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Cyclical *Ightirāb* in the Poetry of al-Nawwāb, Darwīsh, and al-Barghūthī

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Abstract

This article focuses on the notion of *ightirāb* in the works of three poets: Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb (1934–2022), Maḥmūd Darwīsh (1941–2008), and Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī (1954–2002). The article explores the multi-dimensional meanings of *ightirāb* and argues that *ightirāb* is a processual and cyclical experience that is approached and confronted through poetic expression. Standing at the center of the discussion, al-Barghūthī attests to the impact of the works of al-Nawwāb and Darwīsh on his writing. Theoretically speaking, al-Barghūthī analyzes major elements in the two other poets' production, one of which is their approach toward *ightirāb*. As such, al-Barghūthī's work is both analyzed as a case study and used to provide a theoretical framing for this article. *Ightirāb*, as shown in the examples of the three poets, is explored through contradictions, oppositions, and the dialectics of construction and de-construction.

Keywords

ightirāb – Arabic poetics – Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb – Maḥmūd Darwīsh – Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī

Ightirāb is a dominant state in modern Arabic literature and in particular Palestinian literature,[1] which encompasses moments of loss, forced dislocation, imprisonment, and exile. At the same time, *ightirāb* can incite active literary participation. Engaging with the experiences of *ightirāb* puts at the forefront the role of the literary work as a space for representing social, political, and personal experiences, and asserts active trials at negating anxiety and loss. By reading excerpts from Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb's (1934–2022) *Watariyyāt layliyyah* (1970–1975), Maḥmūd Darwīsh's (1941–2008) "Rubāʿiyyāt" (1990), and Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī's (1954–2002) "Tanabbuʾāt" (1988), this article investigates *ightirāb* as a processual experience that can be explored, challenged, and confronted through poetry. Viewing *ightirāb* as a *movement* falls in line with the work of the Syrian sociologist Ḥalīm Barakāt, who perceives the condition of *ightirāb* as a "moving process" ("*ʿamaliyyah ṣayrūriyyah*")[2] that involves ongoing interactions between what he calls "the sources of reality" ("*maṣādir al-wāqiʿiyyah*") that constitute the direct social, historical, religious, or political reasons behind the *ightirāb*, the individual's experience and awareness (*waʿī*) of *ightirāb*, and the behavioral reactions to this awareness (*al-natāʾij al-sulūkiyyah*), which include acts of submission, retrieval, or revolt.[3]

In the following excerpts, al-Nawwāb captures *ightirāb* through the juxtaposition between the vicious and the secure in life. Darwīsh crystallizes *ightirāb* in the short form of a quatrain as a simultaneous unfolding of harsh visual realities and hopeful visions of the future. Al-Barghūthī presents the tension between the conflicting internal and external *ightirāb* and highlights the attempts of the speaker to change and recreate themselves. I argue that these poems provide us with a reading of *ightirāb* not as a linear, and therefore definite, experience. The poems rather deploy contradictions and acts of (de-)construction in the poetic images, which show the dynamics of *ightirāb* and its cyclical nature.

Another main aim of this article is to place al-Barghūthī in conversation with the two seminal poets al-Nawwāb and Darwīsh. Al-Barghūthī's literary project is an impressive body of work that includes poetry, prose, academic

1 See for example: Ahmad H. Saʿdi, "Representations of Exile and Return in Palestinian Literature," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 46, no. 2–3 (2015), 216–243. See also the *Journal of Arabic Literature*'s two special issues on "Exile, Alienation and Estrangement," vol. 46, no. 2–3 (2015) and vol. 47, no. 1–2 (2016). In Maḥmūd Darwīsh's speech "al-Bayt wa-l-ṭarīq," which was published in *Al-Karmel* in 1999, he highlights the influence of the exile-return binarism on both collective and personal memory; see Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "al-Bayt wa-l-ṭarīq," *Al-Karmel*, Issue 62 (1999), 257–260.

2 Ḥalīm Barakāt, *al-Ightirāb fī-l-thaqāfah al-ʿarabiyyah: matāhāt al-insān bayn al-ḥulm wa-l-wāqiʿ* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wiḥdah al-ʿArabiyyah, 2006), 10.

3 Ibid., 59–62.

writing, and criticism. Notions of *ightirāb* are central in his writings, and his treatment of *ightirāb* is often substantiated with examples from the work of these poets. By placing him at the center of this discussion, new light is shed on an author who has been little studied but whose influence on contemporary Palestinian literature should receive more attention. As such, al-Barghūthī's poetry will serve as a case study, while his critical writings will constitute a theoretical foundation for this article.

What Is Ightirāb?

The term *ightirāb* can be translated into many related, and yet conceptually and historically specific, terms.[4] Despite the different connotations and discussions, *ightirāb* will be used here to signify the general experience that encompasses other states like estrangement, displacement, loss, exile, alienation, fragmentation, and dispersal. The following overview of the term, with a focus on al-Barghūthī's understanding of it, illustrates the complexity of the term and the difficulty of its translation. Karl Marx views alienation as the outcome of capitalism, wherein one loses the connection with one's humanity in its transformation into an object.[5] Edward Said writes in his much-cited article "Reflections on Exile" that "while it is true that literature and history

4 In the Hans Wehr dictionary, for example, the word *ightirāb* is translated as: "separation from one's native country; emigration; Europeanism, Occidentalism, Westernism." See Hans Wehr, "iġtirāb," in *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 3rd ed., ed. J. Milton Cowan (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976), 669.

5 To give one example from Capital, he writes: "…before [the worker] enters the process, his own labour has already been alienated…from him, appropriated by the capitalist, and incorporated with capital, it now, in the course of the process, constantly objectifies itself so that it becomes a product alien to him…The worker's product is not only constantly converted into commodities, but also into capital, i.e. into value that sucks up the worker's value-creating power, means of subsistence that actually purchase human beings, and means of production that employ the people who are doing the producing." Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (England: Penguin Books, 1976), 716. In his critique of contemporary Palestinian poetry, al-Barghūthī utilizes a Marxist angle that calls for restoring the centrality of the individual in literary production. See Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, *Azmat al-shiʿr al-maḥallī* (Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 1979). Al-Barghūthī's time in Hungary while studying economics allowed him to experience *ightirāb* on a personal level (the move from the village to the city) and opened his eyes intellectually to the works of Marx, Lukacs, Rilke, and others. His personal and intellectual experiences carved an awareness of the multi-dimensionality of *ightirāb* and led to his many engagements with the different sociological, psychological, and political levels of Palestinian life. See Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, "Min usus al-shiʿr ʿind-l-ʿarab," in Murād al-Sudānī, "Mudawwanat Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī fī qawānīn al-shiʿr al-ʿarabī" (MA diss., Birzeit University, 2012), 119.

contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement."[6] Estrangement, which can be translated as *ightirāb* in this quote, seems to be an accompanying feeling to the individual's life in exile. The multi-dimensionality of *ightirāb* can also be seen in discussions of Arabic poetics. In his study of the concept of *ightirāb* in pre-modern Arabic poetry of the 13th century, Aḥmad al-Falāḥī argues that despite the interconnectedness between the two terms of *ghurbah* and *ightirāb*, *ghurbah* (often translated as *exile*) is used in relation to physical displacement, while *ightirāb* serves to portray a "psychological displacement within the inner psyche of the individual … that is not delineated by a certain time or space."[7]

The literary works of al-Barghūthī have steadily received more attention in the decades after his death. After being diagnosed with cancer in his forties, al-Barghūthī decided to return to his childhood village of Kobar near Ramallah. Yet this return, as the Palestinian intellectual Fayṣal Darrāj comments, did not follow the script of the hoped-for return that was forever celebrated and imagined by the likes of Ghassān Kanafānī and Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā as an end to exile and loss. While Kanafānī's and Jabrā's *ightirāb* was caused by their physical inability to return, al-Barghūthī's return instead entails

> شهادة على أحوال "فلسطين أخرى"، التي هي مزيجٌ من الشجن والذكريات. فلا فلسطين السليمة هناك، ولا الفلسطينيّ قادر على معالجتها لأنّه معطوب يتأمّل رام الله وما جاورها، ويشهد على تحوّل المكان والمسار واللغة.
>
> witnessing the conditions of "the other Palestine," which is a mixture of melancholy and memories. The intact Palestine is not there, nor is the Palestinian able to fix it, for he himself is damaged when he observes Ramallah and its surroundings and sees how the place, its language, and its future have all changed.[8]

Al-Barghūthī's experience with *ightirāb* and its internal and external dimensions was at its highest during the last years of his life, as exemplified particularly

6 Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2012), 302.

7 Aḥmad al-Falāḥī, *al-Ightirāb fī-l-shiʿr al-ʿarabī fī-l-qarn al-sābiʿ al-hijrī* (*Dirāsah ijtimāʿiyyah nafsiyyah*) (Amman: Dār ghaydāʾ, 2013), 15. All translations from Arabic are my own unless otherwise stated.

For a detailed discussion of the many definitions of *ightirāb*, see al-Falāḥī's introduction (11–17).

8 Faiṣal Darrāj, *Riwāyat al-taqaddum wa-ightirāb al-mustaqbal* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 2010), 245.

in his two autobiographical works *al-Ḍaw' al-azraq* and *Sa'akūn bayn al-lawz*. These works were written after his cancer diagnosis. They narrate episodes from the author's childhood, discuss his studies in the United States and eventual return to his village, and describe his encounters with people who have been marginalized by their societies, all the while elaborating his own views on various political and social events.[9] However, al-Barghūthī's interest in *ightirāb* can already be seen in his earlier writings. In his 1981 work on the psychology of struggle in literature, he explains that *ightirāb* is "a feeling of negation in the world, a feeling of the freezing of relations that tie [one] to the others."[10]

Like the word *estrangement* in English, *ightirāb* is related to stranger (*gharīb*). Because of these derivatives—*ightirāb-gharīb* and *estrangement-stranger*—*ightirāb* entails a dynamism between the I and the other. Another derivative of the word *ightirāb* is *taghrīb*, the Arabic term for what Bertolt Brecht calls "the distancing effect."[11] While analyzing this term in an essay titled "The Self and the Place," al-Barghūthī points to the link between the distancing/estranging effect (*taghrīb*) and the sense of surprise and wonderment that it brings. *Taghrīb* feeds *istighrāb*. This notion regarding the connection between the familiar and unfamiliar resonates with Viktor Shlovsky's theory of defamiliarization. The Russian theorist explains in his influential article "Art as Device" that art's purpose is to transform the recognizable into a stranger. He writes that "by 'estranging' objects … the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious.'"[12] The *istighrāb*, as al-Barghūthī explains, is what works then at (re-)discovering the unfamiliar/stranger (*gharīb*) and transforming it into the familiar (*ma'lūf*).[13] This is one of the layers of *ightirāb* that al-Barghūthī investigates, in which there is a constant ebb and flow between the familiar and the unfamiliar and an emphasis on the movements between them in the literary works.

Because of the polysemy of the Arabic word *ightirāb*, whose etymological relatives include the words for *strange* and *stranger* (*gharīb*), *defamiliarization* (*taghrīb*), *exile* (*ghurbah*), and *wonderment* (*ishtighrāb*), the term will be retained in its Arabic form in this article. *Ightirāb* names differing personal,

9 See Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, *al-Ḍaw' al-azraq* (Ramallah: Dār al-Ru'āh, 2007) and *Sa'akūn bayn al-lawz* (Ramallah: PING, 2004).

10 Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ: al-Ṣirāʿ al-nafsī fi-l-adab* (Ramallah: PING, 2012), 85.

11 Bertolt Brecht, "On Chinese Acting," *The Tulane Drama Review*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1961), 130.

12 Viktor Shlovsky, "Art as Device," *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 6.

13 Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, "al-Anā wa-l-makān," in *al-Farāgh al-ladhī ra'ā al-tafāṣīl* (Ramallah: Dār al-Bayraq, 2006), 67.

social, political, and poetic experiences. What then unites all these experiences? It is the forceful distancing that is created between one and the homeland, one and others, or one and themselves that is a common thread between these different instances. In other words, *ightirāb* is used here as an encompassing term of feelings, bodily states, negations, and negotiations that the (poetic) figure experiences.

The Poets

While intertextual engagements in literature are sometimes implicit and not easily identified, al-Barghūthī explicitly declares that he was influenced by Darwīsh and al-Nawwāb in his poetic journey. Al-Barghūthī saw Darwīsh as the greatest twentieth-century Arab poet and viewed al-Nawwāb's *Watariyyāt* as the Arabic counterpart to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in terms of its importance to the development of modern Arabic poetry.[14] Al-Barghūthī's engagement with the two poets also extended to literary criticism and analysis, and *ightirāb* was a recurrent theme in his philosophical and critical studies of the two poets.[15] To give one example: Al-Barghūthī argues that one of the main differences between Darwīsh's poetry and al-Nawwab's is that Darwīsh "resists *ightirāb*'s seizure of the soul by siding with love, freedom, and beauty all together;"[16] whereas al-Nawwab, as seen in *Watariyyat*, "intentionally and constantly combines between 'violence' and ugliness"[17] to expose the harshness of the experience. Taking a cue from al-Barghūthī's readings of the two poets, the following sections showcase how the three poets represent that dynamic experience of *ightirāb*.

Al-Nawwāb

In his book *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ*, al-Barghūthī describes al-Nawwāb as an exemplary figure who resorted "to the epic form" in *Watariyyāt* in order to

14 Al-Barghūthī, "Min usus," 118.

15 See, for example, Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, "al-Ruʾyah al-falsafiyyah fī *Arā mā urīd*" in al-Sudānī, 205–209.

16 Al-Barghūthī, "al-Iqāʿ wa-al-ruʾyah," 154.

Al-Barghūthī does not argue that Darwīsh does not portray images of viciousness and ugliness, but rather that the latter's approach differs from al-Nawwāb's.

17 Ibid.

portray the "high level of psychological contradictions" of his contemporary period.[18] In the short prelude to his text, al-Nawwāb himself describes it as

> انها محاولتي للخلاص من الآلة الواحدة والضجر في الشعر العربي والتي هي وحدتي الموروثة، باتجاه بناء سمفوني ملحمي يولف بين التأجج الفردي المتعجل، وخطى التاريخ الثقيلة البطيئة الواثقة.
>
> my attempt to get beyond the boredom of using a single instrument in Arabic poetry, which is my inheritance, and to move toward creating an epic symphony that harmonizes between the swift blaze of individuality and the plodding, reliable steps of history.[19]

The edition of *Watariyyat* (containing the first and second movements) consulted for this article was published in 1977. The poem draws on two main sources of inspiration. The first source is episodes and figures from the Arab and Muslim past. The second is al-Nawwāb's personal experiences with exile and suffering during the Baʾathist regime in Iraq because of his political views and activism against oppression. The poem thus presents the interconnectedness between past and present, between the individual and the collective, and between the literary and the political.

For al-Nawwāb, and particularly in his *Watariyyāt*, the Palestinian cause stands at the center of his poetic and revolutionary vision. Beyond lamenting the loss of Palestine, al-Nawwāb approaches the topic with a sense of rage and strident criticism for the betrayal of the Palestinians by both Arab and Western regimes.[20] Despite the exclusion of al-Nawwāb politically and literarily, his unwavering loyalty to the Palestinian cause earned him a reputation among a young generation of Iraqis and other Arabs as "the poet of the proletariat."[21]

Al-Nawwāb's suffering is seen, for example, in an episode in *Watariyyāt* where he is asked by an executioner (*jallād*) in Tehran about his identity. Al-Nawwāb confesses to the reader:

خجلت أقول له، قاومت الاستعمار فشرَّدني وطني.

18 Al-Barghūthī, *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ*, 76.

19 Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb, *Watariyyāt layliyyah* (Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 1977), 7.

20 Saddik Gohar, "Rethinking Watariyyat Layliyya/Night Strings by the Iraqi Poet Muthafar Al-Nawwāb," *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 3, no. 4 (2011): 446.

21 Ibid., 444.

> I was ashamed to tell him that I resisted colonialism and my homeland threw me out.[22]

As a vocal critic of the Iraqi government and other Arab regimes, al-Nawwāb suffered from torture, imprisonment, and exile. This experience of physical and emotional *ightirāb* was coupled with a layer of literary *ightirāb*: his poems were banned in many Arab countries and published editions of his work were often riddled with typographic errors.[23]

A distinctive aspect of al-Nawwāb's writing style is his ability to represent the "illogicality of reality" ("*lā maʿqūliyyat al-wāqi*ʿ") in life through the employment of satire. As Salaam Yousif argues, satire ("*al-hijāʿ al-hazlī*") in al-Nawwāb's poetry has a similar effect to Brecht's "distancing effect;" i.e., the *taghrīb* mentioned previously.[24] Throughout his work, al-Nawwāb utilizes familiar ideas, experiences, and figures and places them within a different context to highlight the devastating realities of oppression, sectarianism, and divisions in the Arab world. In one well-known passage from *Wataṛiyyāt*, the poet tells ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib:

لو جئت اليوم،
لحاربك الداعون اليك
وسمّوك شيوعية.

> If you came back today,
> Your proponents would attack you
> And call you a communist.[25]

By creating a line between the figure of ʿAlī—the Prophet Muḥammad's cousin and the first Shīʿī imam—and the poet's understanding of communism, the poem recontextualizes the intellectual and historical elements within

22 Al-Nawwāb, 72.

23 ʿĀdil al-Usṭah, the Palestinian academic and critic, provides an overview of al-Nawwāb's reception by multiple Palestinian critics (including al-Barghūthī), as well as a discussion of some of the discrepancies found in the many copies of al-Nawwāb's poems. See ʿĀdil al-Usṭah, *Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb: al-Ṣawt wa-l-ṣadā* (Cairo: Madbūlī, 2000), 4–1 and "Ightiyāl Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb..shiʿriyyan," *al-Ayyām*, 24 Feb. 24, 2013. Al-Barghūthī was aware of the errors in his printed works. See al-Barghūthī, *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ*, 76.

24 See Salaam Yousif, "Oppression and Defiance in the Poetry of Muzaffar al-Nawwab," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 3 (1993): 97.

25 Al-Nawwāb, 16.

the current political atmosphere of oppression.[26] This reading of al-Nawwāb showcases how the use of *taghrīb* (joining the unfamiliar elements of the historical figure of ʿAlī and the contemporary attacks on communists) becomes a way of revealing the different contemporary experiences of *ightirāb*, including being unsupported and attacked, which the speaker is going through.

One of the poetic techniques that al-Barghūthī appreciated in al-Nawwāb's style was his deployment of contradictions in the poetic image.[27] The following two excerpts from al-Nawwāb's *Watariyyāt* show how he uses oppositional feelings to unravel what al-Barghūthī called the "sense of spiritual dirtiness" ("*shuʿūran bi-l-ittisākh al-rūḥī*") that is created by *ightirāb*.[28] Al-Nawwāb captures how the aggressive, vicious, and ugly are intertwined with the beautiful and the secure. He writes:

تعال لبستان السر،
أريك الربَّ
على أصغر برعم ورد،
يتضوَّع من قدميه الطيب
قدماه ملوَّثتان بشوق ركوب الخيل.

Come to the grove of the secret,
and I will show you god
on the smallest rosebud.
Perfume diffuses from his feet;
his feet are soiled with the longing to ride horses.[29]

Al-Nawwāb constructs his scene through contradictory images. God can be found on the smallest rosebud, thus intertwining the grand with the miniature. Negative imagery as exemplified in "soiled" is juxtaposed with more positive attributes: "*al-ṭīb*" ("perfume") and "*al-shawq*" ("longing"). The scene seems to be calm where god, nature, and life in general are moving harmoniously. The word used here for horses, "*khayl*" shares the same root with *khayāl*, a word that refers to the imagination, among other meanings. This double connotation

26 Adnan Haydar and Michael Beard, "Excerpts from Mozaffar Al-Nawwāb's 'Night-Strings,'" *The Minnesota Review* 26, no. 1 (1986): 49.

27 For an analysis of al-Nawwāb's poetry (particularly the use of contradictions), see Yousif, 95–125.

28 Al-Barghūthī, *Suqūt al-jidār al-sābiʿ*, 86.

29 Al-Nawwāb, 26.

denotes a longing for freedom and openness, both physically and mentally. However, by embroidering the negative as part of the beautiful, al-Nawwāb retains the tension, foretelling the coming of disruption.

Al-Nawwāb uses images of terror to invite the reader to the middle of the dramatic event. Tension in al-Nawwāb's poems is highlighted through the use of different literary techniques just as "dialogue, questions and answers, and techniques of varied repetition which lead to a transgression of genre boundaries."[30] This transgression where poetry is pushed to the realm of drama is another literary layer that mirrors his ability to capture the dramatic political and social reality in the world.

A few pages later in the poem, al-Nawwāb revisits this scene in the grove. This time, however, the harmony between enormity and smallness is disturbed and the arrival of evil (through the figure of the wolf) indicates a change in atmosphere:

شمَّ الذئب دمي
شمَّ دمي
سال لعاب الذئب على قدمي
ركضتْ قدمي
ركض البستان، وكان الرب على أصغر برعم ورد،
ناديت عليه ستقتل
فاركض...
ركض الربُّ..
الدربُ.. النخلُ.. الطينُ..
وأبواب صفيح تشبه حلم فقير فتحت.. ووجدت فوانيس الفلاحين تعين على الموت حصاناً، يحتضر...

The wolf[31] smelled my blood
It smelled my blood
The wolf's drool spilled on my foot

30 Leslie Tramontini, "Molding the Clay: Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb's Concept of Colloquial Poetry as Art of Resistance," in *Commitment and Beyond: Reflections on/of the Political in Arabic Literature since the 1940s*, ed. Friederike Pannewick and Georges Khalil (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2015), 205.

31 For al-Nawwāb, the wolves in *Watariyyat* stand as a symbol for Western imperial countries (Gohar, 445).

My foot ran away
The grove ran, and god was on the smallest rosebud,
I called out to him: "You will be killed
So run …"
god ran..
so did the path.. the palm trees.. the clay
tin doors that looked like a poor man's dream opened.. and I found the
lanterns of the peasants guiding a horse to its death.[32]

The poetic speaker explains in the part that precedes this section that he was bleeding from having been tortured and that the wolf came to attack him. Al-Nawwāb weaves personal suffering, torture, and imprisonment into a complex network. The depiction of loss can be seen through changes in the body: God loses his perfumed feet and they turn into the bloodied foot of the speaker. The sacred and the worldly become one. No longer celebrated, the beautiful features of nature become shared miseries and horrors of death. Death, as al-Nawwāb portrays it, strikes both bodies and emotions. The desire to ride horses, for example, is destroyed through the image of the dying horse. The use here of another word for horse, "*ḥiṣān*," instead of the previously used word "*khayl*," points at a physical as well as a mental destruction of the longing for imagination. Even the sacred and all-powerful is not safe against the viciousness of the wolf. What remains for the speaker to do is warn others to run.

Al-Nawwāb's deployment of running and movement in the poetic image helps him in building "a radical poetics of anger and revolt" and in directly mirroring the on-going experience of physical and spiritual *ightirāb*.[33] The suffering of this persona becomes an echo of the suffering of all humanity. The contradictions in the previous excerpts highlight what al-Barghūthī refers to as "the individual-god" persona in *Watariyyāt*.[34] Al-Barghūthī reads *Watariyyāt* as a search for a god in the figure of the human, whom communism sees as "the root" of all things. In revealing the oppressive reality of life, according to al-Barghūthī, the poem reflects the "tragic realization [of the] fall of the human." This persona thus has to go through a series of configurations that mirror these contradictions in life, transforming from an individual-god into a cockroach that needs saving. The complex and ever-changing persona in the poem experiences *ightirāb* as "a feeling of negation in the world" ("*shuʿūr*

32 Al-Nawwāb, 68.
33 Gohar, 445.
34 Al-Barghūthī, *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ*, 85.

bi-l-nafī fī al-ʿālam") that separates him from the human next to him.[35] It is interesting to note that al-Barghūthī uses the preposition "in" ("*fī*") and not "from" ("*ʿan*"), indicating that *ightirāb* is not a path with a clear-cut end, way out, or separation from the world, but rather a cyclical experience that involves never-ending negotiations in the individual's relation to society, history, and themselves.[36]

Darwīsh

Al-Barghūthī viewed Maḥmūd Darwīsh's poetry collection *Arā mā ʾurīd* (I See What I Want) as the "most important, most complex, and most beautiful" of his works.[37] Al-Barghūthī attributes the value of the collection to the relation between the poetic "image" (*al-ṣūrah*) and the "idea" (*al-fikrah*).[38] In this collection, Darwīsh steps beyond direct political engagement and becomes a "myth maker who is building a mythical world, where he weaves together the current reality with the recurring past of history, the national with the humanistic, and the personal with the collective."[39] Published in 1990 and written in exile in the midst of the first Palestinian Intifada, the collection is an example of Darwīsh's "middle period" and is rooted within the larger historical and political realities of Palestinian life.[40] The collection showcases a shift in Darwīsh's writing toward "using allusive references and metaphors"[41] and attests to the dynamism between language and memory in creating a vision of the homeland and return.[42]

35 Ibid., 80, 84–85.

36 As al-Barghūthī calls it: "al-Dawrah aw al-duwwāmah." ("a cycle or a whirl"). See ibid., 90.

37 Al-Barghūthī, "Min usus," 122.

38 Ibid.

39 Iḥsān al-Dīk, *Tamthīlāt al-khiṭāb fī-l-adab al-Filasṭīnī al-ḥadīth: Dirāsāt mukhtārah* (Nablus: Dār al-Jundī, 2016), 12.

40 Fady Joudah, "Introduction: Mahmoud Darwish's Lyric Epic," in Mahmoud Darwish, *If I Were Another: Poems*, trans. Fady Joudah (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), viii.

41 Issa J. Boullata, "If I Were Another by Mahmoud Darwish, Fady Joudah," *World Literature Today* 84, no. 2 (2010), 73.

42 Joudah, x–xi.

Darwīsh and Edward Said were two of the most notable Palestinian intellectuals who worked closely with the PLO, represented by Yasser Arafat (Yāsir ʿArafāt), during the period between 1967 and 1991.[43] Sharing a common experience of a childhood in Palestine and living in exile, the three men "worked together to give definition to the Palestinian national movement in the postcolonial era."[44] Despite their "despair" about the reality of living in Palestine, their collaborative efforts provided an image of Palestine that was "oriented toward the future."[45] Their hope of creating a future Palestine ended with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Darwīsh and Said were critical opponents of the agreement, and they both detached themselves from the PLO in its aftermath.[46]

This collection and the poem discussed here thus constitute an interesting case of in-betweenness where Darwīsh was writing from exile, remembering a past, and imagining a future. It is in this interplay between the real and the imagined and the trials at resolving it that *ightirāb* is most apparent. In his reading of the first poem, "Rubāʿiyyāt," in the collection al-Barghūthī observes that Darwīsh uses each quatrain (*rubāʿiyyah*) to describe an "experience or a memory that represents one link in the chain of history."[47] In the poem, which is made up of fifteen quatrains, the history of the poetic self ("*al-anā*") unfolds through his comments on different elements in life (poetry, love, death, theatre, blood, war, prison, etc.).[48] Similar to his reading of *Watariyyāt*, al-Barghūthī's approach to this collection is centered around the notion of *ightirāb*, as he argues that "the totality of episodes in the history of 'the self' [*al-anā*] culminates in a lonely *ightirāb*."[49]

The usage of the poetic form of the quatrain is a stylistic reflection of this feeling. In its simplest definition, the quatrain is a poetic unit that is made up of four lines. The Arabic quatrain can stand "as an independent verse form and

43 One major example is their collaborative work on the Declaration of Independence in 1988. See Salah D. Hassan, "Passing Away: Despair, Eulogies, and Millennial Palestine," *Biography* 36, no. 1, (Winter 2013), 45–46.

44 Ibid., 28.

45 Ibid., 30, 32.

46 Ibid., 272–8. For more on Darwīsh's poetic critique of the Oslo Accords, see Sinan Antoon, "Mahmud Darwish's Allegorical Critique of Oslo," *Journal of Palestine studies* 31, no. 2 (2002): 66–77.

47 Al-Barghūthī, "al-Ruʾyah al-falsafiyyah," 205.

48 See Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Rubāʿiyyāt," in *Maḥmūd Darwīsh: al-Aʿmāl al-shiʿriyyah al-kāmilah*, vol. 2 (Ramallah and Amman: Mahmoud Darwish Foundation, al-Ahliyyah lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, Dār Al-Nāsher, 2014): 313–322. The English translation of Darwīsh's poem by Fady Joudah is used. It is taken from Mahmoud Darwish, "Rubaiyat," in *If I Were Another: Poems*, trans. Fady Joudah (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 4–8.

49 Al-Barghūthī, "al-Ruʾyah al-falsafiyyah," 205.

as an element of structure in longer compositions."[50] The form of "Rubāʿiyyāt", made of fifteen separate and clearly numbered sections, shows an interplay between connection and rupture. The poem presents at once snippets of the speaker's reflection on life, and at the same time, the different quatrains reveal a kind of rupture between these reflections through the jumps between the different elements. The refrain "I see what I want" stands as a connector between the different images, and the use of the verb "see" (*arā*) intertwines the visual with the visionary.[51] The sixth quatrain elucidates the dynamics of past, present, and future, and the connection between the individual and the collective. Darwīsh writes:

أرى ما أُريدُ من الحرب... إني أَرى
سواعدَ أجدادنا تعصُرُ النبعَ في حَجَرٍ أخضرا
وآباءنا يَرِثُون المياهَ ولا يُورثون، فأُغمض عينيّ:
إنَّ البلادَ التي بين كفيَّ من صُنْع كفّيّ.[52]

I see what I want of war ... I see
our ancestors' limbs squeeze the springs green in a stone,
and our fathers inherit the water but bequeath nothing. So I close my eyes:
The country within my hands is of my hands.[53]

This quatrain makes use of oppositions in a manner similar to that employed by al-Nawwāb in the examples given in the previous section. This time, however, the contradiction hinges on the ability of the speaker to restore a space that existed in the past. The first line, "I see what I want from war, I see," plays on what is familiar and expected in a Palestinian poem and prepares the reader for destructive images of war. The second and third lines, however, overturn this assumption and transform the negative and disastrous perception of war

50 G. Doerfer, C.H. de Fouchecour, and W. Stoetzer, "Rubāʿī (pl. Rubāʿiyyāt)," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). The issue of "quatrains" as a poetic form falls outside of the focus of this article. However, it is important to note that there are different rhythmic formats, definitions, and understandings of quatrains. For more on this, see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *The Great Umar Khayyam: A Global Reception of the Rubáiyát*, 1st ed., (Dordrecht: Leiden University Press, 2012).

51 The sensory images are important for situating the poem within the actual and the lived and away from mere abstractions. Ṣubḥī al-Shaḥrūrī, *Fī taʾwīl al-shiʿr al-maḥallī: Bayn nuhūḍih wa-istinsākh al-wāqiʿ* (Nablus: Dār al-Fārūq, 1995), 52.

52 Darwīsh, "Rubāʿiyyāt," 318.

53 Darwish, "Rubaiyat," 5.

through the shift from bodily seeing to internal (re-)envisioning. This interplay is based on the act of seeing a state in the present (the war), the act of remembering (re-envisioning) something from the past, and, by closing his eyes, the envisioning of a new reality.

The images conjured by the poem are not static—either in action, nor in space or time. *Ightirāb* is portrayed through the tension between what was once there, what is not there, and what one is determined to see. The vividness of the image from the past creates a sense of generative movement and harmony (both through nature, in the images of the spring and the green rock, and through genealogies, in the discussion of fathers and ancestors) that opposes the degenerative motion of war. The image, furthermore, represents a similitude between the one and the many where the poetic *I* becomes aligned with the collective. At the backdrop of the speaker's seeming loneliness stands the awareness of the importance of visionary transformability, as the speaker creates a "private lexicon of sorrow and praise."[54] This oxymoronic imagery champions the visionary (through memory) over the visual (through perceiving the destruction of war). The speaker concludes the quatrain by asserting his power and the agentive role of memory to create a world of his own making, as he declares in the last line.

Despite the power of this hopeful image, its ability to move beyond *ightirāb*, and thus to be activated in reality, is not achieved in the poem. As such, the speaker moves in the following quatrain to another visual element (literal), and image (visionary) as will be exemplified below. The poem, thus, becomes a place of ebb and flow and a space where the speaker attempts to decipher the realities of *ightirāb*.

Al-Barghūthī

Al-Barghūthī's first published poetry collection *al-Ruʾyā* (The Vision) (1988) constituted, in his own words, his aim at unleashing his poetic innovation that depended on a long literary tradition.[55] The collection was published at a crucial time in Palestinian history, during the most heightened time of collective struggle against the Israeli occupation since 1967. In a diaristic work titled "Dhākirah ʿādiyyah fī zaman ghayr ʿādī," al-Barghūthī explains that he had returned to Palestine two months before the eruption of the First Intifada in 1987. One of his reflections about that time period is that "the [Israeli]

54 Joudah, x.

55 See al-Barghūthī, "Handasat al-qaṣīdah," in al-Sūdānī, 174.

occupation was implanting in the soul the feeling of its weakness, so that we would think that we are cowards."[56] Al-Barghūthī expresses the feelings of Palestinians under massive Israeli control and brutality, and whose reaction was one of self-sacrifice and communal unity in the face of economic, political, and social siege.[57] In his search for a way out of this feeling, al-Barghūthī realizes that he could look to the streets for an answer.

Every night at seven o'clock, al-Barghūthī would sit down to write poetry. While *al-Ruʾyā* was his first published poetry collection, al-Barghūthī mentions that a previous poetry collection, which was at a printing press during that time, was lost. This was during the time when "the soul *takhalkhalat* in the Intifāḍah"[58] and al-Barghūthī never looked for it. The verb that he uses, *takhalkhala*, is central to the discussions of this article regarding the experience of *ightirāb*. The verb, which means "to become disjointed," can be read as part of the dialectics of de-construction and construction that is seen in al-Barghūthī's reflections of that period and in the following poem. The verb denotes a movement and a space that is not wholly destroyed, but which has not achieved a state of complete construction. It is in this movement of disjoining (*takhalkhul*) that *ightirāb* is captured. The sense of *ightirāb* during that time can be seen in the multifaceted factors that include external acts of oppression as well as the popular defiance from the streets. Internally, it showcases the psychological and emotional struggles of Palestinians and their attempts at finding answers and ways out.

Al-Barghūthī's prose poem "Tanabbuʾāt" from *al-Ruʾyā* starts on a note of tension and confusion both in content and style. The text reads as a series of internal conversations, dialogues, and commentaries involving a star and a flock of partridges. At first glance, it seems that the poetic narrator is speaking to an unknown addressee, and tells him that one day he (the addressee) will ask himself:

56 Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, "Dhākirah ʿādiyyah fī zaman ghayr ʿādī," in *al-Farāgh al-ladhī raʾā al-tafāṣīl*, ed. Murād al-Sūdānī (Ramallah: Dār al-Bayraq al-ʿArabī, 2006), 46.

57 As Saʿdī explains: "The Intifadah was the first occasion since the 1936–1939 Palestinian rebellion when many ordinary citizens—mainly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—took part in the struggle; it was a breathtaking development, which caught all major political players unprepared. Beyond that, it crystallized the political debate on Israel/Palestine, revealing its basic elements. Underneath the thick layer of legalistic, theoretical, and practical argumentations and propaganda representations, the struggle is, at the end of the day, waged by natives for their freedom and dignity against a mighty entity of settlers. This is particularly so as the Intifadah was largely peaceful and the use of violence by Palestinians was mostly symbolic, while the Israeli army, by contrast, used excessive force." See Saʿdi, 242.

58 Al-Barghūthī, "Dhākirah ʿādiyyah," 46.

هل أخطأتُ في فكِّ حروفِ الخريطةِ أو في مقاييس الخطى؟

> Did I make a mistake in the deciphering of the writing on the map or in the measurements of the footsteps?[59]

A second reading of the poem, however, in tandem with the title of the poem, indicates that both speakers reside in one person. "Tanabbu'āt" ("Predictions" in English) reveals as such the speaker's present condition and his predictions about what is to happen to him. The line between the narrator and the addressee becomes blurry and disjointed—*mutakhalkhil*, to reference the previously used verb—and the reader cannot recognize if it is the addressee himself who is speaking, or if the narrator is speaking on his behalf. This confusion in who the "I" in the poem adds to the multilayered effects of *ightirāb* that shadow personal and collective lives. For as al-Barghūthī later argues in an analysis of one of Darwīsh's poems: "There is a [shattering] in *ightirāb* where the 'I' becomes, to itself, an 'other.'"[60] The main source of tension is revealed in the middle of the poem. Al-Barghūthī epitomizes the feeling of *ightirāb* by introducing both internal and external experiences:

قد خيَّرتني بين اغترابي عنها وبين اغترابي فيها قفارُ البلادِ ، فقلتُ : يعزُّ علينا الخيارُ.

> The wasteland gave me the choice between my *ightirāb* from it and my *ightirāb* in it. I said: The choice is too difficult to make.[61]

Ightirāb here is both external (physical) and internal. The narrator/addressee answers by saying that the choice between one form of *ightirāb* and the other is difficult.

The second half of the poem witnesses a shift into a defiant mood that dilutes the sense of loss that was at the beginning. Instead of retreating or surrendering to the feeling, al-Barghūthī's narrator/addressee declares at the end of the poem: "And in my hands is my fate" ("*Wa-bayna yadayy maṣīrī*").[62] This feeling of determination and belief in one's self is similarly echoed in the aforementioned quatrain by Darwīsh. The narrator/addressee in al-Barghūthī's poem does not stop at stating that his fate is in his hands, but shows how this

59 Al-Barghūthī, "Tanabbu'āt," in *al-Āthār al-shi'riyyah* (Ramallah: PING, 2008), 26.
60 Al-Barghūthī, "al-Ru'yah al-falsafiyyah," 208.
61 Al-Barghūthī, "Tanabbu'āt," 27.
62 Ibid., 28.

declaration becomes a revolutionary reaction that is fulfilled through an act of self-deconstruction and union with nature:

واليومَ أخلعُ سنّي العاجيَّ ، أمنحهُ للشجيراتِ والقمرِ الدائريّ

> Today I tear out my ivory tooth and give it to the small trees and the round moon

He continues by declaring:

فأزرعُ مثلَ قنطرةٍ على ظهر الندى رمشي.

> and I plant my eyelashes like an arch on the back of the dew.[63]

Spatial movement takes shape through the expansion of the human body and its intertwinement with nature. By spreading throughout nature, both land and sky, the speaker manages to trespass the inescapability of the two prisons of *ightirāb*.

The speaker in al-Barghūthī's poem (who is referred to as a prophet that has not been understood by his own people) ends by declaring:

قد رحلتُ وفي عتمةِ اللهِ أمشي، ويمشي اللهُ في عتماتي ،
وبعدَ قليلٍ سأبزغُ من نجمَةٍ لا تراها بعدُ هذي البلادُ،
وبين يدي مصيري، ضوءٌ
من الوجهِ يطفحُ، لكن لا يرى الضوءَ مَنْ كانَ يسقطُ بيني وبينَ عينيهِ الخمارُ.
ويقولُ: ما هذا؟ أجيبُ: بين الله والفانينَ ينسدلُ الستارُ.

> I have left and in the darkness of God I walk, and God walks in my darknesses
> and soon, I will rise from a star, which these lands cannot yet see
> and in my hands is my fate. A light
> overflows from the face, but—between whose eyes and myself the veil falls—he cannot see the light
> and he says: What is this? I answer: Between God and the *fānīn* the screen drops down.[64]

63 Ibid., 27.
64 Ibid., 28.

The poem concludes by suggesting that self-deconstruction is not an act of self-hurt and does not come from a feeling of loss, but rather from a feeling of empowerment. The self in this section has been able to fulfill its *fanā'* (annihilation). In Sufi conceptions,[65] *fanā'* and its counterpart *baqā'* (subsistence) is a coupling through which the self journeys from its bodily and spiritual shackles, returning home (to God). In Sufi traditions and practices, the term *fanā'* designates a "dynamic" state (*ḥāl*) that is part of a continuum of states [*aḥwāl*] that revolve in the human sphere and in other high spheres, between life as we understand it on earth and life in a form incompatible with the human cycle.[66]

Using this dialectical nature of the concept as a frame for reading the last section of the poem, one realizes that while the star in the poem becomes a symbol of movement from *ightirāb* on earth into the sky, *fanā'* does not denote a definite cut from the realities of living. In other words, *ightirāb* is not utterly demolished but is rather a part of the oscillating states of the self, and it can thus be experienced again depending on the changes of life.[67]

It is in reading the three poets together that a sense of the composite meanings of *ightirāb* comes through. Putting the excerpts in conversation shows how poetic elements have been deployed *in action* and through a vividness that captures the surges of immovability, instability, and confusion that is imbued in and created by *ightirāb*.

The star, which was mentioned in al-Barghūthī's poem, features in another of Darwīsh's quatrains. In this *rubā'iyyah*, the poetic *I* reveals what he sees in death. He declares:

أَرى ما أُريد من الموت: إِني أُحبُّ، وينشقُّ صدري
ويقفز منه الحصانُ الإِروسيُّ أَبيضَ يركض فوق السحابْ
يطير على غيمة لا نهائية ويدور مع الأَزرق الأَبَدِيّ..
فلا توقفوني عن الموت، لا تُرْجعوني إِلى نجمةٍ من ترابْ.[68]

65 It is important to note here that throughout the centuries, different Sufi groups had different ways of discussing and conceptualizing the opposition of fanā'/baqā', which fall beyond the scope of this article. For more on these concepts, see Jawid Mojaddedi, "Annihilation and abiding in God," in K. Fleet et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online* (Brill, 2008), doi: https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_SIM_0329.

66 Walid El Khachab, "Mystic Annihilation in Sufi Art," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 42 (2022), 234; translation mine.

67 While the self can retain its connection to life after achieving a higher form of *fanā'*, Sufis assert that it approaches life with a new self-awareness "while being fully aware of divine presence at the same time." Kazuyo Murata, "Fana and Baqa," *Islamic Studies*: Oxford University Press, (2018), https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780195390155-0256.

68 Darwīsh, "Rubā'iyyāt," 320.

> I see what I want of death: I love, and my chest splits
> for a horse of Eros that leaps out of it white, running over clouds
> and flying on endless vapor, circling the eternal blue ...
> So do not stop me from dying, do not bring me back to a star of dust.[69]

The speaker in this excerpt experiences a similar act of bodily transformation as in al-Barghūthī's poem. Instead of being scared of death, which is a means of *ightirāb* from and an opposition to life, the speaker welcomes it. Staying with the Sufi discussion of *fanā'* provides a connection between the two poems and a frame for reading their manifestation of *ightirāb*. The "dynamic and lively" nature of *fanā'* comes from its "hovering" between two opposites. As El Khachab explains:

> If death is the opposite of life, *fanā'* in Sufism is a death and a life together ... The idea of *fanā'* ... is one form of death, which is another life. It is not an entrance into nonexistence.[70]

The self in Darwīsh's quatrain does not cease to exist because of death. Instead, nature is already residing in it, and through death, a new life is once again allowed to leap, run, love, fly, and circle. While death is often associated with a state of immovability, both Darwīsh and al-Barghūthī invite a state of movability through the illumination of celestial figures and a generative nature that races beyond the contours of the body.

The ability of the poetic elements to tread between and beyond spatial, emotional, and political *ightirāb* is also particularly stressed in the last few pages of the second movement of al-Nawwāb's *Wataṙiyyāt*. Al-Nawwāb depicts in detail moments of torture in prison by jailers who want him to admit to his misdeeds in relation to his revolutionary acts and criticism of the government. The images and experiences seem to be biographical, or at least inspired by the poet's personal encounters in prison.[71] The speaker is on the verge of confessing, but the last few lines indicate a shift from confession to resistance. The speaker remembers historical figures like Abū Dhurr, personal relatives like his mother, and social figures like the people from his own homeland. The figures are inserted beyond their symbolic figurations and are revived as humans who

69 Darwish, "Rubaiyat," 7.

70 El Khachab, 233.

71 It is worth noting that the "I" of the speaker should not be confused with the "I" of the poet. In fact, it is the polyphonic atmosphere of the poem, where different voices from modern and historic times adopt the first-person voice to express their rage, sadness, or satire, which gives the poem its importance (see Gohar, 455–458).

exist in the time of narration and who have the ability to fuel strength and resistance in the mind and body of the speaker. They are figures that cross beyond the *ightirāb* of the speaker and stand beside him. Their invocation transforms resistance into a communal act, one that spreads through time and space:

رفضت...
وأطبقت فمي، فالشعب أمانة في عنق الثوري
رفضت.

I refused ...
and I closed my mouth. The people are a responsibility [*amāna*] in the throat of the revolutionary
I refused.[72]

The refusal here comes as an act that stands in opposition to the act of confessing, which for its part it is an embodiment of the speaker's *ightirāb* from his true beliefs and a symbol of letting his people down.

Elements from nature, too, stand as part and parcel of the poetic image and the movement against *ightirāb*. The palm trees that once ran away from terror with the speaker (as explained previously) are invoked again at the end of al-Nawwāb's poem:

صعد النخل بقلبي
صعدت إحدى النخلات بعيداً أعلى من كل النخلات
تسنَّد قلبي فوق السعف كعذق
من يصل القلب الان...؟؟!
قدمي في السجن... وقلبي بين عذوق النخل
وقلت بقلبي: إياك.
فللشاعر ألف جواز في الشعر
وألف جواز أن يتسلل للاهواز
يا قلبي! عشق الأرض جواز
وأبو ذرٍّ وحسين الاهوازي وأمي والشيب من الدوران
ورائي من سجن الشاه الى سجن الصحراء
الى المنفى الرَّبذي، جوازي

72 Al-Nawwāb, 76.

وهناك مسافة وعي، بين دخول الطبل على العمق
السّمفوني
وبين خروج الطبل الساذج في الجاز
ووقفت وكنت من الله قريبا.

The palm tree rose in my heart
One of the palm trees rose higher than all of the others,
supporting my heart like a branch on the palm fronds.
Who can reach the heart now ...??!
My foot is in prison ... and my heart is amongst the palm fronds.
And I said in my heart: don't you dare [confess].
There are a thousand permissions [*jawāz*][73] in poetry for the poet
and a thousand permissions to sneak away to Ahwaz[74]
My heart! Loving the earth is a permission
And Abū Dhurr and Ḥusayn al-Ahwāzī and my mother and the one with gray hair, who follow
Behind me from the prison of the Shah to the prison in the desert
To the Rabadhī exile, are *jawāzī*.
There is an expanse of awareness between the entrance of the percussion in the depths of the
symphonic
And the plain exit of the percussion in jazz.
I stood and was close to God.[75]

The poet encapsulates the intensity of *ightirāb* through the evocation of his body and nature. The speaker is hovering between two states: his foot stands in prison, but his heart has risen high with the palm tree. The poetic image amplifies the poetic image with a movement that trespasses (*tatajāwaz*, from *jawāz*) the physical confinement of bodily imprisonment, as al-Nawwāb asserts in the line "There are a thousand permissions in poetry for the poet" ("فللشاعر ألف جواز في الشعر"). For despite being in prison, the heart is freed and is allowed to roam to different spaces and times. It is a level of awareness or *waʿī* (which Barakāt points to in his work as a way of dealing with *ightirāb*, and which is

73 *Jawāz* in Arabic means permission/allowance, but it is also the word used to mean a passport. In this way, al-Nawwāb is highlighting the fact that he had to be undercover, escape to the desert so that he is not found, and sneak (illegally) back home. Despite his inability to use the document (the passport), poetry allows him to trespass spaces.

74 Al-Nawwāb's birthplace, which was annexed by Iran.

75 Al-Nawwāb, 76–77.

central in achieving the Sufi state of *fanāʾ*) that al-Nawwāb exemplifies here. The *fanāʾ* state and its connection to awareness are particularly evident in the last line, where a closeness with God is achieved. The speaker realizes that in order to earn his freedom and enact his rebellion, he has to channel the percussion in a symphonic setting. The symphonic invocation here closes the circle of the poem by echoing al-Nawwāb's earlier declaration at the beginning of the poem of intertwining the flame of the individual within the larger historical context.

While the poem seems to end on a victorious note, al-Barghūtī argues that this end is "part of the whirl and not a real end to the internal quicksand." In al-Nawwāb's following poetry collection "we feel the same whirl of loss and *ightirāb*," thus attesting to the cyclical nature of *ightirāb*.[76]

Conclusion

Al-Barghūthī declares in one of his lectures that simply put, it is not possible to comprehend modern Arabic poetry without comprehending "*al-ightirāb*".[77]

This article ventured from al-Barghūthī's premise regarding the centrality of *ightirāb* in modern Arabic poetry—and particularly, as he shows in his writings, in the poetry of Darwīsh and al-Nawwāb. Reading the examples above through the lens of *ightirāb* attests to a few central issues. *Ightirāb* is an experience that is at play within the personal experiences as well as the collective and general contexts. While all three poems showcase *ightirāb*, they at the same time reveal it in different modes.

Nature and the body take central stage in the revelation of *ightirāb* and its dynamics. Acts of running, seeing, bodily changes, visions, and unions with the other become modes of approaching and resisting *ightirāb* and seem to offer (momentary) resolutions away from it. At the same time, and despite this apparent resolution, a sense of immersion in *ightirāb* is revealed through the often-sole voices of the speakers and the stylistic constructions of the poem. As such, *ightirāb* becomes a cyclical notion that is constantly being processed rather than a definite state that is overstepped. In the present examples, the poetic image becomes at once a representation of the experience and a trial of facing it through making use of contradictions, oppositions, and the dialectics of construction and de-construction.

76 Al-Barghūthī, *Suqūṭ al-jidār al-sābiʿ*, 91.

77 Al-Barghūthī, "Handasat al-qaṣīdah," 185.