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Mihyar of Damascus: His Songs

by Adonis

Translated from Arabic by Adnan Haydar & Michael Beard

Born in 1930, Adonis mastered traditional poetic forms very young as a child in Syria. Later, in Lebanon, he became a pivotal figure in the new poetry which began to appear in the late 60s, and also edited an influential Lebanese literary magazine. By that time he had established himself, through poems like those in *Mihyar of Damascus*, as the voice of new possibilities in Arabic poetry. With the publication of *Mihyar of Damascus: His Songs* (1963) – widely viewed as a watershed moment in Arabic poetry – Adonis forged a whole new set of possibilities for Arabic poetry, writing in traditional meters but directing them towards a kind of modernism which rethought every possibility of rhythm, style, and conceptual complexity. He is the rare poet whose critical commentary is startling and surprising on a level with his poems.

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This is an immensely satisfying new collection of poems—continuing the poet’s restless, metaphysical exploration into “everything strange.”

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[Adonis] writes from a profound understanding of and love for the Arabic culture from which he has been politically exiled. His poems are passionate, tragic, lyrical, evocative.

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About the Poet

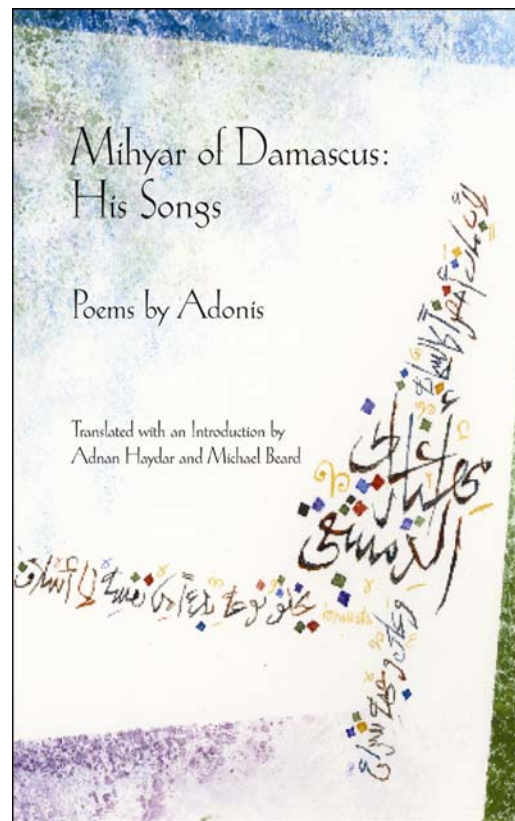
Adonis is arguably the leading Arabic poet in the world. Born in Qassabin, Syria, Adonis studied philosophy in Beirut, where he obtained his Doctorat d’Etat in 1973. After his arbitrary imprisonment for six months in 1955 for political activities and membership of the Syrian National Socialist Party, he settled in Lebanon in 1956, later becoming a Lebanese national. He has been short-listed for the Nobel Prize on multiple occasions and received numerous other honors.

About the Translators

Adnan Haydar is head of the Arabic section in the Department of Foreign Languages and professor of Arabic and comparative literature at the University of Arkansas. Michael Beard has been a member of the University of North Dakota faculty since 1979. In 1996 he received a Fulbright Fellowship to teach at the University of Jordan.

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