

The Poetics of Anti-Colonialism in the Arabic Qaṣīdah



BY

HUSSEIN N. KADHIM

BRILL STUDIES IN MIDDLE EASTERN LITERATURES



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IN THE ARABIC *QASĪDAH*

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PREFACE

Napoleon Bonaparte's short-lived invasion of Egypt in 1798 set in motion the progressive *Isti'mār* (colonization) of much of the Arab lands by the major European powers of the time. Britain occupied Egypt (1882), Palestine (1917), Iraq (1918), and Syria (1918). For its part, France occupied Algeria (1830), Morocco (1912), and, following the San Remo Conference, Syria (1920). Henceforth Britain and France would enter into a relationship with their Arab subjects characterized by Albert Hourani as follows:

It is this imposition of an alien rule upon an unwilling people which is called 'imperialism.' At the present time [1953] much effort is spent in trying to prove that there never was such a thing as imperialism. Apologists of Britain and France put forward statistics to show that the countries of Asia and Africa have benefited materially from Western rule. That may or may not be true, but it is strictly irrelevant. The essence of imperialism is to be found in a moral relationship—that of power and powerlessness—and any material consequences which spring from it are not enough to change it.¹

Hourani's characterization of Imperialism (often used interchangeably with colonialism) as a relationship of "power and powerlessness" is crucial to an adequate conceptualization of colonialism within a specifically Arab context. As long as this relationship thus characterized persisted, so does colonialism, whether or not the hegemonic power maintained direct rule over the subject territory.² Fifteen years after Iraq went through what Frantz Fanon called "the farce of national independence,"³ the leading Iraqi poetess Nāzik al-Malā'ikah (b. 1923), for instance, could still cite as one of the reasons for the melancholy note of her first verse collection *ʿAshiqat al-Layl* (Lover of the Night, 1947) "exasperation over the British colonization of Iraq."⁴

¹ Albert Hourani, "The Decline of the West in the Middle East—I" *International Affairs*, vol. XXIX (1953), London: Royal Institute of International Affairs 30–31.

² This point should be borne in mind particularly with respect to the discussion in chapter 5.

³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963) 67.

⁴ Nāzik al-Malā'ikah, "Al-Shi'r fī Ḥayātī," *Al-Majallah al-ʿArabīyyah lil-Thaqāfah* 4 (1983): 189.

A variant though less common term is *Istī‘mār Istī‘tānī*, which denotes “settler colonialism.” This term has been largely associated with French colonization of North Africa as well as Jewish settlement activity in Palestine. With respect to the latter, however, the term never gained a wide currency; the more derisive *al-kiyān al-ṣuhyūnī* (the Zionist entity) is most often used in reference to the “state of Israel.” Opposition to this entity took the form of *muqāwamah* (resistance); the literary output connected with this resistance has, since the mid-twentieth century, been known as *adab al-muqāwamah* (the literature of resistance). In an essay presented to a conference on contemporary Arabic literature held in Rome, 16–20 October 1961, the Jordanian critic ‘Īsā al-Nā‘ūrī defines Arabic literature of the post-1948 era as: “a literature of struggle, or a resistance literature (*adab muqāwamah*), or a literature of liberation.”⁵

It is widely held that the field of postcolonial studies has focused on the study of predominantly Western imaginative, polemic, and other discourses related to Empire. This emphasis has prompted some critics of the postcolonial theoretical stance to point to a possible complicit role postcolonial studies may have played in the continued centrality of the West. The charge pertains to the field’s “alleged reinscription of the cultural authority of the West by virtue of a largely exclusive attention to colonial discourse as the privileged object of analysis.”⁶ Preoccupation with the colonial has indeed tended to displace the anti-colonial body of writing as the object of critical and cultural analysis. This body of writing, moreover, has often been deprecated on aesthetic grounds as well as for reasons that have to do with the issue of provenance. In the course of discussing the reception of African literature in the West, Edward Said acknowledges that “an ambiance of polemic surrounds this work” but rightly notes,

[O]ne cannot look at African writing except as embedded in its political circumstances, of which the history of imperialism and resistance to it is surely one of the most important. This is not to say that African

⁵ ‘Īsā al-Nā‘ūrī, “Al-Adīb al-‘Arabī wal-Thaqāfah al-‘Ālamiyyah,” *Al-Adab al-‘Arabī al-Mu‘āṣir: Proceedings of the Rome Conference on Contemporary Arabic Literature*, Rome, 16–20 October 1961, ed. Simon Jargy (N.p.: Adwā’, 1962?) 67.

⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997) 156.

culture is any less cultural than, say, French or British culture, but that it is harder to render invisible the politics of African culture.⁷

Barbara Harlow, a leading theorist of “resistance literature” is less apologetic in her defense of anti-colonial discourses. In her highly perceptive book *Resistance Literature*, Harlow notes that “[t]he resistance poems actively engage in the historical process of struggle against the cultural oppression of imperialism, and assert thereby their own polemical historicity.”⁸ Harlow goes on to say,

Within this historical conjuncture, the inherited notion of literature in the west as objective, aesthetic, representing universal human values is either compelled to redefine its criteria or is destined inevitably to participate in the First World’s post-colonial project of cultural imperialism.⁹

With respect to the issue of provenance, moreover, critics on both sides of the cultural divide seem in agreement as to the (extensive) influence of the West in the “emergence” of postcolonial literature. However, while defenders of this body of discourse often employ such euphemistic terminology as “borrowing,” and “re/appropriation” of Western modes of discourses by the colonized,¹⁰ detractors have cited that literature’s putative tendency to duplicate Western modes as grounds for dismissing it. Commenting on modern Arabic literary output, the Orientalist G. M. Wickens has this to say:

I will not linger on it, for, to be frank, I doubt whether there is much worth saying about it: most of it, though not quite all, seems to me little but a servile imitation of the worst features of our own modern literature.¹¹

To account for such sweeping dismissal, Salih Altoma cites “the tendency to judge Arabic literature on the basis of external, i.e. Western, literary canons.” Altoma goes on to note:

What is truly astounding is that such a wholesale dismissal is pronounced without any reference to the genres, works or authors Wickens has in mind while surveying the field. The fact that some of the most

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 239.

⁸ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 37.

⁹ Harlow 40.

¹⁰ See, for example, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989) 38–77.

¹¹ Quoted in Salih Altoma, “The Reception of Najib Mahfuz in American Publications,” *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 41 (1993): 163–4.

significant developments or innovations were taking place in different Arab countries before the fifties is completely overlooked.¹²

The present study takes as the objects of analysis a number of twentieth-century Arabic odes (qaṣīdahs) which, while pursuing an overtly anti-colonial agenda, nevertheless remain mindful of their literariness. The study demonstrates that although these works unabashedly pursue a “political” subject matter, they do so without compromising their distinct status as *adab* or literature. Indeed the impact of these works derives as much from the particular poetics they elaborate as from the validity of the causes they espouse.

Debates on cultural/literary borrowings almost invariably posit the Arab world to have been a principal recipient of Western influences. That the Arab “encounter” with the West has exercised considerable influence on modern Arab literary discourse cannot be gainsaid; indeed, as Chapter 2 proposes, this influence has often been crucial. This fact, however, has tended to obscure the extensive motif as well as generic transposition involving twentieth-century Arabic literary output and the classical Arabic traditions. The most notable feature with respect to the former is that the topoi and motifs of the classical qaṣīdah proved transposable to differing contexts and localizations—a fact which may in part account for the endurance of the classical qaṣīdah form itself. With respect to the latter, moreover, the provenance of the anti-colonial qaṣīdah is to be sought not in any particular Western literary tradition borrowed or re/appropriated by the colonized, but rather in the classical Arabic “sub-genre” of *shīʿr al-taḥrīd* (incitement poetry) as well as its variants of *istinhād* (exhortation) and *istinḡār* (the call to take up arms).

The period that begins roughly around the middle of the nineteenth century and continues well into the twentieth century has come to be known as the period of *Nahḍah* (awakening) in Arabic literary production. This period witnessed the emergence of the “Neoclassical School” of Arabic poetry. The Neoclassical qaṣīdah written in opposition to colonialism is often either contrapuntal or re-presentative. When contrapuntal, this qaṣīdah tends to be argumentative, engaged, and at times polemical. In its re-presentative mode, however, the qaṣīdah is largely demonstrative; it seeks to set forth the oppressiveness of colonial rule and the consequences thereof

¹² Altoma 163–4.

on the subject populace. These features are present in the works of such poets as the Egyptian Aḥmad Shawqī (1868–1932) and the Iraqi Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875–1945) in whose corpora Neoclassicism is generally assumed to have reached its zenith. From Shawqī’s highly influential corpus this study engages three qaṣīdahs each of which represents an intervention in the colonial narrative that sought to de-scribe that narrative’s representations of colonialism.¹³ From al-Ruṣāfī’s no less influential works, the study examines a somber qaṣīdah that the poet composed in exile following the conquest by Britain of his native Iraq.

The mid-twentieth century witnessed the advent of the “free verse” movement in Arabic poetry. Two Iraqis, Nāzīk al-Malāʾikah (b. 1923) and Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (1926–1964), are often credited with pioneering the new form of poetry. This form circumvents the somewhat extreme metrical regularity of the neo/classical qaṣīdah by abandoning the predetermined number of feet in favor of the single foot as the basic metrical unit of the qaṣīdah. The movement was ushered in with the publication of al-Malāʾikah’s collection, *Shazāyā wa-Ramād* (Splinters and Ashes, 1949), and that of al-Sayyāb, *Aṣāṭīr* (Myths, 1950). It was, however, al-Sayyāb’s corpus and that of his Iraqi contemporary ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (1926–1999), that proved most influential as the new poetry gained wider acceptance throughout the Arab world.

Not unlike their neoclassical predecessors, poets writing in the free verse mode have frequently broached the theme of anti-colonialism. In this respect it is possible to point to two distinct types of the free-verse qaṣīdah: the first was composed in the main during periods of “veiled” colonialism;¹⁴ the second becomes common in the post-colonial era following the overthrow of some pro-Western regimes. The former is frequently structured around such key oppositions as repression/freedom, death/rebirth. This type of qaṣīdah recognizes the current unfavorable circumstance but often concludes with the promise

¹³ For the purposes of the present study, I use the term “de-scribe” to denote “the writing, unwriting, and rewriting of imperialist texts.” See Jo-Ann Wallace, “De-Scribing the Water-Babies: ‘The Child’ in Post-Colonial Theory,” *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialisms and Textuality*, eds. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (London: Routledge, 1994) 171.

¹⁴ In the case of Iraq, for instance, “veiled” colonialism spans the period from 1932, the year in which the country was proclaimed an “independent” state, to the year 1958 in which the pro-British monarchy was overthrown.

of a more favorable state. The latter type dwells on the present adverse state and seems to proffer no comparable prospect of progress. The present study considers five qaṣīdahs by al-Sayyāb and al-Bayātī that exhibit these two patterns of the free-verse qaṣīdah.

The rationale for tracing anti-coloniality through the works of a number of poets is that such an approach affords a more systematic treatment of the subject than would otherwise be possible if the study were confined to a single author. The choice of writers, moreover, has been dictated by two factors: first, the Arab poets considered in this study were, to varying degrees, situated within the Arab national liberation struggle; second, these poets exercised, and continue to exercise, major influence, thematically as well as mimetically, on contemporary and subsequent Arab poets. Nevertheless, a certain degree of arbitrariness in this choice must be conceded; indeed the corpora of several similarly situated and no less influential poets include a large number of anti-colonial qaṣīdahs. Of these mention must be made of Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1839–1904),¹⁵ Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1871–1932), Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī (1900–1997), and Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr (1931–1981).

Although the qaṣīdahs considered in this book have in the course of the twentieth century been the subject of some critical commentary, their specifically anti-colonial address as well as the particular poetics they elaborate are often either overlooked or inadequately investigated. The present inquiry, which makes no claim to being exhaustive, seeks above all to foreground these two issues from an anti-colonial standpoint. In this respect, I have drawn on the theoretical insights provided by Frantz Fanon, Edward W. Said, Barbara Harlow, and others. My indebtedness to the above as well as to others mentioned throughout this study is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the poetry of Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī, see Yaseen Noorani, “The Rebellious Subject: Political Self-Fashioning in Arabic and Persian Poetry of the Colonial Period,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 29 (1998): 1–30.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE LORD AND THE BARD: COLONIAL DISCOURSE AND COUNTER-DISCOURSE

European colonial interest in the Arab lands is generally assumed to have begun with Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798. Although Bonaparte's expedition proved short-lived, nonetheless it marked the beginning of the progressive subjection by the major European colonial powers of much of the Arab lands.¹ With its occupation of Egypt in 1882, Britain entered into a relationship with its Arab Other which has been rightly described by Albert Hourani as "one of self-confident force imposing itself upon resentful weakness."² In this chapter an attempt is made to demonstrate that, from the onset of colonialism, Arab subjects strove to undercut this relationship and to effect alternative power relationships. Poets utilized the traditional Arabic *qaṣīdah* form to interrogate what some critics have called "the textuality of Empire,"³ and to mobilize a collective response to colonialism. This chapter will engage two anti-colonial *qaṣīdahs*

¹ The term "Arab" is used throughout this book to refer to the inhabitants of the geographic region known today as "the Arab world" who speak Arabic and most of whom subscribe to the ethos of either Christianity or Islam. Some scholars have maintained that Egyptians did not identify themselves as Arabs at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet here is Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid, the pro-British Egyptian nationalist, writing in his newspaper, *Al-Jarīdah*, as early as 1907 in support of the efforts to hold a farewell ceremony for the retiring Lord Cromer: "But the character of Lord Cromer, the position he holds, the tie that exists between the Egyptian nation and his nation, and the need for harmony in the relations between the two nations in the interest of both, all of this should dissuade us from obstructing [the holding of] a farewell ceremony for him, from obstructing the honoring of his having been a guest [*sic*], and sending him off as required by national amicability and Arab generosity" (*Al-Jarīdah*, No. 44, April 30, 1907). Luṭfī al-Sayyid's invoking the concept of Arab generosity indicates that his readers, the Egyptian reading public, identified themselves, at least to a certain extent, as Arabs and that the terms "Egyptian" and "Arab" were not mutually exclusive. See Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid, *Ṣafāḥāt Maṭwīyah min Tārīkh al-Harakah al-Istiqlālīyah fī Miṣr* (Cairo: n.p., 1946) 79.

² Albert Hourani, "The Decline of the West in the Middle East—I," *International Affairs* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs) 29 (1953) 33.

³ Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, eds., Introduction, *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994) 1–11.

by the Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī (1868–1932), arguably the greatest poet of the Neoclassical School of Arabic poetry. Each qaṣīdah can be seen to represent a literary-rhetorical response to colonialism, an intervention in the colonial narrative that sought to contest that narrative’s representations of colonialism, to challenge, in the words of Edward Said “the idea of empire and the cost of colonial rule.”⁴

Qaṣīdah no. 1: “A Farewell to Lord Cromer” [3]

1. Your own days or the age of Ismā‘īl?
Or are you a Pharaoh ruling the Nile?
2. Or are you ruling the land of Egypt by his command
Neither consulting nor ever held accountable?
3. You who own the enslaved necks through [brute] force;
Have you never sought a path to the hearts?
4. When you departed, the country said the *Shahādah*
As if you were an incurable disease from which it had recovered.
5. On the day of parting you heaped humiliation upon us;
Never was decorum so outraged!
6. Why did you not consider a show of courtesy
After the Premier wove you a wreath of tribute?
7. Look to the courtesy of the Premier and his civility,
And you will find the Premier cultivated, noble.
8. In a playhouse built for comedies
You acted out tragedies in many acts.
9. In which “al-Ḥusayn” witnessed the cursing of his forefathers
And “the blind man,” uninvited, took a front-row seat.
10. Cowardice belittled and degraded them;
If a man shows cowardice, he will live in ignominy.
11. When you mentioned in [the playhouse] the country
and its people
How well you acted the role of its death.
12. You announced to us lasting enslavement
and unending humiliation
And a state that would never see change.
13. Did you think that Allah is less strong than you are?
That He lacks the power to change and replace?
14. Allah rules over kings and no states
That contend with Him for power will last.
15. Before you Pharaoh in his domination was even mightier
And his tribe, among all men, even grander.

⁴ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) 200.

16. Today a government broke its promises,
A government whose promises we had held as Gospel.
17. It entered Egypt in accordance with precepts of friendship
But proved to be a consumptive disease.
18. It destroyed the country's landmarks, razed its wall,
And thwarted its hoped-for independence.
19. They said, "You [Cromer] had brought us prosperity and
opulence."
They denied Allah's due and His work and the Nile,
20. And the way Egypt was in the time of Muḥammad [‘Alī]
And its ascent in the time of Ismā‘īl,
21. And thronged schools which he built in the country
In which the share of the poor was ample,
22. And fortresses whose traces are ineffaceable
And Ibrāhīm's armies and fleet,
23. And streams flowing among villages
That turned the desert into farmlands and fields,
24. And cities planned and laid out
And once rough roads made smooth,
25. And the cotton, thanks to Muḥammad,
In Egypt cultivated, ginned, and spun.
26. *Before* you Ismā‘īl extended to mankind
The dense shade of civilization in the country.
27. If he were compared in munificence and in extravagance
to what you spend today,
He would be deemed a miser.
28. And if he slew one inspector,
How many have you slain at Dinshaway?
29. Do not mention the Kurbāj of his days
After you have added trains to its skirt.
30. Extol instead the lofty palaces he built
That have become your haven and your place of rest.
31. Had he not built them, you would have had to dwell
In camps and in tents.
32. How many an imagined favor did you bestow on us,
Then burden the astute and knowing with reproach.
33. In every Report you say, "I created you."
Do you deem your Report a Revelation?
34. Is it due to your liberality that schools [in your reign]
Neglect sciences and teach football?
35. Or [is your notion of] safeguarding Egypt's Justice System
That you put the judge of Dinshaway in charge
of the Justice Ministry?
36. Or does an army count its ruination [at your hand] a favor,
An army like the army of India, which has become groveling?
37. Look at its young men, how do they rank?
Are they not inconsequential among the armies?

38. You prevented them from attaining high ranks
While elevating your own people above them.
39. While armies aspire and cherish hopes for a future,
They are left bereft of hope.
40. [This is] After they bestowed on Edward
A great conquest.
41. If I were a redcoat,
I would worship you instead of Jesus as my benefactor.
42. If I were an Englishman, I would accept you
As king whose hand I would lavishly kiss.
43. If I were a member of the Club, I would
Fill it with tears and wailing out of sorrow over your departure.
44. If I were a missionary roaming the land preaching,
I would recite the verses of your praise.
45. If I were a moneychanger, in London a creditor,
I would gladly send you a remittance.
46. If I were your *Times*, I would fill my pages
With praise for you that would resonate throughout the land.
47. If I were a diligent foreigner in Egypt
I would praise your name in the morning and afternoon.
48. If I were de Serionne, I would have sworn that it was you
Who bestowed the [Suez] Canal on the whole generation.
49. What difficulties and obstacles it had faced
You overcame with your resolve.
50. The covenant of the Franks, and you know their covenant,
They never shortchange benefactors a bit.
51. So leave, may Allah—exalted is His work—protect you
Resigned, if you like, or deposed.
52. And wear on your leg a garter in London⁵
And there succeed Grey or Campbell,
53. Or share with the mighty king his lands
And rule the length and breadth of the dominions.
54. Verily we made our wishes before Allah
And Allah guaranteed their fulfillment.
55. [Let him] who reviles the religion of Muḥammad [know]
That Muḥammad is empowered by Allah, a Messenger.⁶

The *qaṣīdah*⁷ was composed in response to Cromer's farewell speech, which he delivered at the Khedival Opera House in Cairo on the

⁵ A reference to the Order of the Garter (KG), which was conferred upon Cromer following his retirement.

⁶ Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī, *Dīwān Shawqī*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1979) 369–74. The *qaṣīdah* is in *al-Kāmil* meter. For the Arabic text, see Appendix 3. All translations from the Arabic are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁷ An early treatment of this *qaṣīdah* is in Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī, *Waṭaniyyat*

evening of May 4, 1907 at the end of his tenure as Consul General in Egypt (1883–1907).⁸ Before Cromer took the floor two personalities addressed him. The first was the Comte de Serionne, Superior Agent of the Suez Canal, who spoke on behalf of the European residents in Egypt. In his speech, de Serionne paid tribute to Lord Cromer and his reforms in Egypt.⁹ The second and more pertinent speech from the perspective of this study was the one made by the then Egyptian Premier Muṣṭafā Fahmī (Mustapha Pasha Fehmy) in which he paid tribute to Cromer for his services to Egypt (see

Shawqī, 4th ed. (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1978) 196–249. The work is a broad historical survey of the major political and social events of the period punctuated with quotations from qaṣīdahs on these events by Shawqī as well as by other Egyptian poets, especially Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm. Other works which contain some discussion of the qaṣīdah include: Shakīb Arslān, *Shawqī Aw Ṣadāqat Arabāʾin Sanah* (Cairo: ʿIsā al-Ḥalabī, 1936) 246–52; Mounah A. Khouri, *Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Studies in Arabic Literature, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 65–84; ʿUmar al-Disūqī, *Fī al-Adab al-Ḥadīth: Al-Shiʿr baʿda al-Bārūdī*, vol. 2, 5th ed. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Risālah, 1964) 91–4; Muʿāwiyah Ḥanafī Maḥmūd, *Maʿa Shawqī* (n.p.: n.p. n.d.) 25–6. Works that deal with the corpus of Shawqī in general include: Shawqī Dayf, *Shawqī Shāʿir al-ʿAsr al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1953); Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Ḥāfiẓ wa-Shawqī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Iʿtimād, 1933); Māhir Ḥasan Fawzī, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Taʿlīf wal-Nashr, 1969); Māhir Ḥasan Fawzī, *Shawqī: Shiʿruhu al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi Miṣr); Ṭāhā Wādī, *Aḥmad Shawqī wal-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Rūz al-Yūsuf, 1973); Fawzī ʿAṭawī, *Shawqī: Shāʿir al-Waṭaniyyah wal-Masrah wal-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Al-Sharikah al-Lubnāniyyah lil-Kitāb, 1971); Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Majīd, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Al-Shāʿir wal-Insān* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1982); ʾIlīyā al-Ḥawī, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Amīr al-Shuʿarāʾ*, 3 vol. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1977); Zakī Mubārak, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1977); ʿAbbās Ḥasan, *Al-Mutanabbī wa-Shawqī wa-Imārat al-Shiʿr* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi-Miṣr, 1976); Jaroslav Stetkevych, “Sīmiyyat Aḥmad Shawqī wa-ʾIyār al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī al-Kilāsīkī,” *Fuṣūl* 7.1–2 (1986–1987): 12–29; Fawzī ʿAṭawī, *Aḥmad Shawqī Amīr al-Shuʿarāʾ: Dirāsah wa-Nuṣūṣ* (Beirut: Al-Sharikah al-Lubnāniyyah lil-Kitāb, 1969); Antoine Boudot-Lamotte, *Aḥmad Sawqī: l’homme et l’oeuvre* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1977); Muḥammad al-Ḥādī al-Ṭarābulusī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Uslūb fī al-Shawqiyyāt* (Tunis: Al-Jāmiʿah al-Tūnisīyyah, 1981). *Fuṣūl* devotes two special issues (1982–1983) to Shawqī and Ḥāfiẓ. See also: Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 46–51; M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) 29–42.

⁸ Evelyn Baring, first Earl of Cromer (1841–1917). From 1872 to 1876, he served as private secretary to his cousin Lord Northbrook, Viceroy of India. In 1877 he was made one of the commissioners for the Egyptian Public Debt. In 1879 he was appointed Comptroller-General of Egypt. From 1880 to 1883, he was financial member of the council of the Viceroy of India. From 1883 to 1907, he was Agent and Consul-General in Egypt. See “Cromer, Evelyn Baring, 1st Earl of, Viscount Errington of Hexham, Viscount Cromer, Baron Cromer of Cromer.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2003. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 30 Jul, 2003 <<http://search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=28411>>.

⁹ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

Appendix 1). In his own speech, Cromer recalled his contributions to “the regeneration of Egypt” and the “material and moral advances” of the Egyptians under British occupation (see Appendix 2). He alluded pointedly to the Egyptians’ ingratitude. He ended his speech by issuing a stern warning to the Khedive ‘Abbās II (who did not attend the ceremony) about the future management of Egypt’s finances and by dismissing the Egyptian national movement as spurious and unrepresentative of Egyptian aspirations.¹⁰

Cromer’s speech provoked a chorus of protest by the nationalists as well as by forces allied with the Khedive.¹¹ Among those who set out to refute Cromer’s charges was ‘Alī Yūsuf, the owner of *Al-Mu’ayyad* newspaper, a paper that was generally sympathetic to the Egyptian national struggle for independence. Convincing as Yūsuf’s rebuttal was, it was Aḥmad Shawqī’s response that gained the widest currency. Shawqī’s qaṣīdah, “A Farewell to Lord Cromer,” which he published under a pseudonym on May 9, 1907 proved extremely popular.¹² Commenting on the popularity of the qaṣīdah, the prominent Lebanese writer Shakīb Arslān (1869–1946) remarked: “We do not believe that there is any man of letters or a reciter of any literature in Egypt and in its surrounding regions who has not memorized this qaṣīdah of Shawqī and who is not grateful to him for it.”¹³ The extraordinary reception of the qaṣīdah might seem perplexing in view of Shawqī’s situation. Shawqī was no Egyptian nationalist. As opposed to the Egyptian poet Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1871–1932) who was considered the poet of the people, “the poet of the Nile,” Shawqī was of Turco-Circassian extraction. Moreover, he was born to a family with close ties to the Khedive Ismā‘īl, and was the Khedive’s court poet. In short, he was as far removed from the trials and aspirations of the masses of Egyptians as anyone could be. Moreover, he was not above praising the British occupying power. It was the Khedive Tawfīq in whose service he was who had invited the British

¹⁰ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

¹¹ An Arabic translation of Cromer’s speech was published by *El-Muqaṭṭam*, a pro-British Cairo newspaper and, according to the *Times*’ Cairo correspondent, was sold “by the thousands,” *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907. This translation is reproduced in Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid, *Ṣafahāt Maṭwīyyah* 85–95.

¹² Al-‘Aqqād suggests an earlier date. He maintains that Shawqī published the qaṣīdah a few hours after the ceremony at the Opera House. Al-Ḥūfī, *Dīwān Shawqī*, 1: 369 fn.

¹³ Arslān 252.

forces to invade Egypt and to crush a “genuine national movement against an older alien domination: that of the ‘Turkish’ ruling class created by Muhammad Ali,” that is, the ‘Urābī Uprising of 1882.¹⁴ Shawqī was not slow to praise the Khedive and to lampoon ‘Urābī upon the latter’s return from British-imposed exile.

In light of these facts, which were well known to Shawqī’s contemporaries, the extraordinary reception of the qaṣīdah may strike us as surprising. It is possible to ascribe this reception to two main factors: one political and the other rhetorical. The first was the widespread Egyptian resentment of the British occupation, which Shawqī was able to tap, a resentment engendered by the realities of military occupation and colonialism. The second factor was Shawqī’s ability to manipulate the qaṣīdah form and the traditional Arabo-Islamic values that it encodes to articulate issues of contemporary concern. A close examination of the qaṣīdah will demonstrate the manner in which Shawqī managed, to a large extent, to subvert the discourses of Cromer. The qaṣīdah begins by apostrophizing Cromer thus:

*Ayyāmukum am ‘ahdu Ismā‘īlā?
am anta Fir‘awnun yasūsu ‘l-Nīlā?*

Your own days or the age of Ismā‘īl?
Or are you a Pharaoh ruling the Nile?

The use of the interrogative is, as Muḥammad al-Ṭarābulsī has pointed out, a common stylistic feature in the corpus of Shawqī.¹⁵ Al-Ṭarābulsī notes that such interrogative structures often occur in clusters that form the preludes to many of Shawqī’s qaṣīdahs.¹⁶ With respect to the significance of the use of the interrogative, he maintains that Shawqī often employs it “in the sense of censure (*al-taqrī‘*) and so forth in the political qaṣīdahs. Such censure may be borne out of a desire to spite someone if the interrogative is directed at an adversary or an enemy.”¹⁷ Shawqī’s counter-discursive strategy thus involves the use of this structure to “deflate” Cromer’s sense of self-importance to which he gives full expression in his farewell speech. The comparison undertaken in the opening line between Cromer’s

¹⁴ Hourani, “The Decline of the West” 29.

¹⁵ Al-Ṭarābulsī 350–55.

¹⁶ Al-Ṭarābulsī 351.

¹⁷ Al-Ṭarābulsī 354.

rule of Egypt and that of Ismā‘īl is intended to suggest that the former’s rule would fade into insignificance if compared to that of the latter. Shawqī’s assault on Cromer’s arrogance and grandeur, moreover, is pursued in the second hemistich of the opening line which is intended to invoke a glory and might far greater than that of Cromer: the glory of Pharaonic Egypt.¹⁸

The image of Cromer as a despot is elaborated in line 3:

Yā mālikan riqqa ‘l-riqābi bi ba’sihi
halla t-takhadhā ila ‘l-qulūbi sabīlā

You who own the enslaved necks through [brute] force;
Have you never sought a path to the hearts?

This line implies that Cromer’s authority over the Egyptians derives not from consent but from brute force and is, therefore, illegitimate; the line further implies that the Khedive’s rule is based on consent and is therefore legitimate. Moreover, Cromer’s relationship with his subjects amounts to enslavement as indicated by the phrase *mālikan riqqa ‘l-riqābi* (owning the enslaved necks); it recalls Pharaoh’s relationship with his subjects as represented in Islamic scripture and mythology. The line thus serves to define Cromer’s relationship with the Egyptians: colonial authority does not rule, it enslaves; colonialism/military occupation by the British amounts to enslavement of Egypt.

The notion of colonialism/military occupation as enslavement of the subject is emphasized in line 12:

Andhartanā riqqan yadūmu wa-dhillatan
tabqā wa-hālan lā tarā taḥwīlā

You announced to us lasting enslavement and unending humiliation
And a state that would never see change.

In his speech, Cromer said:

What are the main facts as regards the Egyptian situation? First, that the British occupation will continue for an indefinite period. On this point we have the formal assurance of his Majesty’s Government. The

¹⁸ For a discussion of Pharaonicism in Shawqī’s poetry see: ‘Irfān Shahīd, *Al-‘Awdah Ilā Shawqī: Aw Bā‘da Khamsīna ‘Aman* (Beirut: Al-Ahliyyah lil-Nashr wal-Tawzī‘, 1986) 545–566; al-Disūqī 235–242; Su‘ād ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ‘Abd al-Karīm, *Islāmiyyāt Shawqī: Dirāsah Naqdīyyah* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1987) 66–74; Maḥrūs Mīnshāwī al-Jālī, *Al-Āthār al-Miṣriyyah fī Shī‘r Shawqī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1986) 37–46.

second point is that, as long as the occupation continues, the British Government will necessarily be responsible, not, indeed, for the details, but for the main lines on which the administration is conducted. On this second point there ought, I think, to be no manner of doubt.¹⁹

It is this “imposition of alien rule upon an unwilling people,” in Hourani’s words, which is the essence of imperialism.²⁰ Shawqī’s characterization of the relationship between England and Egypt as one of enslavement of Egyptians by the British renders it contestable by the subjects. The relationship thus characterized amounts to a moral outrage to be resisted. Admonishing Sheikh ‘Abd al-Karīm Sulāyman for attending the farewell ceremony, Shawqī, in the second hemistich of line 9, refers to him as “the blind man”:

*Shahida ’l-Ḥusaynu ‘alayhi la’na uṣūlihi
wa-taṣaddara ’l-‘mā bihi taṭfīlā.*

In which “al-Ḥusayn” witnessed the cursing of his forefathers²¹
And “the blind man,” uninvited, took a front-row seat.

On the surface, this is a reference to the Sheikh’s fading eyesight. On a deeper level, however, the adjectival *al-‘mā* (the blind) connotes spiritual blindness; the Sheikh’s physical near-blindness is a manifestation of a spiritual blindness. This hemistich makes an allusion to the Qur’ānic verse: “Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts.”²² In the Qur’ānic context, it is the unbelievers’ spiritual blindness that causes them to reject belief in Allah. It is thus suggested that to acquiesce in this relationship is to be guilty of moral and spiritual blindness, a blindness that borders on *kufī*, unbelief in Allah.²³

Line 4 marks a shift in the portrayal of Cromer:

*Lammā raḥalta ‘ani ’l-bilādi tashahhadat
fa ka-annaka ’l-dā’u ’l-‘ayā’u raḥīlā.*

¹⁹ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

²⁰ Hourani, “The Decline of the West” 30.

²¹ Arslān finds it extremely odd that Cromer should “say what he said in the presence of prince Ḥusayn Kāmil, the son of the Khedive Ismā’īl and the future Sultan of Egypt.” Arslān 247.

²² Qur’ān 22: 46. Trans. Yusuf Ali.

²³ Arslān, however, maintains, “the blind man,” (Sheikh ‘Abd al-Karīm Sulaymān) “was not involved in politics” and speculates that Shawqī made mention of him “only to sound humorous.” Arslān 247.

When you departed, the country said the *Shahādah*
 As if you were an incurable disease from which it had recovered.

With this line the theme of Cromer/colonialism as a disease, a pollutant, is introduced. The verb *tashahhadat* (from the trilateral root *sh-h-d*) has in this context a number of significations. The most transparent of these is that the country offered praise to Allah for His ridding it of Cromer as a man afflicted with an incurable disease would do if God of his disease cured him. *Tashahhada* further signifies embracing Islam—a person becomes a Muslim upon repeating the *shahādah*: *ashhadu an lā ilāha illa Allāh* (I bear witness that there is no God but Allah). Looked at in this way, the implication would be that Cromer's departure/removal leads to a reaffirmation of Islam, a religion that he especially targeted for disparagement. If Cromer's presence in and rule of Egypt represents pollution, disease, the undermining of faith, his removal amounts to purification, recovery, a reaffirmation of faith.

Line 5 begins a chastisement of Cromer for his indecorous speech at the ceremony honoring him:

Awsa'tanā yawma 'l-wadā'i ihānatan
Adabun la-ʿamruka lā yuṣību mathīlā!

On the day of parting you heaped humiliation upon us;
 Never was decorum so outraged!

Cromer's speech was thought by many to constitute a serious breach of decorum, an outrage to *adab* tradition.²⁴ This tradition enjoins a notable being honored to observe a code of decorum. Observance of such a code in this particular case entails acknowledging society's hierarchy at the top of which stood the figure of the Khedive. It also entails eschewing any undue display of feeling. Cromer's failure to acknowledge the reigning Khedive, the accusations of ingratitude he leveled at the Egyptians, his brazen assertion that the occupation would continue indefinitely, and his contemptuous dismissal of the Egyptian national movement and its leadership amounted to *ihānah*

²⁴ In this context the term *adab* denotes a set of rules that define "proper" conduct, which had become associated in the Arabo-Islamic collective memory with the upper echelons of society. For a study of the evolution of the term *adab* and its various meanings, see S. A. Bonebakker, "Adab and the Concept of *Belles-Lettres*," *ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 16–30.

(humiliation, affront). The extensiveness of the abuse Cromer heaped on the Egyptians is emphasized through the use of the verb *awsaʿa* (Form IV). Significantly, the object of the verb is a pronominal suffix that refers to the Egyptians collectively. This stresses that Cromer's affront was directed not at a certain section of Egyptian society; rather, it was directed at all Egyptians. Cromer's blatant disregard for the code of decorum is underscored by juxtaposing the noun *ihānah* with *adab*; the word *ihānah* closes the first hemistich while *adab* initiates the second. His disregard for the prompting of decorum is further emphasized by contrasting it with the Premier's gracefulness and his scrupulous observance of the code of *adab* (line 7). Cromer is thus judged by the Arabo-Islamic rules of nobility and is found wanting. These rules were stated famously by the 'Abbāsīd poet al-Mutanabbī (915–65):

Idhā anta akramta 'l-karīma malaktahu
wa-in anta akramta 'l-la'īma tamarradā.

When you honor a man of honor, you own him;
when you honor an ignoble, he's impudent.²⁵

The fundamental rule of nobility is that “its principles of reciprocity and obligation function only among nobles. . . . When you commit an act of generosity to a noble, he will acknowledge the debt incurred and his obligation to repay it, that is, he will feel grateful and ‘obliged.’ A bond of loyalty is thereby established. Conversely, such generosity conferred upon an ignoble will elicit only insolence or contempt—he will claim he was owed it all along.”²⁶ Cromer's ignoble disposition as shown by his disregard for the rules of nobility casts doubt on the legitimacy of the entire regime of which he is a part, the British government and its colonial enterprise.

The culpability of the British government in the plight of Egypt is the subject of lines 16, 17:

Al-yawma akhlafati 'l-wu'ūda hukūmatun
kunnā nazunnu 'uhūdaha 'l-injilā

²⁵ Trans. S. Stetkevych. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, “The Politics and Poetics of Ceremony: Al-Mutanabbī's ‘Id-poem to Sayf al-Dawlah,” *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature*, ed. J. R. Smart (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996) 133; *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002) 212–223.

²⁶ S. Stetkevych, “The Politics and Poetics of Ceremony” 133.

Dakhalat 'alā ḥukmi 'l-widādi wa-shar'ihī
Miṣran fa-kānat kal-sulāli dukhūlā.

Today a government broke its promises,
 A government whose promises we had held as Gospel.

It entered Egypt in accordance with precepts of friendship
 But proved to be a consumptive disease.

Thus if Cromer is likened in line 4 to an incurable disease, the British government is likened to consumption, *i.e.*, tuberculosis—which, at the turn of the twentieth century and until fairly recently, was a terminal and dreaded disease in the Arab world. Moreover, much as the English term for tuberculosis, “consumption,” conveys the idea of wasting away and destroying, the Arabic *sulāl* in terms of Form (*fu'āl*) and etymology indicates an invasive disease—a vivid metaphor for the British colonization of Egypt. Line 16 continues the notion of the British government as anti-Islamic and malevolent, and therefore submission to its rule as amounting to *kufī*, by introducing the theme of *ikhhlāfu 'l-wu'ūd* (breaking of promises) which is synonymous with *ikhhlāfu 'l-'uhūd* (breaking of covenants). This theme can be traced to the Qur'ān: “For the worst of beasts in the sight of God are those who reject Him: They will not believe. They are those with whom thou didst make a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they have not the fear (of God).”²⁷ The immediate occasion for these Qur'ānic verses was the alleged treachery of the Banū Qurayzah, a Jewish tribe that had entered into a covenant with the early Muslims concerning the defense of Medina only to break that covenant, an act which provoked the Muslims to take reprisals against them (A.D. 627). Cromer's affirmation that the British occupation would continue runs counter to earlier British government's pledges of an early withdrawal of the British army and an end to occupation. It amounts to the breaking of a covenant the British government had made with Egypt just as the Jews of Banū Qurayzah had broken their covenant with the early Muslims. Indeed, the British government's breaking its covenant casts doubt on that government's very claims to being a “Christian” government guided in its actions by the Gospel and makes it identifiable as a modern Banū Qurayzah. The line can be read as a call for insurrection. Just as the early Muslims were “justified” in avenging themselves on the

²⁷ Qur'ān 8: 55–56. Trans. Yusuf Ali.

Banū Qurayzah for the latter's alleged treachery, so too are modern Muslims no less justified in making the British accountable for their treachery which acts on Egypt as tuberculosis acts on the body.

In line 19 Shawqī turns to contesting the claims made by the Egyptian Premier Muṣṭafā Fahmī at the farewell ceremony. In his tribute to Cromer, Fahmī said:

Egypt, my lord, cannot forget that she owes to your wisest counsels, assistance, and support that transformation which calls forth a universal feeling of admiration. History must chronicle and appreciate the varied progress which has been realized by this country. I wish only to affirm that the fellah has felt the benefits of the transformation which has been accomplished and has participated more than any other in the general prosperity. He thus enjoys happy days owing to the improvement in his moral and material condition. It is to this work, my lord, that your name will be attached, and it will ever ensure the sincere and profound gratitude of Egypt.²⁸

In the colonial situation, the colonizer, in the words of Frantz Fanon “only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly” the superiority of the colonizer's codes.²⁹ The Premier's assertions that Cromer/the occupation was responsible for bringing about prosperity to Egypt, and further, that the peasantry—the vast majority of Egyptians—underwent not just material, but also moral, improvement as a result of British occupation, amount to such an admission. To characterize, as does the Premier, the imposition of British codes over Egyptian as signifying moral improvement deserving sincere and profound gratitude on the part of Egyptians is to admit “loudly and intelligibly” the superiority of the imposed codes and to urge acquiescence in the regime which is predicated on them. Moreover, such characterization amounts to an implicit rejection of Egyptian/Islamic codes as leading not only to material decline but also to moral degeneration. In line 19 Shawqī contests this claim:

*Qālū jalabta lana 'l-raḥāhata wal-ghinā
jahadu 'l-ilāha wa-ṣun'ahu wal-Nīlā.*

They said, “You [Cromer] had brought us prosperity and opulence.”
They denied Allah's due and His work and the Nile.

²⁸ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

²⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Constance Farrington, trans. (New York: Grove Press, 1968) 43.

To contest this claim, Shawqī invokes the notion of *juhūd* or ingratitude, denial of indebtedness. To counter munificence with *juhūd* is reprehensible enough in the Arabo-Islamic traditional value system. How much more reprehensible would *juhūd* be if the benefactor is Allah whose blessing is boundless? Yet this is exactly what those who credit Cromer/colonialism for Egypt's prosperity are guilty of. It is not simply a question of misplaced credit but an act so deliberate and reprehensible as to border on *kufr* in Allah's blessing. This line clearly invokes Qur'ānic admonitions to those who deny Allah's blessing such as the following: "And ye have no good thing but is from God",³⁰ "Will they then deny the favours of God."³¹ These two verses establish that Allah is the source of all *ni'mah* (blessing), a notion in which many Muslims firmly believe. Others may act as instruments of Allah, but it is Allah who is ultimately the source of *ni'mah*. Denying this or giving credit to anyone else amounts to *juhūd* in Allah's *ni'mah* and borders on *kufr*. The claim of Cromer's supporters that he was the source of Egypt's prosperity is thus pitted against Allah's affirmation that He alone is the source of all *ni'mah*. The line also serves as a stern warning: to concur with the Premier in his assertions is to be equally guilty of *juhūd*. In short, equating the Premier and others' claims with *juhūd* renders these claims invalid and objectionable. If the Premier's speech amounts to an admission of the supremacy of the colonizer's codes, and ultimately lends legitimacy to the regime/the colonialist enterprise that is predicated on such codes, Shawqī's *qaṣīdah* (as in this line) serves to undo such admission and consequently to *de*-legitimize that enterprise. It is here that the significance of the *qaṣīdah* in part lies.³²

"Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip," argues Fanon, "it turns to the past of the oppressed peoples, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it."³³ Instances of what Fanon calls the "work of devaluing pre-colonial history"³⁴ in the case of Egypt abound in Cromer's annual reports and in his farewell speech. Take, for example, education. In his address, Cromer characterizes

³⁰ Qur'ān 16: 53. Trans. Yusuf Ali.

³¹ Qur'ān 16: 71. Trans. Yusuf Ali.

³² It should be noted that Shawqī contests specific claims the Premier makes rather than the latter's conduct at the ceremony which is lauded in lines 6–7 above.

³³ Fanon 210.

³⁴ Fanon 210.

the educational system that had existed before the British occupation of Egypt as “absolutely worthless.” He goes on to claim that during his rule the educational system underwent “a remarkable change.”³⁵ In reality, it was Muḥammad ‘Alī who, in a bid to build up a strong army during his rule (1805–1848), introduced to Egypt Western secular forms of education. Muḥammad ‘Alī also sent Egyptian students to study in Europe. Upon returning to Egypt, they were employed in teaching and in administrative jobs. When Muḥammad ‘Alī’s grandson, Ismā‘īl, became Khedive (1863–1879), he pursued the modernizing of education more actively and on a larger scale than his grandfather. Among Ismā‘īl’s important achievements were establishing Dār al-‘Ulūm (The Teachers’ Training College, 1872), and Dār al-Kutub (The National Library, 1870).³⁶ By contrast, Cromer’s record on education is lamentable. As Peter Mansfield has noted, throughout Cromer’s rule of Egypt “the amount spent on education did not exceed one percent of gross revenues. . . . The consequence was that in 1910 the literacy rate was 8.5 percent for males and 0.3 percent for females. When he [Cromer] retired, about 1.5 percent of the population was receiving primary education as compared with 1.7 per cent in 1873.”³⁷ In his attempts to achieve solvency, Cromer abandoned the policy of providing free education in state schools, a policy that had been pursued by both Muḥammad ‘Alī and Ismā‘īl.³⁸ Moreover, Cromer was opposed to establishing a university in Egypt for fear that such institution would foster Egyptian nationalism. This prompted the Egyptian liberal theologian Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905) to charge that the British were intent on preventing “the development of a liberally educated elite capable of governing a modernized Egyptian state.”³⁹ Cromer’s dismissing of Egypt’s precolonial past as a historical void, his rigging chronology to make civilization and even morality start with the date of the British occupation, are not due to his nature, however arrogant and imperious it may have been; rather, they are due to the

³⁵ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

³⁶ M. M. Badawi, ed., *Modern Arabic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 6–11.

³⁷ Peter Mansfield, *The British in Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) 140–41.

³⁸ Mansfield 143.

³⁹ Mansfield 146.

nature of the colonial enterprise itself and to the “ideologies of moral, cultural, and racial supremacy” which underpinned and legitimated that enterprise.⁴⁰ From the colonizer’s perspective, the pre-colonial past of Egypt (like that of other colonized peoples) had to be dismissed as a pre-civilized limbo. For to admit otherwise would be to negate the supposed *raison d’être* of colonialism.

Shawqī’s rejoinder to such devaluation of Egypt’s pre-colonial past is to reclaim that past. To such reclamation he devotes a large section of the *qaṣīdah* (lines 20–31) in which he details the reforms and achievements initiated by Muḥammad ‘Alī and his successors. This section culminates in line 26:

Qad madda Ismā‘īlu qablaka lil-warā
zilla ‘l-ḥadārati fi ‘l-bilādi zālilā.

Before you Ismā‘īl extended to mankind
The dense shade of civilization in the country.

If the colonialist enterprise is predicated on the legitimating ideology which claims that the pre-colonial past of conquered peoples is an historical void to be filled with the civilization of the conqueror, then Shawqī’s assertion that the “shade of civilization” had indeed extended before the advent of colonialism serves to erode the very ideology which sustained that colonialist enterprise. Furthermore, this ideology, to which Cromer wholeheartedly subscribed, held not only that the conquered territories needed to be regenerated in a material sense, but that the inhabitants of these territories, too, needed to be saved from their moral degeneration.⁴¹ Cromer cites as evidence of such degeneration Egyptians’ ingratitude⁴² to him for the

⁴⁰ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 24.

⁴¹ As Edward Said has shown in his landmark study, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), Cromer’s views of the Oriental were informed to a great extent by Orientalist “scholarship.” In his delineation of “the mental and moral attributes” of the Oriental, Cromer relies heavily on Alfred Lyall, Edward William Lane, Ernest Renan, as well as on the Napoleonic *Description de l’Égypte*. See The Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, vol. II (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1908) especially pp. 123–200.

⁴² With regard to Egyptian ingratitude, Cromer draws on the authority of the well-known Orientalist Edward William Lane whose book *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* he cites approvingly: “The natives of Egypt in general, in common with the Arabs of other countries, are [according to our system of morals] justly chargeable with a fault, which is regarded by us as one of great magnitude; it is want of gratitude.” Cromer 195 fn.

“benefits which have unquestionably been conferred upon them.”⁴³
In his farewell speech Cromer stated:

I am often told that the Egyptians generally fail to show any great amount of gratitude for the benefits which have unquestionably been conferred upon them. I do not know what their feelings are in this respect. A French philosopher once said something to this effect:—
“Lorsqu’un peuple a trop souffert, à peine a-t-il la force de remercier ceux qui le sauvent.” Assuredly, the people of Egypt in past times suffered grievously. Whatever their feelings may be now, I refuse to be reasoned out of what, if it be a delusion, is at all events a noble delusion; I refuse to believe that the Egyptians, at all events the best among them, do not recognize that it was the hand of Western civilization, acting mainly during the last 25 years through the instrumentality of England, that has raised them from the slough of despond in which their lot was formerly cast, that pointed out to them the way which leads to material prosperity and moral elevation of thought; and if, which is far from being the case, I were convinced that the present generation do not recognize this manifest truth, I should still cherish the hope that posterity would do so. I believe it is a fact that the children of the blind are able to see.⁴⁴

The contestation of colonialism in its interpellative stage is, as Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson have pointed out, “a contest of representation.”⁴⁵ Shawqī’s contestation of Empire’s self-representation takes the remainder of the qaṣīdah, which is divided into two sections. The first section (lines 32–40) is concerned with questioning Cromer’s claim of “the benefits which have unquestionably been conferred” upon the Egyptians with respect to three areas which Cromer stressed in his speech and in his annual report of 1906.⁴⁶ These are the areas of education, the Justice System, and the condition of the Egyptian army under British control. Shawqī’s oppositional representation suggests that Cromer’s claim of “material prosperity and moral elevation” conferred by colonial rule on ungrateful Egyptians is indeed a delusion. What makes Shawqī’s counter discourse more convincing is that the facts on the ground appear to correspond more with his account than with that of Cromer. The case of education has been discussed above. With respect to the army, Cromer’s claim in his

⁴³ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

⁴⁴ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

⁴⁵ Tiffin and Lawson 10.

⁴⁶ Cromer 555–59.

report of 1906 that “[t]he soldier has acquired some pride in the uniform which he wears”⁴⁷ is *de-scribed* (in lines 36–40). The picture Shawqī draws is one of a dispirited and inconsequential army whose men were deliberately denied promotions and in which British officers held all senior positions. Furthermore, this army was used not to the benefit of Egypt but as an instrument in the service of the British Empire. It is with regard to the Justice system, however, that Shawqī could tap the most intense resentment to British occupation. In his speech, Cromer makes some rather absurd claims about the justice system of Egypt during his rule, including the false claim that “every individual, from the highest to the lowest, is now equal in the eye of the law.”⁴⁸ Shawqī could have pointed to the case of European residents in Egypt who numbered over 113,000 in the year 1906, who enjoyed consular protection, and to whom the law did not apply,⁴⁹ and indeed to the fact that the British themselves, including the army of occupation, were above the law. Yet in line 35 he chooses to respond by invoking the more emotive Dinshaway, the small Delta village which, as we shall see in the second part of this chapter, was brutalized by the British authorities following the incident of 1906 and which became a symbol of colonial oppression and a recurrent motif in the literature of the period:

*Am min ṣiyānatika 'l-qaḍā'a bi-Miṣra an
ta'tī bi-qāḍī Dinshawāya wakāilā?*

Or [is your notion of] safeguarding Egypt's Justice System
That you put the judge of Dinshaway in charge of the Justice Ministry?

The second section of Shawqī's response to Cromer's charge of Egyptian ingratitude takes up lines 41–49. In this section, Shawqī provides an exhaustive list of those who counted Cromer as their benefactor, none of whom is Egyptian. They include “redcoats,” “missionaries,”⁵⁰ “London creditors,” “foreign residents” in Egypt,

⁴⁷ Cromer 556.

⁴⁸ *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

⁴⁹ Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid notes that “[u]nder the protective mantle of the Capitulations, and often with the complicity of their Consuls, aliens could commit any form of crime with impunity; for they could be arrested only with the consent of their Consuls, and were tried in Consular courts where, more often than not, they were released without proper trial.” Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer: A Study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969) 6.

⁵⁰ A reference to Cromer's alleged encouragement of Christian missionary activity in Egypt during his tenure. See al-Ḥūfī, *Diwān Shawqī*, 1: 373 fn.

and “de Serionne.” The thrust of Shawqī’s argument is that Cromer’s demand that Egyptians show gratitude to him is baseless, that Egyptians have nothing to be grateful for. It is not Egyptians who should feel gratitude but rather European interests in Egypt, the “Franks” of line 50 who owe Cromer a debt of gratitude.⁵¹

The qaṣīdah ends by reiterating the anti-Islamic nature of Cromer and his colonial rule:

*Man sabba dīna Muḥammadin fa-Muḥammadun
mutamakkinun ‘inda ‘l-ilāhi rasūlā.*

[Let him] who reviles the religion of Muḥammad [know]
that Muḥammad is empowered by Allah, a Messenger.

Directly, the line refers to Cromer’s tirades against Islam in his annual reports to the British government, especially his report of 1906.⁵² The concluding line confirms the anti-Islamic disposition of Cromer and hence the illegitimacy of British rule over the Muslim country of Egypt.

In conclusion, Shawqī’s counter-discursive strategy in this qaṣīdah involves casting the struggle between Egypt and Cromer/colonialism as one between belief/Islam and infidelity, as a conflict between good and evil, between the forces of life and those of death and degeneration. To this end, he marshals imagery of death, disease, and barrenness, and makes extensive use of the historical archetype. His strategy also involves exploiting skillfully the anti-colonial sentiments of Egyptians and their grievances with respect to colonial rule. Judging by the extraordinary reception of the qaṣīdah when it was published, it is clear that Shawqī succeeded to a large extent in undercutting Cromer’s peremptory rhetoric.

Qaṣīdah no. 2: “The Anniversary of Dinshaway”⁵³ [4]

1. O Dinshaway, peace be upon your hills,
The days have taken away the bliss of your abodes.

⁵¹ Arslān 251.

⁵² Cromer 132–67.

⁵³ Aḥmad Shawqī, *Al-Shawqīyyāt*, vol. I (Cairo: Al-Istiḳāmah, 1961) 244–45. The qaṣīdah is in *al-Kāmil* meter. For the Arabic text, see Appendix 4. Works that contain references to or discussion of this qaṣīdah include the following: Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī, *Waṭaniyyat Shawqī*, 4th ed. (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1978) 215–22; Aḥmad Zakī ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Shā‘ir al-Waṭaniyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1977), 29–40; Aḥmad Suwaylim al-‘Umarī, *Adab*

2. Those present at your verdict have dispersed in the land,
Never will that scattered gathering be reunited.
3. Months have passed over those laid in their graves,
And a year has passed over those put in chains.
4. How are the widows after [the loss of] their husbands?
And what has become of the orphans?
5. Twenty homes have become deserted,
Their bliss replaced by dreariness and gloom.
6. Would that I knew, was it doves in the towers,
Or was it death?
7. O Nero, had you lived till the reign of Cromer,
You would have known how sentences are carried out.
8. Bewail, O doves of Dinshaway, and terrify
A people sleepless in the valley Nile.
9. If the living sleep,
Nightmares stand at dawn between them and their beds.
10. A people in agony thinking about the day
Whose enormity caused feet to tremble:
11. The whip at work, the gallows four,
Working in concert, and the soldiers standing,
12. And the Advisor looking at the horrors,
Skins and bones bleeding all around him.
13. In every corner and every quarter,
Sorrowful people feeling great anguish.
14. The faces of bereft men veiled with sorrow,
Bereaved women's faces veiled in dust.

The second qaṣīdah amounts to an elaboration on the two references to Dinshaway contained in the first qaṣīdah. The Dinshaway incident involved a group of British officers who, on June 13, 1906 went pigeon shooting at the village of Dinshaway in the Nile delta. The villagers had previously complained to the authorities about British officers shooting their pigeons, but to no avail. During this particular incident, an affray broke out between the villagers and the officers. During the affray a gun belonging to one of the officers accidentally discharged wounding four villagers, one of whom was

Shawqī fī al-Siyāṣah wal-Ijtīmāʿ: Dirāsāt Muqāranah (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Miṣriyyah, 1942) 82; Fawzī ʿAṭawī, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Amīr al-Shuʿarāʾ* (Beirut: Al-Sharikah al-Lubnāniyyah lil-Kiṭāb, 1969) 155–157; Najīb al-Kīlānī, *Shawqī fī Rakk al-Khālīdīn* (Cairo: Al-Sharikah al-ʿArabiyyah lil-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr, 1963) 71–72; Muʿāwiyah Ḥanafī Maḥmūd, *Maʿa Shawqī* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.) 22–25; al-Disūqī 95–97. Rita ʿAwaḍ, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Beirut: Al-Muʿassasah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1983) 24–6; and Mounah A. Khouri, *Poetry and the Making of Modern Egypt: 1882–1922* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971) 82–4. A partial citation of the poem (with an English translation) is in Khouri 83–4.

thought to have been killed. This further incensed the villagers who then beat up the officers. One of the officers ran back to the British military camp in an attempt to fetch help. Before he reached the camp, however, he collapsed and died from heat and exhaustion, as was later determined by British doctors. An Egyptian farmer who was attempting to revive him was taken by a group of British soldiers to have killed him and was subsequently bludgeoned to death. Back in the village of Dinshaway the officers were handed over to the police.⁵⁴

The British response to the incident was a decisive show of force. A Special Tribunal was set up to try the villagers.⁵⁵ On June 27, the Tribunal passed sentences on twenty-one villagers ranging in age from seventeen to sixty. Four men were sentenced to hang, two were sentenced to penal servitude for life, six to seven years' imprisonment, three to one year's imprisonment and fifty lashes each, and five to fifty lashes each. The sentences were carried out in public on the site of the incident in Dinshaway and the entire village was forced to watch.⁵⁶ The emotional impact of the sentences on the populace seems to have been profound. Describing the feeling of Egyptians following the executions, the Egyptian writer Qāsim Amīn (1863–1908) is quoted as saying: "Everyone I met had a broken heart and a lump in his throat. There was nervousness in every gesture—in their hands and their voices. Sadness was on every face, but it was a peculiar sort of sadness. It was confused, distracted and visibly subdued in the face of superior force."⁵⁷

Qāsim Amīn was not the only one to detect such nervousness among Egyptians following the hanging and flogging of the Dinshaway villagers. Writing from Alexandria on July 15, 1906, the *Times* correspondent states:

The condemnation of the Dinshaway criminals has produced a wholesome nervousness among many of the supporters of the Pan-Islamic movement, who realize that any anti-European movement will be met

⁵⁴ Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn 'Alī al-Masādī, *Dinshaway* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1974) 71–81.

⁵⁵ The tribunal was composed of the following: Colonel Ludlow, representing the army of occupation; W. Bond, Vice-President of the Courts; Faṭḥī Bey Zaghlūl, President of the Native Courts; W. Hayter, acting Judicial Advisor; and Buṭrus Ghālī, the interim Minister of Justice. Lutfi Al-Sayyid 171.

⁵⁶ Lutfi Al-Sayyid 172.

⁵⁷ Lutfi Al-Sayyid 173.

by drastic measures on the part of the government. . . . That fanatical feeling is widely spread among the rabble of Alexandria and Tanta is well known. But the Tanta mob has been profoundly impressed by the consequences of the Dinshaway incident, and in Alexandria there are signs that the anti-foreign excitement is subsiding.⁵⁸

These remarks shed some light on why the sentences were so harsh. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid maintains, "Dinshaway was a blunder on the part of the British officials." She cites Lord Lloyd's⁵⁹ statement that the British response was "dictated by panic" and speculates that had the incident occurred twenty years earlier, the response would not have been so severe.⁶⁰ I take the view that the British response was not taken on the spur of the moment, it was not the result of panic as Lord Lloyd maintained, nor indeed was it the act of a vindictive tribunal out to seek vengeance for the "murder" of an English officer. Rather, the sentences were a calculated measure by an imperial authority in response to what was perceived as a challenge to that authority. The Dinshaway affray was a symbolic challenge but was by no means an isolated incident. As Lutfi al-Sayyid herself notes, the incident "came as the culmination of a series of events" especially "the agitation of the national press for evacuation."⁶¹ This stepped-up opposition is indicated by Findlay, the Acting Agent and Consul-General in Lord Cromer's absence. Referring to the affray at Dinshaway, Findlay states: "It is due . . . to the insubordinate spirit which has been sedulously fostered during the last year by unscrupulous and interested agitators."⁶² Colonialism demands acquiescence in its rule; the Dinshaway incident represented a challenge to that rule, to the authority of Empire which had to be suppressed. Far from being an act committed by panic-stricken officials on the scene, it is the very manner the hegemonic and exploitative regime of colonialism was to be maintained. To abandon coercion is to abandon Empire.

This view is supported by the fact that British officials in London fully endorsed the sentences, considering them as necessary to affirm

⁵⁸ *Times* [London] 28 July, 1906.

⁵⁹ Lord Lloyd succeeded Allenby as High Commissioner in Egypt.

⁶⁰ Lutfi Al-Sayyid 175.

⁶¹ Lutfi Al-Sayyid 175.

⁶² Telegram dated July 5, 1906 to Sir Edward Grey, the then Foreign Secretary. *Times* [London] 28 July, 1906.

the authority of Empire. In his book, *Twenty-Five Years*, Edward Grey, the then British Foreign Secretary, relates the incident as an example of the difficulties that faced the British government “in the course of governing an oriental country, where its rule depends on *force* (emphasis added).”⁶³ The verdict and sentences were telegraphed to Grey who had the authority to overrule the Special Tribunal. “I consulted Campbell-Bannerman [the Prime Minister] in his room at the House of Commons,” Grey relates in his memoirs, “and we got Asquith [a future Prime Minister] to join us. Our decision was that we could not interfere, and the sentences were executed.”⁶⁴ For his part Lord Cromer, who was on leave in England at the time, stated that “Had I remained in Egypt, I should in every respect have adopted the same course as that which he [Mr. Findlay] pursued. . . . I consider that the sentences, though severe, were just and necessary.”⁶⁵ This concurrence of Britain’s leading statesmen on the necessity of repression attests to the pervasiveness of the ideology of imperialism that informed the colonizer’s perceptions of the colonized.⁶⁶

Aḥmad Shawqī appears to have been among those who were “profoundly impressed by the consequences of the Dinshaway incident,” *i.e.*, by the consequences of resisting Empire. He was conspicuous in his silence on the incident,⁶⁷ and it was not until a year had passed that he published this qaṣīdah.⁶⁸ The qaṣīdah, entitled

⁶³ Viscount Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years: 1892–1916*, vol. 1 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1925) 130.

⁶⁴ Grey of Fallodon 133.

⁶⁵ *Times* [London] 28 July, 1906.

⁶⁶ In the House of Commons, in response to questioning by Irish members of Parliament, Grey defended the necessity of the sentences and issued a warning to MPs to refrain from criticism of the sentences, as such criticism would undermine the authority of the Empire. *Times* [London] 28 July, 1906. In his book, however, Grey contends that his defense of the sentences in the House of Commons was based on two telegrams (reproduced in the book) he had received from Findlay. Although he maintains that “[w]hen the full facts were before me I felt that what had been done was open to question,” nowhere does he repudiate the sentences. Grey of Fallodon 133.

⁶⁷ Al-Ḥūfī proposes several explanations for Shawqī’s silence. See al-Ḥūfī 218–21. Khouri, however, attributes the poet’s silence to the nature of the relationship between the Khedive ‘Abbās and the British. Khouri 83.

⁶⁸ Aḥmad Zakī ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm maintains that the qaṣīdah appeared in *Al-Liwā’* newspaper June 27, 1907 (following Cromer’s departure) on the first anniversary of the Dinshaway incident. The declared purpose of the qaṣīdah was to seek clemency for the prisoners of Dinshaway. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm 35. Khouri, however, gives May 27, 1907 as the date of the publication of the qaṣīdah in *Al-Liwā’*. Khouri 84.

“The Anniversary of Dinshaway,” is notable for its use of the poetic topos of *al-wuqūf ‘alā ‘l-aṭlāl*, a topos thought to have originated with the poets of pre-Islamic Arabia and in which the poet, while on a journey through the desert, would stop at the remains of the abandoned encampment where his beloved once lived. The blackened traces of such encampment evoked in him feelings of nostalgia and yearning for the days of bliss when the encampment was alive with inhabitants, especially his beloved. Although in this *qaṣīdah* Shawqī casts himself in the role of the ancient Arabian bard, nevertheless the *qaṣīdah* is, in a broad sense, a *mu‘āraḍah* (*imitatio*) of a *qaṣīdah* by a later ‘Abbāsīd poet, Abū Tammām (c. 804–845), who invokes the topos of the traces of encampment, as had become customary for later poets. Abū Tammām’s *qaṣīdah* in question is a panegyric to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma’mūn (813–33) on his foray into Byzantine territories in A.D. 830–31 and begins thus:

*Dīmanun alamma bihā faqāla salāmū
kam ḥalla ‘uqdata ṣabrihi ‘l-ilmāmū*

He alighted at a blackened trace
and bade it peace,
How often has alighting loosed
forbearance’ knot!⁶⁹

Shawqī’s *mu‘āraḍah* begins thus:

*Yā Dinshawāya ‘alā rubāki salāmū
dhahabat bi-unsī rubū‘iki ‘l-ayyāmū.*

O Dinshaway, peace be upon your hills,
The days have taken away the bliss of your abodes.

Thus the abandoned encampment topos which figured so prominently in pre-Islamic poetry, and which was revitalized by the *qaṣīdahs* of such poets of later ages as Abū Tammām, survives into the twentieth century through *qaṣīdahs* like this one. It is in this sense that Shawqī can be seen as revitalizing the *qaṣīdah* tradition, by recovering topoi which survived at the hands of poets like Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī (821–79) but headed for oblivion during

⁶⁹ Trans. S. Stetkevych. See Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ‘Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991) 113. See also al-Ṣūlī, *Sharḥ al-Ṣūlī li-Dīwān Abū Tammām*, ed. Khalaf Rashīd Nu‘mān, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah, 1978) 372–80.

the Age of Decline. Shawqī's achievement is not so much that he reintroduced themes and motifs from the Classical Age as that he made these germane to the modern age, employing them to articulate contemporary concerns even as he invokes the authority of the autochthonous tradition.⁷⁰

Points of similarity between Abū Tammām's qaṣīdah and Shawqī's include the use of an identical meter (*al-Kāmil*) and rhyme scheme, the fact that both qaṣīdahs describe a raid and its effects, and that in both the pigeon motif figures prominently. Indeed the presence of the pigeon motif in Abū Tammām's qaṣīdah may have suggested it to Shawqī as the model for his qaṣīdah on the Dinshaway incident in which pigeons played a role. Another similarity is the extensive use in Shawqī's qaṣīdah of lexicon and imagery from Abū Tammām's qaṣīdah.

Yet it is not merely the similarities between the two qaṣīdahs that are striking, but also the differences. Shawqī's qaṣīdah represents an inversion of the thematic context of Abū Tammām's. Abū Tammām's qaṣīdah celebrates the victorious campaign of a Muslim ruler, the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, against the Byzantine infidel. Al-Ma'mūn's campaign against the Byzantines serves to uphold the rule of Islam and to invigorate the Muslim polity; it is a victory by Islam over *kufī* (disbelief), by the Muslim polity over the Christian infidel. In Shawqī's qaṣīdah, however, the roles are reversed; it is the infidels who raid a Muslim community and shed its blood. The Dinshaway incident represents a violation of the *Ummah*, the Muslim community.

Unlike Shawqī's first qaṣīdah which is reactive and which has an argumentative structure,⁷¹ this qaṣīdah has a more intricate, studied structure reflecting the medieval intertext that it evokes and through which it is recuperated. The opening line can be viewed as a concise statement of the thematic focus of the qaṣīdah that is then amplified in the rest of the qaṣīdah. The line initiates two oppositions around which the qaṣīdah revolves. The first opposition is between the past and the present. The second hemistich evokes a state antecedent to the imposition of colonial rule during which the

⁷⁰ Shawqī's accomplishment is in many respects similar to that of Abū Tammām. On the latter's transforming of the classical elements of the qaṣīdah to articulate 'Abbāsīd concerns see Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 110–34.

⁷¹ For a discussion of the aesthetics of resistance poetry, see Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 31–74.

Dinshaway community lived in peace and tranquility. The second opposition results from the prevalence in the *qaṣīdah* of a syntactic structure, subject-verb-object, in which the referent of the subject is variously defined whereas the referent of the object is predominantly Dinshaway(ans)/Egyptians. In the second hemistich of the opening line, the agent that acts upon Dinshaway is *al-Ayyām*, an all-encompassing term whose multiple significations include the work of fate, the adverse effects of natural phenomena, of the passage of time, and the effects of human action. The object of the action of *al-Ayyām* is identified as the bliss that Dinshaway once enjoyed but was taken away. An actor/acted upon dichotomy is thus set up in this line and is pursued throughout the *qaṣīdah*.

The portrayal of the British occupation of Egypt as a conflict between Islam and *kufṛ* is introduced in the second line:

Shuhadāʾu ḥukmiki fi ʾl-bilādi tafarraḡū
hayhāta lil-shamli ʾl-shatīti nizāmū.

Those present at your verdict have dispersed in the land,
 Never will that scattered gathering be reunited.

In the first hemistich the phrase *shuhadāʾu ḥukmiki* refers to those who were present at the verdict, those who were condemned. However, the more common signification of the noun *shuhadāʾ* is “martyrs.” Those who were condemned by the British tribunal are thus accorded the status of *shuhadāʾ*. This necessarily implies that their executioners are *kuffār*, infidels engaged in a war against Islam and Muslims, and the occupation as the rule of *kufṛ*. It is the religious duty of Muslims as prescribed by the Qurʾān not to submit to, but to resist *kufṛ* and *kuffār*, especially when the latter attempt to impose their will/rule on Muslims. The customary Muslim response to *kufṛ* and *kuffār* is *jihād* or the striving to subdue *kufṛ* and to reassert the true religion, *i.e.*, Islam. The identification of the victims of Dinshaway as *shuhadāʾ* and their executioners as *kuffār* carries an implicit call for *jihād* against the *kuffār*/the British occupation to re-establish the rule of Islam. In the same hemistich the verb *tafarraḡū* (scattered) alludes to the separation of men from their families as a result of their execution or incarceration. It further evokes the *firāq*, the tragic departure and dispersal of the abandoned encampment topos. The dispersal of Muslims at the beginning of the *qaṣīdah* is made more poignant by contrasting it toward the end of the *qaṣīdah* (line 11) with the union suggested by the adjectival *mutawahḥidāt*, literally “united,” to

describe the way the four gallows, the symbols of colonial oppression, were placed adjacent to one another on the day of the executions.

The past/present dichotomy initiated in the opening line is augmented in the second hemistich of line 2: *hayhāta lil-shamli 'l-shatīti niẓāmū*, literally, “Never will the scattered gathering have order.” This augmentation is effected through the juxtaposition of *al-shaml* (the gathering/the union) and *al-shatīt* (the dispersed/the scattered). Although the relatedness of “the scattered gathering” to the villagers is not stated explicitly, it is nonetheless strongly indicated through the device of alliteration: the two /sh/ words that alliterate in the second hemistich follow on the single /sh/ word of the first hemistich (*shuhadā*). Moreover, the nominal *niẓām* (order) suggests a present state of disorder and confusion. It evokes a precolonial era during which order and harmony prevailed, an era brought to an end by the imposition of colonial rule. The disorder and confusion as a result of the imposition of colonial rule implicitly call for restoring order and banishing confusion. This could only occur if the source of the disorder and confusion, *i.e.*, colonialism, is banished.

The actor/acted upon dichotomy initiated in the opening line is reinforced in line 3 which comprises a parallelism between the slain villagers and those incarcerated:

Marrat 'alayhim fi 'l-luḥūdī ahillatun
wa-maḍā 'alayhim fi 'l-quyūdi 'l-āmū.

Months have passed over those laid in their graves,
And a year has passed over those put in chains.

The victim status of the condemned villagers is brought out by the syntactic construction of the line. In this line the condemned villagers are placed as objects in both hemistichs. In the first hemistich the subject of the verb *marra* (to pass) is the plural noun *ahillatun* (crescent moons-months) which *marrat 'alayhim*, literally, passed over the dead villagers. In the second hemistich, the subject of the verb *maḍā* (to elapse) is *al-āmū* (the year which passed since some of the villagers were incarcerated). In both hemistichs, the condemned villagers occur as objects, acted upon, affected by the actions of others. This sense of the villagers as victims is accentuated by the repetition of the prepositional phrase *'alayhim* (over them) in identical positions in both hemistichs. The overall effect of this construction is to portray the condemned villagers as hapless victims of the tyranny of others, *i.e.*, their British rulers.

The past/present opposition introduced in the opening line and reinforced in line 2 is sustained in line 4:

*Kayfa 'l-arāmilu fiki ba'da rjālihā?
wa-bi-ayyi ḥālīn aṣbaḥa 'l-aytāmū?*

How are the widows after [the loss of] their husbands?
And what has become of the orphans?

In this line the precolonial state of contentment is indicated in the first hemistich by an adverb that denotes temporality, *ba'da* (after). In the second hemistich this former state is indicated by the verb *aṣbaḥa*. The verb *aṣbaḥa* (to be in the morning) does not suggest action but rather a state; it combines the idea of being or existence with that of temporality. In twentieth-century usage, moreover, *aṣbaḥa* has come to denote primarily the idea of change, “to become.” The use in this line of diction that evokes death and barrenness, *arāmil* (widows) and *aytām* (orphans), serves to identify British rule as a force that causes separation, death and barrenness. Moreover, the use of the plural forms of the two nouns suggests that such separation, death, and barrenness take place on a large scale. The overall effect of this is to underscore the deleterious effect of British rule. Benevolent rule, such as that of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn in Abū Tammān's qaṣīdah, secures for the polity life and regeneration:

*Wa-takaḥḥala 'l-aytāma 'an ābā'ihim
ḥattā wadīdnā annanā aytāmū.*

Who fostered orphans
in their fathers' place
Until we wished that we
were orphans too.⁷²

By contrast, the British rulers of Egypt orphan children; they deprive them of the nurturing presence of their fathers. They give children not life and nurturing but death and destitution. They also widow women thus stifling the biological regeneration of the polity. Their rule is malevolent as it is destructive; it is thus shown to be illegitimate. Shawqī's attempt to establish the illegitimacy of British rule is significant; once the illegitimacy of a rule is established, it becomes incumbent on Muslims not to acquiesce in it but to resist it.

⁷² Trans. S. Stetkevych. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 115.

In line 5 the two oppositions, which have informed the *qaṣīdah* so far, are sustained:

‘Ishrūna baytan aqfarat wa n-tābahā
ba‘da ‘l-bashāshati waḥshatun wa-zalāmū.

Twenty homes have become deserted,
 Their bliss replaced by desolation and gloom.

The past/present dichotomy is suggested by the denominative *aqfara* (Form IV). The noun *qafṛ* denotes a desolate place, a place whose occupants have left it, and is a key element in the traditional diction of the abandoned encampment topos. On one level then, *aqfara* refers to the Dinshaway homes that have become empty, their former occupants having been hanged or incarcerated. But *qafṛ* also denotes a stretch of land with no water or vegetation, a desert.⁷³ The denominative thus suggests a present state of barrenness as opposed to a former state of fecundity. The dichotomy is augmented by the use in the second hemistich of the adverbial *ba‘da* (after) with reference to a past state of *bashāshah* (bliss, cheerfulness) that has now been replaced by *waḥshah* (desolation—another element of the abandoned encampment lexicon) and *zalām* (darkness, gloom), and also by the juxtaposition of the two states in the same hemistich. The alliterative configuration observed in line 2 is resumed in this line: the two /sh/ words that alliterate in the second hemistich are anticipated by the single /sh/ word of the first hemistich. As in line 2, the alliterative pattern serves to define the relatedness of the references of *bashāshah/waḥshah* to the village(rs).

On the other hand, the actor/acted upon dichotomy is reinforced through the syntactic construction of the line. Although the subject of the verb *aqfara* consists of an implied pronoun that relates to *‘Ishrūna baytan* (twenty homes), the verb implies a state or a condition rather than an action. Its use, therefore, does not contradict the directionality of the syntactic structure posited above. This directionality is manifested in the second verbal sentence that straddles both hemistichs. The verb *intāba*, to beset, to afflict, to befall (from the trilateral root *n-w-b*) is used for its connotative associations which include *nā‘ibah* (a calamity, a disaster). The agent of the verb consists of *waḥshah* (dreariness) and *zalām* (darkness, gloom), which pervaded

⁷³ “*Qafṛ*,” *Lisān al-‘Arab*.

the Dinshaway homes as a result of the actions of the occupiers. The object of the verb is a pronominal suffix that refers to the twenty Dinshaway homes. Thus we have an object (twenty homes) acted upon by desolation and by (the forces of) darkness through a verb that suggests death, affliction, and agony.

Line 6

*Yā layta shiʿrī fi ʿl-burūji ḥamāʾimun
am fīl-burūji maniyyatun wa-ḥimāmū*

Would that I knew, was it doves in the towers,
Or was it death?

echoes Abū Tammām's line:

*Hunna ʿl-ḥamāmu fa-in kasarta ʿyāfatan
min ḥāʾihinna fa-innahunna ḥimāmū.*

They are doves but when
you scatter them in augury
You break the vowel and then
they spell death.⁷⁴

Although Abū Tammām's line seems to anticipate the Dinshaway atrocity, it is, according to one critic, concerned with commenting on "the subjectivity of perceptions." He distinguishes between "objective and subjective perception: the doves are merely birds, it is only when we impose a subjective interpretation on them . . . that they acquire significance for us—fate."⁷⁵ Shawqī's line, however, is not concerned with making such distinctions but with drawing on the elegiac potential of the dove motif in the Arabic poetic tradition. In that tradition, the cooing of the dove is closely associated with mourning and with the remembrance of the dead. The elegies of al-Khansā', the Arab poetess of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, attest this. In one of her elegies for her half-brother, Ṣakhr, who was slain during a tribal raid, al-Khansā' laments his death thus:

*Abkī li-Ṣakhrin idhā nāḥat muṭawwaqatun
ḥamāmatun, shajwahā, warqāʿu bil-wādī.*

I weep for Ṣakhr when(ever) a ringed, dust-colored dove
wails/coos with grief in the valley.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Trans. S. Stetkevych. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 114.

⁷⁵ Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 124–25.

⁷⁶ Al-Khansā', *Dīwān al-Khansā'* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1963) 34.

In another elegy, she vows to keep the memory of her slain brother alive:

*Wa-sawfa abkika mā nāḥat muṭawwaqatun
wa-mā aḍāʿat nujūmu ʿl-layli lil-sārī.*

I shall weep for you as long as the ringed dove wails/coos
and the stars guide the night traveler.⁷⁷

Another poet of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods in whose verse the dove stands for the remembrance of the dead is Abū Dhuʿayb al-Hudhalī. Elegizing a slain relative and inciting his tribe, Hudhayl, to avenge him, Abū Dhuʿayb asserts:

*Fa-wa ʿl-Lāhi lā alqa bna ʿammin ka-annahū
Nushaybatu mā dāma ʿl-ḥamāmu yanūḥū.*

By Allah, I shall not find a cousin like Nushaybah
as long as the doves coo.⁷⁸

By associating the doves of Dinshaway with the traditional poetic ones, the doves of Dinshaway become a symbol of mourning for and remembrance of the slain villagers. This association of doves with death and mourning is reinforced by the structure of the line itself: the two nouns, *ḥamāʿim* (doves) and *ḥimām* (death) occupy identical positions in their respective hemistichs; each occurs at the close of its respective hemistich. It is further reinforced by the phonetic near identity between the two nouns; the initial, medial, and final consonants in both nouns are identical. The use in this line of the exclamatory formula *yā layta shiʿrī* (would that I knew) suggests that the identity between *ḥamāʿim* and *ḥimām* seems so complete to the poet that he does not know the one from the other. The sense of death evoked in line 6 is heightened in line 8, which begins with the imperative: *nūḥī ḥamāʿima Dinshawāya* (Bewail, O doves of Dinshaway). In this line the cooing/wailing of doves echoes and amplifies the wailing of the grief-stricken Dinshaway community so that the horror and grief of the villagers of Dinshaway are felt everywhere in the Nile Valley; the local is thus transformed into the national. In this respect, the effect of the *nuwāḥ* (cooing/wailing) of

⁷⁷ Al-Khansāʾ 59.

⁷⁸ Al-Sukkarī, *Kitāb Sharḥ Ashʿār al-Hudhalīyyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, vol. I (Cairo: Dār al-ʿUrūbah, n.d.) 148.

the doves, that of keeping alive in the memory of the people the atrocities at Dinshaway, is similar to that of reciting the *qaṣīdah* whose title, “*Dhikrā Dinshawāy*,” literally means “The Memory of Dinshaway.” Moreover, the line ending, *laysa yanāmū* (sleepless), suggests the topos of the sleepless night associated in the classical Arabic poetic tradition with unavenged blood.⁷⁹ The allusion to avenging the Dinshaway atrocity, occurring as it does at the close of the line, creates suspense in the *qaṣīdah* that is sustained in the following two lines (lines 9–10).

In line 7 Shawqī invokes the notion of *‘adl* (justice) as opposed to tyranny:

Nīrūnu law adrakta ‘ahda Kīrūmirin
la-‘arāfta kayfa tunaffadhu ‘l-ahkāmū.

O Nero, had you lived till the reign of Cromer,
You would have known how sentences are carried out.

The tyrannical rule over a Muslim community contrasts sharply with the Islamic notion of the justice of the ruler. In Islamic society, a ruler’s possession of *‘adl* (justice) has always been held to be of paramount importance. This derives in part from Qur’ānic injunctions such as the following: “God doth command you . . . and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice”,⁸⁰ “God commands [you to do] justice.”⁸¹ The importance of justice to legitimate rule is indicated by the well-known dictum, “*Al-‘adlu asāsu ‘l-mulk*” (Justice is the very foundation of government). *‘Adl* is so central to legitimate authority that its lack, *jawr* (tyranny), has the effect of de-legitimizing such authority. In light of this it is not surprising that poets throughout the Islamic period have attributed an idealized image of the just ruler to those rulers they eulogized. Attributing *‘adl* to the eulogized serves to legitimize and strengthen his rule. An example of this image of the just ruler is that which Abū Tammām draws of the Caliph al-Ma’mūn:

Yā ayyuha ‘l-maliku ‘l-humāmu wa-‘adluhuū
malikun ‘alayhī fil-qaḍā’i humāmū.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of pre-Islamic elegiac verse, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) 161–238.

⁸⁰ Qur’ān 4: 58. Trans. Yusuf Ali.

⁸¹ Qur’ān 16: 90. Trans. Yusuf Ali.

O magnanimous sovereign
 whose justice
 Is sovereign over him,
 in judgement magnanimous.⁸²

Justice thus tempers al-Ma'mūn's power. He "rules as hero-king over his people, but justice rules as hero-king over him" ensuring that he does not abuse his power.⁸³ Power tempered by justice is conducive to the good of the polity. If attributing 'adl to a ruler legitimizes and strengthens his rule, stressing a ruler's lack of 'adl serves to de-legitimize and to undermine his rule. By invoking the name of Nero and suggesting that Nero, an infamous tyrant in his own right, could have learnt something in the domain of tyranny from Cromer, Shawqī incorporates Cromer's rule in a tradition of *jawr*. This has the effect of identifying Cromer's as an illegitimate rule that should be resisted.

The effect of colonial tyranny over the Egyptians is referred to in lines 9–10 which describe a populace in agony over the Dinshaway executions and floggings. It is to a graphic description of these and their effect on the populace at large that the remaining four lines (11–14) are devoted. An important structural feature of the second half of the qaṣīdah (lines 8–14) is the shift in the temporal frame of reference effected through a shift from the Perfect tense which dominates the first half of the qaṣīdah to the Imperfect. In line 11, for instance, the past is collapsed into the present:

*Al-sawtu ya'malu wal-mashāniqu arba'un,
 mutawaḥḥidātun wal-junūdu qiyāmū.*

The whip at work, the gallows four,
 Working in concert, and the soldiers standing.

Thus the agent *al-Ayyām* which initiated the actor/acted upon dichotomy (line 1) and which is variously defined throughout the qaṣīdah now encompasses the most manifest instruments of control by repression: whips, gallows, and soldiers. Through the use of a lexicon that evokes death and violence, the poet paints a grim picture of the Empire "at work." Moreover, the blurring of the boundaries between the past and the present, effected through the use of the Imperfect Indicative as a historical present, in addition to creating

⁸² Trans. S. Stetkevych. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 115.

⁸³ Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 129.

a sense of urgency and immediacy, suggests that the work of Empire—the *faẓāʾiʿ* (horrors) which the colonizer commits with whips and gallows (line 12)—has not ceased but continues during the present time. The penultimate line suggests that these horrors of the occupation are felt not just by the Dinshaway villagers to whom the lashes were applied and for whom the gallows were set up; the entire populace is affected.

To conclude, what is striking about this short *qaṣīdah* is Shawqī's recourse to the evocative power of the traditional elements of classical Arabic *nasīb* (elegiac opening) and *rithāʾ* (dirge), as well as martial elements, to achieve an emotive *political* response. A precolonial era is evoked during which peace, harmony, and order prevailed, an era brought to a close by the imposition of a colonial rule variously defined as a tyrannical rule of *kufī*, as a force which causes separation, barrenness, and death, and as a pollutant in the body of the *Ummah* from which it needs to be purified. The *qaṣīdah* underscores, through a dominant syntactic structure, the subjugation of Egypt(ians) and provides a graphic portrayal of Empire at work.

If the executions and flogging of Dinshaway were intended to affirm the authority of the Empire, Shawqī's *qaṣīdah* serves to unsettle, to undermine that authority. If this is how imperial authority is to be maintained, then, in the words of a contemporary critic of colonialism, "there can be no more . . . urgent political duty on earth than the disruption, defeat, and suppression of the Empire."⁸⁴ By foregrounding the workings of Empire, Shawqī's *qaṣīdah* can be seen to have contributed to that end.

⁸⁴ Bernard Shaw, *John Bull's Other Island* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1907) 48–49.

CHAPTER TWO

EMPIRE AS OCCASION: AḤMAD SHAWQĪ'S ELEGY FOR DAMASCUS

None who lived through those three terrible days (October 18–20) will ever forget the experience, particularly the two nights of incessant shelling, which, with the added horrors of fires springing up on all sides, became veritable nights of terror.

The Times correspondent, Damascus, Oct. 25, 1925

Red liberty has a gate
Upon which every blood-soaked hand must knock.
Aḥmad Shawqī

The role played by poetry in the evolution of nationalist movements has received substantial critical attention particularly in recent decades. Scholars have made numerous attempts at theorizing resistance to imperialism at the discursive level. Some have focused on the role of poetry in mobilizing a collective response to colonialism while others have addressed the ways in which “subalterns” have sought to interrogate the narrative of Empire and to articulate a colonized subjectivity. Through a discussion of an overtly anti-colonial *qaṣīdah*, this chapter is concerned to a substantial extent with such opposition to the colonial project as undertaken within a specifically Arab context. Before I proceed to the discussion of the *qaṣīdah*, however, I shall point to an issue that has not received adequate critical attention in the post-colonial debate with respect to the Arabic *qaṣīdah*. I propose that, the detrimental impact of Western Imperialism on the Arab societies it subjugated notwithstanding, its impact on indigenous literary production has often been crucial.

It is generally assumed that the Ottoman rule of Arab lands, which started in 1516 with the capture of Syria and continued until the beginning of the twentieth century, was a period of Arab literary and cultural decline. Surveys of the history of modern Arabic literature often begin by reciting the reasons for such decline. One such survey is by M. M. Badawi whose list of causes of decline includes such factors as cultural isolation from the West, a deficient “system

of education which was chiefly theocentric in character and which did not encourage much initiative and originality,” the “lack of patronage” on the part of “Turks untutored in the Arabic tongue,” as well as the supplanting of Arabic by Turkish as the official language.¹ Badawi goes on to describe the state of Arabic poetry under Ottoman aegis thus:

Most of the Arabic poetry of the eighteenth century is bedevilled by the passion for verbal jugglery, the aim of the poets apparently being to impress their audience with their command of the language, with their ability to manipulate it with acrobatic effects. They vied with one another in imposing the most ludicrous limitations and constraints upon themselves, such as writing verses in which every word alliterates, or in which a word begins with the same letter as that with which the preceding one ends, or in which every word or every letter, or every other letter must be dotted. Sometimes poets would pride themselves on writing panegyric verses which if read backwards would have a completely opposite, satirical significance. The same essential lack of seriousness is found in the pursuit of *badīʿ*, empty figures of speech for their own sake, just as it is reflected in the preponderance of verse written on trivial social occasions in which greetings and compliments are exchanged by the poets or versifiers.

In the above, Badawi provides an account of the degeneration of the classical *qaṣīdah* into what can be termed a “mock-*qaṣīdah*”, that is, the application of some features of the form, style, and diction of the *qaṣīdah* to “insignificant” subject-matter (petty incidents, mundane situations, *etc.*) The reasons cited by Badawi—and a host of other critics—for such decline are not invalid; however, they do not fully explain the erosion of the *qaṣīdah* tradition. To speak of a decline in eighteenth-century Arabic poetry presupposes a state relative to the “classical” *qaṣīdah* as elaborated by such celebrated ‘Abbāsīd poets as Abū Tammām (*c.* 804–845), al-Buḥturī (821–79), and al-Mutanabbī (915–65). In this respect, there is no reason to assume that the “system of education” in the golden ages of the *qaṣīdah* was any less theocentric than it was during the Ottoman period. Nor indeed would it be accurate to speak of a “lack of patronage”; rather, Arabic poetry of this period had to contend with a lack of “official” patronage and indeed a generally diminished level of patronage.

¹ M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) 6–7.

It is well known that as early as the Umayyad period, the *qaṣīdah* had already become increasingly occasion-driven. The Umayyad (661–750) and ‘Abbāsīd (750–1258) periods represented a “heroic” age abound with “occasions” that inspired many a memorable *qaṣīdah* by, among others, Abū Tammām, and al-Mutanabbī. The occasions may have been distressing or festive, but they were often “heroic” pitting the protagonist in a “heroic encounter” with a foe—the Byzantines, fate, *etc.* A certain *relatedness*, therefore, is to be discerned between the decline of the *qaṣīdah* and the dearth of the grand occasion which once provided poets with an apposite subject-matter (as opposed to the insignificant “occasion” decried by recent literary history). This dearth was the corollary of a shift in the political fortunes of the Arabs; Ottoman rule signaled a political *de*-centering of Arab lands and populations that lasted for centuries.

It was at this juncture that Empire proved crucial to invigorating the *qaṣīdah*; it did so above all by providing it with a subject-matter that enabled the *qaṣīdah* to transcend that which is “trivial” in Badawi’s terms, to renounce its mundaneness, and to shed its “essential lack of seriousness.”² Significantly, the modern occasional *qaṣīdah* frequently presents its (Arab) protagonists in a “heroic encounter” with a foe (often the West but also fate into which the former is sometimes integrated). The “heroic encounter,” moreover, is bolstered rather than diminished by the imbalance of power between the two sides. Nor indeed does this *qaṣīdah* merely recount an event; very often it participates to varying degrees in the event while memorializing it.

One such *qaṣīdah* whose aesthetic merit has long been recognized and whose genesis is inexorably linked to colonialism is “*Nakbat Dimashq*” by the neoclassical Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī (1868–1932), whose renown throughout the Arab world rests largely on his fervent anti-colonial *qaṣīdahs*.

The series of events that occasioned this *qaṣīdah* are what came to be known as the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925–1927, in the course of which Damascus was subjected to bombardment by the French army of occupation.³ The Revolt broke out on the twentieth of July

² Badawi 7.

³ The Allied Conference of San Remo (April 19–26, 1920) mandated Syria to France. In July 1920, France occupied Syria and deposed Faisal (1885–1933) who had been elected to head an Arab state in Syria. For an overview of the modern

1925, against a backdrop of mounting discontent with French domination.⁴ On that day Ṣulṭān al-Aṭraṣh (1891–1982), a Druze leader who would later emerge as the leading figure in the Revolt, together with a group of Druze tribesmen occupied Ṣalkhad, the second largest town in Jabal al-Durūz. The following day witnessed another raid by al-Aṭraṣh and his followers against a small French contingent, which sustained heavy casualties as a result; later in the same day the Druze rebels besieged al-Suwaydā', the main town of the Jabal.⁵ Emboldened by their initial successes, the rebels pressed on their anti-French insurgency. The insurrection culminated on August 2, 1925, with a surprise attack on a sizable French force under the command of General Roger Michaud.⁶

In the rest of Syria, the Damascus-based nationalist People's Party spearheaded opposition to French rule. Although the Revolt was localized in its origin and motivation, resentment of French occupation was rampant in the rest of the country. It was no surprise, therefore, that the leaders of the nationalist movement in Damascus and elsewhere would make common cause with the Druze rebels in a bid to turn a local revolt into a Syria-wide anti-French uprising.⁷ This Druze-nationalist coalition circumvented a long standing French policy the bedrock of which was the "cutting off of the Jebel from all intercourse with the outside world,"⁸ especially from Damascus—the hotbed of Syrian nationalism. Given the traditionally independent Jabal as well as its distinct ethnographic constitution, the success of this policy should have been assured. Undue French interference in the traditional power structure of the Jabal, however, antagonized powerful tribal leaders;⁹ the French "persistent endeavor to ride roughshod" over the Jabal populace at large created a widespread

history of Syria, see Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay* (Beirut: Lebanon Bookshop, 1968).

⁴ Muḥiy al-Dīn al-Safarjalānī, *Tārīkh al-Thawrah al-Sūriyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqazah al-'Arabīyyah lil-Ta'līf wal-Tarjamah wal-Nashr, 1961) 43–7. Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920–1945* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987) 152–54.

⁵ Al-Safarjalānī 138–39; Munīr al-Rayyīs, *Al-Kitāb al-Dhahabī lil-Thawrāt al-Waṭaniyyah fī al-Mashriq al-'Arabī: Al-Thawrah al-Sūriyyah al-Kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī'ah lil-Ṭibā'ah wal-Nashr, 1969) 165–75; Khoury 151–52.

⁶ Al-Safarjalānī 139–43; al-Rayyīs 175–78; Khoury 151–52.

⁷ Al-Safarjalānī 143–44; Khoury 160–64.

⁸ *The Times* [London] 27 Oct. 1925; Khoury 152.

⁹ Khoury 153–57.

sense of grievance and discontent which the rebel leadership was not slow to exploit.¹⁰ It was apparently at the instigation of the Syrian politician ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Shahbandar (1879–1940), then president of the People’s Party, that al-Aṭrash pressed on his anti-French campaign to Damascus.¹¹ Al-Aṭrash would make the first such attempt to breach the relatively well-fortified Damascus on August 24, 1925. This attempt was repulsed by the French forces and was followed by an exodus of nationalist leaders for whom the rugged terrain of the Jabal offered a sanctuary.¹² Henceforth the Jabal would become the locus of the all-Syria anti-French independence movement.

For the movement to succeed, however, the Revolt had to be taken to Damascus, the historical capital of al-Shām, as well as to the Syrian heartland; confined to the Jabal, it would represent an irritant rather than a credible force capable of undermining French hegemony. Hence in the following months several major uprisings would be staged in the main Syrian towns, the most consequential of which was that which took place in Damascus.¹³

The degree to which the rebel leader subscribed to the aims of the People’s Party is still a subject of debate.¹⁴ It is certain, however, that as the Revolt progressed al-Aṭrash became more involved in and sympathetic to the cause of the nationalists. He would subsequently be hailed as the leader of the Syrian revolutionary movement “*qā’id al-thawrah al-sūriyyah*,” a role he could not have anticipated few months earlier.

If there is doubt about the degree of al-Aṭrash’s allegiance to the cause of Syrian unity and independence, there seems little doubt that material gain was a motive for many of his Druze and Bedouin followers who made several forays into Damascus and its environs.¹⁵ In the months preceding the French attack on the city, lawlessness

¹⁰ *The Times* [London] 27 Oct. 1925; al-Safarjalānī 131–35; al-Rayyis 148–55.

¹¹ Khoury 163.

¹² Khoury 163–64.

¹³ On October 4, 1925, Fawzī al-Qāwuqjī, a disaffected officer in the Syrian Legion, led a rebellion in the town of Hama. The rebellion lasted several days and caused extensive damage. French reprisals were especially brutal, resulting in heavy civilian casualties. Khoury 171.

¹⁴ Al-Aṭrash had maintained a certain level of contacts with the nationalists in Damascus prior to the outbreak of the rebellion. Khoury 160–61. Communiqués issued by al-Aṭrash during the rebellion reveal a surprising degree of (Syrian) national consciousness. See al-Safarjalānī 153–62.

¹⁵ Al-Rayyis 286.

prevailed especially in the areas between the Jabal and Damascus. Despite measures taken by General Gamelin to restore order, systematic pillaging of villages in that area continued unabated.¹⁶

Towards the end of September, Druze rebels and their Bedouin allies began targeting French troops stationed on the outskirts of Damascus. In concert with this insurrectionary activity elements of the People's Party staged anti-French rallies and demonstrations in the city.¹⁷ On the morning of October 18, insurgents were able to infiltrate certain quarters of the city, especially Shāghūr and Maydān.¹⁸ On the same day the historic al-ʿAzm Palace, which was used by General Sarrail (the then French High Commissioner), was seized by rebels. The building sustained substantial damage; many of its treasures were looted or damaged.¹⁹ The High Commissioner, having left Damascus earlier in the day, escaped the raid. French attempts to bring the situation under control ran into strong opposition.²⁰ At this juncture, the French seem to have opted for taking drastic measures as a means of reestablishing their control over the city. *Nakbat Dimashq* (the calamity visited upon Damascus) was drawing near. The following excerpt of a report filed October 25 by *The Times's* correspondent in Damascus provides a disturbing account of the atrocity:

At 6 o'clock that evening [October 18] the French started to bombard the old city. The shelling was intermittent, and as far as is known only blank shell were used at that juncture, but this did not diminish the consternation of the populace and of a large number of Europeans whose quarters were in the native city, which was the object of the bombardment. The shelling continued during the night. The next morning, suddenly and without warning, all the [French] troops were withdrawn from the old city, including the Christian quarters, and concentrated at Salihyeh at which were the French cantonments, whither all French families were removed. From 10 o'clock for 24 hours the bombardment—live shell now being used—was continued by artillery [based] outside the city, while aeroplanes flew overhead

¹⁶ Gamelin replaced Michaud as Chief of Staff of the region. Khoury 174–75.

¹⁷ Khoury 174.

¹⁸ The rebels received cooperation from some local residents. Khoury 176.

¹⁹ *The Times* [London] 27 Oct. 1925; al-Rayyis 281–82; Khoury 176–77.

²⁰ *The Times* correspondent writes: "At midday on the 18th the French sent tanks through the city and these passed along the bazaars at a terrific speed, firing to the right and left without ceasing. The mob erected barricades in the rear of the tanks and when they were returning they were shot at from above, many of their crews being wounded." *The Times* [London] 27 Oct. 1925.

dropping bombs and using machine-guns. Only at noon on the 20th did the firing cease. . . . The 48 hours' shelling, combined with the activities of the marauders, as might be expected, left substantial traces. I made an extensive tour of the city and was shocked at the havoc wrought in every direction. . . .

As one walks through these bazaars, which but a few days ago were prosperous and in full activity—it is impossible to drive—one is depressed by the spectacle of destruction and ruin, and this feeling is accentuated by glimpses of even greater damage done up the little side-alleys leading off them. The Saghur quarters are also badly damaged, while the Suk el Kharratin (Turners' Market), which runs across the south end of the Street called Straight, has also suffered severely, house upon house and shop after shop having the appearance of being in process of demolition. But the holes are unmistakably made by shell, and smoke curling between the rafters and firemen working on the roofs tell the true tale.

Happily the Great Mosque escaped, in spite of its being near to the bombarded areas, but not so the beautiful green and blue tiled Senaniyeh Mosque, which has an enormous hole in the dome made by a shell and some of its mosaic windows destroyed. The Imam and some worshippers invited us in to view what had happened. They scarcely spoke; their attitude eloquently expressed how deeply they felt. From the minaret a wonderful panorama is to be had of the whole city, and it was from there that I first realized the extent of the destruction which had been done.²¹

Estimates of casualties and property damage vary but most indicate a heavy death toll and extensive property damage.²² The indiscriminate bombardment of a defenseless populace by an occupying power led to an international outcry in the face of which the French government of Premier Paul Painlevé (1863–1933) was compelled to recall Sarrail.²³ It was as part of this outcry that Shawqī's qaṣīdah was delivered.²⁴

Tragically for Damascus, widespread international condemnation did not bring about a cessation of hostilities. After failing to co-opt

²¹ *The Times* [London] 27 Oct. 1925; Khoury 177. For other accounts of the assault on Damascus see al-Safarjalānī 217–25; al-Rayyis 280–86.

²² Al-Rayyis 284; Khoury 178; *The Times* [London] 27 Oct. 1925.

²³ Sarrail was recalled in October 30 and was replaced by Henry de Jouvenel as High Commissioner. Khoury 181.

²⁴ In the Arab world solidarity with Syria was strongest in Egypt due in large measure to the activism of Syrian expatriates in that country. On November 5, 1925, Sa'd Zaghlūl issued an appeal to his countrymen to extend humanitarian assistance to Syria. Al-Safarjalānī 471–72.

al-Atrash, and as the insurgency continued, Henry de Jouvenel, Sarrail's successor and the one-time editor of *Le Matin* proved himself no less ruthless.²⁵ He would subject the city to two further offensives that exceeded in their savagery that ordered by Sarrail.

The first of these took place in February 1926; during this onslaught, which was carried out predominantly by Circassian and Armenian elements of the French army, “[h]ouses were looted and there were reports of old people and children being mutilated and women being violated.”²⁶ French onslaughts on Damascus culminated in the offensive of May 7, 1926 that targeted the Maydān quarter of the city. The horror and destruction visited upon this quarter is indicated in the following account:

[I]n less than 12 hours the French Army struck with more intensity than it had either in October or in February. The number of houses and shops destroyed during the aerial bombardment or as a result of incendiaries was estimated at well over 1,000. The death toll was equally staggering, between 600 and 1,000. The vast majority of casualties were unarmed civilians, including a large number of women and children; only 50 rebels were reported killed in the attack. Afterwards, the troops indulged in pillaging and looting and then paraded their spoils through the streets in the city center, in many cases displaying them to the survivors of the raid who “in a stream of cowed and wretched humanity moved into other parts of Damascus (where they could find temporary shelter) bearing the few objects which they had been able to save.” The French assault made of a formerly busy quarter of 30,000 people a virtually deserted ruin.²⁷

By the end of June 1926, the Revolt had all but foundered; most of its leaders having either surrendered to the French or fled the country.²⁸

The Great Syrian Revolt has been described as “a signal event in the history of modern Syria, and in the Arab world at large.”²⁹ Despite the consequential position it occupies in the history of anti-colonial national liberation struggle, the Revolt is today mainly recalled through Shawqī's qaṣīdah in which it is memorialized.³⁰ It is instruc-

²⁵ Khoury 182.

²⁶ Khoury 192.

²⁷ Khoury 196.

²⁸ Khoury 204.

²⁹ Khoury 166.

³⁰ In Syria, however, the Great Revolt became an integral part of the mythopoeia of Syrian nationalism.

tive that subsequent historical accounts of the Revolt not infrequently cite Shawqī's qaṣīdah in question.³¹ Ultimately, the power of the qaṣīdah derives from its transcending the particular historical events that occasioned it to become an enduring and cogent denunciation of colonial oppression.

The shelling of Damascus led to a wave of protest throughout the Arab World. A large number of rallies were held to show solidarity with the Syrian people in the face of a colonialist onslaught. In these rallies numerous qaṣīdahs were declaimed. Much of this verse has now been enveloped in oblivion; Shawqī's qaṣīdah is a notable exception. No doubt the prominent place Shawqī occupies in modern Arabic poetry has in part contributed to the renown of the qaṣīdah; this, however, does not fully account for its enduring appeal. Numerous testimonies to this appeal bear this out. Of these a few may be cited: the Egyptian critic Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī describes the qaṣīdah as "*min rawā'īhi 'l-khālīdati,*" (among his timeless masterpieces);³² referring to the qaṣīdahs Shawqī devotes to Syria, the noted Egyptian critic Zakī Mubārak describes "Nakbat Dimashq" as "*al-qaṣīd al-ladhī lā-yuṭāwiluhu qaṣīd,*" (unsurpassable verse).³³ Mubārak goes on to claim: "no poet has composed more exquisite verse than that which Shawqī composed on 'Nakbat Dimashq.'" ³⁴ On the reception of the qaṣīdah outside Egypt, the prominent Lebanese writer Shakīb Arslān (1869–1946), remarks in his characteristic ornate style that the whole Arab world "*qāma la-hā wa-qa'ad wa-hallala bi-hā wa-kabbar,*" (stood up for it and sat down, uttered the words "there is no God but Allāh" for it and exclaimed "Allāh is great.")³⁵ In addition,

³¹ The opening line of the qaṣīdah is cited in al-Rayyis 284; lines 33, 35, and 48 form the epigram to al-Safarjalānī's history of the Revolt.

³² Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī, *Waṭaniyyat Shawqī: Dirāsah Adabīyyah Tārīkhīyah Muqāranah*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr lil-Ṭab' wal-Nashr, 1960) 183.

³³ Zakī Mubārak, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Ammah lil-Kitāb, 1977) 57.

³⁴ Mubārak 57.

³⁵ Shakīb Arslān, *Shawqī aw Ṣadāqat Arba'īna Sanah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1936) 258. "Nakbat Dimashq," however, is not without its critics. In a study entitled *Aḥmad Shawqī: Amīr al-Shu'arā'*, the Lebanese Īlīyā al-Ḥāwī devotes a few pages to a discussion of the qaṣīdah in which he unfavorably compares it with a poem in the "free-verse" mode by the Iraqi poet Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb. A critic of the Neoclassical School of poetry, al-Ḥāwī's appraisal of "Nakbat Dimashq," his implicit holding it as paradigmatic of the neoclassical ode is itself an indication of the significance of the qaṣīdah. Īlīyā al-Ḥāwī, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Amīr al-Shu'arā'*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1977) 87–96.

one may note that anthologies of Shawqī's verse rarely fail to include this qaṣīdah. In this chapter, I propose that the enduring appeal of the qaṣīdah is the result of the convergence of a solemn occasion on the one hand, and on the other, the poet's adept re-enactment of the qaṣīdah tradition to enunciate this occasion. I further propose that the achievement of Shawqī lies fundamentally in his evolving a poetics that has creative recourse to tradition as it seeks to advance an anti-colonial agenda, to articulate a vision of a decolonized Arab subjectivity.

The Nakbah of Damascus³⁶ [5]

1. Peace [to you] gentler than the east breeze [blowing from] Baradā
And tears that cannot be held back, O Damascus.
2. The pen and the rhymes entreat [your] forgiveness
The enormity of the affliction eludes a [proper] description.
3. A memory, when recalled, my heart
To you ever turns, throbbing.
4. I too endure what the nights have visited upon you,
Wounds deep in the heart.
5. I [once] entered you, the sunset had a glow to it,
And your face, its features smiling, cheerful.
6. Beneath your gardens streams flowed,
Your hills filled with leaves and doves.
7. Surrounding me were young men, noble and comely,
In virtue they have attained far ends and precedence.
8. On their mouths are eloquent poets
Among them are articulate orators.
9. [They are] Reciters of my odes, so marvel at a verse
Which in every corner is recited.
10. I winked at their pride so that the lions' noses
Burned with rage and the nose's bone flared up.
11. And from the bit clamored every proud and freeborn man,
In him a pure lineage from Umayyah.
12. Accursed be such news that followed in succession
Distressing to the ear of the stalwart.
13. The post sets it forth in detail to the world;
The telegraph sums it up to the horizons.

³⁶ I have opted not to translate the Arabic "*Nakbah*" due to the fact that the Arabic carries a range of connotative meanings which none of the English words into which it is generally rendered (*e.g.*, calamity), seems to adequately convey. Implicit in the Arabic *Nakbah* is a sense of a downfall, a fall from grace. In the 20th century the most famous *Nakbah* is that suffered by the Arabs in 1948 with the defeat of the Arab armies and the loss of Palestine—the year is referred to as *‘āmu ’l-nakbah*.

14. Because of the horrifying events [described] in it
It is almost thought of as myth, though it is true.
15. They said: the monuments of history have been leveled;
They said: ruin and burning struck them.
16. Have you not, O Damascus, suckled Islam?
The wet nurse of paternity not to be disobeyed!
17. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is your crown, naught more beauteous
Or more graceful has adorned a head.
18. Every civilization that ever flourished on earth
Had a root from your lofty tree.
19. Your sky a book [full] of the ornaments of the past;
Your land a parchment [full] of the ornaments of history.
20. You built the mighty state and a dominion,
The dust of whose twain civilizations is impenetrable.
21. It has in al-Shām banners and a wedding
Whose glad tidings ring out in al-Andalus.
22. The eternal abodes—woe to you—what has befallen them?
Have they indeed been effaced? Have they?
23. Are the garden's rooms orderly?
Does their felicity have, as it had yesterday, symmetry?
24. What about the dolls of the chambers,
Veils violated and screens torn!
25. They came out, flames [raging] in the sides of the thicket
And behind the thicket the young being fed.
26. Through whatever path they sought safety,
Paths of death came in its stead.
27. In a night beyond whose sky
Shells and fates [of death] were flashing, stupefying.
28. When steel thundered, a horizon reddened on its sides
While [another] horizon darkened.
29. Ask him who filled your maidens with terror in the deep of
the night,
Is there a difference between his heart and rock?
30. The colonizers—although they may feign tenderness—
Have hearts like stone that feel no pity.
31. He struck you, as he did France, heedlessly
A warlike man, full of vainglory and folly.
32. When seekers of justice come to him
He says: [they are] a gang of schismatics and rebels.
33. The blood of the revolutionaries is known to France;
She knows that it is light and truth.
34. [Blood] flowed on [France's] land, bringing life,
Like a downpour from the sky, and sustenance.
35. A land whose youths died that it may live;
And perished that their kinfolk may endure.
36. And peoples were set free by [French] lances
How then can they be enslaved by [the same] lances?

37. Sons of Syria, lay aside wishes,
Cast away dreams, cast [them] away.
38. For it is a political trick
That you are deceived by titles of Emirdom—which are
nothing but enslavement.
39. How many a bent [from haughtiness] neck a humble man showed,
Like the bent neck of a hung man.
40. Tears occur in dominions, and then pass away
But a tear among the disunited does not pass away.
41. I have counseled [you] though we are of different abodes,
But in cares we are all [from the] East.
42. If our countries differ,
[Yet] a language and a tongue not differing bind us together.
43. You stand between death or life;
If you desire good fortune, then endure suffering.
44. The Homelands have in the blood of every freeman
A hand to lend and a debt due.
45. Who will give [the enemy] death to drink and drink thereof
himself,
If freemen are not given [death] to drink and give it out?
46. And nothing can build dominions like blood sacrifices
Or bring rights nearer [to fulfillment] or do justice.
47. For in the slain [there is] life for generations [to come];
In the captives [there is] ransom and release for them.
48. Red liberty has a gate
Upon which every blood-soaked hand must knock.
49. May the Exalted One reward you, O sons of Damascus,
The glory of the East, in the forefront of which was Damascus.
50. You came to the aid of your brother in his hour of trial;
[And] every brother is deserving of his brother's succor.
51. The Druzes are not an evil clan
Even though they are undeservedly held blame.
52. No, they are warriors, magnanimous to the guest,
Like al-Ṣafā spring, they are hard and soft.
53. They have a proud mountain with peaks
Reaching reddish black clouds, piebald.
54. Every lioness and every lion-cub [among them]
Fights tooth and nail [to protect] its thicket.³⁷
55. It is as if there is something of al-Samaw'al in it [the mountain]
For all its attributes are honorable and noble.³⁸

³⁷ I have opted for “its thicket” to render *ghābatīhi* in preference to the literal “its forest.” *Ghābatīhi* is rendered in most anthologies and citations of the *qaṣīdah* as *ghāyatīhi* (its goal). That this rendition is erroneous is corroborated by an anecdote related by Shakīb Arslān in which he discusses with Shawqī his choice of this very word. See Arslān 258.

³⁸ Aḥmad Shawqī, *Al-Shawqīyyāt*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Istiḳāmah, n.d.) 73–6.

The *qaṣīdah* tradition on which Shawqī draws is a variegated and multifaceted one. An elegiac opening section known as the *naṣīb* commonly prefaces the quintessential classical *qaṣīdah*. It is at this section that the pre-Islamic bard (and following him later poets) would halt at the former abodes of his beloved and her tribe, bid the once lively but now effaced dwellings *salām*, and not infrequently wallow in nostalgic recollection of days past. This section is often followed by the *raḥīl*, a recounting of a desert journey the poet commonly undertakes. The *raḥīl* marks a transition from the melancholy of the *naṣīb* to the *gharaḍ* (main topic) of the ode. The topics most often broached in the classical *qaṣīdah* are *madīḥ*, (panegyric), *fakhr* (self-praise), and *hijāʿ* (invective).

A subgenre within the *qaṣīdah* tradition but somewhat distinct from the main stream of that tradition is *riṭhāʿ*, the elegiac composition customarily mourning the death of a relative. Noted classical elegists include Abu Dhuʿayb al-Hudhalī (d. ca. 649), and the warrior-poet al-Muhalhil b. Rabīʿah of pre-Islamic times.³⁹ The foremost

For the Arabic text see Appendix 5. In an article on Shawqī, M. M. Badawi characterizes the state of scholarship on the poet as follows: “There are innumerable books and articles written on Shawqī, but to the best of my knowledge none of them attempts to provide a close critical analysis of his work.” M. M. Badawi, “Al-Hilāl,” *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. II (1971) 135. Badawi’s observation is largely applicable to “Nakbat Dimashq”; although, as Badawi notes, numerous works have dealt with the corpus of Shawqī, these have tended to eschew the type of critical analysis of which Badawi speaks. Instead, most proffer partial or full citations of the *qaṣīdah* or make generalized commentary on it. These works include the following: Arslān 252–58; Ṭahā Wādī, *Aḥmad Shawqī wal-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Rawz al-Yūsuf, 1973) 40–4; Ḥanafī al-Maḥallāwī, *Shawqī wa-Bayram: Al-Ḥudhūr, al-Thawrah, al-Ṣulṭān* (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr lil-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr wal-Tawzīʿ, 1999) 72; Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfi, *Waṭaniyyat Shawqī: Dirāsah Adabīyyah Tārīkhīyyah Muqāranah*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr lil-Ṭabʿ wal-Nashr, 1960) 183–85; Aḍwāʿ ʿalā al-Adab al-Ḥadīth (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1981) 17–19, 26–7, 178, 182; Aḥmad Suwaylim al-ʿUmarī, *Adab Shawqī fī l-Siyāsah wal-Ijtīmāʿ* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjli al-Miṣriyyah, 1972) 12, 40–1, 147–48, 160, 204; *Mihrājān Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-ʿAlā li-Riʿāyat al-Funūn wal-ʿĀdāb wal-ʿUlūm al-Ijtīmāʿīyyah, 1960) 43, 51, 286; Fawzī ʿAṭawī, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Shāʿir al-Waṭaniyyah wal-Masrah wal-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1989) 37–43; Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1969) 130, 157; Shafīq Jabrī, *Dirāsah ʿan Shawqī* (N.p.: Dār Qutaybah, 1997) 144–46; Shawqī Ḍayf, *Al-Riṭhāʿ*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi-Miṣr, 1955) 51; ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Sharārah, *Shawqī* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965) 121–29; Zakī Mubārak, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Al-Hayʿah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1977) 57–8; Rītā ʿAwaḍ, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Beirut: Al-Muʿassasah al-ʿArabiyyah lil-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr, 1983) 39–41; Ilyā al-Ḥawī, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Amīr al-Shuʿarāʿ*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1977) 87–96, 117–24.

³⁹ For an important study of al-Muhalhil b. Rabīʿah, see Suzanne Pinckney

practitioner of *rithā'*, however, is generally considered to have been al-Khansā' (d. ca. 645), the *Mukhadram*⁴⁰ poetess whose elegies for her slain relatives had come to exemplify the elegy in the Arabic tradition. Out of this elegiac tradition, there arose in later Islamic times a poetic metastasis that came to be known as *rithā' al-mudun* "elegies for (fallen, ravaged) cities."⁴¹ Both types of the *rithā'* qaṣīdah have an elegiac, plaintive strain as their predominant feature; however, whereas the *rithā'* qaṣīdah was commonly composed by womenfolk and falls within the realm of the private, *rithā' al-mudun* was prevalently composed by male poets and falls within the realm of the public. It is this latter qaṣīdah that seems to provide the model for Shawqī's ode at hand. This is not to suggest, however, that other features of the classical qaṣīdah, such as the *aṭlāl/nasīb* topoi, are not detectable in the ode. Ultimately, the ingeniousness of "Nakbat Dimashq" rests on Shawqī's recourse to the qaṣīdah tradition to produce something "novel" to the extent that it addresses topical concerns and interposes atypical conceptions and lexicon while at the same time partaking of that tradition.

The broad structural basis of the qaṣīdah is the contrast between a blissful past of Damascus recalled and a disconsolate (in the aftermath of French bombardment) present narrated, described, "witnessed." The ode opens by invoking a quintessential element of the classical qaṣīdah: the bidding of peace to an abode now effaced.⁴² Even at this early stage in the unfolding of the ode, it is evident that the poet aims at a correspondence between Damascus ravaged by French bombardment and the (pre-Islamic) abodes ravaged by the elements; in other words, Shawqī describes the demolished city in terms of the *aṭlāl* topos so paradigmatic of the classical and neo-classical ('Abbāsīd) qaṣīdah. This treatment recalls, for instance, the opening of Abū Tammām's panegyric to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma'mūn:

Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) 206–38.

⁴⁰ *Mukhadram* denotes someone who lived in pre-Islamic and (early) Islamic times.

⁴¹ See Shawqī Ḍayf, *Al-Rithā'*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1955) 47–51.

⁴² Al-Ḥūfī cites the opening line as an example of Shawqī's skillful *maṭālī'* (opening lines of qaṣīdahs). Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī, *Aḍwā' 'alā al-Adab al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981) 171.

Dimanun alamma bi-hā fa-qāla salāmu

He alighted at a blackened trace and bade it peace.⁴³

The equivalency between the scene of Damascus in the aftermath of French bombardment and that of an effaced abode is not as far-fetched as it may appear. Indeed, as the above brief historical account attests, entire quarters of this ancient city were reduced to rubble by intense shelling. Moreover, when the *qaṣīdah* was composed and delivered, attacks on the city and its environs were still ongoing; smoke was still billowing from several quarters of the city. It is in light of this that the opening word *salām* should be seen. To the extent that it evokes the *aṭlāl/nasīb* topoi of the classical ode, it grounds the poem in the *qaṣīdah* tradition thus offering the poet recourse to the full potentialities of that tradition. The nominal *salām* is often rendered as “greeting”; another equally frequent rendition of the noun is “peace.” *Salām* as peace is an especially apt choice for a poem addressed to a war-ravaged city; peace is what Damascus lacks most. *Salām*, therefore, can be seen to function in a twofold manner: it is the greeting of the abodes familiar from the classical ode; it is also optatively used in the midst of an ongoing war being waged on a city and its populace. Its efficacy derives from its use against a backdrop of war whose rumblings were still audible to the poet as far away as al-Azbakiyyah Gardens in Cairo where the solidarity rally was being held.

A striking contrast is embodied in the elative with which the first hemistich concludes and which relates to the *salām* the poet conveys to Damascus: this *salām* (*qua* greeting) is *araqqu* (gentler) than the fabled east wind blowing from Baradā—Baradā being a river that flows through Damascus and has become associated with that city in poetic discourse. In addition to *salām*, the other constituent parts of the first hemistich, *ṣabā* and Baradā, produce the impression of an idyllic world, a world that is as beautiful and harmonious as it is serene. The imagery derives much of its intensity from the way it is contrasted in the ode with the inclemency and violence of a war visited upon a once peaceful city. The war/calamity impinges

⁴³ Abū Tammām, *Dīwān Abī Tammām bi-Sharḥ al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī*, vol. 3, ed. Muḥammad Abduh ‘Azzām (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif bi-Miṣr, 1957) 150. Trans. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ‘Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991) 113.

on the ode with the same abruptness it does on Damascus. The second hemistich of the opening line portrays the reaction of the poet as he contemplates the plight of Damascus:

wa-dam'un lā yukafkafu yā Dimashqu
And tears that cannot be held back, O Damascus.

The second hemistich commences an elegiac strain that runs through the entire *qaṣīdah*. The shedding of tears at the opening of the poem falls squarely within the topos of *al-bukā' 'alā al-aṭlāl* of the classical *qaṣīdah* which, tradition holds, was originated by the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays who, at the opening of his renowned *Mu'allaqah* ("master poem"), enjoins his two journey companions thus:

Qifā nabki min dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzili
Halt and we will weep for the memory of a beloved and an abode.⁴⁴

Another feature which grounds the opening of Shawqī's ode in the *qaṣīdah* tradition is that which involves references to place-names: Damascus, Baradā. Unlike the abodes of the classical *qaṣīdah*, however, which the bard hastily leaves behind, Damascus casts a deep shadow on the entire ode. Shawqī does not leave the city behind and embark on the conventional *raḥīl* to another destination; he lingers on in Damascus and its environs. Although the poet does take temporal and spatial "journeys," these invariably lead back to Damascus. The centrality of Damascus is underscored by the key position it occupies in the line, as the rhyme-word; as such, it sets the rhyme for the entire *qaṣīdah*. The emphasis on Damascus is further heightened by the vocative *yā* indicating the addressee of the ode to be the former Umayyad capital.

The key words of *salām* and *dam'* (tears), each of which initiates its respective hemistich, involve a contrast that is developed as the poem unfolds. The harmony at the semantic level (implicit in the words *salām*, *ṣabā*, Baradā, and the elative *araqqu*) is augmented at the level of sound through the assonance between *salām* and *ṣabā* which begin with /s/ and /ṣ/ respectively; and by the alliterative repetition of /m/ at the opening of the first hemistich, and its recurrence at the onset of the following hemistich. This harmony reaches its height through the rhyming effect between *ṣabā* and Baradā both

⁴⁴ For an analysis of this *Mu'allaqah*, see Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals* 241–85.

of which end with the long vowel /ā/ suggesting repose, tranquility, and peacefulness.

In contrast to the harmonious, flowing quality of the first hemistich, the second hemistich exhibits a confluence of emphatics in its midst in the passive *yukafkafu* (to be held back) that results in a dissonance, an awkwardness that can be felt in an impeded flow of the line. To be sure, both hemistichs involve a “flow” from a semantic perspective: on the one hand, there is the flow of the east wind and that of the river; on the other, there is the flow of tears at the tragedy that has smitten Damascus. However, whereas the flow in the first hemistich is invigorating, salutary, not to be interrupted, in the second it is unwholesome; an attempt is implicitly made to halt/interrupt it, albeit to no avail.

If the first hemistich is optative, the second evokes a sorrowful circumstance with respect to Damascus. This is perhaps best illustrated by the conflation of *damʿ* (tears) and Damascus. The conflation is suggested by the identical onset of both nouns: each begins with the stop /d/ followed by the nasal /m/. It is further suggested by the key positions the nouns occupy: *damʿ* begins the hemistich while Damascus concludes it.

A measure of the calamity that has befallen the city is indicated in the following line which entreats the city’s forgiveness on the grounds that *jalālu ʿl-ruḏʿi ʿan waṣfin yadiqqu*, “The enormity of the affliction eludes a [proper] description” (line 2B). Despite the poet’s misgivings about his poetic ability to “do justice” to the calamity, however, the line indicates that the *qaṣīdah* will proceed to provide such a *waṣf*, an account, a description of that calamity. In its prosaic, statement-like quality, the line proves less striking than line 1B on which it is an elaboration. Moreover, at the level of sound it contributes little to the theme of the poem. The most striking phonological feature of the first couplet, therefore, pertains to the rhyme-letter. By a felicitous coincidence the object of the elegy ends with the consonant /q/ followed by the short vowel /u/. This sound structure tends to echo the cooing of the dove, the preeminent symbol of mourning in the *qaṣīdah* tradition. The rhyme-letter sounds a melancholy note whose effect is amplified in the gemination that affects twenty-two rhyme words of the poem. The meter employed, *al-Wāfir*, furthers this effect. This meter permits of a subdued tone, of a sense of resignation that is perceivable throughout whole sections of the ode.

The foregoing close analysis is intended to underline the key role the opening line performs as it subsumes the two main thematic divisions of the ode referred to above. This process of subsuming is pursued in line 3–4; at this juncture, however, each state in the history of Damascus is assigned a separate line. Line 3 begins with a verbal noun that introduces a temporal extension in the poem. In the *qaṣīdah* tradition the occurrence of *dhikrā* (memory, remembrance) is not infrequently encountered in the *nasīb* section; indeed, the crux of the *nasīb* relates to memories recollected/relived, as well as to the notion of loss of that which is recalled. In the *nasīb* the object of recalling is often the beloved and, by extension, her abodes and the former inhabitants of the now effaced abodes. This is memorably phrased in the opening of Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allaqah* quoted above: *dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzili* (the memory of a beloved and an abode).

As will be explained below, for Shawqī *dhikrā* refers to two distinct memories: a distant, collective memory (the subject of lines 16–21) and a more recent particularized memory (the subject of lines 5–11).⁴⁵ Although the two are discrete in temporal terms, the distinction is blurred as both are subsumed in the verbal noun with which line 3 begins which has the effect of molding them in a singularity of past experienced, recalled, celebrated, and at once mourned. The *dhikrā* itself is still alive in the consciousness of the poet; it is recurrent as it is cherished, so much so that its frequent recurrences causes the poet to always turn back to Damascus, his heart throbbing with longing for that which is recalled:

Wa-dhikrā 'an khawāṭirihā li-qalbī
Ilaykī talaffutun abadan wa-khafqu.

A memory, when recalled, my heart
 To you ever turns, throbbing. (Line 3)

The imagery of the second hemistich of the line evokes a hesitant parting of company; it intimates the poet's profound longing for a city from which he has reluctantly departed. The line may have been inspired by a *qit'ah* (a short poem) by the Andalusian poet Ibn Baqīyy who recalls an orchard he had visited thus:

⁴⁵ Fawzī 'Aṭawī takes Shawqī to task for indulging in personal recollections, which, he holds, is unbecoming given the solemnity of the occasion of the *qaṣīdah*. Fawzī 'Aṭawī, *Aḥmad Shawqī: Shā'ir al-Waṭaniyyah wal-Masrah wal-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1989) 38.

*Ahīmu bi-hi fī ḥālātī 'l-qurbi wal-nawā
wa-ḥaqqun la-hu minni 'l-tadhakkuru wal-'ishqu.*

I feel fondness for it whether it be near or far
For due to it (from me) are remembrance and love.⁴⁶

In contrast to line 3 with its focus on a past fondly recalled, line 4 is concerned with the present dismal state to which Damascus has been reduced. The line can be viewed as an elaboration on lines 1B and 2B respectively; it expounds on the theme of the flowing tears introduced in line 1B as it refers to the cataclysm visited upon Damascus the enormity of which eludes attempts to depict adequately. The party culpable for the grief of the city is the all-embracing *al-layālī* (the nights=fate) revealed in this line to have smitten Damascus resulting in *jirāḥātun laḥā fi 'l-qalbi 'umqū* (wounds deep in the heart). It is also at this line that the poet's identification with the city is made explicit. Although he is not embattled by *al-layālī*, the affinities between poet and city are such that that which adversely affects the latter has a corresponding impact on the poet—hence his tears that overflow in the opening line. The poet and city are thus united in a commonality of grief and mourning indicated by the imagery of “deep wounds” which both sustain. As the poem progresses, further light is shed on the nature of these wounds. The image of *al-layālī* shooting arrows that cause deep wounds is of course not original with Shawqī; such imagery is often encountered in the classical *qaṣīdah*. For instance, in a famed elegy for the mother of a patron al-Mutanabbī remonstrates:

*Ramānī 'l-dahru bil-arzā'i ḥattā
fu'ādī fī ḡhishā'in min nibālī.*

Time has so struck me with afflictions
[It is as if] My heart is in a veil of arrows.⁴⁷

In al-Mutanabbī's verse, *al-arzā'* is the plural of *ruz'* (affliction), a noun already encountered in line 2B of Shawqī's *qaṣīdah*. It is, however, through the transposition of the topos of *al-layālī* (used

⁴⁶ The following line in the *qū'ah*, moreover, is dominated by imagery of hearts (of the poet and of a river) throbbing. See al-Maqqarī, *Naṣṣ al-Ṭīb min Ḡhuṣn al-Andalus al-Raṭīb*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥiy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, n.d.) 18.

⁴⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, n.d.) 141.

interchangeably with *al-dahr*—time, fate) to a new context that this otherwise tired imagery derives its impact. Like *al-dahr*, *al-layālī* combines the notion of temporality with that of fate. The two are especially adept at inflicting *arzā'* on poets and (conveniently for poets) on their patrons thus affording the former the occasion to strut their metrical stuff. In the classical ode, *al-layālī* often possess a somewhat formless, vaguely distressing predilection; in the ode at hand, by contrast, they are qualified—as will be shown below.

The *dhikrā* of which line 3 makes brief mention is recalled in more detail beginning in line 5 through line 11. The *dhikrā* at this juncture is an individual one; it relates to a visit Shawqī paid to Damascus shortly before the outbreak of the Great Syrian Revolt—indeed the rebellion broke out days after the poet had left Damascus. The *dhikrā* passage can be divided into three sub-sections as follows:

Lines 5–6 describe Damascus in garden terms,

Lines 7–9 describe the young Damascenes encountered by the poet
on his trip,

Lines 10–11 allude to the poet's incitement of the Damascenes and
their response to such incitement.

The transition from the “introductory” passage (line 1–4) to the “memory” passage is clearly indicated at the syntactical level through a shift from the nominal clauses pattern that has thus far dominated the *qaṣīdah* to a verbal construction with which line 5 begins. The Perfect *dakhaltuki* (I entered you) marks a shift from the “timelessness” of the opening section to the specific time of the poet entering the city. With this line, moreover, the pace of the poem begins to pick up; the movement implicit in *dakhaltu* interrupts the “motionlessness” of the opening section. This briskness is intensified by the fact that for the first time in the *qaṣīdah* line 5A ends in a closed syllable. The line proffers a narrative of Damascus as encountered by the poet in 1925 shortly before the outbreak of the Revolt. The poet arrives in Damascus at the hour of *al-aṣīl*, the time immediately before sunset. Upon his arrival *al-aṣīl* is in a state of *ʾiṭlāq*, a reference to the glow of light in the sky at the hour of sunset. Although the imagery above all evokes nature's luminous luster, the trilateral root, ²-*s-l*, however, further denotes origins and descent of individuals as well as traditions. All of these associations are hinted at in the context of references to Damascus. *Aṣīl* thus functions on multiple levels evoking at once the luster of nature/Damascus as it

subtly hints at the *aṣālah* of a city which, although ancient, still “had a glow” emanating from it.

On a different level, however, the blithe portrait the poet draws of Damascus is not all it seems: *al-aṣīl*, the very word which conjures up associations of beauty and originality can also be perceived as a foreboding that is to befall the city. As noted above, the noun refers to the point in time just before sunset, that is, the end of the day, and the approaching night which, in its plural form in the preceding corresponding hemistich (line 4A), is portrayed as shooting arrows that cause “wounds deep in the heart.” It can thus be seen as marking the imminent end of an era (in this case, of peacefulness and tranquillity); it can further suggest twilight, hinting at a decline: the *aṣālah* (the grandeur of Damascus) whose flame once raged has now been reduced to a mere glow. This interpretation is lent plausibility through the use of the mournful *wurqu* (doves) with which the second line of the couplet concludes. Despite the melancholy note, however, the dominant mood of the couplet is one of contentment and exuberance. This becomes apparent in the second hemistich of line 5 which is constructed around the metaphor of the city as a woman of cheerful disposition: *wa-wajhuki dāhiku ’l-qasamāti talqu* (your face, its features smiling [literally “laughing”], cheerful). While not uncommon in the Arabic literary tradition, in this instance the imagery derives its effect largely from the contrast between the laughter in this line and the weeping indicated by overflowing tears in the opening line.

Another key word in this hemistich is the rhyme-word *talqu*. The trilateral root *t-l-q* denotes being uninhibited, released, free-flowing. From this root is derived the adjectival *ṭalīq* which signifies being “free,” “unobstructed,” “unconfined.” *Ṭalqu* thus harks back to a period anterior to French colonialism during which the city and its populace carried on an uninterrupted, free existence.

The portrayal of the city started in line 5 is continued in the following line where it is described in Edenic terms: *wa-taḥta jīmānīki ’l-anhāru tajrī* “Beneath your gardens streams flowed” (line 6A). This hemistich, it will be apparent, represents a restating of a Qur’ānic verse (2:25) describing the Paradise that awaits the righteous in the Hereafter: *Jannātīn tajrī min taḥtihā ’l-anhāru* (Gardens beneath which rivers flow).⁴⁸ Perhaps because it merely restates a familiar Qur’ānic

⁴⁸ Trans. Yusuf Ali.

verse, perhaps because it dispenses with the uniqueness of the poetic Baradā in favor of an undifferentiated plurality of rivers, the first hemistich of line 6 proves less striking than the second. For its part, the second hemistich derives some of its impact from the *jīnās* (paronomasia) that involves *awrāq* and *wurq*. The referent of *awrāq* (leafy trees) is the Ghūṭah, the famed orchards around Damascus—and the scene of much fighting between the Syrian rebels on the one hand, and French troops and their mercenary forces on the other. *Wurq* (pl. or *warqāʾ*) signifies “doves.” In the qaṣīdah tradition the “dove” is the foremost symbol of mourning; it is also closely associated with memory, its cooing apt to set off melancholy recollections. The association between memory and the cooing of the dove is perhaps best typified in the following lines from an elegy by the poetess al-Khansāʾ for her slain brother Ṣakhr:

*Tadhakkartu Ṣakhran idh taghannat hamāmatun
hatūfun ʿalā ghuṣnin mina ʿl-ayki tasjāʿu.
Tudhakkirunī Ṣakhran wa-qad ḥāla dūnahu
ṣafīḥun wa-aḥjārūn wa-baydāʾu balqaʿu.*

I remembered Ṣakhr when a dove sang
loud on a thicket branch, cooing.
It reminds me of Ṣakhr—as slabs, stones, and a barren desert
stood between him [and me].⁴⁹

It is thus highly appropriate that the dove should figure in the “memory” segment of this neoclassical qaṣīdah.

As noted above, the triplet comprising lines 7–9 describes *fityah* (young men), the young Damascenes the poet encounters on his trip to the city. The triplet is taken up by stock descriptions prevalent in a conventional panegyric: the young men are described in line 7 as “*ghurrūn ṣibāḥūn*” (noble and comely), “*la-hum fi ʿl-fadli ghāyātun wa-sabqu,*” (in virtue they have attained far ends and precedence). Noticeable about the *fityah* description, however, is the prominent position accorded in the following two lines to the facility of poetry/discourse: in line 8 they are praised for their counting among their ranks *shuʿarāʾu lusnun* (eloquent poets) as well as *khuṭabāʾu shudqu* (articulate orators). In the concluding line of this subsection, they are collectively praised for being *ruwāt* (pl. of *rāwī*, reciter, transmitter) of

⁴⁹ ʿAbd al-Salām al-Ḥūfī, ed., *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Khansāʾ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1985) 68.

Shawqī's verse. The concluding part of this line expresses awe at (the renown of) a verse that has found reciters everywhere. The reference to the merits of the poet's own verse may strike one as conceited, boastful, even misplaced—given the occasion for which the *qaṣīdah* was composed. To account for this seeming boastfulness one must recall that the actual (as opposed to the putative) addressees were not the Damascenes themselves; the poem was delivered in Cairo before a gathering that included Syrian expatriates and Egyptian sympathizers but also other poets. The presence of the latter group may indeed have been behind this digression on the part of Shawqī.⁵⁰ Regardless, this burst of hauteur may be seen to serve the purpose of the ode irrespective of authorial intention. Shawqī's verse is so sublime that it finds reciters everywhere. Despite this, however, the second line of the *qaṣīdah* confesses the poets' inability to proffer adequate description of that which has transpired in Damascus. The overall effect of this is to heighten the sense of the severity of the *Nakbah* by implying that even a verse universally acclaimed such as Shawqī's cannot adequately do justice to it.

In sharp contrast to the nominal structure of the preceding triplet, the final couplet (lines 10–11) with which this section closes has a predominant verbal structure: each of its two lines begins with a verb in the Perfect. The syntactic switch marks a transition from a description of a state (that of the young Damascenes) to a more animated phase. The agent of the action in line 10 is the poet himself who discloses with respect to an earlier juncture: *ghamaztu ibā'ahum* (I winked at their pride). Having ascertained the pride of the young Damascenes (especially in line 7), Shawqī proceeds to relate how he had earlier aroused them. He does so in a subtle way implicit in the Perfect *ghamaztu* which, *inter alia*, signifies “to signal to somebody,” “to wink,” “to beckon.” The verbal clause refers in particular to an earlier *qaṣīdah* titled “Damascus” which, unlike the poem at hand, he delivered in Damascus on August 10, 1925 at a reception honoring the Syrian notable Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī. That occasion forms part of the memory which line 3 bespeaks. In that first “Damascus” *qaṣīdah* Shawqī describes the young Damascenes thus:

⁵⁰ Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī maintains that this line was Shawqī's rejoinder to his critics of whom ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād was perhaps the most vehement. Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1969) 157.

*Nazaltu fī-hā bi-fityānin jahājūhatin
ābā'uhum fī shabābi 'l-dahri Ghassānu.*

In it [Damascus] I alighted with bounteous youths
Their forebears, in the youth of Time, the Ghassānids.⁵¹

Within traditional Arab culture the invoking of *ibā'* is often couched in genealogical terms; it involves reminding the addressees of their belonging to certain Arab clans noted for their *ibā'*, a trait which, within traditional contexts, denotes valor, pride, but especially aversion to being ill-treated. In Shawqī's first "Damascus" qaṣīdah he makes reference to the tribes of Ṭayyī' and Shaybān, proverbial for magnanimity; to Ghassān, the putative founders of the 6th century Ghassānid state in Syria; and to 'Abd Shams, the patronymic of the Umayyads. Similarly, an explicit reference is made in line 11 of the qaṣīdah at hand to the Umayyads. It should be pointed out that invoking the names of certain pre-Islamic tribes conjures up the *aṣālah* alluded to in line 5A; not a few in the eastern part of the Arab world (especially Syria and Iraq) trace their ancestry to these revered tribal confederations. To intimate, as does the poet, that the lineage of present Damascenes is traceable to these clans subsumes them within a hallowed tradition; the suggestion constitutes the ultimate form of *madīḥ* (praise) that could be accorded to a community or an individual—given the essentially tribal disposition of early twentieth-century Syria. Inclusion in a tradition such as this, however, inevitably carries with it an obligation to live up to the standards set by ancestors. Having reminded them of their hallowed lineage and of their charge, the response of the young Damascenes is predictable. Lines 10 and 11 are largely taken up by an account of this response:

*Ghamaztu ibā'ahum ḥattā talazzat
unūfu 'l-usdi wa-dṭarama 'l-madaqqu.
Wa-dajja mina 'l-shakīmati kullu ḥurrin
abiyyin min Umayyata fī-hi 'itqu.*

I winked at their pride so that the lions' noses
Burned with rage and the nose's bone flared up.
And from the bit clamored every proud and freeborn man,
In him a pure lineage from Umayyah.

⁵¹ *Al-Shawqīyyāt*, vol. 2, 101.

Thus the poet's implied *tahrīd* (incitement) has the effect of arousing the Damascenes to fury so that they rise up against oppression visited upon a populace whose ancestors were legendary for their aversion to being slighted. The imagery in line 10 is somewhat commonplace; much more intriguing is the metaphor occupying the first hemistich of line 11 that concludes this section. In this hemistich *al-shakīmati* (the bit) functions as an emblematic term for colonialism; implicit in it are notions of limitation, constraint, and external control. As such, *al-shakīmati* carries a connotative scope similar to that of *al-nīr* (the yoke) that is to become the most common symbol for colonial oppression in the twentieth century. The evocative power of *al-shakīmati* is bolstered through its juxtaposition with *hurr* (free-born) in the same hemistich. The contrast pits the "freeborn" Damascene against the bit of French colonialism; the ensuing encounter is captured at the syntactic level in a verbal clause in which the Damascenes cause clamor, *resist* oppression—as is becoming of the descendents of the proud and mighty Umayyads.

Historians of the Great Syrian Revolt will no doubt take issue with Shawqī's implicit claim that his earlier *qaṣīdah* kindled the Revolt.⁵² Nor indeed does Shawqī engage in any overt anti-French incitement in that ode. The closest he comes to sounding an overtly political note is in the concluding verse of the ode: *Wa-naḥnu fi 'l-jurḥi wal-ālāmi ikhwānu* (In the wound and in suffering we are brethren) in which references to *al-jurḥi* (the wound) and *al-ālāmi* (the suffering) appear to be an allusion to European colonialism which then dominated both the poet's native Egypt as well as Syria.

With line 12 the second section of the *qaṣīdah* that centers on the woes of the city begins. The ten lines that make up this section can be divided into two thematically related units: lines 12 through 15 introduce in general terms the tumult that has affected Damascus; lines 16 through 21 revert back in temporal terms to the *dhikrā* theme. This time, however, the memory is a collective one—as opposed to the individual *dhikrā* the poet recalls in the first section of the *qaṣīdah* beginning with line 3.

The reaction of the poet to the news of the bombardment is indicated in the maledictory formula *lahāhā 'l-Lāhu* which literally means,

⁵² One critic, however, maintains that the *qaṣīdah* "increased their [the Damascenes] fury and the revolution of their thoughts." Shafiq Jabrī, *Dirāsah 'an Shawqī* (N.p.: Dār Qutaybah, 1997) 144.

“May God curse it.” The quick succession of the events that take place and the corresponding speedy dissemination of news of them are captured by the verb *tawālat* (came in rapid succession). The effect of the maledictory formula with which the line opens, moreover, is heightened at the close of the line through the characterization of the impact of the news as *mā yashuqu* (distressing, heart-breaking). The common bond between poet and city, which finds expression in the wounds both sustain (line 4), is reinforced in this line through the reference to the poet as *walīy*, a supporter, a sympathizer. *Walīy*, moreover, functions to bind together the two hemistichs of the line through the *jinās* (root-play) it forms with *tawālat* with which the first hemistich concludes. The use of this device foreshadows other devices the poet has recourse to in the following three lines.

At this juncture the poet holds off giving a detailed account of the events that came to constitute *Nakbat Dimashq*. In lieu of such an account the lines exhibit heavy reliance on rhetorical flourish. Line 13, for instance, is structured around the *ṭibāq* (antithesis) between *yufaṣṣilu* (to detail) with which the first hemistich begins and *yujmilu* (to summarize) which begins the second hemistich. The *ṭibāq* mirrors, albeit in an inverse order, the overall design of the *qaṣīdah* itself: the making of general statements about Damascus/the *Nakbah* to be followed by more specific recounting of events and circumstances related to that *Nakbah*.

Line 13 is notable for the striking parallelism between its two hemistichs involving syntactic parallelism (Imperfect Indicative + pronominal direct object + prepositional phrase + subject). This is furthered by the rhythmic near identity between the two key verbs with which each hemistich begins: *yufaṣṣiluhā* (sets it forth in detail), *wa-yujmiluhā* (sums it up).⁵³ The reliance on rhetorical devices is pursued in the following line (line 14), which is structured around yet another *ṭibāq* between *khurāfah* (legend, myth) and *ṣidq* (truth). The reference to *khurāfah* falls within what is known as *tahwīl* (overstate-

⁵³ Al-Ḥāwī remonstrates that this line expounds “a prosaic reality.” He goes on to question the usefulness of a verse that merely conveys “thoughts that are common on the tongues of the masses [*al-dahmā*].” An exponent of the “free-verse” movement, al-Ḥāwī’s criticism overlooks the fact that colonialism is no less “prosaic” a reality; moreover, he clearly overlooks the key role of the “the masses” in the struggle to alter this actuality. Al-Ḥāwī 89.

ment), the use of which is intended to heighten the sense of calamity, to portray the assault on the city in apocalyptic terms. It is also suggestive of a sense of shock and disbelief at the level of the violence to which the city was subjected. This is also implicit in the two verbs *takādu* (it is almost) and *tukhālu* (thought), which start their respective hemistichs. The semantic affinity between the two is furthered at the sound level: both words begin with the consonant /t/; in both is observed an identical morphological structure (CVCVCV). The sense of disbelief is heightened by the alliterative linking of *tukhālu* and *khurāfati* through the consonant /kh/.

The rhyme-letter provides an obvious link to the following line that begins with *wa-qīla* (it is said). This line, which rounds off the equivocal subsection, is notable for the repetition of *qīla* at identical positions in both hemistichs. Each occurrence is followed by a cryptic account of damage done to Damascus. The repetition, anticipated in line 12 in *tawālat* (came in a quick succession), tends to draw attention to the extensiveness of the damage done to the city. The devastation is particularized in this line as affecting *ma'ālīmu 'l-tārīkhi*, the historical monuments of the city. The key word in this line is *al-tārīkh*; it harks back to *dhūkrā* in line 3 in as much as *al-tārīkh* is a form of memory, albeit a collective one.⁵⁴

Rather than proceed to an extensive account of the damage the bombardment of the city causes, the *qaṣīdah* reverts back to the memory theme, specifically to *tārīkh* as memory. This subsection is largely preoccupied with the monuments of Damascus, the destruction of which is a source of anguish for the poet. The recalling, as the *qaṣīdah* does, of these monuments in deferential terms has the effect of making their destruction in the following section all the more catastrophic and distressing.

The thrust of the following subsection (lines 16–21) is the invoking of the Arab-Islamic history of Damascus.⁵⁵ This subsection is

⁵⁴ Al-Ḥāwī objects to Shawqī's use of *al-tārīkh* (history) on the grounds that the word tends to exaggerate, to overstate (*tahwīlyyah*), and to amplify (*tadhīmīyyah*). This inevitably raises the contentious issue of whether there are words that are inherently and irrevocably "unpoetic." Al-Ḥāwī 89. In a similar vein, Rītā 'Awaḍ writes that "its then wide fame notwithstanding, this *qaṣīdah* remains a resounding [piece of] oratory that is closer to versification than it is to poetry." Rītā 'Awaḍ, *Aḥmad Shawqī* (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Tibā'ah wal-Nashr, 1983) 40.

⁵⁵ Al-Ḥūfi refers to lines 16–21 as constituting *fakhār*, the conventional boasting or pridefulness. Al-Ḥūfi, *Aḍwā'*, 26. This point is also made in Aḥmad Suwaylim

structured around a series of metaphors the most striking of which is that with which the subsection begins:

Alasti Dimashqu lil-Islāmi zīʿran
wa-murđīʿatu ʿl-ubuwwati lā tuʿaqqu?

Have you not, O Damascus, suckled Islam?
 The wet nurse of paternity not to be disobeyed! (line 16)

Underpinning this image is the historical role played by Damascus as the seat of the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) in the consolidation of Islam. The image of Damascus as *zīʿr* (wet nurse) recalls how Damascus “adopted” the infant religion—barely few years after its birth;⁵⁶ it further recalls how during the Umayyad period Islam, nurtured in Damascus, grew and reached its apogee with respect to the consolidation of the faith as well as in geographical terms. The use of the connotative *zīʿran* by Shawqī, it should be noted, recalls a similar use by the Andalusian poet Ibn Zaydūn (1003–70) in his famed “Nūniyyah”:

Kānat la-hu ʿl-shamsu zīʿran fī akillatīhi
bal mā tajallā lahā illā aḥāyīnā.

Within her veils she is the nursling of the sun
 though it touches her barely.⁵⁷

The personification of Damascus as *murđīʿah* of the forefathers of Islam is extended into the following line with its reference to the great Muslim leader Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (1138–1193). Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, who captured Jerusalem in 1187 and defended it during the

al-ʿUmarī, *Adab Shawqī fī l-Sīyāsah wal-Ijtīmāʿ* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Miṣriyyah, 1972) 40.

⁵⁶ The notion of the city as a “mother” is famously phrased in Abū Tammām’s panegyric to the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim:

Ummun la-hum law rajaw an tuftadā jaʿalū
fidāʿahā kulla ummin minhumu wa-abī.

In her [Amorium] they had a mother, had they hoped to ransom her,
 They would have given every dam among them and every sire.

Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, 47. Trans. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 189. See also A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1965) 52.

⁵⁷ Ibn Zaydūn, *Dīwān ibn Zaydūn*, ed. Karam al-Bustānī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1964) 11. Trans. Michael Sells, “The Nūniyya (Poem in N) of Ibn Zaydūn,” *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, eds. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin, and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 494.

Third Crusade (1189–1192), is invoked almost exclusively in contexts involving strife with the (Christian) West. He is associated in the Muslim collective memory with stemming the Crusaders' tide that, at a certain historical juncture, threatened to overwhelm Islamdom.⁵⁸ The reference to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in possessive terms as “*tājuki*” (your crown) is perhaps inspired by the fact that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is buried in Damascus. The image of Damascus wearing a crown referred to in the elative in both hemistichs conjures up associations of stateliness, supremacy, and grandeur.

The notion of Damascus as a nurturer is continued in the following line (line 18) through the tree metaphor:

Wa-kullu ḥadāratin fi 'l-arḍi ḫālat
la-hā min sarḫiki 'l-ʿulwiyyi ʿirqu.

Every civilization that ever flourished on earth
 Had a root from your lofty tree.

The notion of Damascus as nurturer is thus extended temporally as is implicit in *kullu ḥadāratin* (every civilization, present and bygone). Nor is the nurturing reach of the city confined to Islamdom; it extends to *al-arḍ*, the whole world. In addition to the notion of the nurturer, the tree motif posits Damascus as the “Source,” the “trunk” of a tree whose roots extend to other regions. The symbolism implicit in the tree motif is augmented by the rhyme-word, *ʿirqu* (root) that carries connotations of origins and of course rootedness.

The contrast between *samāʿ* (sky) and *arḍ* (land) around which line 19 is structured is prepared for in the preceding line. The consonant /s/ in *sarḫiki* recurs in *samāʿuki* as the initial radical, thus providing a link to line 19. Moreover, *samāʿ* (sky) with which the line begins is anticipated at the semantic level, in the adjectival *ʿulwiyyi* (lofty) of the previous line. The imagery of the tree whose roots burrow into the ground and whose top stretches up to the sky tie in with the *samāʿ/arḍ* duality around which the line is structured. The imagery of Damascus's sky as a book and its ground as parchment, however, appears to be a variation on similar imagery in Shawqī's earlier “Damascus” qaṣīdah:

Hādihā 'l-adīmu kitābun lā-kifāʿa la-hu
raththu 'l-ṣaḫāʿifi bāqin min-hu ʿunwānu.

⁵⁸ For a fuller discussion of the motif, see Salih Altoma, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn fi al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth* (Damascus: Dār Kūthā, 1997) 16–21.

This ground is a book with no equal
Its pages worn, its title visible.⁵⁹

In the *qaṣīdah* at hand, the earlier image is particularized into two domains that subsume the *samāwī* (that which is heavenly, descended from heaven) and the *ardī* (earthly, worldly). The key words in the first hemistich are *samāʿ* and *kitāb*. The symbolic underpinnings of *samāʿ* in the context of the *qaṣīdah* revolve around the notions of *dīn* (religion) and *wahy* (the revelation)—*samāʿ* being the “source” of *wahy*. It is to be noted that *samāʿ* often occurs in Qurʾānic contexts in conjunction with *al-ard*.⁶⁰ The above interpretation is rendered plausible by the second keyword that concludes its respective hemistich. *Kitāb* signifies a “book”; another key signification of *kitāb* relates to the Qurʾān. References to the Qurʾān as *kitāb*, moreover, are numerous in the Qurʾān itself.⁶¹ To the extent that *kitāb* refers allusively to the Qurʾān, this hemistich harks back to the role of Damascus as nurturer of the religion of Islam.

The image of the sky as a book in the first hemistich of line 19 leads to another image occupying the second hemistich of the line: that of “the ground as parchment,” as a historical record on which is inscribed the “earthly” antecedents of Damascus, the recounting of which takes up the concluding couplet of this section (lines 20–21). The integration of the twin domains of *samāwī* and *ardī*, however, is effected through the striking syntactic parallelism between the two hemistichs of the line: (subject + possessive suffix + preposition phrase + genitive constructions + predicate); it is further augmented through the repetition of *min ḥilā* (of the ornaments) at identical positions in both hemistichs.

The concluding couplet (lines 20–21) amounts to a narrative of that which is recorded in the parchment/the ground of Damascus:

Banayti ʿl-dawlata ʿl-kubrā wa-mulkan
ghubāra ḥadāratayhi lā yushaqqu.

La-hu bil-shāmi ʿlāmum wa-ʿursun
bashāʿiruhu bi-Andalusin tudaqqu.

You built the mighty state and a dominion,
The dust of whose twain civilizations is impenetrable.

⁵⁹ *Al-Shawqīyyāt*, vol. 2, 99.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Qurʾān 3: 190.

⁶¹ As in Qurʾān 2: 2.

It has in al-Shām banners and a wedding
Whose glad tidings ring out in al-Andalus.

Damascus is thus proclaimed to have been the builder of a grand state, the Arab-Islamic state, a dominion whose might is suggested by the ostensibly outlandish thick dust imagery.⁶² The “twain civilizations” is a reference to the states set up by the Umayyads in the East as well as in al-Andalus.⁶³ The fact that the following line (line 21) specifies al-Shām/al-Andalus precludes a reference in the preceding line to the ‘Abbāsīd state even though, in the earlier “Damascus” qaṣīdah, ‘Abbāsīd Baghdad is counted among the accomplishments of Damascus:

*Law-lā Dimashqu la-mā kānat Tulayḥilatun
wa-lā zahat bi-banī ‘l-‘Abbāsi Baghdānu.*

Had it not been for Damascus, Toledo would not have been,
Nor would have Baghdad bloomed with the scions of al-‘Abbās.⁶⁴

With line 21 the “memory” section introduced in line 3 comes to a close. Conceived above all as a portrait of Damascus in the period anterior to the *Nakbah*, this section is key to the antithetical structure of the qaṣīdah. The most distinctive aspect of the section is perhaps the way in which individual and collective memories of Damascus blend to form an entwined, yet congruous whole.

Having drawn a largely idyllic portrait of Damascus antecedent to the French bombardment, Shawqī proceeds to a description of the state of the city during and in the aftermath of the attack. This description, which is anticipated in line 4, runs through lines 22–36. The fifteen lines that make up this section can be broadly divided into two subsections of seven lines each with line 29 marking a transition. The distinctive feature of the first subsection (lines 22–28) is a heavy reliance on the qaṣīdah tradition—and that of *rithā’ al-mudun* (elegies for cities) in particular—for its diction, topoi and imagery. By contrast, the second subsection (lines 30–36) is particularized in as much as it marks a progression from broader tradition-based

⁶² The “thick dust” imagery is often associated with battle scenes in the qaṣīdah tradition. Nevertheless, it should be recalled that the “building” with which line 20 begins involves at a literal level the raising of dust. More significantly, the Umayyad state was above all a military enterprise.

⁶³ Arslān 253; ‘Aṭawī 39.

⁶⁴ *Al-Shawqīyyāt*, vol. 2, 100.

contexts to the modern instance of the French assault on an Arab/Muslim city. The effect of this progression is that the French bombardment of Damascus is made to partake in a tradition of belligerence towards Islamdom of which *Nakbat Dimashq* is a recent instance.

A common feature of *rithāʾ al-mudun* is the anguished expression of disbelief at the mere occurrence of a disaster, and the extent to which it has affected a city. An instance of this is to be found at the opening of a lengthy elegy to Ronda:

*Aḥaqqan khabā min jawwi Rundata nūruhā?
wa-qad kasafat baʿda ʾl-shumūsi budūruhā?*

Is it true that the light has gone out from the sky of Ronda?
That its moons and suns have eclipsed?⁶⁵

It is this sense of shock and incredulity that line 22 of Shawqīʾs qaṣīdah echoes:

*Ribāʿu ʾl-khuldī wayḥaki mā dahāhā
aḥaqqun annahā darasat aḥaqqu?*

The eternal abodes—woe to you—what has befallen them?
Have they indeed been effaced? Have they?

The reference to an Islamic city as *ribāʿu ʾl-khuldī* (eternal abodes) is not uncommon; similar references to metropolises of Islamdom abound in the qaṣīdah tradition. For instance, in an elegy to Baghdad in the aftermath of the civil war that erupted following the death in 809 of Hārūn al-Rashīd between his sons al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn over succession to the Caliphate,⁶⁶ Abū Yaʿqūb Iṣḥāq al-Kharīmī refers to the city as *jannatu khuldīn wa-dāru maghbaʿatin* (an eternal garden and a pleasing abode).⁶⁷ What seems at first to be a stock reference to a city, however, gains some vitality through the contrast pursued in the second hemistich of the line. The contrast in question is implicit in *ribāʿu ʾl-khuldī* with which the line begins and in *darasat* which occurs in the midst of the second hemistich. In par-

⁶⁵ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ḥusayn Muḥammad, *Rithāʾ al-Mudun wal-Mamālik al-Zāʾilah fi al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī ḥattā Suqūṭ Ghimāṭah* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Jabalāwī, 1983) 209–211.

⁶⁶ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1991) 35.

⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, vol. 8 (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi-Miṣr, 1966) 448. See also Muḥammad 58.

ticular, *khuld* carries notions of perpetuity and durability. It occurs most often in the collocation *jannatu 'l-khuld* signifying the everlasting abode of the blessed in the Hereafter. In stark contrast to this, the Perfect *darasat* denotes “to be effaced,” “to wither away after a period of liveliness and prosperity.” It is a recurrent topos of the classical *qaṣīdah* used in reference to *al-aṭlāl*, the now effaced abodes of the beloved, at which the wistful poet often halts to recall former days of bliss and to shed the habitual tears. Implied in the *ṭibāq* between *ribā'u 'l-khuldi* and *darasat* is a sense of incredulity and bewilderment, a sense that something is amiss. This sense is anticipated in the second hemistich of line 14 where reports of the destruction of the city are met with stupefaction: *tukhālu mina 'l-khurāfati wa-hya ṣidqu* (It is almost thought of as myth, though it is true). It is further heightened by the angry exclamation *wayḥaki* (woe to you), by the insistent repetition of *aḥaqqu* (is it true?),⁶⁸ as well as by the questioning note in the interrogative with which *darasat* is completely surrounded. Line 22 is ingenious in as much as it brings the “effaced abode” topos of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah* to bear on a modern (twentieth-century) phenomenon; Damascus in the aftermath of the French bombardment resembles the *aṭlāl* familiar from the pre-Islamic ode.⁶⁹

The inquiring note that dominates the opening line of this section is continued in the following line (line 23) in which the subject of inquiry is the order that once prevailed in Damascus. The notion of order is suggested by the reference to *ghurafu 'l-jināni* (the garden's rooms) being *munaddadātum* (orderly) which concludes the first hemistich as well as in *nasqu* (symmetry) at the close of the second hemistich. The recurrence in this line of *jīnān*, now couched in the interrogative, contrasts sharply with the certitude of the Perfect in line 6 in which it first occurs. The dichotomy of order/disorder antecedes the colonial age of course; its presence in Arab-Islamic civilization centers on the notion of Islam as representing the paradigmatic Order (Sunni Muslims had historically viewed the Caliph as the upholder of this Order). Thus a circumstance liable to imperil Islamdom (such as an assault on a Muslim community) is often perceived as setting

⁶⁸ *Aḥaqqu* can also mean “Is it fair?” “Is it just?”

⁶⁹ Al-Ḥāwī takes issue with Shawqī's use of *ribā'u 'l-khuldi* (eternal abodes) on the grounds that it is *tahwīlīyya* (tends to exaggerate), and *jāriyah bayna 'l-‘āmmah* (common among the common people, in common usage). Al-Ḥāwī 90.

off anarchy and disorder.⁷⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that in elegies for cities this motif should be a recurrent one.

In addition to the cosmological dimension of the dichotomy, the dislocation that results in the aftermath of an attack on a (Muslim) community is commonly seen as constituting a state of disorder—as the following verse from an elegy to Basra by the ‘Abbāsīd poet Ibn al-Rumī (836–96) shows:

*Rubba qawmīn bātu bi-ajma‘i shamlīn
tarakū shamlahum bi-ghayri niẓāmi.*

Many a people who passed the night in closest unity,
they left their unity utterly disordered.⁷¹

Significantly, the age of colonization witnessed a resurgence of the motif; this resurgence often centers on notions of pre-colonial order/post-colonial disorder.

A distinctive feature of the opening two lines of this section is a structure that relies heavily on the interrogative, reflecting the poet’s sense of doubt and bewilderment. This structure is maintained in the following line (line 24), which leads into perhaps the most recurrent motif of *rithā’ al-mudun*: that of the unsavory effects of warfare on womenfolk. In its quintessential form, the motif highlights the dishonor visited upon Muslim maidens (and consequently upon their menfolk) and the resultant obligation to cleanse such dishonor through vengeance. In Shawqī, however, the physical safety of womenfolk becomes a major concern for the poet; indeed the endangerment of women by the bombardment of the city takes up the bulk of the triplet (lines 25A, 26A, 26B). Nevertheless, the notion of feminine defilement remains a focal point. This is indicated in the key position the topos occupies in the triplet:

*Wa-ayna duma ‘l-maqāṣiri min hijālin
muhattakatin wa-astārīn tushaqqū!*

What about the dolls of the chambers,
Veils violated and screens torn! (line 24)

⁷⁰ For a full discussion, see Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 113–211.

⁷¹ The elegy was composed following the sack of Basra by the Zanj in September 871. Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān Ibn al-Rūmī*, Ḥusayn Naṣṣār, ed. vol. 6 (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1981) 2379. Trans. Arberry 66–67.

The “dolls of the chambers” imagery recalls similar imagery in al-Kharīmī’s elegy to Baghdad cited above:

*Wa-hal ra’ayta ’l-quṣūra shārī’atan
tukinnu mithla ’l-dumā maqāṣiruhā!*

Have you beheld the palaces rising high
Their chambers concealing the likes of dolls.⁷²

Defilement through unveiling is an ever-present risk that the “dolls of the chambers” run; the qaṣīdah tradition abounds in references to instances of such defilement. The best known such reference is perhaps to be found in Ibn al-Rumī’s elegy cited above:

*Kam fatātin maṣūnatin qad sabūhā
bārizan wajhuhā bi-ghayri lithāmi.*

How many a chaste maiden they carried into captivity
Her face displayed without a veil!⁷³

In Shawqī, the veiling is implicit in *ḥijālīn* (veils) as well as in *astārīn* (screens). The unveiling is indicated in the adjectival *muhattakatīn* (torn, violated) in reference to *ḥijālīn*. In this connection, the use of *muhattakatīn* sounds a more disturbing note. This is because the adjective most often occurs in conjunction with *’arād*, pl. of *’ird* (honor), the custodian of which have traditionally been women. The violation of *’arād* often involves a violent sexual act. This interpretation is lent plausibility in the nominal clause that concludes the line: *astārīn tushaqqu*. The allusion to sexual violence directed at women is implicit in *tushaqqu* which counts “to be torn,” “to be penetrated,” “to be pierced” among its denotations. On another level, however, *tushaqqu* provides a stark contrast between the present dismal state of Damascus and its former state as builder of civilizations whose dust is impenetrable (line 20). The contrast has the effect of making the decline in the position of the city all the more distressing.⁷⁴

⁷² Al-Ṭabarī 449. Muḥammad 59.

⁷³ Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, 2378. Arberry 64–5.

⁷⁴ The “dolls of the chambers” imagery provides al-Ḥāwī with an opportunity to decry Shawqī explicit conventionality: “Perhaps,” al-Ḥāwī speculates, “the poet sought through that [imagery] to incite the masses whose [concept of] shame is confined to what befalls them with respect to women.” Al-Ḥāwī 94. Al-Ḥāwī’s frequent references to the masses as *al-dahmā’* (which carries connotations comparable to that of the English “the rabble”) clearly betrays the ideological underpinning of his critique of Shawqī.

Having led to the “dolls of the chambers” triplet, the interrogative starts in line 25 to give way to predominately declarative statements that reflect the certitude of the catastrophe that has come to pass.⁷⁵ The concluding line of the triplet (line 26) introduces the notion of death explicitly for the first time in the *qaṣīdah*. It does so in the course of describing harrowing and, ultimately, futile attempts by the womenfolk to escape the indiscriminate and intense bombardment of residential quarters of the city. The omnipresence of death is intensified through the repetitive *tarīqin/turqu* (path/s), which occur at identical positions in their respective hemistichs. It is suggested through the solitary road leading to safety as opposed to the multiplicity of the paths leading to death; it is further heightened by the contrast between *al-salāmata* (safety) in the first hemistich of the line and *al-mawti* (death) in the second.

The death topos introduced in line 26 is continued in the following couplet (lines 27–28) in which the account of the shelling reaches a culmination:

*Bi-laylin lil-qadhāʾifi wal-manāyā
warāʾa samāʾihi khatfun wa-ṣaʿqu.*

*Idhā ʿaṣafa ʾl-ḥadīdu ḥmarra ufqun
ʿalā janabātihi wa-swadda ufqu.*

In a night beyond whose sky
Shells and fates [of death] were flashing, stupefying.

When steel thundered, a horizon reddened on its sides
While [another] horizon darkened.

The nocturnal setting of the scene coincides with the historical account of the *Nakbah*; as noted in the introductory section of this chapter, the shelling of the city continued unabated for two nights. For the purposes of the *qaṣīdah*, however, the use of the night is especially effectual as it augments the sense of confusion and disorientation that the populace at large—and the “dolls of the chambers” in particular—are made to endure.⁷⁶ The use of the possessive in the first hemistich of line 27, moreover, creates the impression of a night

⁷⁵ Al-Ḥūfī cites lines 24–28 as an instance of Shawqī’s use of “realistic diction” in his imagery. Al-Ḥūfī, *Aḍwāʾ*, 178.

⁷⁶ It should be noted in this connection that in the *qaṣīdah* tradition the night as a motif recurs in battle scenes to show the extent of the battle and the ensuing confusion.

“given over to” shells (*al-qadhāʾif*) and death (*al-manāyā*), a night in which the two rule supreme, the former leading to the latter in lethal succession. The preponderance of death in this couplet is further reflected in the transition from the singular *al-mawti* (death) in the previous line to the plurality of *al-manāyā* (fates of death) in line 27.

A premise of this study has been that neoclassicists drew for their poetic models on the qaṣīdah tradition. The qaṣīdah at hand provides numerous instances of a neoclassical poet having recourse to the qaṣīdah tradition. One such instance relates to the classical battle scene. In particular, the topos of the night lit up by the fiery battle is encountered, for example, in panegyrics lauding the martial feats of ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs. Line 28 of Shawqī’s qaṣīdah can be seen to represent a variant of this topos. In addition to providing a vivid portrayal of the activity of French cannon,⁷⁷ this line is concerned to emphasize the repetitiveness and constancy of the shelling; the emphasis is effected through the repetition of *ufq* (horizon) at identical positions in the two hemistichs of the line, by the alliterative repetition of /ḥ/ in the first hemistich, as well as by the morphological identity between the color designations *iḥmarra* (reddened) and *iswadda* (darkened). The color designations mirror the transition observed in the preceding line: the sequence *al-qadhāʾif/iḥmarra*, *al-manāyā/iswadda* underlines the progression from danger (the predominant symbolism of the color red), to death (a recurrent symbol of which is the color dark).

Line 29 marks a key transition in the qaṣīdah. Up until this point, the qaṣīdah has confined itself to allusions and terse references notable for their non-specificity—about the culpability for the *Nakbah*. Before it effects such transition, however, the line “looks back” to the preceding sections of the qaṣīdah:

Salī man rāʿa ghīdaki baʿda wahmin
abayna fī ʿādihi wal-ṣakhri farqu?

Ask him who filled your maidens with terror in the deep of the night,
 Is there a difference between his heart and rock?

The first hemistich offers a recapitulation of the preceding subsection. The Imperative with which the line begins resumes the questioning

⁷⁷ Commenting on the imagery of this line Arslān claims that “[i]t is impossible for any [other] poet to attain this degree of eloquence in the description of military bombardment, especially in the darkness [of the night]. Arslān 254.

note that informs lines 22–23 as well as line 16. The relative clause that follows, *man rāʿa ghīdaki* (he who filled your maidens with terror), in its stubborn refusal at specificity, is stylistically more akin to the earlier sections of the *qaṣīdah*. The clause, moreover, reintroduces the notion of *rawʿ* (fright) stated explicitly in line 14 as well as implicitly in the description of the battle that takes up lines 27–28. Its reference to the effect of the bombardment on maidens to the exclusion of the rest of the populace makes it an apt recapitulation of the “dolls of the chambers” triplet (lines 24–26).

The integration of the “pre-modern” and “modern” takes place in line 30, which makes the first explicit reference to the scourge of colonialism as culpable for the *Nakbah*. This identification is effected above all through the way the line restates the previous line. Thus the relative clause “he who filled your maidens with terror in the deep of the night” in the first hemistich of line 29 is counterposed to *al-mustaʿmirīna* (the colonizers) in the following corresponding hemistich. The identity is furthered in the respective second hemistichs, the relationship between which is largely tautological. This disclosure permits a re-reading of line 4 in which *al-layālī* (the nights) are held to have struck Damascus. This in turn allows interchangeability between *al-mustaʿmirīna* and *al-layālī*, an interchangeability that is augmented through the repetition of the key verb in line 4, “*ramā*” (to strike), at the beginning of line 31. To account for the interchangeability between the two terms, it must be recalled that when the *qaṣīdah* was composed *al-istiʿmār* (colonialism) was still a relatively inchoate term whose outline had not been fully sketched out. By contrast, the use of *al-layālī*, with its largely negative reference and wide diffusion, offered an especially effective stratagem for defining the concept of *al-istiʿmār* for a mass audience. The interchangeability between the two terms, therefore, can be seen to function as a defining mode in the overall scheme of the *qaṣīdah*. As noted elsewhere in this study, the term *al-layālī* in the sense of “time” or “fate” is largely associated with hardship, misfortune, and undoing. By locating *al-istiʿmār* within the terms of reference of *al-layālī*, the former term is made to partake of the latter’s maleficent disposition.

The above hypothesis, however, does not fully account for the conflation of *al-layālī*/*al-istiʿmār*. It is notable in this respect that line 31 betrays a certain ambivalence on the part of Shawqī towards the colonizing power. The use of *al-layālī*, therefore, must also be seen as an attempt on the part of the poet to reconcile a position that

is as perplexing as it is paradoxical. To the extent that it *re*-presents *al-isti'mār* as *al-layālī*, the *qaṣīdah* conceives of the latter as a manifestation of fate, sharing with it its essential traits: its tyranny, unresponsive nature, and especially its proverbial *ṭaysh* (rashness). Nor does this compromise the anti-colonial address of “Nakbat Dimashq;” this fate is lamented, protested, and opposed with a vehemence and intensity worthy of the *qaṣīdah* tradition.⁷⁸

The unfeeling nature of colonialism is captured in the simile that occupies the second hemistich of line 30 wherein the colonialists are described as possessed of *qulūbun kal-ḥijārati lā-tariquu* (hearts like stone that feel no pity).⁷⁹ The inclemency of the colonizer contrasts sharply with the tenderness of the poet who, in the corresponding hemistich of line 4, complains of *jirāḥātun la-hā fi 'l-qalbi 'umqu* (wounds deep in the heart) he sustains in the aftermath of the *Nakbah*. The contrast, moreover, is mirrored at the phonological level: the three radicals of the plural *jirāḥātun* (wounds) recur in line 30B in a somewhat inverted order to form *ḥijārati*, the stone to which the hearts of the colonizers are likened.

The remaining two lines of this triplet (lines 31–32) further narrow down the scope of culpability—from the plurality of *al-musta'mirīn* to the specificity of an individual colonial official. The lines refer in particular to the role played by the then French High Commission General Sarrail. In the second hemistich of line 31 Sarrail is characterized as *akhū ḥarbin bi-hī ṣalafun wa-ḥumqu* (A warlike man, full of vainglory and folly). The line seems to suggest, however, that Sarrail is solely to blame for the atrocity, that France is as much a victim of his “folly” as is Damascus. It thus provides another instance of the ambivalence that Shawqī feels towards France.⁸⁰

If colonial discourse seeks to formulate definitions that accord with the colonizer’s stance, anti-colonial discourse is as much about contesting such definitions and proposing alternative ones. In line with

⁷⁸ This was clearly recognized by the French authorities, which responded by banning Shawqī from visiting Morocco on account of this *qaṣīdah*. See Arslān 258.

⁷⁹ This simile is somewhat common in Arabic literary tradition; it also occurs in the Qur’ān as in the following example: *Thumma qasat qulūbukum min ba’di dhālika fa-hiya kal-ḥijārati* “thenceforth were your hearts hardened: they became like a rock.” (2: 74) Trans. Yusuf Ali.

⁸⁰ Arslān concurs with Shawqī that the atrocity amounted to a stain on the history of France “because of this leader [Sarrail].” Neither seems inclined to allow that Sarrail was ultimately an instrument of French colonialism. Arslān 254.

this schema, the French High Commissioner is described at the conclusion of line 31 as foolhardy. An instance of his folly is provided in the following line where Sarrail characterizes the Syrian insurgents as a gang of rebels. The couplet (lines 31–2) undertakes to contest the colonizer's definition. On the one hand, Sarrail is presented as foolhardy, reckless, and irrational; it follows, therefore, that definitions issuing from him are flawed. On the other hand, a counter-definition is proposed in the reference to the insurgents as *tullābu ḥaqqin* (seekers of justice). Although line 32 seems to make a specific reference to Sarrail's refusal to receive a Druze delegation, and perhaps also to his conspiring to have another delegation imprisoned, his characterization in line 32B of those who resist colonial oppression as *ʿiṣābatun* (a gang) has since become all too common.

The following passage (lines 33–36) continues the process of contesting colonial definitions and of offering alternative ones. Structurally, the first two lines of the passage are closely related, as are the last two. Lines 33–34 recall the French Revolution and the sacrifices the French revolutionaries made. The classical motif of the blood of the slain as possessing a regenerative power comparable to that of rain finds ample expression in line 34:

Ḥarā fi-ardihā fi-hi ḥayātun
ka-munhalli 'l-samā'i wa-fihi rizqu.

[Blood] flowed on [France's] land, bringing life,
 Like a downpour from the sky, and sustenance.

The function of this couplet is to induct the Damascenes into a tradition of revolution, to place them on a par with their French counterparts of former times. This equivalence is furthered at the lexical level through the repetition of the key word *ḥaqq* (just, rightful) which occurs in 32 as part of the phrase *tullābu ḥaqqin* (seekers of justice) in reference to the Syrian insurgents and recurs as the rhyme-word in line 33 which suggests that the French should be able to recognize and identify with the shedding of revolutionary blood. The effect of such posited equivalence is to undercut the colonial definition of the Syrian insurgents as *ʿiṣābah* (a gang) and to propose a more valid definition of them as *thuwwār* (line 33A), revolutionaries whose cause is no less legitimate than that of their French predecessors.

The irony implicit in the French colonial situation is the subject of the last two lines of this section of the qaṣīdah. It finds expression at the structural level in a series of *ṭibāqs*: in the first hemistich

of line 35 the *ṭibāq* involves *māta/li-taḥyā* (died/that it may live); in the second hemistich, it involves *zālū/li-yabqū* (perished/that they may endure). As one *ṭibāq* follows another in quick succession in line 35, the note of irony mounts until it reaches a peak in the concluding line:

Wa-ḥurrirati 'l-shu'ūbu 'alā qanāhā
fa-kayfa 'alā qanāhā tustaraqqu?

And peoples were set free by [French] lances
 How then can they be enslaved by [the same] lances?⁸¹

With this paradoxical, sour note the second section of the qaṣīdah comes to a close. The final section (line 37–55) is marked by a shift of focus: *banī Sūriyyata* (sons of Syria) become the addressee; the section affords the poet an opportunity to engage in *nuṣḥ* (counsel). In the conventional *rithā' al-mudun*, this section is at times taken up by *tahṛīd* (incitement) wherein the poet calls for vengeance on the foe. Such *tahṛīd* is often undertaken in conjunction with references to divine rewards awaiting those who heed the call for vengeance.⁸² It is against this backdrop that the final section of Shawqī's qaṣīdah should be seen. This section can be subdivided as follows:

Lines 37–40 are taken up by counsel proper.

Lines 41–42 are parenthetical; they establish the poet's entitlement to offer such counsel.

Lines 43–48 fall within the category of *tahṛīd*.

Lines 49–50 extol the solidarity of the Damascenes with the Druze insurgents.

Lines 51–55 pay homage to the Druze.

The quadruplet with which this section begins (lines 37–40) shows a preoccupation with the policies pursued by the French colonial

⁸¹ To Fawzī 'Aṭawī these lines amount to "mild reproach" by a poet sympathetic to French civilization. 'Aṭawī 41. The Algerian representative to a festival held in Cairo in 1958 to pay homage to Shawqī, however, was even harsher in his criticism of the late poet. In his address to the festival, al-Bashīr al-Ibrāhīmī thoroughly rejects the claim that "peoples were set free by [French] lances." *Mihrajān Aḥmad Shawqī* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'lā li-Ri'āyat al-Funūn wal-Ādāb wal-'Ulūm al-Ijtīmā'iyyah, 1960) 43.

⁸² This observation is applicable mainly to an atrocity by non-Muslims on a Muslim community. It is to be noted that *tahṛīd* was already established in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods. See Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals* 161–238.

authorities the crux of which was the setting up of “autonomous,” ethnically or confessionally-based entities or “Emirates.”⁸³ The implications of such a divide and rule policy in terms of making possible continued French hegemony are too transparent to warrant elaboration. It should be noted, however, that the region that then formed Syria, was multi-ethnic and multi-religious—a fact that Shawqī feared the colonizers would exploit to their advantage—as indeed they did. This accounts for his repeated admonitions to Syrians not to be hoodwinked by petty entities and sham titles that merely perpetuate continued subjection referred to in line 38 as *riqqu* (enslavement).⁸⁴ His anxiety over divisiveness among Syrians culminates in the closing line of the passage:

*Futūqu 'l-mulki taḥduthu thumma tamḍī
wa-lā yamḍī li-mukhtaliḥina fatqu.*

Tears occur in dominions, and then pass away
But a tear among the disunited does not pass away.

Nor is this the first time that Shawqī places such a heavy emphasis on the import of Syrian national unity; in his earlier “Damascus” *qaṣīdah* he addresses the Syrians thus:

*Al-mulku an tatalāqaw fī hawā waṭanin
tafarraqat fī-hī ajnāsun wa-adyānu.*

Dominion [is achievable if] you unite in the love of a homeland
In which races and creeds differed.⁸⁵

Another theme encountered in his “Damascus” *qaṣīdah* relates to the kinship between Egyptians and Syrians; in addition to the Arab-Islamic heritage of both peoples, this kinship arises from a commonality of suffering through subjection to colonialism. In “*Nakbat Dimashq*” this theme takes up lines 41–42:

*Naṣaḥtu wa-naḥnu mukhtaliḥina dāran
wa-lākin kullunā fi 'l-hammi sharqu.*

*Wa-yajma'unā idhā ikhtalafat bilādun
bayānun ḡhayru mukhtaliḥin wa-nuṭqu.*

⁸³ Arslān 255.

⁸⁴ In his address to the Shawqī festival, the representative of the League of Arab States makes the claim that Syria had indeed responded to the poet’s call by “discarding its titles” and joining Egypt in the United Arab Republic. Aḥmad al-Tājī, “Shawqī wal-‘Urūbah,” *Mihrajān Aḥmad Shawqī* 286–87.

⁸⁵ *Al-Shawqīyyāt*, vol. 2, 102.

I have counseled [you] though we are of different abodes,
But in cares we are all [from the] East.

If our countries differ,
[Yet] a language and a tongue not differing bind us together.⁸⁶

This assertion of kinship occupies a parenthetical position between the somewhat subdued counsel of lines 37–40 and the forthright *tahrīd* of the following subsection (lines 43–48). Like the preceding sections of the *qaṣīdah*, this subsection continues to draw on the classical tradition. It is, however, noteworthy for its ardent and open call for resistance, for its integration of the terminology of the “national liberation struggle” of the twentieth century, and above all, for its striking imagery and “heroic” tone.

The critical stage the Great Syrian Revolt was passing through is captured in the antithesis that is the structuring basis of line 43. It is to be recalled that when the *qaṣīdah* was composed, Syrian resistance was still ongoing, as was the clampdown by French authorities. A threshold is reached as is implied in the contrast in the first hemistich between *mawtīn* and *ḥayātīn*. At a literal level, *mawtīn* of course denotes “physical death” while *ḥayātīn* denotes “life.” In the context of the passage, however, *mawtīn* is to be seen primarily as denoting continued subjugation. It is an all-encompassing state of which physical death forms a part, as the frantic attempts of Damascene women to dodge it show:

Idhā rumna ’l-salāmata min ṭarīqīn
atat min dūnihi lil-mawtī ṭurqu.

Through whatever path they sought safety,
Paths of death came in its stead. (Line 26)

On the other hand, *ḥayātīn*, which closes the first hemistich of line 43, denotes above all the freedom that will come about with the demise of colonialism. Although expressed disjunctively, the Syrians can ill-afford to elect the former; they can, however, opt for the latter, the life the specific nature of which is elaborated in the conditional mode of the second hemistich:

Fa-in rumtum na’īma ’l-dahri fa-shqū
If you desire good fortune, then endure suffering.

⁸⁶ To al-‘Umarī these lines constitute a call for “the union of the Arabs.” Al-‘Umarī, 160.

The *ḥayātīn* of the first hemistich appears to be synonymous with *naʿīmā ʿl-dahri* (good fortune) in the second. It should be recalled that *naʿīm* (bliss, felicity) is a state that Damascus once experienced in the pre-colonial era; line 23 alludes to the loss of this state in the course of a query by the poet about the (lost) order of the gardens' rooms:

Wa-hal li-naʿīmihinna ka-amsi nasqu?

Does their felicity have, as it had yesterday, symmetry?

There is something peculiar about collocating *naʿīm* (bliss) with *al-dahr* (fate), however. The notion of *shaqāʿ* that concludes the second hemistich is often associated with the trials of life; by contrast, *naʿīm* is commonly posited in scriptural terms as the reward for such *shaqāʿ* in the Hereafter. *Al-Dahr*, moreover, is not ordinarily seen as a source of *naʿīm*; to the contrary, it is proverbial for being an author of hardship and suffering. It should be recalled that *al-layālī* (the nights), *al-dahr*'s connotative equivalent in the context of this *qaṣīdah*, are shown in line 4 to be inflicting deep wounds on both poet and city. *Naʿīmā ʿl-dahri* thus proves to be a somewhat unwieldy and contrived collocation—unless it is to be understood as denoting the overcoming of the vicissitudes of time which doubtlessly include colonialism. What needs to be emphasized, however, is the contrast between the traditional notion of *dahr* (fate/time) with its vicissitudes, and the idea that Syrians must now take their “fate” into their own hands; they can achieve “felicity” (*i.e.*, freedom) but they must be willing to fight and die for it.

The imagery in line 44 of *al-awṭān* (the Homelands) as a creditor claiming payment from the debtor/colonialism is in part prepared for in lines 32–3 which bespeaks of demands for redress so contemptuously dismissed by General Sarrail. The plural *awṭān*, moreover, extends the spatial terms of reference of the *qaṣīdah* so that the blood in the line can be seen to hark back to *damu ʿl-thuwwānī* (the blood of the revolutionaries) which in line 33 refers equally to that of French revolutionaries. More congruent with the conventions of the classical *qaṣīdah*, however, is the *saqy* (drinking) imagery that structures the following line:

*Wa-man yasqī wa-yashrabu bil-manāyā
idha ʿl-ahrāru lam yusqaw wa-yasqū?*

Who will give [the enemy] death to drink and drink thereof himself,
If freemen are not given [death] to drink and give it out? (Line 45)

The image of *al-ahrār* (freemen) drinking death and giving it to the enemy is the traditional battle metaphor for slaying as “giving to drink” (giving death instead of life).⁸⁷ The underpinning of the image, however, is the notion of bloodshed in battle that is conducive to communal renewal. Such regenerative power is famously enunciated in a panegyric by al-Mutanabbī to his patron Sayf al-Dawlah who, in 954, carried out a raid on the frontier-post of al-Ḥadath:

*Hali 'l-Ḥadathu 'l-Ḥamrā'u ta'rifu lawnahā
wa-tālamu ayyu 'l-sāqiyayni 'l-ghamā'imu?*

*Saqathā 'l-ghamāmu 'l-ghurru qabla nuzūlihi
fa-lammā danā min-hā saqathā 'l-jamājumu.*

Does al-Ḥadath the red recognise its own colour,
and does it know which of the two wine-bearers was the clouds?

The white clouds watered it before he descended,
then when he drew near it the skulls watered it (again).⁸⁸

Similarly, the interchangeability between blood and rain as sources of renewal is unequivocally spelled out in Shawqī's reference in line 34 to the blood of the French revolutionaries:

*Jarā fi ardihā fihī ḥayātun
ka-munhalli 'l-samā'i wa-fihī rizqu.*

[Blood] flowed on [France's] land, bringing life,
Like a downpour from the sky, and sustenance.

The poet seems to be invoking France's own revolutionary tradition—the concept of sacrificing one's own life to free one's country and countrymen. From a postcolonial perspective, the irony is that

⁸⁷ Arslān notes that the image is somewhat similar to that found in the following line by a poet he does not identify:

*Saqaynāhumū ka'san saqawā bi-mithlihā
wa-lākinnaḥum kānū 'alā 'l-mawti aṣṣarā.*

We gave them a cup to drink; they gave us one like it
But they bore death with more patience.

Arslān 256. The line as cited above is attributed to the Umayyad Zufar ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kilābī. See al-Marzūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah*, ed., Aḥmad Amīn and Abd al-Salām Ḥārūn, vol. I (Cairo: Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'lif wal-Tarjamah wal-Nashr, 1951) 156. In a slightly varied form, the line is also attributed to the *Mukhaḍḍam* poet al-Nābighah al-Ja'dī. See Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, ed. Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-'Arabī lil-Ṭibā'ah wal-Nashr, 1968) 171.

⁸⁸ Al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, vol. 4, 96. Trans. Arberry 84.

the colonized (Arabs) have co-opted the enlightenment rhetoric of the colonizer. There is also the sense that France has betrayed its own self-proclaimed principles of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*.

Although it continues the argument of the previous two lines, line 47 has a distinct structure based on *ṭibāqs* within individual hemistichs as well as parallelism between the two hemistichs:

Fa-ḥī 'l-qatlā li-ajyālin ḥayātun
wa-ḥī 'l-asrā fidan la-humu wa-ḥitqu.

For in the slain [there is] life for generations [to come];
 In the captives [there is] ransom and release for them.

The *ṭibāq* in the first hemistich between *qatlā* (the slain) and *ḥayātun* (life) can be seen to echo the notion introduced in line 35 with respect to France whose youths died that it may live: *bilādun māta fīyatuhu li-tahyā* (A land whose youths died that it may live). The second hemistich is similarly structured around a *ṭibāq* involving *al-asrā*, the captives of colonialism, providing a ransom that would set whole generations free. The subsection culminates with a line whose haunting imagery has earned it just renown and made it perhaps the most often re/cited line in the context of Arab anti-colonial struggle:

Wa-lil ḥurrīyati 'l-ḥamrā'i bābun
bi-kulli yadīn muḍarrajatin yudaqqu.

Red liberty has a gate
 Upon which every blood-soaked hand must knock.⁸⁹ (line 48)

A striking feature of the *qaṣīdah* is the recurrence of the theme of freedom: it occurs in lines 11A, 36A, 44A, and line 45B. The recurrence of *al-ḥurrīyati* at the concluding line of this section further heightens the emphasis on this key term in the vocabulary of anti-colonial struggle of the twentieth century. The suffixing of the adjectival *al-ḥamrā'* (the red) suggests that the image may have been inspired to a certain extent by al-Mutanabbī's above-cited panegyric wherein the frontier post of al-Ḥadath is referred to as *al-ḥamrā'*. The reference to freedom as *al-ḥamrā'* clearly draws on the symbolism of the color red which includes blood, the shedding of which would set

⁸⁹ Salma Khadra Jayyusi renders this line, which she describes as “highly exciting,” as follows: “The door of red freedom is rapped by bloody hands.” Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, vol. II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 712–13.

Damascus free from colonialists whose thundering cannon, as line 28A recounts, causes its horizon to become fiery red.⁹⁰ The transition from one state to another is suggested in the nominal *bābun* (door, gate) that hints at a passage from one station to another, an entry into a different realm. The impediment to such entry is implicit in the restrictiveness of the *bāb* itself; access to a new realm is contingent upon gaining entry through this gate. The knocking, audible at the end of the line, implies that the *bāb* is closed, that access is restricted or denied. The imagery of a blood-soaked hand knocking at the gate of freedom, moreover, can be viewed as a variant on the “hand” imagery in line 44 which bespeaks of Homelands as having *yadun salafat*, a hand to lend.

No less exquisite is the “Druze” passage (lines 51–55) to which lines 49–50 provide a transition by positing a kinship between the Damascenes and the Druzes. Such kinship is rendered explicit through the repetition of *akh* (brother) three times in line 50 in an apparent reference to the Druze leader Şulţān al-Aṭrash. The reference to al-Aṭrash as *akhākum* (your brother) underscores the contrast between him and his foe General Sarrail described in line 31 as a warmongering *akhū ḥarbīn*, literally, “brother of war.”

The contesting of colonial discourse in the preceding sections of the *qaṣīdah* is taken up in this passage. In line 32 General Sarrail is cited as dismissing the insurgents as *ʿiṣābatun kharajū wa-shaqqū* (a gang of schismatics and rebels). Such dismissal, with its transparent ideological underpinnings, would become a customary response to anti-colonial struggle over the course of the twentieth century. It is in essence the task of the concluding five lines of the *qaṣīdah* to resist this colonial representation and to offer an alternative one. The former is taken up in line 51, which categorically rejects the claim that the Druzes were *qabīla sharrīn* (evil clan) and notes the injustice of such characterization. An alternative representation takes up the remaining four lines.

In the foregoing sections of the *qaṣīdah* the poet sought to establish continuity between modern (early twentieth century) Damascenes and their Umayyad predecessors, to cast the Damascenes as heirs

⁹⁰ Arslān 257. It should be noted that “red liberty” is the title of an earlier *qaṣīdah* by Shawqī (1918) on the Egyptian anti-British struggle. *Al-Shawqiyyāt*, vol. 2, 186–87.

to that grand Umayyad tradition. With respect to the Druzes, a somewhat similar attempt is undertaken to subsume them within an Arab-Islamic context:

Wa-lākin dhādatun wa-qurātu ḍayfin
ka-yunbūʿi ʿl-Ṣafā khashunū wa-raqqu.

No, they are warriors, magnanimous to the guest,
 Like al-Ṣafā spring, they are hard and soft. (Line 52)

The adjectival *dhādatun* (defenders of their land), carries associations of fierceness, resolve, and fortitude. This contrasts with *qurātu ḍayfin* (magnanimous to the guest), which connotes generosity and compassion. The combination of gentleness and harshness finds an apt expression in the simile with which the second hemistich begins: *ka-yunbūʿi ʿl-Ṣafā* (literally, like the spring that flows from amidst hard rock). The simile makes allusions to the hill of al-Ṣafā which, together with al-Marwa, forms part of the rites of the Muslim pilgrimage—both are proclaimed in the Qurʾān to be *min shaʿāʾiri ʿl-Lāh* (among the rites of Allah).⁹¹ The allusion to al-Ṣafā thus recalls religio-historical bonds between the Druzes and the rest of the Arab/Muslim populace of Syria. The two traits of gentleness and harshness find correspondence at the semantic level in the adjectival *khashunū* (hard) and *raqqu* (soft) used at the end of line 52 with reference to the Druzes. This sets them apart from *al-mustaʿmirīn* (the colonialists) who, insists line 30, merely feign gentleness for malevolent ends but whose hearts are “like stone that feel no pity.”

At the beginning of this chapter, it was proposed that colonialism functioned as an occasion, as a catalyst for a largely incident-oriented Arabic *qaṣīdah*. In the course of a re-enactment of the *qaṣīdah* tradition, the neoclassical poet had occasion to draw on transposable themes and motifs of that tradition. One motif that Shawqī ingeniously transposes is that of al-Samawʿal, an important element of the mythology of pre-Islamic Arabia. It is with a discussion of the transposition of this motif that this chapter concludes.

Although the legend of al-Samawʿal is multifaceted, it is those aspects of the legend that pertain to constancy, fidelity, and allegiance that Shawqī finds germane to the context of the Great Syrian Revolt. Tradition holds that al-Samawʿal al-Azdī lived in the mid-

⁹¹ Qurʾān 2: 158.

dle of the sixth century in the region of Taymā' in the Arabian Peninsula where his (grand) father had a palace/fortress constructed from black and white stone—hence its sobriquet *al-Ablaq* (piebald). From his fabled palace-fortress al-Samaw'al would offer sanctuary and succor to the fugitive and the destitute. It was, however, his refusal to betray the poet Imru' al-Qays to the Ghassānid King al-Ḥārith b. Abī Shammar that earned him/his legend an enduring niche in the mythological repertoire of the Near East.⁹² Al-Samaw'al, who sacrificed his own son, rather than break his vow to Imru' al-Qays, is an especially apposite motif for the Druzes in the context of the Great Syrian Revolt. The most transparent aspect of the motif is their respective “possession” of a *jabal* (mountain/fortress). In al-Samaw'al's famed ode he maintains:

*Lanā jabalun yaḥtalluhu man nuḡīruhu
man'ūn yaruddu 'l-ṭarfa wa-hwa kalīlu.*

*Rasā aṣluhu tahta 'l-tharā wa-samā bi-hi
ilā 'l-naḡmi fa'ūn lā-yunālu ṭawīlu.*

We have a mountain where those we protect come to dwell,
impregnable, turning back the eye and it a-weary;

Its trunk is anchored beneath the soil, and a branch (of it) soars with
it to the stars, unattainable, tall.⁹³

Shawqī's reference in line 53 to Jabal al-Durūz is as follows:

*La-hum jabalun ašhammu la-hu šū'āfun
mawāridu fī 'l-sahābi 'l-jawni bulqu.*

They have a proud mountain with peaks
Reaching reddish black clouds, piebald.

The reference in the line to the peaks of Jabal al-Durūz as *bulqu* (piebald) alludes to *al-Ablaq*, al-Samaw'al's fabled palace-fortress. Like *al-Ablaq*, moreover, Jabal al-Durūz provided sanctuary for leaders of the Damascus-based nationalist People's Party who sought refuge therein to escape pursuit by French authorities.

Al-Samaw'al's legendary fidelity to Imru' al-Qays, even at the cost of his own son's life, is especially pertinent within the context of the

⁹² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. I (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir lil-Ṭibā'ah wal-Nashr, 1965) 518–19.

⁹³ Trans. Arberry 30.

Great Syrian Revolt. The Druze community had traditionally lived in relative geographic isolation from Damascus and from other centers of Syrian nationalism. In addition, the Druzes represent a religious minority in Syria whose interests, it was assumed, would be better served by an alliance with France. The Great Syrian Revolt, however, would disprove these assumptions. Although it started as a local uprising set off by specific grievances towards French officials, the Revolt soon evolved into a genuine Pan-Syrian anti-colonial movement. French strategists, it turned out, had overestimated the divisive role of ethno/religious differences among the Syrian populace while underestimating the capacity of Syrians to transcend these differences and to join forces in the fight against foreign oppressors. The transposition by Shawqī of this key motif—al-Samaw'al was Jewish—is a cogent metaphor for the strong solidarity between Druzes and Damascenes during the historic Revolt.

As noted above, Shawqī closes the first section of this qaṣīdah (line 10–11) by recalling how, in an earlier qaṣīdah, he had appealed to the Damascenes' sense of pride so that they rose up in revolt against colonial oppression. Shawqī's ostensible crediting his ode with inciting the Revolt might be viewed with some skepticism. This is not to underestimate, however, the role of the qaṣīdah, Shawqī's in particular, in formulating, articulating, and promulgating Arab aspirations for national independence. Shawqī, moreover, could find recompense in the fact that what he had advocated in his "Damascus" ode would presently come to pass. Towards the end of that qaṣīdah, he exhorts the Syrians thus:

Al-mulku an tatalāqaw fī hawā waṭanin
tafarraqat fī-hi ajnāsun wa-adyānu.

Dominion [is achievable if] you unite in the love of a homeland
 In which races and creeds differed.⁹⁴

Such union—which would have seemed improbable few months earlier—was amply demonstrated in the course of the Great Syrian Revolt, a singular historical event which "Nakbat Dimashq" memorializes as it mourns the destruction of Damascus.

⁹⁴ *Al-Shawqīyyāt*, vol. 2, 102.

CHAPTER THREE

MA'RŪF AL-RUṢĀFĪ AND THE POETICS OF ANTI-COLONIALISM

With [al-Ruṣāfī] the role of the poet as a national fighter for his people's cause became well established.

Salma Khadra Jayyusi

Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875–1945) is arguably one of the most paradoxical figures in the history of modern Arabic poetry. The onetime disciple of the Baghdad theologian Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī (1857–1924) would, in his later life, lead a most licentious and dissolute life—al-Ālūsī had been so impressed by the devoutness of his young disciple and by his dedication to theological studies that he gave him the title of al-Ruṣāfī anticipating that he would one day parallel the Sufi master Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 816). Once an Istanbul notable, a personage of rank and means, al-Ruṣāfī would eventually be reduced to scraping a living by running a cigarette stand in Baghdad or to surviving on handouts from well-wishers. Yet the man, whose allegiance to the Ottoman Empire even after its demise and to the idea of Pan-Islamism was unwavering, would be appropriated by the nascent state of Iraq to such an extent that he became the “national poet” of that country. Al-Ruṣāfī's odes extolling the Ottoman Empire would subsequently be memorized (after being edited by various Ministries of Education) by millions of Iraqi school children to instill in them patriotism and love for a state of which the poet was a reluctant citizen. Perhaps most paradoxically from the perspective of this study is that the bard, whose name in Iraq and in much of the Arab world is synonymous with anti-colonialism, should remain virtually unknown to readers as well as (postcolonial) critics outside the Arab world.

This chapter is in part an attempt to introduce this influential literary figure who dominated the Iraqi literary scene in the first half of the twentieth century.¹ This will be undertaken through a close

¹ Al-Ruṣāfī was also called “the Great Poet of Iraq.” Testimonials to the pre-eminent position he occupies in twentieth-century Arab literary and cultural history

analysis of his poignant *qaṣīdah* titled “Ba‘da ’l-Nuzūḥ (After Exile). The *qaṣīdah*—one of few not intended for public declamation—was composed after an embittered al-Ruṣāfi left Baghdad in self-imposed exile. In the course of the discussion of the *qaṣīdah* in question, moreover, al-Ruṣāfi’s endeavors to come to terms with the disintegration of the notion of the Ottoman *waṭan* (Homeland) in the aftermath of World War I are traced along with the consequent loss of identity, individual as well as collective. How this process contributed to evolving an anti-colonial poetics rests to a certain extent on a distinctiveness mediated by the discourses of the *qaṣīdah* tradition. Before proceeding to an analysis of the *qaṣīdah*, however, it is necessary to situate it within the historical context of early twentieth-century Iraq.²

Ma‘rūf ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Ruṣāfi was born in 1875 in Baghdad, then the capital of an Ottoman *vilayet*. The year following al-Ruṣāfi’s birth saw the proclamation of the first Ottoman Constitution (December 23, 1876). In March 1877, a legislative Assembly purporting to represent all Ottoman provinces (*Majlis al-Mab‘ūthān*) was convened. The Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II whose notoriously oppressive rule lasted from 1876 till 1909 soon dissolved this Assembly, however.

include the following examples. “He is considered the undisputed standard-bearer of modernity in poetry on the shores of Tigris.” Ṭāhā al-Rāwī, quoted in Qāsim al-Khaṭṭāṭ, Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Saḥartī, and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Khaḫāji, *Ma‘rūf al-Ruṣāfi Shā‘ir al-‘Arab al-Kabīr: Hayātuhu wa-Shi‘ruhu* (Cairo: Al-Hay‘ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Ta’līf wal-Naṣhr, 1971) 195. “With him the role of the poet as a national fighter for his people’s cause became well established.” Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, vol. I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 193. “We do not believe that anyone from among men of politics, or leading journalists and intellectuals, was able to stand up to British colonialism and the timid stance of the [Iraqi] government towards it, denouncing its injustices and oppression, and calling for revolution against it, like our poet al-Ruṣāfi.” Ra’ūf al-Wā‘iz, *Ma‘rūf al-Ruṣāfi: Hayātuhu wa-Adabuhu al-Siyāsī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, n.d.) 87. The Lebanese journalist Na‘ūm Labkī offered a curious testimony to the preeminence of al-Ruṣāfi. In an essay in a newspaper he published in America, Labkī insisted: “Ma‘rūf al-Ruṣāfi” is a pen-name for a great Arab poet whose domicile is not in Baghdad as he pretends on the pages of newspapers.” Labkī goes on to argue that Iraq’s deep literary and cultural backwardness as well as the mounting suppression of liberties make it impossible for such an outstanding poet to thrive in that country. Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 46–7.

² For the following brief account of the historical background to the *qaṣīdah*, I relied on the above works by al-Khaṭṭāṭ and al-Wā‘iz, which provide extensive information on the life of al-Ruṣāfi. The most extensive work to date on the history of Iraq in the opening decades of the twentieth century is ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥasanī, *Tārīkh al-‘Irāq al-Siyāsī al-Ḥadīth* (Saidon: Maṭba‘at al-‘Irfān, 1948) especially part I, 51–226.

The restoration of the Constitution in 1908 was, therefore, an occasion for much celebration. It was then that al-Ruṣāfī's name burst on the Istanbul scene for the first time with his Arabic rendition of the Ottoman national anthem, which had been authored by the Turkish poet Tawfīq Fikrat (1867–1915). The sense of optimism at a new era of liberty, however, proved short-lived: in April 1909, at the instigation of religious conservatives, disaffected elements in the army staged a mutiny that led to the suspension of the Constitution and the restoration of the unlimited power of the Sultan. Abdul Hamid's rule, however, was about to come to an end; army units stationed in Macedonia were soon able to suppress the mutiny. When the Assembly subsequently reconvened, it deposed Abdul Hamid, replaced him with his heir apparent Muhammad Rashad, now Sultan Muhammad V, and left members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in firm control of the government.

By a mere coincidence al-Ruṣāfī was to witness the mutiny and its subsequent suppression, having been invited earlier to Istanbul to collaborate with one Ahmad Jawdat on publishing an Arabic version of the latter's newspaper *Iqdām*. The events of April 1909 provided a venue for al-Ruṣāfī to demonstrate his enthusiasm for the Unionists whose loyal supporter he remained till the very end—his support for the CUP landed him in jail and almost cost him his life.³

Al-Ruṣāfī eventually returned to Baghdad, the Arabic newspaper project having foundered. In a stopover in Beirut he published the first edition of his *Dīwān*, which appeared in 1910 as *Dīwān al-Ruṣāfī*. He would make another trip to Istanbul; this time to edit the Arabic language newspaper *Sabīl al-Rashād*. During his stay in the Ottoman capital he gave lectures at some high profile schools. In 1912 he was appointed to the Ottoman Assembly whose other members then included Fayṣal I (1883–1933), the future King of Iraq.⁴ The relationship between the two men soured, however, with the outbreak

³ Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 52–5. Al-Ruṣāfī was not an uncritical supporter of the CUP. See al-Khaṭṭāṭ 149–53.

⁴ Al-Ruṣāfī served as deputy for al-Muntafiq, a province that formed a part of the current Basra region in Iraq. Fayṣal was deputy for the region of al-Ḥijāz in the Ottoman Assembly. The acquaintance between the two men dates to that period. See al-Khaṭṭāṭ 138. Al-Ruṣāfī would later serve several times in Iraqi legislative Assemblies and would take an active part in the political debates that raged on in these Assemblies. Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 139–40, 149–55, 159–63. It is, however as a nationalist poet that he is most remembered.

of World War I and the subsequent outbreak of the Arab Revolt on June 10, 1916. Al-Ruṣāfi's support for the CUP, his firm belief in Pan-Islamism, as well as his deep apprehension of European colonial powers, may explain his opposition to the Revolt⁵ and his denunciation (*hijā'*) of al-Sharīf Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (d. 1931), who led the Arab Revolt against the Turks:

*Qālū 'l-sharīfu wa-law ṣahhat sharāfatuhū
lam yanquḍ al-'ahda aw lam yakhfur al-dhimamā.*

They called him al-Sharīf, but if his Sharīfdom were genuine
He would not have broken the covenant nor acted treacherously.⁶

In the aftermath of the war and the subsequent partition of the Ottoman Empire, al-Ruṣāfi found himself in a difficult position. He could not remain in Istanbul where he would endure taunts about the "betrayal" by the Arabs whose loyalty to the Ottoman State he had long proclaimed; he could not return to Baghdad, which was now under direct British military occupation. He thus headed for Damascus where Fayṣal had set up an Arab government. If he had entertained hopes about his trip to Damascus, these were soon dashed as Fayṣal and his associates rebuffed him. Fayṣal had not forgotten al-Ruṣāfi's denunciation of his father al-Sharīf Ḥusayn b. 'Alī,⁷ nor his ill-tempered lampoons of the Arab advocates of reform,⁸ or indeed his deafening silence when the leaders of the Arab Reform move-

⁵ Al-Ruṣāfi was not alone in his opposition to the Arab Revolt. See Hilāl Nājī, *Al-Qawmīyyah wal-Ishirākiyyah fī Shi'r al-Ruṣāfi* (Beirut: n.p., 1959) 55–6. See also al-Khaṭṭāṭ 91.

⁶ In renouncing his allegiance to the Ottoman "Caliphate," al-Sharīf Ḥusayn b. 'Alī was perceived by the poet to have acted treacherously. This is one of four lines denouncing Ḥusayn, which are not included in either edition of the *Dīwān*. These lines once formed part of a *qifāh* (a short poem); in its full form, the piece was composed of 11 lines with the four lines in question forming lines 6–9 of it. The poem in question appears untitled in the 1959 edition of the *Dīwān*. See *Dīwān al-Ruṣāfi*, 6th ed., vol. I (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, 1959) 545. In Muṣṭafā 'Alī's edition, it appears under the title "Al-Lu'm wal-Ḥayā'." See Muṣṭafā 'Alī, ed., *Dīwān al-Ruṣāfi*, vol. 5 (Baghdad: Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfiyyah al-'Ammah, 1986) 432–33—henceforth referred to as *Dīwān*. Both editions note the omission without comment. The four lines are cited in al-Khaṭṭāṭ 90–91. Noting their omission in the *Dīwān*, al-Khaṭṭāṭ maintains that the late Syrian historian Amīn Sa'īd narrated the lines to him from al-Ruṣāfi. Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 91, note 1.

⁷ Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 97–9.

⁸ See the poems "Mā Hākadhā," and "Fī Laylah Nābighiyyah," *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 46–58.

ment were summarily executed by the local Turkish governor Jamāl al-Jazzār.⁹

After several months in Damascus during which al-Ruṣāfī was at a loss as to what to do, he was invited to Jerusalem where he took up a teaching post. He left Damascus towards the end of 1919 full of resentment that finds expression in his embittered qaṣīdah “Ba‘da Burāḥ al-Shām” (After leaving al-Shām).¹⁰ Al-Ruṣāfī’s sojourn in Jerusalem lasted from 1919 until 1921. In Jerusalem he was shown considerable hospitality especially by Rāghib al-Nashāshībī (1881–1951), the then mayor of Jerusalem. While al-Ruṣāfī was still in Jerusalem, Fayṣal’s government was toppled in 1920 by the French. This event, perhaps predictably, did not move al-Ruṣāfī to compose any verse on the occasion—he would later make a reference to it in his qaṣīdah “Maẓāhir al-Ta‘aṣṣub fī ‘Aṣr al-Madaniyyah” (Aspects of Chauvinism in the Age of Civilization) in the course of denouncing the Arab Revolt.¹¹

Another consequential event that did not elicit any reaction from al-Ruṣāfī was the 1920 anti-British uprising in Iraq.¹² The uprising compelled the British occupation to set up a provisional government in Iraq headed by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kaylānī (d. 1927), a Baghdad notable, and proceeded to appoint a king for Iraq. A number of names were proposed as possible candidates for the kingship, the most credible of which were the interim Premier al-Kaylānī and Ṭālib al-Naqīb, another notable from Basra. Britain, however, was predisposed towards Fayṣal; Winston Churchill in the Cairo Conference of March 12, 1921 made this clear. As news began circulating about the imminent appointment of Fayṣal to the kingship, al-Kaylānī and

⁹ Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 85–89.

¹⁰ *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 102–09.

¹¹ *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 97–101. See especially lines 18–21.

¹² Non-Iraqi Arab critics have often been baffled by al-Ruṣāfī’s silence *vis-à-vis* the 1920 anti-British uprising in Iraq while Iraqi critics, especially those sympathetic to the poet (such as Muṣṭafā ‘Alī), have either dodged the issue or offered unsatisfactory explanations. ‘Alī, for example, cites the fact that, at the time of the uprising, al-Ruṣāfī was residing in Jerusalem. See al-Wā‘iz 195–97. Two factors may be cited to account for al-Ruṣāfī’s failure to compose any poetry in support of the uprising: first, his close association with the then mayor of Jerusalem Rāghib al-Nashāshībī who was known for his pro-British leanings and al-Ruṣāfī’s own appeasement of the British when he felt compelled to do so. Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 126–30. Second, the 1920 uprising in Iraq was an entirely Shī‘ī uprising; al-Ruṣāfī, a Sunnī, must have looked upon it with antipathy and suspicion.

al-Naqīb stepped up their canvassing for themselves. To further their own claims, the two decided to publish a newspaper—their choice of editor fell upon al-Ruṣāfi, whom they invited back to Baghdad for this purpose. While preparations were being made for the mouth-piece, al-Naqīb was ambushed by the British at the house of Gertrude Bell (1868–1926) and was sent into exile in India. With that, the newspaper project came to an abrupt end. Soon afterwards, Fayṣal arrived in Baghdad to assume the throne of Iraq—he was crowned on August 23, 1921.

With the arrival of Fayṣal, al-Ruṣāfi's hopes for the regime he was helping set up suddenly faded.¹³ He therefore felt compelled to appease Fayṣal in the hope of garnering an appropriate position in the new regime. His qaṣīdah “Fī Dār al-Naqīb” (In the House of al-Naqīb), in which he praises Fayṣal profusely and dismisses his opponents, is clearly an attempt at such appeasement.¹⁴ These attempts, however, came to no issue: al-Ruṣāfi was offered an insignificant post as deputy head of the Committee on Translation at the Ministry of Education.¹⁵ Al-Ruṣāfi's consternation grew as he watched lesser personages assume high-ranking positions. Towards the end of 1922, he left for Beirut vowing not to return to Iraq. It was there that he composed the qaṣīdah that is the subject of the present chapter.¹⁶ The publishing of the qaṣīdah appears to have caused a stir in the Arab world which finds expression in a moving qaṣīdah composed in response to al-Ruṣāfi's by the Tunisian poet ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kirbākah, whose title

¹³ Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 109–11.

¹⁴ *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 233–34.

¹⁵ Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 111.

¹⁶ “Ba‘da ‘l-Nuzūḥ” is not the first “exilic” qaṣīdah al-Ruṣāfi composed; following his first journey to Istanbul in 1908, he composed a similarly titled poem, “Ba‘da ‘l-Bayn” (After Separation). Unlike “Ba‘da ‘l-Nuzūḥ” with its embittered tone and its overt political anti-colonial address, “Ba‘da ‘l-Bayn” is mildly reproachful of Baghdad for the hostile reaction to his progressive reformist ideas, especially those that address the status of women in Iraqi society, provoked in some conservative quarters. *Dīwān*, vol. 2, 130–36. See also al-Khaṭṭāṭ 260–61. The date of the composition of “Ba‘da ‘l-Nuzūḥ” is a subject of controversy: a prefatory note to the 1959 edition of the *Dīwān* states that al-Ruṣāfi composed the qaṣīdah “in Beirut in the year 1922, having left Baghdad intending not to return to Iraq.” See *Dīwān al-Ruṣāfi*, 6th ed., vol. I (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, 1959) 426. Muṣṭafā ‘Alī, however, takes issue with the date and maintains, instead, that al-Ruṣāfi composed the poem “in Beirut in the year 1923 following his return from Istanbul, because when he left Iraq in the year 1922, he traveled to Istanbul by land . . . then he traveled from Istanbul by sea and he landed in Beirut where he composed this poem.” *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 137, note.

“Ma'rūf al-'Azīmah” (The one whose resolve is known) puns on the poet's name.¹⁷

- “After Exile”¹⁸ [6]
1. They are the homelands that I draw near while they drive
me away
Like adversities that I test while they afflict me.
 2. Long have I complained against an age I endure;
Will I ever find a freeborn man to redress my grievance?
 3. It is as if, when I dwelled in my country,
I dwelled in an uninhabited home.
 4. Till when shall I remain an exile in [foreign] lands?
The vicissitudes of time with canine teeth making me bleed!¹⁹
 5. At times [I am] in desolate deserts on a heavily laden she-camel;
At other times on the seas aboard a freighted ship.
 6. Many a time have the nights drowned me in their calamities
But I swam through them with the dolphin of my resolve.
 7. I am the son of Tigris by which my verse is known
Even though its water does not quench my thirst.
 8. I was indeed its warbling nightingale, singing for it
The most melodious songs in the most melodious tunes.
 9. Where boughs, wreathed with flowers, carried me
Among the blossoms of orchards.
 10. I was in it chanting, enraptured
Savoring the fragrance of the sweet basil,
 11. When suddenly a crow alighted in it, which left me cheerless
And whose cawing portending separation was distressing to me.
 12. And then I became a quarry for the crow;
I did not become a quarry for falcons!
 13. And so I flew away not concerned
With what narcissus and jonquil I left behind.
 14. Woe to Baghdad from what the nights will relate
In the chronicles about it and me.
 15. Surely with a flood of tears I have watered its pasture grounds
On the sides of a valley that does not water me.
 16. I did not reckon when I wept in it for my kinsmen
That I wept for those who would cause me to weep.
 17. Is it part of virtue that the ignorant man is held in high esteem
there,
While I dwell in degradation's grip?

¹⁷ Al-Khattāt 133–114.

¹⁸ “*Al-Nuzūh*” in the title of the qaṣīdah (Ba'da al-Nuzūh) conveys the idea of distance, remove, and remoteness from one's abode. For the Arabic text see Appendix 6. All translations from the Arabic are my own unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹ For stylistic purposes, I have rendered the Arabic *dahr* in this line as “time” and in line 2 above as “age.”

18. Or that the ignoble man there can hold his head high
While I endure a life to the point of having my nose cut off?
19. By Allah this has never been one of my traits
Nor is enduring ignominy [part] of my creed.
20. I am not one to sacrifice my honor to live off it
Even if I had to live off Zaqqūm and Ghislīn.
21. The harshness of my life in the heights of my honor made me
dispense
With what I see of the comfort of low living.
22. I made a vow to myself; the days are my witness,
Not to acquiesce in the inequity of Sultans.
23. Nor to befriend an impostor even if he be a king,
Nor to associate with the brethren of Satans.
24. As for life, it is an inconstant thing,
Man lives in it till a determined time.
25. It is all the same to me whether death comes—overpowering
[one]—
Before twenty or after ninety.
26. To me age is counted not by [the number of] years
But by [the number of] lofty deeds that adorn it.
27. Sixty years of life I would [gladly] exchange
For sixty lofty deeds, even for less than that [number].
28. For the longest of lives are indeed the ones that have
The most numerous noble deeds—of all types.
29. Truly the ignoble man is buried even before his death
While the noble man, even if he has perished, is not buried.
30. Nor is he who has lived in ignominy to be envied [such a life]
Nor is the one who dies in honor short-changed.
31. I did not reckon that Baghdad would refuse me
One day the water of its Tigris, and cause me to go thirsty.
32. Until a lowly pack of men with the morals of wolves
Took over [control] in it.
33. Nothing has harmed me except that today I am from among Arabs
Who feel no indignation over a matter that does not please me.
34. By Allah my due would never have thus been lost
If I were from among the ‘Ajam with reddish beards.
35. Why should I remain in Baghdad enduring
Degradation amidst affront!
36. To Beirut I shall make my affiliation,
Perhaps Beirut will henceforth grant me sanctuary.
37. Hopes I have pinned on Baghdad have been dashed
Will they be dashed too if they seek refuge in the shadow of
Sinnīn?
38. Would that Syria,²⁰ its cloud heavy with rain,
Suffice me in place of Iraq and its valley.

²⁰ Syria then included present-day Lebanon.

39. The days had in al-Shām²¹ some time ago committed
A sin, which the nights then wiped out in Palestine.
40. In which al-Nashāshībī²² would come to my aid
And I was a bosom friend of al-Sakākīnī.²³
41. And in which Ibn Jabr²⁴ would not fail
To console the stranger, the downhearted.
42. If in Jerusalem I had [many] illustrious companions
How many more blessed and noble of spirit there are in Beirut!²⁵

²¹ Al-Shām traditionally refers to the region that at present comprises most of Syria, Lebanon, and parts of Jordan. It can also refer colloquially to the city of Damascus; it is the latter denotation that the poet appears to refer to.

²² Is'āf al-Nashāshībī of Jerusalem to whom al-Ruṣāfī dedicated a piece titled "Al-Nashāshībī." *Dīwān*, vol. 5, 363–64.

²³ The Palestinian writer Khalīl al-Sakākīnī (1878–1953).

²⁴ 'Ādil Jabr (d. 1953), a Palestinian academic to whom al-Ruṣāfī dedicated a piece titled "'Ādil Jabr." *Dīwān*, vol. 5, 365.

²⁵ "Ba'da 'l-Nuzūh," *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 137–142. The life and corpus of al-Ruṣāfī have been the subject of a substantial number of works in Arabic; these, however, have been largely biographical in their bent. This qaṣīdah, moreover, has received scant analytical attention even in those works that attempt to transcend the biographical focus so characteristic of much twentieth-century Arab literary criticism. A number of factors can be cited to account for this critical circumvention: these include the "unfavorable" references the poem makes to Iraq, as well as the fact that it contains an implicit denunciation of Fayṣal I and of the Hashimites who reigned in Iraq until 1958 and who continue to rule in Jordan to this day. It is important to note in this respect that the antipathy towards the *ancien régime* in Iraq was almost exclusively limited to the Regent 'Abd al-Ilāh and to the much reviled veteran Premier Nūrī al-Sa'īd both of whom were perceived as agents of British colonialism; it did not extend to the late Fayṣal I whose forbearance earned him the sobriquet of "Mu'āwīyat Banī Hāshim" and whose dedication to building an Iraqi nation won him the affection of large sections of the Iraqi populace. In addition to the above factors, the critical preference prevalent until recently for verse declamatory in tone has also contributed to the dearth of studies that take this qaṣīdah as their focal point—this qaṣīdah is one of few poems by al-Ruṣāfī clearly not intended for public delivery.

This is not to suggest, however, that Arab critics have failed to recognize the aesthetic merit of the qaṣīdah. To the contrary, most references to it are highly laudatory: Maḥmūd al-'Abṭāh refers to it as "among the finest of the poetry [al-Ruṣāfī] composed in Beirut." Maḥmūd al-'Abṭāh, *Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī: Ḥayātuhu wa-Āthāruhu wa-Mawāqifuhu* (Baghdad: Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfiyyah al-'Ammah, 1992) 103; Ra'ūf al-Wā'iz describes it as "among his most exquisite political and psychological poems." Al-Wā'iz 80; Qāsim al-Khaṭṭāṭ refers to it as "his magnificent poem." Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 112. The favorable critical appraisal, however, did not lead to detailed analyses of the poem; such works as exist make only passing references to the qaṣīdah often in conjunction with citing individual lines or sections of it. These include the following: Badawī Ṭabānah, *Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī: Dirāsah Adabiyah li-Shā'ir al-'Irāq wa-Bi'atīhi al-Siyāsiyyah wal-Ijtimā'iyyah*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjilū al-Miṣriyyah, 1957) 65, 138–39; Muṣṭafā 'Alī, *Adab al-Ruṣāfī: Naqd wa-Dirāsah* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1947) 80, 89–90, 107; *Muḥāḍarāt 'an Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī* (N.p.: Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyyah, 1954) 87; al-'Abṭāh 103; Al-Ḥusaynī 'Abd al-Majīd

The *qaṣīdah* opens with an invocation of *al-mawāṭin* (the homelands). The choice of the plural noun is striking in a number of respects; especially noteworthy is the emphasis lent to *al-mawāṭin* through the use of the pronominal *hiya* (they are). This emphasis makes the plurality of the homelands all the more conspicuous. *Mawāṭin* derives from the trilateral root *w-ṭ-n*. This root yields two nouns both of which are widely used: *waṭan* (pl. *awṭān*) and *mawṭin* (pl. *mawāṭin*). The root itself conveys the idea of (settling down in) a dwelling, an abode. *Waṭan* has been used almost exclusively to denote the above significations; by contrast, *mawṭin* has a broader denotative range. In addition to the above significations, it is used to denote “a battle-field,” as in the Qurʾānic verse: *la-qad naṣarakumu ʾl-Lāhu fī mawāṭina kathīratin* (Assuredly God did help you in many battle-fields).²⁶ More broadly, it may refer to the location where something is to be encountered: two of the more common usages are *mawāṭin al-dāf* (weak spots) and *mawāṭin al-ʿillah* (diseased spots). The use, therefore, of

Hāshim, *Maʾrūf al-Ruṣāfi: Shāʾir al-Hurriyyah wal-ʿUrūbah* (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah lil-Tibāʿah wal-Nashr, n.d.) 14; Ibrāhīm al-Kaylānī, *Maʾrūf al-Ruṣāfi: Dirāsah Adabīyyah Naḥṣiyyah wa-ʾIṭimāʾiyyah* (Damascus: Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-ʿArab, 1978) 33–4; ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Sharārah, *Al-Ruṣāfi* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1964) 40–1; Aḥmad Maṭlūb, *Al-Ruṣāfi: Arāʾuhu al-Lughawīyyah wal-Naqdiyyah* (Cairo: Maʿhad al-Buḥūth wal-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyyah, 1970) 48–50, 84; al-Khaṭṭāṭ 101, 112, 272, 339; al-Wāʾiz 80–1. Other works that deal with the life and corpus of al-Ruṣāfi include: Al-Shaykh Jalāl al-Ḥanafī, *Al-Ruṣāfi fī Awjāhihi wa-Ḥaḍīdhi* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿĀnī, 1962); ʾIlyiyyā al-Hāwī, *Maʾrūf al-Ruṣāfi: Al-Thāʾir wal-Shāʾir*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1978).

Despite his position as one of Iraq’s greatest twentieth-century poets, al-Ruṣāfi remains largely unstudied and untranslated in the West, although a few critical works contain some general discussion of the poet and his oeuvre. These include the following: Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, vol. I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 188–93; M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) 55–62; S. Somekh, “The Neo-classical Arabic Poets,” *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 49 and *passim*. A very modest number of al-Ruṣāfi’s poems have been translated into English. These are the following: “Naḥnu wal-Ḥālah al-ʿĀlamiyyah” (We and the World Situation), trans. A. J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1965) 165–69; “Poem to al-Raihani,” “The Abyss of Death,” trans. Issa Boullata and Christopher Middleton, *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) 95–6. A recent bibliographic study includes entries for translations of seven other poems: “At a Game of Football,” “Fairest,” “The Negative Truth about Me,” “The Past and Us,” “Sleepers, Wake!” “To the Fairest,” and “Untitled Poem” [urging the Arabs to rise]. Salih Altoma, “Iraq’s Modern Arabic Literature in English Translation: A Preliminary Bibliography,” *Modern Iraqi Literature in English Translation*, ed. Saadi A. Simawe, spec. issue of *Arab Studies Quarterly* 19. 4 (1997): 167–68.

²⁶ Qurʾān 9: 25, trans. Yusuf Ali.

mawāṭin in preference to *awṭān* with its expanded expressive range makes it possible to associate it with largely negative circumstances set forth in this introductory thematic unit (lines 1–6).²⁷ The use of *mawāṭin*, furthermore, appears to be deliberate; al-Ruṣāfī was certainly conscious of the notion of *waṭan*; his *ḥamāsīyyah* (exhortatory poem) composed upon the entry of the Ottoman Empire in World War I (October 29, 1914) alongside Germany is an instance of such consciousness:

*Yā qawmu inna l-ʿidā qad ḥājamu ʿl-waṭanā
fa-nḏū ʿl-ṣawārīma wa-ḥmū ʿl-ahla wal-sakanā.*

O [my] kinsmen, the enemies have attacked the homeland
So unsheathe your swords, and defend your kin and your abode.²⁸

As this line indicates, al-Ruṣāfī's *waṭan* was not Iraq but the Ottoman state in its totality, with Iraq forming only a part of it. In other words, the notion of Iraq as *waṭan* was subordinated to an overriding Pan-Ottomanism based on shared religion and forming the foundation of an *Ummah*, a distinctly Islamic community. The notion of the Ottoman state as *waṭan* is emphasized in its repetition in the *qaṣīdah* quoted above. Iraq, to be sure, is mentioned in that *qaṣīdah*:

*Inna ʿl-ʿIrāqa la-ʿamru ʿl-Lāhi masbaʿatun
tawāṭhabu ʿl-usdu fihī min hunā wa-hunā.*

By Allah Iraq is a lions' lair
Lions are leaping in it from here and there.²⁹

This reference to Iraq, however, does not amount to equating it with *waṭan*, nor does it propose Iraq as a substitute for the Ottoman *waṭan*.³⁰ The above references were prompted by reports that the

²⁷ This usage is partly dictated by metrical exigencies.

²⁸ See "Al-Waṭan wal-Jihād," *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 311–19.

²⁹ *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 317.

³⁰ No attempt is undertaken in this chapter to chart a comprehensive trajectory of the evolution of the conception of *waṭan* in the corpus of al-Ruṣāfī; the discussion is limited to the concept as it is elaborated in this *qaṣīdah*. The *qaṣīdah* "Al-Waṭan wal-Jihād" cited above marks what can be considered a defining moment in al-Ruṣāfī's *waṭan*-related thinking; another *qaṣīdah* that arguably marks another turning point in the poet's thought is "Ilā Abnā'i ʿl-Waṭan" which he delivered at a reception held on July 11, 1923 in his honor following his return from Beirut. In this *qaṣīdah*, *al-waṭan al-ʿazīz* (the dear homeland) in line 29 is a reference to Iraq. See "Al-Waṭan wal-Jihād," *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 149–56. Henceforth, al-Ruṣāfī would not leave Iraq (except for brief visits to neighboring countries) despite the continued neglect and the abject poverty, which he endured for the rest of his life.

British army was on the verge of conquering Iraq, reports that appeared to have been most distressing to the poet who hailed from the Ottoman provinces of Iraq. The references were intended principally to exhort the Iraqi Ottoman subjects to resist the British assault and to safeguard the territorial integrity of the Caliphate. Al-Ruṣāfi's exhortations to the inhabitants of Iraq did little, however, to alter the course of the war; soon afterwards, British troops overran the Basra and Baghdad *vilayets*. Not long after that, the Ottoman Empire was soundly defeated. The Ottoman territories were subsequently divided between the victors, Britain and France, with Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan forming part of England's possessions.

When the dust of World War I had settled, al-Ruṣāfi found himself under a new and, to him, an alien political order. An examination of his verse of this turbulent period indicates that the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire as a political and communal entity resulted in a corresponding disintegration of al-Ruṣāfi's notion of *waṭan*. There is no indication, moreover, that the demise of the Ottoman *waṭan* was followed by a smooth transference of the idea of *waṭan* to the newly created state of Iraq.

The Ottoman *waṭan* (Homeland) disintegrated into a plethora of *mawāṭin* (homelands) that initially denoted geographic rather than emotive entities. These *mawāṭin*, which included Syria under Fayṣal's short-lived state and later Iraq, again under Fayṣal, possessed none of the emotive qualities of the *waṭan* so movingly recalled in al-Ruṣāfi's *ḥamāsiyyah*. To the poet these are, to a certain extent, antithetical to that of *waṭan*. The latter conjures up associations of proximity, familiarity, and closeness; the former, by contrast, tend to banish him. This is implied in the Imperfect *tuqṣī* (to drive away) in the opening line with its connotations of distance, remove, and remoteness. It is *al-mawāṭin* as a foe that makes it possible for the poet to compare them through the simile in the second hemistich of the line to the entirely maleficent *al-ḥawādith* (the adversities). The proposed identity of *al-mawāṭin* with *al-ḥawādith*, it should be noted, is reinforced on the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels.

The relationship of the speaker to the two key terms of *al-mawāṭin* and *al-ḥawādith* is paradoxical; there is inherent irony in this relationship which finds expression in the *ṭibāq* (antithesis) between *udnīhā* (I draw them near to me)/*tuqṣīnī* (they drive me away) in the first hemistich of line 1 and, equally striking, in the root play of *ablūhā* (I test them)/*tublīnī* (they afflict me). The relationship between the

speaker and *al-mawāṭin/al-ḥawādith* is essentially injurious and oppositional. This is the ground for his *shakwā* (complaint) contained in the first hemistich of line 2 against both terms—now subsumed in an overarching *dahr*, which combines the notion of temporality with that of fate.

The dreariness indicated in the opening line through a high concentration of long vowel sounds is echoed in a phrase not infrequently encountered in the qaṣīdah tradition: the emphatic particle *qad* followed by the onomatopoetic *tāla* (has been long). The exasperated, oft-voiced *shakwā* uttered by the complainant in the first hemistich of the second line and his uncertain exclamation as to whether he will ever encounter a freeborn man (*hurran*) who will redress his grievance is common in that tradition. The motif of *shakwā* against *al-dahr*, it should be recalled, is especially common in periods of transition with their high potential for dislocation and disruption.³¹

The task, as it were, the opening line undertakes is to effect a correspondence between *al-mawāṭin* and *al-ḥawādith*. The first hemistich of the line introduces the notion of *al-mawāṭin*; in the second, this notion is modified through its identification with *al-ḥawādith*. The conception of *al-ḥawādith* (also *al-aḥdāth*) as hostile, malignant, and unresponsive is well established in the Arabic literary tradition; its association with injury, blight, and loss is perhaps best illustrated in the opening verse of an elegy by al-Mutanabbī (915–68) for his grandmother:

Alā lā wī 'l-aḥdātha ḥamdan wa-lā dhammā
fa-mā baṣṣuhā jahlan wa-lā kaffuhā ḥilmā.

I neither praise nor reproach the vicissitudes of time
For its misdeed is not out of ignorance nor its desisting out of
wisdom.³²

Having established a connection in the opening line between *al-mawāṭin* and *al-ḥawādith*, it becomes possible thereby to forge a link between *al-mawāṭin* of the opening line and *dahr* of line 2. In much

³¹ Al-Ruṣāfī devotes several qaṣīdahs to *al-dahr* motif: “Al-Dahr wal-Ḥaḳīqah,” “Al-Dahr,” “Min Muḍḥikāti 'l-Dahr,” and “Yā Dahr.” *Dīwān*, vol. 2, 109–29. The scope of this study precludes a discussion of these poems, or a fuller reconstruction of al-Ruṣāfī's conceptualization of *al-dahr*.

³² 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, vol. 4 (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, n.d.) 226.

of the remainder of the *qaṣīdah* the speaker sets forth his complaint against this all-encompassing *dahr*.

The representation of *dahr* (pl. *adhur* or *duhūr*) in the Arabo-Islamic tradition is somewhat ambivalent. In a well-documented *Hadīth* the Prophet Muhammad enjoins his following not to confound *al-dahr*: “*fa-inna ’l-Lāha huwa ’l-dahrū*” (for Allah Himself is Fate).³³ This seeming identification between Allah and *al-dahr* has been variously explained by acquitting the latter for the calamities that befall mankind; the author of such calamities being Allah rather than *al-dahr*. A similar acquittal of *al-dahr* is found in the Qur’ān in which non-believers’ claim that it is *al-dahr* that annihilates them is dismissed: *wa-qālū mā hiya illā ḥayātuna ’l-dunyā namūtu wa-nahyā wa-mā yuhlikunā illa ’l-dahrū* (And they say: “What is there but our life in this world? We shall die and we live, and nothing but time can destroy us”).³⁴ Other Qur’ānic references portray *al-dahr* in an uninvolved state such as the following verse in which *al-dahr* signifies primarily (a prolonged period of) time: *hal atā ‘alā ’l-insāni ḥīnun mina ’l-dahri lam yakun shay’an madhkūrā* (Has there not been over Man a long period of time, when he was Nothing—not even mentioned).³⁵ The *qaṣīdah* tradition, moreover, contains instances that show *al-dahr* in a somewhat favorable light: in the following verse *al-dahr* is used in the sense of “the good old days” fondly and nostalgically recalled by the famed Umayyad ‘Udhri poet Jamīl Ibn Ma‘mar,

*Alā layta ayyāma ’l-ṣafā’i jadīdu
wa-dahrān tawallā yā Buthayna ya‘ūdu.*

Would that the days of repose anew
and a time now past, O Buthayna, return.³⁶

Nonetheless a preponderance of literary references to *al-dahr* cast it in an unmistakably adversarial position *vis-à-vis* man: it is often unfeeling, flighty, vicious, and cruel.

The unusually high occurrence of references to *al-dahr* in the corpora of ‘Abbāsīd poets is significant in the context of the *qaṣīdah*

³³ Al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī bi-Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 13 (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, 1959) 184–85.

³⁴ Qur’ān 45: 24, trans. Yusuf Ali.

³⁵ Qur’ān 76: 1, trans. Yusuf Ali.

³⁶ Jamīl Ibn Ma‘mar, *Dīwān Jamīl*, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār Miṣr lil-Ṭibā‘ah, 1967) 61.

under discussion. Neoclassical Arab poets such as al-Ruṣāfī, Aḥmad Shawqī (1868–1932), and Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī (d. 1997), it should be recalled, looked primarily to 'Abbāsīd poets, at whose hands the qaṣīdah had undergone significant transformation, for poetic models. In this respect, it is safe to assume that al-Mutanabbī had exerted the greatest influence on later poets. In the qaṣīdah under discussion, echoes of al-Mutanabbī are unmistakable. The motif of *shakwā* as extrapolated in al-Ruṣāfī in the second line bears a certain resemblance to its treatment in al-Mutanabbī who, like al-Ruṣāfī, had his ambitions thwarted by a ruler—in the case of al-Mutanabbī it was Kāfūr al-Ikshīdī, the ruler of Egypt (d. 968)—and was consequently forced to flee that country. Al-Ruṣāfī's exasperated call in the second hemistich of line 2 echoes a similar call by al-Mutanabbī following his estrangement from Kāfūr:

*Amā fī hādhihi 'l-dunyā karīmū
tazūlu bihi 'anī 'l-qalbi 'l-humūmū!*

Is there in this world a noble man
Through whom cares are removed from the heart!³⁷

The opening two lines of al-Ruṣāfī's qaṣīdah are notable in that, semantically and structurally, they form a self-contained couplet within the first thematic unit. Their non-specificity, their references to a plurality of *mawāṭin*, as well as their invoking of fate function to elevate a mundane situation so that it assumes "cosmological" dimensions.

While the opening couplet alerts the reader that the qaṣīdah involves a *shakwā* against *al-mawāṭin/al-dahr*, the seriousness of this *shakwā* is indicated not merely by the lengthy endurance of *qad tāla* but also by the repetition of *shakwā*: line 2 opens with the theme of *shakwā* and closes with it. Discernible in the remaining four lines of the first unit (lines 3–6) is a progression from the general to the particular; a more detailed statement of the complainant's unhappiness is given in these lines.

Line 3 provides the first indication of relatedness between the speaker and the as yet unidentified Baghdad. This is effected through the possessive suffix in *bilādī* (my country). This relatedness, however, is a feeble one, as is suggested by the diction: *bilād* has none of the subtlety of *waṭan*. Moreover, it is undermined in the following

³⁷ Al-Barqūqī, vol. 4, 282. The line forms the opening of an invective at Kāfūr.

line through the plurality of *buldān* (countries), the possessive suffix having been dropped. At the same time, the simile in the second hemistich that relates to *baytīn ghayri maskūnī* (uninhabited house), continues the notion of *mawāṭin* introduced in the opening line, not as sites of solace and succor but of abandonment and emptiness. This notion of *awṭān* is further intensified through the use of the Perfect *nazaltu*. The verb derives from the trilateral root /n-z-l/; it denotes “to alight in a place,” “to dwell.” This is apparently the primary signification intended in this line. The root, however, also connotes “to afflict,” “to befall” in relation to a misfortune—whence the verbal noun *nāzilah* (mishap, calamity, blow of fate). On the one hand, this latter signification seems to pervade line 3 through the repetition of the verb in key positions: it closes the first hemistich and opens the second. On the other hand, the repetition functions to bind together both hemistichs of the verse. At the semantic level, the line shows affinities with the respective hemistich of the opening line through the notion of *balwā/balāʾ* (affliction). It also ties in with the following respective hemistich (4B) through *nawāʾib* (vicissitudes).

The most important contribution, however, that line 4 makes to the unfolding intent of the *qaṣīdah* is that it identifies the nature of the complainant’s injury, the source of his discontent: he is *mughtarīb*. Adjectivally referred to, the plight derives from the trilateral root *gh-r-b* whose core signification pertains to being distant, removed in space, removed from that which is familiar. From this root are derived *al-ghurbah*, and *al-ighṭirāb*, which are often used interchangeably. The most common verbal derivations from this root are *tagharraba* (Form V), *ighṭaraba* (Form VIII) both of which signify “to become a stranger,” and *gharraba* (Form II), “to cause someone to suffer *ghurbah*.” The lexicon *Lisān al-ʿArab* gives the following pertinent example: *qad gharrabahu ʾl-dahr* (fate caused him to become a stranger); it further gives the following definition of *gharīb*, commonly rendered as “stranger”: *baʿīd ʿan waṭanihi* (distant from his homeland).³⁸

As the example from *Lisān al-ʿArab* cited above indicates, *ghurbah* as an experience endured is causally linked to *dahr*. Time is seen as progenitor of such *ghurbah*; the latter occurs within the context of an oppressive time. This relatedness is underlined through clear links between lines 4 and 2. These include the repetition of *dahr*, the deno-

³⁸ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1956), item *gh-r-b*.

tative correspondence between *ḥattā matā* (till when) with which the first hemistich of line 4 opens and *qad ṭāla* (long has been) at the beginning of the first hemistich of line 2, the further correspondence between the interrogative clauses *ḥattā matā* which opens the first hemistich of line 4 and *amā uṣādīfu* (will I ever find) with which the second hemistich of line 2 opens, both implying exasperation at a drawn-out adversity.

Although *ghurbah* is construed primarily through the agency of an oppressive *dahr*, for this *ghurbah* to be fully expressed the agency itself needs to be elaborated. This elaboration is effected through the metaphor in the second hemistich of line 4 in which the term used to describe the calamities of fate (*nawā'ib al-dahr*) is *anyāb*, the canine teeth of a rapacious beast. This is a fairly straightforward metaphor whose grounds pertain to the violence and destructiveness associated with a savage beast. Such imagery of *dahr* is of course not original with al-Ruṣāfī; its use here recalls a verse by the 11th century poet Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Bistī:

ʿAḍḍanā ʿl-dahru bi-nābih
layta mā ḥalla bi-nā bih.

Time has bitten us with its canine tooth
Would that which has befallen us befall it!³⁹

Moreover, its use in reference to *ghurbah* appears somewhat inflated and therefore ineffectual. Nevertheless, to the extent that it indicates deliberate recourse to tradition-based poetic devices, it proffers clues to an evolving poetics whose treatment of the essentially modern phenomenon of colonial displacement is at the same time and to varying extents mediated through discourses of antiquity. The point that needs to be emphasized in this respect is that there is a certain deliberateness to this mediation; it is to be seen first and foremost as an act of “cultural recall.” The dislocation, displacement, and the distancing in geographical terms are countered at the affective level; their maleficent impact is diminished, though not fully eliminated, through contiguity to the classical heritage. The association between *ghurbah* and *nawā'ib al-dahr*, moreover, is underscored in the structure of line 4: *mughtarib* (an exile) concludes the first hemistich of line

³⁹ Al-Khūrī Būlus ʿAwwād, *Al-ʿAqd al-Badīʿ fī Fann al-Badīʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-Mawāsīm, 2000) 44.

4 while *nawāʾib al-dahr* initiates the second hemistich with nothing to separate the two.

Line 5 proffers instances of the ravages of time and of the consequences of *ghurbah* upon the speaker. It allusively refers to that quintessential conventional motif of the classical *qaṣīdah*: the *raḥīl* (desert journey). What is striking about this line in the context of an evolving poetics is the way in which the sea journey is integrated within the conventional *raḥīl*. This integration is effected primarily through parallelism—at the phonological, syntactical, and semantic levels.

Of particular note in this respect are the participles with which both hemistichs of the line conclude. These participles refer to the vehicles of the respective journeys. There is, however, indirectness implicit in such references, an indirectness that is in line with the precepts of the classical *qaṣīdah*. Consonant with these precepts the *nāqah* (she-camel), the quintessential mount of the desert journey, is referred to epithetically as *mūqarah*.⁴⁰ *Mūqarah* denotes primarily the heavy load a mount carries while on the journey. Although associated with the mount of the pre-Islamic *raḥīl*, the camel was in fact still the predominant method of transport in Iraq at the time the *qaṣīdah* was composed. One account has it that when al-Ruṣāfi left Baghdad bound for Istanbul, he took a land route that ran through Aleppo before reaching the Ottoman capital; he traveled by sea, however, on his return journey from Istanbul to Beirut.⁴¹ If we take *mūqarah* to refer to his mount on his overland journey to Istanbul, *mashḥūn* (from the trilateral root *sh-ḥ-n*) signifies primarily a fully freighted boat. The identity of *mūqarah* and *mashḥūn* is effected through the epithetic references to both which highlight the weightiness of the burden both endure in preference to the myriad *nāqah*-related epithets which allude to that mount's speed, sleekness, and so forth, that are at the disposal of a poet.

In addition to the exigencies of the rhyme scheme, the use of *mūqarah* accords most readily with the most obvious property of the

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the motif of the *nāqah*, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, "Name and Epithet: The Philology and Semiotics of Animal Nomenclature in Early Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 1986): 89–124; *Muhammad and the Golden Bough: Reconstructing Arabian Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996) 50, 58–60.

⁴¹ *Dīwān*, vol. 3, 137, note. 'Alī cites al-Ruṣāfi's *qaṣīdah* "Fī Ṭarīqī ilā Ḥalab" (*Dīwān*, vol. 3, 185–87) to corroborate his account.

ship. This is especially expedient given the relative dearth of corresponding epithetic references to the sea vessel in the classical tradition.⁴² *Mūqarah*, moreover, functions in a mood-setting capacity: the identity between camel and rider elaborated with respect to the classical qaṣīdah is mirrored here; a heavily-laden mount functions to externalize a rider's *humūm* (the cares made familiar in the qaṣīdah tradition) consequent upon *al-ightirāb*.

The marine references in the second hemistich of line 5 leads to the next dominant metaphor: that of the nights as a sea of *maṣā'ib* (calamities) that drown the speaker. Although this image occupies a key position (it forms the opening of the line that concludes the first thematic unit of the qaṣīdah), it nevertheless proves ineffectual. It is essentially a tired, transparent image; the key position it occupies makes its deficiency all the more glaring. It is perhaps more interesting to note the way the image is anticipated in the preceding hemistich through *ṭawāmī* that epithetically refers to "seas," or "oceans." The significations of the substantive *ṭammah*, moreover, include "a great misfortune," "a calamity." *Ṭawāmī*, therefore, subtly expresses that which is stated explicitly in the first hemistich of line 6: the toll that *maṣā'ib* take on the speaker.

The first reference to liquids in the qaṣīdah occurs in line 4; the liquid in question is blood rather than the life-giving water, or the blood of the enemy whose shedding possesses, in the qaṣīdah tradition, a revitalizing property for the community. The shed blood is, paradoxically, that of the speaker himself. Moreover, reference to water in line 5 (*al-ṭawāmī*) is subsumed within the vicissitudes of time motif in the preceding line; this tends to negate its life-sustaining property. The destructive property of water is pursued in the line that concludes the thematic unit (line 6): the water encountered there is drowning; it is a destructive force at the disposal of the ominous *layālī* (the nights).

The drowning metaphor introduced in the first hemistich of line 6 is extended in the second hemistich, where the speaker's fortitude proves to be somewhat effective. This is partly due to the novelty of the term *dulfīn* (dolphin) as well as to the element of surprise involved in its use. The image is apparently inspired by anecdotes

⁴² For a related article see Robert McKinney, "Ibn al-Rūmī's Contribution to the 'Nautical *Raḥīl*' Tradition: the Expression of Meaning Through Form and Structure," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 29 (1998): 95–132.

in which dolphins come to the rescue of drowning men. There is no reason to assume, however, that such a perception was widespread in early twentieth-century Iraq; it is in fact safe to assume that the majority of al-Ruṣāfi's contemporaries would have been unfamiliar with this marine mammal—an unfamiliarity that is not surprising in a nearly completely landlocked country such as Iraq. Compounding this unfamiliarity is the dearth of references to the dolphin in the classical Arabic literary corpus.⁴³ It is possible that al-Ruṣāfi's dolphin is that of al-Buḥturī, for example, transposed to a dismal situation; the possibility that al-Ruṣāfi may have seen a dolphin or heard anecdotes about it during his sea voyage from Istanbul to Beirut cannot be ruled out of course. What is pertinent from the perspective of the *qaṣīdah*, however, is that the image functions to “de-familiarize” the experience of exile/the exilic journey, to lay emphasis on the “unusualness” of such experience, to create an impression of a world removed from common experience. It is this distancing from that which is familiar that forms the essence of the *ghurbah* bemoaned in this unit of the *qaṣīdah*.

Despite the vicissitudes set forth in lines 1–6, the speaker declares in the second hemistich of line 6 that he can “hold his own,” as it were, *vis-à-vis* an oppressive time. This hemistich, furthermore, marks a transition signaled by the conjunction *fa-*, which imparts a sense of conclusion. This hemistich contrasts in its tone with the preceding lines; up until this point in the *qaṣīdah*, the speaker has been reduced to a passive recipient of the blows of time, confining himself to setting these forth and indulging in *shakwā*. Beginning with this hemistich, however, the tide begins to turn; discernible in it is a tone of the *fakhr* made familiar in the classical *qaṣīdah*. This boastfulness is continued in line 7 in the emphatic *āna bnu Dījlāh* (I am the son of Tigris) that introduces the second thematic unit of the *qaṣīdah* (lines 7–13).

⁴³ One such occurrence is in a panegyric by al-Buḥturī to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mutawakkil. See Ḥasan Kāmil al-Širāfi, ed., *Dīwān al-Buḥturī*, vol. 4 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif bi-Miṣr, 1963) 2419. For an analysis of this *qaṣīdah*, see Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) 38–47. In this panegyric, the dolphin occurs in an exquisite description of the Caliph's artificial lake and the surrounding vegetation; the image of the dolphin in the poem is intended to convey the “exotic” character of the Caliph's lake/gardens. It should be emphasized that, unlike al-Ruṣāfi's, the dolphin in al-Buḥturī's *qaṣīdah* constitutes a part of a blissful setting.

The main function of this unit is to invoke a lost order and to set forth how the disorder of the present came about. The extended metaphor that is the basis of this narrative unit proves to be key to this function. The boastfulness with which this section begins is not uncommon in classical Arabic poetry. Perhaps the best-known Arabic verse, which begins with the formulaic *āna bnu*, is that by the *Mukhadram* poet Suḥaym Ibn Wathīl al-Riyāḥī made infamous by al-Ḥajjāj al-Thaqafī (d. 714), the Umayyad governor of Iraq who, in a bid to subdue a contemptuous Iraqi populace, declaimed:

*Anā bnu jallā wa-ṭallā'u 'l-thanāyā
matā aḍā'u 'l-ʿimāmata taʿrifūnī.*

I am the son of the unveiled, the prominent one
When I remove the turban you will know me.⁴⁴

Moreover, this hemistich echoes a verse by the *Mukhadram* poet Sālim Ibn Dārah,

*Anā bnu Dārata mashhūran bi-hā nasabī
wa-hal bi-Dārata yā lal-nāsi min ʿarī!*

I am the son of Dārah, my lineage is known for her [or for it]
Is there in Dārah, O people, any dishonor [to be found]!⁴⁵

The use of *āna bnu* lends force to the affirmative stance the poet adopts at this turning point in the qaṣīdah. The fact that he identifies himself (for the first time in the poem) as “son of Tigris” is intriguing in a number of respects. The introduction of Tigris marks a progression from the non-specificity of *mawāṭin* (homelands), *bilādī* (my

⁴⁴ Al-Aṣmaʿī, *Al-Aṣmāʿiyāt*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr and ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi-Miṣr, 1964) 17. This verse has also been rendered as follows: “I am the son of splendor, who scales the heights/when I remove the turban, you will know me.” See al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Marwānīd Restoration*, vol. xxii, trans. Everett K. Rowson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989) 13.

⁴⁵ Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim Khafājī refers to this hemistich as *min qawli 'l-shāʿirī 'l-qadīm* (from the saying of the ancient poet). Al-Khaṭṭāṭ 339. See ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghādādī, *Khiṣānat al-Adab*, ed., ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. I (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī lil-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr, 1967) 468. Sālim Ibn Dārah was slain during the reign of the Caliph ʿUthmān on account of his biting lampoons. As the following variant reading given in Abū Tammām’s *Ḥamāsah* [al-Khaṭīb al-Ṭabrīzī, vol. I, 206] indicates, the identity and indeed the gender of Dārah are uncertain:

Ana bnu Dārata maʿrūfan la-hu nasabī

I am the son of Dārah, my lineage is known for him.

country), *buldān* (countries) in lines 1, 3, 4, respectively to the specificity of Dījlāh as the locus of his filiation. The symbolic significance of the river Tigris resides in the way it connotes a wellspring of autochthony; it is in a sense the counterpart of Najd for the Bedouin poet.⁴⁶

The reference to Tigris/the poet as the son of Tigris is significant within the context of the modern *qaṣīdah*; the infrequency of references to rivers in Bedouin and bedouinized poetry is not surprising given the dearth of rivers in the Peninsula. However, the river occupies a prominent position in twentieth-century Arabic poetry as part of a distinct poetics that sought to construct an anti-colonial national (as opposed to pan-Arab) identity. It is also at this period that poets begin to be identified with certain rivers—the best-known case of such identification is that of the Egyptian poet Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1871–1932) known as *shā‘ir al-Nīl* (the bard of the Nile). The identification of verse and river is echoed in the first hemistich of line 7 with its declarative *ma‘rūfan bihā adabī* (by which my verse is known). In addition to punning on the name of the poet “Ma‘rūf,” the hemistich is striking in its use of *adabī* (my verse, my literary output) in preference to the customary *ḥasab* (noble descent) or *nasab* (lineage). This is particularly noticeable in view of the largely genealogical *anā bnū* (I am the son of) with which the line begins.⁴⁷ It should be noted in this respect that the *qaṣīdah* under discussion served as a model for one of most celebrated odes in neoclassical Arabic poetry: “*Yā Dījlata ‘l-khayr*” (O Bounteous Tigris) by the Iraqi poet Muḥammad Mahdī al-Jawāhirī (1900–1997), a late contemporary of al-Ruṣāfi.⁴⁸

The motif of the river, thus, does not amount to a “departure” in the *qaṣīdah* tradition. The most noticeable feature with respect

⁴⁶ Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1993) 120–22, 128.

⁴⁷ It is to be noted that the (Arab) genealogy of al-Ruṣāfi is a subject of dispute. See Ṭabānah 35–6; Muṣṭafā ‘Alī, *Adab al-Ruṣāfi* 55–61. Placing emphasis on *adab* rather than on *ḥasab* or *nasab*, however, is not unknown in the classical tradition; the obvious example in this connection is the ‘Abbāsīd poet al-Mutanabbī. In addition to “letters”, “verse,” the substantive *adab* denotes “morals,” “decorum,” “decency.” These connotative possibilities can be seen to anticipate the speaker’s holding fast to his principles in the face of temptation and privation; the second hemistich of line 7 refers to the poet’s thirst (privation), his access to the water of the Tigris having been denied.

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Mahdī al-Jawāhirī, *Barīd al-‘Awdah* (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-Ma‘ārif, 1969) 133–70.

to this occurrence is that it forms a part of an ongoing process of re/negotiation: on one level Dijlah is ushered into the symbolic realm of modern poetry; on another level, this “new” realm is tradition-bound as is manifest in the conscious reworking of the verse by Ibn Dārah cited above. This integrative process, moreover, is continued in the second hemistich of line 7 with its invocation of the theme of *al-zamaʿ* (thirst) that is an integral part of the hardship of the classical *raḥīl*.

The reference in the first hemistich of line 7 to *adab* qua verse/literature leads into the nightingale metaphor that forms the basis of the remainder of this unit (lines 8–13). The main thematic concern of these lines is the evoking of a lost order and setting forth how the disorder of the present came about. This is phrased above all in a syntax that relies heavily on verbal clauses in the Perfect. Although this unit has an overall structural coherence, thematic subdivisions marking a clear temporal progression can nevertheless be discerned as follows:

Line 7 represents a statement of the present situation,
 Lines 8–9 invoke past order/bliss,
 Lines 10–12 continue the invoking of past order but also signal the
 onset of disorder,
 Line 13 contains the poet’s response to the disorder.

Lines 8–9 are thematically connected as they portray a pre-colonial era of order, harmony, and tranquility; an idyllic state in a pristine past. This couplet is based on the *bulbul* (nightingale) metaphor. It is important to note the difference in the symbolism of the nightingale in the *qaṣīdah* tradition as opposed to its treatment in other, especially, classical and post-classical Western traditions. In Western traditions, the nightingale is associated with melancholy, mournfulness, and the night. In the *qaṣīdah* tradition, by contrast, the bird most closely associated with mournfulness and melancholy is the “dove” rather than the nightingale. There is a touch of melancholy in the call of the nightingale as is indicated in the elative *ashjā* (most melodious); indeed the adjectival *shajjīy* (melodious) is most often used to describe the song of the nightingale. Nonetheless, this melancholy is not as pronounced in the call of the nightingale as it is in the cooing of the dove. Unlike the Western nightingale, the Arabic *bulbul*, also known as *ʿandalīb*, is often encountered in a state of bliss, nor is it particularly thought of as a nocturnal bird. What the two

traditions do have in common is their respective associating of the nightingale with love.

Another correspondence between the two traditions relates to the occurrences of the nightingale as metaphor for the poet. This metaphor is contained in line 8 in which al-Ruṣāfi declares himself to have been *bulbuluhā 'l-ghirrīd* (the warbling nightingale of Tigris). The focus of the metaphor is the melodious song of the nightingale/poet as well as the gentleness, sweetness of the bird/poet living in a state of infinite bliss. This state is further augmented through the garden imagery of the following line (line 9)—the imagery of the nightingale flitting peaceably from bough to bough, the beauty of its song supplemented by the beauty of flowers decking the boughs. The overall image that emerges from this couplet is that of a *firdaws* (paradise)—peaceable, harmonious, exquisite, exuberant, its serenity broken only by the melodious song of the nightingale. The choice of flora and fauna in this couplet (*bulbul* “nightingale,” *ghuṣūn* “boughs,” *ward* “flowers,” *azhār* “blossoms,” *basātīn* “orchards”) presents an idealized Iraq prior to the onset of colonialism. It should be noted that such representation of the pre-colonial era, which bore little resemblance to poverty and famine-stricken Iraq at the turn of the twentieth century, is not particular to al-Ruṣāfi; in fact, it was quite prevalent among anti-colonial writers in many parts of the formerly colonized world.

The relationship between this subsection of the *qaṣīdah* and the preceding section is antithetical. This is perhaps best illustrated in the participle *ma'rūfan*. In addition to punning on the name of the poet, it connotes being known, noted, familiar; it suggests acquaintance, closeness, and recognizability. The former state of the poet contrasts sharply with his present state described in line 4 in another participle as *mughtarib* (an exile); this participle, however, further connotes being “a stranger,” “an alien,” “an outsider.” The contrast is pursued in line 9 wherein the nightingale/poet is borne by flower-decked boughs implying former contentment, ease, and bliss. By contrast, in his present state the poet is often found either on a *mūqarah* connoting the hardship of the desert journey or on a *mashhūn* connoting hazard (especially of drowning)—in sum, a life fraught with hardship and dangers. The use in line 8 of the emphatic *qad* in conjunction with the substantive verb *kuntu* (I was indeed) can be seen as conferring double emphasis: on the one hand, it emphatically states that the poet did occupy such a position in the past *vis-à-vis* Tigris (that of her warbling, blithe nightingale); on the other hand,

it can be understood as conceding unambiguously that the period of bliss is now an irrecoverable past.

Line 9 is concerned primarily with delineating the serenity and repose that permeate Tigris/the Garden. This is further reinforced through the partial internal rhyme in the first hemistich between *aqallatnī* (boughs “carried me”) and *mukallalatan* (wreathed) and through the frequency of long vowels. The overriding syntactical feature of these two lines furthers continuity through a structure based on a main clause in line 8 of which *kāna* is the main verb with line 9 forming a subordinate clause.

Although referred to above as forming part of the next subsection of this thematic unit (lines 10–12), line 10 may be seen to belong equally to the preceding section. According to this schema, the line functions as a restatement of the preceding two lines. Semantically, the first hemistich of the line provides a succinct summation of the poet/nightingale’s former state of *ṭarab* (rapture) as elaborated in line 8 while the second hemistich recalls the orchard, the locale that nurtured that state of *ṭarab*. Line 10 thus does not introduce any new ideational element; it does, however, introduce a timely transition to the following subsection proper (lines 11–12). The temporal term *baynamā* (while) with which line 10 begins, moreover, requires a correlative; the verbal sentence occupying the first hemistich of line 11 and introduced by the adverbial particle provides such correlative. The two lines (10–11) are thus united in simultaneity of action. This construction is significant to the extent that it commonly indicates an element of surprise, a suddenness that is apt to make a misfortune all the more distressing to the affected party. This sudden and distressing occurrence is set forth in lines 11 and 12, which are informed by the *ghurāb* metaphor.

The force of the second thematic unit derives from the way it sets the idyllic world of the nightingale against that of the *ghurāb*. The associations of the *ghurāb* in the Arabic literary traditions inspire the dominant imagery of line 11. *Ghurāb*, from the triliteral root *gh-r-b*, denotes a crow or a raven—no clear distinction is usually made in Arabic between the two species of these carrion birds. It is to be noted that the associations of the raven inside and outside the qaṣīdah tradition have been largely negative.⁴⁹ These associations coalesce

⁴⁹ See, for example, Al-Jāhiz, *Al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. II, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1965) 313–15.

around two related themes: death and separation.⁵⁰ In *qaṣīdahs* depicting battles, ravens—together with vultures and hyenas—are frequently encountered feeding on the corpses of the slain. Their assumed predilection for devouring corpses is probably at the heart of the way they came to be regarded as ominous creatures capable of foretelling death. Their “raven black” plumage no doubt contributed to their being viewed as such—given the mostly negative associations of the color black.

The association of the raven with death has been prevalent in the Arabic tradition; equally prevalent is its association with separation. To the extent that death marks separation, the two themes are related. More often, however, the separation portended by the appearance of the raven is the physical separation from kinsmen brought about by the departure of the tribe. The departure of the tribe of the beloved is feelingly portrayed in the *nasīb* section of many a classical *qaṣīdah*. It is primarily this latter association of the raven that is invoked in line 11. The theme of separation is implicit in the verb *yūhīshu* whose trilateral root *w-ḥ-sh* denotes melancholy, solitude and desertion—feelings often invoked by the abode/encampment whose inhabitants have departed. What is referred to implicitly in the first hemistich, however, is made explicit in the second; this is effected through the reference to *al-bayn*, a substantive commonly suffixed to *ghurāb* that denotes (of/heralding) parting, separation.⁵¹

A striking feature of these two lines (11, 12) is the transposition of the motif of *ghurāb al-bayn* as well as the concomitant context of the motif. Thus the pre-Islamic departure of the tribe (to be differentiated from the *rahīl* section of the *qaṣīdah*, the journey the poet undertakes) and the resultant separation from kinfolk are transposed in al-Ruṣāfi to the modern phenomenon of political exile (voluntary or otherwise) that has been set in motion since the early twentieth century with the advent of colonialism in the region. In

⁵⁰ In the Qurʾānic account of the slaying of Abel by Cain (5: 34), the raven appears at the scene of the crime in an instructive role: *fa-baʿatha ʾl-Lāhu ghurāban yabḥathu fī-ʾl arḍi li-yuriyahu kayfa yuwāriya sawʾata akhīhi. Qāla ya-waylatī aʿjaztu an akūna mithla hādihā ʾl-ghurābi fa-uwāriya sawʾata akhī fa-aṣbaḥa minā ʾl-nādimīn.* (Then God sent a raven, who scratched the ground to show him [Cain] how to hide the shame [the body] of his brother. “Woe is me!” said he; was I not even able to be as this raven, and to hide the shame of my brother?” Then he became full of regrets.) Trans. Yusuf Ali. See Al-Jāhīz, *Al-Hayawān*, vol. III, 410–11.

⁵¹ Al-Jāhīz, *Al-Hayawān*, vol. III, 431, 438–9.

al-Ruṣāfī the symbolic freight of this motif is transferred to Fayṣal who stood at the head of a regime installed by British Imperialism. The *ghurāb* as implicit metaphor for Fayṣal casts the Hashimite monarch in the abject role of the raven: a harbinger of displacement, exile, of *ghurbah*.⁵² The causal link between the appearance of *ghurāb* (i.e., the arrival of Fayṣal in Iraq)⁵³ in line 11 and the exile of the poet is echoed at the semantic level: the *ghurāb* of the first hemistich of line 11 harks back to, and shares a common trilateral root with, *mughtarib* (an exile) of the first hemistich of line 4, describing the poet in exile.

In line 12, al-Ruṣāfī clearly continues to draw on the classical *qaṣīdah* tradition by invoking yet another key motif from that tradition: the *ṭard* (the hunt).⁵⁴ In the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah* this motif often occurs twice. It occurs in the *raḥīl* section in the course of describing the hardship the poet's mount endures along the way. In this scene, the poet often describes a wild beast being hounded by predators, its frantic efforts to defend itself and evade its pursuer(s). The poet then concludes by likening his own mount to the beleaguered beast. The hunt scene of the *raḥīl* section often implies a tragic element to the encounter between hunter and hunted. By contrast, the "main" section of the *qaṣīdah* not infrequently features yet another hunt scene; in this case, however, it is of the heroic type undertaken by the poet himself. It is a hunt that bears testimony to the poet's prowess as well as to his willingness to provide for others.

There are two points to be made with respect to al-Ruṣāfī's transposition of the hunt motif to a contemporary context. What is significant to the forging of an anti-colonial poetics is not so much the mere deployment of a classical motif; rather, it is the transformation or reworking of the motif in such a way as to make it plausibly applicable to a new context. In al-Ruṣāfī, the hunt scene exhibits

⁵² It should be noted that *ghurāb* as metaphor for personages is not unknown in the *qaṣīdah* tradition; Kāfūr, for example, figures as such in some of al-Mutanabbī's invectives. The ground of such metaphorical usage, however, is often the perceived resemblance in color between the black plumaged raven and the object of the lampoon.

⁵³ At the root level, moreover, *ghurāb* alludes to the fact that Fayṣal was *gharīb*, i.e., not a native of Iraq. Around the time of his arrival in Iraq, the local opposition to Fayṣal was proclaiming a policy of "Iraq for the Iraqis."

⁵⁴ For an exposition of the hunt motif in classical Arabic literature, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, "The Hunt in Classical Arabic Poetry: From Mukhaḍḍam *Qaṣīdah* to Umayyad *Tardīyyah*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 30 (1999): 107–27.

none of the heroic elements found in its pre-Islamic prototype. For a nightingale to become *ṭarīd* (a quarry)⁵⁵ of *shāhīn* (falcon)⁵⁶ would be the “natural” order: the quarry may succeed in evading its pursuer in which case there is a heroic element to the hunt. Often, however, it falls prey to the fierceness of that predator in which case the encounter is tinged with a tragic element. In either case the hunt involves a “natural” course of events.

Assigning to the raven the role of predator is somewhat problematic. There is seemingly nothing tragic or heroic about being chased by it; rather, the whole affair represents a state of disorder that borders on the comical. To say this is not to suggest an innocuous encounter; to the contrary, the proverbial *ḍaḥīkun kal-bukā* (laughter that resembles crying)⁵⁷ is apropos in this respect; there is a deep poignancy behind the ironic stance that the speaker adopts toward this predicament.

An intriguing aspect of the transposition of the pre-Islamic hunt motif relates to the recounting of the hunt scene. In the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah* the auditors are customarily briefed about the hunt through the poet’s own account—the quarry is often referred to in the third person. In al-Ruṣāfī, however, the quarry/nightingale relates the scene in which it is a reluctant participant as well as reports its own response to the predicament. With this response (line 13), the second thematic unit achieves a sense of conclusion, as indicated by the conjunction with which the line begins. This line marks a transition implied in the Perfect *taraktu* (from the triliteral root *t-r-k* which denotes “to abandon,” “to leave behind”). In its immediate context,

⁵⁵ *Ṭarīd* is used metaphorically in the *qaṣīdah* tradition as in the following instances by al-Shanfarā and al-Mutanabbī respectively:

Ṭarīdu jināyātīn tayāsama laḥmahu
‘aqrātuhu lī-ayyihā ḥumma awwalū.

I am an outcast hunted by crimes that draw lots for his flesh;

The winner gets the first choice from his carcass.

Trans. S. Stetkevych. See Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) 147.

Ṭarīdatu ḍahrīn sāqahā fa-radadtahā
‘alā ‘l-dāni bil-khaṭṭī wal-dahrū rāghīmū.

(It was) an exile driven away by destiny, then you restored it to the (true) religion with Khaṭṭī lances in destiny’s despite.

Trans. A. J. Arberry. See al-Barqūqī, vol. 4, 97. See also Arberry 84–5.

⁵⁶ The *shāhīn* symbolic tradition largely overlaps with that of falcons, vultures, and eagles.

⁵⁷ As the poet al-Mutanabbī famously phrased it. Al-Barqūqī, vol. 1, 167.

taraktu refers to the narcissus and the jonquil (that is, the poems) the poet nonchalantly leaves behind in Baghdad. At a deeper level, the act of leaving implies a withdrawal from a state that is malevolent as it is debasing to the poet; such withdrawal constitutes the denotative crux of *nuzūh* of the title of the *qaṣīdah*.

The remainder of the *qaṣīdah* can be roughly divided into two sections each of which begins by invoking Baghdad (14–30, 31–42). The seventeen lines that form the midsection—the longest of the poem's three thematic units—present an elaboration as well as a rejection by the poet of the current state of disorder. This midsection, moreover, can itself be subdivided into 3 subsections that are closely connected as follows:

Lines 14–18 invoke the key concept of *murū'ah* (virtue, honor, probity) and note that the state, which the poet is compelled to endure, is in contravention of the precepts of *murū'ah*.

Lines 19–23 signal an uncompromising rejection of this state of disorder. This is effected primarily through negative constructions.

Lines 24–30 are taken up by reflection on the larger issues of life and death; a note of resignation pervades these lines.

“Woe to Baghdad,” begins the first subsection of this unit. Instead of venting his frustration at the raven/Fayṣal as the party culpable for his torment, the poet thus directs his feelings of anger and frustration at Baghdad. With respect to the poetic tradition of which the *qaṣīdah* forms a belated part, this is the motif that signals the end of the *nasīb* and the beginning of *raḥīl*. Such schema obtains in the most representative specimens of this tradition. These include the celebrated *Lāmiyyat al-‘Arab* attributed to the pre-Islamic poet al-Shanfarā,⁵⁸ they also include such equally famed *qaṣīdahs* as *Sīmiyyat* of al-Buḥturī (821–79),⁵⁹ and *Lāmiyyat al-‘Ajam* of al-Ṭughrā’ī (d. 1120).⁶⁰ In this respect we are not concerned primarily with the *raḥīl* section of the classical *qaṣīdah*, which, regardless of its provenance, came to form a convention, a transitional section between the melancholy of the *nasīb* and the fulfillment of the climactic section of the

⁵⁸ S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals* 119–25, 143–57.

⁵⁹ Al-Ṣayrafī, vol. 2, 1152–62. An English translation of the *qaṣīdah* is in Arberry 72–81.

⁶⁰ ‘Alī Jawād al-Ṭāhir, *Lāmiyyat al-Ṭughrā’ī* (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-‘Ānī, 1962) 9–18.

qaṣīdah. In al-Shanfarā, the poet's estrangement from his kinfolk (*banī ummī*) leads him to disavow them and to substitute others for them—these latter turn out to be wild beasts! What seems at a superficial level peculiar about al-Shanfarā's qaṣīdah is that it imparts no overt feelings of loss subsequently experienced following his separation from his kinfolk; to the contrary, the qaṣīdah seems (again at a superficial level), suffused with an intense sense of relief, exhilaration, of contentment at being in the company of “kindred spirits.” This seeming lack of (be)longing to a specific *waṭan* and *qawm* (kinsmen) might be inferred from the most famous line of the *Lāmiyyah*:

*Wa-fī 'l-arḍi man'an lil-karīmi 'ani 'l-adhā
wa-fīhā li-man khāfa 'l-qilā muta'azzalu.*

In the land there is for the noble-hearted
a place remote from harm;
For him who fears hatred,
a refuge.⁶¹

A medieval qaṣīdah that would perhaps be most profitably compared to al-Ruṣāfī's is a panegyric by al-Mutanabbī to Kāfūr al-Ikshīdī which begins with an exclamation the poet addresses to himself: *Kāfū bi-ka dā'an an tarā 'l-mawta shāfiyā* (Such is your affliction that you see death as a cure).⁶² The relevance of this qaṣīdah lies in the way it chronicles the stages of al-Mutanabbī's passage from the court of Sayf al-Dawlah (916–967) in Aleppo, from whom the poet had become estranged, to that of Kāfūr in Egypt where he hoped he would be recompensed and would occupy a position befitting him. Structurally as well as thematically, al-Mutanabbī's qaṣīdah can be viewed as a representative specimen of the classical exilic qaṣīdah. It is, therefore, not surprising that al-Ruṣāfī's qaṣīdah bears some resemblance to it. Both poets, for instance, devote a substantial part of their respective qaṣīdahs to bemoaning their underrated condition and conclude by holding out the hope of recompense elsewhere. It is the dissimilarity, however, between al-Ruṣāfī's and the classical tradition (of which al-Mutanabbī's qaṣīdah is a striking instance) that is most instructive. In al-Mutanabbī, the patron is indispensable; he

⁶¹ Trans. S. Stetkevych. S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals* 143.

⁶² Al-Barqūqī, vol. 4, 417. For an important study of this qaṣīdah see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002) 212–223.

takes up the place of the homeland. In another panegyric to Kāfūr the poet allows,

*Wa-mā kuntu law-lā anta illā muhājīran
la-hū kulla yawmin baldatum wa-ṣiḥābu.*

Were it not for you, I would assuredly be a migrant
Every day in a [different] town and with [different] companions.⁶³

In al-Ruṣāfī, significantly, the city as *waṭan* displaces the patron of the classical qaṣīdah as the crux around which the poet's affectivity coalesces.⁶⁴ The implications this carries with respect to the forging of an anti-colonial poetics as well as to the then inchoate Iraqi nationalism are significant.

A substantial part of al-Mutanabbī's above-mentioned qaṣīdah is suffused with feelings of betrayal of the poet by Sayf al-Dawlah. Similar sentiments find expression in al-Ruṣāfī, especially in lines 14–16. These feelings, however, are not directed towards Fayṣal—from whom he was similarly estranged; rather, they are directed at Baghdad.⁶⁵ The city's failure to accord the poet the position and protection that are his "right" (line 34) renders it iniquitous, cruel, and even despotic. These inequities are symptomatic of a state of aberration that preoccupies the poet in much of the rest of the qaṣīdah.

This subsection (lines 14–18) elaborates a set of expectations connected to the notion of *waṭan* rather than to a patron and further imparts an overwhelming sense of betrayal relative to these expectations. This is effected through a temporal frame of reference that commences with the futuristic line 14 to be immediately followed by

⁶³ Al-Barqūqī, vol. 1, 327.

⁶⁴ In an article on the neoclassical Circassian Egyptian poet Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1839–1904), Yaseen Noorani writes:

Neoclassical poetry removes the emphasis from the *mamdūh*, the one-man source of social dispensation, to the poet himself and his readers, who are now to bring about the utopian community through their own efforts. Successful purification of the self, both individual and social, is no longer the symbolic ability to praise the *mamdūh* and thereby join his society, but is now the transformative political action required to create a redeemed society that takes the place of the *mamdūh*.

Yaseen Noorani, "The Rebellious Subject: Political Self-Fashioning in Arabic and Persian Poetry of the Colonial Period," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 29 (1998): 30

⁶⁵ This should be qualified: Fayṣal never became al-Ruṣāfī's patron despite the latter's attempts to secure such patronage.

a shift into the past (lines 15–16) and then to the present (lines 17–18). A striking feature of this subsection, however, is the series of contrasts that form the structural basis of lines 15–18.

Although the “woe” with which line 14 begins is often used in a denunciatory sense, its use here is largely exclamatory; it amounts to an expression of concern over what *al-layālī* (the nights) would relate about poet and city. That *al-layālī* can be a remorseless foe is made abundantly clear in the opening section of the qaṣīdah: line 6 contains a reference to repeated attempts by *al-layālī* to drown the speaker. The “woe” then ought to be seen as a warning that the account to be given would be severely chastising towards Baghdad. *Dawāwīn* (pl. of *dīwān*) can in this context refer to “registers,” as in the dictum *al-shiʿr dīwān al-ʿArab* (Poetry is the register of the Arabs), in which case it accords adeptly with the implicit metaphor of *al-layālī* as a “scribe.” It can also denote volumes of poetry in which case it provides a link to the preceding section through the reference in line 7 to *adabī* (my verse, my literary output).

The first of the series of contrasts invokes two related classical topoi: the weeping at the *aṭlāl* (the effaced encampments) as well as the *istisqāʿ* (invoking of rain) the recipient of which are often the *aṭlāl* themselves. In the qaṣīdah tradition, these two topoi often appear consecutively: the shedding of tears at the *aṭlāl* in remembrance of their former inhabitants, especially the poet’s beloved, is often followed by *istisqāʿ*. These two topoi, however, do not always appear in the same poem. Whereas weeping at the abodes customarily occurs at the outset of the qaṣīdah, the invoking of the rain may occur at any part including the concluding section. In al-Ruṣāfī we observe a coalescing of two related though differentiable topoi into one with no future-oriented invocation being issued. The fact that the poet is disenchanted with Baghdad precludes such possibility—nor would it make sense to issue such invocation for a city through which the Tigris runs. Yet the essential *istisqāʿ* motif is discernible; it is made all the more intense through uniting it with the weeping topos. Unlike the classical poet who often contends himself with the supplicatory call for the rain to fall on the deserted abodes, al-Ruṣāfī does “water” Baghdad’s environs. What is more, he does so with his own tears. That is why Baghdad’s failure to reciprocate, its willingness to keep the poet in thirst, is all the more distressing to him.

The imagery of shed tears is carried over into the following line (line 16). The poet’s sense of betrayal, disbelief, and bewilderment

finds expression in the incredulous *mā kuntu aḥsibu* (I did not reckon) with which the line begins.

With line 17, al-Ruṣāfī invokes the cardinal concept of *murūʿah* (virtue, honor). His stratagem, as it were, is to invoke this concept and then to contend that the prevalent circumstance, which he is compelled to endure, is antithetical to this fundamental concept, thereby in need of re-ordering. Remonstrating that men ignorant of virtue (lacking in honor) are accorded high rank in Baghdad, he the poet, whose *adab* is well known, acknowledged in the city, is forced to “dwell in degradation’s grip.” This situation, moreover, makes it possible for the ignoble (*al-ṭurṭūr*) to thrive in Baghdad, with “nose” held high, whereas he the poet is made to endure a harsh and humbling life. This harshness is expressed through the violent imagery in the second hemistich of line 18 of the poet having (part of) his nose cut off (*jadʿa ʿimnū*) as a mark of public disgrace.⁶⁶ This image, moreover, is prepared for contrastively in the preceding hemistich where *al-ṭurṭūr*, unlike the hapless poet, is permitted to live in Baghdad *dhā shamamīn* (i.e., “his nose held high”). The use of *shamam* in conjunction with *ʿimn* (nose) hints at pride, even haughtiness. It is in this sense that the *Mukhaḍram* poet Kaʿb Ibn Zuhayr uses the phrase in his famed ode commonly known as “Bānat Suʿād,”

Shummu ʿl-ʿarānīni abṭālun labūsuhumu
mīn naḣī Dāwūda fī ʿl-ḣayyā sarābīlu.

Haughty high-nosed champions,
who on battle day
Don shirts
of David’s weave.⁶⁷

By contrast, the state which al-Ruṣāfī endures is marked by an extreme level of humility, want, and hardship. Moreover, the prospect

⁶⁶ The figurative use of the nose mutilation is not uncommon in the classical tradition, as in the following line from an elegy by the Umayyad/ʿAbbāsīd poet al-Husayn b. Muṭayr:

Wa-lammā maḍā Maʿnun maḍā ʿl-jūdu fa-nqaḍā
wa-aṣbaḣa ʿimnū ʿl-makārīmī ajdaʿā.

When Maʿnun departed nobility departed, and so it expired
And the nose of noble deeds became cut off.

Al-Marzūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah*, ed., Aḥmad Amīn and Abd al-Salām Hārūn, vol. 2 (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Taʿlīf wal-Tarjamah wal-Nashr, 1951) 937.

⁶⁷ Trans. S. Stetkevych. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, “Pre-Islamic Panegyric and the Poetics of Redemption,” *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 30.

of the poet being subjected to physical violence is also implied in the mutilation imagery. This imagery is all the more striking given that the faculty of smell contributes to defining the poet's former state of bliss (line 10): *astanshiqu 'l-tība min nafhi 'l-riyāḥīnī* (savoring the fragrance of the sweet basil).

The paradoxical situation in which the ignoble leads a life of ease while the poet endures a life of hardship finds an equivalent at the level of sound:

*Wa-an ya'īsha biha 'l-turṭuru dhā shamamīn
wa-an us'am bi-'ayshī jad'a 'imīnī?*

Or that the ignoble man there can hold his head high
While I endure a life to the point of having my nose cut off? (Line 18)

From a phonological perspective, the first hemistich of the line is smooth, flowing, uninterrupted. This contrasts sharply with the second hemistich which describes the condition of the poet: the onset of the hemistich is interrupted by three glottal stops occurring in succession on the first two words; the flow is further impeded by the fact that both words end with *sukūn* (quiescence). The impeded flow reaches a climactic level with the final part of the hemistich, which is composed of *jad'a 'imīnī*. The juxtaposition of two occurrences of the consonant *'ayn* separated only by a short vowel renders this concluding phrase a veritable phonological riddle. Regardless of whether or not this indicates a conscious attempt on the part of the poet to match sound with sense, it is clear that the sound structure contributes to the overall signification of the line.

The following subsection (lines 19–23) puts forth a sustained and firm rejection of the abject state, depicted especially in lines 17–18, to which the poet is subjected. This repudiation of what the poet perceives to be a state of disorder is based upon a structure that relies heavily on negative constructions: four out of the five lines that make up this subsection involve statements of negation, a rejection of that which contravenes the precepts of *murū'ah*. The first two lines of this subsection (19–20) are closely linked, as are the last two lines (22–23). The colonial situation described in lines 17–18 is seen to be antithetical to the precepts of *murū'ah*. The first hemistich of line 19 signals an emphatic rejection of this contrariety, a rejection made explicit through the negative clause *mā kāna hādḥā* (this has not been). Subsumed within the demonstrative is the predicament set forth in lines 17–18. The negation is lent further emphasis through the use

of *tallāhi* (by Allah) in preference to the more prosaic *wallāhi* as well as through the use of *qaṭṭu* (never). *Hādhā*, *i.e.*, the scheme described, is here dismissed as not belonging to, not forming a part of the poet's *shiyam* (pl. of *shīmah*) whose denotations include dispositions, moral codes, and character. Submission to such a state runs counter to the poet's own sense of virtue and honor.

He would not tolerate this situation on another account: the allusion to *munkar* (line 19). In theological terms, *al-munkar* denotes that which is "evil"; pious Muslims are described in the Qur'ān as those who take it upon themselves to forbid such evil: *yanhawana 'ani 'l-munkar* (they forbid evil).⁶⁸ This "theological" interpretation is lent plausibility owing to the subsequent invoking of *dīn* (religion, creed), which forms the rhyme word of the line. The disorder is thus phrased in doctrinal terms as amounting to a state of *munkar* for which Fayṣal is ultimately accountable.

Line 20 begins the process of citing instances of the poet's *shiyam* foremost among which is his refusal to compromise his honor for gain, even if he is reduced to a sustenance of *Zaqqūm* (fruit of a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-fire) and *Ghislīn* (pus). The references in the second hemistich of this line to the unmistakably Qur'ānic terms of *Zaqqūm*⁶⁹ and *Ghislīn* link this hemistich to the corresponding preceding hemistich of line 19 with its references to *al-nakrā'* and *dīn*. The initial consonant in *Ghislīn* also provides an obvious link to the following line that begins with *aghnat* (enriched) denoting the genuine richness derived from unblemished honor. Line 21 is linked to the preceding line through the substantive *sharaf* (honor), which is often used interchangeably with *'ird*; the line can therefore be seen as a restatement of line 20. The use of *sharaf*, moreover, underscores the address of line 21 through its reiteration of the significance of safeguarding one's honor.

With the concluding couplet of this subsection (lines 22–23), the *qaṣīdah* begins to take on more overt political resonance. In the first

⁶⁸ Qur'ān 3: 104, 114.

⁶⁹ The Qur'ānic account of *Zaqqūm* (37: 62–66) is that it is "*shajaratum takhrījū fī aṣli 'l-jahīm. Ta'uhā ka-annahu ru'ūsū 'l-shayāṭīn*," (a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-fire. The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils). Trans. Yusuf Ali. Other Qur'ānic references to the tree of *Zaqqūm* include: 44: 43–46; 56: 52–53. *Ghislīn* figures in Qur'ānic descriptions of the punishment meted to a sinner: "*fa-laysa la-hu 'l-yawma hāhunā ḥamīm. Wa-lā ta'āmun illā min Ghislīn*" (So no friend hath he here this day. Nor hath he any food except the corruption from the washing of wounds). Qur'ān: 69: 35–36. Trans. Yusuf Ali.

hemistich of line 22, we learn of a “covenant” the poet makes with himself, the terms of which are spelled out in the following three hemistichs. These are: not to acquiesce in the *jawr* (tyranny, despotism) of Sultans (22B), not to befriend a *kadhḥāb* “a liar, an impostor” (23A), and finally, not to associate with “the brethren of Satans (23B).”⁷⁰ From an anti-colonial perspective, the significance of these two lines lies in the way they define the British-installed regime at the head of which stood Fayṣal. This inevitably raises the issue of the referent of *al-salāṭīn* (Sultans). Although the title of Sultan was associated with Ottoman rulers, it was also used by extension to denote any potentate. The open-endedness of the Perfect *‘āhadtu* (I made a vow), as well as the non-specificity of *al-salāṭīn* are such that the line can be taken to allude to al-Ruṣāfi’s denunciation of the despotic Abdul Hamid II. Al-Ruṣāfi is credited with having been among few voices raised in denunciation of the oppressive regime of Abdul Hamid even before the latter’s deposition.⁷¹ Due to the ambiguity of the referent, however, the line can be taken to allude to the new “sultan,” that is, Fayṣal. Given that the qaṣīdah was composed immediately following al-Ruṣāfi’s departure from Iraq under Fayṣal, this interpretation might seem plausible.

The invoking of the notion of *jawr* (tyranny, despotism) with respect to Fayṣal would have seemed far-fetched. By the time of the composition of the qaṣīdah Fayṣal had not yet established himself as a “Sultan” in Iraq nor had he then or thereafter perpetrated an act that amounted to *jawr*, nor indeed did he possess the power to do so. His was a virtual puppet regime under the dominance of the then Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill. By contrast, the *jawr* of Abdul Hamid II was proverbial throughout the Ottoman Empire; it was felt by meek and mighty alike. The invoking of the notion of *jawr al-salāṭīn* (the despotism of Sultans) in a qaṣīdah denouncing Fayṣal is arguably an attempt by the poet to place Fayṣal within a tradition of tyranny, to cast him as heir to the despotic Abdul Hamid.

The references to Fayṣal become more transparent in the concluding line of this subsection. Notable in this respect is the use in the first hemistich of line 23 of *malik* (king), which was the more

⁷⁰ For a discussion of allegiance and the abrogation thereof in al-Mutanabbī see S. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy* 223–39.

⁷¹ Al-Khaṭṭāt 49; Muṣṭafā ‘Alī, *Adab al-Ruṣāfi* 15–18; al-Wā‘iz 127–28, 143–45.

accurate title of Fayṣal. However, whereas in the preceding line the castigation of Fayṣal coalesces around the notion of *jawr*, in this line it seems to take on religious undertones. This stratagem is important given that Fayṣal's "moral authority" rested to a certain extent on his genealogy; he was the scion of al-Sharīf Ḥusayn b. 'Alī of Mecca who claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad. It, therefore, becomes imperative for an anti-Fayṣal stance to question his claims to Prophetic descent and thus the very legitimacy of his kingship. It is in this context that the adjectival *kadhḥāb* ("a liar" but also "a pretender," "an illegitimate claimant") may be seen. Of particular note in this respect is the antithesis it forms at the root level with the preceding word *uṣādiq* (befriend) but whose trilateral root *s-d-q* also signifies "to give credence to," "to recognize," "to give one's consent to." Above all, al-Ruṣāfī's use of *kadhḥāb* echoes al-Mutanabbī's scornful reference to his Egyptian patron Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdī:

Innī nazaltu bikadhḥābīna ḍayfuhumu
'ani 'l-qirā wa-'ani 'l-tarḥālī maḥdūdu.

Indeed I have alighted amongst liars whose guest
 is denied alike hospitality and departure.⁷²

The assault on the hallowed authority of Fayṣal reaches its apogee in the second hemistich of line 23 with its reference to *ikhwān al-shayātīn* (the brethren of Satans). Although the Genitive phrase is indeterminate with respect to its referents, it is, however, related thematically to the preceding hemistich: *kadhḥāb* qua "pretender" counts in Islamic orthodoxy among "the brethren of Satans." The objects of both hemistichs have to contend with a similar stance on the part of the poet; he is adamant in his refusal to associate with them. The second hemistich is notable for the striking effect produced by the alliteration observable in *ukhālīṭa ikhwāna* (associate with the brethren). Semantically, the two hemistichs are further linked. In addition to the conjunction with which each begins, we observe in the first half of each hemistich an identical syntactical structure: a negative

⁷² Trans. A. J. Arberry. The line forms a part of a well-known invective against Kāfūr. Al-Barqūqī, vol. 2, 142. An English translation of the qaṣīdah is in A. J. Arberry, *Poems of Al-Mutanabbī: A Selection, Translations and Notes by A. J. Arberry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1967) 111–14. A more recent translation and analysis of the qaṣīdah are in S. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy* 225–37.

particle followed by a verb in the Imperfect (with an implicit subject—the poet), then by a direct object.

An equally significant linkage is that attempted between *shayāṭīn* (satans) and *salāṭīn* (sultans). This linkage is effected primarily through a full morphological identity between the two plural entities: (VCCVCVCVCV). Once a link has been established between the two, once rulers are seen to have affinities with satans, their standing with respect to *ḍīn* (Islam) becomes highly problematic—indeed it becomes incumbent on every Muslim not to acquiesce in such rule which is thereby rendered un-Islamic, anti-Islamic and, therefore, illegitimate. In sum, the relationship between the opening and closing couplets of this section is contrastive: the opening couplet (19–20) underlines the poet's attributes chief among which is his conformity with the precepts of religion; the concluding couplet focuses on rulers who are shown to join with satans in a “brotherhood” of evil.

The above subsection, which relies on a procedure whereby a particular situation is set forth and subsequently rejected, can also be seen to function as *fakhr*, self-praise in the tradition of the classical qaṣīdah. Line 20, for instance,

Wa-lastu abdhulu ʿirdī kay aʿīsha bihi
wa-law taʿaddantu ʿZaqqūman bi-Ghislīnī,

I am not one to sacrifice my honor to live off it
Even if I had to live off Zaqqūm and Ghislīn.

recalls al-Mutanabbī's boastful assertion:

Wa-lā uqīmu ʿalā mālin adhillu bihi
wa-lā aladhdhu bi-mā ʿirdī bi-hi darīnu.

I do not accept wealth on account of which I am humbled
Nor do I relish that which taints my honor.⁷³

This virtual *fakhr* can be seen to partially inform lines 24–30 that make up the conclusion of the midsection of the qaṣīdah. In many a qaṣīdah in the classical tradition, such a section is often composed of no more than a couplet providing an aphoristic conclusion before the transition to a (new) patron proceeds apace. With no assured destination to proceed to,⁷⁴ the poet lingers on in this section, which

⁷³ Al-Barqūqī, vol. 4, 369.

⁷⁴ The fact that the qaṣīdah was composed in Lebanon, after al-Ruṣāfi had left

is notable for its circularity and its ruminative preoccupation with issues of life and death before it grinds to a belated halt in the aphoristic statements of lines 29–30. So deep is the poet's sense of loss and grievance, however, that his lengthy philosophizing which takes up lines 24–30 appears to do little to alleviate his loss; so much so that the final section of the *qaṣīdah* (lines 31–42) begins by re-invoking it anew.

The final section can also be subdivided into several interrelated subsections. Lines 31–33 provide a succinct summation of the main thematic preoccupations of the *qaṣīdah* so far. The first hemistich of line 31, in its invocation of Baghdad, harks back to the opening line of the second section (line 14) in which Baghdad is warned against the “woe” awaiting it in the form of a harsh judgment of history over its ill-treatment of the poet. Noticeably, the phrase *mā kuntu aḥsibu* (I did not reckon) first encountered in the second section of the *qaṣīdah* (in line 16), recurs in the third section (31A). Moreover, the Imperfect third person feminine *tuḥalliʿunī* (refuse me) with which this hemistich closes can be seen to possess twofold significations: *ḥallaʿa* denotes “to drive away,” “to expel.” Its use is most often associated with driving camels from water; the lexicon *Tāj al-ʿArūs* gives as its synonym the verb *ṭarada* (to expel).⁷⁵ Within the confines of the hemistich in which it occurs, it can be seen to fall within the semantic range of *ṭarada*, the poet qua *ṭarīd* (a quarry) referred to in line 12.⁷⁶

A key motif in the *qaṣīdah*, that of *zamaʿ* (thirst), recurs in this line: *tuḥalliʿunī ʿan māʿi Dijlatihā yawman wa-tuzmīnī* (would refuse me one day the water of its Tigris, and cause me to go thirsty). A

Iraq is extraneous; it does not signal an *arrival* at a destination voluntarily chosen. In metaphorical terms, he is cast ashore in Beirut; his being there is a manifestation of the exilic condition. This is indicated especially in lines 4–5. On a more pragmatic level, al-Ruṣāfī did not journey to Beirut in response to an invitation, nor did he seem to have had a clearly formulated plan for residing in that city; he seems to have “ended up there,” having nowhere else to go.

⁷⁵ Al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, vol. I [Item ḥ-l-ʿ].

⁷⁶ The equivalency between being an exile and being a “quarry” is perhaps best illustrated in the following verse by the ʿAbbāsīd poet Abū al-Asad al-Shaybānī:

Layta shiʿrī adāqat ʿl-ardu ʿannī
am nafyyun minā ʿl-bilādi ṭarīdū!

Would that I knew: has the land become too narrow for me
 Or am I an exile from the country, a fugitive!

Quoted in al-Jāhīz, *Rasāʾil al-Jāhīz*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. II, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Khānjī, 1965) 67.

correspondence is observable between the second hemistich of line 31 and the second hemistichs of lines 15 and 7. *Tuzmūnī* (cause me to go thirsty) in 31B clearly echoes *laysa yasqīnī* (does not water me) of 15B as well as *laysa yurwīnī* (does not quench my thirst) of 7B. Structurally, these three hemistichs function to bind the qaṣīdah together through their unity of statement. A similar unifying effect is created by the use in line 16 of *mā kuntu aḥsibu* (I did not reckon) followed three lines later by a sentence in the Perfect initiated by the emphatic *tallāhi* (by Allah). This configuration—*mā kuntu aḥsibu* followed by the emphatic *tallāhi* (with two lines intervening) recurs in an identical manner in the third section of the qaṣīdah in lines 31 and 34.

At the phonological level, the consonant /ḥ/ which occurs twice in the first hemistich of line 31 provides an noticeable link to the second line of this subsection (line 32) in which it “bounds” the line, occurring as it does at its opening word as well as at its closing rhyme word. Through the preposition *ḥattā* (until), this line pinpoints the juncture at which the poet’s life of bliss was disrupted; it recalls a period anterior to the current situation described so fondly through the nightingale imagery. This state of bliss came to an abrupt and violent end, notes line 32, when a *zīnīyah*—a group of lowly people came to power, took charge in Baghdad. This is a thinly-veiled reference to the “state apparatus” composed of Fayṣal’s associates from his days in Damascus as well as Iraqis who joined the Fayṣal regime, some for noble reasons but others for opportunistic ends—hence their characterization as possessed of *akhlāqī ‘l-sarāḥīnī* (the morals of wolves).

Line 34 marks a climactic point in the thematic progression of the qaṣīdah:

Tallāhi mā dā‘a ḥaqqī ḥākadhā abadan
law kuntu min ‘Ajamīn ṣuḥbi ‘l-‘athānīnī.

By Allah my due would never have thus been lost
 If I were from among the ‘Ajam with reddish beards.

The notion of loss that pervades the preceding sections of the qaṣīdah is made explicit in this line. The loss the speaker sustains is consequential upon not being affiliated with a certain category:⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Cf. the opening poem of Abū Tammām’s *Ḥamāsah*,

those who are 'Ajam with reddish beards, a reference to personages of "European stock"—the then governing class in Iraq whose ranks comprised mostly Englishmen. Thus not being a member of a certain group renders one an "outsider," a "marginal." Such exclusion entails a loss—in this case that of *ḥaqq*, that which is due to someone but also that which is rightful, just, and equitable. The reality of this supposition is not left in doubt; it is underscored through the use of the emphatic *tallāhi* (by Allah) and *abadan* (never) in key positions in this hemistich of "loss": its beginning as well as its end. With this reading of line 34 the first hemistich of the preceding line acquires further connotative possibilities. The clause *mā ḍarranī ghayra annī 'l-yawm min 'Arabīn* (Nothing has harmed me except that today I am from among Arabs) forms a contrastive relationship with the following line: being Arab at this historical juncture is a veritable source of *ḍarar*, harm, injury through which the affected party is condemned to exile, internal as well as external.

The loss the speaker sustains and of which line 34 bespeaks is not transient; it is as durable as it is irrevocable. This is suggested by the adverbial *abadan* which denotes "never," but also "for ever." Cognizant of the certitude and permanence of the loss, the poet concedes the futility of continued domicile in Baghdad. This finds expression in line 35, which marks another transition in the qaṣīdah:

Alāma amkuthu fī Baghdāda muṣṭabīran
'alā 'l-ḍarā'ati fī buḥbūḥati 'l-hūnī!

Why should I remain in Baghdad enduring
 Degradation amidst affront!

This line recalls al-Ṭuḡhrā'ī's nonchalant questioning:

Fīma 'l-iqāmatu bil-Zawrā'i lā sakanī
bi-hā "wa-lā nāqatī fihā wa-lā jamalī.

Why should I remain in al-Zawrā' [Baghdad]? My abode is not
 To be found in it "nor my she-camel nor my male camel."⁷⁸

Law kuntu min Māzinin lam tastabīḥ ibilī/banū 'l-laḡīṭati.

If I had been from [the tribe of] Māzin, the sons of the misbegotten woman would not have plundered my camels.

Al-Marzūqī, vol. 1, 23.

⁷⁸ See Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Ghayth al-Musjam fī Sharḥ Lāmiyyat al-'Ajam*, vol. I (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1975) 107–9. Al-Ṣafadī provides an account of the genesis of the proverbial "*lā nāqatun liya fī hādihā wa-lā jamalū*" and notes its

In the case of al-Ruṣāfī, continued domicile in Baghdad would entail continued endurance of *ḍarāʿah* (humility); enduring humility is the inverse of the notion of *ʿird* (honor), the safeguarding of which is stressed in line 20. The sound structure of the two substantives, moreover, tends to echo this opposition: at the root level *ḍarāʿah* and *ʿird* share three identical radicals; in *ḍarāʿah*, however, these radicals occur in an *inverted* order. Continued domicile in Baghdad would further entail enduring a continued state of *hūn* (affront, abasement) lent further emphasis through its occurrence earlier in the qaṣīdah (in line 17)—*al-hūn* is the only rhyme-word that recurs in the rhyme scheme of the qaṣīdah.

Although in the qaṣīdah tradition the notion of loss is not infrequently encountered, where loss occurs in al-Ruṣāfī, however, it is more pronounced. This is primarily because in the qaṣīdah tradition the loss is often encountered in the initial, preparative section of the qaṣīdah. In the classical qaṣīdah, this section is followed by the *raḥīl*, which often amounts to a distancing of the poet from the scene of loss. The paradigmatic *raḥīl*, moreover, is often transient and goal-oriented; it frequently marks a transition from the despondency of the *nasīb* to a blithe restorative state whereby the poet is either united with a liberal patron or is reintegrated into his kinsfolk.⁷⁹

To sum up, in the paradigmatic qaṣīdah there is often the expectation that the loss encountered at the prelude would be remedied in the climactic concluding section. In al-Ruṣāfī, by contrast, the loss receives its most pronounced exposition at precisely the point where, in the classical qaṣīdah, we would expect to come upon the recouping. In al-Ruṣāfī the loss is inconclusive, open-ended, progressing; it is not relieved by subsequent invocation of Beirut nor by the recollection of former commiserating patrons. Indeed a marked feature of the remainder of the qaṣīdah (lines 36–42) is its equivocation; the only certitude to be found in these lines has to do with the preponderance of noxious circumstances in Iraq and the poet's firm rejection of them. This has so far been matched by a heavy use of negative particles. With line 35 the use of negative particles comes to an abrupt end; henceforth, the uncertainty of the interrogative

taḍmīn by al-Rāʿī al-Numayrī. An elegant rendition of al-Numayrī's line is in Stetkevych, "Name and Epithet," 97.

⁷⁹ See S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals* 3–54.

prevails reflecting the poet's bewilderment, indirection, and skepticism as he is cast ashore in Beirut.

The concluding subsection (lines 36–42) similarly has its own internal organization: lines 36–38 (the “Beirut” triplet) go closely together; lines 39–41 (the “Palestine” triplet) are likewise closely related; both triplets are linked in the final line of the qaṣīdah with each hemistich of that line harking back to its respective triplet. The “Beirut” triplet can best be described as future-oriented; it embodies the poet's hope for a reversal of the abhorred state that prevails in his native land. The triplet is, however, largely tentative as is indicated by the particle *laʿalla* (perhaps) in the second hemistich of line 36, the interrogative that occupies an identical position in its respective hemistich in line 37, as well as the optative particle *layta* (would that) with which line 38 begins. Moreover, the opening line of the triplet signals the poet's cognizance that the loss he has sustained extends beyond mere geography; it marks a concomitant shift, a rupture involving the poet's affiliation. This is suggested in the participle *muntasabī*, from the root *n-s-b* (my affiliation). In its genealogical bent this hemistich (36A) recalls the first hemistich of line 7 in which the poet emphatically declares himself to be “the son of Tigris.” The subdued, pleading tone of this triplet is perhaps best implied in the personification of the poet's hopes taking shelter in the shadow of Mount Ṣinnīn in Lebanon (37B). *Istadhrat* is semantically related to *dhurā* (heights) in the first hemistich of line 21 where hardship is embraced as the price to be paid for keeping one's honor untainted. The relationship, therefore, between these two hemistichs tends to be a contrastive one.

Another contrastive relationship is observable in line 38, which refers allusively to *irtiwāʿ* (the quenching of thirst) through the imagery of a cloud heavy with rain—the quintessential metaphor for a liberal patron in the qaṣīdah tradition. The hope of a possible *irtiwāʿ* in Syria contrasts sharply with the motif of thirst that permeates the preceding sections of the qaṣīdah, especially the second hemistichs of lines 7, 15 as well as line 31 in its entirety. The concluding line of the triplet further holds out the hope of abundance as is indicated in the rhyme word *tughnīmī* (suffice me, make me do without) which harks back to line 21 where the harshness of the poet's life is seen as a source of (moral) abundance; it further refers back antithetically to the second hemistichs of lines 18 and 20 where the lack of such an abundance is poignantly decried through mutilation imagery

as well as imagery derived from Qur'ānic depictions of the torment the damned endure in the Hereafter.

The relationship between the “Beirut” triplet and the subsequent “Palestine” triplet is a symmetrical one. This symmetry involves the forward-looking property of the former as opposed to the recollectiveness of the latter; the uncertainty the future holds for the poet in Beirut as opposed to the certitude of past happenings, which the latter recounts. Like Baghdad, Damascus had committed a sinful act against the poet in former times—a reference to the rebuff al-Ruṣāfi received from Fayṣal when the latter reigned in Damascus. Unlike Baghdad, however, this sinful act was “wiped out” in Palestine through the camaraderie and hospitality of al-Nashāshībī, al-Sakākīnī, and Ibn Jabr on whose names the poet puns in line 40 and in the following line. It is important to note in this respect that none of the three personages named above amounts to a patron in the sense familiar in the classical qaṣīdah. They are, moreover, subsumed within “Palestine” the country; they are the former *ṣaḥbun* (companions) of the first hemistich of the concluding line of the qaṣīdah. Implicit in the root *s-h-b* is equivalence in rank; no patron/poet dichotomy is thus posited. These, however, do come close in signification to the singular *ḥurr* (freeborn man) whom the poet seems to despair of encountering in the second line of the qaṣīdah.⁸⁰

A marked feature of this triplet is the contrastive use of *al-ayyām* (the days) and *al-layālī* (the nights) in line 39. In the qaṣīdah tradition, these plural substantives often occur interchangeably and combine the notion of temporality with that of fate/destiny. In that tradition, they are often malevolent, unfeeling, a force to contend with; they occur in such roles in al-Ruṣāfi's qaṣīdah in lines 6, 14, and 22. In this signification, moreover, they approximate *al-dahr*, another frequently invoked concept that likewise combines the notion of fate with that of temporality. In al-Ruṣāfi's qaṣīdah *al-dahr* occurs twice: in the first hemistich of line 2 and in the second hemistich of line 4. The use of *al-ayyām* and *al-layālī* in the same line in antithetical roles—*al-layālī* undoing what *al-ayyām* has committed—does not represent a distinct pattern in the qaṣīdah; rather, this use seems to be occasioned by poetic convenience—in this case a “division of

⁸⁰ They are, however, to be differentiated from the *qawm* of line 16 with whom the poet shares a lineal bond.

labor.” By contrast, when they occur in a singular form the two terms are commonly limited to indicating a temporal frame of reference; instances of this latter occurrence include *yawm*, which, in lines 31, 33, and 36, denotes “today,” “the present.”

The structure of this subsection is, as noted above, highly symmetrical: Beirut *vis-à-vis* Palestine, future *vis-à-vis* past, confirmed munificence/hoped-for munificence. The subsection is rounded off in the final line which binds both triplets as it refers back to the respective sections: the first hemistich harks back to the “Palestine” triplet; the second to the “Beirut” triplet. This structural ordering, however, does little to obscure the transparent disorder that is the colonial situation nor does it assuage the grievousness of the exile precipitated by it. This is demonstrable in the concluding line of the *qaṣīdah* with its listing of multiple homelands. The structural unity, which the final subsection achieves, is to a certain extent undermined as the *qaṣīdah* makes references to an array of homelands. In lines 35–42 there is a succession of references to present/former/future homelands as follows:

Baghdad/Beirut/Beirut/Baghdad/Ṣinnīn/Syria/Iraq/Damascus/
Palestine/Jerusalem/Beirut.

It is hardly necessary to state that the spatial reach of this subsection, the dizzying array of homelands presented here, is antithetical to the very notion of the Homeland, the most elemental aspects of which are its singularity and its permanence. Although at the concluding section the parts seem to “fall into place” structurally, the state of disorder with which the *qaṣīdah* grapples reaches a culmination at this section. To say this is not to detract from the significance or the aesthetic worth of the *qaṣīdah*; to the contrary, much of the impact of the *qaṣīdah* derives from its sustained attempts at confronting this disorder, drawing in the process on a multiplicity of resources of which the *qaṣīdah* tradition is perhaps the most recognizable. Al-Ruṣāfī envisages a more favorable order but does not refuse to acknowledge the current disorder. This acknowledgement is implicit in the *al-mawāṭin*, the plurality of homelands with which the *qaṣīdah* begins.

It is ironic that while postcolonial literature of the twentieth century is widely perceived as duplicating Western praxis—as indicated by such terms as “re/appropriation” or “servile imitation”—neo-classical Arabic poetry has often been deprecated in the Arab world

for its putative rigid conformity to the conventions of the classical *qaṣīdah*. It should be apparent from the above discussion that al-Ruṣāfi's *qaṣīdah* bears little resemblance to Western praxis; it should further be apparent that it is at variance with some of the *qaṣīdah* conventions, most notably with respect to the concluding section. A rigid adherence to the conventions of the *qaṣīdah* would have entailed the certitude of good fortune at a new court in the company of a munificent patron as the *qaṣīdah* draws to a close. This is clearly not the case here; nowhere do we find in al-Ruṣāfi's the transition to a would-be patron as elaborated in the *qaṣīdah* tradition. Granted, we do encounter passing references to *ṣuḥḥun ghaṭāriḥah* (illustrious companions) and *mayāmīn* (noble of spirit) in the concluding line. These, however, remain subsumed within the subdued tone of the section; the tone never rises to the celebratory "peak" the classical *qaṣīdah* achieves in this section. Indeed, as has been noted above, this *qaṣīdah* reaches its culmination in line 34; thereafter, it proceeds in a downward tapering movement. The "unconventionality" of this *qaṣīdah*, its divergence from the paradigmatic *qaṣīdah* mode points to a preoccupation on the part of the poet not only with the *qaṣīdah* as artifice but also with the colonial situation as predicament.

The most striking aspect of al-Ruṣāfi's *qaṣīdah* lies in its attempt at forging a poetics particular to the situation at hand in which the poet has recourse to the topoi and motifs of the classical *qaṣīdah*. These topoi and motifs function above all as conceptual tools in an ongoing process to obtain a purchase on an alien and alienating (colonial) situation. Ultimately, the *qaṣīdah* itself functions as a re-ordering stratagem, a stratagem that seeks to reorder the (poet's) world through the word.

CHAPTER FOUR

REWRITING THE METROPOLITAN TEXT: BADR SHĀKIR AL-SAYYĀB ON “ARAB DECLINE”

[O]ur language has as many colonies as our King,
and that in this one respect at least we are the
resolute conquerors of the world.

Charles Whibley, quoted approvingly by T. S. Eliot¹

In the year 1925 the French polemicist Henri Massis published *Défense de l'occident* in which he attacked the post World War I tendency to “orientalize,” a tendency that appeared most pronounced in, but by no means confined to, Germany and Russia.² Massis was alarmed by what he saw as the inclination of some German intellectuals to seek the spiritual revival of a war-ravaged Europe in the East. These intellectuals were, Massis remonstrated, “devoting their energies to filling the world with their own disillusionment, and to cultivating the germs of a destructive Asiaticism, in order to scatter them over the nations of a devastated Europe.”³ Massis was particularly dismayed by the vogue that writings by certain German Orientalists appeared to enjoy in the post-war era: “Anthroposophism of Steiner, Hinduism of Rabindranath Tagore, nordic Neo-Paganism, Taoist mysticism, Buddhist wisdom,” Massis lamented, were among the doctrines Germany examined “in order to discover the elements of a spiritual revival,”⁴ while a footnote refers the reader to an appendix that deals with “the origins of this Orientalist movement in Germany, and on its post-war development.”⁵

Massis’s cannon may have been aimed at German intellectuals and Orientalists, but the thunder could be heard in London by, among others, T. S. Eliot’s circle of *The Criterion*, the literary quarterly

¹ T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972) 504.

² Henri Massis, *Defense of the West*, trans. F. S. Flint (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927).

³ Massis 20.

⁴ Massis 36–37.

⁵ Massis 20, footnote 2.

Eliot founded in 1922 and edited until 1939. Massis's declamations against the introducers into Europe of "a doubtful Asiaticism,"⁶ and his denunciation of them as "European deserters . . . who have become the accomplices of this Asiaticism,"⁷ could not have been lost on Eliot who, three years earlier, published *The Waste Land*, a poem which bears unmistakable traces of the Asiaticism that so alarmed Massis. Writing in *The Criterion* in 1928 John Gould Fletcher, an associate of Eliot, undertook to "controvert if possible the doctrines put forward by M. Henri Massis, in his *Defense of the West*," the gist of which was "that in Russia and in Germany, since the War, there has been a growing tendency to 'orientalize'; and against this tendency M. Massis brings forward the authority of Latin Mediterranean civilization, controlled and directed by the Catholic Church."⁸ In these prefatory notes I shall refer to Fletcher's rebuttal as it affords some insights into the ideological ambience in which *The Waste Land* was born.

Fletcher's rebuttal is instructive in that it reveals more concurrence than disagreement with Massis. Both Massis and his interlocutor are in accord that "the Orientalist tendency" in Germany is attributable to the devastating effects of World War I, which resulted in carnage and destruction unprecedented in European history.⁹ The conclusion of that war, moreover, revealed what Fletcher considers to be a far more alarming prospect, it revealed "an Orient rapidly altering, assuming the right to dispute the primacy of civilization with ourselves, and prepared to adopt our machinery, armaments, diplomacy, business methods, and general efficiency . . . in order to defeat our aspirations to be masters of the world."¹⁰ On the fundamental question that the Orient must not be allowed to contest Europe's position as "masters of the world," Massis and Fletcher are

⁶ Massis 13.

⁷ Massis 132.

⁸ John Gould Fletcher, "East and West," *The Criterion* June 1928: 313.

⁹ Massis contends that Russia offers a far less problematic case despite the fact that the Orientalist tendency is more pronounced in Russia than it is in Germany. If after two centuries of forced Europeanization initiated by Peter the Great Russia is turning toward the Orient, it is because her connection with the West is "fortuitous." Hence she turns her back on Europe without regrets: "Russia has sinned in having disavowed her Orientalism," Massis quotes Prince Trubetskoï as saying. Massis 51-56.

¹⁰ Fletcher 306.

in total agreement. It is on what needs to be done to prevent such a prospect from becoming a reality that the two disagree; in other words, they disagree not on the objective, which is the perpetuation of Europe's hegemony, but on the means to secure this objective. Massis advocates what can be termed a "cordon sanitaire" approach involving sanitizing Europe, purging it of all traces of Asiaticism. "Among all the subversive forces that are undermining Europe, ideas too generate events," Massis recognizes, "and already they are coming to the surface of the body of thought that covers them. But the latter opens up the way for them, multiplies their dangers, and increases their fatal violence."¹¹ Massis therefore posits certain relatedness between the Orientalisms then in vogue in Europe and the "events" that were taking place around the time he was writing his polemics. These unspecified events, which had as their objective the overthrow of Europe's hegemony, include, *inter alia*, the Amritsar massacre of 1919 in India and the start in 1921 of the Non-Cooperation movement in India under the leadership of Gandhi. Whether propagated by Europeans or by Orientals, these Orientalisms are equally damaging to the dominant position of Europe: "Tagore and Gandhi are 'modernist'; and the Orientalism of those Westernised Asiatics, whose second-hand language is modeled on ours, is no less suspect to us than that of a Keyserling or a Romain Rolland."¹² The dangers that would accrue from the propagation of such an Oriental "system of ideas" are due to the fact that this system of ideas, its outward manifestations notwithstanding, has as its ultimate objective the overthrow of the West's *political* hegemony:

Deep down within them, these oppressed races do not believe that 'Europe is ready to abandon its political inhumanity, since it expects nothing except from the modification of systems, and it has no hope of a change of heart.' And while Rabindranath Tagore holds that 'the East, with its ideals, in which are deposited centuries of sun and starry silence', can wait patiently until Europe 'loses breath' and 'the Giant of Flesh disappears into the abyss', Mahatma Gandhi, who is defending

¹¹ Massis 133.

¹² Massis 106. Massis nonetheless draws a distinction between two strains of Orientalism: one, represented by such Orientalists as Romain Rolland and Keyserling, seeks to "dewesternise" the West; the other, represented by Renan and Taine, is characterized by uncompromising Westernism and is beneficial in that it constantly forewarned Europe against what Renan called "a reservoir of barbarian forces" ready to overwhelm it (Massis, 53). Recalling the examples of Renan and Taine,

his threatened house, does not harbour these convenient illusions: ‘*The only effort needed,*’ he says, ‘*is to drive out Western civilisation*’ [emphasis in the original]. That is the final word of this spiritual system of ideas, in which are embodied elementary forces that *aim, in fact, at our annihilation*¹³ [emphasis added].

Europe is indeed “bruised in mind and body,” Massis acknowledges.¹⁴ However, for the European recovery to take place it is imperative that Europe be protected against “[t]he poison of the East.”¹⁵ Massis proposes as a panacea for the European malaise the shunning of all cultural contact with Asia and “a complete restoration of the principles of Græco-Latin civilisation and Catholicism.”¹⁶

For his part, Fletcher proposes that “the present [1928] state of Europe, decadent and anarchic” might benefit from “contact with Oriental forms of culture and life.”¹⁷ That such contact as proposed by Fletcher does not amount to “a true shift in the terms of European cognition” becomes abundantly clear as he proceeds in his rebuttal.¹⁸ He begins by locating himself *vis-à-vis* the Oriental: he is an “Occidental” who regards “the most valuable aspect in life, that which in me and my fellows has primacy over the rest, as the will that extends itself in *the conquest of external circumstances*” [emphasis added]. Having set himself up as the archetypal “Occidental,” Fletcher goes on to elaborate on the essence of Occidentalism: to the Occidental, life is “a fundamentally dynamic activity, a life-force, a Heracleitean fire, *a conquest of inertia and shapelessness*” [emphasis added].¹⁹ Occidentalism is thus posited as the will to power over external circumstances, inertia, and shapelessness. For this will to be exercised, for it to come into being, it must come into contact with external circumstances, with inertia, and with shapelessness. This Fletcher finds in the Oriental:

Massis laments: “Is it conceivable that, after our defeat in 1870, thinkers like Renan and Taine, in their concern for the conditions favourable to our recovery, could ever have advised us to look to the maxims of Confucius or Lao-Tseu for the gospel of the new life.” Massis 47.

¹³ Massis 115.

¹⁴ Massis 190.

¹⁵ Massis 151.

¹⁶ Massis 189.

¹⁷ Fletcher 308.

¹⁸ Elleke Boehmer writes that “it is important not to mistake the cross-cultural conversation that emerged for a true shift in the terms of European cognition, or for a relationship of sharing or equal interchange.” Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 140.

¹⁹ Fletcher 309.

“[T]o the Oriental, the activity of the will so long as it is directed outwards towards the conquest of life, and not inwards to the conquest of self, is altogether perverse and evil. The harmony that the Oriental seeks is the harmony of stability, even of *inertia*” [emphasis added].²⁰ The contact with Oriental forms of culture thus becomes a conquest of external circumstances, of inertia, and of shapelessness. Moreover, the Oriental invites such conquest by his “passivity, submission,” traits inculcated in him by his great teachers who include Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed: “*Non-resistance to nature, letting things take their own course*, is the first precept of Oriental morality” [emphasis added].²¹ The Occidental conquest of external circumstances elicits no resistance from the Oriental, since it is in harmony with the natural order of things. Such intercourse amounts to a symbiosis, a complementarity of actor and acted upon that is in accordance with the laws of nature. This complementarity is morally beneficial to the Oriental as it affords him an opportunity to fulfill the main precept of his morality. Without such quest on the part of the Occidental, the Oriental would surely be reduced to moral vacuity!

If such a symbiosis is beneficial to the Orient, it is equally beneficial to a Europe that is “chaotic and disintegrating” and in pressing need of regeneration. It is widely held that this need for regeneration was one of the effects of World War I on Europe. It was rendered all the more urgent by the steady decline of Europe’s position in the world and the concomitant rise of Russia and the United States as dominant world powers. The task, therefore, facing the European is to restore order to a chaotic and disintegrating Europe.²² This task is to be achieved, Fletcher proposes, by incorporating “the best that has been said and thought for the past two thousand years,” some of which, Europe has only recently become aware, lies in the East.²³

Colonialism is commonly assumed to denote the occupation of territory and its subsequent exploitation and settlement. Such a definition tends to reduce what is a highly complex and all-pervasive

²⁰ Fletcher 310.

²¹ Fletcher 310–11. See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 219. I should like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Said’s monumental work, *Orientalism*, which has proved the most enabling work in the field of Postcolonial studies.

²² Fletcher 324.

²³ Fletcher 312.

process to a mere struggle over territory. As Edward Said remarks, “the struggle for control over territory is part of that [human] history, so too is the struggle over historical and social meaning. The task for the critical scholar is not to separate one struggle from another, but to connect them, despite the contrast between the overpowering materiality of the former and the apparent otherworldly refinement of the latter.”²⁴ Drawing on Said, Elleke Boehmer describes colonialism as “a metaphoric and cartographic undertaking.”²⁵ The difference between the cartographic and metaphoric aspects of the colonialist undertaking proves so tenuous that Eliot could state, in his spirited apologia to Rudyard Kipling, the bard of Empire: “There are deeper and darker caverns which he penetrated, whether through experience or through imagination does not matter.”²⁶ Eliot himself alludes to this interconnectedness between the cartographic and the metaphoric. The function of a literary review, writes Eliot, is “to maintain the autonomy and disinterestedness of literature, and at the same time to exhibit the relations of literature—not to ‘life,’ as something contrasted to literature, but to all the other activities, which, together with literature, are the components of life.”²⁷ In this chapter an attempt is made to foreground the relations of literary works, in particular T. S. Eliot’s poem, *The Waste Land*, and a poem by the leading Arab poet Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (1926–1964) to “the other activities,” specially colonialism, which had a profound and lasting impact on European as well as Arab histories.

The important insight of Eliot is that spaces other than cartographic are colonizable. Here, I contend, is where the coloniality of *The Waste Land* (a poem whose very title underlines the correlation between the metaphoric and the cartographic), can be seen to reside, in Eliot’s colonizing of the mythological spaces of, *inter alia*, the “Near East.” Such colonization was motivated by a conscious pursuit of self-renewal on the part of the colonizer. Eliot writes that “the possibility of each literature renewing itself, proceeding to new creative activity, making new discoveries in the use of words, depends on . . .

²⁴ Said, *Orientalism* 331.

²⁵ Boehmer 17.

²⁶ T. S. Eliot, *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons: 1943) 20.

²⁷ T. S. Eliot, “The Function of a Literary Review,” *The Criterion* July 1923: 421.

its ability to receive and assimilate influences from abroad."²⁸ The thesis propounded here may be objected to on the grounds that, Eliot's explicit support for the British Empire notwithstanding, he called for the separation of literature and politics.²⁹ A closer examination, however, will show that such a separation is tenable only on a superficial level. In this respect we would do well to bear in

²⁸ T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954) 113.

²⁹ Eliot was too Virgilian/Dantean to embrace the British Empire as wholeheartedly as did Rudyard Kipling, professing instead a citizenship of the Roman Empire as imagined by Virgil:

We are all, so far as we inherit the civilization of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire, and time has not yet proved Virgil wrong when he wrote *neq tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi*. But, of course, the Roman Empire which Virgil imagined and for which Aeneas worked out his destiny was not exactly the same as the Roman Empire of the legionaries, the pro-consuls and governors, the business men and speculators, the demagogues and generals. It was something greater, but something which exists because Virgil imagined it. It remains an ideal, but one which Virgil passed on to Christianity to develop and to cherish.

T. S. Eliot, "Virgil and the Christian World," *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: The Noonday Press: 1967) 146.

Moreover, the often-quoted comment Eliot makes in a communication addressed to Madox Ford, the editor of *The Transatlantic Review*, "I am all for empires, especially the Austro-Hungarian Empire," cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of Eliot's endorsement of Empire. T. S. Eliot, "Communication to Madox Ford," *The Transatlantic Review* Jan. 1924: 95-96. There is, however, no dearth of such evidence in the corpus of Eliot. Of this I cite the following examples: Attributing French protest at British policies in Egypt to the French "ignorance" of foreign affairs, rather than to imperial rivalry, Eliot writes: "It [the political philosophy of M. Maurras] is also obscured by the fact that M. Maurras and his friends have often displayed a lamentable and even grotesque ignorance of foreign affairs—the ignorance which made it possible for M. Daudet to exclaim against British 'tyranny' in Egypt." T. S. Eliot, "The Literature of Fascism," *The Criterion* Dec. 1928: 289. Commenting on the disruptive effects of British rule on the indigenous cultures of India, Eliot writes:

To point to the damage that has been done to native cultures in the process of [British] imperial expansion is by no means an indictment of empire itself, as the advocates of imperial dissolution are only too apt to infer. . . . It is noticeable that the most vehement criticism, or abuse, of British imperialism often comes from representatives of societies which practice a different form of imperialism—that is to say, of expansion which brings material benefits and extends the influence of culture. America has tended to impose its way of life chiefly in the course of doing business, and creating a taste for its commodities. Even the humblest material artefact, which is the product and the symbol of a particular civilisation, is an emissary of the culture out of which it comes: to particularise only by mentioning that influential and inflammable article the celluloid film; and thus American economic expansion may be also, in its way, the cause of disintegration of cultures which it touches.

Eliot, *Notes* 91-92.

mind the significance Eliot attaches to literature in the re/making of nationhood. Eliot writes that “a genuine nationality depends upon the existence of a genuine literature, and you cannot have a nationality worth speaking of unless you have a national literature.”³⁰ If the existence of a vigorous national literature is a prerequisite for the existence of the nation as a political entity, it follows then that that which renews literature also renews the (European) nation in a way similar to the renewal achievable by cartographic expansion, by the acquisition of territories.³¹ The metaphoric constituent of the colonialist project is, as Said put it, “a vital, informing, and invigorating counterpoint to the economic and political machinery at the material center of imperialism.”³²

The Orientalists and their early detractors do not differ consequentially in their objectives, although they may differ in the means to achieving these objectives. Massis’s portent of sinister “avalanches” poised to “roll in upon us from the high plateaus of Asia”³³ echoes Eliot’s uneasy foreboding in *The Waste Land*: “Who are those hooded hordes swarming/Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth/Ringed by the flat horizon only.”³⁴

Another account on which *The Waste Land* warrants scrutiny relates to the way it tends to center the Western metropolis.³⁵ If we allow that *The Waste Land*, as seems plausible, is at least in part about “the

In the introductory essay to his anthology of Rudyard Kipling’s verse, Eliot laments: “For too many people, an Empire has become something to apologise for, on the ground that it happened by accident, and with the addition that it is a temporary affair anyway and will eventually be absorbed into some universal world association.” T. S. Eliot, “Rudyard Kipling,” *A Choice of Kipling’s Verse* 25.

³⁰ Eliot, “Communication,” 95.

³¹ In this respect, Massis’s probing of the true motives behind the Orientalist tendency in Germany is instructive: “But a desire for power, for positive utility, for discipline with a view to a result is mingled with all these divagations. And, as Barrès said, ‘many of these curiosities, far from being resolved in nirvâna, might quite well be nothing more than new means of domination and conquest.’ Does not the whole endeavour of these [German] thinkers tend secretly to win back spiritual primacy for the German nation and to assure it a new hegemony?” Massis 38.

³² Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994) 222.

³³ Massis 132.

³⁴ *The Waste Land, The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952) 369–371.

³⁵ Elleke Boehmer notes: “Eliot sets the shattered social landscapes and polyglot murmurings of *The Waste Land* (1922) in London, not on the Gangetic Plain.” Boehmer 145.

immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history," then the poem's proclamation of the centrality of the West becomes all too obvious.³⁶ Eliot thus assumes that "contemporary history" is synonymous with European history; he precludes the possibility of the existence of other histories, which may not have been panoramas of futility and anarchy, *i.e.*, the histories of emerging nations. Other histories did not count, the only history that counted as History was that of Europe. Moreover, the note on the literary use of "the mythical method" in respect of the futility and anarchy of this European history is perhaps revealing. It is, Eliot writes, "a way of controlling" this anarchy, its function is therefore to arrest, to reverse, to undo the anarchy in the contemporary European history.³⁷ Since anarchy is assumed to be detrimental to the well being of any society, especially an Imperial society subject to order and hierarchy, the envisaged political function of the mythically structured poem, the role it performs *vis-à-vis* the Imperial Metropolis becomes critical.

"The citation of native cultures on canvas or in poetry," writes Boehmer, "mimicked on a figural level the absorption of the non-European world by the West."³⁸ In the foregoing I have indicated that such citation does more than mimic the absorption of the non-European world by the Metropolitan West, that it stakes claim to

³⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," *The Dial* July-Dec. 1923: 483. The most common interpretation of *The Waste Land* was rejected by Eliot himself: "I dislike the world 'generation', which has been a talisman for the last ten years; when I wrote a poem called *The Waste Land* some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed the 'disillusionment of a generation', which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention." T. S. Eliot, "Thoughts After Lambeth," T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972) 368. If we insist, as we must, that *The Waste Land*, a key metropolitan text, is more than "rhythmical grumbling" (see Eliot's own definition of what constitutes imperialism quoted in note 29 above), then an interpretation of the poem ought to take account of Eliot's conception with respect to the literary use of the myth. In a review of *Ulysses* Eliot writes:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. Eliot, "Ulysses" 483.

³⁷ Eliot, "Ulysses" 483.

³⁸ Boehmer 146.

the cultural spaces of the non-Western world, it appends these spaces to the European space. And while physical decolonization can be said to take place when the last imperial soldier disembarks, the decolonizing of meanings is far more problematic to effect. Difficulties notwithstanding, various Arab poets have undertaken this task. An attempt that addressed itself to *The Waste Land* was undertaken by the poet Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb³⁹ in his poem “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī” (In the Arab Maghrib, 1956).⁴⁰

Al-Sayyāb’s views on the role of literature in the process of decolonization were expounded in an address he gave to the second annual convention of Arab writers, which was held in Damascus in September 1956, a few months after the publication of the poem under review. In his address al-Sayyāb stated:

I need hardly say that man’s history has always been a conflict between evil and himself, and that giving literary expression to this conflict amounts to an expression of life, a realist literature in other words. . . . I do not say anything new when I say that today [1956] evil is represented—in its most hideous and dangerous form—in colonialism and its forces, and in the factions on which it relies. . . . The task of literature—or rather great literature—was, and still is, the portrayal of this conflict between evil and man. I would like to point out an important aspect, which is that when the man of letters portrays this conflict, he does so not as a disinterested spectator—for he is human above all. The cause then is his cause and the battle is his battle. That is

³⁹ Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (1926–1964), an Iraqi poet who, together with another Iraqi, the poetess Nāzik al-Malā’ikah (b. 1923), pioneered the free verse movement in Arabic poetry. His famous poem, “Unshūdat al-Maṭar” (The Canticle of the Rain, 1954), which is included in his major collection of the same title (1960), is arguably the most influential poem written in Arabic in the twentieth century.

Testimonials to the influence of al-Sayyāb on modern Arabic poetics include the following: “Al-Sayyāb took Arabic poetry out of the virtual dead end it had reached by the late 1940s and redirected it to broader horizons of contemporary human experience. Thanks to his genius this generation has been able not only to say poetry anew but also to cause springs to pour forth from the language itself, springs that impart vigor and vitality to the imagination of generations to come.” Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, *Al-Nār wal-Jawhar: Dirāsāt fī al-Sh‘r* (Beirut: Dār al-Quds, 1975) 49; “Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb was the greatest of the poets of the new school of poetry; he left behind a legacy of poems that surpass in quantity and quality the corpus of any other poet.” Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mu‘ī Hījāzī, quoted in Fathī Sa‘īd, *Al-Ghurabā’* (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah lil-Ṭibā‘ah wal-Nashr, 1966) 79–80.

⁴⁰ The poem appeared in *Al-Ādāb* issue of March 1956. A correspondence by al-Sayyāb indicates, however, that it was being composed in November 1955. See correspondence to Suhayl Idrīs dated November 1, 1955 in Mājid al-Sāmarrā’ī, *Rasā’il al-Sayyāb* (Beirut: Al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1994) 120.

how literature was and still is, one of man's weapons with which to open up a path to a better life.⁴¹

The poem under discussion falls within the now familiar category of "Resistance Literature."⁴² Al-Sayyāb's decolonizing strategy involves, *inter alia*, reclaiming that to which *The Waste Land* lays claim, *i.e.*, the religio-mythological spaces of the "Near East."⁴³ It furthermore involves a re-centering process so that "In the Arab Maghrib" foregrounds concerns and preoccupations particular to the Arabs. Such foregrounding is sustained through borrowing from and allusion to Classical Arabic literary traditions, Islamic sources, especially the Qur'ān, Arab/Islamic history, the Christian heritage of the Near East, and occasionally other Western literary sources. Moreover, by adhering to the general scheme of the ancient Mesopotamian myth of death and resurrection (the Tammuz myth), the Arab poet is able to transcend *The Waste Land*'s vision and ultimately to repudiate that vision.

⁴¹ Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, "Wasā'il Ta'rif al-'Arab bi-Nitājihim al-Adabī al-Ḥadīth," *Al-Ādāb* Oct. 1956: 22. The realization that, its formal independence notwithstanding, Iraq was still colonized by Britain appears to have been widespread among contemporary Iraqi intellectuals. The leading Iraqi poetess Nāzik al-Malā'ikah, for example, cites as one of the reasons for the melancholy note of her first verse collection (*Āshiqat al-Layl*, 1947) "my exasperation over the British colonization of Iraq, my resentment of the Iraqi government which was represented by Nūri al-Sa'īd [pro-British Prime Minister until 1958 when the Monarchy was overthrown] and 'Abd al-Ilāh [the Regent]." Nāzik al-Malā'ikah, "Al-Shi'r fī Ḥayātī," *Al-Majallah al-'Arabīyyah lil-Thaqāfah* 4 (1983): 189. For a testimonial of al-Sayyāb's anti-colonial activism see, for example, Khālīš 'Azmī, *Ṣafahāt Maṭwiyyah min Adab al-Sayyāb* (Baghdad: Ministry of Information, 1971) 9–12.

⁴² In her important work, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), Barbara Harlow states that [t]he term "resistance" (*muqāwamah*) was first applied in a description of Palestinian literature in 1966 by the Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani in his study *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948–1966*. The term, however, occurs in an earlier essay by the Jordanian critic 'Isā al-Nā'ūrī, which he presented to a conference on contemporary Arabic literature held in Rome, 16–20 October 1961 and is included in the proceedings of that conference. In the essay al-Nā'ūrī defines Arabic literature of the post-1948 era as: "a literature of struggle, or a resistance literature 'Adab Muqāwamah,' or a literature of liberation." 'Isā al-Nā'ūrī, "Al-Adīb al-'Arabī wal-Thaqāfah al-'Ālamiyyah," *Al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āsir: Proceedings of the Rome Conference on Contemporary Arabic Literature*, Rome, 16–20 October 1961, ed. Simon Jargy (N.p.: Adwā', 1962?) 67.

⁴³ The following remarks by al-Sayyāb indicate a consciousness on his part with respect to the "ownership" of such mythological space:

There is another group of younger Arab poets, however, who read and understood Eliot and were influenced by his spirit as well as by his technique. These poets saw in *The Waste Land* a most vehement lampoon of Capitalist society

The diverse sources on which al-Sayyāb draws notwithstanding, *The Waste Land* remains a pervasive influence on “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī,” the intertext on which al-Sayyāb’s text is contingent and without which it cannot be fully recuperated.⁴⁴ For this reason, I shall employ the terms “basal text” to refer to *The Waste Land* and “lateral text” in reference to al-Sayyāb’s. These two terms, I would submit, characterize the unique interrelatedness of certain texts. Pointing to the usefulness of these two terms in general literary and critical studies, however, does not diminish that of other terms in current usage.

“In the Arab Maghrib”⁴⁵ [7]
 [To the great Arab *mujāhid* Messali al-Hadj]
 I read my name on a rock
 Here, in the desolation of the desert,

by comparison to which would pale all the lampooning by Communist poets for all its malignity and rancor. They saw in [*The Waste Land*], on the other hand, [Eliot’s] lampoon of societies which abandoned true human values, the sublime religious values. It is a lampoon that applies not only to Capitalist society, but also to Socialist society—in Communist countries. Indeed it applies to a certain extent to sick, backward societies including Arab society. [This group of Arab poets] saw how a Western poet was able to benefit from *their own symbols*, such as the symbols of Tammuz and Osiris, he thus called their attention to a matter to which they had previously paid no attention” [emphasis added].

Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, “Al-İltizām wal-lā İltizām fī al-Adab al-‘Arabī al-Ḥadīth,” *Al-Adab al-‘Arabī al-Mu‘āşir: Proceedings of the Rome Conference on Contemporary Arabic Literature*, Rome, 16–20 October 1961, ed. Simon Jargy (N.p.: Aḍwā’, 1962?) 249–50.

⁴⁴ On the influence of Eliot on modern Arabic poetry al-Sayyāb writes:

It is inevitable in this respect that we refer to the powerful influence of the distinguished English poet T. S. Eliot, especially that of his poem “The Waste Land,” “Al-Arḍ al-Kharāb” on committed poetry in modern Arabic literature. . . . It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that modern European civilization has not had to contend with a more vehement nor more profound lampoon (*hijā’*) than that directed at it by T. S. Eliot in his poem “The Waste Land.”

Al-Sayyāb, “Al-İltizām wal-lā İltizām” 248–49. Al-Sayyāb’s interpretation of *The Waste Land* as *hijā’* (lampoon) may have contributed to the somewhat declamatory tone of “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī.”

⁴⁵ *Al-Ādāb* [Beirut] March 1956: 6–7. For the Arabic text, see Appendix 7.

The first critical commentary on the poem appeared in a subsequent issue of the Beirut literary review *Al-Ādāb*. The commentary, by the Egyptian poet Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, came in the midst of an ongoing feud between the two poets, which lasted from 1953 to 1956 and centered on the merits of their respective poetry. Predictably, the commentary was unfavorable: ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr rejected what he believed was al-Sayyāb’s conception of the war in Algeria “as another Crusade.” He further complained that several lines of the poem were unscannable (the poem represents an attempt at employing varied meters: with the exception of four lines which are in *al-Rajaz* meter the remainder of the poem is in *al-Wāfir*). *Al-Ādāb* April 1956: 63.

On a red brick,
 On a grave. How does one feel when he sees his grave?
 He sees it and is perplexed by it:
 Is he alive or dead? For it suffices him not

5

This prompted a rebuttal from al-Sayyāb much of which he devotes to refuting ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr’s charges of metrical lapses. *Al-Ādāb* June 1956: 74. For a discussion of al-Sayyāb’s attempt at employing varied meters see: Muṣṭafā al-Sa’danī, *Al-Taḡhrīb fī al-Shi’r al-‘Arabī al-Mu’āṣir: Bayn al-Taḡrīb wal-Mughāmarah* (Alexandria: Munsha’at al-Ma’ārif, 1988) 119–21. See also Ḥasan Nāzim, “Li-Mādhā Kāna Shi’r al-Sayyāb Shi’ran Kabīran,” *Al-Ādāb* 1–2 Jan.-Feb. (1996) 59.

A comprehensive treatment of the life and corpus of al-Sayyāb is Issa J. Boullata, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: Ḥayātuhu wa-Shi’ruhu* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1971). Another major study of al-Sayyāb is Iḥsān ‘Abbās’s, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: Dirāsah fī Ḥayātihī wa-Shi’rīhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1969) especially pages 225–321. Works that make references to or contain some discussion of the poem include: Ḥasan Tawfiq, *Shi’r Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: Dirāsah Fanniyyah wa-Fikriyyah* (Beirut: Al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1979) 204–06; Pieter Smoor, “The Influence of T. S. Eliot on a Representative Modern Arab Poet, Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb,” *Centennial Hauntings: Pope, Byron and Eliot in the Year 88*, ed. C. C. Barfoot and Theo D’Haen (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1990) 347–50; Ḥasan Nāzim, “Li-Mādhā Kāna Shi’r al-Sayyāb Shi’ran Kabīran,” *Al-Ādāb* 1–2 Jan.-Feb. (1996) 59; Mansour Guissouma, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: essai sur la créativité poétique* (Tunis: Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de Manouba, 1989) 147–151; Mājid al-Sāmarrā’ī, *Rasā’il al-Sayyāb*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1994) 120–21; Iliyā al-Ḥāwī, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: Shā’ir al-Anāshid wal-Marāthī*, part 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, n.d.) 95–8; Muṣṭafā al-Sa’danī, *Al-Taḡhrīb fī al-Shi’r al-‘Arabī al-Mu’āṣir: Bayn al-Taḡrīb wal-Mughāmarah* (Alexandria: Munsha’at al-Ma’ārif, 1988) 119–21; Jalāl al-Khayyāt, “Al-Tabshīr bil-Thawrah wa-Qiyāmuhā fī al-Shi’r al-‘Irāqī al-Mu’āṣir,” *Al-Shi’r wal-Thawrah: Mukhtārāt min al-Abhāth al-Muqaddamah li-Mihrājān al-Mirbad al-Thālith 1974* (Baghdad: Dār al-Ḥurriyyah, 1975) 57–8. A translation of the poem by Lena Jayyusi and Christopher Middleton is in *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) 437–442. A more recent study on al-Sayyāb that devotes several pages to a discussion of the poem is Terri DeYoung, *Placing the Poet: Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb and Postcolonial Iraq* (Albany: SUNNY Press: 1998) 81–95. The difference between my work and previous treatments of al-Sayyāb, however, is one of focus: the present inquiry is concerned not so much with Eliot’s influence on al-Sayyāb as with the manner in which al-Sayyāb re-writes Eliot as a decolonizing strategy.

Works on the influence of Eliot in modern Arabic literature include the following: ‘Abd al-Wāhid Lu’lu’ah, *Al-Nafkh fī al-Ramād: Dirāsāt Naqdīyyah* (Baghdad: Dār al-Rashīd, 1982) 169–98; Mohammad Shaheen, “Eliot in Modern Arabic Poetry,” *T. S. Eliot: Man and Poet*, vol. 1, ed. Laura Cowan (Orono, Maine: The National Poetry Foundation, 1990) 151–64; Nayif al-‘Ajlūnī, “Al-Turāth wal-Mu’āṣarah: Muthāqafah Mujziyyah Bayn al-Sayyāb wa-Eliot,” *Al-Bāḥiṭh*, 13. Jan.-March (1994) 33–50; Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, “Min al-Marji’iyyah al-Gharbiyyah ilā al-Marji’iyyah al-‘Arabiyyah: Al-Uṣṭūrāh wa-Taḥawwulātuhā fī al-Qaṣīdah al-‘Arabiyyah al-Mu’āṣirah,” *Al-Mu’aththirāt al-‘Ajnabiyyah fī al-Shi’r al-‘Arabī al-Mu’āṣir: Proceedings of al-Halaqah al-Naqdiyyah fī Mihrājān Jarash al-Thālith ‘Ashar*, ed. Fakhrī Ṣāliḥ (Beirut: Al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1995) 47–55; Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, *Al-Nār wal-Jawhar: Dirāsāt fī al-Shi’r* (Beirut: Dār al-Quds, 1975) 49–76; *Al-Rihlah al-Thāminah: Dirāsāt Naqdīyyah* (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-‘Asriyyah, 1967) 21–9; Rashīd

That he should see a shadow of himself on the sands,
 Like a dust-covered minaret
 Like a graveyard
 Like vanished glory 10
 Like a minaret upon which the name of Allah reverberated
 And on which a name of His was carved
 And Muhammad was an inscription on a green brick
 Exulting high on it . . .
 But now dust 15
 And fires eat at his meaning,
 And invaders kick him without boots
 Without a foot.
 From him bleed, without blood,
 Wounds without pain 20
 For he has died . . .
 And we died in him, both the dead and the living.
 We are all dead
 I and Muhammad and Allah.
 And this is our grave: the ruins
 of a dust-covered minaret 25

Mubārak, *Mithāt ‘Arabīyyah wa-Sharḥīyyah fī al-Shīr al-‘Arabī al-Ḥadīth* (N.p.: Dār Māhir, 1995) 169–98; Muḥammad Banīs, *Al-Shīr al-‘Arabī al-Ḥadīth* (Casablanca: Dār Tubqāl, 1990) 200–4, 213–22, 261–65; Anas Dāwūd, *Al-Uṣṭūrah fī al-Shīr al-‘Arabī al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: Dār al-Jil, 1975) 213–98; S. Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry: 1800–1970* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976) 196–288; Issa J. Boullata, “The Poetic Technique of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab,” *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1980) 232–43; Nazeer el-Azma, “Free Verse in Modern Arabic Literature,” diss., Indiana U., 1969, 123–63, 178–96; “The Tammuzi Movement and the Influence of T. S. Eliot on Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb,” *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1980) 215–31; ‘Alī Shalash, “T. S. Eliot fī al-Majallāt al-Adabīyyah: 1939–1952” *Fuṣūl* 3–4 (1983) 311–15; Arieḥ Loya, “Al-Sayyāb and the Influence of T. S. Eliot,” *Muslim World* 61 (1971) 187–201.

Other works that deal with the life and corpus of al-Sayyāb include: Nājī ‘Allūsh, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: Sīrah Shakhṣīyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Awdah, 1974); ‘Alī ‘Izzat, *Al-Lughah wal-Dalālah fī al-Shīr: Dirāsah Naqdīyyah fī Shīr al-Sayyāb wa-‘Abd al-Sabūr* (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Ammah lil-Kitāb, 1976) especially pages 21–46; Khālīṣ ‘Azmī, *Ṣafahāt Maṭwīyyah fī Adab al-Sayyāb* (Baghdad: Ministry of Information, 1971); Haydar Tawfiq Bayḍūn, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: Rā’id al-Shīr al-‘Arabī al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1991); Muḥammad al-Tunjī, *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb wal-Madhāhib al-Shīrīyyah al-Mu‘āṣirah* (Beirut: Dār al-Anwār, 1968). See also Salma Khadra Jayyusi, “Modernist Poetry in Arabic,” *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 132–79; *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 530–747; Kamāl Khayr Beik, *Harakat al-Ḥadīthah fī al-Shīr al-‘Arabī al-Mu‘āṣir* (N.p.: Al-Mashriq lil-Tibā‘ah, 1982) 41–62; Jalāl al-Khayyāt, *Al-Shīr al-‘Irāqī al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1970) 170–201; M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975) 250–58.

On it are inscribed the names of Muhammad and Allah,
 On scattered shards
 Of brick and pottery.
 O grave of the deity, on the daylight have fallen
 The shadows of a thousand spears and elephants 30
 And the color of Abraha
 And what the guide's hand reflected from it,
 And the woeful and defaced Ka'ba.
 I read my name on a rock,
 On two graves between which lies
 the span of generations, 35
 That makes this pit
 Contain two: my great grandfather—and mere sand
 And mere black powder from him that have settled in his grave—
 And me, his son in his death, and the morsel of clay.
 From my grandfather would flow 40
 With the tide
 A cry that fills the shores: "O valleys of ours, rise up in revolt!
 O this blood lingering on through the generations
 O heritage of the masses,
 Shatter and crush these chains now 45
 And like an earthquake
 Shake off the yoke, or crush it and with the yoke crush us!"
 Our god was strutting about
 Among the bands of the heroes,
 From campsite to campsite 50
 From banner to banner
 The mighty god of the Ka'ba,
 Yesterday in Dhū Qār he donned
 A coat of mail whose edges bore traces of al-Nu'mān's blood
 The god of Muhammad, and of my Arab fathers 55
 Was sighted in the Rif Mountains bearing the standard
 of the revolutionaries,
 But in Jaffa the people saw him weeping in the ruins of a home.
 And we saw him one day descend upon our land from the clouds:
 Wounded he was walking in our quarters and begging,
 But we did not bandage his wound, 60
 Nor did any of us, his servants, sacrifice to him
 Anything other than bread and livestock!
 While the voices of the worshippers tremble with his lamentations.
 Whenever they prostrate themselves blood oozes,
 Then a mouth hurriedly bandages it 65
 With (Qur'anic) verses the wound spurns,
 Which allay our fear of our knowledge that we will revive him
 When revolutionaries from among us jubilate,
 "We shall redeem him!"
 From the darkness there descended on our dwellings

A swarm of locusts, scorching them. 70
 It was as if the waters of the Tigris, where [the swarm of locusts]
 turned back
 Testified to it with blood and ink.
 Was it not its judgment that had so stunned the pregnant women
 That they gave birth to naught but ashes?
 And that shod, with the crescents
 of the remnants of minarets, 75
 The hooves of a steed?
 And that came to al-Shām dragging on its soil
 The feet of two lions hungry in the heart?
 To the hungrier of the two lions it fed Jesus
 And quenched its thirst from the water of baptism 80
 It then bit the Prophet of Mecca . . . so that the deserts
 And all of the East hasten to Jihād?
 Has it returned today in order to take revenge on us for defeating it?
 And because Allah remains in our villages, and we did not kill Him?
 Nor from hunger did we ever eat Him? 85
 Nor for money did we sell Him
 As they did
 Their god whom they made from gold we had toiled for?
 As they ate him when they were hungry—
 Their god whom we had, from our bloodied bread,
 created? 90
 And in Paris harlots take
 Their pillows from the agony of Christ
 While sterility passed the night planting in their guts
 The mouth of the dragon: hissing
 And hurling at our sanctuaries 95
 Iron legions, like horsemen but without souls,
 That encroach beyond Mecca upon fortresses we built
 And upon the mountain slopes of Yathrib.
 I read my name on a rock . . .
 And between two names in the desert 100
 The world of the living drew a breath
 As the blood of the veins flows between one pulse and another
 And from a red brick standing over a pit
 There lit the features of the land
 Without a gleam 105
 Blood in it, then [the blood] named [the land]
 That [the land] might take its meaning from [the blood],
 That I might know that it is my land,
 That I might know that is part of me,
 That I might know that it is my past,
 which I cannot live without, 110
 That I would be dead without [the past],
 walking among [the land's] dead.

Is that clamorous valley full of standards ours?
 Is this the color of our past
 That glowed from the windows of al-Ḥamrā'
 And from a green brick 115
 On which a remnant of our blood writes the name of Allah?
 Is this the sound of the call to the dawn prayer?
 Or is it the battle cry of the revolutionaries
 Rising up from our fortresses?
 Graves went into labor to resurrect the dead in millions,
 And Muhammad and his Arab god and the Anṣār rose up: 120
 Verily our god is with(in) us.

The title “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī” announces the poem to be about the geographic region known as “the Arab Maghrib” which comprises the present countries of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.⁴⁶ This, however, is no ordinary title; it encodes multiple connotative possibilities that are not immediately accessible. These possibilities derive from the word “*al-maghrib*.” This noun denotes “the west” as opposed to “the east.” An equally common denotation of the word “*al-maghrib*,” however, is “the hour of sunset,” “dusk.” Viewed thus, and because it is qualified by the adjective *al-‘Arabī*, “the Arab” the connotative meanings of the title begin to unfold: the poem is about Arab decline, the Arab twilight as seen by the poet in the mid-1950s.⁴⁷ This tentative political interpretation of the poem is at once supported by the dedication of the poem “To the great Arab *mujāhid* Messali al-Hadj.”⁴⁸ The Arabness of the poem first introduced in the title is thus reinforced in the dedication. Even at this very early stage, it becomes clear that the poem is an “Arab poem.” The importance of such unrelenting emphasis on the Arabness of the Maghrib region and on that of Messali al-Hadj becomes clear if we recall the fact that in the mid-twentieth century the very identity of the Maghrib and its inhabitants was contested by French colonialists, to whom much of the region, especially Algeria, was “*française*,” and the anti-colonial forces in the forefront of which was Messali al-Hadj.

⁴⁶ Tunisia and Morocco became independent in 1956; Algeria won its independence in 1962.

⁴⁷ DeYoung translates “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī” as “In Arab North Africa.” Such rendition, however, tends to diminish the connotative possibilities of the poem’s title. DeYoung 81–95.

⁴⁸ Messali al-Hadj (1898–1974) was an Algerian nationalist leader who fought for an Arab Muslim independent state in Algeria.

Structurally, the poem is divided into three parts, each of which is introduced by the verbal sentence: *qara'tu ismī 'alā ṣakhrāh* "I read my name on a rock." These divisions, however, do not indicate thematic autonomy. There is, as we shall see, considerable overlapping among the component parts, as when a theme started in one part overflows into the next.

Part 1, which runs from line 1 to 33, seems to correspond to the first cycle of the Tammuz myth, that of the death of Tammuz.⁴⁹ It also accords closely with the basal text's opening section, "The Burial of the Dead," on which, as on other parts of that poem, it draws. The speaker of the opening passage appears to have woken up (from death) and is perplexed as to whether he is alive or dead. This apparent evocation of the *Aṣḥāb al-Kāhf* motif prompted one scholar to call this and certain other poems by al-Sayyāb "*al-Qaṣā'id al-Kahfiyyah*," ("the Cave Poems"):⁵⁰

I read my name on a rock
Here, in the desolation of the desert,
On a red brick,
On a grave.

⁴⁹ Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā writes that "[i]t was by coincidence that Badr became acquainted with this myth in two chapters from a volume I had translated from *The Golden Bough* by Sir James Frazer (the two chapters were published in a Baghdad magazine in late 1954). When Badr read these two chapters he found in them an immense poetic means which he henceforth utilized for his idea for more than six years during which he wrote his most exquisite and profound verse." Jabrā, *Al-Rihlah al-Thāminah* 24.

⁵⁰ The reference is to *Aṣḥāb al-Kāhf*, "the Companions of the Cave," the name given in the Qur'ān (18: 9–26) to the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. See 'Abbās 267–75. 'Abbās considers the poem as belonging to al-Sayyāb's *al-Qaṣā'id al-Kahfiyyah* (the Cave Poems), as well as to his "Arab Poems," the Pan-Arab poems al-Sayyāb published in *Al-Ādāb* review in the 1950s which include: "Qāfilat al-Ḍayā" (on the plight of the Palestinian refugees), "Risālah min Maqbarah" (a tribute to the Algerian resistance), and "Būr Sa'īd" (on the 1956 Tripartite Aggression against Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel), all of which were published in 1956. 'Abbās asserts that, unlike "The Canticle of the Rain" which he sees as informed by the Tammuz myth, "the Arab poems are not subject to the Tammuz symbol." He cites as reasons for al-Sayyāb's aversion to the myth during the *Al-Ādāb* stage of his poetic career the incongruity between the themes of al-Sayyāb's poems of this period and the theme of the Tammuz myth, al-Sayyāb's failure to sufficiently assimilate the myth, and the fact that the *Al-Ādāb* period represents the time of his acute consciousness of Arab nationalism. To employ pagan symbols would have run counter not just to the tenets of Islam but also to Arab nationalism which al-Sayyāb saw as indissolubly linked to Islam. 'Abbās 267–75, 303–5. What 'Abbās fails to see, however, is that the Tammuz myth, Arabized and Islamicized, proffers a structural

The first line contains two false leads: the verbal sentence *qara'tu ismī* (I read my name) recalls a Qur'ānic verse which begins thus: *iqra' bismī rabbika al-ladhī khalaq* "Recite in the name of your Lord who created" (96: 1). This was the first verse "revealed" to the Prophet Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel. The collocation at first intimates a flourishing/dawn of faith. The second of what turn out to be false leads relates to the word "*ṣakhrāh*" which denotes "a rock," thus suggesting solidity and constancy. Seeing the speaker's name etched in stone might suggest stable identity untrammelled by the vicissitudes of time and circumstance. The galloping upbeat meter of the line, moreover, contributes to furthering this sense of self-assurance and certitude. This sense, however, is abruptly undermined in the following three lines, the first of which identifies a locale: a desert. The desert, normally the nexus of Arab authenticity, is prevented from being so by the first noun of the genitive construction of which it forms a part. This noun characterizes it as desolate and empty. It thus evokes mainly a wasteland, an *Arab* wasteland. Here again, the meter collaborates to evoke a sense of death, desolation, and stillness. This is effected in part by the *jinās* (paronomasia) between *ṣakhrāh* (a rock) and *ṣahrā'* (a desert) with *ṣahrā'* retroactively defining the *ṣakhrāh* of the first line. Moreover, the additional *alif* followed by a vowelless glottal stop has the effect of causing the solidity of the first line to disintegrate. The absence of vocalization at the end of *ṣahrā'* imparts a sense of stillness, even of death, which is precluded in the first line by the fast pace and the compactness

as well as a thematic focus for "Fī al-Maghrib al-'Arabī." Issa J. Boullata, however, includes the poem among what he calls al-Sayyāb's "Tammūzite poems" and rightly notes that in the majority of such poems the poet's "emphasis is mostly on the present suffering of the Arabs, their tragic malaise being very much his own personally. In hopeful moments, he extols the heroic, redemptive, aspects of Arab sacrifice and death, as in 'Ilā Jamīla Būḥayrid,' 'Risālāh min Maqbara,' 'Fī al-Maghrib al-'Arabī.'" Issa J. Boullata, "The Poetic Technique of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: 1926–1964," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 2 (1971) 110. DeYoung recognizes that "the chain of events described in the poem follows the pattern of death/rebirth, where the sacrificial death of a youth, the 'beloved of the gods' (in this case the speaker), leads directly to the regeneration of the land." DeYoung 86. There are two points to be made about this statement: first, in the poem what is emphasized is not the speaker's death but Muhammad's. The speaker's death is consequential to that of Muhammad: "For he has died/And we died in him, both the dead and the living" (lines 21–22); second, what leads to the regeneration in the concluding part of the poem is not the sacrificial death of the speaker but the willingness on the part of the Arabs as a collectivity to make redeeming sacrifices.

of the line. This downtrend continues, accelerated in the third line by *ḥamrāʾ* (red) which, like *ṣahrāʾ*, ends with an *alif* and a vowelless glottal stop, until it reaches “rock” bottom phonetically and metaphorically in the first part of line 4, “*alā qabr*” “on a grave,” a pit.⁵¹ The verse, therefore, points forward to the main preoccupation of this part of the poem: death. So far, however, this death is individual, the speaker’s own death. It is also tentative: there are overt signs of death but these are shrouded in the uncertainty of the interrogative in line 6 “Is he alive or dead?”

A noticeable feature of this poem is the prevalent use of shadow symbolism. This use of the shadow as a motif may have been suggested to al-Sayyāb by Eliot’s use of it in the basal text:

Only
 There is shadow under this red rock,
 (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
 And I will show you something different from either
 Your shadow at morning striding behind you
 Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you.⁵²
 (*The Waste Land*, ll. 24–29)

Eliot’s shadows are generally taken to be an allusion to Isaiah’s vision of Christ’s Kingdom: “And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” (Isaiah 32: 2)⁵³ Al-Sayyāb’s use of the shadow motif appears, however, to aim for a different effect. From the context of this passage and from similar uses of the shadow motif elsewhere by al-Sayyāb, it appears that

⁵¹ ʾĪyā al-Ḥāwī maintains that “the rock, the red brick, and the grave are symbols of the vanished great past, which evoke in the poet feelings of pride and revulsion at the same time.” Al-Ḥāwī, part 2, 95–6.

⁵² *The Waste Land*, ll. 24–29. This passage is also quoted by Pieter Smoor who writes that,

[I]n his nationalistic, pan-Arab period, Sayyāb took a closer look at particular passages of Eliot’s poetry, and sometimes provided them with his own interpretation, as was the case with his rendering of a well-known passage from *The Waste Land*, Part I, “The Burial of the Dead”. . . . This picture, adapted to Sayyāb’s own uses, appears in his poem, “In the Arab West.” Despite its title, the poem’s subject is the whole of Arab civilization and its glorious past. Eliot’s “red rock” has become a “boulder” and a “red tile,” upon which the name of the poet Sayyāb, rather than “Petrus,” for example, has been written. Smoor 347–8.

⁵³ Robert L. Schwarz, *Broken Images: A Study of The Waste Land* (London: Associated University Press, 1988) 86.

the shadow of line 7, “That he should see a shadow of himself on the sands,” connotes not Eliot’s shadows but rather Eliot’s “little life” that winter feeds with dried tubers.⁵⁴ A further source of the shadow imagery of line 7 can be identified as Edith Sitwell’s poem “Poor Young Simpleton”:

We watched the somnambulists, rope-walkers, argonauts,
 Avatars, tamers of steel-birds and fugitives
 From dream and reality, emigrants, mourners,
 And each with his Shadow, to prove that Man lives!⁵⁵

Like the rock motif, moreover, the “shadow” appears to be a floating symbol that carries different connotations with successive occurrences. Lines 1–7 can be described as “self-centered,” focusing on the speaker’s own consciousness. Beginning with line 8 there is a noticeable progression with the poem’s focus shifting from the personal to the collective, or rather the personal and collective begin to be fused. The three short lines 8–10 can be viewed as capsule versions of much of the poem, each of which hints at a particular theme which is then taken up and developed in the poem: a dust-covered minaret, a graveyard, and vanished glory. The minaret motif first introduced in line 8 is elaborated in lines 11–28. In its present state the minaret,

⁵⁴ In a later poem al-Sayyāb addresses his son Ghaylān as his shadow extending after his own death. “Marḥā Ghaylān,” *Dīwān Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Awdah, 1971) 326.

⁵⁵ “Poor Young Simpleton” (lines 41–44), Edith Sitwell, *The Canticle of the Rose: Selected Poems 1920–1947* (London: Macmillan, 1949) 173. On al-Sayyāb’s use of Sitwell’s “steel-birds,” see, for example, his poem “Marthiyyat Jaykūr.” Al-Sayyāb, *Dīwān* 403. See also Lu’lu’ah 182. Lu’lu’ah, a literary scholar and a friend of al-Sayyāb, writes that around the mid-1950s, “Badr [Shākīr al-Sayyāb] borrowed a volume of poems by an English poetess [Dame Edith Sitwell] who became famous with the publication of her *The Canticle of the Rose* which contains selections from poetry she wrote between 1920 and 1947. The book was published in 1949. Of this volume professor Jabrā [Ibrāhīm Jabrā] had a copy (possibly the only copy then in Iraq), so Badr borrowed it and never returned it to its owner [Jabrā] to this day [1981].” Lu’lu’ah 178. Lu’lu’ah, furthermore, makes the observation that the title of al-Sayyāb’s masterpiece “The Canticle of the Rain,” was chiselled out of the titles of two of Sitwell’s poems: “The Canticle of the Rose,” and “Still Falls the Rain,” both of which were contained in Sitwell’s aforementioned volume. Lu’lu’ah 182–85. See also el-Azma, “Free Verse in Modern Arabic Literature” 173. Al-Sayyāb’s “The Canticle of the Rain” was published in *Al-Ādāb* in August 1954—it was composed in 1953 during the poet’s exile in Kuwait, see letter to Suhayl Idrīs dated March 25, 1954, al-Sāmarrā’ī 105–6. Al-Sayyāb was therefore familiar with Sitwell’s works when in 1955 he wrote “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī.”

an emblem of Arab/Islamic civilization, is described as *mu'afarah*, that is, "dust-covered," suggesting mourning, death, and dereliction.

The striking aspect of the elaborative section is the temporal contrastive switch between past and present effected through the alternative use of the Perfect and the Imperfect tenses. Lines 11–14 are dominated by verbs that denote the past: *taraddada* (reverberated), *khutṭa* (was carved), *kāna* (was). These lines recall historical moments in which the minaret/Arab-Islamic civilization was in its heyday. From the top of the minaret the name of Allah, the sound of faith, rang out. Nor was the name of Allah ringing out of the minaret the only sign of the certitude of belief; His name was inscribed on it. This is the second time in the poem so far that the reader encounters a name; first, it was the speaker's name inscribed on a rock in the opening line. The difference is that although the verb of the opening line is in the Perfect tense, it actually indicates a recent state of affairs bordering on the present, whereas the verb of line 11 indicates distant past as do the verbs of lines 12–14.

Another personage whose name was once inscribed on, significantly, a green *ājūrah* "baked brick" is Muhammad. The change in the color of the *ājūrah* from red in line 3 to green in line 13 is not fortuitous but relates to the use of color symbolism in the Arab/Islamic tradition. In that tradition red is often the color of the dead, of destructive fire, and of blood. Green, by contrast, is the color of spring whose fructifying rains clothe the land in vernal vegetation. Islam's standard, moreover, is green. The Prophet Muhammad and his descendants are generally believed to have worn green garments.

The "heights" of line 14 signify the heights once attained by Arab civilization in its golden age. The juxtaposition of a past state of glory (lines 11–14) with the description of a lamentable present in the following lines serves to throw into relief the bleakness and hollowness of the present. The change of color thus reflects an inauspicious change of status, a downfall. This downfall is literal as well as metaphorical: literal in the sense that a name once inscribed on the "heights" of a minaret can be found in that minaret now reduced to rubble; metaphorical in the sense that the heights of civilization he/his people once attained have now been reduced to a state of civilizational dissolution. The name/Muhammad is at present being consumed by earth and fires. Significantly, the impact of these elements is upon the meaning first and foremost. Muhammad/the inscription bleeds at the impact of kicks directed at him/it by invaders

so far unidentified and thus standing for all anti-Arab forces of more recent times. The insistent repetition of the negative compound *bilā* “without” in lines 17–20 and elsewhere in the poem appears to suggest influence by T. S. Eliot, as in “The Hollow Men”:

Shape without form, shade without color,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion.⁵⁶

Al-Sayyāb’s use of the negative compound, however, represents a significant thematic transmutation. In al-Sayyāb a pattern is discernible whereby an image, found in Eliot is taken up, transformed and imbued with new connotations that derive their connotative potential from the new ambience in which the image occurs.⁵⁷ In lines 17 and 18, the kicking directed at (the inscription of) Muhammad “without boots/Without a foot” suggests a cultural onslaught rather than a physical act.⁵⁸ Again, the reference in lines 19–20 to the wounds that bleed from (the inscription of) Muhammad without blood or pain is shown in line 20 to imply a state of death. Muhammad’s death leads (lines 21–23 reveal) to “our” death:

For he has died . . .
And we died in him, both the dead and the living.
We are all dead⁵⁹

The pronominal suffix in *mutnā* (we died) in line 22 indicates a collectivity, all the Arabs, those who are alive and those dead all die as a consequence of Muhammad’s death. These lines have elicited an interpretation to the effect that “Muhammad was life and pride, his name was glory and immortality, but today [1956] he is no more than a name, no more than rigid, shattered, and spiritless grandeur.”⁶⁰ This interpretation, which was endorsed by al-Sayyāb himself,⁶¹ shows a deep consciousness on the part of the modern Arab of the extent of Arab decline, a decline made all the more manifest by the recollection of former Arab glory. What it does not show, however, is the way in which al-Sayyāb has transposed Eliot. The immediate

⁵⁶ “The Hollow Men” 11–12, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952) 56. ‘Izzat 37–8.

⁵⁷ Lu’lu’ah 181–85.

⁵⁸ ‘Abbās 271.

⁵⁹ ‘Abbās 269.

⁶⁰ *Al-Ādāb* May 1956: 59.

⁶¹ *Al-Ādāb* June 1956: 74.

source of lines 21–23 is the basal text’s description of the crucifixion of Christ in “What the Thunder Said:”

He who was living is now dead
 We who were living are now dying
 (*The Waste Land*, V. 328–9)

The minaret motif might be taken to represent a transformation of the approach to the Chapel Perilous of the Grail legend with its images of desolation and dereliction. Eliot, as has been noted above, is by no means the sole influence in the poem; the list of the dead in line 24 clearly suggests Christian Trinitarianism transposed/Arabized and inverted to correlate with the present (the 1950s) Arab circumstance as perceived by the poet—inverted as the doctrine of the Trinity holds the three Persons, *i.e.*, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to be alive.

In addition to the description of the Chapel Perilous of the Grail Legend, found in the basal text, al-Sayyāb’s choice of the minaret motif may also have been suggested to him by an interpretation of *The Waste Land* that appeared in 1955 just before he began composing the poem under discussion and with which he became familiar. The interpretation in question was provided by M. Khouri in the form of a brief essay which appeared side by side with parts of al-Sayyāb’s better-known poem, “Min Ru’yā Fūkāy” (From the vision of Fukai) in the same issue of *Al-Ādāb*, the Beirut Pan-Arab literary review in which al-Sayyāb published most of his “Arab” poems. Referring to Eliot, Khouri writes: “During this period [1922–1939] he published *The Waste Land*, and ‘The Hollow Men,’ poems in which he portrays . . . ‘the feebleness of human life and the sterility of civilization,’ and laments—like someone standing in a grand ancient cathedral—its waste world.”⁶² It should be noted that contemporary Arab translators, including al-Sayyāb himself, were inclined to render *The Waste Land* as “*al-Ard al-Kharāb*,” (the ruined, ravaged land). Such a rendition tends to connote a physical rather than the spiritual wasteland that many Western commentators see in Eliot’s poem. This effect is discernible in lines 25–28 which initiate the graveyard section:

And this is our grave: the ruins of a dust-covered minaret
 On it are inscribed the names of Muhammad and Allah,

⁶² *Al-Ādāb* January 1955: 33.

On scattered shards
Of bricks and pottery.

These lines seem to echo “The Burial of the Dead” section of the basal text:

Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images.
(*The Waste Land*, ll. 20–22)

In the final passage, which rounds off Part 1 of the poem (29–33), the shadow symbolism first introduced in line 7 is heightened:

O grave of the deity, on the daylight have fallen
The shadows of a thousand spears and elephants
And the color of Abraha
And what the guide’s hand reflected from it,
And the woeful and defaced Ka’ba.

In this passage, however, the shadow, which was an unsubstantial proof of the speaker’s being alive in verse 7, is now cast by a multitude of spears and elephants. The reference is to the abortive raid on Mecca (the subject of Sūra 105 of the Qur’ān) carried out in the year of Prophet Muhammad’s birth, (*ca.* A.D. 570) by Abraha, the Abyssinian ruler of South Arabia, whose army included elephant(s). The shadow, now an entirely negative symbol, is also cast on the daylight by Abraha and is reflected (that is, Abraha’s shadow) by the guide’s hand. The allusion here is to the Arab collaborator who allegedly aided the Abyssinians’ campaign against Mecca by acting as a guide to Abraha.⁶³ In this passage, the invaders of line 17 are identified as the Abyssinians who sought to sack an Arab shrine. This passage initiates a “we/they” dichotomy whereby the “we” term integrates the modern Arabs with the forces of *khayr*, that is, benevolent forces, while “they” subsumes the forces of *sharr*, or the malevolent forces aligned against “us.”

The opening passage of Part 2 of the poem (lines 34–39) introduces yet another grave, that of the speaker’s great-grandfather.⁶⁴

⁶³ Jaroslav Stetkevych, *Muhammad and the Golden Bough: Reconstructing Arabian Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996) 36–48.

⁶⁴ On al-Sayyāb’s “fascination” with the grave motif, see Jabrā, *Al-Nār wal-Jawhar* 61.

Soon, however, the two graves dissolve into one “pit” which contains the great-grandfather and his great-grandson (the speaker) united in death (line 36). The “pit” also contains *maḥḍ rimāl* (mere sand) and *maḥḍ nuthāratin sawdāʾ* (mere black powder), death images that recall Eliot’s “handful of dust.” The closing line of this passage (line 39) draws heavily on Qurʾānic imagery and idiom. Borrowing from the Qurʾān in this line includes *mudghah* “morsel,” which occurs in the Qurʾān in 22: 5 and 23: 14 in reference to the stages of the creation of man. They further include *ṣaḥṣāl* “clay,” which occurs in 15: 33 and in 55: 14 also in reference to the creation of man.

Lines 40–47 contain the exhortation of the great-grandfather. Exhortation from the grave is a theme common in al-Sayyāb’s “Arab Poems”; in a poem entitled “Risālah min Maqbarah” (A Letter from a Graveyard) dedicated to the Algerian resistance fighters, al-Sayyāb’s speaker somewhat exasperatedly cries:

From the bottom of my grave I cry out

 Despair not of re-birth or resurrection.⁶⁵

Noticeable in the great-grandfather’s exhortation is an attempt, through the use of such aqueous diction as “*yaṭūfū*” (to flow), “*al-madd*,” (the tide) and “*al-Shuṭʿān*” (the shores), to evoke the image of “the drowned Phoenician sailor” of Eliot: a type of fertility god whose effigy was annually committed to the waves in an elaborate ceremony symbolizing the death to be followed by vernal re-birth.⁶⁶ In this section, as elsewhere in the poem, significant transformative activity takes place *vis-à-vis* the basal text. In “Death by Water,”

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
 Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
 And the profit and loss.
 (*The Waste Land*, IV. 312–14)

By contrast, the grandfather in al-Sayyāb’s poem issues forth exhortations to his descendants loud enough to fill the shores. Lines 40–47 contain what seems to be an attempt to identify the drowned god (a variation on Tammuz) as “my grandfather,” to lay claim to this

⁶⁵ Al-Sayyāb, *Dīwān* 389–93. Also quoted in al-Ḥāwī 98–9.

⁶⁶ Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957) 34–51.

body of mythology as properly belonging to “us,” *i.e.*, the Arabs.

Yet another possibility for reading “the Grandfather’s sermon” (lines 42–47) is as a transposed version of the “thunder’s sermon” in the basal text. Eliot’s re-presentation of the “thunder sermon” is generally viewed as regenerative in its intent. The words of the thunder would, if heeded, constitute a panacea for the ills of the West. Yet however insightful the words of the thunder in the context of the Eliotic wasteland and however great the potential benefits which would accrue to the inhabitants of that waste land, in so far as the *Arab* waste land is concerned, they are essentially irrelevant. More pertinent words are those that issue from the grandfather and include a call for revolution, to “crush these chains” (line 45), and to “shake off the yoke” of colonialism (line 47). This passage, therefore, identifies the causes that lie behind the lifelessness and desolation in the Arab lands as represented by the preponderance of graves in the first part of the poem. It is thus implied that if these words are heeded by the Arab “living dead,” a reversal will take place in the state of affairs that prevails in Part 1 of the poem; the death of Part 1 would be supplanted by a re-birth. The effect of the grandfather’s exhortation, moreover, is augmented by the allusion it makes to the pre-Islamic Arab belief that “if a man is slain and his death goes unavenged, an owl (*hāmāh*) will emerge from his grave and will continuously cry out for a drink until his slayer has been slain.”⁶⁷ It is further augmented by the denotations of the verb *yaṭūfū* in line 40, which include: to appear as a ghost, or a specter, to someone, often in his sleep. The exhortation thus invokes the age-old concept of the “genuine” Arabs as *Ubāt al-Ḍaym*, as those who resist oppression rather than accept it in supine submission.

Having sounded the call for revolt, the voice of the grandfather recedes as the remainder of this part of the poem is taken up by a largely ruminative discourse that parallels the “Lamentations” cycle of the Tammuz myth while alluding in several instances to the basal text. This part of the poem can be subdivided as follows:

Lines 48–56: our god in an exalted state

Lines 57–59: our god in a disgraced state

⁶⁷ *The Mufaḍḍaliyyat: An Anthology of Ancient Arabian Odes Compiled by al-Mufaḍḍal son of Muhammad*, ed. Charles James Lyall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921) 322. See also al-Ḥāwī 99–100.

Lines 60–68: causes of disgrace from within

Lines 69–98: causes of disgrace from without.

Lines 48–56 describe “our god” in an aggressive defensive posture. The use of the possessive in reference to god is sanctioned by Islamic scripture.⁶⁸ It is also convenient for the construction of a we/they dichotomy that is discernible throughout much of Part 2. The correspondence between the fortunes of a god and those of his believers is spelled out in highly unorthodox terms in an earlier poem by al-Sayyāb entitled “Marthiyat al-Ālihah” (Elegy for the Gods).⁶⁹ In brief, the fortunes of a god are but a reflection of those of his worshippers: their glory is his, their decline is his too. The former supremacy (of the god) of the Arabs is expressed in martial imagery and diction that evoke triumph, power, and mastery: the assurance of *yakhtāl* (strutting about, line 48), with bands of heroes in the following line, the overwhelming power of the mighty god of Ka’ba suggested by the use of the adjectival *al-Ĵabbār* (the mighty, line 52). The employment of the Dhū Qār motif reinforces this sense of former Arab preeminence. Dhū Qār is the name of a watering place in Iraq close to which a mytho-historic battle was fought in the opening decade of the seventh century between the Arabs and the Persians. In the battle, which may have been precipitated by the imprisonment of al-Nu‘mān b. al-Mundhir (d. 602),⁷⁰ the last Lakhmid ruler of the Arab kingdom of al-Ĥīrah, by the Sasanian king of Persia Khosrow Parviz (d. 628), the Arabs dealt an unexpected blow to the prestige of the Persian Empire.

⁶⁸ Instances of such sanction are: “And your God is One God “(2: 163), and “Your God is One God.” (16: 22)

⁶⁹ *Al-Ādāb* February 1955: 8.

⁷⁰ It is to be noted that the pre-Islamic Arab king of Ĥīrah shares with the anemone an identical name in Arabic: al-Nu‘mān (line 54). Frazer’s reference to anemone, with which al-Sayyāb was familiar through Jabrā’s translation, is as follows: [T]he scarlet anemone is said to have sprung from the blood of Adonis, or to have been stained by it; and as the anemone blooms in Syria about Easter, this may be thought to show that the festival of Adonis, or at least one of his festivals, was held in spring. The name of the flower is probably derived from Naaman (“darling”), which seems to have been an epithet of Adonis. The Arabs still call the anemone “wounds of the Naaman.” The red rose also was said to owe its hue to the same sad occasion; for Aphrodite, hastening to her wounded lover, trod on a bush of white roses; the cruel thorns tore her tender flesh, and her sacred blood dyed the white roses for ever red.

Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Part IV, *Adonis Attis Osiris*, vol. I, 3rd. ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1980) 225–6.

The reference to Dhū Qār is significant in that the battle was “nationalist,” as it were, rather than religious. Dhū Qār is one of the most celebrated of *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, tales of pre-Islamic Arab heroism used by Arab nationalists in the twentieth century for the construction of Arab identity. The reference to Dhū Qār immediately following the reference to the Kaʿba serves to subsume the latter in one unbroken tradition of Arabness, to integrate pagan Arab history with Arab/Islamic history. This is an attempt to reclaim a history that is often dismissed as paganism, the celebrating of which runs counter to the spirit of Islam.

This sub-section undergoes a temporal shift from distant to more recent past as the Arab deity is “sighted (*tarāʿā*) in the Rīf Mountains bearing the standard of the revolutionaries” (line 56). The line, however, equivocates. Implied in the verb *tarāʿā* is that a mere glimpse was caught of god, that “god in an exalted state” is not a felt presence but a possibility. Nevertheless, the image holds out a vision, however dim at this point, of ultimate resurrection. This image recalls lines 360–366 of the basal text which, Eliot relates in a note, “were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions” but which allude to Christ as he appeared to two of his disciples on the journey to Emmaus, as told in Luke 24: 13–15.⁷¹

This vision quickly fades into a description of “god in disgrace” (lines 57–59). The state of decline is thrown into relief by contrasting high and low points in Arab history. The locale of Jaffa is a low point in Arab history, site of Arab defeat and humiliation in more recent times. This low point becomes all the more poignant as it is juxtaposed with the immediately preceding Dhū Qār, site of Arab glory and triumph over non-Arabs (Persians). This sense of decline is augmented in the second half of line 57, which evokes a stock image of desolation, sterility, and loss. Such an image informs the prelude to many a Pre-Islamic and Islamic *qaṣīdah*, the *nasīb* section, in which the poet makes a teary halt at the melancholy ruins of the once thriving encampment of the tribe of his beloved.⁷² The

⁷¹ *The Complete Poems and Plays* 54, note to line 360.

⁷² Commenting on the similarities between this poem and the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah*, Mansour Guissouma writes:

Or, si la structure de ce poème semble, de prime abord, bien élaborée et bien renouée, approchée de tout près, elle ne dépassera pas de loin la structure classique du poème arabe de l'époque préislamique où le poète s'arrête devant *al-aḥlāl* (Les ruines et les traces) pour les interroger sur un passé disparu, une

image of god/the poet weeping at the ruins of a settlement contrasts sharply with that of a god proudly strutting about among numerous bands of intrepid followers.

Line 58 sets the stage for the remainder of the section, which delineates the reasons from within for the “death” of god (lines 59–68).⁷³ It is implied that the cardinal fault of the modern Arabs is their reluctance to make redeeming sacrifices. In the basal text in response to the command of the thunder, Eliot’s speaker ruminates:

Datta: what have we given?
 My friend, blood shaking my heart
 The awful daring of a moment’s surrender
 Which an age of prudence can never retract.
 (*The Waste Land*, V. 401–5)

With respect to the inhabitants of the Arab wasteland, the speaker charges that no ‘*abd*’ was willing to sacrifice “[a]nything but bread and livestock” (line 62).⁷⁴ The more common denotations of the word

bien-aimée qui s’est éloignée ou une tribu qui a émigré. A l’instar du poète classique, Sayyâb interroge non seulement le rocher, la brique rouge et la tombe, mais il s’adresse aussi à son “moi”, comme le faisait le poète classique qui s’invente un compagnon ou un ami souvent imaginaire auquel il demande, par la suite, de pleurer avec lui et de partager avec lui, le poids de la solitude et de l’angoisse. Une deuxième similitude entre ce poème de Sayyâb et le poème classique existe. Elle concerne le “je” de l’énonciation poétique qui apparaît comme un sujet prédominant et qui, lorsqu’il disparaît, se cache dans le poème classique sous le “nous” de *qawm* (fraction de tribu) ou de *qabîla* (tribu) et, dans le poème de Sayyâb, sous le nom de l’Islam, de Dieu, de Muḥammad, puis sous le “nous” du peuple. See Guissouma 150.

⁷³ Referring to lines 57–60 of the poem, DeYoung writes of “a less sanguine sight: of God, having descended from the heavens to the Palestinian city of Jaffa, now occupied by the Israeli army, walking among the crowds of the inhabitants in the beleaguered city who offer him a quick meal but do nothing to ‘bandage his wounds,’ nor do they seem willing to sacrifice anything they hold precious to help him.” According to this reading this part of the poem represents an indictment of the Palestinian inhabitants of Jaffa for their unwillingness to “sacrifice anything they hold precious.” This reading, however, takes no account of the fact that no Arab (poet or otherwise) would (at least publicly) blame the Palestinians for the Zionist aggression perpetrated against them. What leads DeYoung to this interpretation is a failure to discern two “independent” episodes/images in these lines; the first is that of god weeping at the remains of a Jaffa settlement (line 57); the second is that of God descending not on Jaffa but on “our lands” from the clouds (line 58–59). The target for the poet’s reproach are not the inhabitants of Jaffa who are, as DeYoung rightly notes, “beleaguered.” Rather, it is the “we” of lines 58, 60, which stands for the rest of the Arabs who are taken to task for their failure to come to the aid of their beleaguered Palestinian brethren. DeYoung 83.

⁷⁴ As an advocate of “committed” literature, al-Sayyâb attempts in “Fī al-Maghrib

‘*abd*’ in this context are one of the faithful, a believer in Allah. However, through the agency of the imagery of *aghlāl* (chains) contained in line 45 and that of *al-nīr* (the yoke) repeated twice in line 47, the word takes on connotation of enslavement (by the colonizer).

The affinity between “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī” and *The Waste Land* is further indicated in the closing lines of this sub-section. To the inhabitants of Eliot’s waste land,

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
(*The Waste Land*, ll. 1–4)

The inhabitants of this waste land, however, fear life and the rebirth that the spring rain brings, and are content to live in a winter that

... Kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
(*The Waste Land*, ll. 5–7)

Similarly, in lines 65–68 of the lateral text the inhabitants of the Arab wasteland are shown to fear the rebirth that would ensue as a result of an act of sacrifice:

Then a mouth hurriedly bandages it
With [Qur’ānic] verses the wound spurns,
Which allay our fear of our knowledge that we will revive him
When revolutionaries from among us jubilate, “We shall redeem him!”⁷⁵

An anti-colonial strategy often employed by Arab poets involves integrating modern colonizers with archetypal foes.⁷⁶ The function of the

al-‘Arabī” to highlight the shortcomings of contemporary Arab society. In this he saw himself as emulating Eliot who, al-Sayyāb believed, “undertook in his remarkable poem ‘The Waste Land’ a deep and sincere analysis of his society, nay, of the whole European society, an analysis that contains a large number of facts.” Al-Sayyāb, “Wasā’il Ta’rīf al-‘Arab bi-Nitājihim al-Adabī al-Ḥadīth,” *Al-Ādāb* Oct. 1956: 23.

⁷⁵ DeYoung translates lines 67–68 as follows: “[Those words] will cure our fear by [emphasis added] our knowledge that we will make him live/If the revolutionaries among us cry out jubilantly: ‘We will sacrifice ourselves for him!’” A closer examination of the lines, however, will show that such knowledge is not used as a cure for fear, as DeYoung’s rendition implies; such knowledge is the source of the fear of the inhabitants of the Arab waste land. DeYoung 83.

⁷⁶ ‘Abbās 268.

sub-section of the lateral text (lines 69–98) is twofold: to identify archetypal foes of the Arabs and to integrate modern foes in a tradition of animosity. Lines 69–82 are taken up by such an identification of archetypal adversaries the most fiendish of whom were the Mongols who swept through Arab/Muslim dominions in a massive onslaught that culminated in the sack of Baghdad in the year 1258. Lines 69–76 allude, through imagery and diction that evoke dissipation, defilement, and violation, to the horrors the Mongols visited on Arab lands. These lands are described evocatively as “*qurānā*” (line 69). The singular “*qaryah*” denotes “communal dwellings,” “a village,” “a town.” In its plural form, however, the noun evokes the *qurā* mentioned in the Qurʾān, notably in Sūra 34: 18 which contains a reference to “*al-qurā allatī bāraknā fihā*” “the towns which We have blessed.” This reference is construed by most commentators as denoting al-Shām, the region of Greater Syria. Umm al-Qurā, “the mother of towns,” furthermore, is a common epithet for the holy city of Mecca. The use in the poem of the noun in its plural form represents an attempt to draw on its Qurʾānic connotations in order to define Arab land as holy land whose pillage by the Mongols amounted to a sacrilege. Moreover, the use of locusts as metaphor for the Mongols is in many ways telling. The locust is a universal symbol of destructive forces; it is especially pertinent in the context of rural Iraq where swarms of locusts devouring crops and causing widespread famine was until very recently a dreaded scourge. In the Qurʾān, furthermore, it occurs twice: in 54: 7 it is used to describe the subdued state of unbelievers on the Day of Judgment, “like scattered locusts”; and in 7: 133 it figures, along with other scourges, as agent of divine retribution on the people of Pharaoh for their refusal to believe in Moses. It is the latter occurrence that carries significant implications within the context of the poem. Occurring as it does immediately after references to the Arabs’ reluctance to make redeeming sacrifices, reluctance indicative of lack of faith, the swarm of locusts/the Mongols hints at divine retribution for a people bereft of faith.

In “The Fire Sermon” the Thames,

... bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights.

(*The Waste Land*, ll. 177–79)

In the case of the Tigris River, a far more invidious testimony is left behind (lines 71–72),

It was as if the waters of the Tigris, where [the locusts] turned back
Testified to it with blood and ink.

The reference is to the destruction perpetrated by the invaders, which was not confined to human life. Chroniclers relate how the Mongols devastated the numerous libraries of Baghdad, the capital of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate, how they dumped huge collections of books in the Tigris river so that the ink dyed the waters of the river. The extermination of civilian population is repugnant enough; it becomes even more so if carried out in conjunction with the wanton destruction of cultural artifacts, sources of light/knowledge.

Following lines 69–72, which establish in declarative sentences the archetypal foe of the Arabs, a structural shift occurs from the declarative to the interrogative. Line 73 and the following three lines further elaborate on this foe. The sentence that begins in line 73 and overflows into the following line carries a literal as well as a metaphorical intent:

Was it not its judgment that had so stunned the pregnant women
That they gave birth to naught but ashes?

At a literal level, the reference is to the atrocities carried out by the Mongols during their sack of Baghdad, which included widespread mutilation of victims. There is also a metaphoric sense in which the Mongol invader *fajā’a ’l-ḥubālā* (stunned the pregnant women). The Mongol onslaught on Baghdad, the principal center of Arab/Islamic civilization, was so devastating that the year 1258 (the date of the sack of Baghdad) is often taken to mark the onset of the age of Arab decline, an age generally considered to have persisted till the present time. Thus as a result of this onslaught the *ḥubālā* (pregnant women), symbol of the potential of the Arab nation, brought forth naught during this long era but *ramād* (ashes), a vivid metaphor for this age of decline.

The sub-section on the causes of decline from without is concluded by a passage (77–82) that subsumes under the rubric of the archenemy another group of invaders, the Crusaders. Like the preceding passage, the concluding sub-section does not spell out the identity of this other group of actors. However, the several allusions and clues it contains make them readily identifiable. These allusions

and references include al-Shām, the locale of the Crusades, *asadayn* (two lions), an allusion to Richard I “the Lionhearted” (1157–1199), King of England and one of the leaders of the Crusaders, ʿĪsā (Jesus), and *māʾ al-ʿImād* (the water of baptism).

Throughout this section (69–82) the agent is identified as *sirbun min jarād* “a swarm of locusts” (line 70). The verb pattern of this section makes possible the integration of the Mongols as well as the Crusaders under this rubric. Lines 71–82 contain twelve verbs of which eight refer to “the swarm of locusts” and have as their subject an implied pronoun falling back upon them. The positing of an actor/acted-upon dichotomy, where the actor is “they,” “forces of darkness,” “a swarm of locusts” and the acted upon are “we,” makes it possible in lines 77–82 to make an implicit claim on ʿĪsā/the Christian heritage as properly belonging to “us”—since it falls within the acted-upon term of the opposition. Imagery and diction in this sub-section serve to further this incorporation. ʿĪsā is indigenous to al-Shām while the “swarm of locusts” is alien.⁷⁷

It is important to note that the violative acts in this section are seen as a continuation of those described in the preceding subsection (69–76). What takes place in this respect is a fusing together of Mongol and Crusader under one rubric, that of “a swarm of locusts.” This fusion of foes is achieved primarily by the identity of the subject, which in both sections is an implied pronoun falling back upon the Mongols as well as on the Crusaders. It is suggested, therefore, that the blood that stains the waters of the Tigris River is identical to the blood of a Jesus being devoured by “the hungrier of the two lions.” Moreover, the waters of baptism with which the assailant quenches the lion’s thirst hark back to the waters of the Tigris River in line 71.

⁷⁷ Commenting on the allusion to the Crusaders DeYoung states: “[T]hey have fed [Jesus to the hungry lions.] This propensity to violence [on the part of the Crusaders/modern French], and willingness to destroy their God for material gain . . . is the true nature of these people, the speaker realizes.” DeYoung 83–4. It is important to emphasize that Jesus is not identified in the poem as “their god.” The poem equivocates with regard to the identity of “their god.” Whereas line 90 can legitimately be seen as an allusion to the rites of the Eucharist, line 88 contains an allusion to “the calf.” To imply that Jesus is *their* God, however, would undermine the structural design of this part of the poem, which is to lay claim to Jesus as part of “our” heritage.

Having established the “swarm of locusts” as the arch foe of the Arabs and having identified it as incorporating both Mongols and Crusaders, *i.e.*, forces of darkness, disbelief, and wanton destruction, the poem moves in the following section (83–98) to integrate the present adversaries of the Arabs, the French and Jewish colonizers of Algeria and Palestine respectively, as falling within this adversarial tradition. Thus in line 83 the agent of the verb *‘āda* “returned,” is the same implied pronoun falling back upon the “swarm of locusts” variously alluded to as the Mongols and the Crusaders and whose iniquity is the subject of lines 69–82.

The temporal progression, which begins from the pre-Islamic times (Abraha’s raid on Mecca), reaches the present moment of Arab history (1950s). Line 83 clearly binds the present adversaries to the forces of darkness of former times. An air of uncertainty, of self-reproach, however, permeates lines 84–86. These lines refer back to the theme of unwillingness to redeem “our god” that finds expression in lines 60–68. The note of questioning that pervades these lines seems to suggest possible culpability in “our own demise.” The speaker seems to affirm those things, which he, at a superficial level, disavows: decide, devouring god, bartering god away. This interpretation is supported by earlier references to the death of “our god” (23–29) and to the reluctance of the Arabs to redeem him (60–68). The use of the particle *kamā* “as” in lines 87–90 suggests culpability common to both oppressor and oppressed in the Arab decline. We are as guilty, the speaker seems to imply, as our oppressors, for we are similar to them in so many respects, all of which are introduced by the conjunction. Nonetheless, the Arabs differ from their adversaries in one significant respect: the nature of their respective gods. “Our god” is the god of Islam, of Mecca, an authentic god worthy of sacrifice. This makes our unwillingness to redeem him all the more ignominious. Theirs, by contrast, is a false god made from gold/bread “we” (the Arabs) have toiled for.

The allusion to the golden calf of Exodus as “their god” serves to bolster “our claim” to Christ as belonging properly to “us,” a notion introduced in lines 77–80. This claim is further reinforced in this section of the poem by the reference to the sacrilegious use made of the passions of Christ by the “Paris harlots” (lines 91–92). The grotesque image of the mouth of the dragon being “planted” by “sterility” into the “Paris harlots” has the effect of depicting the

“progeny,” *i.e.*, the French/Jewish colonizers as the monstrous product of demonic sexuality.⁷⁸ This sense is amplified through the use of the verb *yaqdhij*, which denotes “to attack with bombs,” but also “to ejaculate.” It is further augmented by the description of the progeny in line 96 as:

Iron legions, like horsemen but without souls.

Discernible in this imagery is the influence of García Lorca, whom al-Sayyāb admired, especially of his “Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard,”

Their skulls are of lead,
which is why they don't weep
With their patent-leather souls
they come along the street.⁷⁹

This section closes with a reaffirmation of the identity between former adversaries and those of more recent times (the French, the Jews), who encroach upon Mecca and also Yathrib. Yathrib was the pre-Islamic name of an oasis settlement in the Arabian Peninsula to which the Prophet Muhammad sought refuge in A.D. 622, whereupon it was renamed al-Madīnah (Medina) in his honor. The use of the town's pre-Islamic name is significant in two respects. In addition to emphasizing the “Arab” as opposed to the “Muslim” predisposition of the poem, it suggests an identity of the forces that have over the centuries attacked the Arabs. It, therefore, implicitly strengthens the design of the poem to integrate the modern French and Jewish colonizers with the Abyssinians, the Mongols, and the Crusaders in one unbroken chain of offensives directed against the Arabs.

Part 3 of the poem (lines 99–121) corresponds closely to the rebirth cycle of the Tammuz myth. In terms of length it also corresponds to the structure of the myth as described by Jessie Weston. In *From Ritual to Romance* Weston notes “the lack of any artistic rep-

⁷⁸ For a discussion of al-Sayyāb's use of sterility imagery in the poem see 'Izzat 35–6. See also DeYoung 90–1.

⁷⁹ Federico García Lorca, *Selected Poems*, trans. Merryn Williams (Newcastle, Eng.: Bloodaxe Books, 1992) 107. Shortly after the publication of “Fī al-Maghrib al-‘Arabī” al-Sayyāb published “Ghārsiyā Lorkā,” a poetic tribute to Lorca. *Al-Ādāb* June 1956: 24.

resentation” of the celebration of the resurrection of Tammuz.⁸⁰ The dearth of information on the resurrection of Tammuz is reflected in this part of the poem in its relatively truncated form (23 lines as opposed to Part 2 which is composed of 65 lines or Part 1 which contains 39 lines). Whether this is fortuitous or by design is open to speculation. Such brevity may also reflect the lack of a “regeneration” section in the basal text. It is in this part of the lateral text that al-Sayyāb undertakes the most pervasive transformation of the basal text. In contrast to the apparent fragmentary structure of the basal text, which is echoed by one of the Thames daughters who can “connect/Nothing with nothing” (*The Waste Land*, III. 301–2), the lateral text is a highly structured *qaṣīdah* whose three component parts are indissolubly linked to one another.⁸¹ This structure, the progression from the death of the first part to the rebirth of the concluding part, reflects the vision of ultimate rebirth and regeneration implicit in the Tammuz myth. It is precisely because of this vision of rebirth and regeneration that the Tammuz myth so greatly appealed to the Arab poets of the 1950s and 1960s, the so-called Tammuzian poets,⁸² who found in the myth an apt vehicle for articulating their own vision of ultimate Arab regeneration following centuries of decline.⁸³

⁸⁰ Weston 40–41.

⁸¹ See also ‘Abbās 272.

⁸² Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā writes that “[i]n the mid-fifties, especially following the publication of my translation of Frazer’s book *Tammuz, or Adonis* (which is one of the volumes of *The Golden Bough*) there appeared on the Arab literary scene a number of poets whom I at the time called in one of my critical studies ‘The Tammuzian poets,’—such as Adūnīs, Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, K̄halīl Ḥāwī, and Yūsuf al-Khāl— in whose poetry this ancient Semitic idea reappeared.” Jabrā, “Min al-Marjī‘iyyah al-Gharbiyyah” 49. See Frazer, chapters 1, 2, 9, 10. See also Mubārak 180–94. “From among the Tammūzī poets,” writes el-Azma, “it was al-Sayyāb who applied the rituals to the political realities of the time in Iraq and to ideological conflict and developments. The rest of the Tammūzī poets with no exception exploited the cultural and the spiritual aspect of the rituals.” El-Azma, “Free Verse in Modern Arabic Literature” 145.

⁸³ In this connection al-Sayyāb writes:

The political circumstances which the Arab countries were going through [in the 1950s] with respect to intellectual terrorism and the absence of freedom, favored the resort to [the use of] symbols through which [Arab poets] expressed their indignation over the political as well as the social conditions of their countries and their hope for a new resurrection that would raise them from their death.

Al-Sayyāb, “Al-Iltizām wal-lā Iltizām” 250.

It is also in this concluding part that the lateral text transcends the apocalyptic vision of the basal text,⁸⁴ which pertains to “the salvation of the Waste Land, not as a certainty but a possibility.”⁸⁵ By the end of *The Waste Land* it becomes clear that this possibility is not realized. As one critic has noted:

The rain, several times promised, never quite arrives. The nearest it gets is in the words ‘Then a damp gust/Bringing rain’ (lines 393–4); but then ‘the limp leaves/Waited for rain’ (395–6) and ‘the black clouds/Gathered far distant’ (396–7); and, although the thunder speaks, at the end of the poem the plain is still arid. The poem ends still waiting upon the event, still gathering itself, still ‘humped in silence.’⁸⁶

This has led to the characterization of *The Waste Land* as “defeatist,”⁸⁷ and “a poem of radical doubt and negation.”⁸⁸ What takes place in the concluding part of the lateral text is a process whereby the elements of sterility, death, and desolation, which preponderate in the first two parts of the poem are steadily reversed leading to a rebirth of “us/our god.”⁸⁹ It should be noted that in the verbal sentence *qaraʿtu ismī ʿalā ṣakhrāh* (I read my name on a rock), which opens the

⁸⁴ Commenting on al-Sayyāb’s famed poem “Unshūdat al-Maṭar,” el-Azma writes: The differences between the attitudes of both poets towards the rituals of fertility and vegetation here must be kept in mind. However, we find striking similarity between the theme of “The Waste Land” and the themes of Tammūzī poems in general. It can be seen that “The Waste Land” had left its mark on al-Sayyāb’s major themes. Remarkably, he employed not only Eliot’s themes but also his images, monologues and even his poetic vocabulary. And while from a religious standpoint Eliot elevated his vision to the tragic level of a cultural crisis, al-Sayyāb’s vision was framed by the political, social and economic conditions of his environment. He did not fail to surpass those conditions and, in so doing, transcend his [al-Sayyāb’s own] vision.

El-Azma, “Free Verse in Modern Arabic Literature” 183–84. See also el-Azma, “The Tammūzī Movement” 220–21.

⁸⁵ B. C. Southam, *A Guide to Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968) 69.

⁸⁶ Gareth Reeves, *T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land*. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994) 95.

⁸⁷ David Craig, “The Defeatism of *The Waste Land*,” *T. S. Eliot: The Waste Land*, ed. C. B. Cox and Arnold P. Hinchliffe (London: Macmillan, 1968) 200–215.

⁸⁸ Eloise Knapp Hay, *T. S. Eliot’s Negative Way* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 48.

⁸⁹ Comparing al-Sayyāb’s poem “Unshūdat al-Maṭar” with Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, el-Azma writes:

Hope for resurrection and rebirth is the most characteristic feature of al-Sayyāb. The vision of life and water in “Ode to the Rain,” through which he foresaw the Iraqi revolution, became a legendary song on the lips of his people. The rain in the not-too-distant future will wash Baghdad, and the wind will sweep

first two parts of the poem, the identity-asserting *ismī 'alā ṣakhrāh* (my name on a rock) is immediately undermined in the subsequent lines. In the first part the identity-assertion of the opening line is thwarted in the following line by the identification of the locale as “the desolation of the desert” suggesting sterility, vacuity, and death. In the second part, it is canceled out in the following line (35) by the identification of the locale as “two graves” suggesting a preponderance of death. In the third part of the poem, however, the opening line is detached syntactically and semantically from the following lines. In Part 1 the lines from 2 till the middle of line 4 cannot stand on their own semantically; they are incoherent without the opening sentence. Similarly, lines 35–39 of Part 2 are semantically contingent on the opening line. The full denotations of the verbal sentences that open the first two parts of the poem are thus mediated through the elaborative subsequent lines. By contrast, when this verbal sentence recurs as the opening line of Part 3 (line 99), it does so independently; it is syntactically and semantically self-sustaining. Nevertheless, the affirmative property of the sentence is amplified in the following line by the addition of *ismayn* “two [more] names” (unidentified though clearly belonging to “us”), and by the fact that the “names” occupy identical positions in their respective lines. Moreover, the noun *ṣahrā'* (desert) undergoes a transformation produced by the new ambience in which it recurs. Where it first occurs in the poem (line 2), the desert is, as noted above, prevented from functioning as a nexus of Arab authenticity by being appended to the desolation of *wahshah*. Stripped of this noun, the desert is restored in line 100 to its dominant signification. The desert is revealed to be the locale where regeneration takes place. Thus in line 101 the reader is thrust into the world of the living with the same suddenness with which he is thrust into the world of the dead in the first part of the poem, with line 101 forming the converse of the listlessness of Part 1.

Another sign of the restoration of life is the near absence of references to graves in the third part of the poem. Whereas references

away injustices, hunger and tyranny from the barren city. That was al-Sayyāb's message in “Ode to the Rain”; Eliot's was quite the opposite. There is no water to revive the wasteland of Western civilization.

El-Azma, “Free Verse in Modern Arabic Literature” 182–83. See also el-Azma, “The Tammūzī Movement” 220.

to graves occur no less than seven times in the first two parts, the concluding part contains only one reference (line 119). This reference, moreover, pertains to the Qur'ānic notion of *nushūr*, the resurrection of the dead in the Hereafter as described in Qur'ān 35: 9, rather than to death. It occurs as the subject of the verb *tamakhkhaḍat*, "[the graves] went into labor." By means of this verb the grave is transformed into a womb giving birth to new life. In this context the grave symbolism represents life restored on a immense scale rather than death. Related to this is the use of blood symbolism in the poem. Apart from its peculiar absence in line 19, blood figures in the poem (lines 43–47) as the addressee of "the Grandfather's Sermon":

O this blood lingering on through the generations
 O heritage of the masses,
 Shatter and crush these chains now
 And like an earthquake
 Shake off the yoke, or crush it and with the yoke crush us!

Blood is of course a universal symbol of life and regeneration. In the poem the blood symbolism follows an almost uniform pattern. The pattern is as follows: the blood addressed in "the grandfather's sermon" represents the possibilities for regeneration/rebirth. However, when it occurs in "the death section" (lines 64, 72) it is blood shed for the wrong cause, it is the blood of god/and of victimization by tyranny. Its shedding, therefore, results in death, sterility, and non-realization. It is only when blood is shed according to the injunctions of the grandfather, *i.e.*, for the cause of freedom/liberation that it fulfills its role as agent of regeneration.⁹⁰ This takes place in the third part of the poem where the imagery and diction indicate that the grandfather's call is heeded.

⁹⁰ The notion of blood bringing fertility is well known in classical Arabic poetry. However, a shift is discernable with regard to the source of blood; in classical poetry it is often the blood of the enemy whose spilling was perceived as regenerative. For a full discussion of the symbolic significance of blood in classical Arabic poetry, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1993) especially 55–83; 206–38. In more recent times, however, the reverse has been true; it is almost invariably "our" blood spilled by our foes, or willingly by us in defense of our land and our honor that is seen as bringing life and regeneration. This change perhaps reflects changed power relations and the fact that Arabs in modern times perceive themselves as a beleaguered people. In a later poem of al-Sayyāb ("Madīnat al-Sindibād," 1960) blood and rain become interchangeable: "*Tabāraka 'l-Ilāhū wāhibū 'l-Damī 'l-Maṭar*," "Blessed is the Deity, giver of the blood, the rain." Al-Sayyāb, *Dīwān* 464. See also Mubārak 188.

Thus the valleys, the first addressee of the grandfather, exhorted to rise in revolt in line 42 are in full revolt by line 112. The fortresses, which succumb in line 97 to encroaching iron legions, are by line 118 reverberating with the Muslim battle cry. What transpires is a liberationist revolution emanating from al-Maghrib (al-Ḥamrā')⁹¹ and bringing not death and desolation but life and fecundity. The blood, the second addressee of the grandfather, acts in Part 3 of the poem as the paramount agent of rebirth; it "lit the features of the land/ Without a gleam," implying above all a spiritual rebirth (lines 104–105). The blood that emanates "from a red brick standing over a pit" (line 103), and lights the features of the land is the blood of redeeming, life-bringing sacrifice; the initial reluctance to make this sacrifice reduced the Arab land to the waste land so graphically described in the first two parts of the poem. In the third part of the poem the blood of sacrifice "names the land" (line 106) and establishes the speaker's belonging to it/his relatedness to it. It also furnishes a link between having a land and having a history; without the one the other cannot be had. The land is the speaker's past/history without which this history becomes inaccessible to him—and without this history he would be lifeless. Thus to be alive is to possess a history, but a prerequisite to possessing a history is the possession of a land. The blood of sacrifice, therefore, secures the source of life, the land.⁹²

⁹¹ I find myself compelled to disagree with DeYoung's reading of the symbolic significance of al-Ḥamrā' (line 114). DeYoung writes that "Alhambra, of course, was the last Arab Muslim stronghold in Europe and fell to the Christians in 1492. But, despite falling into the possession of hostile European rulers the palace itself has endured in much the same shape and configuration as when it belonged to the Amir of Granada. Thus it can function, and does seem to do so in Sayyāb's poem, as a symbol of life and survival, as a continuing and ineradicable Arab presence in a land that, like colonial North Africa, had been subject to appropriation by hostile European armies." DeYoung 88. I take the view that al-Ḥamrā' is used here as a synecdoche for the whole region of al-Maghrib (as opposed to al-Mashriq), which historically included not only North Africa but also al-Andalus. Rather than being concerned with the palace's state of disrepair, the use of al-Ḥamrā' is intended primarily to indicate the locus of the revolution, to indicate that the revolution takes place in al-Maghrib, and to equate this revolution with national revival.

⁹² El-Azma notes that "[w]hile Eliot returns to the church as the only remaining hope for mankind, al-Sayyāb resorts to revolution and martyrdom. In the final analysis death for both Eliot and al-Sayyāb becomes the open gate to rebirth; and while the former finds himself a Catholic Christian faith, al-Sayyāb attaches himself to the human forces in their ethical struggle of good against evil." El-Azma, "Free Verse in Modern Arabic Literature" 186. See also el-Azma, "The Tammūzī Movement" 223.

The paradise whose loss is precipitated by the absence of faith and by the resultant unwillingness to make redeeming sacrifices is regained in the concluding part of the poem owing to the sacrifice the Arabs now make. The name of god, effaced in Part 1 due to their reluctance to make sacrifices, is now re-written by, significantly, “a remnant of our blood” (line 116). It is reaffirmed by the call to the morning prayer which mingles with the exclamation *allāhū akbar* “God is greater”⁹³ of the revolutionaries in one potent affirmation of life/faith: *inna ilāhana fīnā* “Verily our god is with(in) us” (line 121). Thus the forces that were glimpsed from afar (line 56) now make their presence fully felt. The message of renewal set forth in the poem is perhaps best illustrated by the shifts in the poem’s temporal frames of reference; the poem begins with its title evoking the “dusk” and closes on the call of the *muezzin* for the dawn prayer.

⁹³ This exclamation forms a part of the call to the Muslim prayer and is also the Muslim battle cry.

CHAPTER FIVE

PALESTINE: THE CENTRAL CAUSE: ‘ABD AL-WAHHĀB AL-BAYĀTĪ’S “ODES TO JAFFA”

The decade that followed the establishment in 1948 of Israel witnessed the burgeoning of what came to be known as “*Adab al-Muqāwamah*” (resistance literature) in Arabic. A considerable body of oppositional verse was composed by poets who envisioned themselves as participating in the Arab struggle for the liberation of Palestine. As the foregoing chapters have shown, the literature of resistance to hegemonic presence on Arab lands predates the 1948 war. Nevertheless, the term “*Adab al-Muqāwamah*” became closely associated with the Palestinian cause. The centrality of that cause to the Arabs was such that “*Adab al-Muqāwamah*” formed an integral part of the overall project of *Illizām* or commitment to public causes.¹ In an address to a conference on contemporary Arabic literature held in Rome, 16–20 October 1961, the Jordanian critic ‘Īsā al-Nā‘ūrī defined Arabic literature of the post-1948 era as: “a literature of struggle, or a resistance literature (*Adab Muqāwamah*) or a literature of liberation.”² It is in part to indicate the centrality of the Palestinian cause that the qaṣīdahs discussed in this chapter are drawn from the corpus of the Iraqi ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (1926–1999), considered to be one of the foremost Arab poets of the twentieth century and whose name was synonymous with *Illizām* in Arabic poetry.

Al-Bayātī’s poetic evolution has often been divided into a number of stages inaugurated by a “Romantic” phase.³ This phase is

¹ For a discussion of *Illizām* (Commitment) in Arabic poetry, see Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, vol. II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 574–83. See also S. Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry 1800–1970: The Development of its Forms and Themes under the Influence of Western Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976) 267–88.

² ‘Īsā al-Nā‘ūrī, “Al-Adīb al-‘Arabī wal-Thaqāfah al-‘Ālamiyyah,” *Al-Adab al-‘Arabī al-Mu‘āṣir: Proceedings of the Rome Conference on Contemporary Arabic Literature*, Rome, 16–20 October 1961, ed. Simon Jargy (N.p.: Aqḥwā’, 1962?) 67. All translations from the Arabic are my own unless otherwise noted.

³ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sharaf, *Al-Ru‘yā al-Ibdā‘iyyah fī Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1991) 35; Khalīl Rizq, *Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī fī Dirāsah Uslūbiyyah*

generally assumed to have lasted from 1945 through his collection entitled *Malā'ikah wa-Shayāṭīn*, 1950 (Angels and Devils). The body of verse contained in this collection is in a “Romantic” vein and largely conforms to the metrical conventions of the traditional *qaṣīdah*. The critical reception of the collection, however, was somewhat lukewarm. Commenting on this reception and on the genesis of his *Illizām*, al-Bayātī relates:

I recall that the Iraqi newspapers [of the time] wrote about [*Malā'ikah wa-Shayāṭīn*]. What has remained in my memory of these writings is that some of those who wrote about it wished that these poems had been committed to social and political causes rather than circling around that romanticism. I used to smile when I read this talk because it was favorable, and because it meant that I write or will write good poetry, but that what it lacks is *Illizām*, which is not something to lose sleep over.⁴

The closing years of the 1940s, moreover, witnessed stepped up experimentation in form that sought to circumvent the extreme metrical regularity of the classical *qaṣīdah*; conforming to metrical conventions entailed the use of a certain number of feet and a single meter throughout a poem. The outcome of this experimentation has since come to be known as *shīr al-taf'īlah*, or “free verse.” This new mode involves a shift from the use of a predetermined number of feet to the use of a single foot as the basic metrical unit of the poem.⁵ Two Iraqi poets, Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb (1926–1964) and Nāzīk al-Malā'ikah (b. 1923), are often credited with pioneering this new poetry.⁶ This breakthrough ensured al-Sayyāb and al-Malā'ikah a prominent position in the history of modern Arabic poetics.

1945–1979 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Ashraf, 1995) 20–22; Salih Altoma, “A Journey of High Hopes, Disillusionment and Renewed Faith,” *Aljadid* 28 (1999): 20–21.

⁴ 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Ṣrah Dhātīyah: Al-Qīthārah wal-Dhākīrah* (London: Manshūrāt al-Bazzāz, 1994) 56–57.

⁵ The first two poems written in the “free verse” mode were Nāzīk al-Malā'ikah's poem entitled “al-Kūlīrā” (The Cholera) which appeared in a Beirut review in 1947, and Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb's poem, “Hal Kāna Ḥubban?” (Was it Love?), which was included in his collection, *Azhār Dhābilah* (Wilted Flowers), published in that same year. For a comprehensive treatment of the “free verse” movement in Arabic poetry, see Jayyusi, *Trends* 530–747; M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) 223–31.

⁶ For an important dissenting opinion, see Salma Khadra Jayyusi, “Modernist Poetry in Arabic,” *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M. M. Badawi (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 141–54.

Al-Bayātī initially spurned the new mode on ostensibly aesthetic grounds, maintaining that the new poetry “was not sufficiently justified with regard to the form which they [al-Sayyāb and al-Malā’ikah] used in most literary circles.”⁷ Soon, however, he realized its potential and adopted it in his subsequent compositions. His embracing of the new, increasingly popular mode of writing no doubt contributed to a more favorable reception of his poetry. It was, however, his *Iltizām*, his consistent espousal of an overtly political agenda in his later verse that catapulted him to the forefront of Arab poets of the twentieth century.⁸

Al-Bayātī’s “Realist” stage is generally taken to begin with the publication in 1954 of his second collection *Abārīq Muhashshamah* (Broken Pitchers). During this stage, al-Bayātī’s commitment to the Palestinian cause⁹ finds expression in such qaṣīdahs as “Al-Malja’u ‘l-‘Ishrūn” (Shelter No. 20),¹⁰ and “Qaṣā’id ilā Yāfā” (Odes to Jaffa). As their titles suggest, these qaṣīdahs take as their focus the Palestinian. This focus, however, is often treated in conjunction with another equally common theme, that of the land/Palestine. In the following, a somewhat cursory discussion of the first of these qaṣīdahs is attempted. From a literary-historical perspective, the qaṣīdah represents an early instance of al-Bayātī’s *Iltizām* or “committed” poetry; as such, it provides an insight into the evolution of his poetics.

“Shelter No. 20”

[8]

Like the empty days of soldiers who have returned from combat
 And like the dreariness of the consumed in a cough-filled night
 Were our songs, we were wandering without shade
 Awaiting the night, the news in the mail:

⁷ Al-Bayātī, *Sirah Dhāṭīyyah* 56.

⁸ M. M. Badawī echoes a near consensus in critical circles when he notes that al-Bayātī “is generally regarded as the most committed Arab poet and as the leader of the socialist realist movement in modern Arabic poetry.” Badawī, *A Critical Introduction* 210.

⁹ ‘Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim notes that al-Bayātī’s pan-Arab orientation becomes more pronounced in the collection *Al-Majid lil-Atfāl wal-Zaytūn*, which appeared in 1956. During this period of Arab nationalist resurgence, the Palestinian cause occupies a prominent position in his poetry due to the centrality of this cause to the Arabs. ‘Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim, *Al-Iltizām wal-Taṣawwuf fi Shūr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī* (Baghdad: Dā’irat al-Shu’ūn al-Thaqāfiyyah al-‘Ammah, 1990) 108.

¹⁰ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Abārīq Muhashshamah*, 4th ed. (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār al-‘Adāb, 1969) 11–13. The most extensive study of this *Diwān* to date is by Ihsān ‘Abbās, *‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī wal-Shūr al-‘Irāqī al-Ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt, 1955).

“Shelter No. 20	5
We are still well, and the children	
—and lice and the dead—send their regards to relatives.”	
The raw, distorted memories pass, and the tents	
The wind, the morrow, and the darkness	
Like our faces after parting.	10
“O mother! we are still well,” and the wolves	
Howl and howl across the desert of sleeplessness.	
“O brothers, whence do we start?” From here! The night of coughing	
And our teary, returned mail:	
“Nothing worth-mentioning, Jaffa is still [there],	
the comrades are still	15
Beneath bridges, and above lampposts	
Swaying, headless, in the air	
Our blood shed	
On its old walls is still [there], the thieves,	
And our barren fields invaded by locusts.”	20
“From here, O mother! the gallows posts and the fire	
From here they began and we begin, the road	
Rough and long.	
May the cowering, servile one not live.”	
Jaffa to you we shall return tomorrow with the harvest	25
With the swallows and the spring	
With comrades returning from exiles and prisons	
With the dawn and larks	
And with mothers.	
“Shelter No. 20	30
We are still well, the children	
And displaced brothers,	
From our remote vault, send their regards to relatives.” ¹¹	

As its title implies, “al-Malja’u l-‘Ishrūn” is about refugees the extent of whose predicament is indicated by the number “20” with its associations of multiplicity and excessiveness. The structural basis of the *qaṣīdah* is the broad opposition between the current abysmal circumstance of the refugee (lines 1–20) and the poet’s vision of a more favorable condition in which the injustice of the present would be undone. This opposition is phrased in a style that relies heavily on retrospection interspersed with excerpts from exchanges of messages between refugees and their separated relatives:

¹¹ Al-Bayātī, *Abārīq* 11–13. The *qaṣīdah* is in *al-Kāmil* meter. It is anthologized in full in Ṣabrī Ḥāfīz, *Al-Raḥīl ilā Mudun al-Ḥulm* (Damascus: Manshūrāt Ittīḥād al-Kuttāb al-‘Arab, 1973) 115–16. For the Arabic text, see Appendix 8.

Ka-farāghī ayyāmi 'l-junūdi 'l-Ā'idīna mina 'l-qitāl
wa-ka-wahshati 'l-maṣḍūri fī layli 'l-sū'āl
kānat aghānīnā wa-kunna hā'imīna bi-lā zilāl
mutaraqqibīna 'l-layla anbā'a 'l-barīd.

Like the empty days of soldiers who have returned from combat
 And like the dreariness of the consumed in a cough-filled night
 Were our songs, we were wandering without shade
 Awaiting the night, the news in the mail.

The songs are described through two similes each begins its respective line. In the opening line the emphasis of the simile is on the vacuity of the songs, a void suggestive of spiritual hollowness. This sense is compounded by the monotonous days of idling soldiers having returned from combat. The oppressiveness that permeates this line is continued in the second line whose diction evokes feelings of dejection and bleakness. It is to be noted that the key words in these two lines (*farāgh* “emptiness,” *wahshah* “dreariness,” *al-maṣḍūr* “the consumed”) carry associations most probably intended to evoke an “existentialist” dilemma as al-Bayātī (and indeed other Arab poets of the 1950s) were wont to do.¹² This is indicated by the preponderance of death imagery implicit in *al-qitāl* “combat,” *al-maṣḍūr* “the consumed,” and *al-sū'āl* “the cough”; it is further suggested by the prevalent images of darkness: *layl* “night” towards the middle of the second line, *zilāl* “shades” with which the third line closes, as well as *al-layl* “the night” in the midst of the concluding line of this passage. The plight of the refugee thus seems to form a part of an all-encompassing “existentialist” moment rather than the result of specific socio-political circumstances. This outlook is subsequently modified and a more pragmatic, as it were, appraisal of the refugees’ predicament begins to emerge. The *qaṣīdah* thus anticipates the later development of al-Bayātī’s verse.

The first excerpt from the refugees’ mail takes up lines 5–7. The conformation of the excerpt is familiar enough. It was a common practice for radio stations in the Middle East to devote some evening

¹² Khalil Shukrallah Rizk writes that “[a]s an existentialist—and I am using this word in a general sense—al-Bayātī, in some poems of this collection, comes close to Albert Camus’ notion of the absurd as it is reflected in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Khalil Shukrallah Rizk, “The Poetry of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Thematic and Stylistic Study,” diss., Indiana University, 1981, 74. [Published in Arabic as Khalil Rizq, *Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī fī Dirāsa Uṣṭūbiyyah 1945–1979* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Ashraf, 1995)].

programming for broadcasting messages from Palestinian refugees to their kinfolk who have been left behind in the occupied territories. With the sealing off of the borders of Palestinian territories which fell to Israeli control following the 1948 war and the resultant dispersal of many of their former inhabitants into various parts of the Middle East, these evening programs were among few means of contact between those Palestinians left behind and those who sought refuge in neighboring countries. The message, which takes up lines 5–7, appears to originate from a refugee camp and is directed to relatives in occupied Palestine. This is indicated by *al-maljaʿ* (the shelter) with which line 5 begins. The use of *al-maljaʿ*, in preference to the more circumstantial *al-Mukhayyam* (camp of tents), is in part due to metrical exigency; it also identifies more overtly the subject matter of the qaṣīdah as it shares a common root with *al-lāji* “the refugee.” At a certain level, it hints at fright and vulnerability. It is thus anticipated in line 3 in the participle *hāʾimīn* “wandering,” as well as by the dryness and thirst of *bi-lā zilāl* “without shade” which concludes the line.

The fifth line announces the origin of the message; the following two lines contain the sanguine though customary announcement of the state of the refugees: *mā-zilnā bi-khayr* “we are still well.” This salutary message is undermined, however, through the parenthetical *al-qamlu wal-mawtā* “lice and the dead” which abruptly initiates line 7. Both nouns in the apposition undercut the optimism of *mā-zilnā bi-khayr* with their invocation of wretchedness and death.¹³ A similar scheme obtains in lines 11–12 with the recurrence in the midst of line 11 of *mā zilna bi-khayr* being undermined by the imagery of the wolves that close the line and whose repeated howling at the beginning of line 12 breaks the stillness of the desert.

The exposition of the condition of the Palestinian reaches a culmination in the midsection of the qaṣīdah (lines 13–20). This midsection is set off syntactically through the switch from the declarative in the beginning of the qaṣīdah to the interrogative that forms the first half of line 13. To the extent that the preceding sections are for the most part expository of the plight of the refugee, this inquir-

¹³ Salma Khadra Jayyusi renders lines 6–7 as follows: “We are all well, and the family (together with the lice and the dead) send greetings to their relatives.” Jayyusi, *Trends* 715.

ing note represents an attempt at confronting this situation. It embodies a search for directionality. The optimism of the reply *min hunā* “from here,” however, is attenuated by the genitive phrase that immediately follows it: *laylu ’l-su’āl* “the night of coughing.” This phrase harks back to the opening of the *qaṣīdah* where it first occurs (line 2). It thus blurs the directionality that might be perceived in the cryptic answer. The linkage between this and the preceding sections is pursued in the following line *wa-barīduna ’l-bākī ’l-mu’ād* “our teary, returned mail” in which the opening word *barīduna* refers back to line 4 which depicts the refugees anxiously awaiting *anbā’a ’l-barīd* “the news in the mail.”

This theme is lent further emphasis in the two participles that make up the rest of line 14: *al-bākī* (teary) and *al-mu’ād* (the returned). *Al-mu’ād* (which shares a common root with *al-’ā’idīn* “those who have returned” of the opening line) signifies “the returned,” *i.e.*, the mail is returned as displaced addressees could not be located. More evocatively perhaps, *al-mu’ād* alludes to the purported refusal by Israeli postal services to deliver mail if an address included the word “Palestine.” Such mail would allegedly be returned to its sender post-marked “Unknown address.” Whether such postal policy was in fact followed is extraneous; allusions to it in the literary discourses of the period are not infrequent.

Al-mu’ād, moreover, permits of yet another reading: taken to mean “repeated,” it is suggestive of the monotony first encountered at the opening line of the *qaṣīdah*. This sense of repetitiveness is reinforced in the following six lines (15–20), which form the longest mail excerpt in the *qaṣīdah*:

Lā shay’a yudhkaru, lam tazal Yāfā wa-mā zāla ’l-rifāq
tahta ’l-jusūri wa-fawqa a’midati ’l-diyā’
yata’arjahūna bi-lā ru’ūsīn fi ’l-hawā’
wa-lam yazal damuna ’l-muwāq
’alā hawā’iḥihā ’l-qadīmati, wal-luṣūṣ
wa-huqūluna ’l-jardā’ yaghzūhā ’l-jarād.

Nothing worth-mentioning, Jaffā is still [there],

the comrades are still

Beneath bridges, and above lampposts

Swaying, headless, in the air

Our blood shed

On its old walls is still [there], the thieves,

And our barren fields invaded by locusts.

The previous mail excerpt in lines 5–7 locates the speakers at a shelter, *i.e.*, as refugees, but this excerpt, with its reference to Jaffa, indicates that its respective speakers are the Palestinians inhabitants of Jaffa who remained in the occupied city. The reference to Jaffa, moreover, represents a distinctive feature of the “Palestine poem”; it underlines the interface between the Palestinian (often a refugee) and the land of Palestine (of which Jaffa is a recurrent motif).¹⁴

As this passage suggests, the Palestinians who remain under occupation do not fare better than those who were displaced. The circumstances of the preceding sections endure. The declarative *lā shayʿa yudhkaru* “nothing worth-mentioning” with which line 15 begins reiterates the emptiness of *farāgh* at the beginning of the *qaṣīdah*. The persistence of a noxious state is perhaps most discernible in the macabre imagery of comrades swinging headless, above lampposts (lines 16–17). It is further indicated in the gruesome image of the blood-soaked ancient walls of Jaffa, the blood defined as “our blood” (lines 18–19). Although the identity of the malefactor is not explicitly stated, *luṣūṣ* “thieves” with which line 19 concludes, however, provides a clue. That *luṣūṣ* immediately follows imagery of blood-soaked walls denotes the extreme violence with which the robbery (of Palestine) is carried out.¹⁵ In this sense, it echoes the “wolves” that occupy an identical position in its respective line (line 11).

The untoward state posited above continues to be expounded in line 20 that concludes this section of the *qaṣīdah*. This line is notable for the way in which it compresses multiple images: *ḥuqūl* connotes fecundity, generative capacity, and life, whereas the adjectival *al-jardāʿ* is suggestive of dearth, barrenness, and destitution. *Al-jardāʿ* thus refers back to *ṣahrāʿ* towards the end of line 12. The exiguity implicit in *jardāʿ* is amplified through the introduction at the end of the line (line 20) of *al-jarād* “locust” with which it forms a derivational *Jinās* (paronomasia). The use of *al-jarād* as a metaphor for

¹⁴ This is the case, for instance, in “Al-‘Arab al-Lāji’ūn (the Arab Refugees), another *qaṣīdah* by al-Bayātī dated August 1961, in which Jaffa occurs three times. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Al-‘amāl al-Shiʿriyyah*, vol. I (Beirut: Al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1995) 424–26.

¹⁵ Commenting on these six lines Khalil Shukrallah Rizk writes: “The objective reality in this diwan is that of a shattered world lacking order, unity, and justice. His feeling of distress, under the pressure of the socio-political nightmare of the time, is reflected in his portrayal of the bestiality of the oppressors and the sufferings of the oppressed.” See Rizk 72.

Zionist occupation of Palestinian/Arab land would become frequent in much anti-colonial verse of succeeding decades.

In line 13, it will be recalled, the question as to how to deal with an adverse situation is first posed. Although the question is followed by the reply *min hunā* “from here,” the demonstrativeness of *min hunā*, however, dissipates into a bewildering array of imagery of death and demise. A fuller answer is thus deferred. It is only with line 21 that a scheme to reverse the grim situation that has predominated in the *qaṣīdah* so far is proposed. The vision that finds expression in lines 21–24 is one of struggle. The phrase *min hunā* that first occurs in the middle of line 13 recurs as the onset of line 21 now given additional force through the use in its midst of the emphatic *hā* as well as through its repetition in identical position in the subsequent line. The four lines are characterized by an overtly declamatory tone as well as by a diction that relies heavily on lexical successions: nominal (*al-mashāniqi wal-ḥarīq* “the gallows posts and the fire,” line 21); verbal (*bada’u wa-nabda’* “they began and we begin,” line 22); adjectival (*wa’irun ṭawīl*, “rough and long” line 23, *ri’didun dhalīl*, “cowering, servile one” line 24).¹⁶

Given the defiant tone of these four lines and indeed the somewhat revolutionary struggle they adjure, it is expedient that the following passage (lines 25–29) would carry an affirmative note and would signal a triumphalism, which, in the case of “the Palestine poem,” is often equated with “the return” of the displaced:

Yāfā na’ūdu ghadan ilayki ma’a ’l-ḥaṣād
wa-ma’a ’l-sanūnū wal-rabī
wa-ma’a ’l-rifāqi ’l-’ā’idīna mina ’l-manāfi wal-sujūn
wa-ma’a ’l-duḥā wal-qubbarāt
wal-ummahāt.

Jaffā to you we shall return tomorrow with the harvest
 With the swallows and the spring
 With comrades returning from exiles and prisons
 With the dawn and larks
 And with mothers.

This affirmative note is especially striking in the opening line of the passage that begins by apostrophizing Jaffā. In this line the two most

¹⁶ In this respect, Rizk cites line 8 of the *qaṣīdah* and notes, “[a] noun phrase modified by a stringing adjective—two or more in a row—is a significant stylistic device in the poet’s descriptive style.” Rizk 110.

recurrent motifs in Palestine poetry (the land and the refugee) come together. The former finds expression in Jaffa; the latter is implicit in the Imperfect Indicative *naʿūd* “we shall return.” The verb tends to heighten the note of triumphalism that permeates this largely anthemic passage. If we recall that *al-ʿawdah* “the return” would signal the ultimate triumph of the Palestine cause, *naʿūd*, therefore, represents the most pronounced manifestation of the reversal of the inauspicious state that dominated the early sections of the *qaṣīdah*.¹⁷ In this respect, *naʿūd* of line 25 contrasts sharply with the adjectival *al-muʿād* “the returned” with which line 14 concludes. In line 14 *al-muʿād* connotes foiling, non-fulfillment, and defeat whereas *naʿūd* of line 25 denotes the moment of arrival, the end of a quest. This notion is reinforced in *al-ʿāʾidīn* in the middle of line 27 in reference to comrades returning to the homeland, having been freed from the scourge of exile and imprisonment. The participle in this line similarly contrasts with its first occurrence in the *qaṣīdah*; toward the end of the opening line, *al-ʿāʾidīn* refers to soldiers who have returned from combat; it connotes primarily emptiness, torpor, and monotony.

The return of which the penultimate section speaks is not an actuality; rather, it is a promise as is suggested by the temporal *ghadan* “tomorrow” in the middle of line 25.¹⁸ The promise, which the line holds, is elaborated in the remaining lines of the passage. To begin with, the prepositional *ilayki* “to you” towards the middle of line 25 adds a sense of directionality to the quest, a directionality that contrasts pointedly with the aimless wandering of the refugees in the second half of line 3. The promise, moreover, is enunciated in the succession of prepositional phrases that abound in the passage. Most notable of these are *maʿa ʾl-ḥaṣād* “with the harvest” at the conclusion of line 25, and *maʿa ʾl-sanūnū wal-rabīʿ* “with the swallows and the spring” of the following line. These derive much of their force from the way they contrast sharply with imagery of barrenness and desolation particularly in line 20:

¹⁷ Rizk draws a distinction between longings in al-Bayātī’s first two collections when he writes that “longings in his first collection [*Malāʾikah wa-Shayātīn*] were without nostalgic yearning to return; meanwhile, in his second collection [*Abānīq Muḥashshamah*], they are accompanied with the theme of coming back or returning. The theme itself is extended to include the longings of the exiled Palestinians and their determination to go back, despite the oppressive alien Zionist forces which, in 1948, occupied their land and displaced them.” Rizk 86.

¹⁸ See Sulaymān Gibrān, *Al-Mabnā wal-Lughah fī Shīʿr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Dirāsah Uṣṭūbiyyah* (Acre: Dār al-Aswār, 1989) 74.

Wa-ḥuqūluna 'l-jardā' yaghzūhā 'l-jarād.

And our barren fields invaded by locusts.

At first glance the concluding four lines of the *qaṣīdah* (30–33) represent a reiteration of the excerpt that takes up lines 5–7 above. The hopeful note of the concluding sections, however, is carried over into this section. This is demonstrated in the substitution of *al-ikhwatu 'l-mutasharriḍūn* “displaced brothers” of line 32 for the parenthetical death-filled *al-qamlu wal-mawtā* “lice and the dead” with which line 7 begins. The fact that *al-ikhwatu* are, by the end of the *qaṣīdah*, still displaced precludes a complete reversal of the elements that predominates in its opening sections. The recurrence of the excerpt in a reconfigured form, however, indicates that the earlier despondent mood has somewhat abated; a sanguine note is discernible in this concluding passage, albeit a muted one.

Reflecting on his early poetic career, al-Bayātī recalls:

When, in the early fifties, the light flooded human reality before my eyes, the picture that was drawn before me was one of shattered reality over which despair reigned. Thus my early poetry was an attempt to portray this extensive ruination and the barrenness that prevailed over things. I was not trying to search for the cause behind this barrenness; I merely portrayed it. But when I moved beyond the portrayal stage, this was not connected with finding a social justification for rebellion; rather, it was connected with the metaphysical cause. So much so that the metaphysical concept of rejecting reality and rebelling against it—without revolution—was the beginning of commitment.¹⁹

This statement seems to indicate that al-Bayātī's *Itlīzām* at this stage was “metaphysically” inspired.²⁰ Despite its sometimes declamatory, even “revolutionary” tone, the *qaṣīdah* lacks an overt Marxian outlook.²¹ The displacement of the Palestinians is approached in “existential” terms as “the third [type of] exile in the sense of the removal

¹⁹ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Diwān ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī*, 3rd ed., vol. II (Beirut: Dār al-‘Awdah, 1997) 19.

²⁰ Rizk 89.

²¹ This point is also made by Rizk. See Rizk 73. Muḥiy al-Dīn Ṣubḥī refers to al-Bayātī of *Abārīq Muḥashshamah* as “*al-thawrī al-lā muntamī*” (the non-committed revolutionary). Muḥiy al-Dīn Ṣubḥī, *Al-Ru’yā fī Shīr al-Bayātī* (Damascus: Manshūrāt Itlīḥād al-Kuttāb al-‘Arab, 1986) 55. In a passing comment on the *qaṣīdah*, Ṣubḥī, however, makes the somewhat questionable assertion that “the revolutionary voice speaks only once and briefly while a portrayal of the degrading scene dominates the atmosphere of the *qaṣīdah* and ‘the wolves’ speak at length.” *Al-Ru’yā* 63.

of the human being from the land on which he was born, and in which he put down roots.”²² The death, moreover, which casts a shadow over the qaṣīdah, seems to be of the type which al-Bayātī calls “*al-mawt al-majjānī*” “pointless death.”²³ This type of death, the poet goes on to say, was “most manifest in [the collection] *Abārīq Muhashshamah*, this death had to be understood, an understanding of it amounted to rebelling against it.”²⁴

Al-Bayātī’s third collection *Al-Majd lil-Atfāl wal-Ḍaytūn* (Glory to Children and Olive Trees, 1956), represents a further stage of this process of understanding. Significantly, the Socialist ideology that was making inroads into the Arab cultural scene in the 1950s begins to inform this process. *Al-Majd lil-Atfāl wal-Ḍaytūn*, therefore, represents the poet’s transition to a recognizably new stage, that of Socialist Realism.

Al-Bayātī’s best-known “Palestine work” of this stage is perhaps his “*Qaṣā’id ilā Yāfā*” (Odes to Jaffa). The work is composed of five “poems,” each of which is numbered and titled separately. These are as follows: (I) “Ughniyah” (A Song), (II) “*Aslāk Shā’ikah*” (Barbed Wire), (III) “*Risālah*” (A Letter), (IV) “*Al-Majd lil-Atfāl wal-Ḍaytūn*” (Glory to Children and Olive Trees), and (V) “*Al-‘Awdah*” (The Return).²⁵ These, however, are so structured as to form a coherent thematic unit, henceforth referred to as the qaṣīdah.

²² Al-Bayātī, *Dīwān* 22.

²³ Al-Bayātī, *Dīwān* 20.

²⁴ Al-Bayātī, *Dīwān* 20.

²⁵ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Al-Majd lil-Atfāl wal-Ḍaytūn*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-‘Arabī lil-Ṭibā‘ah wal-Nashr, 1967) 5–13. Works that make brief references to or contain some discussion of the poem include: Salih J. Altoma, *Palestinian Themes in Modern Arabic Literature: 1917–1970* (Cairo: The Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1972) 33; M. M. Badawi, *A Critical Introduction* 211; Sulaymān Gibrān, *Al-Mabnā wal-Lughah fī Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Dirāsah Uslūbiyyah* (Acre: Dār al-Aswār, 1989) 133, 158–59; ‘Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsīm, *Al-Itlīzām wal-Taṣawwuf fī Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī* (Baghdad: Dā’irat al-Shu‘ūn al-Thaqāfiyyah al-‘Ammah, 1990) 108, 110, 168; Jayyusi, *Trends* 698–99; ‘Alī al-Rā’ī, “*Al-Shā’ir al-ladhī Yushqihī wa-Yus‘iduhu Alam Kabīr*,” *‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Rā’id al-Shīr al-Ḥadīth*, eds. Nihād al-Takarlī *et al.* (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqazah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Ta’līf wal-Tarjamah wal-Nashr, 1958) 46; Mujaḥid ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Mujaḥid, “*Shā’ir Aḥāla al-Shīr ilā Ughniyah*,” *Ibid.*, 52; Mīshāl Sulaymān, “*Al-Sindiyan Yahza’ bil-Riyāh*,” *Ibid.*, 86–7; Khalīl Shukrallah Rizk, “The Poetry of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Thematic and Stylistic Study,” *diss.*, Indiana University, 1981, 153, 189. [Published in Arabic as Khalīl Rizq, *Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī fī Dirāsa Uslūbiyyah 1945–1979* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Ashraf, 1995)]; Aḥmad Suwaylim, *Al-Mar’ah fī Shīr al-Bayātī* (Cairo: Al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Ammah lil-Kitāb, 1984) 48, 58.

In common with the bulk of the poetry of resistance, this *qaṣīdah* seeks to mobilize a collective response to the Zionist occupation of Palestine.²⁶ Unlike much of this verse, however, the *qaṣīdah* follows a somewhat elaborate structure marked by a reliance on a complementary interface of elements drawn from the classical tradition as well as from Near Eastern mythology. This structure makes possible a poignant articulation of al-Bayātī's vision of the ultimate triumph of the Palestinian cause.

"Odes to Jaffā" [9]

(I) "A Song"

O Jaffa, your Jesus is in bonds,
 Naked, daggers tearing at him, beyond the crosses of borders
 And above your domes a cloud is weeping
 And a bat flying.
 O red rose, O spring rain 5
 They said—while in your two eyes the day is dying
 And tears dry out despite the sorrow of the heart—
 They said: "Delight in the scent of the ox-eye of Najd,
 O comrade."
 And ashamed I wept: 10
 "For after this evening the ox-eye will be no more"²⁷
 For the door has been slammed shut by Judas and the road
 Deserted, and your dead children
 Without graves, they're eating
 Their livers, and on your sidewalk they slumber. 15

(II) "Barbed Wire"

The cries of the woman who guards the vineyard
 In the night awaken me
 And I hear reverberations
 Of the north wind
 On one side of the olive grove, to my ears repeat 20
 The tragedy of my subjugated people, standing fast,
 The tragedy of loss.
 It is as if a battle were raging

²⁶ Shawqī Khamīs includes this *qaṣīdah* among those poems of al-Bayātī that "support . . . our position of struggle and contribute to mobilizing the feelings of the masses of readers, awakening them and leading them on the arduous and bloody path to freedom." Shawqī Khamīs, *Al-Manfā wal-Malakūt fī Shī'r 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī* (Beirut: Dār al-'Awdah, 1971) 82.

²⁷ The translation of al-Qushayrī's quoted verse is by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych. See Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the 'Abbāsīd Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991) 326. See also note 28 below.

- Between me and death in silence and in somber resolve:
 I will not die 25
 As long as there remains in the lamp of the refugees' night
 Oil and fire, beyond the graveyard of borders
 Where the tattered tents (fluttering)
 In the wind like a sign pointing
 To the path of return, bloody, nigh. 30
- (III) "A Letter"
 O brethren burning with desire for a morrow under the stars
 Makers of the great love
 And of bread and flowers
 O children of Jaffa wandering 35
 On the boundaries
 Of my great homeland
 I am still here, singing the sun, burning
 Singing, still.
 The wind, and the sparrow in the throes of death in my house, and
 the shadows
 Black, veiling from you my blood-soaked face 40
 And Israel's night vomiting hate and vengeance.
 And whoremongers and informers.
 I am still here, singing the sun, in silence
 And in somber resolve
 O brethren burning with desire 45
 For struggle.
- (IV) "Glory to Children and Olive Trees"
 Glory to the martyrs and to the living from among my people
 And to those torn asunder, standing steadfast.
 Glory to children in the night of torment
 And in tents. 50
 Glory to olive trees in the land of peace
 To the small sparrows searching in the dust
 Of my field, and to the army garrisoned on the boundaries
 Of my great homeland
 —The army of Arabism and salvation— 55
 Glory to poets and writers, lovers of life
 Waging, today, the fateful battle
 And striking at the hand of tyrants.
 Glory to the sick on the beds of weeping
 And to toiling women 60
 The mothers.
- (V) "The Return"
 The night is banished by the lamps of the eyes
 Your eyes, O brethren scattered, hungry
 Under the stars.
 It is as if I dreamt that I paved with flowers and tears 65

Your road.
 And as if Jesus
 With you were returning to Galilee
 Without a Cross.²⁸

The first poem titled “A Song” is the only component part of the *qaṣīdah* in which Jaffa is the addressee. Like all towns in Arabic, Jaffa is referred to in the feminine. But Jaffa is no ordinary town. It had been the object of “conquest” in a literal sense since ancient times. The list of those who “possessed” Jaffa includes Thutmosis III, the Kings David and Solomon, the Assyrian King Sennacherib, the Persians, Alexander the Great, the Ptolemies, the Crusaders, and, in more recent times, the British.²⁹

“*Qaṣā'id ilā Yāfā*” is about the conquest of Jaffa by the Zionists in the year 1948. Several accounts have been written of this recent conquest. After accompanying his father, a Jaffite, on a nostalgic visit to the hometown he left in 1948, Omar al-Qattan writes:

In that year the city surrendered to the Jewish forces on 13 May. Before its surrender, Jaffa had been one of Palestine’s largest and wealthiest cities, with a population in excess of 120,000. Indeed in the 1947 UN partition plan for Palestine, the city had been given to the Arabs although it lay at the heart of the nascent Jewish state. As soon as the British government announced its intention to pull out of Palestine, Jaffa became the theater of some of the most vicious fighting between the poorly armed Palestinian irregulars and both the Haganah and Irgun militias.

By the time it surrendered Jaffa had become a city of ghosts, its inhabitants dwindling to three or four thousand. The Haganah—which two days later was to become the official Israeli army—ordered all the remaining Palestinians to assemble in one neighbourhood, Ajami, where for over a year they were surrounded with barbed-wire fences and forbidden to leave. Indeed until the six-day war in 1967, a Jaffite could not leave his or her hometown without a special military permit; and until just over a year ago [1998], Tel Aviv municipality, which had annexed Jaffa, would very rarely issue an Arab with a building permit to erect or refurbish his or her house.³⁰

Poem I, which is concerned primarily to delineate the effects of dispossession on the dispossessed, opens by juxtaposing Jaffa and Yasū‘

²⁸ The *qaṣīdah* is in *al-Kāmil* meter. For the Arabic text, see Appendix 9.

²⁹ “Yāfā,” *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1934 ed.

³⁰ Omar al-Qattan, “Memory can Turn Men into Heroes,” *New Statesman* June 1999: 29–30.

(Jesus). The often conspicuous use of Christian as well as other Near Eastern myth, it should be pointed out, was common to the so-called “Tammūzian” poets of the mid-twentieth century such as Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, Khalīl Ḥāwī, and Yūsuf al-Khāl.³¹ The use of the possessive suffix in the first line as well as the juxtaposition of Jaffa and Yasū‘ has the effect of uniting Jesus with the Jaffite/the Palestinian in a commonality of suffering. The opening lines of the poem describes how Jesus/the Jaffite fares under Zionist hegemony:

Yāfā yasū‘uki fil-quyūd
‘Arīn tumazzīquhu ‘l khañjīr, ‘abra ṣulbāni ‘l ḥudūd

O Jaffa, your Jesus is in bonds,
 Naked, daggers tearing at him, beyond the crosses of borders

While the primary symbolism of these two lines pertains to the Crucifixion³² as is suggested by the collocation of Yasū‘ (Jesus), *al-quyūd* (the bonds), *‘arīn* (naked), *ṣulbān* (crosses), allusions to Prometheus are also discernable in the collocation of “bonds,” “tearing at,” and the “livers” of the concluding lines (line 13–15). The references in the concluding lines to the devouring of livers tend to reinforce the Jesus/Prometheus fusion with the resultant expansion of the range of symbolisms.³³ The adjective *‘arīn*, moreover, is significant to the referential potential of the poem. The physical nakedness of Jesus corresponds to the dispossession (*istilāb*) of the Jaffite refugee—the loss of home and belongings.³⁴ The adjective is syntactically related to the noun *‘arā’* (bareness, open space, open country) and both

³¹ See Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, “Min al-Marjī‘iyyah al-Gharbiyyah ilā al-Marjī‘iyyah al-‘Arabiyyah: Al-Uṣṭūrah wa-Taḥawwulātuhā fī al-Qaṣīdah al-‘Arabiyyah al-Mu‘āṣirah,” *Al-Mu‘atthirāt al-Ajñabiyyah fī al-Shī‘r al-‘Arabī al-Mu‘āṣir: Proceedings of al-Halaqah al-Naqdiyyah fī Mihrajān Jarash al-Thālith ‘Ashar*, ed. Fakhrī Ṣāliḥ (Beirut: Al-Mu‘assasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1995) 49; Nazeer el-Azma, “The Tammuzī Movement and the Influence of T. S. Eliot on Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb,” *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. Issa J. Boullata (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1980) 215–31.

³² Rizq notes that “the cross and crucifixion perform the function of a symbolic image that unifies the severe pain and the suffering of the Palestinian people in the land of dispersal.” See Rizq 134. For a discussion of the use of crucifixion imagery in al-Bayātī see Rizk 165–66, 182.

³³ For a discussion of the use of Prometheus in al-Bayātī see Rizk 75, 124–27, 186–87.

³⁴ Ṣabrī Ḥāfīz describes the Palestinian refugee as “the Christ of our modern age being crucified every day in the tents of the refugees.” Ḥāfīz 48–9.

derive from the trilateral root ʿ-r-y , which denotes destitution, deprivation, and dispossession.

The speaker is inducted into the trio of Jesus/Prometheus/the refugee in lines 8–10. The violence of the Imperfect *tumazziqū* (to tear at) in the second line contrasts sharply with the listlessness of a Jesus immobilized. “*Tumazziqū*,” moreover, carries connotations that pertain to the dismemberment by European powers, following WWI, of the Arab lands into mandates, “protectorates” and spheres of influence, and to the imposition of what were widely considered to be artificial *ḥudūd*, “borders,” but also “limitations” intended to fence in and to act as instruments of death, as indeed subsequent events would bear out.

The melancholy tone pervading the opening lines, moreover, recalls the *nasīb* section of the traditional *qaṣīdah* in which the hapless poet surveys the effects of dislocation visited upon the *dīyār* (abodes of the poet’s tribe or of his beloved), by humans or by the elements, rendering them deserted and in a state of ruin (*aṭlāl*), and poignantly reminisces on a state of “bliss” that once enveloped the abodes.³⁵ The parallels with the traditional *nasīb* are pursued through imagery of the shedding of tears. References to tears in this section of the poem include a cloud (line 3), Jaffa whose tears dry out despite the anguish of the heart (line 7), and the speaker, who in line 10 relates how he shed tears out of shame. In its undisturbed state Jaffa is a wellspring of fecundity as is indicated in line 5 in which it is apostrophized as a “red rose” and “spring rain,” the latter in particular being a primary agent of fertility and regeneration. The affirmation implied in the rain and spring of line 5, however, is nullified by the preponderance of imagery of death and sterility: the cloud of line 3 which would ordinarily be a source of rain instead supplies not life-giving rain but tears. Diction that denotes death in this section includes the verb *yaḥtadīr* “dying” (line 6), *mawtāki al-ṣighār* “your dead children” (line 13), as well as the reference to the grave in the penultimate line.

A noticeable feature of the initial four lines is the contrast between a Jesus in bonds and a bat flying freely over Jaffa’s domes.³⁶ The

³⁵ See S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993) 18–54; 241–85.

³⁶ The fact that domes are architectural features of both Muslim and Christian shrines preserves the “ecumenical” disposition of the poem.

impact of the onslaught on Jaffa/Palestine is so far represented in primarily spiritual terms: Jesus is the foremost symbol of (en)light-(en)ment), the “day” of line 6 which dies while Jaffa watches helplessly. A cloud is reported in line 3 to be blocking the light over Jaffa’s domes and thus precipitates the onset of darkness in the following line. The resultant darkness makes it possible for the bat, here standing for the Zionist occupier of Jaffa, to fly. The “black” color of the bat as well as its tendency to shun the daylight and become active/fly at night makes it an especially apt symbol for the Zionist as harbinger of darkness, and a sinister being that could only thrive in a state bereft of (en)light(en)ment.³⁷

The second passage (lines 6–15) is noteworthy in two respects. In the first instance an attempt is made to transpose the pre-Islamic *nasīb* topos to the Palestinian refugee/exile. This takes the form of an exchange between the speaker and the disembodied voices of *qālū* “they said,” that counsel the speaker with an importunity indicated by the repetition of the Perfect *qālū* at the opening of lines 6 and 8. In the traditional *qaṣīdah* the interlocutor(s) are often the poet’s journey companion(s) who entreat the grief-stricken poet to show forbearance. The transposing of the *nasīb* topos to the Palestinian exile is effected through *taḍmīn*, a quotation from the *qaṣīdah* tradition. Commenting on his recourse to that tradition, al-Bayātī remarks: “When I would make use of a verse by a pre-Islamic poet such as Ṭarafah or an Islamic or a ‘Abbāsīd poet, I would feel happiness because this line or a part of it had enlightened some of the darkness of my soul, and almost pointed for me the way to a new, unknown, and mysterious road.”³⁸ In this instance, al-Bayātī makes use of two verses by the early Umayyad poet al-Ṣimmah al-Qushayrī who, tradition holds, was obliged to migrate from his native Najd and live in exile in Syria.³⁹ Al-Qushayrī’s verses in question are as follow:

*Aqūlu li-ṣāhibī wal-ʿīsu tahwā
binā bayna ʿl Munīfati fal-Ḍimārī*

³⁷ Citing lines 12–15 of the *qaṣīdah* Sulaymān Gibrān maintains that “the poet opens and concludes the poem with what is ostensibly a dialectical structure; nevertheless the imagery is of . . . the bleak type only.” Jabrān 133.

³⁸ Al-Bayātī, *Ṣirah Dhātīyyah* 34.

³⁹ For an account of the circumstances that led to al-Qushayrī’s self-imposed exile see Al-Marzūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Hamāsah*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Taʿlīf wal-Tarjamah wal-Nashr, 1952) 1239.

*Tamatta' min shamīmi 'arāri Najdin
fa-mā ba'da 'l-'ashīyyati min 'arāri.*⁴⁰

I say to my companion as the grey camels bear us swiftly
Between the hill of al-Munīfah and the valley of Ḍimār
“Delight in the scent of the ox-eye of Najd,
For after this evening the ox-eye will be no more.”⁴¹

The above verses relate al-Qushayrī's counsel to his unidentified companion, given while on their way to Damascus, to savor the fragrance of Najd's ox-eye, “*'arāri najdin*,” which would be no more following nightfall, after which they would have—by the poet's estimate—left the Najd region with its sweet-smelling ox-eye behind. Al-Bayātī's speaker, who unlike al-Qushayrī is the recipient of counsel, is addressed by the vocative particle *yā* followed by the noun *rafiq*. “*Rafiq*” traditionally denoted “a companion” and is often synonymous with al-Qushayrī's “*ṣāhib*.” Common collocations in which “*rafiq*” occurs include “*rafiq al-darb*” (journey companion), “*rafiqat al-'umr*” (life's female companion), the latter being an epithet of a wife. In more recent times, however, certainly around the time al-Bayātī's qaṣīdah was composed, it had taken on predominantly leftist political overtones and had come to denote primarily “comrade.” Thus twentieth-century political ideologies are overlaid on the *nasīb* reference, “contemporizing” it. This process is significant insofar as it grounds modern Arab (political) discourse in classical discourse by uniting the Jaffite

⁴⁰ Al-Marzūqī 1240.

⁴¹ The translation is by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych who, in an illuminating discussion of Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsah*, cites al-Qushayrī's verses as an example of the developed nature of “the concept of the relativity of time and space” in poetry. S. Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām* 326. Al-Qushayrī's verses in question are also discussed in Jaroslav Stetkevych's groundbreaking work on the classical Arabic *nasīb*. J. Stetkevych considers al-Qushayrī's verses to be “representative of the early elegiac treatment of Najd.” He elegantly renders the verses as follows:

To my companion I say, while amber camels rush
with us downslope:
Delight in the fragrance of the oxeve of the Najd,
for come the night it will be gone!

Commenting on the verses J. Stetkevych notes that “[a] landscape, Najd has become transformed into an arrested poetic vision. It is the desert bloom in the poet's memory long after the rain of spring is lost in vaporous figments of mirages and long after the desert has reverted to its nearly year long inclemency. It is all the poet chooses to remember and to live by. To say that this particular poet's Najd never existed does not invalidate the vision. His and every true poet's Najd existed when it was retained poetically as a chosen moment.” See Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1993) 117.

refugee of mid-twentieth century with the uprooted Umayyad in a commonality of exile, loss, and displacement. Between the two hemistichs of al-Qushayrī's second line cited above, al-Bayātī inserts, in addition to that catchword of twentieth-century Arab leftist discourse, the disclosure *fa-bakaytu min 'ārī*, "And ashamed I wept" (line 10). It should be noted that *'ār* and *'arār*, which form an Imperfect Jinās (paronomasia), echo *'arīn* of line 2 acoustically and/or semantically.

Al-Qushayrī does not elaborate on why "after this evening the ox-eye will be no more," as the topography of Najd would have been too familiar to his companion to warrant such an elaboration. Al-Bayātī's "appropriation" of al-Qushayrī, however, involves reconstructing the latter's verse in such a way as to further the overall design of his "Odes to Jaffa."⁴² This he does through the explanatory sentence occupying line 12 in which Judas is identified as culpable for the suffering of Yasū' / Jaffa, as the one who slams the door shut in the face of the refugee/exile. The reference to Judas in this line, moreover, is significant, given the phonological near identity in Arabic of Yahūdihā (Judas) and Yahūd (Jews). A marked feature of this section, moreover, pertains to the manner in which the then contested Arabness of Jaffa is affirmed. Such affirmation is achieved by invoking Najd as the locus of Arab authenticity, by the use of Najd interchangeably with Jaffa—a use that is made possible by the *taḍmīn*. The manipulation of pre-Islamic themes and topoi to articulate contemporary (20th century) socio-political concerns is arguably one of the most striking features of modern Arabic poetry.

The second poem entitled "Barbed Wire" provides yet another barrier in the face of the exile yearning to return, to attain freedom. The title refers to the widespread use of barbed wire by the occupation authorities along the borders to prevent "infiltrators" from returning to Palestine or within the occupied territories to cordon off certain Palestinian areas. Figuratively, it represents an obstacle to be surmounted by the refugee/Palestinian before "the return" becomes a reality, before freedom is attained.

Roughly divided into two sections, the first part of "Barbed Wire" (lines 16–22), reveals the despondency of the speaker/exile, which

⁴² Rizq cites al-Qushayrī's verse as an instance of al-Bayātī's use of "allusions, reference, and quotations. In the poem 'Song' for example, the poet adopts the following verse by the pre-Islamic [*sic*] poet al-Šimmaḥ b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qushayrī . . . then puts it in the following mould [lines 8–11 of al-Bayātī's poem are cited]. Rizq 138.

finds expression in the first poem through the *taḍmīn* of al-Qushayrī and through the interjection that the gate to Jaffa was slammed shut by Judas. As the second poem begins, this lingering despondency is heard in the piercing cries of “the woman who guards the vineyard,” a reverberating nightmare that awakens the speaker from his night slumber. The poem’s temporal frame of reference is still “the night,” the day having been encountered in the first poem as *yahtaḍīr* (line 6), with the consequent flying of the bat above Jaffa’s domes. The Messianic symbolism of the vine and in line 20 of olives harmonizes with and augments the Yasū‘/Jesus imagery of the first poem. Although usages of and allusions to *al-kurūm* (vine, grapevines), and *al-zaytūn* (olives, olive trees), are not uncommon in Arabo-Islamic tradition, so frequent has been their use in twentieth-century Arab discourse on the question of Palestine that they have come to symbolize Palestine.

The deliberate use of a *female* who guards the vineyard and whose cries are heard at *night* strongly suggests a rape scene, the reverberations of which amount to a *ma’sāh*, “tragedy,” repeated twice (lines 21–22). This tragedy carries particularly distressing overtones supplied by *al-kurūm*. The noun derives from the trilateral root *k-r-m* from which is also derived the noun *karāmah*, “honor,” “dignity.” In traditional Arab culture the female is the bearer of a community’s honor, the violation of which plunges that community into *‘ār* (shame, dishonor), first encountered in line 10 of the first poem. The speaker’s identification with this violated community is underscored through the use of the possessive particle suffixed to *shā‘b* (line 21).

Although the predominant tone of this section is one of loss and despondency, also detectable in it are unequivocal signs of resistance to the onslaught. The female guard utters not a whimper but *ṣayḥāt*, shrill cries of anger, protest, and denunciation. Moreover, although subjugated “*maqḥūr*,” the Palestinian is nevertheless *ṣāmid* “standing fast” (line 21). This steadfastness provides the sustenance for the speaker in the battle between him and death, a battle between good and evil, between light and darkness. It proves to be the oil and the fire of the lamp that shatters the night of the refugee and enables the speaker to keep death at bay (lines 25–27).⁴³ A process is set in motion whereby symbols of the frailty and defenselessness of the

⁴³ ‘Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim considers “the fire” to be the primary symbol in al-Bayātī’s revolutionary verse. Al-Sayyid Jāsim 168.

Palestinian are transformed into sources of empowerment. As noted above, the cries of the guard are not only signs of distress but also demonstrations of defiance that have the power to effect a state of consciousness, to awaken. Similarly, the tattered tents that shelter the refugees, fluttering in the wind, become like road signs that point to the path of return which, though bloody, is nevertheless *qarīb*, literally “near.” It should be noted that the function of the wind undergoes a significant transformation: in the first section the reverberations of the north wind repeat/echo the tragedy, thus amplifying it (lines 18–21). In the second section, the wind causes the tents of the refugees to flutter so that they seem to point to the road of return. The succession of the adjectives qualifying the road of return is consequential inasmuch as making *al-dāmī* (“the bloody,” an implicit call to armed struggle) precede *qarīb* (near, nigh) renders the latter contingent upon the former.⁴⁴

The refugees, whose steadfastness makes it possible for the speaker to proclaim in line 25 his will to endure, are the addressee of the third poem entitled “Risālah” (A Letter). The address, which takes up lines 37–44 of the poem, amounts to a reiteration of and elaboration on the speaker’s will to defy death. Such elaboration becomes crucial as the poem moves closer to the realization of the “morrow” for which the refugees, whom the speaker identifies as “my brethren,” are “burning with desire” (line 31). The sinister forces that victimize the Palestinian linger in this section. This is intimated by the presence in lines 39–40 of shadows that conceal the speaker’s blood-soaked face from the wandering children of Jaffa. The malevolence of these shadows is amplified through the use of the adjective *sawdā’* (black), which, in Arabic contexts, carries largely negative connotations. These shadows coalesce in the following line (41) with “Israel’s night” that vomits rancor as well as vengeance on its victims.

Arab nationalist ideology in the post World War II era posited that the success of the Zionist colonial project was contingent upon the obliteration of any trace of the Arab identity of Palestine. This

⁴⁴ Al-Bayātī draws a distinction between the death in *Abārīq Muhashshamah* (1954) and death in *Al-Majd lil-Atfal wal-Zaytūn* (1956), *Ash‘ār fī al-Manjā* (1957), *Ishrūn Qaṣīdah min Berlin* (1959), and *Kalimāt lā Tamūt* (1960). The former he calls *al-mawt al-majjānī* (futile, purposeless death), while the latter is “death for the sake of freedom.” ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Tajribatī al-Shū‘riyyah* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Nizār Qabbānī, 1968) 21.

ideology consistently portrayed the struggle with the Zionists over Palestine as *ṣirāʿ wujūd* (a struggle for [Arab] existence) rather than *khilāf hudūd* (a territorial dispute). The use in line 37 of the negative particle followed by the Imperfect *azāl* is, therefore, key to subverting this menacing design. The significations of the verb *zāla, yazālu* include “to disappear,” “to vanish,” “to cease to exist.” However, the preceding negative particle has the effect of dispelling the dreaded prospect implied in the verb. Indeed, notions of persistence and endurance are integral to this construction, perhaps more so than could be intimated by the English “still” into which *la yazāl* is often rendered. With unrelenting insistence in lines 37, 38, and 43, *la-azāl* encircles the black shadows that permeate lines 39–41. The shadowy presence is further encircled/overwhelmed by the sun, the primal source of light, which the speaker sings in lines 37 and 43, with which the address opens and on which it closes. The repetition of *la-azāl* constitutes a verbal enactment of *ṣumūd*, the steadfastness of the subjugated Palestinian people referred to in line 21. This steadfastness is further reinforced through the repetition in lines 43 and 44 of the prepositional phrase *fī ṣamtin wa-iṣrārīn ḥazīn* (in silence and in somber resolve), first encountered in line 24 describing the battle between the speaker and death.

The “Letter” closes as it begins with the addressee “O brethren burning with desire.” This conclusion permits two possible readings. In the opening line of the “Letter” the brethren yearn for “a morrow under the stars,” *i.e.*, the dawn of liberty and emancipation. In the concluding line, however, the yearning is “for struggle.” The closing line can be seen as “prescriptive” insofar as it expounds on how this “morrow” is to be brought about. The prepositional phrase “*ilā ghadīn taḥta ’l-nujūm*” (for a morrow under the stars) with which the poem opens becomes in the closing line *ilā al-niḍāl* (for struggle) with *al-niḍāl* thus posited as the pathway to a “morrow” of liberty. Another possible reading of line 45 “*yā-ikhwaṭī ’l-mutaḥarriqīn*” (O brethren burning with desire) is as a partial repetition of line 31 “*yā-ikhwaṭī ’l-mutaḥarriqīn ilā ghadīn taḥta ’l-nujūm*” (O brethren burning with desire for a morrow under the stars) with line 46 “*ilā ’l-niḍāl*” (for struggle) forming a call by the speaker for his “brethren” to engage in struggle.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The use of the prepositional phrase in exhortations is common in twentieth-

Either way the call for *al-niḍāl* (whose use here in preference to *al-jihād* maintains the “left-leaning” tendency of the poem) is integral to the dawning of the cherished “morrow under the stars.” This *niḍāl* is to be collective and to be waged at all levels, including the symbolic level. Participation in this struggle confers upon the participant *majd*, the glory that is touted throughout the penultimate poem, Poem IV, entitled “Al-Majd lil-Aṭfāl wal-Zaytūn” (Glory to Children and Olive Trees), which gives al-Bayātī’s *Dīwān* its title.⁴⁶ This poem, which builds on the call to struggle that concludes the preceding section, marks a shift from the prevalent tone and diction of the qaṣīdah as a whole.⁴⁷ It is the part of the qaṣīdah in which the overtly declamatory voice of the orator rises increasingly above that of the poet. This rhetorical change is also a change in mood, from the shame and despair of the “*nasīb*”-derived sections to a “*fakhr*” (boast)-like assurance and resolve. It is through this forthright celebration of the revolutionary spirit, through the unbridled recourse to polemics, that the qaṣīdah’s function as an act of resistance, and as an attempt to mobilize a collective response to the Zionist occupation of Palestine, becomes most pronounced and unequivocal.

The concluding poem, Poem V “The Return,” represents a marked reversal of the bleak elements that preponderate in the preceding sections. A conspicuous instance of this process of reversal pertains to the imagery of the night/darkness in the qaṣīdah. In Poem I the day is described as *yaḥtadīr* (dying) and is replaced by a night during which the cries of the female vineyard guard are heard forming the opening of Poem II. In Poem III the “black” shadows that veil the speaker’s blood-soaked face merge with Israel’s night that spews hatred and vengeance. In Poem IV the night is a source of the “torment” that refugee children must endure. By the concluding section, however, this night is being banished by the *qanādīl* (lamps) of the refugees’ eyes (lines 62–63).⁴⁸ Significantly, although the penultimate poem provides a lengthy list of various sections of the Arab popu-

century Arab political discourse. Examples of such use are: *ilā al-amām* (forward), *ilā al-jihād* (to Jihād).

⁴⁶ For an examination of the structure of this section, see Jabrān 133.

⁴⁷ Sulaymān Gibrān cites Poem IV as representative of poems by al-Bayātī that are “based upon a repetition of the structure of one key sentence.” Gibrān 133.

⁴⁸ Jayyusi cites line 62 (as well as lines 13–15) as exemplifying the colorfulness of al-Bayātī’s imagery due to the influence of “a dogmatic belief in the glorious future of the Communist struggle.” Jayyusi, *Trends* 699.

lace deemed worthy of glory, it is the Palestinian refugees who ultimately act as the instrument of this (en)light(en)ment.⁴⁹ Scattered and hungry, they are nonetheless possessed of the power to expel an oppressive night. The “morrow” for which the refugees burn with desire at the opening of the “Letter” is fast approaching and can now be envisioned by the speaker.

The process of reversal affects another theme that predominates in the initial sections of the *qaṣīdah*: the exile/separation of the Palestinian. The Qushayrī-inspired assertion that “after this evening the ox-eye will be no more” (line 11) is negated in this section by a vision of the speaker paving with flowers and tears the refugees’ road of return (lines 65–66). The road of return whose proximity is tentatively proclaimed in line 30 becomes almost palpable. This vision is quiescent yet potent enough to throw open in front of the refugee/exile the door which, in Poem I, was slammed shut by Judas.

Perhaps the most striking reversal/transformation involves the figure of Yasū‘/Jesus who, in Poem I, is encountered in chains, naked, with daggers tearing at him. The vision of Yasū‘ returning among the returnees to Galilee, having been freed of the Cross, embodies the poet’s abiding faith in the ultimate triumph of justice over oppression.⁵⁰ The battle that rages in silence in lines 23–24 between the speaker and death is won. The image of a Crossless Yasū‘ in Galilee is testimony to this triumph.

To conclude, the scheme of “Odes to Jaffā” involves a reliance on a complementary interface of elements drawn from the classical Arabic *qaṣīdah* as well as from Near Eastern mythology. With respect to the former, notable in the *qaṣīdah* is the characteristic progression of the classical *qaṣīdah* from the despair, loss, and melancholy

⁴⁹ ‘Alī al-Rāṣī maintains that al-Bayātī “sees in them [the Palestinian refugees] the Arab refugees, and all the refugees from homelands in the deep past and in the tormented present.” Al-Rāṣī 46.

⁵⁰ Al-Sayyid Jāsim 110. Salih Altoma characterizes al-Bayātī’s vision of return as “idyllic.” See Altoma, *Palestinian Themes* 33. Commenting on al-Bayātī’s collection *Al-Majd lil-Atfāl wal-Ḥayāt* (Glory to Children and Olive Trees, 1956) M. M. Badawi writes that the collection “opens with a series of poems entitled ‘Diary of an Arab in Israel’ in which the poet, committed to the Arab cause, sounds more hopeful.” See Badawi, *A Critical Introduction* 211. Jayyusi, however, remarks, “Socialist poets like ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī usually end their poems with a note of confidence in the struggle of man and his ultimate victory, within a Socialist framework. This can be irksome because it does not allow for the usual change of mood and might lead to artificiality in weaker poets.” Jayyusi, *Trends* 652.

of the *nasīb*, of which the *taḍmīn* from al-Qushayrī is the most pronounced instance, to the resolve and boastfulness of the penultimate poem which recall the *fakhr* sections of many a traditional qaṣīdah. On the other hand, the qaṣīdah, as has been noted above, draws on elements of Near Eastern mythology that relate to the cycle of death and resurrection in its Christian mutation. It is the combination of these elements in “Odes to Jaffa” that makes possible a potent articulation of al-Bayātī’s vision of the ultimate triumph of the Palestinian cause.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ELUSIVE DREAM: ‘ABD AL-WAHHĀB AL-BAYĀTĪ’S ODES TO HIS SON ‘ALĪ

The British Mandate over Iraq was formally terminated in the year 1932, and the country was proclaimed an independent state.¹ This formal independence, however, did not signal the end of British dominion over the country; in the course of the ensuing decades the newly formed monarchy became widely perceived as a protégé regime serving the interests of the British. To many Iraqis the new order represented colonialism by proxy; it was predictable, therefore, that anti-colonial opposition should now be directed at this new regime.

The bedrock of colonial policy in the post-Mandate era was the imposition of treaties on former possessions. If imperial powers saw such treaties as instrumental in maintaining hegemony over these territories, anti-colonial forces saw opposition to these treaties as a means of undermining this hegemonic relationship. To anti-colonial forces, these documents legalized colonialism and made it permanent—hence the fierceness of the opposition to them. Abrogating Anglo-Iraqi treaties thus became a rallying cry for nationalist forces that mobilized widespread popular opposition to them. This opposition often met with harsh repressive measures taken by successive regimes. Despite mounting repression, however, this was not an era of pessimism; to the contrary, it was an era of nationalist assertion. The belief seems to have been widespread that freedom (understood above all as genuine independence from Britain) was achievable, that treaties were obstacles to be surmounted.

Political repression bore down on intellectuals who stood at the forefront of opposition to treaties and to veiled colonial hegemony. The most vocal opposition, however, came from Arab nationalists and Leftists (and their sympathizers). Both camps shared an anti-colonial stance and were, to varying degrees, sympathetic to Socialist

¹ Anglo-Iraqi relations in the first half of the twentieth century were in many respects representative of those that obtained between colonial powers and other Arab countries.

ideas emanating from the Socialist camp, particularly the Soviet Union. Through an examination of a *qaṣīdah* by the leading anti-colonial poet ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (1926–1999), the first part of this chapter demonstrates that a deep-seated belief in the endurance of a veiled colonialism existed long after overt British control had come to an end. Counterpoised to this belief is a robust spirit of resistance nurtured by an equally strong belief in the inevitability of national liberation.

The signing on January 15, 1948 of the Portsmouth Treaty of “alliance” between Britain and Iraq sparked off mass protest in the streets of Baghdad.² The treaty, which would have replaced the Anglo-Iraqī treaty of 1930, was widely seen as perpetuating British hegemony over Iraq. Al-Bayātī, then attending the Baghdad Teachers Training College, took part in one of the demonstrations; as a result, he claims to have sustained a serious injury and was later imprisoned. Following his graduation, he took up a teaching post in al-Ramādī, a small town to the north west of Baghdad. In 1954, he was fired from his post on account of his Leftist views.³ It was at this period that he began contributing to the Baghdad monthly *al-Thaqāfah al-Jadīdah*, which was launched in 1954. Only four issues of this Marxian journal appeared before the authorities banned it as part of a widespread campaign of repression intended to forestall opposition to the upcoming Baghdad Pact (the Baghdad Pact was signed in 1955 by Britain, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan; its main objective was to prevent Soviet expansion into the Middle East). In 1954 al-Bayātī was forced into exile first to Syria and subsequently to Beirut.⁴ Following the 1956 war of aggression by Britain, France, and Israel against Egypt, he moved to that country. This period, which ended in 1958 with the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq,

² The treaty was concluded on January 15, 1948 by the then British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin (1881–1951) and the Iraqī Prime Minister Ṣāliḥ Jabr (1896–1957). The wave of protest, which was triggered by the concluding of the treaty, came to be known as al-Wathbah (the leap). See Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 120–22.

³ For a discussion of the ideological underpinning of al-Bayātī’s poetry, see Saadi A. Simawe, “The Lives of the Sufi Masters in ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī’s Poetry,” “*Perhaps a Poet is Born, or Dies*”: *The Poetics of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, spec. issue of *Journal of Arabic Literature* 32.2 (2001): 123–25.

⁴ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Yanābī‘ al-Shams: Al-Sīrah al-Shī‘riyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Farqad, 1999) 52.

is referred to as the poet's "first exile." It was at the onset of this period that the following *qaṣīdah* was composed.

"A Song to my son 'Alī" [10]
 My beloved son
 I called out your name while the snow
 Like the night, was falling on my head, like the fog,
 Like your mother's eyes when she bade me farewell, like the nightfall.
 I called out your name 5
 Where the wind blew
 In [the land of] exile,
 But an echo answered me back: "My beloved son."
 And the killers
 Count my breaths, and in my tormented homeland they
 imprison 10
 The fathers of your little brethren
 While they bring glad tidings
 Of the free world, to the slaves
 And of the miracles
 Of their dollar—the hope of the peoples— 15
 And the giver of life to the dead.
 They frighten mothers
 And they soak
 The banners of your people, my little one, with blood.
 But you are busy and you do not answer. 20
 Busy with your new toy, you do not answer.
 And your mother's eyes awaiting me, the sky,
 And the night in Baghdad awaiting dawn
 The cheerless bread-seller
 Wanders in the bazaar streets, the blind and beggars 25
 Resume on the sidewalk
 Their recitation of the Holy Book.
 While behind prison walls
 A great people awakens
 Destroying its chains, my beloved son, 30
 But you are busy and you do not answer.
 The wind in [the land of] exile blows, it is as if something in me
 had died.
 I invoke a blessing, my little one, despite its harshness, on life.
 For you and I belong to our people even though tyrants loathe it.⁵

⁵ 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Al-Majd lil-Atfāl wal-Ḍaytūn*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī lil-Ṭibā'ah wal-Nashr, 1967) 49–51. The *qaṣīdah* is dated December 1955. It is in *al-Kāmīl* meter. For the Arabic text, see Appendix 10. Works that make brief references to or contain some discussion of the *qaṣīdah* include the following: Ṣabrī Ḥāfīz, "Riḥlat al-Bayātī ma'a al-Nīrān wal-Kalimāt," *Ma'sāt al-Insān*

The 34 lines that make up the *qaṣīdah* are distributed in a number of passages of uneven length. The structural basis of the *qaṣīdah* is a twofold dissociation: the ideal world of the child set against the harsh realities of colonial Iraq. A related dissociative structure involves a dialectic of life/death—the deadness of the present to be transcended by the regeneration to come. Although the title proclaims the *qaṣīdah* to be a “song,” its opening line clearly follows the format of a letter: *waladī ḥabīb* is the customary opening of a letter from a parent to his/her son. The opening short line compresses the two interrelated themes of regeneration and love. The former is implicit in *waladī* (my son), which, at the root level, denotes birth, issue, and offspring. The latter theme is also introduced in the opening word of the *qaṣīdah*; it is further suggested in the qualifying adjectival *al-ḥabīb* (beloved) with its transparent reference to *ḥubb* (love). That the addressee assumes a motif-like dimension becomes clear as the *qaṣīdah* unfolds.

A marked shift in thematic emphasis is observed in the following line,

Nādaytu bismika wal-jalīd

I called out your name while the snow,

which, on a superficial level, seems to withhold any further elaboration of the themes introduced in the opening line through the abrupt introduction of *al-jalīd* (the snow) at the conclusion. *Al-Jalīd* functions as a key image in this passage; it suggests death, stultification, and wintry decay. Its connotative potential is developed in a twofold way: on the one hand, its juxtaposition with love, warmth, and regeneration tends to throw its stultifying properties in sharp relief; on the other hand, these stultifying properties are carried over through variations on the dominant image that occupies the remainder of this passage.

al-Muʿāṣir fī Shīʿr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah lil-Ṭibāʿah wal-Nashr, 1966) 150; Z. Dawlīsh, “Al-Bayātī Rāʿid al-Shīʿr al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth,” *Ibid.*, 249; Aḥmad Suwayd, “Shāʿir min Jīlīnā,” *ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Rāʿid al-Shīʿr al-Ḥadīth*, eds. Nihād al-Takarlī *et al.* (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqazah al-ʿArabiyyah lil-Taʿlīf wal-Tarjamah wal-Nashr, 1958) 23; Alī al-Rāʿī, “Al-Shāʿir al-ladhī Yushqīhu wa-Yusʿiduhu Alam Kabīr,” *Ibid.*, 45; Khalīl Rizq, *Shīʿr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī fī Dirāsah Uslūbiyyah: 1945–1979* (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Ashraf, 1995) 119–20; Sulaymān Gibrān, *Al-Mabnā wal-Lughah fī Shīʿr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Dirāsah Uslūbiyyah* (Acre: Dār al-Aswār, 1989) *passim*.

The first of these variant images is that of the “night” falling on the speaker’s head. This image, the underpinning of which is the dialectic of light/darkness, functions to bring out the absence of daylight, the onset of darkness, of death. The image is notable for the way it concretizes the concept of the night with its multiple dismal, “nightly” associations. It functions in conjunction with other related images: that of the “fog” at the close of line 3 as well as that of the sunset descending into nightfall (line 4).

Unlike the similes that occur in line 3 and at the close of line 4, all of which involve inanimate objects, the simile that occurs in the first part of line 4 takes a human dimension; it compares the snow to *‘yūni ummika fī wadā‘ī*, “your mother’s eyes when she bade me farewell.”⁶ It may be observed that adjacent imagery such as the snow, the night, and the fog serve to externalize the somber mood of the mother—her eyes are frosty, foggy, bereft of the glitter of the light.

With the nominal *wadā‘* (farewell) a dominant motif, that of separation/exile, is introduced. The images in this passage (the snow, the night, the fog, the sorrowing eyes of the mother, and finally sunset) all serve to bring out aspects of the exilic experience as endured by the poet. At the structural level, the opening passage achieves a degree of cohesion through the insistent repetition of the comparative *ka-* (like) as well as through the morphological and rhythmical identity between *maghīb* (nightfall, sunset) which provides a closure to the passage and *ḥabīb* (beloved) which forms the second part of the opening short line. The subsequent quadruplet (lines 5–8) is anticipated thematically as well as structurally by the preceding one. This quadruplet, however, marks a progression in the spatial dimensions of the *qaṣīdah*. This spatial extension expands on the notion of exile first introduced in line 4. For its part, line 5, *nādaytu bismika*, “I called out your name,” reiterates the verbal clause that forms the opening of line 2 above and thus provides an obvious structural link between the two passages. Through a rapid succession of prepositional phrases in the following two lines, instances of the exilic experience are presented. Implicit in the speaker calling out to his son is, of course, the notion of loss that stems from separation of the poet-father from ‘Alī as well as a desire to be re-united with him.

⁶ Sulaymān Gibrān holds that the similes in lines 2–4 are characterized by being more “declamatory” than “novel and original.” Gibrān 150.

The search by the poet-father for his son, we learn in lines 6 and 7, takes place *fi mahabbi 'l-rīh*, “where the wind blew,” as well as in *al-manfā*, “in [the land of] exile,” as yet undetermined exilic spaces.⁷ In particular, the wind imagery evokes the “spiritual emptiness” of such spaces. The notion of emptiness as well as of alienation is confirmed as the speaker’s calls go unanswered except by a chilling echo, resounding the call first heard at the opening of the *qaṣīdah*. This imparts a sense of heaviness that is paralleled at the phonological and syntactic levels through the repetition of /ff/ at the beginning of lines 6–8 and also through the successive prepositional phrases that make up lines 6–7 in the middle of the passage.

With line 9 the quadruplet pattern that has so far dominated the structure of the *qaṣīdah* disintegrates as the poem moves in one sweep that comprises lines 9–21, which form its second section. The second section is further marked off syntactically by a shift from the first-person singular that had dominated the *qaṣīdah* so far to the third-person plural. This syntactic shift has a correspondence at the referential level; it centers around line 9 that forms the opening of this somewhat extended passage. There is something startling, shocking, if not gruesome about *al-qātilūn*, the killers who make a sudden appearance.⁸ With its violence in its most extreme form is introduced for the first time in the *qaṣīdah*. *Al-Qātilūn* is lent additional emphasis as it occupies a parallel position to that occupied by *waladī* (my son) at the opening passage of the *qaṣīdah*. With its connotations of cruelty and murderous impulses, it stands in sharp contrast to *waladī* whose associations include innocence and vulnerability.

Another aspect in which *al-qātilūn* contrasts with *waladī* relates to the words’ respective referents. Unlike *waladī* whose referent is spelled out through the possessive suffix and further qualified adjectivally, the solitary *al-qātilūn* is enveloped in sinister ambiguity. In its non-specificity it is as gripping as it is fearsome. Beginning in line 10,

⁷ Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi argues, “al-Bayātī’s poetics of exile emanates from a rupture, a wound, that signifies a memory of nostalgic yearning.” Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi, “‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī’s Poetics of Exile,” “*Perhaps a Poet is Born, or Dies*”: *The Poetics of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, spec. issue of *Journal of Arabic Literature* 32.2 (2001): 212.

⁸ For a discussion of the imagery of al-Bayātī, see Issa J. Boullata, “The Masks of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī,” “*Perhaps a Poet is Born, or Dies*”: *The Poetics of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, spec. issue of *Journal of Arabic Literature* 32.2 (2001): 117

we observe a movement from this indistinctness as several forms of its agency are given. Line 10 is notable for the imagery that occupies its first half: *yuhṣūna anfāsī* (count my breaths). The image of the killers “counting” the breaths of the speaker, while hardly a novel one, nonetheless forms a part of a freedom-oppression thematic dichotomy. In particular, the image alludes to the network of spies and informants of the Nūrī al-Sa‘īd regime who shadowed Iraqi expatriates and whose presence al-Bayātī found so unsettling.

This theme is pursued in the remainder of line 10 with its declarative *wa-fī waṭanī ‘l-mu‘adhdhabi yasjunūn*, “and in my tormented homeland they imprison.” Those incarcerated by *al-qāṭilūn* in the speaker’s “tormented homeland” are identified as *ābā’a ikhwatika ‘l-ṣighār*, “the fathers of your little brethren.” This identification is striking inasmuch as it signals a departure from much of current polemical discourses which often portrayed those harried by repressive regimes in such heroic terms as *rijālāt al-‘Irāq*, “the (fearless) men of Iraq, *al-ashāwus*, “the audacious,” *etc.* To refer to them as *ābā’a ikhwatika ‘l-ṣighār* is to humanize them: those victimized are not a special category of men who threaten the powers that be; rather, they are ordinary Iraqis, fathers of little children. The emotive load of the line is further brought out by the diction: *ābā’* suggests fatherliness, compassion, and tenderness. In a similar vein, *ikhwatika* connotes brotherliness, benignity, and affection. For its part, the qualifier *al-ṣighār* conjures up innocuousness. This renders their persecution all the more unwarranted and hardhearted. Those victimized are not merely the fathers but, perhaps more movingly, the children who are left fatherless, with no one to fend for them as a result. The functional signification of this line and the preceding one has to do with the repressive measures taken at the instigation of Western powers in the wake of the Wathbah (leap) of 1948, the Intifāḍah (uprising) of 1952,⁹ and also during the period between 1945 and 1955—the latter period, which saw the return of Nūrī al-Sa‘īd to the Premiership, witnessed mass incarcerations of those Iraqis opposed to the regime.¹⁰

⁹ The Intifāḍah (uprising) broke out in late November 1952 in Baghdad and spread to other parts of the country. Its suppression by the army and police resulted in numerous deaths among the demonstrators. Tripp 130–31.

¹⁰ Tripp 136–37.

It was during the latter period that al-Bayātī was compelled to go into exile, first to Damascus and later to Beirut where the qaṣīdah was composed.¹¹

The oppressiveness of lines 10–11 is rendered more emphatic as it contrasts with the professions the killers make in the following two lines:

*Wa-yubashshirūn
bil ‘ālamī ‘l-ḥurri ‘l-‘abīd.*

While they bring glad tidings
Of the free world, to the slaves.

In these lines the contrast takes an embittered ironic tone, centered on the promise of freedom as opposed to the actuality of oppression in the speaker’s homeland. The discrepancy between promise and reality is emphasized through the antithesis between *yasjunūn* (they imprison) with which line 10 concludes and *al-ḥurr* (the free) in the middle of line 13; this is further heightened by the juxtaposition of *al-ḥurr* (the free) and *al-‘abīd* (the slaves) in line 13.

Lines 12–13 can be seen to proffer some clues to the identity of *al-qātilūn*. In this respect, it should be recalled that the year 1955, towards the end of which the qaṣīdah was composed, was a period of intensified Cold War between the USSR and the Capitalist world—now increasingly led by the United States. A key term of the rhetoric of the Cold War was that of the “Free world” standing in opposition to the totalitarianism of the USSR. For its part, the “Socialist camp” often referred to Western domination of the non-Western world in terms of “enslavement.” Such parlance also characterized Iraqi Leftist, especially Marxian, discourses of the era. Given al-Bayātī’s close association with the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), it is possible to see line 13 as an ideologically framed attempt at subverting an increasingly dominant Imperialist discourse. This is not to suggest, however, that the notion of “*isti‘bād*” (enslavement) was exclusively used by Leftists and Marxists; the term was in fact com-

¹¹ Al-Bayātī left Iraq in 1954 for Damascus; later, he moved to Beirut. “But my residence in Beirut,” he recalls, “did not last long, as the Baghdad Pact began knocking on the doors in most Arab capitals which were under Western influence. And so I left Beirut and returned to Damascus because some friends who were concerned about my safety advised me to do so after Lebanon had entered into a security treaty with the Baghdad Pact.” Al-Bayātī, *Yanābī‘* 55.

monly invoked by factions that represented a broad spectrum of opinion with respect to Anglo-Iraqi treaties especially those of 1930, 1948, as well as to the Baghdad Pact.

With lines 14–15 we come as close to an identification of *al-qātilūn* as the qaṣīdah offers:

Wa-bimuʿjizāti
dūlārihim—amalu ʿl-shuʿūb.

And of the miracles
Of their dollar—the hope of the peoples.

The qaṣīdah thus continues to list the promises “they” hold out: the second of these pertain to *muʿjizāti/dūlārihim*, “the miracles/of their dollar.” Although the Western power with direct hegemony over Iraq was then Britain, the United States was making its presence increasingly felt in the region. This is attested to by the well-known role the CIA played in the 1953 overthrow of the Mosaddeq government in neighboring Iran as well as by the US co-sponsorship (along with Britain) of the Baghdad Pact. More to the point, the US was increasingly seen as spearheading Western Imperialism in an ever-polarizing world. From a Leftist or Communist position, the dollar became symbolic of a monolithic Imperial hegemonic power bloc that subsumed both Britain—then *de facto* ruler of Iraq—as well as the United States, a bloc bent on political domination and economic exploitation of Third World countries.

Having introduced the theme of political hegemony in the previous lines, lines 14–16 focus on the claim that embracing Capitalism would result in an “economic miracle.” The lines make no attempt to directly refute this claim; rather, they rely on subtle irony to discount this dubious (to the poet) proposition. The ironic note is implicit in the noun *muʿjizāt*, “the miracles” of the sonorous (and in this case metrically expedient) *dūlār*, in the parenthetical *amalu ʿl-shuʿūb* (the hope of the peoples), as well as in the following line which refers to the dollar as *wāhibu ʿl-mawtā ʿl-ḥayāt*, “the giver of life to the dead” (line 16). In addition to the ironic stance the speaker adopts, the lines are lent added force through the juxtaposition in line 16 of *al-mawtā* (the dead) and *al-ḥayāt* (life). The structure of this line, it should be noted, mirrors that of line 13 above.

With line 17 the ironic tone gives way to a more sobering charge: the colonialists *yurawwiʿūna ʿl-ummahāt*, “frighten mothers.” The reference to *al-ummahāt* refers back to line 4 in the opening passage of

the qaṣīdah where the mother's eyes are likened to snow. The most revealing charge with respect to decoding *al-qātilūn*, however, is what is stated in lines 18–19:

Wa-yukhaddībūn
rāyāta sha'bika yā-ṣaghūrī bil-dimā'.

And they soak
The banners of your people, my little one, with blood.

With these two lines a disturbing image of colonialism in praxis is presented. With the imagery of blood-soaked banners of the (Iraqi) people, the thematic scheme of freedom-repression finds its fullest support. On the one hand, *rāyāt* (the banners borne in public demonstrations), carries associations of freedom and liberation. These very emblems of freedom, however, are then soaked with blood thus underscoring the oppressiveness of colonial rule. The line proves particularly striking as it condenses multiple associations in a single haunting image. The two lines allude in particular to the ruthlessness with which the Wathbah of 1948 as well as the Intifāḍah of 1952 were put down. During these popular uprisings, police were ordered to open fire on peaceful demonstrators carrying banners that called for an end to British hegemony.¹² Perhaps the most chilling instance of oppression—especially given al-Bayātī's Leftist sympathies—was the execution in mid-February, 1949 of Yūsuf Salmān Yūsuf, the charismatic leader of the outlawed Iraqi Communist Party and two other leading ICP members. These men had been serving life sentences for “subversion” which, in colonial jargon, meant inciting anti-British protest when Nūrī al-Sa'īd returned to the Premiership. Not content with the penalties that had been meted out to them, al-Sa'īd had them re-tried, and they were sentenced to death—the three were hanged publicly in Baghdad squares.¹³ The conclusion of this section (lines 20–1) represents a variation on line 8 with which the first section ends. In both lines, however, the call to 'Alī goes unanswered, adding to the speaker's sense of frustration and separation.

¹² On another occasion, (July 1946), the police opened fire on workers of the British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company on strike to demand better wages. A number of workers at the IPC Kirkuk oil fields were killed as a result. This incident took place during the Premiership of Arshad al-'Umarī; it led to his ouster in November 1946 and ironically to the return of Nūrī al-Sa'īd to the Premiership. See Tripp 117–18.

¹³ Tripp 118, 124.

I have proposed above that the *qaṣīdah* is informed by a thematic scheme, the basis of which is freedom versus oppression. With the treatment of the theme of oppression, the *qaṣīdah* gradually moves to an examination of the theme of freedom. The elaboration takes up the following nine lines. This section can be divided into a number of distinguishable subunits as follows: lines 22–23 introduce the first signs of a possible reversal of the state of oppression that preponderates in the earlier section of the *qaṣīdah*; lines 24–27 occupy a somewhat transitional position between the preceding and the subsequent subunits; lines 28–30 embody the speaker’s vision of a free homeland. The section is rounded off by the refrain-like *wa-anta lāhin lā tuġīb*, “but you are busy and you do not answer,” which forms line 31.

Lines 22–23 mark a return to the light/darkness binarism first introduced at the opening of the *qaṣīdah*. In lines 3–4, it will be recalled, the theme of darkness/death is carried by a succession of similes as follows:

*Kal-layli yahbiṭu fawqa ra’sī, kal-dabāb
ka-‘uyūni ummika fī wadā’ī, kal-maghīb.*

Like the night, was falling on my head, like the fog,
Like your mother’s eyes when she bade me farewell, like the nightfall.

The theme is taken up in lines 22–23:

*Wa-‘uyūnu ummika fī intiṣārī wal-samā’
wal-layli fī Baghdād yantaẓiru ‘l-ṣabāh.*

And your mother’s eyes awaiting me, the sky,
And the night in Baghdad awaiting dawn.

At a superficial level, we observe that variants of the imagery in lines 3–4 recur in lines 22–23 in an inverted order—inasmuch as the “night” line follows the “mother’s” line in their order of recurrence. More consequential for the treatment of the light/darkness dichotomy are reversals within corresponding lines. Line 4, for instance, features the mother’s eyes at the moment of farewell suggesting separation and exile; in line 22, by contrast, the mother’s gaze is one of *intiṣār* (awaiting)—the prospect of a reunion is thus hinted at. Similarly, in line 3 the Imperfect-based image of the night “falling” on the speaker’s head suggests an onset as well as a continuance of darkness. The night in line 23, however, is “awaiting dawn.” That *al-ṣabāh* (dawn) occurs at the conclusion of a line that begins with

al-layl (the night) is noteworthy. The imagery of the natural cycle of night and day as the basis for a political metaphor suggests that the liberation of Iraq is as ineludible as a new dawn following the night.

Another apparent reversal relates to the nominal *al-ḍabāb* (fog), which occurs independently at the end of line 3. *Al-Samāʿ* (the sky) occupies a position in its respective line (22) similar to that occupied by *al-ḍabāb*; the fog at the beginning seems to dissipate as the *qaṣīdah* progresses. The most striking sign of a reversal, however, relates to the notion of “waiting” underlined through the repetition of *intiẓār* in the Indicative *yantaziru* in lines 22, 23 respectively.

Implicit in *intiẓār* is the awaiting of a favorable circumstance that will undo the wretchedness of the present as exemplified by the scenes occupying lines 24–27. The bread-seller image, which takes up line 24 and the first half of the following line,

Wa-bāʿū ʿl-khubzi ʿl-ḥazīn
yaʿūfu fil-aswāqi . . .

The cheerless bread-seller
Wanders in the bazaar streets . . .

functions in conjunction with the subsequent scene which occupies the remainder of line 25 as well as the following two lines,

. . . wal-ʿimyānu wal-mutasawwilūn
yastaʿnifūnā ʿlā ʿl-raṣīf
tilāwata ʿl-dhikri ʿl-ḥakīm.

. . . the blind and beggars
Resume on the sidewalk
Their recitation of the Holy Book.

These two scenes heighten the realism of the *qaṣīdah*—the bread-seller as well as the blind and the beggar formed a part of the urban landscape of Iraq in the 1950s.¹⁴ The somnolent imagery of the scenes is suggestive of squalor, ruin, and death-in-life. The scenes derive further impact from the way they set the actuality of poverty,

¹⁴ Salma Khadra Jayyusi reflects a critical near consensus when she writes that “[a]l-Bayyātī can well be regarded as the most important representative of neo-Realism in Iraq, and perhaps in the Arab world, for he proceeded to produce volumes of poetry which show both dedication and an experimental spirit.” Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, vol. II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 577.

squalor, and desolation against the promised “miracles” of the colonizer’s dollar sardonically referred to in lines 14–15 above.

In contrast to the indifference of the child, to the passivity that permeates the preceding “bread-seller” and the “blind and beggars” scenes, the passage that concludes this section (lines 28–30) speaks of a people that has now awakened from slumber, a people bent on destroying its *aghlāl*, the chains that have so far shackled it, reducing it, notes line 13, to a state of enslavement:

Wa-warāʿa aswāri ʿl-sujūn
yastayqiẓu ʿl-shaʿbu ʿl-ʿaẓīm
muhattīman aghlālahu

While behind prison walls
 A great people awakens
 Destroying its chains.

Viewed in isolation, this passage with its tensional imagery might seem to typify the versified sloganeering characteristic of much revolutionary discourse of the period. Viewed in conjunction with the preceding passage, however, it appears less so. To the extent that it embodies a vision of a homeland released from the shackles of colonial domination, the passage derives some effect from the way it sets that which is envisioned against that which is actual, existent—the squalor and despair of the preceding two scenes.

The passage ties up several thematic foci. For instance, *al-sujūn* (prisons, line 28) harks back to the verbal *yasjunūn* (they imprison, line 10); the Imperfect *yastayqiẓ* (awakens, line 29) refers back to *al-layl* (the night) and *al-ṣabāḥ* (dawn) of line 23; the nominal *al-shaʿb* (a people, line 29) refers back to the plural *al-shuʿūb* (the peoples, line 15) as well as to *shaʿbika* (your people, line 19); *aghlāl* (chains, line 30) is related at the semantic level especially to *al-ʿabīd* (the slaves, line 13). The vocative *waladī ʿl-ḥabīb* (my beloved son) with which the passage concludes, moreover, refers back to the opening line of the *qaṣīdah* which it forms. More notably, *wa-anta lāhin lā tujīb*, “but you are busy and you do not answer,” which first occurs as line 20 recurs to form line 31. The clause thus marks off specific sections while at the same time it contributes to the unity of the *qaṣīdah*. To the extent that it is about the non-response of ʿAlī, moreover, line 8 can be seen as a semantic variant of this clause.

The concluding triplet—lines 32–34—represents a succinct recapitulation of the thematic preoccupations of the *qaṣīdah* as a whole:

*Al-rīhu fī 'l-manfā tahubbu, ka-anna shay'an fiyya māt
innī ubāriku, yā-ṣaghīrī raghma qaswatīha, 'l-ḥayāt
fa-anā wa-anta li-sha'binā milkun, wa-in kariha 'l-tughāt.*

The wind in [the land of] exile blows, it is as if something in me had died.

I invoke a blessing, my little one, despite its harshness, on life.
For you and I belong to our people even though tyrants loathe it.

Line 32 succinctly restates the dominant themes and motifs of the “death” sections of the *qaṣīdah*: this is effected through *al-rīḥ* (the wind), *tahubbu* (blows), and *al-manfā* (exile) first encountered in lines 6, 7, respectively. The line ends thus:

... *ka-anna shay'an fiyya māt*

... it is as if something in me had died.

Although this part of the line makes explicit reference to the death of something within the speaker, the notion of death is undermined through the use of the particle *ka-anna* (as if). It is countered in the following line to that of life, which the poet celebrates despite its harshness. The speaker and his son's belonging to their *sha'b* (people) is what makes an otherwise stark life celebratable. This common sense of belonging, moreover, signals a reunion at the ideational realm of the poet-father and his son.

Lines 33–34 as well as the preceding three lines (28–30), embody the speaker's faith in the ultimate triumph of the forces of freedom over those of tyranny and colonialism.¹⁵ While firmly rejecting the status quo, the lines hold out the prospect of an (imminent) age that will witness the end of (colonial) oppression. In particular, the defiant “*wa-in kariha 'l-tughāt*” (even though tyrants loathe it), with which the *qaṣīdah* concludes, is significant as it proclaims the Imperialists incapable of altering certain truths such as the Iraqi-ness of Iraqis or their commitment to the cause of freedom and national liberation.¹⁶

Not long after the composition of this *qaṣīdah* the monarchy in Iraq was overthrown in a military coup that took place on July 14,

¹⁵ In this respect, Jayyusi remarks, “Socialist poets like ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī usually end their poems with a note of confidence in the struggle of man and his ultimate victory, within a Socialist framework.” Jayyusi cautions, however, that “[t]his can be irksome because it does not allow for the usual change of mood and might lead to artificiality in weaker poets.” Jayyusi, *Trends* 652.

¹⁶ Muhsin Jassim al-Musawī notes that “[r]ebellion is very inclusive as a recurrent motif in al-Bayātī's poetics.” Al-Musawī 223.

1958. The widespread resentment of the monarchy was attested by the euphoria that swept Baghdad upon its overthrow. At last the day of a free and genuinely independent Iraq had arrived—or so it seemed at the time. The demise of the monarchy at the hands of what appeared to be genuinely progressive and unmistakably anti-colonial forces heightened the anticipation that freedom was no longer to be merely envisioned at the conclusions of otherwise death-filled poems but was about to become a lived reality.¹⁷ The next few years, however, would see the Revolution failing to live up to that promise; they would see disillusionment where there was once fervent hope and sanguine expectation. This sense of disillusionment found ample expression in much of the verse of the period. The qaṣīdah to be examined in the remainder of this chapter typifies the post-Revolutionary “poem of disillusionment” with the Republican regimes of the 1950s and 1960s. This is not to propose, however, that no sanguine poems have been composed in the post-Revolutionary era; rather, the intent of this discussion is to point to a pattern in the qaṣīdah that has persisted to the present. Before we proceed to the discussion, however, a brief narrative of the 1958 Iraqi Revolution is needed to situate the qaṣīdah within a specific historical setting.¹⁸

In the early hours of July 14, 1958, an army unit commanded by ‘Abd al-Salām ‘Ārif (d. 1966) set out from its headquarters in the town of Fallūjah to seize control of Baghdad. By the early morning, elements of that unit had seized the Baghdad Radio and Television Station and the Ministry of Defense, and were surrounding al-Riḥāb Palace where the royal family resided. Another unit commanded by ‘Abd al-Karīm Qāsim (1914–63), which had been positioned on the outskirts of Baghdad to resist any possible loyalist counteroffensive, joined up with the first unit. By noon of that day the insurgents had consolidated their grip on the city, proclaimed the country *jumhūriyyah* (a republic) and in the process massacred the royal family. The military takeover initially led to a state of lawlessness as jubilant throngs marauded in the streets of the city, committing in the process

¹⁷ In response to reports of the Revolution, the London *Times* warned: “If the revolt succeeds it could be a disaster for the west.” *Times* [London] 15 July, 1958.

¹⁸ A concise account of the July Revolution is in Tripp 143–192. For a more detailed account of the Revolution, see Ṣabīḥ ‘Alī Ghālib, *Qisṣat Thawrat 14 Tammūz wal-Dubbāt al-Ahrār* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah lil-Ṭibā‘ah wal-Nashr, 1968); Fāḍil Ḥusayn, *Suqūṭ al-Nizām al-Malakī fi al-‘Irāq* (Cairo: Al-Munazzamah al-‘Arabiyah lil-Tarbiyah wal-Thaqāfah wal-‘Ulūm, 1974).

vengeful acts against anyone suspected of being a member of the former regime. So resented had some of the former rulers of Iraq been that the corpse of the crown prince ‘Abd al-Ilāh and that of his veteran Premier Nūrī al-Sa‘īd¹⁹ were mutilated in a cruel manner. Reflecting on the events that transpired on that day, al-Bayātī writes in 1968:

That took place one day in July 1958. The glorious Iraqi Revolution had liberated Baghdad. We expatriates and exiles decided to return to our homeland, which had been liberated from the Baghdad Pact and had avenged the humiliation it had been made to endure by the mounts of Anglo-American colonialism.²⁰

This statement is significant insofar as it refers to Baghdad as having been liberated. It further characterizes ‘Abd al-Ilāh, Nūrī al-Sa‘īd, and other members of the monarchial regime as *maṭāyā al-istīṣmār*, literally “the mounts of colonialism.”²¹ Also notable is the reference to this colonialism as Anglo-American; it indicates that actual military presence or settler activity is not a prerequisite for a state to fall with the parameters of a “colonial power” as envisioned by the poet and by many others—America had neither maintained any military presence in Iraq nor engaged in any settler activity in that country. Nevertheless by the mid-fifties, its hegemonic presence, as noted above, was being increasingly felt in the region.²²

The “liberation” of which al-Bayātī speaks was reflected in the revolutionary regime’s abandoning the repressive policies (including restrictions on political parties and on the Press) that had been pursued by the former regime. This led to a scramble by various factions with often inexorably conflicting agendas to control the direction of the Revolution. In the months following the Revolution, three

¹⁹ A comprehensive biography of Nūrī al-Sa‘īd is by Lord Birdwood, *Nuri As-Said: A Study in Arab Leadership* (London: Cassell, 1959). A more recent and no less sympathetic biography is by al-Sa‘īd’s Egyptian daughter-in-law; see ‘Iṣmat al-Sa‘īd, *Nūrī al-Sa‘īd: Rajūl al-Dawlah wal-Insān* (London: Mabarrat ‘Iṣām al-Sa‘īd, 1992).

²⁰ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Tajribatī al-Shi‘riyyah* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Nizār Qabbānī, 1968) 105.

²¹ In the Iraqi colloquial, *maṭāyā* denotes “donkeys”; it carries particularly derogatory connotations that pertain to servility and imbecility.

²² The day following the coup in Iraq, US marines landed outside Beirut in an attempt to shore up the Camille Chamoun regime. *Times* [London] 16 July, 1958. It should be noted, however, that al-Bayātī’s remark was made a decade after the July Revolution.

forces came to the fore: the Pan-Arabists, whose ranks included the Ba'athists and who called for an immediate union with the United Arab Republic; the Communists, who were opposed to such a union, advocating instead the socialist transformation of the country and closer ties with the USSR; and the Iraqi nationalists, who favored an independent Iraq and a policy that would put Iraqi national interests first. To these must be added Kurdish political groupings, which were generally opposed to the Pan-Arabist agenda. For their part, the "Free Officers," who had carried out the Revolution, did not constitute a coherent grouping; their ranks included members espousing all of the above ideological positions. These positions would prove irreconcilable; the freedom the Revolution heralded meant different things to different groups. This state led to often tragic consequences; the subsequent five years were marred by civil strife, repeated coup attempts, and murderous rampages, as competing groups attempted to stake their own claims over the Revolution. Among these, two incidents are particularly alarming: the first was the Shawwāf insurgency of March 1959, which was carried out in Mosul by Pan-Arab army officers alarmed at the increasing sway of the Communists;²³ the second was what came to be known as "the Events of Kirkuk" (July 1959) believed by some to have been instigated by the Iraqi Communist Party.²⁴ Both episodes would lead to much bloodletting as elements of the ICP set out to purge these cities of "counterrevolutionaries"—various factions carried out their excesses in the name of protecting the Revolution.

ʿAbd al-Karīm Qāsim had sought to maintain his grip on power by pitting one faction against another. Having earlier allowed the Communists to defeat Pan-Arabists in Mosul and in Kirkuk (or at least was slow to rein them in), he then turned on the Communists themselves. For their part, the Communists had sought to seize control through initially allying themselves with Qāsim and subsequently pushing him aside or reducing him to a mere figurehead. Qāsim, however, offered strong resistance; using the Kirkuk massacres as a subterfuge, he clamped down heavily on them.²⁵ At this juncture, al-Bayātī, then closely associated with the ICP, resigned his post as

²³ Tripp 156.

²⁴ Tripp 157–58.

²⁵ Tripp 158.

Cultural Attaché at the Iraqi embassy in Moscow in protest.²⁶ It was also in reaction to these measures taken by Qāsim against the Communists that al-Bayātī wrote the qaṣīdah titled “Maqāṭi‘ min al-Simfūniyyah al-Khāmisah li-Brūkūfif” (Excerpts from Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 5).²⁷ The Communists and their sympathizers, however, did not generally see Qāsim’s measures, as part of an “Imperialist” onslaught; rather, they represented *ih̄tirāb*, infighting among progressive forces, or *inh̄wāf*, a deviation from the course of the Revolution.²⁸

The clampdown on the ICP was accompanied by the re-imposition of restrictions on political parties and on the Press. Discontent grew further as a Kurdish insurrection, which the government attempted to suppress by military means, broke out in the north. In the subsequent two years Qāsim would become increasingly isolated in Iraq and—following his claim in June 1961 of sovereignty over Kuwait—in the Arab world as well.²⁹ His position had become so enfeebled that it was only a matter of time before his adversaries would pounce on him. This took place on February 8, 1963 when the Ba‘thists, in collaboration with disaffected army officers, staged a coup.³⁰ This, however, was no ordinary coup; to many—including the Communists who had suffered at the hands of Qāsim—it was an attempt to undo the July Revolution. Upon learning of the coup attempt, the Communists rallied to Qāsim’s support; the streets of Baghdad became a veritable battlefield where Communists fought internecine battles with Ba‘thists and other Arab nationalists. For several days the city was transformed into a war zone—the image

²⁶ He was appointed to this post in 1959. Al-Bayātī, *Yanābi‘* 73–4.

²⁷ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Dīwān ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-‘Awdah, 1971) 669–72.

²⁸ Al-Bayātī, *Yanābi‘* 74. In “Maqāṭi‘ min al-Simfūniyyah al-Khāmisah li-Brūkūfif,” we read the following:

Madīnatī dammarahā ‘l-zilzālu
afnā ahlahā ‘l-ṭā‘ūn
aṣābahā ‘l-junūn.

My city was ravaged by an earthquake
Its inhabitants wiped out by the plague
It has been stricken with madness. (Al-Bayātī, *Dīwān* 670)

²⁹ Tripp 165.

³⁰ A concise account of the Ba‘thist coup is in Tripp 167–70. Two lengthy accounts of the coup from a Ba‘thist/Pan-Arab stance are: Muḥammad Bāqir Shirrī, *Al-‘Irāq al-Thā‘ir* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1963); Aḥmad Fawzī, *Qīssat ‘Abd al-Karīm Qāsim Kāmilah* (Cairo: Al-Sharikah al-‘Arabīyyah lil-Ṭibā‘ah wal-Nashr, 1963).

of streets strewn with corpses is etched in the collective memory of the city's inhabitants. Moreover, the sense that a cataclysmic event had taken place was by no means confined to the region of Baghdad. Despite the shortcomings of his rule, Qāsim had come to symbolize the Revolution. His demise—his corpse was shown on Baghdad television—signaled the death of the Revolution. In subsequent months, vengeful Ba'athists conducted a campaign of terror against Qāsim supporters and sympathizers, especially the Communists. Al-Bayātī, still in exile in Moscow, did not escape this campaign—the new regime stripped him in absentia of his Iraqi citizenship and revoked his passport.

The events of 1963 cast a deep and an enduring shadow on Iraqi political and intellectual life that is discernible in the writings of the period. The association between the counterrevolutionary regime and the “colonial” West, to add to the confusion, was not as transparent as that between the monarchy and the West—a connection, however, was intimated in some writers such as al-Bayātī. Characteristically, a subdued tone pervades the literature of this period; the verse often imparts a strong sense of disillusion, bewilderment, and soul-searching.

“Two Odes to my Son ‘Alī” [11]

(I)

My sad moon

The sea has died; its dark waves have eclipsed the sail of Sindbad
Its sons no longer call out to one another with the gulls; only a hoarse
echo

Has returned.

The horizon has been shrouded by the ashes 5

For whom then shall the mermaids sing?

For the sea has died

Seaweed floats on its brow, as do worlds

In which we once had, when the singer sang, memories.

Our island has drowned, there is no more singing 10

But only weeping

The larks

Flew away, so O my sad moon:

The treasure lies buried in the streambed,

At the farthest end of the orchard,

under the little lemon tree, hidden 15

There by Sindbad.

But it is empty, there, ashes

Snow, darkness, and leaves bury it, and in the fog are buried

[All] beings.

Is this how we die in this wasteland? 20
 Does the lamp of childhood dry up in the dust?
 Is this how the daylight
 Fades while in the hearth of the poor there is no fire?

(II)
 Cities without a dawn sleep
 I called out your name in their streets,
 but only the darkness answered me 25
 I asked the wind after you as it moaned in the heart of silence.
 I saw your face in mirrors, in the eyes
 In the panes of the distant dawn
 And on postcards.
 Cities without a dawn covered by ice 30
 Whose churches the sparrows of spring have deserted
 For whom shall they sing? For cafes have closed their doors.
 For whom shall you, O cleft heart, pray?
 For the night has died
 And chariots 35
 Have returned without horses, covered with frost
 Their drivers dead.
 Is this how the years depart?
 And torment tears at the heart?
 While we [move] from one exile to another, from door to door. 40
 We wilt as lilies in the dust wilt.
 Poor, O my moon, we shall die
 Our train always passes us by.³¹

The selection of this *qaṣīdah* is apropos in so far as it represents a “sequel” to “A Song to my son ‘Alī”—a decade separates the composition of the two *qaṣīdahs*.

³¹ ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī, *Sifr al-Faqr wal-Thawrah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1965) 32–39. The *qaṣīdah* is dated March 1965. It is in *al-Kāmil* meter. For the Arabic text, see Appendix 11. An English translation of the *qaṣīdah* is by M. A. Khouri and H. Algar. With the exception of their rendition of lines 3 and 33, this translation is generally adequate. See M. A. Khouri and H. Algar, “Modern Arabic Poetry II,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* I (1970): 80–82. Works that make brief references to or contain some discussion of the *qaṣīdah* include the following: Shawqī Khamīs, “Al-Iltizām fī Sifr al-Faqr wal-Thawrah,” *Ma’sāt al-Insān al-Mu’āsir fī Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī* (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah lil-Ṭibā’ah wal-Nashr, 1966) 228–29; Malik ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, “Sifr al-Faqr wal-Thawrah,” *Ibid.*, 268; Maḥmūd Amīn al-‘Ālim, “Al-Ḥuzn ‘inda ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī,” *Rabī‘ al-Ḥayāt fī Mamlakat Allah: Shahādāt wa-Dirāsāt fī Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī*, ed. ‘Adnān Ḥaqqī (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-Adīb, 1974) 51; Iḥsān ‘Abbās, “Al-Ṣūrah al-Ukhrā fī Shīr al-Bayātī,” *Al-Ādāb* [Beirut] March 1966: 29–30; Sulaymān Gibrān, *Al-Mabnā wal-Lughah fī Shīr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Dirāsah Uslūbiyyah* (Acre: Dār al-Aswār, 1989) *passim*.

“Two Odes to my Son ‘Alī”³² is an extended lament as the poet-father looks back at the time that elapsed since the composition of “A Song.” Like its predecessor, the qaṣīdah is ostensibly addressed to ‘Alī. The son, however, is transformed in its opening line from *waladī ‘l-ḥabīb* (my beloved son), into *qamarī ‘l-ḥazīn* (my sad moon).³³ The moon as a metaphorical term for offspring as well as for persons of transcendent beauty is not uncommon in the qaṣīdah tradition. With respect to offspring, perhaps the most memorable instance occurs in an elegy by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Tihāmī (d. 1025) in which he refers to a deceased young son as *wa-hilāla ayyāmin maḍā lam yas-tadīr badran*, “a crescent of [few] days it departed, it did not assume a round shape [to become] a full moon.”³⁴ Unlike many traditions, which refer to that celestial body in the feminine, the Arabic moon is peculiarly masculine. Its gender notwithstanding, it is used in reference to both males and females. The most common lunar references, however, relate to women; the beautiful face of the beloved is often likened to the moon. Not to be overlooked, however, is the powerful symbolism of the moon as light shining in the midst of a “sea” of darkness. As a source of light, the moon is inexorably associated with overwhelming darkness. It is with this nocturnal image that the qaṣīdah begins.

The opening line introduces a light/darkness dichotomy that is developed in the three sections of Ode I: lines 2–11; 12–19, and 20–23. Such elaboration is undertaken through the use of two extended and interrelated metaphors. The first is that of *al-baḥr* (the sea). When calm, the sea is seldom of much interest to the literary imagination. It is, however, when it is stormy that it acquires particularly rich symbolic significance. Its raging, irrepressible, even violent tempestuousness makes it an apt metaphor for the Revolution. But there is more to the sea/Revolution metaphor; concomitant with its destructive power, the sea water is also a symbol of life. The sea,

³² The work is titled “Qaṣīdatān ilā Waladī ‘Alī” (Two Odes to my son ‘Alī); it is divided (by the poet) into two units. Henceforth, I refer to the work as “the qaṣīdah” and to its two component parts as “Ode I” and “Ode II.”

³³ In this connection Iḥsān ‘Abbās notes that in al-Bayātī’s *Sifr al-Faqr wal-Thawrah* ‘Alī “has become ‘a sad moon’ not in need of presents [*i.e.*, toys] . . . for every poem addressed by the poet to ‘Alī does not reflect the son’s portrait; rather, it reflects the father’s own experience.” ‘Abbās 29.

³⁴ Al-Bākhazrī, *Dumyat al-Qaṣr wa-‘Uṣrat Ahl al-‘Aṣr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnjī, vol. I (N.p.: Mu’assasat Dār al-Ḥayāt, 1971) 142.

further, embodies the aspirations of seafarers, fishermen, and others who look to it as a repository of riches and as a source of sustenance. It is these associations that render the metaphor particularly expressive of the Revolution with its destructiveness (directed at the decrepit monarchical regime), its assuming the position of a “sustainer,” especially with respect to social reforms aimed at transforming the lot of the poverty-stricken masses.

Line 2, however, does not refer to the sustaining or rebellious attributes of the sea; rather, it directly announces its death: *al-baḥru māta*, “the sea has died.” The first two words of the line thus introduce the sea as “living” first and then as “dead.” The fact that the region boasts a “Dead Sea” detracts nothing from the quality of the image; it is strong, suggestive, and pithy in the context of the *qaṣīdah*. Moreover, the news of the death of the sea is explicative of the melancholy moon at the opening line. More importantly, the darkness associated with lunar imagery is developed in the second line; the relationship between darkness and death, or darkness qua death implied in the opening line is made explicit in the second. As a “dead sea” its liberating as well as nurturing faculty dies too. In this line a shift to other aspects of the metaphor occurs. As noted above, the sea can be a source of life and sustenance; it can also symbolize death. When rough and turbulent, it tends to “swallow” seafarers and dash hopes of good fortunes. The sea can further be mortal as when it withholds its blessings. To sum up, the prospect of a “death by water” is ever present and alternates with the promise the sea holds.

The theme of the sea qua foe is pursued in the remainder of the line which begins the second controlling metaphor—that of Sindbad. The most famous of seafarers, Sindbad sets out on seven fabled voyages on a quest for adventure and fortune. In this part of the line, marine inclemency is demonstrated; the sail of Sindbad falls prey to the black waves of the sea. The verbal clause, which forms the middle of this line, continues the light/darkness dichotomy implicit in the lunar reference in the opening line. In the second line, however, such darkness becomes intense and overpowering. This is effected through the adjectival *sawdā'* (black) as well as through the Perfect *ghayyaba* [Form II] which signifies “to conceal.” This Form carries connotations of intensiveness and thoroughness. The verb further echoes the first line as it denotes, at the root level, the setting of the moon. The predominant note of this line is one of stillness of the

kind that follows death (of the sea and ostensibly of the drowned Sindbad). This air of stillness is heightened through a melancholy recollection of a moment now past when the sea's *abnā'* (sons) were *yataṣāyahūna ma'a 'l-nawārisi*, "calling out to one another with the gulls." In the context of this passage *abnā'* is taken to refer to fishermen and sailors who cry out, often in rhythmical chanteys, to one another to alleviate the solitude and boredom that typify the lives of seamen. The image of "the sons of the sea" calling out to one another, their calls in tune with the plaintive cries of seagulls, suggests tenderness and harmony. This predominantly aural image derives some of its impact through the way it contrasts *al-ṣiyāḥ* (loud calling out) with *al-ṣadā* (a mere echo). It is striking that, although the speaker bemoans the absence of *ṣiyāḥ* through the negative structure of the line, this negation does little to muffle the aural effect of the image.³⁵

The nominal clause which concludes line 3 and whose predicate constitutes line 4 (*al-ṣadā/al-mabḥūḥ 'ād*, "a hoarse echo has returned"), represents the most overt reference to a possible relatedness or resemblance between the current Republican regime and the former monarchical one. The use of *al-ṣadā* (an echo) in reference to the *ancien régime* is particularly effective in so far as that regime was widely believed to have been a protégé of British colonialism. It is thus implied that the originary voice emanates from the Metropolis; the Iraqi regime is but an echo of that authoritative voice. The exiguousness of *al-ṣadā* is furthered through the adjectival *al-mabḥūḥ* (hoarse), rendering it indistinct *vis-à-vis* the originary voice. This signification is enhanced at the phonological level through the onomatopoeic *mabḥūḥ* which contains two occurrences of the voiceless consonant /ḥ/. The hoarse echo, the line announces, has returned after an absence. This span is artfully suggested through the spatial arrangement of the line—the nominal sentence skips over a substantial open space before it is continued towards the end of line 4. This spatial arrangement further places *'ād* (has returned) in an identical position with *al-Sindibād* (with which it forms a perfect rhyme). This

³⁵ The collocation of *ṣiyāḥ/ṣadā* occurs famously in al-Mutanabbī's qaṣīdah to his patron Sayf al-Dawlah in which he beseeches: *anā 'l-ṣā'ihū 'l-maḥkiyyu wal-ākharu 'l-ṣadā*, "I am the loud calling, the [one whose words are] spoken; the other [rival poet] is the echo." Al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, vol. II (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, n.d.) 15. On al-Bayātī's use of *al-Turāth* (Arab literary and cultural traditions), see Salih Altoma, *Fī al-'Alāqāt al-Adabiyah bayn al-'Arab wal-Gharb* (Damascus: Dār Kūthā, 1998) 267–70.

arrangement contributes to the signification of the *qaṣīdah* through the tragic ironic note it sounds: the resilient Sindbad, whose triumphant return at the conclusion of adventure-filled voyages are far-famed, does not return—his skiff is swallowed by the black waves of a dead sea. By contrast, an echo whose very constitution suggests dissipation, dissolution, and impermanence makes an unexpected and unbidden return.

No less significant for the design of the *qaṣīdah* is the way the metaphor pursues the life/death dialectic. In particular, *al-mabḥūḥ* suggests a muffled, moribund sound. This tenor of listlessness is continued in the fifth line:

Wal-ufqu kaffanahu 'l-ramād

The horizon has been shrouded by the ashes.

Up to this point in the *qaṣīdah*, manifestations of death and dissolution have been limited to the past and the present. With this line, however, the preponderance of the darkness/death aspect of the dialectic involves that which is to come—as symbolized by *al-ufqu* (the horizon). This horizon, says the line, “has been shrouded by the ashes.” The death symbolism is conveyed through the *kafan* (shroud) imagery; it is further conveyed through *al-ramād* (the ashes) acting as a shroud. In addition to its dark gray color, *al-ramād* is associated with death in so far as it is what remains after the fire has “died out,” has been extinguished; in this sense, it is closely related to *turāb* (dust).³⁶ It should be remarked that both *ramād* and *turāb* are often used in mourning rituals in some regions of the Arab world.³⁷

By the end of line 5 portrayal of death and desolation so preponderates that line 6 is rendered a mere rhetorical question:

Fa-līman tuḡhannī 'l-sāḥirāt?

For whom then shall the mermaids sing?

Furthermore, this line proves explicatory of the differing titles of the two *qaṣīdahs*—*Uḡhnīyah* (A Song) of the first³⁸ as opposed to *Qaṣīdatān*

³⁶ Both figure in Qur'ānic texts carrying similar associations. See also *Jibrān* 202.

³⁷ These rituals, still practiced in some rural communities in Iraq, involve womenfolk throwing dust/ashes on themselves.

³⁸ Another *qaṣīdah* of the same title not considered in this study is “*Uḡhnīyah Jadīdah ilā Waladī 'Alī*” (A New Song to my son 'Alī), al-Bayātī, *Diwān* 383–85.

(Two Odes) of the second. For mermaids (whom al-Bayātī may have heard “singing, each to each” in T. S. Eliot’s poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”) sing of things joyful and promising.³⁹ Prufrock does not think that the sea-girls will sing for him (as they did for Ulysses); in al-Bayātī, by contrast, the plaint relates to the futility of finding anyone or anything to sing for. As sketched out in lines 1–5, the world of “Two Odes” is so overwhelmed by despondency and death as to preclude the possibility of the mermaids singing their enchanting songs. This state is further confirmed in lines 7–11 that primarily reiterate the demise theme introduced at the opening of the qaṣīdah. This first section comes to a conclusion with a reference (in line 10) to an island, a refuge to the shipwrecked sailor from drowning and from other menaces of the sea. The island itself, however, has drowned, and with this singing is transformed into lamentation.

Sindbad, as perhaps the most animated metaphor in the qaṣīdah, continues to be developed in its second section (especially in lines 14–19).⁴⁰ This development is carried out through the juxtaposing of the fecund and life giving (lines 14–16) with the lifeless and defunct (lines 17–19). Line 14 speaks of a treasure to be found in a streambed. This line marks a transition in the localization of the qaṣīdah from a marine scene in the first section to an agrarian one in this section. Lines 14 through 16 seem to contain directions by the poet-father to ‘Alī as to where to find the chest:

Al-kanzu fī ‘l-majrā dafīn
fī ākhiri ‘l-bustāni, taḥta shujayrati ‘l-laymūn, khabba’ahu
hunāka ‘l-Sindibād.

The treasure lies buried in the streambed,
 At the farthest end of the orchard, under the little lemon tree, hidden
 There by Sindbad.

³⁹ T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952) 7.

⁴⁰ Sulaymān Gibrān conjectures that “through [the Sindbad symbol] the poet refers to himself in all probability, perhaps under the influence of the circumstances of exile and displacement.” Gibrān 157. On the use of Sindbad in al-Bayātī’s corpus, see Sāmīḥ al-Ruwāshdah, *Shi‘r ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī wal-Tuwāth* (Amman: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1995) 102–05. For a discussion of the use of Sindbad in modern Arabic poetry, see Fārūq Sa‘d, *Mīn Wahy Alf Laylah wa-Laylah*, vol. I (Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-Ahliyyah, 1962) 124–42.

At first these lines suggest the transition to the “re-birth” section familiar in much earlier verse. The theme of rebirth is implicit in the vegetation imagery of the line: *al-majrā* (the streambed) with its life-giving water, *al-bustān* (the orchard), as well as *shujayrati ’l-laymūn* (the little lemon tree) with its nourishing fruits. Moreover, placing the chest at the farthest end of the orchard implies a call for the son to embark on a quest to recover it. At this juncture in the *qaṣīdah*, we would expect the essentially moral quest for the treasure to begin and be brought to a successful conclusion. These expectations, however, are unfulfilled as the wistful line 17 announces the chest to be *khāwī* (empty), symbolizing above all spiritual void. We further learn in line 17 and in the following line that:

... *wa-hā anna ’l-ramād*
wal-thalja wal-zulumāta wal-awrāqa taṭmuruhu
 ... there, ashes
 Snow, darkness, and leaves bury it.

In addition to the announced emptiness of the chest, the prevalence of death imagery (the ashes that remain after the fire has died out, the wintry snow, the darkness of the night and of the grave, the dead autumnal leaves), points to the futility of such a quest.

“A Song,” it will be recalled, ends on an affirmative note of life and hopefulness:

Innī ubāriku yāṣaghūrī, raghma qaswatihā, ’l-ḥayāt
 I invoke a blessing, my little one, despite its harshness, on life.

By contrast, this poem ends with an expression of despair and bewilderment of a helpless and hapless speaker. This is perhaps best conveyed in the plaintive rhetorical questioning of the closing quadruplet (lines 20–23):

Akadha namūtu bi-hādhihi ’l-arḍi ’l-kharāb?
wa-yajiffu qindīlu ’l-tufūlati fī ’l-turāb?
Ahākadhā shamsu ’l-nahār
takhbū wa-laysa bi-mawqidi ’l-fuqarā’i nār?

Is this how we die in this wasteland?
 Does the lamp of childhood dry up in the dust?
 Is this how the daylight
 Fades while in the hearth of the poor there is no fire?

The quadruplet dwells on the death theme that has so far dominated the *qaṣīdah*. At the lexical level, this theme is explicitly stated

at the beginning of line 20 through *namūt* (we die). The Imperfect refers back to the death imagery in the opening sections of the *qaṣīdah*—especially lines 2 and 7. The invoking of the “wasteland” at the end of line 20 further contributes to the theme of death and sterility.⁴¹ This theme is pursued in the following line in which *qindīlu ʿl-tufūlati* (the lamp of childhood) is surrounded by the dryness of the Indicative *yajiffu* (dry up) and by *al-turāb*, the dust to which living things are reduced.⁴² The theme is augmented through the rhyme of “*al-kharāb*” in line 20 with “*al-turāb*” in the following line. To a certain extent, the image in line 21 derives its efficacy through the reference to *al-tufūlah* (childhood) which suggests a premature and hence a particularly tragic death.

If the first couplet is structured around the life/death dialectic, the second (lines 22–23) picks up the light/darkness dichotomy:

Ahākadhā shamsu ʿl-nahār
takhbū wa-laysa bi-mawqidi ʿl-fuqarāʿi nār?

Is this how the daylight
 Fades while in the hearth of the poor there is no fire?

The light term of the dichotomy is suggested by *shamsu ʿl-nahār* (daylight), *mawqīd* (hearth), as well as by *nār* (fire). The imposing presence of light reinforced by the rhyme of “*al-nahār*” with “*nār*,” however, is undermined by the verbal *takhbū* (fades) with which line 23 begins. Moreover, the negative particle *laysa* in the line causes Ode I to conclude on a note suggestive of emptiness and unfulfilled desire. Although the line refers to the plight of the poverty-stricken masses, the highly symbolic *shamsu ʿl-nahār* as well as of *nār* suggest that the deprivation is as spiritual as it is physical. As noted above, in the twentieth line the poet-father laments:

⁴¹ It should be noted that *al-arḍ al-kharāb* which concludes line 20 is the customary Arabic rendition of the title of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. It is commonly accepted that Eliot exerted deep influence on the Arab poets of the 1950s and 1960s. Jayyusi, *Trends* 564–65. Indeed such influence is discernible in “Two Odes to my Son ‘Alī’”; the invoking of the “wasteland” at the end of line 20 is but one obvious instance. Yet, while acknowledging such influence, al-Bayātī nevertheless protests that dwelling on it amounts to “negating Arab creativity and thought to the benefit of another [Western] thought.” Ḥāmid Abū Aḥmad, *ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī: Sirāh Dhātīyyah, Al-Qūthārāh wal-Dhākīrah* (N.p.: Al-Majlis al-ʿAlā lil-Thaqāfah, 2000) 105–07.

⁴² For a discussion of similar imagery in al-Bayātī’s *qaṣīdah* “Miḥnat Abī al-ʿAlā” (The Ordeal of Abī al-ʿAlā, 1965), see Boullata 114.

Akadha namūtu bi-hādhihi 'l-arḍi 'l-kharāb?

Is this how we die in this wasteland?

The demonstrative in the midst of the line contributes to the signification of the qaṣīdah in so far as it situates the speaker in a particular locale. The poet-father (with his son) surveys post-Revolutionary Iraq and sees nothing but a wasteland that proffers nothing but death; it is a land whose sun is setting upon a populace starving in mind and body.

Faced with such an abysmal fate, the poet is compelled to go into exile. This moment of exile, already anticipated in lines 12–13 with their reference to larks that have flown away, is set forth in the twenty lines of Ode II. The Ode is divisible into two elegiac passages—each beginning with the phrase *mudunun bilā fajrin* “cities without a dawn” (lines 24–29; 30–37)—and a largely introspective concluding section (lines 38–43).

At the opening of Ode II we find the exiled poet-father wandering⁴³ in *mudunun bilā fajrin*, “cities without a dawn.”⁴⁴ It may be observed that whereas in “A Song to my son ‘Alī,” the natural progression of night and day provides a metaphor for the inevitable liberation of Iraq. Here, in Ode II, the opposite holds: the nature cycle is cut off or interrupted; a night without end envelops the cities. This line marks a further movement in the trajectory of “Two Odes” from the sea through an orchard to an urban setting. This shifting functions to present the various aspects of the death and sterility theme. The most salient feature of Ode II is its circularity, its reiteration of the thematic complex of darkness/death set off in Ode I.

The first two sections of Ode II deal with the poet-father’s exile and consequent separation from his son, as well as reintroduce the light/darkness, life/death dichotomies; these sections echo corresponding sections in “A Song.” In the following, several instances of such echoism will be cited. In line 25, *nādaytu bismika fī shawārīihā*, “I called out your name in their streets,” refers back to lines 2 and 5 in “A Song”: *nādaytu bismika*, “I called out your name”; the conclusion of line 25, *fā-jāwabanī 'l-ḡalām*, “but only the darkness answered

⁴³ Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi notes that “until the 1970s, the image of the outcast and the wanderer is paramount” in the poetry of al-Bayātī. Al-Musawi 218.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of nocturnal imagery in al-Bayātī see Boullata 114.

me,” is a variant on *fa- jāwabanī 'l-ṣadā*, “but an echo answered me back,” in line 8. In line 26: *wa- sa'altu 'anka 'l-rīḥ*, “I asked the wind after you,” reiterates *nādaytu bismika/fī mahabbi 'l-rīḥ*, “I called out your name/Where the wind blew” (lines 5–6). The wistful *al-fajri 'l-ba'īd*, “the distant dawn,” in line 28 recalls the night in Baghdad awaiting dawn (line 23). The interrogative *fa-līman tuḡhannī*, “for whom shall they sing?” which forms the first part of line 32 refers back to the title of the first qaṣīdah.

Moreover, having posited a circularity as the most marked feature of Ode II, it is predictable that we encounter in it echoes of Ode I. These include the following: the interrogative clause *fa-līman tuḡhannī*, “For whom shall they sing?” which, as noted above, forms the opening of line 32 in Ode II is a repetition of line 6, Ode I, in which the speaker laments, *fa-līman tuḡhannī 'l-sāḡirāt?* “For whom then shall the mermaids sing?”; the news that *al-laylu māt*, “the night has died,” which constitutes line 34 (Ode II) is a variant on *al-baḡru māt*, “the sea has died,” which forms the onset of line 2 (Ode I) and is repeated as line 7 in the same Ode. But perhaps the most elaborate repetitiveness is that involving lines 20–23 and 38–42 in the two Odes respectively. The persistence of the state of despondency is suggested at the syntactic level: the first passage is made up entirely of structures in the interrogative. The first two key lines in the counterpart passage are similarly in the interrogative. The predominance of the interrogative in the former passage and its forceful resumption in the latter connotes a continuation of the speaker’s state of confusion and bewilderment; the recourse to exile exacerbates rather than allays this state.

The latter passage, moreover, displays a persistence of other elements of the theme of darkness/death. The image of lilies withering in the dust in the middle of line 41 is a variant on the “lamp of childhood” drying up, similarly, in the dust (line 21); it further recalls the imagery of fading daylight in lines 22–23. It may be observed that the image of lilies withering represents a reversal of the Biblical “lilies of the field” (Matthew 6: 28). At the lexical level, notable repetition includes *namūt* (we die) in line 20 which recurs at the end of line 42; *al-fuqarā'* (the poor) towards the end of line 23, which recurs as the onset of line 42, and *al-turāb* (the dust) which closes both lines 21 and 41. The sound structure of the two passages, moreover, contributes to the somewhat wearisome recurrence signification. This is effected most obviously through the rhyme between

al-kharāb (the wasteland) and *al-turāb* (the dust) in the former with *al-ʿadhāb* (the torment) and *li-bāb* (to door) in the latter.

In the introduction to this book, I proposed that there existed two thematically differentiable types of the free-verse *qaṣīdah*: the former composed largely during periods of “veiled” colonialism; the latter flourished in the post-colonial era following the overthrow of some pro-Western regimes. The former is most often structured around such key oppositions as repression/freedom, death/rebirth. This type of *qaṣīdah* acknowledges reality but frequently concludes with the promise of a more favorable state. The latter type dwells on the present adverse state but seems to proffer no comparable prospect of change; it begins on a heavy note of despondency and concludes on the same pessimistic note.⁴⁵ The presence of the “rebirth” section is as conspicuous in the former as its absence is in the latter. This is demonstrated in the respective conclusions of the two *qaṣīdahs* that have been considered in this chapter:

Al-rīhu fī ʿl-manfā tahubbu, ka-anna shayʿan fyya māt
innī ubārīku, yā-ṣaghīrī raghma qaswatīha, ʿl-ḥayāt
fa-anā wa-anta li-shaʿbinā mīlkun, wa-in kariha ʿl-ṭughāt.

The wind in [the land of] exile blows, it is as if something in me had died.
 I invoke a blessing, my little one, despite its harshness, on life.
 For you and I belong to our people even though tyrants loathe it. (“A
 Song,” 32–34)

Ahākadhā tamdī ʿl-sinūn?
wa-yumazziqū ʿl-qalba ʿl-ʿadhāb?
wa-naḥnu min manfā ilā manfā wa-min bābin li-bāb
nadhwi kamā tadhwi ʿl-zanābiqu fī ʿl-turāb
fuqarāʿ, yā-qamarī, namūt.

Is this how the years depart?
 And torment tears at the heart?
 While we [move] from one exile to another, from door to door.
 We wilt as lilies in the dust wilt.
 Poor, O my moon, we shall die. (“Two Odes,” 38–42)

Yet despite the imposing presence of a revival section in the former and its absence in the latter, the dissimilarity between the two *qaṣīdahs*

⁴⁵ In a similar vein, al-Musawi writes, “Al-Bayātī has worked out an ever growing poetics of exile that resists closure or ultimate findings and truths.” Al-Musawi 212.

is one of degree. The former counterpoints an adverse condition against a vision of change. For its part, what I have termed “the poem of disillusionment” is not all about disillusion. In a manner not dissimilar to that found in the first *qaṣīdah*, this poem sets a state of despondency, privation, and disorder against a *desire* for hopefulness, deliverance, and order. Although only implicit, its presence is never far from the surface.

To contemporary readers the extent of despondency that this “poem of disillusionment” displays might seem somewhat excessive. The circumstances of al-Bayātī’s departure from Moscow in the autumn of 1964 may have contributed to this. “When I arrived in Cairo,” he concedes, “bitterness was overflowing in me.”⁴⁶ A fuller explanation, however, must be sought above all in the great discrepancy between vision and reality with respect to the July Revolution.⁴⁷ Several decades later, al-Bayātī would couch this discrepancy in the following terms:

Al-Sayyāb’s *qaṣīdah* “The Canticle of the Rain [1954]” was in those years a promise, a forewarning, and one of the signs of the doomsday to come. Doomsday did come—afterwards—just as al-Sayyāb had predicted it would. But instead of [the Revolution] climbing the mountain of light, the quagmire of death opened its mouth wide so that hands were stained with blood, and a new wall erected.⁴⁸

It is a commonplace that the free-verse generation of poets, like the architects of the July Revolution, hailed mostly from the rural, underprivileged classes. Under the monarchy, these classes had been effectively disenfranchised; their members were largely excluded from participation in political life, which remained the prerogative of the aristocracy (landed or mercantile). This exclusion inevitably led to a collective failure on the part of these young and eager intellectuals to appreciate the complexities involved in bringing about the socio-economic transformation of an underdeveloped society. It led many to entertain the flawed assumption that the *ancien régime* was the main obstacle on the road to a progressive society, and that transformation could be brought about once the pro-Western monarchy was

⁴⁶ Al-Bayātī, *Yanābīʿ* 67.

⁴⁷ Al-ʿĀlim, however, holds that melancholy in the poetry of al-Bayātī is “part of the vital fabric of the poetic experience and one of its authentic dimensions.” Al-ʿĀlim 50.

⁴⁸ Al-Bayātī, *Yanābīʿ* 93.

deposed and replaced by a revolutionary regime. The pre-Revolutionary world, moreover, was an ordered one, a world divisible into “us”/the people versus “them”/the colonizers and their protégés. In the aftermath of the Revolution, however, this apprehensible division collapsed compounding the sense of confusion and bewilderment perceptible in many a qaṣīdah of this period.

Since the composition in 1965 of “Two Odes to my Son ‘Alī,” disillusionment, especially among the Arab intelligentsia, has continued to mount as revolutionary regimes have been transformed into oppressive apparatuses throughout the length and breadth of the Arab world. Other factors contributed to fuelling this sense of disillusion; these include the defeat of Arab armies in the 1967 war, the Sadat “peace” treaty with Israel (widely seen as a capitulation to Israel), as well as the subsequent Israeli invasion of Lebanon and occupation of Beirut in 1982. So widespread is the disillusionment that it has become a recurrent theme in recent Arabic poetry.

EPILOGUE

The onset of colonial hegemony represents the most consequential event in modern Arab history. Well over a century has elapsed since the beginning of resistance to that hegemony; nevertheless, the aims of anti-colonial struggle continue to elude those who have partaken in it. If we accept Albert Hourani's definition of Imperialism as an asymmetrical power relationship between the Arabs and the West, it is unquestionable that such a relationship has endured to the present moment. If, moreover, we concur with Patrick Brantlinger that Imperialism represents a "pervasive set of attitudes and ideas towards the rest of the world,"¹ it becomes possible to aver that no part of the world has been impacted more adversely, indeed catastrophically, by the pervasiveness of this "set of attitudes and ideas" than has the Arab/Islamic world—as was amply demonstrated in the closing decade of the twentieth century.

A common adage has it that poetry is *Dīwān al-ʿArab* or "the [public] register of the Arabs"—as the saying is often rendered. Indeed, poetry has been the uppermost literary form of that people since pre-Islamic times; it was inevitable, therefore, that it should play a critical role in the anti-colonial struggle. It did so through a largely salutary relationship with opposition to Empire. Anti-colonialism acted as a catalyst to a languishing and devitalized poetry; it furnished that poetry with a laudable mission as well as a sense of direction. This gave rise to a corpus that came to be known as *shīʿr munāḥaḍat al-Istiʿmār* (the poetry of anti-colonialism). The opposition to Empire was, in turn, furthered by poetry; in its rendering of colonial domination and resistance thereto, the qaṣīdah partook in forming as well as enunciating a new political consciousness.

Shīʿr munāḥaḍat al-Istiʿmār subsumed the political while retaining the poetical. It did so through elaborating a poetics that maintained the integrity of the qaṣīdah without circumventing its historical moment. Therein lies the importance of the anti-colonial qaṣīdah.

¹ Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988) 8.

APPENDICES

[1] Speech by the Egyptian Premier Muṣṭafā Fahmī (Mustapha Pasha Fehmy) delivered at the Khedival Opera House in Cairo on the evening of May 4, 1907

My lord, allow me to express to your lordship, in the name of the Government and of the great majority of the Egyptian people, the sincere regrets caused by your departure, regrets which are all the greater because that departure is necessary owing to the state of your health, which has been sacrificed to the constant and excessive work imposed upon you by your attachment to the country and passionate desire to contribute unceasingly to its prosperity. Egypt, my lord, cannot forget that she owes to your wisest counsels, assistance, and support that transformation which calls forth a universal feeling of admiration. History must chronicle and appreciate the varied progress which has been realized by this country. I wish only to affirm that the fellah has felt the benefits of the transformation which has been accomplished and has participated more than any other in the general prosperity. He thus enjoys happy days owing to the improvement in his moral and material condition. It is to this work, my lord, that your name will be attached, and it will ever ensure the sincere and profound gratitude of Egypt. Allow me to express regret also at the departure of Lady Cromer, who by her bounty and charity has gained the hearts of those unhappy ones to whom she has brought consolation and help; thus deserving the gratitude of all. My lord, you have sincerely loved Egypt and have devoted the best years of your life to this country. We are convinced that you will continue that kindness of which you have given such incessant proofs, and in expressing our deep affection let us ask you to allow us to consider you always as one of us.

Source: *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

[2] Lord Cromer's Farewell Speech delivered at the Khedival Opera House in Cairo on the evening of May 4, 1907

Your Excellencies and gentlemen,—I must ask you to receive the remarks which I am about to make with some indulgence. It is, indeed, a considerable effort to me, morally and physically, to address you at all—physically, because I have to muster all my strength in order to do so, and morally, because I am fairly overwhelmed by all the great kindness which I have received from all classes during the last few weeks, and because it costs me a very bitter pang to part finally with a country where I have so many friends, and with which all the incidents

of my public career, as well as the joys and sorrows of my domestic life, have been closely connected for well nigh upon a generation of men. I am leaving, gentlemen, not for any political reasons, but because the hand of time has begun to press hardly upon me, because after nearly half a century spent in the public service, during far the greater portion of which I have been working at high pressure, I think I am entitled to a rest, and because I feel that all the very important interests over which it is the duty of the British representative to watch in this country will be better served by the appointment of a younger man in the full possession of his mental and physical vigour.

Before dealing with other matters, I should like to say a few words in reply to the graceful allusions which both the Comte de Serionne and Mustapha Pasha Fehmy have made to Lady Cromer, my helpmate, which have touched me, and I am sure I may add her, very deeply. I might wax very eloquent on this theme, but for obvious reasons I must exercise some control over my feelings. I will confine myself to saying that while I was listening to the two speeches you have just heard I felt a strong desire to change places with the speakers. I should have preferred to eulogize Lady Cromer rather than to reply to the very flattering remarks which have been made about myself. Perhaps I may take this opportunity of saying that one of the objects which Lady Cromer has had most at heart was to assist, in common with other philanthropic ladies, in arresting the terrible infant mortality of this country, and I venture to express the hope that this work, which has been well begun, will not in the future be neglected. Gentlemen, I am not going to dwell at any length upon the history of the past, neither can I allude to all those with whom it has been my privilege to co-operate in the creation of a new Egypt. I will only say that I have always felt that I had much more than my share of public praise for whatever good has recently been done in this country. I could have effected nothing without the hearty co-operation of others, Egyptian and European, our countrymen, as well as those of other nationalities. Amongst those I should like to say no one has done more useful work than Mr. Findlay, who during my absence in late years has acted for me under circumstances of somewhat peculiar difficulty. I do not doubt that in the course of the 24 years during which I have held my present post I have made many mistakes, and possibly may have incurred some enmities; but your presence here this afternoon is, I hope, sufficient proof that I have also contracted many friendships. Let me add that I am particularly touched by the presence of so many foreign colleagues, with whom, as with their predecessors, I have entertained most friendly relations. Although, as I have said, I cannot speak of all those with whom I have co-operated, yet one or two personalities come so vividly before my mind on the present occasion that I perforce must mention some names. In the first place, I should like to say a word or two of one to whom, in my opinion, the public has never yet done sufficient justice. I allude to the

late Khedive, his Highness Tewfik Pasha. Gentlemen, I am not going to use the language of empty compliment or to employ conventional phrases. What I say I mean. Tewfik Pasha understood his country and his countrymen well. He constituted an admirable link between the reformers, whose zeal he at all times tempered, and the people, whose ultra-conservative fears of reform he used his influence to allay. History will be unjust if it does not accord to Tewfik Pasha a somewhat important niche in the Valhalla of Oriental potentates. He did not himself take any very active part in the regeneration of Egypt, but he was wise enough to encourage and support those who were working for its regeneration. Another great figure of the past comes prominently to my mind on the present occasion. Gentlemen, those who are acquainted with the past history of Egypt, and who also have read my recent annual report, will recognize that the proposals which have been brought forward in connexion with modifying the *régime* of the Capitulations are the natural complement of the great and statesmanlike work originally projected by Nubar Pasha. I would mention the name of another Egyptian statesman whom I am glad to see here this afternoon. I allude to my old and trusted friend Riaz Pasha. Gentlemen, little or no courage is now required on the part of the young Egyptian who poses as a reformer, but it was not so always. Ismail Pasha had some very drastic methods of dealing with those who did not bow before him. Nevertheless, some 30 years ago Riaz Pasha stood forth boldly to protest against the maladministration that then prevailed in Egypt. He was not afraid to bell the cat. I admired his courage, and though at subsequent periods I frequently differed from my old friend and colleague, I have never ceased to regard him with esteem, I may almost say affection, which his sterling qualities so well merit.

What can I say of my valued friend Fehmy Pasha, with whom during so many years I have been on terms of intimate personal friendship? In the first place, I can say that he is one of the most thorough gentlemen I have ever met in my life. Perfect loyalty, straightforwardness, and truthfulness have been conspicuous in every act of his life. In the second place, I can say that in a quiet and unobtrusive manner he has rendered most valuable services to his countrymen. I feel that these very few remarks scarcely do justice to his eminent qualities or to the personal esteem in which I hold him, but I have still much to say, and I must be brief. It has been a great pleasure to me to be associated so long with the present Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sir Ghaly Boutros, whose versatile intellect has been of the utmost service in solving many of the tangled questions to which the special political situation of this country frequently gives rise. Lastly, gentlemen, I should like to mention the name of one with whom I have only recently co-operated, but for whom in that short time I have learned to entertain a high regard. Unless I am much mistaken, a career of great public usefulness lies before the present Minister for Education, Zaghloul Bey. He possesses all the qualities which are

necessary to serve this country. He is honest and capable, and has the courage of his convictions. He has been abused by many less worthy among his own countrymen, but with these high qualifications he should go far.

Of my European coadjutors all I need say is that I thank them all heartily for the invaluable help and support which I have received from them under circumstances of great difficulty. I cannot undertake to mention all the names, but if there are any whose names deserve to be specially cherished by the people of this country, they are, perhaps, Sir Colin Scott Monorieff and Sir William Garstin, able subordinates who have given the Egyptians what they most require—water. To these I may add the name of the distinguished Frenchman, Professor Maspero, whose erudite researches into the past history of Egypt have rightly secured for him a fame which is worldwide. Lastly, gentlemen, I wish to say that no part of my duties has interested me more than that connected with the Sudan. It will always be a source of pride and satisfaction to me to have been associated with Sir Reginald Wingate and his zealous and capable coadjutors in the remarkable work of regeneration which for some years past has been proceeding in that country.

With the help of those I have mentioned and many others, I have, I think, in spite of my shortcomings, done a good piece of work here during the last quarter of a century. I am often told that the Egyptians generally fail to show any great amount of gratitude for the benefits which have unquestionably been conferred upon them. I do not know what their feelings are in this respect. A French philosopher once said something to this effect:—“Lorsqu’un peuple a trop souffert, à peine a-t-il la force de remercier ceux qui le sauvent.” Assuredly, the people of Egypt in past times suffered grievously. Whatever their feelings may be now, I refuse to be reasoned out of what, if it be a delusion, is at all events a noble delusion; I refuse to believe that the Egyptians, at all events the best among them, do not recognize that it was the hand of Western civilization, acting mainly during the last 25 years through the instrumentality of England, that has raised them from the slough of despond in which their lot was formerly cast, that pointed out to them the way which leads to material prosperity and moral elevation of thought; and if, which is far from being the case, I were convinced that the present generation do not recognize this manifest truth, I should still cherish the hope that posterity would do so. I believe it is a fact that the children of the blind are able to see.

Gentlemen, when I first came to this country to occupy my present position, I set two principal objects before myself, which I have steadily pursued for a long term of years. One was political, the other administrative. The main political object which I kept in view was to contribute to the restoration of that good understanding between France and England which the force of circumstances, rather than any intentions or ambitions on the part of the rulers or populations of either country, had impaired. That very distinguished statesman, M. Gambetta,

whose masterful will during his period of office exercised an abiding effect on the course of Egyptian history, once said to his countrymen:—"Ne rompez jamais avec l'alliance anglaise." My creed of international politics, which I believe is shared by a large number of my countrymen, is almost summed up in the phrase:—"Ne rompez jamais avec l'entente française." This *entente*, to which Count Serionne has alluded in sympathetic terms, is based on common interests, close neighbourhood, community of political institutions, mutual respect, acquired in past rivalry of arms on many a well-fought field, and the recognition of the fact that the characteristics and qualities of the two nations serve as the complement of each other; further, it threatens no one, it is based on a common desire to maintain the peace of the world. If ever two nations were marked out by the force of circumstances to be friends, certainly they are France and England. Well, gentlemen, it was clear to the merest tiro that, as long as this Egyptian sore continued to rankle, that friendship was naturally impaired. Therefore, when I came to Egypt in 1883, I determined, so far as my limited sphere of action enabled me, to use my utmost endeavours to repair the breach. It was long and uphill work. For years the two nations looked at each other askance, "comme deux chiens de faïence," as our French friends say. We exchanged some hard, fortunately only verbal, knocks, and I came in for my fair share of them. There was a time when my name was rarely mentioned in a French newspaper without the addition of some rather uncomplimentary epithet of which I think "le brutal Cromer" was the one most commonly used. Indeed, if I remember rightly, I was on one occasion likened to the most blood-thirsty heathen gods, and was termed "Moloch." These journalistic amenities, which give a zest and life to political discussion, need not be taken too seriously, more especially now. Happily, these things are past, and recently I have on more than one occasion been termed "Cet illustre vieillard," which clearly denotes a change of tone. Seriously, however, I did my best for many years to lead up to an understanding between the two nations, and I may say that one of the happiest days of my Egyptian career was April 8, 1904, when the Anglo-French Agreement was signed. I do not, of course, for a moment claim to be one of the principal authors of that Agreement. The chief merit of its conclusion lies with the statesmen who conducted the foreign affairs of either country in Paris or London, and also, I trust I may be allowed to add without disrespect, with the talented Sovereign whom I have had the privilege to serve. But I think I may go so far as to say that the continuous efforts made by all concerned in Egypt over a series of years to avoid unnecessary friction and deal in a frank and friendly spirit with any small grievances which arose out of the fact of the British occupation of Egypt paved the way for the settlement and facilitated the work of the negotiations.

I turn now to the administrative object which I have always kept in view. We have recently been hearing a good deal of wild talk about the autocratic and tyrannical government of Egypt. I do not care to

answer criticism of this sort at any length. I may, however, say that throughout my Egyptian career I have done my best to instill a liberal spirit into a system of government which of necessity is bureaucratic. I have certainly always endeavoured to the best of my ability to ascertain the true state of public opinion, European and local, and to give due weight to it. I must leave others to decide how far I have succeeded.

I turn to another point. I hear it frequently stated that, although the material prosperity of Egypt has increased marvelously in late years, nothing has been done towards the moral and intellectual advancement of the people. What! Has there been no moral advancement? Is this country any longer governed, as was formerly the case, exclusively by the use of the whip? Is not forced labour a thing of the past? Has not the accursed institution of slavery practically ceased to exist? Is it not a fact that every individual, from the highest to the lowest, is now equal in the eye of the law, that thrift is encouraged, that the most humble member of society can reap the fruits of his own labour and industry, that justice is no longer bought and sold, that every one is free—perhaps, some think, too free—to express his opinions, that king baksheesh has been dethroned from high places and now only lingers in the purlieus and byways of administration, that the fertilizing water of the Nile is distributed impartially to prince and peasant alike, that the sick man is tended in a well-equipped hospital, that the criminal and the lunatic are no longer treated like wild beasts, that even the lot of the brute creation has not escaped the eyes of the reformer, that solidarity of interests between the governors and the governed is recognized in theory and in practice, that every act of administration—even if at times mistaken, for none is infallible—bears the mark of honesty of purpose and an earnest desire to secure the well-being of the population, and, further, that the funds, much reduced in amount, now taken from the pockets of the taxpayers, instead of being for the most part spent on useless palaces and other objects in which they are in no degree interested, are devoted to purposes which are a real benefit to the country? If all these, and many other points to which I could allude, do not constitute some moral advancement, then of a truth I do not know what the word “morality” implies. I am told, however, that the intellect as well as the morality of the Egyptians has been neglected. To this statement also I give an emphatic denial. Look at the case of female education. Can any thinking man suppose that this country can really imbibe the true spirit of civilization until the position of its women is changed? If so, I venture entirely to differ from him. A few years ago my distinguished friends Artin Pasha, Kassim Amin Bey, and a very few others alone took an interest in this question. The rest of the population was not merely indifferent, but absolutely hostile. Look at the change now. The Egyptian Government has not got schools enough to provide for all the girls whose parents wish them to be educated. Again, look at the subject

of elementary education. The system which existed before the British occupation began was absolutely worthless. Here, again, there has been a remarkable change. Village schools, under the influence of many of the most enlightened provincial notables, are springing up all over the country. A remarkable movement has also taken place in favour of industrial education. As to higher education—namely, the teaching of law, medicine, engineering, &c.—there has been a steady advance for many years along the whole line. I quite admit that if, 20 years ago, unlimited funds had been at the disposal of the Government, a great deal more might have been done. The main factor in the Egyptian problem, however, was that the funds available, so far from being unlimited, were for years barely sufficient for the most pressing needs of the administration. Of course, a great deal still remains to be done in the way of moral and intellectual progress, and I have every confidence that in the good hands of the present Minister of Education, and of his adviser, Mr. Dunlop, rapid progress in educational matters will be made.

Moreover, a very competent and excellent ally has recently come into the field in connexion with this subject. I read a short time ago in the newspapers of an interview which the Khedive had accorded to a French newspaper correspondent, when his Highness made the following remark:—"International concern for the Egyptian Debt is henceforth at an end." I may remark incidentally that, for the time being, this is quite correct, but I am very fully convinced that, if reality were given to many of the wild schemes of Egyptian reform, of which we have lately heard a good deal, international concern in the finances of this country would very soon be quickened into life. I need not, however, dwell on this point. The Khedive then continued:—"It is time to devote all our efforts, not only towards the material welfare of the population, but towards the satisfaction of their intellectual and moral requirements. For my part, I have no more serious preoccupation than that." I heartily welcome this declaration. His Highness can more especially do a great deal in the way of the moral advancement of the people. He can put a stop to the scandals of the Wakfs' administration, which exercise so demoralizing an effect on this country. He can show his co-religionists that the Mahomedan Law Courts can be reformed without in any way shaking the pillars of the Moslem faith. He can sternly repress the proceedings of the self-seeking and irresponsible advisers who generally cluster round an Oriental Court, and whose influence is so detrimental to public morality. He can use his great influence to encourage true reformers, who have the well-being of the country earnestly at heart. If, as I trust will be the case, his Highness does these things, he will earn the gratitude and respect of every class in this country.

I fear I weary you, but so far I have dealt with the past. If you will grant me your attention for a few minutes longer, I wish to make some remarks about the future. What are the main facts as regards

the Egyptian situation? First, that the British occupation will continue for an indefinite period. On this point we have the formal assurance of his Majesty's Government. The second point is that, as long as the occupation continues, the British Government will necessarily be responsible, not, indeed, for the details, but for the main lines on which the administration is conducted. On this second point there ought, I think, to be no manner of doubt. The conclusion I draw from these facts is that the present system of government, in spite of its numerous defects and anomalies, which no one recognizes more fully than myself, must be continued. And I believe no one is more capable of safeguarding its continuance than my very able successor, Sir Eldon Gorst. You all know Sir Eldon Gorst's merits too well for it to be necessary for me to dwell at length on his eminent qualities. I will, therefore, only say that nothing has afforded me greater pleasure than to know that my place will be taken by one for whom I entertain such a warm personal friendship and in whom I have such thorough confidence as Sir Eldon Gorst. I see from the utterances of the Press, both European and local, that Sir Eldon Gorst is strongly advised to follow what is called my policy. I had, therefore, better explain what my policy has been. It may be summed up in very few words. It has been, to tell the truth, I know Sir Eldon Gorst will follow that policy, and I do not doubt that in the performance of his arduous duties Sir Eldon Gorst will receive the same loyal and efficient support from our own countrymen and others as has been uniformly vouchsafed to me. Never forget that in this country the maxim "Union is strength" must be fully applied, if the complete measure of beneficial effect is to be produced. I am not likely in future to take a very active part in politics, but I shall continue, as far as my health and strength allow, to take an interest in Egyptian affairs. Whatever influence I can exert will be exercised in the direction of steady progress on the lines already laid down. I shall deprecate any brisk change, any violent new departure; more especially, if necessary, I shall urge that this wholly spurious manufactured movement in favour of the rapid development of Parliamentary institutions be treated for what it is worth. And, let me add, it is worth very little. It does not really represent the voice of the intelligent dwellers in Egypt, European or Egyptian. When all nonsense and exaggeration are swept away, it will, I think, be found that the differences of opinion between my opponents, especially those in England, and myself are really not so much ones of principle as of degree. They wish to gallop. I consider a steady jog-trot is the pace best suited to advance the interests of this country. It is a pace which has done us good service in the past, and I say it should be continued, never relaxing to a walk or breaking into a gallop. My strong conviction is that if the pace be greatly mended a serious risk will be incurred that the horse will come down and break his knees.

I wish to tell you why I entertain and why I now state these opinions. It is not because I hold that any political advantage will accrue

to my own country from their adoption. It is not even because I believe them to be shared by all the most intelligent classes, European and Egyptian, in this country. No, it is mainly because I hope that what I am now saying will eventually be translated into the vernacular language, and will thus reach the ears on some, at all events, of the voiceless millions of blue-shirted fellaheen, on whose labours the prosperity of the country really depends. I, who claim always to have been their true friend, warn them against allowing themselves to be duped and misled by their pseudo representatives, who, without a shadow of real authority, credit them with ideas which they neither entertain nor fully comprehend, and who advocate a political programme, the immediate adoption of which, while detrimental to all other interests, would, I am firmly convinced, be specially hurtful to those of the poorest classes of the community. If, instead of being the defender of a régime which has now lasted nearly a quarter of a century, I were to turn my hand to criticizing it, I should be disposed to dwell on the point that progress, instead of being too slow, has been so fast that the reforms effected have not as yet been thoroughly assimilated by the mass of the population.

Yet one further word of advice, which I wish to give before I sit down. The maxim "Union is strength" applies not merely to those in the service of the Government, but to all who are interested in the introduction of true civilization in this country. They should hold together. I do not merely mean that Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, and other Europeans should lay aside petty international rivalries and combine together in the common interests, but also that all in favour of rational government and steady progress, be they Moslem, Christian, European, African, or Asiatic, should unite in resisting those forces, which, whether from ignorance or intention, are in reality advocating the cause of retrogression. I thank you for the patience with which you have listened to me. I have now said all I have to say. I do not doubt that difficulties still lie in the path of the Egyptian reformer, and especially in that of Sir Eldon Gorst, but my last word for him and for all of you may fitly be the inscription which in former days was frequently inscribed by the worshippers of Isis in this country on their tombs. It was in the language used by that nation which is the true parent of European civilization, whose descendants have to a large extent and to the great advantage of this country settled in Egypt, among whom I am pleased to count many excellent friends. I need hardly say that I refer to the language of Greece. The inscription to which I allude was Εὐψύχει which, translated into English, means "Be of good cheer." With full confidence in the future of the country which has been my home for so many years, in which the germs of civilization are now, I firmly believe, fastened too deeply in the soil to be easily uprooted, I reluctantly bid you a grateful farewell.

Source: *Times* [London] 6 May, 1907.

[3] أحمد شوقي

وداع لورد كرومر

- ١- أيامكم أم عهد إسماعيل؟
 أم أنت فرعون يسوس النيل؟
- ٢- أم حاكم في أرض مصر بأمره
 لا سائلا أبداً ولا مسؤولاً؟
- ٣- يامالكاً رقيق الرقاب ببأسه
 هلا اتخذت إلى القلوب سبيلاً؟
- ٤- لما رحلت عن البلاد تشهّدت
 فكأنك الداء العيأء رحيلاً
- ٥- أوسعتنا يوم الوداع إهانةً
 أدب لعمرك لا يُصيب مثيلاً
- ٦- هلا بدا لك أن تُجامل بعد ما
 صاغ الرئيس لك الثنا إكليلاً؟
- ٧- انظر إلى أدب الرئيس ولطفه
 تجد الرئيس مهذباً ونبيلاً
- ٨- في ملعب للمضحكات مشيدٍ
 مثّلت فيه المبكيات فصولاً
- ٩- شهد الحسين عليه لعن أصوله
 وتصدر الأعمى به تطفيلاً
- ١٠- حين أقلّ وخط من قدريهما
 والمرء إن يجبن يعيش مرذولاً
- ١١- لما ذكرت به البلاد وأهلها
 مثّلت دور مماتها تمثيلاً
- ١٢- أنذرتنا رقيقاً يدوم وذلةً
 تبقى وحالاً لا ترى تحويلاً
- ١٣- أحسبت أن الله دونك قدرة؟
 لا يملك التغيير والتبديلاً
- ١٤- الله يحكم في الملوك ولم تكن
 دول تنازعه القوى لتدولا
- ١٥- فرعون قبلك كان أعظم سطوةً
 وأعزّ بين العالمين قبيلاً
- ١٦- اليوم أخلفت الوعود حكومةً
 كنا نظن عهداً الإنجيلاً
- ١٧- دخلت على حكم الوداد وشرعته
 مصراً فكانت كالسُّلال نخولاً
- ١٨- هدمت معالمها وهدت ركنها
 واضاعت استقلالها المأمولاً
- ١٩- قالوا جلبت لنا الرفاهة والغنى
 جحدوا الإله وصنعه والنيلاً
- ٢٠- وحيأة مصر على زمان محمد
 ونهوضها من عهد إسماعيلاً
- ٢١- ومدارساً يبني البلاد حوافلاً
 حظ الفقير بهن كان جزيلاً
- ٢٢- ومعاقلاً لا تمحي آثارها
 وجيوش إبراهيم والأسطولاً
- ٢٣- وجداولاً بين الضياع جوارياً
 تذرّ اليباب مزارعاً وحقولاً
- ٢٤- ومدائننا قد خطّطت وطرائقنا
 كانت حزوناً فاستحلن سهولاً
- ٢٥- والقطن مزروعاً بفضل محمد
 في مصر مطوجاً بها مغزولاً

- ٢٦- قد مدَّ إسماعيلُ قبلكَ للورى
 ٢٧- إن قيسَ في جودٍ وفي سرفٍ إلى
 ٢٨- أو كان قد صرَعَ المفتشَ مرةً
 ٢٩- لا تذكُر الكرياجَ في أيامِه
 ٣٠- وامدَحْ قصوراً شادَهْن يوانِخا
 ٣١- لو أنه لم يَبْنِها لتخذتمُ
 ٣٢- كم مئةً موهومةً أتبعَتها
 ٣٣- في كل تقريرٍ تقولُ خلقتُكم
 ٣٤- هل من نَداك على المدارس أنها
 ٣٥- أم من صيانتكِ القضاءَ بمصر أن
 ٣٦- أم هل يُعدُّ لك الإضاعةَ مئةً
 ٣٧- انظر إلى فتِيانِه ما شأْنهم
 ٣٨- حرمتهم أن يبلغُوا رتبَ العُلا
 ٣٩- فإذا تطلَّعت الجيوشُ وأمَّلت
 ٤٠- من بعد ما زفُّوا لإبورد العُلا
 ٤١- لو كنتُ من حُمُرِ الثيابِ عبدتُكم
 ٤٢- أو كنتُ بعضُ الإنكليز قَبْلِكُم
 ٤٣- أو كنتُ عضواً في الكلوبِ ملائته
 ٤٤- أو كنتُ قسيساً يهيمُ مبشراً
 ٤٥- أو كنتُ صرَّافاً بلندنَ دائناً
 ٤٦- أو كنتُ (تيمسكُم) ملأتُ صحائفِي
 ٤٧- أو كنتُ في مصر نزيلاً جاهداً
 ٤٨- أو كنتُ سريونا حلفتُ بأنكم
 ٤٩- ما كان من عقباتِها وصعابِها
 ٥٠- عهدُ الفرنجِ وأنت تعلمُ عهدهم
 ٥١- فارحلْ بحفظِ الله جلَّ صنيعه
 ٥٢- واحملْ بساقك رِبطةً في لندنِ
- ظلُّ الحضارة في البلاد ظليلاً
 ما تُنفقون اليومُ عدُّ بخيلاً
 فلکم صرعتَ بدنشواي قتيلاً
 من بعد ما أنبتَ فيه ذيولاً
 قد أصبحتُ مأوىَ لكم ومقيلاً
 منها المضاربَ والخيامَ بديلاً
 ممناً على الفطنِ الخبيرِ ثقيلاً
 أفهل ترى تقريرك التزويلاً ؟
 تذرُ العلومَ وتأخذُ (الفوتبولاً)
 تأتي بقاضي دنشواي وكيلاً ؟
 جيشُ كجيشِ الهندِ بات ذليلاً
 أو ليسَ شأنًا في الجيوشِ ضئيلاً ؟
 ورفعتَ قومك فوقهم تفضيلاً
 مُستقبلاً لم يملكوا التأميلاً
 فتحاً عريضاً في البلادِ طويلاً
 من دونِ عيسى مُحسناً ومنيلاً
 ملكاً أقطعُ كَفَهَ تقبيليلاً
 أسفلاً لفرقتكم بكاً وعويلاً
 رتلتُ آيةً مدحك ترتيلاً
 أعطيتُكم عن طيبة تحويلاً
 مدحاً يردُّ في الورى موصولاً
 سبَّحتُ باسمك بكرة واصيلاً
 أنتم حبوتُم بالقناةِ الجيلاً
 ذللتُموه بعزمكم تذيلاً
 لا يبخسونَ المحسنينَ فتيلاً
 مُستعفياً إن شئتُ أو معزولاً
 واخلف هناكُ غرايَ أو كمبيلاً

- ٥٣- أو شاطر الملك العظيم بلاده
 ٥٤- إنا تمئنا على الله المنى
 ٥٥- من سب دين محمد فمحمد
 وسُسِ المالكَ عَرْضَها والطولا
 واللَّهُ كان بنيلهنَّ كفيلا
 مُتمكنُ عند الإله رسولا

[4] أحمد شوقي

ذكرى دنشواي

- ١- يا دنشواي على ربك سلامٌ
 ٢- شهداءُ حكمك في البلاد تفرّقوا
 ٣- مرت عليهم في اللحد أهلةُ
 ٤- كيف الأراملُ فيك بعد رجالها
 ٥- عشرون بيتاً أقفرت وانتابها
 ٦- ياليت شعري في البروج حمائمُ
 ٧- «نيرون» لو أدركت عهد «كرومر»
 ٨- نوحى حمائمُ دنشواي وروعي
 ٩- إن نامت الأحياءُ حالت بينه
 ١٠- متوجع يتمثلُ اليومَ الذي
 ١١- السوط يعملُ والمشانقُ أربعُ
 ١٢- والمستشارُ الي الفظائعُ ناظرُ
 ١٣- في كل ناحية وكلّ محلةٍ
 ١٤- وعلى وجوهِ الثاقلين كآبةُ
- نهبتُ بِأُنسِ رُبوعِكَ الأيَّامُ
 هيهاتَ للشملِ الشّتيتِ نظامُ
 ومضى عليهم في القيودِ العامُ
 وبأيِّ حالٍ أصبح الأيتامُ
 بعد البشاشةِ وحشةٌ وظلامُ
 أم في البروج منيةٌ وجمامُ ؟
 لعرفت كيف تنفذ الأحكامُ !
 شعباً بوادي النيل ليس ينامُ
 سَحراً وبين فراشه الأحلامُ
 ضجتُ لشدةِ هولهِ الأقدامُ
 متوحداتٍ والجنودُ قيامُ
 تدمى جلودُ حوله وعظامُ
 جزعاً من الملاء الأسيف زحامُ
 وعلى وجوهِ الثاكلات رغامُ

[5] أحمد شوقي

نُكْبَةُ دِمَشْقِ

- ١- سَلَامٌ مِنْ صَبَا بَرْدَى أَرْقُ
- ٢- وَمَعْزِدَةُ الْيَرَاعَةِ وَالْقَوَافِي
- ٣- وَنِكْرَى عَنْ خَوَاطِرِهَا لِقَلْبِي
- ٤- وَبِي مِمَّا رَمَتْكَ بِهِ اللَّيَالِي
- ٥- دَخَلْتُكَ وَالْأَصِيلَ لَهُ اتِّبَلَقُ
- ٦- وَتَحْتَ جِنَانِكَ الْأَنْهَارُ تَجْرِي
- ٧- وَحَوْلِي فِتْنِيَةٌ غُرُ صَبَاحُ
- ٨- عَلَى لَهَوَاتِهِمْ شُعْرَاءُ لُسُنُ
- ٩- رُوءَاةٌ فَصَائِدِي فَاعْجَبْ لِشِعْرِ
- ١٠- غَمَزَتْ إِبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى تَلْظَتْ
- ١١- وَضَجَّ مِنَ الشُّكَيْمَةِ كُلُّ حُرِّ
- ١٢- لِحَاهَا اللَّهُ أَنْبَاءٌ تَوَالَتْ
- ١٣- يُفَصِّلُهَا إِلَى الدُّنْيَا بَرِيدُ
- ١٤- تَكَادُ لِرُوعَةِ الْأَحْدَاثِ فِيهَا
- ١٥- وَقِيلَ مَعَالِمُ التَّارِيخِ دُكَّتْ
- ١٦- أَلْسِنَتِ دِمَشْقِ لِلْإِسْلَامِ ظُنُورًا
- ١٧- صَالِحُ الدِّينِ تَاجِكِ لَمْ يَجْمَلْ
- ١٨- وَكُلُّ حَضَارَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ طَالَتْ
- ١٩- سَمَاوُكُ مِنْ حِلْيِ الْمَاضِي كِتَابُ
- ٢٠- بَنِيَتْ الدُّوَلَةُ الْكُبْرَى وَمُلْكًا
- ٢١- لَهُ بِالشَّامِ أَعْلَامٌ وَعُرسُ
- ٢٢- رِبَاعُ الْخُلْدِ وَيَحْكُ مَا دَهَاها
- ٢٣- وَهَلْ غُرِفَ الْجِنَانِ مُنْضِدَاتُ
- ٢٤- وَأَيْنَ دُمَى الْمَقَاصِرِ مِنْ حِجَالِ
- ٢٥- بَرَزْنَ وَفِي نَوَاحِي الْأَيْكِ نَارُ
- وَدَمْعٌ لَا يُكْفِكُفُ يَا دِمَشْقُ
- جَلَالُ الرُّزْءِ عَنْ وَصْفِ يَدِيقُ
- إِلَيْكَ تَلَقُّتُ أَبَدًا وَخَفِيقُ
- جِرَاحَاتِ لَهَا فِي الْقَلْبِ عُمُقُ
- وَوَجْهُكَ ضَاحِكُ الْقَسَمَاتِ طَلِقُ
- وَمِثْلُ رُبَّكَ أَوْرَاقُ وَوَرِقُ
- لَهُمْ فِي الْفَضْلِ غَايَاتُ وَسَبْقُ
- وَفِي أَعْطَافِهِمْ خُطْبَاءُ شُدُقُ
- بِكُلِّ مَحَلَّةٍ يَرُويهِ خَلْقُ
- أَنْوُفِ الْأَسَدِ وَاضْطَرَمَ الْمَدْقُ
- أَبِيٍّ مِنْ أُمِّيَّةٍ فِيهِ عِنُقُ
- عَلَى سَمْعِ الْوَلِيِّ بِمَا يَشُقُ
- وَيُجْمَلُهَا إِلَى الْأَفَاقِ بَرُقُ
- تُخَالُ مِنَ الْخُرَافَةِ وَهِيَ صِدْقُ
- وَقِيلَ أَصَابَهَا تَلْفٌ وَحَرَقُ
- وَمُرْضِعَةٌ الْأَبُوءَ لَا تَعُقُ
- وَلَمْ يُوسَمِ بِأَزَيْنَ مِنْهُ فَسَرِقُ
- لَهَا مِنْ سَرْحِكِ الْعُلُويِّ عِرْقُ
- وَأَرْضُكَ مِنْ حِلْيِ التَّارِيخِ رِقُ
- غَبَارُ حَضَارَتَيْهِ لَا يَشُقُ
- بَشْشَايِرُهُ بِأَنْدَلُسِ تَدُقُ
- أَحَقُّ أَنْهَها دَرَسَتْ أَحَقُّ
- وَهَلْ لِنَعِيمِهِنَّ كَأَمْسِ نَسُقُ
- مُهْتَكَّةٌ وَأَسْتَارُ تَشُقُ
- وَخَلْفَ الْأَيْكِ أَفْسَرَاخُ تَرْقُ

- ٢٦- إِذَا رُمِنَ السَّلَامَةَ مِنْ طَرِيقٍ
 ٢٧- بِإِيلٍ لِلْقَنَائِفِ وَالْمَنَائِيَا
 ٢٨- إِذَا عَصَفَ الْحَدِيدُ أَحْمَرَ أَفُقُ
 ٢٩- سَلِيٍّ مَنْ رَاعَ غَيْدَكَ بَعْدَ وَهْنٍ
 ٣٠- وَلِلْمُسْتَعْمِرِينَ وَإِنْ أَلَانُوا
 ٣١- رَمَاكَ بِطَيْشِهِ وَرَمَى فَرَنْسَا
 ٣٢- إِذَا مَا جَاءَهُ طَلَابُ حَقِّ
 ٣٣- دَمِ الثُّوَارِ تَعْرِفُهُ فَرَنْسَا
 ٣٤- جَرَى فِي أَرْضِهَا فِيهِ حَيَاةٌ
 ٣٥- بِلَادٍ مَاتَ فَتَحَيْتَهَا لِتَحْيَا
 ٣٦- وَحَرَّرَتِ الشُّعُوبُ عَلَى قَنَاهَا
 ٣٧- بَنِي سُورِيَةَ اطَّرِحُوا الْأَمَانِي
 ٣٨- فَمِنْ خِدَعِ السِّيَاسَةِ أَنْ تُغْرُوا
 ٣٩- وَكَمْ صَيِّدٌ يَدَا لَكَ مِنْ ذَلِيلٍ
 ٤٠- فَتُوقِ الْمَلِكُ تَحَدُّثُ ثُمَّ تَمْضِي
 ٤١- نَصَحْتُ وَنَحْنُ مُخْتَلِفُونَ دَارًا
 ٤٢- وَيَجْمَعُنَا إِذَا اخْتَلَفَتْ بِلَادُ
 ٤٣- وَقَفْتُمْ بَيْنَ مَوْتٍ أَوْ حَيَاةٍ
 ٤٤- وَلِلْأَوْطَانِ فِي دَمِ كُلِّ حُرٍّ
 ٤٥- وَمَنْ يَسْقِي وَيَشْرَبُ بِالْمَنَائِيَا
 ٤٦- وَلَا يَبْنِي الْمَلَكَ كَالضَّحَايَا
 ٤٧- فِيهِ الْقَتْلَى لِأَجْيَالِ حَيَاةٍ
 ٤٨- وَلِلْحُرِّيَةِ الْحَمْرَاءِ بَابُ
 ٤٩- جَزَاكُمْ ذُو الْجَلَالِ بَنِي دِمَشْقِ
 ٥٠- نَصَرْتُمْ يَوْمَ مِحْنَتِهِ أَخَاكُمْ
 ٥١- وَمَا كَانَ الدَّرُوزُ قَبِيلَ شَرٍّ
 ٥٢- وَلَكِنْ ذَاذَةٌ وَقُرَاةٌ ضَعِيفٌ
- أَتَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِ لِلْمَوْتِ طَرِيقُ
 وَرَاءَ سَمَائِهِ خَطْفٌ وَصَعْقُ
 عَلَى جَنَبَاتِهِ وَأَسْوَدُ أَفُقُ
 أَبْيَنُ فُؤَادِهِ وَالصَّخْرُ فَرَقُ
 قُلُوبُ كَالْحِجَارَةِ لَا تَرِقُ
 أَخُو حَرْبٍ بِهِ صَلْفٌ وَحُمُقُ
 يَقُولُ عِصَابَةٌ خَرَجُوا وَشَقُّوا
 وَتَعَلَّمُ أَنَّهُ نُورٌ وَحَقُّ
 كَمُنْهَلِ السَّمَاءِ وَفِيهِ رِزْقُ
 وَزَالُوا دُونَ قَوْمِهِمْ لِيَبْقُوا
 فَكَيْفَ عَلَى قَنَاهَا تُسْتَرَقُ
 وَأَلْقُوا عَنْكُمْ الْأَحْلَامَ أَلْقُوا
 بِالْقَنَابِ الْإِمَارَةَ وَهِيَ رِقُ
 كَمَا مَالَتْ مِنَ الْمَصْلُوبِ عُنُقُ
 وَلَا يَمْضِي لِخُتْلَفِينَ فَتُقُ
 وَلَكِنْ كَلْنَا فِي الْهَمِّ شَرَقُ
 بَيَانٌ غَيْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ وَنُطُقُ
 فَإِنْ رُمْتُمْ نَعِيمَ الدَّهْرِ فَاشْتَقُوا
 يَدُ سَلَفَتْ وَدَيْنٌ مُسْتَحَقُّ
 إِذَا الْأَحْرَارُ لَمْ يُسَقُوا وَيَسْقُوا
 وَلَا يُدْنِي الْحُقُوقُ وَلَا يُحِقُّ
 وَفِي الْأَسْرَى فِدَى لَهُمْ وَعِثْقُ
 بِكُلِّ يَدٍ مُضْرَجَةٌ يَدُقُ
 وَعِزُّ الشَّرْقِ أَوْلُهُ دِمَشْقُ
 وَكُلُّ أَخٍ بِنَصْرِ أَخِيهِ حَقُّ
 وَإِنْ أَخَذُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَسْتَحِقُّوا
 كَيْتَبُوعِ الصَّفَا خَشِنُوا وَرَقُّوا

- ٥٣- لَهُمْ جَبَلٌ أَمَّامٌ لَهُ شِعَابٌ مَّوَارِدُ فِي السَّحَابِ الْجَوْنِ بَلَقُ
 ٥٤- لِكُلِّ لَبِوَةٌ وَلِكُلِّ شَيْبِلٌ نِضَالٌ دُونَ غَايَتِهِ وَرَشْقُ
 ٥٥- كَأَنَّ مِنَ السَّمَوَاتِ فِيهِ شَيْئاً فَكُلُّ جِهَاتِهِ شَرْفٌ وَخُلُقُ

[6] معروف الرصافي

بعد النزوح

- ١- هي المواطن أدنيها وتُقصيني
 ٢- قد طال شكواي من دهر أكابده
 ٣- كأنني في بلادٍ إذ نزلت بها
 ٤- حتى متى أنا في البلدان مغترب
 ٥- فتارةً في الموامي فوق موقرةٍ
 ٦- كم أغرقتني الليالي في مصائبها
 ٧- أنا ابن «دجلة» معروفاً بها أدبي
 ٨- قد كنت بلبلها الغريد أنشدها
 ٩- حيث الغُصون أفلتني مكللةً
 ١٠- فبينما كنت فيها صادحاً طرباً
 ١١- إذ حلّ فيها غراب كان يوحشني
 ١٢- حتى غدوت طريداً للغراب بها
 ١٣- فطرت غير مُبالٍ عند ذاك بما
 ١٤- ويل لبغداد مما سوف تذكره
 ١٥- لقد سقيت بفيض الدمع أربعها
 ١٦- ما كنت أحسب أنني مذ بكيت بها
 ١٧- أفي المروءة أن يعتزّ جاهلها
 ١٨- وأن يعيش بها الطرطور ذا شمم
 ١٩- تالله ما كان هذا قطّ من شيمي
 ٢٠- ولست أبدل عرضي كي أعيش به
 ٢١- أغنت خشونة عيشي في ذرا شرفي
 ٢٢- عاهدت نفسي والأيام شاهدة
 ٢٣- ولا أصادق كذاباً ولو ملكاً
 ٢٤- أما الحياة فشيء لا قرار له
 ٢٥- سيانٍ عندي أجراء الموت مُحترماً
- مثل الحوادث أبلوها وتُبليني
 أما أصادف حراً فيه يُشكيني
 نزلت منها ببیت غير مسكون
 نوائب الدهر بالأنياب تُدميني
 وتارة في الطوامي فوق مشحون
 فعُمت فيهنّ من صبري بدلفين
 وان يك الماء منها ليس يُرويني
 أشجى الأناشيد في أشجى التلاحين
 بالورد ما بين أزهار البساتين
 أستنشق الطيب من نفع الرياحين
 وكان تنعابه بالبين يؤذيني
 وما غدوت طريداً للشواهين
 تركت من نرجس فيها ونسرين
 عني وعنهما الليالي في الدواوين
 على جوانب وادٍ ليس يسقيني
 قومي بكيت على من سوف يُبكيني
 وان أكون بها في قبضة الهون
 وأن أسام بعيشي جدع عريني
 ولا الحياة على الزكراء من ديني
 ولو تآدمت رَقَوماً بغسلين
 عمّا أرى بخسيس العيش من لين
 أن لا أقِرُّ على جور السلاطين
 ولا أخالط أخوان الشياطين
 يحيا بها المرء موقوتاً الى حين
 من قبل عشرين أم من بعد تسعين

- ٢٦- ما بالسنين يقاس العمر عندي بل
 ٢٧- لو عشت ستين عاما لاستعصت بها
 ٢٨- فانما أطول الاعمار أجمعها
 ٢٩- ان اللثيم دفين قبل ميتته
 ٣٠- وليس من عاش في ذلِّ بمغتبط
 ٣١- ماكنت أحسب بغداداً تُحلّني
 ٣٢- حتى تقلد فيها الأمر زعنفه
 ٣٣- ما ضرّني غير أني اليوم من «عرب»
 ٣٤- تالله ما ضاع حقّي هكذا أبداً
 ٣٥- علام أمكث في بغداد مصطبراً
 ٣٦- لأجلنّ الى بيروت مُنتسبي
 ٣٧- خابت ببغداد آمال أوملها
 ٣٨- فليت سورية الوطفاء مُزنتها
 ٣٩- قد كان في الشام للأيام مذ زمن
 ٤٠- اذ كان فيها النشاشيبي يسعفني
 ٤١- وكان فيها ابن جبر لا يقصر في
 ٤٢- ان كان في القدس لي صحب غطارفة
- بما له في المعالي من تحاسين
 ستين مكرمةً بل دون ستين
 للمكرّمات من الابكار والعون
 وما الكريم وان أودى بمدفون
 ولا الذي مات في عزِّ بمغبون
 عن ماء دجلتها يوماً وتظمني
 من الأناس بأخلاق السراحين
 لا يغضبون لأمرٍ ليس يُرضيني
 لو كنت من عجم صُهب العثانين
 على الضراعة في بحبوحة الهون
 لعلّ بيروت بعد اليوم تُؤويني
 فهل تخيب اذا استذرت بصين
 عن العراق وعن واديه تُغنيني
 ذنب محّته الليالي في فلسطين
 وكنت فيها خليلاً للسكاكيني
 جبر انكسار غريب الدار محزون
 فكم ببيروت من عُرّ ميامين

[7] بدر شاكر السياب
 في المغرب العربي
 {إلى المجاهد العربي الكبير مصالي الحاج}

قرأت اسمي على صخره
 هنا ، في وحشة الصحراء ،
 على أجرّة حمراء ،
 على قبرٍ . فكيف يحسُّ إنسانٌ يرى قبره ؟
 يراه وإنه ليحارُّ فيه :
 أحيّ هو أم ميتٌ ؟ فما يكفيه
 أن يرى ظلًّا له على الرمال ،
 كمئذنةٍ معفّرةٍ
 كمقبرةٍ
 كمجدٍ زال !
 كمئذنةٍ تردّد فوقها اسمُ الله
 وخَطُّ اسمٍ له فيها ،
 وكان محمدٌ نقشاً على أجرّةٍ خضراءِ
 يزهو في أعاليها . . .
 فأمسى تأكل الغبراء
 والنيرانُ ، من معناه ،
 ويركله الغزاة بلا حذاء
 بلا قدم
 وتنزف منه ، دون دم ،
 جراح دونما ألم -
 فقد مات . . .
 ومتنا فيه ، من موتي ومن أحياء .
 فنحن جميعنا أموات
 أنا ومحمد والله .

وهذا قبرنا : انقاض مئذنة معفّرةٍ
عليها يُكتبُ اسمُ محمدٍ والله ،
على كسر مبعثرةٍ
من الأجرِّ والفخار .
فيا قبر الاله ، على النهار
ظلُّ لألف حربةٍ وفيل
ولونُ أبرهه
وما عكسته منه يدُ الدليل ،
والكعبة المحزونة المشوهه .

قرأت اسمي على صخره ،
على قبرين بينهما مدى أجيالُ
يجعل هذه الحفره
تضمُّ اثنين : جدُّ أبي - ومحضُ رمالُ
ومحضُ نثارة سوداء منه ، استنزلا قبره -
وإيائي ، ابنه في موته والمضغة الصلصال .

وكان يطوف من جدِّي
مع المدَّ
هتافُ يملأ الشيطانَ : «يا ودياننا ثوري !
ويا هذا الدمُّ الباقي على الأجيال
يا إرثَ الجماهير ،
تَشْطَبُ الآنُ واسحق هذه الأغلال !
وكالزلال
هزُّ النيرِ ، أو فاسحقه واسحقنا مع النير» .
وكان إلهنا يختال
بين عصائب الأبطال ،

من زُندٍ إلى زُندٍ
 ومن بُندٍ إلى بُندٍ .
 إلهُ الكعبةِ الجبَّارُ ،
 تدرِّعُ أمس في ذي قار
 بدرعٍ من دم النعمان في حافاتها آثار .
 إله محمد وإله آبائي من العرب ،
 ترأى في جبال الريف يحمل راية الثَّوار ،
 وفي يافا رآه القوم يبكي في بقايا دار .
 وأبصرناه يهبط أرضنا يوماً من السحبِ
 جريحاً كان في أحيائنا يمشي ويستجدي ،
 فلم نضمدُ له جرحاً
 ولا ضحىً
 له منا بغير الخبز والانعام من عبْدٍ !
 وأصوات المصلين ارتعاشُ من مراثيهِ .
 إذا سجدوا ينزُدُ
 فيسرع بالضماد فمُ
 بآياتٍ يغضُّ الجرح منها خير ما فيه ،
 تداوي خوفنا من علمنا أنا سنحبيبه
 إذا ما هلل الثَّوار منا : «نحن نفديه» !

أغار ، من الظلام على قرانا
 فأحرقهن ، سربٌ من جرادٍ .
 كأن مياه دجلة ، حيث ولّى ،
 تنمّ عليه بالدم والمداد .
 أليس هو الذي فجأ الحُبالي
 قضاه ، فما ولدن سوى رمادٍ ؟
 وأنعل ، بالأهلة في بقايا

مَاذَنْهَا ، سَنَابِكِ مِنْ جَوَادٍ ؟
 وَجَاءَ الشَّامَ يَسْحَبُ فِي ثَرَاهَا
 خُطَى أَسْدِينَ جَاعَا فِي الْفُؤَادِ ؟
 فَأَطْعَمَ أَجُوعَ الْأَسْدِينَ عَيْسَى
 وَبَلَّ صَدَاهُ مِنْ مَاءِ الْعِمَادِ
 وَعَضَّ نَبِيَّ مَكَّةَ . . فَالصحارى
 وَكُلَّ الشَّرْقَ يَنْفِرُ لِلْجِهَادِ ؟!
 أَعَادَ ، الْيَوْمَ ، كَيْ يَقْتَصَّ مِنْ أَنَا دَحْرِنَاهُ ؟
 وَأَنْ اللَّهَ بَاقٍ فِي قِرَانَا ، مَا قَتَلْنَاهُ ؟
 وَلَا مِنْ جُوعِنَا يَوْمًا أَكَلْنَاهُ ؟
 وَلَا بِالْمَالِ بَعْنَاهُ -
 كَمَا بَاعُوا
 إِلَهُمُ الَّذِي صَنَعُوهُ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ كَدْحِنَاهُ ؟
 كَمَا أَكَلُوهُ إِذَا جَاعُوا -
 إِلَهُمُ الَّذِي مِنْ خَبِزِنَا الدَّامِي جَبَلْنَاهُ ؟
 وَفِي بَارِيسَ تَتَّخِذُ الْبِغَايَا
 وَسَائِدَهُنَّ مِنْ أَلْمِ الْمَسِيحِ .
 وَبَاتَ الْعَقْمُ يَزْرَعُ فِي حَشَاهَا
 فَمِ التَّنِّينِ : يَشْهَقُ بِالْفَحِيحِ
 وَيَقْذِفُ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ فِي حَمَانَا
 جِحَافِلُ كَالْفُؤَارِسِ ، دُونَ رُوحِ
 تَجِدُّ وَرَاءَ مَكَّةَ فِي الصِّيَاصِي
 أَقْمِنَاهَا ، وَيَثْرَبُ فِي السَّفُوحِ .
 قَرَأْتُ اسْمِي عَلَى صَخْرِهِ . .
 وَبَيْنَ اسْمِينَ فِي الصَّحْرَاءِ
 تَنْفَسُ عَالَمُ الْأَحْيَاءِ

كما يجري دمُ الأعراق بين النبض والنبضِ .

ومن أجرّة حمراء ماثلة على حفرة ،

أضياء ملامح الأرضِ

بلا ومض

دمٌ فيها ، فسماها

لتأخذ منه معناها

لأعرف أنها أرضي

لأعرف أنها بعضي

لأعرف انها ماضيّ ، لا أحياء لولاها

واني ميّت لولاه ، أمشي بين موتاه .

أذاك الصاخب المكتظّ بالرأيات وادينا ؟

أهذا لونٌ ماضيّنا

تضوّاً من كوى «الحمراء»

ومن أجرّة خضراء

عليها تكتب اسمَ الله بقيا من دم فينا ؟

أنبر من أذان الفجر ؟ أم تكبيرة الثوار

تعلو من صياصينا . . ؟

تمخّضت القبور لتتشر الموتى ملايينا

وهبّ محمدٌ وإلهه العربيّ والانصار :

ان إلهنا فينا .

[8] عبد الوهاب البياتي

الملجأ العشرون

كفراغ أيام الجنود العائدين من القتال

وكوحشة المصدر في ليل السعال

كانت أغانيها ، وكنا هائمين بلا ظلال

مترقبين ، الليل ، أنباء البريد :

«الملجأ العشرون»

مازلنا بخير ، والعيال

- والقمل والموتى - يخصون الأقارب بالسلام» .

والذكريات الفجة الشوهاء تعبر ، والخيام

والريح والغد والظلام

كجوهنا غب الرحيل :

«أماه ! مازلنا بخير» والذئاب

تعوي وتعوي عبر صحراء السهاد :

«يا إخوتي من أين نبدأ؟ من هنا ! ليل السعال

وبريدنا الباكي المعاد :

«لا شيء يُذكر ، لم تزل (يافا) وما زال الرفاق

تحت الجسور ، وفوق أعمدة الضياء

يتأرجحون بلا رؤوس في الهواء

ولم يزل دمنا المراق

على حوائطها القديمة ، واللصوص

وحقولنا الجرداء يغزوها الجراد» .

« من ها هنا أماه ! أعود المشانق والحريق

من ها هنا بدأوا ونبدأ ، والطريق

وعرطويل

لا عاش رعيدي ذليل» .

(يافا) نعود غداً اليك مع الحصاد

ومع السنونو والربيع

ومع الرفاق العائدين من المنافي والسجون
ومع الضحى والقبرأتُ
والأمهات .
«الملجأ العشرون»
مازلنا بخير ، والعيال
والأخوة المتشردون ،
من قبونا النائى يخصون الأقارب بالسلام» .

[9] عبد الوهاب البياتي
قصائد إلى يافا

(١) أغنية

(يافا) يسوعك في القيود
عارٍ، تمزقه الخناجر، عبر صلبان الحدود
وعلى قبابك غيمة تبكي ،
وخفاش يطير .

ياوردة حمراء ، يامطر الربيع
قالوا - وفي عينيك يحتضر النهار
وتجف ، رغم تعاسة القلب ، الدموع -
قالوا : « تمتع من شميم ،
عرار نجد ، يارفيق »
فبكيت من عاري :

«فما بعد العشية من عرار»
فالباب أوصده (يهودا) والطريق
خالٍ ، وموتاك الصغار
بلا قبور، يأكلون
أكبادهم ، وعلى رصيفك يهجعون .

(٢) اسلاك شائكة

صيححات حارسة الكروم
في الليل ، توقظني ،
فأسمع وهوهات
رياح الشمال
في غابة الزيتون ناحية ، على سمعي تعيد
مأساة شعبي الصامد ، المقهور
مأساة الضياع .

وكأن معركة تدور
بينني وبين الموت في صمت وإصرار حزين :
أنا لن أموت
ما دام في مصباح ليل اللاجئين
زيت ونار ، عبر مقبرة الحدود
حيث الخيام الباليات
كأنها في الريح ، لافثة ، تشير
إلى طريق العودة ، الدامي ، القريب .

(٣) رسالة

يا إخوتي المتحرقين إلى غد تحت النجوم
يا صانعي الحب العظيم ،
والخبز والازهار ،
يا أطفال يافا الهائمين
على تخوم
وطني الكبير
أنا لأزال ، هنا ، أغني الشمس ، محترقاً ،
أغني لأزال .
والريح ، والعصفور في بيتي ينازع ، والظلال
سوداء ، تحجب عنكم وجهي المخضب بالدماء
وليل إسرائيل وهو يقيء حقداً وانتقام
وعاهرين ومخبرين
أنا لأزال ، هنا أغني الشمس ، في صمت
وأصرار حزين
يا إخوتي المتحرقين
إلى النضال .

(٤) المجد للاطفال والزيتون

المجد للشهداء والاحياء ، من شعبي

وللمتمزقين الصامدين

المجد للاطفال في ليل العذاب

وفي الخيام

المجد للزيتون في أرض السلام

وللعصافير الصغيرة وهي تبحث في تراب

حقلي ، وللجيش المرابط في حدود

وطني الكبير

- جيش العروبة والخلاص -

المجد للشعراء والكتاب ، أحباب الحياة ،

الخائضين ، اليوم ، معركة المصير ،

والضارين يد الطغاة .

المجد للمرضى على سرر البكاء

وللنساء ، الكادحات ،

الأمهات .

(٥) العُودة

الليل تطردة قناديل العيون ،

عيونكم ، يا إخوتي المتناثرين الجائعين

تحت النجوم .

وكأن حلمت بأنني بالورد أفرش والدموع

طريقكم .

وكأن يسوع

معكم يعود إلى (الجليل)

بلا صليب .

[10] عبد الوهاب البياتي
أغنية الى ولدي علي

ولدي الحبيب

ناديت باسمك ، والجليد

كالليل يهبط فوق رأسي ، كالضباب

كعيون أمك في وداعي ، كالمغيب .

ناديت باسمك

في مهب الريح

في المنفى

فجاويني الصدى : «ولدي الحبيب»

والقاتلون

يحصون أنفاسي ، وفي وطني المعذب يسجنون

أباء إخوتك الصغار

ويبيشرون

بالعالم الحر ، العبيد

وبمعجزات

دولارهم - أمل الشعوب -

وواهب الموتى ، الحياة

ويروعون الأمهات

ويخضبون

رايات شعبك ، يا صغيري ، بالدماء

وأنت لاه ، لاتجيب

لاه بلعبتك الجديدة ، لاتجيب

وعيون أمك في انتظاري ، والسماء ،

والليل في (بغداد) ينتظر الصباح

وبائع الخبز الحزين

يطوف في الأسواق ، والعميان والمتسولون

يستأنفون على الرصيف
 تلاوة الذكر الحكيم .
 ووراء أسوار السجون
 يستيقظ الشعب العظيم
 محطماً أغلاله ، ولدي الحبيب
 وأنت لاهٍ لاتجيب .
 الريح في المنفى تهب ، كأن شيئاً فيّ مات
 إني أبارك ، يا صغيري رغم قسوتها ، الحياة
 فأتنا وأنت لشعبنا ملك ، وإن كره الطغاة .

[11] عبد الوهاب البياتي
قصيدتان الى ولدي علي

-١-

قمري الحزينُ

البحر مات وغيّبت أمواجهُ السوداء قلع السندياد
ولم يعد أبنائه يتصايحون مع النوارس والصدى
المبحوح عاد

والأفق كَفَنَهُ الرمادُ

فَلِمَن تَغْنِي الساحراتُ ؟

والبحر مات

والعشب فوق جبينه يطفو وتطفو دنيوات

كانت لنا فيها ، إذا غَنَى المغني ، ذكريات

غرقت جزيرتنا وما عاد الغناء

الا بكاءُ

والقبرّاتُ

طارت ، فيا قمري الحزينُ :

الكنز في المجرى دفين

في آخر البستان ، تحت شجيرة الليمون ، خبأهُ

هناك السندياد

لكنه خاو ، وها ان الرماد

والثلج والضلمات والأوراق تطمره وتطمر بالضباب

الكائنات

اكذا نموت بهذه الأرض الخرابُ ؟

ويجفُّ قنديل الطفولة في الترابُ ؟

أهكذا شمس النهارُ

تخبو وليس بموقد الفقراء نارُ ؟

- ٢ -

مدنُ بلا فجرٍ تنامُ
ناديتُ باسمكُ في شوارعها ، فجأويني الظلام
وسألتُ عنك الريح وهي تننُّ في قلب السكون
ورأيت وجهك في المرايا والعيون
وفي زجاج نوافذِ الفجر البعيدُ
وفي بطاقات البريد .
مدن بلا فجر يغطيها الجليد
هجرت كنائسها عصافيرُ الربيعُ
فلمن تغني ؟ والمقاهي أوصدت أبوابها
ولن تصلي ؟ أيها القلب الصديع
والليل ماتُ
والمركبات
عادت بلا خيلٍ يغطيها الصقيع
وسائقوها ميتون
أهكذا تمضي السنون ؟
ويزق القلبُ العذابُ ؟
ونحن من منفي إلى منفي ومن باب لبابُ
ندوي كما تدوي الزنابق في التراب
فقراء ، ياقمري ، نموتُ
وقطارنا أبدأ يفوتُ .

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