

**Bilal Orfali (American University of Beirut): *Walking in the Steps of Poets: Secular Arabic Poetry in Sufi Anthologies***

It is common practice in modern times to read mystical poetry and relate it to our own mundane lives and loves. Early Sufi poets did the opposite: their mystical hymns often spun out of the courtly poetic *ghazal*, panegyric and wine songs. Bilal Orfali's paper highlights the relationship between the Arabic courtly poetic canon and early Sufism. Sufi anecdotes, reports and poetry evoke past poets and their poetic heritage; they tend to quote or refer to eminent poets whose poetry must have been widely circulated and memorised. Yet, Sufism places this readily recognisable poetry in a new context that deliberately changes the past. It is a process of a metaphorization in which the reality of the pre-Islamic, Umayyad and Abbasid models now acts as a device or metaphor for Sufi poetics.