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## **Unearthing Literature: The Case of Hussein Barghouti**

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## Chapter 4: Myth – Rituals as technique

خلق قصيدة أو نصّ هو فعل سحريّ، ولي فيه طقوسي، الضوء 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.<sup>481</sup>

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.”<sup>482</sup> Another author and friend of Barghouti, Rajā’ 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.”<sup>483</sup> Barghouti’s works entice a trend of writing that disrupts the familiar and champions the unfamiliar as seen, for example, in his autobiography *al-Daw’*. 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

<sup>481</sup> Barghouti, “Laḥẓat al-khalq,” *al-Shu’arā’*, no. 8 (2000): 225.

<sup>482</sup> Ṭaha writes:

"وكأني به في أيامه الأخيرة قد أدار ظهره للعلم الموضوعي، واستقبل علماً آخرَ يُقَدِّفُ إلى الصّدْرِ قذفاً."

Al-Mutawakkil Ṭāha, “Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī ḥuḍūrih al-thānī,” *al-Shu’arā’*, 5.

<sup>483</sup> "...حياتك المكتنفة شعراً وتجارب وعمفاً كأنها تغني عن عيش ألف عام."

Rajā’ Ghānim. “Ṣabāḥ al-khayr yā Ḥussayn,” in “Ṭaḥiyya ilā Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī,” ed. Akram Musallam, *Majallat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniyya* 114 (Spring 2018): 100.

Palestine.<sup>484</sup> 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 *Sa'akūn* 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 *Sa'akūn* his views of the almond trees around him and writes:

كل لوزة، عندي، أنثى عارية في موسم حج وثني...ولدت كي تقول لي سرّاً قديماً، وثنياً، ربّما، من أسراري  
الأولى.<sup>485</sup>

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

<sup>484</sup> Ghassān Zaqtān, a poet and a friend of Barghouti, writes that a copy of parts of Barghouti's *al-Daw'* in the *Kitāb fī Jarīda* series sold three million copies (Ghassān Zaqtān, "Lā astaṭī' al-kitāba 'an Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī," in "Taḥīyya 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-Daw' al-azraq. Kitāb fī jarīda*, no. 66 (February 2004) <http://www.kitabfijarida.com/pdf/66.pdf>

<sup>485</sup> Barghouti, *Sa'akūn*, 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 "Qīṣaṣ". 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.<sup>486</sup> 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-Ru'yā*, *Tūjad alfāz*, and *Marāyā sā'ila*, and his prose works *Sa'akūn* and the post-modern text *Hajar al-ward*.

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<sup>486</sup> 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.<sup>487</sup> 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.<sup>488</sup> Others highlight the embeddedness of myth in the unconsciousness of the personal and collective memory of the author.<sup>489</sup> 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,<sup>490</sup> others see the two as separate entities.<sup>491</sup> Furthermore, rituals are often approached as mirrors to larger social, political, and religious practices.

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<sup>487</sup> Rīta ‘Awaḍ, *Uṣṭūrāt al-mawt wa al-inbi‘āth fī al-shi‘r al-‘Arabi al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: al-Mu‘assasa al-‘Arabiyya 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.

<sup>488</sup> In her innovative study, ‘Awaḍ 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. ‘Awaḍ’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 (*Uṣṭūrāt 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.

<sup>489</sup> Some of the earliest studies on myth in modern Arabic literature include As‘ad Razzūq, *al-Uṣṭūra fī al-shi‘r al-mu‘āṣir: al-Shu‘arā’ al-Tammūziyyūn* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Majallat Āfāq, 1959). Khalīl Aḥmad Khalīl, *Maḍmūn al-uṣṭūra fī al-fīkr al-‘Arabi* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘a li al-Ṭibā‘a 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).

<sup>490</sup> 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.

<sup>491</sup> 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.<sup>492</sup> Ronald L. Grimes understands rituals as actions that are performed through the body and exercised through the senses. They are thus “embodied.”<sup>493</sup> 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.”<sup>494</sup>

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,<sup>495</sup> 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.

<sup>492</sup> 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.

<sup>493</sup> 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).

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> 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.<sup>496</sup> 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.”<sup>497</sup> 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.”<sup>498</sup> 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.<sup>499</sup> 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

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<sup>496</sup> 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.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Frye, “The Archetypes of Literature,” 225-226.

Barthes informs us, makes myth into “a system of communication,”<sup>500</sup> 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.”<sup>501</sup> In other words, these objects are given “particular” meanings that become part and parcel of a certain discourse.<sup>502</sup>

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.<sup>503</sup> 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.”<sup>504</sup> 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”<sup>505</sup> 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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<sup>500</sup> Roland Barthes, “Myth is a Type of Speech,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 117.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

<sup>503</sup> 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.

<sup>504</sup> Staal, “The Meaninglessness,” 4.

<sup>505</sup> 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 *Hajar al-ward*:

...انتقلت من التقليد إلى التجديد، كنتَ تستألفُ فصرتَ تستغربُ، من هنا فصاعداً الأشياءُ حرباءُ تتقلبُ وتتقلبُ،  
وروحك حرباءُ أخرى تتقلبُ وتتقلبُ معها.<sup>506</sup>

...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,<sup>507</sup> 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 *Qīṣaṣ ‘an 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 “Qīṣaṣ” that he would like to “dream history more than to follow it, and to

<sup>506</sup> In this passage, the prophet-like figure is addressing the narrator. Barghouti, *Hajar al-ward*, 65.

<sup>507</sup> See for example Hussein Barghouti, “al-Šūra al-shi‘riyya,” in Murād Al-Sūdānī, “Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shi‘r al-‘Arabī” (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 124-131. And Hussein Barghouti “‘Alāqat irādat al- Aštara bi mūsīqa al-shi‘r wa al-rasm bi al-kalimāt” in Murād Al-Sūdānī, “Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shi‘r al-‘Arabī” (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 132-138.

follow it more than to betray it” / "أحلم التاريخ أكثر مما أتبعه، وأتبعه أكثر مما أخونه".<sup>508</sup> 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 “Qīṣaṣ”, 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 Imru’ al-Qays, and they engage in conversation about his most famous poem. Barghouti provides an understanding of the poem by imagining how Imru’ 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.<sup>509</sup>

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 *hajj* (pilgrimage).<sup>510</sup>

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

<sup>508</sup> Hussein Barghouti, “Qīṣaṣ ‘an zaman wathanī,” in *Al-Sādin, al-Nāqa, Qīṣaṣ ‘an zaman wathanī*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: al-Mu’assasa al-Filasṭīniyya li al-irshād al-qawmī, 2003), 23.

<sup>509</sup> See *Ibid.*, 60-66.

<sup>510</sup> 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 Ka‘ba, Barghouti argues for example, sanctifies the shape of the circle.<sup>511</sup> 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 Ka‘ba. The same reference is then transported from the historic-fictional reference in the “Qīṣaṣ” to the present-day personal narrative of Barghouti in *Sa‘akūn* (at the beginning of this chapter).<sup>512</sup> 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 “Qīṣaṣ” “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 *Usṭūrāt al-khalq al-‘Arabiyya*, the Kuwaiti scholar Abdullah al-‘Udhri explains that in order to understand what

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<sup>511</sup> To give an example, Barghouti underscores the sacredness of certain numbers in Pre-Islamic belief and argues that it is the basis for the *mu‘allaqāt* (the famous pre-Islamic poems). Barghouti argues that the main rhythmic units (*taf‘īlāt*) 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 *Umrū’ al-Qays’* famous beginning in which he is addressing two other people. *Imrū’ al-Qays* is standing with his two interlocutors within four spaces, thus asserting the sacredness of the square and the triangle (see Barghouti, “Qīṣaṣ,” 62). For more on Barghouti’s discussion of the sacredness of the circle in Pre-Islamic times see *al-Sādin*, 315-324.

<sup>512</sup> In the *qīṣṣa*, the speaker informs us that women thought that by circling the Ka‘ba naked, the God of the moon ‘Hubal’ could impregnate them. See Barghouti, “Qīṣaṣ,” 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.”<sup>513</sup> 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-‘Udhri, the Syrian scholar Firās al-Sawwāh asserts in his book *Mughāmarat al-‘aql 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.”<sup>514</sup> 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.<sup>515</sup> 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

<sup>513</sup> Al-‘Udhri explains that his interest in myths started from childhood when his mother used to narrate to him stories from the past. Abdullah al-‘Udhri, *Uṣṭurat al-khalq al-‘Arabiyya* (London: Al Warrak Publishing Ltd. 2006), 14.

"الكي نلّم 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."

<sup>514</sup> Firās al-Sawwāh, *Mughāmarat al-‘aql al-ūlā* (Damascus: Ittihād al-Kuttāb al-‘Arab, 1976), 25.

"...فقتت عبر فصول الكتاب بتقديم ترجمة أمينة وكاملة وجرافية لمعظم النصوص الأسطورية المكتشفة في سورية وارض الرافدين...وكان هدفي الأساسي إعطاء صورة واضحة لقراء العربية عن اسطورة المنطقة."

<sup>515</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 142.

time he is “born with the work” as a “modern scriptor”<sup>516</sup> 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 (*kā’ināt wā’iya ‘āqila li-dhātiha*) and were given personifications and bodies of their own. This form of human perception is what Barghouti calls “the primitive consciousness” (*al-wa’ī al-bidā’ī*) or “the mythological” (*al-ustūrī*).<sup>517</sup>

<sup>516</sup> Barthes, “The death of the Author,” 145.

<sup>517</sup> Barghouti, “al-Ṣūra al-shi’riyya,” 124. ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād 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 ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād, *al-Fuṣūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 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."<sup>518</sup> 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.<sup>519</sup>

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

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<sup>518</sup> Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 161.

<sup>519</sup> 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.<sup>520</sup> 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-Ru’yā*. 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.

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<sup>520</sup> Barghouti, “The Other Voice,” 164.

#### 4.5 First ritual – Reversal

The first poem in the collection *al-Ru'yā* is entitled “Inānnā.”<sup>521</sup> 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.<sup>522</sup> 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,<sup>523</sup> 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<sup>524</sup> informs us that the relation between the Sumerian couple differs from that of the Babylonian and Akkadian one.<sup>525</sup> 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.<sup>526</sup> 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

<sup>521</sup> In the cited poem, the name of the goddess is written as Anānā. The correct spelling is Inānnā.

<sup>522</sup> Al-Sawwāḥ, *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql*, 1996, 311.

<sup>523</sup> 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.

<sup>524</sup> 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.

<sup>525</sup> Al-Sawwāḥ, *Mughāmarat al-ʿaql*, 1976, 437.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, 439-450.

decides, angrily, to send him in her stead to the underworld. The myth is “seasonal”<sup>527</sup> 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.<sup>528</sup> It should be noted that the poem is mythical in that it evokes aspects from the ancient Near Eastern myth of Ishtar.<sup>529</sup> 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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<sup>527</sup> 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.

<sup>528</sup> al-Sawwāh, *Mughāmarat al-‘aql*, 1996, 384.

<sup>529</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup>-June 30<sup>th</sup>, 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:

أنا يا أنا!  
أضيئي قليلاً نوافذكِ البابليَّة، بالشمعدانِ القديمِ أضيئيها!  
فإنَّ عليه نقوش وفي الشمع حفرة.<sup>530</sup>

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

<sup>530</sup> Hussein Barghouti, "Inānnā," in *al-Āthār al-shi'riyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shi'r, 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.<sup>531</sup> 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,"<sup>532</sup> 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<sup>533</sup> and explains that he is old but strong and has the ability to control the wind.<sup>534</sup> 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?"<sup>535</sup> 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؟ أنا! أنا!<sup>536</sup>

<sup>531</sup> "مطرٌ وريحٌ حولَ سورٍ مغلقٍ، والبرقُ غطى حاجبي" <sup>531</sup>

Ibid., 15.

<sup>532</sup> 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.

<sup>533</sup> "أنا شيخٌ هذي النواحي يا أنا! أنا!"

Barghouti, "Inānā," 15.

<sup>534</sup> "والريحٌ حولَ يديه ضحايا" <sup>534</sup>

Ibid., 16.

<sup>535</sup> "أو ليس يكفي أن ينوح إلهٌ على بابها?" <sup>535</sup>

Ibid., 17.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 15.

## Why these rituals? Inanna!

Inanna is, thus, engaged in a ritualistic performance:

وأنا يدها فوق شعاع الشمعدان فراش تطاير، وهي  
تحضّر روعي!  
وتتمنّم شيئاً، وتنسى جسدي!<sup>537</sup>

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.<sup>538</sup> The reactions to such rituals are also similar: there is a proliferation of chaos from both the character in the poem (Inanna),<sup>539</sup> 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:

<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>538</sup> Barghouti, "Laḥzat al-Khalq," 225.

<sup>539</sup> "يا أنانا، لماذا العيش؟"

Barghouti, "Inānnā," 17.

وطَهَّرْتُ نَفْسِي مِنْ بَقَايَا التُّرَابِ، وَمِنْ شَهْوَةِ الْحَبِيبِ.  
سَوْفَ أَطْفِئُ نَفْسِي: نِيَّةً، نِيَّةً،  
ثُمَّ أَمْشِي فَوْقَ مَاءِ الْعَالَمِ السُّفْلِيِّ: فَوْقِي النُّوْحُ وَتَحْتِي النَّحِيبُ.<sup>540</sup>

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.

رَبَّةُ الْمَاعِزِ الْأَبْيَضِ تَرَعَى مَاعِزاً،  
رَبَّةُ الزَّبَدِ الْبَحْرِيِّ تَرَعَى حَمَامَ الشَّمْسِ فَوْقَ الْمَوْجِ،  
تَرَعَى مَاعِزاً،  
رَبَّةُ الْخَضِرَةِ تَرَعَى عَشْباً أَوْ مَشْمِشاً عَاجِزاً<sup>541</sup>

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.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>541</sup> 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).<sup>542</sup> 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 أبيض الصوفِ حتى يأكل من عشبٍ داست عليه  
خطاها!  
يا ليتني ثوراً تجول قرب نهرٍ سار تحت سماها!<sup>543</sup>

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.

<sup>542</sup> Al-Sawwāḥ *Mughāmarat al-'aql*, 1976, 302.

<sup>543</sup> 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"<sup>544</sup> ("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.<sup>545</sup> 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.<sup>546</sup> In his 1999 poem "Ḥalīb Inānnā" ("The Milk of Inanna")<sup>547</sup> 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.<sup>548</sup> 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."<sup>549</sup>

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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<sup>544</sup> Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, "Unshūdat al-matar," in *Unshūdat al-matar* (Cairo: Mu'assasat Hindāwī li al-Ta'līm wa al-Thaqāfa, 2014), 123-128.

<sup>545</sup> 'Awaḍ, *Uṣṣūrat al-mawt*, 100-112.

<sup>546</sup> 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.

<sup>547</sup> Mahmoud Darwish, "Ḥalīb Inānnā," in *al-A'māl al-shi'riyya al-kāmila*, vol. 2 (Amman: al-Ahliyya li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2014), 693-697.

<sup>548</sup> Al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry*, 109.

<sup>549</sup> 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"<sup>550</sup> from his 1998 collection *Tūjad alfāz*. 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."<sup>551</sup> Transgression is thus a synonym for literary transformation and is exemplified in this poem in three ways: in

<sup>550</sup> Hussein Barghouti, "Jāzz Sharqī," in *al-Āthār al-shi'riyya* (Ramallah: Bayt al-Shi'r, 2008), 225-235.

<sup>551</sup> 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 alfāz*, which is a 'dream' collection.<sup>552</sup> Barghouti believed "in the existence of a library in the valleys of the self."<sup>553</sup> Khalid Furani provides a section in his book to what he labels "the dream"<sup>554</sup> 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."<sup>555</sup> 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-Dhubyanī (d. 604), al-A'shā (d. 625), and 'Alī 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

<sup>552</sup> 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.

<sup>553</sup> "...اعتقدت بوجود مكتبة في أغوار النفس."

Barghouti, "Hussayn al-Barghūthī," 208.

<sup>554</sup> See Furani, *Silencing the Sea*, 175-236.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

conversing with tradition. Thus, it is a transformation.”<sup>556</sup> 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”<sup>557</sup> that develops from beginning through middle to end and rather argues for a reading that is immersed in “totality.”<sup>558</sup> 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

<sup>556</sup> "أغبر في الاقتباس، عادة، في محاوراة مع التراث. لذلك فهو تحويل." Barghouti, "Jazz sharqī," 231.

<sup>557</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Myth and Music," in *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge, 2009), 39-48.

<sup>558</sup> 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."<sup>559</sup> 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.<sup>560</sup> 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.<sup>561</sup> 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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<sup>559</sup> William "Billy" Taylor, "Jazz: America's Classical Music," *The Black Perspective in Music* 14, no. 1, (Winter, 1986): 21.

<sup>560</sup> 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).

<sup>561</sup> 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.”<sup>562</sup> 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.”<sup>563</sup> 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.”<sup>564</sup>

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 فانحسرتُ مع الماضي يداي<sup>565</sup>

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 أنواعَ نمورٍ جرحتني جروحاً<sup>566</sup>

In forests, I wrestled with different kinds of tigers that injured me greatly

<sup>562</sup> Al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry*, 239.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>565</sup> Barghouti, “Jāzz sharqī,” 225.

<sup>566</sup> 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 الإوزَ وما عزكم  
في جبالٍ لكم  
ما كنت نايً.

كنت الفراغ الذي في داخل الناي<sup>567</sup>

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.”<sup>568</sup> 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,”<sup>569</sup> 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 لوحدي داست عليَّ خطاي.<sup>570</sup>

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

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Hamilton Gibbs, *Arabic literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 16.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> 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 زائلٌ  
مستفعلن أو فاعلا تن فاعل<sup>571</sup>

My wisdom rests in my step, and the path is a bent or an evanescent line  
*mustaf'ilun* or *fā'ilātun fā'ilū*

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 *'arūd* (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*

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<sup>571</sup> 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.<sup>572</sup>

In the prosodical line, Barghouti mixes different rhythms that do not belong to the same *baḥr* (meter). The rhythmic units or feet (*tafīlāt*) (the “dummy words”)<sup>573</sup> of *mustafīlun*, *fā’ilātun*, and *fā’ilū* do not come in the same classical meter.<sup>574</sup> In addition, he adds “و” (“or”) as part of the rhythmic unit, thus transgressing the confinements of poetic meters, which are derived from the root *f-‘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 (*tafīla*) 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 (*tafīlāt*) have served as the backbone and the adopted path in the history of Arabic poetry,<sup>575</sup> 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 (*‘ilm al-‘arūd*) as a futile and a nonsensical science, and mock its

<sup>572</sup> van Gelder, *Sound and Sense*, 23.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

<sup>574</sup> 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.

<sup>575</sup> For more on the topic of rhythms and meters in Arabic poetics, See Barghouti’s piece “al-Īqā’ wa al-ru’yā.” 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-Īqā’ wa al-ru’yā,” in al-Sūdānī, Murād. “Mudawwanat Ḥussayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shi’r al-‘Arabī” (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 151-160.

founder al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad.<sup>576</sup> 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.<sup>577</sup> 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"<sup>578</sup> or "meaningless"<sup>579</sup> (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-Rūmī'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"<sup>580</sup> 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.<sup>581</sup> 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

<sup>576</sup> Some of the critics of the science of prosody that van Gelder introduces include al-Jāhīz (868), Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 1001), Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq (d. 994). See van Gelder, *Sound and Sense*, 24-25.

<sup>577</sup> The lines read:

مستفعلن فاعلن فعول	"مستفعلن فاعلن فعول"
معنى سوى أنه فضول	بيت لمعناك ليس فيه

"*mustaf'ilun fā'ilun fa'ūlun/ mustaf'ilun fā'ilun fa'ūlū*

... 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 *tafīla* in the first hemistich should have a *nūn* at the end (*fa'ūlun* and not *fa'ūlū*). The omission is probably a typographical error.

<sup>578</sup> "رائدٌ عن الحاجة"

*Ibid.*

<sup>579</sup> Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense*, 23.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>581</sup> 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-Khalīl's set rules. For more on this, see "Barghouti, 'al-Īqā' wa al-Ru'yā," 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 الله أو قدمي  
 أو قرء<sup>582</sup> هذا البرّ أو قلّمي  
 أو صرّ هذا الإرث من عدم  
 اتركوني، نويتُ الرحيل<sup>583</sup>

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.

<sup>582</sup> In two footnotes, Barghouti explains the meaning of the two words:

قرء: برد شديد.

صرّ: صوت شديد (مثلاً، صوت الريح).

The first word translates as: extreme cold and the second one as a loud sound (the sound of the wind, for example).

Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 227.

<sup>583</sup> 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:

وتعرّت ليلتها كالنجمه فلففتها بالعباءة، مرت خشونة كفيّ على  
حلمتيها، فحنيتهها فوق شاهدة قبر امرئ القيس،  
قالت: " أنا آخر الأثار المكتشفة." <sup>584</sup>  
....

عادةً ما كانت تعود إليّ في حلمي، وتجنو كاللبوة،  
عاريّة، على أربع فوق الرمل المهجور أمامي، وتهزّ  
شعرها، ناظرة خلفها، نحو الأسد اللذيذ حين كان  
قمر البحر الميت يغسل الرمل ويرسم ابيضاضاً  
صاعداً نحو أديرة معلقة في جبل قرُنطل. <sup>585</sup>

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 Imru’ 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 Imru’ al-Qays’ grave.” This echoes Imru’ 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

<sup>584</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid., 229.

maturity.<sup>586</sup> The speaker here seems to be falling in the same “arrested development”<sup>587</sup> as Imru’ 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 الأميرُ على نايهِ الأحمرِ"، قالت،  
 " كاللحنِ النازلِ نحو غروبِ التفتُ على  
 ما يخرجُ منه ... يَمَأي لَمَنُ عزفُ عالنايِ يَمَأي<sup>588</sup> ....  
 يَمَأي لَمَنُ عزفُ عالنايِ يَمَأي النارِ الخضرا اللّي الدفا  
 منها دخلَ ذكرايِ يَمَأي! .  
 صرتُ نا وهُو أنا، بس الوجعُ يَمَأي مثل الميخنا،  
 لَمَنُ أنا وهُو صرنا أنا<sup>589</sup>

‘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*<sup>590</sup>  
 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 *fushḥa*

<sup>586</sup> Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, 261.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> 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.

<sup>589</sup> Barghouti, “Jāzz sharqī,” 231-232.

<sup>590</sup> 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 Imru' 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 قبر امرئ القيس، كانت لوحة، فظة الملمس،  
 تكعيبيّة، عيُّها خلف  
 رأسٍ كان مشقوقاً، من النصف، باللونين  
 الأحمر والأسود. بعدُ ثالثٌ كان للرؤيا<sup>591</sup>

Near the grave of Imru' 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 Imru' 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

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 234.

between the arts and the senses are related, as Northrop Frye tells us, to ritualistic acts<sup>592</sup> 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.<sup>593</sup>

The transgression of the female body takes shapes in different crossings: from the realm of physicality:

وتعرَّتْ لِبَيْتِهَا كَالنَّجْمَةِ فَلَفَفْتَهَا بِالْعِبَاءِ<sup>594</sup>

to the musical register (through the ney):

كَالْحَنْ النَّازِلِ نَحْوِ غُرُوبِ أَلْتَفِّ عَلَى  
مَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ<sup>595</sup>

and finally, a cubist painting:

قَرَبَ قَبْرِ أَمْرِئِ الْقَيْسِ، كَانَتْ لَوْحَةً، فَظَةً الْمَلْمَسِ،  
تَكْجِيْبِيَّةً<sup>596</sup>.

Barghouti uses music in the title to contour the transgressive moves away from classical forms of art. Music, in the form of 'arūd, is also used as part of the poetic expression and content of the poem. The break in the typical musicality of an 'arūd line exemplifies the subject matter of transgression. The characteristics of the cubist painting are

<sup>592</sup> 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.

<sup>593</sup> Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," 224-225.

<sup>594</sup> Barghouti, "Jāzz sharqī," 228.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>596</sup> 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*.<sup>597</sup> Barghouti applies “this dynamic tension” between the *qaṣīda* as a “profane antitext” and the “Qur’ānic sacred text.”<sup>598</sup> 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 تتجه التفاصيل التي تبحث عن لوحةٍ لم تكتمل؟<sup>599</sup>

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”<sup>600</sup>), 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 أيها النملُ ادخلوا مساكنكم"  
سيدوسُ سليمانُ علينا، وجندُهُ، وأسمعُ الخطواتِ، وإيقاعها،  
وبها نداسُ ويقتلنا الاختباءُ<sup>601</sup>

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.

<sup>597</sup> “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.

<sup>598</sup> 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).

<sup>599</sup> Barghouti, “Jāzz sharqī,” 234.

<sup>600</sup> "سأسوقك سوقاً، بدفء من الذهب الإيقاعي." "

Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> 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 *buhūr* 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.<sup>602</sup> 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.

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<sup>602</sup> 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."<sup>603</sup> 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."<sup>604</sup> 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.<sup>605</sup> 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."<sup>606</sup> 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.<sup>607</sup> 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.<sup>608</sup> Metamorphosis is constituent on the 'I' that

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<sup>603</sup> Barghouti, "The Other Voice," (abstract, 2).

<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>605</sup> See ibid., 9-12.

<sup>606</sup> Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses*, 19.

<sup>607</sup> Barghouti, "The Other Voice," 3.

<sup>608</sup> 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 تتحل، كثنائية، إلى فكرة أو كرامة، 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 *Sa'akūn*, 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 sālila* 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 *musta'ribūn*.

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.

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Hussein Barghouti, "Jidāriyyat muḥāṣar bi al-thunā' iyyāt," *al-Shu'arā'*, 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-A'māl al-shi'riyya al-kāmila*, vol. 3, 7-105 (Amman: al-Ahliyya li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2014).

فجأة حدث شيء غريب فعلاً. سمعت صوتاً يشبه بكاء طفل صغير، يأتي من جنائن التين والزيتون المقمرة، وقف شعر رأسي من الدهول...بدا الصوت، كأنه يأتي من كائن لا يُرى في هذا البرّ الواسع.<sup>609</sup>

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.<sup>610</sup>

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 *musta'ribūn* whose function is to infiltrate Palestinian villages and cities in order to kill or arrest Palestinians.<sup>611</sup>

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...وربّما سأكون أنا هذه الغريريا، ولكن ليس آخر "غريريا"، في هذه الجبال، حتماً.<sup>612</sup>

I told myself: soon, on a moon-lit and a somewhat calm night, the *musta'ribūn* 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 *musta'ribūn* occupy his place in his favourite space (*al-dayr*), the sound of the *ghrayriyya* will haunt them. Barghouti stipulates that this sound,

<sup>609</sup> Barghouti, *Sa'akūn*, 37

<sup>610</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 74-75.

which will frighten the *musta'ribūn*, 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 أمي يومها، "هل تعرفين الغريريا؟"، قالت: إنَّ حجمها كالقط، تقريباً، ولكنها 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 يخرجني من حلمي.<sup>613</sup>

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.<sup>614</sup> This is a suitable understanding for the second level of transformation (the sound transformation); however,

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>614</sup> Esmail Nashif, "Fī al-lā/Taḥawwul fī al-mumārāsa 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 ba’d al-siyāsī*). The mythical deployment in *Sa’akūn*, 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.<sup>615</sup> 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 *musta’ribūn* indicates the act of making oneself Arab. This case,

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<sup>615</sup> "...يتحوّل التاريخي إلى أسطوريّ مطلق أفق 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.”<sup>616</sup> Through objectification, objectifiers are transformed from “mere things of nature into subjects.”<sup>617</sup>

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 *musta ‘ribūn* 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”<sup>618</sup> nor “the projector of the dream world.”<sup>619</sup> Barghouti or the *musta ‘ribūn* 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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<sup>616</sup> Barghouti “The Other Voice,” 160.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

Barghouti manages through the ritual of metamorphosis to patch the distance between himself and the ‘other’ (nature). The *musta‘ribūn*, 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.”<sup>620</sup>

The body’s ability to transform is echoed in Barghouti’s experimentation with poetic body. In his poetry collection *Marāyā sā‘ila* (*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.<sup>621</sup> 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.”<sup>622</sup> Klee’s statement that “art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible”<sup>623</sup> is

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<sup>620</sup> Abdel Nasser, *Literary Autobiography*, 5.

<sup>621</sup> Barghouti, “Bayn al-shi‘r.”

<sup>622</sup> Qtd. in John Sallis, *Klee’s Mirror* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2015), 8.

<sup>623</sup> 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)<sup>624</sup>

The red line in Klee's *In the Magic Mirror*, follows his technique of "taking the line for a walk."<sup>625</sup> The line in this technique is "an *active* line, which proceeds freely."<sup>626</sup> 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 its 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

<sup>624</sup> 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>.

<sup>625</sup> Qtd. In Sallis, *Klee's Mirror*, 47.

<sup>626</sup> *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-ta'ta'a*) becomes a way of creating the text.<sup>627</sup> 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."<sup>628</sup> 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.<sup>629</sup> "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."<sup>630</sup> 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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<sup>627</sup> Al-Shaikh, "Marāyā sā'ila," 120.

<sup>628</sup> Christa Albrecht-Crane, "Style, stutter," in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J. Stivale (London: Routledge, 2014), 113.

<sup>629</sup> Gilles Deleuze, "He stuttered," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), 107.

<sup>630</sup> *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 المنبتقة عنها. هاجسه الحرية. يقول بأن الشعر قوالب لا تكفي لكي يعبر عن كل ما فيه، وبدل التضحية بالحرية سيضحى بالقوالب.<sup>631</sup>

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 أم  
 مة شاعرة  
 وتعلمت منها التخفي بالكلام  
 وأب  
 أم  
 مي.<sup>632</sup>

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

<sup>631</sup> Barghouti, *Marāyā sā'ila*, 17.

<sup>632</sup> *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.”<sup>633</sup>

#### 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<sup>634</sup> that lead the way into the undiscovered and the not-yet understood.

<sup>633</sup> Deleuze, “He Stuttered,” 107.

<sup>634</sup> " شيء يجعل الأشياء غامضة، موحية، أكثر مما أفهم "

“Something that makes things mysterious, allusive, and beyond what I can understand.”  
Barghouti, “Lahzat 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 *Hajar al-ward*<sup>635</sup> contains descriptions that might, at first, be read as an echo to Barghouti himself. It reads:

أتى كنبِيّ ومضى كنبِيّ من عالمٍ آخر ومن حُلْمٍ مختلفٍ، علامةٌ بعثت من قوى أعلى... لم يك ما يكفي من الأرض لخطوة حين جاء، ولا ما يكفي من السماء لوجهٍ ماطرٍ أو لدعوةٍ، ولم يك أيضاً حزيناً، وكأنه شعر بإزاحةٍ من المكان، شعرَ كمن جاء يودّع سكان الأرض.<sup>636</sup>

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.

<sup>635</sup> 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 *Hajar al-ward*.

<sup>636</sup> Barghouti, *Hajar 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"<sup>637</sup> 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.<sup>638</sup>

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,

<sup>637</sup> Susan Sontag. "Against Interpretation," 14.

<sup>638</sup> 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.