AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE HOUSE AND THE OTHER HOUSE:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF KIN-WORK IN PUBLISHING

by
SOHEILA AHMAD JAMIL SHOURBAJI

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon
July 2022

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE HOUSE AND THE OTHER HOUSE:
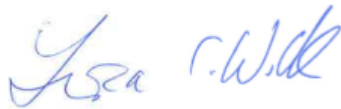## AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF KIN-WORK IN PUBLISHING
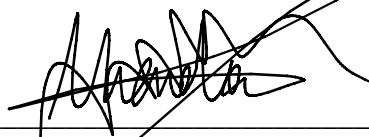
by
SOHEILA AHMAD JAMIL SHOURBAJI

Approved by:

_____   July 31, 2022

Dr. Kirsten Scheid, Associate Professor   Advisor
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies

_____

Dr. Livia Wick, Associate Professor   Member of Committee
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies

_____

Dr. Nada Moumtaz, Associate Professor   Member of Committee
Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

Date of thesis defense: July 29, 2022

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THESIS RELEASE FORM

Student Name: ____Shourbaji _____Soheila _____Ahmad Jamil_____
                                 Last   First   Middle

I authorize the American University of Beirut, to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of my thesis; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes:

☒ As of the date of submission

☐ One year from the date of submission of my thesis.

☐ Two years from the date of submission of my thesis.

☐ Three years from the date of submission of my thesis.

August 19, 2022

_____

Signature   Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT
OF THE THESIS OF

Soheila Ahmad Jamil Shourbaji   for: Master of Arts

                                                      Major: Anthropology

Title: The House and the Other House: An Ethnography of Kin-work in Publishing

Publishing in Beirut is a kinship enterprise. This study examines the nexus of kinship and economics at a small publishing house. Starting with the dream of publishing and the kin-work that rendered it into reality, I study the dialectics of obligation and desire that sustain the publishing house. Resources in the form of money, labor, books, and texts circulate and morph between the family house, the publishing house, and the bookstore. I argue for an interpretive theory of economic activity which produces sale, consignment, gift, and debt exchanges. The Arabic book market is a market of talk. I argue that monetary and textual value claims require interpretation and slip between the market and the language systems. Speech patterns and socialities further consolidate into publishing methodologies. The publishing house contends with the secular and sacred aesthetic realms to produce crafted and textured books. I observe that their print artefacts impress onto the reader's intuition and materialize a playful yet reverent orientation to the public. Eventually, this thesis studies exercises of meaning and matter making.

Keywords: kinship, economy, semiotics, interpretation, publishing, printing, exchange, value, books.

PREFACE

The world of publishing always abducted my imagination. Tales of publishing socialities, scandals, and adventures reverberate through the collective. Every day I went to do fieldwork, I could hardly believe that I get to step into this world. It all feels like a vitalizing dream now, and I cannot conceive of a better aftertaste.

This thesis is an ethnographic study of a publishing house in Beirut. I conducted participant-observation with the publisher, designers, authors, and printer between June and December 2021. I attended meetings, worked at the bookstore, and socialized with my interlocutors' interlocutors. I supplemented my fieldwork with nine interviews some of which took the form of a most delightful conversation.

The thesis is divided in four chapter. The first chapter examines the kinship arrangement of work at the publishing house. The second chapter analyzes the interpretive processes of economic activity at the house and the store. The third chapter looks at speech patterns and editorial methodologies. The fourth chapter contends with the materiality of bookmaking. Herein, I briefly intoroduce the publishing house.

Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt is a small publishing house that bears the stamp of the pine tree. Since 2014, they have published literary translations, re-editions of novel old books, narrative texts contending with the city, and studies in language and literature. *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* presents a particular case study. On one hand, the publishing house has a similar kinship structure to most publishing houses in Beirut and other Arab cities. On the other hand, they pursue unusual texts and artisanal production value. Their editorial and translation process complicate our conceptions of authorship, and their print artefacts unravel our familiarity with the book form.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

MAKING KIN: THE DREAM OF PUBLISHING

"It had always been an unconscious dream, *ḥilm baṭini,* in our house," publisher Hāla told me with such joy on her face, as if realizing for the first time. The evening had fell on the bookstore. I sat on a chair near Hāla's desk and asked her for the fifth time perhaps how the publishing house started. She told me that since she was a child, she managed the family's library. She used to organize the shelves, classify the books with a label maker, put slips inside the ones they can lend to others, and keep a record of the family friends borrowing and returning books. She fondly remembered how her father used to say, "Hāla will open a publishing house for the family one day."

The unconscious dream, springing from a moment in childhood, took root in Hāla's consciousness as she grew up. For her retirement, she wanted to buy an old building and turn it into a bookstore, a publishing house, and a research centre with a backyard café. However, the dream materialized into a different form. Hāla once jokingly told her sister about her project, and the sister told their brother. In his words, the three of them got together and cast the 'spells' that brought the publishing House, *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* (est. 2014), into being.[1] Each member of the house contributed in the way they could--time, place, texts, and money--but the one who got the project off the ground was Hāla.

The 'spells' entailed two actions: the arrangements to start the publishing house and the fights through which Hāla and her brother negotiated their desires. The fights and arrangements functioned to order two senses: the sense of desire, *al-ḥilm*, to publish

---

[1] In this chapter, I will refer to the publishing house as the House to differentiate it from mentions of the family house. I explain the methodological and theoretical reasons for this below.

and the sense of obligation, *al-wajib*, to do the work. In every retelling of the origin story of the House, Hāla insists that her siblings first plotted behind her back, and her brother responds asking how that could be when it is *her* publishing house. Hāla's sense of duty meant that she would be the one to run the House. Hāla had always been a *ṣaḥibat wajib*, and consequently became *ṣaḥibat dar al-nasher,* the convener of the publishing house. Her brother is, however, a "a dreamer, a poet, but not an executor," and true to character, he provided the first four texts for the House to publish. Desire and obligation flow in the opposite direction as well; after all, the publishing house is Hāla's life-long dream, and her brother was motivated by obligation to financially support the project. Thus, the tension and conventions that animate the publishing House originated in the family house.

This chapter looks at the nexus of kinship and economics at the publishing House. On one hand, the publishing house was in many ways the whole family's project, and on the other hand, the economy (of the house and the publishing House) is 'putting the house in order.' The question then concerns the kin making processes at the publishing House and the structural economic set-up of the family house. There is an uneasiness to my main problematic because modernity presumes kinship and economics must be categorically separate domains. What iterations of kinship are at work in the House? How do they forge into and overlap with work relationships? What makes kin-work different from other work relations? What functional dialectics animate the House? How do members of the House negotiate kinship and kin-work? With what tensions and conventions, fights and arrangements, desires and obligations? What labor conditions do the members of the House work under? What other work and kinship

configurations surround them? What economic dangers does one publishing house pose to another?

A. Kinship and Kin-work

In this thesis, I move between two locations of kinship: the family house and the publishing House, or the House and the other house. In the family house, we find iterations of kinship based in reproduction, such as parenthood and siblinghood, i.e., the individuals related by birth. This mode of kin-making, *Qaraba*, includes the set of relationships that one is born into. At the publishing House, a corporate group (in the sociological meaning) that emerged from the family house, we find a parallel notion, *Qurba,* the set of relationships that one forges through proximity and closeness. Intense friendship such as the friendship that grows through work is a kind of *Qurba*. The publishing House borrows from the family house its kin structure (siblinghood, parenthood, friendship) and transforms it into a work structure (sibling co-worker, parent/child co-worker, or friend co-workers). At the publishing House, on the other end of the transformation, we do not only get co-workers who are siblings, but we also get an economically specific rendering of kinship which I call 'kin-work.' What cuts across both locations, the family and the family business, I argue, is obligation and desire. Kinship and kin-work at the publishing House are based in urgent obligations and desires to produce books together with siblings and friends. I argue that in this kind of family business, siblinghood and friendship must be re-configured into work relationships by means of proximity, *Qurba*.

In distinguishing kinship from kin-work, I accept Marilyn Strathern's invitation to capture the 'specificity of kinship relationships' as they enter different domains and

contexts of social life (2014, 46-49). I argue against models that see the family business as a linear appendage of the family. Relegating all iterations of kinship to domestic kinship erroneously flattens out the cross-domain functioning of kinship. If I were to consider the family business a graft of the family stitched onto the economic domain, I would present the family as a self-evident unit. The presumption that domains must, in fact, be separate has shaped much of kinship studies. Furthermore, the problem lies in the separation of kinship from other domains of life as a condition for secular and modern socialities in which families have shed their functional (economic, political, pedagogical…) roles and remain only a site of socialization (McKinnon and Cannel 2013). The presumption goes even further leading anthropologists to diagnose the (perceived) extension of kinship into other domains as antithetical to modernity. However, studying the functioning of kinship in domestic, economic, religious, and political domains (and vice versa) thwarts this presumption that runs through the literature.

The notions of the family and the household require ethnographic grounding. The potency of my interlocutors' accounts about fights, excitements, and common creativity, changed the core question of my project. The kinship conditions of their work together, of this kind of work, came into focus for me. However, I soon understood that even though the publishing House is a public institution, my interlocutors continued to struggle for a sense of interiority and privacy. They tried to shield this interiority even from me as they would invite me to neither their big fights nor their family events. I reciprocated this boundary and reserved my questions about the family dynamic until the end of my fieldwork, trying to avoid the confrontation for as long as I could. Instead, the interiority of the family continued to strongly impress

itself upon me. For example, my interlocutors consistently used words like 'naturally' and 'habitually' to explain the decisions they make at the publishing House. Hāla and her brother explained the work division to me by invoking each other's characters and the family dynamic. The more I requested to hear the origin story of the publishing House, the more I realized the logic that the anecdote follows; family members act out in the publishing House the habits they formed in the family house because they are surrounded by the same people but in a different setting. Shortly, I will describe the ethnographic notions of family and household that my interlocutors hold, but before that, I turn to the mechanism by which the structure of the family house infused into the structure of the publishing House.

The unconscious dream, the tensions that work brought up, and the conventions that the family contributed to the work setting start in what Malinowski calls the 'initial situation' (1930). The initial situation of the family is the "set of initial conditions which determine the attitudes of the actors in the kinship drama" (23). Here I apply Malinowski's methodological lesson to pay attention to the influence of familial constitution on later life. I have observed that my interlocutors use the initial situation of the family house to create the initial situation of the publishing House through a complex process of fights and arrangements (what they call the spells). Based on his fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski describes similar processes of extension and distortion of the family kinship into adolescent and adult life as the family sentiment struggles against societal sentiments (25-27). The push and pull reaches equilibrium at the end because the family and society fulfill different social functions (28). I similarly argue that the family and the family business fulfill different social function. While extension and distortion inscribe early kinship onto later kinship, the

tensions and conventions at the interface of the house and the publishing House produce kin-work. Kin-work is the specific rendering of kinship in the workplace. It is negotiated through a set of dialectics: fights and arrangements, desires and obligations, tensions and conventions. These dialectical negotiations produce the kin-work dynamic which I study through the work division at the publishing House.

Work is divided at the publishing House by means of the habits, dispositions, and specializations of the kin co-workers. *Ḥilm* and *wajib* are two expressions of desire and obligation comparable to other family business dynamics in the anthropological literature. Sylvia Yanagisako studied the entanglements of motives, interests, and desires of kinship and capital in the Italian silk industry (2002, 4). She argues that kinship sentiments (such as the desire to bequeath the business to one's child) both undermine and enable the family business creating the conditions for the continuity of some relationships and the demise of others (85). In Japan, Dorinne Kondo investigates the powerful sense of obligation that children feel towards the middle-class family business such that they will offer themselves up for succession over other professional plans they might have had for themselves (1990, 120). She introduces the culturally specific notion of the household, the *ie*. The *ie* congeals around the possession of property (rather than relationships) where members of the household manage this property through their occupations of a set of positions (such as the married couple) (122). Kondo concludes that because the company and the family are based in the specific economic formation of the *ie,* they serve as "readily exchangeable templates for one another" (198).

The family business cannot be separated from the economic nature of the family. The Modern Lebanese middle-class family is a thoroughly economic formation

(Khater 1996). During the second half of the 19th century, rural women and men ventured into two novel economic opportunities: work in factories and migration (326). While this first generation of factory worker and migrants returned to the village and consolidated their acquired socioeconomic status, their descendants moved to coastal cities joining the ranks of their urban peers and co-constituting the modern middle-class family with its modern materials, tastes, and expenditures (339). These families organized themselves around "a cult of domesticity" by which women were assigned the strictly social role of managing the household (341). By the early 20th century, the change in work conditions from the village to the city produced a tight configuration between work, family, and class. It is surprising then that the family has been isolated out of the economy and that the interlinking of kinship and economics came to be seen as 'primordial' and even regressive (see chapter two).

B. Making the House in *Qurba*

What kind of a house is the family house and how is it different from the publishing House? The use of the term 'house' for publishing establishments in Lebanon comes from the French *la maison d'édition* (Bizri 2012, 302). The choice to translate *maison* to *dār* and not *beit*, for example, calls for attention. *Dār* specifically refers to the part of the house that is open to the outside denoting the domestic potential for receiving guests and strangers. In this way, the publishing house retains the interiority-exteriority duality of the domestic household. Hāla once told me, "We don't have people from outside the family in the publishing House." In this statement, she does not mean that all of her co-workers are brothers and sisters. Instead, she asserts that the publishing House assimilates a kinship infrastructure from the family into the

work setting. Jana, the art director and partner in the publishing House, similarly told me, "There is something of the family in our work. Very quickly, we became *aṣḥab* and *qrab* (close friends)." By the family, my interlocutors do not mean the nuclear family and especially not the family of the "cult of domesticity." Even though the family house is based in *Qaraba,* and the publishing House is based in *Qurba*, what cuts across both modes of kinship is proximity. Proximity transforms both strangers and family members into *Qrab*. I must intervene here with two caveats: family members are not *Qrab* enough to work together by default, and strangers-turned-friends sustain their status as *Qrab* through their work. In other words, friendship between the members of the publishing House remains beholden to the work. The making of the publishing House is work of *Qurba,* the derivation of proximity from family and into work and friendship. *Qurba* work entailed two processes by which Hāla reduced the personal distance between her and Jana and established a work distance between her and her brother. As such, Hāla created the publishing House out of the family house.

The publishing dream required the labor of making the House. Other than herself and her siblings, Hāla needed three more important members to set up the House: a graphic designer, an editor, and a printer. Jana is a well-known graphic designer in Beirut. Hāla called Jana and told her about the publishing House. They immediately clicked and started to work on the foundational design for the publishing House, i.e., the logo, the book and page parameters, and the font choices. Hāla had been friends with Jana's family for a long time through her work with Jana's mother in libraries and her academic relationship with Jana's father as he served on her PhD committee. Working together at the publishing House strengthened the family friendship. More members of the two families became friends as well. Jana met Hāla's

siblings, and Jana's husband and Hāla's brother became friends because of their shared interest in theater. This meant that Jana became a family friend to Hāla's family and Hāla became a family friend to Jana's family.

Next, Hāla hired Sarah, the in-house copyeditor. Hāla met Sarah through Sarah's sister who worked with Hāla at the National Library. Hāla then asked her publisher friends about what else she needed to do to set up the House. She registered the publishing house with the help of the family's lawyer. Hāla, her mother, and her friend (who was initially supposed to be the art director) signed the registration papers. The brother and the sister preferred not to be officially implicated. The legal procedure entailed three steps: registering the name with the Ministry of Economy, declaring the intent to practice publishing with the Ministry of Information, and purchasing the ISBN license from the Ministry of Culture. As there is not publishing without printing, the law also requires that a publisher has a contract with a printing press. Hāla's friendships with designers and publishers led her to meet calligrapher, artist, and printer Ali. His press became the official printing associate for *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt*. The House was officially registered in January 2014. Setting up the House was thus a logistical, legal, social, and material venture.

The social labor of making the publishing House further required an exercise of *Qurba*. Soon after the work began, Jana and Hāla realized that the art director's involvement at the publishing House was much deeper than they initially thought. Jana was working on the project "like it was her own," as they put it. On one hand, working for long and dispersed hours as a freelancer did not make sense, and on the other hand, the work itself was difficult to quantify. Hāla and Jana would, for example, have a spontaneous phone call that would turn into a work call. When Jana brought up this

issue, Hāla and her brother suggested that Jana become a partner in the House. In doing this, they changed the work relationship making Jana *closer*. Jana now had more influence on the publishing decisions. In making the first *Qurba* claim, the three of them made the publishing House an economic entity beyond the family house.

The second *Qurba* claim came four years later. Hāla and her brother's siblinghood had to be transformed into a work relationship and a work friendship. They told me that they became work friends by enduring the work together and by fighting and helping each other. The issue was the division of responsibilities. Because both of them managed the administration and the money at the publishing House, they often clashed on how to do things. As a result, they would fight (*netsharaʿ* or *netkhana'*) whenever they were in the same room during the early years of the publishing House. Hāla then came up with the solution telling her brother to "forget about *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt*." For the publishing House to work, Hāla decided to manage the administration and the finances making her role as the publisher a distinct singular job. This insurgency did not ruin the publishing House. Making her brother *further* from the core operation of the publishing House and retaining him as an author, editor, funder, and intellectual partner was possible because of the siblinghood and because "he has a big heart." The second *Qurba* claim not only set the publishing House on the right track, but also "like magic" transformed the relationship between Hāla and her brother.

C. Family Tensions and Conventions

How does the family initial situation persist after the *Qurba* claims? Work at the publishing House is modeled on a sibling dynamic. The work relationship between Hāla, her brother, and Jana possesses the malleability of siblingship and its fine balance

of antagonism and friendship. The family origin of the work frames and reconfigures all of the work relationships (I turn to the relationship with Sarah and Ali in the next section). Family problems, habits, and dispositions spill into work. In fact, they were never separate from the work as the 'modern' paradigm would suggest. Because the work dynamic initially comes from the house dynamic, the house dynamic is in turn inflicted by the work dynamic. This is because the work domain pressurizes the tensions that family members do not have to address in the domestic domain.

The family initial situation also persists in the work division. Work is divided in the publishing House by means of the habits, dispositions, and specializations of the kin co-workers. There is a sense of a habitual division especially between Hāla and her brother. This sense does not simply make the work easier. On the contrary, it highlights to the siblings their differences. While the brother has a clear vision of what he wants to do for a book, he will not always have the follow-through to make publishing happen. This contrasts with Hāla's industrious management and immense curiosity about how everything in bookmaking, the editing, design, and printing (let alone the kinship processes that consolidate and expand the House) works.

The members of the publishing House find ways to economize (or work around) each other's habits. They sway in the push and pull of fights and arrangements and desires and obligations. The economy of habits, however, scales up to create the deeper dialectic of tensions and conventions of kin-work. The question remains, how does habit function? A theory of the habit has to account for the different settings and contexts in which habit is challenged and confirmed, i.e., it has to be a theory of habituation. Gregory Bateson (1958) defines schismogenesis as "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative

interaction between individuals" (1958, 175). Schismogenesis occurs in situations

where "the individuals are held together by a form of common interest, mutual

dependence, or by their social status" (182-3). My interlocutors are in two of such

situations--the family house and the publishing House. On one hand, they are subject to

the differentiation effect of the work context which continues to put their habits in new

settings. On the other hand, they are subject to the streamlining (opposing

differentiation) effect of the family initial situation which insistently offers a familiar

setting for their habits. For example, since Hāla and her brother operate in the

publishing House according to their differences, they must continue to emphasize this

behavior so that the work can build momentum. This work momentum also depends on

the shared interests between the siblings. In this sense, the habituation of the family

creates tensions and conventions for the emergent habituation at the publishing House.

The cleft (schism-) is only made steeper by their awareness and conviction that the two

domains of kinship and economics are meant to be functionally separate. This is

especially relevant in a society where clientelism debilitates the provision of public

services.

Family conventions provide the dynamic from which the work relationship

emerges. This paradoxical 'gift' further implicates the family in the work. The

automatic work division creates the conditions for an easy slip into family habituation

where siblings are obligated to each other. It becomes difficult to differentiate between

these familial obligations and the professional executive obligations. Similarly, family

tensions interlace into the work conflicts. Hāla and her brother confess that the

beginning was really difficult. The clash of time and desire created the driving inertia

for the project. They have both told me, while laughing, that they "fought a lot" and

"used to butcher each other." Hāla wanted to do other things before starting a publishing House, but she had always strongly wanted to work in publishing. At the same time, her brother was looking for a publisher for his literary translations, but he still wanted her to publish his work. Starting the publishing House was thus an act of obligation and desire, but it is the difficulty in differentiating the familial from the professional that generates the clash and the inertia.

The publishing arrangement between the siblings entailed that the brother funds the work. Money is a good example of how the work situation inflicts the family situation. Hāla told me that money was bound to create tension, and they found it hard to talk about. I think that money is a difficult issue because for the family, money is a source of sustenance mostly relayed to the background. The institution of the family reproduces itself precisely by concealing its economic nature, while the family business requires a degree of transparency between the members. I realized that the issue was not the money itself, but the fact that family members now had to talk about it. When Hāla started to manage all the money, she minimized these difficult conversations. The *Qurba* claim, as differentiated from the *Qaraba*, thus solved one of the big fights between the siblings.

Schismogenesis is bound to reach an equilibrium that contains the dialectical oppositions (ibid, 190). The publishing House certainly achieved this state of equilibrium. Otherwise, I would not have been able to do any fieldwork. As Ali put it, Hāla and her brother fight as colleagues and make up as siblings. Jana and Hāla are not siblings, but they do fight "like siblings" when they must. This similarity means that Hāla and Jana's relationship too is modeled on siblinghood. The *Qurba* claim between the siblings and Jana established an additional avenue for equilibrium. The relationship

with Jana is privileged in this way because the design work is foundational to the realization of the publishing dream. The relationship between Hāla, her brother and Jana cushions the work tension, or in other words, their relationship can take a fight and come back from it. For the publishing House, the deep simmering tensions burst into fights from time to time, and they animate the work. The members of the House make these fights useful for the work, and after a while they laugh about it.

D. Extending Work and Friendship

If there is one basis for Qurba and friendship at the publishing House, it is particularity about the work--Hāla in editing, research, and execution, her brother in translation, Jana in design, Sarah in copyediting, and Ali in printing. Their affinity to each other, around particular and accurate work, substantiates their *Qurba*, their kin proximity. Constant adhesion to particularity helped them extend their work relationships into work friendships. Between 2014 and 2018, the publishing House had an office in Ras Beirut. Hāla, Sarah, and Jana each told me the office had 'something of the house in it.' Hāla would spend most of her day in the office. Sarah would work from the office for six hours a day, and in that period, she and Hāla started to become closer friends during their shared time. Hāla told me she felt very lucky to have found Sarah, so particular, *neeʾa* about language. Jana and Hāla had instantly clicked as well because they are both, in their own words, *neeʾa* about their work. Jana similarly spent a lot of time at the office where she found herself and Hāla becoming closer. She was fascinated with the work they were doing and discovering Hāla's personality, "so close to the heart."

The office closed down in 2018 because they realized there was no need for it anymore especially after they opened a bookstore in 2019. Hāla and Jana started to work together from Hāla's house. They would, for example, dedicate the better part of every Tuesday to working on their current publishing project together at Hāla's apartment. When I asked Hāla if I could attend one of these meetings, she was hesitant to tell me that they were not really 'work meetings' and more like visits or long hangouts, and that that was ironically the most productive environment for them to work together. She told me these 'meetings' were a lot of 'talk' and long-winded conversations, "*bikerr al-hadith.*" This is first because they share many interests and second because they do not want their work in the House to be an 'official' work thing. They do this self-assigned work because it excites them. Later, Hāla offered to hold shorter meetings with Jana in coffeeshops so I could attend them. This attests to the *specificity* of the kin-work dynamic so much that their kind of meeting was not entirely congruent with a meeting to which they could invite me.

Even though it is hard to separate the work from non-work, members of the House try to demarcate time for work. Phone calls are especially tricky. When Hāla gets a call from her brother, they start with talking about family matters and drift off to talk about a text or a book. Hāla then realizes the call would take longer than she can do at the moment, and she tells her brother she will call him later and 'put the work hat on.' As he works in editing, reading, and literary translation for the House, he often needs to 'think out loud' with Hāla. They get on long phone calls and for example, reconstruct ideas that he had for a text. He remains somewhat outside the execution work, and Hāla sometimes enlists his help with making selection decisions or figuring out the knot of a

text under editing. Hāla and Jana also need to think out loud together. They hold this kind of meeting when they first start working on a new book.

Work friendship is a unique arrangement extending from kin-work. An example of work friendship is the dynamic between Hāla, Jana, and Ali. Ali's press is well-known for fine printing and the use of artisanal techniques even in mass production. When Hāla approached him to work together, he immediately realized that they share the same ethic of particularity. For Ali, this friendship came out of the refined conversations and shared interests in art and literature. They were not friends before working together, but this kind of work (that does not seek profit) can only be done on the basis of friendship, for him. Friendship is 'rewarded' with work in his expression, and his friendship with the House has grown enough to mediate the work relationship. At the same time that my interlocutors' notion of friendship is beholden to the work, their work together becomes governed by the socialities of friendship rather than professionalism.

The socialities of friendship clearly imprint on the publishing House meetings. However, the friendship imperatives became especially apparent to me in the conflicts. When a mishap comes up at work, and the problem escalates, two options exist. With the people associated or within the House, tension is always addressed through ʿatab, friendly but serious reproach. ʿAtab also works for friends outside the House. However, when a conflict starts with 'strangers,' the bounds of professionalism replace the mediating effect of ʿatab. ʿAtab is thus a manifestation of schismogenesis (of differentiation) that unravels and contains the kin-work. Since schismogenesis elucidates the internal work conditions at the House, I turn to the external labor conditions under which the kin-work arrangement struggles and survives next.

E. Labor Conditions

Hāla studied three early 20th century publishers in Beirut in her PhD dissertation, *Dar Sader*, *Dar al-Khashaf*, and *Dar al-Makshuf*, the ancestors of Lebanese publishers (Bizri 2013). These three publishers illustrate the change in bookmaking and printing around the turn of the century by which the job of the publisher came into purview. It had been the case that publishers either start as booksellers (*al-Kashaf*) or printing press owners (*Sader*). A publisher starting from a bookstore had to acquire a printing press and vice versa. Fouad Hobeiche (*al-Makshouf*) was the first to establish a publishing house without having a store or printing press. His feat reconfigured the material conditions for publishing and initiated the scene that grows throughout the 20th century. This material shift opened the door for the establishment of small publishing projects. Current-day small houses remain distinguishable from large houses because the latter own printing machines.

The publishing House, in its current economic shape, is tightly controlled by work conditions under late capitalism. The size of the publishing House determines work relations. Jana and Sarah are freelance workers; they do a certain amount of work, and they get paid for it. Technically, Hāla is a freelance worker at the publishing House but one that does not directly get paid for her work. The brother does not get paid royalties for his books either. This is because the book sales have not produced significant profit yet. Ideally, they all prefer, including Hāla, to be full-time employees at *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* and have monthly salaries, insurance, and paid vacations. They work as freelancers not because they want to, but because it has become the only option for a small project without steady funding. They all have had and continue to

work on projects other than the publishing House to make a living. However, the House is more of a passion project for all of them than their other work and one conviction they strongly adhere to is that they do not want to accumulate wealth from publishing. The publishing House does not provide them with constant work to do as is the case at larger publishing houses. They resourcefully make this arrangement work.

Compare the labor conditions at the publishing House to larger publishing houses. The financial capacities since the House started in 2014 did not allow the establishment of a large institution, and the unfolding of the economic crisis in 2019 thwarts this possibility even further. The financial conditions were more viable for publishing houses that opened around the middle of the 20th century. Things would be different if Hāla published more commercial work like best-selling novels. But being who they are and adopting a non-capitalist approach to making and selling books, they cannot turn into a larger institution. Consequently, Hāla has taken on several roles. She does the logistical, administrative, and financial work for the House and the bookstore on top of her responsibilities as the publisher. This is work she does not like to do, and which takes away from her concentration and time of publishing work. Hāla is mostly motivated by her sense of particularity here meaning that her obligation strictly stems from the work and not the family. She has no set time for work and often works beyond a regular working day. When she is at the bookstore, she constantly has to attend to several tasks such as operating the store, bookkeeping, and accounting. She sometimes tries to start with these mechanical tasks at the bookstore to clear her head for editing.

While much of the anthropological literature on family businesses calls such over-work self-exploitation and theorizes it as the main tenet of small family businesses (Creed 2000), I argue that the conglomeration of different roles into Hāla's work creates

an emergent position. This compound position integrates tasks that cross the boundary between publishing and bookselling. Hāla hopes to hire a bookstore manager to oversee sales, book orders and re-stocking and an accountant to come to the store once a week and deal with the bills, payments, and receipts. This is not financially possible currently, but she is working towards a point where the revenue from the bookstore would generate the money to fund these part-time positions. However, hiring people to do some of this work would not remove the high-stakes compound aspect of Hāla's work because she retains a larger sense of obligation towards the reputation of the publishing House.

Hāla also ideally wants to establish a part-time paid position for an intellectual partner who would help her source texts and make editorial decisions. Her brother performs this role to an extent, but she wants to expand the circle of work division and decision-making. The re-published books tie the publishing House to Hāla, and the literary translations tie it to her brother. However, for a small publishing project to grow into its full size as a publishing House, more people need to come in and assume some of the publishing responsibility. Hāla finds it ultimately futile for her to run all of the projects within the House. Thus, she wants to undertake the difficult task of basically creating a new House member. She wants to establish a multiplicity and a collectivity within the editorial process. A new partner would create the opportunity for further differentiation and further schismogenesis that challenges the familial initial situation.

During my fieldwork, Hāla attempted to bring in a friend as a project manager within the House.[2] The manager was set to run the publication of a series of books, working on the first book in the series and selecting texts and authors to introduce and

---

[2] I refer to this person as "manager" to maintain their anonymity.

annotate the consequent texts. I find it useful to highlight the reasons for which this attempt ultimately failed. While the difficult logistics and the shortage of time obstructed the work, it was the friendship between the publisher and the manager that exploded the underlying tension. The work division was a major issue over the few months during which the attempt extended. Hāla told me that there was something fragile in her work with the manager because usually a publishing project is the manager's idea and not the publisher's. They had somewhat clashing intentions for the project especially in terms of how to frame the texts. Because they were friends, they both initially thought that they would not have to compromise so much and that they would agree enough to execute the project. This friendship which preceded the work (unlike the friendship with Jana, Sarah, and Ali) did not prove to be a tenable basis for kin-work.

F. Surrounding Houses

The publishing House is surrounded by other publishing houses with their own kinship processes and claims. Many of the people working in publishing in Beirut were born into publishing Houses. While some inheritors were not interested in resuming the work, others tried to run the House as a tribute to their parents (*al-Makshuf*). Others continued for the legacy of the family long after the founding grandfather died (*Ṣader*). Some have inherited whole publishing houses and enlarged them by getting into other kinds of publishing (*al-Adab*, *al-Nahda al-Arabiya*). On the other hand, some Houses were founded on ideological or political basis, and they were able to sustain their activity by additionally printing commercial books to fund their own interests (*al-Farabi*). Many journalists went into publishing (*an-Nahar*, *Riad el-Rayyes*). Siblings

(*al-Furat*, *al-Jadid*) and friends (*al-Saqi*) established publishing houses together. Writers and illustrators also established houses to publish their own work. The common factor for all the large family publishing Houses (*Hachette-Antoine*) is that while the major decisions might still be made by the family, these institutions are powered by and dependent on employees (see Mermier 2006). *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* was established by siblings and opened up to friends.

Setting up a House means one has to learn and practice the *maṣlaḥa*, the craft of publishing. Hāla extensively learned about publishing through her work in libraries, research, and sociability with publishers. However, she realized in retrospect that she only really learned to publish by publishing. This *maṣlaḥa* itself, the set of knowledge, logistics and social relationships is also a claim that the publisher has to make. We can see the ways that the *maṣlaḥa* has been claimed by looking at the types of publishing houses. Publishing has largely been a family venture. It requires various kinds of resources (intellectual, social, financial) that family members have been putting together to afford opening a House. However, the family origins or aspirations of these Houses have not always assured their survival, Hāla told me. The destiny of many publishing Houses has hinged on the characters of inheritors.

Groups of these publishing Houses have social relationships to each other that range from professional friendliness to alliance and mutual support. The more general sense of collegiality is still restricted to groups of publishers that find themselves similar to each other whether politically or operationally. Without similar commitments and orientations, a sense of animosity grows instead of collegiality. Alliances and rivalries become a strong factor in a publisher's claim to the *maṣlaḥa*. Here I discuss the

economic danger that the establishment of one publishing house poses to others. I discuss the issue of editing as crucial to alliances and rivalries in chapter three.

Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt was one of the last publishing houses to open in Lebanon. The stance that other publishers took when Hāla opened her publishing house had to do not only with the economic efficiency of publishing nowadays, but more crucially with the defiance of the circumstances. Hāla's timing raised many question marks for other publishers. They would ask mutual friends, "What is she doing? Publishers are going bankrupt and closing. Who opens a publishing house now?" She had been familiar to many publishers from book exhibitions, professional and social events and from her work at public libraries. She had even more direct and intimate contact with them when she was conducting her doctoral research. Her friendship with Dar Sader and Dar al-Furat particularly grew because they valued her scholarly work. Since she started publishing, the friendship between the three publishers forged into an alliance of mutual support. Other publishers, although friendly acquaintances, took a cautious and vexed stand. Hāla's research interviews raised suspicions for some who were worried about their *maṣlaḥa*. This was because of a particular attitude to the work of publishing. *Maṣlaḥa* is thus not only the knowledge of how to do a job but also the interests that can only be protected by keeping the knowledge secret. For example, they feared they might have disclosed the secret knowledge that gives them an edge over other publishing houses during the interviews.

The confusion and animosity did not last for too long. When *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* published the Samuel Beckett translations which were received as original but peculiar, the perception of threat largely dissipated. Even later, when it became clear that Hāla's project was not to take writers from established publishers, they did not feel

as bothered by the new neighbors. There is an unspoken custom between publisher that I call an 'economy of authors' by which one House considers they should have an exclusive working relationship with an author. This exclusivity puts the responsibility on other publishers not to approach the concerned author, even though publishers can no longer provide constant work for authors (and illustrators for children's books publishers). Publishers usually verbalize the 'unspoken' custom to blame the author for working with another publisher or the other publisher for agreeing to work with the author. More of the animosity lifted when Hāla opened the bookstore, and Hāla even received congratulations and encouragement. The store actually began to mend some of the neighborly relationships and clear the atmosphere because Hāla would now be selling these publishers' books.

G. The Interiority and Exteriority of Publishing

Although *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* is a small publishing project born out of desire to make peculiar and beautiful books, Hāla has become increasingly concerned with publishing for a larger audience. She realized that the previous books might come across as mysterious and create a further ambiguous exterior to the publishing House. In the latest edition, *ʿAn Aḥwal Kutub al-Aṭfal* (On the State of Children's Literature), Hāla was thinking about the potential reader more than she had before. Furthermore, she began to work on publishing projects that would appeal to more readers: publishing fiction and publishing for children. The upcoming collection of short stories will surprise readers because *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* has not published standard fiction by an Arab author so far. Hāla has called this project their "actual beginning as

publishers" as they will be able to hold publishing ceremonies such as author signing and reading events.

Publishing for children is a kinship process tightly weaving the exteriority of the House to its interiority. The work on children's books only began towards the end of my fieldwork, but I found the following relevant to the kinship question. During a meeting between Jana and Hāla, Jana showed us sketches she made for the books. The character she drew resembled her own toddler. Hāla pointed that out, and Jana said that the sketches made her child laugh. Jana was regularly referring to her own child during the meeting to speculate what children might like or find visually and narratively intriguing. By publishing for children, the publishing House is beginning to work along the lines of kinship to reach non-kin, the entire generation of children. When they address a child they care for, they also address the children that will make this child's world in the future.

Parallel to multiplying and solidifying their reading public, the publishing House is engaged in multiplying their own interiority. Hāla will continue to undertake the difficult process of bringing in an intellectual partner to make the publishing House less vulnerable to the family house. She wants to ensure succession, i.e., someone else who can continue the work after her, through an 'illegitimate' extension of kin-work. With this, I rest my case for the kinship of labor and the laboriousness of kinship. Through this research project, I have learned to see the unconventionality in conventions and the novelty in habituation. Ethnography enabled me to connect the interiority of the publishing House to its exteriority, and anthropology provided the comparative sensibility to think about the publishing House as one kind of family business.

In this chapter, I studied the nexus of kinship and economics at the publishing House. I argued that the transformation of *Qaraba* into *Qurba* produces kin-work. I explored the mutation of the family initial situation into the publishing initial situation. I described the dialectical dynamic of kin-work and theorized it as a process of schismogenesis. I mapped the stakes of the publishing *maṣlaḥa* and the ways that different publishers claim it. I ended with the propagation of kinship processes to construct the exteriority of the House. Next, I turn to the economics of publishing and bookselling.

CHAPTER II

INTERPRETING VALUE: THE ECONOMICS OF PUBLISHING

The book is a distributed object in both a monetary and a literary sense. The monetary value of a book is distributed between the publisher, bookseller, and customer. The literary value of a book is distributed in a much more diffuse fashion. One June morning, as I walked into the bookstore, I could feel myself pushing through a tense, almost nervous, affective field. A mixture of sadness and anger clouded Hāla's face. We sat in silence for a while before she looked at me from behind her desk and said, "All the time, I am just trying to limit the loss." Hāla had piles of bills and receipts in front of her. She was swamped with work, but more so by a duty towards the distributed entanglements of the book trade. This duty is motivated by a sense of fidelity, *amana*, between publishers and booksellers. Money, as I have encountered it in Arabic publishing, poses the conundrum of managing loss (and not gain). Publishers I have met have often joked "*rah ynkherib bayte"* (my house will be ruined) if not already "*nkharab bayte*" (my house was ruined), figuratively meaning that their finances are in shambles. The site of this 'ruination' is, expectedly, the 'house.' The house, and not only the publishing house, is on the verge of ruination.

In this chapter, I think of money, work, and stock as resources circulating through the house, the publishing house, and the bookstore. My interlocutors exchange money, work and stock making them solid, yet shape-shifting categories. I base my thinking on a material production theory of value, and I specifically foreground the kin-work condition of this production. The casting of resources as a question of circulation (as I do with money, work, and stock) complicates the mode of production. For

example, although money is a resource that comes into the publishing house, the publishing house had a hand in producing this money by virtue of the kinship between the siblings--the kinship processes in the house and the publishing house produce the money *for* publishing. The mutation of circulation into production and production into circulation further allows an ethnographic mapping of value. I follow three iterations of value: the value of sociality, the value of money, and the value of books. I provide a semiotic and interpretive analysis of exchange. The exchange event enfolds a thick process of negotiating value. I present ethnographic material on what money does, how people feel about it, how they save and spend it, and how they interpret its meaning as it continues to de-value. These interpretive exercises draw from a larger ideology of money and trade. I track the local notions of craft and interest and their possible entanglements with family and class. The 'economy' happens in the interstices.

In concrete terms, I ask, how do desire and obligation operate around the publishing house? How do publishers and booksellers negotiate sale, risk, gift, and debt? How do economic practices obligate publishers and booksellers to each other? What logic governs a publisher's orientation to money? What challenges does that logic produce? I argue for the interpretive basis of the economy where interpretation is the assignment of meaning to monetary exchanges. I argue against theories of the calculative basis of the economy, or what has been called representation. I explore how sale by consignment practices encapsulate a notion of *amana*, fidelity, which charts the moral depth of the economic tradition of publishing. Gifting practices adjust value categories and protect the sociality of the publishing trade. I substantiate my claim that emergent kinds of socialities between publishers, sellers, and customers center around the family corporate kin group. The distributed quality of books imprint upon those who

exchange them producing a tight configuration of people and resources. In broad terms, I study three semiotic forms: money (this chapter), speech genres and lingual artifacts (chapter three), and the look and feel of books (chapter four).

A. The Economic Value of Families

That the publishing house is a family business makes all the difference. Proximity or *Qurba* kinship produces a configuration I call kin-work which entails the work of social, economic, and cultural production. This kinship structure is not excised from the outside social world as a model of public/private might suggest. On the contrary, the obligations and desires of kin-work create a ripple effect and impress upon the friendships and trade relationships surrounding the house. Eric Wolf synthesizes an outward-scale from kinship to friendship to patron-client relations (2001). He sketches this gradient of alliances starting from resources and the circulation of resources. For Wolf, the ascent of the family as the central corporate kin group is both a functional and a historical question. He theorizes that "the family remains the multipurpose organization par excellence in societies that are increasingly segmented into institutions with single-purposes" (172). This seems to explain the immense cultural capital that the unit of the family begets in Lebanon. Leila Tarazi Fawaz (1983) documents the merchant history of 19th century Levantine urban economy. She argues that Beirut's urban growth entailed "the preservation and in some respects the accentuation, of family and other traditional ties" (89). Merchandise was very much a family venture concentrated in the 'Seven Families' of Beirut (94).

Institutions that employ family resources for economic ends make crucial ethnographic sites because they reveal the horizons and the limits of the family's

cultural capital in wider society. For an instructive example from Lebanese history, Nada Moumtaz (2021) studied the trajectory of family waqf (Islamic charitable endowments) from Ottoman to Mandate to present day Lebanon. She argues that the family waqf becomes a marked entity with the gradual separation of economy and religion stripping each of the functions of another (62). This separation agitates a moral danger where "family waqfs become a threat both to the family as a space of emotion, because they brought the economy into the family, and the economy, because they tied up wealth in "private" kinship networks and eventually were heavily restricted by law" (18). Moumtaz thus poignantly coins the term 'ethic of the family' and maps its discursive fall in modern-day Lebanon (166). The fall of the 'ethic of the family' is a historical event and a readjustment of value uprooting the family from its moral and religious (writ largely) grounding. While the family had mobilized care and pious deeds for its own members, it can no longer favorably command such a public sense of obligation.

This historical exposition brings us back to the issue of domains. Because value is a *social* achievement, it invites comparison across different domains (Graeber 2013, 226). Even if the ethic of the family discursively fell through the cracks of modern statehood, it persisted practically. Lebanese society is largely thought to be haunted by the zeitgeist of 'familism' where people inevitably turn back to their families as the ultimate inherent source of value. However, the iteration of kinship across domains entails complicated processes and not a haunting. The value of the family is realized differently in publishing than it is in politics or agriculture or merchandise. The effect of the family on public and economic life has been devastating in some areas and generative in other. Ethnographies of family businesses can capture the difference and

substantiate a theory of why the economic incorporation of the family persists. The publishing house is a kinship form that gains further economic function using the initial members' resources and alliances. The recruitment of family members in publishing is not arbitrary. On the contrary, kin-work harvests the kinds of dispositions and merit required to make and sell books. The ethnographic question we must ask is, what kind of a social achievement does kinship make in domestic, economic, religious, and political domains?

B. Market Socialities

The economic value of the family, or of kin-work, extends into the bookstore. Here I present some aspects of market socialities. The bookstore is a public extension of the publishing house.[3] It operates on collegial (see below) and customer sociality. When Hāla needed a bookseller to help her at the store, she asked her friend from the National Library if her daughter, Lucciana, would be interested in the job. Lucciana grew up attending book launches and fairs with her mother, and the opportunity to work at the store seemed like a suitable social continuity. Furthermore, Hāla's friends and good acquaintances come to the store for long visits and intriguing chats. They never just buy books and leave. The entanglement of social and economic activities upsets a simple differentiation between market and non-market exchange. Buying from your friend's bookstore is first a means of reciprocity, a non-market exchange, but it is achieved through a market exchange, paying money for a book.

Even with strangers, the exchange event harvests an affinity between seller and customer. The bookseller's job is to metabolize a customers' curiosity into desire.

---

[3] A publishing house is legally registered as an 'Institution for Publishing, Printing and Distribution.' Even though at the time of the founding of the House, it was only a publishing institution, the legal model allowed Hāla and her siblings to open the bookstore in 2019 without any additional licensing.

Consider the thick yet unspoken claims that go into (trying to) sell books. The bookseller gauges the level of a customer's interest and makes relevant recommendations. The bookseller summons together a description of the book, the author, the customer's particular interest, and condenses them into a convincing yet gentle nudge. If all these elements fall into place, the sale works. The notion of curiosity or interest, *ihtimam*, is a most elusive quality that Hāla still ponders after two years of working at the store. It bears an economic meaning in the sense that a sufficiently interested customer will buy the book, but a merely curious customer might not. *Ihtimam* seems to rise and drop without clear notice. However, in the kin-work setup, curiosity can and does condense into a desire that corresponds to the desire that drives publishing. Hāla conveys her own interest in books to customers initiating a subtle negotiation of value and slowly figuring out what a customer might like. The work of bookselling is a concrete extension of the house's mode of sociality to non-kin who become good friends, acquaintances, and regular customers. The undercurrent of the seller's exposition is precisely the not-self-evident value of a book. I have learned this from watching Hāla sell books, and especially *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt's* publications, which she finds mysterious, and I find ethnographically valuable in their mysteriousness.

Selling books requires richly interpretive and semiotic work. The bookseller and the customer work to thicken and layer their exchange of money. Beyond the unspoken negotiation of interest, the seller and the customer treat money as a sign that they need to address, and they address it through talk. The nature of such sign is indexical. The index model of the sign emphasizes the causal relationship between the sign and its meaning over similarity (iconicity) or convention (symbolism). Money carries such semiotic potency because of its indexicality--a clear sequence of cause and effect--you

pay money, you get a book and vice versa. As though to gloss over this transactional

clarity, money is always exchanged with two to three (if not more) expressions of

thanks. The customer hands the seller money. The seller says "*merci*!" The customer

takes the bag and the change and says "no, thank *you*!" The seller repeats then

"*shukran!*" This linguistic exchange is usually followed by an exchange of goodbyes.

The ripple effect of kin-work further comes across in book distribution. Hāla

told me that there is distribution crisis in the Arab world that has to do with issues of

organization and trust. As the tasks of the older publishing house--selling, printing,

promoting, delivering--separated, distribution remained the hardest task. Thus,

publishers have come to heavily rely on bookfairs. They take their books themselves

and retain the sum they would have paid to a distributor. Through the two publishers'

friendship, *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* used to work with *Dar al-Furat* for distribution.

However, the difficulties of traveling and getting reimbursements from bookstores

dissolved this aspect of their partnership. Since Hāla also opened the bookstore, she

explored other venues of distribution starting with selling her publications at the store. I

recorded many book orders that were sent to bookstores in Berlin and Italy as well as

book fairs in the United Arab Emirates, France, and Italy. A few days before the release

of *ʿAn Aḥwal Kutub al-Atfal,* Hāla traveled to Egypt to attend the Cairo International

Book Fair 2021. Although she did not attend as a publisher, she took a few copies of the

book and gifted them to some of the authors, illustrators, and publishers that the book

talks about. A few weeks later, an Egyptian bookstore ordered thirty copies of the book.

When Hāla mentioned this to a friend who was traveling to Egypt soon, the friend

offered to take the copies with her. There was one more person that Hāla wanted to send

the book--Mathilde Chèvre, the author of the study. One time and by complete

coincidence, a new face showed up at the store. After a long chat, it turned out that this customer was traveling to Mathilde's city and offered to deliver her copy. The purpose of distributing books through kin and friends helps the publisher reduce shipping costs and thus avoid increasing the prices of exported copies.

C. The Economic Crisis

Keith Hart (1986) problematizes the dichotomy between commodity theories and token theories of money. The tails side of the coin embodies the bottom-up market processes, an alienating commodity of a set price for impersonal exchange. The heads side embodies the top-down authority of the state, a token of the legal relationships between persons (638). For him, even if the dichotomy is instigated by the heads-and-tails duality of coins, money still functions on both registers of value. The 1971 severance of the convertibility the US Dollar from gold meant a decoupling of value where the price of money as a commodity was no longer pegged to any other material value but to an interpretive emergent quality: the strength of a national economy (Gregory 2014, 53). The Lebanese currency, pegged against the United States Dollar, descended into its latest crisis in 2019. During my fieldwork, the market exchange rate fluctuated between 7,000 LBP and 20,000 LBP for 1 USD between June and December 2021. While the exchange rate did reach a record of 30,000 LBP during the holidays, it stabilized around 20,000 LBP well into the first quarter of 2022.

Ethnographic accounts of non- or partially monetized economies and exchange systems illuminate the valuation dynamics of money. Webb Keane's case study in Sumba, Indonesia is instructive. Money, introduced in the late 20th century for state taxes and services, retained a marked and marginal role against exchange valuables such

as cloths, gold ornaments, and cattle (276-78). Keane analyzes an incident where money was offered instead of a gold ornament to initiate a marriage proposal. The bank note was meant to serve as a token, but the offer was contested on a commodity basis because it was not an appropriate amount (273-74). Money here is circumscribed by the possibility and the danger of "tokens slipping into alternative regimes of value [i.e., commodity]" during exchange (274). The bank note, while presented as a token, slipped into commodity value. This slippage is precisely what happened after the onset of the economic crisis in Lebanon. The crisis highlighted the commodity function of money and with the decreasing exchange value and purchasing power of Lebanese bank notes, they slipped into tokens--tokens of 'nothingness,' that is. People started to pay more attention to the condition of Lebanese paper money, and they would not accept frail and unclean notes.[4] They have also been applying tape across minimal tears which would have been irrelevant before the crisis. They have always paid similar attention to the state of USD bills with and without an economic crisis.

Depositors lost their bank savings because they were only allowed to withdraw at the official exchange rate of 1,515 LBP (and later 3,800 LBP) for 1 USD. My interlocutors and their conversationalists constantly described the economic situation as a delusion, a *wahm.* They feel deluded not only with the current diminishing value of the currency but also with the previous high value and stability. Money has functioned in commodity exchange *because* of its tokenization and stabilization into a 'fictional' official exchange rate. The official exchange rate was 'fictional' before the crisis making the currency function according to the state's assigned token meaning instead of its actual commodity exchange value. The contrasting appearance and truth produced

---

[4] My advisor alerted me that people treated Lebanese money bills the same way in the 90s during the first round of de-valuation.

the delusion and the realization that the Lebanese currency had been 'nothing' and meant 'nothing' for a long time.

Publishers faced a concrete question of value--the value of their books--despite the fleeting *wahm* around the value of money.[5] Publishers still had to generate meaning for the money they demanded for their books. On the day that the exchange rate reached a record of 16,500 LBP, Hāla was getting calls from publishers about their response to this hike. A feeling of urgency, if not emergency, suspended the air in the room. Hāla almost wanted to close the store for the rest of the day. One publisher asked her to sell his books using an exchange rate of 16,000 LBP justifying the request by saying "so I would not wrong you nor wrong myself." He did not want to lose money (by underpricing the book) and did not want her to lose customers (by overpricing the book), although the price that he chose tips the scales much more to his own benefit. On another day, Hāla acquired books from a new publisher who insisted that "a dollar is a dollar," refusing to negotiate a fixed exchange rate. On the other hand, other publishers, until today, stubbornly refuse to increase their prices. Each publisher has different labor conditions in their establishments. Some of them need the money to print new books. Others have to pay off debt to printers and royalties to authors. Yet others paused their publishing operations so they can pay their current employees from selling their stock. At the bookstore, the changing exchange rates meant that one customer would pay a set price for a book and another customer would pay more for the same book the next day. The bookseller had to keep track of the changing prices in LBP against the fixed USD prices which created interpretive problems for her and for the computer which I turn to later.

---

[5] The value question has historical resonance as publishers faced the same problem during the civil war in Lebanon until the pegging of the currency against the USD (Kafi, 1986).

Hāla considers that some *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* books were slightly more expensive than average before the crisis.[6] When Hāla was starting up the publishing house, her publisher friends told her that publishers conventionally price a book by multiplying its production cost by three. For her books, she factored in the entire cost into the prices but did not go up to the triple. Her books still turned out more expensive than average because the publishing house is small. Since the onset of the crisis, she has been selling her books for the lowest gain possible. The concept of loss is difficult to pin down for a new publishing house. Hāla told me founding the house requires more expenditures than it generates returns. She and her brother accepted to take risk of latent return and not rely on publishing for a living wage. They decided that for the first few years, they will consider that a book succeeded if it garners readers' curiosity regardless of the numbers. Inspired by the 2019 protests and further complicating the prospect of gain, Hāla decided to consider the USD equal to 1,000 LBP instead of 1,515 which brought down the prices of her publications. While she knew that this choice would incur additional loss, she made the offering in the spirit of the gift. Hāla resisted changing the exchange rate for 24 months into the crisis, and when she did, she only raised it to 3,000 LBP per USD then to 10,00 the month after until the moment of writing. Next, I turn to the ideological undercurrent of how publishers apprehend money.

D. Money and Semiotic Ideology

The exteriority of the publishing house is strongly tied to its interior kin structure. Because *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* is a small publishing house, Hāla is able to create a sociality that ripples through and cuts across the interiority/exteriority

---

[6] This is not because they were priced higher than the average book but because some readers have said that some of the texts were shorter than usual and so the books should be cheaper.

barrier. Hāla insists that the house should remain a small project to preserve and replenish the initial desires and obligations that got her and her brother into publishing. The scale of the house's production has implications for its capacity to employ (chapter one) and for its relationship to money. The small publishing house has less work for the workers to do which makes their labor more expensive for the publisher to compensate and the books more expensive to produce. Almost counterintuitively, the smaller the publishing house is, the riskier and more expensive it is to run. The choices that the members of the House make for beautiful and playful bookmaking add to the risk factor (chapter four).

However, the publishing house's relationship to money is not only an economic equation. I use Keane's notion of semiotic ideology to understand the undercurrent of thoughts and feelings that publishers have around money (2006). Semiotic ideology is the logic that organizes encounters with semiotic forms--the logic along which people align their moral actions (20-1). By means of indexicality, signs and semiotic forms, such as money here, gain ethical consequences and come to generate meaning through the lens of their consequences. The semiotic ideology in the literary venture casts money in a quite sinister light. In the publishing subdomain of the economy, publishers are not supposed to be merchants, *tujjar*, and acting like merchants brings them public condemnation. Publishers consistently express a disinterest in the financial requirements of running a publishing house or at least a disinterest in accumulating wealth. Hāla has genuinely visceral feelings of disgust, abject, and repulsion around money or the fact that money is a part of her work. These feelings gain such social potency because interest in money makes publishers merchants, the total inverse of themselves and the compromise of their projects.

However, publishers are caught in a double bind. It is their responsibility to realize the literary value of a text and harvest its readership. The financial failure of a publishing project implicates its literary and social failure. The unrealized publisher is shamed before their colleagues. I think of the publisher's work as loss management. Managing loss is a delicate balance of the ethical implications of mixing money and paper, economic and cultural production. Managing loss is a more ethnographically grounded diagnosis than Bourdieu's "interest in disinterestedness" (1993, 40). Hāla opened the publishing House at a time when generating profit was near impossible which other publishers found strange and threatening. To them, the desire to make particular books does not justify the risk that she took in opening a new, especially small and self-funded, publishing house. They further deemed these books financially nonviable. What publishers understand to be their craft, their *maṣlaḥa*, involves two economic principles. First, there is the livelihood (*rizq*) that they need to earn through their work, be it publishing or not. Second, there is the benefit (a direct translation of *maṣlaḥa*), their personal and public interest and gain from their line of work.

E. The Arabic Book Market

The Arabic book market contextualizes and situates the publishing semiotic ideology. The origin story of the publishing house has a market twist. The printer, Ali told me that the 1960s saw the rise of a printing industry in Lebanon which proliferated with the printing of religious books, textbooks, and magazines (also see Maasri 2020). These printer-publishers "fed the machines" with high demand texts and generated the money to print less profitable genres. With the political unrest in Arab countries since the 1990s and global economic recession in 2007, the bulk of imported books fell out of

demand. However, the most relevant event for the printing economy today was the cutting of trade routes through Syria since 2011. The economic conditions that enabled Lebanese publishers to produce books for the Arab World have changed, but that was not the starting point for *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt.* They opened the publishing house to publish books they like. They did not study the market. Instead, they orient to the public in this way: if we like these books, there must be others who will like them, too.

Alfred Gell asks, how could we approach markets as both ceremonial and instrumental institutions through which social categories "find tangible expression" (1982, 486-89)? He starts from the multiple frameworks of economic relationships (479). In his study of an Indian tribal market, he identifies the village and the market as two frameworks where the village reflects the value system of wider society, and the market reflects the value system of the state. While he adheres to the structuralist thesis that the physical structure parallels the social structure, he adds that this parallelism results from a negotiation of value (481). We learn a valuable ethnographic lesson from Gell to identify contexts and value frameworks in markets.

The larger market of Arabic books extends over twenty-two countries. The urban legend goes "Cairo writes, Beirut publishes, Baghdad reads." This market is a product of language and print capitalism (Anderson 1983, 45). I propose to cast the Arabic book market in Gell's analysis. The market is concretized in the physical spaces of bookstores and bookfairs. The book market entails tight negotiations of value of language, production, and readership. The social categories for the publishing house are not caste categories, but kinship categories of proximity and certainly, class entanglements with family. Issues of 'truth and mystification' of the social reality of markets are not unique to literary markets as Gell shows.

F. Publishing Money

An ethnography of money allows me to consider three locations of kin-work through which money and other resources flow. The publishing house started with family funds. Hāla's brother supplied the money for the making and printing of the first few books. Her sister later provided money to support the publishing process. Hāla and her siblings made the publishing House by pooling together resources from the family house, their own capacities, and the money they have each made working their regular jobs. Since the beginning, Hāla started to explore the option of partial external funding and collaborations with other cultural institutions to add to the brother's funding which lasted until 2018. During my fieldwork, the publishing house received a larger grant viable for a year between July 2021 and July 2022. While the publishing House is a 'passion project' animated by the inertia of desire, Hāla's sense of obligation strongly includes an obligation towards her co-workers. This obligation originates not only in the closeness between them, but also in Hāla's conviction that she should not treat her co-workers like a merchant would. Although the money of the publishing House came entirely from the house, Hāla later decided to draw a clear distinction between the money of the house and the money of the publishing House. For example, she decided to economize the production of a new book rather than ask her brother for money to print the book. She further cut down bookstore expenditures and minimized her own salary so she can continue to pay her co-workers fairly.

Large external funding reconfigured the work arrangement at the publishing house. The economic structure of the House does not conform to the structure that the

funders presume. This difference created more administrative work for Hāla. On one hand, the House might actually have not been able to operate this past year without external funding, and on the other hand, Hāla learned that the change in their kin-work dynamic that the funding required did not suit them. They only received 42% of the amount of money they proposed for several publishing projects. She initially tried to fit the projects into the much smaller fund but later opted to focus on two or three of the projects and postpone the rest. The kin-work arrangement at the publishing house conflicted with the institutional arrangement common in cultural institutions. The kin-work arrangement starts from and economizes available resources.

Here is an example of the difference between the funders' presumptions and the kin-work arrangement at the publishing House. Before the transfer of the money, the funding agency requested that the publishing house provide a breakdown of how they will use the fund. I was sitting with Hāla one day as she filled the budget sheet. She first divided the allocated money into production costs and 'employee' salaries. This did not work because the publishing house usually pays the co-workers by project. She then tried to divide the money by project. This did not work either because not all the projects would be finished by the end of the funding period. Finally, Hāla divided the money by bookstore costs and salaries for each employee. As Hāla postponed some publishing projects and prioritized others over the period of my fieldwork, she had to always adjust the budget sheets and document these changes. This is work that she only had to do for the funders. Using non-house money entailed negotiations of a new kind with the co-workers such asking them how much their work would cost for a time period on different projects instead of each project on its own.

The material conditions of making books are a crucial part of the semiotic process of selling them. Returning to the original kin-work rhythm was one outcome of the past year. While Hāla and Jana do not want to change the look and feel of their books, they cannot continue to produce with the same costs. Hāla wants to make more practical choices for the circumstances and make books that are 'easier' to sell. My interlocutors often say, on different occasions, "we will not accumulate wealth working in publishing. The point is for us to be happy with this work." The beginning was not only the point they decided the scale of the venture, but also when they decided the kinds of books they would make. There was a 'huge fight' at the beginning. While the brother wanted to make special edition books, Hāla wanted to produce beautiful but cheap books. What they eventually produced was something in between. As they prepare to print books after the onset of the economic crisis, they had to re-work their previous production strategy. For example, Hāla decided to print only five hundred copies of the book she will publish in 2022. They have printed 1,000 copies of each of their editions, even though the offset machine can produce 3,000 copies per print for a similar cost. Given that they are a small publishing house producing for a small local book market, they incurred a large loss even before the economic crisis.

During a meeting with the printer, Hāla said that the publishing house should change the way they deal with money to survive the times. She wants to find a way to deal with resources that does not deplete neither labor nor money. The entry point she found was to become aware of the way the House has been using money. The conversation, never short of a literary quality, built up to an interesting distinction between different kinds of spending money, all of which they want to actively avoid. These qualifications of money expenditure are *baḏẖ* (lavishness), *tabḏīr* (profusion),

and *isrāf* (squandering). *Al-baḏẖ* is living outside one's means and here for example, producing a very expensive but beautiful book. *Al-tabḏyr* is spending money here and there without it culminating into the intended result. *Al-isrāf* is the absolute waste of time and resources. Hāla said that they have been guilty of *baḏẖ* so far, and it has given them a name for producing beautiful books, but that it will not serve them anymore. This new direction in managing resources will have great implications for the number of copies that the publishing house will print and the projects that they prioritize. It is also a step towards getting the publishing House to a point where it produces its own money.

G. Store Money

The bookstore is an attempt at financial viability for the publishing house. Although Hāla speculates the store is not generating a large revenue, it still creates 'movement.' The publishing house gained a stronger public presence with the bookstore. The store provides the space for thicker sale interactions with customers and more substantial work relationships with other publishers. This space fully embodies the value of sociality for bookselling. Furthermore, the store has the potential to cover its own costs and later make money for publishing.

Stock is the reserve of books that a bookstore keeps. The store runs on an initial number of books and further accumulates stock. Stocking entails contacting publishers, selecting titles, purchasing books, delivering them to the bookstore, and then displaying and managing them. Stocking is serious and difficult labor, both social and financial. This is mainly because the bookstore needs continuous re-stocking. Even though some books stay on the shelves for months, others need monthly replacement. For the *Ṣnūbar*

Bayrūt bookstore, the initial stock consisted of their own publications. The store mostly lists books by Lebanese publishers (as well as some other Arab publishers) with whom Hāla has a variety of relationships. I focus on three.

There are three scenarios--Hāla works with publishers who are her colleagues, others who are her friends, and yet others who are strangers. I learned from my fieldwork that these three scenarios of economic activity, explicate the sociality of the publishing scene in Lebanon. One time, a regular customer asked for two books that were not listed in the store. Their publisher, however, regularly works with Hāla, so she gave him a call to order the two books. By virtue of their strong collegial relationship, the publisher also told her that their prices were set to hike soon. This gave Hāla the chance to make an inventory (*jardeh*) of the books she needed from this publisher and send him an email with the full order. Collegial publishers are the ones who might have had doubts about Hāla's project in the beginning, but the bookstore has mended these relationships. The unacknowledged doubt required that both the publisher and Hāla re-establish their relationship.

Hāla also works with publishers who are her friends outside of work. This usually means that she has listed their publications since the very beginning, adding to the initial stock of her own publications. Visits to such publishers often include paying off the money from the sold books and getting new copies for the bookstore. When Hāla makes such trips, she usually sets aside a whole morning or afternoon to visit publishers in a specific destination, such as Hamra. When she tasked me with such a visit, I found it to transpire surprisingly fast compared to her own visits. This difference highlights the sociality of working with friends.

A subset of these publishers are Hāla's close friends. The trouble with closeness sometimes is that invoices and receipts get lost. One friend publisher usually tells Hāla, "*Khalaṣ bayne wa baynik.*" This statement suggests that the money will stay between them, as if 'in the family,' and that they will deal with it *later* or in another fashion. However, she still has to generate the documents she was supposed to get from other publishers, and it bothers her because it is time-consuming and impedes with her workflow. Based on my fieldwork in the bookstore, I think that the issue here has to do with the semiotic ideology around money. Neither Hāla nor her friend like to engage in the financial aspects of running a publishing house and a bookstore, nor do they consider themselves any good at it. They both understand this about each other, so they rarely bring it up meaning that they maintain the contract of '*bayne wa baynik.*'

Less frequently, Hāla orders books from publishers she had not worked with before. These encounters illustrate a more 'official' relationship. The phone calls with such publishers often start with an introduction of *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* and the bookstore. After that, the bookseller and the publisher negotiate the bookstore's cut. Bookstores usually expect a 30-40% cut on books because publishers understand that bookstores need to cover several expenses in order to provide the service of selling books. Big bookstores and distributors often demand a cut up to 50%. However, the discount for all the books in *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* bookstore average around 25%.

Exchange events require interpretation during and after the fact. The daily economic activity at the store offers itself to the first round of interpretation, however minimal. I have heard Hāla and Lucciana state "it was a good day at the store" or "it has been a bad couple of weeks for the store" based on the customers that visit. On the days that I ran the bookstore, I found myself making similar statements assessing how many

customers came in and how much they were interested in buying books. These statements sum up a day's or a week's work and endow it with a degree of economic meaning. The bookseller is, of course, also concerned with higher-stake interpretation, that of the stock, the revenue, and the gift. Interpreting the larger economic cycle at the bookstore augments singular exchange events to each other.

H. The Interpretive Basis of the Economy

Stocking the bookstore transforms money into books. I have shown the social labor of stocking the bookstore. Here, I explicate the financial--how the stocking process works and how it operates using 'latent money' through sale by consignment. I argue that the economic activities at the bookstore require interpretive exercises ranging from provoking a customer's curiosity to telling if the bookstore is gaining or losing money. Selling and buying books are semiotically thick processes. On one hand, they hinge on a well-established semiotic ideology. On the other hand, they entail the risk of slippage from one regime of value to another. Economic activity thus requires interpretation, beyond representation and calculation.

The bookselling trade starts on paper. Hāla keeps all bills, receipts, and invoices in large binders. These documents record every exchange since the opening of the bookstore. She classifies the documents into folders inside the binder--a folder for each publisher she buys books from and a folder for each store she sells books to. She then transforms the documented exchanges into numbers on the stock Excel sheet. The sheet records the details about the titles listed in the store such as publisher, author/translator/illustrator, year of publication, genre, and themes. The sheet also records the number of copies in stock, the copies sold each month of the year and the

copies left. This last column is named the 'actual' stock. However, this is only an estimation of reality. The sheet sometimes shows that the store has, say, two copies of a book, but nothing is on the shelf. This sounds the alarm for missing copies. While trying to make sense of the discrepancy, Hāla, disheartened, exclaimed, "the shelf is the reality and not the Excel sheet!" In this situation, Hāla either checks whether these copies are stored at her house, or she asks Lucciana if someone bought the copy and she forgot to record it in the sales notebook. The publisher that gave her the copy interprets a missing copy as a sold copy, and Hāla has to cover the loss in case the copy is lost. However, most of these missing copies turn out either in the cupboard next to the desk or in the house. They end up there because of the tiny storage space at the store where usually only one or two copies of each book fit on the shelf.

While the exchanges with the publishers and other bookstores are recorded in the invoices, the exchanges with customers are recorded in the sales agenda notebook. On a given day, the bookseller records each sale on the agenda mentioning the title of the book, its publisher, its price, and the number of sold copies. Hāla then goes over the weekly sales and enters the changes in the stock numbers on the Excel sheet. Hāla records large orders that libraries, institutions, bookstores abroad, and book fairs make in a separate notebook. She then rips the page from the notebook and attaches it to the day of the sale in the sales agenda. She learned these techniques through her work in libraries.

The meticulous work of preserving documents and recording exchanges aims to draw a full circle from the publisher to the bookstore to the customer. Money and stock flow through this circle. On one hand, stocking the bookstore transforms money into stock, and on the other hand, the bookstore 'works' if it can transform stock back into

money. Recording economic exchanges creates the conditions the interpretation of the documents and the numbers. Recording makes the singular exchange event meaningful. Otherwise, the exchange would not count as a market exchange. Interpretation reveals whether reverse transformation took place.

Interpretation poses material and ethical difficulties. By reading the documents and the numbers, Hāla cannot tell how much the bookstore earned and how much it cost at the end of the month. In the summer of 2021, nearly two years after opening the store, Hāla commissioned a programmer to create a bookkeeping system for the bookstore. She met him through another bookseller for whom he also created a bookkeeping system. During the first work meeting, Hāla explained to him how the bookstore works and how she records all sales on paper. He requested she elaborates on one thing, the sale by consignment system, *beiʿ bel amana* (sale by fidelity), by which booksellers and publishers trade books. The duty of maintaining the books and the records binds the publisher and bookseller in the meantime. *Al-amana*, fidelity, obligates publishers and booksellers to each other and expresses the inseparability of the social and financial obligations of the trade.

This is how sale by consignment proceeds. A publisher sends the bookstore a number of books. The bookstore does not directly pay for the books. When a customer buys a copy of the book, the bookstore reimburses the publisher for the exact copy that sold and retains the value of the bookstore discount. The unsold copies either remain on the shelves or return to the publisher if the bookseller does not have the clientele for them. On the ground, the scale of this operation is much wider, involving tens of publishers and hundreds of books each at different points of the timeline. It is a very delicate balance keeping track of everything. Currently, what makes this process even

more complicated is that publishers have a fixed price for their books in USD, but they frequently change the LBP exchange rate they use as the currency continues to crash. For example, one publisher changed their rate from 1,500 to 4,000 to 10,000 to 15,000 to 20,000 LBPs over the period of my fieldwork. The decision to change sometimes came at the same day that the parallel market rate changed, and other times it came weeks later. Different publishers had extremely different exchange rates at any given time. This means that Hāla would have two copies of the same book from the same publisher for two different prices depending on the day that the copy arrived at the bookstore. She did not apply the higher rate to both copies to maintain the binding obligation of fidelity, *al-amana*. At a later and more severe stage of the currency devaluation, most publishers asked that their entire stock at the bookstore be sold for newer exchange rates.

The challenge here is for Hāla to keep a legible record. Because each book title splinters into several books of different values, she can no longer record the sales manually. The programmer concluded that "*al-amana* is the problem" which sounded like a sharp critique of the choice to trade by consignment. For him, if Hāla paid for the book that she stocked and then sold it, she would not have to worry about the different exchange rates. Hāla argued against his claim saying that sale by consignment works for everyone including large bookstores. The problem, she said, is that she does not have a computer programme to carry out the process and keep track of the different exchange rates and the splintered value of each book. The programmer then shifted to say that if *al-amana* is not the problem, he needs to make the programme *read* the different USD and LBP prices for different copies of the same book. Thus, the programmer's task is to build an interpretive framework for the computer.

The computer also needs to understand the interpretive problem that arises in manual calculation. The bookseller sells on behalf of the publisher and buys on behalf of the customer. The sale hinges on 'latent money' which is the money that flows from the customer to the bookstore to the publisher after the stock flows from the publisher to the bookstore to the customer. The programmer summed up by saying, "what you sell (*beiʿ*) is not what you earn (*qabiḍ*), and what you spend (*ṣarif*) is not what you pay (*dafiʿ*)," to which Hāla exclaimed, "precisely!" This is an interpretive problem because the programmer and the bookseller assign relationships of meaning between the four types of monetary exchange. One economic activity does not *mean* the other one because the books are traded by consignment. Consider the flow of money from the perspective of the bookstore (chart 1). In selling, money moves from the customer to the bookstore and the publisher. In paying, a subset of the selling money goes from customer to publisher only. In earning, the rest of the selling money goes to the bookstore only. In spending, the store uses the earned money for maintenance. With another portion of latent money, the store re-stocks books. The latency thus enables and supports the bookstore's mediation of the relationship between customers and publishers.

Chart 1: Chart showing the flow of money from the customer to the publisher through the bookstore.

The store, however, is connected to the publishing house because Hāla doubles as a publisher and a bookseller in the store. Hāla thus occupies both the publisher and bookstore positions in this chart when it comes to *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* books. The flow of money in the store is usually supported by house money (for the rent) and funding money (for the bookkeeping program and bookseller salary). The additional money obscures the net revenue of the bookstore. The software will calculate the revenue (after all four studied expenditures) that the bookstore generates day by day, month by month, and then year by year. This calculation will inform Hāla which of three possibilities is happening at the store. The first possibility is that the bookstore covers its own expenses which is Hāla's goal for now. The second possibility--that if the bookstore does not cover its own expenses, it would be a catastrophe for both the house and the publishing House. The third possibility--that the bookstore generates substantial net revenue--is far-fetched even by the best estimates.

Publishing sociality is edged with risk. The latency is rich with the possibilities of gain, loss, and gift. Mistakes happen between selling, paying, earning, and spending money. However, not all mistakes are the same. Some calculation mistakes are discovered and corrected, and other smaller mistakes are covered by the revenue elsewhere. Yet other mistakes are absolved of the mundanity of monetary exchange. For example, the bookseller might reimburse a publisher slightly more or less than he is owed. Hāla interprets such a mistake as a gift, money that circumvents notions of loss and gain. The bookseller's interpretation, which cannot be taught to the computer, neutralizes 'risk' into gift and protects the sociality of the trade. Hāla told the programmer that these mistakes could happen both ways, could go unnoticed, and are believed to even themselves out eventually.

More recently, Hāla has been finding it easier to buy the books she lists in the bookstore and pay for them directly. Other bookstores and publishers developed this preference as well now that more and more books are being sold at a rate closer to the daily black-market rate. While sale by consignment entails selling the books one time on behalf of the publisher, this process entails selling the books twice, first to the bookstore and then to a customer. Even in this case, booksellers frequently update their prices based on the exchange rates that each publisher adopts. Bookstores pay attention to keep their prices the same as each other, so they gain neither a reputation for overpricing nor for underselling other stores.

Printers in Lebanon have also used a similar latent money system, although they call it *daīn*, debt, or *beiʿ /shiraʾ bel daīn* (sale/purchase by debt). I have heard from my interlocutors that over thirty printers have shut down since 2019 because of how deeply indebted they were. Previously, they would, for example, print a book for a publisher

and procure the money after the book sells, but they would also obtain paper from a supplier and pay for the paper after the publisher pays them. They had operated on debt for many years, and it did not pose a problem until the national currency de-valued, and the money that they owe and are owed, retained its USD value. They could not pay back their debt or procure their money back, and thus, they announced bankruptcy. I do not mean that what the printers do is not, in fact, debt, nor do I mean that what the booksellers do is radically different from debt. The two different interpretations, *amana* and *daīn*, illustrate a site of threat to publishers--that they might have to call their latent money debt were booksellers non-cooperative.

Although I argue that the economic logic of publishing is largely congruent with the economic logic of trade, I do maintain Bourdieu's structuralist thesis that the literary world flips the value hierarchies of the economic world such that prestige rules over monetary success (39). For example, a young man once entered the shop. Hāla knew him from his student political activism, and they had a brief chat. He chose a book which he could not afford, but Hāla did not want that to be an obstacle. She asked him how much he could pay, and they negotiated a price. At first, I thought that this was very unusual for the bookstore. However, bargaining only happened because Hāla offered to negotiate the price, perhaps to loosen the cause-effect conditionality of the money exchange. In doing so, she reversed the initiation of bargaining which a customer normally instigates. Fuad Khuri argues that bargaining plays a crucial *social* role forging friendships and patron-client relationships (1968, 698). Here we find it being used at a most vulnerable site, a young customer who might not have enough expandable money to be a customer. Another strategy that Khuri documents is a seller's use of kin-terms such as 'brother,' 'sister,' 'son,' and 'daughter' to strengthen their

relationship to a customer (701). Notably, I never heard kin-terms used between a seller and a customer at the bookstore. I think this abstinence is a double reversal--a reversal of the forged kinship between seller and customer at the store and a reversal of the achieved kinship between co-workers behind the scenes. The abstinence thus testifies to the *specificity* of kinship made through work.

Furthermore, bargaining takes the form of a pre-emptive gift at the bookstore. Hāla always tries to negotiate reasonable prices with publishers on behalf of customers. She anticipates that with the near constant electricity cuts, books will come back as the main medium of entertainment, and when people come to buy them, they should be able to afford their only remaining source of solace. She particularly has younger people in mind. She feels she should not have them leave the shop empty handed because of money. On the other hand, when a customer buys a lot of books, Hāla usually adds another book as a gift.

In conclusion, I presented a case study of a work setting in which workers struggle to produce and negotiate value. I started from the form and function of family in economic production. I explored the dynamics of valuation of money during the economic crisis. I analyzed the undercurrent of semiotic ideology and how it creates coherence across semiotic forms. I concretized the phenomenon of the Arabic book market. Back at the house-publishing house-store triad, I tracked the circulation of publishing money and store money and the ethical and interpretive conundrums involved. I built up to an argument for the interpretive basis of selling, buying, and talking at the bookstore. In the next chapter, I turn to the language-market-speech configuration.

CHAPTER III

CORRECTING ERROR: THE METHODOLOGIES OF PUBLISHING

The publishing house is named after a Beiruti social tradition. Hāla told me that the residents of the city used to go to the pine forest for picnics. While there, they would exchange the latest gossip. The saying "*yunshur waḥad ʿa Ṣnūbar Bayrūt*" means to discuss someone's business in public, 'to hang his business on pine trees' like hanging laundry. The name of the publishing house, *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt,* where *nashr* (root of *manshūrat*) means to hang/make public/publish, plays on the words. Hāla usually explains the name to customers and friends by saying "*Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* but we publish something else." The joke invokes an intimate urban sociality vitalized through talk.

In the previous chapter, I began to touch on the ways in which language and the market are two systems of value open to each other (Keane 2008, 30). In particular, I have shown how talk and money come to bear on economic activity. For the case of publishing, there is another way in which language and market interact. The book market is basically a market of talk. In this chapter, I explore how my interlocutors weave their speech into their publishing. I probe the connections and disconnections between oral and written language, talk and text. While semiotic ideology structures the interpretation of economic processes, metapragmatic methodologies structure the interaction of talk and text at the publishing house. Both semiotic processes rely on the indexical property of textual and speech signs and give rise to the phenomenon of the Arabic book market.

I ask, in which genres do the members of the publishing house order their speech? How do they then use language in their publishing? How and why do they edit texts? How and why do they re-publish texts? And how and why do they publish vernacular books? What vulnerabilities, difficulties, and obstacles do they face in editing, re-publishing, and vernacular writing? I argue that there is a co-constitutive relationship between text and speech. I use my interlocutor's metapragmatic notions to analyze their approach to language use. I show that the main incentive for editorial work is error. The specter of error haunts the publishing craft.

A. Genres of Talk

It was clear to me since the beginning of my fieldwork that my interlocutors talk in a particular way. Day after day, I started to notice the insistence on accuracy, the word play, the inner jokes, the historical references, and the overall saturation with a literary quality. I was bewitched by the literary effect, but more so by the underlying sociality that affords my interlocutors such a range of language use. Ethnographically, I started to follow the speech genres, "the relatively stable types of utterances," and to note the "typified situations and themes" in which each genre appeared (Bakhtin 1994, 60, 87).

Consider the speech genre of pleasantries between the siblings. Hāla and her brother reiterated on several occasions their constant contentions over language use. This tension pushes their thinking about language, and they use humor and banter to relieve it. With the development of their work friendship, they now exchange pleasantries (*laṭaʾif*) and tease each other over the work instead of fighting as they used to. Radcliffe-Brown defines the joking relationship as "a peculiar combination of

friendliness and antagonism" (1940, 196). He identifies joking relationships in alliances

of goods exchange and inter-marriage (207-208). I would add kin-work as an intriguing

kind of joking relationship. The kin-work arrangement differs from other work

arrangements precisely because it allows intense contention and intense affinity without

sabotaging the work.

Language fights make their own speech genre between my interlocutors and

their interlocutors. Hāla and Sarah, the copyeditor, feel very strongly about linguistic

errors. Hāla often says, "*tsharaʿna!*" (We had a fight). She then explains how she

quarreled with one of her friends or colleagues over the correct conjugation of a verb or

spelling of a word. For example, she contested her friend's use of *muʾaqat* (temporary)

and alerted them to the correct *fuṣḥa* term which is *muaqat* (without the *hamza*). While

these conversations escalate into heated debates, they retain a friendly nature. Sarah also

finds errors agitating. For example, the mistakes she sees on the announcements posted

in the building entrance irk her. She keeps a pen in her purse for such emergencies. She

crosses out the wrong word or phrase and rewrites it correctly. She assured me that this

does not bother her neighbors.

Furthermore, my interlocutors apply reflexivity to their own speech through

concrete and typified statements of self-correction. The speaker declares that they have

made a mistake and that they are going to correct it. Examples of the declaration are

"Sorry! I used the wrong word" and "Hold on, I will say something else." These self-

corrections concern even word choice which the listener can otherwise correct in their

head based on the context. One of my interlocutors said during a meeting, "Let me

summarize, sorry, no, let me summarize and digress." This concern with error translates

from speech to text as I will show below.

B. Uses of Language

Publishers work in the domain of literature, *adab*. Allow me to suggest an ethnographically sound definition of *adab. Adab* is the satisfactory use of language. I have learned through my fieldwork with a publisher that the use of language is a thoroughly social craft. Making books through particular kinships (chapter one) and materialities (chapter four) is a matter of *adab*, one that is further congruent with interpersonal *adab*, proper and polite conduct. For my interlocutors, conduct between members of a publishing house and between the house and its readers weighs in on the genre of *adab* making it a domain of cultivation, playfulness, and reverence.

Producing literature entails deep thinking and talking about language. Such metapragmatic activity contends with language-in-use and ultimately with the use of language, albeit the "appropriate use of language" (Lucy 1993, 15-17). The satisfactory use of language scaffolds the appropriate use of language, making *adab* a question of compound competency. The competent speaker applies a host of metapragmatic functions to produce a seamless, comprehensible utterance. The competent author and publisher, however, employ what I propose to call a host of *metapragmatic methodologies*, which combine grammatical, compositional, and literary notions of language use. The notion of metapragmatic methodologies accounts for my interlocutors' insistence on controlled, yet generative speech and writing.

Metapragmatic methodologies make up the flesh and blood of talk. Consider the notions of *Faṣaḥa* and *Fazlakeh. Faṣaḥa* is the emergent quality of eloquent speech. While the notion draws its potency from the largely inherent eloquence of Standard Arabic, *fuṣḥa*, speaking *fuṣḥa* alone does not make an eloquent speaker. The eloquent speaker uses language with seamless skill even in their everyday vernacular talk.

Faṣaḥa directly opposes *rakaka*, brittle and weak use of the language. It is precisely this *faṣaha* that I was trying to put my finger on during my early fieldwork. *Fazlakeh* (*faḏlazah* in *fuṣḥa)* is when a speaker captures a complex thought in a concise word or phrase--possibly of their own coinage--often after generous elaboration. In colloquial use, the word gains a negative connotation, as in a speaker who elaborates beyond the listener's interest. My interlocutors, however, claim *fazlakeh* almost as a core work ethic. They think of their insistence on editing, font choices, work with language, and printing material as examples of *fazlakeh.* Hāla and Ali told me on separate occasions that the thing about *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* is that "*byaʿamlo min al-ḥabbeh ʾebbeh*" (they make mountains out of molehills), as the proverb goes.

The ethnographic notions of *faṣaḥa* and *fazlakeh* reflect two approaches to language use. The first approach is serious and confrontational reverence for the grammar and sensibilities of competent speakers. The second approach entails play, humor, and invention. My interlocutors subject both Standard Arabic, *fuṣḥa*, and spoken vernacular Arabic to metapragmatic methodological work. With the capaciousness of *faṣaḥa* and *fazlakeh*, fight and play, my interlocutors make utterances into linguistic artifacts ranging from jokes to books. Together, *faṣaḥa* and *fazlakeh*, synthesize a language in the making, a craft whose practitioners contest weak speech and argue for renewal. I now turn to the application of metapragmatic methodologies to three publishing practices: editing, re-publishing, and vernacular writing.

C. Episteme on Error

Error entices editorial work in publishing. Editing springs from the publisher's episteme on error, and it is not an automatic choice for all publishers. For Hāla, editing

conserves grammatical correctness and proliferates the text's *faṣaha*. The Arabic notion of editing, *tadqiq*, emphasizes accuracy and thus the appropriate and comprehensible use of language. While editing is difficult and demanding work, Hāla and Sarah insist on editing because they enjoy it. Hāla told me that since she was a kid, whenever she opens a book, the errors immediately pop out to her, and she starts to imagine what the book would look like without any mistakes. Sarah told me that when she sits in front of the computer correcting a spelling here and a punctuation mark there, she feels *saltana*, a state of ecstasy derived from listening to oriental *tarab* music (Shannon 2003, 74).

The publisher devises an expansive regiment to detect and fix error. However, error poses an intrinsic caveat. The prospect of small illusive errors dangles over the editing process and puts the editor in a strenuous encounter with the text. Ali, the printer, has a theory that no print has ever been completely void of errors. He told Hāla and me during a meeting that the reputable printer is the one who has managed to make these errors so small that clients do not notice them, so they go and tell others that such-and-such is a good printer. The unruly materiality of machines and paper has the last word. Hāla mostly seemed to agree with Ali because language, especially unruly in text form, tends to escape the arduous editing and the numerous eyes that read it. On the release day for *ʿAn Aḥwal Kutub al-Atfal,* Hāla and Philippa felt so nervous to open a copy and find an error after four years of working on the book.

Error manifests in colder and harder forms as well. Printers used to prepare books using typesetting machines which did not allow the publisher to go in and correct errors they find while reviewing the manuscript during printing or before a second edition. They used to compile in two columns the errors they find and their corrections. The typesetter would then print a sheet titled *al- ḫataʾ w al-ṣawab* (errors and

67

corrections) or an errata sheet and add it to the back of the book before binding. Today, when a publisher issues a second print of a book, they directly edit the digital file. Hāla's brother, the author of the Beckett series, keeps going back, reading the books, and recording the errors he finds. Now that he had found the errors, he wanted to notify the reader. He prepared an errata sheet which Hāla printed and added to each copy of *Kayfa al- Ḥal* on display at the store (fig. 1). Thus, the publisher and the author took up the available albeit forgotten printing practice to polish a printed book and relieve themselves of the weight of error.

Manuscript editing goes deeper than finding errors. During my fieldwork, fiction author Zeinab was finalizing her short story collection for publication with *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt*. Before Hāla began to edit the text, Zeinab used to meet with her at the bookstore. Zeinab would read out loud a story she has been working on, and Hāla would offer her first impression. They also often discussed the procession of the short story and how the reader might understand it. After one of these readings, I asked Hāla about her work with Zeinab. She started by saying that she loves Zeinab's style, her *nafas* (breath) in sentence composition. She still edits the text for several reasons and over a few rounds. Hāla fixes the grammar and molds the text into the genre of the short story. She imparts consistency on the text probing the logic and the plot of the story. In doing this editorial work, she harvests the potential of the text, a process of *tathqif,* or culturation. In the back and forth between author and publisher, the text 'grows' into a piece of literature, rather than intrinsically 'expresses' the genre of *adab*.[7] The publisher makes the text a product of more than the author alone.

---

[7] I owe the analysis of editing as *tathqif* to my advisor.

To generalize, the editing proceeds through a few steps. The author considers the publisher's comments and transforms the draft, *khartush*, into a manuscript before submitting it to the publisher. It is inappropriate to submit a *khartush* to a publisher because of its overwhelming errors. Hāla reads the text correcting the mistakes she considers non-negotiable such as grammatical errors. She then sends the text to Sarah. Sarah makes edits on the Word file in Track Changes mode. She detects more grammatical and compositional errors as well as mistakes in word conjunction and phrasing; some phrases are colloquially used to mean one thing but mean another in the dictionary, and so the editor chooses the lexically correct meaning. Hāla goes over these changes and approves the ones concerning the correct use of *fuṣḥa* Arabic without consulting the author. Hāla gives the author a paper copy of the edited text with suggested changes in composition, word choice, and plot. Once Zeinab returns the paper version, Hāla enters the changes into the file, prints it and gives it to an external editor to read and make suggestions. The external reader must have a different approach to language, perhaps more grammatically conservative, and a different reading style, in order to catch the remaining errors in the text. Hāla then decides whether to accept or reject the external reader's suggestions. She returns the text with the final changes to the author for approval. The text then moves from editors to designers who enter the text into the InDesign programme using the font that the publisher and art director have chosen for the book. The publisher prints the typeset version and reads it to correct the errors that the designers make as they type up the text.

Hāla considers editing the utmost standard for publishing work. One afternoon, Samer, a friend of hers and a widely read published author himself, passed by the

bookstore to visit Hāla and pick up some books.[8] Hāla introduced me as an anthropology student studying publishing. Samer commended my work and said, "I hope you are not writing about something on its dying bed." This 'something' (which I thought referred to the publishing industry) opened a space for Hāla's interpretation. She seemed more worried about the place, Beirut, and its unfolding ruination. As the sense of sorrow dissipated into the room, Hāla and Samer shifted to discuss some of their latest readings. They did not digress far, however, and talked about books that were so badly edited that they could not even finish them. The mistakes strongly 'irked' them. Hāla revealed what one publisher once said to her, "No one edits these days anymore, so why should we?" Samer was not surprised because he noticed this publisher's latest editions have been full of mistakes. Another publisher told Samer that there are no good editors or copy editors in Lebanon, to which Hāla retorted that there are, but "one must really look for them." For both Hāla and Samer, publishers should feel more obliged to exert more editorial effort even if ultimately, it is impossible to catch all errors. Hāla returned to the question that hung in the air and added that maybe it is not only the place that will perish, but also this way of working and publishing.

Amongst publishers, there is an emic evaluation that distinguishes good from bad editing, and consequently, good from bad publishing. Hāla and Samer's conversation implicates singular actors, publishers that edit well and others that edit poorly or do not edit at all. Publishing alliances and rivalries are thus based to an extent on the standard of what publishing, materially and processionally, is. Work ethic and methodology occupy the utmost contested category of value. This, to me, exploded the idea that publishing alliances and rivalries would only be based on intellectual

---

[8] I changed this person's name to maintain anonymity.

contentions and publishing programs.[9] Remember that the main criticism that *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* received from other publishers at the beginning was about the apparent 'excessive' work they seemed to put into their books.

D. Re-publishing Methodologies

If editing is *tadqiq*, revision is *taḥqiq*. Hāla applies the rigorous methodology of *taḥqiq* to re-publish books. More than accuracy, *taḥqiq* probes the sincerity of one version of a text compared to others. Revision thus undoes the certainty of the original and unpacks the multiple possibilities of the text. This makes error and its correction contextual assessments that the publisher must make. Many publishers use the negatives of photographs of the initial edition or photocopy the book for re-publishing. Hāla, being a historian, takes a different approach to re-publishing. For her, the point of re-publishing is not to re-sell the book or only to make it available. The point is to introduce the book in a new mold, to make it both comprehensible and appealing to the modern-day reader, and to honor these authors, their work, and their historical period.

Error is the main incentive for re-typing, editing, and revising a text for re-publication. Although re-typing introduces new errors, re-printing the book reproduces old errors. The publisher derives a particular kind of pleasure from revising the text. Hāla told me, "When you work on the text, you figure out the trap, *al-faḫ bi al-naṣ*." Error is thus not just legible mistakes--mistakes that can be pointed to and corrected. Error is the trap that resides deep in the composition and the game that animates the text.

---

[9] Alliances and rivalries are also a matter of kinship. See chapter one.

When re-publishing Fouad Hobeiche's *Rasul al-ʿUri*, Hāla chose to correct the errors on behalf of the author. Hobeiche compiled the errors and his corrections in an errata sheet at the end of his book. While Hāla intervened in the body of the text, she re-printed the author's errata sheet (fig. 2). Here, she decided that the corrected version of the text was most sincere to the author's will. She reasoned that if he were alive and issued a second printing of his book, he would correct the errors.

In Elias Abou Chabakeh's writing, the trap turned out to be the absence of errors. While working on re-publishing his book *al-Rusum,* Hāla had in mind his reputation for editing his texts beyond doubt. At first, only a copy of the original print of the book was available to her. She typed up this version of the text, and then she looked for different editions and manuscripts for comparison. She was unsure of the word *rāza* (راز) in the phrase "*wa ruznahu fil ayam al- ṣaʿ ba fa lam najidhu,*" which she thought should be *zāra* (زار), to visit. The phrase means "and we [??] in the difficult times and we did not find him." To 'visit him and not find him in difficult times' would have made sense, but every version of the text still said *rāza*. Hāla reasoned that a dot must have went missing during typesetting and another dot must have appeared because of the mold eating the copy (fig. 3). However, she still had an inkling that Abou Chabakeh did not make a mistake. She consulted *Lisān al-ʿArab* dictionary and found twenty meanings under the root word *r-ā-z,* and the very last one was "to examine" or "to test" which fit Abou Chabakeh's intended meaning; "and we tested him in the difficult times, and he failed." This story confirms the value of methodological and contextual work with error where sometimes there might be no error at all.

Revising the text is an ethical orientation towards both the reader in enhancing the readability of less familiar texts and the author in taking them up on every word--the

words they wanted corrected and the words that only seem incorrect. Editing re-engages the text and further harvests its literary potential.

E. Vernacular Writing

Re-publishing is Hāla's project, and vernacular literature is her brother's. While there is no innocent use of language, whether standardized or vernacular, the publishing house here makes an argument for the literary potential of vernacular text. The metapragmatic methodologies of *faṣaḥa* and *fazlakeh* consist through the vernacular editions. Publishing in Lebanese vernacular is a challenge to the market conditions of Arabic books where only Standard Arabic enhances (if not determines) the reach of a book. While the publishing house, and namely Hāla and her brother, established a grammar that governs spelling in vernacular in order to distinguish error, the project challenges larger conventions around error, i.e., 'it is wrong to write spoken language.'

Hāla's brother instills a kind of *faṣaḥa* into vernacular writing. He presents sensory, tangible, and intuitive evidence for the capacities of vernacular writing. This is an argument about language use. While the competent speaker learns to write in Standard Arabic, he had learned before that to think and speak in vernacular Arabic. Standard Arabic occupies the register of text and vernacular Arabic retreats to the register of speech. Vernacular Arabic thus resists writing. Writing in vernacular language clashes with the competent speaker's habitual use of language. However, because vernacular language resides in the speaker's intuition, it creates the kernel for further use. This clash has led *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* to take a methodological approach to publishing vernacular writing insisting on reverence and seriousness in one of their most innovative projects.

The satisfactory use of language hinges on its appropriate use. Appropriate writing relies on the adherence to grammar. Hāla, as the publisher and editor, mandated the adherence to a set of rules that impart consistency on vernacular text making it easier for the uninitiated reader. Writing vernacular speech is tapping into the spoken, which is usually heard but not seen. Sound concretizes into letterform in accordance with the *fuṣḥa* grammar, which governs the readability of the text. While reading any written text, readers lock themselves into Standard Arabic pronunciation. Vernacular text then poses the threat of unfamiliar concretization. Here, the publisher has found that there is no one 'natural' way to translate the spoken into the written. The brother has thus assigned and created specific diacritics to denote sound units prevalent in vernacular but missing in Standard Arabic writing. He and Hāla continued to have these discussions as publishers and language practitioners. The coinage of the grammar system proves that one actually and eventually cannot write exactly the way he talks because it is illegible without a grammar structure. With continued exposure and practice, however, the speaker can lean into their intuition to learn to read grammatically consistent vernacular writing. In a metapragmatic *fazlakeh* fashion, Hāla and her brother named the features they assigned to vernacular pronunciation. An example is *hawmala* which is a superscript that looks like a knot (ˇ) and allows the omission of the pronoun attached to the end of a verb; in *fuṣḥa*, one says *akaltuha* (I ate her) but in vernacular says *akalta* dropping the 'uha' sound of the pronoun (see fig. 4 for more).

The case of vernacular publishing further elucidates the co-constitution of text and speech. The vernacular books each have a page that guides the reader through the denotation grammar. Hāla and Sarah had a document in which they gathered all of the

vernacular rules. However, Sarah has now internalized the grammar so well that she can apply it while editing the brother's texts without returning to the document. This shows the slippage of vernacular writing from the intuition into the habitual register of written language. The brother translates texts and writes them by hand. He sends Sarah pictures of the pages he wrote so she can type up the texts and edit them. Alongside the pictures, he records the texts for Sarah in order to retain the plot of speech that writing cannot retain on its own. The orality further eases the difficulty of the text. Despite the initial difficulty in reading and writing vernacular speech, the underlying connections of textual and speech practices at the publishing house make the strange a little bit more familiar.

To conclude, I have shown the kin-work basis and parameters of speech between my interlocutors. I have explored *faṣaḥa* and *fazlakeh* as fight and play uses of language. I have probed the stakes of error, the danger it poses, the traps it sets, and the games it weaves. The publisher's craft requires eloquent competence of speech and meticulous ordering of texts. Practicing language via publishing shows the obligatory orality of written language. Next, I turn to the material production of the books.

CHAPTER IV

DRAWING IMPRESSIONS: THE ARTEFACTS OF PUBLISHING

My last day of fieldwork started with a meeting between the publisher, the art director, the designer, and the printer. I, uncharacteristically, arrived first to the printing press and sat across from the printer Ali in his office. Soon after, the office bustled with long greetings, catch-ups, and laughs. Ali usually shares his latest fine prints with the group. This time, he pulled a gigantic book from the top shelf and held it with both arms. He began to set the book down on the table but decided against it and ushered us into the well-lit balcony. On the table there, he opened the book onto a print of deep black, luscious green, and dense red. Hāla, Jana, and Philippa did not conceal their admiration and excitement quickly huddling around the book. As they got closer to pore over the print, I had a Geertzian moment straining over their shoulders (2005, 86). However, no one was reading anything. We all stood there basking in the print's impression.

In this chapter, I study the artful practice of bookmaking at the publishing house. I start from the page as the unit of encounter with the text. The reader consumes the text page by page. However, the surface of the page presents itself as an image first and text second. At the initial interphase, only the pattern of lines cuts through the page and up to the eyes. Jana, Hāla, and her siblings all grew up yearning for beautiful Arabic books. As this desire ran 'in the family,' Hāla and Jana now seek to make crafted, textured, and layered images at the publishing house. Their notion of beauty, *ḥelo*, exceeds 'beauty.' They desire to make 'sweet' books that play a clever twist and leaves the reader altered even if in the smallest way by the end. When I first opened one of the *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt*

books myself, that was exactly how I felt. I was struck by the game, the craft, and the politeness of the book. In this chapter, I attempt a 'semiotic theory of art' (Geertz 1976, 1488). For me, the semiotic here involves the immediate and intuitive encounter with text through signage, the system of signs that enables us to read the text. Visual art speaks to a semiotic register seated deeper in the senses than the faculty of interpretation and meaning making. In this sense, semiotics works towards and against an aesthetic cultural sensibility which carries, frames, and enlarges the meaning and interpretation of signs.

I aim to illustrate the politeness, humility, and beauty with which the publishing house orients itself to the public. While some might argue that this orientation is merely eccentric, manipulative, or inaccessible to the reader, I argue that that it offers the public an impression of local material history and present/presence. I argue that the publishing house works on the look and the feel of the books to intervene in the visual field of the Arabic book. I explore the intricacy and craft of the design and print with which they make each page. I ask, what local and temporal scales does the house chart in its bookmaking project? What modern visual and tactile qualities do they make and reiterate? Which do they challenge? How do they comprehend the trajectory of the Arabic book, and how do they contest it? How do they tap into readers' intuition to produce poignant impressions? What aesthetic potentials and sensibilities do they cultivate and against what?

A. The Production of Modernity

Mass produced and widely distributed print media has definitively been theorized as the material condition of the creation of the imaginary of the national

public (Anderson 1983). This argument grounds itself in the scarcity of manuscript cultures in opposition to the abundance of print cultures. Studying the overlap between manuscript and print practices complicates this story (Messick 1992, Auji 2016). Although the historical moment of manuscript-print overlap mostly passed, we still face the question of print media produced outside (and despite) the spirit of the nation. What happens when we extricate print from Anderson's triad of print, capitalism, and language markets? Michael Warner offers the concept of publics (versus the Public) to theorize the currency of attention over national (or group) sentiment (2002). In my ethnographic fieldwork, I have found that the publisher works to draw, maintain, and enculturate the reader's attention into a desire for beautiful books. The case study of *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* presents an overlap of another kind--the overlap of the 'stranger sociability' of publishing (ibid) and the kinship of laboring to make this publishing happen. This, too, is a modern phenomenon.

For Geertz, art textures the collective sociality and weaves into 'a particular pattern of life' (1976, 1475). The habitual context thus patterns and orders the practice and reception of art. As I began my ethnography, the inkling that printing must be part of a larger cultural logic and pattern stirred me. I found that the pressing of surfaces against one another cut across different forms and practices of printing. In Arabic, the word root *ṭa-ba-ʿa* creates a lexical field of nature (*ṭabiʿa*), habits (*ṭibaʿ*), printing (*ṭibaʿa*), and imprinting (*inṭibaʿ*). Printing, in such a linguistic ontology, acts through making an impression. Reading a print imprints the reader (Scheid 2015, 360). The way it should imprint them *is* the site of concern. Not only does each page produce imprints, but so do linguistic formations, sentence structure, the textual 'ring,' and other literary devices.

I use the concept of modernity to explore locality and contemporaneity. The temporal quality of modernity in Arabic, *hadatha*, invokes happening, occurrence, and recurrence. The publishing project critically entails the creation of locality. I find that locality inheres in *impression* rather than identity. Locality corresponds to the temporality of *hadatha* with its cyclical and consistent metabolism of attention into desire. Impressions (*inṭibaʿt*) thus work on a semiotic basis because they speak to the intuition. If identity (like commercial branding) creates instant iconic recognition, impression works on the habitual buildup, the growing sensibility, and the sense of appreciation that one harvests over a period of time, even a lifetime. Working towards impression requires the reader to allow the material to grow on them. This interaction requires both the publisher's and the reader's *tahḏib*, polished conduct and humility. Holding that modernity thus becomes a quest for novelty, I investigate the semiotic parameters of the artful creation of modern locality in *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt*.

The Arabic book has a strained relationship to modernity. It is an object that pre-dates modernity but continues to suffer at its hands. Although the Arabic book market is a function of shared language, Arabic books historically displayed astonishing diversity. However, I find that the semiotic capacity of the Arabic speaker can surpass the differences. For example, I learned to look at and read manuscripts of different layouts, grammars, and localities throughout my fieldwork. My favorite teacher and the exemplary figure that *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* map their bookmaking practice back to is graphic designer Mohieddine Ellabbad. Having himself been called a bookmaker, *ṣaniʿ kutub* throughout his career, Ellabbad wrote several illustrated articles about

bookmaking in his compilation *Naḏar!*.[10] He and other members of the Egyptian vanguard visual art movement claimed graphic design as their profession distinguishing it from their training in fine arts (Maasri 2020, 140-42). One entry titled, "Beautiful Traditions in Arabic Bookmaking!" (1987), starts with the sanctity that Arabs have always endowed on books. Sanctity has spilled over from religious to non-religious books as the written word gained ethical meanings and repercussions in the dominantly religious textual practice of the language. Ellabbad identifies framed ornamentation around the text, wide margins with notes, opening and closing pages that greet and bid farewell to the reader in manuscript traditions as *signs* of the 'eloquence, elegance, and sensuality' of the hand-written page. He emphasizes the versatility of ornamentation when he recounts examples of Arab (and especially Egyptian) printers who reproduced traditional page layouts and motifs with printing machines up until the early 20th century. Through his firsthand encounter with these printed, manuscript-like books lying around the house, he learned to read, hold, and appreciate books as thick, crafted, sacred, and finely executed objects. For him, making and selling books faster came at the expense of the dimensionality, beauty, and accuracy of manuscripts and rendered printed books 'flat,' 'ugly,' and full of errors for such trained readers. Ellabbad calls for bookmakers to "continue what has been discontinued" asserting that the modern-day graphic designer, like the scribe, miniature painter, calligrapher, and artisanal printer, can choose to re-signify sanctity and re-dignify *ṣinaʿt al-kutub* (bookmaking) to harvest the aesthetic potential of bookmaking traditions and to re-orient the reader against the (social and cosmological) flatness of isolated text.

---

[10] The articles that comprise the four albums were initially published in several Egyptian periodicals between 1985 and 2003. Conversely, the last album in the book documents a design experiment that he led with new graphic designers in 2004.

B. Drawing Language

Looking at the finished products of *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt*, with Ellabad's manuscript-trained eyes, allows us to consider the ways in which text is not only a linguistic but also a visual entity. On a more fundamental level, the visuality of Arabic script takes grammar for its grounding. In Arabic, a body of rules governs the *drawing* of words: *qawaʿid al-rasm* (orthography rules). These rules exist to regulate the differences between how Arabic words are pronounced and how they are written. The differences exist in *fuṣḥa* as well as vernacular speech. Such lexical and grammatical innovation happened over two stages. In the 19th century, language modernizers such as journal writers and editors would try out terms in the press and gauge the public feeling, which words catch which meanings. However, an official and mandated Modern Standard Arabic consolidated with the establishment of linguistic academic councils that formalized lexical coinage and grammatical adjustment (Versteegh 2014, 226-31).

Students in state schools learn Modern Standard Arabic through reading and writing. For these novice readers, words gain their meaning from being tightly locked within a particular way of writing. *Drawing rules* thus provide the semiotic basis for fast reading and recognition of meaning. School children spend years perfecting comprehensible writing and script. They train their hands and eyes to apply the rules (especially *drawing rules*) to the point that the rules become internal, common sense, and available to the intuition. The adult reader then taps into their intuitive faculty in order to use their senses. To read is to operate the semiotic habitual body in accordance with the learned, internalized linguistic systems. The competent use of language *faṣaḥa* relies on the intuitive access to *rasm* rules, but *faṣaḥa* only comes a few steps later. The unification and sanctioning of one way to write Arabic (and one way to make Arabic

books) entails a long political and economic process, but here I show that standard written language only works through the power of semiotic immediacy.

Semiotic power relies on the habituation of the senses. Habits (*ṭibaʿ*) decisively divide work among kin co-workers (chapter one). The products of the publishing house also correspond to the habituation that Arabic speakers undergo at school. The Arabic visual vernacular that the publishing house creates through the font and page design consistently corresponds to the Arabic grammar and logic of *rasm*. When the Arabic speaker encounters the classical fonts most of the time, their habituated eyes increasingly abstract the visuality of written language into these particular fonts. They learn to expect to see these fonts. However, the abstraction does not mean that Arabic speakers will lose the ability to read the same script in different fonts. Reading operates the habits that sit deeply in the senses and systematize them.

The fonts that *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* develop and use appear, to seasoned readers, strongly different from the fonts used in most of Arabic publishing. The publishing house works on font because they do not take for granted the *rasm* basis of both text and image. The house's relationship to language entails deep reverence for its traditions, grammar, and aesthetics as well as a yearning for modernist innovation, play, and craft (chapter three). Since the font embodies speech, the quest for new fonts animated the design process since the beginning.

It is possible to create different fonts in the first place because while *rasm* grammar governs the drawing of words, it does not govern the drawing of letters, or letterform.[11] *Rasm*, drawing, works with the line. Typography is a continuation of

---

[11] This is a list of important distinctions that my interlocutors helped me understand: Manual writing styles are called scripts, and digital writing styles are called fonts. Calligraphy is the basis of writing in any language. For some languages, it has germinated into a craft and an art practice. Typography is the design field concerned with script.

calligraphic practices. Arabic calligraphy takes root from *khaṭ*, meaning both line and script. For book publishing, the font and its logic, *khaṭ*, should cohere to *rasm* grammar to exercise its semiotic power. For example, it should be cursive, and it should go from right to left to be legible and recognizable. The semiotic coherence of the font creates the sought impression.

One way to see the different possibilities of *drawing words* is to read texts from the 19th century (or any time before the establishment of Modern Standard Arabic). During my fieldwork, Hāla was reading an encyclopedia entry from al-Bustani under consideration for the Ephemera Series, and I got to read it as well. My task was to compare the typed-up Word document version to the original version. The main question for revising the text was, "How does a contemporary publisher reconcile between the ways that al-Bustani and Modern Standard Arabic each draws words?" Hāla reasoned that even though she, as a language connoisseur (my description), would want to preserve how al-Bustani drew words, as a publisher, she must draw the words as legibly as possible for the contemporary reader. She eventually decided to adopt the Modern Standard Arabic word *drawing rules* but to keep al-Bustani's phrasing choices. Differences in conventional phrasing come from the standardization of some linguistic formats and the vernacularization of others. For example, in Modern Standard Arabic, one should say *fi Bayrout* (in Beirut) while Levantine vernacular speakers more commonly use a different proposition, *bi Bayrout*. Al-Bustani himself uses *bi* meaning that the colloquial-sounding *bi* today only became relegated to vernacular use later. By using both methodologies, Ṣnūbar Beirut's re-publication proposes to preserve the sound but not the drawing of al-Bustani's text.

C. Aesthetic Realms and Mixed Signals

Prints and imprints act within the visual culture. I base my analysis of the positioning of *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* in the larger book culture and tradition on a notion of aesthetic realms. If *drawing rules* lock meanings to particular semiotic forms (and not others), aesthetic realms emphasize, reproduce, and proliferate particular meanings (and not others). Multiple aesthetic realms exist at the same time and compete to lock meanings to their semiotic forms. An aesthetic realm is thus the repertoire of visual and tactile semiotic forms that come to encapsule a social or political reality. Consider fonts-- each font, by means of signage, not only draws out a text but it also invokes a particular aesthetic realm. For Arabic, at the time and place of my fieldwork, there are two realms at stake: the first is the secular aesthetic realm, currently seen in school textbooks, journalism, government, and other institutional print outputs. The secular aesthetic realm has been narrowly and incrementally defined, and it emphasizes what Ellabbad despises about carelessly made books. The second realm, the sacred realm contains religiously defined and solid visual and literary devices and markers, but something else as well. Since the secular realm has foregrounded the text omitting any ornamentation around it, the overflowing quality of decoration and beauty can only be seen in the sacred aesthetic realm. The sacred aesthetic realm has thus become largely identified with the excess of the secular, that which is not secular. Examples include what Ellabbad likes about manuscripts. If modern-day secular Arabic books are ugly, the aesthetics of beautiful Arabic books become saturated with sanctity. Ellabbad argues that it is this sanctity that affords us centuries-long continuity from the manuscript to the printed Arabic book.

The secular/sacred divide is not intrinsic, static, or inevitable. It is, however, the

concrete result of historical processes. Hala Auji (2016) studied the long overlap

between printing practices and Christian and Muslim scribal traditions in 19th century

Beirut.[12] She crucially problematizes the supposed 'rupture' that print technology

caused. She identifies several scribal aesthetics and traditions in the inaugural prints

produced by the American Press between 1834 and 1840.[13] These scribal traditions

included elements such as ornamental headplates and frames around the text produced

using letterpress printing and a calligraphic Arabic doxological incantation (the *basmala*

in both Christian and Muslim iterations) produced using hand-engraved stamps.

Explicitly religious phrases appeared in both secular and religious books (37-42). The

aesthetic and textual emulation of scribal traditions characterized many other Arabic

presses in the region, because the printed Arabic book's success required its merging

with established Arabic manuscript book form. This is most clear in the economic value

that ornamentation endowed on printed books (49-52). However, this trajectory changes

in later prints produced by the American Press between 1841 and 1851 as they adopted

a more purposeful conversion and education program. These printed books carried "a

Presbyterian aesthetic: unadorned, text-emphasized layouts" (64). This does not mean

that other presses followed a similar timeline, but the American Press aesthetic switch

foretells the consolidation of the secular aesthetic realm in Arabic book production.[14]

Impressions exercise a powerful force on viewers. Impressions do not merely act

within a visual culture, but they shape and contest the teachings of the habitual context.

---

[12] These were 'almost indistinguishable' meaning that scribal aesthetics corresponded more to locality than to confession (Auji, 40).

[13] The American press was associated with the Syrian Protestant College (currently the American University of Beirut). Both were run and funded by the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions.

[14] Ellabbad talks about adherence to manuscript aesthetics well into the early 20th century in Egyptian presses.

Through fonts, layouts, and printing techniques, *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* shift Arabic books to the sacred aesthetic realm. One item at the bookstore provides a succinct case study. A poster of a peculiar short text that strings together the titles of *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* hangs behind the bookseller's desk (fig. 5). Hāla's brother wrote this text for the publishing house's catalogue. Other than the poster, the text appears on one side of the catalogue. The print is organized into two font sizes, large for the conversation and small and elevated for the book titles, with the dots and the dashes of the Arabic letters faded out in pink. The color is visible in different degrees depending on the light. The distinct coloring of the dashes, dotes, and vocalization notations is a prominent tradition in Arabic manuscripts. Although the idea behind the poster falls within the genre of the inside joke (chapter three), the poster usually attracts a lot of attention, but it is mostly brief. I myself read it when I first saw it, but I did not understand. On another occasion, Hāla read it out loud for me and explained it while chuckling. Some people comment on how there are no points and dashes which is how Arabs used to write because they did not need the notations to understand the words. Hāla always points out that the annotations are there, just in lighter ink. Someone also once mentioned that people are now writing this way on social media to avoid the algorithm blocking their posts from reaching others. Mostly, people take a picture of the poster, and stare at it, smiling or even laughing, without actually reading it, I assume, because the viewing would only last less than a minute. However, one time, an elderly man in formal attire walked into the bookstore, spent some time looking at the shelves, and then looked at the poster. Hāla noticed him linger and offered to read the text for him from behind her desk, but he said "no, I want to try," and squinted his eyes to read it in the dim evening light. He then hesitantly asked Hāla if the text on the poster is from the

Qur'an. She told him that it is not and turned to me and Lucciana saying that her brother would be very happy to hear someone made the association. The visitor added that he thought it was from the Qur'an because it says *Rasul* (an easily recognizable word without any dots or vocalization notations) at one point. Hāla got up and handed him a copy of the book with this title, *Rasul al-ʿUri*, a 1930s call for nudity, and as he read the back cover, the smile on his face turned into a deep frown. He did not like, in his own words, the author's challenge to the Bible. After an arduous conversation between him and Hāla where she tried to qualify the call for nudity in its historical moment and ambitions, the visitor left the bookstore politely but kept a copy of the brochure that Hāla offered.

Bookstore visitors exercise an 'ethic of attribution' to reason with the mixed signals that their senses are registering (2017, 310). Siobhan Magee develops this term to capture the consistent but hesitant association that her interlocutors in Kraków, Poland drew between fur and Catholicism. Her contention is that they continue to 'read Catholic signs' in non-religious contexts and over non-religious objects (such as fur) whether they continue to practice the religion or not (curiously, via a connection to nature) (315). In general, bookstore visitors experience an emotional effervescence while looking at the poster and leafing through *Ṣnūbar Beirut* books. They either seem uncomfortable, confused, revered, or elated while trying to read the mysterious fonts. The beauty of the books lends them a sense of sanctity which produces such emotional effervescence. Beautiful surfaces then, by means of excess, transport the reader into a sacred realm despite the secular or even profane content as with *Rasul al-ʿUri*. Sacred aesthetics enculturate the reader into a larger context where religious text (and the reading of religious texts) is the *par excellence* Arabic textual practice. On one hand,

the reader attributes the beauty of the font and the manuscript-like poster to the sacred aesthetic realm in the context of a non-religious bookstore, and on the other hand, they cannot fully attribute the text to the secular because its aesthetic does not correspond to the secular aesthetic realm as it 'should.' What bookstore visitors deal with is a puzzle of competing contexts that produce mixed signals.

Attribution is a struggle with shifting aesthetic realms. When a reader is inclined to lean into the confusion, identifying it as an 'art-like' situation, he experiences a state of abduction (Gell 1988, 13). The above-mentioned lexical field of *ṭa-ba-ʿa* exercises full force along the 'nature' axis. Kirsten Scheid (2015) argues that Landscape painting in Mandate Lebanon takes up the connection between nature (*ṭabiʿa*) and impression (*inṭibaʿ*). The artists that made these pictures devised "a technology for stamping […], carrying the imprint from the countryside to the exhibition hall" (361). In doing this, the artists argued that they faithfully transport the 'signs of a divine presence' to the viewer making the contemplation of nature through a landscape painting a mode of prayer (365). The artists' interpretation of the lexical field foregrounds a concept of *force* through which nature and prints of it *act* on the viewer creating an impression that continues to act in the mode of habit (360).

The threshold of one aesthetic realm is difficult to cross into another. The reader rightfully stumbles over the threshold which she had always known to be clear.[15] However, the reader stands to be impressed by strange, mixed, and world-changing forces. This is what the case of *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* teaches us. Perhaps art, like anthropology, ventures to make the familiar strange.

---

[15] The confusion of the mixed signals is further complicated by the current use of beautiful fonts with their sacred connotation in secular political campaigns in Lebanon.

D. The Designer's Page Work

The design process at *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* engages the habituated senses. The art director and the publisher need to consider how the text and the cover can work together, how much the book weighs in the reader's hand and where they place their finger, how the binding allows the book to open and close, how much the strings and the glue give, how the paper feels against skin, and how the ink reflects and absorbs light. *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* want the reader to enjoy the materiality of the book as he holds, smells, and cocoons into it. They design books against instant recognition and fast consumption.

The art director, publisher, and the designer go about this methodically. Graphic designer Philippa joined *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* in 2018, and Jana focused on art direction for the house.[16] Hāla, Jana, and Philippa hold meetings to plan the making of a book. The designers read the text wholly or partially. While reading, the art director creates a list of keywords to inspire the design. The three of them hold brainstorming sessions: If the book is a translation, they look at other editions. If the book is a republication, they look at an original copy. They also review the decisions made to produce previous books. Sometimes they use the same template, the same font combination or the same book and page measurements. Otherwise, they realize that a text needs a new visual mold. They point out mistakes they should not repeat. However, relying on formats does not only make the work smoother, but it is crucial to establish a visual consistency across publications. They choose the font, the division of paragraphs and chapters, and the parameters of the text on each page like the thickness of the font, the distribution of the footnotes, and the placement of images.

---

[16] Jana taught Philippa at university and then they became friends through their work together and through their common interests.

Design work contends with the materiality of the text. I learned to pay ethnographic attention to the work of creating each page in each book. Each book needs ṣaff, typesetting. Ṣaff entails the casting of the text into lines, khuṭuṭ. The design process orders the text, figures it out, and makes it into shape. The *rasm* work of ordering, figuring, and matter and meaning-making speaks to the reader's intuition. Getting the imprint right creates readability, to be precise.

Practically, the designer receives the full text from the publisher and creates a template for the book using the InDesign programme. The designer takes the text from the Word document and enters it in the InDesign file.[17] Alongside the text, there can also be images, page numbers, and date stamps. The text itself is divided into layers like the main body, the footnotes, and the sidenotes. The designer starts by making four or six pages as a test run, prints them, and brings them to a meeting with the publisher and the art director for them to see and interact with the pages and give feedback. The test run must include all the varieties within the text (such as quotations, indentations, ornaments, marks) so that every detail can be agreed upon. Then the work on the whole book file begins. Throughout the work, the art director and the publisher review the file (either through comments on the file or during meetings), and the designer continues to finetune the details. The last stage of the editing process happens on the InDesign file instead of the Word document in order to correct any mistakes that happen during typesetting. The editors verify the readability of the design because they can sense when something is not visually working on the page.

---

[17] I use the designer here because it can be someone other than Jana and Philippa. For example, the illustrator commissioned to design the cover for an upcoming book has also agreed to design the book on the onside.

E. Printing

The design work hinges on the printing. While the designers take the text and make it into a digital book form, it is the printer that materializes the book into existence. The printer renders the ordering (*ṣaff*) and the drawing of meaning (*rasm*) on paper. The exactness and cleanliness of the printing process makes all the difference for the reader. My interlocutors use the term '*ikhraj,*' art direction of the book to judge whether a book is well-made. I understood that they also mean the printing execution and finish when they say, "the work of *ikhraj* on this book is *ḥelo!*" This means that, for them, the text produces an impression that is entirely locked into the print. This means that drawing and ordering have to run deep in the production process in order to surface on the page.

The printer sheds different light on bookmaking than the designer. The publisher tries to be in between the printer and the designer (the ordering and the *ikhraj*) so she can preserve the integrity of the design and carry out beautiful and cost-effective execution. Execution requires accurate decisions. The printer considers what the machines can do, how the ink will look on different kinds of paper, whether the paper is already imported and available or not, and how much material is needed for the number of copies the publisher wants printed. The vignette that I opened with was Ali's argument for digital printing. Jana, and Philippa were surprised (and even agonized) to hear that Ali and Hāla were even considering digital printing for the upcoming publication. To make her point, Philippa brought her hands together and without touching, pressed them on top of each other. She and Jana reiterated that digital printing does not create the same impact that the Offset machine creates on the paper. Ali and Hāla agreed that digital printing cannot create this effect. However, Ali's expertise

comes from his intricate work and interaction with the material. His press combines new and old printing techniques and machines to create an artisanal imprint on mass production. By the end of the meeting, they agreed that they will craft a solution for the digital conundrum.

F. Exposition of the Page Designs

Finally, I turn to some of *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* books to illustrate their craft and their orientation to the reader. In *Qarantina*, the page design produces a manuscript-like effect (fig. 6.a). The narrative text appears in a comparatively large size. Vernacular and *fuṣha* sentences each take different fonts. The phrases that appear elevated in a smaller size are the author's intrusive thoughts. The green dots drawing on the color of the cover direct the orality of the text more than they grammatically punctuate it (fig. 6.b). The footnote stands vertically in the narrow margin. The first and last few words of the paragraph are illuminated with green. If read together, they make up a coherent sentence of their own. The author's name was even translated into a completely different Arabic name for a witty linguistic game.

Jana's work on Arabic manuscripts that culminated into the art book *Kitab al-Hawamish* (the book of margins) made her realize that books today are boring. She became interested in creating tricks, games, and layers as in manuscripts. This playfulness with the production and with the reader is a dignifying stance that re-enchants books with mystery. In the Samuel Beckett translations, the back covers each carry a blot of ink (fig. 7). The blot seeming to be out of place, a mistake on one copy, is actually mechanically produced, but it is used to mess with the paradigm of mass production. While the publisher leaves this game to the extra attentive reader, the inside

of the book starts and ends with an explanation of the notation system that the publisher has used to enter the vernacular sections of the book (fig. 4.a). The guide shows how they use special features that remedy the different pronunciations made in vernacular dialects. There are sounds we pronounce while speaking in vernacular but not in *fuṣha* Arabic. For example, the notation system uses a *hamza* on the *qaf* to create the possibility of either pronouncing the full *qaf* or to rendering it into a *hamza* while reading. They guide the reader with example of vernacular word *drawing* vs Modern Standard Arabic *drawing* (fig. 4.b). This act of courtesy to uninitiated readers familiarizes vernacular writing and crosses the stranger sociality of publishing.

The vernacular and *fusha* differ by the complete use of vocalization notations (*fatha*, *damma*, etc) for the *fusha* seen on the top half of the page shown here (fig. 5). On the bottom half, the innovative vernacular notations take their space and mark the section as vernacular (fig. 8.a). This font used here is comparatively more difficult to decipher than the one used in *Qarantina*. The designer challenges the reader to cross the threshold. Jana told me that the text is "like a voice in your head, and you need to dive into it." However, the difficulty of the font never surpasses the competency that Arabic speakers have cultivated. The font while unusual and unfamiliar does not prevent reading. Its aesthetics poke at the immediacy of its semiotics but never completely reduce legibility. If the font were completely illegible, we would not have a book but the anti-thesis of a book. Requiring the reader to put in effort dignifies them as equal to the author, designer, and publisher.

The publishing house intended to signal their careful thinking about language through the use of unusual fonts. The paper is soft, and the silhouette of a page transpires through another (fig. 8.b). The insistence on difficulty is even extended to the

angular lettering we see used on the cover to write Samuel Beckett's name (fig. 8.c).

The title (in green) is written in the same font as the text, and the name of publishing

house is handwritten. These different scripts speak to different registers and mess up the

exclusivity of the aesthetic realms. Jana made the drawing on the cover which needed to

be abstract, simple, and clean, paralleling the eloquence and conciseness, the *faṣaḥa,* of

the text.

The publisher consistently chooses to add a visual element to all their texts. For

Hāla, the point of re-publishing is to present the text in a new visual mold. The 2014

Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt edition of *Rasul al-ʿUri* (fig. 9) works with images in two

ways. Fouad Hobeiche used photographs of nude exercise in his book. The house

worked with artist Hussein Nassereddine to create collages using these photographs for

decorative pages (fig. 9.b). They embedded slight mistakes (such as a motif in the

wrong direction) in these pages to create a glitch effect which would please the reader if

they noticed it. Jana used the image from the original front cover to create a new cover

(fig. 9.c). For a comparative perspective, they also re-printed the original front cover on

a page inside the books (fig. 9.d) and printed a sheet from Fouad Hobeiche's periodical

on the back cover of the book (fig. 9.e). Both methods mobilize the historical value of

the images and archive them. The ornamentation in this book is both a polite

orientation, *tahḏib*, towards the original author whose work said renewal in place of

flattening by sales-oriented reprinting, and a polite orientation towards the reader whose

desire for beauty, games, and craft in the book is anticipated and fulfilled.

For each book, Jana creates one component by hand, she alerted me to the

importance of this component during our interview. It can be a drawing for the front

cover, or the writing of the title, or the chapter numbers (fig. 9.a). After all, she and her

co-workers like the early printed books because they used fonts that were similar to handwriting, and because the old machines used to make the same kinds of mistakes that humans make. In the book ʿAn Aḥwal Kutub al-Aṭfal (fig. 10), Philippa created the lettering for the title on the cover (fig. 10.a). She found a font that she liked, typed the words of the title, and retraced them on a tracing paper. She then modified the letters, stretched them, and continued to repeat the process until she a got a result she liked. She then carved the title on Lino and created a Linocut print. She made several prints each with a slightly different finish because the ink, the paper, and the pressure produce different result every time drawing meaning into different directions, pushing and pulling its ephemerality. She then scanned the final result and added it to the InDesign file.

During the printing process, Jana suggested that they make the edges of the book round (taqrim) so it would remind the reader of children's books. The choice of magenta and green for the cover invoke the same connection. The book's academic genre required much design work on the sidenotes which appear in the third column of each page. The page design (fig. 10.b) balances between the required coherence, appeal, and neatness on one hand, but also clearly shows the multiple layers of the text. The designer used different symbols to indicate different kinds of additional information, a circle for context, a triangle for bibliographic refences, and a square for detailed lists (fig. 10.c). They underlined names of children book authors and introduced them the first time they each appear in the text, and they emboldened book titles and introduced them in the same way (fig. 10.d). The various footnote styles, by means of signage, make it easier for the reader to distinguish the different kinds of information that the book offers.

Bookmaking at *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* practices a sense of playfulness, craft, and politeness. The publisher takes the reader up on a challenge, to struggle through mixed signals and cross aesthetic thresholds. They ease the text and visually texture it into the page. *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* create a precious iteration of modern locality that combines separate aesthetic realms and messes with the trajectory of flat mass-produced Arabic books.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Hand of History: In this thesis, I have attempted an analysis of the socio-economic composition of publishing in Lebanon. I became interested in the nexus of kinship and economics as both a total social fact and a historical production. Publishing, in particular, seems to be a stubborn case of the role of kinship in trade. The publishing scene in Beirut constitutes of families, alliances, and resources, the same way it did a hundred years ago. A historical sense of craft augments the requirements of publishing. I utilized an ethnographic model of kinship-making, proximity or *Qurba*, which seems to condition kin-work relationships. Ultimately, this thesis is an account of the kinship of labor and the laboriousness of kinship. Conducting ethnography showed me the intricacies and difficulties of habituation. The requirement of undesirable work to produce desirable publishing creates a powerful paradox that characteries the craft of publishing. The mutation of the family initial situation into a work initial situation required discursive, relational, and material transformations in the family. I further learned to recognize the unconventional means of forging kin-work, as my advisor put it, a kind of 'illegitimate' asexual reproduction or multiplication with the efforts to cast new publishing house members.

The semiotic interphase between the publishing house and its public of strangers poses another set of historical questions. Despite its expansiveness, I found that the notion of 'interpretation' precisely steers exchange events into sales, gifts, and debts. On one hand, interpretation is informed by the ethical complications of mixing money and paper, and consequently, trade and literature. However, a historical process (which I do not understand yet) produces strong semiotic affects like the publisher's disgust with

money. Exchange errors are categorically different from textual errors. However, I think that the interpretation of error as a gift in the market and as a threat in the text deserves further theorization which can elucidate exactly how the market and language systems of value interact in publishing.

Notes on Methodology: The bookstore doubles as Hāla's office. This doubling professes both the paradox of undesirable-work-desirable-publishing and the austere neoliberal transformations of the workplace. I was still initially reluctant about what fieldwork at the bookstore could offer the ethnography. However, the long quiet days slowly revealed themselves to be rich with complex exchange events. Thinking about exchange, production, and circulation led me to realize that it is value categories and negotiations that reside deepest in the workings of the economy. I learned to notice the ritualization and socialization of what initially seemed to be mundane economic exchanges at the store.

I decided to do the interviews at the end of my fieldwork because they seemed to be a bigger ask of my interlocutors than spending time with them as they worked. More fundamentally, I realized that I needed to understand how my interlocutors speak. Thinking about talk as crossing production (editing) and exchange (selling) helped me understand the connection between the publishing house and the store and de-mystify the market. The store further taught me about the deeper phase of distribution which relies on the direct interaction between a book and a potential reader. I conclude that *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* intervene in the Arabic book market, and in the visual culture, by getting readers to struggle with mixed signals and cross aesthetic thresholds. Even though I documented the attribution of and abduction by mixed signals throughout

my fieldwork, I only understood such visual dynamics as I wrote the thesis. This was a lesson in the importance of ethnographic stubbornness.

My proposition to define literature as the satisfactory use of language was a methodological choice. The definition allowed a space for both the orality of written language and the textual projections of regular speech. I hit another obstacle when I considered the visuality of Arabic script through the prism of unusual fonts. *Drawing grammar* channels the visuality of script into a digital system of meaning where only a precise drawing of a word carries its meaning. However, the historical fluctuations of this grammar mean that *drawing* orders, and figures, and captures meaning on a primarily malleable underground. Print artefacts thus required different theoretical tools. The language and art systems present an incommensurability that differs from the constant slippage allowed between language and market systems. I tentatively conclude that work with language aims to make the strange familiar and work with art aims to make the familiar strange. I certainly found the vernacular books strange for the better part of my fieldwork, and I only later began to understand them as a concretization of speech events. While they run on the semiotic power of the inalienable orality of written language, they chart yet unexplored possibilities of artful vernacular competence and literature.

Publishing Genealogies: From the backstage, I realized that the categories of 'established,' 'independent,' 'small,' and 'big' publishing hardly relied on any material substance, at least outside American and European mediascapes. Local historical categories of publishing that come from the splintering of 'intellectual' publishing away from printing and selling books, however, stood the test of ethnography. Publishing houses in Lebanon largely differ based on their ownership of the means of production.

Printing machines create multiple economic venues for printer-publishers. Besides material categorization, I propose that it is the spectrum of kin-to-stranger sociality that determines the structural category of publishing. The publishing that I studied requires kin as much as it requires strangers making it a 'genealogical' kind of publishing, a practice invested and interested in familial and craft history. 'Anarchist' publishing, in opposition, more directly mobilizes the semiotic immediacy of print forms like pamphlets and zines creating a stranger-oriented sociality. A publisher thus uses the sociological structure roughly in two ways: genealogical publishers extend their own kinship network into a ripple, and anarchist publishers let a commune of strangers form around their publication. In this sense, *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* is a genealogical publishing project that outsources printing and congeals more forcefully around the desire to publish with and for kin.

APPENDIX

Note: all images are a courtesy of the publisher. I used photographs of some pages to show the materiality of printing and digital images of other pages to ensure clarity. I added a black border around the white digital images.

خطأ وصواب "كيف الحال"

وصوابه	الخطأ	السطر	الصفحة
خير	تخير	٥	١٥
خير	تخير	١٢	١٥
اَلأَلِفِ	اَلأَلِفِ	١٣	١٨
تهيدا	بهيدا	٤	٧٣
تعلا	تعلى	١٣	٧٥
إِذْ	اَذ	١٠	١٠١
تُفْتَحُ	تَفْتَحُ	٥	١٣٧
يَس	كُس	٩	١٦١
نْسطلو	نسطلو	٢	٢٠٦

الرأي اليوم، ٢٠٢٠/١٠/٢٠، أنَّ ما لم يُصوَّب هنا حقٌّ وإن بدا غريبًا، والله أعلم

Figure 1: Errata sheet for *Kayfa al-Hal*, 2021.

الخطأ والصواب

اقرأ السطر الاول من الصفحة ١٤ : « الناس ويتنعمون بملاذ الدنيا ا على ان يحتفظوا في الوقت عينه » بعد كلمة (يلهو) في السطر ١٥ من الصفحة نفسها

خطأ	صفحة	سطر	صواب
الطلق	١٩	٤	الطلق
الانفولات	١٩	٥	الانفعالات
تنظم	١٩	١٣	تنظم
قبل	٢١	١٣	قبل
بتخيله	٢٢	١٠	بتخيله
البعة	٢٣	٩	البتة
قظلة	٣٠	١٤	قظلة
ستری	٣١	٧	ستری
لوبيك	٣٢	٦	لوبيك
المر	٣٣	٧	للمر

Figure 2: Fouad Hobeiche's errata sheet, reprinted the *Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* edition, 2014.

طيّب خلافًا لما بلغني عنك... سأكرمك عندما تسنح الفرص».
أما الجيب القائم في الجهة الغربية العليا من صدري فهو أظهر
الجيوب وربما لأنه يحمل رسائل مدح من بعض تلاميذ المدارس
المأخوذين بشعري، ورسائل أخرى يحثّني أصحابها على الإسراع
بطبع «غلواء» وقد فاتهم أني لم أنتهِ بعد من نظمها. وأما الجيب
الرابع فلا أثر عليه من طيب العافية لأني جعلته وعاءً للدراهم.
وقد تجد بين تلك الطوائف من الأوراق صورًا فوطوغرافيّة عزيزة
على قلبي... أستوحي أشباحها في ليالِيّ الشعريّة إذ أكون بعيدًا
عن حقائقها الجميلة.

أنهض من الفراش في الساعة الخامسة صباحًا فأتناول قليلًا من
الطعام، ثم أشعل النارجيلة وأضع أمامي ركوة قهوة كبيرة وأنصرف
إلى الكتابة.

أما الموضوع فأكون قد فكرت به في الليلة الفائتة.

لست من الكتبة الذين يستطيعون أن يخلقوا شخصية من غير
أن يكون هناك نموذج لها (موديل). فعندما أفكر في موضوعي
أستعرض في مخيّلتي شخصًا خبرته عن قرب، وأجعل أشرحه كما
أريد أنا لا كما يريد هو، ولا أليث أن أخرجه من يدي في شكل
ينطبق على فئة من نوعه. وقد أضع في فمه حوارًا لم ينطق به
في حياته ولا عهد له بمثله. وكثيرًا ما سخرت لأجل ذلك عددًا
من أصدقائي وصديقاتي وهو لا يشعر. وكثيرًا ما أنتبه بعض هؤلاء
الأصدقاء والصديقات إلى خطّئي فغضب علَيّ وتجنّبني، ولكني أعلم
حق العلم أني إذا عدلت عن هذه الخطة تجفّ مخيّلتي وينضب

يوسف البريدي [١]

قناة مستقيمة لم يحرّف الجلالُ والهيبة حقّها عليها ، يُظهرُها
رأس معبّس القسمات ، مرتفع الجبين في أنفة و كِبَر ، يستبطئه من
الماضي أثرُ طيّب ومن الحاضر كرامة وإجلال .

ذلك هو الزعيم الزحلي المشوق يوسف بك البريدي .

إذا تصفحت أديم وجهه وقّفت نظرك على أجفان متهدّلة تندلق
القسم الأعلى منها على مقلتين عميقتين أعارها تهدُّلُ الأجفان صبغة
أمرٍ جال ، واستشففت ، خَلَلَ غضونه البارزة بروز الأليافِ في
الجذوع المعضّلة، روحًا عاملة لا تستقر من التفكير على هدَفٍ واحد .

وقد يكون استغرابُهْ في التفكير لأوب في النفس ما برح يقتفر
لأجلِهِ سُنَّةَ العمل المقرون الى الاخلاصِ والتضحية ؛ وقد أنجز
بعضَهُ ، وأوفى على البعض الاخر ، وإن يُجْرِهِ السعيُ عن إتمامه ولو
أداه الطواف الساهكْ إلى دليج الليل ، فهذا الرجل ، وقد ترسّمه
بعثٌ من الناس ما يزال يُختم عليه القلوب والضمائر ، يوْدي لبلاده وهو
ناءٍ عن كراسيّها مالا يوْدّيه اليها نوّاب الامة ذاهة الشعب ...
وعندي ، وعندَ كل من يسبر أغوار النفوس الصادقة ويأخذ الرجل

[١] لم نحصل على صورة يوسف بك البريدي فليعذرنا القراء .

نقلت آثار بكّت إلى العربيّة على مناهج لغويّة أربعة هي نهج العامّة صرفًا، ثمّ نهج العلماء صرفًا، ثمّ النهج المتناوب وهو أن يتتابع النهجان بتواتر يقرّره النصّ، ثمّ النهج المخضرم وهو أن يصهر النهجان في تلاوة واحدة.

عرّب هذا النصّ، وهو "رِفْقَةٌ"، على النهج المتناوب، بتمام الأحرف كلّها عند ورود نهج العلماء فيه، بغرض فرز النهجين ثمّ تيسير التلاوة.

مصطلحات تدوين العامّيّة

٠١ زوال "أَلْ" التعريف أمام الحرف الشمسيّ إلى:
— أَ + ّ: أَشّمس
— حرف العطف + ّ: عَشّمس، جائز عند العطف

٠٢ زوال "أَلْ" التعريف أمام الحرف القمريّ إلى:
— لْ: لْجوي
— لّ: لّغيّم، واجب عند سكون قاف القمر

٠٣ ألتباس "ج" فهو شمسيّ أو قمريّ بمزاج

٠٤ أعتماد الإمالة (ˇ) لتدلّ على أيٍّ من السكون أو الفتح أو الكسر أو الصوت المميّل بينهما

٠٥ إظهار الشدّة لا محالة إن غابت أيقن عدمها

٠٦ أعتماد الهوملة (ْ) فوق الحرف الذي تلاه الضمير لو لم يسقط

٠٧ إسقاط الهوملة عند الحرف المتحجّر غير المجنّس: إنّو، في...

٠٨ همز القاف (ؤ) عند جواز الوجهين في لفظها

٠٩ تشريع الرأي عند الحرف الملتبس فيجوز "كذا" و"كزا"

٠١٠ إسقاط جميع الحركات ما عدا حالات:
— التعريف (أنظر ١ و٢)
— الإفصاح الجزئيّ: شي مُخيف
— الكلام الأجنبي: بكّت
— سكون فاء الفعل عند سقوط الألف أمامه: فْترض
— تحريك الحرف المضاف للكلمة: عَشّمس، لْلمستقبل

بدع تدوين العاميّة

- أَلشّبَاك   أَشّبَاك
- من أَلشّبَاك   مُنشّبَاك
- أَلعالي   لَعالي
- أَلغيّم   لْغيّم
- بيكيت   بَكّت
- عَمَلَهْ   عملّو
- عَمَلُوهُ   عملّو
- طريق   طريْق

Figure 4: Explanation of the vernacular writing methodology in the Samuel Beckett translations (a) and examples of the vernacular writing as it differs from Modern Standard Arabic on the inside of the front cover (b), 2014.

قالت أهلا بك ^{كيف الحال}؟ قلت ونحك ما حطبـــك!
نسرين ما لا يُفهم، ولا تفكين كانـــك ^{الى الاعسر نسرين}!
قـــالت فشر! إن ^{رســـوما} لمفهـــــوم اسـدّ الانفهـــام.
قلت بحـال لك! ما الظاهر فيه من سهوله إلا فطبه
بيصـــاء تقـــود الى مرح يجبــرنا على ^{مسوار فى حديقه نرائـــا}
^{اللعوى}. قالــــت فما قولك بمارن و^{سرونـــه اللن نكى}؟ هيدا
نص أوضح من بكوه بابى بدو ^{بحرب وصعنه نروح العله}. قلت
طيـــب بس هولى ^{الكتـــاب} مش مفهومين، كانهم ^{رفقه}
سوء إى والله. قالت هيدا من عيـــنك المبليه ^{سرّ قول}
^{ونطر}. قلت إى احسن ما كـــون سايف قدامى ^{رســـول}،
وقول هه فرحـــت، ويطلـــع نبع ^{العرى}! قالت لولا ثم
لولّ،كت امــرح، وطى صوتـــك إن ^{مقاصلى نرنعـــس}... قلت
إى رعبـــه زعيـــره ما عَ قلبك شرّ، حسبيـــها ^{كرنستـــا}.

Figure 5: Poster hung in the bookstore showing the text that recounts published titles.
The same text also appears on the back of the *Manshūrat Ṣnūbar Bayrūt* brochure,
2019.

لم يصدر البيان الرسميّ، بس أنا واضح من الأسانسور بتطلعلي خبرة إنّو في فصيل أبو خنجر كتنسخ غرافيتي ما بينطمس، وأنّى ذلك بعكس كلّ التوقّعات ● حصلت الواقعة في وضح النهار، في شارع ٣٣، منطقة جنبلاط، على خطوتين من المدرسة العليا للأعمال – هذا ما باح لي به الناطور، وبدا أضطرابه شديدًا، ثمّ أضاف – لا شهود على الواقعة

حين تكون مدينةٌ ما مشبعةً بالأساطير كما هو الحال هنا، في بيروت، حين تشدّ نفسها إلى نفسها بواسطة أسطورةٍ محبكةٍ – هالألف حجر وحجر يلّي تلعب تزواياهن ألف مرّة ومرّة تقلب هوّة 'أعتقد' –، بواسطة أسطورةٍ بالحقّ شبيهةٍ تخضع لها لكنّها تؤلّفها، وتنظّمها، وتضمنها وتعرّضها وفي الوقت ذاته، تنشرها، تشكّك فيها، ثمّ تفكّكها ثمّ تعاود الكرّة – مهسترة، منهجيّة، شهوانيّة، عالعهد يا بينيلوب، لا يولد فيها شيءٌ إلّا أن يلتزم بإيقاعٍ واحدٍ وحيدٍ، مفاده الخرافة اللامتناهية وما خلت تلد مركّبًا، يرصد له متعهّدون محلّيون لهم دكاكين يشرفون فيها على تموينه وتخزينه وإعادة توزيعه وتصديره، بحيث أنّ محوى هذا المكان أضحت عمليًّا لعشرات السنين، ومن دون أن يمانع مانعٌ، سينما فلت تالهوا الطئ **يرتادها المخرجون والروائيّون**¹⁴

وبالتالي ترانا ركبنا الموكب، وسرّبنا عطريق بخطّين، بسرعة، من هالطرق اللي عالريحة بس إذا واحد بعذو طيّب بيسمّمولو روحو وبدّنو ● ويلّا يا وعي يا فيق وثبّت حالك متل steadycam، بذك تمسح المنطقة كأنّ بحركة واحدة؛ الجملة بتشدّ وما بتجي، الأرضيّة قدّ ما مكيّبة بتكركب الفكرة؛ ما في قانون عام، كلّو نزوح مستدام، وين ما كان 'هناطرف الدائرة'، ولا مكان 'هنا المركز'، أدبيّات الخطاب ما هيّ إلّا فرب تقلّك فرب تقلّك تنكسب أكتر وأكتر ● فالمشهد المصوّر بدّو يتعب أكيد، بالأخص شفهيًّا لأنّو منللو الواحد يسوقًا بسلاسة من ذكر شي مدينة لذكر مدينة بعينًا؟ بدّو يفشل معلوم، ولّا لأ؟ ● والدليل عندك هالشجيرات اللي نتفو عقلّة ما عرفو كيف يكبرو أو هالجسر اللي بتدا وتكمّل لمحتو أنا وطالع من مطعم بالأشرفيّة بعد ما كنت تبغددت، وبكواعي اللي

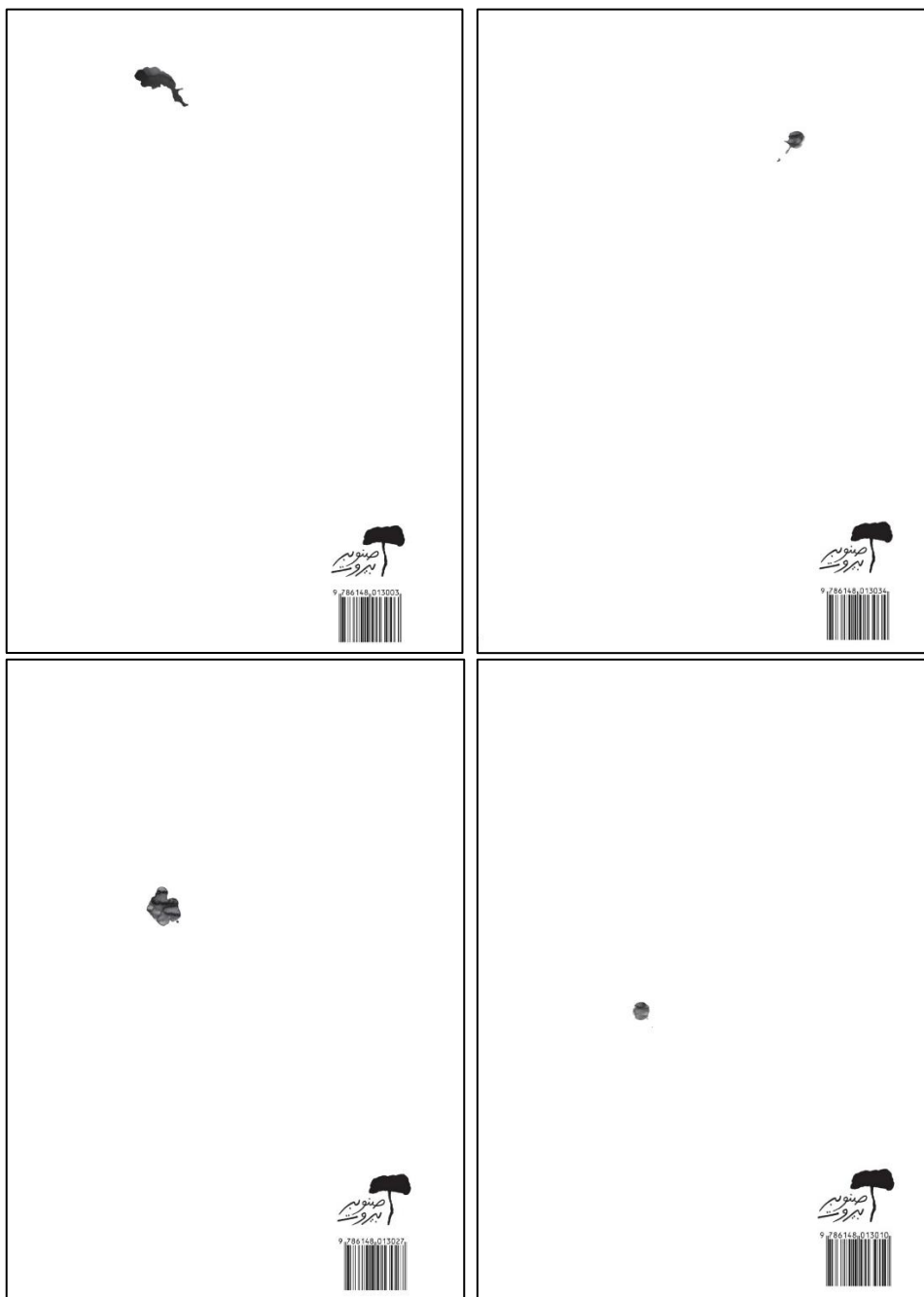Figure 6: Page outtake (a) and front cover (b) of Qarantina, 2016.

Figure 7: Back covers of the Beckett titles, 2014.

اَلشُّرَفَةُ اَلْوَحِيدَةُ فِي غُرْفَةٍ فَارِغَةٍ مُظْلِمَة. اَلشُّرَفَةُ اَلْوَحِيدَةُ اَلْمُطِلَّةُ عَلَى اَلظَّلَامِ اَلْخَارِجِيّ. وَبَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَا شَيْءَ. كَلَّا. لِلْأَسَفِ كَلَّا. أَضْوَاءُ تُخْتَضَرُ وَمَفَاصِلُ تَرْتَعِشُ. أَفْكَارُ تَنْتَفِضُ فَلَا تُلَفَظُ. لَا تَهْمُدُ.

مش بأيّ محلّ معيّن على اَطّريق من ألف لَياء. أو لَتّشبّه بْلْحْفيْفة فول على طريق راس أَجْبل. بْشي نقطة على طريق راس أَجْبل بدل من مش بْأيّ محلّ معيّن. بْشي مطرح بين ألف وياء على طريق راس أَجْبل. موطّى راسك فوق لْهاوية ونازل عدّ. عَ شمالك لْمدارج. قُدّامك

اَلشُّرْفَةُ اَلْوَحِيدَةُ فِي غُرْفَةٍ فَارِغَةٍ مُظْلِمَةٍ. اَلشُّرْفَةُ اَلْوَحِيدَةُ اَلْمُطِلَّةُ عَلَى اَلظَّلَامِ اَلْخَارِجِيِّ. وَبَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَا شَيْءٍ. كَلَّا. لِلْأَسَفِ كَلَّا. أَضْوَاءٌ تُخْتَضَرُ وَمَفَاصِلُ تَرْتَعِشُ. أَفْكَارٌ تَنْتَفِضُ فَلَا تُلْفَظُ. لَا تَهْمُدُ.

مش بأيّ محلّ معيّن على اَطريق من ألف لَياء. أو لَتْشبّه نْلحْفيفة فول على طريق راس اَجْبل. بْشي نقطة على طريق راس اَجْبل بدل من مش بأيّ محلّ معيّن. بْشي مطرح بين ألف وياء على طريق راس اَجْبل. موطى راسك فوق لْهاوية ونازل عنّ. عَ شْمالك لْمدارج. فَدّامك
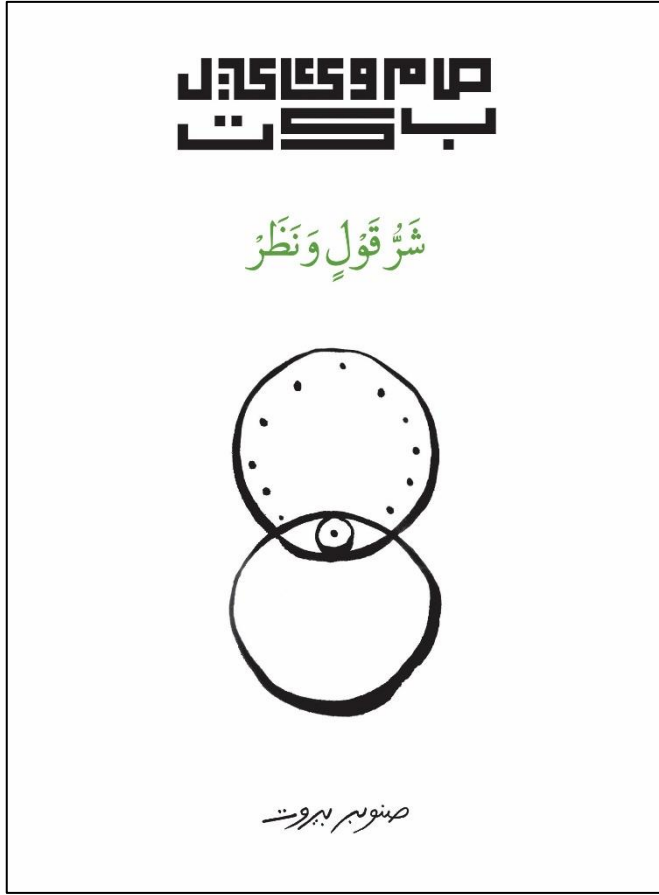
Figure 8: Page outtake (a), photograph of the page (b), and front cover (c) of one of the Beckett titles, 2014.
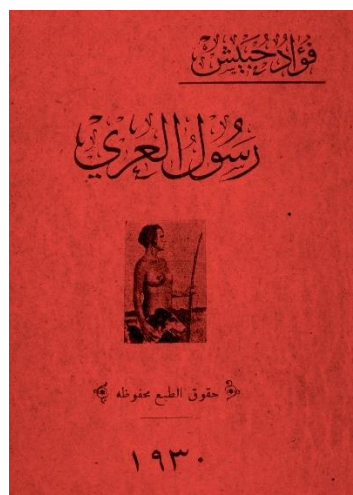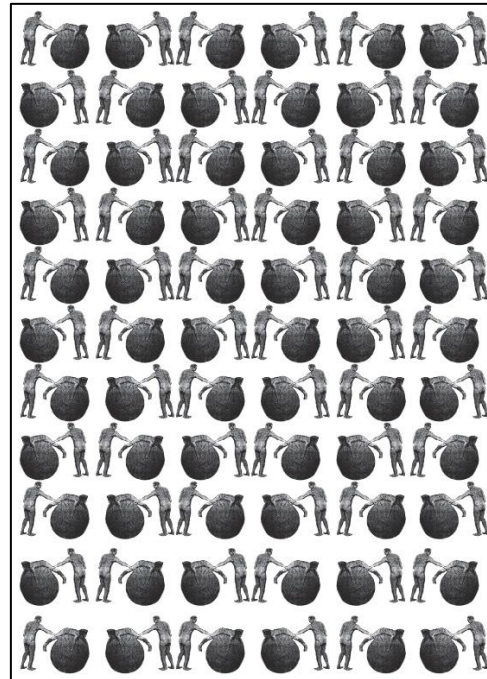
١

يقول مؤلّف «في بلاد العراة» أنّ ما ورد في كتابه لا علاقة له البتّة بالخيال، وإنّما هو وصف صادق لحالة راهنة، وتسجيل منزّه لحوادث اختبرها بذاته وطرق جرّبها بنفسه: فقد رغب في الابتعاد عن باريس حيث الحركة والضوضاء، فنصحه صديق أن يذهب إلى 'تاكندورف'، وهي قرية في ضواحي 'لوبيك' من أعمال ألمانيا. وقد وصف وصوله إليها، قال: «وسمعتُ حفيف أقدام تقترب، وضحكات تتعالى في فضاء الممرّ. ثمّ فُتح الباب، فظهرت أمامي صبيّة عارية في لباس الأمّ حوّاء تعضّ في تفّاحة حمراء». فيدهش عند هذا المشهد غير المنتظر،

٦٥
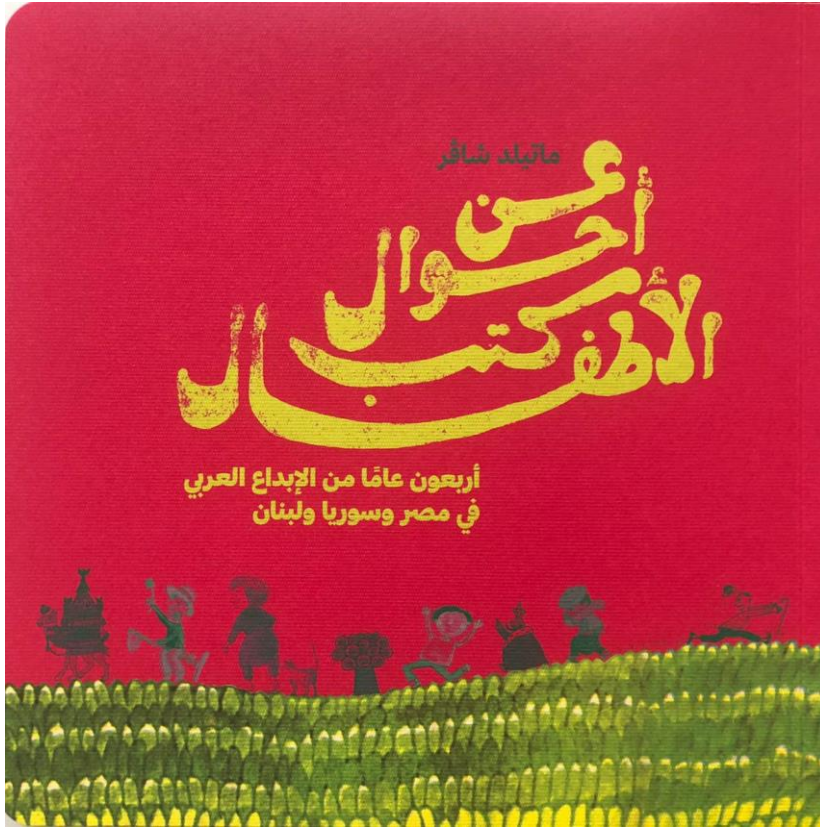
Figure 9: Two pages (a-b), front cover (c), original cover (d) and back cover (e) of *Rasul al-ʿUri*, 2014.

ماتيلد شافر

أحوال كتب الأطفال من

أربعون عامًا من الإبداع العربي
في مصر وسوريا ولبنان

من الجندي الصغير إلى الشاهد العاجز على زمانه

بها "كليلة ودمنة"، فتتقصى العلاقات التي تربط بين الأقوياء
والضعفاء، وتدعو كبار هذا العالم إلى النظر في الأمور والعدالة،
معيدةً النظر في جوهر السلطة وأصولها.

علاقات السلطة وأنماط الحكم

توثق **دار الحدائق**، في العام ٢٠٠٣، عروتها من جديد بتراث
الحكايات العربية، عاملة على تحديثه، بفضل **"نجمة البحر"**،
وهي حكاية رعوية وبيئية الطابع، حكاية شاب في مقتبل العمر
منشغل بإنقاذ نجمات البحر عبر إعادتها إلى البحر، ورجل سلطة
ونفوذ، يرخي لحية ويعتمر عمامة كالعرب المحترمين في المنمنمات،
يكتشف الحكمة الحقيقية في كلمات هذا الشاب المتواضع، والمثال
الذي يجسده. يجوب الشاب الشاطئ، في كل يوم، ويلتقط نجمات
البحر المصطدمة بالرمال ويبعدها إلى الماء. يجد رجل السلطة
والنفوذ في هذا الانشغال، بادئ الأمر، ما يُثير الضحك ولا يُرتجى
منه من فائدة، بما أنه لن يقدر على إنقاذ الآلاف من نجمات البحر
الأخرى المرمية على الرمال. أما الشاب فيعتبر أن فعل إنقاذ الآخرين
هو دائمًا فعل ذو فائدة، وأن المبادرات الصغيرة تشكل المآثر الكبيرة.
وبهذا، يوضح الرجل المتواضع، صاحب الفعل للتواضع، في إقناع
رجل السلطة بأن النفوذ يجد له مرادفًا في الفعل. في هذه الحكاية
ما يذكّرنا بـ"مقامات" الهمذاني أو "مقامات" الحريري التي تجمع
بين بطل الحكاية الفقير ولكن المكر الذكي، والأثرياء والنافذين الذين
يتعلمون منه. من جهته، يستلهم الرسم النبياني لصاحبه **محمد
سعيد بعلبكي** الأنظمة العربية التي تسوس للمنمنمات ويعمل على
تحديثها، مشاركًا بهذه الإحالة في الحكايات القديمة. غير أن الكتاب
المصور يشكل رسالة رجاء حديثة بالكامل: فهو يدعو النافذين في
هذا العالم إلى الاهتمام بالمعوزين، المهملين على الشاطئ، شارحًا
للأطفال أن ما من فعل واحد إلا وانطوى على أهمية أو فائدة
ما، فحتى لم تُنقذ إلا بضعة أرواح من الآلاف المطروحة على
الشاطئ، فإن هذا الفعل يبقى مغزى يستحق التنفيذ.

يبدو كتاب **"عندما رقص الأسد"**، من خلال المجاز الحيواني،
وكأنه يستدعي بدوره النافذين وندعوهم إلى الحراك، أي إلى
إدراك واقع العالم. مرة جديدة، نجد الحكاية تضع في الواجهة
مخلوقًا صغيرًا وضعيفًا (هو الخروف) وآخر كبيرًا ونافذًا (هو

الأسد). تكمن مهارة الخروف في قدرته على تحويل الأسد بعيدًا
عن هوسه بالسلطة، وفي الوقت نفسه بعيدًا عن نيّته بافتراسه،
واضعًا نفسه على مرأى منه بحيث يلحظ الأسد أنه موجود.
لينجح ذلك، على الخروف أن يكون ذكيًا، وصاحب دهاء، وقتًا.
فروح يعني ويرقص، جاذبًا الأسد الذي يقوم هو أيضًا بالرقص، وفي
ذلك صورة مجازيّة للسلطة للتنوّرة. يتعلق مجموع أعمال **إيهاب
شاكر** التصويرية والفنية، في الرسم التشكيلي والرسوم المتحركة
والرسوم التبيانية، بكيفية استحضار الحركة، بوصفها جوهر
الحياة". وبهذا، فإن الأسد الذي يدخل فضاء الحركة، يدرك
جوهر العالم والحياة ويصبح صاحب سلطةٍ سمحًا، محترقًا
الآخرين وبخاصة الأضعف منه، وعادلًا.

"الملك بير" قصة أخرى لـ**إيهاب شاكر**، تطرح مجدّدًا مسألة حمل
النافذين إلى الدخول في فضاء الحركة وإلى إدراك الواقع المحيط
بهم، إذ كيف السبيل إلى حمل ملك فني إلى التطوّر والتعيّر إن
لم يرَ شيئًا ولم يفهم شيئًا مما تكابده رعيّته، ولم يكن له أهل
يشرحون له ما يجهله؟ كيف السبيل إلى اقتلاع النافذين من شرك
الوقفة الجامدة والطغيانية التي تجدّروا فيها، كالطفل المتمسك
بنزوته؟ في قصة **"الملك بير"**، يشكّل الحبّ الذي يكلّه لآنسةٍ ما،
عاملًا يُخرج الأمير الفني من نزواته كمتنفّذ، ويفتح عينيه على

*"الملك بير"، إيهاب شاكر، القاهرة،
دار نهضة مصر، ٢٠٠٥. (الصورة).*

*"عندما رقص الأسد"، إيهاب شاكر، القاهرة،
دار الشروق، ٢٠٠٨.*

١٢١

الكتكوت ليس كلبًا"، نص جار النبي الحلو،
رسم حلمي التوني، القاهرة، دار الشروق، ٢٠٠٣.

"حيلة ذكيّة"، نص زين العابدين الحسيني،
رسم حجازي، بيروت، دار الفنى العربي، ١٩٧٥.

محيي الدين اللبّاد

(١٩٤٠-٢٠١٠)، رسّام مصري وفنّان تشكيلي،
مبدع عُرف بدقّته في العمل. تتلمذ على يد
حسين بيكار، وكان من رواد دار الفنى العربي
ومديرها الفني في سنوات البداية. له العديد
من الكتب المصورة في النقد الفني.

١٧

Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire (FSP) -
Lecture publique et édition jeunesse
(2005-2009) أو "صندوق التعاون الأولوي"
- المطالعة العامة والنشر للأطفال، هو تمويل
فرنسي لدعم الكتاب والقراءة لدى الأطفال
في لبنان. كان قائمًا عندما بدأت بحثي هذا.

"موسوعة أدب الأطفال وأدبائهم في سورية
بالقرن العشرين"، مهيار الملوحي، دمشق،
دار شهرزاد الشام، ٢٠٠٤.

دلال حاتم (٢٠٠٩)، محيي الدين اللبّاد (٢٠١٠)،
عدلي رزق الله (٢٠١٠)، ممتاز البحرة (٢٠١٢)،
سليمان العيسى (٢٠١٣).

٢١

Figure 10: Front cover (a), inside page (b) and sidenotes (c-d) of ʿAn Aḥwal Kutub al-Atfal, 2021.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Benedict. 2006 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Auji, Hala. 2016. *Printing Arab Modernity: Book Culture and the American Press in Nineteenth-Century Beirut*. Vol. 7. Leiden; Boston: Brill. https://brill.com/view/title/32580.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1994. "The Problem of Speech genres." In *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov.* Ed. Pam Morris, 60-102. London: Hodder Education.

Bateson, Gregory. 1958. *Naven: A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View*. 2nd ed. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bizri, Hala. 2013. "Le livre et l'édition au Liban dans la première moitié du XXe siècle: essai de reconstitution d'une mémoire disparue." Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. Versailles: Université de Versailles.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Randal Johnson. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Creed, Gerald W. 2000. ""Family Values" and Domestic Economies." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (1): 329-355.

Fawaz, Leila Tarazi. 1983. *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut*. Vol. 18. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Gell, Alfred. 1982 "The Market Wheel: Symbolic Aspects of an Indian Tribal Market." *Man* 17, no. 3: 470–91. https://doi.org/10.2307/2801710.

———. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1976. "Art as a Cultural System." *MLN* 91 (6): 1473-1499. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2907147.

———. 2005. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 134 (4): 56-86. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028014.

Graeber, David. 2013. "It is Value that Brings Universes into being." *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (2): 219-243. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.2.011.

Gregory, Chris. 2014. "On Religiosity and Commercial Life: Toward a Critique of Cultural Economy and Posthumanist Value Theory." *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4 (3): 45-68. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau4.3.005.

Hart, Keith. 1986. "Heads or Tails? Two Sides of the Coin." *Man* 21, no. 4: 637–56. https://doi.org/10.2307/2802901.

Kafi, Huda. 1986. "The Book Industry in Lebanon: Publishing Houses and Reading Habits." MBA diss. American University of Beirut.

Keane, Webb. 2006. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. California: University of California Press.

———. 2008. "Market, Materiality and Moral Metalanguage." *Anthropological Theory* 8, no. 1: 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499607087493.

Khater, Akram Fouad. 1996. ""House" to "Goddess of the House": Gender, Class, and Silk in 19th-Century Mount Lebanon." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (3): 325-348.

Khuri, Fuad I. 1968. "The Etiquette of Bargaining in the Middle East." *American Anthropologist* 70 (4): 698-706. https://www.jstor.org/stable/670552.

Kondo, Dorinne K. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lucy, John Arthur. 1993. "Reflexive Language and the Human Disciplines." In *Reflexive Language*, 9-32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Malinowski, Bronisław. 1930. "17. Kinship." *Man (London)* 30: 19-29.

Maasri, Zeina. 2020. *Cosmopolitan Radicalism: The Visual Politics of Beirut's Global Sixties*. Vol. 13 Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108767736.

Magee, Siobhan. 2017. "Catholic in Kraków? Fur, the Ethic of Attribution, and when Non-Religious Things Conform to Religious Aesthetics." *World Art (Abingdon, U.K.)* 7 (2): 307-327.

McKinnon, Susie and Fenella Cannell, eds. 2013. "The difference kinship makes," *Vital relations: modernity and the persistent life of kinship*, 3–38. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.

Messick, Brinkley Morris. 1993. *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society*. Vol. 16. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7x0nb56r/.

Moumtaz, Nada. 2021. *God's Property: Islam, Charity, and the Modern State*. California: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.100.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1940. "On Joking Relationships." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 13, no. 3: 195–210. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1156093.

Shannon, Jonathan H. 2003. "Emotion, Performance, and Temporality in Arab Music: Reflections on Tarab." *Cultural Anthropology* 18 (1): 72-98. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3651584.

Scheid, Kirsten. 2015. "Divinely Imprinting Prints, Or, how Pictures Became influential Persons in Mandate Lebanon." In *The Routledge Handbook of the History of the Middle East Mandates*, edited by Cyrus Schayegh and Andrew Arsan, 371-391. London: Routledge. https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.aub.edu.lb/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315713120-37/divinely-imprinting-prints-pictures-became-in%EF%AC%82uential-persons-mandate-lebanon-kirsten-scheid.

Strathern, Marilyn. 2014. "Kinship as a Relation." *Homme* 210 (210): 43-61.

Versteegh, Kees. 2014 [1997]. *The Arabic Language*. Second edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. doi:10.3366/j.ctt1g0b09q.

Warner, Michael. 2002. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture* 14 (1): 49–90. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-14-1-49

Wolf, Eric R. 2001 [1966]. "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies." In *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World*. California: University of California Press.

Yanagisako, Sylvia Junko. 2002. *Producing Culture and Capital: Family Firms in Italy*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

اللباد، محيي الدين. 2012. نظر! الهيئة المصرية العامة للكتاب ـ مكتبة الأسرة.

ميرمييه، فرانك. 2006. الكتاب والمدينة: بيروت والنشر العربي. ترجمة يوسف ضومط. بيروت: مختارات.