

**Bawardi, Basilius. 2019. *The Magazine Shi‘r and the Poetics of Modern Arabic Poetry: A Textual Study*. Studies in Oriental Culture and Literature 5. Berlin: Peter Lang. 322 pp.
ISBN 978-3-631-77563-9.¹**

The book reviewed here is one of two (along with Creswell 2019) seminal publications on modernism in Lebanon and on the magazine *Ši‘r* ('Poetry'), which were released in the same year. Bawardi's book is based (as mentioned, p. 9) on his PhD thesis (Bawardi 2003). His 2012 paper also comprises some of the book's theses. The research corpus includes translated and original poems, as well as essays of literary criticism from *Ši‘r* (published between 1957–1964 and 1967–1969), one of the most important contemporary Arabic literary magazines.

The 'Preface' begins with the keyword 'modernism' (p. 13). Its equivalent in Arabic, *al-ḥadāṭa*, is as ambiguous and polysemantic notion as it is for term *al-nahḍa* '(literary) awakening' in the Arab world. In their notorious manifestos, modernisms customarily tend to undermine the thematic and/or formal foundations of the past. Obviously, as the author explains, this relation between past and present is usually more complex. Let us mention the words of Wilhelm Apollinaris Kostrowicki, whose eight 'pioneering' poems (as Bawardi terms them) translated by Šawqī 'Abī Šaqrā, were published in *Ši‘r* (see Appendix of the translated works: 1964, Nov 29/30). This renowned poet of Polish origin, known commonly as Guillaume Apollinaire, inventor of the neologism 'surrealism', and one of the precursors of this trend, remarks in 'La Phalange Nouvelle':

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Quelle serait la caractéristique d'une tradition, sinon la continuité? [...] les maîtres que nous aimons, que nous voulons continuer en conservant notre personnalité, [...] ils existent, ils vivent, ils sont en plein travail, en pleine gloire.² (Apollinaire 1909: 134)

Bawardi discusses the various and changing attitudes of Ši'r towards Arab literary tradition. He lets us understand why the authors of the magazine played a delicate game with an Arab audience, sensitive to their literary legacy and to the fluctuant socio-political context. He also analyses a rare selection of politically engaged poems in the magazine (see for example, the author's observations on the Algerian Revolution, p. 38, and his remarks on the magazine's subtle policy during the Nasserist Pan-Arab project in Egypt, p. 59).

But modernism in Lebanon also raises the question of the impact of European and American cultures on Lebanese poets. The author gives us exhaustive answers on this topic. He refers, *inter alia*, to the theoretical background of André Lefevere's and Susan Bassnett's scientific works (p. 61 ff.), inspired by renowned Israeli researcher Even-Zohar Itamar. We see how in Ši'r, new Arabic translations, in their overwhelming majority in prose, resemble palimpsests by hiding under a visible layer literary forms, patterns and cultural connotations, heavily loaded with linguistic characteristics of their original languages.

But there is a flipside of the coin here. Adonis, many years later after his publications in Ši'r, perversely makes us look for true modernism in ancient Arab poetry, and offers harsh remarks, pointing to the meanderings of youthful searching for new patterns and for new topoi in distant beautiful lands: 'This has led us to concoct an illusory, specious modernity which is embodied on [...] the level of poetry in plagiarizing forms of expression from languages whose particular genius is intrinsically different from that of Arabic.' (Adonis 2003: n.p.). These words complement Bassnett's observations, as she remarks in the preface to the third edition of her important work *Translation Studies*: 'For just as the model of colonialism was based on the notion of a superior culture taking possession of an inferior one, so an original was always seen as superior to its "copy"' (Bassnett 2002: 5).

Bawardi offers an interesting explanation for some heterogeneous approaches of the magazine's authors to the forms of the poem (first of all *prose-poem*), to the variability of literary patterns, motifs, and terms, to the form of the language itself (i.e. standard Arabic versus Lebanese Arabic dialects), and to a different perception of intellectual Arab elites. His analysis, solid and richly layered, is supplemented by interesting excerpts from his interviews with Adonis. Let me add here two less known facts about Yūsuf al-Ḥāl and Adonis, the most important authors in Ši'r.

² 'What would be the characteristic of a tradition, if not continuity? [...] the masters that we love, that we want to continue while preserving our personality, [...] they exist, they live, they are at full work, in full glory.'

Yūsuf al-Ḥāl enabled the young Maurice 'Awwād (1934–2018), one of the greatest poets writing in the Lebanese dialect, to publish his first book of poems, entitled ʿAḡnār (feminine proper name) in 1963. Adonis, on the contrary, tried to dissuade 'Awwād from writing poetry in Lebanese after the publication of the same book (my personal conversation with 'Awwād, Kfar Shima, 30 September 2018).

Bawardi describes the creative richness of the research corpus, testifying to valuable cosmopolitan, intellectual life in the Middle Eastern *melting pot* (a well-known expression propagated in another context by Israel Zangwill, and frequently used, among others, in popular and scientific productions for describing Beirut). This intensive vitality, this vibrant creativity during 1950s and 1960s (obviously wider than the magazine itself) take place in the shadow of a dormant volcano: the magazine had stopped publication six years before the destructive conflicts, euphemistically called *al-ḥawādiṭ* ('incidents').

The book structure is well organised. The final conclusions are instructive and helpful. They summarise well the book's most important theses. One finds also here three valuable appendixes: 1) of the translated works (pp. 205–243), 2) of the Arabic works (pp. 244–283) and 3) of critical articles (pp. 284–300). The bibliography is extensive, though one observes here some minor mistakes, mainly in transcription of some titles. Neither of the author's aforementioned publications (Bawardi 2003, 2012) are not included in it. I think that at least two theses in Arabic, both with rich bibliography and directly connected to the subject of the book, could have been taken into consideration: 'Aṭar maḡallat (Ši'r) al-lubnāniyya fī ḥadāṭat al-kitāba al-šī'riyya' (Malikī 2015) and 'Anāšir taḥdīt al-naṣṣ al-šī'ri fī maḡallat Ši'r' (Munā 2006).

It is my duty to mention some minor errors (partly misprints) mainly in Arabic transcription: p. 22 *ḥadāṭa* (and not *hadāṭa*) 'modernism', *ibid. namūdaḡ* (and not *namūtaḡ*) 'model', p. 23 *mafḥūmuhā* (and not *mafḥūmahā*) 'its concept', p. 26 *muḡāyira* (and not *muḡāyira*, correctly p. 44) 'different [point of view]', p. 72, n. a [*'ayyām*] 'ayyār' '[The Days] of March' [correctly 'of May'], p. 121 *muḥāwalāt* (and not *muāwalāt*) 'attempts', p. 124, n. 250, p. 141, n. 289 *taškiliyya* (and not *taškiliya*) translated here 'plastic' [art], p. 141, n. 289 *graphī* (transcription? -*ph*) 'graphic', p. 176, n. 372 *taždid* (and not *tždid*) 'renewal', p. 310 *poème* (and not *poèm*) 'poem'.

Notation of human proper names: p. 24 and p. 29 [*'Antūn*] *Sa'āda* (and not *Sa'ādi*), p. 26 *Fādīl* (and not *Fādīl*), p. 26 *Kanafānī* (and *Kanafānī*), p. 28 *Ḥadrā'* (and not *Ḥadrā'*), p. 28 *Raḥbānī* (and not *Raḥabānī*), p. 33, p. 34, n. 38 *al-'Azmī* (and not *al-'Azmī*), p. 55, n. 99 'Alī (and not *Alī*), p. 56, n. 99(d) 'Abd (and not 'Abd), p. 74 [*Henri*] *Michaux* [and not *Michau*], p. 76, n. 137 [*André*] *du Bouchet* (and not *de Bouché*), p. 213 *Birtöld* (and not *Britöld*) 'Bertold', p. 226 *Šiksbir* (and not *Šaisbir*) 'Shakespeare', p. 310 *Baudelaire* (and not *baudelaire*).

Notation of 'ayn and hamza: p. 18, p. 124 *ru'yā*, and variant with short -a: p. 124, n. 250 *ru'ya* (and not *ru'yā/ru'ya*) 'vision', p. 124, n. 250 'arabī (and not

ʿarabī) ‘Arabic’, p. 165, n. 342 ʿāšifa (and not ʾāšifa) without translation, *ibid.* warāʿ (and not warāʿ) ‘behind’, p. 174 ʿāmmatan (and not ʾāmmatan) ‘in general’, *ibid.* ʿašar (and not ʾašar) in: tāsiʿašar ‘the Nineteenth’, p. 177 ʿāmmiyya (and not ʾāmmiyya, correctly noted elsewhere) ‘colloquial language’.

Etymology of the word *Simūrg* should be nuanced, p. 183, n. 383.

Despite these mainly technical shortcomings, I warmly recommend Bawardi’s book which makes a significant contribution to our better understanding of the history of the ideas in Lebanon and the history of literary trends in the Middle East. Undoubtedly, it will be a reference for researchers of various fields.

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