**Maghut, Muhammad** (1934-2006), a Syrian poet born in Salamiya, is widely credited with introducing free-verse into Arab poetry. He published his first collection, huzn fi daw’ al-qamar (*Sorrow in Moonlight*), in 1959, which was followed by several other collections, most famously al-farah laysa mihnati *Happiness is not my Profession* (1970). His poetry received numerous awards, such as the 2004 Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Cultural Award. He is probably best known for his theatre and film collaborations with Duraid Laham. Adapting a character that Laham had created for the television program, makalab ghawar (*Ghawar’s Pranks*), Maghut transformed the resilient but maligned clown into a potent figure of political critique. The first of these plays, day’at tishrin (*October Village* (1974)), described the Arab-Israeli conflict, by depicting a small Arab village rocked by successive coups and political violence while the people lament the loss of a vineyard taken by thieves. Three more theatre collaborations followed before Maghut authored two screenplays for Laham—al-hudud (*The Border* (1984)) and al-taqrir (*The Report* (1987)). Maghut was also a prominent essayist. In the collection, sa’akhun watani (*I Will Betray my Homeland* (1987)), Maghut cultivated the persona of a writer of offensive opinions and raw appetites. However his commitment to Arab nationalism underlay the satire in all of his works. Maghut’s formal experimentations and the cutting irony he infused into his nationalism mark him as prominent voice of Arab modernism.

List of Works

huzn fi daw’ al-qamar (*Sorrow in Moonlight* 1959)

ghurfah bi-malayin al-judran (A Room with a Million Walls, 1960)

al-‘usfur al-ahdab: masrahiyah (*The Hunchbacked Sparrow: A Play, 1967*)

al-farah laysa mihnati (*Happiness is not my Profession* 1970)

al-muharrij: masrahiyah fi thalathat fusul (*The Jester: A Play in Three Acts, 1973*)

sa’akhun watani (I Will Betray my Homeland, 1987)

References and Further Reading

Asfour, John “Adonis and Muhammad al-Maghut: Two Voices in a Burning Land” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 20.1(1989) 20-30.

Adam, Luayy muhammad al-maghut: watan fi watan (Muhammad al-Maghut: A Country in a Country). Damascus: dar al-mada lil-thaqafah wa al nashr, 2001.

Paratextual material



(Image from Wikipedia, Arabic)

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