

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A volume such as this cannot come into being without the support of an enormous number of people. Since this volume contains four theater plays, it was especially helpful for us to see a full production and several readings of our translation of one of them and to stage translations of several other modern and contemporary works from the Arab world, including another play by Saʿdallah Wannous. The administrations of the American University of Beirut, where Robert Myers teaches, and the Lebanese American University of Beirut, where Nada Saab teaches, were both instrumental in supporting our work as translators. Our colleague and friend, the Lebanese director and actor Sahar Assaf, worked with us to transform our translations into beautiful theatrical productions, which was a great gift for any translator. Silk Road Rising Theater in Chicago, and its directors Jamil Khoury and Malik Gilani, in conjunction with a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, supported the translation and production in Beirut and reading in Chicago of our translation of *Rituals of Signs and Transformations*. Marvin Carlson and Frank Hentschker, of the Segal Center at CUNY in New York, not only invited us to present a reading of this same play there, Marvin also included it in his groundbreaking volume *Four Plays from Syria*. Frank and Marvin also very graciously allowed us to offer our own translations of *An Evening's Entertainment for the Fifth of June* and *The Adventure of the Head of Mamlouk Jabir*. Marvin and Safi Mahfouz first offered versions of these works in *Four Plays from Syria*, published by the Segal Center, which is the most important venue for world theater in North America. Thanassis Cambanis wrote a wonderful piece about Wan-

nous and our Beirut production of *Rituals* in the *Boston Globe*, and our friend the renowned journalist Rami Khoury wrote an extraordinary tribute to the New York reading of the play that was published in his syndicated column.

We are especially grateful to the poet Marilyn Hacker, who first suggested we contact John Donatich at Yale University Press about publishing translations of Wannous's work for the Margellos World Republic of Letters. Both John and his staff, including Danielle D'Orlando and Kristy Leonard, were exceedingly helpful and patient as we suggested alterations in the content so as to offer the best possible introduction to Wannous's work to an English-speaking audience. Yasmina Jraissati, of the Raya Agency, who represents the Wannous estate, went out of her way to help facilitate our work in every way, as did Sa'dallah Wannous's daughter, the writer Dima Wannous, and his widow, Fayza Wannous. Another important supporter of our work and of scholarship about and translations of plays from the Arab world more generally has been Margaret Litvin of Boston University.

Miriam Ayres, whom we both met when we were all graduate students in New Haven, was an impeccable copyeditor and proofreader, and Rawan Nasser, an MA student in the literature program of the English Department at AUB, meticulously examined our translations alongside the original Arabic versions and assisted with innumerable editorial corrections. Sonja Mejcher-Atassi, chair of the English Department at AUB, and David Wrisley, the former chair, both supported our work as translators, and Elise Salem, a celebrated scholar of Arabic literature and a Vice President of LAU, offered us support and guidance at every turn. The Theater Department of LAU and Dean Nashat Mansour also coproduced one of our Wannous productions. President Fadlo Khuri and Dean Nadia El Cheikh of FAS have been ardent supporters of AUB's Theater Initiative and the production of plays at AUB. The former Provost of AUB, Ahmad Dallah, and the former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at AUB, Patrick McGreevy, helped us fund productions and generate inter-

est in the theater of Wannous. We would also like to thank the actors who performed our translations of Wannous's dialogue and the audience members from AUB, LAU, Beirut, New York, and Chicago. The beautiful cover of this volume, a reproduction of a painting by the Iraqi artist Jamil Hammoudi, was selected as a result of the efforts of Kaoukab Chebaro, Associate University Librarian for Archives and Special Collections and Assistant Professor at AUB. Ms. Ishtar Jamil, the daughter of Jamil Hammoudi, kindly granted us permission to use the painting for the cover of the book.

We are, of course, especially grateful to Sa'dallah Wannous. Although, because he passed away two decades ago, neither of us knew him, we have had the enormous pleasure of becoming acquainted with him through his literary and theatrical legacy. We are indebted to Yale University Press and the Margellos World Republic of Letters for providing us with this medium for sharing that legacy with other lovers of theater and literature.

This page intentionally left blank