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Title of thesis THE EXPERIENCE OF EXILE IN MODERN ARAB
POETRY

..... Degree PH.D

The Experience of Exile in Modern Arab Poetry

This thesis is a study of how exile has affected the work of several Arab poets of the latter half of the twentieth century, set against the political background of nationalism, the end of colonialism and the resultant Arab regimes, the effects of modernisation and globalisation, and the ramifications of the establishment of Israel. It also makes comparisons with recent theories of exile literature and of literary movements. The analysis is structured in three sometimes overlapping areas: firstly, depiction of the pain, insecurity and dangers of exile and of its causes, including elements of committed and resistance poetry; secondly, the search for affiliation, both through nostalgia and the Palestinians' claim to their country, and in substituting for old linkages a 'poetic terrain' or networks of real or virtual connections; and, thirdly, the creation of new poetics by changes in the form, content and philosophy of Arabic poetry, through fruitful interaction with the Arab heritage - the use of historical figures and genres, creative use of classical forms and metres, and, often by inversions, of classical *topoi* - in conjunction with, but not subsumed by, interaction with both the European heritage and with the contemporary *avant-garde*. The psychological effects of the disruptions of exile, and attempts to create meaning and identity are also taken into account, as well as the question of how poetry can be a vehicle for the expression of suffering and/or for raising political issues.

Exiled Arab poets of the last half century, like other exiled poets, have made a significant contribution to their culture, especially in the field of modernist poetry, and have begun to establish it in world literature. And, because they have experienced so much, they have had much to say.

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The Experience of Exile in Modern Arab Poetry

PhD Thesis

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The Experience of Exile in Modern Arab Poetry

Abstract of Thesis

This thesis is a study of how exile has affected the work of several Arab poets of the latter half of the twentieth century, set against the political background of nationalism, the end of colonialism and the resultant Arab regimes, the effects of modernisation and globalisation, and the ramifications of the establishment of Israel. It also makes comparisons with recent theories of exile literature and of literary movements. The analysis is structured in three sometimes overlapping areas: firstly, depiction of the pain, insecurity and dangers of exile and of its causes, including elements of committed and resistance poetry; secondly, the search for affiliation, both through nostalgia and the Palestinians' claim to their country, and in substituting for old linkages a 'poetic terrain' or networks of real or virtual connections; and, thirdly, the creation of new poetics by changes in the form, content and philosophy of Arabic poetry, through fruitful interaction with the Arab heritage - the use of historical figures and genres, creative use of classical forms and metres, and, often by inversions, of classical *topoi* - in conjunction with, but not subsumed by, interaction with both the European heritage and with the contemporary *avant-garde*. The psychological effects of the disruptions of exile, and attempts to create meaning and identity are also taken into account, as well as the question of how poetry can be a vehicle for the expression of suffering and/or for raising political issues.

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on the work of exiled or displaced Arab poets, mostly from Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, and mainly from 1948, the year of the *nakba* (disaster) of the establishment of Israel, and the impotence of the Arabs to prevent this. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced or fled, and many of them and their descendants still live in refugee camps; those living in Israel itself might be described as 'inner exiles', and those in the West Bank and Gaza are under occupation, as well as being subject to arbitrary displacement. Therefore, although many Arabs are political exiles from various regimes, and some have chosen exile for economic or personal reasons, a significant feature of Arab exile is the exile of a nation, condemned to limbo, and a source of tension both to the Arab world and to the world in general. A second feature is the notion of the 'Arab world' which has, to a large extent, a shared religion, language, history, and a considerable cultural heritage. There are tensions between Arab states, and a great deal of external 'divide and rule', but there is some sense of unity or 'brotherhood', and it is possible for Arab exiles to live in another Arab country, and hence not be as alienated as some. A third element is that the history of the Arabs has at times been intertwined with that of Europe, and that influences have been in both directions. In the Medieval period the Arabs ruled most of Spain for centuries, they preserved and expanded the Greek legacy, and Arab civilisation enriched that of Europe in the literary and, particularly, scientific, medical, and philosophical fields. Recently, following four centuries under Ottoman rule, the Arabs have been colonised or quasi-colonised, and deeply affected by the establishment of Israel, globalisation, and exploitation of their natural resources. Some of this has brought benefits but it has imposed strains on Arab societies, giving rise to a fourth feature of rapid but partial and uneven modernisation. Some of the poets discussed in the thesis have moved in both space and time from peasant villages to the metropolis, from cycles of nature to the less differentiated time of cities, and into the modern world. However, they also see dictatorial and anachronistic Arab regimes, sometimes propped up by outsiders and allowing exploitation of their countries, that are more interested in their own survival than in benefiting their peoples, many of whom are being denied the benefits of economic, political, and social development. A fifth feature is that, as in the past, Arab intellectuals have been open to new ideas and many Arab writers and poets have fruitfully interacted with other literatures. In the last century or so, Europe has given Arab culture new genres such as the novel, drama, and cinema and Arabs have creatively espoused these and integrated them with the Arab cultural heritage.

Modern Arab poetry is one facet of the modern Arab engagement with colonialism and postcolonialism; the confrontation with modernisation and globalisation; and the attendant issues of identity, nationalism and language. It has developed in not much more than a century from ossified and rigid forms and conventional themes to a varied *oeuvre* of mainly modernist and in some cases post-modernist forms that are able to reflect and interact with the modern world. Much of this poetry as well as being aimed at an Arab readership also targets others. It has the political aims of recording and publicising the problems of the Arab world and their causes and of establishing/raising awareness of that world in its positive as well as negative aspects, and trying to change that world so that it will be better equipped to confront its problems. Some of it 'writes

back' to Arab regimes, to Israel, and to global forces. It may consciously or unconsciously reflect the fragmented state and internal and external tensions of the Arab world in its different types of government, the oppression and scattering of many of its peoples, and its 'lack of a centre' effectively since 1967 but especially since 1982 with the physical as well as societal destruction of its main cosmopolitan centre, Beirut. But it also raises Arab self-awareness and self-confidence. These things have been achieved in various ways. Sometimes partly through sheer passion and anger; sometimes through effectively drawing upon the Arab heritage and on other cultures; and increasingly through the development of new poetics.

The thesis aims to demonstrate the range, quality, modernity, and effectiveness of the poetry of Arab exiles against the background of the physical and psychological problems, as well as the potential advantages, of exile, and of recent theories on exile writing, and touches on the political issues both internal and external to the Arab world that are the main causes of that exile. It also addresses the expression of human suffering and of political issues, and of how literary creation is affected by exile. In doing so, it makes comparisons with other poets and other exiles, in terms of circumstances, of influences, and of parallel responses to the modern world.

The beginnings of Modern Arabic poetry can be traced to when, as part of the fight against British control of Egypt at the turn of the 19th century, neo-Classicists¹ such as Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Barūdī (1839-1904) and Aḥmad Shawqī (1868-1932) revived positive elements of the literary heritage dispelling some of the stagnation of preceding centuries. In the early decades of the 20th century the Romantics, primarily the Diwan and Apollo Groups in Egypt, experimented with both form and content as did the Arab immigrant *Mahjar* poets in North and South America in their accommodation of exile and interaction with new cultures. There were probably mutual influences between these groups as well as common sources as both were affected, directly or indirectly, by the European Romantics.² Nationalist poets such as the Palestinian poet Ibrahīm Ṭuqān (1905-41) in his poem 'Red Tuesday' (1930)³ and the Iraqi Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (1926-64) who, with his compatriot Nāzik al-Malā'ika (1923-2007), was particularly associated with the *ta'fīla* movement beginning in the 1940s, moved from the Romantic sensibility to write about their suffering peoples in realistic terms, and Resistance and Committed poetry continued through the 1950s and 1960s. Then, with the 'collapse of totalising discourse'⁴ in the Arab World a variety of poetic techniques developed at various textual levels from the very fine, at the level of paranomasia, relative positioning of nouns and adjectives, use of gender etc., through multiple voices and the use of extended metaphor such as Khalīl Ḥāwī's (1925-82) use of the grotesque and dialogue, to the overall architecture of poems, collections of poems, or works such as Adūnīs's (b. 1930) *al-Kitāb* that defy classification. The poetry celebrates the Arab tradition by incorporating many of its features, usually in an interactive rather than passive way, and demonstrates that modern Arab intellectuals are as capable of interacting with and contributing to other traditions, as they have been in the past. Poets and critics have also demonstrated that the Arab tradition has at times been in advance of the Western tradition: characters like Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), the first major historian in the modern sense after Thucydides and for some time to come, and Omar Khayyām (d. c. 1125) a rebel philosopher poet and great astronomer and mathematician make their appearance in poems

of Adūnīs and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī (1926-99)⁵; as a critic Adūnīs compares the modernity of ‘classical’ Arab poets to that of poets such as Mallarmé (1842-98) and Baudelaire (1821-67)⁶ several centuries later; and Kamal Abu-Deeb compares the critical theory of al-Jurjānī (d. c. 1080) to that of twentieth century theorists.⁷

Arab exile is one of the consequences of the forces that have acted on the Arab World in the last century and a half, and it has had a considerable influence on the development of poetry. The work of those poets who have been driven, or have chosen, to live in exile has been of particular significance because of the profound effects of that exile, through suffering, through political involvement, through trying to make sense of their lives and to find structure and purpose, but also through their encounters and often fruitful interactions with other cultures and the distancing from their original *milieu* that often gives new perspectives. Their experience of the general fragmentation of the Arab World is heightened as no individual poet’s experience of exile can be precisely the same as any other’s, and tightly knit groups are less likely and then more transient than in a more stable *milieu*. This isolation, especially with people who are receptive to new ideas, can lead to highly original work that reflects the fragmentation, or, to take its positive aspect, multiplicity of the modern Arab world.⁸ Exile has provided much of the subject matter of their poetry, especially in the case of Palestinians, but its effects may be seen in work that does not explicitly relate to exile. Most of the poetry discussed in this thesis may be regarded as modernist, some even post-modernist.

Edward Said (1935-2003) has written of the anguish of exile, and also of its advantages or benefits as well as of the responsibilities of the intellectual,⁹ who often faces terrible dilemmas in regard to going into exile and in regard to its risks and attractions, examples of the tensions and dialectics of exile discussed in Chapter 1. He and others have written on the forces that cause exile and on those that lead to its continuation for many people. Prior to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries exile *per se*, as opposed to migrations, was largely the fate of individuals and small groups, generally intellectuals and political figures, and there are such individual exiles from the political systems of modern Arab states, but in the last two centuries it has also become the fate of peoples, such as the Red Indians, Australian Aborigines and South Africans herded into reservations, and, in the modern Arab case, the Palestinians, who have been dispossessed, exiled and occupied, a source of unease in much of the modern international community. It can be argued that ‘(t)he creation of the state of Israel was necessary for the Jews and for the world’¹⁰ but this has been at a great and continuing cost to the Palestinians and other Arabs as that state has become more paranoid, aggressive and expansionist. The timing of the ongoing Israeli occupation and colonisation of Palestinian territory is significant, both because it has been taking place in a world with well developed communications and because it is happening in a world with international law and institutions that aspires towards international justice and morality. As the Israeli historian Benjamin Beit-Hallami says:

The uniqueness of Zionism in the history of settler colonialism is its recency.
It is the latest and the last of these historical experiments and it is still being

carried out today. It is going to be the last case of such an arrangement in human history. Its early success was quite remarkable. Now it is facing difficulties because recent developments have weakened the historical forces that made it possible.¹¹

Red Indians, Aborigines and South Africans did not have a voice at the time when their lands were colonised, because they were isolated cultures confronted by technologically advanced conquerors, but the Palestinians, or Palestinian intellectuals, because they are part of a wider cultural grouping with a shared history and literary language and because of modern communications, do have a voice. They live in a world that is changing, and their voice is a force, and their cause an important test case, in that change. Poetry has been an important component of that voice. However, it can be argued that too much emphasis on the Israel-Palestine question has inhibited the development of many poets, notably Maḥmūd Darwīsh (1942-2008).¹²

Members of privileged classes, which includes many in the West but fewer in the rest of the world, have, and frequently exercise, the choice to be cosmopolitan. Attachment to the land has been broken, and, with increasing population mobility and the expansion of towns and cities, familial and community attachments are stretched, but their loss or dilution are evidently compensated for by new or larger attachments. Modernist literature, art, and music is primarily the product of certain cities such as Paris, London, and Vienna at certain times; and of the choice of certain people to be cosmopolitan – figures such as Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Picasso, and Stravinsky, to name but a few. There are comparable cities in respect of Arab modernism, especially Beirut, but also Cairo and the New York of the *mahjar* poets in the first half of the twentieth century, and in the latter half Paris and London; and great cosmopolitan figures, including several of the poets discussed below. However, there are many who have not had a choice, and are forced into alien *milieus* and deprived of many of the components of a ‘normal’ identity, although they may have additional ‘extra’ components. Much of the poetry discussed speaks of separation from land, family and community, but some also speaks of the community of exiles or demonstrates involvement with new aspects of life.

Cosmopolitanism has been an important route to modernisation in the Arab world. Some of this has been intended, as countries have chosen to send their young people abroad to universities and other institutions so that on returning they would help to modernise those countries. This is sometimes double-edged as some have preferred to stay away, and many young Palestinians have been encouraged by Israel to pursue their education abroad, with the intention that they should remain there, thus contributing to the weakening and impoverishment of Palestinian society. Literary figures such as the Iraqi poet ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, who was an exile from one regime and a diplomat for another, the Syrian Adūnīs, who settled in Lebanon after having been imprisoned for political activities and later chose to live in Paris, the Palestinian Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā (1919-94), educated in England and the United States and later settling in Iraq, and the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh, who travelled widely and lived in Paris for many years, have benefited greatly from their cosmopolitanism and have transmitted their knowledge of other

cultures and ways of life and, particularly Adūnīs and Jabrā, have used their fresh perspective on Arab culture and society to make constructive criticisms of it in their writings. All have been modernist in the form of their poetry, as well as in its content.

Amin Maalouf (b. 1949), a Lebanese Christian who writes in French, has lived in France for some time, is a winner of the *Prix Goncourt*, and whose writing ‘bridges the gap between Europe and the Arab world’¹³ discusses, in his book *On Identity*,¹⁴ issues of identity, language, nationalism, colonialism and globalisation, both generally and as they affect the Arab world. Much of what he says relates to some of the theoretical discussion of the tensions and dialectics of exile in Chapter 1, and his notion of ‘identity’ has corollaries in other networks. In his first chapter, Maalouf points out that, especially in a world of extended communications, in both the media and travel senses, any individual’s identity is made up of multiple elements and that

. . . for the great majority these factors include allegiance to a religious tradition; to a nationality – sometimes two; to a profession, an institution, or a particular social milieu. But the list is much longer than that; it is virtually unlimited. A person may feel a more or less strong attachment to a province, a village, a neighbourhood, a clan, a professional team or one connected with a sport, a group of friends, a union, a company, a parish, a community of people with the same passions, the same sexual preferences, the same physical handicaps, or who have to deal with the same kind of pollution or other nuisance.¹⁵

A corollary of these ideas is that people such as exiles, refugees, the dispossessed and the underprivileged, are robbed of certain components of identity and forced into clinging to other less constructive ones – and they are frequently people who were deeply connected to land but who are forced to live in high concentrations in camps, slums and ghettos, and are unable to embrace the compensations of cosmopolitanism.

Maalouf says that not all the allegiances that compose a person’s identity are equally strong, but none is entirely insignificant,¹⁶ and that all the potential combinations of these allegiances create unique individuals, but

. . . while there is always a certain hierarchy among the elements that go to make up individual identities, that hierarchy is not immutable; it changes with time, and in doing so brings about fundamental changes in behaviour.¹⁷

He gives telling examples from the history of the last 20 years in what was Yugoslavia,¹⁸ and considerable flux and variation in dominant identity can be seen in the Arab world. Arabs can see themselves historically as victims of the Ottoman Empire and of European colonialisms and currently as victims of globalisation and neo-Imperialism, in a state of backwardness in relation to much of the world, exploited for their natural resources, and with their culture and religion downgraded in the eyes of others. In response to this, and in their battles for secular or religious

states, they can see themselves as nationalists or Islamicists, and the emphasis of nationalism or Islam can shift. Ira Lapidus points out that, in Egypt:

In the 1930s and 1940s the Muslim Brotherhood stressed the anti-imperialist aspects of Islam because it saw the main enemy to be British. In the 1950s and 1960s it stressed solidarity and justice in opposition to the corruption of the military regime. In the 1970s the Islamic reform movements emphasised personal morality and family values in response to the stresses of a changing social order.¹⁹

Maalouf also says that

[t]he identity a person lays claim to is often based, in reverse, on that of his enemy.²⁰

This is apparent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – Zionist ‘nationalism’ can be said to have created Palestinian nationalism. It is also the case that a monolithic religion, ideology or nationalism robs its adherents of a ‘normal’ identity and breeds extremism. Maalouf says that ‘the notion that reduces identity to one single affiliation . . . encourages people to adopt an attitude that is partial, sectarian, intolerant, domineering, sometimes suicidal, and frequently even changes them into killers or supporters of killers. Their view of the world is biased and distorted.’²¹ Many Israelis are guilty of this – in despising Palestinians as Gentiles and as peasants and in clinging to their own identities as the ‘divinely chosen’ and as victims, and on both counts believing that they have the right to victimise others and that legitimate protest is simply anti-Semitism. Conversely, Said and others, such as the Palestinian human rights activist Raja Shehadeh (b. 1950), argue that many Palestinians have not attempted to understand the Israelis, either in their ideology and motivation or in the mechanisms of oppression, but seem to regard them almost as an abstract scourge akin to the Tatars, and cling to the past, ignore irrevocable change and hope for complete restitution of what has been lost for ever, rather than aiming for an achievable settlement. Many Palestinians do have contacts with Israelis as is demonstrated in novels and personal account literature. This is not as apparent in poetry, although some poetry does mention Israelis, and as human beings, for example Fadwā Tuqān’s (b. 1917) poem ‘Eytan in the Steel Trap’ and Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s ‘A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies’.

A shared language is an important feature of the Arab world and of Arabic poetry. As language is an important component of identity, the fact that poetry is largely written in standard Arabic rather than local dialects has helped to maintain a pan-Arab identity and a connection to the Arabic literary heritage, as well as guaranteeing a large readership. But the Arab world also encompasses cases of people whose linguistic identity has been threatened. In countries of North Africa where French was imposed, along with the perception that it was the language of modernity and therefore superior to Arabic, generations of Arabs have written in French,²² and in Israel, many young Palestinians are educated in Hebrew and are bi-lingual. In some senses this has been an enrichment, for instance in the cases of the Moroccan Abdellatif Laâbi (b. 1942), who writes in French but has translated Arabic poetry into French, and Maḥmūd Darwīsh, who at an early age

absorbed European and Ancient Greek literature through Hebrew translations. References to the Arabic language in the work of many poets, and in the case of Adūnīs making its alphabet integral to the structure of some of his work, demonstrate its importance to them. In respect of religion, modern Arab poetry is almost entirely secular. Except for a few Christians such as Tawfīq Ṣāyigh (1923-71), religious imagery is used in much the same way as mythical imagery is, and Sufi imagery is largely transmuted into something akin to Surrealism. This may be a continuing effect of the Prophet's supposed disapproval of poetry, but it is also an indication of a commitment to secularism and modernity.

Maalouf, himself a product of a French-based education in Lebanon, also believes that in the interaction between cultures 'the key word is reciprocity'²³ and that people should endeavour to accept cultural differences and learn to understand and respect other cultures. He writes of immigrants that

[t]hose who can accept their diversity fully will hand on the torch between communities and cultures, will be a kind of mortar joining together and strengthening the societies in which they live.²⁴

The exile, and also the Palestinian inner exile in Israel, is in a position to act as mortar which can both make his own position more bearable and contribute to wider understanding.

Arab exiles have had to deal with profound shifts in their world view, which are partly a function of the accelerated modernisation that is occurring in various aspects of the Arab world. Many Arab poets are not far removed from rural backgrounds with a sense of the cycles of nature, undifferentiated past time and an instinctive belonging to the land, with limited horizons (both literally and figuratively), absorbed in hard physical work and a patriarchal and religious way of life. Even gradual changes where the old and new co-exist and the young begin to seek education and/or economic improvement generate pain and nostalgia, demonstrated for example in the work of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, educated in Baghdad in the 1940s, which compares city and countryside, but a sudden disruption of the old life, as in the case of dispossessed Palestinians, generates a new awareness of land and often a perverse clinging to the past at the expense of shutting-off the possible benefits of modernity. One aspect of this is the 'Palestinian land rhetoric' discussed in Chapter 3. Or the world can expand too much, with too much travelling and too much change which gives a sense of being cast adrift, and many poets try to create new connections, often seeming to cast in all directions, in both space and time, notably in some of the work of al-Bayyātī. Perceptions and treatment of time also change. Traditional communities are locked into the cycles of nature, a sense of undifferentiated continuity, and the eschatology of religion. When this is shattered, there can be either an instinctive urge towards clinging to the past or a search for new discourses. Perhaps for many Arabs religion still provides the 'sense of an ending',²⁵ but the secular future is problematic as the Arab world is in a state of flux, and of insecurity due to its perceived backwardness and to the effects of external forces. Modern Arab poets almost exclusively write in a secular vein: forced to confront linear time, some have fallen into nostalgia; many have turned to the use of myth as a symbol of hoped-for change, mainly manifested in the

Tammūzī movement of the 1950s and 1960s; some, notably Muḥammad al-As‘ad (b. 1944), have registered the loss of cycles. Some fix on the present, as so many people are forced to live from moment to moment when their past is lost and the future is unimaginable. There is little exploration of the future or utopian dreams, beyond vague hopes of regeneration in the use of myth or through martyrdom, and exhortations to continue ‘the fight’, although in some poets a future is hinted at. Samīḥ al-Qāsim’s (b. 1939) ‘The Boring Orbit’²⁶ implies continuity of Palestinian problems, and the sub-title of Adūnīs’s *al-Kitāb ‘amsi al-makān al-āna* (Yesterday – the Place – Now), a catalogue of the ‘tragedies and disasters’²⁷ of Arab history, where ‘he crams place between two times’ marking ‘a contiguity between non-homogeneous places, although yesterday and now are not complete as a sequence in objective reality except in the future’,²⁸ rather implies a similar future. Some have used Arab history and the Arab heritage to create continuity and identity and to explore current issues. Some escape into their own private worlds, an ‘inner exile’, although, especially in the case of Adūnīs, this can also be a search for an absolute that is an assertion of faith in the infinite continuity of nature and civilisation that renders local temporal problems insignificant, implying their eventual resolution.

Many poets have expressed suffering, usually, but not always, indirectly in depicting the sufferings of others, and this gives rise to tensions in their poetry. Suffering and abuse of human rights should be made known, as a matter of record and to attempt to stop them and prevent their occurrence in the future, and poetry can offer consolation to those who are suffering and be cathartic for the poets, but for poetry to be poetry it has to avoid catalogues and propaganda and to be good poetry it has to avoid sentimentality, self-righteousness and self-pity.

Similarly, there are aesthetic and social tensions in poetry that alludes to or reflects political issues. It is difficult for contemporary Arab poets to avoid politics as it pervades the lives of intellectuals and writers, many of them exiles, and the lives of many of their compatriots. It has been argued that being an instrument of resistance and political debate has been detrimental to Arab poetry and has inhibited the development of some of its poets – and conversely that poets should not pursue ‘art for art’s sake’ while they and their countrymen are suffering political and military oppression. Several poets have written about poetry, for example, Mu‘īn Bsīṣū’s (1927-84) poem ‘To Rimbaud’ perhaps raises the issue that being a politician or fighter or ideologue is detrimental to poetry, or that those who become involved in such things or have blood on their hands are unfit to write poetry. Or, in an early poem, Maḥmūd Darwīsh paradoxically makes a beautiful expression of commitment:

*For me it’s essential to reject the rose
That comes from a dictionary or a volume of poetry.
Roses sprout from a peasant’s arm, a worker’s grip;
Roses sprout on a warrior’s wound*²⁹

Most exiled Arab poets write poetry as a subsidiary activity and take up other paths – as novelists, academics/teachers, editors, anthologists or critics, or as politicians or activists. Arguably the poetry of the latter is less rich, but people for whom poetry is a component of their

identity are more likely to be confident in their multiple allegiances, and are therefore less likely to take extreme points of view, so will be true in their poetry, and treat it as neither entirely an instrument nor an escape.

This thesis discusses a range of Arab poets from various backgrounds who have lived in exile, and reflect the variegated history of the Arab world in the twentieth century and the many facets of exile and alienation. It can be argued that exile is often of benefit to the development of an intellectual and hence to his country and to the wider Arab world – sometimes whether those in power like it or not. Exile has provided contact with different cultures and with modernism and modernity and their effects; it has given exiles the perspective to constructively criticise their countries, both socially and politically; it has helped in constructing a modern Arab identity and helped to bring the Arab world into the world arena; and exiles have been of importance in the creation and maintenance of the Palestinian identity in the struggle for a state and a solution to the problems of mass Palestinian exile. The poems analysed in detail are primarily ones that depict the experiences of exile, many of which also reflect the effect of exile on their creators.

The first chapter discusses the general condition of exile, some recent theories of exile writing, and some of the causes of exile in the modern world and their application to the Arab World. It touches on the issue of how poetry can express serious issues and the resultant tensions, and on the nature of artistic innovation and how it may be affected by exile, and also discusses other social and literary aspects drawn on in the thesis, and gives a brief account of the development of Modern Arab Poetry up to 1948 and an overview of developments since. There are inevitably overlaps between the following chapters, but Chapter 2 'The Depiction of Exile' is mainly concerned with the direct experience of exile, the associated issues and the physical and psychological problems. It mainly focuses on Palestinian poets, as the Palestinians, as a people as well as individually, have been the main Arab victims of exile and the causes of their exile are more defined. The following two chapters are concerned with the response of poets to exile, and how their work not only reflects their anxieties but is also affected by them. Chapter 3 'Lost Lands and the Search for Affiliation' discusses poems about land and dislocation, mainly, but not entirely the 'Palestinian land rhetoric'; the use of myth; the sense of being adrift in both space and time; and the attempt to create new affiliations, primarily through the work of al-Bayyātī whose fragmented structures and multiple connections express the fragmentation of the Arab world, some of its important figures, and the influences upon it. Chapter 4 'New Horizons and New Poetics' is about poets whose work, often highly modernist and using distinctive poetics, challenges Arabs to confront the problems of their world and to try to change it. They have gained perspective from exile, and have been open to new cultures and new ideas which they have positively incorporated into their own cultural background. Sometimes they have responded to new environments with bursts of creativity, and they have become cosmopolitan and as well as incorporating new ideas into Arab poetics have contributed to placing Arab culture onto the world stage.

The Conclusion summarises the main features of the poetry analysed, and makes some broader comparisons, especially in relation to poetics and to the tensions mentioned above between poetry

and the expression of suffering, and between poetry and politics, and to the expansion in knowledge, thought, vision and inspiration that exile can give to poets, as to other intellectuals.

¹ I am using the terms 'neo-Classicists' and 'Romantics' in line with M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1975

² Ibid. p. 202

³ See Issa J. Boullata, 'Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān's Poem "Red Tuesday"' in Issa J. Boullata and Terri DeYoung eds., *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Literature*, The University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, 1997 pp. 87-100

⁴ See Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'The Collapse of Totalising Discourse and the Rise of Marginalised/Minority Discourses', in Kamal Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq eds., *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, Brill, Leiden, 2000

⁵ Medieval, and modern, Arab cultural and scientific achievements are now also being disseminated in other spheres: for example the linked exhibitions of the Festival of Islam that were held in London in the 1970s; the *Institut du monde arabe* in Paris which has lecture and film programs, and a permanent exhibition as well as temporary exhibitions including in 2000-2001 *Adonis Un poète dans le monde d'aujourd'hui*, and in 2005-2006 *L'âge d'or des sciences arabes*; the editing, translation and publication of medieval texts under the auspices of the CNRS in Paris and al-Furqān in London; and an increasing number of permanent and temporary exhibitions. There is also more attention in the media – articles, reviews, and television and radio programs.

⁶ Adunis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, tr. Catherine Cobham, Saqi, London, 1990 originally published as *Introduction à la poésie arabe*, Sindbad, Paris, 1985, pp. 80-81

⁷ Kamal Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjani's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, Aris & Phillips Ltd., Warminster, Wiltshire, 1979

⁸ The concepts of fragmentation and multiplicity are discussed in several of Kamal Abu-Deeb's articles, see particularly Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'Cultural Creation in a Fragmented Society', in Hisham Sharabi ed., *The Next Arab Decade: Alternative Futures*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado and Mansell Publishing, London, 1988 and Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'The Collapse of Totalising Discourse and the Rise of Marginalised/Minority Discourses', op. cit.

⁹ Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*, Vintage, London, 1994

¹⁰ Interview with Daniel Barenboim by Shirley Apthorp, *Weekend FT*, January 4/5 2003, p. VII

¹¹ Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Original Sins: Reflections on the History of Zionism and Israel*, Pluto Press, London, 1992, p. 82

¹² For example see Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Janā'izziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh' in Kamāl Abū Dīb, *Jamāliyyāt al-Tajāwur aw Tashābuk al-Faḍā'āt al-'Ibdā'iyyah*, Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, Beirut, 1997

¹³ Peter France ed., *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1995 p. 480

¹⁴ Amin Maalouf, *On Identity*, trans. Barbara Bray, The Harvill Press, London, 2000 (French title *Les Identités meurtrières*, Éditions Bernard Grasset, Paris, 1998)

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 10

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 12

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 11

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- ¹⁹ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, 1988 p. 636
- ²⁰ Maalouf, op. cit., p. 13
- ²¹ Ibid. p. 26
- ²² Conversely there are tensions with indigenous languages as well as dialect – see Réda Bensmaïa, *Experimental Nations Or, the Invention of the Maghreb*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2003, pp. 14-18
- ²³ Maalouf, op. cit., p. 36, and other references
- ²⁴ Ibid. p. 31
- ²⁵ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1966, reprinted with an Epilogue in 2000
- ²⁶ Discussed in Chapter 3
- ²⁷ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Huwadha al-Kitābu' a study of Adūnīs's *al-Kitāb, al-Ḥayāt*, London, January 16, 17, 18 1996, January 16 article, column 2
- ²⁸ Ibid., January 17 article, column 2
- ²⁹ 'The Rose and the Dictionary' in Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Akhir al-Layl*, 1967 Translation in Mahmud Darwish, *The Music of Human Flesh*, selected and translated by Denys Johnson-Davies, Three Continents Press, Washington D.C. and Heinemann, London, 1980

Chapter 1 Background

The study of exile, and the question of how to define, categorise and analyse exile literature, can be approached in various ways. This chapter discusses various aspects of exile, and some recent theories of exile writing as well as literary and psychological aspects that are drawn on in the thesis. It also gives an account of the development of modern Arab poetry up to 1948, and an overview of events, influences, and developments since.

The study of the causes and effects of exile may come under the headings of Politics, History, Cultural Theory, Sociology, and Psychology. The causes of modern exile include colonisation, revolution, dictatorships, post-colonialism, and the effects of modernisation, socialism, and globalisation. Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities*¹ is a sociological-historical study of the concept of the nation that has relevance for those to whom their nation is lost, as well as to theories of postcolonialism, which has much to do with modern nation building and exile. Political theorists such as Aijaz Ahmad and Perry Anderson are relevant in terms of the modern forces of politics and local and global economics that are among the causes of modern exile, and the work of cultural theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari, Homi Bhabha, Fredric Jameson and Terry Eagleton also has implications for the study of exile. Some of the work of Edward Said is focused on Arab, and particularly Palestinian, exile and he is himself an exemplar of the exiled Arab intellectual and a powerful spokesman for the Palestinian exiles of whom he was a part. This part of his work is mainly political and historical, but some of his work on cultural theory has implications for the study of exile writing, and has obviously been influenced by his own experience of exile. The causes of Arab exile are touched on where relevant, but are not discussed in any depth in this thesis, but the effects of exile, which as well as displacement and alienation include insecurity, fear and guilt, are commented on throughout, and some work on this that falls between cultural theory and literary theory is discussed later in this chapter. Writers also write about exile, under the auspices of biography or memoir, in the novel, and in poetry. Although the focus of the thesis is Arab exile poetry, it occasionally touches on some relevant Arab biographical or memoir work.

Exile is mainly seen as displacement and alienation outside one's country, but it is possible to be displaced and/or alienated within it, an 'inner exile', being unable, unwilling, or not allowed to leave under the rule of a coloniser or occupier, or under a regime to which one is opposed. Exile may be forced, under duress or fear, or may be voluntary due to economic or social conditions. As exile afflicts, or may be opted for by, members of various cultures at various times it may to some extent be treated as a universal condition and exile literature may therefore be studied both synchronically and diachronically. Although parts of the literature of exiles may be subsumed under particular national literatures, exile literature is very often in a state of hybridity, drawing upon influences from contemporary and historical sources both in the exile's own and in other cultures, and language may be an issue as the exile may be cut off from active participation in his own language and may even have to write in another. Exiled intellectuals also tend to interact, both with their host country and with transnational networks, and there are sometimes mutual

influences between literature, and the art and music of different cultures. Such influences on Arab poetry are particularly apparent in the work of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī.

In respect of exile writing, there are strengths and weaknesses in different genres. Some polemical writing can be very effective, for example Edward Said’s *The Question of Palestine, Peace & Its Discontents*, and *After the Last Sky*.² The novel, although it can be fragmented, is generally a realistic genre and can present a detailed picture, and raise arguments: for example, the Palestinian novel *Wild Thorns*³ raises the issue of the tensions between activists and the rest of the population, including their own families, when the innocent are likely to suffer the effects of reprisals and collective punishment, whether they support the activists or not. There are also, usually, the focusing aspects of narrative and characterisation. Film and drama can be graphic and appeal directly to the emotions. And the internet and ‘blogging’ are beginning to take their place in the gamut of modern media, with instantaneous dissemination. But all require production: books are heavy and identifiable; as Brecht said, drama requires a theatre and audiences;⁴ and blogging requires a computer and telecommunications. Poetry has the advantage, particularly in situations of flight and resistance that it can be brief and condensed, and is therefore easily portable, and easily preserved or memorised. It can be published relatively inexpensively in small magazines and even newspapers or circulated unofficially, and in extreme situations it does without pen and paper. Palestinian Resistance poetry emerged full blown on the Arab and world stage in 1967 after nearly two decades of being underground, and some of the poems of Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) were composed mentally, recited to friends, memorised and preserved for posterity, and written down later. Although poetry is compressed, it can be very powerful as seen in Arab ‘platform poetry’ and in the fact that a poet like Maḥmūd Darwīsh was able to fill a football stadium, but it can also offer quiet personal solace. There are tensions in the choice of genre in representing exile and the other horrors of recent times: the novel may be more informative and discursive, but it can preclude elements of lyricism, consolation and catharsis, and of the connections possible in poetry. Hence, perhaps, the pervasive tendency in the last century towards mixed genres – structured collections of poetry, and poetic prose both in the novel and in the relatively new genre of poetic memoirs such as W.G. Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn* and Primo Levi’s *The Periodic Table*. There are Arab analogues: Muḥīd Barghūthī’s (b. 1944) *I Saw Ramallah*, Raja Shehadeh’s *The Third Way* and *Palestinian Walks*, and Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s *Memory for Forgetfulness* are about different aspects of the Palestinian experience, and Abdellatif Laābi’s *Le chemin des ordalies* is an account of his imprisonment in Morocco. However, poetry was until comparatively recently the predominate genre in the Arab world as the novel and drama and the power of media are relatively new, dating from the late 19th century. There is a strong poetic heritage, which in some respects anticipated modern poetic developments in Europe, and many of the poets considered in this thesis not only have an innate awareness of their heritage but have developed it, so Arab poetry to a considerable extent retains its power, and the respect accorded it. It has been of importance, especially in maintaining Palestinian identity and claims.

Because of modern communications it is possible to travel or be flung faster and further and to retain some old connections and create new ones. It is also possible to travel in time – from rural

villages to the metropolis and from less developed countries to modern ones, and many exiled writers are confronted by modernity as well as modernism, which is an important strand in modern Arab poetry. Exiles have also been confronted from the later decades of the twentieth century by the political and economic forces of globalisation and the social and cultural effects of postmodernism.⁵

The aspects of exile discussed in the next sub-section are manifested in various cultures. Some can be seen simplistically in terms of apparent dualities or opposites but it is implicitly if not always explicitly acknowledged that there may be a continuous and fluid spectrum between such dualities,⁶ and all dualities inevitably overlap and are overlaid with aspects such as nationalism and language and with the more recent forces of 'transnationalism' and globalisation. Similarly theories on exile writing in the following sub-section draw on many cultures, and exile literature takes many forms and is often hybrid. I will also discuss aspects such as artistic creation, 'collage', and surrealist theories that are applicable to some of the poetry discussed in the main body of the thesis. Particular features and circumstances of the Arab world are touched on in comparisons in the course of this chapter, and the final sub-section gives a brief account of modern Arab poetry up to 1948, the starting point of the poetry discussed in the thesis, and an overview of its development since.

Aspects of Exile

Forced Exile and Voluntary Exile

Forced exile and displacement may be the result of formal banishment, change of regime, religious, political or economic factors, colonisation, or occupation. Ovid and Dante are historical examples of formal banishment; drastic changes of regime that led to the exile or death of significant sections of the population include the French and Russian Revolutions, and the triumph of fascism in Spain and some of the post-colonial countries of South America. There have been exiles on religious grounds: for example, in England, persecuted Protestants during the reign of Mary Tudor and, later, Puritans who opted to leave England for the New World, and the many Huguenot Protestants who fled France at the time of the Edict of Nantes. The Jews have been subject to many exiles and persecutions, partly due to their introversion and maintenance of a distinct identity, and partly because of some the niches they have occupied, such as being intermediate between landlords and serfs in Poland and Russia, and as moneylenders. This applies to other groups such as those from the Asian sub-continent who emigrated to African states to be part of an administrative class under the auspices of the British Empire and were, after several generations, expelled, and modern Arabs, particularly Palestinians, have experienced multiple exiles. Exile may be to escape war, famine, massacre or persecution, or as in the case of the many German and Jewish intellectuals who fled Germany in the early 1930s, pre-emptive.⁷ Intellectuals frequently suffer persecution or worse at the hands of oppressive regimes because they are seen as a subversive influence.

Voluntary exile includes defecting, for which one needs cultural capital or valuable information, for example Russian musicians and ballet dancers, and various spies; being sent abroad for education; and the intellectual choosing to go abroad for a more congenial and creative environment. Some leave their country to escape bad economic circumstances, or for a better life, or to earn money that is often sent to support or improve the lives of families left behind. Many Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza are supported by such remittances. And voluntary exile may become forced exile and *vice versa*.

There is a gradation between the exile and the refugee – the term ‘exile’ more usually refers to an individual, and one possessing some kind of financial or cultural capital, and the term ‘refugee’ to members of a group, often with little means of support. In the Palestinian case, many in 1948 fled in panic at reports of massacres, some have been forced into exile by expulsion or by confiscation of their land, and members of the PLO were expelled from Jordan in 1971 and from Beirut after the Israeli Siege of 1982. Most of the discussion in the following three sub-sections is in terms of individual exiles, since the individual exile is more relevant to exile writing, although some aspects may also apply to groups. A feature of Palestinian exile poetry is that it does sometimes apply to a group.

Displacement, Alienation, and Inner Exile

Exile to another country, alone or even with immediate family, entails alienation and the breaking of ties – with family and friends, from native land, from land itself in the case of agrarian refugees such as the Palestinians who fled in 1948, and with all the hitherto taken for granted components of life as described by Amin Maalouf. It also entails having to interact in one way or other with a host country or place of refuge, which may be welcoming, neutral, or hostile. Wojciech Kalaga depicts exile, as well as being ‘an enforced and radical displacement’, in stark cultural terms, as ‘displacement from one’s own interpretive universe to another, alien interpretive universe.’⁸ There are obviously gradations in this – as Edward Said points out, exile may be tolerable or even beneficial for the artist or intellectual, especially when thrown into a cosmopolitan milieu, although it is rarely so for those lacking intellectual, social or economic capital, who may not even understand the language of their host country, and are not able to tap into social and cultural networks

. . . the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created. You must think of the refugee-peasants with no prospect of ever returning home, armed only with a ration card and an agency number. Paris may be a capital famous for cosmopolitan exiles, but it is also a city where unknown men and women have spent years of miserable loneliness . . .⁹

A host country may be welcoming to defectors, the wealthy, and famous intellectuals, and may provide social and academic networks, especially where there is an established exile community, and charities and social services may provide support for the less privileged. However, when too many exiles or, more demeaningly refugees, are unwelcome or simply an intolerable strain, they may be bundled into refugee camps. Although there is often a common language, as in the

Hispanic world and the Arab world, and where exiles from post-colonial countries to the ex-coloniser also share a language, there may be subtle or major differences, and there are different social and political rules to negotiate. The home country may exert pressure on the host, and exiles may be under surveillance from either or both. They may also face resentment, suspicion, poverty and exploitation. These all cause psychological problems, and added to them are loss and loneliness, and perhaps fear for those left behind, and the guilt of abandonment and of being safer and more secure than their compatriots.

Ideological differences can be very distressing. Manfred Stassen¹⁰ discusses the case of Wolf Biermann, born in Hamburg, a committed socialist who had opted to live in the GDR in 1953 but who, because of his criticisms of the regime, was effectively expelled to West Germany in 1976. He was in his country of birth, with the same language, culture, and history and even 'the German mentality and the unmistakable German national character [which] are detectable on either side of the divide' but he had lost 'the socialist frame of reference and the socialist horizon of expectations' and 'had to learn a different political system, that of capitalism, in which there are no utopian aspirations left, because of the ubiquitous hegemony of the ideology of profit.'¹¹ Stassen also remarks that Biermann's sudden freedom to write about anything he wanted however he wished was not a liberation but a more severe form of censorship than that practised in the GDR as 'the Western ideology of "anything goes" in the arts, condemns the politically committed writer to compete in the cacophony of voices and the information pollution of the Western media and condemns him to total irrelevance.'¹² Similarly, German writers such as Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht were out of place in California during World War II. Brecht had been warned against going to his erstwhile spiritual home the USSR because of the persecution of intellectuals there and ended up writing film scripts for Hollywood.¹³ Arab exiles in Europe and America were faced by ignorance and indifference about their countries, and intellectuals by 'information pollution', but indifference has recently become prejudice and hostility, with the 'war on terror'.

Religious differences can also be a source of distress, and are part of the reason for tight-knit communities and resistance to interaction with a host country which may cause isolation. Jews and Muslims may be shocked by some Western mores and fearful of the corruption of their children and dilution of their religion by secularism, and conversely relatively secular Muslims may find it difficult working in a strict theocracy such as Saudi Arabia.¹⁴

People may also be exiled within their own countries. There may be the separation of prison, house arrest, or the practice of sending intellectuals and dissidents off to a remote area – as Ovid was exiled to the Black Sea, a cultural backwater of the Roman Empire, so modern dissidents have been packed off to Siberia, the Italian *Mezzogiorno*,¹⁵ and remote peasant areas of China¹⁶ – which results in isolation, privation, and perhaps stultification. There is also the state of 'self' or 'inner' exile which may be as painful as displacement - the terrible pain of being opposed to a regime, not wanting or not being able to leave, and therefore of living in a mental straitjacket or leading a double life, as in many dictatorships or theocracies, in a state of outward complaisance but private rebellion, having to keep a low profile, and living in a constant state of fear and distrust. This

inevitably leads to stagnation and frustration. Juan Goytisolo (b. 1931) writes of the miseries of living under Franco's regime in Spain:

For the men and women of two successive generations, generally endowed with social and moral sensibility, whose hopes for equity and justice could never be satisfied by the freedom to thrive or enrich themselves more or less honestly, the consequences of the system have had a devastating effect: a true moral genocide.¹⁷

The poets Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) and Osip Mandelstam, and the composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75) might be regarded as inner exiles in the USSR as they suffered terrible indignities, restrictions, and fear, and Mandelstam suffered voluntary exile in the Crimea and forced exile in Voronezh, and died on his way to prison camp. At times Akhmatova, though remaining in Leningrad, was denied employment and a ration card, so had to depend for food on the hand-outs of friends, and Shostakovich was 'denounced', yet both were also at times used as emblems of the regime. They suffered the double pain, during World War II, of passionately loving their country and hating its enemies but also hating its leaders. There are cases of populations living under occupation, in fear and distrust of both occupiers and compatriots such as in France during World War II, and the Palestinians, under Egyptian and Jordanian, as well as Israeli, occupation. Maḥmūd Darwīsh has written a famous and powerful poem on the indignities of the Identity Card, and Palestinians constantly face checkpoints and the associated dangers of trigger-happy soldiers or of critical delay, for instance in reaching a hospital; unemployment; and having to live on UN hand-outs. This leads to a general impoverishment of Palestinian society in all senses.

As some persecuted Russian intellectuals chose to remain in the USSR, so some Palestinians such as the lawyer and writer Raja Shehadeh and the poet Samīḥ al-Qāsim, have actively chosen to remain in Israel or Palestine and maintain the Palestinian presence – termed *ṣumūd* in Shehadeh's book *The Third Way*.¹⁸

The migration of rural populations to towns should be mentioned here, as it has relevance to some of the poets discussed in this thesis. It began in the industrialising countries of Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both because of the effect of land reforms and because of the availability of jobs in the new manufacturing industries, but in the last century such movements have taken place in the underdeveloped countries with some different causes, such as the damage done to rural economies by the effects of colonialism and imperialism and growing pressures of population on the countryside, as well as in search of economic or educational opportunities. As well as a voyage through space, this is also a voyage through time, and can be as much of a disruption as other forms of exile.

Universal and Particular Aspects of Exile

Exile has a long history. It always involves alienation and usually separation from native land and/or family and friends, but the dynamics depend on the nature and character of the exile himself and the interaction between him and the place where he lives or seeks refuge. It is very often political: of being *persona non grata* or opposing the current rule, but the 'current rule' has changed in the course of history. The earliest documented case is that of the Egyptian Sinuhe around 2000 BC who fled the kingdom on hearing that he was about to be seized by the authorities, but returned as an old man seeking Pharaoh's mercy.¹⁹ Modern exiles may identify with historical exiles such as Ovid and Dante, but the reasons for their exiles are both 'an antique drum' – Augustus and the Roman Empire are long gone, and the Guelfs and Ghibbelines of Dante's time are almost forgotten, simply 'united in the strife which divided them',²⁰ but there are general commonalities in being opposed to a system or out of place, and either leaving or being expelled from that system or having to endure it in some way. In leaving one's country there is always the question of language, especially for the exiled writer whose use of language may have been the reason for his banishment but for whom language is often his only weapon and solace. An exile may have to interact with another language which is not the language of his thinking, and there are difficulties even in the 'half-exile' of a common language such as in the Hispanic world, the Commonwealth, and the Arab world. There is the fear of never belonging anywhere but also the fear of loss of identity or of acquiring an *ersatz* identity²¹ in living in a foreign country – and fear of absorption, as is implicit in the later work of Adūnīs. And there is the question of for whom exiled writers are writing. It may be for others in their country or for the exile community; it may be to assert an identity and a cause; it may be 'writing back' to or against regimes, colonisers, or neo-imperialists; or it may simply be for themselves and, hopefully, the future. Much of Mandelstam's poetry was not published in his lifetime but was preserved by friends and published later.²²

There is also the concept of 'transnationalism' in the sense that exiles may have more in common with each other than with contemporaries in both their home and host countries who have not been severed from the existing components of their lives and had their existing patterns of thought shattered. This applies particularly to intellectuals who, by their nature, often feel limited by and hence do not fit into the milieu into which they are born. Hence the modern exile's empathy with the self-pity of a 1st century Roman exile and the sense of tragedy, quest, and wandering in Dante. In much exile writing there is a tendency to build transnational and trans-temporal cultural edifices. This perhaps demonstrates the sense of being cut off from one's own culture and having found a refuge in new connections and in 'fragments I have shored against my ruins',²³ as well as a belief in the eternal power of culture and civilisation in contrast to the current tainting or suppression of the writer's own culture.

The particular aspects of exile are generally synchronic, depending upon contemporary political and social structures, means of travel and communication, the extent of interactions between cities, states, or blocs, and on current modes of thought. Before there were borders,

people were exiled from groups, as the pre-Islamic *ṣaʿālik* poets were ‘exiled’ or outcast from itinerant tribes. Exile from cities and kingdoms preceded exile from states. Exile may be from land rather than from a nation – for Palestinians, exile from land pre-dated the concept of the Palestinian nation, and one may regard oneself as exiled from a village or house that has been home to generations of one’s family, but there are less tangible separations in the case of an exile who has lived in various places in a modern city and is separated from a society, a shared culture, or a ‘nation’. Nationalism, while an important modern construct, is an ambiguous one, as:

For the exile, a sense of both nationalism and national identity are necessary. Without the belief that there is a connection between an individual and a place, exile has no meaning.²⁴

However, national identity cannot be a monolithic concept, because societies cannot be homogenous even if they are constrained to appear so, and in rapidly modernising societies this is particularly so as old structures break down and new ones struggle for hegemony. Juan Goytisolo argued in 1979 that official versions of Spanish culture had erased the truth of Spain:

A single Spain does not exist, but rather a variety of Spains each of a different economic, social and cultural level: every effort to reduce them to a common denominator leads us to sacrifice reality to the arbitrariness of a method.²⁵

The corollary of this is that there are dominant or imposed cultures and suppressed cultures, that there are tensions between them, and that latent forces may erupt in times of change. A suppressed religion may break out as it did after the disintegration of the USSR and, with terrible consequences, in Serbia after the break-up of the patchwork Yugoslavia. Tribalism, suppressed by the Ba’thist party in Iraq, rapidly became a factor in the resistance to US occupation. And there is a tense and difficult dynamic in many countries between the forces of modernisation and those of patriarchy and traditionalism. McClennan points out that the exile’s nationalism is usually contrary to the versions of nationalism and national identity fostered within the nation’s borders. Nationalism and its changing status in the modern world are discussed later, as is the universal yet always particular question of language.

Positive and Negative Effects of Exile

Exile can offer advantages such as a better economic situation, relative comfort and/or safety, new influences, and new opportunities, although some of these may be tarnished by guilt. It can also offer increased freedoms of thought and expression. Edward Said says that one positive thing to be said of exile is that it can be ‘contrapuntal’:

Seeing “the entire world as a foreign land” makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal*.²⁶

Such 'originality of vision' can be a spur to literary creativity and much great literature has been produced by exiles, some being open to and revelling in the new and some dwelling on loss, and shifting combinations of both elements. The history of exile literature is as old as the history of writing itself, but despite this vast and varied literary tradition it can be argued that criticism of exile writing has largely been 'according to a binary logic, where exile either produces creative freedom or it traps the writer in restrictive nostalgia. . . Exile either causes creative freedom and reflects a global ethic or it results in heightened provincialism and literary regionalism.'²⁷ Claudio Guillén defines two types of exile writing, exile (nostalgic) and counter exile (creative), and correspondingly that they may either 'look within' and focus on loss, or be 'solar' if they tend to 'look up towards the sun and the stars'. He does suggest a spectrum between the exile and the counter exile, but does not account for texts that might hold the concepts in tension.²⁸ Sophia A. McClelland's theory of the tensions and dialectics of exile writing, both positive creative factors, is discussed in a following section.

Some of the pains of exile have been mentioned above – primarily loss and potential dangers, but also the difficulties of having to find means of support, and of adjusting to the demands of a new society and possibly a new language. This can cause painful destabilisation of psychological and intellectual networks. Wojciech Kalaga depicts a state of exile that, as well as being 'an enforced and radical displacement', entails 'displacement from one's own interpretive universe to another, alien interpretive universe.' He defines 'interpretive universe' as

a textual environment formed by a culture, governed by its own interpretive paradigm, i.e., a set of interpretive tendencies resulting from its specific hierarchy of world views, principles of inference, systems of values, semiotic repertoires and culturally determined perceptual preferences.²⁹

As well as not understanding the ambient language, the exile/refugee may not know the law, how to find help or information, or even such apparently simple things as how to buy bus or train tickets. These are factors in the exploitation of illegal immigrant workers, and of 'trafficked' women and children. Even for the less unfortunate, accompanying displacement is

the annihilation of the ontological role of interpretation which now, deprived of its own semantic universe, simply cannot take place at all. However, in order to avoid annihilation of the person's being at the very same moment, some kind of substitution is necessary to take the place of the ontological texture of interpretation. It is now *translation* that becomes its ersatz, enforced by an alien semantic environment. It ousts and supplants *interpretation* not only as an act of cognition . . . but primarily as an ontological condition of existence and continuity of self. This shift in the existential basis which constitutes the foundation of our individual being entails an amputation of the attributes of existence which have already been shaped by interpretation; it resects and blocks the established interpretative pathways or, in other words, it deprives our existence of authenticity.³⁰

The self 'becomes scarred by the inadequacy of its own authentic medium within the context of its new interpretative universe.' The new universe may be rejected, which is possible for a group or where there is a community of fellow nationals, but this can result in 'existential solitude and dissociation from the surrounding world.' And it is inevitable where exiled groups are confined to refugee camps. Or the new universe may be accepted and one may 'substitute self-interpretation . . . by a permanent translation of one's self into alien worlds and categories', the strain of always having to consciously think about even the slightest thing, of not being able to take anything for granted. One has to become a 'public ersatz of oneself'³¹ seen by others in limited terms, 'the man in the Chinese takeaway', 'the Syrian poet in the café', and stifled in terms of one's true identity, a state of inner exile in addition to displacement and alienation.

Theories on Exile Writing

The work of the following authors, who analyse exile literature under disparate theoretical frameworks, is drawn on in the discussion of some of the facets of exile in the rest of this chapter. Sophia A. McClellan argues convincingly that opposites such as those mentioned above, and other aspects of the exile's life, are in a state of tension and continuous dialectic and that the effects of this are apparent in exile writing. Her book is a study of three modern Hispanic writers, one exiled from the fascist dictatorship of Franco in Spain, the others from post-colonial fascist dictatorships in South America sustained by the forces of globalisation, and explores the way in which they 'depict cultural identity as caught between abstract theories of boundary-free identity, the politics and problematics of representation, and the painful realities of exile, authoritarianism, and social marginalisation.'³² She structures her analysis in terms of *Nation, Time, Language, and Space* and the tensions and dialectics within and between them. Exile implies travel and Susan R. Suleiman³³ uses the 'metaphor of the journey' as a way of organising a varied set of essays under the headings of *Signposts, Travellers, Outsiders, and Backward Glances*. María-Inés Lagos-Pope³⁴ discusses several historic exiles, and Michael Murphy³⁵ focuses on three very different twentieth century poets, English, Russian, and Hungarian-Jewish, both in political terms and in the effect of their experiences of exile on their work. 'Hybrid' literatures are often a consequence of exile, sometimes intentionally in the case of voluntary exiles to major cultural centres: Murphy discusses this in the case of Joseph Brodsky (1940-96), and by extension in other Russian authors, and María Rosa Menocal³⁶ deals with the importance of suppressed and written-out-of history hybrid cultures, and their lingering, perhaps later rediscovered, traces and influences, focusing on the culture of al-Andalus. Henry Kamen³⁷ argues that the literature of Spain is primarily a literature of exiles, from the suppressed literature of the banished Arabs and Jews of al-Andalus to subsequent exiles from the constraints of church, state and fascism. Similar arguments could be made for Russian culture. Peter the Great's brutal westernisation and modernisation resulted in a ruling class that barely spoke Russian, and there were tensions in the nineteenth century between the Europeanised culture, to which many exiles contributed, and the 'Russianness' promoted by groups such as the 'Mighty Handful'. The great Russian poet Pushkin (1799-1837) reflects both

aspects – writing fairy tales such as ‘The Tale of Tsar Saltan’ and ‘The Golden Cockerel’, the part fairy tale (perhaps magic realism) ‘The Bronze Horseman’, and socio-critical works such as his masterpiece *Eugene Onegin*. The corollary of a suppressed culture is an imposed one – this is a feature of fascist states with an official history of a glorious, homogenous past and communist ones, trying to negate the past in favour of a utopia to come, and also of theocratic states, to various degrees. All are capable of ‘doublethink’ and of the *trahison des clerks* in using modern technology to perpetuate anachronistic ideas; they stifle the creativity of those who are against the regime and even those who are with it, who necessarily are limited in their thinking; and the main aim of many regimes becomes simply self-preservation for the ruling oligarchy. McClellan discusses the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile – sustained by compliance with ‘globalisation’ which preserves and benefits the oligarchy, but not necessarily the bulk of the population. Many such regimes are in a state of partial modernisation – of an elite benefiting from modernisation, but within the framework of a modernity that has been acquired too rapidly and superficially which their states lack the physical and educational infrastructure to internalise and distribute. This also applies to much of the Arab world. Modern Russian exiles and particularly inner exiles, fought against the artificial imposed culture of ‘Socialist Realism’ leading oppressed and deprived lives, within or outside of prison or gulag. Michael Hanne’s collection of essays and other genres and media³⁸ covers a wide range of peoples, circumstances, and reactions, including themes such as slavery and the use of transported convicts in European settler colonies. Other collections of essays similarly cover a wide range³⁹ – some with emphasis on one of the earliest groups to be studied, that of Germans and Jews who fled fascism in the early 1930s, of Jews dispersed during and after World War II, and of people who had emigrated from the Soviet Bloc.⁴⁰ Jewish diaspora and exile are ultimately the main cause of Palestinian exile, so it is an irony that comparisons may be drawn between them. For the Arab world and beyond it Edward Said has written on the ‘general’ effects and pains of exile, and on how they, and modern geo-politics, relate to the particular case of the Palestinian people in their exile. Again politically, Aijaz Ahmed writes of mass exile. Hence there is a wide variety of threads in the study of exile and its causes, and in the study of exile literature, different subsets of which apply in particular cases.

The two major facets of Arab exile discussed in this thesis are: the exile of Palestinians resulting from the establishment of Israel in 1948, subsequent wars and Israeli encroachments, and the continuing state of conflict; and the mainly political exile of other Arabs from various regimes, although both shade into economic migrants and those seeking education and intellectual freedom. It is also estimated (mid 2008) that up to 4.5 million Iraqis have been displaced within or outside Iraq in the aftermath of the US/British Invasion of 2003, although this is too recent for study and, hopefully, temporary. Both types of exile are affected by the external influences of globalisation and neo-imperialism, and Arabs, not only exiles, are struggling to come to terms with the modern world. Although Modern Arabic Poetry can be viewed as a fairly cohesive whole, the poetry of Palestinian exiles has particular characteristics, and the analytical framework of the thesis reflects this.

The Tensions and Dialectics of Exile Writing

Some of the aspects of exile discussed above are presented in terms of binary opposites, and exile writing has sometimes been analysed in such terms, but it was also pointed out that there has been an awareness of a spectrum between such opposites. In the light of recent work, Sophia A. McClennan argues for a dialectical theory of exile writing since

binary thinking, when applied to the cultural production of exiles, is unable to account for the ways that contradictory concepts coexist in tension within the same work. . . the key tensions in exile writing are not merely two-fold (as in nationalism versus globalisation), but are multiple (as in nationalism, counter-nationalism, alternative nationalism, anti-nationalism, and transnationalism). The focus on binaries tends to limit the categories of meaning that one looks for in a text. Dialectical thinking would encourage, instead, that one look for all angles or perspectives represented in a text.⁴¹

Exile is a complex condition, nor is it fixed as circumstances and the exile himself inevitably change. McClennan argues that in exile writing a series of dialectic tensions revolve around central components of the exile's identity and that a dialectical approach

allows for a theory of exile literature that is flexible and fluid, since the particular dialectical aspects of any text will be determined by its specific historical circumstances and narrative components. . . . The condition of exile is not static. Rather, it is a condition that is constantly unstable and in flux.⁴²

The main components of exile that she analyses are nation, time, language, and space in respect of three Hispanic writers. There are correlations in modern Arab literature and some commonalities between it and the Hispanic experience e.g. a shared language, so that the exile may not totally cut off from his language and may have channels for publication, a similar mix of regimes, similarly partially modernised and inequitable societies, and comparable degrees of external exploitation and manipulation. She also points out that the dialectics of exile in the latter part of the twentieth century reflect two 'intertwined and inseparable historical transformations'. Firstly, that the increasing globalisation of capital has altered the concept of the nation and reduced national sovereignty so that exiles after 1960 must become global citizens at a time when nationalism is undergoing significant revision. Secondly, exiles after 1960 were separated from their homes, language, and cultural centres at the same time that theories of cultural identity were being recast in the light of postmodernism.⁴³ The effects of postmodernism on modern exile writing are discussed in a later section.

Regarding time, the exile 'has been cast out of the present of his or her nation's historical time' which causes 'a series of dialectic tensions between different versions of linear/progressive/historical time and the experience that exile is a suspension of linear time. This suspension of linear time includes a sense that time is cyclical and primordial (linking exiles across the ages) and a sense that time is relative and fractured (casting the exile out of

meaningful/monumental time).⁴⁴ These ideas have resonance with some Arab poems, and will be discussed in the Conclusion.

Writers in exile have often been forced to leave their countries because of their use of language, so that they can see language both as a source of power and a source of pain. They appreciate its ability to fuel the imagination just as they

realise that dictatorships manipulate language (through censorship and propaganda) in order to quell independent thought. The dialectics of language for the exile relate to contradictory depictions of language as regional or universal, meaningful or meaningless, powerful or useless, authoritarian or liberating, communicative or misleading, and so on.⁴⁵

Arab writers, from the early 20th century, in tension with the respect accorded it as the language of the Qur'ān, have striven to make their language a better vehicle for expressing current problems and aspirations, are divided on the use of local dialects versus a common 'standard' Arabic, but strive to make their writing meaningful, powerful, liberating and communicative – if sometimes in difficult ways. And some, such as Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Adūnīs, claim to live in their language.

Exiles may see space as liberating or confining,⁴⁶ and some Arab poets see it as centrifugal or even as infinite and multi-dimensional. And exiles'

depictions of "imagined communities" either are comforting and capable of solidarity or threaten to repress difference and destroy the individual . . .
Consequently, spatial dialectics in exile writing relate to many factors regarding real and imagined territories of existence.⁴⁷

Nationalism

As well as the concept of an exile as an outcast from an itinerant tribe, exiles from Ancient Egypt, the Roman Empire, and the medieval city state of Florence have been mentioned above. While Ancient Egypt may be regarded as a theocracy, the latter two have commonalities with the modern concept of the nation with their concept of the citizen. Benedict Anderson⁴⁸ describes the 'nation' as a cultural construct of the past three centuries following the collapse of the absolute power of monarchy and church, supported by ideas of a broadly common culture propagated by books, newspapers, maps and museums. Although for well established and well defined countries this notion was able to maintain continuity with the earlier status quo, it was of great importance in the creation of states such as Italy and Germany, and in shaking off colonialism and the creation of post-colonial nation states. However, maintaining new nationalisms can be difficult, particularly where social infrastructure is imperfect, and in extreme cases the 'nation' becomes the imposed construct of a current oligarchy.

These vary with types of regime, and are often strange hybrids. McClennan points out the paradoxes that while fascism is fiercely nationalist, it is an international force, and that while fascist regimes look towards the future they draw upon myth – as the Third Reich drew upon old German myths as well as the notions of 'racial purity' and the 'master race', and the Italian fascists

drew upon the glories of ancient Rome. The fascist regimes in Spain and in South America that she considers combine a linear and primordial view of time, as they incorporate notions of progress but also of a return to origins.⁴⁹ Chile, for example, was in many respects a modern state, but Pinochet, like Franco, associated his project closely with the Catholic Church 'and considered himself both the head of state and the pre-ordained protector of Catholic values in Chile' hence his 'ideological base for his role as dictator combine[d] pre-modern and modern notions of, on the one hand, a monarch/spiritual leader who was destined to rule the land, and, on the other, a president who heads a nation of citizens.'⁵⁰

Even in non-fascist forms of government there are pre-modern myths such as the hero e.g. 'the new communist man', or 'regeneration' e.g. 'the New Deal',⁵¹ and totalitarian or military regimes often try to establish the leader as a heroic figure and as the benign 'father of his people'. Examples in the Arab world are the concept of *al-nahda*, used by Jurjī Zurdān and others, for the process of literary and cultural revival in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Anṭūn Sa'āda's (1904-49) concept of 'Greater Syria', the *Tammūzī* movement in poetry, drawing upon the Mediterranean myth of Adonis/Tammūz, and cults of leaders such as Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, Ḥāfiẓ al-'Assad, and Ḥusnī Mubarak in posters and in the media. There is an interesting dialectic of the hero in modern Arabic poetry, which is discussed in Chapter 2, particularly apparent in poetry written after the death of 'Abd al-Nāṣir.

McClellan argues that

Leftist variations on cultural nationalism do not rely on a mythical return to origins but are more concerned with returning the nation to the control of its inhabitants. Their rhetoric of cultural nationalism is based on revalorising culture so that the culture of the disenfranchised will have more power in society and will not remain in the margins. . .⁵²

This is again a complex field embracing elements such as popular and folk culture,⁵³ and in some left-wing writers there is a focus on sexuality, in all its aspects, in opposition to the restrictions of religions and patriarchal systems.⁵⁴ Communist states imposed the utopian and unreal construct of the equal society and the uneasy partnership of atheism, socialist realism, and a controlled high culture for all. The Arab Islamic world has to a large extent been rediscovering its history, as well as earlier histories such as that of Ancient Egypt and Babylon, and some leaders have made use of them, but there are tensions in the celebration of a pagan past.

Nationalism was an important element in shaking off colonialism in the Arab World, and it is of importance in the Palestinian fight for justice and a sovereign state. But Palestinian nationalism is currently somewhat utopian, and many of the other Arab nationalisms are questionable, being applied by ruling oligarchies to extremely heterogeneous and, sometimes, even arbitrary 'nations' (for example Lebanon and Iraq), and are perhaps only of use *faute de mieux* because of the dearth of political infrastructure and lack of political education. Since independence, Arab states have been buffeted by external forces: the establishment of Israel, and the resulting tensions and conflicts; becoming pawns in the Cold War and the problems faced by those who had opted for

'socialism' with the weakening and collapse of the USSR; and the importance of oil to the globalised economy. Palestinian refugees have been a burden to several neighbouring states, especially Lebanon, and conflict with Israel has damaged Arab economies in the need, or sometimes perceived need, for expenditure on arms, and constant damage to infrastructure. Socialism, while still an ideal for some, as it was for several of the poets discussed below, is largely a spent force and nominally socialist regimes are in effect oligarchies or dictatorships, and have suffered from embargoes. Arab states are either bullied or courted by the West, and most are in a state of incomplete modernity, and of general disjunction between rulers and people. There are tensions with religion, as there is often a religious infrastructure where mosques, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, perform important social functions such as mitigating poverty, but religious leaders are often opposed to modernisation and interaction with the West. Some leaderships perform uneasy balancing acts between interaction with the forces of globalisation and denigration of the United States for domestic consumption. A current (2008) casual effect of globalisation is the problems caused in Egypt, for example, by the diversion of grain production in the United States to bio-fuels, and hence the reduction in the amount of cheap grain being dumped on world markets. There is thus a great deal for the exiled writer to protest against, although many current evils are the result of complex and anonymous forces.

Transnationalism

McClennan argues that 'transnationalism' in the political and economic sense is a consequence of globalisation and the increasing presence and influence of transnational corporations 'the messengers of Western culture and its mode of production'.⁵⁵ It has profound effects on the functioning of many countries, and on the concepts of nation and borders, often in paradoxical ways⁵⁶ and inevitably carries connotations of colonialism for countries previously affected by it. However it could be argued that 'the Arab world' is an example of a somewhat uneasy transnationalism for historical reasons and because of the inherent association of Islam with the state. It is united by a shared language, religion, and, to a degree, history, but there are tensions within it, partly because of Palestine, but also because of different degrees of secularisation and wealth, and because of historical and current alignments. Some of these are expressed in poetry. There is bitterness in Kamāl Nāṣir's (1922-73) 1960 poem 'The Leaders of My Country'⁵⁷ when what was left of Palestine was administered by Egypt and Jordan, and in Aḥmad Daḥbūr's (b. 1946) castigation of those who sell off their countries' natural resources '*I do not exonerate the vipers of the oil wells / or pass light sentence on their petrodollars*'⁵⁸. Murīd Barghūthi's poem 'The Tribes'⁵⁹ writes of refugee camps and the anachronisms of parts of the Arab world. In other poems there is the expression of love of Beirut, for some decades the cosmopolitan centre of that world, and the continuing violence wreaked upon it. The tensions for Palestinians and Lebanese between resistance activists and the effects of reprisals and collective punishment on civilian populations are perhaps a sensitive subject for poetry, but they are expressed in novels such as *Wild Thorns*.⁶⁰

Further political reactions of writers are discussed below, but 'transnationalism' in the cultural sense is an important concept in the study of the 'cultural production' of exiles who can 'exemplify the ways in which the physical borders of a nation do not always have ultimate significance.' For them, borders may be more important because they define "inside" and "outside," "native" and "alien," but less important because 'culture is experienced as something displaced from territorial space.' 'Transnationalism' is also significant

because it is a useful way to describe the bond that exiles feel with other outsiders and/or intellectuals. When exiles must look beyond the boundaries of national identity for a community, they find that others who are from other nations share their fears and concerns. For this reason, exile narratives often seek other lines along which to draw identity that are not merely national – such as gender, race, class, or sexuality.⁶¹

To these factors must be added the sense of unity of socialists and / or revolutionaries which can be observed in the work of some Arab poets, notably 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī. Such practices may occur in the work of non-exiles, but

because of their isolation, exiles are in a situation that calls their attention to commonalities that transcend the national and link them to others regardless of nationality, or even historical synchronicity. . . Exiles recognise that their plight is timeless and universal (there have always been exiles and outcasts) and that their condition is closely connected to their particular historical moment (they are exiled because of a set of historical events). This causes their sense of cultural identity to be general and local, transnational and national, historical and atemporal.⁶²

Language

Exiled writers have many issues concerning language. They may suffer the isolating effect of not understanding the language of the host country and the loss of their 'interpretative universes' as discussed by Wojciech Kalaga above. They may be writing in a language that is not the language surrounding them, or not quite as in the case of Hispanics within the Spanish speaking world, Arabs in the Arabic speaking world, or Commonwealth citizens in England or North America, and therefore have to switch modes of thinking and may lose facility in and contact with developments in their own language. There are issues of audience – they may be cut off by censorship from audiences in their home country, and go unnoticed in a new language or in translation in the 'information pollution' in their host country. There may be pain in writing in the language of a coloniser or oppressor, but there may also be positive aspects, and hence tensions. Like many North African francophones, Assia Djebar's (b. 1936) French education cut her off to a large extent from the people she grew up with but she 'concedes the uncomfortable truth that her ability to write in French, the language of "yesterday's enemy", has freed her from some of the most fundamental features of Algerian patriarchal control.'⁶³ There are Palestinians in 'inner exile' in Israel who have to study in Hebrew, or not at all, and some even write in Hebrew, sometimes to

great effect.⁶⁴ And under the Ottoman Empire and European involvements, generations of Arabs were educated in the language of their rulers – Turkish/Farsi, English, and French. People from the Indian sub-continent and Africa write in English because it was the only common language in amalgamated lands with numerous local languages. Many Jews have written in and loved and found identity in, the languages of those who have persecuted them – Polish,⁶⁵ German, and Czech, for example Paul Celan (1920-70) and Franz Kafka (1883-1924).

Language is double edged: one may be in exile because of one's writing, but it may be a weapon, a solace, and a means of preserving identity and meaning in life. There are inevitably tensions. As well as 'writing back' to the politics of their home country or to external forces, as discussed below, exiles may see writing as a weapon against 'official discourse', which may amount to a perverted use of language as in the language of Communist orthodoxy (parodied by George Orwell as 'Newspeak'), Catholicism allied with Fascism in Spain and South America,⁶⁶ the Messianic arrogance of the second Bush administration, or the stultifying effect of constant 'good news' and complacency such as that which was so rudely shattered in the Arab World in 1967,⁶⁷ and modify it accordingly. Language can be used to misrepresent as much as to represent. McClennan sees Juan Goytisolo's writing as depicting 'a constant dialectic between affirming and denying the ability of language to represent' and quotes his expression of the violence in language that he sees as necessary to shake off entrenched discourses:

"The world in which we live calls for a new, virulent, anarchic language . . .
[W]e can only create destroying: a destruction that is also a creation; a
creation equally destructive".⁶⁸

This has resonance with Surrealist theory and with the theoretical writings of Adūnīs. Alternatively, the Chilean Ariel Dorfman (b. 1942), who says that "language is what allows us to reveal reality and to hide reality . . . [it] is full of lies and full of revelation" does not choose destruction as his creative method, but fragments the narrative line, providing many visions of the same story.⁶⁹

There is a reciprocal relationship between postmodernism, poststructuralism and the modern world. Thought and hence writing are shaped by the complexity, fragmentation and rapid rate of change of the world, and in a feedback effect writers are influenced by current theories and actively engage with them. Exiles, both dislocated and more exposed to such influences than most, may demonstrate more pronounced reactions. Some theories of how language may be affected by exile and of how it may be used are discussed in later sections, for example instinctive reactions to the fragmentation of the exile's life as well as surrealist theories. It can be argued that many poststructural theorists of exile regard the condition as an opportunity to

explore the connections between discourse and an absence of communication. Because exile is centred on a condition of absence and emasculation (loss of power), it immediately connects to issues of desire and lack, conjuring up the work of Lacan. Furthermore, Derrida in his article "Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book" equates exile with writing:

“We must be separated from life and communities, and must entrust ourselves to traces . . .”⁷⁰

McClennan analyses many distinctive features in how language is used in the novels of the three writers on whom she focuses (one of whom, Cristina Peri Rossi (b. 1941), is also a poet), which are mentioned here as similar features may be observed in some of the poetry discussed in this thesis. Language as solace affords the compensation of alternate worlds, and the escape into abstraction. As Edward Said has claimed:

“Much of the exile’s life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule . . . The novel [according to Lukács] . . . exists because other worlds *may* exist, alternatives for bourgeois spectators, wanderers, exiles”⁷¹

In Goytisolo’s *Juan sin tierra* (1975) the reader is told that only through the chaos of the signifier can there be freedom for the signified, or the self,⁷² and a feature of the work of both Goytisolo and Ariel Dorfman is the shifting of the text between various personal pronouns. By shifting the meaning of “I” and “You” Goytisolo raises the notion of an internal identity and an external one, which is ‘a significant threat to a system that requires that identity remain fixed and determinate.’⁷³ And in Dorfman’s *Viudas* (*Widows*, 1971) the text shifts from third to first person, suggesting the interaction between personal and collective history, and fragmenting the authority of the narrator. By using this complex strategy, Dorfman suggests that only through a multiplicity of perspectives can one appreciate history.⁷⁴

A feature in Peri Rossi’s writing is the notion of naming. In her poems *Lingüística General* (1979) she writes that:

“The poet doesn’t write about things / but rather about the names of things”, a statement which seems to reflect a poststructuralist position on language. Yet, elsewhere in the same book, she writes . . . “To avoid/evade the name of things / is to summon them in a more eloquent way” . In these lines she suggests that even if literary language is incapable of perfectly reflecting reality, it is still representational. Or another reading of these lines might be that literary language is more powerful and evocative than the direct address of authoritarian language.⁷⁵

The protagonist of her book *La nave de los locos* (*Ship of Fools*, 1984) likes to look at maps (the importance of which is emphasised by Benedict Anderson) and remember countries that have been destroyed or conquered and is aware that although the lands remain ‘their signifiers have been changed.’⁷⁶ This has particular resonance for Palestinians, whose land has been both reshaped and renamed by Israel. However, ‘[m]emory and writing are weapons against absence and disappearance’.⁷⁷ Naming is also an important concept for Adūnīs.

Writing Back – to the Centre, and to the Past

‘Writing back to the centre’ was described as a property of literature produced in colonised and postcolonial states in the book *The Empire Writes Back*.⁷⁸ The authors say that one of the things that such literatures have in common is that they have ‘asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasising their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre.’⁷⁹ This is also very much a feature of the writing of political exiles who have been formed by their country, but who reject the tenets of its current leadership, such as the example of the Spaniard Juan Goytisolo discussed above. Goytisolo rejects the mores of Franco’s Spain, and investigates the suppressed Islamic elements of its history through his interaction with Morocco. Another centre that is being written back to is the centre of globalisation and neo-imperialism.

Terry Eagleton defines three phases in the growth of industrial capitalism: the ‘individualist’, the ‘corporatist’ and the ‘imperialist’ where capitalism extends its activities and effectively plunders raw materials beyond national boundaries,⁸⁰ and it can be argued that globalisation and the increasing presence of transnational corporations, are eroding national boundaries and giving rise to a condition of ‘transnationalism’. This is achieved in various ways, preferably by ‘soft’ power, the transmission of American cultural and economic hegemony (which includes the exploitation of cheap labour channelled through middlemen), but otherwise by ‘hard power’ (funds and arms).⁸¹ Some South American fascist regimes were supported by American soft or hard power, which means that opponents of those regimes were not only writing back to the regimes themselves, but also to neo-Imperialism, and such arguments can be applied to US funding of Israel, and of its support for regimes that are acquiescent in the exploitation of oil reserves.

A further feature of those who have been colonised or otherwise exploited is that:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by *dislocation*, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement . . . Or it may have been destroyed by *cultural denigration*, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model.⁸²

The great Arab civilisation and its scientific and philosophical achievements and contributions to European learning were largely written out of European history by the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and allowed to lapse from Arab consciousness by the Ottoman Empire and European colonisations. There has been cultural denigration in the Maghreb, by the coloniser France, and, somewhat more subtly, in Egypt and the Levant through the education systems provided by administrators, mandates, and missionaries. Dislocation and erosion of their society has been imposed upon Palestinians by their coloniser both through external exile, and displacement within Israel and the occupied West Bank. Many Arab writers are asserting Arab culture against past colonisers, the current coloniser, and against current Arab regimes, and some are part of a drive for modernisation – against both the stagnation of religious orthodoxies, and the

dependent superficial modernity of the elites, allied with allowing the exploitation of Arab natural resources.

In his article 'Conjectures on World Literature'⁸³ Franco Moretti argues that world literature (like capitalism) is 'simultaneously *one*, and *unequal*: with a core, and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality' and he quotes Itamar Even-Zohar's remark that '(t)here is no symmetry in literary interference. A target literature is, more often than not, interfered with by a source literature which completely ignores it.'⁸⁴ However, Arabic literature is probably unique in non-European literatures in that whereas the literatures of North and South America and of Africa are primarily descendants of the European, while the literatures of Southern and Eastern Asia have, until comparatively recently, developed independently, in the past it has been an influence, sometimes a formative one, in the development of European literatures.⁸⁵ This gives rise to a rich vein of tensions and dialectics. The poetry of al-Andalus is believed to have influenced the troubadour tradition and the *maqāma* is a precursor of the picaresque novel. More recent influences are the *Arabian Nights*, first translated into a European language in 1704 by the Frenchman Antoine Galland, which has become part of European popular literature from fairy stories to the pantomime and been adapted by writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, James Elroy Flecker and the American novelist John Barth in his 1972 novel *Chimera*;⁸⁶ the influence of the poetry of Islamic Spain on the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936); and the influence of Islam in Spain on Juan Goytisolo. Arabic poetry and novels are translated into European languages – Munir Akash says that Maḥmūd Darwīsh's poetry has been translated into 22 languages and that he is 'the best-selling poet in France and in the Arab World', winning several international literary prizes.⁸⁷

The Arabs are also in a curiously ambivalent position in the current world order: with the exception of Algeria, they were only quasi-colonised in the past but part of their world is now colonised by Israel, supported by the United States; they are not part of the capitalist hegemony but have resources that are valuable to it; they are closer to European culture than most of the rest of the world and intertwined with its history; and their religion has much in common with that of Europe, yet is often seen as hostile. Because of mutual influences they are not entirely peripheral, but they are isolated because of Israel and because many Arab states have espoused socialism, and, although they are united to a degree in their language, religion and their pan-Arabism, subjected to divide and rule. However, enhanced by its rich cultural legacy and its current cosmopolitanism, which owes a great deal to exiles, Arabic poetry, as well as the Arabic novel, does write in or write back to the so-called 'centre' and contribute to making the Arab presence felt.

The Form and Subject Matter of Poetry

There can be both aesthetic and political debates as to what poets should write about, and there are often conflicting views between the writer and the critic, between the writer and his/her readers, and inevitably, if there is any element of the political, between the writer and his/her targets and the censor. Literature is affected by its time:

Existing artistic practices can come under pressure from a number of external sources . . . [including the] political (such as the need for disguised expression in an occupied country), international (such as the impact of another culture after conquest or immigration), and ideological (such as the inadequacy of traditional artistic models in a post-revolutionary situation). These external pressures often serve to make visible rifts and stresses in what had been taken for granted as a fulfilling and self-sufficient mode of artistic expression, as when [in England] the couplet came, toward the end of the eighteenth century, to seem a restrictive and over-intellectual manner of writing poetry, or the vast scale of human misery came, toward the end of the following century, to seem under-represented in fiction.⁸⁸

The perceived inadequacy of the couplet, and the comparable 'dismantling' of the French 12 syllable alexandrine inaugurated by Victor Hugo and continued by the work of Symbolist poets such as Rimbaud (1854-91) and Mallarmé⁸⁹ were both reactions to their time, as were the attempts to change the deeply entrenched and restrictive forms of classical Arab poetry that culminated in the *taf'ila* movement in the 1940s and 1950s. 'Human misery' has entered poetry, from the eighteenth century in Europe and from the late nineteenth century in Arab poetry, both in response to social change and in reaction to forces such as war, invasion, and displacement that have affected many countries and many levels of society and on a wider scale than ever before. Some, shocked by the horrors of twentieth century Europe, have argued that suffering and politics are not fit subjects for poetry; that after World War I

. . . poetry was dead, and that henceforth the only medium through which a poet might give lyrical expression to his emotions was prose.⁹⁰

or that it was 'impossible after Auschwitz', as Theodor Adorno once said. Salvatore Quasimodo (1901-68) is more positive in saying in 1956 that 'poetry undergoes a basic change during and after a war, since war alters the moral life of a people and fosters a greater need for truth than is felt in normal times'.⁹¹ A great deal of tragedy has been experienced in the twentieth century, at all levels of society, and this has been reflected in poetry, because of the perceived 'need for truth' in communicating experience and stating positions.

A gradual movement from the 'noble, mythical and heroic' was part of the evolution of Western poetry resulting from the effects of the Enlightenment and industrialisation, perhaps also influenced by the development of the novel,⁹² and there was a comparable movement in modern Arab poetry. The English Romantic poets were the first to look beyond the heroic themes of poetry and move the focus from heroes, courtiers or intellectuals to the ordinary sufferings of ordinary people and to revolutionary demands for social justice. Prior to this the heroes of poetry were privileged doers or tragic heroes rather than victims pitted against external forces. William Blake's (1757-1827) *Songs of Experience* express the suffering of previously ignored less privileged members of society and the ordinary soldier: *How the chimney-sweeper's cry / Every black'ning church appals, / And the hapless soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down palace walls*.⁹³

In heroic poetry violence is stylised, and conflict tends to end in glorious victory, a glorious death, or oblivion. There is little depiction of prolonged pain and continued suffering. But with the collapse of totalising discourses such as royal power, the power of a dominant religion, or state power, there are no longer heroes but victims pitted against forces over which they have little control.⁹⁴

In England, Tennyson's (1809-92) 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'⁹⁵ may appear, and certainly sounds like a heroic, military poem but it is subversive, as the soldiers are victims: '*Not tho' the soldier knew / Some one had blundered: / Their's not to reason why, / Their's but to do and die . . .*' and poets of World War I took the glamour out of war, for example in Wilfred Owen's (1893-1918) 'Anthem for Doomed Youth':⁹⁶

*What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns,
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.*

Again, this is written in an established form, the sonnet, and sounds heroic in its alliteration and some of its imagery, but it shocks in the contrast of ecclesiastical terms such as '*passing-bells*' and '*orisons*' with the dehumanisation of '*these who die as cattle*', and the defamiliarisation of attributing anger and stuttering to guns. 'Cattle' has connotations of mechanised slaughter, and immediately evokes blood and guts. 'Strange Meeting',⁹⁷ in a freer form, is a dialogue of 'enemies', two ordinary soldiers meeting in Hell, one of whom had killed the other, who together mourn their lost lives and the horrors they have seen and committed '*. . . the truth untold, / The pity of war, the pity war distilled.*' Another product of World War I is Giuseppe Ungaretti's (1888-1970) brief modernist poem 'Watch' (1915)⁹⁸ which describes: '*. . . A comrade / Massacred / With his mouth / Snarling / Turned toward the full moon*' (which evokes the bestiality of dogs or wolves howling at the moon) but still in communication with the living: '*With the congestion / Of his hands / Penetrating / into my silence*'. 'Congestion' evokes congealing of blood but also intrusion, and the presence of the dead man forces upon the living man a heightened awareness of his own mortality and of the value of life: '*An entire night . . . I have written / Letters full of love / Never have I been / So / Tied to life*'. There is a shocking contrast of the long subordinate clause and its horrors with 'letters full of love'.

The poetry of the first World War has tended to overshadow that of the second in English poetry but there is a wide range of poetry relating to World War II in other languages, reflecting the different experiences of many peoples and the extension of the effects of war to civilian populations. British civilians experienced the blitz, but they did not experience invasion, occupation, displacement, 'ethnic cleansing' or the A-bomb.⁹⁹ These experiences speak to all, and the poets often try to establish linkages and frames of reference, as well as contrasting modern strife with heroic values.

W.H. Auden's (1907-73) poem 'The Shield of Achilles' intersperses Homeric descriptions of the beautiful decorations of Achilles' shield, showing religious rites and calm, fertile landscapes,

with modern scenarios.¹⁰⁰ Anna Akhmatova's poem 'The Wind of War'¹⁰¹ is a memorial to the invasion of Russia and particularly the siege of Leningrad, and encompasses escape to Tashkent, the progress and sufferings of the war, resistance, the breaking of the siege '... on this starless January night / Amazed at its fantastic fate, / Returned from the bottomless depths of death, / Leningrad salutes itself.' and the final liberation from invasion 'A clean wind rocks the firs, / Clean snow covers the ground. / No longer hearing the tread of the enemy, / It rests, my land.' The poem is full of nationalist references and love of her country: '... we will preserve you, Russian speech, / Mighty Russian word!', 'Peter's orphans' and Neva water in Leningrad, and birches and snow – which finally becomes a metaphor for cleansing. The beauty and patriotism of the poem are in stark contrast with the USSR's treatment of her.

A 'remarkable feature' of the war in occupied France was 'the sudden popularity of poetry', not only illegally produced Resistance poetry but also 'contrabande' poetry that was 'legally published but cryptically subversive.'¹⁰² Francis Ponge (1899-1988) was active in the Resistance, and wrote prolifically during the war, but 'his work deals with the war itself only in the most oblique, codified way.' His poem 'Metamorphosis' was 'apparently used as a recruitment poem' but it is 'so deeply coded that it is hard for us now' to see it as a war poem. Louis Aragon's (1897-1982) poem 'The Lilacs and the Roses'¹⁰³ depicts the exodus from Paris as it was being occupied by the Nazis, contrasting the horror of the situation with the beauty of the flowers lining the road. Aragon was Jewish, and a subtext of 'The Lilacs and the Roses' is that many of those fleeing Paris were Jewish. The poetry of Paul Celan also reflects the exile, persecution and murder of Jews, and his poems about his mother have been compared to some of Maḥmūd Darwīsh's poetry.¹⁰⁴

Auden's ironic use of an ancient heroic theme, Akhmatova's love of her invaded land, French resistance poetry and poetry of exile and persecution have parallels in Modern Arab Poetry. The use of the A-bombs in Japan is so far a unique horror. Nobuyuki Saga's (1902-97) poem 'The Myth of Hiroshima'¹⁰⁵ depicts instant oblivion:

*Hundreds of people vaporised instantly
are walking in mid-air.*

'We didn't die.'

'We skipped over death in a flash and became spirits.'

'Give us a real, human death.'

One man's shadow among hundreds is branded on stone steps.

'Why am I imprisoned in stone?'

'Where did my flesh go, separated from its shadow?'

However, this fear of leaving no trace has resonance for dispossessed Palestinians who may not die and be buried, as their forebears had been, in their own land. This is perhaps why the Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh feels an affinity for the victims of Hiroshima in his 1969 poem 'lauḥa 'alā al-jidār' ('A Picture on the Wall')¹⁰⁶ and in his 1986 book *Dhākira li-l-nisyān*

(*Memory for Forgetfulness*),¹⁰⁷ especially as by then there were rumours that Israel might be developing nuclear weapons capability.¹⁰⁸

Arguably prose, notably the novel, is a more flexible vehicle than poetry, and almost from its inception the novel had a wider range of subject matter, although from the English Romantics onwards poets did express political and social issues and created new poetic forms for doing so – notably Baudelaire and Rimbaud in their depictions of metropolitan Paris and T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) in trying to reflect the state of post World War I Europe. Events as terrible as World War I, the Holocaust, or of having been imprisoned and tortured, are difficult to write about and, it seems, cannot be written about directly for that writing to be acceptable as literature. There is perhaps some sort of taboo. Such writings are often written long after the event as the writer needs time to come to terms with and objectify his experience. There are ‘novels’ such as those of Primo Levi or Alexander Solzhenitsyn, but some, especially poets, use hybrid forms in poetic prose, such as the memoir. The French Jew Jorge Semprun (b. 1923) wrote a memoir *L'Écriture ou la vie* published in 1994, where he recorded discussions with other ex-prisoners shortly after the liberation of Buchenwald where they wondered how they would be able to explain to others what had happened to them.¹⁰⁹ The young Semprun thought ‘You’ll never manage it without a degree of artifice. Just enough artifice for it to become art!’ but others disagreed, asking what had art to do with the experiences they had just lived through. However, a French academic pointed out that there would be many witness accounts, and that documentary evidence of the atrocities would be found, but that historical reconstruction would not in itself bring alive the harrowing truth of the Holocaust:

The essential truth of experience cannot be communicated . . . Or rather, it can only be communicated through literary writing.¹¹⁰

Semprun’s text is

. . . experimental . . . fragmentary and discursive and does not have a final conclusion. While he does describe the traumatic conditions in the camps, much of the text passes in memories of books he has read that had a profound influence on him. . . [it] is not one long, dark tale of suffering and degradation. . . Semprun’s story requires a unique format because his experience is so beyond the normal frames of reference. He can only make sense of his experience by comparing it to the everyday face of the world, by measuring the distance he has moved away from the realms of nightmare. . . [and] he is rebuilding his identity with every sentence he writes.¹¹¹

This type of analysis could equally be applied to some examples of Palestinian ‘Personal Account’ literature¹¹² such as Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s memoir of the Israeli siege and bombardment of Beirut in 1982 *Dhākira li-l-nisyān*,¹¹³ and the Moroccan poet Abdellatif Laābi’s memoir of his imprisonment and torture in Morocco, *Rue de Retour*,¹¹⁴ both of which are discussed in Chapter 2. Darwīsh’s memoir was written three years after the event, from the vantage point of Paris, and Laābi’s is looking back on his experience whilst struggling to adapt to his release and picking up

the threads of his life. Both have written several volumes of poetry, but have also chosen to use the hybrid form of the memoir, written poetically and discursively.

Politics is only a subsidiary theme to exile in this thesis, but it is often deeply tied up with exile so is a part of exile poetry. Suffering, both physical and psychological, is also inevitably a part of exile. Although it is often at great cost both may have the positive effect of enhancing a writer's work. As a means of writing about difficult subjects, some modern Arab poets have been remarkably inventive. This is in part the effect of confrontation with the 'other', which is often heightened by exile.

Exile and Literary Creativity

Book titles such as *Creativity in Exile*¹¹⁵ and *Exile and Creativity*¹¹⁶ imply some connection between exile and creativity, and this is intuitively comprehensible in that exile can present stimulation, new experiences, new opportunities, freedom from constraints, and access to materials and means of publication. It is also the case that, by his very nature, the intellectual may not fit into the environment into which he is born, and so has the compulsion to travel and, if necessary, become an exile.

In his book about literary creation, Derek Attridge says that '[the] other brought into being in a creative event is . . . at once implicit in the cultural field and wholly unpredictable from it'¹¹⁷ and poses the question:

how does an entity or an idea unthinkable or unimaginable within existing frameworks of understanding and feeling come into being as part of our understood and felt world?¹¹⁸

His work draws heavily on Derrida and ideas of the 'other', where the 'other' as well as another person may be things at the limits of experience or of cultural memory. Extrapolating, there can also be the 'other' of foreign countries, languages and cultures. He bases his discussion on literary creation within his own culture, but some of his arguments can be heightened, but also complicated, by the effect of exile which as well as exposing people to a wider range of experience and increased cultural and political awareness, and to other languages as well as possibly the suppression of their own, may, sometimes in complex ways, affect and enhance an individual poet or writer's literary creativity. He defines 'individual frameworks of understanding and feeling' in terms of 'idioculture . . . the embodiment in a single individual of widespread cultural norms and modes of behaviour' saying that

. . . an individual's grasp on the world is mediated by a changing array of interlocking, overlapping, and often contradictory cultural systems absorbed in the course of his or her previous experience, a complex matrix of habits, cognitive models, representations, beliefs, expectations, prejudices, and preferences that operate intellectually, emotionally, and physically to produce a sense of at least relative continuity, coherence, and significance out of the manifold events of human living. . . . Although a large part of an individual's

idioculture may remain stable for some length of time, the complex as a whole is necessarily unstable and subject to constant change; and although one is likely to share much of one's idioculture with other groups . . . it is always a unique configuration.¹¹⁹

However, the appearance of stability is only maintained by repression or exclusion of some elements or possibilities, which may be subject to external challenges and internal tensions.¹²⁰ Attridge sees otherness as something that is at any time outside the current established horizon provided by the culture for thinking, understanding, imagining, feeling, perceiving,¹²¹ and that the introduction of 'otherness' into a culture

. . . manifests itself as an act of reshaping, ranging from the major to the minuscule, brought about by an individual's or group's exploitation of a culture's contradictions, overdeterminations, marginalisations, gaps, and tensions. In coming to be acknowledged – which means in the process of shifting frameworks so that it can be acknowledged – the other exposes a reality or truth of which the culture and its subjects were unaware, and unaware for reasons that are far from arbitrary.¹²²

This uncovered reality may be pleasant or it may be unpleasant or even dangerous, and it may be politically unacceptable to state authorities, but the revelation of the hidden costs of a culture's stability, the bringing to fruitfulness of seeds that had lain dormant, the opening-up of possibilities that had remained closed, is 'however risky – a good in itself.'¹²³

'Exclusions' from the Arab-Islamic cultural field as well as unquestioned assumptions have been exposed by poets and have been the subject of critical works. Shawqī and others brought the half-forgotten splendours of al-Andalus into mainstream Arab culture. The *tafīla* movement finally broke the iron grip of the old Arab metrical structures. 'Committed Poets' such as the early al-Bayyātī exposed the terrible conditions facing poor migrants from the countryside in cities such as 1950s Baghdad. Palestinian poets have tried to expose what is hidden by Israel, often from its own people, many of whom are in a state of ignorance or denial. In his critical works as well as through his poetry Adūnīs questions the authority of religion and the resistance to change of centuries, and has brought to attention neglected or suppressed elements of the Arabic heritage, such as the creative mystical strand and the 'modernity' of some poets of the Abbasid period that was allowed to fade into oblivion, rather than be developed.¹²⁴ Even great poets like al-Mutanabbī (c. 915-65) are half forgotten, although since they permeate the culture rather as the Bible and Shakespeare do in English, their rediscovery strikes chords with many.

Unless the individual involved is exceptionally blinkered in his thinking idioculture is inevitably affected by transplantation to a different *milieu*, where cultural fields overlap and previously held assumptions become questionable. This can occur within a country, for instance where an individual moves from one social class to another, or where a colonised or semi-colonised country has a foreign educational system imposed upon it, as happened in many Arab

countries, as well as outside it. Several of the poets discussed in this thesis are the products of such internal overlapping before, as well as the further overlapping(s) of, exile.

Attridge also says that in his own experience of creativity there has been an

element of passivity, of heightening responsiveness to hints of relationships, to incipient arguments, to images swimming on the edge of consciousness, an element of “letting them come” as much as seeking them out . . . [and that] it seems likely that major feats of creativity spring from a much more remarkable openness of the mind to what it has not yet grasped.¹²⁵

Several exiled Arab poets demonstrate an openness to *milieu* – neither Adūnīs nor al-Bayyātī can have set out intentionally to learn of and incorporate all the allusions that are present in their works, and how the work of some highly original poets, such as Muḥammad al-As‘ad and Walīd Khāzindār (b. 1950), developed is not apparent. But lasting cultural innovation can only come from directly within the cultural field or by absorption, both for creators and, particularly, for the reception of their work. As “[t]he music of Schoenberg could not have immediately followed the music of Bach,¹²⁶ so it would have been inconceivable for poets like Shawqī to even appreciate let alone follow Eliot. Similarly, Badawi suggests that one of the reasons that the Arabs turned to the Romantics when they first encountered western poetry was that:

Romantic poetry presents fewer difficulties than the classical which relies upon the peculiar rhetorical features of a language, particularly its formal features. (How many native English speakers can really appreciate Racine?) Because Romantic poetry is more spontaneous and emotional its appeal is proportionately more immediate. Like the Arabs, the Japanese, for instance, translated or adapted Shelley when they first met English poetry.¹²⁷

But with the need to express modern Arab problems the mere existence of modernist poetry gave those who encountered it the impetus to try to understand it and to experiment. This demanded the development of the Romantics and *Mahjar* poets, and nurtured the unease with old forms which eventually led to the brilliant synthesis of the *taf‘īla* movement, which simultaneously gave poets more freedom of expression but also maintained continuity with the poetic heritage, making their poetry acceptable to a wide readership. As Attridge also says:

Originality in the fullest sense is achieved when a combination of external and internal pressures makes it possible for a gifted individual or group to create a work of art that . . . breaks new ground, or . . . brings about the irruption of the other into the same.¹²⁸

Ideas that are too far outside the experience/idioculture of most people take time to be widely accepted, often needing a process of education that may change the culture: good poetry may inspire its readers to acquire that education, although in some cases new ideas may never be accepted. But, as discussed later in respect of Surrealism, poetry is capable of subliminally

weakening or even shattering preconceptions at various levels, from theme to unsettling ways of using words or grammar, and of leading to new ways of thinking.

The development of sub-cultures is also a feature of the fragmentation of the modern world, but if they are not absorbed/accepted to some degree they eventually collapse. Comparisons are: Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, which is still regarded as dangerously modern and unacceptable by many, but after 100 years is regularly performed; and that although T.S. Eliot has become part of the Western canon, Ezra Pound (1885-1972) is still only at the periphery. Some works may only be accessible to those who are exceptionally receptive and sometimes only to a small coterie. Perhaps younger people have a less fixed and more receptive idioculture – they have fewer ingrained ideas to overturn and less involvement/implication with existing structures and there are naturally elements of rebellion and 'the anxiety of influence', although there may be susceptibility to fashions. Many younger Arab poets have tried to emulate the Syrian poet Adūnīs, for example, sometimes with disastrous results but with the positive outcome of spreading his ideas and awareness of his sources and influences. It is also an occupational hazard for exiled poets that instead of bestriding cultures they may fall between them. There is a delicate balance between the new that changes a culture and developments that fall by the wayside. The effects of exile on literary creation are highly complex and variable, as may be seen in some of the poems discussed later.

Fragmentation and Collage The Modern and the Contemporary, and Postmodernism

Fragmentation and collage may be observed in art and literature throughout the twentieth century and are features of modernism and postmodernism. They are a reaction to rapid change, possibly in some cases derive from scientific theories of relativity and uncertainty, and one strand is the work of the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941) who was an acknowledged influence on the major poets T.S. Eliot, highly influential himself, and Osip Mandelstam. Bergson argued that individual consciousness was above all the operation of memory, selection from the 'pure memory which retains the totality of our conscious states . . . in order to guide spontaneous action in relation to what is about to happen'. He extended this 'conviction of the primacy of creative inner experience' to the notion of the *élan vital* or vital impulse which 'he conceived as directing the evolutionary process towards ever new forms and increasingly complex states of organisation.'¹²⁹ Artists and writers select from the memory of their community or nation, and from other cultures, as well as from their own experience, and fragmentation is often heightened for those who are exiles. Eliot, at the end of *The Waste Land* talks of the 'fragments I have shored against my ruins' and fragmentation, and a theory of fragmentation related to the distortion of time amidst 'the vortex of changes and the unceasing flood of phenomena' which are a feature of both 'the quickening tempo of the historical process'¹³⁰ and exile, can be observed earlier in the work of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam who studied in Europe in his youth and was later a victim of exile in all senses – voluntary exile to the Crimea, living in a state of 'inner' exile in Leningrad under Stalin's terror, being exiled to Voronezh, and finally dying en route to Siberia. The fragments in his semi-autobiographical work *The Noise of Time* are united spatially through their juxtaposition

rather than temporally or causally, thus consciously avoiding chronological or causal relationships.¹³¹

Mandelstam's poems draw on many themes – Russian history and culture, Dante, Jewish themes, ancient Greece, Ovid (one collection written in the Crimea is called *Tristia*) and also science. Michael Murphy demonstrates that he was a great influence on another exile poet, Joseph Brodsky (1940-96), whom he analyses in terms of fragmented memories, often based upon photographs. The photograph was defined by Susan Sontag as a “featherweight portable museum” and can function as an extension of memory, ‘a portmanteau of memories and lost objects’.¹³² Poems that are based on momentary concrete visual images can be very powerful, as can be seen in some poems of Walīd Khāzindār and al-Bayyātī.

If modernism reflects the urge to create ‘increasingly complex states of organisation’ postmodernism is the effect of the collapse of rigid states of organisation, and of attempts to deal with the resultant state of fragmentation. As well as seeing the alteration in the concept of the nation as an important element in late twentieth century exile writing, McClennen also highlights the importance of the fact that, after 1960,

theories of national identity were being recast in light of postmodernism. The scepticism of certain strands of postmodern thought, the fractured language of poststructuralism, and the questioning of all master narratives of cultural identity converge on this generation of exiles and influence their writing.¹³³

and posits what is cause and what is effect:

If the exile represents cultural identity as fragmented, does that indicate an affinity with postmodern theory? Alternatively, does narrative fragmentation represent an effort to reconstitute the multicultural national experience endangered by forced cultural unification under authoritarianism? Or, does narrative fragmentation reflect the exile's sense of loss and cultural separation? To what do we attribute the fragmentation of narrative in these exile texts? Perhaps the answer is that each of these issues plays a role.¹³⁴

Fragmentation is discussed in the writers she analyses, and it can be observed in modern Arab poetry. It can also be observed in modern art. Linda Nochlin in her discussion of painters in exile¹³⁵ makes points relevant to literature. In her section on R.B. Kitaj, a Jew who was self-exiled from the United States and chose to settle in Britain, she says that:

One might say that diaspora is enacted as much in the centrifugal energies and fragmented condition of his compositions as it is in his often ambiguous subjects with their equally provocative titles, made even more complex by the often lengthy narratives with which he supplements his paintings.¹³⁶

In 1972-3 Kitaj painted *The Autumn of Central Paris (after Walter Benjamin)* where he

emphasises the signifiers of exile, alienation, and breakup in the visual structure of the canvas . . . the political is much in evidence in this homage to Benjamin's "addiction to fragment-life, the allusive and incomplete nature of his work" as Kitaj terms it in his textual accompaniment to the painting.¹³⁷

Kitaj is establishing a link with one of the great tragic exiles of the twentieth century, and the painting has echoes of Manet and Cézanne and 'is redolent of Manet's *Concert at the Tuileries*, which was . . . an homage to the creative Paris of the Second Empire, but it projects a vision of the intellectual life of the city now abjected, ominous, torn apart'¹³⁸ as it was when Benjamin was there. Nochlin quotes the philosopher Richard Wollheim on the significance of the fragment in Kitaj's work, saying that the fragment serves three purposes: to attach the work of art to the past by embedding some of the past in the present; to reproduce the condition of modern primarily urban life to which modernist art is wedded; and to allow the artist to 'capture intimations of the uncanny, and the daemonic and the dreamlike, which are integral to any art of a confessional kind, which modern art is committed to being'.¹³⁹ These comments are evocative of some of the poetry of the Iraqi poet 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī discussed in Chapter 3 which is similarly fragmented and ranging in time, displays intertextualities with poems and paintings, and is often dedicated to fellow exiles, and of Maḥmūd Darwīsh's memoir *Memory for Forgetfulness*, which is a collage of the events of a day during the 1982 siege of Beirut, interspersed with personal and historical digressions, notably on the Hiroshima A-bomb and the Crusades, and ruminations on coffee, water, and football.

Wollheim's comments on the notion of modernity also resonate with the work of some Arab poets, especially that of Adūnīs. He also makes the distinction between modernity and the contemporary, contrasting Kitaj with David Hockney, who he says equates the modern with the contemporary. For Kitaj

modern life is the life of that legendary metropolis, of that mechanised Babylon, where all the great writers and painters, and all the great idlers and noctambulists, and all the great madams and their clients, real and fictional, of the last hundred years and more, would have been equally at home; where Baudelaire might have strolled with Svevo, and Walter Benjamin had a drink with Polly Adler, and John Ashbery written poetry at a café table, and where Cavafy and Proust and Pavese could have negotiated with Jupien for the sexual favours they craved.¹⁴⁰

Nochlin sees this as 'not merely evocative word painting' but as a representation of Kitaj's fragmentary, and basically non-historical, view of modernity, what he himself might denominate as his diasporist vision. As Wollheim says:

In K's world picture, the term *modernity* has a denotation that has been distended over time; it is used to refer to everything that it has ever been used to refer to since it first gained circulation as a tool of criticism, now more than a hundred years ago.¹⁴¹

Eliot argued for the modernism of the English Metaphysical poets, and Adūnīs argues convincingly for the modernism of some Arab poets and critics in the Abbasid period, and explicitly compares Baudelaire to Abū Nuwās (d. c. 813), Mallarmé to Abū Tammām (d. c. 845) and says that:

My reading of Rimbaud, Nerval and Breton led me to discover the poetry of the mystic writers in all its uniqueness and splendour, and the new French criticism gave me an indication of the newness of al-Jurjānī's critical vision.¹⁴²

Mutanabbī moves through Adūnīs' poem *al-Kitāb* and Omar Khayyām through some of the work of al-Bayyātī – they too might people Wollheim's legendary metropolis.

Surrealism

There are many threads in 'Surrealism', and some modern poets, and other writers, in many cultures have aimed to create surrealist works because of belief in its ideals, because of its power to shock and unsettle and its capacity to say things without saying them directly, and perhaps because of the sheer transcendent beauty that is possible in such works. It might be regarded as part of modernism, but also as one of the germs of postmodernism. Several notable Arab poets, especially Adūnīs, have written in a surrealist vein, and it is one of the elements of what might be called the transnational *avant garde*. As McClennan sees a correlation between exile writing and poststructuralism, so Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron sees a natural correlation between exile and surrealism and sees a state of interior exile as the natural condition of a writer:

Any writer, as a poet, is exiled in language itself, in the language of communication; he creates a space in which he can write *his own* language. By definition, the situation of any artist is an interior exile. Strangeness can be of oneself, from inside one's own consciousness. Strangeness is a base of common experience, that of the inadequacy of language. It rebounds into the anxious search for those with whom communication becomes possible in spite of everything.¹⁴³

and argues that exile itself, however painful it may have been, was for the French Surrealists a 'voyage of initiation',¹⁴⁴ and as a heightening of such alienation, contributed to surrealist creativity.

Surrealism, as defined by the French Surrealists in the aftermath of World War I, was not totally new, as much of what has been termed 'mystical writing' by for example Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Julian of Norwich, and the writings of Persian, Arab and Turkish Sufis might be regarded as surrealist. André Breton (1896-1966) himself distinguished between 'eternal surrealism, whose origins can be found in all cultures' (usually referred to as 'mysticism'), and the 'historical' surrealism developed in France between 1919 and the dissolution of the group in 1969, and argued that surrealism was nourished by mysticism, as mysticism is constantly revived by sensitive human beings.¹⁴⁵ This connection possibly contributed to the openness of some Arab

poets to surrealism, especially Adūnīs. However, whereas mysticism is essentially private and in the spiritual sphere, surrealism was in revolt against the way in which writing and the world were shaped by

[t]hree great systems of exclusion and division . . . the play of prohibitions, the strongest of which is the prohibition of desire; the division between reason and madness; and the will to truth.¹⁴⁶

and was an attempt to

break the accepted verbal associations [and] to attack the metaphysical certainties of the common herd, to escape from a conventional and arbitrary vision of the world. "Does not the mediocrity of our universe depend essentially on our power of expression?" A stereotyped language in which all freedom is strictly limited imposes upon us the vision of a stereotyped, hardened, fossilised world, as lifeless as the concepts that are intended to explain it.¹⁴⁷

The powers of a stereotyped, fossilised world, and of most modern states and regimes, are opposed to change, fear the disruptive power of desire and madness or even difference, and often have little concern for 'truth' if it is not as they want to see it. Desire and madness are controlled, and mystics were generally written off as madmen. Desire and madness are constant themes in surrealist writings and are important elements in some of the Hispanic exile literature discussed above: Goytisolo and Peri Rossi write ostentatiously and aggressively on desire, homosexuality and lesbianism in opposition to the stranglehold of the combination of fascism and Catholic mores, and one of Peri Rossi's books *La nave de los locos (The Ship of Fools)*¹⁴⁸ counterbalances the Judeo-Christian myth of creation with myths of expulsion and '[b]y exposing the fact that the isolated self suffers . . . points at the tyranny of the myth of creation and its corresponding emphasis on harmony and cultural homogenisation.'¹⁴⁹

An early influence on surrealism was Freud's theory relating to the powers of the subconscious and of dreams, and there were experiments with automatic writing in order to tap this, but the main result of this, and what is regarded as a distinguishing feature of the movement, was its focus on the image, and the aspiration to create images of strangeness and power. Some of the founding surrealists, such as Aragon, who later wrote of surrealism as a vice and the image as a drug, came to believe that this went too far, and Marcel Raymond admits that 'most surrealist texts disclose an incessant flow of images whose common characteristic is that they defy common sense'¹⁵⁰ but argues that '[l]yrical transfiguration is achieved only at the price of logical incoherence, of a contradiction in terms.' and that 'the magical power of poetry has always consisted first and foremost in unusual associations and in a supple, insinuating manner of using words.' There are examples of this in the classical period, especially in Gongora and the Metaphysical poets, and

with Baudelaire, "the first of the seers" as Rimbaud called him, the imagination became aware of its demiurgic function. Grafted on a mystical

sense of “universal correspondence,” it anticipates its immense task of revealing by means of images the essential kinship of all things, the participation of all things and souls in an all-pervasive mind, in the “dark and profound unity” of the whole.¹⁵¹

Most of Baudelaire’s successors did not follow him, but Raymond argues that the sometimes strained or forced surrealist images represent the terminal point of a line of development through writers such as Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and Lautréamont (1846-70). ‘Absolute’ surrealists such as Pierre Reverdy (1889-1960) (in 1918) argue that the image should be a pure creation of the mind, and that the characteristic of the strong image is that it ‘derives from the spontaneous association of two very distant realities whose relationship is grasped solely by the mind’.¹⁵² This has echoes of the Metaphysical conceit and of the concept *al-madhhab al-kalāmī* of the Abbasid poet and critic Ibn al-Mu‘atazz (861-908).¹⁵³ Reverdy even adds: ‘If the senses completely approve an image, they kill it in the mind.’¹⁵⁴

Paul Valéry (1871-1945) maintained that all things were interchangeable and that the mind had the ability to associate “any” objects and forms, and:

In the eyes of the surrealists, the unconscious spontaneously wields this power of substitution; but it does not confine itself to creating abstract relations; it makes objects participate in one another, it mysteriously identifies them. Thus, in the dream, the framework of the principle of contradiction is exploded; everything can replace everything else without losing existence and concrete power.¹⁵⁵

In the lead up to World War II and its subsequent horrors, the French Surrealists felt that the only way to cure the evils of the world was to radically re-invent it.

. . . Refusal, challenge, and even a kind of bizarre self-righteousness define their positions, at a moment when all energies were turned toward the Resistance: theirs was an apolitical attitude, apparently, and was seen for that reason as scandalous.¹⁵⁶

They were maligned for being apolitical during the war and the occupation of France but Chénieux-Gendron argues that although they were against these, they were taking detached, long-term views and trying to effect profound changes, rather than focusing on short-term issues. They would argue that ‘[a] poem which takes liberty for its theme says less than a poem whose liberty of expression calls for Liberty in all its senses’ and ‘[t]he poet must be the bearer of dishonour, he must “pronounce words which are always sacrilegious and permanent blasphemies” in order to bring about a network of new signs, into which we may project our freedom.’¹⁵⁷ Chénieux-Gendron concludes that:

Exile, for the surrealists, involves the retreat of a psychological subject into a past encountered in its violent tension, the retreat of a linguistic subject into

the tension of writing, the retreat of political consciousness into a resistance to facile solutions, which are those of all summary analyses.¹⁵⁸

Some later exile writing may be described as surreal, notably that of Goytisolo, and I will argue that this applies to work discussed in this thesis, for example, some of the work of Adūnīs, al-Bayyāfī, and Khalīl Ḥāwī. Other features of surrealist writing identified by Chénieux-Gendron are: a 'paradoxical lyricism', the 'poetics of a lyricism where utterance is violence is the opposite of lyrical effusion', and that

the "vanishing point" of surrealist writing is determined by *seeing* and *making* [others] *see*: witness the surrealists' overwhelming interest in the *image*.¹⁵⁹

The idea of seeing and making others see is present in Longinus, and André Breton links the idea to apprehension of the sublime, but it could perhaps also be linked to Deleuze's notion of literature as a machine in *Proust and Signs* (1976) and *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975).¹⁶⁰ Deleuze argues that 'the *Recherche*, like other modern artworks, does not mean so much as it functions'¹⁶¹ and that the modern work of art 'is essentially productive, productive of certain truths'.¹⁶²

Networks

The modern world is full of networks, based upon communication in all its senses: roads, rail, shipping lanes, and airways; telephone, radio and TV networks, and communications satellites; human networks of trade, influence, espionage, and terrorism; networks of scientists, writers, and artists, and of museums, cinemas, and theatres; and, perhaps the emblem of the age, the Internet. The world is more connected than ever before, but also more fragmented, and a multitude of connections makes control difficult, if not impossible.

There are also psychological networks that are, like the Internet, virtual. There are many corollaries of Amin Maalouf's ideas of the elements of identity discussed in the Introduction such as Edward Said's concepts of filiation and affiliation¹⁶³, Pierre Bourdieu's 'habitus'¹⁶⁴, and Stanley Fish's concept of the 'Interpretive Community'.¹⁶⁵ Wojciech Kalaga's 'Interpretative Universe' and Derek Attridge's concept of 'idioculture', are both discussed above. Filiation, and possibly affiliation, may be linear where the individual is part of a rigid hierarchical or patriarchal structure, but otherwise such networks are multi-dimensional and overlapping. They may be both restrictive and enhancing. Filiation/affiliation are mainly discussed in Chapter 3, especially in relation to Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, and to the later work of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyāfī, which is also discussed in terms of another network, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'rhizome' structures as opposed to the 'tap root' structures of hierarchical or patriarchal systems.

People may create and actively participate in networks, but they are also affected by them, and networks influence each other. American 'soft power' may be as effective as 'hard power', and the power of the media is well known, and often underestimated. The surrealists were aware of the power of literature to influence, and Deleuze analyses this in terms of his 'literary machines.' And

scientific notions of relativity and uncertainty are, like postmodernism and modern theories of language, a part of the *zeitgeist*.

Postmodernism may be seen as a cause of fragmentation, but inherent in fragmentation is the possibility of an infinite number of connections with varying degrees of dominance. For the exile these may be more complex than in a static society because he is driven to make new connections when old ones are stretched or broken, and is subject to a wide range of new influences. There is the compulsion to place oneself in a continuum for consolation, feeling oneself to be part of something, by contributing to transnational and transtemporal cultural edifices, 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins', as seen in the work of poets such as disparate as Eliot, Mandelstam, Adūnīs, and al-Bayyāfī.

Hybrid Cultures

All cultures are stratified and fragmented according to various factors such as environment and occupation, class, sex, the spread of literacy, levels of education, and available media; and states and oligarchies, educators, creators and cultural producers all participate in and attempt to shape them for purposes of personal or intellectual satisfaction, profit, or control. And all are hybrid in some sense if only simply because people are different and think in different ways and thought cannot be totally controlled. They may also be hybrid because of their history, for example England, its place names and its language reflect Roman occupation, Viking invasions, and the Norman Conquest. The Roman Empire chose to have its culture influenced by the conquered Greeks, and the Arab Empires chose to be influenced by their conquered peoples, mainly the Persians, and, as mentioned above, Tsarist Russia, partly in its drive for modernisation, imposed the French language on its elites, as well as Italian architecture upon its capital city. The European Renaissance chose to adopt Roman and Greek culture and, ultimately, with the beginnings of 'modern' science to 'write out' Arab influences and at best regard the Arabs as 'transmitters' of the Greek heritage,¹⁶⁶ although traces remain in mathematical, chemical, and astronomical terminology and in Arabic star names. Part of this writing out and cultural denigration was due to the Spanish *Reconquista* and fear of the Ottomans, and it can be argued that part was because of the complex effects of the Ottoman Empire and European colonisations and influence.¹⁶⁷ The history of colonialism and imperialism has left its erasures, its traces, and its hybrids, all over the world.

In the course of their history the Arabs have been constructively open to outside influences. During the Arab Conquests of the 7th to 8th centuries they rapidly moved from basically tribal organisation to administering an empire by utilising and learning from the abilities of other peoples, the conquered Byzantines and Sassanians, as well the Jews present in the Empire, and drew upon and developed their depositories of knowledge. The first great period of Arab poetry, the *Jāhiliyya*, was almost entirely *sui generis*, but the second, classical Abbasid poetry, although written in Arabic, gained a great deal from Persian influence and from Persians writing in Arabic, and the mystical strand in Arab poetry is owed to the Persians. Arab rulers and intellectuals were keen to learn of and from Europe following Napoleon's Expedition to Egypt. And modern Arab

poetry, the third great period of poetry, owes a great deal to the European influences it has absorbed and built upon. The latter two flowerings of Arab poetry are good examples of 'hybrid vigour', as was the poetry of al-Andalus, deriving from the poetry of the Umayyad period, but having connections with the Abbasid Empire as well as absorbing local influences.

In her book *Shards of Love Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* María Rosa Menocal¹⁶⁸ discusses the hybrid culture of al-Andalus and its systematic suppression and writing out of history by the Catholic rulers of Spain. It was also written out of history in much of the rest of Europe, despite many connections and the Arab legacy in Sicily as well as in Spain, hence the move 'into the "modern" world, the Renaissance, and the culture of humanism through an act of violent expulsion of a culture of highly productive hybridity.'¹⁶⁹ Al-Andalus had been a hybrid culture of Muslims, Jews, and Christians, and as well as being a glorious period of Arab culture it was also 'the golden age of poetry for the Jews'.¹⁷⁰ The significance of the strophic *muwashshaḥa* as a 'lovers' dialogue . . . carried out in languages previously segregated as incompatible',¹⁷¹ and a hybrid of Arabic poetry and a refrain or *kharja* which is an Arabic transliteration of a local vernacular was only recognised in the last century.¹⁷² Menocal says that:

This is far more than "mere" love poetry . . . This is no less explicitly a poetry of and about the creation of a new language for poetry, of a new literature. . . this is the newly coined, literally invented poetry of a society of marked pluralisms, for which the classical poetic forms, with their linguistic and stylistic orthodoxies and unities, were transparently insufficient. Thus, a new generation of poets wreaks havoc with classical traditions, rooted in singularity and the immutable written language, by making them sing to and with the Other – the vernacular, the explicitly vulgar, the fluid and oral, the female voice.¹⁷³

She also comments that:

It is crucial to remember, at this juncture, that the Hispano-Arabic songs, the *muwashshaḥāt*, that, like the [Provençal] *canso*, comprise the heart and soul of the new song tradition, are both uncompromising in their innovations *and* openly conscious of their indissoluble bonds with the traditions from which they are breaking away.¹⁷⁴

Andalusi poetry was, through the *canso*, which also faced attempts at eradication, an indirect influence on European poetry. The final phrase echoes the innovation of the 20th century *tafīla* movement and its comparable retention of a link to the classical Arab tradition.

Menocal argues that the Hispanic culture of South America owes some of its vibrancy to the retention of some aspects of the Andalusian culture that was suppressed in Spain itself after 1492, and discusses how traces of that culture are now being rediscovered and appreciated in Spanish and the wider European and Middle Eastern culture. Federico García Lorca regarded 1492 as the darkest year in the history of Spain, and Juan Goytisolo, discussed above, has also studied and

drawn upon Spain's Islamic heritage. What has been regarded as classical Arab culture has also chosen to ignore elements of the culture of al-Andalus such as the *muwashshaḥa*, as it has chosen to ignore the mystical thread of Islam and popular literature such as the Arabian Nights and medieval epic, but these are now percolating through Arab consciousness, thanks mainly to the work of modern poets and novelists.

However, there are still attempts to enhance, impose, and suppress elements of cultures. These attempts, in conjunction with the forces or powers that they represent, such as the oligarchies and dictatorships, occupations, and the operation of the 'soft' or 'hard' power of globalisation, are often the cause of contemporary exile and literary exiles often try to oppose them.

The Development of Modern Arab Poetry

Although the development of Modern Arabic Poetry owes a great deal both to having a strong base on which to develop and to the influence of foreign educational institutions established in Greater Syria and Egypt in the course of the nineteenth century by the French, British, Russians and Americans, it has been greatly enriched by the contribution of migrants and exiles who have also, throughout the Arab world, contributed to developments in the wider cultural field, and affected many other spheres. The neo-Classical poets, the first to question the then degenerate nature of Arabic Poetry where poets indulged in exaggerated technical virtuosity on themes such as the panegyric, reflect the cosmopolitan nature of the Ottoman Empire, changing education systems and the extent of European influence, even though this was resented in many quarters. They were generally, but not always, from the upper echelons of society, travelled within the Empire, were politically aware, if not active, and several wrote some of their best poetry in exile. They aimed to cure the malaise of Arabic Poetry by a return to the classicism of medieval poetry, especially that of the Abbasid period, and, by harking back to a time of glory, to assert Arab cultural identity in a world threatened by alien forces. Badawi makes the point that an important contributory factor in this was 'the growing realisation of the excellence and relevance of the ancient Arabic poetic heritage, which was being continually rediscovered and edited throughout the nineteenth century, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of scholars, particularly orientalist.'¹⁷⁵ This is an extension of Benedict Anderson's argument of how European studies of their colonised (or in the Arab case, quasi-colonised) lands, such as archaeology, and here literature, became weapons to be used against the coloniser in promoting nationalisms.¹⁷⁶

In the relatively compressed evolution of Arabic poetry, sometimes influenced by European poetry such as the Romantics in its early stages and later by T.S. Eliot, the French Symbolists and Surrealists, Federico García Lorca and others, but often in parallel reactions to modern forces, poets have used various strategies for engagement with the issues of politics and suffering. By the end of the nineteenth century there were stirrings of revolt among Arab intellectuals, and the beginnings of changes in Arab poetry that made it a better vehicle for expressing contemporary problems. People began to write political poetry, first against the Ottomans, and their clients such

as the Khedives of Egypt, and then against occupying European powers. Modernist Arab poets have gradually thrown off antique forms and content, to become effective political critics.

Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī was born in Egypt of an old Circassian family and, after private education, attended one of Muhammad 'Ali's modern military schools. He went to Istanbul where he had a post in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, achieved military distinction under the Khedive Isma'il and became Minister of Education and *waqf* under the Khedive Tawfiq in 1879. He is generally held to be the first significant figure in Modern Arabic poetry since:

Because with Barudi poetry ceased to be a mere artificial display of linguistic ability, and became of direct relevance to the poet's serious business of life, it is not surprising to find him dealing, directly or indirectly, with political themes. His poems include much political criticism, diverse attacks on the tyranny of Isma'il and especially Tawfiq, earnest calls to the people to revolt in order to realise a more democratic or representative system of government.¹⁷⁷

Before being exiled to Ceylon because of his involvement in the Urabi rebellion of 1882, he wrote patriotic poetry but in a eulogy to Tawfiq on his accession to the throne he 'emphasises the need for the people to have a say in their own government'.¹⁷⁸

Aḥmad Shawqī similarly had a modern education but studied law and translation, and was sent by the Khedive Tawfiq to study law at the University of Montpellier. On his return to Egypt he was appointed to a court position and became the favourite poet of the Khedive 'Abbas, composing a large quantity of panegyric poetry. When World War I broke out the British declared Egypt a British Protectorate and deposed 'Abbas. Shawqī was exiled to Spain because of his attachment to 'Abbas, his loyalty to the Ottomans and his virulent attacks on the British. The two men had differing experiences of exile: al-Bārūdī was effectively a prisoner, and although he wrote some of his finest poetry in Ceylon it was about his personal grief and nostalgia and 'the cumulative effect tends to be perilously close to self-pity',¹⁷⁹ for Shawqī it was freedom from writing panegyrics so that he could write more individual and serious poetry and the extension of his horizons in travelling in Spain and studying its Arab past. He used Andalusi forms and themes in his poetry, mixing regret for al-Andalus with his regret for Egypt, and thus further contributed to the assertion of the glories of Arabic civilisation.

The Neo-classicist Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1871-1932) is admired for his elegies, some of the best known being on public figures such as Muḥammad 'Abdu, Muṣṭafā Kāmil and Sa'id Zaghlūl, and put irony to use in a poem addressed to the British after the Danshaway affair of 1906. The incident, where, in a fight between three British officers who were shooting birds and the villagers, an officer was killed, brought the harsh retaliation of four villagers being sentenced to death, two to life imprisonment, and three to one year's imprisonment and fifteen lashes, the hanging and flogging to be carried out publicly in the village, has been the theme of many poems and popular ballads. Ibrāhīm compares the birds being shot to the Egyptians and the rings on the birds' necks to their metaphorical and sometimes actual chains:

We and the wood pigeons are one, for the rings have not yet parted from our necks.

Irony is also deployed in his poem 'Women's Demonstration' in which 'he describes in mock heroic terms the unequal battle between the British troops and a procession of women peacefully demonstrating in protest against the arrest and exile of the nationalist leader Sa'id Zaghlūl in 1919.'¹⁸⁰

Lebanese and Syrian *Mahjar* poets who had emigrated to the United States early in the century were, in a group formed in the 1920s and led by Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān (1883-1931) and Amīn Rīḥānī (1876-1940), among the first to begin to question the rigid structures of Classical Arabic poetry and the pre-eminence of form over content that had inhibited its development as a vehicle for contemporary themes. They, and groups who emigrated to Egypt and South America, were not strictly exiled but left their homelands for political and/or economic reasons and because '(t)he autocratic rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid made life generally difficult for these educated and freedom-loving Arabs who had enjoyed a modern education in European and Russian establishments.' They also had fewer opportunities at home 'because of the increasing role of Europeans in the commercial life of the Lebanon after the 1860s'. However, the North and South American immigrants 'suffered from a feeling of exile, of lack of belonging. Living in countries where the language of their literary efforts and of their tradition was not spoken, they felt that their very cultural existence was at stake.' They set up Arabic journals to publish their work, but they interacted with their new environment in that they, or rather their intellectual leaders, were influenced by 'the latter-day romanticism and transcendentalism of American literature which characterise the work of Emerson and Thoreau, Longfellow and Whitman.'¹⁸¹ They introduced new poetic forms which abandoned both the fixed metre and rhythm of classical poetry and used lines of varying length and the stanza form, and also introduced new themes and metaphors which continued to be used in later Arabic poetry.

Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān is regarded as the most important poet of Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century. Like Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm he is 'writing back', with powerful poems criticising landowners who had sold land to Zionists and promoting awareness of and resistance to the policies and actions of the British Mandate and the Zionists. Issa J. Boullata says that although Ṭūqān's poetry is strongly based on the Arabic classical tradition it 'has innovative dimensions that give it a particular modern flavour totally its own.'¹⁸² He discusses the poem '*al-Thulāthā' al-Ḥamrā'* ('Red Tuesday') (1930) which commemorates three Palestinians who were sentenced to death and hanged by the British mandatory authorities on Tuesday 17 June 1930 for their participation in the revolt of 1929, and expresses the indignation of Palestinians at their harsh and unfair treatment. The poem galvanised its immediate audience and, on publication, the whole Arab population of Palestine. 'It was a new departure for Ṭūqān, with its artistic sophistication, dramatic effect, and powerful symbolism presenting the historic event in a truly impressive manner.' It is in the form of a complex *muwashshaḥa* consisting of nine stanzas, with three strophes, entitled 'The First Hour', 'The Second Hour' and 'The Third Hour', interpolated between the eighth and ninth, commemorating each of the three men who were hanged in the prison in Acre at three successive

hours beginning at 8.00 am. Ṭūqān uses multiple voices in the poem: that of a single narrative voice; those of three personified days speaking of terrible events of the past, which are overshadowed by the current day; and three personified hours speaking of the three men who were hanged.¹⁸³ Making the number three a constituent of the form of the poem anticipates later experiments in form, such as Adūnīs's use of both letters and numbers in some of his works.

Ṭūqān's poem is about ordinary men, but despite its innovations clings to heroic forms. Some poets of the 1950s and 1960s also write in a heroic vein, and perhaps the last Arab attempt at a heroic discourse was the 'situation of only partial modernity' of the 'frenzied experiments of the seventies',¹⁸⁴ following the 1967 debacle, as, inspired by Adūnīs and by the emergence of Palestinian resistance poetry previously unknown outside Israel, poets were struggling to adopt modernist poetry but were still presenting deluded views of the Arab world. Much of it sounds hollow, and it is roundly condemned by Jayyusi, both for its heroism and ill-conceived modernism. Terri DeYoung's discussion of 'The Death of Elegy' comparing the official commemorative volume of poetry on the death of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir with the more spontaneous earlier volume also demonstrates that the heroic is no longer appropriate to the modern world and does not sit well with modernist poetry.¹⁸⁵

An interesting figure in Egypt was the left-wing writer and critic Luwīs 'Awaḍ (1915-90) who studied abroad for an MA in English at Cambridge and a PhD in Comparative Literature at Princeton¹⁸⁶ and who had also been imprisoned for his political views.¹⁸⁷ He published a highly experimental volume of poetry *Plutoland and Other Poems* 'with a revolutionary introduction calling for the need to write the poetry of the people and to overthrow the dominant traditional metrical forms'¹⁸⁸ in 1947, and was an important contributor to modern Arabic culture in his many critical articles and translations of Aeschylus, Horace, Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot¹⁸⁹ and was foundational in introducing Eliot to Arab readers in a long article in *al-Katīb al-Miṣrī* in 1946.¹⁹⁰ His poetry, however, has 'fallen by the wayside'.

The mid-twentieth century saw decisive changes in the Arab world. Following World War II, the European Mandates and colonisations were steadily thrown off, but new problems arose. The nineteen fifties and sixties were a significant period in the development of Arabic poetry which was deeply affected by the major political events of the establishment of Israel and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem in 1948, and the stirrings of protest against repressive and/or reactionary Arab regimes. The Palestinians were a people in exile, which has added a new dimension to the consideration of exile, and their situation was both a cause for shame and an affront to the Arab world which had been unable to prevent their plight and had had an alien state set up in its midst. Several of the major protagonists of this period were migrants or exiles, mostly within the Arab world, notably the Iraqi and Syrian poets who had settled in Beirut, but others wrote poetry of exile in response to the Palestinian situation. Poets such as Yūsuf al-Khāl (1917-87), Khalīl Ḥāwī, Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā and Tawfiq Ṣāyigh had been educated in French and/or English literature in their countries, but augmented this knowledge by study and travel abroad. Al-Khāl and Ṣāyigh taught abroad. Many were self-consciously trying to expand Arab intellectual

horizons, and living abroad gave the opportunity for an active synthesis of Arabic and European culture with a choice of influences, as opposed to what had been regarded by the Europeans teaching in Arab lands as both appropriate and suitably canonical. Because of French and Russian influences (several Arab states became pawns in the Cold War and some espoused socialism) many poets were communists or Marxists, and there was a significant movement in 'committed poetry' (*iltizām*) which depicted the state of the Arab masses, as well as the stirrings of Arab nationalism. Poets such as the Iraqis Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb and 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī were imprisoned or exiled at times for their political beliefs. Al-Sayyāb was one of the first to write poetry which, while it adhered to the *taf'īla* (metrical foot) of classical poetry, abandoned rhyme and a fixed number of *taf'īla* in each line, and members of the *Majallat Shi'r* movement based in Beirut centred around Yūsuf al-Khāl's magazine *Shi'r* from 1957-67

. . . adopted the revolutionary ideas on poetry of the great socio-political and literary critic Anṭūn Sa'āda. In his critical work *Cultural Struggle in Syrian Literature*, Sa'āda held that poetry should not only reflect political and social realities but should also project a 'vision' of the future. Sa'āda suggested that modern poets should create their own idiom, forms and images, and that they should exploit the traditions of the civilisations that flourished in the area before Islam.¹⁹¹

This was an influence on the *Tammūzī* movement where poets as well as drawing on the myth of the fertility god Tammūz as a symbol of Arab regeneration, also drew upon other mythical, legendary, historical and religious figures in their poetry 'reshaped to incorporate themes of contemporary significance'.¹⁹²

Modern Palestinian poetry first emerged into the wider Arab world in the mid-sixties as poets such as Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Samīḥ al-Qāsīm, and Rāshid Ḥusayn (1936-77) began to make their voices heard in Israel as the poets of resistance. Both Darwīsh and Ḥusayn later left Palestine. The latter was destroyed by his exile, but the former was greatly enhanced by it and became the main literary spokesman of his people.

The destruction of Beirut in 1982 was of crucial importance for Arab exiles and for Arabic poetry. It had been a significant and relatively liberal cultural centre where many exiles from other Arab countries had gathered and in its role as a publishing centre it was of importance to these people and to many others who were marginalised within their own countries. Several people were doubly exiled, notably Maḥmūd Darwīsh who then settled for a considerable time in Paris where he wrote some of his best poetry, as well as *Dhākira li-l-Nisyān* (*Memory for Forgetfulness*) a profoundly poetic yet political account of the Siege of Beirut.

The current established generation of poets has absorbed, and continues to absorb modernising and internationalising influences, but several also draw on classical Arab forms and on Arab history and literary genres. Adūnīs, as well as being a significant poet has published books on criticism and an anthology of classical Arabic poetry, and has argued that elements of the Abbasid heritage can be regarded as comparable to modernist poetics. Maḥmūd Darwīsh uses Andalusī

forms as well as history in his set of poems *Aḥad 'ashara kawkaban* (Eleven Planets) but experiments with the sonnet in his collection *Sarīr al-gharība* (The Bed of the Stranger). 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī demonstrates Spanish and Russian influences and touches upon painting and space flight. The poetry of exile has several major themes ranging through deliverance, identity, resolve and writing back, to the more negative but cathartic longing and despair, and has been of importance to Arab exiles in their struggles for forbearance, identity and resolution, but it also encompasses the benefits of the marginality of exile, which can give the poet the objectivity and isolation of the visionary or prophet. Adūnīs's *Mihyār* is a marginal figure, a traveller, an exile, as is his 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Dākhil in *Ayyām al-Ṣaqr* (Days of the Hawk). Arabic poetry of exile also has the added depth of the pre-Islamic *Jāhiliyya* poetry arising from a nomadic culture, which has ideas of wandering but also of the never taken for granted value of the land and intimate knowledge of it. Some modern Arab writers use structures, tropes and images from these poems – sometimes inverting them in various ways. For example, the *aḥlāl* is about people who have departed, being remembered by others after their departure, but in 'On the Last Evening in this Land', the first poem of the *Eleven Planets* sequence, Maḥmūd Darwīsh depicts a kind of *aḥlāl* in advance imagining the conquerors entering the houses of Granada and what is being left behind by those going into exile being used, intimately, by others.

There are several important features of the Arabic literature of exile. One is that the Arabs have a rich language and an established literature with a considerable literary heritage. Another is that Arabs, other than some North African Francophones, and with the odd exception such as Jubrān who wrote in both Arabic and English, with considerable success in the latter, have been able to write in Arabic and gain an international audience, because of the available publishing facilities and a wide enough market. Many have been exiled within the Arab world, and those outside it have been able to maintain connections. Consequently, they have not had to face the dilemma of many of the writers of Africa and Asia in having to abandon indigenous languages to find an international audience, or in some cases even an audience within their own country. Moreover, Arabic literature has expanded its international audience through translation. A poetry that is rich in ideas and in imagery can be appreciated in translation, even if rhythm, wordplay and specific cultural references do provide an added dimension for Arab readers. That many Arab poets draw on Western imagery as well makes their work more approachable in translation and a challenge to and influence on Arab readers, leading to further interaction and, hopefully, improved mutual understanding. As an English reader might be indebted to T.S. Eliot for initiating their reading of Dante, so might young Arabs be indebted to Darwīsh for Ancient Greek literature, or to al-Bayyātī for Lorca and Picasso, and young French and Spaniards to Arab poets for the history of Spain and the Arab world. Paradoxical recent developments are that while North Africa is beginning to reclaim its Arabic heritage the Moroccan Francophone writer Tahar Ben Jelloun won France's most prestigious literary prize, the *Prix Goncourt*, in 1987; the same prize was won in 1993 by another Arab, the Lebanese Amin Maalouf; and a younger generation of Arab exiles is beginning to write novels, and a few, poetry in English and other languages. The Egyptian Ahdaf Soueif was shortlisted for the UK Booker Prize in 1999 for her novel *The Map of Love*. This all indicates an

increasing cosmopolitanism, and that the Arab civilisation now has a well developed and confident literature ready to take its place in 'world literature'.

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⁵ Sophia A. McClennan, *The Dialectics of Exile*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, Indiana, 2004 pp. 3-4

⁶ *Ibid.*, McClennan discusses earlier theorists such as Claudio Guillén and Michael Seidel in her Introduction

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⁸ Wojciech H. Kalaga, 'Translating the Exile Self' in Kalaga & Rachwat eds., *Exile: Displacements and Misplacements*, op. cit., pp. 49-56, p. 49

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¹⁰ Manfred Stassen, 'Neither Here nor There: Reflections on German-German Exile', in Lahiri ed., *Inhabiting the Other: Essays on Literature and Exile*, op. cit., pp. 116-124

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¹⁹ Robert Edwards, 'Exile, Self, and Society', in Maria-Inés Lagos-Pope ed., *Exile in Literature*, Associated University Presses Inc., Cranbury NJ, 1988 pp. 15-31 p. 17, quoting Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study*, Harrap, London, 1972, pp. 43-45

²⁰ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, Section III of 'Little Gidding'

²¹ This concept is raised in Wojciech H. Kalaga 'Translating the Exile Self' in Kalaga & Rachwat eds., *Exile: Displacements and Misplacements*, op. cit., pp. 49-56 which is discussed below

²² Osip Mandelstam, *Selected Poems*, tr. James Greene, Penguin Books, London, 1991 p. xxxviii

- ²³ T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, end of Section V
- ²⁴ McClennan, *The Dialectics of Exile*, op. cit., p. 21
- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 76
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- ²⁸ Ibid.
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- ⁴¹ McClennan, op. cit., p. 31
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⁷² Ibid., p. 140

⁷³ Ibid., p. 148

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 147

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- ⁸⁵ See Jacques Berque, *Cultural Expression in Arab Society Today*, tr. Robert W. Stookey, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1978 (first published in French as *Langages arabes du présent*, Editions Gallimard, 1974)
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Chapter 2 The Depiction of Exile

Depiction of exile is the most straightforward way of writing about exile and its problems, and the most appealing to a mass audience, but it is often very subtle especially in some of the ways in which it negotiates the tensions of expressing extreme suffering and dealing with the political issues that are usually at the heart of Arab exile. Some such poetry may be strident, heroic and self-delusional, and often clings to old forms that may be attractive in an oral environment (much 'resistance poetry' has been set to music) but does not truly confront modern issues. However, some apparently simple poetry can have considerable depths of meaning.

Much poetry of exile is poetry of alienation and of nostalgia, for a lost country or way of life, or even, simply, for childhood and lost innocence. Arab poetry includes such poetry, but it also includes the poetry of Palestinians who, as a people as well as individually, have been the main Arab victims of exile. The causes of their exile have been more defined, their writers identify with the Palestinian people as a whole and are also perhaps more attuned to the practical problems of exile as intellectuals, as children or as members of family or village groups, have often suffered in the same way as simple peasants. Political exiles from other Arab countries are less likely to have been torn from rural environments that are both home and livelihood, and have not lived in refugee camps. Most, but not all, of the poetry discussed in this chapter is by Palestinians.

Palestinian poetry has depicted the sufferings of the Palestinians and expressed their grievances, and it has been part of the creation and maintenance of a Palestinian identity, and of political and intellectual discourses concerning both Palestinians and the Arab world in general. Since theirs is both their own exile and part of the exile of a majority of their people, the poets are more graphic in their depictions of the stages of exile and in their yearning for their recently lost country. Poetry about Palestine and the 'land rhetoric' entered into is discussed in the next chapter. This chapter discusses going into exile, travelling, some of the physical facets of limbo and restriction, the dangers encountered by activists and others, the tensions and divisions arising from different experiences of exile, and touches on the end of exile – which is rarely hoped for or discussed, and usually signifies acceptance of assimilation or of having become a permanent 'esoteric' exile, or despair.

Exile is mainly a state, whether of constant movement, limbo, or varying degrees of integration into a host society, and may last for years, even a lifetime. Its beginning, and sometimes its ending are usually more defined. There are voluntary exiles who have made a decision to leave their countries for various reasons, such as the desire for education or to escape an intolerable social or economic situation, but for others the beginning of exile can be abrupt, as an escape from the dangers of imprisonment or torture, or as expulsion, which has been the case for a large proportion of the Palestinian people. Some voluntary exiles have been transformed into compulsory exiles, and many Palestinians have been born in exile. Exile may end by changes of regime and the individual's choice to return to his country, or by his formally becoming a citizen of another country. It may be regarded as over where the individual effectively settles in another country or becomes 'a citizen of the world' without taking citizenship. Return may be bitter-sweet – the

returning exile may find that he no longer belongs or no longer wishes to belong, because of changes in his country or in himself. Or exile may end only with death – and then persist in being buried away from ones country.

The exile of a people can perhaps be said to have ended when a majority, or at least their children, usually more flexible and amenable to new influences, have begun to be assimilated elsewhere, thus effectively renouncing any claim to their former land. Whether generations born 'in exile' can truly be regarded as exiles is a moot point, as a new generation inevitably has a different frame of reference, although this is more arguable if they are born in closed communities such as refugee camps. Such people regard themselves as exiles from somewhere they do not know through inculcated feelings of attachment or nationalism, but also because they are not able to form healthy, multi-dimensional attachments and because of anger at the injustice of their position. Palestinian exiles have the focus not only of their lost land, but also of the people who have taken it, their continuing encroachment and mistreatment of fellow-Palestinians, the inconsistency of their attitudes and the double-standards practised. And since Zionists choose to regard anyone of Jewish origins, many of whom are to all intents and purposes nationals of the country in which they are living, as having the 'right of return' to Israel, the current case for Palestinians born in camps to be regarded as exiles cannot easily be dismissed.

Perhaps the hope of return has been corrosive for the younger Palestinian generation born in exile. Perhaps much of the poetry written by people who do have homes and jobs is more through solidarity than through personal experience, as it is only the exiled generation that has been torn from the land, that truly carries the 'emotional baggage'. Other displaced peoples direct more of their energies to the battle of acceptance and assimilation into other societies, than to trying to recreate their own, accepting that it has been irrevocably lost. This is clear from comparative cases: expatriate Indian literature, while there is in it an element of a love-hate relationship with India, is increasingly about assimilation; similarly, very few migrants from the ex-Soviet Bloc countries of Eastern Europe wish to return to their own countries which have confused identities, poor government, little opportunity and little sense of national pride.¹ Alienation is from the host society that they wish to join. Arab exile poetry in general is not often directed towards assimilation into other countries,² but usually, when not strictly realistic or 'esoteric', expresses nostalgia or denunciation towards Israel/Palestine or the Arab world.

Going into Exile

Expressions of the beginning of exile in the Arab world are naturally most prominent in the case of Palestinian poets and writers as many Palestinians have experienced expulsion or flight in groups linked to specific historical events, some repeatedly, and for many others exile is a constant fear – either enforced or as the only option because of unbearable economic or psychological pressures.

In general, 'going into exile' poetry of 1948 is less prominent or graphic than that of later exoduses perhaps because poetry itself was less established in Palestine, there was less group



consciousness and because the people displaced were primarily agrarian. The forced exile was also unprecedented – few Palestinians could have foreseen the organisation and scale of the Zionist activity, despite persistent earlier incursions and Zionist activism, and there was a sense of shock and paralysis immediately afterwards. This is perhaps caught in a short stanza in Maḥmūd Darwīsh's poem *'āzifu al-jūtāri al-mutajawwil* 'The Wandering Guitar Player'³ :

*He was a poet
But the poem
Dried up in his memory
When he saw Jaffa
From a ship's deck.*

Tawfīq Ṣāyigh is mainly discussed in Chapter 4 as a pan-Arab poet of alienation, of which exile is simply one facet, but he was, as a fairly young man, one of those driven into exile in 1948. He had left Jerusalem, where he had been teaching, as did many civilian Arabs, because of the fighting that had broken out even before the British withdrawal from Palestine, and joined his family in Tiberias, but they 'soon discovered that they were not safe even there.' After the 'intentionally publicised' massacre of Deir Yāsīn and 'similar Zionist excesses', they joined the ranks of 'those who fled the country in a stampede for safety'.⁴ Issa J. Boullata says that

(h)e loved his homeland and remembered with ruefulness the moment he had to be forcibly separated from it into exile in 1948. In his "*Mu'allaqa*", written in 1961, images from that moment keep recurring . . .⁵

and quotes a passage relating to Ṣāyigh's taking refuge in Lebanon:

*On the day we left the homeland
Carrying nothing with us
Except memories, fears and defeats,
And a long obstinate sword
Stood between us and the homeland –
...
I knew that the era of loss had started,
That there was no more safety,
That every country was hostile
And every sea had dried up
And every thread had been cut.*⁶

There is also a sense of ordeal and escape in the poem. He says that

*My life is a succession of fires.
My time: I date it with fire
That singes and eats up
And sharpens swords.*

and referring to his temporary respite at the family home, in a town on the Sea of Galilee, after his escape from Jerusalem, he says:

*Escaping from fire we came to water.
From a kick in the back
To two open arms.
Escaping from defiled fire
We came to holy waters⁷*

Swords are from classical imagery, but the symbolism of the latter extract reflects the religious preoccupations that were also elements in Ṣāyigh's poetry.

Some poetry was written by poets such as Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā and Salma Khadra Jayyusi (b. 1926) who were already abroad, in an absence that became exile, who identified with their displaced countrymen and felt for them and for themselves loss of connection with the land and loss of identity, although at the time many of them regarded themselves more as Arabs than Palestinians, according to the pan-Arabic ideology of the time, and because the creation of a specifically Palestinian identity came later. Some poetry, as well as personal accounts, an important genre of Palestinian literature, was written retrospectively by following generations who had been children, or had not even been born in 1948, drawing on the fragmented memories of themselves and/or their elders. And some poetry was no doubt lost.

Jabrā, then living in Iraq, was one of the most important Palestinian poets writing immediately after 1948. However, his important exile poem *fi bawādī al-naḡī* 'In the Deserts of Exile'⁸ begins *in medias res*:

Spring after spring, in the deserts of exile

and is elegiac, and somewhat timeless. Similarly, his poem *kharzat al-bi'r* 'The Mouth of the Well',⁹ while it relates to the massacre of Deir Yāsīn, one of the main causes of Palestinian flight, and is certainly a political poem, frames its message in literary and Biblical allusions.

Palestinian 'Personal Account' literature

is perhaps the greatest witness to the age of catastrophe. Most of it represents an affirmative stance in the face of the disadvantages imposed on the daily life of the individual, and of the negative publicity applied to the Palestinian cause with impunity over the decades . . .¹⁰

It is a powerful genre for the depiction of suffering and for putting forward political issues, as it encompasses much of the history of Palestine and includes diaries, autobiography and blends of personal and family memories, especially in the case of accounts by those who experienced major events as children.¹¹ It covers a range of experiences including displacement, exile, resistance and prison, and is often written by poets in a poetic vein. It has 'political immediacy' and often takes on a 'collective value' as it

is conceived as an eyewitness account of contemporary Palestinian life, presented with the view, first, of grasping a sense of identity within the chaos of the communal tragedy, and, second, with a view of speaking out to the world.¹²

The poetry of Muḥammad al-As‘ad is discussed later in this chapter in terms of movement and in Chapter 3 in terms of spatial awareness, but his highly poetic memoir of his childhood, *Children of the Dew*,¹³ gives an account of the flight over several nights of his own family and other families from their village. There is a strong sense of terror and of the dangers and hardships of the flight, and the practical problems of transporting small children. ‘We did not disappear suddenly, like those who vanish in the wilderness as they relate in stories, but found our gradual way to Dalya . . . The time for crying had not yet arrived; later, tears would be stamped forever on the soul. No elegies yet, for the children needed to eat on the strange day in which villagers cracked out of their nut shells for the first time in their lives, outside familiar salt and water . . .’¹⁴ There is also an example of the sense of dislocated cycles that pervades his work and is a potent symbol for numerous facets of exile. He says that his mother told a story that when she and other adults crept back to their abandoned house for food at dead of night, the pigeons awoke and flapped around them ‘as if dawn had suddenly arisen . . .’. He then says:

This reversal in the cycle of night and day was to continue for us. No longer did solar time have any dominance. Whether it was night or day, pigeons would flutter their wings, and trees unfurl their green branches. We would stay awake, awake . . .

They, the people, are the masters of time that disappeared because they disappeared. And the same goes for the dew, and the calendars of days; for this was Palestine’s dew, and Palestine’s winds, and those flowers were Palestine’s anemones.¹⁵

Looking back, al-As‘ad is objectively aware of the powerlessness of the Palestinian refugees and tries to comfort his uncle who was in his youth a fighter against the British and the Zionists by saying that the loss of his land was not his fault, because ‘(y)our land was being stolen out from under you. Other people were bargaining with the British and the Jews.’ However, he realises that he had ‘been cruel without knowing it’¹⁶ in his insensitivity to the ‘emotional baggage’ of the older generation who inevitably live in the past, in making the man feel that all his actions had been insignificant, and that he himself has other ties, but the old man does not:

I have tried to steal his past from him; what he had been in the past. I, who now have warm relations with words, while his relations are still with the dew and the rocks.¹⁷

‘Half the Night’¹⁸ a poem by Walīd Khāzindār, born in Gaza in 1950, gives a sensitive depiction of ‘the night before’ of a peasant family about to be driven away from their home, their land, and their livelihood. The poetic voice is that of a man looking back to an event that occurred

when he was a child, but tension is maintained by remaining in the present of the poem, with references to the past, but only hints of the future. The father seems continuous with the land:

*His touch is wheat
when with tired hands he taps on our shoulders,
and a cypress rises in his silence
because he does not complain.*

He is a dignified figure, especially in the image of the cypress which evokes Abbasid poetry, and also Christ-like

*He used to share a loaf of bread, like a miracle, among us
and share his days and commandments.*

in his munificence, and in the hint of future suffering. He wanders anxiously about the house 'counting' his children, of whom the poetic voice says:

*We did not understand grains then.
We did not understand dew.*

This reflects the notions of unselfconscious rootedness in the land, and of not yet having learned to think in symbols, discussed in Chapter 3, but the father 'counting' his children, which gives a sense of fear and has connotations of being herded or driven, is part of the realisation that this will change. There are infinite shades of meaning in the symbolism of the poem, especially the final stanza:

*My mother, who is
a thousand and one labyrinths,
all morning
follows his ember
ash by ash.*

The father is still prowling in the morning; the mother follows him, protective yet not intrusive, cleaning up after him; but 'a thousand and one' invokes Shahrazad and the preservation of life and identity. Although the mother is self-effacing, one feels that she will show strength and resourcefulness later on. 'Labyrinths' implies wandering, yet being restricted, and with little hope of escape. Is the mother symbolic of the country with its strength and complexity? Is the ember the dying of hope . . . or could it be rekindled? . . .

This last poem could apply to a family leaving Palestine or being displaced, as happened with much of the agrarian population both in 1948 and with the confiscation of land in the Occupied Territories following the 1967 war. The process of adjustment to becoming a citizen of Israel or falling under occupation, with or without actual dispossession and displacement, must be a change of state and an alienation comparable to being exiled.

Between 1949 and 1967, Israel had consolidated its gains, and partly using reparations from Germany¹⁹ used the two decades 'both to increase its population and to invest in expensive

military equipment', while the indigenous population of the remaining 23% of Palestine continued as best it could, prevented from achieving any sort of autonomy by the administration of Jordan in the West Bank and Egypt in the Gaza Strip.²⁰ Then,

(i) In June 1967, Israel launched a huge pre-emptive strike on its neighbours, obliterating their offensive capability and paving the way for sweeping territorial gains. In the course of 'defending' its 1949 success, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as vast areas of the Sinai desert in Egypt. The Palestinian population which had found itself corralled into the West Bank and Gaza twenty years earlier now watched helplessly as the last 23% of what had been Palestine fell under Israeli control.²¹

The immediate causes of the War are still debated.²² The official Israeli position was that it was wholly defensive, but 'the speed of the Arab defeat, and the extent of Israel's land gains, cast doubt on this picture of Israel on the brink of destruction',²³ and

(i) it was, however, difficult to overlook other motives for the war, or at least to admit that the Israeli conception of the usefulness of the territories was in flux. Before the end of June 1967, the Knesset passed a law to allow for the effective absorption of East Jerusalem . . . On 28 June, the legal process was completed, and an institutional framework was established for the widespread expulsion of Palestinians from some areas and the transfer of Israeli Jews into others.

The 'reunification' of Israel was a distinctly different phenomenon from the 'defence of Israel'.²⁴

Like most later major events, the Six Day War demonstrated a mixture of preparedness and opportunism, combined with the willingness to take risks over any international reaction. Despite UN protests about the annexation of East Jerusalem and the 'cleansing' of hundreds of Palestinians Israel rapidly secured Jerusalem 'not against external threats but for the purpose of its own aggrandisement.' In November 1967 UN Security Council Resolution 242 was passed saying that Israel should withdraw 'from territories of recent conflict', emphasising the 'inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war', but this was ignored by Israel.²⁵

The whole Arab world was left in a state of shock and shame. Many of its citizens realised that they had been deluded by their own governments and much poetry of the time reflects this, for example Nizār Qabbānī's poem 'Footnotes to the Book of the Setback'.²⁶ Palestinians who had struggled to maintain hope fell into despair at the consolidation of the Israeli position and at the exercise of overwhelming military power. However, one consequence of the 1967 War was that 'diaspora writers discovered, with apparently unexpected joy, the presence of an already powerful poetic activity behind the iron walls that divided the Palestinian people' by writers such as Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Tawfiq Zayyād (1932-94) and Samīḥ al-Qāsim who had somehow kept abreast of the poetic events taking place elsewhere in the Arab world.²⁷ Zayyād and al-Qāsim have both

remained in Israel, the former taking a political role, discussed later, and the latter, like the lawyer Raja Shehadeh,²⁸ from conviction of the need to maintain a Palestinian presence. Their poetry has mostly been of endurance, quiet resistance and depiction of the condition of Palestinians in Israel, and some of it has been subtly innovative. Al-Qāsim's poem 'Bats'²⁹ is a half comic but deeply paranoid poem of constantly being under surveillance, given power by the staccato repetition of the word *khafāfīsh*. His 'The Story of the Unknown Man' (1971)³⁰ is a symbolic story of an internal exile who is also a revolutionary figure; he has no name and few belongings and is rejected by people who, despite the injustices done to them, want only a quiet life:

*The white houses
Slammed their doors on him,
Only jasmine plants
Loved his face with its shadows of love and hate.*

The poem is very beautiful and sonorous in its repetitions, especially in the already repetitious phrase '*wa ṣāra yāman ṣāra*', ominous in the 'choked' sky with the cloud of changing colour, the only colour in the poem except for the jasmine and the white houses, but there is perhaps hope, as by the transformative sacrifice of his old coat the man does finally get through to the people and brings about hopefully life-renewing rain, a metaphor for action, and, as well as the jasmine, a symbol of purity and the truth which the unknown man is trying to uphold, the '*white houses began to love him.*'

Darwīsh's collections after the War demonstrate grief, and further dislocation. In '*Ākhir al-layl* (The End of the Night) (1967) he depicts Israeli force in 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies' and the 'Victim Number . . .' poems; loss and shame in 'A Plain Song about the Red Cross'; and in 'The Rose and the Dictionary' an expression of poetic 'commitment' :

*For me it's essential to reject the rose
That comes from a dictionary or a volume of poetry.
Roses sprout from a peasant's arm, from a worker's grip;
Roses sprout on a warrior's wound,
On the forehead of a rock.³¹*

Al-'aṣāfir tamūt fi-l-jalīl (Birds are Dying in Galilee) (1969) is a sad and fragmented collection, drawing many comparisons. Some of the poems show signs of being platform poetry with what are basically refrains as in '*lauḥa 'alā al-jidār*' ('A Picture on the Wall'),³² which damningly evokes the painful image of the shapes of people on walls being all that was left of them after the detonation of the first A-bomb at Hiroshima, an event that Darwīsh enlarges on later in his memoir of the 1982 siege of Beirut.³³ There are only slight variations, in the phrases indicated by bold print, between the 1st, 3rd, 5th and 7th stanzas (each bitterly evoking the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem):

*. . . we talk now of many things
Of the setting of the sun in a tiny land*

And about the wall where Hiroshima wails . . .
'Night passes, and all that we can take from our world
Is the shape of death
At high noon.'

where 'the setting of the sun' becomes 'the withering of the corn', 'the agony of the grass' and 'the loss of colour' and the 'shape' of death becomes 'colour', 'taste' and 'sound'. Similarly, the four stanzas of 'A Gentle Rain in a Distant Autumn'³⁴ begin:

A gentle rain in a distant autumn
And the birds are blue, are blue, . . .

A gentle rain in a strange autumn
And the windows are white, are white, . . .

A gentle rain in a sad autumn
And the promises are green, are green, . . .

A gentle rain in a distant autumn
And the birds are blue, are blue, . . .

and each ends:

<i>wa ana la urīd</i>	<i>. . . all I want</i>
<i>. . .</i>	<i>. . .</i>
<i>ghaira mandīli ummī</i>	<i>Is my mother's handkerchief</i>
<i>wa asbābi mautin jadīd</i>	<i>And reasons for a new death.</i>

Both poems are beautifully rhythmic, so are easily declaimed, sung and learnt, but the imperfect repetitions have an unsettling effect and imply both pervasiveness, in the different senses referred to in the former and the different colours in the latter, and duration, and there is no sense of closure. Darwīsh is being a spokesman for his people and explicitly reproaching the Israelis, as in the title poem and in 'The Hundred and Fifty First Psalm' (there are a hundred and fifty psalms in the Bible). The latter has hints of Darwīsh's thoughts that he might become an exile:

Jerusalem! Which has withdrawn from my lips . . .
And distances are nearer

There is a sense in the collection of thinking things through, as all Palestinians and Arabs had to do at the time. The final poem, 'wa yatidīl al-sitār' ('And the Curtain Falls') is an expression of despair, and perhaps of irony at his career as a committed performance poet from which he says that he is resigning. The sense of unreality and performance continues in some of his later work, moving on to depicting himself and others of the PLO as making a video of their image of Lebanon in *Memory for Forgetfulness*³⁵ and his reference to the media event on the White House lawn at the time of the Oslo Accord in 'A non-Linguistic Dispute with Imru' al-Qays',³⁶ which is discussed in Chapter 4.

Darwīsh's poems illustrate Palestinian despair, as well the beginnings of Israeli expansionism and of active support for Israel by the United States that also began in 1967:

Impressed by Israel's overwhelming display of force, the United States moved to incorporate it as a strategic asset. . . Military and economic assistance began to pour in as Israel turned into a proxy for US power in the Middle East.³⁷

The poem 'A Picture on the Wall' with its evocation of Hiroshima perhaps implies this.

A further effect of the Six Day War was that, with the Arab armies defeated and demoralised, it left a power vacuum in the opposition to Zionism into which Yasser Arafat and Fatah were able to move. The PLO had been founded in 1964, but after 1967 more Palestinians became activists and many went into exile as a consequence of this, first in Jordan and then other parts of the Arab world, notably, until 1982, Beirut. The poetry of activists is discussed later, but the protagonists of the 1982 Palestinian exodus from Beirut, the then dynamic cultural centre of the Arab world where many intellectuals had settled, were considerably more self-aware than those of previous mass exoduses. Writers now saw themselves as an important part of the Palestinian struggle, which was by then generating its own discourses, and for many it was a second or even third going into exile. It is significant that Maḥmūd Darwīsh's group of poems written 'as the fighters of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation were preparing to leave Lebanon'³⁸ were rapidly circulated so that the Arabic texts and an English translation were able to be published in book form in 1984. The poems cover many aspects of the Palestinian exile and as well as having a personal yet universalised tone, several are written in the first person plural and represent the Palestinian people. The poem 'Taḏīqu bi-nā al-'arḏ' 'The Earth Is Closing in on Us'³⁹ depicts the PLO fighters leaving Beirut and contains powerful images of constriction, repetition and loss, but also germs of hope as well as appreciation of the humanity of opponents, and has many rich resonances.

It begins:

The earth is closing in 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 was our mother

So she'd be kind to us. . .

'closing in on us' is a terrifying image of restriction, funnelling and crowding yet 'pushing us through the last passage' in conjunction with 'I wish the earth was our mother' has connotations of childbirth, which links with the later mentions of children, perhaps trying to inject a little hope. The verb *taḏīqu* has connotations of being at a loss, which adds depth. The poem also expresses the reciprocal horrors of war in human terms

. . . We saw the faces of those to be killed by the last of us in the last defence of the soul.

*We cried over their children's feast. We saw the faces of those who'll throw
our children
Out of the windows of this last space. . .*

The word 'akhīr 'last' is used seven times in the short poem, giving a sense of desperation, as in the line:

*Where should we go after the last frontiers? Where shall the birds fly after
the last sky?*

Part of the poignant latter image is used to great effect by Edward Said as the title of his book 'After the Last Sky', demonstrating the power of poetry. How can there be a 'last sky' when the sky, certainly for birds, seems infinite? Yet the sky changes as we travel and as we can imagine and remember a sky at a particular time at a particular place, so each frontier has its own sky and men can effectively claim that sky and deny it to others. A darker tone is that birds are seen to disappear into the sky. The sky is a pervasive symbol in Darwīsh's memoir of the Siege of Beirut *Dhākira li-l-nisyān (Memory for Forgetfulness)*,⁴⁰ where the A-bomb that caused the appalling destruction of Hiroshima is evoked as a grey egg, and is very often threatening as the source from which destruction rains, as it is, also in beautiful metaphors, in the work of other poets such as Ahmad Daḥbūr and Mai Ṣāyigh (b. 1940).

Another poem of the group, 'afī mithli hadhā al-nashīd 'Is It in Such a Song?',⁴¹ gives an explicit reference to the expulsion from Beirut:

. . . What shall the invaders say?

We have conquered the cloud of the voice in the month of August?

The poem 'Departure'⁴² by the resistance and feminist poet Mai Ṣāyigh also describes the expulsion of the PLO after the Siege of Beirut, from one exile to another. The opening of the poem addresses the besiegers:

*In this the moment of departure,
point your red arrows,
disarm the lightning, and open wide
The gate to my exile.
Close the sky's open face and ride away.
I long so deeply that the shores unfold their seas
and horses bolt!*

The last two lines imply despair and almost a wish to be thrown into oblivion, although they do also evoke a continuity with the Arab heritage. The earlier lines depict the overwhelming force of the enemy and their power to create a temporary gap in their wall of ordnance to force the exiles out. They too will then leave Beirut, as they are pursuing the PLO and expelling them from someone else's land, but they are able to close any avenues of return.

Aḥmad Daḥbūr touches on the departure from Beirut in his poem 'I Do Not Renounce Madness',⁴³ and the poem ends with one of the main Palestinian stopping places, the refugee camp. It has some beautiful and original imagery of nature damaged and perverted by the 'enemy', but resisting and in sympathy with the exiles:

*The shaken sky-sieve sprinkles delicate death
Who is the enemy?
The rest of the white clouds are lit with thunder
and have split into boats, while exiles are preparing to leave*

The 'shaken sky-sieve' is a wonderful image both of defamiliarisation and of connotations. The shock of comparing ordnance falling from the sky to flour or dust falling through a sieve makes the reader pause and visualise the gunfire and bombs more clearly, and there is a terrible contrast between a quiet domestic rhythm and death falling from the sky. A further connotation might be the contrast with rain, and its gentle, life-giving effect on the earth, as it appears in other Arabic poetry.⁴⁴

Beirut had been for several decades the home of a strong community of Arab poets, several of whom wrote of the expulsion of the Palestinians as well as of the suffering of the city and its people. Adūnīs, born in Syria but for many years a naturalised Lebanese, was there during the Israeli siege and wrote an agonised poem *al-Ṣaḥrā'* (The Desert (The Diary of Beirut Under Siege, 1982)).⁴⁵ A section is an incantatory farewell to the departing Palestinians:

*Trees bow to say goodbye
Flowers open, glow, lower their leaves to say goodbye,
Roads like pauses between the breathing and the words say goodbye,
A body wears sand, falls in a wilderness to say goodbye,
The papers that love ink,
The alphabet, the poets say goodbye,
And the poem says goodbye.*

which also evokes the community of poets, as well as personifying poetry and its media. In contrast to the mass exile of Palestinians, Adūnīs's exile is that of an individual, for political and later intellectual reasons. His poem 'Days of the Hawk'⁴⁶ tells the story of an individual escape, that of the Umayyad prince 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Dākhil from the Abbasid overthrow of his family's dynasty, comparable to that of many Arab political exiles on a change of regime, and, like some, an escape from death. Al-Dākhil's companion, his younger brother, did not escape. The citation gives the protagonist's own account of his shaking off pursuit by swimming across the Euphrates, beginning:

Over my face the spears have been stilled between rider and prey

as his pursuers drop back. Like the previous extract, the poem is partly about poetry and the poet – 'Abd al-Raḥman was himself a poet – and it is perhaps unusual in that it encompasses the

beginning of exile, the state of wandering, and envisages the positive end to its protagonist's exile in the founding of the Andalusian caliphate. The exile is a hero – a contrast with Palestinian poetry of exile where he is usually a victim.

However, Andalusia is a negative symbol for Palestinians as it was the only part of the Islamic world to be totally lost before the establishment of Israel. It is a symbol that Maḥmūd Darwīsh resorts to only in despair, when he again writes of going into exile in his collection *Aḥad 'ashara kawkaban* (Eleven Planets) of 1992⁴⁷ which was significant as the year of the five hundredth anniversary of the final fall of Andalusia with the handing over of Granada to *los reynos catolicos*. The collection begins with the long poem, divided into eleven parts, *aḥad 'ashara kawkaban 'alā 'ākhīr al-mashhad al-'andalusī* (Eleven Planets in the Last Andalusian Sky) which is based on the surrender of Granada by the final Nasrid King Muhammad XI and the departure of the Muslim population into exile. The later stages of the history of Andalusia reflect Palestinian history in the constant displacement of Muslims due to Christian advances. Comparison might well be drawn with the continuing appropriation of Palestinian land in the Occupied Territories by Israeli settlements and between Muhammad XI, regarded by history as an ineffective leader, and Yasser Arafat. The first poem, *fī-l-masā' al-'akhīr 'alā hadhihi al-'ard* 'The Last Evening in This Land' is, like Khāzīndār's poem discussed above, a portrayal of the night before, with the poetic voice trying to decide what to take, and imagining the violation of others living in his house and drinking the wine, eating the food, sleeping in the beds and even drinking '*the wine of our flowing muwashshahas*'. He also sees the place as betraying its occupants as it '*changes our dreams / as it changes its guests.*'

However, although crossing the line into exile only takes a moment, the state of exile can seem infinite and in many cases lasts for the rest of a person's life, and for ever if his/her body is buried in a foreign land. Darwīsh's poem '*abī* (My Father)⁴⁸ gives expression to this fear:

*My father once said:
He who has no homeland
Has no grave within the earth
. . . and he forbade me to travel.*

Movement and Wandering

Travelling and wandering form a large part of Arab exile poetry, although for many the depiction of wandering and exile has become part of a more general expression of loss and alienation, for example in the work of Tawfīq Ṣāyigh and 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, and for many poets it is a metaphor for what they see as a necessary process of self-discovery for the Arabs in the modern world. For some, there is a creative adoption of some of the themes of pre-Islamic poetry, when wandering was a natural state, which is a good example of T.S. Eliot's belief that poets should not ignore the past but should develop it and carry it forward into the future, and his 'dynamic' concept of tradition:

Tradition . . . was kept alive by the interaction between the new and the old through individual talent, which acted as a catalyst: not only did the old influence the new, but the new adjusted the relations and propositions of the old.⁴⁹

The wanderers are both individual and in groups; sometimes they are timeless or mythical, sometimes historical; sometimes they are travellers in a threatening modern world. It might be argued that the work of Palestinian poets is more concrete in this respect and that it is mainly non-Palestinian poets, lacking a collective discourse of return, who think in terms of voyages of discovery, and it is they who also tend to express the search for self-discovery, acceptance or transcendence through poetic masks. Al-Bayyātī is discussed in this respect in Chapter 3 and Adūnīs and Khalīl Ḥāwī in Chapter 4.

Two poems by Palestinians, Jabrā's 'In the Deserts of Exile'⁵⁰ and 'Emigration'⁵¹ by Zakariyyā Muḥammad (b. 1951), deal with a group who are in a wilderness, travelling away from somewhere, Jabrā's from their seized country and Muḥammad's, two generations later, from 'the camps'. Jabrā's group are wandering in the desert - a symbol of exile from classical and Biblical times - where spring is meaningless and 'eyes are full of frost and dust' but they envisage further wanderings in the modern world calling upon their land to:

*Remember us now wandering
Among the thorns of the desert,
Wandering in rocky mountains;
Remember us now
In the tumult of cities beyond deserts and seas;
Remember us with our eyes full of dust
That never clears in our ceaseless wandering.*

and they are looking back and remembering what was done to them:

*They crushed the flowers on the hills around us,
Destroyed the houses over our heads,
Scattered our torn remains,
Then unfolded the desert before us.*

The agency of their grief is all-powerful, even able to 'unfold the desert'.

'Emigration' is a poem of very simple images of what could be transhumant migrants in a past age going towards an indefinite 'place in the North / where the grasses grow / to the height of their breasts' with 'their children on the backs of mules' but with ominous undertones such as:

*They were like a cloud
climbing up to heaven*

as if they were about to disappear, and

The more they penetrated the land

*the more their shadows expanded
and returned towards the camps*

where they seem to be going west when north was mentioned earlier, and are travelling at sunset, and therefore into the night, when they should be striking camp, but the poem says earlier that they have left behind their tent pegs, the shadows seem to yearn to return to 'the camps', and

Their dogs were mute

and they are the only ones to look back, which gives a sense of foreboding. It is not clear what is happening in this epic other than renunciation and resignation, but there is a sense of finality in having left the tent pegs, which suggest the Qur'anic symbol of the stability of the earth. The opening '*They're all gone*', echoed later, '*They're gone*' implies that the people are lost and forgotten by the world, even if they survive individually. It is a hopeless reflection of the Palestinian condition.

In an appreciation of Zakariyyā Muḥammad his friend, the Jordanian poet Amjad Nāṣir, quotes a review:

They (Muhammad and Nasser) are poets of an epic, from which nothing is understood except sorrow, and narrators of stories from which nothing can be gleaned except a state of siege. Their images follow one upon the other until they no longer form a complete image but a single breath disrupted by the stumps of images. Yet, poetically, they know how to make you collude with them in the betrayal of the age.⁵²

and Jayyusi says that

his latest poetry trembles with the tragic but totally unsentimental voice of a poet who has reached the end of his endurance and finally realised how the world around the Palestinian has completed its conspiracy.⁵³

Adūnīs's 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Dākhil in '*Ayyām al-Ṣaqr*'⁵⁴ is a historical exile, one of the few members of the Umayyad dynasty to escape the Abbasid massacre in 750 CE. It is a poem of loss and of longing, set in a sort of waste land, a poem about the power of poetry (and of the poet - Adūnīs perhaps sees his hero as a reflection of himself) but also a poem of hope and faith in the power of the Arab heritage. As a Syrian, Adūnīs can identify with the Euphrates singing:

*'Quraysh
is a pearl that shines from Damascus
concealed beneath sandalwood and frankincense,
softer than Lebanon's longing,
more beautiful than the East can tell.'*

and the poem foretells a positive end, when

. . the hawk in his wandering, in his life-giving pessimism,

*builds on the summit in limitless passion
a beloved Andalusia,
an Andalusia rising from Damascus.
He carries to the West the harvest of the East.*

Here, in contrast to Andalusia being regarded as a symbol of Arab loss, and to Darwīsh's despair in 'Eleven Planets in the last Andalusian sky', Andalusia is a symbol of new creation after exile and also a statement of the great history of the Arabs and of the significant contribution that their civilisation has made to 'Western' civilisation.

Much of the poetry of Muḥammad al-As'ad gives examples of what could be described as Imagism and Vorticism in Arab poetry in the clarity and accumulation of its images and its sense of speed, heightened by the short lines, although he also experiments in other veins. Speed for him is not the speed of urban life and mechanisation as it was for the Vorticists and Futurists, but the speed of dispersal. He is the author of several collections of poetry, a book on criticism, *Poetic Diction*, a memoir of the 1948 exodus, *Children of the Dew*, mentioned above, which gives second hand memories of his childhood and of the exodus, collected from the accounts of older members of his family, and has written a book on Palestinian painting.

His poem 'Personal Account'⁵⁵ gives an impression of continuous movement, reflected in the movements of heavenly bodies, but with constant yet changing estrangement:

*You awaken in cities you don't know
Beneath a sky you don't know
Ghost and event split your loyalty
 You are the hour and the transient cloud.
A moon face
Rises at the far end of the earth
Sets . . .*

'*Ghost and event split your loyalty*' implies a clinging to memory and hence a reluctance to accept any present and stop and settle. There is dislocation and sleeplessness in the moon rising and setting in one night, made more explicit in the later *déjà vu* of the quasi-repetition of the last four lines, following a terrible expression of despair:

*Come, desolation overwhelms me.
A crowd of events divides me.
I am the machined hour and the transient cloud
A moon face
Rising at the far end of the earth
Sliding down
In this rocklike night.*

The pronoun has changed, as the poem keeps switching between first person singular and plural and an addressed second person, a further indication of alienation. The phrase 'rocklike night'

invokes Imru' al-Qays' famous description of a sleepless night in his *mu'allaqa*. Cities and the desert occur and re-occur; there are repetitions of words that already contain repetition within themselves:

Roads are circles

Coiling

Coiling

Coiling

and

. . . roads we awake

To see them extending,

Extending

Extending.

The short lines also give a sense of speed and vertigo, which accelerates towards the end of the poem

The dazed body . . .

Is submerged by a flood of sleep.

A thousand stony cities

Over the darkness and the desert simply

Float.

Once again

Cities collapse.

An arrow shoots into space

But does not return.

You try to figure out forgotten words

Fumbling for the first sound.

Once more you live in estrangement

Once again

Snares are clutching at your hands.

How alien things are

When you forget their ways.

There is a sense of dislocation and paranoia and then the hopeless two line coda:

What will come next

Will be even darker.

Jayyusi says that 'al-As'ad's poetry is rich in sensuous imagery and emotion and reflects the poet's involvement in the themes of personal love and the collective suffering of Palestinians living in the diaspora.⁵⁶ She also says that he managed to avoid the pulls and pitfalls of poetic fashion in the 1970s

remaining loyal to a self-contained, highly controlled form of expression. He is a poet of great artistic integrity and is the possessor of an unfaltering poetic instinct that enabled him to sustain his own lucid vision through the frenzied period of the seventies and to preserve linguistic and metaphorical frontiers solidly closed to gibberish and false adventurism. . . . No poet . . . is more committed than al-As'ad: the very nature of his sensibility stems from the fact of constant exile and sustained injustice. At the same time, however, his work is striking proof that poetic technique does not necessarily derive from thematic involvement, but stems rather from the poet's own artistic and attitudinal makeup and from the extent to which his or her sensibility will resist or succumb to the spuriously attractive artistic compromises of the age. All through the period of frenzy al-As'ad, with his refined urbanity and artistic restraint, quietly rejected the "legitimate" social expectations of the period and continued developing his art.⁵⁷

She also comments that the 'urbane tone' of his poetry does not reflect anything in his upbringing or education. He came originally from a village in Palestine, which he left when four years old, and then lived in a refugee camp in the south of Lebanon.

In such a camp he was neither in touch with an agricultural nor with a strictly urban environment, but rather hovered between many kinds of environments, none of them likely, one would have thought, to produce the distinctive urbanity characterising his poetry. The forces at work in the creativity of this and other poets are many and not always explicable.⁵⁸

Several of al-As'ad's poems are collages using a wide range of fleeting images from all over the world such as 'museum gates' and 'shopping malls', and he shows an interest in scientific thinking in 'botanical pain', the 'machined hour' and his references to planets and nebulae, part of the sense of dislocation from the cycles of nature that pervades his work. The vertiginous pace, terrifyingly boundless space and uncertainty of his poetry is very modern. Jayyusi's comments underline al-'Asad's originality: he is perhaps an example of the sort of complex idioculture that may be formed by a highly creative individual open and receptive to all kinds of influences, as defined by Derek Attridge.⁵⁹

Murīd Barghūthi is discussed in more detail later, but his short poem 'Exception'⁶⁰

*All of them arrive
river and train
sound and ship
light and letters
the telegrams of consolation
the invitations to dinner
the space ship
they all arrive / all but my step towards my own country . . .*

is a graphic if rather understated poem of exile, except for the bathos of the space ship in the penultimate line and the sharp contrast at the end. The clever mix of current physical modes of travel with the propagation of light and sound, the electromagnetic and physical modes of verbal communication and the means of travel of the future makes it a highly modernist poem that exacerbates feelings of movement and dispersal as well as the speed of modern life.

Parts of the poems of Buland al-Ḥaydarī (1926-96) express the sense of endless wandering:

*. . . footsteps rambling on the pavement that returns to nowhere
From a thousand ports I came
To a thousand ports I will be gone
And in my eyes are a thousand waitings*

heightened here by the use of 'thousand'. As an Iraqi political exile, al-Ḥaydarī's country and home still exist, but, ground down by travel, he fears he might never return:

*I am afraid
That my sad silent nights will wake up
And life will be as life tells us it is:
A hand waving on a pavement that returns to nowhere.⁶¹*

Wandering can be very painful, but so too can be restriction.

Restrictions and Indignities

Groups of exiles, both those expelled from their country and inner exiles, are restricted in their movements and may be physically restricted in being confined, sometimes for very long periods, in camps or even prison. Groups and individuals abroad may be under constant pressure – from the political oppressors from whom they have fled if they constitute some form of resistance, who may try to suppress their voices or even capture or assassinate them, and/or from the authorities or even the people of the countries in which they are currently living which exacerbates the inevitable strain of being an intruder and different.

Boullata interprets No. 24 in 'al-Qaṣīda K', by Tawfiq Ṣāyigh, as a 'symbolic poem . . . in which the poet, as a traveller without a passport, loses hope of ever entering God's Kingdom in the same manner as he has lost hope of ever returning to Palestine occupied by hostile authorities.'⁶² Elsewhere, the same poem is called 'To Enter a Country'⁶³ and can be read as expressing the indignities of exile for one arriving in a ship at a port who will

*. . . see
in the evening
a handsome, intimidating giant
rise upright before your eyes,
a face that's terrified you before
in a thousand ports,*

a thousand countries.

...

he bellows: "Your passport?"

No passport –

No entry

If you don't have it,

get out.

It could be said that since the establishment of Israel almost all Palestinians have been under some sort of restriction. Those abroad became exiles or are refugees, whether within the Arab world or outside it. Arab countries all have their own agendas and varying external influences: exiles and migrants are used as cheap labour in the Gulf states; in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon Palestinian refugees are a strain on resources and a potential cause of instability and many are restricted to camps; and most regimes are afraid of destabilisation by intellectuals and the politically committed. Those living in Israel, whether displaced or not, are subject to discriminatory laws and regulations and are restricted in their movements; those in the West Bank and Gaza were controlled by Jordan and Egypt until 1967 and then occupied by Israel. Parts of these areas have become increasingly crowded with the influx of refugees from Israel and those displaced by Israeli annexation of land, against which they have little redress. People are restricted in both their daily and working lives by road blocks, barriers, checkpoints and curfews.

Maḥmūd Darwīsh's famous poem 'Identity Card' (1964), described by Edward Said as the Palestinian national poem, rages against the indignities of life for ordinary Palestinians living in Israel shortly after its establishment. In its harsh staccato rhythms it echoes 'Platform Poetry', and was transmitted throughout the country as were the works of oral poets. All Palestinians had to carry an identity card at all times, and were continually subjected to checks, as is made clear in the six repetitions of *sijjil* (write down, record) in the poem, and resentment is apparent in the use of the imperative. The poem partially describes Darwīsh's father, who was forced to work in a quarry in order to support his family after their return to Palestine, because of the appropriation of their land, as described in the memoir *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-'adi*,⁶⁴ so the poet is drawing upon experience, but it doesn't mention the indemnity, denying basic human rights, that such workers had to sign absolving their employers from responsibility for any injuries they might incur.⁶⁵ The poem is passionate and direct, in the first person, with a harsh rhythm and frequent repetition of the harsh imperative '*sijjil*' (write down) that are suited to performance and oral transmission, so simple people in similar situations can easily identify with it, but is highly ironic and dramatically structured in beginning and ending with an obdurate stand against the occupier with intermediate 'stanzas' alternating between the current situation and the past, first the continuous family history and then an account of the seizure of land. It depicts the Palestinian situation and jibes at Israeli demographic fears:

'Identity Card' (*Biṭāqa huwīyya*) (1964)⁶⁶

Write down:

*I am an Arab
 my I.D. number, 50,000
 my children, eight
 and the ninth due next summer
 -- Does that anger you?*

Write down:

*Arab.
 I work with my struggling friends in a quarry
 and my children are eight.
 I chip a loaf of bread for them,
 clothes and notebooks
 from the rocks.*

and is also a strong depiction of the toil of making a minimal living, as well as expressing the Palestinian peasant farmer's deep familial connection with the land in Biblical terms, evoking the beginning of time and genealogies:

*My roots have gripped this soil
 since time began,
 before the opening of ages
 before the cypress and the olive,
 before the grasses flourished.
 My father came from a line of ploughmen
 and my grandfather was a peasant
 who taught me about the sun's glory
 before teaching me to read.*

The 'opening of ages' and the cypress connect to the Arab literary heritage, but mention of a 'line of ploughmen' and 'peasant' root the poem in current time and ordinary people. Parts of the poem are good examples of the Palestinian 'land rhetoric' discussed in Chapter 3 in the depiction of deep family connections to the land, and it is also accusatory:

*You have stolen my ancestors vineyards
 and the land I once ploughed
 with my children,
 leaving my grandchildren
 nothing but rocks.*

and then threatening, but in a dignified manner that eschews the theft, and the hatred generated to justify it, of his opponents:

*I do not hate
 and do not steal
 but starve me, and I will eat*

my assailant's flesh.
Beware of my hunger
and of my anger.

The burden of the sheer difficulty of finding any sort of job has remained – a high proportion of Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Territories are unemployed, living on UN handouts, and movement is impeded by checkpoints, and frequent closures and curfews. Education and health care are similarly restricted.

In addition to the shared physical restrictions, intellectuals are restricted in other ways. They are often denied avenues of learning and communication. Writers in Israel and the occupied territories face terrible dilemmas, under conditions such as those described by Ḥanān 'Ashrāwī as long ago as 1978, but having as much relevance today, where she wrote of the plight of writers who feel

most keenly the economic and psychological pressures of living under occupation. Lack of freedom can be confronted or evaded, but when writers and intellectuals are unable to survive physically, then the sacrifices demanded of them become unbearable. The brain drain from occupied Palestinian has reached alarming proportions, with the educated young seeking a living elsewhere. Such a danger is enhanced by the symbolic role these people play in the eyes of society as a whole: they are the national figures, symbols of resistance and political as well as aesthetic consciousness, who are wielding their mighty pens in the face of the enemy. Such a tremendous responsibility is placed on their shoulders, burdened with the aspirations of a whole nation, that they are no longer free agents or individuals. The repercussions of their actions are quite serious and widespread, and in the words of the budding poet Walīd al-Hallīs, "A poet who leaves destroys a nationalist phenomenon," and lets down a whole generation who looks up to him.⁶⁷

This dilemma is apparent in some of the writings of Maḥmūd Darwīsh (including his correspondence with Samīḥ al-Qāsim, who has remained in Israel⁶⁸) and is reflected in his poetry and that of others, for example the '*diploma of a son / framed in gold, coated with dust*' in Murīd Barghūthi's poem 'The Tribes'.⁶⁹ The situation of Arab poets living in Israel and the resulting tensions and divisions are discussed below.

In Limbo

The prose poem *maṭār* 'Athīnā 'Athens Airport'⁷⁰ by Maḥmūd Darwīsh is a powerful modern metaphor for both the displacement and the limbo of exile. The poem is obviously not strictly representational. Transition and air travel are the *raison d'être* of an airport, but that reality is punctured in the poem by incompatible time scales - the mention of years, a marriage ceremony

and making investments, and *milieu*, by the replies that the group is “*From the sea*”, their destination is “*The sea*”, and the statement that they are ‘*waiting for the sea*’, all of which echo the expulsion by sea from Beirut. But airports are also places of boredom and misery, where the waiting may be, and can certainly seem, longer than the journey, as well as places of limbo since within passport control areas the passenger is cut off from the outside world and only provided with basic necessities – or the superfluous in Duty Free shops. For the passenger between flights or the would-be immigrant this limbo is a prison. Readers in many parts of the world can identify to some extent with the boredom, discomfort and limbo of airports, and are therefore in a position to extrapolate their experiences, and identify to some degree with the poem.

The poem uses multiple voices providing snapshots, often ironic, of various personae which give impressions of the disruption of life for ordinary people and of the roles that have developed as a sort of meta-structure of the Palestinian situation. It begins:

Athens Airport boots us to other airports. A fighter said: “Where can I fight?” A pregnant woman blurted at him: “Where can we have our child?” An employee said: “Where can I invest my money?” . . .

The first phrase is an inspired translation of the Arabic *maṭār’ athīnā yuwazza’unā lil-maṭārāt* where ‘boots’ implies being kicked out and perhaps even the computer jargon of a restart, and the Arabic *yuwazza’unā* is equally rich in the meaning of ‘redistributes us’, and hence splitting up. The fighter’s question is ominous – he has become a fighter because of the Palestinian situation and his question implies both that he can see no end to that situation and that he can imagine no other life, yet he is connected to life by the woman who is bearing his child, a pressing predicament that must be addressed. The customs officials, common personae of the poetry of exile, are present; so are a frustrated young couple wanting to consummate their marriage (like the pregnant woman a symbol that life goes on, even with little hope of its being a normal life); so, ironically, is an analyst making Delphic pronouncements: “*They die so they may not die. They die overlooked.*” The writer is also present as in this group of poems, as in much of his work, Darwīsh is conscious of the role of the poet. And a woman says: “*My bundle is my village!*” Nothing else remains for her. The people all appear to be different and are each encapsulated by a single facet of their identity, a corollary of Amin Mahlouf’s ideas on the loss of the numerous threads of identity, discussed above, and of the dangers of one component becoming dominant – this is certainly so for the fighter, who cannot imagine a normal life, and by his existence makes life difficult for others, and perhaps for the poet who may become introverted, absorbed in his poetry and detached from life – although in writing such a poem Darwīsh is avowing his commitment to life and to his people.

Apart from airports there are other transient places of exile – public places for people who may have no private space. Jassim al-Musawī writes of the ‘[t]averns, cafes, stations and sidewalks’ which have ‘punctuated’ al-Bayyātī’s poems since *Abārīq Muhashshamah* (1954) ‘fixing and posting him to the wall, a voyeur . . .’⁷¹ and they punctuate the lives of others as well. There are also refugee camps.

Parts of Aḥmad Daḥbūr's poem 'I Do Not Renounce Madness'⁷² reflect the life in camps of the first generation of exiles and their children and the birth of the third generation. Born in 1946, Daḥbūr spent most of his childhood and youth in a camp:

*People survive in the camps, despite surveillance
 God's camping grounds are vast, and His exile, so full of traps,
 is loaded with police reconnaissance
 but we do not die
 we generate new life in wombs and the dead
 return and multiply . .*

and even under surveillance, and as external forces haggle over them, people carry on with their lives:

*The Enemy is the Enemy
 These locusts are the Enemy

 This siege is the Enemy
 Equal divisions as they split the camp between them
 But the camp does not die
 and here the children carry the bomb and wheat stalks, and
 the good is abundant in this world, and chains aren't sufficient
 to close the playgrounds, and one clear day, the children shall
 return in the same boats. . .*

Part of this has a Biblical tone with locusts, children gleaning wheat stalks and 'the good is abundant in this world' but it mixes with the present time, and 'locusts' is a fresh and effective simile for the enemy. There are gleams of hope in the reference back to the boats of the 'white clouds . . . lit with thunder . . . [which] have split into boats' of the expulsion of the exiles quoted earlier, and in that, although the extract talks of the ever-present fear of death, it ends with a refusal to look back, a commitment to human relationships and hope in contemplating having a child, even in a camp:

*Laila is with me
 We walk on rubble, and weep like this, in public,
 laugh, like this, in public, and make fun of the word "Why"
 No, we shan't return to our childhood
 From here, the new begins, and childhood shall return to
 Laila's womb, be born in the camp, and the camp shall grow
 and grow, then it will run
 in the direction of the water spring
 and engender a world

 And I shall have time to write a different poem.*

Laila and her black eyes evoke pre-Islamic poetry and the story of Layla and Majnūn, who fell in love as children, but in an inversion of pre-Islamic poetry the ending of the poem evokes the *aṭlāl*, and in further inversions the rubble of this unnatural camp is lasting, the poet is with his beloved 'in public' rather than lamenting her, and although they weep, they laugh as well. The refusal to return to childhood is a rejection of the nostalgic inclinations of some other writers, and a hope for political maturity directed towards seeking a viable solution. Perhaps there is a brief *madīh*, with the hope of engendering a world, and being able to 'write a different poem'.

Large numbers of the Palestinian people have been in a state of exile for decades, many of them living in refugee 'camps', a highly paradoxical term. In Murīd Barghūthi's poem 'The Tribes'⁷³ references to

Tents and more tents

are rich in allusion and paradox. A tent of stone or with chandeliers and brass gates is a contradiction in terms, as the essence of a tent is its portability; the wandering tribes of the pre-Islamic past no longer exist; their relicts in Palestine, whose impermanent camps were the basis of a permanent way of life lasting for centuries, have now been dispossessed; however tents imply a camp, and the ugly UNRWA constructions of the refugee camps could be bitterly described as 'tents of stone' and have acquired an appalling permanence. The poem could also be interpreted as a condemnation of nostalgia and trying to live in the past:

*Our tribes retain their charm
now that the tribes are out of date!*

and a critique of the anachronisms of parts of the Arab world, its superficial modernity and ambivalent attitudes to women and to Islam with references to the evil eye, whiskey and soda, wine and 'the fourth wife'. And it is surely a barb at the uneasy balance between Saudi ideals of Bedouin asceticism and ornate chandeliered palaces.

People living in a state of limbo through no fault of their own experience despair, uncertainty and humiliation and may also be in danger, as were the victims of the 1982 massacres by Christian militias in the Beirut refugee camps, Şabra and Shatila, and as civilians in the Occupied Territories are in danger of the effects of Israeli reprisals for the operations of Palestinian activists. Activists themselves are discussed in the next section.

Activists and Prisoners

Some people escape into exile to avoid threatening situations in their countries, but exile is not necessarily safety. Most of the situations discussed so far in this chapter have been those of dispossession and of insecurity, or of danger through presence in a war zone, but people who are activists inevitably expose themselves to the risks of prison or assassination, and many others have been imprisoned simply for expressing political views. Prison may be regarded as a type of exile as it involves separation and dispossession, and for political prisoners and those imprisoned for

délits d'opinion it has causes in common. Writing about activism and political imprisonment implies commitment or at least sympathy: it is expressing a point of view and is an account of 'man's inhumanity to man', but it seems that people in prison or who have been in prison also write for comfort, catharsis, and to preserve their humanity, and as an assertion of that humanity. Some such accounts can, in spite of their subject matter, become works of art.

Activists may write to express their rage, to justify their actions or to promote their causes. Such writing may be bombastic, extolling martyrdom and intended to inspire or incite others. The Palestinian Kamāl Nāṣir worked as a journalist in Jordan after the partition of Palestine and was imprisoned several times by the Jordanian authorities because of the explicit political content of his writing. His poem 'The Leaders of My Country'⁷⁴ was written in 1960, when the leaders of the poet's country were effectively the governments of Jordan and Egypt, more concerned with their own affairs than the ineffective and undermined Palestinian leadership of the time, still formally the Mufti of Jerusalem. It could be applied with equal bitterness at earlier and later times. The poem begins castigating those leaders:

*When I write the history of my country
with tears and ink,
I will reserve a dark page
for disgrace,
a page wearied by nights of tattered mourning,
a page that exposes the secrets of corruption
and deceit in the course of our long struggle.
I will speak openly
to the perplexed millions in my country
about our leaders.*

and later praises his suffering compatriots:

*When I write the history of my country
in my youth, in my blood
I will reserve a page for the people flooded with glory
an immortal red page in the book of redemption
fired with heroism, bleeding in sacrifice and martyrdom*

...

John Mikhail Asfour says that Nāṣir's poetry was committed to documenting the struggle of the Palestinians, not only in Israel but in other Arab countries where they were at times subjected to hardships and discrimination, and that, like other Palestinian poetry it is charged with emotion and pain, but is distinguished by 'its cultivated vocabulary and symbolic thrust . . . from the direct and colloquial style favoured by poets like Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Samīḥ al-Qāsim.'⁷⁵ The poem bears this out, and it is obviously trying to project bravery and confidence, but, although it projects deep feeling it does not quite ring true.

'Letter to Fadwā',⁷⁶ written in reply to a poem that Fadwā Ṭūqān sent him when he was imprisoned in the West Bank in the fifties but obviously intended for a wider audience, is a poem of constriction, suffering, and of solidarity, and addresses both Fadwā and his homeland:

*If my songs should reach you
despite the blocked skies around us,
it is because I've spread my wings
to embrace your tortured span,
because we share tragedy
and dark destiny,
and together we partake of
memories, wishes, dreams.*

*I am what you've wanted me to be
and what hardships have decreed.*

declaring that he has been formed by the events of his life and his love for his homeland, and stating his dedication, implying that he was prepared to sacrifice his poetry and his youth for it:

*I've loved my homeland, so my heart
aspires joyously to brave the tides.
Regret or cease? That could not be!
Since when did a poet seek honour or regret?*

...

*Life seethes in my youthful veins
yet I wander naked, seeking life for
my wounded people, that they might live
with happy pride, building their world.*

'Since when did a poet seek honour or regret?' again does not quite ring true in such an ostentatiously heroic poem, and perhaps demonstrates the tensions of a poet in a non-heroic age using the forms of a lost heroic one. However, this is a man who is fully aware of the dangers of his actions; he knows many who have died for the Palestinian cause, and at the end of the poem he writes in the voice of a martyr who believes in a form of resurrection. Perhaps at the time of writing the poem he feared for his life, and intended it to be an epitaph. His continuing to be involved in some form of resistance inevitably led to its being prophetic:

*If my songs should reach you
despite the narrow skies around me,
remember that I will return to life,
to the quest for liberty,
remember that my people may call on my soul
and feel it rising again from the folds of the earth.*

After the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 Nāṣir joined the PLO and in 1969 was elected as a member of the Executive Office. He was assassinated in Beirut in 1973, along with two other PLO leaders, by Israeli commandos in 'Operation Spring of Youth', against the background of 'a long list of PLO and Israeli acts of terror from Bangkok to New York' in the period of the beginnings of Israeli settlement in the Occupied Territories and of PFLP hijackings and Black September activism,⁷⁷ far removed from the ancient heroic world that his language evokes. He was regarded, and promoted, as a martyr and his complete poetic works were published in Beirut in 1974.

Another activist of the same generation as Nāṣir, was the poet, essayist and journalist Mu'īn Bṣīṣū who also wrote prose works on his life and his imprisonment. The two men represent different facets of the Palestinian experience of the 1950s and early 1960s, as Nāṣir fell under Jordanian authority but Bṣīṣū was born in Gaza which was taken over by Egypt. He was a Marxist and a political activist and spent most of the 1950s in prison at the hands of the Egyptians because they 'persecuted members of communist and other nationalist parties in Gaza because they embraced different beliefs from those of the Egyptian authorities' and his graphic memoir *Palestinian Notebooks* 'reflect[s] the way people during that early period looked at political and cultural life, and how the long night of the Palestinians started as soon as the catastrophe of 1948 divided their country and scattered their people.'⁷⁸ He worked mainly as a teacher, but was also a journalist, and lived in Cairo, Baghdad, Beirut, (where he was an advisor to the Unified Information Bureau of the PLO, and had to leave in the 1982 exodus) Damascus, Moscow and finally London, where he died suddenly in 1984.

Some of his poems are in a heroic and sometimes violent vein, for example 'Footsteps',⁷⁹ about a man who has been 'kidnapped . . . from his trench' and 'flung into the cells' darkness', which begins 'Brother! If they should sharpen the sword on my neck, / I would not kneel, even if their whips lashed my bloodied mouth' and ends 'Now the hero lives, his footsteps ringing triumphantly / within the closed walls of every prison.' 'The Vinegar Cup'⁸⁰ explicitly compares the agony of the activist to the crucifixion of Christ, and expects his martyrdom to have comparable influence:

*For if I should not rip apart
how would you be born from my heart?
How would I be born from your heart?
Oh, my people!*

'Sailor Returning from Occupied Shores'⁸¹ is gentler in its addressing a lover, but still somewhat heroic in hinting at ancient epics such as the *Odyssey* and *Sindbad*. It implies continued exile, conflict and suffering:

*But I've been fated to perpetual travel!
A wave arrives from the sea,
clutches at my sails,
and will not let them go,*

*The winds clutch
at my thirsty heart,
and the blood of my wounds
remains fresh for each new morning.*

This final section could be compared to the myths of the Flying Dutchman, doomed to perpetual travel, and Prometheus, who was punished for giving fire to Man by having his liver pecked out each day by an eagle while it rebuilds itself each night for him to be tortured anew.

However, 'To Rimbaud' (1967)⁸²

*When Rimbaud became a slave-trader
And threw his net
Over Ethiopia
To catch black lions
Black swans
He abandoned poetry . . .
How honest was that little boy . . .*

indicates the dilemmas of the poet. The implication of the poem is that doing evil is incompatible with poetic sensibility, and that it requires dishonesty or self-delusion to write poetry when doing evil, but it goes on to say that many poets who became 'slave-traders', 'usurers' and 'representatives of publicity agencies' did not abandon poetry. The poem could be pointing at Israeli poets and Palestinian/Arab poets who accept living under oppressive regimes, to the detriment of their poetry, as argued by Ḥanān 'Ashrāwī,⁸³ but it also raises the issues of poetry subordinated to commitment and of poets with blood on their hands.

Heroic poetry does not ring very true in the modern age, except perhaps in 'platform poetry' where the poet is a performer and crowd emotions run high, and attempts to perpetuate heroic genres tend to fail, as they do not match the spirit of the times. Jayyusi condemns 'the frenzied experiments of the seventies' in Palestinian poetry, since 'the poets' vision, focused as it was on the notion of heroic grandeur and on celebrating an enduring challenge to injustice, [did not] allow them to see, in their own lives and in the lives of those around them, the disintegrated and humiliated existence of men and women rendered gratuitous victims to coercive regimes.'⁸⁴

Terri DeYoung discusses the ambivalent position of the heroic genre *rithā'* (elegy) in connection with poems published following the death of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir in 1970. *Rithā'* had, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries been 'an ideal vehicle for contesting colonialism' but 'once circumstances changed and colonial rule was expressed through more covert institutional structures following World War I . . . public elegy found itself the object of unrelenting attacks by the "Arab romantic" literary schools . . . [who articulated] a counter-discourse to that of their predecessors, one which valorized sincerity, originality, emotional authenticity and the idea of individual (as opposed to national) freedom.'⁸⁵ An 'official' Ministry of Culture collection of elegies was published two years after 'Abd al-Nāṣir's death, but *Kitābāt*

'*alā Qabr 'Abd al-Nāṣir* which was published a year earlier, and 'contains the writings of many stellar names . . . like Adūnīs, Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Amal Danqal, Samīḥ al-Qāsim, Fadwā Ṭūqān and Ḥijāzī . . . exudes an air of being fugitive, perhaps even oppositional, to the official "business of mourning" for a revered public figure.'⁸⁶ The poets see 'Abd al-Nāṣir in his totality, as a somewhat flawed and failed hero, and one who had shackled poets and free discourse. Adūnīs's poem 'An Introduction to the History of the Petty Kings' uses the ambivalent 'objective correlative' of a time of turmoil in Islamic Spain, distinguished by divisions and weak leadership, that ended in disaster, rather evocative of the modern fissiparous Arab world that 'Abd al-Nāṣir was unable to unite. Most of the poems in this earlier volume were ignored in the official collection in favour of more traditional works. Of the three modernist poems (of four) retained, two were by members of the committee, but DeYoung argues in respect of the third, 'The Man with the Green Shadow' by Darwīsh, that 'a good deal of its appeal may have had to do with how it directly confronts the question . . . How can *riḥā*' recreate itself to speak with both public and private voices? That Darwīsh's exploration of this problem was an exceptionally thoughtful one that gave due consideration to the concerns of the traditionalists and the reformers in this respect was no doubt important in the positive evaluation accorded it by critics.'⁸⁷

Mai Ṣāyigh is of a later generation than Nāṣir and Bsīsū but was also, from 1968, associated with the PLO. Like Bsīsū, she was born in Gaza, but had to leave in 1956,⁸⁸ presumably for activism against the Egyptians. She has been a feminist as well as an activist and 'has dedicated her life to the cause of freedom and has a particular interest in the women's liberation movement.'⁸⁹ She was part of the withdrawal from Beirut in 1982, and as well as three collections of poems, she has written a prose account of the Israeli invasion and siege of Beirut. Some of her poetry is polemic in tone, but this is usually softened or balanced by feminine attitudes, as perhaps Nāṣir's 'Letter to Fadwā' and his 'From nowhere in the world', addressed to his mother,⁹⁰ and Bsīsū's 'Sailor Returning from Occupied Shores' are softened by being addressed to women.

The poem 'Elegy for Umm 'Ali'⁹¹ combines feminism and activism as its subject worked for the Resistance and was killed. It is propagandist⁹² and written in a slightly bombastic vein, but there is feeling in the depiction of Umm 'Ali's repression of tears and connections with nature 'She huddles over [her city's] newborn dawn / planting stars in that hopeful sphere', and 'from you I learned how basil grows' also expresses the continuity of life and implicitly Umm 'Ali's cause.

'Lament'⁹³ is similarly about resistance and martyrdom, and powerfully is addressed to the person who has been killed, but the grief of exile is present in the sense of separation and in the contrast between the first stanza, full of symbols of rural Palestine, especially the evocation of scents:

*Those we love die like birds,
mourned by orange trees which never wither
tomorrow when birds return to Gaza
to peck at your blue window*

*while narcissus perfume is everything
and jasmine fills the air. . .*

and a crowded city under occupation, where the poet records the fact of haphazard death, separated from family and friends, which is only learnt of later, after a period of anxiety and uncertainty :

*On dark alley walls
our comrades' deaths are announced
posters show their smiling faces
The usual way we learn
one has fallen on the long road*

and the occupying forces who impair mourning:

*foreign helmets that sting like whips
block your funeral
pursuing your beloved name
wrapped in a coffin that rests on Gaza's wounds*

The poem is feminine, in giving expression to grief, but it refuses to be overemotional and demands an acceptance that personal grief is only part of the shared grief for a cause:

*Yet when they drank to you in the pine woods
I asked why
a tear hesitated in my cousin's eye
the tear in her green eye
that told me of your death
what a great poster that'll make!*

even though

I burn with grief

The ending is an expression of the lack of power, but the endurance, of a woman:

*I learn to perfection the art of waiting
on the sidewalks of love and fire.*

...

Şāyigh's poem 'Departure' on leaving Beirut, discussed above, is not in a specifically feminine voice, and nor is 'From Beirut under Siege A last letter to my son'⁹⁴ except perhaps in

This war breaks the heart

and in the suggestion of expected grief, but also expected suppression in

*I would not object if one day soon
you wake up to find my martyred face
on a poster.*

It is mainly a poem of steadfast resistance, acceptance of martyrdom and hoped for resurrection, expressed in natural imagery:

*Beirut, that fortress in the flames,
will not succumb to fire's touch.
She lives like a cactus flower.
Pomegranate blossoms unfurl from her wounds,
and birds build new homes.*

It warns of the complexity of the Palestinian situation and the danger of deception or compromise:

*Son, be careful,
hypocrisy has a whole cast of actors,
as do compromise and caution*

and again it shows the dangers of war with bullets, guns and mixed imagery:

*But you are meant for danger,
winds and rains
smearing the sky with spring
and martyrs.*

and personification of war:

*War gobbles the heart,
rips life from my hands,
halts the stars in their orbits,
extinguishes day.*

Şāyigh's poetry transcends being activist and feminist.

Some of the poetry quoted above, notably that of Mai Şāyigh, does transcend being 'committed' and there are highly poetic accounts of great suffering in prison. Abdellatif Laâbi, imprisoned in his native Morocco for *délits d'opinion*⁹⁵ writes of loneliness and torture, but also of consolations: the community of prisoners and their occasional singing together;⁹⁶ the joy and connection to life from things such as a small patch of ground that the prisoners were allowed to cultivate as a garden: 'You go around the square of earth with the same respectful and wondering awe as that of the pilgrim making the circuit around the Kaâba' and even being able to make a gift 'Before leaving you pick a few bindweed which you put between the pages of a large book or dictionary. Once they are well pressed you will be able to fasten them to the letters you send to your wife and closest friends.'⁹⁷ and the top of a palm-tree in another courtyard of his prison and the 'secret communion nurtured throughout my sentence by moments of self-rediscovery I felt at the sight of those free-waving fronds'.⁹⁸ The prison experience is described in flashbacks, as the book also handles the disorientation of being back in the real world, and the problems of readjustment and rebuilding of identity and of interrupted relationships. Laâbi writes in French, but he has also translated Arabic poetry into French and has published several anthologies.

People grow out of committed or resistance poetry, partly as their resistance group is dispersed or the cause ends or as the initial outrage fades and becomes a chronic state of suppressed anger or despair, and partly as they mature and move into a wider sphere. For example, al-Bayyātī's early resistance poetry was against the British and their clients in Iraq, Darwīsh's early work was written as an Arab living under Israeli rule soon after the establishment of Israel and Laâbi's initial resistance poetry was against the French and then the King of Morocco. All three have matured into broader and more contemplative work, and have perhaps allowed themselves to be more poetic. Kamāl Nāṣir did not survive to grow out of what now seems rather old-fashioned poetry. Many of the more poetic and moving accounts of the dangers of the activist or political exile are written in a more objective vein by those who, while they may have suffered such dangers themselves, write of others or of abstract figures. They also probe the psychological state of the pursued, and of the individual who constantly moves from city to city, solitary room to solitary room.

Living with Danger

As military or political activists try to organise opposition outside their country, so surveillance follows them or they are seen as a potential destabilising influence on their host countries. Even writers and intellectuals who are simply stating a case are not immune from this. Hence, some people such as Palestinian officials or political exiles from repressive regimes in the Middle East or North Africa live in constant fear of death or imprisonment and are therefore continually under strain, on the move, and unable to settle or feel secure anywhere.

Two very different poems, by Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Aḥmad Daḥbūr, showing different ways of dealing with the loss of a friend and compatriot were written in memory of the Palestinian intellectual and PLO representative in France, 'Izzidīn al-Qalaq, who was assassinated in Paris in August 1978.⁹⁹ The poems are propagandist in publicising the death of one who could be regarded as a martyr, and perhaps transmutations of the *rithā'* (elegy) which, in the twentieth century, 'finds itself seemingly obliged to recreate itself in modern Arabic literature in terms of a poetic that privileges the private voice over the public one.'¹⁰⁰ The prevailing tone of both poems is of affection for the dead man, who is depicted more as a victim than a hero, but they also contain other strands. Both reflect al-Qalaq's awareness of his peril and his distracted, sometimes philosophical, sometimes half-humorous attitude towards it. Darwīsh¹⁰¹ begins:

*At the door of his room he said
They kill us without reasons.
Do you like French wine and les femmes distraites?*

but later it emerges that al-Qalaq is a thorn in the flesh of the Israelis:

*They told me that they'd give me
Twenty thousand francs
For a speech in which I would convince*

*The French gauchistes that the prisons on the West Bank
Were really only clinics . . .*

In a glimpse into the subject's mind, the poem portrays his fear and his humour

*He would say his last goodbye to me
Every time we met
Since in his mind he pictured me
Following his coffin. Rising from the flowers,
He could ask:
Are you now convinced
That they kill us without reasons?*

but also his current state of distraction and not being able to lead a full life, and inevitably looking to the past:

*He would fall in love, and then forget.

But he remembered every leaf on every plant
That grew alongside roads
That lead from Northern Palestine.*

There are touches of nostalgia:

*Do you remember childhood,
How we snatched our hearts and fingers
From the brown cats that lived outside the door.*

and of love for things lost by both current and former generations:

*. . . My father wishes he could sleep
On the stones that sleep within his soul. . .
I am a native of the Carmel,
A mountain which the evening melts down into kisses.
I lay under the pines for fifteen winters.*

Darwish is in the poem partly, through al-Qalaq, contemplating the state of distant exile of which he himself is now a part, and the voice speaking often varies in the Arabic, as an explicit dialogue. The poem depicts the general state of the Arab exiled community:

*He let himself be trailed by the eyes
That knew his shadow. Crowded by the streets,
By the friends on their way to solitary confinement
Or to the latest film.*

and later a sort of companionship in limbo:

We sang together of the vagueness that enwrapped us.

It ends with a picture of al-Qalaq's death that links him to his homeland through maps, lost comrades and the symbol of the mother, whose letter telling him to come home in the summer, as well as one from Beirut telling him to be on his guard, he reads immediately before his death. In his room, that is all that is currently his life:

*He inspects his papers,
And the homeland waiting in the map.
He counts the pictures of the dead
That line his walls.
He finds the letter that his mother wrote him,
The bullet that has found him finds him
'Come home with the summer, please, my son.'*

There are hints of the pleasures of Paris that the threatened exile cannot wholly enjoy, and that Paris, although accepting him, is not excessively vigilant on his behalf: *'In July, all Paris will head south. / Perhaps the ones who kill might also head south.'* The assassins cynically bided their time and al-Qalaq was killed in August.

The poem combines the statement of al-Qalaq's assassination with a portrait of him as a friend and a likeable human being, and a glimpse of the life of an exile, unable to feel secure or trustful, assailed by memories of Palestine and the Arab world, the pleasures of Paris that cannot be unthinkingly enjoyed, and tantalising unattainable love. Although the title implies death, and al-Qalaq sees every goodbye as a last goodbye and envisages his own funeral, there is a degree of tension enhanced by the contrast of the theme with the rambling structure of the poem and references to daily life in Paris. The poem is an early example of Darwish's *lughat al-tahwīm*¹⁰² where the form, repetitions and rhythms of the poem almost outweigh the content. They reflect a chronic state, and the death of al-Qalaq, despite its premonitions comes as a shock, heightened by the anticlimax.

Rana Kabbani's translation tightens up the poem, and removes several references to a female figure who may be called *'what you will. / A woman, a language, a homeland, a mirror,'* as well as hints of betrayal and of the fear and impotence of the exiled community in a foreign country. Al-Qalaq contemplates suicide because he feels that he can trust no-one in his unstable world: *'For might not friends betray like enemies / for friends pass by like a stream?'*, and at the end of the poem he is lured from his room because *'... they told him / that his friend the Arab student wanted to see him urgently'* and then the student *'gave him a frightened greeting / but very soon drew back – and at the fatal shot / returned to the chestnut trees / to drink his cold coffee.'*¹⁰³ The translation ends dramatically, but the original ends in anticlimax as the student returns to his cold coffee – rather as life goes on as Icarus is falling from the sky in Brueghel's painting or a herd soon returns to its grazing after one of their number has been picked off by a predator.

Dahbūr's poem¹⁰⁴ is angry rather than sad and resigned, and makes a martyr of al-Qalaq, but it also reflects affection for his friend, the community of exiled Palestinian intellectuals and activists,

and the misery of being observed, pursued and in fear of one's life on top of being an exile. Al-Qalaq is denied even a transient home, but manages to joke about it:

*'Izzidin came laughing toward me
whipping out that old notebook of his
and proceeded to list his would-be killers.
He did not speak about his strange uncertain nights:
"Each day under a different roof!
Behind you creep plagues, fools and the cops!"
He laughs, "It's Paris, you know."*

He is a symbol of the recurrent misery of Palestinians, and of betrayals, as the whole world seems to be against him and his hunters will get him in the end:

*He is our wretched land
If danger misses,
why, gravity pulls it back again to strike
He unmasked the tyrants with their lies
capitals deserted him . . .
. . . They kill you
but each morning tells again
the story of your resurrection
and the killers shiver
murmuring, "Why don't the refugees just die?"
Say, "They will not die!"*

The poem is also a polemic as it is an exhortation to the Palestinians to be steadfast and tells them that if they do not endure then the blood of al-Qalaq, and others like him, is 'on our hands', although Daḥbūr condemns other parts of the Arab world:

*I do not exonerate the vipers of the oil wells
or pass light sentence on their petrodollars
for I pursue a black rose growing in my heart
while the evidence overwhelms me.*

'A black rose' is a reflection of the blackness of oil, and the betrayals of those who benefit from it by channelling wealth away from their peoples, on whom he would not 'pass light sentence'.

Daḥbūr's poetry can be sad and affecting at a human level, longing for simple human happiness, as in 'I do not Renounce Madness' discussed above and the short poem 'The Terms of Ambition'¹⁰⁵

*I assemble my points of ambition –
to drink tea at dawn, and spin freely
in the city*

*of my buried treasures,
 and to correspond with her
 who has lightened my stress.
 In order to achieve this,
 I need to establish in the city of my soul:
 time, and a safe land.
 Hardly the requisites of an agitator?
 For the sake of tea, a dawn, paper, and stamps,
 I need armed fortresses,
 weapons to help me stand and defend.*

The poem poses the question of why such simple things should be so unattainable and why people who are not aggressors but have been forced into a situation where they either have to accept being forgotten in the limbo of refugee camps or, living elsewhere, are feared if they try to offer some kind of resistance, or even simply to assert their identity and state what has been done to them.

In a further tribute to al-Qalaq, Darwīsh imagines a meeting with him during the bombing of Beirut in a section of *Dhākira lil-nisyān*,¹⁰⁶ which, intentionally or not, has many echoes of T.S. Eliot's image of a meeting in London during the blitz with 'a familiar compound ghost',¹⁰⁷ perhaps an amalgam of Eliot's friend W.B. Yeats, who had died in 1939, and Dante both of whom had, like al-Qalaq, 'left [their bodies] on a distant shore'. They have a philosophical discussion, suffused with the awareness that al-Qalaq is dead:

*"Izzeddine," I ask, "what are you doing here? Weren't you assassinated?
 Didn't I write your obituary? And didn't we walk in your funeral in
 Damascus? Are you alive or dead?"*

"Like everyone here."¹⁰⁸

implying that those present are in a state of life-denying limbo. Finally, they embrace in farewell and al-Qalaq 'vanishes like a fleeting notion' and 'has blended with the rain of rockets'¹⁰⁹ as the ghost in 'the disfigured street' left Eliot 'with a kind of valediction, / And faded on the blowing of the horn.'

Such parallels, like that with Hiroshima which is fundamental to the book, or the repeated, plaintive cry 'Why should we not love football?' are a plea to those not immediately involved, but not entirely devoid of responsibility for the Israel-Palestine situation to appreciate that others have the same sensibilities as themselves and that, as they themselves may have suffered war and bombing, so the Palestinians and Lebanese are now suffering.

There are dangers for 'Arab Israelis', even poets, within Israel. Abdellatif Laâbi discusses the changed composition of Palestinian Arab society after 1948 because of the emigration of almost all of the urban population. The towns were taken over and became centres of political rule and of cultural and ideological control, and very little remained as the nucleus of a new literary

renaissance because practically a whole generation of writers had been exiled. The whole population was subject to a cultural blockade and an active exercise of deculturation, but

despite these constraints, there was the popular poetry, to a large degree anonymous, which filled the gap, to the peril of the poet, it is true, for poetry was considered a subversive activity to the extent that the occupation authorities did not hesitate in having a popular poet, known by the pseudonym of Humayd, assassinated.¹¹⁰

Mahmūd Darwīsh also tells of a singer/poet who used to visit villages at night at about this time, who had returned unofficially and was hiding in the mountains, who also 'disappeared'.¹¹¹ He himself was for many years a focus for Palestinians and had been imprisoned at times while living in Israel, as had many others. Living abroad he was also kept track of, and in a letter to Samīḥ al-Qāsim gives a personal example of how, when invited to be interviewed on Finnish television he was 'balanced' by an Israeli, cruelly one who had a home where Darwīsh's destroyed village had been, which demonstrates the depth of an informal surveillance system, or self-censorship of Western media in the face of it.¹¹²

Walīd Khāzindār has written powerful poems on the isolation and psychological strain of a threatened exile. In 'Belonging'¹¹³ the exile knows that he is under surveillance and notices the slight differences in his room that demonstrate that someone has searched it:

*Who was it fractionally moved the vase
and was here in the room in my absence?
And the picture of the slain knight on the wall
someone has tampered with it . . .*

He is obviously accustomed to such intrusions and having to steel himself to endure them:

*What new assertion of calm will restore the vase to its place?
What reconciliation impose on the dead knight
his old demeanour, his symmetry on the blank wall?*

but still feels violated by someone else touching his personal belongings:

*What will restore to my pillow and my shirt
The aroma of the citizen?*

He knows that he does not belong and is not a true citizen. The picture of the dead knight implies danger, lost hopes and powerlessness, but also perhaps the rejection of old heroic styles of poetry. The poem is subdued yet very painful, given immediacy by the use of the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique and the strong sense of the room, conjured up in a few words.

'Houses'¹¹⁴ also depicts the loneliness and psychological stress of exile. A man has come to a new, temporary stopping place:

The cloud of migrations is in his eyes,

*and in the leather briefcase the book, the pencil, the family photograph
The rust¹¹⁵ of benches on his hands, the rust of banisters and doorknobs,
the rust of handshakes on his hands.
The briefcase propped against the wall –
will he take out his souvenirs first, or will he
like a magician take out a country . . .*

He has few possessions, and does not want to create even very simple routines or connections where he is, despite the natural urge to do so, because he knows that he will soon leave, be moved on, or possibly arrested:

*He closed his eyes, lay back against the shoulder of familiar habits.
He will not make friends with another vase,
he will not confess to a bed that will blow up in the next war,
he will not make tea or sing.
. . . he will listen hard for a sound coming from the garden gate.*

but there is currently

. . . nothing but the hum of talk in the houses next door.

- a stark contrast of the normal life of those who belong, with his rootless, solitary, lonely and endangered existence. Being afraid to 'make friends with another vase' or to 'confess to a bed that will blow up . . .' implies hours lying on a bed, staring at the few objects in the room, and a complete lack of human connections, and imposes a heavy presence on mundane objects as in a Still Life painting. The 'cloud of migrations . . . in his eyes' and the use of the word 'rust' earlier in the poem give a terrible sense of confusion and of being worn down by movement and neglect, as well as the idea that whatever he has touched, such as countless, alien 'banisters and doorknobs', has also touched him and left something of itself upon him, so that the 'rust' is both erosive and burdensome.¹¹⁶ There is an element of the novelistic technique of 'indirect free style' in the poem, as the man ponders what to do or not do, in a jumble of the immediate present, past and future.

An appreciation by Şubhī Ḥadīdī in *Banipal*¹¹⁷ suggests that

. . . a standard Khazindar poem establishes in the poetic texts what a standard Still Life painting establishes in plastic arts: a complex web of relationships between the pure mind and the pure "things", based on the play of more than one level of meaning, and on the vivid interaction between the literal and the figurative. . . By entrusting his feeling to a set of carefully chosen primal matters . . . Khazindar carries the soul towards the matter.¹¹⁸

Stillness is demonstrated in the two poems discussed above, and the sense of a small room in both is perhaps also reminiscent of Vermeer's quiet interiors. In this pictorial aspect, as well as in writing prose poetry, Ḥadīdī compares Khāzindār to the French poet Francis Ponge who in the

interplay between the observer and the object . . . gives systematic priority to the object. Rather than using things as images of human attributes, he covertly uses human attributes as images of things.¹¹⁹

He also comments that, although Khāzindār writes prose poems, he does employ the basic Arabic metrical unit, the *tafīla*, and sometimes inserts metrical sections into his prose, which although they

might look like unconscious “digressions” from the main prose structure of the poem . . . are not only organic component parts of the rhythmic scheme of the poem, but also Khazindar’s own mark of identification among Arab poets of his generation, and his major contribution to those efforts which sought and still seek to develop new forms of poetic musicality.¹²⁰

These poems are original in being at the boundaries of poetic imagery and of genre, both in Khāzindār’s metrics and his use of novelistic techniques, so have a sense of strangeness or defamiliarisation, but they accurately project lived experience and have profound resonance. Their quiet density sticks in the mind.

Jayyusi regards Khāzindār as part of the new, dissident poets who espoused modernism from the eighties, but in their individual ways, without any centralising theories and polemics. On the strength of his first collection, she saw him as

one of the finest poets of the younger generation and probably of modern Arabic letters as a whole, whose rigorous economy of style is unsurpassed by his contemporaries, whose metaphorical representations are both precise and highly complex, whose gemlike choice of words is selective yet smoothly natural – sometimes almost colloquial – and whose dynamic variation of theme is informed by great delicacy and a sensitivity too refined to allow any place for the loud, emphatic depictions of life found in earlier poetry. Khazindar’s thematic approach is as personal as it is collective, as Palestinian as it is universal; he is one of the outstandingly promising Palestinian poets of the late twentieth century.¹²¹

Divisions and Guilt

The previous two sections are on the work of activists or of people who have suffered the pains or dangers of exile writing of others. There is a sense of fellow-feeling and sometimes community, although isolation, movingly portrayed by Khāzindār, is often a feature of exile poetry. Guilt and resentment, over escape, survival or adjustment are further elements within families or groups.

Salma Khadra Jayyusi had left her country before the establishment of Israel in order to study and then continued to live abroad through her marriage to a Jordanian diplomat, so was never actually forcibly driven from it as were some of her relations. Her long poem ‘Without Roots’¹²² is

an exploration of the breakdowns caused by exile, the difficult relationships of people affected in different ways and the resulting division, anger and guilt. The poet is nostalgic for her country and has the feeling that it is now lost to her, but she does have a positive and secure life outside it, whereas other members of her family, and her people – for the poem, although it appears autobiographical, mixes the general and the particular - have now been displaced by the Israelis and have become refugees, and she can do little to help them and is absorbed in her own life while they can only be ‘guests’ or ‘refugees’.

*My uncle hungered and we lamented his hunger
Then we fed him for a month as a guest
And rested from the pangs of conscience
We then gave him up to the great wide world
And got absorbed in our own worlds.*

However, neither her relations nor she herself can or will absolve her from her guilt. She meets her cousin, which revives her happy memories of a shared youth with him – sharing in the beauties of the land and in the hopes and ambition of young people for their future:

*I shouted to him, "My cousin, 'the apple of my eye', O noble man,
I am still loyal to the fond memories
...
A fragrance still clings to my heart of the fig leaves that shaded us.
You were a world of bloom: the sun and heaps of wishes
Were your sweet hope, your faith, your yearning . . .
Do tell me something new about you and I will tell you something about my life
About my dream, my ambition, my thoughts and travels
Hey, what? Why are you turning away from me, distracted
Impatient? Are you not my cousin, O noble man?"
He said to me with indifference, "No, a stranger" and he disappeared.
Memories died at his heels . . . and we vanished
Farewell, stranger.*

What for her are happy memories are, for him, bitter reminders of all that he has lost. She remembers that they had both demonstrated against the British, who are now history, but she has not shared his later experience of dispossession. She imagines a meeting with her grandfather. His figure is redolent with images of mutual love, care and belonging, both to him and to their land and culture, but imagining that meeting brings the realisation that the world of those memories is lost:

*He used to cherish me, babble to me, sing to me as a child
"My town is high . . . on the top of a hill
o my dear little girl . . . O jasmine bud."
He taught me old poetry,
The principles of religion (Ah for his despair!) and the Qur'an.*

...

A little girl with her grandfather can never have enough of his love.

... I said, "Grandfather, don't you know my voice?

Has it not made an echo while remembering you?"

My grandfather said, "Get up and leave us.

...

You do not understand the meaning of silence in a broken heart."

...

The call to prayer rose high

But my grandfather's heart is distracted and cannot hear it . . .

The poem is subtle in attributing an initial degree of insensitivity to the speaker, which is resolved in the course of the poem into empathy, and understanding of the difference between protest, in one's home base 'as of custom' against the occupying British and the enormity of having been dispossessed, robbed of livelihood, and dispersed. The effect of the realisation of pain and loss is heightened by the repetitions – and especially by the omission of the little girl, the fragmentation of the words and the foretaste of loss in the parenthesised (*Ah for his despair!*). 'Jasmine bud' is first used as a term of endearment for the little girl, but it appears later as an irritation, applied to a baby boy, made fractious by his ambience of misery and insecurity.

The beginning of the fifth section, the sting in the tail of the poem, is an agonising depiction of the dehumanisation and meaninglessness of mere existence without the framework of home, land and societal structure as the speaker begins to realise the effects and consequences of what has happened:

Pale lips do not approach prayer at dawn

Pale lips do not know the purity of kisses

They do not kiss today except [in] lust

And though their feverish passion bears fruit

Pale lips do not kiss naked children

Born without roots, without a morrow,

From a passion that has no love.

A sudden defamiliarisation and sense of dehumanisation are achieved by the synecdoche of 'pale lips', in contrast to the colour of the rest of the poem, and the shocking use of the word 'yalthimu', which means to kiss an object, rather than a person. The future looks grim for children conceived and born in such circumstances. However, the poem ends in a sort of unity:

O sons of the dead, are you dead like them

Or are you orphans? Or the scar of a wound in a sad people?

We are all that . . .

A word of a hoarse discordant tone united us

"Refugees"

Although Jayyusi has benefited from exile to the extent of having had a successful career, and she has used her opportunities to promote the Arab world in the West through her criticism and translations,¹²³ as well as writing some feminist poetry,¹²⁴ '[h]er poetry reflects the Palestinian tragedy'.¹²⁵ This poem could also be seen in terms of the 'Palestinian Land Rhetoric' discussed in the next chapter, both in its evocation of nature in Palestine and in its linking of the generations that demonstrates the previous continuity of life there.

Another source of division has been the situation of 'Israeli Arabs', those Palestinians who remained in Israel after 1948, who may be distrusted by both Israelis and other Palestinians. The dilemma of whether to remain in Israel or go into exile is apparent in some of the writings of Maḥmūd Darwīsh (including his correspondence with Samīḥ al-Qāsim, who has remained in Israel, and sometimes urged him to return¹²⁶) and is reflected in his poetry and that of others – for example in Murīd Barghūthi's poem 'The Tribes', discussed above, which contains the telling phrase

. . . *the diploma of a son*
framed in gold, coated with dust.

A son has gained educational qualifications, and in the initial joy at his achievement his diploma has been '*framed in gold*'. However, perhaps he has not been able to find employment commensurate with his qualifications and to be able to recompense the sacrifices made for his education – in which case he and his family cannot bear to look at the diploma, or he has left his family and gone abroad or become an activist, bringing reprisals upon them, and they ignore the diploma out of bitterness.

Several poets who are Israeli citizens contribute to the expression of exile, dispossession and alienation. They are second class citizens who are inhibited in doing many things and are, to a large extent, exiles in their own land. They may themselves have been injured, imprisoned and harassed and they are inevitably touched by the experiences of others. They may be criticised for writing poetry that is not 'resistance' or 'committed' or for forming connections with Israelis, although it can be argued that in the long term such connections are of value in fostering increased mutual understanding and as a negation of racism and demonisation. It is also important to maintain the Palestinian presence, as argued by Raja Shehadeh in his book *The Third Way*.¹²⁷ For intellectuals in particular, although exile may be hard it very often brings advantages and rewards. The exile may be of value in fighting for his country in whatever ways he can, but the intellectual brain drain, which is encouraged by the Israelis, weakens the Palestinian population both economically and politically and impoverishes its leadership.

An important element in the vexed question of whether any sort of accommodation with Israelis is a good or bad thing was the Israeli Communist Party,¹²⁸ which aimed at Arab as well as Jewish membership, gained popularity and recognition amongst Arabs in the 1950s and 1960s and provided avenues of publication for Palestinian writers as well as opportunities for study abroad. The Party was open to Arabs because of pressure from the Soviet Union, from which its publications also received financial support, and communists were tolerated in Israel, because of

surviving ideals of Socialist Zionism and the Labour Party desire to be internationally accepted as being socialist, and no doubt because they were pretty much a negligible minority, but contributed to the appearance of democracy. On the other hand, because of the fears of Arab governments, the communist party was outlawed in the West Bank and communists in Gaza were seen as a danger to the Egyptian government and frequently exiled and/or imprisoned, as in the case of Mu'īn Bsīṣū.

Tawfiq Zayyād developed under the aegis of the Communist Party as he studied Russian literature in Moscow, was one of the main leaders of the Communist Party Rakah which struggled for Palestinian rights in Israel, was mayor of Nazareth from the seventies and was elected a member of the Knesset. He has translated several Russian literary works into Arabic, as well as work of the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet. His poetry was mainly produced in the fifties and sixties and he has also published novels, political writings and a work on Palestinian folklore.

Jayyusi says that his metrical free verse collection *Warmly I Shake Your Hand* (1966)

is regarded as a landmark in the history of the Palestinian struggle against Israel. It includes many poems of courage and resistance, some of which have been adapted to music and have become part of the lively tradition of Palestinian songs of struggle.¹²⁹

but Yasir Suleiman criticises his work on the grounds that

(a)lthough some of his poetry is in free verse, it is reminiscent of pre-1948 Palestinian poetry in its upbeat, oratorical style of delivery, as well as its being largely '*munāṣabāt*' poetry (poetry of occasions).¹³⁰

Zayyād's poem 'The Assassination of Awwad al-Amara of Kofr Kanna',¹³¹ is reminiscent of the structure of Ibrāhīm Ṭuqān's poem 'Red Tuesday', written in 1930 in commemoration of three Palestinians hanged by the British for their participation in the 1929 revolt,¹³² in its different voices and its oratorical style. It is however very effective and moving in depicting the virtues of an ordinary man who loves his family, his simple life and his land, and who is shot returning home slightly late for the curfew that he had not been told of as he stops to rejoice at the signs of badly needed rain. He is the sixth person in his village to have been shot that year, by 'the bullets of vengeance', and one of the voices asks what viper is crawling behind the open artery of blood? A voice from afar tells them that 'people say' that history is vengeance, that it moves in a stream of blood to a dusty citadel in the heart of the town, where there is a Kafkaesque unnumbered room. A chorus tells his friends to place him in

. . . *the bosom of the earth*
which was always his passion
which was and remains
his mother, his nation . . .

and to protect his tomb and make sure that it remains green.¹³³ The poem seems to call for endurance rather than resistance as do the extracts

*Here we shall stay
Like a brick wall upon your breast
And in your throat
Like a splinter of glass, like spiky cactus . . .*¹³⁴

and

*A thousand forgotten
conquerors have passed
over my country
and melted
like
the snow*¹³⁵

'I Grasp Your Hands'¹³⁶ is more positive – the poet is dedicating himself to his country:

*I have refused nothing to my country
I have not bowed down
I have stood up to my oppressors
though orphaned, naked, barefoot
my flags are not at half-mast
and I have maintained the grass on the graves of my ancestors
I call upon you, I grasp your hands!*

and has not bowed down, and 'maintaining the grass' is a powerful image of continuity.

'On the Trunk of an Olive Tree' is seen as 'a final bulwark against the progressive transformation of the land' where, under danger of arrest and lacking paper, the poet talks of carving the details of his life, his land and his people on the tree.¹³⁷

Because of the Communist Party Zayyād, living in Israel, was able to fight politically, within the law, for Palestinians, as well as being able to publish his work. He imported new literary elements through his Russian translations as well as his researches into Palestinian folklore, but his poetry reflects none of the experimentation that was going on in other Arab countries because he was cut off from them, and because official circuits in the Soviet Union as a guest of the Party would have offered little of the modernist stimulus experienced by migrants or exiles in Baghdad, Beirut or Paris at about the same time.

Other poets who have remained in Israel or, since 1967 the Occupied Territories, are Fadwā Ṭūqān, an important figure both as a feminist and a resistance poet; Samīḥ al-Qāsim, one of the generation of 'resistance poets' between 1948 and 1967 which included Maḥmūd Darwīsh; Laylā 'Allūsh (b. 1948), whose poem 'The Path of Affection' can be seen as a sensitive example of a familial 'land rhetoric';¹³⁸ and Ḥanān 'Ashrāwī (b. 1946), who has studied and taught abroad and who, as well as being a respected political figure and critic, writes poetry in English making known Palestinian dilemmas,¹³⁹ Israeli atrocities,¹⁴⁰ and also points out the dilemma of some Israelis,¹⁴¹ as does Fadwā Ṭūqān.¹⁴²

In a 1978 article¹⁴³ 'Ashrāwī discusses the problems facing Arab literature in Israel and the Occupied Territories in respect of the difficulties of publication, the effect on literature of the situation of the writers as well as the effect on the writers themselves and their dilemma discussed above as to whether they should go into exile, with the immediate hope of a better life, or remain. There was severe censorship, under both the Israelis and the Hashemites, following the British Mandate emergency regulations of the 1940s, which 'were called Nazi and anti-Semitic when used against the Jews but . . . were part of Israeli democracy when used against the Arabs.'¹⁴⁴ In Israel, however, because of the Communist Party and its newspaper *al-Ittiḥād* and monthly *al-Jadīd*, established in 1951, and later because of other progressive¹⁴⁵ or neutral publishing houses, as well as literary supplements in newspapers there were viable avenues of publication and 'Israeli attempts to suppress [Palestinian] literature did not succeed entirely', and were 'gradually enfeebled by the perseverance of the politically committed poets and writers of the area.' One way of evading censorship was heavy use of symbolism, although this 'gradually became a burden on Palestinian literature, degenerating into clichés and frozen metaphors.'¹⁴⁶

The Israeli authorities tried to counter this literature by creating or sponsoring other houses that would publish work that was supportive of Israeli interests or at least not openly against them, for example organisations sponsored by the Histadrut (the General Labour Federation) or by the official Israeli Arabic newspaper *al-Anba'*. Naturally, this polarity was reflected in the literature and readership of both groups, each with their own writers and audience and 'hence the choice of publisher [became], in itself, an overt political position.'¹⁴⁷ 'Ashrāwī defines

. . . two poles of poets [that] are discernible: the nationalist, committed and politically aware poets, who view poetry primarily as a vehicle and a means of moving the masses; and the individualistic, personal poets who are totally detached from their people and setting, having reached a point of abstraction and intellectualisation that becomes entirely incomprehensible. In both groups the cathartic element is visible; in the former on the collective, patriotic scale and in the latter on the personal, psycho-therapeutic level. In between are the poets who write committed poetry with a "message," but who have Westernised (and consequently foreignised) their style and allusions to the point of obscurity.

The individualistic group is the easiest to deal with in that its impact on the local literary scene is minimal. It includes the "Sharq" poets, who write to themselves and to each other, looking to the West for inspiration. Foremost among these is Michel Haddad who has made several attempts at forming Arab literary associations in Israel supported by Jewish-Israeli writers and critics of Arabic literature such as . . . Shmuel Moreh . . . Other poets of this group include . . . Anton Shammas.¹⁴⁸

This is perhaps a black and white view taken by one who is herself politically committed. It is a constant dilemma for Palestinian poets that both dedication to commitment and the attempt to

evade reality can be equally damaging to poetry, and such polarisation does not easily allow for any intermediate position.

Michel Ḥaddād (1919-96), mentioned by ‘Ashrāwī, was born and educated in Nazareth, taught in Ramallah, Gaza and Jerusalem and then remained in Nazareth until his death. Shmuel Moreh describes Ḥaddād’s launch of the monthly *al-Mujtama’* in 1954 as ‘providing the younger writers and poets with a common forum’ and as ‘a milestone in the renaissance of Israel(i) Arabic literature’ and praises Ḥaddād for ‘(throwing) open the columns of his magazine to members of all communities’. Ḥaddād also founded *Rabiṭat shu‘arā’ al-‘arabiyya* (the Poets Association) in 1955 and published an anthology of poetry by its members. At the time of Moreh’s article (1967), Ḥaddād and Jamāl Qa‘war were editing a column for the Friday literary edition of *al-Yawm* and for the Arabic broadcasting service of Kol-Israel.¹⁴⁹ They were also involved in literary and cultural meetings at centres for promoting Jewish-Arab mutual understanding, which were probably honest attempts to improve mutual understanding, but tainted for most Palestinians by Israeli government support.

His poetry may seem somewhat hopeless in tone, but it is pointing out comparisons with other acts of conquest and their evils – for example, ‘The Books’ which deals with Hulaghu’s burning of books on his conquest of Baghdad and ‘The Head-dress and the Cause’ where he talks of connections between East and West, comparing the rhythm of the Red Indians’ dance to the Palestinians’ *dabka*,¹⁵⁰ implying the similar treatment of both groups, a comparison later taken up at greater length by Darwīsh. Anton Shammas, a younger member of Ḥaddād’s group later left Israel, but Jayyusi praises his Arabic collection written at that stage in his career. He has written poems and a critically acclaimed novel,¹⁵¹ setting out the experiences of Palestinians in Israel, in Hebrew, as well as poems in English and contributes to Arabic diaspora literature, for example in *Banipal*.

Many Palestinian writers in Israel walk a difficult path, as they are held in suspicion and contempt by Israelis and often by other Palestinians whether inside or outside the country. They may be in danger simply through maintaining the Palestinian presence¹⁵² and may be criticised for forming any kind of connections with Israelis, or even for having Israeli friends, although there is the argument that people aiming for some sort of rapprochement are more realistic than those with idealistic, uncompromising but probably unrealistic aims, and that in the long term such connections will be of value.

The End of Exile?

Exile can end in various ways: in return to one’s country if the cause of exile, such as a particular political regime, has been removed; in assimilation elsewhere, and, close to that, cosmopolitanism - an option that is, however, only open to rich or talented individuals; or it may end in death in another country or in a terrible place of limbo such as a refugee camp. But even return can never be true return – things may have changed, people will have changed and the exile himself will

have changed. In his book *I Saw Ramallah*¹⁵³ Muṛīd Barghūthi depicts the ironic situation where he, the exile, has changed and the place has not, since one of the evils of occupation is that it prevents economic development and forces people to cling to the past, thus denying themselves a future:

I used to long for the past in Deir Ghassanah . . . But when I saw that the past was still there, squatting in the sunshine in the village square, like a dog forgotten by its owners – or like a toy dog – I wanted to take hold of it, to kick it forwards, to its coming days, to a better future, to tell it: “Run.”¹⁵⁴

In his poem ‘Steps in Strange Lands’¹⁵⁵ Buland al-Ḥaydarī, an Iraqi political exile, expresses both hope of return:

*Beyond all the nights of this earth I have a love and a home
There will remain for me a love and a home
. . .
And Time may take me back.*

and fear that his country might not ever take him back, and that even if it did those he loved may have grown away from him:

*If it took me back
If my eyes could embrace my clear blue sky
Would a heart beat for me in that home, I wonder
Would love remember the son of that yesteryear, I wonder
Would two eyes smile, I wonder*

In a short poem of 1960 ‘The Fugitive’,¹⁵⁶ al-Bayyāfī expresses the fear of dying away from home:

*I dreamt I was without a home,
Dying in an unknown city,
Dying alone, my love, without a home.*

In her set of poems ‘Songs for an Arab City’,¹⁵⁷ an account of revisiting her native city, Salma Khadra Jayyusi expresses the case where the poet has been changed by exile, is caught up in her new life and does not truly wish to return, and thus experiences a complex of feelings where she feels tugged by and yet rejected by her native land. But in writing in the fourth poem:

*In you I saw my grave
deserting me.*

she is facing the probability of not being buried in her native land, thus being separated from it for ever. Her voluntary exile is possibly no longer reversible.

Zakariyyā Muḥammad’s poem ‘Departure’ discussed above could be seen as predicting a hopeless end to the Palestinian exile in oblivion. However, the Arab world is still in a state of flux, and the Palestinians have not yet given up, so poems continue to be written about exile as an

ongoing thing and left open-ended; even the assimilated still feel that they are outsiders; and many poets direct their efforts to depiction and argument.

But for many, exile becomes a way of life, and they never feel at home anywhere. This is to an extent a choice, but it is also a consequence of the loss of a possibly taken for granted set of relationships and sense of belonging that, once lost, cannot be recreated or replaced. Part of this is the general condition of many in the 'developed' world with its increasing rates of physical and social mobility, but some remain in a state of continued alienation, towards either home country or host country. For some Arab poets this is the result of psychological damage either through loss and suffering or through pain and hopelessness due to the continuing problems of the Arab world. In an article on exile and creativity¹⁵⁸ Halim Barakat gives an example of alienation, and a tragic end to exile:

. . . Jabrā recalls that Tawfīq Ṣāyigh, a poet in exile no matter where he lived, had a famous dictum: "Worse than exile abroad is exile within one's own homeland", meaning by homeland the Arab world. The dominant theme of his poetry was alienation in exile. So was the story of his life as told by Jabrā. He died as an exile at Berkeley, California, and was buried there in a vast cemetery, with a Chinese man on his right and a Japanese on his left: a stranger to the bitter end.¹⁵⁹

¹ Sharmistha Lahiri ed., *Inhabiting the Other Essays on Literature and Exile*, Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2001 is a collection of articles presented at an International Seminar organised by the Department of Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of Delhi and gives several interesting cases for comparison.

² There are a few examples such as Anton Shammas' short poem 'Don's Party', and Maḥmūd Darwīsh's 'Speech of the Red Indian', discussed elsewhere, as well as Adūnīs's 'A Grave for New York' (text and translation in Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Adonis A Time between Ashes and Roses*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2004, pp. 123-177). Only Shammas' poem is about rejection by another society, the other two poems are condemnatory.

³ Abdullah al-Udhari, *Victims of a Map, (Victims)*, Al-Saqi Books, London, 1984, pp. 40-45

⁴ Issa J. Boullata, 'The Beleaguered Unicorn: A Study of Tawfīq Ṣāyigh', ('Unicorn'), in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 4 (1973), pp. 69-93 (Unicorn), pp. 72-73

⁵ Ibid. p. 76

⁶ Ibid. p. 78

⁷ Ibid. p. 77

⁸ A.M. Elmessiri, *The Palestinian Wedding*, Three Continents Press, Washington, 1982, pp. 68-71

⁹ Ibid. pp. 46-47

¹⁰ Salma Khadra Jayyusi ed., *Modern Palestinian Literature, (MPL)*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992 p. 66 She appears to have coined the term, and includes a selection of extracts pp. 607-730

¹¹ Jayyusi's earliest extract is the diary entry of Khalil al-Sakakini for 17 November 1917, relating to the Ottoman withdrawal from Jerusalem. Muḥammad al-'Asad was 4 at the time of his family's displacement in 1948. Maḥmūd Darwīsh has also written memoirs of when he was a child.

¹² Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 67

¹³ Ibid., pp. 622-7

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 623 and 625

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 625

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 627

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 627

¹⁸ In *Banipal*, London, Issue 6 Autumn 1999, p.28

¹⁹ Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, Verso, London and New York, 2000 pp. 84-6

²⁰ Nicholas Guyatt, *The Absence of Peace Understanding the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Zed Books, London and New York, 1998, p. 6

²¹ Ibid., p. 7

²² See Kirsten E. Schulze, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Pearson Education Limited, Harlow UK, 1999, pp. 35-7

²³ Guyatt, op. cit. p. 7

²⁴ Ibid., p. 7

²⁵ Ibid., p. 8

²⁶ Translated by Abdullah al-Udhari in *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1986, pp. 97-101 The poem was published in Arabic in Beirut in 1967.

²⁷ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit. p. 21

²⁸ See Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way*, Quartet Books, London, 1982

²⁹ al-Udhari *Victims* op. cit., pp. 60-61

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 71-74

³¹ These poems from *Ākhir al-layl* are translated in Denys Johnson-Davies, *The Music of Human Flesh*, Three Continents Press, Washington DC, 1980

³² Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *al-'aṣāfir tamūt fī-l-jalīl*, (*Birds are Dying in Galilee*), Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1969, pp. 5-8 (My translation)

³³ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Dhākira li-l-nisyan*, Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 6th edition, 1994 First published in *Al Karmel*, 1986 Translation *Memory for Forgetfulness* by Ibrahim Muhawi, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995

³⁴ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *al-'aṣāfir tamūt fī-l-jalīl*, op.cit., pp. 12-14 and, with translation, in al-Udhari, *Victims*, op.cit., pp. 46-49

³⁵ Darwīsh, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, op. cit., pp. 45-49

³⁶ In Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Limādha tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīdan*, Riad El-Rayyes, Beirut, 1995, pp.155-8

³⁷ Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, op. cit., p. 20

³⁸ Al-Udhari, *Victims*, op. cit., p. 7

- ³⁹ Ibid. pp. 12-13 – I have made a minor change in using ‘closing in on us’ rather than ‘closing on us’
- ⁴⁰ Mahmud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, tr. Ibrahim Muhawi, op. cit. The events of the book take place on a single day, 6 August 1982, an anniversary of the Hiroshima A-bomb.
- ⁴¹ Al-Udhari, *Victims*, op. cit. pp. 24-25
- ⁴² Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit. pp. 281-2
- ⁴³ Ibid. pp. 140-1
- ⁴⁴ For example Abū Tammām’s ‘Spring’ *qasīda*, quoted in Robert Irwin, *Night & Horses & the Desert*, Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1999, pp. 136-7
- ⁴⁵ Adūnīs, *Kitāb al-Ḥiṣār*, Dār al-‘Awda, Beirut, 1985 Translations in al-Udhari, *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, op. cit., pp. 64-75, and al-Udhari, *Victims*, op. cit., pp. 134-165
- ⁴⁶ John Mikhail Asfour, *When the Words Burn An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, 1945-1987*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1993, pp. 179-184. Arabic text in Adūnīs, *al-‘amāl al-shi‘riyya al-kāmila*, Dār al-‘Awda, Beirut, 1988 Vol. 1, pp. 449-459.
- ⁴⁷ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *‘Aḥad ‘ashara kaukaban*, Dār al-‘Awda, Beirut, 1992
- ⁴⁸ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *‘Ashiq min Falasṭīn*, Dār al-‘Awda, Beirut, 1966, pp. 66-68 (My translation)
- ⁴⁹ Quoted from Eliot’s essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, ‘Modern Arabic Literature and the West’ in Issa J. Boullata ed., *Critical Perspectives in Modern Arabic Literature*, Three Continents Press, Colorado, 1980, pp. 7-22, p.10
- ⁵⁰ Elmessiri, op. cit., pp. 68-71
- ⁵¹ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 227
- ⁵² Amjad Nasser, ‘Zakaria Muhammad, my friend and first guide to poetry’ in *Banipal* op. cit., Issue 7, Spring 2002, pp. 22-23. The review was by Isam Mahfuz in the Beirut daily *Al-Nahār*.
- ⁵³ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 58
- ⁵⁴ Asfour, op. cit., pp. 179-184 Arabic text in Adūnīs, *al-‘amāl al-shi‘riyya al-kāmila*, Dār al-‘Awda, Beirut, 1988, Vol. I, pp. 449-459
- ⁵⁵ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 119-121
- ⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 119
- ⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 59-60
- ⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 60
- ⁵⁹ Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004 Some of Attridge’s arguments on the nature of literary creativity are discussed in Chapter 1
- ⁶⁰ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 129
- ⁶¹ Issa J. Boullata, *Modern Arab Poets 1950-1975*, Heinemann, London, 1976, p. 25
- ⁶² Boullata, *Unicorn*, op. cit., pp. 78-79
- ⁶³ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 286-8
- ⁶⁴ Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ ed., *Maḥmūd Darwīsh in Silsilat al-shi‘r wal-l-shu‘arā*, Dār al-Fatā’ al-‘Arabi, Cairo, 1994, pp. 18-19
- ⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 18 and Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Poemes palestiniens Chronique de la tristesse ordinaire*, tr. Olivier Carre, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1989, p. 30

- ⁶⁶ Arabic text in Ḥāfiẓ, op. cit., pp. 47-52, translation in Asfour op. cit., pp. 213-5
- ⁶⁷ Ḥanān Mikhā'il 'Ashrāwī, 'The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 7 (1978), pp. 77-101, pp. 82-83
- ⁶⁸ Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Samīḥ al-Qāsim, *Al-Rasā'il*, Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1990
- ⁶⁹ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 126-7
- ⁷⁰ al-Udhari, *Victims*, op. cit., pp. 36-37
- ⁷¹ Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayāfī's Poetics of Exile', *Journal of Arabic Literature (JAL)*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2001, pp. 212-238, p. 216
- ⁷² Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 140-1
- ⁷³ Ibid. pp. 126-7
- ⁷⁴ Asfour, op. cit., p. 233
- ⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 233
- ⁷⁶ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 236-7
- ⁷⁷ Said K. Aburish, *Arafat From Defender to Dictator*, Bloomsbury, London, 1998, p. 125. A review of the 2005 film *Munich* by D.D. Guttenplan (*TLS* No. 5366, 3 February 2006, p. 16) says that Nāsir's death was part of the Munich reprisals, although he had no connection with Black September
- ⁷⁸ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 628
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 135-6
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 134
- ⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 134-5
- ⁸² Abdullah al-Udhari, *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, op. cit., p. 114
- ⁸³ Ḥanān Mikhā'il Ashrāwī, 'The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation', op. cit., pp. 77-101
- ⁸⁴ Jayyusi *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 55, 53
- ⁸⁵ Terri DeYoung, 'Nasser and the Death of Elegy in Modern Arabic Poetry' ('Death of Elegy'), in Issa J. Boullata and Terri DeYoung eds., *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Literature*, The University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, 1997 p. 64, 65
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 70-71
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 72
- ⁸⁸ 'Abd al-Laṭīf Lābī, *La Poésie Palestinienne Contemporaine*, Editions Messidor, Paris, 1990 p. 93
- ⁸⁹ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 280
- ⁹⁰ Mentioned in Chapter 1. See Stefan Sperl, 'Stabat mater: reflections on a theme in German-Jewish and Palestinian-Arab poetry', in *Comparative Literature* 22, Cambridge University Press, 2000 pp. 105-129
- ⁹¹ Jayyusi, *MPL*; op. cit., pp. 280-1
- ⁹² See 'The Heroism of Umm Ali' in Mai Ghoussoub, *Leaving Beirut*, Saqi, London, 1998 Second Edition 2007, pp. 65-78 for a non-propagandist yet perhaps more tragic account.
- ⁹³ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *Modern Arabic Poetry An Anthology, (MAP)*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, p. 416-9
- ⁹⁴ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 282-3

- ⁹⁵ Abdellatif Laâbi, *Rue du Retour*, tr. Victor Reinking, Readers International, London, 1989 First published in French as *Le chemin des ordalies*, Éditions Denoël, Paris, 1982
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 87-8
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-2
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 11
- ⁹⁹ Data on al-Qalaq is from a footnote in Ibrahim Muhawi's translation of *Dhākira lil-nisyān, Memory for Forgetfulness*, op. cit., p. 159
- ¹⁰⁰ Terri DeYoung, 'Death of Elegy', op. cit., p. 65
- ¹⁰¹ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, 'al-ḥiwār al-'akhīr fī bārīs (li-dhikrā 'izziddīn al-qalaq)' 'Last Evening in Paris' (To the memory of Izzedin al-Qalaq) in *Ḥiṣār li-madā'ih al-baḥr*, Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, (1984), pp. 51-62 trans. in *Sand and Other Poems*, Rana Kabbani, KPI, London, 1986 pp. 61-66
- ¹⁰² See Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh' in *Jamāliyyāt al-Tajāwur aw Tashābuk al-Faqā'āt al-'Ibdā'iyah*, Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Maḥāyir, Beirut, 1997 pp. 79-84 This is discussed further in Chapter 4
- ¹⁰³ Darwīsh, *Ḥiṣār li-madā'ih al-baḥr*, op.cit., pp. 55 and 62, my translation
- ¹⁰⁴ 'In Memory of 'Izzidin al-Qalaq' in Jayyusi, *MAP*, op. cit., pp. 194-7
- ¹⁰⁵ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 140
- ¹⁰⁶ Mahmud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, trans. Ibrahim Muhawi, op. cit., p. 159-163
- ¹⁰⁷ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, Little Gidding II
- ¹⁰⁸ Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, op. cit., p. 162
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 163
- ¹¹⁰ 'Abd al-Laṭīf Lābī, *La Poésie Palestinienne Contemporaine*, op. cit., p. 14, my summary/translation from the French
- ¹¹¹ Mahmoud Darwish, *La Palestine comme métaphore Entretiens (Palestine as a Metaphor Interviews)*, translated by Elias Sanbar and Simone Bitton, Actes Sud, Arles, 1997 pp. 113-4. Darwish says that his 1976 poem 'Qaṣīdat al-'Arḍ' ('Poem of the Earth') in 'A'rās is about this man
- ¹¹² Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Samīḥ al-Qāsim, *Al-Rasā'il*, op. cit., p. 43
- ¹¹³ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 198
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 199 There is a copy of the Arabic text in *Qantara*, Institut du monde arabe, Paris, Issue 57, Autumn 2005, p. 76
- ¹¹⁵ 'rust' is a translation of 'qaṣḍīr' which strictly means 'tin'.
- ¹¹⁶ 'Rust' is an inspired translation of 'qaṣḍīr' (tin), which would have little meaning here in English. Perhaps 'taint' would be more accurate in conveying the unpleasant smell from touching metallic objects (or sweaty hands), but this loses the element of brittleness present in 'rust'.
- ¹¹⁷ Ṣubḥi Ḥadīdī, 'Walīd Khazindar: The Stubborn Style', in *Banīpal*, London, Issue 6 Autumn 1999, pp. 28-9
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 28
- ¹¹⁹ Francis Ponge, *Selected Poems*, ed. Margaret Guiton, Faber and Faber, London, 1998 Preface p. xii
- ¹²⁰ Ḥadīdī, op. cit., p. 29

¹²¹ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 58

¹²² Issa J. Boullata, ed., *Modern Arab Poets 1950-1975*, op. cit., pp. 131-4 Arabic text in Salma al-Khadra' al-Jayyusi, *al-'awda min al-nab' al-halim*, (*Return from the Dreaming Fountain*), Manshura Dar al-Adab, Beirut, 1960, pp. 146-160

¹²³ Her many anthologies, mainly under the auspices of PROTA (Project of Translation from Arabic), which she founded and for which she has raised funds, have allowed writers from many parts of the Arab world to recount their experiences and state their cases.

¹²⁴ See Kamal Boullata, ed., *Women of the Fertile Crescent Modern Poetry by Arab Women*, Three Continents Press, Washington DC, 1978

¹²⁵ Boullata, *Modern Arab Poets 1950-1975*, op. cit., p. 146

¹²⁶ Mahmud Darwish and Samih al-Qasim, *Al-Rasa'il*, op. cit.

¹²⁷ Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way*, op. cit.

¹²⁸ I have used Dunia Habib Nahas, *The Israeli Communist Party*, Portico Publications, London, 1976 for historical background on the Israeli Communist Party

¹²⁹ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 327

¹³⁰ Entry by Yasir Suleiman in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey eds., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, p. 824.

¹³¹ Labi, *La Poésie Palestienne Contemporaine*, op. cit., p. 226-9

¹³² Discussed in Chapter 1, referring to Issa J. Boullata, 'Ibrahim Tūqān's Poem "Red Tuesday"' in Issa J. Boullata and Terri DeYoung eds., *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Literature*, op. cit., pp. 87-100

¹³³ Labi, *La Poésie Palestienne Contemporaine*, op. cit., p. 226-9 my summary and translation from the French

¹³⁴ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., 'Here We Shall Stay', p. 327-8

¹³⁵ Asfour, op. cit., p. 236

¹³⁶ Labi, *La Poésie Palestienne Contemporaine*, op. cit., *Je serre vos mains*, pp. 225-6, my translation from the French

¹³⁷ Barbara McKean Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1994, p. 75

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7

¹³⁹ e.g. 'Economics' in Kamal Boullata, *Women of the Fertile Crescent*, op. cit., p. 143

¹⁴⁰ e.g. in Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 340-1, 'From the Diary of an Almost-Four-Year Old' referring to one of many children who lost an eye through being hit by rubber bullets during the *Intifāda*

¹⁴¹ e.g. in Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 337-8, 'Night Patrol'

¹⁴² e.g. in Elmessiri, op. cit., pp. 94-7, 'Eytan in the Steel Trap' about a child born in a *kibbutz* who questions his position but will inevitably be trapped by it.

¹⁴³ Ashrawi, 'The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation', op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 78

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 79 Up to 1974 she lists *Arabesque* in Haifa, *al-Maktaba al-Sha'biyya* in Nazareth and *Şalaḥ ad-Dīn* in Jerusalem, and, in 1976, after five years of attempting to get a licence, the magazine *al-Bayader*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 78

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 80

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. pp. 84-5

¹⁴⁹ Shmuel Moreh, 'Arabic Literature in Israel', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, London, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1967, pp. 283-294, reprinted in Shmuel Moreh, *Studies in Modern Arabic Prose and Poetry*, Brill, Leiden and New York, 1988, p. 163

¹⁵⁰ Lābī, *La Poésie Palestienne Contemporaine*, op. cit., pp. 149-152

¹⁵¹ Anton Shammas, *Arabesques*, tr. Vivian Eden, University of California Press, Berkeley Los Angeles London, 2001 (first published by Michaelmark Books Ltd. Am Oved Publishers Ltd., 1986) English translation copyright Harper & Row Publishers, 1988)

¹⁵² Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, David Grossman, *The Yellow Wind*, tr. Haim Watzman, Pan Books, London, 1989, and Raja Shehadeh, op. cit., all document this.

¹⁵³ Mourid Barghouthi, *I Saw Ramallah*, tr. Ahdaf Soueif, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo and New York, 2000 (first published in Arabic, 1997)

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 70

¹⁵⁵ Boullata, *Modern Arab Poets 1950-1975*, op. cit., pp. 25-26

¹⁵⁶ al-Udhari, *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, op. cit., p. 36

¹⁵⁷ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 185-6

¹⁵⁸ Halim Barakat, 'Explorations in Exile and Creativity: The Case of Arab-American Writers' in K. Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq eds., *Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, Brill, Leiden, 2000, pp. 304-320

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 311. The reference is to Jabrā I. Jabrā, 'The Palestinian in Exile As Writer', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, issue 30, no. 2, vol. 7 (winter 1979), p. 83

Chapter 3 Lost Lands and the Search for Affiliation

This chapter is about exile as loss of land and, less directly, as loss of patterns of life and of the seasons, and about attempts, both conscious and unconscious, to create affiliations after the loss of filiation. This is mainly discussed in terms of the displacement or exile of individual poets, but it has been a general feature of societies in the Islamic lands because of the interlinked effects of modernisation, colonialism, and the political turmoil and new external and internal interactions following the independence of most Islamic states.

Edward Said describes a filial relationship as one 'held by natural bonds and natural forms of authority' and says that 'the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms – such as . . . consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture' and that the passage from filiation to affiliation can be seen as 'the passage from nature to culture'.¹ Short of the subjects of anthropology, filiation is not entirely consonant with 'nature', but in some recent instances in the Arab world it has been very close to nature, especially in terms of long cultivated land, since the last century has seen the large scale movements of populations from country to city that were more gradual two to three centuries ago in Europe, and it has also seen the abrupt severance of a majority of Palestinians from their land.

The breaking of filiation has occurred in different ways at different times and over varying timespans in different countries of the Arab world. Although the overwhelming break in Palestine was due to the creation of Israel, and is therefore largely seen in terms of Palestinian dispossession, the previous generation of Palestinian intellectuals had had to come to grips with the British Mandate and the modernising influence of the West. The earlier influence of the Ottoman Empire had been rather more attenuated than in other parts of the Middle East because none of the cities of Palestine were major political or cultural centres.² Major cities in other areas were centres of Ottoman influence which had then had colonialist influence grafted onto them. Syria and Lebanon in particular had been subject to this influence throughout the nineteenth century, partly through religious considerations where the English and Americans, and the French and Russians supported educational missions, the latter in support of Catholic and Orthodox minorities. Arab intellectuals such as the generation of *Mahjar* poets benefited from education, but the 'autocratic rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid made life difficult for these educated and freedom-loving Arabs' and their career paths were blocked by 'the increasing role of Europeans in the commercial life of the Lebanon after the 1860s',³ so many of them went into exile. Iraq was heavily influenced by the British since the establishment of the Mandates following World War I, and the younger generation of intellectuals in Baghdad in the 1940s and 1950s, for example, who were educated in Arabic and English, following the school reforms of 1936,⁴ had little continuity with earlier generations of intellectuals most of whom tended to use Ottoman and Persian as their language of culture. School textbooks were written by Syrians or Lebanese, and the Egyptians 'had a virtual lock on the publishing industry'.⁵ The work of many Iraqi poets at this time demonstrates alienation. Intellectuals in the colonised countries of the Maghreb which achieved independence in the 1950s and 1960s were alienated in their new, Arab nationalist countries by

having been educated in French and being unversed in Arabic. Ironically, many exiles from the middle-Eastern countries taught Arabic and practised other professions in North Africa.⁶ In many countries intellectuals became increasingly threatened with the establishment of authoritarian military regimes, so Arab political exiles came to their exile in various states of affiliation and de-affiliation.

Sometimes Arab intellectuals in exile have to become repositories of Arab culture, and need to look to the future, since they are free of some of the constraints of their native countries.⁷ This some of them do in various ways – in their own creative work and in critical work. They have also put Arab literature into world literature by translating it or by writing in other languages, and by creatively absorbing other influences and by influencing other literatures, as Arab literature has done in the past.

The world of exiled Arab intellectuals is not homogeneous, but has had a variety of often random connections. People of various backgrounds may meet in a certain city at a certain time and form vibrant communities, with elements of rebellion, experimentation and cross-fertilisation of ideas – Cairo in the early and mid 20th century, the *Mahjar* poets in North and South America, Baghdad of the 1940s and 1950s, and, notably, the Beirut of the 1950s and 1960s, which gave rise to the magazines *Al-Adab*, *Sh'ir* and *Mawāqif* and where Yūsuf al-Khāl held weekly meetings of *avant-garde* poets and writers, which might be compared to the Paris of the late 19th century and London of the early 20th. The predominant theme of Paris and London modernists, many of whom were voluntary exiles, was their rejection of aspects of Modernity and their attempts to maintain/create a high culture; that of the Arabs, often forced exiles, was the rejection of established political systems and the evils and injustices – both internal and external – facing the Arab world, and they are 'deeply concerned about the identity and future of Arab culture in a tragic age.'⁸ Part of the intellectual modernism of much Arab poetry may also be due to the fact that it has tapped into networks of European/American literary modernism drawing upon critical as well as creative thought, and that it has been able to use modern communications, in all senses – magazines, newspapers, travel, conferences.

As an exiled poet begins to accept and adapt to his position he may either retreat into himself or begin to explore the wider perspective that has been imposed upon him and move beyond the immediate causes and depictions of exile. Many connections and filiations have been broken, and the ways to survive are either trying to cling to them in a sort of denial, or to create new ones. For some, especially but not necessarily Palestinians, the main pain of exile lies in separation from their land. The bulk of Palestinian refugees were agrarian and many modern Arab poets have had direct or not very far removed experience of being connected to and living off the land. Major figures such as al-Sayyāb, Adūnīs and Maḥmūd Darwīsh were born in villages; Salma Khadra Jayyusi writes of an uncle and cousin who came from a village; and Palestinians born in exile or who went into exile at a very early age, such as Muḥammad al-As'ad, had the memories of their immediate family. This does not apply to English/American poets such as Eliot or Pound, most of the modernist French poets or even to the highly nationalist W.B. Yeats, who were significant

influences on modern Arab poetry, and there are examples where a strong physical feeling for land has been grafted onto a more abstract model. Living off the land can be felt in some of the poems of al-Sayyāb and Darwīsh. This connection to land is drawn on in what has been called the 'Palestinian land rhetoric', in some of the *'Tammūzī'* poetry of the 1950s and 1960s and in some poetry of displacement where cities, both foreign and in the poet's country, are contrasted with the country. The Iraqi poet al-Bayyātī, born in Baghdad, although he hates the modern Arab city, does not contrast it with the country.

There have been attempts to create attachment to land – by Israelis, and by Palestinians with children born in refugee camps – but most exiled poets live in foreign towns and have had to create affiliations within foreign cultures. Many have followed successful careers, usually not primarily as poets, but often in literary areas such as editing magazines, university teaching, writing critical books and articles, translation and/or anthologising, and maintain contacts through various conferences. They study Arabic poetry, add to it, criticise it and help to disseminate it. For some, the demands of a career or perhaps the feeling that they could not develop their poetry or could perform greater services to Arabic literature in other ways have led to the abandonment of poetry at a comparatively early age, for example Jabrā, who worked for the Iraqi Oil Ministry and wrote novels, and Tawfīq Ṣāyigh who taught and edited the journal *Ḥiwār*. The stability of a career does provide new connections. But the situations of some have also been in constant flux with ongoing levels of political change, and the work of major poets such as Adūnīs, al-Bayyātī and Maḥmūd Darwīsh has altered a great deal in the course of their lives. New affiliations can take many forms: a new language; new relationships; a sense of belonging to a wider 'Arab world' rather than to any individual country; of becoming part of a physical community or of a scattered literary community; or of tapping into the global literary community. Many of these aspects are reflected in poetry, in what it says or does not say, in dedications, allusions, intertextuality and even in form, and they have also created affiliations in groups of exiles, in their poetry and in what is partly a 'virtual' Arab world in exile.

It must be borne in mind that the poetry is not necessarily the poet. The work may be based as much upon empathy as experience. It may be difficult to differentiate between an unconscious effect of experience and the poet having found an appropriate way of transmitting what he wants to say. Some poets are highly politically motivated in their work and others are not. Resistance poets and very committed poets are often more concerned with how to use poetry effectively, than for poetry *per se*; Adūnīs is obviously highly self-conscious, both in his poetry and in what he is trying to put across, and it would appear that, despite his appearance of emotionalism, al-Sayyāb was too,⁹ whereas Darwīsh and the later al-Bayyātī claim to 'live in their poetry', and do not display such a strong sense of ideology, and their poetry is in the one case allegorical and to an extent lyrical and in the other fragmented.

Loss of Land

Much modern Arab poetry about land in the 1950s and 1960s is part of the 'Palestinian land rhetoric' so, although it is nostalgic, it is also political, in trying to demonstrate a claim to a lost land or written by people still living in Palestine who had either been displaced or saw the displacement of others at the hands of Israeli settler colonisation. But with increasing distance from 1948 and 1967 such poetry becomes more sophisticated and more poetry of exile than of claims, rage or resistance as seen in some of the examples in the previous chapter. Maḥmūd Darwīsh's 'Speech of the Red Indian' is allegorical in depicting the constant displacement of another people but draws implicit comparisons between the agents of their exile and those of the Palestinian exile, as well as evoking some of the brutal aspects of modernisation used in colonisation, and some of Muḥammad al-As'ad's poems implicitly accept loss of land in their strong sense of centrifugal movement, displaced seasons and the loss of regular patterns of life.

Some exiles cling to the past and concentrate very negatively upon nostalgia. An example is Abū Salmā (1907-80) who after 1948 lived as an exile in Damascus.¹⁰ His nostalgic poetry about his lost homeland, his constant deep yearning for its flora and fauna, and his faith in an inevitable reunion with it endeared him to thousands of Palestinians, and he was eventually given the name "The Olive Tree of Palestine" as a symbol of permanent rootedness and unswerving love and faith. However, Jayyusi says that

his diaspora poetry displays a lack of coherence and an affected tone not present in the fiery, compact, spontaneous verse he wrote in Palestine before 1948; it is as if his vision had become shaky and unsure. . . his poetry fails to express the true dimensions of his country's tragedy, or to reflect the real aspirations of Palestinians.¹¹

The deterioration in his work perhaps reflects the disorientation of exile, and perhaps he was too old and too well established as a poet on leaving Palestine to be open to new impressions.

Ḥasan al-Buḥairi (b. 1921) similarly settled in Damascus after the Palestinian diaspora of 1948. His beautiful poem/song 'Orange Blossoms'¹² is nostalgic and romantic, but ends in claiming ownership:

*It was our sky that warmed and fostered them
with purest sunshine that could give them birth
and that which nourished all their grace and beauty
and all their fragrance – was our native earth*

and another poem 'The Malady and the Cure'¹³ ends:

*. . . tears alone have never righted wrong,
Who resolutely charge can seize their right
who've cast out fear and are resolved to fight.*

Inevitably there is an overemphasis of the importance of land in the work of recent generations of Palestinian poets who, if Israel had never come into being, would have in any case had their connections to land weakened. Many have attempted to build a 'land rhetoric'¹⁴ around the lost places of Palestine. Barbara McKean Parmenter discusses two ways of experiencing place – "rootedness" and "sense of place":

Rootedness is unself-conscious and implies "an incuriosity toward the world at large and an insensitivity toward the flow of time." It is being at home without having to think about it. To have a sense of place, on the other hand, is to self-consciously construct an attachment to and appreciation of the local environment. The latter requires a certain distance between self and place, together with an acute awareness of the outside world and the flow of time. Tuan remarks on the use of historical events to construct a sense of place . . . The implication is that place, or at least a sense of place, is a social construct as well as an existential experience.¹⁵

Orange blossoms become important once they are lost.

Mahmūd Darwīsh's important poem 'Identity Card' (1964),¹⁶ which represents an early stage of his life and of his poetic development has been discussed in the previous chapter, although it can be read in terms of land rhetoric in its depictions of continuous generations closely connected to the land. The Israeli is an impersonal presence in the latter poem, but in the poem 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies' written after the 1967 June War¹⁷ Darwīsh faces up to the physical presence of the other, and the evils of war and occupation.

According to Johnson-Davies, Darwīsh recreates a conversation he once had with an Israeli soldier, and whether or not this is true, it is an effective structure for expressing the issues of the poem. The soldier is portrayed, with a certain degree of disdain, as an individual human being, who

*. . . doesn't seek to analyse his dream, understanding things
Only as he feels and smells them.*

and is attached to his mother, who is very real, and not symbolic of a motherland

*He understands, he told me, that home
'Is to drink my mother's coffee,
To return of an evening.'*

and

*He talked to me of the moment of farewell,
Of how his mother wept in silence as they led him off
To some place at the front.
His mother's anguished voice
Was carving out a new longing under his skin.*

*O that doves might grow up in the Ministry of Defence,
O that they might.*

But this also implies that the man did not think about the situation in Israel until directly affected. He has accepted what he has been given – he may have been born in Israel, he may be a recent immigrant from a country where he or his family did not feel accepted or secure, who has been welcomed and given grants and subsidised housing – and it has not occurred to him to think that other people may have been dispossessed and displaced to provide homes for himself and others, nor has he been encouraged to do so. He wishes for ‘doves’ in the Ministry of Defence because he does not wish to fight.

In an article on Israeli and Palestinian discourses of rootedness Carol Bardenstein writes of the Israeli project of

‘getting to know’ or ‘knowledge of the country’ referred to in Hebrew as *yedi’at ha-arezt*. This is the project of becoming directly acquainted not only with historical events of note, but very pointedly with the country’s flora, fauna, geographical and geological terrain, etc. This project is rigorously, one might even say obsessively, institutionalised throughout educational institutions in Israel (and was so in the pre-1948 Jewish educational institutions in Palestine), from kindergarten through primary and secondary school, as well as in the army and in a number of independent organisations.¹⁸

This is reflected in the poem, where the poet quizzes the soldier on his feelings for the land:

*I asked him: ‘And the land?’
He said: ‘I know it not.
I do not feel that it is – as poems express it –
My very skin and heartbeat
I noticed it suddenly as I do the shop, the street, newspapers.’
...
‘Would you die for it?’
‘Certainly not.
The only bonds that tie me to the land
Are a fiery article, a lecture –
That taught me to be in love with love of it*

The encounter is almost companionable, in contrast to the situation; there is no hatred, simply an acceptance of power on the one hand, and of authority on the other, and that although the soldier says that he wants ‘. . . a good heart not a loaded rifle’ and ‘. . . a sunlit day, not the mad, / Fascist moment of conquest’ a soldier has to be

*. . . a machine, spitting out fire and death,
Turning space into a black bird.*

Being a soldier, however, makes him complicit and brutalises him. He dreams of white lilies to try to erase from his mind the *'red boxthorn / [he] had exploded in the sand, in breasts, in bellies.'* He describes a man, a farmer or labourer, he had killed in terms that relate to Christ crucified – *'A crown of blood marked his high forehead. / . . . His arms stretched out, / Like two dry streams . . .'* When asked if he grieved, his reply is *'Grief is a white bird / That does not come near the battlefields.'*

The poem reflects the anomalous situation of Israeli and Palestinian in that, in it, Darwīsh gives the Israeli soldier the discourse of flowers, olive branch, birds and land that Arab poets usually attribute to Palestinians. The beginning sounds like 'unselfconscious rootedness' in land, but it is not very profound, as the soldier says that he would not be prepared to die for *'the land'*. However, he may well die for it as a *'machine, spitting out fire and death'*, generated by an ideology. The soldier even talks of his mother's coffee, which is a frequent topos in Darwīsh's own work, but he appears to see 'home' in terms of human relationships, rather than in the ideology of possession of the land which has been drummed into him. The poem powerfully uses colour: a bird is mentioned several times, but then grief is described as *'a white bird / That does not come near the battlefields'* and the soldiers on the battlefield are *'turning space into a black bird'*; and the only other colour admitted is the red of blood. There is perhaps the implicit suggestion here that polarised views, black and white, and the ordinary people who do not question them, can only lead to blood. There is tragic irony when the soldier describes his killing of a Palestinian peasant *'as though reciting a song'* using the imagery of the crucifixion, as mentioned above; the dead man seeming to merge with the land, making a final claim to it with his blood; and the image of him falling like a collapsing tent, which conjures up Arabness. The dead man and red boxthorn *'exploded in the sand'* also evokes *Tammūzī* poetry, discussed in the next section.

The movement from the land has been cushioned for other young Arabs by the fact that their homes still existed while they were finding their place in the world. Ironically, several of the reasons for the rapid emergence of Palestinian poetry also soon began to damage it. Although poems such as Laylā 'Allūsh's 'The Path of Affection' unite land with people through the metaphor of family¹⁹ and with the repeated use of 'Arab' as an adjective, and in 'Without Roots' Jayyusi talks of her grandfather and cousin, many poets have used the sexual metaphor of the lover yearning for his lost love, for example Sālim Jubrān (b. 1941): *'You can uproot the trees / . . . / You can plough my village houses under / leaving no trace of their walls / You can confiscate my rebec / . . . / but you cannot suffocate my tunes - / for I am the lover of this land / and the singer of wind and rain'*.²⁰ This is effective for the sense of violation at invasion, and brutal changes such as the construction of settlements and highways, but can be problematic, and can be taken too far. Parmenter suggests that the difference between these two metaphors involves expressions of power, since the family works as a metaphor for the land by invoking a shared, intimate bond, based on long experience, which is unattainable for newcomers 'no matter how much they manipulate surface appearances', whereas the sexual metaphor represents a more aggressive battle for possession where the (male) author asserts his own ownership of the land over his Israeli rival. However

this possession, while more declarative and strongly worded, is also more vulnerable and desperate. It is the act of an individual apart from community, and it acknowledges the presence of a powerful rival who may take away possession. The land as female is the object of a wrestling match, and in its objectification it becomes in some sense up for grabs.²¹

This aggressive individuality was also an element, in some hands, of what Jayyusi sees as the deficiencies of Palestinian poetry in the 1970s and, although the articulation of the relationship between people and place is necessary, so that words can be translated into power and action, it can be destructive in that

so much that is meaningful is inexpressible in the common parlance of power and is thus marginalised. In the act of creating a powerful language of place, we begin to speak and think in symbolic and often simplistic terms which distort essential meanings and experiences.²²

Darwish has used the entire gamut of symbols for the connection to land, the lover, notably in 'A Lover from Palestine', but also mother, father and grandfather. Although the land rhetoric was a necessary response to the Zionist land rhetoric, it has been the prime cause of another main danger for both exiles and those living under occupation, that of thinking too much in symbols. Parmenter also quotes Raja Shehadeh, who wrote:

Sometimes, when I am walking in the hills . . . unselfconsciously enjoying the touch of the hard land under my feet, the smell of thyme and the hills and trees around me, I find myself looking at an olive tree, and as I am looking at it, it transforms itself before my eyes into a symbol . . . of our struggle, of our loss. And at that very moment I am robbed of the tree; instead there is a hollow space into which anger and pain flow.²³

Although he recognises the importance of maintaining self-identity and opposing Israel's efforts to deny Palestinians a place, he is angered when that rhetoric robs him of the land's material essence.

The Israelis are not only physically reshaping Palestine into Israel, they are forcing the Palestinian to reshape his or her emotional and spiritual attachments to the land. The land necessarily becomes part of the political argument. Its trees, houses, fields, and hills are no longer unquestioned elements of the places where Palestinians dwell; they must do battle with the places that the Israelis are constructing.²⁴

Another aspect that Murīd Barghūthi points out is that symbols can cause people to live in the past and help their occupiers to deny them a future:

. . . it is in the interests of an occupation, any occupation, that the homeland should be transformed in the memory of its people into a bouquet of 'symbols.' Merely symbols. They will not allow us to develop our village so that it shares features with the city, or to move with our city into a

contemporary space. Let us be frank: when we lived in the village did we not long for the city? . . . Did we not wish that those cities would become like Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Beirut? . . . The Occupation forced us to remain with the old. That is its crime. It did not deprive us of the clay ovens of yesterday, but of the mystery of what we would invent tomorrow. . I used to long for the past in Deir Ghassanah . . . But when I saw that the past was still there, squatting in the sunshine in the village square, like a dog forgotten by its owners – or like a toy dog – I wanted to take hold of it, to kick it forwards, to its coming days, to a better future, to tell it: “Run.”²⁵

Clinging on to the past and to an old identity as a defence mechanism against an alien and hostile occupation was seen as a literary as well as a social problem by Hanān ‘Ashrāwī, writing in 1978, since it

. . . adds fuel to the national folklore revival and that at the same time gives Palestinian literature a somewhat defensive and extreme colouring and weighs it heavily with the task of aggressively expressing and affirming this identity. . . this has become a double-edged sword in that initially it gave momentum to the literary movement, but then became a rigid pattern depriving the literature of much of its originality and vitality. The language itself, at first enriched by folkloric and colloquial terms and expressions, is now suffering the loss of meaning and force which comes as a result of endless repetition and formulaic constructions.²⁶

Samīḥ al-Qāsim’s short poem of 1983 ‘The Boring Orbit’²⁷ symbolically expresses the continuance of the Palestinian dispossession and this state of repetition in a conversation with ‘*a daughter who’s not yet born*’ who asks why the earth goes round, and whom he tells that it is because of God stirring the sugar in His coffee cup one morning. The stirring is ‘*[i]n dull, empty circles, / Dull circles, / Dull, empty circles / and since that time, my child, / The earth’s been rotating in its boring orbit*’. This continues the past into the unborn future, extending them both by the use of ‘Hagar’, the mother of the dispossessed Ismail, ancestor of the Arabs, as the child’s name. The confined swirling of coffee in a cup is a powerful image, as the coffee can only be drunk or subside and grow cold, and the repetition of the poem mirrors rotation. For those crushed and overwhelmed by the Palestinian situation or obsessed by it, there is the danger of remaining in a ‘boring orbit’ or ‘closed circuit’, which is also the title of a collection written by Jabrā (*al-Madār al-Mughlaq*) as early as 1964.

Writing poems such as ‘Identity Card’ and other poems directly reflecting the Palestinian situation has made Maḥmūd Darwīsh into ‘the Palestinian national laureate’ but possibly at the cost of greater poetry that he might have written. Kamal Abu-Deeb has also used the term ‘closed circuit’ (*‘shi’riyyat al-dā’ira al-muqfala’* (Poetics of the Closed Circuit)) in an article on Darwīsh²⁸ and said that:

The Palestinian tragedy has two aspects, the first is the Jewish appropriation and oppressive occupation of Palestine, and the second is Palestine's appropriation and oppressive occupation of Maḥmūd Darwīsh.

But even if we are not able to free Palestine from Zionist appropriation we should at least work towards freeing Maḥmūd Darwīsh from Palestine and freeing Palestine from Maḥmūd Darwīsh . . .²⁹

Abu-Deeb itemises five ways in which Darwīsh might develop his poetry, the first of which is that he should break the circuit, abandon it completely and give up being the poet of the Palestinian cause.³⁰ This is the only route that Darwīsh has not found himself able to follow until comparatively recently,³¹ although he has broadened the range of his poetry through the use of both universal and personal dimensions, by exploring inconsistencies, ruptures and tensions, by the use of multiple voices and viewpoints, and by going beyond the exhausted, stereotypical repetitions that surrounded the cause and replacing them with new aesthetics.³² The experiences of leaving Palestine in 1971, living in Beirut from 1973 to 1982, enduring the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the siege of Beirut and the subsequent expulsion of the PLO, and living for some time in Paris have obviously affected his poetry. He wrote some of his best exile poetry, some of which was discussed in the previous chapter, in Paris, as well as *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* and was no doubt exposed to new influences there. The poems of the 1990s are considerably more complex and often allegorical. They reflect his experience, as well as active researches. Darwīsh has talked of writing lyrical epics reflecting the fate of the victims of history, and this applies very much to his 1992 collection *'Aḥad 'ashara kaukaban* (Eleven Planets).³³ Edward Said has described his work 'as an epic effort to transform the lyrics of loss into the indefinitely postponed drama of return'³⁴ but in this collection there is an element of despair. The first group of eleven poems is based on the Fall of Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, mostly from the point of view of the last King of Granada. This is followed by a long poem called 'The Speech of the Red Indian',³⁵ which is based on 'Chief Seattle's Speech' of 1854 as indicated by the use of the final words of the speech, 'Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds', as a citation.³⁶ There is a group voice, which has elements of the 'Indians' of Central and South America as well as the 'Red Indians' of North America. The poem is about genocide, greed for gold and for land, brutality and lack of understanding and also passionately about connections with land and the fear of total eradication, even from history:

Don't slaughter our past.

But if the crime is known of, as it now is for the United States, and is beginning to be for Israel

*You will need a treaty with our ghosts on those sterile winter nights,
a less bright sun, a less full moon
for the crime to appear less graphic³⁷ on the screen*

The Indians are portrayed as having a mystical link with their land and the animals inhabiting it, many of whom were also almost hounded to extinction, and the poem taps into the current

ecological discourse, as it mourns land and creatures exploited by overwhelming technological power. Parts of it echo the imagery of the preceding Andalusí poem:

*Take the rose of our dreams
and see what we've seen of joy.
Sleep in the shade of our willows . .*

where the dispossessed imagine the intruder taking over all the valued elements of their lives and the lives of their predecessors. There is acceptance of different worldviews:

*. . . you have your god and we have ours.
You have your past and we have ours.*

but incredulity at the sheer inhumanity of the colonists:

*. . . don't you ever
memorise a few lines of poetry, perhaps,
to restrain yourselves from massacre?
Weren't you born of a woman?
Didn't you suckle the milk of longing
from your mother as we did?*

The Indian voice recognises that the Indians will be destroyed by the power of technology

*Soon you'll raise your world over ours,
blazing a trail from our graveyards to a satellite.
This is the Iron Age: distilled from a lump of coal,
champagne bubbling for the mighty.*

but the poem then moves into discourse relevant to the mechanics of the Israeli-Palestinian situation and the 'death-in-life' state of Palestinians under military occupation

*There are dead and there are colonies.
There are dead and there are bulldozers.
There are dead and there are hospitals.
There are dead and there are radar screens
to observe the dead
as they die more than once in this life, . . .*

and the sheer horror and inhumanity of mechanised war

*Into what abyss
is this robot bristling with aircraft carriers and jets
consigning the earth?
. . .
A new Rome, a technological Sparta and an
ideology for the insane ...*

The question

... where are you taking my people and yours?

is posed, implying that the invaders are destroying themselves as well as their victims. The Indians would

*... rather depart from an Age
our minds can't accept.*

Darwīsh is arguing how the United States and Israel will be seen by future generations. That the colonisation of North and South America was based upon genocide of less technologically advanced native peoples is now accepted in objective versions of history; *Pax Americana* has been compared to *Pax Romana*; and Israel has been compared to Sparta,³⁸ an introverted, brutal and self-brutalising empire. Norman Finkelstein has directly compared the westward growth of the United States with the Israeli Palestinian situation.³⁹ The poem is also, in itself, an implicit warning to the Palestinians of the dangers of compromise – the Red Indians bent over backwards to compromise; many converted to Christianity; they continued to agree to move to new reservations as agreed old ones were settled in the unstoppable drive west – but there is despair, as the Indian displacement never stopped. The generally slow tone of the poem and its repetitions express sadness and the mystical overtones of the life of the Indians; it is harsher when referring to Columbus, and the section '*There are dead and there are colonies. . .*' (*'hunālika maufī wa mustaṭānātun, wa maufī wa būldūzrātun, wa maufī / wa mustashfayātun, wa maufī wa shāshātu rādār tarṣudu maufī? . . .*)⁴⁰ is very powerful in its repetition and alliteration.

Although 'The Speech of the Red Indian' is captivating in its sound, and raises the historical issue of the Red Indians and a current issue, the despoilations of technology, its allegory is very specific. It is focused on Palestine, although it does succeed in being more universal than if this was explicit. Darwīsh's life was shaped as the 'poet laureate' of his exiled people, and he continued to be 'appropriated' by Palestine. In 1991 he disassociated himself from the PLO and in some collections since wrote more personal poetry, but he later returned to Palestine, and wrote in support of the second *Intifāda*, and allowed himself to be a symbol. He has said that he lived in his poetry.

Tammūzī Poetry – Cycles of Fertility and Rebirth

In the 1950s and 1960s *Tammūzī* poetry was an important genre which in many ways fitted the mood of the time, and some examples can be seen as poetry of exile and separation from land. The name derives from the ancient fertility myth of the slain Adonis/Tammūz, from whose blood sprouted anemones, via both Antūn Sa'āda's use of it as a symbol of the rebirth of the greater Syrian nation, and T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*, which was very influential as it struck chords with Arab feelings of frustration and alienation, and the longing for an Arab renaissance, as well as with the poets' desire to experiment with poetic modernism. Other elements were Adūnīs's use of the myth of the phoenix in 'Resurrection and Ashes' as a symbol of cleansing and rebirth,

the resurrection of Christ and the failed resurrection of Khalīl Ḥāwī's Lazarus, as well as myths such as Sindbad and Odysseus which lack the element of resurrection. Much *Tammūzī* poetry has a feeling for land and the forces of nature – the production of grain and flowers and the cleansing and fertilising power of rain – but this is in most cases political allegory as:

The use of such myths, where the god rises from death and the world is again filled with fertility and life, reflected a profound hope in the resurgence of the Arab spirit after the catastrophe of 1948, a renewed faith in the possibility of resurrection after symbolic death.⁴¹

Although it is poetry of exile or wandering it cannot be associated with any 'land rhetoric' which is perhaps emphasised by the fact that the Palestinian Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, who gave the movement its name and translated the crucial part of Fraser's *The Golden Bough*, connects more deeply with the wandering and alienation of *The Waste Land* than with land and nature. Indeed, the collection from which his poem 'The City', discussed later, comes is entitled *Tammūz fī-l-Madīna* (*Tammūz in the City*, 1959). This is also perhaps a matter of circumstance: Jabrā lived in Iraq, rather than in Palestine where, in the decades following 1948, poets were both in a state of shock and cut off from the Arab poetic mainstream.

Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, very much associated with the *Tammūzī* movement, is one of the most important Arab poets of the 1950s and 1960s and was both politically committed - he was initially a communist, for which he suffered exile and prison, but later supported mainstream Arab nationalism - and committed to poetry. Jayyusi argues that his 'experiments helped to change the course of modern Arabic poetry'. He and Nāzik al-Malā'ika are generally regarded as the founders of the free verse movement in the late 1940s and he 'gave it credibility with the many fine poems he published in the fifties.'⁴² The development of his poetry, which has a great deal of intertextuality with the English poets that he studied at the Teachers' Training College in Baghdad, can be seen as experimentation with various discourses – Apocalyptic, Edenic, fertility myths, and then Arab myth,⁴³ all attacking what was effectively British rule of Iraq, and later the excesses of the al-Qāsim regime. Terri DeYoung argues that much of al-Sayyāb's writing can be seen in Edward Said's model as the 'valorisation of affiliation at the expense of filiation' as to 'choose one's own genealogy, through literary models, must have seemed powerfully attractive to one whose filiative bonds had been . . . badly frayed in childhood.'⁴⁴ She and Asfour⁴⁵ both comment upon his complex metricality, suiting form to meaning. His famous poem *Unshūdat al-maṭar* ('Song of the Rain')⁴⁶ denouncing the al-Qāsim government, describes the endless pain of an Iraqi exile staring at his country across the Gulf:

*Do you know what sadness the rain evokes?
And how roof-gutters sob when it pours?
And how in it the lonely person feels lost?
Endless is the rain: like shed blood
Like hunger, love, children and the dead.*

DeYoung suggests that al-Sayyāb / the speaker

. . . is racked with despair over what he sees as the failure of his fellow Iraqis to achieve real freedom, and he has a vision of them trapped in an eternal sterile seasonal cycle . . . [which brings] . . . only the endless recurrence of repression and famine as their harvest is taken from them by oppressors.⁴⁷

The poem also portrays the sadness and dangers of trying to escape political oppression:

*How many a tear we shed, on departure night,
And – lest we should be blamed – pretended it was rain.*

. . .

*“O Gulf,
O giver of shells and death.”
Of its many gifts, the Gulf strews
On the sand its salty surf and shells
And what remains of the bones of a miserable, drowned
Emigrant who drank death
From the Gulf waters and its bottom*

The rain that drenches the poem is symbolic of grief – it is often mingled with tears, literally so in the above extract - and of fertility, both misused and longed for. It is addressed to a woman who is described in terms of palm trees, vineyards and the sea, perhaps as much country as lover, and after emotive references to the tragedy of a child who has lost his mother, who is:

*On the hillside mortally sleeping in her grave
Eating earth and drinking rain*

it moves to the wider tragedy of Iraq and its people.

The poem became very popular throughout the Arab world, for its cadences with the repetition of *maṭar* and the numerous evocations of its string of images of people’s lives and of Iraq and the Gulf. It is highly emotional with its references to a lover, children, a child who has lost his mother, a ‘*sad fisherman*’, drowned emigrants, starving villagers, and a baby, all of which strike deep chords. It is pervaded with water, as well as the rain a river shaken by an oar reflecting the moon and stars, the Gulf, and the ‘*dew of the Euphrates*’. There is a tension between constant hunger in Iraq and eating and drinking used in ways other than those relating to human needs: the dead mother is ‘*eating earth and drinking rain*’; ‘*palms drink the rain*’; ‘*the ravens and locusts have their fill*’; the drowned emigrant who ‘*drank death from the Gulf waters*’; and ‘*a thousand snakes drink nectar*’, as there is between hunger and images of lush vegetation nourished by the rain. The only hope is in ‘*a roseate nipple in the mouth of a babe*’, a symbol of a hoped-for better future. There is an Edenic reference in the thousand snakes and it is Apocalyptic:

*I can almost hear Iraq gathering thunder
And storing up lightning in mountains and plains
So that when men break open their seals
The winds will not leave of Thamūd*

Any trace in the vale.

evoking both the Day of Judgement and the Qur'ānic account of the destruction of Thamūd, as well as in the emphasis on birth and death. DeYoung says:

As is abundantly clear from even the most casual perusal of apocalyptic writings, their dominant focus is always on temporality: the representation of the end of things as they have been, with perhaps a hopeful gesture toward a renewed and better future. When Sayyāb avails himself, as he does in many of his most successful poems . . . this temporal element is never absent, but hovers over the trajectory of the poem like a vengeful spectre waiting for the appropriate opportunity to emerge.⁴⁸

It is a complex, shifting narrative, as although there is a poetic voice addressing a female presence, the voice at times becomes plural as well as giving brief stories such as that of how people try to protect the child from the finality of the death of his mother for over a year, and viewpoints of people such as the fisherman, villagers and emigrants. It is also significant as a famous and loved example of *taf'ila* poetry as well as containing nuances of older Arab poetry including such 'fine structural interaction' as the uses of the dual in the opening lines which reflect, but do not mimic, a frequent usage in pre-Islamic poetry,⁴⁹ and echoes of Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 'thunder in the mountains and 'death by water' as well as its structure of shifting themes. And it helped to make poetic modernism acceptable to a wider audience. Although he appears very emotional, al-Sayyāb is obviously highly self-conscious in his use of poetic techniques.

'Jaikūr and the City' (1956)⁵⁰ is explicitly a *Tammūzī* poem in that Tammūz is present, but it lacks hope of resurrection. It contrasts the ashen imprisoning horrors of the city with the longed-for moist green beauty of the village where al-Sayyāb was born. The city is a place of exile and epitomises corruption and a denial of life.

*The city streets coil around me
thongs of mud bite into my heart,
a dull ember in it yields only clay*

...

*These are streets of which drowsy hearthside legends say:
From them no more than from the shores of death
has any traveller through night returned*

This section has echoes of Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' in the walker in the city who does not truly belong; the personification of 'streets' and biting 'thongs of mud' like Eliot's 'yellow fog' that 'rubs its back' upon window-panes, 'licked its tongue' and 'curled once about the house'; the hint of Shakespeare's 'death, / The undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveller returns'⁵¹ when Hamlet is mentioned in Prufrock. In an image of impotence, Prufrock says:

I should have been a pair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

and al-Sayyāb reflects this in:

*Who shall change the human claw into a hand
with which the child can wipe his forehead?*

and his powerlessness against the metaphorical wall around Jaipur:

*Who shall pierce the wall? Who opens the gate? Bloody his
right hand on every lock? And my
right hand: no claw
to fight with on the streets of the city, no grip
to raise up life from the clay, it is clay only.*

The goddess asking 'the surgeon' to help perhaps evokes 'a patient etherised upon a table' in Prufrock.

The city is contrasted with the village from which the poet has been cut off:

*And Jaikūr is green, dusk
has touched the crests of her palm trees
with its sorrowful sun.*

only:

*Sleep
has paved me a path to her: out of my heart
it goes
through the city labyrinth, across the night, across
The fortified citadels. . .
. . .
veins of Tammūz crossing the city, veins that branch
through every home and prison, every coffee bar,
every prison and bar and every nightclub,
through all the insane asylums,
every whorehouse of Ishtar . .
And the goddess Lat grieves for Tammūz.*

The 'path' of sleep has Sufi echoes; it connects the living heart of the poet with the veins of the dead Tammūz in whose decay is the blighting of countryside and city; and it also has echoes of the vicissitudes of the *rahīl* genre in pre-Islamic poetry. Much of Sayyāb's work can be described as romantic, and some of it has been criticised for its sense of nostalgia and for naiveté,⁵² but, especially in terms of the *taf'īla* movement and in drawing on Eliot, he has been an important influence in modern Arab poetry, and as he died very young it is not known what he might have become.

Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā was born in Bethlehem, and grew up in Jerusalem. He graduated from the Arab College there, then went to Iraq. He later won scholarships to Cambridge and Harvard, then settled in Baghdad. In 1954 he became head of publications at the Iraq Petroleum Company, and in 1977 was appointed cultural consultant at the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and Information, where he worked until his retirement in 1985, hence experiencing modernisation in the economic and political fields, which must have contributed to his appreciation of literary and poetic modernism. He was among the few early authors to introduce prose poetry and one of the central five of the 'Tammūzī poets'.⁵³

He seems to have taken both a Palestinian and pan-Arab point of view, the former mainly in his poetry, which he gave up at a fairly early stage, and his late autobiographies and the latter in his fiction. In his poetry he sought to express 'the anger, bewilderment and alienation experienced by his countrymen, uprooted from their land and its traditions', but he also believed that '(t)he challenge of adapting to the modern world should be a supreme concern of the Arabs' and that 'the sense of dispossession and instability suffered most acutely by the Palestinians reflects the state of the Arab world at large, hovering on the brink of changes which will transform the very fabric of their society.'⁵⁴

As something of an outsider in the country where he spent most of his life, Jabrā was able to convey much of the complexity of the Arab world. Roger Allen says that

Jabrā's predilection for setting the action of his novels among groups of intellectuals and his use of the multinarrator technique serve to make his novels a gold mine of views on a whole variety of subjects connected with life in the modern Arab world.⁵⁵

Boullata writes that in all his literary and artistic activities,

Jabrā was a strong modernising influence, bringing to his Arab compatriots new cultural and social attitudes. The fact that he was a Palestinian living in exile was basic to the experience of life depicted in his writings; it also enhanced his understanding of modern humanity, living in constant threat of annihilation. The feeling of siege abounds in his verse and fiction, and the need to break out of it is a major trait of his writings.⁵⁶

His later novels, *al-Ghuraf al-Ukhrā* (The Other Rooms, 1986) which seems to be a Kafkaesque evocation of the 'feeling of siege', and *Ālam bi-lā Kharā'it* (A World without Maps, 1983) written in conjunction with 'Abd al-Rahmān Munīf, are complex and experimental.⁵⁷ Jabrā also wrote many essays on literary criticism, and a number of works on art and art criticism, being himself a painter who participated in the modern Iraqi art movement from the late 1940s. He translated over thirty books from English.

Much of Jabrā's poetry relates to Palestine and to both his own and a more general sense of exile but, although in general it preserves an Arab identity, it is often heavily overlaid with tones of Western poets, T.S. Eliot in particular, historical echoes from al-Andalus to Socrates, and

Christian imagery. 'The City' (1958)⁵⁸ reflects a 'state of siege'. It evokes Eliot in much of its imagery; in engaging the reader with its stream of consciousness recalling 'Ash Wednesday', 'Gerontion' and parts of *Four Quartets* and *The Wasteland*; and in calls to 'look' and in questions:

I
Look at the deserted street in the dark,
and the closed doors of shops;
look at the street stretched in the morning.
Did you rest between the closing and opening of doors
in untroubled sleep?
Mine was burdened with dreams.
I live with shadows and lanterns.

and in philosophical ruminations on the sterility and boredom of exile:

II
What is the barrenness in the blood?
Boredom is born every day, and I say
this nothingness at least obliterates the preceding day's boredom,
sympathy and solace;
but the days that persist in
dragging the remains of the years
to unmarked graves
spin, too, in seasons.

The poem is in the voice of an alienated stranger, wandering in a devastated city and there is a sense of pain and loss, death and decay, barrenness and hopelessness. It is night in the city, and the wanderer lives with 'shadows and lanterns' in a shut-in state of anxiety into which come transient flashes of images and memories. The light of the lantern seems very fragile, and this links with a clouded consciousness in the frightening image

Have you seen your fingers dry
hard as shiny nails?
Each nail is the worm from a carcass
sliding on the circle of lights in your brain,
so that you see only the swaying shadows
distend and crowd the doors and sidewalk.

There are flashes of hope such as the description of the seed that

. . . grows a stalk which contains
the fury of winter and the joy of spring . .

but they are usually negated. There is a sense of entrapment and of a very long struggle. The people, the city and even the earth itself are afraid of storms, which would seem to symbolise an uprising:

*I saw their inhabitants, hunted by dreams
 raise their empty hands and cry:
 'If only the storms would cease to rage!' but, as the narrator says
 Would storms not lift the shadow
 and rid them of ghosts
 that the sap might flow from their roots
 and fill up the branches with buds and flowers?*

However, in the final section the narrator seems to summon up his resolve, sees that the storm is necessary for cleansing and for new life and calls upon it:

*But when the storms blow
 they sweep the dead from the sidewalk, obliterate
 the lanterns and shadows,
 and purge the eye and foot.
 Blow, storms,
 and pry
 the fingers of death from us;
 dismiss
 the pain patrolling every door
 . . .
 Descend
 from the heights
 pregnant with the tides of the sea, and efface
 all rotting things from sight.
 Open the doors of the city to the great sea;
 turn angry waves into the shadow-houses . . .*

This section has echoes of the ending of the *mu'allaqa* of Imru' al-Qays, and like his songbirds ends with sound and the hope of light, rebirth and joy:

*Then will the sun burst forth
 with blossoms and greenery for the city
 and laughter will be heard from every
 window, room, and house.*

This is very much a *Tammūzī* poem of the time, and part of the group's important contribution to the development of Arabic poetry but it is displaced to the city, reflecting the position of Palestinians displaced from their land. However, although it depicts the pain of exile and alienation and calls for fertility to surge from the blue caves of the sea '*into our land / and blood*' it ends with a positive hope for the city too, which relates the poem to Jabrā's wider hopes for Arab modernisation.

Loss of the Cycles of Nature

In contrast with *Tammūzī* poetry, where the cycles of the seasons are cycles of fertility with the hope of rebirth, and perhaps as a rebuttal of naïve dreams of resurrection or return, an enduring theme in the work of the Palestinian Muḥammad al-As‘ad is the loss or distortion of the seasons. Fertility of plants and animals, and ultimately humans, demands land. It is a perversion of nature to be severed from land and from nature – modern man may choose to live away from the land, even though he is still ultimately dependent upon it and the individual exile may become accustomed to urban life, but a people driven from their land and forced to live disrupted from nature, living off the productive efforts of others, are in an unnatural, demeaned and tragic position.

‘The Earth Also Dies’⁵⁹ expresses the disruption of exile and life without its fixed patterns and attachments:

*Why are we suddenly left
Without seasons
Without skies
Without mothers?*

The poet establishes a reciprocity between exiles and their land, a variation on the ‘land rhetoric’ discussed above, arguing that the land that has lost its people is similarly damaged:

*The earth also dies
Cannot take us
As martyrs
Or prophets
We who are deleted
Without a sign of identification
To mark our absence,
Who are spread out
Like untranslatable tenderness,
We wanderers
Like nights astray
Over otherworldly deserts.*

The loss of a continuous history rooted in the land is implicit. The short poem ‘When the Inhabitants of Planets Converse’⁶⁰ has a sense of a world that has been destroyed and its people cast adrift and lost in immensity, both in space and time:

*Vast
Beyond number
Like wild honey
Apples in the forest
Ripe figs*

In abandoned gardens
Like houses
Destroyed and overturned
Under endless stars
Of beings no one mentions
Like a sea for which
We attempt to find
A history
Like a desert
Forever prelife
For which we attempt to find
Some seasons.

Like the poems discussed in the previous chapter, there is a sense of speed in the short lines. The reader is swept from the familiar munificence of nature in Palestine, through destruction to the 'endless stars'. Who are the 'beings no one mentions'? In one context it is Palestinians in the second half of the twentieth century; in the context of the title it could be aliens, beautiful or terrifying, or even godlike. The second half of the poem evokes the whole sweep of creation and how modern man is lost in space and time and has to find history and order, but it also depicts exile. The loss of seasons is a powerful image of exile for al-As'ad – leaving your particular place on the earth alters the seasons, or even distorts them, both in deserts, where the seasons manifested through the cycles of vegetation are lost, or in the concrete jungle of cities where cycles of flora and fauna are neglected and the cycles of the stars cannot be seen. As well as being an exile, al-As'ad is a modern poet. This poetry evokes the following section from 'East Coker'⁶¹ in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, where Eliot, too, portrays distorted seasons:

What is the late November doing
With the disturbance of the spring
And creatures of the summer heat,
And snowdrops writhing under feet
And hollyhocks that aim too high
Red into grey and tumble down
Late roses filled with early snow?
Thunder rolled by the rolling stars
Simulates triumphal cars
Deployed in constellated wars
Scorpion fights against the Sun
Until the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire

Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.

'That was a way of putting it' Eliot says. Al-As'ad's way is gentler and less grandiose, and less impersonal – his swept up exiles are trying to find a history and some seasons. But they both evoke the terror of modern scientific man's awareness of the immensity of the universe yet cling to their own particular seasons: Eliot the snowdrops, hollyhocks and roses of the English garden, and al-As'ad the wild honey and figs of Palestine.

Adrift in Space and Time – the Search for Affiliation

As can be seen in the case of al-Sayyāb, much of whose poetry was written in Iraq and relates to Iraq, even movement from village to city - which is often effectively a movement in time from feudalism to modernity, as well as a social rupture because of the effects of displacement and education - inevitably gives rise to a widening of horizons and a weakening of connections to persons and places. It also weakens polarities - the person who has been within a fixed hierarchical structure begins to see that there are other structures and other types of connections. When this is followed by exile, as was the case for many Arab intellectuals, the widening of horizons – and 'idiocultures' is even greater. Several poets reflect this in their work - their early work is from a personal point of view, and usually spatially and temporarily restricted, whereas their later work is over a much wider canvas. Several significant Arab poets have been in exile for many years, at a time of considerable political, social, and technological change. For example Darwīsh's 'Identity Card' and 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies' discussed above are fixed in the area of Palestine where the poet was born and in contemporary time, and although in the former there are references to earlier generations in the same place, this is seen as an undifferentiated continuity until the recent disruption. Whereas his later poetry ranges through space, time and various cultures. Darwīsh has moved into a wider world.

Similarly, the early work of the Iraqi poet 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī is first based in Iraq, and after an initial romantic phase moves towards committed poetry, but it soon begins drawing upon external influences, using distancing techniques, such as poetic masks, and ranging through space, time, myth and history. As an urban Arab and as a solitary exile, in his early exile poems he sees exile as separation from family, danger, and not belonging but, already, in 'A Traveller without Luggage' on an abstract, cosmic scale. His relationship with his country varied, in accordance with political events there, and he passed most of his life outside it, in necessary or voluntary exile, and travelled widely. He described himself as 'the victim of three forms of exile: the exile of existential uncertainty, the exile of physical deprivation, and the exile of rootlessness.'⁶² However, this made him cosmopolitan. He made friends of many nationalities, and was always open to new cultural influences, many of which persisted throughout his poetic development.

He was a contemporary of al-Sayyāb at the Teachers' Training College in Baghdad, in an atmosphere of anti-regime politics and English poetic influences, and from 1953 was being published in, and no doubt reading, Suhayl Idrīs's groundbreaking magazine *al-Adab*. His early

commitment phase is demonstrated in the declamatory, revolutionary style of 'Broken Urns' (*Abārīq Muhashshama*, Beirut 1954) and the harsh realism of 'The Village Market'⁶³ in the same collection. The latter poem can be seen, like examples from several other contemporary Iraqi poets, as a *mu'arāḍa* of al-Sayyāb's 'In the Ancient Market'⁶⁴ and uses al-Sayyāb's new poetic form of *taf'īla* poetry, which al-Bayyātī adopted at an early stage, going on to become one of its major proponents. Al-Sayyāb's poem begins '*Night, and the ancient market*' whereas al-Bayyātī begins '*The sun, and the emaciated donkeys, and the flies*'. Night in a deserted ancient market is romantic, whereas the sun in a crowded village market with emaciated donkeys and flies is not. Al-Sayyāb's unified vision and single consciousness are contrasted with a series of details and multiple consciousnesses. Al-Sayyāb's poem is itself using and adapting various influences: the market is chosen as the bearer of the poet's memories perhaps because it 'possesses a set of features that allows it to interact meaningfully with the literary tradition's convention(al) locus of memory and loss: the *aṭlāl*' although 'the market is not, as the *aṭlāl* once was, a place of intimacy, of human (*in*)dwelling. It is a place of commodities, where objects are temporarily stored, in order to be bought and sold.' DeYoung links this with a later part of the poem where the beloved says: '*I, O one so near, so far, / Am yours alone, but I won't belong to you . . . / I belong to someone else*', comparing herself to a commodity, and also likens part of the poem to Eliot's 'Portrait of a Lady', albeit with a reversal where the man rather than the woman is silent.⁶⁵ The example shows the ferment of poetic ideas in Baghdad, and the constant experimentation and search for affiliation amongst its young intellectuals.

However, al-Bayyātī went too far in criticising the Iraqi regime and after a brief imprisonment in 1954, he went into exile for four years separated from his wife and children. This first exile gave rise to several fairly straightforward accounts of the pain and dislocation of exile and a spell in Cairo soon after the 1952 Egyptian revolution and encompassing the 1956 Suez affair accentuated his left wing and anti-colonialist sympathies, as well as involving him in a new intellectual *milieu*. The range of his subjects expanded from the poor villages of Iraq to the exploited millions of the developing world. The pastiche 'The Sorrows of Violets' (in *Ash'ār fi'l Manfā* 1957) explicitly rejects romanticism by contrasting dreams of '*the sorrows of violets / Or of a sail glowing / Under the green moonlight on a summer night*' with the reality of the oppressed, exploited millions '*who make a boat for the dreamer*' and '*Under the night sun dream of a morsel*.'⁶⁶ He was drawn to committed left wing poets from other countries, becoming involved in translating Eluard (1957) and later Aragon (1959); and began a lasting friendship with the exiled communist Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, who had spent around 18 years of his life in prison, when he met him in Moscow in 1958. He returned to Iraq after the 1958 overthrow of the monarchy, and in 1959 was appointed Cultural Attaché at the Moscow Embassy, but in 1961 resigned from this post to accept a professorship at Moscow University. Once again he was exposed to the West's pursuit of its own interests, this time directly. Al-Qāsim's 'non-aligned stance went down badly in Washington', as did his convening of a meeting of representatives of other oil-rich countries in Baghdad to form OPEC in September 1960, and he was overthrown in 1963 by a group from the

Ba'ath party, who were in collusion with the CIA.⁶⁷ Al-Bayyātī was stripped of his Iraqi citizenship by the new regime. Boullata says that in collections in the late 1950s and 1960s

. . he supports national struggles in all parts of the developing world against the hegemony of the West . . Algeria's struggle against France, Egypt's heroism in the Suez War, Vietnam's bid for independence, or other people's fight for justice. This celebration of political struggles reaches a climax in his *Sifr al-faqr wa-l-thawra* (Book of Poverty and Revolution) (1965), establishing him as one of the leaders of socialist realism in modern Arabic poetry.⁶⁸

Al-Bayyātī had welcomed the Iraqi revolution of 1958, but it had turned sour. In the 1960s he was having to face up to the Ba'ath party's misuse of socialism and the non-Utopia of the USSR. Disillusioned, he tries to see the current state of the world in some sort of historical perspective, and begins to adopt 'a strangely materialist philosophical position, fraught with elements of pantheism and mysticism, for which he finds support in ancient Babylonian literature. Put simply, it is that the spirit of life is ever renewing itself and death is merely the return of the part to the whole or, on a political level, revolution is to be kept up by a succession of revolutionaries.'⁶⁹ Badawi argues that

. . . it is most likely that one of the factors that have led to his change of style is the growing influence of Adunis's poetry which . . . reveals a mystical outlook, and which seeks to destroy all logical connections, relies heavily on surrealistic imagery and resorts to the use of masks. In this respect Adunis's influence helped to strengthen and confirm whatever effect on his poetry was exercised by Bayyātī's earlier fascination with the work of Marxists like Mayakovsky, Aragon, Eluard and Neruda which, besides being Marxist, was also either futuristic or surrealistic or opaquely symbolist.⁷⁰

Martinez Montavez sees 1966 as the beginning of a 'narrative phase' in al-Bayyātī's poetry.⁷¹ Two poems of this year, 'Childhood' (*al-Ṭufūla*) and 'Lamentation' (*Bakā'īya*), from *Alladhī Ya'tī wa lā Ya'tī* (1966), reflect the desperate state of the cities of Iraq, and Aida Azouqa demonstrates his adoption of T.S. Eliot's ideas of depersonalisation (including his concept of the 'objective correlative'); the use of myths both as a means of distancing and universalising; and of the function and nature of poetry as an art form.⁷² Badawi says that al-Bayyātī's poetry 'at least starting from the volume *Twenty Poems from Berlin*, is full of allusions, not only to people and places, myths and events, but also to particular poems. This is a feature which he clearly adopted from T.S. Eliot', and that he is also concerned with how to present the ideal hero of our times (and of all times) in an extreme situation. This ideal hero is a blend of the revolutionary, the poet/artist and the lover.⁷³ These two poems use the persona of the Persian poet and mathematician Omar Khayyām who, like al-Bayyātī, lived in an era of political flux so therefore provides both a distancing and an objective correlative for the current Arab condition. Khayyām himself is almost a mythical figure but myth explicitly enters the second poem in its use of the Greek myth of

Orpheus pursuing Eurydice into the Underworld, conflating Eurydice with 'Ā'isha, one of al-Bayyātī's recurring female figures. The first poem has clear echoes of *The Waste Land*, for example, the nightingale, and terse questions such as 'will the garden bloom?' and 'Will the sky release rain / And the truth be born?'. The poems are committed and shocking in their imagery, and are also examples of free verse, with a variable but effective rhyming scheme. They certainly reflect a sense of alienation, and the dislike that al-Bayyātī felt for the city. Montavez says that '[t]he history of man mixes with the present as myth mixes with reality.'⁷⁴ Other poems of the collection, 'The Heir' and 'Thread of Light' present the Spanish poet Lorca, a revolutionary hero adopted by several Arab poets, as 'the descendent of Homer', and as being 'like a luminous thread stretched across the generations in a world of anarchy and confusion'.⁷⁵

Like many other Arab poets, 'the disastrous Arab defeat of 1967 had . . . a shattering effect' upon him⁷⁶ and 'strengthened his criticism of Arab regimes and his love for the struggling Arab masses.'⁷⁷ It gave rise to despair, as in the bitter polemic 'Lament for the June Sun' (1968). Again, his poetry began to change.

While retaining his commitment to fight injustice, imperialism and reactionary governments, his poetry began to acquire mystical dimensions of love, using symbols and allusions derived from the great Arab mystics, as in his collection *Qaṣā'id ḥubb 'alā bawwābāt al-'ālam al-sab'* (1971).⁷⁸

In 1975, Badawi's analysis is that from *Poems of Love at the Seven Gates of the World* 'mystical and surrealistic elements become dominant features of his style, in many places to the point of unintelligibility.'⁷⁹ Al-Bayyātī visited Morocco, Algeria and Paris in 1970 where he may have learnt more about French surrealist poetry, and returning to Iraq in 1972 he no doubt found himself in a surreal situation. But much of al-Bayyātī's work of the 1970s might also be seen as exile poetry *par excellence*, both in form and content. It seems unstructured, even fragmented, sometimes giving two or three alternatives for single words. It has a sense of being adrift, and casting out in all directions, always ranging over four dimensions and even envisaging a fifth, and gives the sense of his being overburdened by experience and influences. He is a very pictorial poet and there is a sense of the sheer variety of the world, a strong presence of weather – especially rain and snow indicative of the grief, loneliness and discomforts of exile. The poems are longer than before, and sometimes employ prose poetry, both of which are features of contemporaries such as Adūnīs, Hikmet and Laābi. Many of the collections/poems might also be seen in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome analogy from their book *A Thousand Plateaus* where they make the distinction between tap-root, or tree systems, and rhizome systems. They say that:

Binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree. . This is as much as to say that this system of thought has never reached an understanding of multiplicity: in order to arrive at two following a spiritual method it must assume a strong principal unity.⁸⁰

but that

. . any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be.⁸¹

and

A multiplicity has neither subject or object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows).⁸²

Western power structures, or power structures that try to mimic them, are also basically hierarchical and tree-like, as are familial structures. Binary logic is reflected in many self-other dialogues, notably, and destructively for the Arab world, the smooth replacement of Communism as other by Islam as other in the most simplistic American thinking, but also in some Arab thinking questioned by poets such as Tawfīq Ṣāyigh and Khalīl Ḥāwī, who are discussed in the next chapter. Most long poems display a linear or circular structure, or can be a collection of small self-contained sections, but al-Bayyātī instinctively, in his being adrift but also perhaps in an innate appreciation of multiplicity, casts out in all directions and produces poems that are not easily categorised and have no sense of closure, but are very truly ‘texts’ in the old connection to weaving. They reflect people he has met, places he has visited and influences he has been open to – in literature, art, history, myth and politics. They reflect the power of modern communications, as do the World Wide Web and espionage, trade and ‘terrorist’ networks.

Muhsin al-Musawi also sees al-Bayyātī’s poems as a sort of incarnation, saying that ‘[m]ore than any other Arab poet . . . [he] addresses the theme of exile as a textual engagement whereby land is displaced onto a poetic terrain. . . [and] has worked out an ever growing poetics of exile that resists closure or ultimate findings and truths.’⁸³ He may be creating for himself a poetic/textual homeland – which he is – but, as regards many contemporaries, this is a sub-set of a living, personal network which, although it has no centre or hierarchical structure, can provide a sense of affiliation which perhaps compensates for the loss of filiative structures.

Al-Bayyātī’s ‘rhizomes’ are connected in various ways, as they frequently cover vast distances and are full of references and allusions to mythical and historical figures and to contemporaries, especially writers and artists from numerous countries. His work is linked by his political beliefs and his belief in commitment and revolutionary change; his concern for poetry as a force for change; his frequent intertextualities; his cast of characters, such as al-Khayyām, other poets, Sufī mystics, and especially the pervasive female character always out of reach of the poet, frequently given the name of ‘Ā’isha, who symbolises the power of love as ‘an ever-present possibility’;⁸⁴ and, especially in the later works, his being the ‘victim of . . . existential uncertainty, . . . and the exile of rootlessness.’⁸⁵ Not having firm roots, he seeks a multitude of connections/affiliations. Many names and places, while not expanded upon, inevitably evoke connections. His work can also be impressionist or full of often sparkling, often puzzling images.

Part of the elements knitting together al-Bayyātī’s nexus are his frequent dedications.⁸⁶ These are often marks of friendship and/or respect but are not always simply a matter of homage – there

can be radical recasting of a predecessor's work, implied criticism and sometimes irony. Muhsin al-Musawi contrasts al-Bayyātī's treatment of al-Sayyāb, al-Mutanabbī, and Khalīl Ḥāwī. In 'Writing on al-Sayyāb's Tomb' al-Musawi argues that 'al-Sayyab's poetry is presented as too innocent to cope with such complications' as the 'urgency and requisites' of the state of siege depicted in the poem.⁸⁷ In a poem on al-Mutanabbī 'the subtext markers. . are taken from al-Bayyātī's register, while al-Sayyāb's is relegated to the distant regions of childhood, deprived of the poetic potential held by the elegiser.' And in his 'Elegy to Khalīl Ḥāwī' 'al-Bayati is more concerned with questioning the very vocation of poetry. In line with a non-complacent view of modern poetry, al-Bayati argues for the poem not the person'⁸⁸ and 'the prioritisation of the poem, the text, over the person, the precursors, swerves on purpose from the elegised to the text itself, from intersubjectivity to intertextuality, humanising the subject first to drive him out of the textual horizons next.'⁸⁹ Some of the dedications are to living people, who may also figure in the poems – either as part of the narrative or in intertextualities. They are usually characters with whom he is unproblematically able to identify such as Abdellatif Laābi, engaged in a socialist struggle in Morocco, and the Spanish exile Rafael Alberti who, having been active on the Republican side in the Civil War, had lived in exile in Argentina and, from 1963, in Italy.

Aida Azouqa describes 'Ā'isha as 'a figure who recurs in al-Bayati's poetry and assumes a variety of roles and identities. They range from her being the beloved of al-Bayati's poetic masks to representing the motherland and its aspiration. Al-Bayati frequently confers upon 'Ā'isha a mythical stature through associating her with fertility goddesses.'⁹⁰ There are parallels in other poets such as Dante's Beatrice and Hölderlin's Diotima.

There are rich intertextualities, both literary and artistic. The poems are modernist in their sense of multiplicity, perpetual movement and scientific imagery, and sometimes powerfully pictorial as well. Art is an important element of European modernism, and many intellectuals in Iraq and Lebanon were also artists or interested in art, for example the poets Jabrā and Yūsuf al-Khāl. Passages such '*the Andalusian poet wear(ing) the cape of the wind / Carrying his guitar, flying over the sleeping mountains*' might be seen as intertextualities with artists, in this case Chagall,⁹¹ and Picasso is a character as well as an influence in 'Nightmare',⁹² and acrobats, clowns and guitar players figure in the poem. Al-Bayyātī's friend Rafael Alberti, to whom he addressed a poem, was an artist as well as a poet, which is reflected in his poems, especially *To Painting* (1951)⁹³ which contains poems on specific artists and specific colours which are accumulations of exquisite sharp images and al-Bayyātī's use of colour and fleeting images often echoes his.

In Chapter 1 al-Bayyātī's 1970s poems were compared to the artistic notion of collage, particularly with reference to the work of R.B. Kitaj.⁹⁴ There are perhaps closer comparisons to Chagall, with his frequent references to flying, and to the work of the Chilean painter Roberto Matta Echaurren (1911-2002) whose large surrealist collages may be very sinister, despite their apparent beauty, and often contain strange, other-worldly, floating figures and multiple horizons, giving an uncontained sense of space. Matta mostly lived in exile in Europe and was involved with the Surrealists in the 1930s and with figures such as Lorca, Dali, and Picasso, and later took part in numerous conferences on the themes of surrealism, revolution, liberty, and poetry.⁹⁵ Al-Bayyātī

uses a quotation on poetry by Matta, from an opening address to a conference in Havana, as a citation in *tajrībatī al-shi'riyya*⁹⁶ so presumably had met him, and had probably seen his work.

Another constant thread is the poet and the art and demands of poetry. Al-Bayyātī draws on Rimbaud's remark:

The poet is really a thief of fire. Humanity, and even the *animals*, are his burden; he must make sure his inventions live and breathe; if what he finds *down below* has a form, he offers form: if it is formless, he offers formlessness . . .⁹⁷

in *Autobiography of the Thief of Fire*, and much of the later work reflects the final phrase of the quote. He often writes of the poet and poetry in the abstract, or of other poets.

There are also mystical elements. The title *Shīrāz's Moon* is a play on Shams Tabrīz the name given to the man who changed the life of the Persian mystic Rumi. Perhaps as Badawi suggests Adūnīs was an influence towards mysticism, but so too may have been Nazim Hikmet, as there are intertextualities with his work.

Al-Bayyātī's *oeuvre* is so complex that it gives rise to numerous interpretations. It is perhaps self-indulgent and superficial in some of its allusions, but it is fascinating and beautiful, and gives a sense of identity in Islamic history, and in being part of the community of Arab and world poetry. It is also serious in its themes and likely to spark curiosity and concern in those who read it. Many of the poems of the 1970s are so full of allusions that there is the sense that rather than al-Bayyātī drawing upon his influences and experiences, they are crowding in upon him.

The poem *al-Zilzāl* 'The Earthquake' (1974)⁹⁸ demonstrates several of the features discussed above. The poem is fragmented in form - divided into six unbalanced sections of 23, 2, 1, 2, 2 and 29 lines respectively, the title expresses the hope for revolutionary change, and it is dedicated to 'Abdellatif Laâbi and his colleagues'. The Moroccan poet, who was a prisoner at the time for *délits d'opinion*, is a person with whom al-Bayyātī naturally identifies as a critic of oppressive regimes, and is an important figure in the nexus of Arab poetry. He was educated in French, so like many Maghrebi intellectuals is disconnected from his own people, although identifying with them, and not entirely a part of the culture in which he was educated. Before his imprisonment he had edited the magazine *Souffles* and participated in events such as the Conference of Arab Poets in Beirut in December 1970, which he addressed. Al-Bayyātī was involved in conferences in Morocco in the same year. Laâbi writes in French, and has translated Arabic poetry into French, including a comprehensive anthology of Palestinian poetry and, in 1987, a reciprocal gesture to al-Bayyātī, a selection of poems entitled *Autobiographie du voleur de feu*, the title of the collection in which 'The Earthquake' appeared. 'The Earthquake' ranges in both space and time, placing Laâbi's struggle in the historical context of the linked history of Morocco and Europe. The connections are fluid and somewhat muddled - most of Morocco's current problems stem from French colonialism, of which Laâbi is a cultural victim, but al-Bayyātī draws on its historical links with Spain, and links Laâbi with the Spanish and Cuban revolutionaries Lorca and Guevara. The

asides on Cuba as well as evoking socialist revolution evoke the past failure of Spanish colonialism, and are also reminiscent of similarly glancing references to Cuba in Hikmet's poem 'Flaxen Hair'. In the first section he touches on Laâbi's concern at the poverty, lack of education and superstition of his people:

*God's sun shines in your eyes when setting on the
Fishing boats at the Moroccan shores
Where the poor of the Atlas await the miracles
Of the moon saint*

on the general state of the political exile:

*I see you: while from exile to exile
I carry the soil of the nation /
The forbidden poems / the secret newspapers / the fire.*

and the 'feverish' activities of border police. Laâbi was a publisher of forbidden poems and a suspended magazine.

The next four very short sections introduce 'Ā'isha, one of al-Bayyātī's recurrent female figures, who can neither reach or leave Cuba, an unsuccessful product of both Spanish and US history and an emblem of left-wing revolutionary movements, heightened by the involvement of the legendary Che Guevara, mentioned later in the poem, in its struggle, and touch on the left-wing Spanish poet and martyr Federico García Lorca, with hope

*IV
He said: I will return Garcia Lorca
At midnight
And in the big valley, the flowers slept.*

that is dashed:

*V
The Andalusian lover: blindfolded and killed
Before midnight and before the cock's cry.*

The final section of the poem is partly narrated by 'Ā'isha, who tells of seeing 'the last king of Cordoba' depressed and scared, attended by 'the executioner, the poet', which invokes Hārūn al-Rashīd and his *Arabian Nights* companions, 'and the castrated fortune teller', who foretells his end. He has the poet and the fortune teller executed, so it appears that the king of Cordoba is to be associated with the king of Morocco and other oppressive rulers and the poem becomes a message of hope, if exiled and imprisoned intellectuals can unite with the 'Atlas poor':

*We deceived the police at midnight
We carried the secret newspapers / the forbidden poems /
The fire*

*To the tombs / the magic charms / the sacrifices /
The solemn vows*

as the poem does textually by juxtaposing distinctive lines previously separated by several lines or by the police. There is a sense of community in the juxtaposition of voices: 'You said, and I say too: / it is the earthquake.', and the earthquake, or revolution, brings hope: 'She said, you say, and I say too: The last caliph in Cordoba is dying.'

The poem 'For Rafael Alberti'⁹⁹ is in a similar vein. It evokes the poets Lorca, who was murdered, and Machado, who died in exile, fellow members, with Alberti, of the 'Generation of '27'; 'the suffering of the Spaniards'; the lost Arab cities of al-Andalus '... the Arab coming from Toledo, / My seventh grandfather in his leather coat / Driven to his death or exile'; the dangers of being a poet:

*From my poetry I inherited: this deadly poverty,
This love, this flame, this murderous sword
With which my throat will be cut one day
For my support of the poor.*

and '... the cries of the exiled Spaniards / From every land / Where man is condemned to death.'

The rambling nature of the poems is matched by the chameleon nature of the central identities, and both are infinitely connected throughout the work. Perhaps this is an indication of how people are changed by exile and their identity becomes fluid, having to take 'the shape of things' and 'never claim a definite space', as Zakariyyā Muḥammad says.¹⁰⁰ In 'Profile of the Lover of the Great Bear'¹⁰¹ al-Bayyātī takes exile to extremes in using the image of a space traveller to paint a picture of someone isolated by travel and wearied by the burden of experience. Al-Bayyātī was 'home' in Baghdad at the time, and perhaps uneasy and facing up to the Ba'ṯh betrayal of pure socialist ideals. 'Profile' is a telling word, since a profile reveals little of character, and this might hint at a need for concealment, as does only being seen

*... at night
Walking under the snow
His head bent, alone,
And when you called him
His reply, a vague smile
Fading in the wind and the dark*

Despite his travels he has not found what he was seeking, for

*... within himself he resumed his daily torment and the quest
For love's continent*

The reference to space travel in the line

As though a thousand years had passed him by

implies that both physically and psychologically normal relationships of space and time are distorted, analogous to the relativistic concept that at approaching the speed of light an astronaut can cover vast distances in what he experiences as a relatively short time, whereas a considerably longer time will have elapsed in the place to which he returns. Psychologically, the travels and experiences of an exile can dilate time and change him considerably more than he, or his contemporaries, would have been changed in his place of origin. He is restless, unable to belong, and still searching:

*Waiting for a new sign to appear in the black sky
Or a spark in the unknown*

and he has suffered, in a brilliant scientific image of attrition:

*He was a comet bleeding
Returned from his travels and burnt out*

The objective observer and the focus on a single character are unusual in al-Bayyātī's 1970s poetry – he is perhaps out-of-character, and observing himself, or hinting at the sterility of science or what could be the sterility of exile if one does not accept new affiliations. In other poems in the same collection he plunges back into his complex web of literary, historical and mythical references.

The title poem of *Autobiography of the Thief of Fire* certainly questions the role of the poet à propos the state, with 'In the capitals of the East, the poets – beggars – eunuchs / Caged, creeping on their stomachs'¹⁰² and 'The Greek Poem'¹⁰³ is a paean to poetry where the displaced, suffering poet is a madman but also some kind of sacred figure. It is perhaps trying to inject the power of human love, symbolised by the vigour of pagan religion, into the acceptance and fatalism of Islam, since part of the poem echoes the occasion of the Prophet Muhammad's first revelation of the Qur'ān, although the poet is first told to 'Utter ('unṭuq) in the name of love / And in the name of God' and then, after an angel opens his chest and removes from his heart 'a grain of black musk' and says: 'Read! ('iqrā')' he reads '. . . the commandments of the gods of poetry' and 'the gods of crazy poetry ran to Delphi lamenting the fate of the poets'. The structure of the poem, which plays with tone and genre, reflects its movement from a state of suffering and loneliness to confidence in the power of poetry. Its first two sections are relatively long and written as prose poems (*qasīdat al-nathr*) which form dense blocks on the page. The characters of the lover and the madman, and his love and 'a naked woman on a horse' seem to shade into one another. The madman/lover, while having faith in God, is passive in his suffering, but the woman wants to change, despite calls to 'Wait for me!' and runs off. The following nine short sections, which depict: the pagan inspiration of the nymph-like naked, dancing woman with 'golden tresses'; the poet's voyage to Delphi and the temple of Apollo, god of music and prophecy, and the sacred oracle; and the revelation of the 'commandments of the gods of poetry', are written in prose poetry (*al-shi'r al-manthūr*), and give an impression of lightness with their short lines and the gaps between the sections. The twelfth section, a mixture of mainly prose poem but also prose poetry, reverts to a state of despair for the pagan nymph which is countered by the hope of the madman and his faith

in his God; the woman again wants to depart, but together, but the man asks her to wait with him.

The final section:

On my way back from Delphi

The Gods of pure poetry

Gave me the blessing

And the power of the word.

is in prose poetry, and gives some sense of resolution in confidence in the power of the word, and of reconciliation in combining the gods of poetry with blessing (*barakāt*).

The themes of *Love, Death and Exile*, the title of Bassam Frangieh's selection of al-Bayyātī's later poetry, are pervasive. Frangieh says that some of the deep anxiety of al-Bayyātī's poetry might 'suggest, falsely, that [it] is predominately grim, even fatalistic' but argues that 'it is replete with examples of his abiding faith. The primary source of his strength is love' which he portrays as 'the supreme human experience, which manifests itself in a variety of forms: love of mother, earth, children, homeland, revolution, and humanity. As if to pay homage to the transcendent quality of love, al-Bayyātī rarely depicts it in terms of gender nor mentions the physical appearance of the lover.' It is 'beyond ownership', 'an ever-present possibility', and thus 'the metaphysical companion of the exile' that 'makes exile both meaningful and tolerable'. He says that: 'The recurring appearance of 'Aisha' is illustrative of the centrality of love and its consistent meaning in al-Bayyātī's poetry. . . her regular reappearance is an important thread' that binds his works together.¹⁰⁴ 'However, Aisha appears only to disappear. Every new mask that she wears offers great fulfilment as well as great disappointment, for Aisha is unattainable.'¹⁰⁵

'Ā'isha moves through various incarnations and also locations, such as Spain, Russia and Waterloo Station, or Nishapur and Ancient Assyria, which reflect al-Bayyātī's travels and studies. In 'I Am Born and Burn in My Love'¹⁰⁶ as a 'tartar cat' associated with 'polar cities', snow and icons she is perhaps a reference to Pasternak's Lara, a victim of historical forces, exiled within her country, yet able briefly to snatch at transcendent love; she is compared to 'the blond concubines' of the king of the Alhambra, often brought from the Caucasus; and 'was under the seven moons' evoking an earlier poem, 'The Lady of the Seven Moons'¹⁰⁷ who is also Russian – a legendary woman worshipped in the Black Sea area.¹⁰⁸ A fair-haired Russian lady may also invoke Vera Tulyakova, the dedicatee of Hikmet's poem 'Flaxen Hair',¹⁰⁹ who became Hikmet's wife and whom al-Bayyātī would have known in Moscow. The poem is also full of the pain of memory

Exiled in my memory,

Imprisoned in words,

I flee under the rain.

of the inspired but suffering poet

I hear the sound of an eastern lute and the cry of a gazelle,

I draw near, breathless and dazzled

By the glory of Arabic words

Interlaced with thousands of flowers

...

But a hand extends,

Throwing me into a abyss of darkness

Leaving my lyre on the carpet

And a ray of light from a day that died.

and the pain of exile and loss

My life's sun has disappeared:

Nobody knows

Love is blind lonely existence

No one knows another in this exile.

The world's heart is made of stone

In this kingdom of exile.

She is nameless, paradoxically 'woman of the Himalayas and the Andean plains' in 'I Shall Reveal My Love For You to the Wind and the Trees'¹¹⁰, a naked woman with golden tresses in 'The Greek Poem', and 'an unknown lady' in 'the flower of life' in 'First Symphony of the Fifth Dimension'¹¹¹ but in all cases a symbol of the power of love.

The latter poem is, like 'Profile of the Lover of the Great Bear' a carrying of exile to excess and exudes a sense of unreality, as it is distributed over space, time, and even an imagined dimension. The poet is a creator of multiple, interpenetrating worlds. The female is connected to the Russia nexus as she is associated with 'the white nights of the Pole', the Black Sea, harking back to the goddess 'Lady of the Seven Moons', and the Ural mountains, but she is of all times and places as he 'will ask the subway workers about her' but asks 'Why did the papyrus not speak of her? Why did she not leave an address at the post office . . .'. 'Abd al-Karīm 'Amjāhid argues that she represents the spirit of poetry, but she still represents love and its ability to fight exile and death.¹¹² The section

*I have lost my life from exile to exile, waiting for a vessel to come down
between my fingers. It has often fallen between the throes of poetry and my
death, but I have not questioned nor have I been questioned in the febrile
revolution of the planets: Why has she left me to search for her in the books
of magic and in the depths of wells?*

would support both interpretations. Some of the imagery of the poem is reminiscent of Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner', with a hint of the Flying Dutchman, potent symbols of endless exile and roaming. There is a central character who is eternally cursed and ever thirsty; the contrast in Coleridge's

'The moving Moon . . .

(whose) beams bemocked the sultry main,

Like April hoar-frost spread;

*But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.*

is evoked by al-Bayyātī's 'I travel in my slumber, between the white nights of the Pole and the ruinous fire of this bloody dawn'; the figure of death as a beautiful woman 'the Nightmare Life-in-Death was she' whose mysteriously powered ship rapidly appears and disappears and leaves a ship full of dead men, except for the mariner cursed by his killing of the albatross, is evoked by al-Bayyātī's 'lady in the flower of life' who descends from 'a vessel loaded with corpses and dead birds'. Al-Bayyātī is comforted by a male spirit who sends 'signals from a brilliant star' as the Mariner was comforted by spirits from the pole. The pole (*quṭb*) is also a central symbol in Sufism, both as the highest point in the hierarchy of saints, and 'the polar star, thought to be located opposite the Kaaba, is the guiding light for the traveller'.¹¹³ However, the poem ends on a hopeless note, the poet seems as remote 'between the throes of poetry and my death' perceiving only 'a dim light, and other signals, emanating from a vessel that sails between the ruins of this bloody dawn and the sky of the white nights of the Pole' as if he were in a fifth dimension. Even the unknown lady who lies in wait for him seems to have given up and 'sighs in the febrile revolution of the planets.'

Between 1969 and the late 1980s al-Bayyātī's collections cover an extraordinary and sometimes chaotic range of subject matter. The poems are usually fairly long, in a mixture of free verse and poetic prose, frequently within a poem, and are divided into sections, usually numbered, the majority of which are very short although they are outweighed by the longer sections. Four of the disparate poems discussed above: 'For Rafael Alberti', 'Portrait of the Lover of the Great Bear', 'The Greek Poem', and 'I Am Born and Burn in my Love' are from the same collection of 1975 *Qamar Shīrāz*, and the other four poems in the collection are similarly disparate. In a 1980 article¹¹⁴ Abu-Deeb argues that the divisions in the poems are part of a formal structure as each of the eight poems has two centres (*markazān*), or three in the case of longer poems, which constitute the central 'narrative' of the poem. The first centre (*markaz*) is always the first section (or movement *haraka*) and the final one is at the end of the poem – the final or penultimate section, exceptionally in the sixteen section final poem the pre-penultimate. The divisions are perhaps 'to break the monotony',¹¹⁵ and the short sections are a sort of ornament to the main theme, sometimes diversions, sometimes expansions. Sometimes a later section echoes a previous one, as in sections 6 and 10 of 'I Am Born and Burn in My Love':

'I cry: "Lara!" / The frightened wind replies: "Lara!" and
"Lara!" I cry. / "Lara," the frightened wind replies, / "Is in the fisherman's
Cottage."'

There are also phrases that echo through the poems like *leitmotifs*, in this poem 'But a hand stretches' and 'A ray of light from a day that died' in sections 2, 7, and 11. The 2 or 3 lines between are variations on the theme of erasure, and some of al-Bayyātī's titles 'The Gypsy Symphony',¹¹⁶ 'First Symphony of the Fifth Dimension' and 'Variations On the Suffering of Farīd

al-Dīn al-Aṭṭār¹¹⁷ suggest that he is consciously using musical analogies in the form of his poems. Abu-Deeb also points that there are conflicting dualities in the poems at the level of meaning e.g. of presence and absence, past and present, and at the textual level e.g. that the loved but also destructive Lara is described by masculine nouns and verbs at the beginning of 'I Am Born and Burn in My Love', and that throughout the poem there are patterns and tensions in the use of *tafīlas* within sections that reflect the meaning. This gives an overall, universal unity:

The individual is the root of multiplicity and opposition, and everything is another manifestation of another aspect of a total reality which itself arises from conflicting dualities¹¹⁸

but structural unity with a lack of thematic unity gives an air of *plus ça change plus c'est la même chose* reflecting the burden of experience of long exile. Perhaps al-Bayyātī is trying to assert that the exile is still the same person, despite so many experiences, and this is supported by the continuity of the pervasive female other, usually 'Ā'isha, but she changes too, and there is an inescapable sense that he has been profoundly affected by his exile.

Al-Bayyātī is no longer trying to change the world, as it has disillusioned him too much. But in late work, where he reverts to shorter poems, he continues to proclaim the power of poetry:

. . (they) buried the head of the poet
In a field of ashes
But the poet on the cross of exile
Carried the sun and flew.¹¹⁹

His final, valedictory collection *Nuṣūṣ Sharqīyya Eastern Texts* (1999), touches again on some of his earlier themes and personages, and demonstrates his anguish at events in Iraq. 'Ā'isha says that she is 'the granddaughter of a Kurdish Emir / Whose eyes were gouged out in a Mongol raid'.¹²⁰ There is a touching poem on the solace of family love and continuity and perhaps still being an Iraqi where, when his granddaughter asks why he is using a magnifying glass for reading, he says: 'Because the light is escaping from my eyes / And returning to the distant mountains of my ancestors.'¹²¹ The final poem says that it is only poets who can ' . . challenge the monster lurking / At the gate of Thebes / Or travel maddened with desire / To Shīrāz' but ends with humility asking for a firebrand from the fire of poetry so that:

I may continue the journey of my death
In the night of meaning
Witness of an era, blind
Not seeing anything
Yet seeing all things.¹²²

- ¹ Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 16-20, quotes p. 20
- ² Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature, (MPL)*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p. 6
- ³ M.M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, p. 179
- ⁴ Terri DeYoung, *Placing the Poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Postcolonial Iraq*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, p. 42
- ⁵ Ibid. p. 43
- ⁶ For example Sa'dī Yūsuf taught Arabic in Algeria for 7 years from 1964, and says that many Iraqi professionals went there. Interview in *Banīpal*, London, Issue 20, 2004, pp. 6-7
- ⁷ 'Iṣām al-Khafājī argues that intellectuals are so seriously inhibited in some of the cities within the Arab World that it falls to exiles to preserve their culture, in Isam al-Khafaji, 'The Exile Within: Arab Culture in a Dismal Age' in *Arab Studies Journal*, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, Washington DC, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 4-16
- ⁸ M.M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, op. cit., p. 265
- ⁹ Terri DeYoung, *Placing the Poet* op. cit.
- ¹⁰ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 9-10
- ¹¹ Ibid. pp. 19-20
- ¹² Ibid. p. 137
- ¹³ Ibid. p. 138
- ¹⁴ Barbara McKean Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1994, p.2. She says that she has taken the term from Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way*, Quartet Books, London, 1982
- ¹⁵ Parmenter op. cit., pp. 4-5. She says that the terms are distinguished by Yi-Fu Tuan in 'Rootedness versus Sense of Place', *Landscape 25* (1980), pp. 3-8
- ¹⁶ John Mikhail Asfour, *When the Words Burn An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, 1945-1987*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2nd edition, 1992, pp. 213-215 Arabic text in Sabrī Ḥāfiẓ ed., *Mahmūd Darwīsh in Silsilat al-shi'r wa-l-shu'arā*, Dār al-Fatā', Cairo, 1994 pp. 47-52
- ¹⁷ In *'Akhīr al-layl* (1967). Translation in Denys Johnson-Davies, *The Music of Human Flesh*, Heinemann, London 1980 pp. 19-22
- ¹⁸ Carol Bardenstein, 'Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges and the Prickly-Pear Cactus in Israel/Palestine', *Edebiyāt* NS Vol 8, No. 1, 1998, pp. 1-36, p. 3
- ¹⁹ Parmenter, op. cit., pp. 83-4
- ²⁰ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 191
- ²¹ Parmenter, op. cit., p. 84
- ²² Ibid., p. 86
- ²³ Ibid., p. 87 quoting from Shehadeh op. cit. pp. 86-9
- ²⁴ Parmenter, op. cit., p. 86
- ²⁵ Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, trans. Ahdaf Soueif, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo and New York, 2000 (first published in Arabic, 1997), pp. 69-70

- ²⁶ Hanan Mikha'il Ashrawi, 'The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 7 (1978), pp. 77-101, p. 82
- ²⁷ Abdullah al-Udhari, editor and translator, *Victims of a Map*, Saqi, London, 1984 pp. 82-83
- ²⁸ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh' in Kamāl Abū Dīb, *Jamāliyyāt al-Tajāwur aw Tashābuk al-Faḍā'āt al-'Ibdā'iyyah*, Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, Beirut, 1997 p. 81
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.80
- ³⁰ Ibid. pp. 81-82
- ³¹ For example in Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Sarīr al-gharība*, Riad El-Rayyes Books, Beirut, 1999 and *Jadāriyya*, Riad El-Rayyes Books, Beirut, 2000
- ³² Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh', op. cit., p. 82
- ³³ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, '*Aḥad 'ashara kaukaban*', Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1992
- ³⁴ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and other essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000, p. 179
- ³⁵ Translated by Sargon Boulous in Munir Akash and Daniel Moore eds., *The Adam of Two Edens*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2000, pp. 127-145
- ³⁶ <http://www.halcyon.com/ahborhts/chiefsea.html>
- ³⁷ I disagree with Sargon Boulous's translation of '*ihtifālan*' as 'glamorous' here
- ³⁸ For example a Jewish character says: 'A Jewish homeland or an ugly little Spartan state?' in John le Carré, *The Little Drummer Girl*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1983 p. 426
- ³⁹ Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, pp. 104-21
- ⁴⁰ Darwīsh, '*Aḥad 'ashara kaukaban*', op. cit., p. 44
- ⁴¹ Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 21-2
- ⁴² Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *Modern Arabic Poetry An Anthology (MAP)*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, p. 427
- ⁴³ DeYoung, op. cit., Chapters 1-4
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 127-8
- ⁴⁵ Asfour, op. cit., p. 54
- ⁴⁶ In *Unshūdat al-maḥār* (1961). Translation Issa J. Boullata, ed., *Modern Arab Poets 1950-1975*, Heinemann, London, 1976 pp. 7-10 Asfour says that it was published in 1956 op. cit., p. 157, and DeYoung says it was written in 1953 op. cit., p. 15
- ⁴⁷ DeYoung op. cit., pp. 15-16
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 1
- ⁴⁹ Sabry Hafez, 'The Transformation of the Qasida Form in Modern Arabic Poetry' in Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle eds., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Africa & Africa*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1996 pp. 99-120, quote p. 109
- ⁵⁰ Jayyusi, *MAP* op. cit., pp. 432-435
- ⁵¹ Hamlet, Act III, Scene (i)

- ⁵² Notably by al-Bayyātī in 'Kitābah 'alā qabr al-Sayyāb' ('Writing on al-Sayyāb's Tomb') in *Kitābah 'alā al-Ṭīn* (1970), discussed in Muhsin J. al-Musawi, 'Dedications as Poetic Intersections', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Brill, Leiden, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, 2000, pp. 18-20
- ⁵³ Asfour op. cit., note 46, p. 55
- ⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 185
- ⁵⁵ Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel An Historical and Critical Introduction*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 1982, 2nd edition 1995, p. 57
- ⁵⁶ Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey eds., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature, (EAL)* Routledge, London and New York, 1998, entry by Issa. J. Boullata p. 405
- ⁵⁷ Allen, op. cit., pp. 72-3
- ⁵⁸ Asfour, op. cit., pp. 188-192
- ⁵⁹ Jayyusi, *MPL* op. cit., pp. 123-4
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125
- ⁶¹ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 'East Coker' beginning of section II
- ⁶² Abdul Wahab al-Bayati, *Love, Death & Exile*, ed. Bassam K. Frangieh, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., 1990, p. 5
- ⁶³ Translation in Boullata, *Modern Arab Poets 1950-1975*, op. cit., p. 14
- ⁶⁴ DeYoung, op. cit., pp. 216-219
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 213 and 215
- ⁶⁶ Translation in Boullata, *Modern Arab Poets 1950-1975*, op. cit., p. 15
- ⁶⁷ Dilip Hiro, *Iraq A Report from the Inside*, Granta Books, London, 2003, pp. 25-6
- ⁶⁸ *EAL* op. cit., pp. 142-3
- ⁶⁹ Badawi, op. cit., pp. 214-5
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-6
- ⁷¹ Pedro Martinez Montavez, 'Tres ciudades españolas en la poesia de 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī' in Pedro Martinez Montavez, ed., *Exploraciones en la literatura neo-arabe*, Instituto Hispano-Arabe, Madrid, 1977, p. 73
- ⁷² Aida O. Azouqa, 'Defamiliarisation in the Poetry of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī and T.S. Eliot: A Comparative Study', *JAL*, Brill, Leiden, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, 2001, pp. 167-211, pp. 182-3
- ⁷³ Badawi op. cit., p. 214
- ⁷⁴ Montavez, op. cit., p. 75 quoting Jasim
- ⁷⁵ 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, *Diwān 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī*, Dar al-'Awda, Beirut, 1971, pp. 69-70 and 83-86
- ⁷⁶ Badawi op. cit. p. 212
- ⁷⁷ *EAL* op. cit., p. 143
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3
- ⁷⁹ Badawi, op. cit., p. 215

- ⁸⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, London, 1992, translation © University of Minnesota, 1987, p. 5
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 7
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 8
- ⁸³ Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī's Poetics of Exile', (Poetics of Exile), in *JAL*, vol. XXXII, no. 2, 2001, pp. 212-238, p. 212
- ⁸⁴ Frangieh, op. cit., p. 7
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., p.5
- ⁸⁶ Discussed in Muhsin J. al-Musawi, 'Dedications as Poetic Intersections', op. cit.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 20
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 22
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 24
- ⁹⁰ Azouqa, op. cit., p. 202
- ⁹¹ 'The Earthquake' from *Autobiography of the Thief of Fire* (1974), in Frangieh op. cit., pp. 144-151
- ⁹² 'Nightmare' from *Poems of Love at the Seven Gates of the World*, translation by M.M. Badawi in *JAL* Vol. VI, 1975, pp. 134-136
- ⁹³ Rafael Alberti, *To Painting*, trans. Carolyn L. Tipton, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1997 (*A la pintura* published 1951)
- ⁹⁴ Discussed in Linda Nochlin, 'Art and the Conditions of Exile: Men/Women, Emigration/Expatriation' in Susan Rubin Suleiman ed., *Exile and Creativity*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1998 pp. 37-58
- ⁹⁵ *Petit Journal MATTA*, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1985 (Accompanying a Retrospective Exhibition)
- ⁹⁶ *tajribatī al-shi'riyya in diwān 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī*, Vol. II, Dār al- 'Awda, Beirut, 1971, pp. 371-508 p. 399
- ⁹⁷ Letter to Paul Demeny, May 15, 1871 in Arthur Rimbaud, *Rimbaud Complete*, trans. and ed. Wyatt Mason, The Modern Library, New York, 2002 p. 368
- ⁹⁸ *Sīra Dhātīyya li-Sāriq al-Nār* (1974). Text and translation in Frangieh, op. cit., pp. 144-151
- ⁹⁹ In *Qamar Shīrāz* (1975). Frangieh op. cit. pp. 160-167
- ¹⁰⁰ In his poem 'Apology' in Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., pp. 224-6
- ¹⁰¹ In *Qamar Shīrāz* (1975) Frangieh op. cit. pp. 184-187 and Abdullah al-Udhari, *Modern Poetry of the Arab world*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1986, pp. 40-41
- ¹⁰² Abdelwahab Al Bayati, *Autobiographie du voleur de feu*, trans. Abdellatif Laābi, UNESCO, Actes Sud, Paris, 1987, p. 67. (Most of the biographical data for al-Bayyātī is taken from Laābi's Bio-Bibliography)
- ¹⁰³ In *Qamar Shīrāz* (1975) Frangieh op. cit., pp. 188-195
- ¹⁰⁴ Frangieh, op. cit., p. 7
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 8
- ¹⁰⁶ *Qamar Shīrāz* (1975) Frangieh, op. cit., pp. 196-207
- ¹⁰⁷ *Kitāb al-Bahr* (1973) Frangieh, op. cit., pp. 116-123

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- ¹⁰⁸ Frangieh, op. cit., Glossary, p. 312
- ¹⁰⁹ Nazim Hikmet, *Beyond the Walls Selected Poems*, trans. Ruth Christie, Richard McKane and Talât Sait Halman, Anvil Press, London, 2002, pp. 219-230
- ¹¹⁰ *Mamlaka al-Sunbula* (1979) Frangieh, op. cit., pp. 256-263
- ¹¹¹ *Mamlaka al-Sunbula* (1979) Frangieh, op. cit., pp. 242-247
- ¹¹² 'Abd al-Karīm 'Amjāhid, *Shi'riyya al-Ghamūd – Qirā'a fī Shi'r 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī*, Manshūrāt al-Mauja, Dār al-Qarūwīn, 1998, p. 206
- ¹¹³ Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God*, Edinburgh University Press, 1994, p. 62
- ¹¹⁴ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Dirāsa bunawiyya fī shi'r al-Bayyātī: Qamar Shīrāz', *Al-Aqlām*, Baghdad, Vol. XV, no. 11, August 1980, pp. 20-42
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 22
- ¹¹⁶ In *Autobiography of the Thief of Fire* (1974) in Frangieh, op. cit., p. 153
- ¹¹⁷ In *The Kingdom of Grain* (1979) in Frangieh, op. cit., pp. 243 and 249
- ¹¹⁸ Abū Dīb, *Qamar Shīrāz* article op. cit., p. 29
- ¹¹⁹ 'False Critics' in *Bustān 'Ā'isha* (1989), Frangieh, op. cit. p. 279
- ¹²⁰ 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayyātī, *Nuṣūṣ Sharqiyya*, Dār al-Madā, Damascus, 1999, p. 60
- ¹²¹ Ibid., p. 69
- ¹²² Ibid., p. 105

Chapter 4 New Horizons and New Poetics

This chapter discusses the work of poets who have gained perspective from exile – both through suffering, their experience of new environments, and from learning of and from the other. They have used the notion of exile in diverse ways, and some of them have used and created distinctive poetics, elements of which are powerful metaphors for exile and much besides. Poetics can be defined as the various techniques by which a poet formulates, communicates and enhances what he means to say, and these techniques may be verbal or non-verbal, rhythmic, metrical, aural, visual, and structural at both the very fine level, and at sometimes multiple higher levels.¹ There are frequently ‘states of tension’² within poems – for example between writing that is beautiful in itself or in its sound and rhythms and dark subject matter as in *al-Kitāb* where ‘Adūnīs articulates the voice of al-Mutanabbī in exquisite poetic language, which is a distillation of the enchantment and seductive charm of his astonishing poetic *oeuvre*, burnished with a steady hand, oscillating between the translucence of cryptic clarity and the indeterminacy of luminous absence’,³ or within a generally discursive poem such as Maḥmūd Darwīsh’s ‘Last Evening in Paris’ discussed in Chapter 2 where a terrible event is implicit in the title, is at times hinted at, but only finally occurs near the end of the poem. Sometimes a unified poetics, such as Khalīl Ḥāwī’s dual voices and his ‘espousal of the grotesque’,⁴ al-Bayyātī’s segmented, musical structures,⁵ multiple voices or viewpoints, and what Kamal Abu-Deeb defines as *lughat al-ghiyāb* (the language of absence)⁶ and *lughat al-tahwīm* (the language of incantation)⁷ may apply over entire poems or collections.

Beirut was an important element in the lives of all the poets discussed in this chapter – both through its position as a centre for Arab culture and through the effects of its terrible history in the second half of the 20th century. Beirut in the 1950s and 1960s can justifiably be compared to Paris and London at the beginning of the twentieth century. It had been a cosmopolitan city for decades, and people from many parts of the Arab world had been brought together who covered various artistic fields and had many cultures to draw on, and several of them had worked abroad. There was a proliferation of small magazines and cultural gatherings, and a sense of change and, with post-colonialism in the Arab world and post-World War II recovery in Europe, but before the development of globalisation, there was a sense of hope in the modern. The magazine *al-‘Adāb* began publication in 1953 and in 1957 the poet and critic Yūsuf al-Khāl, returning to Lebanon after working in New York, founded the influential magazine *Shi‘r*. Al-Khāl was deeply committed to modernist poetry and gave a seminal lecture in 1957 on the ten elements that he would like to see in the ‘experimental avant-garde’ poetry followed up by articles in *Shi‘r*,⁸ and his influence on the modernist movement in Arabic poetry could be compared to that of Ezra Pound in London,⁹ as indeed he himself saw it. Over the years, the *Shi‘r* circle included many prominent poets and thinkers, and both magazines published poems and articles on criticism and critical theory, including translations from French and English.

Maḥmūd Darwīsh said that the effects of the *Shi‘r* circle did not percolate through to the poets of the time in Palestine, but he lived in Beirut from 1971-82 so met some of them at a later stage. In his later work he allows his own exile to stand as a symbol of the exile of his people, and

depicts the pain of other exiles as metaphors for that of the Palestinians but also uses their experiences as a means of criticising the causes of Palestinian exile and failures in Palestinian leadership. His poetry is less complex, less universal and perhaps more closely linked to its time than that of the other poets discussed in this chapter, probably because he was inevitably part of a 'national' group whereas they have essentially been individual exiles, but it has shown a considerable degree of development and range of experimentation and much of his later work can be regarded as examples of 'new poetics.' Possibly some of that later work shows some influence from the work of Adūnīs, but he has always consciously retained a lyricist strand from which his *luḡhat al-tahwīm* has developed.

Tawfīq Ṣāyigh and Khalīl Ḥāwī have clearly both been hurt by their exile, but their complex poetry employs a range of techniques and allusions and its aim is not so much to portray exile as to use exile and wandering as metaphors for existential self-exploration and to force upon the reader self-examination and examination of his own and other cultures. Adūnīs appears to be a natural exile or cosmopolitan, and he also uses wandering in his work – mythical, historical and sexual – for existential exploration and for cultural criticism. All three, like al-Bayyātī, embrace multiplicity, and they actively seek to collapse simplistic dualities such as East/West, ancient/modern, good/evil, spiritual/materialist. They were part of the experimental and critical milieu of Beirut in the 1950s and 1960s, with its strong adumbration of philosophy and exposure to other modernist poetry and were also of crucial importance in the establishment of 'prose poetry' as a viable means of expression in Arabic poetry. Adūnīs, like al-Bayyātī who can also be considered a practitioner of some of the new poetics such as *luḡhat al-tahwīm*, has lived abroad for most of his life and has built many connections with other cultures.

The sub-titles of this chapter are partly drawn from critical articles on the relevant poets and show the broad range of their work and, since their careers have spanned several decades, Adūnīs and Darwīsh in particular cover wide ranges in their individual *oeuvres*. They are a disparate group: Ṣāyigh and Ḥāwī as Christians are perhaps less inclined to fatalism and acceptance than many Muslims and more inclined to write about God, but they both have a tendency towards darkness and despair, although they fight by trying to demonstrate issues. Adūnīs and Darwīsh both write in a secular vein, avoid fatalism, and never cease to aspire to write beautiful poetry and demonstrate their joy in the world – Adūnīs in a more mystical and abstract vein, Darwīsh in a profound attachment to flowers, trees and place – but both raise serious issues and try to be a force for change. Ḥāwī was Lebanese and Adūnīs Syrian-become-cosmopolitan, and although Ṣāyigh was Palestinian he seems mainly to think in pan-Arabic terms, whereas Darwīsh remained Palestinian, because he lived in Israel and later the West Bank and was for a time associated with the PLO, and because he identified with his people and it was demanded of him as 'Palestinian National Poet'.

Maḥmūd Darwīsh - The Reluctant Poet of his People

Several poems by Maḥmūd Darwīsh (1942-2008) have been discussed above as very early in his career he established himself as both a resistance poet and as one who wrote movingly of his country and of its seizure, creating a focus for the anger, pain and longing of Palestinians. Some of his poems soon after the June War of 1967 express despair and also fear of the powerful military machine that the Palestinians found themselves up against, especially in 'A Picture on the Wall' analysed in Chapters 1 and 2 where references to the horror of Hiroshima are in a state of tension with the haunting beauty and unsettling imperfect repetitions of the poem. He then wrote moving poems about the Palestinian exile, notably the group of poems written in 1982 after the PLO expulsion from Lebanon. From an early stage, he did not see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in strictly black and white terms and deny the humanity of the opponent, as exemplified in 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies'. He writes of relationships with Jewish women, partly as a metaphor for the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, and, as he was educated in Israel, some of his influences came via Hebrew sources. Nor did he see himself as resistance poet rather than poet, and was saddened that some of his admirers remain devoted to his early, immature poetry and tend to disparage his later work,¹⁰ especially more personal collections such as *The Bed of the Stranger* (1999), and this may have inhibited his poetic development. Kamal Abu-Deeb remarks that:

The tragedy of Palestine has two aspects: the first is the Jewish appropriation and oppressive occupation of Palestine, and the second is Palestine's appropriation and oppressive occupation of Maḥmūd Darwīsh.¹¹

and argued that to achieve his full potential as a poet Darwīsh should free himself from the Palestinian cause. Despite a few attempts Darwīsh was not able to do this, but his poetry continued to develop using a variety of techniques. Much of that development can be attributed to his exile in Beirut from 1971 and the subsequent PLO expulsion in 1982, and his later exile in Paris, no doubt a congenial place of exile with the presence of other Arab poets and the French intellectual climate, and also, being outside the Arab world, a remote vantage point for the distillation of his experience.

Apart from his resistance phase he pursued a fairly individual course. Although he generally used free verse, he was formed as a lyrical poet before he entered wider Arab poetry circles and much of his poetry is intensely musical, and he uses imagery of nature, mostly from Palestine, throughout his *oeuvre*. He said that the poets who most influenced him in his youth were Qabbānī, al-Sayyāb, al-Bayyātī, 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī Ḥijāzī and Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr,¹² and western authors such as Lorca and Neruda as well as parts of the Bible and Greek tragedies which he read in Hebrew translations.¹³ He grappled with communicating the Palestinian displacement and exile in various ways in the decade or so following the Israeli siege and the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut in 1982. The set of prose poems produced after the 1982 PLO exit from Beirut reflect the hopelessness of that time as well as many of the 'general' pains of exile, and some of them are analysed above in these terms. He also began to actively research themes for his work,¹⁴ broadening its scope. His memoir of the siege of Beirut, *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1986),¹⁵ was

written in Paris in a very short time but after a gestation of 2-3 years. It is structured as the account of a single day, August 6 1982, the anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, hence a source of explicit parallels. The sky of Beirut is often described as 'a grey egg', evoking both the threatening storm of ordnance and the totemic image of an atomic detonation. The book is poetically written and weaves a complex tissue that moves in and out of the fields of memoir, history, and politics, with brilliant diversions into subjects such as coffee, water, football and media, and the germs of some of his later work are already apparent. Again, it is an account of pain and danger, and it is a powerful indictment, especially in the comparison of the behaviour of Saladin to that of western 'crusaders', but it still envisages relationships between Israeli and Palestinian, and is also a celebration of the joys of life – be they love, coffee, or football.

In 'Arā ma 'urīd' (*I See What I Want to See*) (1990)¹⁶ there is an elegaic tone, an aura of taking stock ' . . . I am looking behind me . . . at the leaves of trees and the pages of life' (in the proem), and of having endured enough (the title poem), but Darwīsh is experimenting in form, with stanzaic poems and with the first of his 'lyrical epics', the two long, non-stanzaic, 'woven'¹⁷ poems 'The Tragedy of Narcissus, the Comedy of Silver' and 'The Hoopoe', which draw on mythical and Biblical/Qur'ānic sources.¹⁸ These are accurate reflections of interminable exile with the sense of wandering in both, and they both evoke a 'land rhetoric' ('*Land, like language, is inherited*' is a frequent refrain in the former) and demonstrate great beauty of imagery and phrasing (and the former also experiments with prose poetry). They are examples of Abu-Deeb's *lughat al-tahwīm*¹⁹ where the musicality, internal rhymes and leitmotif-like repetitions possibly have more effect than the content of the poems. The reader rather loses his bearings in a long poem with no defined narrative or subject(s), and perhaps simply because there is no pause for breath, yet is deeply affected and moved. Later poems are more structured, but many retain the same incantatory elements. By now Darwīsh's horizons have extended further in both space and time. *Aḥad 'Ashara Kawkaban* (1992),²⁰ looks at various facets of the situation of the soon to be exiled Muslims of Granada in 1492. The title poem is full of the imagery of the Arabs of Granada with their gardens and their music, but also evokes the music and culture of Spain and reconciles the Arab 'a stranger to Syria as well as Andalusia. / . . . the Adam of two Edens . . .' with the Spaniard 'Expel me slowly. Kill me slowly / With Garcia Lorca / under my olive tree.' In the final section, 'al-Kamanjāt' ('The Violins'), the hypnotic repetition of *al-Kamanjāt* is reminiscent of Lorca's repetition of *a las cinco de la tarde* (at five in the afternoon) and other repetitions in his 'Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías'²¹ where Lorca sings of his friend's elegance 'in words that moan', like Darwīsh's weeping violins. The Muslims of Granada and the constantly displaced Red Indians of another poem in the collection are metaphors, as their situations provide parallels for that of the Palestinians, the forces mitigating against them, and their leadership. Although both peoples were in a weak position, the last Sultan of Granada was a weak leader, and the Red Indians, while constantly subject to broken agreements, continued to accept further ones. The Granada poem is divided into eleven very different parts, moving between the last Muslim king and a universalised poetic consciousness and using different styles of poetry, and the Red Indians poem merges

history with recent times and evokes the tension between nature and the negative, destructive aspects of technology used by colonialist settlers. The latter poem is highly incantatory, an example of *lughat al-tahwīm*.

The 'Oslo Agreement' of 1993 can also be seen as the spur to a new burst of creativity. *Why Have You Left the Horse Alone?* (1995)²² and *The Bed of the Stranger* (1999),²³ a personal and experimental work, perhaps his *Song of Songs* but also about poetry, are both structured, multi-titled, and unified works. It might be argued that they follow some of Adūnīs' ideas and even pay homage to the structure of *Mihyār*. The former is formally divided into six named sections with titled poems within them, and the latter is interspersed by six 'sonnets', each on the theme of writing. *Why Have You Left the Horse Alone?* has a wide temporal range and provides a sense of continuity, even a foundation myth, and links time and space – a man looking over space from his balcony sees his 'phantom' and looks back at his own past and the history of his people.

'A non-Linguistic Dialogue with Imru' al-Qays'²⁴ can be seen as a directly political poem relating to Darwīsh's understanding and rejection of the Oslo Accord as an undermining of Palestinian aspirations; his disassociation from Arafat, who had become a weak leader and had finally let his people down by side-lining the official Palestinian delegates and making too many concessions;²⁵ and his perception of the media event on the White House lawn as a ghastly pantomime.²⁶ The perpetually exiled Imru' al-Qays had also been robbed of his patrimony and, according to legend, was betrayed by an external power that had claimed to be helping him. The modern media symbol is both a powerful image for exile – separation from reality and being watched – and for manipulation by external forces with their own agenda, the sense that others are writing the script.

Later books, published since his move to Amman in 1995 and then to Ramallah in 1996 show despair, although he allowed himself to be associated with the 'Second Intifāda' especially in writing *State of Siege* (2002).²⁷ *Mural* (2000)²⁸ is rather more personal, in reflecting on death and a near-death experience, and looking back on his life, with frequent intertextualities with earlier poems. The title, and the form as a single wide-ranging poem reflect the content. Darwīsh is a tragic figure, and this was compounded by the ill-health which caused him to confront his own mortality. There is a pervasive sense of loss, and the sense that the future, as for Ḥāwī, is for the children of his contemporaries.

Tawfīq Ṣāyigh - The Beleaguered Unicorn

The Palestinian exile Tawfīq Ṣāyigh (1923-71) is a poet more affected and formed by exile than one who writes of it. Although he had connections with several seminal figures in Arab poetry, notably his friendship with Jabrā, being part of Yūsuf al-Khāl's circle, and publishing in *Shi'r*, he pursued a fairly independent course, and eschewed the *Tammūzī* group and the *tafīla* movement. He had obtained a BA in Arabic and English Literature from the AUB in 1946 and had returned to Palestine to teach but, because of the establishment of Israel, the family left for Lebanon in 1948.

He worked in Beirut – but from 1948-51, which predates the early stages of the *Majallat Shi'r* movement, and from 1962-8 as editor of *Hiwār* - and so absorbed some Western influences on an individual basis through his years abroad, studying at Harvard from 1951-2 and then studying and teaching in the UK until 1962.

The critics Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Issa J. Boullata both see him as a true modernist ahead of his time. He was the first Palestinian to contribute to the modernist trend with the publication of his first, avant-garde collection *Thalathūn Qaṣīda* in 1953²⁹ which 'proved the absolute validity of prose-poetry for Arabic, despite the voices raised against it during the fifties and sixties as a hybrid form that could never equal the splendour of rich traditional metrics'.³⁰ The poems are wide-ranging and several were shocking for their time: a third are somewhat romantic love poems, and some, addressed to God, are correspondingly somewhat repentant,³¹ but others reflect disillusionment with the Arab world that had been unable to prevent the Palestinian debacle, had inflated ideas of its capabilities, and was floundering in its confrontation with the withdrawing colonialist powers and western modernity. The poem 'A National Hymn'³² portrays his homeland, probably the Arab world in general, as an ageing beauty, who has been fashionable, seductive, and sought after but has now been 'crowned with humiliation . . . castrated [her] sons' and prostituted her daughters. In contrast, references to a glorious past of a husband turned into a leader who built hanging gardens and ' . . . is it true that you led the horses . . . [who] did not open their mouths to nibble / but opened them to emit a neigh like hymns of minarets?' are expressed in classical terms. Similarly, in No. 28,³³ a night out in Beirut is described in terms of harsh, ugly modernism, and modern life seems to impede the writing of poetry. They possibly reflect some of the 'colloquial' dialogue in *The Waste Land*. Ṣāyigh also examines the concept of the poet/intellectual as hero in several poems on ambiguous heroes. The unwilling, repulsed, and alienated hero of the Coriolanus poem³⁴ is probably another borrowing from Eliot, 'Faust 1954'³⁵ has the poet selling his soul for inspiration, and Poem 6³⁶ achieves defamiliarisation by a striking inversion of a story from the Arabian Nights (where most heroes are in any case ambiguous) – it speaks in the voice of a genie trapped in a bottle for thousands of years. The genie is himself frustrated – he is a powerful being but lacks free will and cannot influence what will happen to him, and has an objective and dismissive view of mankind. He is constrained to obey foolish people who when given access to his power are not rational enough to make good use of it. He is perhaps a symbol for the power of the intellectual or poet, and how it can be misused.

Later poems give an impression of the protagonist as victim, buffeted by forces beyond his control, and there are strong overtones of flight, pursuit and trials. He published *al-Qaṣīda K* in 1960 and *Mu'allaqat Tawfiq Ṣāyigh* in 1963, after which he produced little poetry, concentrating on editing and teaching. Both works reflect much pain from his years in the west, and some of the ugliness of western modernity, which, even before his direct experience of it, he saw being transferred to the Arab world. Exile, through the pain of having to leave his native land, and in terms of education and of interaction with the west – both in a damaging love affair and the confrontation with the problems of modernity – have shaped his poetics. Specific references to his

exile from Palestine only appear in these later works, refined by time and universalised by combination with other themes, for example in No. 12 of *al-Qaṣīda K*

*Free was I from love
Innocent my land.
Have you come to repeat to me
The tragedy of my country?
...
How is one who presses oil and wine to know
The meaning of fighting?
The most, the utmost that memory taught me is:
Two armies fighting on a land of a third party
...
But it did not teach me about a country that destroys
Then builds up for itself,
That ejects but does not withdraw.³⁷*

where the rapacious woman K is compared to Israel, and himself as naïve lover compared to unaware Palestinian peasants.

Boullata defines three main foci of poetic consciousness in Ṣāyigh's work, united by the theme of love: the homeland, the sweetheart and God, which may sometimes overlap so that a poem may be understood at two or even three levels of meaning. Modern man is often alienated from other people and from God, the exile is alienated from his homeland, and in Ṣāyigh's work love can turn to apparent hatred. 'It is out of this intense love that the homeland is seemingly hated for its present backwardness in relation to its glorious past, castigated for its servility to despotic leadership and its prostitution of lofty ideals. . . the unrequiting sweetheart is seen as a torturer and as a death-bearer . . . (and) God is represented as "the Hound of Heaven" that pursues the poet unremittingly, observing his weakness and his sinfulness.'³⁸

The sweetheart and man's relationship to God are not directly related to exile, but Ṣāyigh's alienation as an exile heightens his awareness of the universal alienation of modern man from God. The sweetheart topic is personal, according to Boullata, and in the case of "K" the fruit of an exploitative relationship with an English woman which was perhaps particularly damaging as there was little in Ṣāyigh's cultural background to prepare him for such a relationship. He loved his homeland, but was permanently separated from it. Boullata quotes a passage relating to Ṣāyigh's taking refuge in Lebanon:

*On the day we left the homeland
Carrying nothing with us
Except memories, fears and defeats,
And a long obstinate sword
Stood between us and the homeland—
...*

*I knew that the era of loss had started,
That there was no more safety,
That every country was hostile
And every sea had dried up
And every thread had been cut.*³⁹

The homeland of Şāyigh's poems is not usually limited to Palestine which he appears to regard as lost to him for ever. He experienced an intermediate form of exile in Lebanon, and a more profound exile in the UK and US. Boullata comments that:

. . . the homeland . . . is not limited to a geographical conception, it includes Arab culture and civilisation as a whole. It grieved the poet immensely to see the Arab world lag behind other nations and to see it divided upon itself, dissipating its energies or submitting to a rule that deprives the individual of his liberty, which is greatly needed if he is to share creatively in building up a modern Arab homeland.⁴⁰

In the poem first published in *Shi'r* in 1961 and then as 'Mu'allāqa Tawfiq Şāyigh' in 1963⁴¹ there is a description of 'A London of dark skies, walls, and stone hearts / one large / unquenchable lavatory', paranoia 'Every night I'm pursued and tried. / I am tortured, led to the guillotine' and desperation 'I'm powerless / no family / Crippled / and no healing Christ'. The same poem compares the love of 'two Maryams' – the cruel lover and his mother, and with its imagery of swords, this may also be seen as a comparison of Israelis and Palestine.

Jayyusi says that he avoided rhetoric and 'discarded personal heroism and the status of the poet-seer and poet-prophet', all prevalent at the time, and recognised his status as *victim* not hero

. . . revealing the alienation and suffering imposed by contemporary evil, internal and external, on the life of the individual. . . . He wrote a poetry that was universal in an era of nationalist verse, personal in an age of communal orientations, and individual in a period dominated by fashions and styles. Loner, victim, and wanderer, his poetry is a supreme example of an early modernity achieved because of the poet's particular qualities of vision and technique.⁴²

Boullata refers to the 1963 poem 'A Few Questions I Pose to the Unicorn'⁴³ as 'perhaps the strangest poem in Arabic literature', but himself takes the 'beleaguered unicorn' as a symbol for Şāyigh. In her analysis of the poem, Zahra A. Hussein Ali sees it as a negation of dualities and absolutes that is 'exemplary in its cross-cultural richness.' She believes that the poem is about 'the failure of the poetic self . . . to achieve genuine tragic heroism' in its inability 'to set up an active paradigm of redemptive integration in a world characterised by conflict, difference, and sexual desire', and argues that it draws on his studies of Nietzsche and Yeats at Oxford:

Like Nietzsche's works, Ṣāyigh's poem dramatises the necessity of a bipolar unity of opposites; like Yeats, he expresses this particular philosophical vision of renewal through an out-moded bestiary.⁴⁴

The unicorn is 'the symbol of an effete and inadequate intellectual consciousness, whose views on the virtue of heroism are fallacious'.⁴⁵ She discusses the originality of Ṣāyigh's symbol:

By selecting the outmoded medieval myth of the unicorn to be the allegorical dramatic vehicle for his philosophic vision, Ṣāyigh found the formula for an organic form which neither mediates nor synthesises the oppositional forces in his vision – hence all polarised forces in the poem are affirmed: unicorn/virgin, chasteness/desire, meekness/aggression, sublimation/pleasure, idealism/hedonism. A mediation or a synthesis would have been inevitable, for instance, had he chosen the traditional Middle Eastern fertility myth of Tammuz and Ishtar, a myth which was regularly appropriated by modernist Arab poets writing in the fifties and sixties. Ṣāyigh's choice attests to his intellectual integrity and his unwillingness to cater to the prevalent taste and assumptions of common readers, who equated the idea of a post-colonial literary renaissance with the return to native cultural roots and regional mythologies.⁴⁶

Ṣāyigh sees the faults of the Arab world and also the deficiencies of heroic rhetoric which does not even understand its problems, let alone have any idea of what to do to combat them. As Ṣāyigh's virgin does not wish to be platonically adored but yearns for a sexual relationship leading to a changed future of maternity, so the Arab world needs its intellectuals, instead of praising it or bemoaning it, to engage with it and change it.

Boullata takes a more negative view and argues that the virgin 'stands for all the ideals and principles that the poet believes in and the world denies.' Rather than compromise, the poet remains true to what he believes in, even if this leads to suffering and death, which is his only salvation. He concedes that Ṣāyigh's 'poetic universe' is not easy to penetrate or understand, and ends:

It may be too personal at times, too particular. But it is through the particular that the poet wants us to see the universal and, as such, his poetry is a terrifying testimony to the condition of modern man.⁴⁷

The unicorn poem predates Ṣāyigh's further betrayal by the west, the violation of having been used indirectly by the CIA in what he thought was a respectably funded magazine through which he had hoped to contribute constructively to the Arab world. Many had suspected CIA funding before he was forced to accept the truth of it and, although Boullata argues that attacks on his integrity were unfounded, he suffered the rejection of his peers and there was no response to his appeal in May 1967 for Arab funding for *Ḥīwār*. In June, the Six-day War engulfed the Middle

East and exacerbated the Palestinian situation. Ṣāyigh left the Middle East in the autumn of that year and died prematurely, in America, in 1971.⁴⁸

Khalil Ḥāwī - The Philosopher of the Grotesque

Khalil Ḥāwī (1925-82) has been described as ‘the epitome of a new breed of Arab poet: highly educated, well read in Arabic and Islamic thought as well as in Western philosophy and literature’ and as being ‘together with Adunis . . . the poet who has most given modern Arabic poetry its dimension of intellectual richness and philosophical contemplation and depth’.⁴⁹ Like many others, he had, through his hard-fought-for education, made the difficult move from a poor rural background to Arab intellectual urban life and beyond, and saw and was disillusioned by the faults of the contemporary Arab world in its confrontation with post-colonialism and modernity, as well as by the faults of its assumed antithesis, the West. He studied and then taught at the American University of Beirut, went to Cambridge on a scholarship for his PhD in 1956, and then returned to teach at the AUB and the Lebanese University. He wrote one very powerful poem of exile, relating to his time in Cambridge, but used themes of wandering in other poems.

He appears to have been more influenced in his poetic development by Beirut than by his sojourn in the West since the elements of his mature poetry can be seen in work that was written before his departure for England, where he uses the theme of exile and wandering as a metaphor for the search for understanding and accommodation of the world. His poetry constantly projects a sense of alienation which, since some of this antedates his actual exile, would seem to stem from his movement from country to city, his alienation as an intellectual from his roots, his confrontation with modernity, and his despair at the current state of the Arab world, for which he felt constant shame (*al-dhull*) and degradation (*al-‘ar*), both frequent terms in his work.⁵⁰ In his youth he saw hope in the teachings of Anṭūn Sa‘āda, but his subsequent disillusionment was ‘one of the turning points of his life’.⁵¹ However, he clung to hope for the future, although seeing himself as a part of a deeply damaged generation that must suffer and sacrifice itself for generations to come. This is very apparent in his poem ‘The Bridge’ (1957) where his ‘*ribs are stretched out as a firm bridge*’ for ‘*the children of [his] contemporaries*’ who will go ‘*[f]rom the caves of the East, from the swamps of the East / to the new East*’ while he ‘*will remain / Empty-handed, crucified, lonely*’.⁵² His work has been regarded as unnecessarily ugly and gloomy, but Zahra Hussein Ali contends that ‘[t]o appreciate fully Ḥāwī’s virtuosity one must investigate his creative espousal of the grotesque as his only viable aesthetic mode.’⁵³

She argues that Ḥāwī’s poetry ‘pivots on the crisis of the *épistème*’ and that it is

transgressive on all levels. On the one hand, it embodies scathing attacks on the decadent culture and spirituality of the East and on the complacency of the post-colonial Arab reader. On the other hand, it disdains not only the conventions of “committed”, propagandist poetry but also avant-garde poetic conventions championed by westernised Arab poets, namely the sceptical

attitude towards language, the view that poetry is a self-reflective, purely aesthetic entity, and a linguistic construct void of a lofty intellectual substance – in short, that form, not content, makes the poem.⁵⁴

He is keen to understand Western ideas and uses free verse, but is unwilling to embrace the Western poetics of some of his contemporaries. Nor is he willing to directly portray the miseries and sufferings of his people, as in resistance poetry and poetry of nostalgia. His poems usually have a narrative and some sort of moral point, and are examples of the 'extended image'.⁵⁵ There are often dual voices and a dialectic, for example between the sailor and the dervish and between the Cambridge student and his alter-ego, the hermit.

Hussein Ali contends that Ḥāwī's espousal of the grotesque began in 1953, when he first embarked on his career as a practitioner of high modernism; that this grotesque is multi-faceted and that 'he employs it as a structuring device, in order to suggest a stratum of allusions, and to achieve conjointment of dystopia and utopia.' She says that he is closest to the surrealist painters and existentialist writers, but argues that 'he was not blindly imitating the western literary fads of surrealism and existentialism, but he was creatively interweaving his eastern heritage with western aesthetics.'⁵⁶ Surrealist and existentialist ideas were circulating in Beirut at the time: for example, *al-'Adāb* had published an article on surrealism and translations of surrealist poets in its very first issue in January 1953, and a translation of Sartre on 'abath (the 'absurd') in August 1953.

Like Adūnīs and Ṣāyigh he demolishes simplistic dualities such as East/West, good/evil and spiritual/materialistic, by criticising both, hence demonstrating the need for mutual understanding and synthesis – as 'the new East' in 'The Bridge' implies. His poetry is not black and white, but dark grey, albeit with some glimmers of hope, but only for a future that does not include him.

'The Sailor and the Dervish' and 'The Magi in Europe'

'The Sailor and the Dervish' (1957) begins with emblems of Western civilisation, Ulysses, Faust and Huxley, then strikes an Eastern mythical tone with its implicit evocation of Sindbad (used explicitly in later poems), and a mystical one with mention of the Ganges and of 'al-tau'amān: *Allah wa-l-dahr al-saḥīq*' 'the twins: God and old Time', but these and some of the poem's beautiful cadences and repetitions are contrasted or in a state of tension with Ḥāwī's shocking use of the grotesque to debunk both East and West. When the sailor lands in the 'centuried East' seeking a mentor, 'the landscape turns out to be the opposite of the conventionally idealised realm of spice, frankincense, inspiration, and wisdom. It is physically sordid and spiritually poisonous; Lethe-like, it depletes the visitor's vitality, and gives him amnesia.'⁵⁷ The dervish himself is disgusting, almost part of the slime, but he hubristically believes that all the roads in the world end at his door. Ḥāwī's sarcasm at both East and West aims to demolish 'morbid but solemnly-rooted binarisms', that the East is good and the West, the Other, is evil, and that one can follow only two paths:

to imitate the West, or to remain East. Not only does Ḥāwī's mischievous grotesque subvert this logic of either/or, a dangerous form of intellectual

idolatry, but it alludes tantalisingly to a humanistic, post-West, pre-East (i.e., when East was not perceived as an antithesis) épistème.⁵⁸

There are rhymes in the poem – especially in adjectives (not a common feature in modernist poetry, but here used with deadly effect⁵⁹) ending in *-īq* (often *rīq*) – repetitions, and clever linkages. The sailor in his '*duwār al-baḥr*' and disorientation from his travels in the west is akin to the dervishes dizzied by their '*ḥalaqāt al-dhikr*'. The depiction of the further cycles of the rise and fall of civilisations as pustules on the surface of the Earth may be grotesque, but it is a valid Huxleyan scientific view, as is the idea of life arising from primeval slime. There is a certain irony in this being said by the dervish, followed by '*I wonder whether you have been burdened / With more truthful visions than you can bear?*', reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's '*human kind / Cannot bear very much reality.*'⁶⁰ Science, and hence modernity, cannot be avoided but it must be possible to make a fruitful synthesis. The sailor ends confused, but the world is as it is, and the poem closes repeating the reconciling metaphor from its beginning:

... *death*
spreading blue shrouds for the drowned

Nature can give beauty, in life, and even in death.

'The Magi in Europe'⁶¹ shows the explicit encounter of East with West which is only briefly touched on in 'The Sailor and the Dervish'. In the Bible the Magi occur only as external ciphers who come to worship the infant Jesus. T. S. Eliot expands on this in his 'The Journey of the Magi' by seeing them as symbols of the old religions that Christianity will replace who, when they return home, are '*no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, / With an alien people clutching their gods.*' Ḥāwī's Magi start off damaged as they are '*. . . from Beirut – born tragedies / with borrowed faces and minds*' trying to find some sort of certainty or consolation. They are repelled by rationalism and intellectualism in Paris, and in Rome feel that any essence of Christianity has been eclipsed by its symbols and perverted by its clergy. London appears as a triumph of commerce over innocent ideas of Christmas – only a commercial paradise can be found on earth in indulgence and intoxication. Dancing in a club ironically becomes the ancient ritual of the 'night of tombs' in a cave where the poem fuses elements of magic and alchemy with Christian ideas of miracles and cleansing and the Magi '*knelt in reverence*' to a god '*escaping the blaze of the sun / and the horror of certitude, / Who hides / in the caves of the underworld / from the land of civilisation.*' The implication is that the materialism of the West forces people into primitive indulgence since it denies them any spiritual dimension. The myth has progressed from East praising West (the Bible), through East being overpowered by West (Eliot's Magi), to East seeing the deficiencies of the West and trying to reject them.

'The Flute and the Wind' and the Sindbad poems

Ḥāwī's '*al-nāy wa-l-rīḥ fī ṣauma*' at Cambridge' ('The Flute and the Wind in the Hermit's Cell in Cambridge')⁶² can be read as a painful poem of a particular type of exile, that of the alienation and frustration of the young Arab, hampered by poverty and burdened by the hopes and sacrifice of his

family, seeking education in the West. It can also be seen as a clash of cultures, of the modern Arab wounded and guilt-ridden by the weakening of ties with his past, and of disappointment in a dream that has failed to live up to expectations. He is beginning to see that there are no straightforward solutions to the problems of the Arab world – Western modernity is also flawed and unhappy. He is shocked by the atavistic antiquity of Cambridge, its adherence to old customs and pride in its past: ‘hermit’s cell’ implies a room in some old college which at the time was strictly masculine, even down to college servants, cold (in the poem he talks of ‘*cold cells*’ and ‘*coughing out his lungs*’), uncomfortable (students often had to traverse open courtyards to go to a bathroom) and where gowns had to be worn for dinner and the attendant rituals of the Senior Common Room. The poem is, like ‘The Sailor and the Dervish’ a dialogue, here between the unhappy student longing for an escape from his situation, and his alter-ego, ‘The Hermit’ urging him to acquiesce in it. The student voice says:

*I am not one of you, not one
of your fellowship of monks and
ascetics with dehydrated flesh*

...

*My blood is too thick
to turn to water.*

College life must have seemed ludicrous and complacent, in stark contrast to the progressive, politically conscious circles in which he had moved in Lebanon, and the ruination of his hopes to broaden his knowledge to help the Arab world in its need for modernisation. He must also have been isolated as a mature student who had come directly from a foreign country – more privileged foreign students were often educated at English public schools before coming to Cambridge. The poem has a quality of introversion; it shows little attempt at exploration of his milieu, and depicts the isolation and depression that exile can bring.

The divisions of the poem reflect the poet’s quandaries, the named sections showing the factors that are tearing at him, and the unnamed his internal conflicts, and in several ways it evokes pre-Islamic themes (*aghrāḍ*), a further metaphor, beyond the title of the poem, for his roots. The first section entitled ‘*fi-l-ṣauma‘a*’ (‘In the Hermit’s Cell’) shows his location and his state of stress, accentuated by paranoia towards ink bottles and pens, paper and worries, that stand between him and the door – like the traces of an *aṭlāl*. The second shows his hatred of the environment in which he finds himself, and his desire to rebel against it rather than to acquiesce in it ‘*merely for a chair / and a title*’. The third section is entitled ‘*al-nāy*’ (‘The Flute’), and the flute symbolises his remote home, and, in a short section in the voice of his father, the hopes of his family, and of his fiancée, towards whom his feelings seem ambivalent. She is described as pining for him, but instead of positive hopes for their future union he fears that she might die and describes her in terms of sadness, coldness ‘*her wedding dress woven of winter snow*’, and of unfulfilment, as the woman is pining and she is not erotic. In the next section ‘*al-rīḥ*’ (‘The Wind’), the wind seems to symbolise his longing for escape from family and scholastic pressures, and there is some sense of oppression

and resentment towards the fiancée 'who lives and dies waiting' and so, by putting her life on hold, has a claim on him. The longing for the 'the dark Bedouin girl', sometimes expressed in harshly erotic terms, is mixed with a longing for experience 'wa 'ashrabu min marārāt al-durūb bilā marārah' 'to drink from the bitterness of the roads without bitterness' and inspiration, and for the Dionysian in contrast to the monasticism of Cambridge and the propriety of his fiancée. But the section moves into a wider sphere of hope for a brighter future for the Arab world, symbolised by the vibrant beauty of the elusive Bedouin girl who can only be tamed by one who is worthy of her through wearing 'the patience of a camel', in whose heart a child can build a paradise, and 'who lives on / strange fruits / some grown with difficulty / some picked with ease.' He rejects the peacock, a frequent symbol of the current generation of vainglorious Arab leaders and intellectuals, who believes that 'elegant poems and roses / can cover up the shame / of his comic existence', choosing to believe that 'the season of the raging wind / will wipe off the antique / and rusted fences of the mind.' But the next section 'al-nāsik' ('The Hermit') is an interruption to his imaginings where that part of him that knows that he is duty bound to continue with his studies brings him down to earth. The metaphorical hermit is confused by his response that 'I was alone with the dark Bedouin girl / drinking from the bitter cup / without turning bitter' but the final untitled section returns to his conflicts: his family and fiancée, the 'defeated' hermit who is gathering up his strength for another bout of conscience and the 'desert of paper' that seems to besiege him. The poem ends in despair, as it seems to question the validity of a lifetime of study: '. . . beyond, a valley of more paper / and beyond that / a lifetime of old paper.'

The poem is multilayered, and depicts very clearly some of the pain of exile. It also debates whether action is more important than intellectual effort. There are only hints of the grotesque – the hermit alter-ego, the likening of Cambridge to a 'preserved mummy', the 'monks and / ascetics with dehydrated flesh', the more frightening aspects of the bedouin girl, and the peacock of confused sexuality, with breasts, who thinks that 'elegant poems and roses / can cover up the shame / of his comic existence'.

Resentment against the fiancée, who is perhaps a metaphor for the Arab world that also refuses to change, and despair are also depicted in a subsequent poem 'The Faces of Sindbad' (1971) which is 'primarily an account of the effect of time on the poet, and describes with some irritation how the woman he loves remains totally unchanged throughout his long absence . . . and how she thinks that he has not changed "from the youth choking with tears in the airport café", while he has had much to endure which has left his mark on his face.'⁶³ The poem treats the problem of identity and loneliness as a young scholar in a foreign land and his temptation to commit suicide by jumping over Waterloo Bridge, but it ends with 'a mature acceptance of the passage of time' and 'man's eventual triumph' over it. 'Sindbad on his Eighth Voyage' (1956-8), which by its very title implies the need to go beyond the past, is 'an even more triumphant work' which records the poet's interior journey where he jettisons 'old outworn preconceptions and useless inherited attitudes'. Ḥāwī says in the proem that '[w]hen he had reached the essence of his nature he came back and brought with him a treasure unlike any other that he had found on his previous voyages.'⁶⁴

Ḥāwī wrote a very dark poem 'Lazarus 1962' (1965), following his despair at the collapse of the union between Egypt and Syria in 1961,⁶⁵ which is again grotesque – Lazarus has been returned to life, but in his rotting body, and wishes only for death. It is not possible to resurrect the past. He seems to have been a highly introverted and obsessive character – more damaged by personal alienation and the state of the Arab world than by exile. His suicide in 1982 following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, a political act and an expression of despair, must surely reflect this mental predisposition as much as the event itself, which more rounded and resilient people endured.

Adūnīs - The Cosmopolitan and 'Irregular Mystic'

Although some of his poetry depicts the pain and politics of exile, Adūnīs is a prime example of an exile who has become cosmopolitan and might well have become an exile as much by choice and temperament as by necessity. In an interview he says that even as a child he felt that he could not be bounded by his birthplace:

I hope I'm not exaggerating when I claim that I was obsessed even as a child with a vague feeling that my birthplace was that somewhere from which I would venture out, and not stay. A feeling told me I'd find myself only somewhere else. In other places than this. But how? and where? ⁶⁶

He very early displayed a sense of purpose in travelling some distance to read a poem before the newly elected president of Syria in 1944, which led to his being given access to education at a *lycée* in Tartus and then at a public school in Latakia. After receiving his "baccalaureat" he studied philosophy at Damascus University and at the St. Joseph University in Beirut. He has been an exile since 1956.

Perhaps part of his early accommodation of exile was that he seemed to lack a sense of attachment, or even interest, in place and buildings *per se*, as his early work was dominated by the 'poetry of time.'⁶⁷ As mentioned above, from an early age he was highly focused on his search for the abstractions of education and contact with other minds, and in describing his life in Damascus he says:

I didn't see much of the city; never knew it in detail . . . As far as I was concerned, Damascus was confined to a tiny room of a poor student who'd come from his village to get educated; there were the books, the lecture halls at the university, the offices of *The New Generation* newspaper, and later on *Al-Binaa'*, where I worked as a literary editor, plus the houses of a few friends.

Damascus was my second village. It didn't overwhelm me, as it should have, with me coming from a distant poverty-stricken village. It was the big capital, but it didn't strike me as such. I spent about six years there, from 1950 to 1956, and now, after more than forty years, I know it only as a memory. I

keep reminiscing about it, and find that Damascus, for me, was history – it was a time, not a place.⁶⁸

This was perhaps a defence mechanism common to many young Arabs moving from country to city in the mid-twentieth century, but the final sentence implies the idea of the equivalence or merging of space and time and the focus on the interior life so often found in his early poetry. There is certainly no 'land rhetoric'. Apart from the references to Damascus, Qāsyūn and the Baradā, and the Euphrates, in 'The Hawk' (which is in character with the hero of the poem, the most firmly rooted of Adūnīs's poetic masks) specific places rarely feature in his early work, and physical features, flora and fauna are abstractions often simply functioning as symbols or as 'objective correlatives' such as the trees in *Metamorphoses of the Hawk*.⁶⁹ His poems set in Beirut are more about events and experiences than place. Although in recent work he has 'displayed a new fondness for the 'poetry of place''⁷⁰ only occasionally does he locate himself in a specific place. It becomes more and more explicit that his *raison d'être* lies in his poetry which he sees as a substitute philosophy and which is distinguished by 'a tone of quest and a refusal to accept present reality',⁷¹ a focus on the Arabic language, down to its alphabet and letters, and the fruitful interaction of a multiplicity of cultures. However, his detachment is not lack of feeling, rather, as Eliot says:

There are three conditions which often look alike

Yet differ completely . . .

Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment

From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference

*Which resembles the others as death resembles life . . .*⁷²

His moves within Syria and then his long term exile in Beirut and then Paris, as well as intermittent travels have exposed him to a wide range of experiences, opportunities and influences that enabled him to develop his thought and his poetry in various ways. Like many Arabs of his time he has travelled in time as well as physically – from a 'poor peasant village' to an eyrie on the 35th floor of a skyscraper in the most modern district of Paris.⁷³ Exile seems to have affected him in three ways: firstly, leaving his home at a very early age without any intention of returning compounded by his own exile and, probably more importantly, the exile of others, has imbued his poetry with a constant sense of wandering and trying to find meaning or structure in life; secondly his early years in Beirut and especially his year studying in Paris (1960-1) gave him the stimulation and inspiration for an enormous burst of creativity in the early 1960s; and finally his long exile encompassing imprisonment in Syria, the dangers and eventual disruption of his life in Lebanon, and then living in an alien *milieu* in France has given him a hybrid identity – Syrian, Lebanese and French – not specifically belonging anywhere. His poetry has reflected this: early works such as 'Leaves in the Wind' (1955-7) the title of which is an image of random dispersal borne out by its form, 67 mainly tiny sections, where the uprooted poet wanders yet tries to impose order; his mould-shattering masterpieces of the 1960s; and a later trend towards the abstract and mystical, although in the last ten years he has produced a second masterpiece *al-Kitāb*⁷⁴ which

draws heavily on medieval Arab genres, and some rather more personal and lyrical poems. However, he has at times been moved to write overtly political poems, notably the collection *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*.⁷⁵ Major effects of exile on his poetry are that it has given him perspective and constant new influences that he has merged with earlier ones. He has remained 'uncompromisingly adventurous',⁷⁶ is a great synthesiser, and just as he wishes for a better world that embraces multiplicity, so he embraces many cultures in his work.

Influences

There are several major influences on Adūnīs's work which he eclectically unites to varying degrees – Sufi literature, European philosophy, politics, Arab and European modernist poetry and criticism, Surrealism, and the Arab literary heritage, including the *Qur'ān*. He is also deeply committed to a refined form of Arabic, in contravention of trends towards the use of more approachable language.

His tendency towards inner exploration and a sort of mysticism can perhaps be traced to his having been introduced to the *gnosis* (spiritual insight) of the great Sufi visionaries such as al-Hallāj and Ibn 'Arabī at an early age,⁷⁷ although this has probably been expanded by later studies of Sufi literature and encounters with elements of French poetry. His book *Sufism and Surrealism*⁷⁸ demonstrates that he has thought deeply about both. A French critic sees him as a visionary,⁷⁹ and he cites as influences the nineteenth century symbolists and Henri Michaux (1899-1984),⁸⁰ 'the medical student who early on abandoned physics for metaphysics', whose work shows an 'apprehension of a human affinity with the cosmos' and who 'makes a crucial linkage between individual body and universal spirit'⁸¹ both of which can also be seen as elements of Sufism. Imagery often associated with Sufism such as the sun, water, waves, foam, clouds, wind, dust, weaving and sewing⁸² can be traced throughout his poetry, and such elements are also associated with Symbolism:

. . . Mallarmé's poetics logically implies the continuous disregard of facts and objects, in favour of the allusion, the foam, star, and smoke, that symbolise the astral body which the "pure" poem must be.⁸³

As other modern poets have used *topoi* from pre-Islamic poetry in their work, such as Maḥmūd Darwīsh and Aḥmad Daḥbūr's inversions of the *aḥlāl* discussed above, he has appropriated Sufi imagery and adapted it to his purposes. Metaphors for creation and change by the power of divine love are applied to the power of poetry. He makes the alphabet into a 'character' in his work, perfectly assimilated into Sufi imagery:

*O miserable alphabet, O twenty-
nine reeds, with what can I further burden you and what
forest can I plant you to be?*

*I give up to nature's beast and drag myself behind you.*⁸⁴

and in *al-Kitāb*

A magical being / a foundling of the stars / his name is alphabet

al-Mutanabbī's innermost friend and confidant ⁸⁵

At one point he says

Colours are the alphabet of nature ⁸⁶

a modern mystical concept, a correspondence, c.f. Baudelaire's 'Correspondences', and in a later poem ' 'abjadiya' (Alphabet)⁸⁷ in each of the 28 sub-poems he uses the letter heading the poem at the beginning of several of its lines, a partial inversion of classical rhyme schemes and perhaps a nod to al-Ma'arrī's (d. 1058) *al-Luzūmiyyāt*.

Such mixtures make it clear that he is not a religious poet, rather 'transreligious' or an 'irregular mystic'.⁸⁸ He writes in *Celebrations* . . . :

My nature is heresy / but the truth shines within me. ⁸⁹

However, he uses frequent citations from the mystics and dedicates poems to them, and the title of his journal, *Mawāqif*, is taken from al-Niffarī's work *Kitāb al-Mawāqif wa-l-mukhāṭabāt* ⁹⁰ as he sees in the mystic a brave searcher for truth.

Although his more overtly political poems were triggered by the 1967 débâcle and the Lebanese civil war, the influence of philosophy and politics, as well as his rejection of tradition, began at university in Damascus where he joined the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) and became imbued with the ideology of Anṭūn Sa'āda, and it was the power of the modernist influences of Arab and French poets, as well, no doubt, as his studies in Philosophy⁹¹ that soon made him critical of the university:

My studies at the university were the abyss that opened between me and the past. The university was there to kill poetry and poetic taste at the same time. Tradition seemed to be a negation, not just of life, but of humanity and progress too, the way it was presented in class.

And then at the university, also, the split began with the reality that was around me: I began to see the present as an extension of the past as it was presented at the university. I began to feel that I was living at the edge, swaying and ready to fall. ⁹²

and led to the development of his sense of 'poetic mission'.⁹³ The ideas of Nietzsche and Heidegger can be seen in his poetry and criticism: echoes of Nietzsche's condemnation of institutional Christianity can be seen in his condemnation of 'tradition' above and in *al-Thābit wa-l-Mutaḥawwil* (1974-8); Zarathustra and ideas of the power of language and the need to destroy before (re)creating can be seen in *Mihyār* (1961) as well in later works; and Heidegger's ideas of the nature of man's *Being* in the world (Dasein) and that 'reality' as seen in human systems of perception is not true reality are expressed in *Mihyār* and later works such as *al-Muṭābaqāt wa-l-awā'il* (1980) and *Ihtifā'an bi-l-ashyā' al-ghāmiḍah al-wāḍiḥah* (1988). Both philosophers were

no doubt first encountered at university but deepened by his connections at *Shi'r*. The power of the word continues in later works such as *al-Kitāb*.

Exposure to European poetic influences may have begun in Damascus, but there was considerably more scope for this in Lebanon and especially his 1960-61 spell in Paris. After imprisonment in Syria because of his political views, Adūnīs went into exile in Lebanon in 1956 where Yūsuf al-Khāl, impressed by the poem 'al-Farāgh', had offered him a position on the staff of *Shi'r*, and he later became a Lebanese citizen. He was deeply involved in the *Majallat Shi'r* movement, and it might be said that Al-Khāl 'saw in Adunis the 'Eliot' of his movement in which he planned to play the role of Pound' and that 'Shi'r provided the circumstances for actualising Adunis' potential.'⁹⁴

The influence of Anṭūn Sa'āda persisted in the early years of Adūnīs' work at *Shi'r*, partly through al-Khāl, who had also been a member of the SSNP. Kamal Abu-Deeb has argued that his use of fertility and resurrection myths is drawn more from the work of Sa'āda⁹⁵ than from T.S. Eliot, who, advertising his own sources in the notes to *The Waste Land*, was the source for most other practitioners. This is perhaps also because being educated in Syria he was more exposed to French literature than English, as was the case for poets from Iraq and Palestine. This is reflected in the 1957 poem '*al-ba'th wa-l-ramād*' (Resurrection and Ashes)⁹⁶ which, although it shows *Tammūzī* influences – in the use of 'resurrection', a mention of 'one (who) died on his cross' and of flowers, especially anemones – and a strong sense of alienation, also draws on the ancient civilisation of the Mediterranean through the myth of the phoenix (using *fīnīq* rather than the usual Arabic '*anqā*') and mention of the ancient Phoenician cities of Tyre, Carthage and Baalbek.

Adūnīs admits that he had at first been inclined to dismiss the (non-Sufi) Arab heritage, but being open to other cultures has helped him to appreciate his own. In *An Introduction to Arab Poetics* he acknowledges that he and others were initially captivated by Western culture, but that some 'armed with a changed awareness and new concepts which enabled us to reread our heritage with new eyes and to realise our own cultural independence' went beyond this and discovered the modernity at various periods in Arabic poetry that was not appreciated 'from within the prevailing Arab cultural order and its systems of knowledge'. Reading Baudelaire and Mallarmé had helped him fully appreciate Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām, reading Rimbaud, Nerval and Breton led him to 'discover the poetry of the mystic writers in all its uniqueness and splendour', and the new French criticism gave him 'an indication of the newness of al-Jurjānī's critical vision.'⁹⁷

Conversely, he is claiming an independent and very early modernism for Arab poetry, but, significantly, based on poets who were often outside the established tradition. A corollary of Adūnīs' recognition of the modernity of parts of the Arab heritage is the rejection, by himself and others, of the 'orthodox Sunnite world view which has dominated Arabic culture for centuries'. Although he 'does not reject the tradition: he re-defines it and establishes his relationship with it as it is redefined.'⁹⁸

The fruitful interaction of all these influences first became apparent in the work that is generally regarded as his masterpiece *Aghānī Miḥyār al-Dimashqī* (*Songs of Miḥyār the Damascene*, 1961)⁹⁹ much of which was written in Paris.

Miḥyār

Since Adūnīs' visit to Paris in 1960-1 immediately preceded the important collections *Miḥyār* and *Metamorphoses*, the former of which is a watershed in modern Arab poetry, as well as the beginning of work on his *Dīwān al-shi'r al-'arabī*,¹⁰⁰ his exile in Paris can be seen as a catalyst. He had been experimenting with techniques of poetic distancing: through writing poetic dramas such as *'Majnūn bayna al-mawī* and *al-Sadīm*¹⁰¹ but in *Miḥyār* he suddenly arrives at a great creation of a complex, disembodied and apocalyptic mask and the book

. . . is structured in a unified manner; it has a metaphysical aspect, and focuses on the great questions that assail modern man. Adūnīs seeks to formulate a pure language as a condition of a form and a [mode of] expression that is directly opposed to those imposed by prevailing codes. . . . an imaginary medieval poet, Miḥyār, expresses the thought and world vision of Adūnīs. The work achieves a very fine equilibrium between the socio-political commitment of the poet and symbolic language. Mystical introspection becomes an occasion for seeing beyond transient reality. Miḥyār is [a] poet-errant . . .¹⁰²

Books such as Jubrān's *The Prophet* and Ilyā Abu Mādī's *Ṭalāsīm* are perhaps attempts in this direction, and Adūnīs admires Jubrān and cites him as one of his influences, but both are rambling narratives rather than gem-like, heterogeneous yet unified structures, and they do not have the property that *Miḥyār* has that parts can stand as poems in their own right, independent of the whole.

The form of *Miḥyār* is as complex and fragmented as the world that it seeks to portray and is a celebration of multiplicity and unity, of East and West, ancient and modern – things that are only truly experienced by the wanderer, be he exile, scholar or explorer. Numerous references, some explicit but mostly implicit, are densely woven into it and the collection is almost overdetermined for prophecy, extremism, poetic experimentation, and madness – perhaps to an extent Adūnīs is playing games. It might be seen as a cross between the work of Baudelaire, Lautréamont and Rimbaud, all of whom were complex, wandering characters¹⁰³ – and perhaps these and his interest in surrealism were the nuclei around which Adūnīs's gestating work crystallised. The title reflects Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror*, and the six *mazāmīr* (there are six *chants*) reflect *Maldoror* in being exaggerated, larger than life, and apocalyptic, but with a Maldoror who is an amalgam of god, magician and Nietzschean Superman. As in Lautréamont's work, strangeness is sometimes generated by the use of extremes of the paradigmatic axis,¹⁰⁴ for example 'Yesterday he carried a continent and changed the position of the sea. / He paints the back of day and creates daylight out of his feet . . .' from the first *mazmūr*.¹⁰⁵ The wandering and literary nature of the protagonist has

echoes of Rimbaud's *Une saison en enfer* and *Illuminations*, Baudelaire's *flâneur* and Maldoror – 'a work which contains its own commentary' and 'explores the different possibilities and limitations . . . of literature as artefact . . . [Lautréamont's works are] different approaches to the alchemy of the word'.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps drawing upon such uncompromisingly secular works gave him the confidence to create a modernist, secular character: Mihiyār is not a shadow of a religious mystic – he is a combination of questioning intellect and literary mechanism.

However, it is sometimes thought that the 'character' Mihiyār draws on the poet Mihiyār al-Daylamī (d. 1036) whose work Adūnīs admires and whom he describes as being '*rāfiḍiyyan ghāliyyan*' (an extreme rebel).¹⁰⁷ The Mihiyārs have common features: the poems of al-Daylamī 'give expression to . . . a "hidden world" which does not lie in any perceptible reality language might mirror, but in the texture of literary language itself';¹⁰⁸ and his *Dīwān* has long poems interspersed with 'clusters of short pieces of verse . . . witty, riddle-like portrayals of disparate objects';¹⁰⁹ both of which could be said about al-Dimashqī. Al-Daylamī converted to Shi'ite Islam from Zoroastrianism, which provides links with both Adūnīs and Zarathustra. But it is perhaps no coincidence that the consonants h y r, have, in Arabic, connotations of demolition.

The work also has echoes of Sufi works. Rumi's *Mathnāvi* is similarly variegated (also divided into 6 sections) but Sufism is updated: it was an end in itself or in God, but Adūnīs has the secular aim, echoing the Surrealists, of seeking to alter perceptions and ultimately the world. The citation consists of two brief quotations from Hölderlin, a further link to madness. The first:

Then why, O lovely sun, do you not suffice

is perhaps a reference to Shams al-Din, Rumi's inspiration, implying that such inspiration is not enough in the modern world. The second:

A stranger it comes

To us, that quickening word,

*The voice that moulds and makes human*¹¹⁰

makes clear the importance that Adūnīs attaches to poetry, and the quotation refers back to '*. . . the word / [that] came down to us from the East*'. Hölderlin's 'East' is the Classical Greek civilisation which he hoped could revive Germany, but Adūnīs's 'East' is implicitly those parts of the Arab heritage, which in interacting with modern influences, could revitalise the Arabs at the present time, and perhaps a connection with the Eastern Mediterranean civilisation evoked by Anṭūn Sa'āda. But he does use classical Greek references and also echoes Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, which draws upon a pre-Islamic Persian mystic. The title of the first section 'The Knight of Strange Words' evokes yet another mystic wanderer, the 'Knight of the Doleful Countenance', *Don Quixote*, a work that was foundational in the European genre of the novel and has profound ramifications in East-West interaction: it is set in a Spain shortly after the final suppression of Muslim rule but still bearing traces of it; the assumed narrator is a Muslim, Sidi Hamet, and it is a book in which writing and texts figure prominently. A recent review considers that '*. . . the true novel becomes the author's dialogue with the book's authors and characters – that is to say, as*

Bakhtin pointed out, with language and its power to recreate the world,¹¹¹ the latter a constant preoccupation of Adūnīs. Cervantes' creation Don Quixote is also very much the creation of the chivalric books that he reads. Jubrān wrote books entitled *The Prophet* and *The Madman*, and the use of 'voices' in *Mihyār* is perhaps a reference to his famous poem 'The Two Voices', but the strangeness and cosmic, apocalyptic dimensions take it beyond the comfortable mysticism that made Jubrān so popular in the West. The collection is full of Sufi imagery, and wandering Sufis were often regarded as mad, but like *Mihyār*, and Don Quixote, theirs was a questing madness that sought to improve the world. Within a few pages Adūnīs has established links to several threads of eastern and western culture.

Mihyār's songs, usually very short, are interspersed by the *mazāmīr* and followed by a series of elegies under the heading 'Repeated Death'. They have wide-ranging individual titles, an innovation in Arabic poetry, which is reminiscent of both Baudelaire and Rimbaud. The titles of the sections: 'The Knight of Strange Words', 'The Magician of Dust', 'The God of Death', 'Iram the Many-Columned', 'Young Time' and 'The Ends of the Earth' (which might refer to Rimbaud's fragment *Confins du monde*) reflect the wide range and huge spatial, temporal, and spiritual dimensions. The 'Magician of Dust' explicitly refers to Orpheus,¹¹² another exemplar of the power of poetry, from ancient Greek myth, who is able to charm animals and birds, trees, stones and mountains, and even gods, including the gods of the underworld, and Iram is a story from the *Qur'ān*. The work is timeless and placeless, or of all times and all places. This might be compared to the state of limbo of an exile, but, especially in the *mazāmīr*, where *Mihyār* projects a sense of power, it is Ibn 'Arabī's *barzakh*, the intermediate world between existence and nothingness, the site of images and revelations, and of imagination.¹¹³

Mihyār himself is elusive: he is described, addressed or speaks, which confuses the relationship of the poet and the mask, but it is soon apparent that he is a poet. In their detailed analysis of the gradual, and very theatrical, introduction of *Mihyār* to the reader in the first section 'The Knight of Strange Words', Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar identify many textual strategies: the ambiguity of the title – does the Knight utter strange words or is he composed of them?; in the *mazāmīr* he is described in strange, hyperbolic and mystical terms but not named; in the first *ughnīya* 'He is not a Star' ' . . . the psalm's layering of modifiers gives way momentarily to a stripping of them . . . [and] the source of the protagonist's power ' is briefly 'define[d] by negation' when sun and moon are seen as representing 'the trappings of two religions' but the poem then says that he is a 'bleeding pagan spear invading the world of letters' and 'wears the nakedness of stone'.¹¹⁴ Beard and Haydar argue that stone, a key term in Adūnīs's poetry, 'suggests the world without poetry, the resistant scene from which the poet begins' and that '[t]o return to the nakedness of stone is an act which in the world of *Mihyār* generates power. We know in a general sense where this power comes from – from the acts of naming which are constant in these poems.'¹¹⁵ The notion of the power of naming is an aspect of Surrealism, mentioned in Chapter 1. There is also the Sufi idea that stone can become mirror or gem¹¹⁶ and possibly the connotation of the Philosophers' Stone.

There is no straightforward narrative:

. . . Adunis does not present them [the poems] as a sequence; it is as if each poem were an arc on the circle of Miḥyār's rise and fall, *fanā'* and *baqā'*, some stages repeating, some overlapping, and often with a triumphant stage reflecting the arrival of its contrary (as in 'The Face of Miḥyār' where '*here he is overstepping / the caliph's boundaries / advancing the flag / of retreat*').¹¹⁷

This heightens the sense of mystery, and recalls what Eliot wrote on St. John Perse's lack of explicit connections in *Anabasis*: 'The justification of such abbreviation of method is that the series of images coincides and concentrates into one intense impression . . .'¹¹⁸ There is perhaps some connection, as Adūnīs has translated the complete works of St. John Perse.¹¹⁹

Beard and Haydar do not see the series of poems as 'Sysiphean repetition' or as 'a series of masks' but think that '(t)he implication is that Miḥyār's persistence continues in a system independent of natural cycles.'¹²⁰ This effect persists in the cycles of the section titles, and the work ends in analogous fashion in the last two poems of the sixth section: 'Who are you?' where the reply '*a wandering spear / a lord who lives without prayer*' refers back to 'He is not a Star', and 'The New Noah' implies a new beginning; and in the two elegies with which the work ends. The first is to a vanished body without a coffin, for whom '*The radiance of the path draws your face / And the threshold walks behind your footsteps*', but in the second '*The dust sings your praises . . . gives your footsteps to the abyss / Lamenting the remains / Of your songs and your visions*' and then, in closure of a created world, '*The dust covers the glass of the seasons / Covers the mirrors / And covers your hands*.'¹²¹ But Miḥyār reappears in later works (for example 'The head of Miḥyār' in the *Book of the Migration*, and in *Célébrations* . . . where 'In Celebration of Abū Tammām' is referred to as '*Extracts from the Memoirs of Abū Tammām as told to Miḥyār the Damascene*'¹²² – one of Adūnīs's worlds abutting into others as, according to the philosophers, one world is as real as any other.

Miḥyār himself is mysterious and protean. Beard and Haydar say that Adūnīs 'does not paint a hero for us, or an anti-hero. He hollows out a hero-shaped space',¹²³ and Adūnīs himself says:

. . . through this persona I wanted to get out of the direct subjective discourse and speak an unpersonal (sic) language, symbolic and objective-historical, through a persona symbolic and mystical at the same time, so it is more than a mask. It is a vortex where Arab culture would meet with all its dimensions into the central and pivotal cause: crossing from the old Arab world into the new one.¹²⁴

Kamal Abu-Deeb talks of Adūnīs creating in his poetry a 'mysterious world' with 'intimate, multiple affinities, harmonies and perfection' where the poet dwells 'knowing that he is mysterious, incomprehensible, but eternally at peace with himself'.¹²⁵ Through the use of strange language where '[a] body can be described in the language of stars, or dust, or flowers' and '[a] tree becomes a book as naturally as a grave becomes a mirror' the poem

becomes the microcosm which embodies Adunis's fundamental vision of reality, of man, nature and metaphysics; it becomes a totality within which the tensions are resolved between the most intense oppositions, in which every level becomes a transformation of the basic vision of reality underlying the poem; the poem becomes an act of harmonisation, balance, discovery of the interfusion and interdependence between the linguistic constituents. All constituents move towards a central meaning which is seen to reside in the various phenomena of the universe; the meaning radiates through all linguistic constituents forming a network of relationships which give the poem its totality. Everything in the universe becomes yet another manifestation of an essential meaning. . . semantically and syntactically, what applies to one element applies equally smoothly to another, to all others.¹²⁶

The poem, despite its sense of closure, is thus open to numerous interpretations. The complex three-layered structure: of fine textual and linguistic devices and imagery; the prose *mazāmīr* and short poems; and the major sections, is made into a self-contained, integrated world by means of titles, internal cycles and references, but it impinges upon many others, from East and West. Creating his own world is a useful self-protective ability for an exile, like Sufi writers who 'live not so much in a place as in their texts'.¹²⁷ It is an amazing synthesis that has led to something entirely new, and profoundly influenced Arab poetry.

Other Works

Adūnīs has constantly experimented with poetic techniques and has written much on poetics and on cultural criticism, both of which were contributed to by his involvement with other cultures and the perspective gained by his exile. Al-Faddul charts his poetics from the early pan-Syrian ideas of Anṭūn Sa'āda to the idea of the poet as a visionary destroyer and (re)creator, and since most of his formulations on poetics follow the major works of the 1960s, they have evolved with his poetry. He has ranged through theatre and masks; the idea of metamorphosis, possibly encountered in Paris where the concept of Narcissus would lead to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from which he also takes figures such as Sisyphus and Orpheus; and the highly original concept of the mirror. Ḥātim al-Sakr charts his development through drama and masks (both fields of experimentation in Syria and Lebanon) to the notion of the mirror, and discusses its connotations such as the myth of Narcissus and Lacan's 'mirror phase' of the infant in modern psychology.¹²⁸ Perhaps Adūnīs's earliest mirror poem is '*mir'ār al-ḥajar*' in *Mihyār*¹²⁹ which has Sufi tones, but he later develops and secularises the image, especially in reflecting his experiences in Beirut. Al-Saqr quotes '*al-nās marāyā tamshīr*' (*people are mirrors walking*)¹³⁰ which can be interpreted as saying that since the people have been torn away from everything that constituted their identity, they are left simply reflecting what is happening to them. There is a similar sense of only the external present remaining in 'Mirror for the Twentieth Century', 'Mirror for Beirut' and 'The Pearl (Dream – Mirror)',¹³¹ and the latter evokes the fragility of mirrors:

And histories are mirrors

And civilisations are mirrors

Smashed to pieces.

The mirror is a very powerful mechanism as symbol or as object correlative, because of its ambivalence. Sufis see man as 'a mirror of God'¹³² but Ibn 'Arabī says that a man knows but does not know his reflected image, as 'senses are wrong and misleading',¹³³ and indeed it is a 'mirror image', back-to-front. The mirror can be completely impersonal, yet it does encompass the reciprocity of the thing reflected and its image, although it can distort or flatter and its field is inevitably limited and exclusive. It is two dimensional and fragile, but in the story of Narcissus the mirror has terrible power. Abu-Deeb analyses the complex poem '*kāmiyā' al-narjis - ḥulm*' ('The Alchemy of Narcissus - Dream')¹³⁴ beginning:

The mirror reconciles noon and night

Behind the mirror

A body opens up the way

To its new regions

In the accumulation of eras . . .

at length, in terms of transformative power.¹³⁵ The poem is explicitly surrealist, using the words 'alchemy' and 'dream' which figure in Surrealist writing, and even '*sarāwīlhā al-narjisīyya*', the mirror's 'narcissistic trousers' which are blended with the sun. This does just about make sense – a flash of light reflected by a moving mirror could give the impression of whirled clothing (c.f. the Arab metaphor of the skirt of day wiping out the stars).

Adūnīs portrays the East-West cultural dialogue in *Ayām al-Ṣaqr* (Days of the Hawk) (1962), 'a song whose Rimbaudian flights of oratory end in evoking our Andalusī heritage . . . at the age of 32-34 he had already begun a dialogue between cultures'¹³⁶ where al-Dākhil is a political exile, perhaps a mask, but also an allegory, a statement of the power of the poet and an assertion of the gifts of Arab civilisation: '*An Andalusia rising from Damascus. / He carries to the West the harvest of the East.*'¹³⁷ However in *Metamorphoses of the Hawk* (1964)¹³⁸ he reveals the generally repressed facets of the exiled hero. 'Season of Tears' is tragic and incantatory in its repetitions of '*The cry of the desert has died down*' '*The cry of return has died down*' and acceptance of a world lost forever. 'Season of Ascent to the Towers of Death' expands the range of the poem outside al-Dākhil with references to Baghdad and the 'towers of death' which were the piled up skulls of the victims of the Mongols – but universalises his experience of the massacre of most of his family and their supporters. 'Season of Trees' is probably a reference to the palm tree that al-Dhākīl had brought from Ruṣāfa to al-Andalus which was symbolic of his yearning for Syria and to which he wrote a poem, but it does not depict specific trees – the trees are objective correlatives. The use of 'seasons' here and in *Aqālīm al-nihār wa-l-layl* explicitly echoes Rimbaud, and the texts are very Rimbaudian. Another poem of the early 1960s is *Transformations of the Lover* (1962), both erotic and mystical. Adūnīs is experimenting in all facets of life, portraying the poet as mystic and creator, god, hero, and lover, in an almost Wagnerian manner.

Although Adūnīs maintains an appearance of detachment in *Mihyār* and other work he is subtly political in work of the late 1960s and early 1970s, both in response to political events and to his own explorations of the West. He depicts the pain of exile in the *al-Ṣaqr* poems, and criticises Arab politics and mourns the state of the Arab world in *Muqaddima li Tārīkh Mulūk al-Tawā'if* (Introduction to the History of the Petty Kings) (1970) and *Hādihā huwa 'Ismī* (This is My Name) (1969).¹³⁹ The latter two poems are highly surrealist and explicitly use surrealist notions such as the need to destroy and radically re-invent the world: 'A time between ashes and roses is coming / When everything shall be extinguished / When everything shall begin' in the first, and 'the landmine of civilization' in the second,¹⁴⁰ an ironic image in the face of the many landmines inflicted by 'civilisation'. *Qabr min ajli New York* (A Grave for New York) (1971), in the same collection, is an explicit indictment of the US. All three poems range through history, literature, and the present, and encompass beauty and horror, hope and despair, writing back to both Arab rulers and the forces with which they have to interact. The misery of war and the destruction of Beirut also figure graphically in *Kitāb al-Ḥiṣār* (The Book of the Siege) (1985).¹⁴¹

In poetry of the 1980s and early 90s Adūnīs becomes almost transparent, using mechanisms such as 'Correspondences', 'Beginnings' and 'In Celebration of . . .'.¹⁴² As in *Mihyār* the multiplicity of aspects and images 'coincides and concentrates into one intense impression . . .'.¹⁴³ This can be compared to the work of other modern poets such as Neruda's *Odes*¹⁴⁴ and Octavio Paz's *Toward the Beginning* (1964-8), and *Configurations* and *Confluences* (1969-75)¹⁴⁵ and perhaps there is a hint of influence or homage in Adūnīs's titles. Paz's work has been described as 'a luxuriant synthesis of his native Mexican traditions and those of the Indian subcontinent with the international avant-garde',¹⁴⁶ and Adūnīs has achieved a comparable synthesis. The two men are friends, who met in Paris, both highly cosmopolitan members of the 'international avant-garde'.

Al-Kitāb 'amsī al-makān al-'ān (The Book: Yesterday - the Place - Now) is another great synthesis and experiment in form, but not as serene as *Mihyār*. It is deeply tragic: disaster and tragedy are central to the narrative, and to the Mutanabbī of *al-Kitāb*, 'as they are to any man who is a descendant of Arab culture and Arab history, whoever he may be',¹⁴⁷ and deeply personal, transmuting the tragedy felt by Adūnīs into a rambling catalogue of the tragedies and disasters of Arab history, portrayed through multiple, shifting voices. There are multiple manifestations of Mutanabbī – he is his (fictionalised) historic self, he is 'identified with' by the author, and he 'identifies with'¹⁴⁸ others. It is a huge work, in three volumes, published over a period of seven years, reminiscent of the size and comprehensiveness of medieval compendia of people and places such as Ibn Khallikān's (d. 1282) *Wafayāt al-a'yān* and al-Maqrīzī's (d. 1441) *al-Khiṭaṭ*. The subtitle is 'A Manuscript Attributed to al-Mutanabbī Edited and Published by Adūnīs', drawing on the story that when Mutanabbī was murdered his manuscripts were 'dispersed by the desert winds'.¹⁴⁹ Supposed manuscripts have been used as novelistic devices, for example in Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī's *al-Zaynī Barakāt* (1971) or Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980), but this is highly innovative in poetry, and yet another type of mask. It is a device that legitimates the provision of a metatext, as some pages are 'divided into three columns, the first for the Narrator,

the middle and widest column for the Poet's words, and the third column is for exact historical references and facts' although it also is 'set somewhat like a script' and Adūnīs says that the influence of cinema scripts can be seen in it.¹⁵⁰ Commentary in margins is also a common feature of old Arabic texts. The central column is boxed which is perhaps an indication of constriction, and is divided into two, so there are in effect four voices 'each representing a different aspect of Arab history' although 'centred on the personality and experience of al-Mutanabbī'.¹⁵¹ Further devices include *hawāmish* (margins), *dhikrā* (memoirs), *dafātir* (journals), and 'private papers' of people such as Sayf al-Dawla and his sister, which allows enormous flexibility and fluidity. Although it draws on historical characters and Arab genres it is as abstract and philosophical as Adūnīs's other works, and the power of the word and the persecution of poets are constant themes. The poetry in the text is in free verse, in contrast to the rigid metres used by Mutanabbī, but conversely, perhaps as a dialectic with the constraints of a previous age, Adūnīs imposes upon himself structural restrictions. Within the various sections of each volume, sub-divisions, and the cities that appear in the '*al-dhikrā*' sections of Volume II, are marked by letters (in the *abjad* sequence), invariably running from *alif* to *ghayn*. The *hawāmish* sections, although divided by roman numerals and names in Volume I, names in Volume II, and Arabic numerals and nouns in Volume III, always have ten sub-divisions. Thus letters and numbers as well as being the basic components of the work also play a rôle in shaping it.¹⁵² The names used are those of historical figures mostly, but not entirely, poets. It is a view of Arab history in line with Adūnīs's critical writings – most of the poets occur in his *Diwān al-shi'r al-'arabī*, and other figures include philosophers, scientists, the grammarian Sībawayhi (whose own great work is referred to as *al-Kitāb*), Ja'fār the Barmakid, and rebels such as Sufīs, Mu'tazilites and Zendiqs (atheists). The numbers of names may give a sense of the multiplicity of the world, but, since little is generally known of most of them and since Adūnīs always packages them into his groups of 10 or 28, there is sometimes a sense of sameness or the insignificance of individual lives. The 28 cities of Volume II, simply referred to as *al-madīna 'alif*, *al-madīna bā*' etc., are not described in terms of any physical features but in terms of how poetry/poets or their inhabitants are treated. They are 'unreal cities' that might be compared to those of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* where Marco Polo, weary of travel, describes to Kubla Khan, weary of conquest, the cities of his empire, and says:

'Travelling, you realise that differences are lost: each city takes to resembling all cities, places exchange their form, order, distances, a shapeless dust cloud invades the continents. Your atlas preserves the differences intact: that assortment of qualities which are like the letters in a name.'¹⁵³

'Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice.' . . .
 'Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased,' Polo said.
 'Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little.'¹⁵⁴

They reflect the numbing effect of constant travel, and the *khātima* section following *al-madīna ghayn* implies that Mutanabbī is perhaps always imagining Kufa, where he lived as a child, and

Aleppo where he lived for some time, although he also dreams of Baghdad, in his time the endangered centre of high Arab culture, as in Volume III all but the final *hawāmish* sections begin with the words:

I imagine Baghdad, but I live / in Aleppo, and I live / in Kufa ¹⁵⁵

Mutanabbī lived in a time of flux when the Abbasid caliphate was so weakened by internecine strife that local dynasties were becoming increasingly independent. He himself had to flee Kufa at an early age when it was seized by the Carmathians, and in 945 AD the caliphs were reduced to becoming puppets of the Daylamī Būyids. He led a precarious life, constantly seeking patronage. Although he found a degree of security for nine years with Sayf al-Dawla in Aleppo, he endured much insecurity and hostility, even prison, and eventually died at the hands of one of his enemies. The book is a life of Mutanabbī, a history of his times, a *khīṭa*, and a *wafayāt*, but the *fāṣila istibāq* ('Preludes') sections invite comparison with politics now, and there are equally relevant depictions of exile and suffering.

Abu-Deeb sees *al-Kitāb* as 'the jewel in the crown of Adūnīs's poetry and the pinnacle of half a century of poetic creation, and of struggle with language and form, historical and cultural formations, the impact of the modern world, and with the psyche, space and time'¹⁵⁶ and deeply personal, engendered by the psychological constrictions of Adūnīs's life as an exile, intertwined with the life of al-Mutanabbī.

It is as if he experienced in his European exile a radical return to his native country and personal space, to an enveloping womb where he is eternally hidden, and it is as if every place in which he lives is a phantom that does not impress itself on the mirror of his soul and the darkness of his consciousness and unconsciousness which continue to locate themselves in one place and no other – Kūfa, the symbolic city: the scene of the promising, agreeable beginnings, happy childhood, tragedies and disasters, a desert of nightmares, a place of ruined dreams, which in its soil and spaces shapes, kneads, and fuses the time of the history of Adūnīs and the history of his prodigal, seeing, distressed Mutanabbī, in his own present and in the presents of them both.¹⁵⁷

Although he participates fully in the world of modern poetry¹⁵⁸ there seems to be in Adūnīs a quality of detachment and introversion, brought upon by exile, that makes him escape in his poetry into other worlds. Some are literary as in *Mihyār*; some historical (with the awareness that these are to an extent imagined) as in 'The Hawk', 'The History of the Petty Kings', and *al-Kitāb*; or he delves into abstraction as in *Celebrations* . . . or into the body and mind of a lover. However, there is a profound difference between his early and late masterpieces – in *Mihyār* there is a spirit of exploration of other cultures, whereas in *al-Kitāb* the focus is on his own. It is as if he is trying to preserve himself as an Arab, in the face of a fear of becoming a Frenchman, and to preserve Arabness in the face of exile and fear of the homogenisation in so many aspects of life that results from globalisation and neo-imperialism.

A later work, *tanabba' ayyuhā al-a'mā (Prophesise, O Blind Man)* (2003),¹⁵⁹ is wide-ranging and lyrical in parts: 'Twelve Candles for Granada' is descriptive of the Alhambra, as well as talking of poetry and Spanish poets, and is perhaps a nod to Darwīsh's *Eleven Planets*. It also has personal tones: Adūnīs responds to cities he has visited, describing Berlin in 'Concerto, 19 Wallotstrasse, Berlin', the address of the Institute for Advanced Study where he had a bursary. He evokes Dante when visiting Florence, and dedicates poems to three of his translators, Jacques Berque, another critic who demonstrates the inter-relatedness of East and West, Anne Wade Minkowski, for whom he evokes the legend of Zeus and the Phoenician princess after whom Europe is said to have been named, another East-West link, and Francesca Corrao. But, in the light of the continuing tragedy of Arab-Western relations he again links history with the present time, notably in the powerful 'Concerto, 11 September 2001 AD', written in September 2002, even predating the invasion of Iraq, debating the consequences and the inconsistencies involved:

Guantanamo / a prison run by capitalism in a communist island

and

No revenge without justice: thus spoke Aeschylus

Revenge first: thus spoke New York ¹⁶⁰

Adūnīs is a controversial figure. His socio-critical work and his writings on poetics can be criticised for lack of rigour¹⁶¹ but they have had the effect of raising issues. His poetry can be seen as daunting, and over-intellectual and some see it as irrelevant to the Arab cause, as he has avoided being a blatantly 'committed' poet and claims that the 'New Poetry' is 'not concerned with events' but deals with 'the most stable and permanent phenomena, those which do not lose their significance with the lapse of time, because great poetry looks to the future',¹⁶² and allows us 'to see the world in all its vitality, virginity and potential for renewal.' It also allows us to become one with the world. 'In the New Poem, we do not look for the image or the idea as an end in itself, but for the poetic world within it and its relation to the human being and his situation.'¹⁶³

However, some of his work is political in powerful but subtle ways, as it universalises and draws historical linkages, and his poetry is often very beautiful in its detail – works such as *In Celebration of Things Clear and Obscure* can be read simply as a string of exquisite words and images. It has been greatly enriched by his exile, much of it is about exiles and reflects the state of exile, and he uses a state of detachment or *barzakh* for existential exploration. He is very much a part of Modern Arabic Literature, both through his journal *Mawāqif* and his influence on others, and his poetry and other works have made a contribution to a 'high culture', which is a positive thing both in itself and as a matter of national and cultural self-respect. He has maintained a continuity with the Arab heritage and the plethora of references in his poems has the effect of stimulating exploration of Arab and other cultures and of linking Arabic literature with European¹⁶⁴ and *vice-versa*. Other poets have also produced challenging work, but he has been an inspiration to many, and his interaction with other cultures and high profile outside the Arab world has enhanced its image.

¹ A wide range of such techniques are discussed in Kamāl Abū Dīb, *Fī al-Shi'riyya*, Mu'assasat al-Abhath al-'Arabiyya, Beirut, 1987 and Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'al-Wāḥid wa-l-Muta'addid', *Fuṣūl*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Summer 1996

² 'masāfa al-tawattur', a central theme in Abū Dīb, *Fī al-Shi'riyya*, op. cit.

³ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Huwadha al-Kitābu' a study of Adūnīs's *al-Kitāb, al-Ḥayāt*, London, January 16, 17, 18 1996. Bottom of col. 5, 16 Jan article.

⁴ Zahra A. Hussein Ali, 'The Aesthetics of Transgression: Khalil Hawi's "The Sailor and the Dervish" and the European Grotesque', (Ḥāwī), in *JAL*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1997 p. 219

⁵ Discussed in Chapter 3. See Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Dirāsa bunawiyya fī shi'r al-Bayyāfī: Qamar Shīrāz', *Al-Aqlām*, Baghdad, Vol. XV, no. 11, August 1980, pp. 20-42

⁶ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Lughat al-Ghiyāb fī Qaṣīdat al-Ḥadātha', *Fuṣūl*, Vol. 8, No. 3-4, Cairo, 1989

⁷ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh' in *Jamāliyyāt al-Tajāwur aw Tashābuk al-Faḍā'āt al-'Ibdā'iyyah*, Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, Beirut, 1997, p. 83

⁸ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, (T&M), Brill, Leiden, 1977 pp. 569-72

⁹ Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey eds., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, (EAL), Routledge, London, 1998 pp. 429-30

¹⁰ Introduction by Munir Akash to Mahmoud Darwish, *The Adam of Two Edens*, ed. Munir Akash and Daniel Moore, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2000, p. 26

¹¹ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh' op. cit., p. 80

¹² Mahmoud Darwish, *La Palestine comme métaphore Entretiens*, translated by Elias Sanbar and Simone Bitton, Actes Sud, Arles, 1997, pp. 21-2

¹³ Ibid., p. 23

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 50

¹⁵ Mahmud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, tr. Ibrahim Muhawi, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995 *Dhākirat li-l-nisyan*, Dar al-'Awda, Beirut, 6th Edition, 1994 First published in *al-Karmel*, 1986

¹⁶ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, 'Arā ma 'arīd', Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1990

¹⁷ Mahmoud Darwish, *Entretiens*, op. cit., p. 41

¹⁸ Translations in *The Adam of Two Edens*, op. cit., and Mahmoud Darwish, *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, ed. Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché, University of California Press, 2003

¹⁹ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh', op. cit., p. 81 *Lughat al-tahwīm* is difficult to translate. *Tahwīm* means *humming, drowsiness*. Perhaps *incantatory language*.

²⁰ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Aḥad 'Ashara Kawkaban*, Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1992

²¹ Federico García Lorca, *Lorca Selected Poems*, Selected and translated by J.L. Gili, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1960, pp. 101-112

²² Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Limādha tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīdan*, Riad El-Rayyes, Beirut, 1995

²³ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Sarīr al-gharība*, Riad El-Rayyes, Beirut, 1999

²⁴ In Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Limādha tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīdan*, op. cit.

- ²⁵ Saïd K. Aburish, *Arafat from Defender to Dictator*, Bloomsbury, London, 1998, pp. 252-6
- ²⁶ Sinan Antoon, 'Mahmud Darwish's Allegorical Critique of Oslo', *Journal of Palestinian Studies* XXXI, no. 2 (Winter 2002), pp. 66-77
- ²⁷ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Ḥālat hiṣār*, Riad El-Rayyes Books, Beirut, 2002
- ²⁸ Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Jidāriyya*, Riad El-Rayyes Books, Beirut, 2000
- ²⁹ All three of Ṣāyigh's diwans are in Tawfīq Ṣāyigh, *al-'amāl al-kāmila (al-majmū'āt al-shi'riyya)*, (AK), Riad El-Rayyes Books, London, 1990
- ³⁰ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *An Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, (MPL), Columbia University Press, New York, 1992 p. 23
- ³¹ Issa J. Boullata, 'The Beleaguered Unicorn', (Unicorn), *JAL*, Vol. IV, 1973 pp. 83-4
- ³² Ṣāyigh AK p. 51, Issa J. Boullata, *Modern Arab Poets*, (MAP), Heineman, London, 1976 p.117
- ³³ Ṣāyigh, AK p. 97, Boullata, MAP p. 121
- ³⁴ Ṣāyigh, AK p. 61
- ³⁵ Ṣāyigh, AK. p. 57
- ³⁶ Ṣāyigh, AK p. 43, Boullata, MAP p. 119
- ³⁷ Quoted in Boullata, Unicorn, op. cit., p. 86
- ³⁸ Ibid., p. 76
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 78
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 79
- ⁴¹ In Tawfīq Ṣāyigh, *Mu'allaqa Tawfīq Ṣāyigh*, al-Mu'assasa al-Waṭaniyya lil-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, Beirut, 1963.
- ⁴² Jayyusi, MPL, op. cit., p. 23
- ⁴³ In Tawfīq Ṣāyigh, *Mu'allaqa Tawfīq Ṣāyigh*, op. cit. Hussein Ali gives this text and a translation in her article cited immediately below.
- ⁴⁴ Zahra A. Hussein Ali, 'The Aesthetics of Dissonance: Echoes of Nietzsche and Yeats in Tawfīq Ṣāyigh's Poetry', (Ṣāyigh), in *JAL*, Vol. XXX, 1999, pp. 1-54 p. 1
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 6
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 15-16
- ⁴⁷ Boullata, Unicorn, op. cit., p. 93
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 69-71
- ⁴⁹ Entry on Ḥāwī by Kamal Abu-Deeb in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey eds., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, (EAL), Routledge, London and New York, 1998, Vol. 1, p. 277
- ⁵⁰ Khalīl Ḥāwī, *Naked in Exile*, (Naked), Translated with Introduction by Adnan Haydar and Michael Beard, Three Continents Press, Washington DC, 1984 p. 3
- ⁵¹ EAL op. cit., p. 277
- ⁵² Boullata, MAP, op. cit., p. 31
- ⁵³ Hussein Ali, Ḥāwī, op. cit., p. 219

- ⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 219
- ⁵⁵ Jayyusi, *T&M*, op. cit., p. 678
- ⁵⁶ Hussein Ali, Ḥāwī, op. cit., p. 222
- ⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 223 (The article gives the Arabic text and Boullata's translation.)
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 233-4
- ⁵⁹ Hussein Ali suggests that this, and certain phrases, are in parody of Saint Athanasius' biography of Saint Anthony of Egypt, and sees the sailor as a degraded copy of Saint Anthony, Ibid., p. 228 ff.
- ⁶⁰ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, Burnt Norton I
- ⁶¹ Translation in John Mikhail Asfour, *When the Words Burn An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, 1945-1987*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2nd edition, 1992 pp. 168-70
- ⁶² Khalīl Ḥāwī, *al-nāy wa-l-rīḥ*, Dār al-Rihānī, Beirut, 1971 pp. 21-40, translation in Jayyusi, *MAP*, op. cit., pp. 252-6
- ⁶³ M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1975 p. 249
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 249
- ⁶⁵ *EAL*, op. cit., p. 277
- ⁶⁶ *Banīpal*, London Issue 2, June 1998, p. 31
- ⁶⁷ Entry on Adūnīs by Kamal Abu-Deeb in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey eds., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, op. cit., p. 59
- ⁶⁸ *Banīpal*, Issue 2, op. cit., p. 33
- ⁶⁹ In Adūnīs, *Kitāb al-taḥawwulāt wa-l-hijra fī-l-aqālīm al-nahār wa-l-layl*, Dār al-Ādāb, Beirut, 1965
- ⁷⁰ Abu-Deeb, *EAL* article op. cit., p.59
- ⁷¹ Ibid.
- ⁷² T.S. Eliot *Four Quartets* Little Gidding, III
- ⁷³ *Zeitliteratur*, (Supplement to *Die Zeit*, Hamburg), September 2004, p. 3
- ⁷⁴ Adūnīs, *al-Kitāb 'amsi al-makān al-āna*, Saqī, London, 1995, 1998, 2002
- ⁷⁵ Adonis, *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, Arabic texts plus translations and Afterword by Shawkat M. Toorawa, Syracuse University Press, 2004
- ⁷⁶ Abu-Deeb, *EAL* article op. cit., p.59
- ⁷⁷ Michel Camus, *Adonis le visionnaire*, Éditions du Rocher, Monaco, 2000 p. 9
- ⁷⁸ Adunis, *Sufism and Surrealism*, trans. Judith Cumberbatch, Sāqī, London, 2005 (Published in Arabic, 1995)
- ⁷⁹ Michel Camus, *Adonis le visionnaire*, op. cit.
- ⁸⁰ *Banīpal* 2, op. cit., p. 38
- ⁸¹ Henri Michaux, *Tent Posts*, Bilingual Edition, translation and Introduction by Lynn Hoggard, Green Integer, Copenhagen, 1997 Introduction pp. 5-6
- ⁸² All mentioned in Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun a Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi*, Fine Books Ltd., London, 1978.

- ⁸³ Marcel Raymond, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism*, tr. S.I. Lockerbie, Methuen, London, 1970 (first published in French *De Baudelaire au Surrealism* in 1933) p. 21
- ⁸⁴ 'Singular in the Form of the Plural', in Boullata, *MAP*, op. cit., p. 68
- ⁸⁵ Adūnīs, *al-Kitāb* op. cit., Vol. II, p. 53
- ⁸⁶ Adonis, *Célébrations*, Arabic text (1988) with French translation by Anne Wade Minkowski, Éditions de la différence, Paris, 1991 p. 159
- ⁸⁷ Adūnīs, *'awwala al-jasadi ākhira al-baḥr*, Saqi, London, 2003 p. 175
- ⁸⁸ Camus, op. cit., pp. 12 and 15 (quoting Roberto Juarroz)
- ⁸⁹ Quoted in Camus, op. cit., p. 18
- ⁹⁰ Adūnīs, *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, op. cit., p. 185
- ⁹¹ Hishām Sharābi suggests that 'understanding Adonis's poetry may be greatly advanced by the help of two radically different (western) texts: Heidegger's essay, "What are Poets for?" and Freud's paper, "On Dreams". *Banipal* 2, op. cit., p. 32
- ⁹² *Banipal* 2, op. cit., p. 34
- ⁹³ Asfour uses this term *When the Words Burn*, op. cit., p. 41
- ⁹⁴ Atif Y. Faddul, *The Poetics of T.S. Eliot and Adunis*, Al-Hamra Publishers, Beirut, 1992 p. 102
- ⁹⁵ *EAL*, op. cit., p. 58
- ⁹⁶ Translation in Boullata, *MAP*, pp. 57-62 Adūnīs, *al-'amāl al-shi'riyya al-kāmila*, (AK), Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1988 pp. 153-73 is a somewhat different Arabic version
- ⁹⁷ Adunis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, tr. Catherine Cobham, Saqi, London, 1990 originally published as *Introduction à la poésie arabe*, Sindbad, Paris, 1985, pp. 80-1
- ⁹⁸ Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'The Perplexity of the All-Knowing', (Perplexity) in Issa J. Boullata ed., *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, Three Continents Press, Washington DC, 1980 p. 319
- ⁹⁹ The text used is in Adūnīs, *al-'amāl al-shi'riyya al-kāmila*, (AK), Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1988 2 Vols. Vol. I, pp. 245-430
- ¹⁰⁰ Adūnīs, *Dīwān al-Shi'r al-'Arabī*, Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1964-8, 3 volumes
- ¹⁰¹ Adūnīs, *AK*, op. cit. Vol I, pp. 175 and 189
- ¹⁰² Francesca M. Corrao, *Nella pietra e nel vento*, Mesogea, Messina, 1999, p. 15
- ¹⁰³ He cites them as influences in his *Banipal* interview, op. cit., and the chapter 'Rimbaud, Orientalist, Sufi' in *Sufism and Surrealism* op. cit. shows his deep interest in Rimbaud as a bridge between West and East
- ¹⁰⁴ c.f. Michel Rifaterre, 'Generating Lautréamont's Text', in Harari, Josué V., ed., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, Methuen, London, 1980 (First published by Cornell University Press, New York, 1979)
- ¹⁰⁵ Text and translation in Abdullah al-Udhari, *Victims of a Map*, Saqi, London, 1986 pp. 106-109
- ¹⁰⁶ Lautréamont; *Maldoror & The Complete Works of the Comte de Lautréamont*, trans. Alexis Lykiard, Exact Change, Cambridge MA, 1994 Introduction p. 4
- ¹⁰⁷ Adūnīs, *Dīwān al-Shi'r al-'Arabī*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 520 (He merits 20 extracts, pp. 472-6)
- ¹⁰⁸ Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1989 p. 2
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48

- ¹¹⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger, Anvil Press, London, 2004 pp. 158/9 and 474/5
- ¹¹¹ Jeremy Lawrance, 'Still readable', *TLS*, 22 April 2005, pp. 6-7
- ¹¹² Adūnīs, *AK*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 298
- ¹¹³ Adunis, *Sufism and Surrealism*, op. cit., pp. 62-3
- ¹¹⁴ Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar, 'Making Mihyar: the Familiarization of Adunis's Knight of Strange Words' pp. 81-2 in *Literature East & West* 4, nos. 1-2 (1988): *Critical Pilgrimages: Studies in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. Fedwa Malti-Douglas, pp. 79-88
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82
- ¹¹⁶ Schimmel, op. cit., p. 75
- ¹¹⁷ Beard and Haydar op. cit., p. 84
- ¹¹⁸ St. John Perse, *Anabasis*, tr. T.S. Eliot, Faber and Faber 1931, revised 1959 Eliot's Preface p. 10
- ¹¹⁹ Shawqat M. Toorawa, Afterword, p. 189 in Adonis, *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, op. cit.
- ¹²⁰ Beard and Haydar op. cit., pp. 84-5
- ¹²¹ Adūnīs *AK*, op. cit. Vol I, pp. 417, 418, 429, 430 This is the ending of *Mihyār* in the 1988 *dīwān* cited. The poem ends differently in Anne Wade Minkowski's translation in *Chants de Mihyar le Damascène*, Gallimard, 2002. Adūnīs does revise his poems -- in Adonis, *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, op. cit., Shawqat Toorawa says that the 1996 *dīwān* is definitive.
- ¹²² Adonis, *Célébrations*, op. cit., pp. 208/9
- ¹²³ Beard and Haydar, op. cit., p. 87
- ¹²⁴ *Banīpāl*, op. cit., Issue 2, p. 38
- ¹²⁵ Kamal Abu-Deeb, *Perplexity*, op. cit., p. 310
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-310 This also applies to later work e.g. *Célébrations*. op. cit.
- ¹²⁷ Adunis, *Sufism and Surrealism*, op. cit., p. 95
- ¹²⁸ Ḥātīm al-Šakr, 'wajhu Narsīs fī miyāhi al-shi'ri qaṣā'idu al-marāyā fī tajribati 'Adūnīs', *Fusūl*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Autumn 1997 pp. 24-40
- ¹²⁹ Adūnīs, *AK* op. cit., Vol. I p. 329, Translation Asfour, op. cit., p. 179
- ¹³⁰ From *hadhā huwa 'ismī* in Adonis, *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, op. cit., pp. 64/5
- ¹³¹ Abdullah al-Udhari, *Victims of a Map*, op. cit. pp. 91, 95, 129
- ¹³² Adunis, *Sufism and Surrealism*, op. cit., p. 82
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 63-4
- ¹³⁴ Adūnīs, *AK* op. cit., Vol II, p. 219 – here *ḥulm* does not appear in the title
- ¹³⁵ Kamāl Abū Dīb, *Jadāliyyāt al-khafā' wa-l-tajallī*, Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, Beirut, 1979 Chapter 6
- ¹³⁶ Camus, op. cit., p. 63
- ¹³⁷ Adūnīs, *AK* op. cit., Vol. I, p. 458. Translation in Asfour, op. cit., p. 183
- ¹³⁸ Adūnīs, *AK* op. cit., Vol I, p. 461. French translation in Adonis, *Le livre de la migration*, trans. Martine Faideau, Luneau Ascot, 27002 Evreux, France, 1982

- ¹³⁹ Both in Adonis, *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, op. cit.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 55, and pp. 69, 81, 89
- ¹⁴¹ Adūnīs, *Kitāb al-Ḥiṣār*, Dār al-‘Awda, Beirut, 1985 Translations in Abdullah al-Udhari, *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1986 pp. 64-75, and al-Udhari, *Victims of a Map*, op. cit., pp. 134-165
- ¹⁴² Adonis, *Les Résonances Les Origines*, trans. Chawki Addelamir et Serge Sautreau, Nulle Part, Périgueux, France, 1984 (with Arabic text) Original: *al-muṭābaqāt wa-l-awā’il*, Dār al-Ādāb, Beirut, 1980 and Adonis, *Célébrations*, op. cit., Original: *Iḥtifā’an bi-l-ashyā’ al-ghāmiḍa al-wāḍiḥa*, Dār al-Ādāb, Beirut, 1988
- ¹⁴³ Eliot *Anabasis* introduction, op. cit., p. 10
- ¹⁴⁴ Pablo Neruda, *Elemental Odes*, selected and translated by Margaret Sayers Peden, Libris, London, 1991 (From *Odas elementales* (1954), *Nuevas odas elementales* (1957), and *Tercer libro de las odas* (1959))
- ¹⁴⁵ In Octavio Paz, *The Collected Works 1957-87*, ed. Eliot Weinberger, Carcanet, Manchester, 1988
- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid., jacket blurb
- ¹⁴⁷ Kamāl Abū Dīb, ‘Huwadha al-Kitābu’, op. cit., 16 January 1996 article, col. 2
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 16 January 1996 article, col. 3
- ¹⁴⁹ *EAL*, op. cit., p. 560
- ¹⁵⁰ *Banipal* op. cit., Issue 2, p. 30
- ¹⁵¹ *EAL*, op. cit., p. 59
- ¹⁵² Perhaps there is also an influence from OULIPO which was set up in Paris in 1960 where writers imposed various mathematical or other constraints on their work. Adūnīs was in Paris from 1960-61 See Harry Mathews & Alastair Brotchie eds., *OULIPO Compendium*, Atlas Press, London, 1998 and 2005
- ¹⁵³ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver, Picador, London, 1979 Italian: *Le città invisibile*, Einaudi, 1972 p. 108 (Calvino was involved with OULIPO)
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 69
- ¹⁵⁵ Adūnīs, *al-kitāb*, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 39, 83 etc.
- ¹⁵⁶ Kamāl Abū Dīb, ‘Huwadha al-Kitābu’, op. cit., 16 January 1996 article, col. 2
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 16 January article, cols 1-2
- ¹⁵⁸ c.f. the wide range of contributors and photographs in Institut du monde arabe, *Adonis, Un poète dans le monde d’aujourd’hui 1950-2000*, Institut du monde arabe, Paris, 2000, the book of an exhibition of the same name at the Institut du monde arab 2000-01
- ¹⁵⁹ Adūnīs, *tanabba’ ayyuhā al-a’mā*, Saqi, London, 2003
- ¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 125 and 127
- ¹⁶¹ Mounah A. Khouri, ‘A Critique of Adonis’s Perspectives on Arabic Literature and Culture’ in *Studies in Contemporary Arabic Poetry and Criticism*, Jahan Book Co., Piedmont CA, 1987 and Faddul op. cit.
- ¹⁶² Adūnīs, *Zamān al-shi’r*, Dār al-‘Awda, Beirut, 1972 p. 10, quoted by Faddul, op. cit., p. 147
- ¹⁶³ Adūnīs, *Zamān al-shi’r*, op. cit., p. 12, quoted by Faddul, op. cit., p. 148
- ¹⁶⁴ This is a slightly inaccurate term but ‘the West’ or ‘the world’ are too broad

Conclusion

Arab poets of the last 60 years have lived against a background of rapid political, social and economic changes, and in confrontation with the forces of globalisation and modernisation, and some have suffered exile – either as part of the displacement or exile of Palestinians or as exiles from the various post independence regimes of the Arab world. They have had a great deal to write about, as demonstrated in the range of the poems analysed above. Their achievements owe a great deal both to the rich Arab heritage, from which they have absorbed a love of poetry and a gift for imagery and metaphor which runs deep in Arab poetry and have adapted characters and themes and poetic techniques, and to predecessors who revived that heritage after centuries of stagnation and then began to alter the functions of poetry, to absorb aspects of European poetry, and to experiment with subject matter and form. Several important Arab poets, before 1948 as well as after, have been exiled in some way, and exile and the causes of exile have had considerable effects on their poetry.

Chapter 1 discussed various facets of exile and some recent theoretical work on exile literature relating to other literatures and its relevance to Modern Arab Poetry, and several important principles were noted. There are gradations between states of exile that might be regarded as polarities and these facets of exile and aspects such as nationalism, globalisation, modernisation, and language exist in individual writers in a state of dialectic and flux. Exile may have positive as well as negative effects, and it can be studied both synchronically and diachronically, and there is a tendency in some exiled writers to participate in both transnational and transtemporal networks. Also, modern exiles live in a time when national boundaries are being eroded by the forces of globalisation, and 'postmodern' systems of thought and communication are increasingly fragmented. Writers are both shaped by, and self-consciously interact with, these forces, and with literary trends such as surrealism, and they sometimes display influences or parallel developments with other genres such as painting. They 'write back' to various centres – of former or current colonisers, to the rulers and political systems of their own countries, and to the anonymous centre of globalisation. They participate in and create networks, become hybrids, sometimes with considerable 'hybrid vigour', and contribute to hybrid cultures, always a factor of humanity, although some rulers try to impose monolithic cultures and write others out of history. Changes in the form and subject matter of poetry and literary creativity in other literatures were also discussed, with some comparisons to Arab literature.

The predecessors of the poets considered in the thesis, from the late 19th century up to 1948 compressed about two centuries of European developments into seven or eight decades. Poetry was of necessity the first literary form of resistance to the Ottomans and to effective British colonialism in Egypt in the late 19th century because at the time the novel and drama had not developed in the Arab world. 'Neo-Classicists', perhaps inspired by the efforts of European 'Orientalists', realised that the classical heritage would be a more effective medium than Arab poetry in its then current state of 'stagnation' after centuries of Ottoman rule. This generated a sense of pride in the heritage and its achievements, and poems by al-Bārūdī, Shawqī, and Ḥāfīz

Ibrāhīm were highly effective, but later poets still felt restricted in expressing what they wished to say by the rigid meters and rhymes of Arabic poetry and began to experiment. The 'Romantic' phase, as argued in Chapter 1, was a necessary intermediate phase in the development of modern Arabic poetry because Romantic poetry could be more easily assimilated as it was 'spontaneous and emotional' and did not rely on 'the peculiar rhetorical features of a language, particularly its formal features', and because it was thought of as being rebellious and anti-classical¹.

The Dīwān and Apollo groups in Egypt and the Lebanese and Syrian *Mahjar* poets who had emigrated to North and South America were influenced by the European Romantics, but the latter in particular also adopted other influences and made important experiments in form and content. Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān, the leader of the New York *Mahjar* poets is acknowledged as an important influence by Adūnīs, the leading Arab modernist. The romantic phase in Arabic poetry was compressed in comparison with the European one because of the need to express modern Arab problems and because the mere existence of modernist poetry gave some of those who encountered it the impetus to try to understand it and to experiment.

The great breakthrough in modern Arabic poetry was the formulation of the *taf'īla* Movement in 1947, attributed to al-Sayyāb and Nāzik al-Malā'ika although there had been earlier attempts in the same vein, and al-Sayyāb's poems of the 1940s and 1950s, especially the much loved *Unshūdat al-maṭar*, helped to popularise it. As suggested in Chapter 1, this development was a reaction to its time, comparable to 'when [in England] the couplet came, toward the end of the eighteenth century, to seem a restrictive and over-intellectual manner of writing poetry'² and to the 'dismantling' of the French 12 syllable alexandrine inaugurated by Victor Hugo and continued by the work of Symbolist poets such as Rimbaud and Mallarmé.³

The poetry analysed above covers a wide range, sometimes in the *oeuvres* of individual poets, and reflects their experience of exile - directly or indirectly - and the current problems of the Arab world, as well as asserting the strength of Arab culture. It also demonstrates some of the characteristics of exile literature that have been observed in other cultures, and linkages with other cultures as well as with the Arab heritage.

The poetry discussed in Chapter 2 'Depictions of Exile', mostly by Palestinians, covers many aspects of the process and state of exile. It is usually straightforward and fairly realistic, but often very subtle. There are poems about going into exile, experienced by Palestinians during the 1948 establishment of Israel, after the 1967 June War, and during the 1982 expulsion of PLO forces from Beirut, ranging from the very simple and personal such as in Darwīsh's poem 'My Father' and Walīd Khāzīndār's subtle 'Half the Night' about a family about to be dispossessed from the viewpoint of a child, to groups in Darwīsh's 'The Earth is Closing in on Us' and Maī Ṣāyigh's defiant poem 'Departure', as well as in Aḥmad Daḥbūr's poem beginning with the powerful metaphor '*The shaken sky-sieve sprinkles delicate death*' but ending in a man and a pregnant woman surveying an *atlāl* in a refugee camp. Adūnīs says goodbye to the Palestinians in 'The Desert (The Diary of Beirut Under Siege, 1982)' and gives an example of an individual, political exile escaping death at the beginning of 'Days of the Hawk'. Palestinian 'Personal Account'

literature also gives very emotive accounts of the problems of transporting families in 1948. There are poems about wandering such as Jabrā's 'In the Deserts of Exile' and Zakariyyā Muḥammad's ominous 'Emigration', and rapid dispersal in Muḥammad al-As'ad's breathless accumulation of fleeting images in 'Personal Account'. There are poems about the indignities of demands for passports and for Identity Cards, notably in Darwīsh's angry 'Identity Card', and of existing in limbo – Darwīsh's metaphor of 'Athens Airport' and Daḥbūr's account of life in refugee camps. There are poems about resistance and martyrdom by activists such as Kamāl Nāṣir (assassinated in 1973) and Mai Ṣāyigh, and about being observed and pursued such as the poems about 'Izzidīn al-Qalaq (assassinated in 1978) by Darwīsh and Daḥbūr and Khāzindār's movingly paranoid poems 'Belonging' and 'Houses'. Exile also generates divisions and guilt: Jayyusi's moving poem 'Without Roots' contrasts the pain of dispossession with the guilt of one who has settled elsewhere, and '... *the diploma of a son / framed in gold, coated with dust*' in Murīd Barghūthi's 'The Tribes' also indicates a disappointed or divided family – initial pride in the son's diploma turns bitter if he cannot get employment commensurate with his qualifications, if he has had to go abroad and abandon his family, or perhaps if he has become an activist.

Guilt and divisions are not the only tensions of the Palestinian situation. There is the dialectic between hope, the corrosiveness of false hope, and despair; and between hero and victim. Tawfīq Ṣāyigh saw the Palestinians as victims at a very early stage, but heroic poetry lasted for some decades, particularly in the work of activists such as Kamāl Nāṣir. There is tension between resistance and activism and personal danger and the pain and damage caused to others, and that these are of little effect, other than maintaining the cause, and make the situation of most Palestinians worse. Mai Ṣāyigh's 'Lament' is cruel perhaps in discounting 'the tear hesitat[ing]' in her cousin's eye, and sometimes propaganda comes close to falsehood – Mai Ghoussoub's account of Umm 'Ali, made into a heroine by Mai Ṣāyigh, is tragic in telling the story of a victim, a servant girl abused by the family for whom she worked, who became a fighter out of inchoate rage and perhaps a desire to belong, daring to expose the mixed motives of some fighters. This is also implied by Darwīsh's resistance fighter in 'Athens Airport' who cannot imagine any other life.

Some continue to assert the Palestinian cause by maintaining an uncomfortable presence in Israel or the occupied West Bank, Shehadeh's *ṣumūd*, rather than emigrating to a more comfortable life, and they and those forced to remain in refugee camps are a constant, if ignored, reminder of the Palestinian situation. They are the victims of victims, although innocent of any responsibility – a complex dialectic, which is rarely touched on in poetry – but a reproach to the world in being pitted against a major military power which goes virtually unchecked. Some of Maḥmūd Darwīsh's work analysed in the thesis subtly reflect this. 'Identity Card' (1964) demonstrates brutal occupation and indignity; 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies' (1967) shows the power of the occupier, its state of denial, and its self-brutalisation, but also depicts long Palestinian connection with the land; 'A Picture on the Wall' (1969) depicts fear of military power and of obliteration; *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1986) depicts overwhelming power, tension between Israelis and Palestinians as people in the same land, is a reproach to the world for ignoring the Palestinians and makes comparisons with the Crusades, where the Muslim Saladin

behaved far more honourably than the Crusaders; 'A non-Linguistic Dialogue with Imru' al-Qays' (1995) expresses Darwīsh's understanding of the Oslo Accord as an undermining of Palestinian aspirations, and of the media event on the White House lawn as a ghastly farce; and 'The Speech of the Red Indian' (1992) compares the Palestinians to the displaced Red Indians, so very explicitly links Israel and its sponsor the United States.

There are also tensions with other Arab countries. From 1948-1967 Jordan and Egypt administered the West Bank and Gaza and some Palestinians suffered at their hands, as reflected in the work of Kamāl Nāṣir and Mu'in Bsīsū. Several states are affected by Palestinian resistance and the burden of refugees. Some may have their own quarrels with Israel, such as Syria's consistent demand for return of the Golan Heights, or may make accommodations, such as Egypt's peace treaty, and all are subject to external as well as internal pressures and may pursue their own interests. This is a complex dialectic in terms of McClelland's concepts of transnationalism and globalisation. The 'Arab World' is an amorphous concept that benefits many exiles but is ambivalent globally. Some Israelis argue that Israel is a small country and that the Arab states, as Arabs, should absorb the Palestinians, but the Arab states are highly justified in seeing Israel as an outpost of globalisation and US Imperialism, as well as the oppressor of fellow Arabs. There are also tensions in how far writers should be political. Ḥanān Ashrāwī took the very black and white view in her 1978 article discussed in Chapter 2 that poets had a duty to be committed. Some poets espouse commitment, often to the detriment of their poetry, others resist it, but many are more subtle. Although writing beautiful poetry, Maḥmūd Darwīsh has conveyed the Palestine situation to the rest of the world. It is sad that he was sometimes criticised for writing poetry that was apolitical, such as *The Bed of the Stranger*, and that he was probably inhibited in his poetic development by such pressures.

Some apparently simple poems employ innovative poetics, for example Darwīsh's imperfect repetitions in 'A Soft Rain in a Distant Autumn', al-As'ad's Imagism and Vorticism, and Khāzindār's intense portrayals of single moments using novelistic techniques such as 'stream of consciousness' and 'indirect free style'. The poems are fairly dissimilar, even with the same subject e.g. 'Izzidīn al-Qalaq or the exit from Beirut. This is perhaps because, certainly up to 1967, individual Palestinians were isolated and not connected to the Arab mainstream. Creative people evolved individual poetics, even with limited contacts and experience. One aspect is that the exiled group in poems feels depressing, as if being exiled together can only lead to obliteration, as in Jabrā and Zakariyyā Muḥammad's poems, or smothers individuality. Mai Ṣāyigh and Ahmad Daḥbūr's poems about leaving Beirut both start off referring to a group, but quickly move to the family or couple in trying to generate hope in the future. Darwīsh's 'Athens Airport' is frightening – the people are each depicted in terms of only one aspect of identity, as Amin Maalouf says a dangerous and unnatural state, and they are imprisoned together, barely connecting with each other, except for the frustrated couple unable to consummate their marriage.

Frequent references to plants and trees also underline the loss of land and are used as symbols. References to family, or tribe in some cases, makes suffering more graphic, and emphasises the

fact that the Palestinians are a people in exile, and familial links are also of importance in asserting a claim to lost lands, as demonstrated in some of the poems discussed in terms of the 'Palestinian Land Rhetoric' in Chapter 3.

The first two sections of Chapter 3 'Lost Lands and the Search for Affiliation' discussed the work of poets who have a common theme in loss of land, although they deal with this in different ways, and poets who are members of the fairly loose *Tammūzī* group that generated a definable phase in Arabic poetry. There are nostalgic poems about land, but the poems discussed are largely part of the 'Palestinian Land Rhetoric', the movement from the unselfconscious rootedness of generations of peasants to making a claim to land in opposition to those who have taken it. Many poets use the metaphor of the lover which while 'declarative and strongly worded is . . . vulnerable and desperate . . . The land as female is the object of a wrestling match, and in its objectification it becomes in some sense up for grabs.'⁴ The familial, as mentioned above, is perhaps more powerful, and is used to great effect in Darwīsh's 'Identity Card' and in Jayyusi's 'Without Roots' in addition to the other aspects of those two poems discussed in Chapter 2. Darwīsh's 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies' also uses the Land Rhetoric in terms of a murdered peasant whose blood mingles with the soil, and portrays the opposite view of Israel's attempts to generate a discourse of ownership, and of Israelis caught up in a situation from which many of them are sheltered or are in a state of denial. Other aspects are misplaced heroism, trying to deny that the Palestinians are victims, becoming caught up in symbols, eventually with numbing effect, and *ṣumūd*, the maintenance of the Palestinian presence⁵. There is also the notion of 'the closed circuit' – of Palestinians caught up in a seemingly endless cycle of misery as depicted symbolically in Samīḥ al-Qāsim's 'The Boring Orbit', and of potentially great poets being trapped by a single issue, denying possibly greater achievements.⁶ Darwīsh's poem 'The Speech of the Red Indian' moves the Israel-Palestine situation to an allegorical level – it is hauntingly beautiful, but it 'writes back' speaking of genocide, land and the technological superiority that does not value the land and damages it, tapping into current ecological issues and drawing a telling parallel with Israel's supporter, the United States, and its treatment of indigenous Americans.

The *Tammūzī* poets constitute a definable phase and important focus in post-1948 poetry and had a presence in Baghdad, Beirut and Cairo and used modernist forms – drawing on the *taf'īla* movement and on experiments in prose poetry. The prime ideal of the movement was the hope of an Arab renaissance following the disasters of recent history, but two poems of al-Sayyāb were analysed in terms of land, exile – from countryside and country – and their poetic techniques, and Jabrā's 'Tammūz in the City', is primarily a poem of exile, but holding out hope for both exiles and city dwellers. Both al-Sayyāb and Jabrā have explicit intertextualities with T.S. Eliot, one of the inspirations for the movement, but Adūnīs's poem 'Resurrection and Ashes' is closer to the ideas of Anṭūn Sa'āda, using the phoenix, another Middle Eastern myth, and mentioning ancient Phoenician cities. In contrast to cycles of birth and regrowth/regeneration, Muḥammad al-As'ad writes powerful poems about the loss of cycles of nature, with dispersal from native land and living in cities where the cycles of nature are not as apparent, a constant theme in his work, which was also touched on in Chapter 2.

'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī is discussed at length in the final section of Chapter 3. His work covers a wide range – early Romantic poetry, committed poetry, simple depictions of his early exile, and later complex and fragmented poems with a huge range of countries, themes and personae linked by a persistent form and recurring characters and themes. He uses a range of poetic techniques – he was an early proponent of the *taf'īla* movement, shows influence from Eliot, uses poetic masks and has also used dedications in complex ways. He has created a distinctive 'musical' form, and uses a huge range of fine scale poetic techniques.⁷ His 1970s poetry reflects the burden of experience of an exile, and the fragmentation and multiplicity of the world. He attempts to forge unity through form, connections, recurring characters, and through the power of love, but his work epitomises fragmentation and a sense of the infinite connections that are possible in a world where totalising discourses have collapsed and have been replaced by numerous overlapping networks.⁸ The 1970 poems were compared to ideas of collage – they are in any case often highly pictorial, and have intertextualities with painters and writers, and with music. They are also perhaps refuges, and are certainly cultural edifices.

Chapter 4 'New Horizons and New Poetics' focuses on poets who have developed distinctive poetics and have engaged in the dialectic of East and West in complex ways. It demonstrates the importance of Beirut, both as the most important cosmopolitan, intellectual centre of the Arab world and, in its terrible history from the late 1970s, a microcosm of that world. Maḥmūd Darwīsh has been engulfed by the history of Palestine, and the form of his work sometimes reflects this containment in the repetitions and 'cocoon' like structure of a 'typical Darwīsh poem',⁹ but he has written about the Palestinian cause in distinctive ways and has incorporated other cultures and histories into his work. Tawfīq Ṣāyigh, Khalīl Ḥāwī, and Adūnīs represent the intellectual, philosophical and highly modernist strand of modern Arabic poetry, incorporating the effects of study abroad, and Ṣāyigh and Ḥāwī are tragic figures profoundly damaged by their exile and interaction with the West.

Ṣāyigh has been described as the first 'true modernist' in Arabic poetry in proving 'the absolute validity of prose-poetry for Arabic, despite the voices raised against it during the fifties and sixties',¹⁰ and in recognising the status of the Arab as victim rather than hero 'revealing the alienation and suffering imposed by contemporary evil, internal and external, on the life of the individual.'¹¹

Ḥāwī has been described as being 'together with Adūnīs . . . the poet who has most given modern Arabic poetry its dimension of intellectual richness and philosophical contemplation and depth'.¹² His poems engage in a dialectic with western ideas which demolishes simple dualities, through sustained metaphors throughout individual poems, often through a dialogue, and through his 'creative espousal of the grotesque'¹³ notably in poems such as 'The Sailor and the Dervish' analysed above. Also analysed is 'The Flute and the Wind' which is a moving poem of exile, as well as of the intellectual dilemmas of the modern educated Arab.

Adūnīs is a highly cosmopolitan figure who has lived in exile for most of his life, mainly from choice, and his work, although regarded as abstract and difficult by many, can be regarded as the

culmination of modern Arabic poetry, perhaps at the cost of an interior isolation and the fear of losing his Arabness which is implicit in his late work *al-Kitāb*, as discussed above. He is almost a French poet, as many comments about French poetry from Baudelaire through Symbolism to Surrealism could be applied to him, for example:

. . . Mallarmé's poetics logically implies the continuous disregard of facts and objects, in favour of the allusion, the foam, star, and smoke, that symbolise the astral body which the "pure" poem must be.¹⁴

"Passionately in love with passion and coldly determined to find the means of expressing it," thus Baudelaire defined Delacroix, and defined himself at the same time . . .¹⁵

Several correspondences with Surrealism were pointed out in Chapter 4 and there are undoubtedly borrowings, such as the 'land-mine of civilisation', but many arise from interaction and conscious fusion with Sufism.

Adūnīs has employed a wide range of poetics, ranging through poetic masks, the symbol of the mirror, the 'language of absence', and experiments in form at all levels from the very detailed to entire poems, sets of poems and the three volume collection *al-Kitāb*. He also experiments in many facets of life in his poetry, portraying the poet as mystic, destroyer and creator, god, hero, lover and victim. He has reflected the problems of the Arab world, notably in overtly political poems such as 'An Introduction to the History of the Petty Kings' and 'A Grave for New York', and in depicting the misery of war and the destruction of Beirut in *Kitāb al-Ḥiṣār*, and *al-Kitāb* is an account of the 'tragedies and disasters'¹⁶ of Arab history. He has created a powerful synthesis of Arab and European culture in his work, demonstrated above in the complex web of intertextualities in *Mihyār*, and in his drawing upon many of the tenets of the French Surrealists, and has asserted the glories of Arab culture and history in both his poetic and critical works, as well as in his anthology of Arabic poetry¹⁷ which promotes some suppressed parts of the heritage. He has tried to change the Arab world, and has certainly had a profound effect on modern Arabic poetry and has raised consciousness of it throughout the world as a member of the international *avant garde*.

Threads of suffering and politics are woven throughout the works discussed, but except in some committed poetry they are usually expressed objectively and allusively, albeit affectingly, as in Darwīsh's metaphor of flowers of blood and his depiction of an ordinary Israeli soldier in 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies', his allegories of Palestinian dispossession in '*Aḥad 'ashara kaukaban*', and in 'Izzidīn al-Qalaq's half-joking references to his own death in both Darwīsh's and Aḥmad Daḥbūr's poems. These two poems perhaps constitute modern versions of the *rithā'*. In being polythematic they blur the focus on the person being mourned, and he is depicted as a victim rather than a hero, but also as a complex figure who raises many issues and is objective, even humorous, about the danger he is in. He is a 'complete man' who is both more human and more interesting than a hero. In 'I Do Not Renounce Madness' Aḥmad Daḥbūr repeatedly asks 'Who is

the enemy?’ but never answers the question explicitly, relying upon synecdoche, forcing the reader to extrapolate as well as to contemplate all aspects of the situation of those portrayed in the poem:

*Who is the enemy?
The shaken sky-sieve sprinkles instant death
Who is the enemy?
The sea is treacherous
the sky is treacherous*

The sky and the sea are made dangerous by the human agency of aircraft and gunships, but they might also be dangerous in themselves as the exiles are driven from *terra firma*.

Psychological pain is expressed subtly, and the accounts of the siege of Beirut by Darwīsh and of ten years in prison by Abdellatif Laābi, discussed in Chapter 1, demonstrate that

[t]he essential truth of experience . . . can only be communicated by literary writing.¹⁸

There are also expressions of fear – of military force in the poems of the Beirut siege and some of Darwīsh’s poetry; of being observed and pursued; and of oblivion, of being adrift, without any stable connections or of absorption and permanent loss of national or Arab identity – the Palestinians of never returning to their country, Adūnīs of becoming a Frenchman.

There is also in much of the poetry, which is almost exclusively secular, a drive towards modernisation. This can be seen in the modernism of the poetry and in the explicit desire for change and modernisation in the work of Jabrā (mainly his novels and criticism), Barghūthi’s *I Saw Ramallah*, and in the work of Tawfīq Ṣāyigh and Khalīl Ḥāwī. There are scientific metaphors such as Jabrā’s ‘closed circuit’, al-Qāsim’s ‘boring orbit’, and al-Bayyātī’s ‘febrile revolution of the planets’ and his space traveller in ‘Portrait of the Lover of the Great Bear’, and scientific references in the poetry of Muḥammad al-As‘ad and others as well as a frequent sense of movement in space and time. The power of modern communications figures in Bsīsū’s ‘Exception’, and Darwīsh’s ‘video event’ on the White House lawn and talking of feeling as if he were taking part in a video of life in Beirut during the Siege and the joys of watching football on television. Darwīsh’s references to mechanised war and exploitation, and tapping into the modern ecological discourse in ‘The Speech of the Red Indian’ are also very modern. And Adūnīs, in his critical writings, his overtly political poems in the collection *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, his *Dīwān al-Shi‘r al-‘Arabī*, his translations of modernist poets, and in his own poetic modernism, aims to change Arab society as well as Arab poetry.

There is an innate gift for metaphor, symbols and imagery inherent in the Arab heritage, as well as an incipient modernism in some Abbasid poetry and criticism pointed out by critics such as Adūnīs and Abu-Deeb, which has perhaps made some poets, and ‘idiocultures’, innately receptive to European modernism and equipped to interact with it rather than to simply imitate. There is frequent use of old images such as horses, swords and black eyes and old tropes such as the *aḥlāl* reinterpreted in new ways, and there are highly original new metaphors – threads, flowers of

blood; Adūnīs's 'his roots are in his footsteps' from the first *mazmūr* of *Miḥyār* and '... the sighs of our ancestors are an abundant rain, a cryptic rain, and our footsteps are their domain' in *al-Kitāb*¹⁹; 'the strange day in which villagers cracked out of their nut shells for the first day in their lives' in Muḥammad al-As'ad's *Children of the Dew*²⁰ a touching connection to nature and the unknowing vulnerability of something that seems well protected or permanent but can be instantly violated by human agency, and Daḥbūr's '[t]he shaken sky-sieve sprinkles instant death',²¹ both of which al-Jurjānī might have liked. There are elements of classical poetics such as paronomasia and the metrical feet of the restrictive old Arab metres but the latter are liberated and used in more flexible and varied patterns in *taf'īla* poetry. There are many instances of poetic modernity with experiments in form at all levels, and symbolism and surrealism. Ḥāwī's use of the grotesque, in extended metaphors in some poems, is surreal, and he, Tawfiq Ṣāyigh, and Adūnīs aim to affect modes of thought and 'make others see', a Surrealist aim.

Some of the events that have affected Europe and also Latin America were discussed in Chapter 1, and it was clear that there are parallel reactions to different events. Like most modern Arabic poetry 20th century war poetry was mainly anti-war poetry, dealing with the victims. There is French and Russian poetry reflecting occupation which might be compared to some Palestinian poetry of occupation; several Arab poets identify with the Spanish Republican poets, especially Lorca; and al-Bayyāt's interaction with the work of his friend Rafael Alberti is also mentioned in the thesis. That they were socialist and on the losing side was part of their appeal to committed Arab poets. In European war poetry there is a sense of more or less equal opponents, but Palestinians and Lebanese have suffered displacement and occupation, and have been on the receiving end of mechanised war. There are common features between fascist regimes in Spain and Latin American and various Arab regimes from which writers were exiled and to which they have 'written back'. Fighting overwhelming forces is reflected in the poetry of the 1982 siege of Beirut, and fear of overwhelming forces is often reflected in the poetry of Maḥmūd Darwīsh, especially in 'A Picture on the Wall', which evokes the effects of the Hiroshima A-bomb, and 'The Speech of the Red Indian'. The relative powerlessness of Arab forces, despite the vast amounts of oil revenues spent on sophisticated military hardware in some cases, is emphasised in Nizār Qabbānī's 'Footnotes to the Book of the Setback'.²² Social poetry came earlier in England - Arab committed poetry, excluding the political, comes from a later urbanisation, with an adumbration of Soviet 'socialist realism', French 'commitment', and third world ideology, but modernist Arab poetry in its early stages demonstrates hope in modernisation. There is some nostalgia, for example al-Sayyāb and some Palestinian poets, but this later becomes transmuted into the 'land rhetoric'.

Some of the poems analysed display various modernist techniques, such as the 'prose poetry' adopted by many Arab poets and Ḥāwī's use of dialogue and the grotesque mentioned in Chapter 4. Another is the shifting of personal pronouns and multiple voices, which can be compared with some of McClennan's comments on Ariel Dorfman and Juan Goytisolo, discussed in Chapter 1. This applies to some cases discussed in Chapter 3, such as Jabrā's poem 'The City'²³ and al-Bayyāt's early 1966 'Childhood' and 'Lamentation'²⁴ and more so in his 1970s poems. Adūnīs

adopts such techniques as early as 1961 in *Mihyār*, where his usage has a similar intention to that of Goytisolo in his 1966, 1970 and 1975 Trilogy, of destabilising hegemonic discourse.

Similar poetry can arise in parallel from different experiences, although some of this may be imitative: both the *Tammūzī* and committed poets discussed consciously reflect Eliot, as demonstrated by frequent intertextualities, although they were reacting to different situations. Tawfiq Ṣāyigh demonstrates interactions with both Eliot and Yeats, and Adūnīs uses his profound interaction with modernist French poetry, largely written against the evils of modernisation, as an instrument in his campaign to modernise Arab society, and has perhaps also drawn inspiration from the South American poets Pablo Neruda and Octavio Paz in his poetry of the 1980s and early 1990s. However, Adūnīs and al-Bayyātī go well beyond mere imitation, and Adūnīs' *Mihyār* and al-Bayyātī's 1970s poems predate the works of Goytisolo and Dorfman to which they are being compared. Darwīsh's *luḡhat al-tahwīm* and imperfect repetitions in 'Soft Rain in a Distant Autumn' and 'A Picture on the Wall' evoke Wallace Stevens's 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds'²⁵ almost certainly unconsciously, and 'The Man with the Blue Guitar'²⁶ might also be described as an example of *luḡhat al-tahwīm*. Darwīsh is conveying duration and continuation of the Palestinian state of occupation and exile whereas Stevens, also being surrealist, is perhaps conveying a state of existential angst. Some work of al-As'ad is comparable to Vorticism or Futurism in its strong sense of movement and 'When the Inhabitants of Planets Converse' evokes part of Eliot's *East Coker*; and poems by Walīd Khāzindār discussed in Chapter 2 demonstrate modernist novelistic techniques such as 'stream of consciousness' and 'indirect free style', and an Arab critic compares him to the French poet Francis Ponge, but none of these feature seem imitative.

With regard to the

. . . intriguing question of whether basic features and constituent elements of a *postmodern age* which are thought to be the product of highly technological, post-industrial, late-capitalist societies can make their appearance in a pre-industrial, pre-capitalist society which has hardly been touched by technology and high capitalism²⁷

I would argue that much of the poetry analysed in this thesis can be described as postmodern, notably the later work of al-Bayyātī and much of the work of Adūnīs, in its fragmentation, and multiple voices and aspects. Some of al-Bayyātī's poems have been compared to ideas of collage and the collage paintings of R.B. Kitaj, in Chapter 3. Elements of Adūnīs's *al-Kitāb* have been compared to Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* in Chapter 4, and his use of the device of a text is comparable to that of Gamāl al-Ghītānī, another Arab postmodernist, in his *al-Zaynī Barakāt* (1971), and Umberto Eco in *The Name of the Rose* (1980). There are complex treatments of time – the timelessness or being of all times and avoidance of chronological or causal relationships in Adūnīs, al-Bayyātī and others, depiction of hope in the cycles of nature in some poems and despair at their loss in the work of Muḡammad al-As'ad, and despair in the cycles of Palestinian misery in al-Qāsim's 'The Boring Orbit'. And although few Arab societies have directly integrated advanced

technology or high capitalism, some are beginning to, and few are insulated from their effects or from the shaping of thought through the *zeitgeist* which impinges upon them through modern networks of media, commerce, politics and thought. Each *bloc* is fragmented in its own way, and postmodernism, like nationalism, is contagious.

Perhaps as a response to the times most of the poetry that has been discussed has an air of the cosmopolitan. The poets are interested in world issues and in their own and other cultures, and their poetry rarely reflects Wojciech Kalaga's concept of the pain of adjustment to another 'interpretative universe' mentioned in Chapter 1. This may partly be because many Arab exiles live in other parts of the 'Arab world', but it also denotes a positive openness to other cultures allied with a strong sense of being part of their own, and of pride in it. However, Kalaga's argument must apply to many living in refugee camps, and to the less educated - refugees rather than exiles, and it can be observed in some of the poetry of Khalil Ḥawī, although this does relate to the 1950s and 1960s.

Exile can heighten the experience of many of the themes discussed in this thesis. Exiles are exposed to disruption of existing patterns of life and filiations, to dangers and insecurities, and to physical and psychological pain, and exiled poets do depict these conditions and protest against them. But exiles, 'the exceptional ones among them'²⁸ may also be exposed to new experiences which can generate new affiliations and expand horizons and idiocultures. Al-Bayyāṭī, discussed in Chapter 3, abuts upon English, Russian and Spanish culture, and creates in his life and work networks of connections, ranging through space, time, and even a 'fifth dimension'. Arab exiles in vibrant cosmopolitan cities such as early 20th century Cairo and mid-20th century Beirut as well as in the West have naturally been more exposed to modernism, modernity, and later post-modernism than in the societies from which they have come and, if they are receptive, can interact with such concepts and transmit them to others. A new *milieu* can give new viewpoints, sometimes for criticising Arab society, and freedom from censorship or tacit restrictions, and it can enhance creativity and give inspiration – as discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to Adūnīs's burst of creativity in the early 1960s after some years in Beirut, and especially his year in Paris.

The last century, and especially its latter half, has seen major developments in Arab poetry, comparable to the flowering resulting from the interaction with other cultures following the Islamic Conquests. It has been affected by many complex forces and has similarly been a period of 'hybrid vigour' and has given rise to several significant poets some with a wide popular appeal as well as some, notably Adūnīs, who have created a high culture and, both in writing back to the centre and in developing the periphery, have become part of world culture.

Hence, the poets discussed in this thesis, as well as depicting many of the aspects of exile and its problems and reflecting the fragmented and multiplicitous state of the modern Arab world in their poetry have, through adapting the Arab heritage in a critical but fruitful interaction with other cultures and through developing new poetics, produced a highly varied and original body of work in which their peoples can take solace and pride. Their work draws attention to the Arab world and

its problems and the injustices perpetrated upon it, but also challenges Arabs to expand their horizons and change attitudes in order to confront those problems more effectively.

- ¹ M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1975 p. 263
- ² Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004 p. 39
- ³ Victoria Best, *An Introduction to Twentieth-Century French Literature*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London, 2002 p. 37
- ⁴ Barbara McKean Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1994, p. 84
- ⁵ Formulated in Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way*, Quartet Books, London, 1982
- ⁶ See Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh' in Kamāl Abū Dīb, *Jamāliyyāt al-Tajāwur aw Tashābuk al-Faḍā'āt al-'Ibdā'iyyah*, Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, Beirut, 1997, referring to Maḥmūd Darwīsh
- ⁷ See Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Dirāsa bunawiyya fi shi'r al-Bayyāfi: Qamar Shīrāz', *Al-Aqlām*, Baghdad, Vol. XV, no. 11, August 1980, pp. 20-42
- ⁸ See Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'The Collapse of Totalising Discourse and the Rise of Marginalised/Minority Discourses', in Kamal Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq eds., *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature*, Brill, Leiden, 2000 and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, London, 1992, translation © University of Minnesota, 1987 inter alia
- ⁹ See Abū Dīb, 'Janā'iziyyāt Maḥmūd Darwīsh', op. cit.
- ¹⁰ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *An Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature, (MPL)*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p. 23
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Entry on Ḥāwī by Kamal Abu-Deeb in Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey eds., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature, (EAL)*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, Vol. 1, p. 277
- ¹³ Zahra A. Hussein Ali, 'The Aesthetics of Transgression: Khalil Hawi's "The Sailor and the Dervish" and the European Grotesque', in *JAL*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1997 p. 219
- ¹⁴ Marcel Raymond, *From Baudelaire to Surrealism*, tr. S.I. Lockerbie, Methuen, London, 1970 (first published in French *De Baudelaire au Surrealism* in 1933) p. 21
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 9
- ¹⁶ Kamāl Abū Dīb, 'Huwadha al-Kitābu' a study of Adūnīs's *al-Kitāb, al-Ḥayāt*, London, January 16, 17, 18 1996, 16 January 1996 article, col. 2
- ¹⁷ Adūnīs, *Dīwān al-Shi'r al-'Arabī*, Dār al-'Awda, Beirut, 1964-8
- ¹⁸ Victoria Best, op. cit., pp. 7-8
- ¹⁹ Adūnīs, *al-Kitāb 'amsi al-makān al-āna*, Vol. 1, p. 19 mentioned by Abū Dīb in 'Huwadha al-Kitābu', op. cit., 16 Jan article, col. 6
- ²⁰ Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 625
- ²¹ In his poem 'I Do Not Renounce Madness' in Jayyusi, *MPL*, op. cit., p. 140

²² Abdullah al-Udhari, *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1986 pp. 97-101

²³ John Mikhail Asfour, *When the Words Burn*, The American University in Cairo Press, 2nd edition, 1992, pp. 188-192

²⁴ From *Alladhī Ya'īt wa lā Ya'īt* (1966). Texts and translations in Aida O. Azouqa, 'Defamiliarisation in the Poetry of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī and T.S. Eliot: A Comparative Study', *JAL*, Brill, Leiden, Vol. XXXII, pp. 206-211

²⁵ Wallace Stevens, *Selected Poems*, Faber and Faber, London, 1993, pp. 38-41

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-62

²⁷ Kamal Abu-Deeb, 'The Collapse of Totalising Discourse . . .' *op. cit.*, p. 341

²⁸ Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and other essays*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000 p. 183

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