

## Acknowledgments

From the time the idea of this book germinated till its completion, a little bit more than a decade passed. Researching, and writing about, the 1960s New Left and its becomings in the times that span the aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq and the Arab revolutions (2011–) was punctuated by a seesawing of intense political moods. Despair was washed away by revolutionary tides before receding, leaving in their wake those fortunate enough to survive the counter-revolutionary ordeal scattered and bereft. Revolutionary passion and political disenchantment moved out of the archive of theoretical texts and experiences I was writing about to lay claim on the present, mandating in the process a modulation of the major keys in which this past was cast and recast. I could not have kept on working and completing this book without the many gifts received along the way.

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a gift to this project. In the autumn of a life of intellectual sparring, a time of treason of many “secular” bishops of Arab culture, the late Sadik al-Azm stood up for the Syrian revolution. His fiery public writings were matched in private by a gentle and dialogic sensibility.

I have been in conversation with Hazem Saghieh for nearly two decades now. Those exchanges have seeped in more than one way into the veins nourishing this book. From Hazem I also learned how to sustain warmth and cordiality amid heated political exchanges and intellectual differences. The initial ideas for what years later became this book emerged in conversation with the late Joseph Samaha. I learned from him in more ways than I can now remember since we first met in the late 1990s. Joseph’s sharp analytical prose, his ethico-political disposition to not sell short his opponent’s positions, and the sheer conceptual firepower of his arguments took the art of political editorials to unmatched heights: ephemeral sculptures of the “here” and “now.” Waddah Charara concluded our initial interview by saying that he is less interested in future meetings in making speeches on “intellectuals” and “revolutions” than he is in being “questioned” and “shaken”—playfully borrowing Henri Calet’s words “do not shake me, I am full of tears” before swiftly adding, “not ideological tears, though.” These words capture something of Charara’s intellectual dispositions that are difficult to discern if one is only acquainted with his complex scholarly works and trenchant political commentaries. In the numerous exchanges I had with him, I experienced firsthand an openness to critical dialogue and a deep ethnographic attunement to listening to, and mulling over, his interlocutors’ words. I cannot help thinking that these deep antihierarchical dispositions are carryovers from his Maoist past. I cannot thank him enough for his generosity, which enabled a string of exchanges that began more than a decade ago as an expression of a desire for questions.

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