NEW VOICES OF ARABIA
THE POETRY

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The Poetry

An Anthology from Saudi Arabia

Edited by
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Acknowledgements

In February 2008, I was part of a media delegation invited to visit Argentina. On the plane flying from Madrid to Buenos Aires, the head of the delegation gave each of us a small diplomatic bag as gifts to be given to Argentinean officials. Opening the surprisingly light bag, I found two small books in Spanish with the aim of introducing them to Saudi culture. It was then that the idea of having anthologies that introduce our literature to the world in all languages was born.

This book would not have been possible without the support of the Ministry of Culture and Information, first to the Minister, His Excellency Dr Abdulaziz Khawjah, and to all who contributed to the project. My gratitude goes to the panel that selected the writers, and to Dr Saad Al-Bazei, who offered invaluable assistance and support at all stages of the project, Dr Mohammad Habibi, poet Ahmad Al-Mulla, Dr Hasan Al-Nemi, Dr Mujeb Al-Adwani and writer Jubair Al-Mulaihan. I would also like to thank the editors of the anthologies, Dr Saad Al-Bazei, Dr Abdulaziz Al-Sebail and Anthony Calderbank, for their efforts and contributions.

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Yousef Al-Mohaimeed
Director of Dar Al-Mufradah Publishers

Foreword

The function of artistic creativity extends beyond merely conveying aesthetic experience. It provides evidence of people's cultures, and also demonstrates the power of language through many different styles of literature. This literature expresses people's concerns, needs and how they interact with their environments.

These anthologies of poetry and short stories are rendered in a widely known international language in order to present Saudi culture to the world. This is intended to strengthen the mutual human, artistic and civil ties with the international community. Such relations stem from the belief that artistic creativity is one efficient method for human communication.

These collections present a selection of poets and short-story writers of different generations, artistic orientations and social classes in Saudi Arabia. The selection is meant to reflect the diversity of the forms that the poets and story writers use as well as the literary schools to which they belong. It thus aims to clearly portray the level of innovation and progress that these art forms have undergone in the kingdom in recent decades.

Therefore, these anthologies are considered a significant contribution to cultural dialogue among nations. Their contribution lies in depicting human emotions and actions pertaining to Saudi culture, thus providing an image of the Saudi experience and stripping away many stereotypical views and preconceptions. This is in keeping with the Saudi leadership's initiative in supporting international cultural tolerance and religious dialogue. King Abduallah ibn Abdulaziz has led this initiative in order to bring people together, encourage understanding and promote tolerance. This dialogue began locally within the kingdom, after which it progressed to the wider Islamic world to include all Muslim nations. After that, the Saudi call for tolerance and dialogue grew to include the rest of the international community until it was adopted and supported by the United Nations.

The Ministry of Culture and Information would like to thank Dar Al-Mufradah Publishers, which has led this project, for their organized

and methodical efforts in bringing about these anthologies in a timely manner.

Nasser Al-Hujelan
Deputy Minister for Cultural Affairs
Ministry of Culture and Information
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Introduction

The literature of Saudi Arabia is first and foremost part of Arabic literature. Like other segments of Arabic culture at large, it partakes of the language, history as well as the socio-geographic and other elements constituting the Arab world. Yet, like other parts of that same world, Saudi literature has a number of distinctive features that justify calling it 'Saudi'. The formation of Saudi Arabia in the early decades of the twentieth century resulted from the unification of parts of the Arabian Peninsula that had until then remained disparate, loosely related by ethnic origins and tribal traditions. The new synthesis was detrimental to the evolution of a cultural identity that derived as much from the long and rich history of Arabic literature as from the new socio-political reality that brought together writers from almost all parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The resulting combination did not only bring various experiences and local traditions together, but it also deepened and increased contacts with the rest of the Arab countries and the rest of the world. It created a vibrant literary tradition and milieu that we now call 'Saudi literature'.

At the beginning there came what often comes first: a classical period or a classical revival – a neo-classical period to be more accurate – that attempted to reconnect the new milieu with its heritage: ancient Arabic poetry. As in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and other parts of the Arab world, poets in the developing kingdom sought their identity and meaning in emulation of the work of pre-Islamic as well as early Islamic periods. The poets from Hejaz, Najd and the other provinces of the new country welcomed King Abdulaziz as conqueror and leader with panegyrics composed in the formal manner of poets such as Jarir and Abu Tammam of the eighth and ninth centuries AD. Reading Saudi poets such as Mohammad bin Uthaimin or Ahmad Ibrahim Alghazzawi one would find it difficult to sense that the poems are from the early twentieth century. Yet this trend did not continue for long. Even some of the poets who were contemporary with the neo-classicists already found the courage, knowledge and the artistic dexterity to venture out of that impasse.

Winds of modernity

Deriving much from fellow Arab poets in Egypt, Lebanon and other places in Arab countries, poets such as Mohammad Hassan Awwad, Hamza Shehata and Hussain Sarhan opened new horizons during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s by starting a mixture of two veins: the classical and the romantic. In the hands of such writers, not only poetry but also other genres saw a local renaissance that led to the sprouting of forms and techniques, in addition to ideas and themes, all testifying to a robust literary scene that was full of realized fruits as much as rich potential, certainly not without numerous obstacles and challenges. The change coming with time meant that generations stood distinctively apart, but the elements of continuity were also there. This could be seen in prose as well as poetry, but it was the latter that was destined, as ever in the Arab world, to demonstrate the continuity running side by side with innovation in literary culture. In poetry we can see the rapid changes that affected not only Saudi literature but also Saudi life and culture as a whole. The unabating tension between the forces of change and tradition are nowhere more visible and even painful than in the poem as a form that can be easily described as the mainstay of Arabic literature as a whole, and the Arabian Peninsula more particularly.

And it was in the poem that the war of change was fought more fiercely and forcefully. But it was not until the middle of the last century that that war was finally won by the forces of change and modernization, thus bringing about formal and thematic elements that poetry had never witnessed. Young Saudi poets, building on the accomplishments of a generation a little older than themselves, began interacting even more forcefully and deeply with their counterparts in the Arab world. The interaction brought, as it did before, an immediate clash with deeply seated traditions that could not tolerate what was seen as a threat to Arabic culture itself. Poems that reflected romantic and symbolist currents in Arabic poetry at the time, in their turn a reflection of European and older trends, antagonized many people as much as they breathed life into a static and self-enclosed literary scene. Eventually those early changes encouraged a younger generation to be even bolder in its innovation.

In the 1970s and 1980s innovation transformed into sweeping change. Those two decades saw the strengthening of what came to be known as 'free verse'. Vanguard poets such as Mohammad Al-Ali and Ghazi Al-Qussaibi, who hailed from the eastern parts of the kingdom, published poems that showed newer techniques as well as different experiences. Whereas Al-Qussaibi utilized with high skill the romantic vein in a some-

what traditional verse, Al-Ali could easily be considered the father of the new form, with poems in free verse (*tafi'ylah*) that highlighted the struggle of the individual artist to forge an identity in a rather hostile environment. The tragic political realities of the Arab world overshadowed the poems of Al-Ali, as well those of Al-Qussaibi, particularly in the aftermath of the 1967 Arab–Israeli War. The romantic vein in Al-Qussaibi's poems, along with those of other poets in the 1960s and 1970s such as Mohammad Fahad Al-Isa, Hassan Al-Qurashi and Mohammad Al-Muslim, constituted a counter-current to the sad socio-political realities of Arab life at the time. The domination of poetic flights into love that so often borders on the erotic, the appeal of themes related to the desert and Bedouin life, all added to an escapist trend that could only be instigated by inhospitable realities around them. In a poem entitled 'Lydia', M. F. Al-Isa, for example, takes a European, romantic flight as he remembers a young beauty whose name alone is enough to transport him away from his locale. But the poem goes even further in a romantic search for existence: 'I set my soul free …/ it fluttered …/searching for the secret of being …/for destiny…'

Mohammad Al-Ali, who led a modernist trend in the 1970s, had his romantic roots, but his value rests on his ability to repeat what three or four decades earlier someone like M. Awwad was able to call for: a freeing of the poem from the clichés of romanticism:

> The dreamy comets have turned into ashes
> now he wears the nakedness of rocks
> No water in the water
> I was once stopped by a gull that was afar
> I hear its rhythm-dripping feathers
> Illusions that wash away death from all of our fear-stricken fantasies.

Al-Ali gave a new generation of poets new metaphors that were derived, paradoxically, from the discovery that certain things have already left or need to leave, like the dying comets and departing gull, the realization that what was known was no more, 'no water in water'.

The hard reality that Al-Ali sought to establish as a new source of poetic inventiveness and innovation did not, however, eliminate the entire romantic atmosphere. It seemed inevitable that poets will have some romantic period at the beginning of their careers. This was true of the younger generation of Saudi poets who began publishing in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the work of poets such as Fawziah Abu Khalid, Saad Al-Hamideen, Ali Al-Dumaini and Ahmad Assalih Hasan Al-Sabe', some of the early themes continue, but they are modified and conjoined by new

developments both on thematic and technical levels. The 1970s witnessed what came to be known as 'the *tafrah* years', the economic boom that resulted from the rise in oil prices. With their artistic sensibility, the poets who lived through that change were more interested in the human price paid for the change. In a series of works by poets such as Mohammad Al-Thubaiti, Abdullah Al-Saikhan, Mohammad Jabr Al-Harbi, Khadijah Al-Amri and Thurayya Al-Urayyid, the changes affecting the kingdom and Arab world as a whole are reflected in images that derived from Bedouin traditions and desert imagery as much as from urban life. The themes of identity, love, human suffering, women, Arab political life, among others, galvanized this group of poets, who saw themselves, and were seen by others, as the 'modernist poets' (*shua'ra' alhadatha*).

One of the significant developments during the 1980s was the bold entry of female poets onto the scene. Already a visible presence through the pioneering work of Fawziah Abu Khalid, who was the first of either sex to publish a collection of prose poems (in 1971), female poets now gathered new force that would continue over the following decades and offer a new streak in a scene already replete with male publications. The work of Khadija Al-Amri, Ghaida' Almanfa, Thurayya Al-Urayyid and Ashjan Hendi, among others, added new perspectives and sometimes even new techniques to the Saudi poem. Their poems fall generally within the *tafi'ylah* tradition, which maintains the traditional metres but avoids the monotony of sticking to the same number of feet in each line. Thematically, however, the poems of these female voices differ to some extent from those of men in that they generally address the social and cultural issues related to women in a conservative society, but they are by no means limited to such issues. General concerns and aspirations are also strongly to the fore. An interesting example is a poem by Ashjan Hendi entitled 'Isabella'. The poem harks back to M. Al-Issa's use of 'Lydia', both being names of European girls, but it is the difference that strikes one in the comparison. The poet recalls a girl she met in Frankfurt while attending the Frankfurt Book Fair:

> Every day Isabella looks for someone other than me.
> And finds me.
> And I look for someone other than her.
> And find her.
> They say of East and West: never the twain shall meet.
> But Isabella and I
> meet every day on our journey
> searching for another.

Prose poems: dominant themes

The poetics of simplicity and surprise characterizing Hendi's culturally charged poem became the mark of a new period. In the 1990s much of the poetic scene began to shift for both male and female poets. The prose poem made an entry with a force – a new poetic vigour – as well as an increased degree of sophistication. Faced with an uproar of denunciation from conservative quarters who could not see how a poem could be in prose, this new form has proved to be more resistant and resilient than even its proponents imagined. Although not quite new on the Saudi scene – some poets in the 1950s and 1960s, and Fawziah Abu Khalid in the early 1970s, had already published poems without any metrical elements – what happened in the last decade of the twentieth century was more in keeping with developments in world poetry that seeped into the work of poets from the Arab world. These included the Lebanese Unsi Alhaj and Abbas Baidhoun, the Syrian Mohammad Almaghout, the Iraqi Saadi Yousef and Sargoun Bolus, in addition to other poets from Bahrain, Egypt and North Africa. The work of the Saudi poets reflected elements found in the poems of those in the wider Arab world, but in several instances came out of an indigenous experience and vision, which gave them both newness and originality. In the work of poets such as Ibrahim Al-Husain, Mohammad Al-Domaini, Ahmad Al-Mulla, Huda Al-Daghfag, Fawziah Abu Khalid, Ali Al-Amri and Mohammad Obaid Al-Harbi, the prose poem shows a deep and subtle involvement in the daily and the marginal, but also in less mundane matters, reflected in unusual imagery and in intricate and esoteric metaphors. Mohammad Al-Domaini, in a piece entitled 'The angel of sorrow', writes:

> After a while … the door to this room will be forcefully opened
> because
> the street overflows with my silence.
> The police will find me
> imprisoned in a book …

The sorrow is of course that of an intellectual overwhelmed by a sense of foreboding that his venture into reading and creative work are going to bring him trouble. The irony, however, is that he will be found out not because of the noise or movement such work is likely to stir but because of the silence, the ability of the security services to detect even the silence of creative work. Interestingly Al-Domaini articulates similar worries even in a city like New York where he lived as a student during the 1980s. His poem on America is part of a significant body of Saudi poetry that

explores relations with the West both culturally and politically. In this he has forerunners such as Hussain Sarhan and Ghazi Al-Qussaibi who published a volume entitled *The Face of London*, as well as by other poets such as M. F. Al-Isa who was quoted earlier.

Today views of the West or Western culture constitute a significant theme in Saudi poetry. Many of those views are politically charged, others are culturally oriented. Generally they testify to an openness to 'the other' that Saudis have known for many decades and which are likely to intensify as the flow of trade, tourism and educational interchange keep increasing. Many of the Saudi poets who wrote about America, Britain and other Western countries and societies were once either diplomats or students.

Important as the presence of 'the other' is in Saudi poetry, the presence of the local culture – the geographical and folkloric aspects of life – is even more visible and influential. The desert in particular has always represented a significant presence in Saudi life and culture. Poems celebrating the life of desert dwellers, the Bedouins, who have almost become extinct under the pressure and expansion of civil or metropolitan life, constitute a major segment of the poetic corpus. In the best of these poems it is not nostalgia or simple romantic musings that dominate. Rather, such poems use the desert theme to address contemporary issues of identity, existence and ethics. An outstanding example here is a poem by Mohammad Al-Thubaiti entitled – in Arabic – 'Taghribat Alqawafil wa Almatar' ('The westward migration of caravans and rain'). The poem depicts a pre-Islamic caravan lost in the desert which is looking for both water and a missing priest and fortune-teller (*kahin*). The speaker is a collective voice, and the journey becomes the stage to raise the concerns of the caravan as it moves without a leader to find both that leader and the source of its life, rain. The agony with which the poem overflows can be seen as an expression of loss that a people and a culture feel in an alien modern world. The traditional and familiar theme of desert people losing their way is transformed into a universal highly symbolic situation reminiscent of 'The Wasteland' by the Anglo-American poet T. S. Eliot.

The presence of the desert in Saudi poetry might suggest the absence of its antithesis, the city, but that is of course contrary to the truth. Since the 1950s, poets have embraced the various ramifications of civic life, thus allowing the metropolis to occupy a prominent position. This has been even more noticeable with the advent of the prose poem, which can be seen as essentially a metropolitan form. Since the French poet Baudelaire in the second half of the nineteenth century, who was one of its fathers, the prose poem took on the various aspects and challenges of life in a city, the

grim as well as the bright aspects. Saudi poets, like other Arab poets, have took on the same challenge, for it was not easy to modify a poetic language loaded for centuries by an environment and ways of living so remote from modernity. Many of the best works by poets such as Ahmad Al-Mulla, Ibrahim Al-Husain, Fawziah Abu Khalid and Huda Al-Daghfag are good representatives of how poetry has come to terms with life in cities. Such examples should also include poets who did not write prose poems, but chose the so-called 'free verse', or *tafi'ylah* form. Poets such as Ali Al-Dumaini and Saad Al-Hamideen have since the 1970s derived many of their themes, and a great deal of their imagery and language, from city life. Unlike the younger generation of the prose poem, however, that older generation was less focused on metropolitan life than that which followed.

The role of literary criticism

Any introduction to Saudi poetry would remain incomplete without reference to the role played by literary criticism in providing a critical discourse that moved alongside the poetry, providing an intellectual and aesthetic commentary, analysis and evaluation. In earlier decades criticism was rare and when it existed it generally took the form of impressionistic pieces about poems published in newspapers. But as the cultural life of the country matured, criticism became a significant force that came from academic and non-academic individuals, and in the form of lectures, well-informed essays in literary supplements, or as scholarly studies in books. The names here include Abdullah Nour, Ali Al-Dumaini, Mohammad Ashshanti, Abdullah Al-Ghadhami, Said Assuraihi and Saad Al-Bazei. Over the last three decades, the literary and the journalistic establishment, represented here by literary supplements in major newspapers, the major literary clubs and the Saudi Association of Culture and the Arts, offered a platform for both the poems and the critiques, although many of the poets and the critics came to publish their work later.

Yet this introduction, indeed the entire anthology, cannot claim to do justice to such a diverse scene of poetical output. One needs a number of introductions and anthologies to come close to that. Being a volume of selected works, an anthology is itself an initial announcement of leaving out something, usually a great deal. This great deal is not necessarily less important or significant than what is included; in fact it can be equal to or even more important than what is selected. The point is not in importance but in representation. The editor of this anthology simply believes that he has selected poets and works that go a long way in representing the poetical scene in Saudi Arabia, and representation means familiarizing

a reader who is new to that scene with what has been produced over a period of time, here almost half a century. By bringing three generations of poets together, and offering around forty poets with a number of poems by each, the claim of representation appears well justified. By joining Hussain Sarhan in the 1950s to Hilda Ismail and Ahmad Kattua' in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and by juxtaposing the traditional rhythms of the classical poem with the diametrically different poetics of the prose poem, one is offered a fairly balanced picture of what was and is still going on under the same umbrella of poetry.

Saad Al-Bazei

Abdullah Al-Saikhan

He was born in 1956 in Tabuk, in the north of the kingdom. He has worked in journalism as an editor, and has published one collection of poetry entitled *Apprehensions on the Rituals of Homeland*. Some of his poems have been translated into English.

A myth

The Time: A time that's passed
The Place: Our village, lying on the sandy hill
The Occasion: A woman from our village called Laila
who fell in love
The Actors: The village chief … some village men
They said: 'This beauty brimming in Laila's eyes …
where did it come from?
This beauty tattoo, glittering always in the palm of gypsy
women
Who painted on her hands?
This anger clear in the faces of the village men
Who grew it in her eyes?
Who taught Laila to dwell in the breast of the man?
To mix with his breath?
To forget a woman's modesty?
Who taught her
To draw this passion coming down from Rayes to Abha?
In this place we hide our faces
behind our hands if
Love is mentioned
Or if some lad asked what the colour of love was
What, village Sheikh, must we do?'
Standing in the middle of the circle said
Why not cut out the roots of love
and be saved?
There stands its tree planted on the road of the village
Cut it down to its deepest root
So that no other Laila
Can ever emerge
to dwell in the breast of a man.
The narrator said:
A branch of that tree resisted
and grew,
Laila,
in the heart of the night,

would slip out,
to water it
with the love that dwells in the pupils of her eyes
And it grew and grew
Until it became a tree
Its branches stretching
From that village
To cover the whole earth
Whoever eats from it
is afflicted with love
Whoever sits in its shade
falls in love with the first girl
he meets
of all the girls of this earth.

Translated by Bassam Al-Hilu
with Alan Brownjohn

Poems of the antechamber

1

A foot ascends the stairs
With a step that has no echo
The door is opened, no one is there
A foot ascends the stairs.

2

For whom does her braid come
Loose? The shadows fall
Her sister shook the brilliance
A king fills up the clouds.

3

The more the gale rattled
I uttered rain in its wind
While the palm tree grew tall
The cluster withered and broke off.

4

Sit between us, absence
And abandoned stories
A mist precedes my rain
So touch its beginning now.

5

They all left and he came
While I was the orphaning of a song

He slammed the door behind him
Then I was alone for a second time.

6

A boy assumes love is just
As he willed and desired
He knew not that he was weak, even
When commanding or forbidding.

7

Cities, how are they of glass?
And mirrors of stone
And beaks are not sold
Yet birds are bought.

8

Do not pass by, for between us are
Seven destroyed dwellings
Above them the owl rises
Like the melody of a broken flute.

9

The night descended between us
And two arms in a pillow
The morning exposed our secret
And disguised a steed in us.

10

What is it which makes that
Between my palm and hers
A basin of mint unembellished
With the details of her fleetness?

11

A boy behind his shattered
Rifle, a boy
Half of whom is blood
And on that half his medals.

Short poems

The poet

He rejoices … Thirty rivers of silk and a forest of aquamarine belong to him
A desert belongs to him, when she notices him briefly behind the wind and a rebelling boxthorn
Water belongs to him, since a cloud – lightly – passed by … and the prairie rejoiced
Poetry belongs to him, since rhymes were suspended over the spinning wheel of black wool
He rejoices … Thirty broken mirrors and a thousand spread out verses belong to him.

Sword

The days were summer
I was sitting on the roof, and the trees were telling me what the river had
generously granted them
With praise, and rustling
I said, Mother, say some poetry for me
She drew a sword on the ground
And said it was a palm leaf.

Maliha

Her face is rain … and her hands are dust
This which grows on her shoulders has fruit, like absence
Her face is rain
Her chest is two clouds of clarity, or a dream of two children
Or a nation within, in its possibilities: rain … no rain
Maliha awoke when the morning came; she wore her house robe and turned to song
Rain … no rain

She lifted her face to the sky
Rain … no rain
And undressed as birds do
The sky granted her its windows
It rained … rained
And Maliha was suspended over the trees.

Star of ink

Ours, a high moon in Al Yamama
But when we stay awake, he comes down the stairs in the sky to pass the night
Ours, the star of ink …
We write it, and the heavens are a notebook
Ours, in the pigeons, the cooing of two …
But their tears turned to stone
Ours, in infatuation, an orphan's heart …
But when it loves passionately, I flourish
Ours, Imru Al Qays, seeking a lost country …
Then he loses
Ours, in Al Rasafa, two flutes …
Sorrow keeps us distant … until we gather our souls in a book of scattered satires
Ours, two glasses, in remorse
I spilt the more beautiful once upon a sorrow
And the second of them broke
Ours … that which is ours, other than this hell that has surrounded us …
But, from the dew, it will uncover
Ours, God
And God is great.

Translated by Ayesha Saldanha

Abdullah Al-Washmi

He holds a PhD in rhetoric and literary criticism and teaches at the College of Arabic Language at Imam University. He is the chairman of Riyadh Literary Club and hosts a cultural programme for Saudi Radio. He has published two poetry collections in addition to critical studies. He is the recipient of the Prince Faisal Bin Fahd award for poetry.

A memory for forgotten streets

Surprise
He said: even shops open their mouths
surprised
to see streets crying.

Dust
Dust is the streets' tears,
the seats watch in silence
the crying carnival.

World
The street itself,
the clock too
and the world, run.

Bridges
Bridges try to escape
runners' pressure.

Kiss
A city street
smiles as a lady walks
on its cheeks,
and kisses her feet enthralled.

Stepping
Lighten your steps, this is my blood
on the streets' surface asking:
How many killers will be trampling me down?
Lighten your step, these are my own eyes,
on the streets' surface
pleading that you be merciful to the dead.

Fingerprint
The streets:
Are they trying to study the details,
Read all the worries in the feet of passers-by?
Tickle their dreams,
then leave them to tears?

Blame
As for all those who lose their way,
Streets are not to blame.

…

I imagine – with ultimate love – that streets
have become
a meeting point for travelling pigeons,
that birds practise their yearning on the lamppost,
that traffic police come to allow
an instant
for seagulls' passage.

Kiss
And they have one body,
a thousand meanings.
These are not our streets,
they are …
farewell kisses.

The impossible journey
Standing in front of the eyes like mist,
well, I'll leave towards whiteness,
– says the little poor – as the dust
of our salutes engulfs him,
like darkness, when we pass by
towards stillness.

Black
Like a sorceress
he twists here
below our feet,

then no one
holds his sighs
except us.

Laughter
Like a grave
streets cover our dreams.

Sidewalk
Life is streets
Paved
For passage.

Eyes
The girls' bus leaves its parking space,
the eyes behind it
never grow old …!

Opportunity
Streets offer us an opportunity
to meet loved ones,
to wipe away our sadness with them
or redraw the maps of our hopes
then go back to the old houses!
Oh, who was hallucinating that streets are
abodes for vacuum?
Because even lovers nothing can accommodate
their yearning and smiles
except these streets.

Black
Why should streets be as black as death,
that we flood with light?
It is we who choose their colours,
perhaps to make them similar to our dreams,
or our days,
perhaps
perhaps.

Names
Streets have names:
Sibaweih
Ibn Maa' Assama'
Tareq
Ibn Sina,
these do not know the houses, we left them for the
sun
to burn their feet in the streets conflagration.

Witness
In the alleys of old quarters,
nothing but streets bear witness
to the dreams
and ends
of the departed.

Boredom
A street in the city
Was so bored of standing on the roads
That he left to where the frivolous are celebrating.

Knowledge
Look at these streets
Do they teach us the language of waiting, ruin, siege
And we are their students?
How many times did we knock on their doors,
wrote our tales,
loved in them,
and for them
our parents dedicated us.

Crying
When streets cry
no one rubs off their sadness
except our kids,
they turn streets into playgrounds for their dreams.
and ends for their sadness.
When streets cry the young ones
Recite their elegies.

Pregnant women street
The child's history
begins in the streets.

Kohl
Streets are defeated
They furtively put on
kohl.

Eternal love
Streets carry us to gardens, or to graveyards,
plant our bodies, perhaps, in elegant hospitals,
then teach us to repent.
Thus, a lover who is tireless,
and a beloved who is never repentant!

Right
He said to me:
There the road in front of you,
never harm it,
give it its right to stand fast!

Ring road
It turns
and turns.
Where to, you big circular,
besieging us with big blackness?

Translated by Saad Al-Bazei