FLAGG MILLER
University of Wisconsin at Madison

Of songs and signs:

Audiocassette poetry, moral character, and the culture of circulation in Yemen

A B S T R A C T

A problematic of authorial subjects, character *(ṭibāᶜ)* has long provided a generative reflexive template in Yemeni textual practice. As contemporary vernacular poets and singers consider the benefits and costs of an audio-recording industry for the integrities of political speakers, they use a graphic alienation inherent to a trope of character to articulate moral ambivalences over, and expressive possibilities of, authorial iteration. In this article, I propose a framework for considering the moral entailments of a culture of circulation. [*circulation, media, poetics, religion, authorship, character, Yemen*]

The poets are trailed *(yaṭabbiᶜ)* by those who stray
Do you not see *(ā lam tarā)* how they aimlessly rove in every valley
Preaching what they never practice
Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in
the remembrance of God, and defend themselves only after they
are unjustly attacked . . .

—Qur'an 26:224–227

Over the past half century, Yemenis have collaborated toward building one of the liveliest grassroots recording industries in the Arab world. This distinction has its roots partly in Aden's post–World War II pioneering of the recording industry on the Arabian Peninsula and can also be attributed to the existence in Yemen of a large rural and mostly nonliterate populace, to the state's relative tolerance for political expression, and to a popular passion for indigenous song. Sung and recited poetry has long been integral to political and moral life, and audiocassette producers and their audiences have developed a fine set of distinctions for evaluating the benefits and costs of technological mediation for traditional institutions of authority. In recent decades, poets who provide the industry with its lyrics have elaborated such distinctions by focusing on the moral integrity of character *(ṭibāᶜ)*.

On one cassette released to popular acclaim, a poet known for his wry political verse and heated exchanges launches his poem by evoking a difference for listeners between the character of his correspondent, Abū Qaĩs al-Hāshidī, and the character of himself and his ally (''Saḥḥāgī''). After several opening verses, the poet dismisses his correspondent's earlier prediction that his own fortunes would change as a mere reflection of his time-worn fickleness:

To [he] who said things would change: that which dazzles deceives.
His character is the coward, selfish and ever superficial

He no longer weighs his words before he circulates them
[While] the gallant errs not, however much his opponent sallies forth
[The finest] incense exudes what it contains and displays
We won't rebuke the Ḥāshidī and his family, we might even vaunt about him
[Now that] Saḥḥāgī's words have left Abū Qaīs in a mad delirium
From the age of the Queen of Sheba until now, [Abū Qaīs] has been bigoted
At night reactionary, he'll join whomever pulls together[1]

Where the poet describes his correspondent's weak ''character'' as a perversion of the values of courage (shagāᶜah), generosity (karāmah), and expressive dignity (adab), he pays homage to classic registers of tribal honor that would be evident to those familiar with the standard moral bearings of highland political discourse in Yemen. Indeed, in contrasting these lines with the poet's subsequent theme of retrogressive state authority, expressed in his opponent's bigotry and ''reactionary'' character, which appear to have remained unchanged since Yemen's early Sabaen (''Sheban'') monarchy, listeners might attribute the moral power of such verse to a variation on the rhetorics of tribes and states that previous anthropological scholarship has helped nuance and problematize.[2]

Yet the poet's keen attention to the visual appearance, weight, movement, and smell of words and things urges his audience to move beyond normative values and themes. An experience with the sensory aspects of circulation draws listeners into strangely familiar realms of moral bearing in the world. In this case, a trope of character prioritizes and assembles sensations into larger signifying clusters: Graphic uncertainty is evoked in the first strophe, followed by a trope of character that indexes the moral constitution of his opponent, who is described as a ''coward, selfish and ever superficial.'' Such personification of graphic duplicity enables reflection on larger social costs, described in terms of circulatory credibility: ''He no longer weighs his words before he circulates them (yansharuh).'' By contrast, the character of ''the gallant'' retains his integrity, expressed through a fragrant, salubrious kind of circulation: As one who ''errs not,'' the gallant is likened to the finest ''incense'' that ''exudes what it contains and displays.'' Such steadfastness allows the gallant to disseminate a purer, original essence—a publicly perfused incense whose benefits might reaffirm his true character. Through the uncertainties and risks of circulating characters, moral credibility emerges.[3]

The dissemination of audio-recorded texts in a vibrant cassette industry offers many poets new opportunities to influence public opinion in a country where access to official media channels is restricted. Within two weeks of releasing a poem, vernacular poets can hear their critical political verses being performed by singers and musicians, the performances having been recorded on tens of thousands of cassettes and consumed by huge and diverse audiences. In confronting vastly accelerated scales and rates of reproduction, however, these cassette poets also face new demands on the boundaries of their communal loyalty, on the quality of their work, and on their integrity as recognized political pundits. A problematic of circulation, I suggest in this article, provides poets and their audiences with a way to reflect on these demands. Of course, Yemenis have long been interested in issues of circulation, for many good reasons: The movement of resources—whether material or conceptual—has long proved central to communal survival, and talk about circulation has also provided people with a way to think about their own community in relation to networks of commerce and exchange that extend beyond their community. In recent decades, however, Yemeni cassette poets have talked about circulation through new analogies of character. Whereas some characters cohere like resonant incense, others disintegrate like flashy, overhandled commodities.

In a recent analysis of presidential politics in the United States, Jane Hill (2000:262–263) suggests that the framework of ''character,'' as it is typically invoked in this country, evokes the moral compass of intentional actors who seek to establish credibility across diverse events and contexts. To have character is to assert one's own moral fiber. In an arena of high political stakes in which multiple discourses of truth and reference are leveraged toward persuasive advantage over an electorate, ''true character,'' thus, becomes a critical signpost by which politicians define themselves against their theatrical and poll-driven opponents. But, ultimately, Hill suggests, character coexists in dialogic tension with modes of performativity and referential instability, and, to understand how character emerges at the intersection of alleged virtue and performance, she urges attention to ''personalist language ideology'' (2000:267).

Although I, too, am interested in ideology, here I highlight aesthetic considerations to complicate presumptions that a strictly ideological approach might make about coherent regimes of symbolic and material domination. The trope of character that I examine is certainly ideologically informed; but character also remains the product of situated habits of apperception that are cultivated in poetry and verbal practice. In particular, the trope offers reflection on an experience with physical and metaphysical iteration or, in a moral sense, with duplicity. I argue, more broadly, that the Yemeni trope of character helps articulate a problematic of duplicitous authorship (in standard Arabic, ta'līf) that takes on a particular form in an extremely decentralized and commercially productive

cassette industry.[4] For poets, I suggest, authorship is primarily a matter of persuasive agency, and poets' ability to be persuasive depends on two factors. First, an author must have circulatory efficacy, that is, the capacity to put verses into public circulation so that they will be consumed and passed on by others. Second, an author must also produce something original; an author has an identity that is defined apart from sheer dissemination. It is the disparity between these two notions of authorship, I argue, that character highlights: Poets who want to reach broad audiences with cassettes must betray something original, something noncirculatory and close at hand. To have character is, paradoxically, to admit a certain necessity for duplicity.

The challenge for poets is how to achieve duplicitous authorship while also remaining moral. I suggest that the resourcefulness of character (ṭibā^c) in managing such a challenge lies in the trope's asserted graphic aspect; in particular, the trope habitually evokes images of writing and script. In general, the graphic aspect of character functions for poets as what Maurice Merleau-Ponty has called ''a repeated index'' (1968:130). Such an index is a sign of both alienation and permanence because graphic things can visibly move in the world and become ephemeral, although their very presence to viewers also induces a sense of enduring selfhood, thus providing a potential for moral credibility (''My incense exudes what it contains and displays''). When hitched to technologies of inscription, the duplicity of visual signs is elaborated in relation to traditional regimes and dispositions of authoritative mediation and helps to explain why the trope of character continues to figure in the work of audio-recording poets, even though such poets are primarily involved with an industry of sound more than of writing or graphic media. In fact, by reflecting on the alienations and moral demands of character, such poets are able to conceptualize new duplicities of sonic abstraction, new indexes of authorial integrity.

I attend closely to the textual and aesthetic conditions of authorship in this article because I think such an approach can help anthropologists understand habits of moral reflection whose nuances and power for people can be located culturally, in the symbolic practices of specific communities. At one level, one might note how authorship is encoded through script and, especially, literary production in many different societies, not solely in Yemen or in the Middle East, more broadly. This phenomenon could be explored through familiar techniques of social anthropology: Where writing is a practical technology that has long been restricted to certain groups, one might speak of a ''restricted literacy'' (Goody 1968:11–19) that informs textual authority. Nevertheless, much of the cultural dynamic of authorship inheres not just in codes of script and literature but also in concepts of inscribed texts,

as these ideas have been elaborated through symbolic practice over time. In Islam, of course, as in other monotheistic religions of the Middle East, the authority of God's ''Book'' as emanating from on high has long been secured through an aesthetic of immanent script, whereby a single author's (God's) uncorrupted message is safely extracted from the tempests of everyday oral articulation. Other authoritative ''text-concepts,'' as I call them, have also long existed in the Arab world, however, and these can be considered complementary to, and also distinct from, those of divine scriptures.

This article focuses on the *qaṣīdah,* which I think can be considered one of these text-concepts. Widely recognized as the Arab world's ambassador of poetic genres, the qaṣīdah, whose formal structure is generally 15–50 monorhyme couplets, was enjoyed by listeners in pre-Islamic Arabia. Over centuries, the qaṣīdah has become a valuable resource in political and moral life, and I approach the genre as a distinct site for authorship.[5] For Yemenis familiar with the qaṣīdah as a kind of authoritative text, the audiocassette industry presents a moral problematic that is urgent as well potentially generative. As the industry has facilitated the mass production of identical audio copies, many of them requiring far greater collaboration among poets, singers, and other industrial agents than had existed before, poets are reflecting on the influence of powerful regimes of authorial alienation on their verse. In apprizing the circulation of their words through industrial reproduction, poets ultimately develop models of moral integrity that are persuasive for audiences precisely when those models can substantiate beleaguered texts within and against, rather than beyond, the paradoxes of technologically mediated authorship.[6]

Most of the poetry I discuss in this article comes from an area called Yāfi^c, where I conducted a year and a half of graduate fieldwork.[7] Approximately fifty miles northeast of Aden, in southern Yemen, the region has a reputation for outspoken political poets, both because of its historical prominence as home to a powerful tribal confederation and because of its links to Aden. The invective tenor of much of the verse in this article is traceable not only to the agonistic style of much highland political poetry but also to Yemen's two poles of suzerainty, which consolidated in the North and the South. The North, with its capital in Sanaa, had historically been governed by a lineage of Zaidi religious elites and, periodically, by Ottoman Turkish administrators. Nationalist movements led the country in Arab, Islamic, and tribal directions over the course of the mid-20th century, with eventual support from Saudi Arabia and the United States. The South, by contrast, had long known an amalgam of independent sultanates. The British, who arrived in the 1830s, gradually drew these sultanates into more sustained commercial and administrative relations with the capital city of Aden. After South

Yemen's independence from the British in 1967, the country swung to the left, becoming a Soviet client state and espousing radical socialist ideals that were less lenient toward tribalist and Islamist discourses. In 1990, North and South Yemen unified, just as the Cold War was officially drawing to a close, and the Republic of Yemen has since known moderate stability (with the exception of a three-month war against southern separatists in 1994).

The moral authority of diatextual circulation

At its best, poetry is considered by Yemenis to be curative. Many responded to my questions about the value of poetry in daily life by explaining that ''poetry redresses problems'' *(al-shiʿr yaʿālig al-mashākil),* and others compared poets to medical doctors who could ''reveal the truth'' *(yikhshif al-ḥaqīqah).* At its worst, poetry can also ignite conflict and spread malevolence. Throughout Yemen, poetry is viewed as a powerful means of social and personal intervention and continues to be so used by young and old, men and women, and rich and poor.

An introduction to the social and textual stratigraphy of poetry in highland Yemen is helpful in considering the discursive transformations that cassette poets introduce to moral discourse and to a trope of character, in particular. Although literacy has been historically restricted throughout Yemen, poetry has long been composed and performed without the assistance of writing. Poets renowned for their insight and powerful memories have long excelled in the oral performance of a variety of poetic genres. Some of the most hortatory of these genres are distinguished for idioms of honor, piety, and persuasive force and have been recognized by Yemenis as expressing ''tribal ethos'' *(qabyalah).*[8] But genres of oral poetry that are less overtly tailored to public political comportment also exist, including agricultural poetry, sentimental *(ʿāṭifī)* poetry, riddle poems, and wisdom *(ḥikmah)* and advice *(wasāyā)* poetry. Many of these latter genres are more often sung than chanted with martial vigor, and their registers of status, gender, affect, and moral orientation can be enhanced through instrumentation that has traditionally included the tambourine *(ṭār),* drum *(tanak),* or stringed lute *(qanbūs* or *ʿūd).*[9] A polyphony of oral performance has been so central to social and political life in Yemen that vocal articulation becomes aestheticized in many poems as an icon of sociobiological aspects of personhood: Loud, echoing speech indexes the social vitality of speakers, and metaphors frequently equate effective speech with natural processes (e.g., thunder, storms, and raging floods connote locutionary virility, whereas zephyrs and fragrant breezes suggest more pacific vocal dispositions).

Oral poetry in Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula has received much scholarly attention. Over the latter half of the 20th century, some of the most comprehensive studies emerged from Yemeni and Arab scholars, whose interests in oral and, especially, tribal poetry were elaborated and refined through folklore studies introduced to the Arab world by Soviet ethnographers during the 1950s, as well as from Western anthropologists, whose long interests in tribal organization and performance are well-known (al-Baraddūnī 1988, 1995; al-Maqāliḥ 1978; Caton 1986, 1987, 1990; Ghānim 1987; Ḥārithī 1990; Lambert 1997; Miller 2002a, 2002b; Nājī 1959, 1983; Rodionov 1996; Serjeant 1951). But poetry in Yemen has also long been composed through writing. In preindependence eras, literacy had been an instrumental competence for scholars of religion and jurisprudence who worked in socially demarcated ''convening grounds'' of religious education *(hijrah-s, ḥawṭah-s,* or *rubāṭ-s).* Tribal elites also acquired literacy through shorter stints of training at these institutions. A wide variety of formal and vernacular literary stylistics, then, developed and became integrated with practices of oral poetry and song. In the rural highlands, one genre of written vernacular poetry that gained special currency has been called ''initiation and response'' *(bidʿ wa jiwāb)* poetry. In this genre, one poet sends a qaṣīdah to a second poet, and the second poet responds to the first with his own qaṣīdah, which matches the first in rhyme, meter, and theme.[10] In regions with especially high rates of emigration, this genre became especially useful, as Yemeni religious notables, tribal sheikhs, and migrants of varying occupations employed such poetry to correspond with one another over considerable distances, detailing events both near and far. In the region of Yāfiʿ, copies circulate today of letter poems that were composed over 250 years ago, some written to and by migrants who had traveled to other regions of Yemen as well as to India and further afield. As I discuss below, this genre becomes instrumental for cassette poets, despite the obvious oral and aural nature of their medium, not only because conveying qaṣīdah poems across sometimes vast distances is still best achieved through writing but also because the written and literary difference of such a genre provides poets with a means to reflect on the mediation of oral communication and to assess the costs and benefits of circulating texts for moral expression.

Over the course of the 20th century, rural Yemenis' access to literacy steadily grew, especially in the South. British tutelage of children from notable families expanded throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and a series of massive literacy campaigns launched after independence in 1967 made writing central to the young socialist state's revolutionary objectives. Through such campaigns, the political calling of the writer *(kātib)* or even the university-trained intellectual *(adīb)* grew more accessible for many people, even as the defining criteria of such roles withdrew predictably toward new poles of prestige: Free-verse poetry composed in semiclassical Arabic became a favored currency among many young poets, and older forms of tribal poetry,

including bidᶜ wa jiwāb verse, were disparaged as ''backward'' *(mutakhallif)* and ''sectarian'' *(ᶜashā'irī).* By the 1980s, liberal press reforms helped loosen the state's tight control of print media, enabling a diversity of commercial newspapers and publishing houses to regain a momentum that had been enjoyed in Aden during the decade before independence. Classical as well as literary-vernacular *(adabi)* poetry figured large in the publishing industries of both North and South Yemen and ensured that many poets remained keenly attuned to the rewards and credentials of new authors *(mu'allifūn).* Highland poets who continued to privilege traditional bidᶜ wa jiwāb verse were unlikely to be able to enjoy such credentials.[11] Nevertheless, where written stylistics conveyed the authority of contending regimes of literacy (traditional Islamic, reformist Islamic, progressive colonial, and state socialist), poets crafted their verse accordingly, even as they continued to foreground highland conventions of oral performance and song that could index alternative communities of text users. As I suggest below, the clamorous, even markedly amateur oral and aural qualities of sung cassette verse remain generative icons of moral difference for both singers and poets.

The task of situating persuasive political verse morally, then, has required poets to engage in what I call a ''diatextual'' hedging that crafts authority across (dia-) the textual norms of specific communities of sociolinguistic interaction.[12] Where certain literate styles have long been iconic of the spiritual, affective, and authorial immanence of the holy book, their deployment continues to convey durable habits of pious comportment and orientation. Conversely, certain hortatory oral stylistics are drawn from a long tradition of tribal poetry whose pragmatic context has typically been political event making, including dispute settlement, public commemorations, war, and weddings. In an earlier era of sociolinguistic study by scholars of Arabic, an axis of diglossia might have been used to identify a common folk model of language that differentiates between two social registers: a highly literate register that indexes a community whose paradigmatic texts are composed in a classicized standard register, and an oral, vernacular register that signals the sociolinguistic, political, and cultural difference of a nonliterate (in my case, tribal) community.[13] Such a model, however, requires calcifying the social indices of given written and oral registers into essentialized and historically unchanging standards. To approach such registers as dynamic resources that are deployed within situated acts of moral and political commitment, one need not simply enumerate them or even situate them pragmatically within ideological contexts. Rather, the stakes of literacy and orality must be situated within ongoing transformations in textual production and consumption. How do such registers signify degrees of social or moral affinity across contending textual claims that are routinely being reprioritized? How do systems of replication, accumulation, and preferential conversion inform such prioritizations? How, ultimately, do interlocutors deploy oral or literate registers as relative probabilities of their own social agency, as defined in habits of textual authority that they might credibly elicit? Attention to circulation, I suggest, can provide a way to approach these questions both from a material perspective, as informed by a political economy of texts, and from an aesthetic and reflexive perspective, as occasions for speculating on a kind of condition of moral affinity and alienation that I call, in broadest terms, ''authorship.''

The development of the audio-recording industry in Aden in the late 1940s introduced new regimes of authoritative textual replication and dissemination, along with new strategies of diatextual hedging. Initially, wax-disc records were produced by foreign-owned companies, such as Parlophone and Odeon, and featured Egyptian, Kuwaiti, Indian, and Western classical music that appealed to Aden's well-heeled multinational populace. Radio Aden, established in 1954, helped popularize such recordings and was reaching audiences across southern Yemen by the mid-1960s. Over the course of these decades, the industry gradually began to feature an increasing number of Yemeni singers. By the late 1950s, dozens of recording studios had appeared in Aden, each of which promoted its own homegrown stars, and Aden was fast becoming the largest recording center in the Middle East after Cairo. Many of the Yemeni singers were members of higher-status families of urban patricians and religious notables; largely men, they had long sung while strumming a traditional lute for elite audiences in private homes. Nevertheless, a wider range of rural singers from more modest families, among them an increasing number of women, also began to acquire recording contracts.[14] With fame, these singers began to infuse prestigious traditions in metropolitan song with a greater variety of rural poetic genres, melodies, rhythms, and instrumental arrangements. In step with their innovations, aspiring young poets from an increasing range of backgrounds and competences refashioned their own verses in the hope of attracting established singers' patronage.

Cassette technologies enabled the most radical transformations in public recorded song. After the appearance of bulky open-reel recorders in the mid-1950s, and shortly thereafter the eight-track cassette recorder, the standard Philips cassette recorder (invented in 1963) was reaching enterprising consumers in rural areas by the late 1960s. Relatively cheap, transportable, and easily suited to impromptu use, Philips-recorder cassettes had two notable effects on listeners' experiences of metropolitan song. The first was to integrate rural producers and consumers into a far more decentralized recording industry: Before the 1970s, the vast majority of Yemenis had only rarely heard songs performed to stringed instrumentation or in musical

ensembles; thereafter, Yemenis were not only hearing such song more frequently but were also treated to songs performed by local artists in familiar linguistic and musical variants. The cassette, thus, enabled the articulation of a host of regional musical styles with nascent consumer markets, and, as a result, it became a medium for wedding indigenous habits of listening and musical participation to broader currents of metropolitan song. As a technology that appeared at a particular juncture in Yemeni nationalist history, however, the cassette also facilitated a second kind of experience with metropolitan song, one privileging reflections on alienation and difference as much as on participatory attunement. Audio-amplification technologies that preceded the cassette, like the record and radio broadcasting, emerged in sync with the two Yemens' nationalist movements, which gained momentum from the 1940s through the 1960s. The audio-cassette, however, became available to consumers just after the two Yemens attained independence (the North in 1962, the South in 1967), during shaky years in which state culture was tightly monitored and the liberal promises of revolutionary change were becoming strained. Precisely during those years the cassette offered consumers a radically decentralized venue for mobilizing discourses of populist dissent.[15] As a result, politically active singers, poets, and their audiences have long viewed the cassette as a moral resource associated as much with obdurate localities of textual authority and communal sentiment as with translocal regimes of commercial or state production, accumulation, and representation.[16]

One of the genres of political poetry that has best accommodated the use of cassettes for regionalized political dissent is bidᶜ wa jiwāb verse. Long swapped between highland literate notables to build interpersonal alliances, exchange views on politics and moral life, and affirm enduring communal loyalties, bidᶜ wa jiwāb qaṣīdahs attracted an increasing number of rural singers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Indeed, in shops across both North and South Yemen, cassette series appeared that featured poets from different regions debating with one another. When embellished with nationalist agonism and claims of primordial prowess as well as with the savvy humor of reconstructed tribesmen, bidᶜ wa jiwāb verse became an especially popular forum of political dissent, one that mapped only imperfectly onto contemporary discourses of reform that were aired in state-sponsored media channels in registers of nationalism *(waṭaniyyah),* democracy *(dīmūqratiyyah),* Islamic reform *(iṣlāḥ),* and so forth.[17] Since unity between the Yemens in 1990 and a war in 1994 that ended in the defeat of southern separatists, bidᶜ wa jiwāb poetry has become a genre of choice for many political cassette poets, especially those from southern regions whose constituents feel removed from the cultural and political orientations of a northern-based administra-

tion. Poets and singers from Yāfiᶜ, in particular, have gained national renown for producing humorous and barbed cassette exchanges.[18] Such distinction lies partly in Yāfiᶜ's historical prominence as the home of one of the largest tribal confederations in Yemen and partly in its considerable leverage in socialist party politics during the years of the former PDRY. Yāfiᶜī artists, however, have benefited especially from the region's large diasporic community in Aden as well as in Saudi Arabia, the Arab Gulf States, and the United States. As metropolitan residents who are estranged from their highland homes and embroiled in cultural politics, Yāfiᶜī migrant audiences have taken a special relish in confronting the ironies of moral compromise in the modern world, not the least of which is the idea of traditional tribesmen using new media technologies and popular song to mobilize audiences toward political action.

One of the most famous of these Yāfiᶜī cassette producers is the singer Ḥusaᶖn ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir, a man whose work has been the focus of much of my research. The poetry that I discuss in this article is largely drawn from his cassette series. Born in a remote highland canyon in the early 1950s, ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir grew up helping his six siblings with subsistence farming and, on occasion, tilling neighbors' plots with a valued family ox. With meager savings, he invested during his youth in a Middle Eastern lute (ᶜūd) and over the years refined his musical talents through informal performances among friends. Today, ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir receives letter poems from hundreds of poets across Yemen, adapts them to song, and then sings them to the accompaniment of his ᶜūd. Having begun recording in the late 1970s, ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir had released over 108 cassettes by 1998, averaging one new cassette of the latest political verse every three months for over two decades. Some of his cassettes reach hundreds of thousands of listeners. Because many of his listeners are Yemenis of highland rural backgrounds, his instrumental arrangements are fairly simple (involving no synthesizers or sound manipulation) and his repetitive melodies foreground verbal articulation over musical embellishment, in keeping with a conservative highland qaṣīdah performance style. Such a traditional sound, however, conceals ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir's metropolitan lifestyle: In fact, he left Yemen when he was 16 and has lived for the past four decades in Doha, the capital of Qatar. Moreover, many of the most popular poets featured on his cassette series are also partial or full-time migrants (mostly shopkeepers, small businessmen, and civil servants). Accordingly, as ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir and the poets he works with look back on their homeland, recalling their lives, families, and friends there, they are poised between communities with markedly different literary orientations, textual practices, and moral orientations, all of which intervene poignantly in linguistic valuations that singers and, especially, poets must make in tailoring their work to quite different

audiences.[19] Indeed, the increasing collaboration required of singers, poets, and cassette-shop owners to target such diverse audiences, combined with singers' own rise in prominence as cassette celebrities, has gradually contributed to poets' awareness of the problematic (if potential resourcefulness) of technically mediated authorship.

An aesthetics of character

Within this context of textual production and consumption, then, poets are working to define their authority. In the rest of this article, I focus on how a trope of character helps articulate an especially fertile dialectic through which poets explore the challenges that a cassette industry presents to composers of persuasive public verse.

Arabic poetry has long known the "character issue," a phrase that routinely appears during U.S. presidential elections as candidates seek to connect with voters through something more essential than political platforms. As early as the ninth century, satirical debates occurred between famous poets who treated listeners to lengthy, often excoriating descriptions of one another's characters. In the qaṣīdah, in particular, authorial integrity was a vital issue, and many heated debates took place over charges of plagiarism *(sarqah)*. Poets frequently attempted to clear themselves of such charges by alleging inspiration from the muses, such that verses resembling those of previous authors could be abstracted from the tempests of perfect iteration.

In 21st-century Yemen, the muses still bring authentic words directly from beyond. In a growing industry of publishing and audio recording, however, poets and audiences express increasing concern with more powerful social and industrial intermediaries that may be informing the claims of individual authors. Such concerns are explored, I suggest, through attention to the difference between character and appearances of character.

In 1981, during tensions between former North and South Yemen, a poet from the North released a qaṣīdah on cassette that ridicules his South-Yemeni correspondent. His qaṣīdah treats listeners to an extended exposition on his correspondent's character. In opening verses, the correspondent is labeled "the sleeper" and is described as having a bad habit of mistaking dreams of national prowess for real visions:

> [The poet] Bu Zaid Ahmad says: "If it were only so!
> [If only] dreams of sleeping people could be
> fulfilled!"
> The sleeper said: "I saw it!"
> He thinks that he saw the highest of heights ...
> He wishes that [Yemen]'s protection
> [Extended] from the tip of Najrān to the desert of
> Thamūd

> I have sworn to him: "You did not envision it!
> [Such protection] is far, farther than the farthest
> distance!"[20]

Notice here the terms in which the poet's discourse on character is framed. Although putatively about Yemen's "protection," the more urgent matter is visibility, more precisely, visual uncertainty. This theme is introduced by the character of the sleeper but is developed in more explicit terms: "I saw it," "He thinks that he saw," "You did not envision," and so forth. From the 1980s onward, such specular anxiety increasingly has engaged a trope of character in many of the most popular cassette poems.

The duplicity of sight occasioned by shifty character is especially disturbing, given how stable highlanders imagine sight to be. Commonsense idioms suggest that sight is the most reliable, the least morally suspect, of the senses. A highland proverb neatly captures this sensibility: "The gap between good and evil is only four fingers wide" *(baīn al-khaīr wa-l-sharr arbaᶜ banān)*. If the palm of the hand is placed on the cheek, only four fingers separate the eye—the keenest sensor of "good"—from the ear and its temptations to hearing "evil."

Insofar as character destabilizes a primary medium of apperception, I suggest that the trope invites consideration of a wider range of potentially moral media. The generative reflexivity of character in this respect is expressed in a broader set of philosophical ideas about selfhood and the relation of the self to the natural world. This perspective was outlined for me by Yemen's foremost poet laureate, ᶜAbdallah al-Baraddūnī, who chose the trope of character (ṭibāᶜ) to talk about the defining skills of the folk poet.[21] Character, he explained, marks the difference between sentient humans and animals. Specifically, character emerges from two sensory domains. The first domain is linked to basic bodily needs—eating, drinking, sleeping, and so forth. The second domain is more imaginative and is best expressed as poets reflect back on life experiences with poetic as well as religious insight. It is this second, more reflective domain, al-Baraddūnī explained, that is especially important to the development of character. I would add that the poet's observations here roughly map onto the model of authorship that I have proposed—a model that emphasizes reflection on something original and close at hand (like bodily needs) from a more distanced, abstracted (and, as I ultimately suggest, circulatory) vantage point.

The bifurcation of character between natural and symbolic orders is to some extent reminiscent of early European moral philosophy, with which national poets like al-Baraddūnī are familiar. But this framework also draws from a metaphysics of human nature that has had considerable currency throughout Yemen as well as in

other parts of the Arab world. In discourses of Islamic science, philosophy, and theology, the term *ṭibāᶜ* has been deployed, along with its equivalents *ṭabīᶜah* and *ṭābiᶜ*, to refer to a mutable principle of motion and rest.[22] Cassette poets are elaborating the dynamics of this principle through their own historical and technical dilemmas: The semantics of the term *ṭibāᶜ* are employed with new effects by framing the duplicity of character in terms of inscription. From the verb *ṭabaᶜ*, meaning ''to impress,'' ''to imprint,'' or simply, ''to print,'' *ṭibāᶜ* conveys a sense of character that is figuratively marked, the second-order predicate of an original. In the Yemeni highlands, where literacy has historically been restricted, the original from which the imprint is drawn has typically been oral articulation. Loud speech that echoes from peak to peak indexes the vitality of social persons in poetry, and countless metaphors compare effective speech to thunder, storms, or flash floods—natural processes that express a poet's powerful locution. When the imprint of voice implies a separate replication, then, heightened attention is drawn to the mediation of language and to the problematic of this mediation for authors.

In many poems I have collected, the term *ṭibāᶜ*, as character, is introduced precisely at the point when the poet mentions marks of writing or script. This tendency to characterize orality with scriptive tropes appears to have some historical roots. A Yāfiᶜī poet writing in the mid-18th century, for example, sent a written response to a second poet, whose tribe—the Ḥāshid—was at war with Yāfiᶜ at the time. Referring explicitly to his receipt of a written ''mark,'' in a section typically reserved for acknowledging a correspondent's initiation letter, the Yāfiᶜi poet declares:

The Ḥāshidī's mark arrived, and we have discovered
  That [his] tongue is layered with impressions
    (ṭibayyiᶜ)
Some have character *(ṭabᶜ)*, while others have
    character stamped upon them *(mutaṭṭabiᶜ)*
  Like stars fading in the west, verses [those that] rise
    in the east
There is rabble amidst [us], and tribes
  You are the rabble, and the tribes are Yāfiᶜ[23]

In these verses, it is precisely the arrival of the opponent's ''mark,'' or *raqm*—from the verb ''to write,'' *raqama*—that the semiotics of character is invoked, in all its problematic. The opponent's ''tongue,'' ''layered with impressions,'' confirms his ''stamped'' character, whereas the Yāfiᶜī poet's own character, defined in contradistinction, rises like a radiant star attesting to his tribe's more radiant character. One should note, too, of course, the deployment of a metaphor of visibility to further the poet's intimations: His opponent's star fades into dusk,

as his own rises visibly at dawn. Although the tongue is the principal icon of character, the rotation of images confirms the poet's own characterological eminence—although again, in a manner foreshadowing the penchant for irony that is the hallmark of many cassette poets—images prove especially mercurial, setting and rising in the west and east.

Among other early Yemeni poets, a slight variant on the verbal root *ṭ-b-ᶜ* indexed more powerful, inward agents that could be summoned forth by script. The term *ṭābiᶜ* had long been used for an invisible, conjuring force that beckoned the poetic muse, although such a force is rarely mentioned by Yemenis anymore. Unlike the muses for Greek poets, as noted by anthropologist Lucine Taminian (2000:99–100), the *ṭābiᶜ* was a highly personal companion and was not associated with genre or shared by all poets who composed in a particular genre. In the opening verses of a qaṣīdah by Yahyā ᶜUmar, one of Yemen's most celebrated singers and poets who is reputed to have lived in the early 18th century, the *ṭābiᶜ* seems to be invoked in no uncertain terms through script, although its accompanying spectral apparitions seem to provide no surer guidance to the poet:

Yahyā ᶜUmar said: By God, I didn't know
  That yearning could do this to me
By God, had I known, I would not have grown mad
  I would have been a brave poet, in confronting
    love
Out in the open, I would have cured my passion
  Rising to become Yahyā the Yāfiᶜī
[Yet] late into the night, how I've sought and found
    nothing
  I'll write out the script, and set down my ''*ṭābiᶜ*''
How many labors I witnessed
  They became like visions, not a thing remained
    with me

The poet imaginatively addresses his torturous yearning and inability to have acquired foreknowledge concerning the ways of courtship when he describes himself rising to self-authorization as ''Yahyā the Yāfiᶜī.'' But when he tries to commit his authorship to pen, with the assistance of his *ṭābiᶜ*, his efforts once again dissolve into visual and objectual loss. The false promise of the muse-inspiring *ṭābiᶜ* is performed through yet another layer of visual marking by recent Yāfiᶜī editors who published this poem in a paperback volume of Yahyā ᶜUmar's verse: In an unusual editing decision seen nowhere else in the book, the word *ṭābiᶜ* is set between quotation marks (Ghūlabī et al. 1993:77). The abstracting demands of the *ṭābiᶜ* force may yet exert their power on authors.

The contrast in both of these examples of early Yāfiᶜī poetry between essential, authentic oral articulation and false, alienating written script would be glossed by Derrida

(1974) as an example of "logocentrism," the plague of much Western philosophy, which, as he argues admirably, has held writing to articulate a fundamental alienation of the self from some unitary, oral Other. Although logocentrism does inform anxieties of mediation in the Arab world, the equivalences between communicative coding and subjectivity, between signs of orality or writing and notions of "original" selves, vary historically, as conditions of mediation change, as well as pragmatically, that is to say, according to sociolinguistic contexts and communicative strategies.

In a 21st-century cassette industry in which poets and singers from across Yemen are collaborating toward the production of audio-textual material, duplicitous mediation remains a pivotal issue. In an industry in which a whole host of song and musical registers are being introduced to traditional poetry to generate sales, however, the problematic marks of character are being recast in a somewhat broader spectrum of communicative codes.

Responding to a poet who has challenged his stature, the famous southern Yemeni cassette poet Shāyif al-Khālidī "Bū Lawzah" begins his qaṣīdah in this way:

> Bū Lawzah [said]: my place is stalwart, every red fire aflame
>> Because a hunter sets his sight on me, though he shoots a hundred bullets
> Woe to al-Ṣonbaḥī (his opponent)! For he is in my wildfire, yet knows not
>> Where the [fiery] journey leads, [though] he dances to it with his double-reeded flute
> Too bad he didn't show respect with his sayings or with a heroic dialect
>> For he is a regular guy, it is not his custom to vaunt with his poetry
> His courage and reputation are as a poet from Hamrah, but he is no poet!
>> He told us this so he would appear clever, so that one could know his share and price,
> And now his tongue got long, opening ears to the charlatan
>> So that he now attacks his uncle. [Sure] he brought water, [but] *sans* the channel [to channel it].[24]

Although addressing, in the most general terms, the results of local elections and national politics, the narrative framework of the poem centers on character—the poet's own, his opponent's, and that of other cassette poets. In these verses, moreover, what perverts character is not written marks or inscriptions but, rather, metaphors of sound: a "tongue" that "opens ears to the charlatan," "sayings," a "heroic dialect," and a "double-reeded flute." In an audio-recording industry in which political verse is being reproduced by a motley new cho-

rus of aspiring poets, many of whom tailor their poems to the interests of popular, singing "artists" *(fannānīn),* the poet attends closely to the dangerously persuasive powers of wanton words and sounds. People can mischaracterize themselves, the poet suggests, as his opponent tried to do. Indeed, as a forewarning, the old discourse of shifty images initiates the first few verses: Although the poet declares his own "place" to be fixed and "stalwart," his opponent, who is the supposedly watchful hunter, fails to recognize the poet's "red fire aflame." As in the martial 18th-century poem I mentioned earlier, specular faculties index oral faculties, and shiftiness in one domain can imply shiftiness in another. But the ground that separates sight from sound, good from evil, is all too human: "four fingers" in the proverb previously mentioned and character in poetic terms, in both cases a difference of mediation. In the earlier poem, this mediated difference was made available for consideration by writing; the arrival of the written mark provided an occasion for considering characterological duplicity. In an increasing number of cassette poems, however, it is sound (the "double-reeded flute") that becomes the mark of difference between images, with all their potential transience, and an ideal, and now vehemently idealized, oral primacy.

The dialectic toward productive song

Let me step back, for a moment, to consider the subjective entailments that such transformations in character are enabling. As Derrida's logocentrism becomes particularly unsustainable as a guide to textual and moral practice, a better account is needed of how the cassette industry is helping to condition productive anxieties.

The dialectic of the evident *(ẓāhir)* and the concealed *(bāṭin)*—the dialectic so central to the notion of character I have been discussing—has a long history in popular mystical practice in the Arab world and is richly elaborated in centuries of Islamic moral philosophy.[25] Most poets have ready access to such discourses (note the aforementioned verse "[The finest] incense exudes what it contains [*yihtawī*] and displays [*aẓhara*]"). I argue, however, that, for poets who confront the circulation of their poems on the cassette-recording market, the discourse of the evident and the concealed (in quotidian terms, the seen and the unseen) becomes inflected by a trope of character whose ironic terms express certain problems that arise when epistolary correspondence is subject to forces of technological and industrial mediation.

As I have been explaining, a certain moral problematic of audio mediation is expressed by cassette poets. Such poets have concerns with the effects of the recording media on their work, and their concerns are expressed with equal urgency by singers as well as audiences, who,

in numerous interviews I conducted, expressed keen interest in discussing the demands of new political, social, and economic forces on poetic form and practice. To be sure, new media technologies such as cassettes are seen to provide poets and singers with extraordinary access to public audiences and can bring political leverage, cultural influence, and fame. But benefits of media are offset by costs. Frequently, popular poets are accused of softening their political criticism to appease state or sectarian interests. No less serious to poets' integrities are privatized concentrations of cultural and economic power: A commercial, metropolitan pop-song industry represents a constant threat to the political and moral loyalties of poets, particularly as tales circulate of immense profits being won by singers and songwriters who have reached the limelight but who have sold their own local cultural traditions and audiences cheaply. For many, the temptations of fame are leading poets into alleyways of suspect intentions.[26] Scales of broadening circulation and publicity that are made available to folk poets and singers are of concern at more mundane levels, too. Some fans complained to me that in a radically decentralized and expansive cassette market, poet correspondents no longer know one another and have trouble pitching their verses to the actual social positions and habits of their addressees. More common are stories about unwarranted pretensions, outright charlatanry, and mistaken identities.

Rather than baldly denying the pressures of the market, cassette poets are leading the way in reconsidering their roles as authors in the marketplace. Of course, the more self-declaimed political poets decry those who openly take money or gifts for their verses: To barter poems for monetary return is to impugn one's credibility as an impartial political pundit. Nevertheless, as would-be exemplars of practical, workaday realism, poets acknowledge that words are by no means impervious to the influence of things precious or monetary. The Bū Lawzah verses I quoted, for example, spoke of an opponent's "tongue," which extends outward, threatening to get away from his control because he pursues a "share" and "price" for his words. In an increasing number of cassette poems from the late 1970s onward, as the cassette industry has reached full steam, metaphorical comparisons of speech to commerce have explored the alienation of words from authors—to effects more or less beneficial, depending on poets' strategies (see Miller 2002a).

Given that the recording industry, in particular, is seen to have a powerful influence on the popularization and commercialization of verse, references to music, song (and dance), and the double-reeded flute—quintessential registers of aural entertainment in Yemen—become iconic of buying and selling. In many poems, audiovisual media are represented explicitly as cheapening politi-

cal poetry. Issued on the heels of the 1994 Yemeni war, for example, one cassette features a northern poet who sarcastically wonders how his opponent, in this case, again, "Abū Lawzah," can welcome the postwar outcome when he had once sung and danced for communist ideologues:

> After the solution was imposed by cannon and rifle
>   Abū Lawzah the stern yielded, his character gave way.
> What gained supremacy, and changed its character and the arena?
>   Did you see him perform ablutions? Or was it only deceit by the deceiver?
> Yesterday, Jubaĭqah and Jaᶜjaᶜah were in a ditch [a reference to separatist leaders]
>   Today, [with] their total defeat, their sails have been hoisted!
> How do I interpret your manner, when he was dancing
>   His power amplified by the two importers of rumor? [perhaps Marx and Lenin]
> How you sing of them and how your anthems supported them
>   In the pulpits and on television and radio.
> Any interpretation was convincing, except that which was convincing
>   May God destroy the world's greed and the gains of wheedling.[27]

The poet's oscillation here between second- and third-person pronouns underscores how his opponent is a characteristic shifter. Such implications are confirmed by initial themes of specular uncertainty and elaborated as the poet tries to "interpret your manner" *(ufassir sulūkak)*.[28] Visual cues slip toward unseen, inward intensions in subsequent verses, as the power of "dancing" is amplified by "rumor" and then broadcast through song via classic instruments of state media: the pulpits (oral–visual), television (electronic audiovisual), and the radio (strictly aural). The commercial duplicity of character, thus, becomes explicitly underscored in terms of a difference of sonic mediation that abstracts potent oral articulation into registers of more passive reception.

In the efflorescence of recorded audio media that developed over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, character, thus, acquired a range of audio registers whose moral qualities become calibrated in proximity to the popular market and to entertainment *(sala)*. One could chart such registers on a scale of declining moral authorship, a scale that maps the anxieties of poets per se on an axis of declining orality, from—at the top—powerful oral articulation, often expressed in classic tribal genres and idioms, to oral news from more reliable sources to rumor from less reliable sources and, finally, to song with musical

accompaniment. That said, I hope I have also made clear how such a taxonomy is at once (1) the historical and conditional response of a specific group of cassette poets who, engaged with the recording market, find themselves confronted with specific moral liabilities and challenges; and (2) a response that is actively reflected on and queried as poets attempt to secure a more reliable ground of authorship that can translate their verse across conventional moral boundaries. Thus, poets compare their words with commerce and song. Thus, too, they rework the moral implications of given audio registers by foregrounding, sidelining, or ironically flipping their conventional indices in the interests of gaining rhetorical advantage among growing popular audiences.

As cassette poets competitively characterize one another amid an array of aural registers whose instability is confirmed by shifting images and mobile things, some of the surest grounds of truth become, ironically, written. Where authorship through orality is especially liable to appropriation and transformation by an audiocassette market, writing becomes a comparatively more stable index of character, especially in its distance from market pressures. A rich semiotics of legitimate inscription, thus, emerges in many cassette poems, as handwritten letters, legal documents, official stamps, reliable newspapers, and other media are cited by poets as evidence of moral rectitude. One northern cassette poet, thus, chastises a southern correspondent for praising socialist party leaders, accusing him specifically of signing documents without legitimate authority:

> There before you is ʿAlī Sālim, Muḥsin, and Sālim
>   To whom you make melody with cassettes, as if with films
> They won't pour you a drink if you are thirsty and starving.
>   I have your complete news, by pages and pens:
> Some chargé d'affaires like you didn't sign with the hand of a judge,
>   And [their] affair[s] ended with prison, death, or execution[29]

The problem here is sonic entertainment—which the poet evokes in the opening verse by referring to his opponent as a cassette-producing charlatan; his "melody," coded at the lower end of the taxonomy of virtue, is compared to "films." To underscore the severity of his opponent's moral shortcomings, the poet turns to references of writing in subsequent verses: Although he writes truthfully with "pages and pens," his opponent fails to use writing responsibly, with potentially disastrous ends. In such poems, writing still proves dangerously circulatory and can be bent toward nefarious purposes (hence, a frequent ironic tenor in references to writing). Nevertheless, a semiotics of communicative stability is made available to cassette poets when, confronting the risks of a commercially driven recording market, they signal affiliation with long-standing institutions of literate authority. Such institutions are indexed by appropriate tokens not only of divine scripture and Islamic law but also of more secular institutions, such as state bureaucratic offices (the courthouse, official thumbprints, and identity cards), state-managed print media (newspapers and journals), and formal and semiformal educational venues (diplomas and written letters). By foregrounding tokens of writing—and, indeed, practices of writing, as well (the most famous cassette poets always recite their qaṣīdahs from very large and visible books when performing in front of audiences; recitation of poetry by rote is more often the custom of print-published authors)— poets resort to more institutionally sanctioned codes of authorship, codes that, as enfranchised literate agents, they can carry with them wherever they, and their poems, might travel.

Note here that such references to institutionalized literate authority are not solely concerned with Islamic precepts but are also about civic virtue, more generally. Cassette poets lack religious training, so they naturally hedge their appeals to religious authorization. By contrast, they show far greater relish for signs of state and legal literate authority, such as bureaucratic stamps, driver's licenses, official documents, banknotes, and so forth. Indeed, these tokens of scriptive authority have had increasing relevance for Yemenis both at home and abroad in the decades after independence, as literacy rates have climbed along with expanding bureaucracies and standardized forms of personal documentation. Although poets, thus, borrow authorizing force from literate competences long associated with Islam, they are also translating these traditional competences into the conditions of everyday civic life and, in the process, creating new vocabularies of virtuous character.

Pre-scribing truths

Cassette poets, then, have been seeking marks of inscription to create a space for themselves in which authorship is more institutionally secure precisely for its distance from the treacherous playgrounds of spoken and heard sound. In contrast to a conventional axis of valuation, it is the public and visible presence of the inscribed word that makes it so morally secure. Poets' return full circle to a state of original powerful oral articulation, this time with a crucial difference, begs the obvious question: How have they been able to reverse what, in a discourse of the seen and the unseen, has been such a liability? The transduction would appear no small feat. For cassette poets ultimately have to confront the fact that inscription is, fundamentally, an imagistic medium that can be manipulated and distorted.

I would suggest that much of the secret to this puzzle lies in the fact that the signs of visual inscription that poets are employing are not actually visible. Recall that this strategy of returning to visual marks has emerged as a specific response to the dissemination of poetry on audio-cassette, in an industry in which authoritative, political words are mingling with the commercial production of song and music. Faced with such auditory perversion, cassette poets locate their own authorial integrity in an idiom of inscription, as I have shown. Inscription now becomes fixed, however, its textual power made immanent precisely in its removal from a visual world and its encompassment within a solely aural world. To be sure, poets use signs of writing, but these signs are, within the rhetorical fray in which moral grounds are being won and lost, heard on audiocassette, rather than seen. Poets depend on recorded sound for much of their authority, and identifying heard words with a fixed legitimacy—which is what signs of inscription effectively do—helps them to reclaim an oral capacity that is effectively localized and genuine.

Poets' discovery of an oral authorship made possible by unseen script is by no means unique in the Arab–Islamic world. Since at least the seventh century, the prophet Muḥammad's oral message to humanity has been insured against those who would mistakenly or willingly corrupt it by its permanent inscription in the "Book"—God's unseen book on high, in which divine law and the fate of each individual are meticulously recorded. God's authority is crucially oral, and the Qur'an has long been memorized and passed on from generation to generation through recitation without any assistance of literacy or a knowledge of writing. Nevertheless, it is God's authorship of hidden scripture that ensures the wide circulation of his words, their translation in numerous dialects and languages, such that rearticulation presents no threat to authorial integrity.

This discourse of hidden script and books is an extremely persistent one throughout the Arab world, as noted by other ethnographers (see Shryock 1997:213–221; also Eickelman 1978; Gilsenan 1987; and Messick 1996). I have encountered the discourse numerous times in Yemenis' narratives about history, genealogy, and important events, the true versions of which are said to be recorded in unique tomes that are never ultimately produced. Cassette poets are drawing from this logic of entextualization ("I have your complete news, by pages and pens"). Cassette poets' relation to the recording market, however, puts them in a rather peculiar spot. For one thing, they are crafting persuasive verse in an industry that is investing audio texts with new kinds of authority. As tens of thousands of copies of their poems are inscribed, not onto pages but onto polyester recording tape, new discourses of authenticity are being produced. The

notion of an "original copy" (nuskhah aṣliyyah), for example, has emerged in the Arab recording world. An original copy is a higher-priced, more-genuine cassette copy of a supposed original text, one that is crucially an audio recording, rather than a written document. Forms of audio authority are also being newly created, if not problematically so, in a recording market that is radically decentralized and poorly regulated. Confronting the emergence of such new, and questionable, forms of authorship, cassette poets are keenly attuned to the ironies of original texts, just as they are attuned to the ironies of original authors. The trope of character, I would suggest, is precisely where the contradictions and possibilities of authorship for modern moral orators can be explored.[30]

Manfred Schneider (2001) considers in a suggestive recent account of early forms of religious mediation how the exchange of written letters in early Christendom facilitated new forms of authority and authorship. He suggests that, whereas early Judaic authority had bolstered the integrity of its predominantly oral transmission by investing sacred written texts with the power to transmit absolute original utterances, St. Paul and the apostles invested the image of the written word with the iconic immanence of spirit, which could be accessed by any faithful believer (Schneider 2001:202–203). Although the interpretive competences of viewers would become more radically expressed in participatory acts of reading only after the Protestant print revolution in the 16th century, the scriptural image in early Christendom was on its way to becoming authorized through independent human interpretation as much as through hierarchies of orally codified divine authority. In the case at hand, the aural reproduction of audiocassettes ensures a scriptive durability that early Judeo–Christian–Islamic believers did not have. The immanence of the image clearly has a rough equivalent. Given the popular and vernacular production of cassette authors, however, the image has been subsumed within the authorial (original) if still iterable (disseminatable) vocal presence of sung cassette poetry. The spoken word is no longer the mouthpiece of a genuine presence of an author; rather, it has become chartable in degrees removed from a range of authorships.

Conclusion

The trope of ṭibāᶜ that I have discussed in this article clearly accesses many of the same inscriptive dialectics that have distinguished the English term *character* (thus, my translation of the term). As with the English term, it is the inscriptive and indeed iterative aspects of ṭibāᶜ that become especially salient in poets' metacommentaries on the problem of mediation. In Yemen, however, the tropic analogies of ṭibāᶜ are articulated not in a literate culture of upper-bourgeois society, but among vernacular

poets who are using written correspondences and audio-cassettes to convey recited and sung verse. In such conditions of textual production, authorship is expressed through aesthetic norms that differ from those captured by the novel, with its emphasis on the effects of subjectivity that are enabled by new forms of scriptive, particularly literary, circulation (maps, calendars, newspapers, letters, banknotes—in an 18th-century idiom—and so forth).

As I have suggested, a popular aesthetics of the seen and the unseen remains the informing thread that stitches together poets' reflections on character. Where ṭibāᶜ foregrounds script and what is seen, the trope allows reflection on what leads away from the viewer, away from more essential inner, unseen qualities that may promise a certain truth. Crucially, however, poets articulate this realm of unseen truth in different registers as transformations in media present them with different expressive challenges. Here I move from an aesthetics of first-order indexicality (embedded in the norms of communicative practice) to a kind of second-order aesthetics that is marked by a more pronounced, creative reflexivity (Silverstein 1996: 293–294). This reflexivity is institutionally relative. In written epistolary practice, especially before independence in Yemen, when writing was mastered by few, written script's mediated Other was oral articulation, whose supposedly embodied, natural qualities complemented and secured authorship through writing. Over the last four decades in Yemen, the imagistic and the seen have gradually shifted from writing, the marked medium of the recited epistolary tradition, to aurality, the uncertain medium of a wildly prolific cassette industry. A shift in the characterizing of media has, I suggest, considerable moral entailments. With the cacophony of double-reeded flutes and audiocassettes, the Otherly register of truth becomes mundane forms of writing that are unseen; in particular, when such a register is embodied in the words of poets that are then rearticulated by singers, truth resides in a sonic medium whose originary value becomes manifest only in relation to inscription. At an analytic level, the subjective index of poets' newfound vocal agency requires a project of what one might term "phonogrammatology": a study of perceived sonic forms whose fixity is secured through possible differences in the scriptive double.[31] Ethnography provides the surest preventative against abstracting such apperceptions from ongoing social contestations—in this case, to wit, those occurring within a specific industry of pop-song and political verse.

I have argued that the trope of character privileges scriptive analogies. I would suggest, moreover, that further consideration of other scriptive or, more broadly, image-doubling tropes could provide significant leverage for understanding the cultural politics of authorship in other contexts.[32] As a mode of subjectivity that is especially attuned to how discursive authority influences ex-pressive capacities, authorship is best approached in both pragmatic terms, as a "footing" (Goffman 1981) that is achieved, maintained, and cultivated, and in political and historical terms, as a discourse of power that advantages some performers over others. The function of such marks of difference in interrogating as well as in perpetuating power hierarchies may well be evident not only in the strategies of poets working in the stranger hinterlands of the recording industry but also in folk ideologies of authorship, more generally.

I suggest that such scriptive reflexivity is likely to become more, rather than less, germane to studies of modernity as discourses of citizenship popularize neoliberal horizons of legality, as multinational corporations increasingly influence occupational and stylistic competences, as large numbers of young, educated men and women confront labor shortages with associational and affective adjustments, as faiths of scripture mobilize toward recruitment and political influence, and as media technologies continue to inform sign flow in all of these domains. Crucially, however, as my analysis of character in Yemen also suggests, authorship emerges not only in degrees of proximity to, but also, critically, in degrees of remove from such literate marks.[33] For Yemeni cassette poets and their fans, authorial characters become most convincing when rearticulated in the sounds and voices of those who are actively engaged in the moral claims of political life.

Notes

1. The poem is by a southern Yāfiᶜī poet, Yaḥyā al-Sūlaĭmānī, an internal security official during the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), who has a reputation for unflinching political satire. The respondent, ᶜAbdallah "Abū Qaĭs" al-ᶜUlafī al-Hāshidī, a part-time migrant in Qatar, is of the Hāshid tribe of northern Yemen. Both al-ᶜUlafī's poem and al-Sūlaĭmānī's response were released by Ḥusaĭn ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir in 1986, on cassette no. 57. Al-Sūlaĭmānī's poem begins with a meditation on the difference between the "good character-muse" *(ṭābiᶜ al-gaĭd)* and the "coward" *(fasl).* Notice in the following excerpt from ᶜUlafī's response how the trope of circulating character is reiterated, with a careful prelude that features a graphic display of charlatanry:

> [Sahhāgī] has no steed, no truck, nor even any engine
> After nine years of commerce, his engine has gone
>   kaput
> He has become distracted, lost, obsessed with pleasing
>   sights

> By my account, he rides with no authority, carries no
> standard
> His is nothing but a character who enjoys jesting and
> concealment
> He wants to tickle a camel, but camels don't laugh
> when tickled

2. In these verses, the southern poet's description of his north-ern correspondent's government as royalist and ''reactionary'' evokes a rhetorical framework that was commonly heard among southern socialists before the 1990s. Categorizations of Middle Eastern discourses into ''tribal'' and ''national'' frameworks have a voluminous literature. For Yemen, see Adra 1994; Caton 1990; Dresch 1989, 1994; and Miller 2002a, 2002b.

3. Although character is partly deployed to assign responsibility and establish intentionality *(niyyah),* I suggest that its use also enables reflection on the multiplicity of subjectivities as informed by historically situated media regimes. A study of character, thus, allows one to introduce broader material considerations to studies of situated pragmatic negotiations over the social assignations of truth and ''reality'' (see Rosen 1984). Whereas studies of inten-tionality often explore how shared norms and social sensibilities are leveraged toward instantiations of public, visible agency, my analysis of character begins with a visual problematic of circulat-ing things that is used by interlocutors to consider inward, invisible intentions, and ultimately, to manage them relationally and thereby build moral credibility. However emphasized, inten-tionality and character can obviously work together in tremen-dously productive ways.

4. *Ta'līf,* the standard literary term for ''authorship'' in the Arab world, concisely expresses the moral stakes that I outline in this article (although the term is rarely mentioned by ver-nacular poets). From the verb ''to join harmoniously, to unite,'' and, concomitantly, ''to compose through assemblage,'' *ta'līf* foregrounds an unstable tension between compositional unity and multiplicity. Emile Beneveniste and Jacques Derrida have explored the semantic elaborations of this dialectic in religious discourse by noting a distinction that has routinely cropped up in Western debates over religious inquiry since Cicero between religion as a practice of binding or uniting (from the Greek notion ''ligare'') and religion as a practice of assembling or gathering (from the Greek notion ''legare''; see Derrida 1998). Setting aside the applicability of such distinctions to actual debates over religion in Europe or the United States, one can observe similar metaphysical antinomies at work in discourses of both authorship and religion. Unfortunately, authorship has come to be more frequently associated with individual and often secular identity (undoubtedly an association pro-moted by religious orthopraxy), and its substantial moral claims are underestimated.

5. Scholarship on qaṣīdah poetry has long focused on the relation between first-person narrational frameworks and a com-plex weave of second- and third-person verbal suffixes and pro-nominal markers that invest the authorial voice with rich social indexicality (Gelder 1983; al-Hamīrī 1999; Lyons 1999:38). The generative influence of Arabic qaṣīdahs on European lyric poetry has been explored by scholars of Spanish troubador *kharjas* (Reckert 1993) and later European traditions of romantic ode (Stetkevych 1975). From the verb *qaṣada,* ''to aim for'' or ''to intend,'' the qaṣīdah is a terrific performative resource that is often leveraged toward hortatory ends, typically expressing moral conviction, eulogizing one's community, or praising a patron. The qaṣīdah's remarkably durable couplet and rhyming structures and conventional themes have enabled the genre to circulate in

recognizable form such that well-established qaṣīdah traditions can be found throughout North Africa, Turkey, Central Asia, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

6. The interdependence between concepts of ''true'' authorial texts and markets of intellectual production that are increasingly collaborative and commercialized has been richly explored in the case of Western biomedical publishing by Mario Biagioli (1999). As Biagioli (1999:25–26) suggests, the truth of authors' unique contributions becomes especially important when publishing is accompanied both by escalating rewards in status and money and by greater demands for collaboration. It is the author's resurgence as a locus of universal responsibility, rather than the author's ''death'' (Barthes 1975, 1977; Certeau 1988), that secures the moral validity of knowledge and its potential to ensure individual credit. In the Yemeni cassette industry, credit is largely accrued in the form of fame, political influence, and status; political poets vehemently disclaim receiving financial compen-sation for their verses, and singers often follow suit, although proceeds can accrue in the form of gifts, hospitality, invitations to prestigious events, and valuable contacts. As I suggest later, the commercialism of the cassette-recording industry is, thus, more of moral than financial concern for audiences, a factor that helps preserve a wider latitude for multiple forms of authorial truth value than seems to be available in a Western biomedical publishing industry.

7. I made three separate visits to Yemen between the summers of 1995 and 1998.

8. *Zāmil* poetry, typically four to eight verses, is the favored genre in this scholarship (Caton 1990:127–154; Ḥārithī 1990).

9. For introductions to Yemeni song and music, see Miller 2005.

10. The epistolary exchange of classical Arabic qaṣīdahs be-tween lettered elites on the Arabian Peninsula has received con-siderable attention by scholars (ᶜAwadaīn 1980; al-Baraddūnī 1998; Shāmī 1966; Socin 1901; Sowayan 1985). Studies of episto-lary verse composed in vernacular Arabic of the bidᶜ wa jiwāb style are far rarer; see Caton 1990:27–28, Miller 2002a, Miller and Freitag 2005, and Rodionov 1996.

11. Occasionally, highland poets who migrated to larger Ye-meni cities or who worked abroad gained access to smaller publishing houses that were willing to produce paperback vol-umes of their more literary-vernacular poems. Shāyif al-Khālidī (n.d.), for example, published such a volume in addition to having his work published in several edited collections, news-papers, and a Yemeni literary journal; several other highland cassette poets have seen their qaṣīdahs published in newspapers. In their interactions with me as well as with most highland audiences, however, poets downplayed such publications of literary poems (adabi) in favor of narratives about locally pro-duced poems that had ''redressed problems.''

12. My emphasis on diatextuality, rather than intertextuality, is designed to avoid presuming rigid semiotic alternatives and, instead, to foreground the experience of textual form as a dynamic multiplicity of signs whose referents are potential as much as determined, connoted as much as denoted. I suggest that a diatextual approach invites a fuller theory of the imaginative resources that given aesthetic and discursive regimes bring to textual practice, such that one can resist equating subjects with an overly prescribed set of signifying dispositions.

13. Although the term *diglossia* was originally proposed for the study of Greek speech communities, linguist Charles Ferguson (1959) developed a model for Arabic that has definitively shaped the parameters of sociolinguistic scholarship ever since. For a thorough extension of the model to discourses of textual authority,

see Shryock 1997:217–218; for a superb consideration of diglossia as language ideology, see Haeri 2003.

14. Women as well as men have been outstanding poets throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and oral song and recitation have long been preferred modes of performance, especially in rural areas. In recent decades, as women's public performances have become politicized, determined rural women have increasingly turned to other media channels to disseminate their verse, a topic that I discuss elsewhere (Miller 2002b). Because few women have been able to disseminate their own poems by cassette, however, I do not treat women's poetry in this article.

15. In many Arab countries, cassette recording became available to popular audiences during approximately the same critical nationalist period. Six Arab nations achieved independence from colonial powers in the 1950s and another six in the 1960s; the standard Philips audiocassette, thus, came into wide use between 5 and 15 years after most Arab states achieved nationalist independence. The cassette's revolutionary capacities were first evident in their extraordinary use in political activities, first underground and later public, of the Ayatollah Khomeini's supporters during the Iranian Revolution. In the current millennium, cassettes continue to figure in mobilizing populist dissent in many Arab–Islamic countries, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Morocco, Indonesia, Malaysia, and, of course, Yemen.

16. Lively debates occur over the political and moral utility of cassettes. Political activists with whom I spoke tend to emphasize the utility of cassettes as "letters" (risā'il) or "bullets" (raṣāṣ) that can secure the delivery of local messages to political leaders who remain otherwise inaccessible. Those more concerned with commercial influences on recorded verse, whether cultural purists or cassette-shop owners, contested the locutionary power of cassettes by labeling the technology a "sandwich" (sanwīsh) or "cocktail" (kūktaīl), consumables whose delicious if morally questionable Western origins conveyed rich irony. The cassette poets I discuss in this article situate themselves between these poles: Although acknowledging the vulnerability of their recorded words, they also seek to create characters who can emerge from a commercial cassette market with a newly minted moral integrity. Much of the challenge of such positioning lies in the poets' need to recur to conventional frameworks of identity (e.g., tribal masculinity) to achieve marks of authorial distinction that index their own cassette competences, in particular. Cassette poets are, thus, not free from creating their own versions of cultural purism.

17. Although poets frequently invoked nationalist frameworks, such as the socialist revolution (thawrah) and the rights of workers and citizens, along with ideological antagonisms between communism (shuyuʿiyyah) and reactionaryism (ragʿiyyah), they typically began their poems with fiery tribal invective that had rarely been heard in public media in the 1970s and early 1980s. Such invocations frequently focused on the moral shortcomings of poets' opponents as well as on the gory details of preindependence tribal wars whose honorable precedent could serve as justification for present demands for political participation.

18. In addition to ʿAbd al-Nāṣir, two other Yāfiʿī singers and part-time migrants in Saudi Arabia, both of a younger generation, have gained national recognition as aficionados of political bidʿ wa jiwāb poetry. Foremost among these is ʿAlī Ṣāliḥ b. Jarhūm, whose production surpassed that of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir by 2000 and whose latest release is no. 134. A skilled ʿūd player, Jarhūm's cassettes occasionally include such instruments as the violin and the double-reeded flute. The second singer is ʿAlī b. Jābir, whose innovative instrumental arrangements, generic hybridization, and use of

sound reverberation (common on pop-song cassettes) make him a more controversial figure among audiences in the highlands. Both singers show a special passion for witty and politically provocative qaṣīdahs. Both singers also favor poems that convey tribal idioms with somewhat greater sincerity than was common in preunity days, a trend that corresponds with renewed tribal discourses in southern Yemen and with the interest among younger and migrant audiences in reasserting tribal identity.

19. Poets and singers frequently acknowledged the importance of achieving the right balance between registers and readily discussed the differences between folk poetry (shiʿr shaʿbī) and popular poetry (shiʿr ʿāmī), the latter associated with popular song, official–public events, and commercial media.

20. Released on ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's cassette no. 10, this initiation qaṣīdah to al-Khālidī was written by Aḥmad al-Qaīfī of Radāʿ (former North Yemen). Qaīfī, who died in 1998, was one of the most celebrated of the cassette poets in the series. Along with Aḥmad al-Ṣonbahī, he was one of the earliest poets to launch the debates between northern and southern poets that became the hallmark of the series. As is usual, the response qaṣīdah is sung in succession on the remainder of side A of the cassette.

21. I interviewed al-Baraddūnī on August 29, 1995.

22. The 14th-century Arab philosopher Abū ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), a neo-Aristotelian, deployed the term in his treatise on rarified heavenly bodies, and his theory was extended by other philosophers to certain forms (ṣuwar) and humors of the human body that mediate between corporeal substances and the soul (Haq 1998:25). Crucially, ṭibāʿ emerges for such philosophers not simply from a dialectic of the material and spiritual, the evident (ẓāhir) and concealed (bāṭin), but also from a dialectic that becomes possible only through the interventions of the human intellect and soul. Perhaps not surprising, given my argument here, the semantics of such mediation have been explored in terms of technological intervention from some of the earliest documented appearances of the term ṭibāʿ. The majority of references to the root ṭ-b-ʿ in the Qur'an refer to acts of stamping or "sealing," as in "So God seals the hearts of the unbelievers" (1946:7:101). Moreover, although the verbal cognate "it follows or trails" (yaṭabbiʿ), cited in the famous Qur'anic verse that I include at the outset of the article, lacks such explicit technological doubling, an aesthetic of visuality nevertheless immediately accompanies its mention and conveys a specific sense of poets' mediated characters. Of course, in this article I suggest that the moral resourcefulness of such a trope must be approached through ethnographic study, in this case, through a set of specific dilemmas that poets confront in composing political verse in the Yemeni recording industry.

23. This qaṣīdah has not been released on cassette, as far as I know. I obtained a photocopy of it from a schoolteacher in Yāfiʿ, who had thought so much of the poem that he typed it out to share with associates.

24. The poem is a response to Aḥmad al-Ṣonbahī from al-Baydā' (ʿAbd al-Nāṣir cassette no. 61, 1987). The exchanges between these two poets are the most famous in the ʿAbd al-Nāṣir series, and some (such as those on no. 99, released after the Yemeni War of 1994) have reached hundreds of thousands of listeners. Their contributions feature on approximately 25 percent of the series' cassettes. Al-Ṣonbahī's friendship with al-Khālidī, maintained through family visits and holiday gift exchanges, was well-known, although their sparring often grew heated as tensions flared between Aden and Sanaa.

25. Distinctions between the manifest and outward (ẓāhir) and the nonmanifest and inward (bāṭin) have been elaborated extensively in traditions of Qur'anic exegesis. In popular metapoetic

discourse in Yemen, the terms *ẕāhir* and *bāṭin* are frequently invoked when discussing the meanings of poems, and the category of ''esoteric poetry'' *(shiᶜr bāṭanī)* is formally recognized as a genre. Most Yemenis define this genre more in terms of the use of localized symbols, indigenous knowledge, and moral conduct than in terms of religious mysticism.

26. ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir's cassettes cost approximately 90 YR apiece in 1998 ($0.70), and almost all gross profits from their sale accrue to the cassette shop. Political cassette poets generally disdain suggestions that they take money for their verses. Singers are generally more prone to acknowledge professionalism, especially those who view themselves as popular artists (fannānīn; as opposed to amateur entertainers [*mutribīn*] such as ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir and other political cassette singers). For cassette poets, then, the commercial recording market represents a moral liability at ethical and aesthetic levels more than at a monetary one. Fame *(shuhrah)* is often cited by audiences as exerting the most dangerous influence on poets' work. With the right contacts, poor poets can leverage their ''language of the market'' *(lughat al-sūq)* onto the cassettes of well-known singers and even compel the finest poets to respond to them if only to stifle their slanderous doggerel. Many listeners compare cassette poets unfavorably with earlier poets by saying that the former have grown accustomed to wild ''exaggeration'' *(mubālaghah)* designed to sustain a ''media war'' *(ḥarb iᶜlāmī)* that prevents them from commenting on local conditions with ''dignity and moral virtue'' *(adab w-akhlāq).* Again, fans of cassette poetry regularly celebrate poets' abilities to disseminate political verse widely to help redress urgent social and political tensions. But the same fans also lament the passing of an earlier era in which such tensions were addressed at more local levels with poems that, in one informant's words, were ''measured'' *(mawzūn)* and had ''traces'' *(athār).* Beneath all such comments are concerns about the moral costs of mass circulation as much as of production and consumption.

27. This poem is by ᶜAbdallah al-ᶜUlafī (see n. 1) and was released on ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir's record-breaking cassette no. 99.

28. The verb *interpret* here invokes elaborated formal interpretation (as in Qur'anic interpretation [*tafsīr*]), whereas the verbal object *your manner* foregrounds the inward intensions of a single visible thread or line *(silk).*

29. The poem, by Aḥmad ᶜAlī al-Qaīfī, was sent to Shāyif al-Khālidī (ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir cassette no. 64, 1988).

30. In his brilliant essay on the impact of mechanical reproduction on the experience of authoritative objects, Walter Benjamin (1968) suggests that mechanical reproduction destroys the ''aura'' of objects by alienating viewers from their unique functions in historically situated contexts of usage. I would suggest that such a perspective risks circumscribing ''usage'' into idealized stereotypes, however, that, although perhaps helpful in studying ideology, fail to account for the new functions that technological objects may acquire amid contending historical regimes of truth and knowledge. In the case at hand, the audible original copy may well contain an irony that confirms Benjamin's insights into consumers' sense of object-alienation; but so, too, cassettes are gaining authority as media that help secure the integrity of previous moral utterances. Charles Hirschkind's (2001) work on Islamic cassettes in Egypt is especially helpful in elaborating the utility of cassettes in practices of virtuous attunement. Hirschkind and I both approach alienation through considerations of performativity that are socially and culturally situated.

31. My inspiration for the term *phonogrammatology* comes from an English-language abstract of a dissertation by Swedish scholar Philip Hallden (2001). In what appears to be a fascinating study, Hallden explores the rhetoric of Islamist audiocassette preachers through what he terms *phonogramology,* which he describes as ''the study of audiomedia and its special characteristics.'' My own Derridan rendition of Hallden's term is designed to emphasize a pragmatic account of situated moral claims. As there is no English translation of Hallden's dissertation, I am unable to elaborate on the theoretical and methodological implications of his approach.

32. In Yemen, such scriptive tropes might include wisdom (ḥikmah), expressive dignity (adab), history *(tā'rikh),* documentation *(tawthīq),* and public song *(fann).* As for image-doubling tropes, ethnomusicologist Jean Lambert (1989:71) has noted complaints from popular Yemeni singers and their audiences that televised images of performing artists now index a commercially devalued ''character'' (his term), even as such images have become instrumental to their success.

33. Outlining the need for an anthropology of technology, Madeline Akrich (1992) has argued that a study of the ''description'' of technical objects can help highlight the social objectifications that accompany given technologies and that become ''inscribed'' into the social fabric of local communities. My article illuminates how one group of producers has sought to ''de-scribe'' relations of reproduction that are felt to have been imposed by a cassette industry: namely, by deploying a historical semiotics of writing and orality to highlight a gap between newer demands of authorship being made by the cassette industry and older notions of oral authority that are discursively situated in highlands sociopolitical life. Such a reflexive approach provides an important cautionary to a persistent sociology that insists on distinguishing between the internal (technical) and external (contextual and historical) facets of given technologies. As poets' use of the trope of ṭibāᶜ suggests, it is by remooring the conventional boundaries of cassette recordings to notions of moral constitution, technical reproduction, and genre-relative authorship that the object of the cassette and the social relations it expresses become generative of new horizons of communal identity.

References cited

Adra, Najwa
   1994 Tribal Dancing and Yemeni Nationalism: Steps to Unity. Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée 67: 161–168.
Akrich, Madeleine
   1992 The De-Scription of Technical Objects. *In* Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law, eds. Pp. 205–224. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
al-Baraddūnī, ᶜAbdallah
   1988[1982] Funūn al-adab al-shaᶜbī fī-l-Yaman. Beirut: Dār al-Ḥadāthah.
   1995[1972] Riḥlah fī-l-shiᶜr al-Yamānī qadīmihi wa ḥadīthihi. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr.
   1998 al-Thaqāfah wa-l-thawrah fī-l-Yaman. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr.
al-Hamīrī, ᶜAbd al-Wāsiᶜ
   1999 al-Dhāt al-shāᶜirah fi shiᶜr al-ḥādithah al-ᶜArabiyyah. Beirut: al-Muᶜassasat al-Jāmaᶜiyyah.
al-Khālidī, Shāyif
   N.d. Waḥdah wa man qaraḥ yaqraḥ. Aden: Manshūrat 26 Sibtambir.
al-Maqāliḥ, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz
   1978 Shiᶜr al-ᶜāmiyyah fī al-Yaman. Beirut: Dār al-ᶜAwdah.

ᶜAwaḍaīn, Ibrāhīm
   1980 al-Muᶜāraḍah fī-l-adab al-ᶜarabī. Cairo: Maṭbaᶜat al-Saᶜādah.

Barthes, Roland
   1975 The Pleasure of the Text. Richard Miller, trans. New York: Hill and Wang.
   1977 The Death of the Author. *In* Image-Music-Text. Roland Barthes. Pp. 142–148. New York: Hill and Wang.

Benjamin, Walter
   1968 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. *In* Illuminations. Hannah Arendt, ed. Pp. 217–251. New York: Schocken.

Biagioli, Mario
   1999 Aporias of Scientific Authorship: Credit and Responsibility in Contemporary Biomedicine. *In* The Science Studies Reader. Mario Biagioli and Peter Galison, eds. Pp. 12–30. New York: Routledge.

Caton, Steven
▶1986 Salam Tahiya: Greetings from Highland Yemen. American Ethnologist 13(2):290–308.
▶1987 Power, Persuasion and Language: A Critique of the Segmentary Model in the Middle East. International Journal of Middle East Studies 19(1):77–102.
   1990 Peaks of Yemen I Summon: Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Certeau, Michel de
   1988[1984] The Scriptural Economy. *In* The Practice of Everyday Life. Michel de Certeau. Steven F. Rendall, trans. Pp. 131–153. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Derrida, Jacques
   1974[1967] Of Grammatology. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, trans. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
   1998 Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ''Religion'' at the Limits of Reason Alone. *In* Religion. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, eds. Pp. 1–78. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dresch, Paul
   1989 Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen. New York: Oxford University Press.
   1994 A Daily Plebiscite: Nation and State in Yemen. Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée 67:67–77.

Eickelman, Dale
▶1978 The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and Its Social Reproduction. Comparative Studies in Society and History 20(4):485–516.

Ferguson, Charles
   1959 Diglossia. Word 15:325–340.

Gelder, Geert van
   1983 The Abstracted Self in Arabic Poetry. Journal of Arabic Literature 14:22–30.

Ghānim, Muḥammad ᶜAbduh
   1987 Shiᶜr al-ghinā' al-Ṣanᶜānī. Damascus: Dār al-ᶜAwdah.

Ghulābī, ᶜAlī ᶜAbdallah, Aḥmad Bū Mahdī, Muḥsin Dayyān, and Muthannā Qāsim
   1993 Ghinā'iyyāt Yaḥyā ᶜUmar. Damascus: al-Kātib al-ᶜArabī.

Gilsenan, Michael
   1987 Sacred Words. *In* The Diversity of the Muslim Community. Ahmed al-Shahi, ed. Pp. 92–98. London: Ithaca Press.

Goffman, Erving
   1981 Footing. *In* Forms of Talk. Erving Goffman, ed. Pp. 124–159. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goody, Jack
   1968 Introduction. *In* Literacy in Traditional Societies. Jack Goody, ed. Pp. 1–26. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Haeri, Niloofar
   2003 Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt. New York: Palgrave.

Hallden, Philip
   2001 Islamisk predikan på ljudkassett: En studie i retorik och fonogramologi. Ph.D. dissertation, Center for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University, Sweden.

Haq, S. Nomanul
   1998 Ṭabīᶜa. *In* The Encyclopedia of Islam, vol. 10. T. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. v. Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs, eds. Pp. 25–28. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.

Hārithī, Ṣālaḥ
   1990 al-Zāmil fī al-ḥarb w-al-munāsabat. Damascus: al-Kātib al-ᶜArabī.

Hill, Jane
   2000 Read My Article: Ideological Complexity and the Over-determination of Promising in American Presidential Politics. *In* Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities. Paul V. Kroskrity, ed. Pp. 259–291. Sante Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Hirschkind, Charles
▶2001 The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt. American Ethnologist 28(3):623–649.

Lambert, Jean
   1989 Du 'chanteur' a 'l'artiste': Vers un nouveau statut du musicien. Peuples Méditerranéans 46(January–March): 57–76.
   1997 La médecine de l'âme: Le chant de Sanaa dans la société yéménite. Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie.

Lyons, J. C.
   1999 Identification and Identity in Classical Arabic Poetry. Wiltshire, UK: Aris and Phillips.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice
   1968[1964] The Visible and the Invisible. Claude Lefort, ed. Alphonso Lingis, trans. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Messick, Brinkley
   1996 Media Muftis: Radio Fatwas in Yemen. *In* Islamic Legal Interpretations: Muftis and Their Fatwas. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Brinkley Messick, and David S. Powers, eds. Pp. 311–320. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Miller, Flagg
   2002a Metaphors of Commerce: Trans-Valuing Tribalism in Yemeni Audiocassette Poetry. International Journal of Middle East Studies 34(1):29–57.
▶2002b Public Words and Body Politics: Reflections on the Strategies of Women Poets in Rural Yemen. Journal of Women's History 14(1):94–122.
   2005 Entries for Yemen, Aden, and Sanaa. *In* Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World, vol. 6. John Sheperd, David Horn, and Dave Laing, eds. New York: Continuum.

Miller, Flagg, and Freitag, Ulrike
   2005 Three Poems on British Involvement in Yemen, from the Yemeni Press, 1937. *In* A Sourcebook of Modern Middle Eastern History. Benjamin Fortna, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nājī, Muḥammad Murshid
   1959 Aghānīna al-shaᶜbiyyah. Aden: Dār al-Jamāhīr.
   1983 al-Ghinā' al-Yamanī al-qadīm wa mashāhīruh. Kuwait City: al-Ṭalīᶜah.

Qur'an
   1946 The Holy Qur'an. Y. ᶜAli, trans. Lahore, Pakistan: Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore.

Reckert, Stephen
   1993 Beyond Chrysanthemums: Perspectives on Poetry East and West. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Rodionov, Mikhail
  1996 Poetry and Power in Hadramawt. New Arabian Studies 3:118–133.
Rosen, Lawrence
  1984 Bargaining for Reality: The Construction of Social Relations in a Muslim Community. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Schneider, Manfred
  2001 Luther with McLuhan. *In* Religion and Media. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, eds. Pp. 198–215. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Serjeant, Robert B.
  1951 Prose and Poetry from Hadhramawt. London: Taylor's Foreign Press.
Shāmī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad
  1966 Dāmighāt al-dawāmigh. London: Maᶜhad al-Imām al-Hādi li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Nashr.
Shryock, Andrew
  1997 Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Silverstein, Michael
  1996 Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life. *In* Proceedings of the Third Annual Symposium about Language and Society. Rasako Ide, Rebecca Parker, and Yukako Sunaoshi, eds. Pp. 266–295. Austin: Department of Linguistics, University of Texas.
Socin, Albert
  1901 Diwan aus Centralarabien. Leipzig, Germany: B. G. Teubner.
Sowayan, Saad Abdullah
  1985 Nabati Poetry: The Oral Poetry of Arabia. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Stetkevych, Jaroslav
  1975 The Arabic Lyrical Phenomenon in Context. Journal of Arabic Literature 6:57–77.
Taminian, Lucine
  2000 Playing with Words: The Ethnography of Poetic Genres in Yemen. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan.

Flagg Miller
Department of Anthropology and Religious Studies Program
University of Wisconsin at Madison
1180 Observatory Drive, 5240 Social Sciences Building
Madison, WI 54911
wfmiller@wisc.edu