

Research Article

Psychological Alienation and the Aesthetics of the Lost Place in the Self-Laments of Mālik b. al-Rayb, Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī, and Ibn Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History	This article examines how configurations of place function as a semiotic apparatus that reshapes the lyric self in classical Arabic self-elegy. It focuses on three case studies: Mālik b. al-Rayb's death-bed lament, Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī's Rumiyyāt, and Ibn Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī's laments for lost Sicily, which respectively stage estrangement in the open wilderness, carceral confrontation with a Byzantine Other, and a homeland reconstituted in language. The study pursues three objectives: (i) to trace the shifting relationship between self and place across these texts, (ii) to describe how linguistic and sonic markers of alienation are patterned in each corpus, and (iii) to reassess prevailing critical narratives of the Arabic self-elegy. Methodologically, it combines close reading with semiotic and critical discourse analysis, supported by targeted lexical mapping of place- and exile-related fields and descriptive analysis of pronominal choices and sound structures (refrain, parallelism, echo). The analysis shows, first, that Mālik b. al-Rayb's poem organizes nostalgia around solitary bodily vulnerability in a liminal desert space; second, that Abū Firās's prison odes transform spatial confinement into argumentative self-assertion vis-à-vis both Byzantine captors and an Arabic audience; and third, that Ibn Ḥamdīs's Sicily becomes a mnemonic archive in which communal loss is staged and renewed. Taken together, these findings outline a trajectory (1st–6th AH) from individual farewell poetics toward symbolic resistance and then mnemonic reconstruction, and they offer a comparative framework for the poetics of place in Arabic literature.
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1. Introduction

"Analyzing Mālik b. al-Rayb, Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī, and Ibn Ḥamdīs, this study examines how place reshapes poetic identity under extreme trial. It argues that place functions as a semiotic apparatus that re-engineers the self across contexts of wilderness, captivity, and exile." (Söylemez & Küçüksarı, 2022, p. 1045). To address the neglect of spatial function in existing scholarship—which privileges the ethical in

self-elegy, the political in captivity verse, and the affective in exile—this study proposes the framework of “topographies of fragility.” This concept captures the patterned re-inscription of place and value when the lyric subject confronts the intensified vulnerabilities of dying, imprisonment, or exile. Informed by geocritical debates regarding space as a reservoir of memory and lived experience, the analysis demonstrates how these spatial regimes actively restructure the poetic self (Ghazoul, 2006, p. 118). While drawing on these insights, the article tests and recalibrates them against the specificities of classical Arabic verse. In this tradition, naming sites, invoking abodes and ruins, and opening with the *nasīb* are not mere ornaments but performative acts that redistribute agency between self and environment (Webb, 2020, p. 259).

Scholarship on Mālik b. al-Rayb foregrounds the elegy’s penitential and stylistic dimensions yet largely neglects the critical intersection of religious lexis and toponymic mapping at the threshold of death (‘Alī, 2023, p. 2890). While scholarship on Abū Firās’s *Rumiyyāt* has focused on the politics of honor and princely identity, it has overlooked the carceral spatiality that reshapes pronominal address. This study argues that vocatives and oaths are not mere rhetoric, but essential media of symbolic spatial appropriation within the captive environment (Hermes, 2009, p. 11). Although ‘Sicily as memory’ is a pervasive trope in Ibn Ḥamdīs scholarship, the field lacks a geotextual perspective that systematically integrates toponymic frequency with the poet’s sonic architecture—such as refrain, antithesis, and rhyme—to map the island’s semiotic reconstruction (Carpentieri, 2024, p. 243).

Navigating the tension between referential geography and psychological metaphor, this study adopts a hybrid methodology: close reading disciplined by lightweight lexical cartography and classical gazetteers. It tests the hypothesis that distinct spatial regimes—the open wilderness (self-elegy), the carceral enclosure (captivity), and the reconstructed homeland (exile)—function as semiotic engines. These regimes systematically reconfigure addressee design, value lexicons, and rhythmic-rhetorical techniques, proving that place is not a neutral backdrop but a structural motor of lyric meaning (Sorum, 2011, p. 97).

The analysis operates along three interrelated tracks to operationalize the ‘topographies of fragility.’ First, it traces a trajectory from individual nostalgia and symbolic resistance toward the linguistic reconstruction of place. Second, it examines how the tension between the terminal instant of dying and the protracted intervals of captivity and exile dictates discursive rhythm and pacing. Finally, it investigates the reconfiguration of chivalric legitimacy from martial deed to spatial imagination. Together, these tracks

provide the scaffolding to address the study's central research questions across the three corpora

2. Literature Review

While scholarship on classical self-elegy, captivity, and exile is vast, these genres are seldom integrated into a comparative framework that treats place as a primary agent. Existing studies often prioritize affect or historical circumstance, relegating topography to a mere backdrop. To address this gap, the following review synthesizes relevant research along three thematic axes, moving beyond individual poets to clarify what remains underexplored

2.1. Space as Metaphor and Backdrop

Initial scholarship largely treats space as a static metaphor or secondary setting. In the study of classical self-elegy, specifically regarding Mālik b. al-Rayb, emphasis has traditionally fallen on the rhetoric of repentance and the ethical dimensions of the dying voice, frequently tethered to biographical and historical particulars (Al-Jubouri, 2021, p. 390). Scholarship on both Mālik b. al-Rayb and Ibn Ḥamdīs typically treats toponyms as scenic backdrops or nostalgic indices—markers of lost geography and tribe rather than semiotic operators. While existing readings emphasize sensorial detail and the rhetoric of farewell, they overlook how place functions as a dynamic agent that actively reconfigures pronominal address, value hierarchies, and the temporal horizon of the lament. Consequently, space remains a mere container for experience, rather than the structural force shaping lyric subjectivity (Granara, 2000, p. 395).

2.2. Discourse Under Constraint: Captivity and Carceral Space

A second scholarly vein explores the Rumiyyāt through the poetics of constraint, focusing on honor, pride, and sonic patterning. While the prison serves as a political and psychological frame, its spatial dynamics—boundaries, enclosure, and carceral semiotics—remain largely untheorized. Consequently, captivity is treated as a factual predicament rather than a discursive regime that actively restructures address and confrontation, or enables the symbolic re-appropriation of space through vocatives and oaths (Talafha et al., 2022, p. 7).

2.3. Nostalgia, exile, and spatial memory

A third axis addresses exilic nostalgia, particularly in Andalusī verse. Scholarship on Ibn Ḥamdīs demonstrates how Sicily is reconstructed as a repository of memory through sensorial detail and toponymic catalogs. Yet, these place-names are seldom analyzed as a systematic 'affective mapping,' nor are their sonic

architectures—such as refrain and rhyme—tracked as patterns that organize exilic poetics. Ultimately, place is treated as the object of longing rather than a structuring principle mediating between individual and communal memory (Damirova, 2025, p. 318).

2.4. Place as dynamic agent and the present study's contribution

Across these strands, place remains largely relegated to metaphor or backdrop. This study addresses the absence of a comparative model that unifies self-elegy, captivity, and exile under a shared rubric. By theorizing place as a dynamic semiotic agent, it explores how topography actively re-engineers lyric selfhood, addressee design, and rhetorical technique—corroborating these stylistic claims with rigorous toponymic and lexical indicators (Batcho, 2023, p. 3).

Integrating the verse of Mālik b. al-Rayb, Abū Firās, and Ibn Ḥamdīs, this study introduces 'topographies of fragility'—a comparative framework examining place under conditions of dying, captivity, and exile. By synthesizing close reading with toponymic and lexical cartography, the analysis demonstrates how spatial regimes function as semiotic engines rather than neutral backdrops. Ultimately, this approach redefines place as an active agent in the re-engineering of the self across classical Arabic genres (Benataiba, 2025, p. 7).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Design of the Study

Employing qualitative analysis and descriptive metrics, this study tests the hypothesis that spatial regimes—wilderness, captivity, and exile—systematically restructure lyric voice and rhythmic-illocutionary techniques. By treating place as an active semiotic engine, the analysis traces a trajectory from the personal nostalgia of self-elegy, through the defiant positioning of captivity verse, to the memorial reconstruction of exilic lament (Stamboul, 2024, p. 97).

3.2. Corpus Construction and Sampling

The corpus spans the 1st–6th centuries AH (7th–12th CE), focusing on three paradigmatic clusters: Mālik b. al-Rayb's *yā' iyyah* as the definitive deathbed self-elegy; two select captivity odes from Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī's *Rumiyyāt*, chosen for their spatial density and reflexive depth; and a cluster of exilic poems by Ibn Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī that thematize Sicily through systematic toponymic naming. Prioritizing analytical depth over exhaustive breadth, the study treats these texts as representative geotextual case studies of dying, captivity, and exile

Table 1. Overview of the corpus and sampling.

Poet	Period (AH / CE)	Scenario	Textual basis (edition used)	Sampling note
Mālik b. al-Rayb	d. 60 AH / 680 CE	Deathbed self-elegy in open desert	Dīwān Mālik b. al-Rayb, ed. Al-Qaysī (1969)	Single extended yā'īyyah treated in full as the canonical deathbed self-elegy
Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī	320–357 AH / 932–968 CE	Captivity in Byzantine prison	Dīwān Abī Firās al-Ḥamdānī, ed. al-Dahhān (2017)	Two extended captivity odes from the Rumiyyāt, used as paradigmatic case studies of the prison scenario
Ibn Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī	447–527 AH / 1055–1133 CE	Exilic nostalgia for lost Sicily	Dīwān Ibn Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī, ed. Abbas (1960)	Small cluster of Sicilian nostalgia poems centred on Sicily as memory and lost homeland

Utilizing critically established editions with relevant variants footnoted, Table 1 details corpus metrics. Selection prioritized metrical integrity, distinct spatial signaling, and thematic alignment with deathbed, captivity, or exile, while excluding apocryphal, fragmentary, or spatially sparse texts (Makhoul Sleiman et al., 2024, p. 161).

3.3. Coding Scheme and Light Lexical Mapping

Table 2. Sample coding of spatial and alienation lexemes

Poet	Poem / Example verse (excerpt)	Target lexeme	Field	Spatial regime	Syntactic environment	Sonic / Rhetorical function
Mālik b. al-Rayb	بوادي الغضى أزجي القلاصن النواجيا	Wādī al-Ghaḍā	Place	Open wilderness	Descriptive / narrative clause in opening nostalgic movement	Anchors the nasīb in a concrete desert site; participates in monorhyme and place-name parallelism.
Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī	أيا جارتا هل تشعرين بحالي	jāratā ("neighbour")	Place / boundary	Carceral enclosure	Vocative address	Personifies the prison boundary; vocative functions as refrain-like opening that "opens a window" in the wall.
Ibn Ḥamdīs al-Ṣiqillī	ذكرت صِقلِيَّةً والأسى	Ṣiqilliyya ("Sicily")	Place	Lost / reconstruct ed homeland	Declarative statement in climactic coda	Triggers a chain of recollection; name placed near rhyme-peak, launching a cluster of parallel lines about exile and memory.

To operationalize "place" and "alienation," this study employs a verse-level lexical mapping procedure comprising four stages:

1. Seed List Construction: A lexicon of spatial and alienation-related terms was compiled from standard references and preliminary readings.
2. Manual Coding: Tokens were tagged for morphology and syntactic environment (e.g., vocatives,

imperatives).

3.Contextual Refinement: Ambiguous lexemes were cross-referenced with classical sources to preserve distinctions between referential and metaphorical usage (see Table 2).

4.Aggregation: Frequency data were synthesized to substantiate qualitative interpretive claims with lexical evidence.

This low-overhead lexical mapping responds to recent calls in Arabic comparative poetics to couple interpretive reading with tractable, explicitly documented descriptive procedures (Stamboul, 2024, p. 97). All coding decisions were documented in the spreadsheet, so that another reader could, in principle, retrace the steps and verify the classification of individual lexemes.

Table 3. Relative prominence of spatial regimes across the three corpora (qualitative overview)

Corpus	Open wilderness	Carceral enclosure	Lost / Reconstructed homeland
Mālik b. al-Rayb (self-elegy)	High (desert, watering-places, frontier route)	Absent	Low / implicit (homeland recalled mainly through desert toponyms)
Abū Firās (two captivity odes)	Low (only occasional outdoor or frontier reference)	High (prison, walls, fetters, guards, neighbour of prison)	Low (homeland/court evoked more as political-moral horizon than as mapped space)
Ibn Ḥamdīs (nostalgia poems)	Absent	Absent	High (Sicily, harbours, towns, routes named as mnemonic archive)

While cross-tabulations (not reproduced in full) were used during analysis to see, for instance, where captivity poems concentrate carceral lexemes around first-person plural pronouns, or where exilic laments align homeland terms with communal “we” and memorializing refrains.

5. Finally, integrating lexical data with close reading bridges semiotic details and broader patterns. This framework renders the mapping of “semiotic fields” and “spatial regimes” reproducible while preserving the interpretive granularity essential to literary inquiry.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Mālik b. al-Rayb

Mālik b. al-Rayb The self-elegy of Mālik b. al-Rayb (d. 60/680), a Tamimi brigand-turned-soldier in Khurasan, reconfigures space from passive backdrop to semiotic agent. Through motifs of travel and liminality, the poem frames the desert not merely as a setting, but as an active participant in a rite of passage, transforming personal mortality into a spatial ethics of memory.

4.1.1. The Semiotics of Place

The Semiotics of Place: Desert and Deathbed In Mālik's *yā' iyya*, toponyms delineate a geo-textual itinerary from the Najdi homeland (Wādī al-Ghaḍā) to the Khurasanian frontier (Marw). Far from ornamental, these names serve as indexical signifiers of spatial loss: the former anchors longing, while the latter marks a fatal threshold. This usage exemplifies "desert toponymy" as a discursive cartography, simultaneously mapping physical routes and normative value systems (Al-Qarnī, 2020, p. 2)

4.1.2. The operation of *layta* أَلَا لَيْتَ شِعْرِي هَلْ أَبِيتَنَّ لَيْلَةً ... as a semiotic lever of absence

Layta as a Semiotic Lever of Absence The opening formula *Alā layta shi' rī* transcends simple wish-fulfillment to function as a semiotic lever, shifting the discursive locus from the sensible to the ideal. This establishes a "theatricalized absence" where place is linguistically invoked yet physically unreachable. Pragmatically, *layta* operates as a bouletic operator, codifying the structural gap between reality and desire to signify intrinsic impossibility (Marmorstein, 2016, p. 11).

ومن ذلك قوله في يائته المشهورة

بوادي الغضى أُرْجِي الْقَلَّاصَ النّوْاجِيَا	أَلَا لَيْتَ شِعْرِي هَلْ أَبِيتَنَّ لَيْلَةً
وليت الغضى ماشى الرّكّاب لياليا	قَلَيْتَ الْغَضَى لَمْ يَقْطَعْ الرّكْبُ عَرْضَه
مزارٌ ولكنّ الغضى ليس دانيا	لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِ الْغَضَى لَوْ دَنَا الْغَضَى
وأصْبَحْتُ فِي جَيْشِ ابْنِ عَقَّانَ غَازِيَا	أَلَمْ تَزْنِي بَعَثَ الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهَدَى
أَرَانِي عَنْ أَرْضِ الْأَعَادِي قَاصِيَا	وَأَصْبَحْتُ فِي أَرْضِ الْأَعَادِي بَعْدَ مَا

(Al-Qaysī, 1969, p. 88)

At Wādī al-Ghaḍā I urged the camels on—would that I might pass there one more night! Would that the valley had journeyed with the riders; how I wish al-Ghaḍā were near, though now distinct and denied. I exchanged error for guidance, joining Ibn 'Affān's ranks; once far from the foe, I now wake in their midst.

4.1.3. Discourse and Legitimacy under Spatial Pressure

Discourse and Legitimacy under Spatial Pressure The command, "O my two companions... dismount," signals a discursive conversion. Here, the vocative functions beyond mere affect, recruiting companions as proxies at the grave's liminal threshold. Pragmatically, this direct address confers perlocutionary force upon the utterance, effectively substituting somatic failure with linguistic agency (Schweller et al., 1976, p. 331).

ويكمل الشاعر مستطردا يصف لحظات الموت بأسمى العبارات وأدق التعابير في قوله
 فيا صاحبي رحلي دنا الموت فانزلا
 برابية إني مقيم لياليا
 أقيما علي اليوم أو بعض ليلة
 ولا تُعجلاني قد تبيّن شائيا

(Al-Qaysī, 1969, p. 91)

Companions of the saddle, dismount—death draws near; Upon this hill, I shall long remain. Attend me this day, or but part of the night; Hasten not, for my fate is now laid bare.

4.1.4. Ethical Legitimacy and the Measurement of Distance

Repentance articulates a “geography of values.” In the verse, “By my life, though Khurasan claims my head / I long kept my distance from its gates,” spatial distance is gauged ethically. Here, Khurasan transcends cartography to become a symbolic arena for testing martial subjectivity, separating the poet’s former delinquency from his final testament (Khalīfa, 2024, p. 153).

تقول ابنتي لما رأيت طول رحلتي
 لعمري لئن غالت خراسان هامتني
 سفارك هذا تاركي لا أبا ليا
 لقد كنت عن بابي خراسان نائيا
 إليها وإن مئثموني الأمانيا

(Al-Qaysī, 1969, p. 89)

My two daughters said, when they saw how far my journey led:

“This voyage of yours will leave me, will make me fatherless.”

By my life, if Khurāsān should at last sever my head,

I have long kept far from the twin gates of Khurāsān.

And if I escape those gates, I shall never return,

Not even should you tempt me with every promise of desire.

4.1.5. Geo-intertextuality: Names Whose Functions Shift- Mu‘jam al-Buldan as a regulative frame for names

Geo-intertextuality: Mu‘jam al-Buldan as Regulative Frame Yāqūt’s Mu‘jam al-Buldan provides a necessary regulative constraint, anchoring semantic tiers in historical materiality to preclude unmoored metaphorical readings. This lexical triangulation distinguishes specific spatial functions: Wādī al-Ghaḍā as refuge, al-Rābiya as sepulchral threshold, and Marw as the frontier of ordeal (Serjeant, 1959, p. 584).

4.1.6. From naming to functional “codification

From Naming to Functional Codification Classifying toponyms by function reveals naming as

“semantic legislation” rather than mere description. This mechanism regulates poetic structure, redistributing voice and rhythm. Consequently, name sequences operate as indexical “affective maps,” codifying the desert as a definitive signifier of isolation (Sperl, 1989, p. 31).

4.1.7. Architecture of Echo: the Yā’iyyah and the Monorhyme

Architecture of Echo: The Yā’iyyah and Monorhyme The extended yā’ rhyme generates an “aural distance” that protracts closure and anchors supplication. Concurrently, the monorhyme secures rhythmic cohesion, aligning chant units along a single axis. Within the qaṣīda’s constraints, this phonetic structure serves as a mechanism of semantic tension, amplifying the elegiac urgency of leave-taking and testamentary injunction (Dahīsh, 2025, p. 181).

4.1.8. Oath-taking and the Management of Rhetorical Authority

Oath-taking and Rhetorical Authority Oath formulas (e.g., la’amrī) transmute report into binding commitment, conferring rhetorical agency upon the incapacitated subject. Transcending mere intensification, the oath functions here as a juridical mechanism that authorizes the utterance within the honor code. This probative force structurally counterbalances the speaker’s somatic fragmentation (Weigelt, 2020, p. 89).

4.1.9. Ittifāt and the Reorientation of Discursive Axes

Ittifāt and the Reorientation of Discursive Axes The sequential shifts between “I,” “you” (dual), and “they” orchestrate a dynamic reorientation of address. This device acts as a mechanism of narrative revitalization, modulating the scope from counsel and self-rebuke to existential protest. Functionally, ittifāt heightens compositional tension, rendering the utterance polyphonic (Yıldırım, 2025, p. 1295).

ومن الشواهد في القصيدة على ماسبق قوله

ولا تُنْسِيَا عهدي خليليَّ بعد ما	تَقَطَّعَ أوصالي وتبلى عظاميا
ولن يَعدَمَ الوالونَ بَنَّا يُصِيبُهُم	ولن يَعدَمَ الميراثُ مِنِّي المواليا
يقولون: لا تَبْعُدْ وهم يَدْفِنُونَنِي	وأينَ مكانُ البُعدِ إلا مكانيا

(Al-Qaysī, 1969, p. 93)

Companions, heed my pledge when joints are severed and bones decay. Kin shall not escape their grief, nor heirs their due. They cry “Do not go far!” while interring me— Yet where is distance, if not where I lie?

4.2. Abū Firās Al-Hamadani

Abū Firās al-Hamdānī The Rūmiyyāt of Abū Firās (320–357/932–968) constructs an abusive spatiality defined not by toponyms, but by a lattice of carceral signs (fettters, guards, night). Here, the prison functions as a performative “produced space” rather than a static “named site.” Rhetorical instruments—apostrophe, oath—supplant geographical mapping, reconfiguring confinement as the absolute limit of discourse (Khawaldeh & Sultan, 2011, p. 241).

4.2.1. The Semiotics of Place

The Semiotics of Place In the Rūmiyyāt, spatial toponyms recede in favor of a coercive carceral lexicon (fettters, guards). This shifts the text from external reference to a semantic field constructed through rhetorical density (vocatives, oaths). Consonant with theories of the “production of space,” the prison emerges here not as cartographic nomenclature, but as a disciplinary regime fashioned by power and sensory distribution (Al-Sayyid, 2011, p. 659).

يقول أبو فراس الحمداني في قصيدته التي مطلعها

أَقُولُ وَقَدْ نَاحَتْ بِقُرْبِي حَمَامَةٌ
مَعَادَ الْهَوَى مَادَقَتْ طَارِقَةَ النَّوَى
أَيُّضْكَ مَأْسُورٌ وَتَبْكِي طَلِيقَةٌ
أَيَّا جَارَتَا هَلْ تَشْعُرِينَ بِحَالِي
وَلَا خَطَرَتْ مِنْكَ الْهُمُومُ بِبَالٍ
وَيَسْكُتُ مَحْزُونٌ وَيَنْدَبُ سَالٍ

(al-Dahhān, 2017, p. 46)

A dove lamented near. I cried, “Neighbor, do you sense my plight? By Love, you have not tasted parting’s blow, nor has sorrow crossed your mind. Does a captive laugh while the freeborn weeps? Must the griever hush while the carefree wails?

In “O Neighbour of the Prison,” the dove supplants toponymy, serving as a mediating threshold between confinement and liberty. As a sensorial node, the bird generates a discursively embodied space defined by vocative address, establishing a metaphorical economy that besieges captivity through discourse rather than geography (Hammadi, 2015, p. 127).

4.2.2. The operation of the vocative ayā jāratā as a semiotic lever of adjacency

Ayā Jāratā as a Semiotic Lever of Adjacency The vocative ayā jāratā operates as a semiotic lever, reconfiguring carceral space into a relational field of adjacency. This pragmatic shift moves the text from monologic endurance to dialogic appeal, re-voicing the boundary as contact. Analogous to layta in Mālik’s

verse, the vocative codifies the disparity between captivity and freedom not as psychological effect, but as a structural spatial–ethical interval.

ثم يستطرد الشاعر متعجبا بين حاله وحال الحمامة بقوله

أَتَحْمِلُ مَحْزُونََ الْفُؤَادِ قَوَادِمُ	عَلَى غُصْنٍ نَائِي الْمَسَافَةِ عَالٍ
أَيَا جَارَتَا مَا أَنْصَفَ الدَّهْرُ بَيْنَنَا	تَعَالِي أَقَاسِمِكَ الْهُمُومَ تَعَالِي
تَعَالِي تَرَي رَوْحاً لَدَيَّ ضَعِيفَةً	تَرَدَّدُ فِي جِسْمٍ يُعَذِّبُ بَالٍ

(al-Dahhān, 2017, p. 46)

High on the bough, wings bear a grieving heart; Neighbor, Time has dealt us injustice. Come, share my sorrows; draw near To see a soul fluttering in a tormenting frame.

4.2.3. Legitimacy and Address under Coercion (A Discourse-Analytic Reading)

Legitimacy and Address under Coercion Abū Firās transfigures the monologue into a symbolic appropriation of space, supplanting physical escape with doctrinal authority. By reorienting power onto a vertical axis, divine succor annuls the “sovereignty of the fetter.” Pragmatically, the vocative operates as a performative speech act: addressing a transcendent interlocutor, it pierces the carceral boundary to regulate the discursive situation (Al-Ḥulaybī, 2007, p. 121).

ويقول في إحدى روميّاته مستصبّرا

مُصَابِي جَلِيلٌ وَالْعِزَاءُ جَمِيلٌ	وَوَظَلِّي بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَوْفَ يُدِيلُ
جِرَاحُ تَحَامَاهَا الْأَسَاءَةُ مَخُوفَةٌ	وَسُقْمَانُ بَادٍ مِنْهُمَا وَدَخِيلُ
وَأَسْرُ أَقَاسِيهِ وَلَيْلُ نُجُومِهِ	أَرَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ غَيْرَهُنَّ يَزُولُ
تَطُولُ بِي السَّاعَاتُ وَهِيَ قَصِيرَةٌ	وَفِي كُلِّ دَهْرٍ لَا يَسْرُكُ طَوْلُ

(al-Dahhān, 2017, p. 37)

My trial is grave, yet patience fair; Perchance God grants redress. Wounds healers dread afflict me— Two ills: one patent, one concealed. I suffer chains and stagnant stars, Watching for their wane. Hours dilate, though few in count; Prolonged sorrow yields no joy.

Politically, silence functions as implicit censure regarding ransom delays, interrogating obligations of dhimma and ‘aṣabiyya. The Rūmiyyāt thus transmutes the captive “I” into a political “we.” Situated within Hamdānid-Byzantine exigencies, the captive self is mutually constituted with the imagined community; protesting the delay thereby operationalizes the logic of legitimacy (Simeonov, 2023, p. 435).

4.2.4. Geo-intertextuality: “A Produced, Unnamed Space”

Geo-intertextuality: A Produced, Unnamed Space In the Rūmiyyāt, geo-intertextuality substitutes toponyms with generic carceral fields, displacing the “geography of reference” for a “geography of utterance.” Grounded in Lefebvrian theory and carceral geography, these reading frames space as relationally produced. Consequently, the cadence of prayer functions as a technique of “spatial expansion” defying physical confinement (Lefebvre et al., 2013, p. 323).

Deploying a Foucauldian lens of “discipline and surveillance,” this reading reframes the Rūmiyyāt’s “breaking of walls” as a rhetorical transmutation rather than a material rupture. Here, the wall becomes a “discursive boundary” perforated by apostrophe, demonstrating the efficacy of voice in the inscription of space (Driver, 1985, p. 435).

4.2.5. Style and Voice (Rhythmic and Vocative Engineering)

Style and Voice: Rhythmic and Vocative Engineering The recurrent vocative ayā jāratā engineers a “coercive-resistant” timbre, producing a syncopated rhythm that fractures the conventional martial boast. Functioning pragmatically as an autonomous adjunct, the vocative amplifies iltifāt to redistribute affective registers. This mechanism reconciles the juxtaposition of vaunting and supplication, simultaneously inscribing and resisting carceral constraint (Foucault, 2011, p. 115).

Vocal legitimacy draws upon the bay‘a, functioning not as ornamentation but as a normative apparatus of obligation. This transposition of the oath from the political to the lyric sphere buttresses the carceral self, furnishing a hermeneutic of efficacy grounded in ritual authority (Al-griati, 2006, p. 53).

4.2.6. Specific Applied Instances

“O Neighbour of the Prison”: The vocative transforms the neighbor into an “animated spatial boundary,” transposing the material wall into a permeable discursive threshold.

“Can a captive laugh...?”: This rhetorical paradox spatializes justice. Juxtaposing the free bird’s tears against the captive’s laughter exposes the carceral maldistribution of grace.

Divine Supplication: By forging a performative axis with a transcendent addressee, the poet displaces horizontal confinement, effectively annulling the prison’s sovereignty.

Synthesis: Consequently, the Rūmiyyāt demonstrate an inverse correlation: as toponymy rarefies, verbal techniques densify. Space is produced not by naming, but by an arsenal of vocative and supplicatory acts that breach the wall linguistically, constituting resistance through voice rather than site.

ويستطرد الشاعر في قوله

بَكَيْتُ ابْنَ سِتِّينَ أَوْ زَارَهَا

ضَحِكْتُ ابْنَ عَشْرِينَ مِنْ صَبَوَةٍ

فَمَا زَالَ رَبُّكَ غَفَّارَهَا

فَلَا تَعْظُمَنَّ لَدَيْكَ الذُّنُوبُ

(Abbas, 1960, p. 183)

At twenty, I laughed at desire's folly; At sixty, I wept its burden. Deem not your sins immense—
Your Lord remains Ever-Forgiving.

Grounded in Granara's scholarship, this reading posits naming as a vehicle for collective recall. Nostalgia thus transcends mere lament, functioning as a "narrative retrieval" of place. This framework elucidates the Dīwān's structure, mapping the vocal trajectory from private affect to collective memory (Miller, 2022, p. 119).

Ibn Ḥamdīs's aging voice—contrasting youthful ardor with senescent reflection—serves as a calibrated measure of his discursive shift. The contiguity of "greyness" and "exile" is a stylistic configuration where the utterance of the name functions as an apparatus for safeguarding identity. Temporal lexemes (youth/age) thus generate the coordinates through which "Sicily" is transformed from a lost site into a living archive (Carpentieri, 2016, p. 11).

Medieval citations often emphasize that the invocation "I remembered Sicily..." concludes rather than opens the poem. This structural positioning is pivotal; it frames the toponym as a ritual coda, transmuting the physical site into a definitive, resistant act of linguistic remembrance.

4.3.2 Discourse and Collective Memory

From "I, the Exile" to "We, the Memory" In Ibn Ḥamdīs, the pronominal shift from "I" to "we" transcends grammar, signaling the self's transformation from a private mourner into a collective spokesperson. This "inscription of memory" migrates from ephemeral communication to a long-duration cultural vessel. Consequently, the poem functions as a mnemonic ritual where the name "Sicily" facilitates the discursive repossession of the homeland, consolidating communal identity within the vacuum of exile (Carpentieri, 2018, p. 9).

ومن ذلك قوله أيضا

فَكَمْ جَزَبَ فِي السَّيْفِ أَعْيَا الْمَدَاوِيسَا

لَيْنَ كَانَ أَعْيَا كُلِّ طَبِّ عَلاَئِهَا

وَكَاثَتْ عَلَى أَهْلِ الزَّمَانِ مَحَارِسَا

صَقْلِيَّةٌ كَادَ الزَّمَانُ بِلَادَهَا

فَكَمْ أَعْيُنٍ بِالْخَوْفِ أَمْسَتْ سَوَاهِرًا
وَكَاثَتْ بِطَيْبِ الْأَمْنِ مِنْهُمْ نَوَاحِيسًا
أَرَى بَلَدِي قَدْ سَامَهُ الرُّومُ ذَلَّةً
وَكَانَ بِقَوْمِي عِزُّهُ مُتَقَاعِيسًا
عَدِمْتُ أَسْوَدًا مِنْهُمْ عَرَبِيَّةً
تَرَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهَا الْعُلُوجَ قَرَائِيسًا

(Abbas, 1959, p. 243)

If healers fail her wound, then blunt the sword That wearied both its maker and its lord. Sicily—once a rampart outstripping Time, A sleepless guard for all her people's prime. Now restless eyes, by terror kept awake, Mourn the easy sleep they once did take. My country bows beneath the Roman yoke, Her honor shattered, and her pride a smoke. Where are the Lions? Vanished from the field— While foreign brutes now force the brave to yield.

4.3.3. A textual indication of the swerve from “I” to “we” effected through the vocabulary of the collective.

From "I" to "We": The Lexicon of the Collective In Ibn Ḥamdīs's poetry, the transition from individual mourning to communal recollection is mediated through a "lexical widening." While the "I" remains the grammatical subject, the invocation of "land," "chronicles," and "rivers" invokes a shared inheritance. By recounting these "chronicles," the poet transcends private grief to function as a "keeper of the register" for a dispersed community. This implicitly pluralizes the discourse; the individual voice becomes a vessel for collective memory, where "we" is articulated through the curation of a common landscape (Shuqair, 2023, p. 8).

From Toponym to Lieu de Mémoire The invocation of “Sicily” transcends mere naming; by anchoring the poem to institutional markers—mosques, abodes, and rites—the toponym is transfigured into a lieu de mémoire (site of memory). As the lived milieux de mémoire (environments of memory) recede into exile, each utterance activates the archival function of language. The name thus becomes a collective preservative, reconstructing a homeland that has vanished from the map but persists through ritualized speech.

4.3.4. Pronouns and the technique of iltifāt as an instrument of discursive co-participation

Instruments of Discursive Co-participation The transition from “I” to the collective is operationalized through iltifāt. Far from ornamental, this pronominal alternation functions as a mechanism for reallocating adhesivity, drawing the community into the field of utterance. Analysis reveals that modulating grammatical person transcends mere self-assertion, establishing an intersubjective space of collective co-

implication where the individual ordeal is recast as shared history (Jankır, 2025, p. 334).

4.3.5 Geo-intertextuality — Naming as symbolic reconstruction

In the Rūmiyyāt, “Sicily” functions as a constellation of “geographic icons.” Through geo-intertextuality, naming operates as a restorative technique, suturing sensory archives into the discursive void left by physical effacement. Aligning with Westphal and Tally’s geocritical protocols, this mechanism dislodges place from mere reference, reallocating it to a representational axis that prioritizes cartographic retrieval over ego-centric narration (Westphal, 2007, p. 6).

4.3.6. Functional coding of Sicilian toponyms

Functional Coding of Sicilian Toponyms Mirroring Mālik’s desert itinerary, Ibn Ḥamdīs’s Sicilian toponymy follows a rigorous functional taxonomy: (i) sites of convivial security, (ii) loci of Norman conquest, and (iii) mnemonic thresholds of communal ritual. These proper names are not mere scenic flourishes; their strategic placement—primarily in the climactic mid-movement or coda—serves as a summative anchor for reflection.

Under this coding, “Ṣiqilliyya” evolves from a geographical label into a nodal point within a value-laden network. Much like Wādī al-Ghaḍā organizes Mālik’s trial, these toponyms structure a geography of dispossession. Consequently, the semiotic mapping reorients the text from individual nostalgia toward a collective horizon of prospective restitution.

4.3.7. Style and Voice

The Architecture of Memory Through a counterpoint of parallelism and antithesis (paradise/expulsion; weeping/rivers), Ibn Ḥamdīs creates an “imagistic economy” that transcends mere elegy. By interlacing photic imagery—candles and lights—the poem populates the scene with kinetic vitality, transmuting description into a “ritualized landmark.” Consequently, these recurring acoustic and visual gestures function as semiotic emblems, recasting the lost homeland as a permanent discursive presence (Tawfiq & Najras Al-Jubouri, 2020, p. 83).

4.3.7.1. Style and voice: parallelism, antithesis, and the sounding of “Ṣiqilliyya”

The counterpoint of antithesis (paradise/expulsion; youth/age) in Ibn Ḥamdīs’s laments provides more than ornament; it constructs an acoustic scaffold for the name “Ṣiqilliyya.” Strategically positioned

at rhyme-peaks or within the penultimate hemistich, the name induces a metrical deceleration. This placement transforms the toponym into an "aural hinge," where rhythm and rhyme converge to audibly condensed memory.

Stylistically, the emphatic sibilants and liquid interior of "Şiqilliyya" function as a "virtual refrain." By situating the name at these rhythmic climaxes, the poet reorganizes the line's internal balance, ensuring the homeland resonates as both a semantic and acoustic landmark. Music, therefore, is not a neutral vessel for lament but a formal structure of remembrance.

4.3.8. Voice and Temporality

The Pronominal Architecture The oscillation between the individual "I" and a collective addressee constitute an "architecture of voices," transmuting self-enclosure into a representative register. Within this framework, the motifs of senescence and exile interweave to produce an "inner time." Here, rhythmic parallelism functions as an architectonic structure of remembrance rather than a mere metrical frame, ensuring that the poem's music serves as a formal vehicle for collective memory (Raslān, 2024, p. 6091).

4.4. Comparative Synthesis: Spatial Regimes, Voice, and the Trajectory of Fragility

The three corpora delineate a coherent trajectory of lyric selfhood under fragility, evolving across three distinct spatial and discursive axes:

1. **Spatial Regimes:** The movement shifts from Open Wilderness (Mālik: exposure and ethical reorientation) to Carceral Enclosure (Abū Firās: disciplinary space and perforated boundaries) and, finally, to the Lost Homeland (Ibn Ḥamdīs: linguistic reconstruction of a vanished site).
2. **Discursive Addressee Design:** The voice expands from a solitary "I" addressing kin, to a captive "I" implicating political and transcendent authorities, culminating in a collective voice acting as the custodian of communal memory.
3. **Axiological Focus:** The value-lexicons transition from repentance (Mālik) to legitimacy (Abū Firās) and, ultimately, to symbolic restitution (Ibn Ḥamdīs).

Methodologically, this evolution is underpinned by specific sonic-rhetorical apparatuses: the prolonged yā' rhyme codifies death "on the road"; the carceral vocative perforates the wall to produce a discursive boundary; and the ritualized naming of "Şiqilliyya" transforms the island into a chant-like archive. Together, these "topographies of fragility" demonstrate that in classical Arabic lyric, the

"legitimacy of the voice" consistently supplants the "sovereignty of the site," transmuting physical loss into enduring discursive presence.

5. Conclusions

This article has examined how configurations of place function as semiotic mechanisms that reshape the lyric self in three distinct corpora of classical Arabic poetry: Mālik b. al-Rayb's deathbed *yā' iyyah*, Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī's *Rūmiyyāt*, and the Sicilian nostalgias of Ibn Ḥamdīs. By integrating close reading with a lexical–geotextual analysis, the study argues that place is not a neutral backdrop but an active apparatus that conditions the speaker's voice, addressee, and ethical lexicon.

The comparative analysis yields findings along three structural axes. First, in terms of spatial regimes, the texts demonstrate a trajectory from the open wilderness of Mālik, which organizes a geography of trial and repentance; to the carceral enclosure of Abū Firās, which produces a disciplinary space through oaths and supplication; to the lost homeland of Ibn Ḥamdīs, where toponyms function as sites of memory that reconstruct the island in language. Second, the pronominal structures shift alongside these spaces: Mālik's lyric "I" addresses kin at the threshold of death; Abū Firās's captive "I" oscillates between complaint and boast; and Ibn Ḥamdīs's ageing "I" evolves into a communal "we," acting as a custodian of exile memory. Third, the study identifies a corresponding recalibration in the value lexicon—moving from ethical recalibration and repentance to legitimacy and obligation and finally to symbolic restitution—supported by distinct sonic patterns, from the desiderative *layta* to the jagged rhythms of carceral vocatives.

Theoretically, these findings support the concept of "topographies of fragility" as a lens for reading Arabic lyrics under conditions of existential duress. However, these conclusions must be qualified by several limitations. The analysis relies on a small, purposively selected corpus and manual lexical mapping, which inevitably simplifies fluid textual dynamics. Consequently, the findings represent analytically grounded tendencies within these specific texts rather than universal laws governing the *Rūmiyyāt* or all exilic verse.

These limitations suggest specific avenues for future research. Subsequent scholarship could extend this framework diachronically and generically, incorporating Andalusian exile poetry or Sufi verse where spatial metaphors of the "station" (*maqām*) are central. Furthermore, a broader sample of the *Rūmiyyāt* and Ibn Ḥamdīs's *dīwān* could be analyzed using large-scale digital text analysis to test the robustness of the

lexical patterns identified here. Finally, comparative studies might profitably bring these Arabic materials into dialogue with other traditions of carceral writing, refining our understanding of how the lyric subject constructs a "self" when the physical coordinates of that self are constrained or erased. Ultimately, this study suggests that classical Arabic lyric does not merely describe places; it brings them into being as semiotic structures, endowing them with a recitable history and a community of memory.

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