Messianic Modernism: Adunis' Vision of Revolutionary Arab Poetics

By

I. Jamal Atalla

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Asian Languages and Cultures)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

2019

Date of final oral examination: 5/3/2019

The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Vinay Dharwadker, Professor, Comparative Literature
Mary Layoun, Professor, Comparative Literature
Maciej Statkiewicz, Associate Professor (Emeritus), Comparative Literature
Nevine El-Nossery, Associate Professor, French and Italian

CONTENTS

A SHORT FORWARD

I first encountered Adunis' Introduction to Arab Poetics about a decade ago, and the horizons it opened up for me intellectually at that time were, in my humble opinion, beyond price. In this vein it should be acknowledged that though this study, as often as not, largely takes a highly critical stance toward this and other works by Adunis on the subject of poetics and modernity, the broad array of topics this dissertation was "enabled" to address and engage with would never have been possible but for the rich array of issues Adunis *himself* has taken on quite fearlessly throughout his career as a passionate poet-critic. Ever-questioning of all things around him, he has left few stones unturned in his quest to define and stake out a new Arab poetic and cultural "modernity".

As such, the intellectual debts I owe to Adunis are many. I would also like to thank Professor Dustin Cowell, as well as all those long-ago lecturers at Jordan University in Amman, for first instilling a fascination with the Arabic language in me, and to all friends and family members for their patience and encouragement as the whole process of graduate study slowly led to this conclusion. And, of course, to the members of my committee: Professors Vinay Dharwadker, Mary Layoun, Nevine El-Nossery and (last in alphabetical order but certainly not least (!)) Maciej Statkiewicz. And to young Mustafa of Deir Az-Zour, gone prematurely but certainly not forgotten, who taught me so very many things that remain beyond words.

CHAPTER 1 : Modernism's Unapologetic Spokesman -- an Overview

1.1. Acclaimed Poet, Controversial Critic

It is no exaggeration to say that from the middle of the 20th century up until today, no other literary figure besides the Syrian poet-critic 'Ali Ahmad Sa'id Esber (b. 1930), more commonly known by his pen name Adunis ('Adonis' in English) has been more at the center of public discussions and debates over Arab artistic modernism. Adunis has occupied this prominent position ever since the early 1950s, when he and Yusuf al-Khal founded and edited Shi'r magazine in Beirut and became prominent leaders of the modernist poets living there. This led to the emergence of the so-called Tammuzi movement, when Adunis and other poets associated with the Beiruti modernists sought to reuse and reengage old mythic themes of pre-Islamic and Islamic Arab lore in new "modern" ways. Adunis then went on to occupy center stage in two other major revolutionary developments of mid-20th century Arabic poetry. The first of these was the "free verse" movement, which sought to overthrow the hegemony of older classical forms of Arabic poetry that emphasized fixed traditional metrical verse patterns. "… the prose-poem or qasidat al-nathr," notes Robyn Creswell, *"*was a new and controversial form in Arabic poetry in the late 1950s. It was one that Adonis and Unsi al-Hajj, in particular, championed…" (131). The second was a collection of verse Adunis published in 1961 titled Aghani Mihyar al-Dimashqi ('The Songs of Mihyar the Damascene'). Speaking in highly esoteric and complex verses and images, its solitary and enigmatic narrative voice based on a little-known figure from medieval Islamic history spoke of personal quest and struggle amidst a realm of profound psychological isolation. Aghani Mihyar captivated other Arab poets, and as a

result had arguably as much or more impact upon modern Arab poetic stylistics as any other single book of verse published within the 20th century. It "established a new direction in Arabic poetry," note two of its translators into English, "comparable to that series of breaks with traditional styles we find elsewhere in early moments in the history of modernisms: Mallarme or Apollinaire in France, Ezra Pound in the Anglophone world, Ungaretti in Italy…" (Mihyar of Damascus 11).

> "Of all the figures produced by the Arab modernists it is Mihyar, the gloomy, many-sided hero of Adonis' *Aghani Mihyar al-Dimashqi* (1961), who seems to typify the *Shi'r* poets' conception of man. *Aghani Mihyar* has always been recognized as central to Adonis' career as a poet – "the initial, definitive disruption," in the words of his English translators – as well as the *Shi'r* movement more generally. ... As the philosopher 'Adel Daher put it, writing in the pages of *Shi'r* soon after the collection's publication, "I do not hesitate to say that *Aghani Mihyar al-Dimashqi* is a new experiment in the manufacture of man … ." (Creswell 112)

Adunis' continuous decades-long influence upon Arab modernist poetics did not stop there by any means. In the 1960s he delved deeply into the study of Arabic lore and verse traditions from the medieval era. The result was a publication of his Diwan al-Shi'r al-'Arabi, an ambitious three-volume anthology of premodern classical Arabic verse, and his vast Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil ('The Fixed and the Mutable'), a historical study spanning some 750 pages over three volumes, which sought to reanalyze well over a millennia of Arab-Islamic history through Adunis' modernist conceptual lens. Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil gained attention

throughout the Arab world, stirring admiration in some quarters while also sparking intense controversy in others. Meanwhile Adunis founded another major literary journal, Al-Mawaqif, in 1968. Published up until 1994, Al-Mawaqif would similarly occupy center-stage in discourse and debate over Arab literary modernity. Over the last couple of decades or so Adunis has also been a central editorial columnist in Al-Hayat, a major international Arabic-language newspaper published out of Saudi Arabia, where he has regularly voiced his opinion to audiences there about cultural and political developments in the Arab world.

The result of this has been that other than the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), who during the later decades of his life enjoyed what could be described without undue exaggeration as quasi-rock star status across the Arab World, Adunis is today perhaps the only other contemporary verse writer with a name and face so instantly recognizable to mass audiences there. When as an already-established poet Adunis earned a PhD at St. Joseph's University in Beirut in 1973, his final oral examination was televised (Mihyar of Damascus 11). Although now as always there are plenty of other talented and prominent poets throughout the region, few if any have enjoyed nearly the level of mass media exposure of these two. Whereas Darwish attracted near-unanimous adoration by firing Middle Eastern audiences' imaginations with his ardent, eloquent championing of the Palestinian cause, however, Adunis' high-profile status within the Arab World has been much more contentious. It is not his poetry that has necessarily been the main factor in gaining him widespread controversy. Even one of his bitterest critics of today, Iraqi novelist Sinan Antoon, has acknowledged his status as one of the greatest Arab poets of the modern era.

> … Adunis... is and will always be one of the most important Arab poets of the

> 20th century. His poetry represents a genuinely radical break with what came before. His metaphors are dazzling and his voice is pristine. Although he was not the first, nor only poet to write what came to be known as qasidat al-nathr (the prose poem), his name became synonymous with it and his style was emulated by later generations of Arab poets. He has an immense talent and restless spirit, coupled with an encyclopedic knowledge of the Arabic tradition, a mastery of its poetics and from the outset, an openness to modern, especially French, poetry -- all of which put him in a unique position to make a broad and deep impact on Arabic literary culture. (Antoon)

Another harsh critic of Adunis, Muhammad Badawi, also acknowledges that his influence on the development of "contemporary Arabic poetry" over the last several decades has been "probably greater than anyone else" (75).

What have always attracted agitated debates around Adunis, rather, are his prolific writings in the field of politics and cultural criticism, and his numerous media and lecture appearances as a public intellectual – all of which he has repeatedly deployed to develop an outspoken philosophy of aesthetic modernism that he frequently presents with unapologetically polemical overtones. Badawi writes with barely-concealed sarcasm when he designates Adunis as the Arab World's "most articulate champion of modernism, one who has tirelessly continued to explain, define and defend it almost *ad nauseam..."* (75). Antoon, for his part, has been careful to draw a clear-cut distinction between Adunis' activities as a poet on the one hand, which he praises in the passage quoted from above, and his more publicly-contested activities as a cultural critic and modernist public intellectual, which Antoon has come to view quite negatively. In a

prominent 2011 editorial in Al-Jazeera English, Antoon vehemently criticized Adunis over the latter's refusal to stand behind the various unarmed uprisings of the Arab Spring against some of the region's more brutal autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and elsewhere. Adunis did so mainly on grounds that these popular movements did not meet his stringent criteria for constituting a truly "modern" movement. "Adunis the poet," Antoon wrote dismissively in response, ".... will always be at the heart of modern Arabic poetry. His poems will be read with admiration and awe, but perhaps it's time to forget about Adunis, the cultural critic and radical intellectual" (Antoon).

Antoon expressed particular anger over Adunis' withholding of definitive support for Syria's wave of public protests against the ruling Asad regime – a stance which caused considerable acrimony in some intellectual circles. Adunis did not side with the regime, and in fact condemned its brutal tactics towards the demonstrators. In editorials he penned, however, he implied that the protestors lacked the level of enlightenment necessary to effect true social change and bring Syria into full "modernity". "No one doubts", he wrote warily of the situation at one point, "that the demand for democracy does not necessarily guarantee that those demanding it are democratic" ("Risalah Maftuhah"). Antoon and some other critics were upset by Adunis' attitude toward the demonstrators in the face of a regime that had slaughtered scores of them with hails of bullets, and tortured children as well as adults to death as punishment for participating in the protests. Later in June 2013 Adunis would weigh in on the Egyptian military's contentious overthrow of the country's first democratically-elected president, Islamist Muhammad Mursi, who inspired populist pride in some sectors of Egyptian society while stirring antagonism in others, by supporting the military's actions and labeling it a victory for the cause

of secularism and enlightenment in the Middle East ("Tahyah ila Misr").

As an ardent secularist and outspoken opponent of orthodox Islam, Adunis had already been attracting controversy decades prior to these more recent antagonisms over the Arab Spring. He has repeatedly asserted that Islam, as currently practiced, is a fundamental obstacle to the realization of a "modern" culture within the Arab world, and has devoted considerable amounts of time to theoretically attacking the long centuries of religious thought and philosophy developed by key medieval Muslim thinkers such as Al-Shafi'i, Ibn Hanbal and al-Bukhari – doctrines that form the core of much of mainstream Islamic worship and practice today. Adunis dedicates a lengthy section of his magnum opus in literary and cultural criticism, Al-Thabit wa Al-Mutahawwil, to a critique of Al-Shafi'i's 8th and 9th century writings on Islamic theology and jurisprudence, which he designates as a critical historic marking point between an Arab world of open intellectual horizons on the one hand, and closed ones on the other (2: 29-30). In interviews Adunis has gone as far as declaring paganism superior to monotheism, a provocative public gesture by most contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamic standards.

> Well, what is monotheism? It's saying, "My prophet, as a monotheistic one, is the final prophet of all." Each of the monotheistic religions repeats that. Secondly, [they say] "the truth conveyed by this particular prophet is the final truth. There is no other." Thirdly, that "there will be no more prophets after mine". Which means that God has no more to say; because he has said his final word to his final prophet. That's what monotheism is. But it also means that violence against the "other" is an integral part of monotheism. It's always been that way... The Greeks and the Phoenicians never went to war to defend a god. But

> monotheists go to war to defend God, in the name of God.
>
> Monotheism arrived in order to do better, to correct, as a way for man to feel better about himself, and so on. But what happened was the opposite; even if you make the comparison with apostates, pagans, the Greeks, and Phoenicians, Egyptians and Sumerians, what they accomplished goes far beyond what the monotheists created. What did monotheism create? Nothing. Almost nothing, vis-à-vis the great Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek and Phoenician civilizations. If you go to see the Mayan civilization in Mexico, you would be even more convinced. It's an extraordinary world that Christianity destroyed. So now it's worse; monotheism is, you see, a tragedy. Man, as an individual, doesn't exist anymore. There is the monotheist idea. You, or me. There is war, which is part of existence. It's our existence. The war between people, between tribes and individuals. ("Cairo Review Interview")

Adunis has also caused considerable stir with his periodic tongue-lashings of Arab society in its entirety, for what he asserts is abject stagnancy and failure to measure up to the standards needed for it to succeed in the contemporary modern era. This stand is also something for which Antoon has attacked him:

> It is strange that someone so covetous of the Nobel Prize would declare that the culture to which he belongs – the culture he supposedly champions – is also extinct. Twice in recent years, Adunis has insisted that Arab culture is "extinct". In an interview with al-Arabiyya satellite TV on September 7, 2007, he claimed, "We are a people who are on their way to extinction... We no longer have

> the creative capacity to build a great human society and participate in building the world." In April of 2009, Adunis spent a week in Iraqi Kurdistan on an official visit and again declared that Arab culture was extinct and added: "If an American, a European, and an Arab sat at a table, what would the Arab have to offer? Nothing." But this apparent contradiction finds resolution in another unusual aspect of Adunis's self-presentation: he deems himself an exception and an aberration. Through sheer chutzpah, Adunis claims a unique revolutionary authority to be the one best suited to represent the culture that, according to him, has ceased to live. (Antoon)

Both Adunis' poetry and his criticism, notes Antoon while summing up at one point, "earned him legions of adversaries, but also many admirers" (Antoon). As these first few pages of this introduction might suggest, of the two roles Adunis plays within today's Arab world -- elder poet and public intellectual -- this dissertation will focus primarily on his activities within the latter category. For it is here, within his books and essays on cultural and literary criticism, and verbal statements he has made in public interviews and seminars, that his most explicit and clearly formulated statements and assertions about modernism can be found.

Today in the 21st century Antoon, Adunis' junior by 38 years, has labeled him obsolete and condemned to "irrelevance" due to his extremely conservative reaction to the Arab Spring (Antoon). Another younger scholar of Arabic poetry, Robin Creswell, has similarly used the word "obsolescence" to describe today's status of the 1950s Beiruti modernist circles Adunis first rose to prominence among (280). Indeed some of the more recent controversies that have gathered around Adunis appear to be due in no small part to his dogged loyalty, over half a

century later, to some of the dominant tropes within Arab discourses of the earlier times when he was a young intellectual."… the surprise that Antoon exhibits at Adunis' eventual response to this [Syrian] revolution is somewhat baffling to me," wrote Karim Abu Zeid in a response to some of Antoon's condemnations of the elder writer, "for Adunis' response is hardly inconsistent with his writings over the past fifty-plus years" (Abu Zeid). Adunis' well-known stance as an absolute secularist, for one example, might seem to some to be rather out of touch with today's reality on the ground following the past several decades which, starting with Iran's 1979 revolution, have seen Islam's political resurgence in the Middle East. The current mainstream view among scholars and intellectuals, in fact, appears to be that for better or worse Islam is, and will remain indefinitely, an inseparable core component of the Arab World's sociopolitical landscape. Adunis' stance seems significantly less far from the mainstream, however, if placed within the larger context of Arab modernist and nationalist thought of earlier times. During the early and middle 20th century radical secularism was, though never a true majority viewpoint, much more mainstream within public Arab discourse. Notwithstanding his Christian background, staunchly secularist stances and harsh public criticisms of Islam, political activist Antoun Sa'adah, who Adunis idolized as a youth in the 1940s and 1950s, commanded a notable following among otherwise-conservative military officers in Syria at that time.

Meanwhile Adunis' dismissal of the Arab Spring as incapable of bringing the complete "package" he sees as required to implement true modernity to Syria, which seemed callous and insensitive to Antoon and others, also arguably rates as significantly less uncompromising by ideological standards of earlier mid-20th century Arab modernism. As will be explored further in later chapters Ba'th party founder Michel 'Aflaq, who was on a more political level a fierce

antagonist of Adunis and the Beiruti modernist poets he was a leader of, shared in general more or less the same totalist view towards modernism expressed by Adunis in specific application to the Arab Spring. For Adunis, Sa'adah and 'Aflaq, any modernist project for sociocultural improvement and advancement that, in any form or fashion, promises only partial or imperfect change instead of absolute, all-encompassing change for Arab society is inherently and fundamentally a philosophically defective venture.

Whether one supports or doubts the efficacy or accuracy of Adunis' prescriptions and edicts for Arab culture and society here and now in the 21st century, furthermore, his long career, however imperfect in the eyes of some critics, nonetheless stands as a central intellectual bridge between the mid-20th century's currents of Arab modernism and reform and similar cultural currents sweeping the Arab World today. After a second introductory chapter that follows this one, this dissertation then contains four chapters focused on juxtaposing some key aspects of Adunis' critical thought on Arab modernism beside larger threads of the mid-20th century intellectual environment it first emerged out of. The first and second chapters will explore overlaps between Adunis and the quasi-messianic modernism of two major mid-20th century nationalist leaders already mentioned here. The first is 'Aflaq, a founder of the Ba'th party and one of the more influential ideological opponents of Adunis and the Beiruti modernists. Alongside major figureheads such as Egypt's Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser, 'Aflaq played a central role within the emergence of mid-20th century Arab nationalism. The second is Adunis' boyhood idol Antoun Sa'adah, a charismatic activist and leader who was executed by the Lebanese government in 1949 under controversial circumstances. After his death Sa'adah's thought and ideas continued to play an influential role within some Lebanese and Syrian intellectual circles. One of

his major writings, Al-Sira' al-Fikri fi al-Adab al-Suri ('The Intellectual Struggle Within Syrian Literature'), went on after his death to become an important aesthetic map for the 1950s Beiruti modernists and the affiliated Tammuzi poets that Adunis was a part of (Creswell 65). The first chapter will focus on highlighting common threads of an overall vision of "messianic modernity" that lie within the discourse of Adunis, 'Aflaq and Sa'adah, thereby borrowing and adapting a term coined by Stephen Sheehi in his Foundations of Modern Arab Identity (11). The second chapter will then attempt to analyze some potential gaps and paradoxes within the ideals and tropes they deploy in this regard as Adunis and the other two lay out their visions of how to transform Arab societies.

The third chapter stands in contrast with both those that precede and follow it by exploring one particular area in which Adunis does, in fact, diverge significantly from the main streams of mid-20th century Arab reformist and nationalist discourses and instead follows a path that brings him into significant overlap with another group of earlier modernist predecessors – the Arab Romantics. As his career moved onward past the 1950s, Adunis began to develop what would evolve into an elaborate artistic aesthetic of rebellious "outsider" individualism and antinomian dissidence that shares strong parallels with certain strains of medieval Arab poetry, as well as some "decadent" modernist western poets such as Charles Baudelaire, who Adunis has cited as a literary influence of his (Introduction to Arab Poetics 81). Even after these developments occurred, however, much of Adunis' writings and public statements have also continued to reflect noticeable traces of more communalist and utopian strains of modernism epitomized by mid-20th thinkers such as 'Aflaq and Sa'adah, with their emphatically group-oriented vision of an Arab people united and merged together in spirit for the sake of national

"progress". These two contrasting threads of individualist antinomianism on the one hand and communalist utopianism on the other never seem to directly interrogate each other within Adunis' writings and public statements. Instead they sit alongside each other in ambiguous coexistence inside his discourse as a public critic. It is in this particular regard, it will be argued in this chapter, that Adunis shares parallels with late 19th and early 20th century Arab Romantic figures such as Khalil Gibran and Amin Al-Rihani. On the one hand, according to Stephen Sheehi's analysis in his article "Modernism, Anxiety and the Ideology of Arab Vision", these earlier thinkers were deeply attracted to the antinomian spirituality and aesthetics of Romanticism as a response to Victorian-era Enlightenment-style rationalism. At the same time, however, they would not, or could not, psychologically break with the rationalist and positivist doctrines of social reform and "progress" bequeathed to them by the prior generations of the middle and late 19th century Arab modernist movement that immediately preceded them.

The fourth chapter will focus on overlaps and divergences in the approaches developed by Adunis, Sa'adah and 'Aflaq to address a particular dilemma which confronted not only Arab modernists of the 19th and 20th centuries, but intellectuals in other non-western lands during those times as well. As Frantz Fanon once observed, under the impact of escalating western political and sociocultural domination, non-western thinkers were confronted not only with threat of erasure of their own indigenous cultural present, but all traces of their historical pasts as well (210). In apparent response to this threat which in effect spanned the full spectrum of their collective cultural time, Adunis and other thinkers of those eras such as Sa'adah and 'Aflaq developed "modernist" aesthetic philosophies that could hold out promise of striking simultaneous balance between promoting change and "progress" into the present and future for

Arab culture on the one hand, and preserving, maintaining and restoring what they saw as its past historic cultural strengths on the other. The results with Adunis, and ‘Aflaq and Sa'adah as well, are writings on aesthetic “modernism” with a markedly different rhetorical sensibility about the metaphysics of human time and history than is the case with many more prominent western writings, where achieving “modernism” is often seen as a markedly more emphatic act of rupture with the past.

Adunis’ many decades of literary output is as immense in prose as in verse, to the point that summary analysis of all its minutiae is an impossible task for one study. Over decades he has composed a multitude of lengthy books and articles on literary criticism, anthologies of verse by other poets which also contain ample commentaries by him, countless pages of poetry, has also engaged in myriad interviews with the media, and has written scores of newspaper articles. What makes the task of analysis somewhat easier despite this is that, as Abu Zeid mentioned in his response to Antoon’s criticisms of Adunis, the central tenets of his views on modernism have remained relatively consistent for many decades. The fundamentals of these views can be found within a thread of four major works that connect and overlap with each other, designated by Adunis himself as central to his critical writings (Introduction 10). These include the approximately 100-page introduction to his ambitious three-volume 1960s anthology of selections from premodern Arabic poetry titled Diwan al-Shi’r al-‘Arabi (‘Corpus of Arabic Poetry’), his Arabic-language Muqaddamah li al-Shi’r al-‘Arabi (‘Introduction to Arab Poetics’), published in 1971 and directly developed and elaborated out of the earlier preface to the Diwan, his magnum opus in literary criticism Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil (‘The Fixed and the Mutable’), also published in the early 1970s and spanning three volumes and over 750 pages,

and finally the later 1990 Introduction to Arab Poetics, based on a series of lectures given in French at the Sorbonne in the mid-1980s. (This last is not to be confused with the other "Introduction" written in Arabic over a decade earlier, which covers similar topics but has far from identical contents).[1]

Though Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil is inarguably Adunis' most famous work on cultural and literary criticism and by far his most monumental, this dissertation will focus primarily though certainly not exclusively on the fourth chapter of his later English-language Introduction to Arab Poetics, which is titled "Poetics and Modernity". Although much more brief and condensed than al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil, it is nonetheless actually a somewhat more expansive conception by Adunis of his philosophy of aesthetic modernism. For it is in this later work that Adunis finally comes back round and completes the full circle of intellectual activity that begins with the three earlier works, and their extensive critiques of Arab schools of aesthetic traditionalism and their integral ties to orthodox Islam. Just as with many western schools of aesthetic modernism that harbor combative insurgent philosophies of art, Adunis' own particular version can arguably said to be defined as much or perhaps even more by what he rhetorically opposes it against as what he declares it to stand "for" (Calinescu 79 & 92). Whereas in the three earlier works the focus rests on Adunis' antagonism against the discursive nexus between orthodox Islam and Arab artistic traditionalism, it is in the fourth chapter of the Introduction that he finally fleshes out the other half of the dualistic battlefront of oppositions that define his vision of "modernism". In this chapter he not only criticizes Arab traditionalism and orthodox Islam as is his usual custom, but also places his modernist vision alongside -- and often starkly

[1] Translations from all Arabic-language texts throughout this study are mine unless otherwise noted.

opposes it against -- those elements of western culture and sociopolitics that have come to have dominating influence over the Middle East beginning with the 19th century.

1.2. Legacies of Mid-20th Century Arab Nationalism and Modernism

Adunis' outspoken and at times blunt attitudes in his philosophical advocacy of modernism have resonances with the rhetorical style of Sa'adah who, as previously mentioned, Adunis himself has labeled as one of the inspirations for his own literary life. Sa'adah was similarly uncompromising, and as will be discussed in chapter three, was also often highly polemical and pugnacious towards towards other thinkers and intellectuals around him in his espousal of his modernist vision. Adunis became affiliated with the political party Sa'adah founded, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), at the very young age of 14. Although he ceased political membership within the SSNP as a young adult, Adunis has continued to speak of Sa'adah as having a foundational intellectual influence upon his own work (Creswell 65).

Though it is well-known that Adunis and the 1950s Beiruti modernists had ties to Sa'adah, scholarly work focused on tracing the specific intellectual and textual connections that might exist between them seems to be relatively limited, one notable exception being Robyn Creswell's 2012 PhD study of Adunis and the Beiruti modernists titled "Tradition and Translation: Poetic Modernism in Beirut". This general scarcity may be in part due to distraction presented by violent conflicts Sa'adah's political party was involved in with the Lebanese government at several points, as well as the bitter controversies that surrounded his military trial and execution. Though not as prolific as Adunis' own volume of output, Sa'adah's own critical writings were substantial enough and touched on a broad range of topics, including

sociology, history and philosophy.

Direct commonalities between Adunis and Sa'adah may not be readily apparent at first glance. Not only are Adunis' writings significantly more voluminous and elaborate in scope than Sa'adah's – Sa'adah's idealistic philosophy of modernism, as will be explored in following chapters, is usually couched in relatively straightforward prose and terminology whereas Adunis' approach can often appear much more esoteric and ambiguous. Adunis, habitually a dogged rhetorical champion of dissidence and pluralism, has frequently expressed disdain for mainstream institutions of authority throughout the Arab world, and often professed sympathy for the sundry and diverse array of rebellious and antinomian artists, thinkers and religious and political leaders that have existed throughout Arab history, both modern and medieval. Sa'adah, on the other hand, was a quasi-Romantic nationalist with a thoroughly communal vision, who appears to have had scant regard for the kind of aesthetic creeds of antinomianism and nonconformity that Adunis espouses as a poet. For Sa'adah, as will be discussed in later chapters, the ultimate value of literature and poetry is their potential to give developing societies moral inspiration and prescriptions to steer their course by on the path toward cultural advancement, whereas Adunis by and large rejects such didactic attitudes towards verse.

Nonetheless, this dissertation argues, sizeable resonances of Sa'adah are present within Adunis' writings and public statements. Both conceptualize the cause of modernism as one that is ultimately spiritual in essence, and transcendent far beyond quotidian and materialist concerns. The writings of both seem to imply that a society's entire sum value can implicitly be judged by whether or not it is capable of achieving "modernity". Furthermore, for them the modernist quest is a thoroughly totalist affair – either a society achieves "modernity" in each and every one

of its aspects, or its accomplishments in this regard stand as counterfeit. Such sentiments as these can be found in the writings of ‘Aflaq as well, regardless of whatever political antagonisms existed between him and Sa’adah’s disciples at one time or another.

In line with the above Sa’adah’s rhetoric in Al-Sira' al-Fikri fi al-Adab al-Suri can at times be more pseudo-mystic than rationalist, and as such, couched in appeals to the reader’s emotion as much or more than their intellect. This is actually consistent with Sa’adah’s view of his modernist and nationalist project of social advancement as aimed at holistically transforming not only human intellect, but human sense and emotion as well. For Sa’adah, truly successful “modernist” literature fuses intellect and emotion together into one greater unity, whereas literature which relies on only one or the other of these two faculties is necessarily incomplete. Adunis and the Beiruti modernists, in their turn, went on to make Sa’adah’s notion a central principle of their own philosophy of art and poetics. In this vein, as we will see, Adunis within his writings develops the notion that one of the fundamental roles of modernist poetry is to serve as artistic counterweight against the unquestioned primacy of rationalism within many of the more mainstream and orthodox discourses of modernity.

Another shared trait between Sa’adah and Adunis is a sense of ambition to delve deep into the Arab cultural past in order to locate and provide historically-based justifications for their own respective visions of what Arab “modernism” should be constituted by today. As the work of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and many other modernist American and European literary figures all show, how to relate to the past is an issue that underlies modernism in the west as well as the east. Among Arab modernist thinkers, however, confronted as they are by a present-day modernity with a substantial amount of components coming from outside their own cultural

origins, how to relate to the past becomes an especially tension-laden issue, as will be discussed in the final chapter. Sa'adah and Adunis can be readily grouped within a certain cohort of 19th and 20th century Arab intellectuals, such as Taha Hussein and Jurji Zaydan among others, who delve into the Arab past with a particularly ambitious level of scale and scope. In this regard Adunis' developing of his three-volume, 750-page Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil as a centerpiece of his modernist vision could be said to mirror Sa'adah's earlier endeavors with Nushu' al-Umam ('The Growth of Nations'), an unfinished two-volume treatise spanning thousands of years back into the epochs of the Sumerians, Phoenicians and other ancient pagan Semitic cultures of the Middle East. Sa'adah went on to make it an ideological centerpiece for his own activist platform for sociopolitical progress.

As one consequence of this gesture of delving backward so extensively into the past, as discussed in the last chapter, the "modernisms" of Sa'adah and Adunis undergo a transformation of a particular sort. Intellectual emphasis on modernity being primarily the outcome of more recent historical developments of the last few centuries, common in many of the west's formulations of its own cultural modernism, lessens. Instead, Middle Eastern capacities Sa'adah and Adunis ideologically "unearth" from past history and proclaim as necessary ingredients for a new indigenous Arab "modernism" emerge as potentials that, according to them, have been perennially present in Arab culture ever since the most ancient of times albeit, perhaps, often in more incomplete or dormant states than today. This supposed ancient Arab cultural potential for "modernism" is, in turn, seen by them as being locked in perpetual antagonism with elements they believe oppose and hinder it. These negative elements are then designated by them as sociocultural ingredients of "backwardness", "blind" adherence to tradition, superstitious

primitivism and so on and so forth. In turn, outcomes of the struggles between these two sets of elements shape more or less the entirety of recorded Arab history into an unfolding chronicle of ages of alternating progress and stagnation, or “light” and “darkness” as it were, depending upon which elements happen to be ascendant at any particular time. For Adunis, the ultimate era of “light” was that of medieval Baghdad at its cosmopolitan peak, when it was the epicenter of the Islamic imperium. For Sa’adah, it is the age of the similarly cosmopolitan port cities of the seagoing Phoenicians, who built an extensive network of international commerce and once inhabited the coasts of Lebanon, Tunisia and elsewhere along the Mediterranean thousands of years ago.

Using Sa’adah as a template of sorts through which to view Adunis should not imply in any way that the latter’s work is a simple teleological outgrowth of the former, for Adunis' work diverges markedly from his intellectual predecessor in important ways. Furthermore, although Adunis was a disciple of Sa'adah's at a very young age, by the 1950s the Beiruti modernists Adunis became a part of -- many of whom had also been former youthful disciples of Sa'adah's political party -- were moving on towards finding their own particular intellectual paths. Although paths followed by the Beiruti modernists did take inspiration and guidance from Sa'adah in some important areas, they also moved on to diverge significantly from him in others (Creswell 77-9, 83, 96-7). What this study will attempt to do, rather, is to use Sa’adah's texts, along with those of 'Aflaq and other earlier Arab thinkers, as a barometer of sorts for the then-existent intellectual atmosphere that Adunis first began growing towards maturity in as a poet and intellectual, at a time when circumstances within the Arab World in domains such as mass literacy rates, available public and social media and the overall technological environment

outside urban areas were profoundly different than they are today. Some post-colonial theorists of today, such as Sari Makdisi and Stephen Sheehi to name two, have criticized the creeds of Arab modernist thinkers of such earlier eras as containing overly-uncritical adoption of western benchmarks of "modernity" onto an Arab context. As will be explored particularly in chapters four and six, strong western conceptual influences do sit beneath the writings of Adunis, Sa'adah and 'Aflaq, though the importation of them into their discourse is certainly not undistilled or wholesale by any means. This dissertation will argue, however, that what is as much or perhaps even more important in their writings is the often-strident messianism of their visions – a messianism standing in significant contrast to more pessimistic attitudes towards "modernism" and "modernity" that began to gradually evolve among a significant undercurrent of Arab thinkers and writers later on, starting with the 1960s (Makdisi 87, 97-100). Furthermore the writings of all three, it could be readily argued, are threaded through with rhetoric as frequently couched in a sense of mysticism towards modernity as it is in appeals to rationalism. This particular aspect of their writings is not so remarkable, perhaps, given the fact that all three were operating as intellectuals in an age when the traditions of Romanticism were still having a strong effect on both western and Arab modernist and nationalist discourses. What is also important to note about this is that Adunis' own writings today as a now-senior man of letters have continued to carry such sensibilities onward into our contemporary era.

In marked contrast to such approaches towards modernity stand the more staid and reserved critical writings of another central figure of mid-20th century Arab modernism, Iraqi poetess and literary critic Nazik Al-Mala'ikah, whose own writings will be discussed at the end of chapter four. Along with Adunis, Mala'ikah was one of the first pioneers of the modernist

Arab “free verse” movement of the mid-20th century, which broke away from traditional Arabic poetic meters. Although Adunis was one of the most prominent promulgators of “free verse” during his time among the Beiruti Modernists, Mala'ikah slightly preceded him in this particular art form, being one of its very first inventors along with fellow Iraqi poet Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab in the late 1940s. As with Adunis and many other literary figures of the mid-20th century, Mala’ikah also saw the emergence of new Arab modernist stylistics such as free verse, with its radical departure from more traditional poetic practices, as a central and necessary cultural means of expression for the profound changes sweeping societies all across the Middle East. Unlike Adunis or Sa'adah, however, she declined to launch any manner of rhetorical attack on audiences and critics with more traditionalist leanings, even those among them openly hostile to modernism. Mala'ikah also withheld from advocating for Arab literary modernism with the same types of polemical, exhortative rhetoric that often characterized the writings of Adunis, Sa'adah, 'Aflaq and their circles. “Free verse” and other newer modernist literary modes, for Mala'ikah, had not arrived to render older, more fixed traditionalist genres obsolete or supplant them, but instead to stand alongside them and supplement them. As a result Mala'ikah, unlike numerous other mid-20th century Arab modernists, declined to designate the invention of “free verse” and other such stylistic breaks by Arab poets and writers with past traditions as a watershed moment within Arab literary history. Though the rise of “free verse” was without doubt an important event, she predicted, with the passing of time its overall significance would inevitably step backward to take a more subdued spot alongside any number of other important events, both ancient and modern, that had occurred within that history as a whole.

1.3. Situating Earlier Arab Modernisms in Today's Global World

At the end of Sudanese writer Tayyib Salih's 1966 novel Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shamal ('Season of Migration to the North'), the primary character is left in an ambiguous and perilous situation, suspended and immobilized in the waters of the Nile and on the verge of drowning, with no indication at the storyline's close as to whether or not he will survive. He had entered the river's waters with the intention of reaching its northern shore.

> … I continued swimming and swimming, resolved to make the northern shore. That was the goal. … Little by little I came to hear nothing but the reverberation of the river. Then it was as if I were in a vast echoing hall. The shore rose and fell. The reverberation of the river faded and overflowed. In front of me I saw things in a semicircle. Then I veered between seeing and blindness. I was conscious and not conscious. Was I asleep or awake? Was I alive or dead? Even so, I was still holding a thin, frail thread: the feeling that the goal was in front of me, not below me, and that I must move forwards and not downwards. But the thread was so frail it almost snapped and I reached a point where I felt that the forces lying in the river-bed were pulling me down to them. …. Turning to left and right, I found I was half-way between north and south. I was unable to continue, unable to return. I turned over on to my back and stayed there motionless, with difficulty moving my arms and legs as much as was needed to keep me afloat. I was conscious of the river's destructive forces pulling me downwards and of the current pushing me to the southern shore in a curving angle. I would not be able to keep thus poised for long; sooner or later the river's forces would pull me down

> into its depths. In a state between life and death I saw formations of sand grouse heading northwards. … (166-7)

Sari Makdisi interprets this final scene as an allegory of the often-overwhelming dilemmas modernity has brought to the Arab world and its inhabitants – with the northern shore the protagonist unsuccessfully seeks representing western-constructed paradigms of "development" and "progress" that so many Arab leaders and intellectuals have constantly striven for, ever since the 19th century, without definitive success.

> Steadily weakening, having been stripped of the directional certainty normally provided by the river's unwavering northward flow, and having been cut off from the reassuring and familiar landmarks on its banks … the narrator is unable to situate himself in terms of a directional flow: he is unable either to continue his "migration" to the north or to return to his point of departure, which had vanished as soon as he entered the water. (86)

"Ultimately" Makdisi continues, "… the 'migration' referred to in the title" of Salih's book "… never takes place; and one of its figurative 'vehicles,' the Nile itself, appears in the end to be incapable of deliverance -- incapable of steady progress toward a predefined goal or objective" (86).

Along with the treachery of the Nile's waters another final revelation comes to Salih's character, placed very close to the novel's last sentences:

> … Then my mind cleared and my relationship to the river was determined. Though floating on the water, I was not part of it. I thought that if I died at that moment, I would have died as I was born -- without any volition of mine. All my

life I had not chosen, had not decided. … (168)

If one were to further extend the thread of interpretation Makdisi posits, then not only does the powerful, impersonal and treacherous "modernity" the Nile symbolizes refuse to deliver the promise of forward "progress" to Salih's protagonist -- it also leaves him with the final realization of just how much an utter outsider and stranger he is to the processes of "modernity" he is immersed – and now quite literally drowning – within. After all its goals and objectives never originated from within himself but instead, as it were, from the external direction of the "north" he futilely seeks after, which Makdisi interprets as a symbol of Europe and the west. Neither, as the Arab protagonist realizes at the end, does his sociocultural immersion within this larger process, symbolized by not only the Nile but all his previous life prior to his actual physical immersion within it, offer him any control over what will occur within its dynamics. At the very end of the novel Saleh's protagonist arouses from his torpor and decides to "choose life" and scream out for help – but it is unclear if any aid will arrive to him. "The summoned help never arrives," notes Makdisi in his commentary, "and a great darkness closes in on both the narrator and the narrative" (86).

Within not only Season of Migration but other central works of modern Arab literature such as Ghassan Kanafani's Rijal fi al-Shams ('Men in the Sun') and, I would argue, the stark existentialist verses of the late Iraqi poet Abdel Wahab Al-Bayati, the Arab individual is frequently posited as someone who primarily interacts with modernity from a beleaguered reactive position rather than as any kind of proactive agent of it. Modernity, within this narrative point of view, comes towards the Arab individual from outside their own cultural being, often as a highly invasive and threatening entity. As with Makdisi's allegorical reading of Salih's narrative

at the end of Season of Migration to the North, though this modernity was never of the Arab individual's own making or design it nonetheless imposes itself upon them with overwhelming force. Within this narrative model, as such, an Arab thinker is compelled to "struggle" with modernity from a chronically besieged and highly disadvantaged position. Adunis has himself described the Arab thinker as someone who is living in a contemporary state of "crisis of identity" and psychological "siege", while Sa'adah speaks of the native intellectual floundering within an era of literary "chaos" and "anxiety", and psychological "convulsion" and "contradiction" (Adunis, Introduction 76, 81; Sa'adah, Al-Sira al-Fikri 2).

It must be acknowledged within this regard, of course, that thinkers and intellectuals who have sought to grapple with and mold cultural modernity from an Arab perspective operate from a radically different location vis-a-vis modernity's own event horizon than their western counterparts such as Hegel, Marx, Baudelaire or Habermas, for some examples. The west was modernity's internal point of origin, from which it emerged very gradually in stages over centuries, whereas the Arab world was, at least initially, an external point of its outward impact, and its advent there was vastly more sudden and rapid. Whereas modernity made the west into a "colonizer", furthermore, it brought the Arab world into the ranks of the "colonized". However, I would argue that despite this it cannot necessarily be concluded that thinkers in that region, in the end, have had less essential a role to play in the intellectual defining and shaping of the "modernity" we perceive around us today on the larger international and global level than their western counterparts.

If relative to modernity's origins one simply adopts positional terms of "insider" versus "outsider" too uncritically, one could easily conclude that an Arab thinker who seeks to be a true

"innovator" vis-a-vis a modernity is inevitably bound to fight an arduous uphill battle in order to do so, due to presumed status as a disadvantaged and struggling "outsider" inexorably pushed toward a defensive position of fraught intellectual compromise with modernity rather than proactive agency. One could further argue from such an emphatically positional and geographical viewpoint that since modernity came from "outside" the Arab thinker's self and culture, whatever they create from intellectual interaction with it must inevitably emerge from an intrinsically secondary and derivative position rather than a primary one of "origination" -- in contrast to what would presumably be the case with a thinker situated at modernity's western "center". The opposing correspondence along this line of thinking, of course, would be that the western thinker must come from an inherently more advantageous stance in regards to modernity vis-a-vis their Arab counterpart -- since they, by contrast, sits at modernity's geographical fundament and "origination point". Therefore, one could presumably argue, they are not forced to operate from any such "second-tier" vantage point as their non-western peers are and hence, whatever they produce intellectually vis-a-vis modernity can be presumed to be much more likely to be "authentic" rather than "derivative", since the product of their thought is not subject to the kinds of fraught compromise that the Arab thinker is presumably forced to engage in, located as the latter is out at the external edge of modernity's "periphery".

Yet when we actually examine the life and work of many western thinkers who sought to engage with modernity in their own writings, whether Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, or Max Weber to name just a few, we find that they as well, no less than their Arab counterparts, as often as not felt similarly locked in a belated struggle of their own with modernity and the unforeseen and overwhelming changes it brought upon their own western societies – changes that were often

baffling and even traumatic, regardless of whether those societies occupied a position at modernity's center of initial origin or not. Marshall Berman notes in this regard that 19th century western modernist thinkers are simultaneously moved "at once" in opposite directions by both "a will to change – to transform both themselves and their world – and by a terror of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart. They all know the thrill and the dread of a world in which 'all that is solid melts into air'" (13).

A similar dualist thread of simultaneously felt excitement on the one hand, and overwhelming suffocation and sense of helplessness on the other, cuts through Berman's analysis of what it is like for the average individual to live in the modern western world today:

> … To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. … (15)

No other than Max Weber, one of the Victorian era's central philosophical proponents for the power of modern western rationalism, spoke in highly negative terms of the psychological "iron cage" modern industrialization of life had imposed upon the western individual (Protestant Ethic 181). Weber also described, with no little ambivalence, the "fate of our times" within the

west as the "disenchantment" of the spiritual world brought about by the increasing rationalization of all facets of human life and activity (Essays in Sociology 155). Weber is, in a way, a prototypical example of the modern western intellectual's frequent dual sense of both excitement and dread in the face of modernity's onslaught that Berman refers to. On the one hand, in a deeply rooted sense of self-superiority common within 19th century western thinking, he expresses near-unquestioning self-confidence that the west he is a part of is, essentially speaking, the sole and exclusive authentic source and possessor of modernist rationalism. This western exclusivity lies, according to him, not just in the domain of some or other aspects of culture and society but in *all* of them – from mathematics to law, and from art, to government and music for example. Even the most complex and elaborate non-western systems of theology and jurisprudence such as those of orthodox Hinduism and Islam, asserts Weber, simply do not possess the same authentic sense of "rational" formulation as those of the west. For Weber, furthermore, this penchant for "rationalism" is a western monopoly not only upon recent history but all of it in its entirety.

> Only in the West does science exist at a stage of development which we recognize today as valid. … knowledge and observation of great refinement have existed elsewhere… But in Babylonia and elsewhere astronomy lacked … the mathematical foundation which it first received from the Greeks. The Indian geometry had no rational proof; that was a product of the Greek intellect, also the creator of mechanics and physics. The Indian natural sciences, though well developed in observation, lacked the method of experiment, which was …

> essentially a product of the Renaissance, as was the modern laboratory. Hence medicine, especially in India, though highly developed in empirical technique, lacked a biological and particularly a biochemical foundation. A rational chemistry has been absent from all areas of culture except the West.
>
> The highly developed historical scholarship of China did not have the method of Thucydides. Machiavelli, it is true, had predecessors in India; but all Indian political thought was lacking in a systematic method comparable to that of Aristotle, and, indeed, in the possession of rational concepts. Not all the anticipations in India … nor the extensive codification especially in the Near East, nor all the Indian and other books of law, had the strictly systematic forms of thought, so essential to a rational jurisprudence, of the Roman law and of the western law under its influence. … (Protestant Ethic 14-15)

At one point Weber is even willing to go as far as suggesting that this supposed difference between "rational" western thought and "less" rational non-western thought may actually be due to a type of inherent racial superiority.

> … When we find again and again that, even in departments of life apparently mutually independent, certain types of rationalization have developed in the Occident, and only there, it would be natural to suspect that the most important reason lay in differences of heredity. The author admits that he is inclined to think the importance of biological heredity very great. (Protestant Ethic 30).

Weber's sense of absolute difference between the west he is a part of on the one hand, and the east or "Orient" on the other – his never-explicit but ever-present sense of the west's

innate categorical superiority over all other cultures -- and his western self-presumption of sole possession of traits of "rationalism" and, by implication, the truly "modern" is, of course, hallmark western thought of the era he lived in, with deep strains that can be traced up into western intellectual discourse today. Seventy years after Weber's observation just above, for example, this same western sense of self-exclusivism in regards to "rationality" can be readily found in the pronunciations of U.S. State Department doyen Henry Kissinger. In conceiving and executing foreign policy on behalf of a western superpower, Kissinger writes, the American diplomat must necessarily split the world into two polarities, taking into account "the difference in philosophical perspective" which has, "ever since the Renaissance", fundamentally "distinguished the West from the part of the world now called underdeveloped… . The West is deeply committed to the notion that the real world is external to the observer, that knowledge consists of recording and classifying data – the more accurately the better." Meanwhile on the other hand, Kissinger asserts, those nonwestern cultures which the American diplomat must deal with, " which escaped the early impact of Newtonian thinking" are thereby still locked within a realm of psychological subjectivity, since they "have retained the essentially pre-Newtonian view that the real world is almost completely *internal* to the observer" (48).

> Technology comes as a gift; acquiring it in its advanced form does not presuppose the philosophical commitment that discovering it imposed on the West. Empirical reality has a much different significance for many of the new countries than for the West because in a certain sense they never went through the process of discovering it… (49).

For Kissinger, writes Edward Said in a sarcastic critique, "the point he makes is sufficiently

unarguable to require no special validation. We had our Newtonian revolution; they didn't. As thinkers we are better off than they are" (47).

In Weber's own writings, however, this sense of western exclusivity becomes starkly balanced by a sense of deep helplessness in the face of what this same modernity the west itself originated has now wrought upon it – and, as well, in the face of what this modernity may now hold for all the west's inhabitants in the future.

> ... This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only with those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.
>
> … material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. ... The rosy blush of … the Enlightenment, seems also to be irretrievably fading, and the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs. … In the field of its [modern capitalism's] highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport.

> No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved." (Protestant Ethic 181-2)

Engel's 1845 eyewitness reports in The Condition of the Working Class in England on the miseries he witnessed in the 19th century factory town of Manchester, meanwhile, indicate that within the full onslaught of the industrial revolution brought about by modernity, economic colonialism of a sort could often just as easily be practiced upon large swaths of populations sitting at the imperial center of a modernizing west as it could be upon those at its subjugated peripheries. Strong arguments can be made, as such, that innovations of western thinkers such as Weber, Marx and others can also, in fact, similar those of so many modernist Arab thinkers, be said to frequently have been in large part the product of defensive-minded processes of fraught reaction to, and troubled negotiation with, a modernity they were compelled to grapple with as a result of upheavals brought about by it within the west itself, just as it also brought tumult to those nonwestern lands this same modernity ostensibly gave the west dominance over. Just as with those of Arab "modernists", their western writings also often carry a strong sense of threat and, occasionally, even overwhelming helplessness in the face of modernity's unpredictability and inevitability. It could further be argued that in many cases such darker forebodings often sit simultaneously within their texts alongside other observations regarding new, unprecedented

opportunities for social advancement and progress brought into existence by virtue of this very same modernity. As such, even though it may be true European thinkers did not face colonial subjugation in the same manner as Arab intellectuals did during the 19th and 20th centuries, the issue of whether thinkers at modernity's initial center necessarily occupied a definitively less beleaguered position with more inherent agency than those at its initial periphery is, perhaps, more ambiguous than one might initially expect.

Meanwhile, scholars Peter Gran and Stephen Sheehi have argued that Arab and Ottoman intelligentsia of the late 18th and early 19th century were, by and large, much more proactive in recognizing and attempting to grapple with the onset of modernity and the industrial revolution than later historians have given them credit for (Sheehi, Foundations of Modern Arab Identity 4). Today, furthermore, there is the fact that many lands and populations of the non-western world are passing from the earlier colonial era into a newer, more fully globalized modernity that increasingly includes nonwestern states such as Japan, China and India among others as powerful participants within a larger, broader arena modernity has now moved into as it plays out its course and develops onward beyond its original European-American origins. As such, alongside numerous “modernist” thinkers of other nonwestern lands beyond the Middle East, writings of Arab thinkers such as Adunis and others can now be said to be voices rooted within evolving and ongoing experiences of populations who today partake of modernity's vast playing field as its nonwestern majority rather than a non-Occidental minority, as may once have been the case in previous eras.

For such reasons I would argue Adunis' thoughts as a modernist thinker, whether or not one agrees with all of them, are as important for study today as those of any prominent western

peer. A second reason for Adunis' importance is, perhaps somewhat ironically, the very same one that may have caused a few younger intellectuals to announce his "obsolescence" – that is, his abiding discursive ties to earlier mid-20th century modernist and reformist Arab thinkers such as Sa'adah. This, I would argue, is due to a need for intra-comparative study between the various stages of Arab "modernity" itself. Today, if one does not exercise undue care, it is too easy to fall into a simple binary narrative of modernity's advent in the Arab world as a straightforward existentialist polarity of a stable and static "traditional" realm prior to modernity's impact in the 19th century, now irrevocably transformed ever since into a "modern" scene of crisis and frenetic activity. What correspondingly follows from this are binarized categories of Arab intellectual history as well – pre-impact, and therefore "premodern", on the one hand, and post-impact and therefore "modern" on the other. One would never, of course, equate late 19th century or early 20th century Europe, however "modern" it was in comparison to the more traditional societies that existed before it, with 21st century Europe. Meanwhile, though by the time of Sa'adah's height of public prominence and Adunis' youthful formation and early career "modernity" had already been on the ground in the Middle East for the better part of a century at the very least, the Arab world of that time was also technologically, sociologically and culturally a radically different arena of "modernity" than the one that exists today.

There is good reason to wonder, for example, if Sa'adah's own rise as a public leader could ever occur in quite the manner it did if he were operating today. Though Sa'adah's own political party never held majority power in any Arab country even at the peak of its popularity and influence, it did play a prominent role in the overthrow of at least one Syrian regime, that of Husni Al-Za'im, very shortly after Sa'adah's own death, and remained a major player in Lebanese

politics up into the early 1960s. As will be discussed in the third chapter, in an age when television channels had not yet arrived to the Arab world and mass literacy was still more or less confined to urban centers, Sa'adah forged his sizeable following not by appealing all-inclusively to mass publics throughout the land but by galvanizing younger members of the urban economic and political elites – university students, young and idealistic businessmen, and officials and officers in the middle and upper-level echelons of the governments and militaries of the Levant. Meanwhile, in a fashion also markedly different from leaders in the Arab public realm today, Sa'adah worked through the world of letters – pamphlets and essays in print journals and newspapers – to get his ideas out to his followers and audiences at large.

Not only was public discourse about the shape Arab "modernity" should take generally in the hands of smaller, more limited elite circles than it is today, but some seminal post-colonial era events that have dramatically complicated debates about what "modernity" and its attendant paradigms of "progress" ultimately mean for the Arab world had not yet taken place. These include, among other things, the full-scale military occupation and colonization of the Palestinians as well as repeated military interventions and occupations by other foreign powers, bloody civil wars in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, and the collapse or near-disintegration of several modern Arab nation-states. Thinkers like Sa'adah and a then-younger Adunis were, of course, also grappling with the impact of tumultuous events and intrusive foreign interventions into Arab culture during those now-bygone decades as well -- Sa'adah himself was jailed several times by French colonial authorities. Nonetheless, perhaps since they were, in that particular era, closer in time than we now are to the actual event horizon of modernity's first arrival into the Arab world, they often appear to have formed a markedly more optimistic view of what modernity's

potentials might hold in store for future Arab societies than many Arab thinkers do today, though it cannot be necessarily said that they were utterly wide-eyed and uncritical towards modernity either.

One example of the psychological ramifications of being closer to this initial event horizon of modernity, that will be discussed in more detail in chapters three, is Adunis' repeated autobiographical narratives of living through stark childhood transition from initial upbringing within a 1930s Alawite peasant village that he depicts as being more or less straight out of the Biblical era, with absolutely no modern infrastructure or edifices and no schools, machinery, electricity or running water, to later attendance as a teenager alongside children of Syria's urban elites in the country's top Francophone lycee school, in the cosmopolitan port city of Tartus. What is, in essence, a narrative claim by Adunis of being a living, in-the-flesh embodiment of direct, radical transition from premodern Arab primordiality to modern cosmopolitanism, a claim that directly echoes similar bildungsroman narratives of earlier modernist thinkers such as Egypt's Taha Hussain, is a motif for a type of psychological experience which those later Arab intellectuals of today who now consider Adunis to be “obsolete” could never lay claim to for themselves.

As such, the coming of modernity into the Arab world by no means simply impacted it in one-off, before and after fashion but rather, as in the west, has left behind it a continuous saga of change and evolution within the Arab world ever since its arrival. Furthermore, in line with the reasonings for my previous assertion of the importance of studying Arab modernist thinkers vis-a-vis their western peers, given the now-thoroughly globalized nature of modernity there is no reason to deem study of its considerable history of evolutions and multiple changes and shifts

within the Arab world, or within any other non-western region, as any less relevant or critical today than study of its lengthy evolution within the western domain.

As such, though some may argue that the strains of optimist “messianic modernism” that Sa'adah and Michel 'Aflaq represented, for their part, in a rather assertive and straightforward way and that Adunis now seems to embody in more subtle and nuanced but nonetheless noticeable fashion, have now “had their day” and passed onward relative to the 21st century Arab world, they nonetheless remain a vital historical component within the larger chronicle of transition and evolution within the Arab world that has taken place ever since modernity's first inceptions there. Indeed in rather strange and dramatic fashion the span of Adunis' own life, from his early youth in an utterly premodern village of a species that by and large no longer exists in the Middle East today up to his current status as a hyper-literate 21st century cosmopolite intellectual living in Paris in a fully globalized era can be taken, in a way, as a parable of some of the vaster sweeps of change that have occurred in the Arab world over the last eighty years or so.

In this regard comments made by Berman in a western context, about the need for intercomparative study between today's modernity and the past viewpoints of earlier western modernist thinkers, perhaps ring true to no small degree within the Arab domain as well:

> Marx, Nietzsche and their contemporaries experienced modernity as a whole at a moment when only a small part of the world was truly modern. A century later, when the processes of modernization have cast a net that no one, not even in the remotest corner of the world, can escape, we can learn a great deal from the first modernists, not so much about their age as about our own. … If we can make their visions our own, and use their perspectives to look at our own

environments with fresh eyes, we will see that there is more depth in our lives than we thought. …

It may turn out, then, that going back can be a way to go forward: that remembering the modernisms of the nineteenth century can give us the vision and courage to create the modernisms of the twenty-first. … To appropriate the modernities of yesterday can be at once a critique of the modernities of today and an act of faith in the modernities – and in modern men and women – of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. (36)

CHAPTER 2 : The Metaphysics of Modernism

2.1. Adunis, Arab Modernism and the West: Overlaps and Divergences

As the bulk of this study is investigation and interpretation from deep within the tangles of the numerous interlockings that lie between Adunis and other thinkers and discursive currents of the Arab World – and his various deployments within its larger sociocultural issues -- this short section is a brief attempt to provide some measure of counterbalance by stepping backward and upward momentarily in order to look at the overall body of philosophies and metaphysics Adunis has developed as a public critic and intellectual from a more abstract and summary angle. Though even this section will also be compelled to engage to some extent with the sociocultural entanglements that characterize Adunis' work its aim is to provide, as much as possible, a more above-the-ground bird's eye view.

The individual components that make up Adunis' overall philosophy of Arab culture and "modernism" are, in and of themselves for the most part, by no means unique. His well-known aesthetics of antinomian identification with social and cultural outsiders, dissidents, and moral and political outlaws, for example, hold strong parallels with earlier Arab Romantics, such as Khalil Gibran and his contemporaries, as well as Baudelaire and the French poetes maudits. Prime examples of the poetes maudits' own aesthetic of the rare, defiant literary genius with an outsider's taste for the odd, the "marvelous" and the sensual – who stands thereby estranged from his more mundane, quotidian society – are Baudelaire's two essays lauding American poet and horror writer Edger Allen Poe, which will be discussed in the chapter on antinomianism. Adunis has cited both Baudelaire and Gibran as important influences of his (Introduction 81), and dedicates an entire 50-page section of Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil to Gibran, whom he

designates as the first true "founder of the vision of modernity" within the Arab world , and its "first pioneer" (3: 163). For Adunis, Gibran's late 19th and early 20th century literary investigations of the realms of vision and "madness" represent a seminal attempt to question and overthrow long-held norms of traditional Arab culture *(*Al-Thabit 3: 177).

Adunis' antinomian aesthetics also harken back to well-known ancient creeds of "outlaw" and outsider poetics within Arabic tradition itself. These venerable currents go back as far as pre-Islamic times, with the libertine poet Imru' al-Qais and the sa'aleek – Bedouin outlaws and highwaymen who celebrated their violent life in verse. They then continue into the medieval Islamic era with figureheads such as the flamboyant wine-drinker and pederast Abu Nuwas and the semi-outcast and political gadfly Al-Mutanabbi -- both considered today as two of the greatest poets of Arab history -- the defiantly licentious sensualist poets Bashar bin Burd and Umar Ibn Abi Rabi'ah, and the rebelliously anti-orthodox mystic and poet Al-Hallaj, executed by the 'Abbasid caliphate for heresy, who remains controversial within the Arab World up until now. Among contemporary Arab poets of today, furthermore, sympathies with these older Arab poetic traditions of antinomianism and staunch individualism are far from confined to Adunis. Many prominent Arab poets of recent times, such as Iraq's late 'Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati and others, have utilized resonances of these older "outlaw" traditions within their own verse.

Meanwhile, throughout central passages of his Introduction to Arab Poetics as well as some later sections of Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil, Adunis constructs a lengthy and sustained philosophical polemic in order to argue that language's poetic registers are in many ways superior to its more rational ones, on grounds that they supposedly offer a freer, less hindered form of discursive space – and one more truly nurturing of the human spirit. **"...** the world

existing within the boundaries of religious and philosophical knowledge is closed and finite because it is certain... ," he writes at one point. "... it becomes a system of beliefs and an ideology. But from the perspective of poetic, that is metaphoric, knowledge, the world is by contrast open and infinite, because it is possibility, a continuing process of search and discovery" (Introduction 72).

> … Arabic, in its metaphoric or poetic structure, is a language which arouses a desire to search, to know the unknown and attain perfection. It is too vast to be confined within the limits of the given and the actual: there is a dimension of infinity to its powers of expression, which corresponds to the non-finite aspects of knowledge. (72)

This, in turn, strongly echoes countless decades of philosophical rhetoric by European "counter-Enlightenment" philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and others who sought to contest the west's dominant sociopolitical traditions of the Enlightenment and their sanctification of rationalism.

> … the aesthetic critique of [rationalist] modernity has played a crucial role in the philosophical critique – from Schiller and Romanticism to Nietzsche and post-structuralism. In particular, the realm of radical experience – of experience set free from the constraints of morality and utility, religion and science – opened up by avant-garde art has figured prominently in more recent attacks on the egocentric, domineering, objectifying and repressing "sovereign rational subject". (Habermas viii)

Also having strong overlaps with outside sources, both in their concepts and their

terminologies, are the underlying theoretics of Adunis' magnum opus Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil, in which – in accordance with the work's title -- he advocates for a historical model of Arab societies as a perennial arena of opposition between dynamic and "mutable" forces of innovation and dissidence on the one hand, and forces that he characterizes as "fixed" and rigidly traditionalist on the other. Perhaps the most visible overlap in this particular case is with Baudelaire's seminal 19th century essay on western artistic modernism, "The Painter of Modern Life". In this similarly highly dualist essay, Baudelaire postulates that art is constituted by an opposition between elements of a timeless, eternal and universal fixed abstract beauty of the kind widely dissimulated in classical art on the one hand, and, on the other hand, elements of a more mutable and dynamic beauty of the "fleeting" and "transient" sights and sensations of everyday life in the here and now.

> Beauty is made up of an eternal, invariable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severally or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions. Without this second element, which might be described as the amusing, enticing, appetizing icing on the divine cake, the first element would be beyond our powers of digestion or appreciation, neither adapted nor suitable to human nature. I defy anyone to point to a single scrap of beauty which does not contain these two elements. (3)

For Baudelaire, as with Adunis in his own similar duality, it is the *later* elements of human and historical mutability and transience, rather than the former, that combine together to comprise that particular aspect of artistic stylistics that it is most appropriate to designate as

"modern".

> … it is much easier to decide outright that everything about the garb of an age is absolutely ugly than to devote oneself to the task of distilling from it the mysterious element of beauty it may contain, however slight or minimal that element may be. By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable. Every old master has his own modernity; the great majority of fine portraits that have come down to us from former generations are clothed in the costume of their own period. They are perfectly harmonious, because everything – from costume and coiffure down to gesture, glance and smile (for each age has a deportment, a glance and smile of its own) – everything, I say, combines to form a completely visible whole. This transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be despised or dispensed with. By neglecting it, you cannot fail to tumble into the abyss of an abstract and indeterminate beauty, like that of the first woman before the fall of man... (13)

"Woe to him who studies the antique for anything else but pure art, logic and general method!" Baudelaire writes elsewhere in the essay. "By steeping himself too thoroughly in it, he will lose all memory of the present; he will renounce the right and privileges offered by circumstance – for almost all our originality comes from the seal which Time imprints on our sensations" (14).

Adunis himself is not at all secretive about proclaiming his influences from not only Baudelaire, but western literature as a whole:

> I must also admit that I did not discover this modernity in Arabic poetry from within the prevailing Arab cultural order and its systems of knowledge. It was reading Baudelaire which changed my understanding of Abu Nuwas and revealed his particular poetical quality and modernity, and Mallarme's work which explained to me the mysteries of Abu Tammam's poetic language and the modern dimension in it. My reading of Rimbaud, Nerval and Breton led me to discover the poetry of the mystic writers in all its uniqueness and splendor, and the new French criticism gave me an indication of the newness of al-Jurjani's critical vision. (Introduction 81)

What does make Adunis distinctive is his rhetorical and philosophical deployment of all this particular array of rich ingredients within an Arab setting rather than a western one. Nor is his interaction with the western elements of this mix unreserved or simple-minded rote borrowing and copying by any means. For Adunis, western culture represents not only positive opportunity when properly utilized, but negative threat as well when it is thoughtlessly or slavishly imitated by Arab artists and intellectuals. Such a submissive approach to western culture, he writes, “amounts to looting at a personal, linguistic and poetic level, and is the way to complete alienation” (87).

Few if any of Adunis’ Arab modernist contemporaries, furthermore, can be said to have pushed their thoughts on aesthetic “modernism” into such voluminous depth and breadth of elaboration as he has over some six decades of extremely lengthy writings. Although artistic creeds characterized by adamant and often flamboyant individualism, and self-declared alienation from society, have long been par for the course in the west, Adunis has been

remarkable for an entire lifetime of dogged championing of such aesthetics within the Arab World -- and for playing a central role in injecting them into literary discourses there as, for example, was the case with his widely admired and imitated poems about the solitary and distinctive "Mihyar the Damascene" in the early 1960s. Adunis' impact in this regard is particularly noteworthy in view of the fact that during the mid-20th century period of his intellectual formation and initial activities as a poet – a time when direct western colonial rule had yet to be fully lifted from either the Middle East or the rest of the non-western world – Arab modernist cultural thought was largely dominated by issues of how to form strong group and community identities in the face of extremely difficult circumstances. This overriding concern with group identity, as will be seen in later chapters, is amply reflected in the writings of Sa'adah and 'Aflaq, as well Frantz Fanon, the mid-20th century Afro-Caribbean writer who went on from participating in the Arab rebellions against French colonialism in Algeria in the 1950s to play a broader foundational mid-20th century role in theorizing ways and means of international non-western resistance and cultural assertion against western colonialism on the global level. As will also be discussed in later chapters Fanon, who was deeply influenced by Marxism, expressed deep suspicion towards sociocultural creeds of individualism, seeing these as largely imported influences from the west that ultimately corrupted and weakened the will of non-western peoples in their arduous struggles towards national and cultural independence from colonialism and its legacy (47). Fanon's negative attitude toward intellectual elitism and sociocultural adoration of rare and exceptional individuals marches in parallel to this. "We ought not to cultivate the exceptional or to seek for a hero, who is another form of leader," he writes at one point. Instead, he continues, "We must uplift the people themselves as one united, wholistic

and homogenous body" (197).

> … What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people. … It is from the base that forces mount up which supply the summit with its dynamic, and make it possible dialectically for it to leap ahead. (197-8)

It cannot by any means be said that Adunis, for his own part, is simply unconcerned with issues of community and the body politic – far from it, as shown by his engaged and impassioned public letters to Bashar Al-Asad in the wake of the Syrian uprising and the regime's violent crackdown on it ("Risalah Maftuhah"). In contrast to 'Aflaq, and Sa'adah the mentor of his youth, however – and in even more marked contrast to the emphatically populist Fanon -- issues of the individual and the realms of the exceptional individual's creative and imaginal vision often assume equal if not greater attention and importance in his thought. Such emphasis on the individual would also become a hallmark of the Beiruti modernist circles that Adunis was a prominent leader of. In the following passage in Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil, Adunis implicitly criticizes orthodox Islam's staunchly communalist mindset, and its view of human individualism as insignificant in the grand scheme of things:

> What became clear to me... is that the human being as an individual entity, as a creator responsible for his deeds, did not exist as an understood concept in

> Arab-Islamic culture. The ummah [i.e. Islamic religious community] is the entity that it is possible to describe as (the sole) being that exists, and the individual is defined by the place he occupies within the ummah. As such he is nothing but a sprout on the tree of the ummah. (1: 5)

Meanwhile, similar to so many western theoreticians and cultural visionaries of the antinomian, the marginalized and the liminal within western culture from the 19th century Romantics onward, Adunis maintains it is within Arab society's own marginal spaces of cultural dissidence and deviance, that fall beyond its more conformist and conservative group-oriented structures and boundaries, that its deepest and most authentic powers of imagination are to be found.

> … I began to search for alternative forms... legend, mysticism, magical and non-rational elements of the literary tradition, the mysterious regions of the human soul. I used them to move away from the cold rationalism of science, in my efforts to reveal truths which are more sublime and concern humanity in a more profound way... It was an attempt to reflect upon and comprehend human existence as a whole, beginning deep down where the reality of this existence was least cluttered by extraneous factors and man lived directly with the land and talked to it in a language which operated at the level of sensation and physical contact, inarticulate cries, instinct and sex. Such a way of proceeding is obviously the opposite of the rational, direct, clear approach, plunging deep into the obscure and terrifying areas which escape the grip of science and rationalism, but where great creation has its beginnings suspended over the abyss of the unrefined and

the limitless. (Introduction 95)

As Matei Calinescu describes it, western modernist artistic schools reflexively form the most fundamental aspects of their identities by positioning themselves in opposition to their societies' more dominant ideologies and institutions, whether this be the west's cult of rationalism and progress, mass consumer capitalism, neoliberal politics, or anything else of this nature. Not only has western artistic modernism been all along, almost more than anything else, an expression of rebellion and "irreconcilable opposition" against these more dominant creeds of western bourgeois capitalist identity – indeed, the very identity of western aesthetic modernity as a whole, according to Calinescu, is "an entirely negative one". It is in essence a culture of overthrow defined, as much or more than by what it stands for, by what it stands against (79). Although Adunis also carves out the boundaries that define his own vision of Arab "modernism" in this same highly charged, polarized, anti-establishment manner, what sets him somewhat apart here, once again, is the vast and elaborate lengths he goes to in order to do this, including well over a thousand pages of books and essays over the span of several decades that attempt to take on the entire length and breadth of Arab cultural history. At over 700 pages, Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil is perhaps the hallmark example of Adunis setting up and elaborating endless chains of oppositions between various entities he chooses to designate as forces of "orthodoxy" and "rigidity" on the one hand – whether these be Bedouin tribal hierarchies, companions of the Prophet Muhammad who succeeded him in rule of the Islamic empire, such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar, the medieval 'Abbasid Caliphate, prominent medieval Islamic lawgivers such as Ibn Hanbal and al-Shafi'i, or modern Arab poets with conservative leanings whom Adunis disapproves of, among myriad other things – and other elements he chooses to label as forces of

"dissidence" that, therefore, presumably contain "dynamism" and even seeds of "modernism" -- everything from libertine poets to dissident extremist sects such as the 7th and 8th century Khawarij, to violent Bedouin outlaws. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil and other writings in this vein laid out Adunis' cultural philosophies by counterposing them against his critique of orthodox Islamic traditions. In the 1980s, with the second version of his Introduction to Arab Poetics, he then came full circle and further defined his philosophy of modernism by juxtaposing and opposing it to those western sociopolitical structures and ideologies which have come to hold dominating influences over Arab society during the contemporary era.

Although, as such, Adunis' cultural theories and formulations of Arab modernism have numerous parallels from a great deal of the spectrum of contemporary western thought and discourse, there is one particular conceptual stance that does, in fact, set him apart fundamentally from the west. This is how he positions his poetic "modernism" vis-à-vis time. For theorists of western modernism such as Matei Calinescu and Jurgen Habermas, the core essence of that modernism is tied, first and foremost, to very recent events in human history -- starting with the Renaissance -- that have fundamentally changed our perceptions of time.

> … the idea of modernity could be conceived only within the framework of a specific time awareness, namely, that of *historical time,* linear and irreversible, flowing irresistibly onwards. Modernity as a notion would be utterly meaningless in a society that has no use for the temporal-sequential concept of history and organizes its time categories according to a mythical and recurrent model. (Calinescu 13)

For Habermas, the larger sociocultural "concept of modernization refers to a bundle of processes... cumulative and mutually reinforcing...," that are inextricably tied together. They include the new perception of a dynamic, linear and irreversible time developed largely in the Renaissance that broke away from older medieval European theocratic models of timeless, divinely-imposed norms, the contemporary emphasis on rationalism and rationality inherited from the 17th and 18th century Enlightenment age, and the technological advent of industrialism (2).

Prior to the Renaissance, explains Calinescu, medieval Christian Europe had viewed time as a passive, fixed stage for the unfolding of events preordained by divine will from on high. With the advent of the Renaissance, however, this view of time would change fundamentally.

> … During the Middle Ages time was conceived along essentially theological lines, as tangible proof of the transient character of human life and as a permanent reminder of death and what lay beyond. … Such conceptions were natural in an economically and culturally static society dominated by the ideal of stability and even quiescence – a society wary of change, in which secular values were considered from an entirely theocentric view of human life. There were also practical reasons for the rather loose and blurred time consciousness of the medieval individual. We must remind ourselves, for instance, that no accurate measurement of time was possible before the invention of the mechanical clock in the late thirteenth century. For all these combined causes, as a recent student of the Renaissance discovery of time has pointed out, the medieval mind "could exist in an attitude of temporal ease. Neither time nor change appear[ed] to be

> critical, and hence there [was] no great worry about controlling the future."
>
> The situation changed dramatically in the Renaissance. The theological concept of time did not disappear suddenly, but from then on it had to coexist in a state of growing tension with a new awareness of the preciousness of practical time – the time of action, creation, discovery, and transformation. (19-20)

No longer was western human "time" static and endless, and shaped by the will of higher powers external to this humanity. Instead this new human "time" was now immediately present and at hand, precious and volatile, and shaped internally by human hands alone.

> Insofar as the Renaissance was self-conscious and saw itself as the beginning of a new cycle in history, it accomplished an ideologically revolutionary alliance with time. Its whole philosophy of time was based on the conviction that history had a specific direction, expressive not of a transcendental, predetermined pattern, but of the necessary interaction of immanent forces. Man was therefore to participate consciously in the creation of the future: a high premium was put on being with one's time (and not against it), and on becoming an agent of change in an incessantly dynamic world. (Calinescu 22)

"… At this time the image of history as a uniform process that generates problems is formed," notes Habermas, "and time becomes experienced as a scarce resource for the mastery of problems that arise – that is, as the pressure of time" (6).

As such, Calinescu notes, western artistic modernity has come to identify itself as set firmly inside history and time, and by and large refuses any notions of transcendence for its identity and principles. The historical wake of this dramatic shift was gradually followed by the

eventual waning of classical aesthetic codes and norms which had seen art as an exercise in reiterating forms prescribed by past tradition in accordance with “eternal” norms of formalized beauty. Out of this dissolution, in turn, was born today's “modernist” aesthetic of art – epitomized in Baudelaire's formulations mentioned previously – as engagement with the ever-shifting sights, sounds and dynamics of the present moment within the world immediately at hand, rather than with any preset transcendental themes, molds or values imposed from on high.

> … From the point of view of modernity, an artist – whether he likes it or not – is cut off from the normative past with its fixed criteria, and tradition has no legitimate claim to offer him examples to imitate or directions to follow. … His own awareness of the present, seized in its immediacy and irresistible transitoriness, appears as his main source of inspiration and creativity. … What we have to deal with here is a major cultural shift from a time-honored aesthetics of permanence, based on a belief in an unchanging and transcendent ideal of beauty, to an aesthetics of transitoriness and immanence, whose central values are change and novelty. (Calinescu 3)

The result, notes Calinescu, is that in the realm of the arts a modernist “culture of rupture” comes into being which, by the very structure of its own fundamental sense of self, holds at its core a “constitutive sense of creation through rupture and crisis” (91 & 92). In a way that deeply parallels Calinescu’s model of artistic modernity as one in which the artist is cut off from all past and previous norms, Habermas also formulates sociocultural modernism at large as an entity cut off from such prior norms and continuously forced to rely for guidance on itself alone, in the immediate here and now.

> The dynamic concepts that emerged together with the expression "modern age" or "new age" in the eighteenth century or acquired then a new meaning that remains valid down to our day are adapted to this – words such as revolution, progress, emancipation, development, crisis and *Zeitgeist.* ... They cast conceptual-historical light on the problem posed for the modern historical consciousness of Western culture that had developed in connection with the oppositional concept of a "new age": Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself.* Modernity sees itself cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape. This explains the sensitiveness of its self-understanding, the dynamism of the attempt, carried forward incessantly down to our time, to "pin itself down." (7)

Adunis diverges from much of all this quite markedly, however. Unlike Calinescu and Habermas, multiple times in his Introduction to Arab Poetics he casts his own particular vision of Arabic poetic modernism in quasi-transcendent terms. Also unlike them, his Arab "modernism" is not inextricably tied to more recent, immediate historical developments alone. By no means does Adunis reject the western notion of commitment to artistic modernism necessitating a substantial amount of dynamic engagement with the immediate here and now of the temporal world. And for him as with western modernists, any doctrine that seeks to eternally fix forms or aesthetics according to a religious or classical mandate is antithetical to cultural modernity. Indeed, his massive trilogy Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil is a rhetorical assault on the textually-fixed, and therefore timeless and temporally static, morals and artistic values promulgated by

orthodox Islam, in line with what was supposedly mandated by the Qur'an and its medieval-era clerical interpreters.

> If the religion (of Islam) is the final seal of (all) knowledge and the endpoint of perfection, that means that nothing can develop in the future that is not contained within it. Thus (divine) revelation is the foundation of (all) time and history at once, or (in other words) the beginning of (all) time and history. For this reason it is not a past time-period, instead it is all of time together – yesterday, now and tomorrow. (Al-Thabit 1: 36)

The result of such a religious viewpoint, in Adunis' view, is a culturally frozen and static – and ultimately stagnant – frame of reference in which all historical flux and change is inherently seen as having "a negative meaning" (Al-Thabit 1: 40). Nonetheless, despite his criticism of such an ahistorical viewpoint on the part of Islamic orthodoxy, the Adunis of the Introduction to Arab Poetics also assigns to his poetic "modernism" its own particular aspects that definitively transcend specific time, place and historical developments. Within his Introduction, the initial textual launching point for his assertions of "modernism's" transcendence beyond temporality and the historical moment occurs when Adunis pointedly notes that poetry is created out of language, an element present with humanity since its very origins. As such, "metaphor in relation to the experience of mysticism has no past," he writes at one point (72-73).

> By this I mean that it is a perpetual beginning, a bridge connecting the seen and unseen... It is not merely a rhetorical or descriptive technique, but an original impulse, bursting into life in the same movement as poetic intuition. (73)

Therefore, he then asserts, the linguistic qualities his formulation of poetic "modernism" draws

upon, among them the use of open-ended metaphorical tropes to question discourses that prop up more "close-ended" discursive systems such as orthodox Islamic doctrine or "rationalist" reality, can therefore be said to originate from language's most primordial elements, that lie beyond the flux and ebb of historical time.

> ... it became clear to me that modernity was both of time and outside time: of time because it is rooted in the movement of history, in the creativity of humanity, coexisting with man's striving to go beyond the limitations which surround him; and outside time because it is a vision which includes in it all times and cannot only be recorded as a chronological event: it cuts vertically through time and its horizontal progress is no more than the surface representation of a deep internal movement. *In other words, modernity is not only a process that affects language, it is synonymous with its very existence.* (Introduction 99-100. Italics are mine.)

As such, beneath whatever lengthy pages Adunis might use in his Introduction to Arab Poetics or other writings to lay them out, when taken in and of themselves his actual underpinning principles for his formula of poetic "modernism" are actually quite simple and straightforward. To recapitulate and then elaborate: The fundamental source of all human thought, Adunis notes, is language. Language "is meaning itself because it is thought," he notes at one point. "Indeed, it precedes thought and is succeeded by knowledge" (Introduction 82). For this reason it is here "at the level of language," he states, that poetic modernism must ultimately look for answers to the central questions about its nature and identity (83). As such, "modernity is not only a process that affects language; it is synonymous with its very existence. Modernity in poetry in any language is first of all modernity of the language itself" (100).

The element at language's foundations, Adunis states, that constitutes the most central ingredient not only of human ability to question and examine this world's metaphysical boundaries, but also to open unexplored imaginal dimensions and build new conceptual worlds as well, is the metaphor. Indeed in the Arabic language in particular "metaphor", he asserts, "is more than an expressional device; it is in the structure of the language itself, an indication of a spiritual need to transcend reality …" (Introduction 70).

> … metaphor releases reality from its familiar context, while releasing the words used to discuss it from theirs, changing the meaning of both words and subject matter, and in the process constructing new relationships between one word and another, and between the word and reality. (71)

Since the poetic registers of language tend to be much more open-ended and flexible in terms of the kinds of thoughts and statements they allow expression of than the more close-ended and regulated registers used for rationalist discussion and mundane communication about everyday affairs, Adunis asserts, it is within them that the metaphor can be exploited to its fullest potential for such endeavors of intellectual boundary-crossing and world-building.

> Legislation and codification go against the nature of poetic language, for this language, since it is man's expression of his explosive moods, his impetuousness, his difference, is incandescent, constantly renewing itself, heterogeneous, kinetic and explosive, always a disrupter of codes and systems. (Introduction 33)

Adunis then concludes, at the end of his line of argumentation, that it is precisely this special potential of metaphor-driven poetic language to explore the intellectual unknown, when

harnessed and used properly, that in fact constitutes poetic "modernism".

> Such a text, examples of which are found in the work of some poets and mystics, transcends… epistemological systems and their theories. It achieves in its structure and its vision an organic relationship between poetry and thought, and by its insights and moments of illumination it opens up before us a new aesthetic horizon, and also a new horizon of thought. (59)

This formulation of modernism is simple – and also extremely open-ended and sweeping. In essence, "modernity" is nothing other than language when it uses the metaphor to "think" creatively -- and no other particularly ironclad underlying qualifiers or restrictions are placed upon this philosophical construct by Adunis. He does put some specific historical context onto this concept when he notes that auspicious terms for the development of an Arab aesthetic "modernism" come about in literate rather than oral cultures and urban, cosmopolitan environments rather than more remote rural or tribal ones (Introduction 37 & 88). Such terms are however, comparatively speaking, much looser that those that have been developed in theorizations about western modernity. Meanwhile, beyond such broad qualifiers, Adunis is emphatic that the cultural "modernity" he has formulated can happen in 8th century Baghdad every bit as much as in any 19th, 20th, or 21st century location. "For example, what does progress mean in poetry?" he writes emphatically at one point. "Nothing. The idea of progress is fundamental to science but quite separate from artistic creativity" (94).

> This continuity of the poetic order confirms that Arab poetic modernity is a part of history and that the modern is also ancient; since nothing radical has been added to it, it cannot be said that the concept of modernity in poetry has altered.

(98)

As such, Adunis states at another point, the “old and the new in poetry are” indeed “two faces of a single creativity” (100).

One other western modernist thinker who, unlike Calinescu and Habermas and more similarly to Adunis, emphasizes timeless continuities over rupture and immersion in the immediate present is the early 20th century poet-critic T.S. Eliot. Eliot, as Calinescu notes, came from a line of turn-of-the century writers such James Joyce, Ezra Pound and others who embraced a more conservative modernist vision that did not share in the more radical anti-traditional notions of the more “avant-garde” schools of those times.

> ... [modernist] authors like Proust, Joyce, Kafka, Thomas Mann, T.S. Eliot, or Ezra Pound… have indeed very little, if anything, in common with such typically avant-garde movements as futurism, dadaism, or surrealism.... It is true that modernity defined as a "tradition against itself" rendered possible the avant-garde, but it is equally true that the latter's negative radicalism and systematic antiaestheticism leave no room for the artistic reconstruction of the world attempted by the great modernists. (140-141)

For Eliot, the relationship between “tradition” of the past and “modernity” of the present is a deep and broad one, that is sustained and perpetual. Eliot further speaks of the need for all modern poets to have a “historical sense” of this deep continuity. This “historical sense,” Eliot writes, is “nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year...” (49).

> … the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past,

> but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. (49)

In the following passage Eliot does acknowledge that change is an inevitable occurrence within artistic aesthetics wherever and whenever time and history progress onward – but he also emphasizes that, nonetheless, broad and timeless continuities lie deep beneath the surface of these same changes:

> [The poet] must be aware that the mind of Europe – the mind of his own country – a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind – is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route,* which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen. (51)

For Eliot, as such, rather than a modern dominance of crisis-prone ruptures there is, instead, a steady, harmonious dance within any artistic lineage existent today, between timeless continuities on the one hand and perpetual changes on the other.

> … what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it... The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this

> idea of order... will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. (49-50)

In a way that somewhat parallels Adunis' conception of a poetic modernity that falls both inside and outside of time, Eliot similarly speaks of the “historical sense” that he believes a poet must possess as having a sense of the “timeless as well as the temporal” working “together” (49). Meanwhile, as Habermas notes, at the core of Baudelaire's dualistic “modernism” also sits a particular convergence between the “eternal” and the “transient”:

> [Baudelaire] assigns to the modern work of art a strange place at the intersection of the axes of the actual and the eternal: “Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one-half of art, the other being the eternal and immovable.” … Actuality can be constituted only as the point where time and eternity intersect. (9)

With Baudelaire, Habermas further relates, since the “authentic” modernist work “is radically bound to the moment of its emergence,” and “precisely because it consumes itself in actuality, it can bring the steady flow of trivialities to a standstill, break through normality, and satisfy for a moment the immortal longing for beauty – a moment in which the eternal comes into fleeting contact with the actual” (9). It is by such means that Baudelaire's modernism seeks its ultimate goal, which is to “distill the eternal from the transitory” (10).

However, regardless of what both have to say about eternity neither Eliot nor Baudelaire, in their western context, go as far as semantically taking modernism outside of “time” and temporal transience altogether by placing it within “language”-- as Adunis does.

2.2. Arab Tradition and the "Double Siege"

Badawi accuses Adunis of lack of precision in his conceptualization of poetic modernism, and does not refrain from expressing a measure of irritation when doing so. "With Adunis it can be said that modernism in modern Arabic poetry has been achieved," he writes sardonically. "In fact, Adunis's infatuation with the concept of 'modern' is such that on certain occasions the term ceases to have any temporal significance at all, and becomes an expression of a value judgment" (75-76). Abu Zeid also notes the vaguenesses of Adunis' modernist creed, although in less unflattering terms than Badawi.

> The exact nature of this revolutionary culture [espoused by Adunis] is certainly up for debate. Much like Nietzsche's Ubermensch, Adunis' revolutionary culture is a nebulous entity that seems to be in a constant state of flux … (Abu Zeid)

"Vague" or not, this model of poetic modernism is still, in essence, simple and straightforward in design. It is in Adunis' actual on-the-ground application of it outside its initial abstract conceptual origins, however, that more tangled ramifications quickly come along. Adunis asserts that much – or perhaps even most -- of Arab poetry of contemporary eras fails to satisfy his criteria for being truly "modern". For one, Adunis labels the entire aesthetics of the Arab writers and poets of the 19th century's literary Nahdah ('Awakening'), generally viewed by scholars and historians as the Arab world's first pioneering movement of intellectual and aesthetic "modernism", as a cultural failure. Mainstream Arab perceptions of prominent Nahdah poets such as al-Barudi, Ahmad Shawqi and others, whose verses discussed and dealt with contemporary social developments and issues of their time, more or less take for granted that they are to be categorized as "modern" writers. Adunis asserts, however, that beneath the

contemporary content and topics these earlier poets addressed, the underlying stylistics of their verse was actually nothing more than repetition and "consolidation" of older traditionalist Arab poetic formulas that he views as worn-out (Introduction 87).

Therefore these earlier poets are – or so Adunis asserts – in fact representatives of what is ultimately a fake modernism. In fact the entire Nahdah, states Adunis categorically and dismissively, did nothing more than play a role, along with Arab religious and political establishments, in creating a superficial -- and ultimately false -- marriage between old, traditionalist forms of Arab literature and shallower notions of modernity borrowed from western forms and fashions, leading to a "specious" Arab modernity (Introduction 85). "The result," he concludes, "was that the Arab personality, as expressed through this poetry, appeared to be a bundle of self-delusions…" (80). Adunis thus accuses the Nahdah of playing a participating role in installing what would eventually become a permanent condition of dysfunctional culture within the Arab world that has, according to him, continued up until today.

> The age of the Nahdah did not raise … in regards to the cultural regime that was already dominant, any new questions regarding the matter of literary innovation. Instead it repeated the old questions. Because of this it did not go back to look (critically) at what had (already) been inherited, and did not understand the meaning of modernism. And (thus) from here (onward) it did not leave behind itself (for future generations) anything it is possible to (truly) build on for literature today. Rather, it revived what should have remained dead. (Al-Thabit 3: 215).

Although Adunis, much in the manner of early 20th-century western modernist poets

such as Pound and Eliot, places extremely high value on a poet knowing past poetic traditions of the language he works within *(*Introduction 100*),* his sense of exclusivity also extends to the question of what kinds of Arab poetry from that past might have any relevance to the modernist poet. For most medieval Arab literati, poetry was first and foremost an oral practice, and a type of rhetorical art, in which the poet generally though not always served first and foremost as a spokesman for his larger kin group and sociopolitical faction, and its identity. This is something Adunis himself discusses briefly in the Introduction.

> Pre-Islamic poetry … developed as something heard and not read, sung and not written. The voice in this poetry was the breath of life – 'body music'. … It was his [the poet's] duty to give to the collective, to the everyday moral and ethical existence of the group, a unique image of itself in a unique poetic language. In doing this, the poet was not expressing himself as much as he was expressing the group, or rather he expressed himself only through expressing the group. (13-14)

Although Adunis' view of old oral poetic traditions is far from negative overall, he sees the vast majority of medieval critics whose thought was influenced by these traditions as irrelevant, and focuses his attention on the minority of poets and critics he can find within premodern Arab traditions who he thinks conform more to the expectations of his own mid-20th century artistic background – literate, neo-Romantic and staunchly individualist in vision, such as Abu Tammam and Al-Jurjani. He is also generally dismissive of the vast majority of verse composed during the many centuries that lie between the collapse of the cosmopolitan ‘Abbasid empire, popularly considered by Arab intellectuals and publics as a sort of “golden era” of

medieval Arab political and cultural power, and the modern era as formulaic and fossilized -- and therefore, in effect, beneath consideration for study by any Arab poet who wants to be a true "modernist".

> The retreat of Arab society from the ways opened up by modernity began with the fall of Baghdad in 1258. With the Crusades came a complete halt, prolonged by the period of Ottoman domination. (Introduction 77)

Perhaps such polemics and sweeping judgments made by Adunis about the value of Arab poetry, both present and past, when he applies his model of "poetic modernism" should come as no surprise. For this model, as simple and straightforward as it may appear in and of itself, is no neutral construct. The larger context presented within his Introduction to Arab Poetics makes it clear that Adunis designed it as a philosophical counter to a "double siege" he believes has fallen upon contemporary Arab culture from two different directions at once (81). The first component of this "siege" is internal pressure from what Adunis asserts are powerful and continuous forces of rigid traditionalism within Arab society that – according to him -- have kept the culture stagnant to this very day. The second is outside pressure from western capitalist and neocolonialist institutions that, he states, keep Arab culture in a state of subjugation and "dependency" vis-a-vis outside entities (81).

Adunis frames the internal forces of Arab "traditionalism" that he places on one side of the "double siege" as a quasi-monolithic entity that, he asserts, has always dominated Arab society both in the past and now.

> Because of the dominance of this 'fundamentalist' knowledge at the level of the establishment and those in power, the Arabs find themselves – in spite of all

> the changes of the past fourteen centuries – moving on a stage where history is repeating itself with just one objective: the continual actualization of the past. (Introduction 79)

Although within his writings those forces he associates with "the dominance of the traditionalist mentality in Arab life and in Arabic poetry and thought" (77) that he blames for supposedly keeping Arab society frozen and mired in the past are, first and foremost, intellectual circles associated with orthodox Sunni Islam, at various times in his writings he also draws other items into the mixture, including among other things various Arab governments past and present and – as previously mentioned -- medieval Arab critics who saw poetics through the lens of oral rhetoric rather than Adunis' own modern neo-Romantic inclinations, as well as the Nahdah movement in its entirety. During the 1950s when the Beiruti circles of modernist poets and their flagship journal, Shi'r magazine, came under heated rhetorical attack from other modernist and nationalist poets associated with the rival Adab magazine, Adunis also chose to label all these hostile poets as "traditionalists" as well (Creswell 54). With Adunis, as such, as with his handling of the term "modernist", the term "traditionalist" also becomes at times a rather open-ended polemic.

Meanwhile though the second "outside" component of the siege, as Adunis sees it, comes from Arab subjugation to western industrial capitalism and its economic and military dominance, he takes care to distinguish between these particular western elements and his overall attitude towards western culture as a whole, which is far from entirely negative.

> Consciousness of the other assumes a realization on our part that the opposition between the Arab-Islamic East and the European-American West is not

> of an intellectual or poetic nature, but is political and ideological, originally a result of Western imperialism. This is why when we reject the West we should not reject it as a whole, but only this ideological aspect of it. Similarly when we reject the automated nature of its technology, this does not mean that we reject the technology absolutely or the intellectual principles which led to its invention, but only the way the West uses it and imposes it upon us, in an attempt to buy us and turn us into mere consumers and our countries into market-places. We can learn from the creative energy of the West and its intellectual inventions and construct a dialogue with them, as the West itself did in the past with the products of our civilization...There is much in it which we can benefit from, not only in understanding our particular problems, but also in the production of knowledge. (Introduction 90-91)

However although Adunis gives very high value to much of the intellectual and aesthetic achievements of the west he does, as mentioned earlier, complain of certain contemporary Arab poets who, he asserts, have engaged in uncritical importation and adoption of western concepts into Arab verse, which according to him leads to a shallow and thoroughly inauthentic Arab poetic modernism – and, ultimately, "alienation" of the Arab poet from his own culture (87).

Adunis' model of Arab "modernism", constructed upon the linguistic promises of poesis and its metaphoric powers, contests the "double siege" he complains of on three levels – two of which have already been touched upon above and a third which has not yet been discussed. Firstly, as already mentioned, the open-ended nature of metaphor-driven poetry contests the "close-ended" characteristics which Adunis portrays as characterizing the thought patterns

behind both western rationalist discourse and orthodox Islamist legalist discourse and their participation in the "double siege" upon contemporary Arab culture. Secondly, the metaphor's capacities for open-ended, dynamic thought and metaphysical world-building also contest what Adunis characterizes as traditionalism's and Islam's tendency to see life "as a text" – or in other words, as a manifestation of phenomena supposedly already preordained and fixed by the Islamic Qur'an.

> … traditionalist culture is embodied in the uninterrupted practice of an epistemological method which sees truth as existing in the text, not in experience or reality; this truth is given definitively and finally and there is no other. The role of thought is to explain and teach, proceeding from a belief in this truth, and not to search and question in order to arrive at new, conflicting truths. (Introduction 78)

As such, Adunis asserts, in Arab fundamentalist and traditionalist thought "the past is defined" not in terms of the unfolding, open-ended present moment physically at hand but instead "according to the time when the text [i.e., the Qur'an] came into existence. It is the crucible where all times meet." It is this approach to life as a manifestation of an already-fixed text, Adunis asserts, which keeps Arab culture itself, as it were, literally "frozen" in time (85).

The third purpose of Adunis' model, one not touched on yet, is to also counter western claims of hegemony over "time" at the very same time he seeks to contest Arab fundamentalist claims of this same hegemony, via their "fixed" texts of religious revelation and tradition. For at the same time that Adunis sees schools of fundamentalist tradition that dominate Arab culture from one direction "freezing" time at a textually-defined conceptual moment in the past, he sees

the western capitalist and rationalist-scientific discourses which have also come to dominate it from a different direction claiming the authority to dismiss that same past -- and, indeed, to erase it all together.

> The need to transcend the past, or erase it, is … self-evident in scientific procedure. The past is error, and authority is sought not from what is past but from what is to come. (Introduction 92)

In line with what Matei Calinescu noted in a passage mentioned previously in this section, this frequent western attitude of outright dismissal towards the past often extends to a large degree to art and aesthetics as well as science. Any authority once held by past artistic history and its traditions, as Calinescu observed, is seen to be largely abrogated for the "modernist" western artist – and instead, an aesthetics of sensory immersion in the present, contemporary moment takes its place. For his part Adunis, however, pointedly rejects such formulations.

> *... There are those who see modernity as the quality of being directly connected to and alive to the present moment.* To seize the movement of change in this moment is proof of modernity. It is obvious that these people view time as a series of regular uninterrupted leaps forward, so that what happens today is necessarily an advance on what happened yesterday, and what happens tomorrow is an advance on both. The mistake of this tendency is to turn poetry into a style, *ignoring the essential point that most modern poetry goes beyond the present moment, or goes against it*. (86. Italics are mine.)

"Poetry does not acquire its modernity merely from being current," Adunis argues.

"Modernity is a characteristic latent in the actual structure of the poetic language." To follow creeds of modernity that simply promote the present moment over the past, he argues, is to create a poetics that ultimately "resembles waves on the surface of the water, vanishing one after another..." (86).

As such Adunis' ideological transfer of the supposed "source" of poetic modernism out of "time" and into the dynamic, open-ended potentials of metaphor-driven "language" allows him to simultaneously contest both Arab traditionalist freezing of the past into fixed, codified mandates, and western scientific-rationalist erasure of that same past – along with any western claims to pseudo-Hegelian hegemony over time via the notion of the west being the globe's ultimate society of ever-forward march towards the "future" and "progress". For language, rather than being limited to any particular designated time or era of the past, present or future, is equally tied to human existence in all ages and places. Adunis himself speaks openly of the metaphysical struggle he sees himself as engaging in:

> I started to see … something inimical to the spirit of poetry in every move to make poetic creation subject to a rationalist scientific precept: one that seemed to say, the future before all else. I began to search for alternative forms which, while not rejecting the notion of the future, did not put an absolute ban on the past. They were forms which, on the contrary, embraced the past in some way: legend, mysticism, magical and non-rational elements of the literary tradition, the mysterious regions of the human soul. … Such a way of proceeding is obviously the opposite of the rational, direct, clear approach, plunging deep into the obscure and terrifying areas which escape the grip of science and rationalism, but where

> great creation has its beginnings suspended over the abyss of the unrefined and the limitless. (Introduction 95)

The result is a quasi-mystical formulation of poetic "modernism" by Adunis that, he finally claims near the end of the Introduction, is "both of time and outside time" (99).

> I saw poetry increasingly as the most important means available to humanity of breaking the hold of modern technology and its instrumental rationalism. If technology is the relationship which human beings have established with nature, through scientific rationality, then poetry is the relationship which one human being establishes with the individual essence of another, through nature. When there is no poetry in a period of history, there is no true human dimension. *Poetry, according to this definition, is more than a means or a tool, like technology: it is rather, like language itself, an innate quality. It is not a stage in the history of human consciousness but a constituent of this consciousness.* (96. Italics are mine.)

In many ways the struggle Adunis poses as a "double siege" from two directions at the level of culture can, at a purely linguistic level, be ultimately boiled down a step further into one struggle along a single axis – that of poetics versus rationalism. For Adunis, notwithstanding the fact he expresses a degree of respectful acknowledgment towards the accomplishments of western science in the Introduction, rationalism is deeply suspect in all its forms. For Adunis, it is ultimately rationalism – or, at the least, pseudo-rationalist rhetoric and discourse – that has frequently underlain and propped up not only "borrowed" capitalist forms of modernity that have come to dominate the Arab world as part of intrusive forces of western hegemony, but also the

long centuries of indigenous fundamentalist religious tradition that have now supposedly combined with these intrusive western elements to put a twin chokehold on attempts to establish a viable and flourishing aesthetic "modernity" in the Arab world via the latter's manifold texts of quasi-legalist theocratic "logic", as it were. (80-81). Poetry, by contrast, holds no substantial inherent negative traits of any kind for Adunis. It "is creative energy, free and unlimited, and a light which allows transfigurations to be glimpsed by piercing the veil of darkness that hides things."

> Because it is light, it does not err. Error is begotten by judgment and the imagination does not pass judgment. Error occurs in reason, the faculty which produces judgments, and which can err in its understanding of things revealed by the imagination. That is why it is impossible to evaluate the mystical text rationally: it is the product of an experience in which reason and its judgments have no place. (66-7)

CHAPTER 3 : Adunis, Sa'adah and 'Aflaq -- Messianic Modernism's Visionary Romance

3.1. Political Antagonists with a Shared Sense of Vision

Michel 'Aflaq, a contemporary of Antoun Sa'adah and younger than him by six years, was one of the principle founders of the Ba'th party and its central philosophical architect. Alongside Egypt's Gamal 'Abd Al-Nasr, 'Aflaq's Ba'th Party occupied a central role within pan-Arabist and Arab Nationalist politics in the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s, first becoming an influential political player in Syria and Iraq in the 1950s, and then gradually assuming actual control as the ruling party of both those countries during the 1960s and onward. It would continue to control Iraq up until the Second Gulf War in 2003, and remains in power in Syria to this day despite the long and bloody civil war currently ongoing in that country. The Ba'th party was also a central actor along with Nasr in an abortive attempt to merge Syria and Egypt into a "United Arab Republic" that would last from 1958 to 1961.

In 1955 the assassination of a prominent Syrian military officer with Ba'thist affiliations, 'Adnan Al-Malki, by a partisan from Sa'adah's SSNP, prompted a crackdown within that country on Sa'adah's party by the Ba'thists and their allies. Sa'adah's party would eventually be banned inside Syria. 1961 would see the outbreak of repeated public exchanges of vitriol between the Beiruti modernist poets of Shi'r magazine -- many of whom, including co-editors Adunis and Yusuf Al-Khal, were former disciples of Sa'adah -- and those who centered around Shi'r's literary rival, Adab magazine. The followers of Adab, like 'Aflaq and the Ba'th party, were by and large pan-Arab nationalists. The following year, in the wake of a failed coup attempt which the SSNP participated in against the ruling Lebanese government, these public exchanges of vitriol between the Shi'r and Adab poets would escalate even further (Creswell 49-58). In a memoir

Adunis associates 'Aflaq and his followers with elements that “at that time, were the vanguard of those who were in a state of war with us and were working to expel us from existence within Arab poetry” (Ha Anta Ayyuha al-Waqt 146-7). In the same passage he further reports that an impromptu meeting between 'Aflaq and al-Khal at a Beirut hotel, which according to Adunis was an attempt by al-Khal to reach some common ground between the two, ended in bitter acrimony (146-7).

Sinan Antoon similarly recalls the deep hostility the Ba'th party held towards Adunis and other poets in the Shi'r magazine group during their rule of Iraq under Saddam Hussein:

> I still remember going to the library of the College of Arts my freshman year at Baghdad University to check out one of his [Adunis’] poetry books. The librarian told me that all of Adunis’s books were on the blacklist. His cultural project was antithetical to Iraqi Ba’thist culture which was at its apex in 1986… The party and its cultural clients who controlled literary outlets and institutions viewed Shi’r and the poets around it with deep suspicion. (Antoon)

Adunis briefly describes the banning in both Damascus and Baghdad of Shi'r magazine, along with all publications or works by poets associated with it. “There are writers and poets still alive (today) who participated in (enforcing) this ban,” he states bitterly, “who we call heroes of our age” (Ha Anta Ayyuha al-Waqt 144-5). Adunis made no mention of such previous acrimony between the Ba'thists and the Shi’r poets when he wrote his public letter to Bashar Al-Asad over the unrest in Syria and the Asad-led Ba'thist regime's brutal response to it, decades after Antoon's undergraduate years had ended. Nonetheless, his assessment of the Ba'th party's performance in Syria was cast in scathing and dismissive terms. What had transpired in Syria with the Ba'thists,

he asserted, was part of an overall Arab nationalist "experiment with ideological (political) parties in Arab life" of the contemporary era that "has failed on all levels...". As wary and critical as Adunis was of those civil and political elements that had risen up against the regime, he asserted that the Ba'th party was also as "completely responsible as are the groups that oppose it, for the collapse that is beginning to become a reality, the collapse of Syria and the disfiguring of its civilizational image…" ("Risalah Maftuhah").

> The truth is that the party did not create anything that can be accounted as new or creative, in any field. … It obstructed the growth of a free cosmopolitan culture, and destroyed human morals, founding a culture (based upon) loyalty to it, and upon mutual hostility towards its opponents, and upon slogans and propaganda that were, for the most part, simple-minded and superficial. ("Risalah Maftuhah")

Although much of the enmity between the Shi'r group, which as already mentioned included many former followers of Sa'adah's SSNP, and the Ba'thists came years after Sa'adah's death in 1949, deep divergences at the level of ideology existed even prior to all these events due to 'Aflaq's pan-Arabist call for a united Arab state stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf on the one hand, and Sa'adah's espousal of the establishment of a united "Greater Syria", embracing all of the Levant and Fertile Crescent, that would be politically independent of the rest of the Arab states, which he deemed by and large to be inferior cultural entities. (Mabadi' al-Hizb 37-42; Sira' 19-20)

Nonetheless, despite all this, there are profound overlaps -- at a very fundamental level -- between the broader cultural and political sensibilities of 'Aflaq, Sa'adah, and Adunis. The following extremely compact text by 'Aflaq, composed in 1955, is in a way a concise nutshell of

some of the essential sensibilities of the intellectual milieu that Arab discourses on cultural and political modernism were growing out of around the midpoint of the 20th century.

THE FUTURE

There (does not lie) between us and that future which the Arab Ba'th (movement) speaks of -- and which is the subject of our work and struggle -- a (calculable) time-period to be estimated in terms of months and years.

Indeed it is a personal, psychological location in time, that we can bring into reality starting from this moment. And if we take hold of it, we take hold of eternity.

The future is not a period and place in time that will *come*, for the (ancient) heroes of the Arabs did not become eternal because they *came* with great deeds. No indeed, they came with great deeds because they *believed* in eternity (in the first place). For the future is the psychological and intellectual level that it is incumbent upon us to arrive at in this *present* time.

We are not in need of years, nor months. For indeed man arrives to this future in no more than one instant, when the human individual achieves awareness of his higher symbolic self, and becomes wakeful and determined.

For the future which the Ba'thist (activist) embodies is a (microcosmic) image of our ummah [i.e. the Arab and Muslim 'community' as it will be] when the Ba'th ('resurrection') is (itself) achieved – in other words when a total Arab revolutionary overthrow (inqilaab) is achieved. Indeed it is an image of the Arab

> ummah in its healthful state of life to come. Thus this image must be achieved and brought into reality here and now within (the ranks of) the Arab Ba'th (movement) until it succeeds (in its aims).
>
> Indeed there are many weapons within our hands, and great powers -- these are the powers of the principles that we work and live for, and the powers of (our) being organized. But there is a power which surpasses all the other ones – this is that *we embody* for the ummah its future, and that we are achieving this future now and are living it (here) among us.
>
> For we will not say to the Arabs that "You will arrive to a free, unified socialist life" and, in one word, "to the Ba'thist life", in the future when the Arab Ba'th is achieved. Instead we say to them, "This is our image (to follow and embody) from this moment onward." This is the life in which social differences (and divisions) fade away, and all regional obstacles and sectarian clamors, and all trace of slavery and private interests and ignorance and (blind) tradition – when the future comes to us, and grows and develops (here) within us, and there will no longer be anything divided from or outside of us. (35)

'Aflaq's calling out to disciples to activate and embody the "future" here and now at this very instant is, of course, targeted toward the particular purpose of the moment -- galvanizing his followers. Simultaneously, however, it is also deeply rooted in his lifelong philosophical approach to cultural and political modernism. A main doctrine of Ba'thism, in fact, was that the most efficacious way for its cadres of political activists to influence Arab populaces at large and move them towards its vision of sociocultural progress and "revival" would be for them to

personally and spiritually “embody” in front of those publics, through all their thoughts, words and deeds, the actual state of being and praxis that they believed should be aspired to and emulated by Arab society as a whole in the “future” to come (‘Aflaq 13-14). 'Aflaq, who studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, was reportedly influenced by the writings of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (Benewick and Greene 4). Bergson was, among other things, a well-known critic of purely mechanistic and rationalist approaches to explaining the biological origin and evolution of life. One of 'Aflaq's most widely-known ideological concepts, alluded to in the tract above, was that of an ancient, semi-mystic, quasi-transcendent “Arab spirit”, neglected and forgotten during recent centuries of supposed Arab “backwardness” vis-à-vis the west, that awaited resurrection and rejuvenation in order for Arab society to more effectively face the challenges of the contemporary era. (Bowering 21) The name of 'Aflaq’s party, ba’th, in fact means “resurrection” or “revival” in Arabic – a meaning which 'Aflaq deploys when he speaks in the fifth paragraph of the previous tract about the “ba'th” ('resurrection') of the Muslim community to come in the new age of the “future” he envisions. This word has extremely strong religious connotations in Arabic, and is used in the Quran in passages describing the final day of resurrection and judgement. Some scholars believe there are direct links between 'Aflaq’s “Arab spirit” and Bergson's concept of “elan vital”, which the later envisioned and postulated as a driving force behind life's origin and evolution within the universe that ultimately lies beyond and defies any materialist or mathematical explanations (Bowering 21). Aflaq also had highly negative views of Marxism's materialist approach towards analysis of the workings of history, and at one point went as far as positing the Ba'th party as an agent of the “Arab Spirit” working against communism (Benewick and Greene 5).

In the tract above, 'Aflaq pointedly takes the ideological quest of working towards an empowered Arab society of the "future" and emphatically separates it from the logistical affairs of physical and mathematical time – and, by implication more or less, sociohistorical phenomena that call for logistical approaches in dealing with them as well. Achievement of the society of the "future", as such, ceases to become a matter that hinges on material considerations, in the Marxist sense, and instead becomes a spiritual one that hinges upon the forces of human personality, the human psyche and human willpower. Thus it is, 'Aflaq's tract suggests, that if the Arab individual truly wants the realization of an empowered society around him, the path to this is not first and foremost through such items as economics or technological know-how, but instead through personal embodiment and "living" of the vision 'Aflaq believes such a "future" society must be founded upon.

Emphasis on personal vision and will over logistics in such regards is present as well in Adunis' Introduction to Arab Poetics. "… modern Arab thinkers have adapted to the shock of modernization from the West by treating modernity primarily as a technological achievement," he writes at one point. This, he then asserts, has inevitably led to a negative outcome and a passive Arab modernity that merely "adopts new things but not the intellectual attitude and method which produced them," whereas "true modernity is a way of seeing before it is production" (79). Such a stance also finds old echoes in one of the first seminal texts of the Victorian-era Arab modernist Nahdah movement, Butrus al-Bustani's 1859 Khutbah fi Adab al-'Arab ('Lecture on the Literature of the Arabs'). For Bustani "it is not the natural affair of the fields of knowledge that they are inherited as the result of properties or money…". Instead, attaining and encompassing them are first and foremost a matter of "personal effort". Further, he

adds, personal will must be accompanied by sustained personal discipline as well, as the various sciences of knowledge "are like guests, who do not remain except for those who undertake to host them in the manner they deserve…" (2).

Meanwhile after 'Aflaq asserts human enactment of the "future" hinges first and foremost on personal will and personal embodiment, and then rhetorically frames human ability to achieve that "future" as freely available and unbounded potential within the Arab individual that exists independently of any larger external conditions or circumstances around them, he then goes further. He suggests that since enactment of this "future" state is not bound to the finitudes of mathematical or historical time, this state – and those who achieve and enter into it -- therefore have the potential to partake of eternity itself. As with the word ba'th, the Arabic word 'Aflaq uses for this eternity -- khuluud – also has strong religious and Quranic connotations, and is used to indicate the transcendent and perfected state of being that will be realized by those who are elected to Paradise in the afterlife.

Another item of vocabulary within the tract that helps set the stage for Aflaq's rhetorical usage of khuluud is his deliberate transition from the Arabic word zaman when speaking of calculable, measured time in the first paragraph to the associated but unidentical zamaan (with a longer vowel and greater stress within the second syllable) in the immediately following paragraph, when he speaks of the personal, psychological aspects of the anticipated semi-utopian "future". Whereas the first word simply means calculable time as marked off by clocks or calendars, the second has deeper and more varied connotations. It often refers much more broadly to entire ages or durations of time, and can mean anything from someone's personal past, to a historical era or epoch, or even the fictional time a fairytale might be set in. It is often used

in literary narratives when evoking remembrance of past, bygone ages and locales. As such the second word, zamaan, has much more ample psychological and existential connotations in Arabic. Thus, 'Aflaq's pointed transition to use of this word in the comparison between mathematical and personal time within the first two paragraphs further rhetorically pushes the anticipated "future" to be achieved away from the realm of the material and the logistical, and into the realm of the psychological, the imaginal, and the spiritual.

Multiple passages of Adunis' essay on "Poetics and Modernity", written some three decades after 'Aflaq's tract on "The Future", also harbor similar hints of escape from temporality's boundaries. One that particularly contains echoes of 'Aflaq is the following passage already cited on page 15 of Chapter 2 of this dissertation, in which Adunis, quite similarly, emphatically claims for his own modernist cultural construct aspects of transcendence above and beyond quantifiable, logistical time. Of course Adunis is speaking here, overtly at least, of language and literature, whereas 'Aflaq's tract presumably deals more with the realm of the sociopolitical. In any case, however, both these two realms are deeply intertwined with each other in Adunis' thought. "… in Arab life," he notes elsewhere in 'Poetics and Modernity,' "the poetic has always been mixed up with the political and the religious, and indeed continues to be so" (Introduction 76).

> .. it became clear to me that modernity was both of time and outside time: of time because it is rooted in the movement of history, in the creativity of humanity, coexisting with man's striving to go beyond the limitations which surround him; and outside time because it is a vision which includes in it all times and cannot only be recorded as a chronological event: it cuts vertically through

> time and its horizontal progress is no more than the surface representation of a deep internal movement. In other words, modernity is not only a process that affects language, it is synonymous with its very existence (99-100).

The primary focus in Chapter 2 of this dissertation was on how this and other passages in Adunis' Introduction to Arab Poetics implicitly contest western time-based concepts of modernism by pinning it, instead, upon the presumably "timeless" workings of language. Just as within 'Aflaq's writings it becomes a recurring theme that achievement of an Arab future laden with "the good" is an ever-present potential due to its being inseparably tied to unerasable "seeds of goodness", "treasures of the good and of love" and "potentials for … renewal" that 'Aflaq maintains are inextricably rooted within the human persona, always waiting to be uncovered and released (26 & 162), so for Adunis "modernism" is also an ever-present potential inextricable from the deepest roots of human language – and the human thought that comes from that language. For Adunis it is a potential which can, as also discussed in Chapter 2, manifest itself not only today in our contemporary era but in medieval Baghdad or Cairo as well.

What makes this particular passage by Adunis merit a second look is that it has multiple rhetorical tiers to it, others of which also mirror 'Aflaq's writings in noticeable ways. Just as 'Aflaq detaches the quest for the future from purely logistical time (zaman) and ties it to a more open-ended and psychologically loaded perception of time (zamaan), so Adunis here describes modernism as "a vision which includes in it all times and cannot only be recorded as a chronological event". For Adunis as for 'Aflaq, as such, logistical, recorded, mathematical time simply cannot contain "modernity". Just as a vast iceberg floats vertically upon the waters with only a small portion of it visible above the surface, so cultural modernity, for Adunis, "cuts

vertically through time and its horizontal progress is no more than the surface representation of a deep internal movement". Adunis' "modernity", in other words, inscribes itself on measurable time but simultaneously lies unfathomably beyond it as well. Meanwhile, just as 'Aflaq links achievement of an empowered future for Arabs to the individual's enactment of his "higher symbolic self" ('dhaatuhu al-mithaaliyyah') so Adunis similarly speaks in somewhat grandiloquently universalist and vaguely neo-Romantic terms of his version of aesthetic modernism as a product of "the creativity" of all of "humanity" in its entirety, as well as "man's striving to go beyond the limitations which surround him" (Introduction 99). In sum, as with 'Aflaq, Adunis similarly pushes toward locating modernity largely outside the quantifiable finitudes of physical and historical temporality, and ties it instead to what are assumed to be time-transcendent workings of the human psyche and soul.

For 'Aflaq, not only eternity but a perfected state of being will await Arab society once it achieves and activates this potential promise of the "future", or so the end of his tract rhetorically asserts. Once this "future" is achieved, it concludes climactically in its final passage, all social and political corruption, all societal differences and divisions, all perceived Arab "backwardness", and all other sundry things that the narrative voice sees as holding society back from a "future" of fulfillment will vanish, to be replaced by a sociopolitical existence of absolute unity and egalitarianism. In such a high-stakes game of all or nothing, 'Aflaq asserts, there can be no compromises and no acceptance of merely partial measures of improvement. The way to achieve the future can only be through inqilaab – the complete overthrowing of the imperfect and detrimental existing order. For 'Aflaq, inqilaab ('overthrow' or 'overturning' in Arabic) was one of the centermost tenets of Ba'thist ideology -- to the point, according to him, that the entire

meaning of Ba'thism itself could be "condensed" into this word (159).

What 'Aflaq's tract on "The Future" leaves the reader with in the end is a vision of cultural and sociopolitical modernism that is thoroughly quasi-mystical and messianic in its sensibilities. Here too as well, his and Adunis' mysticist sensibilities in this particular regard can be said to find apparent echoes of a kind within Bustani's 19th-century Khutbah. In it the new fields of knowledge brought by the modern era, that are now critically necessary for the Arabs to grasp for themselves, are seen as pure and almost numinous things. For "it is impossible for knowledge and what is base and despised to gather together," or so Bustani writes at one point (3).

Meanwhile as for 'Aflaq and Sa'adah, it is true that on the level of specifics, as mentioned previously, they diverged radically from each other. For while Sa'adah did not dismiss the notion of the modern "Greater Syria" he envisioned having substantive ties to a larger pan-Arab network of cultural and political alliances, he nonetheless saw it as having a very distinct and separate identity of its own apart from the rest of the Arab-speaking countries (Mabadi' al-Hizb 32). Furthermore Sa'adah maintained that both Islam and Christianity had, historically, impaired more than they had helped the sociopolitical development of the Middle East (Mabadi' al-Hizb 61-64) 'Aflaq, by contrast, was an ardent pan-Arabist who saw the creation of a unified state incorporating all Arab-speaking countries within it as an absolute necessity for the enactment of an empowered Arab society (Benewick and Green 4; 'Aflaq 227-8). And though 'Aflaq envisioned such a "modern" pan-Arab society as mainly being ruled by secular legal practices, he still saw Islam as a central and essential pillar of Arab cultural identity that simply could not be dispensed with (Benewick and Green 5; Bowering 22; 'Aflaq 52-54). 'Aflaq

harshly criticized ultra-secular nationalists such as Sa'adah who, among other things, sought to largely purge Islam out of contemporary modernist political thought (Fi Sabil al-Ba'th 62-66, 126-128).

In other areas apart from geopolitics and Islam, however, differences between Sa'adah and 'Aflaq diminish substantially. For whether or not Sa'adah and his former youthful disciple Adunis ever presented their own modernism in exactly such concentratedly blunt and explicitly quasi-spiritualist rhetoric as 'Aflaq does in the preceding tract – and indeed the two of them, especially Sa'adah, do seem to repeatedly come very close indeed at the least -- their own sensibilities about political and cultural modernism, when viewed in sum, very much overlap with 'Aflaq's to a striking degree. For both of them as well, achieving the "future" Arab cultural potential they believe the modern era holds out in promise is, as much or more than being an affair of material considerations or logistics, very much a matter of the human individual's personal will, psyche and intellect instead. As will be explored in both this chapter and the next, their particular visions of cultural and political modernism are not only also shot through with quasi-mystical themes and sensibilities -- their writings about those visions are also often just as strident in their preaching of the necessity for total, uncompromising change.

'Aflaq and Sa'adah were not only historical contemporaries, but also shared deep similarities to each other in their class and family backgrounds, in the methods they used to disseminate their sociopolitical creeds, and in the particular audiences they appealed to in order to recruit followers. Both were part of the urban educated classes of the northern Levant, both were from Christian families and both received large parts of their education in western countries. 'Aflaq received his undergraduate education in the Sorbonne in Paris, and Sa'adah

spent well over a decade of his life as both a teenager and adult as an expatriate in the United States and Latin America. They were activists in an era with little to no electronic mass media available to the public at large outside of, perhaps, the occasional radio. At the time literacy rates both within the Levant and the Arab World as a whole were radically different than they are today. UNESCO statistics compiled in the mid-20th century indicated that as of 1950 an estimated 50-55 percent of Lebanon's population aged 15 and older was illiterate (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 40). In neighboring Syria and Jordan meanwhile, UNESCO estimates placed this same age sector of their populations at 70-75 percent and 80-85 percent illiterate, respectively (39 & 40). Today 21st century UNESCO estimates state that well over 90 percent of the population aged 15 on up in Jordan, almost exactly 90 percent of the same age population in Lebanon and over 80 percent of it in Syria are literate (Huebler 37). It is perhaps no surprise, then, when 'Adel Beshara notes that although news of -- and corresponding reactions to -- Sa'adah's 1949 execution at the hands of a Lebanese military tribunal spread quickly enough among urban bourgeoisie and intellectual elites in central metropoles like Beirut, ripples and reactions among the larger public, especially those outside central urban areas, was much more diminished.

> … back then the Lebanese press was very different from the press today, anywhere. Most newspapers were short, only four pages, with eight pages just beginning to be adopted, slowly... most had small readerships and a limited, select clientele, whose prejudices they addressed with similarly slanted journalism. Few of them circulated outside the metropolitan centres of Beirut or other main towns or reached the countryside and outlying areas. Public visibility, therefore, was

poor... (162)

As such, those circles of thought and discursive activity which can be said to have been engaged with ideals and philosophies of “modernism” and contemporary “nationalism”, whether political or literary, were limited more or less exclusively to upper ranks of the urban bourgeoisie. The vast bulk of prominent Arab thinkers about “modernity”, whether secularist or Islamic reformist, had had, like Sa’adah and ‘Aflaq, a great degree of western – or at least westernized – education. Many were also expatriates who spent significant periods of their lives abroad in western countries, such as Amin Al-Rihani, Khalil Jibran and Sa'adah himself. And Sa'adah and 'Aflaq were far from the only Arabs of Christian background standing at the foreground of modernist and nationalist thought – indeed, Arab Christian presence within such circles of discourse was quite formidable at that time. Butrus Al-Bustani, considered by many to be the first, pioneering modernist thinker of the late 19th century and the intellectual founding father of the seminal Arab Nahdah or “Renaissance” movement of that same era, was a Christian, as were both Rihani and Jibran, of whom the latter is widely considered to be both one of the very first and one of the greatest “modernist” Arab litterateurs.

Both Sa'adah and ‘Aflaq took their respective turns toward activism on behalf of building an improved, “modern” Arab polity while working as teachers in urban settings -- 'Aflaq as a high-school teacher in Damascus and Sa'adah as a German instructor at the American University in Beirut. Both primarily recruited followers to their ideologies from among the very young, and very idealistic, educated urban middle and upper-class students they taught and mingled with. In a society almost exclusively limited to cinema, print media and written media, both disseminated their messages via writings, journals and pamphlets along with speeches and other direct, face-

to-face, personal interactions with their followers. A passage from 'Aflaq's writings alludes directly to this particular tight-knit pseudo-intellectual environment that he operated within as an activist.

> … we are not men of politics who use streets and public gatherings to spread their propaganda, and make their speeches for limited intellect(s) and superficial, intermittent emotions.
>
> For the things we dream of are more difficult, and our aspirations more distant. For that reason we chose writing as the means to disseminate our thoughts. As opposed to oration, it directs itself to the quiet, composed intellect and true, deep emotion. This is what guarantees for us the attention of the prepared, cultured youth for the sake of their understanding and grasping the truth. (24)

Among the very young educated idealists Sa'adah's message would attract would be a fourteen-year-old Adunis, then studying at an urban French lycee school in Syria. Adunis would go on to meet Sa'adah in person and face-to-face twice as a teenager (Adunis and Saqr Abu Fakhr 39-41).

3.2. The All-or-Nothing Demands of Messianic Modernism

For Sa'adah as with 'Aflaq, the mission of modernism does not involve any kind of "change" that could be classifiable in finite or measurable terms. It is a project of radical, all-encompassing transformation of each and every element within the sum lifeworld a human society exists and functions within, emotional as well as intellectual -- a "spiritual, material,

social and political revolution that changes the life of a people in its entirety" (Al-Sira' al-Fikri 27). It is a switch from one realm of being to an utterly different one, a fundamentally "new world of thought and feeling" (73). As such when it occurs, a culture's psychological understanding and approach to even those matters involving the most basic and intimate human senses and sensibilities, those as instinctual as love and lovemaking, are also transformed from one entire state to another. Sa'adah asserts, for instance, that people of a nation whose "psyche" is in a "beginning" stage dominated by traditionalism are unable, within their musical and poetic arts, to comprehend and portray things related to love as anything other than those emotions "that are shared between man and animal, such as sexual appetites that represent the majority of the emotions of such a people." He then counterposes as the polar "opposite" of such a traditional society a "people whose psyche has become liberated and elevated". Their art and music, he asserts, "expresses emotions that have risen above sexual appetites" and "imaginings that have risen above lower animal matters." Among such a more "advanced" culture, love has ceased to be a mere animalistic affair, as it were, and has instead become "a higher aspiration" that "raises their souls" and "hones their resolution.... giving birth within their souls to sublime emotions and thoughts..." (33).

Sa'adah waxes particularly quasi-mystical and pseudo-messianist in a passage of Al-Sira' al-Fikri where he speaks further of the refined and elevated state that a properly-shaped state of "advancement" would supposedly bring to the human affairs of Eros in Syrian society if it were achieved. Within the passage's first sentence he also heaps scorn upon traditional Arab poetics and some of the stock metaphoric images commonly used in it to depict the state of romantic attraction.

> And love was a matter of burning physical appetites in material form that appear in “eyes shooting arrows” and “the wine of saliva”, the “quivering of the breast” and praise of physiques. Then [after achievement of an advanced society] it becomes a question of the beauty of life as a whole, and the sharing among spirits of this beauty. … The issue of physical contact being the full extent of the highest psychological aspirations [of love] is an affair that has become dead for the new vision of life, being and art. The issue of love being a union of thought and emotion, and the participation of souls in understanding the beauty of life and the achievement of its highest aspirations, has taken its place. (Al-Sira’ al-Fikri 70)

So drastic and radical is this shift, so entirely different is the conceptual world that is brought about if a proper modernity is realized and achieved, Sa'adah suggests, that the average artist from a society that has never previously experienced such an “advanced” state is, by and large, altogether incapable of even remotely fathoming what it might be like, or what it would signify. “The literary man and the poet and the actor are sons of their environments,” he notes. Only the more remarkable artist “who is a pioneering genius” or an adept philosopher “have the ability to slip free of their time and place and plan a new life and trace out higher principles of innovative genius for a nation in its entirety” (28). In manner rather similar to Plato's treatment of the divide between awareness and ignorance by use of his famous parable about cave dwellers who have never seen the sun – and therefore can have no comprehension whatsoever of what the world of light outside their dark abode might even be like -- Sa’adah relates a couple of anecdotes to illustrate his own point. One is that of a couple of male Syrian actors called upon to

play two different roles on stage opposite women. The first is a younger man portraying a character engaged in amorous courting, the second an actor portraying a father reunited with his daughter after long absence.

> … some years ago one of the aficionados of that art asked me about how to elevate the theatrical presentation of narrative in Syria. I said that the matter is tied to the elevation of the life of the Syrian people itself. For acting roles of love, nobility and heroism in elevated colors requires the sensitivities of the actor towards these traits to be elevated. And it is impossible for those who are not accustomed to anything except the (coarser) physical directions of love to theatrically act its more elevated psychological states. And indeed I once saw an aficionado of acting in Damascus, and he was an enlightened young man, try to play the role of (a person) getting acquainted with a young woman where it was to be expected that she would fall in love with him and vice versa. The role ended up far from producing the desired result on an elevated level of emotion and conduct. (28)

As for the actor who portrayed the role of a father meeting his daughter after having gone missing for a long period of time, he too, Sa'adah asserts, was rendered incapable by his social background and circumstances. "...when the time of meeting his daughter came," Sa'adah narrates, "... all (the actor's) attempts fell down (in failure) to make the arms of the father stretch out in yearning and embrace the young woman with gentleness and tenderness. Femininity had a stronger effect on the man than any conception of parenthood and childhood that was (supposed to) partake of his acting." On the other hand, Sa'adah then suggests, "if the man had had a

different upbringing he undoubtedly would have been closer to mastering the portrayal of his role" (28).

The second narrative used to illustrate this point is that of a "Syrian writer... who looked upon himself as a great literary man." While in Sao Paulo, Brazil, he had gone to attend a performance of one of Beethoven's symphonies. Like the actors in the other anecdote, Sa'adah portrays him as simply unable to understand what Sa'adah sees as the more "advanced" or "modern" nature of Beethoven's music.

> He was not long seated before he excused himself from listening to it, and left the place. He was confused by the 'stupidity' of (those) people who could tolerate sitting, without boredom, for over an hour to hear music which had no entertainment in it... (39)

Unlike other members of the audience, Sa'adah asserts, the Syrian writer, utterly blind and insensible to the virtues of the music, simply heard "rumbling, thundering, roaring, rustling, recoils and thumping..." (39). Sa'adah then juxtaposes what he sees as the "advanced" or "elevated" virtues of Beethoven with a figure he has contempt for as a supposed embodiment of "traditional" music – the famous Egyptian female singer Umm Kulthum. For Sa'adah, whereas Beethoven's music offers higher philosophical truths, Umm Kulthum offers only hollow diversion.

> … due to the extreme aversion of the aforementioned 'great writer' to what he had heard... and to relieve his distress, he asked the owner of the Syrian bookstore he was telling his story in, to let him hear some of the songs of the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum, she who delights with entertainment and who causes sweet

> sadness! (al-mutribah wa al-mushjiyyah). And he was not content at that but started to call out to a friend of his who was passing by the place and say to him: "Come and let us die (of pleasure) for this singing!" (ta'aal namuut bihadhihi al-ghanaa'). And he didn't (even realize) he was stating the entire truth with this expression of his that he used intending another meaning! (39)

Though Adunis does not necessarily formulate this totalist, all-or-nothing vision of modernity in exactly such concise and concentrated terms as Sa'adah in his own critical writings, such an attitude lies visible and transparent beneath not only aspects of his intellectual approach, but the way he molds and presents himself as a public figure as well. In a 2014 interview with a Danish cultural institute, Adunis compares and contrasts himself with other Arab poets. Within this comparison he implies, to no small extent, that the only truly legitimate kind of aesthetic modernism is one that creates an altogether and entirely new conceptual and stylistic world rather than partial changes of any sort. Adunis then further intimates that artists and poets who do not engage in such radical change, for whatever reason, are of a somewhat lesser stature.

> I didn't just break with poetry -- I created a new history -- for Arab culture, Arab poetry, Arab prose and Arab literature. You know ... You need a tree to make a forest. I am just a lonely tree, but I created a forest around me -- of Arab poets, Arab writers, Arab intellectuals... As if it was a new history within this history. But this affected my relationship with the other Arab poets. I thought that all Arab poets should do what I did. Create their own worlds, entirely new worlds -- and break with the old, not just repeat it. That's why I can be quite harsh when it comes to Arab poetry. I don't see people who try to do what I did. That's why I try

> to avoid speaking about them. I have the greatest respect for their work -- but I prefer not to judge them. ("I Was Born for Poetry")

One particularly prominent and well-known trope within Adunis' public image is his repeated narratives of his childhood as a peasant in a remote Syrian village. In manner somewhat similar to another equally prominent 20th century Arab modernist, the famous Egyptian litterateur Taha Hussein and his stark autobiographical depictions of growing up in primitive, rudimentary conditions as a 19th century Egyptian villager before moving into the contemporary cosmopolitan circles of intellectual life in Cairo in his Ayyam trilogy**,** Adunis uses these narratives as a bildungsroman of complete, sweeping metamorphosis from a universe of tradition to a universe of modernity that is, by and large, incommensurable and incomparable with the previous one left behind. Within these narratives the child Adunis begins as an agrarian peasant boy in a remote Syrian village with absolutely no traces of technology or cultural manifestations of the 20th century to speak of, whereas the mature adult Adunis emerges as a hyper-literate urban cosmopolite at the center of the modern globalized world, in Beirut and then Paris. "I always ask myself how I was transformed into this other person," Adunis told one interviewer, "it was almost miraculous" (Jaggi). Adunis was born in the northern Syrian village of Qassabeen to a family of Alawite peasants in 1930. According to Adunis, there was no school in the village and he never saw a radio or a car until he was 13 years old. Childhood consisted of working in the fields with the family. Literacy consisted of going to the home of a village elder for informal education, as well as studying reading and poetry at the hand of his father. In one interview Adunis states, almost symbolically as it were, that it was a "village that belonged to the beginnings of creation...":

> … huts made of stone and mud that we called our houses. The mud cracked every season, and we had to fix the roof with new mud and thatch to make it withstand rain and wind and time. Nevertheless, the rain kept seeping through invisible cracks and its drops fell on our heads – father and mother and kids – as we sat to rest, or eat, or sleep. The house was so narrow that my father built a big wooden bed and raised it on high stilts where we all slept: it was like a smaller house inside the house, and we used the space beneath it for many purposes. In winter, when it was cold, our only cow, and her companion ox, slept under it.
>
> … Every day I went barefoot to the... village teacher's abode, where the old man taught me how to read and write. I sat near him and he hooked his cane's pointed tip between my toes, to keep me there, in case I thought of running away to roam in the fields, as I usually did whenever I had the chance. ("Adonis: There are Many Easts")

Adunis' accounts of this primordial childhood, lyrical though they can be, are often loaded with a heavy sense of psychological lack. "... I was working in the fields... I spent my youth as one of those people who work upon the land," Adunis tells one interviewer. "Because of that I did not sense my childhood the way other children feel it. Indeed my longing [for childhood], as such, is the longing of someone who did not live childhood the way other children live it today..." (Adunis and Saqr Abu Fakhr 17).

> … I hope I'm not exaggerating when I claim that I was obsessed even as a child with a vague feeling that my birthplace was that somewhere from which I will venture out, and not stay. A feeling told me I'd find myself only somewhere else.

> In other places than this. (“Adonis: There Are Many Easts”)

At age 13 the peasant boy of Qassabeen hatched an audacious plan. It was announced that the first president of a newly independent post-colonial Syria, Shukri al-Quwatli, would be touring rural villages in the region. The boy was determined to compose a poem for him and recite it aloud in public. The young Adunis went, dressed in traditional village clothes and nearly barefoot -- and eventually, after some setbacks, managed to perform the poem in front of al-Quwatli and assembled onlookers.

> … The day the president came... he was visiting a town close by... I was wearing the traditional villager's gumbaaz and a jacket – and a pair of worn-out shoes. I was practically barefoot. And by some strange coincidence I managed to read the poem to him. And he actually liked it. He asked to see me and I went to the presidential palace. He embraced me and asked: "How can I help you, son?" I said: "I want to go to school." He answered: "Consider it done. You will go to school." Before our meeting, he had taken a line from the poem – and used it in a presidential speech. I remember that line: "For us you are the sword, for you we are the sheath." So he played on that saying that we were his protectors and so on. That's how I got to go to school with a poem. And that's why I feel that I was born for poetry. (“I Was Born for Poetry”)

Al-Quwatli eventually arranged for the young 'Ali Ahmad to attend what was then the most prestigious school in the country, the French Lycee in the town of Tartus, whereupon the peasant boy of Qassabeen rubbed shoulders with children from some of the most prestigious families in the country, and thereby began the first step along his way toward becoming the

cosmopolitan poet known today as “Adunis”.

In contrast to this narrative by Adunis of decisive will to change, and its consequent result of a successful self-transformation and metamorphosis that is totalistic in scope, is his depiction of the 19th century Arab Nahdah, previously discussed in the Introduction. As discussed there, Adunis paints the Nahdah as the story of an Arab society that is indecisive in its own will for total, sweeping cultural change, thereby resulting in a self-transformation that is ultimately a failure due to its partial – and therefore compromised – nature. One particular poet that Adunis singles out and focuses on repeatedly in his critical writings as a central symbol of this purported failure is Ahmad Shawqi, widely regarded by many as one of the greatest literary figures of Victorian-era Egypt. “... it is ideology that thinks [in them],” Adunis writes in a wry commentary on several of Shawqi's major poems, “not him [the poet]. And indeed, it is the structure [of previous traditions] that writes, and not him” (Diwan al-Nahdah 12). For Adunis Shawqi's poetry represents, like the Nahdah as a whole, partial rather than total change since Shawqi blended portrayals of contemporary events and issues with verse that formally and stylistically – according to Adunis, at least -- remained largely traditional. Adunis asserts this all shows that even as Shawqi and Nahdah era poets similar to him treat “modern” topics and news events in the content of their verse, their “intellectual understanding” on a larger artistic level remains stagnant and fossilized (Adunis, Introduction 87; Creswell 250).

Adunis' tendency to see any intellectual movement that is less than perfect or “complete” in his eyes as being a failure to meet the criteria of legitimate “modernism” also comes out in his public hesitance to endorse the Arab Spring uprising in Syria that caused so much controversy to swirl around him in some quarters. “…I'm not against them,” Adunis said of the young activists

who launched the Arab Spring in one interview – but nonetheless, he categorically refused to endorse the movement as a whole (Jaggi). Although in the Syrian case Adunis grudgingly acknowledged the unarmed movement there had its virtues, he nonetheless maintained, more or less, that it failed to bring the total package of thought and practice he asserts true cultural and political "modernism" requires:

> But, who are this opposition today?
>
> 1 – There are "voices" – thinkers, writers, poets, artists, culturally educated people, young men, and young women. They have noble and just points of view and aspirations. But no written declaration unites them, even on the level of the symbolical and the historical – a document that would carry their thoughts and clarify their goals for what (would come) after the current regime. The voice, if it does become embodied, remains an (active) voice. But (then) it does not enter necessarily into the rubric of the practical working situation (at hand). It remains in that which is beneath it, or above and beyond it.
>
> 2 – And there are "actions" – demonstrations, clashes, agitators, (who) raised banners and slogans, people killed, people fighting (in battle). And (as for) these, moral and exemplary or purely (altruistic) nationalist stances unite those among them, based on principles and (guiding) examples. But among some of them there appears an antagonistic and violent "motif", within which predominates a tone of instigation, rebelliousness, sectarian religiosity, or Salafism. ("Risalah Maftuhah")

Thus, in very similar fashion to his overall treatment of Shawqi and the Nahdah, Adunis

here asserts that partial or less-than-perfect change or transition in Syria would also be, ultimately, failed change. Meanwhile, though the hair-raising atrocities of the Ba'th regime got some passing notice in Adunis' letter to Bashar Al-Asad, the presumed sin of the Ba'thists that Adunis focused on much more repeatedly throughout the text than the tortures and killings were what he characterized as the Ba'thists' "failure" to bring all-encompassing sociocultural "modernity" to Syria.

> … The truth is that the party did not create anything that can be accounted as new or creative, in any field. Indeed, in practice, rather, and on the purely cultural level, for example, it is a traditionalist party... especially in the areas of education and learning, and schools and universities... And the Party never built (even) a single university that could be used as any (kind of) exemplar [to build upon for educational progress], or (even) a single institution for knowledge or art that could be used as an exemplar (to build upon) at all. ("Risalah Maftuhah")

Adunis' consistently repeated stance during the Arab Spring that it was -- by virtue of being a spontaneous and therefore (presumably) less-than fully planned, calibrated and perfected push for change – not to be counted on as having the potential for a "true" revolution has parallels in a passage from Sa'adah's writings over half a century earlier. In a didactic short story previously written by Sa'adah himself that he quotes from in Al-Sira' al-Fikri, titled "Faaji'at al-Hubb" ('The Tragedy of Love') the main character, Salim – who is clearly a stand-in for Sa'adah and his own views -- also expounds at length on the dangers of less-than-perfected and less-than-totalized revolutions that fail to embrace all aspects of human affairs, both public and private, and to firmly and comprehensively integrate the social and political with the cultural.

> … He [Salim] saw political revolution as a hollow affair if it was not centered upon a firm mindset fixed soundly in the heart of each individual, whether man or woman, youth or girl, by a living literature and art of music that unites the emotions and brings them together around a higher aspiration, until they became joined with one society-wide sense of faith that stands upon love – love that if it is present within the souls of an entire people brings about among them sincere cooperation and beautiful sympathies between them, filling life with hopes and energy. With this, political struggle becomes conducive to productivity. As for nationalism built upon worn, reactionary traditions, it is a barren thing, *even* if it leads to political freedom. (Al-Sira' al Fikri 35-36)

Meanwhile, as already mentioned in discussing 'Aflaq's concept of inqilaab, he also takes a strongly concordant stance with Adunis and Sa'adah on this theme of the need for nothing less than "total revolution" – regardless of whatever antagonisms may have existed between 'Aflaq and Adunis, or the Ba'thists and Sa'adah's political party, at one time or another. In a key passage of his own writings, 'Aflaq justifies his rejection of more materialist-oriented approaches to social change, such as those of the Marxists, by polemically finding them lacking in comparison to his own ideal of absolute and all-encompassing change that will embrace both the human exterior and spiritual interior so thoroughly that it will "shake" all aspects of activity and endeavor.

> … We are convinced that the spirit is the origin of all things. This deeper spiritual drive does not merely hold control over matter and means -- it also creates them. As such the overthrow (inqilaab) must partake directly of the

> spiritual, and not be confined or stopped at the boundary of forms and appearances. Let us suppose that one day an unforeseen accident or miracle freed the Arabs from the sum of the injustices and forms of corruption that stand as a stumbling block in the path of their life and progress, and that (all) the governments, by means of some strange magic, fell from our path and sincere nationalist governments that fervently (support) the public interest took their place. Do you think that (in this way) the Arab inqilaab would be accomplished?
>
> I believe that something of this sort would not be (a true inqilaab), because superficial change that does not touch upon the spirit, that does not open up thought, and does not shake creation and stand it up (anew), that does not cause (true) faith to explode forth as a result of difficulties faced – this kind of superficial change would rapidly turn back to the previous condition of affairs. (163)

For Adunis, as with Sa'adah in the latter's passages discussing the state of Syrian theater mentioned previously, when a society does not effect such successful change everything – even the most basic and intimate aspects of individuals' personal lives – is affected, as the following passage from an interview shows:

> Unfortunately... our circumstances, our social situation, and our political situation especially, have disfigured the realm of friendships as it has disfigured the ream of love [i.e. romantic relationships], to the degree that it has created a type of lack of confidence and kinds of doubts. ... For society – and I always go back to the society – it is not possible to see within it any individual who is a hundred percent

> healthy, except if the society he lives within is also healthy. And our society, unfortunately, is not healthy. (Adunis and Saqr Abu Fakhr 25)

For Adunis and Sa'adah, as such, it is therefore as if such a lack of "complete" or "total" modernity in the Arab world is an all-encompassing phenomenon, that leaves the society and all individuals within in it in a state of utter existential "lack" as well.

An important counterargument which merits raising here is that such all-or-nothing philosophical approaches and attitudes towards "modernity" do not necessarily conform to what history shows of the extremely gradual and often uneven evolution of "modernity" as it was first known in Europe and the west, via lengthy processes of small, incomplete, imperfect steps – as testified to in the work of so many scholars who have studied its development, such as Jurgen Habermas, Eric Hobsbawm, Matei Calinescu and Karl Marx to mention only a mere few. For the advent of "modernity" in Europe has been, by all accounts, a process brought about by the accumulation of sporadic, halting and unpredictable changes – often accompanied by corresponding reversals and setbacks at one time or another – over several centuries that stretch as far back as the early Renaissance at the very least. Furthermore many of those steps and transitions that resulted in today's "modernity" were, in and of themselves, highly problematic or even traumatic, as witnessed by the profound social stresses caused by the mass industrialization of England in the 18th and 19th centuries, or the violent mass purges and executions of the French Revolution.

> To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction. It is to be overpowered by the immense bureaucratic organizations that have the power to control and often to destroy all communities, values, lives; and yet to be

> undeterred in our determination to face these forces, to fight to change their world and make it our own. It is to be both revolutionary and conservative: alive to new possibilities for experience and adventure, frightened by the nihilistic depths to which so many modern adventures lead, longing to create and to hold onto something real even as everything melts. We might even say that to be fully modern is to be anti-modern: from Marx's and Dostoevsky's time to our own, it has been impossible to grasp and embrace the modern world's potentialities without loathing and fighting against some of its most palpable realities. (Berman 13-14)

From this point of view, then, similarly imperfect events in the contemporary Arab context, such as the Nahdah and the Arab Spring, could be seen potentially not as a failures, but as very similar spontaneous, ad hoc and often-unpredictable steps along a shaky path of social progress and evolution – developments, as such, to be evaluated and then built upon rather than scrapped and condemned. As we have seen, however, the formulations of Adunis and Sa'adah go in a very different direction, and Ba'thist doctrines and aesthetics also emphatically reject such models of partialisms and imperfections. Ba'thist sociocultural aesthetics also explicitly dismiss the notion of change through gradual, cumulative "progress" within the Arab context altogether – as witnessed in the following passage by Sa'dun Hamadi, a prominent Ba'th activist who would rise to political prominence within the government of Saddam Hussein. For Hamadi the slow, halting developments that characterized the rise of modernity in the western context are simply not tenable within the Arab world, due to what he sees as its current "sickened" and pathological condition:

> Inqilaab (‘overturning’) is the contrary of slow progress. For progress in the future is the result of change that occurs in society as a result of the interplay of internal factors in its structure now (at this current time). It (progress) is (as such) a differentiated extension of the present. For if the present is sound and strong, standing upon correct institutions, progress comes as an increase of (this) flowering and (of further) advancement forward. And if the present is sickly and weak at its foundations, progress comes as an increase in (that) weakness and sickness. And this takes its course by action of the process of snail-like change and accumulations whereby the interacting factors (in play) feed (into) each other, and (thereby) produce a surplus of the good – or bad – effects... For this reason, as such, if the Arab situation is left to itself and the automatic workings of development, it will increase in corruption and negativity, and backwardness. As such, there can be no doubt of (the necessity of) a (total) overthrow that will transform progress and change its logic. There can be no doubt of (the necessity) of bringing about a deep tremor within the Arab psyche... ('Aflaq 11)

As for Sa'adah, a “committed ideologue... which led him to scorn half-measures and vacillation and which influenced the intransigence with which he later stuck to his program of national revival”, such a totalist all-or-nothing attitude towards modernism found expression not just in his writings, but in his often-uncompromising behavior as a political leader -- and, ultimately thereby, the manner of his actual downfall and death as well (Beshara 1). The historical account written by Beshara, who is openly sympathetic to Sa'adah, suggests that a major factor contributing to his ultimate destruction in Lebanese politics, and his controversial

execution by his enemies, was his unwillingness to slacken the neo-messianic principles of his vision for a modern “Greater Syria”. The result was emotional inability to play the more impure pragmatist games of haggling and realpolitik with allies and enemies alike that were typical of Lebanese politics.

> … it is difficult to determine why the Khoury regime did not regard execution as a risk. … Nonetheless... factors are clearly discernible. The first was the impression that since Sa'adeh had no powerful allies his execution would not pose a particular danger to regime power. Sa'adeh is mainly to blame for this. During his struggle with the Khoury regime, he purposely maintained a certain distance between himself and the political forces in the country out of the belief that both the government and the opposition were part of the same political establishment. Such neutrality enabled Sa'adeh to retain ideological credibility, but deprived him of allies to lean on in difficult times. Although the Lebanese opposition was just as determined as he was to get rid of the Khoury regime, it did not get directly involved with him and refused to come to his aid at the crucial moment. Like most Lebanese, it found his vision of radical change too extreme for its liking. … (214)

On the literary front, earlier sections of Sa'adah's Al-Sira' al-Fikri feature multiple attacks upon other equally prominent Arab public thinkers of his era with modernist leanings on grounds that they do not have the necessary “total” vision Sa'adah deems required for the achievement of modernity -- and therefore are, in effect, intellectual failures. Sa'adah's targets in this regard include the seminal Egyptian modernist novelist Muhammad Husayn Haykal, the famous

Lebanese poets Khalil Matran and Amin Al-Rihani (the later of whom was, alongside Khalil Gibran, one of the most prominent of the Arab Romantics), and no less giant a figure than Taha Hussein, widely considered as Egypt's most prominent public intellectual of the early 20th century. Sa'adah scathingly criticizes all them, with his condemnations of Lebanese writer Mikhail Na'imah being a typical example of his polemics against these other well-known intellectuals. “If the embellishments of literary and poetic expression are stripped from this speech,” he writes regarding a particular passage of Na'imah's about the modern era in the cultural east and west, “then not a single truth is to be found in it, except for ignorance of life's affairs and its development ever since man first appeared on nature's stage, and ignorance of history...” (20).

Of course much of the controversy generated by Adunis has been due to similar adamant and outspoken attitudes which, among other things, have lead him to dismissively blast Arab contemporary culture and society in its entirety as a “failure” in multiple public appearances over the past few years as, discussed in the first introductory chapter of this dissertation. If we “compare what the Arabs have done in the last hundred years with what has been achieved by others in the same period,” Adunis stated in a March 2011 interview on Dubai TV that gained worldwide attention, “all I can say is that we Arabs are in a period of extinction – extinction meaning we no longer have a creative presence on the world stage” (Dubai TV). Recently he has reiterated similar messages to the effect that Arab culture, taken in sum, is in a state of abject failure and on the verge of “extinction” -- in conferences in Cairo and Brussels in early 2015 and the spring of 2016, respectively (Qai’i, “Adunis Yaftah al-Nar”; Adunis, “The Roots and Causes of Islamic Violence?”).

3.3. Mystic Modernism and the Union of Thought with Emotion

> … And this rank is not possible to be achieved without connection to a new vision towards life, existence and art that contains a fundamental truth fit for founding a new world of thought and feeling. If for doubters it is not the otherworld, the most sublime without measure, it is (nonetheless) a world above the past worlds, and a step for which there can be no doubt, in order to continue the psychological elevation of humanity. And for this (reason) it is an eternal world, because what comes after it in faraway eternities will come forth from it and establish itself upon it. Or, at least, it will be those souls that rise up to this new world that will be prepared to gladly accept an (even) more glorious world. If the hiding places of eternity are discovered it will be possible to bring about that world, of which it is not possible for us now and for a long time hence to imagine its necessities, its truths and its affairs. … (Al-Sira' al Fikri 73)

Once again, as with 'Aflaq's tract on the "The Future" -- and as with his own passage from Al-Sira' al-Fikri about the transfiguration of love within advanced societies quoted on page nine of this chapter -- the above passage by Sa'adah, also from Al-Sira' al-Fikri, evokes the cause of cultural modernism in terms much more mystic and emotive than rationalist. It also -- once again -- takes modernism out of the affairs of the measured and the logistical, and into realms of transcendence. As such, though Sa'adah was an adamant secularist who argued for eliminating all influences that the Arab world's powerful religious establishments exert upon it, within this passage and others in Sira' his vision of the life that will come into being once an "advanced"

and empowered Syrian society is achieved is rhetorically cast within spiritualist terms. As with 'Aflaq's use of ba'th (resurrection / revival) and khuluud (eternity) discussed in the previous section, Sa'adah similarly invokes deep Qur'anic connotations within this particular passage by also using khuluud -- the state of everlasting and imperishable being that will be attained by those who achieve heaven in the realms beyond this temporal one – to denote "eternity" here. Meanwhile Adunis' vision for "poetic modernism" is also frequently laced with quasi-spiritualist rhetoric of its own, as in the following paragraph where he praises the prominent medieval Arab poets Abu Nuwas, al-Niffari and al-Ma'ari, whom he favorably considers to be "modernists" in their own right – and, as such, kindred spirits of those contemporary versifiers whom Adunis believes to be the true, genuine Arab "modernist" poets of today. The poetry of these three, he writes:

> … is not a product of the imagination, as a purely psychological or sensory faculty, but in the mystical sense... In this sense, the imagination is an intermediary between the spirit which belongs to the transcendental world and the senses which belong to the world of tangible evidence. It is also a depository from which the spirit draws its primary material. It is creative energy, free and unlimited, and a light which allows transfigurations to be glimpsed by piercing the veil of darkness that hides things. (Introduction 66-7).

With Adunis, as touched on in dissertation chapter two, such quasi-spiritualist sentiment is also linked with not only deep suspicion of the rational, but of the scientific as well. In contrast to the large-scale technologization of human existence in the contemporary era which has given it a "uniformity and sameness which gave life itself a mechanical dimension" (Introduction 94),

one of the supreme virtues of poetry which makes it invaluable and indispensable today, he writes, is that it "keeps human beings open to the invisible... the infinite unknown... in an all-inclusive movement which goes beyond the mechanical, blind indifference of technical progress..." (97).

> The human being is a sublime creature, and there is nothing for him in this modernist technology except the materialism of an attachment to manufactured things, and to quantity. Technology does not cover the whole of existence; it only responds to the needs of an insignificant part of it. Moreover, man is not defined by quantity. (96)

Although Adunis, mirroring Sa'adah, freely and repeatedly insists upon the vital importance of social "progress" both in his speeches and writings as a public intellectual, he pointedly refuses to link such notions into direct one-on-one connection with technological and materialist advances.

> … the progress of a society is not represented merely by economic and social renewal, but more fundamentally by the liberation of man himself, and the liberation of the suppressed elements beneath and beyond the socio-economic structure, in such a way that human beings at their freest and most responsive become both the pivot and the goal. (96)

As also cited in chapter two Adunis builds on this by asserting at one point that in this day and age, it is poetry that is "the most important means available to humanity of breaking the hold of modern technology and its instrumental rationalism" (96).

> If technology is the relationship which human beings have established with

> nature, through scientific rationality, then poetry is the relationship which one human being establishes with the individual essence of another, through nature. When there is no poetry in a period of history, there is no true human dimension. (96)

Not only is poetry more fit than scientific rationalism to take us closer to the "human", according to Adunis. He also spends spends considerable time arguing that due to their more open-ended syntactical nature the poetic registers of language are in many ways a more suitable medium for promoting cultural revolution as well.

> … the knowledge in this [poetic] text is dynamic, explosive and unfettered. It is a dislocation, an experimentation. It is not based on analysis or logic or a preordained method, but on the person, his experience, his vitality and capacity. The world appears in the text as an infinity of empty spaces and focuses of action, of disorder and diversity. There is no stability, and nothing in thought is pre-established. (68)

"An examination of writings from even the earlier parts of Adunis' career," writes Abu-Zeid, "reveal a preoccupation not with revolution per se, but the inauguration of what he calls a *revolutionary culture*. Language, and poetry in particular, play a central role in this" (Abu Zeid).

"Poetry... is revolutionary by its very nature," Adunis writes at one point. ".. Art is movement and passing beyond (established boundaries). It is, as such, separate from (any institutional) regime and (intrinsically) tied to revolution as it is a perpetual movement and a perpetual passing beyond. If the regime is entrenchment in the present that remains only a

present, then art is movement within the process of becoming that (always) remains a future" (Zaman al-Shi'r 227).

His valuation of poetic above rationalist discourse on multiple fronts comes despite the fact that in his thinking on many specific political issues, as will be discussed later in the chapter on Adunis and antinomianism, he often discursively adopts tropes that could be said to strongly echo Enlightenment-style rationalist modernism itself, or what Calinescu designates as "bourgeois" modernism.

> With regard to the… bourgeois idea of modernity, we may say that it has by and large continued the outstanding traditions of earlier periods in the history of the modern idea. The doctrine of progress, the confidence in the beneficial possibilities of science and technology… the cult of reason, and the idea of freedom defined within the framework of an abstract humanism, but also the orientation toward pragmatism and the cult of action and success – all have been associated in various degrees with the battle for the modern and were kept alive and promoted as key values in the triumphant civilization established by the middle class. (41-42)

Resonances of such an "abstract humanism," along with its associated "cult" of knowledge and "progress" come into the foreground in certain passages of Adunis' public letter to Bashar Al-Asad, such as the following.

> And on the purely cultural level, for example, [the Ba'th party is] a traditionalist party, and a reactionary, religiously-based party in many cases – especially in cases of education and learning, and schools and universities. It did not give any

> space to the human being in his capacity as a human being in what lies beyond his ties [to particular social, ethnic or religious groups]... And the Party did not build even one model university, or model institution of knowledge or the arts. ("Risalah Maftuhah")

The trope of "freedom defined within the framework of an abstract humanism" – along markedly western lines -- comes out further in Adunis' call to al-Asad for secularist partitioning of the Arab polity, in the form of "the complete separation between what is religious, and what is political, social and cultural" – for, he writes, "there is, fundamentally, no democracy within religion, within the conceptualization agreed upon circulated within Greco-Western culture..." ("Risalah Maftuhah"). This embrace of western humanist abstraction further includes the notion that people are defined first and foremost by membership in a nation-state rather than membership in a particular religion or ethnicity, that "I belong, in characterization of me as a citizen – man or woman – to a society characterized as one whole that cannot be divided, prior (and above) my belonging to any religion, tribe, sect or ethnicity" ("Risalah Maftuhah").

Nonetheless, even if it can be readily argued that a pseudo-western Enlightenment sensibility defines a significant part of the overall parameters of the particular brand of sociopolitical "modernism" he espouses to Asad, it is perpetually language's poetic registers – and not its more rationalized or analytical ones – that are its most privileged and powerful spaces for Adunis. Meanwhile Sa'adah, within the field of literary genres, asserts preferences that could be said to have parallels with Adunis' championing of poetry over language's more mundane registers within the zone of linguistics. Sa'adah makes bluntly clear several times in Al-Sira' al-Fikri that he has no use for the adoption of western-style "social realism" and its

focus on quotidian life that had come into vogue with a noticeable portion of Arab writers at that time.

> ... the poet who is a “mirror of the societies” or a “mirror of his age” is not capable of being revolutionary in poetry or literature, as this revolution means implicitly a revolution in life and the view towards life. And the poet whose (principle) affair is that he is a reflection of the state of his society or his era as a mirror is not the man from whom it can be expected to find a new state of being for his people or his era. (28)

Instead it is mythopoetic genres of verse and epic, along with ancient mythological and cosmological narratives, that Sa'adah sees as the necessary central vehicles for building a new, “modern” kind of Syrian literature which a new cultural identity can be formed around. The culmination of Al-Sira' al-Fikri is, in fact, a dramatic exhortation to contemporary Syrian poets and writers to adopt as their exemplar a particularly old mythological corpus that could not possibly be farther removed from the more mundane details of contemporary everyday Syrian life – the four to six thousand year old religious mythologies of ancient Sumeria, Babylon and Ugarit. For Sa'adah believes that it is in these myths, which lie at what he sees as the oldest layers of the region's sociocultural psyche, that as many or more significant truths for Syrian identity are to be found than in any “social realist” literature depicting today's contemporary life of the here and now.

> Towards the place of these Syrian gods it is incumbent upon aware literary men to make pilgrimage, to travel and to return from their travels, bringing to us a literature which makes us uncover our psychological truth within the greater

> issues of life that our thought engaged and dealt with previously in our myths, that have a place of distinction within human thought and feeling that elevates all that was and is known of the matters of thought and emotion.
>
> And now I speak to all Syrian poets saying:
>
> Come let us raise up for this ummah ('community') that stumbles within the darknesses a torch that has within itself the light of our truth, the hope of our will and resolution, and the health and vitality of our life. Come let us raise for our ummah castles of love, wisdom, beauty and hope with the materials of the history of our Syrian ummah and its talents, the philosophies of its myths and teachings that deal with the greater human issues of life. Come let us begin -- by means of a vision towards life, existence and art with which we can do so, by its light – to revive our beautiful, great truth from its place of slumber. (64)

This exhortation by Sa'adah to return back to the region's most remote and ancient myths would go on to become a core aesthetic of the mid-20th century Arab modernist Tammuzi poetic movement, which Adunis would play a major role in during the earlier stages of his career.

Inferring from all this however that Adunis and Sa'adah, for the sake of Romanticism or mysticism, actually abandon rationalism altogether within their particular versions of artistic modernism would be a fundamental mistake. In fact one of the attractions for Sa'adah to poetry as an art form is precisely that he sees within it the potential to take human emotions and senses and fuse them with human intellection into a larger whole greater than its parts. "Indeed I see poetry or, at least, exemplary and more elevated poetry as emphatically connected to thought," he writes at one point, "even though feeling is its fundamental business and active ingredient –

because human feeling itself is firmly connected to thought, within the strange and amazing composition that we call the soul" (Al-Sira' al-Fikri 31). Moreover, one of Sa'adah's central tenets later taken up by Adunis and other 1950s and 1960s Beiruti modernist poets is the notion that "modernist" literature ascends upward beyond "traditional" or "primitive" genres and supercedes them because it takes human faculties of sense and emotion and integrates them with the more intellectual registers of thought. Sa'adah emphatically dismisses more traditional forms of poetry and music because, in his view, they are based solely – and blindly – on sheer emotion and sensualism alone.

> [As for] a people whose psyche remains in its elementary stage or is confined to it by the rule of antiquated customs or traditions that result from such a psyche, their music is elementary as well. In this case it does not express anything except the emotions that are shared between the human and the animal, such as sexual appetites that represent the majority of the emotions of this people. And opposite this is that people whose psyche has become liberated and elevated, for their music expresses emotions that rise above sexual appetites, and imaginings that rise above lower animal concerns, since their aspiration in the world is no longer confined... Indeed it has become a more elevated aspiration that love raises their spirits toward, and hones their resolve for the accomplishment of... (33)

An entire chapter of Adunis' Introduction to Arab Poetics bears the title "Poetics and Thought", and focuses on reiterating at extensive length this notion that truly sound poetry fundamentally consists of "thought" every bit as much as it does of "emotion". When the poet

strikes his mark correctly, states Adunis, “poetry and thought are fused into a unity of consciousness, in a way such that thought seems to emanate from the poetry like perfume from a rose” (Introduction 70). Indeed a well-known hallmark of the stylistics of Adunis' own verse is that it deliberately courts intellectual riddles, ambiguities and conundrums. As Creswell notes with Aghani Mihyar al-Dimashqi ('The Songs of Mihyar the Damascene'), published in 1961 and arguably Adunis' best-known and most widely influential collection of verse, the poems are constantly filled with ambiguous and elusive “self-identifications” by the narrative voice in which each new epithet or identification it delineates for itself never ceases to “pose riddles of its own” (142).

> To solve them, we might be tempted to research the history of the rivalry between poet and prophet, to reread Nietzsche, or to parse the connotations of “*ḥujja*,” a legal term signifying “testimony” or “evidence,” but one that also belongs to the lexicon of Shiite prophetology, where it is a figure of authoritative interpretation, God’s “proof” to man. Such considerations suggest that the poems of *Aghani Mihyar* are designed to provoke exegesis. “Who are you?” is a question that gives critics something to do, like solving a puzzle or lifting up a mask. (142)

“No text is entirely innocent of such solicitations and no criticism can entirely avoid them,” Creswell observes. “The solicitations of *Aghani Mihyar* are perhaps only especially blatant.... in attempting to cast a sort of verbal spell that suggests we are in the presence of a mystery, but one we might hope with sufficient erudition and patience to get to the bottom of. Many [of Adunis'] critics proceed under this spell” (143). Creswell further observes that Adunis’ critical writings and polemical manifestos about modernist poetry are also “heavily invested in

the defense of difficulty, or ambiguity...” (143). One such defense comes within Adunis' extensive endorsement of Al-Jurjani, a medieval literary critic who he holds up as an example of a “modern”-minded rather than traditionalist or reactionary thinker of previous times. At one point Adunis paraphrases Jurjani's views on metaphor-driven poetic language and the difficulty of its comprehension by mass audiences:

> The images invented by metaphorical language 'hint at things pictured by the imagination' and not understood except by 'instinctive reason and vision of the heart'. They are subtle and delicate, obscure and unfamiliar, so that they can only be understood by a form of interpretation which relies on deep contemplation, reflection and subtlety of thought. Only those whose intellect and vision make them out of the ordinary can understand them properly; that is 'those with pure intellects, sharp minds, sound natures and souls ready to perceive wisdom'. (Introduction 48)

This conception of poetry as an art whose creation and reception could both only be accomplished by select groups of people, Adunis asserts, was in fact prevalent among the majority of those innovative poets and critics of imperial Baghdad who he hails as medieval 'modernists'.

> [In their view the] reading and writing of poetry demand knowledge, expertise and intellectual discipline. Natural ability, skill in improvisation and mere linguistic knowledge are not enough. This principle led to the notion that poetry is not for everybody: its appreciation and practice are confined to a special group and it is difficult for those who are not of this group to understand it.

(Introduction 51)

Abu Tammam, one of the most eminent poets of the 'Abbasid court in Baghdad who was also controversial in his times both for his willingness to break previous poetic molds and the obscure complexities and difficulties of his poetry, is staunchly defended by Adunis. "... his (own) poetry was the invention (of something) without (any previous) exemplar (for itself)," writes Adunis at one point in Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil. "… And this is why it confounded others, for it was as simple as the simplicity of divine creation – but it was (also) difficult (to comprehend) except for the Creator (himself) – not only in terms of its innovation alone, but (also) in terms of its appreciation" (2: 115).

> The new, as such, is strange. And strangeness means that his poetry was not what people were used to. For his language was original, primordial, and the language of (ordinary) people is nothing except a (mere) echo that falls from this primordial language. (2: 117)

In the meantime, what becomes more and more clear as Sa'adah hashes out his claims that will go on to influence the Beiruti modernists, regarding a supposed gap between "higher", more "advanced" art forms that purportedly represent a full and proper fusion of "emotion" with intellectual "thought" on the one hand, and "lower", more "primitive" forms that are supposedly mere superficial "animal sensuality" on the other, is that there is significantly more at play culturally within Sa'adah's thoughts than the overt terms of "thought" and "emotion" he casts his paradigm in. One indicator of this is a certain Arabic term Sa'adah deploys in association multiple times when speaking of the "limited, narrow, primitive" and "stagnant" genres of music and poetry he claims represent "lower" forms of sensuality and inferior cultural capability --

tarab, a concept rich in connotations that has remained central in Arab popular discourse about music and poetry up to today. (Al-Sira' al-Fikri 37). Tarab, states Creswell, is a major focus of populist cultural identity and aesthetics in the Arab World. It "is an experience that is pan-Arab, but also uniquely Arab," he notes. "Hence, like '*duende*,' to which it is often compared, '*ṭarab'* is famously difficult to translate" (174).

> "*Ṭarab*" is a notoriously difficult word to define, "a term denoting poetic and musical emotion, evoking a broad spectrum of sentiments, from the most private to the most violent: pleasure, enjoyment, emotional trauma, exaltation," according to a standard reference**.** For brevity's sake, it is often rendered into English as "musical rapture." More descriptively, *ṭarab* is a state of intense vibration or *Stimmung* experienced by both musicians and audience, linked to one another by a loop of "ecstatic-feedback." … the possibility of *ṭarab* is conditional on its occasion, what aficionados call "*jaww*" [atmosphere]. The ecstatic experience is an offspring of the vagaries of time, place, and mood—the audience's state of receptivity, the musician's readiness to perform—which must all be in accord before *ṭarab* comes into being. (172-3)

Noteworthy here is that the particular era in which Sa'adah made his rhetorical attack on the culture of tarab and the mutrib (the artist who provides the audience with tarab) as being worn and outdated was, in fact, *not* a period of decline and stagnation for this particular aesthetic, but rather one in which it was exploding to new heights of appeal with mass audiences by means of modern media.

The late forties and fifties were preeminently the era of the Egyptian

> *muṭribīn*, Umm Kalthum and ʿAbdal Wahab, whose songs were broadcast on Egyptian Radio across the region, giving rise to what Virginia Danielson has called a pan-Arab "*ṭarab* culture," an experience of being together in a musical mood. (173)

In fact Umm Kulthum, excoriated in a passage by Sa'adah cited in the previous section about a Syrian artist who is "deaf" to the virtues of Beethoven and has ears only for the "superficial" and "purely emotion-based" lyrics of this Egyptian singer, was and remains -- nearly beyond all argument -- the ultimate diva figure of contemporary popular Arab music up until today. Sa'adah's polemics against tarab and Umm Kulthum, as such, are by no means a straightforward drawing up of a time-based distinction between "newer" and "older", more "traditionalist" art forms – regardless of whatever terminology Sa'adah employs to shape and present his arguments to his readers. It is, in fact, an act of discrimination between a disparate, heterodox range of artistic cultures and genres from *various* times in history that Sa'adah views as elements of a more "refined" and "high" culture that he envisions -- whether these elements be music of western classical composers like Beethoven, five-thousand-year old epic myths of the Fertile Crescent's very first urbanized states, or anything else – and other genres and bodies of art that, whatever level of appeal they might have to Arab or Syrian mass audiences at large, Sa'adah regards as merely "populist" and "provincial" -- and therefore inferior.

"For Saʿada, and for the modernists after him," comments Creswell, the concept of "*ṭarab* is the mark of provincialism. It is the music of rustic voluptuaries rather than poets, its raptures are a sign of spiritual death." It is this judgment, Creswell notes, that leads to "Saʿada's censure of Umm Kalthum's" supposed "sentimentalism" as well (177).

> Saʿada's preference for the philosophical compositions of Beethoven and Wagner over the emotive dirges of the *muṭribīn* is echoed by many of the [Beirut modernists] ... Yusuf al-Khal composed several articles on Eastern and Western music, where he inveighed in particular against the influence of "Egyptian music, devoid of art or taste, filling the soul with waves of lethargy, despair, grief, and degeneration."... Even those *Shiʿr* poets who never belonged to the party often echo Saʿada's preferences. (177)

Firstly, as such, for both Sa'adah and the Beiruti modernists who came after, those various and sundry forms of art that they see as seeds of "high" culture -- whether older genres originally espoused by Sa'adah or newer poetic forms Adunis and the modernists participated in shaping and promoting themselves, such as the qasidat al-nathr ('prose poem') – thoroughly surpass populist genres such as Umm Kulthum's music or traditional lineages of village folktales, which Sa'adah inveighs against in Al-Sira' al-Fikri as thoroughly "unfit" ingredients to build modern Syrian literature on in terms of aesthetic depth and sophistication.

> Ecstasy (tarab) and sadness (shajuw) by themselves are necessities of the impoverished kind of life within psychological culture, art and the spiritual dimensions... Indeed the benefit of music is not confined to ecstasy and sadness alone except where music has frozen into these two (more) primitive emotions because of a stagnation of the life of [i.e. offered by] the environment, both spiritually and materially. For advanced music carries the spirit into intellectual meditations and spiritual revolutions beyond and above the various individual desires and attachments that belong to affairs of biology and sex. However, this

> elevated music is (either) the offspring of an advanced age, or the product of an innovative imagination capable within itself of picturing a world of thoughts, meditations and emotions within a (particular) wave of notes and melodies that require, in their turn, an era that understands them. (37)

Secondly, they also perceive the assorted genres espoused by them to have international cultural value and potential to be a proper part of a global "world literature", with all the sense of prestigious cosmopolitanism that title carries. The other types of art they stand against, on the other hand, do not do so in their eyes, and thus remain irrevocably confined and restricted to a purely localized aesthetic scope – and always, therefore, crude and "provincial". From the viewpoint of Sa'adah and the modernists, states Creswell, their efforts along this particular front were aimed at the "deprovincialization" of Arab arts by finding particular forms of expression that would render Syria, as Sa'adah viewed it, "among the ranks of the nations that possess a living literature worthy of permanence, and of occupying an international place" alongside similarly (presumably) "worthy" literatures produced by other nations within the prestigious arena of "adab 'alami ('world literature')" (Creswell 179; Sa'adah, Al-Sira' al-Fikri 44-5 & 50).

Today, when Umm Kulthum not only remains quite arguably the biggest name in music throughout the Arab world, but has also become known to many audiences internationally as well, the question of whether or not such formulations about what types of Arab artistic production are truly fit to be "global" and which are merely worthy of being "local" stands proven as correct remains open to debate. Whatever possible defects might be found in their actual applications of their paradigm, however, it cannot be said that Sa'adah and the modernists' insistence upon only certain forms of literature being qualified to represent a fully integrated

fusion of emotion with ratiocination was merely the fruit of arbitrary snobbery on their part and nothing else. Their stance also clearly fits into the larger overall sociocultural vision Sa'adah presents in his writings of the only "true" modernity being that in which *all* human faculties and senses are brought into play without exception or omission, and then elevated upward in unison as one comprehensive whole by a society as it advances and progresses.

However arbitrary they may seem at times, Sa'adah's and the Beiruti modernists' discriminations between Beethoven and the nathr prose poem among other things on one side, and traditional and populist Arab poetics and music on the other, also reflect another larger ideal the Beiruti modernists constructed and took quite seriously. This is a distinction between certain aesthetics they asserted were more suitable for "modernity" because, they believed, they represented movements and patterns mirroring the deeper "inner rhythms" and interior psychological world of the thinking individual on the one hand, and other forms which, according to their polemical assertions, represented either mere cold, exteriorized artistic formality -- such as classical Arab poetry with its fixed, prescribed rhymes and meters -- or the lumpen, unfiltered and undiscriminating mindset of groups and crowds, such as oral forms of poetry or music by mass-audience divas like Umm Kulthum and others.

> Another contrast the modernists systematically drew between their notion of the prose poem and what they called "traditional verse," was that between an external, rule-bound music on the one hand … and, on the other, a music based on "personal experience" or the dynamic rhythms of the self. This is the difference implicit in Adonis' criticism of *ṭarab* as music for the ear rather than the mind... [Meanwhile their] determination of music as subjective experience is, of course,

one with deep roots in the philosophical and poetic tradition. It goes back at least to Hegel's *Aesthetics* and is continued by that German tradition of "absolute music" (Carl Dahlhaus's phrase), whose primary names—Beethoven, Wagner, Nietzsche—are precisely the ones we find in the writings of Saʿada and his disciples**.** ...The prose poem is the culmination of this effort. It was a genre ... that the *Shiʿr* poets theorized as a new musical form, an autonomous, symphonic work of art that sprung from the poet's most "private" experiences. (Creswell 179-180)

CHAPTER 4 : Messianic Modernism -- Problematics and Paradoxes

4.1. The West's Shadow

Certain aesthetic contrasts mentioned in the previous chapter constructed by Sa'adah and then carried onward by the Beiruti modernists, such as cultural privileging of supposedly more "advanced" music of Beethoven and other western classical composers over allegedly more "primitive" music of popular Arab singers such as Umm Kulthum, might arguably suggest Sinan Antoon's accusations that Adunis is a sycophant of the west who simply "rehashes stale Orientalist notions" are not altogether lacking in validity (Antoon). There are, meanwhile, repeated statements Adunis has made, and continues to make, at international public conferences such as ones in Brussels in 2016 to the effect that "... Islam was founded amid blood, violence and killing. ... Islam and democracy have nothing whatsoever in common". Adunis then went on to add that throughout history democracy has been more or less exclusively "a Hellenistic-Western notion" ("Roots and Causes of Islamic Violence?"). Statements such as this were a factor behind Antoon's condemnation of Adunis' activities as a public intellectual in Al-Jazeera English, which went as far as attacking the elder poet's personal character:

> … we might consider the column he has written for more than two decades for the Saudi-owned pan-Arab daily, al-Hayat. He never utters a word about the horrendous practices and politics of the Saudi regime, but often rehashes stale Orientalist notions about "the Arab mind" and reduces the complex problems and challenges facing the Arab world to the need for a reinterpretation of religion. Arabs, he insists, are still imprisoned in the past and the concept of the individual does not even exist in Arabo-Islamic culture, as Arabs have yet to rebel against

> the super tribe. He sadly sounds like a fusion of Bernard Lewis and Irshad Manji. Some read these sorry statements as a symptom of his obsession with the Nobel Prize and a form of active lobbying for it since it would surely endear him to the committee to pose as the lone voice in the wilderness, even though there are hundreds of voices. When he was asked by the New York Times last year about the Nobel, he claimed that he was indifferent and didn't want to talk about it. But in the Arab World, it has become a joke. (Antoon)

With Sa'adah, moreover, the frequent favoring of western cultural traditions over eastern is often quite overt. A central motif of Sa'adah's Syrian Social Nationalist Party platform was neo-Romantic idealization of the history of the Fertile Crescent, or what he designated as "Greater Syria", and its lengthy millennia spent prior to Islam as a cradle of sophisticated and powerful urban-imperial civilizations such as Sumeria, Ugarit, Akkad, Babylon and Assyria. Sa'adah emphatically refuses to culturally align his construct of a "Greater Syria" with the rest of the Arab world and the "east".

> ...Syria is not an eastern nation. And indeed it does not possess an eastern psyche. And if Syrians became enamored of singing the praises of 'eastern excellences' that arrived to them in a mixture from literature of India, the Iranians and the Arabs, this did nothing except to cause the disintegration of their (authentic cultural) view of life and the loss of their (true) higher (cultural) exemplars among successive waves of (eastern) conquests and disruption of Syrian societal and psychological life. (Al-Sira' al-Fikri 20)

For Sa'adah the true identity of "Greater Syria", as such, lies entirely within its ancient

pre-Islamic pagan heritage rather than its later Arab-Islamic one. Sa'adah then rhetorically goes further toward the Occident in al-Sira' al-Fikri by asserting that "the Syrian intellect" was the primary cultural progenitor of the west itself and the original shaper of "its cultural foundations, material and spiritual", via Greco-Roman adoption of its innovations. Among such innovations cited by Sa'adah are the first phonetic alphabets, for which "no small number of biased historians have tried to forbid her [Syria] from the pride of having invented them" (61). Tablets unearthed by archaeologists in Ras Shamra and elsewhere also demonstrate, he asserts, that it was also "Greater Syria" that developed history's first classical body of poetics and mythological narratives well.

> ...classical poetry began in Syria, and the Greeks carried it from there – (the Greeks) who collaborated with the Romans in refusing Syria its due credit for (its critical role) in human innovation, and (its) leadership of human thought. (61)

For Sa'adah, the subsequent coming of Islam and the peninsular Bedouin Arabs to Syria is an entirely negative cultural event. He portrays it as ushering in a millennia and half of "confusion of the Syrian psyche," and a "dark obscurity that has surrounded it ever since it went astray from its original authentic axis beneath the effect of the barbarian conquests which cut off Syrian literature from its (true) psychological principles" (60-61).

Contemporary Arab-Islamic aesthetics and poetics, furthermore, by and large offer Syrians only "superstitions empty of philosophical import, and (empty) of connection with the stream of elevated human thought and emotion...", according to Sa'adah. As such they altogether fail to provide the "Syrian soul..." with "anything of its (authentic) traits or origins" and, therefore, can be no legitimate substitute for Syria's "original myths" which, by contrast, do

contain true “philosophical value concerning human existence” (60-61).

More often than not Sa'adah does avoid casting his presumptions of western cultural superiority over the east in essentialist terms:

> … human nature is one in the entirety of all races and nations, even if temperaments vary. Emotions of love and hate, graciousness and cruelty, happiness and sadness, and the causes of delight, meditation, entertainment, thought, ambition and contentment and what results from the entirety of them in terms of psychological upheavals, enthusiasms, and imaginings that words fall short of describing, all of these are one in the entirety of nations in the east and west, and there is no difference between them except in the degree of the attentiveness and elevation of psyches, and the force of their feelings, or their sluggishness, decadence and lack of feeling. (Mabadi’ al-Hizb 33)

Sa'adah also denounces more extreme ideologies of western racial superiority in vogue during that era. “… and what is to be said about Germany,” he writes in a pointed reference to Nazism. “Is it not a mixture of about three ethnic lineages, whose ancestral traits vary in the north, south and center, notwithstanding all that is spoken there about the purity of Aryan blood?” (Nushu' al-Umam 169). “… as for calling for a purity of one descent or blood,” he writes elsewhere, “this is a superstition without any veracity in any nation among nations whatsoever, except only rarely in savage societies, and it does not exist (whatsoever) except within them” (Mabadi' al-Hizb 28).

By no means, however, does Sa'adah altogether forego notions of innate superiority of some races over others.

> And with all this, there is still no doubt of acknowledging, in reality, ancestral differences, and the existence of cultured bloodlines and baser bloodlines, and the principle of both [mutual] relatedness and difference between bloodlines and descents. And upon this principle it is possible for us to understand the reasons for the psychological superiority of the Syrians, which is not attributable to unrestrained (racial) mixing but rather to the particular type of harmonious and distinguished mixture, which is also strongly harmonized with the particularity of the natural (geographic) environment. (Mabadi' al-Hizb 29)

However if one places a spotlight on comments by Adunis in such vein as the ones mentioned at this chapter's beginning, or pro-western sentiments of Sa'adah in the domain of art and culture, then one should also perhaps make note of times when both go in opposite directions. While Adunis can be rather scathing of the Arab world at times, he has demonstrated himself to be equally capable of this in regards to the west. The following passage from his public letter to Bashar Al-Asad displays an attitude of deep suspicion towards western designs quite common among contemporary Arab intellectuals as a whole.

> I know, and many others beside me know, that the west -- and especially the American -- does not fight to defend the Syrian people and does not defend human rights inside Syria. Indeed it fights to defend its strategies and interests. But it is blessed with the good fortune of the excuse that Syria provides to it [i.e. the excuse of ongoing human rights abuses inside Syria], and the rationalization that it grants in order to mask its new colonialism with (the call) of defending the human being and their rights... ("Risalah Maftuhah")

As discussed in chapter two, though in his Introduction to Arab Poetics Adunis takes a stand against the kinds of blanket condemnations of western culture and society that are frequent in contemporary Arab discourse, he does display a wary stance toward western scientific rationalism, and a significantly more negative one towards western mass capitalism. Western capitalism in particular comes in for strong criticism from him, as well as the Arab world's wholesale adoption of many of its systems and structures. Adoption of western-style capitalism is, according to Adunis, one of the factors that has caused the Arab World to "concoct an illusory, specious modernity which is embodied" among other things "in the importation of modern manufactured goods" on the "practical, day-to-day level..." (Introduction 85).

> The technical, mechanical aspect of modernity is turning our lives into a desert of imported goods and consumption, eating away at us from within and distracting us from thinking about our own distinctive powers of invention. (85)

Throughout the final chapter of the Introduction to Arab Poetics, in turn, Adunis is emphatic that Arab society must create modernity out of its own self rather than any foreign "other".

> … The new in Arabic poetry…, however unequivocal its formal break with the past may appear, is nevertheless identifiably Arab in character; by this I mean it cannot be understood or evaluated within the context of French or English modernism, or according to their criteria, but must be seen in the context of Arab creativity and judged by the standards of artistic innovation particular to Arabic. (100)

If achievement of such an aware and self-critical indigenous modernity is not achieved,

Adunis warns elsewhere in the Introduction, “modernity in Arab society will always be a commodity imported in some underhand way. The society itself will remain a carriage rumbling and swaying along in the wake of the train of Western hegemony...” (89).

It is elements such as these within Adunis' writings that Abu Zeid cites as counter-evidence against Antoon's accusations that Adunis is a sycophant of the west:

> … Antoon portrays Adunis as someone who loathes Arab culture and is constantly fawning after the West. What Antoon fails to note is that Adunis’ critical prose writings are not only critiques of Arab culture, but also hymns to it. Innovative, vital thinkers can be found in abundance in Arab history, according to Adunis; this is the other half of his prose writings, the half that praises poets and thinkers such as Abu Tammam, Ibn al-‘Arabi, al-Mutanabbi, al-Qadi al-Jurjani, and al-Razi, to name just a few. Nowhere in his critical writings does Adunis claim that the Arab world should imitate the West, a cultural realm that he often portrays as overly consumerist and materialistic. Rather, he decries what he sees as the West’s domination of Arab life, and calls for a return to and a revaluation of those Arab thinkers that he believes represent the innovative current in Arab cultural history. (Abu Zeid)

Sa’adah, for his part, was jailed three times by the French colonial regime in Lebanon and Syria for his opposition to it, and at one point sentenced to no less than six years imprisonment. This was an opposition which he was willing to publicly state in unequivocable and unyielding terms.

> ...Syrians are a nation, and it alone is the rightful master in regards to rulership of

> every inch of (the nation's) land, the disposal of it and decisions in its affairs. ...
>
> Those who do not say that Syria is for the Syrians, and that Syrians are not a complete nation commit the crime of stripping Syrians of their rights of ruling themselves and their nation, and the Syrian National Socialist Party declares them, in the name of millions of Syrians that yearn for freedom, and desire life and elevation upward, to be criminals. (Mabadi' al-Hizb 14-15)

Adunis' emphasis in the Introduction to Arab Poetics on the critical need to create a modern Arab cultural selfhood that is ultimately independent of all outside criteria, western or otherwise, finds echoes of a sort within certain political passages by Sa'adah almost half a century earlier. "The higher principles which they [Syrians] wish to achieve are... principles that grow out of their own selfhood – from their (own) special temperament and talents..." he writes in Mabadi' al-Ḥizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima'i wa-Ghayatuh ('The Principles and Mission of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party'). "... Based on this principle," he asserts, his party will not accept whatsoever "for any person or party other than Syrians the right to speak in the name of Syrian interests in domestic or international affairs, or to incorporate the path of Syrian interests into the interests of (an entity) other than the Syrian nation" (19-20). This is, perhaps, a pointed reference to public justifications put forth at times by both French and British occupation forces that they had come to the Fertile Crescent not to "colonize" its peoples, but merely to chaperone and "safeguard" the interests of "underdeveloped" populations that were, or so it was alleged, incapable of self-governance.

Neither, in respect to Sa'adah, is his ideological separation of Syria and the Fertile Crescent from the larger Arab World or his cultural linking of it with west more than east a

significantly eccentric position by his era's standards either. This is one area where Adunis and Sa'adah do diverge. Although Adunis' critical thought does, in a way, loosely mirror Sa'adah's by its frequent privileging of the aesthetics of the Arab world's urban elite cultures over its rural and tribal ones, he does not single out any one geographical region of the Arab World above others in order to claim particular cultural distinction for it. Rather, as with most other Arab intellectuals today, his critical writings tend to embrace a pan-Arab cultural identity based on the sharing of a common language throughout the Middle East and North Africa. As for Sa'adah's era however, as Asher Kaufman notes, the idea of a greater "Syrian, non-Arab" nation had in fact already been in existence among certain major intellectual currents of the region for at least three decades prior to Sa'adah's own founding of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (7-8).

Prior to the coming of the French and their administrative separation of Lebanon from the rest of the Levant, most local Christian intellectuals, like Sa'adah, identified themselves primarily as part of a larger "Syrian" cultural and sociopolitical entity (Kaufman 8). In the early 20th century Pan-Arabism, today the undisputed ideological norm in Arab political and intellectual life even if it has never been effectively put into actual practice on the ground, had not yet become the more or less unquestioned consensus among Middle Eastern intellectuals and publics it is today. At the time of Sa'adah's final public confrontations with the Lebanese government and his ultimate demise by firing squad in 1949, in fact, Pan-Arabism's initial ideological upsurge was only a few decades old. "… before 1908," notes Kaufman, "the designation 'Arab' was still associated with Bedouins and the desert, despite the 'awakening' of the Arab literary movement" (8). Pejorative usage of the term "Arab" as an association for "backward" Bedouin and village cultures is a repeating trope in Sa'adah's own writings.

> … For many years, historians of the Middle East gave much weight to the Arab identity as a powerful political force in the Arab provinces of the declining Ottoman empire. … This interpretation also viewed most of the political developments in the Middle East at that time as *reactions* and *responses* to the increase in Arab sentiments. Thus, the rise of non-Arab sentiments among some Lebanese Christians was also seen as a reaction to the growing strength of Arabism rather than as an independent desire emanating from a socio-political reality within Lebanon.
>
> However, it has been long understood that this kind of interpretation overemphasized the strength of Arabism, under-emphasized the power of loyalty to the Ottoman empire and almost entirely disregarded local territorial sentiments in geographical Syria. … Arab national sentiments, founded on the writings of Islamic reformists, existed before 1914, but by no means did they win the overwhelming support of the local elite. This elite turned Arabist only with the fall of the empire, after 1918. (Kaufman 6-7)

As Egyptian intellectual Taha Hussein's well-known calls in the 1920s and 1930s for his country to distance itself from the Arab-Islamic portions of its identity and rediscover its pre-Islamic "Pharaonic" roots bear evidence, it was not only in the Levant that regional movements based on local rather than pan-Arab identity were to be found during those previous times. Meanwhile during that era, numerous intellectuals and leaders among Lebanon's sizeable and influential Christian population were, arguably, even significantly more culturally pro-western in their sentiments than Sa'adah himself. A commonly-professed identity among Lebanese

Christians, and the Maronite Christians in particular, was that of self-proclaimed descent from ancient seafaring Phoenicians rather than Arabs, with an often-accompanying rhetorical implication that their cultural ties with the ancient Greco-Roman Mediterranean, and later Christian Europe, were ultimately stronger than those with Asia and the Arab realm (Kaufman 3-5, 26-7). Although Sa'adah was, quite arguably, markedly more cool and distant towards the west than many of his Christian Lebanese peers on the political level though not the aesthetic one, he too utilized this trope of ancient pre-Islamic "Phoenician" identity as a central ingredient of his own writings within Al-Sira' al-Fikri, Nushu' al-Umam and Mabadi' al-Hizb, and argued that it was a substantially more important component of "Greater Syrian" identity throughout the Levant and Fertile Crescent than later Arab-Islamic elements.

It is also arguable that Adunis' constant denunciations of the state of contemporary Arab culture, another salient reason for Antoon's lambasting him as a tool of the west, stand as rather unremarkable within overall currents of earlier 20th century Arab intellectual discourse. Throughout not only those periods but more recent decades as well, Stephan Sheehi notes, it has been a frequent theme among Arab public thinkers to deplore the supposed deficiencies of their culture vis-à-vis modernity. This has resulted, Sheehi asserts, in an ubiquitous discourse of self-alleged Arab "failure" and "backwardness" among Arab elites, in which they often contrast their own societies' presumed " 'ignorance, 'lack of unity' and… 'absence of democracy'" against purported Western qualities of "'progress,' 'civilization,' development, and modernity…" (Foundations 3).

> … post-1967 Arab intellectuals quite visibly have struggled with the "failure" of their own societies and states, often implicitly agreeing with… [Western

> discourses about supposed Arab cultural retardation]. The editorials written in English-language dailies such as the *Daily Star, Kuwait Times, Arab News,* or *al-Ahram Weekly,* written by mainstream indigenous intellectuals, analysts, journalists, and activists, confirm such an observation… intellectuals from Constantine Zurayk, Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm, and Nadim Bitar to Hisham Sharabi and Hazim Saghiyah might agree that the disempowerment of the Arabs cannot be separated from their cultural and political illiteracy. For them, the loss of Palestine in 1948 and the completion of their dispossession in 1967 are manifestations of a deeper and more fundamental failure inherent to modern Arab subjectivity. These tragedies were a result not only of the corruption and authoritarianism of Arab regimes but also the "backwardness" *(takhalluf)* and "ignorance" *(jahl)* of their own societies. More specifically, they conclude that Arab societies failed to break with their traditionalist and conservative tendencies, preventing them from internalizing the spirit of modernity in its most positive, humanistic, and even revolutionary forms. (2-3)

It appears that for 'Aflaq writing in 1943, this state of intellectual affairs is at least in part to blame on "no small number" of Arab thinkers and culturalists who "live among us in their bodies" while "their thoughts and souls are with the European countries..."(63).

> In our countries there is no small number of cultured people who are disfigured – in whose hands culture has become an instrument of harm. [Especially]...those who have lived in a familial and social midst which has lost an Arab spirit, then have learned in foreign institutes or western zones, and were deprived of Arab

> culture then... gave license to themselves to give opinions about the core (issues) of our national life, which they had (previously) lived as strangers from, ignorant and contemptuous towards it. (62)

"...there is no doubt, 'Aflaq comments ironically in another passage, "that this is a natural thing and... is attractive to them personally, because... [the west] is a strong, lofty world climbing upward, for its affairs concern the whole world and shake it, while the Arab world does not have this level of importance..." (63). 'Aflaq diagnoses the situation's cause and remedy in relatively straightforward terms. On the one hand, those Arabs who have an upbringing and past history that grounds them too weakly in their own native culture are vulnerable to negative influences from western culture, thereby leaving them susceptible, as 'Aflaq puts it in the passage above, to becoming intellectually "disfigured".

> Culture is not a static thing that enters the head and then becomes fixed, instead it is a movement and life that interacts with the person and affects him, it has needs, demands and necessities, and it has an environment in which it sprouts up and takes on meaning, so if western culture enters into an Arab intellect not equipped and armed with Arab culture, it transports it to a western life. (62-63)

On the other hand, 'Aflaq believes, those who have sufficiently strong rooting in their own native culture are not similarly at risk. Indeed they even stand to benefit from active exposure to and interaction with western culture in ways that those with weaker rooting in their native cultural soil are not capable of.

> ...Loss of the Arab spirit and Arab culture leads to a denuded culture. Thus the individual becomes weak and stripped, and the foreign culture enters upon

> them without there being before it anything to forbid, hinder or moderate it, and they become deprived of a personality and it dictates over them. Whereas an Arab individual's becoming cultured by the west is completely beneficial to them on condition that their personality has already been (previously) formed (in their own culture). For the Arab individual who (already) possesses his (native) spirit and culture, which will prevent their falling into error (within) western culture and will correct it, and who has the power to embody that culture in an intellectual embodiment that will make him ruler over it rather than ruled by it, it [i.e., western culture] becomes an instrument of his service and benefit. (62)

For Sheehi writing as a scholar in 2004 however the affair is not so clear-cut, and is due instead to issues that lie deeper, and that are more tangled and intransigent. So prevalent were such discursive tropes of Arab lack and "failure" in the modern era among 19th and 20th century Arab intellectuals from both "the right and left" across the full ideological spectrum from secularist to Islamist, Sheehi concludes, that they must lie at nothing other than the very foundations of modern Arab identity itself (Foundations 10 & 11). Key among themes within this cluster of discourse, according to Sheehi, is that of the Arab World as a ground of contestation between the twin poles of "progress" and "backwardness". As discussed in the previous chapter, this particular binary is also a common thread in the writings of Adunis, Sa'adah and 'Aflaq.

> The obsession of Arab and non-Arab thinkers, scholars, journalists, artists and activists with "failure" is not a coincidence but rather a preoccupation that finds its roots in the very formation of modern Arab subjectivity… These terms predominate because they are an outgrowth of paradigms inherent to modernity

> and built on… [this] dichotomy of progress and backwardness. (Sheehi, Foundations 3)

In many ways such paradigms are, Sheehi asserts, "inseparable from the very epistemology of… [modern Arab] selfhood" (11). For both Sheehi and Sari Makdisi, who is another critic of earlier 19th and 20th century Arab modernist paradigms, the point is not that Arab public thinkers who echoed and disseminated these themes were in any way deliberate agents of the west. In fact, western intrusion and domination was largely anathema to the vast majority of indigenous Arab thinkers engaged in these particular intellectual currents. However, asserts Makdisi, the fact these thinkers were nonetheless unconsciously engaging in discourses about modernity built on constructs such as "progress" and "backwardness", or social "advancement" and "underdevelopment" that had originally developed within modernity's initial rise in the west itself made their attempts to escape Occidental hegemony fundamentally problematic.

> … The problem here, of course, is not that nineteenth- and twentieth-century *Europeans* came to see Asia as... underdeveloped relative to a Eurocentric standard but that many Arabs (and other Asians) came to see *themselves* in precisely such terms. And even many of those who have refused to acknowledge such putative European superiority have nevertheless established their challenges to it in the very narrative and discursive terms that it has itself proposed and invented; hence, such challenges have more often than not been defused or negated by their participation in the very same conceptual and discursive system (of modernity) against which they seek to define themselves as oppositional. (88)

In close parallel to Makdisi, Sheehi asserts that the dichotomy of "progress" and

“backwardness” and notions that possession of “rationalism and secular knowledge are the authoritative signs” which serve as indispensable proof of a culture's stature within a new humanist world where the “universal endpoint is 'progress and civilization'” are all ultimately “criteria” that are, in the end, laid out and “based upon European predominance and mastery” above all else (Foundations 31, 32 & 33). As such, he maintains, these cultural dictates are inextricably tied to the west's colonial apparatus (34).

If Sheehi's framing of the situation is correct, then assertions such as 'Aflaq's that the Arabs have failed to combine realization of an identity that is compatible with the modern world along with one that is soundly indigenous in nature and not susceptible to western ideological pressures ultimately lie on shaky ground. For they are based on an erroneous “prevalent assumption” among many native intellectuals “that modern Arab identity” can actually be “separated from the dominant epistemology that it developed during the colonial era. Or, it presupposes that intellectuals could, in some way, have rejected European hegemony and formulated a sense of self that was separate from the West’s domineering presence” (10). In Sheehi's pessimistic view any modernist identity formed with an orientation toward “knowledge” and “progress” is thereby driven by paradigms inescapably intertwined within a western and colonial cultural worldview. This means, in other words, that intellectual separation between modern aspirations of upward “progress” and western cultural hegemony simply does not lie within the realm of possibility.

If accusations that Adunis has westernized and self-Orientalized are viewed within such a framework, then it can be readily argued that such accusations fail to take certain larger complexities and paradoxes of contemporary Arab intellectual history into account that go far

beyond Adunis as one individual thinker. As such, questions of whether Adunis is a "tool" of the west, a "champion" of Arab identity against that same west, or in self-contradictory fashion both at the same time inevitably tangle up inside broader coils of issues that cannot be readily parsed with polemics. Throughout the entire final chapter of Adunis' Introduction to Arab Poetics, in passages discussed at previous points in this dissertation, Adunis repeatedly walks a line between certain overtones of admiration for the west on the one hand, and a tangible measure of suspicion or even rejection of certain of its cultural aspects on the other. Such ambiguously circular Arab discursive tendencies vis-à-vis the west, Sheehi's and Makdisi's commentaries suggest, go back to the very fundaments of the 19th century Nahdah and the origins of Arab modernist discourse itself.

Such inescapable circularities show, perhaps, in Sa'adah's insistence within his nationalist party platform on a unique and ineradicable Syrian indigenous identity even as he conceptually places western culture at a level of definitive superiority in key ways, and in Adunis' insistence on a unique native Arab modernity that cannot be measured by outside standards even as he writes elsewhere that he "must also admit," as mentioned in chapter two, that " I did not discover this modernity in Arabic poetry from within the prevailing Arab cultural order and its systems of knowledge". Rather it was reading the work of western modernist poets such as Baudelaire and Mallarme which led him to discover the potentials for modernism which lay scattered at various locations within the Arab poetry of past ages, in the works of Arab poets such as Abu Tammam, Abu Nuwas and others (Introduction 81).

` Adunis asserts that he finds "no paradox" in this act of discovery of an "indigenous" Arab potential for modernism via readings into the history of western modernism (Introduction 81).

Within the theoretical framework Sheehi sets out, however, there is indeed a paradox – one pointing to a larger chain of inescapable contradictions within all 19th and 20th century constructions of Arab modernism itself.

4.2. Tomorrow's Intangible Ghosts

Another place of potential paradox within Adunis' work I would argue, one that quite arguably exists in Sa'adah's and 'Aflaq's as well, lies within the same elements that give his vision much of its compelling rhetorical appeal and sense of scope -- the totalistic open-ended sweep and quasi-mystical imagery with which he lays out his conceptualization of modernism. Adunis' construct of modernism, ventures Abu Zeid, is a particular type of entity which inherently and intransigently resists concrete definitions.

> "... revolution à la Adunis is less a single temporal event than a process. An examination of writings from even the earlier parts of Adunis' career reveal a preoccupation not with revolution per se, but the inauguration of what he calls a *revolutionary culture*. … The exact nature of this revolutionary culture is certainly up for debate. Much like Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, Adunis' revolutionary culture is a nebulous entity that seems to be in a constant state of flux, one that is incessantly turning back on itself and revaluing its own values. In a certain sense, it can therefore never fully be realized, for it is a never-ending project. (Abu Zeid)

Meanwhile, as noted in chapter two, one of Adunis' few concrete delineations of what poetic "modernism" actually is, is that it is the creative use of metaphor within language – a definition which in and of itself remains highly generalist. Adunis concludes his chapter on

"Poetics and Modernity" in his Introduction to Arab Poetics in similar intangibilist open-ended manner, with an ending statement to the effect that regardless of whether or not all aspects of our contemporary modern life could be said to be effectively characterized by "creativity", the human capacity for "creativity" nonetheless remains "eternally modern" (102).

Adunis' approach to cultural modernism as an aesthetics of perpetual mutability and evanescence that can never be pinned down at one definitive point harks back, once again, to Baudelaire's writings. Baudelaire, as discussed in chapter two, delineates the aesthetics of modernity by opposing them to the fixed formulas and norms of classical art, thereby presenting them as a dynamic quest to capture the more transient and fleeting aspects of human life and existence – the "fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable" (Painter of Modern Life 13). In this western-based interpretation of aesthetic modernism by Baudelaire, as discussed in chapter two, cutting of ties with past traditions and their preset rules is assumed to free the artist to plunge into immersion in the constant mutability of the here and now, and a quest for fixed, pre-prescribed classicist modes of achieving artistic transcendence is thereby replaced with artistic exploration of what is immanent, immediate, and constantly in flux within the world. Also discussed in chapter two was that just as Baudelaire shaped his own philosophy of modernism in large part by opposing it to more fixed schools of European classicism that he criticized as having tendencies towards stagnation and fossilization, so Adunis sets up traditional Qur'anic thought as the central opposite and antagonist of Arab "modernism", with his main premise being that classical orthodox Islam ultimately ossifies all things it engages with by freezing them within the motionless rigidities of its formalistic thought.

In other words, a central premise of both Adunis' and Baudelaire's versions of aesthetic

modernism is that to fix something is ultimately to petrify it – and, as such, to risk killing its spirit. It can be argued, however, that the very fact that Adunis' vision of modernity is all-encompassing and open-ended, and so often insistently vague in its rhetoric, makes it rather easy for him to claim, on rather intangible grounds as well, that a particular thinker he differs with has somehow not had the entire insight necessary to fully grasp modernity. Already mentioned in previous chapters were Adunis' repeated plaints that earlier thinkers of the Nahdah were not sufficiently capable of the task of formulating a genuine modernity in its entirety, his well-known polemical broadsides against antagonists in Adab magazine circles labeling them as intellectually-petrified "traditionalists" in the 1950s, and his much more recent intimations in an interview with a Danish TV channel, soft-spoken but nonetheless explicit, that he alone more or less among contemporary Arab poets has truly dedicated his life to building an entire "new world" of modernity in holistic form ("I Was Born for Poetry"). Once again such statements could be said to find past echoes of a kind in Sa'adah's mid-20th century denunciations in al-Sira' al-Fikri, also discussed previously, that other internationally prominent Arab writers and thinkers of his era had failed to answer the conceptual challenge of modernity and not intellectually grasped its full scope.

Makdisi notes of Tayyib Salih's description of the Nile at the end of Season of Migration to the North, discussed in chapter one, which Makdisi interprets as an allegory of modernism itself, that it "appears in the end to be incapable of deliverance" for the novel's main protagonist "– incapable of steady progress towards a predefined goal or objective" (86). Not only does Adunis' modernity potentially become a benchmark for which it can be claimed without too much concrete delineation or evidence that rival intellectual schools or thinkers have somehow

missed its mark; as Abu Zeid's characterization of Adunis' construct as "a never-ending project" that can "therefore never fully be realized" might suggest, it is also possible for this nebulous modernity to become a rather mirage-like goal, perpetually subject to the rhetorical argument that Arab society is still "one step away" from truly accomplishing it. This has been a key deficiency, according to Makdisi, of many previous Arab paradigms of modernity.

> … modernity was, from the beginning, not only inextricably associated with Europe: it was a "goal" that one could only define as a *future* condition, a *future* location, a *future* possibility. Modernity, in other words, is, on this account, always already displaced and deferred: it is always on the other side of the river, or up the stream – or up in the sky. (90)

The result, Makdisi states, is that in the Arab World up until today "modernity remains, as it has been from the beginning, a perpetually deferred future status rather than ever being, or becoming, an immediately apprehensible present one" (96). It can be argued that this critique of 19th and 20th century Arab modernisms being perpetually self-locked in a rhetorical state of incompletion finds resonances in Adunis' criticisms of the Arab Spring on grounds that none of its various insurgent movements brought anything sufficiently "modern" to the table of existing affairs, as well as all the controversial public assertions he has made, up until today, that Arab society has still failed the test of achieving a "true" modernity despite an abundance of profound technological and sociocultural changes that have taken place on the ground in that region ever since the 19th century. For it appears that Adunis, as with many modernist intellectuals of the 19th and early 20th century, cannot accept any evidence of change within Arab contemporary society as conclusive proof of modernity unless its signs and omens are, to use Sheehi's words,

“conspicuous”, “ostentatious” and spectacular rather than merely mundane and quotidian in appearance (Sheehi, Foundations 12)

Somewhat in tandem with this comes Badawi's criticism, mentioned in chapter two, that Adunis' particular brand of modernism seems at times to morph from being any type of tangible construct with “any kind of temporal significance” into a kind of very generalized and abstract moral “value judgement” (75-6). A case in point for Badawi's argument can be made in the following passage, in which Adunis counterposes his vision of modernism against the often-unsettling world of today created by western scientific modernity and its accompanying cult of rationalist progress.

> Thus I began to follow a path which was the opposite both of the scientific path, in the purely technical sense, and of the rationalism on which science is based, or what it gives rise to. Progress began to take on a different meaning in my mind. I gradually became aware that the essence of progress is human, that it is qualitative not quantitative, and that the Westerner who lives surrounded by computers and exposed to the latest in space travel is not necessarily any more advanced in any profound sense than the Arab peasant living among the trees and cattle. (Introduction 96)

There is no denying, of course, that in and of itself this passage is philosophically resonant and deeply poignant. As undeniably powerful as its assertions may be on a certain psychological level, however, it is devoid of specific markers by which to judge what the actual human “progress” it cites might be. Its rhetoric ultimately lies in a plane beyond either the refutable or the verifiable.

4.3. The Flattening of History

Whatever intangibilities Adunis gives to his conceptualization of Arab poetic modernism on the philosophical level, on the level of historical application as we have seen previously, he does hold some definite ideas about which Arab literary figures and movements meet his standards for being "modern", and which do not. It is in his specifications in this regard, or at least those in such works as Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil, that Antoon and Abu Zeid accuse him of engaging in "reductive binary thinking" (Abu Zeid). For example in order to construct his two historical poles of "static" or rigidly "fixed" tradition (al-thabit) on the one hand and mutable, flexible and dynamic "modernity" (al-mutahawwil) on the other, Adunis engages in sizeable amounts of grouping very disparate historical elements into a strictly bipolar system of opposing polemical baskets. This is at a risk, quite arguably, of ignoring the more variable complexities and ambiguities of medieval Arab history. On the side of the "mutahawwil", for example, Adunis coagulates together, among many other things, ultra-conservative medieval religious factions such as the Kharijites and Twelver Shia on the one hand and rebellious artists such as the incendiary 9th-century poet Abu Nuwas, who in fact defiantly flaunted conservative religious norms by writing verse in praise of wine and the erotic love of adolescent boys, simply on grounds that such extremely disparate cultural agents represent, each in their own particular way, critiques of mainstream Sunni orthodox authority, which Adunis almost invariably characterizes as a major component of al-thabit.

Echoes of this approach ring, perhaps, in Sa'adah's own rather dualist model for weeding out what are fit ingredients for Syrian cultural "progress" and what are not. His approach results,

it could be argued, in significant conceptual flattening out of the Arab world's cultural history. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Sa'adah divides the cultural history of the region into the urban realms of ancient pre-Islamic cosmopolitan city-states of the Levant and Fertile Crescent or "Greater Syria" such as Babylon, Nineveh and Phoenician urban centers of power and prestige such as Carthage and Sydon on the one hand, and the rural and desert-based Bedouin world of southward Arabia from which Islam originated on the other. Sa'adah then lauds the era of the pre-Islamic city-states and the urban-led empires that emerged from them as an embodiment of an upward trajectory of sociocultural progress, while presenting their polar opposite of "stagnation" by lumping Islam together with the tribal ethos of the nomadic peoples of the region, designating these in tandem as a primitive, atavistic force that, he maintains, plunged the region into a millennium and a half of cultural backwardness and retardation with its rise to political power in the 7th century A.D. Though Islam did begin in the Arabian peninsula, however, as the following passage by historian Jonathan Berkey shows, recent generations of scholars have come to generally agree that the bulk of the coalescence and formation of Islam as the religion and set of practices we know today took place in the Levant and the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and Iran.

> ...the connection between Arabia and its people and their culture, on the one hand, and Islam on the other, is problematic. The religious tradition which we now identify as "Islam" may have begun in an Arabian context, and certainly that context remained central to the later development of the religion for any number of reasons. … But is it useful to think of Islam as principally a *product* of Arabia, as the Islamic tradition does? Certainly the demographic and cultural center of

> gravity in the Islamic world quickly moved beyond the Arabian peninsula. … Arabia may be where Islam began, but the cultures and traditions of other areas, most notably the more populated regions of the Near East from Egypt to Iran, arguably played a more critical role in the subsequent delimitation of Islamic identity. (39)

As such, the history of the relationship between Sa'adah's "Greater Syria" and the Bedouin Arabs who first brought Islam to it is not at all one of mutual distinction and separation but instead one of a deep, sustained and complex intertwining. It is, furthermore, hardly the black and white history Sa'adah depicts in his own narrative.

It could be said that Adunis engages in similar flattening out of Arab history in, for example, the following passages of the Introduction to Arab Poetics. In them, as will be discussed further below, he quite arguably conducts extensive binarization and oversimplification of the complex and tangled institutions of authority of the medieval Arab-Islamic world. Adunis begins this sequence of paragraphs by characterizing elements of the medieval Arab "modernism" he believes existed in 8th and 9th century Baghdad under the 'Abbasid caliphate in terms which could also be used to describe the way many aesthetic modernist movements of the last two centuries of Arab and western history have seen themselves as well – that is, not only intellectually innovative, but profoundly anti-establishment, anti-authoritarian and egalitarian in spirit as well. "Its development in the eighth century," he asserts, "was bound up with the revolutionary movements demanding equality, justice and an end to discrimination between Muslims on grounds of race or colour. It was also closely connected with the intellectual movements engaged in a re-evaluation of traditional ideas and beliefs, especially in the area of

religion" (Introduction 75).

Adunis then contrasts such elements of his proposed 'Abbasid-era Arab "modernism" with what he sees as their opposite polarity, by portraying Islamic structures of religious and political authority and forces of traditionalism within his narrative as having been combined together into one more or less monadic, totalitarian entity.

> The dominant view was that the state was founded on a vision or message that was Islam. On the one hand, this state was constituted as a caliphate, in which the designated successor not only followed on from his predecessor but preserved the heritage and conformed to it in both theory and practice; on the other hand, it was a state formed of a single community, meaning that unanimity of opinion was an essential requirement. Politics and thought were religious; religion was one and permitted no divergence.
>
> This explains why for the most part those in power fought against these revolutionary and intellectual movements [of modernism]. Politically, they were considered a rebellion against religion because they attacked the caliphate, which represented religious authority. From an intellectual and philosophical point of view, their adherents were seen as heretics and apostates, either for restricting the role of religion in the teaching of virtue, or for denying the role of revelation in knowledge and saying that knowledge and truth were the business of reason.
>
> The authorities viewed the mystical elements in these movements as constituting an attack on the law and practice of Islam…
>
> To put it another way, those in power designated everyone who did not

> think according to the culture of the caliphate as 'the people of innovation' *(ahl al-ihdath)*, excluding them with this indictment of heresy from their Islamic affiliation. This explains how the terms *ihdath* (innovation) and *muhdath* (modern, new), used to characterize the poetry which violated the ancient poetic principles, came originally from the religious lexicon. Consequently we can see that the modern in poetry appeared to the ruling establishment as a political or intellectual attack on the culture of the regime and a rejection of the idealized standards of the ancient, and how, therefore, in Arab life the poetic has always been mixed up with the political and the religious, and indeed continues to be so. (76-7)

While similar to what Adunis states in the first paragraph there was, in that era, an Islamic public ideal of Muslims as one unified body of religious sentiment led by the reigning caliph as successor to the Prophet Muhammad and custodian of his revelation, there is ample historical evidence that this highly abstract notion, similar perhaps to modern-day American slogans of “E Pluribus Unum” or “One Nation Under God”, did not necessarily match a much more complicated and ambiguous real-life situation on the ground within the establishment institutions of medieval Islam. The 'Abbasid age, coming as it did only a few centuries after the death of the Prophet, was a period where contrary to the depiction above much of Islamic doctrine was not yet rigidly set, but still in a period of formative flux (Berkey 114). Meanwhile, rather than being monadic, authority over religion and politics lay largely fragmented within a web of uneasy tension between the imperial caliphate on the one hand and the conservative religious clergies of the mosques and Shariah courts on the other, known as the 'ulama. These two bodies of

establishment authority by no means existed in a unified state, but in fact stood quite distinct from each other. Though as institutions representing and acting on behalf of Islam they necessarily intertwined together to some degree, their coexistence was often fraught with mutual dissonance and antagonism, and at times was even openly hostile. A prominent example of this, for example, was a confrontation over religious doctrine and authority between the caliphs and the influential arch-conservative traditionalist cleric Ibn Hanbal, which led to his imprisonment and torture in the mid-ninth century.

> ... his opposition to the official creed [espoused by the caliph] was shared by other religious scholars, particularly the partisans of the Prophetic traditions (the *ahl al-hadith*) as the locus of authoritative religious knowledge and guidance. The position of the traditionalists and religious scholars grouped around Ibn Hanbal enjoyed considerable support among the population of Baghdad. (Berkey 127)

A major part of this cultural tension within structures of Islamic authority was due to the fact that the ‘ulama primarily originated from and were tied first and foremost not to the imperial court, but to the urban middle-class merchant bourgeoisie of Baghdad and other medieval cities of the era. “Much of Islamic law is designed to encourage the commercial spirit”, Berkey notes. “… the lawyers recognized the claims of ‘custom’ (‘*urf*) in the resolution of disputes and the setting of commercial standards – the custom, that is, of the urban marketplaces” (121-2). As such, the sentiments of the Islamic clergy of those times according to historians, contrary to whatever elitism Adunis’ depiction may either directly or indirectly imply were, though socially conservative, also often strongly populist and egalitarian.

> … Many of the jurists and scholars who shaped Islamic law were themselves

> merchants or from commercial families, and so the *shari'a* quite naturally reflects the tastes and priorities of the urban middle classes. Islamic law constitutes more a discursive tradition informed by competing principles than a fixed body of rules, and so generalizations are inevitably dangerous; but the values of thrift, a disciplined work ethic, and – within the limits imposed by a society in which a person's status was so contingent on that of a larger social or religious group – individual privacy, responsibility and initiative are readily apparent in the writings of the early jurists. (Berkey 121)

Meanwhile the 'Abbasid caliphal court itself, according to historians, aspired to emulate a very different cultural legacy than that of the urban middle-class 'ulama. It was also one which orthodox traditionalist Muslims today would also most likely find highly alien. This legacy was formed by the imperial customs and traditions of the ancient Iranian kings. When founding and constructing Baghdad as their new capital, the 'Abbasids deliberately constructed it near the older Iranian royal capital of Ctesiphon. "Everything about the city" of Baghdad, notes Berkey, " – its spatial arrangement and decoration, the ceremony of the caliphs and their courtiers within it, its very location not far from the old Iranian capital of Ctesiphon – signaled the unabashed absorption of pre-Islamic imperial traditions, as well as a sharpening of Iranian influence on the character of the civilization" (113).

> Seen from this tradition, the caliph was to be a major figure, successor to the Great King of the Iranian empire close to whose capital Baghdad was built. He even ought to have a certain religious aura, foreign to the spirit of Shari'ah as envisaged by the Piety-minded, but close to that of the old Sasanians. When the

> caliph was addressed – as he was – as the ‘shadow of God on earth’, the ‘ulama scholars could only be profoundly shocked. The Sasanian monarch, standing at the summit of the divinely ordained aristocratic society of the Mazdean tradition, had been held to be a special instrument of the divine will. He had been invested with the sacred divine glory, a mystic aura which represented the authority and power of God. Shar’i Islam, with its egalitarian insistence that all men were on the same level before God, could ill tolerate such a figure. Yet the courtly circles were willing to ascribe a very similar position to the caliph, only limiting themselves to language which did not go so far as to ascribe to him any part of actual divinity. (Hodgson 281)

The result, as Marshall Hodgson's description above indicates, was a fundamental conceptual split between the vision of Islam espoused by the ‘Abbasid rulers on the one hand, and that of the conservatively populist ‘ulama on the other, since the 'Abbasid “spirit” of imperial “absolutism remained profoundly contrary” to the shari’ah codes constructed and elaborated by the 'ulama (347).

> From the viewpoint of the Piety-minded, the ‘Abbasi regime represented at best a compromise with their pious ideals for Muslim society – and some aspects of ‘Abbasi rule, notably its arbitrariness, presented an extreme corruption of, or even a rude and alien intrusion into, the proper Islamic social order. The Piety-minded ‘ulama’ scholars proceeded to develop, in the form of Shari’ah law and of Shari’ah-minded disciplines harking back to Muhammad and to the Irano-Semitic monotheistic tradition generally, a programme of Islamic culture which

> allowed the ‘Abbasi caliphate at best a secondary role. ... Just as the Piety-minded ‘ulama’ were developing a comprehensive cultural pattern, so also did the society surrounding the caliphal court develop a comprehensive cultural pattern, in which the incipient culture of the Piety-minded could have, at best, only marginal relevance. This pattern – in contrast to that associated with the Shari’ah – was more aristocratic than populistic; it was based in large measure on agrarian traditions such as those which had been kept alive from Sasanian times among the landed gentry of the Iranian highlands, including Khurasan. (Hodgson 280)

In contrast to the overall narrative framework Adunis lays out in the passages cited earlier, historical evidence also indicates that a key portion of that era's currents of literary innovation, including much of the shift from older oral poetics to a new literate cosmopolite poetics, came from within the milieu of the 'Abbasid imperial court itself. Two poets in particular that Adunis labels as central to the evolution of a new poetics of “modernism” and anti-establishment “dissidence” within 'Abbasid Baghdad, Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam, were products of the caliphal patronage system. Far from being anti-elitist rebels, at least on a political level, they were court poets who made their living composing verse for the ‘Abbasid rulers. Abu Tammam was, during his lifetime, one of the 'Abbasid caliphs' premier political propagandists, celebrating their military victories and public executions of prominent political opponents in verse.

> The point of greatest splendor in the caliphal court was its patronage of letters. … Formal Arabic prose received its first great impulse with the translation of several Pahlavi works. … This prose was limpid, entertaining, and edifying; for

> some time such remained the norm of the Arabic prose honoured by the katib class, the courtiers and bureaucrats who supported the [caliphal] absolutism. They delighted in literature that was worldly-wise and informative and could add to the polish and brilliance of their sophisticated conversation – and of their official correspondence. The adab, the polite cultivation of that class, gave a large place to verbal brilliance and hence to literature.
>
> But at least as important as prose, for the adib and for the katibs generally, was poetry. (Hodgson 296)

Hodgson indicates that much of the new innovations in poetry were fueled by the 'Abbasid court literati's taking up of older forms of Arab Bedouin poetics and adapting them to the new needs and tastes of these literate urban audiences of the court – tastes which, whatever public pretentions the court might have had to leadership of higher religious concerns, were often profoundly and unabashedly worldly.

"Abu Nuwas of Basrah (and of Persian stock)," notes Hodgson, "was personally a libertine and dedicated his verse to love and wine. … he glorified licentiousness with an echo of such old-Arabian models as the love-prologue that initiated a Bedouin formal ode (*qasidah*); but he rejected the heroic grandeur that had gone with the qasidah in favour of a more intimate, even a pert and playful, relaxation. Abu-Nuwas dedicated much of his erotic verse to the love of youths, thus setting a fashion that was later to become fixed in some Islamicate circles even if the poet had no personal homosexual interests" (296).

> ... whether in its pre-Islamic Bedouin form or in the form it took when revived in the Arab garrison towns of Marwani times, that [older] tradition [of Arabian

> Bedouin poetics] was alien not just to the family heritage of most of the Muslims of ‘Abbasi times, nor even to the daily language, which was (if Arabic at all) an eroded, ‘settled’ Arabic ... More important, the Arabic poetic tradition was alien also to the deeply urban patterns of the bureaucracy and of the other elements in the population which now turned to honouring it. Hence among literary scholars … arose a school of collectors and editors of the old poetry, dedicated as much to its philological niceties as to its aesthetic delights; while the more poetically gifted, rebelling against the limits which interpreters of the tradition had thought to lay down for it, took up the sense of Arabic rhythm and image and the straightforward spirit with which the tradition confronted them and transmuted all that into a form and a mood more appropriate to the courtier, the katib, and even the merchant. (Hodgson 296-7)

Meanwhile, appetites and tastes of the 'Abbasid court sparked not just literary innovation, but innovations in the sciences as well.

> Already under al-Mansur, the caliphal court had come to patronize … learning of the most varied sorts. In contrast to Kufah and Basrah, which long remained important centres of the Arabic and Shar’i studies, Baghdad thus became a center not only of these studies but of natural science and metaphysics. The most famous works of medicine, mathematics, and astronomy, especially, were translated: probably first from Pahlavi and Syriac but then also from Sanskrit and Greek. …
>
> … With the patronage of al-Ma’mun, Baghdad soon became the greatest

> centre of such science and philosophy in the empire... (Hodgson 298)

As for circles of Islamist traditionalism which arose both under the ‘Abbasids and in subsequent medieval eras, according to Berkey, they arose in tension-laden semi-agonistic tandem with forces of political authority such as the aristocratic rulers of the royal courts and other military elites, sometimes alongside them and sometimes in opposition them.

> … The ascendance of a traditionalist outlook and the crystallization of the social status and authority of the religious elite, the ulama, should be read in part as a response of disenfranchised social elites representing, or claiming to represent, the older traditions of Islam, to the fractured new political arrangements and (in some cases) alien political powers. At the center, the authority of the ulama continued, for the moment anyway, to bump up against the power of the caliphal state or military regimes, which may be one reason why it sometimes manifested itself suddenly and violently, as in the crowds led by traditionalist followers of Ibn Hanbal. But elsewhere, as in the provinces, the authority of the ulama had clearer political implications. For example, the ulama families commanded a limited but effective authority through their control of the *qadis'* courts... The ulama’s authority, in other words, constituted one of the only effective checks to the potential tyranny of the alien military regimes which began to dominate the Muslim world in this period. As a result, the history of the Islamic world in the ensuing centuries would be to a large degree the history of the accommodation between the alien military regimes and the local ulama elite. (Berkey 150-1)

4.4. A Closing Counterpoint: Modernism as Middle Path with Nazik Al-Mala'ikah

For the sake of a brief contrast to such conceptualizations of modernism by Adunis and Sa'adah without necessarily taking sides, it is perhaps noteworthy to overview another central mid-20th century Arab literary modernist who largely embraces the same viewpoints about the supposed inadequacies of traditional Arab poetics as Adunis but then, from this starting point, proceeds down a path that leads to fundamentally different prescriptions for Arab poetic modernism. In the late 1940s Iraqi female poet Nazik al-Mala'ikah and her fellow countryman Badr Shakr Al-Sayyab were widely credited with being the very first poets to break with traditional Arabic metrical patterns and publish works in the unregulated "free verse" format that eventually became a cornerstone of Adunis' own modernist aesthetics. Like Adunis, Mala'ikah was also a staunch public defender of Arab modernist poetry against its traditionalist detractors.

"Do you see it as plausible, then," she wrote in response to cultural conservatives who labeled the free verse movement as frivolous, "that a movement could come to arise in a given society, and a whole generation of people could respond to it over a period of ten long, gradual years, without it possessing sociological roots that call out for it and decree its emergence? Is it even conceivable that this movement could spread forth out of depths of emptiness and silence without roots or ties, or causal factors" (41)?

Alongside Adunis and other modernists of the mid-20th century, Mala'ikah also emphatically believed that Arab culture had entered into a deep state of crisis, and that there was critical need for fundamental changes in aesthetics in order to respond to it.

> In reality the individuals who start movements of renewal in the Arab community (ummah) and create new [literary] forms, in fact do this in response to a psychological need that weighs down upon their being and calls out to them to

> fill the vacuum that they feel. And this vacuum does not arise except from the occurrence of a dangerous fracturing within some sectors of the domain the Arab community lives within. ...
>
> … And the truth is it is possible for us to count the free verse movement as a pure and genuine product of social factors in which the Arab community attempts to restore the structure of its ancient, richly-supplied intellect upon a modern foundation, with its affair in this matter being the affair of all movements of renewal which have issued forth into our life today, in all the various domains. (41-2)

Mala'ikah then goes on, in her diagnosis of traditional Arab poetics' contemporary state and its validity for the present and future, to echo Adunis in other ways as well. As with him, Mala'ikah declares that older Arab poetics have become, with the passage of centuries, rigid and artificialized. This product of previous cultural eras, she asserts, is now psychologically out of touch with the issues of the new age and, as such, no longer adequate to address the needs of contemporary Arab society and culture.

> As for the restrictions that narrow the horizons of the old metrical patterns, they threaten the contemporary individual with a hollow opulence and squandering of intellectual energy inside formalities that have no benefit to them, at a time when this individual is struggling to build and establish [new things], and towards intellectual works concerning the topics of this [contemporary] era. … The poet wishes to be motivated and to move forward. The problems of this age call to him and he does not have the time for opulent fetters or the vanities of

> mono-rhyme. (43)

Also, as with Adunis in his critiques of orthodox Islam and its Qur'anic and literary methodologies, Mala'ikah charges traditional schools of Arab poetics with the sin of seeking to arbitrarily fix Arab culture and verse into an unnaturally timeless mold, thereby petrifying it.

> … Indeed it is possible for us to view the [modernist] movement from other angles, and see in it a phenomenon of young people's sense of constriction from the halo of sacredness that Arab critics surround our literature with. And it is as if this [older] literature is perfection (in itself) with no further goal beyond it. And perhaps such sacralization is counted in the view of the [new] working generation as a kind of rigidity, and this includes the notion [that the previous literature is the exemplar] of achievement, perfection and attainment. And this is an idea that makes (further) work and effort in literature something for which there is no motive or benefit. And indeed our generation is weary of the contents of the old poetry, and when it found that the ghosts of the past were nesting in these (traditional) meters it chose to leave them for a period, to build a new poetic entity in new meters… (48)

"... the reality", she concludes in response to this, "is that life itself does not move forward in one mode only, and is not bound to a fixed conformity in its events, and instead flows without restriction…". Furthermore language itself, she adds, "which is the fount of all thought and poetry, does not follow formulas" (47).

Mala'ikah also parallels Adunis by asserting that such alleged failures by Arab traditionalism have led not only to cultural crisis in the contemporary era but have also, prior to

this, induced long centuries of a dark age and literary stagnation within Arab poetics in previous eras as well.

> And indeed this age of ours came in the tracks of a dark age in which superficial molds and hollow artifice, and forms that did not express any vital thing overcame Arabic poetry. And the modern poet found himself at the rear of generations of poets who wrote riddles, and obsolescence and [pointless] hemistiches... and all that indicates that they did not wish to convey a particular necessary subject to their readers – instead their concern was to create abstracted forms of only superficial value. (47-8)

However, although Mala'ikah diagnoses the cultural crisis at hand in highly similar terms to Adunis, her prescription for it is profoundly different. It is from this point onward that Mala'ikah goes into a fundamental divergence from Adunis. For her response to traditionalism is one of mediation and compromise with it, rather than one of confrontation or calls for cultural overthrow. For Mala'ikah, despite all her criticisms of poetic traditionalism on various counts, it still has a fundamental and necessary role to play within Arab culture at large. Meanwhile literary audiences that support and adhere to traditionalism, she states, are by no means to be condemned. For her their wary and at-times hostile reactions towards modernism, regardless of how much they should be contested at times, are nonetheless part of a larger necessary instinct all societies require for the sake of their own self-sustainment and cultural continuity.

> … there is no doubt that a thoughtful view of the sociological would make us less full of blame toward the multitudes. For in reality this conservatism is nothing other than the voice of cohesion and a sense of origins within the character of the

> Arab community, which refuses to simply collapse in the face of each and every new idea presented. For if not for this, then it would no longer be a community and it would not be possible for it to preserve its heritage. (37-8)

In the interaction of free verse with traditionalism, Mala'ikah asserts, what is called for is not its supplanting or erasure, but its supplementation instead, with traditional verse and modernist verse thereby playing a necessary joint role alongside each other. For Mala'ikah, in the end, there can be no all-or-nothing claim that either poetic modernism *or* traditionalism, in and of itself, is the sole answer to the challenges Arab culture faces in the contemporary era.

> And indeed it is important for us to point out that the free verse movement in its correct, clear form is not a call to completely discard the (traditional) linear meters, and it does not aim to put an end to the poetic measures of Al-Khalil [a famous medieval grammarian of verse] and take their place. And indeed all that it aimed for was to invent a new mode that it can establish alongside the old way, and seek assistance from in (addressing) some of the topics of this complicated age. And I do not think it hidden to some of those who follow this subject that some topics benefit more from the old verse meters than from the free meter. And because of this we do not see a reason to pardon the inclination of some of the newly emerging poets towards writing all of their poetry in the free verse meter. (49)

Meanwhile Mala'ikah warns her readers of "extremism" within the Arab modernist free verse movement itself.

> As for today, we are somewhat alarmed for the free verse movement. This

> intemperateness which accompanies it alarms us, and the stridency and fanaticism with which some of its enthusiastic supporters write, who have reckoned that warring upon our older literatures should be part of the goals of free verse – as if it were possible, unconditionally, for us to create something which our gifted ancestors did not already have a share in laying out the path for along the (previous) thousand years. And the reality is that the free verse movement will not gain anchor within our history until the modern poet realizes that his old heritage is, indeed, that which was the wellspring that drove him to new inventiveness. And perhaps rejection of the old and overzealousness in turning away in aversion from it is one of the symptoms of a weakness in self-confidence among nations. (49)

As such Mala'ikah -- very much unlike Adunis, Sa'adah, or 'Aflaq with his notion of inqilaab or cultural and political "overthrow" – seems to envision the dynamic of Arab cultural modernism as one of steady progress and development and incremental, organic change in stages rather than any sweeping revolution. For Mala'ikah, Arab poetic modernism is a movement that should, ideally, seek to mutually interact with previous currents of Arab traditionalism rather than attempt to bring about their obsolescence. Furthermore it is a movement that, rather than seeing itself within the grand scale of Arab cultural history as a whole as a sort of overarching pivot, sees itself modestly as merely "a small point" in a much larger and "venerable literary history" (50).

CHAPTER 5 : The Ambiguous Domain Between Progress and the Antinomian

5.1. An Initial Overview

Besides being among the Arab world's most prominent spokesmen of artistic "modernism" over the past several decades, Adunis has also been among the most ambitious archivists of Arab-Islamic history's cultural currents of antinomianism and dissidence. Many other Arab poets, both modern and ancient, have incorporated "outsider" tropes of rebellion and antinomianism into their verse. Few if any, however, have devoted as many hundreds of pages as Adunis has, in Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil and elsewhere in his critical writings, to theorizing about Arab history's various figureheads and movements of dissidence including, to list a few categories, its anti-orthodox religious visionaries, iconoclastic literary thinkers, decadent poets and insurgent political men of action. Within Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil Adunis combines the Arab world's many historical outsider traditions together, as discussed in previous chapters, to form the second pole of the agonistic pairing within the work's title -- al-mutahawwil ('the mutable'). Al-mutahawwil, to summarize once again, is the particular half of the duality of the thabit or "fixed" and static traditionalist and orthodox elements of Arab culture on the one hand, and the mutahawwil or "mutable" and ever-shifting dissident and nonconformist elements on the other, that Adunis formulates as the primary wellspring of dynamism and innovation within Arab civilization.

It is in this construction by Adunis of his own personal philosophy of "revolutionary culture" built on "radical individualism," as Abu Zeid puts it, now standing today as central to his critical writings, that Adunis' thought fundamentally diverges from the particular strains of modernism espoused by Sa'adah and 'Aflaq (Abu Zeid). Both of the latter two, as was the case

with many other mid-20th century reformist and nationalist thinkers throughout the non-western world, were strongly communalist in their sentiments. Sa'adah and 'Aflaq were also highly negative, overall, in their opinions regarding cultural ideologies of individualism and nonconformism.

Within Abu Zeid's editorial response to Antoon's criticisms of Adunis after the latter's lukewarm reaction to the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring, he suggests that the Arab Spring's spontaneous mass populism and Adunis' own notion of "revolutionary culture" might, in fact, be structurally incompatible with each other.

> … Adunis' conception of "revolution," whatever one may think of it, cannot simply be equated with what is commonly referred to as political revolution, with the collective revolt against an existing system. (…the radical individualism that Adunis' revolutionary culture seems to imply might, in fact, preclude the very possibility of the sort of collective revolt that is happening across the Arab world today.) (Abu Zeid)

It cannot be said, however, that Adunis' break with the type of mid-20th century communalist sensibilities expressed by Sa'adah and 'Aflaq as reformists and nationalists is a complete one. As a consequence, this chapter will argue, within Adunis' writings and public statements two divergent rhetorics develop alongside each other. Many passages of Adunis' prose and verse are ardent odes to individualism and nonconformism that also, at times, appear to contain wariness towards mainstream masses and mainstream populism. Other comments by him, however, strongly parallel a general sensibility that pervades Sa'adah's and 'Aflaq's works – that humankind's narrative is, first and foremost, a neo-Hegelian chronicle of its larger

collectives and their successes or failures as nations and peoples in the task of accomplishing an upward climb towards "progress" and "mastery" that has been existentially mandated for them by the workings of history (Sheehi, Foundations 34). This is, in Adunis' own words, the duty of the larger Arab community as a collective to participate and compete alongside other cultures in "the building of the world" ("The Roots and Causes of Islamic Violence?").

Adunis' dual position in this regard, this chapter will further argue, has significant parallels with another particular group of early 20th-century Arab modernists: the Arab Romantics. They chose to undertake a major break of their own with the neo-Hegelian, rationalist mandates of the previous 19th-century Arab Nahdah reformist movement but, according to Sheehi, did not and could not abandon this positivist legacy of the Nahdah altogether. Adunis, for his part, cites the most famous Arab Romantic, Khalil Jibran, as the first poet to initiate a decisive and definitive move towards modernism within Arab verse (Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil 3: 157). Adunis also rebels against the Nahdah though, at least ostensibly, for different reasons than the Arab Romantics by claiming, as discussed in previous chapters, that it remained traditionalist at its core beneath its modernist veneer, and therefore was incapable of accomplishing the task of achieving the true modernity it aimed for.

Similar to many of their Romanticist counterparts in Europe one of the major aspirations of the Arab Romantics, who rose to prominence about a half century prior to Adunis, was to contest internationally dominant norms of Enlightenment-style rationalism culturally associated with the west. As with the western Romantics, they considered such rationalist orthodoxies to often ultimately be superficial, sterile, and at times negatively detrimental toward human life's more intuitive and spiritual aspects (Sheehi, "Modernism, Anxiety" 73). Sheehi argues that

despite this avowed goal of the Arab Romantics, the pressures of adapting to and confronting western sociocultural dominance and colonialism placed certain inherent psychological restraints upon them which made it impossible for them to simply renounce all ideologies of rationalist-based productivity and progress, unlike some of the more radical western modernist schools of aesthetics, such as the "decadents", that did in fact make a complete rupture. This was in large part because the Nahdah, which immediately proceeded the era of the Arab Romantics, had sought to contest western intrusion and western claims of its cultural superiority by installing a competing indigenous positivist narrative of self-capacity for progress and "Enlightenment" within Arab society itself. Sheehi argues that so deeply was this counterbalancing reaction by the Nahdah psychologically needed within the Arab world to provide ballast against the pressures of the western onslaught, and so deeply ingrained did this neo-Hegelian discourse instilled by the Nahdah into Arab culture become as a consequence, that the Romantics simply could not afford to abandon it altogether.

It is not the aim of this dissertation to psychoanalyze Adunis in the manner Sheehi seeks to do with the Arab Romantics in his own studies, but rather, to simply note the discursive parallels between him and them. For similar to the Arab Romantics before him, as will be discussed in this chapter, Adunis ends up straddling an in-between line of espousing an aesthetics of individualist antinomianism and nonconformity on the one hand, and an ideal of an Arab society duty-bound to cooperate as a collective to achieve upward social advancement and "progress" on the other. An echo of the Arab Romantics' earlier situation comes within a passage from Adunis' Introduction to Arab Poetics where he expresses deep ambivalence towards the modern western cult of rationalism. Within the same paragraphs, nonetheless, he retains the

accompanying modern Enlightenment notion of "progress" as a key trope, naming it explicitly.

> Scientific awareness created anxiety and insecurity in us, whereas our unconscious gave us certainty and reassurance. We considered science as a gain at the level of external progress, but a loss in terms of progress in the internal world of intimate human affairs...
>
> In this climate ... we began to pose our artistic questions in relation to science. For example, what does progress mean in poetry? Nothing. The idea of progress is fundamental to science but quite separate from artistic creativity. Thus we found something which was incompatible with science as progress but was not an irrelevance. *We began to deduce that scientific progress was not synonymous with progress as a whole and was therefore not to be used as a norm. Another sort of progress exists on a different level nearer to man and more expressive of the inwardness of his being.* (Introduction 93-94. Italics are mine.)

Although within these paragraphs the notion of "progress" is consciously and deliberately shifted out of the realm of positivism it nonetheless remains central and active within the passage's rhetoric, albeit on terms that have now become mysticist and pseudo-Romantic.

These two sets of cultural ideals, often agonistic towards each other, which Adunis and the Arab Romantics attempt to stand on a bridge between, echo what Calinescu describes as an ineradicable schism underlying western cultural modernism. According to Calinescu western modernity's powerful Enlightenment heritage, with its emphasis on scientific rationalism, utilitarianism and collective human "social progress" finds itself today in a state of "irreducible hostility" with western aesthetic modernist schools that evolved out of 18th and 19th century

Romanticism, with their frequent emphasis on the irrational, the intuitive and the antinomian. Whereas certain more radical western modernist artists who philosophically side with the latter half of this polarity have come to reject its Enlightenment opposite altogether, within their own particular non-western arena Adunis and the Arab Romantics end up occupying a more middle-of-the-road position.

In order to investigate further how Adunis' own "in-between" position in this regard compares and contrasts with western modernist aesthetics, he will be compared later on in this chapter with two particular western thinkers who both embraced antinomianism but take differing positions within it. The first is Baudelaire, who embraced a "decadent" poetics of antinomianism and was openly hostile towards the Enlightenment and its attendant cult of "progress". The second is British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner was also attracted to cultural aesthetics of antinomianism but, unlike Baudelaire, was a staunch humanist. Turner theorized elements of the antinomian or the "liminal", as it is termed within anthropology, as having a positive and beneficial role to play within the social and psychological workings of human collectives.

5.2. The Individual "Plural" and the Collective "One"

In the last pages of his Introduction to Arab Poetics Adunis wraps up his concluding formulations for the "Arab poetic modernity" he prescribes to counter the dire crisis he asserts confronts the Arab world today -- the "double siege" he believes has been placed upon it by Islamic orthodoxy on the one hand and encroaching western colonialism and capitalism on the other. Adunis thereby hopes to restore vitality to a culture he believes has largely become

enfeebled (81).

> If Arab poetic modernity is partly based on the liberation of what has been suppressed – that is, on the expression of desire – and on everything that undermines the existing repressive norms and values, and transcends them, then ideological concepts like 'authenticity', 'roots', 'heritage', 'renaissance' and 'identity' take on different meanings. *Traditional notions of the continuous, the coherent, the one, the complete, are replaced by the interrupted, the confused, the plural, the incomplete,* implying that the relationship between words and things is constantly changing: that is, there is always a gap between them which saying or writing the words cannot fill. This unbridgeable gap means that the questions 'What is knowledge?', 'What is truth?', 'What is poetry?' remain open, that knowledge is never complete and that truth is a continuing search. (101. Italics are mine)

In the Introduction to Arab Poetics repeated threads occur of such statements about urgent need to nurture discourses of the "plural", the open-ended and the "incomplete" in order to challenge other, more dominant discourses that claim to speak for truth and authority in contemporary Arab society. Existential rivalry between a static "one" and a mutable, ever-changing "plural" is, quite arguably, the most fundamental dichotomy underlying Adunis' thought about the nature and workings of Arab culture, with Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil standing as his most expansive treatment of this conceptual duality. Adunis argues that the two terms mentioned in the work's title, designated as the "fixed" or "permanent" and the "mutable" or "transitory", are essential cultural forces that have, ever since the coming of Islam, permeated

the Arab world and generated a fraught, conflict-ridden dialectic between rigid orthodoxy and traditionalism on the one hand, and innovation and dissent on the other. Furthermore, Adunis maintains, it is rigid traditionalism that has been historically dominant within Arab-Islamic civilization.

Opposition to the "fixed" or "permanent" within Adunis' thought also seems to translate into a broader philosophical opposition on his part to all monadic creeds of existential or sociocultural unity or homogeneity as well, whether secular or divine. "I stand with polytheism" and against "al-wahdaniyyah" Adunis declared in one television interview. ("Khalik bil-Bayt"). When used in a philosophical sense wahdaniyyah, from the Arabic root wahid or "one", refers in general to any kind of philosophical or ideological principle that decrees unison around a singular focal principle, and is most often used to refer specifically to monotheism. Along such lines comes Adunis' assertion in another interview, cited in chapter one, that the transition from polytheistic religions to monotheistic ones in ancient Europe and the Middle East was a setback for humankind as a whole.

Adunis' affirmation of the "plural" and his rejection of sociocultural ideologies of "unity" and "oneness" carries over into his assessment of the earliest age of Arab verse he holds to contain true roots of the artistic and cultural "modern". This is the shift from oral poetics of collective tribal identity to more literate and cosmopolitan verse that occurred within the early Islamic imperium's developing urban centers of the 8^{th}-10^{th} centuries AD. It is the disintegration of tight-knit holistic tribal identities and the emergence of a more aloof and fragmented urban cosmopolite individualism, for Adunis, that leads to the first clear emergence of an aesthetics of "modernism" within Arab verse.

> There was, in the social domain, the feeling that there was a chasm between the poet and the other, that he was alone and the other was a wall in his face. And social development and the increase of the population and the increase in their density and their gathering together in the "city" worked towards weakening the intimate connections between the poet and the other, and between him and nature. … Society became a thick, darkened lump that stood between the poet and the light, and thus his feelings increased that he was cast out, besieged, and choked. Yet his reactions were strong, varying between loneliness, scorn, aloofness and refusal. And in all this, he felt that he was living in a "time of monkeys", as Abu Nuwas expresses it, and at the same time his spirit sensed that he was ahead of his time and his contemporaries. And this sense accompanied an urgency to affirm (an aesthetic of) spiritual eruption, and individualism. (Diwan 1:43-44)

Adunis characterizes this move from a poetics of social unity to one of social individualism and sukhriyyah (social satire or 'scorn') as leading, on a philosophical level, away from a poetics of "acceptance" of the standing order of things into one of "questioning" instead (1:43, 1:44).

> ... in acceptance (there is) contentment and assurance and certainty; in questioning there is rebellion, refusal and doubt. Acceptance is joy and ease, questioning is anxiety and concern; acceptance is the sign of fixity, and questioning is the sign of mutability. (1:43)

The result, Adunis asserts, was that the "true poetic movement was no longer, amidst the

many inherited heaps (of tradition), tied to politics or morality or the pervading public customs, as much as it was tied to the movement of civilizational development (and progress)" (1:44). Poetry was now "exemplified socially by rejection of the dominant values, or at least a lack of viewing them as being described as complete (and) finalized. The (productive) illness of the age, in the domain of innovation, was the poet's compelling emotions of need for modernization and renewal" (1:43).

This philosophical bent towards individualism and dissent within Adunis' critical writings carries over into his choices for the genres and stylistics of his verses as a practicing poet. A prime example of this is the Arabic poetic genre of ritha' or lamentation, which Adunis has made a cornerstone of his own verse-writing. In ancient, longstanding Middle Eastern traditions both Arab and pre-Arab, the lament, "which stems in turn from a far older corpus, originating in such texts as the Sumerian 'Lament for Ur' and the 'Book of Lamentations' has been an important rhetorical and ritual means of expressing communal longings, and collective loss" (Creswell 251). As Creswell notes, this tradition of communal lament has been a central current of Arab poetry up until today.

> A more recent and relevant example... is Shawqi's elegy for Damascus, "Nakbat Dimashq", a poem composed on the occasion of the French shelling of Damascus to put down the Syrian Revolt of 1925-7. ... Shawqi's poem, one of his best-known poems of any genre, can be seen to lie behind a number of later texts, including [Nazik Al-Mala'ikah's iconic lament] "Cholera". … it ["Cholera"] makes a recognizably similar gesture, expressing the poet's sorrowful empathy for the suffering of fellow Arabs and a corollary invective against the colonizers. …

> Another contemporary strain of the collective *marthiya* was... written by Palestinian poets in the wake of the massacre of Kafr Qasim, in October, 1956. The most striking examples of these poems are Samih al-Qasim's "Kafr Qasim," and Mahmoud Darwish's later, Lorca-like series, "Azhar al-Damm [Flowers of Blood]... "The poetry of Kafr Qasim became, in a sense, a genre unto itself," Hoffman writes. "When a poet read his verse about the massacre aloud before a crowd it took on extra meaning, as though he were speaking not just for himself but for the group as a whole and as if the grisly event were not unique but the sum of so many others." (251-2)

In his own use of the elegy or lament genre however, Creswell notes, Adunis has steered markedly away from this communalist bent.

> For a poet such as Shawqi or al-Mala'ika, the *ritha'* provides the poet with an opportunity to express his or her solidarity with a collective ("Damascus", "Egypt"), to affirm communal ties at a moment of historical trauma and dispersion. The *marthiya* is thus an occasion of … a performance that establishes the poet and audience as a community of "one tongue". For Adonis, by contrast, the elegy registers a state of solitude. … Rather than a work of empathetic identification, it is a document of disaffiliation. (260)

Among typical personae that Adunis composes the elegies for are solitary, antinomian thinkers and visionaries such as the libertine 8th century poet Bashar Ibn Burd who, according to lore, was flogged to death for composing satirical verse attacking the caliph al-Mahdi.

> Do not cry for him, and leave him to the whip, and the mad caliph,

and call him the devil, or then, call him the plague,

for he is here, and still remains there,

bellowing through the deaf streets,

bellowing in our mute depths,

roaring like the earthquake …

(Aghani Mihyar 208)

The assorted collection of isolated, marginalized and often-suffering figures Adunis chooses to compose elegies for contains other previous poets from past ages of Arab history as well (247). "Elegies written for fellow poets are hardly unknown in Arabic literature," Creswell notes. "... but Adonis' single-mindedness in this respect is notable" (253). Another libertine poet eulogized in Aghani Mihyar is the 'Abbasid court poet Abu Nuwas, famous for verses dedicated to wine and eroticism.

… Let's leave ourselves, oh Abu Nuwas,

to the evenings that wrap us with cloaks and the traces (of bygone Bedouin campsites).

Our loved ones are tyrants, dissembling like the sky.

Leave ourselves to the beautiful torment, and the wind and its sparks. …

(205)

This pattern within Aghani Mihyar and elsewhere in Adunis' verse is, Creswell argues, part of a larger effort by him to establish a kind of "modernist counter-cannon, a heterodox tradition of the anathematized" to counter contemporary voices of authority and orthodoxy within Arab culture (256). This endeavor can also be seen, of course, in Al-Thabit wa al-

Mutahawwil with its dedication of approximately 750 pages to tracing and memorializing dissident and outlaw forces of Arab cultural history. Another subject of an elegy is the famous historical figure of exile ‘Abd al-Rahman, an 8th century Umayyad prince who fled to medieval Spain from Iraq after his entire clan was slaughtered by the 'Abbasid factions that had wrested control of the Islamic imperium away from them, and founded the first medieval Muslim kingdom there. Others include the controversial medieval Sufi martyr Al-Hallaj, gruesomely tortured and executed in public for heresy in 922 A.D., whose teachings remain a contentious subject among Sunni orthodox circles to this day.

> … Nothing remains for those coming from far away
> with echoes and death and ice
> in this land of Resurrection,
> nothing remains except for you and the Presence,
> oh language of Galilean thunder
> in this skin-deep land,
> oh poet of secrets and roots.
> (Aghani Mihyar 207)

As such, the “central poems of Aghani Mihyar” as such “are not national allegories but allegories of exile,” notes Creswell. “They rewrite earlier myths of rebirth in a lyric register, as episodes of *errance,* a series of journeys in which the speaking subject turns away, in disgust, melancholy, or anger, from a national collective...” (125-126). “I’m not the father of the world,” the Biblical Adam declares in an act of denunciation in Aghani Mihyar. “I’ve never glimpsed Heaven. …” (188). “He knew the others / so he threw his rock over them and turned round /

carrying the day's white spot (on his forehead) …", Adunis writes in a poem titled "The Others" in Aghani Mihyar (35). After turning away from these "others" the poem's protagonist continues onward to a place of solitude that appears to be self-appointed.

> … To (a place) where no one other than him is found he comes,
>
> At a place where he does not see the others he turned round,
>
> carrying the day's white spot (on his forehead),
>
> erasing the nearby page of the sky. …
>
> (35)

"My banner is (of) a party that does not fraternize or come together (with other parties)…" the narrative voice declares in "King of the Winds" (53). "Not God do I choose nor Satan," Mihyar declares, when asked to decide on a bond of allegiance:

> Both of them are walls.
>
> Both of them shut for me my eyes.
>
> Should I trade a wall for a wall?...
>
> (51)

Yet another poem in Aghani Mihyar announces self-appointed solitude as well:

> I live in these homeless words,
>
> and live, and my face is the companion of my face,
>
> and my face is my road.
>
> In your name oh earth that extends along its length,
>
> enchanted, alone,

In your name oh Death, oh friend.

(70)

The result both in verses about Mihyar and elegies by Adunis dedicated to other personae is a pantheon of figureheads "of suffering and marginalization" within Adunis' verse and critical writings that form a type of elite, solitary and heroic spiritual aristocracy of defiance and isolation (Creswell 247).

Oh you dead one upon the wood (of the cross),

my friend,

the flowers along the road have drawn your face,

and the threshold has walked behind your footsteps.

(Aghani Mihyar 209)

"Oh wound, oh dove of journeying, I named you the feather (i.e. quill-pen) and the book," Mihyar announces in one poem (44). Another poem in Aghani Mihyar addresses Odysseus, the iconic ancient Greek figure of wandering, warning him of irrevocable exile:

Even if you returned, Odysseus,

and even if the distances narrowed in upon you,

and the guide burned

in your grievous face

or your intimate terror,

You will remain a history of wandering,

you will remain in a land with no promised date,

you will remain in a land with no place to go back to,

Even if you returned, Odysseus.

(80)

Along these lines comes yet another famous figure Adunis portrays as an exemplar of existential pessimism and self-chosen isolation, the prominent world-spurning medieval aesthetic and poet Abu 'Ala al-Ma'ari. What is noteworthy here perhaps is that, along with the ‘Abbasid court poets Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam among others, Adunis has also chosen to designate al-Ma’ari as a supposed exemplar of Arab medieval “modernism” in his Introduction to Arab Poetics.

> … Al-Ma'ari establishes nothing, at the level of either language or meaning. On the contrary, all that he proposes only casts doubt on both of these: for him they are simply two ways of expressing futility and nothingness. He creates his world – if create is the right word – with death as his starting-point. Death is the one elixir, the redeemer. Life itself is only a death running its course. A person's clothes are his shroud; his house is his grave, his life his death, and his death his true life. In a variation on the theme, the poet says that a man's native land is a prison, death is his release from it, and the grave alone is secure. Therefore the best thing for him to do is to die like a tree which is pulled up by the roots and leaves neither roots nor branches behind it. Humanity is unadulterated filth and the earth cannot be purified unless mankind ceases to exist. The truth is that the most evil of trees is the one which has borne human

> beings. Death is a celebration of life. Man smells sweeter when he is dead, as musk when it is crushed releases all of its aroma. Moreover, the soul has an instinct for death, a perpetual desire to become wedded to it. (65-66)

Another depiction by Adunis of existential isolation and existential pessimism as a position of heroism comes in his commentaries on the pre-Islamic Bedouin poets who forged the oldest known corpus of Arabic verse.

> "If (only) the youth were stone": this wish that comes upon the tongue of Tamim Bin Muqbil is one of the fundamental keys to understanding Jahili [i.e., pre-Islamic] poetry. It is a watchpoint from which we look out upon its spiritual geography and its dimensions. ... this wish uncovers the Arab's sensation that life is fragile, quick to break. For it is "borrowed clothing," as Al-Afwah al-Uwwadi describes it, "corrupted by death" according to Ka'b bin Sa'd al-Ghinawi – the death which "courses through the soul" as the sun courses through the sky according to Qass bin Sa'idah. For man is the "the hostage of calamities" (Bishr bin Abi Khazim al-Asadi), and the grave is "the home" of the human (Duwayd bin Zayd), and the "true home" (Al-Afwah al-Uwwadi). As such, there is no true bliss – since what [in the end after all] is "the bliss of someone alive who is moving towards death" ('Uday bin Zayd al-'Abadi).
>
> … this uncovers the yearning to overcome fragility and death. And when the [pre-Islamic] Arab poet discovers himself, he discovers the absurdity of the world which, despite that (yearning), his fate is tied to. Thus his self develops into a double entity: There is no connection to it [i.e., the self] with what it

> contemplates [out in the world], and whenever it increases in contemplation of it, it increases in awareness of the chasm that separates it [i.e. the self] from it [i.e. the things of this world]. And when his split from things (of the world) becomes clear to him, his lack becomes apparent. As such, his thirst for completion cannot be accomplished except outside (of himself). He feels, as he shares in the existence of things (of the world), that he lives (only) temporarily. He suffers the torment of one who cannot relent in the end. Indeed he is outside of the world and outside of himself at the same time: melancholy and isolated, awaiting, fidgeting, adventuring, and wishing that he could overcome time, death and change, wishing that he could become stone.
>
> ... in his search for ways to escape, his movement is not religious activity towards a higher divinity that offers salvation. For he is tied to the earth searching, via his paganism, for elevation (and release) of another kind – that is, earthly elevation. There is nothing for him except the earth – he is sincere towards it and subject to its rhythm. (Diwan 1:22-23)

This is all quite far from the aesthetics of Sa'adah, who in large part chose the archaeologically unearthed myths written on the prehistoric clay tablets of Ras Shamra as seeds for his envisioned "national" Syrian literature because he perceived within them tropes that he believed offered uplifting moral exemplars to utilize for galvanizing a communalist and nationalist sense of "Greater Syrian" activism. In one passage of Al-Sira' al-Fikri, after narrating one of the heroic tales inscribed in the tablets, Sa'adah goes on to enumerate such virtues:

> … And each one of them [i.e. the gods depicted in the story] has a

> message to convey: The god of wisdom who reminds the people of (the virtue of) patience and calls them to surrender to destiny. And Adun, or Adunis of the classical Phoenicians, who fills their spirits with exuberance and enthusiasm for beauty and love. Then there is the goddess Amaat, servant of the powerful goddess Ishrat, who shows the people how to make clay bricks out of mud to build their houses. (63)

For Sa'adah, as such, the proper purpose of any indigenous "Greater Syrian" literature is emphatically that of moral tutorship and mobilization of the communal whole into a cohesive nation-state. This comes out in his criticisms of a poem by the Lebanese poet Shafiq Ma'louf titled " 'Abqar," a romantic poem with ancient Arabian legends about the world of spirits and apparitions incorporated into it. Sa'adah has no issue with the quality of the "poetic imagery" in Ma'louf's verses which, he concedes, "is admirable" (56). However, or so he asserts, the nature of the romantic liaisons presented in the poem fail because they offer readers no proper moral model for social progress and elevation as a collectivity.

> ... the conception (of its) exemplar is primordial, primitive – and it is (even) possible to call it ignorant or animalistic. For love, as the poet portrays it, is (merely) a biological instinct with all that it contains of (unthinking) inclinations and bodily longings, not an exemplary spiritual goal that takes from the biological matter (at hand) a ladder to reach the summit of its higher exemplar, where the spirit frees itself from the bonds of the (baser) need of maintaining the species and the (physical) pleasures of its affairs and erects a lofty spiritual structure for (the sake of) a nobler life, and where love's desire is for the greater

> social human happiness. (56)

Rather, Sa'adah maintains, the nature of human love as depicted within literature should be a means "for (achieving) the mutual embrace (and interlocking) of souls resolved to stand or fall together for the sake of achieving the higher aspiration for jihad ('struggle') against corruption and base things, and the triumph of total and complete truth, justice, beauty and love..." (56).

It is here in Adunis' bent away from aesthetics of communalism, and towards celebration of antinomianism, plurality, fragmentation and defiant individualism, and so forth, that he takes one of his more substantial divergences from Sa'adah, the hero of his youth. For as Creswell elaborates in a section titled "The Turn to Personalism" in his own study, in an era when many other mid-20th century Arab modernists and nationalists were predominantly thinking in terms of the larger group and polity, and maintenance of its cohesion and conformity for the sake of "progress" and a larger social good, Adunis and his Beiruti friend and colleague Yusuf al-Khal were among those steering Shi'r magazine and the Beiruti modernists on a markedly different path (77-96).

Meanwhile at a more general international level Frantz Fanon, one of the mid-20th century's most prominent critics of western colonialism and advocates for nonwestern revolution and reform, saw such creeds of individualism as a western-bred corruption.

> … The native intellectual had learnt from his masters that the individual ought to express himself fully. The colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native

> who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory. The very forms of the struggle will suggest to him a different vocabulary. Brother, sister, friend – these are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie, because for them my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on. ... Such a colonized intellectual, dusted over by colonial culture, will in the same way discover the substance of village assemblies, the cohesion of people's committees, and the extraordinary fruitfulness of local meetings and groupments. Henceforward, the interests of one will be the interests of all, for in concrete fact *everyone* will be discovered by the troops, *everyone* will be massacred – or *everyone* will be saved. The motto "look out for yourself," the atheist's method of salvation, is in this context forbidden. (47)

For 'Aflaq as well, any efforts to combat the "backward" state of mid-20th century Arab society and culture can leave little or no room for such individualism. He would have no general objection to such ideologies of individual subjectivity, he explains, if he were operating as an activist within a society in a state of sociopolitical "advancement" and "power" (69). This is because in such a society "the responsibility of the individual is lightened, as he has the power to benefit it but is incapable of harming it, and there is no contradiction as such, or major difference between his benefitting it or deriving benefit from it -- indeed these two benefits are woven together most of the time" (69).

> … And by means of the individual affirming his (own) personality, the personality of his community is (thereby) affirmed, and by establishing his private

> work he serves the general public life, and if he participates at certain specific times and limited occasions in public work, he knows that his participation, if added to the participation of others, leads in a sure and certain manner to the needed general result or what approximates it (for his society).
>
> That is, ... the community that is in this condition maintains dominance over its circumstances and its course to a large extent. Thus its life is positive, a series of (productive events) pouring forth, and it rises upward and it is (as easy and effortless for it) as if it, from the force of its momentum, were (actually) in a state of descent. And the individual is carried by its current in this upward rise and serves it without pain or cost. (69)

Within a society in a state of "backwardness and weakness" however, 'Aflaq asserts, such individualism has an opposite and altogether negative effect. Here in such a less-developed, subaltern society, he maintains, "the responsibility of the individual grows huge, as it is seen that each movement of (any one) of his movements has capacity to harm his community..." he asserts (69).

> … Thus his placing large importance upon his private life and personal benefit will not only be a neglect of his public duty of service [in such circumstances of social backwardness] – indeed most times [these backward circumstances will ensure that it is] directed in (antagonistic) opposition to it [i.e. the common good]. And the individual (who does this) is no longer a cell inside the body of the community if it consumes the nutriments (of that larger body) at the same time that it [i.e., the society] does. Instead rather (the individual)

> becomes an antagonist of that body, who does not grow strong except by making it weak, and does not grow fat except by starving it. … That is because the community, in this state, is on a passive course, subject to a series of factors and circumstances far and near, internal and foreign. Thus between the community and its interest, between its aspiration and its (actual) capability, lie confusions and contradictions. (69-70)

For his own part Sa'adah, in regards to men of letters specifically, warns several times in Al-Sira' al-Fikri against what he terms "individualist inclinations" among them, such as personal pursuit of individual differences in styles or themes in order to distinguish their work from those of other artists (72).

> Some of the deficiencies that block these literary men from taking up the new point of view towards life, existence and art are clear within the individualist inclination that I pointed out in Mr. Yusuf Ma'louf's letter to his younger kinsman, the poet Shafiq Ma'louf, when he says to him: "Take care in your coming compositions to be an inventor in what you move intuitively towards, whether in thought or deed, and to be imitated rather than an imitator in all your works. For it is upon this fundamental basis that the fame of a man stands in this life." And indeed I made clear, at the heart of this study (of mine), the mistakenness of this thinking which makes personal fame the aim of thought and work within life. And I add further here that this "fundamental basis" which the aforementioned poet's uncle put forth leads by its interpretation towards destruction of fundamental truths which necessarily must be the aim of all constructive thought and all living,

> beautiful emotion. Because whenever each and every well-known (thinker) comes to strive (only) to be imitated, how much will there be great sundering and chaos between those crowding against each other for (ownership of) “invention”, for the sake of fame and elevation over their comrades, who (thereby) become rivals? Does not this pressing up against each other and mutual contradiction arrive with them (in its wake) to the point of animosity, hatred and jealousy hidden behind … appearances of dissimulation and hypocrisy...? (71)

In the end, Sa’adah asserts, since the “golden basis, for which no other is valid, for bringing forth a renaissance in life and art” is the seeking out of the “greater fundamental truth for a more noble life in a more noble world”, the issue of who can claim the personal distinction of having been the very first discoverer or inventor of this original, fundamental truth is ultimately peripheral, and generally makes no difference whatsoever for society as a whole (72).

> … It makes no difference whether this truth will be your invention or my invention, or the invention of one other than you or I. And it makes no difference if this truth will come forth from a person of high social standing with wealth and influence, or if it will flow forth from an individual who is (simply) one of the people, because the aim must necessarily be the aforementioned greater truth and not the negative direction that individualistic, private, exploitative desires affirm. (72)

5.3. The Uneasy Bridge Between the Nahdah and Modernist Rebellion

As Adunis comes to diverge from Sa’adah, 'Aflaq and other mid-20th century Arab

modernist-nationalist thinkers of their kind in the ways mentioned in the previous section, the discursive space he moves into comes to have parallels with one of the more influential arenas of contestation within contemporary western theory and philosophy. There, as philosopher Thomas McCarthy observes, embracing the "plural" and the "constantly changing" as a counterweight to more monolithic discourses of the "one" and the "fixed" has been a constant theme, ever since Nietzsche, of the "counter-Enlightenment" schools of philosophy, along with other dissident movements that have sought to counter the dominant paradigms of rationalism and utilitarianism that have defined much of western mainstream society since the Enlightenment.

> To the necessity that characterizes reason in the Cartesian-Kantian view, the radical critics typically oppose the contingency and conventionality of the rules, criteria, and products of what counts as rational speech and action at any given time and place; to its universality, they oppose an irreducible plurality of incommensurable lifeworlds and forms of life, the irremediably "local" character of all truth, argument, and validity; to the apriori, the empirical; to certainty, fallibility; to unity, heterogeneity; to homogeneity, the fragmentary; to self-evident givenness ("presence"), universal mediation by different systems of signs (Saussure); to the unconditioned, a rejection of ultimate foundations in any form. ... (Habermas viii-ix.)

There is also the matter of how even though Adunis casts Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil as a conceptual work grounded solely upon Arab sources alone **(**Al-Thabit 1:23**)**, as mentioned in previous chapters those familiar with the western history of aesthetic modernity can quickly

notice that the terms of Adunis' duality that frames this work significantly overlap with the dichotomy developed by one of the west's key 19th century formulators of artistic modernism – Baudelaire, who has been cited by Adunis as a key influence on his own work as an Arab poet and thinker (Introduction 81). Over a century prior to Adunis, as discussed in chapter two, Baudelaire develops within his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" a key European modernist formulation that beneath all artistic activity there is a constant duality between forces of the "fixed" on the one hand and the "transitory" on the other. Baudelaire's western dualist model is accompanied by the same notion later posited by Adunis within an Arab context, that the "transitory" is the pole from which innovation in cultural aesthetics typically springs from.

In one important aspect of Adunis' formulation and application of this duality to Arab history, however, he differs significantly from Baudelaire. Within Baudelaire's own vision of artistic modernism he does not freight its polarity of the "plural" and the "fleeting" with the same sense of assertive moral mission Adunis does. For Baudelaire, more or less, both poles of the duality simply "are" and the modernism that results from currents of the "fleeting" and the "transient" simply "is", with no all-encompassing moral declaration implied by siding with this half of the polarity over the other – or, at least, not to the same degree as with Adunis' formulations in an Arab context.

Within Baudelaire's formulations, though there is tension of a sort between the two poles of the "classical" and "eternal" on the one hand and the "transient" or "modernist" on the other, there is no sense of inescapably violent historic conflict between them. Indeed, the two are fully united twins of one larger Janus-like entity. "The duality of art is a fatal consequence of the duality of man," he writes at one point. "Consider, if you will, the eternally subsisting portion as

the soul of art, and the variable element as its body" (Painter of Modern Life 3) As such, the issue for Baudelaire is not one of any innate battleground between these two poles of art. Rather, it is that European artists have simply been focusing on one side of the dualist equation, the "eternal", more than is necessary, and it is therefore time to even out the balance.

> This transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be despised or dispensed with. By neglecting it, you cannot fail to tumble into the abyss of an abstract and indeterminate beauty, like that of the first woman before the fall of man. (Painter of Modern Life 13)

Adunis, for his part, also acknowledges in passing at one point that the mutahawwil ('mutable') and the thabit ('fixed') are interdependent polarities that cannot exist without each other. (Al-Thabit 1:25) Nonetheless, within his critical writings the relationship between the two tends to be significantly more polemical and antagonistic in comparison to Baudelaire. Throughout his critical writings Adunis castigates various Arab modes of "traditionalism", whether tribalism, orthodox Islamism, or aesthetic conservatism, as stagnant and harmful to Arab culture.

> Because of the dominance of this 'fundamentalist' knowledge at the level of the establishment and those in power, the Arabs find themselves – in spite of all the changes of the past fourteen centuries – moving on a stage where history is repeating itself with just one objective: the continual actualization of the past.
>
> The reason this approach has gained in ascendancy is because 'modern' Arab thought has not confronted it in an analytical and critical manner and dismantled it completely. Perhaps it has not dared to, or perhaps it has preferred to

> work some kind of magic to make it vanish into thin air, which has quickly had the opposite effect. (Introduction 78-9)

Such repetitive focus on perceived negativities of traditionalism is not found within Baudelaire's oeuvre. Although Baudelaire was a champion of modernism on the artistic front, it is well-known that he was no believer in modernity's other narrative of a greater universal social "progress" in store for humankind. In fact Baudelaire, by all accounts, loathed such notions. Such distaste particularly comes out in his essays eulogizing Edgar Allen Poe.

> Poe, who was of good stock and who held moreover that his country's great disaster was to have no aristocracy of birth, granted, as he said, that among a people without an aristocracy the cult of Beauty could only be corrupted, cheapened and must finally disappear – Poe, who regarded Progress, that great idea of modern times, as an idiot's delight, and who called the 'perfections' of the human habitation 'scars' and 'rectangular obscenities' – this man found himself singularly alone in America. He believed only in the unchangeable, the eternal, the 'self-same', and – a thing which must be a cruel privilege in a society enamoured of itself! – he possessed that great Machiavellian common sense which marches ahead of the wise man, like a pillar of fire, across the desert of history. (Painter of Modern Life 73)

As the United States was internationally held up in the 19th-century as an epitome of western socioeconomic "progress", it was especially an object of scorn for Baudelaire. "That rabble of buyers and sellers, that nameless thing, that headless monster, that convict deported beyond the seas, a State?!" he exclaims mockingly at one point.

> The conclusion, I repeat, has been forced on me that Poe and his country were not on a level. As a country, the United States is like a gigantic child, naturally jealous of the continent. Proud of her material, abnormal and well-nigh monstrous development, this newcomer in history has simple faith in the all-powerfulness of industry; like some unhappy spirits among us, she is convinced that Industry will end by gobbling up the Devil. Time and money have so great a value over there! Material activity, inflated to the proportions of a natural form of madness, leaves the American mind with very little room for the things which are not of the earth. (Painter of Modern Life 72)

Though Adunis does not seem to share quite this degree of loathing towards such aspects of modern industrial-scientific culture, as seen in previous chapters his overall attitude towards it can still be quite negative. Meanwhile, though Adunis is not as bluntly or overtly elitist as Baudelaire, who in the above passages heaps denigration upon American "democracy" and declares the relationship between the writer and the larger public to be "a brotherhood based on contempt", at times a certain sense of cultural exclusivism can also be found within his own writings as well. This comes across in a passage part of which was mentioned previously in chapter three, where he summarizes the working principles of the poetic "modernism" he claims characterized early medieval Baghdad and its shift from tribal-oral to cosmopolitan-literate verse composition and audience reception. Along with its "insistence on the continual violation of established practice in order that poetry should always be strange and new in its language, structures, images and meanings," he states, this new poetic "modernity" required that a "vast cultural knowledge should be a prerequisite for every poet and critic" – implying thereby that

under these new cosmopolite “modernist” standards, the circle of participants in production and reception of verse necessarily became relatively limited and exclusive (Introduction 51).

> The reading and writing of poetry demand knowledge, expertise and intellectual discipline. Natural ability, skill in improvisation and mere linguistic knowledge are not enough. This principle led to the notion that poetry is not for everybody; its appreciation and practice are confined to a special group and it is difficult for those who are not of this group to understand it. (51)

Nonetheless as we have seen previously Adunis, antinomian individualist and quasi-elitist or not, does periodically hold onto paradigms of larger Arab communal “progress” as an important trope within much of his thought, as exemplified by the general rhetoric within his public calls for the Arab world to move towards practice of secularist democracy. This also comes across in the passage from his Introduction cited in this chapter's initial overview section. In it, even as Adunis expresses a wary distance from modern scientificism and its own particular discourse about the nature of social “progress”, he nonetheless speaks of another kind of cultural “progress” that “exists on a different level nearer to man...” (94). Adunis’ writings retain other tropes of sociocultural “progress”, “innovation”, and “revolution” as well. This appears, for example, in his assessment of the larger cultural impact of the Qur'an. In spite of his frequent anti-orthodox and anti-Sunni Muslim stances, Adunis nonetheless sees the emergence of the Qur'an as an unprecedented step of advancement for Islamic culture that, according to him, eventually set the stage for the poetic “modernism” of early medieval Baghdad.

> The Quran was not only a new way of seeing things and a new reading of mankind and the world, but also a new way of writing. As well as representing a

> break with the *Jahiliyya* [i.e. pre-Islamic era] on an epistemological level, it represented a break on the level of forms of expression. The Quranic text was a radical and complete departure: it formed the basis of the switch from an oral to a written culture – from a culture of intuition and improvisation to one of study and contemplation, and from a point of view which made contact with the pagan surface of existence to one which reached into its metaphysical depths. (Introduction 37)

Such passages demonstrate that unlike with Baudelaire, for Adunis humanity is emphatically not delineated by a "desert of history" that lies flattened out and homogenously eternal and timeless. Instead, he views human history as a dynamic one characterized by kinetic movements both of upward progress and downward retrogression. This shows for example in his adoption of a particular trope that is ubiquitous among modern Arab intellectuals – that of the rise and fall of 'Abbasid Baghdad. Early 'Abbasid Baghdad of the 8th and 9th centuries has, ever since the Victorian era, widely been perceived as a true "golden age" of Arab culture by Arab thinkers and their publics (Sheehi, Foundations 26-27). Adunis hails the rise of 'Abbasid Baghdad and its elite literary culture, designated by him as a previous historic era of Arab literary-poetic "modernity". This past medieval 'Abbasid "modernity", in turn, becomes for Adunis definitive proof of indigenous potentials for "progress" within Arab-Islamic culture.

> … there was the urban-sedentary dimension with its own values and symbols (as opposed to the desert and bedouin life), given unique expression and anchored firmly in the literary consciousness by the poetry of Abu Nuwas, the linguistic-metaphoric dimension or the rhetoric of metaphor... expressed for

> posterity in the poetry of Abu Tammam and the mystic poets; and finally the dimension of interaction and assimilation with non-Arab cultures.
>
> This modernity thus progressed beyond the normative and instead of referring to past authorities began to assert its uniqueness and individuality. It started to innovate, continually renewing the image of things and man's relationship to them, as well as ways of using language and styles of poetic writing. …
>
> Thus modernity in Arabic poetry had its origins in a climate which brought together two independent elements: awareness of the new urban culture which developed in Baghdad in the eighth century, and a new use of the language to embrace this awareness and express it in poetry. It developed in a spirit of opposition to the ancient, at the same time interacting with other non-Arab currents. ...
>
> … This combination carried Arab-Islamic civilization at its most mature to the West by way of Andalusia. (Introduction 88-9)

The inseparable and inevitable corollary of such “progress”, “revolution” and “innovation” within Adunis’ framing of Arab-Islamic history is that of “decline”, "stagnation" and “ignorance” and, as such, the necessary antithesis of this supposed golden age of cultural “modernism” within 'Abbasid Baghdad is its subsequent decline and collapse. Here too Adunis takes up a narrative common to contemporary Arab public discourse by asserting that Arab culture has now been in a crisis phase of decadence and chronic stagnation for numerous centuries, and therefore far removed from a time when, unlike today, Arab culture truly

represented global power. As mentioned in chapter two, in his Introduction to Arab Poetics Adunis asserts that Arab culture more or less ceased to be innovative altogether during the entire length of the centuries that lie between the fall of 'Abbasid Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258 and the contemporary era today (Introduction 77).

As such, while Adunis does diverge from explicitly anti-individualist sentiments within the particular type of mid-20th century reformist-nationalist thought Sa'adah, 'Aflaq and Fanon exemplify, with its wholesale communalism and Hegelianism, he also stands apart from many European aesthetic modernists by nonetheless retaining elements of positivist humanism and its attendant iconology of collective "progress". From at least the mid-19th century up until today, according to Calinescu, the discourses of western artistic modernism have often been deeply steeped in a bitter and irreducible antagonism towards mainstream orthodoxies of the Enlightenment and its core ideologies of rationalism, positivism, and its creed of progress (10, 42). The writings of Baudelaire and his literary descendants, such as the "Poetes Maudits" and the "Decadents", are one particularly prominent exemplar of such deep-seated hostility.

Adunis' distinct difference from such strains of European artistic modernism comes out prominently, for example, in a recent lecture at a European public seminar. In it Adunis decried Arab societies for, according to him, failing to recognize that in this contemporary era fundamental self-transformation is direly needed from them for the sake of keeping up with sociocultural changes in the rest of the world. The "important thing," Adunis stated, "is to change the infrastructure and culture of society." As a result of this Arab "backwardness" Adunis perceives, he concluded categorically at the conference that the Arabs may very well "become extinct in the civilizational sense because we have no identity, and" therefore, to repeat a

comment already cited in this chapter's overview section, “we have no innovative participation in the building of the world” (“The Roots and Causes of Islamic Violence?”). As such for Adunis, as the very last sentence cited shows, the ultimate failure of Arab societies is what he sees as their inability to participate in a universal narrative of collective human progress which, or so his statement implies, all societies worldwide are compelled to comply with and participate in.

Another 2011 interview by Adunis on a Dubai news channel similarly shows such neo-Hegelianist framing of human history as a global sociocultural competition of “change” and “progress” slotted in an upward direction:

> … I do not understand what is going on today in Arab life. I don't know. I do not know how to analyze it, except with this hypothesis: When I look at the Arab world, with all its riches, and all the capability of the individuals who belong to the Arabs, especially those (living) abroad, among them all the great thinkers, and scientists, great businessmen, great engineers and doctors... I mean the Arab individual is not lesser in intelligence and intellect from any (other) individual in the world, and is at the top (in these categories) – but (only when living) outside his society. So my judgement is absolutely not against the individuals. My judgement is against the institutions and the systems.
>
> So if I were looking at the Arabs, with all their riches and their astonishing capabilities, and compare this with what the Arabs have done over the last hundred years, and what others have done in the last hundred years, I cannot say (anything) except that we Arabs are in a phase of extinction. Extinction in the sense that we no longer have any creative presence on the world stage. Of course

> the quantity is present – the numbers of people are present. But a people becomes extinct when it no longer has the power of creativity – and the power to improve and change its world. And this is the real intellectual crisis. We are facing a new world with ideas that no longer exist, and within a context that has ended. We have to achieve a complete cutoff from this context, on all levels, and think of a new Arab-ness, of a new culture, and of a new Arab society. (Dubai TV)

Meanwhile, as Adunis' already-discussed open public letter to Bashar al-Asad in 2011 shows, as much or more than blaming the Asad regime for its violent and often-gruesome crackdowns on popular protests of the Arab Spring there, Adunis blamed it for what he perceived as a lack of innovative infrastructure and institution building, accusing it of being a "traditionalist party" that "did not create anything that can be accounted as new or creative in any field", including in "areas of education and learning, and schools and universities," or even "a single institution for knowledge and art that could be used as an exemplar" to spark further sociocultural progress, and so on and so forth. ("Risalah Maftuhah"). As such, though Adunis does expresses wariness towards both modern science and rationalism at times, and in his Introduction to Arab Poetics criticizes those who would conceive of modernity solely within more positivist and utilitarian terms of industry, manufacturing and technology, the presence of a general pseudo-Enlightenment ideology of social progress and advancement remains repeatedly evident in various statements of his. This middle position between antinomianism and a kind of institutionalist positivism echoes, in some ways, Stephan Sheehi's assessments of particular discursive behaviors of Arab Romantic figureheads such as Khalil Jibran and Amin Al-Rihani. The Arab Romantics were active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several decades prior to

Adunis' own emergence as public poet and intellectual. Like their Romantic counterparts in Europe, and similar to Adunis later on, the Arab Romantics also took a rhetorical stand against domination of rationalism and positivism within contemporary human life, whether in the realm of the aesthetic or the political, and championed the importance of the powers of the intuitive, the emotional, and the quasi-spiritual. This stance, Sheehi relates, was a direct reaction against the previous 19th century Nahdah, which had sought to counter the threat of the west's rising cultural and political power by adopting its triumphant Enlightenment-style values, and transplanting and rooting them into the Arab environment.

> Throughout the [19th century Ottoman] Empire, nascent bourgeois and petit-bourgeois classes and their organic intellectuals, to paraphrase Deleuze and Guatari... "massively decoded" every form of pre-modern cultural and social practice as archaic and "backwards," from communalism to traditional modes of commodity production and exchange. In the Arab World, the Arab Renaissance *(al-nahdah al-'arabiyah)* was the necessary ideological component to modernization. The Arab Renaissance was an era of protean cultural and intellectual production that strove to build a modern Arab society and polity based on the preeminence of positivist, rationalist and scientific thought in the service of the idiomatic "civilization and progress" *(tamaddun wa taqaddum).* In spirit, the mastery of these goals would enable the "peoples of the East" to withstand the imperialism of the West.
>
> Arab Romanticism was a rejoinder to the ideological offensive of the Arab Renaissance. In the Romantic's eyes, the Renaissance resulted in a

> stripping away of everything noble and holy in "Eastern" society, trumpeting the "final triumph of rational materialism." (Sheehi, "Modernism, Anxiety" 73)

However, even as the Arab Romantics launched rhetorical contestations against positivism and rationalism and assumed anti-establishmentarian overtones in many of their writings they balked, according to Sheehi, at the all-out rebellion against more orthodox and positivist aesthetics initiated in Europe by artists such as Picasso, the Cubists and other hyper-abstract western modernist movements. For Jibran, Rihani and the Arab Romantics, or so it appears, such an attack on classicist "higher truths" went too far.

> [Khalil] Jubran's visceral reaction to his first encounter with Cubism is telling. After visiting the Paris gallery in 1909, he exclaims, "Have these mad artists forgotten their mothers, sisters, and their lovers? Do they lack feeling? How can they defile the woman's body, that divinely holy figure?" (82)

In his essay Sheehi uses this and other similar evidences to argue that such disapproval of the Cubists and other western abstract hyper-modernist movements of their kind forms indirect but compelling evidence that, whatever ostensible rebellion the Arab Romantics had launched against Nahdah positivism and rationalism, particular factors within the overall sociocultural situation of the Arab world during their time constrained them from separating themselves altogether from the legacy of the Nahdah and Enlightenment. In fact, he maintains, such a visceral reaction by Gibran toward the Cubists demonstrates that beneath the surface of its rhetoric, rationalist positivism still lay as a key component within the bedrock of Arab Romanticism itself.

> … the epistemology of the Arab Renaissance is entrenched even within the

> works of Arab Romantics… the hegemony of the Arab Renaissance and its concomitant positivism against which Romantics protested underlies their own reception of modernist art. (74)

Whatever contestations were made by the Arab Romantics of positivist discourses of the Nahdah, argues Sheehi, they were nonetheless inherently the offspring of that earlier 19th century movement. As with Adunis, prominent Arab Romantics like Jibran and Rihani were, even as they waxed mystic and ostensibly anti-rationalist in writings on the literary level, prominent agitators for western-style modernist reform within Arab societies on the political one. Even if the "social priorities" of the Nahdah "ran contrary to the Romantic project", writes Sheehi, "the example of 'the pioneers' of this earlier Arab 'Renaissance' testified to the potential of modern Arab culture and could not be readily abandoned by their Romantic successors" (81-82).

> The historicizing of Arab Romanticism – its position vis-a-vis modernity, the West, the Arab Renaissance, nationalism, and reform – leads us to the inevitable realization that Romanticism could not break from the positivist, reform tradition and, in fact, was made of it. (85)

This continued need inherited from the Nahdah to demonstrate the "potential" of Arab culture in the Victorian age and turn of the century highlights a particularly intransigent factor making true philosophical separation from Nahdah positivism impossible. This, according to Sheehi, was the deeply-penetrating inroads made into the Arab world by western colonialism itself. This existentially menacing situation made it psychologically urgent for Arab societies to contest European rhetorical assertions of their alleged inferiority by demonstrating they were not congenitally destined to be permanently locked into a subaltern "backward" state vis-à-vis the

west. This threat had been a compelling factor behind the birth of the Nahdah itself. As such "Rihani's and Jubran's stance towards modernism," Sheehi asserts, "were ambivalent because of the specific predicament of the Orientalized colonial subject" (86).

> The movements of Romanticism and reform positivism were both generated in the shadow of the relentless offensive of European imperialism to build a portfolio for colonialism that is predicated on the lack of the Oriental subject: the lack of knowledge, morals, order, rationality, science, discipline and so on. (85)

Under such sociocultural pressure from a vastly more powerful Europe, Sheehi maintains, the Arab Romantics, like their Nahdah predecessors, could not afford rhetorically condoning or tolerating any perceived symptom of "laxness" or "backwardness" in Arab society around them. "Under the ever-present and indicting gaze of the West (if not the actual threat of colonialism)," Sheehi asserts, "the [Arab] Romantic subject has only one epistemological turn" and, as such, even as the Arab Romantics waxed anti-rationalist and anti-positivist on one level, they too, in the end, had no choice but to turn "back" on another level, toward the "avowed commitment to modernity" previously inscribed by the Nahdah and its positivist doctrines (89-90).

In similar vein, as we have seen, come Adunis' repeated expressions of deep anxiety over the current state of Arab culture and its capacity for "progress" vis-a-vis the west and other cultures on the global level, in both his critical writings and his public statements.

5.4. Tenuous Conquest: Planting Humanism's Banner in the Realm of the Antinomian

Though the terminologies of Baudelaire's and Adunis' respective dualities of fixity and

mutability mirror each other they are, quite obviously, deployed within significantly different cultural and artistic situations. Baudelaire's version of this duality comes through his participation in the world of 19th-century French Romanticism and its culture of aesthetic "dandyism" and "decadence". His entry point into the duality is the realm of the *image*, within his critical writings on the visual arts and their relations with the sensual world. The particular "fixed" unitary entity which he seeks to critique and counterbalance within his philosophical duality is the longstanding classical tradition of the visual arts in Europe, with its timeless and transcendent prescribed forms for "eternal" and unchanging plastic and visual beauty, carried over from previous eras of European art into the 19th century. Adunis deploys his duality within today's Islamic world, with its own particular history and issues. His launching point is in the sphere of language, in which he challenges the fixed *word* of Islamic orthodoxy and its claims that one static, fixed interpretation of the Qur'an is valid and mandatory for all ages and places. Though the purpose of Baudelaire's writings is to champion the "fleeting" and the "transient," which he sees as having been neglected by critics, he essentially sees the dynamic between it and the classicism of the "eternal" as that of two Janus-like faces of what is ultimately one artistic energy. Even the old classical masters of previous ages, notes Baudelaire, each have their "own modernity" (Painter of Modern Life 13). By comparison to Baudelaire, as noted previously, Adunis' binary model for the Arab Islamic world tends, overall, to be markedly more conflict-ridden. While somewhat similarly to Baudelaire Adunis does acknowledge that the "fixed" and the "transient" are not mutually exclusive forces and, in fact, have often been somewhat intertwined with each other throughout Arab history (Al-Thabit 1: 25), he nonetheless customarily depicts them as highly polarized entities that are strongly antipathetic towards each

other.

These above differences notwithstanding, this section will argue that a more fundamental divergence lies within the respective paths along which Adunis and Baudelaire each use their dualities to carry their own particular banners of antinomianist aesthetics. For Adunis, as seen previously in this study, the realm of antinomianism and its unregulated multiplicity is a platform from which to assert a particular humanist and individualist creed of his design in the face of the twin monoliths of western rationalism and colonialism on the one hand, and orthodox Islam on the other, on behalf of what he sees as a beleaguered Arab cultural world. Within this "plural", Adonis believes, is a badly-needed space of conceptual freedom from which to look out upon the span of the history of Arab thought, and locate a more flexible identity for himself and his fellow Arabs than those offered by current dominant discourses pervading their world. Overtones of this idealistic framework of antinomian aesthetics as a path toward quasi-spiritual revelation and practice of human liberation come out particularly strongly, for example, within his commentary on the medieval 'Abbasid-era poetics of Abu Nuwas. On the technical level, Abu Nuwas was considered one of the most masterful premodern poets ever to have composed verse in Arabic. His odes dedicated to the love of wine, customarily forbidden by Islamic doctrine, and amorous relationships with women and adolescent boys also made him one of the most famous medieval Arab figures of license and rebelliousness. Though the commentary's framing and narrative style makes it rather clear Adunis is adopting a kind of narrative mask within it and writing, as it were, as much or more from Abu Nuwas' poetic point of view than his own, Adunis' own attitude to the ancient poet is clearly sympathetic. Within Abu Nuwas' work, he asserts near the beginning of the following commentary, there is a particular "method constantly at work behind the text,

directed towards a particular kind of knowledge and a particular moral order" (Introduction 60).

> The poetical element is to be found in the exploration of human potential and frustrated human desires, and in the unleashing of these desires in such a way that the gap separating emotion and action, desire and ability, is eliminated. It is also present in what is implied by this unleashing: the destruction of the walls barring the way to the wide open spaces of freedom. In Abu Nuwas's poetry there is a flame which devours every obstacle, be it social or religious. For him, joy does not come from the practice of the permissible but, on the contrary, from the pursuit of the forbidden and the illicit. He considers that the violation of taboos gives rise to a disordered state of bliss which is the equivalent of destroying the existing cultural and ethical systems, and which holds in it a firm promise of the advent of a culture in which there will be no repression and no restrictions. This new culture will take a stand against the old values of 'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not', and allow life to be lived in such a way that a harmony is created between the rhythms of the body and the rhythms of reality in a music of freedom. (60)

The deeply humanist overtones of Adunis' reading of Abu Nuwas contrast significantly from Baudelaire's deliberately stark and menacing eroticist exploration of the sensibilities and sensualism of "woman in revolt against society" within his description of Constantin Guys' sketches of prostitutes in 19th century Paris. As he lays out his narrative of the model of the prototypical woman who lives, in his words, like a "gypsy" along the "fringes" of respectable post-Napoleonic French society, his depiction gradually increases in its rhetorical violence

(Painter of Modern Life 36).

> Against a background of hellish light, or if you prefer, an *aurora borealis* – red, orange, sulphur-yellow, pink... against magical backgrounds such as these... there arises the Protean image of wanton beauty. … She has discovered for herself a provocative and barbaric sort of elegance … She is a perfect image of the savagery that lurks in the midst of civilization. She has her own sort of beauty, which comes to her from Evil always devoid of spirituality, but sometimes tinged with a weariness which imitates true melancholy. She directs her gaze at the horizon, like a beast of prey; the same wildness, the same lazy absent-mindedness, and also, at times, the same fixity of attention. ... the triviality of her life, which is one of warfare and cunning, fatally grins through its envelope of show. (36)

This sense of lurking existential threat continues onward and then intensifies further with Baudelaire's commentary on lower-echelon prostitutes trapped within the cheapest, shadiest brothels.

> … Descending the scale, we come down to the poor slaves of those filthy stews which are often, however, decorated like cafes; hapless wretches...
>
> Some of these, examples of an innocent and monstrous self-conceit, express in their faces and their bold, uplifted glances an obvious joy at being alive (and indeed, one wonders why). Sometimes, quite by chance, they achieve poses of a daring and nobility to enchant the most sensitive of sculptors, if the sculptors of today were sufficiently bold and imaginative to seize upon nobility wherever it

> was to be found, even in the mire; at other times they display themselves in hopeless attitudes of boredom, … almost masculine in their brazenness, killing time with cigarettes, orientally resigned... or else precariously balanced on stools and chairs; sluggish, glum, stupid, extravagant, their eyes glazed with brandy and their foreheads swelling with obstinate pride. We have climbed down to the last lap of the spiral... And now, sketched against an atmospheric background in which both tobacco and alcohol have mingled their fumes, we see the emaciated flush of consumption or the rounded contours of obesity, that hideous health of the slothful. In a foggy, gilded chaos... we assist at the Dervish dances of macabre nymphs and living dolls whose childish eyes betray a sinister glitter, while behind a bottle-laden counter there lolls in state an enormous Xanthippe whose head, wrapped in a dirty kerchief, casts upon the wall a satanically pointed shadow, thus reminding us that everything that is consecrated to Evil is condemned to wear horns. (37-8)

In this particular line of comparison with Baudelaire there are, perhaps, further parallels between Adunis and the Arab Romantics. For all that Adunis takes up the sigil of the antinomian, espouses the poetics of outlaws and libertines, frequently expounds on themes of social alienation in his poetics, and also professes some degree of intellectual and aesthetic affiliation with Baudelaire, his overall humanist slant towards the antinomian contrasts significantly with the aesthetics of both Baudelaire and other 19th and 20th century western outlaw and "decadent" writers and intellectuals who followed in the footsteps of the latter such as Rimbaud and the poetes maudits, Jean Genet, Antonin Artaud, Pawl Bowles and William Burroughs to name just a

few. In contrast to Adunis, in the works of such as these the darker, more menacing aspects of the realms that lie beyond the more sheltered boundaries of rationalist orthodoxies come much more prominently into the foreground.

In this regard, though the terminology of Adunis' duality of orthodoxy and the antinomian may match that of Baudelaire, the actual thrust of his writings on the “plural” may be said to more closely resemble the aims of another of the west's prominent intellectual delvers into antinomianism – British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. As will be discussed in the following pages, Turner's own theoretical entry into the realms of the antinomian and the marginal was similarly motivated by profoundly humanist aims. Highly similar to the manner in which Adunis speculates that it is in the realms of the “plural”, the outlawed and the dissident that some of the greatest human and cultural potentials of an otherwise-conservative Arab world might lie, Turner's work on premodern African societies led him to postulate that it was in the realms of the antinomian and the taboo, or what he termed “anti-structure” as opposed to the orthodoxies of social “structure”, that some of the most necessary and important building blocks of human thought and potential lie.

When comparing Adunis to Turner it should also be noted that though the latter was officially an anthropologist, he was deeply tied to the arts throughout his life. Turner's mother, an actress, was one of the founding members of the Scottish National Theater (Deflem 2). After his ethnographical fieldwork in his younger years, Turner would spend his later decades as a campus professor in the U.S. actively involved with New York's avant-garde theater scene, forming a friendship and collaborative partnership with prominent counterculture playwright and producer Richard Schechner. “From his mother,” notes Mathieu Deflem, “Turner inherited a profound

interest in the theatrical and creative side of man… . Turner's fascination with human creativity is also clear from his lifelong interest not only in ritual, but also in art, literature, and poetry (which he in fact wrote occasionally)" (5).

While Adonis focuses on historical interplays and collisions between forces of orthodoxy and dissidence in the Arab-Islamic world, Turner first began formulating his duality during his research in the 1950s on the everyday ritual life of smaller-scale traditional African societies, where complex cycles of symbolically elaborate ritual were a central underpinning of sociopolitical life. Turner asked why such societies, thoroughly conservative in their dealings with everyday mundane affairs, periodically gave license to their members to step almost entirely out of customary social norms and enter into many kinds of anarchic behaviors within their cyclical group rituals. This included behaviors easily labeled by those societies as "deviant" if they were ever to occur outside ritual space. Examples of such occurrences in premodern societies include rites of initiation, or "rites of passage" in which particular members of a community are ceremonially transported and transformed from one social rank or category to another, such as circumcision rituals that "make" boys into men, installation and crowning of new rulers, or funeral rites in which the recently-living are ritually joined into the ranks of the ancestors. Among other such rites are cyclical sacred festivals and carnivals in which, for a designated period of time, everyday social statuses and ranks and their expected attendant behaviors are ceremonially suspended for participants. Ritual subjects and participants such as these thereby enter into what a predecessor of Turner's, Dutch folklorist Arnold van Gennep, had termed a state of the "liminal" (21). For a particular period of time – hours, days or even months or more – they spend time in an in-between phase in which, by virtue of being no longer what

they had been nor what they are yet to become, they are ritually placed in an in-between marginalized "outsider" state vis-a-vis the everyday rules and structures of their own societies. "...during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') is ambiguous," wrote Turner. "...he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming social state" (Forest of Symbols 94).

A ubiquitous characteristic of ritual proceedings surrounding such marginal "in-between" states, Turner noted in his ethnographies, was that the "outlaw" behaviors of ritual subjects and participants are frequently accompanied by fertile webs of often-bizarre symbolism.

> The attributes of liminality or the liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.
>
> Liminal entities … may be represented as possessing nothing. They may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, to demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system – in short, nothing

> that may distinguish them from their fellow neophytes or initiands. … (Ritual Process 94-95)

Using the framework of terms and theory predominant in anthropology at the time, Turner decided no human society could ever have a truly fixed, stable social "structure". Instead, he asserted, all societies are the result of flux-prone interplay between forces of "structure" and "anti-structure" (Ritual Process 97, 129-30). Cohesive, static structures and hierarchies of orthodoxy give societies the everyday working form and cohesion they need to function and survive in a dangerous, often-hostile world. Alongside this, however, an array of other social, cultural and psychological elements – much more heterodox and fragmented, antinomian and explosive – lurk beneath this otherwise-static surface of "structure". If such elements are left ungoverned, Turner stated, they threaten to undermine and destroy any human society. However, he decided, tolerating them and utilizing them to some degree is nonetheless necessary within all societies, since they serve to counter-balance all the psychological negativities that any excessively rigid hierarchy and structure would inevitably inflict on them. Therefore, he concluded, in traditional societies such forces are routinely incorporated into spaces of ritual action. (Ritual Process 129-30)

Turner noted two other aspects of the liminal, "anti-structural" phase of rituals that he believed have fundamental and universal anthropological implications. One of these is the phenomenon that the "liminal" phase of such rites, in addition to its predetermined periods of suspension of social rules and norms, also often contain culturally-designated occasions for ceremonially leading participants, especially those undergoing "rites of passage", into intellectual exploration of some of the most fundamental underlying tenants of their culture and

its particular ontological view of the world.

> Among the "instructions" received by neophytes may be reckoned such matters as the revelation of the real, but secularly secret, names of the deities or spirits believed to preside over the rites... They are also taught the main outlines of the theogony, cosmogony, and mythical history of their societies or cults, usually with reference to the *sacra* exhibited. Great importance is attached to keeping secret the nature of the *sacra,* the formulas chanted and instructions given about them. These constitute the crux of liminality... (Forest of Symbols 103)

The concepts contained within such information communicated during the "liminal" phase of rites, stated Turner, often contained no less than "axiomatic principles of construction" of the particular society's ontological view of the world in its entirety, or as such, "basic building blocks that make up the cosmos" as envisioned by that society (Forest of Symbols 106-7).

> The central cluster of nonlogical *sacra* is then the symbolic template of the whole system of beliefs and values in a given culture, its archetypical paradigm and ultimate measure. Neophytes shown these are often told they are in the presence of forms established from the beginning of things. … these *sacra,* presented with a numinous simplicity, stamp into the neophytes the basic assumptions of their culture. (Forest of Symbols 108)

"During the liminal period" as such, noted Turner, "neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them. Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection" (Forest of Symbols 105).

> Thus, the communication of *sacra* both teaches the neophytes how to think with

> some degree of abstraction about their cultural milieu and gives them ultimate standards of reference. At the same time, it is believed to change their nature, transform them from one kind of human being into another. It intimately unites man and office. (Forest of Symbols 108)

As such in a way that, though certainly not identical, noticeably has echoes with Adunis' formulations about the more intellectually unstructured and freeform domain of cultural aesthetics associated with the antinomian, the dissident and the realm of the mutahawwil or "mutable" allowing for a kind of deeper knowledge that escapes rationalism's strictures, Turner also theorized that the praxis of ritual liminality and the psychological atmosphere it generates allows traditional societies to go beyond their own more regulated cultural channels of instrumentalist and rationalist-oriented thought in order to also pursue "deeper" ways of knowing and fathoming things.

> We are here in the realm of what Warner… would call "nonrational or nonlogical symbols" which arise out of the basic individual and cultural assumptions, more often unconscious than not, from which most social action springs. They supply the solid core of mental and emotional life of each individual and group. This does not mean that they are irrational or maladaptive, or that man cannot often think in a reasonable way about them, but rather that they do not have their source in his rational processes. … (Forest of Symbols 107-8)

"Liminality here breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchises speculation," concluded Turner. "… Liminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis, where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence" (Forest of Symbols 106). As such, the cultural

topoi and symbols traditional societies explore and pursue within the ritual spaces of liminality, he summed up, “paradoxically expose the basic building blocks of culture just when we pass out of and before we re-enter the structural realm” (Forest of Symbols 110).

The second factor within ritual liminality or “anti-structure” which Turner believed had universal cultural implications was a phenomenon he labeled “communitas” (Ritual Process 96-7). This theoretical entity was based on Turner's observations, already briefly mentioned in passages quoted from above, that subjects of rituals of liminality were often customarily stripped of all markings and indications of the social ranks and roles they otherwise occupied within the everyday, mundane life of the community outside of sacred ritual space. Regardless of their families' varied particular status or power within their societies, boys of all social classes often wore the same simple, humble or scant garments together, or were even kept naked, during the liminal phases of rites of initiation into manhood, symbolically denoting and emphasizing their absolute humility and equality to each other as initiates during the ritual, as well as their absolute submission to communal authority (Ritual Process 95). Prior to their final elevation to a much more formidable social status, kings undergoing rites of installation into rulership were often similarly ritually stripped of rank and dignity, or even publicly subjected to hardships or abuse, during the liminal phases of their own coronation rites.

> The neophyte in liminality must be a *tabula rasa,* a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status. The ordeals and humiliations, often of a grossly physiological character, to which neophytes are submitted represent partly a destruction of the previous status and partly a tempering of their essence in order to prepare them to

> cope with their new responsibilities and restrain them in advance from abusing their new privileges. They have to be shown that in themselves they are clay or dust, mere matter, whose form is impressed upon them by society. (Ritual Process 103)

As crude and brutal as this absolute stripping down and harsh-minded equalization of liminalized ritual subjects might seem, Turner asserted emphatically, it stood for much more than any kind of ritual sadism or primitivist theatrics of domination and submission. It was in fact, he declared, the recognition by such traditional societies, otherwise typically extremely conservative and status-conscious in quotidian nonritual life, of a common human bond between all their members beneath all hierarchies of structure. In line with this he noted that "… Among themselves, neophytes tend to develop an intense comradeship and egalitarianism. Secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenized" (Ritual Process 95).

Liminal ritual subjects, he noted, "*have* nothing. They have no status, no property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows. Their condition is indeed the very prototype of sacred poverty." Turner compared them to the words of Shakespeare's King Lear, as representing nothing other than "naked unaccommodated man" (Forest of Symbols 98-99).

> … The liminal group is a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions. This comradeship transcends distinctions of rank, age, kinship position, and, in some kinds of cultic group, even of sex. Much of the behavior recorded by ethnographers in seclusion situations falls under the principle: "Each for all, and all for each." …

> This comradeship, with its familiarity, ease and, I would add, mutual outspokenness, is once more the product of interstructural liminality, with its scarcity of jurally sanctioned relationships and its emphasis on axiomatic values expressive of the common weal. People can "be themselves," it is frequently said, when they are not acting institutionalized roles. … They confront one another, as it were, integrally and not in compartmentalized fashion as actors of roles. (Forest of Symbols 100-101)

What such dynamics of liminality within ritual time and space implied, according to Turner, was that for traditional societies there were essentially two modes "of human interrelatedness" within them, cyclically "juxtaposing and alternating" with each other (Ritual Process 96). The first was a "structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system... separating men in terms of 'more' or 'less'" (Ritual Process 96). The second, emerging "recognizably" within the liminal spaces of public ritual "is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus,* community, or even communion of individuals…" (Ritual Process 96).

Turner was insistent that rather than being something "instinctual", or "the product of biologically inherited drives", or "epiphenomena of some kind of herd instinct", communitas was instead a product of "peculiarly human faculties" and therefore something "existential" (Ritual Process 127, 128, 188). It involved, he asserted, human cognizance of the ontological implications of "the whole man in his relation to other whole men" (Ritual Process 127).

> Beyond the structural lies not only the Hobbesian "war of all against all" but also communitas. … Essentially, communitas is a relationship between

> concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals. These individuals are not segmentalized into roles and statuses but confront one another rather in the manner of Martin Buber's "I and Thou." Along with this direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities, there tends to go a model of society as a homogenous, unstructured communitas, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species. (Ritual Process 131-2)

This ritual space of "communitas" and its accompanying states of liminality, "marginality, and structural inferiority," Turner further stated, "are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art" (Ritual Process 128).

Unlike the polemical, fraught and frequently antagonistic relationship of Adunis' duality of the thabit and the mutahawwil within his modernist oppositional framing of dynamic progress and stagnant backwardness, Turner's duality of "structure" and "anti-structure" within its particular anthropological context is, by and large, a model of hybrid complementariness and neutrality. "The moment a digging stick is set in the earth, a colt broken in, a pack of wolves defended against, or a human enemy set by his heels," Turner wrote, "we have the germs of social structure. This is not merely the set of chains in which men everywhere are," he added in an implicit critique of Rousseau and his 18th century Romanticist speculations on the inherent purity of man when released from social structure, regulations and hierarchy, "but the very cultural means that preserve the dignity and liberty, as well as the bodily existence, of every man, woman and child. There may be manifold imperfections in the structural means employed and the ways in which they are used, but, since the beginnings of prehistory, the evidence suggests that such means are what makes man most evidently man" (Ritual Process 140).

As such, Turner asserted, a stable balance between “structure” on the one hand, and “anti-structure” and its intrinsic phenomenon of “communitas” on the other, was a fundamental need of all societies. Structure guaranteed cultural survival, but society’s periodic entry into the ritual spaces of “communitas” was necessary on a cyclical basis for the cleansing of social tensions and antagonisms brought about by the constraints of structure and hierarchy, and the regeneration of communal group sentiment.

> ... Life in “structure” is filled with objective difficulties: decisions have to be made, inclinations sacrificed to the wishes and needs of the group, and physical and social obstacles overcome at some personal cost. Spontaneous communitas has something “magical” about it. Subjectively there is in it the feeling of endless power. But this power untransformed cannot readily be applied to the organizational details of social existence. It is no substitute for lucid thought and sustained will. On the other hand, structural action swiftly becomes arid and mechanical if those involved in it are not periodically immersed in the regenerative abyss of communitas. … (Ritual Process 139)

Though Turner's dualist model necessarily differs both in context and overall emphasis from Adunis’, his too was, in effect, constructed to emphasize the human potential of the dissident and marginal realms of the antinomian. Turner would go on from his initial anthropological research on traditional African cultures to extend and generalize his model to embrace all human histories and societies, both ancient and modern. He contended that numerous dissident and subaltern groups throughout human history such as, for example, the early Franciscan monks in medieval Europe, dissident populist Hindu movements in medieval

India, and the modern "hippie" movement of 1960s America which Turner was deeply sympathetic to, were all embodiments of "communitas". As with Adunis it can be said that Turner also sought, in his own particular way, to mark and stake out the realms of the marginal, the dissident and the antinomian as a "humanist" zone of sorts – one with, in his view, deep potentials for the betterment of humankind. Meanwhile though Turner's work on "anti-structure" and "communitas" officially sits within the genre of ethnographic scholarship, there is ample biographical evidence that his endeavor to utilize the antinomian for humanist ends was, as with Adunis, an endeavor born of deeply personal convictions.

> … Turner's work... [is] characterized as one in which there are crucial intellectual turning points, often coinciding with important crossroads in his life; parallels can be traced between Turner's anthropological enterprise and his personal life history. Without this, I believe, justice could not be done, either to Turner's work or to his life, "for in him there was, most unusually, no apparent distinction between life and work" … . (Deflem 1)

Turner's first premonitions of human comradeship and "communitas", notes Deflem, came not in his later ethnographic work but the deep friendships he formed under intense conditions during his time "as a non-combatant soldier during World War II," in which he served on a bomb disposal squad due to his status as a conscientious objector, although "it was not until his analysis of the Ndembu ritual complex" in Africa "that he became fully aware of its theoretical relevance" (Deflem 2, 14). Later, during his ethnographical work, he converted to Catholicism. "... on a personal level" his fieldwork on sacred rituals in particular, states Deflem, "must have been an important contributing factor, if not a direct cause" for this religious

conversion (5).

> … the religious component in ritual was essential for Turner. … Turner… went even further by asserting not only that ritual is religious, but also that religion has ontological value: "After many years as an agnostic and monistic materialist I learned from the Ndembu that ritual and its symbolism are not merely epiphenomena or disguises of deeper social and psychological processes, but have ontological value." In Turner's approach, religious belief seems to correspond to the nature of reality itself. … Soon after the publication of his work on the *Chihamba* ritual Turner was criticized for overestimating the role of religion in his study of ritual. (12)

Deflem, by and large, endorses and then adds to previous criticisms by others that the deeply personal aspect of Turner's theorizing about liminality led at least some of his work astray – in particular, his later writings where he attempted to translate and generalize his observations about liminality and "communitas" from the specific context of the particular African tribes he had directly studied into a more universal basis. "Turner has often been praised for the careful detail in his accounts of ritual among the Ndembu," he writes. "… However, when Turner started discussing the liminoid, ritual and religion in industrial society, and the overall importance of communitas in the course of world history, his own personal convictions (he remained a devoted Catholic after his conversion) appear to have entered into his anthropological analysis" (Deflem 18).

> ... In the different manifestations of communitas, Turner came to see the operation of a meaningful and powerful human energy by which the tight nets of the social

> structure could be circumvented. In this way, Turner's work may be read as a plea for people to engage in communitas-inspired action and constantly defy the social order by inverting, or even perverting, its structural demands. For so humane an endeavor, Turner, one of the leading authorities in a scientific enterprise, has been criticized for overestimating the powers of liminal and liminoid phenomena to challenge the social structure... Turner may have failed to see the informal, egalitarian aspects in structured relationships and may have ignored the symbolic dimensions, informalities, and the humanly meaningful within the realm of structured relationships.
>
> It seems that for Turner, as a pious Catholic, communitas in his later works became more a matter of faith than fact, and that he wanted to see communitas and religion everywhere leading to the day when, as Turner's former collaborator Richard Schechner… explained, "each individual will love his/her neighbor as him/herself, and when abused, will be able to turn the other cheek." (Deflem 18-19)

It is not the point of this section, in any case, either to vouch for or against the "empirical" accuracy of Turner's writings on "anti-structure". Nor is it to argue for any exact parallels between the particulars of his and Adunis' theoretics on the antinomian, though it is clear there are multiple resonances between them. Rather it is to point out how, as thinkers with profoundly idealistic points of view, they both similarly sought to "humanize" the realm of the antinomian in ways that a thinker like Baudelaire, for example, does not. In a portion of a passage quoted from in a previous chapter Adunis speaks of just such a quest to find ultimate

origins of the human essence itself within such realms, when he describes his pseudo-scholarly 1960s efforts to delve into some of the most ancient and primeval layers of the medieval Arab poetic corpus.

> This return to older sources was not passe, as some commentators described it. It was an attempt to reflect upon and comprehend human existence as a whole, beginning deep down where the reality of this existence was least cluttered by extraneous factors and man lived directly with the land and talked to it in a language which operated at the level of sensation and physical contact, inarticulate cries, instinct and sex. Such a way of proceeding is obviously the opposite of the rational, direct, clear approach, plunging deep into the obscure and terrifying areas which escape the grip of science and rationalism, but where creation has its beginnings, suspended over the abyss of the undefined and the limitless. (Introduction 94)

With Turner and Adunis, as such, the "plural" and its world of "anti-structure" is relevant for our study primarily because of what they believe to be its immense potential to serve humankind. Within the vast, open-ended spaces of the plural, as they see it, humanity can delve into the furthermost reaches of its own psychological and existential being – something they believe it could never do within the confined limits of structured "orthodoxy". And as such, for these two thinkers, some of humanity's highest and truest potentials lie in no place other than these rugged outlands of "anti-structure" – potentials that could never be part of ordinary social "structure".

Adunis and Turner, to a large extent, seek to harness the inchoate forces of the heterodox,

the chaotic and the plural for the sake of a larger social good. As already touched on, Adunis seeks newer, more open ground from which marginalized voices of the Arab world that speak for heterodoxy and openness can stave off the "double siege" inflicted upon them by dominating, oppressive forces both western and indigenous. Turner, meanwhile, developed his work in large part out of the general array of sympathies common to those thinkers of western progressivism and "counter-culture" ever since the 1960s: Among these, sympathies for the mass populist and youth movements of the Vietnam war era and beyond, and for members of lower social strata marginalized within industrial societies.

Baudelaire's aesthetic and philosophical descent into the realms of the antinomian is, by contrast, a comparatively more ambiguous quest on several counts. For one, Baudelaire's own highly conservative worldview, informed by a traditionalist Christian belief in the inherent grace of the higher divine realm and the inherent baseness and evil of this lower material world, leaves no room for the kind of optimistically humanist attitudes towards the baser subterranean dimensions of the antinomian professed by Adunis and Turner. Baudelaire's convictions in this regard are explicit and adamant.

> The majority of errors in the field of aesthetics spring from the eighteenth century's false premise in the field of ethics. At that time Nature was taken as ground, source and type of all possible Good and Beauty. The negation of original sin played no small part in the general blindness of that period. But if we are prepared to refer simply to the facts, which are manifest to the experience of all ages no less than to the readers of the Law Reports, we shall see that Nature teaches us nothing, or practically nothing. I admit that she *compels* man to sleep,

> to eat, to drink, and to arm himself as well as he may against the inclemencies of the weather: but it is she too who incites man to murder his brother, to eat him, to lock him up and to torture him; for no sooner do we take leave of the domain of needs and necessities to enter that of pleasures and luxury than we see that Nature can counsel nothing but crime. It is this infallible Mother Nature who has created patricide and cannibalism, and a thousand other abominations that both shame and modesty prevent us from naming. On the other hand it is philosophy (I speak of good philosophy) and religion which command us to look after our parents when they are poor and infirm. Nature, being none other than the voice of our own self-interest, would have us slaughter them. (Painter of Modern Life 31-2)

"I ask you to review and scrutinize whatever is natural," Baudelaire writes onward in the same passage, "all the actions and desires of the purely natural man: you will find nothing but frightfulness. Everything beautiful and noble is the result of reason and calculation. Crime, of which the human animal has learned the taste in his mother's womb, is natural by origin... Evil happens without effort, naturally, fatally...." (32).

The result with Baudelaire, in regards to antinomianism, appears to be an aesthetic rooted not in any sense of possible humanist fulfillment, but instead one which confronts the reader with a steady stream of irreconcilable dualisms. Man, the inherently "depraved animal," the "most perfect of the beasts of prey," stands perpetually in between his urges towards God and his urges towards Satan (Painter of Modern Life 11; Intimate Journals 50,73). Making love, perhaps the most central act of human existence, is for Baudelaire an inherently infernal one, in which "the sole and supreme pleasure… lies in the absolute knowledge of doing *evil*" (Intimate Journals 34).

"There is, in the act of love," Baudelaire writes elsewhere, "a great resemblance to torture or a surgical operation" (Intimate Journals 46). As the noblest forms of beauty are those which contain elements of solitude and sorrow, he pens at another point in his diaries, it naturally follows that "the most perfect type of manly beauty is Satan – as Milton saw him" (Intimate Journals 44)

> …dualism... is basic to Baudelaire's way of thinking and entire creative activity. … It is almost a truism to say that there are few moderns in whose world outlook Christian dichotomies (God/Satan, heaven/hell, soul/body, supernatural virtue/natural sinfulness, eternity/time, etc.) play such a vast and complexly dialectical role as they do in Baudelaire's. (Calinescu 53)

The result, quite arguably, is an aesthetics that thrives not on any quest for greater discoveries or resolutions, or higher fulfillments within the layers of the antinomian in the same sense as seen with Adunis and Turner, but instead on production of dissonance and paradox for their own particular aesthetic purpose. "The mixture of the grotesque and the tragic is agreeable to the spirit," writes Baudelaire, "as are discords to the jaded ear" (Intimate Journals 48).

> Modernity, from this [i.e., Baudelaire's] point of view, appears as a spiritual adventure; the poet sets out to explore the forbidden realm of *evil,* whose most recent *flowers,* dangerously beautiful, he is supposed to discover and pluck. The task of the artist is akin to the alchemical one of extracting gold from mud or – if we translate this typically Baudelairean metaphor – to reveal the poetry hidden behind the most horrifying contrasts of social modernity. … *Les Fleurs du mal* and the prose poems of *Le Spleen de Paris* carry out both the program of a

> poetry of urban modernity and the most general project of a beauty, infernal and divine, whose being is the paradoxical place where opposites coincide...
> (Calinescu 54)

Within such aesthetics, touched as much or more by older medieval Christian dualities than by contemporary humanism, the “plural” and “anti-structure” seem, more often than not, bound to obey neither humanity nor any other entity except themselves -- and whatever inexplicable, unknowable forces they originate from. For Baudelaire, also in typically dualist fashion, it is the tempting fascination of this abyss of “anti-structure” on the one hand, and disorienting nausea caused by it on the other, that perhaps serves as its most essential and profound aesthetic phenomenon for anyone who seeks to plumb its depths, as the following poem shows. In it, Baudelaire defiantly taunts his reader with the prospect of exactly such a dualism -- the allure and temptation of the illicit and the condemned on the one hand, and the fear of alien things beyond human fathoming on the other.

“Épigraphe pour un Livre Condamné”

Lecteur paisible et bucolique,
Sobre et naïf homme de bien,
Jette ce livre saturnien,
Orgiaque et mélancolique.

Si tu n'as fait ta rhétorique
Chez Satan, le rusé doyen,

Jette! tu n'y comprendrais rien,

Ou tu me croirais hystérique.

Mais si, sans se laisser charmer,

Ton oeil sait plonger dans les gouffres,

Lis-moi, pour apprendre à m'aimer;

Âme curieuse qui souffres

Et vas cherchant ton paradis,

Plains-moi!... Sinon, je te maudis!

"Epigraph for a Condemned Book"

Peaceful, bucolic reader, temperate, artless and good-living, throw away this saturnine, orgiastic and melancholy book.

Unless you've finished the rhetoric course at Satan's school, that wily professor, throw it away! You wouldn't understand anything in it, or you'd say I was hysterical.

But if, without letting yourself be drawn in, your eye can look down into abysses, read me, and learn to love me;

Curious, suffering soul, travelling in search of paradise, pity me! … Or else I will curse you.

(Selected Poems 169)

Without venturing to take sides with either Baudelaire or Adunis and Turner on the grand intangibilities discussed in this section, it is perhaps somewhat relevant to recall Michel

Foucault's own particular writings on those discarded and shunned realms that lie outside social orthodoxy in the west. Foucault emphasized that merely because certain dimensions of thought might lie in conceptual outlands, or burial grounds beneath gaps that had been discarded or declared off-limits by orthodoxy, one could not automatically leap to any conclusion that such terrains of the forbidden always necessarily offered as-yet uncovered or untapped human powers of freedom or self-realization. For Foucault, as such, rather than being suppressed treasuries of unlimited lodestones, cracks and fault lines within the walls of "structure," or, as Adunis might characterize it, the "fixed" or the "one," might very well often be simply that -- gaps and cracks, and nothing more.

> The existence of systems of rarefaction [i.e., weeding out and suppression of certain discourses] does not imply that, over and beyond them lie great vistas of limitless discourse, continuous and silent, repressed and driven back by them, making it our task to abolish them and at last restore it to speech. Whether talking in terms of speaking or thinking, we must not imagine some unsaid thing, or an unthought, floating about the world, interlacing with all its forms and events. (229)

As such we "do not find, on the one hand, forms of rejection, exclusion, consolidation or attribution," asserted Foucault, "and, on a more profound level, the spontaneous pouring forth of discourse ..." (233). Just exactly how much the "anti-structure" of the "plural" holds genuine promise, or only danger and "fools gold" -- or both at the same time – perhaps inevitably and necessarily remains an area of philosophical aporia.

CHAPTER 6 : The Quest for Arab Modernism Between Past and Future

6.1. Proving Universal "Competence" --- and Preventing Local Erasure

In The Wretched of the Earth Fanon gives an opinion as to why, in lands impacted by western colonialism, native intellectuals' efforts to protect their indigenous cultural roots can often seem strident to outside onlookers.

> … The passion with which native intellectuals defend the existence of their national culture may be a source of amazement; but those who condemn this exaggerated passion are strangely apt to forget that their own psyche and their own selves are conveniently sheltered behind a French or German culture which has given full proof of its existence and which is uncontested.
>
> I am ready to concede that on the plane of factual being the past existence of an Aztec civilization does not change anything very much in the diet of the Mexican peasant today. … But it has been remarked several times that this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped. (209)

For Fanon, this dire risk of "being swamped" extends not only toward the colonized country's cultural present, but its past as well: "... colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country," he writes at one point. "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (210).

> … the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought for by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.
>
> On the unconscious plane, colonialism therefore did not seek to be considered by the native as a gentle, loving mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free reign to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology, and its own unhappiness which is its very essence.
>
> In such a situation the claims of the native intellectual [in defense of his own culture] are not a luxury but a necessity in any coherent program. (211)

A sense of cultural threat from the rise in tandem of modernity and western hegemony has been, ever since the very first beginnings of the 19th century Nahdah, a persistent theme within Arab intellectual discourse about contemporary events. Adunis, as previously discussed, incorporates this theme of threat and encroachment from the western direction into his larger concept of a "double siege" placed upon contemporary Arab cultural identity. Although in his writings Adunis pointedly shuns cultivating animosity towards western society as a whole he maintains, as described in chapter two, that certain of its more negative elements have combined with detrimental aspects of the Arab world's own indigenous sociopolitical and religious

orthodoxies to place a twofold stranglehold on its cultural sense of self.

> [The result is] a double dependency: a dependency on the past, to compensate for the lack of creative activity by remembering and reviving; and a dependency on the European-American West, to compensate for the failure to invent and innovate by intellectual and technical adaptation and borrowing. ... In both cases there is an obliteration of personality; in both cases, a borrowed mind, a borrowed life. (Introduction 80)

In somewhat similar fashion to Fanon, within Adunis' thinking not only do these twin forces of "double siege" seek to dictate the outcome of the Arab world's present and future in repressive ways, they also pose peril for its past as well, threatening to "blur or blot out the values of modernity and creativity" that lie within past historical ages of "the Arab literary heritage" (80). For Adunis, the more destructive dynamics he associates with the rise of western sociocultural hegemony, such as the forces of industrial capitalism and the "technical, mechanical aspects of modernity", threaten retroactive erasure of the accumulated layers of past history that make up today's Arab cultural identity, "eating away at us from within and distracting us from thinking about our own distinctive powers of invention" (85). Meanwhile, for him, the more negative elements of Arab traditional orthodoxy implant and permeate contemporary Arab culture with rigid and stagnant self-interpretations of that past, smothering its rich potentials for indigenous renaissance and renewal (89-90).

In The Wretched of the Earth Fanon sees, as it were, psychological necessity for the native intellectual to turn towards his culture's historical past in order to defend his culture's *local* and *particular* sense of individual identity in the face of the global leveling wrought by

modern colonialism. In Foundations of Modern Arab Identity Sheehi, by contrast, notes a compulsion felt by Arab intellectuals to excavate their cultural past for another purpose – to find evidence within it that their culture has previously demonstrated the necessary "competence" to claim a larger place for itself within the new *universal* world order that colonialism and modernity have embraced the globe with, namely, their all-encompassing, mandatory Hegelian paradigm of international "progress and civilization" (Foundations 31).

> … [Hegel's] paradigm of history and the dialectic of the subject are a profound preliminary effect of the colonial encounter within but not exclusive to the Arab world. In other words, the notion of universal history centered on progress is the same notion on which colonialism finds its "civilizing" justification. ... the colonial encounter extends an invitation to the colonized to judge his own cultural presence in contrast to the west, who is now waiting on the doorstep to intervene with its overwhelming political, economic and military power and "goodwill". (Foundations 34)

Echoes of such an overarching Hegelian framework echo, albeit with more benign overtones, in Adunis' observation that "today" in the modern era "the world... lives in the climate of a single universal civilization, but one that has its own specificities... that depend on the level of creative presence in the various peoples" (Introduction 92). A need to respond to the west and challenge its monopoly upon such now-universalized models of neo-humanist "progress", I would argue, underlies Adunis' claim that within the cultural developments of the medieval imperial 'Abbasid era and its cosmopolitan urban centers such as Baghdad, the Arab world has already previously demonstrated its own historical proof of an indigenous capacity for

"modernism" (Introduction 75, 88) In similar vein come Sa'adah's previously-discussed assertions that it was none other than the Phoenicians who supplied the preliminary seeds of modern western civilization itself, with their pioneering development of the first phonetic alphabets and their innovations in urban infrastructure and international commerce. Although the sum of Adunis' writings such as Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil, the Introduction to Arab Poetics and others arguably represent one of the more lengthy and ambitious efforts to reach into Arab-Islamic history in order to find fodder for argument that this culture has all along demonstrated its own sufficient elements of "modernity" independent of the west, such endeavors go all the way back to the beginning of the Nahdah, with Butrus Al-Bustani's mid-19th century Khutbah Fi Adab Al-'Arab ('Lecture on Arab Culture'). In his Khutbah Bustani, like Adunis and Sa'adah, looks through the width and breadth of Arab history to find argumentary evidence that the culture's past annals of achievements have already proven its qualifications to take its own full, independent place within the new modern world order alongside the Occident. Bustani starts by citing the same trope in a pan-Arab context that Sa'adah deploys in a "Phoenician" or "Syrian" context, reminding the reader of indigenous Arab claims of Arab-Islamic high medieval culture being an original historical ancestor of western cultural greatness itself.

> Indeed it is often that we hear the sons of the Arabs displaying pride and boasting among themselves due to the fact their ancient grandfathers were the ones who graced the world with the sciences and arts, though the opportunity of knowing the truth (of this) is not easily available to them. (4)

Bustani then resolves to investigate this historical "truth" behind such claims, and

launches into the main body of his Khutbah (4). In what ensues, writes Sheehi, “al-Bustani is methodical in laying out the evidence that the precedent for Arab cultural and social progress had been set centuries earlier” (Foundations 28).

As with Adunis, al-Bustani also points to the cosmopolitan age of the ‘Abbasid caliphs at the height of their international power in the 8th and 9th centuries, and that era's burgeoning manuscript culture of academic and literary writings, as proof positive that the Arabs, like the west, can claim a historical role as nurturers of international cultural “progress”. Throughout the Khutbah Bustani enumerates all the various accomplishments of the imposing pre-print medieval culture of handwritten texts on literature and knowledge that flourished under early 'Abbasid rule in Baghdad, internationally famous among historians to this day. This includes Bustani's description of its considerable activities in the preservation of ancient Greek scientific and philosophical texts and their translation into Arabic. Bustani points out to his reader that many of these 'Abbasid texts did indeed find their way into medieval European intellectual circles, thereby serving as a critical scholarly resource during the west's own so-called Dark Ages. Thus, affirms Bustani, Europe indeed stands “indebted” to the Arab world for its own present-day cultural greatness (8). This past 'Abbasid-era greatness, further asserts Bustani, proves irrefutably “the excellence of the Arab intellect and the quality of its preparedness for obtaining knowledge...,” to a point that “in the world there are no people capable of surpassing the Arabs” in this regard (16).

> For al-Bustani, the determination (*'azm*) of these forerunners created “the golden age of Arab knowledge”... . Intellectuals prospered at this time. Their work was patronized while schools and libraries, by which knowledge is produced and

reproduced, flourished (Sheehi, Foundations 8).

At cannot be said either Adunis or Sa'adah, nor 'Aflaq for that matter, are motivated by a desire to actually turn the Arab cultural clock back in time toward the historical past. Sheehi emphasizes that Bustani's own Victorian-era investigation of history is not a gesture of nostalgia for historical return either.

> Al-Bustani was not concerned with mapping out a return to past Arab greatness, as was the case with eighteenth century *wahabism,* or the conservative *salafiyah* movement at the end of the nineteenth century. Appropriately, he was preoccupied with the progress of the Arabs within a universal context. Like Turkish, Armenian, Persian and Indian reformers, he searched for the method by which he could "rekindle" the desire for knowledge that would catapult them into the modern era as efficacious cultural producers who would rival the West. (Foundations 25)

As such, rather than a call for a return to the past what Bustani's Khutbah ultimately represents, according to Sheehi, is an attempt to demonstrate the Arab World's "competency" in order to allow "the Arabs to enter the rationalist tradition and a Hegelian concept of universal history..." (30, 31):

> Consequently, the universal endpoint [envisioned by al-Bustani's narrative] is "progress and civilization". In addition to presenting the evidence of Arab mastery, al-Bustani reassures the native readers of their place in a universal history... (31)

If one places Fanon's and Sheehi's perspectives together and combines them one arrives, I

would argue, at a two-tier compulsion placed by modernity and colonialism upon the native intellectual that pulls their approach to their indigenous past heritage in two largely opposite directions at the same time. These are, to reiterate, pressure on a local level to defend the culture's distinctive historical traits and particularities against a global flattening and erasure of cultural individuality brought about by modernity and colonialism, and simultaneous pressure on a universalist level to demonstrate that the indigenous culture's same past history also demonstrates proof of its required "competence" to claim full international status within a new, standardized worldwide humanist order of "progress". Fanon asserts within the quote opening this chapter that these same pressures to demonstrate such competence are not placed to the same degree upon western culture which, he states, has already "given full proof of its existence" within the new modern order of things and therefore remains relatively "uncontested" within the overarching ideological and discursive matrix formed by modernity and colonialism.

Both of these pressures upon the past are apparent within Adunis' own approach to Arab poetic modernism. For he argues, as we have seen previously, both that medieval 'Abbasid Baghdad provides proof that Arab culture has the prerequisite capacity for "innovation" and "progress" to take its own place in the modern worldwide order of things, and at the same time that Arab culture must create its own "modernity" by itself and out of itself alone. The larger pressures confronting Adunis as he forms his construct of his Arab poetic modernism, I would argue, compel him not only towards a two-way approach towards past Arab history specifically, but a two-way approach towards the full spectrum of temporality as well that spans all the way from that past into the future. The result is a particular species of cultural modernism which must simultaneously engage itself with the unfolding present and future on the one hand in order to

stay culturally viable within the new ever-changing global order, and with the width and breadth of the Arab-Islamic cultural past as well, whether (a la Fanon) in order to defend the particularities of Arab identity or (a la Sheehi) to find evidence to demonstrate its universal cultural competence. Such an underlying back-and-forth movement that is ever-shifting between poles of past and future, and local particularity and global universality, comes across, for example, in Adunis' prescription for an Arab indigenous modernity based on cultural "authenticity".

> … Authenticity is not a fixed point in the past to which we must return in order to establish our identity. It is rather a constant capacity for movement and for going beyond existing limits towards a world which, while assimilating the past and its knowledge, looks ahead to a better future. (Introduction 90)

The "authentic" Arab modernity Adunis envisions, as such, emphatically demonstrates commitment to the indigenous past as one of its conceptual pillars, actively working to encompass and "assimilate" all its breadth and scope on the one hand, while at the same time demonstrating a capacity for "movement" which "goes beyond" that past towards the future on the other. This dualist, in-between stance within temporality comes across elsewhere in the fourth chapter of the Introduction as well:

> … I started to see … something inimical to the spirit of poetry in every move to make poetic creation subject to a rationalist scientific precept: one that seemed to say, the future before all else. I began to search for alternative forms which, while not rejecting the notion of the future, did not put an absolute ban on the past. They were forms which, on the contrary, embraced the past in some way. (94-5)

This two-way time engagement, echoed to no small degree within the writings of both Sa'adah and 'Aflaq as well, is, as discussed in chapter two, noticeably different from Calinescu's and Habermas's formulations of an out-and-out rupturing with history and the past caused by modernity's advent within the western arena. In their writings, as discussed in that section, western cultural modernity seizes upon intensive engagement with the present, in a fashion such that modernity "has to create its normativity" entirely "out of itself" alone (Habermas 7). The result for the western artist is that he is "cut off from the normative past with its fixed criteria," with tradition no longer possessing any "legitimate claim to offer him examples to imitate or directions to follow" (Calinescu 3).

Within the unfolding of Arab aesthetic modernism, on the other hand, from its initial inception with Bustani and the 19th century Nahdah onward the Arab past has been, in many ways, equally as urgent a concern for Arab reformers as the present. For Adunis and Sa'adah, cultural "modernity" is at the same time both something to be realized through active engagement with the present and through quasi-archaeological excavation of the past. Within Adunis' own modernism this becomes both a neo-Baudelairean immersion in the flow and activity of the immediate and "mutable" here and now, and an uncovering and restoration of the lost layers of Arab history. In this vein, even as Adunis in his editorials, public statements and critical writings frequently deplores what he perceives as a lack of competent, committed engagement by Arab culture with the demands of the present era, elsewhere in his writings he asserts that an inextricable part of Arab cultural modernism is a simultaneous commitment to "immersion in history" in order to retrieve whatever may have been left uncovered within its "silence" and "blank spaces" brought into existence by omissions within the discourses of

orthodox tradition (Introduction 33-4 & 101).

The outcome in this regard stands in marked contrast to Baudelaire's central essay on western modernism, “The Painter of Modern Life” wherein he depicts the habits of the French journalist and draftsman Constantin Guys, who serves as Baudelaire's prototype for the modernist artist he envisions. Baudelaire describes Guys spending countless hours roaming around cities and observing people and events prior to sitting down to draw, thereby pursuing Baudelaire's modernism by immersing himself in all the external flows and immediacies of the world around him.

> The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flaneur,* for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and to remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. (Painter of Modern Life 9)

Rather than such an ecstatic external thrust, a fundamental part of Adunis' conceptualization of Arab aesthetic modernism is largely characterized by immersion of the “Arab mind” within itself in an interior direction, and into its cultural past as well, in order to pull its indigenous “modernity” out of this self-interiority. “… it would appear”, he writes at one point, “that modernity is the problem of Arab thought in dialogue with itself and with the history

of knowledge in the Arab tradition. If we are to treat the problem of modernity, we must first re-examine the structures of Arab thought. To question modernity, Arab thought must question itself" (Introduction 83).

In this necessary mission to span an arc across both present and past in order to grapple with the various issues confronting it, Adunis' Arab modernism thereby comes to echo Sa'adah's and 'Aflaq's key rhetorical trope of khuluud (eternity) by taking on the type of quasi-transcendentalist traits discussed in chapters two and three. It becomes an Arab indigenous modernity both "of time and outside of time", tied not to temporality but instead to the eternal qualities of metaphorical power perpetually latent within the Arabic poetic "language itself" (Introduction 99-100). Adunis' assertions of the possibility of constructing an Arab poetic modernism standing altogether above and beyond time come out distinctly in the following passage in particular:

> … Poetry keeps human beings open to the invisible, the hidden, the infinite unknown, always on the threshold of what is to come; at this point, which is both in time and outside time, poetry becomes a bridge joining what a man was, what he is here and now, and what he will be tomorrow in an all-inclusive movement which goes beyond the mechanical, blind indifference of technical progress and embraces the changing unknown. (Introduction 97)

This quasi-transcendentalist, atemporal vision of Arab poetic modernism reaches rhapsodic overtones in the following passage:

> It appeared to me then that poetic modernity had been incorporated into history, which meant that the concept which I was in the process of discovering

became ‘ancient’. …

> Modernity as a concept whose fundamental characteristic is opposition to the ancient had ceased to exist. (Gibran (1883-1931) and al-Sayyab (1926-64), both 'moderns', share a poetic house with the 'ancients' Imru' al-Qays and Tarafa ibn al-'Abd (538-64), and with [the medieval ‘Abbasid poets] Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam who were 'modern' in relation to the pre-Islamic poets but are today considered 'ancient' when judged in terms of chronological time. All of these poets come together, beyond the simple categories of modern and ancient, in a single melting-pot of poetic creativity to form what I would call the entirety of authentic Arabic poetry, or, from a historical point of view, ‘the second modernity’. (Introduction 97-8)

If Arab cultural modernity has now apparently become semi-eternal with Adunis, however, it also appears to be eternally beleaguered by those forces opposed to it. For even within what he posits as Arab “modernism's” historical peak in Baghdad, as we saw in the chapter four, Adunis still sees powerful currents of rigid traditionalism and authoritarianism, personified by the 'Abbasid caliphate and the institutions of orthodox medieval clergy and scholars, looming above and over it. In Adunis' historical vision, the forces of “modernism” then become suppressed and dormant altogether beneath intensely conservative cultural reactions to the foreign threats posed by the Crusaders and other invaders beginning in the eleventh centuries – threats which culminate in the catastrophic Mongol sacking of Baghdad in AD 1258 (Introduction 77). Due to the pressures of foreign disruption and indigenous conservatism throughout these later medieval historical periods, Adunis maintains, indigenous capacities for

"modernism", however culturally active they might have been at one time or another, were never able to truly enter into the central stream of Arab cultural consciousness.

> The problem of poetic modernity (hadatha) in Arab society goes beyond poetry in the narrow sense and is indicative of a general cultural crisis, which is in some sense a crisis of identity. This is linked both to an internal power struggle which has many different aspects and operates on various levels, and to an external conflict against foreign powers. …
>
> Perhaps this helps to explain why the current of modernity in Arab society sometimes flows strongly (as was the case in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries) and at other times abates and recedes (as it did in the following centuries), according to whether the double-sided conflict, internal and external, is at a high or low point. It may also explain why modernity has tended to be a force which rejects, questions and provokes without entering in any conscious, radical way into the structure of the Arab mind or into Arab life as a whole. Perhaps, finally, it may go some way to explaining the dominance of the traditionalist mentality in Arab life and in Arabic poetry and thought. (Introduction 76-7)

Such a tumultuous view of a perpetually up-and-down, imperiled "modernism" within Arab-Islamic history finds parallels of a sort in Al-Bustani's Khutbah, where he weaves together his historical narrative into a "representation" of Arab "cultural and social success and failure", with such success or failure seen as dependent on whether what Bustani sees as forces of knowledge or ignorance are in ascendance within a particular era (Sheehi, Foundations 26). Serving as paragons of an epoch of ignorance for Bustani are the very early Rashidi and

Umayyad caliphs who followed immediately after the Prophet Muhammad. In the Khutbah, for example, he recounts an erroneous, now-discredited historical myth that it was the Caliph 'Umar who ordered the burning down of Alexandria's legendary ancient library of artistic and scientific manuscripts, originally constructed by the classical-era Ptolemid Greeks. Bustani's depiction of 'Umar within this account echoes Adunis' rhetorical framing of Sunni Islam's orthodox religious establishment as one that seeks to treat all realms of knowledge and information as lesser appendages of the fixed, static text of the Qur'an, thereby constricting and petrifying them.

> It is said that when 'Amr bin al-'As conquered the city of Alexandria in 640 AD, under the caliphal rule of 'Umar bin al-Khattab, after lengthy siege, [the Alexandrian Christian] Yahya Al-Iskandari al-Ya'qubi, renowned as a grammarian, came to him and said to him after becoming acquainted with him, due to his [newfound] closeness to him: "You have taken into your reach all the goods of Alexandria and taken hold of all the various kinds of things present among them. As for what [among them] is of benefit to you, I will not oppose you. And as for what is of no benefit to you, we [of Alexandria] are more suitable for it."
>
> 'Amr asked him: "What is it that you need?"
>
> He replied: "The books of wisdom that were in the royal libraries."
>
> Then Amr told him: "It is not possible for me to grant you them before asking permission of the Commander of the Believers, 'Umar bin al-Khattab." And 'Amr wrote to 'Umar and informed him of what Yahya had said. Then 'Umar's letter came to him, in which he said: "As for the books that you

> mentioned, for if there is in them that which is in accordance with the Book of God [i.e. the Qur'an], then within the Book of God is that which makes it superfluous. And if there is in them that which contradicts the Book of God, then there is no wanting of it. So proceed in their elimination." Then when the Commander of the Faithful's letter came to him he went ahead with dispersing them to the baths of Alexandria, and burning them in their stoves. And they were fueled by them for a long time. (6-7)

Within Bustani's narrative 'Umar's theological act of renouncing all sources of knowledge outside the Qur'an goes on to have catastrophic consequences:

> It is said that the number of books was four hundred thousand. And if it is true that this library… contained the books of the sciences of India, Egypt and Greece, their burning was a great loss which cannot be recuperated. And there is no doubt that when the Arabs awoke from the heedlessness of ignorance and uneducated folly, soon after this event, they indeed shared sentiments of grief and regret with the rest of the world over the loss of this esteemed library, which the Ptolemids and Caesars spent considerable wealth to gather together. (7)

Meanwhile for Bustani, as we have already seen, it is the later 'Abbasids, whose cosmopolitan era of rule in their capital of Baghdad is also lauded by Adunis, whose dynastic era stands as the premier exemplar of Arab enlightenment. Then, with the fading of the 'Abbasids, Bustani sees "knowledge" fading as a vital force within Arab cultural consciousness for long centuries, only to be jolted into activity by the challenge of rising technological European hegemony after the passing of over a millennium of "ignorance". After the golden age of

Baghdad, he asserts, “the desire of the rulers and the great ones for knowledge dropped away... efforts to obtain it became inactive... its tomes became timeworn... and (commerce in) the commodity of knowledge stagnated, and time and mortality sent the men of knowledge to oblivion, and ignorance took up rulership over the people with great power...” (25).

As such, with Adunis and Bustani the quest to reach backward into past Arab history and grasp and acquire previous elements of “modernity” and “progress” buried and tangled up beneath its manifold layers of “backwardness” and “ignorance” can be an arduous struggle indeed. T.S. Eliot's western-based prescriptions, mentioned in chapter two, that the modern poet must “struggle” and make difficult efforts to achieve true comprehension of past traditions becomes an even more fraught and dire prognosis with ‘Aflaq:

> How can our past return to us, this past that we take pride in and long for, when we so frequently differ on its interpretation and meaning? For among us are those who reckon that merely imitating its frozen forms will bring back to us the secret of its power and genius...
>
> In our past is an authentic spirit, in our past is a free and nobly elevated life, but I believe that that spirit, that authenticity and elevated nobility, is not possible for us to understand and make contact with in any shape or manner unless we make a bloody and arduous climb upwards toward it, unless we deserve it in a noble and suitable way… (161)

The question perhaps, especially with Adunis and Sa'adah, is to what degree in reaching backwards to grasp the past they actually do so, as opposed to what degree they inadvertently cast their own reflections upon its waters in a self-circular fashion. As we have seen in chapter

four both engage in a significant flattening out of history, and take up as central to their thinking tropes they shared with past generations of western Orientalists among others. These tropes, ironically, have now themselves come to be seen as backward by many scholars as time has moved forward. Such is the case, as we saw in that chapter, with Sa'adah's notion that back in the far past are “authentic” Syrian cultural roots of cultural dynamism buried beneath over a millennium of backwardness brought about by the “barbarian conquests” of Islam and the desert Arabs. As noted there, scholars today have generally come to agree that whereas Islam originated in peninsular Arabia, the bulk of its subsequent formation and evolution into the complex and far-flung religious and cultural entity we know today occurred under the influence of factors and forces existent within the more populated and cosmopolitan areas the desert Bedouins conquered, including the Levant and the Fertile Crescent.

Such, as well, is Adunis' trope of an Arab culture sent into nearly a millennium of cultural torpor following the decline of 'Abbasid Baghdad. Perhaps first formulated by western Orientalists and by Bustani as well in his Khutbah, this particular trope was then perhaps first called into question in the 1960s by Marshall Hodgson, one of the first western scholars to break with the racialist ideologies of the Orientalists that divided the human world between “western” minds and “non-western” ones along colonialist ideological lines. It has consequently fallen out of favor and come to be seen as antiquated within much of mainstream scholarship on Islamic history since then.

> ... one of the crudest, yet remarkably pervasive forms of hypostatizing a cultural tradition... [is the] misimpression that 'the East' has latterly been awakening from a 'millennial torpor' [which] is still remarkably widespread. It results, of course …

> from the profound ignorance of world history not only among modern Westerners but among others as well …
>
> Western scholars assumed that the comparatively slow pace of technical and intellectual development which they could perceive in the nineteenth-century world abroad amounted to no development at all, and marked a difference of race and place rather than one of age...
>
> While more or less recognizing the comparability of pre-Modern Western and non-Western societies as to degree of cultural activity, they have blanketed all pre-Modern areas under the term 'traditional'... as if all had been asleep together (save in certain periods of undeniable florescence) – rather than all awake together. As we have noted, the degree to which pre-technicalized and even pre-literate peoples have been bound by the 'dead hand of tradition' has been greatly exaggerated. Among Muslims, at any rate, the major institutions of each age can be shown to have their own functional justification at their own time: Muslim social decisions, even under the conservative spirit, were made primarily not out of deference to the past but as meeting concrete and practical interests of dominant social groups. (Hodgson 38)

6.2. Fanon: the “River of Blood” and the Closed Road to the Indigenous Past

Once again, as with some previous chapters, this one will end with a counterpoint. Once again as well, this alternative point of view is presented merely for the sake of additional perspective, rather than attempting to take sides or pass any summary judgment on the issues in

question. Although, as mentioned at the opening of this chapter, Fanon warns indigenous peoples of the threat of erasure of the cultural past they universally face under colonialism, thereby diagnosing a key aspect of the situation under which Sa'adah, 'Aflaq and Adunis all operate as mid-20th century Arab thinkers, he nevertheless issues a contrasting verdict from theirs in regards to how to grapple with this situation. For Fanon, as will be discussed below, all attempts to resuscitate the indigenous cultural past from beneath colonialism's shadow, admirable as they may be, inevitably lead to a dead end.

This ultimate decision to render judgment against preservation of the past comes as the result of a larger twofold equation Fanon posits. On the one hand he states, it is a perfectly natural and crucial psychological instinct for a native intellectual to feel the need to "tear" themselves "away" from cultural association with the colonialist forces that seek to erase their indigenous roots and impose western norms upon them, in order to seek a return to their own native origins. "This tearing away," he writes, "painful and difficult though it may be, is however necessary" (218). Native intellectuals who fail to respond to this need, he states, risk "serious psycho-affective injuries" and, ultimately, self-negation on a fundamental level. The consequent result of such inertia would "be individuals without an anchor," Fanon writes, "without a horizon, colorless, stateless, rootless – a race of angels" (218).

Though passively remaining in the middle space between their own culture and that of the colonizer risks stranding the native intellectual among such "rootless" individuals without cultural or philosophical anchor, Fanon maintains, most native thinkers who operate within the environment generated by colonialism ultimately give in to this inertia, and fail to muster the necessary decisiveness to tear themselves away from it. In such cases it "will... be quite normal

to hear certain natives declare, 'I speak as a Senegalese and a Frenchman…',” or “ 'I speak as an Algerian and a Frenchman…'". Although “the intellectual who is Arab and French, or Nigerian and English, when he comes up against” this pressure to “take on two nationalities, chooses, if he wants to remain true to himself, the negation of one of these determinations,” the majority of native intellectuals in the colonized country simply “cannot or will not make a choice,” Fanon states – thereby remaining, in his opinion, ultimately adrift and ineffective as cultural and sociopolitical thinkers and actors (218).

Those native intellectuals who do, however, remain firm in their decision to return back to the fundaments of their own cultures and seek their origins take a step, according to Fanon, that is not only critical for themselves, but also has powerful consequences for the colonizer as well.

> … The sari becomes sacred, and shoes that come from Paris or Italy are left off in favor of pampooties, while suddenly the language of the ruling power is felt to burn your lips. Finding your fellow countrymen sometimes means in this phase to will to be a nigger, not a nigger like all other niggers but a real nigger, a Negro cur, just the sort of nigger that the white man wants you to be. Going back to your own people means to become a dirty wog, to go native as much as you can, to become unrecognizable, and to cut off those wings that before you had allowed to grow.
>
> The native intellectual decides to make an inventory of the bad habits drawn from the colonial world, and hastens to remind everyone of the good old customs of the people, that people which he has decided contains all truth and

> goodness. The scandalized attitude with which the settlers who live in the colonial territory greet this new departure only serves to strengthen the native's decision. When the colonialists, who had tasted the sweets of their victory over these assimilated people, realize that these men whom they considered as saved souls are beginning to fall back into the ways of niggers, the whole system totters. Every native won over, every native who had taken the pledge not only marks a failure for the colonial structure when he decides to lose himself and to go back to his own side, but also stands as a symbol for the uselessness and the shallowness of all the work that has been accomplished. (221)

Nonetheless, Fanon believes, this quest for previous indigenous cultural origins cannot be the native intellectual's final step, and if they pursue it onward without alteration, the eventual result will be a cul-de-sac. For one thing the very fact his country has been colonized, or so Fanon believes, means that the native intellectual is seeking to resuscitate a culture already irreparably ruptured since the very first day of western colonialism's arrival. It is, therefore, no longer truly "alive". As such, although "persistence in following forms of cultures which are already condemned to extinction," he writes, may at first seem to be a forceful and effective demonstration of the native speaker's "nationality" and identity in the face of colonialism, it is nonetheless, "a demonstration which is a throwback to the laws of inertia" (237). For even as the native intellectual seeks return to what he perceives as the original and "authentic" ways of his people, conditions brought about by colonialism and the impact of the modern era are bringing about fundamental and irrevocable changes not only to the life of the indigenous intellectual but the masses around him as well. Under these circumstances, believes Fanon, the quest for

previous origins of native culture can only turn out to be a quest for antiquated “exoticism”, far removed from actual reality currently on the ground (221).

Furthermore, according to Fanon, even as colonialism seeks to erase the native past on one hand, it has a second insidious effect on it on the other. For colonialism’s scholars and expert specialists do seek to maintain the native culture – but in rigidly academicized and exoticized forms of its past existence, that interact in a highly negative way with native intellectuals who also seek return to past “origins”. Meanwhile, Fanon states, whenever change impacts art forms of the native culture in ways he views as positive, such as whenever indigenous currents of rebellion loom up against colonialism's repression and subsequently begin to find an outlet of expression in native artwork, colonialist scholars rush to condemn these new and dynamic developments.

> On the whole such changes are condemned in the name of a rigid code of artistic style and of a cultural life which grows up at the heart of the colonial system. The colonialist specialists do not recognize these new forms and rush to the help of the traditions of the indigenous society. It is the colonialists who become the defenders of the native style. (242)

For Fanon, it appears, there simply can never be truly lasting castles of “origin” or fixed, permanent foundations of “authentic” culture for native intellectuals to take up abode within. For him such things, whatever short-term philosophical or ideological force they might have, are in the end mirages. For Fanon, for all intents and purposes, a colonized society’s culture is not to be found back within remnants of older traditions or customs, but instead within its present-day evolution amidst the ever-shifting, intangible “occult space” brought about by the indigenous

people's ongoing responses to the situation of modernity and modern colonialism here and now:

> … It is not enough to try to get back to the people in that past out of which they have already emerged; rather we must join them in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called into question. Let there be no mistake about it; it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come; and it is there that our souls are crystallized and that our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light. (227)

As such, Fanon asserts, it is not through exploring traditional rituals or costumes or other such activities that indigenous culture is to be formed in the here and now of today, but instead within the endeavors of an indigenous population to adapt to and overcome ongoing circumstances as they occur on the ground within their struggles against modern colonialism. It is around such "struggles" he writes, for example, "that African-Negro culture takes on substance, not around songs, poems, or folklore" (25).

> … Adherence to African-Negro culture and to the cultural unity of Africa is arrived at in the first place by upholding unconditionally the peoples' struggle for freedom. No one can truly wish for the spread of African culture if he does not give practical support to the creation of the conditions necessary to the existence of that culture; in other words, to the liberation of the whole continent.
>
> I say again that no speech-making and no proclamation concerning culture will turn us from our fundamental tasks: the liberation of the national territory; a continual struggle against colonialism in its new forms... (235)

For Fanon, struggle itself is the purest form of creating “culture”.

> The native intellectual nonetheless sooner or later will realize that you do not show proof of your nation from its culture but that you substantiate its existence in the fight which the people wage against the forces of occupation. No colonial system draws its justification from the fact that the territories it dominates are culturally non-existent. You will never make colonialism blush for shame by spreading out little-known cultural treasures under its eyes. (223)

Fanon also moves in reverse to another previously-discussed paradigm within the thought of Adunis, Sa'adah and 'Aflaq: their formulations that it is critical to form a complete conceptual framework for a new, “modern” national culture in all its aspects as a philosophical foundation to stand upon prior to initiating any acts of sociopolitical struggle. For Fanon it is the dynamics of the struggle itself, and that struggle's resulting effects on the indigenous people who initiate it, that will ultimately create the new national cultural framework. Fanon maintains that such a framework born spontaneously and organically out of struggle, furthermore, will remain as a living and dynamic force regardless of the final success or failure of that struggle. For Fanon, in other words, there are no strict prior criteria to place upon any popular struggle, such as Adunis placed upon the Arab Spring in his letter to Bashar Al-Asad, that it must meet or satisfy in order to justify itself as a cultural force. As such, for Fanon an indigenous people's struggle itself is culture, and vice versa.

> We believe that the conscious and organized undertaking by a colonized people to re-establish the sovereignty of that nation constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists. It is not alone the success of the

> struggle which afterward gives validity and vigor to culture; culture is not put into cold storage during the conflict. The struggle itself in its development and in its internal progression sends culture along different paths and traces out entirely new ones for it. The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former value and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man. (246)

In the end it could be said that for Fanon, here also unlike Adunis as well, imperfections or insufficiencies either within such indigenous movements of struggle or within historical changes brought about by them are irrelevant as well. “As for we who have decided to break the back of colonialism”, he writes emphatically, “our historic mission is to sanction all revolts, all desperate actions, all those abortive attempts drowned in rivers of blood” (207).

A BRIEF EPILOGUE

Of History and Discursive Analysis in Arab Studies, and "Miserable Afterlifes"

As we have seen Adunis, contrary in general to European public intellectuals of academic background such as Michel Foucault or Jurgen Habermas, has never been one to shy away from posing statements about culture, or summary judgments of entire swaths of it, in blunt, simple terms. In this, perhaps, he recalls less the modern concept of the "professional" scholar, and more the kind of poet-critic Baudelaire once was. As literary creator and critic combined Baudelaire, in the words of one of his translators into English, "was quick to reject a cold, mathematical, heartless type of criticism, and to require in its place a criticism which should be 'partial, passionate and political'…" (Painter of Modern Life ix). For Baudelaire, as his words in an essay on German Romantic composer Richard Wagner show, being both a passionate poet and a passionate critic were inseparable from each other.

> All great poets naturally and fatally become critics. I pity those poets who are guided by instinct alone: I regard them as incomplete. In the spiritual life of the former a crisis inevitably occurs when they feel the need to reason about their art, to discover the obscure laws in virtue of which they have created, and to extract from this study a set of precepts whose divine aim is infallibility in poetic creation. It would be unthinkable for a critic to become a poet; and it is impossible for a poet not to contain within him a critic. Therefore the reader will not be surprised at my regarding the poet as the best of all critics. (Painter of Modern Life 125)

Just as the disputability of Adunis' opinions cannot simply be said to void his longstanding role as a central indigenous critical voice of Arab modernism and tradition, so to can the same be said for Baudelaire in his time and place as well. As Baudelaire's translator Jonathan Mayne also noted, whether or not he was historically "accurate" in predicting the precise path of western modernisms to come in the eras following him is quite arguably less relevant than the seminal nature of his role in helping shape these modernisms in the first place.

> … It has for some time indeed been conventional to hold that Baudelaire was the only art-critic of the nineteenth century who never made mistakes. And if by the phrase 'never made mistakes' we mean that he exactly anticipated the verdicts of posterity in all his judgments, it must at once be owned by anyone who has taken the trouble to read what he wrote that this conventional belief is not founded strictly on fact. Other critics of his time… may be instanced as more accurate prophets of the dawn. Other critical attitudes than his belief in a purified and re-stated Romanticism may now seem to have been more in the mainstream of the theory of art as it has since developed.
>
> But though such practical criticisms must indeed be admitted to have some force, it is legitimate to ask whether it is not perhaps a little crude to attempt to place such a critic as Baudelaire – or any critic, for that matter, who is also a creative artist – in accordance with a simple score-card of 'hits' and 'misses', and particularly when those hits and misses are themselves not so much verifiable facts as elements in a constantly changing complex of opinion. It is necessary at once to state that we do not read Baudelaire in order to dazzle ourselves with the

> shafts of his prophetic gaze… But against the enormous positive importance of his work, any such possible shortcomings are fundamentally insignificant. (Painter of Modern Life xv-xvi)

As such, though this dissertation has been somewhat skeptical towards some opinions put forward by Adunis, as well others of Sa'adah and 'Aflaq, its ultimate intent is not to dispute their status today as foundational voices within Arab modernism's shaping and, in the case of the latter two, within that of Arab nationalism as well. As with Baudelaire in his own western context, whether or not the sociocultural predictions of these three thinkers have ultimately turned out to be empirically "accurate" is perhaps of less import than the issues they had a pivotal role in pointing out as necessary to address within the Arab arena. These issues are, by and large, ones that lie at the heart of contemporary Arab cultural identity including, to name but a few among many: what should modern Arab culture's relation to the west be, and how should it answer the profound challenges to Arab identity the west has thrown at its feet? How should modern Arab culture relate to its historical past within the context of an ever-changing world today? How necessary is it for Arab culture to hold fast to its own local particularities in the face of an increasingly globalized and universalized world -- and if this preservation is necessary or important, then which of those particularities are undeniably crucial and which ones might be extraneous?

The importance of studying and paying attention to the content of writings and intellectual ideas of such figureheads of Arab modernism and nationalism both past and present is made more urgent by a current existing tendency within much of scholarship on the Arab world. This particular inclination, as Sheehi notes in his own book on The Foundations of

Modern Arab Identity, is to dwell on political events and dates rather than discursive patterns and currents when attempting to analyze how the modern Arab world has come into being.

> If the history of the Arab world occupies the quiet background of this study, its historiography stands in its path. The historiography of the Arab world has generally ignored discursive phenomena as a determining historical force in favor of material, political, and ideological developments. (7)

This is a tendency which this humble dissertation, standing in the shadow of Sheehi's significantly more monumental work, has been but one small attempt to counterbalance. A vivid example of the results of such insistence on solely dwelling on historical events in order to determine a viewpoint of modern Arab intellectual history can be shown, perhaps, in an article by an expert from America's Carnegie Middle East Center, titled simply "The Miserable Afterlife of Michel Aflaq". The article begins, moves onwards and then ends with pure historiography. It is a point-by-point recounting of when and where 'Aflaq's Ba'th party began, when and where it held power, and what political and military events ensued afterward. 'Aflaq's personal idiosyncrasies are also touched on in very brief biographical manner.

> Today, the Baath Arab Socialist Party—*baath* is Arabic for "renaissance"—is a mere arm of the ruling apparatus, with no more intellectual independence than a police force or a ministry. But it started as a highly ideological movement of protest against French colonial control, led by the Arab nationalist philosopher Michel Aflaq.
>
> Awkward as a public figure and very much not a soapbox politician, Aflaq's musings on the historical role of the Arab nation still managed to infuse a

> generation of young radicals with a sense of purpose and a fierce commitment to anti-imperialism. During the 1940s and 1950s, branches of the party sprang up in several Arab countries, all held together by the top leadership in Damascus. (Lund)

As the author progresses onward in the article toward offering assessment of the sum value of ‘Aflaq’s intellectual and political career, the word “radical” is used repeatedly as a descriptive term with no other elaboration or explanation. Throughout the article, no sentence or passage from the actual intellectual content of ‘Aflaq’s writings is ever cited or discussed. The article ends with two final historical snippets placed as concluding evidence to determine that ‘Aflaq’s historical afterlife as an Arab thinker has indeed been “miserable”. The first one is the irony of Saddam Hussein’s famed insistence on burying ‘Aflaq as a “Muslim” after his death in 1989 despite no apparent hard public evidence that ‘Aflaq, a Christian, had ever officially converted to Islam. The second is the takeover and dishonoring of his grave by American soldiers decades later.

> To have his mausoleum turned into a gym for occupying U.S. soldiers would seem bad enough an afterlife for the man who dedicated his life to radical Arab nationalism. But as it turned out, this was only the beginning of Aflaq’s postmortem tribulations. A few years later, as the U.S. presence in Iraq drew to an end, the Aflaq mausoleum was turned into a shopping mall. Journalists from the U.S. military magazine *Stars & Stripes* passed by in 2010 and noted that Aflaq’s grave now hosted a supermarket stuffed with kitsch goods, “selling pirated DVDs,

> jogging suits and miniature carpets emblazoned with the words ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’ to U.S. soldiers and security guards from Peru and Uganda.”
>
> Whatever deeper meaning one might find in this, it was hardly the epitaph that Aflaq hoped for. (Lund)

One wonders what the response would have been if the sum intellectual value of a thinker similarly central to modern western thought, such as Karl Marx, had been so summarized in a western academic or pseudo-academic article with no reference whatsoever to his actual texts, writings, or intellectual ideas and opinions.

Whatever this dissertation has accomplished, and regardless of how critical this dissertation has been at times of either ‘Aflaq, Adunis or Sa’adah, let it be first and foremost to prove irrefutably that all three thinkers bear much deeper consideration than such dismissive accounts as the one above.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works cited -- authored by or with the participation of Adunis:

Adunis. Aghani Mihyar Al-Dimashqi. Jablah, Suriya: Badayat, 2006.

---. "Adonis: There are Many Easts in the East and Many Wests in the West." Interview with Adunis. Banipal: Magazine of Modern Arab Literature. 2 (1998), www.banipal.co.uk/selections/16/162/adonis/.

---. "The Cairo Review Interview: Age of Darkness." Interviewed by Jonathan Randal and Scott MacLeod; Translated from French by Grant Rosenberg. The Cairo Review of Global Affairs. 13 (2014): 19-29.

---. Diwan al-Nahdah: Ahmad Shawqi. Edited by Adunis. Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malayin, 1987.

---. Diwan al-Shi'r al-'Arabi. Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2010.

---. Dubai TV. Interview. March 6, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2Y2ZcfUIZU.

---. Ha Anta Ayyuha al-Waqt: Sira Shi'riyyah -Thaqafiyah. Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1993.

---. "I Was Born for Poetry." Interview by Hannah Ziadeh. Louisiana Channel. Humblebaek, Denmark: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. November 2014, channel.louisiana.dk/video/adonis-i-was-born-poetry.

---. An Introduction to Arab Poetics. Translated from French by Catherine Cobham. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

---. "Khalik bil-Bayt." Future Television. Interview by Zahi Wahbah. Beirut: December 18, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQoXS2wbz5o.

---. Mihyar of Damascus: His Songs. Translated from Arabic by Adnan Haydar and Michael Beard. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2008.

---. Muqaddimah lil-Shi'r al-'Arabi. Bayrut: Dar al-'Awdah, 1979.

---. "Risalah Maftuhah ila Bashar al-Asad: al-Insan, Huququhu wa Huriyatuhu, aw al-Hawiyah." Al-'Arabiyyah, June 14, 2011, www.alarabiya.net/views/2011/06/14/153187.html.

---. "The Roots and Causes of Islamic Violence? Secularism is the Solution." ADHOC Conference. Participating speech by Adunis. Brussels: May 22, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_mcN-nHvk4.

---. "Tahyah ila Misr wa ila Mayadin Tahririha." Al-Hayah. July 25, 2013, www.alhayat.com/article/448323.

---. Al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil : Bahth fi al-Ittiba' wa-al-Ibda' 'inda al-'Arab. Al-Tab'ah 1. Beirut: Dar al-'Awdah, 1974.

---. Zaman al-Shi'r. Beirut. Dar al-Saqi, 2005.

Adunis and Saqr Abu Fakhr. Hiwar ma' Adunis: al-Tufulah, al-Shi'r wa al-Manfa. Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirasat wa-al-Nashr, 2000.

Jaggi, Maya. "Adonis: A Life in Writing." The Guardian. Interview. January 27, 2012, www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/jan/27/adonis-syrian-poet-life-in-writing.

Works cited -- by authors other than Adunis:

Abu Zeid, Kareem James. "The Arab Spring and Adunis' Revolution, In Context: A Reply to Sinan Antoon." Jadaliyya. September 19, 2011,

www.jadaliyya.com/Details/24407.

'Aflaq, Michel. Fi Sabil al-Ba‘th. Bayrut: Dar al-Tali‘ah, 1963.

Antoon, Sinan. “Adunis, the Revolutionary Poet.” Al-Jazeera. July 11, 2001, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/07/201179124452158992.html.

Badawi, Muhammad Mustafa. A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Baudelaire, Charles. Intimate Journals. Translated from French by Christopher Isherwood. Hollywood: M. Rodd, 1947.

---. The Painter of Modern Life: and Other Essays. Translated from French by Jonathan Mayne. [London]: Phaidon, 1964.

---. Selected Poems. Translated from French by Carol Clark. London; New York: Penguin, 1995.

Benewick, Robert and Philip Green, editors. “Michel ‘Aflaq.” The Routledge Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Political Thinkers. London; New York: Routledge, 1998.

Berkey, Jonathan. The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Berman, Marshall. All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

Beshara, Adel. Outright Assassination: the Trial and Execution of Antun Sa'adeh, 1949. Reading, U.K.: Ithaca Press, 2010.

Bowering, Gerhard, editor. "Aflaq, Michel.” The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Bustani, Butrus. Khutbah fi Adab al-‘Arab. 1859.

Calinescu, Matei. Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism. Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.

Creswell, Robyn. “Tradition and Translation: Poetic Modernism in Beirut.” Dissertation. New York University, 2012. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2012. 3502685.

Deflem, Mathieu. “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis.” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. 30. 1 (1991): 1–25.

Eliot, T.S. The Sacred Wood. London: Methuen & Co, [1950].

Engels, Frederick. The Condition of the Working Class in England. Translated from German by Florence Kelly. New York: John W. Lovell Company, [1887].

Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. Translated from French by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1968.

Foucault, Michel. The Archaeology of Knowledge. New York: Vintage Books, 2010.

Habermas, Jurgen. The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures. Translated from German by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987.

Hodgson, Marshall. The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Huebler, Friedrich, and Weixin Lu. Adult and Youth Literacy: National, Regional and Global Trends, 1985-2015. Montreal, Quebec: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013.

Kanafani, Ghassan. Rijal fi al-Shams. 1963.

Kaufman, Asher. Reviving Phoenicia: In Search of Identity in Lebanon. London; New York: I.B.

Tauris, 2004.

Kissinger, Henry. American Foreign Policy. New York: W.W. Norton, 1977.

Lund, Aaron. “The Miserable Afterlife of Michel Aflaq.” Diwan. Carnegie Middle East Center, March 10, 2014, carnegie-mec.org/diwan/54844.

Makdisi, Saree. “‘Postcolonial’ Literature in a Neocolonial World: Modern Arabic Culture and The End of Modernity.” boundary 2. 22. 1 (1995): 85-115.

Mala’ikah, Nazik. Qadaya al-Shi’r al-Mu’asir. Bayrut: Dar al-‘Ilm lil-Malayin, 1962.

Qai’i, Mahmud. “Adunis Yaftah al-Nar 'ala al-Thaqafah al-'Arabiyyah.” Ra'i al-Yawm. London, Feb 4, 2015, www.raialyoum.com/?p=214003.

Sa‘adah, Antoun. Mabadi' al-Hizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima'i wa-Ghayatuh. [Bayrut] :[Tubi'a bi-ishraf 'Umdat al-Thaqafah fi al-Hizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima'i], 1972.

---. Nushu’ al-Umam. Beirut: 1938.

---. Al-Sira’ al-Fikri fi al-Adab al-Suri. Bayrut: 'Umdat al-Thaqafah fi al-Hizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima'i, 1978.

Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Salih, al-Tayyib. Season of Migration to the North. Translated from Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies. Oxford: Heinemann, 1991.

Sheehi, Stephen. Foundations of Modern Arab Identity. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004.

---. “Modernism, Anxiety and the Ideology of Arab Vision”. Discourse. 28.1 (2006): 72–97.

Turner, Victor. 1920-1983. The Forest of Symbols; Aspects of Ndembu Ritual. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967.

---. The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969.

Unesco. Statistical Division. World Illiteracy at Mid-Century, a Statistical Study. [Paris]: UNESCO, 1957.

van Gennep, Arnold. The Rites of Passage. Translated from French by Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960.

Weber, Max. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Translated from German and edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.

---. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Translated from German by Talcott Parsons. New York: Scribner, 1958.

Works consulted:

Antonius, George. The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1946.

Bayati, 'Abd al-Wahhab. Love, Death and Exile. Translated by Bassam Frangieh. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004.

Boullata, Issa, editor. Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1980.

Devlin, John. The Ba'th Party: A History from its Origins to 1966. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976.

Fanon, Frantz. Black Skin, White Masks. Translated from French by Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

Gran, Peter. Islamic Roots of Capitalism. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979.

Jayyusi, Salma. Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry. Leiden: Brill, 1977.

Musawi, Muhsin. Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition. London; New York: Routledge, 2006.

Rihani, Amin. The Path of Vision: Pocket Essays of East and West. New York: James T. White and Company, 1921.