# A Messy Language
# The Linguistic Conflict in Modern Lebanese Literature

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> Rien n'est plus dangereux que de chercher à rompre le cordon maternel qui relie un homme à sa langue. Lorsqu'il est rompu, ou gravement perturbé, cela se répercute désastreusement sur l'ensemble de sa personnalité
> (Maalouf 1998, 152).[1]

## 1. Introduction

"Hi kifak, ça va?". A casual phrase heard daily in Lebanon blending English, Arabic and French in a single breath. This hybrid greeting, at once intimate and expressive, captures the essence of Lebanon's multilingual reality: a vibrant coexistence of languages that transcends mere communication and enters the realm of culture, politics and identity. The same linguistic layering that colours oral exchanges also marks the country's visual and symbolic landscape, from shop

[1] "Nothing is more dangerous than attempting to sever the maternal bond that ties a person to their language. When this bond is broken or severely disrupted, it can have devastating effects on the entirety of their personality"; translations are by the article's author.

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names and graffiti to advertising and digital content. Yet, beyond the streets and screens, this multilingualism finds a profound echo in literature. Lebanon's multilingual reality is a cultural richness that bears the weight of colonial history, political divisions and identity conflicts. Writers in Lebanon often face the challenge of choosing a literary language, a choice that is never neutral but deeply symbolic and ideological; it is a country where Arabic, French, English and the Lebanese dialect coexist in daily life and in literary production. Even when a writer commits to one language, the presence of others continues to haunt his/her work, creating a complex interplay of linguistic influence. Thus, writing becomes a site of tension between identity, heritage, and global affiliation.

In this article we will explore how Lebanese literature, through its multilingual forms and stylistic hybridity, mirrors the fractured, plural identity of the nation. Also, we will analyze the manifestation of linguistic and cultural conflict in Lebanese literature, reflecting the larger identity crisis of the nation and languages hybridation. Whether through the deliberate use of code-switching, intertextuality, or polyglossia, Lebanese authors reinvent the act of writing as a negotiation between multiple cultural legacies. By examining selected literary texts, we aim to understand how language becomes a battlefield, a refuge, and a creative force all at once, a reflection of Lebanon's messy but generative literary space.

## 2. Historical Evolution of Multilingualism in Lebanon

Lebanon's story is a linguistic tapestry woven over thousands of years, shaped by countless cultures, faiths, and empires. From ancient Phoenician to Greek, Aramaic and Syriac, different languages have always lived side-by-side, creating a unique blend that defines Lebanese identity even today.

Fast forward to the French Mandate (1920-1943), French became formally established alongside Arabic, giving it a certain prestige and a sense of modernity: "Pendant cette période, le français et l'arabe sont considérés comme deux

langues officielles" (Ayoub 2022, 20-21).[2] After gaining independence in 1943, English gradually joined the mix, reflecting Lebanon's growing connection to the wider world. By the time of the civil war (1975-2000s), Lebanon was truly trilingual, but this linguistic diversity also became entangled with political and religious divisions: Arabic became linked to nationalism, French to a sophisticated, cosmopolitan past, and English to economic aspirations.

So, this isn't just about speaking multiple languages; it's a deep-seated part of Lebanese culture, brimming with political, religious, and even ideological layers. While it has enriched writers, it has also created a fascinating internal tension, reflecting the ongoing push and pull between East and West, tradition and modernity. In essence, Lebanese multilingualism isn't just a skill; it's a complex, living testament to a nation constantly navigating its own voice.

### 3. The Crisis of Identity and the Haunting of Language

> Par conséquent, quelque soit l'état de la langue, l'homme de génie est celui qui, en connaissance de cause, fait éclater la langue pour y faire passer son monde original ; c'est pourquoi son apport est indissociablement de l'ordre culturel et linguistique (Abou 1962, 363).[3]

Lebanon is a country of unresolved identities. The persistent question "Who am I?" posed by nearly every Lebanese individual, is rarely met with a clear or unified answer. Am I Phoenician? Arab? Mediterranean? Or simply Lebanese? Amin Maalouf famously treated these identity layers, often contradictory and overlapping, in his book *Murderous Identities*, published in 1998, where he explored the

[2] "During this period, French and Arabic are considered two official languages".

[3] "Therefore, regardless of the state of the language, the man of genius is the one who, knowingly, breaks open the language to let his original world shine through; this is why his contribution is inseparably both cultural and linguistic".

complex and often destructive ways in which individual and collective identities can become sources of conflict and violence, identities that divide rather than unite, that wound rather than heal. In the Lebanese context, this crisis is not only personal or political, but it also seeps into the very act of literary creation. The plurality of languages and faiths, coupled with a volatile political landscape, has shaped a national psyche marked by instability, fragmentation, and ambivalence; this instability becomes manifest in Lebanese literature, where writing is not a neutral act, but one charged with the burden of self-definition. The Lebanese writer does not only write; he or she must first choose the language in which to write, and this choice is never innocent. Each language in Lebanon carries its own historical and ideological weight. But even once the choice is made, the struggle is far from over: the other languages continue haunting the text like echoes from a divided soul, they appear as interjections, idioms, untranslated expressions, or subtle shifts in tone. No single language seems sufficient to contain the totality of Lebanese experience. Thus, literature becomes a space of multilingual hauntings, a messy terrain where language fractures, overlaps, and reconstructs itself in an attempt to grasp the elusive nature of identity. This linguistic haunting is not a flaw; it is the very aesthetic of Lebanese literature; the messiness reflects the nation's composite reality. Writers like Amin Maalouf, Farjallah Hayek, Wajdi Mouawad and Morice Awwad among others have embraced this fragmentation as a generative force. Amine Maalouf confides in the novel *Periple de Baldassar*: "J'écris dans ma langue, mais en lettres arabes, et avec le code qui m'est propre" (Maalouf 2000, 415).[4] This private, coded, hybrid form of expression encapsulates the creative negotiation at the heart of Lebanese writing: the need to invent a new linguistic space that can hold the weight of a fragmented identity.

[4] "I write in my language, but in Arabic letters, and with a code of my own".

### 3.1. Writing as a Site of Linguistic Conflict

If identity is fractured in Lebanon, writing becomes the ultimate stage where this fracture is exposed, negotiated, and performed. Writing is, *par excellence*, the place where languages meet, resist, overlap, and challenge each other. It is not merely about linguistic plurality on the page, it is about the inner battle of the writer, pulled between multiple languages that each carry distinct emotional, cultural, and ideological resonances.

In this context, the question arises: can one truly be bilingual or multilingual in writing? Theoretical linguistics might affirm that bilingualism is the capacity to master and manipulate more than one language. But from a literary and affective standpoint, the answer is far more complex.

Maalouf has often reflected on his own position as a writer “between languages”, and his writing embodies that ethical tension. For him, French is not the language of domination but a chosen tool of mediation, a way to carry Lebanese stories to a global readership. But he refuses to let that choice result in cultural dilution. Instead, his French prose is haunted by Arabic rhythms, references, and terms, creating what we might call a francophone Levantine voice. This voluntary hybridism is markedly different from the unconscious or conflicted multilingualism seen in other Lebanese authors. Maalouf does not suffer from linguistic fragmentation; he embraces it, managing multiplicity with control and purpose. His style is smooth, but his content remains deeply layered, an elegant mask over historical trauma, displacement, and colonial entanglement.

This imbalance is not a failure; it is the very texture of writing in multilingual contexts. The Lebanese writer, even when writing fluently in French or English, may carry within a nostalgia for Arabic, its imagery, its rhythm, its oral beauty. Conversely, a writer in Arabic may long for the conciseness or cosmopolitan tone of French or English. The writer’s pen becomes a compass that spins between inherited and chosen tongues, between mother tongue and adopted idiom, between national affiliation and global aspiration. Thus, multilingualism in literature

is not only a stylistic device but an existential condition. It reveals not a mastery of languages, but rather a *tension* between them, a productive tension that gives rise to a unique literary form. Lebanese literature, in this sense, is not harmonious; it is dissonant, layered, and often contradictory. Yet it is precisely in this conflict that its richness lies.

### 3.2. Linguistic Grafting

In contemporary Lebanese literature, linguistic mixing is not a stylistic flourish, it is an existential necessity. It reflects the fragmented identity of the writer, and the collective memory of a country suspended between multiple heritages. This phenomenon manifests at the most fundamental level: the syntax of the sentence. A seemingly ordinary line by Farjallah Hayek offers a powerful illustration: “Mais on dirait que j’ai peur de Ammo lui-même?” (Hayek 1957, 217).[5]

At first glance, this sentence combines two languages: Lebanese Arabic dialect (“Ammo,” a familiar term for “uncle”) and standard French. Yet this is more than code-switching. The sentence reveals a hybrid syntactic structure, one that speaks to the deep cultural and linguistic layering at the heart of Lebanese identity. The word “Ammo” may seem colloquial, even affectionate, but it is rich in historical resonance; Hayek himself notes in a footnote that “Ammo” has Syriac origins as well as Arabic roots. This seemingly minor detail situates the word within a linguistic genealogy that predates the Arabization of Lebanon, calling back to a pre-Islamic, Semitic cultural memory. In a single word, the ancestral and the contemporary coexist, a reminder that in Lebanon, even everyday expressions are palimpsests of layered identities.

What is even more striking in this sentence is the invisible influence of Arabic syntax on a grammatically French construction. In everyday Lebanese Arabic, one would say: “Ammo, j’ai peur de lui?”. This structure includes a vocative object

[5] “But it seems like I’m afraid of Ammo himself”.

(“Ammo”), plus an object (“lui”, him), and a present progressive verb, a double object formation that is natural in Arabic but redundant or awkward in French. By replicating this pattern, Hayek unintentionally (or perhaps deliberately) introduces a Lebanism, a uniquely Lebanese usage of French marked by Arabic grammar. This is not a mistake but a linguistic trace of identity conflict, or what Jacques Derrida might call a “fracture grammatologique”,[6] a place where language reveals its instability and multiplicity. The explanatory footnote that accompanies “Ammo” is not merely informative, it is meta-literary. It acknowledges the heterogeneous nature of the readership: is the reader Francophone? Arabophone? Diasporic? Foreign? No single group can claim exclusive access to the text. The footnote exposes the inherent incompleteness of communication in a multilingual, multicultural context. Lebanese writing must always negotiate meaning across borders and often resorts to self-translation or contextualization within the body of the text itself.

Ultimately, this single sentence encapsulates a core principle of Lebanese literary aesthetics: disorder is not a flaw, it is the form. The hybridity here is not decorative, it is constitutive. It gives shape to the writer’s inner fragmentation, reflects the unresolved tensions of a fractured nation and resists the linguistic homogeneity often expected by literary canons. As Roland Barthes wrote, “Le texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture” (Barthes 1993, 67).[7] In this case, Lebanese literature is a tissue of languages, memories, and resistances. The sentence by Farjallah Hayek, then, is more than a phrase: it is a

[6] The “grammatological fracture” refers to a fundamental rupture or tear in the relationship between language, discourse, and thought, which challenges the notion of a stable difference or hierarchy among these elements. It emphasizes the difficulty or impossibility of achieving a fixed unity or totality in meaning, highlighting the concepts of *différance* and the infinite depth of the text.

[7] “The text is a tissue of citations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture”.

linguistic map of Lebanese complexity, a mirror in which language, history, and identity are entangled.

In *Le Rocher de Tanios* (1993), Amine Maalouf crafts a French-language novel that is deeply anchored in Lebanese geography, history, and orality. While the narrative unfolds within the smooth, elegant flow of literary French, the insertion of Arabic terms such as “Tanios”, “Sheikh”, and “Kechek” functions not as exotic embellishment but as an intentional gesture of cultural affirmation. Through these lexical intrusions, the author practices what we might call a voluntary hybridism, a deliberate strategy that refuses the erasure of cultural specificity within the dominant language of the former colonial power. Maalouf, who has long chosen French as his primary language of expression, does not abandon his Lebanese roots; instead, he brings them into French, forcing the language to accommodate the weight of another culture. His usage of terms such as “Sheikh” (a tribal or religious leader), or “Kechek” (a traditional fermented yogurt dish), is not translated or explained, and their meanings are left to be understood through context. This decision creates a space of opacity, a moment of resistance where the French reader is momentarily displaced, and the Lebanese reader is subtly privileged. In doing so, Maalouf subverts the typical direction of cultural translation, where peripheral identities must adapt to a central linguistic norm. Instead, he reverses the gaze: it is French that must stretch, bend, and absorb the reality of Mount Lebanon in the 19$^{th}$ century. This movement echoes what Édouard Glissant described as the right to opacity, the idea that cultural difference does not always need to be explained or simplified to be legitimate.

One of the most revealing strategies through which Lebanese authors navigate multilingualism is linguistic grafting, the insertion of words, expressions, or structures from one language into another, often resulting in hybrid semantic fields. This technique goes beyond simple code-switching or borrowing; it reconfigures linguistic and cultural meaning. A striking example of this appears in *Le Rocher de Tanios*, where the term “kaff” (in Lebanese Arabic) simultaneously denotes “the hand” and “the slap.” The sentence “Dans le parler des gens du pays, le

même mot, kaff, désignait parfois la main et la gifle" (Maalouf 1993, 20)[8] reflects the dual register of the word: one referring to the body and the other to symbolic violence. Maalouf explains how feudal lords weaponized this ambiguity, turning the slap ("la gifle") into a metaphor for dominance. "Il faut qu'un paysan ait toujours une gifle près de la nuque" (Maalouf 1993, 20),[9] meaning that a peasant must always live in fear, shoulders lowered in submission. Here, "kaff" becomes a semantic graft, anchoring the Lebanese vernacular into the French narrative, while retaining its cultural and historical connotations. Furthermore, the author extends the metaphor when he writes that "gifle" became a shorthand for "fers, fouet, corvées" (irons, whip, chores), layering the concept with images of labour, punishment, and servitude. This grafting technique enables Maalouf to embed the Lebanese sociopolitical experience into French literary discourse, transforming language into a vehicle of historical memory and postcolonial critique.

Wajdi Mouawad's play *Incendies* (2003) presents a monolingual theatrical text, primarily in French, characterized by a universal, poetic language that intentionally distances itself from specific local dialects or linguistic hybridity. In this context, there is no evidence of linguistic grafting – the intentional blending or insertion of elements from other languages or cultural codes. The language remains abstract and elevated, aligning with the play's thematic focus on myth and tragedy. In contrast, Denis Villeneuve's 2010 film adaptation of *Incendies* introduces extensive linguistic and cultural grafting, particularly through its bilingualism (French and Arabic). The cinematic version incorporates Arabic inscriptions, local idioms, graffiti, songs, and Islamic calls to prayer, deeply rooting the narrative in a realistic Lebanese context. This stylistic shift marks a significant departure from the play's abstract language, embedding the film within a specific cultural and socio-political milieu. Additionally, the concept of phraseological tracing (*calque*

[8] "In the local people's speech, the same word, kaff, sometimes referred to both the hand and a slap".

[9] "A peasant must always have a slap ready behind the neck".

*phrastique*) is relevant in this adaptation process; it involves the literal translation of fixed expressions or idioms from one language into another, preserving syntactic structure and figurative imagery. This technique further reinforces the interplay between languages and highlights the translational dynamics at work in Villeneuve's cinematic interpretation.

The interplay between linguistic form and sociopolitical context in both the play and its cinematic adaptation reveals a profound reliance on culturally coded expressions rooted in Lebanon's historical trauma. A central scene features the protagonist Nawal recounting a harrowing experience aboard a bus, during which she escapes death by asserting,

> NAWAL. J'étais dans l'autobus, Sawda, j'étais avec eux ! Quand ils nous ont arrosés d'essence j'ai hurlé: "Je ne suis pas du camp, je ne suis pas une réfugiée du camp, je suis comme vous, je cherche mon enfant qu'ils m'ont enlevé!"
> Alors ils m'ont laissée descendre, et après, après, ils ont tiré, et d'un coup, d'un coup vraiment, l'autobus a flambé, il a flambé avec tous ceux qu'il y avait dedans, il a flambé avec les vieux... (Mouawad 2003, 72).[10]

This utterance functions through parallelism and anaphora, emphasizing both syntactic structure and ideological distancing. The negation ("Je ne suis pas du camp", "I'm not...") signals religious and national identity boundaries, implicitly contrasting Christian Lebanese identity with Palestinian Muslim refugee status. The phrase encapsulates a cultural code comprehensible primarily to a Lebanese audience, invoking memories of the civil war and the notorious practice of "murder

[10] "NAWAL. I was on the bus, Sawda, I was with them! When they doused us with gasoline, I screamed: 'I'm not from the camp, I'm not a refugee from the camp, I'm like you, I'm looking for my child who was taken from me!' So they let me get off, and then, then they opened fire, and suddenly, really suddenly, the bus went up in flames – it went up in flames with everyone inside, it burned with the old people…".

based on ID card". This is mirrored in the film's translation of the statement to "Massihiye – ana massihiye" (Villeneuve 2010),[11] which reconfigures the original negative formulation into an affirmative declaration of religious identity, again employing anaphora. Both expressions reflect the existential stakes of identity during the Lebanese Civil War, especially in relation to the bus massacre of April 13, 1975, often cited as the conflict's ignition point, where Kataeb militants killed Palestinian civilians. Thus, the dialogue operates on two registers: as a narrative device revealing personal trauma and as a symbolic reenactment of collective memory, illustrating how linguistic performance and historical violence are deeply intertwined in Lebanese cultural production.

In theirs *Incendies*, both Wajdi Mouawad and Denis Villeneuve explore identity as a fragmented construct shaped by memory, language, and the violence of historical erasure. The play constructs identity through denial and ambiguity, emphasizing what remains unspoken rather than what is named an aesthetic of silence that mirrors the trauma of identification in a sectarian and war-torn context. In contrast, the film adaptation undertakes a process of cinematic grafting: what the play implies, the film explicitly reveals, using bilingual realism, French and Arabic, to give voice to buried identities and hidden histories. This linguistic shift marks a crucial movement from theatrical abstraction to visual and cultural specificity, turning a French-language play about Lebanon into a hybrid cinematic object grounded in Middle Eastern geopolitics.

Mouawad's deliberate use of purified French in the play functions to universalize trauma, resisting local linguistic colour in favour of metaphorical and symbolic layering. The film, however, reintroduces the local through grafted language and imagery, anchoring exile, memory, and return in the specificity of place. This duality is further expressed through onomastic symbolism: names are not merely identifiers, but vessels of memory, carriers of loss and reconstruction. Nawal – et-

[11] "Christian – I am Christian".

ymologically meaning “gift” or “grace” in Arabic (Tamer 2004) – embodies a sacrificial mother whose fragmented identity offers her children painful truths in place of comforting origins. Her silence becomes a form of resistance, her legacy a symbolic reconstruction of a violated homeland. The son, born as Nihad, becomes Abou Tareq, a transformation that reflects the violence of naming under ideological regimes. His multiple names represent a tragic grafting of self, imposed by war, ideology, and unknowing filiation. Each name he acquires is a narrative rupture, mirroring the fragmentation of identity in times of conflict. The act of naming, in both play and film, emerges as a performative gesture to restore narrative continuity, to reclaim buried histories, to reconcile silence with testimony. *Incendies* thus stages onomastics not merely as a narrative device, but as a philosophical inquiry into how identity is constructed, effaced, and finally reassembled through language, trauma, and remembrance.

## 4. Morice Awwad: Multilingualism as Rebellion and Style

Morice Awwad is a significant figure in contemporary literature, known for his profound insights and eloquent expressions that resonate deeply with readers. His body of work is extensive and multifaceted, reflecting a rich tapestry of cultural and emotional narratives. For this study, we will focus specifically on illustrative excerpts from his work *Testament to a Young Poet*, written in 2009 and published for the first time in the posthumous collection of 2025. This selection allows us to delve into the thematic and stylistic elements that define Awwad’s literary contribution while highlighting the relevance of his message for aspiring poets and writers. The author emerges as a linguistic innovator in Lebanese literature, challenging traditional norms by adopting Lebanese language written with Arabic letters. This innovative orthographic approach prioritizes phonetic accuracy over classical etymology, allowing Awwad to authentically capture the spoken language of his culture. For example, the phrase يا ولادي (Oh my children) is phonetically transcribed as /ja wˈlɑːdɪ/, where the pronunciation nuances reflect the Lebanese language

richness. By contrasting this with the Modern Standard Arabic equivalent أولادي (awlādī), which is rendered as /ʔawˈlɑː.di/, Awwad showcases not only the emotional depth of familial ties but also the legitimacy of Lebanese language as a literary medium.

The author further disrupts conventional linguistic boundaries by integrating French lexicon as it organically appears in the vernacular of contemporary Lebanese society. His work does not merely exemplify code-switching; rather, it constitutes a form of linguistic resistance and a poetic assertion of national identity. By advocating for Lebanese as a distinct national and literary language, Awwad affirms its legitimacy and expressive potential. His writing becomes a dynamic site of cultural and linguistic grafting, where French serves as the syntactic substrate, while Lebanese Arabic functions as the semantic graft ("scion") that imbues the text with localized character and affect. For example, in *Testament to a young poet* he mixed both languages Lebanese and French in the same paragraph:

ويبئا متلك لْ أعلا: مش بس يا ويلي نْ ما لبننب

Je crois au miracle des mots

تحفتك لعم تحلما، تحفرك ع زاكرة لبنان ل لغّا ل لبنانيّي إنجيلك (Awwad 2025)[12]

w jʔiːbʔaː matˈlɛk lʔaːlaː mɪʃ bæs jawɪli nʔ mɐ lɛbnanɛt... Je kʁwa o miʁakl de mo... ʊ ħiftak lʕam tɛħlama, tħafrak ʕa zaːkrat lɛbnan la lɪɣa lɛlbananiː jɛ ʔinʒiːlak (phonetic transcription)

This interplay results in a hybridized stylistic form, characterized by lexical grafting and the transposition of Lebanese idiomatic expressions into French structures,

[12] "May your highest goal not just be to say 'woe to me if I do not Lebanese', but also to believe in the miracle of words by realizing your masterpiece, which will engrave you in the memory of Lebanon in the Lebanese language, your Gospel".

thereby producing a translingual poetics that defies monolingual paradigms. A key aspect of Awwad's innovation is creating a poetic landscape that resembles a puzzle: in this intricate tapestry, readers encounter both Lebanese and French verses, reflecting the everyday spoken language of Lebanon. This interplay not only enriches the text but also mirrors the linguistic reality of contemporary Lebanese society, where multiple languages coexist and interact. Awwad's poetry captures the rhythm and intonation of spoken Lebanese Arabic while maintaining the structure of French, ultimately producing a translingual aesthetic that transcends traditional boundaries.

Morice Awwad adopts and develops this revolutionary dialectal aesthetic while bringing to it an even more poetically intense and politically provocative energy. His work represents not only linguistic innovation and aesthetic rebellion but also identity performance.

يا ولادي إنتو، ولادي ل عم إتمخضكن تاني مرّا ت تخلء فيكن روح ل لغا لبناني. ل ب دونا إنتو غربا،
من لبنان ل سابع ئارّا
بس يا ويلي إذا ما لبننت (Awwad 2025)[13]

Ya wladi: intu wladi: ja:lli l ʔˤam ʔitma:xadkon tani marra: ta tixlaʔ fikon ruħ la liɣa
lbnaniji li bi duna ʔintu ɣuraba min lbnen l sabiʔˤ ʔara (phonetic transcription)

The phrase يا أولادي (Oh my children) encapsulates the profound emotional bond between Awwad and the young writers and poets, highlighting a crucial connection in the face of globalization, which often threatens to dilute cultural roots. The speaker's aspiration to promote the Lebanese language signifies more than a

[13] "My children, you are my children. I'm giving birth to you all over again, so that a Lebanese language spirit may be born within you. / Without it, you are strangers – strangers to Lebanon, scattered to the seventh corner of the earth.... / But woe to me if I do not Lebanese-ize you!".

mere linguistic endeavour; it represents a cultural renaissance, emphasizing the Lebanese language as a vital vessel for history, values, and communal ties. Awwad's metaphor of giving birth again conveys the importance of nurturing this cultural spirit, for without it, writers risk becoming strangers to their homeland, scattered across distant corners of the earth. The expression "woe to me if I cannot" poignantly reflects Awwad's deep sense of responsibility to instill a strong Lebanese identity, where the interplay of languages mirrors the country's historical complexities and diverse influences. Philosophically, the notion of the "miracle of words" suggests that language possesses the power to evoke emotions, bridge the divide, and foster understanding among individuals from varied backgrounds. Culturally, it acknowledges poetry's role as a medium for social commentary and resistance, allowing voices to rise against oppression and celebrate heritage. The impact of such expressions is profound, fostering a sense of community and belonging while affirming the unique identity of the Lebanese people. Ultimately, this belief in the magic of words serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring influence that language has in shaping thoughts, experiences, and societal narratives. Through the art of language, individuals can reclaim their stories and assert their place in the world, reinforcing the enduring strength of their cultural identity.

## 5. Conclusion

Lebanese literature is not merely written in multiple languages – it is *written through* them. It is a literature born from fracture, diaspora, colonization, and ideological tension, yet it never succumbs to fragmentation. On the contrary, it draws its strength from disorder, forging aesthetic harmony from historical chaos.

As we have seen, this multilingualism is far from neutral. From Farjallah Hayek's hybrid syntax to Amine Maalouf's voluntary insertion of Arabic into French prose, from Wajdi Mouawad's play *Incendies*, where the function of French is to universalize trauma, to Maurice Awwad's impure poetics of rebellion, every linguistic choice is a political and identity-laden act. Language becomes a contested space,

a battleground of memory, ideology, and cultural belonging. Through these examples, we observe how linguistic plurality intersects with spiritual and symbolic plurality, giving birth to literary spaces that are simultaneously sacred and profane, local and universal. Yet this literature is not content with documenting conflict, it *sublimates* it. It reconfigures the ruins of colonial legacies and sectarian divisions into new forms of literary expression. Poetry becomes a space of alienation, but also of transcendence. Language becomes both song and signature. Script becomes a tool of revolution. And the verb – the act of writing itself – becomes the last refuge of identity when national definitions fail.

In this sense, Lebanese literature is neither merely Francophone, nor Arabophone, nor Anglophone, it is Lebanophone: a body of writing that reflects the country's unique position at the crossroads of East and West, tradition and modernity, heritage and invention. It is a literature of the *in-between*, where contradictions coexist, where languages contaminate one another, and where meaning emerges not in spite of complexity, but because of it. Multilingualism, in this context, is not a lack of mastery in language. It is the very condition of possibility for a literature that resists essentialism and embraces plurality. The result is a corpus that, while diverse in form and tongue, remains unified in its thematic preoccupations: identity, exile, memory, and the dream of a homeland still being written.

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