

## The Sufi experience and the mechanisms of experimentation in modern Arabic poetry

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**Abstract---**This article examines the efficacy of the Sufi experience in shaping the features of Arab poetic modernity, as a spiritual and aesthetic refuge for the contemporary poet confronting a crisis-ridden reality. It demonstrates how the Sufi experience converges with modern poetry through a set of shared foundations, including vision (ru'yā), unveiling (kashf), imagination, subjectivity, and the transcendence of context. It also highlights the dependence of modernist poets—such as Adonis, Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, and 'Afīfī Maṭar—on Sufi language and symbolism, whether through the employment of letters, ecstatic utterance (shath), or occult/visionary insights, thereby transforming poetry from mere linguistic expression into an act of unveiling and creation. The article concludes that Sufism was not simply a heritage-based metaphor; rather, it constituted a profound creative horizon that contributed to renewing the structure of the modern poem, enriching it semantically and aesthetically, and linking it to questions of existence, destiny, and freedom.

**Keywords---**poetic modernity, Sufi experience, vision and unveiling, poetic imagination, experimentation.

### Introduction

Modern Arabic poetry has undergone profound transformations affecting its aesthetic structure, its worldview, and its expressive function, as a result of the intellectual, social, and political shifts

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experienced by the Arab subject in the modern era. The poet found himself confronting a crisis-ridden reality marked by alienation, fracture, the dominance of materialism, and a constricted spiritual horizon—circumstances that pushed him to seek intellectual and aesthetic alternatives capable of accommodating his existential anxiety and fateful questions. In the midst of this search, Sufi heritage emerged as one of the most significant currents that enriched modernist poetic experience, given its spiritual depth, symbolic density, and imaginative energy capable of moving beyond the apparent to the inward.

The Sufi experience constituted a fertile domain for the modernist poet, not merely as a religious or behavioral practice, but as a vision of existence, of language, and of the relationship between the self, the world, and the Absolute. Sufism, at its core, is an ongoing search for ultimate truth and a striving for deliverance through unveiling, vision, and intuition—precisely the foundations upon which modern poetry also relies in its attempt to transcend the direct and familiar, to detonate language, and to generate new meanings. From this perspective, the Sufi experience intersects with modern poetic experience in rejecting false reality, deviating from rational and logical patterns, and relying on imagination and symbol as two means of poetically reconstructing the world.

If Sufism historically expressed the self's withdrawal into its inner depths and its journey toward the Absolute, modernist poetry found in this withdrawal an aesthetic possibility for experimentation: liberating language from its traditional constraints and transforming the poem into a space of vision and unveiling. Modernist poets thus drew on Sufi concepts such as vision (*ru'yā*), unveiling (*kashf*), state (*ḥāl*), station (*maqām*), union (*ittiḥād*), ecstatic utterance (*shath*), and the symbolism of letters, turning them into expressive artistic tools rather than purely religious or doctrinal ends. In this way, Sufism shifted from an individual spiritual experience into an effective aesthetic structure within the poetic text.

Accordingly, this study advances a central problematic:

**How did the Sufi experience contribute to the construction of Arab poetic modernity on both the aesthetic and semantic levels?**

This problematic generates a number of subsidiary questions, including:

- What are the points of convergence between Sufi vision (*ru'yā*) and modern poetic vision?
- How did the concepts of unveiling, imagination, subjectivity, and transcendence manifest in modernist poetic texts?
- To what extent did the modern poet succeed in re-employing Sufism as a creative horizon, apart from its doctrinal and historical dimensions?

Through an analytical and aesthetic approach, this study seeks to uncover the effectiveness of Sufism in enriching modernist poetic experience, and to clarify its role in expanding the horizons of expression and deepening the human and ontological dimension of contemporary Arabic poetry. The openness of contemporary Arabic poetry to Sufism may be read as an escape from a materially, socially, and politically distressed reality, and as a search for a world of greater spirituality, translucence, and purity—one in which the force of matter is contained or dissolves. Sufism thus becomes a significant component of Arab poetics and a suitable space for stances of refusal and for compensating existential burdens (given that art is a means of searching for a “lost dream” that the human self strives to attain, and that Sufism is a quest for ultimate truth in the unseen; hence both satisfy a need within human psychology).<sup>1</sup> The essence of the artistic process is that endless search for the lost dream and the inflamed desire toward which the poetic self attempts to move; and this is likewise the axis of Sufism insofar as it is a continuous search for the Absolute in the world of the unseen—hence the importance of both in fulfilling a deep psychological need at the level of human spirit and consciousness. Poems thus bear the idea of deliverance from false reality, as we find in Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s poem “Al-Khurūj” (“Exit”), in which he says:<sup>2</sup>

I leave my city, my old homeland,  
 casting off the burdens of my painful life—  
 there; and beneath my garment I have carried my secret,  
 I buried it at its gate, then wrapped myself in sky and stars.  
 I slip beneath its gate at night;  
 there must be a guide, even if the desert's face resembles itself to me,  
 and its taciturn back.  
 I go out like an orphan;  
 I chose none among companions  
 to redeem me with his own soul—for all I want is to kill my heavy self.  
 Nor did I leave in bed a companion to mislead the seekers:  
 none seeks me but my “old I.”  
 I would become stone if I looked back—  
 stone I would become, or stones of stoning.  
 Sink, then, into the sand—legs of regret;  
 do not follow me toward my exile; I beg you, hell.  
 Extinguish the lamps of the sky,  
 so that the omens of pain may not see  
 my black clothes.  
 Petrify like your hidden heart, O desert;  
 and let the pains of your journey make me forget  
 the memory of the pains I cast away,  
 until my sick body grows transparent.  
 The torment of my journey is my purification,  
 and death in the desert is my abiding resurrection.  
 If I die, I shall live as I please in the radiant city—  
 the city of sobriety overflowing with lights.

At its core, this poem articulates a desire to withdraw and to break free from life, insofar as life has come to embody brutality and bloody struggle that render living almost impossible. “Exit” becomes synonymous with shedding life and its frustrations, and with rejecting the constricted vision of existence, in a quest for truth and deliverance—through the deliberate marginalization of reason, the transcendence of the apparent realities of things, and the felt liberation from constraints that make the human being experience enslavement.

The richness of the Sufi experience—both in its ethical/disciplinary and its creative dimensions—was among the most important reasons that produced, in contemporary Arabic poetry generally, a formula of interpenetration between the experience of Sufism and the experience of poetry. Undoubtedly, the Sufi's renunciation of everyday reality and his rupture with the procession of life around him resemble what the poetic self feels in its resentment toward itself and toward existence; and this resemblance is precisely what makes Sufi models more pliable for those who wish to exploit the symbolic values they contain.<sup>3</sup>

Sufism is among the philosophical orientations closest to poetry, for it is an ongoing endeavor to unveil the obscure and ambiguous, and to express the inner worlds of the self and absolute beauty through symbolic modes that are not bounded by reason nor circumscribed by narrow measures—precisely the aim the poet pursues insofar as he is (a human being possessed by words, captivated by the universe, living the anxiety of giving—an anxiety suffused with the ecstasy of loving the other; words seize him so that he dissolves into himself in order to be reborn anew within his poems. Therefore, the word for him is the key to the secret between him and the Sufi).<sup>4</sup> Modernist poets drew on the language of Sufis and their conceptions; thus, in their poems, they moved beyond the lexical denotation of words and relied on an “unseen” orientation in grasping relations—what they call a “theory of correspondence”—

and they also relied on musicality to suggest meaning, just as the Sufi relies on it in circles of dhikr. Muḥammad Fatūḥ Aḥmad observed that the Symbolist poet Bishr Fāris managed to enrich the lexicon of Symbolist poetry with vocabulary and expressions drawn primarily from our Sufi heritage, such as intoxication (sukr), ecstasy (wajd), pole (quṭb), openings (fatūḥ), unveiling (kashf), gnosis (‘irfān), emanation (fayḍ), the secret (sirr), and subtlety (luṭf).<sup>5</sup>

Among the symbolic features of modernity that resemble Sufism is the symbolism of letters, which is saturated with Sufi resonances and which grounds the act of modernist writing among our contemporary poets. This is a stylistic feature whereby playing with letters and their secrets becomes an aesthetic aim pursued by poets. Among the models of employing Sufi symbols (letters) is Adonis, who says in his poem:<sup>6</sup>

**The bā’ uncovered her head... and the jīm a lock of hair—extinct.  
The alif, first of letters, is extinct—extinct.  
I hear the hā’ sobbing, and the rā’ like the crescent,  
drowned, dissolving in the sands—  
extinct—extinct.  
The magic of your history has ended.  
Bury its abased face and its foolish legacy;  
excuse me and forgive me,  
O gazelle-horned centuries, O eyes of the oryx...  
I bewilder at every moment I see you, my homeland,  
in an image;  
I carry you now upon my forehead, between my blood and my death: are you a grave  
or a rose?**

Here the poet treats letters as symbolic beings that evoke particular meanings. The hā’ and wāw point to the third-person pronoun “huwa” (“He”), which in turn signifies the Divine Presence; the Sufis frequently employed it as the pronoun most fitting for the Divine Self. The poet employs this symbolism out of a conviction that letters precede names: the simple precedes the compound, because knowledge of the compound is contingent upon knowledge of the simple.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Sufi Tendency in Modernist Poetic Writing: Key Features*

#### **1. Vision (Ru’yā)**

The concept of vision (ru’yā) has been associated with poetry more than with prose. Vision is grounded in dream and arises from it; thus, it constitutes its essential component. It is an involuntary spiritual act in which the imaginative faculties display tremendous activity. With poetry’s reliance on vision, it becomes difficult to define it precisely; hence it is regarded as (a leap beyond established concepts—thus, a change in the order of things and in the order of how they are viewed).<sup>8</sup>

Vision originates in the heart, which is a suitable space for its diffusion; it expands further in states of dreaming and stupor. In the absence of reason, the seer sees what cannot otherwise be seen and unveils what cannot otherwise be discovered; he can move through the depths of the unknown and shatter the irrational with a single blow of vision that (removes every barrier, or a gaze that penetrates reality to what lies beyond it—what Ibn ‘Arabī calls “the knowledge of looking,” which flashes in the soul like a blink of the eye).<sup>9</sup> The “vision poem” thus raises profound questions through extracting sensory materials and interacting with them. It does not merely confine itself to what is visible in experience, nor does it transmit it with only minor alteration, nor does it drown in speaking about the self. Rather, it goes further, reshaping its sensation of the visible; it proposes its reading of events and constructs its “happenings” by viewing them from a special angle through which the poetic self reorders things as it sees them (first), hears them (primarily), and senses them (secondarily). It is, therefore, vision through

sensation and sensation through vision: quite simply, it is the poem of questioning, the poem of unveiling, the poem of dream.<sup>10</sup>

The bond with Sufism is, in fact, a bond with vision that establishes an imaginative world. The Sufi elevates imagination in order to move from the outward to the inward. Vision, for Sufis, is a kind of union with the unseen: one beholds forms, knowledges, and secrets with the eye of the heart. Poets drew inspiration from Sufi vision so that poetry itself became vision; and vision is “anxiety—an anxiety of existence and destiny, an anxiety of things and their perpetual change; the elusiveness of cosmic elements; the poet’s pursuit of the world’s ambiguity in order to contain its escapes and build an integrated perspective of it—neither partial nor selective—posing questions many times over what it provides of answers.”<sup>11</sup>

By nature, the Sufi rejects the apparent world and deviates toward the inward world: the world of divinely bestowed truths and ideal forms, toward which the souls of both poets and Sufis yearn alike. Some poets took Sufism as a refuge for discharging subjective intensities and for taking shelter under the mantle of spirit—as one form of experimentation aiming at (taking words out of their entrenched nature into a new nature; this departure creates what is called the “gap” or “distance of tension,” and produces a distance between language and invented language).<sup>12</sup> Sufi language is the piercing of the apparent and its transcendence: it is the language of taste (*dhawq*) and spiritual states (*aḥwāl*), founded on veiling, obscuring, dissimulation, and lived experience; it is not grasped by reason or logic.

For Adonis, vision is an efficacy and a practice upon language: it requires estranging the apparent in order to see the inward unknown within it, through demolition, detonation, and continuous semantic transformation—so as to transfer language to an allusive, indexical level that brings it into contact with what lies beyond the limits of closed physical vision, specifically beyond what is “being” or “visible.”

Adonis says:<sup>13</sup>

**When I drown my eyes in yours,  
I glimpse the deep dawn;  
I see the ancient yesterday,  
and I see what I do not know;  
and I feel the cosmos running  
between your eyes and mine.**

This passage reveals the poet’s Sufi inclination toward existence and toward unifying with it: by “drowning” in the eyes, he glimpses the dawn as the possible desire to become himself; yet this vision turns into what cannot be known, for the cosmos, in his view, flows without cessation, and he knows nothing of it—until it overwhelms his self and returns him to the eyes from which his journey and travel began.

## **2. Unveiling (Kashf)**

Unveiling (*kashf*) is defined as “making manifest what is concealed from understanding, so that it is disclosed to the servant as though seen with the eye.”<sup>14</sup> It does not occur except through gradual progression and in stages—“stations and states” (*maqāmāt* and *aḥwāl*)—grounded in faith, self-detachment from the ego’s caprice, and resistance to satanic impulses in the spiritual wayfarer.

Unveiling aims (to repudiate reality entirely and to establish a subjective, unattainable world that manifests through inward unveiling after all sensory channels have been sealed and suspended).<sup>15</sup> For the Sufis, unveiling is a form of apprehension and “openings” (*fatūḥ*) from God that successively descend upon the servant’s heart. By contrast, unveiling in its modernist sense signifies creation and the production of the first text. In the Sufi conception, unveiling is what distinguishes Sufi knowledge from the exoteric sciences of the law (*sharī‘a*): it is the heart’s vision of divine truths. Modernist poetic unveiling and Sufi unveiling are thus conceptually proximate insofar as both move within the sphere of

the heart's acts. The acts of the heart are scarcely separable from the general human essence; accordingly, modernity's inclination toward unveiling shares with Sufism some of what it undertakes—whether Sufism is taken as a lived poetic experience, or invoked as a clarifying framework for its terminology and modes of knowing.<sup>16</sup>

Sufi unveiling is constrained by three basic limits:

- ❖ First, it is bound to existential forms; hence it remains a practice within the world. Even when it seeks to discover the mysteries of divinity, it ties that intentionality to the domain of the world and its beings. On this basis, it becomes a form of unification with the world.
- ❖ Second, it is bound to possibility rather than to the Absolute. It does not, in itself, ascend to the level of an absolute cosmic truth. The Sufi regards his knowledges as relative and possible so long as their field is possibility itself—namely, the world of existential forms.
- ❖ Finally, it is bound to transformation and renewal in accordance with the renewal of divine self-disclosures (*tajalliyyāt*); hence it is also infinite and open-ended.<sup>17</sup>

The intersection between Sufism and poetic modernity in the notion of unveiling points to a capacity shared by both the Sufi and the poet: the ability to transcend the system of logical knowledge, and to transcend the language that is tied to it—namely, the knowledge that attempts to establish a harmonizing relation between naming/description and the named/described, while affirming the “logical” bond between them as non-deficient and not subject to reconsideration. Modernist poets thus adopted unveiling language as a material that carries their visions from the newly seen empirical level to a level that is not susceptible to dissemination or generalization. From this particular angle, this tendency is close to Sufi experience, for the language of unveiling is subjective; it often breaches what is customary and does not remain in accord with its antecedents. It is, therefore, a language fundamentally grounded in re-naming and in symbol<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the experience of modernity becomes (an experience of unveiling as creation *through* language, not an experience of expression *by* language).<sup>19</sup> For this reason, the Sufi sensibility—understood in its broad sense—permeates much modernist poetic writing, especially in dimensions of unveiling and poetic intuition.

In ‘Afīfī Maṭar, the moment of unveiling appears in the kingdom of the earth and in union with it, as we sense in his words:<sup>20</sup>

My friend al-Niffarī surprises me with the rose of murmuring water and the blaze of the sea and the taste of salty air;

so I desire bread, and I await time, and the childhood of conversation,  
and unveiling, and the announcement of bewilderment.

Here, unveiling takes on a visionary, illuminative, and quasi-occult direction, expressing the depth of the poet's experience through his embodiment of the Sufi's “standing” in the divine presence. Yet the poet's stance and happiness do not reside in achieving the vision and witnessing of the supreme Self; rather, they arise through union with terrestrial forces, which themselves become the source of rebirth and self-disclosure—thus realizing unveiling and stupor.

He also says:<sup>21</sup>

**I remembered—and beneath me the river of living images runs.  
I remembered, and the globe came, and the heavens came to me,  
changing garments for garments;  
the blending among the creatures of memory, and the marriage of what is not  
male with what is female, and what is not female with what is male;  
and the joy of earthly powers granted me the power of summons  
with سحابة (succor) from the images of shattered memory.  
So I summoned from foods, images, and sweet listening  
what I desire;  
and the standing in the station of “Be” grew long,  
and joy filled with tender questions;**

**and the tree of the face drooped with fresh obsessions  
and buds of wakeful perplexity.  
So I knew that upon the Ascension I walk within the pavilion  
of the singular certainty,  
and the circle of the earth expanded.**

This text, in terms of style, corresponds to Sufi ecstatic utterance (*shāḥ*), as it contains striking contradictions that dazzle reason. The poet lives an ascensional journey culminating in a degree of certainty, which for him is embodied in the earth rather than in direct metaphysical witnessing. His poetic self thus hopes for the earth's deliverance—"and the circle of the earth expanded"—which indicates the realization of deliverance through his prolonged journey: deliverance of the earth from the dominating might that presses upon its chest through coercion, aggression, and injustice. This is suggested by the suffering he has endured, motivated by a desire to build and to reconstruct, until he arrives at "standing" in the station of "Be," which signals divine decree in the human being and in all cosmic realms. The line "and the standing in the station of 'Be' grew long" points to the depth of suffering in his long journey and his arduous struggle to extinguish the fire of perplexity and to find answers to his many questions—"and joy filled with tender questions"—in the pursuit of purifying the earth and rejecting the constraints surrounding humanity, so as to create a cosmos suffused with happiness and a good life.<sup>22</sup>

### **3. Subjectivity and the Sufi "I": The Recovery of Primordial Disposition (*Fiṭra*)**

Sufi heritage has come to offer poets new models bearing different visions and imaginative intensities that enriched their corpora. Influence from Sufism emerges chiefly in the realms of the unseen, symbols, and the strange relations that Sufis produce in their speech, thought, and poetry—relations tied to the invisible, the numinous, and the spiritual. These are precisely what attracted the modern poet to Sufism. The poet's "I" becomes an "I" without boundaries—a permeable energy—because poetry, by nature, is (the locus where the consciousness of the "I" realizes itself, whether in cohesion or fracture, and realizes its relation to the object, whether in distinction or interpenetration; and this is among the foremost reasons that explain the linkage between poetry and Sufi experience as a rethinking of the human being's relation to the self, or the self's relation to God, the world, and to itself).<sup>23</sup>

Within this "new I" there is a transformative energy. Subjectivity and the retreat into the "I" are what produce proximity between the Sufi and poetic experiences, in order to escape the trivialities of life and its coarse materialities—indeed, in order (to free the "I" from its prison, to bring it out of the fragility of reality, and to make it soar in the heavens of the infinite Absolute, renewing the spiritual pulse and ascending to the highest degrees of rising toward the transcendent).<sup>24</sup> Both experiences, then, involve a turning inward in search of the hidden and an intuitive plunge into profound depths—something that enriches the imaginative faculty in its effective, moving, and creative function. This "I-ness" (*āniyya*) appears in Adonis's words:<sup>25</sup>

**Through me the cosmos was unified: its eyelids  
wear my eyelids;  
through me the cosmos was unified, through my freedom—  
so which of us invents the other?**

For the poet, the invention and creation of the cosmos is an act governed by possession: the free "I" that determines all its actions according to what suits its experience, without prior limits or constraints that might diminish its power or restrict its centrality.

### **4. Transcendence and Departure from Context and Its Role in Enriching Modernist Poetic Experimentation**

A salient feature of the Sufi tendency is that it has not always been in harmony, agreement, or consonance with the context contemporaneous with it. This condition applies to both early and later

Sufis alike. Such transcendence signifies a refusal of total immersion in the dominant discourses of a given epistemic present, as well as a refusal to abide by established conventions of writing and systems of signification upon which collective agreement is based. The Sufi, in both conduct and writing, expressed clearly and explicitly his departure from context, for the Sufi path in worship, for instance, opened a new way—namely, the path of ecstasy (*wajd*), the heart, and spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*)—instead of the path of knowledge and reason founded on transmission and imitation. As it is stated: (Nothing in existence apprehends the traces of the Truth and knows what is due to Him as it ought, except the heart; for everything other than the heart knows its Lord from one aspect rather than another, and nothing besides the heart can know God from all aspects).<sup>26</sup>

The Sufis thus devoted particular attention to the heart, at a time when others—especially jurists and traditionists—considered desire (*hawā*) to originate in the heart, which is so named because of its constant fluctuation and instability. Their efforts were therefore oriented toward constructing rational and logical methods that regulate doctrine and conduct.<sup>27</sup>

The Sufi's nature, which impels him to depart from context—even in the language through which he expresses himself—does not entail a direct or confrontational opposition to that context. Rather, it takes the form of a state of withdrawal and isolation that the Sufi fashions for himself, within which he formulates his experience. Departure from context is thus a quiet, insulating condition that neither absorbs the context nor collides with it; language becomes part of a private experience.

This dialectic between stasis and movement within the Sufi tendency corresponds, in the experience of modernity, to the continual transcendence of intellectual and linguistic contexts, as well as of any system that ossifies into a fixed and rigid structure. Hence, the Sufi concepts of state (*ḥāl*) and station (*maqām*) may be aligned with the modernist concepts of the “fixed” and the “mutable,” regardless of whether the fixed takes the form of a system, an idea, a style, or a structure. Constraint, coercion, and external impositions are precisely what liberated the doctrine of modernity in its revolutionary dimension that departs from its context. The moment of modernity is, in essence, a decisive rupture in which what follows is no longer subordinate to what precedes it, nor a mechanical continuation thereof. Once this rupture is achieved, the resulting condition becomes a reality that defends itself by itself.<sup>28</sup>

The spirit of modernity finds its most intense expression in creative writing through what is known as experimentation—a term employed by critics to denote the openness of creativity to modes of writing whose concepts, themes, values, and aesthetics are constituted independently of parallel influences or predetermined contexts and patterns. The possibilities of creativity continue to renew themselves across all forms of writing.<sup>29</sup>

In Sufi experience, transcendence becomes a perpetual search for new spiritual influx (*wārid*), and a continual approach toward a state of pure abstraction and attachment to the Absolute. In modernity, it is an essential path for experimentation, writing, and creation, and an expression of firm belief in possibility and in the capacity to realize it. In both cases, there is a will to generate new dimensions of meaning and different modes of expression. What troubles the human being in modernity—understood in its creative and artistic sense—is the occasional narrowing of creative options; hence the constant impulse toward searching and experimenting. This pursuit can be understood through the evolution of poetics itself: once predominantly contextual under the methodologies of contextual criticism, poetic concepts later shifted into a purely systemic framework isolated from context under textualist approaches, and then suddenly transformed into a partnership with the reader or recipient. All of this supports the notion that modernity cannot be equated with a single mode of renewal; each of its manifestations is founded only through declaring its transcendence of what precedes it.<sup>30</sup>

This dynamic is manifested in ecstatic utterance (*shaḥḥ*) and linguistic and stylistic deviation when handling ideas that acquire a Sufi dimension, as seen in Adonis's words:<sup>31</sup>

**I marvel at myself—I do not feel my “I-ness,”  
 able to love or hate people;  
 I cast my radiance and move on.  
 My passion and my bond with what is other than me—with myself  
 and with its depths  
 and its desires—  
 I do not feel my self as my self  
 except when it has melted into what is other than it.**

Here, the poet's self departs from ordinary human emotions—love and hatred—through a deviational pattern that suspends reason and intellectual operations. Yet the Other remains active, relational, and influential through the erasure of boundaries between self and other, inspiring the self toward a revelatory adventure into diverse poetic worlds. In these worlds, language becomes incapable of fulfilling its assigned function, entangling it instead in a web of contradictions. The poet's feeling and perception are realized only through union with other, previously separate selves.

### **5. Imagination**

Imagination, in the Sufi sense, is that which brings together divergences and links the necks of incompatibles, such that opposites are subsumed within a single identity, endowed with attributes that boldly defy normative standards and refuse confinement. Imagination is a cornerstone of Sufism and a great pillar of knowledge—indeed, it is the foundation of existence itself, for imagination can encompass the forms of all possibilities; it is a vast world of boundless capacity and generosity.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, imagination constitutes the unifying relation between the Sufi experience and the poetic experience. In both, imagination prevails as a mediating faculty—an integrating agent between sensation and understanding—capable of subsuming multiplicity into a single composite. In this sense, imagination dissolves its material only to reorganize it according to spiritual principles, calling forth an intuitive language in both Sufism and poetry that is open to the infinite. The logic of imagination thus reveals itself creatively in both experiences through the organization of experience and the realization of unity that governs it—reaching its highest horizon in rare moments.<sup>33</sup>

Imagination is a capacity for creation, generation, and formation, for it personifies the abstract and embodies meaning by casting it into imagistic forms. This implies its ability to make things depart from their original natures. Imagination is among the most prominent techniques available to the contemporary poet; it is his primary tool of creativity. It grants imagination unlimited freedom, allowing it to become an absolute power unconstrained by bounds. For both modernist poets and Sufis alike, imagination functions by bringing together contradictions within a single structure, such that they appear harmonious and coherent.<sup>34</sup>

Imagination opens for poets an infinite horizon that incites them to uncover the secrets of nature and existence, intensifying their desire for knowledge, for lifting the veil from the unknown, and for escaping the constraints of time and place. This is precisely what contemporary poets seek in their creative practices and poetic visions through the aspiration to reach beyond reality.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, imagination forges the bonds of encounter between the Sufi and poetic experiences alike; it is the locus of the capacity to unite, to harmonize, and to juxtapose opposites, and to synthesize disparate levels that ordinarily resist fusion and concord—achieved through the personification of abstractions, the embodiment of meanings, and the bestowal of form upon what eludes and resists it. Imagination is a fabric that weaves together subtlety and density: subtlety tending toward pure meanings, and density toward the sensible. In this, imagination follows a gnostic orientation grounded in the concept of embodiment.<sup>36</sup>

In this regard, Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr speaks of his alienation through activating imagination and expressive energy:<sup>37</sup>

At times I awaken not knowing a name for myself,  
 nor a homeland, nor kin.  
 I linger at the gate of emigration until my consciousness catches up with me,  
 restoring to me a gnostic immediacy,  
 lingering in my head, descending heavily upon my limbs,  
 casting its anchor in my heart...  
 This is a detested day among my days,  
 a detested day among the days of the world.  
 Doors cast me within doors,  
 and my sweat shackles me in a garment woven by the blazing sun—  
 a garment of exhaustion and torment.  
 I return to my home vanquished,  
 not knowing a name for myself,  
 nor a homeland,  
 nor kin.

Through the activation of imagination, the poet creates a depiction of loss that envelops the life of the Arab human being in confrontation with a false world and a false time. Images of suffering take on an imaginative dimension that renders both the psychological and corporeal condition visible: his body touches garments woven by the sun, and fate has bound him in them—"my sweat shackles me in a garment woven by the blazing sun"—all of which signifies constriction and intensity of suffering, until the garment becomes one of sheer exhaustion and affliction. His life no longer resembles life, his time no longer time, and his place no longer place; it is a tragic, vanquished condition in which he recognizes neither name, nor homeland, nor kin.

## Results

1. The article demonstrates that the Sufi experience constituted a central tributary of Arab poetic modernity, contributing to the liberation of the poem from the dominance of immediate reality and declarative language, and opening for it deeper and broader symbolic and spiritual horizons.
2. The study confirms that the modern Arabic poem's openness to Sufism was not a passive escape from reality, but a conscious aesthetic act aimed at interrogating reality, dismantling its falsity, and seeking human deliverance through vision, unveiling, and intuition.
3. The results show a fundamental intersection between the Sufi experience and the modernist poetic experience, manifested in their shared reliance on vision as an alternative to logical reason, and on the heart and imagination as means for grasping the deeper meaning of existence.
4. The study reveals that Sufi concepts—such as unveiling, state, station, union, ecstatic utterance, and the symbolism of letters—were transformed in modernist poetry into artistic and aesthetic tools, re-employed outside their strict religious context to serve expressive and creative ends.
5. The article shows that Sufi language, characterized by ambiguity, deviation, and density, enriched modern poetic language and moved it from the level of expression to the level of creation and semantic unveiling.
6. The results confirm that Sufi vision formed a basis for constructing the modernist poem, turning the poem into a space for existential questions rather than ready-made answers, thus making poetry both a cognitive and aesthetic act.
7. The study clarifies that the Sufi tendency deepened poetic subjectivity: the "I" in modern poetry became an open, infinite self that interpenetrates with the other, the world, and the Absolute—an experience close to the Sufi notion of annihilation (*fanā'*).
8. The article highlights that Sufi imagination played a decisive role in enriching modernist poetic experimentation by bringing together contradictions, personifying abstractions, and expanding the poetic image beyond the limits of time and place.

9. The results affirm that the shared concept of transcendence and “stepping outside context” in both Sufism and modernity consolidated the experimental tendency in modern Arabic poetry and pushed it to break fixed intellectual, linguistic, and aesthetic structures.
10. The article concludes that the interaction between Sufism and poetic modernity was not merely a heritage-based invocation or ornamental language, but a productive creative dialectic that contributed to forming a new poetic vision more capable of expressing the modern Arab subject’s anxiety and existential questions.

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