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Unearthing Literature: The Case of Hussein Barghouti

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Unearthing Literature:

The Case of Hussein Barghouti

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Note on translation and transliteration

All translations from Arabic to English in this dissertation are mine, with the help of some colleagues, except when otherwise indicated. I have followed the guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (IJMES) for the transliteration from Arabic and Persian to English. I have only used internal vocalization (*bayn* and not *bayna*, for example). Known names of modern Arab authors and thinkers are not transliterated, contrary to the names of pre-modern Arab authors.

There are multiple ways of writing the name of the main author who is studied in this dissertation. In Arabic and English, his last name is sometimes preceded by *–al*. In English, the first name is sometimes written as Hussein, or Husain, while his last name is either written with a *t* or a *th* (Bargouti, Bargouthi), a *g* or a *gh* (Bargouti, Barghouti). In this dissertation, I have adopted this spelling: Hussein Barghouti. In the citations, however, I have kept the different spellings of his name in English sources that mention him.

After providing the complete titles of Barghouti's books in Arabic and in English, I have subsequently used the short titles in Arabic. Arabic quotes by Barghouti have been copied exactly as they appear in the printed texts, including typographical mistakes.

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Introduction

In its 2018 Spring volume, the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (*Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya*) dedicated a section to the life and works of the Palestinian author and thinker Hussein Barghouti[1] (1954-2002), which included entries from Palestinian academics, authors, and friends of the thinker. The aim, as expressed in the opening statement, is to "motivate academics and students to study this momentous literary experiment, and to situate it within its cultural, intellectual, and political context."[2] This dissertation, which was started in 2014, is in line with the necessity of studying Barghouti's works and serves as an investigation of his literary contributions. The dissertation presents some of Barghouti's thoughts on writing that were shaped by his personal experiences and his literary standing in Palestinian society. Barghouti's project, it will be argued, is based on acts of change and movement that lead to personal and literary transformation (*taḥawwul*). By exploring the case of Barghouti, this study complicates the tripartite interactions between the personal, the national, and the literary. It adopts the body as a thematic trope and a methodological framework for conceptualizing Barghouti's calls for innovative modes of writing and cross-generic experimentations.

My first encounter with Barghouti was in the summer of 2010 when I read one of his most celebrated books *al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq* (*The Blue Light*) (2001).[3] In 2009, I had taken a course on Medieval Literature during my BA studies at the American University in Cairo, and I was introduced to the vast realm of Sufi writings. Barghouti's text surprised me as a

[1] In the dissertation, I spell Barghouti's name as Hussein Barghouti instead of the transliterated name Ḥussayn Barghūtī. In the sources that mention him, I kept the spelling that is adopted by the author. For Arabic sources that mention Barghouti, I used the transliterated name. The reader of the dissertation can notice that I kept the different spellings in the bibliography, however, I have listed them chronologically in the same section (see the primary sources in the bibliography).

[2] "...ودور هذا الملف الصغير هو تحفيز الأكاديميين والطلاب على دراسة هذه التجربة الأدبية الكبرى، ووضعها في سياقها الثقافي والفكري والسياسي."

Akram Musallam, ed. "Taḥiyya ilā Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī," *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya* 114 (Spring 2018): 86.

[3] After giving the English title of each of Barghouti's works in the first citation, the Arabic titles will be used in the dissertation. Except for *The Blue Light* and Barghouti's PhD title, all other titles are my translation.

modern-day rendition of the notions of journey, experience, and self-discovery that are central to the works of famous medieval Sufi writers such as Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), Rūmī (d. 1273), and ʿAṭṭār (d. 1221). When choosing a topic for my PhD, I knew that I wanted to take modern Palestinian literature as my focal field, and because of my interest in Sufism, Barghouti's *al-Ḍawʾ* was the combination of the two. I initially wanted to study the deployment of Sufism in the works of Barghouti in order to explore how he uses narrative elements such as the journey, exile, and return, and what this tells us about his worldview and the role that the local (in relation to the universal) plays in shaping literary expressions. In the larger context, the aim of the project was similarly to highlight the link between the secular and the religious, the modern and the traditional. Thematically, I started to categorize Barghouti's use of elements of light, taste, sound, and space in relation to Sufi thought. After gathering these notes, I decided to write a chapter on Barghouti's deployment of the senses. While Sufism's influence on Barghouti's writing is evident, I realized that using it as the main prism would confine a larger interpretation of Barghouti's work. After exploring the centrality of the senses to Barghouti's thought, I opted to use a different reading lens: the body. Doing so has revealed Sufism to be one of many influences. The body, on the other hand, provided a richer and more complex framework for reading notions of intertextuality, influence, and innovation in his writing.

Barghouti's literary output is characterized by a deep external and internal awareness of self and other and exemplifies acts of literary departures and innovation that demand to be noticed and studied. What is proposed here is a contextual approach that attempts to read the body anew; i.e. as a producer of experiences rather than a reflection of them. The body, as a site of reading, brings together the personal, the national, and the literary. At the same time, the body is used to rethink the reading process of literature beyond the usually imposed one of 'representation' and towards the literary as a space of transformation. I argue that

Barghouti portrays a vision of Palestinian literature as an ever-changing and self-questioning field. His works exemplify a disruption of familiar expressions regarding notions of political engagement, illness and death, and literary innovation. The aim is not to position Barghouti as a sole voice outside of the Palestinian canon but rather to read his works as an extending force of the literary body, which accentuates the complexity and variety of Palestinian literature.

The link between the body and literature – or reading literature through the body – is evident. One technical and academic example is how we often speak of literature in bodily terms: the *body* of Arabic literature/the literary *corpus* of Hussein Barghouti, for example. In this study, the body is understood as the physical body of the author, the body of the land, as well as the body of the text. The dissertation does not propose that Barghouti's literary productions should only be read corporeally or in a sensuous way. However, it does put forth the argument that reading them through the lens of the bodily can reveal significant commentaries regarding issues of engagement, commitment, and artistic innovation.

Adopting the body as the methodological tool for this dissertation should be understood in light of the context of and the circumstances surrounding the case study. Barghouti's works, as will be further explained, have often been labelled as abstract, detached to the political and social reality in Palestine, and surrealist. This is in fact how I also first understood his style of writing in his autobiography *al-Daw'*. The book was complex, abstract, and philosophical. It reminded me of a Sufi text that moves beyond the expectations of an autobiographical writing and detaches itself from the quotidian and communal in social and political life. The more I read Barghouti's works, however, the more I realized his attunement to material objects and engagement with sensuous experiences. Some examples included the use of light and its relation to notions of power and knowledge, his connection to the land and its reflection of political atrocities but also emancipation, and

his own body as a medium of discovering the world but also of its suffering and eventual decay. This realization drove me to ask the question: what would a divergent reading of Barghouti's works reveal about his engagement and literary innovation? The reading, which is rooted in the bodily, is not chosen as a way of replacing the philosophical, abstract, or surrealist. Rather, it is presented as an exercise beyond what is known about his critical and literary works.

The body is a suitable tool for framing the reading of Barghouti's productions for several reasons. Personally, the body, with its development from childhood to adulthood, and more importantly in its confrontation with notions of pain, illness, and impending death is constituent in Barghouti's writing – particularly after being diagnosed with Lymphoma at a young age. However, this deployment of the body is not limited to his post-diagnosis works. Thematically, the body constitutes a central source of inspiration in the writings of Barghouti.[4] Conceptually, the body is seen here as a stage upon which Barghouti's critical commentaries on the need to challenge the common and preconceived themes, styles, and literary genres are played out. This challenge of the preconceived is evident by viewing the body as an entity that is in a state of discovery and formation. When we look at the body in terms of movement and change, we are also looking at literary texts as bodies that pose critical questions about the rules that regulate the writing of these texts, such as notions of genre and the canon. The body, thus, allows for a comprehensive understanding of Barghouti's project as it conjoins the physical, the fictional, the historical, and the imaginative in a process of formation, as will be seen in the coming chapters.

[4] One clear example is his PhD dissertation: Husain Jameel Bargouti, "The Other Voice: an Introduction to the Phenomenology of Metamorphosis," (PhD diss. University of Washington, 1992).

Modern Palestinian literature: The general context

The term modern Arabic literature is used here to signify the writings composed after the Arab renaissance (*nahḍa*) of the late nineteenth century, which are often studied in terms of the engagement with the West, the relation with tradition, and literary and linguistic innovations.[5] Such a use of the term 'modern Arabic literature' does not overlook the complexities of this 'temporal' demarcation. The word 'modern' entails multiple notions of engagement with the past, literary innovations, and spatial and temporal movements. For example, when defining the 'modern' – and its derivatives modernity and modernism in the context of Arabic literature – one has to distinguish between two main notions: first, the modern as indicative of a specific time period and place, and the other as a processual change, modulation, and thus movement that can take place in different spaces and times.[6]

This dissertation makes references to several scholars and theorists whose works are concerned with issues related to 'modernity,' for example Jean-François Lyotard in chapter 2 and Marc Augé in chapter 3. While Barghouti's works can be situated temporally as part of the 'modern' in Arabic literature, some of his works point to post-modernist tendencies (for example his text *Ḥajar al-ward* and his poetry collection *Marāyā sā'ila*) that complicate the style of writing and modes of expressions, as well as the relations between time and space. But instead of dividing his works along the theoretical and historical debates of modernity and post-modernity, I would like to read them as two modes of expression. The postmodern for Barghouti does not come as a reaction to modernity but rather as a simultaneously existing method for reading the shifts in politics, society, and literature. The modern and the

[5] For more on the history and development of modern Arabic literature, see: Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Literature,* vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 1977). Muhsin al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition* (Oxen: Routledge, 2006).

[6] As Ouyang notes, modernity in poetry in the Islamic period in the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries "used to characterize poetry that violated the ancient poetic principles." Wen-Chin Ouyang. *Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel: Nation-State, Modernity and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 13.

postmodern here represent different modalities of reading rather than merely being epochs that precede or supersede one another.[7]

On the one hand, Barghouti talks about modernity in the vein of innovation and taking the past as a referential tool. One example of this is his commentaries on the modern Palestinian poet Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān (1905-1941). Barghouti's notion of the 'modern' is centered around the need to return to the lived, the sensed, and the experienced. Thus, instead of the form (*qālib*) that is stable and inherited, the modernist works at insuring the heart (*qalb*) as a source of inspiration, where "the bare senses have to return to the initial sense of wonder."[8] The modern for Barghouti is that which is focused on the present, while still retaining a vision for the future. On the other hand, as will be further discussed in chapter 2, Barghouti's conceptions of literature align more with post-modernist thinking and attests to the ability of post-modernism to investigate the past not just as a reference but also as an undiscovered territory, where the referential becomes unknown, uncertain, and opaque. The modern in "modern Arabic/Palestinian literature" is thus used in this dissertation to indicate a time period. Although a study of Barghouti's conceptualization of the modern and the post-modern is not fully investigated in this dissertation, some references to the two terms are made throughout.

Starting from the second half of the twentieth century, calls for social, political, and literary changes were motivated by the anti-colonialist movements in the Arab world and the effects that the *Nakba* (the Palestinian 1948 Catastrophe) have had on Arab authors and nations in general.[9] The theme of political commitment has haunted the artistic and critical

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[7] One example of the distinctions that Barghouti makes between the two terms is in his reading of the spatial changes that have befallen the city of Ramallah. He argues that a 'modernist' lens would read the shifts in regards to the sequence in time (i.e. history). A post-modernist lens looks at history as 'adjacent' rather than sequential. Hussein Barghouti, "'An al-makān al-munqariḍ," in *al-Farāgh al-ladhī ra'a al-tafāṣīl*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: Dār al-Bayraq al-ʿArabī, 2006): 94. See section 1.3.

[8] "على الحواس المتحفيّة أن ترجع للدهشة الأولى."
Hussein Barghouti, "al-Ḥadātha fī tajrubat al-shāʿir," in *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, no. 1 (1998): 89.

[9] Rasheed El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West encounters in Arabic Fiction* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 6.

productions of many Arab and Palestinian writers.[10] Although 1948 is a seminal year that marks change in all aspects of political and personal life in Palestine and is often considered to be a formative year of modern Palestinian literature, "the cultural scene in Palestine" before 1948 and especially during the Mandate period was also "heavily charged with questions like nationhood and self-determination, communal reform and justice among other, equally 'passionate,' questions."[11] As Bashir Abu-Manneh observes, Palestinian poets during the period before 1948 "broke from the social and ideological hold of the politically compromised notables and joined the popular struggle."[12] This meant a struggle against colonial powers, but equally against social authoritativeness.

The topic of commitment (*Iltizām*) has received much attention from critics and writers of modern Arabic literature. The definition of commitment and the debates surrounding it are constantly addressed in scholarship on modern Arabic literature.[13] Jean-Paul Sartre's[14] understanding of the term commitment in *What is Literature?* (*Qu'est ce que la littérature?*) is the most influential definition of the concept.[15] Sartre writes that "a writer

[10] ʿĀdil al-Usṭa, *Adab al-Muqāwama: min tafāʾul al-bidayāt ilā khaybat al-nihāyāt* (Damascus: Muʾassasat Filasṭīn li al-Thaqāfa, 2008), 14-21.
[11] Tarif Khalidi, "Palestinian Historiography: 1900-1948," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 61.
[12] Bashir Abu-Manneh, *The Palestinian Novel: From 1948 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 18. Abu-Manneh mainly focuses on the 1936 revolt and its repercussions.
[13] See Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature," *Journal of World History* 14, I ss. 1 (January 1972): 858-879. Verena Klemm, "Different Notions of Commitment (Itlizām) and Committed Literature (al-adab al-multazim) in the Literary Circles of the Mashriq," *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literature* 3, no. 1 (2000): 51- 62. Pannewick, Friederike, Georges Khalil, and Yvonne Albers, eds. *Commitment and Beyond: Reflections on/of the Political in Arabic Literature since the 1940s* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2015).
[14] Sartre's conceptions of engaged literature were influenced by his views on the economic and political issues in France (particularly his opposition to French colonialism in Algeria). For a detailed discussion of Sartre's relation to Middle Eastern intellectuals and his influence on the understanding of notions of existentialism and commitment, see: Yoav Di-Capua, *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).
[15] While the concept of commitment was mainly developed during the second half of the twentieth century, the discussion of Arabic literature and its link to society had already started during the first half of the century, with the introduction of socialism. Some of the pioneers include Shiblī Shumayyil, Faraḥ Anṭūn, and Salāmah Mūsā (Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Development of its Genres and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 403. For example, Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Barūdī (d. 1904) is seen as "the first *committed* poet" in the modern period (Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature," 861). Later figures that played an essential role in the varied discussion about the meanings and

is committed when he tries to achieve the most lucid and the most complete consciousness of being embarked, that is, when he causes the commitment of immediate spontaneity to advance, for himself and others, to the reflective."[16] The two most important ideas here are that the writer has to be conscious of what he/she writes, and that this consciousness should lead both the writer and the reader to a state of awareness and reflection. Despite calls for innovation and experimentation in modern Arabic literature, there has been "constant reference…to the necessity or inevitability of orientation in literature and art, or to the social, moral, and political function of literature."[17] Commitment is discussed here because it constitutes one major part of understanding modern Arabic literature, but also because it will open up the discussion of how Barghouti, directly and indirectly, contests the notion through his critical and fictional works (see, for example, section 1.5).

While Palestinian literature is part of a long-standing tradition of Arabic literature and heritage, it has gained specificity because of its supposed political, social, and economic uniqueness.[18] This specificity is translated in Palestinian authors' treatment of notions like time, place, and the inescapable political situation.[19] Palestinian literature has been often read as a shadow of important societal and political changes and events.[20] One of the outcomes of the overwhelming presence of the political issue in Palestinian literature is its categorization as a body that serves one specific purpose. The limitation has resulted from political readings

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positition of *iltizām* in society include Suhail Idrīs, the founder of the journal *al-Ādāb*, (see Klemm, "Different Notions of Commitment," 53-55) and the Egyptian critic Maḥmūd Amīn al-ʿĀlim (Ibid., 56).

[16] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 77.

[17] ʿAbd al-Nabī Ṣṭaif, "The Question of Freedom in Modern Arabic Literary Criticism," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 26, no. 1/2 (Mar.-Jun. 1995), 167.

[18] Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (London: Vintage Books, 1992), 154-155.

[19] Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ed., *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 2.

[20] As Bernard comments, the centrality of the political conflict in Palestine within the overall Arab context after 1948 has led to the popularity of Palestinian literature within the field of Arabic literature. Anna Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration and Israel/Palestine* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2013), 3.

that make little room for the notion of Palestinian literature as a product of the complex aesthetic, cultural, and personal engagements of life.[21]

Studies on Palestinian literature often focus on the works of major figures in the literary scene, thus emphasizing the importance of those who are known locally and internationally, and who represent nationalist expressions. While such studies are versatile and can yield new insights even regarding the works of central figures, they still abide by this notion of literary *representation*. Despite the many angles from which his work has been approached, Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), for example, is first and foremost a symbol of Palestinian suffering, resistance, and poetics. Even works that attest to the agency of the Palestinian literary text to "produce its own demographic imaginary – its own mediated infinity – and so its own criteria for national citizenship and national belonging,"[22] are still reliant on taking the "national landscape" as "a bounded and administered territory,"[23] and a central tool for the study of Palestinian literature. This creates the problem that those works that deviate, such as Barghouti's, are not canonized or take a long time to be recognized as part of the literary canon.

Before moving on to Barghouti's life and works, I must make a note on the use of the terms 'Arab' and 'Arabic' in this dissertation. The word 'Arabic' is often used to indicate the language of the written text,[24] while Arab often relates to the ethnic, geographic, or cultural

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[21] Omri explains that the problem of political limitations extends to literary theories concerned with Third World literature, where historical, political, and cultural purposes have been the main reason for studying literature. Mohammad-Salah Omri, *Nationalism, Islam and World Literature: Sites of Confluence in the Writings of Maḥmūd al-Masʿadī* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

[22] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, 40.

[23] Ibid, 34.

[24] Muhammad Mustafa Badawi defines modern Arabic literature as "literature written exclusively in the Arabic language." Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, "Introduction," in *Modern Arabic Literature,* edited by M.M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1.
The linguistic definition is for sure the most prominent one since 'Arabic' is a referral to a language of writing and speaking. However, taking the social, political, and personal lives of many Arab authors into consideration, one can see that many literary works, particularly starting from the 20th century, have been written in different languages (English, French). This includes, for example, the Francophone literature written by Arab authors from North Africa (Paul Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), x.

demarcations.[25] Such a clear distinction between the use of the two terms is problematic and invites a myriad of other issues including who and/or what represents an Arab and how this representation is directly guided by social and political shifts and changes over time.[26] Since most of the literary works consulted are written in Arabic, this dissertation uses the adjective 'Arabic' as reference to the general field of Arabic literature and the different literary genres (i.e. Arabic autobiography, Arabic poetry, etc.). Arab is used in reference to authors (such as Mahmoud Darwish, Edward Said, etc.)

Conceptually, Barghouti alludes to the complex factors that feed into what is considered Arab culture and literature. For example, he reads *al-adab al-ʿArabī* as a continuation of what has started years before the emergence of Islam (pre-Islamic Arabia). This is particularly clear in his text "Qiṣaṣ ʿan zaman wathanī,"[27] which will be mentioned later. Similarly, Barghouti's conception of what is 'Palestinian literature' shows his resistance to an ideological definition that does not take into account its contextual existence within a larger Arab heritage. More importantly, Barghouti is aware of the importance of perceiving what is called *adab ʿArabī* in relation to a world criticism (*naqd ʿālamī*) and a world civilization (*ḥaḍāra ʿālamiyya*).[28] By reading his literary and critical works, one can extract

[25] Tahia Abdel Nasser explains in her introduction that, "I employ the term 'Arab' to encompass writers from the Arab world" regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. Tahia Abdel Nasser, *Literary Autobiography and Arab National Struggle* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 6.
The edited book by Layla Al Maleh *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* uses 'Anglophone' to indicate the written language used, and 'Arab' to reference "Arab authors, or…authors of Arab descent." Layla Al Maleh, "Preface," *Arab Voices in Diaspora*, *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*, edited by Layla Al Maleh (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), viiii.
For more on the complexities of the term 'Arab' in pre-modern Arab culture and literature, see: Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).
[26] Even if Arabic is meant to refer to the language, as Petra Sijpesteijn explains, "…understanding – really understanding – even the simplest Arabic sentence requires an understanding of the customs, history, rituals and *Weltanschauung* of those that produced it." Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "The Wisdom of the Arabs: 400 Years of Cross-Cultural Interactions," *Wit and Wisdom in Classical Arabic Literature* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015), 19.
[27] Hussein Barghouti, *al-Sādin, al-Nāqa- Qiṣaṣ ʿan zaman wathanī* (Ramallah: al-Muʾassasa al-Filasṭīniyya li al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 2003).
[28] Ibid, "Min usus al-shiʿr ʿind al-ʿArab," in Murād al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī" (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 123.

his call to question the use of such terminologies and for the need for an awareness of the intricacies that go into their construction.

Barghouti's major literary departures are evident in his abandonment of set and known literary terminologies and political aspirations. I will show how Barghouti's engagement with Palestinian society and life was founded upon questioning the meanings of representation and upon finding modes of literary transgressions, offering, instead, a fresh perspective on notions of political struggle, land, and writing. What is studied is how Barghouti works from within and in relation to the Palestinian literary scene rather than from outside it.[29] This study offers new insights into Palestinian literature as it widens its critical scopes by exploring Barghouti's experience. The dissertation does not make a general claim on the status of Palestinian literature. Rather, by focusing on Barghouti and his works this dissertation takes into account his reception and studies the social, political, and literary circumstances that influenced his literary experience. In this way, how an individual (Barghouti) interacts with and influences the communal (Palestinian literature) and vice versa is explored. The notion of the body comes into play here. Barghouti overlaps his body with that of Palestinian land and literature. A singular body and its evolution – Barghouti and his work – becomes the vehicle through which the body of Palestinian literature and the forces that aim to form and reshape it can be scrutinized.

One explicit example of the importance of the physical body and its relation to conceptual, social, and political events in Barghouti's life is his practice of martial arts. Barghouti mentions a few times in *al-Farāgh al-ladhī raʾā al-tafāṣīl* (*The Void that Saw the Details*) practicing Tai chi and Karate as a force against the Israeli occupation. The

[29] Sabry Hafez similarly argues that studying the writings of the new literary movement of the 1990s in Egypt should not be by "[freeing] these texts from the useful conventions of reception of narrative texts, but [by demonstrating] how these conventions are modified and transformed to sharpen the text's ability to embrace an ever-changing reality." Sabry Hafez, "Urban Change and Literary Transformation: The Egyptian Novel in the 1990s", in *Sensibilities of the Islamic Mediterranean: Self-Expression in a Muslim Culture from Post-Classical Times to the Present Day,* edited by Robin Ostle (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 346.

occupation's aim was to "precipitate in the soul the feeling of its defect."[30] What further asserts the central role played by martial arts on Barghouti's philosophical and literary thinking is that the foreword to his second book of criticism *Suqūṭ* is written by Ḥasan Ḥalawāni, Barghouti's Karate trainer. In the foreword, we read about the friendship that developed between Barghouti and Ḥalawānī, and about the efforts Barghouti put in introducing Karate to Birzeit University students. The foreword positions Karate as part and parcel of the main arguments in Barghouti's book, which investigates the ways in which the individual attempts at consolidating one's inner conflictions with the external circumstances. Furthermore, Barghouti's interest in martial arts is not solely personal or literary. It is also indicative of his engagement in the educational development in Palestine. Martial arts function as a pedagogical tool for teaching students the art of "flowing" (*insiyāb*)[31] that can help in escaping the feelings of defeat. This idea corresponds to Barghouti's notion of agility as a way of transcending conformism in the acts of reading and writing as discussed below in this introduction.

Hussein Barghouti's life, work, and influences

Hussein Barghouti was born in the village of Kobar, near Ramallah, in 1954. After finishing high school, Barghouti moved to Budapest to study political science and economics, but returned to Palestine after a few years. In 1983, he obtained his BA in English Literature from Birzeit University. Subsequently, Barghouti moved to the US to receive both his MA and PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Washington. In 1992, Barghouti returned to Palestine to work as a teacher and researcher in different Palestinian universities. Furthermore, he was the managing editor of the journal *al-Shuʿarāʾ* and was a co-founder of

[30] "كان الاحتلال يرسخ في الروح الشعور بعجزها."
Hussein Barghouti, "Dhākira ʿādiyya fī zaman ghayr ʿādī," in *al-Farāgh al-ladhī raʾa al-tafāṣīl*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: Dār al-Bayraq al-ʿArabī, 2006), 46.
[31] Ibid.

Bayt al-Shiʿr (The House of Poetry) in Ramallah.[32] During the last few years of his battle with Lymphoma, Barghouti decided to return with his wife Petra and son Āthar to the village where he grew up, Kobar, to spend his remaining days. Barghouti passed away in 2002 and is buried, following his request, under the almond trees of his village.[33]



Figure 1: Barghouti's grave in Kobar (Source: by author, Palestine, March 2019)

Barghouti incorporates, in his literary corpus, different literary influences. He was born in Palestine, yet still lived in Europe and the US for a long time, and wrote in English and Arabic (although his main writings were in Arabic). His literary corpus is vast and

[32] Hussein Barghouti, *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shiʿr, 2008), 349.
[33] I took the following picture of Barghouti's grave and the one in chapter 3 of the area of *al-dayr al-juwwānī* during my visit to Kobar on 15 March 2019.

includes four poetry collections: *al-Ruʾyā* (*The Vision*) (1988), *Laylā wa Tawba* (*Laylā and Tawba*) (1996), *Tūjad alfāẓ awḥash min hādhihi* (*There are More Unfamiliar Formulations than These*) (1998), and *Marāyā sāʾila* (*Liquid Mirrors*) (2000). His other works include a post-modern text called *Ḥajar al-ward* (*The Rosetta Stone*) (2002), a novel entitled *Al-Ḍiffa al-thālitha li nahr al-Urdunn* (*The Third Bank of the Jordan River*) (1984), and his autobiographical works *al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq* (2001), *Saʾakūn bayn al-lawz* (*I Will be Among the Almond Trees*) (2004). His critical studies include *Azmat al-shiʿr al-maḥallī* (*The Crisis of Local Literature*) (1979), and *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ: al- Ṣirāʿ al-nafsī fī al-adab* (*The Fall of the Seventh Wall: Inner Conflict in Literature*) (1981), his PhD dissertation "The Other Voice: an Introduction to the Phenomenology of Metamorphosis" (1992), and *al-Sādin, al-Nāqa, Qiṣaṣ ʿan zaman wathanī* (*The Kaʿba Custodian, The Female Camel, Tales of a Pagan Time*) (2003). He has also given many lectures on the rules of Arabic poetics and wrote (published and unpublished) studies and articles on literature and philosophy. Furthermore, Barghouti worked on more than five plays, edited and/or advised the production of four films, and wrote many songs for Palestinian bands.[34]

Barghouti's many travels and studies in different places (Palestine, Hungary, the US), and interest in different disciplines and fields of study, such as literature, history, philosophy, and political economy assert the varied sources and figures of influence on his thought and writing. With such an avid reader and an author whose writing style resides upon inviting a web of sources and jumping between them, it is difficult to provide a detailed analysis of the intertextual engagement and inspirations in Barghouti's works. This is particularly due to the large number of influences, the differences in the level of inspiration, and Barghouti's aim at overflowing the different channels of inspiration. The influences include direct and explicit references to certain philosophers, authors, and theories, as well as implicit references in the

[34] For more, see al-Shaikh who gives a detailed account of Barghouti's personal life as well as an overview of his critical and fictional works. Abdul-Rahim al-Shaikh. "Beyond the Last Twilight: an Annotated Translation of Barghūthī's Autobiography *al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq (The Blue Light)*" (PhD diss., The University of Utah, 2004).

form of intertextual relations or general lines of inspirations, which cannot be ascertained for sure (See, for example, footnote 118). Some appear sporadically, while others are recurrent. Some are used as frameworks for certain texts, and are criticized in other texts.

Such an act of exploring the complex issue of inspirations, intertextualities, and literary relations is beyond the scope of the dissertation, and requires further research by deeply investigating specific channels of influence. I have followed these endeavours in several of the conference presentations that I gave during the time of my PhD. For example, I gave a presentation about Barghouti's engagement with pre-Islamic Arabian mythology as part of the NISIS spring school in Istanbul in 2015, and a presentation on the influence of Mahmoud Darwish and Muzaffar al-Nawwab on Barghouti's writing as part of the ACLA conference in Utrecht in 2017.

The list of influences on Barghouti's writings and thought includes authors, critics, historical figures, literary figures, philosophical theories, films, painters, and martial arts. However, there are a few figures, theories, and schools of thought that are central to Barghouti's conception. The main influences can be extracted from Barghouti's own declarations, from the works of scholars who have written about Barghouti, from the literary works of Barghouti, or from the bibliographical entries in his critical and literary works.

This dissertation provides a discussion of a few influences in the course of the analysis in the different chapters. These include Arab literary figures such as Mahmoud Darwish, Adonis, al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), Laylā al-Akhyaliyya, Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 896). It is important to note that the chosen examples function to support the arguments in the dissertation, and provide context to the discussion rather than present an overview of the nature or extent of the influence. The reader of the dissertation will notice that some influences are discussed more than others, such as Marx and Lukács (see section 1.4), and Laylā al-Akhyaliyya (see section 2.8). This is in a large part due to the thematic

discussion that dictates the focus of the analysis, and it is influenced by the choice of passages. This is in no way comprehensive, and the influence of many important figures such as al-Mutanabbī and Nietzsche is central to Barghouti's writing and can be further investigated.[35] Friedrich Nietzsche is a recurrent name in Barghouti's writings. Barghouti explains in the introduction to his PhD dissertation that the understanding and definition of 'fiction' in regards to the outside universe that he puts forth is greatly inspired by Nietzsche.[36] A future study could thus focus on reading the two authors comparatively to note lines of influence and inspiration, but also aspects of departure on Barghouti's side.

Some of the influences are not surprising or unusual. T.S. Eliot, for example, is one of the most influential Western authors on modern Arab authors.[37] There are some seminal works of inspiration that Barghouti mentions. These include the Torah, the New Testament, the Quran, and the *Thousand and one nights*. Mahmoud Darwish is also a central figure whom Arab, and particularly Palestinian authors and poets, credit as inspirational. It is, however, the way in which Barghouti manages to tie the different sources and jump between one and the other that colour his style of writing. In one article entitled "al-Baḥth ʿan lugha ukhrā," Barghouti explores the malleable nature of the 'I' and its relation to language and literature by taking the reader through a discussion of different literary excerpts that belong to sources from different time periods and places such as Muzaffar al-Nawwab, Rimbaud, Darwish, Barghouti's own poetry, and a song by the Lebanese singer Fairuz. The article is written as a series of aphorisms. The mix of sources alludes to Barghouti's way of thinking and writing, which is constructed by bringing together diverse inspirations. Furthermore, it stresses the centrality of certain themes in life and art such as the role of the subject, the 'I',

[35] See al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 33.
[36] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 11.
[37] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West," *Journal of Arabic Literature,* vol. 2 (1971): 76-91.

in participating in the acts of reading and writing. This participation is contingent upon the ability to 'transform', i.e. to imagine one's self as something or someone different. [38]

As will be noted in some footnotes, Barghouti engaged with the writings of many contemporary Arab scholars and used them as means of support to his arguments. Firās al-Sawwāḥ and Nasr Hamid abu Zayd are two examples. Similarly, he was in direct contact with many of the contemporary Palestinian authors and critics of his time; these include Asʿad al-Asʿad, Ibrāhīm Jawhar,[39] ʿAbdul-Laṭīf ʿAql, and Ṣubḥi al-Shaḥrūrī.[40] Despite his criticism of al-Asʿad, who was the editor-in-chief of the journal *al-Katib*, Barghouti still published many of his writings there. Barghouti was the managing editor of the journal *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, which published works by many influential contemporary Palestinian and Arab poets. These included, for example, the Bahraini poet Qāsim Ḥaddād, Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian scholar Izz al-Din Manasra, and the poet Asʿad al-Asʿad. This quick survey shows how Barghouti was exposed to different channels of inspiration and was in direct contact with different contemporary poets and scholars.

Barghouti as subject of study

Barghouti's works are often judged (negatively and positively) as philosophical endeavours that revolve around the incomprehensible and the marginal. The marginalization of Barghouti provides a fresh intake on his works that are undisturbed by any expectations of representation nor of a previously set 'Palestinian' check-list. Instead of a direct use of

[38] Hussein Barghouti, "al-Baḥth ʿan lugha ukhrā," *ʿAshtār*, no. 2-3 (January 1994).

[39] For example, Barghouti narrates how he attempted to experiment with poetic rhythms by mixing different rhythmic feet together in his first published poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā*. He then explains how the Palestinian critic Ibrāhīm Jawhar did not see any "vision" (*ruʾya*) in what Barghouti was hoping to achieve. This did not deter Barghouti who continued to experiment with Arabic prosody beyond the rules set by the philologist al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 791). Ibid., "Min usus," 122.

[40] The contact was in the form of criticism, where, for example, Barghouti criticizes the works of al-Asʿad and ʿAql in his first book of criticism *Azmat al-shiʿr*, or criticism towards Barghouti's writing. Al-Shaḥrūrī, as Barghouti writes, helped Barghouti conceptualize his ideas on the concept of estrangement. Barghouti's relation to the contemporary literary scene and his reception were nuanced. ʿAql became one of Barghouti's closest friends with whom he had many debates over philosophical issues. Before this friendship, however, the two had an unamicable relationship because of Barghouti's criticism of ʿAql's poetry in *Azmat al-shiʿr*. Barghouti, 118-119.

political language, or a clear juxtaposition between the personal and the collective, Barghouti's distinct voice presents itself through a heavy reliance on *movement* in space and time and a stream-of-consciousness style of writing. These acts of innovation and experimentations can be delineated, as I will show, "through various accidents and encounters entered on the body."[41]

Barghouti's reception has been tumultuous, with different opinions on the aims and the position of his literary works within the Palestinian literary canon. While risking oversimplification, we can mark distinctly different reactions to his work during his life and after his death. During his lifetime, reception of his work was mainly characterized by "a lack of knowledge of what Barghouti has hazarded, or a total disregard which led many people to misunderstand him."[42] This, in return, meant that many of Barghouti's works were not published or recognized as a seminal contribution to Palestinian literature. Al-Shaikh gives an example regarding the reception of *al-Ḍaw'*. He writes that, while some Palestinian critics found in it a successful departure from "the semilegendary archetypal protagonist found in tradition, Palestinian fictional, and autobiographical writings," others found the autobiography to be tackling "marginal concerns" that are not relevant to the reality of Palestinian society and politics.[43]

In a kind of eulogy, Murid Barghouti reflects in his autobiography *Wulidt hunāk wulidt hunā* on Hussein Barghouti's positions in the literary scene. He writes:

هكذا وجدتني أعيد كتابة موته في مقدمتي لطبعة مصرية من كتابه ولم أذكر فيها أن الموجع في حكاية حسين البرغوثي أن بعض أفراد العائلة لم يعترفوا بقيمته حياً، البعض كان يسخر من شَعره "النسائي" ومن ارتدائه

[41] Tarek el-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 2.

[42] "عدم المعرفة لما اجترحه البرغوثي، أو التجاهل الذي حاق به جعل الكثيرين يقعون في سوء الفهم"
Murād Al-Sūdānī. "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī," (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012): 5.
Note: al-Sūdānī provides in an appendix to his MA dissertation 17 published and unpublished texts by Barghouti. Many of these texts were consulted and quoted in this dissertation.

[43] Al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 2.

للبرمودا الكاكي وإلقائه المحاضرات حافياً، الشاعر ينتزع مكانته بين أهله بموته. حتى الكتّاب الذين أكلتهم الغيرة من سطوته تنافسوا في "حبه ميتاً".

> I thus found myself re-writing his death in my introduction to an Egyptian edition of his book [*Saʾakūn*]. I did not mention that the painful part of Hussayn al-Barghūthī's story, is that some of his family members did not acknowledge his value while he was alive. Some used to make fun of his 'feminine' hair, and of his Khaki Bermuda shorts, and of him giving lectures barefoot. The poet wrestles his position amongst his acquaintances only through his death. Even the authors, whose jealousy of his gravitational pull ate at them, competed to show their postmortrem love.[44]

This reception of Hussein Barghouti's work corresponds to a running theme of his life – lived as an act of marginalization. Barghouti writes in *al-Ḍawʾ* "It does not matter whether I was 'stupid'…or a 'genius', but what matters is the fact that I am always out of context; not belonging to anyone, odd, and weird, and on the margins of life."[45] However, one should not write off Barghouti's whole life and career as marginalized. Although Barghouti's works do not feature in most anthologies and literary overviews until a few years after his death, a closer look at his position in the Palestinian scene presents a more varied image. During his life, Barghouti was in direct contact with most of the well-known contemporary authors, particularly Mahmoud Darwish. He was also involved in the academic and cultural scene in Palestine, one important example being his extracurricular lectures and discussions that he gave at Birzeit University, particularly on the rules and techniques of poetry (delivered in the year 1995).[46] Barghouti's position within and in relation to the literary scene in Palestine should thus not be read as plain and simple ostracism. Rather, he occupied a more nuanced position that oscillated between thematic and stylistic expectation and innovation.

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[44] Mourid Barghouti, *Wulidt hunāk wulidt hunā* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2009), 167-168. First published in 2009.

[45] "ليس المهم أنّني كنت..."أهبل"...أو "عبقريا"، بل كوني دائماً خارج السياق، لا أنتمي إلى أحد، شاذاً، وغريباً، وعلى هامش الدنيا". Barghouti, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 126.

[46] al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat," 2-3. These lectures, which al-Sūdānī adds as an appendix to his MA thesis, will be frequently referenced in this dissertation. As he explains, al-Sūdānī had to rely on the original texts of the lectures as well as the recordings that he made (3).

Barghouti's reception has witnessed a posthumous change, particularly in the past few years. A 2016 blog on Barghouti describes the sudden infatuation of young Palestinian readers with the writer's work, which has become kind of a "trend."[47] Many pieces give an overview of his life and work and provide some highly positive notes on the author's stylistic, critical, philosophical, and artistic insights. Of late, Barghouti has been described as "the poet, the novelist, the contemplative one, who transcendends absence,"[48] with headlines such as "Hussein Barghouti is the Adūnīs of Palestine"[49] summing up the current appraisal of his work.[50] The importance of these new takes on Barghouti is their critical and personal nature. On the one hand, they are motivated by the personal connection to Barghouti and his writings, and his influence on the author; on the other, they attest to the need for a serious critical investigation of his literary production and his philosophical standings and influence.

The prominent Palestinian literary critic Faisal Darraj considers Barghouti to be the last and most important author to take up the Palestinian novel after the novelists of the

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[47] Eslam al-Saqqa, "Kayf Nataʿāmal maʿ Mawrūth Ḥussayn Barghūthī al-'adabī," *Sharīṭ Cinema*, accessed 29 July 29, 2017, https://eslamsq.wordpress.com/2016/04/01/hussain/.

[48] Aḥmad Daḥbūr, "Damʿat al-Arbiʿā': al-Shāʿir Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī Dhikrāh al-Ḥādiya ʿashr," *al-Ḥayāt al-Jadīda*, accessed April, 18, 2016 http://www.alhaya.ps/arch_page.php?nid=204778.

" ...الشاعر، الروائي، المتأمل، المتعالي على الغياب، لا يزال يواصل حضوره الابداعي، بتواضع من لا يعنيه انه يجترح معجزة."

"...the poet, the novelist, the meditative, and the transcendentalist of absence. He still continues his creative existence with the humility of someone who does not care to craft a miracle."

[49] Al-Sudanī, "Mudawwanat," 6.

[50] The entries on Barghouti after his death are many, and include personal and critical commentaries in journals, newspapers, and online blogs and forums. Some examples include: ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kātiba, a Palestinian poet and critic, who, writing in *Mashārif* in the summer of 2002, predicts the growing interest in Barghouti's literary experience, which he calls a "case of misunderstanding" within the Palestinian cultural scene. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kātiba. "al-Barghūthī: Ḥālat sūʾ fahm." *Mashārif* 17 (summer 2002): 189-193. See also from the same journal: Kifāḥ Fannī, "Qadar akīd ʿalā ḍifāf ghayr akīda," *Mashārif* 17 (summer 2002): 194-202. This entry is significant as it exemplifies Barghouti's influence on the author. He ends his piece with a poem that he heard from Barghouti in a dream (this can be seen as an echo of Barghouti's own commentary about the 'dream poetry' in his poetry collection *Tūjad*). See also a section entitled "Raḥīl" in an exclusive edition of the 17th issue of *al-Shuʿarāʾ* magazine including obituaries written by different Palestinian writers and thinkers. Murād Al-Sūdānī, and Aḥmad Daḥbūr et al. "Raḥīl: Fī wadāʿ zamīlina Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī," in *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, no. 17 (2002): 337-394. An example of a book review is that of the Jordanian critic Ibrāhim Khalīl who argues that Barghouti's text, *al-Ḍawʾ,* falls at the intersection of autobiographical writing and novelistic writing. Ibrāhim Khalīl, "al-Barghūthī wa *al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq*: Naṣṣ murtabik bayn al-riwāya wa al-sīra," *Qāb Qawsayn*, accessed 10 May 2017, http://www.qabaqaosayn.com/node/4215.

In the past few years, Barghouti has been featured in more academic works and biographies, such as: "Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī," in *Muʿjam al-Babtain li-shuʿarāʾ al-ʿArabiyya fī al-qarnayn al-tāsiʿ ʿashar wa al-ʿishrīn,* http://www.almoajam.org/poet_details.php?id=2079. ʿAwad abū Zaynah, *Aṣwāt min al-ḥiṣār: Riwāyat al-Ḍiffa al-Gharbiyya wa Qiṭāʿ Ghazza 1993-2005* (London: E-Kutub Ltd., 2011).

sixties (Ghassan Kanafani, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, and Emile Habiby).[51] As Darraj explains, instead of the imagined land of Palestine in the writings of Ghassan Kanafani and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Barghouti's return to Palestine, and particularly to his village Kobar after his diagnosis, witnesses "a place whose features have left, and was transformed by its departing features to destruction and a hostage at once."[52] Writing in 2005, Mardam-Bey notes the emergence of a new style of writing in Palestinian literature that takes the individual and the personal as its starting point rather than "une littérature engagée à l'ancienne."[53] Barghouti's *al-Ḍawʾ* is seen as "un livre culte" and an example of this new style.[54] Barghouti, as Mahmoud Darwish comments in the foreword to the French edition of *al-Ḍawʾ*, smartly abandons the "expected discourse" of political commitment that has become a stamp of modern Palestinian literature.[55] Instead, he obscures the political to give a more prominent place to other aspects of life within his work. Darwish attributes the obscurity of Barghouti's name to the latter's occupation with writing poetry that was weighed down by a heavy reliance on an "intellectual burden" that was influenced by his work as an academic, and which did not suit the general artistic taste in Palestine.[56]

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[51] Faisal Darraj, "al-Riwāya al-ʿArabiyya taʿīsh zaman manqūṣ…wa lā wujūd li 'qāriʾ mujtamaʿī' fī thaqāfatinā," Interview by Niḍāl al-Qāsim, *al-Quds al-Arabi,* 29 December, 2014, http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=271324.
It would be interesting to read Barghouti's last autobiography *Saʾakūn* in conversation with Murid Barghouti's two memoirs: Mourid Barghouti, *Raʾayt Rāmallāh* (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2014). First published in 1997, and Barghouti, *Wulidt Hunāk*, 2009. The works portray a return narrative after long years of exile, and explore the relations between father and son in regards to memory, language, and views. One major difference between Murid's and Hussein's works is that while both authors contextualize the personal within the historical, political, and communal, Murid's memories are guided by the poet's enforced exile, while Hussein's exile was self-inflicted.
For more on Murid Barghouti's "poetic autobiography" (63) and the exploration of the notion of 'solitude' see: Abdel Nasser, *Literary Autobiography*, 80-85.

[52] Faisal Darraj, *Riwāyat al-taqaddum wa ightirāb al-mustaqbal: Taḥawwulāt al-Ruʾyā fī al-riwāya al-ʿArabiyya,* (Beirut: Dar al-Adāb, 2010), 246.

[53] "A literature engaged with the ancient."
Farouk Mardam-Bey, "Le piège des différences," *La pensée de midi* 14 (2005/1): 15.

[54] "A book [that represents] a trend."
Ibid.

[55] Mahmoud Darwish, "*al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq* li Ḥusayn al-Barġūthī fī Ṭabʿa Faransiyya Qaddamahā Maḥmūd Darwīsh," *Al-Ayyam* (May 4 2004), http://www.al-ayyam.com/ar_page.php?id=33dcday3398874Y33dcda

[56] "...حمولة معرفية..."
Ibid.

Sabry Hafez points out that "[f]requently exceptional texts will appear before their time and announce a break with prevalent aesthetics without however, meriting the term 'literary phenomenon'."[57] The change in reception and the booming appreciation of Barghouti's works mark a shift in the literary scene in Palestine. Barghouti is not representative of a writing movement nor is he the "literary phenomenon" of the time when he was writing. He is, however, a precursor of literary conceptions and convictions that have become more accepted in the last few years, particularly after his death. It is thus indeed time to seriously study his work as a force that carves the way for literary expressions that are "indicative of major cultural change"[58] (see section 1.2).

While many local Palestinian writers and journalists have written about Barghouti's works, a comprehensive study of Barghouti is still lacking. The focus has often been limited to a specific genre, and therefore a small number of selected works, rather than a thematic reading of his diverse writing that better position his work within the modern Palestinian and Arabic literary canons.

Barghouti and prior research

Having authored many texts, Barghouti has been gaining more attention from experts as well as the general reading public in Palestine since his death in 2002. Despite this growing interest, Barghouti's works are still understudied. Despite his prolific writing across multiple genres, Barghouti's name and texts still do not feature in most of the studies on different genres of Palestinian literature and art. This general absence in scholarly studies has, of course, its exceptions. Two main studies (one MA and one PhD dissertation) by two of Barghouti's students and friends solely focus on his works. In his MA dissertation "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī," (2012), which is written

[57] Hafez, "Urban Change and Literary Transformation," 344.
[58] Ibid.

in Arabic, Murād al-Sūdānī highlights Barghouti's critical propositions on poetry in Arabic literature. Al-Sūdānī bases his study on the collection of extracurricular lectures that Barghouti delivered to his students in 1995 (many of which are unpublished manuscripts), as well as his poetry collections. Al-Sūdānī's dissertation presents Barghouti's philosophy of poetics by focusing on some literary notions in Barghouti's doctrine of poetics such as the role of the "I" (*anā*), place, myths, Arabic meters, and the overlapping influence of different art forms on his literature.

Abdul-Rahim al-Shaikh, lecturer of Philosophy in the Cultural Studies program at Birzeit University, has also written extensively on the works of Barghouti.[59] His PhD dissertation (2004) is entitled "Beyond the Last Twilight: an Annotated Translation of Barghouti's Autobiography *Al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq* (The Blue Light)." In the first half of the dissertation, al-Shaikh gives an overview of Barghouti's personal life as well as his literary works. Besides the wonderful insights one gets from reading this background, al-Shaikh gives some details regarding Barghouti's own thoughts on his own work and how the Palestinian readership has received Barghouti's works. Al-Shaikh's translation comes in very handy for those who want to read Barghouti's most famous work *The Blue Light*, since it is the only one of Barghouti's text to be completely translated into English.[60]

[59] Al-Shaikh has also worked on a translation of Barghouti's PhD dissertation into Arabic (forthcoming, 2019). He has published a few articles in which he discusses some of Barghouti's themes and conceptions. Some of these articles will be referred to in the course of the dissertation.

[60] A French translation exists of the same book under the title *Lumière bleue* by Marianne Weiss. Hussein Barghouti, *Lumière bleue*, trans. Marianne Weiss, (Arles: Actes Sud Sindbad, 2004). Read a book review of the French translation here: Mustapha Harzoune, "Lumière bleue. Hussein Al-Barghouti traduit de l'arabe (Palestine) par Marianne Weiss, préface de Mahmoud Darwich Sindbad, 2004," *Homme & Migrations*, 2004: 123-124. https://www.persee.fr/doc/homig_1142-852x_2004_num_1250_1_5541_t1_0123_0000_4
Amal Eqeiq, assistant professor of Arabic Studies and Comparative Literature at Williams College, has also translated a few of Barghouti's poems into English. Hussein al-Barghouti, "Poems by Hussein al-Barghouti," trans. Amal Eqeiq, *Jadaliyya* (11 November 2011). http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/24607/Poems-by-Hussein-Al-Barghouti. An excerpt from Barghouti *Saʾakūn* is also provided in English in a special issue on Palestinian literature. "Hussein al-Barghouthi- I'll be among the Almonds," trans. Mona Zaki, *Banipal: Magazine of Modern Arab Literature - Feature on Palestinian Literature*, 15-16 (Autumn 2002-Spring 2003): 107-111. See also a French translation of Saʾakūn: Hussein al-Barghouti, *Je serai parmi les amandiers*, trans. Marianne Weiss (Arles: Actes Sud Sindbad, 2008).

Another seminal study is that of the Egyptian poet and scholar Iman Mersal. In her 2012 article "Blue Light: Reality as the Trap of Memory,"[61] Mersal offers a reading of Barghouti's autobiography *al-Ḍawʾ*, taking cues from Jacques Derrida's ideas on 'hospitality.'[62] What Mersal shows is how Barghouti's autobiography represents a departure from Arabic autobiographical writings which describe a journey to another (usually Western) country and the effects of being in a foreign place on one's identity. While most Arabic autobiographies dwell on the difficulties of travelling and the dealings with border controls and day-to-day difficulties,[63] Barghouti's moves these issues to the background and instead makes the reader part of his interactions with people who are considered by their own societies as marginal and different. Barghouti thus repositions the definition of estrangement from a feeling that is inflicted by the move to a different place to one that is more internal, borderless, and universal.

One of the most important works that feature Barghouti is Khaled Furani's exciting ethnographic study of Palestinian poetry, *Silencing the Sea: Secular Rhythms in Palestinian Poetry.*[64] In his book, Furani builds upon Talal Asad's understanding of the secular in order to present the changes in poetic form of modern Arabic poetry. Furani dedicates the first part of the tenth chapter in the book to an interview with Barghouti. This work is especially helpful because it gives direct insights into Barghouti's view on literature and his relation to his contemporaries in the Arabic literary scene. One of the questions that Furani poses to

[61] Iman Mersal, "*al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq*: al-Waqāʾiʿ maṣyadat al-dhākira," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 21 (2012): 108-132.
[62] Mersal makes reference to Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Standford University Press, 2000), particularly in regards to the 'welcoming' of the foreigner by asking/not asking for their name (see "Foreigner Question," 3- 75).
[63] Mersal, "*al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq*," 110.
[64] Khaled Furani, *Silencing the Sea: Secular Rhythms in Palestinian Poetry* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012).

Barghouti is about the need to write poetry.[65] Barghouti's answer constitutes the threshold of this dissertation. He replies:

> Why poetry? Perhaps there is no answer today for this kind of question. It is like asking, Why music? Not that this is general, but it is in the nature of the human…Why do we have *eyes*?... Frankly, I don't know, but maybe this is what brings satisfaction, the satisfaction derived from creating new things… To create something is to *transform* something or many things. Whether material or mental, you transform many things, the least of which is yourself. When you create something new, there is something new in you. You see things in new ways; you articulate them in new ways. (italics mine)

As Furani explains, it seems that for Barghouti, "[n]o *telos* other than biological datum can furnish a story for poetry."[66] Barghouti equates the existence of poetry to the existence of eyes. The literary and the corporeal are understood within the scheme of creation in which new levels of artistic and visual perceptions are achieved. It is thus this biological and corporeal nature of poetry, and literature in general, that is taken as the premise for reading his work in this dissertation.

Being one of the few authors to approach Barghouti's literary works and general philosophies, Esmail Nashif uncovers Barghouti's thoughts on the problems surrounding Palestinian politics and society and their inabilities to provide strong "forms of knowledge."[67] Both writers question what constructs the Palestinian self (*al-dhāt al-filasṭīniyya*) and its place in relation to modernity and change. Equally, they both interrogate the methodological approaches in the study of society and literature, and the academic hegemony that the seeker of knowledge has to confront.[68] For example, they both assert agility (*al-rashāqa*)[69] as the

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[65] Furani explains how his "… most simple questions, so readily answered by other poets, appeared very dull, lazy, trite, and superficial when I put them to al-Barghouti." (Ibid, 177).
[66] Ibid, 178.
[67] Esmail Nashif, *al-ʿAtaba fī fatḥ al-episteme* (Ramallah: Muwāṭin. al-Muʾassasa al- Filasṭīniyya li Dirāsat al-Dīmuqrāṭiyya, 2010), 12.
"هناك فجوة تتسع باطراد بين عمق المأساة الفلسطينية، بأنيتها كما بتكراريتها، وأشكال معرفتها الفلسطينية والغربية على حد سواء."
[68] Ibid, 13.
[69] See Hussein Barghouti, "al-Rashāqa al-dhihniyya," in Murād al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī," MA diss., Birzeit University (2012), 102-105.

trait that students and readers should acquire in order to move beyond set forms of criticism, teaching, and methodologies and engage with multiple disciplines.[70]

The aforementioned studies chart aspects of the peculiarity of Barghouti's experience, and focus primarily on his poetry or his first autobiography. This dissertation, on the other hand, provides a study to more of his works, focusing particularly on the intersections between his critical and literary productions. Barghouti's corpus is rich because it combines theory and practice. Being both a critic and an author, Barghouti occupies a two-faceted position. On the one hand, he provides his readers with literary analysis and commentaries on cultural life in Palestine, and, on the other hand, he presents his own conception of poetry and literature. These are then tested out in his artistic productions.

Methodology

Barghouti conceptualises literature as that which is experiential, changing, and positional. The body, thus, lends itself as an appropriate medium, as it moves between the fixed and the fluid, the formative and the forming. The value of a monographic study, such as this dissertation, is its ability to capture the interaction between the micro and the macro, and register streams of poetic, social, and personal inspirations. Barghouti's work was concerned with literary investigation and border-crossing. In other words, he is involved in rethinking what makes the bodies of the poetic and the literary.

Although the focus of this study is on the literary productions of one author, not all of Barghouti's works were selected. There are multiple reasons for this. Despite his short life, Barghouti was able to contribute to different literary and artistic genres from poetry to prose, criticism to socio-economic readings, and songs to theatre. To cover all of these works would result in an intellectual biography, which is not the goal of this study. Although such a

[70] Nashif, *al-ʿAtaba*, 15.

biography is needed, the goal here is to identify specific literary tropes that connect body and literature together. A mélange of some famous and lesser-known works is chosen to elucidate some pivotal notions in relation to Palestinian literature and literary criticism in general. As for the non-textual genres (film, and *performed* theatre), it was decided that their inclusion would too greatly widen the literature-focussed discipline of this study.[71] It would also have required an in-depth analysis of other methods like performance studies, media, and audience reception. This study certainly understands the link between different art forms and the ideals they share (a belief that characterizes Barghouti's concept of writing and artistic production, as will be shown in the coming chapters). Nevertheless, as a starting point for delving into Barghouti's contributions, literary texts – in which issues related to performativity and reception are still evident – were chosen. A short treatment of Barghouti's songs is provided in chapter 1 as a way of demonstrating his engagement with society. The songs are primarily approached as texts that reside in the realm of performativity.

This dissertation utilizes the fact that Barghouti wrote both literary and critical works and looks at his critical commentaries and metapoetic productions. The texts are used both to set up a theoretical discussion and to highlight some of Barghouti's theoretical notions and serve as exemplary to these general notions. Thus, the texts complement each other and link theory and practice, which are part and parcel of his literary experience. Below is a list of the main texts that will be discussed:

1. Poetry excerpts from all of Barghouti's published poetry collections:

a) *al-Ruʾyā*

b) *Laylā wa Tawba- Qaṣāʿid min al-manfā ilā Laylā al-Akhyaliyya*

[71] These works include a compilation of folkloric stories: *Rīshat al-dhahab- qiṣaṣ min al-turāth al-Filasṭīnī* (1998), Plays, which included translations of Romeo and Juliet (1994), and original works such as *Ḥafla ʿalā ghaflā* (2001), and *Lā lam yamut* (2002). In cinema, Barghouti has written the scenarios of, worked on the concept of, or worked as an artistic consultant to many films including: *al-Maʿṣara* (1998), and *Ḥurriyyatī al-mafqūda* (2001). For an overview of some of these works, see al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 44-48. For the full list see: Barghouti, *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya*, 349-352.

c) *Tūjad alfāẓ awḥash min hādhihi*[72]

d) *Marāyā sāʾila*[73]

2. *Ḥajar al-ward*[74]
3. *al-Ḍiffa al-thālitha li nahr al-Urdun*[75]
4. *al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq*[76]
5. *Saʾakūn bayn al-lawz*[77]
6. *al-Farāgh al-ladhī raʾā al-tafāṣīl*[78]
7. *Azmat al-shiʿr al-maḥallī*[79]
8. *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ:al- Ṣirāʿ al-nafsī fī al-adab*[80]
9. *al-Sādin, al-Nāqa, Qiṣaṣ ʿan zaman wathanī*
10. "The Other Voice: an Introduction to the Phenomenology of Metamorphosis"[81]
11. Besides the three main theoretical texts above (*al-Farāgh, Azmat al-shiʿr, Suqūṭ*), some of Barghouti's unpublished lectures to his students will be consulted (appended in al-Sudānī's MA thesis). Other texts were published by Barghouti in different Palestinian literary magazines such as *al-Karmel* (Haifa), *al-Kātib* (Jerusalem), and *al-Shuʿarāʾ* (Ramallah).

The list above spans an extensive body of literary, poetic, and critical writings. Since selectivity resides at the heart of any academic endeavour, some works, as will be noticed, feature more than others. Barghouti's last autobiography, *Saʾakūn,* for example, is relevant to more than one chapter. It features in chapter 2, which discusses notions of childhood, language, and beginnings, as well as chapter 3, which revolves around the notions of illness and death. The autobiography is thus useful as it narrates Barghouti's return to his childhood village after his cancer diagnosis. The book consists of conversations between his child-hood

[72] The first three collections will be quoted from: Hussein Barghouti, *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya.*
[73] Hussein Barghouti, *Marāyā sāʾila* (Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Itiḥād al-Kuttāb al-Filasṭīnī, 2000).
[74] Hussein Barghouti, *Ḥajar al-Ward* (al-Bīra: Maṭbaʿat Abū-Ghoush, 2002).
[75] Hussein Barghouti, *al-Ḍiffa al-thālitha li nahr al-Urdunn* (Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Dār al-Kātib, 1984).
[76] Ibid, *al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq* (Ramallah: al-Ruʿā li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 2007).
[77] Hussein Barghouti, *Saʾakūn bayn al-lawz* (Ramallah: PING, 2004).
[78] Hussein Barghouti, *al-Farāgh al-ladhī raʾa al-tafāṣīl*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: Dār al-Bayraq al-ʿArabī, 2006).
[79] Hussein Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr al-maḥallī* (Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 1979).
[80] Hussein Barghouti, *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ:al-Ṣirāʿ al-nafsī fī al-adab* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shiʿr, 2012).
[81] The name is cited in the bibliography according to Barghouti's own spelling of his name in his dissertation: Husain Jameel Bargouti.

self and his presently ill self. Barghouti's *al-Farāgh* is a collection of entries that are mainly concerned with the notion of space. The entries are sometimes more philosophical and meditative, such as the last one on the role of space in relation to religions and ancient mythologies, while others are more personal and reflective. From the philosophical and the personal, theoretical conceptions on Barghouti's perception on space can be extracted. In short, it is difficult to separate the literary from the critical.

The episodes used as case studies are not contingent on the chronology of Barghouti's life. For example, Barghouti's poem "Inānnā," published in 1988, will be analysed in the final chapter that discusses the technique of reversals in relation to mythic visitation. This is to say that this study, while aware of how social, historical, and political changes influence literary productions, approaches Barghouti's literary corpus as a whole, tying ideas across different genres and time periods. It will become clear that this kind of analysis, although seemingly chaotic, rather falls within the lines of Barghouti's conception of life and literature. Everything is connected, and time and space are "embroidered."[82] This way of constructing the literary work challenges the reader to actively engage with the text, as will be further demonstrated in chapter 1.

In order to grasp the interaction between the critical and the literary, the body is dynamically employed to put forth questions regarding content and form, physicality and meta-physicality, and invites the dialectics of the abstract and the concrete. Whether it is the image of the rebelling female body, or that of the illness-infested one, the body in modern Arabic literature functions as a reflection[83] of female suffering and emancipation,[84] national

[82] See section 1.6.

[83] By reflection I mean an interaction between the body and female aspirations. As Ahlam Mustafa argues, Radwa Ashour's writings bypass discussions of the female body to focus more on the voice of the woman and her position in life as a human being. See Ahlam Mustafa, "Raḍwa ʿAshour wa turāth al-mawʿūda: baʿīdan ʿan kitābat al-jasad," *Meem Magazine* (16 November 2017) https://meemmagazine.net/2017/11/16.

struggle, and, in short, personal and collective representations.[85] Writing about the traces and emergence of sexual representations in modern Arabic autobiographies, Valerie Anishchenkova notes that there are "emerging corporeal articulations."[86] While it might be true that explicit corporeality is a newly emergent notion in autobiographical writings, the notion of bodies being "sites of identity construction"[87] is not new to Arabic writing, and it is on this idea that this dissertation builds.

The choice of the body here has been guided by Barghouti's works, which dictate the centrality of the body, as well as the growing theoretical interest of the different guises of the body. I hope to show how the body is not in opposition to other apparatuses like the soul/emotions, but is rather in harmony with them. The body, unlike the soul and the intellect, is well defined and yet not static.[88] A body as a living entity is in a state of continual transformation: it grows, it becomes ill and recovers, it changes shape, it engages in creation and destruction, it breaks down, and wears away. Thus, the body engages in multiple acts of formation: it can be formed, reformulated, and deformed. The body, furthermore, steps beyond its physical formation into other realms of life; particularly knowledge. In Arabic, there are two main words that can be used to describe what we call the body: *al-jism* and *al-jasad*. The Iraqi scholar Rasūl Muḥammad Rasūl describes the difference between the two terms by arguing that *al-jism* describes an entity that has definite measurements, while *al-*

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[84] Asmaa Mouikel, "al-Unūtha al-Sharq-Awsaṭiyya fī mirʾāt al-sard al-nasawī," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 35 (2015): 9-39.

[85] In an article entitled "Shiʿr al-jasad wa jasad al-shiʿr" the prominent leftist thinker Maḥmūd Amīn al-ʿĀlim contends that the discussion around the female body in Arabic thought (the examples of veil and abortion) is one example of "a larger intellectual conflict that is connected to the body of the whole life, the body of society, the body of science and the body of the intellect, and the body of literature, and the body of art in general." In relation to all these bodies, calls for emancipation are what have shaped the representation of the body within Arabic literature. Maḥmūd Amīn al-ʿĀlim, "Shiʿr al-jasad wa jasad al-shiʿr," *Ibdāʿ*, no. 10 (October 1994): 7.

[86] Valerie Anishchenkova, *Autobiographical Identities in Contemporary Arab Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 77.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Discussions on the distinctions/connections between mind and body are ample and extend backmany centuries. See, for example: *Forming the Mind: Essays on the Internal Senses and the Mind/Body Problem from Avicenna to the Medical Enlightenment*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

jasad represents the "symbolic being" (*kaynūna ramziyya*) of that *jism*.[89] This dissertation uses the term body as indicative of both definitions, where the physical body is in direct connection to the intangible self that inhabits it, and the social and political circumstances that are mirrored within it.

In the past few decades, some studies have approached the body as a fertile source for uncovering social, political, and literary issues.[90] One of the most used space metaphors in literature is that between body and nature (land). It becomes even more apparent when both body and land are being threatened, as in the Palestinian case. This situation gives rise to a new set of literary metaphors that have become commonly used in the Palestinian context. The land as a mother, a lover, the blood of martyrs watering the trees, as well as many similar images are at the centre of the Palestinian poetic construction.[91] The body, though, as Abir Hamdar argues, has often been approached as a metaphor for "some prior linguistic, social, or political body – most obviously the body politic of the nation," rather than viewed "as a feeling and suffering somatic entity."[92] The allegorical appropriation[93] of the body and its

[89] Rasūl Muḥammad Rasūl, *al-Jasad al-mutakhayyal fī al-sard al-riwā'ī* (Damascus: al-Nāyā li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 2014), 19-20. For Rasūl, *al-jism* represents the body while *al-jasad* functions as a "metabody" (20).

[90] Some examples of works that look at the body in Arabic literature include Abir Hamdar, *The Female Suffering Body: Illness and Disability in Modern Arabic Literature* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014). Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Blindness and Autobiography: Al-Ayyam of Taha Husayn* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Wen-chin Ouyang, "A Hairy State of Mind: Creativity in the Arabic Literary Imaginary," *Al-Masāq,* 30:1. (2018): 71-89.

[91] See, for example, an analysis of the Palestinian poet Rashid Hussein's poem "Ilā saḥāba", which starts with the speaker declaring: "I am the land/ I am the land…do not deny me the rain." In the poem, the speaker becomes "a martyr whose body serves as a place for the endangered homeland." Stephan Milich, "Writing waṭan in Modern Arabic Poetry," *Representations and Visions of Homeland in Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Sebastian Günther and Stephan Milich (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2016), 123. Mahmoud Darwish is another example, whose "human vision" encapsulates all aspects of life including "the concept of love, homeland, freedom, and nature are completely blended together; they possess similar features." *Modern Arabic Literature,* ed. Roger Allen (New York: The Ungar Publishing Company,1987), 84.

[92] Hamdar, *The Female Suffering Body,* 2-3. Hamdar pays attention to 'the absence' of the body of the sick female character in Arabic literature (3), and how sickness and disabilities in female characters have been depicted by male and female authors in the Levant and Egypt (1950-2000), 4. Pickens similarly notes the often-perceived allegorical relation between one's body and the family or nation. Therí A. Pickens, *New Body Politics: Narrating Arab and Black Identity in the Contemporary United States* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

[93] Frederic Jameson goes further to argue that "All third-world texts are necessarily…allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories." Fredric Jameson, "Third-World

illness as a metaphor for national illness has become essential to notions of political and social awareness among Arab authors. In her book *New Body Politics* Therí A. Pickins explores the relationship between "corporeality" and "socio-political position" amongst Arab Americans and African Americans.[94] It is her notion of "the quotidian flesh" that intersects with the aim of this dissertation. As she proposes, studying the everyday experiences of the body, including "breathing, touch, illness, pain, death,"[95] is central for reading how Arab and African American authors engage with socio-political issues beyond merely "the raced and gendered body."[96] Similarly, Barghouti's contemplation of his own decaying body, the linguistic parallel between himself and his son, and the use of stuttering as a way of composing poetry (see chapter 1-4), are examples of acts of the everyday and the quotidian. These acts, however, do not transcend communal political and social contexts but rather work with and within them.

Tarek el-Ariss's *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* sees the body "as a site of rupture and signification…[thus shifting] the paradigm for the study of modernity in the Arab context from questions of representation and cultural exchange to an engagement with a genealogy of symptoms and affects." By reading 'modernity' (*ḥadātha*) in Arabic as etymologically linked to the word for event (*ḥadath*), el-Ariss charts Arab encounters with Europe as a series of unfolding events whose affects are experienced and performed somatically.[97] The challenge is, thus, whether one can look at the body beyond its pre-determined symbolism and reflections. Can the body be approached as an experience?

Focusing on the works of the Moroccan author Mohamad Leftah, Ziad Elmarsafy highlights the importance of the corporeal body in the creation of meanings in literary texts.

Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 5, no. 3 (1986): 69. It is this notion of the inescapability of the national allegory that Barghouti's case defies.

[94] Therí A. Pickens, *New Body Politics,* 1. Her discussion is guided by the question of embodiment, which she contends is directly related to the social conditions that one experiences tangibly and with his/her senses.

[95] Ibid, 1.

[96] Ibid, 3.

[97] El-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity*, 3-8.

In his article, "Mohamed Leftah: le corps dans l'ordre poétique" Elmarsafy argues that in Leftah's novels "la multiplication et la destruction des corps [qui] deviennent [le] moteur de la narration"[98] are emblematic of the centrality of materiality in life and writing.[99] The events in Leftah's novels are told through acts and images that are conducted by the body and on it.[100] Furthermore, the article draws on how the author uses the body as a material entity to reflect the lives and experiences of his characters (many of whom are prostitutes). Furthermore, the body is used as a reflection of the act of writing where there is "[un] dédoublement…entre l'art et la vie [et] entre le corps physique et le corps esthétique."[101] Leftah, as Elmarsafy shows, relies heavily on the use of intertextuality. In this way, the text, like a physical body, grows out of the author's conversations with multiple sources that belong to different literary and artistic corpuses (both Eastern and Western). This active participation of the body in the literary act (both the human body and the text), and the weaving of different references and allusions are also foundational characteristics of Barghouti's works as will be discussed in this dissertation.

More and more scholars in different fields ranging from neuroscience to the many disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and performance studies have been investigating how "the body might speak to us – not beyond but *through* cultural frames."[102] This study makes reference to an ample number of theories that cover the body in its concrete form from Deleuze's 'stutter' to Foucault's biopolitics, to its abstraction (the body as an allegory/symbol). The centrality of time and space is evident in the theories of the body that include investigations of time and being, memory (Bergson), and the body as a space for perception (Merleau-Ponty). Thus, links will be made to different phenomenological aspects

[98] "…the multiplication [change] and destruction of the bodies become the engine of the narration." Ziad Elmarsafy, "Mohamed Leftah: le corps dans l'ordre poétique," *Itinéraires* 2011-3 | 2011 (November 2011): 76.
[99] Ibid.
[100] For example, through violent acts on the female body (such as rape and mutilation) (ibid., 77-78; 86-87), or through the tattoos on it (ibid., 78).
[101] "a duplication…between art and life…between the physical body and the aesthetical body" (ibid., 82).
[102] Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 11.

regarding embodiment, existence, time, and space. Barghouti sees embodiment and existence as two distinct entities; however, he recognizes that existence cannot occur if there is no embodiment. The body comes *a priori*, as Barghouti explains in his PhD dissertation, and existence is one's (self)-consciousness, which forms through this body.[103] One of the underlying questions that the following chapters tease out, particularly chapters 3 and 4, is what happens when this embodiment is threatened by illness and then death? What these chapters highlight is that Barghouti, contrary to what is assumed, does not propose to transcend the centrality of the body and rely on meta-physical entities. He rather ensures other forms of corporeal embodiment that are inspired by filial relations, spatial relations, and linguistic constructions.

Looking at the body as "the locus of a person's life"[104] rather than a reactionary interface for external influences and recognizing the role "kinaesthetic sensations"[105] play in identity formation, are not only informative to those working in the humanities, particularly in the fields of narratology and literature. Many scholars from the fields of medicine and the social sciences, such as Rita Charon and Arthur Frank, are similarly aware of how stories and narratives that are told and performed by patients are no longer considered "as secondary [to medicine] but have their own primary importance"[106] and can be central to notions of physical healing, "bioethics, and health law"[107] and to the connections between the personal and the social and collective.

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[103] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 160- 165. This will be discussed further in chapter 4.
[104] Rita Charon, *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 86.
[105] Noland, *Agency and Embodiment,* 4.
[106] Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7. In engaging with the links between medicine and stories, Frank distinguishes between several modes of thinking and time periods. In the 'pre-modern' era, stories were seen as representative of one's illness and pain. In the 'modern period' "the medical narrative" – that which is told by the doctor – was then accepted as the true narrative of illness. In the post-modern period, the two narratives (the personal story and the medical one) become as important to the patient's life as the healing journey (see 3-7).
[107] Charon, *Narrative Medicine*, 86.

It is through the interplay between the movable and the immovable (the static and the transformative, to reference Adonis' famous thesis)[108] that emotions and thoughts are depicted in Barghouti's texts. This interplay can thus be seen both thematically and stylistically. The negation of fixed forms and spaces does not reside in the realm of the literary and artistic spaces and bodies, but reaches towards the body of the producer (i.e. the artist).

Theoretical and analytical frameworks

This section highlights the reasons behind the choice of the main theoretical and analytical frameworks. Furthermore, it reveals the connections and structures between the different analytical notions and the links to the methodological tool of the 'body'. Below is a table that specifies the category of each of the analytical notions and their relation to the structure of the dissertation and the adopted theoretical framework in the close-reading chapters:

The body			
	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Structural	Childhood	Death	After-life
Theoretical	Beginning	Space	Myth
Thematic	Language	Land	Ritual

The concepts and theorists which make up the framework of the dissertation might seem eclectic; not belonging to one school of thought or discipline. For example, they come from phenomenology, anthropology, architecture, literary criticism, ritual studies. However, the choice of the different theoretical frameworks can be explained through three main axes: in relation to the case study, in connection to the body, and in relation to one another.

[108] Adonis, *al-Thābit wa al-Mutaḥawwil: Baḥth fī al-Ibdāʿ wa al-Itbāʿ ʿind al-ʿArab*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 1994), 13.

Similar to the choice of themes, Barghouti's varied sources of influence which span different time periods, places, and disciplines call for a similarly wide range of theoretical tools. In other words, understanding Barghouti's rich and complex literary works impels an approach that is intersected and at the same time multiple. While the theoretical frameworks belong to distinct disciplines and categories, they can all be read in relation to corporeal shifts and changes; albeit from different angles. Bringing them together in conversation in this dissertation, thus, forges new ties between different theoretical schools and approaches. This is an act that was supported and exercised by Barghouti – both in his literary works and his critical writings (such as his own PhD dissertation).

The three thematic notions of language, land, and ritual are chosen because they constitute focal points in Barghouti's writings, and because they intersect in his writing. For example, an excerpt that has been chosen in chapter 2 to highlight the language interactions between Barghouti and his son can also be studied in relation to space and the land of their village Kobar. Similarly, it retains mythic and ritualistic references (see section 2.7 for an analysis of the excerpt). The choice to separate these notions into different chapters is thus mainly organizational. At the same time, separating them allows for a deeper analysis of each notion as it is developed in other texts. In other word, each chapter builds a cluster around one of the notions while still retaining a sense of connection to the other notions.

This web of interconnected structures, theoretical points, and thematic notions reveal Barghouti's own conception of literature as a body that is constructed from different channels of influence. They are, thus, presented in a manner that echoes the complexity of the case study, and yet attempts at forming an organized guideline for reading some of his thoughts and literary works. The argument is that these three layers of structure, theory, and theme are understood through the prism of the body. They correlate with the aim to read the body in

relation to the physical human body, the body of the land, and the body of the text, thus, echoing the focus on illness and death, political engagement, and literary innovation.

Chapter 1 delves into the interplay between the literary and the critical in Barghouti's project. Seeing them as complimentary, the chapter is concerned with the forces that fuel Barghouti's literary project. Criticism, as Barghouti sees it, is the literary text's tool of dissection and one that leads to revelation (*kashf*). This chapter has two main functions. First, it positions some of Barghouti's main critical commentaries in relation to the politicization of Palestinian literature and its pre-ordained goals and aspirations within the contemporary scene of Palestinian criticism. Second, it asserts Barghouti's conviction of the entanglement between literary criticism and creativity. The six critical issues which are presented in the chapter are framed by the conversation between the fixed and the transformative body and its links to literature.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 constitute the close-reading sections of the dissertation and take the body as their constitutive framework and their subject of inquiry. As seen in the table, the three chapters are structured chronologically according to the lifespan of the body (life/death/after-life) and are respectively entitled: *Childhood, Death*, and *Myth*. Although the dissertation demonstrates Barghouti's call for breaking fixed structures, I followed a structure that would create a sense of linearity that will soon be challenged within the chapters themselves.

Chapter 2 follows Barghouti's contemplation of his own beginnings in life. The close-reading will be of some of Barghouti's autobiographical episodes about his linguistic and imaginative interactions with his son, and his views on the ever-present link between memory and imagination. I show how beginnings extrapolate literary and stylistic breakages that benefit from familial, historical, and linguistic continuities. The body in this chapter is apparent in two ways. It is elucidated through the juxtaposition of his decaying body because

of lymphoma and his growing child, Āthar. This physical comparison is further pushed towards understanding language as a body that evolves through imagination, memory, and exploration. The chapter takes cues from Edward Said's commentaries on beginnings and Jean-François Lyotard's engagement with language games. A hybrid of the propositions of these two scholars provides the crossroad between the physical and the conceptual shifts that are presented in the chapter. On a more technical note, there is clear evidence that Barghouti read the two scholars and was inspired by their ideas on writing (particularly Lyotard), and the links between literature, space, and politics (Said). The conceptions of beginnings and writing that Lyotard and Said present are related to the body, as this chapter proposes. Lyotard, for example, makes use of the difference between "homology" and "paralogy"[109] and subsequently language games to put forth his view of knowledge and knowledge production. Said, similarly, utilizes a corporeal image of filial ancestry and lineage to discuss changes in language use and writing. What is proposed in this coupling in this chapter is that both scholars attest the ties to an origin, but further assert the need to move beyond. This interplay between origin and beginning and the terminologies that are used by the two scholars are thus taken as a frame for reading Barghouti's commentaries on corporeality and language (see chapter 2 for more).

Chapter 3 takes death as its starting point. It is concerned with the meaning of geographic and physical movements in space and how they yield corporeal, literary, and political shifts and changes. It starts by underlying the direct juxtaposition of the ill body of Barghouti and the stricken body of the land of Palestine during the second Intifada. Cancer and occupation become acts that intrude on the body (the human body and the body of the land), changing their topologies. Suzan Sontag's exploration of how cancer relates to the body as well as Eyal Weizman's examination of the effects of the Israeli occupation on

[109] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Misseapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxv.

Palestinian lands are used to guide this connection. For as Sontag argues, the language used to describe cancer is often borrowed from "the language of warfare."[110]

Besides presenting this direct link between body and land, the chapter presents other experiences with space that relate to feelings of estrangement. The chapter asserts that Barghouti's attention to space preceded his illness. The relation between body and space is presented by arguing that one's body constitutes a space in itself. The relation to other external spaces becomes a question of perspective; and thus, to narration. While many scholars have written about the role of space in literature and life, Marc Augé's arguments seemed as the most suitable framework. His works pay attention to the intersection of illness, space, and literature (or the narration of space). The way that this dissertation frames the connection between Augé and Said is through the shared attention to how the experience of illness influences one's relation to the world, but also to the ways of expressing this experience.[111]

The choice of the two French scholars Lyotard and Augé might seem paradoxical, since the first defined postmodernism while the second rejected the term as a description of the state of being during the twentieth-century and rather defined it as supermodernity. However, these differences are in line with the spirit of the case study. Based on his writings, one can argue that Barghouti would view these opposing terminologies as different modalities of reading, rather than conflictive. In other words, they help in constituting a rich

[110] Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 64.

[111] Commenting on writing his autobiography after being diagnosed with cancer, Edward Said explains in one of his interviews that: "[t]he first thing I did when I discovered that I was ill, after I came back from the doctor, was to sit and write a kind of letter to my mother, who had been dead for about a year, just to put in writing feelings that I would like to have shared with her, and in a certain sense to try to revive a continuity which I felt had been somehow been (*sic*) ruptured. And then thereafter I thought it was important to *memorialize this special world*-which was not only my mother's, but my mother's and my father's and my sisters'-in prose, which I'd never done before. And I did it for *no particular reason*, which was very important for me-that I wasn't doing it to fulfil an intellectual obligation, or a commission or a political need or something of that sort. It was just an excess, somehow, something that I wanted to do." Tariq Ali, *Conversations with Edward Said,* (London: Seagull Books, 2006), 125-126.

and much more varied forms of knowledge, against the singular and one-layered approach to society and life.

Chapter 4 takes Barghouti's posthumous reception, which is often ordained by 'mythic-related' adjectives, as a starting point for unpacking his own approach to myths. While Barghouti's interest in myths as a way of understanding past cultures and their influence on modern poetics and identity is very clear, I argue that his works are ritualistic in nature and reveal his views of literary creativity. Rituals are taken to be literary acts that Barghouti deploys to empower the corporeal and the literary body with an agency that works beyond representation and familiar modes of writing, and the structural components of myths.

As such, the chapter interrogates the complex relation between myth and ritual, which has been extensively studied. As a way of contextualizing the different ways of reading the relations between the two concepts, the chapter follows the views of scholars such as Northrop Frye, Ronald L. Grimes, and Richard van Leeuwen, Firās al-Sawwāḥ, and Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych to argue for a ritualistic reading. It should be noted that any comprehensive overview of the many and varied discussions about the relation of myths and rituals falls outside of the scope of the chapter. While the decision to bring together these different scholars might seem random, all of them focus on rituals in relation to narration and expression. Furthermore, the decision follows their views of the centrality of the body in the performance of rituals. Similarly, literary creativity in Barghouti's writing as will be argued, involves bodily acts that are performed through the corporeal body as well as the text.

As a way of demonstration, the chapter provides three thematic examples of rituals, reversal, transgression, and metamorphosis, which mirror the theoretical issues discussed in chapter 1. Furthermore, these rituals are directly linked to language and space through their call for appreciating what has been constructed (the form of the physical body, the land, or

the text), but push towards transgressing this construction. Once again, these rituals are highlighted in other examples from the dissertation, such as the previously indicated one in section 2.7. In other words, these rituals are not only specified for the proposed example. Rather, they form indicative signposts to a wide reading of Barghouti's writings; both literary and critical.

The three close-reading chapters exemplify moments of departure that Barghouti takes in regard to notions of political commitment, literary genres, and space/time denominators. Through championing the transgressive, the unfamiliar, and the experiential, Barghouti's 'exceptionalism' portrays a deep involvement with the literary scene, and a knowledge of poetic, social, and political Arabic and world heritage, and a conviction in the need for the destabilization of the known in the literary scene.

The variation of thoughts and ideas is nevertheless connected by the uniformity of argument. The thread that connects the aforementioned theorists and concepts is an attunement to acts of changes that rely on what has been discovered, mapped, and utilized before (i.e. an origin) but stress a need to uncover new territories, forms of expression, and capabilities. In one way or another, all concepts have the body (whether the human body, the land, or the text) at the core of their conception. Genealogies and lineages, illness and pain, and bodily performances form a cluster that spans the theoretical premises of the different frameworks as well as the structures and arguments of the chapters.

The question that remains to be answered is how can an analysis based on the body help us in understanding the literary text? By arguing that the text in Barghouti's case assumes undefined and movable abilities, I second Susan Sontag's propositions against the classical views of interpretation. In her "Against Interpretation," Sontag writes that interpretation, as an "act of the mind which illustrates a certain code, certain 'rules'," claims

to restore a text "by disclosing its true meaning"[112] and arranging it within "a mental scheme of categories."[113] Instead of this schematized hermeneutical approach, Sontag proposes to apply "an erotics of art"[114] in which the text is looked at as it unfolds not only in content but also, and more importantly, in form (i.e. body).

At the crux of this dissertation lies the examination of how the conceptualization of the body is not only driven by historical (external) influences, or by events (experiences) occurring on/through the body, but also through an awareness of and a reaction to these occurrences. In thinking of the body as a stage of experiential, external, and internal reflections, Barghouti's literary texts of are thus conceived of as living bodies of their own that function beyond the realms of literary representation.

[112] Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), 6.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid, 14.

Chapter 1: Criticism – Creativity

في لغتي سربُ قلاعٍ صامتةٍ تبعثُ ضوءَ شموعٍ نحويَ،
خلفَ قلاعٍ صامتةٍ تبعثُ ضوءَ شموعٍ نحويَ،
خلفَ قلاعٍ صامتةٍ تبعثُ ضوءَ شموعٍ نحويَ،
يشبهُ أسلاكاً شائكةً، داخلَ أسلاكٍ شائكةٍ، داخلَ أسلاكٍ
شائكةٍ، داخل أسلاكٍ شائكةٍ، وتحيطُ بحرفينِ.[115]

In my language, there is a flock of silent fortresses that send candle light towards me,
from behind silent fortresses, they send candle light towards me,
from behind silent fortresses, they send candle light towards me,
It resembles barbed wires, inside of barbed wires, inside of barbed
wires, inside of barbed wires; they surround two letters.

1.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates six issues extracted from Barghouti's critical and literary works. The six issues relevant to the discussion of Barghouti's concept of innovation are reflected in the above excerpt. They are 1) the link between criticism and literary creativity, 2) the interplay between surface and depth, 3) the materiality of living, 4) the issue of literary engagement, 5) embroidery, and 6) artistic taste. The excerpt is, thus, a metapoetic expression that asserts the link between criticism and literary creativity. These issues will guide the thematic readings of the following chapters and provide insight into Barghouti's views on literature, the relation between criticism and literary creativity, and his engagement with the political and literary scene in Palestine. The chapter traces moments of his departure from the dominant and representative literary and cultural discourses by approaching the body as an explorative agent which moves between the fixed and the transformative.[116]

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[115] Barghouti, "Taḥawwulāt," in *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shiʿr, 2008), 60-61.

[116] In his most acclaimed book, *Al-Thābit wa al-mutaḥawwil*, Adonis defines the static, or the fixed, in the framework of Arabic culture as "that thought that establishes itself over and above the text. It derives its stability from that of text …[This fixed thought] forces itself as the single true meaning of the text, and as such, declares itself a cognitive authority."
"أُعرّف الثابت، في إطار الثقافة العربية، بأنه الفكر الذي ينهض على النص، ويتخذ من ثباته حجة لثباته هو...ويفرض نفسه بوصفه المعنى الوحيد الصحيح لهذا النص، وبوصفه، استناداً إلى ذلك، سلطة معرفية."
Adonis, *al-Thābit wa al-mutaḥawwil*, 13.

The excerpt above is the last section in the poem "Taḥawwulāt" ("Transformations") from Barghouti's first published poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā.* The poem was written in Ramallah and Jerusalem between 1 and 21 January 1988 and is emblematic of Barghouti's engagement with the political and social circumstances of the first Intifada (1987-1993). Although these lines are situated within the tensions in Palestinian life at that time, they manage to highlight Barghouti's concept of innovation, which is based on finding new depths to common elements of poetic expression and politics.

The excerpt is a spatial description of language and shows how the poet transforms himself into a bird in order to move beyond the shackles of fixed linguistic and poetic expressions. It describes how the speaker's body is surrounded and imprisoned by a melange of architectural and linguistic barriers. The section continues:

وقلبي سجنٌ داخلَ سجنٍ داخلَ سجنٍ داخلَ سجنٍ، سربُ سجونٍ مغلقةٍ بالشفتينِ،
فلا تلفظُ في المنطقةِ المحتلَّةِ غيرَ اللفظاتِ المحتلةْ.
وقيودي تحضرُ بالجملة:
فأحلِّقُ، سرباً من حجلٍ بريٍّ تحتَ نجومٍ تتشابكُ، لستُ أُغنِّي صوتاً منفرداً في أجنحتي،
سأغنِّي كلَّ جناحي، كلَّ جناحي، كلَّ جناحي، لستُ أُحرِّرُ نصف فضائيَ،
ربعَ فضائيَ، ثلثَ فضائي، سوف أحرِّره كلَّهْ.
كلّهْ.
هل تفهمني؟ كلَّه!.
وأُعيدُ عليكَ لتفهم: كلَّ جناحي، كلَّ فضائي، كلَّه.
نحنُ أمام الروحِ المحتلَّة وهي تحلِّق كالرخِّ،
لها اللفظة في أوَّلِ الموج.[117]

And my heart is a prison, inside a prison, inside a prison, inside a prison;
a flock of prisons enclosed by the lips.
No utterance sounds in the occupied territories, but occupied utterances
And my chains come bearing a sentence:
So I fly, like a flock of partridges underneath intertwining stars, I am not singing a sole voice in my wings,
I will sing my whole wing, my whole wing, my whole wing. I am not liberating
Half of my sky,
A quarter of my sky, a third of my sky, I will free it all.

The dynamic, or the transformative, on the other hand, is "the thought that also establishes itself over the text but through hermeneutical engagement that makes the text adaptable to reality and its changes" (Ibid).
"وأُعرّف المتحول بأنه...الفكر الذي ينهض، هو أيضاً، على النص، لكن بتأويل يجعل النص قابلاً للتكيف مع الواقع وتجدّده."

[117] Ibid., 60-61.

All of it.
Do you understand me? All of it!
And I repeat so you may understand: all of my wing, all of my sky, all of it.
We face the occupied soul as it flies like a roc.
To it belongs the utterance at the first wave.[118]

Barghouti uses barbed wire, prisons, occupied area, and chains– words that are unavoidable in the discourse and daily life of Palestinians living under occupation. These words have truly become, as Barghouti says, "occupied utterances" that are imbedded in language and life. In the image that Barghouti creates, language is an occupying structure in the middle of which the speaker stands. The restriction of language is expressed through architectural and physical constraints. The flock of fortresses indicates the restriction put on Palestinian poetry. The speaker in the excerpt is surrounded by the languages of others. From between these architectural buildings rays of light come towards him. The light, although often seen as a sign of hope, is actually a barbed wire that traps the letters of the speaker's language. The speaker is imprisoned, and thus, his utterances and words are occupied.

Barghouti equates the freedom of the word with the freedom of physical movement and transformation of the body. The imagery capers between the movable and that which is imprisoned and limited in its movements. He employs the imagery of birds to indicate these shifts. The word flock (*sirb*) is part of this bird imagery and alludes to the potentiality of flying. However, it is used twice to indicate opposite ideas. The first use "flock of fortresses" and "flock of prisons" indicates a state of immovability, while the second "flock of partridges" is one of movability. The interplay between the fixed and the movable is thus

[118] Although there is no direct reference, the plot line of the poem echoes certain aspects from the story "al-Ghurba al-Gharbiyya" by the Sufi philosopher Shahāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191). In this story, al-Suhrawardī narrates his escape from a prison in the West (Qayrawān) and his flight to the East (al-Mashriq). The escape includes travel through the skies and features birds as a trope of freedom (similar to Barghouti's poem). This trip symbolizes a journey towards illumination and light (Mashriq- Ishrāq). Taking this Sufi context as a reference, the two letters that are hinted at but not directly mentioned in Barghouti's poem can thus be interpreted as the *kāf* and the *nūn*, forming together the word *kunn* (be)- an indication of self-transformation and movement towards God and light. For the story see Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, "Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbiyya," *Majmūʿat muṣannafāt shaykh ishrāq*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Pzhushgāh ʿulūm Insānī va Muṭālaʿāt Frīngī), 274-297. I thank Prof. Elmarsafy for bringing my attention to this possible relation.

made clear through the opposing uses of the same word. While the chains are preparing the next sentence, the speaker takes agency and transforms into a flock of partridges. The immovable is furthermore described in the "occupied soul" that is changed into the mythical bird, the roc. The last line frees the occupied soul and the occupied language, through a process of bodily transformation.

The poetic metaphor of occupation and freedom reached through transformation can be read as a critical commentary on the status of poetic language, thus reflecting the first key issue in the chapter regarding the inescapability of criticism in the creation of literature. Barghouti's engagement with the contemporary social and political circumstances is evident in the utilized occupied images. The materiality of Palestinian living, represented by spatial occupation, is inspired by the political realities of that time and is subtly evoked. It is used as a tool for exploring other forms of occupation and freedom, namely linguistic and poetic. The engagement is similarly shown by shifting to second person, making the reader an active participant in Barghouti's imagery by informing the reader of the determination to achieve uncompensated freedom. This invitation to the reader conveys Barghouti's concept of artistic taste, which is discussed in this chapter. In the transformation from the imprisoned body into the free bird, Barghouti embroiders tropes from his present reality with historical allusions, such as the roc, which features in many stories from the Arab literary heritage.[119] The freed soul, similar to the roc, allows the speaker to explore new space and initiate a new utterance. The poetic imagery plays on expressions familiar to the readers but restructures these expressions in a different context. The thematic tropes are mirrored by the conceptual aim: transformation as a means of poetic and literary innovation.

This investigation of the six critical issues will shed light on Barghouti's awareness of and involvement in the contemporary critical scene in Palestine and, at the same time, his

[119] For an overview of the appearance of 'the roc' *al-Rukhkh* in Arabic writing, such as in al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868), Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 1377), and the story of Sindbad the Sailor from *The Arabian Nights,* see Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2004), 694.

precarious place away from canonical Palestinian positions. The issues are probed from Barghouti's two books of criticism *Azmat al-shiʿr al-maḥallī* (1979) and *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ: al-Ṣirāʿ al-nafsī fī al-adab* (1981). I will also bring into my analysis some of Barghouti's other articles and critical commentaries from his creative writings to show how criticism and creative writing form an intertwined web in his canon.

Barghouti's two critical books *Azmat al-shiʿr* and *Suqūṭ* encapsulate important theoretical notions of his approach to contemporary Palestinian literature and his views on the role of literature in political struggle. The books inform us of Barghouti's initial reception within the Palestinian literary establishment. Barghouti's first book of criticism *Azmat al-shiʿr* was written after his return to Palestine from Hungary in 1977. Barghouti notes that he viewed the state of Palestinian poetry to be "tragic."[120] Thus, he set to present *Azmat al-shiʿr* as a way of dissecting what he saw as elements of crisis in this poetry. The main elements of criticism that Barghouti addresses in his first book in regard to Palestinian poetry, which can also be taken as an overarching characteristic of his criticism, revolve around what he calls the superficiality (*saṭḥiyya*) of the approach,[121] and "the plumeting expectations regarding the knowledge of the audience" (*inkhifāḍ mustawa al-iftirāḍ*).[122]

As Barghouti himself explains, his first book was heavily influenced by Marxist-Hegelian and Lukácsian theories.[123] Such influence by the German and Hungarian thinkers is not surprising and follows the trend of that period, where a "Hegelian kind of Marxism"[124] was developing in Europe as a reaction to the Stalinist appropriation of Marxism. The key concepts that tie these philosophers and help us understand Barghouti's critical philosophy are the concern with the materiality of living and the role of dialectics in literature and life.

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[120] "عندما رجعت للأراضي المحتلة العام (١٩٧٧) وجدت الشعر المحلّي تراجيدياً"
Barghouti, "Min usus," 119.
[121] Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 16.
[122] Ibid., 25.
[123] Barghouti, "Min usus," 118.
[124] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), ix.

Identifying elements of crisis in contemporary Palestinian poetry that included a fixation on historical events such as the Nakba and a recycling of themes and expressions by contemporary Palestinian poets, led to the poor reception of the book by those criticized by Barghouti.[125] Barghouti attributed that reaction to a general misconception of the role and function of criticism. Most authors and critics, he postulated, insisted that "all criticism, regardless of how methodical it may be, is slander, and they [considered] praise to be better." Furthermore, he commented that criticism in the Palestinian context was dictated by political and personal allegiances.[126]

Barghouti's initial ostracization shaped by the reception of his first book, affected the writing and production of his second book. As Barghouti narrates, he had to print and distribute *Suqūṭ* on his own account since neither publishing houses nor political parties agreed to endorse it.[127] The main difference between the two books (written two years apart) is the shift in focus from the Palestinian to the global. Barghouti decided, after the tremendous attack on his first book, to focus in his second book on the study of literature in general. While the first book engages directly with the contemporary productions of poets in Palestine, Barghouti builds his arguments in *Suqūṭ* by bringing together many authors, philosophers, and books from Lukács to Freud, Sufism, Dostoyevsky and Shakespeare. Barghouti investigates cases of psychological and personal characteristics in relation to historical and collective sensibilities that are portrayed in world literature, in order to assert the inevitability of the influence of a specific historical moment on one's formation and

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[125] As Barghouti explains:
"أثار الكتاب ضجَّة أيامها: قاطعني على أثرها، على المستوى الشخصي أغلبية الشعراء المحلّيين الذين انتقدتهم وأعنف مواجهة، كادت تصل إلى صراع بالأيدي، كانت مع الشاعر المرحوم عبد اللطيف عقل- الذي تصادقتُ وإيَّاه لاحقاً."
"The book spurred a controversy which drove most local poets, whom I had criticized, to cut all ties with me. The harshest conflict, which almost turned into a fist fight, was with the late poet ʿAbdul-Laṭīf ʿAql. We became friends later."
Barghouti, "Min usus," 118.
[126] "كان الشعراء والنقاد معاً مصرّين على أنَّ كلّ نقد، مهما كان منهجياً، قدح، وعلى أنّ "المدح" أفضل."
Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 119.

artistic production. This reflects a trend in his critical and literary writings, which cannot but be built on the mélange of times, languages, and spaces.

In this chapter, the movement of uncovering new forms and transforming literary expressions beyond the fixed and the known is expressed through notions of dissection, quakes, surface/depth dialectics, literary creativity, embroidery, and taste. These notions are guided by and framed within the human body, the body of the land, and the literary text, and allow for a conceptualization of Barghouti's call for literary and personal transformation (*al-taḥawwul*). The six critical issues extend in Barghouti's critical and creative writings, and one will notice how the issues presented here intersect with one another in his works. However, in order to give clarity and coherence to his thought, they have been ordered in the following manner. The reference to the different dimensions of the (physical, spatial, and literary) body in each of the issues has not been enforced onto the reading. Rather, the decision was to use the body as a way of framing and presenting these issues. For example, Barghouti's assertion of how criticism can yield new forms of literary expressions is presented through the concept of *tashrīḥ* (dissection). *Tashrīḥ* is deployed here as both a medical act that is performed on the physical body and at the same time as a cognitive process that is central to acts of writing. Another example is that of the land in section 1.3. The land is seen as a body, both literally and metaphorically. This body experiences changes and shifts that are understood within the framework of surface and depth. Thus, the body functions as a source of inspiration for framing the chapter, i.e. as a form. At the same time, it is portrayed in a state of change, in which *tashrīḥ* or the interaction between the surface and the depth disrupt both the form of the physical body as well as the known modes of writing and thinking about the political and the literary.

I start with Barghouti's thought on the interconnectedness between criticism and creativity. Barghouti uses the surgical term *tashrīḥ*, as a critical tool of resurging and

revealing new creative depths beyond the observable surface. The second key issue delves into Barghouti's utilization of the interaction between surface and depth in relation to his views on writing national literature and the formation of the canon, which is challenged by tensions between dominant and "deviational" poetics.[128] This innate tension in the construction of the canon is presented through the shifts that happen to the surfaces and depths of the land. The movement between surface and depth is further developed by scrutinizing the notion of embroidery, which is taken and developed from Barghouti's text *Ḥajar al-ward* (*The Rosetta Stone*). It is through threading multiple spaces and temporalities that link past and present that the text, as a piece of fabric, can be woven.

The dialectics between the materiality of living and imagination is a central theme explored in Barghouti's writings. Although the physical land and its possessions play a central role in the case of Palestinian literature, the imagination allows one to transcend this fixed formation. Barghouti's commitment reveals itself through his awareness of the societal and political events that engulf Palestine and in his prediction of changes in Palestinian life. This will be shown through a close reading of one of his songs, which represents a *nubūʾa bi al-hazza al-qādima* ("a premonition of the forthcoming quake").[129] From the *hazza* that shakes the earth, the imagery of geological formation is further taken into the final issue of *al-dhāʾiqa al-fanniyya* (artistic taste). Barghouti utilizes the case of *al-tall* (the mound) to indicate the layering and formations of connected literary influences. Furthermore, the term *dhā'iqa* links back to the notion of taste as a bodily sense that echoes a level of cognitive knowledge and experience.

[128] Al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry*, 237-238.
[129] Barghouti, Hussein. "Dhākira ʿādiyya," 44.

1.2 Tashrīḥ – Anatomy and criticism

لا يوجد مبدعٌ حقيقي في الأدب والفنّ لا يكمن في داخلِهِ ناقدٌ، أيضاً؛ إنّ "تشريح" ما يقوم به وما يقوم به غيرنا أساسيٌّ لصياغة رؤيانا الإبداعيَّة ذاتها، وللتحوُّل الرؤيويَّ المستمر[130]

> There is no real creative person in literature or the arts who does not also harbour an inner critic. For 'dissecting' what one does and what others do is pivotal for forming our own creative visions, and to the latter's ongoing transformation.

The skill of criticism, which hinges upon divulging the inner workings of a literary text, is what eventually leads to the emergence of the creative word in a new form and meaning. Criticism, according to Barghouti, fragments the form and allows the emergence of the unseen and the undiscovered. In one of his lectures to a group of students at Birzeit University, Barghouti explains the interconnectedness between the creative act on the one hand and the critical act on the other. As he explains in the quote above, creation is guided by analyzing what the author and others have already constructed. Barghouti uses the word *tashrīḥ* (dissection) to define the technique of revealing new possibilities and transformations.

As Barghouti sees it, there are two types of criticism: one that provides an understanding of a work of art (academic criticism), and one that mobilizes this understanding to "craft a visionary angle that leads to the accomplishment of a revelation (*kashf*)."[131] As will be demonstrated later, Barghouti criticizes Palestinian poets for their inability to apply self-criticism that would allow their creative works to move away from being a kind of imprisonment and "dead knowledge"[132] of the political and literary heritage to becoming "a light in the dark maze of creation; a transformation."[133] He sees the ability of

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[130] Barghouti, "min usus," 115.
[131] "...الزاوية الرؤيوية التي تؤدّي إلى إنجاز كشف."
Ibid.
[132] "معرفة ميِّتة."
Ibid.
[133] "إلى إضاءة في متاهة الخلق المعتمة، إلى "التحويل."
Ibid.

criticism to reveal and transform as an innate trait of creativity and ever-changing literary productivity.

Barghouti's criticism should be read in light of the dominance of the political in the Palestinian critical and political scene. The popular uprising of the first Intifada, for example, resulted in more interest in ethnographic studies and interviews that "[allowed] Palestinians to circumvent the lack of official state institutions, including archives that have often rendered Palestinian voices mute, when it came to the Nakba."[134] This interest in the documentation of Palestinian existence, Israeli brutality and daily Palestinian suffering, however, was viewed as a sort of socio-political emancipation of Palestinians, but it also meant that "attention to cultural production took a back seat."[135] Another example is that of *The Journal of Palestine Studies*. The journal (published already from 1971) is an example of a dominant academic interest in the area. A look at the issues (particularly the early ones) reveals a deep engagement with political, social, and economic events: from covering human rights issues,[136] to detailed discussions in the fields of economics,[137] political science, sociology,[138] and Israeli policies, periodicals, and press. Palestinian literature, however, seems to have been "eclipsed by successive historical and political events affecting the Palestinian people."[139] There were some exceptions, though. One of the most interesting early exceptions includes a review of a book on Palestinian cinema.[140] Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi's

[134] Joseph R. Farag, *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile*: *Gender, Aesthetics and Resistance in the Short Story* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 140.
[135] Ibid., 141.
[136] For example: Ghassan Bishara, "The Human Rights Case against Israel: The Policy of Torture," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8, no. 4 (1979): 3-30. And Naseer H. Aruri, "Resistance and Repression: Political Prisoners in Israeli Occupied Territories," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 4 (1978): 48-66.
[137] For example: Rosemary Sayigh, "The Struggle for Survival: The Economic Conditions of Palestinian Camp Residents in Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 2 (1978): 101-19.
[138] For example: Halim Barakat, "Social Factors Influencing Attitudes of University Students in Lebanon towards the Palestinian Resistance Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1, no. 1 (1971): 87-112.
[139] Farag, *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile,* 2.
[140] See for example: Soraya Antonius, "The Palestine Cause in the Cinema," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 2 (1978): 120-25.

much quoted article "The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation" is another example.[141] Both appeared in 1978.

Barghouti wrote his first critical works in the late seventies and early eighties. They reflect, thus, a 'local' awareness of the importance to address the state of Palestinian literature in order to reveal deeper creative layers of literary expression. His attempt at addressing these issues regarding Palestinian poetry were a break-through in the Palestinian critical scene. In fact, this literary criticism can be seen as guiding the 'new' wave of criticism and writing starting from the late nineties of the last century (see the conclusion). This, if anything, proves that he was ahead of the literary system at play and with the different political, economic, and social tropes that influenced the literary and critical discussions in Palestine.

This is not to claim that Barghouti was the only one to address the need for a different approach to criticism of Palestinian literature (poetry specifically) during that period, but rather that he played a vital role in cultivating a comprehensive view of what he calls in his first book of criticism a *crisis* (*azma*) in the Palestinian literary scene. In fact, in her aforementioned 1978 article, Ashrawi addresses the effects that the need to assert a Palestinian identity in the face of Israeli brutality has had on the poetic productions of that time period. Ashrawi asserts the need to apply "responsible criticism" to the literature of Palestine, beyond the umbrella and apologetic excuse, of nationalist allegiances.[142] On the one hand, she argues that the revival of folkloric tropes as a means to attest this identity "gave momentum to the literary movement." On the other, she saw that the poetic language was facing "the loss of meaning and force which comes as a result of endless repetition and

[141] Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, "The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 3 (1978): 77-101.
[142] Ibid., 83.

formulaic constructions."[143] While the questioning of these formulaic and thematic boundaries has become a distinctive trend for the post-Oslo era,[144] Barghouti had already initiated a series of questionings on the role and status of literature in Palestinian life. In other words, Barghouti's 'exceptionalism' and creativity are the result of his direct involvement with and observation of the critical and literary field in Palestine, which was not recognized at the time.

In her study *In the Wake of the Poetic: Palestinian Artists After Darwish*, Najat Rahman examines the works of known and emerging Palestinian artists during the post-Oslo period and investigates traces of influence of the 'national' poet of Palestine, Mahmoud Darwish, on their works as well as their artistic engagement with his poetic productions. As Najat explains, these artists[145]

> …aim at the production of new, empowering forms of (collective) subjectivity. [They] envision and practice postidentitarian, postnational political art. They locate questions of identity elsewhere (in poetry, in various art forms, in transnational networks, in new forms of belonging) and reframe the political. They refuse to adhere to predetermined notions of aesthetics and politics, but they all claim a common historical legacy.[146]

This passage could very well summarize both pre- and post-Oslo works by Barghouti. While he acknowledges a historical legacy that includes stopping at specific Palestinian points in time (Nakba, Naksa, Oslo), Barghouti extends his project to include other corners of history and geography that do not follow chronologically and which form a tapestry of interconnected significances, and question notions of nationhood and fixed identities. Similar to Rahman's artists, Barghouti's identity formation through the literary constitutes "practices

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[143] Ibid., 82.
[144] For examples see: Hanan Touqan, "Whatever Happened to *Iltizām*? Words in Arab Art after the Cold War," in *Commitment and Beyond: Reflections on/of the political in Arabic literature since the 1940s,* eds. Friederike Pannewick and Georges Khalil (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2015), 333-349; and Najat Rahman, *In the Wake of the Poetic: Palestinian Artists After Darwish*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015).
[145] Names include Ghassan Zaqtan, Suhair Hammad, Mona Hatoum, Elia Suleiman, and Emily Jacir.
[146] Rahman, *In the Wake of the Poetic*, 2.

of dissensus."[147] The argument is that Barghouti's application of these dissenting practices had started already in the late seventies, when he showed a contestation to a fixated notion of the political, the poetic, and the homeland.[148]

Zeina Halabi explores in her book *The Unmaking of the Arab Intellectual* the transformative approaches of contemporary Arab authors in the 1990s towards the figure of the past Arab intellectual as a fresh way of asking questions regarding *iltizām*, exile, and nationalism. Against the criticism of apolitical engagement, these Arab authors have reconfigured the political in writing. The political in the writing of authors such as Rabee Jaber, Rashid Daif, and Seba el-Herz "professes a contemporary subjectivity….[and] transcends canonical literary tropes and genres."[149] Barghouti, similarly, brings the subjective to the foreground as it goes through a process of questioning the generic formations of previous authors, and moves beyond the prophetic propositions[150] of intellectual Arab figures. Taking Barghouti's comment on *tashrīḥ* as an overarching concept in his works, one can see how he intertwines criticism with the awareness of the function of art and literary creativity. It is in this interplay between criticism and creativity that the political, social, and personal function of literature is unpacked, questioned, and reformed.

1.3 Saṭḥ – ʿUmq: Land and literature

With Barghouti's conception of criticism through *tashrīḥ* highlighted in the previous section, this section approaches land as a body. It looks at the unearthing of the land and uses Barghouti's call to take the surface as an invitation to uncover new depths that create new surfaces in return as the prism for investigating the meanings of the political and the national.

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[147] Rahman follows Jacques Rancière's theorization of "dissensus." Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010).

[148] Jean-François Lyotard, whose notions on childhood and language games will be used in the following chapter, also refers to "dissension" as a way of conceiving "invention." Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxv. (See chapter 2 on beginnings).

[149] Zeina G. Halabi, *The Unmaking of the Arab Intellectual: Prophecy, Exile and the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 157.

[150] Ibid.

While Barghouti does not criticize the national *per se,* he aims at fragmenting the fixed, the obligatory, and the paradigm that defines what the national is. This negation of the fixed approach to writing is reconfigured through the dialectics of surface-depth. Asserting the multi-dimensionality of the national body through the interplay between the hidden and the revealed is essential for the process of creativity and is linked to the interplay between the materiality of life and literary creation in the following section.

The land, as will be shown in the dissertation and particularly in chapter 3, is projected onto Barghouti's body. The political and the communal are not subordinated to the personal in Barghouti's works. Rather, they are tested within and through the personal. Sharīf Kanāʿna, the Palestinian intellectual, argues in one of his articles that identity (*al-huwiyya*) is "a certain consciousness in the individuals belonging to the group of the essence or spirit of the [certain] collectivity of symbols."[151] One of the many characteristics that Kanāʿna lists regarding this state of awareness is "the consciousness of the continuity of that *essence* through space and time from the past to the present, and through the present to the future regardless of the changes in circumstances, regimes and people; that is to say despite the changes in the material components of the community."[152] This idea of an unchanging state and a continuous essence is what Barghouti's works challenge.

For example, Barghouti publishes in the Jerusalemite journal *al-Kātib* a reply to an article written in an earlier edition by Dr. Saʿīd Zaydānī. In it, Zaydānī argues that a social institution is evaluated as national when "it works at creating or strengthening or protecting

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[151] "...الهوية حالة وعي عند أفراد الجماعة بجوهر او بروح تلك الرموز مجتمعة."
Sharīf Kanāʿna, "Dawr al-Fulklūr wa al-Turāth fī Taʿzīz al-Huwiyya," *Kanʿān*, no. 21-22 (January-February 1994): 89.

[152] "الوعي باستمرارية ذلك الجوهر عبر المكان والزمان من الماضي الى الحاضر ومنه الى المستقبل على الرغم من تغير الظروف والانظمة والافراد، أي على الرغم من تغير المكونات المادية للجماعة."
Ibid, 90.

an individual's connection to another individual…in the homeland."[153] Barghouti voices his criticism of such a definition by arguing that:

> [د. زيداني] يشترط ضمنا ان الفرد والوطن هما مفهومان لا تاريخيان، متحجران، ثابتان. بهذه الطريقة يحول التاريخ الفعلي، الواقعي، الى كلمات "مجردة."[154]

> [Dr. Zaydānī] implicitly stipulates that the individual and the homeland are ahistorical, ossified, and monolithic concepts. In that sense, he dissolves the actual and real history into 'abstract' words.

The first point that this quote asserts is that Barghouti was highly engaged with current intellectual discussions on the role of intellectual institutions in Palestine. More importantly, the above shows his engagement rather than detachment to discussions about the relation between the homeland and the individual, and the expression of this relation in writing. Barghouti's contestation is at the abstracted and monolithic appropriation of terms such as 'the individual' and 'the homeland'. On the contrary, he views them as malleable, changeable, and thus not belonging to one unified essence. Barghouti does not negate the national discussion but rather the static approach towards the definition of the national. Following this line, the actuality in Palestinian life is that which is contested and changeable, as opposed to the view of the nationalist representation as a fixed idea and ideology.

One of the ways in which Barghouti addresses the prevalent essentialist approach to the representation of the nation is through the *saṭḥ-ʿumq* dialectics. As Barghouti comments, Palestinian literature, has become dominated by a fixed kind of writing that is not only political, but also superficial.[155] An example of superficiality (*saṭḥiyya*) in literature, for Barghouti, is the subject's easy detectability. It is in this vain that he condemns an ideological

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[153] "المقياس الذي يقترحه [د. زيداني] لتحديد وطنية الشيء هو ان هذا الشيء يكون وطنيا عندما: "يعمل على خلق او تقوية او حماية ارتباط الفرد بالفرد داخل الوطن او/وبالوطن"."
Hussein Barghouti, "al-Fikr al-akādīmī al-sāʾid ilā ayn?" *al-Kātib*, no. 67 (1985).

[154] Ibid.

[155] "لا نوجه النقد لكون أدبنا سياسيا بالدرجة الاولى...ولكن لانه سياسي وسطحي معا وهذا هو مصدر الازمة."
Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 64-65.

and nationalist labelling of Palestinian literature[156] as 'Palestinian' only. This is limiting, according to Barghouti, because it takes 'Palestine' as its main and 'visible' identification.[157] Instead, he understands this labelling as *one* way of naming, and one that should be open to dialectical negations.

This (imposed) over-politicization of Palestinian literature is another reason for Barghouti's initial marginalization. As Joseph Farag rightly puts it, "in large part precisely *because* of Arabic literary scholarship's preoccupation with issues such as gender, resistance, nationalism, or what can broadly be termed 'politics' writ large, engagement with the aesthetic forms in which Arabic (including Palestinian) authors construct their works has been almost entirely absent…Instead, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on the content and discourses of Arabic literary works, rather than their forms."[158] Barghouti makes direct and indirect references to historical and political changes in Palestinian life. However, his investigation of new styles of writing, his negation of generic conformities, and his experimentation with form are all part of his aesthetic innovation. Whether direct political commentaries are there or not, Barghouti's works are nevertheless *engagés*. Thus, I second Farag's argument that "far from being adjacent or secondary to the politics…literary aesthetics are in fact integral to and inseparable from political events, concerns and discourses."[159]

Barghouti criticizes some contemporary poets' fixation on narrating aspects of Palestinian loss and suffering in great detail:

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[156] Although he notes the problematic of defining what constitutes Palestinian literature, the Palestinian critic Ḥusām al-Khaṭīb postulates that the identity of Palestinian literature is formed through the identity of its authors. He notes:
"...يمكن القول إن كل ما انتجه كتاب ذوو أصل فلسطيني من أدب سواء في فلسطين المحتلة أم في بلدان الشتات هو بطبيعة الحال مشمول بمصطلح الأدب الفلسطيني."
He still praises the works of non-Palestinian authors such as the British Ethel Manen (57).
Husām al-Khaṭīb, *Ẓilāl Filasṭīniyya fī al-tajruba al-ʾadabiyya* (Damascus: al-Ahālī, 1990), 20.

[157] Hussein Barghouti. "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī: Ujarrib an aḥlum ḥarfiyyan mā aktub," Interview with Hussein Barghouti by ʿĀṭif Abū-Sayf, *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, no. 15 (Winter 2001): 198.

[158] Farag, *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile*, 15.

[159] Ibid.

لقد عبرت المأساة الفلسطينية عن ذاتها عبر ملايين الظواهر. لجوء وفقدان أملاك وبيوت، موت وبطولات...كيف يمكن للفن ان ينقل ويصوغ كل هذه الظواهر؟
هنا تبرز أهمية الجوهر...ان تناول ظاهرة واحدة فقط وكشف أبعادها، أي تعميق ادراكنا لجوهرها، يجعلها تعكس بقية الظواهر جزئيا. من ناحية أخرى يمنحنا الاقتصار على الجوهر إمكانية الفرار من الواقع بكامل تفصيلاته، وباختصار يمنحنا القدرة على التخيل لابعد الدرجات، واستعمال قدرتنا الإبداعية حتى الحد الأقصى...وهنا ننفصل عن السطح وثرثرته، لهذا تعتبر الواقعية الاشتراكية، واقعية الجوهر، لا كما يصورها الشعراء والنقاد المبتذلون عندنا، وكأنها الالتزام بتصوير الواقع فوتوغرافيا.[160]

> The Palestinian tragedy has expressed itself through millions of phenomena: displacement, loss of possessions and homes, death, and heroisms…how can art capture and give form to all of these phenomena?
> Therein lies the importance of the *essence* (*al-jawhar*). Approaching a single phenomenon and disclosing its dimensions, i.e. deepening our awareness of its essence, enables it to partially refract all the other phenomena. Furthermore, focusing on the essence allows for escaping the actual (*al-wāqiʿ*), with all of its minute details. Put briefly, it fully releases our ability to imagine, and to deploy our creative capabilities to their fullest potential. In this manner, we break away from the surface and its chatter. As such, social realism is in fact the realism of the essence. It differs from how our prosaic poets and critics represent it like it is a commitment to photographically capture reality.

Barghouti's use of the word essence (*jawhar*) here differs from the aforementioned usage. He asserts the constant need to extract the *jawhar* out of all the different phenomena in Palestinian reality. The *jawhar* is thus not known, fixed, or singular, but is rather reached through a process of discovery.[161] The superficiality in dealing with the meaning of Palestinian loss and reality leads, following Barghouti's proposition, to a repetition of content. Many Palestinian critics were aware of the problematics of repetition and of the importance of placing Palestinian literature within the larger Arabic and humane context. However, the Palestinian critic Ḥusām Al-Khaṭīb, for example, finds in a 1980 interview, justification for the focus on the repeated themes of 'Palestinian loss, sadness, happiness, etc.' in the "pressure of the sorrowful occurrences" that punctuate any given Palestinian

[160] Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 15.
[161] This discovery is achieved by putting different elements together, and it is what Barghouti calls *al-khalq* (creation) (see below).

day.[162] Although he recognizes the influence of external political and social circumstances on Palestinian literature, Barghouti does not find them sufficiently justifying.

A good example is Barghouti's discussion of what poetry should be about. Barghouti argues that, since "most people know the bold lines of the Nakba, they know about the resistance and [Black] September and [what happened in] Lebanon" this should not be the essence (*jawhar)* of the newly created poem, but rather the surface and the contours of the poem on which other essences are built and discovered.[163] He argues that:

الأعماق التي اكتشفها [كاتب سابق] يجب أن تدخل [عند الكتاب الآخرين] ضمن مستوى الافتراض، ضمن ما هو معروف ومكتشف، ومن هناك يغوصون لاعماق ابعد.[164]

> The depths that [any preceding author] has discovered should be relegated [by future authors] to the level of assumption; what is already known and previously discovered. From there, they can dive into further depths.

Barghouti's stepping away from the representation of superficial and one-sided reality is in fact an appreciation and understanding of the discrepancies, complexities, and contradictions in life. Barghouti was ahead of his time and his attempts at initiating a different way of writing since the late seventies and eighties, although exposing him to much criticism at that time, follows a later stage in the development of Arabic literature, the works of which have come to be known as that of the 90s generation as mentioned in the introduction.[165]

This new style of writing practice by the 1990s generation still received negative criticism. The line of criticism aimed at this new style of writing was that instead of the

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[162] al-Khaṭīb, "Ḥawl Filasṭīn wa al-tajruba al-ʿadabiyya," in *Ẓilāl,* 51.
"...لا بد من التماس العذر للتركيز على الخصوصية الفلسطينية، إذ أنه يأتي نتيجة لضغط الوقائع المؤسية التي لا يخلو منها يوم فلسطيني واحد."

[163] This is not only referential to historical moments in Palestinian life, but is also applicable to literary techniques and used themes and symbols. For example, he gives examples of poets who re-use symbols like the cross and the mythic figure of Tammūz in adherence to known uses (see Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 34-37). One can see Barghouti's own application of the symbol of Tammūz in the first poem of his first published poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā* (see section 5.4).

[164] Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 39.

[165] For a discussion of this 'new writing,' see Hoda Elsadda, "The Personal is Political," in *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 145- 164.

previously held conception of national struggle, commitment, and political life, these new and controversial (male and female) authors were dwelling on the personal.[166] However, this shift in the direction of writing that Hoda Elsadda explains in her book *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008* can be read as a way of "foregrounding the act of writing as praxis" and consequently blurring the lines between the personal and the public. [167] This way of writing questions the boundaries of space as well as literature (as will be demonstrated in chapter 3).

Barghouti's early criticism addresses the singular expression of Palestinian reality. Its fixation with one approach and its recycling of components portray the surface of this reality (see section 1.4 for an example). The act of searching for multi-dimensionality in the *expression* of reality is what deforms the surface and invites the new depths to emerge. It is important to note that by criticizing the superficiality of writing, Barghouti does not criticize the need for a surface (*saṭḥ*) in writing. It is the movement between the surface and the depth that aids the author in the creative endeavor. The surface represents the base upon which the author can build his/her departure. This is further reflected in his view of political and historical realities as references (surfaces) onto which new literary expressions can be founded.

Beyond the literary and metaphoric contextualization of surfaces and depths, surfaces serve to exemplify Barghouti's unpacking of economic, historic, political, and architectural constructions in Palestine; and thus of the physicality of the land. For example, in a short piece entitled "ʿAn al-makān al-munqariḍ," he provides some insightful remarks regarding the multi-dimensionality of surfaces (*suṭūḥ*) in Ramallah, starting from peasant houses, through 19th-century aristocratic buildings, to the villas and towers of modern times. This is

[166] The resistance against these aspects of change "is first and foremost a function of the dominant ideology among Arab literati that continues to privilege a national narrative narrowly defined to represent their particular worldview." Hoda Elsadda, "The personal is political," 149.
[167] Ibid., 146.

important to note since it reveals Barghouti's intellectual involvement in the day-to-day Palestinian life, and the mixture of literary writings, philosophical investigations, and economic commentaries in his work. Barghouti's observations of shifts and changes in the architectural landscape of Ramallah are particularly linked to political changes (particularly the post-Oslo environment), which brought with it new undivided wealth.[168] These surfaces of Ramallah represent "chronotopic intersections…in an embodied text."[169] Architectural changes and social life are equated, in Barghouti's eyes, to a literary text. In other words, the physical surfaces resemble signs that can be interpreted in multiple ways similar to literary motifs and themes.

The previous examples show that it is the interplay between surface and depth that highlights Barghouti's call for change in modes of writing that are still tied to previous writings and political and societal realities. The deployment of surfaces in different literary, political-economic, and spatial dimensions (see, for example, section 3.6) further elucidates his way of mixing the literary with the lived and his connection to the urgencies and changes in Palestinian life and society. Questioning the representation of land and literature is not a denial of the reality of living, but rather a heightened awareness of its true experience through dialectics and change rather than essentiality and fixation.

1.4 Materiality of living – Literary creativity

As was mentioned above, the dialectics of surface and depth has been presented through the example of the physical land and the social, architectural, and political shifts that affect its formation. Furthermore, the relation has been extended to include Barghouti's

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[168] For more on the architectural shifts in Ramallah whose "urbanizing trajectory long predated the Oslo regime" see Lisa Taraki, "Enclave Micropolis: The Paradoxical Case of Ramallah/al-Bireh," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 37, no. 4 (2008): 6-20.

[169] "تقاطعات الزمان-والمكان...في نصٍّ ملموس."
Barghouti, "ʿAn al-Makān", 85.

conception of creative writing, which acknowledges the productions of previous authors and the major political and social contours, but uses them as surfaces upon which new depths in expression can be uncovered. The body, as a material form, thus co-exists with the philosophical and the abstract. This relation between the material and the creative reveals the centrality of the physical and material body in Barghouti's project. Before moving forward, it is important to make a distinction in the use of the term 'material' in this dissertation. On the one hand, the material is used in relation to the bodily. The body of the human, the land, and the text are approached as such. On the other hand, the material in this section encompasses a larger description of objects or things that relate to economics, history, and politics. The reason for this inclusion of the wider use of the term 'material' is the need to show Barghouti's engagement with literary and economic theories, particularly in his early critical works and his PhD dissertation, influenced by Marx and Lukács. Thus, although the dissertation does not read every material object in life through the prism of the body, this dissertation still assumes, following Barghouti's views, the body as a basic materialist entity and reads its shifts as delineated in Barghouti's writings as commentaries on society, literature, and life in general. In the introduction to his PhD dissertation, he writes:

> I stress the point that the human body is a part of material civilization, because it is fashionable to "isolate" our "bodies" from the rest of the material products of civilization as "subjects" confronting outer "objects."[170]

The materialist approach is used as a means of explaining how Barghouti views 'the fictitious' in writing and is thus suitable for reading works that appear abstract, metaphysical, and immaterial such as *al-Ḍawʾ* and *Ḥajar al-ward*, for example. In short, Barghouti's critical and creative approach can be summarized as one that champions the dialectical nature of life in all its socio-economic complexities. As a result, the literary text becomes an

[170] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 3-4.

exercise in dialectical engagement with the social and political elements of the reality of living rather than in its representation.[171]

One of Barghouti's main lines of criticism is the way in which capitalism has infiltrated the social, literary, and cultural conceptions of Palestinian writing. Lukács' introduction of aesthetical readings of the common Marxist appropriation of economic struggle and realism might have sounded very encouraging to Barghouti. As Bashir Abu-Manneh explains, Lukács argues that "the artistic autonomy and the social meaning of art are distinct yet relationally mediated notions, and that a historicism attuned to conjuncture and rupture"[172] can be helpful in the reading of (Palestinian) novels. Similarly, Barghouti criticizes in Palestinian writing what he calls "the intellectual confusion; [which hinges on] failing to realize that the individual and history simultaneously intertwine and diverge."[173] In other words, Barghouti is attuned to temporal and societal shifts, but champions a literary portrayal that moves away from mere 'realistic' representation.

In her study of the complex relations between narratives and ideology in the late 19th and early 20th century Arabic texts Samah Selim asserts the problematics of defining realism in Arabic (and European) literature. Realism, as she argues, has been understood as a way of building the narrative elements, such as time, place, and plot, as reflections of "the particular social, cultural and political reality (*wāqiʿ*) of the national collectivity."[174] National and ideological representations have been seen as the grid onto which realist writings are scrutinized and as important tools that form the Arabic 'canon'.[175]

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[171] As he states:

"يجب أن يكتشف الشاعر أعماقا جديدة، يجب أن يكون ديالكتيكيا لا أن يقطع الواقع بمثل هذا الشكل."

Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 45.

[172] Abu-Manneh, *The Palestinian Novel*, 7.

[173] "...الخلط الفكري، أي عدم ادراك أن الفرد والتاريخ يرتبطان معا ويختلفان في نفس الوقت..."

Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr,* 55.

[174] Samah Selim, "The Narrative Craft: realism and fiction in the Arabic canon," *Edebiyat: Journal of M.E. Literatures,* 14:1-2, (2003): 110.

[175] Ibid., 109-110.

Barghouti's argument is not to abandon the national but to rearrange the elements that construct it. To give an example: although the reality of the Palestinians is summed up by loss, its depiction in literature (and specifically poetry), in Barghouti's eyes, should not 'mirror' this with endless similar images and metaphors of loss. The material loss of possessions is only one dimension of the Palestinian experience. Thus, the depiction of this loss does not constitute a complete and full portrayal of the reality of the loss. Barghouti takes this 'material' depiction to be a case of ideological statism.

The problem with the materialist fixation, as Barghouti sees it, is that it takes material dispossession as a main and unchanging line of inquiry, thus subordinating the role of the human in the literature for the sake of the material.[176] This capitalist appropriation of the Palestinian representation of 'loss' follows the lines of Lukács' discussion of commodity-structure. Lukács explains that Marx's ideas about commodity-structure can only be understood if taken as the main issue regarding all angles of society, not only economics.[177] On the other hand, this material dispossession assumes a false understanding of the realist approach in which it is "a commitment to photographically capture reality."[178]

How, then, should reality be portrayed? In an article written in 1983, Barghouti presents his insight into the nature of literary creation. What Barghouti argues is that any literary creation, no matter how distant it seems from the actual and the material, depends on them.

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[176] As Barghouti points out, the role of literature would be to restore the importance of the human in the artistic work. By narrating one's dispossessions, the poet is imprisoned within "the sheer values of the materialist capitalist society" (*Azmat al-shiʿr,* 20).
"...البقاء ضمن قيم المجتمع الرأسمالي المادية الصرفة."

[177] As Lukács explains "the problem of commodities must not be considered in isolation or even regarded as the central problem in economics, but as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects."
Georg Lukács. "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist* Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), 83.

[178] *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 15-16.

عملية الخلق الادبي...ليست عملية خلق من العدم...[إن] الادب هو خلق لواقع يتميز بكونه ليس واقعا ماديا ملموسا بالمعنى الضيق للكلمة، فهو واقع موجود فقط في الوعي.[179]

> The process of literary creation is not one where something is created out of nothing. Literature is a creation of a reality that is not shackled by the constraints of the materially and tangibly actual. Rather, it offers a reality that exists solely in consciousness.

This statement points to two conditions for literature. The first is that any literary creation stems from pre-discovered entities that allow for its emergence. Creation is not an origin, but rather a process (a beginning – to reference chapter 2) that needs a foundation or basis (previous beginnings) in order to become a founding entity in itself. This also links to Barghouti's point on the need for future authors to build on the works of their predecessors in order to reach deeper literary interpretations, meanings, and experiences.[180] The second condition is that although the created image might not be a representation of reality, it is still considered a realist creation, since it is a projection of the reality in the consciousness.

The imagination of reality is anchored in the material and the bodily. The abstractness is brought back to the concrete through what he calls *qānūn al-khayāl al-ʿām* ("the general rule of imagination"). He writes that:

لا يمكن ان نتخيل أي شيء الا إذا كان ما نتخيله "صورة" لشيء مادي او مركبا من مجموعة صور مادية.[181]

> One cannot imagine anything except if it is the 'form' of a material object, or if it is compounded out of a number of such forms.

The beginning of any literary creation that emerges from consciousness thus stems from the present and the material but does not result in a mere material outline. It is, thus, the representation of a specific and defined form of the real that Barghouti aims at negating and not the real itself. While elements of political and social suffering are a reality of Palestinian life, their representation should not only mirror their existence in the lives of Palestinians. For

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[179] Hussein Barghouti, "Ṭabīʿat al-khalq al-adabī- Dirāsa fī al-dhātiyya: Mikānizmātiha wa mustaqbalihā wa ʿalāqatiha bi al-thawra," *al-Kātib,* no. 44 (December 1983): 44.
[180] Barghouti, *Azmat al-shiʿr*, 39.
[181] Ibid., "Ṭabīʿat al-khalq", 44.

example, while Barghouti utilized an element from the lives of Palestinians, the barbed wire in the poem at the beginning of the chapter, it is used as a metaphor for the need to emancipate language from its shackles.

The process of creativity is based on three stages, choosing the elements for the imagination (*al-ʿanāṣir*) that are taken from natural, social, political, and economic life. The second is the process of compounding these elements (*ʿamaliyyat tarkīb al-ʿanāṣir*). And most importantly is the first principle (*mabdaʾ*)[182] upon which the construction of these objects is based. By "the principle of imagination" Barghouti alludes to the intentions and decisions that one takes to support this creation. In other words, what is at stake is that although materiality is at the heart of the process, it is eventually the principle of imagination that assures the acts of creativity and innovation.

This juncture between the existent objects and the way and principle in which they are combined resonate with what Barghouti calls in his PhD dissertation "'fictitious' transformation."[183] In Barghouti's understanding, this transformation entails the act of inscribing "any form of self-consciousness," such as personification or description, to these objects.[184] Any object, such as a 'machine', as Barghouti argues, acquires its name, its 'purposefulness' not from itself, but from the acts of ascription (i.e. fictitiousness) that humans exert onto it.[185] Further asserting Barghouti's conviction in the importance of the physical and material body in the act of (literary) creation, he argues that any "'fictitious' imaginings" cannot be constructed beyond the chemical interactions that happen in the human brain and body.[186]

[182] Ibid.
[183] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 9.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid., 10.
[186] Ibid., 9.

With this invitation to construct different fictitious transformations, Barghouti's works are a revolt against these laws governing the Palestinian canon.[187] Barghouti's calls for innovation are, however, not anarchical; he does not champion a situation without any rules, but rather exploration of writing rules (see section 2.1 for a discussion on writing rules). Barghouti, in fact, uses terminology that refer to laws and the mechanisms of creation. For example, when introducing what he calls "the general law of imagination," he writes

...بما ان الادب هو خيال فان هنالك قوانين لا يستطيع الخيال ان يتجاوزها.[188]

> Since literature is a form of imagination, there are as such rules that the imagination cannot surpass.

Imagination is formed by the known objects. However, the ways in which they are imagined and portrayed is what Barghouti aims at expanding. Barghouti criticizes the constitutive position of the poetic image in Palestinian literature. Instead, the multiple understandings of the poetic image and its changeability across subjects and times show how imaginative modes are inspired, rather than being prescribed, by the reality and materiality of being. Taking Barghouti's understanding of the material and its role in literary imagination is important for analysing Barghouti's approach to the demise of his physical body. Barghouti's experience with illness and with the deterioration of his body, as will be shown in the examples in the following chapters, alludes to his awareness of the centrality of the material body. At the same time, his narrations, i.e. different imaginations, of his experience asserts the ability of this deforming body to find new means of existence; and thus, to remain in a state of formation.

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[187] The issue of canon and canonization is complex. It is one that involves a mix of power relations as well as social, political, and cultural influences. The etymology of the word is revealing for the way the canon is formalized. Canon, a Latin word coming from the Arabic word *qānūn,* refers to the laws and rules that govern a chosen body of works. Michael Allan brings together debates on the position of (Arabic) literature in relation to the 'world' and puts forth "a formulation in which literature is understood less as a canon of texts than as a disciplined manner of reading." Michael Allan, "How Adab Became Literary: Formalism, Orientalism and the Institutions of World Literature," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43, Issues 2-3 (2012): 194.

[188] Barghouti, "Ṭabīʿat al-khalq", 44.

1.5 Reforming commitment – Hazza as engagement

This section reads Barghouti's consciousness of and commitment to social, communal, and personal lives. The reading of Barghouti's commentaries on the status of political and social life is framed by looking at the land as a body that is shaken and changed. The name that casts the longest shadow on the notion of commitment in literature in the Palestinian scene is Ghassan Kanafani (1936-1972).[189] In light of the exemplary link between literature and criticism that Kanafani embodies, Barghouti's project represents another example of societal and literary engagement that redefines notions of commitment, national struggle, and resistance.[190] Kanafani's works represent the first conscious step towards a regrouping of Palestinian intellectuals through literature and literary criticism after 1948. He contextualized the role of literature within the larger political and social resistance of the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation.[191] Kanafani asserts that "the issue of commitment is not merely theoretical…but it is rather a deep and responsible sense of awareness of the dimensions of the fight that [the literature of resistance] has found itself in."[192] He equates the role of the author to that of the freedom fighter, thus engulfing literature with notions of political participation and activism.[193]

As in the works of Sartre and Kanafani, the concept of commitment (*iltizām*) is at the core of the political struggle for freedom and assumes an awareness of the intricacies of social, political, and personal lives as set within the relation between the individual and the

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[189] Hilary Kilpatrick provides a beyond-the-political reading of Kanafani's fiction. Hilary Kilpatrick, "Tradition and Innovation in the Fiction of Ghassān Kanafāni," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 7 (1976): 53-64.

[190] Kanafani is mentioned in Barghouti's novel *al-Ḍiffa*, where the protagonist finds himself in Beirut and asks if someone has seen his 'blond' friend whose name is Ghassan Kanafani. Barghouti, *al-Ḍiffa*, 17.

[191] Ghassan Kanafani, *Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine*, trans. Sulafa Hijjawi (Baghdad: The Ministry of Culture, 2009), 55.
Kanafani was the first intellectual to define the term resistance in relation to Palestinian literature in his study *al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī al-muqāwim taḥt al-iḥtilāl 1948-1968* (*Palestinian Resistance Literature Under Occupation, 1948 -1968*).

[192] Kanafani, *al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī*, 61.
"قضية الالتزام ليست نظرية مجردة...ولكن وعياً عميقاً ومسؤولاً لأبعاد المعركة التي وجد [ادب المقاومة] نفسه في صميمها"

[193] For more, see Abu-Manneh, "Ghassan Kanafani's Revolutionary Ethics," in *The Palestinian Novel*, 71-95. Abu-Manneh sets the argument that it was Kanafani's commitment to literature and its role in society that led him eventually to act on a political level (see p. 72-73).

communal. This, as I conceive it, is still central to Barghouti's project, albeit in a different structure. What Barghouti diverges from is the finite and set definition of the concept of commitment. In an interview conducted by the Palestinian writer ʿĀṭif Abū-Sayf, Barghouti comments that

الفن أكثر تعقيداً من أنه لا توجد عنده رسالة، بل توجد عنده رسالة، ما تكتبه من شعر إنساني موقف أخلاقي، أنت تقوم برسالة أخلاقية، ولكن يوجد فرق في النسيج الفني ذاته، وهذا بعينه هو الفن، أحياناً يأخذ شكل شعور أو شكل قصة مع أرنب مثلاً، وهذا يختلف عن القول إن الفن لا يأخذ موقفاً.[194]

> Art is more complex than simply saying that it does not possess a message. It *does* have a message. The humanist poetry you write is an ethical stance. You are performing an ethical message. Nonetheless, there is distinct work performed upon the artistic weave itself, and that is art. Sometimes it takes the form of a feeling, or the form of a narrative with a rabbit, for example. This differs from saying that art does not take a stand.

Abū-Sayf follows Barghouti's commentary with a rhetorical question:

كأنك تقدم تفسيراً جديداً لمفهوم الالتزام؟

It is as if you are presenting a new interpretation of *iltizām* (commitment)?

Barghouti:

هذا شكل من أشكال الموقف، لكنه ليس الشكل الوحيد، هل نلتزم بالجمال مثلاً، أو بدولة قومية، الالتزام ليس قصة نهائية.[195]

> This is one mode of taking a stand, but it is not the only one. Do you commit to beauty, for example, or to a nation-state? Commitment is not conclusive or self-explanatory.

Instead of declaring that commitment should be abandoned, Barghouti invites an expansion of the concept. He asserts that art has a message to deliver, and that it takes a stance based on human experiences.[196] However, this "ethical stance" (*mawqif akhlāqī*) expresses itself through an "artistic weave" (*nasīj fannī*) that can be more than a national

[194] Barghouti, "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī," 200.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.

commitment or an art-for-art's sake commitment. Barghouti's works, thus, represent a departure from 'institutionalized' bodies in Palestine, particularly political parties and sects, and fixed formations of writing.

In a way, Barghouti reverses the line of influence: instead of a definite social or political commitment which yields a certain form of writing, the artistic narrative works as a shaping force of the concept. Barghouti's attestation of the role of narratives falls in line with Kanafani's conviction of the active role of literature in society, which is based on his belief in the "sacredness of the word."[197] Similarly, Sartre shared this conviction when he declared that "the engaged writer knows that words are action."[198] For Barghouti, however, the word is sacred in its changeability and attunes not solely to actions but also to feelings. For Barghouti commitment *par excellence* is made of *multiple* weavings; i.e. multiple forms, bodies, realities and narratives.

The rabbit narrative cited earlier as an example of a committed act is not haphazard. The rabbit (*al-arnab*) is a recurrent theme in Barghouti's *al-Ḍaw'* – a book that was criticized for its lack of commitment to the political and social needs of Palestine (see section 2.3 for the discussion of the rabbit theme). Is the rabbit an intentional 'critical' reply to the misunderstanding of his literary work? At any point, it shows Barghouti's back and forth movement between the critical and the literary. Furthermore, it alludes to the significance of the construction of the narrative on top of thematic labelling, where a story about a rabbit can be as significant as a story about the homeland.

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[197] Kanafani, *al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī*, 75. For more on Kanafani's conception of commitment see Abu-Manneh, *The Palestinian Novel*. "In the heated debate over commitment (*iltizām*) in the Arab world, Kanafani is squarely in the left revolutionary camp." (75)

[198] Sartre, *What is Literature*, 55. While the issue of commitment in Arab thought is complex and varied, Sartre's understanding of it and his influence on Arab intellectuals cannot be denied. As Di-Capua highlights, the influence of Sartre's questions on the nature of writing has affected the way in which Arab intellectuals (particularly in 1950s and 1960s) regarded the strong relation between politics and cultural life (Di-Capua, *No Exit*, 105-106). Inspired by the realities of their present lives as well as theoretical influences from places such as Paris and Moscow, the concept of *iltizām* (commitment) in literature and culture became "a subjective expression of revolutionary commitment." (Ibid., 106).

Since the focus in this dissertation is on Barghouti's main poetry collections and prose writing, I opted to devote some attention here to Barghouti's songs, which fit into his philosophy and offer a more accessible expression of his engagement with society and politics. The short examples presented below exemplify Barghouti's understanding of tension and change in Palestinian life through transformations in spatial and linguistic bodies. These transformations portray a medium capable of capturing the instant and the personal in Palestinian life. In the 1980s, Barghouti was part of a group of young artists whose aim was to provide an art that is representative of the general atmosphere, while still looking for ways to move beyond the typical ways of representation. Barghouti wrote the lyrics to songs sung by some of the most famous music bands at that time including *al-Raḥḥāla, Sanābil,* and the most well-known group, *Ṣabrīn*. As Joseph Massad explains, the lyrics of *Ṣabrīn* "written by Palestinian poets Darwish, Husayn al-Barghuthi, and Samih al-Qasim, seem to be chosen for a fragmentary non-narrative structure that veers away from the ideological songs of ʻAbd al-Wahhab, the sometimes lachrymose mood of the Rahbanis, or the militancy of al-Firqah al-Markaziyyah… just like their resistance to facile lyrics, their complex compositions resist the hegemony of melody so pervasive in contemporary Arab song."[199]

The importance of the study of songs is their immediacy and exhibited awareness to the present situation in Palestine, but also to the predictability of upcoming changes. In 1985, two years before the start of the first Palestinian Intifada, Barghouti narrates how Saʿīd Murād, the composer in *Ṣabrīn,* asked him to write songs about the people (*al-shaʿb*). Barghouti answers by saying

> أنظر للشارع: كل الشبابيك مغلقة، لا أحد يفتح لأحد أو على أحد، ذرات خائفة في جحور خاصة! "الشعب" وهم، كلمة تدل على جماعة متخيلة، وتجمع كل هذه العوالم المغلقة.[200]

[199] Joseph Massad, "Liberating Songs: Palestine Put to Music," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 34.
[200] Barghouti, "Dhākira ʿādiyya," 43.

> Look at the street: all the windows are closed. No one opens for anyone or opens up to anyone. They are just scared atoms in private burrows! 'The people' is an illusion. It is a word that refers to an imagined group, and it gathers all of these self-enclosed worlds.

Barghouti's commentary on the political and social tension that was boiling up during the years preceding the first Intifada is spatially portrayed by the empty street, the closed windows, and the hiding in the burrows. From this enclosed space, Barghouti zooms out into his understanding of 'the people' as an allusion (*wahm*), a closed conceptual entity. He, thus, negates the empty political and ideological slogans referencing the national, the unified, and the communal that the word *al-shaʿb* conveys. Instead, his understanding is based on what is seen and sensed as it unfolds through the enclosed and the hidden, meaning, through the prism of each individual. The illusionary and unified concept of *al-shaʿb* is reconfigured by paying attention to the movements that people are making (the movements in space and their political and literary echoes are dealt with in chapter 3).

Barghouti is aware of the sense of agitation that hides beneath surfaces and outside of known political 'frames' and what is institutional. Just like the image of tension, his vision of change is spatially portrayed. Against the tension and the hiding that takes place in enclosed spaces, Barghouti predicts change coming in the form of geographic movements, where he senses a feeling of

> قوة تتململ تحت السطح، خارج كل الأطر، وخارج المنظمة![201]

> a power fidgeting beneath the surface, outside all existing frames, and beyond the confines of the organization.

Barghouti senses change coming from depths that do not fall within Palestinian frames nor the (political) organization, and which represent a new force that is brewing under the surface. Depth-surface interactions are at play in the vision and signify an awareness of

[201] Ibid., 44.

what is to come in Palestinian life. This force of change is captured in a song entitled "Yā Ḥalālī yā mālī" which he describes in one of his commentaries as

أغنية-نبوءة بالهزة القادمة

a song – a premonition of the forthcoming quake

هاي مدينة مثل البير
المشاوير تودّي وين؟ ومقادير
مقادير وغربتين وغربتين وخفت يصير
الشارع سيل يغرق ناس!

This city is like a well
errands that lead to where? Lead to where? And fates
Fates and two exiles and two exiles and I was scared
that the street would become a torrent that drowns people!

The song ends with:

وامي صبرا قالت مرّة افواج أفواج يهبّوا الناس.[202]

and my mother, Ṣabrā, once said bands upon bands the people will errupt.

Walking at night in Ramallah and witnessing these hidden winds of change, Barghouti documents a vision about a change that was powered by crowds of people (*nās*). The word *al-nās* is in reference to Palestinians who do not belong to any political party or frame. It is no longer *al-shaʿb* in its abstract and unified form that represents political rupture, nor only the eminent fighter (*fidāʾī*), or the celebrated sense of unity, hope, and resistance that are being represented. The concept of *al-nās*, here, allows for individual experiences and variations to come across, where the lonely, the alienated, and the scared also find their voices here.[203] To frame the discussion in relation to the land as a forming body, the street is taken as a spatial representative of the surface and the sense of repressiveness, sadness, and

[202] Ibid.
[203] In his study on the relation between the poet and authority through the case study of the Egyptian poet Fuad Haddad, Sayed Daifallah argues that *al-shaʿb* is a conceptualized and contoured form of representation of *al-nās*. This form of representation, which is used by discourse makers, distances the people *al-nās* from the reality of living into a metaphorical realm (*al-istiʿāra*). See Sayed Daifallah, *Ṣūrat al-Shaʿb bayn al-Shāʿir wa al-Raʾīs: Fuad Haddad* (Cairo: al-Kutub Khān li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 2015).

exile, while *al-nās* come as an earthquake that splits the earth to display the structural body of political and social life. The song represents a poetic vision of the political uprising of the late 80s (the first Intifada). The Intifada came to be known as *intifāḍat aṭfāl al-ḥijāra* ("the uprising of the children of the stones") and was predominantly led by non-party members and councils.

Barghouti's song provides a stark portrayal of Palestinian life. Its effectiveness also comes from its linguistic dimension and the way it oscillates between *fuṣḥā* and colloquial Arabic. The quake that is envisioned in the lives of Palestinians is mirrored in the used language. As Issa Bolous, a Palestinian composer and friend of Barghouti's, comments, working as part of a new intellectual group emerging from rural areas, Barghouti utilized the colloquial Palestinian dialect as a way to "literally invent a new political dialect that captured the politicized rhetoric of the street and employ it in new emerging song genres."[204]

An engagement with the culture, an awareness of the political circumstances, and a creation of a new discourse that accommodates the lived: all these experimentations show Barghouti's aim at creating a literature that captures the core of the (Palestinian) cause, all the while unafraid of exposing the distraught sense of alienation and disintegration in society. With an attention to feelings such as: loneliness, alienation, tension, distress, coupled with a sense of upcoming changes (earthquakes) in society, Barghouti unsettles the fixed meaning of communality and nationalism through *al-shaʿb*. He does that by subordinating songs whose aim were to infuse people with political and ideological energy to those that highlight the lived and experiential feelings and thoughts of *al-nās*. Put differently, he supplants the ideologically abstracting icon of *al-shaʿb*, with *al-nās.* Barghouti's commitment sends a literary message shaped by bodily reformation, be it through metaphors of spatial

[204] Issa Boulos, "Negotiating the Elements: Palestinian Freedom Songs from 1967 to 1987," *Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and Resistance Since 1900,* eds. Moslih Kanaaneh, Stig-Magnus Thorsén, Heather Bursheh and David A. McDonald (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 64.

containment and emergence, or stylistic mixtures across different linguistic registers.

1.6 Taṭrīz – The embroidered space and time

The multiplicity of the committed expressions stems from Barghouti's belief in the existence of multi-dimensional times and spaces. This connection between space and time can be conceptualized in his project through another bodily formation, that of embroidery. Corporeally speaking, the link between textiles and the body is immediately perceived. In the Palestinian context, the traditional clothing, particularly that of embroidered dresses (*athwāb*), is central to the Palestinian body, history, and identity.[205]

The intrinsic and artistic act of textile making is used in Barghouti's text *Ḥajar al-ward* and will be taken as a way of framing his conception on the interconnectedness of times, spaces, and inspirations. The term that is adopted from Barghouti's literary text is embroidery (*taṭrīz*).[206] Beyond the representative nature of embroidery in the Palestinian context, I want to focus on the technical use of the term that leads eventually to the formation of the embroidered piece and subsequently the literary text.[207] The way this specific text is written is in itself an application of this embroidery technique.

In *Ḥajar al-ward*, we follow a narrator's commentary about his encounter with a mysterious person. The man is portrayed as a kind of an ostracized philosopher or prophet

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[205] See Iman Saca, *Embroidering Identities: A Century of Palestinian Clothing* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago, 2007).

[206] The etymology of the word 'text' in English in linked to the act of weaving. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the word text comes from: "Latin *textus* (*u*-stem) style, tissue of a literary work (Quintilian), lit. that which is woven, web, texture, < *text-*, participial stem of *texĕre*to weave." "Text, n.1" OED Online. July 2018. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/200002?rskey=4W8ovQ&result=1 (accessed November 28, 2018). This link between weaving and the literary piece has also been explored in literary theory. The word 'text' according to Barthes holds in its etymology the act of weaving. Barthes explains in his "From Work to Text" that "the Text is plural" and achieves this plurality through the "unique" interweaving of signifiers. Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontata Press, 1977), 159. More recently, the Centre for Material Texts at the University of Cambridge focuses on the acts and ways in which texts have been produced (https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cmt/?page_id=102). See for example the 2012 conference "Texts and Textiles" which investigates the link between language and fabric (https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cmt/?page_id=2630).

[207] The connection between the written text and fabric weaving is not new and is similarly used in classical Arabic literature in relation to notions of authorship and influence. For more on this topic see: *Concepts of Authorship in Pre-Modern Arabic Texts*, ed. Lale Behzadi and Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2015).

who engages with the narrator in many conversations regarding the self, its ability to transform, and the web of past and present. The part that is of interest here is the conversation between the narrator and the prophet-life figure on the questions of space and time. The narrator says:

أدركت لاحقاً بأنه يرى العالم بطريقة مختلفة، فيرى العالم متزامناً، ما حدث قبل عشر آلاف سنة، ربما في زاغروس، موجود في ذاكرته كغرزة تطريز بقرب غرزة تطريز أخرى هي ما يحدث عندنا الآن في أصفهان، فالأزمنة متجاورة وليست متتابعة. التاريخ تطريز...الماضي مساحة كالغابة، قال، والآن مساحة، قال، وأنا مسّاح، أردف، ولا يهمني الزمن المتتابع، بل انفتاح المساحات كتطريز متجاور لا أسبقية فيه لغرزة على أخرى، ولا تتابع.[208]

> I realized later that he saw the world differently. He sees the world as coeval. What happened ten thousand years ago, maybe in Zagros Mountains, exists in his memory like a stitch in an embroidery. It lies next to another stitch that takes place now in Isfahan. Times do not flow consecutively; they are adjacent. History is an embroidering act…The past is a space like the forest, he said. The now is a space, he said. And I am a surveyor, he continued. I am not interested in the consecutive time, but I trace the opening up of areas as adjacent embroidery, where no stitch precedes the other, or succeeds it.

Although these commentaries are part of the narrative line in the text, they are not only descriptive of the views of the specific character. Rather, they are indicative of Barghouti's own theoretical understandings and are representative of his other literary works. Time is described in spatial terms: where past and present are both spaces. The prophet-like figure sees himself as a land surveyor, as someone who views these temporal spaces in their multi-dimensionality. Places and times are thus placed in his mind as stiches of embroidery on the same piece of fabric. Understanding spaces and temporalities in textile terms informs the reading of acts of enjambments in memory that are imperative to Barghouti's conception of his life and literature (for example in section 2.3). The end product of the embroidered piece is never achieved. Instead, what Barghouti champions is the infinite movements between one embroidered stitch and another, and the drive to add more threads to the

[208] Barghouti, *Ḥajar al-ward*, 27-28.

embroidered fabric, thus adding layers and creating more depths by changing the surface of the fabric. This infinite creative artistry allows Barghouti to think of his own body beyond the contours of its cancer diagnosis, and of the literary text apart from its recognizable features and genres. Adjacency (*tajāwur*), contra consecutiveness (*tatābuʿ*), is a positionality that engenders equilibrium, with no ancestral privilege nor contemporary urgency.[209]

Barghouti's belief in this infinite openness of times and spaces, and above all the creative act, is guided by personal, emotional, and physical experiences and is, thus, contextual. This sartorial language is most evident in Barghouti's last poetry collection *Marāyā sāʾila.* Although the front page categorizes the text as a work of poetry, Barghouti's aim in this text was to write a new kind of poetry that does not resemble the familiar poetry. Mixing prose, rhymes, narratives, and rhythms, Barghouti's texts read, as al-Shaikh puts it, like "a creative writing workshop."[210] Again, this stresses the idea of the crafting and dynamic nature of the text that are relevant to the study of Barghouti's productions. The collection reads as one long poem, although it is divided into different sections. The sections that are relevant here are the ones entitled *Qiṭʿat Thawb* and numbered from 1 to 9, leaving out number 8.

The text follows a poet-monteur (film editor) who falls in love with the director of a film that he is working on. She tells him that she will only love him if he manages to write the poem that is in her head. In his journey to find this poem, the poet views a poster of the opera *Carmen*[211] in which the protagonist, Carmen, is wearing a:

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[209] Al-Sūdānī alludes in his MA thesis to an unpublished paper by Barghouti where the latter links embroidery to the idea of moving beyond the *saṭḥ*. See, al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat," 69-70.

[210] "ورشة كتابة إبداعية"
Abdul-Rahim al-Shaikh, "Marāyā sāʾila: Ruʾyat al-ṣawt, samāʿ al-ṣūra," in "Taḥiyya ilā Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī," edited by Akram Musallam, *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya* 114 (Spring 2018): 117.

[211] Al-Shaikh notes that George Bizet's (1838-1875) opera *Carmen* is prevalent in Barghouti's collection and was used to frame his poetry collection "*marjaʿiyyāt taʾṭīriyya*." (ibid., 122). Al-Shaikh, furthermore, explores some of the similarities between Barghouti's text and the opera, which include the similarities in the characters (the female lover that torments the male protagonist) (ibid., 135-136).

ثوبا غجريا إسبانيا مكونا من أثواب عدة. قطعة حمراء عالقة بالخصر تحتها قطعة من البني الداكن أطول من سابقتها، تحتها قطعة صفراء أطول من سابقتها تحتها قطعة بلون آخر أطول من...هضابا، ومروجا، وتلالا، جغرافيا الأندلس مرسومة بثوب!. نسيج القصيدة التي في ذهنها كثوب كارمن، جغرافيا من قماش الكلام.[212]

> a Spanish Gypsy dress made of multiple cloths. There is a red piece hanging down the waist, under which there is a longer dark brown one, under which there is a longer yellow one, under which there is another coloured piece…Highlands, meadows, and mounds; it is as if the geography of *al-Andalus* is sketched in a dress! The fabric of the poem in her head is like Carmen's dress: a geography woven from the cloth of words.

As in *Ḥajar al-ward,* Barghouti draws the link between the multiple layers of the dress and the interconnection between space and time. The placement of the different pieces of fabric echoes the *weaving* of the poem that is inside the director's head. How can the poet then create this multidimensional poem? He continues by asking:

هل يوجد معنى لثوب بدون تاريخ الجسد، لقطع الثوب بدون جغرافيا الأندلس والغجر...لا! وكذلك القصيدة التي في ذهنها لا معنى لها بدون "سياقها". ما أكتبه من تعليقات، هوامش، مقدمات...هو "سياق القصيدة"، جزء من معناها وليس خارجها.[213]

> Does a dress have a meaning outside the history of the body? Do the pieces of the dress have a meaning without the geography of al-Andalus and the gypsies? No. Similarly, the poem inside her head does not have a meaning without its 'context.' The comments, marginal notes, and introductions which I write are 'the context of the poem.' They are an integral part of the meaning and not superfluous.

These questions and his statement on the context as being part and parcel of the meaning of the text elucidate how the body (as a symbol for the literary text) gains meaning through what covers and surrounds it. The acts of moving from one place to another and one narration to another are not simple haphazard stiches. The emotional and physical experiences in the act of writing guide the creation of the fabric and are themselves part of its meaning. Barghouti's project alludes to the openness of times and spaces and the movement

[212] Barghouti, *Marāyā sā'ila*, 55.
[213] Ibid.

between them, while at the same time anchors this movement in the realm of the personal, the lived, and the surroundings.

The examples above taken from Barghouti's critical and literary works constitute the principles on which his poetics rest and elucidate the interconnectedness between criticism and literary writing. The overlapping stitches are Barghouti's own way of justifying the capricious movements and nonlinearity of his writing where one episode, memory, or even word can generate other feelings and thoughts, and thus yield new narratives. In a way, the apparent difficulty in categorically pinning the thematic and stylistic conceptions in his works is an inherent way of his writing, where different times and spaces contribute simultaneously to the creative act.

1.7 al-Dhawq – Taste, land, and literature

خذ، مثلاً، ظاهرة أركيولوجية معروفة. التل...التلّ عبارة عن طبقات ومستويات متراكمة الواحدة فوق الأخرى. الذوق هنا مثل التلّ الذي تتراكم فيه الطبقات، وهنا أعني بالطبقات الذائقة السابقة. هذه الصورة بين التل والذائقة لا تمنع أننا نبني طبقات جديدة، ولكن لا نبنيها على عدم. وفي اللحظة التي تدرك أنه لم تبنَ طبقات جديدة فهذا يعني أن المكان هُجر، وإلى الأبد.[214]

> Take, for example, a well-known archaeological phenomenon, the mound. The mound is comprised of accumulated layers and levels, one on top of the other. *Al-dhawq* (taste) is similar to this cumulative mound. I use layers here to denote the preceding *taste*. This analogy between the mound on the one hand and *taste* on the other does not prohibit the construction of new layers. However, they are not built against a void. The moment one realizes that no new layers have been built means that the place has been abandoned forever.

Barghouti's emphasis on the multi-layered, as opposed to superficial and linear modes of literary creativity draws him to engage with the environment and context within which such literary creativity takes place. His awareness of the surrounding social and literary settings includes a knowledge of the political, economic, and social parameters of life in Palestine, but also an attention to the literary scene and reception. His writing, despite its

[214] Barghouti, "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī," 196.

apparent alienness and desire to present the unfamiliar, is in fact firmly embedded within the realm of reciprocity and readability. In other words, Barghouti's disruption of canon takes place explicitly within and not beyond the relationship with the reader. This section looks at Barghouti's critical conceptions of creativity as it is embedded within the social and literary concerns, and is outlined through the body.

Following his commentaries, *al-dhāʾiqa al-fanniyya* (the artistic taste)[215] is an experiential term that is in a constant state of formation. The terminology used in uncovering its meaning is positioned at the juncture between the human body and senses, and the formation of the earth. *Dhawq* (taste) at the same time can be thought of in terms of senses as well as knowledge.[216]

Barghouti's commitment on the one hand and call for innovation on the other crystalized thanks to his awareness of the literary shifts in society. The change in artistic taste represents for Barghouti an indication of development and movement. These shifts in production and reception are explored through another bodily example. In the quote above, land and literature are approached as bodies that build upon older forms but have the ability

[215] Al-dhāʾiqa is used here to signify the general term of taste. A more specific translation would be: the faculty of tasting.

[216] The term *dhawq* (taste) signifies a series of experiences that include the physical act of tasting, creation through speaking, and knowledge. The sensory converges, leads to, and constructs the cognitive. To put it differently, knowledge does not exist outside the body, but is rather constructed through/by it. This link between knowledge and the senses is beautifully described in Kilito's *The Tongue of Adam*. In this collection of essays, Kilito embarks on analyzing notions of originality in language through utilizing initiation vocabulary taken from stories of beginnings like that of Adam and of Babel. Kilito points out the similarity in French between *savoir* (to know) and *saveur* (savor) and argues that the tongue enjoys a double function - the act of tasting and the act of speaking (as an expression of knowledge). Abdelfattah Kilito, "Babblings," in *The Tongue of Adam*, trans. Robyn Creswell (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 2016), 3.
This same sentiment on the link between the senses and knowledge is also echoed in Sufi texts (For example Ibn al-ʿArabī's conception of *dhawq*). In his *Futūḥāt,* Ibn al-ʿArabī distinguishes between knowledge without *dhawq* and knowledge with *dhawq*. The latter, for him, is a higher form of recognition (*idrāk*). By acquiring *dhawq* and becoming an integral part of it "صاحب علم الذوق" the person is able to recognize things "just as the observer can recgonzie [more] things by using a mirror than he could without using it." *Dhawq,* thus, becomes the apparatus for the revelation of things beyond that which is seen.
"...كما يدرك الرائي بالنظر في المرآة الأشياء التي لا يدركها في تلك الحالة إلّا بالمرآة."
Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. Ahmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, vol.1, 1999), 335.
See also the overview of the emergence and development of the term *taste* in Britain: James Noggle, "Literature and Taste, 1700–1800," *Oxford Handbooks Online,* accessed 21 Jan. 2018. http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935338-e-108.

to transform and change. The mound, as a geographical formation captures the past through the different geological layers. Similarly, literary innovation is built upon the historical and the familiar in literary writing, which includes the works of literary predecessors. The body (geographic and literary), thus, is not constructed in a void, but is rather in a process of formation. Building of similar layers, i.e. recycling literary works that attune to the same *dhāʾiqa*, is for Barghouti an abandonment of the mound, and in a way an abandonment of literature. How, then, does an author add to the mound? Based on his awareness of societal shifts in Palestine, where arguments that "committed art provides final non-negotiable answers"[217] are no longer satisfactory, Barghouti argues that the author can build up new artistic taste by "breaking with the familiar and domesticating."[218] Similar to the first point about dissection and the links between criticism and literary creativity, the relation between reception and creativity is based on the author's ability to reveal new depths that are also hidden from himself.[219]

Consequently, the transformative act does not solely happen on the side of the author, but equally on the side of the reader. Barghouti distinguishes between a reader and an observer and says:

> من يقرأ يتحول، ومن لا يتحول، أي لا "يتخيل" نفسه في "مكان" الشاعر، ليس قارئاً جيداً بل مراقباً، هناك فرق بين من يدخل النار ومن يتفرج عليها من بعيد، محافظاً على "مسافة"...فالأنا اذاً، زاوية نظر، والشعر إعادة صياغة للأنا...صيرورة الأنا الى آخر، هنا، عمل سحري مغرق في الطقوسية.[220]

> A person who reads transforms herself, and the one who does not transform or 'imagine' herself in the *place* of the poet, is not a good reader but an observer. There is a difference between the one who steps into the fire and the one who watches it from afar, thus preserving a '*distance.*' The 'I' then is an angle of perception. Poetry

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[217] "...إنَّ الفنَّ الملتزم يقدِّم إجابات غير قابلة للجدل"
Barghouti, "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī, 194.

[218] "...الخروج عمَّا استألفه واستأنس به"
Ibid., 195.

[219] Al-Shaikh links Barghouti's development of the artistic taste to the collage technique in writing, where different art forms (music, architecture, theatre, and visual arts) are intertwined (al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twighlight," 40-41).

[220] Barghouti, "al-Baḥth ʿan lugha ukhrā," 29-30.

is a reformulation of the 'I' (i.e. of the angle of perception). The process of transforming the 'I' into the other is a work of magic entrenched in ritualism.

Reading, as opposed to observation, requires the reader not only to comprehend the reading material and the position of the author (poet) in it. Barghouti asserts the need for the 'I' as a representation of the self-consciousness to adopt a different position. Connecting with the fictitious creation, the reader goes from being an onlooker on the imaginative act to becoming a creator in his/her own right. Barghouti, for example, directly involves the reader in his *al-Ḍawʾ* by challenging him/her to step beyond his/her logical conception of life. Barghouti tells his readers that only a seer or someone who has the abilities of a *jinn* will be able to grasp the meaning of his text. In this proposition, Barghouti is presenting the act of transformation and one's acceptance of transformability as the path for understanding his writing (see section 2.2).

In his 1988 poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā* we find critical commentary on the need for transformation. Barghouti starts his poem "Taḥawwulāt" ("Transformations") with a poetic declaration:

صياغةً أخرى قصدتُ،
عنيتُ غيرَ صياغتي الأُولى، وغيرَ صياغتي الأُخرى،
وما سأصيغُ،
....
وما كنتُ استسغتُ وما أستسيغُ،
وغيرَ هذا النّفَس المألوف، غير الشّعرِ والشعراءِ،
....
وغيرَ الخطوة الأولى،
وغيرَ الخطوة الأخرى.
أُسمّيه: التحوّل.[221]

I seeked another formulation,
I intended one different from my first formulation, and different from my other formulation,
And from what I will still formulate,
…

[221] Barghouti, "Taḥawwulāt," in *al-Āthār*, 36.

and from what I had enjoyed [found palatable] and from what I still enjoy
something other than this familiar breath, different from poetry and poets,
…
different from the first step,
And the other step
I call it: transformation.

The speaker declares that his poetic method is not only to steer beyond the known methods of presentation, but also from his own ways of expression. The word *ghayr* (different from) becomes a refrain word and stands at the centre of his poetic declaration.[222] The repeated desire to find new expressions becomes the constitutive block of the expression (the poem) itself, where the intention and aim of the poet become part and parcel of the poem. The poetic innovation of finding new forms of expression is equated here to new steps taken by the body. This step can be in reference to the musicality of the poem that is defined through the rhythms and rhymes in the poem (see also section 4.6 for another example). The body is also evoked in the reading of the poem itself and the link in the consonant sounds between the *ṣād* and the *sīn* that link the word ***aṣ**īgh* ("I formulate") with the word *asta**s**īgh* ("I find palatable"). The relation between body and word allows Barghouti to present an act of constant transformation that defies a definite form of writing.

This metapoetic commentary on the need to search for different formulations, styles, and content is also the topic of Mahmoud Darwish's poem "Ightiyāl" (2008). Darwish writes:

يغتالني النقاد أحياناً:
يريدون القصيدة ذاتَها
والاستعارة ذاتها...
فأذا مشيت على طريق جانبيّ شارداً
قالوا: لقد خان الطريق
وإن عثرت على بلاغة عشبة
قالوا: تخلَّى عن عناد السنديان.[223]

Sometimes, the critics assassinate me:

[222] Omar Shabāna, "15 ʿām ʿala Raḥīlih: Hussein Barghouti wa Mughāmarat al-Tajrīb," *al-ʿArabī al-Jadīd* (11 May 2017), https://www.alaraby.co.uk/diffah/books/.
[223] Mahmoud Darwish, "Ightiyāl," in *Athar al-farāsha*, (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2008), 109.

they want the same poem
and the same metaphor…
If I walked inattentively on a side road
They say: he betrayed the road
And if I find eloquence still raw and green
They say: he abandoned the stubbornness of the oak.

Darwish criticizes the critics' 'assassination' (the title of his poem) of his attempts at writing poetry that does not adhere to known and recognizably 'Palestinian' expectations. When investigating other aspects and themes in life, the 'national poet' of Palestine is accused of "betraying" the road (i.e. the Palestinian cause). At the end of the poem, Darwish declares that he survives these assassinations and continues to look for his "new poem."[224] Significantly, Darwish's open declaration comes in one of his last published works (published in 2008); Barghouti's comes in his first published collection (published in 1988). This is indicative of Barghouti's awareness of the lack of poetic formations in the literary and cultural scene and his attempts at highlighting his personal convictions on poetic writing. His goal from the start was ahead of the literary curve.

1.8 Conclusion

Framed by the body as referenced in the human body, the land, and the text, that chapter charted some major critical issues that guide readings of Barghouti's writings. The aforementioned points about the links between criticism and literary creativity, the interplay between surface and depth, the materiality of living, literary engagement, embroidery, and the artistic taste infuse all of Barghouti's works and encompass his critical and literary approach. These notions should be read as a cluster rather than a linear development of ideas. The six notions have been framed by the links of the literary poetics to bodily and physical formations and transformations such as dissection, shifts in land, and taste. Barghouti's

[224] Ibid, 110.

critical writings, particularly the early ones, argue against the view that he was not aware of the political and social shifts in Palestinian life. Furthermore, Barghouti's writings allude to a wide range of influences that include Western and Eastern philosophies, such as the influences of Marx and Lukács, and Sufism, as well as different artistic genres and disciplines such as opera, political-economy theories, and philosophy.

The importance of criticism in relation to artistic innovation resides, in Barghouti's understanding, in its ability to dissect the works of oneself as well as others. Dissecting a work, both in relation to content and structure, reveals repetitions and static formulations that ultimately unearth new forms of expression. Questioning established modes of Palestinian expressions inspired by the collective national identity is representative of post-Oslo Palestinian productions. Barghouti's notions on the power of criticism come at an earlier time and envision shifts in writing. The issue of dissection relates to Barghouti's call for uncovering new depths beyond the known ones. This is particularly relevant in regards to the ways in which the political and the historical are referenced in Palestinian literature. Barghouti does not disregard concepts of national representation, realism, or 'Palestinian' literature, but situates them as part of a reference (a surface) upon which other ways of expression can be discovered, such as the blurred line between the personal and the public. Although Barghouti criticizes a fixation on material loss and a 'realist' representation of Palestinian life and literature, he argues for the centrality of the material and the bodily in the creative endeavour. Imagination, innovation, and fictitiousness, which underline literary creation, are inspired by the author's ability to create connections between the different objects in life.

This connection to the 'real' and the material in life is clear through the fifth notion of commitment. The national commitment or the commitment to 'art for art's sake' represent two of many possible stances (*mawāqif*) in Barghouti's conception. His awareness of the

socio-political shifts in Palestinian life are clear, for example, in the discussed song. The song shows Barghouti's attention to the unforeseen power that is building up under the surface, a reference to both the civil power of Palestinians as well as the literary concept of eruptions from the depths onto the surfaces. It is no longer the political leaders nor the fighters that are in charge of these eruptions, but rather the people (*al-nās*) who are varied in character, and thus, different from the characteristic Palestinian fighter.

The last two notions of embroidery and artistic taste are centered around the malleability of times and spaces. The concept of *taṭrīz* is easily detectable in Barghouti's writings (as will be seen in the coming chapters). Literary inspiration is opened up to spaces beyond the current or historical contexts, beyond the known genres of writing, and where memories and imaginations overlap. Artistic taste is similarly constructed upon previously discovered artistic and literary tastes and transforming them. Barghouti's declaration for the need for transformation beyond known poetic expressions is constructed through bodily (taste, walking) and geological experiences (the mound).

These six notions intersect and show that there is no negation of pre-set political, literary, social views. However, it is the act of formation and creation through transformation that is championed in Barghouti's mind. By looking at these notions, we return to one of the main observations of this dissertation: Barghouti was an initiator who helped carve an evolving artistic taste. This was done through an awareness of the surrounding literary and political influences. Furthermore, Barghouti engenders a way of using these influences as referential to deeper literary discoveries that move beyond the national and the known in poetic writing. The following three chapters represent a thematic application of the aforementioned key issues and are guided by the relation between body and literature. Childhood (chapter 2), death (chapter 3), and myth (chapter 4) are points in time that are reshaped and reformed in the course of each chapter. By focusing on the personal and

analysing specific episodes and passages, Barghouti offers commentaries on language, space, exile, and the literary canon.

Chapter 2: Childhood – Beginnings and language

"بداياتي" ليست نقطة، بل نجمة مشعّة.[225]

My 'beginnings' are not a single point, but a shining star.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter takes the juxtaposition of the human body (dying father-growing son), to highlight Barghouti's conception of language as a body that utilizes known expressions but also disrupts familiarity. Childhood and language are, thus, tackled as entities at the junction between change and permanence. The chapter explores this slippage through the concept of beginning. Similar to the argument presented in the previous chapter that beginnings mark both a break and a continuation, the concept of beginnings in Barghouti's work is seen as the start of literary and stylistic breaks, i.e. literary innovation, that benefit from familial, historical, and linguistic continuities. As such, the close-readings in the chapter also reveal Barghouti's aim at challenging ways of writing autobiographies.

The event that has had most impact on 'the body' in Barghouti's life and writing is certainly his diagnosis with cancer. Experiencing illness and confronting the possibility of death confirmed Barghouti's need to revisit the past and discover new relations in it; i.e. find new depths to the entities that have shaped him as a person. He writes in the opening of his *Saʾakūn* that he is "one of those who master 'beginnings,' but not 'ends'."[226] His return to his childhood village near the end of his life is as such "an unmastered 'end'."[227] Or rather, it is a form of discovering a new beginning that continues after his death. The linguistic interplays between himself and his son illustrate his desire to explore known places and discover new social and literary interactions. They, furthermore, allude to his engagement with the political

[225] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 140.
[226] Ibid., 35. See also section 2.2.
[227] Ibid.

and societal realities around him, and stress the ties between one's childhood experiences and past memories with present and future imaginations.

The engagement with the body, at its later stages (post-diagnosis), yielded for Barghouti two kinds of literary works: first, his two autobiographies *al-Ḍawʾ* and *Saʾakūn*, and second, the short piece "Qiṣaṣ ʿan zaman wathanī" to accompany his two previously-written studies, "al-Sādin" and "al-Nāqa," which investigated pre-Islamic culture, identity, and literature. A common thread in these texts is a focus on beginnings through bodily transformations. Whether it is through a return to childhood (in the autobiographies) or a figurative transformation into a pre-Islamic persona, Barghouti's dying body proves to be still able to manipulate its form through literature. Thus, instead of following the body-soul binary[228] and championing the soul over the decaying body, this chapter argues that Barghouti utilizes the transformative abilities of the body to negate corporeal mortality, thus rendering the body victorious over its own decay.[229]

This chapter focuses mainly on Barghouti's two autobiographical texts: *al-Ḍawʾ* and *Saʾakūn*. Not limiting the reading to Barghouti's autobiographical works, the chapter also examines writings that discuss self-expression through the body, childhood, and language.[230] By scrutinizing the body in its relation to childhood, I demonstrate how Barghouti's autobiographical writings are based on experiences rather than observations and commentaries. They, furthermore, highlight the explorative as well as the exclusionary powers of language. These works clearly exhibit Barghouti's destabilization of social and literary boundaries. The chapter starts by introducing the main used theoretical frameworks and how they relate to each other and to Barghouti's own conceptions. Then, stylistic and

[228] In introducing the role of the body in modern Arabic autobiographies, Anishchenkova highlights the dominant soul-body relationship in Western scholarship. Seminal figures, including Rousseau and Descartes, viewed the subject as an entity that surpasses its embodiment. For more see Anishchenkova, *Autobiographical Identities,* 78-79.

[229] Anishchenova notes how bodies, in their sexuality and corporeality, have been utilized (with an increase use in recent Arab autobiographical writings) as "sites of identity construction." Ibid., 77.

[230] For example, Barghouti's second poetry collection *Laylā wa Tawba*.

literary beginnings are presented and contextualized within the frame of autobiographical writing, the relation to memory and imagination, and the interactions with readers. Finally, I explore ways in which language reveals its multi-dimensionality (across pre-language, language, and post-language) in Barghouti's writings.

Barghouti's reconfiguration of the human body and language will be explored through a hybrid of Jean-François Lyotard's "incredulity toward metanarratives"[231] and Edward Said's understanding of beginning as it exists through the "interplay between the new and the customary."[232] There are a few common points that bind Lyotard and Barghouti in relation to the concept of writing – the role of the 'child' figure, and the link between origin and beginning. An unpublished manuscript by Barghouti evokes Lyotard's call for postmodernist knowledge.[233] In the short manuscript,[234] Barghouti refers to Lyotard's understanding of the postmodern as "writing in *search* of rules"[235] as opposed to the modernist view of "writing in accordance with rules."[236] Lyotard, thus, understands the modern as the way of establishing legitimacy to modes of knowledge by asserting a lineage to a preconceived, grand narrative. The postmodern, on the other hand, allows one to question this established legitimacy, the discourse that it is based on, as well as the institution that conceives of it.[237] Barghouti asserts that the pursuit of new rules does not negate the original ones. In other words, uncovering new depths does not discredit the *status quo*, but rather acknowledges them and moves beyond them. Indirectness in a narrative and its transformation leads "all the rules of the

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[231] Lyotard, *The Postmodern*, xxiv.
[232] Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1975), xiii.
[233] I am grateful to Dr. al-Shaikh for providing me with the unpublished text. As he mentions in his PhD dissertation, the manuscript was found in Barghouti's office at *Bayt al-Shiʿr* ("Beyond the Last Twilight", 40).
[234] Hussein Barghouti, "Bayn al-shiʿr wa al-falsafa," *Unpublished manuscript.*
For more on this see al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 40.
[235] "الكتابة بحثاً عن قواعد."
Barghouti, "Bayn al-shiʿr." Italics mine.
[236] "الكتابة بناءً على قواعد."
Ibid.
[237] Lyotard, *The Postmodern*, xxiii-xxiv.

game to be overturned sometimes."[238] It is this unwillingness to reach a definition in critical thought or literary practice and the possibility of creating shifts in knowledge, writing rules, and language that I find most emblematic of the way in which the views of Lyotard and Barghouti coincide.

On a more specific thematic matter, Lyotard's works attest to an interest in the figure of 'the child' as a potent stage in life. On the one hand, Lyotard directly addresses children, for example in his collection of essays *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*, *The Postmodern Explained to Children*. Later the "to Children" was dropped from the English title. Although the child here is the addressee:

> the promise of the French title to "explain to children" what adults find obscure is surely ironic and not to be taken literally. It will not have explained the postmodern. Rather, it will have shown why it is necessary to approach the philosophical questions raised by postmodernity with patience and with the mind of the child. For childhood is the season of the mind's possibilities and of the possibility of philosophy.[239]

Here we see how childhood is not solely perceived of as a chronological phase in life, but as a *methodological* way of reading and conceptualizing by going beyond known articulations and rules of society.

Lyotard and Said share a similar conception of beginnings. While Said's use is more technical and involves the initiation of writing, Lyotard's is more conceptual. But for the two scholars the interplay between the 'origin' and breaking away from it is what defines beginnings. For Lyotard, beginnings are at the centre of what he conceives of as "Postmodern knowledge."[240] In *The Postmodern Condition* he defines this knowledge as a condition that takes difference and dissension as its fore. What is fundamental for the postmodern is not

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[238] "تنقلب قواعد اللعبة كلها احياناً."
Barghouti, "Bayn al-shiʿr."
[239] Jean-François Lyotard. *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982-1985*, trans. Don Barry, Bernadette Maher, et. al (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
[240] Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition,* xxv.

"the expert's homology" but rather the "inventor's paralogy."[241] The difference between the two is understood here as the separation between origin and beginning. Beginning, as seen through "paralogy,"[242] is not entirely dissimilar to its ancestral lineage (origin) and thus retains homologous attributes. However, it moves beyond shared similarities to assume new functions. The expert, being the source of origin, is subordinate to the inventor, whose aim it is to discover things anew, leading to a beginning. Although Said and Lyotard do not engage directly with issues related to the body, their conceptions on language and beginnings are read here through the frame of the body. As mentioned in the introduction, both theorists present their arguments, which as utilized in this chapter, through bodily terminologies and relations. Forging such a reading lens, which reads both case study and theories through the proposed methodology (the body), allows for an appreciation for the ability to test connections between theories and new ways of framing them.

The concept of beginnings as used in this chapter also draws from some of Said's commentaries on the subject in his book *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. Said understands a beginning as "an activity which ultimately implies return and repetition rather than simple linear accomplishment…"[243] This spiral relation (through return and repetition as opposed to linearity) marks a beginning as "*the first step in the intentional production of meaning*."[244] The beginnings of any literary work, as Said conceives it, are based on the intention and method used by the author to produce the text and its meanings. Looking beyond the "mimetic representation"[245] and into a new beginning, intention confines the literary work within the act of writing. Although a single act, writing is a search for endless possibilities

[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Said, *Beginnings*, xiii.
[244] Ibid., 5. Italics his. "By *intention* I mean an appetite at the beginning intellectually to do something in a characteristic way-either consciously or unconsciously, but at any rate in a language that always (or nearly always) shows signs of the beginning intention in some form and is always engaged purposefully in the production of meaning" (Ibid, 12).
[245] Ibid., 11.

that include the production of meanings, different techniques of writing, mistakes, and inconsistencies.[246] This understanding of meaning production can be extended to include Barghouti's written works as well as his dialogues with his son. Barghouti's goal of writing a poem that does not look like a poem is intentional, to invite new modes and methods of writing where bodily experiences, such as stuttering, and repetitions, afterthoughts, and footnotes become part and parcel of the poem itself (see section 4.7). As will be seen in the examples, the writing intention that Said speaks of is also applicable to Barghouti's dialogues with his son. The dialogues, as will be argued, do not only represent memories whose emotional and personal significance Barghouti aimed to capture. They are also linguistic exercises that reveal Barghouti's methods of literary innovation and highlight his need to discover new modes of expression. In other words, writing about these interactions represents both a registration of personal experiences and a critique of writing.

An early distinction that Said makes in his book is between the two oft-confused concepts of beginning and origin.[247] While the latter entails a sense of passivity, beginning, on the other hand, suggests a movement, i.e. an active process. According to Said, this beginning thus reverts to earlier phases, echoing Lyotard's continuous interplay between origin and rupture from origin to form a beginning.

The link between the body, origin, and beginning is portrayed in Barghouti's contemplation of a Palestinian saying: "The olives continue to live in their oil."[248] Barghouti writes:

> أحبُّ هذا التعبير: "مدّ الزيتون في الزيت." سمعته، أوَّل مرَّة، في الانتفاضة الأولى، في رام الله، في شارع خال، بعد انتهاء "جنازة" طفل استشهد. لا أحد في الشارع، وكنت عائداً إلى البيت، فرأيت عجوزاً تلبس ثوباً فلاحياً مطرَّزاً، يشبه لوحة مرسومة بالخيوط والإبر...بدأت تغنِّي:
>
> "يخليلك الله حجر رخام
> لا ينزاح ولا ينقام

[246] Ibid., 11-12.
[247] "As consistently as possible I use *beginnings* as having the more active meaning, and *origin* the more passive one: thus "X *is the origin of* Y," while "The beginning A *leads to* B."" (Ibid., 6).
[248] Barghouti, *Sa'akūn*, 62-63.

لا برغبة الحسَّاد ولا بنيّة الحكام
يخليلك الله حجر البيت
ويمدّ سنين طويلة في عمرك،
مدّ الزيتون في الزيت."[249]

> I admire this expression: 'the olives continue to live in their oil.' I heard it for the first time on the street in Ramallah during the first Intifada. The street was empty. A 'funeral' of a martyred child had just ended. There was no one in the street, and I was going back home. I saw an old lady wearing a traditional embroidered dress (*thawb*), which resembles a painting drawn with threads and needles. She started to sing:
> "May God grant you a marble rock
> That does not get moved or tumbled
> Neither by the desire of jealous people nor by the intention of tyrants
> May God grant you the rock of the house (May God keep your house safe)
> And add long years to your age,
> Like how the life of olives is extended in their oil."

The above passage conveys ideas and themes that are characteristic of Barghouti's writing, such as the figure of the child, the political-historical setting of the first Intifada, the empty street, the embroidered dress, and the song as a mode of expression – all addressed in the previous chapter. What is relevant to the discussion at hand is the link between the reference to the death of the child, the last line of the song, and Barghouti's conceptualization of death after his own diagnosis with Lymphoma – the three are emblematic of the origin-beginning proposition.

This incident triggers both beginnings and ends. The abrupt end of the child's young life, the prayers of the old lady who is nearing her end, and her prayers for Barghouti's prolonged life juxtapose the reality of death and an absolute end. Through her prayers, the woman calls for continuation. She prays for the elongation of Barghouti's life just as the existence of the olive (the origin) is extended through that of the olive oil (the beginning).

Years later, and after his diagnosis with cancer and return to his village, Barghouti recalls this incident and utilizes it to frame his own relation to death. While his life is being cut short because of his illness, Barghouti manages to extend his existence onto new entities

[249] Ibid.

and bodies. The first parallel that he creates to the olive-olive oil relation from the women's song is that of the mountain-olive oil:

وإذا كان الزيتون يمتدُّ في زيته، فإنّ الجبل يمتدُّ في زيتونه.[250]

And if the olives live on in their oil, then the mountain lives on in its olives.

Barghouti stands between origins and beginnings. Olives are 'the origins' of olive oil, and the oil represents a paralogous entity that resembles its origin but takes on a new shape. This origin, however, is in itself the beginning to another origin, that of the mountain. In order for trees to exist, the mountain needs to exist. In asserting this intrinsic relation between origins and beginnings, Barghouti disturbs any initial starting point (i.e. origin). Instead, every origin is conceived of as an initiation, thus a beginning, and no beginning can start without an origin.

Continuing this line of thought, which he calls *khurrīfiyya jabaliyya*[251] "a mountainous fable," Barghouti turns his attention from the natural bodies of mountains and trees to the human bodies of himself and his son. He concludes:

...ستمتد خريفيتي في "زيتي"، أعني، مثلاً، في ابني الصغير، آثر.[252]

…my fable will live on in 'my oil.' I mean, for example, in my small son, Āthar.

Looking at the narration stylistically, one can notice a circularity that starts with the figure of the martyred child whose early demise initiates a narrative. The narrative in itself takes on another conceptual form in Barghouti's second narration of his experience in the mountain after his return to his village. Nature is portrayed as a generator of beginnings, and eventually the narration leads to the figure of another child, Āthar, whose present and future life is a beginning that was generated by Barghouti's origin. Barghouti does not call this thinking a *khurāfa*, but rather uses the diminutive form, a *khurrīfiyya*. Instead of a "grand

[250] Ibid., 63.
[251] Ibid., 64.
[252] Ibid.

narrative" that holds within itself a grandiose understanding of life and a link between the dying body of Barghouti and the larger body of nature, Barghouti establishes this connection through a small and personal narration, or to use Lyotardian vocabulary, a "petit récit" (little narrative).[253] This narration is not pre-conceived and takes shape through the process of thinking, and over a period of time (first Intifada – Post-diagnosis). It, furthermore, includes different participants: the children, the old lady, nature, and Barghouti himself.

The extension is, according to Barghouti, a process and a movement. For example, the oil retains an essentiality that overlaps with and is traced back to the olive, but it also propagates a change in form and characteristics. Taken separately, the olive tree, the father (Hussein), and the mountain represent sites of origins to their respective forms of life. However, the link between origins and beginnings is one of continuation and transformation. This extension means that the beginnings (the oil, Āthar, and Barghouti) that are attached to their 'origins' share many characteristics with them but retain their specificities. The bottom line is that in beginnings, there is a continuation that incorporates a break.

2.2 Beginnings and autobiographical writings

The following sections explore Barghouti's ideas on beginnings in his autobiographies. Starting with the stylistic beginnings of the actual texts, I explore the use of 'language games' as a way of linking memory and imagination in the narratives. I end with the reader-writer relation that Barghouti initiates, as exemplary of a language game that reconfigures the autobiographic as an 'act' rather than a 'pact.' Beginnings can be read in Barghouti's autobiographical writings as a stylistic technique as well as a literary leitmotif,

[253] Lyotard argues that these little narratives are in direct conflict with the grand narratives which assume a sense of pre-conceived knowledge and are based on the notion of consensus. Through using the concept of 'language games' Lyotard further argues that little narratives are shaped through the performativity of language-thus, attributing a sense of innovation and change to these narratives (see, Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 60-67). For more on the Lyotardian meaning of "little narrative," see: Tony Purvis, "Little Narrative," in *The Lyotard Dictionary,* ed. Stuart Sim (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 133-135.

which negotiate the roles of language, time, and the body in the creation of the narrative. Looking at beginnings as a technique, one sees that the two opening sentences in Barghouti's autobiographies introduce the two central events in the books. *al-Ḍaw'*, which revolves around Barghouti's on-going conversations with a Sufi figure called Barry, starts with:

التقيت به: صوفي من قونية، تركيا، من طائفة "الدراويش الدوَّارين"، من أتباع، مولانا جلال الدين الرومي الذي سنَّ الرقص لهم وله.[254]

> I met him: A Sufi from Konya, Turkey, from the confession of 'the whirling dervishes,' the followers of our Master Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, for whom (he and them) dancing was decreed.

The second autobiography, *Sa'akūn,* which narrates his return to his childhood village, opens with:

بعد ثلاثين عاماً أعود إلى السكن في ريف رام الله...نفيت نفسي، طوعاً، عن "بدايتي" فيه، واخترت المنفى، وأنا ممن يتقنون "البدايات"، وليس "النهايات"، وعودتي، بالتالي، "نهاية" غير متقنة.[255]

> After thirty years, I return to live in the countryside of Ramallah. I have voluntarily exiled myself from my 'beginning' in it, and I chose exile. For I am one of those who master 'beginnings,' but not 'ends.' My return is, thus, an unmastered 'end'.

While Barghouti begins stylistically with the two central themes in his books, meeting the Sufi and returning to the village, the two sentences portray events and actions that start *in medias res*. The verbs 'met' and 'return' drop the reader in the midst of the events, without any background information. The preamble and post-amble narratives of these 'beginnings' are gradually added, by embroidering multiple layers during the course of reading. These techniques of situating the reader in an unfamiliar narration and the enjambment between times, memories, and episodes are revealing of Barghouti's disapproval of a linear and fixed narrative that organizes one's life and memories in a chronological order.[256] Beginnings here

[254] Baroughti, *al- Ḍaw'*, 5.
[255] Barghouti, *Sa'akūn,* 35.
[256] Barghouti exemplifies in his literary works what he argued for in his criticism. As was explained in the previous chapter, the interplay between the familiar and the unfamiliar is a way of carving a new artistic taste for the author himself as well as the readers (see section 1.7).

are chronological, spatial, emotive, and are, most importantly, anchored by the body: the growing child (Āthar) and the dying adult (Hussein) fuel these movements between spaces and across times in the two texts.

2.3 Language – Memory

Besides stylistic beginnings, literary beginnings are traced in Barghouti's works by highlighting episodes that add complexities to the chronological movement of time, and investigate the relations between memory and language. In short, it is through language that relations between past and present, memory and imagination, and father and son are charted in Barghouti's autobiographies. In her article on Palestinian memoires, Terri Deyoung asks a crucial question regarding the link between memory and language:[257] "can memories exist without the act of verbal witness?"[258] The question emerges from the root *dh-k-r*, the root of the word for *memory* in Arabic (*dhākira*) as well as the verbs to remember (*yatadhakkar*) and to utter and mention (*yadhkur*). The idea of looking at autobiographical works as a "testimonial"[259] (utterings) is interesting, particularly in the sense of using these literary works as validated sources of history and societal commentary.

This act of expressing memories through language (autobiographical writing) bridges the gap between the personal and the collective, making an individual's specific experience available to a wider audience. It also situates the literary in relation to other political, religious, and social aspects of life, as the author connects his/her personal story to that of the world he/she lives in. This double meaning of the root *dh-k-r* provides the key to understanding the interactions between father and son in Barghouti's writings. This relation encompasses past remembrance through the father and linguistic creation through the son.

[257] Terri Deyoung explains in the beginning of her article on Palestinian memoires that many scholars have often overlooked the complex role that memory plays on notions like identity, nostalgia, and the self. Terri DeYoung, "The Disguises of the Mind: Recent Palestinian Memoirs." *Review of Middle East Studies* (2017): 1-17.
[258] Ibid, 3.
[259] Ibid.

Barghouti uses language as a tool to rebuild past memories, whereas the son's 'future' memories are captured as they are being shaped by his language formation during his childhood. Through his son's utterances, the father's memory lives on.

In remembering childhood, Barghouti does not only use language as a medium for transporting memories. Language is also used to create a space for imagination. The reality of living, which is also portrayed through memories, is reconfigured through imagination (see section 1.4). This interplay between memories and imagination, which is channelled through language, unsettles, on its part, the linearity of time and space. Imagination created out of memories functions as a beginning and a departure that gets inspired by the past, but does not merely mirror it. In the last section of *al-Ḍaw'*, and after taking the reader past many anecdotes and philosophical imageries, Barghouti presents what can be dubbed his commentary on autobiographical writing in relation to memory, time, and space. He explains that while historicity affects the flow of life, its representation in writing blurs its chronological unfolding. Barghouti asks:

...فالزمن لكلِّ من يمتلك "معرفة مرتَّبة"، متى حدث هذا الحدث أو ذاك؟ لا أدري، أعني، عندما أتأمَّل ذاكرتي، بأنَّ الأشياء تحدث "بعد بعضها"، في تسلسل زمني ما، ولكل هذا التسلسل "ملفٌّ" محفوظ في الذاكرة، لكن القلب له "ترتيب" آخر...فالقلب برتِّب "أثاثه" حسب مدى أهميَّة أي حدث بالنسبة إليه، ضارباً بعرض الحائط كلَّ "نظام الزمن السائد."[260]

> Is time, for anyone who has 'organized knowledge,' reducible to enquiring when this or that event took place? I don't know, I mean…when I reflect on my memory, things happen 'one after the other,' in a certain temporal sequence. But this sequence is a 'file' that is saved in memory. But the heart, however, has a different 'arrangement.'…The heart arranges its 'furniture' according to the importance it ascribes to any given event, forcefully sidelining the entirety of the 'prevalent temporal system.'

Instead of providing his views on time and space in relation to memory at the beginning of his book, Barghouti presents this 'methodological' approach as an epilogue to his work. Moreover, in the act of literary creation, it too comes at the end, namely as a

[260] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw'*, 175.

thought that is reached through the act of writing. For Barghouti, the heart, which forms the source of narration, is the organ that plays with time by jumping from one episode to another, as well as being in charge of space. It arranges its "furniture" according to relevance, giving importance not to chronological sequence. It is narration that charts the understanding of how memory operates, how time unfolds, and how experiences are shaped through language and writing.

In order to highlight how language influences memory and narration, the following section will trace an object of memory in Barghouti's first autobiography: the rabbit (*al-arnab*). The rabbit here is taken as a simple linguistic unit (a word) that denotes a specific shape and reference (an animal). The rabbit features at several points in Barghouti's life, as evident in his writings, and its recurrence highlights the pertinence of how a word can trigger memories from multiple times and spaces.

The first instance is when Barghouti meets Barry, the Sufi from Konya. Barry says:

"كتبت قصة صغيرة...ولو كنت مكانك لأحببت الاستماع لها." ضحك، وفتَّش في جيب معطفه وأخرج ورقة مبتلَّة ممزقة. "وأنا عائد اليوم إلى بيتي التقيت صديقاً قديماً: أرنباً، قلت له: تعال معي، عندي هدية فخمة تليق بك: جزرة."[261]

> 'I wrote a little story… and If I were you, I would have loved to listen to it.' He laughed, and searched in the pockets of his coat, and took out a wet and torn piece of paper. 'While on my way home today, I met an old friend: a rabbit. I told him: come with me, I have a luxurious gift that suits you: a carrot.'

Instead of simply narrating to his readers what Barry was like, Barghouti invites them to enter the Sufi's world to get to know him through his story. Barry's short story about the rabbit reveals his way of thinking and the effects that his simple story had on people like Barghouti. Listening to Barry's story awakens in Barghouti two memories about rabbits. The first takes the reader back to Barghouti's childhood when he lived with his family in Beirut. Although his father was always scared for him to go to the beach and the cinema, Barghouti

[261] Ibid., 33-34.

would sneak out to the cinema after his father went to bed. In front of the cinema, the child (Barghouti) used to find a Shiite fortune-teller sitting with a wooden box that had two small rabbits on it. One was black and brought bad fortune, while the white one brought good fortune.[262] Barghouti recounts another memory of the rabbit from when he was working in Amman. His officemate, whom people called 'the Minister,' used to tell a story about a rabbit that lived on top of the mountain and threw rocks at 'the Minister's' house.[263]

These narrations and memories emerge as a consequence of listening to Barry's story. This movement between the story of Barry and triggered memories of Beirut and Amman defy sequential time that is rearranged by the heart. It furthermore elucidates the power of language – exemplified by the word 'rabbit' – to weave a web of narration and memories. Barghouti's acceptance to engage with Barry's 'unusual' language is what allows him to decipher the Sufi's intention. Barghouti concludes that one word has multiple meanings for different people:

كلمة "أرنب" تعني عند "بري": "صديقاً قديماً" ... وعندي تعني أرنبين هنديين عند قارئة بخت شيعية، وعند "معالي الوزير" تعني أرنباً يسكن ليلاً في رأس الجبل ويدحرج حجارة على بيت معاليه. ونتيجة لتعدُّد عوالم المعنى، لا يمكن لأحد أن يفهم أحداً، سوء فهم شامل..فاللغة موهوبة في قدرتها على سوء التفاهم.[264]

> The word 'rabbit' denotes for Barry: 'an old friend'…and for me, it means two Indian rabbits by the Shiite fortune-teller. And to 'his highness the Minister', it means a rabbit that lives on top of the mountain at night and rolls rocks towards the house of his highness. Due to the multitude worlds of meaning, no one can understand anyone. It is a case of a total misunderstanding…Language is gifted with the ability to induce misunderstandings.

By taking one word as a metonym, Barghouti shows how language has many meanings that are achieved through memory. One word creates "worlds of meaning" that are based on the memories, imaginations, and language of different people. Barghouti similarly notes that these diverse meanings lead to misunderstandings. Instead of reading this passage

[262] Ibid., 38.
[263] Ibid., 40-41.
[264] Ibid, 44-45.

as a declaration of defeat, one should approach it as encouragement to explore beyond preconceptions. It is, in other words, an invitation to conceive of language as a game in which different levels unlock new meaning. The rabbit, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, is Barghouti's way of calling for a multiple reading of political and literary commitment.

Language and childhood share a playful essence. A child masters language by first assembling parts of speech in ungrammatical ways, without perceived or fixed wisdoms. The way I would like to approach these utterances is to look at them in action and see how language and memories are bodily performances and represent moments of beginnings. The main feature of childhood is acquiring knowledge through play.[265] It is in fact not only in childhood but also at all levels of education that Barghouti considers play imperative. Playing, in education and knowledge acquisition, shifts power roles between teacher-student, since it posits, against the seriousness of classrooms and the power position that the teacher claims in delivering a "lifeless, pre-made, dictated, boring, and monotonous, knowledge,"[266] an ability to improvise and come up with different and indefinite moulds of knowledge.

The ability to improvise and create new moulds of knowledge is in line with Ludwig Wittgenstein's conception of language game. It is in its "use"[267] that a word acquires meaning. Use, here, refers not to the way a word is utilized in the constructed sentence, but rather to how language is performed.[268] Lyotard frames the concept within postmodernist

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[265] Jean Piaget utilizes in his seminal work *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* 'beginnings' to describe language and knowledge acquisitions in children through imitations and play. The usefulness of play, as Piaget understands it, is that it "proceeds by relaxation of the effort at adaptation and by maintenance or exercise of activities for the mere pleasure of mastering them and acquiring thereby a feeling of virtuosity or power." Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood,* trans. C. Gattegno and F. M. Hodgson (London: Routledge, 1951), 89.

[266] "...[معرفة] "ميتة"، "جاهزة"، ملقّنة"، مملّة"، وروتينية."
Barghouti, "al-Rashāqa al-dhihniyya," 105. For a reading of Barghouti's article along a Foucault/Baudelairian/Kantian reading of enlightenment and modernity, see Abdul-Rahim al-Shaikh, "A Palestinian Tale of Enlightenment: Towards a Foucault-Kantian Geography of Meaning," *Third Text* 20, issue 3-4, (May/ July 2006).

[267] "For a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Basil: Blackwell, 1958), 20.

[268] As Peter Redding explains in his reading of Wittgenstein's 'language games': "If one thematizes the contextually located *act* of saying something rather than the abstracted *sentential text* of what is said, then one

thinking, where language games become part and parcel of the production[269] of knowledge. Language games are linked to social, economic, and technological concerns. For Lyotard, "the social bond" is imperative for any game to take place, since it implies the players' understanding of the rules of the game. "Every utterance" thus becomes "a 'move' in a game."[270] It is through language games that power is negotiated and one's position in society is assumed.[271] In other words, Lyotard asserts the social 'reality' of these games, which will be read in Barghouti's works through his relation to his society, son, and his illness. Barghouti's linguistic interactions thus reveal insights on individual-societal relations, political tensions, and his deployment of play as a way of creating new modes of literary expressions, as in the example of Laylā and Tawba (see section 2.8).

2.4 Reader – Writer: From 'pact' to 'act'

This shift from language observation by Wittgenstein to Lyotard's general use of language as being part of social and economic modern interactions informs Barghouti's use of these games in the author-reader relationship in his autobiographical writings. Beyond the classical adoption of Phillipe Lejeune's "autobiographical pact,"[272] I read Barghouti's

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sees the making of assertions as a kind of *social practice* which can be done properly or wrongly. But this now lifts the restrictions which the representationalist view of language typically places on the sorts of sentences which can be true or which can embody and convey knowledge." Peter Redding "Habermas, Lyotard, Wittgenstein: Philosophy at the Limits of Modernity." *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 14, issue 1 (1986): 11.

[269] The word *produce* refers to Lyotard's argument that knowledge in the age of technology has become a commensurable entity and not an aim in itself. Lyotard, *The Postmodern*, 4-5.

[270] Ibid., 10.

[271] "I am not claiming that the *entirety* of social relations is of this nature… But there is no need to resort to some fiction of social origins to establish that language games are the minimum relation required for society to exist," Ibid., 15.

[272] Lejeune's autobiographical pact refers to the authenticity of the narration that the author declares to the reader. The author underlines this truthfulness by a link in identity between himself and the 'I' in the text. The pact is fully asserted by what Lejeune calls the "I, the undersigned" (8) whose identity as the author and the narrator is claimed by the signature (11). See Phillipe Lejeune, "Autobiographical Pact." in *On Autobiography*, ed. Paul John Eakin, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989). A reading of Phillipe Lejeune's autobiographical pact is technically not possible in regard to Barghouti's second autobiographical work. Barghouti's autobiography did not exist in a book format until after his death. The first two chapters were published instead in two issues of *al-Karmel* journal, and the third was published posthumously. The title of the last chapter was chosen by one of Barghouti's students. Mersal makes a similar argument regarding *al-Ḍaw'*. Mentioning the name of the author and a subtext that declares the book to be an autobiography does not particularly make it autobiographical (108). Such comments suggest that technical

autobiographical writing in light of Wittgenstein and Lyotard's placement of knowledge and language in the realm of interaction. Instead of a 'pact,' it is thus an 'autobiographical *act*'[273] where the reader is invited to participate in the literary production and reception of Barghouti's texts. *al-Ḍawʾ* is thus an endeavour to recount personal encounters with marginal figures and to regard philosophical and psychological issues. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, the Palestinian literary scholar, identifies the lack of psychological exploration and the focus on external movements in society as weak points in Arabic self-writing.[274] More specifically, Mersal notes in her article on *al-Ḍawʾ* that Barghouti's autobiography diverts from the common expectations in Arabic autobiographies that revolve around the figure of the Arab who travels to the West to pursue an education.[275] In the same light, one can read Barghouti's *Saʾakūn* as an atypical 'return narrative' as it opens post-journey (in contrast with Murid Barghouti's return in *I Saw Ramallah*, which opens with his crossing of the Jordan River and then moves on to narrating other memories).[276] Barghouti's text, in this sense, establishes a beginning in

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autobiographical traits (such as recording and travel narration) do not always point towards an automatic acceptance of a pact on the side of the author.

[273] The term used here does not necessarily follow Elizabeth W. Bruss' use of the term in her book *Autobiographical Acts*. Bruss' understanding of the term situates it within the general knowledge of the readers and author about the 'rules' of writing autobiographies (as a genre). The acts happen when the writer breaks some of these rules. Subsequently, these shifts in the rules represent an act that invites the reader to participate. As Bruss explains, "a reader of autobiography has the right to try to fit the text to his expectations or to complain when he finds something that seems pragmatically unintelligible" (11). The way the use of the term in this section diverts from Bruss' use, is that the latter's proposed rules are not the basis of Barghouti's autobiography. For example, rule 3 asserts that "Whether or not what is reported can be discredited…the autobiographer purports to believe in what he asserts" (Ibid). Barghouti's first autobiography is based on this sense of ambiguity, uncertainty, and inexplicability that prevails to the end of the text. Barghouti does not purport to believe what he is presenting, and invites the reader to experiment for him/herself if they can understand/believe what is being said (see below for an example). Elizabeth W. Bruss. *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

[274] See Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Fann al-sīra* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 1996), 113-114.

[275] Mersal gives examples that include Hishām Sharābī, Abdul-Wahhāb al-Misīrī, and Raḍwā ʿAshūr. At the backdrop of portraying the external struggles of moving to another place, including difficulties with visa, obtaining a scholarship, the journey to the new place, or descriptions and complaints about America, the narrator has from the start "a split identity" (*huwiyya munfaṣima*). The analysis of text follows this question of what will happen to this fragmentation throughout Barghouti's encounters with the Sufi, Barry. Mersal, "Blue Light," 110.

[276] The first chapter of Mourid Barghouti's autobiography is entitled 'The bridge'. Barghouti, "al-Jisr," in *Raʾayt Rāmallāh*, 5-41.

Arabic autobiographical writing that sheds light on the relation between the self and society and its effects on the psychological and internal state of the 'I.'[277]

Barghouti seems to be aware of the 'strangeness' of the characters in his work, and particularly Barry's often-incomprehensible analogies and thoughts. The last few pages of the book represent Barghouti's vignettes vis-à-vis those that might not understand or accept his work.[278] It is as if he predicted the critique of the text as too personal, philosophical, and inattentive to the required literary discourse. The following excerpt elucidates the need for an 'autobiographical *act'* and an engagement on the side of the reader in the game of narration using the body and word. Barghouti asks Barry to explain to him what the meaning of 'the blue light' is:

قلت: "قل لي بوضوح: ما الضوء الأزرق؟"
قال: "ستصله بطريقتين: إمّا بالرقص أو بالعقل"
....
"...تجاوز نفسك، إما أن تتجاوزها بالوجود أو بالمفاهيم".
-"كيف أتجاوز نفسي بالوجود؟"
قال: "عندما تنفجر كطاقة زرقاء في الكون وتعيد الضوء الأزرق عارياً نحو بيته".
-"بالرقص، مثلاً؟"
-"نعم".
-"وكيف أصله بالمفاهيم؟"
-"بكلام يفيض منِّي عليك ومنك عليَّ، حتى تتعلَّم أن تفيض من نفسك على نفسك"
...
هذا نموذج على "كلامه"، ومن العبث محاولة إيصاله لمن لا يلتقط المعنى بقدرة عرّاف أو جنِّ.[279]

'Tell me clearly: what is the blue light?'
[Barry] said: 'you will reach it in one of two ways: either through dancing or via the intellect [ʿ*aql*]'

[277] Beginnings can be studied through the content of the autobiography, as well as stylistically by examining the form a 'beginning' takes in the text. An example of a stylistic approach to beginning is Stefan Wild's chapter in *Writing the Self*: *Autobiographical Writing in Modern Arabic Literature*. By beginnings, Wild refers to the physical, concrete starting of the text. Wild identifies three types of beginnings in autobiographies. The three types are: 1) the "metatextual" text that precedes the actual autobiography, 2) the starting part of the "autobiographical text proper" (83), and 3) the first memory which implements a duality between the present state and that of childhood. See Stefan Wild, "Searching for Beginnings in Modern Arabic Autobiography," in *Writing the Self*: *Autobiographical Writing in Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1998).

[278] This section can be most closely defined as the first type of beginning in Wild's chapter. Some differences are at play here though. First of all, this 'explanation' does not come at the beginning of the text as a separate section. Second, Barghouti's writing is not necessarily directed towards an equal kind of reading. One needs to have more than literary reading skills to grasp the meaning of the writing.

[279] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw',* 174.

…

‘transcend yourself, either through existence [*wujūd*] or through concepts.’

- ‘How do I transcend myself through *wujūd*?’

he said: “when you burst like blue energy in the universe and restore the blue light, naked, to its home.’[280]

- ‘by dancing, for example?’
- ‘yes’
- ‘and how can I reach it through concepts?’
- ‘through speech [*kalām*] that overflows from me onto you and from you onto me, until you learn to overflow from yourself onto yourself.’

This is just a sample of ‘his speech,’ and it is futile to attempt delivering it to someone who does not capture meaning with the ability of a seer or *jinn*.

Using words such as *wujūd* and *kalām*, Barry explains the ways in which the blue light can be reached through body and word. First, it is through exploring the limits of *wujūd* and the explosion of the human body beyond its formation, such as through dancing.[281] The second way is through *kalām*, in which the body of language is challenged and explored beyond the limits of its speaker. Meaning is dissected into multiple pieces that can then be rearranged to arrive at new meanings. The ‘blue light’ is reached through the conversation between the two speakers, once the speakers manage to rise above their own language.

Barghouti[282] recognizes the difficulty of explaining what Barry means by the blue light, since “his speech is undecipherable.”[283] Barghouti’s ambiguity here shifts the

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[280] Barghouti uses this sentence in an article on the vertical and the horizontal in al-Mutanabbī’s poetry. While analyzing al-Mutanabbi’s take on living in danger and having to leave different places, Barghouti writes:

"عندما يتحول "المكان" إلى قوة طاردة، ويصل الطرد مداه، "أفقيا"، تتجه الروح نحو "الأعلى"، وتحلق، نحو طريق التبانات، فيرجع النور الأزرق عاريا نحو بيته الذي جاء منه"

This comment, though an explanation of al-Mutanabbi’s case, summarizes Barghouti’s relation to space and body. From the movement on the surface; i.e. the horizontal movement and existence in space, one can achieve a ‘higher’ movement that enlarges the physicality of space. Earth and sky become another layer of the surface-depth relation. The ability of the body to transform into a flying object that extends the confinements of actual geographical contours decorates Barghouti’s literary works.

Hussein Barghouti. “Taʾammulāt fī rūḥ al-asad: ʿAn jadaliyyat al-ufuqī wa al-ʿamūdī fī shiʿr al-Mutanabbī,” *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, no. 2 (Autumn 1998), 140.

[281] Following al-ṭarīqa al-mawlawiyya, dancing is central to Barry’s life and conception of life. The whirling movements are used as a medium of reaching the metaphysical (God).

[282] It is not only difficult to understand the meaning behind what Barry says and what Barghouti experiences, but also to translate. In his translation of the text, al-Shaikh points out certain words, phrases, and names that are tricky to render in English. Barghouti plays with both signification and form (for examples see al-Shaikh, “Beyond the Last Twilight”, 210-215).

[283] "كلامه طلسم"

autobiography from the realm of representation to the realm of participation. The reader is an interlocutor; he/she is an active participant in the act of reading "the metamorphoses of an idea called, *al-Ḍaw' al-Azraq*."[284] In order to be a participant, one has to be open to surpassing one's own body, to explode and reassemble, and join this call of transformation that Barry is proposing. Only those who approach these words with the abilities of a seer or *jinn* can understand them.

The elaborate and mutli-dimensional discussion of the different rabbits returns at the end of the autobiography and is emblematic of the meaning of the text. Barghouti writes:

سألني أخي، فادي، وأنا أكتب هذا النص: "ماذا يربط أرنباً عند قارئة بخت شيعية، بأرنب في ذهن مصاب بعقدة العظمة في عمَّان، بأرنب في قصَّة لصوفي في "سياتل"، بنصٍّ عن الأرانب تكتبه الآن؟"، قلت: "يمكنك أن تسمِّي ما يربط كلَّ هذه الأشياء معاً بالضوء الأزرق."[285]

> As I was writing this text, my brother Fadi asked me: "what connects a Shiite fortune teller's rabbit to a rabbit in the mind of someone struck with a superiority complex in Amman, with another in the narrative of a Sufi in 'Seattle,' with the text that you are writing now about rabbits?" I said: 'you can call what ties all of these things together the blue light.'

The different rabbits are not simply part of a narration, they are key to deciphering Barghouti's difficult text. The word 'rabbit' highlights Barghouti's critical view on language and the way it allows us to move between spaces, times, and people. The misunderstanding that Barghouti alludes to in regard to the multiple meanings and associations of words in language is how one can explore new meanings, i.e. language games. Understanding the meaning of the text and its title (*The Blue Light*) is contingent on participating in language games.

Al-Ḍaw', however, ends on a note that seems to challenge this call for reader participation. In order to preserve his core and drive people away from his centre, Barghouti

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Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw',* 174.
[284] Al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 214.
[285] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw'*, 175.

the individual puts on a mask. The mask is thus Barghouti's pretend participation in a game that is directed, constructed, and forced on him by society. Barghouti ends by saying:

...ولكن لا، لا أقصد شيئاً، لا أعني، أسحب الآن كلامي، أعطني من فضلك...قناعاً، قناعاً سابعاً، وإلى "دون"، و"سوزان"، و"بري"، أهدي هذه الكلمات عن "الضوء الأزرق".[286]

> But no, I don't mean anything, I retract my words now, please give me…a mask, a seventh mask. To Don, Suzan, and Barry, I dedicate these words about 'the blue light.'

At first, this declaration might read as a retraction from the reader-writer game. Barghouti, however, is using again an unexpected turn in his writing to confuse the reader and bring along an unforeseen ending. The mask is utilized in Arabic literature as a means by which the poet, or the author in general, takes on a second persona that allows him/her to "speak while it eludes identification."[287] Against this backdrop of poetic freedom that the mask gives, Barghouti alludes to the forcefulness of his surroundings to adopt certain masks beyond his acceptance. The masks here are a symbol of distancing oneself from the past rather than connecting the past with the present. By declaring that he will wear the masks, Barghouti is sarcastically indicating his faux acceptance of society's rules. The dedication to his friends juxtaposes this playacting, since only these people understand him beyond the masks.

This ending should not, however, be viewed as Barghouti's break from 'the social bond.' Instead, Barghouti teases his readers by pulling and pushing the invitation to the language game, a tactic Lyotard calls "displacement." As a participant in the language game in *al-Ḍaw'*, the reader "undergoes a 'displacement,' an alteration of some kind…These 'moves' necessarily provoke 'countermoves'—and everyone knows that a countermove that is merely reactional is not a 'good' move…That is why it is important to increase displacement in the games, and even to disorient it, in such a way as to make an unexpected

[286] Ibid., 178.
[287] Muhsin al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry*, 32.

"move" eventually leading to a new statement."[288] This capering regarding the invitation is Barghouti's way of creating displacement and disorientation so that the reader's countermove is not simply reactionary to Barghouti's discourse. The reader is now given a chance to make an unexpected 'move' by willingly deciding to take part in a game that requires him/her to move away from the ordinary. What we have here, henceforth, is an autobiographical 'act' that tests the boundaries of autobiographical writing, by challenging the participation of readers and highlighting their agency.

The previous sections provided an overview of Barghouti's stylistic and literary beginnings. Through 'language games' Barghouti challenges the expectations of autobiographical writing and invites the readers to become participants in the literary act. Furthermore, the example of the 'rabbit' shows how language is central to Barghouti's conception of memory and imagination. The following sections look closer at Barghouti's approach to language particularly in relation to the body. They chart three linguistic moments in Barghouti's texts – labelled as pre-language, language, and post-language. The three layers of language here are understood as zones that develop over time and move towards different modes of thinking. They show his emphasis on the multiplicity of linguistic meanings, the relation between bodily expressions such as crying and the initiation of speaking, the ability of language to surpass its own expression, where, for example, silence becomes a technique of questioning linguistic expression. The versatility of the corporeal experience yields different and dynamic deployments of language, and subsequently of knowledge production.

2.5 Pre-language

Gestures, unaccompanied by words, play an active role in Barghouti's narration and are essential for the construction of an expressive body. The psychoanalyst Adam Philips writes in his book *The Beast in the Nursery* that children in their phase of pre-language

[288] Lyotard, *The Postmodern,* 16.

acquisition (or in their non-verbal expressions) "teach us what it is like not to be able to speak properly; and by showing us this they remind us not only of our inarticulate and virtually inarticulate selves, but also of our internal relationship with these buried, vestigial versions of ourselves."[289] Lyotard also addresses this trace of the child in the adult. The child's importance resides precisely in his or her inability to articulate, determine, and calculate, thus falling outside of the rules that are enforced on adults in society.[290] In *The Inhuman,* Lyotard proposes that "the inhumanity of the system"[291] which is disguised by the mask of development and technology is trying to render the human inhuman. Calling for a defence, Lyotard presents the child, who represents a "delay in humanity" and a delay in entering the realm of adulthood, as "eminently the human because its distress heralds and promotes things possible."[292] It is along this line of thought, which empowers the child with an emotive ability to entice a change, that the following 'crying child' excerpts from Barghouti's writing will be read.

In one of his short pieces "Dhākira ʿādiyya fī zaman ghayr ʿādī," Barghouti presents snippets from his life during the '70s and '80s in Palestine; a tense time that led to the first Intifada in 1987. Barghouti starts his piece by zooming in on a specific remembrance of a personally and collectively tense time. He writes:

(1977): مرحلة الطفل الباكي. شعري على كتفي، صندل جلد. رام الله صيفاً..حيث أنظر [الى] لوحة رخيصة لطفل أشقر، على عنقه منديل أحمر مربوط على طريقة "رعاة البقر"، شعره مسترسل ومفروق إلى الجانب، يبكي. تطلّ اللوحة ليلاً من الشبابيك، معلّقة في البيوت والصالونات، تباع في الشوارع. تكتب المخابرات عن هذه الروح المنكسرة لشعب. مفتاح الروح هو التحوُّل من الحزن إلى الغضب، ومن الخوف إلى "إرادة الهجوم."[293]

(1977): the phase of the crying child. My hair is on my shoulders, I wear leather sandals. Ramallah in the summer… I look at a cheap painting of a blond child, with a

[289] Adam Phillips, *The Beast in the Nursery* (London: Faber, 1998), 47.
[290] Kirsten Locke, "Shadows of Sound: Music Pedagogy and Writing the Inaudible." (PhD diss., The University of Auckland, 2011), 99.
[291] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 2.
[292] Ibid., 4.
[293] Barghouti, "Dhākira ʿādiyya," 41.

> red scarf tied around his neck in 'cow-boy' style. His hair is loose with a side parting. He is crying. The painting peeps through windows at night. It is hung up in houses and salons, and sold on the streets. The intelligence services write about the broken soul of a population. The key of the soul is the transformation from sadness to anger, and from fear to possessing the 'will to attack.'

The first thing that one can notice in the short paragraph is the parallelism in the physical description of the twenty-three-year-old Barghouti and the child in the picture. The second is the popularity of the painting among the members of a community that is broken. While the painting does not have any financial value (it is cheap), one can stipulate that it is the child – the subject of the painting – and the emotion that he conveys that gave it value and led to its popularity. It is the power of the child to express an emotion, which the people are unable to do, that makes the painting so important.

The painting as a visual art form, an image, is a reminder of a beginning. It is both an actual beginning of life through the subject matter of the crying child, and a political and societal beginning towards emancipation, since a child crying is an openly expressed sign of "distress"[294] that signals new possibilities. An action against the occupation can happen through the emotive transformation (*al-taḥawwul*) from sadness to anger, and from fear to 'the will to attack.' Although the picture is immovable, the emotion that is portrayed through the body of the child represents what is missing and hoped to be achieved by the people. The image becomes the people's way of expressing the inexpressible.

This phenomenological relation between the being (the self) and the perceived (the matter) is addressed by Henri Bergson through the concept of images in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. One's body represents the central image through which all other images, what Bergson terms "the universe", are perceived. Although an image (an object/a matter) can exist without being perceived, transforming "presence" into "representation" signifies the

[294] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 4.

placing of oneself in relation to the object in order "to coincide with that which is unique in it as consequently inexpressible."[295] What the body is unable to express, namely the ability to cry, is compensated by the ubiquitous presence of an image that represents this form of expression.

However, Barghouti does not stop at this presence-representation level but alludes to the child's expressive body to channel the representation into an act of resistance.[296] In the same text, Barghouti shows the child's emotive power in an incident that took place years later, during the first Intifada. He recounts:

أخرج بلا نوم. شمس في محطة البنزين، فتاة أعرفها من الجامعة، صحفية تبكي، جميلة جداً وباردة، الآن عيونها حمراء: وعرفت لماذا: على مسافة قصيرة من بيتنا دماغ شاب منثور على الحائط، بقرب الجامع: لحقوه، حاصروه في الزاوية، وعن بعد متر، على الرأس! أبكي: رجع إلي الطفل الباكي! سابقاً، في الثمانينيات...اكتشفت بأن في داخلي طفلاً، في كل بشر طفل. وقفت أمام مكتبة رام الله ليلاً وقلت له، للطفل، وكنت أبكي: متأسف! لازم أقتلك! إذا بتظل عايش أنا لازم أموت! ومددت يدي في الهواء مودعاً، وانتهت قدرتي على البكاء. ها هو نفس الطفل بعينيه الحادتين يقول كيفك، وصعدنا معاً في الشمس، كنت أضحك وأبكي معاً.[297]

> I go out with no sleep. Sun in the gas station, a girl I know from university, a crying journalist, very pretty and cold. Now her eyes are red. I know why: a short distance from our home a young man's brains are splashed on the wall near the mosque. They followed him, cornered him, and from just one meter away. In the head! I cry: the crying child has returned to me! Before, in the eighties…I discovered that I have a child in me. In every human, there is a child. I stood in front of the Ramallah public library and I told him, the child, while I was crying: I am sorry! I have to kill you! If you continue to live, I have to die! And I extended my hand in the air as a goodbye, and I lost my ability to cry. Here he is, the same child with his piercing eyes saying: how are you? We ascended together in the sun. I was both laughing and crying.

In this passage, Barghouti crosses two time periods: the present where he is walking the streets of Ramallah past the murdered young man, with his brains splattered on the wall; and the past, in the early eighties, when he confronted the crying child within himself and decided to kill him to be able to continue living with the general feeling of despair and the

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[295] Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme (London, 1913), 6-7.
[296] This is similar to Lyotard's argument that technology will not be able to take over the human, since a *body* is needed in order to go through the process of thinking, resistance, and questioning of the systems (Stuart Sim, "Inhuman," in *The Lyotard Dictionary*, ed. Stuart Sim (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 105.
[297] Barghouti, "Dhākira ʿādiyya," 52.

inability to express one's emotions that overtook Palestinian life. Walking the streets in Ramallah in the present time, Barghouti is still emotionally and physically incapable of expression. As he explains in a previous passage, he and others have lost their ability to cry. However, the horrific image of the shot young man and the crying young woman awakens in him an inarticulate and yet expressive echo. Instead of running away from this primitive body,[298] Barghouti embraces its existence. He allows his inner child to appear again, which leads him to show his emotions unrestrained through crying and laughing. In other words, he gains an emotionally expressive body, represented by the inner child that remerges at the sight of the murdered young man's body.

The restoration of the laughing and crying represents a beginning of the body anew in the present. As Lyotard explains, despite the seeming delay of the child's entrance into the "adult community [the child] is also what manifests to this community the lack of humanity it is suffering from, and which calls it to be more human."[299] The adult community, as Barghouti explains, has been stripped of its ability to cry and thus to sympathize with each other and the rest of humanity.[300] In their confrontation with the actuality of living (the splattered brains of the young man), it is the child in them that provides them with the appropriate expressive language, and thus presents them with a reminder of their humanity. Barghouti is confronted with the crying young woman, and he realizes that the reason behind the crying is the splattered brains of the young man. The return to this childhood ability is gradual. The emotional expressiveness breaks through the young woman's cold features.

Crying is a primitive form of language that communicates when words are

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[298] See below for more on this primitiveness.
[299] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 4.
[300] As Barghouti explains, in the early 1980s:
"كنا بدأنا نفقد القدرة على البكاء...وفقدنا بالتدريج التعاطف."
"We had started to lose the ability to cry…and we lost incrementally [the feeling of] empathy."
Barghouti, "Dhākira ʿādiyya," 41.

insufficient. Crying in adults becomes an intrinsic characteristic that links them to this initial stage in life. Barghouti approaches the figure of the child as a figure that entices 'the human' in the form of resistance and transformation. The communicative abilities of the child are not verbal – as in the "adult community"[301] – but rather emotive, unrestrained, and incompatible with the rules of society.

2.6 Language

It is noteworthy in this passage that while the child expresses himself by crying, verbal expression starts to take shape when the child asks *kīfak* "how are you?" In this section, I will discuss this entry into the realm of speech by contrasting Barghouti's childhood with that of his son Āthar's. In doing so I will highlight the role of language as a tool for exploration and a marker for exclusion. In addition to that, the links drawn between beginnings and language games, through the examples of father-son interaction, exemplify a destabilizing act of personal and literary boundaries that forms the core of Barghouti's literary project.

It thus follows that language is not a child's first attempt at perceiving, exploring, or engaging with the world, but rather represents a different method of being in the world. The movement towards language acquisition, however, does not automatically go from pre-language to language as a pre-established system. On the contrary, language is a plane onto which one gradually treads and which one discovers. Language is both a child's way of exploring and acquiring knowledge but is in itself the object of exploration.[302] Barghouti demonstrates how these linguistic explorations are examples of beginnings:

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[301] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 4.

[302] These statements are, in the language of child development, posing a question regarding the connection between cognition and language. Research has shown that some cognitive abilities precede linguistic ones, and as Jonas Langer argues "the predominant potential influence would therefore be from cognition to language. Since language lags behind ontogenetically during most of infancy, it is less possible for it to affect cognition." ("The mosaic evolution of cognitive and linguistic ontogeny," 37). However, instead of it being simply one of "symbolic processes [which] express or represent meaning based upon the knowledge generated by cognitive

الطفل، بطبيعته الأولى، والبدئية، يرى الدنيا بطريقة "ملتوية". هذا فنٌّ. كان لوركا يقول: إنَّ الفن "تجنُّب"، كما في مصارعة الثيران.[303]

> A child, through his first and instinctive nature, sees life in a 'serpentine' way. That is art. Lorca used to say: art is 'aversion,' just like in bull fighting.

Primitiveness here is synonymous with beginnings.[304] The child's intrinsically different approach is stretched to encompass the field of artistic expression. The 'serpentine way' and avoidance are movements that take child and artist away from the socially pre-set path of perception and artistic expression. They are in line with Barghouti's call for discovering new ways of reading and writing and with his aspiration to uncover the unfamiliar for himself and his readers. In the following examples, language is presented as a serpentine entity that is constructed anew by finding innovative meanings and word usage. While in the previous example the adult was required to recover his inner child, here the discovery comes through the interaction with a child. The first example concerns Āthar's construction of a narrative that is based on reconfiguring the meanings of certain words. Barghouti writes that one night:

رأى [آثر] غمّازة طائرة حمراء، تضيء وتخبو، من هذا النوع الذي يستعمله الإسرائيليون الآن لتصفيات نشطاء الانتفاضة. كانت مارقة قرب القمر...سألني: "حسين، هذه الطائرة من شو؟". "من حديد". "وهل يخاف القمر من الحديد؟". "نعم، نعم. يخاف القمر من الحديد"...من "طائرة"، و"حديد"، و"خوف"، تناسلت أسطورة "القمر الذي يخاف من الحديد." [305]

> [Āthar] saw the flickering light of a red plane, shining then fading away. It is the kind [of planes] that Israelis use now to assassinate Intifada activists. It was passing by the moon…he asked me, "Hussein, this plane is made out of what?"
> "Of steel."
> "And is the moon afraid of steel?"

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processes," (ibid., 36) language is taken as a way of conceiving of the world, and thus as a cognitive medium in itself. Jonas Langer, "The Mosaic Evolution of Cognitive and Linguistic Ontogeny" in *Language Acquisition and Conceptual Development*, ed. Melissa Bowerman and Stephen Levinson, 19- 44 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[303] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 124.

[304] "كلّ طفل ساحر بدائي"

"Every child is a primitive magician." Ibid., 118.

The word *bidʾiyya* in Arabic comes from the root b-d-' (to begin). Thus, primitiveness should be read as interconnected to the act of initiating and beginning. Therefore, I have opted to translate the word as primitive but it can also be translated as initial.

[305] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 118.

> "Yes. Yes. The moon is afraid of steel."
> …From "plane," "steel," and "fear," the myth of 'the moon that fears steel' was propagated."

In another example, Barghouti writes:

> ...زارنا فرانسوا...وجد في الجبل سنبلة يابسة، أعطاها لآثر قائلاً: "هذي شو؟". فكَّر آثر قليلاً وهو يقلِّبها بين يديه، ثم أجاب: "هذه؟ لكي نقرع بها الجرس!". "أي جرس؟" "جرس العالم". "وكيف صوت جرس العالم؟". ضحك، وقلَّد صوت سيارة إسعاف كان سمعه لما زارني في مستشفى رام الله.[306]

> François[307] visited us…he found in the mountain a dried ear of wheat. He gave it to Āthar and said, "what is this?"
> Āthar thought a bit while moving it between his hands. He answered, "This? It's to ring the bell with!"
> "Which bell?"
> "The bell of the world."
> "And how does the bell of the world sound?"
> He laughed and imitated the sound of an ambulance he had heard when he visited me in the hospital in Ramallah.

In both examples, Āthar builds a 'mythic' world that takes shape through personal, political, and imaginative faculties. Words, such as plane, steels, moon, and bell in the two examples are not understood literally but figuratively, to come to new insights. The plane represents a material reality in the lives of Palestinians. However, Āthar symbolizes a larger kind of political reality in which even the moon is frightened of the plane. Although lacking detailed knowledge of the politics of Palestinian life at that time, Āthar, restores the source of frightfulness, the plane, to the material essence it is made of (the steel). In his myth of the moon that is scared of steel, nature versus occupation is framed in a celestial context that exceeds its earthly one.

In the second example, language is similarly used to create an expanded image that extends from nature (the small ear of wheat) to the larger world (the bell of the world). Embedded in this expanded imagery is the reality of the sound of the ambulance that Āthar

[306] Ibid., 124.
[307] Referring to the Palestinian director François Abu-Salem (1951-2011).

heard while visiting his father in the hospital. The sound of the ambulance represents the dual disintegration of bodies: of the people fighting against the Israeli occupation and the body of Barghouti as it lies in the hospital. In Āthar's myth, the sound goes beyond its physical realm (materiality of living) and becomes an emblem of the world (imagination). In the first example, it is the child who questions the adult while in the second anecdote, the adult is the one who poses the questions. The central point in both revolves around *questioning* as a playful act, or a game, that turns the world upside-down.

The parallelism between father and son, portrayed through each's interplay with language, highlights how language (represented through words and their meanings) could be a vehicle for exploration. But, as Barghouti shows, language can equally be used for exclusion. In order to set up this parallelism, let us take a look at an episode from Barghouti's own childhood as narrated in *al-Ḍaw'*:[308]

كنت أمشي، في جبال رام الله، نحو الينابيع، في زرقة سماء الصيف، وغبار الظهيرة، فأكتب اسمي: "حسين" في الزرقة، بأصابعي، ثمَّ أبتعد مسافة ما، وأنظر نحوه من بعيد، فيبدو لي، أحياناً، مائلاً، مثل لوحة على جدار، فأعود إليه وأعدِّله، أحياناً، أو أعدِّل البقعة الزرقاء نفسها، أحياناً، أو أتركه مختلَّ التوازن، هكذا، وأمضي. أمشي وأهمس بأحرف اسمي لنفسي، كأنَّني كنت أعرف قول شيخ الصوفية محيي الدين بن عربي: إنَّ الأحرف أمم، وبكلِّ حرف نستحضر أمَّة من أمم الجنِّ. كنت أسمع صفير جنّ في الحاء والسين والياء والنون. حيَّرتني الكلمات، هذه البلورات الزجاجية من هواء ملوَّن.[309]

> I used to walk, in the mountains of Ramallah, towards the springs, in the blueness of the summer sky, and the dust of noontime, and write my name *"Hussein"*[310] in the blueness, with my fingers. Then, I used to step back a certain distance, and look at it from afar. It would appear to me, sometimes, slant, like a portrait on a wall, so I would return to it and fix it. Sometimes, I used to fix the blue spot itself, or just leave it like that, out of balance, and go. I would walk and whisper to myself the letters of my name, as if I had known the saying of Shaykh of Sufism, Muḥyyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī that the letters are nations, with each letter we summon a nation from the jinns.

[308] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 117. It is important to note that, despite the multiple and important linguistic shifts that take place throughout the chronological development of children, the focus here is on the use and process of language in its general sense. In other words, language is not read here in relation to chronology but rather as a process of thinking. This is for example the case in the two excerpts in this section. The first is about Āthar (age almost 4) (p.117), the second is about Barghouti when he was older than 4 (he knew how to write).
[309] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw'*, 120.
[310] 'Names' is another topic that Barghouti investigates in his autobiographies. He shows the distinction between his name and Āthar's name. He received Āthar's name in a dream. The name is always misunderstood to be an Arabization of the Western name (Arthur). A misunderstanding of language (the name) leads to a distortion of contextual and historical relations between past and present. See Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 104-106.

> I used to hear the whistling of the jinn in the *haaʾ, and sīn, and yaaʾ, and nūn.* Words perplexed me, these glass crystals made from coloured air.

This narration delineates Barghouti's linguistic explorations through the use of his body. Writing his name on the sky using his finger, looking at it, attempting to fix its position on the blue patch, and whispering the letters of his name are physical acts that allow him to play a game with the letters of his name. It is only later in his life that Barghouti could frame his childhood game in relation to Ibn al-ʿArabī's conceptualization of letters. In Ibn al-ʿArabī's philosophy, letters represent the impetus upon which utterances (*alfāẓ*) are constructed,[311] and each letter in the Arabic language is corresponded to a certain level of being (*Wujūd*), which includes, for example, *al-ʿaql* (the intellect), *al-nafs* (the soul), and *al-insān* (the human).[312] He, furthermore, ponders that these layers of existence are revealed in the Quran through the medium of language;[313] thus, giving letters a symbolism that goes beyond their orthographical importance. For example, Ibn al-ʿArabī makes use of the shape of the letter *nūn* which is a half circle as a way of representing the external and manifested/apparent being (*wujūd*)- (*al-wujūd al-ẓāhir*). The unseen half of the letter, which would complete the circle, is the inner or esoteric being ([*al-niṣf*] *al-bāṭin*).[314] Barghouti, although not aware of Ibn al-ʿArabī's conceptions as a child, similarly contemplates the letters that make up his name (the letter *nūn* being the last letter of his name), and wonders about the significance of their shapes in relation to the outer world (nature). Barghouti's initial experience with letters exemplifies the explorative nature of body and language that

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[311] See, Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 85-132.
As he writes at the beginning of the section on letters:

"إن الحروف أئمة الألفاظ شهدت بذلك ألسن الحفاظ."

Ibid., 85.

[312] See Nasr Hamid abu Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl: Dirāsa fī taʾwīl al-Qurʾān ʿind Muḥyyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī* (al-Dār al-Bayḍāʾ: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2011), 302-303.

[313] Ibid., 299. It can be assumed that Barghouti had read abu Zayd's book since he points it out as a reference on the importance of letters in Sufism and particularly for Ibn al-ʻArabī. See Hussein Barghouti, "Handasat al-qaṣīda: Muqaddima fī mafhūm al-makān." In Murād al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī" (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 176.

[314] Abu Zayd, *Falsafat al-Taʾwīl*, 309.

precedes a conscious awareness of the acts. His game was thus based on playing with language through the body and an initial stage of linguistic and cognitive development.

His family's reaction to his game, however, highlights the exclusionary power of language. They called him *ahbal* 'stupid'. Barghouti explains:

لاحظ أقاربي الطفل الذي يكتب في الزرقة بإصبعه، ويكلِّم نفسه، فلقَّبوني ب"أهبل"...السلطة السحرية التي يمارسها الاسم على المسمى فظيعة. ليست المسألة أنَّ هناك "شيئاً" أو "شخصاً" يسمِّيه أقاربي "الأهبل"، لا! بالعكس، يتمُّ خلق شخص "أهبل" في داخل حسين الحقيقي، هويَّة بلهاء، يوحون لي بأنَّني "أهبل"، فأصير كما يوحون لي. الأهبل موجود في داخل الكلمة نفسها، ويدخل إلى "أذنيَّ"، ومن هناك يسري إلى قلبي، ويستيقظ فيَّ جسد ذهني دخيل، بعثه دخلاء على عالمي.[315]

> My relatives noticed the child who writes in the blueness with his finger, and talks to himself, so they nicknamed me 'stupid'. The magical power a name holds on a person is horrible. The issue is not that there is 'something' or 'someone' that my relatives call *ahbal*; no, on the contrary, an *ahbal* is created inside the actual Hussein, a stupid identity. They imply that I am *ahbal*, so I become what they insinuate to me. The *ahbal* exists inside the word itself, he enters in my 'ears,' and from there streams into my heart, and in me a conscious and intruding mental entity wakes up, that was dispatched into my world by intruders.

How does a child deal with such a form of exclusion? He explains that after being labelled "stupid," he started to divert his attention more to nature and the wilderness than people. He writes:

مرَّة عقدت محاكمة بين سنبلتي قمح، مثلاً، وحكمت على واحدة بأن تذبل.[316]

> One time, I held a trial between two wheat ears, for example, and I ruled that one had to wither.

A few years later, the label that is given to him shifts from *ahbal* to *ʿabqarī* 'genius'. Barghouti had submitted a poem that he wrote for a poetry competition during his last year of high school.

لم يصدِّق أحد أنَّني كاتبها، ولا حتى أساتذة أدب في "كلية بيرزيت"، أو في لجنة التحكيم، ولا حتى معلِّمي نفسه، واتهمت بسرقتها من "شاعر كبير" ما. وعقدوا لي محاكمة في المدرسة، وشاع الخبر، فسمَّيت "العبقري".[317]

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[315] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw'*, 120-121. The translation of al-Shaikh was consulted for this section (see "Beyond the Last Twilight," 154-155).
[316] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw'*, 127.

> No one believed that I wrote it, not even literature instructors at Birzeit College, the judging committee, nor even my own teacher. And I was accused of stealing it from a certain 'great poet.' They held a trial at school, and the news spread, so I was named 'the genius'.

Against the backdrop of the explorative experience of the child, language is used by society as an excluding force. It is, as Barghouti hints at in the above quote, not the word itself, but rather the meaning that is ascribed to it by society that imposes itself on him. While Barghouti's senses in the previous excerpt are outwardly directed towards linguistic investigations and discovery (through the acts of whispering the letters or writing them in the sky), the word *ahbal* leaps inwardly, through his ear, and then his heart, and then his cognition, and creates a foreign and invasive body within him. Despite the shift in meaning that the second label of 'genius' signifies, Barghouti stood at the outskirts of what the other players – people who saw him writing in the sky, and experts in literature – considered acceptable or possible. It was through language that they made him feel "always out of context; not belonging to anyone, odd, and weird, and on the margins of life"[318] as mentioned in the introduction. Language as exercised upon Barghouti through the use of these labels is one of forcefulness, fixed meanings, and intrusiveness.

Mirroring the writer-reader interaction discussed above, Barghouti's encounter with society here can also be registered within the pact-act opposition. Lyotard postulates that language from its beginnings has championed unpredicted and innovative moves. Barghouti's society can be read as an "institution" in the Lyotardian sense, which "always requires supplementary constraints for statements to be declared admissible within its bounds."[319] Not agreeing with the language game with which Barghouti engages implies that his society does

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[317] Ibid., 126.
[318] "...[كنت] دائماً خارج السياق لا أنتمي إلى أحد، شاذاً، وغريباً، وعلى هامش الدنيا." Ibid.
[319] Lyotard, *The Postmodern*, 17.

not approve of his use of language. This refusal forces him to withdraw from the accepted rules of language and to design new rules.

But what drives Barghouti to continue writing and engaging with this society if they do not accept his language? What drives him to continue writing falls in accordance with Lyotard's understanding that "the boundaries only stabilize when they cease to be stakes in the game."[320] Writing becomes Barghouti's way of destabilizing societal boundaries; and, thus, this challenge works as an invitation to a new language game.

When he grows older, Barghouti decides to look further into the meanings of 'stupid' and 'genius'. By uncovering new meanings for the labels of 'stupid' and 'genius', Barghouti investigates how these names belong to (pre-Islamic) time. This provides him with a literary and spiritual context to the 'empty words.' *ʿAbqarī* refers to the Valley of ʿAbqar where pre-Islamic Arabs believed that *jinns* who lived there gave inspiration to poets. *Ahbal* references the pre-Islamic god Hubal, whose name in Aramaic means "smoke."[321] Words, thus, exclude or explore according to their uses and the meaning that is ascribed to them. Barghouti reconfigures the use of the words, and in turn reconfigures his identity and his understanding of others around him. Although the labels of *ahbal* and *ʿabqarī* are used against him to mean stupid and genius, their historical contexts and references provide Barghouti with fresh meanings that go in opposition to their more common use. It is thus not necessarily the origin that remains embedded in the word, but rather the use that gives new meanings to it.

The dialectics of language (sounds/letters/adjectives/conversations) draw the path of childhood of both son and father as shown in the previous quotations. Note, for example, a similarity in the setting of both childhoods, each one mentioned in a different autobiography, and each exposes the multiplicity of linguistic 'uses'. In the case of Āthar, the ear of wheat is

[320] Ibid.
[321] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw'*, 121.

taken for a bell ringer; in Barghouti's case it was taken as someone who is being tried in court. The play is artistic, since it exposes the unlimited capacities of imagination, the serpentine-way of perceiving objects, and the attributions that go beyond the form and function of objects. There is, however, one big difference. In the example of Barghouti, the game unfolds without any involvement from anyone else, whereas in the second, Āthar is part of a dialogic conversation with his father and his friend. In a "language game," Lyotard tells us "every utterance should be thought of as a 'move' in a game."[322] However, in order for these moves to make sense, all players should agree to the game. In this sense, Barghouti's game is incomplete since it is one-sided.

By taking part in the conversation with his son, Barghouti is, however, engaging and reacting to Āthar's moves in the game. By paying much attention to Āthar's engagement with language (first words, sounds, mythic narrative) and narrating multiple anecdotes to capture Āthar's linguistic changes, Barghouti is not merely documenting a child's linguistic and social development, nor is this solely a dying father's way of preserving the memories shared with a son. I argue that this engagement is a new opportunity for Barghouti's own failed language games.

Instead of a game between himself and society, Barghouti builds a game that is based on linguistic dialogue between himself as child and his son. For example, Barghouti notes the similarity between his first memory (*dhākira*) and his son's first enunciation (*dhikr*). Āthar's first word was "plane,"[323] and this realization is shocking for Barghouti since his first memory is of himself and his family being deported from Beirut by plane.[324] His son's budding speech becomes a form of continuation and an inexplicable bond between father and son. A mysterious bond between the two children (Barghouti as a child, and Āthar) is an expression of the intrinsic link between memory and language. While each grew separately

[322] Lyotard, *The Postmodern,* 10.
[323] Barghouti, *Sa'akūn*, 188.
[324] Barghouti, *al-Ḍaw'*, 66.

and within different temporal and spatial influences, a simple developmental/cognitive or even linguistic explanation of how memories and language develop stands short of explaining this mysterious bond.

Said reads such linguistic intersections and shifts through the framework of adoption and construction and deploys familial connections in order to express them. He writes,

> Words are the beginning sign of a method that replaces another method. The series being replaced is the set of relationships linked together by familial analogy: father and son, the image, the process of genesis, a story. In their place stands: the brother, discontinuous concepts, paragenesis, construction. The first of these series is dynastic, bound to sources and origins, mimetic. The relationships holding in the second series are complementarity and adjacency; instead of a source we have the intentional beginning, instead of a story a construction.[325]

Beginnings in language disrupt familiar meanings by creating new ones. Similarly, the examples in this chapter exemplify the shift from a "familial analogy" into one of "complementarity and adjacency."[326] Although Barghouti does not disavow the father-son relationship, which echoes his olive-oil and tree-mountain metaphor, his examples question the point of origin through the medium of 'language games.' By investigating bodily shifts between father and son, the relationship is elevated to the realm of adjacency. Just as time and space are seen as adjacent in Barghouti's conception of embroidery (section 1.6), the chronological relationship of father as the origin of the son, or what Said calls "the process of genesis" where one entity is directly related to an origin, is folded onto itself and father and son encounter interchangeable dialogic experiences. This is, for example, evident when Āthar addresses his father by his first name Hussein. Against the backdrop of dynastic hierarchy, language games assume a more vital position in forging new dimensions to the father-son relationship. Said's idea of "paragenesis"[327] and Lyotard's call for "paralogy"[328] as a way of

[325] Said, *Beginnings*, 66.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid.

assuming new forms fall in line with Barghouti's understanding of body and language (words) as multi-faceted and susceptible to exploration beyond their fixed forms. This becomes evident in the following section, where language is tested beyond its verbal utterances and where the body transcends its physical form.

2.7 Post-language

If language has the ability, through its multiple formulations, to herald different beginnings, moments of silence should not be taken as instances of language disappearance. Such instances of 'post-language' (as I will refer to them) in Barghouti's writing happen when language is incapable of capturing the experience. What we have in the following from *Saʾakūn* is a three-layered structure that represents three bodily changes and shows the dynamic ability of language to detangle, disappear, regroup, and reformulate. The first fold of this change is meteorological, the second gendered, and the third physical. The three moments go through similar trajectories, starting from an accepted beginning, moving towards a change, and ending with a rediscovery of new beginnings.

This section starts with an extraordinary transformation of nature. Barghouti is sitting with his mother and his son Āthar. He writes,

"هذا مساء قياموي،" قلت لنفسي. كنت قاعداً تحت شبَّاك بيتنا العتيق...عندما بدأ طفل أبله أعرفه، يعزف على ال"هارمونيكا" لحناً بعيداً، مضطرباً، ضائعاً في الهواء، هناك، خلف جنائن اللوز. وبسبب من العزف...ربَّما، بدأ الغبار...يرتفع ويتجمَّع، فوق، ويتحوَّل إلى صفرة حادَّة...ثمَّ بدأ، من الغرب، طفح أحمر غريب يشبه سيلاً من شفق قلق يزحف شرقاً، وفي جوانبه دوَّامات سوداء وخضراء وبنية، تتقلَّب وكأنَّ السماء نفسها ستغلي، ولا شمس هناك، لا شمس أبداً...حتى أمِّي لاحظت غرابة الجو، فقلبت نظرها في أحواض النباتات التي زرعتها.[329]

> 'This is sepulchral evening,' I said to myself. I was sitting under the window of our old house when a silly boy that I know started playing a distant and disturbed tune on the harmonica. The tune was lost in the air, there, behind the almond groves. And because of the playing maybe, the dust started collecting and transforming into a sharp yellowness. And then from the west, an unusual red overflow, resembling a

[328] Lyotard, *The Postmodern*, xxv.
[329] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 91-92.

> flood of worried twilight, started crawling eastward. At its corners, there were black, green, and brown vortex turning as if the sky itself was about to boil. And there was no sun there, no sun at all. Even my mother noticed the unusual weather and looked over at the seeds she had planted.

As Barghouti's mother says,

> الدنيا مقلوبة. كان يجب أن يأتي هذا المطر قبل عشرين يوماً، وليس الآن.[330]

> Life is overturned. This rain was due twenty days ago, not now.

The scene recounts an inexplicable change in the weather. Different natural phenomena such as dust, flood, vortex seem to erupt and take over the sky. The end of times starts with a reversal of natural phenomena and a beginning of a new era. This multi-coloured, celestial change automatically introduces mirroring changes in the lives of the observers.

> حتى آثر، الذي بلغ الثالثة الآن، قعد قربي خائفاً، ثم قال: "حسين، انظر إلى البحر الذي فوق!" (اسم السماء عنده). لم أجبه، كنت مذهولاً تماماً، وأراقب، فأكمل: "حسين، أريد فستاناً!". قلت: "الفساتين للبنات، أنت ولد". قال: "طيب. أريد [أن] أصير بنتاً!". شردت في رغبته في التحوّل. قلت: سيصبح أنثى لسبع سنين، مثل تايريزياس، عرّاف معبد دلفى، ثمَّ يرجع ذكراً، فتعترف به جنائن اللوز عرَّافاً لمعبدها، وأحكم من ينطق باسم الآلهة.[331]

> Even Āthar, who was three now, sat next to me scared, and then he said, "Hussein, look at the sea up there!" (the name of the sky for him). I did not answer him. I was completely dumbfounded, observing. So, he continued, "Hussein, I want a dress!" I said, "dresses are for girls, you are a boy." He said, "ok! I want to become a girl!" I thought about his desire to transform. I said [to myself]: he will become a female for seven years, like Tiresias, the priest of the Delphi temple, and then go back to being a male. The almond groves will acknowledge him as the priest of their temple and as the wisest person to speak in the name of the gods!

The second moment of change comes as suddenly as the first one in nature; the child witnessing the external changes is enticed to ask questions of internal changeability. While the first brings sky and earth in parallel positions, the second questions gender and bodily identification. Neither the reader nor Barghouti knows the reason (the thought) behind

[330] Ibid., 94.
[331] Ibid., 93.

Āthar's question; his desire to transform seems to be based on his witnessing of the turning of nature and his reaction to it. The difference in this interaction between Barghouti and Āthar is that the language game is not solely dialogic (as in the previous examples), but takes the shape of announced-hidden utterances. Barghouti is dumfounded, i.e. literally unable to speak. Both Barghouti and Āthar are overtaken by the change in nature. Āthar's statement about wanting to wear a dress is negated by Barghouti: as a boy, Āthar cannot wear a dress. Instead of succumbing to this block in the language game, Āthar asserts his desire by declaring that if one has to be a girl to wear a dress, then he wants to become a girl. The uttered 'move' is then internally accepted by Barghouti who is engulfed in the thought of this transformation. This professed desire leads Barghouti to an internal conceptualization that links the present and real (Āthar) with the past and mythical (Tiresias). Building upon the mythic story, Barghouti constructs a new beginning for Āthar by situating him within a larger historical/mythical context, as well as for Tiresias, who assumes a new role in the form of a child in the Palestinian village of Kobar.

The language game in this case here takes the form of a verbal move that invites a cognitive one. Furthermore, these meteorological and gendered changes push Barghouti to think about his own reality and his death. For Barghouti, opposing death means returning to childhood. He explains,

> من زمن وأنا أحلم أن أعود طفلاً، بعد نضوجي...فجأة قال آثر، وكأنَّه التقط هذه الفكرة من أغواري: "حسين، لم لا تصير أنت آثر، وأصير أنا حسين؟". غريب. روحي وروحه يعرفان بعضهما من حياة سابقة، حتماً، وإلَّا لما التقط ما أفكِّر فيه...وانبعثت عطور سبق وشممتها، روائح نعناع الماضي، وتشابيه مدفونة في تربة الذاكرة...وأفاقت فيَّ الكلمات المنسية منذ حياتي السابقة في دورة التناسخ الأبدي هذه، حيث يرجع كلُّ شيء، ولا شيء يرجع تماماً.[332]

> For some time, I have been dreaming about being a child again, now that I am grown up. Suddenly Āthar said, as if he had captured this idea from my core, "Hussein, why don't you become Āthar, and I become Hussein?" Weird. My soul and his definitely know each other from a previous life, otherwise he wouldn't have picked up what I was thinking about. Perfumes that I had already smelled were suddenly emitted;

[332] Ibid., 94-95.

> smells of mint from the past, and buried analogies in the earth of memory. Words frogotten since my previous life awoke in me through this eternal cycle of reincarnation, where everything returns, and nothing fully returns.

This third change of physical bodies takes on a different path to the announced-hidden utterances. It is Barghouti who starts with the thought of returning to childhood. This idea is picked up by Āthar who states it verbally by suggesting that they switch bodies. The dream to become a child is a wish to forge a new beginning in life. Just as Barghouti declares this dream, bodily and linguistic aspects from the past resurface. The past smell of mint and hidden analogies and forgotten words assert the role of body and language in employing the past as a way of initiating a beginning in the future.

The structure below brings together the three changes discussed in this section. The three instances share a pattern that involves a disruption of the current state from normal weather, boy, adulthood into sepulchral weather, girl, and child. These beginnings assert themselves as new and surprising, but, at the same time keep a connection to the past. The sombre weather represents a belated event which should have started twenty days ago, Āthar's call for change mirrors Tiresias' gender transformation, and Barghouti's dream about childhood is accompanied by linguistic and sensory remembrances from the past. Barghouti's last comment: "يرجع كلُّ شيء، ولا شيء يرجع تماماً." - "everything returns, and nothing fully returns"[333] encapsulates the paralogous nature of *beginnings*, which retain some aspects from the past, but reveal new possibilities and forms in the present.

	Past	**Current state**	**Transformation (beginnings)**
Nature	20 days ago	Normal weather	Sepulchral weather
Gender	Tiresias	Boy	Girl

[333] Ibid., 95.

Physical body	Forgotten words	Death	Child

As the examples show, language games extend beyond dialogic expressions that become insufficient to express or explain these sites of change. Language is still apparent and reveals itself not only verbally, but becomes post-language, where aspects of silence, internal monologue, allusions, and the interplay between past, present, and future become part and parcel of the game.

2.8 Conclusion

Language games and beginnings provide an appropriate theoretical framework for mapping Barghouti's unsettling of the borders of language. Lyotard's and Said's notions on language and beginnings, although they seem unconnected, intersect in their interest in genealogical influences and continuous breakages. The physical body and the linguistic body (as investigated in the pre-language, language, and post-language sections) are charted in this chapter upon acts of continuation of, and divergence from preceding events.

The example of the rabbit elucidates the connection between past memories and interactions, and literary imaginations. Language games, such as those between Barghouti and his son, explore the slips between origins and beginnings, as was shown in the example of the nature, gender, and bodily shifts. The chapter constitutes a thematic reading of continuations and ruptures, upon which beginnings are construed. These linguistic and filial beginnings mirror Barghouti's advocation for literary innovation. As a frame, the chapter on childhood represents an initial stage in Barghouti's life. At the same time, the chapter works at complicating the relation between life and death by reading it as beginnings. By doing this, Barghouti's confrontation with death becomes a way of reconfiguring the decay of his body as will be seen in the following chapter. Childhood for Barghouti becomes a space of past memories, which is susceptible to transformations through imagination. Returning to

memories and registering his conversations with his son reposition Barghouti and his life within new imaginations and narratives. It is important to add that these close-reading examples mirror Barghouti's larger criticism of the state of Palestinian literature and his thoughts on writing and reading which are based on pushing the limits of language and going beyond known modes of expression and engagement.

As a way of bringing the discussed tropes of childhood, language, and the body together, and highlighting Barghouti's exercise of literary creativity, this chapter will conclude with excerpts from his second poetry collection *Laylā wa Tawba* (1996). The collection consists of one long poem that is divided into different stanzas and sections. As in many of his other writings, this collection takes cues from historical and literary subject matter. Its subject matter follows the story of Laylā al-Akhyaliyya, a famous Umayyad poet and her lover Tawba ibn Ḥumayyir.[334] Although the two never eventually marry, they remain in love. Tawba tells Laylā that if he dies and she comes to visit his grave, he will always greet her back. After his death, his words still resonate with Laylā, who visits his grave, greets him, and awaits his reply. Laylā resents him for not fulfilling what he promised in his poetry. This section will focus on two intertwined points: the first concerns the inspiration behind Barghouti's selection of the story of Laylā, which resorts back to his childhood. The second revolves around Barghouti's utilization of Tawba's experience, which investigates the dimensions of language in its relation to the body. The two points, thus, weave together

[334] It is a classical Arabic love story where two lovers are not able to fulfill their union because of societal interjections. Laylā is married off to another man, while both she and Tawba continue loving each other. It is said that Tawba was threatened with death. After his death, Laylā goes to visit his grave and greets him. She reprimands him for not greeting her back following his promise. While standing in front of his grave, an animal jumps in front of her mule and she falls off it and dies. For more on Laylā and her poetry see Dana Sajdi, "Revisiting Layla al-Akhyaliya's Trespass," in *Transforming Loss into Beauty: Essays on Arabic Literature and Culture in Honor of Magda Al-Nowaihi*, ed. Marlé Hammond and Dana Sajdi. (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 185-227. The years of death for both poets cannot be determined, see: Aram M. Shahin, "Reflections on the Lives and Deaths of Two Umayyad Poets: Laylā al-Akhyaliyya and Tawba b. al-Ḥumayyir," in *The Heritage of Arabo-Islamic Learning: Studies Presented to Wadad Kadi* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 398-443.

issues of language, childhood, and body through stylistic and thematic beginnings that construct the collection.

Barghouti informs his readers in the prose preface "Muqaddima mumkina"[335] that he had heard the story of Laylā al-Akhyaliyya in his childhood. The story remained with him as he grew up, particularly when he was living in exile and feeling estranged.[336] For him,

تحوَّلت ليلى الأخيليَّةُ إلى هاجس في روحي، إلى وهم أو منفىً أو شبحٍ أو أسطورةً، ولم أعد أميِّزُ بين الأخيليّةِ والخيال.[337]

> Laylā al-Akhyaliyya was transformed into an obsession in my soul, an illusion or an exile or an apparition or a myth, and I was no longer able to distinguish between al-Akhyaliyya and imagination.

Barghouti shows how a narrative from his childhood has had an immense role in inspiring feelings of alienation in his adulthood. The story of Laylā does not accompany Barghouti without a change; its role is not referential but rather experimental. The narrative takes on a different beginning as it leaves its initial story line towards the realm of imagination. Barghouti plays on the last name of Laylā *al-Akhyaliyya* which resembles in sound the word *khayāl* (imagination). The poem, thus, represents a familiarity that is taken from childhood, but similarly investigates new zones and beginnings that go beyond the known into the imagined. Examples such as Tawba's silence and metapoetic commentaries are beginnings that provide new thematic and critical additions to the storyline.

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[335] This introduction is a form of "self-referential and metatextual" beginning to an autobiography (Wild, "Searching for Beginnings," 83). Barghouti's preface is personal, autobiographical, and relates to earlier memories. In other words, he provides his readers with an explanation for how he was inspired by literary figures, how they intertwined throughout historical moments in his life, and what literary tropes they provided him with. The fact that he starts with an intro in prose is significant to Barghouti's belief in the connection between theoretical and creative productions. In her book *Metapoesis in the Arabic Tradition*, Huda J. Fakhreddine gives the example of Nazik al-Malaikah's poem "Train ride" and focuses on the poet's prose paragraph at the end of the poem. She notes that "the major contribution of this phase of Arab modernism is precisely [the] consciousness, which appears when poets reveal their thoughts about the poetic process. The poem itself is only an illustration. This is not to say that the poetry has no value in itself, but that it seems rather inadequate when compared to the ambitious theoretical ideal proposed by the poets of the movement. Throughout the movement's history, from the beginning of the twentieth century to this day, it seems as if the poetic achievements of modernism in Arabic are constantly striving to catch up with its theoretical propositions." Huda J. Fakhreddine, *Metapoesis in the Arabic Tradition: From Modernists to Muḥdathūn* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 31.

[336] Barghouti, *al-Āthār,* 96.

[337] Ibid.

Tawba's silence and unreturned greetings inspire Barghouti to think about the meanings and possibilities of language beyond its expected verbal utterances. He writes

واللفظُ بيضٌ كسَّرتْهُ لتخرجَ منهُ فراخُ الحمامْ
واللفظُ رحمٌ غادرتهُ التجربةْ
فارغاً – كالكهفِ – بعد خروجِ النعامْ
سمِّهِ: "عجزُ اللغةْ"
أو حيرةَ الأشياءِ من سرِّ الولادةِ بالعذابِ وبالسلامْ.[338]

Utterance is like eggs that were broken so that squabs can come out
Utterance is a womb that was deserted by the experience
It is empty – like a cave – after the ostriches have left it
You can call it 'language's impotence'
Or the objects' bewilderment by the secret of birth through torment and peace.

The passage represents, through birth metaphors, Barghouti's commentaries on the *utterances* in language. The utterance (*al-lafẓ*)[339] here represents the already-made and accepted moves in language. For Barghouti, these utterances portray life-giving spaces that are now left empty; broken eggs, bare womb, vacant cave. The initiation of life (that of animals and humans) is linked to the existence of these spaces. However, the fixation on these spaces as origins, when their beginnings have already left (the baby from the womb and squabs from the egg), is what Barghouti calls "language's impotence." It is the act of giving birth and the emergence of the pigeons and ostriches from the nest that give *meaning* to the utterances, which are otherwise left empty without these experiences. This is not a call to abandon the utterance, but to reinvestigate its possible meanings that can be exerted through *ḥīra* (bewilderment), questioning, and suffering. The detail in the original narrative about Tawba's silence provides Barghouti with a space to give his metapoetic commentary on the dynamics of language. Tawba's silence is not seen as a failed promise to Laylā. Rather, Barghouti deploys this silence as an emblem of revolt against the known and overused

[338] Ibid, 100.
[339] As Geert Jan van Gelder points out, *lafẓ* is more than just words and represents "the way a thought, an idea, or a motif is put into words". It, thus, represents the "surface structure of the sentence". Geert Jan van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 3.

utterances and an invitation to find new ways of expression.

Barghouti employs another incident from the story of Laylā and Tawba to delineate a connection between past and present through the connection between the physical body and language. He takes Tawba's death as symbolic of the revolt against the Israeli occupation, where Tawba becomes a personification of a (Palestinian) fighter. For example, Barghouti writes about Tawba:

...شنقوهُ على تينةٍ في ليلةٍ في حبلةٍ مُحكَمَةْ.
تركوا في فمهِ طلقتينْ:
طلقةً في مَحَلِّ الرغيفِ،
وأُخرى في مَحَلِّ الكلمةْ.[340]

…one night, they hung him on a fig tree with a tight rope
they left two bullets in his mouth
a bullet in place of the bread loaf
and another in place of the word.

Tawba here becomes representative not only of his story, but also that of others. While Barghouti does not specify that Tawba is mirroring a Palestinian figure, words like earth, grave, bomb, bird, lynched on a fig tree, bullets, etc. have become standard in the Palestinian life of revolt and struggle.[341] Tawba, who assumes a new role of a revolutionary, is lynched and shot in the mouth. The two bullets attack the physical body, with the metonym "the bread," and the literary body, as signified by "the word."

The poem can be linked to Barghouti's relation with his son. Reading references to Barghouti's childhood in his works elucidates how relationships (familial, linguistic, or temporal) defy borders and notions of origins if looked at as beginnings. The relation

[340] Ibid., 166.

[341] As al-Dīk argues, this link between the story of Laylā and her suffering and that of martyrs represents a poetic way of writing that is common to many Arab poets including Barghouti, al-Bayati, and al-Sayyab, who highlight the arch of suffering between past and present.
"الذي يرى القصيدة يجدها تعجّ بالهموم المعاصرة، وبالذات ما يصيب المجتمع الفلسطيني والأرض الفلسطينية من هموم وقضايا يحاول الشاعر خلقها في نسيج شعري تتداخل عناصره مع القيم التراثية."
"Reading the poem, one can see how it is inflicted with modern concerns, particularly those that affect the Palestinian land and society. The poet tries to weave these concerns with traditional values." Nādī Sārī al-Dīk, *Ukhwat al-turāb wa humūm al-makān: Dirāsa taʾṣīliyya fī al-shiʿr al-Filasṭīnī al-muʿāṣir* (Jerusalem: Jāmiʿat al-Quds al-Maftūḥa, 2010), 92.

between Barghouti and Āthar is multi-faceted. The first layer shows Barghouti as the origin of Āthar (filial relation). However, instead of experiencing the suppression that Barghouti, as a child, experienced, his father welcomes Āthar's exploration of life through language and play. In fact, by agreeing to engage in Āthar's linguistic games, Barghouti learns how to take linguistic and cognitive departures that help him reach beginnings in his writing as well as in his experience with illness and diagnosis.

Besides the linguistic exploration, the departure towards new beginnings can be approached spatially in Barghouti's works. The next chapter, thus, moves from the temporal moment of childhood into that of death, which takes the ill body as the medium for exploring Barghouti's conception of space. In one passage from *Laylā wa Tawba*, Barghouti writes (through the voice of Tawba):

إنَّ المسافةَ بين الفروعِ وبينَ الجذورِ تسمَّى:
"نضوجُ الشجرْ "
سَمِّها بُعْدَنا عن تربةِ الأصلِ،
أو قربَنا من غموضِ القمرْ.[342]

The distance between the branches and the roots is called:
'the ripeness of trees'
call it our distance from the soil of origin,
or our closeness to the mystery of the moon.

The branches and roots are used to depict two spaces that are distanced and separated. It is, however, the distance between these two entities that constitutes the crux of the imagery. Although the distance represents a movement away from the roots, and thus a separation from the origin, it can also be revered as a space that brings one closer to discovering new things (the mystery of the moon) and thus a beginning. It is this reaching out to different 'branches' while retaining a connection to the roots that represents what Barghouti calls "the ripeness of trees." Movement is thus taken in the next chapter as a

[342] Ibid., 100.

synonym of this chapter's beginning. Just as language games reveal linguistic, social, and power relations, so do the different spatial confrontations between body, land, and literature.

Chapter 3: Death – Space and land

والمرض تماس مع الموت، والوعي بالموت عندها
يكشف الأشياء الكامنة خلف القوالب الذهنية والجاهز.[343]

Illness brings us in continguity with death.
Awareness of death reveals at that moment
the things that reside behind the cognitive
templates and what is ready-made.

3.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, the body in its beginnings; childhood, was taken as a premise for reading notions of language formation in Barghouti's texts. It was argued that it is through the interplay of familial, historical, and linguistic breaks and continuities that Barghouti contemplates literary and personal creativity. Focusing on another central corporeal phase in Barghouti's life, his experience with illness and death, this chapter reads the interaction between body and space. The aim of this chapter is to show how, meeting at the intersections of illness and estrangement, geographic movements in space reveal deeper levels of social, political, and literary interactions and individual-communal interrogations.

By March 2002, Barghouti's health started to deteriorate dramatically.[344] The second Intifada was at its pinnacle and the Palestinian uprising was confronted with an Israeli spoliation of land through the instalment of many permanent and flying checkpoints[345] and forced curfews.[346] The building of the illegal Separation Wall had already started. In order to relieve his pain, Barghouti needed medicine from Beirut, which would come via Jordan. The

[343] Barghouti, "al-Ḥadātha fī tajrubat al-shāʿir," 89.
[344] Al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 11.
[345] Luisa Gandolfo, "Transactions, Space and Otherness: Borders and Boundaries in Palestine–Israel," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 33, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 253–74.
[346] See Suad Amiry, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law: Ramallah Diaries* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004). The book consists of personal anecdotes, diaries, and other kinds of social interactions, which (satirically) document stories from the daily life of the author through curfews (particularly the Ramallah curfew in March 2002), borders, checkpoints, and their effects on personal relations.

medicine was not allowed entry at the Karāma border between Jordan and Palestine.[347] Barghouti passed away on 1 May 2002.

I could not see a more fitting start for a chapter that takes the interaction between body and space for political, social, and literary exploration than this personal anecdote. The anecdote heightens the juxtaposition of the sickened body and the exploited land, a personal/national connection that has been largely explored in modern Arabic, specifically Palestinian literature.[348] Body and space are viewed as synonymous with the human body being approached as a space, and space equally being viewed as a body. The movements that unfold within and through body and space assert their ability to transform and change. It is through these movements that, for example, the analogy of the national body of the land and that of the human body is achieved.

This link between land and body is clear in the anecdote. Growing Israeli control over land and the occupation's power over the lives of Palestinians and their movements stand as a political and historical emblem of Barghouti's struggle against cancer, which spreads viciously in his body and impedes his ability to live.[349] Al-Shaikh provides examples of how Barghouti's personal struggle with cancer corresponded politically with the start of the second Intifada in 2000.[350] For example, he narrates how Barghouti used to see from his hospital bedroom the bodies of young Palestinians killed by the Israeli forces,[351] and how he

[347] Al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 12.
[348] The trope of illness and its mirroring in the land or the nationalist struggle is a common line in modern Arabic writing. Some of the biggest names in the Arab literary scene, including Mahmoud Darwish, Amal Dunqul, Edward Said, and Radwa Ashour suffered from the agony of lengthy illness, treatments, and pain.
See, for example, Amal Dunqul, *Awrāq al-ghurfa 8*, (Cairo: al-Haiʾa al-Maṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li al-Kitāb, 1983), and Radwa Ashour, *Al-Ṣarkha* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2015).
[349] Stories of people in need of hospital care and women giving birth at checkpoints are immense. See, for example, Wendy Pearlman and Laura Junka, *Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada*, First Edition (New York: Berkeley, Calif.: Nation Books, 2003). The author presents interviews conducted with Palestinians during the second Intifada. The interviews try to capture the injustices inflicted on these Palestinians, which led to political, social, and economic changes in their lives. The book, at the same time, conveys the different ways they resisted, for example by finding ways around the demolitions and atrocities of Israeli occupation and control.
[350] Al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 11-13.
[351] Ibid.

decided to be buried in his village Kobar. These events form an inseparable relation between the human body and space, and consequently between the personal (his body) and the collective bodies and spaces of Palestine.

The similarity between cancer and occupation is their uncontrolled movements that they inflict upon the body (the human and the land). These movements can be understood along the line of what Eyal Weizmann calls "elastic geography."[352] In *Hollow Land*, Weizmann denotes that the borders created by Israeli occupation, such as the Wall, checkpoints, and road blocks, "are dynamic, constantly shifting, ebbing and flowing; they creep along, stealthily surrounding Palestinian villages and roads." Besides this "anarchic geography," which corresponds to larger political decisions and shifts, the movement of the occupation in Palestinian spaces has an "erratic and unpredictable nature."[353] Cancer, as an illness, similarly performs unpredictable and erratic movements of shifting, shrinking, and expanding at will. These movements occur unexpectedly in new places and create blockages in the body.

Cancer and its link to occupation in this example follow the general language used to describe the illness. As Sontag explains in her *Illness as Metaphor*, "the controlling metaphors in descriptions of cancer are, in fact, drawn….from the language of warfare"[354] such as colonisation, invasion, defence, etc. Writing in Barghouti's case can, thus, be seen as his 'resistance' against the invasion. As Daniel Punday argues in his *Narrative Bodies,* the links between body and space are central to the understanding of narratives, since changes in "kinetic space" entail a change of perception, and thus "a narrative change."[355] The movements in space and the human body produce different forms of literary expressions. The

[352] Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007), 6-7.
[353] Ibid., 8.
[354] Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, 64.
[355] Daniel Punday, *Narrative Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Narratology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 117.

example of Barghouti illustrates the pertinence of literature, even at the confrontation with death. As al-Shaikh states "until two days before his death, [Barghouti] would engage in sophisticated conversations on the poetics of beauty, historical ironies, and the defeat of evil while reading Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn*."[356] At his deathbed, excerpts from his favourite book *Ḥajar al-ward* were recited by family members and friends "in an attempt to pacify his soul and reduce his agony."[357] Literature stands as the emancipatory tool through which Barghouti resists both the brutality of occupation and the intensity of pain and illness. As seen in his narrations, Barghouti works at reconfiguring a set of movements and transformations that revolt against the imposed transformation of body and space. The body, in this case, is not an agent of reflection as much as it is an agent of action. Its brush with death and experience of illness and pain distort established metaphors and set modes of thought, as Barghouti explains in the opening quote of this chapter. The narration is constructed afresh as guided by the experience of the body and land and their transformations.

Starting from the physicality of pain, some of the main passages in this chapter are taken from Barghouti's last autobiography *Saʾakūn*. As explained in the previous chapter, the book follows Barghouti's return to his childhood village after his diagnosis with cancer. The passages chosen here delineate Barghouti's medical experience: the pain, losing his hair, and his trips to the hospitals. This chapter presents four main examples of movements in space. The first part of the chapter focuses on Barghouti's encounter with cancer, through his experience at the hospital, and his encounter with an Israeli settlement. The second part of the chapter venture out to include other expressions of pain and spatial exploration as they appear in Barghouti's works. The example of the 'crossing' in section 3.7, focuses on the interplay

[356] Al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 12.
[357] Ibid., 13.

between estrangement as a painful experience and space as portrayed in Barghouti's novel *al-Ḍiffa al-thālitha li nahr al-Urdunn*. The other part in section 3.7 investigates the inner-outer dynamics of space and their connection to knowledge by looking at two depictions of enclosed spaces in a poem in Barghouti's first published literary work (the poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā*) and one of his last published works *Saʾakūn*. These examples delineate Barghouti's attention to both physical and literary movements, and exemplify the centrality of senuous and corporeal experiences in Barghouti's works.

3.2 Theoretical framework

This chapter lies at the crossroads between illness, space, and literature. Although many have written about the topic of space and its relation to the body, this chapter is mainly framed by some conceptions by Marc Augé. There are three main reasons for this choice. First, being an anthropologist and a literary author, Augé's writings have been described as "part-autobiographical, part-fictional, essayistic"[358] style, thus alluding to the import of narrative in the conception of spaces and bodies. Second, Augé's understanding of space questions the interplay between the space that is merely surrounding the person and that which is experienced. An "anthropological place," Augé notes, is a "place in the established and symbolized sense."[359] This link to the establishment of symbols is similarly echoed in his note on the individual versus collective approach to illness. Augé's work crosses paths with health studies (particularly applied in Africa). In his "Biological order, social order" he asserts the double-nature of illness which "is at one and the same time the most individual and the most social of things."[360] It is thus Augé's perception of the multi-dimensionality of

[358] Phil Hubbard, and Rob Kitchi eds., *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (London: SAGE, 2011): 27.
[359] Marc Augé, *Non-Places*: *Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995), 81.
[360] Marc Augé, "Biological order, Social order; illness, a primary form of event," in *The Meaning of Illness: Anthropology, History and Sociology*, ed. Marc Augé and Claudine Herzlich, trans. Katherine J. Durnin et. al. (Paris: Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1995), 24.

both space and illness that enables a reading of Barghouti's approach towards space and the body through the prism of movements and transformations.

I start by raising some theoretical points regarding the relation between space and body and delineate some of Barghouti's conceptions of space. Then, I approach the link between space and body through the study of some movements in space that appear in Barghouti's works. Finally, I map these movements, gestures, and descriptions of space to show how geographical topologies engage in social, literary, and political networks. This way of approaching space exceeds visual and geographic coordinates and allows Barghouti to spatially situate the demise of his own body and his death.

3.3 Barghouti and space

This section highlights the centrality of space in Barghouti's conception, particularly in relation to the body, the individual's perception, and interaction with the land. The theoretical discussion in many fields in the humanities and the social sciences has been largely dominated by a "temporal din."[361] Bakhtin's theory of the "chronotope" has fixated the connectedness between time and space in the reading of the literary text. At the beginning of his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics," Bakhtin provides a definition of the chronotope. He argues that "in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole." This whole is composed by time which "thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" and space, which "becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history."[362] While the two entities are seen as inseparable, time is portrayed as a lively matter that evolves and changes (as exemplified through the image of the growing of

[361] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 13. For a comprehensive overview of the development and emergence of spatiality in social theory, see "History: Geography: Modernity," 1-9.

[362] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of The Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics." in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press Slavic Series, no. 1., 1981), 84.

time like a body). Space, on the other hand, is described as "responsive," a consequential and secondary entity to time. By choosing to focus on space in this chapter, I do not argue that space should be seen as superior to time. This is, instead, an attempt to mark the literary dynamics that emerge from setting space at the foreground of the discussion. The strong bond between space and time is essential to the discussion, as will be seen in the following pages. The fact that the heightened stage of Barghouti's cancer and his eventual death coincided with one of the most intense events in modern Palestinian history testifies to the connection and intertwinement of experiences and events.

Space in this chapter is used as the English translation of the Arabic word *makān,* which is extensively used in Barghouti's writings and constitutes the kernel of some of his most important works (for example in *al-Farāgh*). Restoring the word *makān*, in Arabic, to its root *k-w-n*, one can see that there is a link between *makān* and *kawn*, the word for universe, and to *kāʾin* 'being'.

In his definition of the word, however, Barghouti takes the word *makān* as derived from the root *m-k-n*. He writes:

في العربية كلمة "مكان" اشتقَّت من مادة "م.ك.ن"، من المصدر نفسه الذي جاءت منه كلمة "ممكن"، فالمكان هو "ممكناته"، أو "إمكانياته".[363]

> In the Arabic language, the word 'makān' (space) is derived from the root 'm.k.n', and from the same gerund of the word 'mumkin' (possible). *Makān*, thus, refers to its residing 'potentials' and 'capabilities.'

From this root, other words like *tamakkan* 'to be able to', and *tamakkun* 'stability'/ 'power' are derived.[364] This chapter adopts space as a field where, just as Barghouti argues, abilities, possibilities, power, and interactions take place.[365]

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[363] Barghouti, "'An al-makān," 90.
[364] For an overview of the many discussions on the meanings of the word, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, vol. 13, 1997), 363-368.
[365] See Barghouti, "'An al-makān," 90.

As has been pointed out above, the word "space" will be used as an encompassing term for charting geographic and literary movements in Barghouti's works. However, it is important to point out that there are many spatial references that have different meanings. Place, location, position, and other words have their specific geographical and linguistic demarcations and different utilizations in theory.[366] Barghouti is attuned to these different words and their connotations. For example, he refers to the difference between the word *maḥall* and the word *mawqiʿ*. While the first refers to a space that one can exist in, it does not allude to a feeling of *tamakkun*, a feeling of belonging. Contrary, *mawqiʿ* refers to the relation and feeling of belonging between space and the individual.[367]

Besides these differences between spatial terms, Barghouti investigates the varied meanings and states evoked by the single term *makān*. Barghouti deploys a line by Darwish to assert the distinction between *makān* and *lā makān.* Darwish writes:

اللامكان هو المكان وقد نأى في الروح عن تاريخه.[368]

> the non-place is the place when its position in the soul becomes dislocated from its history.[369]

Using this quote, Barghouti argues that this *lā makān* is still a *makān*, but it is one that is "devoid of its history…far away from itself."[370]

What is constant in Barghouti's conceptions is his use of the word *makān* as an umbrella term under which all these spatial dynamics are played out. It is here that

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[366] Augé explains that, for him, space is an abstract term, while place, or what he calls the anthropological place, includes "the journeys made in it, the discourses uttered in it, and the language characterizing it." (*Non-Places,* 81). Place is where the lived and the experienced unfold (Augé, *Non-Places*, 81-83). Another similar term is *placelessness*, discussed in Lutwack's last chapter "Placelessness" in *The Concern of Twentieth-Century Literature.*" He notes that "the disappearance of familiar places and the proliferation of a more and more limited set of uniform places have caused a peculiarly modern malaise called *placelessness*." Leonard Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 182.

[367] Barghouti, "ʿAn al-makān," 91.

[368] Qtd. in ibid.

[369] Mahmoud Darwish, "The Hoopoe," in *If I Were Another*, trans. Fady Joudah (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 49.

[370] "مكانٌ مجَّرد من تاريخه...ابتعد عن نفسه."
Barghouti, "ʿAn al-makān," 91.

Barghouti's distinctions and that of Augé come face to face. Augé's usage of place and non-place as his main constitutive spatial elements is not in opposition to the use of the term space in this chapter. For Augé, space and place are not opposites. Rather, space represents the abstract field in which events, moments, and narratives can take place.[371] A place, for Augé, is a space that is "relational, historical and concerned with identity."[372] Non-place, consequently, is a space that is, as Barghouti also reiterates, devoid of such connections. In other words, Barghouti's *makān* and Augé's space mirror each other. The place/non-place pair in Augé's conception is at play in Barghouti's through the latter's deployment of different spatial states (such as *al-makān al-zāḥif, al- lā makān, al-makān al-munqariḍ* as will be discussed).

Space, whether actual or imagined, is not a static entity. It is rather created by the different movements and acts that one performs through the body. In her reading of the semiotics of space, Ceza Qasim notes that a person's recognition of space happens through "a direct sensory recognition, that starts with the human's experience of their body: this body is 'a space'-… [it embodies] the psychological, cognitive, emotional, and animalistic powers of the living being (*al-kāʾin*)."[373] It is not only the existence of the body as space but the *awareness* of this existence in relation to the surroundings that informs one's position in life. Space becomes an 'anthropological place' when it is conceived through the lived and the experienced. This understanding of space as constructed and perceived through its relation to the body is found in Barghouti's writing. He writes in *al-Farāgh* about the time when he got lost on his way back to his village Kobar.

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[371] Augé, *Non-Places*, 85.
[372] Ibid., 77.
[373] "يدرك المكان ادراكا حسيا مباشرا، يبدأ بخبرة الانسان بجسده: هذا الجسد هو "مكان"-...- القوى النفسية والعقلية والعاطفية والحيوانية للكائن الحي."
Ceza Qasim, *al-Qāri' wa al-Naṣṣ: al-ʿalāma wa al-Dalāla* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-'aʿlā li al-Thaqāfa, 2002), 27-28.

فالمكان، أيها السادة، حرف ياء، رابطة. أولست "أنا" في جسدي؟ أعني أولست أنا ك"أم صفا"، مجرّد "مكان آخر"؟ وما يربط بين هذين المكانين، جسدي و "أم صفا" هو تفسيري أنا، أي رابطة الياء.[374]

> Space, gentlemen, is the letter *yāʾ*, a nexus. Am 'I' not in my body? I mean, am I not, like umm Ṣafā[375] just 'another space?' And what connects these two spaces, my body and umm Ṣafā, is my own interpretation, meaning the association of the *yāʾ*.

This passage exemplifies Barghouti's view of the body as space. It is through the connection the 'I' makes with these different spaces (the body, the village) that the perception of the space is conceived. In the Arabic language, the letter *yāʾ* is the sign that indicates possessiveness for the first-person singular. The argument that Barghouti advances here is that the recognition of space happens through relegating its positionality in relation to the 'I'. Familiar places are familiar and recognizable because they reside in the memory and the map of the 'I', since they have the *yāʾ* attached to them. This ability (*imkāniyya*) at connecting and disconnecting the *yāʾ* serves Barghouti's idea of metamorphosis (discussed in section 4.7), as well as his conception of defamiliarization (the disconnection of the *yāʾ*) as a way to creativity (for an example see section 1.4).

The anthropological place is concerned with more than the individual's perception of the space. Barghouti complicates this relation by exploring the multiplicity of spaces in Palestine that are related to political control (thus, *makān* as referential to *tamakkun* 'power').[376] The conceptual image of the physical space of Palestine (the land) and its loss led to the creation of imagined spaces in the memory of Palestinians. By highlighting the different spatial layers, Barghouti analyses the complex relation between the formation(s) of Palestinian identities and reality in the minds and lives of Palestinians. He writes:

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[374] Barghouti, "al-Anā wa al-makān," in *al-Farāgh al-ladhī raʾa al-tafāṣīl*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: Dār al-Bayraq al-ʿArabī, 2006), 75-76.
[375] Barghouti explains how, on attempting to return to his village, he confused Kobar with the nearby village of Umm Ṣafā.
[376] Barghouti, "'An al-makān," 90.

المكان المنقرض فيه محلُّ لنا ولكن ليس "موقعاً" إنَّه "المنفى"...وكلمة "المنفى" في العربية ترتبط ب"نفى" كنقيض لأكَّد...و يقابل المنفى مكان "حقٌّ" أصليٌّ وطن أم جنَّة ما أو بتعبير لمحمود درويش: "جغرافيا السحر الإلهي" و الحلم بالعودة من المنفى إلى "جغرافيا السحر الإلهي" هاجس أساس في الأمكنة الذهنية الفلسطينية...الجنَّة الضائعة الإلهية تعني فكرة "اللجوء" أي الطرد وبالقوَّة من "جغرافيا السحر الإلهي" إلى أرض أخرى "محلٌّ آخر" منفى-مخيماً، والإصرار على العودة، على الرحلة النقيض من "المحلّ" والمنفى إلى الجنَّة- الموقع- المكان الحقّ. أقول "الجنَّة" كإشارة إلى خطيئة أصلية ما، إلى لعنة ما وسقوط، إلى كارثة ماضية طردنا بها من "المكان الحق" إلى "الأرض-المنفى"-سميّت هذه ب"النكبة"...و "جغرافيا السحر الإلهي" تفسير آخر للمكان، و أسطورة" وظيفتها خلق فسحة من الأمل الحرِّ أي "مكاناً محارباً" للمكان المنقرض...حلم أصلب من "الوقائع"... [ويشكِّل هذا الحلم بالعودة] محور تعريف الذات القومي-الإنساني عندنا.[377]

> The extinct space [*al-makān al-munqariḍ*] has a position [*maḥall*] for us [Palestinians] but it is not a location [*mawqiʿ*], it is 'exile'…the word *manfā* [exile] in Arabic is linked to *nafā* [negated] as an antonym of *akkada* [confirmed].
> In contradistinction to this *manfā*, a space of 'actuality', an original space; a homeland, or some kind of paradise, or what Mahmoud Darwish terms "the geography of divine magic."[378] The dream to return from the *manfā* to the "the geography of divine magic"[379] is a compulsive foundational premise in the Palestinian cognitive cartography [of meaning]. This lost paradise refers to the forced expulsion out of the 'geography of divine magic' to another space, 'another position', a *manfā*- a refugee camp. [It also refers to] the persistence of the desire to return, [the persistence to go on] the opposite journey from the 'position' and *manfā* to paradise- the location [*mawqiʿ*]- the space of actuality.
>
> I use the term 'paradise' to evoke a reference to an original sin, to a curse and a fall, to a past catastrophe in which we were expelled from 'the space of actuality' to 'the earth-*manfā*'"- this [sin] was called Nakba. The 'geography of divine magic' is an alternative interpretation of space. It is a myth whose job is to carve out and hold open a space of free hope. It signifies a 'fighting space' that opposes the extinct space. It is a dream more solid than the 'daily occurences' [*waqāʾiʿ*] (the dream is more real *wāqiʿiyya*). This dream to return represents the axis defining the nationalist-humanist individual for us.[380]

The image created in this quote by Barghouti retains an element of an almost apocalyptic setting (similar to what was presented in section 2.7). Barghouti differentiates between three spaces, or three layers of space that exist in the spatial cognition of Palestinians: a pre-fall (pre-Nakba) space, a post-Nakba space, and another post-Nakba phase in which an imagined pre-Nakba space is restored. Expulsion and return for Barghouti

[377] Barghouti, "'An al-makān," 92-93.
[378] Darwish, "The Tragedy of Narcissus, the Comedy of Silver," in *If I Were Another*, trans. Fady Joudah (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 23.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Meaning Palestinians.

become the two mechanisms through which the transformation of the actual and the imagined take shape. The expulsion has led the *mawqiʿ* to be stripped of its social, emotional, and material realness and stability. This dispossession has left the Palestinians with another reality, another space, namely a *maḥall* that is devoid of connections. This is not to say that the new *maḥall* does not, despite its lack of connection, affect the lives and aspirations of the exiles.

In his book *Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination: Telling Memories,* Ihab Saloul adopts a reading of Palestinian narration of exile and the Nakba, which is characterized by a shift from "a nostalgic memory" to "a critical memory."[381] In this shift, the focus is not solely on the nostalgic memories of the past space (the first space in Barghouti's example), but also on the critical conditions of expulsion and loss, which stress how the present experiences of the exiles shape the construction of the homeland and thus situates the Nakba as a historical moment that continues to reveal itself in the present.[382] This new shocking reality has driven Palestinians to reformulate the actual *mawqiʿ* that is now lost into an image that resides in the otherworldly sphere. However, instead of just imagining this new realm, the imagined space becomes the motor that fuels the aim to realize or regain the previous *mawqiʿ*. As Barghouti explains here, actual life exists in two realms: the material space and the imagined. The very actual expulsion of the Palestinians and the reality of their struggle, which are portrayed in the image of the camp, are opposed to an ideal image about a lost paradisiacal space. What is interesting is that it is this imagined space, which Palestinians create, and not the reality of the camp that becomes the actual driving force and a motive to fight for achieving the return, and thus provides them with a sense of power and *tamakkun*. In the first phase, movement meant the destruction of stability, in the second phase, movement

[381] Ihab Saloul, *Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination: Telling Memories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 69.
[382] Ibid., 69-70.

(the return/the resistance/the fighting) means a movement towards stability.

There is thus a negotiation between actual life and imagination, a *manfā* (exile) and paradise. This engagement with these contradictions is what constitutes the essential dialectical question in the Palestinian case as Barghouti sees it. The word *manfā* in itself propels its taker, the exiled, to be in a state of negation and in a dialectical struggle between what existed, what exists, and what is hoped to exist. As Barghouti construes, this hope to return, fuelled by an imagined space, is what constitutes the literary and poetic representation of Palestine in modern Palestinian literature. I find this passage important because it disrupts this assumed knowledge about what constitutes reality and what does not, since as we see here, an imagined space in the future becomes more real as opposed to the realness of the actual space, in the past and present times. It, furthermore, asserts Barghouti's awareness of the different Palestinian expressions of identity and relation to the land.

3.4 Illness and pain

As this dissertation argues, these different perceptions of space take shape through the body. The topoi of illness and pain, as inspired by Barghouti's experience with cancer and occupation of the land, reveal this connection between space and body. Barghouti's experience with pain forces a confrontation with the position of the self in regard to the physical body. He says of the pain:

..أنا أرغب...أن أنزع الإبر من ظهر يدي، وأستفرغ كلَّ ما في باطني، وفي ذهني، وأحمل كتبي، وجلدي، وثيابي، وأغادر، إلى "الدير الجوَّاني"، وإلى جنائن اللوز. ذهني يشبه هذه القاعة، ويحتاج أمكنة واسعة، مقمرة، ومفتوحة على درب التبَّانات، على المعمار الإلهي نفسه...سأعود إلى الجنائن، سأعود، فجسمي ليس بالضبط أنا، مهما أمعنت في غيِّها الإبر.[383]

> …I desire…to pull the needles out from the back of my hand, to disgorge whatever is inside me, and inside my mind, and to carry my books, my skin, and clothes, and leave, to *al-dayr al-juwwānī* and to the almond gardens. My mind resembles this hall,

[383] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 89.

> and it needs wide spaces that are moonlit, and overlooking the milky way, [overlooking] the divine architecture itself…I will return to the gardens, I will; for my body is not exactly me, regardless of how deeply the needles penetrate.

The quote above from Barghouti's *Saʾakūn* confronts us in a direct manner with the main themes in this section: the reality of illness and pain, the body-land bond, and the issue of embodiment. Barghouti describes the physical consequences of illness and pain as exemplified in the needles and the vomiting. These instances of illness and pain are activities that invade the space of the body. The pain of Barghouti is not a narrated experience. Rather "…[pain] is part of what creates the conditions of action and experience."[384] Action comes in the form of the imagination which transforms the "passive and helpless occurrence" into "self-[modification]."[385] Barghouti's declaration that his body is not him is not a negation of the role of the body in life. Rather, pain works as an active invitation for Barghouti to find new forms of embodiment. These forms are investigated through memories and imaginations, beyond his current decaying body.

Thus, Barghouti's reaction to these invasions of his body is to negate his existences as merely being in his body. And instead, he finds other spaces to be. As is portrayed in different parts of the book, he substitutes his physical body with that of the space of his village, which is possible because of his decision to return to it and be buried there. Although Barghouti hopes to abandon his physical body because of the spatial destructions that it suffers from cancer and invasive medical treatments, he is still in search of a substituting body, his village, which encompasses large spaces on earth and in the sky. Barghouti's loss of body allows him to come up with new ways to experience life *through* embodiment. In other words, the loss of materiality (his physical body) does not indicate a distancing from it but is rather strengthened by taking on a new and self-chosen embodiment. It is precisely this

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[384] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford: Standford University Press, 2003), 85.
[385] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1985), 164.

that roots his post-diagnosis works, perhaps unexpectedly, in the lived, the experienced, and the observed sensations instead of the withdrawn and existentialist.

Augé is attuned to the importance of the body in relation to space (political/religious/social). As was mentioned above, "…[the] effect of spatial construction can be attributed without hesitation to the fact that the human body itself is perceived as a portion of space with frontiers and vital centres, defences and weaknesses, armour and defects."[386] It is not only that the body can be discussed in spatial terms, but also that the body represents a territory. The importance of the body comes from what Augé calls "a meeting of ancestral values," where "elements" exist before the "carnal envelope" of the body and "survive it."[387] Similarly, Barghouti's literary encounter with illness is compatible with his concept of the embroidered spaces and times that go into the making and conception of his own body. These spaces and times are social, historical, religious, political, and literary, and illness is a movement that enables their questioning.[388]

3.5 Movements

This chapter is interested in the shifts that take place within the different forms of space. The first two movements (section 3.6) look at how illness disrupts the body's landscape and is thus a form of movement. In turn, the imposed movement on the body yields active political and literary movements that reconfigure the role of Barghouti and his body in life. In her book *Agency and Embodiment,* Carrie Noland explains that she favours the use of

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[386] Augé, *Non-Places*, 60.
[387] Ibid., 62.
[388] Darwish's *Jidāriyya*, (*Mural*), for example, is a long poem that Darwish wrote after "a brush with death during heart surgery in 1999". Ferial Ghazoul, "Darwish's Mural: The Echo of an Epic Hymn." *Interventions* 14:1 (2012): 37.
See also ʿAbd al-Salām al-Masāwī, *Jamāliyyāt al-mawt fī shiʿr Maḥmūd Darwīsh* (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 2009), 49-50.
"جدارية محمود درويش تمثّل [واجهة] للموت بسلاح الذاكرة الحية التي تختزن قدرا وفيرا من الاحداث والرموز الثقافية…"
"Mahmoud Darwish's 'Mural' represents a façade against death. It deploys living memory as a weapon which witholds a heavy artillery of events and cultural icons."

'gesture' in place of 'movement.'[389] Gesture, as she notes, is suitable for the study of agency, and by "[i]mplying *organized* kinesis, 'gesture' serves as a reminder that movement is not purely expressive but is culturally shaped at every turn."[390] Despite the compelling arguments, and although this chapter studies manifestations of agencies, I opted to use the term movement. This choice is because *ḥaraka* (movement) in Arabic seems to be the more generic term of the two, while *īmāʾa* (gesture) hints at a movement that holds within itself an intended meaning. Movement, instead, opens the space for more complex engagements that ascertain intentionality, but still allows for uncontrolled changes that take place thanks to an individual's agency and body. Barghouti writes:

في العربية، "الميل" حركةٌ ما...و "الميلُ إلى" فعل شيء يتضمَّن اتجاهاً للحركة، تماماً كالميل عن شيء والميلُ هادف، واعٍ...أي أنَّ له امتدادٌ في أعماق كينونة الأنا.[391]

> In Arabic, 'leaning [*al-mayl*] is a kind of movement… and an 'leaning [inclination] for' doing something entails a direction of movement, exactly like an inclination away from something. An inclination is purposeful, conscious; which means that it has an extension in the depths of the being of the 'I'.

In one of his poems Barghouti poetically delves into this harmony between the two entities of the physical movement and its effect on the perception of the 'I'. In deploying the *mayl* as an emblem of transformation, Barghouti situates his poetics not in terms of oppositions between the static and the moving, but rather in the dialectics between them and the ability to choose and transform from one state to the other. In "Mā qālath al-ghajariyyā" ("What the Gypsy Said"), the speaker narrates what a female gypsy has proposed for him to do in order to come back to her "standing, no stick in your hands, and no guide but yourself, purified of all what is other to yourself."[392] The gypsy assumes the position of a teacher and

[389] Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*, 6.
[390] Ibid., 7.
[391] Barghouti, "Wahm al-bidāya…Shabaḥ al-makān." In *al-Farāgh al-ladhī raʾa al-tafāṣīl*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: Dār al-Bayraq al-ʿArabī, 2006), 109.
[392] "وعُدْ لي واقفاً، لا عصاً في يديكَ، ولا دليلٌ خارجكْ، خالصاً مما عداكْ."
Barghouti, "Mā Qālath al-Ghajariyya." In *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shiʿr, 2008), 243.

provides the speaker with advice on how to reach this state of self-knowledge. She tells the speaker:

الكونُ نهرٌ وهَرَمْ.
إنْ مِلتَ إلى تتبُّعِ النهرِ مع الموج رحتَ
وإن مِلتَ إلى جهةِ الأهراماتِ كنتَ مع الثباتْ.[393]

> The universe is a river and a pyramid.
> If you are leaning towards following the river, you are gone with the waves.
> And if you are leaning towards the direction of the pyramids, you are gone with persistence.

This example shows how Barghouti entangles the movement that the individual decides to take in relation to a specific space, and what this movement entails.[394] The key word here is the word *milt*, 'you leaned'.[395] This decision to lean, as the gypsy informs the speaker, yields new perspectives for him: [396]"قدر الروح ما تميل إليه" / "The fate of the soul [is formed] through what it is inclined to [leans towards]." If the speaker decides to go with the movement of the river, he will join the waves. If he decides to lean towards the pyramids, he will find stability. Barghouti compares the moving river to the fixed pyramid, and juxtaposes their consequent state (moving in the case of the river, and staying in the case of the pyramid). Despite these different states, in both cases leaning, *movement*, is required to reach them. In other words, Barghouti does not champion the flowing of the river over the stability of the pyramids. What he argues, nevertheless, is that even stability is achieved through

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[393] He deploys the same idea in his last autobiography:
"إن ملنا إلى النار صار كل ثبات وهماً، وإن ملنا إلى البتراء صارت كلُّ حركة وهماً. كلُّ الفنِّ التشكيلي، مثلاً، يتحرَّك بين حركة النار وبين ثبات الأهرامات، أو البتراء.
"If we learn towards fire, every static entity becomes an illusion. If we lean towards Petra, every movement becomes an illusion. All visual art, for example, moves between the movement of fire and the static state of the pyramids or Petra."
Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 104.

[394] As Soja explains: "space still tends to be treated as fixed, dead, undialectical; time as richness, life, dialectic, the revealing context for critical social theorization." (Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 11).

[395] Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200) understands this leaning to be essential to one's life and survival. In his famous book on love *Dhamm al-hawā*, he writes that love is "the leaning of nature to what suits it."
"اعلم أنَّ الهوَى: مَيْلُ الطبع إلى ما يلائمه. /وهذا الميل قد خُلِقَ في الإنسان لضرورة بقائه، فإنّه لولا ميله إلى المَطعم ما أكل، وإلى المَشْرب ما شرب، وإلى المَنْكح ما نكح، وكذلك كل ما يشتهيه."
Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhamm al-hawā,* ed. Khālid al-ʿAlamī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), 35.

[396] Barghouti, "Mā qālath al-ghajariyya," 244.

movement. In this vein, movement is an act that changes one's perspective. The gypsy advices the speaker:" فاعرفْ ميولكَ تعرفْ قَدَركْ! " / "So know your inclinations (your leanings), so know your fate!" [397] It is not the space itself, but the movement within it that is decisive in the formation of one's self and fate.

3.6 Geographic movements

This section directly relates to Barghouti's experience with illness and his reflections on his death as he witnesses the deteriorating political situation in Palestine during the second Intifada. There is a direct correlation between the invasion that occurs onto his body and that which is inflicted upon the land. The excerpt below explores how Barghouti's position in the hospital complicates his view of himself and his body, and of the social and political situation in Palestine. Illness enforces Barghouti's existence between life and death. At the same time, it reveals the tension between his individual experience of illness and pain and the collective social and political pain. He writes in the first few pages of *Saʾakūn:*

لم يعد لي من مكان في كلّ هذه "الانتفاضة" إلَّا التردد، بشكل مملٍّ، أيضاً، على مستشفى رام الله...هناك متَّسع لي بين الولادات الجديدة في الطابق العلوي، وبين ثلاجة حفظ الموتى تحت...في باب غرفة الطوارىء تتدفَّق سيارات إسعاف عليها رسم هلال أحمر...جرحى وشهداء، وأنا تائه أسأل عن دكتور أمراض الدم. فتردُّ ممرضة متوترة: "نحن في حالة طوارئ، ألا ترى؟". فأدرك أنَّني شخص زائد عن الحاجة، مريض متطفِّل يمشي نحو مصيره وحده، بهواجس فردية، لست "زائراً"، ولا "معافى"، ولا جريحاً ولا على وشك الشهادة، بل "مريضاً عادياً: أي لفظة حائرة بين قاموسيِّ الموتى والأحياء.[398]

> I no longer have a place in this 'Intifada', but to frequent the Ramallah hospital, and that I do boringly too. There is room for me, in-between the wards for the newly born on the upper floor and the morgue downstairs. At the door of the emergency room, ambulances flood in bearing the sign of the red crescent, wounded people, and martyrs while I am lost asking for the haematologist. An anxious nurse answers: 'we are in a state of emergency, can't you see?' and I realize that I am nothing but an excess; an obtrusive patient walking alone towards his fate; carrying personal concerns. I am not a 'visitor' nor 'a recovering patient.' I am not a wounded person or on the verge of martyrdom. I am a 'regular patient,' meaning, a hesitant utterance hanging in-between the lexicon of the dead and the lexicon of living.

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[397] Ibid., 245.
[398] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 35-36.

In this scene of limbo Barghouti hovers between the two states of life and death, and at the same time, between the vertical space of the upper and lower floors. It depicts a moment of high intensity in Palestinian history, while echoing the personal concerns of the sick Barghouti. Between the hope of life and new beginnings – the births on the upper floor – and its sad end – the morgue in the basement – and the wounded people and the martyrs, Barghouti finds himself wandering aimlessly in a state of in-betweenness, not belonging to any of these groups. All these different states and spaces of being crystalized in one contained space, the hospital. Although Barghouti's physical condition requires his stay in the hospital, what he discovers there is that he is unwelcomed. Giving birth, being treated for wounds, and dying are realities that perform themselves in action and immediacy on the bodies of people, while Barghouti's illness remains unseen to those around him and leaves him in a state of inertia. The supposedly enclosed space of relief becomes what Augé calls a non-place, which "creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude."[399] The hospital has room for those whose bodies are experiencing the two realities of life: birth, death, visible wounds. Illness allows Barghouti in that space to witness the unfolding of the dialectics between life and death, but not to experience any of their realities.

Barghouti contrasts his own inertia as perceived by others and himself with the active movements around him. At the same time, the attacks of cancer and occupation continue to viciously expand, proclaiming a central position in the spaces of the body and the land. The power of the occupation and cancer does not reside in their mere presence, but rather in their ability to spread. Cancer, as Sontag explains, is "a disease or pathology of space [whose] principal metaphors refer to topography (cancer 'spreads' or 'proliferates' or is 'diffused'; tumors are surgically 'excised') and its most dreaded consequence, short of death, is the

[399] Augé, *Non-Places*, 103.

mutilation or amputation of part of the body."[400] These topographical changes that afflict the body are similarly apparent in the land of Palestine, particularly through the fences and walls that amputate pieces of land, as well as settlements that appear as alien bodies that invade the landscape at will.

Following his proposition of the textual reading of space, Barghouti argues that

الاستعمار حضور جغرافي يغيِّر طوبوغرافيا المكان...المستوطنة مسطَّح ممنوع، مبدئياً على السكان الأصليين...سطح حصري...قابع في ذاته ظاهرياً ولكنه في الخطاب المحلِّي يدعى بالزحف الاستيطاني: إنَّه مكان زاحف.[401]

> Colonialism is a geographic presence that changes the topography of space. A settlement is a surface. The indigenous inhabitants are barred from accessing it. It is an exclusive plane, [which] ostensibly resides within itself. However, in the local [Palestinian] discourse, it is called the crawling (sweeping) of settlements. A settlement is a space that sweeps up other spaces.

Barghouti distinguishes between two characteristics of a settlement. From the outside, a settlement appears to be a surface that "resides within itself"[402] and seems to indicate a static (settling) demarcation on the land. In reality, the settlement is an object that exports a movement, by spreading itself forcefully upon the topology of the space. The expanding nature of this "sweeping space" (*al-makān al-zāḥif*) happens through confiscations of land and sieges that endanger the lives of Palestinians. This contrasting reading between the occupation and cancer is foundational in the reading of the body as space. The infliction in both cases comes from an 'other', an outsider. The occupation is a force that comes from the outside to take over both the external (the actual land) and the internal (the social and linguistic relations that stem from this land). Cancer, although coming from the inside, is similarly treated as an 'other' as it constitutes an alien and a foreign element in the body.

Going against the metaphoric framework of the illness, Sontag argues that "illness is

[400] Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor,* 14-15.
[401] Barghouti, "'An al-Makān," 86.
[402] Ibid.

not a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking."[403] While I agree with Sontag's predilection for the need to move beyond the metaphoric aspects surrounding illness, Barghouti's equation between the invasive nature of cancer and occupation, and my subsequent analysis, place both illness and metaphor in the realm of the imagined and literary as well as the lived and experienced. This, thereby, offers a more complex understanding of illness than one limited to its metaphoric meaning. At the same time, it unshackles the understanding of the metaphor as a pre-conceived and repeated image by placing it as an ever-constructed and lived experience.

The metaphor of illness in Barghouti's case is no longer an act of drawing likeness between two objects, and the link between cancer and land is not constructed from a "romantic agony"[404] nor from "punitive notions,"[405] but is rather reinvestigated through the narration as will be seen. The metaphor extends the realm of memory and remembrance (childhood-land), and the political grandiosity (martyr/*fidāʾī* (fighter)-land), into the realm of the intimate, the personal, and the ephemeral. The metaphor is not taken for granted, as Aḥmad Daḥbūr argues in his foreword. Although Barghouti returns to a land that is familiar, to him, his return is that of "an explorer"[406] who intertwines his memories of the space with his observations of its new realities and his imaginations of what could happen in it after his death. Thus, while the binarism of body-land/cancer-occupation has framed the metaphor, Barghouti's delineation of it is marked by discovery, somatic experiences, and visions about the future through spatial descriptions, recollections, and imaginations.

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[403] Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, 3.
[404] This is in relation to how tuberculosis was often seen in the 19th century. Ibid. 29.
[405] Ibid., 57.
[406] "He returned...it was not the return of a lost and repentant son, but the return of a discoverer."
"عاد...ليس كعودة الابن الضال النادم، بل كعودة المكتشف."
Aḥmad Daḥbūr, "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī kamā arād: Bayn al-lawz wa al-ruʾyā," in Hussein Barghouti, *Saʾakūn bayn al-lawz* (Ramallah: PING, 2004), 11.

If one were to follow the occupation-cancer analogy, settlements stand as an example of the occupation's "spatial mechanisms"[407] that proclaim domination. Eyal Weizmann's book *Hollow Land* presents an important step towards delineating architecture not as construction but as a constructing process, with layered notions of power, control, and domination at its core. In this vein, "…architecture [can be] employed as a conceptual way of understanding political issues as constructed realities."[408] A passage from *Saʾakūn* that presents a juxtaposition between Barghouti standing alone on the mountain of Kobar and facing the well-secured settlement poses questions regarding the dynamics of power and knowledge and their development through space.

Barghouti encounters an Israeli settlement during his stay in Kobar and narrates the episode in his last autobiography. He dissects the structures that interconnect power, knowledge, and the body in order to unveil the monstrosity of this architectural space. The episode is sensorially charted (particularly through descriptions of light). It shows how Barghouti's personal narration reveals multiple layers of political and legal engagements regarding the illegality of Israeli settlements according to International law,[409] and the issue of naming these settlements. The result is a confrontation between two spaces: the anthropological place and the non-place.

Light is a revealing source since it has both a physical essence that is linked to the body (vision through light) and space (light travels through space). Besides these bodily and physical elements, light and its absence (darkness) have been appropriated as symbols for

[407] Weizmann, *Hollow Land*, 6.
[408] Ibid.
[409] For more on this see the section on the illegality of the Israeli settlements in Pieter H. F. Bekker, "The World Court's Ruling regarding Israel's West Bank Barrier and the Primacy of International Law: An Insider's Perspective," *Cornell International Law Journal* 38, no. 2 (2005): 558- 560.

knowledge, inspiration, and power (or the lack of it).[410] Barghouti remarks in his autobiography that "the connection between power and light is yet to be studied."[411] While standing in the dark on the mountains of his village (Kobar), Barghouti looks towards the west at a settlement. By standing there, Barghouti is creating a literary and physical juxtaposition. He notes that:

في قمة جبل مغطًّى بغابات صنوبر وسرو وبلوط، تشعُّ أضواء النيون من مستعمرة إسرائيلية تدعى "حلميش"، عندهم، و"مستعمرة النبي صالح"، عندنا. أضواء باردة، وكاشفة، ومحاطة بأسلاك شائكة. وبدت المستعمرة معلقة في الفضاء، ربما بسبب الضوء، أيضاً، ولم تلمس الأرض، ولا التاريخ بعد.[412]

> Atop a mountain covered with forests of pines, cypresses, and oaks, neon lights shine from an Israeli settlement, which they call Ḥalmīsh, and we call al-Nabī Ṣāliḥ settlement. The lights are cold and revealing, and are engulfed by barbed wires. The settlement appears to be hanging in space/air [*faḍāʾ*], perhaps because of the light, but also because it is yet to touch the earth or history.

The first juxtaposition in space is physical, guided by striking contradiction between the two sources of light. In this episode, Barghouti stands under the moonlight, while the settlement falls under neon light. Barghouti stands alone, while the settlement is filled with people. He stands outside in nature, while the settlement is enclosed by barbed wire. While Barghouti is standing on the stable immovable mountain, the settlement looks, because of all the light coming out of it, as if it is hanging in the air. This seemingly outer instability in space is translated into a power-knowledge relation. The settlement, whose essence is the finding and settling on a piece of land, cannot attain the self-knowledge that places it in a historical context and thereby gives it a position in the historical narrative of the land of Palestine. Without the connection between the subject(s) (the settlement) and the object (the land), the people there have lost touch with the earth and thus their sense of place. This

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[410] For more on the dynamics of light and darkness, see Gerhard Böwering, "The Light Verse: Qur'ānic Text and Sūfī Interpretation," *Oriens* 36 (2001): 113-144. And Susanne Back, and Folkert Degenring, eds., *Dark Nights, Bright Lights: Night, Darkness, and Illumination in Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

[411] "لم يدرس أحد، بعد، العلاقة بين القوة والضوء."
Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 39.

[412] Ibid., 38.

personal reflection and journey into Barghouti's intimate thoughts at a time of high threats to his body mirror the communal understanding of the settlement. Built in 1977 on land that is part of al-Nabī Ṣāliḥ and Deir Niẓām villages, Halamish is one of the illegally built settlements on the 1967-border territories.[413] The settlements, which remain and continue to grow in number, are deemed illegal by local as well as international legal and humanitarian institutions.[414] The illegality of these settlements as bodies that invade and expand upon the Palestinian territories is thus symbolic of Barghouti's own struggle with cancer.

What Barghouti is poetically expressing here resonates with Michel Foucault's 1978 lecture on bio-power. He defines bio-power as "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power."[415] Foucault's coinage of the term explains how states subjugate the bodies of the individuals to control them and achieve power over them.[416] In other words, the state controls and manipulates the *senses* of individuals, which they use to understand the world. This notion of power of the senses and thus the means of knowledge is explored here through light. The existence of this neon light that is "orderly, dominant, strikingly white, and diffused even beyond the wires"[417] is justified by the illegal settlers as a measure of security and protection of this enclosed space from what surrounds it. However, it is more like an "'armed vision,' a visual occupation."[418] This subjugation is represented in another juxtaposition: Barghouti imagines how a settler, looking out his window, would perceive or

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[413] Natalie Tabar and Lauren Bari, "Repression on Non-violent Protest in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Case Study on the Village of al-Nabi Saleh," *al-Haq* (2011): 9-10. http://www.alhaq.org/publications/publications-index/item/repression-of-non-violent-protest-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-case-study-on-the-village-of-al-nabi-saleh.

[414] For more on the building of settlements see Weizman, *The Hollow Land*, 87-110.

[415] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collége de France,* 1977-78, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16.

[416] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality* vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1998), 140.

[417] "كان [ضوء النيون في المستعمرة] مرتَّباً، ومهيمناً، حادَّ البياض، منتشراً حتى وراء الأسلاك الشائكة التي تعزل كلَّ مستوطنة عن محيطها." Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 39.

[418] "أشبه ما يكون ب"رؤيا مسلَّحة"، باحتلال بصري."
Ibid.

see the mountains opposite him (where Barghouti is standing).

ماذا يرى...حين يفتح الآن شباكه، ويحدِّق في هذه الجبال التي تسبح في تاريخها وتبزغ منه؟ لن يرى، حتماً، الأفعى الملوَّنة التي تطير وتزغرد فوق الخرائب، ولن يسمع هذا الصوت الذي يبكي، ولا هذا السرَّ الذي يجعل حتى مصاباً بالسرطان يمشي فيها في الواحدة ليلاً! لن يلمس التاريخ، ولو كان عرَّافاً، ليس تاريخي أنا، على الأقل، ولو كان إلهاً.[419]

> What does he see, when he opens his window now and stares at these mountains that wade through their history and emerge from it? He definitely does not *see* the coloured snake that flies and ululates above the ruins. And he will not *hear* neither this crying voice, nor the secret that makes even a cancer patient walk here at one in the morning! He will not *touch* history even if he had been a seer, not my history at least, even if he was a god.

The neon light, which gives the settlement its proposed characteristic of safety and power, prevents, in reality, the residents from forming a knowledge of the surrounding space by utilizing their own senses. While Foucault studies power in relation to the nation state and the individual, Barghouti seems to pin all the focus on the individual (himself and the settler) as sites of the power struggle. Barghouti's example opposes Foucault's interpretation. Foucault writes that "[m]echanisms of power are an intrinsic part of all relations and, in a circular way, are both their effect and cause."[420] However, while the settler occupies a hegamonically higher place of biopolitics and its control on movement,[421] he exists as a body on a piece of land that is highly secured. Ironically, Barghouti, while losing his physical body to cancer, is empowered by bio-experiences (through the senses and memory). He is able to observe his surroundings and understand them better, and thereby occupy a higher position.

In other words, while the settler has "the mechanisms of power," Barghouti owns "the relations."[422] It is precisely because of the light that the settler cannot make use of his senses nor of his perception of history and memory, because of the architectural distance from the

[419] Ibid.
[420] Foucault, *Security,* 17.
[421] For more on Israeli biopolitics, see Nigel Parsons and Mark B. Salter, "Israeli Biopolitics: Closure, Territorialisation and Governmentality in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," *Geopolitics* 13:4 (December 2008): 701-723.
[422] Foucault, *Security,* 17.

actual land. He lives under siege, thinking that he is protected in a well-lit site, but the real knowledge, experience, memory, and bodily feelings lie within Barghouti. The moonlight leads Barghouti to walk alone on the mountain and allows him to see a site of remembrance and a place of new experiences. On the other hand, the artificiality of the neon light creates an artificiality of experience. Because the settler cannot engage in the physical and natural phenomena of this mountain, the mountain's history and the settler's memory of the mountain are absent. Light here is a source of power; the neon provides a fake image of protection while in reality it takes away perception, whereas moonlight illuminates the senses. Despite the frailty of Barghouti's body and the mountain of his village, which can be easily occupied by settlers (see example below), both spaces, as he argues, have a knowledge that makes them the holders of real power.

The metaphor of the hanging object emphasises the unsettled space of the settlement. The inability to connect to the land stems from the illegality of the place (the settlement). The term 'settlement,' consequently, loses its validity. The settler exists as a human but without any of the configurations that give him a validity to be in that space. The uncertainty of space as described at the beginning of Barghouti's autobiography is rediscovered here. The oppositional forces of life and death at the hospital and Barghouti's feeling of not belonging shift into oppositional forces between the settlement and the mountain. This time, however, Barghouti knows his place. It is a spatial description that reflects certainty. From feeling like an intruder who does not belong in the hospital, Barghouti is now secure and confident in his village, knowing for sure that he is in the proper space where he belongs, vis-à-vis the settlers whose position is invalidated.

Following a systematic plan at historic erasure and generating new spaces that comply with the settler-colonial discourse, much attention was paid to the naming (and renaming) of

occupied spaces. For that, committees like the "Israel Place-Name Committee" were established to assure the stamping of ancient names onto the different areas. Proper names of Israelis were similarly changed "to reflect the new relationship to nature, political geography, and tough masculinity."[423] The naming of the space "which they call Ḥalmīsh, and we call al-Nabī Ṣāliḥ settlement,"[424] points towards what Joseph Massad calls "naming as geography." By distinguishing the two names, Barghouti is aware of how naming "functions as locating in history, as temporalizing, and ultimately as asserting power as colonial domination or as anti-colonial resistance."[425] Naming becomes a tool for generating movements in space where "[t]opography [turns] into scenography and [forms] an exegetical landscape…The mountain region of the West Bank therefore [becomes] both a physical entity and an imagined, mythical geography."[426]

The act of naming new spaces after ancient places "present[ed] problems of authenticity and site appropriateness."[427] The name of Halamish, in a Biblical name which means flint in Hebrew, has been a site of dispute between the Israeli settlers in that area and the Israeli place-name committee.[428] The settlers opted to name the settlement Neveh Tzuf (Oasis of Nectar), while the Israeli place-name committee rejected the name on grounds that the name refers to a different historical location. The committee, on its part, preferred the name Halamish. The settlers had a similar argument about the lack of authenticity of the location, since Halamish referred to a Talmudic location near modern-day Syria.[429] Both

[423] Joseph A. Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38.
[424] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 39.
[425] Massad *The Persistence*, 14. "The very naming of this space is, in fact, a process of historicizing it. To call it Palestine is to refer to it as a colonized space in both the pre-1948 and the post-1948 periods and to signal its continued appellation as such for a postcolonial period still to come. To call it Israel is to refer to it in the post-1948 period after the coming to fruition of the Zionist project forestalling any notion of a post-Israel Palestine."
[426] Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 135.
[427] Ibid.
[428] Saul B. Cohen, Nurit Kliot, "Place-Names in Israel's Ideological Struggle over the Administered Territories," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 82, No. 4 (December 1992): 666.
[429] Michael Feige, Settling in the Hearts: Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 78.

names are, thus, argued to be geographically inaccurate. This discrepancy in naming[430] is an example of the sense of conflict in the name choice and of the lack of authentic connection to the land, which Barghouti is pointing out in his example. The name al-Nabī Ṣaliḥ similarly has its roots in the religious realm and refers to a place where a *maqām* (a monument) for the prophet Ṣāliḥ[431] was erected. Pilgrims from all walks of life used to come to the village to visit it.[432] The first name (Halamish) is situated in the realm of the historic, religious, and symbolic. The second is a name of a space that has its roots within the historic and the religious but extends to the lived and the social. While in the first case the name is stamped onto the space to create a certain political narrative, in the second, it is the space and the social, religious, and historic movements in it that give rise to the name.

What we have in this episode is a confrontation between two spaces: an anthropological place (according to Augé), the other a non-place.[433] Despite its apparent existence and its powerful location, in reality it is the settlement that occupies the position of a non-place. Augé distinguishes between the two places by saying that "place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten."[434] Similarly, in Barghouti's conception, the mountain as a place will not be erased from history while the non-place of the settlement cannot achieve a settling that makes its existence complete. Barghouti arrives at this realization by integrating historical and political relations and stressing the physiological inabilities of the settler to see because of the physical distinction between light and darkness. The dynamics between the

[430] For more on the disputes and agreements on names between the settlers and the place-name committee, see Cohen, "Place-Names," 662.
[431] A pre-Islamic prophet who is mentioned in the Quran.
[432] For more on the history and social importance of the place, see Johann Büssow, *Hamidian Palestine Politics and Society in the District of Jerusalem 1872-1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 124-125.
[433] Anthropological place: "these places have at least three characteristics in common. They want to be – people want them to be – places of identity, of relations and of history." Augé, *Non-Places,* 52.
[434] Ibid., 79.

two places are unpacked through the experiences of the body, triggered by cancer and portrayed through the ability/inability of a person to experience surroundings thanks to his/her spatial demarcations.

3.7 Literary movements

Besides the notions of bodily (dis)empowerment and knowledge, this chapter also investigates the interaction between spatial movements and literary shifts in Barghouti's texts. The following section takes Barghouti's novel *al-Ḍiffa* as a case for studying two crossings: one spatial, other literary. By analysing moments of crossing in the novel, I will show how Barghouti crosses into unknown literary genres, by contesting what it means to write a novel, and goes beyond political realities, by creating a third imagined bank to the well-known banks of the river Jordan. The aim is to highlight that Barghouti's utilization of space and its relation to the body precede his diagnosis and illness.

The Palestinian poet al-Mutawakkil Ṭāha notes that Barghouti

> كان من اوائل الروائيين الفلسطينيين الذين كتبوا باسلوب سردي حداثي، تداخلت فيه الاصوات والازمنة والامكنة، وغامر بتقديم شخصية لا تدعي البطولة ولا الاخلاق، وانما شخصا عاديا يواجه الكون منفردا...كان ذلك امرا غير معهود في الثمانينيات.[435]

> was one of the first Palestinian novelists to write in a modernist narrative style where voices, times, and spaces are intertwined. He ventured to present a character that does not make pretentious claims to heroism or ethics. The character is an average person who faces the world alone. This was uncommon in the eighties.

Looking at the Palestinian case, one can find two battling forces. On the one hand, the Palestinian literary scene has been dominated by a set of themes that were dictated by external and internal circumstances and historical decrees. On the other, it has offered some examples of literary experimentation that have carved the path for new forms and ways of writing and actively challenged long-rooted generic and stylistic formations in Arabic

[435] Al-Mutawakkil Ṭāha, *Wahm al-wuṣūl: Maqālāt fī al-adab wa al-fann wa al-thaqāfa,* (Ramallah: al-Markaz al-Filasṭīnī li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Mashr wa al-Iʿlām, 2007), 33.

writing. In short, Palestinian literature oscillates between clearly defined borders and transgressions thereof. One of the main problems of studying Palestinian novels is the "confusion between the popular resistance movement on the one hand and the novel as a literary form on the other. The latter reshapes and remodels reality within the contour of novelistic form itself."[436] One can understand this mix up in light of what Wen-chin Ouyang calls "genre ideology." Ouyang defines the term as "the paradigm of knowledge implicit in a genre of storytelling which often manifests itself in the text as generic expectations."[437] The mix up in the case of Palestinian novelistic writing has happened between two ideologies; on the one hand, external political ideologies and on the other internal artistic ideologies regarding novelistic characteristics. Barghouti's novel (and other writings, such as his poetry collection *Marāyā sāʾila*) aims at challenging these ideologies by contesting "the generic expectations" of political reality and narrative elements such as characterizations and time and space.[438]

Barghouti's novel does not belong to the body of novelistic works that grew from "the womb of resistance" (*raḥm al-muqāwama*),[439] which many contemporary authors took as their guiding torch. Yet, the text is exemplary for experimental writing and innovation and deserves more attention and study.[440] In writing the novel, Barghouti was influenced by the

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[436] "هذا الواقع "واقع الرواية تحت الاحتلال" يوقع الدارس في إشكالية الخلط بين حركة المقاومة الشعبية، والرواية كجنس أدبي يعيد تشكيل هذا الواقع وتركيبه ضمن اطار الجنس الروائي."
Fakhrī Ṣālih, "Ishkāliyyat al-riwāya al-Filasṭīniyya taḥt al-iḥtilāl," *al-Aqlām*, no. 7 (1 July 1981): 56.

[437] Wen-Chin Ouyang, "Genres, ideologies, genre ideologies and narrative transformation", *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 7:2 (2004): 128.

[438] Ouyang introduces the term of "genre ideology" as part of a project (Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) (2001–2004)) on Genre Ideology and Narrative Transformation. The project mainly identifies four moments of transformations that happen when stories are transformed into different genres during the same time period and culture, when stories are transformed across cultures, when stories are transformed across time periods, and when stories are transformed across mediums (see Ibid., 129).

[439] Taysīr Mashāriqa, "Tajrīb Filasṭīnī mubakkir fī riwāyat *al-Ḍiffa al-thālitha li nahr al-Urdunn*," *Dunia al-Waṭan* (3 May 2005).

[440] Ibid. Mashāriqa gives the examples of Saḥar Khalīfa, Yaḥya Yakhlif, ʿIzzat al-Ghazzāwī, and Aḥmad Ḥarb. https://pulpit.alwatanvoice.com/articles/2005/05/03/21060.html
" فالخطاب الروائي عند يحيى يخلف أو عزت الغزاوي أو أحمد حرب أو سحر خليفة كان مُتجهاً أو صاعداً بالنفْس (أو الهوية) الفلسطينية إلى رائحة البارود وسياج الوطن أو عتمة السجن. بينما الخطاب الروائي عند البرغوثي كان مُختلفاً ومُختصراً المراحل، مُتجها نحو رائحة الجنس والحب والخمْرة والجمال. وكانت بذلك رواية خارج السياق."

sense of estrangement that he faced when leaving the countryside of Palestine to go to the city (Budapest) in Hungary, as well as João Guimarães Rosa's short story "The Third Bank of the River" (1962)- hence the title.[441] Thus, Barghouti's aim was to highlight the theme of estrangement while giving more attention to the "colouring," and the movement of the text from one image to the other.[442] Similar to the people who appear in his *al-Ḍaw'*, Barghouti's characters in the novel belong to the realm of marginality; ex-lovers, young revolutionaries[443] (like Bilāl), and dead people, including references to Ghassan Kanafani (d. 1972) and Attila József (d. 1937).[444] Rather than depicting a confrontation with those in the centre of society and those who are in power (border control officers, for example), the novel moves beyond them and is created out of the stories and experiences of these marginal people. Even in the second part where the protagonist is tortured by the Israeli soldiers and imprisoned, the light is put on the protagonist's intimate experience and that of the other prisoners.

In the acknowledgements as well as on the cover of the book, Barghouti calls his text a 'novel.' By doing so, Barghouti is striking two chords at the same time. He presents his knowledge and his acceptance of the genre of the novel as representative of his text.

"The novelistic discourse of authors such as Yaḥya Yakhlif, Izzat al-Ghazzawi, Ahmad Harb, or Saḥar Khalīfa was equating Palestinian identity to the [representation] of gunpowder, the borders of the homeland, or the darkness of the prison cell. Barghouti's novelistic discourse, on the other hand, was different and it moved beyond the different Palestinian historical phases. It moved towards depicting sex, love, wine, and beauty. His novel was thus, an out-of-context novel."

[441] As al-Shaikh notes, Rosa's work provided Barghouti with an insight on how to approach alienation and how to "manage the crisis between his 'pastoral, countryside memory' and 'modern, liberal intellect'." ("Beyond the Last Twilight," 41-42).

[442] Barghouti, "Min usus," 119.
"...إعطاء أولوية في دلالات اللغة ليس "للفكرة"، بل "للتلوين"، بحيث ينتقل النصُّ من لوحة إلى لوحةٍ أُخرى، ومن جهة، على هذه اللغة أن تكون "موسيقى"...وأن ندمج مع ذلك الحوار المسرحي والقصَّة القصيرة و "السيرة الذاتية"."

[443] See, for example, his conversations with one of the young revolutionaries who left the fighting, Bilāl (*al-Ḍiffa,* 23-31 and 48-49). Other marginal characters include a Yemeni student whose name the protagonist cannot clearly remember but thinks is Muhammad (ibid., 51). Another is a Kurdish gambler (ibid., 60-61), and a Palestinian who is originally from Haifa but lived in Damascus (Abdullah al-Nājī) (ibid., 61).

[444] Ibid., 81-82. See Anna Zambelli-Sessona's book chapter for examples of the representation of marginalized characters in Palestinian literature. analyses works by the Palestinian authors Imil Habibi and Tawfiq Fayyad which depict marginalized characters, which hold a "symbolic value" in representing the Palestinian experience after the *Nakba* and the *Naksa* (255). Explains a journey from non-marginalization, to marginalization, and an escape from marginalization in two of the authors' texts (236). On the contrary, Barghouti's novel flourishes through rather than beyond the position of marginalization. Anna Zambelli-Sessona, "Marginalities in Palestinian Literature Two Case Studies: Imil Habibi and Tawfiq Fayyad", in *Sensibilities of the Islamic Mediterranean: Self Expression in a Muslim Culture from Post-Classical Times to the Present Day,* ed. Robin Ostle (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 211- 244.

However, the reader soon realizes that it does not adhere to what the novel (as a genre) claims to be. By writing an experimental piece yet placing it in the novelistic form, Barghouti is contesting the frames of what constitutes a genre (the container). The text, thus, becomes more determinant of the container (the genre) than the other way around. This is another example of the engagement of the reader in the conceptualization of the text, as was discussed in the previous chapter. The reader is invited to experience the novel, not solely its plotline, but also the questioning of its genre. As Sabry Hafez comments on the novels of the 1990s, "the inter-connection" (*al-tarābuṭ*) of the novelistic tropes, which was essential for narrative build-up, was replaced with "the adjacency of unconnected things" (*al-tajāwur bayn ashyāʾ ghayr mutarābiṭa*).[445] Barghouti's text, and those of the emerging writers of the 1990s, take disjointed surroundings as an inspiration for the seemingly unstructured narrative line.[446]

Barghouti's novel can be divided into two parts (the pre-return and the post-return through the river Jordan). The first part is more surrealist, the second more rooted in the actuality of living. The surrealist first part is characterised by geographical travels from one place to another (from sitting by the Danube, to suddenly walking in Beirut). I use the word 'surrealist' according to Barghouti's definition of the term. In the introduction to his PhD

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[445] Sabry Hafez, "Jamāliyyāt al-riwāya al-jadīda: al-Qaṭīʿa al-maʿrifiyya wa al-nazʿa al-muḍādda li al-ghināʿiyya," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 21(2001): 197.
This same idea of adjacency rather than succession was discussed in chapter 1 as part of Barghouti's conception of the embroidered space.

[446] The example of *al-Ḍiffa* and that of the two autobiographies *al-Ḍawʾ* and *Saʾakūn,* pose another important question that deserves more attention, namely the link between autobiographical writing and novelistic writing. Richard van Leeuwen discusses this issue by analyzing the representation of space in the 1986 novel, *Ḥabbat al-Naftalīn*, by the Iraqi writer ʿĀliya Mamdūḥ. One of the arguments that van Leeuwen gives is that an author's choice of genre is influenced by his/her outlook of the external surroundings He argues that "if this attitude is marked by conflict and animosity, this will possibly increase the tendency towards subjective descriptions and distortions" (67) as has been the case in Barghouti's autobiographies and novel. This issue is pointed out in the previous chapter (see section 2.3). It stresses the role that memory plays in (re)creating moments in life. Furthermore, the generic hybridity of an 'autobiographical novel' gives the author the freedom to mix aspects of historicity with fictionality (66). This line of thought can also be applied to Barghouti's three texts, where the distinction between the two genres is not clear-cut. For more on the topic see: Richard van Leeuwen, "Representations of space and the autobiographical novel: the case of Alia Mamduh's *Habbat al-naftalin*," in Autobiografía y literatura árabe, ed. Miguel Hernando de Larrimendi, Gonzalo Fernández Parrilla and Bárbara Azoala Piazza (Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2002), 57-69. See particularly pages 65-68.

dissertation, he writes that he has used a surrealist technique in writing where he "[relies] on rapid thought transitions with a dazzling speed. It is a subterranean logic, that is, a logic in which the most crucial lines of arguments and categorical consequences are pushed to the margins, and a thin thread of quasi-logical argument is tossed to the foreground."[447] The second part starts after an 'impossible' crossing through the Danube and the Mediterranean in the novel, and can be termed the 'Haifa-based' narrative in Palestinian writing, such as that of Kanafani and Habiby (as will be shown below). This section describes the protagonist's visit to the city of Haifa, his capture by Israeli police, and his experience with torture and hallucinations in prison. The experienced, physical torture and humiliation by Israeli soldiers, which the protagonist undergoes in a prison cell brings him from dreams and desires into the here and now. It is all these discrepancies between the desired space and the actual space (prison cell), and between the inside (prison cell) and the outside (the road) that highlight the heightened sense of alienation.

The third bank that Barghouti creates in his move through this impossible crossing of waters is often read as representative of this sense of alienation and loss (similar to how the third bank in Rosa's book has been interpreted). However, beyond the portrayal of alienation, it is possible to add a reading of this third space as the space through which the impossible is *enabled* (*mumakkan*, again, sharing the root with *makān*). In other words, the third bank operates as a space that represents the link between the surrealist and the realist. While the spaces are real, the movement between them is not and is as such 'impossible.' Barghouti experiments with the melange of genres and the entanglement of the real and the imagined.

It is thus the crossing section that ties these two parts that will be discussed. The argument is that, by imagining a third bank, the text functions within what can be called 'the impossible space.' Each word in the title is spatially constructed. The first *Ḍiffa* has become

[447] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 24.

the demarcation of political identification of the Palestinians (the West Bank). The *Ḍiffa* is situated in the West in relation to Jordan, which controlled that area from 1948-1967. To be more specific, the main separating mark or location between the West bank and Jordan is the river Jordan. After crossing the river to Jordan, the rest of the world can be accessed. This spatial movement through the river Jordan has been the Palestinians' sole way of leaving Palestine to travel to other countries. This is what Barghouti must have done many times. It is thus a movement from the constrained into the open and free space.

The return to Palestine is introduced abruptly and in the last twenty pages of the novel. The abruptness takes place in light of an unfinished experience. This literary return in the novel is mirrored in Barghouti's actual return to Palestine from Budapest before finishing his studies. Barghouti's return "to his homeland became comprable to the forced return of a warrior. It was a sudden return, before his scene of estrangement could be concluded, and prior to the end of his days of anarchy"[448] While saying the final goodbyes to his lover Dana in the novel, the protagonist is still not over the relationship. Thus, his move back to Palestine happens before the relationship ends and before his state of emotional alienation is over. This incomplete state of being sparks an unusual return that does not follow the usual crossing of the banks from Jordan to Palestine.

At the end of the first section, the protagonist tells his lover:

...فلنتودع الان![449]

Let us say our goodbyes now!

وغطاء من الدمع الشفاف نزل فوق عيني مثل الستارة بعد نهاية المسرحية.. لم اردها ان تلاحظ ذلك..منحتها قبلتين على الجبين واستدرت ذاهبا. وصلت الى غابة تقف غامضة والافق يشتعل مثل غبار الذهب المصحون، والضباب اخضر في جوانبه. اسراب طيور مهاجرة تتماوج فوق مسافات لا يعرفها الا المجانين والانبياء. ودخلت في الغابة الزرقاء والاقدار مظلمة خلفي. ووصلت الى نهر الدانوب وحدقت في نقطة واحدة لا قرار لها...نزلت للماء ومشيت فيه ببطء حتى لم اعد ابصر الا المياه تمتد حتى اللانهاية...[الماء] يبتعد ويتسع ولكنه

[448] "أصبح رجوع حسين إلى وطنه شبيهاً بالعودة القسرية للمحارب، عودة مفاجئة، قبل أن يكتمل مشهد الاغتراب لديه، قبل أن تنتهي الصعلكة." Mashāriqa, "Tajrīb."

[449] Barghouti, *al-Ḍiffa*, 85.

الطريق الوحيدة. عبرت الدانوب لم يصل الماء الا لركبتي، وعبرت غابات لا اعرفها بخطى واسعة حتى وصلت البحر الأبيض المتوسط ودخلت فيه. الماء يبتعد ويتسع ولكنه الطريق الوحيدة..يد في جيب معطفي ويد تدخن السيجار. ومشيت.. اسماك القرش تبتعد رفوفا خائفة مني، وضعت يدي على رأس قرش عجوز فابتعد وهو ينظر نحوي بقلق مثل طفل البحر.[450]

> and a veil of transparent tears came over my eyes like a curtain at the end of a play. I didn't want her to notice that. I gave her two kisses on the forehead and turned away. I reached a forest that stood there covered in mystery while the horizon was ablaze like dust from grounded gold, with green fog on its sides. Flocks of migrating birds undulating at distances that only the mad and the prophets understand. I entered the blue forest, and the fates behind me were dark. I reached the Danube River and I stared at one bottom-less point. I descended into the water and I walked slowly until I could only see the water extending infinitely from everyside… The water was receding and widening but it was the only path. I crossed the Danube, and the water did not reach beyond my knees. I crossed forests that I do not know, with long strides until I reached the Mediterranean Sea, and I entered it. The water was receding and widening but it was the only path… I had a hand in the pocket of my coat while the other was smoking a cigar. And I walked. The sharks were escaping me in fear. I put my hand on the head of an old shark, and it pulled away, looking at me worriedly like a child of the sea.

The excerpt above presents spatial descriptions of an impossible space. They are creating through actual spaces: the forest, the Danube River, and the Mediterranean Sea. The movements within these spaces are, however, surrealist. This happens first through a manipulation of colour, where the forest is blue, and the horizon is green and gold. Secondly, the physical typologies and proportions are changed with the water of the Danube River not reaching beyond the knee. Finally, the impossible space is also portrayed through the ability to move within the forest without any knowledge of it, by echoing the religious in the image of the opening sea, and by overcoming the threatening power of the sharks because of their movement away from the protagonist in fear.

It is, thus, not only that the space is impossible; the movements that are performed in these spaces are equally impossible. Barghouti sculpts distances that, as he mentions, only mad people and prophets can perceive, thus raising these created spaces into the realm of the

[450] Ibid.

unattainable. The crossing of the waters of the Danube and the Mediterranean are described as "the only way" to return home, from Budapest to Palestine. And yet, Barghouti manages to complete the crossing and finds himself at the edge of his lost homeland.[451] While borders, checkpoints, and other marks of restrictions are at the core of many Palestinian texts, Barghouti's imaginary, impossible space allows him to move beyond these realities. But is this impossible space and its crossing to be understood as Barghouti's escape from "the womb of resistance"[452]? The crossing is metaphorical for the literary experimentation that Barghouti had intended for his text. Stylistically, he achieves that through the defamiliarizing rupture between space and colour (the forest is blue, the fog is green, for example). The painted literary image, in other words, becomes distorted, and invites the reader to become part of the new process of familiarization; i.e. part of this unfamiliar and impossible crossing. Barghouti admits that he is treading into unknown spaces "…I crossed forests that I do not know." The manner in which he approaches these unknown spaces, however, is "with long strides."

While the image of the crossing is created with a mix of the imaginary and actual geographic spaces, the practices in these spaces are performed through the body. The entrance into the dark forest, the descent into the water, the nonchalant hand in the pocket and one hand holding a cigar, and finally the petting of the old shark, are all spatial operations in which the body acts and which exuberate a sense of knowledge, confidence, and strength. The novel in general can be seen as an exercise in the unattainable and the incomplete, and as a reflection of the sense of personal loss. However, the example of the impossible space, as portrayed in this crossing scene of the Danube and Mediterranean, asserts that it is not a space where alienation is heightened, or estrangement is widened.

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[451] The return section (or what has been referred to here as the Haifa section) starts with:
"And finally, the lost borders of the homeland appeared."
"وأخيرا لاحت حدود الوطن الضائعة"
Ibid., 87.

[452] Mashāriqa, "Tajrīb Filasṭīnī."

Rather, it represents the ability of the imaginary and the bodily to go through an active crossing that finds new paths in political life and literary writing.

The crossing section is at the same time the bridge that allows for the exploration of multiple emotions: from the movement from one city to the other in the first part coupled with a feeling of estrangement, to that of the confined space of the prison cell in the second part of the novel and the process of losing the ability to recognize oneself. The prison portion highlights Barghouti's usage of the corporeal and the sensory in order to deliver the emotional pain of being horrified. He draws a painting of what he calls "the yellow terror" (*al-ruʿb al-aṣfar*) in which the physical space (the walls of the prison) and time (the nights and minutes) are coloured in yellow. Somatic reactions like feeling sick and vomiting are also conveyed in yellow.[453] The different experienced scenes are painted in 'impossible' colours: from the unmatched multi-coloured painting of the crossing scene to the sonorous single-coloured scene in the prison.

In answer to the previously posed question regarding the place of this text in relation to Palestinian novelistic writing, *al-Ḍiffa* does not operate outside of the Palestinian context, but rather through a different form of expression. Palestinian prose is heavily concerned with documenting the historical and referencing the political, to the point where such representation became to be understood as realist, contextual, and true to the Palestinian struggle.[454] Such historical and political references can be traced in Barghouti's texts, for

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[453] "في سقف الزنزانة الجديدة ضوء صامت يغمر الوجه واليدين والشعر بلون شبحي كالح الاصفرار تمتصه جدران عارية مطلية بالكلس الأصفر. إحساس بالغثيان والقرف والمرض. ليل اصفر ودقائق صفراء وجدار اصفر وحتى تنكة البول بقربي صفراء. عالم اصفر ومغلق. زمن ثقيل سرعان ما فقدت الإحساس به وأنا أجلس محدقا في السقف أو بقع الدم فوق الاوڤرهول... وتمنيت الموت أو بداية التحقيق لكي يتغير شيء ما في هذا الرعب الأصفر ولكن عبثا."

"On the ceiling of the new cell rests a silent light that submerges the face, the hands, and hair with a ghostly, worn-out yellowish colour. The light is absorbed by high walls plated with yellow lime. A feeling of nausea, disgust, and illness permeates. A yellow night, yellow minutes, and a yellow wall, and even the urine tank near me is yellow. It is a yellow closed world. The time is heavy. I soon became desentisized to it as I sit staring at the ceiling or at drops of blood on the overall. I wanted either to die or for the interrogations to start so that something may change about this yellow terror. But alas!"

Barghouti, *al-Ḍiffa*, 97-98.

[454] Two of the most seminal Palestinian novels of that time are Saḥar Khalīfa's *al-Ṣabbār* (1976) and *ʿAbbād al-Shams* (1980). As Abu-Manneh argues, Khalifeh presents an image of "a realism from below," and provides a

example the reference to the civil war in Beirut. However, the historical and the political do not occupy the crux of the text and are rather explored as complementary tropes (i.e. part of the reading and writing assumptions upon which other *essences* are built, see section 1.3). Barghouti's impossible space should not be read as a move away from political reality.

Barghouti presents the relation between the reality of living and imagination through the medium of the intimate, the worldly, the emotional, and the bodily. In his interview with Abū-Sayf, Barghouti explains that a*l-Ḍiffa*'s different and co-existing times, characters, colours, and memories make the novel "a gallery of novels." In other words, the literary form itself complements the incompletion of the content and the formation of the characters in it. This should not be seen as a point of failure, but rather as an amalgam and a charting of unexplored territories. According to Barghouti, this is representative of life, where "the novel is a gallery withholding numerous novels…the reality that we inhabit is a text composed of many texts. The novel is one of them."[455]

The final point that I would like to discuss concerns the entanglement of novelistic writing and genre, the representation of political reality in Palestinian life and literature, and space. The last twenty pages of Barghouti's novel describe the narrator's harsh experience in Israeli prisons and the effects of that time on his mind, body, and psyche. Before being taken to prison the narrator explains that he reached Haifa, a city that he remembers although he has not visited it before. This confusion between memory and actually being in the space is explained by the narrator: "In my memory, things pass...images, which are not inter-connected by anything."[456] This remembered image of Haifa can be read in relation to other

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critique of the political situation in Palestine and the resistance "from the vantage point of a rooted, everyday, feminsit-workerist perspective." Abu-Manneh, *The Palestinian Novel*, 124. While both Khalifeh and Barghouti take the 'marginal' as their primary character in order to question notions of resistance in Palestine, Khalifeh's are based in the 'real' and everyday life and represent a recognizable section in Palestinian society - the Palestinian workers in the occupied territories, or women for example. Barghouti's characters are positioned in the 'real' (in actual places like Beirut, Haifa, Poland) but move and explore these places in a surrealist manner.

[455] "الرواية جاليري من الروايات...الواقع الذي نعيشه هو نص من عدة نصوص، تكون الرواية أحدها." Barghouti, "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī", 208.

[456] "في ذاكرتي تعبر أشياء..صور..لا يربطها شيء."

literary works that similarly take Haifa, as a space, as their focal point. The two works that I refer to are Ghassan Kanafani's *ʿĀʾid ilā Ḥaifā*[457] (*Returning to Haifa*) and Emile Habiby's *al-Waqāʾiʿ* (*The Secret Life of Saeed: the Pessoptimist*).[458]

The first similarity between the books is an interrogation of the actual and the remembered. The two protagonists in Barghouti's and Kanafani's[459] texts share the same kind of overwhelming memories of the city. While the memories that attack Saeed S. in *ʿĀʾid* are based on his actual existence in the space before 1948,[460] the narrator of *al-Ḍiffa*'s knowledge of the space is not based on actuality but rather on a memory that has been created through other mediums, such as literature. Secondly, the prison scenes bring to mind the famous (or infamous) Saeed the pessoptimist. The two protagonists (Saeed from *al-Waqāʾiʿ* and the narrator in *al-Ḍiffa*) can be characterized as anti-heroes.[461] However, while Saeed's life starts in fantasy and ends with it, the protagonist in *al-Ḍiffa* has the philosophical apparatus to analyse his imprisonment, its physical and personal effects, and its social implications. Even while personally experiencing imprisonment, he can look at it as an outsider.[462] What is most notable about the three authors is that they have rendered their innovative experiments in a novel. Kanafani's approach to realism elevated the role of literature from the representative

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Barghouti, *al-Ḍiffa,* 100.

[457] First published in 1969. Ghassan Kanafani, *ʿĀʾid ilā Ḥaifā*, (Cyprus: Dār al-Rimāl, 2015).

[458] First published in 1974. Emile Habiby, *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-gharība fī ikhtifāʾ Saʿīd abī al-naḥs al-mutashāʾil* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, 1989).

[459] Barghouti makes a direct reference to Kanafani in his novel (*al-Ḍiffa*, 17).

[460] "حين وصل "سعيد س." الى مشارف حيفا، قادماً اليها بسيارته عن طريق القدس، أحس ان شيئاً ما ربط لسانه، فالتزم الصمت، وشعر بالأسى وفجأة جاء صوت البحر، تماماً كما كان. كلا، لم تعد اليه الذاكرة شيئاً فشيئاً. بل انهالت في داخل رأسه، كما يتساقط جدار من الحجارة ويتراكم بعضه فوق بعض. لقد جادت الأمور والأحداث فجأة، واخذت تتساقط فوق بعضها وتملأ جسده." يتسلقه من الداخل...

Kanafani, *ʿĀʾid,* 5.

[461] As compared to the figure of Bilal in Barghouti's text, and Saeed's son in *al-Waqāʾiʿ*.

[462] Prison is one of the most explored spaces in Arabic literature. See for example Medhat al-Jayyar, "Jamāliyyāt al-makān fī masraḥ Ṣalāḥ Abdul-Ṣabūr," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics,* no. 6, Poetics of Place (Spring, 1986), 26-44. The article explores the Egyptian playwright's utilization of prison as a theme. For Abdel-Sabur, enclosed spaces like "the train compartment" (35) and "the cave" (36) are equivalent to imprisonment. The binarism between prison and home is utilized as a tool for dramatization, where the first place "يحتضن ويؤمن، في حين أن الثاني يبتلع و يخيف"(36).

Stylistically, both Habiby's and Barghouti's novels use epistolary writing as their frame narrative. Habibi writes that he is narrating what Saeed (the protagonist) has told him in a letter that he sent from outer space. Barghouti's texts starts with the usual letter greeting "Dana, my love" ("*ḥabībatī Dana*"), and follows Barghouti's narration of moments from his life in Europe and in Palestine. (Barghouti, *al-Ḍiffa*, 5).

to the activist.[463] Habiby's magical realism[464] combines the satirical with the epic. Barghouti's novel teases out the different dynamics of space, where the impossible and the actual spaces are equally present.

The crossing section functions beyond a representation of estrangement and loss. It is, in fact, a space that provides a possibility *(yumakkin*) for the melange of geographic spaces (Europe/Palestine - the Danube/the Mediterranean), and attests to the abilities of literary images to caper between the different artistic registers of sounds and colours. The section bridges the different moods of surrealist and realist depictions. This multi-dimensionality of personal, political, historical, and emotional layers forecasts Barghouti's search for new techniques to depict individual as well as collective concerns. The ways in which Barghouti experiences these spaces and expreses them in narration is through the utilization of corporeal devices.

As has been mentioned above, space, for Barghouti, is not solely its geographical positioning, but rather the acts and movements that are preformed within it. This section takes the dialectics of inside-outside to read two depictions of an enclosed space. The first is Barghouti's portrayal of *al-dayr al-juwwānī* (the inner convent)[465] in his final autobiography as a place where many narrated anecdotes take place, and where he chooses to be buried. The second is his deployment of the enclosed space of the cave in a poem from his first published poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā*. The examples of the *dayr* and the cave link the personal and the collective, the meaning of knowledge, the relation between the physicality of the space, and its generative metaphoric nature.

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[463] See Abu Manneh's chapter on Kanafani in The Palestinian Novel: From 1948 to the Present.

[464] See Maher Jarrar, "The Arabian Nights and Contemporary Arabic Novel," in The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West, ed. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 297-315.

[465] The dayr refers to the area where the remains of an old convent stood. It is where his mother lived with the family of the uncle that adopted her (see Barghouti, Saʾakūn, 36-38).



Figure 2: The area of *al-dayr al-juwwānī* (Source: by author, Palestine, March 2019)

Barghouti's return to his childhood village was in particular a return to a specific place in the mountains called *al-dayr al-juwwānī.* Barghouti's return functions as an actual entrance into the place and literal and figurative exits from the shackles of the occupation's settling powers over the land and the demise of his body and upcoming death. For one, his return to the physical space resurrects stories that took place there. In addition, returning with his wife and son entails the creation of new memories and stories.[466] By positioning the physical existence and entrance into the *dayr* within a literary existence in the narration, Barghouti asserts that his return and death do not represent an end to his life, but rather a continuation.[467] The *dayr* is, thus, transformed, in Augé's understanding, into a monument which "is an attempt at the tangible expression of permanence or, at the very least, duration…[and it enables] people to think in terms of continuity through the generations."[468] Besides this personal-collective continuity that Barghouti's evocation of *al-dayr* brings, the

[466] For example, Barghouti and his wife tell their son that this was Aladin's cave.
[467] "وكان من المؤكَّد أننَّا جميعاً، أنا وآثر وبترا، سنرجع إلى "الدير الجوَّاني"، يوماً ما، لا لكي "تكتمل"، بل لكي "تستمر"، "خريفية" الجبل هذه."
Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 67.
[468] Augé, *Non-Places*, 60.

space is constructed and thought of through imagination. His narration, thus, becomes an intersection of past stories and present constructions. He writes:

حينما أمشي، ليلاً، ويكون القمر كاملاً، في خرائب "الدير الجوَّاني"، أشعر إلى أيِّ مدى كان الدير مكاناً قصياً، في البراري...وله جلالة الخراب والقدم. وأراه في خيالي ينهض من خرائبه ويعود مضاء بسراج من الفخَّار فيه فتيل مبتلٌ بزيت الزيتون، وحوله ساحة مرصوفة بحجارة ملساء، مكعبة، وصغيرة، تفيض بخطى رهبان وتراتيل، وضوء نجوم خافت... وحوله، خارج السور، ثعالب، وضباع، وجنٌّ، وكثرة من كائنات لا ترى. مكان "برَّاني" تماماً، ومع ذلك سمَّاه أهلي القدماء: "الجوَّاني"، وكأنَّه كان أقرب إليهم من "حبل الوريد". فاسمه نفسه ساحر، لمن يتأمَّله، ويشبه معبداً يضيء على رأس جبل في أغوار روحهم هم. برَّانية الموقع، وجوَّانية الدير، في اسم واحد. سحر![469]

> When I walk at night among the ruins *al-dayr al-juwwānī,* and the moon happens to be full, I can sense how far off in the wilderness *al-dayr* was. It possesses the solemness of ruins and antiquity. I see it, in my imagination, rising from its ruinous state—restored. It is lit again with an oil lamp made of clay with a wick wet with olive oil. Around it, there is a patio paved with small and smooth cubic rocks that overflow with the steps of priests, chants, and the soft light of stars. Around it - outside the wall - there are foxes, hyenas, jinns, and many creatures that cannot be seen. A completely 'outside' space, and still, my ancestors called it *al-juwwānī* [the inside]. It is as if it was closer to them than the jugular vein. Its name itself is magical, if one observes it, and it resembles a lit temple on the top of a mountain in the valleys of their souls. The 'outerness' of the location, and the 'innerness' of *al-dayr*, in one name. Magic!

Barghouti walks towards the ruins of *al-dayr*, his imagination bringing the space back from the past. The space of *al-dayr* exists on two levels: an inner space that retains the enclosed characteristics of a convent, and an outer space that places it in an open-ended and exterior surrounding (nature). The calm and the wilderness are portrayed through lights, sounds, and movements within the space. The stars and the oil lamps, the imagined movements of the priests, and the sound of recitations paint the sense of calmness of the inner space. The existence of the foxes, hyenas and jinns plot the intimate space within a far-away and wild location. The name of the space thus holds within itself a spatial contradiction: despite its outer location, the people view it, as Barghouti notes, as an "inner" space. The location and its description are thus not necessarily mirroring. The contrast between the *dayr*

[469] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 79-80.

and its surroundings makes it into a space that is turned onto itself, i.e. inner space. This feeling of the innerness of the space is similar to the jugular vein inside the body.[470] It is thus the experience of the location that gives the place its name.

Inside-outside dialectics is poetically utilized in Barghouti's poem "Tawahhujāt" ("Illuminations") from his first poetry collection, *al-Ruʾyā*. The poem revolves around a speaker who is leading people into a cave. The different allusions and imageries echo Plato's famous analogy of the cave narrated by Socrates in *The Republic*.[471] The cave is an analogy for the ignorance of humans who refuse to see the light and decide, instead, to remain inside the cave, believing that the shadows they see are the reality of the world. The analogy, thus, plays on the juxtaposition of light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, and outside and inside. In his poem, Barghouti employs the same components of this cave analogy, but rearranges them in a way that reverses the spatial significance of inside-outside, and thus of the expected opposition of light and darkness and knowledge and ignorance (similar to the example of the settlement above). Knowledge, according to Barghouti's example, is found inside rather than outside the cave. Delving into deeper layers of the earth such as a cave echoes Barghouti attempts to find new depths in life, knowledge, and writing (see section 1.3).

It is fitting that the title of the poem is "Tawahhujāt." The poem is constructed with

[470] Similar to the Quranic verse: "We created man—We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein" the 'jugular vein' in Barghouti's quote is used as a reference to closeness. In the verse, God explains that he has created humans and is thus closer to them than their own organs. He knows their thoughts and beliefs. "Qaf," verse 16, in *The Qurʾan,* trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 340.

[471] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 514a-518b.
Socrates paints an image of the world in order to cast a light on the state of education. In the analogy, a group of human prisoners are shackled inside a cave their whole life. With their backs turned from a fire, they can only see the shadows of stone or wood statues reflecting on the walls in front of them. The shadows and echoes that they see and hear seem to them, as Socrates comes to learn through his dialectics with Glaucon, as if coming from shadows and nothing else. Socrates then describes the incident in which a prisoner is freed and taken to look at the fire, then dragged out into the sun. Despite the initial pain of not seeing, the prisoner gradually gets used to the light and starts perceiving the shadows and reflections of things, the things themselves, and eventually the sun. The return of the free prisoner convinces the others that, because of his ill-adjusted eyes, leaving the cave leads to nothing. They then, as the conversation concludes, refuse to go outside.

the same components of the cave: fire, statues of wood and stone, shadows and sounds, prisoners, reflections, and the moon and stars. The poem starts with the speaker describing how he lit a row of candles and sat to look at the dancing of his own shadow:

أوقُد صفَّ الشموعِ فوقَ مائدةِ الليل، وأرقبُ،
...
رقصةَ ظلِّي فوقِ الجدرانِ، وأصغي
لعواءِ كلابٍ قربَ سجنٍ بعيدٍ، يستبيحُ حياةَ الحقولِ العواءُ.[472]

I light a row of candles on top of the table of the night, and I observe
…
the dance of my shadow on the wall, and I listen
to the barking of the dogs near a far-away prison, as it invades the life of the fields.

Although the shadow, the prison, and the sounds are echoes of the cave's myth, they are used here in a different manner. It is the speaker himself who lights the candles. He knows the existence of the dogs (as beings and not merely shadows) in the far-away fields, and realizes that he is seeing his own shadow in front of him. The speaker is thus, unlike the prisoners in Plato's cave, aware of the outside world and knowledge.

In a reversal of places, the poem alludes to the acts that happen outside the cave. Socrates explains that the prisoners in Plato's cave see the shadows of statues made of wood and stone. In Barghouti's poem, it is the speaker who is turned into a statue.

أحملُ وجهاً من خشبٍ يعرقُ،
ثمَّ ينزُّ العرقُ البارِدُ من بينِ خلايا الخشبْ.
ويدٌ من حجرٍ تحفرُ ظهريَ، مثلَ جذوعِ البلوطِ، وتُخرجُ تمثالَ حصانٍ تحتَ حوافرِهِ
بحرٌ من خشبٍ، وفي فمهِ قطفُ العنبْ.[473]

I hold a sweating face of wood
and the cold sweat seeps from the cells of the wood
and there is a hand of stone that is carving on my back, like an oak's roots. It releases a statue of a horse, under its hooves lies
a sea of wood, and in his mouth, it holds a bunch of grape.

[472] Hussein Barghouti, "Tawahhujāt," in *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shiʿr, 2008), 68.
[473] Ibid.

The speaker gives a portrayal of the outside world. Instead of alluding to the shadows that the prisoners see, the reader witnesses the actual transformation of the speaker into a wooden or stone statue. His face is made of wood, and his body is turned into a stone statue of a horse. Against the backdrop of the journey away from the cave, the speaker ("the words of the faithful" penetrate through me[474]- a reference to those who preceded him) invites people to walk *towards* the cave. He tells people:

فاتبعوني نحو هذا الكهفِ، لا تأكلوا خبزاً من الطينِ،
تخبزه نارٌ مطفأةٌ.[475]

Follow me towards the cave, don't eat the bread made out of clay,
Baked by a put-out fire.

The speaker calls for people to follow him inside the cave. He warns them of falling for the illusions of the outside word. The fire in Plato's analogy, a symbol of knowledge and that which reveals reality as it is, is dead. For the speaker in the poem, life outside the cave is the unreal, it is where one eats bread made of clay. What seems to be the answer to avoid the illusion is a movement opposite to Plato's, namely towards, rather than exiting, the enclosed space. The speaker continues by giving his reason for going from the outside space into the inside one:

مهما اتسعَ البرُّ، إذا اتسعتْ خطوتنا، لا تضيقُ بنا الأرض،
إنَّ الطريقَ إلى داخل الكهفِ واسعةٌ.[476]

No matter how spread the land is, if our steps are spread, earth will not be too small for us.
The path to the inside of the cave is vast.

While the cave is often perceived as a small dark space, Barghouti enlarges it by saying that as long as one's aim is to move, spaces will move and become more spread.

[474] "تعبرني كلمات الأوفياء."
Ibid.
[475] Ibid., 69.
[476] Ibid.

Beyond the reality versus illusion dichotomy and their representation in the outside and inside spaces, Barghouti puts the focus on the act of movement within these spaces. It is this movement that becomes the source of knowledge. The outside space becomes enclosed in the first example as a symbol for intimacy. In this example, knowledge is achieved by travelling through the enclosed space, which makes it boundless.

He continues to break down the analogy using the moon and the stars, rather than the sun, as the guiding light on the journey towards the cave.

وحدنا نسقطُ بين الحجارةِ،
من عطشٍ أو رصاصٍ،
وفي فمنا الشوكُ، والكلماتُ التي لا يعبِّرُ عنها الكلامُ،
وفي يدنا حزمةٌ من ضياءِ النجومِ،
فإن فقدتْ ضوءَها فحمولتنا،
كلُّها،
عتمةٌ وضياءُ.[477]

Alone, we fall between the rocks
from thirst or by bullets.
In our mouths, there are thorns, and words that speech cannot express
in our hands, we hold a handful of the stars' lights.
If they lose their light, then our baggage
is all darkness and light.

Barghouti deploys the light/darkness motif as a way of intertwining the real within the poetic as well as challenging its assumed attribute in regard to guidance and knowledge. The words "rocks," "bullets," and "thorns" echo the political atmosphere of the time in which the poem was written. Barghouti brings together the celestial with the worldly and positions it within the Palestinian reality of that period. The stars have been the source of guidance precisely because of their shiny essence. However, even if they lose this attribute, the speaker and his followers will still have their own enlightened state to illuminate the path. It is again the path that the individuals take that leads them to the light (knowledge) as they do not need

[477] Ibid., 69-70.

an external source of light. Barghouti in the first example of the settlement and the speaker and followers in this one do not need the strong source of light (the neon light or the stars). Instead, Barghouti points to a sense of self-generation of light through their relation to the space and their movement in it.

The speaker continues to redeploy reflection and acoustic elements in the analogy.

نمشي إلى الكهفَ يا قمراً لا يغيبُ،
ونقطعُ نهراً واسعاً، واسعاً، وأعزُّ أحبَّتنا يسبحون على موجه،
كلُّهم شهداءُ.
ويهدأ ماءٌ ليصخبَ ماءُ
وأينَ سيذهبُ صوتُ المياهِ، فنحنُ الضفافُ، ونحنُ الفضاءُ.[478]

We walk towards the cave, O you moon that does not set
and we pass a wide, wide river, and our most beloved people are swimming in its waves.
They are all martyrs.
The water calms down only to erupt again.
Where will the sound of water go? We are the [river's] beds, and we are the void space.

The reflection on the water, which constitutes one of the first steps that the freed prisoner takes in his discovery of the real beings in life, is substituted with the bodies of martyrs. The sounds of water that diminish and erupt again do not leave the speaker and his followers. Knowledge is thus restored to them who represent "the river's beds" and "the void space" unlike the prisoners who do not recognize the source of the sounds. The change of places challenges perceptions of knowledge and ignorance, fiction and reality. At the same time, this example provides a prelude to the final chapter in this dissertation, which explores the notion of myth both as a thematic trope in Barghouti's writing and a theoretical lens for studying his literary production.

It is not the geographical marks of the space itself, but rather the movements within it that construct its significance. Moving on the path (*al-ṭarīq*)[479] is what gives the cave its depth and openness. Similarly, although there is light outside the cave, it is moving inside it

[478] Ibid., 70.
[479] Ibid.

(with the allusion to the moon and its light) that seems to give knowledge to the speaker and the people with him. The same motif of the moonlight giving power and knowledge is used in Barghouti's encounter in the mountains around his village with the settlement many years later. The allusion to Plato's cave and Barghouti's own experience with *al-dayr* show how the literary and the personal can intersect. This lends space, whether actual or metaphorical, a transformative attribute and renders it a formative entity.

3.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to investigate notions of transformation and movement, which are central to Barghouti's literary production, through the prism of space. Space is not solely understood in terms of geographic demarcations, but also as a stage for social, political, literary, and personal interactions. Movements within and between spaces, as was shown in the examples above, reveal some of Barghouti's insights into power relations, knowledge, literary genres, and poetic allusions. Space has been understood as a place of possibilities and a place that "is composed of intersections of mobile elements."[480] Barghouti's experience with illness and pain and his impending death provided the impetus for exploring space, especially the invasion, erosion, and blocking of space. In the first part (geographic movements) Barghouti's illness and pain allow him to reflect upon the personal-collective experiences in Palestine. Furthermore, Barghouti manages to frame the complex political and legal matter of illegal settlement building through the intimate and personal sensory experience of light and space. Though at the threshold of death, Barghouti engages with the reality of Palestinian life by honing in on the strengths and connections that he and his body have with the land. The decaying body is thus enabled (from *tamakkun*) against the backdrop of physiological and settler-colonial restrictions.

[480] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

In the second section (literary movements) space is examined beyond its geographic demarcations. Looking at the text as space, Barghouti builds up *al-Ḍiffa* by bringing together multiple fragmented elements such as locations, characters, and colours. Crossing between these elements is explored through the body and its movements across spaces and between the inside of a prison cell and the outside world. The inside-outside relation is also a movement that reveals Barghouti's conception on knowledge, innovation, and connection to the land. The analogy of the cave is reversed in Barghouti's poem, in which going deeper into the cave is his way of encouraging the exploration of new layers of knowledge. *Al-dayr* joins the two acts of physical and literary movements. Barghouti describes his nocturnal walks to the ruins of *al-dayr*, where he brings back memories that revive the place in the present.

As the examples from Barghouti's novel and his poetry show, the dynamics of space constitute a focal point in his production in general. For example, the interplay between the inside-outside is apparent in his first published poetry collection and his last (posthumously) published autobiography. Barghouti's personal experiences and his poetic aspirations and convictions reflect his perception of space as ever-changing in location and form, and as a realm that yields literary and political commentaries beyond its geographic demarcations. The dynamic relations that Barghouti creates between spaces are based on integrating historical and actual spaces with surrealist movements. The utilization of surrealist and mythic elements is central in Barghouti's writings and has prompted a mythic reading of Barghouti's stance as a thinker and an author. The next chapter takes this centrality as its premise but moves on to question its construction. It argues that Barghouti's writing techniques are *ritualistic* in nature, as they invite literary explorations that go beyond mythic writing.

Chapter 4: Myth – Rituals as technique

خلق قصيدة أو نصٍّ هو فعل سحريّ، ولي فيه طقوسي، الضوءُ لا يجب
أن يكون قوياً، أو أبيض، عندما أكتب. النيون تدمير دماغ. ظلال، من
ضوء شمعة إلى شعاع القمر، شيء يجعل الأشياء غامضة، موحية، أكثر
مما أفهم، حبر أسود، ورق جميل، هذه هي بعض أدواتي الطقوسية.[481]

Creating a poem or a text is a magical act, and I have my own rituals for it. The light cannot be strong, or white, when I write. Neon light destroys the brain. [Instead] shadows come from the light of a candle or the moonlight. Something that makes things mysterious, allusive, and beyond what I can understand. Black ink, nice papers; these are some of my ritualistic tools.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter continues chronologically from the previous two on childhood and death by entering the afterlife. Posthumous reception of Barghouti has in the most part appropriated his works and thinking mythically. For example, his friend and colleague al-Mutawakkil Ṭāha remembers how Barghouti was receptive in his last days to a kind of knowledge that was not received through classical channels of learning, but was rather "thrown into his heart."[482] Another author and friend of Barghouti, Rajāʾ Ghānim, writes in a note to the deceased poet: "…your life was dense with poetry, experiences, and depth, and it suffices living a thousand years."[483] Barghouti's works entice a trend of writing that disrupts the familiar and champions the unfamiliar as seen, for example, in his autobiography *al-Ḍawʾ*. This is a direction of writing that has appealed more to a general Palestinian audience after his death and has marked him as an influential figure in the literary and cultural scene in

[481] Barghouti, "Laḥẓat al-khalq," *al-Shuʿarāʾ,* no. 8 (2000): 225.
[482] Ṭaha writes:
"وكأنّي بهَ في أيامهِ الأخيرةِ قد أدارَ ظهرَهُ للعلمِ الموضوعي، واستقبل علماً آخرَ يُقذَفُ إلى الصَّدر قذفاً."
Al-Mutawakkil Ṭāha, "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī ḥuḍūrih al-thānī," *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, 5.
[483] "...حياتك المكثفة شعراً وتجارب وعمقاً كأنها تغني عن عيش ألف عام."
Rajāʾ Ghānim. "Ṣabāḥ al-khayr yā Ḥussayn," in "Taḥiyya ilā Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī," ed. Akram Musallam, *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya* 114 (Spring 2018): 100.

Palestine.[484] The mythic reading of Barghouti's life and works, where he is portrayed as an intellectual who acquired beyond-human knowledge and experience is probably guided by Barghouti's own interest in myths, his weaving of past and present, and his constant search for beginnings (chapter 2). Although after his diagnosis with cancer Barghouti developed an especially strong interest in (Pre-Islamic) myths, the interest is traceable throughout his oeuvre.

Barghouti's declaration in his last autobiography *Saʾakūn* that he will be among the almond trees after his death situates his body within a specific location (his village Kobar). Thus, he extends the contours of the body from the human form into the space of the land. This extension highlights a belief in an existence beyond the demise of the body, as explored in the olives-oil-mountain metaphor in section 2.1. The link to land in Barghouti's case is also guided by his ideas of the mythical. He explains in *Saʾakūn* his views of the almond trees around him and writes:

كل لوزة، عندي، أنثى عارية في موسم حج وثنيّ...ولدت كي تقول لي سرّاً قديماً، وثنياً، ربّما، من أسراري الأولى.[485]

> Each almond tree seems to me like a naked female in a pagan pilgrim season. It is born to tell me an old, and maybe pagan, secret from my very initial secrets.

This statement combines the previously discussed notions of beginning and space and connects them to this chapter. Barghouti contextualizes the space of Kobar, as signified by each almond tree, through referencing a pilgrimage ritual performed by naked pagan women. The mythical narration of the females, their rituals of pilgrimage and their metamorphosis into almond trees in Barghouti's perception constitute the link between his investigations into

[484] Ghassān Zaqṭān, a poet and a friend of Barghouti, writes that a copy of parts of Barghouti's *al-Ḍawʾ* in the *Kitāb fī Jarīda* series sold three million copies (Ghassān Zaqṭān, "Lā astaṭīʿ al-kitāba ʿan Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī," in "Taḥiyya ilā Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī," ed. Akram Musallam, *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya* 114 (Spring 2018): 97. To access the text and the accompanying drawings by the Palestinian painter Ḥasan Ḥūrānī, see Hussein Barghouti, *al-Ḍawʾ al-azraq*. *Kitāb fī jarīda,* no. 66 (February 2004) http://www.kitabfijarida.com/pdf/66.pdf

[485] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn,* 58.

his beginnings and his position in the space of his village.

This chapter proposes that mythical imageries in Barghouti's texts and his own writing techniques and productions should be read as rituals. Rituals resort to a kind of primitiveness that brings the discussion back to the sensed, the bodily, and the experiential, thus directly connecting to Barghouti's view of literary creativity, which champions the acts of defamiliarizing known ways of thinking and writing. These include imagining new configurations of myths, experimenting with rhythms and rhymes in poetic writing, and reflecting on historic and ubiquitous notions of political tensions in line with the intimate and dynamic experiences of his decaying body.

As a way of framing the close-reading, the chapter identifies three literary techniques, which will be called rituals that Barghouti applies in his on-going challenge of known forms of writings. The identified techniques are reversal, transgression, and metamorphosis. The chapter begins with a general inquiry into the links between myths and rituals. The following section presents Barghouti's view of myth by looking at the methodological framework that he assumes in his investigation of Pre-Islamic times in his "Qiṣaṣ". Section 4.4 looks at Barghouti's intake on the body as a tool for delineating subject-object relations, which are central for the understanding of myths and rituals. The line of thought that is adopted in this chapter is that while myths are narrations that transcend the linearity of time and space, rituals, as acts, invite exploration and initiation.[486] Excerpts from Barghouti's poetry and prose writing are then read in light of the three techniques. The excerpts have been taken from his poetry collections *al-Ruʾyā*, *Tūjad alfāẓ*, and *Marāyā sāʾila*, and his prose works *Saʾakūn* and the post-modern text *Ḥajar al-ward*.

[486] Richard van Leeuwen points out the role that the performative storytelling in the framing story of *Thousand and one night*, which he identifies as a ritual act, plays in inviting 'initiation'. Through her storytelling, Shahrazād aims at changing Shahriyār's behaviour towards women as well as his world view. Richard van Leeuwen, "Narrative and Performance. Shahrazād's Storytelling as a Ritual Act," in *O ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture; In Honour of Remke Kruk*, ed. Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan Hogendijk (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 368; 371-373.

4.2 Myths and rituals

Reverting to rituals helps restore the constitutive elements of literary creativity in the face of the 'completeness' of the myth. The myth represents the final project, while rituals allow the discussion to return to the process of creation. The mythical creation has stood, historically, as a way to deal with death and a form of representing immortality and resurrection.[487] The myth enjoys a multi-positionality within the realms of the conscious and unconscious. Some view the utilization of myth in everyday life and literature as a mirror of modern political and cultural life; a conscious appropriation of past stories in the present.[488] Others highlight the embeddedness of myth in the unconsciousness of the personal and collective memory of the author.[489] At the core of mythology studies lies the link between myths and rituals. While some scholars believe that myth and rituals have a dynamic relation and are connected to each other,[490] others see the two as separate entities.[491] Furthermore, rituals are often approached as mirrors to larger social, political, and religious practices.

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[487] Rīta ʿAwaḍ, *Usṭūrat al-mawt wa al-inbiʿāth fī al-shiʿr al-ʿArabi al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1974), 39-40. For a historical overview of the reception and views of myth in (modern) Arabic literature, refer to Terri Lynn DeYoung, "And Babylon has Fallen: Myth in the Arab World," in "And Thereby Hangs a Tale: A Study of Myth in Modern Arabic Poetry." (PhD diss., Berkeley: University of California, 1988), 57-102.

[488] In her innovative study, ʿAwaḍ adopts myth as a methodological tool for the development of literary meanings and symbolism in Arabic poetry. This reading is inspired by Northrop Frye's critical methodology, where he sees the archetype as a critical tool to the study of literature as a "total form," thus allowing one to conduct "a kind of literary anthropology." (Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," in *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert A. Segal. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 223. ʿAwaḍ's reading follows the search for repeated archetypes (*namādhij aṣliyya*) that are embedded in the consciousness of the modern Arab author, and turns the literary text into a space that transcends its historicity and temporality (*Usṭūrat al-mawt*, 8). Talal Asad invokes the myth in his discussion of the formations of the secular by explaining how the word has been used (positively and negatively) as an equivalent to the "attachment to tradition in a modern world, [to] political fantasy and dangerous ideology." Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 23.

[489] Some of the earliest studies on myth in modern Arabic literature include Asʿad Razzūq, *al-Usṭūra fī al-shiʿr al-muʿāṣir: al-Shuʿarāʾ al-Tammūzyyūn* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Majallat Āfāq, 1959). Khalīl Aḥmad Khalīl, *Maḍmūn al-usṭūra fī al-fikr al-ʿArabī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa li al-Ṭibāʿa wa al-Nashr, 1973). See also: Najma Abdullah Idris, "The Tammūziyyūn poets, and the myth of death and resurrection," in "The Concept of Death and its Development in Modern Arabic Poetry" (PhD diss., SOAS, 1987).

[490] Frazer explains that the relation between myths and rituals is dynamic. He argues, for example, that the Norse legend of Blader belongs to "that class of myths which have been dramatized in ritual." The myth becomes "graphic and precise" because of its description of "words which are spoken and acted by the performers of the sacred rite." James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough- A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 608-609.

[491] Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, proposes a conception of the relationship that does not assume a "mechanical causality" between myth and ritual which predicates the existence of both entities in a society.

Although this 'symbolic' approach of rituals is valid and attunes to a level of representativeness of the collective, the embodied understanding of rituals is more in tune with Barghouti's approach towards the body.[492] Ronald L. Grimes understands rituals as actions that are performed through the body and exercised through the senses. They are thus "embodied."[493] In explaining his definition of a ritual, Grimes notes that

> Ritual is *embodied*. An obvious feature of ritual is that it is a human activity. People do it, and they do it in overt, bodily ways. Because it is in and of bodies, ritual is also cultural, since bodies are enculturated. Ritual is not only in the mind or the imagination, even though it can be both mindful and imaginative. If an action is purely mental, it is not ritual even though mental processes clearly underlie ritual action. However important ritually inspired memories or fantasies may be, we should not call them ritual. Ritual, insofar as it can become the object of study, is evidenced by gross motor movements (or a studied, practiced lack of them) in the body, hence the qualifier "embodiment."[494]

Grimes sees the body as a central denominator for rituals. At the same time, he does not negate the role that the imaginative plays in creating rituals. In Barghouti's case, these rituals, which unfold in a processual way, reflect his conceptions about writing, and eventually serve as a reflexive and mental tool. However, the point is that this reflexive expression is not predicated, but is rather reached through the corporeal and the poetic experiences.

While most rituals are understood as collective performances,[495] Barghouti's identified rituals might seem at first individualistic. However, as has been discussed before, particularly in chapter 1, the social and collective resides within the individual, making any literary act a form of engagement with society. Exploring issues that seem marginal and

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Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Structures and Dialectics," in *Structural Anthropology,* trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 233.

[492] Fritz Staal notes that although rituals can have a symbolic meaning beyond their acts, the performers are primarily concerned with "the execution of their complex tasks." Fritz Staal "The Meaninglessness of Rituals," *Numen* 26, no. 1 (1979): 3. This suggests a primacy of the bodily and the performed above the thoughtful and analysed.

[493] Ronald L. Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 195. The complete definition that Grimes gives is: "Ritual is embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment" (Ibid).

[494] Ibid.

[495] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory*, *Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 96.

personal are, thus, in essence an act of relating to the collective. Secondly, these solo performances can be further taken as a ritualization of new modes of writing and thinking, carving out new artistic tastes. While viewing rituals as signs that are to be interpreted as reflective of social, political, and religious behaviours is certainly relevant, the main point is to approach rituals as tools of *making* and creation.[496] Richard van Leeuwen presents a compelling case in reading the frame story of *Thousand and one nights*– where Shahrazād starts telling Shahriyār stories in the hopes of keeping herself alive– as a ritual. Van Leeuwen reminds the readers that the stories of Shahrazād are "narrated" rather than "written."[497] This in its turn presents her act of narration as performative. In her narration "she shows that storytelling as a means of grasping the world intellectually is an embodied experience, with its possibilities and limitations."[498] The urgency of the narration as it unfolds through an individualistic performance (i.e. corporeally) but which reflects larger social implications is what equates it with a ritual act both in the case of Shahrazād and Barghouti.

The activity of rituals and the narration of the myth are summarized by Northrop Frye and are the guide to understanding these terms in this chapter. Frye views a human ritual as "a voluntary effort…to recapture a lost rapport with the natural cycle…[in which] the conscious meaning or significance is latent." The myth, according to him, is the "central informing power" that provides rituals with symbolic meaning.[499] Rituals refer to acts committed whether consciously or unconsciously, while myth serves as a description and a medium to explain these acts. Myths are tales that have evolved through time and reside in the collective consciousness of a society or a group of people. Symbolic formation, as Roland

[496] In her study of the theoretical approaches to rituals, Bell uses the term 'ritual mastery' to refer to the acts of ritualization as a form of "embodied knowing." Ibid., 107. For more on the different approaches, particularly the Cartesian dualism and the phenomenological, to rituals in relation to the body, see van Leeuwen, "Narrative and Performance," 365-368.
[497] Ibid., 364.
[498] Ibid.
[499] Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," 225-226.

Barthes informs us, makes myth into "a system of communication,"[500] in which an object is transformed into a sign that delivers a meaning (a signification). Barthes continues by saying that "mythical speech is made of a material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness that one can reason about them while discounting their substance."[501] In other words, these objects are given "particular" meanings that become part and parcel of a certain discourse.[502]

A myth, then, establishes a realm of familiarity. It is this familiarity that Barghouti's literary explorations and theoretical discussions aim at surpassing. Instead of the 'completeness' of a myth, we are faced with a fragmentation of elements (rituals) that can be used to create *a* story.[503] Rituals, however, similar to myths, are not devoid of structure. In fact, as Staal argues "ritual…is primarily activity. It is an activity governed by explicit rules."[504] This definition highlights the corporeal nature of the ritual as being an activity. However, it stands in contradiction to the proposed argument about Barghouti's negation of being "governed by explicit rules"[505] that lead to immobility and lack of creativity. Counterintuitively, this contradiction is resolved in the case of the three identified rituals of reversal, transgression, and metamorphosis. The three rituals are governed by the *rule* of constant change and movement that Barghouti sets up as the impetus of creativity.

Rituals are thus based on the awareness and acknowledgment of pre-known requirements and rules (of writing) and on a breakage and a de-familiarization of these rules.

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[500] Roland Barthes, "Myth is a Type of Speech," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 117.
[501] Ibid.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Brown underscores a claim that "…there are no myths, only versions…there are only texts for interpretation…a piece of behavior - a dance or a cockfight - a drawing or painting, a sculptured stone, or a terracotta pot." In other words, he aims at surpassing the "[unavoidable] universalizing" in the myth ("Visual and Verbal, 155). See Reuben A. Brown, "Visual and Verbal Translation of Myth: Neptune in Virgil, Rubens, Dryden," in *Myth, Symbol, and Culture,* ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: W.W. Norton& Company. INC., 1971), 155-182.
[504] Staal, "The Meaninglessness," 4.
[505] Ibid.

De-familiarization for Barghouti is the equivalent of creativity. The task of the author is to deconstruct any set discourse and to work at discovering new relations, links, and symbols. As mentioned in *Ḥajar al-ward:*

...انتقلت من التقليد إلى التجديد، كنتَ تستألفُ فصرتَ تستغربُ، من هنا فصاعداً الأشياءُ حرباءُ تتقلبُ وتتقلِبُ، وروحكَ حرباءُ أخرى تنقلبُ وتتقلّبُ معها.[506]

> …you have moved from imitation to innovation. You were used to familiarization, and now you practice estrangement. From now on things are like a chameleon, always changing and transforming, and your soul is another chameleon; changing and transforming.

Creativity produces movability and requires acts that work to destabilize familiarity in literature. The three techniques of reversal, transgression, and metamorphosis do exactly this and are seen as rituals of transformation.

4.3 Barghouti and myth

Similar to beginning and space, Barghouti had a clear interest in myths. He spent many years studying world myths, theorising about the 'mythical' as a system of viewing the world,[507] and taking Arabian myths as a framework for reimagining a pre-Islamic mentality and identity. Barghouti's infatuation with myths and their links to the present is apparent in his seminal work of criticism *Al-Sādin, Al-Nāqa,* and *Qiṣaṣ ʿan zaman wathanī*. While many Arab authors and researchers have looked at pre-Islamic thought and literature as a reservoir of poetic and historic inspirations, what is different in Barghouti's texts is that his approach towards this pre-Islamic period and tradition is both academic and literary. He writes in the beginning of "Qiṣaṣ" that he would like to "dream history more than to follow it, and to

[506] In this passage, the prophet-like figure is addressing the narrator. Barghouti, *Ḥajar al-ward*, 65.
[507] See for example Hussein Barghouti, "al-Ṣūra al-shiʿriyya," in Murād Al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī" (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 124-131. And Hussein Barghouti "ʿAlāqat irādat al- Asṭara bi mūsīqa al-shiʿr wa al-rasm bi al-kalimāt" in Murād Al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī" (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 132-138.

follow it more than to betray it" /"أحلم التاريخ أكثر مما أتبعه، وأتبعه أكثر مما أخونه".[508] He tries to follow history more than betray it by acting as an 'objective' researcher who makes use of literary and historic sources about that time period to build his text. However, dreaming of that time is only possible by inserting himself within the tales that he is recounting.

In *"Qiṣaṣ"*, for example, Barghouti adopts the character of a merchant who is traveling in an Arab caravan to Mecca. Barghouti creates imaginary experiences and interactions that the merchant would have encountered on his journey. By doing so, his aim was to reconstruct the ways in which Arabs during that time lived, how they interacted, and most importantly how they came about their poetic and mythical understandings. The merchant, for example, encounters the ghost of Imruʾ al-Qays, and they engage in conversation about his most famous poem. Barghouti provides an understanding of the poem by imagining how Imruʾ al-Qays would explain it in relation to the time period and its beliefs and links to nature. Barghouti frames the content and rhythmic construction of the poem in light of the sacred geometrical shapes and numbers that are connected to the days of the year and the lunar months.[509]

To what aim did Barghouti immerse himself inside these texts? Al-Shaikh notes that Barghouti's mission in these studies was to refute

> the theory that Arabs invented their poetic meter and rhyme while accompanying their camels through the desert, that they discovered it by sheer chance while improvising poetry; or while coppersmiths were hammering on their utensils as al-Khalīl's imagination ran wild. Rather, poetic meter is deeply rooted in pre-Islamic rituals and mythology that transmigrated into some Islamic workshop, like daily prayers and *ḥajj* (pilgrimage).[510]

Barghouti's methodological aim was to come up with a theory that ties poetic productions, with their complex rhythms and rhymes, to mathematical and architectural units

[508] Hussein Barghouti, "Qiṣaṣ ʿan zaman wathanī," in *Al-Sādin*, *al-Nāqa, Qiṣaṣ 'an zaman wathanī*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: al-Muʾassasa al-Filasṭīniyya li al-irshād al-qawmī, 2003), 23.
[509] See Ibid., 60-66.
[510] Al-Shaikh, "Beyond the Last Twilight," 21-22.

that are directly linked to and are constitutive of Pre-Islamic rituals. By narrating these tales about that time, Barghouti portrays ritualistic practices of a society that, although long gone, has functioned and still functions as the biggest literary inspiration for Arabic poetry and poetics. The ritual of circling the Kaʿba, Barghouti argues for example, sanctifies the shape of the circle.[511] It is, however, even more important since it represents an act that has managed to transpose itself into different time periods, religious beliefs, and art forms. Besides the act becoming one of the most fundamental activities in Islamic belief, namely, the *ḥajj*, this circularity is a structural basis of Arabic poetry and a thematic reference for centuries. For example, as a traveller with the caravan, Barghouti narrates a tale told to him by a Qurashī, about how he witnessed the circling ritual of naked pagan women around the Kaʿba. The same reference is then transported from the historic-fictional reference in the "Qiṣaṣ" to the present-day personal narrative of Barghouti in *Saʾakūn* (at the beginning of this chapter).[512] Barghouti's mode of writing is built upon creating literary ties between themes, images, and ideas that are revisited in multiple texts. This act from the past is revisited as part of Barghouti's present experience with illness and his burial among the almonds trees of his village.

Barghouti's reliance on what he calls in "Qiṣaṣ" "intuitions" (*ḥudūs*) as a valid method for imagining how people from *al-Jāhiliyya* (the pre-Islamic time) shaped and were shaped by their religious and cultural beliefs and their environment exemplifies his ritualistic approach towards pre-Islamic time and mythology. In his book *Usṭūrat al-khalq al-ʿArabiyya*, the Kuwaiti scholar Abdullah al-ʿUdhrī explains that in order to understand what

[511] To give an example, Barghouti underscores the sacredness of certain numbers in Pre-Islamic belief and argues that it is the basis for the *muʿallaqāt* (the famous pre-Islamic poems). Barghouti argues that the main rhythmic units (tafʿīlāt) of Arabic meters (buḥūr) are either 6 or 8. They are thus the doubling of the three angles of the triangle, or the doubling of the four angles of the square. The number 3 is further postulated in Umruʾ al-Qays' famous beginning in which he is addressing two other people. Imruʾ al-Qays is standing with his two interlocutors within four spaces, thus asserting the sacredness of the square and the triangle (see Barghouti, "Qiṣaṣ," 62). For more on Barghouti's discussion of the sacredness of the circle in Pre-Islamic times see *al-Sādin*, 315-324.

[512] In the *qiṣṣa*, the speaker informs us that women thought that by circling the Kaʿba naked, the God of the moon 'Hubal' could impregnate them. See Barghouti, "Qiṣaṣ," 35-40.

the sources regarding *al-Jāhiliyya* provide us with, we have to "deal with them not based on preconceived opinions, and footnotes…but rather through extracting the information in the sources…then sifting these pieces of information, and then judging them with an open-mindedness." By doing that, one is able to "create a holistic vision of each era and understand the path of the development of the Arab culture."[513] Barghouti, although he shares the goal of uncovering beliefs linked to *al-Jāhiliyya* in the hope of understanding the mentality of that time, diverts from this approach. His aim is not to recreate *the* picture of that time, but rather to create it through the dialectics of 'fact' *and* fiction. Similar to al-ʿUdhrī, the Syrian scholar Firās al-Sawwāḥ asserts in his book *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql al-ūlā* that he tried to give an "honest and full translation" of myths found in Syria and Mesopotamia, in the hope of "providing Arab readers with a clear image about the myth of that area."[514] Researchers here decide to take a step back and look at the myths as observers and commentators of history, and thus present what might be lost in today's daily life.

Barghouti's return to myth takes on the two attributes of detached (objective) researcher and engaged subject, or 'narrator' and 'author' in Barthes' understanding. The author, Barthes writes, is a phenomenon that is thought to be able to give an explanation of the text. The 'narrator,' on the other hand, has a "mastery" in performance.[515] The merchant-researcher strand shows how Barghouti revives both author and narrator. He "nourishes" the work, as an author, by referring back to sources and 'factual' commentaries, but at the same

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[513] Al-ʿUdhrī explains that his interest in myths started from childhood when his mother used to narrate to him stories from the past. Abdullah al-ʿUdhrī, *Usṭurat al-khalq al-ʿArabiyya* (London: Al Warrak Publishing Ltd. 2006), 14.
"لكي نُلِمَّ ونستوعب ما في المصادر يجب أن نتعامل معها لا عن طريق الآراء المسبقة ولقطات الحواشي...بل عن طريق استقصاء المعلومات في المصادر الخاصة بكل فترة، ثم غربلة هذه المعلومات، ثم تقييمها لعقلية منفتحة. بهذه الطريقة يمكننا أن نبني أرضيات واضحة المعالم لكل فترة، ومن هذه الأرضيات نستطيع أن نكون تصوراً شاملاً لكل عصر ونفهم سير تطور الحضارة العربية عبر تاريخها الطويل."

[514] Firās al-Sawwāḥ, *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql al-ūlā* (Damascus: Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-ʿarab, 1976), 25.
"...فقمت عبر فصول الكتاب بتقديم ترجمة أمينة وكاملة وحرفية لمعظم النصوص الأسطورية المكتشفة في سورية وارض الرافدين...وكان هدفي الأساسي إعطاء صورة واضحة لقراء العربية عن اسطورة المنطقة."

[515] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontata Press, 1977), 142.

time he is "born with the work" as a "modern scriptor"[516] through the act of performance (being a merchant). In other words, Barghouti deconstructs the view of *al-Jāhiliyya* as a completed and finished story and, by inserting himself in the narrative, highlights ritualistic acts and movements that eventually lead to its reconstruction.

The interplay between past/present, participant/researcher affirms the deployment of rituals as a source of literary creativity and a tool of criticism. These rituals are acts that, at a certain point in time, were used as ways of living and understanding the world. The rituals found their documentation in the literary form of the *qaṣīda*, thus becoming diachronic elements that serve as a poetic form for personal and communal expressions. However, the participant-observer position that Barghouti takes on aids him in reimagining these rituals not as they are described, but rather as they are lived, thus using them as a read lens against historical compartmentalization.

4.4 Myth and body

After sketching Barghouti's methodological approach to myths in his last written text in the previous section, this section will delve into Barghouti's engagement with myths as delineated through the theoretical discussion of subject/object and the role of the body. Studying grand narratives from Greece, pre-Islamic Arabia, and Mesopotamian (like Gilgamesh) myths, Barghouti notes that worldly entities (sun, moon, waters) were recognized as conscious subject with their intellectual capabilities that have their own sensibilities and subjectiveness (*kāʾināt wāʿiya ʿāqila li-dhātiha*) and were given personifications and bodies of their own. This form of human perception is what Barghouti calls "the primitive consciousness" (*al-waʿī al-bidāʾī*) or "the mythological" (*al-usṭūrī*).[517]

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[516] Barthes, "The death of the Author," 145.

[517] Barghouti, "al-Ṣūra al-shiʿriyya," 124. ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād also refers to the act of humanization that the primitive man attributed to natural entities. However, he asserts that myth does not come naturally, but is rather constituent to the environment of the primitive man (see ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, *al-Fuṣūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1967), 52.

The mythical falls within the laborious interplay between the subject and the object, between the creator(s) of the myth and the mythic character. Although the mythic figure is an object that is created by a subject, the relationship is not one of a maker and a made object, but rather of maker and maker. This is one of Barghouti's central issues discussed in his PhD dissertation on the phenomenology of metamorphosis and the relation between subject and object. If the output of the act of creation is called an 'object,' then in making the mythic figure the subject is simultaneously creating himself/herself as a subject. The subject is, subsequently, in a constant state of "subjectification."[518] Thus, in order to understand how Barghouti approaches myths in relation to the body, one has to understand his view of the relation between the subject and the object.

Before any construction of subjects and objects, Barghouti reminds us that one needs to exist. This initial existence unravels in the being of the body as a biochemical entity. The body has to exist if it is to be transformed into a subject or an object (similar to the discussion on embodiment in section 3.4). He writes:

> 'I do, eat, drink, breathe, work'. No! The body eats, drinks, and works, I remember'! This is a zero! 'It', the brain, remembers, and if something happens to 'it', I myself may disappear, all of 'me'. The verb (sic) to have, to do, and to be contain an interpretation of the process; they represent a reductionist ideology which reduces all of the relation to the 'subject'. It is better to say: the body has an ego, not vice versa; "my" body has me!
> 'I' can dissect my own thoughts as if they are a frog; so I can relate to myself as a subject to an object. Self-consciousness is this very process of relating; it is nothing more than the relation of subject-object internalized, reflected in the human brain and body.[519]

Barghouti brings the core of human creativity in building multi-dimensional narrations that evolve into systems of belief and knowledge back to the physicality of the body. Even the brain where all these processes take shape can stop its chemical connections, resulting, as Barghouti writes, in the disappearance of actions, thoughts, and subsequently

[518] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 161.
[519] Ibid., 161-162.

creativity. By championing this multiplicity in the components of the 'I', Barghouti argues against the fixation of how the self works. Instead of the one-sidedness of the subject, the body allows for a variety of connections. The 'I' stands at the juncture of multiplicity in its relations with the body. The process of discovering the 'I' or what Barghouti calls 'self-consciousness' is thus ever changing and not one thing. It is not that the body is a tool for discovering the outside world – to use Barghouti's words; this is an equally reductionist ideology that puts the body as the guiding compass of the self. Barghouti in fact warns against reading the body as a single static object, since it is in fact made of a combination of elements such as water and amino acids.[520] In underscoring this ability to dissect (linked back to what was discussed in section 1.2), Barghouti presents the 'I', the body, and all other components of existence as a web that can be understood in different combinations and manners. While the body is an *a priori* entity, rituals, in this context, are the acts that provide the body with tools to become self-conscious. This interaction between the presupposed need for a body and its multiple formations is what directs Barghouti to search for different forms of embodiment that will give his body life after physical death.

The following will demonstrate the three rituals in selected excerpts from Barghouti's works. Joining the mythical theme with the ritualistic technique, the first ritual of reversal focuses on the poem "Inānnā" from Barghouti's first published poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā*. I will demonstrate how Barghouti's take on the famous myth of Inanna is ritualistic as it engages in a series of bodily reversals that question the symbolisms of the myth and its allusions.

[520] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 164.

4.5 First ritual – Reversal

The first poem in the collection *al-Ruʾyā* is entitled "Inānnā."[521] Unsurprisingly, the young poet takes Arabian heritage as inspiration for writing. Inanna is the Sumerian name for the famous Babylonian goddess of fertility and love, Ishtar.[522] One cannot speak of Ishtar (*ʿIshtār*, in Arabic) without her counterpart, Dumuzid or Tammuz (*Tammūz*, in Arabic). Despite their varied significances in the works of many Arab authors, the two figures generally come to represent themes of love and bodily desires as well as the cycle of life and death,[523] which includes symbols of love, life, death, resurrection, and reproduction. The goddess willingly descends to the underworld, as her disappearance is essential for the change in weather, the succession of seasons, and thus for the continuation of life. In order to come back, someone must take her place, and so Tammuz takes her place in underworld. In following the different developments of the myth of Ishtar and Tammuz, al-Sawwāḥ[524] informs us that the relation between the Sumerian couple differs from that of the Babylonian and Akkadian one.[525] In the latter two versions, the goddess understands that life and death are two oppositional forces that are at the same time interdependent. The growth of nature comes after a period of destruction, drought, humidity, and storms, asserting the theme of resetting things anew. This cycle is thus pivotal for human life. In a motherly act, the goddess brings back Tammuz from the underworld for six months so that life on earth can resume its normal cycle. [526] In the Sumerian myth, the goddess, coming back from the underworld (after being there for three days), realizes that her husband Tammuz has not mourned her death and

[521] In the cited poem, the name of the goddess is written as Anānā. The correct spelling is Inānnā.
[522] Al-Sawwāḥ, *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql,* 1996, 311.
[523] A group of Arab modernists were called the Tammūzi poets because of their utilization of myth in their poetry and for focusing on issues of resurrection and the dichotomy of life and death, signified by the story of Tammūz. These poets include Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Yusuf al-Khal and Adonis (who adopted the Greek/Roman name of the Babylonian God). For more on this see Rose Gharīb, "Al-Shuʿarāʾ al-Tammūziyyūn: al-Sayyāb," *al-Adīb,* 5-6 (June 1980): 19-21.
[524] It is documented that Barghouti was familiar and engaged with the works of al-Sawwāḥ (See Barghouti's references to al-Sawwāḥ's *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql* in his "Wahm al-Bidāya…Shabaḥ al-Makān," 113; 115.
[525] Al-Sawwāḥ, *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql,* 1976, 437.
[526] Ibid., 439-450.

decides, angrily, to send him in her stead to the underworld. The myth is "seasonal"[527] in the sense that it interrogates the relationship between the gods and their direct influence on nature and human life.

Instead of the usual coupling in the myth, Barghouti replaces the male figure of Tammuz with that of Marduk in his poem. Marduk is the Babylonian patron god, the creator of the universe and the god who ensues order.[528] It should be noted that the poem is mythical in that it evokes aspects from the ancient Near Eastern myth of Ishtar.[529] Thus, it is important to differentiate in this section between two literary topoi: the poem as mythical in its elements, and, as will be demonstrated, the poem as constructed by the ritualistic technique of reversals. Besides the apparent freedom that myths represent in constructing different versions of the same story, they also hold within them structures of connectivity and fixed rules that develop common elements and significances. What is of interest to us is that the symbolic meaning of the original deities in the myth (Inanna and Tammuz) is vexed in regard to the body. Whether it is Inanna's symbolism for fertility and sexuality, or Tammuz's generative relation to nature, (some of his names include the shepherd, the bull, and the child), both figures point towards the revival of the body or the making of new bodies (desire, sexuality, birth, food, which are referenced in Barghouti's poem).

However, by replacing the young Tammuz with the old god Marduk, Barghouti questions the relations that go into the making of these recognizable mythical symbols. Barghouti uses reversals as a way of reconfiguring new meanings and relations within the myth regarding themes of sexuality, age, and power, which take the body as their site. Reversal unfolds in the poem through Inanna who is performing rituals to take control of the

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[527] Gaster talks about the "seasonal pattern" in Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 44.
[528] al-Sawwāh, *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql*, 1996, 384.
[529] For more on the use of myth in Arabic poetry see Angelika Neuwirth, "Introduction," in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach.* Proceedings of the International Symposium in Beirut, June 25th-June 30th, 1996, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Birgit Embaló et al., ix-xxii (Beirut: Druck: Hassib Dergham & Sons, 1999).

city from Marduk. Furthermore, it is presented in Barghouti's disruption of the assumed mythic evocations of the story of Inanna and her lover Tammuz. In other words, the two young figures, Inanna and Barghouti, still retain aspects from the past, in which Inanna is a figure of vegetation and Barghouti is inspired by the myth as a story in the past. The two, however, aim at reversing their roles into catalysts of change and thus invite new power dynamics.

Barghouti's first act of reversal of the myth takes place within the first two lines of the poem:

أنانا يا أنانا!
أضيئي قليلاً نوافذكِ البابليَّةَ، بالشمعدانِ القديمِ أضيئيها!
فإنَّ عليهِ نقوش وفي الشمعِ حفرْ.[530]

Inanna O Inanna!
Light up your Babylonian windows a bit, light them up with the old candlestick!
For there are inscriptions on them, and on the candles there is carving.

Although the title of the poem is Inanna, Barghouti places her here at the beginning of the poem as the interlocutor and not the speaker. In fact, we do not hear the voice of Inanna in most of the poem. As will become clear later, Barghouti narrates the myth not from the perspective of Inanna and Tammuz, but from that of another mythic figure, namely Marduk. The setting, furthermore, echoes a time past, mentioning old inscriptions and holes in the candles. Furthermore, his use of the name Inanna instead of Ishtar is interesting. Inanna is an older name of the (more familiar) Babylonian name Ishtar.

Barghouti does not uproot the myth from its historic past and place it in a contemporary time, as other authors do. Instead, he weaves two past periods together by calling the goddess by her Sumerian name Inanna, instead of Ishtar, while placing the architectural characteristics of the city within the Babylonian realm. The embroidery here is

[530] Hussein Barghouti, "Inānnā," in *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shiʿr, 2008), 15.

not between past and present, but between two periods in the past. This ritual of reversal in times, intertwinement of spaces, and a new focalization of a set coupling are exemplary of Barghouti's writing technique at large (similar to the discussion in chapter 1).

The poem starts *in medias res*, in a stormy scene where rain, thunder, and wind are battering the city. As the speaker suggests, the wind and the trees are awaiting his return to the city.[531] Inanna has closed the gates to her city, while a male figure is calling for her and begging her to let him in. Even though the name of the male figure is not mentioned in the beginning, because of the "primordial image" that the myth inscribes in the "collective consciousness,"[532] one might at first assume that the male voice belongs to Tammuz. The name of the speaker is not revealed. However, he reminds Inanna that he is the *sheikh* of the area[533] and explains that he is old but strong and has the ability to control the wind.[534] Despite his pleas for Inanna to open the doors of the enclosed walls, she does not comply. A few lines later, the speaker is surprised and rhetorically asks: "Is it not enough that a god weeps at her door?"[535] implying the figure is a deity of a prominent status. The realization that the figure is probably not Tammuz is seen in his description as an old figure rather than a young and energetic god. It is only later, in the second half of the poem, that the speaker announces his name, Marduk.

Inanna's unresponsiveness is in defiance of the control the old god tries to exert upon her to open the doors to the kingdom. He realizes what she is doing:

لماذا الطقوسُ؟ أنانا![536]

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[531] "مطرٌ وريحٌ حولَ سورٍ مغلقٍ، والبرقُ غطَّى حاجبيَّ"
Ibid., 15.
[532] Carl Jung, "The Significance of Constitution and Heredity in Psychology," in *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol. 8: Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), 112.
[533] "أنا شيخُ هذي النواحي يا أنانا!"
Barghouti, "Inānnā," 15.
[534] "والريحُ حولَ يديهِ ضحايا "
Ibid., 16.
[535] "أو ليسَ يكفي أن ينوحَ إلهٌ على بابها؟"
Ibid., 17.
[536] Ibid., 15.

Why these rituals? Inanna!

Inanna is, thus, engaged in a ritualistic performance:

وأنانا يدها فوقَ شعاعِ الشمعدانِ فراشٌ تطايرَ، وهي
تحضِّرُ روحي!
وتتمتمُ شيئاً، وتنسى جسدي![537]

Like flying butterflies, Inanna's hands are on top of the ray of the candlestick
She is summoning my soul!
She is muttering something, and forgetting my body!

The old speaker realizes that Inanna is performing a ritual for his removal (death). The performance takes place in front of the candle light and is coupled with mutters. This image of Inanna's ritual is similar to that described by Barghouti in the quote at the beginning of the chapter. Both Inanna and Barghouti use the candle light as a way of moving beyond the known and the ascribed. Inanna's aim is to reverse the control of the god, while the light reveals for Barghouti "mysterious" depths into which he can delve, beyond the known.[538] The reactions to such rituals are also similar: there is a proliferation of chaos from both the character in the poem (Inanna),[539] and the author of the poem (Barghouti), where both are exploring realms beyond their expected functions.

This ritual of preparing the speaker's soul strips away the symbolic attributes of strength and control that have characterized Marduk. What is left is his body. This, again, asserts Barghouti's view of the body as the *a priori* entity that can take new forms of existence. In this example, there is a reversal of the body from the mythic back to the physical. The mythic figure exists as a web of symbols, and once the symbols are gone, the body descends into the realm of physicality. This body becomes the impetus for creating new symbolic attributes. The male speaker realizes his approaching death. He pronounces:

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[537] Ibid., 15-16.
[538] Barghouti, "Laḥẓat al-Khalq," 225.
[539] "يا أنانا، لماذا العبث؟"
Barghouti, "Inānnā," 17.

وطهَّرتُ نفسي من بقايا التراب، ومن شهوةٍ للحبيبْ.
سوفَ أُطفئ نفسي: نيَّةً، نيَّةً،
ثمَّ أمشي فوق ماءِ العالمِ السفليِّ: فوقي النواحُ وتحتي النحيبْ.[540]

and I purified myself from the remainder of dirt, and from a desire for the beloved.
I will switch myself off: switching off one intention at a time
and then I will walk on the water of the underworld: on top of me there is lament and below me there is wailing.

Dirt, desire, and the underworld are references to the slow deterioration of speaker's body by forging a detachment with the symbols of life (the dirt) and love (the desire for the beloved). He is performing a purifying ritual before moving towards death. As mentioned above, Barghouti argues that the body, which is in its own right made up of different constructive elements, should be taken as an impetus for any understanding of life. What he does here exemplifies this. He removes the figure of Marduk from everything that characterizes him and takes the body, which is on the verge of death, as a new canvas upon which new symbols can be carved as shown in the second half of the poem. Keeping with the emblematic symbols of death-life that makes up the myth of Ishtar and Tammuz, Barghouti shifts the mood and the scenery in the second half of his poem. It is at this point that the myth is re-envisioned. In contrast to the storms and winds in the first half of the poem, there is a scene of cultivation and greenery.

ربَّةُ الماعزِ الأبيضِ ترعى ماعزاً،
ربَّةُ الزبدِ البحريِّ ترعى حمامَ الشمسِ فوقَ الموجِ،
ترعى ماعزاً،
ربَّةُ الخضرةِ ترعى عشباً أو مشمشاً عاجزاً[541]

The female lord of white goats is herding goats
The female lord of sea foam is herding the pigeons of sun above the waves
She is herding goats,
The female lord of vegetation is herding grass or helpless peach.

[540] Ibid., 17.
[541] Ibid., 19.

For this scene of rebirth, Barghouti calls upon the figure of Tammuz and his symbolic attributes. Tammuz, who has been silent in the poem, appears at the end as a space for imagination and construction. Inanna's fertility has always been associated with the reproduction of nature, thus creating this link between the earth-mother who takes care of nature (the white goat/the pigeons/the grass).[542] However, the speaker in Barghouti's poem ascribes to her the attribute of the 'Shepherd', which usually belongs to her counterpart Tammuz. This reversal of attributes is continued in the construction of the speaker. The god, watching Ishtar in this generative setting, restores a desire to become a bull. He declares:

يا ليتني
ثوراً أبيضَ الصوفِ حتى يأكل من عشبٍ داست عليه
خطاها!
يا ليتني ثوراً تجوَّلَ قربَ نهرٍ سارَ تحتَ سماها![543]

I wish I were
A bull with white wool, so that it may eat from the grass that is imprinted with her Steps!
I wish I were a bull who roamed around a river that runs underneath her sky!

The bull, like the shepherd, is another name for Tammuz. To reverse the ascription from Tammuz to the old speaker (Marduk) signals a new reading that retains a connection to the previous myth but disrupts the structures of this connection. By doing so, Barghouti introduces a new figure of love that hopes, by imitating the symbolism of Tammuz, to win the love of Inanna, and to spend their days walking in nature. The poem ends with Marduk declaring that he will wait for her to open the doors. The generative scene is thus a story within a myth and is based on Marduk's imagination of how he and Inanna could live happily, if he would gain the attributes of Tammuz.

[542] Al-Sawwāḥ *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql*, 1976, 302.
[543] Barghouti, "Inānnā," 19.

The figures in the poem use rituals as a way to create change and reversal. In this poem, the reader follows Inanna's process of subsuming power from Marduk. The destruction and construction of aspects of the myth happen at the moment when the body is the only thing that remains of Marduk. This moment constitutes the tie between the two sections and the season change in the poem. The use of myths is constitutive of modern Arabic poetics. The myth of creation, particularly that of Inanna/Ishtar and Tammuz has been deployed by many poets (such as Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Mahmoud Darwish). In "Unshūdat al-matar"[544] ("The Hymn of Rain"), al-Sayyab makes use of the myth as a building form for the poem, in the sense that he does not make direct reference to the mythic figures, but rather to the story of death and resurrection.[545] This indirectness, however, is also coupled with other sources of inspiration such as the Quran and other Middle Eastern myths. It also couches the mythic figures as symbols of present-day feelings of alienation, anger, and despair at the state of the Arabs.[546] In his 1999 poem "Ḥalīb Inānnā" ("The Milk of Inanna")[547] Darwish uses Inanna's symbol of fertility and constant change as a way of championing poetic innovation, and presenting his capering between poetic and prosaic writing.[548] The poet, furthermore, alludes to links between the past and the present, by addressing the goddess from the myth and then a modern-day woman. In moving between the styles of writing and the two periods, Darwish's poem "demystifies the mythical aura, and brings the scene back to its human limits, where there is also trouble and sickness."[549]

There are a few similarities between the two poets' utilization of the myth and Barghouti's. The mythical configuration is clear in Barghouti's and Darwish's poems from

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[544] Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, "Unshūdat al-maṭar," in *Unshūdat al-maṭar* (Cairo: Muʾassasat Hindāwī li al-Taʿlīm wa al-Thaqāfa, 2014), 123-128.
[545] ʿAwaḍ, *Usṭūrat al-mawt,* 100-112.
[546] Terri Deyoung, "A New Reading of Badr Shākir Al-Sayyāb's 'Hymn of the Rain'," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24, no. 1 (1993): 40. 39-61.
[547] Mahmoud Darwish, "Ḥalīb Inānnā," in *al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyya al-kāmila*, vol. 2 (Amman: al-Ahliyya li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 2014), 693-697.
[548] Al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry*, 109.
[549] Ibid.

the title. Similarly, Barghouti invokes notions of poetic innovation and change in relation to the change that Inanna provokes. While Darwish and al-Sayyab make direct references to the present time, thus asserting the urgent importance of old stories in making sense of the present, Barghouti's interest resides more in questioning the linearity of time without attributing specific personal and communal incidents and events to the poem. Barghouti's deployment of the myth shakes its constitutive elements and its symbolic meaning, to reconstruct a new meaning and a new version of the myth. This falls in line with the threading of different attributes, times, and spaces together, discussed as embroidery earlier. The dynamic movements of reversal that are performed through the body represent a ritualistic technique that appears in Barghouti's writings in general (for example the post-language example from chapter 2). The poem, thus, works as a theoretical musing of and a challenge to the mythic construction and use in poetry.

4.6 Second ritual – Transgression

Transgression, as a second ritual in Barghouti's writing, is explored in "Jāzz sharqī"[550] from his 1998 collection *Tūjad alfāẓ*. The poem, it will be argued, is a rendition of the classical tripartite structure of an Arabic *qaṣīda*. Adopting tales, figures, and stories from the past and reinterpreting them within the confines of the present is not unprecedented. However, what makes the creation of a new version successful is what the literary critic and translator Josephine Balmer calls *transgression*. The transgressional rendition of the past is based on the writer's "close knowledge and understanding of the original text, not only of its language, but also of its historical and social conventions" while at the same time producing a piece that "could still stand as an original work in its own right."[551] Transgression is thus a synonym for literary transformation and is exemplified in this poem in three ways: in

[550] Hussein Barghouti, "Jāzz Sharqī," in *al-Āthār al-shiʿriyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shiʿr, 2008), 225-235.
[551] Josephine Balmer, *Piecing Together the Fragments: Translating Classical Verse, Creating Contemporary Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 183.

renegotiating the tripartite structure of the classical *qaṣīda*, in shifting the narration from the male to the female persona, and in Barghouti's melange of different artistic forms such as music, sculpture, and painting in the creation of the poem.

The poem spans eleven pages. In it, the speaker asks his family to leave him alone, so that he can go on a journey of discovery. This journey is intertwined with surges of memories and a shift in perspective. The poem comes from the collection *Tūjad alfāẓ*, which is a 'dream' collection.[552] Barghouti believed "in the existence of a library in the valleys of the self."[553] Khalid Furani provides a section in his book to what he labels "the dream"[554] poetry. Furani explains that in his interview with Barghouti, the poet challenged the "outer limits of my understanding…"outer" limits not because they are externally beyond, but rather because, as al-Barghouti might say, they are buried and forgotten."[555] Barghouti does not merely disclose the forgotten aspects of heritage in this poem but also works at reinventing them.

His evocation surpasses the text in intertextuality to include different literary and musical genres. At first, reading the poem takes the reader off guard. The use of quotations, the integration of classical Arabic language, and the footnotes lend some complexity to the poem. For example, there are quotes from modern poets such as Mahmoud Darwish, Muzaffar al-Nawwab and pre-modern figures such as al-Shanfarā (d. 525), al-Ḥajjāj al-Thaqafī (d. 714), al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī (d. 604), al-Aʿshā (d. 625), and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 661). The quoted excerpts are sometimes cited and the name of the poets and some difficult words are explained in footnotes. Other excerpts are integrated without quotation marks or citation in the text. The footnotes even include an explanation by Barghouti about his style of writing. "I make changes in quotes, usually, in the hope of

[552] Barghouti explains in an interview that most of this collection came to him in a dream. For more on this see Barghouti, "Hussayn al-Barghūthī," 208; al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat," 64-66; and Furani, *Silencing the Sea*, 104-116.

[553] "...اعتقدت بوجود مكتبة في أغوار النفس."
Barghouti, "Hussayn al-Barghūthī," 208.

[554] See Furani, *Silencing the Sea*, 175-236.

[555] Ibid., 177.

conversing with tradition. Thus, it is a transformation."[556] The annotation becomes part and parcel of the reading and interpretation of the text. In addition, the inter/paratextual style brings together the inspired, the improvised, the researched, and the critical. This is another example of the poetic transgression that characterizes Barghouti's works.

Barghouti takes the output, that of the classical *qaṣīda*, and deconstructs, reworks, and reconstructs it again. The body appears here in reference to the human form, as well as to the literary form of the Arabic *qaṣīda*. By confronting these two bodies, Barghouti's poem, while still preserving a sense of totality, works at deconstructing the ties that bind the body of the classical *qaṣīda* together (language, sections, rhymes, and rhythms). Thus, the body of the *qaṣīda* is in a state of de- and re-construction.

With the title 'Jazz,' and its adjective *sharqī* (oriental) in the title, Barghouti links literature and music as well as different time periods and spaces (East-West). Claude Lévi-Strauss underscores in *Myth and Meaning* the viable link between music and narrative creation. He focuses on forms like the opera, sonata, rondo, and symphonies that are embedded in Western thought and culture. Lévi-Strauss asserts the futile way of approaching a musical piece or a myth as "a continuous sequence"[557] that develops from beginning through middle to end and rather argues for a reading that is immersed in "totality."[558] The end tells us something about the beginning, and the meaning only becomes clear by taking a holistic approach to the piece and engaging with it. Barghouti's poem is a reading of the classical *qaṣīda* in its totality as a constructed system of social and political terms and a unified style, which is substituted with transgressions as a ritual.

The jazz reference situates the poem within the realm of openness and allows for the transgression of geographic and temporal limits. Although jazz music is still constructed

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[556] "أغيِّر في الاقتباس، عادة، في محاورة مع التراث. لذلك فهو تحويل."
Barghouti, "Jazz sharqī," 231.
[557] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Myth and Music," in *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 2009), 39-48.
[558] Ibid, 40.

upon rules and structures, improvisation is integral to the medium, and emblemizes Barghouti's call to challenge normative rules and to encourage personal experimentation and expression. William "Billy" Taylor, the famous jazz composer, writes that jazz "is both a way of spontaneously composing music and a repertoire, which has resulted from the musical language developed by improvising artists. As an important musical language, it has developed steadily from a single expression of the consciousness of *black* people into a *national* music that expresses American ideals and attitudes to Americans and to people from other cultures all around the world."[559] Jazz, thus, has managed to move to a wider national and even global human sphere. Jazz, in other words, is a representation of establishing roots, defining an identity, and opening it up to a wider audience. While doing that, it brings together the personal and the communal, the specific and the general, and thus represents an appropriate juncture between the improvised and the fixed as discussed above.

In general, the classical *qaṣīda* has three main parts that are mirrored by specific themes.[560] The link between myth, rituals, and the Arabic *qaṣīda* has been expanded in Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych's book *The Mute Immortals Speak*. The main argument that she presents is that "this poetry is ritual in both form and function," and that such structures as the tripartite of *nasīb*, *raḥīl*, and the main purpose of the poem, are not haphazard, but rather serve as a vehicle for the unfolding of the ritual.[561] In this poem, Barghouti adopts the tripartite structure and presents it, in line with classical sensibilities, in a non-haphazard way. However, the reconceptualization of the structure portrays a departure in the way rituals are used and presented.

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[559] William "Billy" Taylor, "Jazz: America's Classical Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 14, no. 1, (Winter, 1986): 21.

[560] 1. The *nasīb* in which the poet/speaker laments the ruins of where his beloved once lived. 2. The *raḥīl* in which the poet/speaker decides to move forward towards the future and to leave the past behind. This part often entails the description of the animal used for the journey. 3. The last part is that of the main purpose of the *qaṣīda* (the call for freedom, in the case of Barghouti's poem).

[561] She identifies two main rituals: rite of passage and sacrifice. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 4.

Muhsin al-Musawi argues that despite this familiar structure, the pre-modern *qaṣīda* includes aspects of "subordination" and "resistance."[562] The tripartite structure of the *qaṣīda* seems to be in line with the normative social and literary life of the time. However, as al-Musawi points out, "this alliance between power and the use of a specific poetic form cannot be taken at face value as representative."[563] Al-Musawi notes that there are practices of 'transgression' that might make use of some normative aspects but situate them in "a new context for further experimentation."[564]

A clear stylistic difference between the classical tripartite of the *qaṣīda* and the present poem is that the tripartite structure in Barghouti's text can be easily identified from the first page. Instead of elongated consecutive sections, the three main tropes in Barghouti's poem follow one another quickly. It is as if Barghouti wants them to be presented adjacently rather than sequentially, creating a form of embroidery (see section 1.6). The first line of the first stanza starts with the *nasīb* and the evocation of the beloved:

بيدي رميتُ حبيبتي للمدِّ فانحسرتْ مع الماضي يدايْ[565]

> With my own hands, I threw my lover into the tides, so my hands receded along with the past

The second line continues with what we can call the *raḥīl*, where the speaker goes on a journey and fights tigers in the forests:

صارعتُ في الغاباتِ أنواع نمورٍ جرحتني جروحاً[566]

In forests, I wrestled with different kinds of tigers that injured me greatly

[562] Al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry*, 239.
[563] Ibid., 245.
[564] Ibid., 243.
[565] Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 225.
[566] Ibid.

The aim of the poem is stated clearly afterwards. The speaker declares his departure from a group (his tribe), a negation of what the collective wants him to be, and presents his determination to transform:

ما كنت ما كنت أرعى الإوزَّ وماعزَكمْ
في جبالٍ لكمْ
ما كنت نايْ.

كنت الفراغَ الذي في داخل النايِ[567]

I was not. I was not herding the geese and your goats
In mountains of your own
And I was not a ney.

I was the void inside the ney.

The initial stylistic transgression is in the immediacy of the declaration. The first two parts come as echoes to the classical structure, while the third becomes the central message that the speaker/poet wants to develop in the poem.

Hamilton Gibb views the *nasīb* as "an elegiac reminiscence of love; its essential emotional element is the evocation of parting."[568] While the *nasīb* is based on the forced and unwanted departure of the beloved from the speaker, the speaker in Barghouti's poem confesses that he was the one who drove his beloved away. Barghouti keeps the "evocation of parting,"[569] but he changes the action upon which this parting concurred. Instead of "reminiscence," the speaker is immersed in a sense of loneliness, anguish, and struggle:

ولمَّا بقيتُ لوحدِيَ داستْ عليَّ خطايْ.[570]

And when I was alone, my footsteps trod over me.

Although the speaker is on his way to achieving this seclusion, he is anguished by his own self. The 'steps' here are important and recur again at the end of the poem. The steps are

[567] Ibid.
[568] Hamilton Gibbs, *Arabic literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 16.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 225.

the metonym of the act of moving, in other words a bodily act that set his journey into motion. Besides this physical movement, steps suggest a rhythm in poetics. Steps indicate the rhythmic units that make up the poem, and in this sense, the line could refer to the speaker/poet's being hindered by his own steps, his own poetic rhythms. The self, although it aims for transformation, is still hindered by what it has been taught and told by others (the tribe). He cannot compose and create freely because the learned rhythms are too dominant. Similarly, Barghouti could be referencing the journey away from classical Arabic poetics and into a space of self and poetic discovery. Read this way, the poem invites the reader, from the first three lines, into a process, a ritual, of change and transgression.

The poem can be read as representative of personal transformation away from the adherence to established foundations like a lover, a tribe, or conformed poetic metrics. This individualistic digression comes out when the speaker declares:

حكمتي في خطوتي والدربُ خطٌّ مائلٌ أو زائلُ
مستفعلن أو فاعلا تن فاعلُ[571]

My wisdom rests in my step, and the path is a bent or an evanescent line
mustafʿilun or *fāʿilātun fāʿilū*

Although the steps seem at first to be an obstacle in the speaker's paths, this section shows a change in perspective, where the speaker believes that they will lead him to new discoveries. As shown in the first line here, the step contains his wisdom despite the irregularity and invisibility of the path. The second line, which is a line of *ʿarūḍ* (prosody), asserts the speaker's experimentation with meters and rhythms and makes it part and parcel of the construction of the poem. It is what Geert Jan van Gelder reads as the interaction between "sound" and "sense" in classical Arabic poetry. In his book *Sound and Sense in*

[571] Ibid., 226.

Classical Arabic Poetry, van Gelder provides examples of classical poetry in which even "dummy words used in prosodical analysis" help in creating the meaning of the poem.[572]

In the prosodical line, Barghouti mixes different rhythms that do not belong to the same *baḥr* (meter). The rhythmic units or feet (*tafʿīlāt*) (the "dummy words")[573] of *mustafʿilun*, *fāʿilātun*, and *fāʿilū* do not come in the same classical meter.[574] In addition, he adds "أو" ("or") as part of the rhythmic unit, thus transgressing the confinements of poetic meters, which are derived from the root *f-ʿ-l*. Rhythms, in other words, become part of the content as they are introduced as a line in the poem and not merely as the rhythmic structures of the poem.

The two lines assert the bodily-poetic analogy, where the physical movement (step) in the first line is mirrored in the rhythmic foot (*tafʿīla*) in the second line. The ability to innovate and transgress over the fixated *buḥūr* (meters) by mixing the different rhythmic units captures the ritual of transgression that Barghouti implements in the previous line where the (poetic) path is no longer cemented. While these rhythmic units (*tafʿīlāt*) have served as the backbone and the adopted path in the history of Arabic poetry,[575] they are similarly malleable and evanescent elements that the poet can mould according to his steps and wisdom. Instead of the overpowering effect that the steps had on the speaker in the initial part, it seems that he has regained the control of his body, movement, and steps.

Van Gelder shows how many poets have deployed rhythmic units to criticize the science of Arabic prosody (*ʿilm al-ʿarūḍ*) as a futile and a nonsensical science, and mock its

[572] van Gelder, *Sound and Sense*, 23.
[573] Ibid.
[574] Each meter is made of specific rhythmic units constructed by sequences of short and long syllables. The rhythmic units are not fixed, and they have many variations depending on their position in the poetry line. See: Ibid., 29-34.
[575] For more on the topic of rhythms and meters in Arabic poetics, See Barghouti's piece "al-Īqāʿ wa al-ruʾyā." In it, Barghouti argues that Arabic poetics and musicality is larger than the limits of al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad's designated *buḥūr* (158). Hussein Barghouti, "al-Īqāʿ wa al-ruʾyā," in al-Sūdānī, Murād. "Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī" (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 151-160.

founder al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad.[576] It cannot be ascertained whether Barghouti knew about all of the examples of prosodical use in some classical poems. However, the quoted lines of Ibn al-Rūmī in van Gelder's text are also discussed in one of Barghouti's texts.[577] Barghouti starts "Handasat al-qaṣīda" with the two lines of Ibn al-Rūmī as an example of classical poetry that invites that which might be seen as "superfluous"[578] or "meaningless"[579] (i.e. the mentioning of the rhythmic units) as a way of building the meaning of the poem. In any case, this reference to al-Rūmi's two lines indicates Barghouti's awareness of the use of prosodical which are reflected in his poem as was seen above. Barghouti's allusions to the classical form of Arabic poetry and to different poets from the pre-Modern era, and the shared technique of "metrical speech"[580] reveals the dynamic interplay and connection between past and present that Barghouti portrays. More importantly, Barghouti shares with these poets a critical view of al-Khalīl's conceptions of poetics. Barghouti argues that the study of prosody should extend al-Khalīl's limited "forms" of meters and rhythmic units.[581] This rupture from the traditional forms of writing are nonetheless done through the engagement with the known parameters of Arabic metrics.

Another prominent trope in the *qaṣīda* is the role of his tribe and the ways in which the poet/speaker defines himself vis-à-vis their social and historical dominance. Instead of counting the virtues of his people and the noble bloodline to which he belongs, the speaker

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[576] Some of the critics of the science of prosody that van Gelder introduces include al-Jāḥiẓ (868), Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 1001), Ibrāhīm ibn Isḥāq (d. 994). See van Gelder, *Sound and Sense*, 24-25.

[577] The lines read:

"مستفعلن فاعلن فعولُ مستفعلن فاعلن فعول
بيت لمعناك ليس فيه معنى سوى أنَّهُ فضول"

"*mustafʿilun fāʿilun faʿūlun/ mustafʿilun fāʿilun faʿūlū*
…is a line like you: there's nothing in it except superfluities". Translation by van Gelder. Ibid., 23.
The Arabic lines are taken from Barghouti's text "Handasat al-qaṣīda," 174. The last *tafʿīla* in the first hemistich should have a *nūn* at the end (*faʿūlun* and not *faʿūlū*). The omission is probably a typographical error.

[578] "زائدٌ عن الحاجة"
Ibid.

[579] Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense,* 23.

[580] Ibid.

[581] Barghouti argues that in order to grasp a better feeling and understanding of modern Arabic poetry, new variations of rhythmic units and new patterns of short and long syllables which go beyond al-Khalil's set rules. For more on this, see "Barghouti, "al-Īqāʿ wa al-Ruʾyā," 159.

presents himself as being at odds with them. This sense of personal loss motivates the poet/speaker to break loose from his people and to go on a journey of self-discovery. This is further reiterated by the speaker in this calling-out to his people:

سوفَ يحرسني اللهُ أو قدمي
أو قــرُّ[582] هــــذا البـــــرِّ أو قلـــمي
أو صرُّ هذا الإرثِ من عدمِ
اتركوني، نويتُ الرحيلَ[583]

I will be protected by God, or my foot
Or the frigidness of this land, or my pen
Or the humming of this tradition coming from the void
Leave me alone, I have intended to leave.

The poet/speaker is convinced of his desire to leave and declares the dimensions of protection that he has: God, his feet, nature, his pen, and heritage. These five powers are at the crossroads between the metaphysical (spiritual/inspirational), the bodily (his foot), the physical (harsh nature), and the cultural (heritage). These are the dimensions that he, in his ritual of transgression, relies on. Similar to the ritual of reversal, Barghouti does not denounce the spiritual, the physical, or the traditional. However, he uses them as a threshold and a surface, upon which new and deeper conceptions of the poetic can be explored (see section 1.3). The foot is a synecdoche to the bodily movement and journey. The steps which were hindering him at first, and then become his guide on his journey, have now been replaced by a stronger symbol which functions as his protection. This strength that the bodily attribute of stepping has gained throughout the poem mirrors the speaker/poet's confidence in his poetic abilities and in his motivation to continue the journey.

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[582] In two footnotes, Barghouti explains the meaning of the two words:
قرّ: برد شديد.
صرّ: صوت شديد (مثلا، صوت الريح).
The first word translates as: extreme cold and the second one as a lound sound (the sound of the wind, for example).
Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 227.
[583] Ibid.

The protagonist in the classical *qaṣīda* realizes that the past is gone, and that his beloved has left, and yet he takes the time to recollect some of his memories with her. Similarly, the recollections of the protagonist in "Jazz sharqī" are erotic, with lengthy lines describing his beloved's physical beauty and the intimate moments they shared. The two moments of recollections are as follows:

وتعرَّتْ ليلتَها كالنجمةِ فلففتها بالعباءةِ، مرت خشونةُ كفيَّ على
حلمتيها، فحنيتها فوق شاهدةِ قبرِ امريء القيسِ،
قالت: " أنا آخرُ الآثار المكتشفةْ." [584]
....

عادةً ما كانت تعودُ إليَّ في حلمي، وتجثو كاللبؤةِ،
عاريةً، على أربعٍ فوق الرملِ المهجور أمامي، وتهزُّ
شعرَها، ناظرةً خلفها، نحو الأسدِ اللذيذِ حين كانَ
قمرُ البحرِ الميّت يغسلُ الرملَ ويرسم ابيضاضاً
صاعداً نحو أديرةٍ معلقةٍ في جبلِ قُرُنْطُلِ. [585]

That night, she stripped down like a star, so I wrapped her with a cloak. The coarseness of my hands brushed against her nipples. I bent her on the headstone of Imruʾ al-Qays' grave.
She said: "I am the last of the discovered ruins."
…
Often, she would return to me in my dream, like a lioness,
she kneels on all four, naked, on top of the abandoned sand in front of me. She flails her hair, while looking behind her towards the delicious lion.
At the time, the Dead Sea was washing the sand and drawing a whiteness that rises up towards convents hanging in the *Qurunṭul* Mountain.

In the first memory, the protagonist describes one intimate encounter with his beloved and situates it in pre-Islamic Arabia by stating that he bent her "on the headstone of Imruʾ al-Qays' grave." This echoes Imruʾ al-Qays's own sexual descriptions in his *qaṣīda*. The pre-Islamic poet narrates at length his seductions, affairs, and encounters with married or nursing women (Umm al-Ḥuwayrith and Umm al-Rabāb), or virgins. The section expresses episodes of "illicit, liminal sexuality" and portrays the poet's still unattained rite of passage and

[584] Ibid., 228.
[585] Ibid., 229.

maturity.[586] The speaker here seems to be falling in the same "arrested development"[587] as Imruʾ al-Qays in his pre-Islamic poem. The two descriptions in "Jazz sharqī", which span geographically from the Arabian desert to the Dead Sea and the *Qurunṭul* Mountains, still portray the male speaker as a "lion" who is in power and control of his beloved's body.

Barghouti reconfigures and transgresses this dynamic in his poem by shifting the focus and power from the speaker towards the beloved. In another section, the readers are given the chance to hear the female's story. The language suddenly shifts from classical Arabic to colloquial Arabic, specifically the Palestinian dialect. The female speaker is re-appropriated, from a person of the past in Arabia, to a woman who speaks in the local dialect. The female gives a heated monologue about how she met her previous lover, an Arab prince, and how his ney playing made her fall in love with him. The section reads:

"عندما يعزفُ ذاك الأميُر على نايهِ الأحمرِ"، قالت،
" كاللَّحنِ النازلِ نحو غروبٍ ألتفُّ على
ما يخرجُ منهْ ... يَمآيْ لَمَّنْ عزفْ عالنايْ يَمآيْ[588] ....
يَمآي لَمَّنْ عزفْ عالنآي يَمآي النارِ الخضْرا اللّي الدَّفا
منها دخلْ ذكرايْ يَمآيْ! .
صرتَ نا وهُوْ أنا، بس الوجعْ يَمآي مثلِ الميجَنا،
لَمَّنْ أنا وهُوْ صرنا أنا[589]

'When that prince plays on his red ney' she said,
'Like a descending tune towards a sunset I wrap myself around what comes out of it…
Oh mother when he played on the ney oh mother….
Oh mother when he played on the ney oh mother. The green fire, from where warmth is derived, entered my memory oh mother!
I and he became me, but the pain oh mother was like the *mayjanā*[590]
When he and I became me.

The female figure has become the speaker, and the object of interest is not the male protagonist, but rather this long gone Arab prince. This alteration of the language (from *fuṣḥa*

[586] Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, 261.
[587] Ibid.
[588] This line is the refrain line from a song entitled Yammāy, which Barghouti wrote for the Palestinian band Ṣabrīn. The song, narrated by the same female speaker here, expresses her love and passion for this Arab prince (*yammāy*- 'oh mother'). Hussein Barghouti, "Yammāy," in *Jāy il-Ḥamām*. Recorded at Sabreen Studio. Jerusalem. 1994.
[589] Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 231-232.
[590] A traditional Palestinian style of singing.

to colloquial), furthermore, arches a connectedness in space from Arabia to Palestine. Barghouti, by giving the beloved a voice, a story, and control over her body, transgresses the typicality of the *qaṣīda*. The main transgression is the representation of the female body. The body, portrayed as a sexual entity in the male narration, attains a state of spirituality when it reaches the union with the beloved. This transgression is pushed further when it is the female speaker who fulfils the traditional *nasīb* of lamenting the physical and emotional loss of the beloved, and of fulfilling the poetics of *qaṣīda* rituals, while attaining maturity and a rite of passage. The female's narration leads the way into an image that revokes the grave of Imruʾ al-Qays. This time, however, it is not the weak sexual body of the woman that is highlighted, but her transformative ability as can be seen here:

قرب قبرِ امرئ القيسِ، كانت لوحةً، فظةَ الملمسِ،
تكعيبيةً، عينُها خلف
رأسٍ كان مشقوقاً، من النصف، باللونين
الأحمرِ والأسودِ. بعدٌ ثالثٌ كان للرؤيا[591]

> Near the grave of Imruʾ al-Qays, there was a painting, rough to the touch,
> It was a cubist painting. Her eye is behind
> a head that was cracked in the middle. It was in the two colours:
> Red and black; there was a third dimension for the vision.

The sexual description of the female body at the grave of Imruʾ al-Qays is transformed towards the end of the poem into a cubist painting, which still takes the body as its focal point but at the same time distorts its physical traits. This confused body – as portrayed in the eye and the head – is precisely what gives a new visionary angle; the body (both the corporeal and the poetic) can cross the limits of its form.

The last transgression to be discussed here is Barghouti's movement between different art forms as a technique in constructing his poem. 'Jazz' in the title positions the poem as a musical piece that is performed (and therefore heard). The piece, however, is written in words (poem) that requires it to be read (and therefore seen). These movements

[591] Ibid., 234.

between the arts and the senses are related, as Northrop Frye tells us, to ritualistic acts[592] that are tied to the cycle of nature. To quote him:

> Some arts move in time, like music; others are presented in space, like painting. In both cases the organizing principle is recurrence, which is called rhythm when it is temporal and pattern when it is spatial. Thus, we speak of the rhythm of music and the pattern of painting; but later, to show off our sophistication, we may begin to speak of the rhythm of painting and the pattern of music. In other words, all arts may be conceived both temporally and spatially…Literature seems to be intermediate between music and painting: its words form rhythms which approach a musical sequence of sounds at one of its boundaries, and form patterns which approach the hieroglyphic or pictorial image at the other. The attempts to get as near to these boundaries as possible form the main body of what is called experimental writing.[593]

The transgression of the female body takes shapes in different crossings: from the realm of physicality:

وتعرَّتْ ليلتَها كالنجمةِ فلففتها بالعباءةِ[594]

to the musical register (through the ney):

كاللَّحنِ النازلِ نحو غروبٍ ألتفُّ على
ما يخرجُ منهُ[595]

and finally, a cubist painting:

قرب قبرِ امرئ القيسِ، كانت لوحةً، فظةَ الملمسِ،
تكعيبيةً.[596]

Barghouti uses music in the title to contour the transgressive moves away from classical forms of art. Music, in the form of *ʿarūḍ*, is also used as part of the poetic expression and content of the poem. The break in the typical musicality of an *ʿarūḍ* line exemplifies the subject matter of transgression. The characteristics of the cubist painting are

[592] For more on the connection between the arts and rituals see, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music,* trans. Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin Books, 1993). Barthes even links ancient rituals to martial arts (specifically wrestling) where there is a "spectacle." (Roland Barthes, "The World of Wrestling," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 13.
[593] Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," 224-225.
[594] Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 228.
[595] Ibid., 231.
[596] Ibid., 234.

used as ways of conceptualizing ideas in the poem. The notion of deconstruction and reconstruction in cubism is used as a way of championing new poetic visions.

The poem ends with a Quranic invocation, specifically that of sūrat al-Naml.[597] Barghouti applies "this dynamic tension" between the *qaṣīda* as a "profane antitext" and the "Qur'ānic sacred text."[598] The concluding lines of the poem delineate a beginning for finding new realms of personal and poetic discoveries. The section starts with a question:

أين تتجهُ التفاصيلُ التي تبحث عن لوحةٍ لم تكتملْ؟[599]

Where do the details, searching for a painting that is yet to be completed, go?

The poem is not conclusive, but rather produces more details that are to be followed and discovered. The speaker/poet says that he will take these details through what can be read as an actual reference to a ritual or a procession ("with a drum of rhythmic gold"[600]), into the verse. The movement of the procession is one that parallels what happens in the Quranic verse; one ant is leading other ants to their homes to save them from being stepped on by Sulaymān. The speaker in the poem narrates to his listeners/readers:

قالت نملةٌ "يا أيُّها النملُ ادخلوا مساكنَكم"
سيدوسُ سليمانُ علينا، وجندُهُ، وأسمعُ الخطواتِ، وإيقاعها،
وبها نداسُ ويقتلنا الاختباءُ[601]

An ant said: 'O ants, go into your homes'
Sulaymān and his soldiers will step on us. I can hear the steps
And its rhythms.
We will be stepped on, and hiding will kill us.

---

[597] "And when they came to the Valley of the Ants, one ant said, 'Ants! Go into your homes, in case Solomon and his hosts unwittingly crush you.'" ("al-Naml," verse 18, in *The Qur'an,* trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 240.

[598] Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, xi. This allusion to the *qaṣīda* and the Quran are typical to Arabic writings. What produces Arabic culture, and literature, is "a mixture of traditional factors, pre-Islamic and Islamic…and new foreign factors rising from the Arab's interaction" with different cultures and languages (Fakhreddine, *Metapoesis in the Arabic Tradition*, 21).

[599] Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 234.

[600] "سأسوقك سوقاً، بدفٍّ من الذهب الإيقاعيّ."
Ibid.

[601] Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 234.

Barghouti ends his poem, similar to how he started it, by referencing the step (*khuṭwa*/ *khuṭuwāt*). The steps in the poem indicate a movement away from the clinging to Arabic *buḥūr* and rhythms, which have imprisoned Arab poets and trod on their freedom and creativity.

Although a clear contextualization to contemporary places and events is not explicit in the poem, it is nevertheless an *engagé* piece in the sense that it spells out a technique of resistance, change, and transgression. The poem is enriched by many literary references, and attests to a great level of inspiration. This shows Barghouti's engagement with previous literary productions and his ability at bringing different poets, time periods, and linguistic and artistic registers in conversation. As this section argues, there is an interplay between the corporeal and the literary bodies, which represents a key to understanding the poem. References to the physicality of the body, as in the steps for example, allude to the need for different poetic movements and rhythmic changes.

4.7 Third ritual – Metamorphosis

As the body and its ability to transform has been the impetus of this dissertation, the last ritual to highlight in relation to Barghouti's writing is metamorphosis. The ritual of metamorphosis constitutes a central ritual in the mythical consciousness.[602] What Barghouti is portraying in the following excerpts is a corporeal and poetic metamorphosis. The first part returns to the notion of space explored in chapter 3, and the second part to the notion of language in chapter 2.

[602] Marina Warner explains her reason for researching metamorphosis is due to the wide deployment of the theme in artistic forms and expressions. She writes, "When I chose the theme, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self,* for the Clarendon Lectures in the Michaelmas term, 2001, I wanted to explore further and deeper the unstable, shape-shifting personae and plots I had come across in fairy tales, myths, and their literary progeny, in order to uncover the contexts in which ideas of personal transformation emerged and flourished, and to offer some historical background to the current high incidence of the phenomena, in poetry, fiction, films, video games." Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

Metamorphosis as a ritual is thematic and critical in Barghouti's conception. In his PhD dissertation (1992), Barghouti works at presenting a phenomenology of metamorphosis. For him, metamorphosis represents "a categorical, radical flux of a self-conscious entity from form to form."[603] He continues, "nature changes from form to form, outer material civilization is and is Man-made, the human species is and reproduces itself and is a part of Nature."[604] Transformation of nature, man, and civilization (i.e. metamorphosis) seems to be the 'natural' course. From this, Barghouti finalizes his concept of creativity, which presumes a process of transformation.[605] Speaking about Ovid's deployment of metamorphosis, Marina Warner writes that metamorphic instances lead to "anagnorisis, or recognition, the reversal fundamental to narrative form, and so govern narrative satisfaction….stories of this kind promise us change, too."[606] An author's deployment of metamorphosis and a departure from the expected form leads eventually to a metamorphic recognition by the reader, and thus transforms the artistic sensibilities of readers, writers, and the canon.

In Barghouti's literary conception, the two mediums for metamorphosis, the thematic and the theoretical, lead to the 'body' as a faculty for sensation, perception, and creativity. The body, according to Barghouti, belongs to the "material civilization" that exists in nature, but is also made and transformed by man.[607] Metamorphosis becomes Barghouti's ritual for finding an embodiment. It forms both a destination and a journey in itself. Its ritualistic nature, thus, comes from its processual delineation as a state that is reached, but which, at the same time, constitutes a port for departure.[608] Metamorphosis is constituent on the 'I' that

[603] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," (abstract, 2).
[604] Ibid., 5-6.
[605] See ibid., 9-12.
[606] Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 19.
[607] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 3.
[608] Many years after finishing his PhD, Barghouti would refer to the metamorphosis of the body and soul in his reading of Mahmoud Darwish's *Jidāriyya*. Barghouti argues that Darwish's poem represents a form of trespassing the juxtaposition between body and soul and other binaries such as life and death. Instead, this binarism will aspire to "degenerate into an idea, a grape-vine, poetry or the absence of meaning." As Barghouti argues, the self can take innumerable forms of existence.
""ميتامورفوزيا" الجسد-الروح هذه تبحث في احتمالات أن تنحل، كثنائية، إلى فكرة أو كرمة، أو شعر، أو غياب معنى."

transforms. It is a transformation that is implanted in a willingness to surpass the space between the 'I' and the 'other.' This becomes apparent in the example from *Saʾakūn*, where Barghouti revises the death of his physical body by embedding his existence within the sounds of nature in his village. Similarly, the poetic body (the poem) in *Marāyā sāʾila* is metamorphosed through the deployment, rather than the negligence, of bodily elements of blindness and stuttering.

Following the links between body and space investigated in chapter 3, this section will look at how Barghouti uses metamorphosis as a way of imagining his existence after death. This imagination is based on the metamorphic abilities of his body, and is thus based on the ritualistic and the bodily, and not merely the abstract and the mythical. The example that follows is a cross between Barghouti's experience of the nature in his village, his position in it in relation to his decaying body, and a confrontation with the Israeli agents known as *mustaʿribūn.*

These excerpts are constructed around different changes that revolve around deformation, formation, and transformation. Similarly, the land upon which he lives suffers from acts of occupation, demolition, and a destruction of form. His walks in the mountains of his village and his narration become the vehicles for achieving metamorphosis, by looking for a different form to defy both death and occupation.

Barghouti narrates how on his walks, he kept hearing a sound that brought to mind a crying child.

Hussein Barghouti, "Jidāriyyat muḥāṣar bi al-thunāʾiyyāt," *al-Shuʿarāʾ*, no. 9 (Summer 2000): 251.
Barghouti writes this article in the summer of 2000 at the height of his illness and when he was starting to his autobiographies. This shows that Barghouti was well aware of poetic engagements with the notion of illness and death, as represented in Darwish's poem. Furthermore, it shows the connectedness between the different theoretical and literary conceptions that he utilizes, such as the notion of metamorphosis. See: Mahmoud Darwish, *Jidāriyya*, in *al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyya al-kāmila*, vol. 3, 7-105 (Amman: al-Ahliyya li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 2014).

فجأة حدث شيء غريب فعلاً. سمعت صوتاً يشبه بكاء طفل صغير، يأتي من جنائن التين والزيتون المقمرة، وقف شعر رأسي من الذهول...بدا الصوت، كأنَّه يأتي من كائن لا يُرى في هذا البرِّ الواسع.[609]

> Suddenly, something really strange happened. I heard a sound that resembles the crying of a young child, coming from the moon-lit gardens of figs and olives. My hair rose with astonishment. The sound seemed like it was coming from a being that cannot be seen in this wide land.

After trying to trace the sound to no avail, Barghouti learns from his uncle that the sound is similar to that of an animal called *ghrayriyya* that lived in the mountains but is now long extinct.[610]

In another episode Barghouti is told that a Palestinian peasant was startled in *al-dayr al- juwwānī* to see a group of armed Israelis who had water pipes with them, like Arabs. They asked him about the best location to smoke and he, frightened, told them that *al-dayr* is the best location. Barghouti realizes, because of their description, that they are not simply Israeli settlers. They belong to a group called *mustaʿribūn* whose function is to infiltrate Palestinian villages and cities in order to kill or arrest Palestinians.[611]

This realization drives Barghouti to imagine what might happen after his death:

قلت لنفسي: عمّا قريب، في ليلة مقمرة وواسعة وهادئة قليلاً، سيأتي المستعربون هنا، ويقعدون فوق خرائب الدير...ويدخنون الأراجيل...وسأمرُّ، ليلتها، بعيداً، بعيداً جداً، على الطرف الآخر من المرج المقمر...من يدري ربما يسمع المستعربون صوت تلك "الغريريا" نفسها...وربَّما سأكون أنا هذه الغريريا، ولكن ليس آخر "غريريا"، في هذه الجبال، حتماً.[612]

> I told myself: soon, on a moon-lit and a somewhat calm night, the *mustaʿribūn* will come here. They will sit on the ruins of *al-dayr.* And they will smoke the water pipes. From far far away, from the other side of the moon-lit meadow, I will pass by…Who knows, maybe they will hear the sound of that same *ghrayriyya*... and maybe I will be that *ghrayriyya.* But it will definitely not be the last *ghrayriyya* in these mountains.

Barghouti imagines how when these *mustaʿribūn* occupy his place in his favourite space (*al-dayr*), the sound of the *ghrayriyya* will haunt them. Barghouti stipulates that this sound,

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[609] Barghouti, *Saʾakūn*, 37
[610] Ibid., 40.
[611] Ibid., 73.
[612] Ibid., 74-75.

which will frighten the *mustaʿribūn*, might be his sound after death. Barghouti ends the first part of his autobiography with a paragraph that solidifies this link between himself and the *ghrayriyya*:

سألت أمّي يومها، "هل تعرفين الغريريا؟"، قالت: إنَّ حجمها كالقط، تقريباً، ولكنَّها ليست مستطيلة مثله، بل شبه دائرية. هكذا سيكون شكلي، وسأسكن في أحلام هذا الجبل. وسيحلم بي، حتماً، وسأحلمه. ولكن كيف سيكون حلم "الغريريا" بالجبل، وكيف سيحلمها الجبل؟ هذه أسئلة لا جواب عليها. ولكن لن يستطيع أحد، ولا حتى مستحضر أرواح، أن يخرجني من حلم الجبل أو يخرجه من حلمي.[613]

> That day, I asked my mother, 'do you know the *ghrayriyya*?' She said, its size is like a cat's, almost, but it is not as rectangular, but semi-circular. This is how my form will be, and I will live in the dreams of this mountain, and it will dream of me, for sure, and I will dream it. But how will the *ghrayriyya* dream of the mountain, and how will the mountain dream it? These are questions with no answer. But no one will be able to, not even a theurgist conjuring spirits, remove me from the dream of the mountain or remove it from mine.

Transforming into a *ghrayriyya* not only assures Barghouti's existence after his death, but transforms this existence into one that is unfixed and changeable. His existence is rather formed and reformed as part of the endless dreams of the mountain. So Barghouti does not only create a link with an extinct animal- which positions him in the mythical, but he stays grounded into what cannot yet be discovered. So, he blurs the relations between the mythical and the real. His existence will be through the dreams of the mountain, which are ever changing and undiscovered yet.

Esmail Nashif provides a reading of these passages in an article that interrogates the notions of transformation in Palestinian discourse. The relations between Barghouti and nature and that of nature and the Israeli agents are situated within a mythical discourse that postulates Barghouti's way of returning to the primitive and the initial as a form of emancipating the human (the Palestinian) from an unbearable reality.[614] This is a suitable understanding for the second level of transformation (the sound transformation); however,

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[613] Ibid., 75.
[614] Esmail Nashif, "Fī al-lā/Taḥawwul fī al-mumārasa wa al-khiṭāb: Ishkāliyyat al-thaqāfiyy al-Filasṭīniyy," *Qadita.net* (16 September 2011), http://www.qadita.net/featured/esmail/

the final 'dream' stage moves even further from the mythical and constitutes a space of contact with the metaphysical, the material, and historical. These shifts between the mythical, the political, and the imaginative are what constitute Barghouti's creative project. As Nashif summarizes it, Barghouti reverts to what is "pre-political" (*mā qabl al-siyāsī*) meaning "the mythical" (*al-usṭūrī*), and then moves beyond it towards what is "post-politics" (*mā baʿd al-siyāsī*). The mythical deployment in *Saʾakūn,* as Nashif reads it, allows Barghouti to transport the historical and communal feelings of loss and alienation against the usurpation of lands and the struggles against the occupation into a space of certainty, and thus peacefulness.[615] However, what is of interest here is not the point in time or the space that Barghouti is stopping at, but rather the actions he is taking in creating such movements. In other words, the historical, the mythical, or the imaginative are adjacent spaces rather than sequential modes of thinking. These are spaces that Barghouti unearths in his writing through sensorial experiences such as sounds, physical appearances, and sights (as in the example in section 3.6). This mythical story about the *ghrayriyya* is thus a narration that seems to work to cement the political rights of Palestinians and their connection to the land. More importantly, however, is the use of the body as a means of creating this narrative. The narrative is thus presented as a process that involves multiple forms of physical transformations that include dynamic acts of deterioration and constructions, rather than a pre-determined connection to the land.

The passages above incorporate different schemes of metamorphosis (transformation). The most important is the dichotomy between Barghouti's physical transformation (his eventual death and the deterioration of his body) and that of the Israeli agents and their link to the land. To start, the word *mustaʿribūn* indicates the act of making oneself Arab. This case,

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[615] "...يتحوّل التاريخيّ إلى أسطوريّ مطلق أقف عليه بأمان واطمئنان، دون ذلك القلق الوجودي..."
"…. What is the historical becomes absolutely mythological. I stand over it safely and securely, freed from existentialist angst."
Ibid.

as Barghouti sees it, is an emblem of insincere transformation, where there is a discrepancy between the outer form and the inner intention and belief. Although their outer appearance (physical form) is that of an Arab, their true and inner nature is one that goes against being an Arab. Their transformation is external and not internal. This inauthentic transformation is why they will not be able to establish a bond with the land despite their physical existence in the mountain. On the contrary, Barghouti knows that his existence in the mountain will outlive his physical form. Barghouti portrays a political tension of occupation and resistance through a juxtaposition of metamorphic appearances.

Metamorphosis, as exemplified from the passages above, has different layers:

Physical form—— physical form

Body (human)—— body (animal)

Physical form —- sensory attribute

Body (animal)—- sound without the form

Sensory attribute—- Dream

Sound without the form—dream of the mountain

This metamorphosis takes the deterioration of the body as a way of postulating a reversal in language from words (the body), into sounds (the animal), and then the disappearance of the sound apparatus. He thus uses the deterioration of his physical body as a way of reformulating new ties to the space. The subject (the 'I' of Barghouti) is reshaped from material to other material/immaterial forms. In these different shapes, the 'I' gains attributes and loses others. In the 'dream' state that the 'I' acquires the new position of being

an object– from Barghouti being the subject into being the object– thus transforming the perception to the mountain, which becomes a subject that is able to dream. This metamorphic process (life-death-life) links back to subject-object relationship explored in his PhD. Barghouti explains that subject-object relations are always present in life. Objectification is a social act in which "'the object is the name we give to our finger print."[616] Through objectification, objectifiers are transformed from "mere things of nature into subjects."[617]

What Barghouti is highlighting here is that the 'I' does not dream on its own but rather that "dreams [are] a historically determined form of self-consciousness." In order to highlight this, the mountain is transformed into a subject, while the *subjectness* of the 'I' is transformed into an object. This inherent quality of subject/object that both Barghouti and the mountain have, and which Barghouti will acquire through metamorphosis, is what stresses his connection to the land. Because the *mustaʿribūn* cannot perform a full metamorphosis, they lack a genuine relation to the mountain, and thus they fall out of the mountain's self-consciousness. In Barghouti's conception, this ability to become part of the mountain is not granted to everyone. In other words, the subject is neither "an origin"[618] nor "the projector of the dream world."[619] Barghouti or the *mustaʿribūn* are not the origin or producers of the dreams, and they cannot enforce what the mountain will dream about. Once again, this transformability (the ability to become a dream and the shifting between the subject-object) is built on a link to history, memory, and life experience. Barghouti manages to tackle issues of land, injustice, and relation to the land, but phrases them through the apparatus of the body and its transformations. Furthermore, his philosophical discussion of metamorphosis asserts Barghouti's bond with the land, allowing him to highlight his views on the illegality, de-historicizing, and uprooting nature of occupation.

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[616] Barghouti "The Other Voice," 160.
[617] Ibid.
[618] Ibid., 164.
[619] Ibid.

Barghouti manages through the ritual of metamorphosis to patch the distance between himself and the 'other' (nature). The *mustaʿribūn*, despite their physical proximity to an Arab, fail to consolidate the physical with the emotional and the land. Metamorphosis is a ritual, as it presents a process of change where his existence is found beyond the narrated and beyond what is described in the text. His existence relies on the mysterious and the not-yet discovered as it resides in the dreams of the mountain. The autobiographical work, thus, explores personal "particularity" and manages to "offer more indigenous reworkings…in response to local historical and cultural change."[620]

The body's ability to transform is echoed in Barghouti's experimentation with poetic body. In his poetry collection *Marāyā sāʾila* (*Liquid Mirrors*) Barghouti expounds metamorphic poetics through the marriage of body and poetics. This is done by going beyond the forms and structures of poetry and takes shape through the medium of the body. The collection, as explained in chapter 1, follows the journey of a blind and stuttering poet (who works as an editor of a film) who searches for the poem inside the head of the woman he loves (the director of the film). Although Barghouti writes that the inspiration and the early poems that were later developed into this collection came from studying a certain painting of Paul Klee, however, he does not name it.[621] What is probable, and taking into account the title of the collection and of many of the chapters– which are linked to mirrors– is that Barghouti might have encountered Klee's painting *In the Magic Mirror*. Klee explains in his diaries that "some will not recognize the truthfulness of my mirror. Let them remember that I am not here to reflect the surface (this can be done by the photographic plate), but must penetrate inside. My mirror probes down to the heart…my human faces are truer than the real ones."[622] Klee's statement that "art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible"[623] is

[620] Abdel Nasser, *Literary Autobiography,* 5.
[621] Barghouti, "Bayn al-shiʿr."
[622] Qtd. in John Sallis, *Klee's Mirror* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2015), 8.
[623] For more on the issue of vision/making visible in Klee's philosophy, see Sallis, *Klee's Mirror*, 35-40.

similarly highlighted in Barghouti's text, where he, intentionally, makes the creative producer of the 'poem that is in the head of the director' *blind*.



Figure 3: Paul Klee's *In the Magic Mirror* (Source: Art Institute, Chicago, 2018) [624]

The red line in Klee's *In the Magic Mirror*, follows his technique of "taking the line for a walk."[625] The line in this technique is "an *active* line, which proceeds freely."[626] The red line represents two registers of *mirroring*: 1) It shows the contours of the face of the depicted woman, 2) It represents a 'magic mirror.' In viewing the line as a mirror, one realizes that it is in fact two faces rather than one that are depicted in the picture. The red line thus functions at reflecting the actualities of a face, but also as a magic mirror that goes beyond the physicality of the face and breaks it into two. These two ways of reflection depend primarily on the perception of the viewer. The face, although immovable, and drawn on a canvas, gains movability through the red line. It is in this vein that Barghouti's collection should be read. The blind editor/poet was hoping to reflect what is in the mind of the director through writing

[624] Paul Klee, *In The Magic Mirror,* 1934, Oil on canvas, on board, 26x19 ¾ in. (66 x 50 cm), Art Institute, Chicago, copyright 2018 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-kunst, Bonn, https://www.artic.edu/artworks/111666/in-the-magic-mirror.
[625] Qtd. In Sallis, *Klee's Mirror,* 47.
[626] Ibid., 56.

down poems that follow the common stream of poetry writing. This is in a way the first register in Klee's mirror; to mirror what is there. The poet realizes at the end that in order to write this poem, he has to break through what is known and what is seen; he has to stop looking at the face in Klee's painting as one. This connection with another art form is indicated by Barghouti's dedication of the collection to Ibrāhīm al-Mzayyin, his long-time friend and painter.

Besides being blind, the poet also stutters. In this section, it will be shown how Barghouti employs the physical stuttering of the young male poet to create structural stuttering in the text. Stuttering here refers to an act that disrupts the known and the familiar rhythms and movements in speech as well as poetics. As al-Shaikh argues, physical stuttering (*al-taʾtaʾa*) becomes a way of creating the text.[627] Barghouti, thus, uses the corporeal as a mechanism of poetic expression in order to introduce his larger theoretical aim of creating movement in his collection. Physical stuttering echoes a larger conceptual aim of the poem, which is to disturb known formulations of poetic writing. In this case, stuttering falls in line with Deleuze's understanding of the concepts of style and stutter as ways of creating "lines of (linguistic, cultural-political) rupture and escape."[628] In "He stuttered," Deleuze points out how "great writers" not only have characters that murmur, whisper, or stutter, but they also manage to make their whole text stutter.[629] "Creative stuttering," he continues, "is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perceptual disequilibrium."[630] Barghouti, thus, deploys 'stuttering' as a physical characteristic of the poet in the text, as a stylistic tool in the formulations of the poem, and as critical commentary on the need to transform poetic writing.

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[627] Al-Shaikh, "Marāyā sāʾila," 120.
[628] Christa Albrecht-Crane, "Style, stutter," in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts,* ed. Charles J. Stivale (London: Routledge, 2014), 113.
[629] Gilles Deleuze, "He stuttered," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), 107.
[630] Ibid., 110.

Barghouti's collection combines prose and poetry, the prose acting as a narrative frame that sets up different events, from the meeting of the poet and the director, to their work on the film, and the police investigation that starts after his disappearance. The poetry, on the other hand, is added as experiments or drafts that the poet writes in order to try and find the poem that the director has in her head. Barghouti's mélange of genres in his collection is echoed in the belief system of the stuttering poet. In a prose introduction to one of the sections, a secret service report about the editor is published. It reads:

شاعر. ضد القيم القديمة والنظم المنبثقة عنها. هاجسه الحرية. يقول بأن الشعر قوالب لا تكفي لكي يعبر عن كل ما فيه، وبدل التضحية بالحرية سيضحي بالقوالب.[631]

> He is a poet who is against old values and the regimes emerging out of them. Freedom is his obsession. He says that poetry is forms that are not sufficient to represent all which lies within him. Instead of sacrificing freedom, he will sacrifice the forms.

The poem changes into including prosaic and poetic sections. The literary in the narrative of the collection becomes a portrayal of the critical aims and inspirations of Barghouti. The body's 'disorder' (stuttering) is utilized as a way of disrupting the order of poetic forms. The young man writes a poem in which the rhythms follow his stutters. A section of a poem reads:

أنت من أمْ

مةٍ شاعرةْ
وتعلّمت منها التخفي بالكلام

وأبْ
أُمْ
ميْ.[632]

Both the young poet and Barghouti utilize the physical stuttering to create new rhythms in the poem. Using stuttering to create multiple meanings makes it difficult to give

[631] Barghouti, *Marāyā sā'ila*, 17.
[632] Ibid., 21.

an English translation. The stuttering introduces a pun in the words: *umm* (mother) and *ummā* (community), and *umm* (mother) and *ummī* (illiterate). The one complete line

وتعلمت منها التخفي بالكلام

explains that the poet has learnt from his community/mother to use words to hide. The poet has decided not to hide behind words and instead explore the innovative nature of language to create new rhythms and meanings, thus transforming poetry from something fixed and hidden to that of the bodily, something lived and experienced. It furthermore restores poetry to its oral origins. What the reader reads on the page is what and how the editor utters the words. The blindness and the stuttering metamorphose the poem from its state as a product of writing and revision into a processual entity that is transformed and inspired by the body of its producer. Stuttering functions on two levels, in the content of the poem and in the structure of the poem. The duplicity in persona (the poet-editor/Barghouti as a poet) and the creation of poetry (the collection and the poems within the collection) is used as a ritualistic example in which "saying is doing."[633]

4.8 Conclusion

The vignette with which this chapter started alludes to Barghouti's conception of creative writing, where certain aspects such as the ink, the paper, and light are necessary tools for the process. Besides these mechanics of writing, rituals are posited as the impetus of creativity. Rituals, as exemplified in moonlight and the soft light of candles, produce a realm of ambiguity and allusiveness[634] that lead the way into the undiscovered and the not-yet understood.

[633] Deleuze, "He Stuttered," 107.
[634] " شيء يجعل الأشياء غامضة، موحية، أكثر مما أفهم"
"Something that makes things mysterious, allusive, and beyond what I can understand."
Barghouti, "Laḥẓat al-Khalq," 225.

This chapter serves as the final chronological stop in the dissertation. Despite the centrality of myths and mythical thinking in Barghouti's writings, the chapter proposes a ritualistic reading that reconfigures myths and the mythical appropriation of Barghouti within the realms of the experienced and the formative. Understanding Barghouti's writings ritualistically works against boxing him in the compartment of philosophical writings that are not in direct contact with the social, political, and literary circumstances. Thus, instead of saying that Barghouti's calls for immortality through a union with nature ruminates around the spiritual/ philosophical/ mythical and thus elevates the human to the state of the mythic, these rituals, taken as tools for writing as well as reading, become vehicles for bringing the otherworldly to the level of the atrocious, the real, and the mundane. Myths, as explanatory systems, seem to function in a space of otherworldliness, with a fixated embodiment. Rituals, on the other hand, make disembodiment/ embodiment the only way of functioning, thus transporting death, after-life, existence into the realm of 'reality' and worldliness. The first page of Barghouti's *Ḥajar al-ward*[635] contains descriptions that might, at first, be read as an echo to Barghouti himself. It reads:

أتى كنبيٍّ ومضى كنبيٍّ من عالمٍ آخر ومن حُلُمٍ مختلفٍ، علامة بعثت من قوى أعلى...لم يك ما يكفي من الأرض لخطوة حين جاء، ولا ما يكفي من السماء لوجهٍ ماطرٍ أو لدعوةٍ، ولم يكُ أيضاً حزيناً، وكأنّهُ شعر بإزاحةٍ من المكانِ، شَعَرَ كمن جاءَ يودِّعُ سكّان الأرضِ.[636]

> He came like a prophet and departed like a prophet. He was from another world and with a different dream. A sign sent from higher powers…When he came, there was not enough space on this earth for a single step of his. Nor was there enough space in the sky to encompass [his] rainy face or [his] call. Yet, he was not sad. It is as if he sensed his dislodgement from space. He felt like someone who came to say goodbye to the Earth's inhabitants.

[635] The text was Barghouti's most favourite production, but equally his most difficult. See al-Sūdānī, "Mudawwanat," 70-72. Barghouti declared before his death that his wish is to be able to write a sequential text to *Ḥajar al-ward*.
[636] Barghouti, *Ḥajar al-ward,* 5.

Barghouti's death at a relatively young age, his different modes of writing, and his multi-registered thoughts might lead one to read the mythic figure, who resembles a prophet and comes with a calling, as biographic. While that is one way of interpreting the text, this chapter has argued that looking at Barghouti's production as ritualistic provides a space for "erotics of art"[637] against the backdrop of interpretation, as Sontag argues (see introduction). It is, thus, the body, and its unfolding that guide the reading of Barghouti's works. By approaching Barghouti through the prism of the body, his experience resides in the yet undiscovered and that which goes beyond the fixed and the labelled. This does not mean a blurring of myths, but rather a proposition of reading them ritualistically. Barghouti alludes to this idea when he argues that:

> إحدى مهمات النص عندي هي خلق الأساطير الجديدة وفقدان ما تخلقه، أيضاً، تفقد نفس الأسطورة.[638]
>
> One of the roles of the text for me is the creation of new myths and losing what it has created. That is to say, it also loses the same myth [that you have just created].

A ritualistic text, as proposed in this chapter, is one that takes at its initial stage a body (human/poetic) as a form of representation, but then, in its acting, detangles from that body. However, because the existence of a body is needed, another form of embodiment is simultaneously being conducted. Reversals were highlighted by showing how Barghouti creates the myth of Inanna by disrupting the specific symbolic attributes of the mythic figures. The overarching notion of reproduction, that is representative of the myth, is taken as inspiration for recreating the narrative. This is an example of taking the mythical narrative as a surface through which new depths can be uncovered. The second ritual of transgression refers to an engagement of the past that intertwines the poetic heritage with breaks in structure, form, and content. The classical *qaṣīda* becomes an adjacent stitch that aids, without subordination, the poetic body to transform. Besides the embroidery of time,

[637] Susan Sontag. "Against Interpretation," 14.
[638] Barghouti, "Hussayn al-Barghūthī," 207.

Barghouti works at challenging the known discourses of poetic reading, thus unfamiliarizing the experience of reading and reception. It is this engagement with the unfamiliar that is the essence of creativity. The link between body and land was investigated in chapter 3. The connection is not mythical, in the sense that Barghouti's body to nature does not come as fixed and packaged. Instead, Barghouti situates this bond in the ambiguous, the dreamy, and the imaginative. His metamorphosis is, thus, ritualistic: an act that reveals itself in multiple façades and in relation to the political confrontations in his village.

Conclusion

The previous four chapters provided literary analysis of some aspects of Barghouti's poetics. The main aim of the dissertation was to weave together the personal (life-death), the thematic (language, land, ritual), and the literary and theoretical. In this way, Barghouti's work exemplifies how the literary stands as a strong signpost for historical, social, and political shifts. The dissertation charted his strong position on overused and fixed terms, concepts, and themes in Palestinian and Arabic literature. It, furthermore, showed how Barghouti's questions and acts of innovation are trials of a style of writing and a way of thinking that have become very influential in contemporary Palestinian literature. The argument put forth is that Barghouti is an initiator of generic and thematic transgressions and an advocate of the dialectics of form and formation as exemplified in the acts of movement which are explored in these chapters.

The difficulty in mapping Barghouti's ideas in an 'organized' manner is due in large part to his use of difficult language, the heavy intertextuality and allusions, and the quick movement of ideas. Space, language, myth, and body are constant features in all of his works, and the call for renewal and defamiliarization is, for lack of a better word, representative of his writing. The dissertation itself played on the dialectics of form and formation, as its structure allows for a categorization of themes according to the chronology of Barghouti's life. The sequential movement from childhood, to death, and then to after-life was then deconstructed within each chapter through the theoretical prisms of beginning, space, and myth and ritual, respectively.

Chapter 1 set the scene for the ensuing close-reading chapters. It introduced six critical issues deemed central to Barghouti's poetics. Using the body as a frame, the six issues exemplified Barghouti's call for moving beyond familiar modes of expression. The freedom of the body from any social, political, or personal constraints is directly connected to the

freedom of language and artistic expression. Although most of the excerpts in the dissertation were taken from Barghouti's poetry and autobiographies, other texts such as his *Ḥajar al-ward* and his works of criticism mark an important step in Palestinian criticism: they reveal a deep engagement with the products of his time, an influence of Arabic and Western literary and social criticism, and most importantly, a literary vision that was based on destroying the reliance on a fixed reference (*marjiʿiyya*). It is from these works that the six terms were borrowed to guide the reading of Barghouti's literary works, an exercise that attests to the natural ties between criticism and literature.

Chapter 2 looked at language through the prism of beginnings. Barghouti defines a beginning as "an initial absence of the presupposed."[639] Taking cues from Said and Lyotard, the chapter presented the processes of language construction as based on continuations and breaks. The chapter interrogated the connections between memory and imagination, and the dynamic relation between the author and the reader, and presented three registers of language (pre-language, language, and post-language). The aim was to show how Barghouti's approach to language mirrors the personal and communal realities but steps further into reshaping them, as demonstrated in the examples from *Laylā wa Tawba*. The examples from Barghouti's own childhood and that of his son reveal Barghouti's transformation of his personal exclusion and his attempt at reconfiguring his nearing death.

Chapter 3 honed in on the concept of space and took Barghouti's confrontation with illness and death as its starting point. Augé's distinction between place and non-place, the notion of the 'monument,' and the links between space and illness were utilized to frame Barghouti's understanding of space. Geographic space, as represented by the land, and poetic space, as represented by genres and literary techniques, are influenced by movements that rediscover their political, social, and artistic meanings. Even at times of severe illness, pain,

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[639] "...غياب أولي للمفترض"
Barghouti, "al-Anā wa al-makān," 70.

and estrangement, literature still functions as a producer of meanings and metaphors. Space, for Barghouti, represents a stage for political commentaries and literary challenges. It is understood as a network of power relations and possibilities (*imkāniyyāt*).

Chapter 4 began with exploring 'myth' as a theme in Barghouti's writings. Myths (with their narrations, archetypes, and symbolism) entail a sense of familiarity. Benefitting from the rich research on the interconnections between myths and rituals, this chapter adopted rituals, as bodily acts, over myths, as completed narrations, as a way of reading Barghouti's poetics. The examples from "Inānnā," "Jazz sharqī," and *Marāya sāʾila* presented the rituals of reversal, transgression, and metamorphosis which acknowledge the known structures of the myth of Inanna and that of poetic writings, but question them. These interplays with the fixed structures attest to Barghouti's awareness of his literary heritage, his aim at presenting uncharted literary connections, and at inviting the reader to discover familiar stories and formats anew. The example from *Saʾakūn* reinstalls the political urgency in the life and writings of Barghouti. The ritual of metamorphosis becomes a tool for establishing connections with the land that are open for future explorations.

The three chapters, in sum, described shifts and movements that disrupt the fixed and point to discovery in modes of expression. The body in this dissertation is both a theme and a methodology. Its importance to Barghouti's personal life is profound, from growing up in the mountains and discovering nature and stories through bodily senses to witnessing the changes of his body due to his illness. Methodologically, the body is a stage for reading changes in the physical body and geographical and political shifts in the national and political body (the land), and for challenging common forms and genres of writing. The body as a lens allows us to see how the lived, the sensed, and the experienced are captured in Barghouti's writings. Rather than deeming the material secondary, the body highlights their role in the creation of the reflexive, the philosophical, and the cognitive.

There are many reasons for the growing interest in Barghouti's literature, particularly after his death in 2002. Many of the poets and writers who Barghouti mentored, some of whom had begun publishing more starting from the 1990s, represent the contemporary generation of Palestinian writers. Shifts in Palestinian literature towards elevating the marginal and the psychological and questioning the typical ways of documenting the political in life[640] meant that Barghouti's works started gaining more academic as well as public attention.[641] The Palestinian writer Akram Musallam, for example, narrates his encounters with tanks and soldiers and the murder of children during the first Intifada. He, furthermore, contours the tension between personal and political life during the post-Oslo era through the lens of his favourite sweets from childhood (*al-ḥalqūm*). Towards the end of the piece, Musallam recalls Barghouti's advice to him: "you go to the ends of the world searching for creativity. What you need, instead, is to train yourself to discover the aesthetic in the ashtray that lies in front of you."[642] The sweets become Musallam's way of expressing the political through the personal and the minuscule, against the backdrop of the grandiose political situation.

Barghouti's influence can be seen in multiple works, for example in dedications[643] that make him a participant in the formation of the new literary text, as Gérard Genette argues. Besides paratextual[644] attention, Barghouti is adapted into an intertextual figure where mentioning his name invokes a set of images and provides him with a different form of

[640] For more on this see Rahman, *In the Wake of the Poetic*, 1-29.

[641] Al-Shaikh presents in his article the shifts in the representations of 'heroism' in the cultural scene in Palestine after the Oslo agreement. In it, he alludes to the role that Barghouti, amongst other poets such as Zakariyya Muhammad, played on the upcoming generation of poets and authors in the '90s. These authors include: Maḥmūd Abū-Hashhash, Akram Musallam, ʿĀṭif Abū-Sayf, and Ashraf al-Zaghal. For more on the changes in the cultural scene after Oslo, see Abdul-Rahim al-Shaikh, "Taḥawwulāt al-Buṭūla fī al-khiṭāb al-thaqāfī al-Filasṭīnī," *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya*, 96 (Autumn 2013): 73-95.

[642] "أنت تذهب إلى أقصى الأرض بحثاً عن الإبداع، وما تحتاجه هو أن تتدرب على اكتشاف الجمالي في منفضة السجائر التي أمامك على الطاولة!"

Akram Musallam, "ʿIndama aṭʿamanī Shimon Perez ḥalqūman," *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya* 96 (Autumn 2013): 143.

[643] See for example Kifāḥ Fannī, "Qadar akīd," 199-202, and Jihād Hudayb, "Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī- Ṣawtuk al-ajash ṣafā wa raqq," *al-Karmel*, no. 76-77 (July 2003): 131-133.*al-Karmel*, no. 76-77 (July 2003): 131-133.

[644] See Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Genette provides a section on dedications as example of paratexts. See pages 117-143.

existence. This is seen in one of Ghassān Zaqṭān's poems "You're not Alone in the Wilderness."[645]

You're Not Alone in the Wilderness

In Star Mountain, by the woods, the wizard will stop me
by a passage for boats with black masts
where the dead sit before dawn in black garments and straw
masks
a passage for the birds
where white fog swims and gates open in the brush
and someone talking down the slope
and bells are heard and the rustles of flapping wings
resembling the forest passing over the mountain and nicking
the night!
...and peasants, fishermen and hunters, and awestruck
soldiers, Moabite,
Assyrian, Kurd, Mamluk, Hebraic with claims
from Egypt, Egyptians on golden chariots, nations
from white islands, Persians with black turbans,
and idolater-philosophers bending the reeds
and Sufis seeking the root of ailment...
the flapping of wings drags the forest towards the edges of
darkness!
…
In Star Mountain, by the woods,

[645] Ghassān Zaqṭān, "You're Not Alone in the Wilderness," trans. Fady Joudah, in *This Week in Palestine* 227 (March 2017), 14-15.

I will hear a familiar old voice
my father's voice throwing dice towards me
or Malek's
as he tows a blond horse behind him in his elegy
or the voice of Hussein Barghouthi
laid to rest beneath almond trees
as he instructed in the text
And my voice:
You're not alone in the wilderness!

In the poem, Barghouti's name positions him at the intersection between familiarity and wilderness. It invites back the laying of his body among the almond trees, as he dictates in his last autobiography. Barghouti is mentioned in the context in which he felt most comfortable, that of the 'unknowns' (the fishermen and hunters) and those who come from all walks of life (the Kurd, the peasants, the philosophers). He is set in the context of familiarity and adventure (wilderness), the unknown and the historical, the spatial and the temporal. In short, he is set in his own poetic conceptions of openness and discovery.

I would like to conclude by echoing Barghouti's statement at the beginning of his dissertation that "every 'conclusion' is on the road, not at the end."[646] It is this sense of incompleteness and constant pursuit of other possibilities, experiences, and perspectives that colour Barghouti's writings and life. Following this initial exercise at charting some of his central ideas in his writing and showing his awareness and engagement with Palestinian life and its literary scene, further research is needed to read Barghouti in relation to other literary

[646] Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 24.

productions.[647] A line of inquiry that I would like to follow is the relation between criticism and literary works. How can one distil insights from critical and literary works and apply them theoretically to the reading of other literary texts? Beyond the analysis of Barghouti's works, how can his literary and critical notions be used as tools for exploration? In this way, literature becomes a self-questioning field that uses all its available tools of criticism and creative writing to come up with new frames of reading. For example, how can the notion of embroidery inform us about the importance, success, and popularity of Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Malhāt* project?[648]

Another approach could be to conduct comparative analysis of Barghouti's works in relation to the many streams of literary influences. An example of this would be a literary analysis that takes Sufi elements such as allusions to Sufi scholars, and the thematic references to light, birds, and journeys as a reading lens, or a theoretical reading that explores intersections and divergences in thought between Barghouti's writings and that of others such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. Barghouti's interest in multiple disciplines and the large spectrum of influence on his thought and writing opens the space for multi-disciplinary studies that intertwine political economy, literature, philosophy, religion, and mathematics.

The literary in Barghouti's works, as this dissertation has shown, moves into the theoretical as well as the pedagogical. His works propose the making of a theory that is both defined and yet open for redefinition. The embroidery motif, for example, is both a thematic imagery in his texts as well as a poetic proposition on the mechanisms of writing. Barghouti's experience as an academic and a literary author also unpacks pedagogical questions regarding

[647] Whether these are Palestinian, Arabic, or more global. For instance, it would be interesting to investigate how experiences of divergence and discovery of new ways of political and social representation is presented in other literary examples (for example Indian writing). See for example Ulka Anjaria, *Realism in the Twentieth-Century Indian Novel: Colonial Different and Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[648] For more on Nasrallah, see Nora E. H. Parr, "Inter-textual Nation: Novel Imaginings of Palestinian Community in the Works of Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh," (PhD diss., SOAS, 2016). The *Malhāt* project consists of a series of novels that trace 250 years of the modern history of Palestine.

the relation between teacher and student and the need to break structural systems of education.

In other words, Barghouti's works serve as subject of study as well as a methodological lens that can aid in reading shifts in Palestinian and Arabic writings. His project of transformation compliments the search for a malleable writing sensibility that is aware of its position in regard to changes in society, and is, at the same time, in tune with a vision for new literary and personal discoveries.

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Summary

This dissertation moves beyond the usually imposed representative nature of Palestinian literature by taking the works of the Palestinian author Hussein Barghouti (1954-2002) as a case study. Many of Barghouti's writings were seen as detached, individualistic, and unrelated to the harsh and pressing realities of Palestinian life. The argument that is proposed in this dissertation, however, is that Barghouti's works exemplify a disruption to familiar expressions regarding notions of political engagement, illness and death, and literary innovation. The dissertation adopts the body as a thematic trope and a methodological framework for conceptualizing Barghouti's calls for creative modes of writing and cross-generic experimentations.

Guided by the personal and literary circumstances that shaped Barghouti's life and works, I look at the body through multiple dimensions: the physical body of Barghouti that is being threatened and invaded by cancer, the land of Palestine as it is similarly being threatened and invaded by occupation, and the body of the literary text, where the forms of genres and literary texts are being negotiated and contested. The dissertation uses the relation between the experiential body and the word as a way of investigating alternative modalities of thinking about literature. After setting up the body as the methodological approach of this dissertation in the introduction, chapter 1 positions some of Barghouti's main commentaries in relation to the politicization of Palestinian literature. Furthermore, it asserts Barghouti's conviction of the entanglement between literary criticism and creativity.

The following three chapters are structured chronologically according to the physicality of the body (life/death/after-life) and are respectively titled: Childhood, Death, and Myth. Chapter 2 reads childhood through the apparatus of beginnings. The chapter argues that looking at literary productions as beginnings is a tactic move for innovation. The close-reading of some of Barghouti's autobiographical episodes show how beginnings

extrapolate literary and stylistic breakages that benefit from familial, historical, and linguistic continuities.

Chapter 3 takes death as its starting point for the reading of Barghouti's approach to political engagement, power relations, and literary genres. Death, as an act that performs itself onto the body, allows for an exploration of the body as space. This chapter is concerned with the meaning of movement and how it yields corporeal, literary, and political shifts and changes. Chapter 4 delves into the interplay between myths and rituals. It explores how Barghouti's literary approaches are ritualistic in nature. Rituals are presented as literary acts that Barghouti deploys to empower the corporeal and the literary body with an agency that works beyond representation and familiar modes of writing, and the structural components of myths.

The difficulty in mapping Barghouti's ideas in an organized manner is due in large part to his use of difficult language, the heavy intertextuality and allusions, and the quick movement of ideas. However, the notions of beginning, language, land, space, ritual, myth, and body are constant features in all of his works. The body highlights its role in the creation of the reflexive, the philosophical, and the cognitive. The dissertation charts Barghouti's strong position on overused and fixed terms, concepts, and themes in Palestinian and Arabic literature. Furthermore, it shows how his questions and acts of innovation are trials of a style of writing and a way of thinking that have become very influential in contemporary Palestinian literature.

Samenvatting

Door het werk van de Palestijnse auteur Hussein Barghouti (1954-2002) als een casus studie te nemen, gaat dit proefschrift verder dan het gebruikelijk opgelegde *representatieve* karakter van Palestijnse literatuur. Veel van Barghouti's werken werden gezien als afstandelijk, individualistisch, en niet gerelateerd aan de harde en urgente realiteit van het Palestijnse leven. Het argument dat in dit proefschrift wordt gepresenteerd, is echter dat de werken van Barghouti een voorbeeld zijn van een verstoring van de bekende uitdrukkingen met betrekking tot noties van politiek engagement, ziekte en dood, en literaire innovatie. Het proefschrift gebruikt het lichaam als een thematische troop en een methodologisch kader voor het conceptualiseren van Barghouti's pleidooien voor creatieve manieren van schrijven en genre-overstijgende experimenten.

Geleid door de persoonlijke en literaire omstandigheden die het leven en werk van Barghouti hebben gevormd, kijk ik naar het lichaam vanuit verschillende perspectieven: het fysieke lichaam van Barghouti dat wordt bedreigd en aangevallen door kanker, het land Palestina dat op dezelfde manier wordt bedreigd en aangevallen door bezetting, en het corpus van de literaire tekst, waar de vormen van genres en literaire teksten worden bediscussieerd en bestreden. Het proefschrift gebruikt de relatie tussen het lichaam dat ervaart en het woord als een manier om alternatieve denkwijzen over literatuur te onderzoeken. Na het lichaam te hebben geïntroduceerd als de methodologische benadering van dit proefschrift in de inleiding, plaatst hoofdstuk 1 enkele van de belangrijkste commentaren van Barghouti met betrekking tot de politisering van de Palestijnse literatuur. Daarnaast bevestigt het Barghouti's overtuiging van de verstrengeling tussen literaire kritiek en creativiteit.

De daaropvolgende drie hoofdstukken zijn chronologisch gestructureerd volgens de fysieke regels van het lichaam (leven / dood / leven na de dood) en hebben respectievelijk de titels: Kindertijd, Dood, en Mythe. Hoofdstuk 2 beziet de kindertijd door de lens van

aanvangen. Het hoofdstuk betoogt dat door het beschouwen van literaire producties als aanvangen een tactiek ontstaat voor innovatie. Het close reading van enkele autobiografische episodes laten zien hoe de aanvangen literaire en stilistische breuken extrapoleert die profiteren van familiale, historische, en taalkundige continuïteiten.

Hoofdstuk 3 neemt de dood als uitgangspunt voor het lezen van Barghouti's benadering van politiek engagement, machtsverhoudingen en literaire genres. Dood, als een handeling die zichzelf uitvoert op het lichaam, maakt een verkenning van het lichaam als ruimte mogelijk. Dit hoofdstuk gaat over de betekenis van beweging en hoe deze lichamelijke, literaire en politieke verschuivingen en veranderingen oplevert. Hoofdstuk 4 gaat in op de wisselwerking tussen mythen en rituelen. Het onderzoekt hoe de literaire benaderingen van Barghouti ritueel van aard zijn. Rituelen worden gepresenteerd als literaire handelingen die Barghouti inzet om het fysieke en het literaire lichaam te machtigen met een agentschap dat verder gaat dan representatie en bekende vormen van schrijven, en de structurele componenten van mythen.

De moeilijkheid om de ideeën van Barghouti op een georganiseerde manier in kaart te brengen, is grotendeels te wijten aan zijn gebruik van moeilijke taal, de sterke intertekstualiteit en allusies, en de snelle opvolging van ideeën. De noties van aanvang, taal, land, ruimte, ritueel, mythe en lichaam zijn echter constante kenmerken in al zijn werken. Het lichaam benadrukt zijn rol in de creatie van het reflexieve, het filosofische en het cognitieve. Het proefschrift geeft Barghouti’s sterke stellingname weer jegens te veel gebruikte en vaste termen, concepten en thema's in de Palestijnse en Arabische literatuur, en laat zien hoe Barghouti's vragen en innovatieve handelingen proeven zijn van een schrijfstijl en een manier van denken die zeer invloedrijk zijn geworden in de hedendaagse Palestijnse literatuur.

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Curriculum Vitae

Haneen Omari was born in Jerusalem, Palestine on 18 May 1989. She received her BA degree in English and Comparative Literature (major) and Arabic literature (minor) from The American University in Cairo in 2011 (*summa cum laude*). In 2012, she received her MA degree in Comparative literature from King's College London (with Merit). She wrote a comparative dissertation entitled "Rooting Palestinian Literature of Exile: an Odyssean Reading: *Men in the Sun*, *The Pessoptimist* and *I Saw Ramallah*." After finishing her MA, she went back to Palestine where she was a lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature at Birzeit University (2013-2014). In September of 2014, she moved to the Netherlands to start her PhD at Leiden university under the supervision of Prof. Petra Sijpesteijn and Prof. Ziad Elmarsafy (King's College London). During her time in the Netherlands, Haneen attended many seminars and lectures on literary criticism, memory studies, area studies, and interdisciplinarity; and gave presentations at Leiden University, BRISMES, MESA, and ACLA. Besides working on her dissertation, she worked as a student assistant at LUCIS (2016-2017). In 2018, she started a lectureship position at Leiden University. She currently teaches pre-modern and modern Arabic literature in the Arabic Studies program, and cultural studies in the International Studies program.