Little attention has so far been given by Occidental Arabists to the Arabic literature of the so-called Southern Mahjar, the Arab immigrant literature of Middle and South America, although Fawzi Ma'luf is a notable exception. This lack of attention may partly be due to the fact that this literature was labelled "traditional," whereas the Arabic literature of North-America was advertised as "innovative" by its protagonists and decried as "a-traditional" by its adversaries. Be that as it may, Shafiq Ma'luf's (1905-1976) long narrative poem Abqar has hardly been considered outside its literary environment, i.e. Brazil and the Arab countries. Translations have not fundamentally altered this situation, though the number of these translations is respectable, according to ِیسٰا al-Nāfūri. He mentions translations into Portuguese, Spanish, French, Russian, German and Italian.\footnote{I want to thank for his kind help Dr. ِیسٰا an-Nafūri, whose impressive library on the Mahjar is now in the library of the University in 'Amman. Dr. Hānī al-Aḥmad, Acting Director of the Library of the University of Jordan, and Mr. ِیزت Zahidah, Reference Librarian of the same library, made my short visit fruitful through their most efficient help. They kindly extended their help beyond the limits of my visit and thus made it possible for me to embark on projects otherwise not feasible. The Netherlands Institute for the Near East kindly put the necessary funds for a visit to Jordan and Egypt at my disposal. Last but not least, I want to thank my friend Mr. J. C. L. Leitch for his interest and advice.}

Shafiq al-Ma'luf was born in 1905 into a literary family. His father was ِیسٰا Iskandar al-Ma'luf, school-teacher, journalist, a member of most Arab Academies and author of an enormous number of books on a wide variety of subjects. Shafiq's brother Fawzi (1899-1930) was a famous poet whose long narrative poem Alā Bisāt al-Rīh (On a magic
carpet) is still widely admired. Shafiq was born in Zahle, Lebanon, where he studied and became a journalist, but in 1926, the same year in which he published his first long poem *al-Ahlām*, he went to São Paulo, Brazil, to become a textile manufacturer. However, literature and especially poetry were never far away, and in 1936 he published the long narrative poem 'Abqar in six cantos. A second version in twelve cantos was published in 1949. Arab literary circles in Brazil immediately hailed the work as an important innovation since they considered it to be proof that Arab legend could be used to good effect in literature.

'Abqar is a long narrative poem describing the poet’s journey to 'Abqar, a place which is not on earth, and not in Heaven nor in Hell, but which is the legendary abode of jinns, ghouls and shaytāns, the place where the great poets are laid to rest.

The poem begins with the poet, upon awakening, seeing his Shayṭān, who tells him to accompany him to 'Abqar. They pass through the Zodiac, peopled by myriads of ēifrīts and jinns, and then land in 'Abqar. There they are awaited by the Ārrāfā, the sorceress, who says that she takes refuge with Satan against the evil of man, and that she does not dare let her viper bite the poet lest it be poisoned. More friendly than this is the Amīrāt al-Jinn, who sings her much admired love-song. The shayṭān and the poet then cross the river Ghayy and enter Hell, where they meet the five sons of Iblis: Thabar, the Shayṭān of war, followed by Dāsim, the devil of defects, Aʿwar, the devil of lust, Zalanbūr, the devil of wealth and Mīsawāt, the devil of untruth. The sixth canto describes the two Shayṭāns of poetry, Hawbar and Hawjal, the first of whom enriches poetry, whereas the second inspires distortion. Then follows Hirāʔ, the Shayṭān of bad dreams, in the seventh canto, and in the eighth canto the Kāhīns Satīḥ and Shiqq appear, of whom I shall have occasion to speak later. The ninth canto opens with the rebellion of the prostitutes in Hell. Their song is another much admired piece of the poem. The tenth canto deals with legendary birds such as al-ʿAnqāʾ, the Rukhkh and the Phoenix. The tales of a man called Khurāfa form the eleventh canto. The first of these tales tells the story of Naṣr Ibn Dahmān, the man to whom youth was given back after he had reached old age. The second is the story of Anāhīd, the prostitute who demonstrated her sincerity in love so well that she was transformed into the planet Venus, and the third tale tells the story of Luqmān, who was allowed to live as long as seven eagles (vultures) would live one after the other. Three thousand five hundred years elapse and then, filled with anxiety, Luqmān tries to stimulate his last dying eagle. Leaving 'Abqar, the poet finds the scattered bones of the great poets, whose remains were taken by their Shayṭāns from all over the world to be laid to rest in 'Abqar.