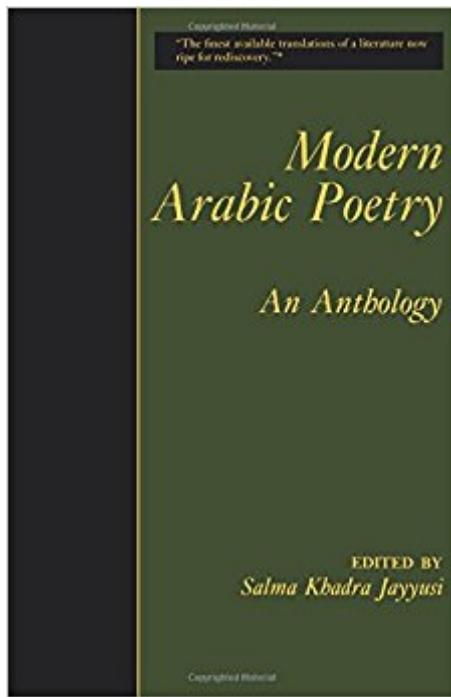


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Modern Arabic Poetry



Synopsis

After centuries of oppressive Ottoman rule, the Arab world began to find new vitality and freedom in the twentieth century. The accompanying resurgence of creative expression is splendidly reflected in this definitive anthology of contemporary Arabic poetry, which spans the modern Arab world from the turn of the century to the present, from the Arab Gulf to Morocco. The editor, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, a renowned expert on modern Arabic literature, presents a thorough introduction to the works of more than ninety Arab poets. To create the best possible English translation, each selection has been translated first by a bilingual expert and then by an English-language poet, who creatively renders it into idiomatic English.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Some of the poetry in this volume are works that western readers would never have the privilege of reading and would have been otherwise deprived of the beauty of this work. A sensitive translation that involved each poet. Discover the voices of arab poets in this volume.

This book blew me away. Fearless poetry.....that's all I can say. These poems are utterly proud, audacious, textured, & profound. If you are a lover of poetry, you will not be disappointed.

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According to Jayyusi view, the cultural bias favoring the group over the individual remains constant, with the poet seen as "a worker producing for the group" with the poetic "product" limited by what the group can accept and utilize. Jayyusi believes poetry is thus driven by a social functionalism expressed in two main directions "one ideological of religious origin and the other musical, in the form of singing and tarab." In other words, poetry must serve a cause, and ideology in the first case, while in the second, and in fact the more keenly felt and popularly enjoyed function, the purpose is sheer pleasure and jubilation. Ideally, the two functions concur--this is the goal of such a poetry. Jayyusi emphasizes that "tarab," i.e. singing, remains fundamental, indeed intrinsic to Arabic poetry past and present. Poetic verse is always subject to this standard. "Don't we notice that the Holy Koran today, for example, is a matter of audition or tarab for most Muslims more than a matter of reading, and comprehension and contemplation," Adonis writes. Jayyusi points out that the two elements, "song" and "function (the serving of a cause)" are so fundamental that any poetic expression not embracing them is culturally relegated to the status of "philosophy," something deemed complex and remote from the people. Thus, unrhymed, non-musical poetry, poetry based on "contemplation and examination of inner worlds" lies so outside Arabic poetic taste as to be utterly marginalized, removed from any but a tiny, refined audience. Jayyusi sees a conflict between this cultural reality and his own conviction that poetry must challenge boundaries and establish new aesthetics. This poetic effort means embracing rather than spurning the difficulty and ambiguity of meaning. "The problem in this context, lies in the refusal of Arabic poetic taste to place poetry at par with the great cognitive and discovery intuitions." As Jayyusi points out, poetry continues to be judged by the causes and concerns it champions, and by the author's affiliations and ideologies. "Original readings concern themselves not with the essence of poetry but with its 'soil' and the 'climate' in which it is produced." This phenomenon, according to Adonis, will only be reinforced by society's increasing domination by the non-literate media, TV in particular. Thus, modern communications technology only serves the religious and social traditions already so profoundly established. This leads Adonis to an equally profound pessimism regarding the present and future chances of Arabic poetry to escape its traditional limitations.

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