Alienation and dissent in the poetry of Allen Ginsberg and Fadhil Al-Azzawi

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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Alienation and Dissent in the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg and Fadhil Al-Azzawi

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of English and Comparative Literature

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

By
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Under the supervision of
Dr. Ferial Ghazoul

December 2019
The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Abstract

This study explores the thematic similarities and contrasts between Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* and Fadhil Al-Azzawi’s “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi.” To contextualize my topic, I briefly introduce the Beat generation as a whole, drawing parallels between them and the corresponding Kirkuk group in Iraq. Ginsberg and Al-Azzawi are, by and large, among the main spokespeople for said literary and cultural groups. The two groups were made up of marginalized individuals who struggled to fit in within mainstream society due to their controversial beliefs and lifestyles. I examine the prominent themes of alienation and dissent in the poems, and explore how these are manifested to reveal a better understanding of the speakers, their conscience and their contexts, all the while maintaining a distinction between the speaker and the poet. The speakers experience alienation in different forms: self-alienation, communal alienation and a sense of distancing from the nation. Moreover, they are both dedicated to dissent. They speak truth to power without necessarily ever taking a single political or ideological stance. The speaker in *Howl* details his generation’s unorthodox anecdotes and strongly criticizes the system which suppresses and ostracizes them. He points out the hypocrisy of a nation which deems his generation immoral for their alternative lifestyles when the system itself is the source of immorality in the poem. In “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi,” the speaker also seeks refuge amongst other marginalized individuals, while simultaneously struggling to define himself and his relationship with his nation. In Al-Azzawi’s poem “Elegy for the Living,” he directly confronts Ginsberg for not standing up against the US foreign policy towards Iraq. I particularly concentrate on the points at which the postcolonial and postmodern meet, with a strong emphasis on common features such as the poets’ confrontational, bold manner, the decentralization and deconstruction of various concepts, as well as the satirical tone which they adopt in their writing.
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Chapter One - Introduction

Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* (1955) and Fadhil Al-Azzawi’s “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi” (1971) share striking similarities despite being separated both geographically and culturally. This thesis will be looking at the thematic similarities, specifically the themes of alienation and dissent, and exploring how the respective speakers navigate both.

In both poems, the speakers present themselves as spokespersons or representatives of their respective generations. The poems strongly focus on political and societal dissatisfaction compounded by a sense of isolation or separation from the majority. The speakers express their unwillingness to conform to social expectations and obligations, their disillusionment with life, and the personal and collective pressures that oppress them. The poems come together in the poets’ unwillingness to conform and disillusionment with life and all the personal and collective pressures that it brings them. In order to contextualize the works of these poets, I will be situating them historically and trace their literary affiliations.

Both Ginsberg and Al-Azzawi belonged to literary groups, which were considered impactful, experimental, and bold. Ginsberg belongs to, and was one of the founders of what was coined as the Beat generation, a literary group in the United States, formed in the early 1950s, known for their revolutionary and innovative writing which was highly controversial. The corresponding group in Iraq, sharing thematic similarities with the Beat generation in their writing, is the Kirkuk group in Iraq, of which Al-Azzawi was a vital figure. In his article “Fadhil Al-‘Azzawi muta‘addidan: Sha‘ir al-mataha wal-rawa‘i al-ra‘i” (Multiple Fadhil Al-Azzawi: The Poet of the Labyrinth and the Visionary Novelist), Mazloum expresses that the Kirkuk group were greatly influenced by the work of the Beat generation, and in particular, Fadhil Al-Azzawi
and Sargon Boulos, who were influenced by their styles of writing. In reference to San Francisco, the original hub for the Beat generation and comments that while the San Francisco had their beach for inspiration, the Kirkuk group had their oil and desert (66).

Mazloum also makes an interesting comparison between how the Beats were influenced by T.S. Eliot and how the Kirkuk group were influenced by the Iraqi Pioneers of poetry (the preceding generation). According to him, while the Beat generation saw Eliot’s writing as too conservative and in, many ways, limited, the Kirkuk group perceived the Pioneers as being progressive, but not sufficiently so. The new wave of experimental writing in the 1960s in Iraq, felt they had to go beyond the limited innovations of the Pioneers (66). This helps us in understanding how both literary groups perceived and interacted with major literary influences. Al-Azzawi himself expresses his attitude towards the Pioneers (Nazik al Mala’ika; Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, Buland al-Haidari, Abdul-Wahab al-Bayati, etc.) as only a partial break with literary traditions and has reservations about their excessive bent towards lyricism (Al-Azzawi, Ba’idan 139-142).

As for the relationship between the “spiritual kinship” of the “leftist innovative current” in the 1960s’ poetics and the Beat generation, Al-Azzawi views it as not a matter of formal imitation, but rather a “kinship of having common grounds shared by both groups vis-a-vis issues of their time, which is a proof that they lived in the heart of their era and grasped its living spirit” (Al-Ruh 171-73). Al-Azzawi, having explained how the term Beats came to be and specifically pointing to the literary panel in which the Beat poets read new poetic texts, including Ginsberg’s Howl, in 1955 in San Francisco, (Al-Ruh 171-72), comes to the conclusion as to the parallelism of both movements—the Beats having rejected “capitalist paradise and its rat race,”
while the 1960s poets of Iraq rejected the “dictatorial paradise and the race of its generals towards national defeats” (Al-Ruh 173).

The Beat Generation

The Beat Generation, who were informally established throughout the 1950s, consist of Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassidy, amongst others. This literary group and movement was one-of-its-kind, due to the level of experimentation and controversy prevalent in the writing of its members. Controversial topics such as sexuality, drug use, rejection of capitalism and Bohemian lifestyles were greatly featured in the Beats’ writing, in an unapologetic tone. Beat writers abandoned rigid writing styles and structures and translated their thoughts, opinions, and feelings in a raw and more often than not, confrontational style.

Post-WWII America saw the rise of an overwhelming emphasis on the importance of conformity. In fact, societally, straying away from a conservative lifestyle was completely rejected and criticized. In his book: *The Beats: A Very Short Introduction*, David Sterritt states: “[T]he idea of adjusting to society was troubling to thinkers who felt society should adjust to thinkers, not the other way around . . . modern conformity is rationalized enough to become a genuine philosophy, defining the typical person as a creature of their environment rather than an individual capable of self-determination” (7). The Beats were aware of this, thus fueling them to write on dissent and constantly push the boundaries of what is deemed socially acceptable. They challenged and defied these societal norms, not only through their controversial lifestyles, but also in the topics of their writing. They refused to succumb to these boundaries, which was the reason they constantly got into trouble.
The post-WWII period was a transitional one, and one in which tensions and paranoia were high throughout society, primarily due to the political climate. There was a general fear of the unknown and government censorship was rigid, especially with the widespread anxiety surrounding the Soviet Union and communism. In his book, “American Culture in the 1950s,” Martin Halliwell states:

There was a sense among some American authors that international events following World War II had become so significant that they could no longer be ignored, but there were also pressures that prevented writers from looking too deeply: political commitment to social causes which had been strong in the 1930s was now unwelcome in a climate of communist suspicion. (52)

Indeed, this was one of the factors which made the Beats so influential; that they were able to address serious issues relating to both domestic and foreign policy loudly and directly. In many ways, they were one of the groups, amongst the San Francisco Renaissance, the Black Mountain Poets, and the New York School poets, who went against the grain at a time when many writers shied away from being so confrontational in their writing.

The American 1950s was also fueled by hypocrisy and a tension between reality and perceived reality, meaning there was a clear distinction between what the government and society saw as goals and strived for, and what was actually achievable. America was presented as a place where people could pursue their dreams without limitations, but this idealized image left many neglected and mistreated. The blatant truth was that there were many for whom the American dream of a liberal affluent life was unattainable. According to Paul Boyer in his book *American History*:
After fifteen years of depression and war, Americans pursued the good life. For many, the dream seemed attainable. Middle-class and many working class families flocked to the burgeoning suburbs . . . Beneath the surface, however, lurked problems. Amid abundance, millions lived in poverty. (95)

The American dream was one of the pivotal societal shared goals of the 1950s but it was not in fact inclusive or available to all. The poetic persona in *Howl* highlights the hypocrisy that was prevalent, especially in the third section of the poem discussing Moloch, a brutal, unforgiving, greedy, and materialistic entity which seemingly represents America. Moloch is notorious for expressing one thing and meaning another. It also cheats and manipulates the people, claiming to be beneficial, but ends up being a source of destruction and downfall, despite the people blindly following it, almost worshiping it.

1950s America also saw a reembracing of religion, with a strong emphasis on church groups as a way to build social ties and a sense of community. According to Boyer, “Church membership soared as newcomers to Suburbia sought friendship and social ties... Reflecting the prevailing piety while highlighting America’s contrast with the officially atheistic Soviet Union, Congress added “under God” to the pledge of allegiance and “In God We Trust” to the nation’s currency” (97). This increased interest in religion served as another one of the forces working against the controversial works of the Beats. Indeed, the speaker in *Howl* toys with religion, challenging preconceived associations and religious imagery, using vernacular, and playful, graphic images—all the while reclaiming and redefining the term “holy” as will be seen in the next chapter. The Beats, for the most part, rejected established American religious traditions, and instead resorted to finding new meanings for holiness and embraced Eastern spirituality.
The Beat generation’s work explores the anxieties of capitalism and lack of social mobility, demonstrating a sense of disillusionment in the era in which they lived. They were, in more ways than one, opposed to the majority of common values, leading them to use literature as their outlet to express that. In recounting his own experience growing up reading the works of the Beats, Bruce Cook states:

And yet I retained the sense of identification with them . . . This was because I was in fundamental agreement with what I perceived, in broad outline, to be their program. Which meant that I was against the same things they were against—elitism on the one hand, mass movements on the other . . . They [the Beats] are different . . . No longer docile as we were, they present their demands where we submitted our requests in triplicate. Or more impressive still, they drop out in disgust from a culture we slavered to serve. (4-5)

Indeed, the Beats were, for lack of a better word, relatable. Despite their creativity and innovation, the Beats were so popular because they voiced the issues, concerns, and confusions of their generation. They served as a vessel of expression in a way that empowered and resonated with millions of people. They were the loudest voice of protest at their time and expressed what their readers and followers wanted to but could not, and said what they wanted to say, but could not articulate.

As with any literary movement so embedded in dissent, the Beats were met with a significant level of criticism. Literary critics labelled them as being anti-intellectual, despite the fact that Ginsberg, Kerouac, Carr and others met while studying at Columbia University. More importantly, they did not have an issue with academia as a whole, but rather the direction
contemporary academia was taking, one which was limited and conservative. Cook challenges this criticism, while visiting Podhoretz’ definition of an intellectual:

An intellectual, if he is anything, is a man who is in touch with his own time, one who knows what’s happening and why. And by that modest standard, any one of the Beats was as much an intellectual as he. Why? Because the Beats had perceived and managed to touch something essential that was only then beginning to take shape in the America of the 1950s. (51)

The Beats were hyper-aware of the political and social pressing issues of their time, and centered their works around them, which is evident when looking at Ginsberg’s *Howl*. The poem is as much about the speaker’s generation’s experiences as it is about their political and social context. Conservative critics and those accustomed to more traditional modes of writing and topics perceived dissent and creatively challenging writing styles as being anti-intellectual and anti-academic. They were not prepared for the Beats’ unapologetic and bold tones of writing, which broke both societal and traditional literary “rules.” Many would argue that the Beats’ writing was not anti-intellectual, but rather new and uncomfortable.

So, what exactly were the Beats trying to achieve? They worked towards establishing a New Vision, a term coined by Ginsberg and Carr (the term itself inspired by W. B. Yeats). This “New Vision” was a reactionary term, developed to counteract the orthodox style of literary thought and criticism to which they were exposed in their university years. Sterritt describes three different methods through the Beats attempted to reach said New Vision:

[T]ravel, done in the frenetic and far-reaching Beat style. Another involved what the French poet Arthur Rimbaud called the ‘long, prodigious and rational disordering of all
the senses,’ allowing sensory inputs to function and commingle in unusual and exciting ways, often with the aid of drugs. A third possible route to new vision is the creation of revolutionary artworks, such as the explosive James Joyce novels (*Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*) that Ginsberg and Kerouac admired. (25)

Therefore, this “New Vision” did not have one single definition but was rather a combination of the ideas of different members of the group. The Beats saw traveling as a top priority. They believed that unless they spend time exploring the world, their writing and views would be restricted and narrow. They were very interested in broadening their scope of thinking and perception, such as their fascination with Eastern religion. The Beats were also interested in exploring the limits and capabilities of their mind, and focused on experimenting with expanding their senses in ways that were unusual. They mainly achieved it through the use of drugs, particularly hallucinogens. Finally, they were intent on writing works that were groundbreaking; that challenged the rules, preconceptions and structure of literature. They aimed to push the boundaries and roam free and limitless with their experimentation. They did not want to be confined.

The Kirkuk Group

The Kirkuk group included a group of writers, thinkers, artists, and intellectuals based in the Iraqi city of Kirkuk. Similar to the Beats Generation, the Kirkuk group, also known as the Sixties Generation in Iraq, experienced major dissatisfaction with the political and societal condition of their nation, which translates through their writing.

They lived through several monumental political moments in Iraqi history. July 14, 1958 saw the military takeover or coup d’état in Iraq. This was initially met with praise and support by
the Iraqi people, the majority of which were wholly dissatisfied with the monarchy, and thus were welcoming this transition. Adeed Dawisha claims that all but a very few were in support of the coup: “The support base for the Kingdom had been narrowing throughout the 1950s so that by the summer of 1958, it had shrunk to a paper-thin layer of privilege of feudal sheikhs, urban rich, and a coterie of opportunistic followers-on” (171). After abolishing the monarchy, Dawisha adds, the power of rule resided in the hands of the Revolutionary Command Council (172).

One of the primary reasons Iraqis were against the monarchy was because of its totalitarian rule. They felt that they did not have any ownership of their nation. Instead of providing a more liberal and inclusive forms of rule, the coup quickly turned into a power battle between different entities in Iraq; first between the two leaders of the coup, Brigadier Abd El Karim Qasim, and Colonel Abd El Salam Aref. Qasim promptly won that power battle as he and his devotees promoted him as the sole leader of Iraq. The Communist party was unhappy with this and fought to hold more power. Initially, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), led by Qasim and Aref, promised to create an inclusive cabinet, but soon the cabinet solely consisted of Qasim’s supporters:

The original Cabinet of the Republic, appointed on the day of the revolution, consisted of a wide array of ideological and political orientations. It took less than three months for the nationalist contingent to be eased out of the Cabinet. Ministerial changes would continue so that by early 1960 only a few ministers were left whose political sympathies extend beyond the parameter of devotion to the sole leader. (Dawisha 180)
The rather dictatorial rule of the military meant that censorship was prominent and so was political imprisonment, as experienced by our poet, Al-Azzawi, amongst other members of the Kirkuk group (Mattawa 12).

Following the years of the military coup of 1958, Iraq was plagued with totalitarian rule shifting from one person or party to another. Despite making some positive changes and improvements addressing enhancing the living conditions of those living in poverty and improving education, the Ba’athists eventually reclaimed their power in 1968. Colonel Abd El Salam Aref was appointed as Iraq’s president, but the Ba’ath party was adamant on civilian rule:

It was the civilians Ali Saleh al-Saadi, Taleb Shabib and Hazem Jawad, through their seniority in the Ba’ath party, who influenced the content and direction of domestic and foreign policy . . . Indeed right through to October 1963, the civilians did hold sway, with military officers seemingly unwilling to publicly challenge their authority. (Dawisha 184)

During their time in power the Ba’ath party were not inclusive or accepting of opposition, and their first short-lived reign (February-November 1963) is associated with bloodshed and brutality, particularly towards the Communist party. By the beginning of 1964, the Ba’athists had lost almost all power as pertaining to policy-making. On his style of rule, Dawisha states: “Aref’s power base centered on the army, which trusted, on the whole non-Party based, officers, that included his brother, occupied the most sensitive security-related positions. Iraq was reverting again to the tradition of a narrow ruling elite revolving around a central figure, this time President Abd al-Salam Aref” (184-85).

Aref’s rule saw more strict control of opposition, including the media and the arts. He ensured that the RCC only consisted of his followers and devotees, in order to make his time in
rule easier and to avoid opposition (Dawisha 186). He was notorious for keeping those who support him surrounding him. In 1965, he appointed Abd El Rahman al-Bazzaz, a lawyer and politician, as Prime Minister making him “the first civilian to become Prime Minister since the demise of the monarchy in July 1958” (Dawisha 187). He hoped to stray from rigid military ruling, but knew that he would need Aref’s permission before issuing any new policy. Aref died in a plane crash in 1966. Considering the fact that Aref’s brother Abd El Rahman Aref took over after Aref’s death, the dream of less military power was not realized.

1968 saw the second power acquisition by the Ba’ath party in which they were notorious for prioritizing the punishment, imprisonment and torture of opposition, particularly the Communist party, of which Al-Azzawi was a part until 1961 (Mattawa 10). The political structuring and institution, reflected the Baathists’ rule which followed only one political direction. There was a general shutdown and intolerance towards any type of opposition, which contributed to Al-Azzawi and other members of his generation to leave Iraq and live in exile. The Ba’ath party halted any publication or literature which expressed dissent.

Al-Azzawi continued to write and get his work published up until his decision to leave Iraq. Mattawa argues that even before he left to Germany, Al-Azzawi was already in exile psychologically: “Not yet in exile, it seems, Al-Azzawi was rehearsing for a life of detachment. one that it deeply in touch with its hopes and desires, but far from achieving them” (Mattawa 13). In an interview with Arab Lit Quarterly, Al-Azzawi spoke on internal form of exile: “Even the good poets who stayed in the country preferred to resign, to seek refuge in what the Germans call Die Innere Emmigration, knowing that no one will care for what they could say, and worse than all that, they could be killed if they broke the sacred lines of the temple’s guardians.” (Al-Azzawi, Fadhil Al-Azzawi n.pag.).
In his introduction to *Al-Ruh al-hayya* (The Vital Spirit)--his memoir on the 1960s generation in Iraq--Al-Azzawi points out some of the issues related to how the generation was defined. Firstly, he does not refer to the Kirkuk group as such, but refers to his generation. He states that the 1960s generation were put in an awkward position, due to being envied by the younger generation that felt ignored because of the spotlight focusing on the 1960s generation. He also discusses how the older generation perceived them as newcomers displacing the high regards bestowed on the poets of the 1950s. They were bothered by the admired status and attention given to Al-Azzawi’s generation (*Al-Ruh* 7-8).

For Al-Azzawi, there are three common misconceptions about his generation. Firstly, that the term only represents writing that was published in the 1960s. He argues that the term also encompasses writers who came of age in the 60s. Secondly, the idea that it is a single unified literary school. Al-Azzawi has an issue with the umbrella term for the 1960s generation; that it is too limiting and does not account for the different gradients and schools of thoughts and beliefs within it. Thirdly, the assumption that it is a type of aesthetic form, in and of itself (*Al-Ruh*, 8-9). Again, Al-Azzawi believes that the work of the 1960s generation encompasses various forms and styles and is not a specific aesthetic style.

When describing the 1960s as opposed to the 1950s, Al-Azzawi states that the generation of the 1960s in Iraq were highly inspired by modernism, which is clear in their writing, with a strong emphasis on liberation. While the 1950s generation, known as the Pioneers, were more patriotic (*Al-Ruh* 9). For him, the 1960s generation strayed away from that patriotism and instead focused on emancipating the human spirit, as suggested by the title of his memoir, *Vital Spirit*. Their writing also extended beyond the constraints of meter, rhyme and form, and instead they placed emphasis on the actual content or body of the work as well as its form (*Al-Ruh*, 15). He
rejects the dichotomy of form versus content as he rejects the separation between poetry and prose (Al-Azzawi, Bai’dan 201).

Al-Azzawi contrasts the 1960s generation in the West with the 1960s generation of Iraq. In the West, dissent was realized by social protests but he argues that in Iraq dissent was mainly embodied through art and literature used as a medium to do so. It was his generation’s voice in opposing and rejecting dictatorial regimes (Al-Ruh 11).

In his essay, “The Rose and its Fragrance,” Iraqi poet Anwar Al-Ghassani discusses the cultural significance of the Kirkuk group that shared a mutual dissatisfaction with the political climate in Iraq, and also connected on a literary and artistic level: “they [the Kirkuk group] came to know each other when they were high school students in Kirkuk. They were all interested in arts and literature, met by coincidence and became friends” (3). Although they originated in Kirkuk, the majority of the group moved to Baghdad in the early 1960s, and despite being subject to harsh working conditions and difficulty making ends meet, they all were adamant on their dedication to producing literature and art, and used these tools to express protest and dissatisfaction towards the political and social system.

Kirkuk was a cultural and multi-ethnic hub and was also considered the center for the oil industry. It was a city known for its ethnic and religious diversity: “Kirkuk has always been a multi-ethnic city where Turcomans, Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians and others have lived together” (Ghassani 2). Its status as a cultural hub meant that it was easily adaptable as a city and while it had its own established unique identity, it was still influenced by other cultures and customs, which can perhaps be important in helping us understand the diversity of the members of the Kirkuk group themselves and their positions as global writers. In regards to the specific poets and their origins, Mazloum comments that Al-Azzawi’s originates from Kirkuk, Sargon
Boulus was from Habaniyyah, Ghassani originates from Amarah, a city in southeastern Iraq while Salah Faik has Turkoman and Kurdish roots (66).

Kirkuk was also known as a hub for leftists, with the Kirkuk Group writing for leftist newspapers being published in the late 1950s, to which Al-Azzawi contributed. However, these newspapers would always be shut down after a short period of time.

There was a significant crackdown on leftists following several leftist riots in Kirkuk in July 1959: “The government of General Qasim used the riots to justify its crackdown on the left in all provinces. The ensuing arrests, harassments and assassinations of leftists by police, reactionary and Arab nationalist forces for more than three years and culminated in the massacres and mass detentions after the February 1963 coup” (Ghassani 6).

The group continued to have their work published in newspapers, leading up to the first book published amongst the members of the Kirkuk group, Immortal Legends, a collection of poems written by Al-Azzawi (Ghassani 6). In the 1950s and early 1960s, theatre, music and film production were booming in Kirkuk, making it a cultural peak for the city.

Much like the Beats, the Kirkuk Group rejected the rigidity of the society in which they were raised: “the Kirkuk group members were not only rebels in literature and culture, but also in their way of life. Ordered, disciplined life, attention to material aspects, family building, planning for life; all these were looked upon with suspicion and were rejected” (Ghassani 10). It is important to note that “this emotional rejection should not be considered a logical and final rejection of their indigenous cultures” (Ghassani 10). They rather appreciated their native cultures, manifested through their interest in classical Arabic literature.
The Kirkuk group were not necessarily aiming to form an entirely new alternative way of thinking or cultural direction, which differs from the Beats considering that they aimed to create a New Vision through their work. As opposed to seeking influence from other Arab countries whose literature they regularly read, they were strongly influenced by Western, including American, literature: “As to [for] Western cultures and literatures, their impact was undeniably strong” (Ghassani 10). The Beats were important in influencing the Kirkuk Group. Ginsberg himself is mentioned in Al-Azzawi’s poem “Elegy for the Living.” The Kirkuk group’s styles of writing evolved over the years with experimentation perceived as a priority. Al-Azzawi himself toyed with concepts of dreams and surrealism in “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi” and when looking at his earlier works, one can see a clear progression in his stylistic innovation.

The Kirkuk Group did not necessarily have a certain goal in mind or direction to create a specific movement. Rather, they aimed to venture into experimentation with literature blindly, unsure where this experimentation would take them: “the thrust was towards a literature completely new whose characteristics were unknown even to group members” (Ghassani 15). This is one of the points at which the Beat generation and the Kirkuk group meet. The new literary and artistic direction they sought established a new literary and artistic standard in Iraq. Their connections with the West opened up communication and produced a more globalized form of Iraqi literature that also preserved the national identity.

In order to contextualize the position of Ginsberg and Al-Azzawi, I will bring in Frederic Jameson’s theory on postmodernism. In his book, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson discusses numerous features of the postmodern subject. Jameson argues that the work of the postmodern artist displays a lack of depth, suggesting that postmodern art, for example, tends to “tell it as it is” without particularly demonstrating richness (Jameson 30).
While Jameson interprets this as a negative aspect, I will be arguing that this attribute of postmodern work is not particularly negative, but rather displays a sense of rawness and honesty that works of modernism are lacking.

In order to contextualize the postcolonial writer, I will be using Anthony Appiah’s chapter entitled “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Postmodern?” In this essay, Appiah discusses that postcoloniality strays away from traditional nationalism and forms a new way of thinking. The postcolonial writer seeks to create work that is transnational and work that extends beyond the border of his/her nation and can be applicable to any time or place. I will argue that the transnationality of the postcolonial writer applies to Al-Azzawi, as despite specific references made in the poem, the speaker is global and transnational. The poem is not, at all, limited by a particular context.

In his chapter entitled “The Question of Cultural Identity”, Stuart Hall discusses three main concepts of identity: the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the postmodern subject. For the purposes of my study, I will be using the concept of the postmodern subject to assess the speakers in both poems. Hall argues that the postmodern subject has no stable or fixed sense of identity but that their identity is ever-flowing and adapting, and that the postcolonial subject does not have a defined sense of self.

Through the following chapters, I will explore the themes of alienation and dissent in Howl and “The Teachings”, the latter of which was referred to by James Byrne, as achieving “an astounding level of metapoetic unity” (n.pag.) and situate Ginsberg and Al-Azzawi’s works as postmodern and postcolonial, respectively. I will also discuss the ways through which, despite being separated by time and space, the poems coincide in their themes and motivations, as well as how they contrast. I argue that they share a common description of the postmodern human
condition: that identity is fragmented and there is a constant desire to find new ways of thinking and living and strive for advancement, exploration and experimentation.
Chapter Two - Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl*

It is evident from reading *Howl* that Ginsberg was very strongly affected by the political and social climate of the United States, as well as its foreign relations and global status. In that way, *Howl* is a very contextual poem, meaning that it is beneficial to understand the circumstances surrounding it, discussed in the introductory chapter. However, it is important to note that it can be applicable to numerous political and social contexts, as a call for emancipation and a rejection of tyranny and capitalism. In his book *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg’s Howl and the Making of the Beat Generation*, Jonah Raskin states the following:

Like many other writers around the world, Ginsberg turned the atom bomb into an all-inclusive metaphor. Everywhere he looked he saw apocalypse and atomization. Everything had been blown up. And almost everywhere he looked he saw the Cold War. He was thinking of the Cold War when he wrote his 1956 poem “*America,*” he said. “I was playing on the phrase Cold War when I wrote, ‘America when will we end the human war?’.”

The war and its impact on America, as well as domestic policies are placed under the spotlight in *Howl*. Ginsberg not only speaks truth to power in the poem, but through anecdotes and social views, encourages readers to do the same. He expresses his blatant dissent and pushes his readers to pursue dissent also. In this chapter, I will be exploring the two most crucial themes in the poem: alienation and dissent. It would be beneficial to first define both terms.

Stokols defines alienation in the following terms:
The experience of alienation is conceptualized as a sequential-developmental process which (a) develops in the context of an ongoing relationship between an individual and another person or group of people; (b) involves an unexpected deterioration in the quality of outcomes provided to the individual by the other; and (c) persists to the extent and the other(s) remain spatially or psychologically proximal. (26)

Stokols describes details which seem descriptive of the speaker’s state of being in the poem: “isolation, reintegration, subjugation and rebellion” (26). Throughout the poem, our speaker goes through all of these stages; he describes a communal isolation, endured by him and by his generation, an attempt to co-exist with the very society that has isolated them, being exposed to constant subjugation, discrimination and mistreatment, and finally, after failing to be accepted, rebel against the system completely. They are the generation “who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for committing no crime but / their own wild cooking pedastery and intoxication” (Howl ll. 66-67) and “who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving genitals and / manuscripts” (ll. 68-69). This chapter will discuss the various manifestations of alienation in the poem; namely alienation from the self, communal alienation and alienation from reality.

In their book On Dissent: Its Meaning in America, Collins and Skover define dissent the following terms: “‘opposition to a proposal or resolution’, or ‘a difference of opinion’ or ‘a disagreement’” (xiii). On dissent in American culture, they state the following: “America values dissent, or so it seems. We often tolerate, encourage, and protect dissent. It is part of Madisonian heritage. Some preach it, some practice it, others safeguard it, and still others endure it even when they oppose its message . . . It is a cultural and constitutional given” (xi). Here, the authors are not only contextualizing dissent but also highlighting its integrality to American culture.
They express that it is often not only encouraged, but almost expected and further describes it as follows: “The liberty of self is meaningless if one must always conform to majority will. Freedom for the outsider allows a unique brand of self-identity and self-expression” (xi). This resonates when thinking of our poetic persona, who consistently makes it a point to extend far beyond conventional thought, and self-expression is encouraged, and at some points even demanded from the reader. Independent thinking, questioning and rebelling against the status quo come so naturally to the speaker, that it is almost as if he presents it as the only acceptable mode of existence. For example, in section two of the poem, the speaker refers to how society adheres to Moloch: “They broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven” (Ginsberg, Howl l. 203) Society is still loyal to Moloch despite Moloch constantly betraying them. Howl addresses various aspects of dissent; dissent against the state and religion, and a total redefinition of holiness with the speaker describing that “Everything is holy! Everybody’s holy! Everywhere is holy! Everyday is in eternity! Everyman’s an / angel!” (Howl ll. 4-5) The entire poem boasts dissent from beginning to end, and the refusal to succumb to societal expectations pertaining to sexual preferences, political thought, traditional academia and intellectualism, what constitutes madness and the inhumane methods used to treat it.

Howl is considered a confessional poem by critics, which is in keeping with the postmodern poetic form, according to Jonathon Holden in his article “The Postmodern Poetic Form.” On the general direction which Anglophone postmodern poetry was heading, he states: “Deprived by the modernist revolution of any sure sense of what poetic form should be, poets have increasingly turned to non-literary analogues such as conversation, confession, dream, and other kinds of discourse as substitutes for the ‘ousted’ ‘fixed forms’” (245). Indeed, Howl has elements of the dream, conversational and confessional analogues, with the speaker’s direct
addressing of members of his generation, as well as the distorted image of reality which is
dreamlike and slips into fantasy. Furthermore, it is confessional due to the details and anecdotes
about the speaker and his generation. In that sense, it follows the American postmodern poetic
form in more ways than one.

Holden also disputes the argument that this type of poetic form cannot be categorized,
even a poem written in a spontaneous manner such as Howl: “One of Allen Ginsberg’s longest
poems, for example, is called a *sutra* … instead of resorting to vague ‘organic’ mystifications, all
we need to do is: 1) *to recognize that postmodern poetic form is predominantly analogical;* 2) *to
extend the range of categories by which we refer to poems, using the analogues to name these
categories*” (248-49). Here, Holden argues that despite the seemingly raw nature of Ginsberg’s
poetry, it still exists within a certain category and that this is important in order to understand the
literary context of the writing as a whole.

and seemingly genuine commentary on his process and struggles while writing Howl. In the
chapter entitled “Ginsberg and Howl”, he comments on the fact that upon sitting down to write
Howl, he aimed to write “whatever he felt like writing,” without worrying too much about
making sure it sounds like a “regular poem” (390). The general tone here alludes to the idea that
Ginsberg was aiming for a raw reflection of his thoughts about the trials and tribulations faced by
his generation as opposed to an organized, neatly-packed account. In fact, Ginsberg stated that
the way he writes a poem is so confessional and transparent that the information he discloses
about himself and his experiences through his poetry should be so raw and unfiltered that it
should mimic what he would share with a friend (Hartman 51). Howl was indeed Ginsberg’s
most honest poem to that date, as in previous poems he had used ellipses to censor his sexuality,
for example, whereas in this poem he is candid about his orientation, but continues ellipses when describing episodes of his mother’s madness (Hartman 52). Hartman argues that through this mode of revealing details which would otherwise be shared intimately between friends, Ginsberg is somehow creating an intimacy or a sense of exclusivity with his reader, through “simultaneously address[ing] and construct[ing] an intimate, particular community” (53).

Raskin argues that despite Ginsberg’s opposition towards his parents, and the toxic psychological effect they had on him as a child, he still, in some way carried on with their legacy through the rebellious nature of his poetry: “If ever there was a poet in rebellion it was Allen Ginsberg. And yet if ever there was a dutiful poet it was also Allen Ginsberg. The son carried on the family heritage even as he railed against it” (26). Ginsberg was, however, dismayed and angry at the fact that he could only share his poetry on a conditional basis, and could not, for example read his poetry on national television: “‘I still can’t go on CBC or NBC and say, ‘go fuck yourself with your Atom bomb’, he complained. America still doesn’t understand. America is still trapped’” (Raskin xv). Despite the boundaries Ginsberg broke through his poetry, he still felt confined in some way.

To situate where Ginsberg fits in as a postmodernist, in his book *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Frederic Jameson describes postmodern art, as lacking a certain depth prevalent within modern art, which is indicative of the raw, upfront and confrontational nature of *Howl*: “The first and most evident is the emergence of a new depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in its most literal sense, perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the Postmodernisms to which we will have occasion to return to in a number of other contexts” (8). He also states: “aesthetic production [today] has become integrated into commodity production” (3), drawing a rather negative image when comparing modern art with
art aimed at high culture, referring to the commodification of art. When looking at Ginsberg’s aforementioned description of his writing process when writing *Howl*, however, it is clear that he was actually seeking to make his writing accessible to all, (and that this detachment from modernist high culture was very much intentional) and the depthlessness in postmodern art to which Jameson refers, is what Ginberg would translate to being truthful and genuine with his reader.

The poem is split into three parts, plus a footnote which strays away structurally and rhythmically from the earlier sections of the poem. Section one, by far the longest section of the poem is describing “the best minds of [the speaker’s] generation” (*Howl* l. 1). In this section, the speaker is defending as well as celebrating his generation. The poem is dedicated to Carl Soloman, another writer and an old friend of Ginsberg’s, whom he met in a mental rehab facility, in which Ginsberg stayed for a while. *Howl* is actually sometimes referred to as *Howl for Carl Solomon*. The first section serves as something of a description of their lives and anecdotes, as well as their psychological and physical deterioration at the hands of—what we later find out to be—Moloch, a symbol for power and authority. Almost every line in this section starts with the word “who” as the speaker is identifying those who have fallen at the hands of this corrupt symbol of power. He describes them as victims of a society who continuously judge, ostracize, and mistreat them for their alternative lifestyles; those who are drug addicts, homeless and political rebels, as opposed to more typically upstanding citizens.

In the second section, the speaker focuses on Moloch, the unyielding and brutal power responsible for the destruction of his generation. By and large, Moloch is presented as the source of all evil in the world, which is tactfully structured to follow the section describing his generation, who are, in comparison not destructive in the same way as Moloch. The speaker
points the reader’s attention to where the true evil lies. In this section, the speaker describes the many evils of Moloch, including the fact that society involuntarily succumbs to it as existing under it is perceived as the only viable mode of existence. This section serves as not only a description of Moloch, but a warning against it, and offers the reader a glimmer of hope and solidarity in fighting against it.

Carl Solomon is in the central figure in section three. Throughout the section, the speaker repeats the phrase “I’m with you in Rockland” (Rockland being the mental rehabilitation center in which the speaker and Solomon met). This section solidifies the sense of solidarity which echoes throughout the poem. The speaker describes the angst and torment of Solomon, who was deemed insane and treated in inhumane ways as a result of that. He also details the confusion he felt between reality and imagination, and celebrates the freedom of the soul in a bittersweet manner, as he describes the injustice of Solomon’s soul being confined in the walls of the psychiatric ward, but also describes his soul as so grand and loud that it transcends past these walls, and that he is more than how his confined status. He ends the section with the imaginary but hopeful image of him and Solomon being reunited and able to exist authentically without repercussions.

“A Footnote to Howl” starts with the repetition of the word “holy” fifteen times and serves as an attempt to completely redefine the word. The speaker equates the sacredness of traditionally holy images pertaining to religion with obscene, graphic, and sexual images, reflecting the lives of his generation. Much like conventional holiness is commonly presented as part of the path towards emancipation, the speaker presents his generation and their “holiness” in a similar manner. The importance of genuineness is in the forefront here. This section compliments and elevates section two of the poem, where if section two serves as a description
of his generation’s lifestyles, the footnote serves as an analysis. The speaker romanticizes and praises his and his generation’s life choices, and the theme of holiness suggests that living their truths is as sacred as following a religious doctrine would be. The speaker is not demeaning religion as much as he is highlighting the objectivity of what can be considered holy. He presents an alternative association with the word; one that purifies these images which would conventionally be negatively interpreted.

Section one of the poem describes the speaker and his generation as social outcasts who refuse to be controlled, despite all attempts by the state to control them. The speaker details the shenanigans they experience, some in a light and humorous manner, while others take a dark turn, describing their downfall into madness. The speaker almost believes that due to them being accused of being mad and constantly rejected by society, it led to a major deterioration of their psychological health. The speaker first describes their alienation through the following lines: “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, / dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix” (Howl ll. 1-2). We are presented with an image of them being lost both literally and figuratively. From the very first image, his generation are presented as struggling and worn out. He is already distinguishing them from the rest of society, due to them seeking a fix of drugs to aid with their ability to function.

The speaker describes his generation as living in a constant state of escapism, and movement from their oppressors, which contributes to their states of social alienation, as well as their desire to dissent against the forces which compel them to consistently be fleeing. An example of this reads as follows:
who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull,

who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall,

who got busted in their public beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana for New York,

who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentines in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night

with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls.

(Howl ll. 13-19)

The speaker is here not only highlighting the chaos they endured and lived by on a daily basis, but also cementing that his generation are not a group of goalless hooligans, but are artists and intellectuals, ostracized for their obscenity and nonconformist publications. Undeniably, the speaker’s generation pursue dissent, but they are also living in fear, hence the reference to the system as the “Terror” heard through the radio. The speaker explains that they absorb this unstable lifestyle by distracting themselves, or seeking methods of escape, namely alcohol, drugs and sex, and all of those enjoyed in an indulgent and uncalculated manner, very much mirroring the chaotic way by which these anecdotes are being told to the reader.

When looking at the speaker’s dedication to a life of dissent, one is made aware of the extent they are willing to go through in order to continue fighting the sources of power and
avoiding an average middle-class American life. This is particularly clear in section one through
the following lines:

who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions and bad music,

who sat in boxes breathing in the darkness under the bridge, and rose up to build
harpsichords in their lofts

[ . . . . ]

who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht & tortillas dreaming of the pure
vegetable kingdom.” (Howl ll. 100-108)

We are previously made aware of the fact that many of the members of the speaker’s generation
are educated and are even artistic intellectuals, but he suggests through the passage above, and
the entire section, that they still choose to live a life that is rocky, unpredictable and disorderly;
the reason for this being that it entails that they get to do what they want and exist freely, without
expectation, and not within a box. They dissent against not only the system, but also against
order, security and stability if it means they have to live a lifestyle which they do not agree with.
It appears as if the hardships they are willing to endure during daily routines which might be
taken for granted, are not always forced upon them, but sometimes they are sought for and so
are, a very conscious and deliberate choice or way of life.

Following on from this, one of the most prominent features of the poem is the strong
sense of community presented to us by the speaker. Other than the personal sense of alienation
from the self and from society, the speaker pays much attention to the idea of solidarity as well.
The speaker and his generation are, by and large, described as a united front, taking into account
various factors, such as the speaker solely addressing Carl Solomon for an entire section and prioritizing the representation of his generation by constant references to those facing the same struggle. The speaker utilizes repetition to express his solidarity with Solomon (who was institutionalized and living in solitude) by the reoccurrence of the phrase “I’m with you” (*Howl* l. 213). This, in itself, depicts a clear stance of empathy and union between the speaker and Solomon, exemplified through the speaker detailing his support towards Solomon through his inhumane treatment at the mental health facility. He also echoes his concern in section one, where he states “ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe” (*Howl* l. 159). To solidify the union and solidarity between him and Soloman, the poetic persona refers to an imagined fantasy reunion with the poet, which is almost meditative: “I’m with you in Rockland / in my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-journey on the highway across America in tears to / the door of my cottage in the Western night.” (*Howl* ll. 259-261). This powerful moment expresses the speaker’s longing to be reuniting with Solomon so badly, but all his acceptance of the fact that this might not happen in the real, therefore anticipating their reunion in the dream world.

In section one, the sense of solidarity is further depicted: “who fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other’s and light and / breasts, until the soul illuminated its hair for a second” (*Howl* ll. 133-34). The word “hopeless” in reference to the cathedrals is indicative of the lack of hope and faith within the speaker’s generation especially their literal faith in monotheistic religion, but that their desperation for each other’s salvation, leads them to resort to any attempt. The above lines serve as a solidification of their mutual support. In this section, the sense of communal alienation is also rather evident. Firstly, the speaker does not identify whose experiences he is sharing, but rather groups them together by starting the section with “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked”
(Howl l. 1), and then goes on to start every line with the word “who,” suggesting that the individual cases do not particularly matter, but rather that they are, above all else, a close community with shared visions and experiences. It is almost as if the speaker does not make distinctions because he is expressing that they are all standing together in everything that they do. They are presented as one in their refusal to succumb to societal norms.

The lines between the real and imagined are continuously blurred throughout the poem, leading us to consider another form of alienation; alienation from reality. This is presented as an intentional form of alienation, and as a means to escape the harshness of reality. Although often associated with drug use, members of the speakers’ generation look for this state even while experiencing sobriety (Stephenson 52). Furthermore, structurally, the poem describes the journey from reality to a state of transcendence and then back to the harsh truth of reality once again, with the speaker continuously expressing his frustrations at this. Furthermore:

Raskin also discusses the way through which Ginsberg surpasses the realm of the real and enters the realm of the imagined, then returns to the real once again. There is a certain frustration associated with this: “‘Howl’ expresses a contemporary confrontation with the concept of transcendence and examines the personal and social consequences of trying to achieve and return from the state of transcendence. Transcendence and its attendant problems may be summarized in this way: the poet, for a visionary instant, transcends the realm of the actual into the realm of the ideal, and then, unable to sustain the vision, returns to the realm of the actual.” (Stephenson 51)

It could be argued that the speaker and his generation are using the realm of the imagined as a way to escape or distance themselves from their unbearable realities. This idea is continuously implied
in the poem, where concepts of the real and the imagined are grouped together not only in the same stanzas, but sometimes in the same lines. In some moments these images of what is real and what is imagined are transparent, and in other moments indistinguishable and interchangeable. There are many gradients of what the speaker means and what he is expressing ironically, what is real and what is not but perhaps one of the most intriguing features of the poem is that distinguishing between what is real and what is imagined does not necessarily matter, and more weight should be attributed to the archetypes he is discussing as opposed to the actual people.

An example of this merging of the real is most prevalent in section one of the poem, when the speaker is describing anecdotes about his generation; “or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality, / who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge this actually happened and walked away unknown and / forgotten into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alleyways & firetrucks . . .” (Howl ll. 116-119). The emphasis and capitalization of “Absolute Reality” and the reassurance of these events “actually happening” does very little to reaffirm to the reader the authenticity of these stories, but actually makes the lines between the real and the imagined blurred, especially considering that these phrases are followed by “walking into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alleyways and firetrucks” which is, in itself, a very unorthodox description. As mentioned earlier, the speaker does this constantly throughout the poem, beginning a description realistically and then ending it imaginatively and vice versa, and that, in itself, could very well be an attempt at escaping the harshness of reality. This strategy supports the idea presented in the poem that the speaker and his generation’s imagination will not be contained.

Furthermore, in section one, the speaker is consistently referring to images of movement or fleeing, exemplified by the following lines: “who wondered round and round at midnight in
the railroad yards, wondering where to go” (*Howl* l. 14), “who disappeared in the volcanoes of Mexico…” (l. 56); “to the lost battalion of platonic conversationalists jumping down the stoops off fire escapes off windowsills off Empire State out of the moon” (l. 32-3). These lines are expressing a certain desire to escape that the speaker and his generation share; desiring to be on the move and that they permanently exist in a state of transition. This is implicit in the strong desire to alienate, or detach themselves, to flee and their inability to remain in one place, both figuratively and metaphorically. They share a dissatisfaction with their physical and psychological positions, and are incessantly in search of alternate lifestyles. This describes the dissatisfaction with the mundane, and their lack of ability to accept their realities, exemplified by the consistent need to keep moving, and the blatant inability to remain settled in one place for an extended period of time. Additionally, almost every line of the first section takes place in a new setting, further expressing the intentional mobility of his generation.

The theme of dissent is also manifested in numerous ways, perhaps the most obvious of which is dissent against the State, explored in section two of the poem, with the focus on Moloch. The speaker continuously refers to an image under the name of “Moloch” who is is a representation of “modern decay” to the poetic persona (Wigand 674). Wigand describes Moloch as follows: “Moloch [is] a God mentioned in the Old Testament to whom children were sacrificed” (265). In this section, the speaker describes issues related to the State’s shortcomings, voices the concerns of his generation and outlines the atrocities with which they have to deal.

The placement of the section on Moloch is quite strategic. In section one of the poem, the speaker details the eccentric and unorthodox lifestyles of his generation, which would be deemed immoral by many, but he swiftly moves on in section two to reveal where the real immorality lies. Through this, he highlights the hypocrisy of a society that readily points fingers when observing
alternative lifestyles, but fails to notice the corruption within it. Moloch here is used prominently to represent this and is described in a way which depicts it as inescapable, yet there remains a voice of hope throughout the section, that people must find the will inside them to resist Moloch (Wigand 674).

The speaker uses imagery effectively here to detail Moloch’s mechanical, soulless nature by describing it as a human and replacing human features with artificial ones in order to reveal the intensity of the lack of compassion and humanity within the institution of Moloch: “Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose / fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a / smoking tomb!” (Howl ll. 187-89). The speaker personifies Moloch, only to emphasize his monstrosity and lack of humanity; he likens it to a human but states that Moloch indeed has no humane traits, so to speak. The imagery used here to describe Moloch alludes to the importance placed on materiality over human souls and happiness. Moloch is described in a machinelike manner, reiterating the concept that of the entity’s soulless nature. This section is in strong contrast with section one of the poem, where the speaker describes primitive, raw humanity that is passionate, soulful and empathetic (when describing the experiences of his generation) whereas Moloch is cold, soulless, unfeeling and unforgiving.

Our speaker reiterates and further expands on the feeling of loneliness felt by himself and those around him. A spotlight is shed on the emptiness and loneliness felt by those existing under Moloch: “Moloch in whom I sit lonely! Moloch in whom I dream Angels! Crazy in Moloch! Cocksucker / in Moloch! Lacklove and manless in Moloch!” (Howl ll. 196-97) Here, the speaker is detailing the suffocation associated with living under Moloch. He details an inability to live in peace due to his lifestyle choices, and sheds light on the lack of freedom and personal choice that
he endures, highlighted through the following “crazy in Moloch! Cocksucker in Moloch!” (*Howl* ll. 196-97) He lists the words that are used to label him and suggests that his critical attitude towards the system that he is forced to live under categorize him as crazy. In other words, he is deemed crazy because he does not conform or follow society blindly. He also expresses that he is reduced to his sexual orientation and not much else, which are only a couple of reasons which make him unable to exist freely and without consequence.

In reference to sexuality, the speaker uses it to tamper with the image of holiness expressed in “A Footnote to Howl,” leaving us with a pensive and reflective image, and with a continued sense of frustration at society’s ranking of what constitutes madness/sanity and what constitutes purity/impurity. There is a glimmer of hope which contrasts with the darkness and hopelessness of section three in which the concept of Moloch is explored. Although the footnote is not always included as part of *Howl*, it ties the preceding sections of the poem together. The repetition of the word “holy” and the repetitive sentence structures mimic a sort of spiritual chant, keeping in tune with the holy theme of the section.

The speaker’s references to sexuality are extremely important when thinking about the social context at the time. In an otherwise heteronormative society, Ginsberg’s explicitly sexual images were groundbreaking and shook the society to its very core, and presented sexual exploration in an unapologetic manner as a stance to express that sexual and romantic relationship do not have to adhere to a typical heteronormative structure, and that people should not be shunned or punished for straying away from it.

The poetic persona equates graphic images of homosexuality with traditionally religious holy images: “The world is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and /
hand and asshole holy . . . The bum’s as holy as the seraphim! The madman is holy as you my soul ape holy!” (“Footnote to Howl” ll. 2-6). This is a celebration of different aspects of life and their spiritual value. The speaker is not necessarily devaluing or directly insulting Christian holy images but rather celebrating images of sexual exploration. The speaker and his generation are also described as being holy: “Holy Peter holy Allen holy Solomon holy Lucien holy Kerouac holy Huncke holy Burroughs” (“Footnote to Howl” l. 8). The speaker lifts his generation beyond the realm of the ordinary and upholds the criticized artists with holiness which is often associated with images of purity and perfection. These images serve as indicators as opposed to the negativity of them being insane due to not being able to succumb to the demands and expectations of Moloch. They are presented as holy because they rejected and continue to rebel against Moloch, despite having been driven to madness due to that.

The people, images, and cities described as being holy can be seen as concepts which stay true to themselves in spite of the social pressures. It seems that it is within that that the speaker finds holiness. Holiness is everything that Moloch is not; holiness is not money-hungry or self-serving. Holiness is kind and it is genuine: “Holy forgiveness! Mercy! Charity! Faith! Holy! Ours! Bodies! Suffering! Magnanimity! / Holy the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul!” (“Footnote” ll. 23-24)

*Howl* expresses the extreme frustrations and unhappiness felt by the speaker and his generation towards the status quo and the poem goes over the themes of sexuality, of drug use and of holiness to describe different layers of this literary direction. The tone and structure of the poem also mirror the overall theme of dissent. Alienation and dissent are almost presented as necessities for the survival of the speaker and his generation. It is not the only way they choose
to exist, but the only way they know how to, and it is what makes them, in the speaker’s eyes, above all else holy.
Chapter Three - Fadhil Al-Azzawi’s “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi”

Fadhil Al-Azzawi’s “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi”, one of Al-Azzawi’s most prominent works, is a non-linear poem which discusses issues of identity, alienation, political dissatisfaction, and dissent. The poem centers around the speaker informally sharing with the reader his experiences and struggles, offering advice, sharing anecdotes, anxieties and fears. Similar to the speaker in *Howl* the two most definitive feelings he experiences are those of alienation and dissent. The speaker expresses an alienation from the self and the nation, and dissent against tyrannical rule and control. Furthermore, the sense of the nation is completely blurred in the poem.

Mazloum introduces Al-Azzawi, not only as a poet, but also as a novelist, critic and translator, and, without underrating the influence of the other founders of the Kirkuk group, such as Sargon Boulus and Anwar Al-Ghassani. He refers to Al-Azzawi as the touchstone of the Kirkuk group and the 60s generation, due to his extremely prevalent influence in its foundation and shaping (65).

Mazloum also refers to Al-Azzawi’s relationship with his nation, citing that the poet is in a continuous search for it and that just because the nation seems deserted (both figuratively and literally), it does not deplete its cultural and historical richness, of which Al-Azzawi is eternally proud (66). Indeed, Al-Azzawi displays an infatuation with the culture of Kirkuk, especially pertaining to poetry and writing. Another point which will be further discussed in this chapter is the poet’s lack of a single political or social affiliation, largely stemming from his distorted relationship with the nation. Al-Azzawi writes from a standpoint of dissent and revolution but, like Ginsberg, Al-Azzawi takes a humanitarian standpoint as opposed to a strictly political one.
Al-Azzawi wrote against the government, and often criticized the lack of freedom of speech and totalitarian rule in his poetry. This translates into his work as the speaker faces similar circumstances. In many ways, it appears that Al-Azzawi spent the majority of his life in Iraq trying to navigate being able to write criticizing the government and standing up for humanity, while simultaneously making some efforts to avoid being arrested for doing so. This is also highlighted by Mazloum, who describes Al-Azzawi as camouflaging his critiques of the government within metaphors, but being attacked for them anyway because of their ambiguity, citing that the Iraqi government did not only go after work that was explicitly criticizing them, but also works that they could not understand (67).

Mazloum describes Al-Azzawi’s diversity in his writing styles and modes of writing as something that was rather progressive at the time. Al-Azzawi did not like to be limited to one specific mode of writing, even within the same piece of work. It is likely for Al-Azzawi’s readers to find aspects of novels, poetry and even drawing all contained within one piece. In this light, Mazloum expresses Al-Azzawi was, indeed, multi-faceted in his styles of writing and his topics, and makes it a point to make his writing worldly and easily applicable to different contexts and geographical areas (67). The educational background of Al-Azzawi, with his reading of the Quran, exposition to village poets, studies in secondary schools where his instructors nurtured his poetic writings, majoring in English Literature, and working in literary journalism, and later his postgraduate studies in Germany—all contributed to his cosmopolitanism that grew out of traditional and local roots (Al-Azzawi, Al-Ruh 32-34, 286-88; Al-Ra’i 134).

Like Howl, Al-Azzawi’s The Teachings is split into sections (see appendix A for the English translation and appendix B for the Arabic original). Sections 1-5 introduce the speaker’s plight, with a strong focus on the combining of the real and the imagined. The poem starts off
with an image of the speaker on a boat, fantasizing about leaving his own body as a mode of seeking emancipation. He then brings the reader back to reality with an image of revolution, dissent and war, but sheds light upon different modes of escape from this harsh reality. He moves on to list the extent of the oppression which he faces, listing different actions he is not allowed to do, such as elegizing his generation, dreaming or crying over the state of the nation and his own misfortune.

The speaker then returns to the imagined scene of a desert in which he meets a bedouin and discusses martyrdom and the lack of value and importance attributed to martyrs. He expresses that they are utilized in a mechanical way and not valued humanely, and are treated as commodities. This scene exemplifies the interchangeability of the real and the imagined as also evident in Ginberg’s *Howl*. Section five consists of a repetition of the word “why,” keeping in tune with the speaker’s tone of questioning and uncertainty. He also directly addresses and questions a mysterious entity, of which the exact identity is not revealed, but it is in the tone of an accusation and a betrayal of the nation. The speaker mockingly invites various entities to exploit his country.

Section 6-10 show a more experimental and unconventional route. In section six, the speaker writes a letter to Fadhil Al-Azzawi, in which he suggests both of them meeting notable historical figures, such as De Gaulle and the “generals of Greece” (“The Teachings” l. 4), as well as to visit Amman to “learn about all the other Arab capitals.” In this section, the speaker is seeking knowledge from different sources, only to give up and choose instead to “go to no place at all” (“The Teachings” l. 131). The speaker then takes on a more existential tone, questioning the ideas of life, death and suffering. The next section features a simple drawing of a man with no features highlighted in the English translation. He expresses indifference towards death, and
aims to never die, meaning through cementing his existence using his poetry. He then specifies that once Al-Azzawi dies, the reader should specify his name on this standard doodle of a man.

In section nine, we find a sample manifesto which urges whoever sees it not only to join the revolution, but numbered points are left blank for the person to “fill in the blanks with whatever goals you [they] wish” (“The Teachings” l. 160). The next section details an encounter between the speaker, a torturer and a nameless Abbasid sultan who asks the speaker to build him a plane to be used in an attack. Realizing that this war would not benefit him, the speaker refuses the sultan’s request, and insults the sultan by mocking the fact that he is not aware of who Einstein is, stating that he who would be better than the speaker at making a plane. The sultan then sends a search party to find Einstein.

The speaker then presents us with an image of Baghdad, and then muses on the significance of life and death, and the battle between wanting to continue living and simultaneously finding life difficult due to the harsh realities of the world. The speaker shares seemingly contradictory thoughts on this matter and an inner conflict arises. The speaker discusses the lack of clarity regarding the character of Al-Azzawi and then ponders on the fact that mankind is the destructor as well as savior of the world. The poem ends on a sad note, in which the speaker is once again confronted with reality and realizes the extent of the lack of freedom surrounding him, and that living in exile only ended up making him feel more alienated. The poem ends with an image of the speaker calling on the reader to cry, but assures the reader that their cries will be unheard and unacknowledged: “Cry out loud / and shepherds will slide from your lips. / Cry out in silence” (ll. 281-83).
In order to situate Al-Azzawi, it would indeed be beneficial to look at Stuart Hall’s theory on the postmodern identity, in his chapter entitled “The Question of Cultural Identity” as part of his book “Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies.” Hall argues that the modern subject has a fragmented identity, and that stable identities are invalid in the modern world: “this loss of a stable ‘sense of self’ is sometimes called the dislocation or de-centering of the subject. This set of double displacement—de-centering individuals both from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves--constitutes a ‘crisis of identity for the individual” (597). Hall suggests that the modern individual feels a social and cultural alienation, as well as alienation from the self, which leads to a state of psychological displacement.

He also differentiates between three concepts of identity; the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the postmodern subject (Hall 596). What concerns us when looking at the poems of Ginsberg and Al-Azzawi, is the postmodern subject, a term which Hall defines as follows:

The postmodern subject, [is] conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a ‘moveable feast’: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not defined around a coherent ‘self.’ Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about…The fully unified, completed, and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning of cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with--at least temporarily. (598)
Hall explains that the neatly-packed and unified image of one’s self is non-existent for the postmodern subject. This fluidity of the identity of the postmodern subject are rather clear when looking at the speakers of our poems, especially in “The Teachings.” In the poem, the speaker struggles in defining his identity, especially seen in his refusal to be representing the good against the bad, rejecting the binary of good versus evil, such as his reference to tanks being driven by “poor soldiers” (l. 14).

In the poem, the speaker struggles to define nationalism and shifts between feeling like he is one with the nation and feeling rejected by the nation and eager to abandon it. He is loyal to it despite being deeply affected by the tyrannical nature of the ruling powers, and even claims to encompass his nation: “I am my nation” (“The Teachings” l. 57). Simultaneously, he describes anxieties in discovering his role, expresses feelings of alienation, lack of belonging, a consistent desire to flee: “I heard men suffer loneliness among the people / and the sea unite his children with the wind/ Homeland poured on the sadness of the East / tell me: / how can flight happen without wings” (“The Teachings” ll. 140-44). In a tone of melancholy, he expresses the feeling of isolation even in the presence of others, leading him to consider leaving to go elsewhere. He uses the metaphor of wanting to fly but lacking the wings, meaning the tools, strength, and ability to do so. This is reflective of his torn and unstable relationship with the homeland. He is tied to it, which is physically pictured through his inability to fly away, but it also difficult for him to entirely detach himself from it. He cannot easily identify with being a national of the homeland in a way which makes complete sense to him.

The speaker expresses the suffocation he feels in his own body as if he lacks ownership of it. He doubts whether he is really himself and whether or not he even wants to remain himself: “I cried, ‘Let me escape from this body laid out like a signpost’” (“The Teachings” ll. 7-8). The
speaker feels distant, which is not only presented in a broad, societal sense, but he is alienated from his own being and experiences bewilderment regarding his true identity, which is reminiscent of Hall’s theory of the postmodern individual, consistently striving for a complete identity, but to no avail (596).

The speaker’s sense of instability is also presented at the forefront through the speaker perceiving and imagining himself as a traveler in the desert, consistently moving and seeking a better place spiritually: “But the desert saw me, followed me like a serpent / and I ran toward another kingdom / and saw the sea” (“The Teachings” ll. 9-11). The speaker is seeking emancipation but the burden of the nation is relentlessly pulling him down. The frequent vocabulary surrounding movement and flight suggests a frustration at his state and place of being. He imagines different locations and personas, suggesting his confused character. Interestingly, Howl also holds numerous examples of the vocabulary of movement, indicative of this constant desire to flee and inability to remain in one place. Both poets experiment with this, in addition to imagined situations and personas, in the manner of incorporating the real with the imagined.

At moments, the aforementioned feeling of unease borderlines on existentialism: “‘There is no limit to life and death is the way.’ Don’t die I am your / friend, O death and I have come. My desire for life has set my blood on / fire” (“The Teachings” ll. 198-200). The speaker steadily reflects on the questions of life and death, shifting between the two. He is almost burdened by his desire to continue living as this means a continued sense of suffering and anger with the image of the desire for life “set[ting] his blood on / fire” (“The Teachings” ll. 199-200) The poem demonstrates a lack of assimilation, and a frustration, manifested in a lack of knowledge regarding a better alternative of existence. In section 12, the speaker shares interview questions
with Fadhil Al-Azzawi, and to the question of “What do people know about me [Fadhil Al-Azzawi]?” (“The Teachings” l. 227), the answer is “Obscure and bare. Like an unfinished prophecy” (“The Teachings” l. 228). Although this is not necessarily indicative of the speaker’s thoughts, which we must distinguish from the character of Al-Azzawi, this answer still signifies the sense of absolute hesitation associated with self-definition in the poem.

The speaker includes himself as part of a bigger group or generation who experience communal alienation. He expresses that it was only through this close sense of community that he finds solace or comfort, and that it was his only salvation or relief through the trying times: “I am grateful, / for drugs are expensive these days, and there is nothing to get one excited / except poems recited in raucous bars with a bunch of friends / conquering the night” (“The Teachings” ll. 22-25). This differs from the overall tone of solitude and grief in the poem, providing the reader with some lightness. The ability to write, read, and listen to poetry has presented a source of comfort to the speaker and his close circle, which is reminiscent of Ginsberg’s *Howl*, in which the speaker’s group also finds comfort in existing together in solitude.

The second stanza of the poem introduces the speaker’s rebellious nature, leading us into Al-Azzawi’s exploration of dissent. After describing the scene in which he escapes the desert, the speaker writes: “[A]nd I ran toward another kingdom / and saw the sea” (“The Teachings” ll. 10-11). He continues: “This is how I came upon burning streets, storefronts shut in the face of / protests demanding bread and work” (“The Teachings” ll. 12-13). Here, he sheds light on a general sense of communal dissatisfaction and a demand for basic human rights. Following this, he explains that this was an attempt to dissent which was met with violence and disdain: “I saw tanks rolling past driven by poor soldiers armed with machine guns” (“The Teachings” ll. 14-15).
The speaker not only describes the chaotic context in which his poem is set, but refers to the blurred lines surrounding good and evil. This is shown through his usage of the word “poor” when describing the soldiers, perhaps suggesting that they are not violent towards the protestors out of their own accord. He suggests, instead, that they are also victims of the system, and so are put in a position in which they commit acts out of obligation, rather than agreement. According to him, and despite his advocacy for humanitarianism, he is clear in expressing that he is not any better than agents of the law. In his introduction to *Miracle Maker: The Selected Poems of Fadhil Al-Azzawi*, Khaled Mattawa writes:

> These disturbing memories [of torture in Al-Azzawi’s time in prison] drive a good share of Al-Azzawi’s poetic investigation. The torturer is as pitiful as his victim, and the line between heroism and delusion is thinner than we are willing to admit. Al-Azzawi’s poems do not merely remind us of the existence of such realities; they document the poet’s miraculous effort to overcome them. (9)

Aspects of the above passage in reference to Al-Azzawi as a person, are definitely echoed through the speaker. The speaker provides the reader with testimonials about his time in prison, and through them, we see that the lines between morality and immorality are blurred, and the speaker struggles to opt for one stance, even politically. Furthermore, the speaker constantly imagines himself in fantastical scenarios, existing in the bodies of others, further alluding to the fluid, unsettled nature of the postmodern identity.

This is once again implied when he abducts a policeman, and plants him in the ground, metaphorically speaking, of course. Once the policeman dies, he mourns him and weeps for his soul (“The Teachings” ll. 36-37). The lines between good and evil are blurred in the poem and
nothing is clear-cut. The ones enforcing the laws of torture and the ones who are on the receiving end of these laws appear to be all experiencing a sense of national alienation. Due to the country being apparently consistently hijacked and exploited, no one seems to belong. The speaker states: “I am not allowed to think that I am: / a man without any particular attributes, a man in the kingdom / of the unknown” (“The Teachings” ll. 33-35). The speaker fails to have one single stance or affiliation. He feels conflicted and he indeed wants to surrender to that uncertainty but feels compelled to be associated with something solid.

The speaker is completely crippled and limited by the mode and context of existence. He thinks he is leading a life that is not, in any way, owned or directed by himself, but rather almost fully determined by outside circumstances. Mourning is a consistent metaphor in the poem, not only a mourning of those who have fallen at the hands of the regime, but also a mourning for free will and independence. Living by one’s own accord is not, at all, presented as a possibility. Repetition is used to emphasize the speaker’s feeling of helplessness and inability to, simply, be. The third section of the poem echoes the lack of control the speaker feels, through the consistent use of five words that reflect his entire existence: “I am not allowed to . . .” (“The Teachings” l. 39). This defining phrase is then followed by different actions that the speaker cannot freely do, or emotions which he cannot freely feel. What is most interesting here is the speaker pointing out his inability to dream (“The Teachings” ll. 43-44). Dreaming is prioritized by both Al-Azzawi and Ginsberg and it is, in fact presented as a basic human need.

The poets insist on imagining an ulterior dimension of existence, or to feel that there is more to existing than the current mode. Indeed, much of this poem translates as being part of a dream itself, or a mixture of a dreamlike state and reality. In this dream state, the speaker is a martyr willing to sacrifice himself for his nation, but that this image does not necessarily
coincide with reality: “I’m not allowed to dream that I am F. Al-Azzawi, / that I’m a murdered chair / that I am my nation” (“The Teachings” ll. 44-46). Does he actually perceive himself to be “his nation” or is this what he strives to be? It is not clear what the nation has become or even whose nation it is.

Looking at Al-Azzawi through a postcolonial lens, one can see the frustration the speaker feels at his desire to and at the same time, lack of ability to reclaim his nation, which is exemplified by the references to the physical land; he is representing his nation from the roots, so to speak. The image of being planted in the soil is one that is repeated throughout the stanzas. The description of the poet planting a policeman in the earth is followed by an image of the Bedouin whom the speaker encounters describing himself as a tree. The speaker expresses an attempted reclamation of the land through the image of being planted in the land itself: “I thought of the masses rolled over by conquerors / and I thought I was a garden” (“The Teachings” ll. 87-88). Likening himself to the physical land therefore conveys that he is seeking a deeper foundation for a connection to the nation, but that due to both internal and external circumstances, this relationship is not as secure as he would hope; in fact, it is very much conflicting and intangible.

The connection that the speaker has with the land is, in more ways than one, skewed. The nationalism that the speaker is presenting is not necessarily one that is seeking a precolonial Iraq, but is offering a humanitarian cause; a need for Iraq to move past its postcolonial status and to culturally flourish. In fact, the speaker calls for the abandonment of traditions that are holding it back and for its people to be honored, remembered, or elegized and to cease their exploitation, which is reflected in the stanza in which the sultan demands to know Einstein’s family lineage in order to identify him. Instead of focusing on the character of Einstein’s achievements and using
those factors to identity him, the Sultan is looking to identify him solely by his family lineage ("The Teachings" ll. 175-77). He is not pushing for a strong nationalist or political cause, but rather for a humanitarian cause for Iraq to reclaim its dignity. Instead of supporting a specific political party or direction, he is disappointed in the fact that his nation has let him down on a humane level. In the conclusion, he calls for peace and humanity:

What world is this when fingers become
candy for birth certificates! and bomb-souvenirs
dangle from girls’ chests!
What peace fills the country
and sits among lovers who lead truth to exile
while the continents are crowded and mankind remains our hope? ("The Teachings II. 261-66)"}

The speaker does not specify a certain political cause or country when calling for peace, but rather uses a general, universal tone. He concludes the poem by broadening his scope and transcending past the specificity of his particular nation and takes a more universal approach that is inclusive of all mankind. This shift fits within Appiah’s description of postcoloniality:

Postrealist writing; postnativist politics; a transnational rather than a national solidarity.
And pessimism: a kind of postoptism. . .Postcoloniality is after all this: and its “post,”
like postmodernisms, is also a “post” that challenges earlier legimating narratives. And it challenges them in the name of suffering victims of “more than thirty republics.” But it also challenges them in the name of the ethical universal; in the name of humanism, “le
gloire pour l’homme” and on that ground it is not an ally for Western postmodernism but an agonist: from which I believe postmodernism may have something to learn. (438)

Here, Appiah highlights the global nature of postcoloniality. He argues that postcoloniality strives past the confines of the nation and nationalism, but takes a more international and inclusive stance, which is shown through the above passage from the poem. He explains that postcoloniality is striving for humanism as opposed to nationalism, which is, in fact, one of the last images the reader is left with. The speaker stresses the importance of a global sense of morality, above all else.

Appiah also comments on the pessimism of postcoloniality, which the speaker maintains throughout the poem. The speaker shares certain snippets of hope, such as in the phrase “[M]ankind remains our hope” (“The Teachings” l. 266), but the poem ultimately ends on a sad and hopeless note, with a scene where the speaker and his wife are living in exile and feels even more alienated than he did in his nation: “I moved away from night and it moved closer to me. . . No one smiled at me. No one was there” (“The Teachings” ll. 271-74). The speaker implies that this despairing feeling follows him even after being away from the anxieties he experienced in the homeland, suggesting that this feeling of alienation was not purely due to his context, but is rather an inescapable feeling within him.

The speaker, once again, expresses an outcry of dissent by giving us a brief insight into the history of his nation. He details the exploitation the nation endured, and highlights the fact that it was treated like a commodity as opposed to a nation in its own right, expressed through the following lines

Come to my country and loot it.
Come to my country, share with us our starvation.

Eat our bitter bread, O prophets of Zion.

Eat my blood, O Indian pilgrims.

Eat, O Persians, from the flesh of my people.

Borders have fallen from my borders.

Come to my country and kill it.

Come to my country and tread upon it,

For I was once a garden. ("The Teachings" ll. 89-97)

He details his nation’s lack of agency through the satirical open invitation for different forces to make use of the nation in whichever way they wish. He suggests that the nation has been humiliated and taken advantage of in the past and does not anticipate this ending in the foreseeable future. He is calling for the salvation of the nation’s people. In doing so, the speaker appears to be demonstrating an idea similar to Appiah’s claim regarding the postcolonial writer’s fixation on the people of the nation: “The postcolonial writer’s humanism – the concern for the human suffering, for the victims of the postcolonial state” (438). Appiah asserts that postcolonial writers feel notable level of empathy towards the cause of their people. Indeed, this fixation with human suffering is quite clear in the poem with the speaker, at many points, speaking on behalf of others, and providing a voice for the voiceless or the unheard.

The speaker emphasizes the importance of both elegy and memory. Remembering and elegizing his generation and those who have been tortured or killed is, in itself, a mode of
dissent. He serves as a spokesperson for his generation and this is a point through which Al-
Azzawi and Ginsberg meet. In both of their poems, the respective speakers voice the anxieties
and concerns of their respective generations.

In “The Teachings,” the speaker communicates the significance of recording memory:
“I’m not allowed to write my names, / to elegize my generation” (ll. 39-40). The speaker
expresses frustration at names being forgotten, meaning that his generation is simply not given
significance. He further pushes this idea in his discussion of how martyrs are treated, again
shedding light on the instrumentalization and commodification of people in order to serve the
interests of those in power: “We [the speaker and the Bedouin] traveled toward night in a cart /
and I heard the saints declare, ‘Martyrs are barred from the world / except in states of emergency
/ and during night battles’” (“The Teachings” ll. 68-71). There is little to no importance
attributed to human life, to the extent that martyrs are not valued and are rejected except when
they are needed for personal gain, exemplified by the mock manifesto in section nine, where it
asks the receiver to fill in the blanks with the reasons for fighting, which insinuates that there is
no reason that is worthy (l. 160). He calls into question and criticizes the sites of power that
either motivate or force the martyrs to sacrifice themselves in the first place. In other words, he is
speaking truth to the entire institution of war and rejects the romanticizing of martyrdom and
self-sacrifice:

Al-Azzawi discusses anxieties of war through the speaker in his poem, “Elegy for the
Living.” In “The Teachings,” the speaker outlines how the nation and its rulers, when looking
towards Western figures and influences could possibly benefit his nation in promoting its
advancement. However, in “Elegy for the Living,” the speaker declares that these Western
figures, including our poet, Ginsberg, have failed him. “Elegy for the Living” (1991) was written
at the wake of the first American invasion of Iraq (Mattawa 14) and describes the speaker’s
disillusionment with the war and the turmoil that affected the nation. A section of the poem is
dedicated to mentioning the figures who have influenced the speaker, but whom he now views to
have contributed in some way to the invasion and bloodshed that was to take place in the nation.
He states:

You bombs, you poisoned gifts, I send you back to America, without spite

or hatred. I return you to Walt Whitman, to Robert Frost, to William

Faulkner, to William Carlos Williams, to Henry Miller, to Anais Nin, to

Allen Ginsberg, to Ferlinghetti, to the Blacks in Harlem ("Elegy" ll. 70-74)

[. . . . ]

. . . to all those we loved and those we hated. ("Elegy" l. 89)

The speaker washes his hands clean of the influences which had previously had a deep impact on
him and which he greatly respected. He is distancing himself from those whom he admired and
wants nothing to do with them or their nation’s bad politics. He resents them for not combating
this violent and brutal invasion, concluding that they, like the nation, have failed him. At this
point, he is not only disenchanted by the hopeful image he had drawn for his nation, but by his
idols in which he instilled his hopes.

This specific yearning for those who influenced him, fits within Appiah’s term
“transnational solidarity,” as typical of postcolonial writing (423). Although there are instances
where the specificity of the poem is clear and at some points the nation to which he is referring
in “The Teachings,” the speaker does not explicitly name the nation as Iraq, thus highlighting the
distinction between the speaker and Al-Azzawi himself as a poet. The poem globalizes the postcolonial struggle, making it applicable to numerous geographical locations and to different points in history as well. “The Teachings” speaks of numerous times and spaces; which Appiah argues, is pivotal in postcolonial writing. According to Appiah, this is where the postcolonial and the postmodern meet.

“The Teachings” offers a multitude of voices and views that, although sometimes contradictory, stay true to the poet’s person. Mattawa states: “By achieving poetic unity through juxtaposed forms, the poem creates a counter-discourse to any kind of monologic or linear discourse, becomes a kind of democracy full of contradictions…But the poet’s voice never gets lost in the cacophony he creates” (12). The speaker experiences alienation from himself, his society, and his nation; he expresses dissent against tyrannical rule and the lack of freedom. He goes through various stages of discovering his identity and his connections with the nation. At some points, he embraces the nation and presents himself as one with it, and at other points, he feels completely bewildered and disillusioned by the nation and what it has become. The speaker constantly slips in and out of reality (feeling alienated for not being able to come to terms with his own reality) and simultaneously, feels detached from his own being and person. He highlights his disappointment in both his nation and himself in regards to his feelings of helplessness. The speaker presents himself as a being who exists to make sure that his generation is heard and elegized, and expressing his anxieties towards the level to which he, amongst others, feels neglected. Not only is the speaker describing the suffering of the nation, but he is also describing a level of human suffering surrounding disenchantment and confusion on both a personal, public, and national levels. Thus, the poem (aided by its numerous voices) doubles up as a specific and local narrative and a timeless and global one, which is indicative of Appiah’s
view that the postcolonial writer is concerned with the human condition in general (Appiah 437), making “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi” worldly.
Chapter Four - Conclusion

Both speakers in Ginberg’s *Howl* and Al-Azzawi’s “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi” experience alienation and dissent in various different forms. They are characters feeling a sense of confusion pertaining to self-definition, and fail to associate themselves with a stable sense of self and identity. The speakers undergo alienation from the self, from reality, communal alienation and an alienation from the nation and its associations. Additionally, both speakers are dedicated to the lives of dissent and openly criticize the societal and political hypocrisies which they observe. They pay heed to exposing immoral and inhumane experiences, and instead of taking a single political or ideological stance, they speak truth to power and articulate a nostalgia for a humanity which transcends siding with one single moral position.

Both speakers experience a sense of alienation from reality, most likely as a mode of experimenting with their imagination, and escaping the harshness of their own realities with which they are unsatisfied. Ginsberg and Al-Azzawi place a strong emphasis on dreaming and fantasizing, and the speakers slip in and out of reality constantly throughout the poems. In *Howl*, the speaker persistently shares different episodes of dreaming and of hallucinations, sometimes in a haphazard manner. He does not necessarily distinguish between the real and the imagined, and presents them as interchangeable. In “The Teachings of F. Al-Azzawi,” the speaker imagines himself embodying others and going on long journeys. The speakers present this desire to dream and imagine not only as a means of escaping unpleasant realities, but also as a tool for self-exploration.

The vocabulary of movement and fleeing is rather evident in *Howl* and “The Teachings.” As a result of feeling alienated from their own selves, both speakers use vocabulary of movement and fleeing, not only representative of their endless desire to explore their surrounding
environments and themselves, but also indicative of their inability to remain in one place for a long time. There is no place in their respective personal journeys for standing still, thus making them restless. They are always hungry to learn more about life and about themselves, and seem to be eternally in pursuit of answers.

It is also interesting to note the speakers’ relationships with their close communities. The speaker touches open a sense of community with his generation to a greater degree in *Howl*, but “The Teachings” also indicates that the speaker is only released from the harshness of life in moments when he is reciting poetry with his friends. However, *Howl* is slightly more centered around the speaker’s generation, and “The Teachings” is slightly more personal, although both poems are representative and aim to serve as vessels of expression or voices for the voiceless. The speakers take on roles as spokespeople for their respective generation, and communicate said generations’ concerns and anxieties.

The speakers take stances of dissent against the political and societal systems to which they are exposed. In *Howl*, the image of the institution or the nation is represented through Moloch. In “The Teachings,” the speaker represents a skewed relationship with the nation; on one hand, he is deeply concerned for the wellbeing of his nation and its people, and on the other hand, he feels detached and alienated from it, and the sense of belonging does not come naturally to him. In *Howl*, the speaker describes Moloch as being the source of all evil and immorality. One of Moloch’s representations is the nation. The speakers highlights his and his generation’s unwillingness to succumb to the system and structure of Moloch, and points out its brutality and
inhumanity. Both speakers discuss the great degree of moral and literal policing which they are forced to endure but they maintain a solid determination to fight or speak against it.

The speakers describe not only experiences of literal imprisonment, but the imprisonment of the mind as well. In “The Teachings,” the speaker refers to the limits to which he is exposed, even when it comes to free thought and dreaming. The speaker in *Howl* presents this more tangibly, referring specifically to censorship and the categorization of those who do not fit into conventional thinking or ways of life deemed insane and unfit to live amongst society. This is where both speakers seem to exist on the borders of society, failing to understand conventional society, and never truly seeming to fit in. Interestingly, the speaker in *Howl* seems further along in his position against the nation, whereas the speaker in “The Teachings” has a more complicated relationship dynamic with the nation, struggling to see where he fits within it.

Elegization is also one of the main manifestations of dissent in the poems. The speaker place emphasis on the importance of elegizing their generations and ensuring that they will not be forgotten. In *Howl*, the speaker shares the experiences, trials and tribulations of his generation, especially in section one of the poem. The speaker in “The Teachings” is less specific with the day-to-day experiences of his generation, but expresses his frustration that he is unable and limited when it comes to recording and documenting their experiences. Both speakers approach their poetry with an angle pertaining to the experiences and anxieties of their generation living on through their poetry, or living on through words, so to speak. They aim to celebrate their respective generations and their accomplishments and sacrifices. Their expression is a mode of dissent in and of itself.
Considering the above-mentioned similarities, we can start viewing the speakers in a new light. What makes these speakers, who are so alienated from society in such an obvious way, spokespeople, or representatives of dissent? Considering the impact that these poems had is thought-provoking when keeping in mind their marginalization in society. One contemplates what makes them so powerful and influential, especially when considering their unreliability as narrators. Both speakers have a weak grasp of reality and are not particularly consistent. They are constantly swaying back and forth, moving from thought to thought, and from anecdote to anecdote, never settling on one specific position or stance. The reader is unaware of where the truth lies, and fails to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. Still, the speakers appeal to the reader, and there is something likeable about them. We trust them even though they never give us a reason to.

Looking at the poems, we can deduce that a reason for their likeability is the fact that they are relatable. The speakers appeal to the reader in an undeniably intimate way, and take them on their journeys in a manner so unfiltered and personal that the reader feels more like a friend than a mere spectator. The poems make it easy for the readers to put themselves in the speakers’ place and to strongly empathize with them. This brings to the forefront what this says about the voices of dissent in postmodern and postcolonial poetry as a whole. Indeed, both took off from modernism. The barrier between the work and the reader is broken, and the reader is no longer on the outside looking in, but engulfed and included in the story being told. Postmodern poetry, unlike modern poetry, is no longer working towards a logical and contained path to truth, but claiming that there is no singular truth to be found anyway. This is evident in the works of
both poets, and especially in the poems discussed here. There is no one answer, nor is there a
desire to find one answer, but rather the process of exploration itself is prioritized.

The postcolonial and postmodern are brought together in both forms’ emphasis on the
idea of questioning previous normalized thought structures which are taken for granted. Both of
our poets present speakers who deconstruct the existing norms in a confrontational, bold manner.
They decentralize concepts and rearrange them to suit their poetic visions, exemplified by the
restructuring of the concept of holiness in Ginsberg’s *Howl* and the recitation of abstract stories
almost in the form of folk tales in Al-Azzawi’s “The Teachings,” as well as the reformation and
editing of official governmental paperwork and using it in a satirical manner. The postcolonial
and postmodern also meet in terms of their general use of irony and satire, as can be seen in the
case of both our speakers, who never fully seem to take themselves or anything around them too
seriously, to the point that this method of satire almost becomes a coping mechanism for them, in
their attempt to deal with the harshness of the world around them.

The speakers struggle to fully define or categorize their political and social affiliations.
However, it does not appear that these affiliations conflict with their motivations. Both speakers
are interested in exploration in various forms, as opposed to seeking to reach one answer through
the poems. The poems serve instead as a tool for introspective and extrospective exploration. For
both poems, there is no singular clear motif. The non-linear, unfiltered structure and content of
the poems is reflective of this tendency. The poems transcend the borders of a single nation,
political stance or personal experience, and instead offer the reader a worldly approach defending
humanity, unconfined self-expression and freedom, thus making both poems, despite some
specificities, timeless. The speakers present us with a view that is inclusive and one that is inspirational and applicable to various contexts, withholding and valuing personal freedom above all else. *Howl* and “The Teachings” invite the readers to look within themselves and at their environments, not to be afraid to question and unlearn, even if it means abandoning an entire set of values. They put the rights of the individuals at the forefront, and invite the readers to continue challenging themselves and seeking answers, albeit ones that might never be found.

When carrying out my research, I noticed a substantial gap in terms of preexisting comparisons between Arab and American poetry, although I believe there is so much potential and many possibilities in studying their correspondence. Through my reading of Al-Azzawi and Ginsberg, I noticed a clear similarity in the sense of the deep desire and commitment to change. There is so much to be said about Ginsberg and Al-Azzawi’s speakers and their approach to dissent. In many ways, I feel both poets set the tone and shape the genre of poetry of dissent or rebellion in their respective contexts. What makes this an unlikely or neglected comparison possible is the fact that both poets are in a deliberate but confusing phase of trying to not only understand, but to also come to terms with the world around them, and discover the ways through which they serve their surroundings, and how their surroundings serves them. A major part of their poetic identities is also linked to their positions as marginal characters; they are not the typical heroes or stand-up citizens who have their life in order, leading standard existence with its typical ambitions. Instead, they are those who have always existed on the sidelines and are speaking to and for a specific group of people who have never truly found their place in society, and their poems almost serve as a guide or cathartic outlet of that shared feeling.
Because of the research potential, comparative literary criticism would benefit greatly from discovering more points of comparison between Arab and American poets from the 1950s and on. Although I slightly tapped into it, I believe more research should be conducted on the relationship with the nation in post-WWII American poetry and postcolonial Arab poetry. There is much to be found in understanding where the nation fits in in the poetry of poets who are confused and detached from it. The reclamation of the nation is a common tool of dissent in poetry, but so is a clear rejection to the nation because of its negative associations at the hands of tyrannical, limiting leaders and governments. More research would enrich our understanding of how these two ideas are reconciled. Post-WWII American poets felt detached from a nation that was rediscovering and reinstating its identity after a monumental historical moment. Iraqi poets in the 1960s were living in a country that was being passed from one direction to another with such a frequency that its identity was completely skewed. This shared disillusionment could potentially answer many research questions and cement this literary relationship further.
APPENDIX
Appendix A

THE TEACHINGS OF F. AL-AZZAWI

1

I lit my father’s boat and rode the wave
rising along the shore of my joy,
ascending the path of revolution.
I saw borders torn down (as my soul aimed for
the valley of understanding
phantoms from drowned cities accompanied me
through white night). I cried, “Let me escape
from this body laid out like a signpost.”
But the desert saw me, followed me like a serpent,
and I ran toward another kingdom
and saw the sea.

2

This is how I came upon burning streets, storefronts shut in the face of
protests demanding bread and work.
I saw tanks rolling past driven by poor soldiers armed with machine guns.
I saw the enemies’ planes climbing the shoulder of the homeland
dousing us with tons of manifestoes, dynamite, and chocolate.
That’s why I sat facing the garden of love and thought
children can die without disease,
and that war commands its friends to oppress God—our sole ally who
sits forever on the edge of the universe/ throwing us his
teachings: opium for free.
And that is why
I am grateful,
for drugs are expensive these days, and there is nothing to get one excited
except poems recited in raucous bars with a bunch of friends
conquering the night.

In this age, as memories later become history
taught at elementary schools (sixth grade specifically),

29
I abducted, just for fun, a policeman from the year 1967 and washed
him with soap and Dettol
for a whole month
then planted him in the garden of the homeland,
but he remained a dead tree forever.
In the morning when I passed by him I used to say: “When are you
going to flower, dear policeman?”
“Not now, at least, not now.”
And when he died I cried a great deal
for he was vaster than my homeland.

3

I’m not allowed to write my names,
to eulogize my generation,
to kidnap the devil from God’s capital.
I’m not allowed to dream that I’m dreaming,
to sit like a blind man and travel the world in an ambulance,
or think that I am:
. a man hung in the courtyard of his house,
or think that I am:
. a man without any particular attributes, a man in the kingdom
of the unknown
who cries, “This is my voice,”
and the sound dries on his lips
and death itself dies—
(to see, to write, to witness).
I’m not allowed to sit alone on a sidewalk and weep out my sadness.
I’m not allowed to go into a toilet and contemplate the future.
I’m not allowed to dream that I am F. Al-Azzawi,
that I’m a murdered chair,
that I am my nation.

That is why I will now kidnap a bearded priest from a refugee camp
and travel the blood of the condemned
toward the mirrors of the soul—
(this is my voice).

30
Once as night walked shadowing a forest,
I heard a Bedouin say, "I am a tree."
I said, "How could that be when you're returning from June for the
third time?"
He said, "Come with me!"
We traveled toward night in a cart
and I heard the saints declare,
"Martyrs are barred from the world
except in states of emergency
and during night battles."

Why?
Why? Why?
Why? Why? Why?
Why? Why? Why?
Why? Why?
Why?

How did you fall when you were the sky shading the victim's face?
Why did you stand staring at those staring at the night?
You were a cry in my body, and you were a cause.
You were my question. That is why I reached for your lighthouse and
gave you my secret.
I thought you filled the earth with me, and that with me truth stands
upright,
and that my death, my happiness, rises from the darkness of prisons.
I thought of the masses rolled over by conquerors,
and I thought I was a garden.

Come to my country and loot it.
Come to my country, share with us our starvation.
Eat our bitter bread, O prophets of Zion.
Eat my blood, O Indian pilgrims.
Eat, O Persians, from the flesh of my people. 
Borders have fallen from my borders. 
Come to my country and kill it. 
Come to my body and tread upon it, 
for I was once a garden.

6

Because I am a cloud raining on the funeral of the sea, 
I sit on the moment between heresy and the wind, 
on the thrones of cities while the plague saves his coins 
to buy up my country. I witness all the world's statues 
coming down the street and sleeping with children 
so that a new generation is born without any redeeming qualities 
whose dreams are warmed by schizophrenia.

For this, and for other than this, and so that we do not forgo our claim 
in another era, 
I decided to write this letter to my own head: 
Remain a stranger 
while fighters from a thousand directions traverse you 
and, as the sea, free of intentions, calls out to the sand that is my 
country, 
to subdue the foam that swirls the circles of time 
where happiness smokes the wretchedness of the poor 
and where the wise men write about 
the manufacture of birds, 
the proletariat in new happy cities, 
man without limbs, 
and the civilization of love.

Hello Fadhil al-Azzawi, 
I'm talking to you from the precipice of time 
filled with fish, corpses, and pins 
and where there is no tunnel. 
Let's go to De Gaulle and talk to him about May 1968. 
Let's go to the generals of Greece and listen to 
Zorba's music.
Let's go to Nassiteon as he devours communists.
Let's go to Amman and look into all the other Arab capitals.
Let's go to some prison and talk to it about the other prisons.
Let's go to no place at all.

7

At dawn I rose and saw closed-up alleys and springs gushing from a desert.
I beheld the birds of the forest.
I gave children the sciences of revolution.
I left the rivers behind me,
a lover smuggled in the era of the masses,
and I heard the trees sing
to the night.
I heard man suffer loneliness among the people,
and the sea unite his children with the wind.
Homeland poured on the sadness of the East,
tell me:
how can flight happen without wings?
How could there be death without a birth certificate?
And on the sidewalks of dreams,
how can your birds abandon the forests of the heart?

8

Look at this man:

I know he will die on one of these days:
Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.
Or in one of these months:
January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December.
Look at him. He is writing poems so as not to die on the days of the week or the months of the year.

Note: to abbreviate this section I request that readers scrap it and just write the day and the month in which I will die (after my death of course) instead of having to write all the days of the week and the months of the year.

9

Manifesto Issued from the Last Trench of the Revolution

| Fight with us for a happier world |
| Free hotel rooms |
| Come sleep with us on collective beds |

A world revolution in cities and countryside to create the Corporation of Free Society (Dh. M. M. Inc.), we declare we will fight for the following goals:

1.
2.
3.
4.

Fill in the blanks with whatever goals you wish. We trust you.

Signed:
The Old Committee for the New Revolution
Large as a tree, a torturer with a shaved head led me to the court of an Abbasid sultan whose name I can’t recall (maybe he had no name at all). Stroking his beard, the sultan asked me politely to create a plane for him with which to attack his enemies gathered in Khurasan.

But I refused his request (what do you expect from me? I am against wars that offer me nothing). I don’t know how the sultan learned that I excelled at making jet fighters.

The sultan said, “Do you refuse then?”

I said, “An airplane? What an insolent Bedouin you are! Go ride a camel. As long as you don’t know who Einstein was, you’ll never ride an airplane. And how did you learn about airplanes in the first place? That’s hilarious.

The torturer struck the back of my neck with his strong fist and I fell to my knees. Still, the sultan cowered before me and said coyly, “Fine, I’ll gather all the jurists, men of letters, and poets, and I’ll ask them to find out about the man you mentioned. What’s his name? Ah, Einstein. He’s a non-Arab. In a day, I’ll bring you his family tree. But why do you care about this man?”

I answered, “Because he was better than me at making airplanes. But he escaped with my favorite neighbor. She was a Circassian, and they rode an Australian mule and went to an unknown country.”

The sultan raved and ranted and looked disturbed. “What a filthy dog, betrayer of trust!” he said.

He issued an edict and the police went out in jet-black night looking for the wise traitor and great scientist.

The wise men, poets, and men of letters began digging through their books for his ancestors, all the way to Noah. It would be unthinkable that he would not have been on Noah’s ark. Therefore it would be impossible to locate him among those who lived on earth before that time.
I want to leave the bottle of the soul and visit Baghdad at night, to see its phantoms wailing in alleyways open to sadness and storms that blow from the shores of history. What did the days say on their leisurely walks? Which desert is having a celebration? Here pain is a new language roaming from continent to continent. I try to leave my ash-existence. You are a country of yes and no/ Come closet/ Of an eternal spider under a thousand moons crawling from traps set for storms/Beware! I see a city rising behind a river, and from the limbs of villages that call out, “This is a time when love is murdered,” where feudalism emerges from its fields smeared with the syphilis of peace, where death is a ledger in which a man who is dissolving writes, “There is no limit to life, and death is the way.” Don’t die, I am your friend, O death, and I have come. My desire for life has set my blood on fire. The female rhinoceros is roaming a forest raised by the crucified master in his last supper, but the newspapers of the left and the right ignored his sermon, not mentioning him even in a corner of their crime pages. Sand under my feet, and winter crosses nature and the seasons scream, “I am blind and cannot see a thing.” Has dawn left the mountains with the curse of war on his hands? Or is he riding the mule of justice wandering among the villages?—visiting prisons and brothels to become a king, or a senator, or a gambler sitting in the cave of his days, not saying what the stranger says in his holy books.

Lift the curtain, you will find a man facing the rivers as they pour into each other.

He stares from the spear’s launching point at his shoulder and sees nothing except a building leaning toward the sidewalk, but as night releases its dogs the song sings its song to the end and the chairs of the dead recline to the sentiments of the masses. It’s better to think of the rivers later (because rivers are like Assyrians who become alienated whenever they visit their homeland) as they carry off the poorest soldiers to freedom where the woodman’s wife
dreams at night
of the stars that fall
to light the village parks.
And with the passing of time, and without mirrors in the room,
F. Al-Azzawi will have become even more aged than time itself
and his face will be an almanac of seasonal winds.
Q: What do people know about me?
A. Obscure and bare like an unfinished prophecy.
Q: Does the man made of stone flowers know which passions still linger
in the eyes of the dead?
A: Fine, Fadhil Al-Azzawi wishes to unveil the sea once in his lifetime, to
drop his thousand birds in the jungle of new politics where the homeland
is a sign hung on the shoulders of shepherds, and where lovers forget to
edify to the custodians of fire.

Look:
all these construction bids for the reforestation of the heart
will not be enough to take a single man
to truth
as she sleeps in the gallows.

13

At last
I stood alone
on a mountain by a river
that turns twice around itself.
I looked at it
and I was sad for my sadness.
I cried, but my voice
disowned me.
It shattered in the wind while the wind that blows between me and life
was singing.
I went down to the river (taking my wound along). I washed. And on
the grass the day rolled past
like a chain circling a stone a thousand years wide.
It turned around itself and went toward the river and drowned its limbs.
It joined fire and water,
and joined me with the great pain.
Because the fruit of delusion tortures the eaters of reality, 
because truth does not dare cross over to the king, 
because cities in reality are more beautiful than in tourist brochures, 
I watch chairs as they sit quietly 
and talk about those who sit on them. 
What world is this where fingers become 
candy for birth certificates! and bomb-souvenirs 
dangle from girls’ chests! 
What peace fills the country 
and sits among lovers who lead truth to exile 
while the continents are crowded and mankind remains our hope?

While cities were left to the wind, 
I, who am deferred from the moment of birth, 
bumped into reality and it shattered as its water broke 
on a sidewalk. 
I moved away from night and it moved closer to me. 
It scratched its head before the police and the wounded. 
No one smiled at me. 
No one was there. 
Open all the doors 
for I love it when Salima looks toward God when she is with me. 
“When are you with me, Salima?” 
“When we do not exist, not even in poems.” 
There are boats. Look at the sea, and you will find a moon, waves, and 
stolen freedoms. 
Cry out loud 
and shepherds will slide from your lips. 
Cry out in silence.
Appendix B

تعاليم ف. العزاوي إلى العالم

1 أنعلت مراكب آبائي للموجة ترقي في ساحلي أتراهي ممراً الثورة، شاهدت حدوداً تُهدمَ، كانت روحني تُقصصُ وادي الفهم تعاشر في ليلٍ أبيض أشباحاً قادمةً من مدن غارقةً في الماء صرخت: لأهرب من هذا الجسد العائل كالشارة (1)
لكن الصحراء راني، تبعتي كالافعى فعدوت إلى مملكة أخرى ورأيت البحر.

2 هكذا دخلت الشوارع تحترق، والواجهات الزجاجية تُغلق بوجو المظاهرات تطلب بالخبز والعمل.

(1) لم يكن الهروب ممكناً على الإطلاق. كانت الأسلاك مكهربة، ووجود الرابية يصوبون يُنادونهم إلى ظهري.

167
رايت الدبابات تتزمر يقودها جنود فقراء، مسلحون بالرشاشات
رايت طائرات الأعداء تتساقط كنف الوطن
ملقيا فوق رؤوسنا أطنانا من المشورات والديناميت والشوكولاته
لذلك جلست أمام حديقة الحب، مفكراً
أن الأطفال يمكن أن يموتون بلا مرض
وأن الحرب تطلب من أصدقائنا أن يقهرن الله؟ صديقنا
المتوحد الذي يعتقد منذ الأبد على حافة الكون
ملقننا إيانا تعاليمه الإلهية المجاني
ولهذا أقدم شكري
فالخدرات باهظة الثمن هذه الأيام
وليس ثمناً ما يشمل
غير القصائد تلقى في حائت صاحب
مع شلة من الأصدقاء يفتحون الليل.

وفي هذا العصر، إذ تصبح الذكريات فيما بعد
تاريخاً يُقرأ في المدارس الإبتدائية - ربما في الصف السادس
بالذات -
سرقت للتسليم ذات مرة شرطاً من العام 1967
خسسه بالصابون والدينوم شهراً كاملاً
ثم زراعته في حديقة الوطن
بادله ظل شجرة حية إلى الأبد
وفي الصباحات إذ أمر به كنت أقول له:
منى تزهر يا عزيزي الشرطي؟

168
ليس الآن على الأقل، ليس الآن.
عندما مات بكثرة كثيراً
فقد كان أوسع من وطني.

منعوّ
إن أكتب أسمائي
إن أرثي جبلية
إن أسرق شيطانًا من عاصمة الله

منعوّ
إن أحلم أي أحلم
إن أجلس كالعمى وأجوب العالم في سيارة إسعاف
وأفكر أي رجل يُشمش في ساحة بنته
وأفكر أي رجل دون مزيا
رجل في مملكة المجهولين
يصرخ: هذا صوتي
فيفجف على شغفي الصوت
ويموت الموت.
أنظر، أكتب، إشهد

منعوّ
إن أجلس وحدي فوق رصيف أبيكي حزني

منعوّ
إن أدخل مرحاضا وأفكر في المستقبل
ممنوع
أن أحلُمُ أنَّي ف. العزاوي
أنَّي كرسي مقلول
أنَّي وطني.

ولهذا سرقي قديما ملتحيا من ملجأ
وأسرفي بين دماء الممنوعين
نحو مرايا الروح
هذا صوتي.

4
مرة إذ كان الليل يسير وراء غابة
سمعت أوعابا يقول: أنا شجرة
قلت: كيف يكون ذلك وأنتم عائدون من حزيران ثلاث مرات؟
قال: تعال معي.
وهكذا إذ سافرنا نحو الليل على عربة
سمعت القديسين يعلنون
أن العالم ممنوع على الشهداء
إلا في حالات الطواريء
والمعارك الليلية.

5
لماذا؟
لماذا؟ لماذا؟
لماذا؟ لماذا؟ لماذا؟
لماذا؟ لماذا؟ لماذا؟
لماذا؟ لماذا؟ لماذا؟
لماذا؟ لماذا؟

سقطت، وأنت السماء تظلل وجه الصحة؟
لماذا وقفت تحدق في الواقفين أمام الليالي؟
فكد كنت في جسدي صرخة وقضية
و كنت سؤالي.

لهذا تقدمت صوب فناك، أعطيت سري
وفكرت أنك ببي نملا الأرض وبي تستقيم الحقيقة
وينهض مؤتي السعادة من عُتُم السجون
وفكرت بالشعب يعبر الفتحون
وفكرت أنني أقول الحقيقة.

تعلوا إلى وطني واسرقوه
تعلوا إلى وطني شاركونا المجاعة
كلوا من خزينا المر يا أنيباه اليهود
كلوا من دمي يا ح реж الهنود
كلوا أيها الفرس من لحم شعبي
فبد سقطت من حدودي الحدود.
تعلوا إلى وطني وافقوه
 تعالوا إلى جسدي واعبروه كعبير ليل حديقة.

لأنني عربية تنتظر فوق جنازة البحر أجلس اللحظة بين الزندقة والريح على كراسي المدن، فيما الطاعون يوفرُ نقوده لابناء شعب هائم في الطرقات فأرى تماثيل العالم كله تهبط إلى الشوارع وتضاجع عشيقاتها ليلذ جليل بلا امتيازات تُدفِّع أحلامه الشيوعية.

من أجل هذا وغير هذا ولكني لا تفطر بدعوانا داخل عصر جديد قررت أن أكتب هذه الرسالة إلى نفسي:

كِنْ غَرِيبًا

يعبرك مقاتلون من ألف جهة والبحر منزها عن أعدًا قصيد ينادي رمالًا هي وطنٌ أن تُطفيء الزبد الذي يُشكّل داير الزمان حيث تدخن السعادة تعاسة الفقراء ويكتب الحكماه عن:

صناعة الطيور

البروليتاريا في المدن السعيدة الجديدة

172
الإنسان بلا أطراف

وحضارة الحب.

هالو فاضل العزاوي
هذا أنا أتحدث اللك من جرَّب الأزمة
ممتلئاً بالأسماك والجثث والدبابيس
حيث لا يوجد نفق.

تعال لنتذهب إلى دينغول ونحدثه عن مايس 1968
تعال لنتذهب إلى جنرالات اليونان ونسمع موسيقى زوربا
تعال لنتذهب إلى ناسيمون وهو يأكل الشيوعيين
تعال لنتذهب إلى عمان وننظر في كل العواصم العربية
تعال لنتذهب إلى سجن ما
ونحدثه عن كل السجون
تعال لنتذهب إلى لا مكان.

في الفجَّر نفتقد، رأيت ممارات مفقرة
وجداول آتية من صحراء
 أمسكت عصافير الغابة
هدية الأطفال علوم الأحلام
خلفت وراءي الأنهار تاهوت في أزمنة الجدب
سمعت الأشجار تغني ليل
سمعت الإنسان يعاني الوحشة بين الناس

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والمبحر يبارك بحارته في الريح.
يا وطني المسكوب على عاطفتي الشرق قللي:
كيف يكون الإسراء بدون جناح؟
كيف يكون الموت بدون شهادة حب؟
وعلى أرضية الأحلام،
طيرك كيف تغادر غابات القلب؟

أنظروا، أنظروا إلى هذا الرجل الرجل.

أعرف أنه سيموت في أحد هذه الأيام:
السبت، الأحد، الإثنين، الثلاثاء، الأربعاء، الخميس، الجمعة.
وفي أحد هذه الأشهر:
كانون الثاني، شباط، آذار، نيسان، ماي، حزيران، تموز، آب،
يول، تشرين الأول، تشرين الثاني، كانون الأول.
أنظروا، إنه يكتب أشعاراً لكي لا يموت في أيام الأسبوع أو أشهر السنة.

ملاحظة:
من أجل اختصار هذا المقطع أرجو أن يضع القراء تاريخ اليوم والشهر الذي سأموت فيهما فقط - بعد وقتين بالطبع - بدلاً ذكر كل أيام الأسبوع أو أشهر السنة، تجنبًا للعمل.
بيان موجه من آخر ختام لثورة

قالنا اتنا من أجل عالم أكثر سعادة
فنادق مجانية
تعالوا وناموا متنا على اسرة موحدة

ثورة عالمية في المدن والأرياف لتأسيس شركة المجتمع الحر

(ذ.م.ه)

نعلن أننا نعمل من أجل:

1 - 
2 - 
3 - 
4 -

املاوا البياض وما يرتك لكم من الأهداف فنحن نثق بكم.

اللجنة القديمة لثورة الجديدة

إقتناجي جلاج حليق الرأس، ضخم كشجرة إلى مجلس سلطان
عباسي، لمأعد أذكر اسمه. ربما لم يحمل إسمه على الإطلاق.
فطلب مني السلطان بادب، مداعبا لتحيته بأصابعه أن أصنع له
طائرة يثير بها على أعدائه المجتمعين في خراسان.

بيد أنني رفعت طلبه. ماذا تتوقعون مني غير ذلك؟ فأنا ضد
الحروب التي لا تقدم لي شيئا. ولا أعرف كيف علم السلطان
بأني أجيد صناعة الطائرات الحربية.
قال لي السلطان: أنت ترفض إذاً؟
قلت: طائرة، يا لك من أعجوب وقوَّة، إذهب واركب جملًا، فما دمت لا تعرف من هو آينشتاين! فإنك لن تركب طائرة على الإطلاق. ترى كيف عرفت بوجود الطائرات؟ إن هذا لأمر مضحك.
حقاً.
ضربي الجلاد على قفأي بقبضة يده القوية فهوبيت على ركبتي.
ومع ذلك تخاذل السلطان أمامي وقال مخادعاً: حسنًا، سأجمع كل فقهاء وأدباء وشعراء المملكة وأطلب منهم معرفة الرجل الذي ذكرته اسمه، ما اسمه؟ آه، آينشتاين، إنه أعجمي. بعد يوم واحد فقط سأقدم لك شجرة عائلته، ثم أضاف مستغرباً:
ولكن لماذا تهم بهذا الرجل؟
أجيب: لأنه كان أحد أظهر علماني في صناعة الطائرات، إلا أنه هرب مع جاريته المفضلة، وهي شركسية الأصل، على بغل أسترالي إلى مكان مجهول.
هج semifate الواقعة وبدا عليه الإزعاج وصاح: يا له من كلب حصير، خائن للأمة.
ثم أصدر مرسوماً خطيراً وخرجت الشرطة في ذلك الليل الذهبي تبحث عن الخائن الحكيم والعالم العظيم، أما العلماء والفقهاء والحكام والشعراء فقد أخذوا ينقبون في
(1) تعمدت هنا إجراج السلطان، فكما تعرفون أن آينشتاين لم يكن حتى قد ولد حينذاك، وكان استحبا، إذ قضى الجبال على ألا يتمكن من إنتاج له في نفسي الفقأ والخوف.
وكتبهم، باحثين عن أعدادهم الأوليين حتى نوح، إذ لا يعقل أن يكون شقيقاً آخر قد شارك نوح في سفينته، ولذلك لا يمكن البحث عنه بين الذين سيروا نوح في استيطان هذا العالم.

1000 قمرٍ يزحف من وكرين للمعاطف، يتبينه، فإنني أرى مدينة تبهض من وراء نهر، من مفاصل القرى تصرخ: هذا زمن يقتل فيه الحب، حيث يخرج الساموث من حقوله، ملطخًا، بالرماد، والموت يكون دفنتاً يكتب فيه رجلٌ يدوب: لا حد لها الحياة والموت هو الطريق، لا تسب، أنا الصديق يا موت أنت، شهودي إلى الحياة أضمرت دمي، وحيدة القرن تجوبُ غابة عمها المعلم المصلوب في عشائه الأخير، غير أن صحفُ اليمين واليسار أغلقت خطاه، فلم تشر إليه مرة واحدة ولو على زاوية مهملة في صفحة الجرائد، الرمال تحت قدمي، والشأية عبر الطبيعة، الفصول باكباً: عمري لا أرى شيئاً. ترى هل غادر الفجر الجبال، حاملًا في راجعه لعنة الحروب أَم راح يجوب فوق بلدة العدالة القرى، مرحلاً بين السجون والمباني كي يكون ملكاً أو ربما مقاتلاً يجلس في كهفه أيامًا، فلا يقول ما يقول الغريب في أسفاره المقدسة؟
يرفع الستارة تجد رجلا يقف في مواجهة الأنهار
تسب في نفسها
ويحدث من مرمي الرمح بكتفيه
فلا برى سوى عمارنة مائلة على الرصيف
ولكن إذ يطل الليل كلابه
تغني الأغنية أغنيتها حتى النهاية
ويجلس الموتى على كراسيهم عند عواطف الشعوب.
حينما لو فكرت في الأنهار، ولما متأخراً
لأن الأنهار مثل الأشوريين تنطوي غريبة كلما مرت بالوطن
تجرف أفرار الجندود إلى الحرية
حيث امرأة الحطاب
تحلم مساء
 بالنجوم التي تتساقط
لتنضيء حدائق القرى
مع دورة الزمن، وبدون مرايا في الحجرة
يكون فاضل العزاوي أكثر شيخوخة من الله
يكون وجهه قاموساً للريح الموسمية.
س: لماذا يعرف الناس عني؟
ج: غامض ومكشوفُ كتبة ناقصة.
س: هل يدري الرجل المؤلف من زهرة حجرية
أية صبيحة في عيونه الموتى؟
ج: حسنا، بود فاضل العزاوي أن يكشف البحر ولو لمرة واحدة
في حياته، أن يسقط عصافيره الألف في غابة الحياة الجديدة،
حيث الوطن شارة تعلق على كتف الرعاة، بينما لا يرى العشاق
ضرورة لتقدم وصايا خاصة إلى سدة النار.

أنظروا!!
كل هذه المقالات المقدمة لتشجع القلب
لا تكفي لتقدم رجل واحد
إلى الحقيقة
وهي تنام فوق مشتقة منفردة.

أخيراً
وقفت على جبل واقف عند نهر
يدور على نفسه مرتين
وحيداً
نظرت إليه، و كنت حزيناً لحزني
صرخت ولكن صوتي
تبنا متني
تكسر في الريح إذ كانت الريح بيني وبين الحياة
تغني
هبعت إلى النهر، جرحي معي، اغتفلت
وفي العشب مر النهر
كسلة تعبر على صخرة طولها ألف عام
ودار على نفسه، ثم سار إلى النهر،

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أغرق أعضاءه
وحذ الناز والماء
وخدني بالعذاب العظيم.

لا أن فاكهة الهم تَعذب أكلاة الواقع
لا أن الحقيقة لا تجازف بالوصول إلى الملك
لا أن المدني كما هي أجمل
بدون برامج للمياء
أراقب الكراسي تبع هادئة
تحث عن الذين يجلسون عليها
كاشطة في أسرارهم.
أي عالم هذا الذي تحول فيه الأحلام
إلى حلوى للولايات
والقنابل إلى هدايا للذكري
تعلن على صدور الفتيات!
أي سلام هذا الذي يبٌل الوطن
يجلس عشاقا يقودون الحقيقة إلى المنفى
إذ القارات مزدحمة والإنسان هو الأمل.

بينما المدن متروكة للريح
اصطدمت، أنا المؤجل منذ لحظة الولادة
بالواقع فانكسور وانكسبت مياهه على الرصيف.
إيعدت عن الليل فاقتربت مني
حك رأسه أمام البوليس والجرحى
ومن يكن أحد يبتسم لي
لم يكن أحد.
إفتحوا كل الأبواب
فأنا أشعشي أن تنظر سالمة إلى الله وهي معي
- متى تكونين معي يا سالمة؟
- حيث لا تكون موجودن حتى في القصائد.

ثمة زوارق
افظر إلى البحر تجد قمرا
أمواجا وحيات مختلسة
أهفت عالية
بتندر الرعاة من شفاهك
أهفت
بصمت.

شباط 1971
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