

## THE Marginal Literature and Ideology in Arab Literary Creativity

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### Abstract

This study examines the relationship between ideology and Arab marginal literature. The margin represents the antithesis of official, central literature and functions as a counter-ideological instrument that seeks to unsettle the narratives of dominant authority, which often bypass marginalized groups, minorities, and opponents of central power. It does so by rebelling against the limits imposed by authoritarian modes of thought and expression, and by making audible the voice of the marginalized, excluded, and forgotten *other* as a form of confrontation rather than compliance. This occurs through exposing the hidden structures of prevailing ideology. The study therefore asks: how have the features of this relationship been embodied in Arab literary creativity?

**Keywords:** literature; marginality; authority; center; ideology

### Introduction :

Marginal literature in Arab culture should not be understood merely as a parallel domain existing alongside the official canon; rather, it constitutes a dynamic space of critique and resistance through which the configurations of cultural and symbolic power are continually redefined. If the *center*, within critical discourse, designates the system endowed with the legitimacy of representation, recognition, and institutionalization, then the *margin* emerges as the rupture through which the voices of lived reality are articulated—voices that dominant ideology seeks either to appropriate or to erase. Accordingly, the relationship between ideology and marginal Arabic literature is not an external or contingent one; it is, instead, a structural relationship in which the contours of the text are shaped by the degree of its proximity to, or distance from, the fault lines of political, social, and religious authority.

This paper is grounded in the premise that marginal Arabic literature is not an accidental byproduct of social exclusion; rather, it is a **counter-ideological formation** that deploys linguistic and aesthetic strategies aimed at dismantling the grand narratives of the center. Within a historical context marked by the predominance of literary models that consolidate the values of collectivity and sameness, forms of writing emerged that rebelled against normative conventions, adopting the margin as a strategic locus of interrogation. This position has ceased to function merely as a site of protest; it has become a laboratory for the invention of new expressive forms that restore visibility to the unsaid and lay bare the contradictions that institutional ideologies strive to homogenize by force.

This study moves beyond the conventional understanding of marginal literature as simply the literature of the oppressed or the socially excluded, and instead advances a broader conception

that links the margin, as an act of resistance, to the ideological agency of the text itself. Drawing on critical frameworks derived from post-structuralist and postcolonial theory, and through an examination of patterns of cultural production and reception in the Arab world, the paper seeks to trace the aesthetic transformations generated by marginal literature within the landscape of contemporary Arabic writing. Ultimately, it offers a reading of the ways in which writing—through its form, experimentation, and marginality—becomes an instrument for deconstructing centers of power, thereby raising a fundamental question concerning the capacity of such practices to reshape Arab collective consciousness and to move beyond the traditional binaries of division.

## 1. Marginal Literature: From Institutional Central Literature to the Margin

Discussion of *literature of the margin* is at once old and renewed. No historical period is devoid of this phenomenon—the center/margin duality—generated by social realities, cultural systems, and political, religious, and economic ideologies that vary from one nation to another and from one era to the next. Literatures of the marginalized emerge under different circumstances and in response to diverse contexts each time. In tracing marginal literature, it is therefore necessary to return first to the term itself and its presence in lexicons.

### 1.1. The Linguistic and Terminological Concept of the Margin

In *Lisān al-‘Arab*, under the root *h-m-sh*, we find meanings associated with speech and motion. The term denotes excessive speech, idle talk, and utterance lacking correctness or sound judgment (Ibn Manzur, 1997). Thus, the concept of the margin becomes associated with surplus discourse from which no meaningful benefit is expected.

The Arabs also attached to the word *muhammash* (“marginalized”) the connotation of one who speaks excessively yet without benefit. It is the passive participle of *hammasha*, a form that suggests an action inflicted upon the object. As is well known in Arabic morphology, the verbal pattern implies intentionality and prior planning toward the achievement of a goal (Al-Zu‘furi, 2008, p. 186). This indicates that the act of marginalization is imposed upon the marginalized without their will or desire.

The term *margin* is connected to a number of fields and domains: political, economic, social, cultural, and literary-creative, among others. Hence, many scholars from diverse disciplines have attempted to define its dimensions and boundaries. It has been addressed by philosophers and scholars in the humanities, including Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Edward Said, and Julia Kristeva, among others. Their work focused on marginalized categories and explored forms of exclusion and isolation within society, since the marginalized have long served as an entry point for understanding the culture of the center and its real-world manifestations in their broad and interconnected forms.

Derrida, in *Writing and Difference*, discusses the culture of the center, its monologic vision, and its exclusion of the other who differs from it. Edward Said regards the marginalized as a distinct and alternative formation rejected and combated by the official institution. Bourdieu, in *The Weight of the World*, portrays the conditions of the oppressed and isolated, such as Algerian immigrants in poor French neighborhoods. Kristeva, in *Strangers to Ourselves*, addresses the estrangement of foreign exiles and their relation to another people’s language, which becomes a psychological barrier that isolates the expatriate (Al-Anzi, 2013).

Since our field is literary studies and the manifestations of the margin within them, it must be emphasized that the literary phenomenon is governed by multiple dimensions: religious, political, social, cultural, artistic, aesthetic, and historical. All of these are, in one way or another, subject to the standards of the center or the official institution. Any writing that attempts to escape or depart from what has been officially codified is classified as literature of the margin, counter-literature, subterranean literature, quasi-literature, parallel literature, or underclass literature, insofar as it represents “oppositional literature that breaks consecrated artistic norms and runs counter to prevailing ideology; hence it has been known as literature of refusal and literature of opposition” (Morales, n.d., p. 31). Speaking of marginal literature therefore necessarily entails speaking of central literature.

## 2. The Concept of the Center

The center/margin binary has generated considerable debate in recent years. It is enough to return to the critical views devoted to analyzing the relationship between these two poles at a time when the voices of the marginalized have grown louder and their productions and creations have appeared, breaking the barrier of silence and fear of prohibition. What, then, is the center?

### 2.1. The Linguistic Concept of the Center

The word *center* derives from the Arabic root (*r-k-z*). In *Lisān al-‘Arab*, *rakz* denotes implanting something upright, such as a spear. *Markaz* also refers to the roots of the teeth, the station of soldiers—the place they are ordered to keep and not leave—the location of a person, and the center of a circle, that is, its middle (Ibn Manzur, 1997). The word *center* is thus associated with force, stability, and control. The center is the essence and origin around which the remaining secondary and marginal elements revolve and through which they are defined.

### 2.2. The Terminological Concept of the Center

Numerous studies have addressed the concept of the center and sought to delineate its features, with sociology taking the lead. There it was used “as a social and geographical concept to indicate the relations between the heart of power and culture in a given society and its surrounding regions” (Mann, 1999, p. 99). Social studies’ interest in the concept was driven by different class divisions and distinctions among social strata—nobility and masters on the one hand, commoners and slaves on the other. Thus, the binary of center and margin, strength and weakness, poor and rich, ruler and ruled, cast its shadow over sociological inquiry.

The concept was subsequently adopted by other disciplines, including economics. Raúl Prebisch used the term *center* to refer to technological and industrial advancement and the production of goods for circulation and export: the producer was the center, and the consumer the margin. He argued that the free global economy is divided into center states—the highly advanced industrial states of Western Europe, the United States, and Japan—and peripheral ones to which manufactured goods are exported (Mann, 1999, p. 99). The world is thus divided into two spheres: center countries, representing advanced societies, and developing countries, or the Third World. This division reflects a colonial ideology clothed in the rhetoric of progress and centeredness, around which former colonies continue to orbit as “developing” states.

Politically, the concept of the center refers to a deeply rooted and enduring relationship within political life, supplied with all the conditions of survival and growth. The political center is the site of authority, rule, and all subordinate administrative structures. As Ibn Khaldun states, “the state is stronger at its center than at its edge and periphery” (Ibn Khaldun, 2010, p. 147). The

center's survival is thus dependent upon power and upon all that sustains and strengthens it; conversely, no true center can exist with eroded or weak authority, because it loses the dependencies that revolve around it.

Finally, with regard to literary creativity, the center is likewise governed by religious, political, social, cultural, artistic, and aesthetic considerations. On this basis, some creative works receive acceptance, elevation, promotion, reading, study, close examination, citation, and application, while others are erased from existence, ignored, and relegated to oblivion and neglect.

For literary creativity to enjoy prestige and occupy the center of creative production, whether the creator or the state is concerned, special care must be devoted to certain writers or literary works that orbit within the sphere of authority and the center. The relationship between creativity and the center is ancient. In the pre-Islamic era, the poet was the tongue of the tribe; he was celebrated and banquets were held in his honor. Across generations, state patronage of literature took the form of stipends, grants, and official posts awarded to writers—"such as administrative posts through which many nineteenth-century French writers lived, a form of state patronage of literature" (Tibirmasin & al-Bah, 2014, p. 301). In Arab literary history, we encounter court poets and court literature—"literature tied to the life of luxury lived by the elite, and sometimes by religious men as well" (Sa'adah, n.d.). Central literature, then, is that kind of literature which serves authority and the upper classes of society; it is always celebrated and surrounded with attention because it is regarded as the complete model to be emulated.

### **3. The History of Marginal Literature in Western and Arab Contexts**

Marginal literature emerged in association with various oppositional movements, whether political, economic, social, or artistic. Such movements have existed since antiquity, with the emergence of literature itself, though they became especially visible in recent times as one of the products of freedom, the foundational principles of modern democracy, the emancipation of marginalized minorities, and the emergence of postcolonial and cultural studies as well as feminist movements. All of these prepared the ground for the rise of literature of the margin.

Likewise, the structure of official literature produced by the modern industrial age opened space for marginal literature, especially as the boundaries separating the two began to dissolve in the age of globalization, openness, border-crossing, the unsettling of certainties, the challenging of taboos, and speech about what had long remained unsaid. Added to this are the transformations in aesthetic standards governing the literary phenomenon and its interpenetration with other arts and fields such as media, cinema, and music, as well as the overlapping of literary genres themselves. These were all new developments within literature, and marginal literature found refuge in them.

#### **3.1. The Emergence of Marginal Literature in the West**

Western comparatists showed interest in the field of marginalized literatures, driven by the desire to uncover literatures accompanying official literature through investigation of literary relations among various civilizations, nations, and peoples. At first, popular literatures served as a link between these bodies of literature and a bridge paving the way toward the study of the marginal literatures of the broader popular classes.

The actual beginnings of serious interest in popular writings can be traced to the University of Bordeaux between 1961 and 1963, where the issue of high literature and low literature was

raised. This was followed by the Cerisy colloquium, where the term *marginal literature* was more clearly defined and its boundaries delineated (Morales, 2018). Thereafter, the term *paraliterature* circulated in French, consisting of two parts: *para* (“beside” or “against”) and *literature*. French lexicography thus adopted meanings such as literature that is similar, parallel, equivalent, or marginal—the latter two being closest, since they refer to literary creativity situated on the margins of official literature. The term was included in *Larousse* in 1984, published by Robert, and from 1986 to 1992 it was also entered into the universal dictionary of literature issued by the French university press PUFs (Khloufi, 2016, p. 94), although criticism often continued to confuse terms such as quasi-literature and counter-literature.

Among the reasons that contributed to the crystallization of marginal literature in Western civilization are the following:

- the problems of the lower social classes;
- the industrial development of the nineteenth century, which produced new tastes and new subjects;
- the role of the press in publishing serialized novels of this kind;
- the benefit taken by various forms of marginal creativity from scientific discoveries. For example, it would have been impossible to speak of organized crime in detective fiction, where resolution depends upon medicine, without scientific developments in analysis.

### 3.2. Marginal Literature in Arab Culture

Most nations and peoples have known the phenomenon of marginalization in many fields, including Arab literary creativity. Scholars have classified the poetry of the *ṣu lūk* brigands as marginal literature, just as prose was once regarded as marginalized in comparison with poetry. The idea of marginalization deepened after Islam, especially with the expansion of Islamic civilization and Arab contact with other peoples, when differences between Bedouin and urban life became more apparent.

In the modern period, once awareness of the concept of marginalization opened our eyes, marginalized literatures and their creators were increasingly exposed because they departed from authority in all its forms—political, religious, social, cultural, and aesthetic. Examples abound. One need only mention, by way of illustration, Naguib Mahfouz’s *Children of Gebelawi* and *The Harafish*. The same applies to poetry, the short story, and other literary genres.

In sum, marginal literature exists in innumerable texts throughout human history as a human condition that people may suffer across civilizations and eras. In the modern century, however, it has become an explicitly literary and cultural slogan.

### 3.3. Ideology and Arab Marginal Literature: From Structural Dependency to the Efficacy of Symbolic Resistance

Arab marginal literature cannot be approached merely as literature issuing from socially excluded groups or voices located outside the official cultural institution. Rather, it must be understood as a textual space formed within a complex network of power, legitimacy, and representation. In this context, the margin is not a fixed geographical or social location; it is a cultural and ideological construction produced by authority when it determines what counts as legitimate literature and what is classified as secondary, deviant, or aesthetically deficient

discourse. The relation between ideology and Arab marginal literature is therefore foundational, because ideology does not simply influence this literature's themes; it also helps produce the conditions of its emergence, shapes the patterns of its reception, and draws the boundaries between the cultural center and the symbolic margin (Bourdieu, 1993).

This understanding proceeds from the idea that center and margin are not natural givens but historical outcomes of processes of selection, codification, and exclusion exercised by political, religious, and cultural institutions. Every authority seeks, directly or implicitly, to stabilize its narrative of society, identity, values, and taste, and to grant this narrative the status of universality and legitimacy. By contrast, texts that challenge this narrative or expose its contradictions are pushed to the margins, whether they interrogate despotism, reveal class structures, expose the marginalization of minorities, or reconfigure the body, identity, and difference outside normative molds. On this basis, Arab marginal literature becomes an expression of continuous tension between discourse of hegemony and discourse of resistance—not between a fixed center and a static margin, but between shifting positions determined by balances of legitimacy and representational power (Derrida, 1978).

From a historical perspective, the Arab experience shows that the margin has remained present in different forms since the early stages of Arab culture. Classical corpora produced multiple representations of voices and writings that did not fully conform to dominant taste or to the moral and political standards consecrated by the institution. Although the critical concept of “marginal literature” in its modern sense was not then current, cultural practice itself contained forms of disparity between recognized discourse written within the logic of the center and other discourses circulating at the borders of legitimacy, read as lower in value, or burdened with connotations of deviance, objection, and transgression. In this sense, modernity did not create the margin out of nothing; rather, it reproduced and reframed it within new epistemic and artistic structures, turning the margin into a strategic site of interrogation and confrontation.

Contemporary Arab marginal literature, through its mechanisms of operation and its plurality of media—from the prose poem and experimental narrative to digital literature and blogs—no longer merely positions itself outside the center. It actively seeks to *re-center* issues of oppression, alienation, and forgotten memory. It is a literature that practices both self-critique and critique of domination, transforming the margin from a zone of exclusion into an aesthetic and ideological laboratory for the invention of new identities and the deconstruction of the grand narratives of the center that long sought to domesticate Arab diversity within monolithic molds (Kristeva, 1982).

Critical analysis of this literature reveals what may be called the “fluidity of positions”: what was marginal in one historical or political moment may become central in another, and vice versa, depending on shifting balances of cultural power. This exchange does not eliminate inequality; rather, it highlights the functional role of ideology in preserving the margin as a necessity for the center's continued self-legitimation. At its core, the center requires an “other” or a “margin” to debate, exclude, or absorb. Ideology therefore works not only through repression but also through the assimilation of the margin and its reproduction in distorted or sanitized form (Bourdieu, 1993).

In conclusion, the relation between ideology and Arab marginal literature remains profoundly dialectical. If prevailing ideology works to contain the margin and reduce it to a fixed type,

marginal literature remains the “crack” through which desires, silences, and truths that the center dares not disclose can pass into expression. Research into this literature does not merely seek to “give voice to the voiceless”; it aims to understand how this literature redraws the maps of cultural power, and how writing is transformed from an act of entertainment or documentation into a profoundly ideological act contributing to substantial shifts in Arab collective consciousness and in its perceptions of self and world.

#### 4. Issues of Marginal Literature in Arab Literary Creativity: Between Past and Present

##### 4.1. Features of the Margin in Arab Heritage

Excavating marginalized issues in the old Arab heritage leads us to literary models that were marginalized for formal and artistic reasons—for example, prose writing in comparison with poetry. The preference granted to poetry was often attributed to the beauty of diction, elegance of phrasing, and clarity of expression. In *Al-ʿUmda*, we find the following preference stated:

Every verse is better than prose in the accepted custom of taste. Do you not see that pearls—siblings and kin to words, and the measure by which words are compared—if scattered, are neither safeguarded nor properly benefited from? But when strung, they are better protected from debasement and their beauty becomes more visible despite frequent use. So too with words: when scattered in prose, they disperse in the ears and slip away from human nature; only the most extraordinary among them remains, if indeed it is the most beautiful.

Thus, poetic artistic writing occupied the throne of classical Arab aesthetic taste, while the aesthetics of prose writing receded—not for anything inherent in prose itself, but because of the preference accorded to the composition and charm of phrasing in poetry over prose.

If we return to the marginalized themes and issues in our Arab heritage—matters deserving far more than a single study—we find that this heritage contains many literary models that engaged questions long considered prohibited or taboo, across religious, political, social, and other domains. Examples include the following:

Marginalized issue	Work	Author
Sex, theft, foolishness, Sufism	<i>Al-Imtāʿ wa al-Muʿānasa</i>	Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi
Politics, sex, literature	<i>Risālat al-Ghufrān</i>	Abu al-ʿAlaʿ al-Maʿarri
Love, sex	<i>Ṭawq al-Ḥamāmah</i>	Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi
Theft, beggary, trickery, religious hypocrisy, sex, humor	<i>Al-Maqāmāt</i>	Badiʿ al-Zaman al-Hamadhani
Miserliness and humor	<i>Al-Bukhalāʿ</i>	Al-Jahiz
Foolishness and stupidity	<i>Akhhbār al-Ḥamqā wa al-Mughafalīn</i>	Ibn al-Jawzi
Love, sex, wit, humor	<i>Al-Aghānī</i>	Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani

There is therefore clear overlap among creators in their treatment of marginalized issues, not to mention the recurrence and intersection of many such themes across creative models. These issues are at once ancient and contemporary, because they are tied to the human being irrespective of time and place. They must therefore be connected to our present as well.

##### 4.2. Features of the Margin in Modern Arab Creativity

Returning to modern marginalized Arabic creative texts gives us a lens through which to understand the issues of marginal literature and to excavate the themes that led to their rejection by official institutions, whether religious, political, cultural, or social. In recent times, literary productions have increasingly been classified under diverse labels that reveal the authority of the center over the margin—for example, women’s writing, Black literature, graffiti writing, satirical writing and caricature, colonial literature, and other labels and terms that continue to affirm the center’s power over whatever it designates as marginal.

Arab criticism initially reflected this hierarchization. Its judgments and standards were, for the most part, tied to the basic assumptions and laws of the center. The prose poem, for example, was marginalized and rejected in its early stages because it was regarded as an open text that crossed genre boundaries: naked, white writing. Critical terms proliferated to describe marginal writings in an effort to distinguish them from official literatures. We thus encounter labels such as *adjacent discourse*, *textual accompaniment*, *quasi-text*, *thresholds of the text*, and *textual parallelism*. These critical terms amount to an implicit acknowledgment of the boundaries between official and marginal literature, whether based on distinctions separating one genre from another or on the transformations affecting specific literary genres in the age of modernity and postmodernity. This was an age marked by intense innovation, rapid and conflictual change, overlapping poetic and prose forms, and growing difficulty in tracking their trajectories and the diversity of critical perspectives surrounding them.

## **5. The Role of Ideology in the Efficacy of Marginal Literature**

There is no doubt that the closer concepts move toward ideology, the more they become enveloped in ambiguity and haze; they become harder to grasp and define, because the ideological field is accompanied by multiple and divergent voices that blur concepts and transform them into advertising or propagandistic slogans for one voice over another.

Here we stand before the world of politics, which cannot be defined without the duality of “inside” and “outside.” There is the one who formulates policy and governs through it, and there is the other who accepts it and submits to it, willingly or unwillingly. Between these two sides appear the features of acceptance and refusal. Yet the party that possesses decision, implementation, and force is the one that dominates those subordinate to it and gathered beneath it. The relation thus becomes dialectical: master and subordinate, follower and followed, center and margin. Politics thereby becomes a problematic issue both in reality and in literary creativity, since literature is an inseparable part of life and reality.

### **5.1. The Centrality of Political Authority and the Literary-Creative Margin**

There is no doubt that the creator or intellectual remains constantly tied to his or her reality in all its complexities and issues. Literature is a reflection of the society it expresses; its purposes and forms may vary, but they all converge in giving expression to the concerns and problems of society and in pushing it forward. In this context, political literature emerges as a form of literature that expresses the political issues of society connected with authority, rule of law, and respect for rights. Literature developed, especially in the 1960s and with the rise of modernism, and literary writings increasingly internalized political worlds.

This is hardly surprising, for authority has embraced the creator since the dawn of history. One need only recall the image of the Arab poet in the pre-Islamic age: the voice of his tribe and its truthful spokesman, honored and almost sanctified in the eyes of tribal authority.

The relation between creator and authority extended into the modern era, producing what came to be termed political literature, revolutionary literature, liberation literature, and related forms, because “behind every political revolution, national movement, or intellectual movement stand writers who set it in motion, stoked its fire, and paved the way for it. Examples are many: the French Revolution of 1789, the American liberation movement of 1860, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Egyptian Revolution of 1954. On the other hand, these socio-political revolutions gave rise to what is called resistance literature and war literature” (Al-Suwaydi, n.d., p. 124).

Literary creativity thus became a participant in the political process and an agent within it, though in a way quite different from the classical image in which the poet merely delighted the ruler and thereby gained proximity to him. In the modern age, especially, the creator began to write about what reality ought to be, and politics became inseparable from that reality. Literature thus started to inspire change and make revolution in a subtle register. Hence, “between the intellectual and the politician there is a remarkable parallelism: the intellectual cannot be defined apart from his or her entanglements in political discourse, and the politician cannot be removed from the definition of the intellectual and his or her concerns” (Al-Ruba’i, 2015, p. 20).

The disappointments of the present therefore led to inquiry into the declared and hidden cultural systems of political despotism, which produced the voice of the margin in a time when literary theory had become inseparable from political convictions and ideological values. Any theory concerned with meaning, value, feeling, and human experience will inevitably become involved with broader and deeper beliefs about the nature of individuals, human societies, and the problematics of power (Al-Ruba’i, 2015, p. 20). Such readings brought marginal literature into relief, allowing its specific features and issues to take shape. The political question emerged as one of its most prominent themes, confirming that the margin is, first and foremost, a political construction.

## 5.2. Marginal Literatures and the Breaking of Political Centralism

For this reason, we deemed it important to trace those literatures that rebel against authority in the modern age, given the consequences of contemporary discourses calling for liberation from constraints and revolt against them. In doing so, they formed a new phenomenon, though one whose precursors were scattered across previous eras.

Its features have become clear in contemporary literature and it has imposed itself as a model across literary genres, both poetry and prose. Many modern and contemporary poets sought to depict the political repression of dissenting opinion and the extension of authority’s control and censorship over poetic creativity. Among them is Nizar Qabbani in his famous poem *The Autobiography of an Arab Executioner*, which exceeded 150 lines and circulated widely throughout the Arab world. Politicians, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens followed it closely. The poem led to Qabbani being barred from entering several Arab countries for years. In it, he says in a tone of great defiance toward the Arab ruler:

*O people,  
I am the first, the most just,  
and the fairest among all rulers.  
I am the full moon in the darkness, and the whiteness of jasmine.  
I am the inventor of the first gallows ...  
and the best of messengers.  
Whenever I think of relinquishing power,  
my conscience forbids me.  
Who, then, would rule these good people after me?*

In another poem, titled *The Actors*, Qabbani mocks Arab rulers as well (Qawshah, 2020). Many other rebellious poets were condemned by Arab political authority, including Muzaffar al-Nawwab and Ahmad Matar, among many others.

If we turn to the novel, we find that it too exposed authoritarian discourse and entered into the dark labyrinths of its corrupt manipulations. The fictional characters, events, times, and places drawn by the creator “confess a sense of disgust at the truth of what is happening. The writer is the first to uncover the game and realize the dimensions of its danger; then, with insight, he anticipates what is coming and translates his future visions into anxious questions rooted in a logic of dissatisfaction” (Al-‘Adwan, n.d., p. 49).

The novelistic text thus enters into argument with authority, politics, and their symbols, as fictional characters break the constraints that marginalized them. One may cite, for example, Ghassan Kanafani’s *Returning to Haifa*, through which he sought to draw near to the masses; because he wrote for the cause of the people, he devoted his pen to weaving the stories of poor people and writing about them (Abu Asba ‘, n.d., p. 22).

Kanafani’s pen thus became a truthful spokesman for the Palestinian cause, and through the novel he expressed its political fractures from within, beginning with the Palestinian individual and extending to the external invader, the Zionist entity. At the same time, he exposed hypocrisy and the manipulations of politics, especially internal Palestinian politics, through the symbols and paper characters of his narrative that also pointed to the corruption of Arab authority. Many novelistic texts followed this logic, especially in societies that suffered acute political crises. An example is the Iraqi novelist Abbas Khalaf in his novel *Al-Baydaq (The Pawn)*, where he depicts military and political hells through the suffering of a soldier named Hashim. His father had died in the Palestine wars, while his distant mother—Umm Hashim—continued to suffer the ravages of the wars that devastated Iraq (Boudbouz, 2016, p. 15). The novelistic text thus outmaneuvers authority and seeks to expose its depths, whose shadows extend over society in general and the family in particular. The features of this strained literature are embodied in the mutilated military system, much like the marginalized Iraqi soldier, emptied of all values and national convictions.

## **Conclusion**

Marginal literatures opposing authority have taken diverse forms throughout history. Literature was once in the service of political authority, and authority in turn lavished it with patronage and honor. Arab literary history offers varied testimonies regarding poets of sultans and princes, whose poems were weighed in gold, and whose gatherings were convened by power so that it

might hear what pleased it and elevated its prestige—as in the cases of al-Mutanabbi and Sayf al-Dawla, among others throughout the stages of Arab literary history, all the way to modern times in the case of Ahmad Shawqi, who was described as the poet of the court and of authority. Political partisanship thus shaped the world of marginal literature and became an inseparable part of it. It also gave rise to novelistic forms that constituted fertile ground for political discourse, with detective fiction and spy fiction providing clear evidence of the dialectical relation between the margin and political centrality.

The literary work has therefore departed from a discourse of harmony and accord with politics and power, crystallizing instead its rebellion against them. Politics has become a dialectical issue in the depths of both poetic and prose genres for most creators, who expose its defects and depict its ugliness in an age marked by plurality of opinions, the rise of freedoms, proliferating crises, the destabilization of centers, the breaking of certainties, the violation of taboos, and the disappearance of geographical and spatial barriers between literatures and cultures, so that the world has become present before all people in every corner of the globe.

This dialectical relationship has contributed to consolidating and activating the binary of literature of the center and literature of the margin: the former aligns with authority, while the latter criticizes it and reveals its defects. Modern theoretical visions and critical readings have also granted both critic and creator the freedom to interrogate the past through the eyes of the present.

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