

ARABIC POETRY

Trajectories of modernity
and tradition

Muhsin J. al-Musawi



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ARABIC POETRY

Since the late 1940s, Arabic poetry has spoken for an Arab conscience, as much as it has debated positions and ideologies, nationally and worldwide. This book tackles issues of modernity and tradition in Arabic poetry as manifested in poetic texts and criticism by poets as participants in transformation and change.

Arabic Poetry studies the poetic in its complexity as pertaining to issues of:

- Selfhood
- Individuality
- Community
- Religion
- Ideology
- Nation
- Class and
- Gender

This book also studies in context, issues that have been cursorily noticed or neglected, like Shi'i poetics, Sufism, women's poetry, and expressions of exilic consciousness. It employs current literary theory and provides comprehensive coverage of modern and postmodern poetry from the 1950s onwards.

Arabic Poetry is essential reading for those with interests in Arabic culture and literature and Middle East studies.

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First published 2006
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016
Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group
© 2006 Muhsin J. al-Musawi

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-415-76992-2 (Print Edition)

TO THE DEVOTEE AND SCHOLAR OF
CLASSICAL ARABIC POETRY
SUZANNE P. STETKEVYCH

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xix
<i>A note on translation and transliteration</i>	xxi
1 Poetic trajectories: critical introduction	1
<i>Arabic poetry in context</i>	1
<i>Modernism and secular ideology</i>	9
<i>The modernist impulse and its aftermath</i>	22
2 The tradition–modernity nexus in Arabic poetics	30
<i>A dynamic tradition</i>	30
<i>Masks</i>	31
<i>The surviving past</i>	34
<i>Recollections</i>	38
<i>Why precursors?</i>	39
<i>Translation as a modernist engagement</i>	44
<i>Configurational sites: classical and modern</i>	46
<i>Undermining poetics</i>	48
<i>Which tradition in the Rome conference (1961)?</i>	54
<i>The dialectics of tradition and modernity</i>	56
<i>Adūnīs: the challenge of tradition</i>	58
<i>Modernity as a constant</i>	60
<i>Al-Bayārī's tradition</i>	64
<i>Poetic career: Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr</i>	66

3	Poetic strategies: thresholds for conformity and dissent	68
	<i>The neoclassical qaṣīdah: Al-Jawāhirī</i>	68
	<i>Addressing the strong precursor</i>	69
	<i>Approaching the glorious legacy: three directions</i>	71
	<i>‘Abd al-Ṣabūr and the emulation of independence</i>	73
	<i>Al-Bayātī’s alien and rebellious precursors</i>	74
	<i>Recreating the forebear</i>	76
	<i>Adūnīs’ objectifications of forebears</i>	78
	<i>Trajectories of modernity and tradition</i>	82
	<i>Conclusion</i>	85
4	Poetic dialogization: ancestors in the text—figures and figurations	88
	<i>Targeting the unitary discourse</i>	89
5	Dedications as poetic intersections	130
	<i>Arab gift compendiums</i>	131
	<i>Poetic simulacrum of narrative</i>	133
	<i>The prefatory and dedicatory in poetry</i>	135
	<i>Al-Ḥakīm’s Bird of the East</i>	136
	<i>Dedicatory matter: identity for acculturation</i>	138
	<i>Al-Bayātī and Kbalīl Ḥāwī—the existentialist and the forlorn</i>	141
	<i>Al-Sayyāb’s lyrical–elegiac mood</i>	142
	<i>Dedications as paratexts: al-Kbāl</i>	143
	<i>Addressing Lorca</i>	144
	<i>Elegy, dedication, and repression</i>	146
	<i>Al-Mutanabbī: between al-Bayātī and Adūnīs</i>	156
	<i>Appendix I</i>	160
	<i>Appendix II</i>	160
6	Envisioning exile: past anchors and problematic encounters	162
	<i>Exilic evocations</i>	163
	<i>Exilic trajectories</i>	188
	<i>Textual homelands in context</i>	191

CONTENTS

7	The edge of recognition and rejection: why T. S. Eliot?	218
	<i>Marxism Christianized</i>	218
	<i>Deconstructing myth</i>	221
	<i>Tradition and the polyphonic poem</i>	224
	<i>The paradoxical appeal of The Waste Land</i>	226
	<i>Disinheritance through excessive patching</i>	227
	<i>Eliot appropriated in traditional satire</i>	230
8	Conclusion: deviational and reversal poetics—dissent, not allegiance	237
	<i>Poetics of legitimacy in context</i>	241
	<i>The elegiac prelude</i>	243
	<i>Classical transgressions</i>	245
	<i>Engagements and invalidations</i>	252
	<i>Iraqi pain recaptured</i>	256
	<i>Sufism and transgression</i>	260
	<i>Elegizing a present</i>	263
	<i>Notes</i>	268
	<i>Works cited</i>	304
	<i>Index</i>	319

PREFACE

This book concentrates on the moment of anxiety and tension in Arabic poetry that occurs whenever poetic identity is in crisis, and whenever poets feel the urgency and need to engage their strong precursors. In this moment, both the spatial and the temporal coalesce, especially in a literary tradition as rich as Arabic. This intersectional space manifests the personal in its cultural richness. As the personal blends with other voices, it loses its individuality and gets objectified, especially when poetic voices dramatize modern consciousness. In other words, my argument follows up poets' personal intimations while tracing the reasons behind their emergence in relation to other issues of regional, national, and global nature. The poetic and the spatial often converge, and the selected text may well testify to the old saying of the Prophet's companion Ibn 'Abbās (d. 687), made popular by Ibn Rashīq (d. 456 h/1065), that "poetry is the register of the Arabs."¹ Whereas modern Arabic poetry may fall short of such claims, its range of exchange with other texts, ancient and modern, Arabic, Asian, and European paradoxically implicates it in both hybridism and specificity. Simply, it belongs to the present as much as it is indebted to the past. This is the source of its strength and strangeness, too, as it becomes a locus of a cultural dynamic. In Yuri Lotman's words, "the goal of poetry coincides with the goal of culture as a whole. But poetry realizes this goal specifically, and an understanding of its specific character is impossible if one ignores its mechanism, its internal structure."²

To enable readers to trace and discern poetic manifestations and revisionist poetics, I have quoted poems and extracts as examples to elucidate the argument. The overall design of the book is thematic in the sense that its first few chapters engage with issues and concepts of tradition in modern poetics, and the responses of poets as participants in identity and cultural formation. Their address to ancient rituals and classical forebears evolves into poetic strategies, ranging between identifications and engagements, to dedications and dialogic negotiations, not only with strong precursors, but also with the reader as another participant in the making of meaning. The argument gathers momentum as the nexus between modernity and tradition invites a resolution, which has so much ambivalence that it resists clear-cut categorizations. The outcome

materializes, however, into textual homelands and exilic evocations that constitute a large portion of modern poetry, and deserve, therefore, to be studied closely in this reading of tradition and modernity trajectories. Stepping outside immediacy in time and place, the poet as exile re-inscribes into the present, a store of remembrance from the ancient past and the classical period, but not necessarily with the ideological and mythical superimpositions of the 1950s in the Arab world, as a period of great awareness of the mythical principle as made popular by T. S. Eliot.

Each chapter argues its case in relation to the whole. Chapter 1 is a critical introduction to familiarize readers with issues and controversies that receive further study and attention in the rest of the book. It introduces concepts and movements as they pertain to Arabic poetry and poetics. Theory and poetry work together toward a deconstructive stance. The hegemonic circulation of dry language, stagnant referentiality, and application of the dormant and the backward to enforce and sustain power relations becomes the target of a revisionist poetics. Poetic lineage and succession become an issue, and the new poets trace their intellectual and textual lineage to classical or ancient texts and figures to debate and bypass neoclassical imitativensness.

Chapter 2, "The tradition–modernity nexus in Arabic poetics," targets the encounter with modernity and tradition among the literati since the *Nahḍah* or the first Arab renaissance in the last part of the nineteenth century. This encounter was not an easy one, and poetry reveals a great deal about the nature of the challenge, and the creative response and participation in its making. Concentrating on specific landmarks, texts and occasions, this chapter revisits the scene to focus on the 1950s as the second renaissance in the history of Arab thought and the formation of the post-independence state. Putting the Romantic yearnings of the earlier generation aside, the emerging poetics was after a new vision that made use of the mythical, the legendary, the folk epic, and the street song to accommodate the new temper of the times.

In Chapter 3, I advance a number of modern poetic strategies that relate to forebears and that have been common among poets since the 1950s. In this and the following three chapters, such strategies are pursued in sequence. In this chapter, there is a discussion of "Poetic strategies: thresholds for conformity and dissent": The facts behind innovation are variegated, and the effort in this chapter is toward looking at these closely in their interconnectedness. The change in form no longer deserves discussion as a pure formalist matter, for organic manifestations are indivisible, and the assumption behind a unitary poetics no longer holds. In this chapter, there is a mention of the resilience of traditional forms, and the recurrence of influence from the past, but tradition becomes more usable and approachable, not as a sacred entity, but as an amalgam of the credited and the discredited.

Chapter 4, "Poetic dialogization: ancestors in the text," carries further the thematic pattern of discussion as set in the preceding chapter. It discusses the meaning of the dialogic principle in poetry. Drawing attention to the use of

the conversational poem, the epistolary form, the song, and the embedded text, the argument in this chapter draws attention to the transgeneric dimension in the modernist movement, and shows the power of the text in enlisting the reader's response. It invites a better understanding of poetry in its intersectional stance between ancient and modern poetics.

Chapter 5, "Dedications as poetic intersections," focuses on another poetic strategy, dedicatory and prefatory matter, which is unduly neglected in criticism of poetry. It looks upon paratextual devices, dedicatory pre-texts, prologues and the like as functional poetics with great density and power. They are rich with exchange, and their recurrence in modern poetics demonstrates how the new poet looks upon ancestors and contemporaries in terms of a textual lineage that invigorates the new poem and makes it an active space that gathers into focus the old and the new. The emergent textual space is one of synthetic engagement and dialogue.

Chapter 6, "Envisioning exile," draws attention to an accumulating exilic poetics as embodying the exile, the outcast, the vagrant, and the rover, or "the sufferer of modernity," to use Hugo Friedrich.³ This theorization carries great weight in this discussion of modernity and tradition not only because of the underlying Islamic or ancient subtext, but also because this is the usual invigorating poetics of modernity and its reliance on remembrance to dispel the encroaching sense of loss. "Exile is places and times which transform their victims," writes Maḥmūd Darwīsh in his *Dbākirah lil-nisyān*,⁴ and the modernist spirit draws on remembrance to resist oblivion and annihilation. The chapter consists of two parts: the first, "Exilic evocations," surveys and studies poetic negotiations with strangers, exiles, and aliens from the past, along with modern exiles like Nazim Hikmet, Lorca, and Alberti. It provides more ground work to study exile in Arabic and other traditions. The emerging text, argues this chapter, is one of anxiety that gathers poetic momentum whenever the poet draws on an ancient legacy to fathom a present moment of rupture. It should not be surprising that this concordance of remembrance turns into an inventory of traces to counterbalance the material loss of homelands. Many examples manifest this tension, and poems by Maḥmūd Darwīsh and the Iraqi Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb (b. 1934), the Iraqi Sa'dī Yūsuf (b. 1934), and many others demonstrate as much. This part proposes an exilic poetics in preparation for other examples.

The second part of Chapter 6, "Exilic trajectories: textual homelands," cites for discussion on selected poems from among a large number of poets, covering most of the Arab scene. There is more on the idea of textual homelands, the evolution of the poem as a displacing topos. The poem as home is a willful construct that exerts remembrance to build an imaginary relocation. Although many poets fall within this category, I find the Iraqi poet 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (d. 1999) the most representative, not only in providing an intricate, well-developed poetics of exile, but also in investing ancient rituals, classical figures, and symbols with new meanings that alleviate the stark

scenes of modernity. While I have been putting a lot of emphasis on Adūnīs as a theorist for the poetic scene, on the Iraqi Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (d. 1964) as the unrivaled lyricist, and on Darwish as a subtle farer between tradition and modernity, and exile as identity, I have devoted more analysis to ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī’s poetry for a number of reasons. His use of Arab tradition and his raids on other cultures are wide ranging and very stimulating. His experimentation with form has no limits, enabling us therefore to see the rest of the scene succinctly.

Chapter 7, “The edge of recognition and rejection: why T. S. Eliot?,” looks at the other side of textual relocation in modern Arabic poetry among poets of great presence, such as Eliot. Their appeal to a poet like al-Bayātī is analyzed in terms of exile, dislocation, disenchantment, and commitment, too. This Iraqi poet is selected to balance the premise that the Iraqi al-Sayyāb is the modern Arab poet most affected by Eliot’s far-reaching impact. My analysis works in textual and contextual terms to demonstrate the dynamics of this impact. The Iraqi poet is not imitative, nor is he complacent. There is a poetics of selection and rejection that draws attention to the use and misuse of the poetry and career of the European–American precursor within the dialectic of modernity and tradition to which Eliot made recognizable contributions.

These lead to a culminating review of the outcome of this encounter between ancients and moderns, Arabs, Europeans, Latin Americans, and Asians. The concluding Chapter 8, “Deviational and reversal poetics,” attempts to read these in terms of the rise and fall of poetics, modes, and genres. In Arab tradition, a “poetics of allegiance” was the most conspicuous in classical poetry, as Suzanne Stetkevych argues in a number of books and articles. Presently, we witness not only a questioning of this poetics, but also an ironic reading of its means and methods. There is also a mediatory poetics that lives side by side with a consistent effort to revoke the poetics of allegiance. The effort is in pace with dissent and innovation and deserves to be seen in context, too.

Hence, the rationale behind this book is many-sided. Primarily it plans to meet the demands of the field for a comprehensive reading of modern Arabic poetry in its cultural context, and its configurational sites and trajectories of modernity and tradition, whereby convergence, friction, and difference generate acute tensions. These sites are of great significance to any study of Arabic culture, as poets revisit tradition and the past in a manner that recalls and debates the classical alternative use of such spatial images as *maqṣad*, *maslak*, and *sabīl*, or destination, track, and path, along with verbs and nouns of achievement like *yajtam’* and *majma’*, which are also indicative of intentions, emulations, assemblies, methods, and ways of argumentation and writing, and geographic routes.⁵ No wonder the focus of trajectories in this book is the *qaṣīdab*, the traditional Arabic Ode, which signifies destination and intention, too, as its *triliteral* root, and dominant tripartite division indicate. This study follows up these images, their traces in the modernist spatial poetics, with its

thresholds, dedications, exilic tropes, and their specific engagements with articles of faith, language, ancient poetics, Islamic culture and rule, and pre-Islamic times, rites, and customs. The book is not concerned therefore with the history of movements and trends; nor does it focus on regional poetic scenes and figures. If it makes any territorial claims it does so whenever there is a crossroad, a threshold, or a meeting ground among texts and voices that navigate between tradition and modernity. It cares for the poetic in its cultural complexity as pertaining to issues of selfhood, individuality, community, religion, ideology, nation, class, and gender. Studied in context, too, are issues that have been cursorily noticed or neglected, like *Shīrī* poetics, Sufism, women's poetry, and expressions of exilic consciousness.

On the other hand, this book brings to this discussion of tradition and modernity a comparative poetic that makes use of English, Spanish, and French criticism and poetry as they overtly or covertly proliferate into modern Arabic poetry. Baudelaire, Lorca, and Eliot, for example, left their marks on modern poetics in matters of theory and poetic practice. They permeated texts along with Muslim and Arab Sufis and renowned Arab poets from pre-Islamic and Islamic times. The religious and the secular find here a meeting ground, and prophets and martyrs offer historical poignancy and buttress a revolutionary register that brings poetry closer to popular culture after a seeming disengagement in the early practices of the Free Verse Movement in the 1950s. These modernist and postmodernist poetics are decidedly different from the rhetoric of the "neoclassical" poets.

In sum, the book looks on these trajectories as textual itineraries that gather enough momentum to enable us to see modern poetry at large in the context of Arab life and culture. Poetry is no longer a genre that calls only for formalist investigation, since the present reading looks upon the whole poetic scene as central to Arabic culture, with its deep rootedness in the past, and its complex engagement with issues of change, progress, nationhood, exile, class, gender, race, and language. It is certainly a site where the meeting with and the revolt against specific markers of other cultures take place. The dialogue with Western life and cultures becomes, here, one of the dynamics of the modern poetic impulse and its subsequent manifestations and fluctuations. Since the late 1940s, Arabic poetry has spoken for an Arab conscience, as much as it has debated positions and ideologies, nationally and worldwide.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The idea behind this book began in the early 1990s, when, in 1993, I was invited to Jordan to offer a lecture on foreign echoes in the poetry of the Iraqi poet ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, included in the Poetry Festival proceedings in 1994 (Amman: MADN). The Egyptian journal *Fuṣūl* and its editor Jābir ‘Uṣfūr asked for a contribution in 1996, which I titled, “Marjī‘iyyāt naqd al-shi‘r al-‘Arabī al-ḥadīth fī al-khamsīnāt” (Critical referents of modern Arabic poetry in the 1950s), *Fuṣūl* 15, 3 (Fall 1996), pp. 34–61. The article elicited Adūnīs’ enthusiastic response, when he was at Princeton as a Visiting Professor. Other lectures on Arabic poetic tradition took place in Morocco under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Bayt al-shi‘r (The Poetry House) and its director, the poet, Muḥammad Bennis. To him, to Adūnīs, to Jābir ‘Uṣfūr, and to the Jarash Festival organizers goes my greatest appreciation and gratitude.

Yet, if these lectures and contributions helped to initiate the idea behind this book, invited lectures at American schools helped to synthesize its whole argument. I thank the MELAC faculty at Indiana University in Bloomington and especially its chair and director for many years, Professor Suzanne P. Stetkevych, who invited me for series of lectures in 1998; and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Rutgers University and its director, my friend, Professor Eric Davis, for a reception and very well attended evening lecture in September 1998. For other lectures, my thanks go to Professor Nazif Shahrani, the director of MELAC at Indiana for a “The Wadie Jwaideh Memorial Lecture in Arabic and Islamic Studies,” Indiana University, November 12, 2003. Also, sincere gratitude is due to my colleague and friend Professor Isabella Camera D’Afflitto for series of lectures at the Napoli Oriental University, Italy, between 1998–2003, covering modernist poetics.

In an earlier form some of these ideas appeared in articles in English, but they underwent serious revisions here to fit its overall argument and thesis. To the editors and publishers of *Journal of Arabic Literature* and *English Studies in Canada* goes my appreciation and gratitude. The feedback and the material made available by my friend and colleague Professor Salih Altoma from Indiana University made this undertaking much easier. I should specifically

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

mention my two friends Professors Jaroslav Stetkevych and Suzanne P. Stetkevych whose keen interest in my work and in Arabic poetic theory is of great value. To Suzanne, as the devotee of classical Arabic poetry and poetics, and an insightful reader and critic of an early draft of this book, I dedicate this book.

In the preparation of the final manuscript, I made very good use of the Routledge readers' reports, and the comments of my two colleagues and friends, the editors of the series, Professors Roger Allen and Philip Kennedy. Their insights and notes were of great help in the final preparation of the manuscript for publication. Mary Allen read the manuscript and offered many editorial suggestions. To her and to my friend Roger Allen goes my greatest gratitude, not only for their friendship and support throughout these years, but also for pertinent insights and advice that proved to be invaluable for the book in its present form. Written over years and pondered for many days and nights east and west, I may unwittingly fail to acknowledge the help of many colleagues and friends. To them all I extend my warm appreciation and gratitude.

Also I would like to acknowledge for the permission granted for reprinting of quotes from the following books: *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*, ed., Salma K. Jayyusi, copyright Columbia University Press. Quotes reprinted with the permission of the press; *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, ed., Salma K. Jayyusi, copyright Salma K. Jayyusi. Quotes reprinted with the permission of Columbia University Press. For permissions to quote from Maḥmūd Darwīsh's poetry, due acknowledgements are to *Jusoor*, and its editor and publisher Munir Akash; to Bassam K. Frangieh, for quotes from *Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati: Love, Death and Exile* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990); and to Saadi Simawi for quotes from *Iraqi Poetry Today*. *Iraqi* (London: King's College, 2003).

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

LC transliteration system, usually collated with that of *IJMES* and *JAI*, is applied throughout, but deviated from in cases where the doubling of the *Y* is needed. Translations from poetry are mine unless otherwise indicated. At times, my version and the one existing in books or journals are mentioned to make them accessible to the reader.

POETIC TRAJECTORIES

Critical introduction

Land, like language, is inherited.

(Maḥmūd Darwīsh, “The Tragedy of Narcissus
The Comedy of Silver,” 2004, p. 174)

Arabic poetry in context

Although poetry is no longer the “Arab dīwān,” the record and archive of Arab life stories, aspirations, feats, and wars, as it was of ancient times,¹ it remains formatively present in Arab life and thought. It is still acclaimed by some as central to a so-called Arab frame of mind. Some Arab critics go so far as to claim that the pre-Islamic and early Islamic celebration of *fuḥūlah* poetry is behind egocentric poetics in modern Arabic writing,² and is responsible for the emergence of patriarchs and dictators.³ Although attesting to the cultural power of poetry and its rhetorical impact, this claim lacks cultural nuance, for hierarchic tradition at large uses masculine terms and measures to enforce its presence. The claim resonates, however, with recognition of poetry and poets as effectively present in Arab life and culture. It also draws attention to the limitation of such a frame of reference, for it has obviously the pre-Islamic Ode or *qaṣīdah* in mind in the first place. Whereas remaining central to cultural and pure literary discussions even after the disintegration of the Arab/Islamic center (i.e. 1258, the fall of Baghdad), the sole focus on the *qaṣīdah* can be very limiting to any rigorous reading of Arab culture, its many trajectories, issues, and complex composition. Yet, in terms of literary discussions, it is so pivotal for literary coteries and controversies that it warrants a brief note on its formal structure.

The poetic form, the Ode or the *qaṣīdah*, accommodates a variety of themes that also decide meters and formulas, however. As the great Arab prosodist al-Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad (d. 786) demonstrates in his pioneering reading of ancient Arabic poetry, his codification of meters on the basis of feet and root, there are sixteen meters of Arabic verse acceptably practiced. Meters vary in line length; but the line, as a number of musically patterned syllables or feet, is divided into two balanced hemistichs that hold the poem together. The rhyme scheme

enforces the unity of the poem to some extent, while its resonance plays at times on the verbal expectations of the learned audiences. Meters usually suit the purpose and the intended musical pace of each theme. Hence the names given to those meters indicate movement, length, time, and, also, intention. Like any long-time practice, the *qaṣīdah* has grown into a binding form, not only in its meters, but also in its dominant structural patterns of the erotic prelude, the journey, and the panegyric in its varieties.⁴ The structure gave way to many innovations between the eighth and eleventh centuries that betrayed dissatisfaction not only with the erotic prelude and its obsolete recollections of desert life, but mainly with ongoing tendencies to imitate the ancients and to apply worn out imagery to a different life and culture. Bashshār Ibn Burd (d. 783), Abū Nuwās (d. 815), Muslim Ibn al-Walīd (d. 823), Abū Tammām (d. 845), al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), and Abū al-^cAlā' al-Ma^carrī (d. 1057) were, respectively, among the pioneers in this innovative enterprise, whereas pre-Islamic poets like Imru' al-Qays have become the strong precursors and forebears in terms of eloquence, spontaneity of experience, and daring involvement in life. Their names recur among the modernists as household words, and their poetry and life are drawn upon in assemblies and speeches. With such names in the back of their minds, modernists can hardly forfeit a sense of cultural or even genealogical succession.

Duly posited as such even in the latest debates on the role of poetry in Arabic culture, the *qaṣīdah* remains central to discussions for reasons that relate to its historicity and place in Arabic culture. The growing critical corpus that focuses on its history and cultural role assumes great significance in view of the changing consciousness, for ancient poetics still operates on this consciousness and formation of temperaments. No matter how hard the modernist and postmodernist critique attempts to sunder its bonds from early criticism and poetry, its inner search for a unified vision against banality, disintegration, and fragmentation implicates it in the interwoven workings of historicity whereby memory operates in a very intricate manner. In Walter Benjamin's articulate deviations from Marxism, "Memory forges the chain of tradition that passes events on from generation to generation."⁵ The workings of poetic consciousness reclaim images and details from the past to endow life with mystery, argues Hugo Friedrich. This amounts to no less than the "... attempt of the modern soul, trapped in a technologized, imperialistic, commercial era, to preserve its own freedom."⁶ This contention applies with equal force to Arabic poetics. To operate on the past entails redefining the present as well, for the modernist poet has to create a new poetic selfhood beyond traditional categorizations of periods and people.

We may cite, as an example, the Moroccan poet Muḥammad Bannīs' (b. 1948) self-styled "lineage to the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays."

He is the '*Arabiyyah*, Arabic language, in a canticle state, face to face with absence-death, as he halts to weep over a deserted campsite,

alone in the desert which I cherish inside my study room. From this canticle, I derive my filiations as an Arab, and to it I listen whenever I detect a *qaṣīdah* or its opposite.”⁷

The specific mention of Imru’ al-Qays’ *nasīb* (erotic prelude) toponymy is of significance, too, as it, in Jaroslav Stetkevych’s words, “does not confer geographical location but serves rather to situate the privileged space, the poet’s *siqt al-liwā*, in the memory and in the imagination.”⁸ The privileged place as a reminder of loss intensifies the speaker’s sense of alienation, and its specific presence in Muḥammad Bennīs’ poetic sketch identifies the speaker, as the successor, with the precursor in an ancestry of creativity and dislocation. While echoing the Syrian-Lebanese poet Adūnīs’ (‘Alī Aḥmad Sa‘īd, b. 1930), pronouncements on the meeting ground between the ancients and the moderns that constituted his poetic taste,⁹ Muḥammad Bennīs writes down a personal poetic lineage, a genetic succession that includes the poetry of Gabriel Garcia Lorca, Eliot, Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, Pablo Neruda, Mallarmé, and Baudelaire, among others, who

cut across . . . [his] Arab lineage, from Imru’ al-Qays to al-Mutanabbī, or from Ṭarafah Ibn al-‘Abd to Ibn Khafājah, and from Jamāl Buthaynah (Ibn Mu‘mar al-‘Udhri) to al-Ḥallāj and Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. Arabic *dīwāns* and writings debate and address a poetic and writing experience, of a universal stamp, through which I have become acquainted with the poetic time, which is what concerns me in writing.¹⁰

While deliberately leading the argument to fit into his tendency to universalize experience, the Moroccan poet locates his career among a number of strong precursors who also substantiate a claim for a poetic role.

Oracular poetics

As late as the 1960s poets looked upon their utterances as oracular, though falling on deaf ears whenever warnings related to pressing national issues. The stand was not random, as it related to urgency and need, for the whole situation after the emergence of the nation-state and the overwhelming Israeli and global challenge propelled soul searching and drove intellectuals to review the cultural terrain and its endemic problems. The Egyptian poet Amal Dunqul’s (d. 1983) famous poem “Crying before Zarqā’ al-Yamāmah,” situates poetry in an oracular position where national heedlessness or negligence of governments will lead to havoc. The popularity of the poem embarrassed many Arab governments that survived through rhetorical victories although lapsing into stagnation and corruption. Using the pre-Islamic Zarqā’ al-Yamāmah’s discernment and vision when she noticed the enemy

from a distance, camouflaging its movement behind tree branches, the poet still thinks in terms of vocational commitment and role enhanced by exceptional prophetic powers. While calling on her to speak up and break silence, the poet understands his position as a brigand who is marginalized for a purpose. "I, who never ate mutton, / Never had power, / was of no consequence," he says, "Banished from the councils of the elders, / Now invited to die/ though not to parley with the men!"¹¹ Years later, some major poets still speak of an active role to be played, an engagement even larger than poetry writing and recitation, to critique a whole life and culture. The Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (b. 1942), for one, argues after the siege of Beirut, August 1982, "...if it becomes necessary for intellectuals to turn into snipers, then let them snipe at their old concepts, their old questions, and their old ethics."¹² The call to involve intellectual life in active discussion and change addresses poetry, too, and criticizes positions and ways of writing. Maḥmūd Darwīsh's underlying critique targets an essentialist and absolutist rhetoric that is usually invoked or debated in the discussions of modernity and tradition.

Continuities and discontinuities

It is pertinent to explain my use of tradition and modernity in terms coherent to readers at large. Also, it is worthwhile to look at this issue in terms of modernist theories worldwide, as Arab poets at the present time are no less open to other cultures than their predecessors between the ninth and twelfth centuries. In Arabic, the past still holds significance, not only because it survives as language, and in accounts, symbols and values, but also because it acts through these on the present. Its registers may be recalled, invested, manipulated, and validated according to the rising occasion or need. "Tradition," argues Anthony Giddens, "is not wholly static, because it has to be reinvested by each new generation as it takes over its cultural inheritance from those preceding it."¹³ In matters of survival, he adds, "Tradition does not so much resist change as pertain to a context in which there are a few separated temporal and spatial markers of which change can have any meaningful form."¹⁴

The configurational nature of the new, and its confluence of trends, tends to supplant petrified forms. Yet, this modernist tendency to manipulate stylistic potentialities in hybrid genres including letters, memoirs, songs, reportage, and their like, can elude both progressive and regressive demarcations. Art forms meet needs and demands, but they are not strictly in keeping with material or social growth. R. Jakobson argues, "Nothing is more erroneous than the widely held opinion that the relation between modern poetry and medieval poetry is the same as between the machine-gun and the bow."¹⁵ By debating such assumptions, Jakobson does not negate the aging

of genres and practices. Victor Úklovskij argues on the other hand for change as an inevitable process.

Each art form travels down the inevitable road from birth to death; from seeing and sensory perception, when the detail in the object is savored and relished, to mere recognition, when the object or form becomes a dull epigone which our senses register mechanically, a piece of merchandise not visible even to the buyer.

(Ibid. 252)

This emphasis on relevance and contemporaneity does not necessarily preclude the perceptibility of specific forms or devices that are able to attract attention, or participate in the formation of a cultural consciousness. Both art forms and socio-cultural change interact in creating a consciousness. While the individual genius is not “simply the geometrical point of intersection operative outside him,” as Victor Úklovskij stipulates in his definition of the artist as an “agent of impersonal forces” (Ibid. 253), there is enough evidence to support Eixenbaum’s paraphrase of Engels’ emphasis on the voice of history. He argues: “. . . creation is an act of historical self-awareness, of locating oneself in the stream of history” (Ibid. 254). Genres get established and approved within a horizon of expectations, for as Mary Louise Pratt argues in view of reader-response and discourse theories, poetry, and literature at large are “context dependent,” and literary production “depends enormously on unspoken, culturally-shared knowledge of the rules, conventions, and expectations that are in play when language is used in that context.”¹⁶ Genres and their subdivisions are “systems of appropriateness conditions,” or sets of generic rules, conditions, and expectations that may involve conformity and deviance, and coding and decoding, she adds in view of Elizabeth Traugott’s discussion of generative semantics (Ibid.). This accountability sums up socio-cultural aesthetics as genres operating on expectations while they are the byproduct of cultural necessity. In broad terms, Anne Cranny-Francis defines genre as a “sociohistorical as well as a formal entity. Transformations in genre must be considered in relation to social changes.”¹⁷ In Arabic cultural dialogue, genres undergo change, deviation, and challenge like any other communicative activity. Issues of tradition and modernity, and their further growths or setbacks, assume complexity due to appropriateness of conditions, which also inform the intellectual consciousness as they get informed by intellectual debate and production processes and imperatives. Their trajectories are neither uniform nor smooth, and postmodern poets in the line of Adūnīs (ʿAlī Ahmad Saʿīd), like the Moroccan Muḥammad Bennis, may come up with a vision that downplays the early Nahḍah mediations between the binding strictures of the ancients and the adaptability to the spirit of the age. With both Derrida and Foucault in mind,¹⁸ Muḥammad Bennis titles an early commentary on his grounding in tradition and modernity *Kitābat al-Maḥw*

(Erasure writing). While establishing his identity and lineage (*Kitābat al-Maḥw*, 12) and asserting a list of readings that connect him to poets, classical, postclassical, and modern, the author also denies succession on the grounds that “writing erases the myth of origin,” for his writing is an “orphan writing” (Ibid. 13). This writing even glosses over the heated debate about the Free Verse Movement of the late 1940s,¹⁹ for he looks upon poetry in terms of a living tradition in constant debate with the *Zeitgeist*, as primarily experienced by the poetic self, beyond any servile subordination to exteriority. The self operates on the real as much as it responds to and challenges its rules and conditions. As such, recognizable deviations and divergences from conventions and norms are not neat formalities or pronouncements against norms, and Foucault’s total set of relations may gather more potency within his concept of the episteme before being displaced as well in a “constantly moving set of articulations, shifts, and coincidences that are established only to give rise to others.”²⁰ Both the conventional and the dynamic vie for ascendancy, and the constant of today may be the fugitive of tomorrow. Yet, even this mounting consciousness does not preclude due recognition of the classical, because ancient poetics of the *qaṣīdah* strongly operates as a frame of reference, regardless of positions and terms of understanding.

The revivalists

Chronologically, thematic concerns take shape in a historical context of encounters with Arabs’ Others. This is not to say that the Arab site was empty of innovation or progression, but it was not concerned with the West before its encroachments, its invasions, occupations, and challenge to ways of life and belief. First came the revivalist movement that included many names from all over the Arab world such as Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (d. 1904), Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (d. 1932), and Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932) in Egypt; Ma’rūf al-Ruṣāfi (d. 1945), Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (d. 1936), ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Kāzīmī (d. 1935) and Muḥammad Riḍā al-Shabībī (d. 1966) in Iraq; and in Lebanon Badawī al-Jabal (the pen name of Muḥammad Sulaymān al-Aḥmad, 1907–?), and Shakīb Arsalān (1870–1946). This movement of the late nineteenth century challenged the colonialist onslaught on Islamic and Arab identity, by laying emphasis on Arabic classical language and political independence. The whole group fits into a neoclassical movement that found perfection in ancient poetry and aesthetics.

For the revivalists of the 1890s, rehabilitating Islam in a modern world did not mean proposing a coherent reformist plan, but rather the regeneration of a pristine model, pure and simple. This model is ready to accommodate changes and appropriate science without losing sight of its Arab–Islamic identity. Whereas poets were inclined toward European achievements in education, science, and even statecraft, the collision with the colonizer intensified a libratory discourse that derived its legitimacy from a glorious

and powerful past. The model was not concerned with historical dynamism, for it built on an essence that was also central to the overpowering discourse of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839–1897) and his disciple Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), the Muftī of Egypt, that gave impetus to moderate Islamic movements.²¹ Very much in correspondence with the religious thought in Iraq, where al-Afghānī spent some time in Najaf, the emerging religio-politic of al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh, along with other Shaykhs of identical concerns, was conciliatory in the sense that it accepted change and civilizational vicissitudes as historical processes. ‘Abduh read Guizot’s *History of Civilization*. He was also very well-acquainted with Ibn Khaldūn’s (d. 1406) reading of history and his emphasis on decline and rebirth cycles in keeping with the dearth or presence of an empowering sense of solidarity or innovation. Thus, while emphasizing the role of Islam as powerfully informing social polity, ‘Abduh was unequivocally allied to Western science and technology, as there is no reason for European “progress to wealth and power except the advancement of education and science,” he stipulates.²² No wonder ‘Abduh was actively engaged in the politics of the period and that some of his disciples like Qāsim Amīn were among the pioneering liberal intellectuals. Qāsim Amīn defended in two of his books the rights and freedom of women (1899, 1900). ‘Abduh bridged the way to liberalism and became, along with the Iraqi religious Shaykhs of the 1920 popular uprising against the British, an influential force in the modernity trend. He and many other Shaykhs were in tune with the liberals in their emphasis on a harmonious navigation between tradition and modernity, a faith in science and progress, in a manner that made use of Rifā‘ah al-Taḥṭāwī’s (1801–1873) significant contribution to the modernity–tradition nexus, his emphasis on reason, and the endorsement of a “renaissance” project.²³ Their project looked upon Islam in terms of its glorious past, specifically the first ‘Abbāsīd period, 750–945, for Taḥṭāwī saw it both as a model in openness to other cultures, and, consequently, as capable of subsuming and applying the achievements of the human mind. Liberal intellectuals thereafter were more attuned to material reality, and, for that matter, were involved in the formation of the nation-state as an anticolonial necessity and a possible stage in an Islamic or pan-Arab entity. Whether we are speaking of public intellectuals like Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (d. 1973) or Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid (d. 1963) in Egypt, for instance, or of Gibran K. Gibran (d. 1931) and Mikhā’il Nu‘aymah (1889–1988) in Lebanon, or Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Sayyid (d. 1937) and Fahmī al-Mudarris (d. 1944) in Iraq, these intellectuals accepted Western culture and education as essential to state formation. Poets like Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932) and Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (d. 1932) in Egypt and Ma‘rūf al-Ruṣāfi (d. 1945), Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (d. 1936), and Muḥammad Mahdī al-Baṣīr (d. 1974) in Iraq took the Western model for state building seriously, while opting for the redirection of tradition away from narrow traditionalism and essentialist revivalism. Muḥammad Mahdī al-Baṣīr was actively involved in party politics, and had

been keen on creating an independent Iraqi state since 1919 when he established *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* (Guardians of independence) as a society in Ḥillah (Babylon).²⁴ There were many like him all over the Arab world, as any survey of political and literary trends indicates.²⁵

The common denominator among liberal poets and some belated revivalists throughout the first half of the twentieth century is pointedly anticolonialist, and recalls a glorious past to indict the present. When he was a Lieutenant under the command of the British Lord Kitchner in Sudan, the Egyptian poet Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (d. 1932) wrote a poetic address to his people in 1872 that recalls the classical poet Abū Tammām (d. 846). To consolidate an anticolonialist poetic among those “Who swore a mighty oath ye would not rest / until this land holds not a soul oppressed,” a lineage should be established between the addresser and the forebear: “What boots the Muse of melody and song, / What the sweet minstrel, noblest of his throng / Than whom Abū Tammām piped not more clear . . . ?”²⁶ The reclamation of poetic ancestors is always present in his poetry for a purpose, for “O Nile! The time of sleep is past and done. / While Egypt slumbers; within Egypt’s shores / Stirs an awakening.”²⁷ The poet, whom his contemporaries described as one who “portrays an entire age in the life of the Egyptian people,”²⁸ recalls the past as one of glory that cannot be revived without a struggle for freedom:

Ask of Baghdad, ‘Didst thou a rival own
When men’s religion was Islam alone?’
Virtue had not through ease to softness grown,
And knowledge crowned a claimed supremacy.²⁹

With its combination of pride in a past of great struggle and achievement and disappointment at a present, this rhetoric is neither confined to the revivalists nor is its reclamation of the past restricted to literary tradition. The romanticists of the Apollo poetic school in Egypt in the early 1930s went even further, to the ancient Egyptian history, where “Ramses sits on his high throne,”³⁰ albeit with a sumptuous Keatsian imagery and detail, as the case was with Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī (d. 1955), the influential member of the Apollo school. Yet, while the early revivalists urge change and revolt through rhetoric and the reclamation of a literary ancestry, the Apollo group romanticizes the call through an appeal to heroes of change and revolt, as one of Khalīl Muṭṭar’s (d. 1949) poems shows, “Ye are a folk whose chronicles abound / With noble deeds, since valor was renowned,” including “Great generals, and dauntless soldiery,” wise “governors” and “scholars profound, who shed true learning’s light / On human hearts, to guide mankind aright.” Such cataloguing might not have been the domain of poetry had it not been for his intervening poetic of fear and danger that builds up in the poem through a Shelleyan aesthetic of powerful natural imagery and human aspiration, “‘Now is the hour of peril come,’ I said, / ‘That shall awake them!

O my soul, be glad! Danger is the thing to stir a frozen soul, / A people's screwed-up virtue to unroll!"³¹ Such a trajectory is not a lonely one, and the postwar period enlists new strategies and visions that, for their mixture and complexity, cannot be easily couched in such categorizations as romanticism or modernism. The recent multiple critique of the 1970s onwards, which targets the "referential authority" of the past model,³² appeared also in corresponding poetry and readings of literary heritage, but with more focus on rebels and dissidents.

Modernism and secular ideology

Revivalist movements as well as national occasions at large operate as catalysts to recollect and enforce the rhetoric of the past as corrective to the present. Secular ideology, especially its pan-Arab articulations, makes use of the rhetoric, too, but its main thrust is focused on its representations of the real. These are bound to be concerned with present sites of fragmentation and disillusionment, especially since the defeat of the nation-state in 1967. Their comparable poetic manifestations unfold in strophic forms, free verse experimentation, and historical reconstructions. Like the modern Arabic novel, secular poetic concerns deconstruct hegemonic representations and their structural patterns of hierarchy and deference. Sufi poetic reclamations or experimental initiations in esoteric lore become part of a larger effort to question beliefs and appearances. In the Arab world of today, there is also the reappearance of traditional war poetry that goes hand in hand not only with fundamentalist pronouncements, but also with regional wars, shows of resistance to hegemonic discourse, and the application of force in global politics. The neo-revivalist movement of the 1990s onward reminds us, for instance, of the late nineteenth-century revivalism, not only against a stagnant Islamism, as represented by the Ottomans, but also more pointedly against colonialism and its cultural incursions. The vacuum created by dictatorial systems in the Arab world and their deliberate persecution and mass killing of the secular left, along with the massive use of war machinery and force not only against the Palestinians but also in Iraq, left the door open for religious revival.

Yet, modernity properly began with the emergence of coteries, groups, and schools that came into contact with Russia and Europe, and developed a new consciousness of individualism and democracy, like the *Dīwān* school in Egypt (1912), with a publication under this name in 1921, and the following one *Apollo* (with a journal under this name, too, 1932–1934). Soon after the Second World War, another radical change under the rubric of the Free Verse Movement took over the poetic scene, bringing into Arabic culture a new consciousness of great complexity that appropriated both radical politics and poetics, and approached tradition and history anew, questioning almost every issue and generating since then further renewals and innovations. In a succinct

note, M. M. Badawi explains these movements in their relation to the classical past with its many schools and attitudes. He argues:

[T]he poets' attitude to their past poetic heritage could be regarded as a reliable indicator of their degree of modernism. As is to be expected, different stages in the development of modern Arabic poetry were accompanied by related changes in the attitude to the past indigenous tradition.³³

As an example he cites how "the forerunner of neoclassicism, al-Bārūdī, compiled a huge and influential anthology of Arabic poetry of the past, which was largely confined to the poetry of the Abbāsīd era, the very poetry the neoclassicists regarded as their model."³⁴ Then he compares this taste with "the pre-Romantics of the Dīwān School" who "favored those Abbasid poets noted for their individuality or emotionalism, such as Ibn al-Rūmī, 'Abbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf, and al-Ma'arrī." He finds the Romantics of the Apollo school in the 1930s and 1940s much attuned to poetry "which celebrated the world of the senses and intense emotion such as the poetry of love, wine, and mysticism. Unlike the Tunisian Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī (d. 1934), who was obviously an extreme case in criticizing tradition in general, they searched the tradition for precisely those qualities which they wished to realize in their own poetry." As for the modernists, who were centered around the Free Verse Movement and experimented freely with the prose poem since the 1950s,³⁵ he thinks of Adūnīs as "the most celebrated example of reappraisal of the past heritage," for not only did he compile an "idiosyncratic anthology of Arabic poetry of the past," but he was also the author of "a massive, searching, and provocative historical study of classical Islamic culture . . . *The Constant and the Changing*, published in 1974." In this study, adds Badawi, Adūnīs emphasizes "the value of the intellectual rebel or dissident, the prototype of the twentieth-century Arabic modernist."³⁶

A word of caution is pertinent at this stage. Under the pressing need for innovation and the imperatives of an appeasing critique that claims modernism as a constant in Arabic literary tradition, Adūnīs collapses innovation in artistry with radical politics of transformation at times. He is right in drawing attention to innovation as a practice among the *muḥdathūn*, or the "moderns" of the classical tradition, and as advocates of change from the pre-Islamic poem, but this should not be confused with dissent. The innovative stance in poetry, usually associated with Muslim Ibn al-Walīd (d. 208 H/823 AD) and Abū Tammām (d. 231/845), has a number of facets and cannot be cited wholesale as a transformational landmark. On the political level, Abū Tammām was never sympathetic to marginalized communities aspiring for change and justice. Nor was al-Buḥturī (d. 284 H/897 AD) for that matter.³⁷ On the other hand, their taste for artifice is also a double-bind, for it emanates from the recognition of competitiveness in a commodity age

whereby the poem as an intellectualized product has its artificial stimuli.³⁸ The renowned prose writer of Basrah and Baghdad, ‘Amrū Ibn ‘Uthmān al-Jāhiz (d. 255 H/868 AD), was straightforward in associating poems addressed to kings, leaders, and notables for profit and repayment with rigorous embellishment and improvisation and craft.³⁹ To apply Lukács’ terms, we may say that the Caliph period witnessed the transposition of art from ritual and spontaneity to an established status of technical artificiality held in suspense between business and “convulsive retreat,” in respect to artists.⁴⁰ Apart from the commodity transaction and the innovative stance in the poetry of the moderns, *al-muḥdathūn*, their extensive use of figurative language⁴¹ has to be looked at also as a sign of transgression, a progressive move forward, for the artist-poet exerts enough energy and thinking to come up with an artistic creation in which he/she “. . . lives . . . activity as a technician,” writes Jameson in a lucid paraphrase of Walter Benjamin.⁴²

The modernist critical effort was neither systematic, then, nor was it necessarily coherent. It had the passion and zeal of opposition and revolt. The female pioneer of the Free Verse Movement, Nāzik al-Malā’ikah, edited the influential “Minbar al-naqd” (critical platform) in *Al-Ādāb* journal in 1953, where heated discussions of modernist poetics took place. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s *Al-Ādāb* was the most influential literary platform with a readership that reached every corner in the Arab world. While there was enough recognition of the Free Verse Movement, the focus in Nāzik al-Malā’ikah’s critical platform was on the technical shift in poetry writing, a shift for which Nāzik al-Malā’ikah spent time and effort to pattern, contain, and redraw as an innovative stance within a classical poetic tradition.⁴³ She was opposed to those, especially Jabrā I. Jabrā, who began to speak of the Movement as a discontinuity, and who were also carried away by their attachment to English and French experimentation.⁴⁴ Both sides of the Movement, the radical and the conciliatory, deserve attention, as they would soon consolidate the modernist and the postmodernist drives in Arabic poetry. To accommodate and appropriate the new genre, writers were also preoccupied with relations to tradition, the classical ode, Western poetry, and the emergence of the prose poem as a technical innovation. There was even a controversy in respect to who was the initiator of the Free Verse Movement. Important as these issues were to a burgeoning endeavor, they detracted attention from the cultural dynamic of change. The effort hindered itself at this stage from further delving not only into continuity as a cultural fact, but also into poetic genealogies, issues of prosification, use of Qur’ānic styles and other poetic discourse. These issues were as real then in the poetic practice itself as they were in Arab life and culture. The modernist drive in the late 1940s to implicate the poetic into common life beyond the nineteenth-century revivalist rhetorical grandeur was part of a broad social and political consciousness, but critics and poets were so prompted and overwhelmed by immediacy that they abandoned the need for a thorough critique to account

for post-Second World War consciousness and its manifestations in poetry, narrative, drama, and the plastic arts. The emerging recognition of the marginalized individual that informed painting and writing in the late 1940s went hand in hand with a total change of vision. Language was no longer the rhetorician's monopoly, and the emerging consciousness opened up tradition and modernity for extensive dialogues of far-reaching consequences. Fragmented as the first outcome in criticism tended to be, it nevertheless set the stage for further investigations of continuity and divergence that were carried out by poets in the first place.

An exceptional discussion by the well-known Iraqi sociologist 'Alī al-Wardī (d. 1995) came out, however, in 1955–1956, on the association between classical poetics as hegemonic discourse and authoritarianism. In a number of articles, brought together later in book form, 'Alī al-Wardī argued the case against classicism as poetic elitism, a mode that caters for the interests of feudalism and exploiters of every kind. His articles provoked many responses which he included in a book titled *Uṣṭūrāt al-Adab al-Rafī* (The Myth of Elite or Highbrow Literature). In the introduction to the book, he says:

There is a story behind these articles. A few months ago, I began publishing some articles in the *Hurriyyah* daily in which I blamed writers for their tenacity in upholding ancient literary traditions regardless of the enormous social and intellectual transformation that was taking place. Many a writer was against me, criticizing and slandering me and writing at random in a battlefield, which they own. I am obliged to respond.⁴⁵

'Alī al-Wardī's *Uṣṭūrāt al-Adab al-Rafī*' is of some significance because of the equation which the author develops between elitism, aristocracy, and prosperous classes. He castigates the critics who think of him as someone who is cheapening literature by lowering its standards of grandeur. Singling out one of these critics, he argues:

Such a man and his like from among sultans' *littérateurs* surprise me. They glorify the poetry that caters for the affluent and lives on the remains of their banquets; but nonetheless, they speak of such poets as the lamps of knowledge and art. As for the poet who is close to the public and its concerns, they look upon him as no more than a useless salesman.

(Ibid. 9)

In this argument, the writer associates elitism and neoclassicism with opportunism. Targeting panegyrics, 'Alī al-Wardī thinks of the strain as no more than a parasitic endeavor which runs counter to the spirit of the age. Making use of theories of elitism, he argues that the elite class "strives to use

appearances and rites that distinguish them from lower classes. They purport to appear in the most lavish and sophisticated appearances so nobody can compete with them.” “Language itself,” he adds, “is deliberately complicated to fit into their system” (Ibid. 193). A counter approach is to decode this language and to replace it with one that uncovers and dissolves the mystique of elitism. Hence comes his call for a counter consciousness:

Oppression by itself does not raise opposition unless there is an accompanying consciousness of discontent. Here lies the role of intellectuals as they call the spade a spade and tell the oppressed that they are so, reiterating this until subdued sentiments explode and history moves forward.

(Ibid. 296)

These views did not pass without detailed refutations from other scholars in the field like ‘Abd al-Razzāq Muḥyī al-Dīn. The latter argued back, specifying that contemporary poetry has a different story to tell, for “poets, in comparison to any educated class, are the least prone to condone corruption, and exploitation (Ibid. 7).” While Alī al-Wardī made use of his training in sociology to discuss neoclassical imitativeness as part of a hegemonic discourse, his paradigms of elitism, exploitation, and grand literary works also partake of the broad cultural consciousness of the 1950s that justified the *Zanj* (Black slaves) revolt and dissent in general.

The significance of this early critique for the modernist endeavor emanates from its use of other disciplines to probe literary tradition. It has also the tendency to question rather than offer absolute answers to pending issues. It prepares the way for further efforts to go ahead in a re-thinking of literary history. The critical endeavor worked in the hands of Adūnīs and others as a deconstructionist effort.⁴⁶ In this sense, “historicity means the use of knowledge about the past as a means of breaking with it—or, at any rate, only sustaining what can be justified in a principled manner,” argues Giddens. He further argues, “Historicity in fact orients us primarily towards the future.”⁴⁷ At a later stage, especially since the 1960s, poets have developed a retrospective mind that makes use of introspection to come to terms with both their grounding in the classical tradition and the emerging consciousness, as Adūnīs’ experience demonstrates. The connection between Gibrān’s daring experimentation in language and poetics prepared the way for the Adūnīsian critique which is still popular with the young generations all over the Arab world.

Gibrān’s innovation

The early romantics of the Dīwān School were not as rebellious as the Adūnīsian prototype of the early 1950s. In their times, there was a new sensibility, receptive to change and innovation.⁴⁸ The same is true of the

Mahjar poets in North and Latin America, those who had access to other cultures, and brought into poetry a new sense of poetic usage and imagery, like Mikhā'il Nu'aymah (1988), Gibrān Khalīl Gibrān (d. 1931), Īliyyā Abū Mādī (1890–1957), and Nasīb 'Arīdah (1887–1946). Significantly, Gibrān Khalīl Gibrān influenced poetic language profoundly, for instance, and has been an impact beyond historical and cultural limits. He may be the right bridge to understand the modern impulse in Arabic poetry, not only because of his exposure to American transcendentalism and European Romanticism, but also because of his deep engagement with the ethics, values, and canons that make up a large portion of Arab cultural tradition. Living across cultures and traditions, he has liberated language from artificiality and let words speak with no metrical restrictions. This is a basic achievement, not only for its immediacy, but also for its recovery of Arabic from the grandiosity and superfluity that accompany dying aristocracies. In other words, in Gibrān Khalīl Gibrān's writing as well as in the emerging postclassical and romantic impulse, there is a recovery, not a revival, along with a dialogue with tradition and interaction with the Western and Afro-Asian cultures. Recovery in this instance means confrontation with the real in its present manifestations, including cultural decadence and servile imitation. As a position or an attitude, it debates a tradition which we usually dump as neoclassical.

A major question that may face students of Arabic poetry relates perhaps to the transformation and change within a single poetic sensibility. For how does a person leave one's grounding behind and develop a new modernist temperament? Like grounding in the Latin tradition, initiation into the ancient Arabic tradition and its later accommodation in the nineteenth century may well empower one's poetic language when the poet is receptive to changes in taste, and is open to experience. Otherwise, poetry may end up as servile imitation of a bygone model.

The Tammūzī movement and the modernity–tradition issue

In Arabic poetics, tradition is even more inclusive, as modern consciousness stretches it beyond the Islamic period to embrace the legacies of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Phoenicians, and ancient Egyptians. To use current criticism, modern consciousness counterbalances its negative categories of ennui and alienation by a "conciliatory gleam" as derived from antiquity and the mythical past.⁴⁹ In modern Arabic poetry, the passage of this past into the present is not a smooth one, as evidenced by the 1964 collapse and disintegration of the Tammūzī movement of the 1950s. This movement took its name from the Babylonian deity Tammūz, "... the youthful spouse or lover of Ishtar, the great mother goddess, the embodiment of the reproductive energies of nature," as James Frazer explains in *The Golden Bough*, a book that was adopted then by a significant number of Arab poets.⁵⁰ The similarity between the Arab scene since the late 1940s and the European one of the

First World War has been noticed by many readers and critics, but the complexity of Tammūz as a symbol relates not only to cycles of life and death, but also to the attending Babylonian rituals, Jerusalem hymns, and Greek vegetation practices. "Under the names of Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis, the peoples of Egypt and Western Asia represented the yearly decay and revival of vegetable life, which they personified as a god who annually died and rose again from the dead," writes Frazer.⁵¹ One member of the Tammūzī movement, the Syrian ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd (b. 1930), was already pen named Adūnīs in an act of ideological initiation and apprenticeship in the Syrian National Party.⁵² Yet, neither the group nor Adūnīs could sustain the mythical Tammūzī pattern for long, for, as myth "is consciousness investing the world and the self with meaning" by categories of unity and contiguity,⁵³ material realities remain too complex to be poetically shaped as such.

The stark scenes of the wasteland, the "landscape of ruins,"⁵⁴ as poetic images of dismembered reality, coincided with encroaching geopolitical challenges to perpetuate modernity-consciousness beyond the reach of the newly emerging states, compelling poets and intellectuals alike to feel an urgent sense of responsibility toward their art and their community. The poetic outcome is one of diversity and loaded manipulation of the historical, the mythical, and the literary. The dialogue with other cultures, especially with Lorca, Neruda, T. S. Eliot, Pound, and Baudelaire, among others, helped poets, nationalists, and outcasts to create substitutive textual homelands. No matter how mitigated by remembrance and recollection, these dialogues and negotiations speak of the modern predicament, whereby the poet, as Hugo Friedrich puts it, "... writes out of himself only insofar as he considers himself a sufferer of modernity."⁵⁵ The emerging speaker in a large number of poems under consideration is a wanderer, a rover, an alien, an exile, and a rebel. Hence the exilic in this confluence of modernity and tradition assumes significance. To cope with a reality of greater complexity than, perhaps, the one in European cultures, Arabic poetry has to be more innovative, ransacking other traditions in the face of the pressures of modernity, while investigating and mapping its own.

"Modernity" may be more difficult to gauge, not only because of the typical reference to Enlightenment markers and the demarcation of world civilizations in terms of Greco-Hellenic referentiality, but also because of the innate ambivalence of the term, for "[I]n the heart of the world of hard science, modernity floats free" (Ibid. 39). However, in Arabic usage since the last decades of the nineteenth century, the term modernity indicates change as propelled and perpetuated by Western scientific and cultural achievements. This understanding involves "consciousness of the discontinuity of time: a break with tradition, a feeling of novelty, of vertigo in the face of the passing moment," writes Foucault of the general concept.⁵⁶ For the Arabs, it lies more with tensions at crossroads whereby every moment demands an answer, not only in respect to a complex past, but also to a present as acted

on by the desires and interests of Others. To overcome banality, loss, absence, disintegration, and other negative categories of modernity, Arabic poetry may not be different from others, as it too invests the scene with enough imagination to objectify the personal in a dramatized effort to cope with the real. Still, it relies on rich resources of history, heritage, and myth, not only to objectify experience in the manner of T. S. Eliot, but also to invest it with enough life and energy from the Arab past. The result is not an accommodation of tradition and modernity in a poetic settlement, for, in the best poems under discussion, negotiation is the generator of creative anxiety in its many poetic manifestations. Navigational efforts between tradition and new poetics are not smooth, however, and we need to look at some autobiographical accounts to make sense of their complexity.

*Fadwā Ṭūqān's autobiographical itinerary from
tradition to modernism*

One way of answering the question, and summing up these configurational sites, or ensembles of voices and trends, is to read through autobiographical records, like the Palestinian woman poet Fadwā Ṭūqān's (d. 2003) *A Mountainous Journey: A Poet's Autobiography*. This is a significant documentary record of her poetic maturation in time and place that provides a synthesized review of trends and movements in relation to the past tradition.⁵⁷ In this autobiography, there is first a context, which is the socio-political scene. Second, there is an emerging sensibility that vies for freedom in the context of an awareness of social and religious limits. Third, there is her literary grounding, first in literary tradition (mostly the classical and the pre-Islamic), an attachment to women poets, and faith in strong male scriptoria. Fourth, there is a further mediation between past tradition and the encroaching modernity through a romantic lens that was represented, to some extent, by Fadwā Ṭūqān's brother, the poet Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān (d. 1941). This autobiography may well be a *Bildungsroman*, a novel of apprenticeship and growth, as other writers of the same age could have undergone the same change and offered a similar poetic experience, albeit with a personal tint and an individual poetic.

In so far as material reality, including power politics, affected her, Fadwā Ṭūqān found in Emile Touma's *The Roots of the Palestinian Question*, enough material to account for her changing sensibility. The British authorities in Palestine arrested her father in 1917, "...banishing him to Egypt along with others aware of the dangers of western imperialism," she writes.⁵⁸ This personal detail fits into the larger context of colonization, for, as she quotes Emile Touma:

Egypt, Libya and North Africa were distributed amongst the colonizing states: Britain, Italy, France and the Ottoman Arab States became targets of French and English greed. With the growth

of the National Movement, the Arabs had formed groups and secret societies in various provinces of the Ottoman Arab States, in a struggle to attain their rights. In the first Arab Congress held in Paris in June 1913, the agenda had stated, very clearly, that the Arab National Movement saw that its path lay within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, not outside it. The leaders of the movement were convinced that this declaration would deter the European imperialists away from the Ottoman Arab States.⁵⁹

Political issues in the anti-colonial struggle were not as straightforward, however, and intellectuals found themselves at crossroads, as even a cursory study of the period shows. Forebears and parents were so involved in the anti-colonial struggle that they secured the affection and solidarity of the young literati who were otherwise resistant to patriarchy. The young Fadwā Tūqān, for instance, both feared and recoiled from her father's response to her early poetic endeavor:

[H]e doesn't believe I am good for anything, I said to myself. He has no feelings for me except indifference, as though I'm nothing, as though I'm a nonentity, a vacuum, as if there is absolutely no need for me to exist.

(Ibid. 59)

Yet, the father's attitude was one of indifference, not oppression, despite her subsequent emphasis on the increasing "rift" between the two (Ibid.). Once she expected him to react angrily at her publication of a poem in a newspaper, but "to my astonishment," she wrote, "the roof didn't fall. Father didn't allude to it and I heaved a sign of relief" (Ibid. 69). Between the underlying familial and social values and ethics and the desire for freedom and release from traditional shackles, there is this intermediate space that becomes the site for a poetic anxiety. Attachment to her brother, the poet Ibrāhīm, is no less controversial, for she "...clung to... [him] with the tenacity of a drowning person to a lifeboat" (Ibid. 53). Due to his care and attention, she received this amount of love, "He alone became the air I breathed, the air of health and personal happiness. His love and special concern for me gave me a feeling of contentment as a human being" (Ibid.). If he had been as withdrawn as his father, her response to him might have been different. In other words, in the familial and social context of a traditional upbringing, there is a confrontation between the desire for individual freedom and the terms by which the society moves and reacts. Yet, this is only part of the story for our reading of cultural interaction. The brother cherished the same common faith in literary tradition because without a good literary grounding in the classical tradition there is no chance for a talent to grow, "he came to me holding *al-Hamasa*, the famous anthology of Abu Tammam [d. 846]" (Ibid. 57).

She realized the significance of this grounding, not only to benefit from Arabic prosody, rhetoric, and the art of poetry, but also to establish the right relationship with tradition, "... studying and memorizing thousands of lines of ancient Arabic poetry cleansed my soul from the torment of mulling over my feelings of self-pity and injustice" (Ibid. 63). This objectifying process complicates matters as much as it seemingly solves them. It counteracts a romantic recoil, but it also brings about a Keatsian negative capability, or in the words of Geoffrey H. Hartman, a "... way out of the morass of inwardness."⁶⁰ To escape the present, she found life in the past, "The pre-Islamic, the Umayyad and the Abbasid poets lived with me. They ate, drank, did household chores and bathed with me. They talked to me and I talked to them" (Ibid.). She adds, "I would fall in love with one poet at a time, until I exhausted his works," reaching thereafter her "last love amongst the ancient poets," namely Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī (d. 968). Tradition as such works its way in the ephebe's sensibility through love, but it is a substitutive love that proves conducive to creativity, "My absorption in my new world taught me the taste of happiness. I was immersed in the act of creating myself, building myself anew, in an eager search for the potentialities and abilities that constituted my life's capital" (Ibid.). Although this immersion becomes "an internalization" for "therapeutic purposes," in a reversal that may not meet Harold Bloom's quest-romance theory,⁶¹ there is still a possibility of combining this personal rebirth with freedom from "acute preoccupation with self."⁶² Her brother was the first to warn her against a narrowed consciousness as concomitant with self-preoccupation, "Sister, people aren't interested in our personal feelings. Don't forget this fact" (*Mountainous Journey*, 70). Her brother's remark came as a comment on her elegiac verse to express her sorrows at his illness. This remark did not come as a surprise, for her "... attempts at poetry," she writes in retrospect, "have revolved mainly around my personal feelings and sufferings" (Ibid.). Her feelings were ones of a "melancholy, introverted nature," which, she writes, "always made me withdraw completely within myself" (Ibid.). Yet, to see the difference between the brother and the sister in clear-cut terms may not lead us further. He warns against introspection, introversion, and self-preoccupation, and he strongly believes in literary revivalism, for he

belonged to a generation that had grown up aware of a widespread movement to revive this heritage through resurrecting its artistic values; its terseness of phraseology, its clarity of expression and its beauty of style, beginning with al-Barudi, at the dawn of the revivalist movement, on through Shawqi and his contemporary Egyptian, Iraqi, Lebanese and Syrian poets.

(Ibid. 72)

At that stage, she seemingly accepted his objections to the Apollo school of the 1930s as "... colorless and weak in style" (Ibid.), for she concurred with

his call for a strong grounding in classical style. At a later stage she withdrew from the *maslak*, or track, of modeling herself upon ancient poets as the practice distracted her from the expressive in poetry, “deflected from genuine experience to a concern for phrasing and selecting words with a ring and reverberation to them” (Ibid. 73). Writing under the pen name Danānīr, the ‘Abbāsīd Yaḥyā al-Barmakī’s slave girl (d. 825), she tried to give vent to her chaste feelings of love (Ibid.). The choice is not random, not only because the slave girl was faithful to her master, and was well educated in poetry and music, but also because she provided Fadwā Ṭūqān with a persona, enabling her to go beyond her self-absorption toward freedom of the imagination, a condition that Bloom articulates as anti-self-consciousness, or resistance to self-absorption.⁶³ The slave girl was equal to the best musician and singer of the day, Ibrāhīm al-Mūṣilī, who said to her master, “if you were ever deprived of me and Dananeer is around, then you have not lost me.” In other words, the choice of the persona cuts across a career and survives in the woman poet’s experimentation. Fadwā Ṭūqān followed tradition and made use of male scriptoria, but she built up a female lineage, too, with its anxieties, gains, and failures. She tried to learn the best in tradition while creating an independent individual talent. In retrospect, she was displeased with herself for writing “. . . forceful poetry with a strong linguistic construction,” modeled on the ‘Abbāsīd tradition, but her amateurish pen name also reveals a taste for the song, the lyric, and music at large. On the other hand, the persona is important, not only as outlet, but also as an objectifying strategy that leads to her rite of passage toward a self-sufficient poetic. The association with the past gave birth to a linguistic repertoire, but her subsequent independence and the culminating estrangement from the influential forebears integrated her into the emerging romantic movement of the Apollo group, before a final affiliation in the poetic sisterhood led by the woman poet and pioneer of the Free Verse Movement, the Iraqi Nāzik al-Malā’ikah (b. 1923).

In preparation for that estrangement, Fadwā Ṭūqān notes that the use of “. . . classical style, and this preoccupation with a choice of words that were resonant but contrived, was an obstacle to the flow and movement, the spontaneity and truth in the process of creativity” (Ibid. 74). In both phrasing and direction, she joined a tendency that had been evolving since the Dīwān group. This awareness led her to poetry of experience, enhanced and furthered by her readings of the Mahjar poets, that is, the Syrian and Lebanese poets in Latin and North America, along with the Apollo romantics of the 1930s in Egypt, Tunis, and the Levant. “From that time, I turned my back on the Abbasid style, my main ambition being to write poetry deriving its beauty from simplicity, flexibility, truthfulness, and poetic expression free of affectation” (Ibid.). Such proclamations imply a break with an early apprenticeship, for the brother’s rejection of the Apollo group apparently fell on deaf ears, and her evolution took a romantic road, which was to find further impetus under the impact of her fellow woman-poet Nāzik al-Malā’ikah.

Her association with the latter was also another rite of passage, as the movement from tradition to modernity, from classical prosody to free verse and from imitation to experience, is not one for all poets and participants in modernism. “No innovative movement can succeed and spread rapidly unless the voice raised on its behalf is distinctive, and can arouse a strong response in others. Nazik, truly, had such a voice,” she says (Ibid. 75). The association with her fellow woman poet also means an acceptance of the latter’s position in respect to the need for music in poetry and the ultimate deep grounding in Arabic prosody and rhetoric. She strives for freedom from “. . . the bonds of ancient prosody,” but she is not for the “. . . abandonment of meter and rhyme altogether” (Ibid.). She believes in a rift between the old and the new, for “the struggle is inevitable for renewal,” and change and mutability have to counter rigidity and permanence (Ibid. 76).

Trajectories of tradition and modernity make headway through this struggle, to be sure, but there is also a careful navigation between the old and the new in order to create a recognizable presence based on shared codes and an innovative contribution. The young woman poet made her distinct achievement while affiliating herself with strong poets. Fadwā Ṭūqān’s antecedent authority begins and ends not only with her women ancestors like Danānīr or women contemporaries like the Iraqi dentist and poet Rabāb al-Kāzīmī (Ibid. 60, 62) and Nāzīk al-Malā’ikah, but also with ancient male prose writers and poets like Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 896) and the rest (Ibid. 53, 63, 66). This autobiographical sketch is not unique, as almost every recognized talent among modern poets followed more or less the same pattern.⁶⁴

Muḥammad Bennīs’ antecedent authority

Another autobiographical itinerary from among the male tradition and from the next generation may prove worthwhile, too. The Moroccan poet Muḥammad Bennīs’ articulations tend to validate his poetics in the first place, to encapsulate the overlapping and contestation of genres in a dialectic that takes into account power politics whose tropes are spatial. As a discursive threshold between Arab East and the Moroccan West, tradition and modernity, and also a site of contestation and configuration, Muḥammad Bennīs’ self-justifications may reveal another poetic predilection, too. In mapping out his own poetic career, Bennīs subscribes to a tendency among poets since the late 1960s to justify a career and characterize it.⁶⁵ Speaking of his own grounding and career, as well of his fellow poets, he traces an antecedent authority, even an ancestry and lineage that can be traced to a family of poets and Sufis. Isn’t he repeating the career of such ancestors as Ibn ‘Arabī and Imru’ al-Qays? They also “. . . tested the sufferings of the road. In alienation, they continued their travel, searching for the pure meaning of words.”⁶⁶ Their wanderings in time and place testify to a restless soul in search for the right word. With Ibn ‘Arabī, there is also the “lineage of place” (Ibid.).

Both come from the Muslim West. Both have a daring experience, that Ibn 'Arabī pours out his life in the *qaṣīdah*, “daringly, and without remorse” (Ibid.). The implications of this personal presence are of great significance to the disciple, the belated poet, as the precursor sets the tone for a unique experience, free from servility to norms. This uniqueness as divergence and freedom takes place, in Pratt’s words, whether the persona “breaks any of the rules to which his utterance is subject.”⁶⁷ The personal in Ibn 'Arabī’s poetry, for instance, defied expectations and raised objections to his seeming infatuations.

Like Adūnīs before him, Muḥammad Bennis finds Abū Tammām no less effective than Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Arthur Rimbaud, in drawing his attention to the need to dig deep into the meaning of words. That was during the formative years 1965–1968 (Ibid. 16). While specifying affiliations, the poet is keen on establishing a poetic lineage whose markers negate the historical to move towards constants that are spatial and poetical.

Although Bennis is not different in the emphasis on the personal from other poets since the 1950s, his retention of this spirit is specifically couched in terms of freedom from shackles and strictures, “. . . the personal which is free from any conditionality” (Ibid. 10). The poets whom he read voluntarily bridge time and space to include from the twentieth century the Tunisian al-Shābbī (d. 1934), Gibrān Khalīl Gibrān and the modernists, and from the classical al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-^cAlā' al-Ma^carrī.

In these *ḍiwāns* I found the blessing which I had missed. It was an individual dialogue between these poets and me. What I read there was the personal, whether real or imaginary, the personal which nobody can see: a solitary world, one of pain, doubt and beauty, without heaven or hell, with no certainty or obligation.

(Ibid. 11)

The meeting ground subsumes time and historicity, for what the dialogue imparts is the recognition of “. . . the language, the image, the suggestiveness, the structure, the interaction, and the symmetry.” Through this engagement, “. . . there runs in me the stunning ringing of a human language, to the extent that the poetic manifests itself par excellence in the language” (Ibid.). While the personal specifies the individuality of experience, the retention of the perennial universalizes its poetic.

This perspective entails a vertical view of time, for it resists “any linear historicity” (Ibid. 10), and it also entails a re-reading of history that may, in the case of his poem “Ākhir Mudhakkirāt al-Mu‘tamid Ibn ‘Abbād” (The Last Memoirs of al-Mu‘tamid Ibn ‘Abbād) challenge “the Moroccan national cultural discourse that [for instance] sympathizes with [Almoravid] Yūsuf Ibn Tāshfīn while opposing and criticizing the poet al-Mu‘tamid Ibn ‘Abbād.”⁶⁸ In this case, the contemporary poet establishes a poetic of affiliation that

builds on the dethroned emir's poetry while "dissolving the bond between the poetic and the national (the religious) in respect to al-Mu'tamid Ibn 'Abbād," developing "a multi-voiced poem that belongs to music as it belongs to the modern poem, ridding myself of the conventional tendency to attain the poetic" (Ibid. 14).

More significantly, Muḥammad Bennis tries his hand at a poetic that makes use of the Qur'ānic verse. He recollects, "I began to ask myself irritably why poetic modernity (the contemporary poem) did not take its lead from the Qur'ānic structure instead of choosing that of the European poem." The poems that he wrote in this vein are "Bāb al-Marāthī" (The Elegies Chapter) and "Al-laylah al-wāḥidah ba'da al-alfayn" (The First Night after Two Thousand), which were published in 1970 (Ibid. 17). In these poems, the poet "eludes the demarcation between poetry and prose" and devotes attention to "the appeal of place" (Ibid.).

In sum, Muḥammad Bennis has been in the line of the emerging consciousness since the 1960s with its transgeneric markers, spatial tropes, and dynamic engagement with both tradition and modernity. Seen in context and in relation to achievements in theatre, fiction, narrative writing, archaeological excavations, and painting, along with the expansion of education in the fields of technology and science, this consciousness manifests a set of relations like the ones constituting the Foucauldian episteme.⁶⁹ With extensive grounding in Arabic and a good grasp of the poetics of modernity, this emerging totality of relations and discursive practices differs from the earlier Naḥḍah or awakening of the early twentieth century. It is more in dialogue with the late classical discussions than with the neoclassicism of the late nineteenth century. It is more cognizant of the modernist interplay of genres that has been displacing the centrality of classical Arabic poetics of the *qaṣīdah*.

The modernist impulse and its aftermath

Literature in its broad cultural domains was so dynamically effective that many ideological formations in the interwar period came from literary figures. It is known, for instance, that the Egyptian leader Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir (d. 1970) modeled himself partly on Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's (d. 1987) protagonist in *'Awdat al-rūḥ* (*The Return of the Soul*, 1933).⁷⁰ On the other hand, other literati developed their ideological visions in view of the dangers of doctrinal schisms and the break-up into ethnic and sectarian entities. The Syrian Christian Michel 'Aflaq (d. 1989), who established the Ba'th Party in 1947, sought to introduce a view of nationalism as an impassioned message like that of Islam. That message, he argued,⁷¹ gave the Arabs a sense of identity and purpose beyond tribal solidarity or division. Building on many writings, including those of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (d. 1903) in Egypt, the Lebanese Najīb 'Azūrī (d. 1916), and also Western thought, advocates of nationalism were no less influential than liberal or socialist intellectuals,

including the advocates of populist thought in Iraq, the so-called Ahālī Group, which was formed in 1931.⁷² The Arab nationalist group had such names as the Syrian Zakī al-Arsūzī, the Syrian-Lebanese Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq (d. 2001), the Lebanese Anṭūn Sa'ādah (d. 1949), and the resident of Iraq Ṣāti' al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 1968).⁷³ Liberal and leftist writers on the other hand were common names among readers throughout the 1940s and until some time in the 1970s. The leftist groups had a strong presence throughout the first half of the century, as their programs partook of Marxist ideology at large while targeting local and regional issues and problems. Poetry was no less involved in these issues, especially at a time when the West was confused with both colonialism and Zionism. School texts all over the Arab world, and under the supervision of Abū Khaldūn Ṣāti' al-Ḥuṣrī,⁷⁴ accelerated national consciousness through anticolonial poetic selections. From Shawqī, there is the renowned verse “red freedom,” and from the Tunisian Abū al-Qāsim al-Shabbī (d. 1934), there is the famous celebration of the people's will to survive, whereas from the Iraqi poet Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfi there is the satirical verse against mandated rule, “with a flag, a constitution, and a parliament; intentionally distorted.”⁷⁵ Poets contributed to every political and cultural platform, and, in times of great political rivalry and competition, they were enthusiastically sought after to appease the anger and expectations of both the elite and the masses.

Questioning the nationalist rhetoric

A many-faceted poetics has been growing steadily since 1967, the Israeli conquest of the surrounding Arab regimes and occupation of more lands. This growth in a modernist poetics was in pace with the innate search for a role and a meaning for poetry and in keeping with the internal and external pressures, war and cultural and economic encroachments. Poetry since the late 1940s has been a scene of confession, criticism, intellectual vigor, ideology, and experimentation. Yet, the search throughout has borne the mark of negotiation between tradition and traditionalism, modernity and subservience. Since the 1960s poets have to speak for a political unconsciousness as well as for the desperate sense of betrayal among the masses that have already placed their faith and trust in national discourses of struggle, freedom, independence, and Arab nationhood.⁷⁶ Poets come up with a disturbing and destabilizing aesthetic, one that questions ideology and grand narratives without conciliatory or utopian recipes. It is not ambivalence that distinguishes this poetics, but rather the shock that leaves the door open for the listener to make choices. Writing on the Palestinian predicament, their siege in Beirut by Israelis and Phalangists in 1982, the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (b. 1942) wrote a memoir in prose, *Dhākirah lil-nisyan* (1995, *Memory for Forgetfulness*), to account for the rupture and the wound that never heals. Palestinian identity is held suspect, as if it were a “contagious diseases.” Yet, Arab governments still use Palestine as an ideological referent “to uplift

Arab-nationalist spirit.”⁷⁷ In the same memoir, the poet searched for a meaning to this predicament, finding its source in the idealist rhetoric lavishly stressed by its advocates and believers, especially by the leader Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir (d. 1970), whose national commitment and vigorous political presence made him bypass social and national heterogeneity, class and ethnic issues, and search for sweeping solutions to internal and external problems. Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s belated critique pursues and culminates many poetic pronouncements of disenchantment, especially after June 1967. Poets like the Iraqi ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (d. 1999), the Syrian Nizār Qabbānī (d. 1997), and the Syrian-Lebanese Adūnīs (b. 1930), wrote biting poetic pieces that draw on the need for serious revisionist reading of language and history.⁷⁸ Maḥmūd Darwīsh also argued in *Dbākīrah lil-nisyān* that nationalist rhetoric addressed a collective identity, not the real facts of fragmentation, ethnic and tribal interests, and petty alliances.

Nasser . . . spoke to their acute sense of loss, naming the banks of the river in such a way as to disguise the mud there—sects and dregs of the Crusaders coming back to life in the darkness, under the ringing speeches. But when the nationalist thesis collapsed, these sects put forth their own almost-shared language.

(Ibid. 46–47)

There are other critiques directed also against other discourses of the second awakening, that is, after the 1952 revolution in Egypt. Taken together, they make up a poetics of great political and intellectual vigor. This poetics contains much revisionism, misreading, and recapitulation that guide poetry on to new horizons.

This book, therefore, concentrates on these communicational paths and markers, and follows up their manifestations in readings of heritage and the misreading of ancient and Islamic poems. It investigates the underlying secular mode in revisionism, whose questioning of representational ethics and codes culminates in a view of identity as “less an inheritance than a creation,” as “man creates . . . identity by creating his life and his thought,” says Adūnīs.⁷⁹

Identity

The road to this conclusive remark is not that smooth. Between inheritance and creation of identity the road is rife with problems and troubles that shape and mark every aspect of life. Each writer’s biography reveals as much. Let us take as an example the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh, whose poetic career problematizes respectively the terms of identity and its formation as in the following itinerary. (1) rhetorical poetics of shock and resistance; (2) dialogical poetics of multiple layering and voicing to account for the complexity of the ongoing loss; (3) a poetic of transcendence that valorizes

the word in a cultural context; and (4) a poetic of absence to speak of exile and the human condition. Identity grows first as an affirmation against occupation and challenge, as his early poems demonstrate. In early poems like “Al-Ḥuzn wa al-ghaḍab” (“The Sadness and the Anger”) and “Biṭāqat huwīyah” (“The Identity Card”) (1964) language is imbued with a national spirit to rhetorically enforce an ultimate rebirth against heavy odds, “We have been carrying sadness for years, but no dawn ever shows / And sadness is a fire that its flame can be put out in delays / yet the wind can inflame it more / and you have the wind, why do you have to bind it? And you have no other weapon . . . / other than meeting the wind and the fire . . . / in a confiscated homeland.”⁸⁰ The outcome of the 1948 debacle turns into a site of destruction where inhumanity reigns under deceitful slogans that target people, Jews as well as Arab Palestinians. Subsequent regressions intensify a sense of loss that builds on actual details of identity erosion. In his poem “On a Canaanite Stone at the Dead Sea” the poet speaks in his own voice where there is confession, and revolt at what is taking place. There is also bitter recognition of the speaker’s little acquaintance with his national landscape and life, “I’ve been a stranger to the desert palm / from the moment I was born / into this crowded mass,”⁸¹ for identity as culture and land was taken for granted before the shock at its destruction and the systematic erosion of the landscape. The poem asks the stranger-occupier to act like colonialists and steal whatever from this land, but “let me plant my wheat in Canaan’s sacred soil” and “Leave Jericho under her palm tree” and “don’t steal my dream, don’t steal / the milk of my woman’s breast / or the ant food dropped in the cracks in the marble!”⁸² Land and landscape assume greater significance as objects of memory and recollection. In a moment of shock and recognition the speaker takes cognizance of an ongoing inhuman confiscation and attrition, as both land and people undergo this erosion. In this global context, affirmative rhetoric gives way to a dialogic poetics that allows a number of voices and, hence, comparisons as in “Speech of the Red Indian.”⁸³ The tragedies of the Native American and the Palestinian reflect on each other, as they both undergo systematic erosion. “Time is a river/ blurred by the tears we gaze through,” says the poet’s persona.⁸⁴ A history of “tidings of innocence and daisies” becomes the target of steel and arrogance where there is no place for primal affection, “Weren’t you born of a woman? Didn’t you suckle the milk of longing / from your mother as we did,” asks the American Indian.⁸⁵ On the other hand, the stranger speaks in terms of the colonizer, as the giver of civilization, electricity, and the carrier of the White Man’s burden. The dialogic principle releases poetry from lyrical monophony and enables it to retrieve complexity without detracting from its poetic flow. The engagement of the poetic with politics of native tradition and colonial onslaughts defines poetry as part of this tradition, for, as usual with the poet, any departure from the song as a traditional poetic signifier means not only dryness and loss on a national level, but also cruelty and bigotry on a wider cultural one. No wonder the native speaker in

the poem asks the invader: "But don't you ever / memorize a few lines of poetry, perhaps, / to restrain yourself from massacre?"⁸⁶ Between this understanding of the poetic as primal innocence and love and the valorization of the poetic word there is certainly ground for more discussion, but the poet is unconcerned with the old racist theories of proneness to one expression or another. The word has a power, and its effectiveness materializes in durability and popular memory. Recollection of this poetry does not entail heterogeneity in response, for as the poet's voice in "Psalm Ten" says, the word becomes part of a collective memory in times of distress, "Interminable agony / has brought me back to a street of my childhood / Taken me into houses, hearts, and stalks of wheat," only to be turned "...into a controversy / Bestowed upon me an identity / and a legacy of chain."⁸⁷ Poetry becomes a resort for sufferers and, paradoxically, for leaders. Yet, this creation that belies passive succession entails an interaction and a role in identity formation. The poem becomes a process rather than an end, and even martyrdom evolves as a dynamic challenge to occupation and invasion of lands and identities. In this as in the "Speech of the Red Indian," Maḥmūd Darwīsh draws a comparison between what is taking place against the Palestinians and the Native Americans. In both cases, there is indigenous culture that re-inscribes identity as a detailed landscape and life against the deliberate physical erosion of home and culture.

These poems lead to a poetic of absence, not only in terms of exile and dislocation whereby memory re-inscribes the text with landscape markers, past experience, and poignant intimations as in most Beirut poems and the ones on the way to Tunisia (1982), but also as a subtext of richness. Anat, the Palestinian moon goddess, the Canaanite queen of heaven and earth, becomes in his poetry the archetypal Palestine with her will to rebirth. A symbol for motherhood and matrimony, she is his catalyst against the onslaught of an aggressive masculine and racist colonial discourse. In the "Phases of Anat,"⁸⁸ her stay in the underworld leaves all in a void. The questioning note that asks for her coming to put an end to emptiness does not duplicate the urge of cyclical death and rebirth of the Tammūzī movement, as the context is in keeping with the poet's consistent equation between the mother and Palestine.

The idea does not negate ancestry or specific landscape mapping,⁸⁹ but signifies an underlying theme that imposes a vision on his latest poetry. Motherhood and nationality coalesce into a song that becomes the epitomic poetics for Maḥmūd Darwīsh. The present betrays enormous disparity between Palestine and discourses of aggression, and between motherly love and invading white masculinity. The poetic of the song, the gypsy celebration of life and love, becomes his only language to enjoy life and to speak of agony. Emotive disintegration under the impact of exile and departure from the fountains of inspiration render poetry divided between two languages: an artificial one that is dry and repetitive and a popular one of songs. "Exile has established two separate languages for us: / Slang for doves to understand and

keep memory fresh, / and classical so I can interpret / shadows to their shadows.”⁹⁰ These problematizations require some re-thinking of tradition in poetry, its terms, and meanings. Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s call for the need to connect to a native tradition, albeit in an ongoing process of recreation, makes use of the following motifs or dominants: (1) Anat as myth and as symbol of motherliness; (2) the carefree gypsy lore of the guitar player; and (3) Lorca, as a reminder of the power of the song and the role of the poet as a public intellectual.

The negotiated poetic space

Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s use of Anat is in line with the ongoing retention of Sumerian and Babylonian lore as cultural continuity. His reading and poetic recreations are in line with this understanding which looks upon culture contextually. The roads taken by poets and intellectuals alike have many things in common. The sense of urban growth and the emergence of educated classes may have brought a poetics of some sophistication, whereby the image eludes clear-cut representations and analogies while language frees its registers from classical rhetoric. In a consistent occupation with everyday speech, it comes alive with the concerns and meditations of the Arab individual now. Indeed, on many occasions early in the 1950s poets even exaggerated this common life language and concern, as ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī’s “Sūq al-qaryah” (“The Village Market”) shows.⁹¹ This use tries to go beyond Wordsworthian intersubjectivity toward an objectification that allows common language to argue the common person’s plight. This language speaks up for the repressed and the muted against a dominating orthodoxy that has hijacked the sacred to justify continued exploitation. The meek are not made to inherit the earth in the hegemonic discourse, but are asked to submit. A dialogic poetic uncovers, for instance, the one-sided reading of the Qur’ān as perpetuated by the dominating class. In “Death-in-Between” by the Egyptian Ṣalāh ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr (d. 1981), “the humble voice” of the common person offsets the statements advanced by the “Grand Voice” in the text, yet the underlying purpose is to debate hegemonic manipulation of the sacred.⁹² On the other hand, the same consciousness draws poetry to the urban site, involving modern poetics in new concerns and preoccupations that are necessarily far from the early romantic interests that colored the poetry of the immediate forebears like the Egyptian ‘Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (d. 1949), the Sudanese Yūsuf Bashīr al-Ṭījānī (d. 1937), and the Egyptian Ibrāhīm Nājī (d. 1953). In modernist and postmodernist paths, there is no Wordsworthian celebration of nature and its offerings, but a problematic relationship exists whereby the speaker oscillates between love and hate, imprisonment and belonging, and denial and recognition of the habitat. The concern with urban life entails larger concerns, too, that go beyond the national and the regional, for urban consciousness is broad enough to engage the human

condition at large. It should not be surprising therefore that the same poets of the second awakening, that is, the Nahḍah after the 1952 revolution in Egypt, have combined their poetics with a politics of engagement that accommodates contemporary national and international heroes, heroines, renowned world poets, and issues of struggle in the three continents. The poetic record is no longer restricted to a local or national specificity, as there is a configurational site that brings together many locales and poetics, ranging from Ezra Pound, Federico Garcia Lorca, and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, to T. S. Eliot; and from Granada, Samarkand, London, Shiraz, and Rome to New York. In modern Arabic poetry, discursive space claims and maps out its registers, markers, and identifications through configurational trajectories.

Non-conformist poetics

Poetic production since the 1940s is of great pertinence to the cultural scene now, not only because it sheds light on the tensions and concerns that plague Arab life and culture, but also because it directs attention to the role of poets and intellectuals in the Arab world. As the competition for the allegiance of renowned names to this or that regime and platform intensifies among non-democracies, poets navigate with caution, but find themselves allured at times by promises of a good and pleasant life that would end the binding contract with a reading public. This contract has a dynamic of its own, based on attachments to public issues and devotion to the poetic art, but not to ceremonials of allegiance as perpetuated by court politics. Thriving in difference, disenchantment, and a search for justice, poetry grows in dissent, and it gains more popularity and vogue for being so. In Arab modernism, conformity is not a poetic track.

While tracing and inscribing sites of recollection, engagement, and dialogue, modern Arabic poetry resurrects Arabic poetics from generalizations and platitudes. Each intersectional site brings anew a figure or a notion through a reading that debates other interpretations. The revisionist poetics appears as dynamically invigorating, for hegemonic poetics, including poetics of allegiance, is not the only poetics worth reading or using as a measurement and the dominating form cannot become the only representational yardstick to assess a literary scene. The use of modified epistolary monologues, free verse, polyphonic conversational pieces, folk poetry, fanciful and imaginary sites, and Sufi revelations are among the many facets of modern Arabic poetry that call for a further reading of the scene, its tradition, and modernity. Poets in the modernist tradition follow a revisionist approach that enable them to see through competing discourses, and to look for markers of revolt, innovation, and change that defy any compartmentalization and categorical explanation.⁹³ In theory and practice, the emerging literary scene has a broad cultural nuance, for poets are no longer concerned with the technical side of poetry, the one which drew substantial attention in the late 1940s, and

POETIC TRAJECTORIES: CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

focus more on a poetics of engagement, not only in its political overtones, but also mainly as an effort to envision a role in an uncongenial circumstance. Tradition itself is no longer one piece, and poets develop a revisionist poetics that questions the dominating discourse, and at times neoclassical language, as the one with a vested interest in the status quo.

THE TRADITION–MODERNITY NEXUS IN ARABIC POETICS

The essence of the matter,
Summed up in a phrase:
We have donned the husk of civilization,
Yet, our soul remains “in the age of ignorance.”
(Nizār Qabbān, “Bread, Hashish
and Moonlight,” 1954, p. 183)

Although seemingly perpetuating an epistemological break with the ancients, modern Arabic poetry since the 1940s has manifested an intricate and deep engagement with Arab–Islamic tradition. Writers, critics, and poets alike wrote on this issue, not only to preempt counter-criticism against their ostensible deviation from tradition at large, but also to subscribe positively to a dynamic engagement with tradition. What Vicente Cantarino generally applies to modern Arab intellectuals as a decisive, though unacknowledged,¹ break with tradition invites serious qualifications in view of the intricate, albeit complex, engagement with literary heritage. To be sure, methodologies and readings in other cultures enhanced this complexity and prompted some self-discovery through a tripartite process of rejection, indecision, and a culminating reinitiation into the tradition. The latter appears finally as an ensemble of competing discourses rather than a unitary, authoritarian one.

A dynamic tradition

The view of a dynamic tradition has gained steadily, perhaps since the publication of T. S. Eliot’s views on tradition, and the belated awareness of Ezra Pound’s “loose-leaf system” which downplays the archival privilege.² Along with these there are other insights into the Arabic literary corpus that come from sociologists and critics.³ It is of great significance that T. S. Eliot’s “Tradition and the Individual Talent” appeared in a number of translations by scholars from different positions, including, from Egypt, Rashād Rushdī (1951),

Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Badawī (May 1956, June 1956), and Laṭīfah al-Zayyāt (1964).⁴ From Lebanon, there was Munah Khūrī (January 1955). Eliot's other essay, "The Function of Criticism," was no less appealing at a time when young intellectuals were involved in writing on and researching the role of literature in the formation of political and cultural consciousness.⁵ As I shall explain shortly, these writings in prose, along with translations and adaptations or appropriations were meant to serve as a poetics of challenge and innovation, which poets staunchly claim as their task to advance and explain. Journals of repute were the platforms for that dissemination of knowledge, and poets engaged throughout the 1950s and the 1960s in a fight with great social, cultural, and political ramifications. As noticed by a number of scholars,⁶ poets found themselves fully involved in the politics of the period. The case was so for a number of reasons that operated on cultural consciousness, especially in the aftermath of the partition of Palestine, the Cold War, and the increasing interest in the natural resources and strategic situation of the area. Along with these factors, there were other occurrences, like the emergence of new powers in the Middle East, the immediate political and factional implications of divisions between nationalist and Marxist ideologies, and the clandestine Zionist strategy to collaborate with corrupt systems in the region to evacuate local Jewish populations.

Masks

Poets of the early 1950s were on the lookout for a vision, a worldview, to bring life to an otherwise dying land. Significantly, the literature of the period was prone to heroic patterning, utopias, and epical or mythical regenerative structures to grasp and tackle aspirations. There was then a search for the mythical god, or the savior and the redeemer, whether Christ, al-Ḥallāj (executed and crucified in 922), or al-Ḥusayn (massacred in 680), to bring about change and fertility.⁷ The vision itself invites and invokes a new poetics, in tandem with or in separation from classical tradition, with special emphasis on theories of persona, mask, and dramatic monologue, along with images, symbols, fertility myths, and historical constructs. In keeping with the magic ritual, the existence of "masks" as possessing those who take them on, the practice is a way to an integrated vision that is otherwise difficult to attain. Released from subjectivity, the poet objectifies experience through this persona or second self. In this instance the persona is an extension of the mask ritual, as it opts for a full artistic vision. The mask for William Butler Yeats becomes an objectifying practice. To reach wider audiences, this poetics takes common language as a given. To use William Butler Yeats' theory of language and the mask, "We should write out our thoughts in as nearly as possible the language we thought them in, as though in a letter to an intimate friend."⁸ The notion remained with him even in subsequent objectifications of experience in a manner that was popular with Arab poets since the late 1940s.

The mask works effectively in such a language. The mask for him is one way of multiple voicing, as it allows the poet to develop both a self and an anti-self, an image of a character that has something of the poet, but which chiefly stands for the qualities the poet lacks.

The idea of the mask came mainly from Ezra Pound, however. His recapitulations in respect to the use of the mask and the persona deserve attention, as they were so popular as to drive the Lebanese poet Yūsuf al-Khāl (d. 1987), the founder of the Beirut journal *Shi'r* (Poetry 1957), to dedicate his *Al-Bi'r al-mahjūrah* to him, as will be explained in due course. "In the 'search for oneself,' in the search for 'sincere self-expression,' one gropes, one finds some seeming verity. One says, 'I am' this, or the other, and with the words scarcely uttered one ceases to be that thing."⁹ The mask as such perpetuates life by annihilating the power of time; it enables the poet to speak while it eludes identification. He writes in the same place, "I began this search for the real in a book called *Personae*, casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem." Whereas the mask may turn into one image of a character, the persona, in Pound's later experiments, may evolve from an imagined character distinct from the poet, to another identified with him, before the narrating *I* distances himself/herself from the imaged character as in Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*.¹⁰ Yet, the mask poem is distinguished by a combinatory voicing, for as the Egyptian critic Jābir 'Uṣfūr rightly notices, "... the mask is a character that the poet borrows from history or myth, to speak through it, but the mask is simultaneously not the poet's voice," for the emerging voice "... is made of an interactional voicing between the poet's voice and that of the character."¹¹ The mask then distances the poet from the romantic "I" which was dominantly present in early romantic groups such as the *Dīwān* and Apollo. The Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh (b. 1942) offers a pertinent notion of the mask in a poem titled "Qinā' li-Majnūn Laylā" (A Mask for Layla's Mad Lover), "I found a mask, and I got interested to be my Other."¹² The self and the anti-self release their tensions in this poetic space, enabling the poem to capture the sense of bewilderment, urgency, and search for meaning.

The use of the persona entails the use of an *I*, which may well alternate with masks and images, achieving even greater multiple voicing. Eliot's mythical method offered a way out for a short while as signified by the Tammūzī Movement before its demise. There was no separation, then, between this epistemological stance and poets' engagement in the struggle against exploitation inside and the fight against the threat from outside. The Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh looks with suspicion on the separation between the techniques of modernist poetry and the need for a populist address. In "Of Poetry," 1964, he directs a populist poetics against both rhetorical obsessions and obscurism and ambiguity.

Our poems are without color,
Voiceless and tasteless.

If poetry does not carry a lantern from house to house
 If the poor do not know what it 'means'
 We had better discard it!¹³

Other intellectuals felt the need for an avant-garde to lead the masses, but this need has not lent itself to experimentation with techniques of an innovative nature. While building on the role of the poet in Arab poetic tradition, poets worked also within a modernist tendency to create a process of perpetual rebirth from the ruins of that tradition which others were bent on destroying. Like many fore-guards elsewhere, Arab poets in the 1950s, also believed "... that to revolutionize art was the same as to revolutionize life," turning in the end "... against the stylistic expectations of the general public, whom the political revolutionists were trying to win over through the use of the most platitudinous revolutionary propaganda."¹⁴ The overall product and effort has a negotiatory stamp, as a configuration of ancient, Islamic, populist, and modernist poetics emerges out of the moment of tension in poetry where the poet attempts to cope with the situation at hand. Indeed, al-Bayātī's "Elegy to Khalil Hawi," may suggest as much, because his Ishtar (the goddess Astarte) sums up this poetic engagement of many histories, dimensions, and prospects. As the persona articulates,

She became the Nile and the Euphrates
 Vows of the poor
 Over the Atlas Mountains
 A lyric in the poetry of Abu Tammam.
 She became Beirut and Jaffa
 An Arab wound in the cities of creativity
 Vowed for love
 Possessed by fire
 She became Ishtar¹⁵

In these textual interventions, the modern poet is desperate to bring together a number of concerns, more dense than Eliot's scattered quotes, the fragments shored against the psychic ruins, and to secure the poetic self from an overwhelming consciousness of a dying civilization. The Arab poet, and al-Bayātī is an example, collapses both the modernity impulse to dissociate from the past and the postmodernist urge to court and voice the marginalized and the parodic against the circumscribed and timeless givens of some prevalent traditional thought. The Iraqi poet sojourns at a cross-roads, where, as Matei Calinescu argues in respect to modernity, the "... modern artist ... [is] torn between his urge to cut himself off from the past ... and his dream to found a new tradition, recognizable as such by the future."¹⁶

The surviving past

The effort to found a new tradition is not an easy task, however, for the effort takes place within the poet's self that has its grounding in a cultural milieu. Torn between the new sensibility and the formidable grounding in the classical tradition, along with the resilient ways of life and customs, the Arab poet is even more divided and driven to soul searching, and experimentation in technique. The woman poet Nāzik al-Malā'ikah (b. 1923) says as much in "Indamā qataltu ḥubbī" (When I killed My Love). As if anticipating her pronounced discontents later on in her career, she wrote this poem in 1952. She was disillusioned with the classical Arabic tradition, its poetry and language, augmented perhaps by personal anxieties. In this poem she speaks of a deliberate rejection of her love, killing it, and eroding everything that relates to it. The first movement in the poem evokes a personal sense of relief and even elation, like a "new poem," that achieves rejuvenation through total rejection of the past. The poem has a pictorial quality that shows her old love as a combination of images, rhythms, and forms, which she has cherished for so long that they have become obstacles and shackles. To murder this love is to put an end to a past that impedes a joyful birth.

I despised your name,
 Its shadows and echoes,
 I loathed its color and tune, rhythm and form
 and the rough memories
 Which fell, were consumed
 and dwelt in eternity all in a moment:
 and I was resurrected as a new poem
 which says that the past is only a word?

Enjoying a moment of triumph, and planning to bury the corpse of the murdered past, the speaker intimates with surprise and further awareness that this act is no more than murdering herself.

The night was a mirror where I beheld my hatred
 and my dead past, but not the center of my being.
 I knew then,
 having killed you in my cup and night
 and borne my murdered slowly to the grave—
 knew, by the lugubrious hue of my face
 that I had only killed myself.¹⁷

The poem appeared later in her collection of 1957 *Qarārat al-mawjāh* (The Trough of the Wave). The implications here are many in view of the poet's known pioneering advocacy of the Free Verse Movement, her writings on

innovation, her lectures on the place and position of women, and her amateurish critique of Arabic language.¹⁸ Paradoxically, the poem also offers a foretaste for her consequent reaction against the radical poetics of transformation and total rejection of traditional prosody. In this poetic intersection, the past, the self, and biological and acquired identity coalesce in a moment of further creativity that supersedes the first offspring or the first poem, exploding the idea of biological succession and involving the moment in a density of psychological potency that shatters linearity and progression. As Edward Said argues, “the past is not a set of such births, and time does not move like a clock, in discrete moments.”¹⁹ The poet in this context is not separate from his or her poetry, and the self undergoes a sense of battling as many poems indicate. Indeed, it is this sense of division and the search for rapprochement that gives poignancy to modern Arabic poetry.

There is no absolute faith in tradition behind the search, and the emerging consciousness of the late 1950s was a mixture of Baudelairean defiance and hesitation at the threshold of modernity. Two short poems by the Syrian-Lebanese ‘Alī Aḥmad Sa‘īd, pen named Adūnīs (b. 1930),²⁰ tell as much. In “Lughat al-khaṭī‘ah” (“The Language of Sin,” 1961),²¹ there is a rejection of a duplicated tradition as an imitation of the ancients. The speaker challenges counter-accusations of transgression as he comes up with a redemptive poetic of virginal space. Burning operates in eschatological and semiotic terms and prepares for the white page, a disconnected stance waiting for inscription.

I burn my inheritance, I say that my land
is virginal, that there are no graves in my youth.
I am above God and Satan;
my ways are deeper than theirs.
In my book I walk
in the procession of the blazing thunderbolt,
in the procession of the green thunderbolt.
I shout: there is no Paradise, no Fall after me,
and I erase the language of sin.²²

In another poem, he impersonates the new Noah, as the speaker insists on redefining Biblical and Qur’ānic traditions, finding a selfhood only in the company of fellow rebels, “I will come in my ark with a poet and a free rebel; / we shall travel together careless of God’s words.”²³ The presence of English and French Romanticism is not hard to trace. Both strains built on a Miltonic free space as in *Paradise Lost*, whereby Satan is given enough voice to justify rebellion. The prototype may be al-Ḥallāj’s Ṭawāsīn, however, for Satan is given much larger space as the great lover who rejects any medium that stands in the way of his love for God. Transgression in this text is an act of love, and disobedience is an assertion of total submersion in love. Adūnīs revolutionizes the moment, however, and broadens the

space to accommodate populism with a tinge of Anṭūn Sa'ādah's (d. 1949) ideology of regeneration.²⁴

We will open our hearts to the flood,
 dive in the mud and strip pebbles
 and clay from the eyes of the floating;
 we will whisper in their veins that we
 have made the ascent,
 emerged from the cave,
 and changed the course of time.

(Ibid. 160–61)

This redefining stance is not smooth, and the mythical patterns underlying his early Tammūzī poems of cyclic regeneration gives way in the 1960s to a poetic aesthetic of Sufi and Surrealist dimensions. Another of his poems, “Al-Ṭarīq” (“The Road,” 1965),²⁵ stands for the nascent effort to free the poetic impulse from new idols, but it may stand as well for the new consciousness, the second awakening of the early 1950s with its aspirations, hesitations, unfinished aims, and amateurish politics. The composite nature of the poem, its accommodation of the religious and the pagan, and the eschatological and the ideological, is worth noticing, as it reveals a mind poised at crossroads between the old and the new.

O road, which refuses to begin:
 We were a face upturned
 to the day, and loved the living presence—
 In our land, there was a God,
 forgotten as soon as he drew apart,
 and we burnt behind him the waxen Temple and all our oblations.
 Now in the absence we have formed
 an idol of dust,
 and pelted it with sanctities
 on the road which was about to begin.
 O Road, you do not know where to begin.

(Ibid.)

These modernist recapitulations take issue with signs of dormancy and stagnation, and raise the level of discontent to a questioning note which looks upon the new poetics as a rediscovery of language and culture at large. In an article on “Poetry and Apoetical Culture,” Adūnīs looks upon the whole moment of anxiety as one of revelation, for “Language has become a raw material to be transformed. The poet has become a manufacturer who transforms words into a product: the poem.”²⁶ The implications of this notion are far-reaching, as the innovatory stance means freedom from hegemonic

strictures. "Opening doors onto the unsayable, it insists on the absence of any correspondence between things and words, which entails a questioning of the truth of any discourse whatsoever, be it human or divine" (Ibid. 106). Anṭūn Sa'ādah's views on culture and religion are not absent here, and they are never absent from the modernist stance and its recapitulations. Innovation "... is a result and not a cause," he argues, and questioning should become therefore central to the method and outlook that leads to change.²⁷ Language becomes both the refuge and the means to question and subvert. In a collection entitled *Nabr bayna janāzatatayn* (A River between Two Funerals), the Moroccan poet Muḥammad Bennīs (b. 1948) looks upon the two sides of the Arab world, the eastern and western flanks, as funerals, where language carves its road in-between. Language figures as a lively promising river, whose richness is one of fertility and renewal.²⁸ In another collection by the same poet, *Nabīḍb* (Wine), there is interfusion between language and wine as both release the mind and offer unlimited prospects for further experimentation.²⁹ It is not surprising that a verse from Abū Nuwās (d. 813) serves as paratext for a poem titled "Lughatun" (Language). Inverting the logical and the seemingly rational, wine as much as the referential paratext informs the poem with freedom rather than with limitation. The verse from Abū Nuwās reads as follows: "O tongue before whom all tongues bow down / an enraptured lover has woven you and made you impenetrable."³⁰ In one part, the speaker in the poem lets the verse to speak in its own terms, beyond the representational, for language becomes, in Foucault's explanation, "without words or discourse, of resemblance."³¹

Certain nudity
 Masked by a vine tree
 of a land, unlike another, that would seem to flee
 The lapidation of its descendants
 And I give my body to the overflowing waters
 Your fire has not set in my members
 Yet, I plant specters
 I almost saw them as secrets
 Lingering behind my blood.
 When looking for them
 The desert glittering
 Becomes my land
 A throbbing overcomes me, and mysterious birds
 Those forests of the night divide among them.³²

Recollections of tradition suggest a rich encounter, not only with the shadows of the past, but also with the self in its new and innovative form. While playing this sense of change and transformation against the old rhetorical devices, themes, and clichés, the poet finds the past also intriguingly consolidating the present with moral responsibility and commitment.

Recollections

One way of dealing with the modernity–tradition nexus is to set recollections of ancient poetry and poets against or in line with contemporary and modern poets who provide innovation and dissent. It is my argument that the act of recollecting classical Arab poets falls within this epistemological trajectory, to uncover and expose the effete and the corrupt while buttressing the dynamics of growth through stratagems of deviation, difference, and transgression at large. The dynamics of commemoration is not necessarily confined to the need “. . . to recover, in the name of a collectivity, some being or event either anterior in time or outside of time in order to fecundate, animate, or make meaningful a moment in the present,” as Eugene Vance suggests.³³ It may stand for an individual choice, a moment of rupture, divested of other ramifications, and offered anew as a resurrected instance to intensify a sense of uniqueness. The effort was neither homogeneous, nor was it smooth, as the poets had their own visions, backgrounds, readings, and affiliations. Significantly, each poet’s career underwent transformation to cope with the rhythm of time and the encroaching pressures. If poets like ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (1926–1999) in “The Village Market,” for instance, employed daily speech to account for the material and the real and to engage poetically the life of the poor classes, later efforts were more keen on indirection and depersonalization, using personae and masks to that purpose. The whole effort recalls the classical Arabic emphasis on poetic erudition, or knowledge of antecedent authority to facilitate affiliation. Whether through masks, voices in Eliot’s terms, or personae, the endeavor involves knowledge of classical and modern literatures as basic to further initiation into the poetics of modernity, whereby recollection operates strongly on its resources to gather the past into a focused moment of relevance. Density means the encapsulation of a selected past, not only to measure up to a present literary effort, but also to enhance consciousness of life as it stands at the crossroads of modernity and tradition. This effort then evolved into more intricate engagements in textual paradigms of either affiliation or opposition, which gave way in turn to further experimentation with forms and stratagems from which emanated poems of great textual resonance.

Analysis in the present chapter dwells on recollection in its intertextual function as an act of alliance, engagement with, and different from, the past, heritage, and forebears. Whereas the use of “engagement” or “commitment” (*iltizām*) since the late 1940s smacks of the political discourse of the postwar period, better manifested in the Lebanese Suhayl Idrīs’ first issue of *Al-Ādāb* (January 1953),³⁴ the most influential journal of the 1950s and 1960s, its use here also refers to and signifies textual appropriation and referentiality. Hence, there was the poets’ need to fluctuate between more than one register, be they existentialist, Marxist, or nationalist.

To escape accusations of ideological catering at the expense of literariness, writers, and poets first, strove to demonstrate their engagements in a register of

broad affiliations that subsumed Neruda, Lorca, and Alberti, along with Arab classicists. Ideological registers are carefully kept in the background through masks and multiple voicing. Certainly, accusations against the direct politicization of poetry were many, but the sharpest ones usually targeted the issue as a sign of poetic failure. The association between mechanical response to issues and occasions and the rhetoric of commemoration, celebration, or lamentation, may be a sign of impoverished vision and poetic failure, argues Adūnīs.³⁵ Shows of poetic recollection are different from this rhetoric. Recollection of poetic texts and figures through expressive devices is an active engagement, whereby memory plays intentionally on this material, to measure up to its moment of cultural affiliation beyond the limits of filiative origination. As Edward Said argues, “The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and ‘life,’ whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society.”³⁶ Societal and cultural realities involve the process in adaptation, change, resistance, and repression, too.

Why precursors?

To focus the discussion, I propose to concentrate first on Arab poets’ recollections of, and engagements with, their predecessors, before tracing the latter’s lurking presence in modern engagements with other cultures, material realities, and current poetics. I will limit the discussion here, and for a good reason, to such precursors as Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (915–965 CE) and Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (973–1057 CE), within the context of the challenge of the modern and the symbiosis of tradition and modernity. Other recollections of self-elegy, like the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s (b. 1942) intertextualization of Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī’s (d. 968) Byzantine odes, will be considered in the section on dialogization. The choice of the two ancestors as masks or voices is not random. They provide the modernists with defiant and rebellious personas. Al-Maʿarrī looked upon his precursor, al-Mutanabbī, as unique in talent and mastery of language, setting the terms thereby for further recognition of the great forebear. Both brought into poetry and poetics artistic freedom, rebellion against gravitational centers of authority, creativity versus fixed norms, interrogational strategies, distrust of subordination, and glorification of the human and the personal. There is no separation between the poet and his poem, and in al-Mutanabbī’s poetry, writes Adūnīs, there is “. . . a whole nature of words, up to his own aspirations, for they challenge, progress, sweep away, attack, conquer, and transcend . . . as if they were the inward answer of his inner self, its very extension and supplementation.”³⁷ Al-Maʿarrī is even more appealing for being subversive, not only in matters of thought and belief and in his incessant questioning of beliefs and the cosmic order, but also for his innovative techniques, especially his *Luzūmiyyāt*, or *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (The necessity of what is not necessary, or observing rules that are not prescribed; Obligations), which he applied to his adoption of a second, third, or fourth invariable consonant

preceding the rhyme consonant. The deviation from the invariable rhyme consonant means greater variety and freedom, but its application to prosody at large indicates a daring experimentation. These operate especially in the development of the long serial poem, with its aperiodic form, resistance to linearity, closure, and formalist totalization. Its emphasis on difference, discord, and dissent differentiates it from the periodic form, with its concords and harmonious pairing of meter, rhyme, and imagery.³⁸ These are also present in his polysemous accentuations, the neoclassical *qaṣīdab* combinational matrix whereby every component relates to the whole, but without the tight conventions of the *qaṣīdab* as a classic artifact.³⁹ His *Al-Fuṣūl wa-al-ghāyāt fī taḥmīd Allah wa- al-mawāʿiẓ* (Chapters and Endings about the Glorification of God and Admonition) was deliberately written in rhymed prose to give the poet the freedom to develop strophes with a specific ending, so as to belong to each other while standing independently. Each distinctive rhyme contributes to the wholeness of the chapters, which bewildered many of his contemporaries.

Both ancestors offer positions and poetics, attitudes and inviting applications of means and visions. Both had their own understanding and selfhood against conventions and worn-out beliefs. For Adūnīs, al-Mutanabbī "... distinguishes himself, and presents his person as a whole universe of certainty, assurance, and sublimity, in the face of others and against them."⁴⁰ To al-Bayātī, these others are the ones al-Mutanabbī knew and challenged as faces of a corrupt system, bent on discrediting poetry, relegating it to shows of subordination and panegyrics. In his poem, "Mawt Al-Mutanabbī," there are a number of voices, along with historical records. The poet's voice navigates among these in an effort to make a case for his independence and integrity. The poem appeared in 1963, as part of his collection *Al-Nār wa al-kalīmāt* (Fire and Words). It is divided into ten sections under the following titles: the first curse, the first voice, the second voice, the third voice, the first voice, the fourth voice, the second voice, the elegy, the second curse, and the poet after one thousand years.⁴¹ The fourth voice stands for the dominating discourse.⁴²

I cut the poet's forehead with the inkstand
Spit in his eyes
Stole from them light and life
Pierced my sword into his verses
Corrupted his followers, and misled narrators
Made him a laughing stock for the court, the knights and their like⁴³

Whenever properly contextualized, both ancestors offer the following positions and stratagems, including raids on other cultures and texts that deviate from hegemonic poetics and vie for a larger space of their own:

1 An instant of modernity, an understanding of life and time as an ongoing struggle, as rupture and crisis, to use Stephen Spender,⁴⁴ against fixity and theocentricity, or (*lāhūtiyab*) in Adūnīs' terminology.⁴⁵

2 No matter how indebted both were to other Arabic texts due to their prodigious memory, their borrowing is an act of creation, not imitation, as they were engaged with the real, for as Adūnīs argues, “heritage cannot be imitated; only created.”⁴⁶

3 Related to their response to time, poetry, even in its most mannerist manifestations in al-Maʿarrī’s *Saqt al-Zand* (The Spark of the Fire Stick), is a register of the imprint of time on their thoughts and feelings. The time challenge is summed up in his verse; “Days destroy us as a glass, with the difference that we cannot be put together again.” Or “Let none vaunt himself who soon returns to an element / Of clay which the potter takes and cunningly moulds for use.”⁴⁷ For both, the present is the challenge, with its immediacy and transitoriness opposing frozen and fossilized traditions. Their very challenge to systems of thought and politics entails their paradoxical dialogue with heritage in a deeper way that distinguished both as among the most prominent in Arabic culture.

4 Their opposition to any pre-constituted models and systematic hierarchies places both outside any gravitational and containing center. Al-Maʿarrī’s resistance to hierarchy emanates from an innate rejection of hereditary succession. Fathering was objectionable for al-Maʿarrī, as he deemed life an act of aggression against him. This acute sense of injustice was exacerbated because the poet never committed this deed against others. “It is my father, who did this wrong to me, / But I did not commit one against any other,” a couplet that he requested his friends to engrave on his tombstone.⁴⁸ There is no consolation in his view of life. He says, “Life seems the vision of one sleeping / which contraries interpret after: / ’Tis joy whenever thou art weeping, / Thy smiles are tears, and sobs thy laughter; / And Man, exulting in his breath, / A prisoner kept in chains for death.” Death itself is there to receive immortals. “To drown in a sea of death where wave ever mounts on wave.”⁴⁹ More of a skeptic and a cynic, the poet is able to touch on the real as it is, for time and space are as limiting as any fetters, no matter how human beings devise means of temporary joy. “Encompassed are we by Space, which cannot remove from us, / And Time, which doth ever pass away with his people” (Ibid. 106). No wonder, that his poetry, especially the *Luzūmiyyāt* (Obligations), led him to conclude, “There’s no Imam but Reason / to point the morning and the evening ways” (Ibid. 115). On the other hand, his precursor al-Mutanabbī sees himself as unique, “no one above, no one below.” This is why he lauds his own poetry. “I am he whose accomplishments even the blind can see, and whose words have made even the deaf to hear; / I sleep in sublime unconcern for the words which wander abroad, / whilst other men are sleepless on their account, contending mightily.”⁵⁰ The implications of his valorized verse are lauded as both unprecedented and inimitable, and every other voice is “the echo.” Poetry as such demands full recognition, and its owner competes with all, in knighthood, creativity and eloquence. “The desert knows me well, the night, the mounted men, / the battle and the

sword, the paper and the pen.”⁵¹ Descendants are attracted to such engagements with articles of traditional thought, and valorizations of reason and the role of poetry, its changing vocation, and its innovative becoming. They find in these two precursors a line of thought that deviates from the circumscribed and the fixed, but also opens up the whole poetic domain for further reviewing. From them revisionism emanates as a legitimized strategy.

There are traces of transgression and revolt in the forebears’ poetry, and the successors have noticed these. To them, the poem is no longer a container, a periodic conventional form, or a concord of harmonious applications, with a superimposed order. It engages personal experience, and is free therefore from imitative rhetoric. The very image of change that takes so many forms and manifestations in the poetry of both fascinates their descendants. Al-Bayātī, for example, compares himself as a rover and exile to al-Mutanabbī who is “restless as if riding the wind.”⁵² To Maḥmūd Darwīsh, the recollection of al-Mutanabbī’s flight from the court of Sayf al-Dawlah to his new patron Kāfūr, from Aleppo to Egypt, speaks to a personal poetic desire for the good, free, and independent life that allows a lyrical and energized flow of emotion. In “Riḥlat al-Mutanabbī ilā Miṣr” (1984, Al-Mutanabbī’s journey to Egypt), there is a celebration of poetry and the poet, for “my homeland is my new poem” repeats the speaker. The exchange between the two is not easy, and he asks if it is true that his homeland is his new poem. There is nowhere to go, and Syria became his exile.⁵³ The poet identifies with the precursor through as process of recognition. “I gaze upon al-Mutanabbī / journeying from Tiberias to Egypt / on a horse of song.”⁵⁴ Images act as in a “radiant vortex,” in Pound’s terms, ceaselessly involved in the act of becoming, and in dynamic acceleration of discord and difference.⁵⁵ The ramifications assume great complexity as modern Arab poets get more involved in their readings of heritage. Both precursors were very well-versed in tradition, in its many manifestations. Both were known to have used allusions, borrowings, and quotations, but there is no implication that they were after these strategies to attain the completeness or the closure of the periodic form. No matter how many books were written on al-Mutanabbī’s plagiarisms, for instance, other books argued otherwise. His poetry defies allegations of subordination to precursors. Time itself is no longer the actor or the agent of change, for it is relegated to the role of the subservient, as it is “a rhapsody of my necklaces—whenever I compose a poem, time becomes a reciter.”⁵⁶ In another translation, “Time itself is a reciter of my odes; / I compose a poem, then time recites it.”⁵⁷ The speaker decenters tradition, and magnifies the role of poetry as acting on time, a position that the self-secluded al-Ma‘arrī never claims. “If the youth blames life in his days, what has he to say if that youth passes?” However, he takes issue with people who blame him for other things. “My inequities are deemed many for some people, but I have no inequity other than grandeur

and virtues.”⁵⁸ In other words, both were bent on de-centering tradition, interrogating society, and ways of behavior and thought. Their ways only ignite dissent and invoke further challenge. Tradition in this context is no longer a sacred entity to be handed over to the new generation, as it is a convergence and divergence of voices and attitudes. Using Pound’s “loose-leaf system” to underplay the privileged textual presence of precursors, and archival tradition at large, Riddel suggests the role of the present text as a dynamic exchange, a different repetitive act, not an act of supplementation to a sacred tradition.⁵⁹ What Adūnīs articulates in this context may be worth mentioning, for

as every age is simultaneously one and many, there is also a difference in the meanings of past and pastness. We have our Arab past, but we do not search for it in al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932), and their likes; but we look for it in Imru’ al-Qays (d. 540), Abū Nuwās (d. 813), Abū Tammām (d. 846), al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 1016), al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), Abū al-‘Ala’ (d. 1057), al-Ḥallāj (d. 922), al-Rāzī (d. 923), Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. 298 H.), Shiblī Shumayyil (d. 1917), Farah Anṭūn (d. 1922), and hundreds of creative minds in our Arab heritage that had opposed and rebelled against the familiar, the traditionalist, the ordinary, and the imitative, and that were creative, innovative and resourceful.⁶⁰

While debating many traditional articles of belief, modern Arab poets also recognize the need to understand the limits of aspiration and achievement, for after the passing of the early years of hope in the 1950s and the 1960s, they found themselves eclipsed, and they began to write as rovers, vagabonds, and exiles. Translation and exchange work dynamically in this intersection, and the model of forebears, is not lost to modernist practitioners. But is the moment of hesitation, perplexity, rejection, counter initiation, and search uniquely modernist? Isn’t it there in the poetry of the precursors? The forebears were no less involved in anxieties of influence that their contemporaries wrote on these as creative tensions. Some critics were more pejorative, however, as they looked upon poems as sites of plagiarism. Al-Ḥātimī (d. 998), for instance, wrote on al-Mutanabbī’s plagiarism from Greek and, especially, Aristotelian philosophy and wisdom.⁶¹ Hence, present needs to widen horizons received impetus from a creative past, as articulated in Adūnīs’ previous note, the one that had resisted imitativeness, and worked out its creativity in trajectories of appropriation and translation. Whereas poets like Adūnīs, recognize this elemental revitalization against immobility and imitation, the Moroccan Bennīs traces in it the meeting grounds between the present advent of the repressed and the ancient negotiation for fertile and transgressive registers.⁶² In this context, grounding in tradition and accessibility to current

thought and poetics is more in concert with each other than what early revivalists might have thought.

Translation as a modernist engagement

Although revealing a changing consciousness, and a commitment to a dynamic role of the literati, translation is a deliberate critique of the present. To use Ezra Pound's resort to a "long series of translations," as defenses against imposed limitations upon the artist's voice, these "... were but more elaborate masks."⁶³ Translation is also an assault whose goal is to undermine beliefs and platitudes. It is certainly a deployment of other techniques and views to create new spaces. In the end, it transplants methods and attitudes, and brings alien voices into new configurations. It ultimately enhances intertextual density, as its achievement resides in its power to reach and digest the registers of the original text. Depending on how cultivated the translator is and how poetically self-preoccupied, the emerging text may carry the traces of both the translator's milieu and person. The anonymous editor for the second print of *Qaṣā'id mukbtārah min al-shi'r al-'ālamī al-ḥadīth* (Selected Poems from Modern World Poetry), translated by the Iraqi poet Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb in 1955, noticed that the Iraqi poet made "... the poems respond to his stylistic and linguistic capacities," proving "that he is unique, able to interact fully with world poetry through enough acculturation."⁶⁴ Yet, this is not the whole story, as the Iraqi poet made a wide selection, covering Latin America, Italy, Spain, Germany, India, and England. His selections include popular names like Neruda, Eliot, Pound, Lorca, Rimbaud, Rilke, Stephen Spender, Edith Sitwell, and Nazim Hikmat. The selections can be easily confused with the poet's inventory, his images of rain and color, his themes of love for his homeland, sentiments for women, depictions of the poet as a rover, prison scenes and the gloom of death, and urban life and longing. There are even the poet's associations of tradition and popular lore as exemplified in Walter de la Mare's poem on Arabia, also included in the collection.

While modern consciousness informs this kind of selection and guides the poet's choice of contemporaries and precursors from other cultures, it also receives further impetus and perpetuation from this effort to reinvigorate the Arab scene. Translation has a double role of invigoration and appropriation, and could operate on the literary scene with great effectiveness. It offers enough deviational poetics to elude censorship or open conflict. Its immediate contribution lies in its subtle undermining of classical canons of imitation, with the form of the ancient *qaṣīdah* as the model. In periods of literary transformation, the conflict between the old and the new, the imitative and the creative cannot be underestimated. Writing about the resilient ancient *qaṣīdah* form, the Palestinian-Iraqi critic and novelist Jabrā I. Jabrā (d. 1995) explains, "The wordiness, the poetic diction, was a continuation of a tradition

of scholasticism in which dictionary learning tended to be of superior urgency to private visions.”⁶⁵ In contrast, modern poetics makes selective use of the salient features of classical poetics, manipulating as method, among others,⁶⁶ Eliot’s objectifications of experience, and his extensive and timely use of the non-literary, the mythological, and the classical. Poetic texts are a space for a dynamic dialogue, and the modern poem in the hands of its masterly producers universalizes the moment through active engagement with the local and the traditional. It may be an address to the educated and the elite, but its negotiatory intertext gives it great potential to effect cultural change.

Although translation at large was taken very seriously throughout the 1950s and 1960s, poets were involved in the effort not only in response to their strong precursors’ practice, but also because of textual pertinence. Hence, translations from Eliot deserve attention, as their timely appearance helped in directing poetry toward a non-romantic stance, an objectification of experience that suited the pose of the poet as a public intellectual. Eliot says in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.”⁶⁷ The significance of this objectification process lies in its challenge to the more popular romanticism. As employed by William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, this depersonalization brought into Arabic poetry new practices, which were subtle enough to elude restrictions and strictures, and also to cultivate taste beyond romantic sentimentalism.⁶⁸ Behind these, a distance is maintained and an oblique view is developed. The past becomes an active moment of present implications. Tradition for the modern Arab poet is no longer a static structure fossilized and contained by the dominating group. In the same essay, which was popular in the early 1950s, Eliot insists on this grounding in heritage to develop a dynamic and effective poetics. He addresses issues of originality and uniqueness in terms of this grounding in tradition and knowledge of one’s literature and culture. The more the poet knows of heritage, the better qualified he or she is to be original and unique, “the most individual parts of [the poet’s] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.”⁶⁹ One’s poetry derives originality and significance according to its place in one’s culture and tradition, among forebears and ancestors, “[the poet’s] significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists” (Ibid. 72). The view gains further emphases in Eliot’s “The Function of Criticism,” for the literatures of a country or a continent are “organic wholes” or “systems in relation to which, and only in relation to which, individual works of individual artists, have their significance.”⁷⁰ No wonder many Arab poets launched a systematic reading of heritage, with a view to find better affiliations and more intimate ancestry. Translated early in the 1950s, both articles operated positively on the literary consciousness, leading to an increasing interest in Middle Eastern mythology, classical poets, and poetics. While inciting the anger of the “old-school gentlemen” who

accused the new poets “of undermining tradition,”⁷¹ poets of the modernist temper followed Eliot in re-thinking tradition, which was kept alive for Eliot, in Jabrā’s words, “by the interaction between the new and the old through individual talent, which acted as catalyst.”⁷²

There are different ideological positions that relate to tradition and its manifestations, and enforce their authority and power as truthful and obligatory. Eliot as well as modern Arab poets oscillate between a counter-identification that “. . . rejects the identity inscribed in the ruling ideological practices,” though with continuing subordination to these, and a disidentification that “. . . works against the prevailing ideological practices in order to transform them.”⁷³ Even the use of voice, mask, and persona indicates this oscillation, for depersonalization is mainly a defensive strategy as poets identify wholly or partly with a selected number of ancestors. They derive from tradition, however, something more than poetic products. They became aware of the heated discussions of the theory of plagiarism in the classical Arab age, with its recognition of the best poet as a good plagiarist of meanings and an original creator of techniques and styles. Many have become aware, too, though at a later stage, of Harold Bloom’s Freudian reading of the struggle with the ghosts of one’s forebears. In both cases, the great poem may become a “map of misreading” to use Harold Bloom’s discussion of the anxiety of influence between the descendant and the ancestor.⁷⁴ Many poems in Arabic betray such anxieties. Nevertheless, their significance, if any, lies in the depth and richness of the cultural subtext. This subtext has become the focus in the discussion of the ancient and the new, and the constant and the changeable in heritage and modernity. As the association between the great poetic talent and the strong precursor has been taken for granted since early Arabic theories of plagiarism, with their emphasis on the right of the strong poet to raid every other poetic territory, the emergence of dense poetic intertexts is not surprising. Whenever these fit well in poetic ensembles, or harmonious configurational sites, poets may well get away with their booty.

Configurational sites: classical and modern

As ancestors demonstrated some lively engagement with other texts, the moderns found further support for the practice in European theories of intertextuality, its inclusion of borrowing, incorporation, allusion, and stealing. The practice is a show of allegiance as much as it is an act of aggression against the engaged. Among strong poets, this takes place within an understanding which may well incorporate Ezra Pound’s definition of tradition as the “. . . beauty which we preserve and not a set of fetters to bind us.”⁷⁵

In theory, discussions and recollections make up a discursive struggle with an agenda and a commitment to undermine and challenge other competing discourses. Especially in moments of crisis, in the late 1940s, Arab intellectuals felt entitled and called upon to participate in change. Whether using

confrontational or smooth literary discourses, there is, in the discursive effort, urgency prompted by a sense of responsibility toward social justice, national issues, and the human condition at large. Partaking of the Nahḍah (renaissance) discourse with its public intellectualism, poetics since the late 1940s has forged for itself a number of registers and strategies whose common ground is dissent. Nevertheless, dissent is not merely a wayward discontent, for the political and the social, as well as the literary and the cultural, take issue with what has been burgeoning since the Nahḍah without concluding in a final settlement. Issues of modernity and tradition, renovation and authenticity, Westernization and atavism were as real and urgent as they are today, since the drive is toward an understanding of the self, its place in the modern world, against a narrative of the past that has been undergoing some deconstruction, but not a dissecting analysis. Although the 1950s were receptive to these efforts, the hegemonic patriarchal, neo-patriarchal, and dominating bourgeois discourses in different areas of the Arab world have been staging a strong fight against innovation and open questioning of heritage. However, discourses of convergence and opposition multiply in respect to ideology, religion, and tradition in its pre-Islamic, ancient, and Islamic manifestations, taking a number of tracks, which may be defined, in Michel Pécheux's terms,⁷⁶ as follows:

1 Ideologically interpellated intellectuals, that is, those who identify with "the discursive formation that dominates them,"⁷⁷ may identify fully with the ideology they subscribe to, as was the early Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (1926–1964) in his communist affiliation and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (1926–1999) of the 1950s. Poetry in this ideologically interpellated stance tends to be anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal, and committed to class and national struggle. Poetics collapses the lyrical and the polemical, while striving to objectify its utterance, to reach for its goal and target. Its dramatizations and attempts to distance the poet from the poem and allow multiple voices find, in al-Bayātī's "The Village Market," a good example.⁷⁸ The devotional nature of this poetics manifests itself in speech-like language, daily usage, and popular sentiments with no effort to court the classical language of the *qaṣīdah*.

2 This same outlook may give way to counter-identification, too, for, to use Issa Boullata's re-phrasing of Pécheux, it "rejects the identity inscribed in the ruling ideological practices, thus remaining more or less subordinate to what it opposes."⁷⁹ In responding to tradition or engaging modernization, poetry here borrows from both. Contamination is the imprint, which even paratextual devices such as dedications cannot dislodge. Almost every modern poet betrays this double indebtedness. Even when al-Bayātī addresses, for example, a poem to the "reactionary poet T. S. Eliot," he cannot release his subtext from the presence of his forebear's ghost. T. S. Eliot's influence on that generation "was eruptive and insistent," writes

Jabrā I. Jabrā, especially as “. . . the people who read him most and translated him and commented on his work were themselves the leading young writers and poets of the new generation.”⁸⁰ He further adds that Eliot was to him and his generation “an articulate and concise advocate of new incipient thoughts.”⁸¹ With this impact, poets in their early maturation cannot resist the attachment, especially as Eliot’s discontent and criticism of a dying civilization, along with his readings of tradition, offer them a much-needed preparation.

3 “Disidentification,” the penchant to displace and transform the dominating ideology, culminates increasing consciousness against hegemonic discourse, not only against the latter’s neo-patriarchal assimilation of colonialist legacy and its resilient practices to sustain power, but also its manipulation of culture, religion, and history to increase its power and tighten hegemony. Conversely, transformative and deviational poetics resorts to different registers to counter and undermine hegemony. It brings to the foreground historical figures, who stood against oppression and fought for social and political justice. In this epistemological domain, modernist poetics forges its imprint, for the Eliotesque allegiance to “something outside us,”⁸² and the use of objective correlatives from history, mythology, and tradition drives many to develop another line of engagement with indigenous faiths, mythologies, symbols, and historical figures.

Undermining poetics

The “disidentification” process could take a number of positions, not only against tradition at large, but also against practices, realities, and lifestyles that are rife with contradiction, and that manifest a discord between traditional indigenous past and pressing needs. This disidentification may evolve also as an act of negation in transformative poetics. Thus, Adūnīs in an early poem already cited, “The Language of Sin” (1961), expresses utter discontent with heritage at large.

I burn my inheritance, I say that my land
 is virginal, that there are no graves in my youth.
 I am above God and Satan;
 My ways are deeper than theirs.
 In my book I walk
 in the procession of the blazing thunderbolt, in the procession of the green
 thunderbolt,
 I shout—there is no Paradise, no fall after me,
 and I erase the language of sin.⁸³

The poet’s register partakes of the tradition that he debates; yet his use of the “green thunderbolt” shares the symbolism of Qur’anic rejuvenation.

It also shares a Tammūzī register with other poets like al-Sayyāb in his “Death and the River.” If his 1957 poem “Rīshat al-ghurāb” (“The Crown’s Feather”) despairs of endless waiting for a “ship that will circuit the universe,” his perplexity and inability to bring himself to pray should not delude us. In this poem, perplexity signals a spiritual crisis. “I want to kneel, I want to pray / to the owl with the broken wing, / to the embers, to the winds” (Pt. iii: 165).⁸⁴ There is a divided spirit, a broken soul, but there is nonetheless a desire to recreate a communal prayer that works, not only within Sufi perplexity, but also within an ideology of national becoming as postulated by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. The pious and the secular constitute this mixed register. Instead of a theologically ordained prayer, the speaker’s performance indicates an innate Sufi departure from the secular knowledge that he is simultaneously courting: “I want to pray to a perplexed star in the sky, / to death and to disease— / and in my incense burn/ my white days and my songs, / my notebook and the ink, and the inkwell” (Ibid. 165).⁸⁵ Seemingly, there is a rejection of a career, too, yet the following lines turn the poem into a celebration of a communal solidarity effectively endorsed in his other poem, “The New Noah” (1958).⁸⁶ In the “Crown’s Feather,” the speaker says, “I want to pray / to all beings ignorant of prayer” (Ibid.). In “The New Noah” the speaker, Noah, offers a revisionist politic of defiance. “If time rolls back to the beginning / and water immerses the face of life again,” he says, “I will not heed His words” (Ibid. 160). Rejectionist poetics in the 1950s was in keeping with a popular secular model that attracted a number of poets who found in the primeval and the mythical a free zone that allowed them to superimpose a cyclical design of birth and rebirth outside the authority of religion. Rejection of the available finds no better image than that of the woodcutter, as in his other poem “A Vision” (Ibid. 163–64). “And rejection is a woodcutter who lives on / my face—who collects me for burning.” Death and rebirth work in this design of phoenix-like burning.

This rejectionist poetics takes many voices. The Iraqi Buland al-Ḥaydarī (1926–1996), for instance, applies it to monotheism at large as a dehumanizing and oppressive force, with astounding justifications for exploitation. In “Journey of the Yellow Letters” (1968), religion “yellowed letters” to the poor,

For a thousand years, children of my poor village
we have slept the long sleep of history
and worshipped our frightful shadows in your eyes.

(In *When the Words Burn*, 81–82)

The poet’s blame is leveled against institutions that have made use of religious and historical narratives of subordination and submission to enforce supremacy and control while driving the poor further into poverty. Its immediate context is socio-political, for poets strive to uncover sham practices and double standards, which they usually associate with fake *mullabs* (religious

shaykhs or jurists). In this vein, they focus also on distorted lifestyles, mixed agendas, and superficial amalgams of ancient and modern attitudes. In the latter mood, the Palestinian Muṛīd al-Barghūthī (b. 1944) writes “Al-Qabā’il” (The Tribes 1978) that pictures tribalism as a state of mind. Using the “tent” as a trope for a Bedouin frame of mind that makes use of the offers of bourgeois life, the speaker says:

Our tribes regain their charm:
 Tents and more tents
 tents of tranquil stone, their pegs are tile and marble
 inscriptions on the ceiling, velvet paper covering the walls
 the family portraits and “La Gioconda”
 facing a tablet with inscriptions
 to repel the evil eye
 beside the diploma of a son
 framed in gold, coated with dust.
 Tents, and a glass window
 it is the trap for young girls, who look out from it and tremble for fear
 their young sister or brother might tell the grown-ups.
 Vapor rises from the tea, whiskey and soda
 and “I do not like wine” and “excuse me”
 “did you manage with the fourth wife?”
 Tents and more tents
 the chandeliers illuminate opulent furnishings
 flies of speech dance through them
 In and out of brass gates draped with chains
 Our tribes retain their charm
 now that the tribes are out of date!⁸⁷

Irony and juxtaposition hold the poem together in a secular terrain. The main thrust of the poem lies thematically in its focus on a bourgeois temper of contradictory beliefs and applications, tied to an old mentality and sham set of ethics and moralities while clinging to Western icons in a pretentious stance of modernity.

This crystallization of socio-political issues may confirm what Nizār Qabbānī cited as a paradoxical temper. Yet, the Palestinian Muṛīd Barghūthī depicts a specific case: the mixed morality and outlook of the emerging bourgeoisie. His subtle irony exposes a class that has become the main target of social and literary criticism, and the butt of narrative satire. Poetry goes further to question mixed agenda and expectations. The persona in the Jordanian Amjad Nāṣir’s (b. 1955) poem “Manfā” (1982, “Exile”) would like to think that the recreation of an indigenous lifestyle in a foreign land can be quite accommodating and salutary.⁸⁸ In “Exile,” which was written while he was in Beirut, the persona comes to realize, however, that memory and

recollected ways of speech and behavior operate so actively only because of the need for self-deceit and wishful thinking as a defensive strategy against an alienating reality abroad.

You see
We haven't changed that much
Perhaps not at all
Our words are still
Strong, clear
the way we Bedouins talk
long embraces
 asking after family and herds
 laughing thunderously
 the scent of old wood
 stored in barns
 still breathes from our clothes⁸⁹

In a self-congratulatory gesture and appeasing discourse, the persona gathers pieces of evidence to convince the listener, perhaps his divided self, that all is well with his Bedouin identity, as if the latter were a jumble of gestures, attitudes, habits, and ways of speech.

you see
we haven't changed that much
perhaps not at all
 we still squat on the earth
 wash lines still block
 the doors to our houses
 our children covered with dust
while in the evenings over mint tea
 we exchange gossip
 that refreshes

(Ibid.)

The underlying irony takes issue with a number of practices that are tribal to the core, but they remain resilient as ways of life, nevertheless, even when people have been in touch with other cultures and societies. Irony undermines a traditional poetics of vengeance, and invites the reader as listener to participate in the effort to expose a discourse of double standards.

we still avenge our honor
our blood
has not changed to water
we live

as if still living in al-Mafraq
 or Salt, Karak or Ramtha
 as if we hadn't crossed
 northern borders
 to big cities and coasts
 where cruel war rages
 and a great sea roars
 where strangers clutch at each other's shirt collars,
 from balconies
 Shoot bullets through wash lines

(Ibid.)

These intimations are ironic for another reason, however. The speaker is no longer the same as his compatriots back home. With this self-critique, he can no longer fit into a Bedouin community that lives also in reciprocal relationship with the urban center. Homecoming sounds impossible, and memory strives to establish another homeland free of tribalism. In poetry, these recollections explode myths of good life in exile, and lead the reader to the complexity of relocation. Memory becomes a trap, and assimilation a myth.

This engagement with issues of traditional life, scenes of dislocation, and conflicting models and mentalities, is no less fertilizing than sites of superimposed visions. The poetics here reaches to the deep concerns of narrative and drama, and involves its encapsulations in greater tension. The effort enhances the 1950s' preoccupations with the worn out attitudes and inhuman practices that linger in the background of change, as Nāzik al-Malā'ikah does in "Washing off Disgrace" and "My Silence"; but they are released in poetic horizons of expectation and invitation of change and joy, as in Munā Sa'ūdī's "So Drunk am I with the Night, the Air, and the Trees."⁹⁰

In Munā Sa'ūdī's poem, the speaker probes another juxtaposed frame, whereby commercial dealings and bourgeois life drive the addressee into oblivion and neglect. The poem fits into a feminist critique that looks on the speaker's freedom in terms of deliberate release from old and new shackles, of worn out customs and commercial spirit. The poem borrows from ancient poetry the sense of freedom and challenge, but it takes from new poetics the postmodernist self-awareness of marginalization. The speaker sees the self as the one ignored and marginalized, not due to traditional ethics and misapplication of Islamic law, but because of a reigning commercial spirit. This sense of self is augmented through a counter self-awareness of rapturous fusion into the boundless and the vast. The sea and the waves become liberating horizons that enable the soul to roam freely.

So drunk am I with the night, the air, and the trees
 So drunk, I enfold the seas of forgetfulness.

When the shore appears, I bend away with my mast
Towards the endlessness of the waters
Counting the waves: wave by wave

The empowering sense of freedom and release gives her a new voice, a voice that shapes the newly emerging poem of little cares, personal occupations, and details beyond the rhetoric of ideology that distinguishes the neoclassical poem.

I yell at the sea:
More of your remoteness.
Fortitude is futile, frustration and conversations
go on and on around the fireplace.
The days have numbers, the faces have names
And the masks mime according to the time
recorded on the clock in the
piazza of the city.

This voice achieves a sense of freedom through a self-critique which is central to this new consciousness. It is only through self-interrogation that the speaker can understand the reasons behind the present estrangement from tradition and community. Both are replaced by new commercialism, leaving the speaker a solitary individual.

Selling is a god, Buying is a god. And you,
they have abandoned you. They let you fall
into oblivion, yes, you:
the distant traveling of the unknown in the
darkness: the drunkenness of the night and the air.
So drunk am I with the night, the air, and the trees
I have carried you, Sea, upon my forehead
You that carry no name, the journey to the unseen
through you and in you, the whole
universe is reduced to the circles of the water:
the tides of death and birth
And the silence *of* the migrating birds
Between the poles.

The poem works its navigation through topography of waters, waves, and shores that are mapped by birds, the speaker's correlatives for the free soul beyond limits and borders.

You, migrating birds:
Go tell the shores you are reaching

The sea is coming to wash the cities
 To sweep the masks that are numbered
 According to the rites of the marketplace
 (The bowing, the creeping, and the fear.)

The sea evolves as a trope for a new poetics of rejuvenation and change.

The sea is coming with the verses of the
 pregnant stones:
 Action is the word and Refusal of the old.
 The sea is coming.⁹¹

Imagery derives its indices from fertile myths, with the sea as the encompassing image of enforced change. The Biblical deluge can sweep away corruption, negligence, and commercialism. In its juxtapositions and recreations of images of the boundless, the poem invites the scenic devices of traditional poetry to represent a sense of the vast and the boundless that is also correlative of freedom. In other words, the poem manipulates a poetics of subversion that gains steadily in impetus within a context of cultural negotiation, as attested to by publications and conferences in the 1950s and 1960s.

Which tradition in the Rome conference (1961)?

As poems of identification, counter-identification, and disidentification multiply, we may need to read through their background, for consciousness operates on needs and outcomes, as much as it derives from them. Socio-political concerns as well as visionary impositions constitute a cultural awareness in which poets participate with a sense of commitment and passion. Although agenda and faiths have varied since the 1950s, references to them early on in that period took the modernity–tradition nexus as a starting point in relation to issues of background ethics and morality. The effort to justify poetic recreations of present concerns and expectations drove major voices to develop a theoretical framework, whereby they could navigate between the past and the present, especially in matters of innovation, change, and their bearing on present life and literature. The Rome Conference of 1961 was an important historical moment as far as these issues relate to the modernity/tradition dialectic. Citing Abū Tammām's (804–845) innovatory stance as both an exemplary appropriation of ancient poetics and a challenge to servile imitation, poets like ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd (Adūnīs) came up with a modernist poetics of some complexity and richness. To justify a position, to criticize social and political evils, or to vie for poetic freedom, many poets, like him, made use of dedications or recollections of ancestors. Poetic strategies, including masks and personae, multiplied along with paratextual reference and historical

recording. Poetic quality varied among practitioners too, and whereas there was richness in some texts, a hurried recovery of historical detail might end up in cheap and superficial recollection.

The Rome Conference on Arabic literature entitled *Al-Adab al-‘Arabī al-mu‘āṣir* (Contemporary Arabic Literature) was not out of context. Adūnīs’ role in debates of modernity and tradition was of great significance. One way of dealing with his role within this complexity in order to reach an understanding of modern Arabic poetics is to refer to the proceedings of the Conference, October 16–20, 1961. The US Information Agency and its World Organization for Freedom of Culture sponsored the conference, in association with the Italian Oriental Institute and the journal *Tempo Presenta*. The sessions dealt with significant issues, and participants included Jabrā I. Jabrā, Adūnīs, Yūsuf al-Khāl, Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, Albert Hourani, Simon Jargy, S. K. Jayyusi, Muḥammad Barrādah, Muḥammad Mzālī, later Premier of Tunisia for many years, ‘Ā’ishah ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (Bint al-Shāṭī’), M. Berger, Jamāl Aḥmad, F. Gabrieli, and Muḥammad al-Fāsī.

The challenge of the modern in the Arab world since the mid-1940s, and perhaps until the 1970s, was prompted and colored by the politics of urgency, especially insofar as the Palestinian question is concerned. It was imbued with Cold War politics and their aftermath. Against imperial and multinational interests in the geopolitics and natural resources of the region, the political assumed greater urgency than the social. The poet, who was intellectually committed to such issues, was bound to develop a register of potency to measure up to an agenda of some sort, be it personal, national, or ideological. This agenda, sometimes hidden and sometimes conspicuous, was at the heart of heated discussions and oblique criticisms. Indeed, we need to go back to Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā’s emphasis on the precious literariness of the text and set it against al-Bayātī’s biting criticism of liberal poetics to understand the literary and cultural climate since the 1950s. Political urgency itself might have led to a counter-reservation against political engagement, probably prompted by fear of lapsing into jargon and emotional rhetoric. Both positions, along with in-between stands, make up a rich and complex poetics.

The majority of the attendees belonged to the liberal tradition, along with some from nationalist orientations. From among the left, one can probably cite Muḥammad Barrādah (from Morocco). Many in attendance were intellectuals who were dismayed by the growing leftist upsurge in Arab cultural life. Others like the Iraqi Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb changed positions after some disagreements with the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), but also because of a personal need for attention at a time when the Party enlisted many competing figures on its side. Around that time the journal *Ḥiwār* (Beirut) and its counterpart in London, *Encounter* (whose editor-in-chief, Stephen Spender, was also a discussant at the Rome Conference), were accused of having Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) support. Even *Shīr* (Poetry, 1957–1964), whose owner was Yūsuf al-Khāl (1917–1987) and editor-in-chief Adūnīs, suffered

such accusations. Nevertheless, it survived attacks and bequeathed its legacy to another journal, *Mawāqif* (Stations), which was started in 1968 in London. The renowned Egyptian Marxist Luwīs ʿAwaḍ (1915–1994) wrote against these journals.⁹² Al-Bayātī also never tired of alluding to this history.⁹³

While strongly divided into factions with agenda and platforms like the Lebanese journals *Al-Ādāb* (The Arts), *Al-Ṭarīq* (The Road), and *Shīr*, and the Egyptian *Al-Tbaqāfab* (Culture), the literati of the 1950s and the 1960s had to cope with the challenge of the modern with its political underpinnings. Despite conflicting priorities, one can detect among these literary factions a tendency to copy each other, and to duplicate terms, values, and whole registers of political, aesthetic, and cultural accentuations and affiliations, whenever traditions and literary history were called into question. It should not be surprising, therefore, that criticism itself was tinged with a partisan taste or a counter-drive to set things right. Although the voices battling for precedence among the pioneers of the Free Verse Movement were trapped in historical records and formalistic assessments, there were also readings by nationalists like Kāzīm Jawād and fellow poets like al-Sayyāb, which tended to find fault with al-Bayātī's poetry or to trace plagiarisms here and there.⁹⁴ Taking the opposite position were the solid scholar and critic Iḥsān ʿAbbās (d. 2003) and Nihād al-Takarī (b. 1925), who cited al-Bayātī as the pioneer in modernity.⁹⁵ Al-Bayātī's priorities were social and political, but his meticulous care for ascendancy drove him to study every poet, including his living rivals like al-Sayyāb and, later, Adūnīs. Indeed, al-Bayātī's Sufi poems carry numerous echoes from Adūnīs, before the unmediated engagements of the former since the early 1970s with Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) and Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 922).

The dialectics of tradition and modernity

However, both al-Bayātī and Adūnīs are attuned to experimentation. Whereas al-Bayātī is keen on underlining his inventory and reiterating his landmarks in a poetic topography of kingdoms, homelands, and underworlds, Adūnīs dilutes and erases. It is no wonder that his tendency to open up tradition and religion beyond sacred principles passed undetected before the growth of fundamentalism since the late 1980s.

Adūnīs' importance for any study of the intersectional dialectic of tradition and modernity is beyond doubt. His intensive grounding in literary tradition at an early time enabled him not only to manipulate heritage and use its sources in an Eliotesque manner, but also to disseminate such a tendency among his counterparts, leading a completely poetic endeavor thereafter into expanding domains of intertextual negotiation beyond the impasse of the Free Verse formalist innovation. Nāzīk al-Malā'ikah (1923–) dwelt on the issue of social roots of the Free Verse Movement, but her endeavor was prompted by the urgency to legitimize innovation using classical roots and

tenets and the modern appropriation of classical prosody, as manifested in her *Ādāb* articles which made up her later book on criticism.⁹⁶ Her concerns were with acquainting readers with the movement, before battling her counterparts whom she deemed irresponsible for their total defiance of tradition.⁹⁷ Adūnīs, on the other hand, led the movement beyond this impasse. Taking advantage of the dismay among the literati at the growing political jargon among the leftists, he brought into poetry a new spirit that was responding to change through an understanding of tradition as a name for diversity. Although negotiating his poetics with care, he nevertheless invited attacks and criticism from associates and opponents.

Although poets of the 1950s shared an agenda for modernity and innovation, their positions regarding tradition were not uniform. Al-Sayyāb's criticism was directed against the *shā'ir al-khaṭābah al-kilāsīkiyyah*, the poet of classical oratory, meaning his mentor and patron al-Jawāhirī (1903–1996).⁹⁸ Al-Bayātī looked upon tradition as a mixture of everything, to be selectively used. Even predecessors like al-Mutanabbī were reduced categorically to beggars and panegyrists on the one hand, and rebels and dissidents on the other.⁹⁹ His Mutanabbī is the one who leaves behind that outworn self, his "shoes," to be up to the challenge, which he sets in his poems of revolt. Regarding Adūnīs, there is an incomplete process of modernity and renewal in tradition, which invites a further shift beyond fixity in forms and values. One is tempted to analyze the poet's position in view of some pronouncements by Baudelaire. The latter says, "Modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art, of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable."¹⁰⁰ Adūnīs built on the modernity constant in his theory of dialectical exchange and struggle. His framework for a nexus of modernity and tradition elicited Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā's criticism at the Rome Conference, for Jabrā argued that modernism needs no historical context.¹⁰¹ As an active member among the literati of the period with great attachment to the westernization of literature, Jabrā developed a method of reasoning that attempted to account for change in the educated class consciousness. The attempt at historical accentuations for modernity bothered him, and he was stronger whenever western poetics was the yardstick. Well-acquainted as he was with Anglo-American literature, he was perhaps aware of Laura Riding's and Robert Graves' *Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), in which they argue for true modernism, as an aesthetically forward movement, with "... faith in the immediate, the new doings of poems (or poets and poetry) as not necessarily derived from history."¹⁰² In a later essay, Jabrā articulates his early argument with Adūnīs in terms of Freudian competitiveness, garbed in neo-historical terms, for the poet "... would have to compete with the great names of the past if he had anything worthwhile to say," he contends, repeating with emphasis Eliot's pronouncements in this respect.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, Jabrā was also attuned to the Eliotesque method of reasoning in respect to his understanding of his own Western tradition. Jabrā drew attention to the sensibility emerging

among the Arabs, as a “history-conscious” one. “. . . there was the new anguish of a vast nation in travail” (Ibid). He argued in bitterness:

The Arabs were suddenly on their own: independent in most cases, but beset by a world that seemed to make a travesty of their independence, with the added trauma of having most of Palestine hacked up into an illogical Zionist state.

(Ibid. 193)

In poetic terms that had already become the leitmotif of the Tammūzī movement, he collapsed the political and the mythological, the ontological and the theological. “A supreme agony, a crucifixion. The poet’s response was severe and radical” (Ibid.).

Jabrā’s identification of the new sensibility is worth noticing, as it offers further justifications for his early pronouncement for engagement with modernity toward change. That phase in Arab life was “. . . history-conscious, humanity-conscious and above all, freedom-conscious” (Ibid.). The implications for modern poetry are deep and many, for the poet has to deploy his consciousness against evil.

In defense of his stance, the poet would now question and expostulate. His poetry, once reveling in oratory, became more and more of a soliloquy, a dramatic monologue, which soon gave its speaker the look and manner of a rather incomprehensible ‘hero,’ an outsider at variance with his society.

(Ibid.)

We can tell that Jabrā tried to account for the impulse of the modern against a rhetorical tradition, whereas Adūnīs took his grounding in heritage as a starting point to establish a comprehensive poetic.

Nevertheless, Adūnīs raised more questions and objections, and proved to be more controversial. The English poet Stephen Spender, as a discussant and participant at that conference, had some reservations against what he deemed as Adūnīs’ radical shift beyond Arabic heritage.¹⁰⁴ In other words, Adūnīs’ theorizations at Rome in 1961 raised a variety of questions and provoked a number of positions of great bearing on issues of modernity and tradition.

Adūnīs: the challenge of tradition

Adūnīs’ concern with modernity cuts across chronology, for modernity is a constant, an ongoing process that resists closure and fixity. It is no wonder that his Rome Conference paper addresses tradition as the context within which modernity works its way in poetic strategies. This view still sustains his writings, but was not easily condoned by classical critics in the 1960s.

His contribution to the Rome Conference had the following title: “Al-Shi‘^c al-‘Arabī wa-mushkilāt al-tajdīd” (Arabic Poetry and the Problematic of Innovation, *Proceedings* 171–91). In twenty pages, he unwittingly follows Ibn al-Mu‘tazz’ (d. 296/908) model in *Kitāb al-Badī‘* (Book of the new, written in 274 H).¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Mu‘tazz tends to vindicate Abū Tammām and the innovators obliquely and in terms of denial, for both the “definable” rhetoric, embellishments, and extant innovations are already there in classical sources, and the *badī‘* should not be seen therefore as an anomaly.¹⁰⁶ Adūnīs also expounds on innovation and modernity in contemporary poetry as an old practice: “...it is ancient, belonging to the eighth century, in the early ‘Abbāsīd period” (*Proceedings*, 171). It is only at a later stage, in 1971, that he qualifies his early understanding of tradition by reference to French poetic mediations. His reading of Abū Tammām, Abū Nuwās, al-Ma‘arrī, al-Niffarī, and al-Jurjānī, we are told, is informed by his readings of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Nerval, and Rimbaud. The passage in his book reads as follows:

It was reading Baudelaire, which changed my understanding of Abū Nuwās and revealed his particular poetical quality and modernity, and Mallarmé’s work, which explained to me the mysteries of Abū Tammām’s poetic language and the modern dimension in it. My reading of Rimbaud, Nerval and Breton led me to discover the poetry of the mystic writers in all its uniqueness and splendor, and the new French criticism gave me an indication of the newness of al-Jurjānī’s critical vision.¹⁰⁷

French poetic mediations are not originators of some epistemological breakthrough. Nor are they a sole source of influx. We know that Adūnīs was attracted to Eliot, too, and collaborated with Yūsuf al-Khāl in translating Eliot’s poems in 1958. On the other hand, the Eliotesque element was no less invigorating for a Tammūzī tradition in Arabic poetry, which had also among its sources Antūn Sa‘ādah’s (1904–1949) book, *Al-Širā‘ al-fikrī fī al-adab al-Sūrī* (Intellectual conflict in Syrian literature),¹⁰⁸ which calls for a recovery of native mythology, with its emphasis on cyclical regeneration and rebirth. Adūnīs listed the book as “...the first to influence my thought and poetic bent,” for it “had a great impact on a whole generation of poets beginning with Sa‘īd ‘Aql, Ṣalāh Labakī, Yūsuf al-Khāl, Fu‘ād Sulaymān, and Khalīl Ḥāwī.”¹⁰⁹ Sa‘ādah’s book should not be underestimated, as it spoke in terms of regeneration and fertility, and offered its readings of conflict in terms that veer away from the romanticisms of other nationalist ideologies. It also placed its argument within a cultural context that accommodated other views and writings in translation that redrew the map of reading beyond inherited views of tradition. The book’s use of myth as quasi-factual was in tune with the vogue of mythology and the search for roots. Indeed, it was one of the sources for the Tammūzī movement, with its use of Middle Eastern mythology, Biblical and Islamic

traditions, and the offerings of the poetry of Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot. Summing up these sources for the movement in view of As'ad Razzūq's book on myth in contemporary Arabic poetry (1959), Nazeer El-Azma concludes, "This development is a phenomenon of the modern aspiration of the Arabs and their deep longing to be alive and productive in the family of mankind."¹¹⁰

In other words, further readings come at times as illuminating sparks that direct attention to the dynamics of literary heritage, and to the pioneering transgressions of Abū Tammām, his deviations from classical tenets, which Adūnīs incorporated in his challenge of the modern. Citing al-Marzūqī's (d. 1030) enumeration of these classical tenets of the *qaṣīdah*, in the introduction to Abū Tammām's *Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah* (The Book of the Poetry of Zeal/Fortitude), Adūnīs in the Rome Conference *Proceedings* questioned classical critical commitments to the pre-Islamic model as one of irrevocable perfectibility and absolute value (*Proceedings*, 171, 173). Applied to ethics and life, this model, contended Adūnīs, is a yardstick whose measurements are meant to stifle innovation. The propagation of an ideal of fixity and immutability amounts to taking the past as the epitome of the sacred, untouchable, and infallible, for that matter (Ibid. 175). Such an argument works through paradigmatic comparison and contrast, for innovators stand for life and change. As for "the ancient and the traditional," it "makes a gravity center in Arabic culture which understands the human as no more than heir and enhancer" (Ibid. 176).

Modernity as a constant

Adūnīs' literary mind engaged him in generalizations that overlooked discourse analysis and empowered cultural structures despite his subsequent interest in dynamics of change in *Al-Thābit wa- al-mutaḥawwil: Baḥṭh fī al-ittibā' wa- al-ibdā' 'inda al-'Arab*.¹¹¹ But Adūnīs' introductory critique in the Rome Conference *Proceedings* could be taken as a pioneering critical insight that regards modernity as an ongoing process whose pioneers in the classical period were many (Ibid. 177), beginning with Muslim Ibn al-Walīd (d. 823) and later Abū Tammām (d. 846). Language in this poetics is a living thing that responds to experience, tension, and passion. Culture itself should be liberated from edification toward freedom and expansion. Poetry is not craft and expression, but creation and vision, he argued, to vindicate his poetics of transgression (Ibid. 181). Certainly, the Adūnīs of Rome had already noticed his precursor's achievement, especially in his deep awareness of the inward underpinnings of language. Although not articulated, one may assume that the Adūnīs of Rome was aware of the precursor's engagement with the "the deep ritual structure—the Ancient Near Eastern paradigms of sacrifice," as studied by Suzanne P. Stetkevych.¹¹² The precursor's studied recourse to the mythical, as well as his transgression against the established *qaṣīdah* formula were, perhaps, in the descendant's mind, as testified to by Adūnīs' emulation of the *Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah* in his own *Dīwān al-Shīr*

al-ʿArabī (Anthology of Arabic poetry),¹¹³ with its thematic divisions and literary preferences. In these practices, Adūnīs followed a selective method to bring together samples that meet his poetic practice. Leaning on the Sufi Shaykh Ibn ʿArabī’s (d. 1240) phrase “transgression of the habitual,” Adūnīs argues that creativity entails transgression, not obedience and subordination. He derives support for his view of the human as an exuberant entity in process from another saying by Ibn ʿArabī, for the human is a “totality,” not a division, a sum, or a particle (*Proceedings*, 181). His emphasis on such issues as totalization in mythical superimpositions, or poetics of synthesis, presence, design, purpose, and creation carry the echoes of modernism in poetry. In this poetics of modernism, creation stands against imitation, and progression against fixity, as Ihab Hassan explains.¹¹⁴

With an introductory critique and a validation of modernism as a constant beyond periodization, the Adūnīs of the Rome Conference had to intertextualize his poetics of transgression within tradition, for the “...connection to heritage should be one of creativity, supplementation and precedence” (Ibid. 184). He suggested that,

while we . . . are far, historically and culturally, from Abū Nuwās, for example, we are close to him. Nevertheless, we still have our own being and specific experience. While we should be aware of this connection, we have to be aware of our separation from him, too.

(Ibid.)

The demand for a new poetics to go beyond the circumstantial imperatives of a constant was at the heart of the modernist drive, to be sure. Whether in Khalīl Ḥawī’s poems, Yūsuf al-Khāl’s canticles of *Al-Bīʿr al-mahjūrah* (The Deserted Well, 1958), or al-Bayātī’s poems since the 1960s, especially *Asbʿār fī al-manfā* (Poems in Exile, 1961), there was a common commitment to work out a modernist poetics with Tammūzī paradigms of rebirth. “Every year Tammūz was believed to die, passing away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world, and . . . every year his divine mistress [Ishtar or Astarte] journeyed in quest for him,” writes James Frazer. “During her absence the passion of love ceased to operate: men and beasts alike forgot to reproduce their kinds: all life was threatened with extinction.” Return and revival were dependent on the great god Eanna’s intervention, and the stern queen of infernal regions “. . . reluctantly allowed Ishtar to be sprinkled with the Water of Life,” and to depart with her lover to the upper world.¹¹⁵ National ideology throughout the 1950s took the place of deity, and mythical patterns of death and rebirth became the political motivations for national revivalism against a background of stagnation. Applied to literature, this movement from death to rebirth meant a movement from “. . . oratory to vision, from subjects to experience, to intuition, logical and rational sequentiality to unity of experience,” within a search for becoming.¹¹⁶

Not all poets share the specific emphasis on the visionary and the prophetic. While different from other modernists like Jabrā, especially in respect to modernity as an ahistorical constant, Adūnīsian poetics was mainly a challenge to leftist poetics, which argued throughout the period in question for an urgent engagement with present evils, including authoritarianism and exploitation. Leftist poetics shared the agenda for innovation, the creative involvement in tradition, and the emancipation from hegemonic discourse. However, its early advocates like the Iraqī poet al-Bayātī (d. 1999), insisted on immediacy, too, in view of urgent issues. Adūnīs reacted against the “mechanical” response as an expression of “poor artistic perspective,” as he argued in another publication.¹¹⁷

To understand Adūnīs in terms of the relation between his early poetics and his writings of the 1970s, a further note may prove worthwhile. The underlying thesis in Adūnīs targets authority. “The emphasis on a connectedness to tradition is practiced by the inherently dominating forces, unifying thereby their domination of the system and their control of speech, for the single purpose of enhancing their culture and hegemony.”¹¹⁸ These forces manipulate theological discourse to preempt criticism and equate power control with religious infallibility. In line with Foucauldian analysis, and with a tinge from Bakhtin, the poet as critic targets unitary discourse as a fossilized one that ends up “in the sealed eternal text of religion.” Conversely, he opts for a poetry that opens up boundaries, and assumes multiple layering, “joining the visible to the invisible,” to be the language “of the edges” that “flays words and in so doing expresses the world.”¹¹⁹ In relation to poetry, he charges literary criticism with imitativeness and dormancy.

Most Arab critics express the same notion [using the past as the measurement for the present and the future], for as much as poetry is close to the origin, its owner becomes a recognized poet. The origin is a static and fixed point around which poets revolve. But they lose in value whenever they are at a distance from this origin.

(Ibid. 114–15)

This whole discussion is couched in paradigmatic antithetical frames of reference that leave some space for the vertical whenever things cannot square. The underlying assumption relates to hegemonic culture, that of the status quo, “. . . as established, like the system, on the proclaimed adherence to fundamentals, and preservation of inherited values, as they stand or as they are inherited” (The Immutable and the Mutable, 1: 22). This culture, “. . . as it proclaims, is literal, fundamental, and referential,” he argues in *Al-Thābit wa- al-mutahawwil* (Ibid.).

Adūnīs’ discourse resembles Foucauldian analysis. In more than one instance, he also believes that discourse, to use Said’s paraphrase of Foucault, “overrides society and governs the production of culture,” for discourse is

a “regularizing collectivity...itself governed by the archive.”¹²⁰ Adūnīs’ search for power relations as they operate through literary discourse is rigorously upheld. To sustain his systematic pairing, he neglects competitive layering within each text. He ends up with a tendency to groupings and divisions subsuming conceptualized tradition. Foucault cautions against the notion of tradition, which, under such groupings, becomes a circulation of “history in the form of the same,” in order “to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin.”¹²¹ Had he resorted to an “archeological method” with a focus on texts as part of a larger network that invites a “countervailing power of criticism...to bring the text back to a certain visibility,” to use Said’s summation of Foucault’s discourse analysis (*The World*, 184), Adūnīs might have escaped generalizations. Comparison with other cultures might have proved useful in this instance to distance the discussion and bring into it other comparable situations where readings of tradition, origin, and classical discourse would have helped in exploding the mystique of the past and uncovering its inner workings. Adūnīs lists as follows the literary repercussions of this classical discourse: (1) The separation between language and meaning, form and content; (2) the view of poetry as a craft; (3) the sacralization of poetic heritage; (4) the prominence of the jurist as representative of Arab civilization; (5) the emphasis on consensus; and (6) the glorification of the past as the perfect, against which both the present and the future “are symbols of degeneration and decadence;” he adds in *Al-Thābit wa- al-mutaḥawwil* (1: 111–16).

Adūnīs’ “mutable” element as a historical dynamic survives in dissent with its outspoken manifestoes and daring opposition. Here, he could have served as “...a counter memory for the text,” to use Said’s words again (*Ibid.*), and searched for the unsaid in the dominating literary discourse as well, in the writings of such ‘Abbāsīd apologetics as al-Jāḥiẓ. As Foucault argues in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, “The manifest discourse...is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this ‘unsaid’ is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said” (*Ibid.* 25). The opposing culture is the dissenting voice that offers different interpretations and interrogates platitudes and assumptions to the extent of creating a political consciousness that is in tune with major political incursions and popular uprisings (*Al-Thābit wa- al-mutaḥawwil*, 1: 223–57).

While fundamental tenets are behind hegemonic discourse, in literary terms they imparted the “...tendency to oratory edification,” says Adūnīs (*Ibid.* 1: 141). In another instance and with cogent phrase, the poet-critic argues the case in terms of hegemonic strictures and ideological manipulation. Ideology attempts to entangle the poetic in its battle, emptying it of its potential freedom, and reproducing it as a political text. In search for an originary unity, nationalist ideology “perceives the poetic text as a battleground between ideas and current tendencies: it makes the poetic text a political text.”¹²²

Adūnīs' early association between the critical reliance on ancient authority and the seemingly resultant dormancy cannot hold for long, for his examples fluctuate, offering both vindications and refutations of this association. The opposing creative impulse has existed since ancient times, as manifested in the supremacy of the personal in Imru' al-Qays' poetry. "He behaved, acted and thought in terms that defy the tribal system and its dominant values" (*Al-Thābit wa- al-mutaḥawwil*, 1: 260). Its flowering is a modernist one that cuts across tradition while building on the sense of an epistemological lack or vacuum, not perfection, in the past. This lack is to be remedied by creativity or borrowing from other cultures. Its landmarks are the emphasis on creative freedom, endless discovery and search, plurality, difference, and multiculturalism (Ibid. 1: 19–21). In a word, the overall Adūnīsian critique stems from a cultural overview of literary and political history as directed and overruled by a hegemonic discourse that, if met with resistance, becomes even more resilient. In this he is not different from his modernist counterparts, but he is more advanced and sophisticated in putting theory and practice together in a legible form.

Al-Bayātī's tradition

A brief note may be desirable in respect to the Iraqi poet al-Bayātī (d. 1999), who flourished in the early 1950s as a leftist, with a daring interest in experimentation. He was already well-established when Adūnīs' presence began to be felt. His recognition as the most challenging among the pioneers was partly real and partly a myth, for leftist politics was in need of a respectable name that could fit well in the call for progress and change. The Iraqi poet al-Sayyāb (d. 1964) was passing through difficult times, including a debate of the mind with itself, as he was worried lest his leftist politics detract from his poetic finesse. The rising recognition of his counterpart drove him gradually away toward the other camp, where Adūnīs and others were to gather around a journal of their own, *Sbi'r* (Poetry). Al-Bayātī shared with this other camp a distrust of "castrated poetry," poetry of generalizations and clichés that fit into authoritarian discourse and hegemonic culture,¹²³ but he also related the inner poetic self to a stage in Arabic life that suffered castration. Poetry for him could reveal a great deal about the society itself, yet it could act on it, too. In other words, he derived his early poetics mainly from a politics of historical materialism, before embarking at a later stage on a conciliatory poetics of both urgency and vision, finding in the archetypal image of the rover enough substantiation in tradition to account for the modernist sense of dislocation, as I will argue in the last chapters. The persona as a rover sums up the poet's own experience. It is only through a spiral inner journey, correlatively delineated through his own personal experience of exile, and away from the factors that have led to stagnation and death, that poetry resurrects itself (Ibid. 158). Al-Bayātī equates the interior journey

with an exilic movement, a restless journey among lands and places, which also occurs as such in other texts by his contemporaries, for Adūnīs' Miḥyār, for instance, is "Like a song visiting us stealthily / On the grey roads of exile."¹²⁴ In a February 1999 interview (in *Al-Abram Weekly*), al-Bayātī looks upon the topographical journey as correlative to the inner one:

I have always searched for the sun's springs. When a human being stays in one place, he is likely to die. People too stagnate like water and air. Therefore, the death of nature, of words, of the spirit has prompted me to keep traveling, to encounter new suns, new springs, and new horizons. A whole new world being born.¹²⁵

Whenever the poet escapes this reality, there is a possibility of a new "dawn."¹²⁶ Hence, al-Bayātī would not take popularity and vogue as symptoms of renewal and rebirth. On the contrary, he looks upon the career of the popular poet Nizār Qabbānī (1923–1996) as bourgeois and clownish.

He is not a poet in the revolutionary, human, and universal sense. He is not a poet of suffering, but like those singers who appear everyday then disappear and die like flies in a cloudy winter. As I mentioned in my collection *Al-Nār wa- al-Kalimāt* in the poem "Abū Zayd al-Surūjī" [*sic*] (1964), he always reminds me of those eunuch poets in the *maqamat* [*sic*] of al-Ḥarīrī, but in a more sophisticated manner. I described Abū Zayd al-Surūjī in the poem as the disease and the plague in periods of defeat, followed by locusts and crows. . . . This is not a single figure but a type of all artists and poets who have resembled him throughout history and this type may appear at any time but in a new disguise.¹²⁷

I have quoted al-Bayātī's comment at length not only to draw attention to the diversity in outlook among poets of the same generation, but also to underline the use of analogy and comparison whenever the present scene is at issue.¹²⁸ While making use of the synchronic and diachronic, al-Bayātī looks upon tradition and modernity as interchangeably present. They manifest themselves in figures and attitudes, in performance and outlook. A historical literary figure is recalled to substantiate a contemporary image or point of view. Time remains cyclical albeit with deviations and transgressions. Like many of his contemporaries, especially the practitioners of mythical foregrounding, al-Bayātī looks upon the present with a synchronic focus that takes codes, allusions, and historical referentiality as a common property shaped by taste and readership and made available through public education. The case is not the same with Adūnīs, however, who looks upon the present as a rupture with a past that suffers from fixity but undergoes crisis, too. As I will argue in another place, there is no better evidence

of difference in vision and use of myth than in their opposite use of Astarte/Ishtar.

Poetic career: Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr

However, having said this, there are stages in each poet's outlook, and poetic inventories fuse into each other much more easily than clear-cut classifications. At a later stage, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr (1931–1981) would reach the understanding that "... heritage is not an immutable legacy, but a mutable one, for the past lives only within a present, and every poem which cannot prolong its life towards the future does not deserve to be part of tradition."¹²⁹ Nevertheless, such an understanding was reached only after he devoted the years 1964–1965 to a rereading of tradition, which led him to select and reject various aspects of tradition and literary heritage, within a broad understanding of culture (Ibid.). It was that understanding which enabled him to look upon the knowledge of roots and origination as no more than an acquaintance to help understand heritage and tradition in a better light. It should not be a matter of allegiance and belonging, for the more one reads, the better-qualified one is to enjoy some portions of tradition, which also make it easy to understand and enjoy other cultures.

In the last years I got used to the feeling of closeness to poets from all over, from whatever period, to the extent that my literary heritage includes Abū al-ʿAlāʾ, Shakespeare, Abū Nuwās, Baudelaire, Ibn al-Rūmī, Eliot, the pre-Islamic poets and Lorca, along with many other figures, poems, thoughts and poetic speculations.

(Ibid. 155)

In other words, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr's belated remarks tend to trust taste first. Tradition loses its national reference within such a broad acculturation. The latter endows the speaker with new measurements. "My guide in choosing and selecting within my own heritage is its value in any language, and its voicing of the human condition, not necessarily in its own language, nor its portrayal of its own times" (Ibid. 159). If this is the case, tradition becomes more of a personal choice, which goes even beyond Adūnīs' mediators from among the Arab classicists and the Europeans. In specific literary terms, classical discussion of innovation and modernity is of little or no consequence to Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr. He may have ruled out the larger context of anxiety, but its complications remain to be investigated and traced in his poems, especially the dramatic pieces where Sufism becomes another channel to mediate modernity and tradition in its socio-political ramifications.

Drama, in this sense, is another medium to come to terms with a knotted problematic beyond the available poetic means. It is also an attestation to the need of poetic prose to engage complexity, its many ramifications in material

reality and history, in a nexus of modernity and tradition. In ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s readings as well as in the readings of other poets of his generation and their disciples and opponents, prose as a mediated genre, and prose as prosimetrum (i.e. a mixture of prose and verse) emerges in its own right. Its genealogical succession assumes significance, as the modern poets go beyond the early classical discussions of rhetoric toward autobiographical investigation of selfhood at the thresholds of modernity, postmodernity, and tradition with its variegated legacy of Odes, lyrics, short sayings, aphorisms, popular poetry, and embeddings. As the next chapter argues, poets’ concerns and engagements with their past gained more urgency under the pressure of modernity, yet the proximity of the latter stimulated new outlooks and enhanced new insights into the past and the present, demanding a corresponding critique of multiple accentuations and a variety of strategies to cope with the growing corpus of modern poetry.

POETIC STRATEGIES

Thresholds for conformity and dissent

Who will buy the history of my forefathers for a day of freedom?
(Maḥmud Darwīsh, *Splinters of Bone*, 1974, p. 9)

One way of addressing the modernity–tradition nexus is to assess representative poetics against the poetic practice itself, its reliance on or fusion into textual terrain, including the narrative and the dramatic, and its exchange with precursors. In addition, writers have shown a tendency since the 1950s to dedicate poems to predecessors and contemporaries. The latter tendency was strong, too, among the post-revivalists, during 1930–1990. Especially among the *qaṣīdab* poets, dedications tend to commend, embed, or improve upon the dedicatee. Many reasons may stand behind the phenomenon, as texts fuse into each other, and each poet asserts a lineage, while fighting for a space of his or her own. Among prominent figures, the Iraqi Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī (d. 1997) offers a good example of intertextual engagements. He addressed the Iraqi poets al-Ruṣāfī (d. 1945), al-Zahāwī (d. 1936), and others in more than one poem each. In distinguishing himself from his immediate forebears, the poet is conscious of the effort to present a unique figure, textually advanced to the readers as a presence that overshadows or surpasses the rest. In Bloom’s terms, “poets differentiate themselves into strength by troping or turning from the presence of other poets,” but the attempt to subsume or ignore a precursor is a sign of anxiety, nevertheless.¹ On the other hand, poets from the young generation may prove more subversive, as they battle an established form, whose “love of language was heady, ecstatic,” for “the poets carried on with the task of reviving words, phrases, and ideas that had remained dormant during five or six centuries of intellectual stagnation,” writes the Palestinian-Iraqi novelist, poet, and critic Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā (d. 1994).²

The neoclassical *qaṣīdab*: Al-Jawāhirī

The case may stand out more emphatically when set against the established neoclassical *qaṣīdab* practice as represented throughout by Muḥammad

Mahdī al-Jawāhirī (1900?–1997), whom Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (d. 1973) rightly described as the epitome of a literary tradition, meaning the classical. Delivering his poem in remembrance of al-Maʿarrī (d. 1058) at the Damascus Poetry Festival (1944), al-Jawāhirī, as usual, performed the recitation as, perhaps, the classicists and their descendants would have practiced it. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn concluded upon listening to al-Jawāhirī. “Al-Jawāhirī stunned me with enchanting eloquence which is the remaining remnant of the right Arabic literary heritage.”³ The phrasing of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s comment should be assessed in view of his own rereadings of heritage. The word “right” calls to mind its opposite “wrong.” The poet’s eloquence and commitment perhaps recalled poetic figures, like al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), to whom Ṭāhā Ḥusayn devoted books. Yet, al-Bayātī, al-Sayyāb, and others criticized al-Jawāhirī. ʿAbd al-Malik Nūrī, the innovator of short story writing in Iraq, thought once (September 21, 1952) of writing a polemic against the Iraqi critic and journalist Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī for publishing an article which lauded the achievement of “the poet of classical oratory.”⁴ As the raging controversy between the two camps—the *qaṣīdab* poets and the innovators—continued unabated, we should not be surprised to find al-Jawāhirī publicly fighting back biting allusions to obsolete poetics. In the Baghdad Poetry Festival of 1969, al-Jawāhirī made use of the occasion to identify with al-Mutanabbī. Both belong to the same region, and his birthplace, Najaf, neighbors al-Mutanabbī’s Kufa, hence the title of the poem, “*Yā ibna al-Furātayn*” (O Son of the Two Euphrates). The poem continues the identification as the forebear’s phantom appears to the speaker as if fresh from that last battle at Dayr ʿĀqūl with Fātik al-Asādī. Nevertheless, the phantom renders time luminous, “a shiny yesterday and a becoming,” with a “face like a dawn beam” and “glittering eye like a twinkling ember.” He is a combination of “the dove and the eagle.” The speaker and the dedicatee are alike in a world of many Kāfūrs.⁵ Taking direction from this analogy, he deplores a present that oppresses the talented and the decent. Both are “*gharīrān*,” innocent and good in “a corrupt world, which they are too sublime to accept.”⁶ Identification occurs for a purpose, and the poet uses the historical construct to address an indifferent or a hostile audience.

Addressing the strong precursor

Comparison and identification is only a threshold, however. Al-Jawāhirī as the strong poet draws on the powerful precursor, al-Mutanabbī, to fight back the oblique criticism of his poetics by Suhayl Idrīs, the editor-in-chief of the formidable journal *Al-Ādāb*. “A friend of mine, whom I don’t deny talent,” says al-Jawāhirī, in reference to the editor-in-chief of the journal *Al-Ādāb*, “means to ‘deny’ the old generation any poetic achievement as if he were the ‘arbiter’ of the poetic scene.”⁷ The poet knows that Idrīs is singling him out by this criticism. He therefore foregrounds his response by relying on posterity,

as the *qaṣīdah* practice has not been outworn or rendered obsolete by time. Its rhyme scheme should not be cited as necessarily negative. The popularity of al-Mutanabbī, he argues in the same poem, indicates that the appeal of poetry in the classical mode continues (Ibid. 358–59).

However, how does al-Jawāhirī address al-Mutanabbī and al-Ma^carrī? And to what extent does his poetic recreation differ from that of his modernist counterparts? In another poem (1935) recited in absentia in Damascus, al-Jawāhirī retraces al-Mutanabbī's personal history and career.⁸ In it soothsayers inform al-Mutanabbī's father about the son, the miracle, and the genius, "Who has signs of immortality," "What a soul is this which looks upon life without challenge as worthless?" (Ibid. 283). His Mutanabbī is unequalled. "What a sea of eloquence, surging with flowing waves of meanings."⁹ As for those who relate talent to affluence, "Brilliance is too sublime to be contained in an elegantly-built mansion/But a poor dimly lit cottage may offer a prophet to the world" (Ibid. 283–84). The emphasis on this aspect of al-Mutanabbī's life should not be bypassed cursorily, for it fits into al-Jawāhirī's advocacy of leftist politics to protect the underprivileged and the downtrodden. Even his al-Ma^carrī, in the celebrated poem of 1944, is a poet and intellectual of great acumen and modesty. "on a mat . . . with a jug of water to sustain him, a mind and shelves of books."¹⁰ Yet this old man surprises and destabilizes attitudes and habits of thought in a world "on which he ponders with compassion and care" (Ibid. 84). That celebrated poem follows, to an extent, the *qaṣīdah* form, as bequeathed in the formulation of Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889).¹¹ Nevertheless, like his ^cAbbāsīd precursors, there is no *raḥīl* section in al-Jawāhirī's poem, and the whole Jawāhirī address is bipartite which focuses on the *nasīb* and the *madīḥ*. As there is no beloved mistress, the site itself, Ma^carrat al-Nu^cmān (near Aleppo), al-Ma^carrī's hometown, assumes the qualifications and connotations of both the abandoned encampment and the beloved mistress. "Halt at al-Ma^carraḥ and gently wipe its dusty cheek / and recall, and be inspired by, the person who overwhelmed the world with his talents."¹² As usual with al-Jawāhirī's dedicatory poems, the panegyric is a threshold for identification, and the speaker usually creates a present site, a configuration of multivoiced opposition whereby dissidents can voice their discontent. Al-Jawāhirī's poetics derives its strength from belonging to tradition in its eloquent rhetorical manifestations of rebellion and opposition as accommodated presently for contemporary concerns. Al-Ma^carrī is a great dissolver of habits, traditions, and conformity, another Messiah in the terrain of culture. "The revolt of thought has a long history which speaks of a thousand Messiahs who have been crucified for its cause."¹³ The *qaṣīdah* form with its traditional resonance receives a new impetus under circumstances of urgency. Immediacy offers these recollections some warmth, whereas the very performance, the eloquent Jawāhirī recitation, invokes historical transference by which the past and the present exchange place. His

poetic poignancy and richness, tinged with leftist sentiments, faith in the masses, engagement with nationalist issues, and wide knowledge, along with his known revelries despite his many exiles, situate him in the very rich nexus of modernity and tradition. Issues of progress, faith in change, resistance to regressive and backward notions are there in abundance in his poetry and practical life. The difference lies in the view of poetry, its forms, language, and adaptability to new styles and ways. Overall, al-Jawāhirī has been a challenge to the modernists. However, this talent is an individual trait in an age that is not very receptive to the classical mode of poetry.

Approaching the glorious legacy: three directions

Perhaps one way of dealing with the poetics of al-Jawāhirī in context is to draw a comparison between his treatment of precursors, especially al-Mutanabbī and al-Ma^carrī, and their presentation in the works of such advocates of modernity as Ṣalāh ^cAbd al-Ṣabūr (1931–1981), Adūnīs (b. 1930), and al-Bayātī (1926–1999). I shall reserve Maḥmūd Darwīsh (b. 1942), Sa^cdī Yūsuf, and the rest for the discussion of dialogization as a textual space of “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses.”¹⁴ The modernity–tradition nexus is already there in the cultural dialogue of the “awakening” period. In 1944, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn retraces his interest in the modernity constant within a West–East encounter: “As the contact between the awakened East and the modern West grew, intellectuals got relatively attracted to Abū al-^cAlā’ [al-Ma^carrī], because they found in the literatures of the West tracks of thought, sensibility, and imagery. They would like to see something similar in Arabic literature, and their desire was greatly appeased when they came upon al-Ma^carrī.”¹⁵ He elaborates on this issue in relation to the unromantic aspect of modernity.

They noticed in Western literatures a poetry which is engaged in philosophy and tackles major issues. When they searched for a corresponding aspect in Arabic literature, they found portions in al-Mutanabbī, and scattered details in Abū Tammām, but it was there in abundance in al-Ma^carrī.¹⁶

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s notion was obviously popular among the literati. The renowned Egyptian playwright Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (d. 1987) was no less attracted to the blind poet, “who was like Homer, imagining things in their sublimity.”¹⁷ The next generation displayed greater preference for al-Ma^carrī. In his *Ḥayātī fī al-shīr* (My Poetic Career), the Egyptian poet Ṣalāh ^cAbd al-Ṣabūr, for instance, says of the classical poet that “life deprived him of eyesight and disappointed him in many ways, but he sublimated himself, much above life and selfhood, to speak of the ‘the human condition,’ and this

is the secret behind his greatness.”¹⁸ The implications here are many, but they also explain the Egyptian poet’s change from the early Romantic position to the Eliotian attitude, from subjectivity to objectification of experience. In the same place, he concludes, “Abū al-‘Alā’ for me is three-fourths of Arabic poetry, and the rest of my heart is divided between Abū Nuwās, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, and others” (Ibid. 159). ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr began his poetic career with imitations of late ‘Abbāsīd precursors, but he developed a perspective of looking upon anecdotal literature and biographical writing as disputed texts that invite interrogation in view of a poetic career and stance. In his 1980 article on Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (973–1057), ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr debates Yāqūt’s (d. 1229) story of the notorious scene in Baghdad, which, supposedly, led to the poet’s self-imposed isolation at Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘man.¹⁹ In ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s view, al-Ma‘arrī’s poetic career, as it shows in his poetry, is primarily influenced by his loss of sight. ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr nevertheless places this within a worldview where even, as the classical poet says, the “most clear-sighted among people is blind as me, let us battle each other in this pitch dark night” (Ibid. 290). As for the attachment that al-Ma‘arrī maintained to al-Mutanabbī, it signifies a stage in al-Ma‘arrī’s career during which he “was infatuated” by al-Mutanabbī’s “stormy and restless life” (Ibid. 291). “Without doubt, he was attracted in his youth not only to al-Mutanabbī’s poetry, but also to his exuberant fighting spirit” (Ibid. 292). ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr could not stop himself from identifying with al-Mutanabbī, “for who could have read al-Mutanabbī without finding himself captivated in taste and soul. Al-Mutanabbī has the attraction of a first love” (Ibid.). Yet al-Ma‘arrī was to outgrow this attraction, as he veered away to develop an independent mind, which “lapsed into rhetoric” and “reference to classical Arabic culture” (Ibid. 296). In this stage, al-Ma‘arrī’s style “is no longer imitative of al-Mutanabbī in resonance and powerful rhythm, but more attuned to the self with its linguistic and cultural richness” (Ibid.). Mapped out in terms of initiation into the classical, in order to surpass precursors on the way to independence, al-Ma‘arrī’s career sets a prototype for the young ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, as his *Ḥayātī fī al-shī‘r* indicates. Arabic literary tradition should have been present in the poet’s mind, as his belatedness accelerates a need to establish an identity in relation to his precursors, as if claiming for himself a specific ancestry among the Arab vagabond poets. In Harold Bloom’s discourse, repressed and belated as it is,²⁰ there is a recognition of this struggle. “Literary tradition begins when a fresh author is simultaneously cognizant not only of his own struggle against the forms and presence of a precursor, but is compelled also to a sense of the Precursor’s place in regard to what came before *him*.”²¹

However, Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s preceding note is significant, not in view of his further reading of al-Ma‘arrī’s texts and his suspicions of a frustrated love affair in Baghdad (*Aqūlū lakum* 299), but more specifically in its emphasis on al-Ma‘arrī’s style, his linguistic fecundity that makes it possible

to articulate his skeptical views within a peculiar vein of ascetics. Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr concludes:

When reaching forty, al-Maʿarrī showed no increase in knowledge, in the language which he had already mastered, the grammar with which he was well-acquainted, religious sects and laws or schools of philosophy upon which he pondered for long. In other words the experience which proved as decisive as to change his life was not intellectual but personal.

(Ibid. 300)

Al-Maʿarrī's *Luzūmiyyāt*, argues Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, shows unwitting attraction to women figures and female metaphors, as if he were an "unrequited lover," unwilling thereafter to repeat his father's wrongdoing in bringing him into this life (Ibid. 301).

ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr and the emulation of independence

ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr's engagement with textual clues to prove a personal element in al-Maʿarrī's poetry should not detract from his emphasis on al-Maʿarrī's independent growth. When read in terms of Stefan Sperl's analysis in *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr's understanding invites further discussion. While making "a concerted attack on all social or ideological hierarchy," as Sperl argues, the *Luzūmiyyāt* dislodges whatever vies for representation to enhance its own presence, "the only remaining force of order," or the "medium itself: speech, and with it the cultural heritage of language."²² Certainly, ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr himself undergoes change. His article of 1980 is unlike, for example, his poem "Abū Tammām" of 1961.²³ In this poem, he simply recreates Abū Tammām (172/788 or 192/808–231/845 or 232/846)²⁴ of the renowned *qaṣīdah* on ʿAmmūriyah (Amorium). The poem draws on analogy to address present political scenes of failure and defeat. Yet in the same collection of 1961, *Aqūlū lakum* (I Say to You), he develops, in the poem that gives the title to the collection, a poetic mixture of irony and apology. The underlying irony sustains a distance that enables the poetic address to penetrate the polished surface of rhetoric and to undermine the whole legacy of classical literature, including its approval of al-Maʿarrī's self-seclusion. The speaker is not al-Mutanabbī, nor is he al-Maʿarrī to choose withdrawal from the world. He is not the "prince of poets" like Aḥmad Shawqī. He is a survivor who has suffered and undergone pain and trouble "... to know the value of the letter / its emanating meaning when combined to another."

I know you are generous and well disposed
And that you forgive my negligence.

I am no Abū al-Ṭayyib [al-Mutanabbī]
 I am not as qualified as this giant knight to capture the right meaning
 And I am not the wise poet, the hostage of his own choice [al-Maʿarrī]
 For have I made this my choice, I will have perished of hunger.²⁵

However, the poet Ṣalāh ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr needs no apology in his poems of 1964, *Aḥlām al-fāris al-qadīm* (The Dreams of an Ancient Knight), for example. Although very much in line with his counterparts like al-Bayātī, especially in delineating scenes of royal corruption, Ṣalāh ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr in “Mudhakkirāt al-Malik ʿAjīb ibn al-Khaṣīb,”²⁶ develops a mask which enables him to criticize classical panegyrics as mere hypocrisy clothed in glorious rhetoric.²⁷ In other words, behind this criticism, there is a belief in a need to go beyond the hegemonic understanding of the classical toward another track of thought based on rigorous questioning of standards and ethics of behavior and taste. His poem, which takes as its point of departure a tale in the *Thousand and One Nights*, is one of exposure. It imagines the nature of corruption, which incites the young king to make his journey into the unknown, beyond the limits of corrupt politics. Although ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr relates this use of the mask to his acquaintance with Eliot’s method,²⁸ the practice was popular among Arab poets in the 1960s, as I shall explain shortly. Nevertheless, insofar as ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr’s career is concerned, this use is in line with his recognition of forebears’ potential for transformation and growth beyond their beginnings, a recognition that implies faith in mutability in the first place. He may well have been aware of this revisionist principle in literature, which is at the heart of the Arab theory of plagiarism, if we take his claim of re-reading tradition seriously. Indeed, the revisionist principle is the invigorating dynamic factor, as it entails, in the words of Bloom, “the subsuming of tradition by belatedness.”²⁹ Awareness of stages and transformations in his precursors’ careers reflects also some recognition of personal evolution. Even when not spelled out, these expressions are textual clues, which invite cautious analysis of poetic identifications and masks in modern Arabic poetry.

Al-Bayātī’s alien and rebellious precursors

ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī’s process of identification with al-Maʿarrī, for instance, manifests no need to dismember the poet into parts and positions, as is the case in his reading of al-Mutanabbī. The latter’s poetic presence in al-Bayātī’s text is rife with tension, a struggle to bypass al-Mutanabbī’s panegyrics and enhance his heroic positions and lofty rhetoric. The rebel is the most interesting part of al-Mutanabbī, and al-Bayātī never tires of reiterating his desire to fuse with this part. As the poet’s next “poem or his genuine homeland is the one which has not yet been reached in pilgrimage,” writes the poet in an autobiographical sketch, there is an ongoing waiting

for “the would-be comer.”³⁰ Even if he or she shows up,

I will not meet this would-be comer, for this is the poet’s fate, and hence the tragedy of al-Mutanabbī whose verse I quote, ‘restless as if riding the wind,’ for the speaker here is the genuine Mutanabbī, the poet and the man, not the other who waits at rulers’ gates.³¹

He adds, that “the one who stood there was only al-Mutanabbī’s shoe, for he was in the habit of leaving his shoe behind and going with the wind” (Ibid. 61). Insofar as al-Ma^carrī’s career is concerned, al-Bayātī deems it less divided, but the poet’s perspectives vary. At an early stage in al-Bayātī’s life (1950–1956), there is faith in regeneration and revolution. His “Maw^cid fī al-Ma^carrāh” (Appointment in Ma^carrāh, that is, Ma^carrat al-Nu^cmān, al-Ma^carrī’s hometown) places the addressee and the speaker in a Tammūzī tradition, “like mythical heroes we met at al-Ma^carrāh.”³² Both celebrate being free from corrupted politics. He calls upon al-Ma^carrī, “hostage of the two cloisters” or the “double siege,” to leave behind his self-imposed isolation, for the “land sings, and the sky / a red rose, and the wind a song.”³³ Nevertheless, disappointments drove al-Bayātī later into further sophisticated identifications with his precursor. In “Miḥnat Abī al-^cAlā” (The Ordeal of Abī al-^cAlā’ al-Ma^carrī), which was composed in 1965, the speaker identifies with the precursor, and takes over his lamentation of personal loss in its ontological contexts. The father, with all ontological and biological connotations, receives blame for bringing him into this world in the first place:

I died, but you are still alive and the wailing wind
 Shakes the house every evening
 You deprived me of the bliss of eyesight
 You taught me the weight of absent words and the agony of silence and
 crying
 The dead alley is covered with frost
 And the door is closed forever
 Three from which I look at you tomorrow
 While kissing your hands: seclusion at my house, blindness and the
 soul flaming in the body.

(Ibid. 2: 24)

Al-Bayātī retraces al-Ma^carrī’s autobiographical lamentation for being jailed in the triple prison of blindness, his house, and “this vile body” in which the spirit resides. He also underlines the poet’s distaste for a material presence in a corrupt world. Nevertheless, al-Bayātī tracks these disappointments for a purpose. Hence, the mask here serves an agenda that remains central to al-Bayātī’s poetics despite some subsequent tendency to situate it within an ontological context of great complexity. In that poem of 1965, with its ten

poetic enunciations or parts, al-Bayātī develops a number of paradigmatic stations, which borrow al-Maʿarrī’s well-known positions. However, al-Bayātī concentrates on the polarity between the State, with its corrupt mechanism, and genuine poetry. The State is the emir of old times whose whims materialize in extreme measures. The poet has to challenge these, to suffer punishment and ridicule. However, al-Maʿarrī, in the same poem, is the one who comes upon self-imposed seclusion as a solution to escape these tides.

It was a profligate time, without borders
 Poets were drowned in it, they were sheep
 And you were the soothsayer among them
 You were at the feast of the wicked
 An eyewitness to an age of darkness

Al-Bayātī manipulates paradigms of corruption and revolt according to a careful reading of al-Maʿarrī, especially his early decision to abandon panegyric poetry because of its need for adornments, that is, “lies and dubiousness.”³⁴ Using the title of al-Maʿarrī’s *diwān Siqt al-zand* for this section, al-Bayātī concludes with an ironic rephrasing of al-Maʿarrī’s objection to “adornment of speech through lies.”³⁵ Al-Bayātī applies this measurement to panegyrics, especially whenever they purport to meet the whims and predilections of corrupt authority. “The *ḥamzab* rhyme is a lame mule / Ridden by the emir every dark menacing night.”³⁶ Nevertheless, using the title *Saqt al-zand* is not a random choice insofar as al-Bayātī is concerned. Al-Maʿarrī’s explicatory note, his exordium, as the *diwān*, specifies a design and intent for his poetry. It aspires to reach for the genuine and to escape the imitative and distorted. As for his politics, “I have never aimed to entertain rulers and chiefs with canticles, and never praised for reward.”³⁷ Al-Bayātī is aware of this political position, but he is also familiar with al-Maʿarrī’s poetics of challenge to the state of things insofar as literature, specifically poetry, is concerned. Rejecting and abandoning poetry is not a solution, and al-Maʿarrī’s *Luzūmiyyāt* is a way to go around the challenge, by manipulating the classical topoi, and hence redirecting the poem. “He re-defines every element of tradition in the light of what he considers morality and reason,” argues Sperl in respect to al-Maʿarrī’s mannerism, to assign it “a new function in a new poetic realm, thus freeing it from the propagation of falsehood to which it had been lowered in the past.”³⁸

Recreating the forebear

Al-Bayātī’s recreation of al-Maʿarrī’s poetics is not limited to the paradigms of good and evil, reason and superstition. He understands both al-Maʿarrī’s deviation from customary rhyming schemes and his ambivalent imagery. Dislodging images from the mimetic and the representational, al-Maʿarrī

reestablishes them in an independent matrix, free from traditional usage. The “motifs” thereby “become ambivalent and acquire the intangible multivalence of symbols.”³⁹ Aware of the lexical and pictorial use of al-Ma^carrī, al-Bayātī finds it more attuned to his temperament to play on ambivalence, especially in his poem “Sujūn Abī al-^cAlā” (“Prisons of Abī al-^cAlā’ al-Ma^carrī” dated February 20, 1999), in *Nuṣūṣ sharqiyyah*.⁴⁰ If light proves misleading in al-Ma^carrī’s *Luzūmiyyat*, according to phonological variations and roots that charge the lexical leitmotifs with new connotations,⁴¹ al-Bayātī begins his poem by playing on the various implications of the red and the black as “Two thieves hiding / in mud huts / in river reeds.”⁴² Color itself derives more potency against a background of loss and absurdity, which informs a pessimist frame of mind, too. “Who can quench the thirst of my body / to move it around the Ka’bah,” says al-Bayātī’s Ma^carrī. The yearning is to rid the self of the body, and to regain the bones as mere relics of “a blind man’s childhood / who lost at the gates of God / the magic of colors.” Al-Bayātī’s Ma^carrī has the insight to see beyond the physical handicap.

In the night of my ancestor’s Ma^carraḥ
 My mother gave birth to me: blind
 I could see from among her fingers
 Ships sailing toward other spheres
 And thieves, some of them rule Baghdad
 And other kingdoms,
 Died before birth
 I could see then my pale mother
 Praying at dawn
 Calling on the phantoms of the dead in the rooms of the house
 Who buries my bones?
 To see them regenerate and grow
 In the mud of rivers
 To make a flute out of them
 For the shepherds to play

(Ibid. 7–11)

The combination of traditional lore in its pastoral dimension with some contemporary dismay is not alien to al-Ma^carrī’s mood, nor does it exclude the potential for participation in change, in a Shelleyan fashion. With this swerve, the modern poet identifies with the precursor to fit the latter into his own poetics, which aspires to survival and growth. In Bloom’s words, “To live, the poet must *misinterpret* the father, by the crucial act of misprision, which is the re-writing of the father.”⁴³ In other words, al-Bayātī brings together many of al-Ma^carrī’s enunciations of autobiographical discontent to fit into a Tammūzī cycle of death and rebirth that redeems the text from pessimist closure.

On the other hand, al-Ma^carrī's mannerism and his use of literary tradition for "continuity and opposition,"⁴⁴ attracts al-Bayātī, too. Al-Ma^carrī's blaming of the world, as manifested in the topos of crafty or treacherous people, transfers into al-Bayātī's poetic re-creations. Nevertheless, the drive undergoes revision to fit into al-Bayātī's focused criticism. The yearning for death remains as the catalyst to release the self from its many imprisonments. "Let me be free, father, from my cage / for my prisons increase in number / and my sufferings grow prolonged" (*Nuṣūṣ* 10). There is certainly no closure in al-Ma^carrī's *Luzūmiyyāt*. Despite the rhetoric of blame and complaint, questioning embodies continuous reasoning. Its targets include corruption, conformity, injustice, hypocrisy, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness. In al-Bayātī's poem, these reappear in an autobiographical stance, which gives the poem cohesion while resurrecting the medium of address from imitativeness and stock images. Although al-Bayātī inhabits al-Ma^carrī's poetic space, his poem eludes duplication and resorts to dichotomous polarization that sustains tension and disruption, without a promise of resolution.

Between the rose and the blade
 My soul is a fading drop of light
 And I fade along with it
 We are both to die in this accursed exile
 So why father
 Did you let me be born, a blind gypsy horse
 Who in this vast plain,
 Knows not where to die

(*Nuṣūṣ* 12)

There is here an incomplete masking as the poet draws the precursor's autobiography and poetics into his own orbit of exile and wandering. In "I am Born and Burn in My Love," al-Bayātī says, "All are alone / the world's heart is made of stone / in this kingdom of exile."⁴⁵ There is another reason for this incompleteness. This identification stops short of masking, for al-Ma^carrī retains a poetic of his own that partakes of a view of death as a release from the prison of life. This prison gives al-Bayātī an opportunity to target al-Ma^carrī's villains as agents of deceit, exploitation, and corruption.

Adūnīs' objectifications of forebears

Adūnīs' view of al-Ma^carrī is different from al-Bayātī's. It is also informed by T. S. Eliot's recognition of English metaphysical poets. His reference to Eliot's comment on William Blake shows that Adūnīs is familiar with Eliot's criticism.⁴⁶ Moreover, his discussion of al-Ma^carrī takes Eliot's objective correlative as directed into consideration to bring feeling and thought together in the manner of metaphysical poetry. Al-Ma^carrī fits well in this

context. “Al-Ma^carrī subjects the beliefs and ideas of his age to a process of questioning in which thought wears the guise of poetry and poetry has the power of thought,” says Adūnīs.⁴⁷ As life, death, and time are addressed anew, free from the connotations of the theological and the moral, argumentation serves as a viable method to unsettle verities (Ibid. 65). The Adūnīsian engagement is keen, however, on underscoring al-Ma^carrī’s desire to make poetry a means “to discover the truth and to know the self and the world” (Ibid. 66).

Yet Adūnīs’ preoccupation with innovation as a modernist constant in the classical tradition draws him closer to al-Ma^carrī’s mannerism. Working within tradition in order to deviate from its verities and to challenge its “established truths,” al-Ma^carrī’s correlative is literary in the first place. To Adūnīs, al-Ma^carrī navigates within words and meanings, as his “text is an encounter between words we possess and meanings we are searching for.” The very effort, with its questioning note, casts doubt on both “language and meaning” (Ibid.). It is not difficult to trace Adūnīs’ deconstructivist stance as he hides behind his precursor. Looking upon al-Ma^carrī as dissolver of worn-out habits of thought and styles, Adūnīs recaptures the moment that draws the forebear to his orbit. The ancestor resisted traditionalism and fought back lineage, and the ephebe finds this empowering as far as his poetics presently functions. While targeting hegemonic poetics, he nevertheless generalizes to advance his critique. “In Arab society, poetry is the first criterion by which a poet’s identity is measured; we can thus understand the challenge faced by a poetry that establishes another concept of identity—one that is pluralist, open, agnostic and secular.”⁴⁸

This is the culmination of Adūnīs’ endeavor to discern dynamics of change within the seemingly imitative and the mimetic. Writing in this vein since 1971 (the publication date of *Introduction to Arab Poetics*), Adūnīs leaves behind the Tammūzī faith of the early 1950s. Under the impact of the French surrealists and his own discovery of Sufism, especially in the metaphorical writing of Muḥammad al-Niffarī (d. 965) who liberates thought and language “from functionalism and rationalism,” Adūnīs the poet is more of a surrealist than a Tammūzī.⁴⁹ His poetic re-creations of forebears after his preoccupation with surrealism tend to veer away from any historical representation. In his *Al-Masraḥ wa- al-marāyā*, 1965–1967 (Stage and Mirrors) mirrors have more of Pound’s vortex, but they are not meant to reflect. They have their refractions and disorientations. “Mir’āt Abī al-^cAlā’” (The Mirror of Abū al-^cAlā’ al-Ma^carrī) in the same volume, for instance, is more concerned with the beholder, the addresser, whose recollections act on the historical substance of al-Ma^carrī’s town, dwelling, and grave, in order to resurrect the poet’s voice, his language, and, for that matter, his immortal presence in poetry beyond physical annihilation. Al-Ma^carrī’s voice permeates time, which, paradoxically, takes a bodily form, whereas speech and language assume a body, too. The exchange of the abstract and the concrete between the “body of days” and

the “body of speech / on the bed of poetry” involves this poetic re-creation in a dialogue of surrealist intersectional complexity. Al-Ma^ʿarrī the person, who has been and will continue to be a controversial historical figure, is a poet whose contribution to poetry is of utmost significance to Adūnīs.

I reckon that I visited your eyes
 In Ma^ʿarrāh, listened to your steps
 I recollect that the grave is walking imitating your steps
 But around the grave sleeps your voice
 As if a quaver,
 In the body of days or in the body of speech
 Nor was al-Ma^ʿarrāh . . .
 On the bed of poetry
 Your parents were not there ⁵⁰

In other words, the poem negates the historical detail, which has already been subsumed by, and erased from, memory. What counts, like a tremor or quaver, is the voice, which is so concretized that it endows absence with presence, as if to substantiate and fill the gap with a counter-detail. In a paradoxical inversion, the substantial voice offers tangibility to surroundings in a context of deep and intricate meanings. If historical accounts speak of al-Ma^ʿarrī and his loss of eyesight before delving into a study of his genius, the poem characteristically reverses chronology and historical sequentiality. The speaker visits al-Ma^ʿarrī’s eyes, which, metaphorically, grow into beingness. Enabled with sight and insight, they no longer hold the poet captive. Even his steps defy accounts of self-seclusion. The grave, which is as obscure as any other token of relevance to al-Ma^ʿarrī’s life, emerges as a person, and death itself is denied supremacy. What survives is al-Ma^ʿarrī’s voice, which fills the place with its presence. Nevertheless, paradoxically, it resides “on the bed of poetry,” as if awaiting a moment of enchantment or transfiguration. This perspective may account for a surrealist stance in Adūnīs’ career, which paves the way for other engagements, including his intimate immersion in Sufi poetics.

Adūnīs’ engagement with his forebears is also worth assessing in view of his own poetics. Speaking of his character Mihyār the Damascene, he objects to critics who “confuse Mihyār the Damascene with the poet Mihyār al-Daylamī,” as “they share only the name Mihyār; otherwise they bear no relationship to each other, none whatsoever.” However, Mihyār is a persona, which Adūnīs cites further on in the same interview as “a personal language, symbolic, and objective.” Being “symbolic and mythic,” it is “more than a mask,” he contends. In line with his timeless crossing, the spatial takes over, and the persona becomes a site of interaction and exchange, “a vortex where Arab culture would meet with all its dimensions into the central and pivotal cause: crossing from the old world into the new one.”⁵¹ Adūnīs’ figures are meant to retrieve a cultural crossing where criticism, historiography,

philosophy, and Sufism interact with the poetic in a discursive site, which he intentionally draws in textual terms as a *matn* (text) and *hawāshī* (margins) in *Al-Kitāb: Ams al-makān al-ān: Makḥṭūṭab tunsab lil-Mutanabbī* (The Book Yesterday, the Place Now: A Manuscript Attributed to al-Mutanabbī). They reflect on each other, and both purport to interrogate each other in a polyphonic moment, which he specifies as “something unprecedented in poetics,” and which takes al-Mutanabbī’s history and career in context.⁵² It leans, as one suspects, on Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s many arguments in this respect, especially in his *Mā’a al-Mutanabbī* (In the Company of al-Mutanabbī),⁵³ but it takes issue with others. In this book on al-Mutanabbī, and in his company through an intimate engagement with his personal life and textual presence, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn investigates various accounts of a poetic career and a controversial personal record. His book has its insights into a cultural and political life, but its criticism of the present is there, too.⁵⁴ The critic is not a neutral figure, and his voice interacts with the poet’s or veers away from it. He has his likes and dislikes, but it deliberately challenges critical insights that build on non-poetic bases. Both the navigational movement among a number of positions and accounts, and the critical insight behind the whole survey provide an indirect explanation of al-Mutanabbī’s revolt (Ibid. 52–55). Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s overall critique is one of assessment and sifting that serves as the culmination of preceding efforts. It is also a manifestation of a new critical spirit that questions historical narratives and undermines traditional analysis, while arguing for “the national character and specific identity of the Arabs.”⁵⁵ Drawn to texts in context, it offers also an oblique criticism of Arabic literary tradition. Adūnīs could have read Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s and other critiques, since his *Kitāb* is a textual engagement of *matn* and *hawāshī* that underscores comparison and relieves history of its monologic directives. The whole endeavor—as a combination of the poetic and the prosaic, the body and the margin—fits into his effort to account for the ups and downs in the history of the Arabs since the Umayyads, a position which he has already developed in his discussion of the literary and the historical in *Al-Thābit wa al-mutaḥawwil* (The Mutable and the Immutable).⁵⁶ Al-Mutanabbī is a locus for “a panoramic expanse as vast as history,” he says in the interview for *Banīḥal*. He adds that “Arab history is staged in this book as though it were an all-encompassing film, in every scene of which, on every page, showing how multi-dimensional ages criss-cross each other, how the subjective, and the old struggles with the new.”⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Adūnīs’ al-Mutanabbī is present to test selfhood amid a historical complexity. Adūnīs’ effort is larger than any other poetic reconstructs given by fellow poets. It reminds one of Pound’s definition of tradition as a “return to origins,” a return that “invigorates because it is a return to nature and reason.”⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this is not a servile return, for Adūnīs takes issue with a tradition at large, through its written heritage, as it is handed over from one generation to another. Poetry becomes a register again, but with a number of accentuations and voicings that also imply, to use Said’s reading of

Kierkegaard, that repetition “involves no giving up, but a self-possession carried to the point of no return.”⁵⁹ The historical detail raises questions about power relations, struggles, lies, achievements, and losses. Although there is no painful introspection as in Romantic lyricism, there is a configuration of texts that allows space for both the self and the anti-self, the voice that speaks, in a Yeatsian fashion, of a lack rather than complementarity. Adūnīs’ voice is present, for it cannot achieve total detachment because of the nature of the endeavor itself, its prose and poetry, which echoes many of his early writings.

Trajectories of modernity and tradition

Applied to the poetic scene, these examples from Adūnīs, al-Bayātī, and ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr may represent the main tracks in modern Arabic poetry. Examples from other major and minor poets are bound to offer deviations and side-tracks, too, but there is here enough disenchantment with the classical rhetoric of poetry. At the same time, poets are intelligent enough to understand that the poetic practice grows among other texts, both vertically and horizontally. Poetic strategies reveal as much, because they demonstrate how closely connected these poets are to tradition as a lively and dynamic blend of stability and rupture. Subsuming modernist poetics, its use of masks, myth, and history within a new awareness of the potentialities of language, poetry has been forging its paths within broad poetic strategies, which one may summarize in preparation for the next chapters, as follows:

1 *Poetic dialogization* The classical poet is present, not necessarily for the sake of identification or fusion, but significantly for the purpose of comparison. The modern poet recognizes a cultural gap that makes it impossible for him/her to dream a position or recognition similar to the one achieved by the forebear. In Ṣālāh ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr’s “Mudhakkirāt al-Malik ʿAjīb . . .” (Memoirs of King ʿAjīb . . .), for example, there is an intersection where poets are present as if for a feast, with all the signs of joy and rapture. Yet it is the young king, the mask, who detects insincerity amid that joy. These poets voice a stand and a position, which is made possible through their subordination to, and generation of, a hegemonic discourse that dislodges others. Significantly, the opening lines of these panegyrics are of great classical resonance. They betray ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr’s grounding in literary tradition and, indeed, unwitting attachment to the classical mode of poetics. Set against the speaker in “Aqūlū lakum,” the mask, al-Malik ʿAjīb, confronts the reader with the fact that he acceded to kingship by succession. “I didn’t obtain kingship by the sword, but by succession and inheritance.”⁶⁰ He listens to poets, as they “. . . were standing in rows at the door / and poems roll on in abundance / Elegizing the late king, as so pure even in death / Glorifying the attributes of his successor, the Just King” (Ibid. 421–22).

‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s impersonation of the panegyric tradition increases the richness of the text.

((An ambivalent voice)):

Prosperous joy replaced that preceding lamentation

((A happy voice)):

No sooner had the bereaved frowned than he had to smile

((A jovial voice)):

You are a florid crescent brilliantly shining.

(Ibid. 422)

This voicing continues to account for modes and accentuations in the panegyric tradition. Meanwhile, the persona intimates how bored he is with the “m” rhyme scheme and, indeed, with the whole performance. However, no matter how critical he sounds, the mere act of conscious impersonation re-inscribes the classical poem as an enduring subtext, for, to use Eliot, “the conscious present is an awareness of the past.”⁶¹ Ironically, the poem, which ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr cites as representing his first encounter with objective correlatives and masks through Eliot’s “Tiresias,” derives its catalyst from this confrontation with the past, its court, poets, and discourse.

On the other hand, in his other poem, “Aqūlū lakum” (I Say to You), the poet as the speaker in the poem vies for a voice amid others who, perhaps, are not ready to allow him such a space. To deflate their expectations of a presence comparable to that of predecessors and forebears, he sneaks into the poetic plethora through a proclamation of his limits. Ironically, however, these limits relate to life conditions as much as they relate to classical criteria of excellence.

But I passed through ordeals to articulate content

To combine matter with manner

To let you listen to me, amid an ensemble of voices⁶²

In other words, the poet emphasizes differences, variants, and displacements, between his situation and that of his forebears in order to obliquely enhance his achievement. “The strength of any poet,” says Harold Bloom, “is in his skill and inventiveness at substitution,”⁶³ and ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr never tired of the process. The many voices he recollects serve as a foil for his present status as a modern poet in trying circumstances. The dialogic principle expands the poem beyond the lyrical, and broadens its scope through the inclusion of other profiles and speeches.

2 *Dedications* Although the use of mirrors may encapsulate the poem as vortex, not as reflection, these may operate as dedications like any others which preface poems. Along with other paratexts, they serve not only to recollect forebears and re-establish them in context, but, significantly, to redeem tradition from fixity and dormancy. Dedications are dynamic grounds for great activity on the levels of style and vision. They reclaim space from hegemonic discourse and involve it in dynamic interaction with potential for

transgression. Both Adūnīs and al-Bayātī are experts in this arena, as I have explained elsewhere.⁶⁴

3 *Exilic engagement* Although seemingly an outcome of modern civilization, with its wars and disruptions, the literature of exile, in its metaphors of dislocation and loss, is deeply established in Arabic culture. Indeed, the classical literature of exile could lend itself so easily to memory that poets may at times borrow spontaneously from its repository. Al-Mutanabbī's well-known lamentation after leaving Sayf al-Dawlah behind could sum up many concerns and sighs. "With what shall I console myself, being without my people and home, having neither boon-fellow, nor cup, nor any to comfort me."⁶⁵ Al-Bayātī's Mutanabbī is this person of no settled abode, who is restless as if riding the wind.⁶⁶ However, if al-Mutanabbī offers this line of exile, al-Ma^carrī offers the other line of spiritual dislocation and ontological disappointment. Exile becomes a poetic incentive and dynamic, however, as poets search for textual homelands that accommodate forebears and contemporaries from every other culture.

4 *Textual apprenticeship* One of the most intricate stratagems of maturation is textual apprenticeship, which has its prototype in al-Ma^carrī's poetic career, as he outgrew his early attachment to his strong predecessor, al-Mutanabbī, while simultaneously deviating from the hegemonic discourse of "adornments and lies." Re-defining tradition in terms of morality and reason, the prototype, al-Ma^carrī in this case, also sets the tone for relentless experimentation within the broad prospects of tradition. It should not be surprising that the modernists agreed on him as a precursor, to be emulated and cited as the exemplar, not in innovation alone, but also mainly in the dynamics of textual transgression and deviation. Enhancing reasoning and morality, he also offers them in practice enough justifications to veer away from servile imitation. His mannerism evolves as one of defiance, deviation, and transgression, rather than a mere exercise in virtuosity. Thus we find that questioning mode, which overrules al-Bayātī's early proclamations of victory, for the human condition is more complicated, and national issues may lead to no less than the precursor's decision for self-seclusion. It should be logical that for the ephebe to reconsider his career and readdress the precursor's poetic experience anew. Al-Bayātī's emanating texts, especially "Sujūn Abī al-^cAlā'" (Prisons of Abī al-^cAlā' al-Ma^carrī) offer this textual reconsideration, with a stylistic intricacy that matches his precursor's mannerism, while manipulating intertextuality for further identifications of cultural and social ruptures. Textual apprenticeship proves to be more enduring, for the precursor takes over, even in a later stage in the ephebe's career. Nevertheless, this stance should not delude us into thinking of it as mere allegiance, for it is also an act of filiation, as the modern poet aspires to locate his personal record within a specific lineage. While manifesting enlightened understanding of the precursor, a poem like "Sujūn" comes as a seal to an established apprenticeship. It is the modern poet's proclamation of achievement and maturity. It is

a declaration of poetic excellence that enables the poet to identify with the precursor, with no anxiety of influence.

This stand may well apply, with qualifications, to Adūnīs and his Mutanabbī. We should remember that *Al-Kitāb* stands for Adūnīs' final say on tradition.⁶⁷ The choice of the precursor is not random. Had Adūnīs still been concerned with issues of innovation, he would have gone to Abū Tammām, who, for a long time, had ranked first among Adūnīs' preferences in matters of poetics. Nevertheless, al-Mutanabbī is deployed for a purpose in a book that makes use of his personal and poetic record within a historical and cultural context. The poet's career and reputation, his controversial lineage, glory, majestic presence, and mastery of language make him a central figure in a text that aspires to gather history and culture in a nexus. The use of a major text that voices the precursor's poetic pronouncements within marginal, but contextualizing, interventions and comments, of opposite claims and positions, is a mechanism to operate on history with power, and even retribution. It is time to see through the misery and the failure. Apprenticeship to the strong precursor is there; it culminates a career of innovation and acculturation, very much in line with that of the precursor. Now the poet outgrows association and strives for lineage. The so-called manuscript is not merely a textual exercise to prioritize writing. It is not a postmodernist pastiche. It is a text that its present writer, Adūnīs, chooses to put under his newly claimed name, al-Mutanabbī. This culmination of a career sums up affiliations, concerns, inhibitions, aspirations, and frustrations. These have been gathering momentum in Adūnīs' other writings to be encapsulated in *Al-Kitāb*.

Conclusion

Recollection, with its many claims on memory, reading, grounding, affiliation, and disenchantment, operates powerfully on poetry. Its intersectional space is a site of rich poetics. Modern poetry, with its postmodernist or postcolonial manifestations, offers many examples of engagements between modernity and tradition. These are also rife with tension whenever contemporary concerns demand a position. But to cover the use and appropriation of classical poetics and poets is beyond the scope of this chapter, for almost all modern poets have made attempts to reconcile positions or to lean on "the traditional symbol . . . to enlighten" current practices.⁶⁸ We may take the preceding perspectives on tradition and modernity as a sort of summing up of directions in modern Arabic poetics, a point that subsequent chapters aspire to address. We need to remember this early search for innovation to understand the significance of the whole effort in its prominent posts. Nāzīk al-Malā'ikah believed in a limited metric innovation to cope with new situations and predilections. Her own poetic career manifests a feminist concern with expression to resist an overpowering masculine language, which she accused of limiting women's

writing. Although such a position could have led her into unlimited prospects of innovation, she succumbed to the idea that classical metrics were too sacred and great to suffer challenge on the hands of practitioners of poetry.⁶⁹ On the other hand, Ṣalāh ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr is for tradition as long as it offers themes and figures of revolution, challenge, and rejuvenation. The sacrificial and the revolutionary make up a register that he shares with many poets of the 1960s in particular.

Al-Bayātī is no less engaged with these issues, and he recalls ancient poets to substantiate a masking process, which aims at distancing his own voice. The aesthetic distance is maintained in his early poems, but this is achieved at the expense of a personal poetics. His increasing awareness of contemporary poetics led him, from the 1960s onwards, into larger experimental domains where re-creation endows the original text, the precursor's life story or *sīrab*, with a contemporary color and immediacy. In these, he, like many of his counterparts, resorts to many expressive devices to concretize a concept, augment an idea, contrast a position, reduce a stance, or parody an occasion.⁷⁰ At times, especially in his poem "Sujūn Abi al-ʿAla'," he is keen on a contemporary resurrection of an ancient original. It is enough to poetize the *sīrab* in a callous age of indifference to poets like him. For the same reason, he identifies with the precursor to make a last choice of lineage, which also puts him on equal footing with a glorious ancestor. The poet's voice negotiates a number of positions and views, which gather momentum for the single purpose of targeting corruption and failure.

This is not Adūnīs' track, however. Although committed to the dynamics of creativity and dissent in tradition, his experimentation knows no limits, for it plays on signification and erasure in order to offer the reader the opportunity to go beyond the rhetoric of domination and control. His early declamations against heritage and inheritance gave way, even in the 1960s, to a sustained reading and grounding in tradition, but with the Ezra Pound's trope of a "loose-leaf system."

The subdued voice is an Adūnīsian creation, as it needs to articulate its suspicions and misgivings subtly and cautiously to escape repression. Yet, the voice may lose its poetic potential in a textual corpus, an excessive mannerism, with unlimited aspiration for documentation. No matter how exquisitely manipulated, historical documentation creates a text that competes with the poetic. Driven to the edge, poetry may lose its potency. The so-called Adūnīsian Mutanabbī manuscript, *Al-Kitāb* (The Book), evolves as an exercise in hermeneutics, an offshoot in experimentation that aspires to entangle tradition and modernity in an irrevocable intersection. Prose and poetry are brought together to account for a present moment of both historical density and rupture. The book is an exercise in prosemination *par excellence*. It builds its text within marginal critiques and historical accounts, which vie for ascendancy as the main text, that is, the poem, plows its way through. Building on the popular saying that al-Mutanabbī is "the occupation of the

universe and the obsession of people,” Adūnīs uses him as the locus for self and tradition, a threshold and material for revisionist poetics. In this poetics, he retains the concept of poetry as the archive of Arab life and culture, as suggested by Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 687), endorsed by Ibn Qutaybah (d. 889) and made popular by Ibn Rashīq (d. 1064), and reiterated by many thereafter, but it is an archive that undergoes revision through the technique of bookkeeping, the “loose-leaf system” of Ezra Pound. The text and the margins take on the argumentation of prose while sustaining the tropes of poetry. The questions of continuity and discontinuity are no longer pertinent, as the effort goes beyond simplifications of sequentiality and origination. Identification is out of the question, since the text and its margins exercise a reapplication of the emerging consciousness to history and literature as controversial narratives. The author pursues interrogation, and his schema resists submission and conformity to pre-constituted models. Dichotomous positions signify plurality and multivoicing. In the process, poetry is no longer the same, nor is prose, for the entanglement enforces loss, gain, and exchange. Nevertheless, it remains to be said that poetry in this far-reaching experimentation may need a spirited effort to regain the beauties of language while aspiring to retrieve a past tradition for new generations of readers whose familiarity with the internet may overwhelm their meager grounding in tradition. The resolve to apply multiple discursive and poetic strategies requires recognition of present complexity and challenge, since the poet has to counteract competing forms of discourse in order to sustain a presence.

POETIC DIALOGIZATION

Ancestors in the text—figures and figurations¹

He stretched a hand out, holding a rolled cigarette,
 and I stretched a hand to take the cigarette.
 And smoke spread, hiding two men
 waiting at the locked door
 on the sidewalk of Abu Nuwas Street.
 (Fawzī Karīm, "At the Gardenia Door,"
 2004, p. 81)

Like the smoke hiding the two men in the Iraqi Fawzī Karīm's (b. 1945) poem, "At the Gardenia Door,"² textual heterogeneity allows independence and fusion while entrenched in space. Nonverbal gestures and acts operate as voices, too. The actual space in front of a locked bar in a Baghdadi street along the Tigris tells a story of a new wave of repression that puts an end to a tradition of wine drinking and revelry that is usually associated with the poet Abū Nuwās (d. 813) after whom the famous street is named. In such a small textual space, the Iraqi poet brings together a number of voices, ancient and modern, with a number of issues, registers, attitudes, and expectations. Although many theorists find poetry immune to dialogization as a plurality of independent voices,³ modernist trends, since early attempts at dramatic monologue, have collapsed poetry and narrative, though at the expense of the lyrical at times. The English Poet Robert Browning's dramatic monologues are among the best examples of the art, and one may trace in Arabic poetics many examples where narrative and poetry coalesce in an intricate manner. Poetry is less hospitable to dialogization, however, in the sense that poetic language is not representational. Mikhail Bakhtin's differentiation, for instance, lies more with the understanding of the novel, not poetry, as dialogic. "The language of the novel is a system of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other."⁴ Foucault assigns to the poet an "*allegorical* role," for there is a search "... beneath the language of signs and beneath the interplay of their precisely delineated distinctions," to capture "... the language, without words or discourse, of resemblance."⁵ Nonetheless,

poetry is no less receptive to other discourses through parody and travesty, and other means, broadening its prospects while undermining these in a more sophisticated contrafaction. This tendency is not the same as archaic invectives, or satirical exercises with their “frontal attacks” which are characterized by bluntness rather than irony and wit.⁶ It works within the hegemonic discourse to break it down, and expose its significations and markers. Poetic creativity here self-consciously targets the hegemonic, especially in its unitary pronouncements, as no other genre can. Manipulating its reserve of poetics, and relying on a close reading of this discourse, with a love–hate binary, the creative impulse can build a new structure, at the expense of the shattered other, as Maḥmūd Darwīsh does in “*Khuṭab al-dictātūr al-mawzūnah*” (The Rhymed Orations of the Dictator).⁷ The significance of this long prose poem to creativity, dissent, contemporary anxieties, and past legacies lies in its volatile dialogic space and its underpinnings of satire and revolt that destabilize the very hegemonic codifications and imperatives that make up the dictator’s rhythmic orations. This prose poem makes use of the roots of unitary discourse, its strong hold on, and manipulation of, value-laden words, clichés, and catch-phrases. The poem targets unitary touchstones, which have been working within a mechanism that dislodges other languages, undermines usage, occupies vital linguistic space, and chases out counter-terms. Maḥmūd Darwīsh probes the mind that manipulates a specific rhetoric as if it were the only language. “If words exceed a thousand, speech veins dry up / and rhetoric becomes corrupt and poetry ends as the property of the rabble.” The poet aims at the value-laden language in the official discourse and state media.

Targeting the unitary discourse

Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s prose poem gives the dictator enough space to speak his mind and explain his suspicions of any language of diversity, insinuation, nuance, and even dichotomous pronouncements.

If you praise the rose, this means you blame darkness,
 In addition, if you recollect the glitter of ancient swords, you blame peace,
 And when you mention jasmine often and you laugh: then you
 attack the regime.

(Ibid.)

Different from neo-historical narratives with their probing into methods and means of coercion, and more dense and suggestive, this prose poem lets the dictator disclose his disapproval of metaphors and conceits, for “... between synthesis and paronomasia the poem relates our ruinous present / and will establish its independent world, and in the crowd slips away from my police” (Ibid.). Hence, the dictator sets the scope and limit of discourse, which

should be devoid of dreams and metaphors, for "...from my language you derive your dreams once a year / ... and from my language you arrive at truth in two words: permitted and tabooed / therefore never look in dictionaries for a language unsatisfied with this model" (Ibid.).

Although presumably penetrating a cultural climate and gaining acceptance through pervasive dissemination, the dictator's discourse suffers from its impositions and limitations which will give way in time to opposition. As its ritualistic tone and value-laden language revolve upon limited paradigms, its maneuvering potential loses ground, and its coercive mechanisms limit creative space and life at large, leaving the dictator's discourse sovereign in a muted land. As always, there is a counter movement within hegemony. Even oblique styles and indirect pronouncements yield in time to shows of disobedience inside and outside hegemony, driving unitary discourse to become mere ultimatums and statements of threat and reprisal. This assault is often the culminating point in discursive battles, and it defines, in retrospect, other techniques of dissent, not only against immediate hegemony, as the examples cited later demonstrate, but also in the burgeoning poetics of diversity, difference, and multiple critiques. The unitary discourse sets its constraints on language, and deploys abundant limits and restraints to restrict competing languages. Poetry has either to succumb to its insinuations and orders, and thereby suffer stagnation and death, or to work out its own challenging tactics. Yet, which Arabic language do we speak of here? Arabic in this instance is not a hegemonic legacy, but the one that, in Muḥammad Bennīs' words, "rooms in the streets and in the hearts, loaded with Qur'ānic verse, traditions of the prophet, laden with slogans and national canticles."⁸ This Arabic is not the one of torture and pain, as jurists apply it, but one of joy and rapture, says Bennīs. This language is as large as life,⁹ and the battle for it is no less demanding and hard than any other battle and war.¹⁰ No wonder the battle for words and communiqués occupies so much space in our macabre world.

In an instant of urgency in defying hegemony, poetry invents a variety of registers. Whereas narrative manipulates indirection and resistance to the utmost, poetry deploys suggestion, irony, sarcasm, and concretization to develop a counter-message. The Iraqi exile in London, the late Sharīf al-Rubayī (d. 1995), titles a poem "Dā'irat al-khawf" (The Circle of Fear), insinuating that his homeland is now one of torture and death, but he has to look forward, nevertheless, and retain it.

I will call you space
 And I will pray to see your shadow covering questions
 Date palms or scaffolds, or shreds of a bomb,
 However, not mere uncared-for wounds, or ransacked ruptures
 Then, I cannot call you homeland.¹¹

The dramatized monologue that addresses the homeland becomes a venue for self-interrogation. Impersonating the homeland and buttressing it with markers of coercion, the speaker works out the questioning process to justify his exile. Another exile from Iraq, Burhān al-Shāwī, lets dreams create an alternative homeland in a short piece titled “Waṭan” (Homeland), with clear-sighted awareness of the disparity between the imagined homeland and its reality.

I dreamt I drew a homeland
 I let the sea break out there, and it did
 I run among its lands with joy
 And I walked among its parts with anxiety
 I baptized it with fire . . . it burnt me
 I sprinkled it with water, and it burnt down
 I let the sun there, but it died out
 I gave it thunder, it did not lighten
 I slept, and my body as on fire
 And I woke up . . .
 I wish the dream did not come true.¹²

Urgency is not always the best of moods for poetry, but dissent and opposition take a number of forms to deal with the real, whether it is foreign occupation or totalitarian and absolutist rule. As we noticed in the readings of socio-cultural issues in Chapter 1, each case enforces its own technique. Even within the normative, there is enough space for innovation. Whether in dialogue with the society, the family, the self, traditional attitude, or ancient forebears and figures, poetry assumes significance as much as it responds to audiences, real or implied. With the exception of love lyrics, with their musical manipulation of emotional and passionate togetherness and separation, poetry makes a challenging progress through dissent. Its success lies in opposition, not conformity. In this respect, we may cite a number of dialogic sites that enable the poem to retrieve narrative space although sustaining its poetic mode in a tradition–modernity nexus. We may outline, for convenience, this polyphony within a creativity and dissent dynamic, as follows.

Personae and voicing

There is first the strategy of letting go a poetic voice that verges on the schizophrenic, and which appears independently among other voices. The early reference to Ṣalāh ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr’s “Mudhakkirāt al-Malik ʿAjīb . . .” (Memoirs of King ʿAjīb . . .) draws attention to one kind of poetic dialogization whereby the poet distances his or her voice through multivoicing that also allows a persona or a mask to intervene. Other examples take on contemporary poetic voices, singers, and prisoners of conscience, along with

poets from tradition. They also allow a persona to intertextualize, discuss, argue, and objectify. They broaden thereby the scope of poetry while recognizing the limitations imposed by material reality on poetry, poets, and culture at large. “My era tells me bluntly: / you do not belong,” writes Adūnīs in “*Ṣaḥrā’, II*” (“The Desert: The Diary of Beirut under Siege II”).¹³ The Iraqi Sa’dī Yūsuf’s (b. 1934) use of the al-Akhḍar Ibn Yūsuf is an early example of a poetic persona. Yet, masking here involves self-questioning, too, in an effort to assess a moment of poetic production. The poet tells us that “L’ Akhdar is a very popular name in Algeria,” and “L’ Akhdar Ben Youssef is my mask. Ben Youssef is my double.”¹⁴ Referring to his exile in Algeria for seven years in the 1960s and then in the 1970s, he says,

with this name I am putting myself into the place, making some roots—not as a spectator but as a real person. And then I write from an ordinary and real angle as well as from the vantage point of an artist.¹⁵

His poem “L’ Akhdar Ben Youssef Wrote His Last Poem” (1976) unfolds to revitalize his poetics, investigate the status of the poet, and map out the whole cultural scene with its ruptures, troubles, anxieties, and concerns. The dialogic technique shows first in the speaker’s divided voice between an addresser and an addressee. Soon after a moment of bewilderment and chaos, there comes a moment of creation, which summons poets and writers, Arabs, French, and others, culminating in an intertextualizing experience whereby the poem owes its being to a larger subtext.

Waves gush between his hands.
 He grabs a stone (suddenly), and turns it into a shell.
 He remains listening;
 a wind gust (constant), blows, blows, constantly.
 He enters the elements.
 The sea holdings turn into a giant wave.
 The earth holdings become a giant wave.
 And he enters the elements:
 a clenched fist
 a stone
 and a face with embossed features.
 Here he’s in his familiar streets . . .
 his steps quickened,
 an oyster shell in his hand.¹⁶

The stone, the shell, the wave, and the wind are among many elements and significations that bring the speaker to the real, to a personal life that he recognizes in preparation for a poetic creation. This moment is not an easy one, as it takes the speaker back to similar moments when the poet passed through

agonies and fears lest he fail to produce the right poem. The underlying voice resorts to prose to fathom the transitional phase from agony to birth.

Is your breathing calmer now? Maybe you can still write. Since you were twenty you often felt in danger when you started a poem? But once you finish the first stanza you feel a power inside you, its origins unknown to you: like a spring from hidden sources. You only feel the muffled gush. It must be your belief then, I mean you L'Akhdar Ben Youssef, it must be your belief that you are now among the lost.

(Ibid.)

The poem attests to Bakhtin's reservations against poetic consciousnesses as unitary, for the resort to prose signifies a search for another representational medium. The poem evolves as a depiction of a condition, for it records the moment as a combinational site between the temporal and the spatial. Poetry makes no claims to inspiration, as the creative impulse collects its material from the real, but it produces a poem through a strenuous effort that involves not only recollection, but also knowledge and actual experience. The artifact records every detail; including the poet's own thoughts and the movements of the hotel maid.

Do Not Turn Your Jacket Over Even If It Gets Worn

A girl enters
the used-clothes
store.
She's thin.
Her eyes widen
the way a skirt widens in the wind,
and widen
to stare at her lover's jacket,
his red/black jacket
and its missing buttons.

He may have used a new meter here, or a no-meter. The issue is not important. When L'Akhdar Ben Youssef is withdrawn from the world he loses his bearings. This is why his wing remains tied to a string dragging on the face of the earth.

Search for Your Defeated Ring in Your Victorious Country

No victor at Night's end, and no defeated.
Each struggles with his stumbling.
Each regrets his stupor.
Each walks to his own slaughterhouse foolish as a bee.
Search for your defeated ring in your victorious country.
That lost star . . .

May be you'll find it.
 And if you do,
 you'll let go of it
 at the end of the night.

(Ibid.)

The resort to prose in the following part is not a lapse into metonymy, for the speaker identifies with ancestors in moments of loss and search for a way out. His al-Mutanabbī (d. 965) is not the luminous ancestor, not the one whom we meet in Adūnīs' "Desert." "What is it that touched al-Mutanabbi / Other than this soil that felt his tread? He betrayed many things, / But not his vision."¹⁷ Sa'dī Yūsuf's al-Mutanabbī is a shattered one who may be no less bewildered than the speaker, but who also emerges as an ambivalent poet, amid "jewelers" and artists. The speaker's eye locates an analogy in the Algerian rug, between black and green, an analogy that reflects on his own experience as recollection, reading and material reality imprint a stamp of indecision on the poem.

Finally he remembered al-Mutanabbi, an old myopic poet, standing in the sand looking for his lost ring. There are jewellers in the world, and there are artists. On the Algerian rug black is balanced with red. Between them is the color of ash. And the yellow... why? The yellow. *Jaune! Jaune!* Arthur Rimbaud or Tristan Tzara? Oh, how close yellow is to green! Only the sea. Camus used to love the yellowness of the wheat fields facing the sea near Tibaza... Tibaza, ah Tibaza!

(Ibid.)

No matter how invigorating recollection may be, the real leaves its stamp of loss, as the speaker holds on to the image of the gray with its connotations of death in loneliness and exile.

Gray Hair May Look Black in Old Age

Such is my case, a withered man at fifty
 Who squats in his room, occupied with lies and cigarettes.
 Who will return milk teeth to the toothless man?
 Or youth to the gray-haired?
 Who can fill this empty head?
 But gray hair may look black in old age
 and a lie may hold the truth
 and cigarette smoke grows into clouds for a raining sky
 and in his toothless gums milk teeth may grow.
 But it is true, too, that an old man at fifty may fall
 dead in his room
 dressed in lies and smoke.

So was L'Akhdar Ben Youssef, shattered, and confused, as:

He had not slept for six days.
 And could not write a poem.
 And so reckless as to have in print whatever he wrote.¹⁸

This dialogic works effectively through prosemination, for embedded narratives and poetic pronouncements fuse into the depths of the poet, the other hidden half that is addressed by the muffled voice. What we hear in the end is the subdued tone of a person who works on the poem now. The poem is one of hesitation, for the early youthful passion is gone, and a critical hesitant mind takes over, questioning the validity of poetry amid noisy claims. The poem grows as an immediate experience: sitting, watching, recollecting, and probing his disappointment, as he grows old.

The poem may be worth comparing to Maḥmūd Darwīsh's "Al-Mutanabbī's Voyage into Egypt."¹⁹ Although seemingly retracing the ancestor's experience with Kāfūr, Darwīsh manages a middle ground between Adūnīs' projections onto al-Mutanabbī and Sa'dī Yūsuf's discontents. Voicing here negotiates a compromise that makes use of various readings of the ancestor's position and genius. The readings enable Maḥmūd Darwīsh to reflect with ease on current politics, including accusations from comrades and radicals that imply poets should keep to a neatly defined politics of commitment. The poem may provide justifications for the great ancestor al-Mutanabbī, and obliquely dispute partisan criticism.

I sell the palace a song
 I break the palace
 With a song
 I lean against the wind and wound
 And am not sold.²⁰

Another way of identification and voicing takes place behind a historical figure. As poems in this respect are many and mostly function in terms of distant masking, I will devote this discussion to an early poem by the Iraqi Ḥamīd Sa'īd (b. 1941), "Wajh 'Ammār Ibn Yāsir" (The Face of 'Ammār Ibn Yāsir), which was written in the 1960s. The poem addresses the historical figure, 'Ammār Ibn Yāsir, the companion of the Prophet Muhammad, who lost his life in 657, fighting on the side of the Prophet's cousin 'Alī at Ṣiffīn in 657. Based on historical accounts of a life of self-denial, sacrifice and faith, the poet establishes the companion's life since early days with the Prophet, fighting the influential tribe of Quraysh, and migrating with the Prophet to Yathrib (Al-Medīnah). The speaker is keen on establishing a lineage with him, a lineage of faith and sacrifice, not blood kinship. It is

a lineage that fights exploitation and misuse, while suffering persecution and pain. Words and action blend, and sacrifice and lyricism broaden the text, endow it with the historical and the immediate, the narrative and the metaphorical.

You, the face of ‘Ammār Ibn Yāsir, like rivers
 Creating the smile of the pine woods . . .
 You, the face of ‘Ammār Ibn Yāsir,
 The face of every ancient vagabond
 Your people take to the pavements of al-Rashīd Street [in Baghdad]
 And address poetry to forests and rivers
 We read what we write to the snow
 Can one read one’s death?
 And sell his voice to the desert?
 Salt waters burnt the blossoms of our fields
 Venomous serpents confiscated every plant
 You, the face of ‘Ammār Ibn Yāsir,
 A vein in you holds every minute captive
 Not a moment dares to resist attraction
 If hours sail into it
 They are free from form.²¹

The poet draws on the companion through a juxtaposed structure whereby the face recalls the redemptive power of poetry to a situation of loss, agony, rupture, and confusion. The moment is one of discontinuity, and recollection acts on the moment to emphasize another historical discontinuity that belies claims of totality. Written in the 1960s, the poem is an endeavor to recall history as a fragmented narrative to revitalize a scene of sterility and failure. This poem, along with many others, also attests to an acute sense of rupture and division. Historical consciousness becomes a burden, as poets are drawn to the margins that enable them to identify with martyrs against centers of power. The emerging voice is no less out of joint than his world for passing through this ordeal of historical retrieval.

Parody, erotica, and women’s bodies

Another poetic strategy may be an amalgam of signatures, parody, and anxiety of authorship. At times, the polyphonic text invests the other’s voice, not as direct quotes and insertions, but as a functional poetics with an impact on the speaker, the epebe. The latter is torn between real attachments to the immediate precursor, the impact of his normative poetics on the epebe’s amatory lyrics, and the latter’s maturing consciousness, its seeming independence from this influence, and its culminating endorsement, in

the case of women poets, of feminist perspectives. In her poem “On the Death of Nizar Qabbani,” Mohja Kahf, a Syrian-American woman poet, develops this multiple critique that enables us to read into the matrix of Qabbānī’s (d. 1996) poetry, its celebration of the female body, and the woman poet’s independence. Qabbānī’s poetry drew a large readership, especially among the younger generations. Its appeal arises from its flaunting of conservative norms, its direct address to the female, and its masculine infatuation with the feminine condition. It also criticizes the traditional ways and lifestyles, along with obsolete politics and social structures. The woman poet here picks on the dominating side of his poetry, and develops a poetic space of anxiety between elegy, as usually used to celebrate the dead, and her present outlook. She resists subordination to the elegizing mode as the women’s legacy in the canon, problematizing the moment instead and coming up with her mixed register of subordination and independence. The speaker is not after contrafaction, but she ends up producing a parody that amounts to no more than a contaminated dialogue. Her immersion in Qabbānī’s poetry involves her text in echoes of masculine erotica, yet she also strives to imprint a voice of her own that makes use of Western feminism. The poem runs in many parts, and deserves close reading, but here are some excerpts.

No: I refuse to mutter eulogy clichés
 I never wanted to hang your image
 in a gilt frame over my bed
 I wanted to roll with you on the page
 in the sweat and muck of writing
 Every morning I wanted to see
 how you would tug the rope of writing
 this way, yanking me suddenly into the mud
 or that way, into the brilliant sea
 and I, resistant, yanking back
 I refuse to make flowered poetry like wreaths,
 to lay pretty metaphors on my head
 and skip through your books like a gazelle.

Admittedly internalizing the poet’s language and critique, she now has to demonstrate learning through a poetic practice of resistance and opposition.

Because you taught me to be savage,
 I wanted to be a claw and tear your cheek
 I wanted to write like the claw of a cougar
 How can I be the claw when the cougar is gone?
 So nobody talk to me anymore about poetry,
 especially you who guard the gates of Arabic
 and slam it against us who stand outside.

His death means the absence of that masculine celebration of the female body, and, in turn, the speaker's dismay at such a loss.

I will never be this beautiful again
 On the day you left, I saw on my face
 the first lines of ugliness beginning
 I saw my skeleton, I saw my white death
 So nobody talk to me about poetry or beauty
 Spring, the April sea, our language, nothing
 will ever be this beautiful again.²²

The poem builds on many other pieces by Qabbānī, and its close parody implicates it in subordination to his text. As he associates erotic love with inscription, "I melted in my love all the pens— / The blue . . . the red . . . the green . . . / Until the words were formed,"²³ Mohja Kahf turns inscription into an act of physical closeness and intimacy, as "I wanted to roll with you on the page / in the sweat and muck of writing," she writes. Yet, this same poetics carries within it the seeds of revolt, for it is no longer limited to boundaries of unrequited love; nor does it entrench its claims within the obscenities of some 'Abbāsīd verse. Mohja Kahf picks on this, too, as a poetics of challenge and revolt. In one poem, "When I Love You," Qabbānī writes:

When I love you, your breasts shake off their shame,
 Turn into lightning and thunder, a sword, a sandy storm,
 When I love you, the Arab cities leap up and demonstrate
 Against the ages of repression
 And the ages
 Of revenge against the laws of the tribe.

(Ibid. 9)

In the words of Salma K. Jayyusi, Qabbānī's poetry has a liberating power as it awakens women "...to a new awareness of their bodies and their sexuality, wrenching them away from the taboos of society, and making them aware of its discriminatory treatment of the sexes, of its inherent cruelty" (Introduction, *Ibid.* vii). While raiding tradition and awakening sexual consciousness, especially among the young, Qabbānī merges daily speech with images from tradition to establish a language of love that blends the old and the new. The male may continue to be the speaker whom Kahf addresses and elegizes, but he is also the victim of desire whose passions set him again among the demented and the insane, those whose language escapes limits and borders, as they are in Foucault's terms, the "disordered" players of

the “Same and the Other.”²⁴ In “An Arab Cure for Love,” Qabbānī says about his love.

It was a sword dormant within my flesh,
 An invading army,
 The first stage on the road to madness.
 (*On Entering the Sea*, 104)

What is of significance to this reading of a poetic terrain between tradition and modernity is the woman poet's effort to go beyond traditional elegies, usually associated in classical male scriptoria with women poets. Her voice in this paradoxical site of elegy and negation is no less drawn to the register of sexual poetics which is usually absent from traditional elegies.

Claiming and naming the forebear

The relation of the modern poet to his forebears is one of ambivalence on many levels. While claiming lineage and intimacy, the modern poet undergoes great anxieties that relate to contemporary issues of political and religious nature. He needs the forebear as a mask, but he has also to distance his/her voice to elude close comparison. This strategy is no less effective than the first two. The forebear is displaced through a deliberate distortion of names, accentuated anew, to carry on an ironic tone that has its blend of joy and frustration. A pertinent example is Adūnīs' mask of the 1960s, Miḥyār the Damascene. Adopting Miḥyār al-Daylamī's (d. 428/1037) first name for a mask, the poet identifies in part with Miḥyār who changed names at a certain time in his life. At the hands of the renowned poet and descendant of the Prophet, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Miḥyār, otherwise Marzawayh, became a convert to Islam in 394 H/1004 CE. Through his master, he was not only acquainted with Shī'ism, but also with chancery skills. Although copying his master and emulating his skills, Miḥyār excelled in poetry and wrote one of the best elegies lamenting the death of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī. Adūnīs' deliberate partial use speaks for his ambivalence in respect to both his 'Alawite lineage and his broad and unlimited vision and poetics. In *Aghbānī Miḥyār al-Dimashqī* (The Songs of Miḥyār the Damascene 1960–1961), in a poem titled “Qinā' al-'ughniyāt” (The Mask of the Songs), the poet says: “He is the only faithful seed? / The only one who settles in the trough of life.”²⁵

Especially in the poetry of the Bahraini Qāsim Ḥaddād (1948), this deliberate “disidentification,” distancing and recall of ancient poets through slight misnaming or collapsing has a resonance of its own. An early poem in this direction is “Ishrāqāt Ṭarafah Ibn al-Wardah,” [Epiphanies/Illuminations of Ṭarafah Ibn al-Wardah] which recalls the pre-Islamic poet Ṭarafah Ibn al-'Abd while deliberately changing the rest of the name into “*wardah*,” that is,

rose, underscoring a feminized lineage that endows the name with love and appreciation. In the poem, he conjoins in the surname two pre-Islamic poets 'Urwa b. al-Ward with Ṭarafa b. al-'Abd. The former is a pre-Islamic *su'lūk*, a brigand, whose Arab mother did not belong to his tribe and who was thus called "son of the stranger," a misnomer that made him blame his father for a misalliance. The poet was an outlaw by choice and dissent, and his love story, heroic feats, and life of brigandage endow the character with many markers of contemporary resonance insofar as Qāsim Ḥaddād is concerned. Conjoining him with Ṭarafah b. al-'Abd implicates tradition and modernity in serious questions relating to individual freedom in the face of the authoritarian and the tribal. This combination aligns the two poets in a simulacrum of faith, revolt, royalty, and rebellion against circumstances of greater challenge. Ṭarafah's poetry as well as his career and premature death in Bahrain validates the ephebe's stand and sets him genealogically in a line of volatile and complex poetic succession. The combined pre-Islamic poets were remembered for poetic excellence, but they were also rebels who anticipated death as the end. Ṭarafah's premature and gruesome death, his sense of independence, his exultation of desert life and fidelity, and his celebration of royalty, as well as his hedonistic life style, are more in tune with the ephebe Qāsim Ḥaddād, whose poetic career, imprisonments, and rebelliousness set him in this line of succession which the ironic tone does not sentimentalize. The very title undermines readings of correspondence, for Qāsim Ḥaddād looks upon tradition as segments that resist compartmentalization as a totality. This fusion of names and details belies ancestry to the giants, and negotiates elusiveness amid texts, people, and contexts of all times and space. Such revisionism and authentication unsettle views of tradition as one solid structure, replacing these with a modernity focus, "a break with tradition," in Foucault's understanding, but with a "will to 'heroize' the present."²⁶

The other side of this deliberate misnomer is contrapuntal, for the poet alienates his ancestors and dislodges them from a unified tradition as major figures of great impact on the present, while he recalls their misfortunes, which are similar to his own. This poetics of dispersion and combination is heterogeneous as it courts voices that intentionally debate lineage as succession and subordination to forebears. The poet in this instance does not invoke them as classical giants, but as a record of a life ridden with difficulty and confusion, albeit with the recognition of the poet's great literary input. This strategy of dispersion collapses names from among forebears, especially from among rebels and vagabonds, debates single authority as promoted by neo-classical tradition, and allows the modern text to be merged into the personal, the societal, and the historical. The composite figure cannot perform fully as a mask, but the combined career and poetry may lend itself to the modern poet as far as his identity, location, and career are concerned. Poetry is no longer a container of individual musings or shows of allegiance, but an experience that aspires to be as polyvalent and contrapuntal as multivoiced narratives.

The tribal and the poetical in Qāsim Ḥaddād's poem

Qāsim Ḥaddād's poem "Ishrāqāt Ṭarafah Ibn al-Wardah,"²⁷ (Epiphanies/illuminations of Ṭarafah Ibn al-Wardah) has eighteen sections, each signifies a moment in the life and poetry of the ancestor and the successor or ephebe. In the first section the addressee is feminine and the poem creates a sense of loss and yearning that recalls traditional classical *nasīb* (the elegiac prelude). On the other hand, its feminine addressee could stand for a cause, feminized in Arabic as *qadiyyah*.

Take me
 In my language
 and in best years there is the children's joyful elation
 Deep in the sea
 The thread of poetry weaves my sails
 And my ships are embroidered with flowers of nostalgia
 Take me
 And open up this universe window
 I am mad
 And infatuation is my rhyme
 And I am a child in this madness of mine
 Open up
 And take over a dream that sprouts, vein bleeding
 from my blood like jasmine.

In the second section, the poet endows the body with power, and the heart with love to merge into a poetic site of great density.

In prison I glow as cutting as a sword
 Conversing with the desert's sadness
 Whenever the cell becomes narrower
 The parts of my heart expand
 I involve the poem in adventure
 And emanate as letters in names.

With this implication of fusion into names, the poet develops the rest of the poem into a stanzaic exchange between his present imprisonments, love for his homeland, and his ancestors' experience of love and torture or banishment. In section six, the addressee is this homeland.

From among the women of the world
 One brought the universe to my heart:
 My beloved
 From among the lands of the world one is more than all lands of bliss
 The homeland that settles in my heart.

In section five, he exchanges voice with “Ṭarafah,” anticipating death while elegizing the loss of his homeland.

I read that I’ll die, assassinated
 And that my country is made sleepless by words
 But my sad wedding becomes trivial
 For my country is besieged by invaders

The pre-Islamic poet Ṭarafah Ibn al-‘Abd had already anticipated death, concluding as follows regarding selfhood amid confusion and neglect.

I see death choose the generous and the noble,
 While picking over the best part of the hardened miser’s spoil.
 I see life a treasure, shrinking every night
 Shrunk by days and time, and then gone.²⁸

What brings Qāsim Ḥaddad closer to his forebears is this controversial character, for he is no less of a rebel and regal compatriot, as he says in section eleven.

I am given the choice, rose of ambiguity
 Between defile death and martyrdom
 A fighter and a knight and take the risk of life and death
 I am not the one to be uncertain in matters of choice
 Between the sword and the pillow

The last section, eighteen, warns us that, as the saying goes in English, “blood runs thicker than water.” This has already been prepared for as the poet recalls the murdered youth Ṭarafah.

It will be said, I am the murdered youth
 Because I refused to submit
 Reject
 Wake up
 A death like mine is beautiful, beautiful, beautiful

The emphasis on the need to recognize difference to go beyond the present impasse has contemporary overtones. Poetic tradition becomes another dynamic in a multiple critique of some immediacy. In another poem, “Al-Kawāsir” (The Rapacious, or Birds of Prey), Qāsim Ḥaddād polyphonizes the poem in an intertextual engagement that debates and counteracts the *qaṣīdab* rite of passage, for the present moment offers a different story of alienation where many voices whisper and participate in gossip and talk. The tribe no longer needs a poet, and its languages speak against a

troublesome career, chasing the poet away as the modern outcast. Qāsim Ḥaddād writes:

Wherever I go I am tracked down by rapacious predators
My tent is ravaged, and my people's languages celebrate my end.²⁹

Again, he has Ṭarafah in mind, as the latter says:

The oppression of a kinsman is more painful to a man
Then the blow of a sharpened sword of Indian iron.³⁰

Juxtaposition and conversational poetics

Along with the previous strategies, there is, fourth, the use of juxtaposition and conversational poetics. This poetic strategy has evolved as one of the most effective subversive strategies. By giving voice to the downtrodden or the outcast, in Miltonic fashion, or through manipulation of Qur'anic dialogues, poets debate current issues on the ground. In "Death-in-Between: A Dialogue," which I have cited in Chapter 1, the Egyptian poet 'Abd al-Ṣabūr lets the "humble voice" argue the case for justice and redemption in terms of the original sin. Adam is the humble man who asks for protection. The poet cites full passages from the Qur'an to be answered by the humble Adam in a beseeching tone, whose concluding words address Eve:

Be thou my help and succor
As I face the Lord; O hide me, take me, enwrap me, and shroud me!
Don't let me be lost,
Now my certainty is lost!³¹

Other passages are not as conciliatory, for juxtaposition means to question the human condition through Qur'anic and Biblical narratives. On the other hand, poets resort to imaginary conversation with people, relatives and their like, as al-Bayātī does in "Qaṣīdatān ilā waladī 'Alī" ("Two Poems to My Son Ali") in his collection *Sifr al-fuqr wa al-thawrah* (The Book of Poverty and Revolution; Beirut, 1965), to escape the agony of separation while he was in exile during the 1960s. He also justifies positions and attitudes. In these pieces, the speaker draws on traditional lore to evoke its opposite, the loss of promise and hope.

My sad moon
the sea is dead; its dark waves engulfed the sails of Sinbad.
His sons no longer shriek with the gulls, "He's returned,"
nor do they hear the hoarse echo of their call.

Ash has shrouded the horizon.
 So for whom do the Sirens sing?
 The sea is dead,
 and on its face, grass floats with our golden days,
 the memory of which returns when the singer sings.
 Our golden days are drowning and singing is turning
 to weeping.
 The larks have fled, my sad moon, and
 the treasure is buried in the stream,
 at the end of the garden, under the lemon tree.
 It was hidden there by Sinbad.
 It is hollow.
 Ash, snow, darkness, and dead leaves bury it.
 Fog has veiled the earth.
 Is this how we die? In a wasteland,
 watching the candle of childhood shrivel in the sand?
 Is this how the sun sets?
 With no fire in the hearth of the poor?³²

In the second part of the first letter, the poet adopts a mask of a forlorn Sinbad, isolated and desolate, whose recollections of family and friends are futile practices to sustain sanity.

Cities sleep without dawn.
 I beckoned your name in the streets, and darkness replied.
 I begged the wind, wailing in the heart of the void;
 I saw your face in mirrors and eyes,
 in window panes of that elusive dawn
 and on postcards.
 In cities without dawn,
 even the birds deserted the churches.

(Ibid.)

Carrying the image of the son does not change things in exile, nor does it bring happiness to the son. The poet justifies then the overwhelming sorrow that envelopes his poetry:

So for whom do you sing, my heart? The street shops have sealed
 their doors.
 For whom do you pray my broken heart?
 The night has passed
 and carriages
 laced with frost
 returned without horses.

The riders died.
 Is this how the years pass?
 With pain tearing the heart?

(Ibid.)

While making use of the voyages of Sinbad, these poetic letters have a counter message. There is no glory and gain abroad, and life is miserable for an exile. The poem negates the promise of munificence and certitude that we usually come across in popular Arabic travelogue. The poem oscillates between nostalgia and loss, and its family reference carries no consolation to the son in Iraq. The “golden days” recalls a history and a past that are lost forever. They indicate absence and implicate the son in a present of pain and failure. The accumulated images are evocative in the sense that they build up a mood of sadness and agony. The speaker entangles the son as the listener, and there is even an intentional design to make him share the father’s sense of loss and disappointment in exile. The homeland carries no beckoning message of relief. Amid destruction and failure, there is no point in setting the sail toward home.

The muted voice of the son, however, may lie behind this address, for the rebuffing note is one of dismissal, not compassion. The son may have asked for a homecoming, and the father’s dismissive remarks mount up reasons for the speaker’s decision to live in exile. Al-Bayātī’s poetic letters are in total opposition to the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet’s series of epistolary poems to his son and wife. They are worth the comparison, not only because of the poets’ friendship and common cause, but also mainly because there is a difference between exile and death. The Turkish poet needs no traditional lore to manipulate or debate, for he is sure of his mission and commitment. The Iraqi poet writes from exile to justify estrangement, and also to narrate his misery, whereas Hikmet writes from prison in 1955 on the way to execution. Hikmet’s “The Last Letter to My Son,” resonates with commitment and love. It also builds a register of defiance.

Memet,
 I’ll die far from my language and my songs,
 my salt and bread,
 homesick for you and your mother,
 my friends and my people,
 but not in exile,
 not in some foreign land—
 I will die in the country of my dreams,
 in the white city of my best days.³³

The conversational tone is compassionate; as it works its way within the father’s understanding of his ideology as one of faith in his culture. This faith

allows no doubts or hesitations to disturb the addressee, and the message is therefore one of consolation and comfort despite the speaker's affliction. Faith summons the rhetorical to its side, whereas doubt disperses this and calls on other techniques to compensate. Faith may work against the dialogic principle, as it imposes its indisputable markers onto the message, whereas the wounded voice comes up with apologies, justifications and negations to make up a case. The wounded voice offers a dialogic principle like a dramatic monologue, while the voice of faith is self-sufficient. Hikmet speaks with certainty and leaves no place for doubts.

Demystification

A fifth strategy relates to a focused undermining of closure and mythical imposition. This argument involves debating mythical structures, as Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb does in "Medīnat al-Sinbād" (City of Sinbad 1960) which, although mentions Babylon in the last part, refers to his own native city Basrah, as the abode of Sinbad the sailor.³⁴ Written in 1960, it culminated his disappointments with the political situation in Iraq and the onslaught on nationalists.³⁵ Mythical patterns of the early Tammūzī movement no longer hold, and the long poem, with its final part, looks upon scenes, sites, and marks as an inventory of apocalypse, or a convergence of chaos. The speaker uses the title ironically, for instead of an abode of glory and good life, "Basrah is in ruins" (Ibid. 102). It gives the lie to all myths and stories of resurrection, regeneration, and fertility. In the final part the speaker relies on a Babylonian subtext to highlight the opposite.

Its hanging gardens are sown
 With heads cut off by sharp axes,
 And the crows peck at their eyes,
 While suns set in the west
 Behind their hair dyed in branches.
 And is this my city? Are these the ruins
 On which was inscribed: "Long live life!"
 With the blood of its slain?
 Is there no god in that place, no water or fields?
 (Ibid. 103)

The poet's dismay at a godless universe is expressed in symbols and images of deceit, betrayal, brutality, and torture that work together to depict a city of loss and death where the mythical structure of regeneration loses meaning.

Is this my city? Daggers of the Tatars
 Sheathed above its gate, and the desert pants
 With thirst around its streets, unvisited by the moon?

Is this my city? Are these the pits,
 And these the bones?
 The shadows look down from their houses
 With their blood dyed somber
 To be lost and unnoticed
 By the pursuer
 Is this my city? With injured domes,
 in which red-robed Judas
 Set the dogs on the cradles
 Of my little brothers . . . and the houses,
 They eat of their flesh
 And in the village Ishtar is dying of thirst,
 There are no flowers on her forehead
 And in her hands there is a basket, its fruit are stones
 Which she casts at every woman. And in the palm trees
 On the city's shore there is a wailing.

(Ibid. 103)

Words and images that normally denote joy here invoke nothing but sterility and waste. Opposite connotations emerge from the register, and stones and wailing are the markers of the new city. The poet, as a “sufferer of modernity,” universalizes the immediate, presenting thereby a “landscape of ruins.”³⁶ The disillusioned voice of the modern Sindbād invites answers, no matter how rhetorical the questions sound. The invitation calls myth, satire, and narrative to a poetic space that is loaded with signs and recollections. Adonis has nothing to offer, and myth pales in the face of a cruel and sordid reality. “Is this Adonis, this emptiness? / And this pallor, this dryness?” (Ibid. 95). A transposition of meaning takes place that corresponds to the new site of loss and destruction. The apocalyptic vision runs counter to the city of opulence and affluence, and the city has no redeeming marker to change it into a celestial one. Losing both the material and the celestial, it is one of death, and the speaker is an outcast, like a raving lunatic. Both share what Foucault calls, a “. . . marginal position and a profoundly archaic silhouette—where their words unceasingly renew the power of their strangeness and the strength of their contestation.”³⁷

Sumer retained

A sixth strategy deals with the ancient Mesopotamian past. The use of Sumerian lore is new in Arabic poetry. Although the mythical element has been present since the mounting interest of the early 1950s, the Babylonian has attracted more attention, especially in terms of epical poetics. Even al-Sayyāb's use of Eliot and the mythical method turns him toward Middle Eastern myth at large. Eliot's use of European tradition, with few references

to the Orient in his poetry and articles, invigorated a search for sources of poetry and poetics beyond neoclassical limits. Navigating between Greek and Middle Eastern mythology, al-Sayyāb wrote to Yūsuf al-Khāl (d. 1987), the editor-in-chief of *Shi'r*:

Have you read what T. S. Eliot said of the individual talent and tradition and their relation to poetry? There must remain an intersection holding the ancient and the modern. Some of the features of the old should remain in the thing which we call new. Our poetry should not be a mimic of the West in Arab or semi-Arab attire. Let us make use of the best in our poetic tradition while making use of the achievements of Western writers, especially the Anglo-Saxon, in the realm of poetry.³⁸

His tradition had not yet coped with the Sumerian heritage despite its great relevance to his Southern background. He had the Babylonian in mind, especially the myths of Tammūs and Ishtār, and the Middle Eastern lore at large. The Sumerian song and ritual are new comers, and many, like the poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh, may find in this lore a subtext to recreate a moment that may be in sharp contrast with the flowing Sumerian wine and the rites of wedding there. In “Ḥalīb Inānnā” (“Inanna’s Milk” 1999), the speaker says:

Yours are the twins of prose and poetry,
 as you fly from epoch to epoch,
 safe and whole upon a cosmic *howdah* of stars your
 victims, your kind guards,
 carry your seven skies caravan by caravan.
 Those who tend your horses, approach the water
 between your hands and the twin rivers:
The first among goddesses is the one most filled with us.
 A loving Creator contemplates His works.
 He is enchanted with them, and longs for them:
Shall I do again, what I did before.
 The sky’s ink burns the scribes of your lightning.
 Their descendents send swallows down upon
 the Sumerian woman’s procession, whether ascending or descending.³⁹

In Sumerian mythology, Inanna, the daughter of the Moon couple Nanna and Ningal, has the power of other deities and is therefore “the virtual Queen of the Universe,”⁴⁰ whose being has gathered “the opposing pairs of creation” (Ibid. 18). Enheduanna was the Sumerian High Priestess to the Moon God Nanna at his temple (Ur, 2300 BCE) and was the one who, in her poetry, elevated Inanna, child of the Moon God above all other deities, as the supreme fusion of the divine and the real. With this combination of opposites, she culminates

as “the goddess of paradox, she is the model of unity in multiplicity” (Ibid. 22). This complexity offers the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh enough space to dialogize. In his poem, the Sumerian Goddess evolves as the source for poetic creativity, but in this process she becomes one with the real woman whom he addresses:

For you, stretched out in the corridor in silk shirt and gray trousers,
and not for metaphors of you that I awaken my wilderness and tell myself
that a moon will rise from my darkness.
Let the water rain down upon us from the Sumerian sky as it does in
myths.
If my heart is sound, like the glass around us, fill it with your clouds
(*Unfortunately it was paradise*, p.110)

The poem evokes the Sumerian procession, and recalls mythical scenes of rapture and joy to endow the addressee’s real situation with benedictions of life and fertility. Yet, the contrast between the recreated Sumerian scene and the actual one is sharp and disheartening. The abrupt change from the poetic to the prosaic, from the lyrical to the actual scene, “*Take a cup of hot chamomile and two aspirin,*” is intentional, as it demystifies the mythical aura, and brings the scene back to its human limits, where there is also trouble and sickness. The conversational tone broadens the scope of poetry, and involves it into multiplevoicing.

Let us finish it here on the edge of the earth
in the place brought down by your hands
from the balcony of the vanishing paradise.
For you, reading the newspaper in the hallway, fighting the *flu*,
I say: *Take a cup of hot chamomile and two aspirin,*
so that *Inanna’s milk may settle in you*
and we may know what time it is
at the meeting of the Two Rivers.

(Ibid. 112)

With this new discovery of the Sumerian poetry, poets find another source to bring poetry and its traditions back to life. As Sumerian poetry and songs have a surprising connection to life styles, customs, and historical happenings, modernist poets, like Darwīsh and the Iraqī Shawqī ‘Abd al-Amīr are no longer tied to mythical superimpositions as their Tammūzī forebears. Poetry in the Sumerian lore humanizes gods and depicts them in their differences and arguments like the rest of the people who are the subject of poetry. In Shawqī ‘Abd al-Amīr’s poem “*Iḥtimālāt*” (Probable cases 1998), the poet makes use of the original Sumerian song, with its mythical underpinnings and markers, for these reflect strongly on the situation in Iraq in the 1990s.

In the first two sections of this long poem, the poet joins the mythical with the real. His poetic concern with details and his meticulous attention to the ancient rites of Sumer, as still lingering in the South of Iraq whence the poet has come, endow these two pieces with enough color and life. The poem is as pictorial as a painting, with lively images of people, boats, water, fire, songs, and animals. The god who gives the title to the first is, after all, a resident of the marshes, the sites of popular rituals, benedictions and magical vows and promises. Every action and motion is rife with mythical dimensions, for life is so real as to evoke the unreal.

In a summer night he saw reed woods
 The fire raised its heads
 The drowned child emerged
 He sat him around the fire and said:
 You will see that death has the taste of burntout fish
 A serpent's bite whose poison sucked by a mother
 A vase of reed like a face of a child
 An old woman carrying a lantern
 Traversing the swamps of fire and creation.
 In the marshes the pillars of the night remain turbaned
 With the embracing kiss of doves that are not coming back
 "The black" is a clay robe⁴¹
 In which songs, for their sharp piercing, become heads and axes.⁴²

The seemingly descriptive hides enormous subversion. It plays on the contrast between what is left of the South of Iraq, the Sumerian site, and the present scene of poverty and desolation, especially in the aftermath of the Iraq–Iran war, and the 1991 uprising, with the ensuing human and environmental destruction due to the systematic draining of the marshes and the imposed sanctions on Iraq as well. The series of images culminates in the reference to Southern singing with its paradoxical lyricism and inherent pain, as it grows into sites of dissent and revolt.

The poet's other piece is more involved in dissent. It uses both the wind and Janūb (South), the Sumerian whore who was married to the god of Heaven, Inlīl. Her freedom, the destructive power of the hot wind, and the defiance of god, and his choice of the whore to offer life, not only sex and love, involve the poem in current politics. The poet brings the mythical background to bear on the present, for Janūb, which is the title of the poem, too, is no longer the ancient woman of joy, but the widowed in the South,

Wearing a robe of dust
 Dancing mad in the squares, the destinies, and the shadows,
 "Janūb" lost all her offspring
 The hot monsoon wind chases him at the entrance of cities

Behind the funeral of a friend
 In the body of a strange woman
 In the woods of things when crowded
 With the years of a not coming hour
 The wind blows.

(Ibid. 60–61)

The images of the robe of dust bring both the wind and Janūb together, as both are empowered in this sweeping freedom to chase out the source of horror and destruction. The poem uses images from the present Iraqi city of Nāṣiriyyah to place Janūb there, in a street traditionally called “‘Aqd al-hawā” (The Love Avenue) in reference to the locations of brothels there. Instead of the ancient joy, love, and sex, there are only death, cemeteries, corpses, and graves where Janūb invokes the compassion of the soil in a world devoid of life and love.⁴³

Language redeemed

A seventh dialogic strategy targets superimposed limitations, strictures, and bondage that fossilize language and deprive it of spontaneity. This strategy becomes a poetic engagement with issues of language and tradition, as in the poetry of Adūnīs, Ḥamīd Saʿīd, and Bennīs. Adūnīs sums up the issue in pointing out the disparity between appearance and reality, representation and presentation, in disjointed times. “Whenever I say: my country is within reach / And bears fruit in a reachable language / Another language kicks me / To another language” (“Ṣaḥrā’ II,” 85; “The Desert,” 27). Using the image of the river, the wave, the water, the desert, the dust, and the green and the silver blue, the Moroccan poet Muḥammad Bennīs rediscovers language as newly born, still pure and shiny, “lightening on water,” as he describes the sense of meeting this language, as opposed to its death in the hands of others. In his poem “Lughatun” (A Language), he finds it a “language / with which I searched for my body / caves enjoying the silver blue.”⁴⁴ This language, in its unadulterated form, “. . . unifies me with my desert,” a desert that “expands re-iterating uncertain caravans’ singing.” He adds, “You language, / by which hand I wrote you / traversing the land / listening to the coldness of the *Dād* (Arabic) between two corpses, two funerals.” Out of this meeting comes a resurrected Arabic, rich with shades and meanings. “This is the language through which / I got acquainted with an inhaling in the unseen / by which I received what a glittering color moistens in the body.” This language has its meaning as a river in “Nahrūn Yufāji” (The River Surprises). With all the power of water and its connotations and bearing on life, the poet draws it as a rich language, or he draws the latter as such. “A River / Surprises what remains of life between us / a life that survives on the verge of death / A river which hides among corners / or lightens”

(Ibid. 66–68). The poet looks for the surprising and the unfamiliar, the flowing and the hidden beneath both hegemonic monopoly of discourse and mundane pragmatism. The poem in his hands is a discovery of the lively and the vital, among the marginalized, the insane, and the Sufis. The loving bond with the language grows in correspondence with this association, which other poets trace elsewhere.

In “Mawt al-mughannī” (The Death of the Singer), Ḥamīd Sa‘īd chooses the absence of the ‘Abbāsīd woman singer Fawz⁴⁵ to articulate his lamentations for the death of poets and poetry. As an eloquent elegy of the dearth of the lyrical in poetry, the poem encapsulates time and space, tradition and modernity, as it elegizes the poetic scene at large.

Fawz is absent . . . so why coming without her . . .
 Why absent?
 The singer is absent . . .
 On his voice does Death lean, backbent,
 His beard of tatters
 His spectacles of wood⁴⁶
 Do not laugh
 Do not arouse his suspicions
 Follow him to where the singer used to have his fires
 Let him write at ease the last words
 The last song in the will.
 Do not wake Fawz up
 Love tired her
 These wrinkles . . .
 the tune of absence which passed through her fingers
 This whiteness in her braids . . . the tune of farewell that remains
 between her lips
 Do not awaken this agony . . . this irritable confidant
 that joined me at many nights to her . . .
 And joined her
 Since light deserted her laugh
 And mourned in her looks⁴⁷

Sa‘īd’s poetics practices lyricism and argues for the poem as a lyrical space that is no less rich in images and recollections. In a poem entitled “Bayt Kāzīm Jawād” (Kāzīm Jawād’s house), Sa‘īd reenacts the late Iraqi poet Kāzīm Jawād’s (d. 1985) voice through the latter’s clothes, papers, books, notes, marginalia, and mannerisms as he used to describe life and poetry. The late poet from the city of al-Naṣīryyah in the South of Iraq is not subjected to poetic retrieval, for the speaker knows him with an intimacy that allows this dialogization. This reminiscence is worth citing, as Kāzīm Jawād argued for a nationalist tradition against innovators while preoccupying himself with

European literature, and he was drawn to a glorious history of the past while his memory hovered around his hometown.

Two coats on a dusty hanger
 Black benches
 Cats that are suspicious and black
 And the sadness is black
 Nothing but memories which are endowed with joy
 And the glitter in the eyes
 Books deserted by their texts
 And the margins feverish with what was,
 Preoccupied with what is to happen

 Newspapers and obsessions . . .
 Who is to knock at the door at night
 Friends departed
 And the poem is worn out
 And the beloved is angry
 And the garden is deserted
 And the time of infatuation is too distanced

 On the way to Qurṭuba (Cordoba)
 Al-Nāṣiriyyah trots in the mountainous roads
 In its dark-yellow charm
 It follows us with songs . . . and in recollections it shares our gypsy nights
 If the cup dried up
 Al-Nāṣiriyyah would become our tavern and . . . our guide
 Who is she who waved to the wrinkles
 And suggested a season for singing
 And a beginning for tears
 Who is she who, with her dexterity, commanded frost
 In dusk paths
 Bestowed on dark-yellow rays this elegance

 Smoke on the terrace . . .
 A face on the window
 Trees of desolation
 Extended their branches . . .
 Oh friends . . .
 Join my desolation
 Share it with me

I bequeath you my desolation . . .
 My bread . . .
 And my cup . . .
 Just leave me the ecstasy
 For I am thirsty . . . Oh friends

.....

A bulbul [nightingale] of transparent glass
 I teach twittering in the morning
 I offer him some of my sorrow . . .
 And let him free
 A rose of dust
 Opens up at night.
 And I pluck it in the morning
 A phantom woman
 I become her lover
 Hiding her charms in sleeplessness
 So, come join my sleeplessness . . .
 Oh poets.

(Ibid. 107–15)

Ḥamīd Saʿīd's lyricism builds on his early poetry of the late 1960s with its recall of Shi'ite rituals, various personages, and life in Baghdad. Nevertheless, he distances himself from his generation's affectations and claims for sophistication. In a poem addressed to his colleague and friend, the Iraqi poet Sāmī Mahdī (b. 1940), Ḥamīd Saʿīd subtly argues against the effort to problematize a scene or a life. Language in this instance recovers a self that is lost in clichés and sophistry. Using a parallel structure, the poet sets a multiple perspective to uncover both the complex and the ordinary. While both can be the objects of poetry, the intimation throughout is toward spontaneity and effortless sweep. "Al-mu'dilah" (The Problem), dedicated to Sāmī Mahdī, begins as follows:

He asked his friend for a loan . . . and bought with it
 Three plants of bitter orange
 He planted them in the house courtyard . . . he borrowed from his lady
 neighbor a table
 And he made a seat out of stone
 He said:
 Now I am done with the problem of the garden

 He saw a kid plucking a lemon from the vizier's garden
 He cursed him in private, to himself,
 And he said: you swine

He went to the market and bought a lemon and tied it to a branch of the
 lean/slender bitter orange
 But. . He was not good at that

 Years later, the poem induced him into youth
 He consented . . . it distanced itself
 He pursued it . . . but it went further
 He shouted at her . . . you stubborn
 Stubborn
 Stubborn
 His voice still traverses the continents
 In white cities . . . in pubs
 You stubborn
 Stubborn
 Stubborn
 Perhaps he saw her
 At a night of flowing black braids
 And thought her Fatimah.
 Sneaking at night to impart her youth into his . . .
 But, she . . .
 Left him to another . . .
 But, how could he leave her . . . to another . . .

 Day and night
 At home . . . in the street . . . at the hotel . . . and the in the train . . .
 In the voice of whom he loves . . . in the trees
 In . . .
 They exchanged siege
 And the problem of the poem never ends.

(Ibid. 83–89)

The elusive nature of poetry, its resistance to sophistry, and its demands on the poet, is behind these poetic discussions and engagements, for the speaker argues the case with himself/herself or with other poets. To invigorate poetry with enough life, language and poetry should be integral enough to be free from restrictive forms. As Qāsim Ḥaddād cautions his persona, “Master the form that bows not to form.”⁴⁸

Functional Sufism

An eighth dialogic strategy relates to Sufi intimations, codes, and significations. The reliance on the registers of the great Sufis means their languages and

knowledge inhabit the emerging texts. Although Sufism has its own registers, its innate resistance to formality and limits, along with its ultimate rift with orthodoxy are appealing to modern poets. Adūnīs wrote poetry in a neo-Sufi vein, as did others from the old generation and the new. He also devotes a book on the conflation of surrealism and Sufism,⁴⁹ whereas other poets practice the convergence with a Qur'ānic stylization that enables them to speak for a poetics that carves its creativity through its roots in tradition. Amalgamating traditions, the Prophet's record, and the implications of modernity, poets like the Egyptian Muḥammad 'Afifī Maṭar (b. 1935), brought into poetry a Sufi strain of great resonance and richness. In a number of preludes that make up his poem "Faraḥun bi-al-turāb" ("Earth Joy" 1975), Muḥammad 'Afifī Maṭar uses the symbolic value of forty as the time for poetic creativity. Relying on the number as the age of the Prophet when receiving the Revelation, the persona looks upon his life in spatial metaphors of forty doors that interchange with symbolic time to coalesce channels of creativity and maturation. Acting on imagination and experience, the spatial and the temporal bring forth the moment of creation as a transfiguration, a poetic creation.

Is it the hour of lengthening shadows,
 Or the date of water springs inner nature,
 bursting out,
 so my body may find completion
 and break into rhymed *fasilas*
 and rhythm-beads?
 I say, I who am born of forty women:
 this is the valor of waiting
 and the stumblings of slow greenness.⁵⁰

Although the single-voiced poem is an unfolding intimation, its merging into other revelations and significations relocates the singular into a tradition, an amalgam of the Prophetic and the Sufi. The case becomes markedly entangled in both in the "Second Prelude," as these intimations flow through the forty doors as channels of reception and response. The mention of al-Niffarī (d. 965), with his Sufi *stay*, arresting contemplation and entrancement, signifies participation in the vision of God, a reaching into the divine beyond the stage of Sufi knowledge. In keeping with the awakening to forms of knowledge in reading, as in the revelatory "Read" that is prepared for in the young girl's initiation into reading, the poetic impulse derives accumulation and growth in time and space to reach the *stay* or the entrancement beyond. Exchanging "Read" in this instance with the Godly direction to the Prophet to "read," the poet lets the poem soar into the revelatory. Because of this, the words assume different meanings and layering, and poetry partakes of the visionary and the luminary. The addressee is in the position of reception,

but he is also the muted addresser in such a *stay* or arresting contemplation. The identification or fusion of the two gathers momentum in the last stanzas, and both are one.

You progress a step toward the hall of forms,
toward the arcades of the phrase,
and everything metamorphoses,
everything metamorphoses. . . .

(Ibid. 5)

The preparation takes place in a number of visits in keeping with Sufi bonds, for the presence of the Sufi Shaykh al-Niffarī as a “friend” means that the persona is no longer a disciple, nor a novice, but an equal in the Sufi *stay* or arresting contemplation, like the Baghdadi Sufi Shiblī in relation to al-Ḥallāj (d. 922):

And my friend al-Niffari surprises me
with the rose of crimson water
and the glare of sea
and taste of salt air . . .
I end up craving bread
and wait for time
and the childhood
of evening talk
and the disclosure
and the moment that stuns.

(Ibid. 2–3)

Poetic variables: the mawwāl and kān kān

A ninth dialogic strategy resides in the use of popular forms. The *mawwāl* goes back to the nonclassical Arabic *mawālī* or *mawālīyāh* form that was in existence by the sixth/twelfth century.⁵¹ With regard to sung form, the *mawālī* is made of four hemistichs of the same rhyme. At a later time it began to accommodate a variety of multi-rhymed compositions. As it gives itself freely to songs of nostalgia and yearning, the form is popular in Iraq. The written form is made of five, or seven hemistichs; the first two have the same rhyme (aa bb a), whereas the third and fourth have another rhyme. The fifth has the same rhyme as the first two.⁵² Practiced by many modern poets, the form is deployed to reinstate the modernity impulse of deviation while appropriating the dialogic through the use of song shreds and popular singing at large. The Iraqis, like al-Bayātī and Sa’dī Yūsuf,⁵³ provide many instances in this regard, but a free application of the form is carried out by the Egyptian Muḥammad ‘Afīfī Matar, who spent some years in Iraq. ‘Afīfī Matar uses as

a refrain “O, night. O eye,” (yā layl, yā ‘ayn) in keeping with the popular tradition of nocturnal yearning and loneliness, a tradition that is not different from the classical use of Laylā (the female name with connotations of night), and *layl* and *layālī* (night and nights). In his *Rubā‘īyat al-farah* (*Quartet of Joy*),⁵⁴ the poet comes up with three *mawwāls*: one unfolds the singer’s suffering at night while longing for the loved one; the second, titled “Distant Gaze,” depicts suffering at large, due to social injustice, in juxtaposition with the joys of love and life; whereas the third, “The Bard’s *mawwāl*,” recreates the popular tragic story of Ḥasan and Na‘īmah, especially Ḥasan’s death, to mourn the fate of singers as lovers while celebrating the permanence of the song as beyond the reach of death. In the first *mawwāl*, the singer is the woman, and the persona fuses easily into her voice, for:

delirium overwhelms me seasons of harvest lay heavy
 on my memory,
 my head, thick with power and poetry,
 fell forward, I dozed . . .
 my body: the opened-out earth;
 creation: a fist of my clay;
 the folk: my children;
 Ya layl!

(Ibid. 27)

In the second *mawwāl*, “The Distant Gaze,” the speaker recollects the traditional erotic prelude only in the third stanza, interweaving his songs with ancient and modern scenes, “ropes across ropes,” but “spidered together by storms” (Ibid.). This poetic scene invites voices and songs as befitting exile and departure that is accelerated by recollection and memories of the ancient past.

The quarry is the last thing
 my ruined dwelling preserved for me:
 hearth’s embers buried in its sand;
 love, a mirage howdah on its desolation,
 Racing and beaming wherever I dwell or more,
 Ya layl!

(Ibid. 27)

In the third *mawwāl*, the singer applies a refrain with a thematic emphasis on the need to be listened to, as there is no more singing if no one listens to his songs. There are slight variations in a number of stanzaic endings to communicate the story of love and loss, while the song as a whole is punctuated with reminiscences, comments, and oblique criticisms of injustice, oppression, and

servitude. The murdered lover, the bard, summons all martyrs and poets, in a confluence of voices that defy death and erosion.

the bard floating on the water,
the heavy-stepping river dragging him
from folk to folk, year to year

(Ibid. 28)

The occasion is used to mourn an all-encompassing death of life and culture that has resulted from oppression, usurpation, and bloodshed. As repression becomes the norm, little is left for language to say, and “. . . between the mask and the symbols’ endurance,” there is little meaningful space (Ibid. 30). The “land of despots” becomes a shriveled carpet, and language turns wooden, emptied of life and meaning.

The flesh of dictionaries
drips off their frail spines.
The verb’s corpse is divulged
in the wood formula of coffins,
and the noun harbors the void’s bitter cold;
significance irrevocably divorced
from allusion and sense,
grammar trades around its terms;
speech remains a distance of sand
throughout which dummies and invading armies stand posted.

(Ibid. 30)

This interplay between the historical, the political, and the cultural is not alien to the *mauwāl* and popular singing in general. Targeting the pervasive penetration into life and culture of a hegemonic ideology, its control of media and means of communication, and its ultimate loss of vitality and spontaneity, the bard invigorates poetry by reconnecting it to traditional lore with its resistance to fossilization and death. Similar to the ballad tradition in its multiplevoicing, this form is appropriatory in nature, and is therefore capable of harboring a number of genres and voices. Its space and freedom allow further dissent and resistance.

On many occasions, modern poetic engagements are often in dialogue with other deviational poetics. They use the time-honored metric systems freely and avoid stock images in keeping with a penchant for freedom. They find in the Baghdadi *Kān Kān*, the Shi’ī *ta’āzī* (singular: *ta’ziyah*), and other poetic modes possible means to invigorate their poetics. Building on the mourning lyrics, usually recited in memory of the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn,⁵⁵ these create a poetic mode of great poignancy and lyrical resonance. For the *Kān Kān* we may quote the following story from the *Arabian Nights*, to understand the love and longing associations that dominate modern poetry whenever the

subject is yearning and romantic agony. In *Night 35*, the three women of Baghdad pass the night with singing in the vein of the *Kān Kān*, crying, and fainting out of longing. The story says:

The shopper rose, entered a chamber, and, soon brought back a bag of yellow satin with two green silk tassels ornamented with red gold and two beads of pure ambergris. She sat in front of the doorkeeper, drew a lute out of the bag, and with its side resting on her knee, held it in her lap. Then she tuned the lute and, plucking the string with her fingertips, began to play and sing the following verses of the *Kan wa Kan* variety:

My love, you are my aim,
 And you are my desire.
 Your company is constant joy,
 Your absence, hellish fire.
 You are the madness of my life,
 My one infatuation,
 A love in which there is no shame,
 A blameless adoration.
 The shirt of agony I wore
 Revealed my secret passion,
 Betrayed my agitated heart
 And left me in confusion.

The *Kān Kān* should go on to explain a condition, for it is only through physical traces that love and passion can demonstrate intensity.

My tears to all declared my love,
 As o'er my cheeks they flowed,
 My treacherous tears betrayed me
 And all my secrets showed.
 O, cure me from my dire disease
 You are the sickness and the cure,
 But he whose remedy you are
 Will suffer evermore.

While the lover is entreated to show compassion and care, the show will increase the speaker's passion and suffering. The increase in love and beauty means more agony.

Your brilliant eyes have wasted me,
 Your jet-black hair has me in thrall,
 Your rosy cheeks have vanquished me
 And told my tale to all.

As the *Kān Kān* builds its effect through dramatization, we expect an increase in agony, leading to expressions of probable martyrdom in love.

My hardship is my martyrdom
 The sword of love, my death.
 How often have the best of men
 This way ended their breath?

Repetition accelerates passion, and the surrender to death dramatizes the recitation and quickens the pace of the *Kān Kān*.

I will not cease from loving you,
 Nor unlock what is sealed.
 Love is my law and remedy,
 Whether hid or revealed.
 Blessed my eyes that gazed on you,
 O treasured revelation;
 This has left me confused, alone,
 In helpless adoration.

When the girl finished the poem, her sister let out a loud cry and moaned, “Oh, oh, oh!” Then she grabbed her dress by the collar and tore it down to the hem, baring her entire body, and fell down in a swoon.⁵⁶

The *Kān Kān* and other nonclassical modes become part of the new Free Verse Movement, its early experimentation with street songs and singing as art. By the same token, these modes are the properties of popular poetry, its vernacular variables, and songs. Like the *mawwāl*, the *Kān Kān* is present in abundance in popular poetry, as the Egyptian Fu‘ād Ḥaddād’s poetry shows. In *Min Nūr al-Khayāl* (By the Light of Imagination), for instance, he says in a poem titled “Kān Yāmā kān” (Once Upon a Time):

Once I entered a house in the Azhar Quarter
 That was one night when we were children,
 I halted; I had not the chance even to look at the walls:
 His voice met me before taking my seat in front of him,
 He had his seat at the center, on his right was his stick
 He was a story-teller telling the tale of the knights.⁵⁷

Such a start leads to other songs and poetic anecdotes that generally celebrate or recollect heroic feats or love scenes. Studies of popular poetry demonstrate how this poetry engages the emotions, passions, and interests of the populace. It is fair to say that mourning and carnivalesque rituals and processions interact with this poetry in dynamic ways. Poets need these

celebrations and processions or assemblies, and a great deal of poetic appropriation takes place in keeping with needs and demands. The public with its platforms is the new patron. The popularity of certain meters among the public may attest to this appropriation process which has its bearing on modern poetry, too. The dominant classical meters, and their variables,⁵⁸ are not the same for modern poetry. In the latter, as Moreh concludes, the *rajaz* comes first in terms of recurrence, then *kāmil*, *ramal*, *mutaqārib*, *mutadārik*, *sarī*, *khafīf*, *bazaj*, *wāfir*, and *basīt*.⁵⁹ Mounah Khouri suggests the following: “. . . of the sixteen traditional meters, only seven (Kāmil, Ramal, Hazaj, Rajaz, Mutqārib, Khafīf, and Wāfir), which are based on the repetition of a single *tafīlah*, could be used by the free verse poets.”⁶⁰ The recurrent mode has a metric mixture which has some of its traces in Qur’ānic and poetic styles, too.⁶¹

The same order does not apply to popular and ‘*āmmiyyah*’ poetry. The order of recurrence is as follows in Iraqi ‘*āmmiyyah*’ poetry, for instance: *mujtath*, *sarī*, *basīt*, *rajaz*, *mutadārik*, *bazaj*, and *ramal*.⁶² Although the *ta’ziyah* makes extensive use of Arabic prosody and leans heavily on early elegies, it has also its modern recapitulations, especially the rhythmic manipulation of political and social issues to reach large audiences and involve wider participation in processions. It has therefore an appeal of its own. Its impact is present in a number of ways: (1) the intensity of mourning as a general climate, especially in the poetry of al-Bayātī and al-Sayyāb; (2) the use of repetitive formulas, phrases, content, and meter; (3) the change in meter within single poems, although the basic meters are the *mujtath* first and then *bazaj*; (4) attention to topography; (5) the tendency to enumeration of names, events, and details; (6) and the propensity to dramatization; (7) and the extensive use of water and blood imagery.⁶³ Although younger and less secularized generations are more attuned to such modes and patterns, we still find in al-Bayātī’s *Sifr al-fuqr wa al-ihawrah* (The Book of Poverty and Revolution) some of these characteristics.⁶⁴ As an example of *bazaj*, al-Sammān cites al-Bayātī’s “Al-Rajul alladhī kāna yughannī” (The Man Who Has Been Singing), from his *Asb’ār fī al-manfā* (Poems in Exile 1957):

At the gates of Tehran we saw him
 We saw him
 Singing.
 We thought him Omar al-Khayyam, sister,
 On his forehead an open deep scar,
 Singing,
 With red eyes
 Like a dawn; in his right hand
 A loaf of bread
 A Koran
 A grenade in his right hand
 Singing, Omar al-Khayyam, sister.⁶⁵

Repetition, and address to an implied or real listener, along with images of struggle and martyrdom, enmesh such a poem nicely in *ta'ziyah* poetry. In *ta'ziyah*, al-Husayan's sister is usually addressed, and the mourning poetry focuses on his determination to fight and on the wounds of martyrs prior to their death. Both the *Kān Kān* and *ta'ziyah* are strongly present in popular culture and operate with power on structures of feeling. Along with other modes that are suited to processions, assemblies, and street performance, both address and influence an audience. Both expand the scope of poetry and endow it with lyricism, and also involve it in multivoicing. Due to this confluence, the poem becomes a meeting space for unmerged voices and consciousnesses. Both *Kān Kān* and *ta'ziyah* meet the demand for a nonelitist poetics that can cope with populist ideologies since the 1950s. Almost every poet, especially in Iraq, came under the impact of these modes in one way or another, and the popularity of some poets grew in part due to this multifaceted correspondence.

Prosimetrum and revisionist poetics

A tenth dialogic strategy relates to prosimetrum, as the practice involves poetry in active dialogue with other genres. The fusion of the old and the new, the past and the present, takes many textual forms. To present a panoramic view of postmodernity and the means by which recapitulations of generic overlapping build on modernity poetics, the fusion of forms, I will offer two examples. The first relates to the use of Abū Nuwās' (d. 813) poetry in modern narrative, as the case is in *Mawsim al-hijrah ilā al-shamāl* (1967; *Season of Migration to the North*, 1969) by the Sudanese novelist al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ. It uses tradition as presented and manipulated in postcolonial writing. This example parodies the prosimetrum practice as much as it debunks Orientalism as a frame of reference.⁶⁶ Its mechanisms of parody and mimicry place it within the heart of modernist and postmodernist experiments. Embedding exoticism as an offshoot of Orientalized practices, its captivating images of an East of rapture and sensuality, al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ implants Abū Nuwās' poetry into his narrative to parody the Orientalist discourse and its markers of a dormant but sensual East. The 'Abbāsīd Abū Nuwās was the boon companion of the Caliph al-Amīn (d. 813), and his poetry was so popular as to invite scribes to add to it whatever they deemed of the same temper. Known for his celebrations of wine and sexual love at large, he was reputed as the most defiant of orthodoxy and behavioral codes of his age. Yet he was also the subject of many treatises that defended the right of poetry to go beyond social and cultural strictures. The specific reliance on Abū Nuwās in al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ's novel also intensifies a revisionist poetics, for wine acts on the mind and the whole scene,⁶⁷ and offers a carnivalesque occasion that allows lies, abuses, and free exchange enough space, exceeding hierarchical constraints. The Sudanese protagonist in London and the

English woman live a moment that parodies platitudes and stereotypes. By extension, the moment is also one of a double bind, as it challenges generic divisions, collapsing poetry, narrative and travelogue into one episode, and also lets memory operate on an otherwise alienating reality for the newcomer from Sudan. To entice an already impressionable mind, the protagonist in *Season of Migration to the North* infatuates Ann Hammond with poetry, which, along with his luring narrative, answers her innate need for diversion and release in an Orientalized East. The protagonist quotes Abū Nuwās:

Does it not please you the earth is awaking,
 That old virgin wine is there for the taking?
 Let us have no excuse, come enjoy this delight;
 Its mother is green, its sire black as night.
 Make haste, Karkh's gardens hang heavy with bloom,
 Safe and unscathed from War's blighting doom.⁶⁸

He adds, and, I also quoted to her the lines:

Full many a glass clear as the lamp of Heaven did I drink
 Over a kiss or in promise of a tryst we'd keep;
 So matured it was by time that you would think
 Beams of light out of the sky did seep.

(Ibid. 145)

Seeing her enraptured, he adds more:

When the man of war his knights for war deploys,
 And Death's banner calls alike to grey-beards and to boys,
 When fires of destruction rage and battle starts,
 We, using our bands as bows, with lilies as our darts,
 Turn war to revelry and still the best of friends we stay.
 When on their drums they beat, we on our lutes do play
 To young men who death in pleasure count a sacrifice divine,
 While fair cup-bearer, subject of our strife, restores to us the
 plundered wine,
 So insistent be, scarce a glass goes empty than it's filled again.
 Here a man reels drunkenly; there another by excess is slain.
 This is true war, not a war that between man and man brings strife;
 In it with wine we kill and our dead with wine we bring to life.

(Ibid. 145)

He elaborates on this interactional terrain whereby the poetic and the narrative interweave:

And so it was with us: she, moved by poetry and drink, feeding me with sweet lies, while I wove for her intricate and terrifying threads of fantasy. She would tell me that in my eyes she saw the shimmer of mirages in hot deserts, that in my voice she heard the screams of ferocious ‘beasts in the jungles . . .

In other words, narrative makes use of a poetics of seduction in such inviting situations. The tactic reveals a number of things, as the protagonist speaks for the writer’s own reading and grounding and his belief in the power of deviational poetics. The narrative carries within it a sense of faith in an identical power to influence impressionable minds, brought up in context of exoticism. Poetry as such is redeemed beyond the divide of the late 1940s, for the modernist fugitive grows into a constant that belies the limits of time and space. Al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ’s practice attests not only to transgeneric poetics but also to the power of this constant, which poets in the modernist tradition had to recognize in the aftermath of the ideological and rhetorical clash with the conservatives and *qaṣ̣īdab* practitioners. Poets hereafter were to reject historical divides, for modernity belies historical limits. On the other hand, poetry is not a single structure and form, for it exists in every utterance and gathers momentum to such an extent as to draw attention to its presence. The whole discussion undermines social, political, and generic hierarchy, and retains heterogeneity in the seemingly smooth terrain.

The second example of this transgeneric overlapping is from the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (1942). The case is not a passing revival of prosimetrum as a validated norm of writing since some time in the late tenth century, for poets like Maḥmūd Darwīsh find it needful to work out a transgeneric mode to commemorate March 30, 1976, Day of the Land. In this long piece of writing, “Yawm al-arḍ” (The Day of the Land 1976), Maḥmūd Darwīsh brings together the lyricism of hymns and songs with prose explanations. Both conjoin to celebrate and set markers for a Palestinian discourse, its significations of sacrifice, faith in rebirth, and the staunch and irresistible attachment to the land, as these portions demonstrate:

Exit of Christ from the wound and from the wind
 Green like plants that cover his nails
 and my chains
 This is my song
 This is the ascent of the Arab boy to his dream
 and to Jerusalem.

With this confluence of the Biblical and the poetic, the religious and the personal, the poet establishes an identity against erosion, an identity of strong

Christian connotations of sacrifice and redemption that debunk any counter claims, and set the scene for a poetics that combines the discursive and the metaphorical.

As if I returned
to what has been
As if I walked
in front of myself
 I restore my harmony
 between the trial and the verdict
I am the son
 of simple words
I am the martyr of the map
 the family apricot blossom
O you who grip the edge
 of the impossible
From the beginning until Galilee
 Return to me my lands
 Return to me
 My identity

The rhetorical call means only to inscribe the terms and nature of this Palestinian identity. Its power emanates from its background where the poet's voice merges with the voice of narrator.

And in the month of March come the silken shadows (and without shadows the invaders). The birds come mysterious as the confessions of girls . . . Five girls conceal a wheat field under their braids. They read the first words of a song about the vines of Hebron. They write five letters: Long may my country live . . . Five girls at the door of a primary school break like mirrors they were the heart—mirrors of the country
Earth in the month of March
set fire to her flowers

The merged voice becomes even larger than the two, the poet and the narrator, for the girls' songs and their inscriptions become part of an inventory of nationhood, of sacrifice and resistance.

I am the witness of the massacre
I am the victim of the map
I am the son of simple words
. . .

In the month of March we come to the obsession of memories and the plants grow upon us ascending toward all beginnings. This is the growing of *reminiscence*. I call reminiscence my ascent to the *Zanzalakht* tree. Thirty years ago, I saw by the sea a girl and I said: I am the waves. She receded in *recollection*. I saw two martyrs listening to the sea: 'Acca comes with the waves. 'Acca departs with the waves. They receded in *remembrance*. Khadija leaned toward the dew and I burned. Khadija! Do not close the door! Nations will enter this book and the sun of Jericho will set without ritual.

O country of prophets: Come to your fruition!
 O country of planters: Come to your fruition!
 O country of martyrs: Come to your fruition!
 O country of refugees: Come to your fruition!

For all the pathways in the mountains are extensions of this song. All the songs in you are extensions of an olive tree that swaddled me.⁶⁹

“Yawm al-ard” (The Day of the Land 1976) gathers its register from songs, speeches, reminiscences, recapitulations, land images, and incantations. The human and the inanimate exchange places easily, and the massacred five girls are the mirror and the land. The land exchanges place with words, and words get their potency as an embodied land. The poet’s register derives its powerful eloquence from urgency, loss, and a will to survive. Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s use of juxtaposed sites, stylistic devices like repetition, naming, expectations, and metaphors as “Five girls conceal a wheat field under their braids,” along with the story of real girls, who were murdered on that day, sets this piece apart as a unique poetic experimentation. The poem perpetuates its total effect through memory and recollection, for the murdered recede into memory as martyrs, but they are also more so for their association with waves. The speaker responds like waves to incantations that carry the image and the voice of the girls. All transfigure into a poetic carnival that defies death and extinction. This mode of writing, whereby the metaphorical and the metonymic coalesce, would receive further validation in due time, and writings of critics and poets would soon recognize the need for this writing to accommodate, in long poems, a complexity that may be hard to express otherwise. This combination has roots in tradition, but it gains in momentum and power in this instance as the poet conjoins actual scenes and vicissitudes with metaphoric accentuations.⁷⁰ This particular use of mixed genres is no less effectively engaged in multivoicing than poetic dramatizations that allow enough space for poets to involve a large number of characters and from different discursive sites to compete for ascendancy. Poetry is no longer the monopoly of the privileged or even the well-educated, for the street itself operates with its own languages to influence, and even decide, the course of events.

Dramatic poetry

This popular use and adaptation to the demands of the street leads us to the last strategy of dramatization, dramatic multivoicing, as ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr and the Iraqi Buland al-Ḥaydarī practiced it. The former’s *Ma’sāt al-Ḥallāj* (*Murder in Baghdad* 1964) has received a lot of critical acclaim;⁷¹ not so the latter’s sophisticated *Ḥiwār al-Ab’ād al-thalāthab* (*Dialogue in Three Dimensions* 1972). ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr rewrites the story of al-Ḥallāj to come to terms with the plight of the intellectual under authoritarian rule. Sufism becomes a threat when it divulges the unspeakable and undermines hegemonic discourse. ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s poetic drama depicts the Sufi dilemma under the strictures of authoritarian discourse. Admittedly making use of T. S. Eliot’s poetics, and of *Murder in the Cathedral* in particular,⁷² ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr has al-Ḥallāj as the counterpart to Eliot’s Archbishop Thomas Becket. Both poetic dramas have clerics, priests, and choruses. Both problematize the role of ideas in undermining authority. ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s poetic work speaks obliquely against the constraints imposed on poetry to compartmentalize it within amateurish nationalist and leftist concepts of identity and utility. Speaking of these concepts at a later period, Adūnīs comes to an understanding of this sense of identity as follows: “. . . identity engenders a reading based on the nostalgia for an original unity: the unity of the nation, the language, the homeland, and of power.”⁷³ He further describes this reading as an ideological one that can be applied to any conceptualizations of notions and beliefs that culminate as master narratives. “This ideological reading perceives the poetic text as a battleground between ideas and current tendencies; it makes the poetic text a political text.”⁷⁴ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s poetic drama effectively manipulates the historical narrative to draw attention to similar situations in contemporary life where authors and writers are under surveillance for their ideas and writings.⁷⁵ In the following extract, al-Ḥallāj disputes the claims that he is courting rebels and opponents to the regime:

The men you name are leaders of the nation;
 They are also my friends, and have my love.
 They promised me if they should come to power
 They will live righteously and not do ill;
 They will grant people their rights,
 And the people will grant them theirs.

(Ibid. 17)

Shibli is not satisfied with the answer.

Furthermore, how do you know that once they’re in power
 The wine of authority might not go to their heads,

And they would not follow you
 Because of their hatred of those who are above you?
 (Ibid. 18)

Notwithstanding the dramatic power of the play, its achievement lies in its political overtones, use of historical narrative, and daring practice of subversion. In other words, the poetic dramatization of the Sufi plight brings into poetry issues and concerns that increase dialogic potency and power.

Al-Ḥaydarī's experimentation is different. He knew how damaging the dramatic could be to the lyrical flow of poetry, and in this poem, *Ḥiwār al-Ab'ād al-thalāthab* (*Dialogue in Three Dimensions*), there is an effort to coalesce the narrative, the epical, and the dramatic. The poem makes use of the three dimensions as representative of the three modalities of the human, in relation to the self, the outside reality, and the absolute. The poem is keen on figuring out the possibility of convergence among the three; yet its underlying theme is one of doubt. The paratextual reference from Dostoevsky, "Beware, beware! Patricide is the worst crime in history," only intensifies the dilemma and increases the tragic dimension of life. Although al-Ḥaydarī was a gifted lyricist, the philosophical side persists in the poem, maintaining al-Ma'arrī's intellectualism interspersed this time with insights from Rilke, Dostoevsky, Freud, and Nietzsche. In the introductory note to the poem, the first voice of man appears true to self for being divided between faith and doubt, hope and mistrust.

All of you, all,
 You, empty presence,
 Who every moment passes by my dim abode,
 Who bear the burden of my heavy night, in mute hypocrisy?
 Here I am, dying for years,
 Crawling for years,
 A bleeding thread between the wound and the knife.
 —Sleep madman, sleep. We wish to sleep.
 —Sleep, damn you, sleep . . . we wish to sleep, to be redeemed
 by the dark.⁷⁶

In these examples, modern Arabic poetry develops a way to diversify its concerns in a poetic that cuts across modernity and tradition as sites of many tracks, discontinuities, ruptures, thresholds, limits, and series, to use Foucault's applications to history.⁷⁷ The early concerns of the first awakening as well as the early preoccupations of the late 1940s are left behind in an arduous search for meaning and role in modern life and culture. Every site assumes a meaning and a challenge, and every word, in many of the texts under consideration, has a role to play. There is rarely a random application of language, and even paratexts appear to be analogous or divergent sites of great potential, as the next chapter argues.

DEDICATIONS AS POETIC INTERSECTIONS

What is it that touched Mutanabbi¹
Other than this soil that felt his tread?
He betrayed many things,
But not his vision.

(Adūnīs, “The Desert,” Pt. 19)

Dedications in poetry as both gifts and sites of repression and displacement deserve greater attention in theory and literary criticism for reasons which this chapter proposes to discuss. Central to a large corpus of poetry since the first decades of the twentieth century, dedications assume the significance of presents and gifts while vying for recognition with or against each poet’s ghosts. In a number of these poetic thresholds, poems grow into readings of history, tradition, and politics of every kind. Their significance for the present reading of the modernity–tradition nexus in Arabic poetry lies in crossroads of tension, its claims to continuity or its opposite. What Alan D. Schrift advocates for the “theme of the gift,” may well apply for dedicatory poetry at large, as it “can be located at the center of current discussions of deconstruction, gender, ethics, philosophy, anthropology, and economics.”² Nevertheless, dedications build on a tradition of gift exchange. Since the appearance of *Kitāb al-Hadāyā* (The Book of Gifts), allegedly written by al-Jāhīz (d. 255 H), a number of books on presents have appeared to meet an increasing demand. It is impossible to have compendiums on gift exchange without an ongoing tradition of some sort. In *Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā* (The Book of Presents and Gifts) by Abū Bakr Muḥammad (d. 380 H) and his brother Abū ‘Uthmān Sa‘īd (d. 350 H.), there are a large number of anecdotes, poems, and references to other poets and patrons.³ Taken together, these appearances depict an age of affluence, which also cared to establish its codes of subordination and allegiance. As if anticipating Marcel Mauss’s formulations, prestation acts as a structuring element, for “through gifts a social and economic hierarchy is established.”⁴ As giving is a privileged position, it usually substantiates caste, class, race, and gender.

Arab gift compendiums

In its evolution and scope, the brothers' compendium, *Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā*, offers more than one piece of evidence to verify the role of gift exchange in sustaining hierarchy. Whether commissioned by the emir of Aleppo, Sayf al-Dawlah, or by the vizier Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥassan Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Hārūn, al-Wazīr al-Muhalabbī (d. 352 H.) who overtook Baghdad (334 H.), the brothers showed great diligence and art in meeting the demands and wishes of their patron. In their introduction, the Khālidiyyān, as they are usually called, write:

You ordered us – May God prolong your munificence – to select for you portions of what is communicated on poetry, and to ignore the meaningless and the trivial, and to condense and sift. Therefore, we embarked on this mission, closely and speedily applying your guidelines, to give the effort its due and to fulfill its obligations.⁵

Although seemingly a surplus in social communications, these “gratuitous and least costly relations of exchange,” in Pierre Bourdieu’s words, “are likely to create lasting relations of dependence.”⁶ A dignitary as patron may derive equal satisfaction from a mutual relationship, for both parties sustain and nurture it through exchange. Such was the connection, for example, between al-Buḥturī the poet (d. 897 AD /284 H.) and the Shi‘ite Shaykh Abū Ja‘far al-Qummī. The latter sent the poet some wine with a messenger, a male slave of some charm. The poet was so impressed by the boy that he asked the Shaykh to offer the boy as a gift:

I wish the gift were the messenger,
I wish the messenger were the gift.⁷

Apart from the implications of desire for fetish objects, male slaves included, al-Buḥturī obviously took it for granted that his poem would ensure him such a gift. Both the patron and the poet enjoyed a privileged position regarding the enslaved other who had no say in that exchange. Among the ruling or dominating groups, reciprocity occurs according to codes and rules of privilege and conduct. Less privileged communities can develop their own rules, to be sure, but property exchange usually stands behind the circulation of wealth, as poetic records indicate. Indeed, al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī (d. early fifth century H) quoted a certain poet as defining prestation in terms of dynamic social and economic exchange:

I noticed people engaged in gift giving
As sale at a market place: take from me and give back.
(*Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā*, 230)

As if anticipating Mauss' reading of reciprocity, the poet's mind is drawn to the very act of exchange as the norm of those times. Set within a context of affluence, this activity is perpetuated in poetry, while signifying what Emile Benveniste describes as the "principle of an exchange" that "stimulates the circulation of wealth throughout the entire society."⁸

Nevertheless, to accept exchange only within the dynamics of circulation limits our reading of poetic offerings. Even when driven by utter sincerity, the poet harbors some latent, perhaps repressed, desire to outwit the recipient. In the Baghdad of the 'Abbāsids, Abū Haffān, 'Abdullāh Ibn Aḥmad al-Mahzamī (d. 195 H), wrote once to a patron, explaining that he had already been at the market, searching for a gift, but nothing there could equal "gifts of gratitude." The poem reads as follows:

I attended the market to buy
 And to choose what is worth giving,
 But I preferred nothing for prestation
 Except gifts of gratitude.
 For to praise you
 Is to satisfy the sanctity of glory.
 To spread praise for people of your like
 Is more pleasant than the incense of aloes wood.
 (*Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā* 155)

Juxtaposing the market and its goods against poems, specifically panegyrics, and appealing to expectations of glory and popularity, the poet claims to supply gifts of better value. Within the intricate make-up of the panegyric, there lies the belief that the poem surpasses the patron's offers. Another unnamed poet is even more specific in drawing distinctions between property and poetry:

If I offer [on this occasion] all my property
 Its best is at your service.
 But I offer praise in verse
 For you deserve this from me,
 Because a property gift perishes
 Whereas a poetic one lasts.
 (*Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā* 156)

Immortalizing poetry, the poet lays claim to the endurance of his gift in comparison with property exchange. Thus, Marwān Ibn Abī Ḥaḥṣah (d. 327 H) writes to his patron:

I embroidered my present for you
 And the best embroidery is what is verbally woven.
 (*Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā* 210)

In other words, poets in that age of prosperity attempted to manipulate a discourse of daily transactions while setting a higher value on their own products. In those scenes of competitive exchange of gifts and privileges, poets close to the dominating groups forged a discourse of their own that was commercial at the outset while vying strongly for refinement at its core. Indeed, to offer a competitive gift, the poet has to specify its distinction first as part of himself. In Emerson's words:

Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself. Thou must bleed for me. Therefore, the poet brings his poem; the shepherd, his lamb; the farmer, corn; the miner, a gem; the sailor, coral and shells.⁹

To offer other presents is an act "fit for kings and rich men who represent kings" (Ibid.). Especially in this connection, the poem offers more than mere obligations, seen by Boas as substituting publicly for the absence of writing in archaic societies. Writing then becomes a re-enactment of perpetual reciprocity whereby the addressee and the addresser are entangled in a relationship that is no less binding than blood. In a deconstructionist reading that lays no less emphasis on the process of giving than its contents, Derrida argues for the text as "the marking of a trace":

The gift would always be the gift of a writing, a memory, a poem, or a narrative, in any case, the legacy of a text; and writing would not be the formal auxiliary, the external archive of the gift, as Boas suggests here, but "something" that is tied to the very act of the gift, *act* in the sense both of the archive and the performative operation.¹⁰

The implications in Derrida's reading tend to revise the whole concept of the gift. He asks, "Why must one begin with a poem when one speaks of the gift? And why does the gift always appear to be the *gift of a poem*, the *don du poème* as Mallarmé says?" (Ibid. 40). Indeed, Derrida suggests first that to recognize the gift as such is to annul it, for it demands reciprocity: "*gift as gift* ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor" (Ibid. 14).

Poetic simulacrum of narrative¹¹

On the other hand, the gift differs from "every other operation of pure and simple exchange in that the gift gives time," for "there must be waiting without forgetting," he adds (Ibid. 41). In other words, the gift as such buys its way through a narrative of some sort, which is another name for time or "waiting for time," or "waiting without forgetting." He suggests, "the thing as given thing, the given of the gift, arrives, if it arrives, only in narrative. And in a poetic simulacrum of narrative" (Ibid.).

There is much to corroborate Derrida's "simulacrum of narrative." However, poets proceed at times from claims counter to gift exchange in order to highlight their vocation while meeting the expectations of the donee, the patron in this case. Indeed, al-Mutanabbī (d. 354 H) tends to annul casual formations of exchange in order to establish another paradigm of restitution. Addressing Abū Shujā' Fārik in 348 H, the poet sets himself apart from current exchange:

You have no steeds to offer, neither do you have money
Let utterance help, if status doesn't.¹²

Whenever al-Mutanabbī's (the prophetizer—he who claimed to be prophet) panegyric searches for both reward and absolute distinction, the address is toward the self as much as it is toward the emir of Aleppo. In addressing himself in the third person, al-Mutanabbī valorizes his mission and his career as a poet, while establishing the basis for his address to the emir.

Through this double-edged repayment, the poet maintains equal footing with the emir in the hierarchy of positions and merits, as Suzanne Stetkevych aptly notes.¹³ While this panegyric assumes its own invocation of self-generating poetics independent of divinity, its play on the components of the panegyric (i.e. the utterance and the reward) involves it in the very politics of dedication as gift. Significantly, in another instance of incomparable self-aggrandizement, the poet openly objects to the patron's acceptance of other poetic shows of allegiance and homage, stipulating that he is to be rewarded for every other panegyric recited, for it is no more than an echo of his poems:

Time itself is a reciter of my odes;
I compose a poem, and then time recites it.
Recluses rush out to bruit it abroad;
With it the tuneless raise their voice in song.
Reward me for every poem recited to you;
For what panegyrists bring is but my poems repeated.
Leave off every voice but my voice;
Mine is the uttered cry, the others, echoes.¹⁴

To use Marcel Mauss' reading of the gift, there is in the panegyric a tendency to restitution, for between the patron and the poet there is a contract of giving and repaying.

What is also distinctive of al-Mutanabbī's panegyric, however, is the insistence on the originality of his gift, its unique nature that, paradoxically, invites servile imitations. To use Derrida's reading of Mallarmé's "Aumône," al-Mutanabbī's poem "is compared to a work that would have been born from the poet alone, without couple or without woman."¹⁵ In fact, the verb "to offer," and next to it "reward" are used in line with an ongoing tradition

of homage and allegiance whereby the poem as an intertextual space betrays its dialogue with other utterances while laying claim to originality.

The significance of this panegyric, in line with the dedicatory, or as an independent mode of address, lies in its drive for recognition within the poetics and politics of that classical age of affluence, competition, and intrigue. Placing itself in an immediate cultural and political space, the panegyric and hence all poems and writings of address claim no spiritual transcendence.

Aside from its immediate desire for repayment and recognition, the poem in this vein is in desperate search for reclamation of what Suzanne Stetkevych specifies as a “backward trajectory”¹⁶ of tradition, maintaining lineage and ancestry through a number of components that Stetkevych designates as “passive perpetuity” (Ibid.), in comparison with its ascendancy in matter and manner, “a forward trajectory.” The latter involves some “active perpetuity” (Ibid.) within the dynamics of influence, transformation, and change, as a centering text at one moment or as provocatively conspicuous at the next, to draw parody, contrafaction, borrowing, appropriation, raid, or confiscation, as al-Ḥātīmī’s term goes to apply to cases of total possession.¹⁷

The prefatory and dedicatory in poetry

Between the desire to belong and the aspiration for present and future dynamism, there is a liminal space, a threshold of some anxiety and uncertainty. This is usually occupied by prefatory and dedicatory material, as if to account for an attitude, to intensify a pledge, to show gratitude overtly, or to rebuke the self for undue forgetfulness in the passage between filiation and affiliation, nature and culture, or tradition and European cultures. It is this threshold, this very “stereographic space” of Roland Barthes, the “weaving of voices,”¹⁸ that betrays patterns of contact and exchange in contemporary Arabic literature.

Thus, while dedications among poets or toward patrons may well be signs of homage, allegiance, and self-identification, they also reveal a sense of displacement, fear of betrayal, loss, and “anxiety of influence,” to use Harold Bloom’s popular term. Dedications also manifest a cultural dialogue, not only among Arabic texts and contexts, but also with other cultures, east and west. The significance of these increases in works of cultural implication, in poetry and narrative, such as Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s (d. 1987) *‘Uṣfūr min al-sharq/ Bird of the East* (1937; French amended edition 1960),¹⁹ al-Bayātī’s elegies, Yūsuf al-Khāl’s dedicatory poem to Ezra Pound, and Adūnīs’s reclamation of al-Mutanabbī in his revisionary construct of an allegedly validated Mutanabbī manuscript, “edited and published” by the belated poet Adūnīs.²⁰ As the following argument suggests, these dedications and textual engagements convey much of the Arab consciousness in respect to issues of religion, practices and rituals, history and culture.

Al-Ḥakīm's Bird of the East

Although specifically concerned with poetry, the following introductory references to al-Ḥakīm's veiled autobiography are meant to account for its negotiatory stance among the increasingly influential channels of Sufi poetry, classical music, and conflicting ideologies in a text that carves out its affiliation while holding hard to its roots. Al-Ḥakīm's *Bird of the East* is dedicated as follows: "To my Patron Saint Saiyidah Zainab," the daughter of Imām 'Alī, and hence the granddaughter of the Prophet Muḥammad. The quarter in Cairo where her shrine stands is also named after her. The protagonist Muḥsin, who relives al-Ḥakīm's days in Paris throughout the mid-1920s, specifies his love and attachment to the saint who "had granted him her grace when he had been in trouble," as a kind of both filiation and homage, for "Her existence was very real in his life," and "every success he had ever had in life resulted from an encouraging wave of her hand" (Ibid. 87). "It was she who instilled forbearance in him or strengthened his will as the case might be" (Ibid. 88), he explains. He further intimates, "Whenever he placed his hopes in something, he always turned humbly to her so that she might stand at his side and combine her profoundly reverent voice with his in supplication to God" (Ibid.). Overwhelmed by Parisian life, the protagonist is driven away from the filial, with its "natural bonds and natural forms of authority,"²¹ toward a "new affiliative relationship," which, in Edward Said's formulation, "changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms" (Ibid. 20) under the impact of the hegemonic culture.

The protagonist, a prototype for a large number of Arab intellectuals since the first decades of the twentieth century, suffers no illusions regarding his state, for displacement and relocation are too real to be minimized or ignored. Their immediate threat is to uproot faith, for "once one has lost it, it is difficult to recapture it" (Ibid. 86). Drawn to Parisian culture through negotiation and acceptance, the protagonist gradually undergoes the "breaking of ties with family, home, class, country, and traditional beliefs," which, in Edward Said's reading of the process, takes place "as necessary stages in the achievement of spiritual and traditional freedom" (Ibid. 19). Displaced as such and alternatively hosted in a specific terrain of culture and its rationalist segments, the protagonist leaves behind "the originating but now unrecoverable father" (Ibid. 18). Standing instead in limbo, Muḥsin confesses, "I am worried myself," for "Under the hot breath of modern culture my faith is trembling like a fragile flower petal" (*Bird*, 86).

As this meeting with Parisian culture never passes without some losses on his part, the protagonist goes back to the dedicatee in supplication for support, for there "were . . . times when life frowned on him and seemed very hard. At those moments it seemed as though the saintly Lady had forgotten him, but when he stopped to think, he realized that in those difficult times and situations it was he who had forgotten her, rather than the other way

round" (Ibid. 87). As if echoing William Wordsworth's pronouncement that "Nature never did betray / the heart that loved her" ("Tintern Abbey" 122–23), the protagonist is quick to set some correctives to his doubts, making a similar surmise, for "She would never forget a person who did not forget her" (Ibid. 87). In other words, the dedicatee is represented in the familiar terms of patronage, according to some ritual of exchange whereby retribution and reward assume "qualitative relationships between the subjects transacting."²²

Although his love for Suzy Dupont offers some substitution for faith, as his forgetfulness of his patron saint indicates, its failure is synonymous with wastefulness and loss. Structured in retrospect upon other popular veiled autobiographies including Goethe's *Sorrows of the Young Werther* and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, this experience in al-Ḥakīm's life coincides with traditional poetic constructs of love, loss, search, and subsequent passage into some communal or spiritual integration. In the terms of Van Gennepe's rite of passage, superbly studied and applied by Suzanne Stetkevych in her reading of Abbāsīd panegyric, the passenger-poet's failure in love or experience entails the following: "Separation from his former condition expressed in the *nasīb*; the Liminal transitional stage in the *raḥīl*, and the Aggregation, that is reentry into society and assumption of new status, in the *madīh*."²³

Inscribed in retrospect, al-Ḥakīm's dedication is an act of compensation for his forgetfulness and doubt. Even his love experience is attributed to an atavistic urge that releases him from self-blame, especially as his view of love as a feeling of sublimity continues to counteract the actual affair with Suzy and others. Gathering snatches from Ḥāfiz (d. 1390), Ishāq al-Mawṣilī (d. 849) and ʿUmar al-Khayyām (d. 1123) on his side, he is keen on expressing his disapproval of the Parisian tendency to display love, as a "vulgar exhibition of the soul's most noble treasures, which ought to be jealously preserved in the heart like pearls in a jewel-box" (*Bird*, 42). Rather fraught with the experiential and the cultural, his letter to Suzy Dupont is a site onto which is inscribed an amalgam of fragments and allusions that make up its matrix as a mirror-in-the-text, another verbal construct that synthesizes his three-staged voyage into the metropolis. In the larger text, allusions and quotations from innumerable cultural terrains, Eastern and Western alike, are available to present an experience of identity and acculturation that applies to many intellectuals of the period of Arab awakening. While leaving *l'humanité* for André and his father, Marx and Cocteau for Ivan Ivanovich, a Russian émigré, al-Ḥakīm's surrogate is there to choose from Ḥāfiz and Khayyām, among others, whatever meets his fluctuating mood. Thus, upon loss and failure of love, Ḥāfiz is there to be quoted:

Ah! She alone it was that soundly slept.
 However, the entire world was sitting up with me.
 (*Bird*, 128)

‘Umar al-Khayyām and an anonymous Japanese poet are also quoted, for the acculturated protagonist lives at an intersection of cultural traffic that achieves some repose only when enveloped by the serenity and comfort of faith. Hence, Beethoven’s devotional writing to his brothers to explain his personal tragedy touches some sensitive chords, drawing him back to that flickering faith: “it was as though a familiar scent rose from the words he had read: these were the same words welling up from the same spring that had produced the message of Near Eastern prophets” (Ibid. 143).

Of more significance for further comparisons with writers and poets, however, is al-Ḥakīm’s stand for authenticity against imitation, and asceticism against materialism. In this context dedications assume other commitments to the “forward trajectory” that resurrects exemplary ancestors while opting for active participation in the current making of things. Faithful to his quietism, al-Ḥakīm also tends to counteract the fatalist element in traditional thought by privileging human agency in its interplay with faith as something personal that sees, nevertheless, into the ramifications of historiography. His very choice of his patron saint disorients orthodoxy, for the holy lady suffered those times of oppression and cruelty after the murder of her brother Imām Husayn and the rest of his family at Karbalā’ in AD 680. The choice carries more subversion than readers may first imagine. The “posthumous dedication also allows the author to produce an intellectual lineage without consulting the precursor whose patronage he is bestowing upon himself in this way,” argues Gerard Genette in matters of dedications as paratexts.²⁴ Therefore, the seemingly innocent paratextual dedication is an intentional insertion of history to subvert the proclivities of authoritative historiography while arguing for a non-materialistic ideology.

Dedicatory matter: identity for acculturation

As a discursive strategy, dedicatory matter is no less significant than masks, contrafactions, parody, and irony, in reaching for some epistemological dissociation with inherent lines of thought, regarding agency, time, history, class, and identity. Especially attuned to dynamics of reciprocity and exchange and to the passage between filiation and culture, its retrospective nature sets its sense of time in a contested space whereby human agency offers its reading of history as a narrative terrain that calls for further investigation and analysis. Rather than forsaking identity for acculturation, or dwelling on the binary positions of one paradigm against another, the negotiatory stance of its inconclusive, open-ended discourse keeps it receptive to further revisionism.

Dedication takes a number of forms. While mainly a prefatory matter, it can also set its claim for a whole poem, significantly bound into a title addressed to another poet, whether a precursor or a contemporary, living or dead. It may also entail a total identification with the dead, using the precursor to resurrect history as narrative from distortions and confusions. Nevertheless, whenever

taking a liminal paratextual space, a prefatory matter to the body or the text, it raises problems and invites questions. Upon discussing Charles Baudelaire's dedication to "Counterfeit Money," for instance, Derrida resorts to his deconstructionist practice to look for reasons behind this dedication. He asks if this dedication on the border is "part of the poem."²⁵ To Derrida, "this dedication only situates . . . the *dative* or *donor* movement that displaces the text" (Ibid.). He further argues in the same place, "there is nothing in the text that is not dedicated, nothing that is not destined, and the destination of this dative is not reducible to the explicit dedication" (Ibid.).

Perhaps it is for this displacement of the text as much as for the opposite direction that evolves within the poem that dedications become sites of bewilderment, uncertainty, or liminality, while seemingly signifying absolute engagement. There are many attestations to this position, but the emergence of the pauper-poet in the figure of the Egyptian poet Amal Dunqul (d. 1983) and the Iraqi Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb is worth emphasizing.²⁶ Descending from the brigand poets of pre-Islamic poetry, but with the radical politics that was critical of Arab states and governments, they brought into Arabic poetry a poetic of personal disinterestedness and political engagement. While this is understandable in terms of current politics and intellectual resistance to hegemony in general, the wave of identification with their voices among other Arab poets deserves attention. A collection of poetry dedicated to Amal Dunqul for instance appeared in 2003, issued by the governmental institution the Supreme Council for Culture.²⁷ Of less dedicatory rebelliousness is ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī. His "Bukā'iyah ilā Shams Ḥuẓayrān" (Lament for the June Sun) was dedicated to the late Syrian nationalist ideologue Zakī al-Arsūzī (d. 1968).²⁸ Speaking for a whole generation, "the generation of meaningless death / The recipients of alms," the poet sets the tone against the earlier poetry of regeneration, hope, and rebirth, usually associated with the Tammūzī group, including Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb (d. 1964), Jabrā I. Jabrā (d. 1995), Yūsuf al-Khāl (d. 1987) and, somehow, Khalīl Ḥāwī (d. 1982). The whole scene depicts defeat. Although it is the defeat of the "giant peacocks alone," the whole generation, nevertheless, is held responsible:

We did not hang a bell on the tail of a cat or a donkey
We did not ask the blind deceiver: Why did you flee?

Moreover, the whole generation seems like T. S. Eliot's "Hollow Men":

We wear the masks of living people
We are half men
In the garbage dump of history.

The very act of dedication, in ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī's "Memory of Zakī al-Arsūzī," is ironic. The Syrian nationalist ideologue wrote a great deal about

the possibility of rebirth, usually associated with cultural resurrection. As the present thwarts all these beliefs and expectations the poet reverts to an opposite outlook, ironically linked in al-Bayātī's early poetry with T. S. Eliot, especially "The Waste Land" and "The Hollow Men." In a poem dedicated to Eliot, included in his collection *Kalimāt lā Tamūt* (Undying Words), al-Bayātī sounds optimistic in his early poems, so he calls on Eliot to come and see a different life and experience where sacrifice is the norm, and where there are no "hollow men":

There are men
Waiting
Burning
To lighten earthly cities
To sing for freedom.²⁹

In general, however, the poet who criticizes Eliot's outlook has also made more use of his poetry than, perhaps, al-Sayyāb. What distinguishes al-Bayātī's poetry, however, is his intricate juxtaposition of opposing images, sayings, and fragments that, as hypograms, pass through some conversion, according to Riffaterre's formulations.³⁰ According to this conversion, these intertextual markers evolve as a generative power that endows poetic texts with their own life (Ibid.). Thus, in "Ḥubb taḥta al-maṭar" ("Love under the Rain"), we come across images from Eliot:

London streets were deeply sighing,
The dawn
Upon wet pavements in her eyes
Disguised itself within tree leaves.

The conversion to an optimistic outlook and regenerative poetic occurs at a crucial intersection, when the reader has been led into thinking of Eliot's typist in "The Waste Land" and the mechanical night greetings of Londoners:

"I do not know," said he and cried;
"See you tomorrow," she replied.
He embraced her and kissed her eyes
Under the falling rain.

There is rain in al-Bayātī's poem, and the kiss in his text assumes a transfigurative power that brings about life and tenderness:

Beneath his kisses, like night frost,
She was melting with tenderness.³¹

Indeed, al-Bayātī's engagement with Eliot's primary images ignites light, warmth, and keen recollections in the Iraqi poet's text, enriching it with very acute tensions without blocking its accumulation of lore, myth, and love:

In every woman's eyes of those earthly cities
 He espied her:
 In flowers cloaked,
 In reddish-lemon leaves mantled
 Hurrying barefoot under the rain
 Beckoning him, "Come follow me."
 Madly running he weeps
 Years of exile and the torment
 Of unrequited search and restless travels.

(Ibid.)

The initial engagement with Eliot's London substantiates another, whereby the poet reverts to his genderless women, Lara and others like her, whose appearance and disappearance, love and estrangement intensify the speaker's self-consciousness, sense of exile, and suffering. Just like al-Ḥakīm's protagonist with his acute sense of displacement, al-Bayātī's persona negotiates an impossible settlement at a textual intersection, eagerly recovered in his poems of dedication. Aside from his poems to Mao "the poet" and to T. S. Eliot, there are others addressed to Hemingway, Aragon, Camus, the Kurdish poet ʿAbdullāh Kurān, the Turkish poet Nāzīm Ḥikmat, ʿAzīz al-Sayyid Jāsīm, Najīb Maḥfūz, and many others.³²

Al-Bayātī and Khalīl Ḥāwī—the existentialist and the forlorn

At these intersections, al-Bayātī's poetry offers its distinctive, though surprising, fusion of Sufism and postmodernism, reality and fiction, frustration and love, and childhood and manhood. Al-Bayātī breaks time into images and patterns that cut across the horizontal and the vertical, making the present an uncertain crossing. Adūnīs' *Aghānī Miḥyār al-Dīmasḥqī* (Songs of Miḥyār the Damascene) passes through such intersections into a re-enactment of a past against historical distortions. On the other hand, Khalīl Ḥāwī could circumvent the problems of identity and cultural displacement through a cultural journey, such as the one in "Al-Baḥḥār wa-al-Darwīsh" / "The Sailor and the Dervish," to negotiate a resolution of some sort. However, there has been no such patterning in al-Bayātī's poetry since the 1960s. In fact, Ḥāwī's poem "The Sailor and the Dervish" specifies the Sailor's impossible choice between the intellectual offers of the cultural West and the mysticism of the East. Like al-Ḥakīm's Muḥsin, Ḥāwī's Sailor also stands for Arab intellectuals in limbo, for he does not belong to the company of Ulysses, Faust, or

Huxley, nor does he settle for the supposedly mystical East. In other words, identity can never be restored through mimicry. To use Frantz Fanon's formulation for false identity, "white masks" never provide identity.³³ It should not be surprising that, despite differences in performance and outlook, modern Arabic poetry is populated with rovers, questers, strangers, and exiles who signify some epistemological crisis.³⁴

Arabic poetry resists claims for closure and settlement when searching for escape. Here lie simultaneously its anxiety, ambivalence, and strength. Dedicatory poetry highlights these conflicting positions and attitudes, for its subtext gathers its preliminary matrix from a wide-ranging dialogue before its ultimate transformation into texts.

Al-Sayyāb's lyrical–elegiac mood

Drawing on an enormous subtext of fragments, lore, vegetation myths, and vernaculars, while manipulating the lyrical–elegiac mode of ancient and classical Arabic poetry, poems since the late 1940s have been widely submerged in crisis of one sort or another, concluding in either an apocalyptic vision or a desire for rebirth. In dialogue with texts and figures, poetry swarms with mythical characters, historical personages, precursors, and contemporaries. In such a poetic space there is so much negotiation and soul-searching that it emerges as the textual terrain for contact and exchange.

The present rather than the past often provokes the lyrical–elegiac mood, for the modern poet, like al-Sayyāb in "Unshūdat al-Maṭar" (Canticle of the Rain), is concerned with capturing the human condition against a background of fertility and wealth. Hence, identification with figures of sacrifice and atonement, in the manner of al-Ḥakīm's Muḥsin in *The Bird of the East*, is another pattern of affiliation that, nevertheless, ransacks cultural terrains in search of further support. Many poets search, through dedications or identifications, for some meaningful stance in an otherwise bewildering experience. In "Al-Nahr wa-al-mawt" (Death and the River), for example, al-Sayyāb identifies with Christ:

I wish as I fly through the night
To help those who struggle,
And clench my fists to strike at fate
I wish if I were to drown
In the depths of my blood,
To bear the burden with mankind,
To bring forth life;
In my death is victory.³⁵

On the other hand, al-Bayātī is more at home with the Sufi experience, despite his reluctance to adopt Sufism as a practice. Identifying textually

with the martyred mystic al-Ḥallāj (d. 922/309 H) al-Bayātī's "Adhābāt al-Ḥallāj" (The Sufferings of al-Ḥallāj) shows another pattern of dedication, whereby the poet's register subsumes the Sufi text, involving it not only in a matrix of modernity, but also weaving it into the poet's own discourse against advocates of traditionalism. Thus, for instance:

How gloomy is the night if the morning dies out
 And throngs of flies, fly hunters
 Eat the bread of the hungry toilers.³⁶

As a pejorative term, "fly hunters" recurs earlier in an article by al-Bayātī, in which he calls advocates of traditional thought, and defenders of the *qaṣīdab*, along with his other opponents, mere "fly hunters," whose emphasis on rhyme and rhythm is merely a mask to hide their blindness to the dynamics of transformation and change.³⁷ Nevertheless, in the same poem, the poet identifies with al-Ḥallāj, for both see in physical annihilation a beginning of salvation:

You passed a death sentence against me a thousand years ago,
 And here I am asleep,
 Waiting for the dawn of my salvation, the time of execution.³⁸

It is worth mentioning that death signifies rebirth to al-Bayātī, for poetry assumes a regenerative power of its own, as his poem "Dam al-shā'ir" (The Poet's Blood) stipulates:

The poet's voice grows louder than the chorus' weeping
 Alone, siding against death, and miseries
 Of mortals; with its black happiness
 Roams the world, in exile
 To be purified, nameless, but has all names
 Transforming by an eternal law
 Killing this gloom, overcoming it with poetry.

(Ibid. 409)

Dedications as paratexts: al-Khāl

Whether taken as total identifications, sites of indirection, or paratexts, these poetic engagements emphasize both faith in the vocation of poetry and the commitment to transformation and change, fathomed and anticipated by poets. Thus, Yūsuf al-Khāl, for example, dedicates his *Al-Bi'r al-mahjūrah* (Deserted Well) to Ezra Pound, implying that the poet, no less than the dedicatee, also suffers for embarking on innovation and change:

We asked you a fig leaf, for we are naked
 We have sinned against poetry, forgive us.

Give back life to us
 You have our pledge
 To establishing, with the warmest tears,
 Citadels for poetry, the keys to them from the valley of the muse
 Your wounds a solace for ancestors,
 A road to salvation for us.³⁹

It is not difficult to see the negotiatory stance between precursors and ephebes, but the negotiator is a rover who resists settling down, searching instead for a full commitment to his vocation as innovator. Al-Khāl's dedication to Pound reveals little of the dedicatee, however, for, to cite Bloom's reading of elegies, such writings "center upon their composer's own creative anxieties."⁴⁰

Addressing Lorca

Conversely, however, poems of total identification with their dedicatee usually release the latter as a version of the present poet's textual concerns, as if working hand in hand, or as one. Al-Sayyāb's address entitled "García Lorca," for instance, is dedicatory in full.⁴¹ By absorbing the poetics of Lorca's lyricism, along with the latter's paradoxical imagery, contrasts of bright colors and modulations of tone between tenderness and violence, al-Sayyāb brings Lorca back to life. Yet, in this dense recreation of Lorca's text, al-Sayyāb's persona exists as identical in concerns, anticipations, and practices. Both are haunted by a sense of personal tragedy, rhythmically present in auditory images of rippling water, lapping of sea waves, shouts, and bells. The blanket of blood is always there, in Lorca's poetry as in al-Sayyāb's "Unshūdat al-maṭar" (Canticle of the Rain) and other poems, for the presence of unjust death receives focused attention. Yet, poetically, it is a sign of rebirth as well.⁴² Absorbed by Lorca's poetry and immersed in its resistance to the mechanical, al-Sayyāb reads his own tragedy and vocation in Lorca. His elegiac-lyricism is so much in tune with the auditory and the visual in Lorca that both are one.

Although popular with many poets, Lorca receives different treatments. In al-Sayyāb's poem, the opening lines recall William Blake's "Tiger, Tiger," but the rest takes Lorca's poetry as text and subtext, as al-Sayyāb's voice merges into that of the murdered poet. The case is different, however, with al-Bayātī's "Marāthī Lūrka" (Elegies for Lorca).⁴³ Although al-Sayyāb's paper boats emerge as paper planes and his rays of light develop into a "halo of light" in al-Bayātī's elegies, these and other images and movements originally grew out of Lorca's texts. In these images, there is action and murder. There are cities rich with anxiety, love, and death. What is distinctive of al-Bayātī is his resurrection of the abstract, bringing it back as a concrete presence. Thus, Lorca emerges in person out of al-Bayātī's texts, to pierce the heart of the night with the pointed word (pt. 5).

Al-Bayātī merges into the fighters who people his Granada poems. However, there runs throughout the implication that the city is no less

troubled than the poet is, for both suffer destruction, “blood and smoke” (pt. 2), but paradoxically without losing their powers of transcendence and rebirth. In other words, the real says something, but poetry provides a counter-vision in tune with that of the dedicatee:

It said to my mother earth: am I to return?
 It laughed, and threw away from me the worm's garment
 And touching my face with the halo of light
 Coming back to her, a youth in surprise,
 Riding my green-wood-steed
 Shouting at her thousand gates, but sleep overcame all
 Drowning the enchanted city with blood and smoke.

(Ibid. 142)

Identifications with Lorca or dedications to him as a poet and person tend to run smoothly. In his poetry as much as in his personal career, Lorca brought to the poets of the 1950s and 1960s what was needed—the poet as fighter, singer, and seer. However, more importantly, almost half of his poetry reconstructs scenes, attitudes, notions, and Andalusian poetics of joy and rapture familiar to a large number of Arab poets. Furthermore, as a martyr he evokes a great deal of mourning usually balanced by his love for life.

It is possible to argue the popularity of Lorca with Arab poets on many levels and grounds. One can cite two more writers as examples, a prose reference to Lorca's poetics by Maḥmūd Darwīsh and a poem by Muḥammad ‘Afīfī Maṭar. ‘Afīfī wrote his poem, “Jarīmah fī Ghirnāṭah” (A Murder in Granada) in 1962. The poem was written in the same vein as many poems that address Lorca, the city, the gypsies, and death. The poet appended a note to the effect that it incorporates lines and details from Lorca's poetry and life, adding, “The poem carries my own disheartening, for the subject is an opening into that.”⁴⁴ The identification between the poet and the addressee centers on both the struggle, including the revolutionary poetics, and the song, the one that makes up the lyrical quality of this poetic:

Silence . . . the poet is in the serenity of the *mīḥrāb*⁴⁵
 Like naked flowers. Like a star swimming in water
 Inspired by the red brick of the deserted well in Alhambra Palace
 Inspired by the stream of the spilt milk and the era of the green grain ear
 Inspired by the agitated alley
 By the bright olive leaves
 Silence, you summer of depths . . . for the poet is possessed
 Mourning tin moons . . .

(Ibid. 285)

Identifications and projections may not be the right poetic means to subjective experience despite their popularity among poets. Lorca's colors and

songs are available, however, to rescue poetry from self-elegizing. Maḥmūd Darwīsh sees in Lorca his vocation as a poet, not for the nature of the precursor's experience, but rather for the notion of poetry as song. Maḥmūd Darwīsh is not sanguine about the trend to intellectualize poetry, nor is he pleased with the tendency to treat the poem as a written form, for Lorca "was chanting. He said poetry needs a transmitter, a living human soul, whether a singer or reciter/chanter. Lorca used to test both the appeal to the taste and the poem itself in recitation. He was in search for the direct connection between the sound and the heart, for poetry is not a visual art. There must be an ear, a rhythm."⁴⁶ Maḥmūd Darwīsh's note is not a passing one, for he looks upon music as the ultimate poetic, free to sail into the unbounded and the unrestrained.⁴⁷

The case is not the same with dedications to other poets, whether precursors or contemporaries. Although the self is occasionally rebuked for negligence, releasing the dedicatee, in the manner of al-Ḥakīm's Muḥsin, from accountability and responsibility for current mishaps, it is usual to come across a variety of dedicatory patterns. Foremost among these is the poetry of repression. In this poetry, the dead poet, the precursor, is held at bay, maneuvered and challenged in the very terrains of his or her poems. Especially when the dead were once contemporaries, dedications to them are offered as gifts while fighting back their heavy textual engagement with their dedicatee. They take from the dedicatee first before embarking on restitution. Oscillating between recognition and denial, these dedications evolve as sites of tension. In Jacques Derrida's words:

Repression does not destroy or annul anything; it keeps by displacing. Its operation is systematic or topological; it always consists of keeping by exchanging places. And, by keeping the meaning of the gift, repression annuls it in symbolic recognition. However unconscious this recognition may be, it is effective and can be verified in no better fashion than by its effects or by the symptoms it yields up... for decoding.⁴⁸

With this recognition of presence in the act of erasure or repression, the poem becomes a potential space of rift and collision.

Elegy, dedication, and repression

Especially in al-Bayātī's elegies, there is great repression that takes a number of directions. More than any other contemporary poet, al-Bayātī was on the lookout for the new, fighting back in himself many ghosts of competing energy and caliber. Outlasting "most of his blocking agents,"⁴⁹ al-Bayātī felt free to develop an enormous corpus of dedications, apostrophes, and contrafactions that set him in the main growing trends, from modernism to postmodernism, in Arabic poetry. Justifying poetic absorption as natural, he looks upon poetic interaction as central to the very mission of poetry. In his

“Marthiyyah ilā Nāzīm Ḥikmat” (Elegy to Nāzīm Ḥikmat), al-Bayātī rephrases interaction as follows, “The virgin wave / plaits its sister’s hair in the evening gloom.”⁵⁰ Nothing can escape contamination, and textual virginity is a paradoxical term as long as there is fusion and contact. Indeed, to claim freedom from contamination is in itself an act of repression, for available textual terrains invite premeditated raids. Especially regarding al-Sayyāb, al-Bayātī betrays more anxiety than usual.

Along with the “daemonization” of a precursor that develops in the belated “counter-sublime,”⁵¹ there is a tendency, in al-Bayātī’s dedications to some “blocking agents,” to humanize the latter in comparison, keeping them, and their advocates, at bay. Sensitive to “the war” waged against him in the 1950s, al-Bayātī’s counter-discourse identifies with the veritable figure of al-Mutanabbī, who, in similar situations, rejoined, “I am not in the habit of concern” about what is said.⁵² Indeed, al-Sayyāb serves now as a reminder “of these dismal unlucky years when we were fighting wind-mills, bringing back to my mind ages of Arabic poetry, with their noise and fights for the gain of the rose of the impossible” (Ibid. 81). Al-Sayyāb’s advocates are set aside as such, while al-Sayyāb himself is “eclipsed,”⁵³ as no more than “a bridge between the Romanticism of the 1940s and the movement for renewal in the 1950s.”⁵⁴

However, as “Negation of the precursor is never possible, since no ephebe can afford to yield to the death instinct,”⁵⁵ al-Bayātī devotes an elegy to al-Sayyāb with a belated introductory note that prepares for the elucidation of reference in the poem. In another place, al-Bayātī looks upon this elegy as the most generous gift, “an initiative, never undertaken by any other poet in the twentieth century.”⁵⁶ The implications of an avowed act of giving are many, to be sure, for to accept Mauss’ discourse and Derrida’s recapitulations, there is in al-Bayātī’s gift “an ethics and a politics that tend to valorize the generosity of the giving-being.”⁵⁷

Nevertheless, when given to the dead, this gift is even illustrative of the generosity principle described by Derrida: “for there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter gift, or debt” (Ibid. 12). On the other hand, to claim it as gift, a unique “initiative,” entails an engagement with the addressee, driving the dedicatory to address al-Sayyāb’s readership in an act of displacement. According to Derrida’s significant observation, to offer a gift (and if the elegy is a gift), the donor “must not see it, or know it either” (Ibid. 14). Derrida further contends:

Otherwise, he (the donor) begins at the threshold, as soon as he intends to give, to pay himself with a symbolic recognition, to praise himself, to congratulate himself, to give back to himself symbolically the value of what he thinks he has given or what he is preparing to give.

(Ibid. 14)

In application, there is much in al-Bayātī's prefatory matter to his "Kitābah ʿalā qabr al-Sayyāb" / "Writing on al-Sayyāb's Tomb"⁵⁸ that corroborates Derrida's deconstruction of the generosity premise. Indeed, what al-Sayyāb and the whole Tammūzī generation took upon themselves to carry out in writing, according to al-Bayātī's implicit rejoinder (*Ḥarāʾiq* 83), made no exceptional contribution to literature: "Crying for Tammūz and al-Ḥusayn has been the very obsession of the poor who have been trying to melt the large prison wall by their tears, arms, and shouts." Although singling out al-Sayyāb's "Canticle of the Rain" as a "promise" and a "warning," there is that repressive urge to suggest al-Sayyāb's failure of vision, for a "death swamp opens its mouth" to enact a new siege that isolates poetry and holds people captive. In other words, the prefatory note simultaneously devaluates al-Sayyāb's major poem—its benedictions and notes of faith—while citing it with admiration.

This argument does not necessarily resolve the complexity of al-Bayātī's elegy as an act of gift giving. Its lyrical–elegiac opening involves it in the rituals of the pastoral elegy. Nevertheless, there is in it homage and allegiance through the identification of the speaker and the dedicatee. The speaker is a lover, yearning to bypass time and space in order to reach the interior of Baghdad, and to recapture the past of childhood experience and the present life there. As his desire is impossible to realize, it assumes additional urgency. Walls of partition shut poets out, and the city is in a state of siege. The very wish to regain childhood is a textual tactic, for the speaker never shares such an experience with the dedicatee. In fact, al-Bayātī's poetry presents its speaker as a grown-up. Conversely, al-Sayyāb's poems are always made of such an intertext, the "anteroom" of the poem, where childhood experience involves recollections of rivers, groves, moons, songs, rain, and mothers.

The text raises further complications. While the title "Writing on al-Sayyāb's Tomb" implies that the speaker is condescending toward an equal, the elegy is drawn into textual strategies that vie for ascendancy and control, especially in terms of register. Beginning with the speaker's act of transgression, climbing Baghdad's fences, there is figuratively a positionality from which the poet assumes the upper hand, to "stretch my gaze into the houses," passing beyond siege and surveillance, as both a fighter and a voyeur. The latter's vision surpasses immediate time and place, reaching far back in history, to associate with martyrs and legendary lovers.

Instead of limiting himself to this wish, the speaker's prayer for identification with lovers is preparatory for another wish to regain childhood, before the complications of poetic maturity:

So that we can meet as two children
And begin where things usually begin
We water the thirsty butterflies,
We make fire out of the papers of our notebooks,
We run into the gardens
and write the lovers' verses on the wall.

The poem allows al-Sayyāb's register to intrude into the elegy, blending it with images, such as the thirsty butterflies, which stand for estranged souls in al-Bayātī's poetry. The ultimate direction of this section is to revert to al-Sayyāb's poetry as images of childhood experience. Contrasted with the state of siege, its urgency and requisites, al-Sayyāb's poetry is presented as too innocent to cope with such complications.

In the last four lines, there are specific allusions to al-Sayyāb's well-known poems. The reference to the crucifixion, the mud houses, ash cemeteries, moons, and nights, is so highlighted that it gives the impression that al-Bayātī leads the elegy out of its main body of childhood experience toward specific commitments to transformation or revolution. However, this concluding section is submerged into a dominant referentiality that enables the speaker to supervise a whole inside, a city under siege, where even recollections are stifled and controlled. Caging these and keeping them subdued, the siege erodes the wish to "tear down your fences (Baghdad) after death." On the other hand, and releasing the text from the limitations of the physical, al-Bayātī's "after death" significantly indicates regeneration and rebirth.

In a poem on al-Mutanabbī written in 1963, al-Bayātī devotes a section to "the poet a thousand years later."⁵⁹ In this part, al-Bayātī depicts his exemplary poet in terms that anticipate the speaker's images in this elegy on al-Sayyāb. His poet "roams around Baghdad's fences and its markets" (Ibid.). Like the speaker, he is also "on the outskirts of dusty towns," banished but yearning for victorious return. In other words, the subtext markers of the elegy are taken from al-Bayātī's register, while al-Sayyāb's is relegated to the distant regions of childhood, deprived of the poetic potential held by the elegizer.

At face value, this elegy reflects a pattern in dedicatory poetry that takes with one hand, in Derrida's speculations on the gift at large, "what it gives with the other."⁶⁰ Read in depth, and in view of the prefatory matter, the poem is an interpretation of al-Sayyāb's experience. Limiting that experience to specific dimensionality, this elegy is the kind of interpretation that Derrida singles out in Georges Gurvitch's postscript to Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*. There, says Derrida:

Some venom is surely being distilled, like a counter-poison in its turn, in the body of this tribute to a tribute, to this already venomous tribute that was the interpretation in question.

(Ibid. 69, n. 21)

Again, negotiation at such textual intersections does not necessarily preclude difference. Indeed, to lighten Derrida's blunt analysis, "vibrant generosity" and "poison" are often present in negotiatory intersections (Ibid. 73).

Perhaps this engagement with al-Sayyāb may show its markers of identity and difference when set in comparison with other poets' elegies. Sa'dī Yūsuf's

“Marthiyyah” (elegy), addressed to al-Sayyāb, makes use of the latter’s poetry, its register and significant tropes and implications. Al-Sayyāb’s village, Jaykur, his use of Christ and crucifixion, Jove, prostitutes and date palms, populate the poem as its intertext and matrix:

Jaykur lightens a lantern in the dumb evening without getting its light
 The orphan died, leaving a widow and orphans behind
 O God’s mercy that accommodated his misery
 O Mother for the one who has no mother to close his eyes: be his cover
 Offer the suffering body rest and the mouth a drop of water.

The poem accumulates details of the register of the forlorn, harping also on Christian and Islamic markers, on the Prophet’s early encounters with his hostile but wealthy tribe, to develop a contrast with the world of the exploiters, who are the happiest for the death of a poet: “Who buys the Messiah’s skin? / We slayed him / so universe rest in happiness.”⁶¹ The motive behind the poem is one of identification with the forebear’s misfortune, for the poet reaches this stage after passing through some ordeal:

My grave behind the hill foreshadows doomsday
 In the desolation of the last exile, and there a pigeon takes shelter.
 Cold makes me shiver: Iraq . . . Iraq . . . No other but Iraq.

(Ibid.)

Sa’dī Yūsuf’s poem is a Romantic one, with little or no serious anxiety. Provoked by hardship and exile, it reads the speaker’s destiny in the poetry of another. Al-Bayātī’s address to Khalīl Ḥāwī is ridden with yet more complexity and anxiety. No less given to the view of poetry as a sacrificial act of a textual nature, Ḥāwī was more disturbed by the ideological idealization of acculturation. Blind adherence to tradition as much as mimicry produce no less horrid leaders than Lazarus, in his “Li-‘Āzar ‘ām 1962” / “Lazarus 1962.”⁶² Rather than a mythical hero of some regenerative power, Lazarus is resurrected from the dead to lust again for death, leading and herding others who are as dead in face and soul on a nightmarish journey between life and death. Anticipating the reign of dictators and their wars of defeat and destruction, the poem is among the most prophetic Arabic textual sites. “Ḥāwī’s Lazarus,” write Adnan Haydar and Michael Beard, “is no simple representation of tyranny or corruption, but at once an embodiment of the Manaḡib or virtues which an anti-colonial society requires, and also a fundamental derailment of that power, a process by which he comes to resemble the forces he has opposed.”⁶³ Against this scene, the poet can no longer pose as savior, sage, or hero: intellectuals are powerless. Henceforth, and in concordance with other writings, the scene witnesses the emergence of masks, contrafactions, historical parodies, and fragments that counter the idealized

longing of the whole Tammūzī tradition. Ḥāwī's "Lazarus" sets the tone for a dismaying image of the present and the future. True to his vision, Ḥāwī committed suicide in 1982.

Ḥāwī's act as much as his later writing left his contemporaries in disarray. While some, like Buland al-Ḥaydarī,⁶⁴ were there to dedicate poems in memoriam using Ḥāwī's poems as subtexts, al-Bayātī was more concerned with questioning the very vocation of poetry. In line with a non-complacent view of modern poetry, al-Bayātī argues for the poem not the person. Hence, the elegized Arab poets from among his contemporaries are driven to the background, while the poem is singled out as the unhealed wound, the undying seed, as he says in "The Sufferings of al-Ḥallāj."⁶⁵

Al-Bayātī's "Elegy to Khalīl Ḥāwī" has drawn significant attention.⁶⁶ Pedro Martínez Montávez wrote on this text, "which may seem cold on the surface, but I see that it evolves from an inner feeling, bare, rigorous and overwhelming, in line with the occasion that inspired it."⁶⁷ Martínez Montávez is not surprised to find the poem in fragments, for it uses three times, past, present, and future that "register the story of the elegized poet's existence." Nevertheless, it is in the third part that "there is a clear, sincere, and deep praise for the dead poet," he concludes.⁶⁸

Martínez Montávez comes across a number of points specifically highlighted in al-Bayātī's elegy to Khalīl Ḥāwī, such as the speaker's sense of horror, his faith that the "kingdom of death is also the kingdom of hope" (Ibid. 148–49) and his blend of the individual and the universal (Ibid.). Nevertheless, the elegy derives its actual strength from its referentiality. Indeed, every part of the elegy echoes and foregrounds the typical preoccupations of al-Bayātī the poet. The first part works with the past, but it is actually meant for the living. The poet delves into fertility cults and vegetation myths where, textually figurations assume their generative power to subvert and undermine state machinery and sites of coercion. The "Ā'ishah" or "Lārā" and "Khuzāmah" of this part are the poet's significations for poetry, exiled and driven to death, only to pass through some transfiguration, and evolve into "verses," "blood," and "vows of the poor":

A lyric in the poetry of Abū Tammam
 She became Beirut and Jaffa
 An Arab wound in the cities of creativity
 Vowed for love
 Possessed by fire
 She became Ishtar.⁶⁹

The poem derives its potential from gathering al-Bayātī's recurrent symbols, his images and patterns of thought, to draw attention to the transcending power of poetry at the very moment when its revolutionary potential is highlighted. The first part blends rituals, scriptures, lore, portents, and classical

poems of transgressive poetics, along with recollections from the registers of socio-political suffering. As an intertext for so many cross-boundaries and currents, the poem is no less a process than a “wound,” alert and alive, reminding its readers of the poet’s identification of poetry and Sufism as “the wound won’t be healed, and the seed won’t die,” as al-Bayātī says in “The Sufferings of al-Ḥallāj.”⁷⁰

The second section of al-Bayātī’s “Elegy to Khalīl Ḥāwī” refers to the suicide of the poet in 1982 in anger, it was reported, at the Israeli siege of Beirut. Written in the past tense, it could specifically mean Khalīl Ḥāwī, but it could also include others, for al-Bayātī was in the habit of emphasizing the immortality of poetry, for which poets die to intensify its potential for endurance. Both poetry as creativity and love as rebirth join forces in the matrix of al-Bayātī’s poetry to minimize physical death. If death occurs, it is only to indict an unjust and love-cruel universe:

Creativity is love
 Love is death
 Creativity/love/death: a birth
 Why did Neruda and Hikmat die then?
 Why is the last rose
 In the window of my house burned?⁷¹

Set within this context, the second section of the elegy is open-ended and ambiguous. It resists specific referentiality on purpose:

As the poet departed
 His footsteps drew the map of things.
 (“Elegy to Khalil Hawi,” 269)

A direct reference to Ḥāwī’s suicide occurs in the third section, for avowedly there is a challenge, as the poem takes shape, transgressive and revolutionary to the last:

When the poet killed himself
 His great journey began
 His visions burned in the sea.
 When his cry penetrated the kingdom of exile
 The people coming from the desert of love began
 To smash the gods of clay
 And build the kingdom of God.

(Ibid. 268–69)

By displacement of positions and discursive slippage, “visions” and the poet’s “cry” or poem take over, relegating the personal suicide to the

background, and evolving the whole scene into another dawn of prophecy, revolution, and change. Poetry is the religion of present times, the new call for transformation. Yet the personal element is also submerged into al-Bayātī's other paradigms of death and rebirth, whereby all poets merge into the speaker as his "Al-Wilādah fī Mudun lam Tūlad" ("Birth in Unborn Cities") signifies:

On the sidewalks of exile
 I arise after death
 To be born in unborn cities
 And to die.

(Ibid. 278–79)

Indeed, physical death, whether suicide or murder, means little in the conflictual context of positionalities. There are "castrated" poets, and poets of exile and change. The latter look upon physical death as meaningless, for they are bound to endure in their "blue fire of poetry." In "Nār al-shi'ṛ" ("The Fire of Poetry") the speaker listens to reports of some impending danger, but these fall short of understanding the potential of poetry:

I was drowning to death
 In the light coming from the farthest star
 Burning
 In the blue sky of poetry
 Sharpening my weapons
 Playing the lyre
 In my death.

(Ibid. 274–75)

The "martyr of the light" in this poem is the poet, whose poems, referred to as "light," endure, surviving annihilation and physical death. Here, as in the "Elegy to Khalīl Ḥāwī," the prioritization of the poem, the text, over the person, the precursor, swerves on purpose from the elegized to the text itself, from intersubjectivity to intertextuality, humanizing the subject first to ultimately drive him out of textual horizons.

It is worthwhile at this stage to specify differences between these two poets, the addresser and the addressee, al-Bayātī and Khalīl Ḥāwī. Al-Bayātī's figurations undergo supplementation or displacement through a deconstructionist process, typical of the poet. Conversely, Ḥāwī's poetry grows through juxtapositions of a symbolic nature, whereby symbols evolve into notions larger than their origins, to be analyzed, criticized, or argued. Al-Bayātī's figurations merge into a persona, which is the poet's as the very epitome of the poetry of resistance, difference, beauty, and love beyond time and place. In other words, al-Bayātī's persona passes through a metamorphosis of some sort, transcending limits, and minimizing henceforth the whole issue of

physical death: "I arise after death/ To be born in unborn cities/ And to die."⁷² Indeed, al-Bayātī's poet never sounds available or obtainable to the mundane:

The rats of the fields of words
 Buried the head of the poet
 In a field of ashes
 But the poet on the cross of exile
 Carried the sun and flew.⁷³

Nevertheless, to think of al-Bayātī's perpetual poet as another archetypal construct is to miss the whole significance of his poetic career. If his persona undergoes a metamorphosis, it is the necessary dynamic alternation between the temporal and the eternal. The gate to this perpetual change is memory, which is individual and universal, real and mythical. Al-Bayātī's achievement lies in this overwhelming memory that stores the sufferings and miseries of humankind, along with their deep sources of love, beauty, and attachment to life. In "I am Born and Burnt in Love," his speaker says:

I hurl a bomb under the train
 The night train in my memory,
 Whose freight is autumn leaves
 Amongst the dead I crawl
 In untilled, murky fields I grope my way
 Seeking night guards to help me stop
 This blind rapacious love—
 This black light in my memory
 Under the falling rain
 Feverishly crying
 I shoot myself at dawn.⁷⁴

More than these paradigms, registers work differently in the poetry of al-Bayātī and Ḥāwī. Indeed, to study the wording of al-Bayātī's elegy may well lead to some conclusions that are different from those of Martínez Montávez. Al-Bayātī's mythical figures, proclamations of dissent, views of tradition, and affiliations in culture and politics, are actively present in such a way as to dislodge Ḥāwī's allegorical structures of birth, rebirth, and indeterminate stand. In their stead, we have a positive deterministic view of progression, bound to lead to change eventually. Hence, the elegized is immortalized only in the title, for he is fused in the third part, after the act of textual dislocation, into all poets of similar choice. The very connectives, *when*, *as*, and *only* place him in an ongoing process of sacrifice. Reading Ḥāwī, as if according to Valery's "Alert Reading," al-Bayātī only tends "to clear imaginative space for [his] own personal goal,"⁷⁵ as Bloom explains in another context. The impersonalized mention of the poet involves the text in self-effacement, an emptying that is

meant to detract from the dedicatee's presence. Embarking on the completion of Ḥāwī's texts, and sublimating his own register in the contested terrain of the elegy, the belated poet, al-Bayātī, keeps both the elegy and the past behind, to create a threshold for a present that belongs entirely to him as the sole survivor. This threshold is one of modernity, for the poet gathers a register to meet the demands of the present, an act that recognizes the latter's significance. In Foucault's words, "Modernity is not a phenomenon of sensitivity to the fleeting present; it is the will to 'heroize' the present."⁷⁶

The case is even stronger when the elegy is read against al-Bayātī's other poem, "Al-Ḥiṣār" / "The Siege," dedicated to Khalīl Ḥāwī as well. Although written *in memoriam*, the poem is plunged into al-Bayātī's well-known register, with its fragments, allusions, and sweeping criticisms that culminate in a view of poetry that is entirely his own. Its conclusion is no less than an assertion that life is a struggle and that surviving death entails no recovery, for this universe is life in death. In other words, suicide is the easier choice in comparison with the ongoing nightmare:

Booked: All Earth Exiles, Prisons,
Torture and Madness Dungeons
Clowns' Masks
Wine Bottles and Poison Jugs
City Restaurants / Spoons / Dishes
Metric Poems / Classical Monorhymes
Inquisition Courts
Theatre Tickets / Asylums / Graves
Love Being / Light Domes
Kings' Tombs
Capitals of Treason / Theology
Where for a poet to go?
Who has survived death to die.⁷⁷

The concluding question veers away from the avowed dedication of "The Siege." "Where for a poet to go?" sets the whole universe against poetic endeavors at large. Every item, every place, every occasion is used, controlled, occupied, invaded, and owned, leaving nothing free. Survival in the physical sense is ironic, for it is life in death that becomes the norm of existence. On the other hand, the question plays also on al-Bayātī's use of "death." While such a life of coercion and manipulation is another name for death, al-Bayātī's alternative is the other meaningful death that takes a stand against the tides of oppression, domination, and control. "Another birth is death, it is coming," he says of Nāzīm Ḥikmat's death.⁷⁸

Al-Bayātī's dedication of "The Siege" runs simply as follows: "To Khalīl Ḥāwī, in Memoriam." This specific mention lends the text some urgency, to be sure. Nevertheless, without it, the poem still voices its frustration and

anger at the human condition. In other words, the dedicatee's decision to put an end to his life is subsumed in a scene of frustration that resists death, nevertheless, through its ongoing questioning note of defiance and opposition. It is only when seen as a threshold for defiance beyond the limits of physical death that such a dedication becomes functional. Otherwise, dedications may turn into sites of displacement, for, in Derrida's words, already cited, "the dedication situates . . . the *dativo* or *donor* movement that displaces the text. There is nothing in the text that is not dedicated, nothing that is not destined . . ."79

Al-Mutanabbī: between al-Bayātī and Adūnīs

Not all poets share al-Bayātī's vigorous sense of contestation. Even al-Mutanabbī, in a poem written in 1963, is drawn back in al-Bayātī's poetry to suffer some castigation at one time and admiration at another for fighting pettiness. This multifaceted critique distinguishes al-Bayātī's readings of precursors. Rather than looking upon the precursor as a historical personage, al-Bayātī reads al-Mutanabbī as advanced to us through narratives. History itself is no more than a number of narratives vying for ascendancy. While some depict him as a poet of panegyrics, others look upon him as a rebel. Voices are projected as positions in the poem to speak for their interest in the poet, or their resentment and detestation. The fourth voice in the poem speaks for the dominating discourse:

I cut the poet's forehead with the inkstand
 Spit in his eyes
 Stole from them light and life
 Pierced my sword into his verses
 Corrupted his followers, and misled narrators
 Made him a laughing stock for the court, the knights and their like.⁸⁰

What al-Bayātī retains is the poet as rebel and exile. This is the "first curse," and the most celebrated in the poem:

You are a mariner without a ship
 You are in exile without a city.

Part of the curse is to roam around, but another part is to suffer misuse, manipulation, and distortion:

In the voice of a generation whose banners were torn to pieces by defeat,
 In a world meddled by merchants and politicians.⁸¹

What metamorphoses out of these narratives is the image of the exile, in perpetual regeneration, "his horse neighs in the evening," on the lookout to regain stolen cities (Ibid. 486).

Al-Bayātī's reading is not identical with that of another contemporary, ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd, Adūnīs (Adonis). His Mutanabbī is a person first, a poet who holds many characters at once—the rebel, the rover, the lover, and the seer. He is also a person of some mysterious ancestry, as the water-carrier's stepson whose lineage to Imām ʿAlī's family implies his right to the caliphate.⁸² Perhaps this side brings al-Mutanabbī closer to Adūnīs, as it imprints his character with a stamp of melancholy, pride, courage, defiance, and restlessness. Indeed, as early as 1964, Adūnīs' biographical entry on al-Mutanabbī in *Dīwān al-Shīʿr al-ʿArabī* (The Diwan of Arabic poetry) emphasizes al-Mutanabbī's "pride," along with his being "courageous and adventurous."⁸³ Adūnīs's selection covers certain items of his precursor's poetry, usually identical with Adūnīs' own predilections. There are a few titles typical of the collection such as "Complaint," "The Black Sun," "Remembrance," "Heedless of Homelands," "The Intimate Sorrow," "The Rock," "Prison," "To a Woman," "Wind," "Humiliation," and "Ecstasy of Pain" along with many other titles that may pass as poems by Adūnīs himself (Ibid.). Adūnīs's critical assessment applies no less to al-Mutanabbī's character than to the defiant tone of his poetry:

In the poetry of al-Mutanabbī, the poet's rebellion against society takes a dimension which is bright and more personal, for the poet distinguishes himself, and presents his person as a whole universe of certainty, assurance, and sublimity, in the face of others and against them. In the very inwardness of his poetry, he embraces this selfhood, addresses it and argues with it in a tone of captivating worship.

(Ibid.19)

Al-Mutanabbī is more to the taste of Adūnīs because, in his poetry, the personal grows into the poetic, hence there is in his poetry:

A whole nature of words, up to his own aspirations, for they challenge, progress, sweep away, attack, conquer, and transcend as . . . as if they were the inward answer of his inner self, its very extension and supplementation

(Ibid. 20)

Adūnīs's major contribution in this regard lies, however, in *Al-Kitāb* (The Book),⁸⁴ his subsequent project to resurrect al-Mutanabbī as a person from a heap of distortions. Along with him, and through his voice, history is reconstructed as a battleground fraught with disasters, calamities, and fabrications. Planning his allegedly resurrected manuscript in the manner of annotation, emendation, and comment, Adūnīs rephrases many of his precursor's poems, juxtaposing these against the historical details, offered by the narrator on the right margin, and against some interventions and intrusions

on the left. The endeavor is revisionist in the main, for the “return of the dead”⁸⁵ signifies their subordination to the will of the belated poet, as if proposing to tell all that it is time to set things right and begin anew. In him is born the precursor, but with further determination not only to abide, but also to emend: “This is our ancestor’s consensus, while I, belated, listen and follow suit.”⁸⁶

Rather than mere acknowledgment of lineage, the belated poet’s interventions are no less revelatory than new gleanings from history: “Time is sitting as a child in my lap to read what space inscribes in notebooks stolen from the pockets of heaven” (Ibid. 23). These notebooks only remind him to “. . . take shade along with his other ancestors / who shine forth, far and higher than the gloom of murder and the venom of murderers” (Ibid. 37).

Revisionism here involves poetry in the very dynamics of reassessment. History accordingly is a narrative, a text among many, whose impact and presence are highly damaging for being manipulated to dominate. Beginning with poets of Tammūzī predilection, Adūnīs soon evolves beyond them, taking issue with the very writing of history in order to present an alternative poetic reading. This is not a sudden swerve in the poet’s career, for he has been negotiating stations and stayings, to use Sufi terms, to come to terms with issues that have been bothering him since his disillusionment with the Tammūzīs. One may cite his “Elegy for the Time at Hand,” as the mid-way poem: “Now in the final act, disaster tows our history/ toward us on its face.”⁸⁷ Although a station, the poem is not yet a visionary one, for the speaker makes no claims to transcendence, “I see what any man can see: libations at the graves of children, / incense for holy men, / tombstones of black marble, / fields scattered with skeletons, / vultures, / mushy corpses with the names of heroes” (Ibid. 47). As for the speaker’s words, “they become a spear in flight, / unopposable as truth, my spear returns to strike me / dead” (Ibid. 50). One might say that here is a lingering Sufi tone whereby the blame becomes the speaker’s way into annihilation as a step on the road to Divinity.

Yet, there is also the poetic of affiliation and rapprochement. In paratexts, poems or citations introducing the text, there is a function that may be central to the text, or may stand for the text itself, as Derrida argues.⁸⁸ The attitude is well recognized in Arabic writing. Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240) speaks as follows of the poetic pieces that introduce each chapter in his Meccan Revelations: “Consider carefully the verses placed at the start of each chapter of this book, because they contain knowledge which I have deliberately put in them. Indeed you will find in these verses things which are not mentioned in the exposition of the corresponding chapters.”⁸⁹ In keeping with this tradition, Arab poets have managed to cement an association between texts and figures. On the other hand, dedications may well be in keeping with this positive attitude, for there may be fewer anxieties than the ones already discussed. This is the case with Maḥmūd Darwīsh in the quatrains which he dedicates to the Palestinian woman poet Fadwā Ṭūqān, in reply to her

poem of 1967 "I Shall Never Cry." According to the editors and translators of Maḥmūd Darwīsh's *Selected Poems* (1973), these quatrains appeared along with her poem in her *The Night and the Knights* (1969).⁹⁰ The remark is important as it negates the anxiety of influence, if we take the dedicatee Fadwā Ṭūqān as the one present in the speaker's mind. He agrees with her, complements her poem, and establishes a new poetic of defiance. In this poem, "Diary of a Palestinian Wound: Rubaiyat for Fadwa Tuqan," there is a connection and a tie, "what gathers us at this hour in this place/ is the way back from an age of wilting."⁹¹ While entertaining love for her eyes, as the elder sister, there is now a common ground that holds them together: "Once my heart could hold nothing but your eyes / and now it's enriched with the homeland."⁹² The meeting with her after 1967 brought about a change in his poetics and ignited a new politic, for he no longer lingers over memories lest "there would grow on my forehead the grass of regret."⁹³ The defiant voice contends: "I am not a traveler. / I am the lover and the land is the beloved."⁹⁴ What brings about the change, however, is the defiance in her poems, the decision not to cry, which he also echoes, affirming to make his voice one of joy to celebrate revolt and resistance. While seemingly a show of solidarity, the poem is a poetic transposition of agenda and registers. Recurrent words in this poem celebrate joy, resistance, land, martyrs, stars, banners, and rippling water. Downgraded or displaced are such words as memory, wound, suitcase, and the traveler. He is "not a traveler", nor is his homeland "a suitcase." On the other hand, "I spit in the wound which fails/ to set fire to the night with foreheads."⁹⁵ Language itself changes according to these new priorities: "My language is the sound of rippling water in the river of storms."⁹⁶

In conclusion, then, modern Arabic literature has been on a journey toward self-awareness, the recognition of failure, and achievement on individual and communal levels. What is seemingly a passage from innocence into experience, from filiation and nature toward culture, is actually ridden with sharp analysis, tension, desire, and fear. Using many discursive strategies, writers and poets are on the lookout for the new to account for a sense of bewilderment, not only regarding other cultures, but also as intellectuals of some responsibility toward their own people, in dialogue with their present predicament. Shocked by the modern state, they suffer another disappointment of even larger proportions than their ancestors' cultural shock in the early 1920s. Thus, some will dedicate their poems to each other, as little men, in hiding or exile, whereas others bewail the death of prophets and prophecy. Nevertheless, determined to put up a good fight, others embark on many discursive strategies, including dedications and identifications with ancestors, for the terrain of contact and exchange lies in this intersection of erudition and dialogue: "The cities break up," writes Adūnīs in "The Desert," "The train is a land of dust / Only poetry knows how to marry this space."⁹⁷ The emphasis on this vast space, its emergence in a semi-apocalypse, retains for poetry a perennial vocation whereby exiles, gypsies, rovers, and vagabonds

replace the awakening intellectuals. In precarious situations, displacement becomes the norm, not settlement, and a poetic of exile grows and develops into textual homelands.

Appendix I

*Writing on al-Sayyāb's Tomb*⁹⁸

I climb your fences, Baghdad, and fall a lover in the night
 I stretch my gaze into the houses and smell the flower of the anteroom
 I weep over al-Husayn,⁹⁹ and will be weeping for him until God may help
 unite the separated¹⁰⁰
 and tear down the wall of partition,
 so that we can meet as two children
 and begin where things usually begin.
 We water the thirsty butterflies,
 we make fire out of the papers of our notebooks,
 we run into the gardens
 and write the lovers' verses on the wall.
 We paint deer and nymphs that dance nude
 under the moon of Iraq.
 We shout under the Arch:¹⁰¹
 Baghdad, O Baghdad, O Baghdad
 we came to you from the mud houses and from the ash cemeteries
 to tear down your fences after death
 to kill this night
 with screams of our love which has been crucified under the sun.
 (ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, trans. with notes by Saadi A. Simawe)

Appendix II

Elegy to Khalil Hawi

I
 As the poet waited
 Aisha died in exile
 She became a morning star:
 Lara and Khuzama/Hind and Safa'
 Queen of queens
 A flame of a fire in the oil towers
 And in the verses of the Song of Songs,
 Blood upon the lines of the Torah
 And upon the foreheads of the thieves of the revolutions.
 She became the Nile and Euphrates

Vows of the poor
Over the Atlas Mountains
A lyric in the poetry of Abu Tammam.
She became Beirut and Jaffa
An Arab wound in the cities of creativity
Vowed for love
Possessed by fire
She became Ishtar.

II
As the poet departed
His footsteps drew the map of things.

III
When the poet killed himself
His great journey began
His visions burned in the sea
When his cry penetrated the kingdom of exile
The people coming from the desert of love began
To smash the gods of clay
And build the Kingdom of God.

(Abdul Wahab al-Bayati,
trans. Bassam K. Frangieh,
Love, Death and Exile)

ENVISIONING EXILE

Past anchors and problematic encounters

Exile is places and times which change their victims.
 (Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "The Tragedy
 of Narcissus," p. 178)

Although heavily involved in negotiating a settlement of some sort, poetry usually draws on the resourcefulness of its authors insofar as they have paradoxically experienced location and dislocation, and orientation and disenchantment in a series of snapshots, gleanings, and textual signposts. Faring in the shadows of archetypal wanderers such as Ulysses, Sindbad, and the rovers of theology and archaic cultures or settling for the disappointments, frustrations, and pleasures of the immediate and the real, exiled writers and artists are nevertheless absorbed and imprisoned by memory, with all the implications of attachment to the past or yearning for release from regret. In a reality of so much disenchantment, time and place are blurred, and the poet's voice searches in vain for a temporal vision. Poetry and music become his gate to life, for "Nothing can take away from you the Andalusia of old times," Maḥmūd Darwīsh says in "Tamārīn 'ulā 'alā gītārah Ispāniyyah (Preliminary Practice on a Spanish Guitar).¹ Even historical records of a glorious civilization are in danger of losing meaning amid encroaching failures and doubts: "Was Andalusia/ here or there? On earth, / or only in poems?" asks Maḥmūd Darwīsh.² To him, the song becomes the people's way to reorient memory in place and time beyond the repugnant reality of brutality and forced exile:

O song, take all our thoughts, and
 lift us, wound by wound,
 heal our forgetfulness and take us
 as high as you can, to the humanity of man,
 shining by his early tents, the
 brass-covered sky dome,
 to see what lies hidden in his heart,
 Lift us up and descend with us down to the place,
 for you know best the place
 and you know best the time.³

Exilic Arabic poetry draws on three sources: first, the strong exilic tradition that includes poems and writings by intellectuals and poets of renown like al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), the brigand poets and most of the Sufis;⁴ second, the present scene of political turmoil with its devastating results and impact; and third, the modern “landscape of ruins,” in Hugo Friedrich’s words, with its synonymous negative connotations of “[d]eformation, depersonalization, obscurity, dehumanization, incongruency, dissonance, and empty ideality.”⁵

Exilic evocations

The power of the past

Arabic poetry of exile serves then as the bridge between tradition and modernity, as it builds on a classical corpus that manifests four significant aspects: first, there is the desire to traverse the universe, gain knowledge and enjoy the new location “against the vicissitudes of time,” as Abū Nuwās (d. c.813) says once.⁶ Second, there is paradoxically the fear of humiliation and desolation in leading the life of *al-gharīb* (the stranger). ‘Alī Ibn al-Jahm (killed 863) is reported as reciting:

Pity the stranger in a foreign country,
 what has he done to himself?
 He left his friends, and they had no use
 for life after he was gone, nor did he.
 He enjoyed great prestige when he lived near his domicile,
 but later when he was far away, he was downcast
 Being a stranger far away, he says:
 God is just whatever He does.⁷

A third aspect should perhaps be associated with al-Tawḥīdī, for, in the words of Rosenthal, he “infused literary tradition with both Sufi internalization and philosophical discipline in a way that was hardly possible after his time.”⁸ While he accumulates all the difficulties and hardships associated with physical dislocation, including humiliation, absence of human contact and loss of friends and family, there is also his own overwhelming sense of alienation. “He is the one who is absent when he is present and who is present when he is absent,” he says. Moreover, there is an innate sense of strangeness. “Nay, he is the one who is the stranger in his strangeness.”⁹

A fourth aspect relates to the Prophet’s saying: “Be in this world as if you were a stranger.” The Muslim’s true home becomes the spiritual one, for the physical world is transitory and passing. One’s sojourn on earth means little, no more than a trial, in preparation for the next. As a transit, the world does not deserve to be an abode for the Sufis who largely endorse the life of

fugitives. "How could someone who is being sought stay in one place?" said one Sufi.¹⁰ In Islamic culture, there is traditionally a positive response to different concepts of migration, for, according to another version of the abovementioned *ḥadīth* by the Prophet, this world is a passing station: "Be in this world as if you were a stranger or an *'ābir sabīl*" (traverser of the road).¹¹ The concept lent itself to non-Sufi directions as well, for roaming the universe becomes another alternative to gain knowledge and renewal. The *ḥadīth* gave perhaps some credit to later articulations on the need to travel to derive rejuvenation and joy. Thus, the pre-Islamic poet 'Urwah Ibn al-Ward, the 'Abbāsīd Abū Tammām (d. 846), the jurist al-Shāfi'ī (d. 820), and others made mention of this need. Abū Tammām, for instance, says: "A man's prolonged stay in the tribe slowly ruins / His stamina and beauty. So go abroad to find renewal."¹² Al-Shāfi'ī lists five merits for travel: "Relief from worries, gain of a livelihood, / knowledge, education, and keeping company with good men."¹³

While these aspects enrich Arabic poetry with cultural specifics, they do not deter its negotiation with other exilic writings. Moreover, both totalitarianism at home and the neoimperialist onslaught have driven so many Arab writers to exile that some Arab poets identify themselves as poets of the world,¹⁴ as if subscribing to George Steiner's claim that "a whole genre of twentieth century Western literature" is "extraterritorial."¹⁵ To Terry Eagleton, extraterritorialism is usually synonymous with regeneration, rejuvenation, and invigoration. Pitted against cynicism, "futility and disintegration,"¹⁶ and the negative categories of modernity, this extraterritorial mode avowedly brings life to a wasteland scene. Enlisting on its side a large number of dissidents, self-exiles, and émigrés, this appropriation is bound to gather support, especially in view of the current vogue of global culturalism.

Contemporary writers like Terry Eagleton focus on familial and social discontinuity as regenerative, a position that was accepted in classical Arabic culture as well, for Ibrāhīm Ibn 'Abbās al-Ṣūlī (d. 857)¹⁷ was reported as saying: "Whenever you take up residence, you'll meet places/ folks and neighbors/ friends to replace the old ones."¹⁸ Disorientation becomes another motivation for improvement and growth. Accounting for this regenerative power, Terry Eagleton sees it emanating "... from the subtle and involuted tensions between the remembered and the real, the potential and the actual, integration and dispossession, exile and involvement" (Exiles and Émigrés, 18). Foreignness is invoked to develop this argument. It is confused, however, with exile proper, for, working within a larger tradition such as the one that T. S. Eliot usually recalls and claims, extraterritorialism is invoked as equivalent to expatriatism, which becomes in turn another legacy of the West and its acclaimed long tradition of fusion, appropriation, and tolerance. Especially when confused with exile, expatriatism is invoked in modernist texts in such a way as to blur distinctions in an area that calls for clear-cut assessments that include, and make use of, contributions from people who have been passing

through the troubles of immigration, disorientation, dislocation, alienation, and spiritual and geographical exile. The confusion is not specifically modern despite the nature of this age as one of great migration. In Arabic classical literature there is also blurring of limits between self-imposed and forced exile. The renowned poet al-Mutanabbī was so desolate once as to decry “having no folks (to be comfortable with), no native land (to repair to), no drinking companion (to whom to confide his innermost thoughts), no cup (with wine to get drunk), no comforting friend.”¹⁹ Resettlement is not an easy thing, for in the same Arab tradition, there is a counter point to the pleasures of travel and accompanying rejuvenation. Living as a stranger entails humiliation. Thus, al-Tawḥīdī quotes:

Whenever he sets foot, the stranger is humbled.
His arm is short, his tongue always blunted.
Wherever you see him, you find him always without a friend
People have one another, but he has no one to help him.²⁰

Beauty of other lands may not undo the sense of dislocation and cultural disorientation, as al-Mutanabbī's often-quoted lines on Bawwān show.²¹ Expatriation, vagrancy, and exile are different categories and should be read so. As William H. Gass argues, James Baldwin's exile, for example, is different from Gertrude Stein's, for his “began before he was born, when the darkness of all our beginnings darkened his skin.”²² On the other hand, it is only Ezra Pound who could qualify as a proper exile from among the well-known expatriates of the early twentieth century, for “[e] xpatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions,” says Said in “Reflections” (262–63). Moreover, exile for writers inscribes its home in writing, for, argues Gass, “the soul is being cast into a cell of the self where it may mark the days with scratches on the wall called writing, but where it will lose all companions and survive alone” (Exile 134).

Exiles and expatriates

Rather than place, writing involves the actual difference between the sense of exile and the rapprochement of the expatriate with the receiving milieu. Whenever writing overcomes dislocation by reinscribing itself within a larger cultural context, it escapes the constraints and pressures of exile. Even such an unsettling and disheartening experience as Ovid's finds its solace in poetry. “Remember, I'm in exile,” he says, “writing not for fame but solace, to work / my woe into an artifact.” To him, “that change” is “in its nature / a kind of distraction better even than comfort.”²³ In Arabic poetry, poets also see the possibility of survival in a poetic ensemble of images, places, histories, and names. In “A Horse for the Stranger,” a poem addressed to “an Iraqi poet,” the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh finds song the only way out of a suffocating

reality where everything changes into a grave, and where great names and poets are confiscated or lost in the sordid reality of invasions, brutality, and death. The negative categories usually associated with modernism assume a redemptive function through poetic and sacrificial association.²⁴ The poem appeared in his collection *Aḥada ‘ashara kawkaban* (1991, Eleven Planets). It is an ensemble of classical and modern registers, a combination of voices, and a subtle navigation among cultures and topographies. It bridges the history of modern Arabic poetry, and interweaves commitments and idealisms in a polyphonic text which in the end turns into a cross, a burden, and a sign for what is taking place. It is a token and a reminder, which is nonetheless effectively operating against such an ordeal:

Not one bird is left in our voice
 to fly to Samarkand
 or any other city.
 Time is shattered,
 language shattered,
 and this air, which we used to carry on our shoulders
 like bunches of grapes from Mosul
 is now a cross.
 Who will bear the poem’s burden for us?²⁵

This is not the voice of an expatriate, but the cry of many voices in pain. The search for “a change in creative surroundings,”²⁶ avowedly distinguishing expatriates, is rather an aesthetic and cultural concern, a privileged phenomenon that re-addresses itself to “the condition of exile as the basic metaphor for modernity,” as Aijaz Aḥmad argues.²⁷ To set it apart from exile proper, Aḥmad develops his argument in line with the cultural theorists’ concern with commitment and engaged positionality. He further explains: “modernism itself [...] has been framed so very largely by self-exiles and émigrés—James and Conrad, Pound and Eliot, Picasso and Dali, Joyce, Gertrude Stein.” They might have shared modernist concerns with exiles, those “who had experienced the same kind of ‘suffocation’ in their own spaces of this globe, and were subsequently to leave behind immense resources of genre and vocabulary for delineating that predominant image of the modern artist who lives as a *literal* stranger in a foreign and impersonal city” (Ibid. 134).

To apply to modernist Arabic writing this differentiation between expatriation and exile, or between living abroad and forced exile, we can choose excerpts from two poems by the late Iraqi exile Buland al-Ḥaydarī (d. 1996) whose intimations demonstrate the psychological crisis the poet passed through before and after taking the decision to leave Baghdad. Buland al-Ḥaydarī suffered exile under the anti-communist regime of 1963. He was back in the 1970s, and left to London in 1977, working in the state-run quarterly *Funūn ‘Arabiyyah*, based in London and Baghdad. In the 1980s he

decided to join political opposition to Saddam's regime. In "Baghdad: Who Knows?" the poet addresses Baghdad as follows:

But Baghdad
 we will remain as we were
 whether I live or die
 whether you live or die
 always you will remain a map
 in my left pocket
 a map which displays your blind eyes
 like two roads
 a road for me as I flee from you
 and a road for the exile returning in a white shroud
 with fire and ashes.²⁸

This is not an expatriate experience of joyful years in London. It does not apply to Eliot and other self-exiles. Homecoming in the Iraqi poet's experience means death, but there is in death a sacrificial meaning that relates the poet to the early Tammūzī movement with its faith in regeneration and rebirth. Years of exile did not release the poet from a harrowing experience of fear that poisoned his recollections and memories, turning him into a schizophrenic creature who was at once the victimizer and the victim:

From when does my time begin?
 from which promise? Which vow?
 uttered by an idol whose firebrand I erected
 I said to them: This is my homeland
 an idol and firebrand of an idol.²⁹

This experience that turns the speaker into a damaged creature and transforms homeland into a site of silence and death differs enormously from Nabokov's experience, for instance, as an expatriate in metropolitan centers.

According to Vladimir Nabokov, in "the two capitals of exile," such as Berlin and London, the direct and immediate response of Russian "*intelligenti*" was to form "compact colonies, with a coefficient of culture that greatly surpassed the cultural mean" of the milieu "among which they were placed."³⁰ However, in them, those expatriates found themselves blending as they wished. "I see myself, and thousands of other Russians," wrote Nabokov in retrospect, "leading an odd but by no means unpleasant existence, in material indigence and intellectual luxury, among perfectly unimportant strangers, spectral Germans and Frenchmen in whose more or less illusory cities we, émigrés, happened to dwell" (Ibid. 276). Nabokov's expatriatism has nothing to do with exile proper. Indeed, it emanates from a privileged position of a voyeur whose panoptic stand prioritizes its gaze in such a way as

to collapse it into that of a colonizer. With little or no concern for people there, the expatriate sees himself/herself as too self-sufficient to need further communication or knowledge. Aside from immediate needs or scenes of distraction, rapprochement does not exist. Speaking of these “unimportant strangers,” Nabokov says, “These aborigines were to the mind’s eye as flat and transparent as figures cut out of cellophane, and although we used their gadgets, applauded their clowns, picked their roadside plums and apples, no real communication, of the rich human sort so widespread in our own midst, existed between us and them” (Ibid. 276). Nabokov was certainly self-critical of this whole outlook, but his revelations could lead us into some distinction between expatriates and exiles. Especially when exiled intellectuals fit in well within their adopted circumstances, like the ones made available for Iraqi journalists and writers in Europe in the Ṣaddām era (1970–2003), there is a possibility of turning exile into luxurious life, unthought-of before, and quite compromising to the inexperienced and the novice.

Although forced at times to recognize their limitations or insularity, expatriates often indulge in complacency or dilettantism in respect to other cultures. Regarding these “aborigines,” Nabokov adds, “It seemed at times that we ignored them the way an arrogant or very stupid invader ignores a formless and faceless mass of natives” (Ibid. 276). The reversals to this situation are no less surprising than the ones a colonizer meets. Using the analogy of the invader and the native, the colonizer and the oppressed, Nabokov argues reversals as follows: “occasionally, quite often in fact, the spectral world through which we serenely paraded our sores and our arts would produce a kind of awful convulsion and show us who was the discarnate captive and who the true lord” (Ibid.). Although expatriates also pass through reminders whenever needing “some trashy ‘visa’, some diabolical ‘identity card’” (Ibid.), this “utter physical dependence on this or that nation, which had coldly granted us political refuge” (Ibid.), could rarely imprint itself into writing without the painful sense of dislocation. Obviously, the Russian communal feeling alleviated the pain and involved the group in expatriation as a pleasurable, albeit an unsettling, experience.

Another note may differentiate further between Arabic poetics of exile and the norms as set in Europe and North America in the first decades of the twentieth century. Especially in matters of literary and cultural tradition and belonging, Arabic poetics deviates from classical norms only to make a counterassertion of belonging, even when this belonging entails a reconstruction of facts. To comfort the nagging self, the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh has to rely on his precursor’s experience, the ‘Abbāsīd Abū Tammām: “If you return by yourself, say to yourself: / Exile changed its profile . . . / Wasn’t Abū Tammām so disturbed before you/ upon facing the self: / ‘you are not the same/ nor are the abodes.’”³¹ Tradition is readily available for the well-versed to offer its succor and comfort despite the disheartening occasion of returning home to see the remains of a past under Israeli occupation.

Cultural tradition works differently in American and European cultures. Malcolm Cowley speaks, for instance, of the lost generation in terms of a contemporary cultural outlook.³² If they revolted against an ongoing tradition, it was because they were “taught to regard culture as a veneer, a badge of class distinction as something assumed like an Oxford accent or a suit of English clothes” (Ibid. 33). Both education and tradition, as advanced through university grounding, tended not to bring them closer to a reality that increasingly made itself visible through wars and conflicts. Their world had nothing to do with that hard reality, for it “was the special world of scholarship—timeless, placeless, elaborate, incomplete and bearing only the vaguest relationship to that other world in which fortunes were made, universities endowed and city governments run by muckers” (Ibid. 30). Hence, their reaction took a Romantic rebelliousness emanating, first, from a sense of difference. Cowley succinctly describes their outlook: “We were like others, we were normal—yet we clung to the feeling that as apprentice writers we were abnormal and secretly distinguished: we lived in the special world of art; we belonged to the freemasonry of those who had read modern authors and admired a paradox” (Ibid. 22).

Cowley accepts Gertrude Stein’s “lost generation” appellation insofar as it is applicable to their chosen uprootedness. It was “schooled away and almost wrenched away from its attachment to any region or tradition,” unprepared for the postwar period, driven by desire “to live in exile,” free from “older guides,” and in “a period of transition from values already fixed to values that had to be created” (Ibid. 9). Unable to contribute to any specific vision or worldview, those writers “were seceding from the old and yet could adhere to nothing new” as they “groped” for some “undefined” path (Ibid.). Not surprisingly, then, they laid their first proclamations against Humanism, and “they had an antithesis” for each of the “Humanist virtues,” explains Cowley (Ibid. 35). Dismayed that the “composite fatherland for which [. . . they] had fought was dissolving into quarreling statesmen and oil and steel magnates” (Ibid. 46–47), they plunged into a bohemia, a mapless realm where “the artist can break the puritan shackles, drink, live freely and be wholly creative” (Ibid. 61). For an Arab exile, like the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh, there is a tradition of many paths and positions, which he recollects and identifies with while accepting acculturation:

I’ve got nothing left but my ancient armor
 And my saddle worked in gold.
 I’ve got nothing left but a manuscript by Averroes,
The Necklace of the Dove, various works in translation.³³

Nonetheless, Cowley’s expatriatism signifies a stance of some influential impact in the literature of modernism. It also retains an amount of undecidability conjoining it to postmodernist attitudes and deconstructionist

methodologies. Its aporetic³⁴ nature within a war atmosphere is imbued with ennui and discontent, and its rebellious spirit is tempered by distrust of any political or social agenda. Indeed, there is a great deal of that creative drive, which unsettles platitudes, pragmatic assumptions, and goals, that situates the expatriate's experience in writing at the liminal stage for postmodernism. This liminality is an exit that opens into another space that distinguishes expatriation. What separates this from exile as a state is its noncommittal stamp.

Thresholds of exilic inertia

While accepting this expatriate achievement as a Post-Romantic flowering of the estranged artist as rebel against suffocating circumstances, critics on the side of theory are rather opposed to that confusion of willful drives and aesthetic concerns with the harrowing experience of exile. It is the postmodernist depiction of all these as manifestations of an overwhelming global phenomenon that bothers theorists, who, like Aijaz Ahmad, look with suspicion on the tendency to collapse issues and positions whenever exile is addressed. Emphasis, according to the latter, is laid "on the productivity, rather than the pain, of dislocating oneself from one's original community" along with some equal adherence to "the idea [...] of multiple belongings" (Ibid. 134) that, for example, shows forth in Rushdie's *Shame*. Exilic writing is never free from pain, anxiety, and longing. Its pain manifests itself in the very rigidity of its discourse, its autobiographical reclamation, and its argumentative tone. At times, it proclaims its presence in longing for, and recollection of, a past that is transfigured into the present and the future. In terms of tradition, language and lore coalesce into indispensable recollections that invade the mind, and decide, for poetry, the flow of rhythm. In "Yakhtārūnī al-'iqā'" (The Rhythm Chooses Me), Darwīsh says: "The rhythm chooses me, chokes me / I am the echo of the violin, not the player / In the presence of memory / I am the echo of things, they speak through me / and I am the utterance."³⁵ Indeed, can exile be without a reconstruction of the past? Can it be without claims of a taken-for-granted homecoming, which we also recognize as impossible? Pain is there in the very threshold of exilic inertia. Ovid's experience is always a reminder of the complications of this issue, so is the experience of every intellectual deeply rooted in his/her own culture. Memory and longing take the person, like Ovid, back, "Not just back to Rome / but to a particular street, a particular house, a room, / a space on the shelf beside your brothers' spaces" (Slavitt 6).

Issues of vagrancy and exile in Western culture find in Raymond Williams's distinction a valid beginning to challenge later views of extraterritorialism and hybridity. According to Williams, "there is usually a principle in exile, there is always only relaxation in vagrancy" (quoted in Ahmad 157). Other writers hold similar views, for expatriation does not involve forced eviction, nor does

it imply a deliberate rejection of one's homeland. It is free from active dissent or opposition. As "the migrant intellectual" is not necessarily a "figure of exile" according to Aḥmad's engagement with Said (Ibid. 12), there is no point in drawing upon immigration at large as a resourceful or "positively enabling experience" (Ibid. 134). In other words, migration, self-exile, and expatriation can prove pleasurable, self-pleasing, and aesthetically rewarding, but they are bound to fail in reaching for the actual sufferings and consequent creativity of dislocation, displacement, and fear. Hence, self-exiles, such as Rushdie before the death decree, tend to confuse issues whenever migration is invoked ontologically, regardless of pressing concerns and ultimate needs for clear-cut analysis. In an article on Günter Grass, Rushdie writes with gusto regarding migration as a state of being and thinking in an age of global culture: "Migrants—borne-across humans—are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples."³⁶

What is disturbing to Aijaz Aḥmad and other intellectuals on the left is this free appropriation of the "condition of exile," but specifically migration, as "the basic metaphor for modernity and even for the human condition itself" (*In Theory*, 134). While driving non-European or American intellectuals to another location, this condition offers them a feeling of satisfaction upon finding their contribution decentering Eurocentrism by subversion, opposition, and counter advocacy. Hence, before the exiling decree, Rushdie has been passing through some "*excess of belonging*" (Ibid. 130), which also undermines any tangible commitment or belonging. Even when recalling the past or reconstructing it in an English-language context, it is there as a variety of fragments, recollections, and bits that make it too sliced to warrant or provoke nostalgia or a sense of guilt. Certainly, intellectuals with more grounding in Higher Humanism like Edward Said enjoy self-identification with such minds as Theodor W. Adorno and Erich Auerbach to the extent that the former's *Reflections* recreates itself in Said's "Reflections on Exile," whereas Auerbach's *Mimesis* creates its "counter-classic" in *Orientalism*, as Aijaz Aḥmad insightfully explains (Ibid. 163). But rather than citing this instance as an accusation, it should be recalled to emphasize the complexity of the issue, to which Said's *Out of Place* may well testify. Exile neither disorients grounding nor involves it in the inevitable change of heart. Auerbach found himself in *Mimesis* with no better companion than memory to reinscribe a tradition into text. The latter grew into a homeland of some sort. However, this may not be yours or mine. Said's grounding in this tradition leads him to recall it as the prime example of intellectual productivity, but he also fights it back in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* as the tradition whose centrism repels other cultures.

On the other hand, intellectuals who are relatively free from predicaments of exile will enjoy a larger cultural and psychological location. Excess of belonging, in this case, becomes an asset that helps them out toward wider

readerships. It is only when this metaphor is cited as representative of a cultural scene at large that qualifications need to be made. Even when writers and academics like Homi Bhabha see this excess of belonging as part of global cultural multiplicity, or its symptom, involving the immigrant intelligentsia in its very formation, behind the scene there is greater subordination to a monopolizing consuming culture that makes use of all—nations, narratives, and intellectuals. Personal records of writers could testify to these, whenever they are not “celebrity exiles” (Gass 130). Nevertheless, let us listen to Homi Bhabha’s often-quoted passage on cultural globalism, transnational dimensions, and disintegration of space-bounds: “America leads to Africa; the nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia; the margins of the nation displace the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis.”³⁷

There is so much testimony to support the lucid summation of the state of global culture that it tends to dissuade readers from further discussion. In the face of such sweeping images, however, much warrants attention. The global village is real, but you need to work your way through, with valid passports, “respectable” documents, and recognition of some sort before you become a citizen of this world. The global context is one of coercion and power, with serious damage to cultures and quality of life. On the other hand, any incident or coincidence may unleash images, attitudes and scenes of hatred and discrimination, based on race, religion, and color. The poetry of the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh problematizes the meaning of exile even further, for the poet and his people are forced away from the land and the life that is theirs. “Is there a sword which hasn’t yet been sheathed in our flesh?”³⁸ Yet the whole effort, vicious and inhuman, acts against nature: “Nowhere is the place/ that distances its soul from its history” (Ibid.). The poet’s personal record of exile may be worth mentioning. He was born in 1942 in the village of Birwe, a district of Acre. In 1948, he was driven out of his village and home when he was 7 years old, finding himself alone in Lebanon, knowing then nothing of the fate of his family. The family stole back into their homeland, but they were treated as strangers. Between 1961 and 1969, he was imprisoned or under house arrests a number of times. In 1971 he left to settle in Cairo, and joined the PLO in 1973 and resigned in 1993. He was in Beirut with the PLO when Israel attacked Beirut in 1982. He left Beirut and settled in Paris in 1985.³⁹ His poetry evolves as an exilic inventory, with traces of pain, dislocation, and anxiety. Yet, it is also one of exquisite lyricism and dialogue with a rich Arab tradition. In “A Horse for the Stranger” addressed to an Iraqi poet (1991), he says:

I have a moon in the region of Al-Rusafa,⁴⁰
 I have fish in the Euphrates and the Tigris,
 I have an avid reader in the South,
 a sun stone in Nineveh,
 A spring festival in Kurdish braids to the north of sorrow,

A rose in the gardens of Babylon,
 A poet in the southern province of Buwayb,⁴¹
 My corpse under an Iraqi sun,
 My dagger is on my image,
 My image is on my dagger.
 Whenever we turn away from the river, my friend,
 The Mongol passes between us.⁴²

Poetry and exile exchange places and the poet let his voice create its own homelands. Exile becomes then an imprint, a life that exists actively in longing, love, wine, thought, dreams, and poetry: "Poetry is a place of exile / we dream and forget where we were when we wake."⁴³ The love that cannot be disentangled, and the feeling and emotion that cannot be dislocated make the state of exile as real as it is possible to be. It enforces itself with might to achieve something impossible. The heart cannot be peaceful, nor can the mind:

Longing is a place of exile
 And a place of exile is the history of this heart.
 How many times have we told the fragrance of the place?
 To be still so we rest and sleep?
 How many times have we told the trees?
of the place to wipe off the invader's mask
 so we might find a place. Nowhere is the place
 that distances its soul from its history.
 A place of exile is the soul
 That distances us from our land and takes us to our love.
 A place of exile is the soul
 that distances us from our soul and takes us to the stranger.
 Is there a sword that has not yet been sheathed in our flesh?
 To relinquish our dream, our brother-enemies
 Have saddled the horses of the enemies that they may exit from our
 dreams.
 The past is a place of exile,
 We tried to pick up the prunes of our exultance from that dead summer.
 Thought is a place of exile:
 We saw our future just behind our windows.
 To reach it, we broke through the walls of our present,
 In addition, it became a past in the shield of an ancient soldier.
 Poetry is a place of exile.
 We dream and forget where we were when we wake.
 Do we deserve a gazelle?

As everything, especially poetry, gathers the signs of exile and intensifies the sense of dislocation and loss, the speaker implores Qur'anic messengers of the

distant and the unseen to map out the mapless and traverse the future. The Qur'anic hoopoe is entreated to lead them into the vast and the boundless:

O hoopoe of mysteries, take us to our endless tomorrow!
 Hitch *our* time to the horizon of this vastness and soar with us.
 Nature is nothing but spirit, and the earth seems, from here,
 A breast aroused by that sublime coming.

(Ibid. 43)

Exile as such is whatever disorients and uproots and whatever, intentionally or unconsciously, takes the person away from his or her homeland. It has psychological, social, political, and textual dimensions. In a neat interweaving of classical images of location and dislocation, of homecoming and departure, the poet disorients a neocolonialist discourse of occupation and unmasks its claims of origins. Expelled from his land, the poet finds everything else a place of exile, carrying scars and reminders. Everything evolves as exile for the uprooted, the pursued, the hunted out, and the tracked down. In this sense, no other location offers comfort, and earth only closes in on people. In a poem titled "The Earth is Closing on Us," the Palestinian poet enumerates the wishes and desires that are made impossible in an apocalyptic scene without a human touch or a heavenly promise, "Where should we go after the last frontiers? Where should the birds fly after the last sky?"⁴⁴ In the same poem, the poet sets the stage for these culminating agonies, for the "belongings" as celebrated by some postmodernist trends have no place in real life, unless the individual is an actor and culprit in this nightmarish production:

The earth is closing on us, pushing us through the last passage, and we
 tear off our limbs to pass through.
 The earth is squeezing us. I wish we were its wheat so we could die and
 live again. I wish the earth were our mother
 So she'd be kind to us. I wish we were pictures on the rocks for our
 dreams to carry
 as mirrors.⁴⁵

These issues involve more complexity than migration, expatriation, and cultural dislocation alone. Moreover, exile within an empire has a different register from deportations outside it. To move to the metropolis is different from banishment into a peripheral or isolated region. Ovid's plea for a place "a little less remote" (Slavitt 32) than that "brink of the world" (Ibid. 33) does not merely betray a sense of geographical dislocation. There is a division between the two worlds, where "There's no literate talk but only the rattle / of men in armor" (Ibid. 68–69). To be deprived of Rome toward "a worse fate, / a long slow dwindle in Tomis," is to be thrown into "that huddle of mean / hovels in the chill wind" (Ibid. 24). Tomis is no more to him than

a name “scribbled on maps as if / to fill [...] spaces” (Ibid.). Indeed, to him this world is antagonistic for being so different from Rome: “I live among / enemies, in the midst of dangers—as if my exile / were not merely from Rome but civilization / itself, from order and space” (Ibid. 21). Enforced exile means deliberate social and human ostracization, and poets feel it more than others as it entails separation from their audiences. In his eloquent long poem *Jidāriyyah* (Mural 1999), Maḥmūd Darwīsh gives this problem another twist, for separation from home intensifies the need, not only for a homecoming, but also for one’s language, which ironically establishes its lyricism in the poem, as if fighting back aridity and death:

My nurse said to me: you were hallucinating a lot,
and shouting at me:
I do not want a return to anybody
not to any country
after such a long absence . . .
I only want to go back to my
language, to its farthest exquisiteness.⁴⁶

Exile proper involves not only dispossession, dislocation, persecution, and danger, but also the danger of a cultural dislocation, an estrangement from one’s language and its springs of spontaneity. Darwīsh addresses this fear of cultural estrangement in a number of poems. In “Qāfiyah min ajl al-mu’allaqāt” (A Rhyme for the Sake of the Pre-Islamic Odes), he looks on his identity and the language as one and the same, “I am my language I, / I am a mu’allaqah . . . two . . . ten this is my language/ I am my language. I am what words say: / Be / my body, and I am the embodiment for their intonation.”⁴⁷

Homecoming for the exile is merely a wish that survives in yearning for change, a dream, or a mere literary contrivance that keeps tradition alive. Maḥmūd Darwīsh recalls tradition as a cultural life, rich and poignant, which reminds him nevertheless of the enormous loss. Absence operates as the reminder and also as the unhealed wound: “Due to its absence, I composed its image: from the earthly/ begins the subtle heavenly. Here I weigh and scan/ the horizon with pre-Islamic Odes . . . Absence/ is the evidence, it is the evidence. For every rhyme/ a camp is erected.”⁴⁸ Metaphorically, the Odes become his touchstones and signs of existence as they are the only tangible presence, the legacy that he carries wherever he goes and of which no one can deprive him. Their presence is set against loss, and they operate therefore as poetic simulacra in exile. The impossibility of homecoming is the exilic norm, the very nucleus of its poetics, but the reliance on a cultural repertoire alleviates the burden. The exiled writer recreates the self amid intersections of agony, frustration, passion, love, memory, attachments, and spatial expansion, traditional and modern, as if to fight back an overpowering sense of loss and annihilation. Exile is a fight for survival that may court the very impossible offerings of the literary tradition.

In his ironic comparisons with the Homeric tradition, Ovid offers some subtle analysis of the difference between exile and adventure in literary tradition. Recognizing the fact that life works in mysterious ways, he only wishes to “contrive the right / endings for everybody as the literary tradition, / teasing us, offers” (Slavitt 16). Homer’s Ulysses is a hero, with “heroic endurance,” but Homer makes it clear that there is a homecoming: “Ithaca waited.” As for Ovid himself:

I’m no hero,
 and my lot is worse than his: he was going home,
 while I have fled mine; he was a warrior,
 while I am a gentle soul, used to the comforts of life;
 he could rely on his own strenuous efforts,
 while I must complain to my wife and hope that a few friends
 may speak in my behalf.

(Slavitt 16)

The epical or the mythical and the real are two different worlds, and poets in exile do not confuse the two, as their difference can be overlooked only at one’s peril. The Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh knows as much, too, and hence he also says:

I sang to measure the loss
 In the pigeon’s agony,
 not to elucidate what God says to humans,
 I am not a prophet to claim inspiration
 and to proclaim my descent as ascent.⁴⁹

On occasion, exile involves further complications. As lands and people are taken, controlled, or colonized, identity formation becomes traumatic. Poets who find themselves with conflicting senses of belonging and attachments end up with an overwhelming sense of rupture as they survive in-between and are unable to attain certainty or comfort. Rena N. Potok reads in this vein the poetry of the Druze Palestinian Naim Araidi, the Israeli citizen: “I came back to the village / as one who flies from civilization / and appeared at the village / as one who comes from exile to exile.”⁵⁰ Such an experience is no less complicated than the juxtaposition between the host culture and the hope for return. Because the latter is desperately woven into the web of memories, there is the lurking recognition that new settlements are the ultimate refuge. As the editors of *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas* argue, “. . . the voyager who has tasted the pleasures and displeasures of exile is unable to steer the ship back home” (Barkan *et al.* 2). Although a few succeeded, unfortunately many failed. Return brought about dismay to such well-known literary figures as the late Iraqi poet M. M. al-Jawāhirī (d. 1998). Returning from Prague in

1969, he was well received, but he found out later that he was in danger of further coercion, manipulation, and possible death. He fled again, to another exile. Many have passed through similar experiences. Others have suffered imprisonment and death. Such facts also reveal more about exile as distinct from expatriatism, hybridity, dislocation, and migration.

Dissidence as exile

Even when approached differently, migration greatly depends on the writer's own assumptions and actual experience in the adoptive country. This is more so when set within an ontological perspective, whereby the whole universe is an enemy or a neutral force, and the writer, left with a sense of negation at one time or rejection at another, develops throughout some defensive strategies of thinking and writing that are in keeping with Julia Kristeva's stance of dissidence. Her writers-in-exile begin with banishment and conclude with concordant resistance, for "... exile is already in itself a form of *dissidence*, since it involves uprooting oneself from a family, a country or a language."⁵¹ Willful as this exile sounds, it is purposefully directed toward some pleasurable disconnectedness, as "...an irreligious act that cuts all ties" (Ibid.). Pleasing and deliberate, it fuses into other concepts of intellectual pursuits of freedom. Whether in keeping with Sainte Beuve, Matthew Arnold, or J. Benda, the intellectual should resist the arena of politics, maintain disinterestedness, and delve into a hermetic quest, for "[o]ur present age is one of exile," argues Kristeva (Ibid. 298). Although involving significant notions to resist hegemonic structures including custom, such formulations as "Writing is impossible without some kind of exile" (Ibid.), or creativity as nonbelonging, "becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex, and identity" (Ibid.), tend to fit into the postmodernist quasi-mystical drive for difference against an overwhelming global cultural takeover. Against this sense, the language of exile develops symptoms of suffering and rejection, for it, according to Kristeva, "muffles a cry, it doesn't ever shout" (Ibid.). As a language of dissidence, exilic discourse evolves as the only speech act that never shies away from unmediated defiance, opposition, and negation at large. After all, no loss could be greater than the one already suffered. Indeed, writing in exile can never escape its gnawing despair. It is worthwhile to quote Maḥmūd Darwīsh again, for in his "Rubā'īyyāt" the universe becomes an inventory of loss, which can be alleviated only through the doves' songs that are similar to his own:

I've seen all I want to see of the sea:
 gulls flying through sunset.
 I close my eyes:
 this loss leads to Andalusia—
 this sail is doves' prayers
 pouring down on me.⁵²

However, to go back to Kristeva, these appeals to the general, the universal, and the global involve a great deal of mystification, despite their pertinence to the issue of spiritual or psychological exile as a state of alienation prior to banishment. They are certainly valid whenever we set them into a historical context of compulsory exile as less harrowing than imprisonment or murder. In other words, exile is a privilege compared to imprisonment or murder. The dictators of Gabriel Garcia Marquez as well as the despots of Afro-Asian countries tend to identify writing and speech in general as potential acts of subversion and sabotage. Ignorant to the end and afraid of the power of thought, they seek words, as monopolies seek money and action. In Gass's pertinent summation, "what is exiled is nearly always someone's word" (Ibid. 129). Silencing writers "who speak out or up" (Ibid.) is the preferred solution for rulers. Especially against thinkers, philosophers, and writers who do not fit into power politics, rulers use the most atrocious methods of containment and revenge.

The record of these writers sets things right for any discussion of belonging. Making the most daring choice of resistance or social hermetic alienation without giving up writing, they continue defying hegemony, manipulation, and despotism. The writings of the Iraqi prisoner of conscience 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim on elitism and culture, civilization and alienation, and vagrancy and foreignness along with his stand for the rights of minorities place him within a line of thought that has been enlisting philosophers and poets as martyrs since Socrates.⁵³ His navigation between tradition and modernity, and his reliance on a rich repository of classical heritage and modern thought should make his writings effectively present in any discussion of modern Arabic poetics. It is not surprising that his writings never lose sight of Socrates, despite the attention usually paid to Aristotle's choice of exile. As the late Lebanese novelist and artist Fārūq al-Buqaylī (d. 2001) informed us, he asked Jāsim to escape possible imprisonment or murder when meeting him at al-Naṣr Coffee-House in Baghdad (1985). Jāsim's answer only repeats that of Socrates, "For my homeland is to pass through difficult times. I cannot leave."⁵⁴ Repeating the Socratic stance, on which he has dwelt in his book *Al-ḥaḍarab wa-al-'iḡbtirāb* (Civilization and Alienation), 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim obviously opts for resistance and inevitable imprisonment and death inside rather than life outside.⁵⁵ To Socrates, as it is to him, "exile is amputation, a mutilation of the self, because the society Socrates lives in is an essential part of his nature, a nature he cannot now divide" (Gass 123). Gass explains further, "Socratically, [...] the community is an essential organ of the self" (Ibid.). Nevertheless, for Jāsim and many intellectuals of similar concerns, escape is out of question; thus he was, to use Gass's words on Socrates, "nettlesome to the last, claiming, among other things, to be a son of the State, and unable to renounce his parentage" (Ibid.).

Yet, 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim cites the very passages of Socrates that happily welcome death, as a sacrificial act for one's own ideas. In a short story of 1986

titled "A Bird in the Cage," Jāsīm impersonates the bird dying but explaining to his comrades and companions that they have lost him unnecessarily for petty considerations and concerns.⁵⁶ With so much sacrifice and resignation to dire circumstance, he leaves those of us in exile, in "fear of personal annihilation" (Ahmad 85). So disquieting is the nagging presence of Socrates and his numerous followers that we are rather prone to cite Aristotle's acceptance of banishment as the inevitable choice to secure philosophy and thought against further losses. Yet, Jāsīm cites these, too, in his book, as if to leave us naked and unprotected in facing an encroaching sense of guilt that continues to torment exiles even when joining the Arab poet Adūnīs in saying: "How to be united with you, my friend homeland / When only the dead there are in the right."⁵⁷

Certainly, the poet Adūnīs here does not identify every homeland with confinement, but he looks upon the speaker's dilemma from a number of perspectives: there is exile from homeland whenever it turns into a repressive state; there is exile from oneself whenever the poet suffers alienation in its many ramifications; and there is also exile from one's culture whenever it evolves into a hegemonic discourse. In any case, the sense of loss may well mingle with a larger disappointment concerning the present situation in its immediate and universal dimensions. At these intersections, the speaker in "Marthiyyat al-ayyām al-ḥādirah" ("Elegy for the Time at Hand" 1958) admits a semblance of loss in his poetry that makes it difficult to draw a line between outside reality and his poetry:

Chanting of banishment,
Exhaling the flame,
The carriages of exile
Breach the walls.
Or are these carriages
The battering sighs of my verses?⁵⁸

The speaker's words to the rest, "my boys," parody the optimistic discourse of nationalism and religion, its faith in "the greener leaves," and its attachment to anchors of faith: "We still have verse among us. / We have the sea. / We have our dreams" (Ibid. 50). Indeed, hope becomes an inevitable prospect in the face of the other alternative of suicide or death:

Under the exile's moon
tremble the first wings.
Boats begin adrift
on a dead sea, and siroccos
rustle the gates of the city.
Tomorrow the gates will open.
We'll burn the locusts in the desert,

span the abyss
and stand on the porch
of a world to be.

(Ibid. 51)

The poem also plays on a positive religious subtext not only of promise and faith, but also of the condition of exile. Strangers draw more love and sympathy. As already mentioned, in Islam strangers are always beloved by God. The Prophet was told to flee beyond immediate borders: "Was not the earth of God spacious enough for you to fly for refuge" (*Qur'ān*, "Women," 70). Nevertheless, the matter is the same if one flees for the cause, "He that flies his homeland for the cause of God shall find numerous places of refuge in the land and great abundance" (Ibid. 71). On a metaphorical level, there is in this verse a promise of life after death, too. As sojourn on earth is temporary, poets identify with Sufis, as these follow the life of fugitives, always afraid of being contaminated by petty concerns. 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim speaks of this life as a mask for another. Now it is the *sāqī* (the cup-bearer) whose cup holds one's life on earth captive:

The world is a mask, you who blame,
life is a *sāqī*
you *sāqī* take me out of your cup
and in time of forgetfulness, I will call on you to possess this moment
a shore searching for a fugitive
an eternal pavement
A night with nobody!
Sorrow!⁵⁹

The oscillation between obligations and needs, between party politics and individual response, informs other positions and attitudes. Many writers have passed or are passing through this experience. Some have already made up their minds to suffer isolation and ostracization. In the words of Adam Schaff:

Is there anything strange in the fact that those who formerly submitted blindly to all orders because they believed in their correctness should, in the face of revealed abuses, now raise questions about the individual's responsibility for his actions and the conflict between conscience and discipline? Is it surprising that such people should raise questions about the role of the individual in the mass movement, and about how he is to decide for himself in the case of conflicts between what he is called upon to do and his own standards of right and wrong?⁶⁰

Even a poet of Sa'ādī Yūsuf's caliber may pass through this bewilderment, as do many other writers who develop a sense of guilt for not measuring up

to friendships or intellectual solidarity. Dissenting from party politics may lead to repression equal to the one exercised by the modern state. Nevertheless, let us expound on Yūsuf's predicament. He is an Iraqi poet who has lived in exile since the mid-1970s. A Communist, he was obliged to follow party regulations. Hence, he was reluctant to write in support of his friend, the dissenter 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim, lest there be a breach of Party regulations. His poetry, however, reveals enormous oscillation, division, and anxiety. In an earlier poem, "Al-Muhājir" ("The Émigré"),⁶¹ he addresses a comrade, a "migrating bird" who has been singing of his new settlement in exile and its sea, horizons, flowering songs, jeweled doors, and minarets. The poet intimates that he is no less attracted to these, but, he asks, does not the migrating bird ever feel the taste of these as "a branch of misery between [his] lips?" Is the land not "ephemeral" there, and are the seas not "salty"? The speaker shares the longing for adventure, dream, and variety, as he is no less prone to joy and rapture, but, does not he maintain an ideology of opposition, revolt, and change? (I: 496–97). Ironically, Yūsuf was driven into exile when the Soviet Union mediated with Saddam to let Communist intellectuals leave Iraq. To remain as Communists in Iraq could have entailed death. Like many intellectuals, the poet was unhappy with this choice, but he was forced to make it, carrying thereafter the scars of memory as he admits in "Kalimāt shubh khāṣṣah" (Words Semiprivate). In a moment of stress, he is to face up to the reproachful addressee:

Let me tell you tonight
 In the grip of memory
 I am a prisoner without a jailer
 And when the hill seems like the clouds,
 and the clouds seem as near as the hill
 When colors and flocks feed on a song,
 for palms and cones in wet grass and vine,
 I regress in memory, and iron-bars
 extend over my forehead

(1: 331)

In other words, the poet of commitment who at first resists exile may eventually accept it, only to pass later through other agonies of self-doubt and guilt. In Gass's words, "For its victim, exile has two halves like a loaf cut by a knife. Heart, home, and hearth fill one side—the land the exile loses; while foreignness, strangeness, the condition of the alien, occupy the other—the strand on which the cast away is washed" (Ibid. 125). In the words of Sa'īdī Yūsuf:

Exile includes the idea of annulment, the elimination of the individual's relation to heavens, land, and community, for there is a vertical line connecting heavens where the worshipped, with earth

where predecessors were in the long quietude of death. And there is a horizontal line relating the village and the town, where there are the houses, memories, and playgrounds of childhood. At this intersection stands the individual. The terror of exile lies in the very dislocation of the individual from this intersection, to transplant him/her in another place where there is no such intersection, for neither heaven is a priori, nor predecessors, homes, memories, or playgrounds as such! What remain then, but misery, suffering, and desolation to preserve the original formation, a dynasty threatened by extinction and the drying root.

(I: 9–10)

Estrangement, memory, and poetry

Saʿdī Yūsuf’s sense of dislocation involves a great deal of pain. Poetry itself develops a new voice, which could be leaving behind “[c]omposure” and “serenity,” the qualities that Said associates with complacency and placidity (“Reflections,” 363). As separation is not only estrangement from a loved one, but also from a past that includes the commitments and aspirations that make up one’s character and history, it is only a step from death. Hence, no matter how sentimental Ernest Dowson sounds among his fellow aesthetes in late-nineteenth-century England, his poem “Exile” captures this sense of loss: “No man knoweth our desolation; / Memory pales of the old delight; / While the sad waters of separation / Bear us on to the ultimate night.”⁶² In poetic reconstructions, the exile is a traveler, “without baggage,” in an early poem by the Iraqi ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: “From nowhere, / with no face no history, from nowhere, / beneath the sky, and in the moaning of the wind, / I hear her calling me—‘Come!’ / Across the hills.”⁶³ The traveler assumes this existentialist loss through the innate desire to make a choice against heavy odds, a point, which marginalizes him or her, relegating the exile to back alleys and nothingness. In a poem titled “Al-Musāfir” (The Traveler), another Iraqi poet Ḥamīd Saʿīd picks up this in-between state where the exchange between the exile and the forlorn traveler takes place, as both are two sides of an image of total loss:

In the terminal, the last station . . . the last train arrives
 The body of the traveler is absent in vacuum . . .
 Blind alleys
 Deserted homes
 The body of the traveler . . .
 Walks . . .
 No rendezvous and no memory
 The pavement narrows.
 Between these steps and the road
 There is no connection.⁶⁴

The implication of disconnection has urgent existentialist overtones whenever the individual is aware of his or her impasse. The Iraqi poet Buland al-Ḥaydarī (d. 1997) gives the moment a strong sense, not only of dislocation, but also of total estrangement. The persona expects no connection, no reference, and no sign of communication. As if foreshadowing later exile, the disenchanted speaker in “Sāī al-barīd” (The Mailman) is not ready even to anticipate communication: “O mailman / what your desire of me is? / I am far removed from the world, / surely you are mistaken, / for the earth holds nothing new / For this outcast.”⁶⁵ To be uprooted from that intersection, the meeting point of identity and direction, definitely involves an ardent search on the writer’s part to relocate himself or herself again in another space, affinity, ethnicity, culture, or language. History tells us how resilient we tend to be. In this regard, Ovid’s story is no less instructive than Socrates’s. After being driven to exile at Tomis, on the shores of the Black Sea, banished from his beloved Rome, and compelled to use the Sarmatian language, his sense of belonging compelled him to develop the habit of talking to himself, “for fear of losing the use of the Ausonian tongue”:

Lest my own voice grow dumb in its native sound,
 I talk to myself, dealing again with disused words and seeking again the
 ill-omened currency of my art.
 Thus do I drag out my life and my time,
 thus do I withdraw myself from the contemplation of my woes.
 (quoted Martz xiv–xv)

In another text, Ovid finds himself impelled “to speak Sarmatian—I get by / with a combination of phrases, gestures, and nods.” On the other hand, a sense of cultural dislocation not only makes his Latin “rusty and stiff,” but also contaminates it with “infelicitous phrases, / awkwardness, barbarisms” because of “this outlandish place” (Slavitt 105–06). Part of the culture of the elite, Ovid’s poetry, especially the erotic which got him banished, was avowedly refined and polished. Thus, it was an act of resistance to continue using Latin, even through a maddening process of self-address:

I walk
 on the beach sometimes to declaim the poems I know by heart
 to try to keep my tongue and the Latin tongue
 Comfortable in my mouth. I talk to myself aloud,
 as madmen do in Rome, but here to stay
 sane. Sometimes I stop at a word whose precise meaning
 escapes me for the moment, and I feel the fear,
 the impotence and the rage that the very old feel
 when their minds start to go, and the tears come.
 (Slavitt 106)

The issues of language, identity, and moods of depression are interrelated and intertwined. The sense of loss, so characteristic of exilic writing, and the impossibility of survival in uncongenial cultures lead to a state of depression and suicide. Since ancient times, the record of suicides has been increasing. Ovid noted then, "Suicide's drastic cure for all of my ills / began to look more and more attractive" (Slavitt 14). Intellectuals like Walter Benjamin, Stevan Zweig, and Arthur Koestler, among many, took their lives also in reaction against a calamity that had been overtaking the human scene. Following Jean Améry, J. M. Ritchie finds both suicide and language dislocation as "dominant" themes of exile.⁶⁶ For moods of depression and despair accumulate when the loss of homeland involves a loss of communication and cultural roots. Certainly, memory has its defensive strategies whereby a reconciliatory cusp could be maintained to offer a portion of one's own in the language of the host culture. Such are Thomas Mann's writings, and the exile output of Erich Maria Remarque, Joseph Conrad, Milan Kundera, and Jerzy Kosinski.

Quite often poetry resists morbidity and suicide. It is mostly through recognition of the dilemma of recollection where no recompense or replacement is at hand that the poet invents his or her ways to thwart depression. Memory reproduces itself in dreams, hallucinations, and absentmindedness. It creeps back to birthplaces and redraws them regardless of physical changes. In Bachelard's view, memory finds its starting and most pleasant point there.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, brought back and recalled in dreams, those places are also the mind's defenses against the actual annihilation of trace and sign. Unless these are inscribed onto the page, memory never tires of return. Inscription offers a textual release, an antidote to nagging memories. For the exile homecoming, rather than an actual event, is more or less an act of memory. If there is a distinction between the wanderers of poetry and narrative and the fate of exiles, it has something to do with return. To Homer, Ulysses should return, but to Ovid, this was beyond reach: "Homer understood from the start / that beyond all the adventures, Ithaca waited; / my fate is not so clear, nor is there any convention / forcing my author toward a happy ending" (Slavitt 16). This is the dislocation which Sa'dī Yūsuf recognizes, and due to it a poetics of anxiety grows, "neither heaven is a priori, nor predecessors, homes, memories or playgrounds" (i: 9–10). Exile sets trajectories and their negations, too, between tradition and modernity.

Poetic reinscription

Hence, to certain intellectuals, memory reconstructs the past as a permanent way of forestalling or accommodating calamity and change, including the probability of no return. In 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsīm's "Monologues of the Seventies," recollection materializes in a monologue that brings back the past to make an opening in a present that witnesses perpetual annihilation. It is the speaker who addresses himself, as if exposing that past and preparing for

a present of self-exile, followed, nevertheless, by imprisonment and death. In view of his imprisonment and execution (1991), his intimations with their Sufi ring assume greater significance for their prophetic tone and the density of recapitulations:

Perhaps I have met you in a small coffeehouse
 Perhaps in the brass market or in that of the cotton-carders
 But perhaps we accidentally met over the bridge of the
 Lovable Shaṭra [a city in South Iraq]
 Perhaps you didn't know politics,
 Perhaps you were ashen faced,
 Like many coffee-house attendants
 Perhaps a fortuneteller said to your simple mother once
 Your son would be a great merchant
 Or a distinguished officer, or physician
 Perhaps . . . perhaps . . . perhaps
 For you didn't carry any distinctive mark
 Difficult was your face to discern . . .
 Fused into the rest, lost among many such were you
 As our faces are as gray as the color of earth in pastures.⁶⁸

The fortuneteller's readings took place when the poet and writer was young, and his recapitulations in the poem, perhaps in the late 1970s, prepared for a Sufi visionary experience with its epiphanies and reflections. Poetry captures the locale, its poetics and politics. Recreating the past means inscribing one's presence in poetry or narrative as if to counteract erosion. The text offers permanence against mortality. Hence, to Ovid, "To take up a pen here [at Tomis] / is an act of defiance, folly, stubborn pride, and habit, / and the occasion of deep chagrin" (Slavitt 68). It is due to their substantial and surviving presence that words resist erosion, frighten despots, and prolong the writer's metaphorical existence. In Ovid's words, "my pen / the best part of me, truest witness, my soul's mirror. / Words for me are as real as the world they describe" (Ibid. 32). Knowing that memory involves exile, as it increases longing and perpetual suffering, the poet winds up his whole experience in statement and illusion, and there is yearning for "numbness" to escape memory (Ibid. 6): "Of all memory's tricks, the most cruel / is accuracy: from those who remember me the clearest, / I am the furthest exiled" (Ibid. 18).

Yet, memory also counterbalances a life of loneliness and isolation in "a lonely exile, stretching out in time / as bleak as the terrain itself, as vast, as empty," which said Ovid "waits to nibble my life away, a day at a time, / toying with me just as a cruel cat / will toy with a mouse" (Ibid. 9). Hence, a friend's sweet voice creeps into this isolation to dispel morbidity and fear: "I hear your voice, / reassuring, familiar, as if from the dream itself, / and I take a deep breath and do feel better" (Ibid. 23). Yet, memory works closely

with imagination. It is not surprising that poets are desperately in need of beautiful moments to punctuate their recollections. Without these, imagination loses its main springs of spontaneity, flow, and ease.

Admitting loss of homeland, symbolized by female beauty and love, the Iraqi exile 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī pours out his fear of creative aridity and drought in paradoxical images. However, his images usually make sense through a gradual discernment of traces and patterns. The world at large lacks feeling: "No one knows another in this exile / All are alone. / The world's heart is made of stone / In this kingdom of exile."⁶⁹ To be in a hard-hearted universe also involves the speaker in gloomy meditations that occupy a self already ridden with doubt. In his poem, "I am Born and Burnt in Love," al-Bayātī recognizes his despair and fear of further losses: "In untilled, murky fields I grope / my way / Seeking night guards to help me stop / This blind rapacious love—/ This black light in my memory" (Ibid.).

Lara and 'Ā'ishā are al-Bayātī's symbols for creativity, poetry, and homeland. The three are so intertwined that estrangement from each involves the poet in a simulacrum of "murdered love / —An incurable wound / And a deadly yearning" that keeps him always in anxiety and disarray: "Madly running he weeps / Years of exile and torment / Of unrequited search and / restless travels."⁷⁰ Fear of poetic drought under the impact of alienation and disenchantment makes the sense of exile more tormenting. For Ovid, writing is inevitable regardless of quality: "I write. It doesn't make / any difference whether it's good or not, / and I have no idea any more, myself" (Slavitt 25).

Although claiming indifference, the poet actually betrays anxiety, fear, and suspicions of failure for not communicating in the right place and time. In the Lebanese Khalīl Ḥāwī's (d. 1982) "Al-Kahf" (The Cave) the speaker recognizes with horror the possibility of dwindling into "a tattered rag":

Shame strips my folded cave
Naked in its exile;
And shall I call for one
Who may work wonders yet?
The great magician died
And he will not return.

What is left of the poet as a creator of marvels is a bundle of formless shapes moving aimlessly here and there:

From the magician's corpse
A tattered rag somehow
Evaporates. It grows:
Some sprightly form sets forth
Unfurled and chased along
From road to wayward road.⁷¹

Poetry versus oblivion

No matter how overwhelming such anxieties and fears seem to be, the poet's recourse to song counteracts further morbidity and depression. The story is as old as Ovid. "Through song I seek oblivion from my wretchedness," Ovid's saying goes. It is the more so when a poet knows that homeland is merely a checkpoint, a police station for interrogation and persecution. Thus, writes Fawzī Karīm, another exiled Iraqi: "Every sail not returning to you, border check-point, / Not searching, in vain, for meaning / But to escape black meanings, / is mine."⁷²

It is not, thus, merely a homeland that preoccupies the minds, thoughts, and dreams of poets and writers; neither is it a concern with some cultural adoption, central as these seem to be to the writings of many. While readerships and audiences are usually placed in one's homeland, inhabiting one's mind as if they were here and now, the ruler and the system work always as some haunting apparatus, a checkpoint once, but also a ferocious animal on another occasion, bound to reach you whenever arrangements are made among states and governments. Indeed, both concerns are so real that they assume an archetypal presence in writings of exile. While Ovid, for instance, asks for human communication to escape the impending sense of "fainting" (Slavitt 215), there was always a fear of death that even praises to Caesar could not dispel. On the other hand, only his audiences could bring him solace and comfort upon reading his poetry of exile: "such as fishing out / from the slosh of surf a glittering bottle, sealed . . . / and, yes, look, with a message inside. You open it up / to read the last cry from an old wreck" (Slavitt 26).

Fear, preoccupation, and concern dwell in exilic writings and give them a character of their own as they reveal anxieties and troubles in juxtapositions, parallels, gaps, and abrupt rejoinders. As Aijaz Ahmad argues:

Writers-in-exile often write primarily for readerships which are materially absent from the immediate conditions of their production, present only in the country from which the writer has been forcibly exiled, hence all the more vividly and excruciatingly present in the writer's imagination because their actuality is deeply intertwined with the existential suffering of exile and with the act of writing as such.

(Ibid. 131)

Torn between a desperate need for an alternative location with adequate emotional support and a compelling need for return, which is almost impossible wherever dictators insist on a total "'massification' of the literary audience" (Brennan 67), the exiled writer is forced to invent a special mode of writing. He or she carries not a cross, but a scar, a mark of mutilation by an ongoing loss for which no gain can ever compensate. Prisoners of conscience have their

agonies, so do would-be-martyrs, but they always tread into memory as if to remind us of our better, buried or murdered, self. In this space of agonies and ruptures dwell poems of exile that evolve as the most stereographic. In their anxieties, preoccupations, fears, and regrets they often borrow from a large exilic subtext, as the poetry of Darwīsh and al-Bayātī demonstrates, while striving for an independent voice. As the following detailed study of al-Bayātī's poetry shows, experience, acculturation, and native cultural consciousness work together to provide a distinctive poetics of exile which derives its character from a constant faring among anxieties and locations. The poetics of exile therefore grows in this in-betweenness, as the defense of identity against erosion and loss.

Exilic trajectories

Exile takes many forms in modern Arabic poetry. While negotiating these forms and manifestations between the ancient attraction to travel and the Islamic sympathy for strangers, there is also the strong sense of dislocation, the classical stance of foreignness among lands that were once part of a central 'Abbāsīd rule. Al-Mutanabbī's famous verses on his foreignness in Bawwān⁷³ are popular enough to evoke a mixed feeling of nostalgia for the past and a sense of alienation enforced by dislocation and repression. The complexity of exile cannot be categorically summarized within these patterns, however. Responses vary, and one must cite a number of examples before providing a focused reading through one single poet.

1 *Forebears and masks*: The poetic of exile may take forebears for masks, or as an intertextual meeting ground integrating the past and the present. The ephebe throws his or her lot into the matrix of the strong poet or intellectual. Maḥmūd Darwīsh fuses his poetics and experience into that of the established precursor Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī (d. 968). He ably gives al-Ḥamdānī's experience contemporary overtones through terms of allegiance and betrayal, poetry and war, sentiment and prowess, and poetry and recitation. In this poem, Maḥmūd Darwīsh is not after identification. Rather, the ancestor's Byzantine odes serve as subtext through which both the self and the nation are seen.⁷⁴ The precursor was a knight, a warrior of great feats, as well as a poet. His wars with the Byzantines elicited outpourings of prowess, courage, and emotion, but many readers are drawn in particular to his prison poems written when he was captured (in 962), without immediate ransom from his cousin the prince of Aleppo. Darwīsh dwells on this detail, and loads it with the Palestinian predicament. Darwīsh obliquely directs feelings of agony against those who leave the Palestinians to their fate, with no serious commitment to their human suffering. The interchange between the cell as an enforced habitat and the imprisoned self borrows from the precursor's agonies, an imprisoned prince and warrior, to appropriate the Palestinian

sense of threat, disruption, dislocation, and challenge, inside Palestine and outside it:

Beware of the coming Sodom, and do not wait for me on Thursday morning.
I don't like density, for it darkens the nuances of meaning in its cell
and leaves me a mere body recollecting its forests alone.
There is a room in the echo like the room of my prison cell,
a room where one talks to the self.

My cell is my image. I found no one around
to share my morning coffee.
There is no seat to share my solitude in the evening,
no assembly to share my confusion in my quest for guidance.
Let me be what the horses in their forays wish me to be:
Let me be a prince or a prisoner: or let me die.
My cell becomes one street, two streets. And this echo
comes from that echo, whether it remains or fades away.
I will come out of these walls a free man,
but like a ghost when he floats freely out of himself.

I will go to Aleppo.
Dove, fly with my Byzantine ode
to my kinsman, and take him this greeting of dew.⁷⁵

Leaning on the original text to problematize the moment, the poet refers to the precursor's famous poem, "I said to a dove which was lamenting nearby/ O neighbor do you realize the state I am in?" to enrich the emerging text with more details of everyday life that lend the poem a deepened sense of the real.⁷⁶ Yet, the poem also builds on the psychology of enforced confinement, the plight of every colonized and threatened soul, to concretize the sense of loneliness, hollowness, and emptiness that the jailer and the colonizer strive to impose on others.

2 *The trace poem as topoi*: On a different level is the "trace poem," which takes the ancestor as topic to develop *topoi* of alienation at large. The Tunisian Ṭāhar Bakrī (b. 1951) recovers in a poem written in French, for instance, the experience and life of the Andalusian Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), and through this recovery brings into the experience of intellectual vigor, imprisonment, and exile, shades of French life and European accentuations of disenchantment and alienation. The emerging text tampers with the ancestor as a mask, for the text is keen on building an existentialized image of the self with postmodernist inhibitions:

Along the secret
roads the hawks estrange
my gaze deprived of nightingales
on the ridge of stirrups that I lose
my feet quiver and I go down
In the wounded stone, the spark.⁷⁷

3 *Identity versus cultural erosion*: Alienation at home and treatment of natives as strangers in their homeland shows more in poetry that takes as subject not only repression, but also foreign occupation. The French experience in Algeria and Morocco provokes a poetics of disenchantment, opposition, resistance, and native solidarity. The alienating force of occupation works culturally on the dynamics of discourse and provokes a counter emphasis on every minute sign of identity and identification, along with the register of anticolonial struggle. While the emerging text is one of postcolonial vigor, its poetics of alienation navigates between an indigenous culture and the present predicament. The following is by the Algerian Assia Djebar:

I have no home
 I wander through the oasis, fires illuminating the night
 O my dead tree my vanished shadow
 Do you remember the palm trees
 The camel and her milk.⁷⁸

The poem nationalizes the struggle while locating it in rustic terms of strong indigenous and traditional connotations where there is no boundary between the speaker and the fighter. The occupiers make the land their own, exiling the natives morally, whereas the poem enhances the presence of rustic images to belie their use of force to undermine and annihilate national solidarity. In an ironic twist, the speaker's complaint of dislocation invokes larger nationhood that intensifies in response.

4 *Exile internalized*: Exile becomes a state of mind, a mood, whenever, as in the case of the Palestinians, the exiling power deploys its might not only to confiscate, repress, and colonize lands but also to uproot national cultures, resources, feelings, and lifestyles. The emerging counter discourse varies in registers and *topoi*. In a poem by Darwīsh, already discussed, soul, place, thought, wine, poetry, and longing are exilic sites, so much so that the poet exchanges places with the partner, the homeland, and the song. "What shall we do without exile?" asks the poet in another poem, for all that is left of the two in the poem belongs to each other, along "with long nights of gazing at the water."⁷⁹ Although this remaining sense grows into a poem inscribed with an inventory of defiance and resistance, its markers are those of love. Darwīsh's poems of exile reinstate moods and agonies in a textual terrain that uncovers the sham of coercive ideology.

On another front, relocation may not end the exile's agonies, but intensify them whenever the poet is reminded of the perpetual infliction of suffering on one's people. In her poem "In San Diego" the Iraqi woman poet Lamī'ah 'Abbās 'I'mārah (b. 1927) says as much of her experience as exile in the United States:

The beauty of San Diego
 reminds me of Lebanon

if only the bleeding would stop.
 It reminds me of Kurdistan at festive times
 celebrating with flutes and tambourines.
 And the wrested homeland
 —how much we have lost
 how much noble Jerusalem means to us.
 The beauty of San Diego tortures me.
 The silver clouds slaughter me.
 How can I live comfortably in a country
 where swords are sharpened for our people?⁸⁰

5 *Exile as prophecy*: Poetry of exile develops prophetic tones. Despite isolation or enforced estrangement, poetry of exile escapes the imposed constraints and limits and spreads like prophecy. Adūnīs's Mihyar as a persona knows as much:⁸¹

Mihyar, betrayed by friends,
 you are an unring bell,
 two syllables on lips,
 a song recalled
 on the white roads of exile,
 a gong sounding
 for the fallen of the earth.⁸²

Textual homelands in context

Taken together, these examples attest to the diversity and complexity of the issue of exile in modern Arabic poetry and poetics. Perhaps, more than any modern Arab poet, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī addresses the theme of exile as a textual engagement whereby land is displaced onto a poetic terrain. His poetics builds on his life in exile, his readings, and interaction with classical and modern literatures. He left Iraq in 1954, and lived in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, and returned in 1958. He was appointed as the Iraqi Cultural Attaché in Moscow in 1959–1961. He was deprived of his Iraqi citizenship in 1963 after the the first Baʿthist coup. He returned to Iraq in 1972, and was appointed by Saddam as the Iraqi Cultural Attaché in Madrid in 1980 until 1987. He was back until 1990 when he left Iraq for good, living in Jordan and then in Damascus until his death in 1999.

He wrote on exile in his *Tajribatī al-shiʿriyyah* (My Poetic Experience).⁸³ There is first the existentialist concept of exile, he says, like a “lonely and sole drop of rain, facing its fate unaided on earth” (Ibid. 392). Then there is the class concept of exile, “whose hero is the poor person” (Ibid.). What relates more to his own role as poet is the third concept, “as it means the banishment of the person from his/her homeland and roots” (Ibid.). These

three concepts, he argues, “are present in my poetry, for I realized since my poetic beginnings the human estrangement and alienation in this universe, then I discovered the alienating power of poverty, then I had to pass through this three-dimensional experience for many years of banishment and with a lot of suffering” (Ibid.). Fighting back recollections of old days and places, as in his poem “al-Jurh” (The Wound) in his collection *Al-Nār wa al-kalimāt* (Fire and Words, 1964),⁸⁴ al-Bayātī has worked out an ever-growing poetics of exile that resists closure or ultimate findings and truths. The mask of the poet Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (d. 1057 CE) leads the poetic voice into the precursor’s dilemma, as is the case in a number of mask poems. Nevertheless, al-Bayātī also delves into mythological space that allows his goddess ‘Ā’ ishah (Ishtar or Astarte) to offer regeneration and rebirth that redeem the exiled poet from permanent suffering. In his poems her departure signals poetic drought and throws the poet into disarray, usually imaged in scenes of loneliness and imprisonment with walls and fences. In his *Tajribatī al-shi‘riyyah* (My Poetic Experience), he stipulates that she is the “soul of renewal and newness through death, for the sake of revolution and love” (*Dīwān*, 2: 416). If she symbolizes regeneration and love in al-Bayātī’s poetry and identifies with a promise to go beyond limits and endow exile with meaning, she stands for dormancy in the poetry of his contemporary Adūnīs. In the latter’s *Awrāq fī al-rīḥ* (Leaves in the Wind), the poem “Al-Ba‘th wa al-ramād” (Resurrection and Ashes 1957) has four canticles. In one of them, “Ramād ‘Ā’ishah” (‘Ā’ishah’s Ashes), for example, she stands for immutability, symbolizing a society and a culture that invite change. This transformation of mythical structures sets the poets apart.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, al-Bayātī’s poems of exile suggest that the mythological space, its freedom and exuberance, cannot sustain the poetic voice for long. It is only through the impersonation of similar poets, like Nazim Hikmet, Rafael Alberti and, in a way, Federico García Lorca, that al-Bayātī recreates a new homeland, a poetic space of forebears and ancestors who hold many things in common and who offer him lineage and filiation. It should not be surprising then that the poem grows into a homeland where the poet survives calamity and death. It is my argument that al-Bayātī’s poetics of exile emanates from a rupture, a wound, that signifies a memory of nostalgic yearning. His sustained poetic effort reveals the progression and maturation of his poetics of exile, however. It is through the endeavor to move beyond the ideals of modernity, including its Eliotic appropriation of myth, that al-Bayātī questions every tenet of truth or reason, and every single staple of unitary discourse, identifying with his ancient precursor Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī, while manipulating his texts of alienation and cynicism into an exilic liminality that resists closure. The mythical pattern of his Tammūzī counterparts is absorbed into a magical world, whereby gods and goddesses fuse into other women who, in turn, lose identity to become symbols of the creative impulse. Al-Bayātī’s voices speak freely in an exilic space made by texts of exile that proclaim nothing outside their textual existence.

The amount of exilic anxiety and concern that constitutes the many intersections of al-Bayātī's poetic matrix is the most distinctive feature of his poetry. Indeed, issues of Sufism, love, political opposition, and poetic positions on tradition and language are subsumed in the larger context of exile. The sense of exile drives him to interrogate memory and self, to search for alternative choices, and to commune with other identities and positions. His poetics of exile grows and develops in an increasingly intricate pattern whereby some of his early poems give vent to sorrowful interrogations of memory in order to face up to new challenges and priorities. Such a start requires another vision, a different linguistic tool with clear positions on tradition, poetry, and poets, ancient and modern.

In his exiles, al-Bayātī develops "guerilla" rhetoric to displace clichés and overworked metaphors. Only through such a remedial act can he negotiate the development of paradoxical paradigms to accommodate his readings, life commitments, and disillusionment: a textual homeland, among a community of exiles, their figures, experiences, and texts. Al-Bayātī's poem is soon to grow into a single trope for home that gains substantiation through further self-effacement. The latter is his only outlet to isolate memory and restrict its movement and pressures. As self-effacement is almost impossible in lyrical poetry, al-Bayātī moves in the direction of both Sufism and myth. Both bring about self-effacement through identification and rapture. Paradoxically, al-Bayātī's poetry achieves a great deal of its lyricism in this textual liminality where the poet fuses into the rest. Yet, despite all this effort, a sense of loneliness, tinged with agony and longing, remains as the ultimate note in his poetry of exile, a mark that sets him apart from his friend the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet with his unflinching stand for both resistance and joy.

Memory dislodged

To understand al-Bayātī's endeavor to achieve release from memory, we have to see his poetics in the larger context of differentiation between exiles proper and expatriates or émigrés. In this respect, Bettina L. Knapp's distinction between exoteric and esoteric exile may prove helpful, although it downplays the significant features of exile at large. Her analysis of the esoteric and its activation of the creative impulse is worth attention, as Halim Barakat rightly notes,⁸⁶ but voyaging in the deep recesses of the mind is only one form of exilic poetics, as al-Bayātī's experience illustrates.

It should not be surprising that al-Bayātī's "Al-Jurḥ" (The Wound 1964), dedicated to the Egyptian poet and cartoonist Ṣalāḥ Jāḥīn, is a focal point in his poetics of exile. The poem, the second of two dedications to Jāḥīn in his *Al-Nār wa al-kalimāt* collection, builds on a juxtaposition of the past and present, the preexiled self, and the present one in its hesitations and anxieties. The wound stands for the memories and recollections that usually invade exilic space, involving the speaker in a state of limbo, inertia, and despair.

The self stands in confrontation to that enormous Romantic resource that established the poet's early reputation, prior to his exile, in *Malā'ikah wa-shayāṭīn* (Angels and Devils 1950), and *Abārīq muḥashshamah* (Broken Pitchers 1954), before reaching into the relatively changing mood of *Asbār fī al-manfā* (Poems in Exile 1957).

As solitude becomes synonymous with suffocation, the wound reopens to direct the mind into the trodden paths of recollection that surge with images of minarets, domes, lamps, stars, butterflies, faces, and delusions. Suffering division (in *The Wound*), the voice argues against memory and the self. The wound stands for a whole generation, which al-Bayātī describes as schizophrenic.⁸⁷ Sad recollections impel the persona to address the preexilic self, to put an end to these flooding recollections that poison his present:

You, exile, talk to me, don't put out your candles
 It is time that you spread in the dawn your masts
 To cauterize your wound, to stab your spear
 In the dragon's mouth, in the old wound.⁸⁸

This voice gains ascendancy whenever empowered by will. It is not so when relapsing into the past. Painful memories come back as unhealed wounds:

Whenever you come back from exile
 Your eyes focus on the old wound
 A dome of dreary night
 Childhood lamps,
 Butterflies and star weddings
 And windmills
 Filling the night with weeping
 Whenever you come back, you trace the wound in the same images
 Cock crows and the tribe's fires
 Glittering and fading to be dusk ashes
 Departure kerchiefs
 Through the door of the impossible
 Whenever back, you see the wound in the guide's eye
 It is the old wound
 Which you always carry in the dreary European night,
 It is the wound that has broken Sindbad's heart,
 It is the same ashes
 Filling the very cup from which you drink.

(Ibid.)

The wanderer is paralyzed and immobilized at times by memory that acts as a bleeding wound. In "Intizār" (Awaiting), in his collection

(Broken Pitchers 1954), he is so powerless that he asks the addressee back home to pray for him:

Pray for me!
 Across the walls of my naked, hungry, sad homeland
 (Ibid. 141)

This homeland evokes nostalgia and longing for people and scenes. Every detail resurges in that pivotal crossing where memory gets entrenched. In a paradoxical strain, memory thrives on these images, enriching the text, whereas the lyrical poet is pushed aside, forlorn and empty-handed:

My fathers and I
 In the solitude of the house
 Alone, with no love or souvenir.
 (Ibid.)

Even in his collection of 1956, *Al-Majd lil atfal wa-al-zaytūn* (Glory to Children and Olives), memory tends to open up the wound, to keep it bleeding, while the speaker addresses his wife, “the sister of my soul,” as his “dove,” whose “eyes are two lamps of gold and fire” to illuminate “the night” of his “exile” (Ibid. 209–10).

Nevertheless, in al-Bayātī’s work (Broken Pitchers 1954) the image of the forlorn wanderer takes shape. Overwhelmed by loneliness and dislocation, the wanderer appears in almost half of the poems. Critics and anthology editors find his “*Musāfir bilā ḥaḳā’ib*” (Traveler without Baggage) the most representative of his early wanderings. It certainly expresses the bafflement of a speaker caught among dislocation, commitment, and existentialist thought. Deprived of identity, a traveler with no baggage—he, in the same poem—is in the in-between state in an elusive terrain that breeds many intersections in al-Bayātī’s poem. Taverns, cafés, stations, and sidewalks have punctuated his poems since then, fixing and posting him to the wall, a voyeur with a disconcerting outlook:

On the wall
 The light of day
 Sucks my years, spits them out in blood
 The light of day
 This day was never meant for me⁸⁹

In a prophetic note of disenchantment, al-Bayātī sets the tone for his subsequent poetry as one of exile: “I shall remain from nowhere, with no face, no history, from nowhere” (Ibid. 121). The implications of this subtext are far-reaching, as the poet is enabled now to fight back or decry the poetics of

stagnation and sluggish thought. Other poems like “Intizār” (Awaiting) and “Waḥshah” (Loneliness) are no less sensitive to issues of dislocation. His collection *Asb‘ār fī al-manfā* (Poems in Exile 1957) is also distinguished by the presence throughout of a speaker, a wanderer and a stranger, who is alienated by circumstance, roaming in “city streets of closed gates,” asking people who are on their way to lands of freedom to pray for him. He requests them to do so, for he is in a “distant homeland / followed by wolves / traversing black plains and highlands,” he says in a poem dedicated to Hind.⁹⁰ While his poem “Ilā Hind” (To Hind) in his 1965 collection *Sifr al-fuqr wa al-thawrah* (The Book of Poverty and Revolution) internalizes al-Sayyāb’s erotic prelude in “Inshūdat al-maṭar” (Canticle of the Rain) and addresses the woman as homeland,⁹¹ the female in “Ghiyāb: Ilā Hind” in his 1957 collection (Poems in Exile) is addressed as a woman whose prayers are needed by the forlorn exile. He is left out, ever forgotten by speeding people and trains, a stand which is to become quite conspicuous in his later collections, especially in his poem “Amṭār” (Rains) in *Kalimāt lā tamūt* (Undying Words 1960). In “Qaṣā’id min Vienna” (Poems from Vienna) in the same collection, he is a solitary person, “Celebrating his birthday tonight / He was a stranger.”⁹² His loneliness is like a drop of rain, solitary, with no connections whatsoever.⁹³ As for his longing, it is like a singing skylark that has settled in a prisoner’s mind. Although musing on antecedent authority, like Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī’s (d. 357/968) poem in prison, the speaker negotiates other texts without full abandonment of the self. Such is al-Bayātī’s “Tidhkār min Baghdād” (Souvenir from Baghdad 1958), which is typical of al-Bayātī’s early poems of exile before he managed to bypass the wound of memory (1: 381).

In comparison, the speaker in *Asb‘ār fī al-manfā* (Poems in Exile 1957) is more baffled than ever by an unease, which is displaced into the exilic—be it lands, outlooks, or texts. This collection has a great deal of uncertainty and hesitation, as the speaker has not finalized a position so far regarding ideological views and concerns. At this intersection, the speaker strives to leave behind the Eliotic practice that characterized his earlier collections. Yet he simultaneously recognizes that Marxist or nationalist commitments may end up in rhetorical practices that lead his writing into the prosaic, rather than the poetic. Even mythology, which has been drawing the attention of his generation since then, suffers further selection and appropriation in an age that has been increasingly on the alert for historical images and cultural directions of wide-ranging implications. In this exilic domain, however, he courts and juxtaposes images, symbols, signs, windmills, black moons, and sham warriors, against lakes and plains of frustration and failure. In “Al-Ālihah wa al-manfā” (Gods and Exile) in *Asb‘ār fī al-manfā* (Poems in Exile), al-Bayātī depicts his exemplary alien poet, the wanderer and the stranger, who is there to offer sacrifice with no possibility of redemption or success.

The poem's self-interrogation

The poem “Al-Ālihah wa al-manfā” is caught between the horizontal and the vertical in space and time, between past experience and present bewilderment. The speaker’s tone is one of anger, rage, and frustration. The poem itself is interrogated and found guilty of inadequacy and poor performance. It is placed in a full context of experience and life that provokes castigation and disparagement:

You coffin weaver in a hot noon
 My warrior died as though of the religion of poor millions
 Died in a strange land
 Died, with no beloved to cry
 For him, in his yellow bier.

(1: 278–79)

Dissatisfaction with the very vocation of poetry sounds even greater as the speaker delineates past experiences of imprisonment and exile, as set forth in this poem within a disproportional context of counterpower, repression, and coercion, along with personal misgivings:

I was torn and fought windmills
 And rode the black moon as mare
 Through the desert of my songs
 And I created poetry from the suffering of my poor people
 So what is next?

(Ibid.)

As for the gods of mythology and religions, they seem to offer nothing in his exile. Exile subsumes everything and turns these into mere artifacts, replicas of some sort that cannot sustain an experience, which, nevertheless, emerges in the full text, a poem of exilic disenchantment. Through denials and negations, lack imprints itself as a surplus, to use the Derridean manipulations of Lacan. Addressing Gods of mythology, the voice in “al-Ālihah wa al-manfā” (Gods and Exile) challenges their offerings in a rhetoric that also interrogates the whole Tammūzī drive of his counterparts:

This is you, and this is what you see
 You are lakes of amnesia
 Plains of ashes
 Trodden forever by your dead knight
 In the heat of noon.

(Ibid.)

It may not lead us far to argue for a definite schema to measure al-Bayātī's poetry. It is fair to say that until the 1970s, the image of the outcast and the wanderer was paramount. Under changes in literary and cultural taste this thematic imposition gave way to intertextual hosting. The dominating speaking persona, and the author in al-Bayātī's case, allows other texts to take over. The emerging poem assumes its lineage within a larger subtext, usually of Sufi and exilic belonging. However, exile is not a uniform whole in al-Bayātī's poetry, and its representations never assume clear-cut images or pronouncements. It is separation and estrangement first, hence its gloom and solitude. It never evokes a longing or culminates in a desire, for it is a reality toward which the poet is driven against his will. It never concludes in physical annihilation, for it gives way to transfigurations and forms that accommodate Prometheus, Waḍḍāḥ of Yemen,⁹⁴ Ibn ʿArabī, and al-Ḥallāj, along with his exiled counterparts. Nevertheless, insisting on transcendence does not preclude physical annihilation, nor does it overlook repression, mutilation, or assassination. These are minimized and moved into the background, however, as al-Bayātī's poetics achieves its counteracting strategy through *dominant* images of resurrection and endless renewal, which are in line with the poet's grounding in political optimism. Al-Bayātī's images ostensibly build on an idealistic vision that argues for the poet's upper hand against enemies of poetry. Acts of intimidation or murderous design only reveal how fearful dictators are of the power of the word. Hence, a poem should originate in a struggle of some sort, to defy and transgress the empirical and the temporal. Even the image of physical termination is contained within an ongoing lively process of rebirth that he cherishes in moments of rapture and joy. In "Madīnat al-ward: Qaṣīdat ḥubb ilā Dimashq" (City of the Rose: A Love Poem to Damascus), the speaker recapitulates his experience of exile:

As youth passed
 I found myself lost, by myself
 Bleeding in the night of exiles
 And the oppressor dug into my grave
 But I shouted from the pit: No
 Defying those returning to murder me.⁹⁵

The pit and the grave could be faces of exile; the terminus of the physical, but their disconcerting presence is subsumed and lost within poetry as a process that offers warmth, companionship, and joy. Indeed, the poet repeats this vocational attribute whenever challenged by disconcerting experiences:

I haven't found life and light
 In the cities of loss and lack
 My poetry was the fire to
 Dispel the gloom of exile and frosty homes.⁹⁶

Exile and the universal in poetry

The wound cannot be healed by itself, for there must be a personal effort to enable the poetic text to grow and gain diversity apart from the seeming impasse. To al-Bayātī, the best way is to universalize his experience, to identify with similar exiles, or even to subsume his poetics within a larger intertext. What may issue as virginal is bound to gain complexity through this interwoven intersection, as his “Marthiyyah ilā Nāẓim Ḥikmat” (Elegy to Nazim Hikmet) suggests:

The virgin wave
Braids its sister’s hair in the evening gloom
Fish get caught in its net
So does the sky.

The implications of this subtext are far reaching, for the poet is now enabled to fight back the poetics of stagnation and sluggish thought:

The letters of yellow books
Gather together,
Giving birth to a red rose.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, such a formula does not assume perfection, for the “virgin wave” continues to “measure the sea,” as he articulates in his poem “al-Nihāyah” (The End), addressed to Hikmet (1: 470). Whenever Hikmet is mentioned in these elegies, al-Bayātī views poetry as an ongoing pursuit, an endeavor of restless doing and undoing. The virgin wave could appear in a “floating cloud” which is “driven by the wind from one exile / to another,” as is the case in his “Marthiyyah ukhrā ilā Nāẓim Ḥikmat” (Another Elegy to Nazim Hikmet, Works, 1: 471).

The configurational poetic that emerges whenever Hikmet is recalled relates not only to both the counterpart and the vocation, but also to al-Bayātī’s archetypal images. In his poetic recourse to ‘Ā’ishah (Ishtar), for example, al-Bayātī takes her as the most effective symbolic pattern of love and change to which he holds to overcome feelings of ennui or failure.⁹⁸ Along with this intentional reliance on myth, al-Bayātī’s Marxist grounding substantiates his faith in a future. Yet his many disappointments work at times against this faith. Hikmet always comes across as the exemplar of the poet–fighter, the one whom Neruda celebrates whenever a mention is made of his experience with his jailers. Speaking of his experience on a warship where he was tried and thrown into a section of the latrines “where the excrement rose half meter,” Hikmet was about to lose faith and strength. “Then the thought struck him,” reports Neruda, “my tormentors are keeping an eye on me, and they want to see me drop.”⁹⁹ Hence was his decision to sing louder and

louder, until he “vanquished the filth and his torturers.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Hikmet’s poems from prison left a clear impression on al-Bayātī, for while Hikmet deliberately follows up his intimate love for freedom, especially in spring, he nevertheless will not let this be the only dominating voice in his prison poems. Nostalgia and celebration of the outside enhance the painful isolation and confinement as they work on the poet–prisoner, but the poet comes often with a refrain of pleasure and hope worked out in sentimental celebrations of the little that may be snatched from his jailers, as in this excerpt from his “Letters from a Man in Solitary” (1938):

Sunday today.
 Today they took me out in the sun for the first time.
 And I just stood there, struck for the first time in my life
 by how far away the sky is,
 how *blue*
 and how wide.
 Then I respectfully sat down on the earth.
 I leaned back against the wall.
 For a moment no trap to fall into,
 no struggle, no freedom, no wife.
 Only earth, sun, and me . . .
 I am happy.¹⁰¹

Such early intimations cannot be lost to the poet who met Hikmet in Moscow and became one of his close friends. Yet, these work in a complex matrix of readings and cultural configurations or separations.

Unless we understand the association between exilic experience and creativity, we are bound to miss al-Bayātī’s otherwise articulate poetics of exile. Aware of the dangers of relapsing into mere rhetoric, as in the polemics of his early poetry, al-Bayātī has deliberately negotiated for a free poetics, unrestricted by premeditated experience. His poetics of exile vies for a text of vagrant words, a wood uncultivated, and paths untrodden.

The poem as a force of life

The image of the wanderer is a central and dominant one. It derives poetic and textual significance from this roaming and association with voices, signs, benedictions, premonitions, and portents. The emanating poetic matrix is rich, and the poem that begins with myth, passes through the prayers and musings of poets and imams to settle in the end in the subtext of estrangement and exile, before offering itself anew as a product. In this intricate fashion, the poem is historical and transcendental, temporal and permanent. It is a text that fights back oppression and exploitation while opting for the endless and the eternal. It is worth noting that al-Bayātī’s last poems emphasize this

combination. Author and text join forces, and they are the same. In *Nuṣūṣ sharqīyyah* (Oriental Texts 1999), text 23 reiterates:

I am confronting now the jury of history
 So notice my heart
 How gravediggers have been digging us a grave
 But we, in the taverns of the world
 Have been creating a kingdom of poetry
 We have been in love with the gods of myth
 Making fires at the top of the Himalayas
 Vowing in Bāb al-Shaykh sacrificial gifts¹⁰²
 To the infallible imam of the poor¹⁰³

“Nuṣūṣ sharqīyyah” (Oriental Texts), which gives the title to the whole collection, is meant to survey and capture al-Bayātī’s career as poet. In that career, a notable change takes place in his collection *Al-Nār wa- al-kalimāt* (Fire and Words 1964). Although the poet is the addresser throughout, there is a tendency to argue for the poem as the inventory and the trail, capturing an experience of variety and defiance. In “Al-Ḥarf al-‘a’id” (The Returning Word), the poet interrogates his personal art. He plays with rhythms, rhymes, and words, and uses “thousands of swords” for his duels, but “the returning poet still roams / the ship is lost” (1: 414). The mixture of recollection and the present experience in exile work together, and exile is accepted as displacement, which can, nevertheless, accommodate his wounds, that is, memories:

You word
 That taught me to fare in the seas
 My Sindbad was murdered in a fire boat
 My homeland is exile
 And my exile for the dear ones is home
 The face of my mother I always see through the wall
 Her face and the children’s
 And the lamps in our street which won over the daylight
 Your word, soaked in blood,
 You the exiled
 I carry Baghdad in my heart from one home to another.¹⁰⁴

Fused into each other, the letter, the poem, and the speaker are the same. So are the tissues of creativity and commitment. While settling for this exchange, the poem of exile has another commitment, as advanced in “Tammat al-lu‘bah” (The Trick is Done/The Game is Over) in his *Al-Nār wa- al-kalimāt* (Fire and Words 1964). The poem wanders and roams around, not the speaker. Protesting censorship back home, the poet speaks of the poem as

an entity that challenges coercion but tries to penetrate deep inside, as this is its space of influence and challenge. As the audience is the speaker's target, the poem has to reach its addressee:

You who fabricate reasons, you who hear me
 Don't leave its letters at the door
 Standing and waiting cursed by the doorkeeper.
 (Ibid. 1: 448–49)

Long familiarity with polemical discourse keeps al-Bayātī's intentions glaringly visible. However, to forestall any confusion of his virgin language with Tammūzī articulations, as advanced by his contemporaries, he reiterates that spontaneity is there in the unpremeditated feelings, joys, cries, and enunciations of people who are the very material and stuff of his text. If there is a moment that stands between spontaneity and poetic flow, he finds solace in Lorca, for he also asks the woodcutter to take him back to the womb. In "Song of the Barren Tree," Lorca asks: "Woodcutter/ Cut my shadow from me. / Free me from the torment/ of seeing myself without fruit."¹⁰⁵ In "al-Mawt wa-al-qindīl" (Death and the Lamp), from the collection *Qamar Shīrāz* (Shiraz's Moon 1975), the Iraqi poet repeats:

Your cries were the axe of the woodcutter penetrating deep into the virgin forests of language: a legendary king ruling a subconscious Kingdom and pagan regions where there exist music, black magic sex, revolution and death . . .¹⁰⁶

To bring "death" and "lamp" together in a title is not innocent. Al-Bayātī insists on reminding his readers of the subtext of his early poetry, especially that intersection of past and present, memory and release, as argued in "Al-Jurḥ" (The Wound). Facing up to the challenge of banishment and its aftermath, he implicitly justifies his early displacement of memory as a step toward new transfigurations. Achieving this means freedom from possessions, a position that Hikmet has already taken. As if taking after al-Mutanabbī who says in one poem that he has neither steeds nor money to present to the patron, invoking poetry to help him out in situations where a gift is the fashion, both specify steeds at the top of their list of lack. Hikmet says in "About my poetry":

I have no silver-saddled horse to ride,
 no inheritance to live on,
 neither riches nor real estate
 a pot of honey is all I own.¹⁰⁷

The whole idea is that there is a creative mind, well recognized even by opponents. To the latter's chagrin, poets have nothing to lose, as long as they are

able to create. Hikmet's "pot of honey" is the poem that interacts with al-Bayātī's poetry. The latter writes:

Take my steed
 The drops of rain clinging to my hair
 The sunflower that presses her cheek in mine
 Take the memories of the childhood of my love
 My books, my death
 My voice will remain, a lamp
 At the door of God.

(Ibid.)

With such a transfiguration "My life slipped through my hands, it became a form,"¹⁰⁸ poetry interchanges with a godly lamp, like Hikmet's "hands full of sun,"¹⁰⁹ offering light and warmth in lieu of his rebellion of many forms. Working within a broad subtext of love and faring freely among images of exiles and Sufis, al-Bayātī develops a strategy that counteracts any anxiety of influence. He familiarizes himself with the vocation itself, and identifies with its prominent figures like Lorca, Hikmet, and Neruda, or Ibn ʿArabī and al-Hallāj, before delving into the matrix of their poetry, to appropriate and retain their images. He himself articulates the argument as follows:

The language of myth
 Lives in the axe of the woodcutter, penetrating deep into
 The virgin forests of language
 Why did the legendary woodcutter king depart?¹¹⁰

The rhetorical question draws attention to the artificiality of a large number of poems in the traditional and contemporary canon that he satirizes and attacks. Their authors are like inquisitors, the advocates of a hegemonic discourse, which his al-Maʿarrī (d. 1058 CE) has already identified in his poetry and in his *Risālat al-ghufrān* (Epistle of Forgiveness). Al-Bayātī's elegies and poetic reconstructions of al-Maʿarrī, al-Mutanabbī, Hikmet, and Lorca in *Al-Nār wa- al-kalimāt* (Fire and Words 1964) and *Sifr al-fuqr wa al-thaurab* (The Book of Poverty and Revolution 1965) should draw our attention to dislocation, alienation, and exile as major themes that cut across their poetry, and allow al-Bayātī to navigate easily among their texts. Al-Bayātī's fear of poetic drought drives him to criticize traditionalists and their like among the modernists who present the image he detests and fears. Hikmet also charges such authors as enemies. "Enter a house where there is a plague," he says, "but do not take one step across a threshold where there is an *agent provocateur*. And if your hand accidentally touches his, wash it seven times. And I will tear up my only holiday shirt and give it to you for a towel."¹¹¹ The poet indirectly offers an image of his alienation among a large group of

writers who constitute a substantial part of the dominating discourse. Al-Bayātī is not as direct. After the negative criticism accorded to his early poetry of commitment, he develops narrative tropes and poetic incursions into available textual belongings, to come up with a register and matrix of his own. His attack on these inquisitors and enemies never ends, but he selects from among them his immediate challengers who work in the field of culture and literature. Speaking of these, al-Bayātī says:

A thief from among them
 A turbaned and ostentatious weeper
 Halted me in my death-pit
 Threatened to throw me out of paradise
 And said: What do you believe in
 I said: in the bleeding dawn's fire
 In my loss in this planet.¹¹²

While the concluding two lines corroborate al-Bayātī's faith in rebellion, and the full commitment to exile as an open space and time, beyond limitation and coercion, there is his other register with its counteracting strategies. Loss in the latter is freedom, and vagrancy is an existence unattainable to the rest. As for the bleeding dawn, it is al-Bayātī's marker for transcendence and perpetual becoming.

Rebellion is inclusive as a recurrent motif in al-Bayātī's poetics. Its many images, especially the "bleeding dawn" and the "pillar of fire," usually lead the speaker back to the uncultivated—but not necessarily Eliot's "sacred"—wood, where words are pure and innocent, making up a settlement for him, which is no less than a textual homeland. In "Death and the Lamp," we read:

Here I am
 Naked like the desert sky
 Sad like a gypsy horse
 Haunted by fire

 Exile is my homeland
 Words are my exile.¹¹³

While this poem should remind us of what the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh say about exile in his collections of the 1990s, the emphasis on language as the haven and the exile is worth notice. This combined interest is a later flowering in al-Bayātī's poetic occupations. However, why does al-Bayātī insist on revolutionary rhetoric to target obsolete language? In *Mamlakat al-sunbulah* (The Kingdom of Grain 1979), he suggests a language of terror, in a kind of "poetry guerilla war against straw canons." The poet is "a terrorist against the absurd," for he is "fed up with expression." He is "an insane terrorist

occupying the mind of revolution.”¹¹⁴ To replace this artificiality with music, the poet has to pass through some transfiguration like a blind musician carried away by his own unpremeditated and spontaneous singing:

He cries out with the voice of my mouth or his own. The climax carries him to the trough of the wave. He weeps beneath the sky of another country. But the strings continue to pursue me in the silence of the Hall. Which of us is born now in this desert?¹¹⁵

A community of exiles

Al-Bayātī is more assured of his vocation as poet whenever the persona and the text fuse to create a plethora of voices and texts, specifically exilic. It is worth noting at this stage that al-Bayātī’s engagement or identification with al-Maʿarrī’s career and discontentment is not a smooth one. As early as 1961, his “Mawʿid fī al-Maʿarrāh” (A Rendezvous at al-Maʿarrāh), in *Poems in Exile*, offers the blind poet of solitude and estrangement from humankind an optimistic overview of life. The Marxist predilection of those years impels al-Bayātī to accept mythical regeneration, hence, “We are meeting in Maʿarrāh like heroes of myths.” Nevertheless, the meeting is a metaphorical subtext that gives birth to a poetic text that celebrates regeneration. He calls on the precursor al-Maʿarrī to

Rise, and behold the land singing, and the sky
A red rose, the wind is a song
Rise, behold the horizon lit with torches
And millions of the down-trodden fighting
In the darkness for sunrise.¹¹⁶

In al-Bayātī’s case, this optimism suffers disappointment. When exiled in Damascus, al-Bayātī significantly gave up those expectations. In a poem, already cited (The Prisons of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ, February 20, 1999), the poet anticipates his approaching death, and identifies with Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī in his self-seclusion. Al-Bayātī finishes his other poems on al-Maʿarrī with a note of resignation, but he reiterates his early commitment to revolution against oppression. Al-Bayātī endows his poetics of exile, as intertwined with and interfused into al-Maʿarrī’s poetics of disenchantment, with an ontological dimension. As a mask, al-Maʿarrī’s questioning tone against the rationale for existence is adopted by al-Bayātī to serve his ultimate sense of bewilderment and despair:

Between the rose and the blade
My soul is a crawling drop of light

With which I linger along
 We both are to die in this accursed exile

So why father
 Do you beget a blind gypsy horse
 That doesn't know, in this vast land,
 Where to die?¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, to identify with al-Ma^ʿarrī, or to take the blind poet and cynic as mask, does not necessarily entail futility and loss, for the mere act of poetic articulation signifies belonging to a culture, its specific identity and formation. Al-Ma^ʿarrī himself never tired of tracing his inventory in shreds and texts, contemporary and antecedent. Whenever physical death draws closer to al-Bayātī's Ma^ʿarrī, poetic lore pours forth its images, in terms of portents or pleasant signs:

My death is everywhere
 And ravings ascend from graves
 Who is to make a fire
 In this dreary night
 Who is to scream in the rooms of the house?
 (Ibid. 10)

Such juxtaposition between an imprisoning bodily form and an unlimited legendary horizon creates the in-between space where the very cry grows into a poem, imbued with greater yearning for release from the prison-house of the body:

Set me free father from this cage
 For my prisons are many
 And my suffering long.

In this argument, al-Bayātī's Ma^ʿarrī mask may well serve as the bridge between the inner yearning, the esoteric personal agony, and the practiced textual fusion into exilic poetry.

What al-Bayātī draws on and feels at home with are texts by renowned exiles. They have made a community of exiles, and their poetry offers at least that much. Indeed, this is the focus of al-Bayātī's dedications to Rafael Alberti (1902–1999), who returned to Spain in 1977, Federico García Lorca (1899–1936), Nazim Hikmet (1902–1963), and Antonio Machado (1875–1939).¹¹⁸ As figures, they grow also into symbols with strong connotations of dynamic international solidarity. Al-Bayātī is no longer in need of

masks, and this community offers more than succor and a home. Speaking in his own voice, he says:

I call on you Alberti!
 And poetry answered
 The hidden lightening inside the bleeding crowds
 Passing in the night of exile
 Illuminating all sufferings of Spaniards
 Rome answered
 And the wild sea music answered
 We were children who penetrated the woods

 But the music subsided, and the sea
 Disappeared into books which spoke about light
 Coming from the heart of Toledo
 About an Arabian Star traveling in Europe
 Sleeping at the gates of Toledo
 We were children.¹¹⁹

However, to include so many exilic premonitions and symbols, the text has to expand to accommodate all the defeated and conquered space, whenever human beings suffer repression and persecution:

I called on you Alberti
 And answered the cries of all exiled Spaniards
 In every land where man suffers death
 (Ibid.)

It should not be surprising that al-Bayātī's Alberti becomes the major symbol for exile, and the poetic subtext becomes synonymous with space. Cities like Baghdad, Granada, Toledo, and Rome are intertextualized in their symbolic density to include historical details that highlight accounts and instances of collaboration and division, rapprochement and estrangement. Outside these cities stand stone walls that shut the poet out. These walls keep away butterflies, al-Bayātī's recurrent symbol of the sad, sensitive soul.¹²⁰ Rome is to remain closed to him, as he says in the same poem, and it remains asleep while the poet tries to overhear the coming dawn from behind the closed gates (Ibid. 167). Indeed, Rome without the flame of poetry or "a column of light" (Ibid. 163) is to suffer alienation. "Rome was searching for Rome in clandestine leaflet" (Ibid. 163). While leaning on Alberti's and Lorca's experience in Rome, the poet develops an intertext charged with defiance which nevertheless undergoes some softening in his Sufi poems.

The Sufi text regained

In order to identify with al-Ḥallāj (858–922 CE), the Abbasid Sufi who was decapitated and burned,¹²¹ al-Bayātī has to transcend the physical. It is not the early life of the Sufi martyr that he seeks, but rather his transfiguration in an intertext of great exilic potentiality. The Sufi martyr survives torture and remains alive in a poetic homeland that harbors Alberti and the rest:

Al-Ḥallāj was my companion on all voyages,
 We shared bread and wrote poetry about visions
 Of the hungry, abandoned poor, in the kingdom
 Of the great mason, about the secret of the
 Rebellion of this man burning with desire for
 the right, his head bowed before the tyrant.¹²²

Joining the exiles and martyrs is a rebirth. However, the development of this poetic strategy is not smooth, for this mask appeared in separation from the rest of al-Bayātī's poetic texts. It was then one strategy among many others to meet the needs and feelings of the speaker. The persona in *Sifr al-faqr wa-al-thawrah* (The Book of Poverty and Revolution 1965) is freed from limitations of space and time through a textual fusion with a number of Sufi masks, especially al-Ḥallāj in al-Bayātī's "cAdhāb al-Ḥallāj" (The Passion of Ḥallāj), written in 1964: "I am here with no rags and tatters / Free as this fire and wind. / I am free forever."¹²³ Al-Ḥallāj's suffering gives life to ancient legends of the phoenix, crucifixion, and sacrifice. The wood of ashes, with its early Eliotic overtones, disappears only to be replaced with a regenerative process that subsumes death as variable. The wound is not wanted to heal: "The wound will never heal / and the seed will never die" (2: 25), he says in part six of the poem.

In "Miḥnat Abī al-ʿAlā" (The Ordeal of Abū al-ʿAlā'), he collapses masks and images. The poem, which appeared in *Sifr al-faqr wa-al-thawrah* (The Book of Poverty and Revolution), is made of ten parts, and its main drive is to emphasize the predicament of dissent. The Arab cynic and poet of seclusion to transcendence beyond the limits of the physical and the earthly. Nevertheless, as already argued, earlier texts betray a great deal of political engagement that grows through controversy and rejection through exposure and allusions to counterfeiters, traitors, and enemies of the poet. Indeed, these are bound to end up with al-Maʿarrī's agonized musings, as in part seven for example. The poem that follows, addressed to his daughter Asmā', takes earlier musings further, for his own face and that of his neighbor are the same. They exchange roles and persist in tracking him, hunting and pursuing him wherever he goes. Although the poem, which gives the title to the collection, insists on rhetorical representations of dire times and poverty that stick to him like unwanted neighbors, the persona's sorrowful tone never aims to

close the gates of exile with assertions. On the contrary, they are left open, acting as channels and openings that accommodate the increasingly powerful will of the speaker:

Is this you, neighbor?
 As if city streets
 Are your threads, you, my coffin?
 Hunting me
 Hanging me
 On a hospital window
 From one exile to another
 Closing in on me with darkness
 These streets of cities that sleep with no stars
 Isn't there some mercy in your stony heart?
 (2: 45)

In other words, exile is no longer banishment in this book, for alienation takes place in an esoteric fashion, to use Bettina L. Knapp's formula, without necessarily applying to al-Bayātī's poetics as a whole. In Knapp's explanation, this exile "suggests a withdrawal on the part of individual from the empirical realm."¹²⁴ The nature of surveillance, represented by the neighbor, may suggest counter connotations, but alienation exists because of alienating realities:

I was a stranger in my homeland and in exile
 My healing wounds
 Will open up again tomorrow
 Interrogating me
 Crucifying me
 On window bars
 O misery.¹²⁵

Al-Bayātī's masks enable the persona to develop an enormous matrix of exilic poetics. Indeed, some of these are never specified, but al-Bayātī is on the lookout for them, borrowing some, at times, from his contemporaries. Zayd Ibn ʿAlī was,¹²⁶ for example, Adūnīs's favorite mask, and he soon became the same for al-Bayātī. In his "Nubū'ah" (Prophecy), in *Al-Kitābah ʿalā al-ṭīn* (Writing on Clay 1970), al-Bayātī identifies with Zayd Ibn ʿAlī as the ultimate image of martyrdom and regeneration. The act of spreading Zayd's ashes at dawn on the Euphrates' waters made Zayd a symbol of the regenerative process, inclusive, as it were, of the phoenix, and of Tammūz and Christian myths of regeneration:

Silent, waiting for resurrection
 For thousands of years,

Carrying my death along with me
 A vagrant, with no food and water,
 Whenever the Euphrates changes direction
 My soul, settling down there as the stones, with
 Euphrates mud and grass.

(Ibid. 2: 187)

Debating redemptive and regenerative poetics

In his poem “al-^ʿArrāf al-a^ʿmā” (The Blind Fortuneteller), the second in *Al-Kitābah ʿalā al-ḥīn* (Writing on Clay), the image of the vagrant poet is repeated, but there is now a specific expectation of a redeeming touch or kiss, be it from Scheherazade or ʿĀʾishah in her many faces. Al-Bayātī identifies with the legendary and historical heroes only by default, for the wanderer–poet never assumes a heroic posture. There must be somebody else to carry the burden, “I am searching in this great crowd . . . for the legendary historical hero who can change this holy mud and this straw into flame . . . into revolution” al-Bayātī writes.¹²⁷

To intertwine in a poetic matrix of an exilic nature does not entail physical survival, for the elegiac poet borrows from Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” to implicate the wind in a regenerative process. Death is not a terminus, “Death is a new birth, a new coming.” Thus, the exilic space is equivalent to Shelley’s seeds in winter. The poet “comes back from exile, with birds and clouds” (Works 1: 474). Nevertheless, fluctuation is the norm in al-Bayātī’s poetics of exile. Even when love is drawn upon in association with the Andalusian element in his poetry, as whenever Lorca is recalled, there is always a counter challenge. The wanderer is so entangled at crossroads that certainty is elusive: “Roads of infatuation deserted me / and paths are tired of me,” he says in “Qaṣāʾid ḥubb ʾilā ʾIshtār” (Poems of Love to Ishtar; Works 2: 193–94).

Although aligned with forces of progress and change, al-Bayātī never settles for a final poetic faith in the manner of his Tammūzī counterparts. Indeed, exile plays so much of a role in questioning settlements and tales of legendary closures that a reader must be on the alert whenever a seemingly regenerative address is advanced. In “The Descent of Orpheus to the Underworld,” in the collection *Al-Kitābah ʿalā al-ḥīn* (Writing on Clay), the persona leaves behind benedictions and prayers, not merely to identify with Orpheus, but also to let him suffer interrogation:

Why are you in exile, with death and autumn leaves?
 Wearing their rags, resurrected in every age
 Searching in a heap of straw for a needle, feverish, cast away
 With a crown of thorns and slippers of snow.

(Ibid. 2: 195)

Despite the poetic formulations that al-Bayātī invents and contrives, exile exerts an enormous pressure on his sensitive soul. However, his musings, imaginings, and intimate alliances usually dispel the gloom of his poems.

In “Sirah Dhātiyyah li -sāriq al-nār” (Autobiography of the Thief of Fire 1974), the poem that gives the title to the collection, the poet tends to work out the dilemma of exile as an ongoing pursuit for love, a salvation that carries within its process the seeds of endeavor and reward. A poetic displacement occurs here, and the mask gives way to a partnership that is the very locus of creative maturation. The poem no longer speaks of “I,” for the individual fuses into a collective “We,” and all women gather in an image of a woman with red hair, like “a fountain flooding from the sky.” This is “the princess of exile whose red hair we are after” (Works 2: 349).

Al-Bayātī’s women symbols

Loss is exile, hence comes ‘Ā’ishah’s significant presence in al-Bayātī’s poetry. She is female, but also childhood, ease, freedom, the desired, and the rapturous. She is the regenerative cycle of cities, villages, seaports, rivers, and fields. To be driven out of her paradise is loss. The poet targets the powers that enforce separation. In other words, the sense of loss is a sense of exile, and their twin presence usually endows his poetry with that painful accentuation that imposes a certain dryness even in moments of rapturous elation. Thus, ‘Ā’ishah (Ishtar) assumes feminine features, but they are features that “are ripened on the fires of poems.”¹²⁸ Her lushness may slip into the text through fusion with apples, wine, and a “hot loaf of bread.” She has then the quality of “fire of the fields,” and of the desire “sleeping in my blood.” Nevertheless, she is also the priestess who “slips away in the belly of the night.” In other words, ‘Ā’ishah “incarnated all faces,” and contains in her being cities and orchards, standing as it were for the magnanimous symbol in al-Bayātī’s poetry. In these embodiments and their denials, ‘Ā’ishah becomes both a recollection and a personal life cycle.¹²⁹ “A premature butterfly / fluttering in the summer of my childhood / She incarnated all faces” (Ibid. 287). The whole section reads as follows:

Eyes burning from excessive compassion
 A face behind its mask, hiding
 The cities of Salih
 And the lemon orchards of the Upper Euphrates
 There I spent the summer of my childhood
 The winter overtook me.

(Ibid. 288–89)

Al-Bayātī’s memory fights specifications and limits, and it is bent on breaking these into shreds and portions that survive in tension, in another sequence of integration and fragmentation. The very images of the concrete

and the abstract, the local and the universal, interweave as if to fight back the impinging recollection of the past. There is no denial of loss and alienation, but these occur in a cycle of love and deprivation, gold and ashes. Contrasting images and significations of opposition flow in profusion whenever a nostalgic mood is about to interpose. Between memory as such and the fear of loneliness and the utter failure of the creative impulse, the typical poem since the 1970s is one of great anxiety and tension. The “middle of the night,” “winter,” and “Autumn of Arab Cities” (Ibid. 279) are al-Bayātī’s images for loneliness and gloom, especially in “Birth in Unborn Cities.” They usually creep up to evoke loss, ostensibly associated with ‘Ā’ishah’s departure, in “Aisha’s Profile,” but also signaling rebirth in the manner of Shelley’s “West Wind”:

After her departure
 I carried in my exile
 The gold of poems and ashes
 (Ibid. 287–88)

Al-Bayātī’s memory has a history of its own beyond the specific childhood recollections of *Al-Jurbh* (The Wound). In every stage of his exile, there is a new symbol of attraction that receives an enormous supplication as if the poet fights back fears of stagnation or dryness. Such is Lārā of October 26, 1974. In his “I am Born and Burn in My Love,” Lārā is the catalyst and the matrix, providing memory with meaning and entangling it in a larger context of reality and illusion. She becomes the signified and the signifier, while the speaker is caught up between desire and fear of loss: “In my memory Lārā awakens,” like a “tartar cat” (Ibid. 197), with its yawning and clawing. Every motion and emotion, the sound and the act, implicate memory in endless imaging that bridges the spatial, the pictorial, and ephemeral. Such subordination entails no release from her “Hanging . . . [him] with her tresses,” or “suspending [him] like a hare upon the wall / Fettered by the string of . . . [his] tears” (Ibid. 197). Her enveloping presence occupies his vision, captures his attention, and colors his perspective. It is there in “paintings,” in “icons,” “beneath the golden mask of death” and in the “enchantment of adorned women.” Indeed, she is everywhere, but too elusive to be a concrete or tangible presence: “Leaving over the golden mask of death / A ray of light from a day that died” (Ibid. 199).

Is Lārā meant as a substitute for ‘Ā’ishah? A version of the seductive, yet unattainable woman? No. Lārā is memory in a state of creative becoming. Her presence establishes the creative impulse and gives form to recollections. Her departure conversely indicates the poet’s anxiety and fear of poetic drought. Indeed, al-Bayātī’s rhetoric for this state of bewilderment and bafflement is another application of “guerilla” terminology that seeks to balance a blank, a lack, or a hole in memory. Black holes worry al-Bayātī, and he borrows a register of violence to counteract inertia. If this bafflement is prolonged he is: “Exiled in my memory, / imprisoned in words, / I flee under

the rain” (Ibid. 201). The hole in his memory will continue as long as Lārā, in her symbolic extension, is not here, leaving him agonized by this endless love:

This ravishing blind love.
 This black light in my memory
 I cry feverishly under falling rain
 I shoot myself at dawn.

(Ibid.)

Prior to this courting of suicide and death, he is even more violent in order to escape a memory of dry and dying sentiments:

I throw a bomb under the train of the night
 Loaded with the leaves of an autumn in my memory
 I crawl among the dead
 Groping my way
 In the muddy untilled fields.

(Ibid.)

At this intersection of inertia despair returns, imposing an atmosphere of gloom on an endeavor, which has been well sustained otherwise:

My life’s sun has disappeared
 Nobody knows
 Love is a blind lonely experience
 No one knows another in this exile
 All are alone
 The world’s heart is made of stone
 In this kingdom of exile.

(Ibid. 207)

Although Ishtar’s presence evolves in al-Bayātī’s poetry as the only remedy for the persona’s soul-searching, her disappearance or elusive status only intensifies the exilic in his poetics. As the Ishtar of mythology (in his “Marthiyyah ilā Khalīl Ḥāwī” / “Elegy to Khalil Hawi,” Ibid. 267), ‘Ā’ishah is the objective correlative of the creative impulse. To put it in other words, she is the poem. Indeed, in “Love under the Rain,” Ishtar or ‘Ā’ishah acts as a catalyst that holds the poem together, for to give her a female form independent from her textual function belies her textual presence:

‘Ā’ishah is my name
 And my father was a legendary king
 Whose kingdom was destroyed by an earthquake
 In the third millennium before Christ.

(Ibid. 231)

When metamorphosing in Ibn ʿArabī’s “ʿAyn al-Shams” (Eye of the Sun), otherwise, al-Nizām, Ishtar, or ʿĀ’ishah is the needed spring of love and creativity. However, she is the desired one toward whom the speaker’s journey aspires to conclude in fusion. Disembodied and desexualized, her features are kept to the minimum, a mere dim recollection that is recalled in times of frustration and despair. Drawing on Ibn ʿArabī’s Damascene experience, the persona in the “Eye of the Sun” repeats:

But she returned to Damascus
 With the birds and the light of the dawn
 Leaving her slave in exile:
 Joyful fugitive prepared for sale
 Dead and alive,
 Drawing on books of water and on the sand
 Her child’s brow, her eyes
 The flash of the lightning across the night
 And a world that dies or is born before the cry
 Of death or birth.

(Ibid. 57)

The dominant presence of al-Bayātī’s desexualized women brings him closer to Ibn ʿArabī’s *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* (Interpreter of Desires). While tracing them in every beautiful act or scene, al-Bayātī’s persona undergoes transfigurations that ally him with poets, Sufis, martyrs, and exiles. His voice reveals no rapture, however: “I bewail in the river of banishment the times of strangers.”¹³⁰ Usually the yearning for a moment of love is a strategy to counteract a world of oppression.

However, exile in al-Bayātī’s poetry also evolves in juxtaposed intersections whereby lack indicates supplementarity rather than opposition. Indeed, bereavement or loss betrays some presence first. The speaker perceives and recaptures it as a time of dislocation. Without the first, that is, the presence, there is no subsequent feeling. His poem works intertextually in this domain, as he willingly negotiates among precursors, taking himself to be a mythical soul, unlimited by time and space. Negotiating in these domains, he is no longer a specific name or person to be persecuted, annihilated, or swept away. He mentions that whenever meeting young women, “they were surprised to find me reciting lines from Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetry [the Sufi poet who died in Egypt in 1235 CE] and speaking of Genesis, thinking that I make fun of them.” He adds that he had to assure them that “I was born and died in many ages and that possibly we could have met in these.”¹³¹ Through speaking of ʿĀ’ishah’s transformations, the poet aims to advance his own metamorphoses, including his fusion in the figures of exiles, martyrs, and Sufis. Indeed, al-Bayātī brings all images together, in “Nār al-shiʿr” (The Fire of Poetry), in his collection

Bustān ‘Ā’ishah (Aisha’s Orchard 1989), collapsing notions and significations to applaud the very position of sacrifice as exemplified in the figure of the martyr:

The martyr of the nation
 Ascending from the bottom of creativity
 Was drowning in the light.¹³²

Whenever the martyr and the exiled poet exchange roles, myth and religion are no longer separate in an integrated symbolism, as in “False Critics”: “But the poet on the cross of exile / Carried the sun and flew” (Ibid. 279). Whenever there is a defiant tone to establish a reality of love, it degenerates into poor rhetoric, as in his poem “Al-‘Amīrah wa-al-ghajarī” (The Princess and the Gypsy) in *Kitāb al-Baḥr* (The Book of the Sea 1973). Indeed, Lorca’s stamp loses its force in such rhetoric:

My love is bigger than I
 Bigger than this world
 The poor lovers
 Crowned me king of vision
 And a man of banishment and exile.¹³³

Al-Bayātī’s *Kitāb al-Baḥr* (The Book of the Sea) bridges the gap in his poetics between the exoteric and the esoteric responses to exile. In the “Sayyidat al-aqmār al-sab‘ah” (Lady of the Seven Moons), visions overtake him and he responds with rapture. The speaker is the woman, and her prophetic pronouncement counteracts fear or sadness. In a paradoxical reversal, the speech runs as a prophecy that the enveloping poetic voice accepts and cherishes. Exile is loneliness and physical annihilation. She says:

In a dream
 I see you on the sidewalk of the white cities
 Walking alone
 Dying alone in banishment and exile
 She said: I love you.¹³⁴

To understand the association between exile, rapture, and love here, we need to explain al-Bayātī’s catalysts, his dominant images of the figure of love, not only as solace but also as the source of creativity.

Love as counterbalance to failure is there in many poems, but the poet makes no easy assumptions regarding his agony. In (Carrying my Death and Leaving), he says, “Lārā has left after my departure / Lost among the crowds of this world.” Nevertheless, this loss stands for a bereavement of some sort, as all the images of beauty and love like Khuzāmah, Lārā, ‘Ā’ishah, and

“The Eye of the Sun” disappear too, leaving him in utter despair, “weeping in the river of loneliness and the times of strangers”:¹³⁵

I destroyed my life
 In all the exiles of the world
 Searching for Lārā and Khuzāmā.
 (Ibid. 2: 302, 304)

The poem, the phoenix

Perhaps more than any among his poems, al-Bayātī’s “Al-‘Arā” (Open Air or Wilderness) in his *Mamlakat al-sunbulab* (Kingdom of Grain 1979) sums up the complexity, density, and diversity of his poetics of exile. In this poem, banishment and alienation act upon the speaker. The latter is obsessed with banishment, as it occupies his dreams and nightmares, pursuing him day and night. His isolation is real, an endless recurrence with no termination or conclusion in sight. His suffering is perpetual, and his self-castigation is enormous. However, identification with the phoenix counteracts this pressure and achieves some release through Sufi longing and yearning. Throughout, Sufi texts and the whole exilic subtext work not only as a counter force to dislodge the power of isolation, but also as a homeland of enunciations and words. Indeed, in exchange of roles, the poem emerges out of this intersection as the very phoenix in its perpetual renewal. The poet does not deny the howling wolf inside him, nor does he overlook “the death of dawn on the sidewalks of earthy cities,” but the poem is his only homeland, his power, and personal presence after fusing the self into the larger one. In “Al-‘Arā” (Wilderness), he says in the prose poem section:

So, here you are, by yourself, filled with alienation in this world, departing at night from the gate of dawn, searching for the one you have seen in your dreams, trying to go beyond the horizon by yourself, returning with the nightmares of a dead day, to begin anew, to carry this rock to the top, every morning you hang yourself, but the phoenix comes back with the fire of poetry to clean from you the ashes of things, for your love remains your sealed treasure, while you are yearning with desire, awaiting and possessed by banishment, you bleed words, you a prince of exile, who rapes the world with words.

(Works 2: 439)

While the last image only betrays al-Bayātī’s desexualized world, its other image points to regeneration, albeit illegitimate and rebellious. Indeed, al-Bayātī’s rebirths are never clear-cut, and the haziness keeps his phoenix depicting a process rather than sounding a triumphant note. This ambiguity

lies behind the intricacy of his poetics:

On the sidewalks of exile
 I arise after death
 To be born in unborn cities
 And to die.¹³⁶

To see al-Bayātī's poetics from an empirically oriented perspective, the reader may trace a certain amount of fluctuation whenever loneliness subsumes the rest of the images and identifications. The fight to keep memory in the background, to intertextualize his poetry in a kingdom of words, and to survive in a wood of variety and richness, entails a great amount of engagement, revision, and proposition. The main effort is to bypass the stage of childhood, the one for which he takes al-Sayyāb to task,¹³⁷ and to survive limitations of every kind, including the one of craft and position, and to empower his poetics of exile with both the universal and the specific. The emerging image of the two voices, the disconcerted and the double, could stand for this complexity of experience and vision. It also contains and appropriates the other recurrent image of the blind and solitary wanderer with its enormous connotations. Certainly, the image of the blind and lonely wanderer eludes Eliot's Tiresias despite al-Bayātī's deliberate association between the two. In "The Blind Fortune Teller" in *Al-Kitābah 'alā al-ṭīn* (Writing on Clay 1970), his persona shouts: "I am waiting here alone, for a thousand years / without a door being opened in the darkness" (Works 1:189–90). In a later poem, "Sīmfuniyat al-bu'd al-khāmis" (The First Symphony of the Fifth Dimension) in *Mamlakat al-sunbulab* (The Kingdom of Grain 1979), the poet repeats, "I am blind and alone," but the frustrated voice is offered comfort by a double who dissents every now and then to draw the poet back to some bright vision. As one of the most schizophrenic of al-Bayātī's poems, "The First Symphony" offers, nevertheless, a glimpse of hope, "between the throes of poetry and my death: I perceive a dim light..."¹³⁸ Indeed this image stands for al-Bayātī's career, not only as a modernist poet, but also as a poet of exile *par excellence*. Without some hope, disenchantment could close the tunnel forever, and poetry would suffer a prolonged pain, with no resolution whatsoever for the Arnoldean dialogue of the mind with itself.¹³⁹ With so much entanglement in poetics and politics of exile, al-Bayātī could be among the few whom Jacques Berque designates as the ones who "refashion one portion of reality,"¹⁴⁰ but he is unquestionably the master of the exilic in poetry. His refashioning is the more effective for his careful and meticulous follow up of trajectories of invention and application. Moving between the routes of tradition and the impositions and needs of modernity, al-Bayātī was able to universalize experience while conversing with the needs and preoccupations of his people. Within this delicate discursive faring, he engages T. S. Eliot's modernity poetics and his synthetic view of tradition without giving up his objections to the latter's conservatism in religion and politics.

THE EDGE OF RECOGNITION AND REJECTION

Why T. S. Eliot?

The influx into Arabic poetics of T. S. Eliot's mythical method, along with his perspectives on tradition and modernity, cannot be exaggerated. Yet, there are differences respecting the nature of its reception and its channels. This chapter proposes to concentrate on one controversial mind among Arab proponents of modernism, namely al-Bayātī, and to argue the case of influx in terms of poetic application, appropriation, and use, as these relate to the subject of this book. Influx inhabits and inhibits locales, souls, and minds whenever there is a combination of need, desire, and the right consciousness. Al-Bayātī's poetics of exile and revolt accommodates T. S. Eliot's early disenchantment with the evolution of Western civilization. As his poetics of exile tends to negotiate a textual homeland, his use of T. S. Eliot evolves into a strategy of containment whose purpose is to appropriate Eliot while manipulating his interpretation of tradition. Although his counterpart in the modernist movement, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, came to understand the legacy of the Anglo-American poet sometime in the late 1950s, al-Bayātī was drawn to him through the Egyptian Marxist Luwīs 'Awaḍ whose article in *Al-Kātib al-Miṣrī* (1946)¹ had a huge impact on the poetic scene in the early 1950s. In comparison, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb was never oblivious to the impact of Eliot, and his use of the mythical method as well as his specific imagery of hollowness drew many responses throughout the last decades.² Yet, the surmise of some Arab scholars that there was a definite Eliotic stamp only on the trio, Luwīs 'Awaḍ, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, and 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, is inaccurate.³ Thinking in terms of direct borrowing and immediate influence, such scholars miss the intricate workings of the creative mind, its negotiation with other texts and contexts.

Marxism Christianized

It is even difficult to apply the notion of influence at large to Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, for the Iraqi poet Christianized Marxism and emptied the Western context of reference, to accommodate his poetic for an Iraqi, specifically Southern, temper. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb is the amalgam of the historical and the immediate, the archetypal and the temporal, the extremely indigenous and the

cosmopolitan, the ascetic and the exuberant, the realist and the dreamer, the Jaykūr child and the citizen of the world, a point that is laughingly hinted at by Unṣī al-Ḥājj.⁴ In him, we find the Arab Romantics along with Shelley, Byron, Keats, Wordsworth, and Eliot. Afraid of too close an association with the *Shi'r* group,⁵ he cited Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" for Yūsuf al-Khāl (letter of May 4, 1958, *Rasā'il*, Letters 130), suggesting the combination of modernism and tradition as a way out of the *Shi'r* impasse. Politically, he stood for "popular literature" as anticolonial, as his letter of June 19, 1954 to Suhayl Idrīs shows (Ibid. 108). Long before that (October 26, 1942), he wrote to the Iraqi dramatist Khālīd al-Shawwāf approving of his advice to follow strong precursors such as al-Mutanabbī, al-Ma'arrī, Abū Tammām, al-Buḥārī, Shawqī, and al-Ruṣāfī (Letters 30). He was able to read his immediate precursors or contemporaries such as Alī M. Ṭāhā and Maḥmūd Ḥasan Ismā'īl because their books were available, not the *dīwāns* of the others (Ibid. 30). Al-Sayyāb was also haunted by temporality like many Iraqis, who, perhaps due to an ancient tradition, are caught between memory and space, with all the implications of anxiety, fear, joy, prosperity, and hunger, superbly brought together in his paradoxical "Canticle of the Rain." Al-Sayyāb's belonging to this "inventory" of traces establishes a firm ground for his popularity and lasting influence. While open to non-Arab readers, his known poems, with their agitation, music, wit, pleasant reasoning, and local color, are also typically Iraqi. Indeed, here lies the difference between the two, al-Sayyāb and al-Bayātī. The latter managed to subsume shreds and images into his poetry while devising a poetic space that opts for universality. The wailing and agonized voice of the rover, the exile, and the forlorn could fit into any scene, especially when the textual homeland builds its inventory through dialogue with other exilic texts. This dexterity eludes the search for plain reference and direct borrowing and compels the reader to accept his texts as universalized witnesses to an age of dislocation, exile, and dissent with conspicuous markers of hollowness, ennui, mechanicality, and death of love. The case is more so as the poet merged the mythical method with patching from other sources. This took place while he was exploiting everyday speech and scenes of common life. In this practice, al-Bayātī is closer to Eliot than al-Sayyāb is.

In 1955, Iḥsān 'Abbās noticed these similarities between al-Bayātī and Eliot, emphasizing the pictorial quality, the use of common speech not traditional poetic lexicons, and stylistic and structural patching in order to depict the emptiness and sterility of the modern scene.⁶ Both used the non-poetic, the common, and the ordinary in such a way as to render it poetic, to implicate modern life in its contradictions and signs of failure. Yet, their concept of fragmentation and sterility is applied differently, for in Eliot's case the urban site is the ruptured and fissured one, while for the Iraqi poet, until the early 1960s, there is a rural site that draws the same response.⁷ More than any modern poet in Arabic literature, al-Bayātī figures as the ephebe and the master, the practitioner and the pioneer, the realist and the Sufī, the rebel and the mythmaker. Throwing himself at an early stage into unrestrained experimentation, he offers

us texts of enormous value for students of comparative literature. They are intertextual terrains of intense negotiations and divided loyalties. Charmed by T. S. Eliot's method of recollection, dialogue, and engagement with tradition and modernity in the *Waste Land*, al-Bayātī devoted enormous attention to the American poet, but with the reservations of the early Marxist, the quasi-nationalist, and the Sufi of a later time. He was no less attracted to Lorca, Hikmet, Neruda, and many others, along with al-Ma'arrī.⁸ Al-Bayātī is both a representative of the modernist engagement and a liberal in literary tradition. As a Marxist but with national dreams, he was opposed to exploitation, dictatorship, and imperialism. He invaded Eliot's images of decay and failure, but he manipulated the mythical element to fit into his early pronouncements of hope. Strongly drawn to Luwīs 'Awaḍ's critique of Eliot, his separation between Eliot's poetics and his visions, al-Bayātī dedicated a poem to Eliot in his collection *Kalimāt lā -tamūt* (Undying Words). Eliot is reactionary here, and al-Bayātī calls on him to attend to a human scene of rapture and change:

There are men
 Waiting
 Burning
 To lighten earthly cities
 To sing for freedom.⁹

Eliot is strangely collapsed into the image of the Arab precursor al-Ma'arrī once, for the latter was also called on in "Maw'id fī al-Ma'arraḥ" (Rendezvous at al-Ma'arraḥ 1957), to leave behind his self-imposed isolation and siege, and join the revolutionary celebration of change.

Al-Bayātī stood against whatever dehumanizes and endangers the human race. Eliot reappears in every stage of al-Bayātī's life, never outgrown, to meet the Iraqi poet's focused pronouncements. Like his fellow poets of the 1950s and the 1960s, al-Bayātī fully participated in enhancing a radical shift toward national awareness, emphasizing throughout the desire for transformation and change. While Marxism made him too politically conscious to sustain a poetics of allusion in his early poetry, his unrestrained immersion in experimentation enabled him to capture the spirit of the age. Not surprisingly, he also made use of Middle Eastern mythology, Judaeo-Christian symbolism, and Anglo-American, Spanish, Turkish and Persian sources. Sufism and mythology work beautifully together in his poetry whenever Virgilian vegetation myths blend with Christian mythology and mystical tradition. The aspiration for change passes through gates of death and rebirth. Liminality becomes the in-between space of rituals and anxieties before incarnation:

We were lovers pursued and cursed
 Between two fires and two worlds
 Suffering the exile in the in-between world.¹⁰

What Nazeer El-Azma associates with al-Sayyāb's poetics applies with no less force to al-Bayātī.¹¹ Aside from his use of myth to enhance change in decaying systems and sterile lands, al-Bayātī's poetry is mainly imagist, deriving its appeal from combinatory feelings and objective correlatives. Its recourse to both dialogue and monologue imprints a lively dimension on his poems that involves them in current debates on politics, faith, poetics, and social ills. His cities are not necessarily like Eliot's, although some suffer no less sterility and decay. Rather than a one set of European, specifically English, cities, al-Bayātī's sites are a world of juxtapositions, deeply rooted in his recollections and perspectives. Toledo is not Baghdad, and Paris is not London. Every city has a meaning usually connected to a historical instance. Paris is a land of hope, but Baghdad is closed to poets. His personal experience or identification with other poets impose a meaning on city symbols and their connotations of regeneration or sterility. Nevertheless, what Nazeer al-Azma finds applicable to al-Sayyāb in contrast with Eliot may also relate to al-Bayātī. He argues:

Death for both Eliot and al-Sayyab became the wide-open gate for rebirth; and while the former finds his self in the Christian faith, namely in its Catholic order, al-Sayyab attaches himself to the human forces in their ethical struggle of good against evil. Simultaneously, faith, which included ethics and provides the final solution, as far as Eliot is concerned, has been the dynamic force, which always illuminates al-Sayyab's struggle for better life.

(Ibid. 223–34)

As if arguing back against a whole Tammūzi tradition and fellow poets, al-Bayātī has chosen 'Ā'ishah, or Ishtar, as the incarnation of the poetic impulse. Rather than the "embodiment of the reproductive nature,"¹² as articulated in Frazer's popular reading in *The Golden Bough*, al-Bayātī's Ishtar incarnates the sum of beauty, love, poetry, water, and joy, along with the aspirations of the poor in cities of plenty, creativity, and challenge. In a series of incarnations, she undergoes transfigurations as the ultimate "Ishtar" in his "Elegy to Khalil Hawi."¹³ On occasions, she defies limits and escapes textual boundaries. In the "Secret of Fire," we are told that "half of you: a woman / the other half: impossible to describe." No words can contain this whole: "Half of you cannot be described/The other half: a priestess in the temple of Ishtar" (Ibid. 305).

Deconstructing myth

With so much integration and disintegration, wholeness and fragmentation, sanctuaries and temples, Ishtar encapsulates al-Bayātī's world, leaving the "youthful spouse or lover" Tammūz simultaneously in perennial, and perpetual, need for rebirth. Al-Bayātī identifies with Tammūz in a way that corresponds to the many-sided expansion of Ishtar. His persona is available not only to

cross-cultural boundaries, but also to fight and challenge powers of oppression and tyranny. He is present to uplift the masses, to decry the present, and to struggle for the restoration of justice, beauty, and love in decayed systems and cities. However, having said this, readers of al-Bayātī's poetry may be disconcerted by a wailing voice that coincides with Eliot's images of dead cities, falling bridges, and wastelands. In respect to the latter, a note of certitude and faith that stamps later poems cannot dislodge his early images of hollowness, sterility, and alienation. Al-Bayātī finds these more attuned to an exilic experience of disorientation and fatigue, as in "I am Born and Burn in Love":

No one knows another in this exile
 All are alone
 The world's heart is made of stone
 In this kingdom of exile.

(Ibid. 207)

More than many of his fellow poets, he blends Tammūz with the Greek Adonis, Christ, Imam Ḥussein [Ḥusayn], Lorca, and al-Ḥallāj in one single image of the poet as martyr, whose blood and word are the same, leading to regeneration, growth, and fertility in "Shiraz's Moon":

The Lovers wash themselves with my blood
 In their exile, the strangers build Shiraz
 With my poems

(Ibid. 211)

Seemingly in reaction against his fellow poets and counterparts of the so-called Tammūzī movement, al-Bayātī developed a poetics of his own that negotiates its images and themes among a number of poetic and socio-political terrains, making use of all of them while attempting to signpost its individual character. Mythology and religion are only part of an enormous subtext that includes history and politics. Yet, although excluded from the Tammūzī movement by many who wrote on the presence of Eliot in the modernist endeavor in Arabic literature,¹⁴ al-Bayātī's mythical patterns accommodate and subsume others, to the extent that the persona sounds like the modernist version of Tammūz, parodied or duplicated in metro stations, on sidewalks, and outside closed city gates.

Transferred from the ancient location and time to a new disconcerting one, Tammūz is bound to suffer displacements, disenchantments, or transformations. He may be al-Mahdī, the Messiah of Islam, or a prophet, or he may fuse into Lorca, Alberti, or Machado, or into historical figures, including Sufis and martyrs. In this sense, the common background for modernism in Arabic poetry appears strongly in al-Bayātī's poetry, despite his astounding realistic strain at times. Writing about sources for the Tammūzī movement, al-Azma

enumerates three, for “the ancient mythology of the Middle East, the figures of Biblical and Quranic narratives and English poetry, underlie the development of modern Arabic poetry and the Tammuzi movement in particular.” He attributes this attitude to an increasing awareness in politics, for this “development is a phenomenon of the modern aspiration of the Arabs and their deep longing to be alive and productive in the family of mankind.”¹⁵ While these make their presence conspicuous in al-Bayātī’s poetry, his tendency to raid other registers freely endows his poetry with a modernist stamp that verges on futility and ennui. The ambivalent voice in *The Waste Land* is more at home in al-Bayātī’s poetic pastiches.

There is also a pattern of poetic tension shared by Eliot and al-Bayātī. While each has a specific poetic for a specific context, there are romantic and anti-romantic traces that characterize their early poetry. In Eliot’s early poems like “Portrait of a Lady” or even “Prufrock” there is what Eric Svarny terms as accordance “with the dry, laconic distancing of personal emotions.”¹⁶ This may not be the case in al-Bayātī’s first collection, *Malā’ikah wa-shayāṭīn* (*Angels and Devils*) (1950), where romantic assertiveness sustains its presence despite the shadowy distancing of the melancholic speaker. Nevertheless, his *Broken Pitchers* (1954) betrays a tendency to objectify experience and to control the Romantic excess of the first collection. A deliberate acquaintance with the Imagists, and Ezra Pound in particular, and a leap into experimentation, involve his poems into objectified structures that appropriate axioms, proverbs, sayings, quotes, and allusions of every kind. Such an endeavor is basic to al-Bayātī’s poetic career, for his poetry, before its mystical turn, is more in dialogue with other texts. In *‘Uyūn al-kilāb al-mayyitah* (*The Eyes of the Dead Dogs* 1969), *Al-kitābah ‘alā al-ṭīn* (*Writing on Clay* 1970), and *Kitāb al-baḥr* (*The Book of the Sea*), al-Bayātī’s use of the Eliotic correlative becomes apparent. Although *The Waste Land* has never disappeared from his poetic register, its method of intertextuality and exteriorization of emotions characterizes these early collections. Lorca and Hikmet had already offered him a regenerative structure, a demythologized vision of struggle and contest, but the application of shreds and fragments came in time to enable him to cope with the unpleasant and the menacing. Paradoxically, in *Autobiography of the Thief of Fire* (1974), *Shiraz’s Moon* (1975), *The Kingdom of Grain* (1979), and *Aisha’s Orchard* (1989), al-Bayātī took leave from earlier interests and figures to pursue a mystical quest that made use of precursors, including Arab poets and Muslim Sufis, while vying for a *rapprochement* between the substantiality of the temporal “I” and spiritual fusion. Eliot of “Ash Wednesday” should not be left out here, for, as Svarny argues, there is a movement “towards an interior, common realm of spiritual realities” (p. 215). In al-Bayātī’s “‘Ā’ishah’s Orchard,” she, who derives her presence from the Babylonian Astarte and the women of such Sufis as Ibn ‘Arabī, resonates in his collections of the third poetic phase, that is, after the phase of political commitment, and faith in regenerative processes, as if in parallel to, or in

dialogue with, Dante's Beatrice or Eliot's Lady in White in "Ash Wednesday" (1930). The presence that is not different from 'Ā'ishah resists personalization to sustain instead the image of forgiveness, succor, and love:

Because of the goodness of this Lady
 And because of her loveliness, and because
 She honors the Virgin in meditation
 We shine with brightness.

(Pt. II)

Unlike Eliot, however, al-Bayātī never endows his women with religious connotations. Like Lārā and 'Ā'ishah, from among his women, the "lady of the seven moons" is yearned for as the source of poetry. Estrangement from her means misery and gloom. In a word, separation is exile. In tune with Ibn 'Arabī's address to his beloved al-Nizām, nicknamed "The Eye of the Sun," al-Bayātī's female mediators also fuse into the temporal and the substantial while ostensibly leading him into some purgatorial ascent, which without lapsing into quasi-religiosity recalls Dante's Beatrice. What is compensated for in Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" with benediction and prayer exists in al-Bayātī's poetry as traces of precarious existence, estrangement, and exile. His objectified structures, their intense visualization, and rich auditory effect, rescue his poetry from too much abstraction, a problem that Eliot had surpassed through structural objectifications.

Tradition and the polyphonic poem

Trans-cultural preoccupations as the common ground for modernism should not be overlooked, however. Whenever there is an engagement with a subtext shared by all, but which also goes beyond Eurocentricism, mutual understanding and exchange become certain. George Steiner's critique of Pound and Eliot for deviation from a "matchless tradition" in the *Cantos* and *The Waste Land*, their appropriation of "Oriental thought,"¹⁷ attests to a common register that has been criticized and condemned by the upholders of a Western canon. In "The Tradition," Pound articulates his justification for modernity in relation to tradition as follows: "The two great lyric traditions which most concern us are that of the Melic poets and that of Provence."¹⁸ He adds, "From the first arose practically all the poetry of the 'ancient world', from the second practically all that of the modern." Counteracting claims of some other originary past, Pound opens up criticism for prospective readings and pleasant joy. To al-Bayātī, as to many among his generation, these prospects enrich poetry and poetics. No wonder the Andalusian presence of Lorca and the faith of the Turkish Nazim Hikmet fuse into a subtext of Sufi poetry and Islamic belonging, along with methods and articulations from modernity at large. In this respect, Badawi is right in

tracing many poetic voices in al-Bayātī's poetry, for "Al-Bayati read Mayakovsky, Nazim Hikmet, Paul Eluard, Aragon, Lorca and Neruda. All of whom left a mark on his poetry," he writes.¹⁹ Other influences on the whole poetic scene have already been discussed by Jabra, who rightly includes Edith Sitwell, especially on al-Sayyāb, Artaud, Apollinaire, St John Pearse, and Jacques Prevert.²⁰

Eliot as an Anglo-American *avant-garde* poet drew the attention of Arab poets in the modernist tradition. Like al-Sayyāb, al-Bayātī felt some alignment with the undertakings of Eliot, as translated and paraphrased by the Lebanese Mounah Khouri in a number of journals, but especially in *Al-Ādāb*.²¹ Eliot's opposition to the insularity of contemporary tradition, its inertia and artificiality, received al-Bayātī's unequivocal approval. Al-Bayātī also felt the need to disseminate his views in essays, interviews, and articles coordinated with young critics and writers who gave the literature of the 1950s and the 1960s its urgency, warmth, and polemical tone.

The line of demarcation that Eliot draws between the static and the dynamic in tradition came as a rescue to Arab poets who were searching for a method to conceptualize their poetic contribution in the face of hostile criticism. Again, Mounah Khouri made it possible to understand Eliot's position on tradition in modern poetry. Eliot suggests that tradition in a static society is bound to lapse "into superstition" and degenerate into imitation and artificiality.²²

The dynamic in tradition was present in the minds of both al-Sayyāb and al-Bayātī, but it was not put to use until later. Like other pioneering voices, al-Bayātī was desperate to shock and destabilize conventions in his early poems. His 'Broken Pitchers' responded to Modernism first and foremost. It was only at a later period, 1957–1963, and with the growing presence of *Al-Sbi'r* group in Beirut that echoes of Eliot's focus on the dynamic in tradition began to be heard, to materialize in poetic representations and figurations usually borrowed from a tradition of dissent. Al-Ma'arrī appeared quite often in his poetry, while al-Mutanabbī continued to be divided into two voices, that of the rebel and that of the panegyrist. Al-Bayātī aligned himself with the first, as if agreeing with Eliot "not only the best, but the most individual parts of his [the poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."²³

The implications of tradition relate to concepts of poetry, too. Even if the poet is a Christ figure, not the prophet of earlier generations, there is an overriding presence of the figure of the poet in exile. While Eliot's term of "exile" at the close of section IV of "Ash Wednesday" appropriates a Catholic prayer at the end of the Mass, there is in it a combination of the Dantesque banishment and the sense of poetic alienation. In Svarny's view, Eliot plays on both meanings to advance his vision of poetry in an uncongenial society.²⁴ Such a sense of exile, along with others, recurs in al-Bayātī's poetry in the context of the Arab predicament, as conceived by a number of poets. The poet in this

context meets death, "I am crucified at dawn, / on the walls," he says in "Love Poems at the Seven Gates of the World."²⁵ Exile, death and resurrection exchange meaning, not only in al-Bayātī's poetry, but also in Adūnīs's. In the latter's "The Desert,"

Everything sings of his exile/ a sea
 Of blood—what
 Do you expect from these mornings other than the veins sailing
 In the mists, on the waves of the massacre?²⁶

The implications of poetic experience in a hostile or indifferent climate receive further intensification whenever al-Bayātī maintains a dual perspective of the word as poetry and the word as incarnation, which Svarny traces in Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" (p. 221). Al-Bayātī's persona reiterates this association between estrangement and incarnation, for the poet is a Christ figure, and resurrection is a perpetual recurrence in a cycle of death and rebirth: "I arise after death/ to be born in unborn cities/ and to die."²⁷ Collapsing the mythical and the theological, al-Bayātī, nevertheless, veers away from Eliot's prayers to negotiate other intertextual terrains for, "In a field of ashes" used by the "rats of the fields of words," there is a design, says al-Bayātī's speaker, to bury the poet. The conspirators fail to perceive that "the poet on the cross of exile/carried the sun and flew."²⁸ The fusion of images and mythical connotations, along with the intentional collapsing of these, are at the heart of al-Bayātī's poetics of inclusion and exclusion, especially if *The Waste Land* is in consideration.

The paradoxical appeal of *The Waste Land*

Although alien to Eliot's worldview in *The Waste Land*, this association of poetic resurgence and revolt is paradoxically applied by its Arab admirers. Many reasons stand behind the enormous popularity of Eliot's *The Waste Land* among Arab poets of the 1950s. In his article on "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," Jabra finds a similarity in temper and vision. He suggests, "Arab poets responded so passionately to 'The Waste Land' because they, too, went through an experience of universal tragedy not only in the World War II, but also, and more essentially, in the Palestine debacle and its aftermath" (Ibid. 14). He further explains, "A whole order of things had crumbled, and the theme of the sterile 'cracked earth' thirsty for rain seemed the most insistent of all" (Ibid.). Especially in al-Sayyāb's poetry the yearning for rain is accentuated in rhythmic beats and refrains, whereby the deep longing recurs as a welcome act to a parched land. The yearning can be parodied or undermined by floods or drowning, but it nevertheless works in a pattern that derives significance from a double bind of belonging to an actual life, the Iraqi South, and to a mythical substructure of death and rebirth, highlighted

and endowed with greater connotations in Eliot's exceptional poem. For al-Bayātī too, this yearning is soon subsumed into his poetry, echoing, but consciously deviating from, al-Sayyāb's "Hymn" or "Canticle of the Rain." Of less patience than al-Sayyāb, al-Bayātī follows Eliot in invading poetic terrains, involving these in juxtapositions or connections, and experimenting freely with poetic styles. Although it is difficult to cite one poem in al-Bayātī's rich corpus that equals Eliot's *The Waste Land*, his poetry at large offers a variety of symbols, mythical patterns, archetypal structures, images of cities, gates, pavements, and bridges. Faces, ancient and modern, emerge every now and then to populate poems of wailing, criticism, anticipation, or despair. On many occasions, but especially in his "Lament" and "Nightmare of Night and Day," al-Bayātī uses Eliot's skeletal narrative to offer a stark and chaotic image of reality. His allusions only highlight this chaos while initiating a deep substructure of cohesion and connection. Al-Bayātī's persona traverses lands and times, a rover or a prophet, a rebel or a victim, garbed with the rags of history while claiming total abandonment of these.

Contrary to Eliot's poetics, al-Bayātī speaks of poetry in his own vein, as a harbinger of change. Yet, his reading of this vocation is not in line with his Tammūzī counterparts. This premise is worth a moment's thought, as he has developed a poetics that varies from al-Sayyāb's. The latter's attraction to Eliot is noticeable, but his early Wordsworthian intimacy with nature and common life involves his poetry in some deviation rather than *rapprochement*, as his "Canticle of the Rain" demonstrates. The Eliotic element in al-Bayātī's poetry resists Romanticism, exchanging it with clear-cut political and historical concerns.

Disinheritance through excessive patching

The mosaic nature of *The Waste Land* with its diversity of cultural codes and shreds provided an instance of perpetual anxiety for the Iraqi poet of exile. In its images, as in its functional manipulation of quotes, the poem offered al-Bayātī a method that was unavailable to him when writing his "Village Market" with its random use of proverbs and sayings. Here in *The Waste Land*, quotes offer, in G. Pearson's words, "an acute crisis of disinheritance"²⁹ which al-Bayātī endorsed as fitting his sense of dislocation. Disorienting past and present, ancient tradition and contemporary literature, these quotations are forms and entities of aggression despite the apparently peaceful fusion in the text. In Svarny's words, each "quotation wrenches lines from their original context and places them as foreign bodies in an alien structure" (p. 162). Al-Bayātī deploys the method in dialectical negotiation among other figures, ancestors, precursors, or contemporaries, beyond borders or cultures, disinheriting original owners while making no claims to a personal poetic originality.

"The Nightmare of Night and Day" offers a very intricate negotiatory site whereby the two voices of Lorca and Eliot are brought together. The whole premise of rebirth and mythical regeneration is addressed anew, for the

“earth dreams of the birth of a prophet/ who will fill the horizon with justice/ and of the birth of the seasons.” Nevertheless, the speaker parodies myth making, undermines its assumptions, and steps into its formations:

I carry a corpse in the streets
 At nightfall
 I will bury it in a brothel or a park
 Or in a coffeehouse or a tavern of light.³⁰

The corpse, which recalls Eliot’s, “that corpse you planted last year in your garden. / Has it begun to sprout?” is no less of a “distortion of the ritual death of the fertility God.”³¹

While al-Bayātī leans on Lorca and Hikmet to depict sacrifice and poetic rebirth, the Eliotic element with its “heap of broken images”³² intervenes whenever the city becomes visible as a consuming but decaying presence. Al-Bayātī’s river is not akin to Eliot’s, but it draws on the latter’s as it

Bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers
 Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
 Or the other testimony of summer nights.³³

Al-Bayātī’s river evokes and deploys similar notions and articulations, however, for Eliot’s negation only testifies to a usual expectation of a dirty Thames. Al-Bayātī writes:

O you mythical river that sucks
 The breasts of the city
 Carrying towards the seas, its filth
 And the dead horses
 And the wreckage of the chariots.³⁴

As if to parody and undermine the speaker in Eliot’s “Fire Sermon,” al-Bayātī’s persona sets the song against a dirty and polluted river, not a “sweet Thames,” which is asked to “run softly” until the speaker ends a song, for “I speak not loud or long,” promises Eliot’s speaker. Subverted by recollections of the fleetingness of time and swiftness of death, the song and the promise are ironically challenged and the remaining aftertaste is one of disappointment and failure: “But at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.”³⁵ Eliot’s river assumes a different meaning and form whenever disappointment is present:

The river sweats
 Oil and tar
 The barges drift
 With the turning tide.
 (Ibid. 2155)

What invites some close comparison between Eliot's "Fire Sermon" and al-Bayātī's "Nightmare of Night and Day" is their use of songs and singing against a background of aspiration and subsequent disenchantment. The artificiality of putting "a record on the gramophone," and the ensuing song of the three Thames-daughters in Eliot's "Fire Sermon" are in al-Bayātī's mind, perhaps. The interlocutor in his "Nightmare of Night and Day" reverts to the rhetorical question: "But what did the song say?" Probably the answer is one of bewilderment identical to what is in Eliot's, "I can connect / nothing with nothing" (Ibid. 2156). In cities of decay and sterility, integration is impossible, and loss imprints itself on everything. Even songs and old scenes of rural life and love get polluted, and the modern site becomes one of sweat and tar.

Where Eliot's London loses glamour and meaning, al-Bayātī's Baghdad carries scars of failure and stagnation: "The Tigris-side city which for centuries produced and maintained a great civilization seemed to me dead and finished. I wished it to stay so, to pour its last fragments into a great sea, and there merge and vanish."³⁶ As it stands, it is a site of "All men / Glued like postage stamps on everything." It offers nothing to childhood except "garbage dumps," and "corpses of houses," whereas he traces its "man of tomorrow / Displayed in the storefronts, / Clothed in sorrow and blackness" (Ibid. "The City," 18). Not mere inertia or failure here disconcerts the speaker, but the sense of the city as a beast, producing evil that derives pleasure from inflicting pain on the downtrodden: "The policemen, the sodomites, and the pimps/ Spitting in his eyes/ As he lay shackled" (Ibid.).

But the city is a presence where nothing connects with nothing, as Eliot's persona implies in "The Hollow Men," for "Death is the fortune teller of the City," says al-Bayātī in "Aisha's Orchard" (Ibid. 282), and the city itself gets involved in a game of chess, to undergo sordid metamorphosis. The city is "A cemetery above a cemetery" says al-Bayātī's persona in "A Profile of a City" (Ibid. 303). It is worth knowing that al-Bayātī's early cities are not identical with his later ones. While not dismissing the temporal cities as "Unreal" in the vein of Eliot in *The Waste Land*, they assume, in "The Birth in Unborn Cities," a number of forms, as one in "the night of the autumn of the Arab cities" (Ibid. 279). These are set in contradiction to the desired "Unborn Cities" of cyclical life and death (Ibid). However, they can suffer disorientation, and "Rome was searching for Rome," whenever intellectual freedom is threatened. However, it is usually "at the gates of Toledo," or "At the borders of Alhambra," that his poetry selects a place for martyrs and exiles.³⁷ Indeed, some cities may appear as a dream, "let us fly to Paris," says "The Lady of the Seven Moons."³⁸ Opposite to these, is Eliot's city:

Unreal City
Under brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many

I had not thought death had undone so many,
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
 ("Burial of the Death,"
The Waste Land 2149)

On similar occasions, al-Bayātī's somber mood grows into morbidity:

She fell silent while we were lost in the Louvre
 We were following the steps of the dead crowd
 We searched for our voices in the tumult of the voices
 For the meaning in the meaning
 ("Aisha's Mad Lover," trans. Frangieh 93)

Upon such negotiatory instances, Eliot penetrates this mood, disrupting the possibility of rapprochement and love: "London streets were sighing deeply/
 The dawn/ Reflecting the wet pavement in her eyes."

If al-Bayātī's early poetry tends to look upon the city in binary opposition to rural life, his villages are not necessarily romanticized. The "Village Market" is a site of desolation, bitterness and exploitation. The city for a villager is "a blind beast / whose victims are our dead, / the bodies of women."³⁹ Although in these early poems of *Malā'ikah wa-shayāṭīn* (Angels and Devils 1950) and *Abāriq muḥashshamah* (*Broken Pitchers* 1954), al-Bayātī was already aware of Eliot's tendency to intertextualize, the city of *The Waste Land* and the *Four Quartets* imprinted on his poems a tone of disenchantment, and a perspective of a disconcerted persona. "He immediately came to regard modern urban life and modern Arab cities as cheap replicas of the vibrant cities of ancient civilization," writes Frangieh.⁴⁰

Eliot appropriated in traditional satire

Eliot's "Hollow Men" appealed to al-Bayātī in more than one sense. He was no less ambivalent regarding his role as a poet. Divided among many positions and perspectives, including the existentialist, the Marxist, and the Sufi, al-Bayātī developed an angry and disillusioned voice. The biting Eliotian criticism of modernity, the alienation of the human, and the seemingly drifting masses underwent appropriation in al-Bayātī's "Lament for the June Sun," dedicated to the memory of the political theorist and ideologue Zakī al-Arsūzī. Eliot's images of aimlessness, emptiness, and his satire of a whole generation offered themselves to al-Bayātī who looked upon the whole 1967 scene as one of waste, failure, lies, and utter negligence. The contemporary East has no regenerative impulse. Neither has it the right to claim a history

of achievement. "Trivia occupied us," and "we swat at flies,"

We wear the masks of living people
 We are half men
 In the garbage dump of history.
 (Frangieh's translation 21)

Indeed, Eliot invades al-Bayātī's mind, for, "We are the generation of meaningless death / The recipients of alms" (Ibid. 23).

The biting satire in al-Bayātī's poetry derives its power from a deep-rooted tradition to which no Arab poet, perhaps, remains oblivious. While the Eliotian element can easily fuse into the general rather than the specific, the remainder establishes itself firmly as a formidable subtext. "We killed each other and now we are crumbs," writes al-Bayātī in "Lament for the June Sun." Our fights and wars are no more than "War of words / wooden swords / Lies and empty heroes." Recollecting reasons for battles and fights in earlier tradition, he finds that "We did not kill a camel or a grouse / we did not try the game of death." Hence, history is emptied of meaning, and people degenerate into lifeless images. "We wear the masks of living people." Al-Bayātī tends to step back and forth, between Arabic tradition and Eliot, to bring the old and the new together, with their store of connotations and cultural implications. Tradition here is no longer a comforting recollection, but a repository of details, a source of ironic contrasts that highlight present disjunctions.

Al-Bayātī's resentful rhetoric, his retaliatory bombardment of critics and poets of a different mind, is indebted, too, to traditional Arabic poetry, particularly its strain of venomous and vindictive opposition. Nevertheless, the Eliotian element is not absent. Especially in "Gerontion," the addresser is Gerontion himself, whose dilemma is a kind of in-betweenness in time. Al-Bayātī's persona, like Gerontion, problematizes tradition and uncovers its ironies. Gerontion's present is as distorted and contaminated as al-Bayātī's human condition and national scene. Like the passage in "Gerontion," where cosmopolitan culture is depicted in terms of a black Mass, al-Bayātī's poetics of satire and bitter criticism are usually leveled against enemies of every sort. These are usually labeled as "false critics," or "rats of the fields of words." On occasion, these are the "giant peacocks," the "thief of the poor's foods," who are "half men" in "the garbage dump of history," as imaged in "Lament for the June Sun" and other poems.

Yet, al-Bayātī's entanglement in the Eliotian mosaic and poetic is more complicated, as it ignites his poetic mind, and directs his memory at times toward tradition as a living presence that entails dialogue, interaction, and negotiation. Eliot's "Little Gidding," where "intersection of the timeless / With time"⁴¹ takes place and informs its subtext, must have been in

al-Bayātī's mind on many occasions. Its recall of Dante's purgatorial fire and its intensification of his *The Waste Land* premise to "establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life," may have drawn al-Bayātī to his precursor al-Ma'arrī (d. 1057). Al-Ma'arrī received great attention from al-Bayātī. Since the 1950s and just before his death in 1999, al-Bayātī devoted many poems to that strong ancestor. Eliot's "dead master" is not different from al-Bayātī's. Both recollect their precursors as masks, but they also fuse into them as "intertextual compounds"⁴² that invite comparison but resist total identification. In their response, Eliot and al-Bayātī engage in adoption and evasion. The tactic could amount to a strategy that draws the present poet into the orbit of the great without detracting from the precursor's status.

Nevertheless, the whole effort to draw a comparison between al-Bayātī and his Anglo-American precursor should not mislead us into thinking of the ephube as passing into a fit of appropriation or surrender to Eliot's formidable authority. The first allusion to Dante in *The Waste Land*—which obviously suits al-Bayātī's discontent with the urban center—recalls for him al-Ma'arrī's identical condemnations and satires as presented in his poetry and *Epistle of Forgiveness*, which some scholars claim as another source for Dante's *Inferno*. Al-Ma'arrī's *Epistle* surveys dignitaries, poets, and writers in hell or in limbo, and investigates ironically superficial readings of the Qur'ānic text regarding heaven and hell. Along with the tradition of the Prophet's night journey to heaven, al-Ma'arrī's writings provided monastic scholasticism with a lot to consider, manipulate, and utilize against competing religions, especially Islam.⁴³ Al-Ma'arrī as a poet of so much discontent, with a deep meditative mind and enormous knowledge, should have been in al-Bayātī's mind whenever hell and heaven become paradigms for contemporary perspectives.

Speaking of his use of Dante in *The Waste Land*, Eliot sounds intentionally bent on a specific address: "I have borrowed lines from him, in the attempt to reproduce, or rather to arouse in the reader's mind, the memory of some Dantesque scene, and thus to establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life" (Quoted in Svarny 208). Al-Bayātī's blind poet and philosopher was not a poet of disenchantment despite his ironic reminiscences about life and death, but he was a person whose personal record was an indirect satirical view of life. His existentialist preoccupations and stark images of life and hell, along with his deep philosophical musings and poetic ironies, made out of him al-Bayātī's counterpart to Eliot's Dante.

On other occasions, al-Bayātī's acquaintance with both invites some analogous manipulation of their texts. In more than one instance, but especially in his poems on al-Ma'arrī, al-Bayātī found in Eliot's depiction of Tiresias a viable mythical method. Oriented in the cynical, but exposed to provocative scenes of sterility and corruption, Tiresias's vision is revisionist in the main. "I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, / can see at the violet

hour.”⁴⁴ It encompasses and encapsulates the whole, but it declaims, what Erik Svarny terms aptly, “the unified self of spiritual autobiography” (p. 191). It is through a bisexual vision that scenes are revisited, styles readdressed, and an amount of proliferation is introduced. Ludic at large, Tiresias’s intent undermines itself, giving way to an enormous relativization, which shreds and quotes only tend to increase. To al-Bayātī, too, al-Ma’arrī, the blind philosopher and poet, oversees a whole scene which he is unable to control or influence. His awareness and insight increase a sense of disenchantment rather than rapture. However, while there is a reason to draw a comparison between Eliot’s Tiresias and al-Bayātī’s blind poet, al-Bayātī’s poetics escapes total mythicization. Indeed, his mystical poems and the significant ones of exile parody the mythical and interrogate its underlying cycle while they opt for a redeeming love.

Grounded in al-Ma’arrī’s poetry, as his many dedications suggest, al-Bayātī is no less at loss than al-Ma’arrī in respect to the whole ontological issue. Always striving to universalize experience, he makes good use of his prototype who also contemplated precursors with a rigorous and revisionist method. Although not particularly an expert in developing a “*mélange* of evanescent voices” (Svarny’s phrase 210), al-Bayātī’s readings offer him shards, fragments, and a rich mosaic of poetic space that throbs with lively discussions and critiques of life, love, death, exile, and poetry.

Al-Bayātī’s Ma’arrī is impersonated in a poem titled “Sujūn Abī al-‘Alā’ (Abū Al-‘Alā’s imprisonments), written just before al-Bayātī’s death (1999). No longer a mask or a ghost as in his earlier poems, the ancestor interfuses into the poet’s persona and they become one. Certainly, Dante fuses into Eliot’s voice, too. In the second section of “Little Gidding,” Eliot’s persona and the “familiar compound ghost/ Both intimate and unidentifiable,” converse, speaking of the past and the present. In James Olney’s words, they are “a collection of disembodied souls representing our personal, professional, national human past and informing our individual present.”⁴⁵ Dante appears and identification and recognition are established, but ambiguity remains there, too, to snap sustained reasoning. The practice is not alien to al-Bayātī in his “First Symphony of the Fifth Dimension”:

I hear him sigh in my slumber
Smiling, he reads my thought and strokes my hair.
I hear him pronounce my name and say:
If this next night comes to folly
And the wind howls behind the Ural Mountains, you may come.
I tell him: I am blind and alone
The voice falls silent.
And I find myself on the pavement of my sleep
Riveted to the magnetic rock
Enveloped by the darkness in the depths of my own hell.

(Pt. III)⁴⁶

The speaker falls into silence, too, and if Eliot's voice and the ghost "trod the pavement in a dead patrol," al-Bayātī's persona suffers similarly, "We were following the steps of the dead crowd."⁴⁷

Indeed, Dante and al-Ma'arrī, the great masters for Eliot and al-Bayātī, were drawn upon, identified with and manipulated in oblique addresses against the modern scene. Both represent the dynamic in tradition for the ephebes, but they also act in the present against its lack of soul. They were recalled for appropriation in a dynamic reading that raises questions about the role of memory in poetry, about what to recall and what to ignore. Both wrote on memory, its benefits, limitations, and restrictions.

When translated and discussed by the Palestinian Lebanese Tawfiq Ṣāyigh (d. 1971),⁴⁸ Eliot's *The Four Quartets* did not leave an immediate strong impression on young poets who had already searched for the new and the challenging in every poetry, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Russian, Spanish, French, or Anglo-American.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, for al-Bayātī the dilemma of exile, memory, and new attachments involved him in further experimentation and appropriation of new material, *The Four Quartets* included. Memory could lead back to nostalgic recollections, as his poem the "Jurḥ" (Wound) demonstrates. That poem sounds as a further elaboration on the persona's musings in Eliot's "Little Gidding," for the whole drive there is, in Gregory S. Jay's words, "to reject the notion of memory as nostalgic recollection and to repudiate thinking of the future as if it were simply perpetuation or recovery."⁵⁰ It also endows memory with another function, beyond time limitations or spans, through a counteracting poetic endeavor, a transfiguration of experience into a new pattern beyond experiential loss:

This is the use of memory
 For liberation—not less of love but expanding
 Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
 From the future as well as the past. . . .
 . . . see now they vanish,
 The faces and places, with the self, which as it could, loved them,
 To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.
("Little Gidding")

Certainly, al-Bayātī's fight against memory in order to begin anew also entails recognition of aspiration and failure, expansion and limitation. In "'Ūlad wa aḥtariq bi-ḥubbi"/ "I am Born and Burn in My Love" (1975), loss of love as a transfigurative act or a spring for creativity means a fall, a trap, and a lack that equals sterility:

Exiled in my memory,
 Imprisoned in words,
 I flee under the rain.
(Pt. V)⁵¹

In a manner that recalls Eliot's memory, al-Bayātī points to the creative moment as one beyond limits. Instead of letting it lapse into nothingness with no transfigurative becoming, he sets it, in 'Ayn al-shams' / "Eye of the Sun" (1971) within a regenerative process, rhetorically devised as a release from the worldly mechanism of the present:

We will meet in another birth, in a new era
 When from my face and your face
 The shadow and the mask will fall
 And the walls will collapse.

(Ibid. 61)

The implications of memory, however, are not so clear-cut. Memory is deliberate; it recalls for a specific purpose: to establish a duplicate city, in "Marthiyah ilā madīnah lam tūlad"/"Elegy to the Unborn City" (1970) a "hidden, enchanted city / On the map of the world / Similar to my city," but also with the implication of possible failure:

In the color of its eyes and in its sad laugh,
 But not wearing
 The tatters of the wandering clown,
 Nor does its summer buzz with people and flies.

(Ibid. 43)

If Eliot achieves a greater distancing and detachment through the power of intertextual insertions that alienate recollections as a past in a presence of hybridity, al-Bayātī images his nostalgic legacy as a nymph of some sort, a sorcerer, or an icon. There he empties his yearnings and belongings, disposing of them as memory, to be drawn upon in need. Such an endeavor is predicated on sites of loss. Even if the nymph and the sorcerer gather themselves into a cloud, the speaker's yearning is no less than that of a parched land, a vagrant, and magus whose "pagan...sad heart" has no anchor of certitude. Significantly, the longed-for image, addressed in feminine terms, is a catalyst of emotions, yearnings, and rapture, unattainable and elusive. The note, which is released due to this sense of loss, brings together, in "Thalāth rusūm mā'yyah" / "Three Watercolors" (1970), a plethora of poetic voices that have inhabited his poetic text: "I die like a drop of sad rain / Upon the faces of the passerby" (Ibid. 49).

The personal agony here is too much for the Eliotian detachment, yet the rain is emptied of its fertility, while the passerby could be any among Eliot's passing crowds. In this verse, there is something from every poet, but also everything that belongs to al-Bayātī, leaving us, upon close reading, absorbed in and challenged by the density and richness of poetry, between trajectories of modernity and tradition. The navigation is both spontaneous

and deliberate, and its intercultural register betrays this admixture while doing violence to both tradition and modernity. In sum, this violence stands for the very act of experimentation with traditional typologies and genres, for urgency on the one hand and exposure to other practices and pronouncements on tradition and modernity on the other have set the scene for new poetic modes and engagements. The act of revoking the normative and dissecting the modern impulse, as I will argue in the concluding chapter, sets al-Bayātī, and perhaps others, within a volatile cultural intersection. This edge makes poetry more exciting, as it sustains life in death while not losing sight of the predicament of the human here and now.

CONCLUSION

Deviational and reversal poetics—dissent,
not allegiance

The previous chapters have studied poetic sites of convergence, discontinuity, and exile. They have also tracked poets' pronouncements concerning Arabic poetry, ancient and modern. It remains for this chapter to draw a comparison between the ancient dominating poetic of allegiance and the modern one. Modern Arabic poetry is often marked by difference, anxiety, and discontent. In this sense, one can argue its secularity. In other words, it is no longer under other obligations of allegiance, including those of authority and subordination as partially sustained in the classical form. Its preoccupations and engagements, as well as its experimentation with modes and strategies, raise further questions regarding estrangement or continuity. But tradition is not a form or a direction. Modern Arab poets and literary theorists, including Adūnīs and Bennīs, looked on tradition as larger than the canon, and therefore, as a debatable ground that should not be confused with hegemonic discourse. While the normative element in poetry was accepted for a long time as another term for the canon, this should by no means blind us to patterns of transgression and dissent, as these validate and perpetuate modernity against dormancy and immutability. In the past, not all tradition was widely accepted and approved by the literati, the court, and the nobility. Including poetry embedded in *Kitāb al-aghānī*, as well as marginalized and muted cultures, tradition was a site of contestation and debate, which contemporary scholarship aspires to readdress and bring back to life. Being so broad, it offers examples to substantiate different positions and arguments, but the variegated nature of tradition also admits the existence of a privileged hegemonic discourse whose power relations undergo change every now and then. This corpus also contains deviational modes of difference and dissent, that is, a counter-hegemonic discourse. If the "weaker" side in the emulation process, as applicable to tradition, "is the more receptive to the stronger influence of the other,"¹ as Foucault argues, there is also the counter motion that builds up in time to supersede and replace preceding norms. We should keep in mind that the court in the 'Abbāsīd period (750–945, 945–1258) was not consistently the same, and that deviational poetics, including the wine poem, paradoxically established its presence

in elitist domains, as Philip Kennedy persuasively argues.² In more than one instance, modern poetics converges with the deviational mode as a process not a terminus. It also integrates and dialogues with texts in other languages and cultures. Its sites of difference or *rapprochement* may establish a common ground with pre-Islamic, classical and postclassical poetics of opposition and dissent, but not so widely with the formative poetics of allegiance, boastfulness, and invective. Compared to the dominant writings of the canon, the deviational remain an undercurrent, for even the brigand-poet, or *Ṣu'lūk*, was identifiably against the dominating social order in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. Brigand poetry was then an act of rebelliousness in both form and matter. Conversely, allegiance to power politics entails allegiance to normative poetics. For a long time, the tradition-honored tripartite structure, as discussed by Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), was enthroned as the cherished model. Ibn Qutaybah's oft-cited description runs as follows:

I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of Odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling-places and relics and places of habitation. Then he wept and complained and addressed the desolate encampment, and begged his companion to make a halt, in order that he might have occasion to speak of those who had once lived there and afterwards departed; for the dwellers in tents were different from townsmen or villagers in respect of coming and going, because they moved from one water-spring to another, seeking pasture and searching out the places where rain had fallen. Then to this he linked the erotic prelude (*nasīb*), and bewailed the violence of his love and the anguish of separation from his mistress and the extremity of his passion and desire, so as to win the hearts of his hearers and divert their eyes towards him and invite their ears to listen to him, since the song of love touches men's souls and takes hold of their hearts, God having put it in the constitution of His creatures to love dalliance and the society of women, in such wise that we find very few but are attached thereto by some tie or have some share therein, whether lawful or unpermitted. Now, when the poet had assured himself of an attentive hearing, he followed up his advantage and set forth his claim: thus he went on to complain of fatigue and want of sleep and traveling by night and of the noon day heat, and how his camel had been reduced to leanness. And when, after representing all the discomfort and danger of his journey, he knew that he had fully justified his hope and expectation of receiving his due need from the person to whom the poem was addressed, he entered upon the panegyric (*madīḥ*) and incited him to reward, and kindled his generosity by exalting him above his peers and pronouncing the greatest dignity, in comparison to his, to be little.³

The norm as set in the example above allows space for different personal accentuations, but the poem has to share a common code with its audience to receive recognition. Within the dynamics of subordination and change, allegiance and deviation, both imitation and innovation work in concordance and refraction. No matter how the pre-modern poet (before 1914 as a date of convenience) argued imitation as both conscious plagiarism and as an inseparable part of one's grounding and learning, there was a binding sense of allegiance to the norm. Sarcasm and humor at the expense of these norms made their inroads only when urban expansion, and its concomitant mixture of races and cultures, especially with the 'Abbāsīd takeover, offered ground and justification to deviation. The urban/Bedouin dichotomy was as serious then as it is now. The anti-Bedouin sentiment, as in Abū Nuwās's poetry, targeted associated ways of thinking, writing, and behaving. Arabism, for a time, was confused with a desert way of life as antithetical to a broad Islamic inter-culturality, along with its manifestations, real or imaginary, in literature. To account for deviational poetics with its streak of the so-called *shu'ūbiyyab*,⁴ as "an attempt to forge the bases for a multicultural intelligentsia,"⁵ we need an overview of normative and deviational poetics since pre-Islamic times, as follows:

- 1 Poetics of Allegiance;
- 2 Mediational Poetics;
- 3 Reversal Poetics.

These work within conventions and norms in subordination or resistance. They lay the ground for postclassical, neoclassical, and modern poetics, as subsequent analysis of neo-Sufism and modern elegiac modes demonstrates. To cope with the poetics of allegiance, however, and its classical underpinnings, Suzanne P. Stetkevych's *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy* may serve the purpose of this chapter as a critical reading of pre-Islamic and Islamic poetry with emphasis on the dimension that keeps it in dialogue with history and culture. The poems, as analyzed in her book, are no longer isolated literary products, but ones that operate in cultural contexts of authority and allegiance, with all their ceremonial rites and demands. Whether actors or supplicants, poets had a role to play within time-honored traditions. Stetkevych also relates change in rhetorical patterns to cultural shifts and religious-political transitions and transformations that justify association with the Umayyad or 'Abbāsīd periods.

In line with Jaroslav Stetkevych's critical method and his masterly use of cultural anthropology and thorough readings of the generic and the mythical in poetry, Suzanne P. Stetkevych carries the study of poetry and poetics beyond philology, while making good use of it whenever the need arises to reflect on poets' special use of words, terms, and occasions. Although unconcerned with early surveys of myth that have their impact on modern

literary sensibility like Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, the writer focuses on four applications, namely, (1) Theodor Gaster's *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Middle East* (1977), with its emphasis on seasonal patterns and the cyclical movement from Emptying to Filling, equivalent to Death and Regeneration in Frazer's model; (2) Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* (1908; trans. 1960); (3) Marcel Mauss' *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925; trans. 1967); and (4) Classical scholarship on the poetic and structural role of preludes in Greco-Latin traditions. These applications bring into focus issues of imitation and innovation without lapsing into the wornout scholarship of authenticity and imitation. Although drawing attention to Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* and Eric Havelock's *The Muse Learns to Write*, the writer's reference means to preempt questions regarding the viability of the historical and the anecdotal.

In a succinct reading of classical Greco-Latin scholarship, and with a cautious comparative application to the pre-Islamic and Islamic panegyric ode, Suzanne P. Stetkevych makes use of Conte's claims for the epic in Western literature. Conte argues that the epical mode "allows a community to consolidate its historical experiences, conferring a sense on them, until they become an exemplary system that is recognized as the community's new cultural sense or scripture."⁶ She develops her argument through a close reading of a number of odes, as follows: (1) al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī's "Are You Leaving Mayyah's People," as an example of pre-Islamic royal ode, cuckolding the Lakhmid king of al-Ḥīrah, al-Nu'mān Ibn al-Mundhir (r. 580–602 CE), and another by the same poet as an example of apology, "O, abode of Mayyah"; (2) Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr's mantle ode, addressed to the Prophet, as an example of conversion and submission; (3) al-Akḥṭal's celebratory ode "The Tribe Has Departed" addressed to the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwān (r. 685–705); (4) Another ode of supplication by the same poet; (5) Odes by the 'Abbāsīd Abū al-'Atāhiyah (748–825–6 CE) and Abū Tammām with their generic equations and significations of achievement and victory; (6) Three odes by al-Mutanabbī; and (7) Odes from the Arab West, al-Andalus.

While arguing for the panegyric ode as functionally "a ceremony of homage and as a *lingua franca* for political negotiation," she develops a rigorous argument against the ghosts of many scholars who either have studied the ode in purely formalistic terms or have ignored its politics. In her view, the pre-Islamic ode "was established as the authoritative poetic paradigm for the Arabo-Islamic poetic tradition" (Ibid. 81). To account for this canonization, Stetkevych develops a reading of poetry and poetics that makes good use of cultural anthropology and classical scholarship. The effort is not propelled by a desire to accumulate readings or evidence, for the writer resorts to theory to develop a perspective that has been gaining ground in scholarly appreciation and acceptance.

Since her first contributions, she has found in van Gennep's rite of passage a viable method to apply to tripartite poetic structure as manifested in the

Jāhīlī or pre-Islamic *qaṣīdab*. The movement of the poem as such establishes a form that answers to the poetics of the period. This form indicates a poem's canonicity, and its empowered presence in social and moral life. The poems as cited by Suzanne Stetkevych offer themselves smoothly to this argument, especially as she combines this tripartite movement with the role of the poem as in Marcel Mauss' rituals of exchange (Ibid. 201–07). The poem as canon has the power to legitimize authority that patrons seek. No matter what forms authority takes, the need for poetic allegiance remains as acute and urgent as long as power structures feel the need. In an example from al-Andalus cited by the author, a poet neglects this contract at one's peril, for failure to see into the time-honored *qaṣīdab* politics only must signal impending failure and collapse. As Sulaymān Ibn al-Ḥakam Ibn Sulaymān's behavior shows, "failure to complete this contractual ritual . . . signals the collapse of Arabo-Islamic culture" (*The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy* 281).⁷ There are abundant examples of recognition of this role, and the writer applies them for comparison and contrast. The need is reciprocal between poets and patrons, and failure on either's part could lead to disorder. Yet to develop the argument only within Arnold van Gennep's tripartite movement toward co-optation and integration may not justify the poets' overt call for status, recognition, and reward. Here, Marcel Mauss offers help in explaining the ritual of exchange, for both patron and poet are under the same obligation of gift rituals. The ceremonial presentation of the poem calls for the conferral of the reward. The poem raises the poet to the status of the patron and justifies, symbolically and materially, the poet's closeness to the patron. Suzanne Stetkevych gives a number of examples to demonstrate this reciprocity. In pre-Islamic as in Islamic poetry, reciprocity works within this dialect. Especially in the case of al-Mutanabbī, this ritual assumes greater proportions as concomitant with the poets' claims of magnanimity and manliness (Ibid. 201).

Poetics of legitimacy in context

The implications of ritual exchange are of so much cultural and social weight because of the *qaṣīdab*'s legitimizing power, which is closely associated with the role of the poet in pre-Islamic society. With this understanding, poetry is no less needed in Islamic times. Using Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr's "Su'ād Has Departed," Suzanne Stetkevych argues that the address to the Prophet (dated 9 H / 630 CE) embodies not only a personal conversion, but also a whole society and tradition that were "co-opted" by Islam (Ibid. 49). Transmuting the *qaṣīdab* codes and rituals to Islam, and legitimizing these, too, in an address to the Prophet, the *qaṣīdab* structure assumes legitimacy and becomes viable for further use. The idea is ingenious as it runs counter to one-sided readings of Qur'ānic positions regarding poets, not poetry. The "Su'ād Has Departed," was the poet's own presentation and gift, his conversion and supplication, which were received with no less a gift than the Prophet's mantle. In the writer's words, "thus we witness in the *qaṣīdab* the Islamic cooptation of

Jāhilī ritual and ceremonial forms to buttress the authority of the Prophet and the nascent Islamic state by identifying them with the authoritative models of the past” (Ibid. 69). True as this case is, the supplicant poem offers poetry the chance to re-establish itself within Islamic rule. Both need each other, and the poem acted then as an apologia to atone for early confusion regarding the message of Islam. Its pioneering conversional poetic set the tone for further examples, but it was also the witness for change from the ongoing tripartite structure to the dipartite that the writer justified in Gaster’s seasonal ritual pattern of Emptying (mortification and purgation) and Filling (invigoration and jubilation) (Ibid. 74). Although the three genre-determined components continue to be the “evocative bearers of political and religious legitimacy,” as the writer argues (Ibid. 80), the seasonal pattern is more congenial to a later period when the panegyric took a more urgent role in the politics of legitimacy. In both cases, the ode applies its tradition-honored themes and motifs without lapsing into the past as a mere imitative practice. The writer invests a lot of comparative poetics in this respect to lucidly pass her idea that “each panegyric ode is a particular embodiment or exemplar” (Ibid. 83), for each applies the generic characteristics along with traditional residual in order to recreate the past to “confirm the present” (Ibid. 83). Deploying therefore the poetics of ancient and Islamic literatures, this book is not occupied with politics that basically works outside the canon and its orbit of response, a point that I deal with later.

Suzanne P. Stetkevych rightly notices the appearance of the “group *raḥīl*” in Umayyad poetry (Ibid. 100), as a transition toward the *madīḥ* as the real purpose of the panegyric. Here Gaster’s seasonal structure proves pertinent as the panegyric moves from chaos and crisis toward reintegration and jubilation. The more the panegyric is driven by urgency the less patient is the poem with its transitions. It is no wonder that later panegyrics give way not only to a bipartite structure, but also to a monopartite one (pp. 143–44). This later development, with its disregard for the opening is not an easy and smooth handover, and the writer devotes many pages to Abū Tammām’s well known celebratory “The Sword is More Veracious” (pp. 156–67) in *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*. With clustered images of rape to speak of the conquered city, the poem may have its built-in structure to substitute the *nasīb* opening of the ancient ode. Yet, the poem remains classical in its imagery and celebration. Abū Tammām was a pioneer in innovation, to be sure, and the author of *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy* has already explained his role in the change that overtook the language of poetry. This innovatory stance did not undermine the basic *qaṣīdab* structure, nor was it meant to be. Indeed, one of the many omissions in the modernist critique especially that of Adūnīs, is this unrestrained celebration of innovation as a constant. Without due search for the more challenging practices since the emergence of both the wine poem and the *zuhd* (ascetic) poetry, as an amalgam of technical and thematic experimentation beyond the tripartite or dipartite structure as a normative

pattern, this critique falls into a formalist trap that alienates the craft from its formative burgeoning.

Normative patterning is a fossilized practice unless it is deliberately parodied or transposed into a new context for further experimentation. While it carries the imprint of its own culture, it may share common features with others. The use of the deserted encampment can be a common legacy of ancient cultures, and a property shared with the Hellenic tradition, as Suzanne Stetkevych argues. This argument, based on Gian Biagio Conte's reading of the Greco-Latin traditions, broadens the scope of the discussion, and makes it possible to speak of the Arabic tradition in terms of world culture. Conte explains how important it was for these ancient traditions to come up with an opening which was no less empowered than a heading or even a title, a "signature" with a full "literary identity" that transferred itself to audiences with a full "emblematic value" (quoted *Ibid.* 25). The opening acts as perpetuator and mediator, for the audience's expectations are both aroused and established as long as "the opening signals . . . the relation between a specific composition and its literary genre" (*Ibid.*). The quote from the classical scholar has no insinuations of influence, for the argument tends to draw attention to this Islamic poetic outside Eurocentric strictures. The case is more so as these pre-Islamic poetic openings have an identified stamp, repeatedly drawn with enough markers to establish a tradition that has been difficult to dislodge without a counter poetic of equal power. As the examples from the modernity outcome explain, the prelude establishes a threshold of shared expectations, but its internal transformations may restore it to the modernity movement as a site of accommodation between the old and the new.

The elegiac prelude

On the formal level, the elegiac prelude, *nasīb*, motivates the poem through a recollection of loss, as imaged in the campsite. The opening is therefore a justification and perpetuation that leads into other parts, which, in Jaroslav Stetkevych's monumental reading of this mode, operates in a fashion that invites comparison with the oration, and, for that matter, with Greek poetics of oratory, that is, exordium, narration, argumentation, and conclusion.⁸ The comparison is worth pursuing, for the opening catered to a mode, a temper and a tradition whereby the poet accepted the role of the oracle, fitting hence into the "oracular" as signified by the abandoned campsite. Suzanne P. Stetkevych carries this further by drawing on the classical scholar Gregory Nagy in his assessment of the mythicized poet in the Panhellenistic tradition whereby the ancient poet's identity was appropriated by "myth-making structure."⁹ This application is valid as long as it eludes the question of authenticity and makes allowance for issues of orality. The case is more complicated, however, whenever the ancient concordance creates its genealogies and modes of succession. The *atāl* or ruined abodes assume not only the stamp of customary practice in

a contextual horizon of expectation, but also the appeal of an oracular testimonial with promises and/or portents. The ancient record of the ten long poems implies an existing tradition that was so captivating as to resist displacement.

Nostalgia, as discussed in Jaroslav Stekevyč's *The Zephyrs' of Najd*, emanates from a recognition of loss, and "rises to the plane of the subjective past, and from there continues rising steeply to the psychological present of memory as reverie, only to drop from there precipitously to the original level of the past as radical loss."¹⁰ The opening works among levels of the past that lead to the present as vindication in keeping with the aspiration and vocation of the speaker in terms of what Suzanne P. Stetkevyč terms dialectic of transgression and redemption. The dialectic works therefore in contexts of legitimacy as an authoritarian given, whereby power claims legitimacy and ordains supplication and conformity. In other words, patterned and designed as such, a poetic structure acts as a vehicle to ensure allegiance and celebration of the self within a privileged position that is sustained only through this allegiance. Even personal merits like Arabness and manliness as celebrated by poets in this vein are the merits that fit into authoritarianism. While these digressions fall within a comparative prospectus, they also shed light on the significance of efforts, like Suzanne P. Stetkevyč's, to develop a critique of the genre as it manifests its characteristics in texts of topical and historical relevance to issues of legitimacy. These are of a tribal, religious, and political nature, and poetry was as entangled in this mechanism as present-day propaganda and the media in general.

The complexity of form in traditional contexts resists mere technical analysis, and Suzanne P. Stetkevyč has made this clear in her critique of scholars, Arabs, and Westerners, who have thought of form in its later maturations as "slavish imitation." Taking issue with the Syrian scholar Wahb Rūmiyyah, she argues that "the high Jāhilī panegyric ode was established as the authoritative poetic paragon for the Arabo-Islamic poetic tradition: it is at this moment that the Jāhilī *qaṣīdah* is canonized."¹¹ Drawing on Tarif Khalidī's "vision of a legitimizing past," she adds that while legitimizing the Umayyad ode through a process of modeling on an antecedent authority, the Umayyad poet also conferred legitimacy on that antecedent through acclaim and recognition (Ibid. 82). This reciprocity works within a new political system, however. The Umayyads, especially the Sufyānids, were badly in need of this authority,¹² not only to benefit politically from the poetic scene, but also to re-establish their presence within the Jāhilī culture, which recognized their economic and social prestige. As translated by Suzanne P. Stetkevyč, al-Akḥṭal's ode of homage to the Umayyad Caliph cogently fits into this argument. Here are some verses:

O Banū Umayyah, your munificence
is like a widespread rain;
It is perfect,
unsullied by reproach.

O Banū Umayyah, it was I
 who defended you
 From the men of a tribe
 that sheltered and aided [the Prophet].

I silenced the Banū Najjār's endless braying
 against you
 With poems that reached the ears
 of every chieftain of Ma'add,

Until they submitted,
 smarting from my words-
 For words can often pierce
 where sword points fail.

O Banū Umayyah, I offer you
 sound counsel:
 Don't let Zufar dwell secure
 among you . . .

Canonization here works hand-in-hand with a hegemonic discourse that is allied to the dominating mercantile class in Mecca with its resistance to Islam. Umayyad critics had to follow the same canon in order to face adversarial poetry, as the *naqā'id* genre indicates.¹³ It is therefore in this context that the *qaṣīdah* as a polemical ode gains significance. In other words, its supremacy is the supremacy of the hegemonic discourse with its markers and designations. Legitimacy as affirmation of control over Islamic polity has its mechanism and needs, and the effort to sustain the presence of the ode, with its legitimizing past, continued until recent times.

Classical transgressions

Yet, this alliance between power and the use of a specific poetic form cannot be taken at face value as representative. There are other poetic practices that take a different track, not only in terms of social, political, and moral practices, but also in innovation and challenge to normative applications. The effort to transgress poetic tradition may well draw harsh criticism, even if the predecessor is no less a talent than al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), whom 'Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Wakī' (d. 393 H) took to task for his "extremism and false . . . extravagance" for saying "nobody is better than me, or even my equal."¹⁴ In practice, however, talent and powerful entrenchment in a masculine tradition make it possible for the poet not only to get away with defiance, but also to legitimize transgression within the dialectic of aggrandizement and supplication. This order eventually suffered further rupture whenever social and cultural change brought about other tempers with no shared agenda and

expectations. Abū Nuwās's (d. 813) transgressions were permissible, not only due to the Caliph al-Amīn's acceptance, a fact that carried a definite legitimizing power, but also because of the vogue with new urban audiences. He was lucky "that people celebrated his poetry and the notables of his age acclaimed him," says Ibn Manẓūr. He was so overwhelmingly in vogue that whatever made a good light verse was attributed to him. More significant is the remark made by Muhlhal b. Yamūt b. al-Mizri', for the poet was popular with the underprivileged, the common and the riff-raff, who preferred him to all, "unsurpassed in what they used to relate and care for."¹⁵

The counter discourse to legitimacy has its undermining mechanisms, too. There is an undermining poetic, which nevertheless makes use at times of the opening of the *qaṣīdah*. For instance, the matter of the dominating tripartite form, in its dialectical and interchangeable poetics and politics of transgression and redemption or supplication and atonement cannot hold in poems of revolt. The case is more conspicuous in the poetry of the brigand-poets, especially al-Shanfarā. The opening line of his Ode calls on his people to embark on their journey away from him, as he intends to depart, too. The emphasis on separation, not integration, gains impetus through substitution of loyalty to "another people." In this instance, the *nasīb* prelude no longer holds.

Modern nostalgia

Having said this, we have to remember, however, that the *at̤lāl* prelude assumes its powerful presence not through imitation but through repetition, for the latter, as Suzanne P. Stetkevych argues in line with Jaroslav Stetkevych and G. B. Conte, invests the poem with "literary identity" (*The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, p. 25). No matter how ancient/Islamic poets like Ḥassān b. Thābit, or ancient ones like Imru' al-Qays or 'Antarah argue the case of plagiarism and the use of the traditional or contemporary corpus, transgression stops short of meddling with the *at̤lāl* opening and its following structural design.¹⁶ Unless we keep in mind the empowered association between the spatial, the mythical, and the human, we may bypass the intimidating presence of this *at̤lāl*, which cannot be dislodged unless there is a radical transformational change, like the spread of Islam and the urban expansion of the 'Abbāsīd era. It was then that the prelude underwent harsh criticism too, and Abū Nuwās was among the first who revolted against its formal and cultural implications, a revolt that should conversely tell us of its heretofore rigorous presence and imposing demands on the creative mind.

On the other hand, the form of the prelude passed through other transformations that also attest to its acceptance as a literary identity. As Michael Sells persuasively argues,¹⁷ early Muslim Sufis made use of the prelude not only as a means of meditation on the fleeting moment as was the case with both al-Junayd (d. 910) and al-Qushayrī (d. 1074), but also as a threshold for the second movement in the poem, namely the journey or the quest. For the

Sufis, the quest as propelled by the beloved's departure is the trial. The journey takes "two notions of stages," however, as Michael Sells suggests (Ibid. 61). "The Sufis combined the two notions of stages, pilgrimage stages toward Mecca and the stages of the beloved in her journey away from the poet," resulting in a "mystical bewilderment," as in the following lines from al-Qushayrī: "I continued to alight / in your affection, / a way-stop for which / hearts are bewildered." (Ibid.) Moreover, the sacred love talk in the 'Udhri tradition of Arab love,¹⁸ made its presence felt conspicuously enough as to appeal to the Sufis who found in its love-madness and self-annihilation the right path toward mystical union (Ibid. 69).

Openings or preludes have other functional and psychological justifications. Poetic tradition resonates with openings and thresholds that are loaded with accumulated nostalgia for the past, along with convincing pronouncements of desires and agonies. At times, the opening is an excuse to recapitulate and accentuate a perspective, and to come up with a prescribed rhetoric. If modern poetry keeps a distance from the ancient tripartite pattern, it does this in due recognition of change, making compelling demands on sensibility and temper. Whenever antecedent authority is present, there is a corresponding recognition of a thematic-structural rupture that demands a compensatory design as in al-Sayyāb's "Canticle of the Rain," and Fadwā Ṭūqān's "Lan Abkī" (I Will Not Cry). Yet, poets in the neoclassical mode (since the last decades of the nineteenth century) are no less drawn to the classical mode in its normative model as a perpetuating impulse that signals and ensures continuity. The classical poet, pre-Islamic or Islamic, has the opening as the "igniting point for memory," as S. Stetkevych argues (*The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, p. 26), which accelerates a structural pattern with codes and transitions that make up a shared register with the audience. It remains to be said, however, that the model does not necessarily preclude deviation and dissent, for no matter how closely intertwined with the politics of allegiance, poetry remains a stage for self-aggrandizement.

When a poet in a neoclassical mode like al-Jawāhirī (d. 1998), for instance, decided to use the elegiac opening, he only used this as a steppingstone to impersonate a predecessor like al-Ma'arrī (d. 1058) in a poem that I discussed in Chapter 3. Through identifying with him, he called for cultural and social change. In this poem, the opening cannot lead to more than a bipartite structure with interventional digressions of both a personal and a public nature. A different example is from the Moroccan al-Mahdī Muḥammad al-Ḥajwī (d. 1969). Al-Ḥajwī titled a poem as follows: "Waḳfatun 'alā al-aṭlāl wa-khiṭāb al-shabābah" (A Halt at a Campsite and an Address to Youth). Instead of asking his audience to halt at a campsite, the poet calls on his people to "renew the jubilation of these deserted ruins," for they speak for a glorious past, "as there is no better evidence than these" of a past worthy of renewal. Writing in an awakening vein, he calls for the use of science and religious goodwill to recapture the glorious past and be an effective participant in the

future.¹⁹ The poem shows the pitfalls of imitation and overblown rhetoric when engaging issues of modernity and progress. In sum, openings that invest the pre-Islamic or Islamic poem with a generic identity may lose effectiveness, whenever the postclassical poet is under no constraints of allegiance to a living authority. The same is also true whenever the classical form is used in full or in part to accommodate a subject of a prosaic or oratory nature. However, present identifications of political or ideological allegiance intentionally deviate from the norm, not only because of their secular predilection, but also because ideology makes a different demand on poetry.

Mediatory poetics

It may be worthwhile to cite al-Jawāhirī's poem, already mentioned in Chapter 3, as an example of mediatory poetics. His use of the opening and his feminization of al-Ma'arrī's abode Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān attest to his subordination to a powerful generic presence of significant cultural grounding. Yet other structural components become his inroads into a number of traditions. Informed by a present commitment to innovation and radicalization of social and political life, these inroads serve as mediatory channels between subordination to ancient authority and susceptibility to a modern temper. Aware of the challenge of the modern, but disappointed at the attack on the classical ode, al-Jawāhirī discusses the applicability of the classical form to modern times. To argue the case in poetry he retrieves ancestral polemical poetics to debate current innovations and their critical orientations. In this case, his poem has a purpose of its own that sets it within mediatory poetics.

It is different, however, from other negotiatory examples with imitative openings whose sole aim is to ignite memory and therefore set the poetic space for a monopartite ode, like Ibn Zaydūn's (d. 1070) "Saqa al-ghaythū aṭlāl al-aḥibbati" (May God Bless the Ruined Abode of the Loved Ones with Rain).

Between mediational and reversal poetics, modern poetry may bring into its intertext the ancient tradition and the poetics of allegiance, not only to question them through a configuration of textual sites, but also to identify with and search for meaning amid so many significations, old and new. Three examples are worth noting here, one by al-Bayātī, in which he recalls the title of the most majestic pre-Islamic classical odes (the *Mu'allaqāt*, which tradition claims were written in gold and suspended from the walls of Ka'bah) for his short free verse poems. He deliberately opens up the form to accommodate modernist responses to life and love, as in "Aisha's Mad Lover":

A bird's song
Woke me in the middle of the night
I followed the bird

Deep into the enchanted darkness
 She couldn't imprison spring in her orchard
 I saw a flowering branch in the gloom,
 Leaning over me
 From the top of the wall of light
 I cried, the spring then returned
 And I was still at the gate of the orchard
 Praying for its flowering branch,
 For the light which comes from inside,
 For the colors
 Carrying my vows to the capital of the empire
 And the stone of wisdom and the legend
 Perhaps the polar star
 Will become a bridge for me on the infernal river of love
 So I can cross the desert
 Walking behind my camel, dawn preceding me to Bukhara
 I return, carrying my vows to Damascus
 Pursued, starved for love
 Writing my ten *mu'allaqāt* (odes) upon its wall.²⁰

The poem makes use of a mixed register of Sufism and love poetry, but its *mu'allaqāt* are no more than short poems, with scattered references to ancient poetry and geographical markers. The overall effect gathers its power from a lyrical strain as centered in the speaker's yearning for love. Beneath this Romantic agony there is also a deliberate parody of the poetics of allegiance, for the vows that the speaker claims to have for the imperial center amount to no more than this personal yearning. In other words, the poet follows up the *rahīl* (journey) part, across the desert and toward the capital of the empire, only as an infatuated lover led by singing, with no definite signs of settlement. The Romantic agony gathers momentum through this dispersion of effects and the acceleration of the endless journey. The act of writing becomes one of displacement; for only in textual domains can the poet ensure a culmination of desire. The act of writing on the wall parodies the pre-Islamic ode, supposedly suspended on the walls of Mecca, while focusing on the written terminus of an endless quest.

The practice of reversal poetics received subtle endorsement in the poetry of Maḥmūd Darwīsh, especially in his poem "Eleven Planets in the Last Andalusian Sky" in his 1990 collection *Aḥada 'ashara kawkaban* (Eleven Planets). Well-acquainted with classical and Andalusian poetic traditions, Darwīsh navigates easily among forms and images, giving these a modernist sweep that is in perfect concordance with a scene of rupture, loss, devastation, and enormous challenge on every front. Only in his poetry can we claim that the classical works as a sustained underlying subtext to energize and feed a modernist poetics in times of discord. Another example of a different caliber is a poem by Amjad Nāṣir. A Jordanian Bedouin by origin, he is not after

random intellectualizations. The poetic and the real have to negotiate a selfhood, not only in matters of position, but also in the very poetic site. The poem burgeons into a self that captures tradition and modernity within a nexus of poetic dialogization. In his “Aḥada ‘ashara kawkaban li-Āsyā” / “Eleven Stars for Asia” (Nicosia 1984), the poet lets this selfhood unfold, not in a romantic vein of lyricism, but in a controversial accentuation amid competing registers, ancient and new:

Because you are bedazzled by
 bows, *howdahs* and the forgotten tongues
 of tribes who lean against the willow and weep
 you have leant against the date palm of my soul
 princes tumble
 and panegyrics
 the stony splendor of the thousand nights
 another night and the silver boughs are completed
 for the space reclining on my shoulders
 another night and the Qahtani will gird on a sword
 from the fuzzy spring-time
 and lead the stallion of his lusts between
 shepherd’s marble
 to the resurgence of the flesh
 temptation inclines to the north from this bareness
 crowned by the moon’s dew,
 the country seized by copper thunderbolt
 and the horns of rams kohl-edged by history’s
 perfumed dust
 ring out in tumultuous turmoil: this is Asia.
 because you come from technology’s eve
 and all sorts of domestic creations
 so you saw the Pleiades shimmer above the camel hump
 and daggers drawn in lupine distrust
 glittering like battle
 you saw the sinful star of seduction flash in the utter
 blackness of the eye of the veiled man
 because you spring from the vapors of rivers
 safe for sailing
 texts of the body prepared for knowledge
 and for oppressive touches
 for you found in the shadow of a pair of ebony shoulders
 the shadow of a continent drowning in sand and weapons
 Asia, Asia,
 sands and raised guns
 tribes who butcher camels kneeling on bended knee

and half
 Asia, Asia
 moons dangling from the trellis dome
 on hempen ropes and mourn by night in crazed cities
 Asia, Asia
 provinces of mustard, aging eagles and improvisations
 Asia, Asia
 Adam's apple is stabbed by thirty prophets
 and eleven stars
 no room for the birds of freckle
 in the jungles of tar.
 no place for the hand of high industry to fall
 on the haft of the plough pulled by Hammurabi's ox
 for we write what we know not
 we proceed in the festivities of speech.
 Asia, is words born on the lips
 fields rising up to the scythe's edge
 and tilting.
 Asia she only saw her mien as war,
 erasing her features and proceeding in the personal
 history to ashes
 for the war is war no more.
 the shots a carnation, which died in the ecstasy
 and marble grows on flanks
 here we are, in the first year before naught.
 the sun of Asia has bared her body and gone
 on to the sea:
 brides of oak evergreen
 quagmires of wisdom
 linden hearts
 dangling on the curve of dryness
 pebbles
 shining in the water-wheel's jaw
 children gather dung.
 to cook well the continent of bread.²¹

The reader may trace in the poem a dense register of ancient times, records of wars, daily life, dreams and aspirations. Yet, the divided voice reads the old and the new recollections and intimations as they unfold now in this solitary moment. The perceiving mind recognizes an invading change and a mixture of futility, absurdity, will, and power in the old lifestyles. The accumulated detail builds a register that moves back and forth between the ancient ode, the war poem, the real Bedouin life, and the recapitulations of a new sensibility that sees through change. The mere fact that the divided voice traces the

whole record and scene indicates an emerging consciousness in search for meaning amid the old and the new, the desert and the city.

Engagements and invalidations

These poetic sites cannot develop a reversal poetics, as basically appropriating the canons to question or undermine them, without signs of referentiality and shared registers with audiences. Texts aspire to relate to potential audiences who can identify with a register or recognize a shared code. All the more so when texts deploy conventional openings and familiar grounds to involve their audience in reciprocity. Under the constraints and promises of modernity, such a deployment may fall short of the goal as set in a poetics of allegiance, but it may situate its new poetic within acceptable norms nevertheless. As mediatory sites, poems in this negotiatory space between the ancient and the modern build up their position in anxiety and tension. Their discursive ground runs the risk of collision and rift that needs another lyrical flow to compensate for the rugged surface of competing registers. On many occasions, the poet is aware of the tension between the inherited legacy and the impulse of modernity. Release is not an easy matter, as the remains of tradition are deeply rooted in memory. Perhaps, the Egyptian Muḥammad ‘Afifī Maṭar offers a good example of the workings of memory on the poetic site. In “Ambiguous Terms,” written in 1979, the poet is not after merging traditional divining and fortune-telling with allusions to Qur’ānic verses on retribution, punishment, or reward. But rather, the poem sets the scene for poetic creation. Its supplication for a poetic spark works slowly and smoothly within traditional lore, with its rich presence in memory, as it fuses with the Qur’ānic and the tribal. The creative process moves among these registers, rites and oaths:

for I hear the rhymed oath, the hard covenant,
while the river has the face of the quarry
amid the desert’s mirages
(*Quartet of Joy*, 1997, 41)

The poetic process cannot dislodge the presence of the traditional *qaṣīdah*, but it can work with it toward the moment of epiphany:

The tribe possesses ashen fires . . .
from the fire substance there is nothing but blood embers
in the ash of memory;
the hospitality rite: aromas of *tharida*,
coffee, and cardamom
clank in the *qaṣīda’s* remains . . .

(Ibid. 40)

Release comes through this grounding, and the spark is ignited in the poem as epiphany:

My elect state overwhelmed me:
 I was seized by the yield
 of the senses,
 and the signs of epiphany;
 ... the earth book tumbled through myriad exegeses.
 (Ibid. 41)

Reversal poetics can work elusively within the poetics of the “nostalgic prelude” (*nasīb*) of the classical *qaṣīdab*, as for example in Fadwā Ṭūqān’s “Lan Abkī” (I Won’t Cry). The poem begins with a paratextual dedication to the poets of the Palestinian resistance, “a present for the Jaffa meeting, 4/3/1986.” Establishing a dedicatory relationship with a specific group of poets entails a contextual and textual terrain where connections are established and poetic transposition is sustained. In this context, no text is free from the impact of the group’s poetic output, and a configurational site emerges. To cite Gerard Genette, “The dedication...proclaims a relationship, whether intellectual or personal, actual or symbolic, and this proclamation is always at the service of the work, as a reason for elevating the work’s standing or as a theme for commentary.”²²

Fadwā Ṭūqān’s poem opens with the nostalgic prelude, at Jaffa’s gates where the speaker has a glimpse of ruined habitations that remind the woman poet of the damage done under occupation and confiscation. The use of the classical tripartite division is found here too. The nostalgic opening sets the tone for the second section, as the speaker describes the ruins that act on her sensibility in preparation for the trouble and misery as suffered in this meeting. Quoting the standardized “*Qifā nabkī*,” (Stop and We Will Weep), of Imru’ al-Qays in his famous prelude, the poem halts at the deserted dwelling-places and relics of habitation at Jaffa, where this speaker begged to stop and weep, complained, and addressed the desolate encampment. Between watching, surveying, and investigating the scene of havoc and destruction, the mind is not satisfied with mere nostalgic recollections. It poses questions regarding the inhabitants of the demolished abodes, the friends and the loved ones:

They were here,
 They had their dreams here once
 Here they drew
 projects for future life
 Where is the dream and where are they?

The question culminates at the threshold of the ruined campsite:

At Jaffa's gates, O beloved ones,
 Among the chaotic wreckage of houses,
 Among the debris and the thorns
 I stood, addressing my eyes: You eyes
 "stop and we will weep,"
 At the ruins of the departed . . .

In this first part, there is a comparison between what was before and what the situation is at the present time. Looking upon the whole situation, the speaker feels the stress as the present scene shows either ruins or a "a gathering of owls and ghosts," where a line from a famous *qaṣīdah* by al-Mutanabbī fits well to bewail alienation and strangeness as the speaker "is a stranger in face [brown and they are white-skinned in Bawwān], capacity [as he uses the spear as weapon], and language [as his language is Arabic]." ²³ Yet, the same reference may not correspond well enough with the original which nevertheless appreciates the beauty of the place in a poem that is addressed as a panegyric to 'Aḍud al-Dawlah and his two sons. The second part recaptures the sense of loss through a journey of political dimensions, as the speaker uses the arrival as a pretext to recapitulate the meaning of loss. It establishes a filiator bond with the Palestinian poets and the community through physical and symbolic communication:

Here I am, O beloved ones, extending my hand to yours
 . . . Raising my forehead to the sun, with you,
 Here you are as hard and powerful as our mountains
 As the roses of our homeland

This part covers journeying in a mixture of emotional and inflammatory rhetoric, as the speaking voice interfuses into the Palestinian national discourse, its landmarks of defiance and struggle. The last part makes use of this journeying, as it moves in a seasonal structure pattern from chaos and misery to prospects of reintegration and jubilation. Although growing out of the second part with its invitation to intimacy and integration there is a promise to join in a struggle that transfigures words into action:

I go forward on the same route of yours,
 Planting my steps into my homeland
 Into my land like you . . . ²⁴

The poem makes cursory use of the traditional structure to retain a poetic root that can substantiate the driving motivation of the poem as a national song of defiance and struggle. As a dominant motif, the will to integrate, to

identify with the displaced and the uprooted, gains power through the layering of textual and formulaic association and recapitulation.

It is interesting to note how contrafaction works in respect to this poem when a poet like Maḥmūd Darwīsh engages it after June 1967, emphasizing a counter memory, not a nostalgic recollection of a past, for cities and places are alive and “we exist in the flesh of our country.”²⁵ Revoking the nostalgic mood as one of loss, the poet uses rhetorical affirmation to displace whatever that betrays weakness and frailty. Yet, rhetoric cannot sustain a position for long, and Maḥmūd Darwīsh will soon search for other strategies to enforce a textual homeland.

Al-Sayyāb’s “Canticle of the Rain” (1954) approached loss differently. Writing when Iraq was still under British domination and when the puppet regime and the corrupt system caused havoc, Al-Sayyāb used a traditional opening, not that of a ruined abode, but of a departing female. While she may share with the traditional poem its evoked mistress or beloved, there is no further association of luxury or ease. Memory and recollection act nevertheless with no less force in perpetuating the poetic process. In this, al-Sayyāb is drawn to the normative *qasīdah* opening, which, in Suzanne P. Stetkeyvch’s words, becomes the “focal point in the process of poetic composition” (*The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, 26). Its *nasīb* threshold deludes the reader and leads him or her to think in terms of normalcy before being thrown into a counter *riḥlah* of migration and exodus, where the river and the sea, not the desert, lead to the third division of the hymn, as the poet invokes change and revolution against a corrupt system. A comparison between Imru’ al-Qays’ *mu’allaqah* and al-Sayyāb’s canticle may be worthwhile to demonstrate the difference between the old and the new. The pre-Islamic poet begins as follows:

Stop! To weep over the memory of a beloved
 And the ruin of the house of the beloved
 In the soft sand, that ripples
 Between al-Dakhūl and Ḥawmal
 As far as Tūdīḥ and al-Miqrāt.
 Here, in the sand, traces are still visible
 Between the well-worn paths.
 What sand the north wind pours over the ruins
 The south wind scatters when it blows.
 And in the empty, ruined courtyard
 The spoor of the white gazelle
 Lies like peppercorns.
 On the morning of departure,
 While they loaded the caravan in the acacia grove,
 I wept uncontrollably;
 My anguish and longing for my loved one
 Were as sharp as the tears shed
 By those who grind the bitter apple seed.²⁶

The pre-Islamic poet traces in the ruins an image of a departing beloved, to whom it is his role to give form and life in poetry. To have this materialize there should be a convincing endeavor, an engagement with obstacles whereby courage and valor may be demonstrated. No tribal or communal integration is possible without a quest. Al-Sayyāb has a different quest, not only in terms of difference between the pre-Islamic context of the desert journey and residual, but mainly in terms of objectification, of giving voice to every detail in order to bewail a condition and to summon change. Written early in the 1950s and published in *Al-Ādāb*, 2(1954), 18, the poem was looked upon as concomitantly engaged in revolutionary poetics while making use of Middle Eastern fertility myths that were in vogue then.²⁷ Leaning on Suzanne P. Stetkevych's erudite reading of the use of rain, storm, and tears in pre-Islamic poetry, Terrī DeYoung reached insightful conclusions regarding the dichotomous rain-tears presence in the poem.²⁸ She also adds Iḥsān 'Abbās's early critique that drew attention to the symbolic design of the hymn, its invocation of tradition to revolutionize it through a poetic of transference whereby the beloved of the traditional prelude is replaced by homeland. The act of textual transference and poetic transposition is not new, however, for it is available in abundance in the ancient, 'Abbāsīd, and postclassical traditions.

Iraqi pain recaptured

Al-Sayyāb's strength lies elsewhere. His masterly use of patching and negotiation between registers, Arabic and Western, attests to a poetic genius that digests creatively to produce a poem that has the ring of tradition and modernity, nostalgia and political consciousness, thought and music. The whole fits into an eschatological vision that partakes of scriptural benedictions and expresses the southern Iraqi sense of agony and pain. Although writing on Buland al-Ḥaydarī as early as 1967, 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim's words apply with more force to al-Sayyāb. He says: "Iraqi pain is real and old, it is the pain of a country passing through series of periods, Babylonian, Sumerian, and Acadian, and its forehead is smeared with the mud of submission. Instead of changing into a David, a Spartacus, or a Greek hero, he resigns, accepting oppressors' alms, and when revolting he is only freed from the Ottoman master to fall into the hands of the British master." He adds: "From this Iraqi poet's background, where our sorrows multiply in the heart of this land, no Iraqi poet emerges without passing through the cycle of pain."²⁹ This homeland for which the exile in Kuwait yearns recaptures in the poem traditional erotic lore without losing sight of the dire reality. The poet was too realistic to let the nostalgic mood override his political awareness of the life and suffering of a wealthy country whose corrupt feudal system was sustained by the colonizer. By invoking the *nasīb* tradition, the poet engages the audience in an associative register of longing and belonging. Drawing on nature

without lapsing into pathetic fallacy, al-Sayyāb gathers devices and images of anticipation and sorrow which he animates as childhood recollections. Nature is animated through this association, too. He makes his journey into the self while traversing the present scene of rain, river, sea, and life in the south of Iraq. The child who giggles and the child who cries for his mother are the two sides of al-Sayyāb's childhood. The mixed significations of rain, its portents and gifts, danger and beauty, gloom and sunshine enable the poem to traverse different conditions and states. This mixed register emerges through human intimations, childhood responses and recollections. Al-Sayyāb's *nasīb* is the more effective as the invoked female is anonymous, available for further poetic transference whenever the poet commingles the land and the woman into one single image of a charming woman in distress. The poet hides behind anonymity while gathering a poetic subtext of mixed emotions. Between the sadness of children and their giggling, he invokes the scene of rain:

In the hour before dawn
 Your eyes are two groves of palm trees
 Or two balconies
 Passed over by the moon
 When your eyes smile, vines flower
 And lights dance . . . like the reflection of the moon in the river
 Disturbed gently by the movement of oars
 In the hour before dawn,
 As if stars throbbled in their depths.
 The stars drown in a mist of sorrow,
 The sea opens its arms
 In the warmth of winter, the chill of autumn,
 Embracing death and birth and darkness and light;
 the shiver of a sob wakens in my soul
 and a wild ecstasy courses through me, reaching the sky-
 The ecstasy of a child who fears the moon.
 Smaller clouds are lost in the heavy dark clouds
 Which, drop by drop, disperse in rain;
 the children's giggling in the grape arbors
 tickles the silence of the sparrows in the trees.
 Then comes the song of the rain.
 Rain . . .
 Rain . . .
 Rain . . .

Rain assumes a mixed register as concomitant with Islamic tradition, for there is repeatedly a rain for retribution in the Qur'ān, "sā'a maṭaru al-mundharīn" (Sūrat al-Naml, p. 58; and al-Shu'arā', p. 173) evil will be the rain for the warned. In reality, rain also causes floods and consequent suffering and

damage, especially for the miserable. The association between loss and rain is underscored to perpetuate the juxtaposition that underpins the poem, between giggling and weeping, beauty and damage, wealth and hunger. This fluctuation lends the poem more referents that apply to the social and political, for wealth turns into poverty and misery, like the rain that brings about damage and loss. Juxtaposition works vertically and horizontally between the human and the natural as they shed into each other to develop the paradoxical structure of the poem. The paradox that gathers force and impetus through mingling sound and meaning takes the poem away from classical structuring. The poetic voice claims no power other than its early invocation as it accelerates memory and perpetuates subtle comparison, invocation and prayer, as carefully measured in pace with the falling rain:

The evening yawns and the clouds continue to gush
 And pour; pour their heavy tears down
 Like a child weeping in his sleep
 For his mother whom, when he woke a year ago,
 He did not see.
 And when he persisted in asking,
 They told him,
 "She'll be back the day after tomorrow,"
 She must come,
 Though friends whisper that she's there
 At the side of the hill, sleeping the sleep of the dead,
 Down in her own earth, drinking the rain
 Like a disappointed fisherman gathering his nets,
 And cursing the fates and the waters,
 Singing his mournful songs when the moon wanes.
 Rain . . .
 Rain . . .
 Do you know what grief the rain brings?
 When the gutters resound with the sad music of the falling rain,
 And how the lonely feel a sense of loss when it rains.³⁰

The popularity of this poem is due in part to its realistic strain, its immediate engagement with Iraqi life and politics. Its durability may be explained also in these terms, as the richest country falls into evil hands every now and then. Yet, this sustained popularity is also due to its power as a poem, its lyrical flow, the density of images, the admixture of the pastoral and the real, the elegiac, and the celebratory. Its biographical journeying back and forth between childhood and adult life, and its music, endow it with markers of both the folk song and the canticle. Its classical poetic subtext is equally responsible for this durability. The poem works within a traditional register, pre-Islamic and Islamic, while it creates its space of innovation and creativity.

Its rain refrain draws on the real and the mythical. Rain is worth reading in context of fertility rites or their revocation. It may appear in benedictions as invocation of good life and prosperity, as in Abū al-'Atāhiyah's erotic prelude for his poem "My Coy Mistress." The pleasant questioning note needs a playful prayer to counterbalance coyness, "may God send rain upon her ruined abode." Recalling the past in a present calls for this verbal revitalization as symbolic of reunion and return. As the ruined abode of the past, the deserted encampment has a connotation of loss, the invocation invites renewal and regeneration. The Islamic element substitutes the mythical and the poem fares well in its subsequent swerve to the metaphorical, for the woman, as Suzanne P. Stekevych notes, stands for the Islamic *ummah*. Suggestions of beauty and coyness and subsequent submission are the poet's mechanism to enhance caliphal power and dominion.³¹ Rain has other connotations, too. Al-Sayyāb is aware of these, as he is aware of the use of rain in the poetry of Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot. Yet, al-Sayyāb's poem carries no scars of imitativeness, and its primary images of eyes and rain, along with other variants on them, hold the canticle together as one compact song, acting on its reader or listener through reciprocal belonging. The poem regains the right balance between tradition and modernity, and negotiates its registers effectively, providing music, multiple voicing, and innovation. In this poem, trajectories seem to coalesce, not in sameness but in valorization of diversity and poetic creativity.

The poem as canticle and hymn (*nashīd* and '*unshūdab*) has contemporary resonance for, as argued elsewhere in this book, poets like Maḥmūd Darwīsh insist that poetry means recitation. The argument runs against the inclination among modernists to claim poetry as textual property, to be read and pondered. This reading of poetry as recitation summons the support of a few poets from among different generations. In poems that make use of the ancient ode as "Anāshīd l-khaymat 'Ablah" (Canticles for 'Ablah's Camp) by the woman poet from Saudi Arabia, Ashjān al-Hindī (b. 1968),³² there is a recreation of the old erotic prelude, but there is also a comparable lyrical effort to intimate emotions and passions that are impossible otherwise for a female writer in a conservative society. She is able to let these passions unfold in orchestrated poetic movements that move back and forth in poetic accentuations between traditional meter and modern free prosodic experimentation. Ancient poets like 'Antarah and Imru' al-Qays are present in the poem in full, so are their women, but these are also thresholds for personal emotion, as the poetess hides behind the ancient ode to secure secrecy in an ongoing love affair.

Personal outpourings hide behind ancient erotic scenes or other biographical situations that enable the canticle to flow, unrestrained by the intellect. At times, the modern poet reads a similarity between his or her situation and a precursor who was also exiled, or betrayed by friends and relatives. Such is the case of the Yemeni poet 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Maqālīḥ (b. 1937). In his poem

“Waraqah min kitāb al-Andalus” (A Leaf from the book of al-Andalus), he builds on a famous *muwashshah* by the Andalusian poet and writer from Granada, Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1374), who was reportedly betrayed by his former student and colleague, the poet Ibn Zamrak. Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb’s prelude runs as follows: “May the rain cloud be bountiful to you when the rain cloud pours, / O time of love union in al-Andalus!”³³ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Maḳālīh finds in the betrayal and also in the experience and caliber of Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb something akin to his own life and experience. Disappointed and forlorn, he advises his heart “to be alone in the void of your sadness / In the alphabet of your rejection / to be a master in your vices.”³⁴ He concludes, “Do not reach the river unless you are alone / Offer fear the greenness of your eyes . . . And do not wait for somebody in the distant horizon.” The canticle turns into an elegy of the self, for the last words run as follows: “Wait for the coming of death in this gloomy wilderness.”

Sufism and transgression

Sufism of the first generation in the eighth century may not offer poetic patterns for subsequent transgression or transposition, but its language and mode are transgressive in the first place. Its burgeoning into a discourse that belies standardization sets the ground for devotional poetics and easily offers its power therefore to modernist experimentation. Although many readers associate the upsurge of Sufism in modern poetry with such figures as Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr and Adūnīs, the Iraqi critic, ‘Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsīm, wrote an early article on this issue in 1966, as a critique of the poem “Ṣalāṭīn al-‘Ajam” (The Sultans of Non-Arabs) by the Iraqi poet ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ṭuhmāzī (b. 1943).³⁵ Jāsīm argues that this poem is divided into six “admonitions/ beneficial pieces of advice” or Sufi offerings; each *fā’idah* speaks for a Sufi station,³⁶ but in context of twentieth century Sufism. These Sufi offerings imply no reciprocity, and become, therefore, a meeting ground whereby “neo-Sufism” (a term coined by Jāsīm, p. 163), “is proud of the illuminations of the early Sufis while keeping a distance. In this very distance emerges the paradox; and as science intervenes, things get complicated and a battle takes place.”³⁷ The critic thinks the poet deliberately relies on Sufism, to escape engagement not only in contemporary Iraqi politics, but also in love, or allegiance. In other words, the critic traces a deliberate devotional design that makes use of the celebrated Sufi Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/874 or 264/877–878), with his exerted effort to be “the smith of his own self,” liberating the self from every obstacle that might separate it from God. Such exertion enabled him to “shed” the *Anā* (I) in *fanā’*, obliteration, as “snakes their skin.” Reaching this stage of ecstasy, the Sufi Shaykh gave way to his *shataḥāt*, accelerated utterances that drew orthodox criticism of Sufism. Ṭuhmāzī makes use of these hybrid and ecstatic utterances in his poem,

but he is more inclined toward the total experience, with its dialogic dimension that captures both the ecstatic and the real. In one gift or benefit, the poet speaks through the Sufi mask:

I laugh like fear, so my ear let you
 Hear the ghosts
 For I laugh in fear, hungry
 I pass behind the tree
 My caravan is the sea, with its belongings
 On wind I lean.

In another offering, the poet speaks in the voice of another Sufi, perhaps Bishr al-Ḥāfi (the barefoot) of Marw and Baghdad (d. 150/767 or 152/769), whose cognomen “the barefoot” may derive from the Qur’ānic verse, Sura 59: 19, “And God made the earth your carpet.” “So, how can a human step onto God’s carpet wearing shoes?” said the Sufi:

I own my shield I own the bloodstained spear
 So why is my body thrown on the ground in neglect?
 You “Ṣalāṭīn al-‘Ajam” (Sultans of non-Arabs),
 Who is standing in my wounds, dragging shoes
 In my deep injuries?
 I refuse to let my wounds be canals
 Emptied of waters
 To become a passage for wallowers
 You, the face who left me
 Can you run away without me?
 I refuse to be an insult
 Do not burn my wounds
 Do not singe the remains of wax in it.

‘Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim draws attention to this intentional confusion between the immediate experience of the speaker and the Sufi subtext (Ibid. 162). While reaching into Sufi sublimateions, the poet achieves “the face of it through exertion, merely the side of the self which is inseparable from everyday experience. Hence, the aspirations of the poet and his transgression of veiling stand for his completeness, as a harmonious blending with the self, with its failures and inner struggles” (Ibid. 163). Thus, he concludes, the poet “does not submit to the supreme vision (the original and the first ancient one), for he is an amateurish practitioner, not living yet total infatuation or ecstasy, for the state of utter transfiguration and fusion invites no explication. Language itself is drawn to its reality, its emanations, and cannot therefore reflect a total visionary attachment to absence, for language is no more than

words that possess the quality of presence in the lap of things” (Ibid. 165). He even draws on a saying by Khalīl Ḥāwī on language and connotation: “language is the daughter of reality, and passions are connected to this realistic source as the base of life. It expresses efficiently what it emerges from, but cannot express what is too supreme in beauty and goodness. Hence, whatever grand relates to humanity, the earth and reality, with all their contradictions, for any expression of the supreme vision involves language in distortion” (Ibid. 165).

This reading draws on Sufi registers. Obviously not in the “staying beyond stayings” state, or *mawqif*, the speaker is in the buffer state, between the *maqām* and *ḥāl*, a pause in the phrasing of al-Niffarī (d. 965) in his book *Mawāqif*.³⁸ The Iraqi poet cannot sustain this vision, and hence is unable to transcend the real world; for he can be drawn away from God by any phenomenal being or thing, and the bond with God is thus severed (Ibid. 19). The poet is aware of these registers and practices, as he is in the state of striving to reach “the veritable ignorance of all things through Me,” as al-Niffarī says in describing this state (Ibid. 39): “Thou shouldst notice in the vision of thy soul every world and heaven, and every sky and earth, and land and sea, and night and day, and prophet and angel, and knowledge and gnosis, and words and names, and all that is in that, and all that is between that, saying: ‘*There is naught like unto Him*,’ and that thou shouldst see this its saying: ‘*There is naught like unto Him*’, to be the extremity of its knowledge, and the end of its gnosis” (Ibid.). As noticed by the Iraqi critic, however, Ṭuhmāzī is engaged only in the present, hence the existence of the veil that resists obliteration. Al-Niffarī describes the stage as revealed: “I look upon thee, and I desire that thou shouldst look upon Me; while all manifestation veils thee from Me. Thy soul is thy veil, and thy knowledge is thy veil, and thy gnosis is thy veil, and thy names are thy veil, and my Self-revelation to thee is thy veil . . . Void thy heart for Me” (49). The poet’s engagement with the present redirects him into the oblique and wayward. The Iraqi poet speaks, to cite Foucault again, in the language of the madman. This waywardness also entrenches Sufism in the discourse of dissent, revitalizing language thereby through this cross-fertilization. The effort “loads all signs with a resemblance that ultimately erases them,” as Michel Foucault speaks of the language of the madman in relation to poetry, for both occupy a “marginal position” where “words unceasingly renew the power of strangeness and the strength of their contestation.”³⁹

This is not the same approach as followed by the Egyptian Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr who takes the Sufi Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 840 or 841–842) as a mask. He achieves this masking, however, through careful parallelism, intertextualization, and indirect reflection on the human condition. In his “Mudhakkirāt al-Sufi Bishr al-Ḥāfī” (Memoirs of the Sufi Bishr al-Ḥāfī 1964), the poet draws a grim picture of the situation that provoked Bishr al-Ḥāfī to leave human society behind. Quotations give the poem a duplicational nature that builds

on a sense of dismay at the whole scene, including censorship and oppression, but it also applies a reversal poetic through a careful manipulation of the Sufi courting of the void to live in the vision of God:

Be careful not to listen
 Be sure not to look
 Be certain not to touch
 Be sure not to speak
 Halt! Cling to the tight rope of silence
 The fountain of speech is deep . . .
 (Works 429)

Here, there is no Sufi positive striving for the bond with the God, and there is no effort exerted to achieve a detachment from whatever worldly attachment deters this bond. The imperative tense redirects attention to the scene in Egypt in 1964, with the increase of totalitarianism and censorship. This Sufi poetics turns into one of dissent, revitalizing modernist poetics with contemporary intimations.

Elegizing a present

Elegy is another poetic mode and theme that undergoes a great deal of revisionism to fit into the devotional, the reversal, and the revisionist. While making use of the traditional *marthiyah* (elegy), this subgenre constitutes a large portion of poetry since the revivalists of the second half of the nineteenth century. One may say that until sometime in the first half of the twentieth century, and even later, Arabic elegy rarely deviated from the poetry of lamentation with its emphasis on the attributes, good deeds, and impact of the deceased. There are a number of subsequent deviations that dilute the genre, immersing it into a new transgeneric consciousness that looks upon the entire contemporary scene as one of lamentation. As Adūnīs says in “Marthiyat al-Ayyām al-Ḥādirah” (Elegy for the Time at Hand 1958):

All men . . . mere scraps from everywhere,
 Fresh baits of arsenic.
 Under their sky what green can sprout?⁴⁰

Elegies no longer work as expressions of lamentation and love for a single individual, despite the resilient presence of such shades, nor do they necessarily court the ancient combination of fertility rites or calls to revenge and blood as functionally intertwined in future reclamation and victory. As if in reaction to early Tammūzī regenerative cycles, Adūnīs places the elegy in chants of

dismay at a grim past and present:

Chanting of banishment,
exhaling flame,
the carriages of exile
breach the walls.
Or are these carriages
the battering sighs of my verses?
(Ibid. 44)

Elements of fertility and vegetation that conventionally appear in rhetorical exclamations of ancient Arabic poetry, receive here a contemporary twist, as the present site is one of aridity and waste:

Cyclones have crushed us.
Sprawled in the ashes of our days, we glimpse our souls
passing
on the sword's glint
or at the peaks of helmets.
As autumn of salt spray
settles on our wounds.
No tree can bud.
No spring . . .
(Ibid.)

The present is only a continuum of a past that has offered no compensatory signs of growth or rejuvenation. *Adūnīs* looks upon the present scene of failure as a distorted reenactment of history, a flawed reading that draws only on signs of callousness and oppression:

Now in the final act,
disaster tows our history
toward us on its face.
What is our past
but memories pierced like deserts
prickled with cactus?
What streams can wash it?
(Ibid. 44)

The emerging poem cannot work outside this ongoing consciousness, even when poets lament a personal loss, for example in the Syrian poet *Nizār Qabbānī's* elegy for his mother "Umm al-Mu'tazz," subtitled as "Elegy to my Mother." In this elegy the poet sees himself as a knight in a lost battle, or a rover among cities of death and disaster: "I emerged from one death/into

another. /It was my destiny to travel between deaths.”⁴¹ The opening works in space, for its site recalls the deserted encampment of ancient poetry and the *marāṭhī* of cities:

When Beirut was gasping in my arms
 like a stabbed fish,
 a call came from Damascus:
 “Your mother has died.”
 At first, I did not comprehend the words.
 How the fish could be dying everywhere
 at the same time?
 The beloved city, Beirut,
 the amazing mother, Fa’iza . . .
 (Ibid. 113)

Although drawn as pieces of recollections addressed to a public that has no idea of a mother who was not “engaged in . . . public relations,” the poem also carries no signs of fertility and vegetation. The stark scene has no consolation, and the speaker feels unprotected and forlorn: “you shall find me roaming the streets, naked” (Ibid. 114). On another occasion, Qabbānī dedicated an elegy to the memory of the Egyptian and Arab leader Jamāl ‘Abd Nāṣir (d. 1970). The poem laments the loss of the Egyptian leader within a different context. It is the nation that betrays the leader, the nation that relinquishes hope and dallies in empty slogans. The poem creates its text through words of love for the lost leader, but no less than two portions of the poem thrive on the blame and the biting criticism of a society that includes the speaker:

We have killed you, last of the prophets,
 you are dead! It is not new,
 this killing of prophets and saints.
 How many an imam has been murdered
 as he performed his evening prayers!
 (Ibid. 153)

The gap between the leader and the nation is huge, and his thought is inaccessible to a stubborn people. The poet looks on nationalist ideology as a virgin land that demands commitment and faith that do not exist:

You came to us, a beautiful book
 We didn’t know how to read,
 You invited us to the land of innocence
 But we refused to follow.
 (Ibid.)

As elegy, this poem swerves from the canon. It shares with women's elegy some sense of incitement and instigation, but this is carried out through self-castigation that may hamper the elegiac ritual obligation involved in war exhortation. It does not meet the rituals of obligatory avenging of the dead, as it upbraids a polity for being below the standards of the deceased. On the other hand, it shares with the *marāthī* subgenre a purpose, to preserve the memory of the deceased leader, and hence to establishing through inscription the permanence of the deceased as "a beautiful book" and "a land of innocence." In other words, the poem proves what Suzanne P. Stetkevych describes as "the *permanence* of the individual which is of the essence, however, not his individuality."⁴²

Qabbānī cannot totally dislodge his poetics from the elegiac tradition. His emotions of loss and frustration need to preserve memory through a poem that must ensure permanence. Between the elegized and the poem, there is a bond of survival. The permanence of each depends on the attributes of both, and hence the poem borrows from tradition the celebration of the dead as beyond the reach of time. As denial of death involves the elegy in a sharp paradox, there is a need to invoke permanence through analogy. As Suzanne P. Stetkevych notices, ancient poets used to draw on comparison to enhance memory. One may add, by magnifying the dead, they allow their unbelief a rhetorical outlet. Hence Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā expresses surprise, for "The stars still shine on high, / And the ground is still firm beneath the foot" (Ibid. 170). Hence, Qabbānī says:

Mountain of pride, we've killed you,
the last oil lamp who could have lit
our winter nights, we've killed you
with both of our hands and blamed it
on fate!

(Ibid. 155)

This attempt at reclamation from death and obliteration aggrandizes the deceased, while it simultaneously buttresses the reciprocity and bond between the mountain of pride and the poem. The interchange between the two elevates the poem to the celebrated national register, and the fusion is complete. The leader's career and thought becomes the poet's as much as the poem becomes the leader's discourse of fertility and regeneration:

Abu Khalid,⁴³ the poem you were
made ink sprout leaves,
Where did you go, horseman of dreams?
What good is any race when the steed is dead?
All myths died with your death;
Sheherezad (sic) committed suicide . . .

(Ibid. 156)

Qabbānī's poem is one of negotiation among a number of registers and poetics. While it shares a purpose with tradition, its sites of frustration, anger, and need for celebration of ideals and aspirations situate it within a large poetic corpus of anxieties and subtle reliance on an Arab poetic legacy. Issues of nation, state, politics, national discourse, and belief, are recalled and criticized or celebrated. Self-flagellation is there, too, in line with a poetic that has been growing since 1967. Another of Qabbānī's poems, "Notes on the Book of Defeat," expresses the opposition to the nation-state, its totalitarianism and oppression, as perpetrators "have been walled in from / mankind's cause and voice" (Ibid. 18). There is no more faith in the superimposed myths of regeneration and fertility, despite the celebration of the Nasserite discourse of Arab rebirth. In the poem there is no more faith in the nation-state, and no more trust in its apparatus. On the other hand, poetic lamentation addresses a scene, and carries the scars and wounds of a generation of poets who felt a considerable sense of betrayal, not only by the nation-state, but also by the so-called democracies, the Western ideals that have been propelling the modernist impulse for a long time since the revivalist movement.

Amid a scene of such complexity, with no hope for a good and decent life, a poetic of exile, alienation, disappointment, and loss finds its sparks in a personal moment of love, Sufi epiphanies, and engagements with forebears and counterparts elsewhere. Even the traditional erotic opening is displaced by urgency, for as the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh says in his "Rubā'iyāt" of national celebration, memory fades and recollections are replaced by the new reality of war, resistance, and defiance: "I seem to remember horsemen and a Bedouin Leila / and herders milking the she-camels in westerly light," but such recollections are passing away. Addressing his homeland, he feels more committed to the present, not to the past: "My country! The Age of Ignorance brings no nostalgia / since my tomorrow is more beautiful than my today or yesterday."⁴⁴ With a hope as defined by will and desire against heavy odds and cruel facts on the ground, we may expect more nostalgia for the past, however. Textual locations emerge as homelands, and identities are forged through dialogic habitats, whereby multiple voicing and semiotic densities give the new poem a character of its own. Treading into a world of neoimperialist politics of violence, a weak nation-state, an arena of double standards and failures, the modernist poetic is an in-between space. While the demands of postmodernity lead to more experimentation with an outcome of fragmented sensibility, the celebrated postcolonial awareness is trapped into a further need for an ongoing investigation of, and challenge to, the overriding neoconservative strategy as it reaches every corner of the globe. At these thresholds, Arabic poetry has accumulated a large corpus that also makes new demands on readers and critics. Its issues, concerns, and experimentation are no longer formulaic or placid. Nor are they as polemical as the early pioneers' recapitulations. Between these anxieties and past legacies, poetry evolves as dynamically involved in the making of life and culture in the Arabic speaking world.

NOTES

PREFACE

- 1 Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq (d. 1064) quoting Ibn 'Abbās, *Al-'Umdah fī maḥāsīn al-shi'r wa-ādābīh wa-naqdīh* (The Pillar Regarding Poetry's Embellishments, Proper Usage, and Criticism) (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Aşriyyah, 2001), p. 20.
- 2 Quoted in Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 47.
- 3 Cited in Jonathan Culler, "On the Negativity of Modern Poetry: Friedrich, Baudelaire, and the Critical Tradition," in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, eds Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University, 1989), p. 193.
- 4 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Memory of Forgetfulness, August, Beirut, 1982*, trans., Ibrahim Muhawi (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995), p. 193.
- 5 Not coincidentally, the tenth century also witnessed the growth of Arabic geographical literature, and the emergence of a *masālik* subgenre. Classical Arabic literary criticism devotes a great deal to spatial tropes, and uses *maslak*, plural *masālik*, in reference to both modes and themes. They say such and such a poet *salka maslakān wa'ran*, meaning he poetically follows a cumbersome path. See especially Işḥāq Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Wahb al-Kātib (after 335/946–947), *Al-Bayān fī wujūh al-Qur'ān*, known as *Naqd al-natḥr*. He suggests as a prerequisite for being a poet good knowledge of other poets and poetry, to be acquainted with "masālika al-shu'arā' wa-madhāhibahum wa-ṭaşarrufahum, fa-yaḥtadhī manāhijahum wa-yasluka sabīlahum" (to know poets' tracks, their schools or attitudes and their manner, to follow their methods and continue their path). He adds, "idhā lam yajtami' lahū dhālika" (if this does not come together, or configure; that is, if not achieved) he has to stop laying claim to poetry. As for the *masālik* in Arabic geographical literature, the best is Ignati Iulianovch Krachkovski, *Istoria Arabskoi Geograficheskoi Literatury* (Arabic translation, Beirut: Dār al-Gharb, Second Printing, 1987), pp. 212–35.

1 POETIC TRAJECTORIES: CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

- 1 See Ibn Rashīq (d. 1064) quoting Ibn 'Abbās, *Al-'Umdah fī maḥāsīn al-shi'r wa-ādābīh wa-naqdīh* (The Pillar regarding poetry's embellishments, proper usage, and criticism), p. 20.

- 2 Literally: the word *fabl* refers to a camel stallion, especially preserved for breeding, not used for other purposes. Its virility is one side of this special attention, but genetic nobility is another; metaphorically: *fuḥūlab* indicates prowess and excellence; the performance of stallions, champions, and paragons.
- 3 See for instance ‘Abdullah al-Ghadhdhāmī, *Al-Naqd al-thaqāfī* (Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī, 2001), pp. 190–99, 270–74.
- 4 For a discussion of these, see Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 5 Cited in Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 62.
- 6 Cited in Jonathan Culler, “On the Negativity of Modern Poetry: Friedrich, Baudelaire, and the Critical Tradition,” in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, eds Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University, 1989), p. 198.
- 7 Muḥammad Bennīs, *Al-A‘māl al-shi‘riyyah*, 2 vols (Poetic Works) (Casablanca: Dār Tūbqāl, 2002), vol. 1, p. 9.
- 8 Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. 111.
- 9 He writes:

It was reading Baudelaire, which changed my understanding of Abū Nuwās and revealed his particular poetical quality and modernity, and Mallarmé’s work, which explained to me the mysteries of Abū Tammām’s poetic language and the modern dimension in it. My reading of Rimbaud, Nerval and Breton led me to discover the poetry of the mystic writers in all its uniqueness and splendor, and the new French criticism gave me an indication of the newness of al-Jurjani’s critical vision.

Adūnīs [‘Alī Ahmad Sa‘īd]. *Introduction to Arab Poetics*, trans., Catherine Cobham (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990; Arabic text, 1971; English trans., 1985), p. 81.

- 10 Muḥammad Bennīs, *Al-A‘māl al-shi‘riyyah*, vol. 1, pp. 15–16.
- 11 Selected trans., and Intro M. M. Enani, *An Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry in Egypt* (Cairo: GEBO, 2001), p. 53.
- 12 Maḥmūd Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, August, Beirut, 1982, trans. Ibrahim Muhawi from the Arabic (Berkeley, CA: University of California press, 1995), p. 65.
- 13 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), p. 37.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Cited in Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (reprint, New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 269.
- 16 Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 86, 204–05.
- 17 Anne Cranny-Francis, *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses of Generic Fiction* (Oxford: Polity, 1990), pp. 16–17.
- 18 Michel Foucault writes:

In fact, the systematic erasure of all given unities enables us first of all to restore to the statement the specificity of its occurrence, and to show that discontinuity is one of those great accidents that create

cracks not only in the geology of history, but also in the simple fact of the statement; it emerges in its historical irruption; what we try to examine is the incision that it makes, that irreducible—and very often tiny—emergence.

(See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 28)

- 19 There is a further note on this movement.
- 20 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 192.
- 21 One may argue that it also made use of early revivalist movements like the Wahhabis in Arabia (first established their presence in 1745, and captured Mecca and Medina in 1803–1804, 1806), the Sanusis in Cyrenaica (the movement was founded in 1837), and the Mahdists in Sudan (whose revolt against the British was in 1885). The survival of these depended then on how much they could cater to dynamics of change and to Western presence and impact, and how open they could be to accommodate the spirit of the age.
- 22 Cited in Carles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 39, 135. See also Majid Khadduri, *Political Trends in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), for a survey of these issues, pp. 59–63.
- 23 For an account of Rifā'ah al-Taḥṭāwī's stay in Paris (1826–1831), see Daniel L. Newman's annotated translation, *An Imam in Paris* (London: Saqi Books, 2004).
- 24 See Ja'far Šādiq Ḥammūdī, *Mu'jam al-shu 'rā' al-'Irāqīyyīn* (Baghdad: Al-Ma 'rifah, 1991), 359.
- 25 See for instance, M. A. Khouri, *Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt (1882–1922)* (Leiden: Brill, 1971); Yūsuf 'Izz al-Dīn, *Al-Shi'r al-'Iraqī al-ḥadīth wa-atḥar al-tayyārāt al-siyāsīyyah wa-al-ijtimā'īyyah fīh* (Modern Iraqi Poetry and the Impact of Political and Social Trends) (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah, 1965); and J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).
- 26 A. J. Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilization* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1978), p. 359
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 361.
- 28 Ḥusayn Haykal's words, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 361.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 362.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 385.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 394.
- 32 Issa J. Boullata's phrase, see *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 47.
- 33 M. M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 76.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 The Free Verse Movement burgeoned technically and thematically as dissatisfaction with conventions, as it looked upon the classical poem as binding, and obstructing full experimentation with one's vision and experience. The movement promotes genuine experience, authenticity and spontaneity of speech. In an eloquent description of the new consciousness and its freedom, the Syrian poet Nizār Qabbānī (d. 1998) sums up the need for the free verse movement as disenchantment with the traditional rhyme that hinders imagination and excitement and renders the poem “disconnected stories in a lofty building.”

- Quoted in John Mikhail Asfour, *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry: 1945–87* (Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant, 1988), p. 27. Although not entirely divorced from rhyme, the modern poem has its inner rhymes and rhythmical structures based on flexibility and cadence, rather than an imposed form. Badawi, *A Short History*, pp. 25–29.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 See Jamal Eddine Bencheikh, *Poétique arabe: Précédée de Essai sur un discours critique*, trans., Mubarak Ḥanūn et al. from *Al-shi'riyyah al-'Arabiyyah* (Casablanca: Dār Tūbqāl, 1996), p. 69.
- 38 For applications to modernity and the transfer from the commercial to the commodity age, see Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 96.
- 39 Ibid. For a survey of these notions, pp. 126–29.
- 40 See Jameson's summary of the principle, *Marxism and Form*, p. xvi.
- 41 See the present writer's survey, "Arabic Rhetoric," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 31.
- 42 Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 81.
- 43 See, for instance, Salma K. Jayyusi's discussion of "modernist prerequisites" as seen in terms of "language, tone, and rhythm to have the poem free of the loud rhetoric, firm assertions and pronounced rhythmic exuberance of traditional poetry." In "Tradition and Modernity in Modern poetry," in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. J. R. Smart (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), pp. 27–48, at p. 39.
- 44 See Jabrā I. Jabrā, cited in *Qaḍāyā al-shi'r al-mu'āṣir*, by Nāzik al-Malā'ikah (Beirut: Dār al-'Im lil-Malāyīn, 1962: rpt, 1989), p. 217.
- 45 'Alī al-Wardī, *Uṣṭūrāt al-Adab al-Rafī* (1956, reprint; London: Kufan, 1994), p. 7.
- 46 See Adūnīs ('Alī Aḥmad Sa'īd), *al-Thābit wa- al-mutaḥawwil* (The Immutable and the Mutable: A study of Conformity and Originality in Arabic culture), 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-'Awdah, 1974–1978), p. 35.
- 47 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 50.
- 48 Al-Jayyusi traces change in sensibility among the early romantics, like Khalīl Muṭrān (1870–1949) and the Dīwān group of the early 1920s in Egypt, and among such Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Mahjar poets as Aḥmad al-Ṣafī al-Najafī (1897–1977), Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875–1945), Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (1862–1936), 'Umar Abū Rīshah (1908–?), Bishārah al-Khūrī (pen named al-Akḥṭal al-Ṣaghīr, 1884–1968), and Amīn Nakhla (1901–?). She traced change in the poetry of Fawzī Ma'lūf (1889–1930), Shafīq Ma'lūf (1905–?), Ilyās Farhāt (1893–1977), Rashīd Salīm al-Khūrī (1887–1984) in Latin America, and Amīn al-Rayḥānī (1876–1940), Mikhā'il Nu'aymah (1988), Gibrān Khalīl Gibrān (d. 1931), Ḍiyyā Abū Maḍī (1890–1957), and Nasīb 'Arīḍah (1887–1946) in North America.
- 49 See Jonathan Culler's use of Walter Benjamin, Robert Jauss, and Hugo Friedrich, "On the Negativity of Modern Poetry," pp. 189–208, at p. 201.
- 50 James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Penguin, 1922); reprint. 1996, p. 391. A member of the group Jabrā I. Jabrā translated the part on Tammūz. See John Mikhail Asfour, *When the Words Burn*, p. 55. He was also the one who used the term Tammūzī poets in reference to a group, including himself.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 On Adūnīs, 'Alī Aḥmad Sa'īd, see Shākir Muṣṭafā. "Al-Shi'r fī Sūrīyā," *Al-Ādāb*, 31 (January 1955), p. 125.

- 53 See Elizabeth M. Baeten's paraphrase of Cassirer, in *The Magic Myth's Abiding Power* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 82.
- 54 See Jonathan Culler's use of Hugo Friedrich's phrase, in "On the Negativity of Modern Poetry," p. 191.
- 55 Cited in Jonathan Culler, "On the Negativity of Modern Poetry," p. 193.
- 56 Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 39.
- 57 Fadwā Ṭūqān, *A Mountainous Journey: A Poet's Autobiography*, trans., Olive Kenny, and poetry by Naomi Shihab Nye (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1990).
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 59 *Ibid.* Further references to this book are in the text.
- 60 Cited in Harold Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance," in *Romanticism and Consciousness*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), pp. 3–24, at p. 6.
- 61 See Harold Bloom, *Romanticism and Consciousness*, p. 5.
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 See, for instance, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fī al-shīr, al-Dawāwīm al-shīriyyah* (My Poetic Career/Collected Poems), in *Al-A'māl al-kāmilah* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-ʿAmmah lil-Kitāb, 1993).
- 65 It is noticeable that every renowned Arab poet wrote on his/her poetic career, a case that does not strictly apply to novelists. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī wrote on his experience, so did Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd-al-Ṣabūr, Nāzik al-Malā'ikah, and others.
- 66 See Muhammad Bennis, "Introduction," in *Al-A'māl al-shīriyyah*, vol. 1, p. 9. Hereafter citations are from this introduction.
- 67 *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, p. 204.
- 68 *Al-A'māl al-shīriyyah*, vol. 1, p. 13. The Almoravid conquest of al-Andalus was between 1086 and 1102. By the time their leader Yūsuf Ibn Tāshfīn died on September 2, 1106, they were in control of Morocco, al-Andalus, and Zaragoza. Al-Mu'tamid Ibn ʿAbbād, was an accomplished poet and the ruler of Seville in Muslim Spain, a descendant of an Arab tribe (d. 1091) and he was in communication with Yūsuf Ibn Tāshfīn in 1086 to come to his rescue even at the expense of his rule. "Better to pasture camels than be a swine-herd" is his famous phrase not to give in to Alfonso VI of Leon-Castile (1072–1109). See Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus* (Essex: Longman, 1996), p. 162.
- 69 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 191.
- 70 The novel was very influential among the Egyptian youth. Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir autographed his book *Falsafat al-thawrah* (The Philosophy of the Revolution) to the writer, asking him for another return of the soul. See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Abū ʿAwf, *Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm bayn ʿAwdat al-rūḥ wa-ʿAwdat al-waʿī* (Cairo: Quṣūr al-Thaqāfah, 1998), p. 101. Also, p. 85, on al-Ḥakīm's view of the impact. Al-Ḥakīm also said, "ʿAwdat al-rūḥ made its point later, when ʿAbd al-Nāṣir came and told me he read the book that drew his attention to Egypt's heritage, its soul, and he was filled with what is in the book. In 1954, when I was purged from office along with others, he stood on my side and said 'this is impossible. Al-Ḥakīm ignited our national feelings when we were young.' He rejected that decision." See ed. Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī, *Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm yatadbakkār* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'lā lil-Thaqāfah, 1998), pp. 113–14.

- 71 Cited from Zeine Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Caravan Books, 1958), p. 130; and in Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900–1963* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1997), p. 90.
- 72 For a brief note, see Majid Khadduri, *Political Trends*, p. 105–06; and Samira Haj's reference to Fu'ād Ḥusayn al-Wakīl, *Jamā'at al-Aḥālī fī al-'Iraq, 1932–1937* (Baghdad: Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfiyah al-'Āmmah, 1986), p. 176, n. 18.
- 73 He claimed Yemen as his birth place, and got his education in Turkey, and spent some years in Syria before joining King Fayṣal of Iraq in 1921. For selections from these writings, see Trevor J. Le Gassick, *Major Themes in Modern Arabic Thought: An Anthology* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1979), pp. 61–70.
- 74 He was the director of education in Iraq since political independence, and was an influential presence among the nationalists all over the Arab world.
- 75 These selections were in the *Muṭāla'ab* (school prose and poetry texts books), 1935–1968.
- 76 The phrase “political unconscious” is coined by Fredric R. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981). According to Jameson:
- The historical past and its relation to current reality can be grasped only if they are understood as parts of a single great collective story, a story of humankind's fall from the original plenitude whose shattered fragments generate humanity's need for narrative and interpretation. But many elements of that fundamental story—the collective struggle for freedom—have been distorted and suppressed: hence Jameson's preoccupation with the concept of a political unconscious.
- See Frans De Bruyn's entry, “Jameson, Fredric R.” in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. Irena R. Makaryk (Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press, 1993), p. 381.
- 77 Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory of Forgetfulness*, pp. 15–16.
- 78 See for instance, Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Lament for the June Sun,” Nizār Qabbānī's many poems including “Bread, Hashish, and Moon,” and Adūnīs, “Elegy for the Time at Hand,” in *Abdul Wabāb al-Bayāṭī, Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Bassam K. Frangieh (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 21–23; *Bread, Hashish and Moon*, trans., Ben Binnani (Greensboro, NC: The Unicorn Press, 1982), pp. 5–7; and Adonis, *The Pages of Day and Night*, pp. 44–52, respectively.
- 79 Adūnīs, “Poetry and Apoetical Culture,” trans., Esther Allen from the French, in *The Pages of Day and Night*, trans., Samuel Hazo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), pp. 101–08.
- 80 These poems are part of *Awraq al-zaytūn*, see Maḥmūd Darwish, *Al-A'māl al-shi'riyyah* (Beirut: MADN, Third printing, 1973), pp. 80–81.
- 81 Translated from his collection *Eleven Moons* by Mona Asali van Engen, in *The Adam of Two Edens*, eds Munir Akash and Daniel Moore (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p. 75.
- 82 *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- 83 Sargon Boulos' translation from the *Eleven Planets* in *ibid.*
- 84 *Ibid.*, p. 139.
- 85 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 86 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

- 87 Mahmoud Darwish, *Psalms*, trans., Ben Binnani (Colorado Springs, CO: Three Continents Press, 1994), p. 53.
- 88 Trans., Hussein Haddawy, in *The Adam of Two Edens*.
- 89 See for instance his "Speech of the Red Indian" where "We still hear our ancestors' voices on the wind," p. 137.
- 90 "Hooriyya' Teaching," trans. from *Why Have You left the Horse Alone?* By Sinan Antoun in *ibid.* p. 86.
- 91 In trans. and eds Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar, *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), pp. 115–17.
- 92 For a translation, see M. M. Enani, *An Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry in Egypt*, pp. 79–84.
- 93 Although no longer tenable among Arabists, R. A. Nicholson's view of race and poetics is worth citing, as it had some echoes among some Arab innovators like the Tunisian al-Shābbī in his discussion of imagination and fancy in *Al-Kbayāl al-shi'rī. 'inda al-'Arab* (Poetic Imagination among Arabs). In an effort to explain the reason behind the emergence of an exquisite poetics among Persian Sufis, especially after the steady deterioration of the Caliphal center in Baghdad since the second half of the tenth century, Nicholson did not question the peripheral national upsurge, for instance, outside the Islamic center that was collapsing even prior to the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258; nor did he debate the resulting cultural freedom from the Arabo-centric discourse to justify the emergence of new modes of writing. Rather, he found explanations in racial difference. He argues, whereas the Semitic race, that is, Arabs, lacks the synthetic mind, and hence produces fragmentary poetry, the Aryan race, that is, Persians, is endowed with the capacity to produce a more spirited and coherent literature. The piece is worth citing in full.

The main reason, I think, lies in racial endowment. The Arab has no such passion for an ultimate principle of unity as has always distinguished the Persians and Indians. He shares with other Semitic peoples an incapacity for harmonizing and unifying the particular facts of experience: he discerns the trees very clearly, but not the wood. Like his art, in which "we everywhere find a delicate sense for detail, but nowhere large apprehension of a great and united whole," his poetry, intensely subjective in feeling and therefore lyrical in form, presents only a series of brilliant impressions, full of life and color, yet essentially fragments and moments of life, not fused into the substance of universal thought by an imagination soaring above place and time. While nature keeps Arabian poetry within definite bounds, convention deprives the Arabic-writing poet, who is not necessarily an Arab, of the verse-form that is most suitable for continuous narrative or exposition—the allegorical, romantic, or didactic *mathnawi*—and leaves him no choice but to fall back upon prose if he cannot make the *qaṣīda* or the *ghazal* answer his purpose. Both these types of verse are associated with love: the *ghazal* is a love-lyric, and the *qaṣīda*, though its proper motive is praise, usually begins "with the mention of women and the constantly shifted habitations of the wandering tribesmen seeking pasture throughout the Winter and Spring; the poet must tell of his love and its troubles, and, if he likes, may describe the beauty of his mistress." Thus, the models of Arabic mystical poetry are the secular odes and songs of which this passion is the theme.

Relying in part on Noldeke and Sir Charles Lyall in the embedded quotes, Nicholson subscribed to a neoclassical tenet that had been popular among neoclassicists throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to these, better exemplified by Dr Johnson in *Rasselas*, the difference in aesthetics lies between a mind that looks at the particular and a mind that synthesizes and sees the whole not the part. Following the same application, as prompted and proliferated by racist ideology in Europe by the end of the eighteenth century, readings of some parts of the canon in these terms and against Greco-Roman samples, bypassed other modes of poetry, including that of the early Sufis. The approach falls within a long established tradition of paradigmatic analysis that takes the most conspicuous or acclaimed in conservative criticism as its yardsticks. There is therefore a fixed structure for the ode. No matter how many deviational poems and poetics argue otherwise, traditional criticism looks on these as occasional or marginal. Abū al-Faraj Al-Iṣbahānī's (d. 356/967) *Kitāb al-agbānī* (Book of Songs) is put aside, and Abū Nuwās's (d. 813/814) corpus and even al-Mutanabbī's (d. 965) and Abū al-ʿAlā' al-Maʿarrī's (d. 1058) poetry and critiques rarely appear in early discussions as sites of opposition to hegemony and power politics. Even when poets are non-Arabs, well-meaning critics find an excuse for dumping them as a Semitic non-synthetic mind.

See Reynold A., Nicholson. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (London: Kegan Paul, 1921, reprint 1998), p. 163.

2 THE TRADITION–MODERNITY NEXUS IN ARABIC POETICS

- 1 Vicente Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age: Selection of Texts Accompanied by a Preliminary Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), p. 4.
- 2 See Joseph Riddel's analysis, "De-centering the Image: The 'Project' of 'American Poetics,'" in *Textual Strategies*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 322–58, at pp. 347–48. Yūsuf al-Khāl's dedication of his *Al-Bi'r al-mahjūrah* (Deserted Well) to Ezra Pound is of some significance, as I argue below. See my "Dedications as Poetics Intersections," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31, no. 1 (2000), pp. 1–37, at p. 15.
- 3 There is a note on this subject later.
- 4 See Rashād Rushdī, *Mukbtārāt min al-naqd al-adabī al-muʿāṣir* (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1951). Also Munah Khūrī's translation of Eliot's article, "Nazrah fī al-naqd al-adabī" (A View of Literary Criticism), *Al-Adīb*, 27, no. 3 (March 1955), pp. 20–21, and his translation of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Al-Adīb*, 27, no. 1 (January 1955), pp. 32–36. Badawī's translation of the same article appeared in *Al-Ādāb* (Cairo, May–June 1956), n.p. Laṭīfah al-Zayyāt's translation is included in her book, *Maqālāt fī al-naqd al-adabī* (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1964). See also ʿIzz al-Dīn Ismāʿīl, "Al-Shiʿr al-muʿāṣir wa-al-turāth" (Contemporary Poetry and Literary Tradition), *Al-Ādāb*, 3 (1966), pp. 22–25. On translations, see Māhir Shafīq Farīd, "Athar T. S. Eliot fī al-adab al-ʿArabī al-ḥadīth," *Fuṣūl*, 1, no. 4 (June, 1981), pp. 173–92; Muhammad Shaheen, "Eliot in Modern Arabic Poetry," in *T. S. Eliot: Man and Poet*, ed. Laura Cowan (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 151–64, and Terri DeYoung, "T. S. Eliot and Modern Arabic Poetry," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 48, 2000, pp. 3–21.

- 5 Eliot's "The Function of Criticism" appeared in a number of translations, too, in 1951, 1957, 1964, and 1978. See Farīd, "Athar T. S. Eliot," p. 180. In context, see DeYoung, "T. S. Eliot," pp. 5–6.
- 6 See for instance, Jabrā I. Jabrā, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," in *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1980), pp. 7–22, esp. p. 14; and M. M. Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Poetry," in *Critical Perspective on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1980), pp. 23–44, esp. pp. 32–37.
- 7 Al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī, the grandson of the prophet, and the Third Shī'ī Imām, and the son of the First Imām 'Alī, the fourth caliph. He rose against the Umayyads as unjust usurpers, and was brutally massacred with his few companions in the battle of Karbalā', which has been invested with enormous significance in Shī'ī Islam.
Al-Ḥusayn Ibn Maṣū'ir al-Ḥallāj is recognized as the greatest mystic, the one who set the example for active Sufism. He was brutally executed in Baghdad, 922, for his outspoken beliefs and mystical ecstasies. Courting death, he bewildered many for the divulgence of the secret of love between the Sufi and the Divine Lover.
- 8 W. B. Yeats, *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 68–69.
- 9 Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 85.
- 10 For a discussion of the poem in view of his theory of masks and personae, see Carol T. Christ's critical reading, *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 42–45.
- 11 Jābir 'Uṣfūr, "Aqni'at al-shi'r al-mu'āsir" (Masks of Contemporary Poetry) *Fuṣūl* 1, n. 4 (July 1981), pp. 123.
- 12 Maḥmūd Darwish, *Sarīr al-gbarībah* (The Woman-Stranger's Bed) (London: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2000), p. 121.
- 13 Trans., John M. Asfour, *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, 1945–1987* (Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant, 1988), p. 196.
- 14 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), p. 112.
- 15 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, "Elegy to Khalil Hawi," in *Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati: Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Bassam K. Frangieh (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), p. 267.
- 16 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, p. 67.
- 17 Trans., John M. Asfour, *When the Words Burn*, pp. 78–79.
- 18 Nāzik al-Malā'ikah, "Al-Mar'ah bayna ṭarafayn," in *Nāzik al-Malā'ikah: Al-A'māl al-natbriyyah* (Prose Works) (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'lā lil-Thaqāfah, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 481–92, at p. 483.
- 19 Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Vintage Edition, 1991), p. 155.
- 20 Shākir Muṣṭafā suggests that the name was given to him by the leader of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, Anṭūn Sa'ādah, see "Al-Shi'r fi Sūriyā," *Al-Ādāb* 3, no. 1 (January 1955), p. 125.
- 21 See, *Dīwān Aghānī Miḥyār al-Dimashqī*, 1960–1961, in Adūnīs, *Al-A'māl al-shi'riyyah al-kāmiyah* (The Complete Poetic Works), (Beirut: Dār Al-'Awdah, 1977) p. 290.
- 22 In *When the Words Burn*, trans. and ed. John M. Asfour, p.162.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 160. Citations hereafter are within the text.

- 24 Anṭūn Sa'ādah was the leader of the SSSNP, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, and was a major influence on many intellectuals in Syria and Lebanon. His execution in 1949 made him more of a mythical hero who sacrificed himself for future regeneration. He was an ardent believer in a Great Syria, comprising the Levant and Iraq. In one of the eight principles of his Party's ideology, there is a celebration of the "The Syrians' genius and mental superiority over their neighbors and others" as they "civilized Greece and laid down the basis of the Mediterranean civilization." See *Mabādi' al-ḥizb*, quoted in Atif Faddul, *The Poetics of T. S. Eliot and Adunis* (Beirut: Al-Hamra Publishers, 1992), p. 115.
- 25 Al-A'māl al-shi'riyyah al-kāmiiah (The Complete Poetic Works), (Beirut: Dār Al-ʿAwdah, 197), p. 386.
- 26 Adonis, "Poetry and Apoetical Culture," trans., Esther Allen from the French, in *The Pages of Day and Night*, trans. Samuel Hazo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 105.
- 27 Quoted in Atif Faddul, *The Poetics*, p. 97.
- 28 Muḥammad Bennis, *Nabr bayna janāzatatayn* (A River Between Two Funerals) (Casablanca: Dār Tūbqāl, 2002).
- 29 Muḥammad Bennis, *Nabīdh* (Wine) (London: Riad El-Rayyes, 2003).
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 19; See Philip Kennedy on Abū Nuwās, in *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 31 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House-Vintage Books, 1970), p. 50.
- 32 Muḥammad Bennis, *Nabīdh*, pp. 33–34.
- 33 Eugene Vance, "Roland and the Poetics of Memory," in *Textual Strategies*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 374–403, at p. 374.
- 34 See Badawi, "Commitment" p. 33.
- 35 See Adūnīs' *Zaman al-shi'r* (Poetry Time/Time in Poetry) (Beirut: Dār al-ʿAwdah, 2nd print, 1978), p. 66.
- 36 Edward said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 22.
- 37 Adūnīs, *Dīwān al-shi'r al-ʿArabī* (Lebanon, Sidon: Al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣriyyah, 1964), my translation, see "Dedications," for full reference, p. 29.
- 38 Using Robert Duncan, Joseph M. Conte comes up with this comparative reading of the periodic and the aperiodic forms, the first indicating correspondence and symmetry, while the second indicates discord, diversity, and multiple significations. See *Unending Design: The Forms of Postmodern Poetry* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 55.
- 39 Robert Duncan's terms, *ibid.*, pp. 54–55. It is of interest that Duncan relates his concept of the long and the serial poem to Dante, whom Miguel Asin Palacios discusses in view of the Arab poet's poetics and epistolary art. See *Islam and the Divine Comedy* (London, 1926; reprint, New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001).
- 40 Cited in my "Dedications," p. 28.
- 41 Al-Bayātī, *Dīwān*, 4th printing, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār Al-ʿAwdah, 1990), 1: 710–18.
- 42 The poet relates what happened to al-Mutanabbī at the court of Sayf al-Dawlah, when either the emir threw an inkstand at him, cutting his forehead, or it was the emir's tutor Ibn khālawayhi, who hit him on the face with a key. That was the reason, it is said, that drove him to leave the court toward Egypt. For the second version, see Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282), *Kitāb wafayāt al-a'yān* (Book on the Deaths of Prominent People) (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 122.

- 43 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Al-A‘mal, al-shi‘riyyah* (The Poetic Works), 2 vols (Beirut: Al-Mu‘ssasah al-Arabiyyah lil-Divāsāt, 1995), 1, p. 27.
- 44 On concepts of modernity, see Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, pp. 91–92.
- 45 See Mounah A. Khouri, “Criticism and the Heritage: Adonis as Advocate of a New Arab Culture,” in *Arab Civilization: Challenges and Responses, Studies in Honor of Constantine K. Zurayk*, eds George N. Atiyeh and Ibrahim M. Oweiss (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 183–207, at p. 186.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 187.
- 47 Cited from Nicholson’s translation in Ilse Lichtenstadter, *Introduction to Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 309.
- 48 See Najib Ullah, *Islamic Literature* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 60.
- 49 Reynolds A. Nicholson, *Translations of Eastern Poetry and Prose* (London: Curzon Press, 1987), p. 105.
- 50 A. J. Arberry, *Poems of Al-Mutanabbī: A Selection with Introduction, Translations, and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 1967), pp. 72–73.
- 51 R. A. Nicholson’s translation, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907; reprint, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 307. For a discussion of the classical and the new, see Joseph M. Conte, *Unending Design*, p. 24.
- 52 Al-Bayātī, *Ḥarā‘iq al-shu‘arā’* (The Fire of Poets) (Beirut: Al-Mu‘assasah al-Arabiyyah, 1994), p. 80.
- 53 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Ḥiṣār li-madā‘ih al-baḥr* (‘Akka: al-Aswār, 1984), pp. 35–47.
- 54 Mahmoud Darwish, “I See my Ghost Coming from Afar,” in *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise, Selected Poems*, trans. and eds Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 55.
- 55 See Joseph Riddel’s discussion of Pound, “De-centering the Image,” p. 344.
- 56 A. J. Arberry, *Poems of Al-Mutanabbī*, pp. 82–83.
- 57 See Suzanne P. Stetkevych, “Abbasid Panegyric: The Politics and Poetics of Ceremony,” in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. J. R. Smart (Surrey: Curzon, 1996), pp. 119–43, at p. 125. There is a further note in the concluding chapter.
- 58 Cited by al-Marzawī and al-Ṣafadī respectively, in Al-Qiftī, “Inbā’ al-ruwāt ‘alā anbā’ al-nuḥāt” and “Al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt” in *Ta’rīf al-Qudamā’ bi Abī al-‘Alā’* (The Ancients’ explication of Abū al-‘Alā’), eds Muṣṭafa al Saqqā, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Maḥmūd, ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn, Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī, and Ḥāmid ‘Abd al-Majīd (Cairo: Dār al Kutub edition, 1944), pp. 27–66, 263–84, at pp. 50, 277.
- 59 Joseph Riddel, “De-centering the Image,” pp. 348–49.
- 60 See Adūnīs, *Zaman al-shi‘r*, p. 239.
- 61 Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad Ibn al-Hasan al-Ḥatimī (d. 998) *Al-Risālah al-Ḥatimiyyah: fi-mā wafaqa al-Mutanabbī fī shi‘rihī kalām Arīṣtu fi al-ḥikma* (Beirut, 2nd Print, 1985).
- 62 See Muḥammad Bennis, *Kitābat al-maḥw* (Erasure Writing) (Casablanca: Tūbqāl, 1994), p. 70.
- 63 See Erza Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 85.
- 64 Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, *Qaṣā’id mukhtārāh min al-shi‘r al-‘ālamī al-ḥadīth* (Selected Poems from Modern World Poetry) (Abu Dhabi: Cultural Foundation Publications, 2nd print, 1998), pp. 5–6.
- 65 Jabrā, “The Rebels, the Committed and the Others,” pp. 191–205, at p. 192.

- 66 See Jabrā, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," pp. 12–13.
- 67 T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, ed. Lodge, pp. 71–77, at p. 76; also T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920; reprint, 1960), p. 58.
- 68 See T. S. Eliot's introductory note *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (New York: A New Directions Book, 1918; reprint, 1968). However, for a summary of Yeats and Pound's positions on masks, see Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics*, pp. 33–44.
- 69 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 71.
- 70 T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, ed. David, Lodge (London: Longman, 1972), p. 77.
- 71 Jabrā, "The Rebels, the Committed and the Others," p. 196.
- 72 Jabrā, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," p. 13.
- 73 Pêcheux's phrases in Issa Boullata's neat summary. See *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought* (New York: State University of New York, 1990), p. 141.
- 74 See Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); and *The Anxiety of Influence* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- 75 Ezra Pound, "The Tradition" (an article published in Dec. 1913), in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 91.
- 76 Michel Pêcheux, *Language, Semantics, and Ideology* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1982).
- 77 Issa Boullata, *Trends and Issues*, p. 141.
- 78 See the poem in *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, selected, edited and translated by Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 115–16.
- 79 Issa J. Boullata, *Trends and Issues*, p. 141.
- 80 Jabrā I. Jabrā, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," p. 12.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 82 T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," p. 77.
- 83 John M. Asfour's translation, *When the Words Burn*, p. 162.
- 84 See his *Al-A'māl al-shi'riyyah al-kāmila* (Beirut: Dār Al-'Awdah, 4th printing, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 411–14.
- 85 For a discussion on Sufi rejection of things partaking of secular knowledge, see A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).
- 86 Adūnīs, *Al-A'māl al-shi'riyyah al-kāmila*, vol. 1, pp. 418–20.
- 87 The original is in Murīd Barghūthī's collection, *Qaṣā'id mukhtārāh* (Naples: Dār al-Fārūq, 1996), pp. 32–33, trans., Lena Jayyusi and W. Merwin, in *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Poetry* and ed. Salma K. Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 126–27.
- 88 Amjad Nāṣir, *Aṭhar al-Ābir* (The Trace of the passerby) (Cairo: Dār Sharqiyyāt, 1995), pp. 73–74.
- 89 Trans., May Jayyusi and Charles Doria, *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology* ed. Sama K. Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University, 1987), pp. 361–62.
- 90 Born in Amman, 1945. For the poem, see *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*, ed. Nathalie Handal (New York: Interlink, 2001), pp. 277–78.
- 91 Kamal Boullata's translation, See *The Poetry of Arab Women*, pp. 277–78.
- 92 Luwīs ʿAwaḍ, *Al-Thawrah wa- al-adab* (Revolution and Literature) (Cairo: Rūz al-Yūsuf, 1971).

- 93 See ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Yanābīr al-shams: Al-Sīrab al-shīriyyah* (Sun Springs: Poetic Autobiography) (Damascus: Al-Farqad, 1999), p. 93.
- 94 Kāzīm Jawād’s review of al-Bayātī’s *Abārīq muhashshamah* (Broken Pitchers) appeared in *Al-Ādāb*, 8 (1954), pp. 33–36; and al-Sayyāb’s response to Nihād al-Takarlī’s advocacy of al-Bayātī’s pioneering poetics appeared in *Al-Ādāb*, 12 (1953), pp. 3–9. Rūz Ghrayīb refuted Jawād in *Al-Ādāb*, 8, 1954, and elaborated on the subject in the next issue, *Al-Ādāb*, 9 (1954).
- 95 See Muḥsin Jāsim al-Mūsawī, “Marji‘iyyāt naqd al-shi‘r al-‘Arabī al-ḥadīth fī al-khamsīnāt” (Critical Referents of Modern Arabic Poetry in the Fifties), *Fuṣūl*, 15, no. 3 (Fall 1996), pp. 34–61.
- 96 Nāzik al-Malā’ikah, *Qadāyā al-shīr al-mū‘āṣir* (Issues of Contemporary Poetry) (1962, reprint, Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1989), pp. 7–14.
- 97 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–62, 293–304.
- 98 See ‘Abd al-Malik Nūrī’s reference to his joint project with al-Sayyāb against al-Jawāhirī in Muḥsin Jāsim al-Mūsawī, *Naz’at al-ḥadāthab fī al-qīṣṣah al-‘Irāqīyyah* (The Modernist Trend in the Iraqi Short Story) (Baghdad: Al-Maktabah al-‘Ālamiyyah, 1984), p. 55.
- 99 See al-Bayātī, *Yanābīr al-shams*, pp. 60–61; and Muḥsin J. al-Musawī, “Dedications,” p. 27.
- 100 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, p. 48.
- 101 For full documentation, see Adūnīs [‘Alī Ahmad Sa‘īd], “Al-Shi‘r al-‘Arabī wamushkilāt al-tajdīd,” in *Al-Adab al-‘Arabī al-mū‘āṣir* (Contemporary Arabic Literature), *Proceedings* of the Rome Conference, October 1961 (n.p: Aḍwā’ Publications), pp. 171–91. For Jabrā’s comments in the *Proceedings*, see pp. 208–10. Hereafter referred to as *Proceedings*.
- 102 Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, p. 84.
- 103 See Jabrā, “The Rebels, the Committed and the Others,” p. 192. Henceforth, Jabrā’s name appears as in his articles in English. Citations hereafter are in the text.
- 104 *Proceedings*, pp. 192–94. Citations from this book are incorporated within the text.
- 105 See ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Kitāb al-Badī‘*, ed. Ignatius Kratchkovsky, (Beirut: Dār al-Masīrah, 3rd print, 1982).
- 106 See Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ‘Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 17–25; and Muḥsin J. Musawī, “Arabic Rhetoric,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 29–33.
- 107 Adūnīs [‘Alī Ahmad Sa‘īd], *Introduction to Arab Poetics*, trans., Catherine Cobham (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990; Arabic text 1971, English translation 1985), p. 81.
- 108 Anṭūn Sa‘ādah, *Al-Širā’ al-fikrī fī al-adab al-Sūrī* (Intellectual Conflict in Syrian Literature) (Beirut: Party Publications, 2nd print, 1947). It is worth noticing that a publishing house that took its name, Dār al-Širā’ al-Fikrī, from the title of Anṭūn Sa‘āda’s book, published Jabrā’s translation of James Frazer’s *Golden Bough* in 1957.
- 109 See al-Mūsawī, “Marji‘iyyāt,” p. 49, and n. 56.
- 110 Nazeer El-Azma, “The Tammūzī Movement and the Influence of T. S. Eliot on Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb,” in *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata, pp. 215–231, at p. 217.
- 111 Adūnīs [‘Alī Ahmad Sa‘īd], *Al-Thābit wa al-mutabawwil: Baḥṭh fī al-ittibā‘ wa al-ibdā‘ ‘inda al-‘Arab* (The Immutable and the Mutable: A Study of Conformity and Originality in Arabic Culture), 3 vols (Beirut: Dār Al-‘Awdah, 1974–1978).

- 112 Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), p. 233.
- 113 Adūnīs, *Dīwān al-Shīr al-‘Arabī*.
- 114 See ed. and intro. Peter Brooker, *Modernism and Postmodernism* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 11–12.
- 115 James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Penguin, 1922, reprint, 1962), pp. 392–93.
- 116 See Muḥammad Jamāl Barūt, “Tajribat al-Ḥadāthah fī Majallat *Shīr*” (Experimentation in Modernity in the Journal *Shīr*), *Al-Kifāh al-‘Arabī* (Weekly) 301, April 16, 1984, pp. 50–51. See also his book, *Al-Ḥadāthah al-‘Ulā* (The First Modernity), 2 vols issued as part of the *Ma‘rifah Quarterly* publications series (Damascus, 1985; reprinted, Dubai: UAE Writers Publication Series, 1991).
- 117 Adūnīs [‘Alī Ahmad Sa‘īd], *Zaman al-shīr*, p. 254.
- 118 Adūnīs, *Al-Tbābit wa- al-mutaḥawwil*, vol. 4, p. 209.
- 119 Adonis, “Poetry and Apoetical Culture,” pp. 106–07.
- 120 Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, p. 184.
- 121 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 4, 3 respectively.
- 122 Adonis, “Poetry and Apoetical Culture,” p. 107.
- 123 Al-Bayātī, *Yanābī‘ al-shams*, p. 153.
- 124 Jabra’s translation, in “The Rebels, the Committed and the Others,” p. 202.
- 125 “An Interview with al-Bayātī,” *Al-Abram Weekly* (February 1999).
- 126 Al-Bayātī, *Yanābī‘ al-shams*, p. 160.
- 127 Reuven Snir’s translation and citation from Iskandar Dāghir’s interview with al-Bayātī (1989). See “Synchronic and Diachronic Dynamics in Modern Arabic Literature,” in *Studies in Canonical and Popular Arabic Literature*, eds Shimon Ballas and Reuven Snir (Toronto, ON: York Press, 1998), pp. 87–121, at p. 99.
- 128 It should be noted that Qabbānī is not as pictured here, and we need to look on his poetry and literary pronouncements in different light. See Boullata’s quotations in *Trends*, pp. 45–46; and Nazeer El-Azma’s concluding quote in his article, “The Tammūzī Movement,” pp. 231–32.
- 129 Ṣalāh ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fī al-shīr, al-Dawāwīn al-shīriyyah* (My Poetic Career/Collected Poems), in *Al-‘māl al-kāmilah* (Cairo: Al-Hay‘ah al-‘Ammah lil-Kitāb, 1993), p. 159. Hereafter, citations from this book are in the text.

3 POETIC STRATEGIES: THRESHOLDS FOR CONFORMITY AND DISSENT

- 1 Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 80.
- 2 Jabra I. Jabra, “The Rebels, the Committed and the Others—Transitions in Arabic Poetry Today,” in *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1980), pp. 191–205, at p. 192.
- 3 Muḥammad Mahdī al-Jawāhirī, “Qif bi-al-Ma‘arratī” in *Dīwān*, 5 vols, eds, Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāī, ‘Alī Jawād al-Tāhir, and Majīd Biktāsh (Baghdad: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-‘Ilām, 1973–1975), vol. 3 (1974), p. 91.
- 4 See Muḥsin Jāsīm al-Mūsawī, *Naz‘at al-ḥadāthah* (The Modernist Trend in the Iraqi Short Story) (Baghdad: Al-Maktabah Al-‘Ālamiyyah, 1984), p. 55.
- 5 The reference is to the regent of Egypt, Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī, a black eunuch servant, who secured the Ikhshīdī rule after his master’s death. He was described

- as a “slave with a pierced lower lip, fat, with misshapen feet and thick hands.” Al-Mutanabbī praised him, and then wrote very vindictive satires against him. For a good account, see Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 237–40.
- 6 Al-Jawāhirī, *Dīwān*, vol. 5 (1975), p. 357.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, p. 361.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, vol. 2 (1973), pp. 279–86.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, p. 284.
 - 10 Al-Jawāhirī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3 (1974), p. 91.
 - 11 See ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Muslim Ibn Qutaybah, “Introduction,” *Kitāb al-Shi‘r wa- al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904), pp. 14–15; Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 77–78; also in Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 9–10. For a very focused critical assessment, see Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 3–8; and for a superb reading of the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of the form, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
 - 12 Al-Jawāhirī, *Dīwān*, vol. 3 (1974), p. 83.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
 - 14 The dialogic principle in Mikhail Bakhtin’s use refers to the polyphonic heterogeneity of the text. See *Encyclopedia of Literary Terms* (Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press, 1993), pp. 31–34.
 - 15 See Ṭāhā Ḥusayn’s introduction to *Ta‘rīf al-quḍamā’ bi Abī al-‘Alā’* (The Ancients’ Explication of Abū al-‘Alā’), eds Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Maḥmūd, ‘Abd al-Saām Ḥarūn, Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī, and Ḥamid ‘Abd al-Majīd (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah al-‘Āmmah li-al-Kitāb, n.d.; reprinted from Dār Al-Kutub 1944 edition), p. iii.
 - 16 Ḥusayn, introduction to *Ta‘rīf al-quḍamā’*, p. iii.
 - 17 Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, “Naẓrah Jadīdah ilā Abī al-‘Alā’,” in *Fann al-Adab* (The Art of Literature) (Cairo: Maktabat Al-Ādāb, 1952), pp. 36–39, at p. 37.
 - 18 Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fī al-shi‘r, al-Dawāwīn al-shi‘riyyah* (My Poetic Career/Collected Poems), in *Al-A‘māl al-Kāmilah* (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1993), p. 158.
 - 19 The disputed account relates how the poet was humiliated in Baghdad after reciting a line from al-Mutanabbī insinuating disrespect to the host, the head of the nobility or *asbrāf*, descendants of the prophet, in Baghdad. See Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, “Aqūlū Lakum ‘an al-Shu‘ara’” (I Tell You About Poets), in *Al-A‘māl al-Kāmilah* (Complete Works) (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1995), vol. 10, pp. 291–301.
 - 20 Reference here to Arab classical theory of plagiarism and its classification of methods and ways of borrowing or stealing.
 - 21 Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, p. 32.
 - 22 Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, p. 99.
 - 23 See Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, *Dīwān* (Beirut: Al-‘Awdah, 4th printing, 1983), pp. 141–43.
 - 24 Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ‘Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. xiii–xiv.
 - 25 Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, *Al-A‘māl al-kāmilah*, 1993, pp. 327–28.

- 26 Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr’s, “Mudhakkirāt al-Malik ʿAjīb ibn al-Khaṣīb” (Memoirs of the King ʿAjīb ibn Khaṣīb), written in 1961. It is included in the *Dawāwīn*, in *Al-ʿamal al-kāmilah* (1993), pp. 419–25. On the use of masks, see Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fī al-shiʿr*, p. 143.
- 27 Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, al-Dawāwīn al-Shiʿriyyah,” pp. 421–22.
- 28 Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, *Ḥayātī fī al-shiʿr*, p. 143.
- 29 Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, p. 36.
- 30 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Yanābīʿ al-shams: Al-Sīrah al-shiʿriyyah* (Sun Springs: Poetic Autobiography) (Damascus: Al-Farqad, 1999), p. 60.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Dīwān*, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār Al-ʿAwdah, 4th print, 1990), vol. 1, p. 268. See also Muhsin Jāssim al-Mūsawī, “ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī’s Poetics of Exile,” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 32, 2 (2001), pp. 212–38, at pp. 224–25.
- 33 Al-Bayātī, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, p. 268.
- 34 On al-Maʿarrī, see Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, p. 100.
- 35 Abū Zakariyāh Yaḥyā ibn ʿAlī al-Khatīb al-Tibrīzī says in his introduction, that al-Maʿarrī calls this *dīwān* “*Saqt al-zand*,” for “the spark is the first to come out of fire from flint.” See eds Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā and Muqaddimat al-Tibrīzī li-sharḥ Saqt al-zand, *Shurūḥ Siqt al-Zand*, consisting of the explications of al-Tibrīzī, al-Batalyawṣī, and al-Khwārazmī (Cairo: Al-Hayʾah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1985; reprint of the 1945 Dār Al-Kutub edition), pp. 3–14, at p. 3. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Bākhari, the poet of Nīsābur (d. 467 H.), also calls it “*Saqt al-zand*” in his *Dumyat al-Qaṣr*. See *Tarīf al-qudamāʾ bi Abī al-ʿAlāʾ*, eds Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā and Muqaddimat al-Tibrīzī li-sharḥ Saqt al-zand (Cairo: Al-Hayʾah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1985; reprint of the 1944 Dār Al-Kutub edition), p. 9.
- 36 Al-Bayātī, *Dīwān*, vol. 2, p. 29.
- 37 See “Muqaddimat al-Tibrīzī,” in al-Maʿarrī, *Shurūḥ Siqt al-zand*, p. 10.
- 38 Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, p. 100.
- 39 Ibid., p. 111.
- 40 In ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Nuṣūṣ sharqiyyah* (Oriental Texts) (Damascus: Al-Madā, 1999), pp. 7–12.
- 41 See Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, p. 129.
- 42 Al-Bayātī, *Nuṣūṣ sharqiyyah*, p. 7.
- 43 Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, p. 19.
- 44 Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, p. 164.
- 45 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati: Love, Death, and Exile*, trans. Bassam K. Frangieh (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), p. 207.
- 46 Ali Ahmed Said Adonis, *Introduction to Arab Poetics*, trans., Catherine Cobham (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 67.
- 47 Ibid., p. 64.
- 48 Ali Ahmed Said Adonis, “Poetry and Apoetic Culture,” trans., Esther Allen from the French, in *The Pages of Day and Night*, trans., Samuel Hazo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 107.
- 49 Adonis, *Introduction to Arab Poetics*, p. 63. See also John M. Asfour, *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, 1945–1987* (Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant, 1988), p. 51.
- 50 Adūnīs [ʿAlī Ahmad Saʿīd], *Al-Masrah wa- al-marāyā*, 1965–67 (Beirut: Dār Al-ʿĀdāb, n.d.), p. 188.

- 51 Ali Ahmad Said Adonis, "Adonis: Interview," by Margaret Obank and Samuel Shimon, *Baniḥal* (June 1998), pp. 30–39, at p. 38.
- 52 Adūnīs [ʿAlī Ahmad Saʿīd], *Al-Kitāb: Ams al-makān al-ʿān: Makbūṭat tunsab lil-Mutanabbī* (The Book Yesterday, the Place Now: A Manuscript Attributed to al-Mutanabbī), 2 vols (London: Dār Al-Sāqī, 1995).
- 53 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Maʿa al-Mutanabbī* (In the Company of al-Mutanabbī) (Cairo: Dār Al-Maʿārif, 1937).
- 54 See Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Maʿa al-Mutanabbī*, p. 100.
- 55 See Nazik Saba Yared, *Arab Travelers and Western Civilization*, trans., Sumayya Damluji Shahbandar, rev. and eds Tony P. Naufal and Jana Gough (London: Saqi Books, 1996), p. 183, on Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Amīn al-Rayhānī.
- 56 See note 48.
- 57 "Adonis: Interview," p. 38.
- 58 Ezra Pound, "The Tradition," in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. and intro., T. Eliot (New York: A New Directions Book, 1918; reprint, 1968), p. 92.
- 59 Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (London: Vintage Edition, 1991), p. 121.
- 60 ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, *Al-Aʿmāl al-kāmilah*, p. 419.
- 61 T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 71–77, at p. 73.
- 62 ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, *Al-Aʿmāl al-kāmilah*, p. 329.
- 63 Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, p. 105.
- 64 Muhsin J. Al-Musawi, "Dedications as Poetic Intersections," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31, no. 1 (2000), pp. 1–37.
- 65 Trans., ed. and intro., A. J. Arberry, *Poems of Al-Mutanabbī: A Selection with Introduction, Translations, and Notes* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), p. 103.
- 66 See Chapter 6, n. 19.
- 67 Adūnīs, *Al-Kitāb: ams al-makān al-ʿān*.
- 68 See Khālid al-Karakī, *Al-Rumūz al-turāthiyyah al-ʿArabīyyah fī al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī al-ḥadīth* (Classical Arabic Symbols in Modern Arabic Poetry) (Beirut: Dār Al-Jīl, 1989).
- 69 In a December 1953 article, cited here, Nāzik al-Malāʾikah writes, "Any cursory social reading of the lexical and grammatical [in Arabic] could prove to us quite clearly that this is a language of people who look down on women." She cites the use of the masculine pronoun as an example. She also thinks that the contemporary use of *ummiyyah*, illiteracy, is derivative from *umm*, "mother" in Arabic. As I have said elsewhere, al-Malāʾikah had then a feminist drive, but her feminism was not as well-documented as her poetic innovations. See al-Mūsawī, "Marjiʿiyyāt." Moreover, for her important feminist contribution, see "Al-Marʾah bayna ṭarafayn: al-Salbiyyah wa-al-Akhlāq" (Women between Two Poles: Negativity and Morals), *Al-Ādāb*, 12 (December 1953), pp. 1–3, 66–69, at p. 2.
- 70 On the use of expressive devices in elaborating a theme as text, see Alexander Zholkovsky, *Themes and Texts: Toward a Poetics of Expressiveness* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 24–25.

4 POETIC DIALOGIZATION: ANCESTORS IN THE TEXT—FIGURES AND FIGURATIONS

- 1 Figuration here relates to the connotation process, the topoi of rhetoric, whereas de-figuration relates to denotation, or the "directly verifiable." De-figuration

- downplays figurative usage as an “elimination of any sense not confined within the spatial motion.” For a reading of both terms, see Shira Wolosky, “Samuel Beckett’s Figural Evasions,” in *Languages of the Unsayable: The play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, eds. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 165–86, at pp. 166–67.
- 2 Fawzī Karīm, “At the Gardenia Door,” trans., Saadi Simawe and Melissa Brown, *Banīpal*, no. 19 (spring 2004) pp. 79–88, at p. 81. The reference in the poem is to a bar in the mentioned street in Baghdad.
 - 3 M. M. Bakhtin argues, “. . . the language of poetic genres, when they approach their stylistic limit, often becomes authoritarian, dogmatic and conservative, sealing itself off from the influence of extraliterary social dialects.” See “Discourse in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans., Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 287. Certainly, Bakhtin speaks of representation and depiction, for “The world of poetry, no matter how many contradictions and insoluble conflicts the poet develops within it, is always illumined by one unitary and indisputable discourse.” He adds,

The poet is not able to oppose his own poetic consciousness, his own intentions to the language that he uses, for he is completely within it and cannot turn it into an object to be perceived, reflected upon or related to.
(Ibid. 286)
 - 4 Bakhtin, “The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981) p. 47.
 - 5 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House-Vintage Books, 1970), p. 50.
 - 6 See M. M. Enani’s valid note in this respect, *An Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry* (Cairo: GEBO, 2001), p. 39.
 - 7 *Adab wa-Naqd*, 141 (May 1997) pp. 97–128.
 - 8 Muḥammad Bennīs, “Al-lughah al-‘azīzah” (The Dear Language), in *Sbataḥāt li-muntaṣaf al-nahār* (Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 1996), pp. 220–21.
 - 9 Ibid.
 - 10 For a survey of earlier discussions of language and discourse, dialects, identity, nationhood, and Islam since the 1950s, see the Lebanese ‘Umar Farrūkh, *Al-Qawmiyyah al-fuṣḥā* (Beirut: Dār Al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1961), pp. 77–219.
 - 11 Sharif al-Rubayī, “Dā‘irat al-Khawf” (The Circle of Fear), in *Al-Ighthirāb al-Adabī*, ed. Salah Niyazi, 27 (1994), p. 39.
 - 12 Written in 1980, and it appeared in *Al-Labzab al-Shi‘riyyah* (London: The Poetic Moment, 1993), vol. 2, pp. 17–18.
 - 13 See Adūnīs, *Kitāb al-biṣār* (Beirut: Dār Al-Ādāb, 1985), pp. 67–86, at p. 69; trans. and ed. Abdullah al-Udhari, *Modern Arabic Poetry* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1986), p. 68.
 - 14 Saadi Youssef: I Have Trained Myself Hard to be Free,” interview, *Banīpal*, no. 20 (Summer 2004), pp. 1–14, at p. 7.
 - 15 Ibid.
 - 16 Translated by Khaled Mattawa, in Saadi Simawi, *Iraqi Poetry Today* (London: King’s College, London, 2003), pp. 246–47. I emended some portions in the translation.
 - 17 Trans. and ed. al-Udhari, *Modern Arabic Poetry*, p. 73.

- 18 My translation. Another is in Simawi, *Iraqi Poetry Today*, pp. 246–47.
- 19 In Mahmoud Darwish, *Sand and Other Poems*, trans., Rana Kabbani (London: KPI, 1986), pp. 11–15.
- 20 Ibid. p. 15.
- 21 Hamīd Saʿīd, *Dīwān Hamīd Saʿīd* (Baghdad: Al-Adīb Press, 1984), pp. 120–21.
- 22 *The Poetry of Arab Women*, p. 144.
- 23 Nizar Qabbani, “The Book of Love,” in *On Entering the Sea: The Erotic and Other Poetry of Nizar Qabbani*, trans., Lean Jayyusi and Sharif Elmusa (New York: Interlink Books, 1996), p. 5.
- 24 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 49.
- 25 Adūnīs, *Al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah al-kāmilah* (Beirut: Dār Al-ʿAwdah, 4th printing, 1985), 1, p. 261.
- 26 Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 39–40.
- 27 The poem was dated 1978. Qāsim Ḥaddād, *Intimāʾāt* (Belongings) (Beirut: Al-Fārābī, 1982), pp. 35–44.
- 28 Tarafa Ibn al-Abd, “The Muʿallaqa of Tarafa,” trans., Michael Sells, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 17 (1986), pp. 20–33, at p. 29.
- 29 “Al-Kawāsir” (The rapacious or birds of prey) in his collection, *Yamshī makhfūran bil-waʿūl* (Arriving Accompanied by Stags) (London: Riad el-Rayyes Books, 1982), p. 87.
- 30 Michael Sells’ translation of Tarafah’s *Muʿallaqah*, p. 30.
- 31 Trans., M. M. Enani, *An Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry*, pp. 79–84, at p. 84.
- 32 Ed. and trans., Mounah Khouri and Hamid Algar, *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 108–10.
- 33 Nazim Hikmet, *Poems of Nazim Hikmet*, trans., Randy Blasing and Multu Konuk (New York: Persea Books, 1994), pp. 166–69, at p. 168.
- 34 Ed. and trans., Mounah Khouri and Hamid Algar, *An Anthology of Modern Poetry*, pp. 93–103. The poem is included in his collection, *Unshūdāt al-maṭar* (Beirut: Dār Al-ʿAwdah, 1971), pp. 151–61.
- 35 For a review of his life, see Issa Boullata, “Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: A Life of Vision and Agony,” *Near East Forum*, xlvi, 2–3, (1970) pp. 73–80.
- 36 Hugo Friedrich’s phrases in connection with modernity. His negative categories are discussed in Jonathan Culler’s “On the Negativity of Modern Poetry. Friedrich, Baudelaire, and the Critical Tradition,” in *Languages of Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, eds Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 193.
- 37 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 50.
- 38 *Rasʿil al-Sayyāb* (Letters of al-Sayyāb), Letter of May 4, 1958, ed. Mājid al-Samarrāʿi (Beirut: MADN, 1994), p. 130.
- 39 Mahmoud Darwish, “Ḥalīb Inānnā” (“Inanna’s Milk”), in *Sarīr al-gharībah* (The Woman-Stranger’s Bed) (written 1996–1997, published, London: El-Rayyes Books, 1999), pp. 53–57. English translation in *Unfortunately it was Paradise: Selected Poems*, trans. and eds Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 110.
- 40 Betty De Shong Meador, *Inanna Lady of the Largest Heart: Poems of Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2000), p. 17.
- 41 Black, *Sawād*, that is, the south of Iraq as it used to be densely green.
- 42 The collection appeared in 1998, and reprinted in his collected works. *Al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah* (Beirut: Al-Muʿassasah Al-ʿArabiyyah, 2000), pp. 58–59.

- 43 Ibid., pp. 60–61.
- 44 Muḥammad Bennis, *Nabr bayna janāzātayn* (A River between Two Funerals) (Casablanca: Dār Tūbqāl, 2000), pp. 30–36.
- 45 Fawz was the fictitious name for the beloved of the Abbasid poet ‘Abbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf (d. after 808), suspected to be ‘Ulayyah, the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd’s sister.
- 46 The shift from the female to the male voice is intentional.
- 47 Ḥamīd Sa’īd, *Mamlakat ‘Abdullāh* (‘Abdullāh’s Kingdom) (Baghdad: Dār Al-Shu’ūn Al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1988), pp. 109–11.
- 48 Qāsim Ḥaddād, “Index Suffering Catalog,” trans., Ferial Ghazoul and John Verlenden, *Banīpal*, 21 (Autumn 2004), pp. 114–15, at p. 115.
- 49 Adūnis, *Al-Ṣūfiyyah wa-al-suryāliyyah* (Beirut: Dār Al-Sāqī, 1992).
- 50 Muḥammad ‘Afīfī Maṭar, *Rubā’iyat al-faraḥ* (*Quartet of Joy*): *Poems by Muḥammad Afīfī Matar*, trans., Ferial Ghazoul and John Verlenden (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1997), p. 2. The text has both the Arabic version and the English translation. The poems were written between 1975 and 1988.
- 51 These fall within the “seven arts of versification” mentioned by the Iraqi Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Hillī (d. 1339), though he places the *mawāliyah* as an isthmus, to fit in either the *mu’raba* (inflected) that does not allow unsound usage, and the *malḥūmah* that allows such ungrammaticalities. See Noha Radwan, “Two Masters of ‘Āmmiyya Poetry,” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 35, 2 (2004), pp. 221–43, at p. 223.
- 52 See ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥasanī, *Al-Aghbānī al-sha’biyah* (Baghdad: Dār Al-Najāh, 1929), p. 32.
- 53 For instance, al-Bayātī titles a poem in his collection *Ash’ār fī al-manfā* (1956), “Mawwāl Baghdadi” (A Baghdadi mawwāl).
- 54 Maṭar, *Rubā’iyat al-faraḥ* (*Quartet of Joy*), p. 27.
- 55 Reference to the Prophet’s grandson, brutally killed by Umayyads in October 680. See my *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p. 297 and n. 18.
- 56 The verse originated in Baghdad, and began to elicit literary attention in the late twelfth century. The song is available, with slight differences, in many translations of *The Thousand and One nights*. See *The Arabian Nights*, trans., Husain Haddawy (New York: Norton, 1990), 81–82.
- 57 Fu’ād Ḥaddād, *Min Nūr al-Khayāl* (Cairo: Ruz al-Yūsuf, 1982), p. 29.
- 58 For a review of these meters, see J. A. Haywood and H. M. Nahmad, *A New Arabic Grammar* (London: Lund Humphries, 1965), pp. 455–61.
- 59 See S. Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry, 1899–1970* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), p. 219.
- 60 See ed. and trans., Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar, “Introduction,” in *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, p. 16.
- 61 See Maḥmūd ‘Alī-al-Sammān, *Al-‘Arūd al-jadīd* (Cairo: Dār Al-Ma’ārif, 1983), p. 12.
- 62 See Rabī’ al-Shammārī, *Al-‘Arūd fī al-shi’r al-sha’bī al-‘Irāqī* (Baghdad: Ministry of Culture, 1987).
- 63 For studies of *ta’ziyah* poetry, see Anayatullah Shahidi, “Literary and Musical Developments in Ta’ziyah”; also L. P. Elwell-Sutton, “The Literary Sources of Ta’ziyah”; Hanaway, W., Jr. “Stereotyped Imagery in the Ta’ziyah,” in *Ta’ziyah: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, ed. Peter Chelkowski (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 40–63, 167–81, 182–92 respectively.

- 64 For examples, see Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar, *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, pp. 109–20.
- 65 ‘Abd a-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Dīwān* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Awdah, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 414–16; also al-Sammān, *Al-‘Arūd al-jadīd*, p. 51.
- 66 For a discussion of prosimetry, see Wolfhart Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres in Classical Arabic Literature,” in *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, eds Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 249–76.
- 67 See Philip Kennedy, *Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abu Nuwas and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 68 Al-Ṭayyib Sālih, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (London: Heinemann, 1969–1970), p. 144.
- 69 See ed. and intro., Salma K. Jayyusi, *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 148–49.
- 70 For a neat reading of early examples of the mode, see W. Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres in Classical Arabic.”
- 71 See Khalil I. Semaan’s introduction, *Murder in Baghdad* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).
- 72 A mention of this impact has already been made in Chapter 2.
- 73 Ali Ahmed Said Adonis, “Poetry and Apoetical Culture,” trans., Esther Allen from the French, in *The pages of Day and Night*, trans., Samuel Hazo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 107.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, *Murder in Baghdad*, trans., Khalil I. Semaan p. 15.
- 76 Buland al-Ḥaydarī, *Dialogue in Three Dimensions*, trans., H. Hadawy (London: PAMEGAP, 1982).
- 77 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 21.

5 DEDICATIONS AS POETIC INTERSECTIONS

- 1 Reference to the renowned Arab poet who was killed in 965.
- 2 Alan D. Schrift, “Introduction: Why Gift,” in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1–22. Mauss’s theory of the gift has been applied to the ritual exchange between poet and patron in the classical Arabic *qasīdah* by Suzanne P. Stetkevych, “Pre-Islamic Panegyric and the Poetics of Redemption *Mufaḍḍalīyah* 119 of ‘Alqamah and *Bānat Su‘ād* of Ka‘b ibn Zuhayr,” in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne P. Stetkevych (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 1–57.
- 3 Sāmī al-Dahhān, ed., *Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1956).
- 4 Cited in Schrift, “Introduction: Why Gift,” *The Logic of the Gift*, p. 5.
- 5 Al-Dahhān, *Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā*, pp. 7–8. Translations from the Arabic are mine except where otherwise noted.
- 6 Cited in Schrift, “Introduction: Why Gift,” *The Logic of the Gift*, p. 15.
- 7 Al-Dahhān, *Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā*, p. 49.
- 8 Emile Benveniste, “Gift and Exchange in the Indo-European Vocabulary,” in Alan D. Schrift, *The Logic of the Gift*, pp. 33–42, at p. 33.
- 9 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Gift,” in *The Logic of the Gift*, ed. Alan D. Schrift, pp. 25–27, at p. 26.
- 10 Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 43–44.

- 11 In Gayatri Spivak's preface, to *Of Grammatology*, by Jacques Derrida (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. lviii there is a mention of Barthes's view of structuralist activity as one that creates an object to "manifest thereby the rules of its functioning." He adds, "Structure is therefore actually a simulacrum of the object, but a directed interested simulacrum." Yet, Spivak adds by way of qualification to the previous view, that for Derrida, there is no such "neat distinction between subject and object" in textuality (Ibid.).
- 12 Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutannabī, *Dīwān Abī al-Ṭayyib al-Mutannabī, bi-sharḥ Abī al-Baqā' al-Ukbarī*, eds Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā *et al.* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 276.
- 13 Suzanne Stetkevych "Abbasid Panegyric: The Politics and Poetics of Ceremony," in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. J. R. Smart (Surrey: Curzon, 1996), pp. 119–43, at p. 121.
- 14 Translation from Stetkevych, "Abbasid Panegyric," p. 125.
- 15 Derrida, *Given Time*, p. 59.
- 16 Stetkevych, "Abbasid Panegyric," pp. 136–37.
- 17 Abū 'Alī Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥātimī (d. 388 H). See *Ḥilyat al-mubādarah fī šinā'at al-shī'r* (The Ornament of the Assembly in the Craft of Poetry), ed. Ja'far al-Kattānī (Baghdad: Dār al-Rashīd, 1979), vol. 2. The "raid," *al-'igbārah*, in al-Ḥātimī's classification is the prominent poet's confiscation of a few lines belonging to a contemporary poet, but which he considers more in line with his own poetry thus forcing its owner to relent and offer them to him in subordination and acquiescence (p. 39). This is different from *al-iṣṭirāf*, which means confiscation and inclusion into one's own of a line, or two or three (p. 61).
- 18 Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay*, trans. Richard Miller (1974; reprint, New York: Monday Press, 1990), pp. 20, 41.
- 19 Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, *'Uṣfūr min al-Sharq* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1988); *Bird of the East*, trans. Bayly Winder (Beirut: Khayyāt, 1966). References in the text are to this translation.
- 20 Adūnīs (Adonis) ('Alī Ahmad Sa'īd), *Al-Kitāb: ams al-makān al-ān Makḥṭūtab tunsab lil-Mutanabbī* (Beirut: Al-Sāqī, 1993). See discussion later in the chapter.
- 21 Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983; London: Vintage Edition, 1991), p. 20.
- 22 C. A. Gregory's terms for gifts and commodities, in Schrift, *The Logic of the Gift*, and p. 2.
- 23 Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Abbasid Panegyric and the Poetics of Political Allegiance: Two Poems of al-Mutanabbī on Kāfūr," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, 2 vols., eds Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 35–63.
- 24 Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 132.
- 25 Derrida, *Given Time*, p. 87.
- 26 M. M. Enani's phrase, meaning "a man with a message, who cares little about the temptations of public life or glory but who would die for a cause." See *An Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry in Egypt* (Cairo: GEBO, 2001), p. 53.
- 27 Hilmi Salim, *'Umm ṣabāḥan ayyuha al-ṣaqr: qaṣā'id 'ilā Amal Dunqul*, ed. Ḥilmī Sālim (Cairo: SCFC, 2003).
- 28 The poem appeared in Abd al Wahhāb al-Bayātī's *'Uyūn al-kilāb al-mayyitab/ The Eyes of the Dead Dogs* (1969). For both the Arabic and the English translation,

- see ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Al-Bayātī, *Abdul Wabab al-Bayati: Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Bassam K. Frangieh, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 21–23. Zakī al-Arsūzī began preaching Pan-Arabism, based on a change in social order, socialism, nationalism, and anti-imperialism. He developed an independent line of thought ahead of other nationalist parties, and was hailed as a national hero by dissident Baʿth leaders in the mid-1960s. See Majid Khadduri, *Political Trends in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 207.
- 29 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Ilā T. S. Eliot,” *Al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah* (The Poetic Works), 2 vols (Beirut: Al-Muʿassasah al-ʿArabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt, 1995), 1, pp. 359–60.
- 30 On Riffaterre’s semiotics of poetry, see John Frow, *Marxism and Literary History* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 153; and Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 89.
- 31 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Ḥubb tahta al-Maṭar,” in *Al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah*, 2, p. 387; and “Love Under the Rain,” trans. George Masri, in *Abdul Wabab al-Bayātī: Love Under the Rain* (Madrid: Editorial Oriental, 1985), n.p.
- 32 See, for instance, al-Bayātī, *Al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah*, 1, pp. 307, 417, 439, 443, 458, 466, 471, 487; 2, pp. 141–46, 219–352, 449.
- 33 See M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 246; also Zahra A. Hussein Ali, “The Aesthetics of Transgression: Khalīl Ḥawī’s ‘The Sailor and the Dervish’ and the European Grotesque,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28 (1997), pp. 219–34; and Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans., Charles Lam Markann (New York: Grove, 1967).
- 34 For more, see Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 2, p. 742.
- 35 Nadia Bishai, trans., *Badr Shaker As Sayab: Selected Poems* (London: Third World Center for Research and Publishing, 1986), p. 17 (Arabic), pp. 30–31 (English).
- 36 Al-Bayātī, *Al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah*, 2, p. 11.
- 37 Al-Bayātī wrote for *Al-Adāb*, 8 (1953), p. 74:
- Fly hunters, we are tired of them. How can we burn them and their flies? My friend [from whom al-Bayātī allegedly quotes] means those poor poets . . . who still hunt out rhythms and rhymes to win the admiration of some . . . imaginary beloved, or some degenerate bellied patron in an age full with heroic feats, transformations and revolutions . . . However, my friend looked around with fear and ran away; leaving me alone, face to face with one of those fly hunters.
- In another instance, al-Bayātī blames al-Sayyāb for leaving him by himself, defending the free verse movement and its aspirations for a break-through in culture. “Poetic heresy was addressed as an accusation against me, more than al-Sayyāb who began to regress and retreat, settling for a truce with powers of darkness which had been hunting out intellectuals and poets.” See ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Ḥawāʾiq al-shiʿr arāʾ* (The Fires of Poets), (Beirut: Al-Muʿassasah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1994), p. 82.
- 38 Al-Bayātī, *Al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah*, 2, p. 16.
- 39 Yūsuf al-Khāl, *Al-Biʿr al-mahjūrah* (The Deserted Well) (Beirut: Dār Majallat Shiʿr, 1958). His dedication to Ezra Pound introduces the collection.
- 40 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 151.

- 41 Bishai, *Badr Shaker As-Sayab*, pp. 21–22 (Arabic), p. 35 (English).
- 42 On this point, see Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements*, 2, pp. 691–92; and Badawi, *A Critical Introduction*, p. 210.
- 43 Al-Bayātī, *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah*, 2, p. 141–46, in six parts.
- 44 Muḥammad ‘Afīfī Maṭar, *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1998), p. 287.
- 45 Indented niche inside the mosque to indicate the direction of the prayer toward Mecca. See Ian Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon Press, 1992), p. 170.
- 46 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, ‘*Ābirūn fī kalām ‘ābir* (Passers-by a Passing Talk; Beirut: Dār al-‘Awdah, 2nd print), pp. 173–74, 175.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Derrida, *Given Time*, p. 16.
- 49 Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, p. 99.
- 50 Al-Bayātī, *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah*, 2, p. 466.
- 51 Harold Bloom’s phrases, *Anxiety of Influence*, p. 100.
- 52 Al-Bayātī, *Ḥarā’iq al-sbu^carā’*, p. 80.
- 53 Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, p. 100.
- 54 Al-Bayātī, *Ḥarā’iq al-sbu^carā’*, p. 81.
- 55 Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, p. 102.
- 56 Al-Bayātī explains to Ḥamīd Abū Aḥmad, “It is irrational to sincerely mourn somebody who has been insulting you.” He concludes that the elegy is there nevertheless; as if to prove that “the enmity is one-sided.” See Ḥamīd Abū Aḥmad, *‘Abd al-Wabbāb al-Bayātī: Sīrah dbāṭiyyah* (An Autobiography), (Amman: Bazzāz, 1994; reprint of the 1989 edition), p. 54.
- 57 Derrida, *Given Time*, p. 44.
- 58 See al-Bayātī, *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah*, 2, p. 219. See Appendix I, this chapter, for English translation by Saadi A. Simawe.
- 59 Al-Bayātī, *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah*, 1, p. 483.
- 60 Derrida, *Given Time*, p. 73.
- 61 Sa’dī Yūsuf, *Al-‘Amāl al-sbi^rriyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Madā), 1995. Vol. 2, pp. 436–39.
- 62 Khalīl Ḥawī, *Dīwān Khalīl Ḥawī* (Beirut: Dār Al-‘Awdah, 1972), pp. 307–12. See also *Naked in Exile: Khalīl Ḥawī’s The Threshing Floors of Hunger*, Interpretation and Translation by Adnan Haydar and Michael Beard (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1984). For “Lazarus 1962,” pp. 79–171.
- 63 Khalīl Ḥawī, *Naked in Exile*, p. 9.
- 64 Buland al-Ḥaydarī’s poem, addressed to Khalīl Ḥawī appeared in *Ilā Bayrūt Ma’a Taḥiyyātī* (To Beirut with My Regards), (Beirut: Al-Sāqī, 1989); reprinted in *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah* (Cairo: Dār Su‘ād al-Ṣabāh, 1993), pp. 643–46.
- 65 Al-Bayātī, *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah*, 2, p. 20.
- 66 Al-Bayātī, “Marthiyyah ilā Khalīl Ḥawī”/“Elegy to Khalīl Ḥawī,” trans. Bassam K. Frangieh, Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati: *Love, Death and Exile*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990. pp. 266–69. See Appendix II, this chapter.
- 67 Martínez Montávez’s article appeared in Arabic in Ḥamīd Abū Aḥmad ‘*Abd al-Wabbāb al-Bayātī fī Isbānyah* (Al-Bayātī in Spain), (Beirut: Al-Mu‘assasah al-‘Arabiyyah, 1991), pp. 143–53. See p. 143.
- 68 Ibid., p. 152.
- 69 Al-Bayātī, “Elegy to Khalīl Ḥawī,” Frangieh, *Love, Death and Exile*, pp. 266–67.
- 70 Al-Bayātī, *Al-A^cmāl al-sbi^rriyyah*, 2, p. 20.

- 71 Al-Bayātī, “Al-Wilādah”/“The Birth,” trans. Frangieh, *Love, Death and Exile*, pp. 282–83.
- 72 Al-Bayātī, “Al-Wilādah fi Mudun lam Tūlad,” “Birth in Unborn Cities,” trans. Frangieh, *Love, Death and Exile*, pp. 278–79.
- 73 Al-Bayātī, “Al-Nuqqād al-Ad‘iyā” (False Critics) trans. Frangieh *Love, Death and Exile*, p. 279.
- 74 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “I am Born and Burnt in Love,” trans. Masri *Abdul Wahab Al-Bayātī: Love under the Rain*, n. p.; al-Bayātī, *Al-A‘māl al-shi‘riyyah*, 2, p. 387.
- 75 Harold Bloom, “The Breaking of Form,” in *Deconstruction and Criticism: Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, J. Hillis, Miller*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 1–37, p. 6.
- 76 Michel Foucault *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 40.
- 77 Al-Bayātī’s “Al-Hiṣār”/“The Siege” was written in 1988; see *Al-A‘māl al-shi‘riyyah*, 2, p. 521–22.
- 78 Al-Bayātī, “To Nazim Hikmet” in *Al-A‘mal al-shi‘riyyah*, 1, p. 472.
- 79 Derrida, *Given Time*, p. 87.
- 80 “Al-Mutanabbī,” in al-Bayātī, *Al-A‘māl al-shi‘riyyah*, 1, p. 483.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 481.
- 82 On al-Mutanabbī’s lineage, see ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Mallāh, *Al-Mutanabbī Yastariddu Abāb* (Al-Mutanabbī Regains His Father) (Beirut: Al-Mu‘assasah al-‘Arabiyyah, n.d.).
- 83 ‘Alī Aḥmad Sa‘īd (Adūnīs), *Dīwān al-Shi‘r al-‘Arabī*, 2 vols (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah, 1964) 2, pp. 342–68.
- 84 ‘Alī Aḥmad Sa‘īd (Adūnīs), *Al-Kitāb: Amṣ al-makān al-‘ān: Makbūṭat tunsab lil-Mutanabbī* (The Book Yesterday, The Place Now: A Manuscript Attributed to al-Mutanabbī), 2 vols. (Beirut: Al-Sāqī, 1993).
- 85 Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, p. 139.
- 86 Adūnīs, *Al-Kitāb*, p. 28.
- 87 Adonis, Ali Ahmed Said, *The Blood of Adonis*, trans. Samuel Hazo (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), pp. 46–54, at p. 46.
- 88 *Given Time*, p. 86.
- 89 Cited in Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ‘Arabī*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, Golden Palm Series, 1993), p. 102.
- 90 Mahmoud Darwish, *Selected Poems*. Introduced and Translated by Ian Wedde and Fawwaz Tuqan (Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1973), p. 88.
- 91 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–86, at p. 83.
- 92 *Ibid.*
- 93 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 94 *Ibid.*
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 *Ibid.*
- 97 *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, trans., Abdullah al-Udhari (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, New York: Penguin, 1986), p. 64.
- 98 First published *Al-Jadid: A Review and Record of Arab Culture and Arts* (Los Angeles, CA: Nagam Cultural Project, 1998), 4, 24, p. 9. Al-Sayyāb is the Iraqi poet Badr Shākir Al-Sayyāb (1926–1964) who, with Nāzik al-Malā‘ikah,

- founded the free verse movement in modern Arabic poetry. This poem was first published in al-Bayātī's collection titled *Kitābah ʿalā al-Ṭīn* (Writing on Clay 1970), which was later included in his *Dīwān ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī* (Beirut: Dār Al-ʿAwdah, 1972), pp. 487–90.
- 99 A reference to al-Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. Martyred with some family members in the 7th century, al-Ḥusayn has become a living symbol of Shiʿite resistance and sorrows.
- 100 A reference to the famous verse attributed to Majnūn Laylā, Qays ibn al-Mulawwah, which is: "And God might help unite the separated (lovers) after / They have thought that reunion was impossible." See Ma'mūn Ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Jannān, *Majnūn Laylā: Bayn al-Wāqīʿah wa- al-Uṣṭūrāh* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1990), p. 145.
- 101 A reference to the Tāq Kisrā (Arch of Chosroes), an impressive brick-vaulted palace built in the ancient village of Ctesiphon on the river of Tigris in Iraq by Sasanid kings (Chosroes) around AD 197–198. See Ctesiphon, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 3rd edn, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. According to the footnote by the poet, "Al-Tāq (The Arch) is a reference to the Arch of Chosroes which is located near Baghdad. As children we used to go there and shout under the Arch so that it echoes what we said."

6 ENVISIONING EXILE: PAST ANCHORS AND PROBLEMATIC ENCOUNTERS

- 1 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Limādhā tarakta al-ḥiṣān wabīdan* (Why Have You Left the Horse Alone?), (Beirut: Riad N. El-Rayyes, 1995), p. 141.
- 2 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "The Last Evening in this Land," "Eleven Planets in the Last Andalusian Sky," in *The Adam of Two Edens*, eds Munir Akash and Daniel Moore (New York: Jusoor and Syracuse University Press, 2000) p. 150.
- 3 Mahmoud Darwish, "The Tragedy of Narcissus, The Comedy of Silver," in *The Adam of Two Edens*, p. 186.
- 4 The Arabic term *su'lūk*, also translated as vagabond, applies to a pre-Islamic group of poets who were ostracized socially, and who created their own solidarity against the tribal one, "relishing antisocial behavior and the hardships of life." See Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 109.
- 5 See Jonathan Culler, "On the Negativity of Modern Poetry: Friedrich, Baudelaire, and the Critical Tradition," in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University, 1989), p. 190.
- 6 Quoted in Franz Rosenthal, "The Stranger in Medieval Islam," *Arabica*, XLIV (1997), pp. 35–75, at p. 52.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 56. Rosenthal used the Arabic terms for stranger and strangeness in this quote.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

- 13 Quoted in Franz Rosenthal, "The Stranger in Medieval Islam," *Arabica*, XLIV (1997), pp. 35–75, at p. 50.
- 14 Sa'dī Yūsuf wrote: "Reading these poets [the French] I felt I wasn't bound by anything, by any tradition." See, "I Have Trained Myself Hard to be Free," *Banīpāl*, 20, summer 2004, pp. 2–14, at p. 7.
- 15 Quoted in Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds Russell Ferguson, Martha Gevers, Trinch T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West. Foreword by Maria Tucker (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 357–66, at p. 357.
- 16 Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés: Studies in Modern Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 15.
- 17 Abū Bakr's uncle, a master of ornate style and poetry.
- 18 Rosenthal, "The Stranger in Medieval Islam," p. 52, n. 69.
- 19 Quoted in Rosenthal, "The Stranger in Medieval Islam," p. 57. See also another version in A. J. Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), p. 103.
- 20 Rosenthal, p. 57.
- 21 The poem begins:
- The abodes of the Valley in respect of delightfulness are, in
relation to other abodes, as spring among all other times,
but the Arab lad amidst them is a stranger in face, hand and tongue,
They are places of jinns to play in—if Solomon had journeyed in them,
he would have journeyed with an interpreter.
See Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī*, p. 134.
- 22 William H. Gass, "Exile," in *The Best American Essays, 1992*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Ticknor, 1992), p. 135.
- 23 David R. Slavitt, trans. *Ovid's Poetry of Exile* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 70.
- 24 See Culler, "On the Negativity of Modern Poetry," *Languages of the Unsayable*, p. 194.
- 25 Mahmoud Darwish, "A Horse for the Stranger," *The Adam of Two Edens*, eds Munir Akash and Daniel Moore (New York: Jusoor and Syracuse University Press, 2000), p. 110.
- 26 Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 44–67, at p. 60.
- 27 Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, and Literatures*, (London: Verso, 1992), p. 134.
- 28 Buland al-Haydari, "Buland al-Haydari: Nine Poems," trans. Salih J. Altoma, *Banīpāl*, Autumn 2003, pp. 29–34, at p. 29.
- 29 Buland al-Haydari "Exile's Agony," in "Buland al-Haydari: Nine Poems," trans. Salih J. Altoma, *Banīpāl*, Autumn 2003, pp. 29–34, at p. 31.
- 30 Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, and Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: Random-Vintage, 1986), p. 277.
- 31 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Inn 'udta waḥdak" (If You Return by Yourself), *Lā ta'tadbir 'mmā fa'alt* (Do Not Apologize for What You Did), (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2004), p. 31.
- 32 Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (New York: Viking, 1975), p. 36.
- 33 Mahmoud Darwish, "Eleven Planets in the Last Andalusian Sky: One Day I'll Sit on the Sidewalk," *The Adam of Two Edens*, p. 158. References to the philosopher

- Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 1198) and to the jurist, poet, and prose writer, Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) whose book is seen as a breakthrough in the theory of love.
- 34 *Aporia*: “time both is and is not.” See Spivak’s Preface, *Of Grammatology*, lxxii. It “describes the gap between the linguistic and philosophical coherence of a text and the subversive contradictions and paradoxes that shadow that coherence. Such subversions serve not just to reverse interpretation but to open the text to a free play of possibilities, making the text ‘undecidable’ and disrupting systematization.” See *Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*, eds Joseph Childers and Gray Hentzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 16.
- 35 “Yakhtārūnī al-‘iqā’ (The Rhythm Chooses Me), *Lā ta’tadbir ‘mmā fa’alt* (Do Not Apologize For What You Did), p. 15.
- 36 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (London: Granta, 1991), 278–79.
- 37 Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation,” *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1–7, at p. 6.
- 38 Mahmoud Darwish “The Hoopoe,” *I See What I Want to See* (1993), *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, selected and translated by Munir Akash and Carloyn Forche (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003) p. 43.
- 39 For a review, see Ibrahim Muhawi, “Introduction,” in *Memory of Forgetfulness*, August, Beirut, 1982, trans. Ibrahim Muhami (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995), pp. xii–xv.
- 40 The reference is to Muḥammad ibn Zurayq al-Kātib al-Baghdadī’s poem “I Beseech God’s Protection for a Moon of Mine Whom I Have Left Behind in Baghdad.” Abū al-‘Abbās Shams al-Dīn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Ayān Wa-anbā’ abnā’ al-Zaman*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968–77), 5, p. 338.
- 41 This is the name of a small river, where al-Sayyāb’s village Jaykūr is. It is immortalized in al-Sayyāb’s poetry.
- 42 “A Horse for the Stranger,” *The Adam of Two Edens*, pp. 110–11. The annotations are mine.
- 43 “The Hoopoe,” *I See What I Want to See* (1993), *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, p. 43.
- 44 “The Earth is Closing on Us,” *The Victims of a Map*, trans. Abdullah al-Udhari (London: Al-Saqi Books, 1984), p. 13.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Jidāriyyab* (Mural) (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes, 2000), p.67.
- 47 In Darwīsh, *Limādhā tarakta al-ḥiṣān wahīdan*, p. 115–16.
- 48 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, “Biḥiyābihā kawwantu šuratahā” (Due to Its Absence, I Composed its Image), in *Lā ta’tadbir ‘mmā fa’alt* (Do Not Apologize for What You Did), p. 49.
- 49 Darwīsh, *Jidāriyyab*, p. 22.
- 50 Quoted in Barkan, Elazar Barkan, and Marie-Denise Shelton, eds, *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 303.
- 51 Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (1986, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 298.
- 52 Darwish, *The Adam of Two Edens*, p. 63.
- 53 Saddam’s half brother Sab’awī confessed on 23 March 2005, that he killed him upon Saddam’s orders.
- 54 Fārūq al-Buqaylī, “Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim: Munājayāt al-sab’in,” (Monologues of the Seventies) *Istijwāb* 13 (September 1994) pp. 42–46.

- 55 'Aziz al-Sayyid Jāsim, *Ta'ammulāt fī al-ḥaḍārāb wa-al-ighbtirāb* (Reflections on Civilization and Alienation) (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1987a).
- 56 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim, *Al-Dīk wa- Qiṣaṣ ukbrā* (The Rooster and Other Stories) (Cairo: GEBO, 1987b).
- 57 Adūnīs, *Qaṣā'id mukhtārāb* (Selected Poems) ed. 'Abd Allāh Ṣūlah (Tunis: Dār al-Janūb, 1995), p. 46.
- 58 Ali Ahmad Said Adonis, "Elegy to the Time at Hand," in Adonis, Ali Ahmed Said, *The Blood of Adonis*, trans. Samuel Hazo (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 46. The version in the 1985 Dār al-'Awdah collected works differs from the translation. See 1, p. 220.
- 59 Fārūq al-Buqaylī, "'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim: Munājayāt al-sab'īn," (Monologues of the Seventies) pp. 42–46.
- 60 Quoted in Richard T. De George, *The New Marxism* (New York: Pegasus, 1968), p. 94.
- 61 Sa'ādī Yūsuf, *Al-A'māl al-kāmilāb* (The Complete Works) (Damascus: Al-Madā), 1, pp. 496–97.
- 62 Ernest Dowson, "Exile," *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose*, ed. Karl Beckson (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 93.
- 63 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, "Musāfir bilā ḥaqā'ib" ("A Traveler without Baggage"), in *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, selected, edited and translated by Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1975) p. 117.
- 64 See Ḥamīd Sa'īd, *Bi-ittiḥāb uḥq ausa'* (Baghdad: Al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1992), p. 9.
- 65 Buland al Ḥaydarī "Sā'ī al-barīd" (The Mailman) in *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, p. 121.
- 66 J. M. Ritchie, *German Exiles: British Perspectives* (New York: Lang, 1997), p. 281.
- 67 Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 14–15.
- 68 Fārūq al-Buqaylī, "'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim: Munājayāt al-sab'īn" (Monologues of the Seventies).
- 69 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī *Abdul Wahab al-Bayātī: Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Bassam K. Frangieh (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), p. 207. Arabic originals are also available in this translation.
- 70 From 'Abd al Wahhāb al-Bayātī, "Love under the Rain" trans. George Masri, *Abdul Wahab al-Bayātī: Love Under the Rain* (Madrid: Editorial Oriental, 1985). For another version, see *ibid.*, p. 223.
- 71 The poem appeared in the late 1950s, and was included in his collection *Bayādir al-jū'* (1965). For translation, see Adnan Haydar, and Michael Beard. *Naked in Exile: Khalīl Ḥawī's The Threshing Floors of Hunger*. Interpretation and Translation (Washington: Three Continents, 1984), p. 23.
- 72 Fawzī Karīm, *Qaṣā'id mukhtārāb* (Selected Poems) (Cairo: State-Publishing House, 1996), p. 105.
- 73 Already cited. "The Arab lad amidst them is a stranger in face, hand and tongue." See Arberry, *Poems of al-Mutanabbī*, p. 134.
- 74 Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Minn Rūmiyyāt Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī," in *Limādhā tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīdān*, 1995, pp. 103–106. Translation is emended from "The Byzantine Odes of Abu Firas," in *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems*, translated and edited by Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché (Berkeley, LA, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 88.

- 75 Emended from “The Byzantine Odes of Abu Firas,” in *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, p. 88.
- 76 Another translation runs as follows:
- Say I when I hear the mourning of a nearby dove
O my neighbor, do you sympathize with me?
- See Mahmud Ibrahim, *Songs of an Arab Prince* (Amman: Ministry of Culture, 1988), p. 111.
- 77 Tahar Bekri, “The Caplets of Attachment: The Exile of Ibn Hazm,” translated from the French by Barbara Beck, *Literary Review*, 41, 2 (Winter 1998), pp. 173–76, at p. 175.
- 78 Assia Djebar, “The Mint and the Olive Branch,” translated from the French by Joanna Goodman, *The Literary Review*, 41, 2 (Winter 1998), p. 190.
- 79 In *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, pp. 113–14.
- 80 Lamī’ah ‘Abbās ‘Imārah, “San Diego,” in *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*, ed. Nathalie Handal (New York: Interlink, 2001), p. 78.
- 81 Reference to the poet Mihyār al-Daylamī (d. 428/1037).
- 82 Adonis, *The Pages of Day and Night*. trans. Samuel Hazo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 23.
- 83 Al-Bayātī, *Tajribatī al-shi’riyyah* (My Poetic Experience), in *Dīwān ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Al-‘Awdah, 1971), 2, pp. 371–508.
- 84 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Dīwān al-Nār wa- al-kalimāt* (Diwan of fire and Words, 1964), in *Al-A‘māl al-kāmilah* (The Complete Works), 2 vols (Beirut: al-Mu‘assasah al-‘Arabiyyah, 1995), 1, pp. 465; hereafter cited as Works. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
- 85 Adūnīs, *Al-A‘māl al-shi’riyyah al-kāmilah* (The Complete Poetic Works) (Beirut: Dar al-‘Awdah, 1971), pp. 260–61. For a review of the use of myth, see Yūsuf Ḥillāwī, *Al-‘Ustūrah fī al-shi’r al-‘Arabī al-mu’āṣir* (Bierut: Dār al-‘Ādāb, 1994), pp. 231–42.
- 86 For a discussion of Bettina L. Knapp’s book and application to creative writing, see Halim Barakat, “Explorations in Exile and Creativity: The Case of Arab-American Writers,” in *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, eds K. Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 301–19.
- 87 Al-Bayātī, *Tajribatī al-shi’riyyah* (My Poetic Experience) (Beirut: Manshurāt Nizār Qabbānī, 1968), p. 12.
- 88 *Dīwān al-Nār wa- al-kalimāt*, Works, 1, pp. 465.
- 89 Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar, eds and trans., *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 117–120. A full text translation is available in this anthology.
- 90 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Ghiyāb: ilā al-Hind” (Absence: To Hind), Works, 1, pp. 278–79.
- 91 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Ilā Hind” (To Hind) in *Sifr al-fuqr wa al-thawrah*, (The Book of Poverty and Revolution) in *Dīwān*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Al-‘Awdah, 1971), 2, pp. 69–71.
- 92 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (Poems from Vienna: Birthday) Works, 1, pp. 378. See also p. 376 for “Amtar” Rains.
- 93 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī “Al-Wahdah” (Loneliness) in *Kalimāt lā tamūt* (Undying Words), Works, 1, p. 380.
- 94 The charming youth buried alive by the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd in 708.

- 95 Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Nuṣūṣ sharqīyyah* (Oriental Texts) (Damascus: Al-Madā, 1999), p. 15.
- 96 Al-Bāyatī, *Nuṣūṣ sharqīyyah*, p. 15.
- 97 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī “An Elegy to Nazim Hikmet”, *Al-Nār wa-al-kalimāt*, Works, 1: pp. 466.
- 98 See the ‘Awdah edition, 2: pp. 415–16.
- 99 Pablo Neruda, *Memoirs*, trans. Hardie St. Martin (New York: Penguin, 1987), pp. 195–96.
- 100 Ibid., pp. 195–96.
- 101 Nazim Hikmet, *Nazim Hikmet, Selected Poetry*, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (New York: Persea Books, 1986) pp. 47–50, at p. 50.
- 102 Bāb al-Shaykh is an old traditional district in Baghdad where the shrine of the Sufī ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī is located.
- 103 Al-Bayātī, “Nuṣūṣ sharqīyyah”, (Oriental Texts), no. 23, p. 71.
- 104 Works, 1, p. 414.
- 105 See Francisco Garcia Lorca and Donald M. Allen, *The Selected Poems of Federico Garcia Lorca* (New York: New Directions, 1955), p. 63.
- 106 Al-Bayātī, *Abdul Wahab al-Bayātī* trans., Frangieh, *Love, Death and Exile*, p. 177.
- 107 Nazim Hikmet, *Poems of Nazim Hikmet*, trans. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (New York: Persea Books, 1994), p. 3.
- 108 Al-Bayātī, *Love Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 183.
- 109 Nazim Hikmet “Istanbul House of Detention,” in *Nazim Hikmet: Selected Poetry*, trans., Randy Blasing and Mutlu Kenuk (New York: Persea Books, 1986), p. 53.
- 110 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Death and the Lamp,” *Qamar Shīrāz*, Shiraz’s Moon, in *Love, Death, and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, p. 177.
- 111 Cited by Samuel Sillen, in Nazim Hikmet, *Poems by Nazim Hikmet*, trans. by Ali Yunus, with an introduction by Samuel Sillen (New York: Masses’ Mainstream, 1954), p. 6.
- 112 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Sujūn Abī al-‘Alā” (The Prisons of Abū al-‘Alā), no. 3, in *Nuṣūṣ Sharqīyyah* (Oriental Texts), p. 11.
- 113 Al-Bayātī, “Death and the Lamp” *Qamar Shīrāz*, Shiraz’s Moon, in *Love, Death, and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, pp. 180–81.
- 114 Works, 2, pp. 425–28.
- 115 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, “Al-Nūr Ya’tī min Ghīrnātah”/“Light comes from Granada,” in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, p. 235.
- 116 Works, 1, pp. 267–68.
- 117 Oriental Texts, p. 12.
- 118 Both Alberti and Lorca established the Union of Exiled Writers against Fascism. On dedications, see Muhsin J. al-Musawi, “Dedications as Poetic Intersections,” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31, 1 (2000), pp. 1–37; revised here for Chapter 5.
- 119 Al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, p. 161.
- 120 See his explanations, in the ‘Awdah edition, 2, pp. 415–16.
- 121 See Frangieh’s, “Glossary,” in al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, p. 309.
- 122 Al-Bayātī, “Qīrā’ah fī Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn lil-Ḥallāj” (“Reading from the book of al-Ṭawāsīn by al-Hallāj”), in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 173.
- 123 Works, 2, p. 20.
- 124 Bettina L. Knapp, *Exile and the Writer: Exoteric and Esoteric Experience in a Jungian Approach* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 1–2.
- 125 Works, 2, p. 46.

- 126 Imām Ḥusayn's nephew who was murdered, burnt and his ashes thrown into the Euphrates by the Umayyads.
- 127 Al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 6.
- 128 Al-Bayātī, "Aisha's Profile," *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 287.
- 129 Ibid. Slight changes have been made in the translated quotes.
- 130 "Al-Raḥīl ilā Mudun al-'Ishq" (Departing for the cities of desire), *Kitāb al-Baḥr* (The Book of the Sea), Works, 2, pp. 302, 304.
- 131 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Ṭaḥawwulāt 'Ā'ishah* ('Ā'ishah's Transformations) (Beirut: Dār al-Kunūz al-Dhahabiyyah, 1999), 190.
- 132 Al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 275.
- 133 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, Works, 2, p. 290, in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 115 (with emendation).
- 134 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, "Sayyidat al-aqmar al-sab'ah" (Lady of the Seven Moons), *Kitāb al-baḥr* (The Book of the Sea), Works, trans. Frangieh, p. 119.
- 135 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī *Kitāb al-baḥr* (The Book of the Sea) Works, 2, p. 296.
- 136 Al-Bayātī, "The Birth in Unborn Cities," in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 279.
- 137 See al-Musawi, "Dedications," p. 18.
- 138 Al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, p. 247.
- 139 In Arnold's Preface to his revised 1853 collection in [Matthew] Arnold, *Poetical Works*, ed. C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. xvii–xxx.
- 140 In *Cultural Expression in Arab Society Today*, trans. Robert W. Stokely (Austin, TX and London University of Texas Press, 1978), p. 301.

7 THE EDGE OF RECOGNITION AND REJECTION: WHY T. S. ELIOT

- 1 Luwīs 'Awaḍ, "T. S. Eliot," *Al-Kātib al-Miṣrī*, vol. 1: 4 (May 1946), pp. 557–568.
- 2 General studies are many, such as M. M. Badawi's introduction to *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 2(1971); S. Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry, 1800–1970* (Leiden: Brill, 1976). Some specific readings are the following: Arieḥ Loya, "Al-Sayyab and the Influence of T. S. Eliot," *The Muslim World*, LXI (July 1971), pp. 187–201; Khalil H. Samaan, "T. S. Eliot's Influences on Arabic Poetry and Theatre," *Comparative Literature Studies*, IV (1969), pp. 472–89. An incomplete listing of the presence of Eliot in Arabic literature and translation is by Māhir S. Farīd, *T. S. Eliot: Shadharāt shi'riyyah wa-masraḥiyyah* (Alexandria: Al-Mustaqbal, 1998), 307–56.
- 3 See Māhir S. Farīd, *T. S. Eliot*, p. 301.
- 4 See 'Isā Boullātā, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb* (Beirut: Al-Nahār, 1971), p. 178.
- 5 The group of poets who were associated with the modernism of the *Journal* since 1957. For more, see John M. Asfour, *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, 1945–1987* (Duavegan, ON: Cormorant, 1988).
- 6 Iḥsān 'Abbās, "Bayna 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī wa-T. S. Eliot," *Al-Adīb*, 27, 3 (March 1955), pp. 22–23.
- 7 See Terrī DeYoung for a sum up of these elements, "T. S. Eliot and Modern Arabic Literature," *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, 48(2000), pp. 3–21, at pp. 12–13; and also my review article of her book, "Placing the

- Poet: Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Postcolonial Iraq," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 30: 3(1999), pp. 291–99.
- 8 It is argued that al-Ma'arrī influenced Dante in a dynamic of appropriation and rejection. See Asin, Palacios Miguel, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*. (London: J. Murray, 1926; reprint, New Delhi: Goodword Book, 2001).
 - 9 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī "Ilā T. S. Eliot," in *Al-A'māl al-shi'riyyah* (The Poetic Works), 2 vols. (Beirut: Al -Mu' assasah al-'Arabiyyah, 1995), 1, pp. 359–60. See also my "Dedications as Poetic Intersections," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 31, 1 (2000), pp. 1–37, at p. 11.
 - 10 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, "Aisha's Mad Lover" in *Abdul Wahab al-Bayati: Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Bassam K. Frangieh (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), p. 91.
 - 11 Nazeer El-Azma, "The Tammūzī Movement and the Influence of T.S. Eliot on Badr Shakir al-Sayyab," *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Washington, DC: 3 Continents, 1980), pp. 215–331.
 - 12 Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (Abridged, edition: New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 378.
 - 13 Al-Bayātī, "Elegy to Khalil Hawi", in *Abdul Wahab Al-Bayati: Love, Death and Exile* trans., Frangieh, p. 267.
 - 14 See John M. Asfour, *When the Words Burn*, for example.
 - 15 Nazeer El-Azma, "The Tammuzi Movement and the Influence of T.S. Eliot on Badr Shakir al-Sayyab," in *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, pp. 215–31, at pp. 216–17.
 - 16 Erik Svarny, *The Men of 1914* Milton Keynes: (Open University Press, 1988).
 - 17 George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (1959; London: Penguin, 1967), p. 12.
 - 18 Quoted in Svarny, p. 168.
 - 19 M. M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 59
 - 20 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," p. 16.
 - 21 I have already cited these in Chapter 2, n. 4.
 - 22 Eliot, "Reflections on Vers Libre," 1917, in *Selected Prose* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1953; rpt 1955), ed. John Hayward, pp. 86–91, at p. 32.
 - 23 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920), p. 48.
 - 24 Svarny, *The Men of 1914*, p. 221.
 - 25 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī "Qasā'id hubb 'alā- bawwābat al-'ālam al-sab'," "Love Poems at the Seven Gates of the World," in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Bassam K. Frangieh, p. 81.
 - 26 Adūnīs, "Al-Sahrā"/"The Desert," in *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, trans. and ed. Abdullah al-Udhari (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, New York: Penguin, 1986), p. 67.
 - 27 Al-Bayātī, "Al-Wilādah fi Mudun lam Tūlad," "The Birth in Unborn Cities," in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, p. 279.
 - 28 Al-Bayātī, "Al-Nuqqād al-Ad 'iyā," trans., Frangieh, *Love, Death and Exile* "False Critics," p. 279.
 - 29 G. Pearson, "T. S. Eliot: An American Use of Symbolism," in *Eliot in Perspective*, ed. G. Martin (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 83–102, at p. 86.
 - 30 Al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 39.

- 31 From M. H. Abrams' edition of *The Waste Land, The Norton Anthology*, 6th edition, vol. 2, (1993) p. 2149.
- 32 "The Burial of the Dead," in *The Waste Land*, p. 2147.
- 33 "The Fire Sermon," in *The Waste Land*, p. 2152.
- 34 Al-Bayātī, "Kābūs al-layl wa-al-nahār"/"The Night Mare of Night and Day," in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., B. K. Frangieh, p. 41.
- 35 "The Fire Sermon," in *The Waste Land*, p. 2152.
- 36 Al-Bayātī, *Tajribatī al-shi'riyyah*, cited in Frangieh's "Introduction" to *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., B. K. Frangieh, p. 4.
- 37 See his poem to Rafael Alberti, in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 163.
- 38 *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 161; and Al-Bayātī, "The Gypsy Symphony," *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., B. K. Frangieh, p. 157.
- 39 'Abd al-Wahhāb al Bayātī "The Village Market," in *An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry*, ed. and trans., Mounah A. Khouri and Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), p. 116.
- 40 Al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, "Introduction," p. 4.
- 41 Quoted Gregory S. Jay, "Ghosts and Roses," in *Modern Critical Views: T. S. Eliot* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), pp. 103–19, at p. 109. See also his discussion of Dante, p. 104 and p. 109.
- 42 Gregory S. Jay's phrase, p. 110.
- 43 See Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*.
- 44 From M.H. Abrams' edition of *The Waste Land, The Norton Anthology*, 6th edition vol. 2 (1993), pp. 2153–54. Quotations are from this edition.
- 45 James Olney, "Four Quartets: 'Folden in a Single Party'," in *Modern Critical Views: T.S. Eliot*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985) pp. 31–41, at p. 34.
- 46 Al-Bayātī, "First Symphony of the Fifth Dimension," *Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, p. 247.
- 47 Al-Bayātī, "Aisha's Mad Lover," XIII in *Love, Death and Exile*, trans. Frangieh, p. 93.
- 48 See Jabra, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," p. 13.
- 49 Tawfiq al-Ṣāyigh published his translation in 1970, see *Rubā'iyāt arba'* (Four Quartets), (Beirut: Al-Khāl Ikhwān, 1970).
- 50 Jay, "Ghost and Roses," *Modern Critical Views*, pp. 103–119, at p. 115.
- 51 Al-Bayātī, "ūlad wa-aḥtarig bi-ḥubbī," "I am Born and Burn in My Love," See Al-Bayātī, *Love, Death and Exile*, trans., Frangieh, p. 201. Poems are available in English and Arabic in this collection.

8 CONCLUSION: DEVIATIONAL AND REVERSAL POETICS—DISSENT, NOT ALLEGIANCE

- 1 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House-Vintage Books, 1970), p. 20.
- 2 Philip Kennedy, *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 3 Trans. Reynold A. Nicholson, from Ibn Qutaybah, *Kitab al-shi'r wa-al-sbu'arā'*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1904), pp. 14–15, in *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 1907, reprint (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 77–78; also cited in Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic*

- Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 328–29.
- 4 The word *shu'ūbiyyah* derives from the word for people or race. The word refers to a movement that asserts the equality of Arabs with non-Arabs.
 - 5 See Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 57.
 - 6 Quoted in Suzanne P. Sterkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, p. 81.
 - 7 The report could be unauthentic as the same was reported of a certain Wālī in Persia, as included in *Al-Bukhalā'* (The Book of Misers; or Avarice and the avaricious) by Abū 'Uthmān ibin Bahr al-Jāhīz, eds Aḥmed al-'Awāmī and 'Alī al-Jārim (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), see pp. 59–60.
 - 8 See Jaroslav Sterkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 8–9.
 - 9 *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, p. 2.
 - 10 Jaroslav Sterkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd*, p. 25.
 - 11 Suzanne P. Sterkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, p. 81.
 - 12 For a succinct note, see *ibid.*, p. 84.
 - 13 On date and meaning, see *ibid.*, p. 83.
 - 14 See Muḥsin Jāsim al-Mūsawī, "Al-Tarjī'āt: Nazariyyat al-tafā'ul fī al-shi'r al-'Arabī al-mu'āṣir" (Interaction Theory in Modern Arabic Poetry), *'Alāmāt fī al-naqd*, 6, 24(1997), pp. 45–78, at p. 60.
 - 15 Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 60–61.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.
 - 17 Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), pp. 57–73.
 - 18 This refers to the idealized love theme usually associated with Jamīl (d. 701) from Banū 'Uthrah tribe, in his love for Buthaynah. But the trend is also associated with a large tradition of madness and love. For an overview, see Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage*, pp. 176–79.
 - 19 al-Mahdī Muhammad al-Ḥajwī, *Diwān al-shi'r al-Magbribī al-taqīdī*, ed. 'Abd al-Jalīl Nāẓim (Rabat: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 2003), pp. 159–61.
 - 20 Trans. Frangieh, *Love, Death and Exile* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 82–83.
 - 21 Amjad Nāṣir, "Eleven Stars for Asia," trans., Zeba Khan, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 22 (1992), pp. 146–47.
 - 22 Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans., Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), p. 135.
 - 23 See Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān Abī al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī, bi-sharḥ Abī al-Baqā' al-'Ukbarī*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā *et al.* (Beirut: Dār Al-Ma'rīfah, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 251.
 - 24 Fadwā Ṭūqān, "Lan Abkī," *Dīwān Fadwā Ṭūqān* (Beirut: Dār Al-'Awdah, 2000), pp. 511–17.
 - 25 "Diary of a Palestinian Wound," in *Selected Poems* (1973) p. 82.
 - 26 Jacques Berque, *Cultural Expression in Arab Society Today*, translated by Robert W. Stookey (Austin, TX and London: University of Texas Press, 1978), pp. 110–11, 264–65.
 - 27 For a review of views and conjectures on borrowings and readings in the poet's inventory, see Terri DeYoung, "A New Reading of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab's 'Hymn of the Rain,'" *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 24 (1993), pp. 39–61, at pp. 39–40, nn.1–2.

- 28 Ibid., 41–42.
- 29 Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsīm, “Ḥawla qaṣā'id 'Irāqīyyah muntakhabah,” in *Dirāsāt naqdiyyah fī al-adab al-ḥadīth* (Baghdad, 1970; reprint, Cairo: GEBO, 1995), pp. 123–40, at p. 127.
- 30 See below DeYoung’s improvisations on the opening of the poem, in Robert W. Stookey’s rendition of Jacques Berque:
- Your eyes are two groves of palm trees at the hour of dawn
Or two balconies from which the moon has begun to recede.
Your eyes: when they smile the vines put forth leaves
And the lights dance in the river
Rippled gently by oars at the hour of dawn,
As though, twinkling in their two depths, there are stars.
- 31 S. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, pp. 146–48.
- 32 In *Mukhtārāt min al-sifr al-'Arabī fī al-Khalīj wa-al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyyah* (Kuwait: Mu'assasat al-Babṭīn, 1996), pp. 433–36.
- 33 For the full text, see James Monroe, *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), p. 338.
- 34 In *Mukhtārāt min al-sifr al-'Arabī fī al-Khalīj wa-al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyyah* (Kuwait: Mu'assasat al-Babṭīn, 1996), pp. 756–57.
- 35 The poem appeared in *Ibnā' al-Nūr* literary page, June 1966, which I used to edit.
- 36 In Sufi terms, there is a difference between *maqām* (station) and *ḥāl* (state). The first, for al-Qushayrī (d. 1074), can be achieved by effort and self-discipline, as each stage of perfection will lead to another. These stations are as follows: contentedness, trust-in-God, surrender, repentance, contrition, watchfulness, and renunciation. The state may come independent of the person’s will or intention. It is bestowed and as such may be withdrawn. For an overview, see Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 102–03.
- 37 Al-Sayyid Jāsīm, “Ḥawla qaṣā'id 'Irāqīyyah muntakhabah,” in *Dirāsāt naqdiyyah fī al-adab al-ḥadīth*. The poem is reprinted in this book, pp. 155–165, at p. 159.
- 38 See Muḥammad ibn Abd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī, *Al-Mawāqif wa-al-Mukhbātābāt*, edit. with translation and commentary by A. J. Arberry (London: Luzac, 1935), pp. 8–9.
- 39 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 50.
- 40 *Dīwān awrāq fī al-rīb* (Beirut: Al-'Awdah, 4th printing, 1985b), 1, pp. 220–26. The translation used here is condensed. Ali Ahmad Said Adonis, *The Pages of Day and Night*, trans. Samuel Hazo (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 47.
- 41 Nizar Qabbani, *On Entering the Sea: The Erotic and other Poetry of Nizar Qabbani*, trans. Lena Jayyusi and Sharif Elmusa (New York: Interlink Books, 1996), p. 113.
- 42 Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 167.
- 43 The Egyptian and Arab leader Nāṣir.
- 44 Mahmoud Darwish, *Selected Poems*, introduced and translated by Ian Wedde and Fawwaz Tuqān (Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1973), pp. 47–50, at p. 48.

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INDEX

- ʿAbbās Ibn al-Aḥnaf 10
 ʿAbbās, Iḥsān 56
 ʿAbd al-Amīr, Shawqī: use of Sumerian
 lore 109–11
 ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, Ṣalāḥ 27, 66–67, 86,
 103, 218, 260, 262–63; dramatic
 poetry 128–29; emulation of
 independence 73–74; poetic
 dialogization 82–83; treatment/
 readings of al-Maʿarrī 71–73
 ʿAbduh, Muḥammad 7
 Abū Nuwās 2, 37, 59, 123;
 transgressions 246
 Abū Tammām 2, 8, 10, 21, 54,
 59, 60; innovatory role 242;
 on travel 164
 “Abū Tammām” (ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr) 73
Al-Ādāb (journal) 11, 38, 56, 225
 Adorno, Theodor W. 171
 Adūnīs 3, 5, 10, 13, 15, 35–37, 40,
 43, 54, 56, 92, 191; and authority
 62; claiming and naming forebears
 99–103; disidentification 48–49;
 elegies 263–64; exile 179;
 experimentation 56; historical
 accentuations for modernity 58–60;
 impact of French poetics 59;
 modernity as a constant 60–61,
 62–64; neo-sufi vein 116; poetics
 80–81, 86–87; role in debates of
 modernity and tradition 55; textual
 apprenticeship 85; tradition and
 modernity dialectics 56, 57, 58;
 treatment/readings of al-Maʿarrī
 78–80; treatment/readings of
 al-Mutanabbī 81, 157–58
 al-Afghānī, Jamāl al-Dīn 7
 Afifī Maṭar, Muḥammad 116, 252;
 use of *mauwāl* form 117–19
 Aflaq, Michel 22
 “Aḥada ʿashara kawkaban li-Āsyā”
 (“Eleven Stars for Asia”) (Nāṣir)
 250–52
 Ahālī Group 23
Aḥlām al-fāris al-qadīm (The Dreams
 of an Ancient Knight) (ʿAbd
 al-Ṣabūr) 74
 Aḥmad, Ajjaz 170, 171, 187
 ʿĀʾishah (Ishtar or Astarte) 151, 192,
 211, 213–14, 221
 Alberti, Rafael 39, 206, 207
 alienation 3, 14, 20, 102–03, 163,
 165, 178, 179, 186, 188, 189–90,
 191–92, 203–04, 207, 209, 216,
 222, 254, 267
 “Al-Ālihah wa al-manfā” (Gods and
 Exile) (al-Bayātī) 196–97
 ʿAlī Ibn al-Jahm 163
 American Indians 25–26
 Amīn, Qāsim 7
 ʿAmmār Ibn Yāsir 95–96
 ʿ*ammiyyah* poetry 122
 Anat (moon goddess) 26, 27
 ʿAntarah 259
 anticolonialism 8, 16–17
 Apollinaire, Guillaume 225
 Apollo poetic school 8, 9, 10, 18, 32
Aqūlū lakum (I Say to You)
 (ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr) 73, 83
 “Al-ʿArā” (Open Air or Wilderness)
 (al-Bayātī) 216
 Arabic language 90

- Arabic poetry 9–12, 237–38, 267;
 continuities and discontinuities 4–6;
 history and criticism 1–3, 267;
 poetics of legitimacy in context
 241–43; prefatory and dedicatory
 material 135; use of popular forms
 117–23; use of Sumerian lore 26, 27,
 107–11
- Arab poets: acceptance of Western
 culture 7; claiming and naming the
 forebear 99–101; exile 164, 171–72;
 poet-patron relationship 131–35,
 241; political involvement 31;
 popularity of Eliot's *The Waste
 Land* among 226–27; role in Arab
 world 28
- Aristotle 178, 179
- al-Arsüzī, Zakī 23, 139–40
- Artaud, Antonin 225
- Ash'ār fi al-manfā* (Poems in Exile)
 (al-Bayātī) 196
- "Ash Wednesday" (Eliot) 223–24,
 225, 226
- Auerbach, Erich 171
- authority 62, 64
- autobiographical accounts: navigational
 efforts between tradition and new
 poetics 16–22
- ʿAwaḍ, Luwīs 218
- ʿĀzūrī, Najīb 22–23
- "Al-Baḥḥār wa-al-Darwīsh"
 ("The Sailor and the Dervish")
 (Ḥāwī) 141–42
- Bakhtin, Mikhail 62, 88, 93
- Bākri, Ṭāhar 189
- Baldwin, James 165
- al-Barghūthī, Muṛīd 50
- Barrādah, Muḥammad 55
- al-Bārūdī 10
- Bashshār Ibn Burd 2
- al-Baṣīr, Muḥammad Maḥdī 7–8
- basīṭ* 122
- Baudelaire, Charles 3, 15, 21, 57, 59,
 66, 139
- al-Bayātī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb 27, 33, 38,
 40, 47, 55, 56, 64–66, 69, 122, 135;
 association between estrangement and
 incarnation 225–26; comparison
 with Eliot 219–20, 221, 222,
 223–24, 225–26, 229–30, 232–24,
 235–26; comparison with Ḥāwī
 153–54; comparison with Hikmet
 105; comparison with al-Sayyāb 219;
 conversational poetics 103–05;
 dedications 139–46, 193–94;
 dedications to Eliot 220; dedications
 to Lorca 144–45; elegies 146–49,
 151–53, 154–55, 199; Eliotic
 elements 141–42, 227, 230–32;
 exile as textual engagement 191–93;
 exile/exilic poetry 186, 193–217;
 experimentation 56, 220; fear of
 creative aridity 186, 203; fight
 against memory 234–35;
 identification with al-Maʿarrī
 205–06; influence of Western poets
 225; parody of poetics of allegiance
 248–49; personae 153–54; poetic
 strategies 86; recreation of
 al-Maʿarrī's poetics 76–78;
 redemptive and regenerative poetics
 210–11; revolutionary rhetoric
 204–05; satire 231; and Sufism
 142–43; textual apprenticeship 84;
 tradition and modernity dialectics
 57; treatment/readings of al-Maʿarrī
 74, 75–76, 232–33;
 treatment/readings of
 al-Mutanabbī 74–75, 156;
 use of mythology 220–22;
 use of precursors 223; women
 symbols 211–16, 224
- "Bayt Kāzīm Jawād" (Kāzīm Jawād's
 house) (Saʿd) 112–14
- Bedouin identity 50–52
- Benjamin, Walter 2, 11, 184
- Bennīs, Muḥammad 37, 43; antecedent
 authority 20–22; grounding in
 tradition and modernity 5–6;
 language 111–12; self-styled
 lineage 2–3
- Al-Bi'r al-mahjūrab* (al-Khāl) 32
- Bird of the East* (Al-Ḥakīm) 135,
 136–38
- Blake, William 78
- brigand poetry 238
- Browning, Robert 88
- al-Buḥturī 10, 131
- Butler, William 31–32

- “Canticle of the Rain” (Al-Sayyāb) 142, 144, 148, 219, 227, 255, 256–59
 childhood: experiences of 148–49
 Christ 31, 142, 150, 222
 cities 221, 229–30
 classical poetics 12
 conversational poetics 103–06
 corruption 54, 74, 76, 78
 creativity 18, 61, 64, 89, 116, 152, 235; and exilic experience 200
 “Crying before Zarqā’ al-Yamāmah” (Dunqul) 3–4
 cultural dislocation 165, 175
 cultural globalism 171

 “Dā’irat al-khawf” (The Circle of Fear) (al-Rubay’ī) 90–91
 Danānīr 19, 20
 Dante Alighieri 232, 233–34
 Darwīsh, Maḥmūd 4, 23–24, 165–66, 188–89, 267; dedications to Tūqān 158–59; exile 168, 169, 172–74, 190; identity and its formation 24–27; nationalistic rhetoric 23–24, 25; notion of mask 32–33; personae and voicing 95; poetic dialogization 89; reversal poetics 249; textual homelands 255; transgeneric mode 125–27; use of Sumerian lore 109; view of Lorca 146
 death: physical 153–54, 155–56; reclamation from 266
 “Death-in-Between: A Dialogue” (al-Ṣabūr) 27, 103
 deconstruction 13, 47, 79, 130, 133, 139, 148, 153; of myth 221–24
 dedications 68, 83–84, 130, 146, 158, 159; existentialist and forlorn 141–42; forms of 138–39; lyrical-elegiac mood 142–43; as paratexts 143–44; *see also* elegy
 demystification 106–07
 depersonalization 38, 45, 46, 163
 Derrida, Jacques 133, 134, 139, 147, 148, 149
 devotional poetics 237–39
Dhākīrah lil-nisyan (*Memory for Forgetfulness*) (Darwīsh) 23–24
 dialectics: of tradition-modernity nexus 56–58
 discourse 62–63; hegemonic 9, 12–13, 47, 48, 63–64, 84, 179, 203, 245; unitary 89–91
 disidentification 46, 48, 99–100
 disinheritance 227–30
 dislocation *see* exile/exilic poetry
 dissidence as exile 177–82
 Dīwān school 9, 10, 13, 32
 Djebar, Assia 190
 Dostoevsky, Fyodor 129
 Dowson, Ernest 182
 dramatic poetry 128–29
 Dunqul, Amal 3, 139

 Eagleton, Terry 164
 elegiac-lyricism 142–43, 144
 elegiac prelude 243–45, 247
 elegy 146–48; as act of gift giving 147–48; al-Bayātī’s 146–49, 151–53, 154–55, 199; deviations 263; to Hāwī 151–53, 154–55; to al-Sayyāb 147, 148–50
 “Elegy to Khalil Hawi,” (al-Bayātī) 33, 151–53, 160–61, 221
 Eliot, T. S. 15, 16, 28, 60, 78, 107–08, 128, 140, 164, 217, 224; about tradition in modern poetry 225; dedications to 220; influence 30–31, 47–48, 225; mythical method 218; translations from 45–46, 59; treatment of Dante 232, 233–34
 elitism 12–13
 epiphany 252–53
 erotica 96–99
 exchange of gifts and privileges 131–33, 241
 “Exile” (Dowson) 182
 exile/exilic poetry 50–52, 64–65, 84, 90–91, 103–05, 162; and adventure 176; community 205–06; debating redemptive and regenerative poetics 210–11; displacement of memory 193–96; dissidence as 177–82; estrangement and memory 182–86, 191–92; exile internalized 190–01; exilic inertia 170–77; and expatriation 165–70, 193; forebears as masks 188–89; homecoming 167, 175, 176–77; image of wanderer 195–96, 200, 210;

- exile/exilic poetry (*Continued*)
 power of the past 163–65; prophetic tones 191; sources 163; Sufi text regained 208–10; textual homelands 191–93, 255; and the universal in poetry 199–200; versus oblivion 187–88
 expatriation 164–65, 170–71; and exile 165–70, 193; impact on modernism 169; rapprochement with host culture 167–68; *see also* exile/exilic poetry
 extraterritorialism 164–65, 170

 “Faraḥun bi-al-turāb” (“Earth Joy”) (Aḫfī Maṭar) 116
 “Fire Sermon” (Eliot) 229
 Foucault, Michel 6, 63, 88, 262
The Four Quartets (Eliot) 234
 Free Verse movement 9, 10, 11, 56, 56–57, 121
 French poetics 59
fuḥūlah poetry 1
Al-Fuṣūl wa-al-gh̄b̄yāt fī taḥmīd Allah wa- al-mawāʿiz (Chapters and Endings about the Glorification of God and Admonition) (al-Maʿarrī) 40

 Gaster, Theodor 240
 genres 4–5
 Gibrān, Khalīl Gibrān 13, 21;
 influence on poetic language 14
 gift compendiums 131–33
The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies (Mauss, Marcel) 240, 241
 Graves, Robert 57

 Haddād, Qāsim: claiming and naming the forebear 99–103
 Haddād, Fuʿād 121
 al-Ḥāfī, Bishr 262–63
 al-Ḥajwī, al-Mahdī Muḥammad 247–48
 al-Ḥakīm, Tawfiq 22, 71, 135;
 dedications 136–38
 al-Hallāj 31, 128, 143, 208
 al-Ḥamdānī, Abū Firās 18, 188–89
Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl (Guardians of independence) 8
 al-Ḥatīmī 43

 Ḥāwī, Khalīl 61, 139, 141–42, 150–51, 186; comparison with al-Bayātī 153–54; dedications to 155–56; elegies to 151–53, 154–55; suicide 151, 152
Ḥayātī fī al-sbīr (My Poetic Career) (“Abd al-Ṣabūr, Ṣalāh) 71
 al-Ḥaydarī, Buland 151, 183; dramatic poetry 128, 129; exile 166–67; rejectionist poetics 49
bazaj 122
 hegemonic discourse 47, 48, 63–64, 84, 179, 203, 245; neoclassical imitativeness 12–13; resistance to 9
 Hikmet, Nazim 192, 199–200, 203, 206, 223, 224; conversational poetics 105–06
 al-Hindī, Ashjān 259
 “Al-Ḥiṣār” (“The Siege,”) (al-Bayātī) 155–56
Hiwār (journal) 55
Ḥiwār al-Abʿād al-tbalātibah (*Dialogue in Three Dimensions*) (al-Ḥaydarī) 128, 129
 “Hollow Men” (Eliot) 229, 230
 “A Horse for the Stranger” (Darwish) 165–66, 172–74
 Hourani, Albert 55
 Ḥusayn, Ṭahā 69, 71, 81

 Ibn ʿAlī, Zayd 209
 Ibn ʿArabī 20–21, 61
 Ibn Ḥazm 189
 Ibn al-Muʿtazz 59
 Ibn al-Rūmī 10, 20
 Ibn Zamrak 260
 Ibrāhīm, Ḥafīz 8
 Ibrāhīm, Ṭuqān 16, 18–19
 identification with ancestors 2–3, 69, 70, 159, 205–06, 234, 259–60
 identity 24–27, 34–35, 267; Bedouin 50–52; and exile 184, 190; Palestinian 23–24, 125–26
 ideology 47, 63; impact of literati 22–23
 Idrīs, Suhayl 69
 “Iḥtimālāt” (Probable Cases) (ʿAbd al-Amīr) 109–10
 imagery 8, 53–54, 71, 76–77
 ʿIṣmārah, Lamīʿah ʿAbbās 190–91

- immigrant intelligentsia 171–72
 Imru' al-Qays 2, 20, 64, 246, 259;
 comparison with al-Sayyāb 255–56;
 identification of Bennīs with 2–3
 Inanna (mythological character) 108–09
 “Indamā qataltu hubbī” (When I killed
 My Love) (al-Malā'ikah) 34–35
 innovation 10–11, 36–37, 56, 59, 79,
 91, 239, 242
 Iraq 255, 256–60
 irony 50–52
 “Ishrāqāt Ṭarafah Ibn al-Wardah,”
 [Epiphanies/Illuminations of Ṭarafah
 Ibn al-Wardah] (Haddād) 99–102
 Islam: rehabilitation 6–7
- Jabrā, Jabrā Ibrāhīm 11, 55, 139; on
 Eliot's influence 47–48; on *qasīdah*
 44–45; tradition and modernity
 dialectics 57–58
 Jāhilī ode 240–41, 244
 Jāhīn, Ṣalāh 193
 Janūb (South) (mythological character)
 110–11
 “Jarīmah fī Ghirnāḥ” (A Murder in
 Granada) (Afīfī) 145
 Jāsīm, ‘Azīz al-Sayyid 178–79, 180,
 181, 260–62
 Jawād, Kāzīm 56, 112–13
 al-Jawāhirī, Muḥammad Mahdī 57,
 68–69; homecoming 176–77;
 treatment/readings of al-Ma‘arrī 70,
 247, 248; treatment/readings of
 precursors 69–71
 Jayyusi, S. K. 55
 al-Jāḥiẓ, Amrū Ibn ‘Uthmān 11
 al-Junayd 246
 “Al-Jurḥ” (The Wound) (al-Bayātī)
 193–94
 juxtaposition 50, 52, 103–36, 140,
 153, 206
- Kahf, Mohja 97–99
 “Al-Kahf” (The Cave) (Ḥawī) 186
 “Kalimāt shubh khāṣṣah” (Words
 Semiprivate) (Yūsuf) 181
kāmīl 122
Kān Kān 119–21, 123
 “Kān Yāmā kān” (Once Upon a Time)
 (Ḥaddād) 121
- Karīm, Fawzī 88
 “Al-Kawāsir” (The Rapacious, or Birds
 of Prey) (Haddād) 102–03
 al-Kāzīmī, Rabāb 20
khafīf 122
 al-Khāl, Yūsuf 32, 55, 59, 61, 135,
 139; dedication to Pound 143–44
 al-Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad 1
 “Khutab al-dictātūr al-mawzūnah” (The
 Rhymed Orations of the Dictator)
 (Darwīsh) 89
 Al-Kitāb (The Book) (Adūnīs) 85,
 86–87, 157
 “Kitābah ‘alā qabr al-Sayyāb” (“Writing
 on al-Sayyāb's Tomb”) (al-Bayātī)
 148
Kitāb al-Baḥr (The Book of the Sea)
 (al-Bayātī) 215
Kitāb al-Tuḥaf wa-al-Hadāyā (The Book
 of Presents and Gifts) 130, 131
 Koestler, Arthur 184
- “Lughatun” (A Language) (Bennīs) 111
 “L' Akhdar Ben Youssef Wrote His Last
 Poem” (Yūsuf) 92–95
 “Lan Abkī” (I Won't Cry) (Ṭūqān)
 253–55
 language 13, 14, 37, 60, 90, 111–15,
 261–62
 “The Language of Sin” (Adūnīs) 48
 Lārā (fictitious character) 151, 212–13,
 215, 224
 “The Last Letter to My Son”
 (Hikmet) 105
 leftist poetics 62
 legitimacy: poetics of 241–43, 246
 “Li-‘Azar ‘ām 1962” (Lazarus 1962)
 (Ḥawī) 150–51
 Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb 260
 literary criticism: imitativeness and
 dormancy 62; modernist efforts
 11–13
 loneliness 94, 185, 193, 195, 196, 212,
 215, 217
 Lorca, Federico Garcia 15, 39, 192,
 202, 206, 208, 210, 223, 224;
 dedications 144–46; popularity 145
 “lost generation” 169
 “Lughat al-khaṭī'ah” (“The Language
 of Sin”) (Adūnīs) 35

- Luzūmiyyāt (al-Maʿarrī) 73, 77, 78
 lyricism 112–14; elegiac 142–43, 144
- al-Maʿarrī, Abū al-ʿAlā 2, 10, 21, 39, 41, 42, 59; exile 84; imagery 71; innovative techniques 39–40; objectifications by Adūnīs 78–80; poetics 76–78; rejection of hereditary succession 41; textual apprenticeship 84; treatment/readings by ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr 71–73; treatment/readings by al-Bayātī 74, 75–76, 156, 192, 205–06, 232–33; treatment/readings by al-Jawāhirī 70, 247, 248
- Machado, Antonio 206
- Mahjar poets 14, 19
- al-Mahzamī, ʿAbdullāh Ibn Aḥmad 132
- al-Malāʾikah, Nāzik 11, 19–20, 52, 56–57; experimentation 34–35; poetic strategies 85–86
- “Manfā” (Exile) (Nāsir) 50–52
- al-Maqāliḥ, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz 259–60
- “Marthiyyah ilā Nāzim Hikmat” (Elegy to Nazim Hikmet) (al-Bayātī) 199
- “Marthiyyah” (Elegy) (Yūsuf) 150
- “Marthiyyat al-ayyām al-ḥādirah” (“Elegy for the Time at Hand”) (Adūnīs) 179
- Marwān Ibn Abī Hafṣah 132
- Maʿsāt al-Ḥallāj* (*Murder in Baghdad*) 128–29
- mask 31–34, 38, 46, 54, 74, 75, 78, 82, 86, 92, 99, 192, 208, 209, 262–63
- Al-Masraḥ wa- al-marāyā* (Stage and Mirrors) (Adūnīs) 79
- mawālī* 117
- Mawāqif* (Stations) (journal) 56
- al-Mawṣilī, Ishāq 137
- Mawṣim al-bijrah ilā al-shamāl* (*Season of Migration to the North*) (al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ) 123–25
- “Mawt Al-Mughannī” (The Death of the Singer) (Saʿīd) 112
- mawwāl* 117–19
- mediatory poetics 239, 248–59
- “Medīnat al-Sindbād” (City of Sinbad) (al-Sayyāb) 106–07
- memory 234–35; and exile 182–86
- meters: traditional 122
- migration 164, 171, 174, 177; *see also* exile/exilic poetry
- “Miḥnat Abī al-ʿAlā” (The Ordeal of Abī al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī) (al-Bayātī) 75–76
- Mihyār the Damascene (fictitious character) 65, 80, 99, 191
- “Mirʾāt Abī al-ʿAlā” (The Mirror of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī) (Adūnīs) 79
- modernity 23; Arabic usage 15–16; as a constant 60–64, 71; critical efforts 11–13; efforts to found new tradition 34–37; emergency of 9–10; impact of expatriatism 169; nationalist critiques 23–24; new concerns and preoccupations 27–28; non-conformist poetics 28–29; technical artificiality 10–11
- A Mountainous Journey: A Poet’s Autobiography* (Ṭūqān) 16–20
- Muʿallaqāt* 248–49
- “Al-muʿdilah” (The Problem) (Saʿīd) 114–15
- “Al-Muhājir” (“The Émigré”) (Yūsuf) 181
- Muḥammad, Abū Bakr 130
- Muhammad, Prophet 95, 150, 180, 241–42
- multivoicing 32, 91; dramatic 128
- “Al-Musāfir” (The Traveler) (Saʿīd) 182
- “Musāfir bilā haqāʾib” (Traveler without Baggage) (al-Bayātī) 195
- Muslim Ibn al-Walīd 2, 10, 60
- mutadārik* 122
- al-Muʿtamid Ibn ʿAbbād 21–22
- al-Mutanabbī, Abū al-Ṭayyib 2, 21, 39, 40, 41–42, 72, 94, 147, 149, 245; exile 84; al-Jawāhirī’s identification with 69, 70; plagiarisms 42, 43; self-aggrandizement 134–35; transgression and revolt 42; treatment/readings by Adūnīs 157–58; treatment/readings by al-Bayātī 74–75; treatment/readings by al-Jawāhirī 70
- “Al-Mutanabbī’s Voyage into Egypt” (Darwīsh) 95
- mutaqārib* 122
- Muṭrān, Khalīl 8

- mythology: recovery of native
 mythology 59; Sumerian 27,
 107–11
 Mzālī, Muḥammad 55
- Nabokov, Vladimir: expatriatism
 167–68
Nahr bayna janāzātayn (A River
 between Two Funerals) (Bennīs) 37
 “Al-Nahr wa-al-mawt” (Death and the
 River) (al-Sayyāb) 142
 Nājī, Ibrāhīm 27
 narratives 89, 90, 123, 156
 Nāṣir, Amjad 50–52, 249–52
 al-Nāṣir, Jamāl ‘Abd 22, 24;
 elegies to 265–66
 nationalism 22–23, 61, 265;
 leftist groups 23; in modernist
 poetics 23–24
 nation-state building: acceptance of
 Western model 7–8
 al-Nawwāb, Muḥaffar 139
 neo-revivalist movement 9
 Neruda, Pablo 15, 39, 44, 199, 203,
 220, 225
 al-Niffarī, Muḥammad 59, 79,
 116–17, 262
 “The Nightmare of Night and Day”
 (al-Bayātī) 227–28, 229
 normative patterning 242–43
 nostalgia 244, 247–48, 253–55
 Nūrī, ‘Abd al-Malik 69
 “Nuṣūṣ sharqīyyah” (Oriental Texts)
 (al-Bayātī) 201
- objectifications 27, 31, 45, 72,
 223, 256
 ode 1, 40, 44–45, 240–42, 245;
 history and cultural role 2;
 meters and formulas 1–2;
 neoclassical 68–69
 “On the Death of Nizar Qabbani”
 (Kahf) 97–99
 oracular poetics 3–4
 Ovid: difference between exile and
 adventure 176; exile 165, 170,
 174–75, 183, 185, 187
- Palestinian identity 26, 125–26
 panegyrics 76, 83, 132, 134–35, 242
- paratexts 143–44
 parody 96–99, 123
 Pearse, St John 225
 personae 19, 31, 38, 46, 54, 64–65,
 80, 153–54, 229, 233; poetic
 dialogization 91–96;
 Pound’s use of 32
 plagiarism 42, 43, 46, 239, 246
 poetic dialogization 82–83, 88–89
 poetic prose 66–67
 poetics of allegiance 238, 239, 241,
 248–49
 poetic strategies 54–55, 68, 82–85;
 dedications to precursors &
 contemporaries 68, 83–84
 polyphonic poem 224–26
 popular poetry 117–23
 Pound, Ezra 15, 28, 30, 32, 42, 43,
 44, 45, 87, 135, 143–44, 223, 224;
 exile 165
 precursors 39–42, 57, 147, 188–89,
 259–60; addressing the strong
 precursor 69–71; in al-Bayātī’s
 poetry 223; transgression and
 revolt 42; understanding of
 language 60
 preludes: elegiac 243–45, 247; nostalgic
 253–55; Sufis use of 246–47
 Prevert, Jacques 225
 property exchange 131–33
 prosimetrum 67, 123–27
- “Al-Qabā’il” (The Tribes)
 (al-Barghūthī) 50
 Qabbānī, Nizār 24, 65, 97–99;
 elegies 264–67
qaṣīdah see ode
 “Qaṣīdatān ilā waladī ‘Alī”
 (“Two Poems to My Son Ali”)
 (al-Bayātī) 103–05
 “Qinā’ li-Majnūn Laylā” (A Mask for
 Layla’s Mad Lover) (Darwīsh) 32
 al-Qummī, Abū Ja’far 131
 al-Qushayrī 246
- rain 257–58, 259
ramal 122
 rebellion 204–05
 recollections 37, 38–39, 85, 267; about
 precursors 39–44

- rejectionist poetics 49–50
 representative poetics 68
 repression 146–49; in al-Bayātī's poetry 146–49
 reversal poetics 239, 249–52; and nostalgic prelude 253–55
 revisionist poetics 123–27, 158
 revivalist movement 6–9
 Riding, Laura 57
The Rites of Passage (van Gennepe) 240
 Rome conference (1961) 54–56; participants 55
The Roots of the Palestinian Question (Touma) 16
Rubā'īyat al-farah (*Quartet of Joy*) (Afīfī Matar) 118
 al-Rubay'ī, Sharīf 90–91
 al-Ruṣāfī, Ma'rūf 23, 68
 Rushdie, Salman 170, 171
- Sa'ādah, Anṭūn 59
 "Sā'ī al-barīd" (The Mailman) (al-Ḥaydarī) 183
 Sa'īd, Abū 'Uthmān 130
 Sa'īd, 'Alī Aḥmad *see* Adūnīs
 Said, Edward 171
 Sa'īd, Ḥamīd 182; language 112–15; personae and voicing 95–96
 Saiyidah Zainab, Saint 136–37, 138
 Šālih al-Ṭayyib 123–25
sarī 122
 Satan 35
 Šātī' al-Ḥuṣrī, Abū Khaldūn 23
 Sa'ūdī, Munā 52–54
 al-Sayyāb, Badr Shākir 44, 47, 55, 56, 64, 69, 106–07, 107–08, 122, 139, 218–19, 225, 226; comparison with al-Bayātī 219; comparison with al-Qays 255–56; dedication to Lorca 144; elegy to 147, 148–50; exile 256; lyrical-elegiac mood 142; mixed register 256–59
 secular ideology 9
 selfhood 2–3, 35, 40, 52–53, 102, 250
 al-Shābbī, Abū al-Qāsim 10, 21, 23
 Shādī, Aḥmad Zakī Abū 8
 al-Shāwī, Burhān 91
 al-Shawwāf, Khālid 219
 Shelley, P. B. 210
Shi'r (*Poetry*) (Journal) 32, 55–56, 64
- Sinbad: voyages of 103–05
Al-Širā' al-Fikrī fī al-Adab al-Sūwī (Intellectual Conflict in Syrian literature) (Sa'ādah) 59–60
 "Širah Dhātīyyah li -sāriq al-nār" (Autobiography of the Thief of Fire) (al-Bayātī) 211
 Sitwell, Edith 60
 Socrates 178–79
 "So Drunk am I with the Night, the Air, and the Trees" (Sa'ūdī) 52–54
 Spender, Stephen 55, 58
 Stein, Gertrude 165, 169
 Steiner, George 224
 Sterkevych, Suzanne P. 239–41
 Sufism 115–17, 128, 142–43, 249; and transgression 260–63
 suicides: and exile 184
 "Sujūn Abī al-'Alā' (Abū Al-'Alā's imprisonments) (al-Bayātī) 233
 Sumerian mythology: use in Arabic poetry 27, 107–11
 "Sūq al-qaryah" ("The Village Market") (al-Bayātī) 27, 38, 47
 al-Šūrī, Muḥammad Ḥasan 69
- ta'āzī* 119
 Ṭāhā, 'Alī Maḥmūd 27
 al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, Rifā'ah 7
Tajribatī al-shi'riyyah (My Poetic Experience) (al-Bayātī) 191
 al-Takarlī, Nihād 56
 Tammūz (deity) 14–15, 61, 221, 222
 Tammūzī movement 14–15, 32, 139, 167, 222; paradigms of rebirth 61; sources 59–60, 222–23
 Ṭarafah b. al-'Abd 99–100, 101–02
 "Al-Ṭariq" ("The Road") (Adūnīs) 36
 al-Tawḥīdī 163
ta'ziyah 122, 123
 textual apprenticeship 84–85
Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Middle East (Gaster) 240
 al-Tījānī, Yūsuf Bashīr 27
 Touma, Emile 16
 trace poem 189
 tradition 14, 30–31, 43, 66; 1950's poets position on 57; classical transgressions 245–46; different ideological positions 46; Foucault

INDEX

- cautions against 63; knowledge of 45–46; modernists view 237; and polyphonic poem 224–26
- tradition-modernity nexus 30–31; dialectics of 56–58; Rome conference 1961 54–56; the surviving past 34–37
- transformative poetics 48–49
- translation 43; as a modernist engagement 44–46
- travel: significance of 164
- Ṭuhmāzī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān 260–62
- Ṭūqān, Fadwā 16–20, 253–55; association with Nāzik al-Malā’ikah 19–20; dedications to 158–59
- ‘Umar al-Khayyam 137, 138
- Umayyad poetry: poetics of legitimacy 242, 244–45
- “Umm al-Mu‘tazz” (Qabbanī) 264–67
- unitary discourse 89–91
- ‘Urwa b. al-Ward 100
- Uṣṭūrāt al-Adab al-Raḥī* (The Myth of Elite or Highbrow Literature) (al-Wardī) 12
- van Gennep, Arnold 240
- voice 46, 53, 86, 88; poetic dialogization 91–96
- wāfir* 122
- “Wajh ‘Ammār Ibn Yāsir” (The Face of ‘Ammār Ibn Yāsir) (Sa‘īd) 95–96
- “Waḳfatun ‘alā al-aṭlāl wa-khiṭāb al-shabībah” (A Halt at a Campsite and an Address to youth) (al-Ḥajwī) 247–48
- Al-Wardī, Alī 12–13
- war poetry 9
- The Waste Land* (Eliot) 220, 223, 224, 226–27, 232
- wine poem 237, 242
- women: bodies 96–99; symbols 211–16, 224
- Writing on al-Sayyāb’s Tomb* 160
- “Yawm al-arḍ” (The Day of the Land) (Darwīsh) 125–27
- Yeats, William Butler 45
- Yūsuf, Sa’dī: elegies 149–50; exile 180–82; personae and voicing 92–95
- Yūsuf Ibn Tāshfīn 21
- al-Zahāwī 68
- Zurayq, Quṣṭanṭīn 23
- Zweig, Stevan 184

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