AN

ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE

ADONISIAN POEM

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the work of Adonis (Ali Ahmad Sa'id) recognized to be the most influential, controversial and complex Arab poet of recent decades. Challenging and obscure in the extreme, his poetry has been the object of wide comment and some translation; this dissertation offers close interpretative study of the meanings and structures of the texts themselves.

Adonis' poetry to date extends over almost three decades and has been frequently republished. Poems differ in length from the briefest two-line fragments to epics hundreds of lines long. In this study poems have been grouped for analysis generally according to length.

This research is presented in three chapters. The first introduces the poet, his environment and the literary studies made about his work. The second and third chapters demonstrate the structural patterns on which Adonis' poems, both short and long, are based.
Close, word-by-word, textual analysis has been the main methodology pursued. It has been found that the complaints made by some critics of incoherence or lack of cohesion in these poems resulted only from superficial reading. The close analysis conducted clearly demonstrates that Adonis' poetry is characterized by careful and predetermined planning and in some cases by extensive re-writing for later editions. Moreover, despite its apparent anarchy and the obscurity of its language, his poetry is in fact based on relatively few recurring structural patterns.

This study has also demonstrated that comprehension and appreciation of Adonis' poetry, in terms of its structures as well as its aesthetic and philosophical purposes, can proceed effectively only from examination of the poet's use of myths and imagery and of his distinctive linguistic lexicon.