Visible Language
53 . 1
the journal of visual communication research
april 2019

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the journal of
visual communication
research
april 2019

ISSN 0022-2224
Published continuously
since 1967

Subscription Rates

United States	Individual	Institutional
1 year	$35.00	$65.00
2 year	$65.00	$124.00

Canadian*	Individual	Institutional
1 year	$44.00	$ 74.00
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Foreign**	Individual	Institutional
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2 year	$107.00	$166.00

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ISSN 0022-2224
Published continuously since 1967.

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the journal of
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Special Issue:
Histories of
Visual Communication Design

April 2019

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Visible Language

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The Implications of Media: A material reading of nineteenth-century Arabic broadsides

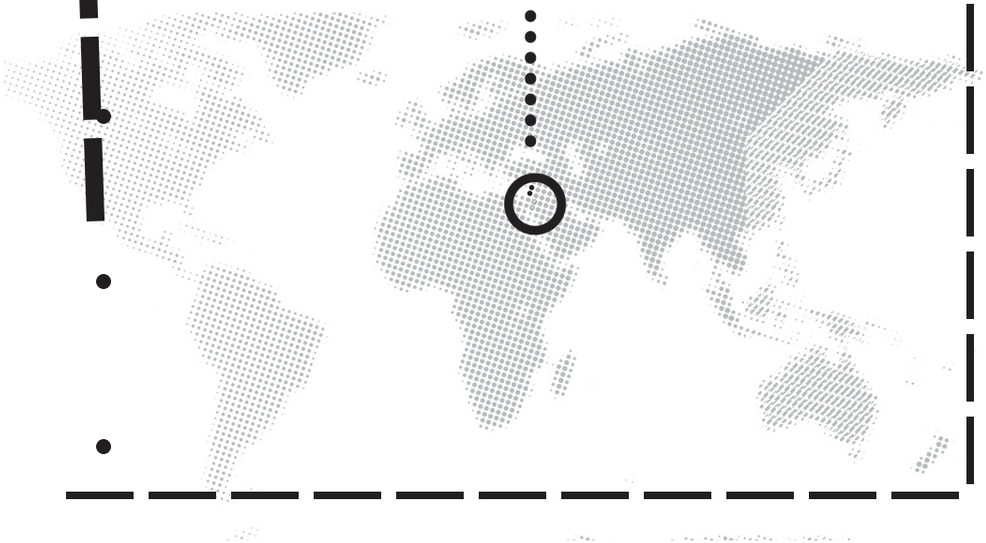
Hala Auji

This article takes up a material analysis of a set of eleven nineteenth-century Arabic broadsides entitled *Nafir Suriyya*, published in Beirut by Syrian intellectual Butrus al-Bustani from 1860-1861. Produced in response to the civil wars of 1860 in Mount Lebanon and Damascus (in the Ottoman Syrian provinces), when intercommunal conflicts occurred between different confessional groups, these publications called for unity and cooperation amongst these communities through the framework of "patriotism" (*wataniyya*) and one's "love of the homeland" (*hubb al-watan*). These broadsides have thus played an important role in twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship on early nationalist sentiment, particularly a Syro-Lebanese political identity, amongst Arabic-speaking Ottoman denizens. However, the format and visual conventions of these broadsides are oftentimes overlooked or misinterpreted, thus effacing an important layer to understanding *Nafir Suriyya*'s wider socio-political significance. Addressing these oversights, this study provides a close material reading of the *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides as examples of a then-new format. Comparative analysis with other contemporaneous public texts, such as Ottoman edicts and proclamations, better clarifies the social and cultural significance of these publications.

Keywords

Arabic printing,
visuality,
Ottoman edicts,
public text,
nahda

وسائل الاعلام و تبعاتها الدلالية : قراءات حسيّة في اللوائح المطبوعة في القرن التاسع عشر



Introduction

This article takes up a material analysis of *Nafir Suriyya*, a rare set of eleven printed Arabic broadsides produced between 1860-1861 in Ottoman Beirut, to consider the wider cultural and socio-political implications of this medium in relationship to other print media in circulation within the Ottoman public domain. Broadsides – large sheets of paper printed on only one side – are perhaps the most scarce of early printed historical documents in the Ottoman world. There are numerous books, pamphlets, periodicals, and ephemeral items (such as small leaflets, postcards, and the like) which can be consulted at international libraries and collections. Yet printed broadsides, particularly ones dealing with political matter, remain elusive. If they are studied, it is often via twentieth-century reissues and not in their original medium. Additionally, in the case of Arabic examples printed in eastern Mediterranean provincial cities, they are hardly ever examined for their visual conventions.

One important example of a text with misunderstood visual conventions is *Nafir Suriyya* (The Clarion of Syria), published anonymously by Syrian scholar Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) in 1860 in Beirut, at the time a city in Ottoman Syria. Al-Bustani published this collection of eleven broadsides sporadically over the course of seven months *(Figure 1)*. Their production was in reaction to his outrage and despair in the aftermath of a series of traumatic massacres and civic strife in 1860, when intercommunal battles broke out along sectarian and class lines in the villages of Mount Lebanon, a region in the Ottoman Syrian provinces (Fawaz 1994, 49-73). For al-Bustani, these events stemmed from a lack of civic unity and concord amongst local religious groups and could only be remedied by one's "love of the homeland" (*hubb al-watan*; al-Bustani 1860).[1] Each broadside's content varied, with topics running the gamut of humanist patriotic ideals: unity and concord, rights of the citizenry, civilization, progress, and social reform. Reiterating the underlying connectivity of these themes, al-Bustani opens each publication with a direct call to his compatriots (*abna' al-watan*) and concludes with the anonymous signature "from the lover of the homeland" (*min muhibb lil-watan*).

Since their publication over one hundred and fifty years ago, *Nafir Suriyya* have served as some of the most widely discussed texts dealing with questions of nationalist sentiment that were, and continue to be, instrumental to present-day narratives of an early Syro-Lebanese political identity (Antonius 1938; Abu Manneh 1980; Beshara 2014; Bou Ali 2013; 2017; Choueiri 1987; Makdisi 2002, 2009; Sheehi 1998, 2000, 2004; Seikaly 2002; and Tauber 1990). *Nafir Suriyya*'s popularity and its pertinence to contemporary scholarship on Middle Eastern history is further exemplified by the publication of two late twentieth-century reissues by Lebanese Nationalist scholars Jean Dayeh, a Lebanese journalist, and Yusuf Quzma Khuri, Librarian at AUB from 1978-81 (Dayeh 1981; Khuri 1990). Additionally, a publication of the broadsides' first English translation by Jens Hanssen and Hicham Safieddine is forthcoming (Hanssen and Safieddine, 2019). Yet, despite the attention *Nafir Suriyya* has received in scholarship, the descriptions and categorization of these broadsides are recurrently unclear or erroneous. A close material reading of the broadsides helps to clarify their meaning and cultural context.

"A weekly paper" (Der Matossian 2014, 190-101), "the first nonpartisan political journal" (Van de Mark 2012, 199), and a series of "pamphlets" (Hanssen and Weiss 2016, 23; Bou Ali 2013, 266; Makdisi 2000, 164) are a few of the inaccurate or ambiguous labels used in present-day

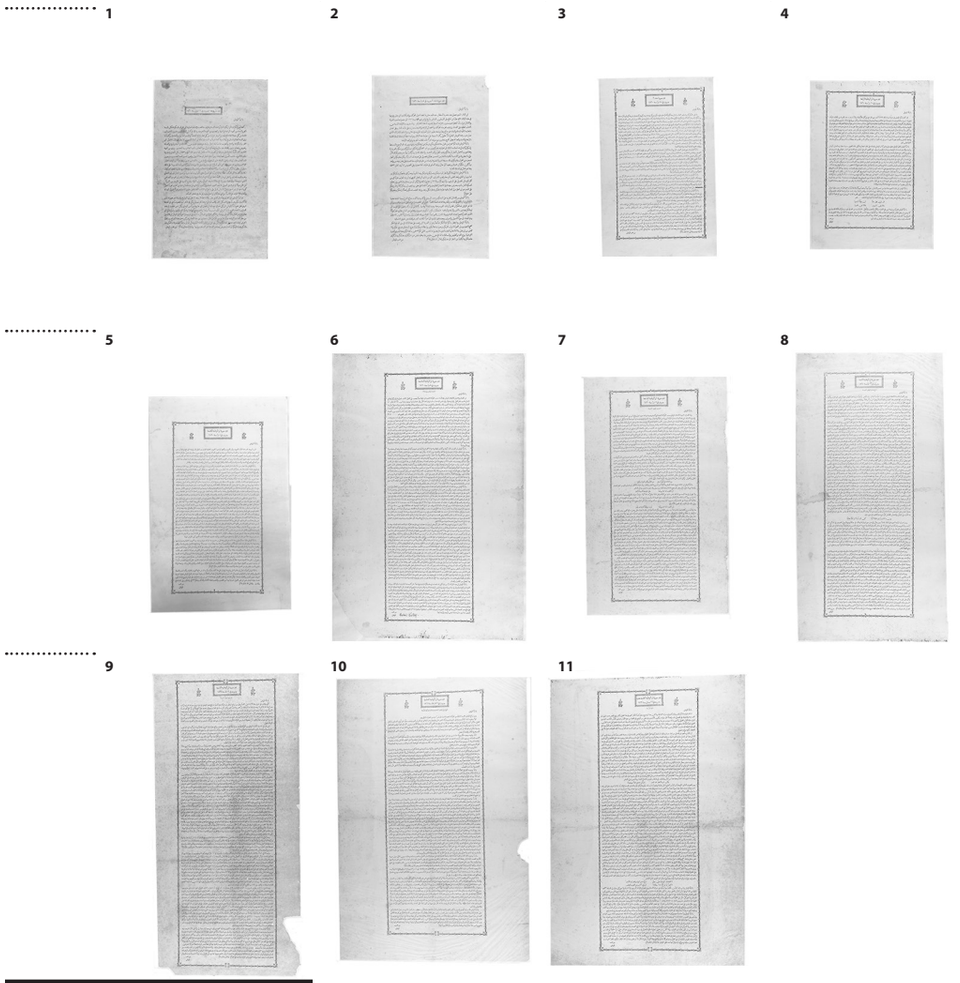


FIGURE 1.

(left to right, top to bottom) Nafir Suriyya, Issue 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Images to scale. Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut (CA:PA:F:956.9:B981nA:v.1).

1 Some scholars translate *watan* as "nation" (Sheehi 1998; Bou Ali 2013; Dayeh 1981). However, in keeping with mid-nineteenth century concepts, I use "homeland" for *watan* and "patriotism" for *wataniyya*. Throughout, all translations are my own unless otherwise noted. I am indebted to Rana Issa, Max Shmookler, Kathryn Schwartz, Adam Mestyan, and Till Grallert for their feedback on this article.

scholarship when describing *Nafir Suriyya*.[2] While descriptions like *newspaper* and *journal* are clearly off-base in this case, terms like *pamphlet* can at times be used to describe single sheet circulars. However, since our present-day understanding of this term typically signifies a small booklet or folded sheet(s) of paper, and not a broadside, this descriptor further perpetuates the confusion surrounding *Nafir Suriyya*'s medium. These oversights persist despite the prevalence of scholarship, since 1980, that correctly identifies and describes these texts as broadsides (Abu Manneh 1980; Choueiri 1986; Sheehi 1989; Seikaly 2002; Ayalon 2016) with some even providing brief descriptions of the format's visual conventions (Abi-Fares 2017, 51; Khuri 1990). Inconsistent views of *Nafir Suriyya*'s format, which date back to the earliest discussions of this publication, speak to a certain ambivalence towards, or unfamiliarity with, the medium of the broadside. In the end, these different attitudes towards the broadside as a format yield the same result: effacing its materiality, which is an important layer to understanding this text's wider socio-political significance.

Broadsides, like letters, flyers, and advertisements, are not only important for their textual context but also the forms in which they appear. As Marguerite Helmers and Charles Hill have argued, "[p]rinted verbal material is conveyed to us in visual forms." Therefore, "rhetoric encompasses a notion of visuality at the very level of text; it is mediated by visuality, typography, even the somatic experience of holding the book or touching the paper" (2004, 3). Limiting the study of printed public texts like *Nafir Suriyya* to a purely logocentric reading overlooks the socio-political and cultural significance of their visual rhetoric, seen in their format, typography, and graphic conventions, all of which are understood to be utilized by authors and publishers "to accomplish different aims" (Helmers and Hill 2004, 3). Through a material analysis informed in part by my reading of Johanna Drucker (1994), I consider how *Nafir Suriyya*'s format and visual conventions played an important role in articulating and communicating its content amongst a diversity of public texts in circulation at this time in Ottoman Beirut. While any handwritten or printed text meant to be read in the public domain can be considered a public text (Sajdi 2013, 9; 13), not all texts were meant to be read or disseminated in the same manner; books, journals, newspapers, pamphlets, placards, and broadsides often circulated differently. Through a visual analysis of *Nafir Suriyya* alongside other contemporaneous textual media, I propose that al-Bustani's use of the broadside format was an innovative application of this print medium at this time. It also may have been interpolating the conventions of local handwritten and printed imperial decrees, such as the Ottoman *firmans* (edicts). This renders *Nafir Suriyya* a previously unexplored lens through which to consider how a now-canonical text's function, significance, and circulation are related to its material characteristics and visual language.

2 Before examining the broadsides, I too referred to them as pamphlets (Auji 2016, 126). Makdisi also switched to the descriptor *broadsides* after earlier using the term *pamphlets* (2008, 207).

Butrus al-Bustani and Arabic Publishing

Nafir Suriyya was printed and circulated in the Ottoman Empire, which at the time extended from the Balkans to most of Arabia and the Eastern Mediterranean region including Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. This was a period of state-initiated modernization reforms in education (known as the Tanzimat, or reorderings, 1839-76) and the rise of a private publishing industry. A merchant and intellectual class emerged, buoyed by the Empire's engagement in the global economy. Its members, coming from the region's largely non-Muslim minority communities and including Jewish, Greek Orthodox, Catholic, and Armenian groups, were beginning to cultivate distinct cultural identities fashioned along religious lines (Makdisi 2000, 2). Educated members of these groups used books, journals, booklets, and newspapers – the products of what sociologist Benedict Anderson has dubbed print-capitalism (1983) – to negotiate their shifting and unresolved views on modernization, nationalism, secularization, and Ottoman citizenship. For members of the Arabic-speaking Ottoman middle class communities, this epoch, known as the Arab *nahda* (or renaissance), generated one of the great intellectual discourses on Arabic language and literature, social progress, civilization, and modernity. Butrus al-Bustani and his publications were central to the foundation of these concepts in the context of nineteenth-century Beirut and Mount Lebanon.

Consequently, al-Bustani is positioned as a key modern Arab public intellectual, whose writing and institutions were central to the *nahda*-period's discourses on social reform and cultural progress (Dayeh 1981; Sheehi 2004; Makdisi 2008; Khuri-Makdisi 2010, 42; Hakim 2013). Born to a Maronite Christian family in the Mount Lebanon village of al-Dibbiyya, al-Bustani studied and then taught at the elite seminary of ʿAyn Waraqa. In the 1840s, al-Bustani lived and worked in the Ottoman port city of Beirut as a translator, press editor, and Arabic instructor (among other vocations) at the main station of the Syria Mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The regional significance of this mission, established by the Americans in the 1820s for the purpose of proselytization, arose from two of its institutions: its American Mission Press (AMP) established in 1834 and the Syrian Protestant College (today the American University of Beirut) established in 1866. The AMP is particularly relevant since it served as one of the region's first Arabic commercial presses at a time when the majority of books were still being produced at multi-confessional manuscript workshops and scriptoria.

Nineteenth-century Arabic bookmaking in the Islamic world was notable for the overlap between printing and manuscript practices, with the former initially circulating in a market dominated by readers of the latter. However, by mid-century, printing had become a popular mode of book production leading to an increasingly competitive publishing economy, with Beirut emerging as an important site for the burgeoning Arabic private publishing industry. The proliferation of printed material demonstrates

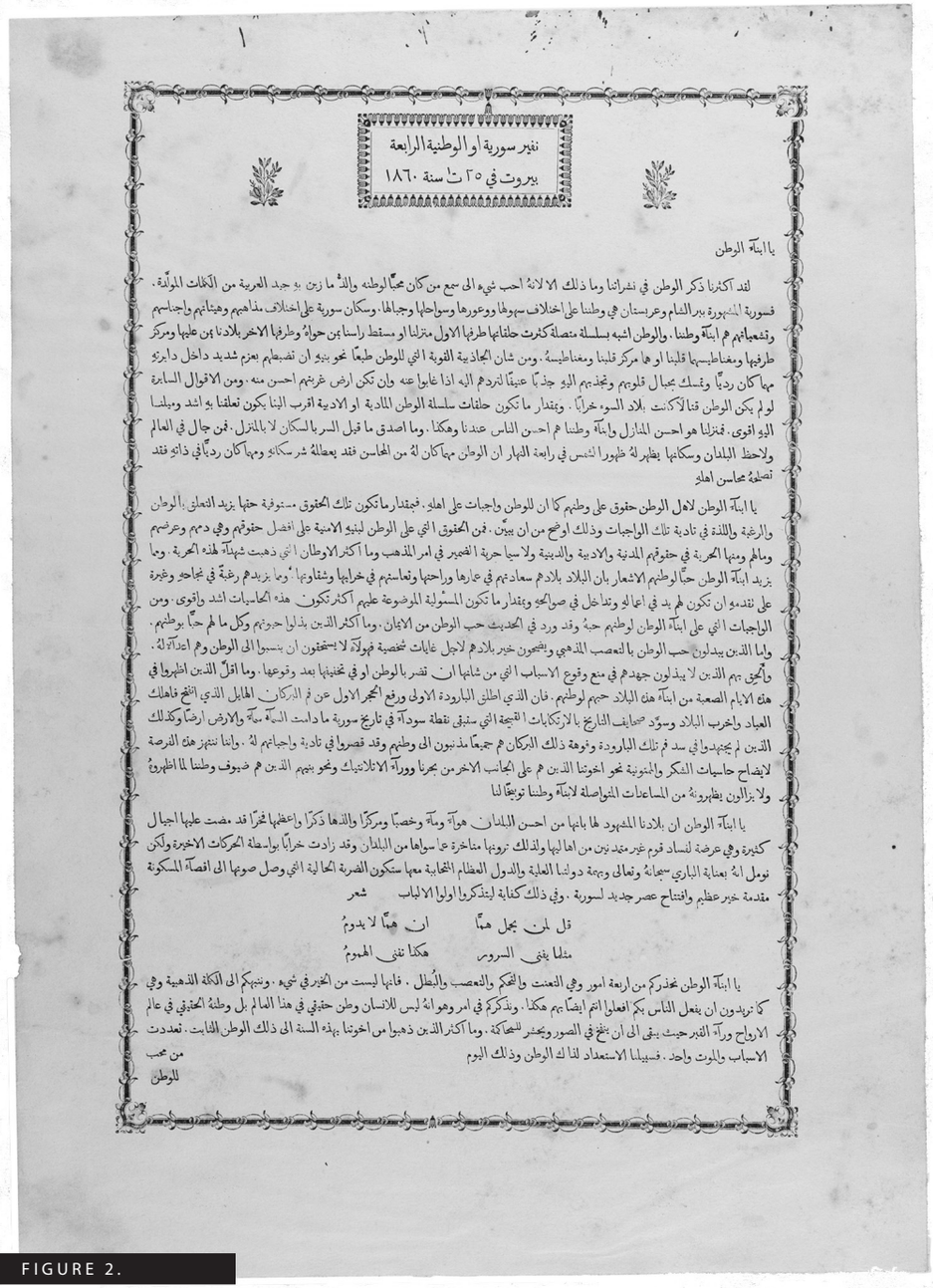
rising competition amongst presses. In Ottoman Syria, the earliest Arabic commercial presses belonged to missionary orders and monasteries, such as the monastic press of al-Shuwayr (in Mount Lebanon) that first opened in the 1700s. This was followed by Cairo's Bulaq Press, the region's first Muslim Arabic publisher, established in 1820 under the patronage of the Egyptian governor Muhammad 'Ali (Schwartz 2015; 2017). The founding of the AMP in 1834 in Beirut (when it was moved from the mission's earlier station in Malta) was followed by the establishment of the Jesuit missionary press in 1848. Soon thereafter, publishers, readers, and authors in Beirut, like al-Bustani and others employed at local missions and/or educated in mission schools, established their own private presses (Ayalon 1995). The AMP's location in this growing merchant city allowed the press to become a key player in the emergent local Arabic printing industry.

As an employee at the AMP and the mission itself (he converted to Protestantism and was involved in the leadership of the American mission's local church), al-Bustani took advantage of what the press had to offer. This press published religious and secular educational texts as well as the mission's translation of the Arabic Protestant Bible, first printed in 1860, which al-Bustani was involved in translating (Grafton 2015). Concurrently, the AMP served as a publisher of scientific, literary, and even nationalist literature by members of elite and middle-class Ottoman Syrian communities (Auji 2016). Al-Bustani was one of these individuals since he published many of his first books at this press, including what is considered his magnum opus: the two-volume dictionary/encyclopedia called *Muhit al-Muhit* (Circumference of the Ocean), printed in 1867-1870 (Issa 2017). He also produced a number of lectures and articles, printed in pamphlet or chapbook form, such as *Khutba fi Adab al-'Arab* (An Address on the Literatures of the Arabs) in 1859. At some point in the early 1860s, al-Bustani became involved with the operations of fellow Syrian intellectual Khalil al-Khuri's (1836-1907) al-Matba'a al-Suriyya (the Syrian Press). In 1868, al-Bustani, along with his son Salim (1848-1884), joined Matba'at al-Ma'arif (the Knowledge Press), which was established by al-Bustani's son-in-law, Khalil Sarkis (1842-1915), in Beirut in 1862 (Ayalon 1995). However, in 1860, al-Bustani was still printing his works at the AMP and *Nafir Suriyya* was most definitely produced during his time at this press.

Nafir Suriyya's Visual Language

Layout, Ornament, and Typography

A bound volume containing a copy of all eleven *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides, which may be the only extant complete set, is available in the Archives and



نفير سورية او الوطنية الرابعة
بيروت في ٢٥ ت١ سنة ١٨٦٠

يا ابناء الوطن

لقد اكثرنا ذكر الوطن في نشراتنا وما ذلك الا لانهُ احب شيء الى سمع من كان محبًّا لوطنه والذُّ ما زين بهِ جيد العربية من الكلمات المولَّدة. فسورية المشهورة ببر الشام وعربستان هي وطننا على اختلاف سهولها ووعورها وسواحلها وجبالها. وسكان سورية على اختلاف مذاهبهم وهيئاتهم واجناسهم وتشعباتهم هم ابناء وطننا. والوطن اشبه بسلسلة متصلة كثرت حلقاتها طرفها الاول منزلنا او مسقط راسنا بمن حواهُ وطرفها الاخر بلادنا بمن عليها ومركز طرفيها ومغناطيسهما قلبنا او هما مركز قلبنا ومغناطيسهُ. ومن شان الجاذبية القوية التي للوطن طبعًا نحو بنيهِ ان تضبطهم بعزم شديد داخل دايرتهِ مهما كان رديًّا وتمسك بحبال قلوبهم وتجذبهم اليهِ جذبًا عنيفًا لتردهم اليه اذا غابوا عنه وان تكن ارض غربتهم احسن منه. ومن الاقوال السايرة لو لم يكن الوطن قتالًا كانت بلاد السوء خرابًا. وبمقدار ما تكون حلقات سلسلة الوطن المادية او الادبية اقرب الينا يكون تعلقنا بهِ اشد وميلنا اليهِ اقوى. فمنزلنا هو احسن المنازل وابناء وطننا هم احسن الناس عندنا وهكذا. وما اصدق ما قيل السر بالسكان لا بالمنزل. فمن جال في العالم ولاحظ البلدان وسكانها يظهر لهُ ظهور الشمس في رابعة النهار ان الوطن مهما كان لهُ من المحاسن فقد يعطلهُ شر سكانهِ ومهما كان رديًّا في ذاتهِ فقد تصلحهُ محاسن اهلهِ

يا ابناء الوطن لاهل الوطن حقوق على وطنهم كما ان للوطن واجبات على اهلهِ. فبمقدار ما تكون تلك الحقوق مستوفية حقها يزيد التعلق بالوطن والرغبة واللذة في تادية تلك الواجبات وذلك اوضح من ان يبيَّن. فمن الحقوق التي على الوطن لبنيهِ الامنية على افضل حقوقهم وهي دمهم وعرضهم ومالهم ومنها الحرية في حقوقهم المدنية والادبية والدينية ولا سيما حرية الضمير في امر المذهب وما اكثر الاوطان التي ذهبت شهداء لهذه الحرية. ومما يزيد ابناء الوطن حبًّا لوطنهم الاشعار بان البلاد بلادهم سعادتهم في عمارها وراحتها وتعاستهم في خرابها وشقاوتها. ومما يزيدهم رغبةً في نجاحهِ وغيرة على تقدمهِ ان تكون لهم يد في اعمالهِ وتداخل في صوالحهِ وبمقدار ما تكون المسئولية الموضوعة عليهم اكثر تكون هذه الحاسيات اشد واقوى. ومن الواجبات التي على ابناء الوطن لوطنهم حبهُ وقد ورد في الحديث حب الوطن من الايمان. وما اكثر الذين بذلوا حبوتهم وكل ما لهم حبًّا بوطنهم. واما الذين يبدلون حب الوطن بالتعصب المذهبي ويضحون خير بلادهم لاجل غايات شخصية فهولاء لا يستحقون ان ينسبوا الى الوطن وهم اعداء لهُ. والحق بهم الذين لا يبذلون جهدهم في منع وقوع الاسباب التي من شانها ان تضر بالوطن او في تخفيفها بعد وقوعها. وما اقلَّ الذين اظهروا في هذه الايام الصعبة من ابناء هذه البلاد حبهم لوطنهم. فان الذي اطلق البارودة الاولى ورفع الحجر الاول عن فم البركان الهايل الذي انفتح فاهلك العباد واخرب البلاد وسوَّد صحايف التاريخ بالارتكابات القبيحة التي ستبقى نقطة سوداء في تاريخ سورية ما دامت السماء سماء والارض ارضًا وكذلك الذين لم يجتهدوا في سد فم تلك البارودة وفوهة ذلك البركان هم جميعًا مذنبون الى وطنهم وقد قصروا في تادية واجباتهم لهُ. واننا ننتهز هذه الفرصة لايضاح حاسيات الشكر والممنونية نحو اخوتنا الذين هم على الجانب الاخر من بحرنا ووراء الاتلانتيك ونحو بنيهم الذين هم ضيوف وطننا لما اظهروهُ ولا يزالون يظهرونهُ من المساعدات المتواصلة لابناء وطننا توبيخًا لنا

يا ابناء الوطن ان بلادنا المشهود لها بانها من احسن البلدان هواء وماء وخصبًا ومركزًا والذها ذكرًا واعظمها فخرًا قد مضت عليها اجيال كثيرة وهي عرضة لفساد قوم غير متمدنين من اهاليها ولذلك ترونها متاخرة عما سواها من البلدان وقد زادت خرابًا بواسطة الحركات الاخيرة ولكن نومل انهُ بعناية الباري سبحانهُ وتعالى وبهمة دولتنا العلية والدول العظام المتحابة معها ستكون الضربة الحالية التي وصل صوتها الى اقصاء المسكونة مقدمة خير عظيم وافتتاح عصر جديد لسورية. وفي ذلك كفاية ليتذكروا اولوا الالباب شعر

قل لمن يحمل همًّا ان همًّا لا يدومُ
مثلما يفنى السرور هكذا تفنى الهمومُ

يا ابناء الوطن نحذركم من اربعة امور وهي التعنت والتحكم والتعصب والبُطل. فانها ليست من الخير في شيء. وننبهكم الى الكلمة الذهبية وهي كما تريدون ان يفعل الناس بكم افعلوا انتم ايضًا بهم هكذا. ونذكركم في امر وهو انهُ ليس للانسان وطن حقيقي في هذا العالم بل وطنهُ الحقيقي في عالم الارواح وراء القبر حيث يبقى الى ان ينفخ في الصور ويحشر للمحاكمة. وما اكثر الذين ذهبوا من اخوتنا بهذه السنة الى ذلك الوطن الثابت. تعددت الاسباب والموت واحد. فسبيلنا الاستعداد لذاك الوطن وذلك اليوم

من محب
للوطن

FIGURE 2.

al-Bustani, B. 1860. *Nafir Suriyya*, 4, October 25, 1860. Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut (CA:PA:F:956.9:B981nA:v.1).

Special Collections Department at the American University of Beirut (AUB).[3] For anyone who has examined these physical copies, two things become apparent. First, these publications are irregular in size and visual conventions across the eleven sheets. Second, the visual language of these broadsides is distinct from those of books and periodicals in circulation at this time. In this section, I consider these two points through a close look at format, dimensions, and visual conventions.

All the broadside body texts start and end with the same two lines. The first line of text, justified right, addresses the reader with, "oh sons of the homeland" and the last line, justified left at the bottom of the text block, is the signature, "from the lover of the homeland" ***(Figure 2)***. The author's address to his readers, and the way in which these lines are arranged on the page, clearly recall epistolary conventions or proclamations that used similar forms of address.[4] However, looking at all the broadsides at once *(Figure 1)* shows many variations across the eleven issues. For instance, of the eleven broadsides that were published, only the first three are approximately similar in size. The smallest of these sheets (issues 1-3) measure at about 9.6 x 15 inches while the largest of them (issues 6, 10, and 11) are almost double in size at 16 x 24 inches *(Table 1)*.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Issue 1	Issue 3	Issue 3	Issue 4
29 September 1860 9.6 X 15 inches 7 X 10 inches	8 October 1860 9.6 X 15 inches 7 X 12 inches	15 October 1860 9.6 X 15 inches 7.5 X 12.5 inches	25 October 1860 10 X 14 inches 7.5 X 14 inches
5	**6**	**7**	**8**
Issue 5	Issue 6	Issue 7	Issue 8
1 November 1860 11.5 X 18 inches 7.5 X 14 inches	8 November 1860 16 X 24 inches 7.5 X 21 inches	9 November 1860 12 X 20 inches 7.5 X 18 inches	1 December 1860 12.5 X 24 inches 7.5 X 20 inches
9	**10**	**11**	
Issue 9	Issue 10	Issue 11	
14 January 1861 12 X 25.5 inches 8 X 24 inches	22 February 1861 16 X 24 inches 8 X 20 inches	22 March 1861 16 X 24 inches 8 X 21.5 inches	

TABLE 1

Table showing the variation in dimensions of *Nafir Suriyya* broadsheets. Sizes are approximate. Paper size, followed by text block size.

While the text in each broadside is composed as a single column with the respective issue title centered above it, the layout of the text on the page – the headings used, the arrangement of the text, and the overall typographic compositions – varies across the different issues. The first two issues, from September 29 and October 8 ***(Figure 3)***, feature fewer decorative elements

3 To my knowledge, several libraries only own microfilms (photographed from the set at AUB). The Lebanese National Library in Beirut has a copy of issue 3, but it does not own a complete set. AUB's set was cataloged in 1953.

4 Tarrazi, for instance, refers to them as *rasa'il* (letters) although he categorizes them as journals (Tarrazi, 1914, 64).

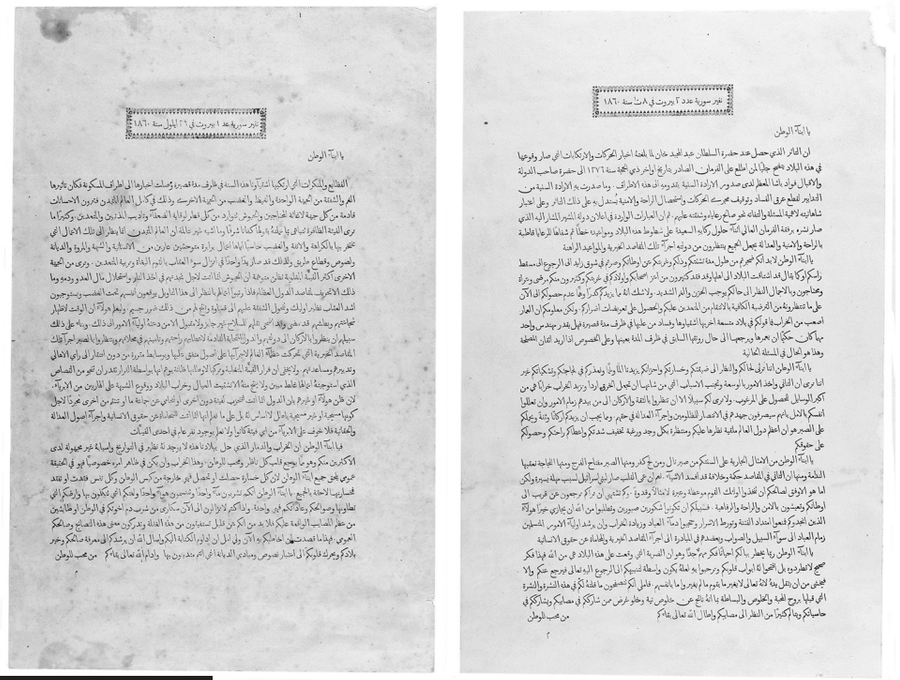


FIGURE 3.

(left) al-Bustani, B. 1860. *Nafir Suriyya*, 1, September 29, 1860. (right) *Nafir Suriyya*, 2, October 8, 1860. Images to scale. Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut (CA:PA:F:956.9:B981nA:v.1).

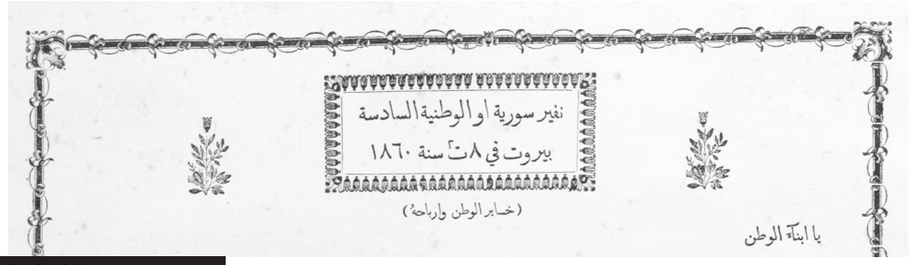


FIGURE 4.

Detail of *Nafir Suriyya*, Issue 6, showing tulip sorts.

6	7	8
Issue 6	Issue 7	Issue 8
crosshead (Arabic): *Khasayyir al-Watan wa Arbahaha*	crosshead (Arabic): *Khasayyir al-Watan al-Adabiyya*	crosshead (Arabic): *Tabi' Khasayyir al-Watan al-Adabiyya*
crosshead (translation): The Homeland's Losses and Gains	crosshead (translation): The Homeland's Literary Losses	crosshead (translation): Continuation of the Homeland's Literary Losses

9	10	11
Issue 9	Issue 10	Issue 11
crosshead (Arabic): *Arabah al-Watan al-Adabiyya*	crosshead (Arabic): *Tabi' Arabah al-Watan al-Adabiyya wa yatlu dhalik Nashratun fi al-Tamaddun*	crosshead (Arabic): *Fi al-Tamaddun*
crosshead (translation): The Homeland's Literary Gains	crosshead (translation): Continuation of the Homeland's Literary Gains followed by a Bulletin On Civilization	crosshead (translation): On Civilization

TABLE 2.

Table showing a list of the crossheads for *Nafir Suriyya*, Issues 6-11.

than the later nine editions, with the main ornamental feature being a frame made up of repeating tulips. The remaining nine broadsides include a similar framed cartouche for the heading. However, these later examples include a scrolling vegetal outer frame (as seen in Figure 2). These issues also show the use of two small floral/vegetal sorts (some topped by the same tulip as that of the title frame) flanking this text box **(*Figure 4*).**[5]

Further showing the varying layout conventions in these broadsides is the inclusion of crossheads, or subheadings, beneath the title cartouche in the last issues of *Nafir Suriyya*, specifically numbers six to eleven (subheadings and their translations are seen in Table 2). The crossheads are contained within parentheses (see detail in Figure 4), which, though typically used in western contexts for asides or non-essential content in a text, were not employed as punctuation marks in Arabic writing at this time. In fact, it appears that these typographic elements were perceived as decorative motifs since they frequently appear flanking subheadings or page numbers and other textual elements in Arabic publications from this period. This use of brackets parallels the common practice at this time where publishers used a variety of typographic sorts for ornamental purposes (Auji 2017). Thus, the parentheses here were meant to draw visual attention to the text enclosed within them, functioning in the same way as the cartouches above the crossheads.

Although composition varied across the eleven broadsides, all featured the same Arabic type, which did not vary in size, design, or weight across the issues or between the headings and body text. The AMP's records refer to the available sizes of type as "small," "large," and "capitals," without giving specific measurements (Smith 1853). From my assessment of the

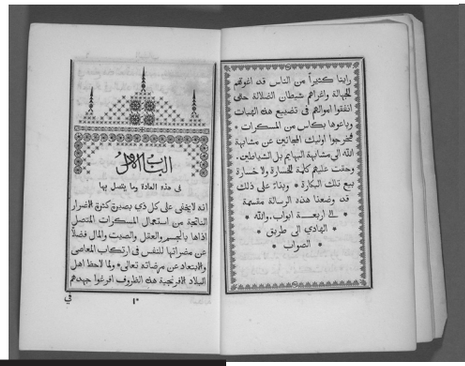
5 Khuri, perhaps in his eagerness to draw a parallel between these decorative elements and the broadsides' message of unity and concord, describes these small plant-like motifs as "olive branches" (Khuri 1990, 85).

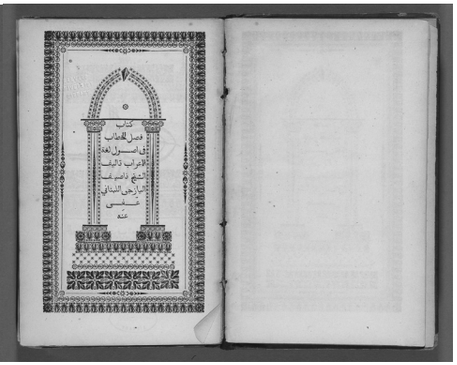
broadsides, the body size of the fount used measures at approximately fourteen points, which is rather small for a large-format publication to be read at any great distance. This particular fount of type was rather prevalent by this time in Beirut, since it was being purchased by many local and regional publishers (Auji 2016, 117-122). Referred to as "American Arabic" amongst local publishers, this type first came into use at the AMP in 1841 (Roper 1998, 50). Although letterpress printing in Arabic and Arabic-script type began earlier in other regional publishing hubs, like Cairo, Istanbul, and Tehran, the first commercial presses in Beirut, like the AMP and the nearby monastic press of al-Shuwayr, usually purchased their types from British, French, and Italian sources before the mid-nineteenth century (Auji 2016, 70).

Production of American Arabic began in 1834 with then-press editor Eli Smith (1801-1857), an ABCFM missionary in Beirut. For the first set of founts, Smith shared manuscript models with fellow missionary member and printer Homan Hallock (1803-1894), employed at the ABCFM press in Smyrna (Izmir), who cut the punches based on these models. The type itself was cast at a foundry in Leipzig, Germany (Glass 1997, 25-34; Roper 1998; Coakley 2003). It was designed to emulate the ideal proportions, in stroke weight, ascenders, descenders, and letterforms, of the Arabic *naskh* script, with one of its key selling points being its attempt at combining the aesthetic proportions of Arabic calligraphy with the necessary legibility once the script was cast into metal (Auji 2016, 114). Before acquiring its American Arabic type, the AMP was still using an earlier set, purchased from a London-based foundry, which the press found to be inadequate (Roper 1998, 60-61). Earlier examples of Arabic types produced by British type founders were not successful in maintaining the proportions of Arabic letterforms and legibility in print since faulty casting frequently led to gaps between letters in words (Arabic is a cursive – connected – script). The American Arabic type used in *Nafir Suriyya* was the same in design and size as that used for almost all the books printed at the AMP during this period. However, the similarities between these broadsides and other AMP publications are limited to a few elements, most notably the fount of type itself. In fact, the broadsides would be difficult to categorize as any other print media format that was produced by the AMP and other local private presses at this time.

Comparison with Contemporaneous Books and Periodicals

A comparison with other print media in circulation at this time shows how the *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides, although bearing some visual similarities to AMP publications, were visually distinct from books and periodicals, even those produced by al-Bustani himself. Early to mid-nineteenth century printed books were diverse in their visual conventions. Given the fact that they circulated in an economy still dominated by manuscripts, printed books often emulated elements rooted in scribal customs. For instance, a small book on abstinence by the American missionary George B. Whiting (1801-1855) shows some of the common practices at this press in the 1830s and

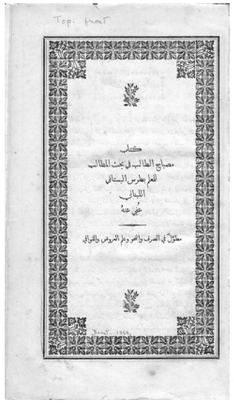




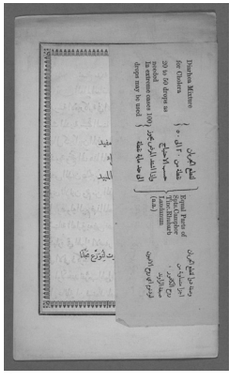
FIGURES 5. & 6.

(left) Example of a chapter opening in a small book printed at the AMP. George B. Whiting. 1838. *Kitab fi al-Imtina' 'an Shurb al-Muskirat* [sic] (A Book on Abstinence). Beirut: AMP. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (*98Miss168).

(right) A decorative title page from a book printed at the AMP. al-Yaziji, N. 1837. *Kitab Fasl al-Khitab fi Usul Lughat al-I'rab* (A Discourse on the Rules of Arabic Grammar). Beirut: AMP. Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (OL 25470.230).(*98Miss168).



7.



8.

FIGURES 7. & 8.

(left) A title page with a thick floriated border. Al-Bustani, B. 1854. *Kitab Misbah al-Talib fi Bahth al-Matalib.* Beirut: [AMP]. Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (OL 21632.2).

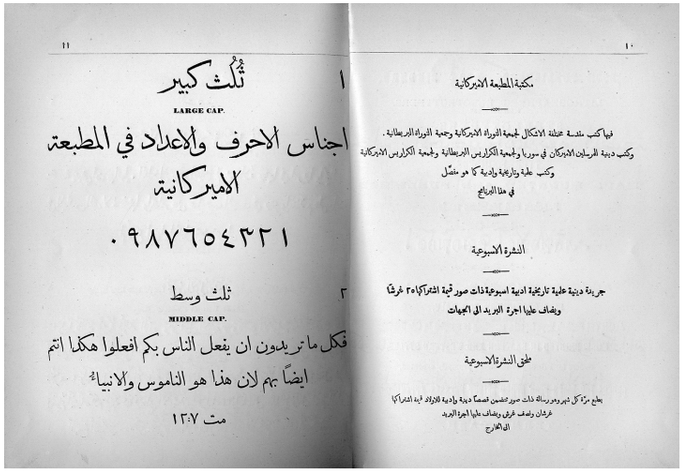
(right) Cover from an 1850s pamphlet on preventing and treating Cholera. Beirut: AMP. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (*98Miss168).

1840s ***(Figure 5)***. In this example, the use of decorative borders composed of vegetal and geometric sorts recalls the illuminated margins and floriated frames found in local manuscripts. Similarly, the beginning of each chapter in this book is marked by the inclusion of a decorative headpiece (see in the top of the left page in Figure 5). Front matter, like title pages, could feature a variety of ornaments, which ranged from highly decorative compositions ***(Figure 6)*** to simpler designs, such as the thick border that graced the title page of a book al-Bustani co-authored (***Figure 7***). Although these conventions varied across periods, particularly at the AMP where books began to show a more simplified aesthetic by the 1850s, such examples demonstrate the variety of material available to al-Bustani at this press, with which he could have embellished his broadsides.

Al-Bustani made use of similar ornaments for his broadsides, if in a more restrained manner. For instance, the tulip frame is similar to patterns seen in many other examples printed at the American Mission Press during this period ***(Figure 8)***. The framing devices used in *Nafir Suriyya* also resemble the neoclassical borders popularized in products of the AMP as well as mid-nineteenth-century British presses. Yet, although these publications all make use of the American Arabic type, al-Bustani limited its use in *Nafir Suriyya* to a single size and did not make use of the larger display sizes available at the press. By the 1860s, the AMP owned several sizes of Arabic type, including two sets of "capitals" produced in the late 1840s "for use in

FIGURE 9.

(left) two sizes of the *thuluth* Arabic type, large capitals and medium capitals. (right) Regular (small) sized "American Arabic" type based on a *naskh* script. AMP. 1891. *Barnamaj al-Matba'a al-Amirkaniyya* (Catalog of the American Press). AMP: Beirut. Pp. 9-10. Archives and Special Collections, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut (CA 015.5692: B619bA: 1891).



titles" and based on the *thuluth* script (Smith 1853) ***(Figure 9)***. However, in *Nafir Suriyya*, the ornamentation is minimal, with the emphasis placed on the text itself. The overall compositional strategy, while bearing some similarities to contemporaneous books, looks distinct when compared to other AMP publications.

FIGURE 10.

Front page of newspaper showing the engraved masthead. Al-Khuri, K. 1860. *Hadiqat al-Akhbar*. January 26, 1860. Digitized microfilm image. Archives and Special Collections, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut (Mic-NA:0147:1858:JAN-DEC).

The *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides also bore little resemblance to contemporaneous newspapers and journals, which were just beginning to emerge in Arabic publishing at this time in Beirut. For instance, Khalil al-Khuri's newspaper *Hadiqat al-Akhbar* (Garden of News; Beirut, 1858-1911)

had an ornamental engraved masthead that included the newspaper's title in a calligraphic script, crowned with a star and enclosed in two entwined leaf sprigs **(*Figure 10*).** This motif commonly appeared as part of the Ottoman administration's visual language on imperial commissions, in military contexts, and for the design of seals, such as the one seen in the *Hadiqat al-Akhbar* masthead, which was used for imperial productions (Eldem 2013). A number of other newspapers at this time featured similar mastheads (Mansour 2017). Additionally, the articles in newspapers were composed as double or triple columns; none featured single columns like *Nafir Suriyya*. Journals were often composed in book format, and featured conventions that were very similar to those of books, since the individual issues were meant to be bound together by the publisher (along with a decorative title page) at the conclusion of each volume. Although the inclusion of cross-heads in al-Bustani's broadsides (in issues six to eleven) suggests a serial format, the visual conventions and page layout did not conform to those of periodicals. From these comparisons, we can see how the medium of the printed broadside may have been a rather nebulous and experimental one at this time. In the case of *Nafir Suriyya* in particular, its conventions show us a visual language in flux, one that incorporated aspects of other print media but was not conceived of in the same manner as books and periodicals.

Tracing the Elusiveness of Broadsides

It is understandable that this irregularity and uniqueness in visual conventions and format would lead to confusion about what, exactly, the *Nafir Suriyya* publications were meant be to and how they were meant to circulate. This ambiguity is further perpetuated by al-Bustani's own descriptions and nomenclature. While these broadsides were printed without attribution, al-Bustani publicly claimed his authorship of them in his lexicon *Muhit al-Muhit*. In this two-volume dictionary, al-Bustani's definition of this publication appears under the entry *nafir* as "a bugle that is blown," continuing:

> [One] of these is *Nafir Suriyya*, which are our hopes that we composed [*ansha'naha*] during the event of 1860 in eleven bulletins [*nasharat*] that we called the *wataniyyat* [patriotisms] (al-Bustani 1870, 2: 2107).

Although al-Bustani refers to these broadsides, here, as "wataniyyat" (patriotisms) this particular nomenclature does not appear in the text itself until the fourth broadside.[6] In this copy (as seen in Figure 2), dating to October

6 *Wataniyyat*, a neologism attributed to al-Bustani derived from the root *watan* (homeland), is what he called his *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides (beginning with the fourth issue). Since the term has no equivalent in English, some scholars have called them "advice sheets" (Sheehi 1998, 87). However, I opt for "patriotisms" since the inclusion of "sheets" assumes that *wataniyyat* refers to a specific medium, which it does not. In fact, one cannot get a sense of the format used for these *wataniyyat* from the term itself. Its ambiguity is imperative to maintain in its translation.

25, al-Bustani introduces the edition in the heading as *Nafir Suriyya aw al-Wataniyya al-Rabi'a* (The Clarion of Syria or the Fourth Wataniyya). Additionally, al-Bustani's description of *Nafir Suriyya* as a *nashra* (plural *nasharat*) is significant to the question of medium; it is a term he repeats in subsequent issues (no. 4, 25 Oct 1860; no. 10, 22 Feb. 1861). In twentieth and twenty-first century contexts, this term can be used in reference to bulletins, circulated notes, and pamphlets, among other definitions (Sheehi 2000, 9). The translation of the Arabic term *nasharat* as a collection of bulletins or announcements is central to my argument that the nature of *Nafir Suriyya* was not being defined by al-Bustani as a publication like a pamphlet or other such bi-folio or folded format, since these broadsides clearly were not produced in pamphlet or booklet form. Attesting to al-Bustani's understanding of *nashra* as a single, unbound, unfolded sheet or panel is the fact that he uses the term *layyiha* (*la'iha* in modern-day Arabic) in reference to these broadsides (*Nafir Suriyya*, no. 3, 15 Oct 1860). This is not a term exclusively used for printed media. Rather, *layyiha* can be used to mean a (handwritten) manifest, roll, scroll, or bill as well as a panel that could be displayed on a wall. At no point does al-Bustani refer to *Nafir Suriyya* by terms commonly used for periodicals at this time, such as *jarida*, *sahifa*, or *majalla*.[7] Considering his reference to terms not exclusive to print media and not associated with journals and newspapers, al-Bustani appears to be locating these broadsides somewhere between printed bulletins and handwritten panels. I would even suggest that the amorphous nature of the sizes and conventions used for these broadsides run parallel to al-Bustani's own ambivalent understanding of and familiarity with the broadside format.

As a relatively new print medium for textual production and dissemination, the broadside, like many other products of industrialization in this context, would have been seen as novel, as would the press equipment on which it was produced. By 1860, commercial printing in Beirut and in regional hubs like Cairo was only thirty to forty years old, and the technology used in the 1830s (such as iron-cast hand presses) was no comparison to the steam-powered rotary presses that infiltrated this budding publishing industry in the 1850s (Green 2010). The rapid influx of new technologies, modes of industrial production, and their products influenced the standardization of Arabic writing at this time. This was particularly evident in the great number of neologisms being put forth and debated by local scholars in their newly-published lexicons and encyclopedias, many of which were also being discussed in periodicals (Drozdík 2000, 189-190). Thus, descriptions and classifications of *Nafir Suriyya* in nineteenth and early-twentieth century sources were conflicting, and this unusual broadside format appears to be one that eluded precise definition.

One of the earliest references to *Nafir Suriyya* in scholarship on Arabic publishing appears in the seminal *History of Arabic Journalism* (1914), by Lebanese scholar Philippe de Tarrazi (1865-1956), who described these

7 Periodicals in the nineteenth century were often called *jara'id* (plural for *jarida*). Earlier uses of this term related to book-keeping. Other words for periodicals included *jurnal* (from the French *journal*, for newspaper), *sahifa* (newspaper), *majalla* (magazine), and *al-suhuf al-maktuba* (written journals). As Tarrazi indicates, these terms were used interchangeably and were often the subject of debate amongst publishers (1914, 7).

single-page broadsides, that were printed on one side, as "a small periodical [*jarida*] of two pages" published in thirteen (and not eleven) issues (Tarrazi 1914, 64). Tarrazi may not have actually seen any physical copies of this publication; he admits to this in his book, stating that Khalil Sarkis, of the Arabic newspaper *Lisan al-Hal* (Voice of the Present) in Beirut, shared a direct quote from *Nafir Suriyya* with him (64). Around the same time, prominent Syrian journalist Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914) classified *Nafir Suriyya* as a newspaper (*sahifa*[8]) by including it in a subsection on Arabic political newspapers (Zaydan 1914, 64-65). A little over two decades later, Lebanese-Egyptian author George Antonius (1891-1941), in his influential *The Arab Awakening* (1938), described *Nafir Suriyya* as a weekly newspaper without providing a citation, though it is probable that he paraphrased the excerpt quoted by Tarrazi (1914, 47), which the latter obtained from Sarkis (Antonius 1938, 49). What these examples (and others; see also Jessup 1910, 2:484; Salibi 1965, 145) demonstrate is that terms for samples of print culture were in flux more than fifty years after *Nafir Suriyya* was published, perhaps as a result of the broadsides' ephemerality, which might mean that none of these individuals actually saw physical copies of these publications. Additionally, these early twentieth-century scholars lived at a time when Arab and Syro-Lebanese nationalist movements and sentiments of dissent towards the Ottoman authorities were prevalent. In their commitment to positioning al-Bustani not only as a key intellectual figure of the early *nahda* but also as an early nationalist thinker, these scholars began the process of canonizing al-Bustani's work, with *Nafir Suriyya* serving as a touchstone for his oeuvre. Consequently, the ephemeral or amorphous nature of *Nafir Suriyya*'s broadside layout went unheeded in favor of the (perceptually) more stable or intellectually rigorous periodical form. This resulted in a chain reaction which set the stage for future misconceptions.

Further complicating matters are the 1981 and 1990 reissues of *Nafir Suriyya* in book-format around the start and at the conclusion of Lebanon's fifteen-year Civil War (1975-1990). The deadliest civil conflict between various Christian and Muslim factions in Lebanon's modern history, it left an estimated 120,000 killed and another 76,000 unaccounted for (UN Security Council 2006, 19). Jean Dayeh's *al-Mu'allim Butrus al-Bustani*, which included transcriptions of all eleven issues of *Nafir Suriyya*, was the first twentieth-century reissue of these broadsides. In his book, Dayeh also anthologized al-Bustani's lecture on the education of women, address on Arab literature and culture, and *Nafir Suriyya* as *nahda*-period texts intrinsic to the twentieth century "battle for nationalist and social revival" and a secular state (Dayeh 1981, 7). Yusuf Q. Khuri's publication *Nafir Suriyya*, which emerged at the end of the war, evoked similar nationalist, non-sectarian sentiments to those of Dayeh, even though Khuri made no reference to Dayeh's work. Publishing the book under al-Bustani's name and including his own in the colophon, Khuri draws a clear parallel between the battles of 1860 and those of 1975-1990 by exclaiming, in his preface, "history is repeating itself, [for] how similar today's context is to that of yesterday." Mimicking al-Bustani's original sign-off, Khuri concludes the preface with, "from the lover of the nation too" (Khuri 1990, 7). Both Dayeh's and Khuri's interest in resurrecting this nineteenth-century publication exemplified what historians of the modern Middle East have explained as a "rediscovery" of nineteenth-century Arabic writing "championed by intellectuals critical of state violence" (Hanssen and Weiss 2016, 6).

Unlike earlier scholars, Dayeh and Khuri consulted the physical copies available at AUB, and both authors corrected Tarrazi's errors (Dayeh 1981, 14; 27; Khuri 1990, 84n8; 85n9). Nonetheless, they describe *Nafir Suriyya* as a *jarida* or *sahifa*. Dayeh explains that it was "one of the first organized newspapers [*jara'id*] in the Arab world," but unlike a large or varied *sahifa* (newspaper), it was "a brief, single-paged publication made up of a single column/article [*maqal*] written by al-Bustani" (Dayeh 1981, 27-28). Khuri, who even provides a brief visual description of the sheets (Khuri 1990, 85), interchangeably refers to *Nafir Suriyya* as a *nashra* (84) and a *jarida* (72; 74). This shows how these two authors, even while looking at the broadsides in their material form, were (perhaps) unfamiliar with or unsure about the broadside format and could only see it as a newspaper or periodical, even if *Nafir Suriyya* did not quite fit those formats' attributes. An additional obstacle to contemporary scholars' understanding of *Nafir Suriyya*'s medium and materiality is that Khuri and Dayeh's books, as edited texts anthologizing these broadsides (of which few exist in their original physical form), alter the original medium in which they appeared. The bound format allows us to read these texts all at once, and at a rate which original nineteenth century readers would not have been able to achieve. Laura Putnam speaks of a similar challenge brought about by the digital turn, which now allows us to read sources "at an unprecedented rate [so] we are finding connections in unexpected places" (Putnam 2016, 377). In these ways, contemporary reissues elevate *Nafir Suriyya*'s status to a "fixed" canonical text, limiting our ability to consider the broadsides' original visual conventions, and, relatedly, their uses and meaning in the public domain.

Public Texts in the Late Ottoman Period

The *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides may have been novel in the 1860s as printed works intended to be freely displayed or distributed to a public readership, as opposed to periodicals and books, which were meant to be purchased from points of sale like bookstands, presses, bookshops, or via subscription. However, public texts were rather common at this time in media besides print. Some of the oldest public texts in the Ottoman realms are the inscriptions on buildings, which were themselves public displays (Sajdi 2013, 15-37). These inscriptions included names of patrons and architects, Qur'anic or other religious verses, and dedications, all of which would typically be found on the inner walls, entrances, and façades of mosques, bathhouses,

8 The term *sahifa* allows for some ambiguity given its association with manuscript culture, as it was first used in reference to a folio from the Qur'an and possibly even pre-dates this religious text (Ghédira 2017). This may have been particularly the case in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century.

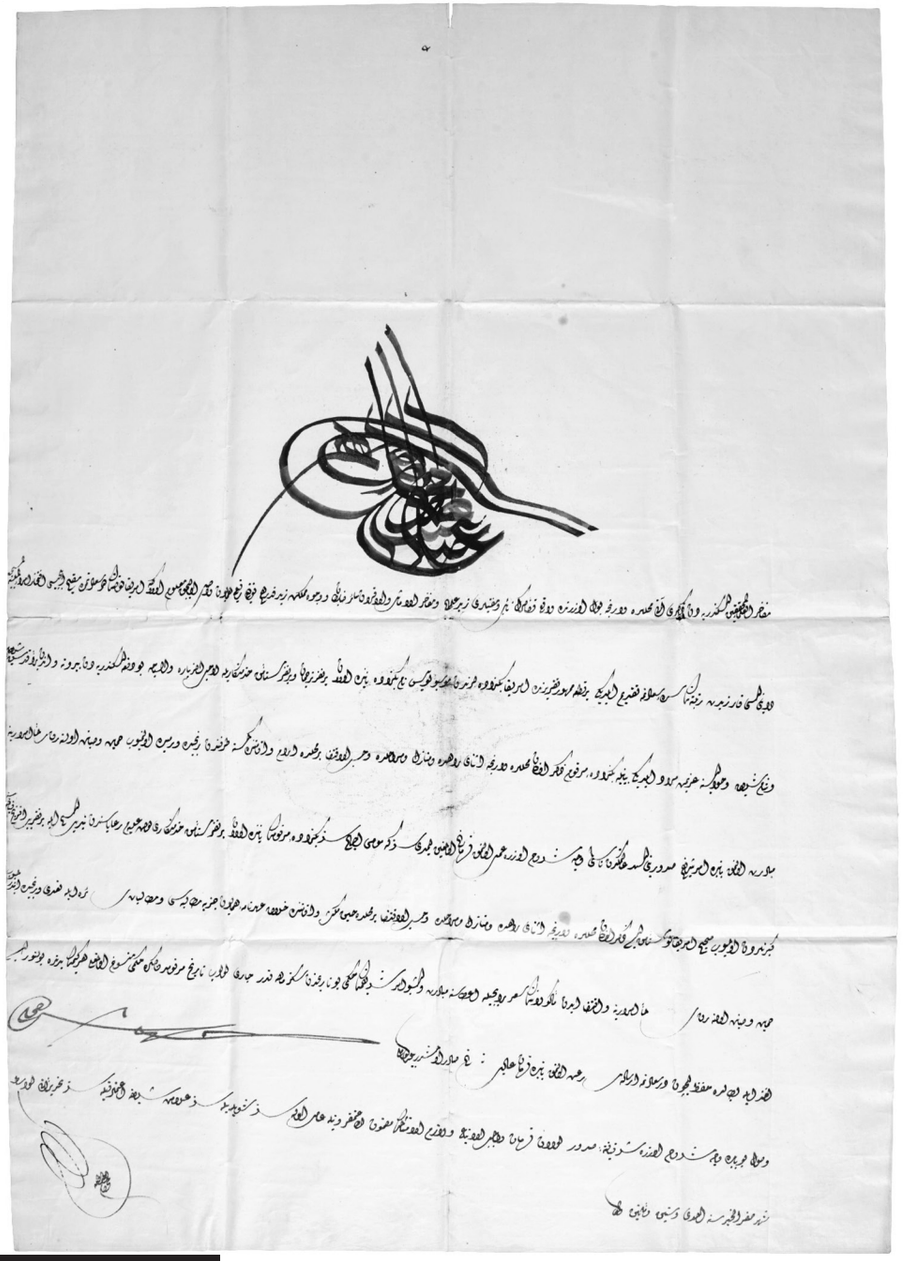


FIGURE 11.

An example of an Imperial decree (*firman*) that shows the ***tughra*** of the Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid I (r.1823-1861), Istanbul, dated 1261 AH/1845 CE. Sotheby's Lot 56, Arts of the Islamic World. http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/arts-of-the-islamic-world-l17220/lot.56.html

palaces, and caravanserais (Önge 2007). The functions and aesthetics of these texts varied widely across time periods and geographic regions and saw major changes in the era of modernity at a time when traditional scripts and conventions were being retooled for new purposes (Eldem 2013, 467; Gharipour and Schick 2013). Early public texts were not limited to buildings or physical spaces and the term can also be used to describe certain kinds of manuscripts. As Dana Sajdi explains, for eighteenth-century Ottoman Syria, before the regional popularity of printing presses, handwritten historical chronicles – produced as books – served as the main "written and public medium whose purpose was, like a newspaper, to inform." Copies of scribal chronicles, which included news on current events and served as spaces for public "interrogation and reform," were shared and read widely, often in public spaces like street cafes (Sajdi 2013, 211). The same could be said for periodicals such as newspapers and journals, which (like historical chronicles) were often read out loud in public squares, cafes, reading rooms, and salons, often to illiterate members of society who frequented these places (Ayalon 1995). The AMP, in line with similar practices at other missionary presses (Paulus 2011), produced numerous small-format pamphlets for free distribution, such as ones on how to prevent and treat cholera (see Figure 8).

Additional media that would also have been relevant for *Nafir Suriyya* are handwritten and printed placards, which were produced for commercial or administrative purposes and featured prominently in the streets of Ottoman cities and towns. The most common kinds of placards circulating in the public domain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were advertisements, official announcements, and edicts. Kathryn Schwartz explains that printed placards of this nature were circulated in the public domain in Egypt during the Napoleonic invasion (1798-1801), as locals adapted practices employed by the French. Proclamations and announcements by members of the French occupation were printed in French, Arabic, and Turkish to be hung on street walls in Egyptian cities and towns. In cosmopolitan hubs like Cairo and Alexandria, placards included handwritten menus, advertisements, and signs that were posted at taverns and restaurants to attract a European clientele (Schwartz 2015, 145). A related text that would have played a role in the public domain is the Ottoman *levha* (*lawha* or *layyiha* in nineteenth-century Arabic), which was typically a handwritten text on paper mounted on a wooden panel. These panels showcased a variety of calligraphy ranging from elaborate zoomorphic designs to simple proverbs written in a single line. These public signs were produced for varied audiences and purposes, as commodities written by public scribes for purchase by members of the middle-class or as more formal objects that were commissioned by wealthier patrons including the ruling elite (Gharipour and Schick, 2013; Blair 2006). Amongst Arabic-speaking members of Ottoman societies, a *layyiha* (or *lawayyih*, in its plural form) was oftentimes the term given to the medium in which non-religious edicts (*firmans*) and *fatwas* (religious orders) were circulated as single sheets (Rafeq 1984, 379) ***(Figure 11)***. *Firmans* were the Ottoman administration's medium for communicating issues pertaining to the military and civilian life (Schwartz 2015, 53).

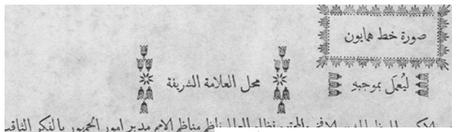


FIGURE 13.

Detail showing the upper section of al-Bustani's Arabic translation of the Ottoman Imperial Reform Edict of 1856.

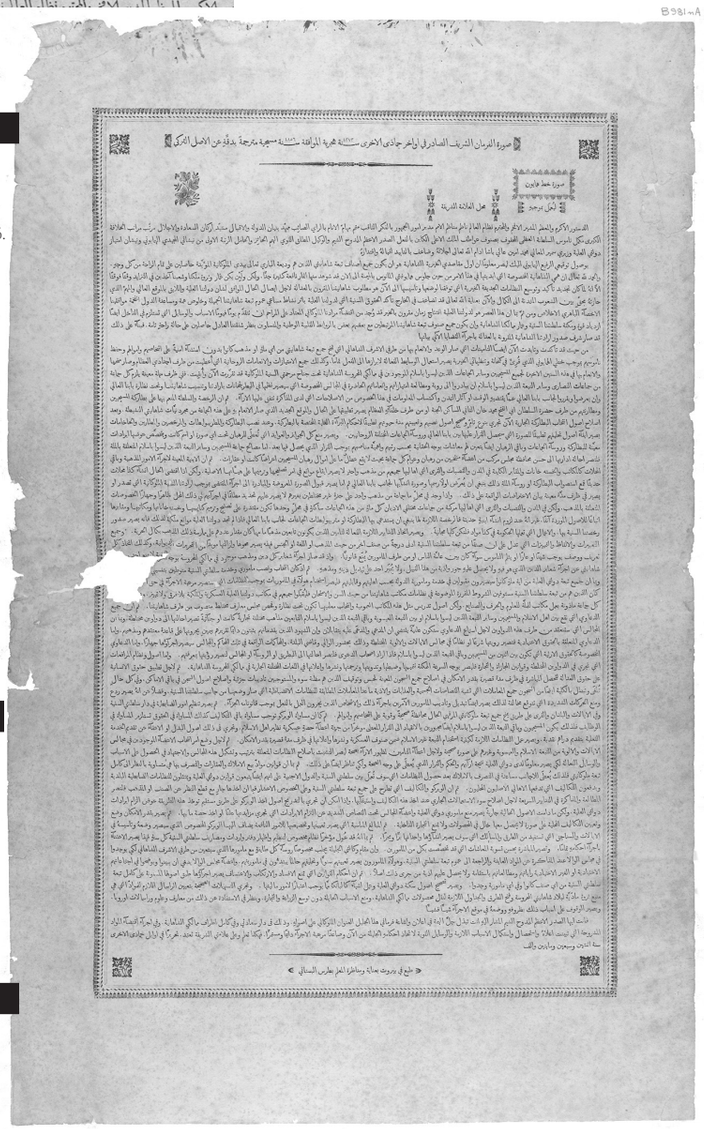
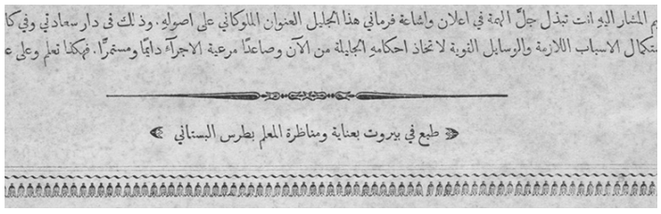


FIGURE 12.

Arabic translation of the Ottoman Imperial Reform Edict of 1856. Al-Bustani, B. ca. 1856-1860. Beirut: [AMP]. Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut (CA:PA:F:956.9:B981nA:v.1).

FIGURE 14.

Detail showing al-Bustani's name at the bottom of his Arabic translation of the Ottoman Imperial Reform Edict of 1856.



Of particular relevance for the discussion of al-Bustani's *Nafir Suriyya*, which, as I noted earlier, he also described as a *layyiha*, are the Ottoman state's reform edicts: the Tanzimat (reorderings). These edicts, issued by Ottoman sultans between 1839 and 1876, were first published in periodicals coming out of Istanbul. One such example was the first official Ottoman Turkish newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* (Calendar of Events), which was established in 1831 by the Sultan Mahmud II and then began publishing issues in other languages, including Arabic, which were spoken in the Empire's provinces (Mardin 2000). The Tanzimat orders, such as those of 1839 (Edict of Gülhane or the Rose House Edict) and 1856 (Imperial Reform Edict), first circulated within the provinces via this gazette. Printed broadside versions of these edicts were also produced in different languages for distribution amongst the Ottoman Provinces, perhaps to be read out loud or posted in public spaces. For al-Bustani, the importance of this new Ottoman proclamation, which spoke of equality and rights amongst Ottoman subjects, is evident in his writing; in addition to mentioning its importance in *Nafir Suriyya*, he also refers to it in an issue of his journal *al-Jinan* (The Gardens), published 1870-1886 in Beirut (Hakim 2013, 148; 298n21). Additionally, al-Bustani himself oversaw the publication of an Arabic edition of the Imperial Reform Edict of 1856 as a broadside at the AMP in Beirut.[9]

The design of the Arabic translation of the 1856 Reform Edict that al-Bustani printed in Beirut ***(Figure 12)*** aligned with the visual language of official imperial edicts and may have served as the model for his *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides. Few of the printed Ottoman Tanzimat edicts survive besides the ones that were published in journals, gazettes, and books. However, a rare surviving printed version of the imperial Edict of Gülhane (1839)[10] can serve as a germane example for comparison with al-Bustani's Arabic copy of the 1856 Reform Edict. Similarities can be found in the latter's inclusion of the title of the edict with the year in which it was issued, using both the Gregorian and Hijri (Islamic) year. Beneath this heading, in the upper right-hand corner, are three lines of text, each set off by decorative brackets or enclosed within a cartouche. These are not simply decorative elements; rather, they take the place of what would have been the location of the sultan's official signature or emblem, a calligraphic formulation called a *tughra* (seen in Figure 11). Instead of the exact *tughra* of the issuing sultan (Abdülmejid I, r. 1839-1861) al-Bustani's version includes the phrase "the place of the noble insignia" (*mahal al-'alama al-sharifa*) and brackets this with a star-like rosette with three stacked tulip ornaments above and below it ***(Figure 13)***. The text in the cartouche, which emulates a seal or stamp, indi-

9 I thank historian Edhem Eldem for his insights and feedback on these points regarding the Ottoman Turkish Tanzimat and the Arabic copy by al-Bustani. The Arabic Tanzimat I consulted was bound with al-Bustani's *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides held at AUB.

10 Few other printed examples of these Tanzimat, particularly in Ottoman Turkish, remain and are documented in archival collections. Though no source is listed for the photo, a low-resolution scan of the original imperial edict can be found under the Wikipedia entry "Edict of Gülhane" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_G%C3%BCl̇hane, accessed 13 May, 2018). It shows the use of the Sultan's official ***tughra***. This edict (and others) were also circulated in books of laws and in newspapers, although the visual conventions of these differed.

cates that this is an official copy of the Tanzimat ("a copy of the imperial text" or *surat khatt humayun*). In fact, I would argue that al-Bustani's Tanzimat may be read as an official Arabic copy of this edict, something like a notarized document sanctioned by the imperial court. This appears to have been a point of pride for al-Bustani since he includes his name as the publisher at the bottom of this edict ***(Figure 14)***.

Significantly, there are numerous visual similarities between al-Bustani's Tanzimat broadside and his issues of *Nafir Suriyya*. For instance, the tulips and some of the ornamental motifs are the same sorts found in *Nafir Suriyya*'s cartouches and the floral elements flanking them. Additionally, both documents show the use of the American Arabic type in the same (14 point) size, with no variations in weight or design. Other similarities include the use of a single column for the text, a large border framing the entire body text, the centered headings, and the large-size format of the vertically oriented document. Although the designs are not exactly the same, the similarities between al-Bustani's Tanzimat and *Nafir Suriyya* are difficult to overlook. Indeed, *Nafir Suriyya*'s layout and visual conventions resemble this copy of the Tanzimat more than they do any other extant print medium from this period.

What are some possibilities for the wider implications of the similarities between these two documents? In the absence of historical documents on design practices, any explanations would be conjectural. However, contemporaneous examples in other settings might help to elucidate some aspects of these practices. For instance, Schwartz explains how in eighteenth-century Egypt, under the French occupation, Ottoman Egyptians "forged [handwritten] firmans in the name of the Porte and other provincial authorities to undermine the French" (Schwartz 2015, 154). These firmans, and their forgery, were remarked upon in the French administrative records in Cairo. Unlike these examples, al-Bustani did not explicitly call the *Nafir Suriyya* broadsides firmans, nor did he literally evoke the authority of the Ottoman government in his text. However, the similarities in the visual language of *Nafir Suriyya* and the printed Arabic Tanzimat suggests that al-Bustani may have been interpolating the authoritative visual language and format of Ottoman edicts. Perhaps this was done in the hopes of gaining the attention of the public "sons of the homeland" to which these broadsides were addressed, by evoking imperial authority or implying that he had the Porte's support for his pleas of unity and concord.

The Significance of Readership

There is no denying that al-Bustani conceived of these broadsides as texts meant for the public domain – one only needs to look at the consistency in their form of address calling out to his compatriots in the vast realms of Ottoman Syria, drawing their attention to what al-Bustani considered to be matters of great urgency. However, we do not have a clear sense of the impact of these works at the time of their production, nor a precise sense of how they were read or circulated, and by whom. Our knowledge is limited by which individual copies of these ephemeral items found their way into archives, or what written records state about the way such objects engaged the public sphere. Inferring their significance relies on building a context which includes our knowledge of adjacent forms of media. We do have some documentation of how placards, bills, and similar media circulated in the regional context. In Egypt, printed and handwritten placards – from advertisements and tavern signs, to Ottoman or French administrative proclamations and announcements – were produced to be hung or pasted on street walls in Egyptian urban centers and towns (Schwartz 2015, 140-144). The placards were also read aloud at mosques during the weekly Friday sermons (in the case of Ottoman edicts) and by public criers. Announcements were also printed in smaller formats and quantities to be shared by elite members of local societies. These public documents were also published in local journals and gazettes (Schwartz 2015, 156-163), which demonstrates how eager officials were to communicate their news widely by relying on diverse social networks and media. The situation in mid-nineteenth-century Ottoman Syria may have been similar, particularly in a cosmopolitan city like Beirut, where printing was a small but growing industry.

It is important to note that so-called public spaces, like streets and buildings, should not be understood as sites belonging to a broad public in nineteenth-century Ottoman cities. Rather, as Till Grallert argues, the notion of the street as a public space was being negotiated, through media like newspapers and placards, between the different groups of city dwellers (informed by their respective economic and socio-political concerns) and through regulation by Ottoman and associated authorities (Grallert 2012). Thus, posting controversial political texts in such spaces would not have been possible without causing a response from local groups and imperial authorities, making the circulation of printed political placards difficult during this period. Although the early twentieth century saw a flurry of political material being printed and circulated regionally and amongst the Arab/Syrian diaspora in places from Egypt to New York and Brazil (Arsan 2012, 167), this was certainly not the case for Beirut in the 1860s. The few extant historical accounts tell us as much. For instance, in 1880, following the suspension of the first Ottoman constitution (established in 1876) by the then-newly enthroned Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876-1909), correspondences by British diplomats stationed in the region note that some non-Turkish denizens in Beirut formed anti-Ottoman "secret societies" which, according to these records, surreptitiously hand-produced and pasted "anonymous placards" in Arabic which "denounced the evils of the Turkish misgovernment and exhorted the population to overthrow it" (Zeine 1966, 62). Illustrating his text with images of a few rare examples of these handwritten "revolutionary" placards, historian Zeine N. Zeine describes them as being "small enough to be hidden in one's coat pocket" (62).

Nafir Suriyya presents us with an anomaly in comparison to overtly political placards. These broadsides were neither small nor handwritten. Additionally, the political situation in 1860s Beirut differed from that of

the 1880s. Most significantly, press censorship laws were less strict in the Ottoman provinces, particularly cosmopolitan port cities like Beirut, at this time (Grallert 2012, 332). It was not until the Hamidian period (particularly the 1880s) that most printed matter, even that produced in the provinces, was required to go through the censorship process of the imperial Press Bureau (Cioeta 1979; Ayalon 2016). It is unlikely that the broadsides were perceived as overtly political or controversial. Although al-Bustani did not sign them with his name, he did identify himself as the author in his lexicon from 1870, which he dedicated to the reigning Ottoman sultan at the time. Indeed, al-Bustani, up until his death, remained in the imperial state's favor; he was honored with a "monetary prize and an imperial decoration" for his work in publishing and education (Makdisi 2008, 208). Surely, if the broadsides were seen as polemical by the administrative arm of the Ottoman Empire in Beirut, there would have been more controversy surrounding their publication documented in the historical record.

Though twentieth-century scholars have made them out to be politically controversial, a close material reading of al-Bustani's broadsides indicates that their purpose and reception at the time of their production might not have been as polemical as later readings suggest. I would argue that al-Butani's deployment of format and visual conventions suggests the broadsides were not meant to flout or challenge Ottoman authority. Rather, they emulate the visual language of official Ottoman documents, thus suggesting a (desired) connection to the Porte's authority. Typographically and compositionally, the broadsides employ a visual logic differentiated from other print media formats of their day, such as magazines or newspapers. Instead, they interpolate the Ottoman conventions for edicts and public texts, and, by extension, the authority and authenticity that this visual language signified to the reader. What is unclear is whether al-Bustani intended the broadsides to be distributed for posting in the streets of Beirut or other centers. But a consideration of the broadsides' materiality does allow 1) the questioning of the eager canonization in twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship, which erases the ephemerality and experimental nature of these works, 2) the expansion of our understanding of printed public texts like broadsides which were caught somewhere between advertisements and formal edicts, and 3) the more nuanced understanding of how these objects may have functioned and circulated in the early public sphere in Ottoman provincial cities like Beirut. This type of analysis facilitates a valuable consideration of the varied roles that print culture, through its visual conventions and textual content, played amongst a small but growing public readership under Ottoman imperial rule and its associated censorship laws.

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