

Marcel Khalife socio-political life: The case of "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf" *Marcel Khalife, vida socio-política: El caso de "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf"*

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Abstract

This paper intends to present Marcel Khalife's life during the Lebanese civil war. Named artist of peace in 2005 by the UNESCO, he is among the most renowned artists mainly through his political songs composed in albums such as "Promises of the Storm", "Arabic CoffeePot"... The latter was released in 1995. The music is based on poems written by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Our aim is to seek Khalife's life and music in relation with the Lebanese conflict in order to better understand his music compositions. The main source of our musical and lyrical analysis will be the song "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf", extracting the main elements which forms it. The methodology will be based on Martin Irvine research in "Popular Music as a Meaning-System". It will be supported by press articles in relation to the composer's musical activities and performances during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). This will allow us to comprehend the relationship between the composer and the political situation and better understand the influence of society on music. This paper will present the beginning of the research and the onward objectives to complete that we will be able to present in further publications.

Keywords: Arabic CoffeePot, Mahmoud Darwish, music, song.

Resumen

Este documento tiene la intención de presentar la vida de Marcel Khalife's durante la Guerra Civil Libanesa. Artista de la paz en 2005 por la UNESCO, es uno de los artistas más reconocidos, principalmente a través de sus canciones políticas compuestas en álbumes como "Promises of the Storm", "Arabic CoffeePot"... Este último fue publicado en 1995. Su música se basa en poemas escritos esencialmente por el poeta Mahmoud Darwish. Nuestro objetivo es entender la vida y la música de Khalife en relación con el conflicto del Líbano con el fin de comprender mejor su composición musical. La principal fuente de nuestro análisis será la canción "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf", extrayendo los elementos principales que la forman. La metodología se basa en la investigación de Martin Irvine en "Popular Music as a Meaning-System". Fuentes primarias como artículos de prensa en relación con las actividades y actuaciones musicales del compositor durante la guerra civil libanesa (1975-1990) cumplirán la investigación. Esto nos permitirá comprender la relación entre el compositor y la situación política y mejor entender la influencia de la sociedad con la música. En este trabajo presentará el comienzo de la investigación y los objetivos futuros para alcanzar que vamos a presentar en próximas publicaciones.

Palabras Clave: Arabic CoffeePot, Mahmoud Darwish, música, canción.

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1. Marcel Khalife: presentation

June 1950, in a small village called Amshit, Marcel Khalife was born. His grandfather (Joseph Khalife) was a fisherman and played the flute which Khalife enjoyed listening to. The musician used to watch the few cars that passed in his village during the day and count them, while during the night, he sum the stars in the sky.

At a young age, he used to accompany his mother (Mathilda) to a church in order to listen to Christians hymns but also Islamic ones which helped him to form his musical consciousness. He used to stay with his mother in the church and listen to the women's voices because at that time man and women were in separate places. At home, he would create rhythms and sounds using pots and plates while tapping on a table. Mathilda saw a special ability in her son in moving his fingers and make different sounds. She decided to convince his father (Michel) to buy him a 'oud which was one of the cheapest instrument at that time. His father gave money to a friend called Antoun Matta in order to purchase the instrument from Syria which was at a cheaper price. From this day onwards, the instrument formed part of Marcel life and soul. After 3 days of acquiring the 'oud, Khalife's mother found him a teacher called Hanna Karam (a retired policeman) in his hometown village where he started to learn. He kept studying there for about 3 months. Afterwards, Hanna called his parents and told them that their son should continue his studies in a professional music institute.

Subsequently, his parents decided to send him to Beirut in order to study the 'oud at the Beirut National Conservatory of Music where he got graduated in 1971. He had to travel each week from his village Amshit to Beirut in order to take his lessons. Khalife have a great esteem to his mother had played the main role in converting him in what he became. (Future Tv) In regard to his family, in June 2014, Khalife wrote a letter to the chief of Lebanese Forces party (Samir Geagea¹) sending his grief for the death of Geagea father. The letter is very emotional were Khalife writes his own experience regarding his father's death which he couldn't see his face and attend to the funeral because of the Lebanese Forces leader as he mentioned. (Future Tv, 2014) Khalife taught at the Beirut National Conservatory of Music from 1972 to 1975 (beginning of the civil war) but also in public universities and private music institutions. In the Lebanese capital, he discovered the Palestinians situation while passing near the refugees camps. This evoked in him the curiosity to know what happened to the Palestinian people in order to be living far from their homeland in this poor and harsh situation. During the same epoch he toured in several countries giving 'oud concerts. Khalife also expanded the 'oud techniques converting it in a concert instrument. (Democracy Now, 2007) The artist created a musical group in 1972 with the aim of reviving the musical heritage and Arabic choral. The first concerts held during the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 where he risked his life performing during bombardments. In 1976 in Paris, he established the Al-Mayadeen ensemble referring to both battlefield and village square. With the creation of this ensemble, emerges the album "Rain Songs". The group music combines Arabic music with occidental instruments. (Mrouweh, 2014: 236).

The poems of Mahmoud Darwish are tightly connected to Marcel Khalife as he also represented his own life experience through them. The song "My Mother" was the easiest one he composed as it recorded him of his own mother and embodied her. The song have a very special meaning for the artist as he can sing the word "My Mother" throughout the song which he cannot do in his daily life. According to Abido Basha, Khalife didn't trust anyone in his Mayadeen ensemble and wanted to impose his own ideas. Toni Wehbe expressed that in the album "Promises of the Storm", Khalife started to consider his ability to sing. He hasn't used to sing in Amshit. The first performance of Al-Mayadeen, Marcel Khalife sang alone for the lack of trusting other musicians in performing his works. We can see through "Mawt Moudir Masrah" that the author had some sort of conflict with Khalife in the Al-Mayadeen ensemble through his critics. The artist expressed himself that he composes in order to see, and if he let others to accompany him, he would have achieved his goal of composing. (Basha, 2005: 100-188) Khalife have a large repertory of his own instrumental compositions such as "The Symphony of Return, Sharq, Concerto al Andalus, Suite for 'oud and Orchestra, Arabian Concerto, Mouda'aba, Diwan al 'oud,

¹ Lebanese politician and commander. He is also the executive chairman of the Lebanese Forces, the largest Christian political party in Lebanon.

Jadal 'oud duo, 'oud Quartet". Al Samaa in the traditional Arabic forms and Taqasim, duo for oud and double bass which was awarded the Grand prize of the prestigious Charles Cros Academy in France in November 2007. One of his latest work, "Arabian Concerto", premiered at the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra inaugural concert and was performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and the Champs Elysees Theater in Paris and Teatro Alla Scalla Milano in Italy and the Royal Albert Hall in London, all under the baton of Maestro Lorin Maazel. Khalife always like to go before time to the concert hall, even before his musical group in order to feel the atmosphere of the hall, to know the technicians and prepare himself for the concert. He also discern the sound quality and adapt it, with the help of technicians, in order to meet the appropriate sound. He doesn't have the paper of being an artist who only performs with an economic objective or for people to applause him. He prefers to enjoy the moment and to create a link with the public (Sky News, 2013).

Since 1982, the composer has been writing books on music such as Al Samaa (a collection of compositions for various traditional Arab musical instruments), a six part methodology for the study of the 'oud in 1982, Arabic music theory and practice in 1984... Filmmaker Pierre Dupouey made a documentary "Voyageur" (2004) representing a biography of Marcel Khalife. The documentary "Voyageur" is an expanded of a shorter version "Le Luth Sacrilège". The new film includes concert footage, interviews and biography of the artist (Thomas, 2006: 533-535). Marcel Khalife's lyrical and instrumental recordings add up to more than 20 albums and DVDs, Promises of the storm (1976), Rain Songs (1977), Where from, do I Enter the Homeland? (1978), Weddings (1979), At the Borders (1979), Stripped Bare (1980), Happiness (1981), The Bridge (1983), Collections – 3 Albums (1984), Dreamy Sunrise (1984), Ahmad Al Arabi (1984), Peace Be With you (1989), Ode To A Homeland (1990), Arabic Coffeepot (1995), Jadal oud Duo (1996), Magic Carpet (1998), Concerto Al Andalus (2002), Caress (2004), Voyageur DVD (2004), Taqasim (2007), Sharq CD & DVD (2007) and Fall of the Moon (2012). He received the award of the National Palestine Medal for Arts and Culture in 2001 which he contributed the financial part of the Award to the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music in Palestine. The Conservatory has since established in his name an annual music competition under the title of "The Marcel Khalife National Music Competition" giving grants to young gifted musicians for their music education He was also named UNESCO's Artist of Peace (Khalife, About).

Marcel Khalife is also no stranger to controversy and persecution. He is banned in Tunisia, was tried for blasphemy by a Lebanese court, was denounced by Bahraini parliamentarians for, quote, "encouraging debauchery." Most recently, a venue in San Diego, California cancelled a scheduled concert, claiming it would, quote, be "divisive" and "unbalanced" to host Marcel Khalife without an Israeli artist alongside him (Democracy Now, 2007).

For the musician it is vital to write about Arabic music history. He believes that the Arabs have always thought that music and singing should be linked. But there must be more writings about Arabic instrumental music. For him, Sayyid Darwish is the source figure in Arabic song change. (Al-Jadid, 1995) During an interview with the Lebanese periodical An-Nahar, Khalife expressed his views on leftist political ideas. To him its is not a political ideology but it is a cultural and human way of life. He stated that Lebanon was never been a "Nation" from the independence day until now. (An-Nahar, 2014) For Khalife the development of the song and the music is linked to the development of the society and the artist ideas. The artist should be related with the people, as an artist but also as a human. He should influence in them. Were lies the problem with the Arab artists with their economic production with the only objective of wealth. As for the Arabic musical instruments their interprets and composers should explore and find new possibilities of playing as Khalife donde with his 'oud. Marcel Khalife explains that his songs are related to the society which is also related to politics. (Mou'dad 1982, 10-11) Regarding the album "At the Borders" composed in 1979, Marcel Khalife explains why he decided to compose music for kids. The artist clarify that the Lebanese people start by studying the French history before their own country. His idea is to compose music related to folkloric themes in order to reach the young generation in a new form. He says that all songs need to evoke a message a reflect the society, which will help the upcoming generation to comprehend the political conflicts. The artist wants the kids obtain a point of view in their lives which he intended throughout his album. (Daoud 1980)

Mahmoud Darwish once described Khalife as "an artist, a guardian of hope and human qualities, expresser of the spiritual energy of man, and developer of an aesthetic taste bound with permanent peace,

life and freedom". For Edward Said Khalife is an "Iconic figure if contemporary Arab culture" (Qantara, 2005).

Image 1. Photo of Marcel Khalife playing the 'oud and singing during a concert



Source: Own elaboration.

2. Khalife cultural life

The Rahbani brothers introduced songs related to the Palestinian cause in the late 60s through songs as "*We shall return someday*"² and "*The child in the cave*" but they didn't extent their compositions on protest songs³ in which Khalife gain his fame. Khalife's compositions are attached to the text meanings on which he relies in several songs. His main poetic source influence are the poems of Mahmoud Darwish. According to Sami Asmar, the influence of Mahmoud Darwish on Marcel Khalife started even before the two artists ever met. At the start of the Lebanese Civil War, in 1976 Khalife stayed in his village due to war circumstances. During this epoch he was in his residence accompanied by his 'oud and books of Mahmoud Darwish poetry. Through his reading of the poems, he was removed by them and had the idea to compose music adapted to some of these poems. The first poem he composed music to was "*Promises of the Storm*", after he continued with "*My Mother*", then "*Rita and the Rifle*" and during his travel to Paris (in 1976), where he fled due to the Lebanese conflicts when they used to kill leftist ideologists, he composed the music of "*Passport*". He experienced difficulties in his travel to France because the Lebanese national airport was closed and he had to go through land by car. At his arrival to Paris (end of August 1975), he went to see Kamal Kassar where he also sang his songs. Kassar was astonished buy Khalife music and told him that the should record them. They got in touch with "Chant du Monde" and Khalife was able to record his first album "*Promises of the Storm*". (Dupouey, 2004) Khalife composition combining his voice ad the 'oud merged forming a new type of songs in the Arabic music. For him, the music in the Arab world is renown through its songs, and this is were artist can enhance their ideas. In order to represent a music in relation with the new social and political situation of people's life's.

At his way back to Lebanon, his songs were already known by the mass because of his several tours throughout Europe and the Maghreb where his fame started. The combination of Khalife music and Darwish poems gave a fresh start for both artists whom met afterwards but never worked directly together. Khalife start composing music on Darwish poems without taking his permission. He was young and didn't

² Song audio https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVkMrJ_pJZI

³ Protest songs are songs that complain about problems perceived in society.

think about the author's rights, he thought that it's normal to compose on poems. Even that the first album got published without the knowledge of the poet. After 7 years of the album publication Khalife finally met Mahmoud Darwish in Beirut. From this moment on, a friendly relationship was born between the two artists. (Al-Jazira) According to Fatimah Abdullah, the compositions of Khalife during the beginning of the civil war create a sort of his own "heaven" to the musician. Music aided him to survive the harsh times. (An-Nahar, 2015) After several years of Darwish death, Khalife recorded "*Fall of the Moon*" album using the poet poetry. It reflects the musician motivation in renewing his relationship with his friend. Through this album, Marcel Khalife rearranged some songs of his first recorded album "*Promises of the Storm*". (Al-Akhbar, 2012) Through the An-Nahar Lebanese newspaper we found an article related to Marcel Khalife "*Ahmad al Arabi*" album recorded in 1984. The journal article dates of the 5th of February 1985. Here Mai Kahali wrote about the new artist album firstly focusing on "*Resit*" song. She explains that the song "*Resit*" is for every soldier related to any ideological fight even if it were of a specific political group. She also explains that Khalife have some songs which are difficult to adapt the music to the original lyrics such as the song "*Rita and the Rifle*" from the first recorded album "*Promises of the Storm*" (1976). But the artist found the right music orchestration by using several instruments which allowed him to create a beautiful songs he could perform and the audience remembers easily the melodies.

Kahali stated that if Khalife songs were more broadcasted, people would have discovered a challenging and beautiful type of cult music. (An-Nahar, 1985a) In the same year, another article related to Marcel Khalife written by George Yamin on the 9th of July 1985. Here the author speaks about the song "*Ya Mahla Nourha*" or "*Dreamy Sunrise*" from the album "*Dreamy Sunrise*" (1984). The author comments on the use of wind instruments which change the ambience of the music. The song gives the flavour of a symphonic piece based on the mode of "*Ajam*" without the use of quarter tones. Yamin continues presenting another song called "*Land of the South*" from the same album. Here we encounter a conversation between two 'ouds on the "*Nahawand*", "*Sigah*" and "*Rast*"⁴ sung by Oumeima Khalil⁸. Another song from the same album is "*Walking Tall*" where we also find a two 'oud performance. In "*Bird of the South*" the rhythm record us of a wedding or popular festival in a village. Also there is a presence of wind instruments playing on the mode of "*Ajam*". (An-Nahar, 1985b)

Marcel Khalife is implicated politically in his belief for the freedom of the Palestinian people. Through his music based on the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and his participation in festivities in the memory of the patriotic Palestinians through defending their home country. Songs of Khalife are usually used and adapted to videos or at ceremony closure, the artist himself sings songs such as "*I am Joseph, Oh my Father*". (An-Nahar, 1998) A campaign in Lebanon was held in regard to the change of the voting age. Demands were to propose that the young generation are legible to vote at the age of 18. Through this campaign, Khalife explained that arts, music and poetry are related to the resistance work. The demands had the objective to let the young generation participate in the Lebanese political life through voting before the year 2000. (An-Nahar, 1999a)

Marcel Khalife was once invited to perform in the International Australian Music Festival in Sidney. But the artist rejected the invitation because of the participation of an Israeli artist named Chava Alberstein⁹. Khalife transmitted a message to the director of the festival explaining his denial to perform and sending credits to the people's accomplishments in south of Lebanon. He hoped that the Israeli artist understand how the Israeli government worked in order to expel the Palestinians from their homelands. The director of the festival responded to Khalife pointing up his sorrow for this decision. He precised that

⁴ The maqam Ajam is constructed of two Ajam trichords with "whole step-whole step" pitch intervals. See <http://www.maqamworld.com/maqamat/ajam.html#ajam>

⁵ Is a tetrachord starting on C "Step, Half-Step, Step", the harmonic minor scale as a whole is called *Nahawand-Hijaz*.

⁶ Is a trichord starting on E Half-flat then a step reaching the fifth degree. starts on the third degree in relation to the "basic" Turko-Arabic scale found in Rast. See <http://www.maqamworld.com/maqamat/sikah.html>

⁷ Is a tetrachord starting on C, it features a half-flat third and a half-flat seventh scale degrees. See <http://www.maqamworld.com/maqamat/rast.html>

⁸ Oumeima el Khalil is an established Lebanese singer who interprets her culture and passion for music to a worldwide audience. Surrounded by an artistic and supportive family, Oumeima began her quest to sing at the young age of 7. Her father had heard of a recently graduated musician called Marcel Khalife and Oumeima was introduced to him as a potential student.

⁹ Israeli singer, lyricist, composer, and musical arranger.

artist should go beyond political conflicts, hoped that the political situation gets better in the Middle East and wished that Khalife will start to feel that art and music are for the union of people. Khalife contested that an artist cannot be discarded from his human feelings and leave his compatriot and family while he goes to perform his art. (An-Nahar, 2001) We find out that Chava Alberstein had also problems with the Israeli government in 1989 through her song "*Chad Gadya*". Alberstein recorded the song adding lyrics to the original text where she criticize the Israeli policies towards Palestinians. For that purpose, the song was banned by the Israel State Radio. The artist also received death threats. She expresses that people are starting to see that the occupation is the reason for violence. (Nidel, 2005) We can ask ourselves why did Marcel Khalife reject the invitation of the International Australian Music Festival in Sidney for an Israeli artist who criticized the Israeli policies towards the Palestinians? They are on the same political side.

Through an interview with Marcel Khalife in Al-Safir (1979) newspaper, the artist explains how music was above political views as he count regarding a concert he had to perform in Tripoli (north of Beirut), he got stopped at a barrage and it was used to ask from which part of Lebanon you come from in order to define the religious views and the political affiliation, but at the contrary Khalife got questioned about his instrument the 'oud. This let the artist to pass the barrage without any problem and without questioning his beliefs. The musician also acknowledge that his political stance combined with the songs meaning and message and the political situation during the civil war played a major role in promoting his renown. Khalife also say that not all of his songs were famous because of his political stance but the ones which the people admired. It relates the listeners to his music combined with the poems and politics. He expressed that his view to Lebanon could be perceived through the song "*From where do I enter homeland*" with the poem of Hasan Abdullah. Khalife say that when he listens to his own music hi doesn't feel as he owns them, he sense as any listener.

The 10th of August 1986, Marcel Khalife with the Al-Mayadeen ensemble performed at the Beit el-Dine festival. One day before, on the 9th of august, a bombed car exploded in Beirut making 13 killed and 106 wounded. (An-Nahar, 1986d) We can observe two faces that the society encounters during this epoch, related to war and cultural life. Between the disaster that happened in the Lebanese capital and a musical concert in Beit el-Dine. We can connect the condition with the change that the Lebanese people wanted, forgetting all the past harsh years they had to endure. Attending a concert during a war period and a bombing attack on the day before, is a decision each listener had to think about. It could be related with the artist, in that case Marcel Khalife, in order to make a stand in favour of freedom. It can also be a state of position to forget the country situation through listening to a musical concert, feeling freedom for a moment in a condition clear-mindedness. Later we found writings on "*Ode to a Homeland*" (1990) album. The songs lyrics are written by various poets as Mahmoud Darwish, Mouhamad 'Abd Allah, Talal Haidar and Joseph Harb. 'Abd Allah mentioned on the introductory album cover that the although the Lebanese poetry speaks about and for the people it faced the difficulty of reaching the public. Like the Lebanese music as it reaches the population only on weekends and holidays as an entertainment tool. This situation kept until Marcel Khalife was able to adapt poetry to music. This concept opened a new way for Arabic music as a cult musical art. People could enjoy listening at any time experiencing their happiness or sorrow during the Lebanese Civil War epoch. The music of Khalife gave a new hope for people, a hope of freedom and happiness. (An-Nahar, 1990a)

3. "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf" case

One of the major political problems he encountered was with the song "*Ana Yousef ya Abi*" (*Oh My Father, I am Yusuf*). The song is part of "*The Arabic CoffeePot*" album recorded in 1995 by "*Nagam Records*". Khalife faced criminal prosecution for the song accused of insulting Muslim religious values through the lyrics written by Mahmoud Darwish. First accusation appeared in September of 1996 but without any direct consequences. More lately in 1999, another persecution took place by *Dar al fatwa* (the Sunni Muslim clerics in Lebanon) which procured that singing verses from the Qur'an was absolutely banned and not

accepted. In one hand, the Grand Mufti Sheikh Mohammad Rashid Qabbani¹⁰, has maintained repeatedly that Khalife is guilty of blasphemy for singing a verse from the Quran. In one hand, through the film documentary of Marcel Khalife "*Voyageur*" (2004), cheikh Maher Hammoud stated that the majority of the Muslim scholars aren't in favour of singing the Quran especially with music; it is strictly forbidden as words of the prophet whom also forbids music. For Hammoud, Khalife case isn't a religious or a cultural problem but a political one. (Dupouey, 2004). But in another hand, Mohammad Hassan al-Amin (Assistant judge at a supreme Shiite religious court) mentioned that Arabic poetry has always been influenced by the Quran texts. The criminal charges began in early October of 1999. The case was investigated by Abdel-Rahman Chehab whom sentenced Khalife for 6 months to 3 years of prison with charges on disrespecting the religious text. The song lyrics included a part inspired from the *Quran* which mentioned Yusuf (Joseph), a religious figure in the Quran and the Bible, suffering as a representation to the Palestinians. The trial took place the 3 of November 1999 where Khalife stated to the Daily Star that he is ready to face every prospect and he will go to prison if he have to, but he also insisted on his own innocence. He expressed his profound cultural disappointment and mentioned that he stalk the Quran verse which opened his soul to vast horizons. He believed that religion is tolerant and not form part of a new inquisition (Al-Jadid, 1999c).

Human rights watchdog Amnesty International called upon the Lebanese government to drop blasphemy charges against composer Marcel Khalife, and described his trial as a "gross infringement of his right to freedom of expression and a violation of ... civil and political rights". The Lebanese government, the Amnesty report says, "must uphold freedom of expression and allow Mr. Khalife to exercise, freely and without fear, his right to freedom of expression and opinion (Al-Jadid, 1999a).

Khalife expressed his grief, indignation, disgust and revolt towards the charges, stating: "The trial placed on me is a form of destruction to the soul and the spirit" (La Revue du Liban, 1999). The musician explained that the poem is the history of Joseph As-Siddik and the questionable phrase is just inspired from the Quran but isn't taken directly from the Quranic text. He was very disgusted how his own country have rewarded him by pursuing the artist through his music. For him this accusation is a misery to culture. It exists as a form of terrorism against thoughts, culture and liberty. He clarifies that the song text expresses the existing dilemma between injustice and the oppressed along human history. As to demonstrated the meaning of the song and his respect to all religious beliefs, he also performed the song in front of all the press.

Several Lebanese, Arab intellectuals and poets were in favour to Khalife's innocence, around 1000 signatures were signed in favour of the artist defence. Editor in chief of An-Nahar newspaper supported the composer through his press articles, as for the Paris Lebanese Culture were also in solidarity with the protest movement of the composer freedom of expression and defence. Mahmoud Darwish himself expressed his unity saying:

I am sad and in pain to see an artist like Marcel Khalife tried. Khalife wanted to express the essence of oppression and injustice through a poem accompanied by "oud".

This is disgraceful and shameful, and one cannot doubt that there is a suspicious campaign against creativity, as if it has become the equivalent of infidelity in the Arab world. I am distressed about this course of events which is dragging our world to rock-bottom (Al-Jadid, 1999).

Walid Gholmieh¹¹ also expressed himself by defending Khalife case. For him it is a positive attitude between artists and government laws to have a certain communication but that should be a democratic one. He hoped that Marcel Khalife went go to jail and that Mahmoud Darwish didn't mean to devaluate the Quran text. (An-Nahar, 1996) To Souha Bechara, the music was heard during the Lebanese war and evoked the resistance spirit towards the Israelian conqueror. As for Elias Khoury whom hoped for the laicity of cultural life and freedom of expression (Dupouey, 2004).

¹⁰ Former Grand Mufti of Lebanon and the most prominent Sunni Muslim cleric in the country. Qabbani succeeded former Grand Mufti Hassan Khaled.

¹¹ Was the director of the Lebanese National Higher Conservatory of Music. He was considered one of the most prominent Middle-Eastern conductors and composers.

The court verdict found Khalife exonerated from charges as the judge Ghada Abou Karroum have said: "He performed the song in such a way that does not violate the sanctity of the Quran text" (Al-Jadid, 1999c) "*Ahmad al Arabi*" (1984), it deals with the 1976 massacre of Palestinians in the Tal Al-Zaatar (Lebanese refugee camp). Darwish wrote the poems in 1977 and wanted to adapt them to Khalife music in 1982. 'Amar Mrouweh mentioned in An-Nahar, the trip of Marcel Khalife and Walid Gholmieh to the Soviet Union. Khalife talks about the importance that the Soviet Union gives for arts and music and the significance of composing orchestral musical works for the Arabic music. Khalife cited that music isn't only to hear but also to see. He continued speaking on "*Ahmad al Arabi*" that the listener shouldn't think that Ahmad (referring to the character used through the album) is a hero, special or a saint. Ahmad isn't a poem written by Mahmoud Darwish nor a music composed by Marcel Khalife for the orchestra and singers but for example, he represents the truth of what's happening daily in the south of Lebanon. He could also represent any situation in any country. He continues explaining that Ahmad represents all oppressions withdrawing all religious and political conflicts. Ahmad is the symbol for freedom, he knows what he wants, doesn't look back, but using traditions and history in order to go forward into modern times (An-Nahar, 1986a).

Marcel Khalife says that he wants to renew the poetry form, in order to become the main musical taste. George Yamin wrote in An-Nahar that the artist started focusing more on musical compositions rather than giving prominence to the voice or himself singing (An-Nahar, 1986b). For Walid Gholmieh, "*Ahmad al Arabi*" is the work of art which relates music to poetry. He cited that the album was firstly characterized with the use of wind, brass and string instruments, with the addition of percussions. Secondly by the voices of Marcel Khalife and Omaira Khalil and finally with the accompaniment of the Al-Mayadeen ensemble (An-Nahar, 1986c).

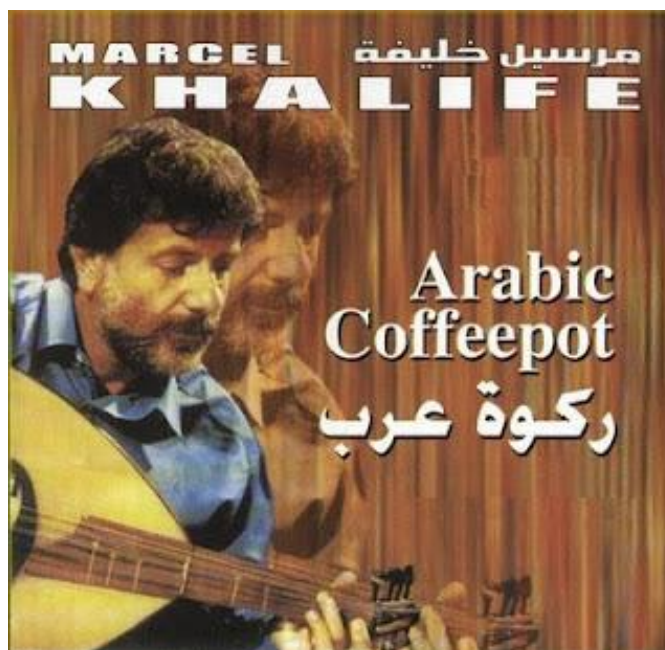
Through an interview made by Michel Matta with Marcel Khalife, the artist expressed his grief to the Lebanese government. The government should change his policies towards the Lebanese people. Khalife stated that he will keep expressing his ideas through his popular and patriotic music. His music represents the suffering and demands of the population. He says that human being is a memory, and there is no future without this remembrance. Khalife pursued his idea remembering his travel to Paris in 1976 with his 'oud. He left because of his leftist ideas that his home village wouldn't accept. But he went back later on to Beirut with the idea of changing the country situation with new thoughts. He started making concerts with the Al-Mayadeen ensemble. Khalife explains that his music was heard outside of the political affiliation of each person. His music is beyond political ideologies, expressing freedom of speech and living that every person of any belief wants (An-Nahar, 1990b).

3.1. Arabic Coffeepot Album

Here we want to present the album which prosecuted Khalife of blasphemy. In this article we went through all the songs of the album, only delineate "*Oh My Father, I am Yusuf*" which we consider represents a major role in understanding Khalife's struggle, as for the relation of music and society. We will establish our song analysis on Martin Irvine article "Popular Music as a Meaning-System: The Combinatorial Structures in Music's Meanings". As the author explains, when we listen to a song, its meaning is related to our background knowledge (in case we already know it) or on the contextual knowledge of the music. Our mind tries to relate the song that we are hearing to the "cultural encyclopaedia" of our personal knowledge. In case of "*Oh My Father, I am Yusuf*" this will depend on the listener personal musical and historical knowledge.

The song can just represent an Arabic music to someone who doesn't understand the lyrics, or it can characterize the musician and the poet for someone who already knows the repertory of Khalife but haven't searched the true meaning of the song. It can also evoke the Palestinian freedom and memories of suffering.

Image 2. Cover picture of the "Arabic Coffeepot" album¹²



Source: Own elaboration.

To others, it can summon the persecutions that Khalife had to overcome. The song is a possible propaganda for people who don't agree with the artist or the poet point of views. As we have done through this article in presenting the artist life in general and musical in particular. Later we revealed his socio-political path and views focusing on "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf" song. This allows the reader to comprehend the global situation of Khalife in order to relate the song to it.

Table 1. Represents the main information's regarding the "Arabic Coffeepot" album. (Discogs, Arabic Coffeepot)

Arabic Coffeepot – Year of publication: 1995 – Label: Nagam Records – Place: Lebanon – Timing: 50'23" – Language: Arabic – Genre: popular Music – Type: CD-ROM – Number: NR 1008

Tracks	Songs Name	Timing	YouTube
1	Arabic Coffeepot	8'00"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAORxHlftyg&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL
2	After All That Happened	8'51"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bZyqeEi5UA&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL&index=2
3	Sing a Little, oh Birds	10'33"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Gjfp7pNiE0&index=3&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL
4	Young Beauty	6'21"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLOmUk1_rPU&index=4&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL
5	Oh My Father, I am Yusuf	6'58"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e69YhR-zJt0&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL&index=5
6	Passing Beauty	1'43"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_toRcz300&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL&index=6
7	Oh What a Country	4'40"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZuGJDALLns&index=7&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL
8	Coffee Trees	3'17"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNck0Dr9T6s&list=PLdycUhnSWuVfqs-E4_RhVKEzCZb4pWAL&index=8

Source: Own elaboration.

¹² Listen to "The Arabic Coffeepot" album on through the following link: <https://open.spotify.com/album/6LXN63m41Flq7U5b8pXBW>

4. "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf" poem

Oh My Father, I am Yusuf (Al Jadid, 1999b)¹³

Music: Marcel Khalife

Lyrics: Mahmoud Darwish

Translation from Arabic: Manal Swairjo

Poem Album: ward 'aqal 1986

Here we present the lyrics of the original poem of Mahmoud Darwish "Oh My Father, I am Yusuf" which will allow us to see the changes of the poem predisposition that Khalife made in order to adapt lyrics and music. The original name of the poem is "I am Yusuf, Oh Father". We will present the original poem lyrics through a Transliteration of Arabic words. Thus, we have followed the system used by the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies. Then we will make an English translation in order that the reader could better understand the meanings of the poet representations.

'anā yūsufun yā 'abī

'anā yūsufun yā 'abī.
yā 'abī, 'ikhwatī lā yuḥibbūnanī, lā yurīdūnanī baynahum yā 'abī.
yā 'adūna 'alayya wa yarmūnanī bilḥaṣah wa 3kalāmi.
yurīdūnanī 'an 'amūta likay yamdaḥūnī.
wa hum 'awṣadū bāba baytika dūnī.
wa hum ṭaradūnī mina 3ḥaqli.
hum sammamū 'inabī yā 'abī.
wa hum ḥaṭṭamū lu'abī yā 'abī.
ḥīna marra 3nasīmu wa lā'aba sha'rī
ghārū wa thārū 'alayka,
famāza ṣna'tu lahum yā 'abī?
3farāshātū ḥaṭṭa2 katīfayya,
wa māla2 'alaya 3sanābilu,
wa 3ṭayru ḥaṭṭa2 'ala rāḥatayya.
famāza fa'altu 'anā yā 'abī, wa limāza 'anā?
'anta sammaytanī yūsufan,
wa humū 'aqa'ūnī fi 3jubbi,
wa 'ittahamū 3dhi'ba;
wa 3dhi'bu 'arḥmu min 'ikhwatī ..
'abatī! hal janaytu 'ala 'aḥadin
'indamā qultu 'innī:
ra'atu 'aḥada 'ashara kawkaban,
wa 3shamsa wa 3qamara,
ra'aytuhum lī sājidīn.

The poem translation into will be taken from (Al Ariqi Rashad, 2014)

I am Yusuf, O father.

O father, my brothers do not love me nor want me among them.

They assault me and throw stones and words at me.

They want me to die so they can eulogize me.

They closed the door of your home and left me outside.

They expelled me from the field.

They poisoned my vineyards.

¹³ Listen to the song "I am Yusuf, Oh My Father" on: <https://open.spotify.com/track/1kb1nXajm9cmVVEIXT0Kg4>.

They destroyed my toys, O father.
When the gentle breeze passed by the played with my hair they became jealous
And flamed up with rage against me and flamed up in rage against you, what did I ever do
to them O father?
Butterflies perched on my shoulders, Stalks of wheat swayed toward me, and birds rested in
my palms.
What did I do O father? And why me?
You named me Yusuf, And they threw me into the well, And accused the wolf, The wolf is
more merciful than my brothers.
O father! Did I ever wrong anyone when I said:
I saw eleven stars, and the sun and moon,
I saw them prostrating before me.

4.1. Marcel Khalife music adapted to Darwish lyrics

Here we delegate the poem lyrical and musical form that the artist gave. Relating music passages combined with the song words. We do not possess the musical notes in order to obtain a more specific analysis but our objective lies beyond it. As we viewed the life of Khalife in accordance with the political situations that he encountered and his social views, we also intend to comprehend furthermore his musical work through this proposed observation.

"Oh My Father, I am Yusuf" is presented by Marcel Khalife as follows:

- Musical introduction (Part 1)

When the gentle breeze passed by the played with my hair (x2)
They became jealous and flamed up with rage against me
And flamed up in rage against you
What did I ever do to them O father?

In this passage, the poet make reference to the Israeli "became envious and outraged at you and me" reflecting the war that caused the exile of the Palestinian people. He continuous asking what caused all of this hatred. Here Khalife changed the order of the original poem, starting with an introductory strophe in order to prepare for the chorus part.

- Chorus

I am Yusuf, O father. (x2)
O my father
O father, my brothers do not love me nor want me among them.
O my father

In the chorus, the composer used the first part of the original poem in order to enhance the main message of the song. This part reflects the rejection of the Israeli people towards the Palestinians while Darwish present himself and addresses his lament to his father.

- Musical interlude 1 (Part 2)

They assault me and throw stones and words at me.
They want me to die so they can eulogize me.
They closed the door of your home and left me outside.
They expelled me from the field.
They poisoned my vineyards.
They destroyed my toys, O father. (x4)

Through this part we can better understand the representation of the suffering and oppression that the poet wants to represent. We can comprehend that "Yusuf" represents the Palestinian people as "my brothers" are the Israelis. The reference to "brothers" is because the Jews and Palestinians living in Palestine shared the same cultural links until the emergence of the Israeli state. "They assault me, throw stones, insults, wish me dead" here is a state of an illustrative action with regard to the Israeli treatment. It is a strong historical personification of a real life experience. He continues "shut your door, expelled, poisoned my grapevine, ruined my dreams", portraying the sufferance endured by the Palestinians and their expulsion from their own lands and homes. Becoming strangers inside their own country. The use of "destroyed my toys" refers to the innocent children of Palestine rendering their loss of homes such the poet own lost childhood.

- Chorus

I am Yusuf, O father. (x2)
O my father
O father, my brothers do not love me nor want me among them.
O my father

- Musical interlude 2 (Part 3)

Butterflies perched on my shoulders, Stalks of wheat swayed toward me,
And birds rested in my palms.
What did I do O father? And why me? (x2)
You named me Yusuf O my father, O my father (x4)

Here we can depict the typical Darwish use of nature to represent his nationalism. As in (Part 2) the employment of "poisoned my vineyards" linked with the very soul of the people land, here he refers to nature "Butterflies, wheat, birds". A kind of remembrance of his land representing images of peace. Asking "And why me?", in allowance to why he had to leave his nation, his home and live in exile as he once were all living in peace and harmony.

- Musical interlude 3 (Part 4)

And they threw me into the well, and accused the wolf,
The wolf is more merciful than my brothers
O my father (x4)

In this part the poet speak for the Palestinians on how they perceive their fate. One more understanding on Darwish point of view saying "they threw me into the well" interpreting to loss of his people. He continues with "and accused the wolf" which represents the alleged of the Israeli government to others. Meaning a deviating act of sides on which Israeli state gilts on. But the poet goes back responding "the wolf is more merciful than my brothers" pointing that even other sides are as harmful as they could be, "my brothers" (the Israeli) are even worse.

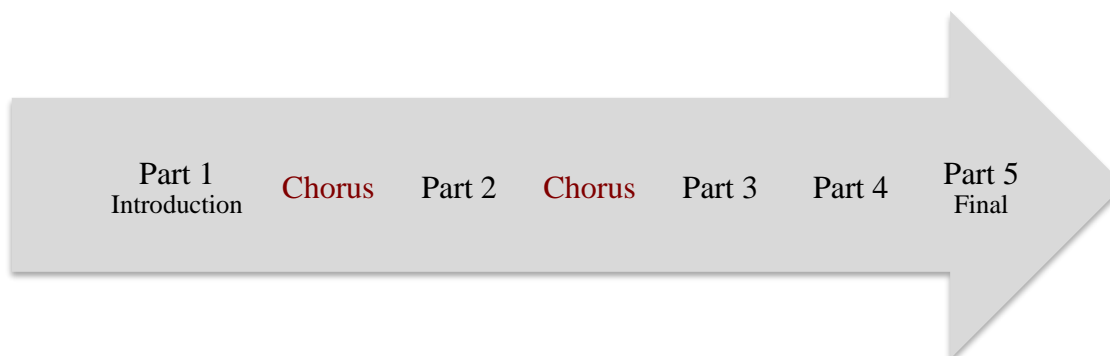
- Musical interlude 4 (Part 5 Final)

Did I ever wrong anyone when I said:
I saw eleven stars,
And the sun and moon,
I saw them prostrating before me (x2)

All prostrating before me (x4)

The last part of the poem is a citation from the Quran. Here Darwish uses a religious ending part to conclude his point of view referring to the religious conflict between Jews and Muslims which had always played a part in Palestine specifically and the Middle East generally. The poet reflects a reaction towards the colonizer state and seek to portray his own and the Palestinian people position towards the conflict. This part sang by Khalife will be the cause him to face the courtyard of the Lebanese government.

Graph 1. Here we represent the chronology form of the song



Source: Own elaboration.

We can discern how Khalife perceived his musical composition through taking parts of the poem and arrange them to obtain a musical song. We have divided the song in parts and chorus. Throughout the whole composition, music enters before the lyrics such as a prelude, an introductory which is normally used when 'oud and singing are combined. The artist introduced 2 choruses related to the song title, using the phrase "my brothers do not love me nor want me among them" which most represents the song message. We could distinguish the most frequent use of the word "Father" which is used at the end of the chorus and parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 apart from the final part where it isn't employed. In total, the word is mentioned 25 times throughout the song.

This means that Khalife focuses on the word "Father" during the entire song as the main core. The word is mainly related to the song title and the main subject of the poem but as we have observed Khalife life, and the relation to music and society, the word can also refer to his own father which he couldn't say goodbye and attend his funeral. The artist is very connected to his family and as we cited earlier on, he sees his own life through Darwish poetry.

The problematic phrase is at the bottom part of the poem saying: "I saw eleven stars, and the sun and moon, I saw them prostrating before me". Khalife had underlined that the song in general highlight the suffering of the Palestinian people such as "Yusuf" suffered with his envious brothers. The first strophe represents Yusuf (as the Palestinian people) speaking about his struggle with his brothers (referring to the Israeli people). Khalife's music composition in this poem and singing Darwish's lyrics, clearly outermost his Palestinian struggle for freedom. In relation with the Lebanese struggle, this means placing him with the Lebanese National Movement¹⁴ political view. This also explains the struggle he had to endure in his life in association with his political beliefs. We refer to his travel to France because of his leftist ideas which were different from his home town village Amshit. As for the religious attacks he had to face with the song "*Oh My Father, I am Yusuf*".

¹⁴ The Lebanese National Movement (LNM) was a front of leftist pan-Arab and Syrian nationalist parties and organizations active during the early years of the Lebanese Civil War that supported the PLO. It was headed by Kamal Jumblatt.

Music content

Instruments: 'oud and Keyboard

The song starts with a two 'oud playing accompanied by an ostinato sound on the keyboard. The musical introduction is about 20" until the voice of Khalife starts on second 21 of (Part 1). The keyboard ostinato continues creating a background ambiance to the voice and the 'oud. On 1'04", the chorus begins with the words "*Oh My father, I am Yusuf*" accompanied by a rhythm change and the 'oud is always playing riffs with the chant. But Khalife gives to his instrument another musical role as a solo. The 'oud is an accompaniment but also creating his own music, merged with the lyrics. On 1'34" the Chorus ends and (Part 2) begins. Here we encounter a different rhythm and melody from the beginning of the song. On 2'52" we enter in a musical interlude in order to start (Part 3) on 3'01". On 5'02" (Part 5), the main 'oud melody make us remember the introductory section of the song in order to impulse us to the final part. (Part 5) which created religious problems puts us in a mood of prayer, evoking the Islamic religious prayers. We can discern that the original poem isn't composed in order to be adapted to a song form with its formal divisions of strophes and choruses. Here Khalife had to deal with a new type of composition with Arabic music arrangements. This is what made Khalife new approach and originality in regard to the Arabian music.

5. Conclusion

We can clearly observe the polemics that have been made towards the lyrics of "*O My Father, I am Yusuf*" song in relation with religious views and the reactions of the intellectuals in favor of defending freedom of expression. A Palestinian poet and a Lebanese musician merged in one polemic song in reference to the war social problems that had occurred in Palestine. We notice how a song can have several facet of repercussion in society. The song emerged from a social influence related to the Palestinian poet which made the poem, afterwards came the artist Marcel Khalife in this case and adapted his own music to the poem which also represents his view to a social situation.

Therefore, a same socio-political situation combined two artists from different countries in the same social stance. But as a result, the problem didn't come from the political stance of the artists, however from a religious dilemma. This problem had a repercussion on the musician and not on the poet. It is leisurely to believe that the attack on Khalife was only for the religious text that he used because this means that he acknowledged the idea of the poet in promulgating the lyrics in society. If we also take the political side of it, the persecution of Dar al fatwa which as a Sunni religion were with the Palestinian struggle of freedom. This means that it is clearly a religious pursuit not allowing any sacred Quran words placed in music. Seeking the charges made by Mohammad Rashid Qabbani, whom have a Bachelor degree in Arts which can clearly explains his interest in music and especially Marcel Khalife.

Through the understanding that music have an influence on society and vice versa, we encounter the need to broaden our investigation on Khalife songs and principally regarding his first recorder album "*Promises of a Storm*" written on Mahmoud Darwish poems. Regarding one of his newest albums "*Jadal*", made by the Al-Mayadeen Quartet composed of Charbel Rouhana, Ali al-Khatib, Aboud al-Sa'id and Marcel Khalife. Here Khalife explains that the 'oud is a musical instrument principally based on improvisation. (An-Nahar, 1999b) Through this new album, the artist created a new form of concerts for the instrument. The 'oud became an instrument of his own without the need of accompanying the vocalist.

The artist explains that his inspiration emerges through poems, people's experiences, nature and all the surroundings. Music inspiration exists in everyday life (Qantara, 2009). These new compositions of Khalife's music are also to be considered in order to understand his socio-musical change during his lifetime. How it took a different form in conceiving musical composition with the merge of his two sons and his latest album "*Fall of the Moon*" were he returns with songs of Mahmoud Darwish.

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