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In it was the name of Mas'ūd, and the witnesses said,  
 "With this, correction is made."

The father is 'Umrān, and the grandfather is 'Atirbī,  
 indeed.

[They] said "This is your son, and your claim is true."

Thank God, the family had a reunion once more with him.

Beloved ones, siblings, and they saw each other in safety.

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And whoever loves guidance, will find light from this very  
 thing.

This is the end of the words [story].

They died in goodness and peace, and now they remain  
 with me.

JENINE DALLAL

## REVIEWS

*When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry 1945-1987*, translated and edited by Jon Mikhail Asfour, Dunvegan, Ontario: Cormorant Books, 1988. 237 pages. US \$ 12.95.

The rubric on the back cover of *When the Words Burn* announces that its appearance is "a major event in the international world of translation and scholarship since John Asfour has not only translated the works of thirty-five poets, but also written a wonderfully engaging and accessible introduction to the social, political and literary background of the modernist movement in Arabic poetry". This is not a first, however, and has been attempted recently by Abdullah al-Udhari in *Modern Poetry of the Arab World* (Penguin Books, 1986) and by Salma Khadra Jayyusi in *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology* (Columbia University Press, 1987). Jayyusi's collection is by far the most impressive of the three, comprising 296 selections by 93 poets. Al-Udhari's is less comprehensive, comprising 101 selections by 24 poets but is the work of one person whereas the other is a collaborative venture. Both unfortunately suffer from occasional mistranslations and the Jayyusi volume is particularly troubling for omissions mid-text.<sup>1</sup> This review is an attempt to evaluate the Asfour collection *per se* and in the context of these other recent contributions.

Asfour has divided the work into two main parts: the *Introduction*, and the *Anthology*; the *Introduction* is subdivided as follows:

- I. Background to the Modern Period: The Classical Tradition in Arabic Poetry before 1945
- II. Free Verse-The Poetry of *Taf'ila*
- III. The Tammuzi Poets: Regeneration in the Wasteland
- IV. The Political Poem in the Resistance Movement

It is "designed to provide the English reader with a more panoramic view of their situation in Modern Arabic society" (14) and to "shed light on the major categories into which the poetry of this anthology seemed naturally to fall" (15). Although Asfour does not suggest that these are cut and dried categories, one cannot but feel that his categorisations inform his selection, a selection "made primarily from a critical perspective" (14). The use of "critical" here is unclear. The inclusion of a given poet is explained by his or her position in the tradition in the biographical notes that precede that poet's poems but the critical inclusion of any given poem over another is not addressed.

Section I is subdivided into "The Nature of the Classical Arabic Poem", "The Need of Evolution in Poetic Convention", and "The Neoclassical and Romantic Poets". This last part is a short but useful overview of the Neoclassical and Romantic poets including an effective comparison of lines by al-'Aqqād and Nizār Qabbānī. The first part is an attempt to acquaint the nonspecialist with the poetic metres and to demonstrate the classical Arabic poet's reliance on these. Although Asfour uses the Arabic terminology (*bayt*, *ṣajz*, *ṣadr*), he, regrettably, does not mention *ʿarūd* (though al-Khalīl's role in the identification of the 16 metres is mentioned on p. 27). Asfour's decision to

explain the metres by illustrating how a poem is scanned is extremely helpful and accessible: he uses a few lines by al-Ḥusri al-Qayrawānī in *khatab*, and a poem by 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā in *ḥawā'ī* to illustrate his point. His pronouncements, however, that the scansion terms (*ḥāṣṣan*, *muṣtaḥṣian*, etc.) are "nonsense words" and that the classical Arabic poem is "descriptive, emotional, declamatory and grandiose in style" can only be interpreted as indictments of the tradition. He concludes this discussion with the following thought: "the difficulty of expressing the mercurial quality of twentieth century experience within such constraints is obvious."

The next part is, therefore, not surprisingly entitled "The Need for Evolution in Poetic Convention". Citing Jabrā, Asfour seeks to show that the modern Arab poet must find a vehicle for his experience outside the narrow confines of the classical Arabic poem. He does not fail to mention the classical poets who also felt this need to transcend the formal limitations placed upon them: Abū Nuwās, al-Mutanabbī, al-Ma'arri, Bashshār and Abū Tammām. The music, the internal life of the poem, become the critical element.<sup>2</sup> Although Asfour acknowledges that American and European models of "modernist" departure are a useful springboard, he is careful to point out that the modern Arab poet is wary of his Western counterpart.

Section II corresponds to the first division used by al-Udhari to classify the poems he has selected and which he entitles *Tajfīṣila Movement (Iraqi School: 1947-57)*. Asfour's is divided into two parts. The first, "Objectives of the Free Verse Movement: *al-shi'r al-hurr* and *al-shi'r al-manḥūr*", is a readable and comprehensive overview of the events of the late 40's, 50's and early 60's, a time that saw the development of free verse and prose poetry. The discussion culminates in a metrical comparison of a poem by al-Sayyāb, to show the virtuosity of use of different metrical feet within one line, and part of one by al-Ḥijāzī, to show the "nervous, brooding, unpredictable music" of a poem by one who has abandoned the *ḥafṣila* but who still uses an erratic rhyme scheme. Asfour also mentions the long poem, a form favoured by such poets as al-Malāṭika, al-Sayyāb, Ḥāwī, Adonis, Sāyigh and al-Ṣabūr. The anthology in fact closes with a long poem by Sāyigh.

Anal Dunqul and Shādhiḥ Ṭāghab are cited as particularly modern poets, the former for his chopping up of lines and the latter for his "informing modernity of attitude or tone in the treatment of subject" (34) which Asfour believes is readily identifiable in the ironic and the comic. Citing Michel Trad's "It's a Lie", Asfour then broaches the issue of poetry in the vernacular and provides the reader with an *aperçu* on the status of colloquial poetry. He mentions several popular Egyptian dialect poets, Ahmad Rāmi, 'Abd al-Wahhāb Muḥammad, Kāmīl al-Shinnāwī but none appear in the anthology. To illustrate the difficulties of interregional comprehension of the vernaculars, Asfour shows the reader how colloquial and "literary" Arabic might differ (35):

*Jabbi liqamar is'bi*                      *Ḍakani alqamar bila'ḥab*  
*Wazalla mithil baqa*                *Waramaha mithila baqah*

We are then eased into a discussion of "Two Voices in Arabic Modernism: 'Alī Ahmad Sa'īd ('Adonis') and Muḥammad al-Māghūt", wherein Asfour compares "the poetry of two leading modernists of the present day" (36), representatives of what he calls two divergent strains of modern Arabic poetry.<sup>3</sup> Asfour's partiality to al-Māghūt is evident from the title of the anthology, that

of an al-Māghūt poem he has included. One of the reasons he likes al-Māghūt is the poet's "refreshing" tone, one that does not hesitate to be self-criticising. This is in contradistinction to Adonis whose persona is that of poet-prophet, visionary, oracle. He is quick to point out, though, that despite these differences, "a deep seriousness pervades the work of both poets" (37). For Asfour, al-Māghūt speaks to and in the eternal present, to the world about him. He cites William Carlos Williams' definition of the poetic task, "to find an image large enough to embody the whole knowable world about me" and suggests that Adonis' oracular and mystical voice is less concerned with the eternal present than with a future born out of a past renewed. That is why, Asfour argues, Adonis' vision requires life in a constantly renewed world, where newness is brought about by erasure, remolding, recasting... But Williams' poetic task is not as alien to Adonis as Asfour believes. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>4</sup> Adonis shares the vision of the American modernists.

Asfour then provides a detailed and instructive analysis of al-Māghūt's "When the Words Burn" in which he points to the poet's "curious juxtaposition of the tragic and the trivial" and his "disparity of diction" (39). The analysis of "The Crow's Feather"; "while it is not an example of Adonis' most daring prosodic experiments" (42), is a good attempt to contrast the treatment of spiritual aridity in the two poets. Asfour scans several of the lines, discusses the nature of the language and concludes, to my mind quite correctly, that "there is a balanced quality to the cadences of 'The Crow's Feather' even in English, controlled and hypnotic rhythms which have little in common with the sprawling, conversational rhythms I have attempted to recreate in translating 'When the Words Burn'" (44). Here are two passages—not contrasted by Asfour—but which I find particularly telling of his point. Al-Māghūt writes, laughs out:

My brothers,  
I have forgotten your features.  
(Those seductive eyes!)  
Four wounded continents crowd in my breast.  
I expect to conquer the world  
with my poetic glances, and my green eyes. (109)  
but Adonis ordains:

I want to kneel, I want to pray  
to the owl with the broken wing  
to the embers, to the winds.  
I want to pray to a perplexed star in the sky,  
to death and to disease—  
and in my incense burn  
my white days and my songs,  
my notebook and the ink, and the inkwell.  
I want to pray  
to all beings ignorant of prayer. (165)

The first part of section III, "A Growing Interest in Foreign Mythologies", is a brief exploration of the use of myth, symbol and legend in the Arabic poem, particularly those elements that are identifiably imported into the tradition, elements Hellenic, Christian and Biblical, Jewish, Persian. The discussion is

useful and the examples good. "Tammuz/Adonis Rediscovered: The Influence of T. S. Eliot on the Tammuzi Poets" is an extension of the first part and concentrates on the critical intersection al-Khāl and Adonis with Pound and Eliot and the influence of "The Wasteland" on modern Arabic poetry. Asfour points out, however, that it was not the mission of the modern Arab poet to rewrite "The Wasteland" in Arabic, and that "the spiritual pessimism of much twentieth century Western poetry has never quite infiltrated modern Arabic poetry" (51). "Modernism versus the Religious Sensibility?" forms the last part of this section and briefly treats the pervasive influence of Islamic and Christian elements on the poets al-Sayyāb, Ḥāwī, and Adonis, all invoked by an admiring Asfour.

The last nine pages of the *Introduction* deal with the political resistance poem and the commitment on the part of the poets to "change". Asfour relates the language of al-Sayyāb in "An Ode to Revolutionary Iraq" to the diction of the early panegyrics and lampoons and contends that "while the modern Arabic poem which addresses a political theme may display new forms and new poetic techniques, and to various degrees adopt a contemporary diction, in tone and in content it has changed very little from the traditional poetic genres" (61). A sweeping observation which is outdone by his assertion that Arabs are "well known as a people swayed by poetic oratory of surpassing beauty and strength" (62).

The fulfillment of the role of poet-orator is emphasized by Asfour as he catalogues the poems and poets he has anthologised, predominantly Palestinians, who, he feels, "are on the whole the least susceptible to despair". He closes with a discussion of Tawfiq Sāyigh and what he writes about Sāyigh may largely be said to be true of the writing of many modern Arab poets (69):

inroads have been made in the social structure, confounding the ordinary and familiar, threatening a way of life consecrated by tradition. Idols have been smashed, heroes disgraced, absolutes overturned.

The second half of the volume, the poems proper, is also subdivided:

- I. The Free Verse Movement
  - a) A 'Generation of Departures'
  - b) Explorations in Modern Forms and Idioms: Non-Metrical Free Verse
- II. Tammuz Rediscovered
  - a) The Five Major 'Tammuzi' Poets
  - b) In the Tammuzi Tradition
- III. Resistance Poetry

The selection of poets is good and includes a number of poets who, though deserving of attention, have not received any in other anthologies. Three of these occur in I(a): Lūwīs 'Awad, Michel Trad, Shādhil Tāqah; two in II(b): Khālid al-Khazrajī, Bandar 'Abd al-Hamid; two in II(b): Salīm Ḥaqqī, Saḍiq al-Ṣā'iḡī; and two in III: 'Izz al-Dīn al-Manāṣira and Kamāl Nāṣir. None of these appear in the Jayyusi volume; neither do Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā and Riyād al-Rayis who do occur in the Asfour and the al-Udhari anthologies. The translations read very well on the whole. Asfour's English is nuanced and controlled. He is able to render the different voices of the poets and the reader is not left with the sense that English-ness has been forced upon the Arabic. The

opening stanza of the collection, the first of three in a poem by Nāzik al-Malāʾika entitled “When I Killed My Love”, illustrates this point:

I hated you, till there was nothing  
but my terrible hate to converse with.  
Into it I poured tomorrow’s blood  
and drowned my present.  
I fed it the fire of curses, revolution and revenge,  
inflicted my cries of hatred upon it in my dark song,  
sustained it with the sleep of the dead  
and drew a curtain of ghosts and gloom around it. (78)

The second poet, Būland al-Haydarī is one of the poets whose poems I compared with the Arabic originals. (Space and time constrained such an enterprise. I chose the following seven poets: Būland al-Haydarī, Saʿdī Yūsuf, Ghāda as-Sammān, Amal Dunqul, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, Adonis, and Muḥsin Bisīṣū). All three of the al-Haydarī poems, which come from his 1968 collection *Rihlat al-hurūf al-sufi* (Journey of the Yellow Letters), are very well translated. The same can be said of the Saʿdī Yūsuf poems where his direct and simple language is ably conveyed in the English, especially “Six Poems” and “The Fence”. Although “Evacuation ’82” also reads well, I prefer the Lena Jayyusi/Naomi Shihab Nye translation in the Jayyusi collection (where it is entitled “Departure of ’82”).<sup>5</sup>

Ghāda al-Sammān is one of the three women poets in this anthology: the other two are Nāzik al-Malāʾika and Fadwā Tuqān. Though known primarily for her short stories and novels, al-Sammān’s poetry is artful and passionate. It is collected in *Iṭiqāl laḥza hārība* (Imprisonment of a Fleeting Moment, 1979) from which Asfour has chosen two poems: “Imprisonment of a Rainbow” and “Imprisonment of a Question Mark”. The former is fluent and faithful but for two oversights. The title should have a question mark, “Imprisonment of a Rainbow?”, and

I love you  
but you will imprison me  
only as a waterfall does a river—  
only as a lake,  
a cloud, or dam (133)

is not, strictly speaking,

*uhubbuka*  
*lakinnaka lan tastajīʿa ʿiṭiqālī*  
*kamā yufshilu ʾl-shalālū fī ʿiṭiqālī nahr*  
*wa yufshilu ʾl-buḥayra wa ʾl-ghayma*  
*wa yufshilu ʾl-sadd*<sup>6</sup>

where the metaphor is couched in an emphatic negative construction and where the thwarting is reiterated in the repetition of the verb *fashala*. The translation is more:

I love you  
But you shall not be able to imprison me  
Just as the waterfall fails to imprison the river  
As the lake fails, and the cloud  
As the dam fails

In the case of "Imprisonment of a Question Mark", the violations are a little more serious. Although

Where does the lightning go  
 after it is extinguished?  
 and the storms of the forest when they abate?  
 and the meteors when they burn out?  
 Tell me where  
 I shall await you there. (132/3).

is a fine rendition of:

*ayna yadhhabu 'l-baḡ*  
*baḡda 'ntijā'ihī?*  
*wa 'asāsifu 'l-ghābati baḡda rahīlihā?*  
*wa 'l-shahab baḡda 'hiraqihā?*  
*qul li ilā ayna*  
*la-antaziruka humāk yā habībī?*

the first four stanzas of the poem are not faithful to the original. The English reads:

O stranger,  
 where do the songs go  
 after we hear them?  
 and after we live them, where are the words of love?

Where is the flame of the candle  
 after the candle melts?

And the caresses  
 after your hand lifts? (132)

omitting lines 6 and 7. The Arabic reads:

*yā gharībū*  
*ilā ayna tadhhabu 'l-aḡhānī*  
*baḡda an nasnaḡaha?...?*  
*ilā ayna tamūḡ kalimatu 'l-ḡubb*  
*baḡda an naḡūlataha?...?*  
*ilā ayna tarḡalu 'l-layzatu 'l-'ḡulwa*  
*baḡda an naḡshaha?...?*  
*ilā ayna tadhhabu lahabu 'l-shamḡa*  
*baḡda an tamūḡ yaduka?...?*<sup>8</sup>

and is more:

O stranger  
 where do the songs go  
 once we've heard them...?

where do the words of love escape  
 once we've spoken them...?  
 where do the sweet moments pass  
 once we've lived them...?  
 where does the candle's flame go  
 once extinguished...?  
 where do your caresses go  
 once you've lifted your hand...?

The one Amal Dunqul poem, perhaps his most famous, 'The Murder of the Moon', is superbly translated; it is a shame that the pathos of the Arabic's last two lines:

*lākin abūnā lā yamūl*  
*abadan abūnā lā yamūl<sup>9</sup>*

But our father cannot die  
 Our father can never die

is compressed rather artlessly into

Our father couldn't possibly die.  
 No; never. (136)

The four al-Sayyāb selections include two of the most frequently translated poems in Arabic literature: "*an-Nahr wa l-mawt*" and "*Unshūdat al-majār*" and are very good renditions of the originals. Both appear in the Jayyusi and al-Udhari volumes. The Lena Jayyusi/Christopher Middleton translation in the former is by far the most lyrical of the three. Al-Udhari's, though quite beautiful in parts, takes many liberties:

I can almost hear Iraq collecting and storing  
 Thunders and lightnings on plains and mountains,  
 And when the men snap their seal  
 The wind leaves no trace  
 Of Thamud in the wadi.  
 I can almost hear palm trees drinking rain,  
 Villages crying, emigrants  
 Struggling with oars and sails  
 Against Gulf storms and thunders and singing  
 (al-Udhari, 31)

I can almost hear Iraq swell with thunder,  
 storing lightning in the fields and mountains.  
 And if men break its seal  
 the winds leave no trace  
 Of the Thamoud tribe in the valley.  
 I can hear the palm trees drink the rain,  
 hear the villages moan, and the emigrants  
 wrestle the thunderstorms of the bay  
 with oars and sails singing

(Asfour, 143)

I can almost hear Iraq husbanding the thunder  
 Storing lightning in the mountains and plains,  
 So that if the seal were broken by men  
 The winds would leave in the valley not a trace of Thamud.  
 I can almost hear the palmtrees drinking the rain,  
 Hear the villages moaning and emigrants  
 With oar and sail fighting the Gulf  
 Winds of storm and thunder, singing  
 (Jayyusi, 429)

Al-Sayyāb's 'Christ after the Crucifixion' is a beautiful and uplifting piece of writing that Asfour has managed ably to reproduce in English. I cite the opening passage to illustrate this dexterity:

After they took me down I heard the winds  
 in a long wail skim the palm trees  
 and the steps fade.  
 The wounds  
 and the cross they nailed me to for the whole afternoon  
 did not kill me, though. And, I listened: the wailing  
 travelled across the field between me and the city  
 like the rope that pulls on the ship  
 while it sinks to the depths. The lamentation was  
 like a string of light between the morning  
 and the darkness in the bleak winter sky.  
 And then the city drowsed upon its affairs. (140)

The line:

When I returned and Judas saw me—  
 his secret—he turned yellow (141)

could have read:

I returned so, and Judas turned pale when he saw me  
 for I was his secret

for an Arabic that reads:

*hākadhā ʿadtu, fa ʾsfarra lamma raʾānī yahūdhā*  
*fa-qad kuntu sirrahu*<sup>10</sup>

It is gratifying to discover that Asfour's translations of Adonis do his visionary writing justice. One wishes, however, that the anthologist had chosen some of his more recent poems. Some of the liberties with the Arabic are a little puzzling:

*kālāhumā jādār*  
*kālāhumā yughliqū lī ʿaynayya*<sup>11</sup>

becomes:

they both are walls  
 and block my sight (161)

when it could easily have duplicated the parallelism of the original:

both are walls  
both block my sight

Sometimes the language is virtually impossible to reproduce:

O road which refuses to begin (162)  
simply does not capture:

*ayyuhādha 'l-tarīqu 'l-ladhī yarfuḍu an yabdaʿa*<sup>12</sup>

And:

Road, you do not know where to begin (162)  
is not representative of:

*ayyuhādha 'l-tarīqu 'l-ladhī yajhalu an yabdaʿa*<sup>13</sup>

“A Vision”, one of many of Adonis’ poems entitled ‘*Ruʿyā*’, is a fine example of the Adonisian treatment of the theme of the city’s decay and the accompanying deterioration of culture. Asfour’s translation manages to convey the rhythms of the unwieldy original:

And I saw—the clouds were a throat;  
the waters, walls of flame;

I saw a sticky yellow thread—  
a thread of history that clung to me  
from a hand that has inherited a sex of dolls,  
an ancestry of rags.

It chews, knots, and loosens my days. (163)

*wa raʿaytu—kāna 'l-ghaymu hanjaratan  
wa 'l-māʾ judʿānan min al-lahabi  
wa raʿaytu khaytan asfaran [sic] dābiqan  
khaytan min al-taʾrīkhi yaʿlaqu bi  
tajjarru ayyāmi wa taʾquduhā  
wa takurruhā fihī—yadun warīhat  
jinsa 'l-dumā wa sulālatā 'l-khirqi*<sup>14</sup>

The only infelicities in the translation are “the world” for ‘*ʿaqs al-khalīfa*’ and “books” and “verses” for ‘*ṣuwar*’ and ‘*ayāt*’.

The inventiveness of Adonis’ language is also retained in the oft-anthologised “A New Noah” but the English does not correspond to the Arabic version in my possession.<sup>15</sup> Doubtless, Asfour has one of the versions later revised by Adonis, something he does frequently.<sup>16</sup> The lines in question are the first five and last three lines of the second stanza and the lines “with a poet/and a free rebel;/we shall travel together/careless of God’s words” (160) in the third stanza.

“The Postman’s Fear” by al-Maghūt, though done justice by Asfour, does not have the cadences and conversational tone of the al-Udhari version. Nor is the tentative, almost prescient knowledge of the closing lines conveyed by Asfour:

I am preparing a huge portfolio  
on human suffering  
as soon as it is signed by the lips of the hungry

and the eyelids of the waiting.  
 But oh, you miserable ones everywhere,  
 I have a fear  
 that God may be 'illiterate'.  
 (Asfour, 110)

I'm preparing a *huge file*  
 About human suffering  
 To present to God  
 Once it's signed by the lips of the hungry  
 And the eyelids of those still waiting  
 You wretched everywhere  
 What I fear most is  
 God could be *illiterate*  
 (al-Udhari, 86)

The Mu'f'n Basisi selections in Part III, both from *Qasā'id 'alā zujaj' an-nawā'idh* (Poems on the Windowpanes, 1979), are well rendered. For reasons unknown, however, Asfour has considerably abridged the opening of 'A Traffic Light':

Red light, stop  
 Green light, go  
 Red green stop go

Red light, red light  
 Where is the green light...? (213)

and sacrificed the tension:

red light  
 stop  
 green light  
 go  
 red light  
 and green light  
 red light  
 and green light  
 stop

stop  
 stop  
 stop  
 go  
 go  
 red light  
 red light  
 where is the green light?

In the second poem, 'To A Lady Tourist', though the tone of the original is retained, a little harm is done the translation when he turns:

*lan yabqā siwā 'llāh*  
*ya'ūa ka-ghazālin akhdara tattabi'sahu kullu kilābi 'l-saydi*  
*wa yatabi'sahu 'l-kahubu 'alā farasin shabbā'?*

Nothing remains but God

Running like a dark gazelle chased by the hunting dogs  
and chased by falsehood on a dappled steed  
into

Nothing remains now but God,  
who runs like a green deer chased by hounds  
and galloping lies. (214)

The anthology closes with a long poem by Tawfiq Sāyigh entitled "Out of The Depths Have I Cried To thee, O Death" an arresting rewording of Psalm 130. It is the last poem in the resistance poetry section although Asfour does write that Sāyigh's poetry is "so far removed from the general thrust of the 'resistance' movement that it really merits a category of its own" (67). The clumsiness

(Who considers the clay a statue is wrought from  
or sends the lover's bones to the lab?) (221)

is the only infelicity. I have not seen the Arabic but Ann Royal and Samuel Hazo render those lines as follows in the Jayyusi volume:

(who cares about the kind of clay that is a statue  
and who would send the beloved's bones to the laboratory?)<sup>18</sup>

There are a number of technical problems and orthographical errors in the text of *When the Word Burn*, primarily in the critical apparatus. Although *qāf* is transliterated *q*, it appears occasionally as *g* ("gasida", pp. 14, 20; "ragada", and *ḡafīya*, p. 17; "gabra", p. 30) as does *j* ("Higra", p. 159). The hard *g* in al-Giza is written "al-Jizah", p. 225. The poetic meter *rajaz* is called "al-rajz", and *ramal* "al-raml". Sāyigh is spelled "Sayish" in the *Table of Contents* and the Nāzik al-Malā'ika entry is improperly spaced. Further spacing trouble occurs in the *Notes on the Introduction* (between the notes 30 and 31, and 41 and 42) and in the *Glossary* where the "Qarrad" entry is repeated. On pp. 25 and 53, "compliment" is used for "complement", and on p. 16 the cryptic "aquiau" occurs. Page 171 has the following oversight: "at Cambridge and Harvard Universities in London".

The two-page, fifteen-item *Glossary* on pp. 225-226 suffers from a number of problems. We are told that *Fayruz* is a "famous contemporary singer and actress who sings patriotic as well as popular songs" but not that she is Lebanese. *Hawl*, *Abu al-* is the entry for the sphinx for which we are told this is the Egyptian name. Of *Hilali*, *Abu Zayd al-*, we are told "His epic poetry about the tribe's battles and his personal duels is representative of a decline in quality in classical Arabic verse, although it has perpetuated a body of popular legends around his name." That the quality of the epic's verse should be measured against "classical Arabic verse standards", whatever those may be, is preposterous and that Abū Zayd al-Hilālī is the subject of the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* and not the author of the epic should be made clear. *Salah al-Din* was not "King and Sultan of the Fatimid dynasty" but of the Ayyubid.

This volume of modern Arabic poetry in translation is a positive contribution to the English-reading public. Although North African and Gulf poets receive little or no attention, the breadth of the selection is good. The majority of the poems are previously untranslated, the introduction is sound and the biographical information is extensive. Asfour also dates the poems which proves

tremendously useful for placing them in chronological context. One wishes he had also provided bibliographical information for the poems. Liberties in translation are, of course, decisions that rest, and always will rest, with translators and their personal sense for the original. For Astour, who is visually impaired, this poetry is oral and aural, and he has, therefore, brought to it an appreciation and understanding that is perhaps different from mine and others. Such an anthology is a formidable undertaking for one person and he may be commended for it. I should remark, however, that there are a number of anthologies of modern Arabic poetry; the real need is for quality translations of individual chapbooks. The reluctance of publishers and translators to look at one region and even at one *dīwān* instead of at the entire corpus of modern Arabic poetry is unfortunate.<sup>19</sup> Be that as it may, *When the Words Burn* is a well-executed anthology which I happily place on my shelf next to my Badawi, my Khouri and Algar, my Boullata, my al-Udhari and my Jayyusi.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See, for instance, "The Deserted Well" by Yūsuf al-Khal (p. 298) and "A Grave for New York" by Adonis (p. 142, 144, 147, 148, 150).
- <sup>2</sup> Adonis, *Introduction à la poésie arabe* (Paris: Sindbad, 1986).
- <sup>3</sup> See, in this connection, Astour's article "Adonis and Muhammad al-Maghut: Two Voices in a Burning Land", *JAL* XX (1989), Part I (March), 20-30.
- <sup>4</sup> *A Critical Translation of Adonis' Waqt bayna 'r-ramād wa 'l-ward*, MA thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1989.
- <sup>5</sup> Salma Khadra Jayyusi (ed.), *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 481.
- <sup>6</sup> Ghada al-Sammān, *al-ʿAṣnāʾ al-ghayr al-kāmiya 5, Fīṭḥ al-ḥaḥa ḥāṭiḥa* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Ghāda al-Sammān, 1979), 10.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 115/6.
- <sup>9</sup> Anāl Dūnqūl, *al-ʿAṣnāʾ al-shiʿriyya al-kāmiya* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿAwdā, 1985), 71.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.
- <sup>11</sup> Adonis, *Al-ʿAṣnāʾ ash-shiʿriyya al-kāmiya, I* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿAwdā, 1985), 288.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 375/6
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.
- <sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, "ʿIṣnāʾi ḥawla ḥadithi al-ṭabaʿati al-ḥadīda", 5-7.
- <sup>17</sup> Muʿin Basṭu, *al-ʿAṣnāʾ al-shiʿriyya al-kāmiya*, (Beirut: Dār al-ʿAwdā, 1987), 341.
- <sup>18</sup> Salma Khadra Jayyusi (ed.), *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 422.
- <sup>19</sup> In this connection, the appearance of M. M. Enani's *An Anthology of the New Arabic Poetry in Egypt* (Cairo: The General Egyptian Book Organization Press, 1986), for example, is heartening.

SASSON SOMEKH, *Genre and Language in Modern Arabic Literature*, Studies in Arabic Language and Literature, Volume I. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991. xii + 141 pp.

An auspicious volume inaugurating a new series of studies in Arabic language and literature (edited by Sasson Somekh and Alexander Borg), this book concentrates on modern Arabic literature in various genres, showing how each of them searches for the most appropriate mode of Arabic language to express its purposes effectively. It is not a mere general study of Arabic diglossia analyzing the characteristics of Arabic *fushḥā* (FU) and *ʿāmmīyya* (AM), but rather a study of the ways and means which modern Arab authors have used and are still using to express themselves in one kind of Arabic or the other of in both, as they write in new genres like novels, short stories, and drama or in old genres like poetry. The focus of the book therefore is the stylistic dimension of modern Arabic writings and the way language operates in them as it accommodates itself to the nature of the literary genre of which it is a vehicle, and to the social and cultural constraints under which the authors perceive themselves to be operating.

Complicated as the issue is, Sasson Somekh presents it in a very clear and logical manner, and succeeds eminently in shedding light on a matter that has not been studied enough. He divides the book into two parts: (I) Prolegomena, consisting of six chapters, and (II) Case Studies, making up the remaining five chapters. The first part is an overview of the problem of diglossia in modern Arab culture and of the social and literary valuation of modes of expression in FU as opposed to AM. This problem is treated in a historical perspective and takes note of the gradual rise of a new "standard" FU as well as of varieties of "pure" and "mixed" FU. This part of the book also has separate chapters, each devoted to a general discussion of one of the main literary genres: prose fiction, drama, and poetry. The second part of the book deals with selected case studies and it analyzes a limited number of Arab authors with regard to their manner of employing the Arabic language in the context of a specific genre or a specific literary work of theirs, be it a translation or an original story, play, or poem.

Although narrative art in the past had many outstanding examples written in classical Arabic in a variety of FU styles, modern Arab writers soon found out that they could not fall back on it when producing new narrative genres. Somekh shows how Faḥṭāwī's translation of Fénelon's novel *Les aventures de Télémaque*, remaining loyal to the norms of classical Arabic, is burdened with rhyme and parallelism and does not reflect the straightforward style of the original. He further shows that Bustānī's translation of Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, by contrast, is unrhymed and free from parallelism and often attempts in its dialogue sections to reflect real speech and the characters' idiosyncracies as in the original. As the novel genre developed in Arabic, with Haykal's *Zaynab* onwards, Somekh notes the increasing attempt of novelists to use AM in the dialogue sections, the more accurately to represent the dialect of the speakers and their character in producing realistic fiction, although some novelists retained the FU or fluctuated between FU and AM in their dialogues. In this regard, Somekh points to Maḥfūz's loyalty to FU grammar in his earlier works but shows how in later years he used a colloquialized FU or hidden AM in his dialogues.

On examining the *narration* sections of Arabic novels and short stories,