



# The Poetics of Adonis and Yves Bonnefoy

Poetry as  
Spiritual Practice

Kareem James Abu-Zeid

Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies

THE POETICS OF ADONIS  
AND YVES BONNEFOY

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The Poetics of Adonis and Yves Bonnefoy:  
Poetry as Spiritual Practice

THE POETICS OF ADONIS  
AND YVES BONNEFOY  
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KAREEM JAMES ABU-ZEID

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## Series Editors' Preface

When we learned that the poet and translator Kareem James Abu-Zeid had no publication plans for his doctoral dissertation on Adonis and Bonnefoy (University of California, Berkeley, 2016), we asked him if he was interested in letting us publish it; he enthusiastically agreed. *The Poetics of Adonis and Yves Bonnefoy: Poetry as Spiritual Practice*—a lightly revised version of the thesis—examines and compares the work of two pre-eminent poets of the second half of the twentieth century and the early part of the twenty-first. Yves Bonnefoy was a French poet, essayist, art and literary critic, editor, and translator; he died in 2016 at the age of 93. Ali Ahmad Said Esber, known by his pen-name Adonis (Adūnīs), is an Arab poet, essayist, artist and literary critic, editor, and translator (including of Bonnefoy's poetry); he turned 90 last year. Through close readings of key moments in their poetry, Abu-Zeid illustrates how both writers, in their own unique ways, construct poetry as a form of spiritual practice, that is, as a way of transforming both the poet's and the implied reader's ontological, perceptual, and creative relationships with their internal and external worlds. Sustained studies of Adonis are, surprisingly, few and far between; those comparing Adonis to other poets rarer still. We are delighted, therefore, to be able to include this important and groundbreaking study in our series.

We are most grateful to the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, its founder Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi, and curator Suheyla Takesh, for permission to reproduce a 2003 art work by Adonis on the cover. Our thanks go also to publisher Billie Jean Collins, cover designer Susanne Wilhelm, and distributor Ian Stevens—with all of whom it is always a privilege and pleasure to work.

Joseph E. Lowry  
Devin J. Stewart  
Shawkat M. Toorawa





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## Abbreviations

<i>Aghānī</i>	Adonis, <i>Aghānī Mihyār al-Dimashqī</i>
<i>L'Arrière-pays</i>	Bonnefoy, <i>L'Arrière-pays</i>
<i>Basic Writings</i>	Heidegger, <i>Basic Writings</i>
<i>Being and Time</i>	Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i>
<i>Entretiens</i>	Bonnefoy, <i>Entretiens sur la poésie (1972–1990)</i>
<i>L'Improbable</i>	Bonnefoy, <i>L'Improbable et autres essais</i>
<i>Le Nuage rouge</i>	Bonnefoy, <i>Le Nuage rouge</i>
<i>Poèmes</i>	Bonnefoy, <i>Poèmes</i>
Q	<i>Qurʿan</i>
<i>Thābit</i>	Adonis, <i>Al-Thābit wa-l-mutaḥawwil: baḥth fī l-ittibāʿ wa-l-ibdāʿ ʿinda l-ʿarab. Vol. 1: al-Uṣūl.</i>
“Transcendancy”	Bonnefoy, “The Feeling of Transcendancy”
<i>Zaman</i>	Adonis, <i>Zaman al-shiʿr</i>