Resistance in political theatre of Saadallah Wannus

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Introduction

The current crisis in Syria brings to mind the talent of Sa'dallah Wannūs (1941-1997), the renowned Syrian playwright, whose plays stimulate audience’s reactions against impacts of the hegemonic power structures. In his plays, Wannūs incites the audience to rebel against authoritarianism and to plan collectively for a future that is neither influenced by the past nor co-opted by the interrelated power structures. This thesis reads Wannūs’ plays published between 1968 and 1996 against the backdrop of the ‘rhizome’ concept launched by the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and Felix Guattari (1930-1992). It also explores the influence of ‘estrangement’ technique adopted by the German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956).

Wannūs portrays a world that Deleuze and Guattari theorize as the ‘rhizome’. The concept of the rhizome describes a root system, which spreads out laterally rather than vertically, has no central root, and all roots spread out in a fragmented, discontinuous, and multidirectional way. The complexity of the rhizome stems from the fact that the web of power relations does not take the form of direct oppression and resistance. Power relations are inherently embedded in the deep state, a rhizomatic structure par excellence. Deleuze and Guattari explain that the rhizome “ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (7). The rhizome, the best representative of the deep state, is linked to the concept of ‘multiplicity,’ which ceases to have any relation to an origin (the one) as subject or object. It is not a multiplication of a definite concept; “there is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject” (8).
Wannūs alerts the audience to the fact that the political power of hegemony is horizontally embedded in society’s formation; and thus, the priorities of society are blurred. For Deleuze, society should benefit from these new mappings to resist the rhizome. John Rajchman explains that Deleuze’s logic “might mean to think in terms of multiplicities rather than identities or propositions, and so to see ourselves, and our brains, as composed of multiplicities rather than predicates and the propositions into which they enter” (51). In parallel, Wannūs dramatizes this rhizomatic structure on stage to alert the audience to the fact that the future requires collective sense and vision that will lead to a collective action. This collective action is bound to subvert the cohesive power structure in order to promote the real needs of society. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the new logic of sense recreates a new “becoming” (11). Literature, according to Deleuze and Guattari as well, does not trace given representations or offer solutions. Instead, it refracts the norm and represents the “unthought of” in order to reproduce the “becoming other” or the future from the “logic of sense” (Rajchman 118). That is to say, the audience is involved by alerting their senses. Besides, the author does not embellish the future or spell out any predictions, but highlights the fact that a change is required and urges the audience to take the initiative to remap the future.

Because this structure is mapped rather than traced, the Australian critic Bill Ashcroft (1952-) suggests in “Conflict and Transformation” that resisting such a structure is an opportunity of transformation to a new form of society (25). Therefore, resistance literature is not entitled to provide solutions or predict the future; rather, its main role is to highlight the mapping of this rhizome and maintain the audience’s original logic of resistance mapping. According to Ashcroft, hope is always implied and not spelt out (otherwise, the play would turn into a didactic piece). He states that:
Creativity is important to oppressed peoples because its function is to inspire hope: hope for change, hope for freedom, hope for the future. This may not be its goal or its purpose—it may have nothing to do with the subject of the creative work—but it functions this way because it affirms that another world is possible.

(Ashcroft 3)


Similar to Brecht, Wännūs’ plays demystify reality and awaken society’s sense of responsibility in opposing power structure. This is achieved by involving the audience and their consciousness in the play. Brecht’s theory which is called ‘Verfremdung’ exhibited different translations from German to English; however, the term ‘estrangement’ is adopted in this thesis. Basically, estrangement means “to show everything in a fresh and unfamiliar light, so that the spectator is brought to look critically even at what he has so far taken for granted” (Willett 177). Brecht utilizes semiology in order to de-familiarize all the givens. John Willett has also stated that “[t]he value of this concept for Brecht was that it offered a new way of judging and explaining those means of achieving critical detachment which he had hitherto called ‘epic’” (Willett 177). Wännūs thus embeds the revolutionary into the de-familiarized dramatic. Put differently, the
audience at the end looks down upon the complicity of the society with the rhizomatic power structure.

In a nutshell, the selected plays prove that Wannūs is bent on writing political theatre, in a manner that aims at shocking the audience, and subverting the norms. To dramatize this vision, Wannūs invests in the characters, setting and plot to delineate the rhizomatic power structures of Deleuze’s concepts through the use of Brecht’s dramatic techniques.

In this thesis, I have translated passages from Wannūs’ plays as well as citations from relevant secondary sources. All translations from Arabic, unless otherwise mentioned, are my own.
Chapter One: Wannūs’ Politicized Theatre

Sa’dallah Wannūs (1941-1997), one of the renowned Syrian playwrights, has managed to set new techniques in the political Arabic theatre after the setback of 1967. Wannūs has realized that the role of drama is not to amuse or numb. He is, in fact, against the separation of Drama from the political state; Drama is the pillar in awakening the Arab consciousness. He has thus introduced a new term called “politicized theatre” (Ruwayni 150). He pinpoints the shocking situation of the real society outside the stage in order to urge the audience to rethink a new society. While Wannūs is reshaping the role and techniques of drama in the Arab world, he portrays society that is well defined by Deleuze’s concepts of rhizome and logic of sense. Wannūs further applies Brecht’s dramatic techniques to activate the role of politicized theatre. This chapter investigates the following: politicization of theatre according to Wannūs; rhizome, logic of sense and transformation in the light of Deleuze’s theory; and theatrical techniques in the light of Brecht’s dramatic techniques.

Section 1.1 Politicization of Theatre

After the setback of 1967, Wannūs has adopted the setup of politicized theatre. Some critics confuse the politicized theatre developed by Wannūs with the traditional political theatre. Wannūs; however, clearly specifies the tenets of politicized theatre in order to overcome the limitations and problems of the traditional political theatre. Wannūs identifies politicized theatre as the core of drama that represents the relationship of society and power structure. Such representation requires the involvement of audience, the everlasting effect of drama on audience off stage and the re-employment of dramatic techniques. This section studies the politicized theatre of Wannūs from the following perspectives: (1) drama as an awakening tool of the Arab
consciousness; (2) the representation of the interrelatedness of politics and socio-economics in society; and (3) the relationship between audience and stage and the role of each.

Wannūs has been highly affected by the setback of 1967 and he could not overlook the deterioration of the Arab world; thus, he decided to take action and revolutionize the Arabic drama. At that time, political theatre was limited to dramatizing texts from historical or didactic drama with happy endings. Wannūs figures out that such kind of drama isolates the audience from the real world and the effect of drama ends after the curtains are dropped down on stage. Hence, Wannūs shifts to what he has called the “politicized theatre” (Ruwayni 150). It is worth mentioning that Wannūs has criticized the didactic drama despite his extensive use of this form in order to grasp the attention of the masses.

According to Wannūs, politicizing the theatre requires avoiding predetermined messages and speeches (Ruwayni 151). Politicized theatre, for Wannūs, is an “awakening” drama in which “negotiation between stage and salon is mandated” (Ruwayni 147). In other words, the main factor of effective politicized theatre is the representation of the real world in its “negative state” in order to ignite the consciousness of audience; thus the audience refutes the negative shocking representation of the outside world. Wannūs is totally obsessed with this level of awakening of the audience and he considers that it is the focal role of theatre. He believes that without “availing continuous awakening, it is always possible to deviate from the [theatre]’s role or [theatre] may defy itself” (Wannūs, Bayanat 39). The selected plays of Wannūs have represented a shocking form of society on stage. One of the best representations in awakening audience is in Tukūs. In this play, Wannūs depicts the ‘body’ as a focal representation of society. Wannūs has shown through ‘Māssah’ that “society has capsized the customs and traditions and protested power and its formalized repressed organizations against the body” whereas ‘Abdullah’ has
shown “apparent change” (Ruwayni 48, 49) rather than effective power change. To clarify, Wannūs has shown that effective revolution against repression is demolished by the killing of ‘Māssah’. Society has failed to interconnect through the rigid customs; henceforth, revolutionary change requires acceptance and support. Wannūs, at this point, alerts the audience to the responsibility of finding more effective and collaborative transformational methods that could lead into democratic just society.

One main objective in the politicized theatre of Wannūs is that the “audience is continuously fueled, and on the long run, the audience is ready to change fate” (Wannūs, Bayanat 40). Wannūs stresses that the audience must be re-charged all the time up to the end; otherwise, drama would be “a tool of ignorance and disversion” (Wannūs, Bayanat 41). Accordingly, in Ḥaflat samar, Wannūs has portrayed the setback of 1967 in a direct dialogue that, though gloomy, reflects the political taboos at that time. Wannūs has given different episodes in this tragedy that fuel the hard memories related to the failures in the War of 1967 and losses in land and souls. He mainly focuses on one message; that is, people should not be passive and should be well aware of the impacts of political conditions on life. Being passive means that the impact of the setback grows and cannot be avoided or healed in the future.

Similarly, in Mughāmarat ra’s al-mamlūk Jābir, people avoid political conflict; as a result, they have paid taxes, then begged and finally they have lost their country and lives. The audience worries when it logically senses the relationship between these episodes and daily life. According to Wannūs, “the concept of ‘politicization’ means that one represents the political problem through its deep laws and interrelated webbed relationship with the economic and political infrastructure of society, and one unleashes a progressive horizon to resolve these problems” (Wannūs, Bayanāt 107). In other words, the writer cannot isolate the impacts of
individual fates from political strategies. Effectively, Wannūs points out that political theatre requires identifying which discourse in politics is adopted and how it is represented (Wannūs, Bayanūt 110). For Wannūs, Arabic political drama should be politicized by identifying “the direction of politics and audience” (Wannūs, Bayanūt 110). In Malḥamat al-sarāb, for instance, Wannūs explores the influence of globalization on society that leads to selling lands. At the end, people lose their sense of belonging, customs, relationships and consequently their future. Wannūs has illustrated this transition of society and the rhizomatic powers in the conversation between Bassām an Adīb:

Bassām: Do you call what we are in development?!

Adīb: And, what is development, then! In a short period, the country has changed and flourished in all directions.. constructional, social and economic.

Bassām: Is it development and flourishing when we sell our lands from which we used to feed ourselves, to sell it and import food and devices that gobble our minds and energy! Is it development that peasantry become servants and shoeshiners! Is it development that principles collapse and human bonds disintegrate and we all become goods in this savage market! Is that the development, Adīb?

Adīb: […] We’ve experienced closed markets and we haven’t achieved anything but poverty and need, and now the authorities have decided, through their wisdom and far sight, to open-up policy, that revives the country, and it provides all required conditions to modernize economy and society. Look!.. In a very short time, fortunes have taken place and have reached those who never dreamed of it.

Bassām: If one listens to you one may assume that most people have become equally rich. Those who become rich are few people; they are brokers and Machiavellian.

Adīb: And, why don’t you say some of the smart and successful men? Opportunities are open for all and that’s the advantage of this period […]

Adīb: These changes that you don’t like are the last option. And, the senior officials call what’s happening the epic of development.

(Wannūs, ʿmāl Vol.2, 734-735)
Wannūs unveils the state of corrupted society by emphasizing its total submission to the power of economy. At the end, he leaves the audience blurred with blocked thoughts in a lost society. Wannūs does not give a clue on how to resolve the web; it is the audience’s responsibility to figure out a new form of society.

Ruwayni points out, that in order to understand the theatre of Wannūs, it is mandated to look at the “social direction” rather than the individual character of the performer and “the subversion of society” from which Wannūs directs the role of theatre in reshaping the society (13). Ruwayni further clarifies that “changing the power is not the required condition for the targeted progress [. . .] the harder issue is changing the society, shaking its stillness, coziness and its immersion in myth” (Ruwayni 29,30). Subsequently, Wannūs has demystified the role of drama in representing the Utopian ready-made solution. He has also stepped out from the classic drama that disengages the audience from politics and involves it into social marginal problems. He shifts the function of theatre to represent repressed society whose interests are interconnected with power desires and needs. At the end, the audience remains trapped in the same web and, by the end of the performance, Wannūs manages to disturb the audience and to push them to think collectively of a way out.

In practice, Wannūs does not limit politicized theatre to the upper-middle class or the educated audience but he targets a larger spectrum of audience that represents the real society and is negatively affected by the political situation. Then, he reveals society in his plays showing the allies of political powers who are the main factors in marginalizing society and so are trapped into the desires of politics. In his plays, Wannūs represents these members through many categories: intellectuals (e.g., religion is an authority), businessmen (e.g., merchandizers), rulers (e.g., kings) and the rest of society (e.g., children, women, illiterate men). In Al-malik huwa al-
malik, for example, Wannūs engages with the role of society in empowering hegemony. Society submits to ruling signs rather than the persons who rule. Such submission seduces the ruler to amplify his domination. Wannūs further emphasizes the interconnectedness of society and interwove power structure in Mughāmarat raʾs al-mamlūk Jābir where Jābir, the mamlūk, dreams of aligning with the king to reap benefits but he is victimized and killed. The minister has followed Jābir’s plot and ordered his agents to kill Jābir once they get the message of invasion of Baghdad (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 216). Wannūs thus shows that rulers are obsessed with achieving their personal benefits at the expense of society. He openly pinpoints the dangers of political conditions on individual lives through the Fourth Man who always aims to warn people nevertheless they are not willing to listen.

The Fourth Man: (In a calm tone) By God. What we’ve seen is much less than what we are going to see. The coming surprises are difficult.

The Second Man: Are you a fortune teller?

The Fourth Man: Me! I’ve never listened to fortune tellers in my life. But, I am trying my best through what I see and hear. And, omens are plenty around us, for who wants to see.

The Third Man: Sir. See or not see. What matters is that this quagmire passes and we gain safety.

The Fourth Man: By God [. . .] The ending is not that easy as we wish. It seems that the minister has planned for a horrible thing, and the armies of the states are creeping towards Baghdad omnivorously cutting the grass and land. Each side is setting his web to catch the other. We still have lots of hard surprises.

The Third Man: Let them set the webs and plan whatever they want. That’s their business. But, we do not ask for but relief.

[. . .]

The Fourth Man: But, do you know that their webs are woven from our skins!

[. . .]
Wannūs glorifies such interconnectedness of the real world to ensure the continuous awakening of the audience. For Wannūs, “liberty is not a political question; it is a social and economic question” (Ruwayni 132). That could be either the individuals’ fear of talking about the political situation or not realizing the impact of politics on their lives. This view is clearly depicted in all the selected plays. For instance, in Mughāmarat raʾs al-mamlūk Jābir, Jābir and Mansour discuss the conflict between the caliph and his minister. Mansour is worried about the consequences whereas Jābir believes that these political matters do not affect mamlūks but only affect rulers. At the same time, Jābir believes that any political chat may lead to the gallows (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 143). Further, when the fourth man (Wannūs usually uses anonymous names to represent samples of society) questions the conflict between the caliph and his minister, people reply that these matters should not bother laymen and laymen should focus on their daily economic matters such as bread. But he objects and says, “By God, it is necessary to ask about the reasons of conflict and we give back our opinions” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 154). In parallel, Wannūs represents the audience as a group of café customers who agree that politics should not be of a layman’s interest, “A safe path since ages [. . .] Who marries our mom, we call him uncle” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 159). Then, Wannūsh shocks people at the end where everything turns upside down starting with the rising taxes then death and finally colonization (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 193, 206, 214, 217). Moreover, the sheikh is allied with the minister to force people to pay the taxes. Clearly stated, the intellectuals and religious men interconnect and support the political powers to subdue the people to the needs of hegemonic rulers. On the other hand, there are people such as Jābir who serve the desires of power to gain promotion in the political
hierarchy; however, he is killed because he never realizes that high officials will ever let people share in the power structure. Wannūs summarizes the story of Jābir:

The Headman: His death was under his scalp,
And, he is not aware.
He travelled along holding fate over his head,
And, he is not aware.
He was dreaming to go back as a high state man,
Waiting for him a wife and wealth,
But, in between death and return,
The distance is a question.

The Storyteller: And, he doesn’t ask the question.

(Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 215)

Here, Wannūs highlights that this is the real situation outside the stage. People avoid politics to live safely. They assume that politics only affects rulers and alliances. Conversely, Wannūs warns them that politics is interconnected with social lives and one must understand the situation and think of its impacts on an individual’s life. Negative impacts are inevitable, and so one must ask the proper questions and should not agree blindly to events. Wannūs does not promise a happy ending for such interconnectedness and its consequences. Instead, he reserves space for the audience to judge and foresee the new mapping of society to get out from this tragic ending.

Wannūs identifies the role of the audience as they are fully responsible to judge, take the initiative for change and revive democracy. Given the detailed negotiation about the setback of 1967 on the stage, Wannūs confronts society that this failure is not only political. Society is responsible for the setback because it is passively driven by a group of complicit intellectuals.
Society has become seduced by the desire of power and submission. Such negotiation on stage was new to the Arab audience. The interaction with the audience turns the society from being a spectator to being an actor, even a virtual one, in the sense that Wannūs does not engage his actual audience, but rather presents some actors, such as café customers, who play the role of spectators. Also, the negative ending drives “a new active wave in society capable of handling the initiative” (Wannūs, Bayanat 123). In the relationship between stage and audience, Wannūs endows drama and the stage with the role of awakening the audience through direct conversation. Direct conversation for Wannūs never means direct messages. Indeed, drama leads to the awakening of audience as a process; but it does not pursue a “ready-made awakening” (Wannūs, Bayanat 126). That is to say, Wannūs drives the audience to exert effort to understand the situation, become part of it, refute the displayed society and then collectively suggests an alternative. He stimulates the audience’s resistance when he persists that the situation has endless ripples of failures and no one is affected as much as the audience. These ripples are repeated over ages because society is passive and led by intellectuals. The latter mainly fight for their individual benefits at the expense of society. The people are always the losers. Thus, society has to ask, understand, think, and collectively search for solutions for its social benefits and rights rather than for the benefits and interests of hegemonic powers.

To sum up, Wannūs revolutionizes the role of drama in the Arabic theatre. He introduces the politicized theatre in which he integrates the external world with the performance on stage through shocking representation of society and in turn through awakening the audience. Wannūs steers the audience to collectively draw a new world.
Section 1.2 Deleuze’s Rhizome, Logic of Sense and Transformation

This section discusses the representation of rhizomatic societal structure as represented in literature. The philosophers Deleuze and Guattari have theorized the rhizome as a means to rethink several rigid concepts and to benefit from the ‘multiplicity’ of ideas in order to recreate a new world, a world that deviates from the narrow binary logic introduced in history or contemporary politics. Deleuze supports this non-systematic structure in order to transform the rigid, systematic customs and beliefs of society where political power dominates into a new collective vision of society. Deleuze’s concepts speak out for the societies dramatized in Wannus’ plays. Wannūs, thus, represents rhizomatic structure and targets afresh society that is bound to emerge from the new collective reactions to a shocking performance. This is what Deleuze calls ‘logic of sense’. This section studies the concepts of Deleuze which set the theoretical framework for Wannūs’ politicized theatre and shows how politicized theatre reshapes the positive future society.

Wannūs has theorized his theatre in incorporating the involvement of audience through the direct representation of the society and different signs of powers that are reflected in their social and economic lives. However, there are two main dimensions that mandate to theorize Wannūs’ politicized theatre through Deleuze and Guattari’s theories of rhizome and transformation. Wannūs mainly represents this state gradually in his plays and it was well structured in Malhamat al-sarāb and Tukūs. As well, Wannūs limits his theory into the involvement of audience and their responsibility to change the society. However, the intricate theory of transformation into the ‘becoming world’ is not theorized by Wannūs’.

Wannūs’ society overtly represents the concept of Deleuze and Guattari of ‘rhizome’. Rhizome is an unrooted webbed stem that is planted above earth as opposed to the normal rooted
plant, it extends horizontally on earth perpendicular with the earth gravity and may generate roots from the auxiliary stems going back to earth and in turn it replants new unexpected plants that form new roots (Deleuze and Guattari 6). For them, society experiences that same representation of rhizome. Society does not repeat original past forms of customs and history. Conversely, society collectively forms new groups. These group members meet and are woven in webs for their needs and common desires, and further integrate and reshape new auxiliary sub-groups from which new customs and beliefs are born and new roots are dipped into earth. Wannūs’ representation of society mainly amplifies the desires of power structure. Intellectuals ally with political power; then they seduce the rest of society to identify their hopes and needs with the desires of power. At the end, socio-economic needs are totally blurred and the repressed consciousness of society is misled. The final outcome is a repressed society that has become part and parcel of power structure. One stark example is this interconnectedness and tragic ending in *Al-fil ya malik al-zamān (The King’s Elephant)*. Wannūs deftly shows the transformation of intellectuals in their alliance with rulers and in turn the desire of society to keep the repressive ruling. This play ends with Zakaria’s alliance with the king and his entourage, signifying that society is eternally trapped in hegemony.

Deleuze mainly provides a new perspective of identity in which he believes that there are no two persons alike because even if the concepts are defined, the ideas differ (Smith 50). Deleuze calls this differentiation “idea of sensibility” in which every person gives a different partial perception of a domain (Smith 54). Such differentiation among people leads to a new form of concept that Deleuze terms “singularity” (Smith 115). Singularity is a new collective sense of a concept or domain. Thus, for Deleuze, the same thing is viewed differently because there is always a minute ‘differentiation’ in ‘percepts’ of each person. The communication of
these different ideas collectively draws a new reflection of the main concept and drives to a new domain. Thus, conflicts trigger healthy confrontations for new thoughts. Deleuze and Guattari say,

Transversal communications between different lines scramble the genealogical trees. Always look for the molecular, or even sub molecular, particle with which we are allied. We evolve and die more from our polymorphous and rhizomatic flus than from hereditary diseases, or diseases that have their own line of descent. The rhizome is an anti-genealogy (11).

Deleuze and Guattari here affirm that the rhizome is the vaccine to keep continuity through reformation. This point of reformation is termed as “line of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 10) where there is no previous same form or concept. This means that people are in need of finding the points of relationship that bring a newly born form; that is, a new collective concept. The appearance of this form is the “becoming-world” (Deleuze and Guattari 10). The “becoming” is the mutation to recreate a new domain; a domain that transforms the systematic worlds then a concept is colored with new definition and identification takes place. Danial Smith explains that ‘becoming’ in the context of Deleuze “refers to an objective zone of indistinction or indiscernibility that always exists between two multiplicities, a zone that immediately precedes their respective natural differentiations” (205). Smith uses the term ‘objective zone’ as a reaching point. However, this point is not well defined from the beginning; it is not a strategic target. It is mutated based on the meeting point of the different percepts provided that this intersection is the intersection of multiplicities at their “limits and borders where it enters into relations with other multiplicities and changes nature, transforms itself, follows a line of flight” (Smith 205).

To elucidate his concepts, Deleuze affirms that human beings never perceive objects equally and this is an advantage to view concepts differently in the future. This change generates a conflict with original roots and given ethnicities. However, people should realize different
views that do not stem from given perceptions. These different views are logically and partially differentiated. Since they are partially different, they open the spectrum for points of commonality. These new common points are the starting point for a new identification of a fresh concept. So, multiplicity generates lines of flight that diffuse and at some later points they meet. This meeting point is called singularity. Singularity is the auxiliary stem that digs a new root. This root is the objective zone. It is the objective for unique concept stated collectively from people’s different percepts. Hence, new concept abandons the old rhizome totally. The old rhizome, for Deleuze and Guattari, is like disease and its vaccine is generated from the new objective zone. Thus, resisting the hegemonic power requires collective thoughts that generate a new concept and new objective zone.

In applying his theory to literature, Deleuze details the relationship between the book (the written text) and the real world. Deleuze emphasizes that they are not the same,

\[\text{Contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an a parallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can). Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature.}\]

(Deleuze and Guattari 10)

Accordingly, the first message from Deleuze to authors is that the objective of literature is not to mirror the real world. The main objective of writing is to revolutionize the thought of the recipient towards the given concept and act as a catalyst for different ideas coming out from the audience. These differential ideas collectively interact and bring new lines of flight. These points of collision create singularities; and, singularity is the admission to the ‘becoming-world’. Therefore, creativity, in Deleuze’s opinion, should not be established on historical events or copies from reality. He actually goes beyond this and encourages the creation of hybrid
characters or shocking events that do not exist in reality as in Kafka’s art-pieces (Marks & Buchanan 150), such as the character, Gregor Samsa, in Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* who has taken the hybrid shape of human and animal (Smith 206).

Applying Deleuze’s thesis to political literature, the objective of art is not to depict reality. The objective is to draw the borders of concepts, incite the audience to think, come up with new ideas that collide with the lines of flight and bring collective singularities to transform the world into the ‘becoming-world’. However, what stimulates audience’s thinking is to push them out of the comfort zone. Thinking is a process that arises “only when compelled to do so, when we undergo a violence that impels us to such a search, that wrests us from our natural stupor” (Smith 91). Hence, Deleuze sets the abstract guidelines in writing political literature. Smith summarizes the pivot of Deleuze’s concept to political literature as the ‘intolerable’. He states that, “For Deleuze, this is what constitutes the new object of a political literature or cinema: the intolerable – that is, a lived actuality that at the same time testifies to the impossibility of living in such conditions” (Smith 213). In other words, audience realizes a world that cannot be tolerated or accepted; a realization that results into a stimulation to think differently from the given view. This process is the result of individual senses. Thus, individual ideas collide with the limits of the shocking view represented in the political literature. The shocking accompanied by unhappy endings is termed by Nietzsch the ‘power of false’ (Marks & Buchanan 175); a term extensively used by Deleuze as a basis for his concept of transformation from rhizome. These shocking images stimulate differential lines of thoughts that are divergent but collectively intersect with this original view. These lines of thought are the lines of flight brought out to fight the “the impossibility of living such conditions” (Smith 213). They collectively build a prospective solution for the ‘becoming-world’.
It should be noted that it is mandated that the author is not offering the solution or drawing the lines of flight; otherwise, audience’ ideas are to be confined to a given plot and they miss the opportunity to bring about the differentiation from which the new society is created. In other words, the author is not the creator of the new society; he is the stimulator to unroot the thinking of audience and to subvert the audience’s amusement with the current conditions on stage and off stage. In this way, the author invites the audience to actively participate in creating the ‘becoming-world’. Then, individuals are rescued from hegemony which enslaves them and treats them as “the product of power”; a kind of power that, as per Foucault, “causes [individuals] to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits [them]” (Marks & Buchanan 195). As a result, the new domain competes with hegemony.

Wannūs employs these concepts in his new theory of politicized theatre. He insists that drama should subvert the comfort zone of audience so that they think, and only then they will change the future. Wannūs has never mentioned Deleuze in his theory nor his philosophy in his objectives. However, Wannūs has applied the concept of rhizome inherently in political drama through the selection of characters, their powers, their alliance, their seduction of hegemonic powers and the consequences of violence, intolerable social conditions and losses of lives and land. Thus, Wannūs portrays the theory of rhizome in order to achieve the same objective through the logic of senses, to achieve the transformation into a ‘becoming world’. Wannūs further asserts that it is the responsibility of the audience—not the author, to map the new society. In order to read Deleuze’s through Wannūs’ theory, this sub-section is divided into the following: (1) the deviation of Wannūs from the traditional drama; (2) the politicized theatre as socio-political drama through (a) deviation from history; (b) deviation from norms; (c) shocking
audience with the intolerable conditions; (3) the role of Wannūs as an author; and (4) the responsibility of audience towards the intolerable conditions.

Starting with the deviation from the traditional drama, Wannūs criticizes the traditional political drama because it directs the audience to certain thoughts; which acts as dictatorship that directs minds to a forceful path. Besides, it is not realistic because it assumes that if the spectators follow this path, they are led to the expected successful ending. However, spectators then act as passive recipients. They attend as students watching the performance. They are not mentally involved in the performance. Hence, as per Deleuze, there is no atmosphere that stimulates thinking. Accordingly, each one thinks of the individual in isolation from the others. Hence, this individualization is reflected in the society. This means that traditional political theatre does not unleash reality. It alleviates the dangers and serves the aims of the political power. Wannūs obviously portrays the situation in the dialogue in *Haflat samar*:

The director: We need a text that mirrors the status quo [. . .] But, the libraries are pity. I want to say they are poor! Of course, before anything, I’ve read for Tawfik Al-ḥakīm, unfortunately, Al-ḥakīm disgraces politics and he doesn’t care about wars. I’ve looked at other authors and I found that all of them, for a reason or another, don’t suffice.

(Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.1, 29)

Wannūs announces his divergence from the roots of traditional political drama. This step mainly paves the way for Wannūs to achieve his main goal; that is, to represent a different approach that stimulates thinking.

If Wannūs has mentioned that politicized theatre is based on socio-political drama that represents the negative effects of political conditions on social life, Deleuze also stresses that in political literature, thinking requires the confrontation with abnormal conditions. Thinking is inspired by violence and intolerable state. Wannūs has been totally obsessed with this drama of
shocking society that abandons traditions and norms and deviates from roots. Ḫaflat samar does not only shock spectators with transformation of society and impacts of politics on their social lives, but he also portrays a corrupted society that is collapsing and there is no hope for revival. At this point, Ḫaflat samar and Deleuze exhibit their singularity. Both fuel the thinking of audience which arises when the rhizome is tight. In Ḫaflat samar, Ḫaflat samar sets an intellectual discussion about the reason of the setback and failure. The discussion ends with the arrest of all spectators to shut up. In Tukūs, Māssah, the symbol of resistance is killed. In Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān, alliance with hegemony is empowered. For each ending, the political condition is tightened and social conditions are worse.

Ḩaflat samar explains to the audience that the failure of their social conditions is planned to serve political desires. Politics direct all means of communication to attract people to the political benefits, which are against the social benefits. It is a society similar to Guy Debord’s Society of the Spectacle which is a silent passive one-way recipient deceived by the rulers and governments via the “mass media” which, in turn, exploits the society and manipulates it towards the master’s purpose (Debord 5). Ḫaflat samar was published just after the events of the setback of June. The mass media has then announced false news declaring that Arabs have won and the enemy is defeated; the patriotic soldiers have destroyed the enemies’ tanks, plane and forts. Such overwhelming romanticized news discredited the media and governors following the aftermath. Ḫaflat samar has inscribed the mess of external truth concealed by the channels of communication whether news or drama and he has adjourned the effect of the passive role of classic quixotic theatre and victoriously forced the awakening of the society from the on-purpose awning and destabilizing plot over the whole society. This plot confuses citizens so that everyone just believes the false news and subconsciously loses the trust of the community, “What appears is
good; what is good appears” (Debord 3). Wannūs translates this statement in the speech of the official man in his play when he tends to dope the audience, “this is a transient celebrity comes anew to prove to us that there are enemies lurk among us and they wear different masks” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 126). This speech scornfully bares the double-faced official men who declare their internal unity whereas they actually divide the society and falsify the clear truth that the audience has discerned all through the play. The audience is aware that the official man is lying; notwithstanding, they clap hands and greet the official man at the end. This hypocrisy emanates from fear; and when the society is coated with fear, the people are totally alienated, “from our faces, hot reaction falls. We were shaking. Roads were falling with rage, violence, and hot reactions” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 114). Consequently, the only solution is rethinking the current situation and given ways by the politicians and their allies.

Wannūs and Deleuze thus take the initiative to encourage the shocking senses to awaken consciousness and take the full responsibility to transform the ‘power of false’ and the intolerable lives into a ‘becoming world’, and to divert from the traditional anxious thoughts into open-minded democratic ones: “Spectator 3: (with a loud voice, towards the auditorium) Today, we’ve improvised. But, tomorrow, you may go beyond improvisation” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 126). As can be noticed, Wannūs urges spectators to break silence and speak out. Wannūs and Deleuze agree that through violence, thinking is reborn for the ‘becoming world’. Thus, it is the responsibility of audience to think collectively and resist these powers that alienate them.

Spectator 7: (going up on stage) When earth shakes.. when we are close to danger, jungle animals smell it. We may not have images on the mirror. . But, we still have the instinct at least; by instinct, we smell the danger.

Spectator 5: And, they didn’t want us to smell it.

Spectator 7: We’ve seen it.
Spectator 5&6: And, they didn’t want us to see it.
The director: All words are well prepared in commas and full stops.
Spectator 7: We’ve felt it.
Spectator 5&6: And, they didn’t want us to feel it.

[. . .]
Spectator 7: The danger was inclining as our mountains, as our seas, as the hot sky.

[. . .]
Spectator 1: How did we accept then? The question rings loudly. That’s the real question and nothing else. The geography teacher has torn the map of lands which is inhabited by people. A soil for roots, to keep existence, so, how did we accept then?
Spectator 2: We are back to distribute consequences and responsibilities.
Spectator 1: Of course.. This crisis is larger than we keep one of us free from its responsibility.
Spectator 7: But we wanted not to accept. We wanted that our lands are not distributed. We wanted that our roots are not cut off or we are threatened to exist.

[. . .]
Spectator 2: And, what is the value of our willing if we are unrecognized images!.

[. . .]
Spectator 7: We wanted not to accept. We wanted to be responsible.

(Wannūs, Ἀ᾿mal Vol.1, 112-115)

Wannūs, all through his plays, raises the full responsibility of audience to think, be aware of the shocking state, be conscious of the dangers of being silent, alienated and individualized. The same applies to Deleuze who guides the direction of thinking through the portrayal of violence and intolerable conditions. Both aim at the transformation of the status quo to a ‘becoming world’.
To sum up, this section has surveyed the main concepts of Deleuze and their application in literature especially the political literature. Deleuze concepts are well read in Wannūs plays. Thus, they are essential in the literature review of Wannūs’ studying. Deleuze revolutionizes the rigid concepts in the world by showing how human ideas differ. This difference results into divergent perceptions of the same objects and even subjects. Accordingly, identity diverges and is differently conceptualized. This divergence means that concepts deviate from rigid roots to bring up different lines of thoughts that may collectively interconnect and form auxiliary stems. These stems are powerful enough to generate new roots, or in another perspective, new concepts. The new concepts define a new zone, a ‘becoming world’. The ‘becoming world’ departs from the original rhizome. As a result, it is a blessing that original roots diverge and constitute a rhizome. Deleuze believes that new thoughts can never emerge without violence and intolerance. From rhizome, people reject the origins and depart from the tight hegemony and dominating powers. People can now think collectively afresh for the ‘becoming world’.

Section 1.3 Brecht’s Dramatic Techniques

Wannūs has contributed specific dramatic techniques to the Arabic theatre, especially the political theatre. Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) has theorized new techniques in the epic theatre that are well mastered by Wannūs in order to engage spectators with the theatrical performance. Brecht, as a playwright and director, has presented a comprehensive manual to address the external world by involving the audience and emphasizing their responsibility to change the world. Brecht has been highly obsessed with the political theatre by employing the technique of estrangement. That is, he aims at estranging audience from performance so that audience is shocked and awakened with responsibility towards the external real world.
Basically, estrangement means “to show everything in a fresh and unfamiliar light, so that the spectator is brought to look critically even at what he has so far taken for granted” (Willett 177). The objective of this technique is not simply “to present what is familiar as unfamiliar” but it is essential to drive “consciousness of the causes of alienation” (Abousenna 37). That is, the audience realizes the reasons that lead to the sense of estrangement which encourages them to “a progressive, futuristic vision for social change” (Abousenna 36). Hence, Brecht opposes the narrow scope of alienation defined by Hegel in which his dialectic limits alienation to negation or estrangement (Abousenna 36). In this perspective, Brecht’s assumption in opposing Hegel (Abousenna 37) matches with Deleuze’s (Smith 91) so that they extend their effect through individual consciousness to change the future.

Brecht introduces the V-effect (defined here as estrangement) in epic theatre as a technique that questions critically the social situation which “is taken for granted” (Abousenna 38-39; Willet 79) or assumed for “perfection” (Willet 78) to “query the rules under which man lived. It was no longer to shock, but to make men think [. . .] that nothing may seem unalterable” (Willet 78-79). Brecht represents this imperfect condition “as socially controllable with the intention of removing the stamp of trust” (Abousenna 39). Brecht in his techniques highlights the social and political points of view in his writings and performance--not only in the hidden message of the play (Willet 187).

Brecht has symbolized estrangement in different stages in his writings and all of them highlight “a hope based on despair” (Weideli 19). In other words, he stresses the portrayal of helpless individuals who are defeated by dominant injustice or fierce wars. These individuals lose their battles and cope with the status quo. In his first plays, mainly, *Baal* and *The Jungle of the City*, “Brecht seems to despair of the helpless state of man who is subject to the irrational
forces of Nature, including the chaos of his own human nature” (Lyons 46). In this stage, Brecht confronts spectators with the vicious circle; there is no way out. The main objective of this starting point is to reflect the political impacts on the individual’s social life. Brecht states that the objective is to show the “separation of elements” rather than their “fusion” in the art work. He stated that “[t]he process of fusion extends to the spectator, who gets thrown into the melting pot too and becomes a passive (suffering) part of the total work of art” (Brooker 45). Some critics such as Willet assume that Brecht was forced to avoid fusion due to the restriction of his exile (Brooker 153). However, this separation is inclined to defuse spectators’ emotions and refract their attention to the political consequences.

Brecht’s techniques have matured in his play Man is Man where his characters have taken action to avoid domination. Human beings are searching for identity and value of existence. Characters are not passive or driven by nature. They apparently fail when they follow their instincts and their individual desires. However, “[t]he loss of individuality which these changes cause is declared to be of little importance because ‘[a] man’s man,’ and one is as good—or as bad—as another because their function and not their unique identity is the important aspect of their humanity” (Lyons 56). This transformation of consciousness is highly clear in Wannūs’ plays. Wannūs presents transforming characters who are driven towards dominating powers such as Jābir, Māssah and Zakaria. These transformations of human beings— from good to bad, enflame the resistance of spectators against the negative consequences of transformation. However, these characters reflect that regardless of human nature, and the rhizomatic structures that emerge from the individual nature of humanity, action is required. In other words, the individual despair enlightens hope for future collective action rather than infusion of helpless sympathy.
It is worth noting that Brecht has experienced the consequences of war, Communism and exile all through his life. These forces direct his writing to coalesce with politics; especially the war, in his drama. This is clear in *Mother Courage* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. In both plays, individuals either ally with power or avoid the dangers of power so that they can safely survive. Yet, they are victimized. In *Mother Courage*, the mother “doesn’t resist the war, she accommodates and uses it” (Lyons 105). Brecht states that the main objective of this play is to show that “in wartime big business is not conducted by small people” and “no sacrifice is too great for the struggle against war” (Lyons 105). Ironically, Brecht portrays the sacrifice of a mother, who aims to benefit from wartime and find a means of livelihood for her children and herself, is unethical and futile. Accordingly, Brecht explicitly directs the audience to avoid alliance with power. Mainly, Brecht’s spectators float between ethical emotions and shocking compassion. Brecht leaves the audience in the paradoxical state “to choose life by denying instincts is to choose a life which is desiccated, mechanical, out of which all human value has been drained” (Lyons 153).

Brecht further empowers this individual greed and self-benefit in *Galileo*. This play is unique in Brecht’s artworks because he portrays renowned historical scientist showing the weak human character. Brechtian Galileo prefers protecting his personal life to sacrificing for the world’s benefits through his scientific discoveries. He could not antagonize the Church at that time. Lyons analyzes Brechtian Galileo as follows:

The primary ambiguity of *The life of Galileo* finds into source in the fact that Galileo’s indulgence in life’s pleasure generates the appetite for knowledge and hence the knowledge, itself, and simultaneously, generates the human weakness which makes him unable to say no to the threat of pain. His submission to appetite is both his strength and his weakness. (127)
It is worth mentioning that as Brecht was writing the English version of *The Life of Galileo* in 1945, the world witnessed the tragic events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which contributed to Brecht’s disillusionment concerning modern science. His condemnation of Galileo comes as a result of his belief that scientists should be working for the benefit of society, not to harm humanity. Brecht has first represented Galileo who does not abandon the virtuous traits of a scientist. He later accuses himself of guilt especially at the end while showing that his greediness results into future scientific crimes such as the discovery of a bomb. Brecht has shown a very complex paradox in Galileo’s biography. The paradox is that Galileo is aware of dangers and he owns the solution. But, he prefers his individual secure life. Lyons thus concludes the Brechtian dilemma of the will in the paradox of Galileo’s decision:

> Galileo elected life, and denied his instinctive movement toward a value outside his own will. However, his scientific contribution was generated in his total appetite for life; and he is unable to deny that very appetite which is the source of his scientific discoveries. Galileo realizes this; and in his immense guilt, his acutely suffering consciousness becomes the most fully developed vessel for the Brechtian dilemma of the will. (153)

Therefore, Brecht, in this play, has shown that solution is neither in the hands of intellectuals nor in the hands of people who have a good will. It is mainly fused in the actions of collective power. Accordingly, Brecht has enlisted the complexity of the relationship of individuals and political power whether through wars, courts or exile. He mainly addresses the fact that whether individuals have good or bad intentions, whether they are knowledgeable or driven by nature, they are all vulnerable to the domination of political conditions and there is no current given solution or itinerary one may follow.

Brecht thus employs estrangement to show the transformation of society based on the political situation to awaken consciousness, then he explains that this consciousness is not
sufficient to get out from the current situation. Peter Brooker, writes in *Bertolt Brecht: Dialectics, Poetry, Politics*:

The process therefore that *Verfremdung* sets in motion is the inherently dialectical one by which whatever is obvious, self-evident, or ‘natural’, is ‘negated’, i.e. made to appear first strange, unfamiliar and incomprehensible, but then, in the ‘negation of the negation’, returned; transformed as the newly intelligible. What, theoretically, Brecht also associates with the process is that dialectical progression to a higher state, the change from quantity to quality, as the spectator is repositioned in relation to ideology and history. As newly class-conscious and politicized individual, the spectator is thus brought to the point, potentially as least, of collective political action. (83)

In line with Brooker’s summary, it is essential to bring in Deleuze’s concept of resisting the rhizome through literature. Deleuze’s strategy aligns with Brecht in shocking the spectator violently. This shock stimulates thinking to transform society. It is mandated that the author should not dictate a solution and historical figures should not be drawn to symbolize history but they should drive spectators to assess history. Also, they both agree that the turning point requires collective will. Hence, Deleuze, Brecht and Wannüs meet at this singular point of reshaping literature to awaken victimized society.

Brecht further stresses that solution is not dictated in drama. Drama, for Brecht, may ironically entertain audience. However, it does not provide a map for the future. Brecht’s drama mainly shows the end point of the state which is a failure as a result of division and private greedy intentions. As Martin Esslin states, Brecht “had nothing concrete to offer when he came to showing how a better system would work. The very violence of his demand for a change, his recurrent assertion that things cannot, must not, go on as they are at present, springs from the failure” (275). This failure marks the emergence of a successful future, as well represented in Eric Bentley’s words, “All this hate means love. All this conflict means conciliation. All this war
means peace. If we are beginning to conceive, and to build, any alternatives to domination and coercion, it is with the help of Bertolt Brecht” (113).

Brecht’s estrangement techniques are not limited to situations; rather, they extend to the performance techniques in order to consolidate estrangement. Brecht is keen to keep a space for actors and audience to interact with the performance. Hence, Brecht believes that, “It is always good not to say much. Then the actors contribute something themselves because they are not simply waiting for orders” (Fuegi 149). Performance for Brecht is a pivotal tool in addressing estrangement. Brooker explains the estrangement in the performance of Brecht’s drama:

It becomes clear, from the many statements made by Brecht, that the function of *Verferemdungseffekt* is to puncture the complacent of either character, motive, narrative, incident or resolution, as ‘fixed’ and ‘unchanging’, or ‘obvious’ and ‘inevitable’ This in his ‘Notes to The Roundheads and Pointed Heads’ he talks of how ‘certain incidents in the play should be [. . .] raised -- by means of inscriptions, musical or sound effects and the actors’ ways of playing—above the level of the everyday, the obvious, the expected (ie alienated). (62)

One technique of estrangement is “moment of evolution (the transformation of feelings into other feelings of opposing art. Critique and empathy in one)” (Abousenna 42). Brecht portrays the happy smooth scene and suddenly transforms feelings to antagonize the happy scene and to realize the dangers and fears behind this calm scene. Then, he pushes the stunned spectators to take the initiative to criticize the situation and resist it. To explain this effect, Brecht realizes that the objective of his drama is far beyond amusement. First, he provides the unfamiliar image or scene to attract audience. Suddenly, he turns it into sympathizing scene; for example, the actress is reading messages and recalling a happy memory and suddenly she decides to commit suicide. Moving from memory that brings happiness and joy to suicide, in turn, transforms recipients’ feelings from contentment into sympathy. However, sympathy is not the objective of Brecht’s drama. He mainly communicates with minds that question the reasons
of transformation from relaxation to a sudden loss of hope and a tragic ending. Brecht also symbolizes the transformation in *Galileo*. There are two men who meet Galileo and try to convince him to quit his studies that are against the stated concepts of the Church. They wear masks and they show sympathy to Galileo who does not have a mask. Afterwards, Galileo has put a mask in the same way these men wear their masks. Lyons analyzes this scene as “[t]his transformation relates to another meaningful use of the symbol of dual personality, integrity and compromise” (124).

Another estrangement technique is “contradictoriness” (Abousenna 42). This technique shows the contradictory actions of the same character. So, there is no ideal perfect character. Brecht here revolutionizes the classic form of heroes in epic theatre. Audience expects that the hero of epics is the savior. Epics are based on entertaining spectators through the continuous successes of this perfect character who never fails. Brecht contradicts this role model and shows that heroes fail and fall at the end. They take wrong decisions and they are not always perfect. As a result, unhappy endings occur. This contradiction does not mean that heroes have become enemies; simply they inherited human nature of imperfection and contradiction. This appears in selecting historical characters such as Galileo who has been later celebrated for his great discovery; however, at his time, he has not confronted the government and he has continued his studies in the dark. As well, “Brecht continually associates Galileo’s hunger for food with his hunger for knowledge” (Lyons 126).

A third technique that Brecht has introduced is “the particular in the general” (Abousenna 42). Since the main objective of Brecht is highlighting the reality on stage, it is essential for him to keep the parallel alignment with real society. He uses particular characters but he emphasizes that the objective of these characters is not personalization. These characters are models in the
In other words, Brecht does not authorize historical era or set a model for modern society. On the contrary, he portrays models as imperfect models while audience criticizes this character to bring up a better general model. Prospective model should not inherit the sympathized narrow path in the past. Brecht has depicted the wartime in *Mother Courage* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. But, “[t]he prologue clarifies the unreality of the action which exists in reality”, as Lyons justifies it, “an illusion in which the reward of compassion is celebrated as exceptional in a world in which compassion has only but a fragile and momentary life.” (154).

Brecht is also keen to propose estrangement techniques for performance and stage a setup that breaks the borders of performance and involves audience into the acts. One of these techniques is assigning a title to each scene (Abousenna 41), as apparent in most of Wannūs’ plays. Another main technique is the involvement of audience in the act (Abousenna 41). However, Wannūs believes that Arabic theatre is not ready yet for open dialogue; thus, he relies on actors who sit among audience as in *Haflat samar*. He may portray a scene that is closer to the casual places as a coffee shop where a storyteller narrates the fairytale of Jābir the mamlūk while customers give their feedback on each episode, and link it with the current incidents so that customers represent the audience in the play.

Wannūs has not restricted himself to a copy and paste process of Brecht’s technique. Indeed, he believes that Arabic theatre’s taste is different from that of the European theatre. For example, Wannūs mentions that the Arab audience does not have a penchant for concerts and music that Brecht uses in his drama. Therefore, Wannūs relies more on the Arabic epic forms such as the storyteller or *rabābah* signer (Wannūs, *A’māl* Vol.3, 98). Also, Wannūs compares Brecht’s technique with his own style showing that Brecht could not remove the stage curtains
whereas Wannūs in *Haflat samar* locates some actors among audience (Wannūs, *A’māl* Vol.3, 97). Based on that, Wannūs has reshaped the epic theatre to adapt to the Arabic audience and involve them into the events; the actors take the position of spectators and become a reflection of audience’s daily life.

However, the two Brechtian techniques that Wannūs has apparently adopted are: role reversal and memory. Role reversal is well performed in Brecht’s play *Man by Man*. Some assume that Wannūs has arabized this play in *Al-malik huwa al-malik*. However, Wannūs has clearly identified the shifting dramatic technique he has adopted in this play that abandons that comedian superficial style in Brecht’s play into customized signs of power that is not personified by the reversed character. In *Al-malik huwa al-malik*, Abou ‘Izza has become the king and no one could recognize the real king.

The other technique of estrangement is memory. Wannūs has introduced different figures from history - caliph, ministry, king, mamlūk, merchandizer (shahbandar), sheikh, mufti and aʿyan (dignitaries). Wannūs highlights that these figures do not symbolize history. Rather, they symbolize figures from any era and at any level of power. As previously mentioned, Brecht and Wannūs bring these figures to portray the power structure, the alliance of subordinates and their desire to identify with the dominating power structure, and finally the strong impacts of the political power on the social conditions.

The common estrangement device between Wannūs and Brecht is the unhappy endings. Both abandon the traditional theatre of entertainment and stress the line of hopeless endings. These endings do not create hope for the audience. The audience is hesitant to believe that
change is attainable without their involvement. The future may change only if the status has changed from the past and current conditions.

Brecht’s technique can be discerned in Wannūs’ plays where Wannūs presents a society that tends to isolate social life from political situation in order to keep the stability of society. Wannūs’ characters avoid any risk that may endanger or improve their social lives. Yet, suddenly he ends each play with a total collapse of society. He then alerts the audience to the fact that such alliances are linked and corruption dominates. Although, Wannūs has employed many Brechtian techniques of estrangement he has radically reshaped them to accommodate the Arabic audience and culture.
Chapter Two: Dramatic Devices and Techniques in Wannūs’ Theatre

Wannūs has fulfilled his plan to revive the Arabic drama by using Brechtian dramatic techniques effectively on stage (Wannūs, Bayanāt 26-27). Wannūs has given special focus to the stage and its effects on performance including visual devices such as local storyteller, curtains, lights, placards and mirrors; non-verbal language such as audience involvement, a play within a play, games, music and time. Further, Wannūs focuses on dramatic techniques such as role reversal and the use of memory. This chapter surveys these devices in Wannūs’ selected plays through the texts rather than performance. It starts with an illustration of Wannūs’ directions for audience involvement and awakening consciousness. Second section focuses on his selection of dramatic devices adapted in the Arabic drama. The last section details the dramatic techniques and their application in the selected works.

Section 2.1 Audience Involvement

Wannūs orchestrates his works to demolish the barriers between audience and stage, between stage and off stage and between politics and social life. These three dimensions, from Wannūs’ point of view, cannot be accomplished without the involvement of audience in the performance, their collective consciousness and their deep thinking (Wannūs, Bayanāt 26). Hence, it is mandated to study the nature of audience as recipients in Wannūs’ theatre, then, read the stage as a catalyst and finally analyze the role of spectators as mirrors who reflect the status quo and have the potential to encourage revolutionary change in society.

Wannūs has persistently stated that his aim is to reach the masses (Wannūs, Bayanāt 25). Accordingly, it is mandated to utilize devices that attract attention and engage the mind. At this
point, Wannūs intentionally opposes the Western bourgeois drama adopted by Brecht (Wannūs, Bayanāt 96). He is bent on revolutionizing the dramatic devices—textual and visual—to serve the lower levels of society. Wannūs sets a direct description of his goals in his introductions. He extensively uses the casual environment of layman to surround audience with a local atmosphere. Thus, he brings the local café to the stage. He implants actors on stage to speak out and encourages audience to participate. He further represents out-stage social life that is abused by political power.

Wannūs tends to employ Brecht’s estrangement techniques in epic theatre (Ismail 166) so that he does not offer a ready-made solution by the end of the performance. Wannūs tends to energize the audience’s outrage into stimulating thoughts “to change the future” (Wannūs, Bayanāt 40). He consciously selects his techniques from Brecht without blindly following in his steps. Wannūs remarks that his audience reacts freely towards “democracy” and without the restrictions and formality of Brecht’s bourgeois audience (Wannūs, Bayanāt 115). Thus, unlike Brecht, Wannūs makes use of this freedom and gets rid of the barriers of stage-curtains (Wannūs, Bayanāt 116). Spectators can view the back and on stage preparations. The audience directly react without performance borders. Through the direct reaction and involvement of audience with actors and stage, Wannūs is supposedly “able to make people relax and encourage their participation in the performance” (Gouryh 219). Contrary to Gouryh’s expectation (219), Wannūs believes that Arabic spectators are not ready for a free discussion. Thus, he creates dialogue through actors. He believes that the customs in Arabic theatre, on one hand, and inability of audience to speak out freely, on the other hand, restrict this openness of audience/stage dialogue (Wannūs, A’māl Vol.1, 131).
Wannūs thus comes up with other devices in order to strengthen the free interaction between spectators and stage. One major device is the use of familiar themes, settings and ambience on stage such as the storyteller and the atmosphere of a café. For Wannūs, these devices achieve the “direct communication” with audience “instantly” (Wannūs, Bayanāt 116). These familiar devices are differently shaped in Wannūs’ plays through local market, local music or musical instruments, and local sayings. Wannūs never abandons these methods even when he travels back into history. It is worth mentioning that Wannūs is against reproducing a saga or epic theatre; he has used them to arrest the recipients’ attention in the performance (Wannūs, Bayanāt 121).

As for the influence of Brecht’s technique of estrangement on Wannūs’ plays, Wannūs presents a society that tends to separate social life from political situation in order to keep the peaceful state of society. Wannūs unleashes the reality through the characters of his plays in order to represent a society that avoids the involvement in politics and it gets deeply involved in the negative consequences of political rhizome. This is clearly portrayed in Malḥamat al-sarāb in which society aims to improve the standard level and reach civil societal standards. But, the end is a total destruction: no land, no money, no customs or traditions, no decent lives and a series of murders and corruption. During the play, Wannūs strengthens this vision of controlled society while the Sheikh and merchants appraise the modernization of the village to meet with civil society. Then, at the end, Zarqa’ foresees that corruption and informs them that they trusted Abbūd who left them with a mirage. Wannūs also provides another perspective in Al-fil ya malik al-zamān where people suffer from corruption and the domination of rulers and their companions. However, once they are given the chance to face this corruption, they retreat and
ally with (or further desire) the power of hegemony. Wannūs thus notifies audience that corruption dominates as long as alliance bonds are established.

Brecht’s ‘moment of evolution’ is also shown in Wannūs’ play *Mughāmarat ra's al-mamlūk Jābir* at the moment when Jābir the mamluk is killed. The scene starts with great appraisal for Jābir’s smartness, then it moves to the laymen who are highly oppressed and are required to pay extra taxes while they are not able to feed themselves, then it moves again to Jābir who is trapped by the caliph and killed. The audience at this moment is detached from the appraisal of smartness and involved in a shocking moment of the turbulent society. Turbulence emerges from society’s carelessness and avoidance to involve themselves in political issues (Wannūs, *A’māl* Vol.1, 193, 206, 214, 217).

Further, the Brechtian technique of ‘contradictoriness’ is clear in Wannūs’ play *Tukūs*. Wannūs turns the conservative character, Mu’minah, into a playgirl who changes her name to Māssah; a change that contradicts customs and turns the city over. The sheikh is requested to give fatwa against Māssah and playgirls; however, the king could not support this fatwa because it limits his freedom. Instead of supporting the fatwa and eliminating corruption, the fatwa is postponed and corruption is spread (Wannūs, *A’māl* Vol.2, 568, 572, 598).

Studying ‘the particular in the general’ in Wannūs’ drama, he similarly ends his plays with chorus that announces that this particular episode is a general one that happens every day since then. Similarly, Brecht’s technique “to understand the one through the other (the numerous scenes)” (Abousenna 42) is portrayed in *Al-malik huwa al-malik*. Wannūs notes that in this play he utilizes the two characters ‘Ubayd and Zāhid to narrate the other characters. These two
characters organize the play and articulate the roles of each character in the game (Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.1, 579).

Brecht was also keen to propose estrangement techniques for performance and stage setup in which they break the borders of performance and inject audience into the acts. One of the Brechtian techniques is labelling each scene with title (Abousenna 41) as shown in most of Wannūs’ plays. Another Brechtian technique is the involvement of audience in the act (Abousenna 41). Wannūs believes that Arabic theatre is not yet ready for open dialogue; thus, he endows the stage with a casual atmosphere such as a coffee shop in which a narrator narrates the fairytale of Jābir the mamluk while customers give feedback on each episode and link it with the contemporary incidents. So, customers represent the audience in the play.

In addition, Brecht utilizes historical figures and scenes to serve estrangement, social estrangement and not historical reconciliation. This is shown in Zarqā’-- a renowned historical figure who is well known for her far sight. Wannūs reflects this character in the contemporary days as a short sighted woman. When her sons quarreled, Zarqā’ retrieves her ability to foresee but she is confined. She could not stop them, and one son kills the other. Zarqā’ is back to her short sight until the last scene when she announces the omen that Abbūd will flee and people will lose their money, merchandise and land and they will kill each other. People stabbed Zarqā’ whereas she was very well respected in history (Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.2, 745-750). This change in treatment and this limitation of the historical figure reflect the turbulent society of nowadays.

Given the above, it is obvious that Wannūs is obsessed with the role of the masses in changing the future. Such change requires the individuals’ awareness and consciousness. Wannūs
uses his devices first to attract audience; second to alert them to the direct link between political powers and social conditions; third to highlight the direct responsibility of audience in the status quo; finally to push them into thinking for the future; a future that will not be changed without their resistance.

Section 2.2 Wannūs’ Dramatic Devices

This section covers in details the dramatic devices that Wannūs employs in his drama and shows the reflections of these devices on resistance literature in the light of rhizomatic structure. The main devices illustrated in this section are: visual devices and stage setup such as notes, placards, curtains, lights, local storyteller and mirrors; and, non-verbal devices such as audience involvement, a play within a play, games, music, time and body.

Because Wannūs targets the lower classes, he explains events, environment, and objectives. So, he provides in most of his plays opening or ending notes. These notes are directed mostly to the reader except that some are meant for the director. These notes clarify the core theme of the play, the relationship between the events and status quo and the experimental directions of dramatic devices in political theatre. In Haflat samar, Wannūs portrays the stage, back stage and off stage while explaining the reasons behind his selections. For example, he mentions that most of managers of cultural corporations have attended the play. Then, he justifies their attendance critically, “in the events of the city, it is a must that cultural corporations attend” (Wannūs, A’māl Vol.1, 23). Afterwards, he compares reality with the episode. He compares the director in the play with directors everywhere in this country who own the stage (Wannūs, A’māl Vol.1, 23). All such details provided by the notes portray the
atmosphere of stage in the text and involve the reader as if he is watching the play on stage and helps the reader to envision the link between real life and story from the outset.

In *Al-malik huwa al-malik*, the notes are very critical and they pinpoint the mistakes which are committed by some directors and critics who miss the core of the play, especially the game. Wannūs explains that the game is mandated and there is no real king who may leave away his position or gown and crown (Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 575). Wannūs also remarks that the play does not target any special social level but a general hierarchical power structure (Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 575). Wannūs mainly focuses on the concept of “disguise” and highlights that the king is a symbol; that is, he is nothing without his signs of kingdom. He also points out that all characters are taking roles in the game except Zahid and ʿUbayd who symbolize the revolution, comment on the events and are aware of their future plans (Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 579). Finally, Wannūs states his message that “This atmosphere of hunting is exactly the celebration that gives us the chance to divide the king and distribute his signs. So, everyone becomes a king in a society with no hierarchy, and no disguise” (Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 578). Given all such details, the reader, aided by these devices, realizes that he should rebel against the status quo and resist the hierarchical power that controls society. Likewise, *Mughāmarat raʾs al-mamlūk Jābir* starts with a descriptive analysis of the stage, a differential stage that has no barriers or borders. Audience and actors are at the same level and on the same stage. In his notes, Wannūs describes his audience as well as his actors. The audience then enjoys a relaxing mood in a café similar to the local cafés.

Wannūs complements his notes and direct messages to the laymen through a set of placards displayed at the beginning of each scene. These placards give an impression that we are reading a plan; they are the milestones which direct us to the next stage. In *Al-malik huwa al-*
malik, Wannūs gives a note that placards should be read by ʿUbayd and Zahid (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 481). The placards, for Wannūs, are part of the chain of events. They are the key to following the events. For example, in Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān (The King’s Elephant), the play is divided into four scenes. The titles of these scenes summarize the psychological change of the mob: 1- The decision (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 453), 2- Exercises (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 466), 3- Off the Castle (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 470) and 4- In front of the King (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 472). Similarly, placards and short description of the next chapter appear in Tukūs and Malḥamat al-sarāb. The clarity of the notes and placards serves the main objective of Wannūs; these plays are written for the masses and not for the highly educated bourgeoisie.

Moving to the stage, Wannūs extends the atmosphere of involving the masses through curtains. Wannūs proudly highlights his genuine innovation of Brecht’s estrangement to serve the Arabic audience who differ from Brecht’s Western audience. Wannūs decides to drop the formality of Brecht’s estrangement and establish a casual atmosphere so he seats actors in the auditorium and invites audience (actors who represent audience) to the stage in Haflat samar. At the beginning, Wannūs raises objections through actors who sit among spectators (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 24) in order to break the barriers and let real audience interact freely. Psychologically, the masses raise collective objection. So, when the play starts with a delay and some of the actors who are sitting among the audience shout and get outraged, this by default passes to the real audience and they object to the delay. After the appearance of the director, another phase of dropping the curtains takes place. The director starts to narrate the events that happened behind curtains. During narration, workers get on stage with lights; decorations change while lights are on and discussions between the director and playwright are displayed (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 30-72). Wannūs extends such direct involvement in Mughāmarat raʾs al-mamlūk
Jābir where audience and actors sit on the same level, and so the audience sits in the café as if they are customers while they are served with tea and shisha (Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 134). Wannūs is really courageous to open the gate for democracy and free discussions in the play. However, he could not rely on audience’s freedom at that time because as per his observations, the audience is not ready to speak out freely. They are not motivated to think loudly (Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 131). This restricts the collective involvement of audience to freely and effectively participate without pre-defined directions from the stage.

Also, stage lights form a special language in attracting the attention of audience especially in Ḥaflat samar. For example, when spectators come over the stage and the director tries to control them, lights are switched off (Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 116). At the end, light is spotted on the official man who arrests all audience and ʿAbdel Ghany to show that power is in the hands of the officials at the end (Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 122). Notes, placards, curtains and lights are dramatic devices used by Wannūs in order to serve the masses and attract their attention then give them a free environment. The audience is then part of the play with no barriers or formality.

Wannūs keeps looking for his devices to strengthen the bonds between audience and stage and embed the feelings that stage is part of reality so that audience could integrate story with reality. One of these devices is the storyteller invited in Mughāmarat raʾs al-mamlūk Jābir. The storyteller in this work plays a focal transformative role. The audience listens to the storytellers at cafés to amuse themselves with epic stories in which the hero wins at the end. However, in this play, Wannūs shocks the audience with the failure of “the dream of winning” (Beyban 60). Such shocking estrangement of audience unleashes reality: power wins even if it
does not serve goodness. Winning turns to destruction and a clear message is conveyed; history repeats itself in continuous failures since recipients do not change their mindsets.

Another set of dramatic devices that consolidates estrangement is the use of mirrors. In ِHaflat samar min ajl al-khāmis min huzayrān (Frolic on the Occasion of the 5th of June), one of the spectators invite others to look at mirrors and search for their reflections. They could not find their images “Spectator 2: Because we are erased images” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 104). Such estrangement that one cannot find one’s reflection in the mirror physically opens space for figuring out the reasons: “Images erased by the national interest” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 104). Such national interest that imprisons, cuts tongues and forbids thoughts and only remains “a fade shadow at the back of the national interest” (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 106).

Wannūs utilizes the stage setup such as curtains, lights and storytellers to direct audience attention to the hidden messages and prepare them to get involved in the play. Once the physical tools are applied, Wannūs invites audience to participate in the dialogue. As previously mentioned, Wannūs could not drop the barrier directly in order to keep space for improvisation. However, he encourages audience to think freely and participate. In Haflat samar, all actors except the director and orchestra band are audiences who sit in front of the stage. Wannūs represents a cornerstone that transforms the silence and fear of audience into an outraged discussion. He starts with objections from the audience that is countered by others. Then, ‘Abdellaḥman (one of the spectators) starts to narrate his story that symbolizes the passive position of most Arabs in 1967. Wannūs then brings in supporters for ‘Abdellaḥman. In turn, Wannūs raises objections to such passivity. Bringing such binary contention on stage, Wannūs threads different narrations from which he collectively brings a group that reveals the reality of national interest. Once resistance has reached its peak, officers arrest those who call for revolt.
mong these waves of outrage, resistance and counter resistance of power, the audience takes sides and thinks while questions are continuously thrown. Wannūs wants to awaken the consciousness of spectators so that they collectively oppose political powers that confine their freedom.

After the first experimentation, Ḥaflat samar, Wannūs also involves spectators in the outraged discussion in his play Mughāmarat ra’s al-mamlūk Jābir. In this play, Wannūs first reveals the passive community that is not involved in political contentions and rather assumes that politics has nothing to do with demands. Then, Jābir appears as a passive layman with “indifference” (Beyban 49); that is, he does not care about the political situation like most of the mob. Then, he finds a personal interest in the political conflict so he turns to the stage “questioning, searching and thinking” (Beyban 49). Then, he finds his way to meet the minister and tells him about his trick. This stage as Beyban calls it, “action and achievement” (49). Although his meeting with the minister is risky, he is willing to “confront” (Beyban 49) power in order to meet his goals. The feedback from the audience (represented in the café customers) comes in the form of their appraisal of Jābir’s smartness. Paradoxically, Jābir has lost his life and he did not reach a place among the political hierarchy. So, Wannūs presents the two opposing forces to the audience while he condemns the passivity in resisting the political domination. He also condemns Jābir’s alliance with political power. Then, he ends the play by reminding the audience that history repeats itself and one should not surrender to passivity (Wannūs, A’māl Vol.1, 218). Wannūs thus forces audience to reject the past and the present to find a new way out for the future.

Wannūs does not always involve audience from the outset. For example, in Al-malik huwa al-malik, Al-fil ya malik al-zamān, Malḥamat al-sarāb and Tukūs, he involves his audience
towards the end while he highlights that history repeats itself and the same ending occurs if there is no change applied. Such a message forces the audience to think of resisting the contemporary power to save the future.

Wannūs restructures the dramatic devices that enrich the psychological impact on the recipients. He uses the multi-dimensional level of involvement by representing a play within a play. And, in all dimensions he empowers the bonds of involvement of audience with play(s). In Mughāmarat ra's al-mamlūk Jābir, the first play is run in the café in which the storyteller narrates the second play of Jābir. In the first play, audience in involved by dropping curtains and setting the place of seats for customers and audience. In the second play, audience in involved through customers’ feedback. Then, another play (within a play) exposes popular discussions among the people. Similarly, in Ḥaflat samar, audience and actors sit off-stage. Then, the director starts the play. However, he announces that he cannot perform it; instead, he narrates what happens in back-stage. As a response, the actors impersonating the audience give their feedback: some want the performance to go on, others welcome the interlude of music and dance. A second play arises when ʿAbdellaḥman reaches the stage and starts to narrate his story. Spectators of the first play get involved in the second play and relate their lives and fates with ʿAbdellaḥman; some agree and others blame him for his passivity. A third play then starts to examine images on mirror while the first play continues to provide some music and dance. A fourth play extends the third one when the geography teacher relates his past with the real contemporary setback and failure. So, the feedback from virtual audience (actors) connects the real audience with reality and links the chain of plays with the status quo. At this moment, plays collapse and an official man ends performance and pushes the audience off stage and arrest them.
Such a series of plays within plays strengthens the involvement of audience and stimulates resistant thinking against the current power.

Wannūs also inserts games in many of his plays in order to estrange audience and establish a virtual space in which everything is permissible and possible. Then, he shocks the audience with the link between reality and games and the dangers of continuing this game. “Mirosław Filiciak has noted that gaming communities can enable rhizomatic identities to emerge” (Martin-Jones and Sutton 18). The game is well addressed in *Al-malik huwa al-malik*. Wannūs assures readers and spectators that events are portrayed in a game. This game permits the flight of imagination. The objective of the game is to display the concept of “disguise” and to go beyond personal identity into a symbolic one in which persons are identified by their costumes (that is, their social levels). Once one gives up his position in the game, a new actor takes his place and identity. Thus, Wannūs paves the way for everyone to find a position and to be attached to the symbolic costume in order to rule and gain power.

Another game is represented in *Haflat samar* when one of the spectators invite the rest to look at the mirror and its corners (Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 103). The game in this play is about the existence of the players; those who join lose their images in the mirror. Hence, this game aims to switch the normal supposition of audience. The norm is that if someone looks at the mirror, he sees his reflection. However, losing images is shocking and frightening. Losing the norm raises questions which lead to reality.

Music is another dramatic device that Wannūs uses to shock audience. Unlike Brecht who uses music to support the feelings of estrangement for the bourgeois, Wannūs uses music to annoy the audience. While audience struggle, the director orders orchestra to play music; as if
music is a place out of the domain that distracts the line of thinking of the audience. That is why it was a triumph for the audience to stop music. Playing music, after the setback of 1967, contrasts with the hard conditions in the country. Music is thus a means of alienation that comes up when power wins and retreats when resistance gains momentum.

While music contributes to the feeling of alienation, time plays a role in estrangement. Wannūs addresses time as one of the core elements in Ḥaflat samar at the beginning of the performance. Real audience does not know that delay is part of the performance and such complaints are raised by actors. Accordingly, complaints begin. This delay frees the spectators from their passive position in watching performance. However, time in Wannūs’ plays is sometimes virtual and at other times historical characters are imagined or reflect memorial events of the setback, as in Ḥaflat samar. Each moment has a different effect on the audience which leads to a new form of thinking.

The last dramatic device that Wannūs masters especially in Tukūs is the body. Body in oriental society reflects taboos and traditions. Brecht and Wannūs address sexuality and homosexuality as a means of projecting a turbulent society. Furthermore, Wannūs orchestrates the inevitable change through the body of Mu’minah or (lately, Māssah). Such shocking estrangement in dropping the traditions into free open life raises a conflict whether to side with Mu’minah—the conservative passive character who was betrayed by her husband, father and brother—or side with Māssah, the attractive powerful rebellious character who breaks all customs. Killing Māssah does not end her impact in changing society. On the other hand, the master of al-ashrāf (the noble religious descendants of the prophet) has apparently changed his body. He seeks apparent soul purity but he is abandoned by the society. Apparently, this shocking result stimulates thinking. Thinking may lead towards resistance to the current
situation. However, resistance is always avoided by the society. Once resistance gains power, it is attractive and it is the catalyst to change society.

Section 2.3 Wannūs’ Dramatic Techniques

This section mainly focuses on two dramatic techniques adopted by Wannūs: role reversal and memory.

Role reversal is explicitly portrayed in Al-malik huwa al-malik. The role reversal in the disguise play first aims to estrange audience with a virtual situation that cannot be applied to reality. However, the ending gives hope to audience that power structure may collapse if signs of power are distributed and decentralized. Wannūs in this play stresses that we must resist figures and we must be aware that changing a person does not mean changing the regime. Wannūs also emphasizes that he does not call for military coup. He calls for collective resistance that involves individuals in the domain of political power. If everyone gains a sign of power, all of us would be as powerful as kings and there will be no hegemonic power.

Role reversal has taken place as well in Tukūs between Mu’minah and Māssah. This reversal threatens society on the social level. However, such reversal has shown the direct impact on political decisions. Political powers could not stand this unsettling of society because it threatens their individual interests and needs. In this role reversal, social resistance is woven into the political interests; thus, political power collapses. However, in a hegemonic society, collapse of political figures means the collapse of society. Social resistance is required to bring a new path of resisting power against the status quo.
In *Mughāmarat ra's al-mamlūk Jābir*, Wannūs shows that role reversal requires full awareness of the opposing power. Jābir assumes that allying with the hegemonic power protects him. However, this hierarchical power never opens space for less submitted hierarchy to stem up and mingle with their structure. Conversely, they empower hegemony.

Wannūs treats memory in a similar way to Brecht. The latter represents historical figures to be judged rather than appraised. Like Brecht, Wannūs believes that history should be assessed in order to trace the roots of power and counter them. That is the reason behind the imperfect images that are recalled. For instance, Zarqā’ who was well known in history for far sight, is represented as a blind woman who could not stop the danger when her sons were fighting and one kills the other (Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.2, 661). Also, Wannūs brings Baghdad, the city of rich civilization, in political conflicts, betrayal and final defeat (Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.1, 141). Memory is a tool of estrangement that shocks spectators who glorify history with assumed series of triumphs even when history records defeats.

Furthermore, Wannūs has introduced different figures from Arab history: caliph, vezir, king, mamluk, merchandizer (shahbandar), sheikh, mufti, aʿyan. Wannūs points out that these figures do not symbolize history. They are symbols that could exist at any age and at any level of power. As previously mentioned, Brecht and Wannūs present these figures to portray the power structure, the alliance of subordinates and their desire for the dominating power structure, and finally the strong bonds and impacts of the political power on the social conditions. So, in *Mughāmarat ra's al-mamlūk Jābir*, the historical events do not embrace the scene. Wannūs does not show a triumph with which the audience can reconcile. On the contrary, he highlights the negative historical image of power and he stresses that history is repeating itself as long as power allies with hegemony.
To sum up, role reversal and memory are dramatic techniques of estrangement that lead audience to a shocking experience. Such a shock, in turn, leads to think of new path so as to avoid defeat.
Chapter Three: Subversion of the Rhizome

The pivotal power of resistance in Wannūs’ plays is the culminated rhizome of hegemonic political structure. Wannūs has exemplified these structures through different representations to show the cemented interconnectedness of these structures. These interconnections are tightly tangled and, in turn, they threaten the social conditions of the laymen who are not offered to adjoin this rhizome. Accordingly, Wannūs portrays this rhizome to agitate the audience (who represents the society) against the threat of these convoluted hegemonic structures. This chapter reads into these rhizomatic structures in Wannūs’ selected plays and it associates this representation with the dramatic devices and techniques discussed in chapter two. This chapter mainly starts with the installation of rhizome in Wannūs’ plays. Then, it shows the tools of resistance devised by Wannūs against such hegemonic rhizome while awakening the audience’s consciousness. Finally, it demonstrates the methods that Wannūs applies to direct audiences towards establishing the new lines of flight and rethinking a new society for the future.

Section 3.1 Rhizome in Wannūs’ Plays

This section studies the form of the rhizome as defined by Deleuze and Guattari in Wannūs’ plays. This rhizome mainly constitutes the political powers and their allied parties. Then, it studies the violence that emerges from this hegemonic rhizome. Hence, this section focuses on the nature of characters in Wannūs’ plays in the light of detachment of these characters from the roots and their lateral effects that spread over the society.

Wannūs betokens the hegemonic societies in his world from different perspectives. From one side, he represents the authoritarianism represented in the ruler who is aware of his allied
men only and is totally detached from his people. This representation is magnified in *Al-malik huwa al-malik (The King Is the King)* where the king is bored and he amuses himself by making fun of the endured people.

VIZIER The Vizier shall always join in his Lord’s games with respect and gratitude[. . .]

KING You? No, that not what I need [. . .] I want something more violent, more vicious! I want to have some fun with the country! With the people!

[. . .]

VIZIER But the people are like frogs… they never cease croaking or grumbling [. . .] Your Majesty must have noticed that on our past expeditions everyone we met has a grievance to tell of or a complaint to make. Ingrates have such long tongues [. . .] I’m afraid their poisonous spray might anger my Lord, or put him in a bad mood. Security reports bring the City naked to you in this very hall [. . .] Why should you expose your august personage to contact with stench and filth?

KING Because there are times when that amuses me. When I listen to the people’s little problems, when I watch the comings and goings in search of a penny or a mouthful of food, I’m overwhelmed by a sense of cunning pleasure. Their stinking lives are more interesting than anything a court jester could imagine or invent. And today there’s something else: I have my own inventions, a game to play, with my country and my people. Since the idea crossed my mind, every part of my body has been throbbing with life. Bring us the disguise.

(Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 493-494; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 84-85)

The king is detached from his people and is surrounded by his entourage. Instead of containment and royal obligations, the king treats the people as if they are puppets who bring fun and amusement through their trivial social problems. The king does not live as a member of the society. He acts as ivy that is disconnected from the social community and their affairs. Conversely, the ivy is irrigated from the sufferings of the laymen. Similarly, Wannūs has represented the king in *Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān*. In this play, the king is a tyrant who is not aware of the violence and aggression exercised on the people: “The King: What do the subjects wish from their King?” (Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 474; Jayyusi, ed. 449).
In both plays, the king explicitly symbolizes the political tormenting power. There is a wide gap between the king who does not show that he is rooted from the society and he does not belong and share the social needs of his subjects. Besides, he stresses that this political hegemony stems from the power of the regime rather than the power of the tyrant individual. In *Al-malik huwa al-malik*, when Abou ‘Izza takes the position of the king, he forgets the social problems of the people and his dominance becomes fierce. He could not recognize his family who has suffered from injustice. Further, he rules against them to empower his position. At that time, for Abou ‘Izza, any complaints threaten his relationship with the allied faithful people: the shahbandar and sheikh.

In *Mughamarat ra’s al-mamlāk Jabir*, the political powers, moreover, abuse the ruling of people to serve their own interests. When the caliph needs extra money to secure his political position, he has arranged with his entourage to collect a “sacred tax” from the people who at that time faced poverty. However, the caliph forces them through fear and threat to pay taxes and give away all their belongings for his personal interest (Wannūs, *A’māl* Vol.1, 189). Thus, Wannūs represents the detachment and aggressive tyranny of rulers as if people serve the personal benefits and interests of rulers rather than being served. The ruler does not belong to the collective body of the society. He is like an ivy growing and spreading laterally to augment the dominant power over society.

The ivy is also represented in *Malḥamat al-sarāb* in the character of Abbūd who does not belong to the village, yet, he apparently supports the people to improve their lives and standards of living; however, he is more interested in abusing them. Abbūd does not represent the political power. He represents the unrooted power in society that acts as the magic stick of political
interests. Similarly, the director in *Haflat samar* directs audience to abide with the interests of the political powers.

The Director: This is a set up by ‘Abdelghany Alsha’ir that it has never happened before. Then, it agitates such affairs that violate security and the higher interest of the state.

(Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.1, 116)

The ivy cannot expand solely. It requires twisted stems that empower its expansion horizontally. In Wannūs’ plays, these stems are armed with the entourage people who benefit from the political hierarchy and they are usually the intellectuals such as the sheikhs or the merchants. In *Al-malik huwa al-malik*, the entourage further tightens the siege and widens the gap between the king and his people. The king does not interact with the people and he is kept in distance from their problems through the ‘security reports’. Hence, the entourage selectively communicates the news that supports their personal interests rather than the ones that serve the people’s benefits. The emergence of entangled rhizome is clearly stated when Abou ‘Izza furiously blames ‘Arqub who reminds him of the unjust sheikh and shahbandar. As a king, he sees them as “friends” who support his kingdom and security.

KING What’s come over you this morning? Are you trying to tell me that the very pillars of this realm are my archenemies? Do you want my state to collapse?

(Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.1, 544; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 107)

Wannūs clearly states that the strength of hegemony stems from the alliance of intellectuals and sheikhs with the rulers. Thus, Abou ‘Izza commands orders against his wife and daughter to end their complaints against the tyrant shahbandar and sheikh because at that moment the unjust people, from Abou ‘Izza’s perspective, are supposed to be the faithful friends to the king. Abou ‘Izza, the disguised king, thus blames his wife who complains against the shahbandar and sheikh.
KING I’ve been holding my temper with you, woman, because I know that bitterness can blind. But, let me just ask: have you come to tell me that this King and that the whole state is a handful of dust?

(Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 562; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 114)

Thus, Umm ’Izza represents the shock of people in this tangled rhizomatic relationship.

UMM ’IZZA (Musing) [. . .] everything the King has just said we’ve already heard from the the Imam, the Judge and the Head Merchant [. . .] You’d think they were all one man, one tongue, one family.

(Wannūs, *Aʾmāl* Vol.1, 563; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 115)

Wannūs portrays that the fact that the rhizome is strong and tight because both parties benefit from this web -- the rulers and entourage. As a result, resistance should not be directed to the rulers alone or the alliances alone; resistance requires collective forces to subvert the bonds of this rhizome.

Wannūs highlights the fragile response of the people towards this rhizome. The people avoid confrontation. As a result, the hegemonic power is strengthened and it doubles the tyranny against the people and their social conditions. In *Mughamarat raʾs al-mamlūk Jabir*, the allied member, ’Abdullah suggests that they collect taxes to support the war and secure the position of the caliph.

’Abdullah: We’ll always find a way to collect money and cover our expenses.

The caliph: Do you think the merchants will pay?

’Abdullah: The merchants!

The caliph: Why not! It is in their interest as well. We secure their benefits.

’Abdullah: Actually we should lessen the draining of merchants. They never scrimp. And, our cases prove that.

The caliph: Then [. . .] how can we save for our expenses?

’Abdullah: That’s simple. The security of the caliph is the duty of every Muslim. From his power, they seek power, and from his weakness, discord and separation
are crawling. And, for that, everyone has to give his share to save the caliph, and his realm. That is their main duties as Muslims.

(Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 188)

Thus, the alliances serve their bonds to empower the desires of political power at the expenses of the social benefits of the people. Wannūs, consequently, highlights that the only affected party by this webbed rhizome is the people and their social rights. Ironically, the people pay the expenses to strengthen the hegemonic rhizome against their rights. As a result, they do not complain:

The caliph: I am afraid that this tax could lead to the grumbling of people. In such a case, grumbling may easily turn into disorder. Then, things turn upside down.

ʿAbdullah: Disorder! The mob of Baghdad raise disorder! [. . .] Caliph of Muslims, you don’t understand your subjects. They may grumble. But, once they see the face of the guard, they chew their grumble, swallow their saliva. In the end, they run, digging the earth to pay the tax.

(Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 189)

Subsequently, the hegemonic rhizome is consolidated by the escape submissive people. The people believe it is safe to obey power blindly and avoid politics. As a result, their lives are destroyed and insecure. Wannūs also portrays the submission of the people for the benefit of political power in Haflat samar; namely, “the national interest” (Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 189). Consequently, the people have left their lands, lost the war and have been treated as strangers in their country. Moreover, they are either silenced or arrested.

Wannūs represents rhizomatic hegemony in Malḥamat al-sarāb where the rhizome functions to serve ʿAbbud’s interest and his foreign companions. In this play, the alliance group is also victimized because it serves a new external rhizome. The people, on the other hand, give away all their lands, money, efforts and interests for the sake of ʿAbbud who seduces them with modernization and civilization. As a result, the society collapses and the brutal rhizome is more entangled. Similarly, in Tukūs, the noblemen turn in the conservative wife who symbolizes the
faithful member in society and force her to confess a scandal in order to save the reputation of her husband.

The rhizome starts with an ivy represented either as a ruler and his entourage or as an outcast member in this society. The ivy then attracts some allied parties who empower hegemony. The rulers and alliances then exercise tyrant domination against the people and their social conditions in order to secure their political powers and their webbed hegemonic rhizome. Thus, this rhizome is empowered by the strong bonds and mutual benefits between political powers and intellectuals or merchandizers. These bonds become much more important than principles, roots and society.

Section 3.2 Resistance in Wannūs’ Plays

The first section studies the workings of the hegemonic rhizome against the benefits of individuals. This section studies the eruption of violence amongst individuals who object to the impacts of rhizome on the social conditions. As a result of violence, Wannūs selects heroic characters who deviate from the norm to resist the hegemony. They bring up different ‘lines of flights’ of thoughts that pave the way of the ‘becoming world’.

Wannūs is interested in the individuals who are driven by their inner desires (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.2, 469) and they do not belong to the hierarchy structure; rather they emerge like an ivy in the society. Deleuze conceptualizes this self in his term ‘idea of sensibility’ which means that each person characterizes a partial variation in thoughts, identity and direction (Smith 54). Wannūs has provided plenty of individual sensibilities that symbolize human characters; yet, they drift from well-known common senses and principles. Given Mu’minah in Tukūs, as an
example, she symbolizes the conservative woman who is brought up on the traditional customs. At the outset, Wannūs portrays Mu’minah as a faithful wife who supports her husband although he has betrayed her. Conversely, Wannūs unleashes the inner desires of Mu’minah in the emancipation of her body and thoughts from the dominating society. This society is a chain of levels of dominations: the group of nobles; patriarchal society; and hegemonic political society. Mainly, Mu’minah acts as a faithful wife who is forced to save her imprisoned husband after he betrayed her with the servant. She exchanges her costumes with the servant to save the reputation of her husband, the noble man. The noble men, his peers, have not treated her as a woman who has no rights or dignity. They care about the reputation of the man and the noble title. As a well-bred woman and a faithful wife, she could not reject this offer. Mu’minah’s father and brother are not exceptional. They are apparently noblemen while they have harassed and raped the female servants. While she is torn between betrayal and nobility, meager Mu’minah could not face the pressures of the hegemonic political powers in order to save the reputation of the noble husband. Afterwards, Mu’minah has transformed her character to Māssah and abandoned her roots and principles. Mu’minah has realized that agreeing to support her husband is like “moving to the edge of the abyss” (Wannūs, A’мāl Vol.2, 497). She feels that she is “nothing but a slave, or belong to a man she antagonizes” (Wannūs, A’мāl Vol.2, 497). Mu’minah has chosen to drop her identity—starting with her name; the first bond since her birth (Wannūs, A’мāl Vol.2, 500):

Māssah: Yes. And, the first step in my journey is to throw your principles behind my back. I have to get rid of your decisions, qualifications and judgments to reach my self. I have to go beyond the level of abuse to meet my body, and to know it. You’ve reduced my body to my private parts that can be abused by a word, a look, or a gesture [ . . . ] I will leave this foul quagmire. In prostitution my private parts will no more be private and subjected to abuse. I will be beyond the confines of fear and abuse. (Wannūs, A’мāl Vol.2, 554-555).
Māssah has destroyed the rigid apparent principles and her attraction has been spread horizontally so that she could change the customs of the whole city. Māssah has resisted the roots and norms and has redirected the figures of political powers. When the mob requests that the prostitutes are executed, the magistrate and Mufti could not abide with the rules fearing that Māssah might be killed. Despite the fact that Safwan, her brother, has killed her; she realizes her everlasting impact on the society. She has told him:

Māssah: (While she is falling) Oh my brother.. You haven’t done anything. My story will spread now like gardens of Ghouta after the rainfall. Māssah will rise and spread. She spreads with thoughts, whispers and stories.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.2, 597)

Māssah has addressed the same concepts of Deleuze of ‘lines of flight’; the differentiation of thoughts that stem apart from rhizome and resist the roots. Māssah has drawn a differential line of flight that refracts from the roots in order to reach the freedom through her free-will prostitution. In her new line of flight, Mufti and magistrate have met and new ‘singularity’ is established against the ground rules. That is the reason behind her confidence that her effect on society will ‘rise and spread’. Māssah will spread through her thoughts. This is the hope that Wannūs conveys in his plays that a new ‘line of flight’ is drawn and ‘singularity’ is collectively driven to resist the rigid powers that distort body and mind.

Wannūs has represented a new ‘line of flight’ that refracts from the norm and revolutionizes the negotiations on stage through heroic characters in each play. Zakaria has played this role in Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān. Zakaria has pointed out that the people should unite and confront tyranny and oppression; otherwise, the threads will expand and swallow the mob. In Malḥamat al-sarāb, Bassām and Zarqā’ resist the wave of modernization. Bassām objects to selling the lands and working in the new projects that destroy lands and enslave villagers. As
well, Zarqā’ warns people that they are losing all their fortunes and lands. In *Mughamarat ra’s al-mamlūk Jabir*, the Fourth Man alerts people that they have to understand the situation, negotiate the consequences and object to the threats. He believes that passive reactions are the real threat and political impacts are inevitable on society. In *Al-malik huwa al-malik*, ‘Ubayd and Zāhid are the main characters who do not participate in the virtual game. They analyze and criticize the situation. Zāhid finally alerts audience, “Even when a King is exchanged, the only way open to him is more terror and repression” (Wannūs, *A’ml Vol.1*, 572; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 119). Thus, ‘Ubayd analyzes the result of continuous repression: “a group that fed up with misery, hunger, and injustice. They went into a furious rage. They slaughtered their King” (Wannūs, *A’ml Vol.1*, 573; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 119). Consequently, Wannūs explicitly prompts audience with the threat and stimulates their thoughts to resist repression and injustice. He always provides a didactic message that summarizes the threat of the rhizome and warns the spectator that passivity is threatening the individuals. Silence and relaxation may swallow all the rights of the society.

**Section 3.3 Thoughts of the ‘Becoming World’**

The last two sections portray the threatening powers and the resistance they generate. However, each play ends with the collapse of society and expansion of tyranny. Wannūs does not portray the problem-solution act in front of audience. He shocks audience with unexpected endings that Deleuze defines as “intolerable”; that is, examining the actual life through incident that “testifies to the impossibility of living in such conditions” (Smith 213). Wannūs portrays a turbulent society and threatened citizens in order to stimulate new ‘lines of flight’ and refracted thoughts that are unuttered in the plays. He mainly represents symbols of revolution and
protesters who lose the battle on stage but they enlighten audience and redirect their thoughts to a path that is not dominated by alliances or political powers. These new thoughts should lead to the saved ‘becoming world’.

The selected plays stress the heated negotiations and acute objections to the status quo whether given as a didactic direct speech or given as an active action from a protestor. The main objective is the portrayal of visual violence and installation of resisting emotions against hegemony. “The only consciousness is the consciousness of violence, fragmentation, the betrayal of every revolution, the shattered state of the emotions and drives: an impasse in every direction (Smith 213). Hence, Wannūs does not provide a ready-made ideal society; on the contrary, he destroys hope in the current situation in order to push people to avoid this “intolerable” society and to pave the way “for the becoming-conscious and the possibility of a revolution (Smith 213). Smith explains this ‘becoming’ as, “the people necessarily enter into the conditions of a becoming, they must invent themselves in new conditions of struggle, and the task of political literature is to contribute to the invention of this unborn people” (212). Wannūs establishes this conscious link with audience through the shocking future. In Al-malik huwa al-malik, the audience cannot imagine their terrified lives under the ruling of Abou ʿIzza who—though he has been one of the terrified citizens at some point but he has been assimilated in the old repressive regime. Accordingly, the only way open to him is “more terror and repression” (Wannūs, ʿAʿmāl Vol.1, 572; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 119). So, in order for people to save themselves, they have “to eat their king” after their “getting furious” (Wannūs, ʿAʿmāl Vol.1, 573; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 119), or, as Wannūs clarifies, he means that people should think openly to distribute the signs of power of the king and distribute them so that power is decentralized.
Wannūs condenses this image of violence and shattered society in *Malḥamat al-sarāb*. This play has shown an interrelated society that relies on the advice of Sheikh and wisemen. This epic does not dramatize individual stories or depict a historical period. It reflects the impact of globalization on a village that globalization has swallowed its customs and traditions. Everyone is obsessed with joining the accelerated wealth regardless the losses in land, fortune, principles and lives. The audience finally visualizes the lost village and there is no way back or out. Deleuze then explains this “intolerable” domination as a catalyst that generates “the speech act as a true genetic element, a virtuality that is capable of linking up, little by little, with other speech acts so as to constitute the free indirect discourse of a people or a minority, even if they as yet exit only as the potential of ‘diabolical powers to come or revolutionary forces to be constructed’” (Smith 214). Wannūs has driven different dramatic elements in this play to weave the rhizomatic texture tightly. Every character has been attracted to the dream of future wealth. One of the clear examples of rhizome is Adīb who symbolizes the low social level in the countryside and who has gained power in the globalization project. Adīb has been transformed from a poor man who has no value or power to a facilitator who can support the wealthy men in their business and personal affairs. Adīb ultimately could have married the daughter of the wealthy man – Muhammed, after Adīb facilitates the marriage of Muhammed from Karīma, the prostitute. Karīma was married to ‘Aboud and when he deserted her, she wishes to remarry him. The Satan has convinced Karīma that she works as a dancer in the night club where she could benefit from the admiration and love of everyman in the countryside. Because Muhammed loves her and wishes to marry her, Adīb arranges for this marriage on condition that he marries Muhammed’s daughter. As well, Muhammed has to give away all his wealth to Karīma. As a result, the wealthy respected man has lost his wealth and reputation whereas the poor man has
become wealthy and highly respected. Moreover, Adīb has become the singular point of interaction between businessmen and people of the countryside. As a point of interaction, Adīb has created a new path that destroys the traditions, customs, land ownership, destroys life and any prospect of safe future. Smith explains this relationship of alliance in the concepts of Deleuze and his partner Guattari in a comparison between primitive societies and capitalism. Smith simplifies this relationship that “[i]n the so-called, primitive societies, social reproduction passed through human reproduction [. . .], whereas in capitalism social reproduction passed through capital (money begets money) and human reproduction consequently becomes privatized” (171). As a shocking end of such differentiation, violence and loss, Wannūs has astonished the spectator with a future prospect in which political affairs including violence impacts social conditions. But, he raises attention that there must be a way to change this destructive direction:

Bassām: [. . .] If awareness and will are there, we’ll find the right path that will save us from poverty, and provide us with direction and dignity.

Zarqā’: And, is there such a path?

Bassām: How can I explain it to you, aunt? Of course it exists, and it is possible too.

(Wannūs, A’māl Vol.2, 690)

Wannūs thus encourages audience to rethink this right path and stand for it.

Wannūs has further shown the transformation of people and their alliance to hegemonic power in Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān. In this play, Zakariā has led the people to meet the king and complain of his elephant (which symbolizes his official men in the regime) that destroys their merchandise and kills their children mercilessly. Once they met the king, they turn silent and
Zakariā Begs the King that the Elephant Gets Married and Reproduces. Deleuze and Guattari have given an intricate analysis in *A Thousand Plateaus* regarding rhizomatic alliance:

> Always look for the molecular, or even submolecular, particle with which we are allied. We evolve and die more from our polymorphous and rhizomatic flus than from hereditary diseases, or diseases that have their own line of descent. The rhizome is an anti-genealogy (11).

In this analysis, they distinguish the normal affection from alliance; the latter emerges in rhizomatic structure against the normal roots and they take different forms that cannot be expected or even avoided. Again, Wannūs draws attention that any rhizomatic alliance with hegemony is unavoidable and it spreads with no control from recipients. Such a shocking truth awakens audience to unavoidable dangers.

In *Mughamarat ra's al-mamlūk Jabir* and *Haflat samar*, Wannūs has portrayed ripples of emerging rhizomes and it moves spectator from level of one rhizome to another, with the aim of transgressing the borders of stage/play and audience. In these two plays that intertwine into a play within play, Wannūs has orchestrated memory, alienation, alliance, social privatization, hegemony and political structure. Deleuze drives the difference between the real experience and the virtual experience so that "they become other" (Deleuze, *Negotiations* 137). In other words, the recipient watches the events and lives these events through his thoughts virtually; they are not his real life: "The aim of literature, for Deleuze, in not the development of forms or the formation of subjects, but the displacement or catapulting of becomings into affects and percepts, which in turn are combined into ‘blocks of sensation’ through their virtual conjunction” (Smith 206). Wannūs has established these blocks of sensation to involve audience in the play within play and involve them in the staged events. He also builds these sensations by linking these events with the real world and through the discussions and negotiations of actors around these
abnormal shocking events. As per Deleuze, the logic of sense is not recognized from pre-defined concepts or perceptions. They arise, instead, from problems that require deep thinking to find a new solution that is not currently feasible (Rajchman 51). So, Wannūs establishes this series of complicated problems before audience’s senses in order for their logic of thinking to be stimulated and to find an innovative solution for this virtual quagmire that they have lived as if it were their own lives.

Similarly, Wannūs provides a virtual representation of life with which spectators identify and virtually live an experience that regenerates a new thinking, that is, the game. In Al-malik huwa al-malik, Wannūs represents a permissible dream for role reversal between the king and his people. He gives a chance for the audience to live the experience of rulers through a virtual game on stage. Martin-Jones and Sutton explain this virtual experience of gaming from rhizomatic angle by stating that, “beyond the level of the game world itself, gamers have the potential to deterritorialise their usual identity as they explore the possibilities of a criminal life that is not normally available to them, or simply ignore crime and enjoy travelling around the city, creating a deterritorialising rhizome as they do so” (26). Mapping this to Wannūs’ play, the audience lives the experience of the king in their ‘avatar’ – Abou ‘Izza. They enjoy the virtual royal identity through Abou ‘Izza. While the spectators build their own regime in mind, Wannūs shocks them that their avatar has aggravated their virtual identity and abused his limits; Abou ‘Izza has been installed with the signs of the regime of the ruling power: the crown and gown. Accordingly, Wannūs drives spectators to rebel through their “logic of senses” and rethink of their triumph against the confining virtual regime. It is time for the audience to establish the ‘becoming’ society through their collective logic of senses against the displayed virtual society in Wannūs’ game.
To sum up, this chapter has shown how the rhizome is well established in Wannūs’ plays by using the dramatic elements and techniques discussed in chapter two. Wannūs has represented the ivy rhizome in its notorious form. He involves the spectators in this rhizomatic structure virtually through their full senses: live existence, games, play within a play, role reversal and actors’ discussions and negotiations. He guides spectators to the fact that political conditions map social lives and one cannot separate one’s life and destiny from political conditions. Because political powers are hegemonic, they destroy society and its future. As a result, the audience is shocked and faced with reality while spectators become resistant, considering these facts. Accordingly, Wannūs keeps space for the audience in real life, allowing them to rethink the situation and to collectively search for the solution and re-establish the new society. This society cannot find space for them in the texture of hegemony that is totally controlled by political hierarchy. Thinking must go beyond the present situation, virtual play and ready-made solutions. The solution stems from collective resisting senses that spread among the audience who re-territorialize the anew society. One last action is required and it depends on how the audience can identify the different paths of the solution from Wannūs’ perspective. This point will be discussed in the next.
Chapter Four: Endings

Theatrical endings in Wannūs’ plays are a pivotal instrument in the estrangement of audience and consequently in inciting the logic of senses against rhizomatic hegemony. This chapter mainly analyzes the directions of Wannūs in drawing the endings of his plays in the light of Brecht’s estrangement techniques and Deleuze’s concepts of ‘rhizome’, ‘logic of sense’ and ‘becoming world’.

The main objective of Wannūs is the awakening of Arabs’ thinking through his plays. He turns the spectator from a passive recipient to an active member who establishes the future society. The link between drama and socio-political conditions maps the structure, language and performance of Wannūs’ works, where the core and peak focus on shocking audience with a hopeless reality. Thus it is legitimate to direct endings into the same objective. Wannūs, at this point, meets with Brecht’s target of estrangement in which drama is not a fairytale with fancy endings. Drama shakes the silence and calmness of passive auditorium and forces thinking to resist the political powers that threaten the contemporary and future social conditions. Wannūs fabricates complicated threads of social consequences stemming from political rhizome. This rhizomatic structure besieges the minds of audience and suffocates the feeling of amusement. Audience expects happy endings and paths of hope; instead, it is confronted with ripples of hegemony intricate by political powers and their allied bodies. This chapter analyses these forms of endings in the selected works of Wannūs in the light of Deleuze and Brechtian theories.

Wannūs focuses mainly on weaving hopeless endings that show that either conspiracy defeats people or persistent people die. Besides, He usually ends the play by showing that the society collapses, people are arrested or terrorism spreads. The recurring portrayal of defeat and despair starts in in Ḥaflat samar. He ends the performance with the conspiracy set between the
regime (the official officer) and allied bodies (represented in the director). The allied bodies cut off the democratic atmosphere and the officials arrest all people who participate in the democratic discussion. They arrest the people who are involved in the discussion once they realize that they start thinking of solutions. The evolving discussion grasps the thinking of different groups of virtual audience (actors who sit among audience). Subsequently, the allied powers recognize the resistance of recipients and their collective ambitious thinking in searching for resolution. Once the allied powers realize the danger of resistance, they arrest the active audience and interrupt the democratic glimpses.

Wannūs henceforth unleashes reality before audience and its consequences. He shows that the authorities will not leave space for society to subvert their powers. Their target is that they repress people and use them to reach their interests and desires. These interests are usually against the benefits of the society. In turn, Wannūs stimulates the resistance of the society against these powers. However, he releases the fact that the given solutions are not effective, besides they are threatening. Threat evolves whether audience avoids the discussion in political conditions or gets deeply involved in discussions. If people passively stay aside from politics, the non-stop weaving rhizome engulfs their society. Society is thus victimized, tortured and lost. They are seduced by the national interests and they end up repressed and subdued. Alternatively, resisting the power of rhizome through democracy, as Wannūs has shown, subverts the authority; as a result, this authority shuts up the audience to save their powers. As another form of the rhizome, the alliances (the director) and the authorities (the official men) unite. The director switches lights off when the discussion is heated and switches them on when the officials interrupt the discussion and arrest audience. The discussion culminates with a detailed analysis of the current situation. Wannūs draws a network of problems but he has kept the questions open.
He leaves the audience with the fact that hegemonic rhizome is empowered and society is violently endangered.

Such representation of threat and resistance is conceptualized by Deleuze as the ‘logic of sense’. In *Haflat samar*, Wannūs ‘de-territorializes’ spectators from the comfort zone and throws their threatened senses in a desert of a hopeless ending. As a human being, one cannot stand still and die in a hopeless desert. One should think of a solution to get out of this quagmire. Wannūs affirms that using the old tools of thinking and resistance lead to the same dilemma. Wannūs, Brecht and Deleuze state that the only path is fresh thinking that collectively ‘re-territorializes’ or emerges from these shocking moments of violence, fear, threat and failure to the ‘becoming world’. As per Wannūs in *Haflat samar*, solutions do not fall in repeating history, destroying borders, deserting lands, allying with authorities or waiting for a leader. However, he stresses in this play that the solution requires collectivity and incessant resistance. The clue here is that resistance must emerge from new tools and directions. This is the ‘becoming world’ that Deleuze foresees if the people hope for new points of singularity.

It is noteworthy that Wannūs implicitly rewards the resisting thoughts. By the end of the play, and during the arrest, the arrested audience threatens these authorities that these discussions have been improvised that night. However, in the future, discussion will be well arranged and organized. In other words, the play proposes collective organized thinking of the future. Organized resistant collective thinking then subverts the power of rhizome. Today, there is no clear answer because it is a session for brainstorming. Yet, in the near future, the solution will be clear and effective. Hence, Wannūs proposes an element of hope in providing solutions. However, he arms audience with the hope that thinking of a solution does not end. The concrete solution requires extended efforts after this frolic. Wannūs, in other words, states that the
authorities threaten democracy and arrest a few people but they cannot arrest resisting thoughts. Wannūs, on the other hand, threatens the authorities that terrorism raises resistance rather than control it. This resistance gives a free rein to subvert the power of authority.

The Men (holding their rifles) - You may leave now.

- Never raise chaos.
- Leave calmly.

The Official Officer: Take them and we’ll see what they are still hiding.

Spectator 2 (in a very strong voice, towards the auditorium) Today, we’ve improvised. Yet, tomorrow, you may go beyond improvisation.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 126)

Wannūs in this play however has proposed a solution in the aggravated discussion; that is, the missing tool is the weapon. The weapon should not be taken as the ultimate goal since Wannūs has written this play to analyze the situation after the setback of 1967. He believes that the authorities divide the powers of society and they do not provide them with the physical and psychological power. Wannūs analyzes the situation in the following dialogue:

The Director: My stage will never be a place for conspiracies. Stop immediately. (Clapping) Where are the lighting technicians? (Clapping) Where are the lighting technicians? Switch off the stage lights. Switch on lights in the auditorium. This should end immediately. This moment. Quickly…Quickly.. Our celebration uncovers a dangerous conspiracy. A horrible conspiracy.

(Stage is switched off. Auditorium is switched on. Audience over the stage are like shadows and their footsteps are confused)

Spectator 2: When we start to exist, when our images start to appear, they call it conspiracy.

Spectator 4: Then terrorism spreads.

The Director: Leave the stage. Leave the theatre.

Spectator: (From the auditorium) Continue.

Spectator 5: Then lights are switched off on us.
Spectators: (from the auditorium) – Continue.

- Watch the results.
- Let’s continue.
- Don’t forget that they are here among us.

Spectator 4: for once at least, we should say everything.

The Director: Stop the riot.. Stop the chaos.. Go out.

Abdelghany: That’s marvelous. You shouldn’t leave a word imprisoned.

Spectators: (From the auditorium) – Continue.

- Let’s continue.
- We all need weapons.
- Just weapons.

Spectator 7 (His voice prevails) We have never demanded because we have such cut off tongues.

Spectator 5: We have not demanded with our deaf ears.

Spectator 4: We have not demanded with our rusty minds.

Spectator 6: We have not demanded minimum provisions despite their lack.

Spectator 7: We only wanted to protest. We wanted to be responsible. In that day in June, the streets overflowed with our steps; we were all one chant: short and to the point. What do you want?

The Group: The weapon.

The Director: Stop. You’ll pay for all that. Stop.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 116-117)

In this dialogue, Wannūs summarizes the conflict between the needs of society, their wishes and the desires or responses of the rhizomatic hegemony. The rhizome is bent on silencing the society. The power is mainly directed to terrorize resistance. It further accuses the resistance of conspiracy as if the society should not negotiate any reactions. However, Wannūs highlights that society, on the other side, is united. It has clear demands but the authorities deprive people from their basic rights. Then, Wannūs urges people to take responsibility since they are willing. Moreover, they know their needs and they meet at one point of ‘singularity’ that they clearly
know what they need. In the war of 1967, the people need the weapons but they are deprived from their weapons and their homes and lands. Thus, they are treated as strangers and worthless creatures. Accordingly, Wannūs points out that the society is repressed when people are silenced and forced to follow the desires of the rhizome. On the other side, the authorities are threatened by the unity and clear vision of collective thoughts and needs. Consequently, they arrest the resisting people to empower their hegemony. Thus, the society has the choice to empower hegemony and repression or take responsibility to revolutionize their thoughts and plan counter actions to subvert power.

The conspiracy is repeated in the endings of Wannūs’ plays as in *Mughamarat ra’s al-mamlūk Jābir* where he utilizes the dramatic element of memory. Wannūs shows that history will repeat itself as long as people are passive, and they separate the social conditions from the political ones. In this play, Wannūs presents a play within a play and noticeably he ends the inner play and he moves outward to the next play. Endings are all characterized by the shocking closure. Jābir, the hero of this epic drama, is expected to step forward to a higher position and marry his beloved because he is smart enough to ally with the political powers. However, Jābir is betrayed and banned from being part of the rhizome. Then, the mob fails to avoid the political conflict in order to live peacefully. They pay for their passivity and the storyteller is not willing to jump into fairytales that have happy endings. Finally, the whole play promises that events will be repeated over ages because people ally with the rhizomatic hegemony through their passivity. So, there is no way out and there is no chance for changes. Wannūs draws spectators’ attention to the threat if they do not think differently and act positively in resisting the rhizome:

The Fourth Man: If you’re bitten by hunger and find yourselves with no shelter.

Zomorod: If heads are rolling, and you face death in a gloomy morning.
The Group: If the night falls heavily held with woe.
Don’t ever forget that you’ve once said
Let pottery hits each other.. Who marries mom we call him uncle.
From the night of woe and corpse we talk to you.

(Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 218)
The message that Wannūs weaves is frightening; namely, that the conspiracy of authorities is repetitive and the passivity leads to poverty, homelessness and terrorism is shocking. Wannūs urges people to change the direction of authority if they want a better life. He clearly indicates to the audience that theatre does not portray the fairy tales and spectators should think and act differently. When people complain that the story is very gloomy, the storyteller explains that the story cannot be bright without changing the reality and reactions of people:

Customer 3: One comes to relieve his agony, and entertain himself, not to weep and grieve.
[. . .]
The Storyteller: I don’t know. Maybe.. It is all about you.

(Wannūs, Aʿmāl Vol.1, 218)
If the people need to watch a bright performance, they have to change their lives by changing the future of their society. The reality is then reflected in the performance of theatre. Put differently, it is responsibility of the society to change the gloomy reality.

Wannūs has portrayed the conspiracy in the dramatic technique of memory in Malḥamat al-sarāb through the death of Zarqā’. He destroys the wisdom of people through Zarqā’, who is shortsighted. Then, she lost her sight. When she can foresee again, people refused to listen to her and follow her advice. Accordingly, people declined the resistance against power. They kill Zarqā’ and they also kill the chance to foresee the future and fight the threats. Wannūs repeatedly cuts off the path to the solution and keeps audience confined in a lost land. Bassam has the
feeling that there is a way out and it is possible. One important derivation is that Zarqā’ has gained the power of prospective affections but she was restricted. She could not take a step further to resolve the chaos.

Zarqā’: and tell them what Zarqā’ has said.. if you haven’t hastened her death, you could have foreseen as far a sun rising after a long night..so long..tell them.

…

Bassām: They killed her, like old peoples who killed their prophets.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.2, 749)

This indicates that the sensation is insufficient without percepts. Also, affects should be reterritorialized through a new line of flight. In other words, the destruction in the future is a catalyst to resist the collapse of the society. However, action is required. This action starts through the new line of thinking then it requires a collective revolutionizing of the current state. He also awakens the audience’s feeling towards their responsibility. The collective logic of sense, the drawing of singular line of flight, the resistant act against rhizome and the reestablishment of new societal roots are the responsibility of the audience as well.

Wannūs further shows the plot of the conspiracy through the characters of Abbūd and the Satan in Malḥamat al-sarāb. This conspiracy is a typical hegemonic rhizome that does not bring danger to the surface. The people are inclined to join the rhizome and serve the interests of the allied members because they assume that it pays back the benefits of modernization and it brings wealth and prosperity. Hence, the rhizome has emerged without any resistance from the majority of the society. The danger is not perceived or sensed by the people. The transformation of society has taken place through the support and willingness of people who paid off their homes, lands, reputations and principles for the sake of higher standards of life. However, it turns out that they have paid the expenses for the conspiracy of Abbūd who has purchased the lands and then sold
them to the foreigners. Wannūs thus draws an intricate rhizome where resistance is considered an obstacle that is furiously opposed by the people. The majority supports the emergence and the re-terrorization of the rhizome. They assume that the rhizome grabs the old roots in order to sprout the ‘becoming’ civilized world for the benefit of the whole society. As a result, the resistance is a risk because cutting off the rhizome means cutting off the tangled stems of the society that is embedded in the rhizome.

Paradoxically, Deleuze provides the remedy of such rhizome through its consequences. This rhizome has resulted into violence (Zarqā’s sons fight and kill one another, and the wife and husband fight and are about to divorce for the sake of a washing machine). Wannūs has symbolized the aggravated violence and corruption in the last words of Zarqā’.

Zarqā’: There is no value for the doctor now. Don’t interrupt my talk. Listen! Tell them that Zarqā’ has said.. I foresee the people killing each other, blood is shed, and is dripping across the roads. All of them blame and kill each other. They don’t care about relatives or neighbours, and they cannot distinguish right from wrong.

Zarqā’: I foresee the government stopping the fighting, horror and failure revolving around the village. Some killed, some imprisoned, and some migrated... Oh! Damn. Your turn will come Bassām, they’ll arrest you at night and transfer you to a distant prison. (pause) I foresee the Mall sparkling. Foreigners are running it. Still things and garbage fall like rain. And the snake spits rats in the abandoned fields and homes. (pause) I foresee, Satan has stained the faces of some of our people. And, they flourish and flourish, and ally with the foreigners and grow. But, my family and the other people in my village, live in misery and drudgery; and they revolve around their hopes and follow their dreams.. I foresee them; they don’t find anything but mirage. Only mirage. Sparkling mirage, colorful and poisoning.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.2, 748-749)

Deleuze mentions that violence is the focal point that brings up thoughts. These thoughts meet and transform violence and the rhizome into the ‘becoming world’. That is to say, if violence
stimulates the thoughts of the audience, they will resist the rhizome. They may not subvert the rhizome. But, they may drive a new line of flight that brings a new rhizomatic structure that is not originated from the hegemonic rhizome. This new structure is the new society of the future. In order to de-territorialize the old rhizome, there is a need for a collective new thinking to re-territorialize a new ‘becoming world’. Wannūs draws attention to the seduction of the offerings of the authorities. He also points out that the rhizome has already been established and violence is inevitable. So, Deleuze extrapolates this ending and gives the hope of regeneration of thoughts and future percepts as a result of this culmination of violence and hopelessness at that point.

In *Al-malik huwa al-malik*, conspiracy is not plotted. It evolves naturally as a result of the king’s arrogance. The king exchanges his position with a layman. This play shows the two destinations of both the king and the virtual king. If the original king could have regained his power, he would have acted similarly as the new king- Abou ʿIzza. As Wannūs explains, more terror takes place. Abou ʿIzza has joined as a layman who dreams to become a king to practice justice. When he becomes part of the rhizome, he acts as a part of the hegemonic regime. So, changing figures does not change the regime: “Zāhid: Even when a King is exchanged, the only way open to him is more terror and repression” (Wannūs, *Aʿmāl* Vol.1, 572; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 119).

Wannūs notifies the audience that the solution lies in distributing the power of the state among people so that there is no dominating power. This distribution displays a new resisting structure in which singularity resides in equal opportunity in the society. Everyone rules and is being ruled. Accordingly, the alliance to hegemonic power is defeated. And, the new society is established with fairness and justice.
The Group: (All together)
History tells of a group that got
Fed up with misery, hunger,
And injustice. They
Went into a furious rage, they
Slaughtered their King, and ate him.
At first some had stomach
Aches, others got sick,
But after a while they
Recovered. They [enjoyed equality] and sat down
Enjoy life without masks or disguises.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 573; Jayyusi and Allen, eds. 120)

Wannūs urges people to resist and confront injustice even if it results into turbulence. He clearly does not propose military coups. He mainly urges the people to control the injustice of hegemonic authorities. But, it is essential to keep in mind that authority is not the personification of a king. It is the rhizomatic regime and the political structure. Thus, Wannūs and Deleuze agree that violence transforms society and brings the ‘becoming world’. Deleuze does not mention the subversion of the regime or the distribution of power. Deleuze does not ponder the subversion of the rhizome. He proposes instead a new thinking that provides new roots for the ‘becoming’ society.

The ending in Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān shows the transformation of society when the people seize the opportunity to confront the hegemonic authorities. Fear dominates and society is disunited. As a result, the figures of power of resistance may ally with the rhizome and empower hegemony. Accordingly, the voice of justice and resistance is dead. In Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān, Wannūs transforms the resistance of Zakaria and the mob into alliance once they get into the
castle and confront the king. This play is unique in its transformative point. Wannūs shifts the confounding rage of people led by Zakaria against the elephant (or the hegemonic regime) into supporting agents that empower hegemony. Wannūs portrays passive society that is subdued by the desire of the political supremacy and authority. In supporting this point, Wannūs shows at the end of the play that the authority is aggravated and hegemony is reproduced:

Actor 7: Do you know now why elephants exist?
Actress 3: Do you know why the elephants breed?
Actor 5: But this story of ours is only a start.
Actor 4: When elephants bred, a new story starts.
All: A violent, bloody story, which one day we’ll act for you.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 476-477; Jayyusi, ed. 451)

In this play, Wannūs has presented the resisting rhizomatic structure in the second and third scenes: Zakaria sets the plot and mobilizes people then he orchestrates people to speak loudly in one aligned voice before the king. In these scenes, Wannūs represents resisting the rhizome, as defined by Deleuze. Starting with violence, people resist the roots of hegemony and start thinking in a different manner to stop the incremental power. People are shocked by the repression and violence (the kid is killed in the street, the merchandise is ruined). This violence and corruption are strengthened through rhizomatic hegemony. The elephant is empowered by the power of the king. As a result, a revolutionary act takes place. Zakaria decides to stop the chaos and collectively drives people through one line of flight. All people must speak loudly in one voice against the corruption of the king’s elephant.

Once Wannūs has drawn the skeleton of the resisting rhizome, he shocks audience that this line of flight is suddenly cut off and people under the supervision of Zakaria de-territorialize
into the roots of rhizomatic hegemony only to reproduce further domination and violence. Such shock awakens audience to rebel against alliance. The turning point occurs when people are paralysed in their fears when they approach the hegemonic power. Once they get into the castle, they fear the throne and they lose their unity and courage. People need to re-territorialize a new line of flight and aggregate it with opposing senses.

In *Tukūs*, Wannūs has extended sensation into multi-dimensional sensation. Wannūs has first dropped the customs when Mu’minah is transformed into Māssah. Then, this transformation has gained upper power over political authority. Hence, Māssah has become a double-edged tool. She de-territorializes customs and re-territorializes resistant power against the dominating rhizomatic authority. Given this heroic power, Wannūs ends her life but promises that her story is to be eternal. Wannūs introduces the revolution of body against dominant authority. However, he kills this revolution keeping the real wave of revolution in the minds of audience. It is essential to remember that Mu’minah has switched to Māssah upon her free will. She also finds that it is mandated to switch to Māssah in order to gain her self-freedom and regain control over her enslaved body. Hence, Māssah is a clear example of resistance in this play. But, Wannūs always cuts off the resisting rhizome to empower the effect of the defeat of resistance in the minds of the audience. While ending Māssah’s life, he keeps the vibrating echoes that Māssah’s character and resistance recreates the future and everyone will aggregate her soul. Māssah spreads through her new ideas and recreates non-parallel rhizome that counters the hegemonic one.

Wannūs has drawn the attention that new thinking that establishes the transformative rhizome flourishes and cannot be ended:

Māssah: You cannot kill me.
Safwān: You speak as my father. .. You’ll see that I can do it.
Māssah: That’s not what I mean.
Safwān: So, what do you mean then.?
Māssah: Safwān, I am a story and the story cannot be killed. I am an obsession, a longing and a lure. And, daggers cannot kill the obsession, the longing and the lure.

(Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.2, 596-597)

Wannūs has adopted the estrangement techniques in all his endings to highlight on awakening the consciousness of audience and rethinking of the current situation. His estrangement tools stimulate the sensation of audience to rebel against and resist the current political conditions with full awareness of the impact of these conditions on their social lives. Mainly, he stresses the tight bonds between political power and allied hegemony that bound to destroy society. Wannūs does not aim to find a solution from past experiences or decide on ready-made solutions.

However, in some of his plays, Wannūs uses the didactic dialogue in a form of direct advice, warning or speech. These forms do not provide free space of mind to think innovatively about the future. Fortunately, Wannūs is usually didactic to strengthen the ending of failure and to affirm that there is no way out from the given episodes. Didactics are clear in the ending of Al-malik huwa al-malik when 'Ubayd re-narrates the fairytale in which people eat their king. This fairytale implicitly proposes the solution from the point of view of the author. He believes that people should distribute the signs of the king among them so that power is not centralized and rhizomatic hegemony loses domination over people. In such didactic message, Wannūs proposes the emergence and requirement of thinking for the audience. He does not provide the map or line of thought. However, he only restricts the objective and solution in distributing the current power of rulers among people. Didactic dialogue also takes place in the ending of Mughamarat raʾs al-
mamlūk Jābir and Al-fīl ya malik al-zamān. Both plays end with a didactic dialogue in a form of epic ending. Both show that passive reactions result into repeating history and empowering hegemony.

All in all, Wannūs follows Brecht’s estrangement in his shocking endings. He aims at highlighting to audience that passivity is a danger. The audience has to rethink the political rhizomatic hegemony which reVolves around social roots and un-earth them. Wannūs forces audience to resist this political state. Resistance requires taking over power. This new power cannot take place if minds do not think of new paths to overcome hegemony. New thinking should not come from history, customs, alliance or avoidance. New thinking (new empowered resisting rhizome) emerges and is spread among society (differential lines of flight or thinking emerges). Society should collectively adopt this new thinking (singularity). Once thinking is spread horizontally, new society (new territory) is established. That is, it provides a chance to establish new roots that have already defeated the hegemonic rhizome. Thus, the ‘becoming world’ is re-territorialized.
Chapter Five: Transformative Resistance in Wannūs’ Politicized Theatre

The previous chapters have surveyed three main perspectives: the Arabic politicized theatre by Wannūs; the rhizomatic structure that stimulates rethinking of the ‘becoming world’; and, the Brechtian estrangement techniques. The survey has investigated the three perspectives and studied their integration in Wannūs’ plays. This chapter studies the impact of Wannūs’ politicized theatre on the Arab society since 1967 and his strategy that aimed at reviving an active effective thinking that could transform the society. The chapter mainly focuses on the successes and limitations of Wannūs’ politicized theatre in the light of current situation in the Arab world.

Critics consider Wannūs, “as Syria's most innovative playwright, is credited with the invention of what is called ‘political theatre’” (Gouryh 219). That is, he transforms the function of Arabic theatre from entertainment to mobilization. Wannūs rejects the trends of traditional theatre. He explicitly opposes renowned playwrights such as Al-Hakim who does not actively reflect the reality. He criticizes such drama in Ḥaflat samar (Wannūs, A’mal Vol.1, 29). Wannūs points out that:

\[\text{[W]hatever happens to people is essentially the outcome of the political conditions, and the prospects of change are contingent upon their attitude toward the existing situation. In such a world, innocence, purity, and neutrality always lead to more human frustration, alienation, and destruction. The process of change requires a collective effort armed with political consciousness.} \]

(Gouryh 219)

Accordingly, all plays of Wannūs target awakening the conscienteness of the Arab audience towards the political conditions and their impact on social lives.

Wannūs first applied his dramatic theory of politicization in 1967 in his play, Ḥaflat samar, where he used direct and didactic dialogue that portrays the emotional and conceptual
events of the setback of 1967. Wannūs assesses his first experiment in drama and proposes that
the effect of this play was restricted to the nature of audience who has not yet gained the
experience to effectively and openly interact with the performance (Wannūs, A’mal Vol.1, 131).
Wannūs expected that his play could have awakened the revolutionary emotions of audience.
However, he reiterates “Haflat samar’s framework is not separate from its content. Its
representation is extracted from a given content, a given subject, and a given time. So, it is either
taken as a whole, or it is nonsense” (Wannūs, Bayanāt 117). Before performing this play on
stage, the Arab society was totally separate from reality. Therefore, Wannūs employs the drama
as an instrument to reveal reality, and this was the main objective in his first experiment
(Wannūs, Bayanāt 29). Yet, he notices that the audience comes out after the performance
laughing without any glimpse of shock or long sensational effect of the events (Wannūs, Bayanāt
41). This is why he assumes that this play is a milestone in his experimental theatre whose main
target was raising the consciousness of audience. If this is not effective in the written text or the
performance, then further devices should be implemented.

The objective of shocking audience to accumulate awareness is a transformational
step in the Arabic politicized theatre because it paves the way for the change. Deleuze stresses
that this change is not the task of the author; it is the action of the recipients. On the other hand,
Wannūs agrees with Brecht that “drama is not a tool for revolution” (Wannūs, Bayanāt 40); it is a
means of revolution. Wannūs mainly focuses on the content and techniques that serve awakening
the audience and mobilizing them. He focuses on techniques that stimulate the collective
awareness of society rather than individual awareness. Wannūs thus matches with Deleuze’s
concept of singularity in his plays. Collective awareness finds a new line of flight, and at a
certain point of intersection, singularity arises and collectively forms the logic for the ‘becoming
world’. In a nutshell, the objective of Wannūs was to establish the collective awareness then to stimulate change through collective transformative thinking. In his first experiment, Wannūs believes that he has reached the collective awareness about the setback of 1967, that is, the impact of the setback on the social conditions. Allen considers this as the “communal [c]atharsis through anger and resentment” (102).

In his second play, Mugharat ra’s al-mamlūk Jabir, Wannūs employs several dramatic devices and techniques in order to deeply engage with the collective awareness and consciousness of audience. “This performance before the café's customers creates a play within a play, and members of the theatre audience become extensions of the café's customers, not via participation in the events, but rather through objective observation” (Gouryh 219). Yet, he is totally aware that there are limitations that hinder the success of real interaction between audience and actors. He believes that the Arabic spectator is not yet ready to openly interact and freely participate in the negotiations on stage (Wannūs, A’mal Vol.1, 131, 133). Therefore, he borrows some devices the Arabic audience is acquainted with, for example, the café and the storyteller (Gouryh 219), and the link between the epic story and the social daily life (Wannūs, A’mal Vol.1, 132). Besides, Wannūs confirms that the experimentation of this play was not totally successful because he relies on ready solutions and didactic speeches (Wannūs, Bayanāt 124). Thus, Wannūs implements the dramatic techniques to effectively involve audience; but, on one hand, it is not a complete project and, on the other hand, audience and performance are not ready for free democratic interaction. This may explain the assumption made by some critics who assume that Wannūs was not successful in orchestrating the dramatic techniques. For example, ʿAbdallah Abu Ḥif believes that Wannūs has
damage[d] the theatrical tradition in general and [. . .] placing actors in the audience or at the front of the auditorium achieved neither participation nor contact nor even dialogue. These were essentially artificial devices which were unable to establish an impromptu, warm or genuine dialogue between the stage and the audience, the two dimensions of the theatre.

(Allen 106)

Actually, this critique overlooks the main objective of Wannūs’ project that relies on involving the audience positively. It could be an incomplete project at the moment. However, it sets the basic infrastructure for reforming the political theatre.

In the experimentation of transformation, Wannūs borrows some Western tools such as estrangement with some modifications to match the Arab society such as epic stories, or adaption such as memory that is adapted for contemporary social vision. Sometimes, he uses games in order to involve the mind in imagining a virtual world. The main target for Wannūs is the collective awareness of audience and their interaction with performance (Wannūs, Bayanāt 37). He masters estrangement in all his plays. The selected plays grasp the full attention of spectators through sampling historic figures adapted in modern life such as Zarqā’ in Malḥamat al-sarāb and mumluks in Mughāmarat ra’s al-mamlūk Jābir. He portrays society in Tukūs. The strategy starts with dramatizing relation of society to fierce hegemonic power structure so as to transfer the reality on stage. This representation forces the spectators to unite with reality so that their usual avoidance might change into violent refusal. This transformation from passivity into interaction is the supporting objective in Wannūs’ politicized theatre. Consequently, the audience is ready to rethink the future.

Despite the intentions of Wannūs, he notes that he could not establish his project thoroughly. To explain, Wannūs has faced some limitations while applying his techniques of politicized theatre. First, he needs an open-minded society (Wannūs, Bayanāt 43). Second,
although he experiments with different devices that suite the Arabic audience, they may not attract all audiences equally. That is to say, had Wannūs selected ordinary devices that attract the common people, he could have lost the appeal to intellectuals. Third, Wannūs realizes his pitfalls in the early plays; he moves forward and tries other techniques without making valuable use from the successes of his early plays. For example, Ḥaflat samar is a cornerstone in visualizing the socio-political dimensions during hard times. This experiment is not repeated in Wannūs’ works. He shifts to adaptation and the virtual world. The setup of this play, starting from the entry point and ending with leaving the theatre, keeps the sensation of involvement alive to a point that one may not separate actor from audience, or reality from drama. This level of full involvement is weakened in the rest of his works.

From Deleuze’s perspective, there is a risk in applying the concept of the ‘becoming world’ on literature. Deleuze assumes that in the transforming rhizome, there lies the ‘becoming world’; since the rhizome is not a tree structure and it cannot be mutually linked with actual experiences, “the rhizome should not necessarily be celebrated as the answer to all problems encountered when thinking in the manner of the tree” (Martin-Jones and Sutton 9). So, what is logically expected to emerge as a form of resistance to the rhizomatic structure could be different from the real experience of the ‘becoming world’ (Smith 254). In other words, there is no regular standard of the expectations from audience to react towards the shocking conditions. The author as well does not provide a given solution; he mainly draws the attention to the dangers of the rhizome, he stimulates the resistance of the society and he keeps the power of resistance at the level of audience’s reactions. These reactions are not measured because people react differently; people may have different backgrounds so that the impact of stimulation might not be consistent.
Thus, any reaction is a resistance. But, collective resistance may not reach the core of power to subvert the rhizomatic structure.

Obviously, the level of resistance is one of the limitations of Wannūs’ politicized theatre. The level of resistance requires evaluating the effect of shock on the audience. It is known that the circles of audience vary widely. Thus, conveying a message with an equal effect is almost impossible. So, the laymen may be inclined to the political bodies which seduce the ordinary people. Accordingly, laymen may not resist as equally as an intellectual. Wannūs has reflected these reactions in the customers of the café and the people in Mughāmarat ra’s al-mamlūk Jābir. The reactions of the customers start with total avoidance of politics which is reflected through their slogan: “Who marries mom we call him uncle” (Wannūs, A’māl Vol.1, 218). Wannūs states that this passive reaction is the responsibility of the audience when the storyteller mentions that tomorrow’s story is directed by the customers of the café, “I don’t know. Maybe. It is all about you” (Wannūs, A’māl Vol.1, 218). The same conflicting reactions appear in Ḥaflat samar where the spectators negotiate what should be represented on stage. Some call for real representation of reality and others prefer an entertaining program so that they could avoid the dangers of political discussions. On the other hand, the resisting spectators stress that they wanted to be responsible but the political powers restrict them. Hence, Wannūs has analyzed the situation and reflections of audience in his plays to show that responsibilities must be shared with society but some still fear this because they want to avoid conflicts with the political power. This conflict may be a burden for society; nevertheless, some people cannot take the initiative to participate, resist and change the status quo. Accordingly, Wannūs cannot measure in advance the impact of stimulation on spectators in resisting the political hegemony.
The second restriction is the different background of the audience. Surely, Wannūs intends to convey explicit messages through the didactic performance. However, some may resist the message. They may believe that this is an exaggeration while they are more affected by the media and political speeches. Some may understand the situation but may not have a clue for a solution. The main objective, as Deleuze specifies, is the shock and thinking collectively meet at a singular point. If resistance is not collectively stimulated, the effect of shocking fades. Similar to the rhizome, resistance must be empowered with entangled stems. This is highlighted in Ḥaflat samar where spectators are caught between supporting the open discussion to reach the truth, on one hand, and calling the negotiation a conspiracy, on the other hand. Also, Wannūs highlights the same trip when Zarqāʾ foresees the dangers approaching the village. Most people accuse her of lies. But, Bassām and Fatema believe her and refuse to follow the herd. The level of knowledge and the background govern the effect of shock on the audience. Some may believe Zarqāʾ and resist actively. Others may realize the danger she foresees but fear to act. The rest may believe that the reality is different and resistance is nothing but chaos and corruption. Thus, it is essential to decide the level base of knowledge in order to expect similar specific reactions of resistance and rethinking.

Wannūs’ strategy-- and Deleuze’s, rely on the reactions of recipients. Thus, if the audience is reluctant to take the responsibility, all the efforts of representing reality and the social dangers are in vain. Therefore, Wannūs relies on conveying this message in all the endings of his plays that history repeats itself and danger snowballs if the people are passive and reluctant to take their responsibility. Wannūs clarifies that hegemony is reproduced by the passivity of the society rather than by the power of political bodies. Thus, the effect of transformation mainly lies in the reaction and willingness of audience rather than the initiative of revealing the reality and
shocking the audience. This way, they have to choose and take responsibility for their choice (Wannūs, Aʾmāl Vol.1, 218).

It could be noticed that in analyzing the transformational techniques of Wannūs in the selected plays, he starts with the didactic catharthis in Haflat samar. He uses different dramatic devices such as the play within a play, and games that involve the audience. However, he represents the status quo of reality in order to notify recipients that their story is repeated in every home in Syria but the media and political bodies prefer hiding the truth. He also openly discusses the position of society. People are ready to take the responsibility but the political powers deprive them of their rights. The catharsis is timely effective; however, the didactic tone is sensationally irritating. Thus, the audience loses the sustainable effects of the shock after the performance. Either they do not fully absorb it or they do not sustain the feeling after the performance has ended. Similar confrontation has taken place in Mughamarat raʾs al-mamlūk Jabir in the form of memory. Wannūs again uses the audience involvement and play within a play but in a different way. He replaces the didactic tone with poetry and he conveys the message through common sayings so that he could reach the laymen.

Apart from Mughamarat raʾs al-mamlūk Jabir and Haflat samar, Wannūs does not directly involve audience. The play takes the normal setup as in the traditional plays. However, he empowers the form of the political rhizome and highlights its indirect impacts on the socio-economic conditions. Also, in Al-fil ya malik al-zamān, he stresses the passivity of the society in empowering the rhizome and leading to the repition of history. However, transformation from social unity to alliance with the leaders shocks the audience. Memory is instrumented in the play but it symbolizes modern life. This changes the strategy of Wannūs’ plays from catharsis into representation. In Al-malik huwa al-malik, Wannūs proposes an action to distribute the sign of
power among the people, which represents a glimpse of hope in case society takes action against the rhizome. Otherwise, terrorism and repression would dominate. Thus, the transformation in these two plays focuses on the upheaval and shock towards the rhizome and its dominance, and the essential responsibility of society in resisting it.

In Tukūs, Wannūs introduces a modification in role reversal. It is the reversal of the same character that represents the transformation of principles in society. He represents a new shocking form where the audience sympathizes with the actress and also objects to the form of transformation that opposes the social principles. The shock removes the recipients out of their comfort zone. They cannot accept the passive character of Mu‘minah or the playful character of Māsah. The two contrasting choices enforce recipients to think of a new path. Māsah teaches the audience that the new path requires migrating from the fixed zone of principles and roots. Fresh thinking is required to reach the ‘becoming world’. In Malḥamat al-sarāb, the rhizome expands and its effect becomes double-edged. The society is seduced with modernization. The transformation is risky because it impacts the whole social fabric. The shock has reached its peak which should urge society to rethink the given paths.

The politicized theatre is indispensable in revealing and understanding reality, in spreading the awareness of responsibility of each Arab citizen towards corruption. Thus, the role of the politicized theatre is to awaken the collective Arab consciousness to resist the growing political rhizome. The status quo as dramatized in the selected plays proves that the rhizome has become intricate; thus, it is essential to establish a parallel rhizome that subverts the political hegemony and distributes power in the ‘becoming world’. I believe that the role of drama should reach catharsis, interconnected political rhizome that entangles with the entourage and alliances.
It calls for violence that creates the highest shock and stimulates the collective thinking against the status quo.

This chapter shows how Wannūs has initiated a major milestone in the transformation of political theatre and has established an effective drama that aligns with the movements of change. This change requires the involvement, awareness; it calls for shocking the audience in order to be resisting collectively the current rhizomatic political hegemony. Once the audience resists the shocking tragic endings and rethink fresh new society is possible, and Wannūs’ objective is achieved. However, this objective is idealistic because Wannūs performs drama to the spectators that differ in their knowledge, background and reaction. Accordingly, Wannūs’ dramatic devices and techniques may not always fit or hit the target.
Conclusion

Wannūs has managed to establish a politicized theatre that creates an effective drama as opposed to the entertaining drama that alienates the spectators from reality. He has proposed a drama that represents the reality where political conditions are not separate from social conditions. Wannūs believes that society’s responsibility is to resist hegemony and to collectively think of a new society. This new society should be based on equal distribution of power among all the people so that decentralization could occur.

Wannūs’ strategy is well mapped in Deleuze’s concepts of ‘rhizome’, ‘logic of sense’, ‘singularity’ and ‘becoming world’. Deleuze believes that the political structure is rhizomatic. It does not align with the society; it is a structure that has no roots in the society but it dominates laterally over society and oppresses it in order to fulfil the benefits and desires of the hegemonic rhizome. Accordingly, Deleuze expects that this hegemonic rhizome stimulates resistance on society’s part. It is the ‘sense of logic’ when society objects to the repression and new ‘line of flight’ and new directions of thoughts arise. These thoughts cannot be directed or planned. Although they are slightly different and move in different directions, they meet at a point that is called ‘singularity’. At the singularity point, thoughts are empowered to resist the dominance and entangled rhizome. This point of singularity paves the way for the ‘becoming world’ or the new society that is not dominated by the centralized power structure.

Deleuze’s idea of the ‘logic of sense’ is pertinent in literature. He asserts that the role of the author is to reveal reality that backs up violence. This violence leads the mind to be against the status quo. Accordingly, society finds a new way that deviates from the norms. Deleuze thus focuses on the moment of violence because it enriches the future. He advises that the author should not reflect individual characters or historical triumphs. If history is installed in literature,
it should be assessed and judged. He also recommends that the author should propose an unrealistic ending that opposes reality so that the audience thinks and gains hope of a different future. Deleuze’s concepts have been reflected in Wannūs’ works: society should think of a ‘becoming world’ that resists the current rhizome. This resistance emerges from the portrayal of the violent status quo and the disturbing reality so that the audience would not tolerate this state of affairs and would surely think collectively of a ‘becoming’ society.

Deleuze further asserts that this new line of thinking requires the stimulation of percepts and affects of the audience. Similarly, Wannūs is startling endings and dramatizes corrupted society on stage so as to stimulate the feelings that are to resist current political conditions. Deleuze also mentions that this corruption in society is evident in modern life where individuals prefer to avoid getting involved in politics. Such avoidance empowers the political rhizome against the social needs. In Wannūs’ plays, the society fears to get involved in the discussions of and negotiations with political bodies. As a result, the political powers abuse society and ally with a selective group in order to empower their domination over the people. Wannūs thus represents a society that is corrupt, disoriented, suffers from poverty, and high taxes and as a result violence erupts among the people themselves. Facing such cruel social conditions that are a result of hegemonic political rhizome strengthens the society to stand against political power. Wannūs further encourages society to think of a world that distributes the signs of power equally so that no one may rule in an authoritarian way.

Wannūs has never referred to Deleuze concepts. However, he has referred to Brechtian techniques and affirmed that he has adopted the Western techniques with modification to adapt to Arabic settings and cultural traditions. Brecht’s estrangement techniques are well installed in many of Wannūs’ plays. Wannūs and Brecht apply, even if unconsciously, the concepts of
Deleuze in involving the audience. Further, they set a strategy to shock the audience with the reality in the performance using different visual and non-visual devices. Besides, they master the employment of role reversal and memory as dramatic techniques that absorb the full attention and feelings of the spectators so that they can indentify with the events on stage. However, while Brecht targets the bourgeois Western spectators, Wannūs targets the low classes, the masses who are more affected by the political power structure in Arab societies.

This thesis studies the application of Wannūs’ theory of the politicized theatre, Deleuze’s concepts of the rhizome and Brecht’s estrangement theory as shown in the selected plays, starting after the setback of 1967. Wannūs has bent on the role of changing the effect of theatre in dramatizing reality and transforming reality. He has targeted awareness then knowledge and finally points to the audience’s responsibility. Wannūs, Brecht and Deleuze agree that the change does not require the collapse of the rulers; it requires the reaction of the people. Wannūs, Brecht and Deleuze confirm that the reaction requires a brutal confrontation with reality so that recipients can resist the hegemonic political powers and think of a new society. Clearly, they do not dictate revolution and they do not evaluate past forms of resistance. They drive recipients to think afresh and find a collective solution. This solution is never dictated or set in the strategy of the authors. On the contrary, they carve space for new thoughts without limitations. Hope is thus reborn from the hopeless endings represented in the drama of Wannūs and Brecht.

Wannūs has been successful in establishing a consistent objective in raising awareness of audience in relation to reality and the status quo, and in shocking the audience with hopeless endings. However, the effect of Wannūs’ politicized theatre on society is controversial and cannot be easily measured. Critics, such as Abu Hif, believe that his efforts are merely a different setup of performance that do not have any tangible effects on society. Other critics, such as
Gouryh, touch on the valuable role of Wannūs’ efforts in revolutionizing the entertaining theatre to represent the political impacts on the socio-economic conditions. However, Wannūs himself believes that his politicized theatre is an ongoing experimental project. In my opinion, I believe that Wannūs should have specified his audience so that he could have provided consistent effective devices that emotionally target a specific group of audience. As I see it, Wannūs has been successful in combining his dramatic tools. However, Wannūs sometimes does not convey the message clearly so that it takes conflicting meanings and this leads to rewriting his plays. Wannūs engaged with the infrastructure of the Arabic politicized theatre. He has managed to engage with Arab society especially with the effect of politics on the socio-economic conditions.

All in all, the efforts of Wannūs can never be denied in addressing the politicized theatre in revolutionizing the stagnant traditional entertaining theatre. Wannūs’ point of strength is that he establishes cemented political rhizome through the rulers and their allies and entourage. The rhizome intensifies domination whereas awareness augments violence and resistance against the rhizome. Wannūs’ efforts have established the initial strategy to march towards the ‘becoming world’.
Works Cited


