The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Resistance in Politicized Theatre of Saʿdallah Wannūs

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Arabic Studies and Civilization

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

By
Iman Ahmed AlAyyat

Under the supervision of Prof. Ferial Ghazoul

May/2016
The American University in Cairo

Resistance in Politicized Theatre of Saʿdallah Wannūs

A Thesis Submitted by

Iman Ahmed AlAyyat

To the Department of Arabic Studies and Civilization

May/2016

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts

Has been approved by

Prof. Ferial Ghazoul
Thesis Committee Advisor
Professor, Department of English and Comparative literature, The American University in Cairo.

Prof. Shereen Abou Elnaga
Thesis Committee Reader
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Arabic Studies and Civilization, The American University in Cairo.

Prof. Heba AlAbbady
Thesis Committee Reader
Professor, Faculty of English Literature, Cairo University.

__________________     __________       ___________
Dept. Chair           Date           Dean of HUSS     Date
Dedication

I would like to give special dedication to Professor Shereen Abou Elnaga who spent effort, time in consolidating the ideas of resistance, rhizome and literature through a series of discussions and valuable mentorship during the composition of this thesis and during prior courses. Without her in-depth feedback, the elaborated work of this thesis would not have come to light.
Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the extensive support and efforts given by Professor Shereen Abou Elnaga and Professor Ferial Ghazoul in the last year. Without their support, detailed attention and review, this work would have never come to light.
Abstract

Sa’d Allah Wannūs (1941-1997) was a renowned Syrian playwright whose plays aimed at stimulating audience’s reactions against the impacts of the political situation after the setback of 1967. Wannūs first highlights the complex interrelationship between the rise of power structures and hegemonic rule colored by the leaders’ aspirations. Such collision with inexorable mapping of reality incites the audience to incarnate an inspiring future that is not influenced by the past or co-opted with the complex interrelated power structures.

Wannūs portrays a world that the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Felix Guattari (1930-1992) theorize as the “rhizome” in which hegemonic societies are established in horizontal de-territorialized structures rather than vertically rooted. Because this structure is mapped rather than traced, the Australian critic Bill Ashcroft suggests that this resisting structure is an opportunity for transformation and way out from the historical hegemony. Deleuze describes this transformation as exemplified in literature by transforming the hegemonic cultures not through “logic of predication of truth”; that is, the author does not embellish the future or propose predictions, but through refracting from the tracings and then mapping the “logic of sense” in reaching the “becoming” assemblage; that is the author highlights that change is required but he does not spell out this change; he urges the audience to take the lead and role to remap the future.

Wannūs also adapts the Brechtian techniques of estrangement in the Arabic theatre in order to involve audience in the status que and awaken their responsibility. Wannūs uses Brechtian dramatic techniques in certain extent. However, he adapts the Arabic environment in order to ensure the involvement of laymen.
This thesis selects works by the Syrian playwright Wannūs that were published in 1968 through 1996, as they are illuminated by the theoretical framework of Brecht, Deleuze and Guattari, and the critical writing of Wannūs, in political theatre.