NOTES

I: Introduction

1. A Nabaṭi poet is called by his peers simply a poet (*šāʿir* or *gassād*), and his work is called poetry (*šiʿir* or *giṣīd*). The poet usually introduces his composition as *giṣīdih* (ode), *abyāt* (verses), *gāf* or *gīfān* (rhymes), *gōl* or *gīl* (contemplated utterance), *kalām* (solemn address), *amṯāl* or *miṯāyil* (allegories), or *jawāb* (response). (Many a poem is composed as a response to the composition of another poet; such a response is also called *mgāḏāt*—paying in kind.) A short poem is called *byētāt* (a few verses) or *mšēxītih*, pl., *mšēxītāt, mišāxīt* (ditty, ditties).

2. H. St. John B. Philby casts some doubt on whether Palgrave actually did make the journey to Arabia (see Philby 1922:II, 117–156).

3. For example, *Dīwān al-Nabaṭ* (1952) by Kh. M. al-Faraj; *Shuʿarā al-Rass al-Nabaṭīyūn* (1965, 1972) by F. al-Rashīd; *Khiyār mā Yulṭaqat min al-Shiʿr al-Nabaṭ* (1968) by A. Kh. al-Ḥatam; *al-Tuḥfah al-Rashīdīyah fī al-Ashʿār al-Nabaṭīyah* (1965, 1969) by M. S. ibn Sayḥān; *al-Majmūʿah al-Bahīyah min al-Ashʿār al-Nabaṭīyah* (1969) by A. Bābuṭayn; *Dīwān al-Nabaṭ al-Ḥadīth* (A.H. 1374) by S. Ḥ. ibn Ḥuraywil; *Dīwān al-Shaykh Qāsim ibn Muḥammad Āl Thānī wa-Qaṣāʾid Ukhrā Nabaṭīyah* (A.H. 1984), and *Mukhtārāt min al-Shiʿr al-Nabaṭī al-Muʿāṣir* (A.H. 1392) by ʿA. ʿI. al-Hadhdhāl.

III. Poetry in the Desert

1. The content and function of poetry in the Arabian desert can be compared to Somali nomadic poetry, of which B. W. Andrzejewski wrote: "Somalis often say that a good poet can sow peace and also hatred; he can win friendship by praise and appreciation, deepen an existing feud, or lead to a new one. In the pastoral interior, poets often act as spokesmen for their clans in disputes, and one can even find interclan treaties in poetic form; it is not unusual for a poet to rise to the rank of a clan leader, if he is not one already.

"The amount of local history enshrined in Somali poetry is enormous, though the historian is to be pitied who tries to find his way through the labyrinthine clan feuds and alliances, obscured as they are by poetic imagery and hyperbole. In the almost total lack of documentation of clan history, however, poetry is the

only source of such information apart from the memories, admittedly prodigious, of the Somalis themselves" (1963:23).

Andrzejewski also observed: "When a poem is first composed and recited it is always topical and related to some true life situation of the poet or his clan: it is composed for a particular purpose, at a particular moment of time, and these circumstances are an integral part of the poem. If it achieves popularity in the areas where the happenings would not be common knowledge, the reciter takes care to explain them. With the passage of time the memory of the particular event is likely to fade even among the poet's clansmen, and the reciter will then use his judgment as to whether they need a history lesson or not. The topicality of a poem does not detract from its continued popularity, if it is good enough. One might think of it as a news commentary in poetic form: one is interested today in both news and poetry, and tomorrow the news has turned into history and the poetry is still there" (ibid.).

IV: Poetry and Regional Politics

1. Examples of ʿAbdallah's poetry appear in Ibn Rashīd (1966:94–101), al-Mārik (1963–1965:I, 181–182), and Musil (1928:30l–304). Some of ʿUbayd's poetry is published by al-Ḥātam (1968:II, 79–91), Kamāl (1960–1971:III, 57–78), and Musil (1928:300–302).

2. In this incident, ʿAbdallah demonstrated his extraordinary courage and intelligence; but he was badly wounded in the scuffle between himself and the slave of Mishārī. For a detailed account of this incident, see Winder (1965:97–99).

3. At one point Doughty admits, "In this poetical eloquence I might not very well, or hardly at all, distinguish what they had to say; it is a strange language" (1921:306). Winder (1965:155) errs in thinking that this verse cited by Doughty comes from a poem composed by ʿUbayd celebrating his triumphant military expedition against ʿUnaizah in 1845.

4. It has been a common practice in Arabia since ancient times that when a hero charges against his opponent in the field of battle he utters his war cry loudly (as explained in chapter 2). It is not unusual for a hero to utter as his war cry the name of the male relative of whom he is most proud. For example, the war cry of ʿAbdallah Ibn Rashīd was *ana axu ʿbēd*, "I am the brother of ʿUbayd," and that of ʿAbdalʿazīz Ibn Saʿūd, the late king of Saudi Arabia, was *ana bin miǵrin*, "I am the son of Miǵrin" (Miǵrin being the apical ancestor of the house of Āl Saʿūd).

5. Some of the poetry of al-ʿŌnī is published by al-Faraj (1952:II) and by al-Ḥātam (1968:II, 234–243). Aside from the meager biographical information that appears in al-Faraj (ibid.) and al-Mārik (1963–1965:III, 280–298), oral tradition remains the only source on the life and activities of al-ʿŌnī. Most of the information presented here was given me by Brāhīm al-Ḥsēn (see Introduction).

VII: Performance

1. In the rainy season, the members of each nomadic tribe disperse in small groups to forage in their tribal territory. During this period there are so few people around that one cannot be choosy about whom one makes friends with. But in summer, tribal sections congregate around their tribal wells in large numbers, and then one can be discriminating in choosing friends.

2. Brāhīm assumes the role of Riḍa and acts as his voice.

3. Riḍa suspends the narrative to embed some personal information about the go-between.

4. Brāhīm is commenting upon an admirable bedouin trait. Unlike townspeople, the nomads allow people of opposite sexes to mix freely, although men and women must both make sure that such free mixing does not lead to illicit sex and the besmirching of tribal honor. The severe punishment accorded violators ensures conformity to this desert code.

5. This is an idiomatic expression used by someone who changes his or her mind about something. It means that everything is in the hands of God; hence, it should be no surprise that someone may think one way now and an altogether different way later.

6. That is, although she considered marrying him, she was not particularly in love with him.

7. This expression is related to the concept of *sitir*, a concept lacking in English, which is related to honor and reputation. In using this expression, one asks God to protect the honor and reputation of someone and guard him from disgrace. The expression is used to indicate that the speaker, though he may not have harmonious relations with a particular person, wishes him no harm.

8. This expression is borrowed from radio parlance; the radio is very popular among the nomads and has a considerable influence on their speech.

9. This expression is used by the narrator of a story whenever he pays a compliment to a character in the story. It is an expression of courtesy and means that the assembled audience is no less worthy of praise than the character mentioned. The proper response to this expression is "The like of you is praiseworthy."

10. Summer is the time when the nomadic tribes congregate around tribal wells in large multitudes. Because there are so many people camped together, friends may not see each other for a long time, especially if their tents are separated by other tents.

11. According to this proverbial advice, if someone comes to you and starts shouting complaints, abuse, or accusations against you, you must hurl back at him similar shouts. By doing so, it is likely that you will come out exonerated and unscathed.

12. That is, the growling of camels is as incomprehensible as a foreign tongue.

13. Men of the tribe are compared to strong male camels which are specially bred to carry heavy loads and are famous for their stamina and endurance. Such men attack the enemy on the battlefield as courageously and recklessly as madmen who fear not death.

14. This idiom means that nothing can be expected of a certain person or thing; here it means, "Do not expect any good from such a base man."

15. This is said to a reciter after he finishes reciting a poem. The proper response is "May your body be sound."

16. Examples of *mrādd* appear in Abu Mājid (1963:143 ff.), Ibn Sayḥān (1965–1969:II, 292 ff.), and al-Badhdhāl (1975).

VIII: Prosody and Language: A Synchronic and Diachronic Overview

1. For more information on the phonology and syllabic structure of the dialect of ʿUnaizah the reader is urged to consult Johnstone (1967*a*). Other relevant works include Cantineau (1936–1937), Johnstone (1967*b*), Blank (1953, 1970), and Palva (1976).

2. On rare occasions, these affricates are realized by native speakers as independent phonemes contrasting with *g* and *k* as shown in the following minimal pairs: *galb* (heart) /*ǵalb* (upside down, inside out); *gadd* (worthy, equal, fit) /*ǵadd* (aim [m.s.]!, it is fit); *šigg* (tear) /*šiǵǵ* (side); *digg* (beat, pound [m.s.]!) /*diǵǵ* (tiny, insignificant—opposite of *jill*); *ḥigg* (a tin can) /*ḥiǵǵ* (an adult male camel); *ragg* (it [m.] softened) /*raǵǵ* (bring up [m.s.] to the roof!); *sāgi* (my leg) /*sāǵi* (an irrigation canal); *kabb* (he spilt) /*ćabb* (fumigate [m.s.]!); *kaff* (he refrained from; he went blind) /*ćaff* (palm of the hand); *ʿakk* (he carried on his back) /*ʿaćć* (hard); *ḍakk* (it [m.] became tight) /*ḍaćć* (it [m.] is tight). But generally native speakers realize *ǵ* and *ć* simply as variants of *g* and *k*. This is borne out by inconsistent pronunciation and by the rhymes of Nabaṭi poetry. It seemed that *g* and *k* were about to disappear and *ǵ* and *ć* were going to take over completely, but the recent rise in literacy has reversed the process, and now it is *ǵ* and *ć* that are rapidly disappearing. Young people today use *g* and *k* in place of *ǵ* and *ć*, and although they realize that these are merely variants, they are beginning to lose their intuitive ability to make the right choice—so much so that when they try to imitate the speech of their elders, they overdo it and use *ǵ* and *ć* indiscriminately, even in places where *g* and *k* are expected.

3. It seems that the affrication of *g* and *k* into *ǵ* and *ć* in the contiguity of *i* may have taken place before the assimilation of *u* to *i*, because this affrication does not take place when the adjacent *i* is historically *u*. This creates contrastive pairs of the following sort: *girr* (be quiet [m.s.]!) /*ǵirr* (confess [m.s.]!); *kil* (eat [m.s.]!) /*ćil* (measure, load [m.s.] the gun!). The initial consonants of *girr* and *kil* are not affricated because their vowel is historically *u*.

4. When the short high vowel *i* which is not historically *u* is elided, its fronting and affricating effect on the adjacent *g* and *k* remains after its elision: *ǵlādih* (necklace), *ćlābih* (dogs).

5. In the case of *ē* and *ō*, this is probably a lingering effect of the initial *a* of the old diphthongs *ay* and *aw*, of which *ē* and *ō* are reflexes.

6. In Nabaṭi poetry a sequence of two, but no more, short syllables is permitted under these specified conditions; but in ordinary speech one may encounter, in

extremely rare and very circumscribed cases, sequences of three short syllables: *šif al-asad* → *ši fa la sad* (look [m.s.] at the lion!).

7. By combining a short syllable with two long ones we get three feet, – – ⏑, – ⏑ –, and ⏑ – –; and by combining a short syllable with three long ones we get four feet, – – – ⏑, – – ⏑ –, – ⏑ – –, and ⏑ – – –. The number of simple and complex meters and their variants that can be formally derived by combining these basic feet is almost infinite, but the Nabaṭi poets employ only a small and manageable number of these possibilities.

8. On the prosody of classical Arabic poetry and on the prosodic terms discussed in this chapter, consult Wright (1971), Weil (1913, 1960), Ben-Cheneb (1924), and Bonebakker (1974).

9. It should be noted that we have been using syllabic analysis throughout for the sake of convenience; the ancient Arab grammarians and prosodists never developed the concept of the syllable, but spoke in terms of combinations of *mutaḥarrik* (CV) and *sākin* (CVC or CV̄) into the larger elements of *sabab* (pl. *asbāb*) and *watad* (pl. *awtād*) which, in general, represent units larger than a syllable.

10. On the relationship of city to desert and colloquial to classical Arabic, see Blau (1963, 1965).

11. Bedouin life had become associated in the minds of the urban masses with the egalitarian and free life of the desert and was idealized by city Arabs as the pristine cultural stage at its most authentic and genuine. In his discussion of the continued fascination of the Arab masses with the desert, Gibb writes: "There is by now a growing body of sociological observations which throws light on the perennial fascination which the old bedouin life and traditions have exercised upon the thought and imagination of the Arabs at all stages of evolution. It is not merely a matter of historical reminiscence but a genuine nostalgia. The bedouin furnished—and throughout all changes continued to furnish—the living models for two characteristics which were felt to be fundamental to the Arab way of life. One was the cult of the Arabic language, the fountain-head of all Arabic artistic sensibility and emotion. The dogma of the philologists, however much it may have been exaggerated in detail, was founded on the undisputed fact that the most satisfying of Arabic speech in its aesthetic quality, and the most uncorrupted in terms of morphological structure, was that of the desert—always excepting the Qurʿān. In the second place, the heroic virtues of the desert supplied the human and social ideals which were held to be those of the Arabs *par excellence*" (1948:577).

12. This term refers to the pre-Islamic period of paganism in Arabia.

13. Ibn Khaldūn wrote: "The nomads of this age, whose language has deviated from that of their predecessors, still compose poetry in all known (Arabic) meters, exactly like their ancestors did. They compose long poems following the established themes and topics such as love, panegyric, elegy, and sat e. The poet may interweave in his composition several themes or he may start with his main theme right away. Many a poem begins with the name of the poet followed by the amatory prelude" (1967:1125).

IX: Nabaṭi Poetry and the Classical Literary Tradition

1. For a translation of the *Muʿallaqah* of Imruʾ al-Qays see Arberry (1957:61–66).

2. The lines by al-Gāḏī cited in the example are based on or derived from the following lines from the *Muʿallaqah* of Imruʾ al-Qays (numbered according to Arberry's translation): line 1 from *Muʿallaqah*, lines 44–45 (comparison of the night to the sea and to a horse, condensed into one line by al-Gāḏī); line 2 from *Muʿallaqah*, lines 71–72 (where it is the lightning which is compared to the anchorite's lamp); lines 3–4 from *Muʿallaqah*, lines 25–26 (a verbal borrowing lost in translation: al-Gāḏī uses the same expressions in his description of Orion as does Imruʾ al-Qays in describing the Pleiades. Al-Gāḏī's line is *taʿarraḍ lah al-jōzā niḏīmah lacinnih // wšāḥin tikāšaḥ fāṣlih lūlwin ṣāfī*, echoing Imruʾ al-Qays's line *idhā mā 'th-thurayyā fī 's-samāʾi taʿarraḍat // taʿarruḍa 'thnāʾi 'l-wishāḥi 'l-mufaṣṣali*); line 6 from *Muʿallaqah*, line 45 (morning is no more cheerful than night); lines 17–18 from *Muʿallaqah*, 16–17 (Imruʾ al-Qays describes his night visit to a nursing mother).

X: Arabic Poetry and the Oral-Formulaic Theory

1. The formula itself as an operational concept has come under severe attack, particularly by H. L. Rogers (1966), Bennison Gray (1971), and Ruth Finnegan (1977:71–72).

2. See especially Albert C. Baugh (1959, 1967), Larry D. Benson (1966), Jackson J. Campbell (1960), Michael Curschmann (1967), Robert D. Stevick (1962), and Ann Chalmers Watts (1969), to name only a few.

3. For a rebuttal of the forgery hypothesis, see Muḥammad al-Khiḍr Ḥusayn (1927), al-Ghamrāwī (1970), al-Asad (1966), Lyall (1918:I, xvi–xxi), Arberry (1957:228–254), and Blachère (1952:166–186).

4. In his book *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry* (1978), Zwettler criticizes Monroe's approach on several grounds, pointing out that his work is marred by "inconsistencies and imprecisions." Zwettler calls attention to the fact that the size and choice of the samples that Monroe takes for analysis are too random to reflect the true characteristics of each poem as a whole. Zwettler himself limits his own analysis to only one poem, the *Muʿallaqah* of Imruʾ al-Qays, but in its entirety. Zwettler also disagrees with Monroe's claim that it is the order of formulas that determines the meters of Arabic poetry. In Zwettler's view, formulas can never be considered as prior to the meters in which they function. With regard to the mechanics of the techniques of formulaic analysis, Zwettler chastises Monroe for choosing not to differentiate between phrases repeated wholly or almost wholly verbatim and those which are related structurally but share only a single common lexical item (Zwettler 1978:43–50).

5. Ibn al-Marāghah ("the son of a she-donkey") is the name given to Jarīr by al-Akhṭal and al-Farazdaq, his rivals.

6. Ḥarzah is the son of Jarīr.

7. Abū Lubnā is the *shayṭān* of al-Farazdaq. The Arabs believe that every poet has a *shayṭān*, a demon or familiar spirit, which inspires him to compose his poetry.

8. The following examples are illustrative.

(a) (al-Iṣfahānī 1868:XV, 147):

أتى الحُطيئةُ كعبَ بنَ زهَير ، وكان الحُطيئةُ راويةَ زُهَير وآل زُهير ، فقال له : ياكعبُ ، قد عَلِمْتَ رِوَايتى لكم أهلَ البَيت ، وانْقطاعى إليكم ، وقد ذَهب الفحول غيرى وغيْرَك ؛ فلو قلتَ شِعْرًا تَذْكُر فيه نَفسك وتَضعنى موضعًا بَعْدك ؟ – وقال أبو عُبيدة فى خبره : تَبدأ بنَفسك فيه وتُثنّى بى – فإنّ الناس لأشعاركم أرْوَى ، وإليها أسْرع ؛ فقال كعبٌ :

فمَن للقوافى شانَها من يَحُوكها   إذا ماثَوَى كَعْبٌ وفَوَّزَ جَرْوَلُ

يَقول فلا يَعْيَا بشَىء يَقُــوله   ومِنْ قائليها من يُسىءُ ويَعْجَل

كَفَيْتُك لاتَلْقَى مِن النّاس واحدًا   تَنَخَّلَ منها مِثْلَ ما يتَنَخَّل

يُثقّفها حتى تَلينَ مُتُونُهـــا   فيَقْصُرُ عنها كلّ ما يُتَمَثّـــل

(b) By Suwayd Ibn Kirāʿ al-Iklī (al-Jāḥiẓ 1968:II, 12–13):

أبِيتُ بأبوابِ القوافى كأنّمـــا   أصادِى بها سِرْبًا من الوَحش نُزَّعا

أكالئها حتى أعَرِّسَ بعد ما   يكون سُحَيرًا أو بُعَيدًا فأهجعا

عَواصِىَ إلّا ما جعلتُ أمامَها   عصا مِرْبَدٍ تغشى نحورا وأذرُعا

أهبْتُ بغُرِّ الآبدات فراجعت   طريقًا أملّتهُ القصائدُ مَهْيَعا

بعيــدةَ شأوٍ ، لا يكادُ يرُدُّها   لها طالبٌ حتى يَكِلّ ويَظلَعا

إذا خِفْتُ أن تُروى عَلَيّ رددتُها   وراءَ التراقى خشيــةَ أن تَطَلّعا

وجشّمنى خوفُ ابن عفّان رَدَّها   فثَقّفتُهــا حَوْلًا جَرِيدًا ومَرْبَعا

(c) By Imru᾿ al-Qays (Ibn Rashīq 1963:I, 200):

أذود القوافيَ عنّي ذِيادا ... ذيادَ غلامٍ جريءٍ جرادا
فلما كَثُرْنَ وعَنَّيْنَهُ ... تخيّرَ منهنَّ شتّى جيادا
فأعزِلُ مَرْجانَها جانبا ... وآخُذُ من دُرِّها المستجادا

(d) By al-Ḥuṭay᾿ah (ibid.: 116)

الشعرُ صعبٌ وطويلٌ سُلَّمه ... والشعرُ لا يستطيعه من يَظْلِمُهْ
إذا ارتقى فيه الذي لا يعلمه ... زَلَّتْ به إلى الحضيض قَدَمُهْ
يُريد أن يعربه فيعجمه

9. See also Ḍayf (1965:9–19).

10. Tribesmen were fond of memorizing poems by their own tribal poets, especially those poems which praised their own tribe and defamed its enemies. One poet poked fun at the tribesmen of Banū Taghlib, who were so preoccupied with reciting a boastful poem by their chief, ʿAmr Ibn Kalthūm, that they forgot to perform the glorious deeds which the poem claimed for them:

alhā banī taghlibin ʿan kulli makrumatin // qaṣīdatun qālahā ʿamru bnu kalthūmu,
yarwūnahā abadan mudh kāna awwaluhum // yā la ᾿r-rijali la-shiʿrin ghayri mas᾿ūmi.

11. For a full discussion of the transmission process in ancient Arabic poetry, see al-Asad (1966:188–255).