MODERN ARABIC POETRY II*

**ALBERT ADĪB** (Lebanese)

_Fidelity_  
I never loved you  
But loved myself in you  
The reflections of a dream, a vision  
And I know that in your mind  
I was only the revenge  
For some wasted love  
We lived together  
And from us was composed a lying legend  
That stifled our souls in pain  
While the world thought us some eternal song  
O the contempt of love  
You were not mine, I was not yours  
I shall leave, you will leave  
Two strangers that lived together  
Leaving behind them  
Lies

**AHMAD AL-ŠĀFĪ AL-NAJAFĪ** (Iraqi), b. 1895

_Immortal Liberty_  
When I die, cast me forth in the plain:  
Sweet unto me there are both life and death.  
Confine me not in the tomb:  
Hateful unto me is prison, though I be dead.  
If my corpse serve as nurture  
For eagles and beasts of prey,  
Then will I see my dismembered body journey forth  
And bear me too in all directions.  
O peerless voyage of my dead frame,  
I yearned for you while yet alive.  
Each limb will traverse a separate sphere,  
Oblivious of its severed fellows,  
And when again they reunite,

* These translations have been taken at random from a forthcoming anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry by M. A. Khouri and H. Algar.
Having travelled throughout creation,
Each will come and relate to me
The happenings it has seen.
Thus will I pass away, yet live again,
Bearing mysteries from the realm of death to life.
This truly is that resurrected life
Promised to man after his decease.

MUHAMMAD AL-FAYTURI (Sudanese), b. 1930

Sad Saturday Night

To-night ... to-night, o sad-eyed one
The cactus bloomed
Above our ancient tomb, the little cactus
Lavishing its black shade on our remains
As if not satisfied with our estrangement
It imbibes all our souls distil
And stretches above us its hard branches
Covering with them shroudless corpses

To-night ... to-night, o beloved
My eyes were with the clouds
And I behind my wall, a corpse imprisoned by a wall
Greater than you perceive, o sad-eyed one
A wall dark by day and night
Buries us, digs our grave twice daily
And we are as two corpses
On their faces but a smile of scorn
And the scream of death

To-night, tears ... to-night, regret
A million flowers trampled underfoot
The smile on a murdered face
Blood from a menstruating sun
Torment mixed with disgust
A seal on the lips
A whip on the brow
The veils of God are burnt
Even my eternal cup is defaced
My sacred cup is ruined
O hideousness of pain