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RESEARCH ARTICLE

JAMAL ASSADI: A VOICE OF CULTURAL BELONGING IN MODERN ARAB POETRY

Nassim Assadi

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Abstract

This article explores the poetry of Jamal Assadi, a prominent Palestinian poet whose works delve into themes of identity, displacement, and cultural belonging. Using a biographical approach, the study analyzes how Assadi's personal experiences, particularly as a Palestinian Arab living in Israel, inform his poetic voice. By drawing on Assadi's own words from interviews and his body of work, the article examines key poems to highlight his reflection on time, memory, and the socio-political struggles of the Arab world. Assadi's use of both classical Arabic poetic forms and modern free verse techniques enriches the Arab literary tradition, blending the old with the new to address contemporary concerns. The critical method employed in this article focuses on the relationship between Assadi's life and his literary creations, emphasizing how his poetry acts as a mirror of personal and collective experiences of exile and cultural fragmentation. Additionally, the article explores Assadi's engagement with global literary traditions, showing how intertextuality plays a role in his political critique. Ultimately, this article affirms Assadi's significant contribution to modern Arab literature, arguing that his poetry serves as both a continuation of classical Arabic traditions and a platform for innovation. By addressing themes of cultural resilience and political critique, Assadi's work provides a nuanced and powerful voice within the broader landscape of Arab poetry, making it an essential subject of literary study.

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Introduction:-

Jamal Assadi's poetry offers a rich and profound engagement with the themes of character and transformation, themes that are deeply intertwined with his personal experiences as a Palestinian Arab living in Israel. His poetry serves as a reflection of both personal struggles and broader socio-political realities that form the Palestinian path of uprooting, resistance, and survival. As a poet, Assadi crafts a narrative that is not merely individual but resonates with the collective voice of a people enduring ongoing conflicts related to land, personality, and cultural heritage. His work explores the delicate balance between the internal quest for selfhood and the external pressures imposed by political circumstances, colonial legacies, and social expectations.

The significance of character and transformation in literature, particularly in contexts of conflict, dislocation, and cultural tension, has been a recurring focus in modern literary studies (Dirlik, 2002 209–234; Altun 2023, 381–385.) Literature often serves as a medium through which writers can explore their personal and collective identities, expressing the pain, hope, and complexities inherent in their cultural narratives. In Assadi's poetry, these themes are

central, as his work exposes a deep-seated engagement with the existential questions of who we are, where we come from, and how we navigate the challenges imposed by history, politics, and social structures. For Assadi, identity is not a static concept but one that is continuously shaped and reshaped by the forces of exile, marginalization, and resistance. His work, therefore, stands as a testament to the toughness of cultural character in the face of adversity and to the transformative power of poetic expression.

This study seeks to explore the ways in which Assadi's personal life influence the themes of character and transformation in his poetry. As a Palestinian Arab in Israel, Assadi occupies a unique position, living within the borders of a state that politically and socially marginalizes his community. His poetry, therefore, is imbued with a sense of longing for belonging, a desire to reconcile his Palestinian heritage with the realities of living in a Jewish-majority state. Through his poetic voice, Assadi articulates not only the struggles of an individual but also the collective thinking of a people navigating the difficulties of cultural survival and the politics of character.

The research presented in this article takes a biographical approach, analyzing how Assadi's life stations outline his poetic themes and stylistic choices. By examining selected poems from his *The Comprehensive Anthology of Early 21st Century Arab Poets*, such as "In the Lobby of My House," "King of the Pen-Land," "The Ravegeon," "The New Year's Eve," "The Phoenix," and "The She-Nightingale," this study examines the poet's evolving exploration of identity and transformation (Assadi, 2024 196-211).¹ These poems, rich in imagery, symbolism, and emotional resonance, reveal the ways in which Assadi grapples with themes of displacement, cultural heritage, and the quest for self-expression amidst conflict.

In addition to analyzing the themes within Assadi's poetry, this study also considers the formal elements of his work, such as his use of imagery, symbolism, tone, and musicality. These stylistic devices enhance the aesthetic qualities of his poetry and contribute to the deeper exploration of character and transformation. For instance, Assadi frequently employs rich, evocative imagery to convey the emotional and psychological states of his speaker, often using symbols drawn from nature, Palestinian folklore, and history. His use of tone, ranging from melancholic reflection to defiant resistance, further underscores the complexity of the poet's relationship with his individuality and his homeland.

By contextualizing Jamal Assadi's poetry within his biographical background and the broader socio-political framework of Palestinian literature, this study seeks to provide a sophisticated understanding of how personal life starts artistic expression. Assadi's work not only exposes his individual journey but also offers insights into the larger narrative of Palestinian character and resistance. His poetry becomes a vehicle for exploring the ongoing tension between the personal and the political, between the desire for cultural continuity and the forces of transformation that sculpt both individual and collective identities.

This research contributes to the study of Jamal Assadi's poetic works by offering a comprehensive examination of the biographical and historical influences that comprise his poetry. Additionally, it enriches the broader discourse on contemporary Palestinian literature by demonstrating how poets like Assadi steer the convolutions of selfhood in the face of socio-political adversity. Assadi's poetry serves as a compelling testament to the resilience of the Palestinian people and their ongoing struggle for cultural survival and self-expression.

Moreover, this study presents Assadi's poetry as a valuable resource for scholars of Arabic poetry, particularly those focused on Palestinian literature. By examining his work within the broader context of Palestinian poetry, the study highlights the essential role of literature in advocating for social change, equality, and the right to live with dignity.

¹.The following titles were shortened for the sake of brevity:

The Story of a People: An Anthology of Palestinian Poets within the Green-line: the Story

The Comprehensive Anthology of Early 21st Century Arab Poets: Anthology

"The Ravegeon": "Ravegeon"

"The New Year's Eve": "Eve"

"The She-Nightingale": "Nightingale"

"My Horses Sprung": "Horses"

"In the Lobby of My House": "Lobby"

"The Phoenix": "Phoenix"

"King of the Pen-Land": "Pen-Land"

Through his verse, Assadi not only copies personal and collective history of expulsion and conflict but also contributes to the literary tradition that calls for justice and the affirmation of selfhood. Ultimately, this study enhances our understanding of how character, transformation, and personal story are intricately woven into contemporary poetry, especially in contexts of conflict and enforced transfer.

Exploring Identity and Transformation in Literature

Literature, with its ability to delve deeply into human consciousness, serves as a powerful medium for exploring character formation and transformation. From the epic journeys of Homer's *Odyssey*, which portrays themes of self-discovery and toughness (Fagles, 1996) to the introspective narratives of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, which explores the complications of selfhood (Woolf, 1927), writers have captivated readers by illuminating the struggles, triumphs, and nuances of navigating selfhood. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* examines cultural individuality and the intersection of personal and social identities, offering insights into the dynamics of cultural encounters (Forster, 2022).

Critical studies such as Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* and Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* provide theoretical frameworks for understanding how literature can reflect, renovate, and mold identities (Bloom 1973; Jameson 1981). Meanwhile, Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* studies character and narrative, emphasizing how literature can influence concepts of selfhood (Ricoeur 1992). Together, these works underscore literature's role in deepening our understanding of the human condition, offering readers a space to connect with characters' journeys, learn from their perception, and expose their own identities.

Arabic literature, like its Western counterparts, serves as a profound medium for exploring themes of selfhood, self-discovery, and conversion. From the classical era to modern times, Arabic poets and writers have grappled with questions of selfhood, cultural belonging, and the impact of social and political upheavals. Works like *The Mu'allaqāt*, the pre-Islamic odes, highlight the desert nomads' values of honor, loyalty, and resilience, exposing a strong sense of tribal character and self-assertion (Lyons, 1990). The journey theme, a motif for self-discovery, can be found in *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, an Arabic adaptation of Indian fables, where characters traverse moral lessons, illustrating the complexities of human behavior (Ibn al-Muqaffa', 2002). Similarly, the epic of 'Antarah ibn Shaddād, a pre-Islamic hero, embodies the quest for self-worth and recognition, especially in the face of racial and social prejudice (Heath, 2010). In modern times, novels like Naguib Mahfouz's *Palace Walk* (1956) and *The Cairo Trilogy* deeply examine the transformation of Egyptian society, mirroring the struggles of characters who navigate family expectations, societal norms, and personal desires. Mahfouz's depiction of generational shifts offers a nuanced perspective on how character is crafted by the interplay between tradition and change (Mahfouz, 1956; Assadi 2024 19-36).

Critical works such as *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction* by Roger Allen (1982) and *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel* by Muhsin al-Musawi (2003) study how modern Arabic writers, influenced by colonial histories and socio-political changes, have depicted selfhood crises, cultural hybridity, and the struggle for self-definition. These studies provide insights into how Arabic literature has become a platform for negotiating between the past and present, tradition and modernity.

The role of poetry in expressing character remains vital in Arabic literature, as seen in the works of Mahmoud Darwish, particularly in his collection *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems* (2003). Darwish's poetry displays themes of dislocation, resistance, and the quest for a homeland, capturing the emotional and cultural uniqueness of the Palestinian people (Darwish, 2003). Similarly, Adonis' *A Time Between Ashes and Roses* investigates the interplay between self-reflection and cultural critique, pushing the boundaries of traditional Arabic poetic forms (Adonis, 2004).

Through these varied works, Arabic literature continues to offer profound insights into personality formation and transformation, emphasizing how historical, cultural, and personal narratives mold the sense of self and belonging. Arabic writers, much like their global counterparts, create spaces for readers to display on their own practices and connect with characters' journeys, deepening the collective understanding of the human condition.

Assad's Poetic Landscape: A Brief Overview

Assadi is a contemporary poet whose collections include *A Hermit's Contemplations* (2019), *Sculpting in the Memory of Time* (2019), *The Sphinx* (2021), and *The Wild Horses* (2023). He is also featured in *The Encyclopedia*

of *Contemporary Modernists* (2021) and *Anthology of Early 21st Century Arab Poets* (2024). In addition to these works, two more volumes are scheduled for release next year, alongside dozens of poems published in electronic magazines and on various websites.

Assadi's poetry predominantly adheres to the 'Arūd of Khalil ibn Ahmad, yet he has also ventured into modern poetic forms characterized by irregular rhyme schemes and meters. His extensive body of work inspects themes of selfhood, enforced relocation, and cultural belonging, offering readers a nuanced and compelling perspective on the human saga. Marked by lyrical beauty, insightful observations, and evocative imagery, Assadi's poetry engages with the densities of traversing a world framed by cultural and societal shifts.

Drawing from his trials of witnessing significant historical, political, social, and educational shifts, Assadi's work analyzes the challenges of reconciling multiple identities, the quest for belonging, and the transformative power of language and memory. Through his poetic voice, he offers profound opinions on how our sense of self and place is patterned by the intersections of culture, history, and personal narrative. His poetry encourages a deeper understanding of the diverse accounts that define the human condition, fostering empathy and appreciation for the richness of our shared stories.

Biographical Approach Through Primary Sources

Biographical criticism is a form of literary analysis that investigates the relationship between a writer's life and their literary works, arguing that learning about the author's personal experiences can deepen our appreciation of their writing. This approach examines how the events, relationships, and social environments in the author's life may shape the themes, characters, and narratives within their works (Benson 107–116). It often overlaps with historical-biographical criticism, which views literature primarily as a replication of the author's life and historical context (Guerin 51). This article adopts a biographical approach to analyze the works of Jamal Assadi, focusing on how his personal development, particularly as a Palestinian Arab living in Israel, cast the themes of personality, exile, and cultural belonging in his poetry. Despite the limited availability of detailed biographical material on Assadi, this study draws from two primary sources: his extensive body of translations and writings, as well as insights gathered from personal interviews with the poet. These sources provide rich material that offers a deeper understanding of how Assadi's life and historical context influence his literary creations. By scrutinizing both his personal narrative and his body of work, this article aims to shed light on the complex interplay between Assadi's life lessons and his poetic expression.

Assadi's introduction to *The Story of a People: An Anthology of Palestinian Poets within the Green-Line*, to start with, signals a deep sense of national pride, distinctiveness, and resilience (2011, 1-17). Through his discussion of Palestinian poets, the author conveys a strong connection to Palestinian culture, history, and the ongoing struggles faced by his people. The narrative emphasizes the enduring spirit of the Palestinian people despite forced shifts, occupation, and adversity. The poets are portrayed as leaders and voices of resistance, who document the realities of life under occupation and serve as beacons of hope and strength for their community. The language used throughout the introduction indicates a profound empathy for the plight of Palestinians, particularly those who have suffered the loss of their homeland, exile, and marginalization. This empathetic tone is coupled with a sense of defiance against the forces of oppression, as the poets are shown to rise "like a sphinx" from the ashes, embodying strength, resistance, and the quest for freedom.

It also highlights the role of poetry in preserving cultural distinctiveness, resisting erasure, and advocating for justice. The mention of poets like Tawfiq Zayyād, Maḥmūd Darwīsh, and Samīḥ Al-Qāsim, among others, suggests a reverence for those who have used their craft to articulate the complexities of Palestinian life and aspirations. The emphasis on themes such as love, hope, dignity, and resistance, even in the face of suffering, underscores the robust and unwavering spirit of the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, the author's choice to bring these narratives to an English-speaking audience demonstrates their desire to broaden the understanding of Palestinian narrative and struggles. This indicates a commitment to preserving Palestinian heritage and to creating dialogue, building bridges, and seeking empathy and support from the global community.

Assadi's *Anthology*(2024), to give another example, represents a significant advancement from his previous work, *Story*, by extending the scope of featured poetry to encompass the entire Arab world. Unlike the earlier anthology,

which primarily focused on Palestinian poets within the Green-line, this new volume showcases voices from across the Arab nations, thus offering a richer, more diverse portrayal of Arab distinctiveness, culture, and solidarity. Assadi's aim with this anthology is not merely to highlight individual poetic talents but to create a "mosaic representing not only the Arab world with its various religious, political and cultural affiliations and interests, but also the beautiful image of modern, educated, and caring citizens of the world" (Assadi, 2024 21). This statement from the introduction underscores his intent to emphasize a sense of unity and shared cultural heritage that transcends national boundaries. Through poems collected from diverse regions, Assadi seeks to convey a broader sense of Arab solidarity, highlighting themes that resonate across countries, such as dignity, freedom, and justice.

Assadi's meticulous process, as described in the introduction, involved reaching out to poets from all over the Arab world, carefully selecting poems that could expose various aspects of Arab life and thought. He asserts, "These poets present new arenas where opposed factors harmoniously join to struggle for dignity, freedom and justice" (28). By curating this selection, Assadi fosters an understanding of the collective Arab spirit and encourages readers to perceive the interconnectedness of paths of struggle across different Arab societies.

Furthermore, Assadi's commitment to Arab unity is evident in his efforts to retain traditional Arabic poetic forms. He writes, "Interestingly, more than 95 percent of the poems are written in the spirit of the classical Arab poem or the famous *boḥūr*, i.e., one unified rhyme, and meter" (28). By emphasizing traditional forms, the anthology both celebrates the rich literary heritage of the Arab world and reinforces a sense of continuity and shared cultural roots. This echoes Assadi's attitude of preserving and promoting Arab literary traditions as a unifying force, even in a rapidly changing world.

In summary, the volume marks a further step in Assadi's efforts to present the richness of Arab culture to a global audience. By including poets from all over the Arab world, Assadi reinforces the values of Arab solidarity and patriotism, offering a powerful testament to the enduring strength of shared cultural and national distinctiveness across the region.

As for the second source of information about Assadi, it is derived from my personal interviews with him. These conversations provided a deep, firsthand insight into his personal journey, his thoughts, and the happenings that coined both his selfhood and his literary work. Unlike traditional biographical research that relies on documented sources, these interviews offered a more intimate perspective on how Assadi views his own life and the impact of historical and personal events on his writing. Through our discussions, Assadi openly reflected on the challenges and transformations he has encountered as a Palestinian Arab living in Israel, a reality that deeply informs his poetic and scholarly pursuits.

Jamal Assadi, born in 1960 in the village of Deir al-Assad, Upper Galilee, comes from a region marked by political upheaval and cultural resilience. His early life in this village was devised by the rural environment, where basic infrastructure such as running water and electricity were lacking. Despite these modest beginnings, Assadi excelled in his education, completing his elementary and middle schooling in his hometown and his high school education in the nearby village of al-Rama. This foundational period of his life coincided with significant political events, including the Six-Day War of 1967 and the October War of 1973, both of which left lasting impressions on him.

Assadi's academic journey took him to Ben-Gurion University in Be'erSheva, where he earned his Bachelor's degree in English and Education in 1981. He continued his studies at the University of Haifa, obtaining a Master's degree in English in 1988, before pursuing his PhD in English Language and Literature at Newcastle University in the UK, which he completed in 2001. These academic achievements, however, were not isolated from the political realities of the time. Assadi lived through key moments in Palestinian history, such as the Lebanon War of 1982, the expulsion of Palestinians from Beirut, the Oslo Accords, and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, all of which contributed to a growing internal struggle with his personality as a Palestinian living in Israel.

The backdrop of these wars and political agreements created a profound selfhood conflict for Assadi. On the one hand, he belonged to a nation that was frequently in conflict with his people; on the other hand, he had to navigate his existence as a Palestinian Arab in an Israeli state. This tension fueled much of his intellectual and literary output, as he sought to reconcile the duality of his existence—a Palestinian deeply tied to his cultural roots, yet living within a nation-state that was often in opposition to those roots. The profound impact of these occurrences is evident in his poetry and academic work, which frequently peruses themes of distinctiveness, eviction, and cultural belonging.

In recognition of his contributions to literature and translation, particularly his work translating between Arabic and English, Assadi was awarded the title of Professor in 2020. His career as an English teacher began in high schools but soon expanded into higher education, where he became a prominent figure in teacher training colleges and universities across Israel and Palestine. At the College of Sakhnin, he founded the English Language Department, English as a Foreign Language and the Practicum. His work as a lecturer at An-Najah University in Nablus from 2010 to 2013 further highlights his dedication to fostering education in both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Assadi's life is marked by the dramatic historical and social changes that took place around him. These include the transition from a village life marked by poverty and isolation to a more modernized existence, paralleling his intellectual and political evolution. The conflicts and wars between Israel and the Palestinian people created his sense of self, creating an ongoing struggle to define his selfhood in a complex and divided landscape. This personal journey is manifested in his writing, where themes of exile, belonging, and cultural survival resonate deeply. Through his poetry and translations, Assadi not only articulates his own life but also those of the Palestinian people, offering a nuanced exploration of distinctiveness within the context of conflict.

Assadi's Poetry and Its Context

Assadi is a prominent contemporary poet whose works engage deeply with the themes of selfhood, displacement, and cultural belonging. As a Palestinian poet writing in both Arabic and English, his voice resonates within the broader tradition of Arab literature, while also reflecting the specific events and struggles of Palestinians, both in Israel and in the wider diaspora. Through his poetry, Assadi presents a complex and nuanced exploration of what it means to route a fragmented world, marked by exile, loss, and the longing for a home that remains both physically and emotionally distant.

Assadi's poetry often deals with the personal and collective trauma of Palestinians, focusing on the enduring impact of forced migration on individuality formation. His works do not merely lament the loss of land and homeland; rather, they probe the deeper psychological and emotional consequences of this uprootedness, which, for Assadi, includes the tension between maintaining cultural heritage and adapting to new realities. His use of lyrical language and vivid imagery underscores the profound sense of alienation undergone by those living under occupation, in exile, or amidst societal shifts, while also offering a space for reflection on fortitude and the human capacity for hope.

Assadi's personal suffering and the historical context in which he has lived play a significant role in shaping his poetic voice. Born and raised in a Palestinian village within Israel, Assadi has witnessed a series of major historical events that have profoundly affected his people, from the Six-Day War in 1967 to the Oslo Accords and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These events have contributed to his awareness of the intricacies of uniqueness, as someone who exists between the Palestinian and Israeli worlds. His poetry manifests this duality, grappling with the difficulties of reconciling multiple identities in a space fraught with political, social, and cultural tensions.

Furthermore, Assadi's poetry serves as a mirror to the broader socio-political issues of the Arab world, particularly the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. His poems offer a poetic chronicle of the Palestinian history, capturing the profound sense of loss that accompanies forced migration, while simultaneously celebrating the perseverance of a people who continue to fight for their right to exist and flourish. Through his works, Assadi becomes a voice for those who have been silenced, using poetry as a means of documenting and resisting the erasure of Palestinian history and distinctiveness. His focus on cultural belonging, the pain of exile, and the quest for justice ties his work primarily to Palestinian literature and to the broader currents of Arab poetry, which similarly grapple with themes of resistance, distinctiveness, and cultural survival.

In this way, Assadi's poetry transcends personal narrative, speaking to the universal account of exile, distinctiveness, and belonging, while remaining firmly rooted in the specific context of Palestinian history and the Arab world's ongoing socio-political struggles. His works invite readers to ponder the interconnectedness of personal and collective uniqueness, encouraging a deeper understanding of the Arab world's literary contributions in the context of its political realities.

Thematic Analysis of Assadi's Poetry

Identity and Displacement

The theme of uniqueness and eviction is central to Assadi's poetry, particularly in his works "Lobby" and "Phoenix." These poems explore the internal and external struggles of navigating a fractured sense of self in the aftermath of war and exile. Assadi's personal experiences as a Palestinian living within Israel are noted in these works, where he delves into the emotional and psychological complexities of exile.

In "Lobby," Assadi captures the sense of perpetual searching and unfulfilled longing that characterizes the torture of enforced migration. The speaker walks and runs, both physically and metaphorically, in search of something elusive: "I do my utmost, but I find her and me not, / Actually, there is nothing to find" (Assadi). The repetition of "I walk and walk" and "I jog, run, and run faster" conveys the urgency and futility of the search for individuality and place. The "Lobby" serves as a liminal space, a symbol of transition where the speaker is neither fully rooted in the past nor able to embrace the present. This restless movement mirrors the uncertainty and instability of living between worlds—Palestinian and Israeli, past and present, homeland and exile.

In interviews held in June 2022, Assadi contemplates on how his people's experience of displacement and the loss of a cohesive individuality has haunted him throughout his life. "I was born in a village that itself has gone through immense changes," Assadi recalls. "The people, the land—they were all transformed by history, by wars, and we were left to search for who we are in a place that no longer felt like home" (Assadi, *Interview*, June 2022). This sense of being caught between two worlds—one's homeland and the land of exile—deeply informs the existential questions of belonging in "Lobby."

Assadi's "Phoenix" expands on the theme of exile of his people by exploring the transformative potential of suffering. The poem presents a figure who returns "Carrying piles of calamities" but who nonetheless seeks to "take the case away from history" (Assadi). This figure, symbolic of both the Palestinian people and the poet himself, embodies the duality of beauty and catastrophe: "Her face is very pretty / But in her chest lies the origin of all catastrophes." The juxtaposition of beauty and destruction echoes the complex emotions tied to compulsory relocation—the yearning for a lost homeland and the pain of its loss.

Much like the mythical Phoenix, Assadi's speaker in the poem contemplates the possibility of renewal, even amid destruction. The poem ultimately suggests that uniqueness, though fractured by forced shifts and war, can still be reborn through patience and resistance. Assadi's personal connection to this theme is evident in his own life. "The wars, the displacement—they shape who you are. But as a poet, I believe it's not only about the loss. It's about finding new ways to survive, to rebuild, even in exile" (Assadi, *Interview*, July 2022).

Both poems mirror the psychological toll of compulsory relocation, as well as the enduring hope that uniqueness, no matter how fractured, can still be reclaimed or reimagined. In "Phoenix," Assadi writes, "I'm the plot and I am the conflict / If it ignites" (Assadi). This declaration of ownership over one's narrative suggests that despite the hardships of enforced transfer, the poet (and by extension, the people) retains the agency to contrive their own story, to rise like the Phoenix from the ashes of catastrophe.

Cultural Belonging and Nostalgia

In "Nightingale" and "My Horses Sprung," Assadi considers the deep sense of cultural belonging, pride, and nostalgia that permeates his poetry. These poems both show his connection to his homeland and engage with broader Arab cultural heritage. The tension between pride in one's roots and the sense of loss due to suffering is woven throughout his works, creating a rich tapestry of personal and collective memory.

In this poem Assadi uses the image of the bird as a symbol of purity, beauty, and tradition. The nightingale, with its delicate form, evokes a sense of nostalgia for a past that is deeply tied to the land and culture of Assadi's Palestinian heritage. The bird's "posture thin" and its "swaying like a spike of wheat" embody the simplicity and natural beauty of life before enforced transfer, drawing readers into a world that is both idyllic and melancholic. The emotional intensity of the poem reveals Assadi's personal longing for a homeland that remains physically distant but ever-present in his memory.

During an interview in June 2022, Assadi remarked, "The nightingale, in my mind, is a symbol of what was lost but never forgotten. It sings of home, of the land that nurtured us, and though it flies far, it carries our culture and

memories wherever it goes.” This sentiment echoes the broader Palestinian and Arab concept of torture and deportation, where cultural symbols like the nightingale serve as a means of preserving and transmitting individuality across generations.

In contrast, “Horses” adopts a more defiant and celebratory tone, focusing on the strength and sturdiness of Arab culture. The horses in the poem symbolize cultural pride and the endurance of a people who have faced numerous challenges but remain steadfast. The opening lines, “My horses sprung successively; their determination is a flame, / They were not deterred by a distress or struck by an ailment,” emphasize the unyielding spirit of those who refuse to surrender their uniqueness, even in the face of hardship. This image of wild, powerful horses contrasts with the fragility of the nightingale, suggesting that while nostalgia may evoke a sense of loss, cultural dignity is a source of *métier* and continuity.

Assadi’s ideas in his 2022 interview align with the themes expressed in this poem: “The horse has always been a symbol of strength in our culture. For me, they represent the determination of our people, how we have faced adversity yet continue to stand tall, our roots deeply embedded in our traditions.” This powerful feeling is captured in the closing lines of the poem, where Assadi writes, “These are my horses, if they are not deterred, they grow wild, / But if disciplined, we obtain graces and nobility.” The tension between wildness and discipline mirrors the poet’s belief in cultural *forte* tempered by tradition.

Assadi’s personal connection to these themes is further highlighted in his introductions to *Story* and *Anthology*. In the former, he emphasizes the role of Palestinian poets as “the voice of their nation, leaders of struggle against all practices of occupation and oppression” (Assadi, *Story*). This exposes the enduring importance of cultural expression as a means of resistance and individuality preservation, which is a central theme in “Horses.”

Similarly, in *Anthology*, Assadi speaks of Arab poets as unifiers of diverse practices across the Arab world. He writes, “These poets present new arenas where opposed factors harmoniously join to struggle for dignity, freedom, and justice” (Assadi, *The Comprehensive Anthology*). This statement highlights Assadi’s belief in the collective asset of Arab culture, which is deeply intertwined with distinct expressions of individuality and belonging. “Nightingale” and “Horses” exemplify this vision by expressing both personal longing and cultural honor, rooted in a shared Arab uniqueness.

In brief, Assadi’s poetry, particularly the two above-discussed poems, embodies the themes of cultural belonging and nostalgia. Through these works, he conveys not only his personal connection to his homeland but a broader commentary on the fortitude of Arab culture in the face of displacement as well. His use of imagery—whether the delicate nightingale or the powerful horses—captures the complexity of cultural individuality, at once fragile and unbreakable. Assadi’s attitudes in his poetry and his introductions to his anthologies reveal a deep commitment to preserving Arab cultural heritage while acknowledging the profound sense of loss that comes with enforced transfer.

The Role of Memory and Time

Assadi’s poetry deeply engages with the concepts of memory and time, often portraying them as intertwined forces that invent individuality, experiences, and one’s connection to the world. In poems such as “Lobby” and “Eve,” Assadi talks about the passing of time, the continuity of memory, and the cyclical nature of life. Not only do these themes resonate on a personal level but also on a collective one, drawing parallels to the Palestinian notion of enforced transfer and the longing for continuity amidst rupture. Assadi’s use of memory and time, therefore, acts as a bridge between the past and present, the personal and the political.

To be more specific, in “Lobby,” Assadi portrays time as both a tangible and elusive force, something that constitutes the speaker’s life while simultaneously remaining beyond his control. The speaker moves through different phases of life, alternating between moments of forward motion and reflection. “I walk and walk. / Next, I jog, run, and run faster / Toward everywhere, / Then I come back.” This passage highlights the speaker’s movement through space and time, suggesting that life itself is a continuous journey. However, the cyclical nature of this journey—coming back after running “toward everywhere”—implies that no matter how far one travels, there is always a return to the self, to the past, and to the memories that define one’s identity.

During an interview conducted in May 2022, Assadi remarked, “Time, for me, is both the path we walk and the measure of our lives. It’s in every breath we take, and yet it’s always slipping away. Memory is how we make sense

of that passage—it's the only thing that roots us when everything else changes." This understanding of time and memory is crucial to interpreting "Lobby." The poem's speaker sketches out landscapes—seas, rivers, mountains—"with my eyes and eyelashes," using memory as a tool to navigate a world that is constantly in flux. The act of remembering, of mentally constructing places and occurrences, suggests that memory is the mechanism by which the speaker can transcend the limitations of time and space, even as he is haunted by the sense that "there is nothing to find."

This same cyclical movement is evident in "Eve," where Assadi discusses the relationship between time's forward march and the ritualistic patterns of life. The speaker ponders over the passage of time, observing that "Tonight, exactly like yesterday / I went to visit her / Chaperoned by the burdens of every day." Here, the repetition of "exactly like yesterday" reinforces the cyclical nature of time—events recur, yet they are never quite the same. The burden of the everyday, the weight of memory, and the anticipation of the future all converge in this moment, making the speaker acutely aware of the passage of time and its impact on his life. In this poem, time is not just a passive backdrop but an active force that founds the speaker's emotional landscape. Assadi remarked in a 2022 interview, "New Year's Eve is a time when people often consider what's been and what will come. But for me, it's a moment where the weight of memory is heaviest—it's not just about celebration but about reconciling the past with the future." This sense of reflection is evident as the speaker moves through his memories and anticipates what the future holds: "The night will be long. / There will be sleep, / There will be sleep and sleep; / There will be no dark fall or dawn!" These lines evoke a sense of finality, where the future, though unknown, is imagined as a place where time might eventually cease its relentless progression.

Assadi's contemplation of time and memory here echoes themes found in Robert Frost's famous poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. In both poems, the speakers confront the passage of time and the inevitable end that lies ahead. Assadi's lines—"The night will be long. / There will be sleep, / There will be sleep and sleep; / There will be no dark fall or dawn!"—suggest a deep contemplation on the approach of an eternal rest, where sleep becomes a metaphor for death. Similarly, Frost's closing lines—"And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep"—also use sleep as a metaphor for death, highlighting the speaker's awareness of obligations and the unfinished journey that lies before him. This intertextual connection between Assadi and Frost enriches the reading of "Eve" by situating Assadi's reflections within a broader poetic tradition.

The intertextuality here is a sign of the universal human preoccupation with the passage of time and death, and reveals Assadi's literary education and familiarity with Western poetic traditions. While Assadi writes from a distinctly Palestinian and Arab context, his ability to engage with the works of poets like Frost illustrates the depth of his literary influences and the cosmopolitan nature of his poetic voice. Frost's speaker, much like Assadi's, is caught in the tension between the demands of life and the inevitable approach of death. Both poets use the metaphor of sleep to signal the end, but while Frost's repetition—"And miles to go before I sleep"—emphasizes the obligations that must still be fulfilled, Assadi's lines suggest a more resigned acceptance of the finality of life: "There will be sleep and sleep; / There will be no dark fall or dawn!"

This intertextual link also deepens the thematic exploration of time in Assadi's work. Whereas Frost's speaker acknowledges the journey ahead with a sense of duty, Assadi's speaker discusses the exhaustion of a life lived under the weight of memory and unresolved history. Assadi's repetition of "There will be sleep" suggests physical rest and the final, unbroken sleep of death, devoid of the cyclical return of day. This finality contrasts with Frost's more ambiguous ending, where the repetition of "miles to go" implies that there is still time to act before rest. In Assadi's vision, time is running out; the cycles of life and history are nearing their end, and what remains is the reflection on past deeds and the acceptance of inevitable closure.

Assadi's incorporation of these themes suggests his personal and political experiences. In a 2022 interview, Assadi shared, "I have always seen life as a series of tasks, but there comes a time when you look back and wonder whether the journey is truly complete. Frost's idea of having 'miles to go' resonates with me, but in the end, we all face that moment when there are no more miles left to walk." His notions here are indicative of the broader human perception but also carries with it the weight of Palestinian history—a collective journey that, for many, feels unresolved and suspended in time. While Frost's poem subtly implies that there is still work to be done before the final rest, Assadi's poem communicates a more pressing sense of closure.

Furthermore, the intertextual dialogue between Assadi and Frost enhances our understanding of Assadi's poetic exploration of memory and time. It demonstrates how Assadi, as a poet influenced by both Eastern and Western literary traditions, engages with universal themes while grounding them in his specific cultural and historical context. The blending of these traditions signals Assadi's intellectual formation, showing how his academic background in English literature informs his work. As a Palestinian poet writing in both Arabic and English, Assadi's ability to draw on Western literary influences like Frost enriches his poetry and bridges cultural divides, offering readers a way to see the common human concerns that transcend national and linguistic boundaries.

In a nutshell, Assadi's portrayal of time in "Eve" is enriched by the intertextual connection to Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. Both poets use the metaphor of sleep to explore the inevitability of death and the tension between life's unfinished obligations and the acceptance of final rest. However, while Frost's speaker acknowledges the miles still to be traveled, Assadi's speaker seems more resigned to the end, signaling the weight of personal and collective memory that informs his work. This intertextuality underscores Assadi's broad literary influences and situates his poetry within a global framework, while still maintaining the deeply personal and political dimensions of his Palestinian identity. Through this lens, Assadi's work engages with universal themes and offers a unique perspective established by his people's experiences of enforced transfer, loss, and the passage of time.

Assadi's engagement with memory and time is personal and political. As a poet deeply rooted in the Palestinian history, Assadi's approaches about time often carry with them the weight of historical memory. In *Anthology*, Assadi writes about the importance of recording the "stories of our predicament, alienation, and marginalization." Memory, in this context, becomes an act of resistance—a way to preserve the cultural and historical continuity of a people who have been physically displaced. In both "The Lobby" and "Eve," memory acts as a tether to the past, ensuring that the personal and collective histories of the Palestinian people are not lost.

Critics aligned with the biographical approach, such as Jackson Benson, argue that understanding an author's life is key to interpreting their works. In Assadi's case, his personal history of witnessing political and social upheaval informs his preoccupation with time and memory. His poetry emulates his agony of growing up in a country where the landscape of memory is constantly shifting due to the political conflicts between his people and the state. This duality between personal memory and collective history adds another layer of density to his work. As he stated in the 2022 interview, "I write not only from my own experience but from the memory of my people—the way we've had to hold on to our individuality through generations of loss."

In conclusion, Assadi's portrayal of time and memory in his poetry offers profound insights into the human notion of change, continuity, and individuality. Through poems like "Lobby" and "Eve," he points out how memory serves as a tool for navigating the inexorable passage of time, and how time itself sets up the way individuals and communities understand their past, present, and future. Assadi's poetic attitudes on time resonate on both personal and collective levels, offering readers a deepened understanding of the ways in which memory and history comprised identity.

Allegory and Political Critique

In poems such as "Ravegeon" and "Pen-Land," Assadi skillfully weaves allegory to critique political structures, leaders, and the broader struggles of the Arab world. These poems, while layered with symbolic meanings, are direct commentaries on power, authority, and the failures of political systems that have composed the lives of people in the Arab world, particularly Palestinians. Through the use of allegory, Assadi is able to address politically sensitive issues in a subtle yet profound manner, inviting readers to engage deeply with his message.

In "Ravegeon," Assadi constructs a surreal narrative that blends absurdity and allegory to criticize political duplicity and the betrayal of Arab causes. The poem opens with a dreamlike scenario: "I saw the cat at the dogs' wedding / Dancing pleasantly, without fears. / At times he mews, / And more often than not, he adopts howling!" This bizarre image of a cat behaving like a dog speaks to the theme of deception and role-playing in political leadership. The animals in this poem are not just animals; they symbolize the Arab leaders who have failed to uphold the dignity and sovereignty of their nations, adopting foreign behaviors and abandoning their original roles.

Assadi's political critique becomes more pointed as the poem develops. The line, "That in my hometown / The herd of wolves swore / That they disliked the meat of sheep, / And repented over past record!" uses the metaphor of

wolves and sheep to comment on the hypocrisy of political leaders. Wolves, traditionally symbols of predatory power, claiming to reject their violent past, reflects a false repentance by those in power who continue to exploit the weak despite their promises of reform. Assadi's choice of animals underscores the absurdity and inherent contradictions in the political sphere, where promises of peace and coexistence often mask continued aggression and exploitation.

In the 2022 interview, Assadi commented on this use of allegory, saying, "I find that the absurdity of the political scene in the Arab world, especially post-colonialism and in the wake of numerous conflicts, can only be captured through allegory. The reality itself is so complex and at times nonsensical that it's easier to grasp through symbolic narratives." This statement highlights how Assadi's poetic approach echoes his understanding of the tangled nature of Arab politics, using allegory as a tool to dissect this complexity without directly naming individuals or governments.

In "Pen-Land," Assadi investigates themes of power and failure, focusing particularly on intellectual leadership. The figure of Shahryar, a reference to the legendary king from *One Thousand and One Nights*, symbolizes the Arab intellectual elite—writers and thinkers whose potential remains unrealized, as they have failed to deliver on their promises of progress and reform. The lines, "He does not possess / The knowledge / To put it into practice, / Or conduct the rules of etiquette," highlight the impotence of these intellectual figures, who, despite their ideals, have been unable to translate their visions into tangible political or social change. Assadi's critique extends beyond political leaders to encompass intellectuals who, confined by rhetoric and theory, have contributed to the stagnation of real-world action.

This theme of intellectual impotence is further emphasized by the poem's concluding reference to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a canonical work known for its allegory of existential waiting and the paralysis of inaction. Assadi writes, "He will wait for Godot, / And both will forget / About each other," drawing a parallel between Beckett's characters and the Arab intellectual elite, who endlessly promise transformation but never fulfill it. By invoking Godot, Assadi critiques the intellectual and political leaders' cyclical failure to act, leaving the people in a perpetual state of anticipation and disappointment.

The intertextual reference to Beckett underscores Assadi's broad literary education, which spans both classical Arabic culture and Western modernism. His use of Shahryar from *One Thousand and One Nights* roots the poem in a classical Arabic tradition, while the allusion to Beckett introduces a modern, existential perspective. This blend of cultural references—from the ancient to the contemporary—demonstrates Assadi's deep engagement with diverse global literary traditions, enriching his critique of Arab intellectual paralysis by situating it within a wider, universal context of human inaction. Through this intertextuality, Assadi highlights the challenges faced by the Arab world and connects these struggles to broader, timeless questions of leadership, responsibility, and the limits of intellectual power.

In his Introduction to *Story*, Assadi addresses this theme of failed leadership and intellectual stagnation. He writes that the Arab world has suffered from external oppression and, even worse, from internal inertia, where leaders and thinkers alike have failed to rise to the challenge of history. It is the duty of poets and writers to hold a mirror to this reality, to force a reckoning (*Story* 5, 17). This perspective, expressed in his critical writings, aligns with the allegorical critique in his poetry, demonstrating a consistency in Assadi's approach to addressing political issues both creatively and analytically.

Moreover, in the Introduction to *Anthology*, Assadi relates to the broader Arab experience of political betrayal and resistance, stating, that poetry has always been a vehicle for expressing the unspoken truths of our society. It has the power to confront political failures and to dream of a better future, free from the chains of oppression, both external and self-imposed (Assadi, *Anthology* 34). This idea of poetry as a means of political resistance is central to "Ravegeon" and "Pen-Land," where Assadi uses allegory to critique and to inspire a recognition of these failures and, ultimately, a call for change.

Through the allegorical frameworks of these poems Assadi critiques not just individual leaders or intellectuals, but the entire system of power in the Arab world. His poetry signifies a deep frustration with the cycles of promises and failures that have characterized much of modern Arab political history, from the post-colonial era to the present.

Yet, it also offers a glimmer of hope, as the allegory allows for the possibility of reimagining these structures, pointing toward a future where genuine change may yet be possible.

Imagery and Symbols in Assadi's Poetry

Assadi's poetry is characterized by his masterful use of vivid imagery and symbolic elements, which serve to deepen the emotional and thematic layers of his work. These symbols are not only indicative of Assadi's personal life but act as universal metaphors that invite readers to connect with larger existential and socio-political themes as well. His symbolic representations—whether through the use of lobbies, birds, or mythical creatures—bridge the personal and the collective, grounding his work in both his individual narrative and the broader Arab experience.

In "Lobby," Assadi uses the symbol of the lobby as a threshold, a liminal space that represents the act of transition—both physical and emotional. The lobby, where the poet walks, jogs, and contemplates, is not merely a domestic space but a symbol of life's ongoing journey and the interactions that make up individuality. The poet writes, "In the lobby of my house / I walk and walk. / Next, I jog, run, and run faster / Toward everywhere, / Then I come back". The cyclical motion of walking and returning mirrors the poet's internal struggles with forced transfer and self-discovery, showing his own mindsets of being rooted in his homeland while constantly engaging with the world beyond.

During a personal interview in June 2022, Assadi explained that "the lobby in the poem reflects a place where I stand between my past and my present—between the land of my ancestors and the modern world that pushes us to move, often against our will." This personal musing highlights how the lobby serves as a metaphor for the larger Palestinian feeling of dislocation and longing for home. In his poetry, lobbies become spaces where memories are revisited, and where the personal collides with the historical and the political.

Another powerful symbol in Assadi's work is the phoenix, prominently featured in "Phoenix." The phoenix, a mythical bird that rises from its ashes, represents the themes of rebirth and survival. In Assadi's poetry, this symbol takes on new dimensions, indicating both personal and collective struggles. He writes, "What if I tell her tales / About an Arab phoenix, / That jumped out of the dust of the archives / And became young again?" Here, the phoenix is a representation of individual regeneration and of the Arab world's capacity for renewal amidst ongoing political turmoil and historical oppression. Assadi's reference to the phoenix is particularly significant in light of his personal biography. Having witnessed major historical events such as the 1967 Six-Day War, the Lebanon War in 1982, and the Intifadas, Assadi often wonders about how these events instituted his understanding of rebirth and the necessity of cultural survival. In his 2022 interview, he remarked, "The phoenix is a symbol of our people's ability to rise again, no matter how many times we are knocked down by conflict. It is about hope, about the possibility of renewal, even when it seems impossible." Through the imagery of the phoenix, Assadi links personal persistence to a broader sense of cultural rebirth, a replication of his own determination to preserve his individuality in the face of adversity.

In "Nightingale," the bird serves as a poignant symbol of the feminine voice and the natural world. The nightingale's "posture thin" and its "swaying like a spike of wheat" evoke an image of grace and beauty, but also fragility. The bird's song signifies a connection to homeland and tradition, as well as the ethereal quality of memory and love. The nightingale becomes a stand-in for what is delicate yet enduring in Assadi's world—an echo of his nostalgia for a past that is increasingly out of reach. During an interview in 2022, Assadi revealed, "The nightingale, in our culture, often represents the feminine, but also the voice of nature that we are constantly trying to hear over the noise of modernity and conflict." The nightingale, then, is both a personal and cultural pictogram for Assadi, embodying a longing for a simpler, purer connection to the world—a connection that is frequently overshadowed by the convolutions of political and social realities.

In "Pen-Land," Assadi employs allegorical imagery to critique political and intellectual leadership. The figure of Shahryar, the legendary king from *One Thousand and One Nights*, is used to denote Arab intellectuals who, despite their knowledge, are unable to effect meaningful change. "He does not possess / The knowledge / To put it into practice, / Or conduct the rules of etiquette." Through this allegory, Assadi critiques the paralysis of intellectual leadership, using imagery that invokes the failure of those in power to guide their people toward progress.

The figurative use of Shahryar and other cultural references demonstrates Assadi's deep literary education, blending both Arab and Western traditions in his work. His invocation of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* further discloses his

ability to draw from global literary traditions to critique the political stagnation in the Arab world. As Assadi noted in a 2022 interview, “I wanted to use the figure of Shahryar not just as a symbol of political leadership, but of intellectual leadership as well. Our thinkers, our poets—people like me—are often caught in this cycle of promising change but failing to deliver. It’s a form of betrayal.” This intertextuality enhances Assadi’s criticism, showcasing his global literary awareness and his ability to use these symbols to convey broader messages about governance and responsibility.

Assadi’s symbols—whether the phoenix, the nightingale, or the figures of Shahryar and Godot—serve as powerful tools in his exploration of uniqueness, fortitude, and critique. These images transcend the personal, engaging with the collective memory and struggles of the Arab world while simultaneously grounding his poetry in his own biographical narrative. Through vivid imagery and symbolic richness, Assadi’s work invites readers to engage with contemplations on life, memory, and the ongoing search for uniqueness amidst dislocation and conflict.

Atmospheric Tone and Musicality

Assadi’s poetry stands out for its rich symbolism and thematic complexity and for its varied atmospheric tones and lyrical musicality. The tonal shifts across his poems—from contemplative and somber to celebratory—create a diverse emotional landscape, enabling readers to undergo the full spectrum of human emotions. This tonal range is complemented by his skillful use of rhythm and structure, which enhances the musicality of his poetry and deepens the themes of love, loss, and identity that permeate his work.

In “Ravegeon,” the tone is marked by a sense of dark contemplation, a mirror of the poet’s internal struggle with existential questions. The opening lines, “I don’t know what I can say, / Possibly the prophecy of an early day, / Maybe the summary of the close of time,” set a somber and introspective mood. This atmosphere of uncertainty and dread is intensified as the poem progresses, with imagery that evokes chaos and disillusionment, such as the “cat at the dogs’ wedding” and “the herd of wolves [that] swore / That they disliked the meat of sheep.” The tone is heavy with irony and skepticism, encapsulating Assadi’s dissatisfaction with the political and social hypocrisy in the Arab world. This darker, more cynical tone contrasts sharply with the lighter, more celebratory tones found in other poems, demonstrating Assadi’s aptitude to traverse emotional extremes within his poetic oeuvre.

During a 2022 interview, Assadi explained, “‘Ravegeon’ was born out of a deep frustration with the state of our world—where the lines between predator and prey, between honesty and deceit, have become so blurred that it feels like we’re living in a nightmare. I wanted the tone to exhibit that sense of confusion and moral decay.” This tone of bleakness and uncertainty mirrors the broader political landscape Assadi’s attitudes of criticism, while the musicality of the poem, with its deliberate rhythms and sharp juxtapositions, serves to underscore the discordant realities it explores.

In contrast, “Eve” adopts a more celebratory and reflective tone. Here, Assadi shifts from the dark introspection of “Ravegeon” to a more hopeful and contemplative mood. The poem’s festive tone is conveyed through descriptions of “paradise” between the arms of a loved one, and the imagery of a life lived joyfully and fully: “How joyful is nighttime when spent together, / From the fall of darkness to the second phase of the night, / Not for so long.” Yet, beneath the celebration lies a layer of contemplation about the passage of time, as the speaker recognizes the fleeting nature of these joyful moments. The musicality in this poem, with its rhythmic cadence and harmonious imagery, enhances the emotional depth of the celebration, adding layers of viewpoints about love, time, and human connection.

Assadi’s mastery of tone is further exemplified in “Nightingale,” where the atmosphere is tender and lyrical, exposing the beauty and fragility of love. The nightingale, a recurring symbol of grace and purity, is described in gentle terms: “Her posture is thin / And her swaying is like a spike of wheat.” The softness of the imagery is matched by the musical quality of the language, which mirrors the graceful movement of the bird. The tone here is not celebratory or somber but gently reverent, as the poet contemplates the ephemeral nature of beauty and the quiet intensity of love. Assadi’s employment of rhythm in this poem is particularly noteworthy, as the lyrical flow mimics the song of the nightingale itself, creating a sense of harmony between the subject and the structure of the poem.

As Assadi noted in his 2022 interview, “Musicality in poetry is essential. It’s not just about the words or the images—it’s about how those words move, how they resonate with the reader on an emotional level. In “Nightingale,” the rhythm was meant to echo the bird’s song, to make the reader feel the same awe and tenderness

that I feel when I think about love and loss.” This focus on the rhythmic and musical qualities of his poetry exemplifies Assadi’s broader understanding of the emotional power of language, a skill honed through his exposure to both Arab and Western literary traditions.

In “Horses,” the tone shifts again, this time to one of pride and defiance. The horses, emblematic of cultural spirit and power, move through the poem with a rhythmic energy that signposts their strength: “My horses sprung successively; their determination is a flame, / They were not deterred by a distress or struck by an ailment.” The musicality of the poem reinforces the sense of forward motion and vitality, with the steady rhythm mimicking the powerful strides of the horses. The triumphant tone here is distinct from the introspective tones of “Ravegeon” or “Nightingale”—it is bold, assertive, and filled with a sense of accomplishment.

Assadi’s ability to manipulate tone and musicality across his poems is a testament to his deep engagement with the emotional and thematic possibilities of poetry. His work reflects his personal trials, his broader intellectual and cultural influences. As seen in his introductions, Assadi consistently emphasizes the role of poetry in conveying the implicit truths of society. His varied use of tone—from the somber and contemplative to the festive and defiant—allows him to search these truths in all their complexity, while the musicality of his verse ensures that his poetry resonates deeply with his readers.

Conclusion:-

Assadi’s poetry is a noteworthy contribution to modern Arab literature, bridging the gap between the classical and the contemporary. His work echoes his personal and cultural experiences and enhances the tradition of Arab poetry through its thematic depth, lyrical beauty, and intellectual rigor. Assadi’s examination of uniqueness, eviction, and cultural belonging connects him to the broader Arab poetic tradition, where themes of exile, nostalgia, and perseverance have been central for centuries.

Assadi’s integration of classical poetic forms, such as the ‘*Arūd*’ meter, alongside his usage of modern free verse techniques, showcases his ability to innovate within the framework of tradition. By employing ‘*Arūd*’, the centuries-old metrical system established by Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad, Assadi aligns himself with the great classical poets of the Arab world, maintaining the musicality and structure that have long defined Arabic poetry. However, he does not confine himself to these strict forms. In poems like “Nightingale” and “Phoenix,” he demonstrates a fluidity between the classical and the modern, using irregular rhyme schemes and free verse to convey complex emotions and political critiques. This blending of old and new forms signals Assadi’s belief that Arab poetry, while deeply rooted in tradition, must also evolve to address contemporary issues.

In his introduction to *Anthology*, Assadi writes, “The tradition of Arabic poetry is not something to be left behind—it is the foundation upon which we build. But like any strong foundation, it must support innovation, change, and the voices of a new generation” (12). This statement encapsulates Assadi’s approach to his craft. He respects the classical forms that have created Arab poetry for millennia, but he is equally committed to pushing the boundaries of these forms, making room for the voices of today’s Arab poets who are grappling with the realities of modern life.

Assadi’s contribution is further marked by his engagement with global literary traditions, drawing inspiration from figures like Samuel Beckett, and even echoing the existential themes of Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” in “Eve.” This intertextuality demonstrates Assadi’s literary education and his ability to dialogue with both Arab and Western traditions, making his poetry a rich tapestry of influences that speak to readers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Through his poetry, Assadi continues the tradition of using verse as a means of social and political critique, particularly in the context of the Palestinian and broader Arab experience. His work challenges both political leaders and intellectual elites, as seen in “Ravegeon” and “Pen-Land,” while also offering attitudes on the personal, existential dimensions of these struggles. His poetry, in this way, serves as both a mirror and a window—illuminating the involvements of a displaced and fractured identity, while offering a vision of perseverance, pride, and hope for the future.

In conclusion, Assadi’s poetry stands as a vital contribution to modern Arab literature. His gift to blend classical and modern forms, to engage with both personal and collective occurrences, and to draw from a broad range of literary traditions, enriches the Arab literary canon. Assadi’s work continues the legacy of classical Arabic poetry and paves

the way for future generations of poets to try new forms of expression within the Arab world's rich literary tradition. His poetry, with its powerful imagery, lyrical quality, and intellectual depth, remains a testament to the enduring power of verse to address the most pressing issues of uniqueness, culture, and politics in the modern world.

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