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Politics in the Wings: A Comparative Study of the Two Editions of Faisal Hourani's al-muḥāṣarūn (The Besieged)

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Abstract

Objectives: The objective of this paper is to compare the first edition (1973) and the revised version (2004) of Faisal Hourani's Arabic novel al-muḥāṣarūn (*The Besieged*), with the aim of understanding the artistic and political choices behind the rewriting, particularly how political factors may have influenced the revision process.

Method: The study adopts a comparative textual and stylistic analysis of the two editions, examining changes in narrative voice, lexical choices, and setting. Special attention is given to literary techniques employed in the rewriting, as well as the broader historical and political context surrounding the production of the second edition.

Results: The study reveals that the second edition softens the novel's earlier tone through strategies such as anonymization, euphemization, and narrativization. These choices reflect a shift in the text's ideological framing, likely influenced by changing political realities. In contrast to literary cases such as James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where revision enhances the original, Hourani's second edition appears less bold both artistically and politically.

Conclusion: The conclusion highlights the significance of the political and historical context in shaping the second edition of the novel, where the aesthetic intentions behind the revisions were overshadowed by political considerations. By foregrounding these contextual influences, the study illustrates how literature may be shaped by both artistic and political pressures, with the writer navigating a shifting landscape of expectations and constraints.

Keywords: al-muḥāṣarūn (*The Besieged*), Faisal Hourani, novel, Palestine, prison

السياسة في الكواليس: دراسة مقارنة لطبعتي رواية فيصل حوراني 'المحاصرون'

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ملخّص

الأهداف: تهدف هذه الورقة إلى مقارنة الطبعة الأولى (1973) والنسخة المنقحة (2004) من رواية فيصل حوراني العربية "المحاصرون" لفهم الخيارات الفنية والسياسية وراء إعادة الكتابة، وخاصة إمكانية تأثير العوامل السياسية على عملية إعادة الكتابة.

المنهجية: تعتمد هذه الدراسة على تحليل نصي وأسلوبي مقارن بين الطبعتين الأولى والثانية من الرواية، مع التركيز على التغيرات في الصوت السردي، والاختيارات المعجمية، وتوظيف المكان. كما تهتم بالتقنيات الأدبية المستخدمة في عملية إعادة الكتابة، إلى جانب السياق التاريخي والسياسي الأوسع المحيط بإنتاج الطبعة الثانية.

النتائج: تظهر الدراسة أن الطبعة الثانية تخفف من حدة النبرة الأصلية للرواية من خلال استراتيجيات مثل التنكير، والتلطيف، والتحويل السردي. وتعكس هذه الخيارات تحوّلًا في الإطار الأيديولوجي للنص، قد يكون ناتجًا عن تغيّرات في الواقع السياسي. وعلى خلاف تجارب أدبية مثل رواية صورة الفنان في شبابه لجيمس جويس، التي جاءت إعادة كتابتها لتعزز النص الأصلي، تبدو الطبعة الثانية من رواية حوراني أقل ثورية على المستويين الفني والسياسي.

الخلاصة: في الختام، تسلط الدراسة الضوء على أهمية السياق السياسي والتاريخي في تشكيل الطبعة الثانية من الرواية، حيث طغت الاعتبارات السياسية على النوايا الجمالية وراء التعديلات. من خلال التركيز على هذه العوامل السياسية خلف الكواليس، تُظهر الورقة كيف يمكن أن يتشكل الأدب من خلال الضغوط الفنية والسياسية على حد سواء، مع تنقل الفنان في المشهد السياسي المتغير كجزء من عملية إعادة الكتابة.

الكلمات الدالة: أدب السجون، الرواية، فلسطين، فيصل حوراني، المحاصرون

1. Introduction

Faisal Hourani as a Writer and Political Activist

Faisal Hourani, the author of al-muḥāṣarūn (henceforth *The Besieged*), who passed away in Geneva on May 12, 2022, is a Palestinian writer whose life is an epitome of the diasporic existence of many Palestinians. His life, literary works, and studies, such as *Paths of Exile*, *The Roots of Palestinian Refusal 1918-1948*, *Palestinian Political Thought from 1964 to 1974*, *The Besieged*, *Beer i-shshum*, and *Samak al-Lujja*, just to mention a few, all focus on the Palestinian cause and its various manifestations and challenges. They reflect his roots and routes, with Palestine serving as the fixed foot, akin to John Donne's compass. A quick overview of his life illustrates his versatile existence and the breadth and depth of his literary and political experience. Hourani was born in Al-Masmiyyah, a small village near Gaza, on 23 March 1939. He was dislocated during the 1948 Nakba, where he lived with his family for one year in Gaza. He then moved to Damascus, where he received his elementary and secondary education. He studied at Damascus University. He then moved to Algeria in 1964 and worked as editor of Palestinian and Arab issues in *Al-Shabab* weekly newspaper; he returned to Damascus in 1965 and worked at *Al-Ba'ath* daily magazine, becoming director of its news department and editor of its opinion page. However, he was banned by the Syrian authorities from writing in the Syrian press after 1971. He joined the PLO in the late 1960s, becoming the editor-in-chief of the PLO magazine *Al-Tala'i*^{c} (Pioneers) in 1970 and an editorial board member of the *Sawt Filastin* (Voice of Palestine). He served as vice-president of the PLO office in Moscow from 1977 to 1978, returned to Damascus in 1978, and worked for the PLO Political Department, serving as head of media and public relations. In 1979, he started working as a writer; he also became a researcher in the PLO's Palestine Research Center in Beirut and eventually served as secretary, then editor-in-chief of its periodical *Shu'un Filastiniyya* (Palestinian Affairs). After 1983, he was deported from Beirut, and the PLO's Palestine Research Center, which was closed down by Lebanese authorities, moved to Nicosia, Cyprus, and resumed its work. Hourani was representative of the Palestinian Writers' Union in the Palestinian National Council (PNC) in 1984. He became an independent member of the PNC in 1988, moved to Vienna in 1989, and worked as a freelance writer (Abu Ghalyoun 2020, 200-203; Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs).

After the Oslo Accords, Hourani returned to Palestine in 1995. For him to visit Ramallah, the administrative capital of the territory supposedly controlled by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), he has to cross the Allenby Border from Amman to the West Bank. For this, Hourani, the author of the first edition of *The Besieged* (1973), which was banned by the Jordanian General Intelligence Department as a hostile literary and political work, probably had to find an arrangement with this department to allow him frequent entry and exit to the PNA territory on the assumption that the PNA had included Hourani and all its affiliates into a similar agreement with Israel. Hourani does have a political enmity with Israel but not a very personal and idiosyncratic one. The situation is quite different with Jordan; the novel was still alive, though, thanks to media and technology, the ban ended up void. Was the reproduction of a new, less hostile edition of *The Besieged* in 2004 with minimal reference to Black September (1970) and subsequent clashes in Jerash and Ajloun between the Jordanian army and the Fidaiyyen (Palestinian Guerillas) in 1971 an inevitable price for such an entry-exit deal? No definitive answer is readily available. However, we will be revisiting this in the course of a detailed presentation and discussion.

1.2 *The Besieged*: An Overview

The Besieged, initially published in 1973 in Damascus and later reissued as a second edition in Ramallah, Palestine, by the Palestinian National Guidance Foundation in 2004, explores the tumultuous events of the 1970 Black September in Jordan, portraying a fierce conflict between the Fidaiyyen and the Jordanian government along with its army. The narrative is meticulously woven in a captivating documentary style, presenting authentic events. It critically examines the stances, practices, and slogans of the Fidaiyyen at the time, steering clear of both exaggeration and fabrication. The storyline unfolds with breathless intensity, pulling at the heartstrings, primarily through the life journey of the protagonist, Khalid, and his beloved Sameera.

This novel distinguishes itself as one of the rare literary works addressing the events of Black September. It thoroughly explores various facets of the subject, encompassing the catastrophe, setbacks, the eruption of the revolution, the intense years in the Jordan Valley, and the onset of clashes, culminating in conflict and imprisonment. The novel vividly depicts instances of torture and interrogation, orchestrated by the commanding officer.

The defeat of Jordan, Syria and Egypt in the 1967 war, and the loss of the West Bank to Israel leads Khalid to join the Palestinian revolution, where he encounters Sameera, who also aligns herself with the same cause. In the narrative, Khalid and Sameera's paths cross as their life stories intersect.

Following the 1948 Nakba, Khalid and his family migrate from their village, Al-Masmiyya, to Gaza. Subsequently, Khalid moves to Damascus, a city rich with familial ties, to pursue higher education. This subtly alludes to the author's own life journey.

Simultaneously, Sameera's family migrates from Haifa to Damascus before settling in Kuwait in pursuit of employment and sustenance. However, their time in Kuwait is marred by various challenges that erode their dignity and Palestinian identity. One such incident involves a proposition from a seventy-year-old Kuwaiti man for the hand of the 17-year-old Sameera. Her firm refusal triggers direct intervention, prompting Sameera and her family to relocate to Egypt. Khalid and Sameera reunite, serving as the narrative focal point. Their experiences address a myriad of issues until the eruption of the Black September events. The duo is eventually apprehended, exchanging messages in prison through a prison guard.

The author seeks to encapsulate the Palestinian experience during the Jordanian era, deliberately omitting specific locations, characters, and names in the second edition that were prominent in the 1973 release, contributing to its authenticity. This individual narrative mirrors the collective Palestinian identity grappling with displacement.

2. Literature Review

The Besieged is a novel that is understudied and not fully acknowledged in scholarly works. The first edition of the novel is almost unknown. To our knowledge, there is no mention whatsoever of it in any scholarly research. For example, at the University of Jordan's electronic theses database, there is only one MA dissertation by Amaal Yousef Abu Ghalyoun in Arabic on three novels by Hourani, including *The Besieged*. Abu Ghalyoun (2020) studies only the 2004 version of the novel and does not mention either explicitly or implicitly the earlier edition. She referenced only two critical works that tackle the novel: one is an article in Arabic by Raed al-Hawari (2016) titled "September Events in Faisal Hourani's Novel – *The Besieged*", and a chapter in a book in Arabic by Ibrahim Khalil (2019) titled *Memory and Imagination in Narrative Discourse*. Al-Hawari (2016) based his study on the 2004 edition of the novel and places it topically and historically with other novels that revolve around Black September, such as Tawfiq Fayyad's *Militia: My Beloved* and Rashad Abu Shawar's *Weeping on the Beloved Bosom*. He does not make any reference to the first edition of the novel. Moreover, his reading of the novel is quite informative and descriptive. It focuses on a number of issues, such as place, though place is quite problematic in the second edition, as we will show later; the mistakes of the Palestinian guerilla factions; their relations with the Jordanian regime; and opportunism. In contrast, Khalil (2019) views this literary work as a prison novel and highlights some of its biographical aspects.

Unlike the very meagre studies on Hourani, the focus of this paper is on the two editions of the Arabic novel al-muḥāṣarūn '*The Besieged*'. The paper presents and discusses an example of a unique experience in Arabic literature of rewriting an already published novel. To our knowledge, this is the first novel in Arabic that has been rewritten. Although a rare experience, in general, there are a number of cases where novelists revisited their novels and provided different editions. A classic example is that of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which went through many processes of revisions and restructuring and took around seventeen years to reach its destination. Several interpretations have been proposed: some are artistic, some are pragmatic, and others are biographical. For example, a psycho-biographical approach to the novel suggests that the alterations made to Victor Frankenstein's character in Shelley's work were influenced by her own loss of control in life. In the 1818 edition, Dr. Frankenstein maintained a sense of morality and some autonomy over his decisions regarding his experiments. However, the 1831 edition portrays him as being trapped by external forces beyond his influence.

Shelley's revisions illustrate the impact of personal emotions and life encounters on the editing process, revealing a connection between the author's own struggles and the evolution of the character (Jeanette the Writer, 2019).

Another interesting case is that of James Joyce's novel *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. According to Richard Ellman (1982), in early 1904 Joyce discovered that Eglinton and another acquaintance, Fred Ryan, were in the process of editing a new intellectual journal named *Dana*, inspired by the Irish earth-goddess. On January 7, he quickly composed an autobiographical story that blended self-admiration with irony. Following Stanislaus's (his brother's) suggestion, he titled it *A Portrait of the Artist* and submitted it to the editors. This marked the remarkable beginning of Joyce's mature work, which later underwent different transformations, evolving into the lengthy piece *Stephen Hero* and eventually being condensed into the middle-length narrative known as A *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This transformative process spanned a decade (p. 144).

If the rewriting of A *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* took ten years and that of *Frankenstein*, seventeen, Faisal Hourani's novel, *The Besieged*, took thirty-one years. It was first published in 1973 in the aftermath of the 1970 Black September, the armed conflict between the Jordanian army and the Fidaiyyen, and then rewritten in 2004. However, unlike earlier experiences of rewriting literary texts like that of James Joyce's rewriting of *Stephen Hero* as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where the rewritten version is a better one or artistically stronger, a close textual analysis suggests that the first edition employs more complex literary techniques and conveys political themes more explicitly than the revised version.

3. *The Besieged*: Genre and Analysis

The Besieged is a multi-generic novel. It belongs to prison literature such as *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Life is Good, Brother* by Nazim Hikmet, and *East of the Mediterranean* by Abdul Rahman Munif, among others. This is evident in the fact that most of its major events take place in a military and/or an interrogation context and are narrated from a prison cell. In the same vein, it can also be seen as a war novel, as it documents and references what came to be called, according to Joseph Nevo (2008, p. 217): "Black September", "the September massacre", "the catastrophe", "the battle for Jordan", or "civil war"/"the Jordanian civil war" that took place in Jordan in 1970. Regardless of these labels, the novel is, after all, a love story; it is about the love between Khalid and Sameera, the protagonists, in the midst of war and imprisonment. As they are besieged, their love grows and makes them withstand the oppression and betrayal of the opposing forces and their own, respectively. However, the focus of the paper is on the rationale behind the rewriting of the novel to bring to the fore the overlooked original text and its literary merits and political context. The main question that this study attempts to answer is why the rewriting? Put another way, what are the intentions of the author behind such an endeavor? As it is difficult to know exactly the author's intentions (beyond his brief statement overleaf inside the front cover page of the 2004 edition), this paper studies the stylistic variations and political underpinnings in the two works to come up with a possible explanation and justification for such an endeavor. Hence, we draw on stylistic studies to provide us with the framework through which we can trace the changes, and by using the methodology of close reading and textual analysis of the two editions, we shed light on the artistic and political reasons behind the rewriting and their implications.

Like the previously mentioned novels that went through the experience of rewriting, *The Besieged* provides a unique experience of rewriting. Unique for two reasons: first, to our knowledge, it is the only novel rewritten in Arabic after its publication. Second, the underlying purpose of rewriting is more likely to be different from the stated purpose by the novelist, as will be shown shortly. The plot and events of the novel are directly linked to the politico-military clashes between the Jordanian regime and the Fidaiyyen organizations in September 1970 and the aftermath battles in Jerash and Ajloun woods in 1971, in which the latter lost the battle and were forced to leave Jordan for Lebanon and Syria. The first edition was out in Damascus in 1973, and it was treated as a hostile publication by the Jordanian authorities and probably by many other Arab governments and thus banned. However, some copies infiltrated the ban and found their way to many readers, particularly in Jordan, who reproduced further photocopies, making the novel available probably to their close

friends. Apparently, one of the authors of this paper was among those friends. In 2004 a new edition with the same title was published in Ramallah, as stated earlier. This was not a cosmetic replacement of the original. It was not a change of the black and white cover of the novel by a color one. Nor was it a change of book and/or font size or layout. Apparently, the novelist was aware of the controversy that may arise over the change and thus stepped in to explain. He stated in a place that is unlikely to draw the reader's attention, i.e., on the verso of the front cover page, that the rewriting of the novel was artistically motivated in the first place without giving any further details about the nature of such needs. Although this may imply that some changes were meant to serve other purposes, he has never alluded to them in any way. In Hourani's words(*):

> This is a reproduction of the novel titled *The Besieged*, which I published in 1973. It was the first literary text I wrote, which I have never republished. This reproduction was necessitated by artistic motives in the first place.

Before we proceed with the analysis, it is useful to brief the reader on the setting and plot of the work under examination. The main setting of the novel is the bloody clashes between the Jordanian government and the Fidaiyyen in September 1970 in Jordan and subsequent clashes in Jerash and Ajloun woods. The novel describes the military battles and the Arab atmosphere at the time, which all ended with the defeat of the organizations militarily and the capture of many of their file and rank, who were kept as detainees in the hands of the Jordanian security services (for more historical details, see "The Jordanian Civil War: A retrospective Analysis" (2008) *Civil Wars*, Special Issue (September 2008: 10 (3)). Another scholarly work that discusses September events is Randa Nasri Mukhar's MA Thesis (1978) titled The Jordanian internal war of 1968-1971: A study in political violence.

In *The Besieged*, the reader is introduced to a story that revolves around a Palestinian detainee and his would be-wife, Sameera. This arrestee is Commander Khalid, who differs from many guerilla leaders, as he held a critical political stance on the presence of the guerillas in the Jordanian cities and Palestine refugee camps; he maintained that the Palestinian fight against Israel should be in the occupied lands. Further, he criticized the extremist slogans of the organizations, including the one on the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea that prevailed at the time without the possibility of implementing it even partially. He also criticized the organizations' slogans that focused on overthrowing the Jordanian regime, including the slogan "All power should be held by the Resistance" (1973, p. 72). This political stance seems to have echoed the position expressed in an article by Fahmi al-Salfiti (1968), critiquing the work of the Fidaiyyen. He states that "Our party has sought to assist the elements of national forces in discovering their responsibilities and persuading them to abandon unrealistic slogans that do not align with the current situation" (p. 359). He adds later on, "Their method of struggle [the Fidaiyyen] contradicts objective circumstances and is characterized by strong extremist tendencies. They tend to isolate the resistance movement from the realities of Jordanian life and the rest of the Arab world" (p. 367).

In Amman, on the eve of the military clashes, Khalid met Sameera, the then wife of Abu Al-Malahim, one of the extremist leaders of the guerillas. Sameera came from Cairo to Amman, and, as it happened, she joined Khalid's office and became one of his staff. Gradually, Sameera got acquainted with his views and positions, fell in love with him, and he fell in love with her. Meanwhile, she got divorced, and together with Khalid, they planned for marriage. She was subsequently arrested and subjected to severe and brutal torture.

The Jordanian General Intelligence interrogator asked Khalid to appear on Jordanian television and radio in order to revoice his critical views against the extremist positions of the Palestinian organizations. The Jordanian government wanted to support its narrative about the destructive role and activities of the Palestinian organizations in Jordan. Khalid refused the offer and stood firm against it. The interrogator subjected Khalid to severe psychological torture by forcing him to witness the unbearable pain and suffering of Sameera during the repetitive and endless sessions of brutal physical torture, as well as attend the torturing of two of his staff, Saeed and Abdel-Fattah, who was actually killed.

Sameera accepted the challenge and refused to surrender, though at one point in time she was at the brink of death. Likewise, Khalid never retreated as he understood that the interrogator wanted to make him feel guilty and responsible for Sameera's suffering and wanted her to turn into an element of pressure on him, but all this did not happen. Sameera endured

torture and stood tall, and in the last scene, when the torture team tore off her dress, she burst into the face of the interrogator, 'Beast', and spit on him (1973, p. 231).

At this very critical moment, Khalid came forward and defended her and spoke loudly, addressing the interrogator, "Do whatever you want. You understand honor in the body, and we understand it in action. You can harm us, but you, in no way, will be able to defeat us the way you want" (1973, p. 232). Then he addressed Sameera, "Your nakedness is a badge of honor and chastity for you. You are my love, you are my comrade, our comrade. He stripped off your clothes, but he did not dare to look at you. He and his aides feared you more when naked" (1973, p. 232). While Khalid was speaking, Sameera stood up naked and handcuffed. The four guards looked down, and the little man, the architect of torture, moved away. Abu Basim, who is arrested because he offers Sameera a refuge to avoid arrest by the security forces, lost consciousness; Saeed, the handcuffed prisoner, cried in silence, and the major left the hall in defeat.

4. *The Besieged* and Its Artistic Choices

This plotline is apparently maintained in the two editions. However, the artistic changes that take place in the second one are evident, creating a different impact on the reader. With stylistics in the background, we show the discrepancies between the two. According to Jeffries and McIntyre (2010, p. 1), stylistics is a branch within linguistics that systematically examines the various styles in language, considering factors such as genre, context, historical period, and authorship. For instance, it delves into individual writing styles that set one author apart from another, the styles associated with specific genres (e.g., 'newspaper language' or gothic novel), and the attributes defining what might be considered 'literary' style. Analyzing style involves a systematic examination of the formal features of a text, determining their functional significance for interpreting the text at hand. Jeffries and McIntyre added that as a linguistic discipline, stylistics has its roots in Russian formation, which attempted to isolate the properties and characteristics of literary language in contrast with everyday and non-literary language (2010, pp. 1-2). Drawing on this and expanding on it, the paper isolates the properties and characteristics of the literary language of Hourani in his rewriting of this novel and examines the literary, historical and political implications of the changes that take place in the second edition.

The Besieged is a text that is rife with references to writing and the process of writing and rewriting. For example, the first edition starts with the investigator asking Khalid to write down his biography to pass the time:

> Khalid leaned his back against the wall of the cell, extended his legs in as relaxed a position as possible, and cast a sidelong but not indifferent glance at the papers laid out in front of him. He then looked at the pen he was playing with and pondered: What if he wrote the story of his life truthfully? What if he didn't hide anything from the investigator who gave him the paper and pen, requesting him to write a summary of his life? (1973, p. 5)

Khalid is also aware of being asked to write and rewrite his life story in order for the investigator to detect the discrepancies and then convict him:

> He was truly aware of their methods, and among them was this one: he writes the story of his life, and they would claim the story is incomplete. Then he writes it again and a third time. Through the small contradictions in the details, the investigator tries to confuse him, to untangle the knot of his tongue, to lead him into providing information (1973, p. 7).

This motif of writing and rewriting aptly fits with what this paper is trying to show: the reasons behind the rewriting of the novel and their implications. Hourani claims that the production of the second edition is artistically motivated. However, we suggest that the changes could have been politically driven. At this stage, let's posit that the reproduction might have been motivated by a host of reasons. First, Houran's belief that the historical events and circumstances that constituted the main pillars of the 1973 edition had changed. Second, the author, who was hardly visible as a Palestinian writer in 1973, wanted his first novel to be republished and thus become available for a wide readership as it had been banned in Jordan and mainly outside Syria for its very sensitive political underpinnings. Third, the 2004 edition could have been the result of negotiations between the author and the security and political censorship authorities involved in media and publication. Irrespective of the author's purpose, we claim that the main objective of rewriting is that of diplomatization and

reconciliation. It shows the author's determination to make the second edition more diplomatic and less aggressive and perhaps less of a nuisance to the Jordanian regime, PNA, and many Arab countries that banned the first edition. However, such political reconsiderations have to be implemented through stylistic and textual changes.

5. Textual Strategies Underlying Political Reconsiderations

We argue that the author has resorted to a number of strategies to achieve his politically motivated objective. These strategies are narrativization, anonymization and euphemization, the focus of this part of this paper.

5.1 Narrativization: From Showing to Telling

One of the trademarks of an effective writer is his/her ability to show, not tell. This is shown clearly in the choices made in the writer's point of view and characterization. Terms such as focalization, dramatic point of view, transitions and characterization are major criteria to assess the artistic qualities of a work of art. Since the beginning of the first chapter, the reader does not fail to note the difference between the two editions.

In terms of focalization, one can identify many examples that show the shift from the active presentation of the protagonist to his passive presentation. This is done from the very beginning of the novel. For example, the original novel begins with the protagonist, Khalid, leaning his back on the wall of the prison: "Khalid leaned his back against the wall of the cell, extended his legs in as relaxed a position as possible [….] He snatched a smile and remembered Sameera [….] Three days ago, they brought him to this cell [….] The man interrogated him" (1973, p. 5). On the other side, the rewritten edition begins with Khalid's absence from the scene, where Khalid is quite overlooked, and an atmosphere of uncertainty is felt due to the lack of any reference to the name of the prisoner who is mentioned after giving a detailed description of the prison:

> They placed him in the cell and kept him for three consecutive days. It measured a few meters in length and a meter or slightly more in width, a space that did not allow the prisoner's body much room for movement (2004, p. 7).

This kind of marginalization is applied also to the protagonist's voice. In the first edition we are given a chance to hear Khalid's voice. Even when the narrator takes over, he employs free indirect discourse, a technique through which the narrator indirectly conveys the thoughts, emotions, or speech of a character. This approach vividly portrays the character's inner thoughts and feelings, blurring the lines between Khalid's perspective and that of the narrator. As a result, readers experience the character's viewpoint in a more immediate and intimate manner, ensuring that Khalid's voice and emotions remain prominent throughout the narrative. The emphasis, therefore, is on showing rather than telling, which is illustrated in many instances in the first edition. The following is an illustrative example of his detention:

> When he arrived here, anxiety seized him, imagining that his companions outside wouldn't know his whereabouts. Eager to establish contact with the outside world at any cost, he didn't miss the sympathetic look in the eyes of the night guard, Abu Mahmoud. He wrote a small letter, telling the guard it was to his fiancée, hoping that would prompt him to expedite its delivery.
>
> Isn't Sameera his fiancée already?
>
> Why hasn't he gotten engaged until now? He reached thirty without getting married, and whenever he was asked about the reason, he attributed it to instability.
>
> "That's not true." He was sixteen or seventeen when he fell in love for the first time ... (1973, p. 28).

As is obvious here, the writer maintains a third-person perspective while still providing a deep and immediate connection to the protagonist's subjective experience. This is quite missing in the second edition, where the narrator is omniscient and didactic, as if he were writing a censored documentary rather than fiction:

> He was brought to this ordinary city prison, and he imagined that Sameera and his comrades wouldn't know the location of his detention, which troubled him deeply. When they took him to the investigator after three days of isolation, he didn't fail to notice the sympathetic look in the eyes of the evening guard patrolling the corridor. As the

> glance repeated on his return, he gathered courage and took a chance. He received a response from the guard and wrote a short letter, telling the man that Sameera was his fiancée.
>
> Isn't Sameera already his fiancée? What's the difference between an announced engagement and an unannounced one? Haven't they agreed to journey through life together? What prevents them from being considered a couple? Is the relationship defined by records and constraints stronger than the one formed by love? Get to know Sameera, on the threshold of thirty and still unmarried. Every time he explained, the reason for not getting married was attributed to instability. Is this really the reason? Is it the only reason? Is it an insurmountable reason? Don't stable people get married? Why did his relationship with Sameera stabilize? Why did they agree to get married, despite meeting and living together during the tumultuous peak of their lives?
>
> Before Sameera, he knew many others, but none of his relationships with them became stable... (2004, pp. 26-27).

Apparently the narrator interferes extensively and is very judgmental and authoritative in the second edition. Moreover, Khalid's perspective is overlooked. Another example that illustrates this point is when Khalid clarifies his position on leadership to Sameera:

> [Khalid to Sameera]: Will you accept my honesty? I don't disdain everyone as you assume. Those who claim that these are the opinions of the majority are not accurate; no one has conducted a survey or poll. Do we arbitrarily label some people as the majority just because they make noise? Regardless, I am most frustrated with those who hypocritically hold extreme views. They know these views are wrong and harmful, yet they align themselves with those who label them as the majority.
>
> [Sameera]: Do you believe that my husband is one of them?
>
> She asked, casting him an inquisitive look that lacked condemnation.
>
> [Khalid]: Honestly, yes. Due to his experience and position in leadership, he knows the reality of our strength and understands more than others the true picture of the situation we are part of. This makes him aware of where grand slogans are leading us.
>
> [Sameera]: But he argues that they stir up popular tension; at least that's what he says.
>
> [Khalid]: That's where the danger lies. Our policies and slogans promise people what they cannot achieve. Failure in this case will breed despair and nothing else (1973, pp. 33-34).

This dialogue takes place in the first edition from page 32 to page 36, showing Khalid's position and how he is against the big slogans and the hypocrite members of the leadership who adopt big slogans knowing the real position and strength of the resistance and still burden the fighters/people with impossible goals to achieve. He believes that these big promises and unrealistic slogans, though they mobilize people and fuel their anger and resistance, will be almost impossible to fulfill and will lead to failure and despair and eventually paralysis. The effect is very harmful. His criticisms and concerns are very valid. He thinks in terms of accountability and integrity. He knows that many members of the Palestinian organizations care less for the cause and care more for their image as guerilla fighters and for their benefits. All of this is done through dialogue.

This dialogue format is missed in the second edition and is substituted with the narrator's voice, where he reverts from showing to telling:

> Facing her insistence on probing the nature of his feelings, Khalid found himself compelled to fully explain his position. He neither entirely hates nor loves Abu Al-Malahim, nor does he hold him in contempt or esteem. Nothing exists between them that breeds hatred or disdain. It is a matter of differing opinions, stances, and modes of behavior. The issue doesn't concern Abu Al-Malahim as an individual but rather the class of leaders to which he belongs. Khalid is perturbed by those who push toward unattainable goals, those who seek the impossible and reject the possible. If the matter were limited to rejection alone, even if it were foolish rejection, it wouldn't bother him much, as foolishness is a common phenomenon, even among leaders, and not all rejecters are fools (2004, pp. 28-29).

First, the change to narrative takes away Khalid's voice and his views that are directly expressed and justified by him in the first edition. He makes it clear that he resigned from his military assignment because the leadership was not making

the best use of its forces. It has the means but does not do anything. For him, the real work should take place inside Palestine: the West Bank. This is all missing in the second edition where Khalid is for the temporary, piecemeal solution:

> And when the opportunity arose to reclaim a part of Palestine within the framework of international legitimacy, they rejected what was readily achievable in favor of distant aspirations, as if it were possible to leap into this distance above reality or reach it on the wings of illusions. Not content with this, they branded those advocating for the utilization of international legitimacy as traitors (2004, p. 29).

This peace-oriented talk, which is more relevant to the Oslo Accord and is connected with subsequent events, was hardly touched upon in the first edition, where the question of peace settlement was not considered. The narrator in the 2004 edition suggests that certain Palestinian groups missed the opportunity to accept a partial settlement—a position that contrasts with the more revolutionary stance presented in the 1973 edition. The provocative word is adhering to the rules of international legitimacy, i.e., UN resolutions that were not implemented because of the US support for Israel on the ground and in the UN Security Council. Knowing Khalid of the first edition, it is impossible that he would think in such a way. The changes in the 2004 edition alter Khalid's characterization, portraying him less as a defiant ideological figure and more as a pragmatic actor within the shifting political context. The shift from dramatic to narrative style, from showing to telling, strips away Khalid's voice and the perspectives he explicitly and justifiably expresses in the first edition. This change has enabled Hourani to tone down Khalid's rhetoric.

This shift from showing to telling is also demonstrated in Sameera's criticism of the leadership and her attack of her husband's friends and their political as well as military tactics. For example, in the first edition, this criticism is done mainly in dialogue. She says:

> For years you have been firing bullets and slogans while reactionary forces are trading with our cause. What does all of this help us with? The Israelis are washing their feet in the canal and the Jordan River and basking in the Golan. Despite the big slogans, the guerrillas have been dispelled from the Ghour to the cities under the mercy of the King.
>
> She [Sameera] said all of that without stopping, then looked at the person who was the last speaker:
>
> Talking about liberating half of Palestine as if it were offered to us on a platter, and all that's left is for us to say yes to attain it? Delusions! Liberating even one region requires years of struggle and efforts beyond what is being exerted now. It especially requires a policy other than this policy and a broader horizon than this horizon and a mindset that does not refuse to understand the world (1973, p. 59).

In the second edition, not only does the dialogue transition into narrative, but there is also a shift from the concept of cause to that of trading. While the Palestinians are depicted as "entering the market, the Israelis are washing their feet in the Suez Canal and warming up in the Ghour and cooling down in the Golan Heights" (2004, p. 53). There is no mention of the Jordan River or the ascending tension and conflict in Jordan.

Another illustrative example, showing the shift from dialogue to narrative, is shown when Sameera insists on staying with Khalid, who is worried about her safety in the midst of escalating danger. The scene goes as follows:

> [Khalid]: Now I need to tour our military sites in the area. I'll take you home, and tomorrow you can join the command center.
>
> [Sameera]: Which home? Should I stay alone on a night like this? If I want to fight, why are you standing against me?
>
> Embarrassment was evident in his movements and glances; he was torn between two regions: his need for her presence beside him and his fear of involving her in a battle she wasn't prepared for.
>
> [Khalid]: It's ten o'clock now; I must leave.
>
> [Sameera]: Let me accompany you!
>
> [Khalid]: No, I refuse that. Go back home...
>
> [Sameera]: I won't go back (1973, p. 74).

While in the second edition, all this is transformed into an act of telling by the narrator:

> Khalid spoke with the logic of a responsible leader, concealing his fear for her from a danger he knew but she didn't. His reasoning meant that his desire for her to stay with him wouldn't be fulfilled if she separated from him in a situation where she underestimated any danger just to remain close to him. When he suggested sending her to the command center where there were many tasks other than combat, she rejected his proposal. Going there, like going home, would distance her from him (2004, p. 59).

By doing so, the 2004 edition amplifies the narrator's voice at the expense of direct character dialogue, which results in a more detached and less immersive portrayal of the protagonists' agency.

5.2 Anonymization: Making the Known Unknown

Another strategy adopted by the writer to achieve his objective of diplomatization and reconciliation is anonymization, which takes the form of the removal of names of places that are of special significance to the novel's plot.

Perhaps the most important anonymization that takes place in the second edition is the omission of the name of the al-Ashrafieh Hospital—a pivotal location in the confrontations between the two parties. In the first edition, Khalid tells the guards, "You will accompany our comrade [Sameera] to Ashrafieh Hospital," (he turned to her and added), "There they will need you. And who knows, you might find me there at any time you need" (1973, p. 85). While in the second edition, Khalid gives a piece of paper to the guard and: "He said authoritatively, cutting off any opportunity for Sameera to object, 'You will accompany the comrade to the hospital; you know it" (2004, 66). In the same chapter, in the first edition, he mentions Amman and Jordan and spends enough time (pp. 105-111) to talk about the details of Black September, which he refers to as "the days of the Amman battle" (1973, p. 105). This has been cut down in the second edition to two pages (middle of 87 to middle of 89), dropping down any reference to Amman or Jordan.

Al-Ashrafieh is one of the seven hills in Amman, known to be a home of many of the dislocated Palestinians after 1948 (Nusaiba 1992; al-Musa 1998; al-Mahasneh 2008). It is in east Amman where al-Ashrafieh Hospital, the oldest public hospital in Jordan, established in 1954, is located. It played a major role during the 1970 Black September events. This is documented in Dr. Raouf Nazmi's short historical account of the events at the hospital in his booklet *The Story of Al-Ashrafia Hospital during the Events of Ayloul in Amman*. Nazmi divides the account into ten days, providing us with a historical account of what took place during these ten days. Reading this booklet, which was published in 1971, and reading chapter 4 of the first edition of the novel (1973), one feels how much they echo each other. For example, in the booklet, Nazmi describes the events of the sixth day: "It's essential to donate blood, but people can't endure six days without food" (1971, p. 52). Then he adds that "people are following the news of the Cairo conference" (1971, p. 53). In the first edition, the narrator echoes the same view in his account of the sixth day: "On the sixth day, the army had taken control of the water depots; there was no longer water in the hospital. The picture was now complete—hunger, thirst, and pain. The only hope was the conference held in Cairo" (Hourani: 1973, p.122).

Al-Ashrafieh Hospital is closely associated with the battles and subsequent atrocities orchestrated by the government's military forces. It served as a sanctuary for numerous innocent civilians and guerrilla fighters alike. As it happened, the hospital was renamed Al Bashir Hospital following the tragic event in which the former health minister, Mohammad al-Bashir, was killed in a military helicopter crash while accompanying former Queen Alia on a return trip from inspecting Tafileh Hospital in southern Jordan on 9 February 1977. At the time, the decision was perceived as an attempt by the regime to erase the troubling and politically embarrassing connotations associated with the previous name. The second edition's omission of specific historical references, such as the name of Al-Ashrafieh Hospital, may contribute—intentionally or not—to the softening of politically charged memory within the narrative.

Not only is the name of the hospital omitted from the second edition, but also the names of Palestinian villages. An example of this is attested in the five-line biography that Khalid submitted to the interrogator. It reads as follows:

> [First edition] I was born in 1940 in the village of Al-Deir in southern Palestine" (1973, p. 7).
>
> [Second edition] I was born in 1940 in a village in the middle of Palestine" (2004, p. 10).

The reader may wish to observe that the writer makes Khalid drop the name of his original town, Al-Deir, in the second edition. Further, he shows Khalid as an ignorant Palestinian who does not know the exact location of his village in Palestine. While he confirms that it is in Southern Palestine in the first edition, he reports, though contrary to reality, that it is in the middle of Palestine. In the first version, the narrator highlights a well-known fact among the Palestinian refugees, that is, the pride they have in recalling the names of their original towns and villages that were damaged and removed by Israel. They are also very conscious of the importance of passing on this to their sons and daughters. This alteration significantly shifts the depiction of the protagonist's connection to Palestinian identity and memory. In the first edition the narrator says that the name of Al-Deir is inscribed in Khalid's memory. It is written in his birth certificate, in his identity card, in his passport, in his school certificates, in the files that the security services keep, and on the borders of the Arab countries that denied him entry (1973, p. 8). However, all of this is missing in the second edition.

Actually, the systematic removal of politically sensitive references suggests an underlying strategy to depoliticize the narrative, particularly in relation to the events of Black September. It seems that this has driven him to madly remove or alter names attested in the first edition, whether they are associated with the clashes or not. However, the diplomatization move has not passed unnoticed. Now that the change has been made, we only wonder if Khalid, the protagonist, or Hourani, his creator, will be denied entry via the Allenby Border with this transformed and distorted memory.

Another example that shows both anonymization and fabrication is the deletion of the place and date of a university student rally that takes place in Damascus in 1962 in support of the demands of the workers of a local company who went on strike. In the first edition, the narrator says: "In 1962 he [Khalid] was arrested in Damascus when university students took to the streets in support of the demands of the striking workers of the pentagonal company" (1973, p. 23). While in the second edition, the narrator says: "In a country other than this one, he was arrested after being accused of leading a protest against a particular policy (2004, p. 22). Not only were Damascus and the year expunged, but the very cause of the arrest has also been fabricated. This revision introduces a notable distancing from the historical and geographical specificity present in the first edition.

Another anonymization of place is also found in chapter two. This time the anonymization is done to Amman, the very city where most of the events take place. In the first edition, the narrator mentions the place by saying, "So, she [Sameera] found herself preparing to go to Amman" (1973, p. 57). While in the second edition, "And before her move to this city" (2004, p. 51). The same happens in Chapter Four, where Amman, which is mentioned in the first version in relation to Sameera, becomes in the second version "the city from which she was expelled" (2004, p. 105) and "the city in which Khalid remained" (2004, p. 106).

Another example takes place in the third chapter when we meet the prison guard from Irbid:

[Khalid] You show sympathy towards me, do I know the reason?

[Guard] I'll tell you... My brother, a fidai, left Amman, then left Jerash. He is now residing in a base for you outside Jordan.

[Khalid] Which city are you from?

[Guard] From Irbid, originally from Irbid, but we've been living in Amman for years.

[Khalid] You're not Palestinian?

[Guard] May God forgive those who divide us. Before these problems, we didn't feel any differences.

[Khalid] And now?

[Guard] I won't hide it from you; the situation is complicated. They tell me I'm an eastern Jordanian and the fidai is Palestinian, that he wants to slaughter me. I know that's wrong, but I dare not say it. They will suspect me and dismiss me (1973, p. 82).

In the second edition, this is toned down and is done through narrative, not dialogue:

And if he is a prison guard, and his brother is a fidai like Khalid, Khalid has the right to inquire about him from his comrades. He left the country with them the day they departed. He is not Palestinian, but may God forgive those who discriminate, as there is no difference. If he doesn't become a fidai like his brother, it's because he is not young

> like him and because government jobs are more secure. Didn't his brother become destitute while he remains employed? The situation is difficult; the leaders tell him that the fidai is an enemy; they say the fidai hates the sons of the country. He doesn't believe what they say; how can he believe it when his own brother is a fidai? As for responding to what they say, he doesn't respond; he doesn't have the courage. If he responds, they will suspect him, and he will lose his job (2004, p. 64).

It is quite obvious that the anonymization of locations is systematic and evidently driven by political motives. The omission of the names of places in the second version harms one of the main pillars of historical narrative, which is setting. Tally (2013, p. 2) posits that "literature helps readers to get a sense of the worlds in which others have lived." Therefore, "space and place are indeed historical" (p. 5). According to him, narrative entails both temporality and spatiality (p. 49); it is a "spatiotemporal world" that "is infused with the places that it explores [. . .] the story and the place are inextricably bound together" (pp. 50-51). Raslan (2024) takes this a step further by discussing psychogeography to show the impact of places and geography on the human psyche. She "describes spatial experiences in accordance with social, physical, historical, psychological, and geographical dimensions of everyday life" (p. 367). In other words, spaces and places are very significant and vital in literary works. Dropping them down from a literary work deprives it of its historical, emotional and political weight and significance.

5.3 Euphemization: Ironing the Unironed

A third and major strategy that is employed in the rewriting of the novel is euphemization. This can be spotted by comparing the confrontation between the interrogator and the detainee in the two editions. For instance, in the first edition, the interrogator reveals his intent when he directs his talk to Khalid:

> We know your views; we know that you were persecuted within your faction because of these views. What we ask of you is that you help us uncover mistakes. We have prepared the means for you to do this.
>
> Khalid says, "I will be frank with you. I am not the type of man you are looking for (1973, p. 6).

The interrogator continues saying:

> You won't get out of here until you do what we want. Since you pretend you possess vast knowledge, you should not be ignorant that our means are unlimited. In my profession I have dealt with heads that are dryer than yours (1973, p. 6).

In the second version, the narrator describes the interrogator as an elegant and dignified man sitting behind an elegant desk. He is frugal in his movements. He asks his questions without urgency and listens to the answers without breaking his chest or being courteous. He does not indicate his sway, nor does he show any tyranny:

> In the [investigation] room, he encountered an elegant and dignified man sitting behind a similarly elegant desk. The man was calm and measured in his movements, posing his questions without urgency. He listened to the answers without running out of patience or showing any irritation, not displaying any dominance or arrogance (2004, p. 8).

There is a lot of justification and positive description of him as a man who is not as callous or disrespectful as he is shown in the first edition. On the contrary, he is selective and careful in his diction.

Another example of euphemization that the writer uses is the renaming and relabeling of politically sensitive terms. A straight example is the use of saji:n 'prisoner' in the second edition in lieu of mu'taqal 'detainee' in the first. In the first edition: "I got a new job and stayed there until 1967. Then I volunteered in the guerrilla activities, and today I am a detainee" (1973, p. 19). In the second edition: "I got a new job and stayed there until 1967. Then I volunteered in the guerrilla action, and today I am a prisoner" (2004, 18-19). The difference between a prisoner and a detainee is major. A prisoner implies trespassing legal issues and committing crimes, while detainee is a clear political term. In their article, Arabic-English translation in the Palestinian-Israeli 'conflict': Ideology in the wings, J. Hamdan, Naser and H. Hamdan (2021) show the difference between the word prison and detention centers/camps where

> The word 'prison' is used to refer to a criminal act or behavior. However, معتقلات has always been used by Palestinians and opposition political parties in some Middle East Arab countries to refer to the kind of imprisonment

which includes administrative detention by the Israeli forces or the regimes of their countries without reference to any charges (p. 86).

A clear example of toning down the political rhetoric of Khalid is the replacement of the term 'royal authority' السلطة الملكية in the first edition when it is offensively used by Khalid to mock or insult the Jordanian regime, particularly the King, with the remarkably less offensive term 'authority'. This was attested in the following texts while Khalid and Sameera were commenting on one instance of the military clashes and chaos in the streets of Amman on the eve of September 1970: Khalid in the first edition says: "Incidents of this kind are increasing day by day. Nothing serious is done to stop them. I bet that the royal authority is happy with what is happening, if it is not the one who orchestrated them" (1973, p. 39). In the second edition, on the other hand, the idea is said by the narrator: "He [Khalid] believes that the authority [loose term] is happy with what is happening as it can use all this to mobilize the people against the guerillas (2004, p. 35).

The significant difference between the two texts cannot pass unnoticed. The writer is defusing the protagonist's rhetoric, giving a chance for diplomacy and compromise to prevail. This becomes more evident once one knows how sensitive the regime is towards any direct offenses to the King. In this context, article 195 of the penal code in Jordan clearly stipulates that whoever dares to insult or mock His Majesty the King in any form, written, oral or pictorial shall be punished by imprisonment from one to three years.

(https://www.ahtnc.org.jo/sites/default/files/penal_code.pdf). In fact, the relatively light term 'authority' is loose and by no means solely refers to the King.

Conclusion

This rewriting aligns with a broader pattern of literary production under political censorship in the Arab world, where authors often revisit their works to accommodate shifting ideological boundaries or to ensure circulation in politically restrictive contexts. In this sense, the 2004 edition of The Besieged does not merely reflect Hourani's personal artistic revisions but resonates with a regional tradition of negotiated literary expression. The text's strategic silences, anonymizations, and euphemizations parallel similar editorial maneuvers observed in politically sensitive literature, where authors reframe narratives to evade censorship while still conveying subtextual critique.

Moreover, the reception of the 2004 edition must be understood against the backdrop of post-Oslo political dynamics. The novel's softened rhetoric, its alignment with discourses of compromise and phased solutions, and its reconfiguration of antagonistic tropes echo broader shifts in Palestinian political discourse post-1993. While the original 1973 edition mirrored the revolutionary fervor and ideological certainty of its era, the later version engages with a more diplomatically cautious and internally divided political landscape. These contextual frames reveal how reader perception—and institutional tolerance—of The Besieged was significantly reshaped by geopolitical changes, especially in relation to Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority.

In conclusion, our comparative analysis has revealed that the second version of the book underwent substantial alterations, where many literary qualities were sacrificed, clearly driven by political motivations. This study highlights the importance of evaluating literary works critically in order to determine how political agendas affect them and how this affects artistic integrity. We anticipate that future studies will explore deeper the reasons behind these alterations, offering more understanding of the intricacies of authorial purpose and the sociopolitical contexts that influence artistic expression.

The political aspects of the second edition are embedded in what we describe as "diplomatizing choices," which probably represent the shifting political landscape of the era. The concept of "politics in the wings" is crucial here, as it refers to the political pressures and constraints that influenced the revisions yet remain hidden beneath the surface of the novel's narrative. The shift from an artistic, aesthetic approach to a more politically driven one appears to be guided by the novelist's evolving political environment and personal responsibilities.

By building upon our findings, scholars can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between literature, ideology, and the pressures of societal expectations, thus enriching the discussions surrounding literary analysis and interpretation.

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