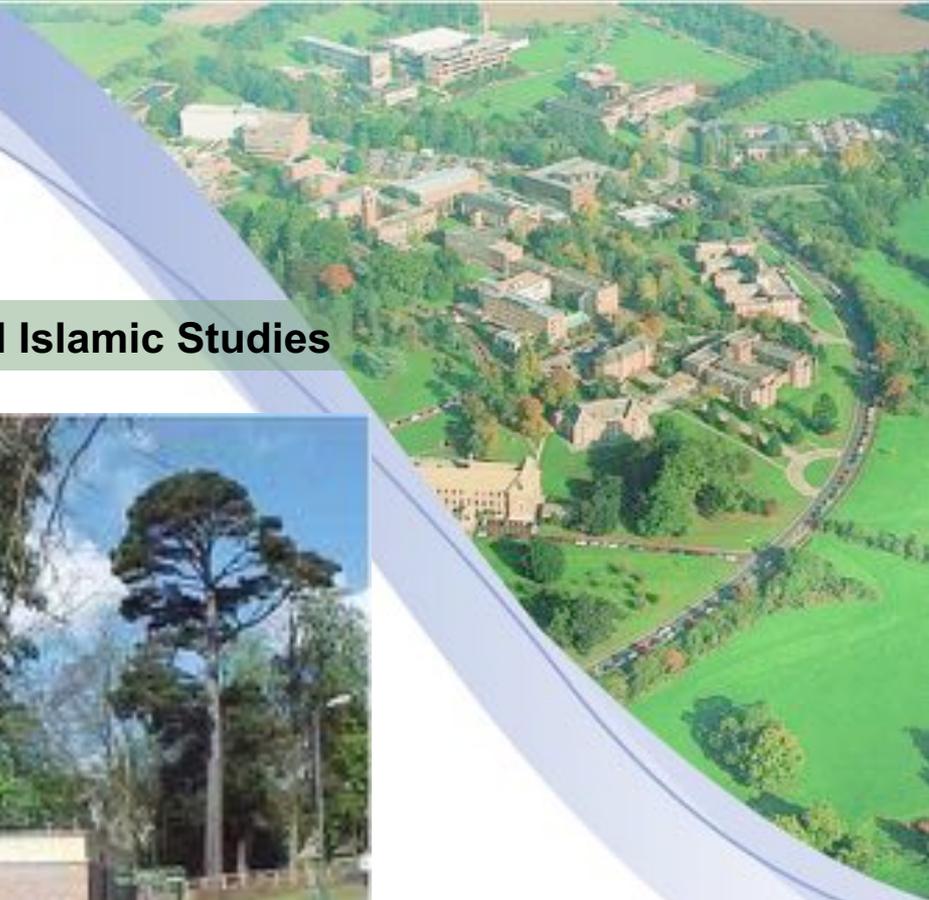


Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Travel

SECTION T

SUNDAY, MAY 16, 1993

Just DESERTS



Outline

- Key terms and concepts
- Al-Shabbi's iconicity
- Displaying the poet and his poetry
- Reflections on value and further research

Tourism

Pleasure

The leisure business

Global/local

Contact

Commodity and commoditization

- Production and consumption
- Things have a social and cultural biography
- “Politics links value and exchange in the social life of commodities” (Appadurai)

The politics of diversion and display

The politics of authenticity and authentication

Commodification of culture in a tourist setting

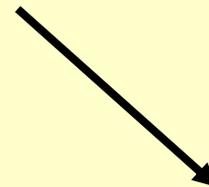
Tourist interest in local culture

Tourists observe events, often without understanding them

Growth in tourism: organized tourism industry

Tour operators market local culture as an attraction

Events/objects become staged for tourists



Loss of meaning for local people

Tourists observe pseudo-events

Relationship between tourists and the toured

Tourist

at play

pleasure

gaze

consumption

has financial capital

temporary existence

distorted experience of time

and space

Toured

at work

livelihood

display

(production)

symbolic capital

permanent existence

(factual) experience

Effects of tourism

Local art is standardized/stylized/becomes kitsch

Tourism revives local art and crafts, creates
tourist art (Graburn)

Community controls access to local culture
('front' and 'back' spaces) (MacNallen)

Staged authenticity: community produces art for
specifically for tourist consumption

Case study

Poems of a school boy

One should visit Tozeur more often!

Short biography

- 1909 – 1934
- Religious education
- “Flying with one wing”
- The poet of *Apollo*
- Ambivalent relationship with the classical Arabic heritage

Poetry

- Few poems (about 100, although the number varies).
- The poet as visionary/prophet
- Against oppression
- Called for action and rebellion
- Love poetry

THE poem

The will of life

If one day people should embrace life,
Fate is certain to respond.
The night will surely dissipate
And chains will be broken.

....

This is what life said to me
This is how her hidden spirit spoke.

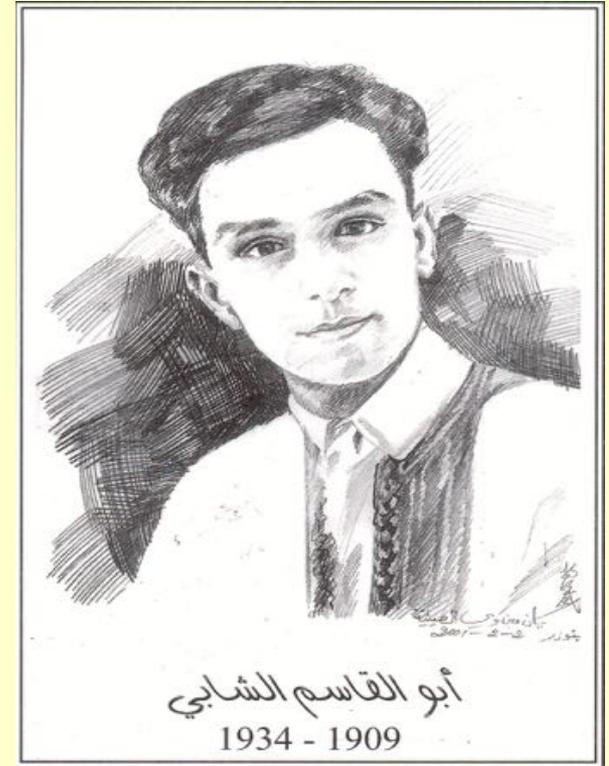
....

Across the universe it was proclaimed:
Ambition is the flame of life,
And the spirit of victory.
If souls reach for life,
Fate is certain to respond.

Canonization

- Anthologized in his lifetime
- Warmly received in the Arab East (unique case)
- A poets' poet
- Curricula
- Eulogized (more poems about him than by him)
- Heavily studied: over 200 books, hundreds of articles, 30 songs by most famous singers, a musical, a TV drama, streets bearing his name, schools, poetry prizes etc...

Three images





أبو القاسم الشابي

1934 - 1909

Symbolic Value

The state

The resistance

Native city

Al-Shabbi the TV drama



Displaying al-Shabbi



Guided tour













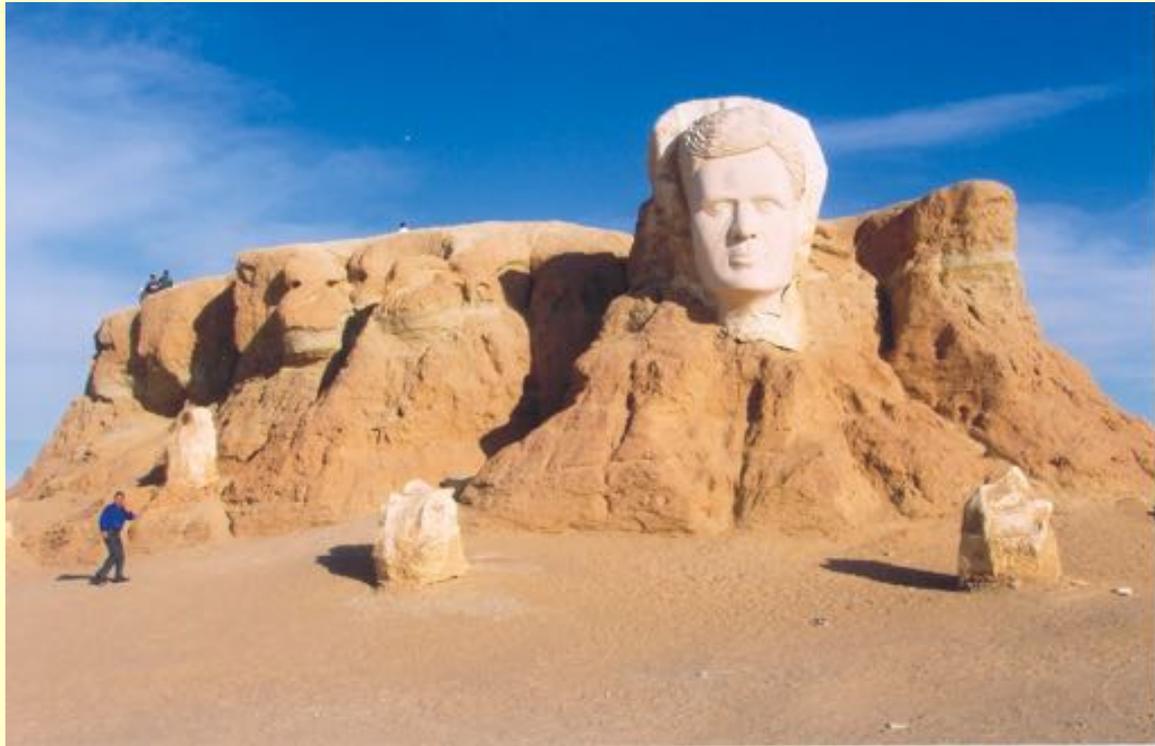
















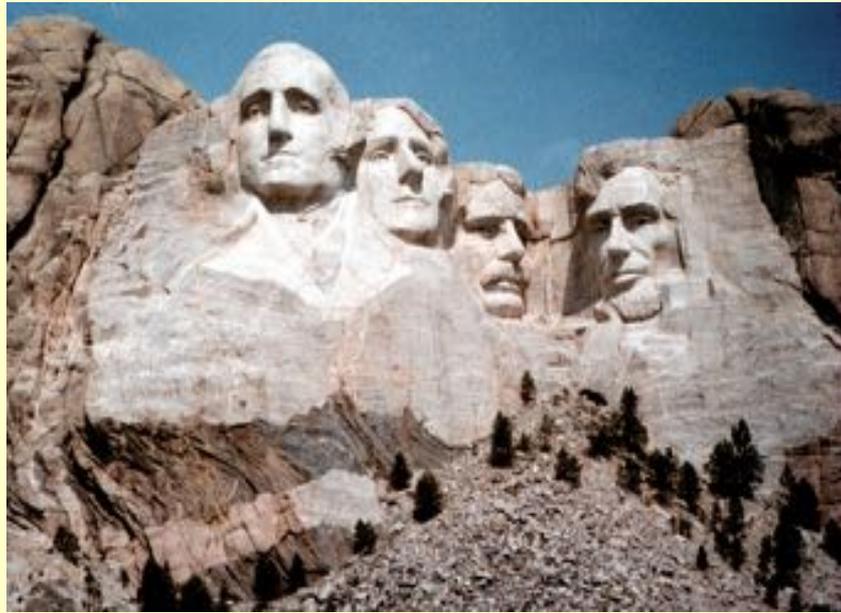




Encoding al-Shabbi

The oriental souk/bazaar

Madame Tissaud



Field Research

- Image making at economy/culture of origin
- The destination: spaces, objects, events
- decision-making mechanisms at destination
- Local power politics/economics
- Locals artists in the tourist economy
- Perceptions of the changes: the tourists and the toured.

perceptions of the displayed poet

“Another questionable development in Tozeur is the addition of head foams to the viewpoint in the Belevedere. If they are suppose to add to the esthetics of nature, they don't. If they are suppose to attack more visitors and more money, I am skeptical. Hopefully the will fall off and disintegrate quickly.” “And Who is the model?” (spelling mistakes in original)

Tunisia Odyssey: Eden to Oasis
Bicycle Africa / Ibike Tours

Dispatch 11 - Tozeur

source <http://www.ibike.org/bikeafrica/tunisia/tun11.htm>



Encoded carpets

“Oriental carpets are part commodity part symbol.”

“They are objects of cultural elaboration for the producer”

The consumer (Westerner) looks for/constructs authenticity for the carpet.

The producer, aware of the consumer, caters to the latter's desire.

Concluding observations and questions

- Contexts of commodification by display (social, cultural and political), Islamic and Arab destinations, these matters are further complicated by East-West relations, Value .
- Negotiation
- local /national/global.
- National(ist) iconography and tourism economy
- Authenticities
- “The aura of art” (Benjamin). In specific terms, is al-Shabbi's poeticity reduced or enhanced by commodification? Symbolic value and its effect on esthetic value? How does commodification affect aesthetic value? And how can we measure this value?
- Transferability of “model” to other destinations/situations.

Contexts

Colonial situation

Inter-Arab relations

The position of poetry in the culture

The poet as an Oriental carpet

