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BLESSETH HIM THAT GIVES AND NOT HIM THAT TAKES: BUṬRUS AL-BUSTĀNĪ AND THE MERCY OF DEBT*

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This article discusses Nahda intellectual Buṭrus al-Bustānī's public and pedagogic writings. It focuses on the nationalist pamphlets, the Nafīr Sūrriya, *written in the wake of the first sectarian–civil war, and his translation of Defoe's* Robinson Crusoe, *both published in Beirut in 1860. I analyze Bustānī's politico-theological and economic thought by looking at the nexus of debt, guilt, love, and mercy that he draws out in the* Nafīr. *The article argues that Bustānī's nation is inaugurated into a "guilt-history" and eternally faced with the task of confronting the mercy of debt and the un-requitable debt of mercy. Nationality in this specific sociohistorical context became a form of artifice that in a postlapsarian age requires religion, labor, and exchange to survive as a social contract. The "civil war" exemplified a return to a state of nature that could only be amended by a return to the laws of nature and the seeking of refuge under the name of one God and one religion,* diyāna. *The social contract, articulated in these terms, could only be sealed through the recognition of natural laws as the foundation provided by God himself, while politics remained concealed under the folds of political theology.*

If you are still inebriated from drinking the blood of your brothers in the nation and dazed from the calamity of the catastrophes that have befallen you, do not fear, you will soon awaken from this loss of consciousness and recognize the meaning of this advice, and the importance of your own public interest.

Buṭrus al-Bustānī, *Nafīr Sūrrīya*, 1860

Any man who is of no use to another, has a useless existence altogether.

Buṭrus al-Bustānī, *Nafīr Sūrrīya*, 1860, and *al-asfār al-kurrūziya*, 1860

* The analysis of debt is beholden to Mladen Dolar's essay on Shakespeare's Shylock from the Merchant of Venice: "The Quality of Mercy Is Not Strained," *Yearbook of Comparative Literature* 60 (2014), 9–26.

From within the processes of integration of the Ottoman Empire into the world market and in the aftermath of the 1860 political violence that had ensued in Mount Lebanon and Damascus emerged a distinct form of liberal nationalism in the works of Buṭrus al- Bustānī, a central figure in the nineteenth-century Nahḍa intellectual movement.[1] By the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had begun to sow the seeds of its *tanzimat* reforms that were largely liberal in nature and had transformative implications for property rights, legislation, and governance, as well as taxation and military conscription. The peasant uprisings of Mount Lebanon (1820s, 1830s, 1841, 1845, and 1860) occurred in the context of drastic land reforms and the encroachment of private property and industrial capital on the premodern tax-farming system, as well the institutionalization of waged labor. This was concomitant with the rise of the Maronite Church as a landowning power, and the demise of the traditional power of Druze and Christian feudal overlords in light of the influx of European mercantile and industrial capital, the establishment of wage labor through trade and the silk industry, reformed Ottoman property and tax laws, Ottoman–Egyptian commercial rivalry, and the rapid urbanization of Beirut and Damascus.[2] It

[1] Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819–83) is a main figure in the Nahda or the modern intellectual movement that emerged at the intersection of capitalist modernization and colonialism in the nineteenth century. Born a Maronite, Bustānī converted to Protestantism and worked closely with the American missionaries in Beirut. He was involved in the King James Bible translation with the missionary Cornelius Van Dyck, and, in addition to compiling a modern Arabic encyclopedia and dictionary, Bustānī translated books like Paul Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. He also wrote a significant number of essays, treatises, and speeches on social organization and society, Arab culture and literature, and modernization. Add to that a series of pedagogic lexicons in Arabic on calculus (for merchants) and grammar (for school students). Bustānī was a prominent figure in *fin de siècle* Beirut's rising urban middle class.

[2] The transformation of relations of production in Mount Lebanon and Damascus had led to the gradual independence of the peasants from the *iltizam* land-tenure system and to the separation of labor skills from land property. In this context, and leading up to 1860, the Christian peasants of Kisirwan in Mount Lebanon revolted against the Christian *Muqa'tiji* and the moneylenders in 1858 following a year of bad crops and the repercussions of the global economic financial crisis of 1857–8. Led by a farrier, Tannius Shahine, the rebels stopped paying taxes, expelled the *muqat'ici* from their lands, and established a political structure with a representative body. The Europeans and Ottomans worked against the growing momentum of the peasant movement, which failed to garner alliances with the merchants and nobles, and it began to take on a sectarian character when Christian peasants rebelled against Druze feudal lords in search of the successes of the revolts in Kisirwan. Although the Druze lords won the battles by orchestrating unprecedented large-scale massacres, the result was that the land-tenure system that they had headed lost to the forces of capitalism in the Lebanese mountains: in the aftermath of these events the silk industry that was largely run by European capitalists emerged

is from within this historical context that the nation form, or *waṭan*, surfaced in Bustānī's writings as a regulative ideal for society in crisis. The conversion of the political violence into the paradigm of "civil war" within one nation rendered a natural history of the nation in a way that made it appear as history's point of departure rather than as the result of a historical process.

Commenting on the 1860 events, Bustānī wrote a series of eleven nationalist pamphlets signed anonymously "loving patriot," *muḥib lil waṭan*, entitled *Nafīr Sūrriya*, "The Clarion of Syria,"[3] and in that same year a translation of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.[4] Throughout these pamphlets and using Crusoe's story as an allegory for civil society in a postwar temporality, Bustānī formulated a form of liberal nationalism in defense of "true religion," *diyāna haqīqiya*, Protestant in spirit and corresponding with a political economic logic that ties it to the history of capitalism.[5] This wedding of religion and political economy is most strikingly evident in the way the concepts of guilt and debt were used

as the main form of production, wage labor replaced tax-farming to a large extent, and family and gender relations were significantly transformed. For relevant sources on the integration of the Ottoman Empire into the capitalist world economy refer to Dominique Chevallier, *La société du Mont Liban a l'époque de la revolution industrielle en Europe* (Paris, 1982); Sevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1987); Alexander Scholch, William C. Young, and Michael C. Gerrity, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856–1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development* (Washington, DC, 1982); Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley, 1995), A. Kais Firro, "Silk and Agrarian Changes in Lebanon, 1860–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22/2 (1990), 151–69; Waddah Sharara, *On the Origins of Sectarian Lebanon, Fi Usul Lubnan al-ta'ifiy: Khat al-yamin al-jamahiri* (Beirut, 2011); Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford, 2005); Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon 1870–1920* (Berkeley, 2001). For discussions of the peasant revolts refer to Ussama Makidisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate: The Revolt of Tanyus Shahin in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42/1 (2000), 180–208. An earlier analysis of the Kisrawan revolt is Yehoshua Porath's "The Peasant Revolt of 1858–1861," *Asian and African Studies* 2 (1966), 77–157; Erik Eliav Freas, "Ottoman Reform, Islam, and Palestine's Peasantry," *Arab Studies Journal* 18/1 (2010), 196–231.

3 The original manuscripts are at the American University of Beirut, Archives and Special Collections Department, and have been reprinted in the book volume *Al-Mu'allim Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Nafir Surriya* (Beirut, 1990).

4 Al-Bustānī, *al-Tuhfa al-Bustānīya fi- al- asfar al- kuruziya* (al-Bustānī's Masterpiece of Crusoe's Travels) (Beirut, 1860), American University of Beirut, Archives and Special Collections.

5 The "nation form," as Étienne Balibar has defined it, emerges and persists as a global ideological form premised on the retroactive construction of national singularity. This nation form is tethered to the development of modern capitalism, within which it has diffused to almost all societies in the past centuries. The form determines a central process:

to separate out a universalistic conception of religion from sectarian political identities, according to which Bustānī's conception of nationality rendered the moral guilt accumulated in the wake of sectarian conflict into a quantifiable debt that underpins a project of national revival through cooperative labor. The political theology that underlies Bustānī's liberal logic, and which will be the focus of the analysis throughout this article, raises the question of the nature of the rule of law in relation to violence; in other words, it exposes the fine line between lawmaking violence and law-preserving violence. Further, Bustānī's worldview provides us with an understanding of the kinds of symbolic investiture that iterate the performative nature of rites of initiation into community in *fin de siècle* Beirut, ones that restrict the potentialities of politics from within a "psycho-theological" framework.[6] Psycho-theology, formulated as an analytic tool by Eric Santner, points to the "theological excess" that underpins modern

the nationalization of society and the production of a people as a *homo nationalis*. Thus the tracing back of an origin for the nation form as an imaginary identification must take account not of its historical origin but of its formal structure and the symbolic forms that determine it. This means that the nation cannot be solely traced to Creole nationalism, as Benedict Anderson argued in his attempts to debunk the Eurocentric appropriation of the nation. Indeed, if the nation did indeed emerge from the sociohistorical context and debates of the French Revolution, it is not because of some natural French essence that it did so, but because of the central position of France as a world empire within the world system then. The resurfacing of nationalism in different historical moments after the French Revolution is a worldwide phenomenon that has been linked to the intervals of crises of state–capital formations. In moments of crisis, the nation emerges to fill the gaps of state–capital's organization of social life; however, the reaffirmation of the structural causality (of crisis and reorganization of society through nationalism) exposes the historicity of that equation. This structure of repetition is not evental but formal; as Kojin Karatani has argued, the nation emerges as a representative structure to establish some form of class equilibrium where there is none. Complementing the analysis of the nation at the formal level, an adequate understanding of nationalism as a modern social form requires that it "captures the dynamic interplay between sociohistorical processes and the embodied, constituting character of everyday practices and cultural categories of understanding," for the nation lies at the conjunction of the socially generated divide between subjectivity and objectivity in capitalist modernity. Refer to William Sewell, "The French Revolution and the Emergence of the Nation Form," in Michael A. Morrison, ed., *Revolutionary Currents: Nation Building in the Transatlantic World* (Chicago, 2004), 91–125; Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History* (Durham, NC, 2014); Manu Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44/4 (2002), 770–99; and Étienne Balibar, "The Nation Form," in Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London and New York, 1991), 86–106.

6 I borrow the term "psychotheology" from Eric Santner, who employs it as an amendment to Sigmund Freud's "psychopathology of everyday life." Eric Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rozenzweig* (Chicago, 2001)

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life, one which informs everyday subjectivity. Reversing the Freudian reading of religion as a psychological state imposed on the outside world, Santner suggests that the question of culture difference, what makes an Other a stranger, is experienced theologically, as an interjection of an alterity into the self, and is a process that is entirely irrational and excessive, and has the structure of a fantasy.

Bustānī has received much attention in the historiography of Nahda since Albert Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, and it has been well established in scholarship that Bustānī represents a liberal and reformist strain of Nahda thought. Historian Usama Makidisi has argued that Bustānī represents a prescient discourse of "ecumenical humanism" through his call for religious tolerance and co-existence during the outbreak of sectarian violence.[7] He reads Bustānī's discourse at the time as one that is recalcitrant to the adoption of "Eurocentric understandings of modernity" by arguing for the maintenance of "religious co-existence" in the face of the 1860 events.[8] Makdisi writes, "Presciently, Bustānī asserted that the mixture of religion and politics would lead to an inflexible political system that could not adapt to new realities, anticipating almost word for word modern-day criticisms of the sectarian political system that dominates Lebanon."[9] Refuting modernization theories' claims regarding the primordialness of sectarianism, and presenting Bustānī's liberalism as a visionary solution, Makdisi argues that sectarianism is indeed modern and can only be overcome by the *proper* separation of religion from politics, one that Bustānī "presciently" adopted early on.[10] This reading remains to be merely descriptive; it prescribes his logic rather than analyzes it, for it accepts the liberal antinomy of religion and politics as it is laid out in Bustānī's writings

7 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge, 1983). Ussama Makdisi, "After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34/4 (2002), 601–17.

8 Makdisi, "Corrupting the Sublime Sultanate," 194.

9 Ibid.

10 Makdisi, in his reading of sectarianism and of Bustānī's discourse, rehearses the classical secularist false dilemma in which overcoming religion is perceived as essential for political emancipation. Marx's rebuttal of Bruno Bauer's radical secularism is instructive here. Marx argues that while religion indeed expresses a limit or a defect in human sociality, it is not the cause of that defect but indeed "the manifestation of secular narrowness" (Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx/Engels Reader* (New York, 1978), 26). Liberal secularists argue that individuals can be emancipated from religion but not from the state and not from their particularities (religion, private property, etc.), while for Marx emancipation can only be carried out by overcoming these secular restrictions and particularities themselves. The universalism of the political state and its internal contradictions is oxymoronic for Marx, for how can freedom and equality be embedded in the realm of rights, as ends, while the concrete means for achieving them are absent?

and does not analyze it. This article argues that Bustānī's "secular" stance is based on a politico-theological worldview that in turn is premised on an idea of universal religion: it is a form of liberal nationalism that binds political economy with religion while propounding the separation of religion from politics.

Makdisi shows how Bustānī formulated quandaries regarding memory work precisely because he deemed the 1860 events civil war within the boundaries of one nation.[11] But what Makdisi misses is the problematic logic of "civil war"—one that Bustānī propounds—as a category of analysis itself, and of the return to "national co-existence" and the rule of law as the solutions for violence. Makdisi represents sectarianism as an unfamiliar interruption of existing social relations, one born out of foreign European interferences and from within Ottoman liberal reforms (also read as external interferences in Mount Lebanon), both premised on an orientalist perception of Mount Lebanon as premodern. However, this does not explain the impulse to abstraction that characterizes liberal "anti-sectarianism" as exhibited in Bustānī's writings—an impulse that cannot be analyzed without attention to political economy largely defined as the symbolic system of relations of exchange and production in society. Why sectarianism emerges hand in hand with a liberal universal conception of religion, and how they both become constitutive of the social bond itself within a national sphere go unaddressed in existing scholarship.

Jeffrey Sacks, in a more recent reading of Bustānī's work, recognizes a relation between religion and the body politic; however, it is one that is premised on a structure of loss and mourning: "the text [*Nafir*] remarks its relation to loss—it repeats the losses, by telling us that it has lost the capacity to represent them."[12] Sacks offers a parallel reading to Makdisi, for he analyzes Bustānī's demand for the separation of religion and politics as one that "enacts and obscures the linguistic, epistemic violence" of modernity.[13] While Makdisi praises Bustānī's liberal humanism, Sacks suggests that his humanism was always already an interrupted project that points to the impossibilities inherent in representation or in "the finite event language is."[14] Neither of these readings takes account of the politico-theological or ideological element implicit in Bustānī's liberal secularism. Further, a close reading of his works shows that the representation of loss incurred by civil war did indeed occur, but through a logic that converted the material losses into moral gains, one that placed the citizens of the nation

[11] Makdisi, "After 1860," 613.

[12] Jeffrey Sacks, *Iterations of Loss, Mutilation and Aesthetic Form: Al-Shidyaq to Darwish* (New York, 2015), 88.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 90.

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in a position of eternal indebtedness to both the "civilized world," *al-ʿālam al-mutamaddin*,[15] and God.

POSTLAPSARIAN NATIONALITY

Bustānī in 1860 proclaimed the political violence a "black mark on the nation's history,"[16] as a testament of sectarianism and "partial interests."[17] He called for a universal religious sentiment, a "true religion,"[18] to cure the ailment of partisan interests; however, the ailment and the cure in this case prove to be identical. True nationalism, like true religion, was essentially a guiltful relation: Bustānī posited the idea of a perpetually indebted national subject as the only penance for the "barbaric" and "uncivilized" political violence.[19] As such his demand was for equality across religious groups—and not within them in contrast to the peasant's demands in 1860—under the claim of safeguarding public interest, *al-huqquq al-ʿumumiya*.[20] This demand for coexistence and national reconciliation accepts the logic of sectarian division as long as it is a relation between social groups *within* one nation. Consequently "civil war," *ḥarb ahliyā*,[21] was characterized as a natural catastrophe, an aberration to the normal order, and as a direct result of God's punishment:

> *Yā abnā' al-waṭan*, the vilest of all things in this world, is war, and the evilest and foulest of all wars is a civil war between citizens of one nation. This type of war usually results because of petty causes and lowly desires. Not only does it oppose the principle of justice and impose on the rights of the guardians of society, it also counters and refutes all the good, honest, and dignified rights and sensitivities of humankind, such as the rights of neighborliness and national fraternity; and gratitude, familiarity, and unity that are directed to the neighbor, brothers in the nation, and anyone who deserves the rights of man and the rights of humanity.[22]
>
> In the same manner by which a father strikes his son with one hand and embraces him with another to dispel vengeance and promote love, so has God almighty done to the nation.[23]

[15] Al- Bustānī, *Nafīr Sūrrīya* (hereafter *NS*), Pamphlet 9, 14 Jan. 1861.
[16] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 4.
[17] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlets 1, 5, 7 ,8.
[18] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 8.
[19] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlets, 1,5,9.
[20] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 1.
[21] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 5.
[22] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 5, 1 Nov. 1860.
[23] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 7, 19 Nov. 1860.

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Entitling the eleven *Nafīr Sūrrīya* pamphlets as *waṭaniyāt*, nationalist pamphlets written in response to the unprecedented "civil war," Bustānī addressed the citizens of the nation, *abnāʾ al-waṭan*, whom he depicted in the image of Cain, "the murderer of his own brother, wandering and lost with no one in his pursuit."[24] Presenting the "civil war" as an act of fratricide, Bustānī drew out a covenant of blood as the basis for the *waṭan* or nation to come after sacrificial violence, for the war had rendered everyone to a state of homelessness, seeking God's kindness and mercy, *al-luṭf w al-raḥma*.[25] Unrequitable mercy was God's alone and all other acts of charity were to be considered requitable debt, "to be paid back from the account of the nation," *min kīs al-waṭan*.[26]

Bustānī warned his readers to beware of perceiving their postwar state as a repetition of the experience of the Israelites in Exodus: "The blinded heart of the Israelites in Exodus is not an example to be followed but a lesson from which you must learn."[27] In the pamphlets, he drew out a scene of conversion, from hatred (of each other) to love (of the nation and God) and from fratricide to sociality. These same *Nafīr* pamphlets were reprinted in 1990 after the end of the Lebanese civil war by another "anonymous patriot," *muḥib lil waṭan*, who argued in the preface that Bustānī's proposed diagnosis of society's ailments and its cure still holds true for post-1990 Lebanon.[28]

The anonymity of the signature, both of Bustānī and of the editor of the reprints, attests to the recognition that the sole author for the discourse of nationalism is the abstract figure of the citizen who shares equal rights and duties with others. The anonymous signature of the text functions here as a "performative utterance,"[29] as a "speech act," as J. L. Austin defined it; it is performative precisely because its meaning is not garnered from the author's intentionality but because it is posed as a constative utterance: the anonymous patriot calls forth at the beginning of every pamphlet the presence of a "we," a body of citizens, *yā abnāʾ al-waṭan*. But who is this we that is hailed forth? The foundational nature of the *Nafīr* asserts this "we" through a calling forth of a civil society forged in the name of the people. It beseeches in the anonymous signature the laws of nature (the need for self-preservation, the division of labor)

[24] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3, 15 Oct. 1860.
[25] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6, 8 Nov. 1860.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 2, 8 Oct. 1860.
[28] *Nafīr Sūrrīya*, *al-muʿalim* Buṭrus al-Bustānī, editor unknown (Beirut, 1990).
[29] J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford, 1979).

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and the name of God.[30] Civil society in its liberal rendering has to be normatively declared against society: "it is a society against society, that is an association of dissociated and continuously dissociating egoisms, that is thus a paradoxical union of desocialization held together through competing property and profit interests."[31] It is thus not surprising that citizens are depicted in these pamphlets as independent animals that require a division of labor for sustenance:

> *Yā abnāʾ al-waṭan*, sons of the nation, the bountiful season of summer has now passed, and the little needs that you had during it shall now increase. You can no longer suffice by sleeping in the wilderness and using trees as your cover and bright stars as your guards . . . the frugal season of winter is here, and it will present you with endless needs to survive its cold, snow, and blizzard.[32]
>
> *Yā abnāʾ al-waṭan*, the ants have gathered harvests for the winter and built tight fortresses for protection from its dangers. The bees have as well done the same and prepared intricate dwellings abundant with nourishment . . . while our fellow humans, the sons of Adam, can barely gather what is required for the fulfillment of their daily needs. They are homeless with no abodes to dwell in, and no garments to protect them from the harshness of cold weather . . . A consideration of their future state is crucial as well as distressing![33]

Nationality in this specific sociohistorical context is depicted as a form of artifice that in a postlapsarian age requires religion, labor, industriousness, and exchange to survive as a social contract. "Civil war" exemplified a return to a state of nature that had to be amended by a return to the laws of nature and seeking refuge under the name of one God. The social contract, articulated in these Hobbesian terms, could only be sealed through the recognition of natural laws as the foundation provided by God. In other words, in the moment of founding the social contract, of calling forth the *abnāʾ al-waṭan*, God is beseeched as the last instance: the creator of nature, and the external guardian of the act of foundation that the *Nafīr* declares. Jacques Derrida's analysis of the function of God as a signifier in declarative acts that found institutions is important for understanding Bustānī's formulation, for "God comes, in effect, to guarantee the rectitude of popular intentions, the unity and goodness of the people. He

30 Refer to Bonnie Honig's "Declarations of Independence: Arendt and Derrida on the Problem of Founding a Republic," *American Political Science Review* 85/1 (1991), 97–113.

31 Werner Hamacher, "On the Right to Have Rights," *New Centennial Review* 14/2 (2014), 169–214.

32 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 2, 8 Oct. 1860.

33 Ibid.

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founds natural law and thus the whole game which tends to present performative utterances as constative utterances."[34]

In the *Nafīr* pamphlets, God is invoked at every juncture as the events are folded into a praise of his abundant mercy and grace: the violence must breed forgiveness and compassion, and, most importantly, the violence binds its survivors into an eternal symbolic debt to God. In turn the violence is given a mythical diagnosis, it is *al-gharaḍ al-aʿmma*,[35] "the blind drive," *al-maraḍ al-khabīth*,[36] "the malignant disease," and *wiswās alqāh al-shayṭan*,[37] a "satanic haunting," an evil apparition. Sectarianism, the assumed cause of the violence, is portrayed as a spectral apparition, and Satan's evil is presented as a necessary supplement to God's good.

Through the identification of sectarianism as the specific form of transgression of the laws of community, the nation emerges in Bustānī's writings as a religious community of faith from within which those with partisan interests ought to be forever banned.[38] In other words, the incitement to transgression (sectarianism) is circumscribed in the very logic of the law (nation as a religious community of faith); it is constitutive of the function of sovereignty, not an exception to it; there is an element of excitation to the function of the law of community, not only repression. Moreover, the socio-symbolic order of community is directly constituted by "the psychic agency that sustains our attachment to the norms of a community," that "functions not so much as the level of belief as in the form of a pressure or urgency that can, in turn, incite transgression of and, thus, apparent distance to, those very norms."[39] The pamphlets iterate the urgency of love for the nation lest violence erupts in its ebbing:

> We have frequently mentioned the nation in our pamphlets because it is the most resonant of words to the ear of a loving patriot, and one of the most beautiful *muwalada* words in Arabic. Surriya, otherwise known as barr al-sham, and Arabistan, is our nation, its expanse being its valleys, fields, coasts and mountains. The people of Surriya from different faiths, kinds, races, and divergences are the people of our nation. The nation is like a great chain connected by its many links: its beginning is our home or place of birth and whomever it

34 Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *New Political Science* 7/1 (1986), 7–15, at 11.

35 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 4.

36 Al- Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 5.

37 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 1, 29 Sept., 1860.

38 Agamben argues that sovereign power is premised on the production and exclusion of bare human life for the purposes of justification of its legitimacy. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, 1998).

39 Santner, *On the Pscyhotheology of Everyday Life*, 101.

includes; its end is our country with all those in it. Its center of gravity is our heart and the center of our heart's gravity is it.[40]

Drawing out the socio-symbolic community of this nation, Bustānī described its force of traction, "it reaches out and grasps and encircles its sons with great force and gravitational pull, forcing them towards it when they are estranged from it."[41] The symbolic order of the nation— posited contra sectarianism—both binds the subject into solidarity with the family/community/institution in a direct covenant with God, and opens the real possibility for his or her own transgression of these bonds. "We call for living watchful religions . . . that lovingly and considerately perceive of sects as members of one family, their father the nation, mother the land, and sole creator God."[42] This form of religious faith in the nation posits sectarianism as a transgression through its very prohibition. In other words, the nation is understood not only in terms of territorial sovereignty but also in terms of a forging of a social contract, a body politic, that must relinquish its right to kill for self-preservation to the law.

Comparing the war-ridden society with the Isrealites in exile, Bustānī warned the citizens of the nation of the threats lying in wait.[43] Yet the only revelation to come out of this Exodus was the acceptance of guilt as the sole horizon for the citizen subject. It is only God with whom the citizen, represented by the figure of Cain, can have an immediate relationship, yet not even God can offer atonement for the guilt, for he can only predestine it. Atonement is only to be garnered in the daily pursuit of bread and from the expenditure of flesh and bone: Bustānī repeated again and again, "you must only accept to live from your own toil and sweat,"[44] "unemployment and indolence are the worst of vices."[45]

While urging his fellow citizens to return to labor in the aftermath of war, Bustānī contended that the urgency of production did not simply come about from the "measure of time in terms of gold,"[46] or wealth, but from the measure of life itself in terms of time: "Life is worth time itself."[47] Bustānī's writings draw out a postwar temporality in which the weight of flesh and bone becomes the subject of a political economy that is to be measured in abstract time. His call for "love of the nation as an act of faith" urges citizens to act *as if* the nation already exists, *as if* the economy exists as a self-contained sphere, in order for society to

[40] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 4.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 7.
[43] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6.
[44] Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3.

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progress in time. Every now moment in the temporality he drew out owes itself to another now, thus the now is constantly passing over into the past and every now is frozen in an act of reproduction of a schema of debt. This perception of the economy as an objective sphere allows for the separation of the political from it, for politics appears as a corrupting force, an aberration to the natural equilibrium of liberal economy.

Moreover, the time that had been "wasted" in "civil war" was to be incurred as debt in the national ledger of gains and losses, *khasāʾir wa arbāḥ al-waṭan*, which were calculated in the pamphlets under two headings: the "moral losses of the nation" and the "material losses of the nation."[48] The losses were calculated in direct monetary costs and as moral losses, *khasa'ir maddiya w adabiya*. Despite all these losses, however, Bustānī urged the nation to emerge from sacrifice for it had received a "blow from the hand of God,"[49] one that is comparable to a "father striking his son."[50] The lesson of the violence, or what Bustānī deemed to be the gain from it, was a sacrifice made to God, one that has opened a path of linear sequential time along which the nation must progress following the call of a "true religion."

Bustānī's political theology relegated the political violence into the past and affirmed the historicity of both God and religion. "It is not in our benefit to look back at the past, rather we must focus our attention and energies on the future for the purpose of alleviating the bad effects and unwanted results of the atrocities."[51] This political theology reaffirmed an understanding of history as a plot or an unfolding narrative; in order to allow time to move on, citizens had to maintain a faith in a conception of community as that which comes after sacrificial violence.

Given that the citizens of the nation had been sacrificed through the political violence, they can now emerge as innocent victims who have been spared the wrath of God. The result of this survival can only be to profess love for the neighbor—"be protective fortresses for each other rather than enemies"[52]—for God and the nation, and forever repress hate. In a true expression of the spirit of Protestant ethics,[53] Bustānī urged his fellow citizens to love the nation and love each other, lest they hate God in light of all the cruelties that had appeared in

[48] Pamphlets 6 through 9 were dedicated to drawing out a ledger for calculating the losses and gains for the nation.

[49] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 2.

[50] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet, 7.

[51] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3.

[52] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 5.

[53] Bustānī's Speech on social organization, *Khuṭba fi al-hayʾa al-ʾijtimāʿiyya* (1869), carries the same task forward by providing an anthropological description beholden to American

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society. Ultimately, his depiction of the political violence draws out an image of concluded struggle, the aftermath of which is a secular temporality (the birth of the nation) during which citizens will recognize the moral transformation that had already been put into place.[54]

DIYĀNA AND *DAYN*: TRUE RELIGION AND DEBT

Not coincidentally, the words *diyāna*, religion, and *dayn*, debt, both echo the meanings of indebtedness, duty, and obligation.[55] Bustānī's proposition of a universal conception of religion as the sole ground for shared communal living was tightly wedded to a projected eternity of reproduction of guilt and debt: "If these events have incurred further animosities and hatred in your heart, then be certain that God will add spiritual atrophy to temporal atrophy."[56] If people choose to ask for atonement from God, he argued, than their losses would be lessened and spiritual blessings imparted to them. Regardless of this spiritual atonement, however, the temporal catastrophe would remain irredeemable.

Consequently, the political violence could only be redeemed through the constant reaffirmation of symbolic debt. Relegating all private losses—the loss of lives, property, and security—to a collective and social guilt leger, Bustānī's discourse universalized guilt. This consciousness of guilt characterizes capitalist modernity, for it reaches to the collective cult not for atonement but only for the universalization of guilt itself.[57]

In this light it is important to look closely at Bustānī's gesture of positing religion, *din*, versus sect, *ṭā 'ifa* in the *Nafīr*. The path to national reconciliation has to go through the affirmation of "religions that are living, vigilant, and educating their followers in tolerance."[58] These different religions are portrayed

Puritanism. In it Bustānī draws out an understanding of society based on distinguishing social spheres from each other: the religious, the moral, the economic, and the political.

54 Robert Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (New York, 2011), 12, further argues in relation to this point, "To believe that we are living after evil and before justice is the essence of what it means to live in a secular age. Secularity is always a secondary concept, defined by whatever element of the sacred is absent from it, and by how that element of sacredness would be conceived."

55 In fact, in al-Bustānī's dictionary, *Muḥīṭ al-muḥīṭ* (Beirut, 1998), 301, *diyāna* and *dayn* are listed under one entry *dānahu*. He defines *diyāna* as "a word for all the ways in which God is worshiped, *milla* and *madhab*, plural form *diyānāt*." And *al-dayn*: "infinitive noun, meaning a postponed loan,"

56 Ibid.

57 Werner Hamacher, "Guilt History: Benjamin's Sketch 'Capitalism as Religion'," *diacritics* 32/3–4 (2002), 81–106.

58 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 7.

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as "members of one family, its father the nation, its mother the land, and its creator God."[59] Religious tolerance is thus based on understanding all religions as "sectarian" variants of one monotheistic faith and on a humanistic conception of one spiritual essence of man.

Invoking a saying pertaining to Luqmān al-Hakīm, Bustānī described the human as a being defined by its essential organs, the tongue and the heart, *inā al-insān bi aṣgharayh*.[60] Religion (the heart) and politics (the tongue) must remain separate. If all humans are God's creations, their father the nation and their mother the earth, then the reasons for their competition and rivalry should be "science, piety, reason, virtue, and respect for the neighbor, as well as the rights of man, and not lineage or belonging to one partisan group or another."[61] In order to neutralize religious difference for political concord, religion is relegated to a specific form of faith, one of the secondary traits of man: the superficial skin that, once shed, reveals the essence of humankind, that being God-given mind and spirit:

> As long as our people cannot understand that religion is a relation between the creator and his slaves, while *civitas*, *al-madanīyat*, is between the individual and his fellow countryman, or between the individual and his government; and as long as they don't realize that it is only on the basis of *civitas* that the social body and political forms are erected; and as long as they don't separate these two principles, religion and politics, in matters of behavior and belief, they shall never succeed in either of them if not in both of them altogether.[62]

The equivalence that is established between the relationship between citizen and his government and between citizen and citizen reveals a strong shift in discourse in relation to sovereignty. Sovereignty, previously reserved for the body of the king, the Ottoman Porte and its representatives, has now been placed in the hand of the citizens, in their smallest body parts, the heart and the tongue. We can see here an utterly modernist shift, from the political theology of Ottoman sovereignty to the biopolitical pressures or psycho-theology of popular sovereignty, from the body of the king to the other body of the king, the body of citizens.

With this discourse the logic of politics is elevated above confessional affiliations and practices, yet remains to be sustained by theological values and concepts. Laboring flesh and bone, the subject matter of political economy, do not enter this form of reconciliatory worldview, and individual flesh and bone must

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 9.

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be consistently sacrificed for the social good, *al-ṣāliḥ al-ʿumūmiyy*.[63] The main condition for reconciliation is "a system of contractual laws and just reforms" that would recognize subjects as equal citizens with equal "civil, religious, and moral rights."[64] For "the citizens have duties towards their nation as the nation has duties towards its citizens."[65] Rehearsing the classical liberal abstraction of individual rights, we can see Bustānī reaffirm the practical abstractions of commercial society.

Further, "true religion" is intrinsically linked to the decree that "all private losses are indeed public ones."[66] In the *Nafīr* pamphlets, the "material losses" of property, labor, and time that had been incurred through violence are calculated as losses of the nation, as public losses. *Diyāna* and *dayn*, religion and debt, once read through Bustānī's rendering of a guilt history in the *Nafīr*, reveal that the positing of ecumenical religions versus sectarianism is far from being the solution to political violence, as some historians have argued.[67] For it is the very category of universal religion, *diyāna*, that is employed by Bustānī to promote a liberal understanding of subjectivity, one that is based on valuing socially productive labor as a means to pay off the symbolic debt incurred by the lapse into violence and "barbarism."[68]

Bustānī's calculation of society's "moral and material losses and gains," *al-khasāʾir al-mādiyya w-al adabiyya*, necessitated an understanding of religion as universal, for "God cannot be abandoned because of the calamity of war."[69] Rather, the events are themselves effects of God's direct intervention, of his will,[70] and they are a lesson taught by a merciful God.[71] This universal conception of religion was constructed through a guilt-and-debt nexus, or a guilt history from which the sons of the nation can never escape. Bustānī's conception of a "true religion" as an end in itself, versus "false religion" as a means to end, is intrinsically linked to his argument for the "love of nation as an act of faith," a phrase that is said to have been in the Hadith—no doubt adding to the symbolic value of nationalist sentiment in this historical moment.

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63 Refer to Eric Santner's *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago, 2011).

64 Ibid.

65 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 4.

66 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 1.

67 Makdisi, "After 1860."

68 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 1.

69 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 2.

70 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 7.

71 Ibid.

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THE LIBERAL FANTASY OF A PURITAN NATION

The argument for universal religion was coincidental with the call for the division of labor as the only natural means for the satisfaction of needs in society. This position was elaborated on in the translation of the story of Robinson Crusoe, which was proposed as a motto of instruction for the nation.[72] Bustānī claimed that he translated *Robinson Crusoe* "within a span of five months of hard work" because the story was of "utmost importance for society."[73] The story of Robinson Crusoe, the man who was of no good to anyone but himself and thus had to be punished with a solitary guiltful existence, the lone body on an island emaciated by endless labor, has been analyzed as the story of liberal political economy.[74] Crusoe speaks to the images of solitary figures that Bustānī had painted into the natural landscape of the nation; like Bustānī's nation, Crusoe was born anew only after his shipwreck on an island. The link between Crusoe and Bustānī's larger political project is further affirmed by his use of the same Arabic stanza in the introduction of the *Crusoe* and the *Nafīr* pamphlets: "he who is of no use to another has a useless existence altogether."[75]

Bustānī's appeal to piety, to "the love of the nation as an act of faith,"[76] and his call to return to labor and employment, can be read as an attempt to *renew* the social foundations of a liberal polity, instilled by the Ottoman *tanzimat* reforms in an age when political power was less bound to property qualifications.[77] In the direct aftermath of 1860 Bustānī called for the necessity of labor for society, labor that had to be expended to pay off symbolic debt and beyond which individual and moral worth are deemed valueless. In pamphlet after pamphlet, the nation is warned of leaving both land and human labor power to waste, for this waste or excess itself would translate into material debt. Even the national ledger that Bustānī drew up of national losses calculated "wasted labor time" next

[72] Refer to the discussion of the Robinson Crusoe translation in Nadia Bou Ali, "Buṭrus al-Bustānī and the Shipwreck of the Nation," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 16/3 (2013), 266–81.

[73] Al-Bustānī , "Introduction," in Al-Bustānī, *al-Tuḥfa al-Bustānīya fi al-asfār al-kurūziyya* (al-Bustānī's Masterpiece of Crusoe's Travels) (Beirut, 1860).

[74] Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London, 1973), 86.

[75] Al-Bustānī, "Introduction," in *al-Tuḥfa*; al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 11.

[76] Al-Bustānī , "Ḥub al-waṭan min al-imān" (The Love of the Nation Is an Act of Faith), *al-Jinan* 1 (1871), 303–6, at 303.

[77] The execution of the Khazen feudal family by the peasants was a pivotal moment during the violence as it provoked increased interference and interest from the Ottoman governors as well as local and foreign merchants. This family represented the tax-farming system: its execution at the hands of the peasants repositioned the Maronite Church and the Beiruti notables against the peasants.

to "uncultivated land."[78] Not coincidentally, this argument was concomitant with the establishment of money as the universal regulator of all values in the empire.[79] In a revealing moment in the text, Bustānī calculated the monetary equivalent of potential laborers killed in the violence: "600 million Francs at the least."[80]

Crusoe's lesson was that shipwreck is the fate of any attempt to break the social contract normatively assumed by liberal thought. His shipwreck on an island that led him to live a brutish isolated life sets the stage for a conversion into both Christianity and civil society. *Robinson Crusoe* is, in fact, the story of "anticipation of civil society";[81] it depicts the social state of humans as being based on relations of exchange as the ideal of social relations. Crusoe's story naturalizes the transformation of uncultivated resources into private property through the expenditure of labor; i.e. the island presents him with a state of existence for which he has tools in another *time*, in the time of civilization or industrial society. The state of nature for both Crusoe and Bustānī's war-ridden society is the source of the laws of nature on which is based the social contract. Bustānī wrote in his introduction to the translation of Defoe's novel,

> Read the story of Robinson Crusoe and you will see how much he suffered to find sustenance on the island on which he was destined to isolation. Then it will become clear to you that the individual necessarily needs others to aid him in fulfilling his needs and that this necessity is what made human society in the first place. One person cannot simultaneously be farmer, weaver, tailor, builder, carpenter, student, teacher, king, sheikh, and priest at the same time.[82]

This national imaginary posited the violence as a rupture from a preexisting uniform and linear history of an imaginary nation, a natural history of the nation, defined primarily in terms of socially determined individual production. By calling unto the "sons of the nation" to return to labor and production and to learn from the "true story of Crusoe,"[83] Bustānī made it seem as though the laboring individual born out of the ruptures of the tax-farming system was in fact an ideal that is to be projected onto the past. Like the Robinsonade tales of the Enlightenment, the individual subject to whom Bustānī addressed his pamphlets is made to seem the point of departure of history rather than the conclusion of specific historical forces. Bustānī warned his readers that if society did not go back to socially necessitated production—which is presumed to have always been in existence before the breakdown of the feudal system—to the abstract and

78 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Marx, *The Grundrisse*, 83.
82 Al-Bustānī, *Khuṭba fi al-hayʾa al-ʾijtimāʿiyya*, 7.
83 Ibid.

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normative ethics of labor, it would collapse. The story of Crusoe, the man who was of no good to anyone but himself, speaks to the isolated individual who is of no utility, of no contract of exchange with others. He is a figure who is not only outside the nation, but also outside the definition of humanity that Bustānī adopted. Crusoe is a lesson to be learned from, a modern Cain, with no one in his pursuit, left to recognize the laws of God and nature in seclusion.

This argument cannot but remind us of Adam Smith's description of isolated man in comparison to productive individuals in civil society. Bustānī, like Smith, posits the division of labor and socially necessitated labor time as the natural conditions of social existence for individuals. The story of Crusoe allowed Bustānī to formulate an abstract, yet concrete, conception of time, one that is equivocated to the flesh and bone of the labor force: "While for the European time is worth gold, for us now time is worth life itself."[84] Political violence had somehow reset the historical time of society back to a state of nature in which time is worth life itself. It is not only in such a state of nature that a pound of flesh is offered as payment of debt, but also within the temporality of the nation in which labor and toil provide the sole means of paying the debt. When Crusoe first arrived at the island it was as though he had arrived anew into the world as a whole, guilt-ridden, fearful of the punishment that he would face. This guilt, very much like the guilt called forth in the *Nafīr* series, made Crusoe work to establish his own puritan monarchy, his own puritan nation on the island. Defoe's *Crusoe* provides the national subject with an image of man destined to create his own social bonds in liberal forms. In the novel, Crusoe's isolation gradually makes him resort to the same ways of civilization: he takes for himself a private property on the island, farms a plot of land, makes straw baskets, takes on a slave he names Friday, and teaches him language. On the island alone he creates for himself a labor schedule about which he writes in his diary until his "ink runs out."[85] By the time Crusoe left the island it would be ready to be turned into a productive colony.

The national subject post-1860 was in a similar state to that of Crusoe: banished outside society, "wretched and alone," and like Crusoe it ought to think only of production and labor. Translating *Robinson Crusoe* and presenting it as a "true story," Bustānī made a necessary connection between a natural condition of mankind and a social one; in both *Crusoe* and the *Nafīr*, the state of nature is the ground from which civil society would emerge. This epistemological move (of naturalizing liberal political economy) inscribes the natural history of the nation; i.e. the opposition created between a state of nature and state of society constructs a natural state to which a specific form of society owes its existence.

[84] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3.

[85] Al-Bustāni, *Al-tuḥfa al-bustānīyya fi al-asfār al-kurūziyya*, 74.

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The positive outcomes of the political violence that were deemed in the *Nafīr* to be the "gains of the nation," are that they had induced the people of society to convert into citizens of a nation. As in any other act of conversion, the key to its immanence is its irreversibility and its reliance on the omnipotence of God. Bustānī establishes an analogy between the convert who places all aspirations in God and the citizen who places all aspirations in the nation.[86] If, after the violence, they accept the nation as their only refuge, it in turn promises them the avowal of guilt for what has "happened" as well as escaping punishment for crimes that they did not commit.[87] The nation, born out of the pangs of "civil war," comes to embody the fantasy of reconciliation and liberal subjectivity.

The nation in this sense functions as a regulative entity that will always come in a future time as a solution for the contradictions in the present. It is this nation that beseeches a distinct universal religious sentiment through invoking moral guilt as the binding force for national subjects. Guilt becomes the reason for the lacks of society: the source of its torments that binds the subject in a guilt history, in relations of debt that in turn structure social relations: every individual action is linked directly to God, who is vigilantly watching over the national subjects. Every stance and action was assigned a rating in the salvation economy drawn out by Bustānī; his logic, however, does not offer atonement, but only functions by accruing guilt.

SENTIMENTS OF EXCHANGE: RECIPROCITY AND GUILT HISTORY

In the wake of 1860 there was an urgent need to "return to labor, exchange, trade, and commerce" and "to return to a state of harmony and fraternity"[88] that had been shattered by the political violence. A call upon nationality, *waṭaniya*, as a sentiment of reciprocity—as love, *mahaba*, fraternity, *ʾukhuwwa*, neighborliness, *al-jīra*, and familiarity, *ʾulfa*—was a call for recognizing certain forms of exchange as sentiments as against others that weren't.[89] These sentiment exchanges were to be based on an obligation to reciprocate and indebtedness to both the internal Other in the nation and its external one (those who had survived the violence and those who had sent humanitarian aid from the "civilized world").

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86 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlets 1, 2, 4,

87 Meister, *After Evil*, analyzes the triad of perpetrator/beneficiary/victim in relation to national reconciliation projects post-1990. He also constructs parallels with postwar Lincolonian ideas on reconciliation in the late nineteenth century. The innocence of national subjects is made possible through projective identification with good victims that seek no retribution, as well as the repudiation of their status as beneficiaries through the avowal of collective guilt.

88 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3.

89 Karatani, *Structure of World History*, 213.

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The calamity of 1860, according to Bustānī, was that it was a "temporal catastrophe,"[90] *kharāb zamaniy*, which had caused society to lose time, in comparison to progressive productive time, and had placed it in a position of indebtedness to human civilization as a whole.[91] This view of time is characteristic of the modern view of history as a progressive sequence of time, one that moves from past, present, to future. Guilt history is this fateful movement of time, the generative process by which guilt is incurred and which blocks history proper; it categorically excludes the possibility of leaving the chain of events.[92] If the political violence was a deemed a source of guilt from which there would be no atonement except by labor and dutiful existence, then every individual activity in society had to be undertaken with regard to an economic index of productivity: both sensuous and intellectual activity had to be essentially productive, working to pay off the debt incurred by "civil war."

The people of the nation in the analogies drawn in the *Nafīr* are like Cain and the Isrealites; in perpetual exile with literally no one to help them, in a twist of faith they had been left to their own will. Even God, whom Bustānī deemed to have had predestined 1860 by a strike of his hand, is not absolved of the guilt: the only answer is to embrace the guilt, to remain chained to the debt through acts of faith, and it is in fact only the state of debt that will enrich the people of the nation.[93] Bustānī equated the "gains of the nation" that had been procured from these events with "moral gains."[94] The civil war had rendered society unproductive and thereby in a state of crisis that could only be amended through a return to production, to labor, to moral uprightness, and to duty; thus the public debt, debt to the "civilized world,"[95] is translated into moral gain. Characteristic of the "metamorphosis from secular economic credit into the sacramental credo,"[96] this logic equates blasphemy with not remaining faithful to the public debt, the debt of the nation. The theogeny of value to be incurred from debt is similar to God, who creates guilty images of him in the world: paying off God, paying off the creditors of the nation, does not seal the debt but rather transforms it into gain.[97] That is the structure of this national fantasy: the citizen must sacrifice himself for the love of the nation and in turn the nation will sacrifice them for more credit. Bustānī's rendering of the guilt into the moral domain is an attempt at averting

90 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 11, 22 April 1861.
91 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 1.
92 Hamacher, "Guilt History," 85.
93 Al- Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 9.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Hamacher, "Guilt History," 93.
97 Ibid.

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the logic of material debt by dividing the gains and losses into both material and moral ones: the king could easily redeem the material losses, although in the form of a debt that the citizens of the nation must pay back, while the moral losses would be projected as eternal debt to God.[98] The material losses were calculated by adding up the estimated values of the number of houses and farms and the harvest burned, in addition to the number of unemployed workers and the labor force (both potential and actual) killed in the violence.[99] Meanwhile the moral losses—broken families, loss of dignity, honesty, well-being, solidarity, communal bonds, and fraternity—are losses that "only God has the restitution for, and not the King."[100]

Although morality is often seen as unrelated to exchange values, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Max Weber—each differently—show us that in fact it is related to economic structure. Guilt emerges from debt: it also emerges in relations of reciprocity. Advocating the first ever American and European humanitarian aid to Mount Lebanon in 1860, Bustānī calculated the national debt as twice the value of the aid at least: "blessed be the one who gives more than one who takes."[101] The one who gives is thus less guilty than the one who takes; however, the relation of debt can only emerge out of this form of reciprocity in which a bystander is saved from the guilt of being a beneficiary by anguishing over the victims.

Thus Bustānī's saw the rule of law and a reformed state as the sole refuge from human atrocity and argued that the only way to make sense of the violence was for the nation to accept its guilt: society had been placed on a path of predestination that binds it to guilt and obligation. In this sense, the 1860 violence was read as the nation's formative original sin. Social relations, based on utility and exchange value, were tightly wedded to a religious ethos: *al-diyāna al-haqāqiyya al-khāliya min al-gharaḍ*,[102] because true religion is devoid of utilitarian interest, and it is antithetical to "sectarian belonging" (*al-ʾintimāʾ ila ṭāʾifa aw ilā fiʾa*). Bustānī's ledger of gains and losses of the nation, and his call for a return to relations of labor, were an essential component of this theological worldview. Ultimately, the nation was born into debt, symptomatic of the onset of a cash economy and fiscal integration into the European banking and finance system, as well as the first recorded humanitarian aid bestowed on Syria and Mount Lebanon by

98 Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6.
99 Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlets 6, 7, 8, 9.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.

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both the Ottomans and Europeans. The nation was in debt *ex nihilo*.[103] What irked Bustānī was the moral debt, the guilt and shame caused by the political violence: "while the nation may be relieved in the future from the material debts incurred on it by the calamities, it will forever be indebted morally to the nations of the world."[104] This focus on morality in Bustānī's works is born out of the growing distance between politics and economy in late nineteenth-century liberal thought, whereby morality takes precedence over politics.[105]

Thereby the perception of nationalism as an "act of faith," as a relation that one accepts *as if* the nation were already there, required a leap of faith. Thus nationalism in this context was not essentially normative: it is not there because the nation already exists, but precisely because it doesn't. The citizen's relationship with the nation has to be sacrificial and based on faith: "Belonging to the nation is an obligation in this world and a promise in another."[106] In other words, nationalism emerged as a sentiment that lives in borrowed time. This borrowed time, or the time of nationalism, becomes the only liveable time. The gap between political struggle and economic struggle is irreducible to either position, as the

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[103] The unification of monetary values had already been under way since the mid- nineteenth century; refer to P. L. Cottrell, Monika Pohl Fraser, and Ian Fraser, eds., *East Meets West: Banking, Commerce, and Investment in the Ottoman Empire* (Aldershot, 2008); and Sevket Pamuk's *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2000). Also, 1860 was the first moment of humanitarian intervention in the Levant—an international tribunal was convened comprising Prussian, French, Ottoman, and British delegates. These proceedings were recently compiled and published in three volumes: Father Antoine Daw, ed., *Ḥaw ādith 1860 fi lubnan wa dimashq, lajnat bayrūt al-dawliya, al-maḥādir al-kamila* (The Events of 1860 in Lebanon and Damascus: The Beirut International Tribunal Complete Proceedings) (Beirut, 1996).

[104] Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6.

[105] This has a similar structure to the late nineteenth-century intellectual arguments in the Muslim world that Faisal Devji describes in "Apologetic Modernity," *Modern Intellectual History* 4/1 (2007), 61–76. Devji analyzes the apologetic stance through which modernity was appropriated by Muslim intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century, by which modernity was conceived in moral terms: "Modernity was being conceived in the classical terms of a beautiful life rather than in those of citizenship, even though this art of living had now come to constitute the morality of a new kind of national community, which did not participate in the life of a state. Ethics, in other words, was not a kind of citizenship, and Islam was not a kind of state, but both might well have served as ciphers for the citizenship and state that were denied to colonial subjects in general and minority populations in particular. The Muslim community for which the Aligarhists spoke was in fact a nation in suspense, one that struggled to position itself in a non-demographic space to avoid a politics determined by categories of majority and minority." Devji argues that the response to modernity was cultural and moral, and posited counter to the legal and political categories of the state.

[106] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6.

Nafīr Sūrrīya pamphlets reveal, and it is from this gap that Bustānī constructed a discourse on guilt and morality: the guilt cannot be atoned for and morality is the only response to the violence of politics and the blindness of economy. In recognition of the perpetual life of this economy of guilt, Bustānī exclaimed, "the future can only be dark and foreboding."[107]

Although the nation emerges as an ideal form in comparison with existing material conditions, as it does in our case here, its materiality is consolidated in its articulation in concrete relations of exchange as well as of production. As a sentiment of exchange, a guiltful nationalism introduces measure into the community, by which every individual assumes a position in the world of relations of exchange in the social world. However, this is only a zero-sum equation from the perspective of the nation form, and debt is not the only remaining surplus of capitalist modernity: sectarianism itself projects out of the unidirectional stream of history as a perpetually unresolved antagonism.

In Bustānī's words, sectarianism forever remains as both a "satanic haunting" and a result of God's direct intervention into history, a lesson to be learned from while it is God's mercy alone that has saved the innocent citizens of the nation, and to which they are all eternally indebted. "We lament our age for these flaws, while we are the source of them; indeed, we are this age's sole flaw."[108] The most valuable "moral gain" of the nation is "repentance to God,"[109] for "salvation will only be possible if you refrain from sacrificing the goods of the spirit on the altars of bodily goods."[110]

In the spectral presence of sectarianism's Other, a nation forged under the tenets of universal religion, society is to be organized around relations of exchange that perpetuate sentiments of guilt. Bustānī's political theology, however, leaves little room for questions pertaining to immediate justice. Indeed, his political theology rereads the historical rupture in terms of a periodic crisis: one that can be overcome *with* time and not *in* time. The past will always be unjust—recall all the images in the *Nafīr*: Cain and Abel, the Exodus, the Fall— and the possibility of exterminating the neighbor and the brother is always around the corner.

NECROMANCY AND THE LOGIC OF SACRIFICE

The discourse of rights formulated via the diagnosis of the violence as a fratricidal civil war lends itself to a repetition compulsion: the nation always arises victorious from violent crisis, from the sacrifice of the innocent who in

[107] Ibid.
[108] Al-Bustānī, "Ḥub al-waṭan min al-imān," 303.
[109] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6.
[110] Ibid.

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turn are essential for the structural renewal of the nation as a historical form. Indeed the nation portrayed in the *Nafīr* is characterized by a necromancy: an indebtedness to the dead in this world and the promise of the dead in the other—"beyond the grave," as Bustānī had put it. It can in fact be argued that the 1860 events institute a historical structure of repetition in a manner similar to the coup of Louis Napoleon of 1799. In both instances there was a social struggle led primarily by a peasant class against an absolutist monarchy, and in both instances we have the emergence of the nation form as the proposed cure.[111] The nation is posited as the antidote to the violent events and all that remains in memory from the social struggle is the extreme violence of the events. However, historical repetition is never a repetition of similar events, but of historical forms and structures that return in the present. What is this return of the repressed if not the return of the banished monarch under the guise of a representative state?

The *Nafīr* pamphlets present us with a formulation of the social contract as being based on "the exchange of rights and duties, the drafting of just and liberal laws that would respect the multiplicity of religious faiths, the appointment of decision-making 'sovereigns,' '*ḥukām*,' as representatives of the people, '*ahali*,' and an adherence to the universal rights of man."[112] In a comparable manner to the coup of Bonaparte, the 1860 events were watersheds for the eradication (and simultaneous repetition) of absolutist monarchy and its replacement by the logic of the modern nation-state. What emerges as an essential element of the latter is of course the crisis of representation: how should a divided society be represented? How to fill the stark gap or hole left by the receding body of the king, or Sultan in our case? If the events of Mount Lebanon, as other similar events in the Balkans, Greece, and other sites of the empire, signaled the pangs of Ottoman integration into capitalism, then Bustānī's *Nafīr* urged the coming of the new in the guise of the old: the social contract to replace absolute sovereignty.

Bustānī's response to the breakdown of the social order began by disavowing the political violence as a peasant struggle, and reading it in familial fraternal terms. Thus political enmity in its fratricidal form must be countered by a love for the enemy on one hand,[113] and by faith in the nation on the other.[114] The underlying premise of the *Nafīr* is a call for the national community to convene on holy ground because the death of "the innocent" (*al-abriyā'*) is the scapegoat

[111] For discussion of the case of the French revolution refer to Sewell, "The French Revolution and the Emergence of Nation Form"; and for a discussion of history and repetition in relation to the nation form refer to Kojin Karatani's *History and Repetition* (New York, 2011)

[112] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 7.

[113] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3.

[114] Ibid.

that is necessary for mutual agreement and collective sentiment (*ʾulfa*) to be reestablished. This national sentiment replaces the body of the Sultan with a community held accountable to codified law, *ahkām ṣarima*; firm laws, *sharīʿa mutafiqa*; consistent laws, *tandhimāt ʿādila ghayr mumtazija bil sharāʾi*"[115]—just reforms that are clearly separate from religious credo, as well as being responsible directly to God's mercy and grace, *shafaqa wa raḥma*.[116]

The Arabic word *nafīr* is used to designate the last two days of pilgrimage, specifically the days that follow the sacrifice, *al-naḥr*.[117] It is certainly not a coincidence that Bustānī chooses this word as the title for his eleven public addresses. Some scholars have suggested the English word "clarion" as a translation of *nafīr*, a call to alarm, a golden horn, a trumpet declaring the urgent and holy need for congregation.[118] But if we trace the Arabic etymology of the word we cannot ignore its specific post-sacrificial connotations. If the political violence of 1860 is to be read as a founding sacrifice for a national community, in the form of fratricide, as Bustānī tells us, then his *Nafīr* beckons a holy congregation, and seeks to seal the covenant of blood with what René Girard has called the "mimetic desire underlying the scapegoating mechanism at the origin of all violence."[119] It would, of course, be easy to analyze Bustānī's gesture in terms of this Girardian schema, in which his *Nafīr* speaks for the desire to identify with the innocent, with Abel and not Cain, with the Isrealites but not with exile. In these Girardian terms, Bustānī's discourse accepts a certain benefit from victimhood, a renewed faith in the nation, as long as the violence is not repeated right away. Describing the events as "a strike from the hand of God," Bustānī left open the possibility of the recurrence of violence at any time. Indeed, it can be argued that this sacrificial logic extends and intensifies the enmity, for it doesn't distinguish between being sacrificed and being used.[120] What I mean by this is that the violence was not originally senseless, but only becomes sensible for the national imaginary by being read as a form of sacrificial violence.

René Girard explains the origins of cultural and religious systems through the mechanism of sacrificial victimhood. This mechanism is driven by a mimetic impulse: "there is nothing, next to nothing, in human behavior that is not learned,

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115 Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 7.

116 Ibid.

117 It is important to note that in Bustānī's *Muḥīṭ* dictionary, *Nafīr Surrīya* is added to the entry under *al-nafar* and following the subentry *nafīr*: "a trumpet or horn, Persian. The *Nafīr Sūrrīya* are hopes of ours that we had published during the events of 1860 AD in eleven pamphlets we called then the nationalist papers, *waṭanīyaṭ*."

118 Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville, FL, 2004).

119 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (London, 2005),7.

120 Robert Meister's discussion of religious anthropology is seminal here.

and all learning is based on imitation."[121] Girard's Aristotelian schema, which Bustānī captures, proposes that mimesis and rivalry are the constituting basis of all sociality; "Because the victim is sacred, it is criminal to kill him—but the victim is sacred only because he is to be killed."[122] The group can only be erected by the passage from mimetic disorder, rivalry and desire, to a sacrificial order. However, Bustānī's call to the citizens to turn to nature (to mimic industrious ants and bees) for a reaffirmation of social bonds keeps open the prospect of the return of violence at any moment. Although the sacrificial logic of national sentiment aims at suppressing intercommunal rivalry and vengeance, it in fact eternalizes the conditions of enmity. In other words, reading the violence as a sacrifice of the innocent does not wash away the foundational guilt because a relation is ultimately established between sacrifice and God's mercy, and the mercy of God remains forever an un-requitable debt: "If you obey me and guard my commandments, the Lord says, you shall have the bounties of the land, and if you do not obey me, you shall be punished by the sword."[123]

Bringing religious law into his address, Bustānī linked the saving of his fellow countryman to God's law, and in order to be saved they must have knowledge of what is to be believed, of what is to be desired, and of what is to be done. The explication very much follows in line with the classical understanding of the fourfold nature of the law as laid down by Aquinas. Bustānī acknowledged two impediments to knowledge of what is to be believed: the Devil had sown in man the disobedience to reason—"desire has overcome reason"[124]—and the devil had interfered through inciting "blind partisan interests," *al-gharaḍ al-aʿma*: "No doubt the site of the calamity is frightening and distressing; what are its reasons, who are the ones who aided the Devil in causing so much moral and natural tragedy?"[125] The withdrawal into sin is thus a withdrawal into barbarism and savagery, a withdrawal that can only be cured by true religion and civilization.[126] A homeostatic political economy of the passions was required to counter this evil and structured along these lines: in order to motivate the return to God's grace Bustānī employed the element of fear; the citizens of the nation must fear not only what has happened but also its possible recurrence by the will of God. As the pamphlets unfolded, the trope of love was introduced to counter that of fear alone, and divine love was equated with the commandment to love thy enemy read through the love of the nation as an act of faith. The nation was

[121] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 7.
[122] Ibid., 1.
[123] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 6.
[124] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 5.
[125] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 3.
[126] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 1.

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consequently understood both as a social contract of duties and rights, and as a nation of faith in God: "We warn you with regard to an important matter: man has no real nation in this world, the only true nation is to be found beyond the grave ... The reasons for dying are many but death is one; we can only prepare for that day to come and that nation."[127]

In conclusion, it is clear that the nation embodies a vexing demand for identification, one that faces the subject directly with immanent death, and despite its retroactive projection of a sacrificial origin, and its binding of the citizen subject into debt in this world and the other (to the creditor, philanthropist, kings of the world, and humanity at large), the nation appears to only be attainable in God and outside "us." On the other hand, the excessive flesh that the citizen has to carry, whatever is accrued over the heart and the tongue, must be managed through sentiments of exchange, through morality and symbolic debt. What waits to emerge from the endgames of this political theology of the hereafter, of this guilt-history, is a politics of the now.

[127] Al-Bustānī, *NS*, Pamphlet 4.

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