THE POLITICAL POETRY OF NIZĀR QABBĀNĪ

A CRITICAL STUDY AND TRANSLATION

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A thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph.D

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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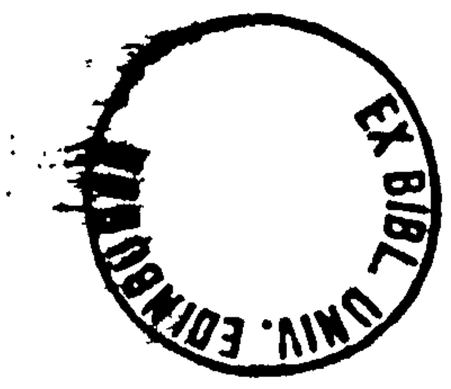
July 1989



PART TWO

TRANSLATION AND TEXT

NOTE ON THE SYSTEM OF TRANSLATION

In any kind of literary translation, particularly that of poetry, the aim of the translator must be to produce an English version which is in fluent English, which reproduces the original intentions of the poet and, it is to be hoped, produces something of the same emotional impact of the original. Since Nizār Qabbānī's language is generally fairly simple, it has usually been possible to translate him quite literally. Occasionally, however, his words have had to be paraphrased, or lines rearranged to meet with the different demands of English grammar. Nevertheless we believe that we have at all times been faithful to his original intentions.

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1. EXPLANATION TO THE READERS OF MY POETRY.

Foolish people say of me

That I have gone into women's private quarters, and not come out.

They demand that a gallows be set up for me

Because I have written poetry about my beloved.

I have not traded - like others - in hashish,

Have not stolen,

Or killed ...

إيضـــاحٌ إلى قـــرّاء شعـــري

...ويقولُ عنّي الأغبياءُ :
إنّي دخلتُ إلى مقاصير النساءِ .. وما خَرَجتْ
ويُطالبونَ بنصب مشنقتي ..
لأنّي عن شؤون حبيبتي .. شِعْراً كتبتْ
أنا لم أُتاجرْ ـ مثلَ غيري ـ بالحشيشِ ..
ولا سَرَقْتُ ..
ولا قَتَلْتُ ..

But I have loved in open daylight;

Do you think I have renounced my faith?

* * *

Foolish people say of me

That in my poems I have rebelled against the teaching of Heaven.

Who says that love is an attack upon the honour of Heaven?

Heaven is my friend -

It weeps when I weep,

And laughs when I laugh.

لكنَّني .. أحْبَبْتُ في وَضَح النهارِ ..
فهل تُراني قد كَفَرتْ ؟ ؟

* * *

ويقولُ عنّي الأغبياءُ :
إنّي بأشعاري ، خَرَجْتُ على تعاليم السماءْ
مَنْ قالَ إن الحُبَّ عدوانٌ على شَرَف السَمَاءْ ؟
إنَّ السماء صديقتي ..
تبكي إذا أبكي ..
وتضحكُ إن ضَحِكتْ ..

And its stars shine more brightly

If one day I fall in love.

What of it, if I sing the name of my beloved

And plant her in every capital city

Like a forest of chestnuts?

* * *

I shall continue to make a practise of love

Like all the prophets.

I shall continue to make a practise of childhood, innocence

And purity,

وتَزيدُ أنجُمُها بريقاً ..
إنْ أنا يوماً عشقتْ ..
ماذا .. إذا غنَّيتُ باسم حبيبتي ؟
وزَرَعْتُها في كُلّ عاصمةٍ
كغابة كَسْتَنَاءْ ..

سأظلُّ أحترفُ المحبَّةَ
مثلَ كُلِّ الأنبياءْ
وأظلُّ أحترفُ الطفولةَ ، و
والنقاءْ ..

I shall continue to write about my beloved's concerns
Until I melt her golden hair in the gold of evening,
While I am - and I hope I shall remain the same -
A child scribbling as he wishes on the walls of the stars
Until love in my country becomes like the air
And I become a dictionary for students of love
And become, on their lips,
An A and a B.

وأظلُّ أكتُبُ عن شؤون حبيبتي
حتى أُذوِّبَ شَعْرَهَا الذهبيَّ في ذَهَب المَسَاء
وأنا ـ وأرجو أن أظلَّ كما أنا ـ
طفلاً يُخَرْبِشُ فوق حيطان النجوم كما يشاء
حتى يصيرَ الحُبُّ في وطني بمرتبة الهواء
وأصيرَ قاموساً لطُلّاب الهوى
وأصيرَ فوق شفاههمْ
ألِفَاً وباءْ ...

2. BREAD, HASHISH AND MOON

I

When the moon is born in the East

And the white roofs doze

Beneath piles of flowers

The people leave the shops, and go in droves

To meet the moon,

خبزٌ وحشيشٌ وقمر

١

عندما يُولَدُ في الشرق القَمَرْ
فالسطوحُ البيضُ تغفو
تحت أكْدَاسِ الزَهَرْ
يتركُ الناسُ الحوانيتَ ، ويمضونَ زُمَرْ
لِمُلاقاةِ القَمَرْ ..

Carrying bread and gramophones to the top of the mountains

And equipment for drug-taking

And sell and buy fantasy

And images,

And die when the moon lives.

يَحْمِلُونَ الخُبزَ .. والحاكي .. إلى رأسِ الجبالْ
ومُعِدَّاتِ الخَدَرْ
ويبيعونَ ، ويشرونَ خيالْ
وصُوَرْ ..
ويموتونَ إذا عاشَ القَمَرْ ..

II

What is it that a disc of light

Does to my country?

To the country of the prophets

And the country of the simple people

Chewers of tobacco, and traders in drugs?

ما الذي يَفْعَلُهُ قُرْصُ ضياءْ

ببلادي ..

ببلاد الأنبياءْ ..

وبلادِ البُسَطَاءْ ..

ماضغي التَبْغ ، وتُجَّارِ الخَدَرْ

What is it that the moon does among us

So that we lose our pride

And live to implore Heaven?

What is it that Heaven has

For lazy, weak people

Who turn into dead men when the moon lives

ما الذي يفعلُهُ فينا القَمَرْ ؟
فَنُضيعُ الكبرياءْ
ونعيشُ لنستجدي السماءْ
ما الذي عند السماءْ ؟
لكسالى ضُعَفَاءْ
يستحيلونَ إلى موتى إذا عاش القَمَرْ

And shake the saints' graves

In the hope that they will give them rice, and children,

The saints' graves,

And spread elegantly-knotted carpets

Consoling themselves with an opium which we call fate

And destiny

In my country,

In the country of the simple people?

ويَهُزُّونَ قبورَ الأولياءْ
علَّها ترزقُهُمْ رُزّاً .. وأطفالاً ..
قبورُ الأولياءْ
ويَمُدُّونَ السجاجيدَ الأنيقاتِ الطُرَرْ
يتسلُّونَ بأفيونٍ نُسَمِّيهِ قَدَرْ
وقضاءْ ..
في بلادي ،
في بلاد البُسَطَاءْ ..

III

What weakness and decadence

Overcomes us when the light gushes

So that carpets, thousands of baskets

Cups of tea

And children

Occupy the hills

In my country

Where the naive people weep

And live in the light which they do not see

أيُّ ضَعْفٍ وانحلالْ
يَتَولّانا إذا الضوءُ تدفَّقْ
فالسجاجيدُ .. وآلافُ السِلَالْ
وقداحُ الشاي ..
والأطفالُ ..
تحتلُّ التِلالْ
في بلادي
حيث يبكي الساذجُونْ
ويعيشون على الضوء الذي لا يُبْصرُونْ

In my country

Where people live without eyes

Where the naive people weep

Pray

Fornicate

And live in reliance on God

Since they first existed

Living in reliance on God

في بلادي ..
حيثُ يحيا الناسُ من دون عيونْ .
حيثُ يبكي الساذجُونْ
ويُصلُّونَ ..
ويَزْنُونَ ..
ويحيونَ اتِّكالْ
منذُ أن كانوا
يعيشُونَ اتِّكالْ

And call upon the crescent moon,

"O crescent,

O spring which rains diamonds

Hashish and drowsiness

O marble, suspended Lord

O unbelievable thing

May you remain, for the East, for us,

A bunch of diamonds

For the millions in whom the senses have ceased to function".

ويُنَادونَ الهلالْ
« يا هِلَالْ :
أيُّها النَبْعُ الذي يُمْطِرُ ماسْ
وحشيشاً .. ونُعَاسْ
أيُّها الربُّ الرُخَاميُّ المُعلَّقْ
أيُّها الشيءُ الذي ليس يُصَدَّقْ
دُمْتَ للشرقِ .. لنا ..
عُنْقُودَ ماسْ ..
للملايينِ التي قد عُطِّلَتْ فيها الحواسْ .. »

IV

In the nights of the East, when the full moon reaches completion
The East is denuded of all nobility
And struggle
And the millions who run without shoes
And believe in four wives
And the Day of Resurrection,
The millions who do not meet with bread, except in fantasy,
And who dwell at night in houses of coughing
Never having known what medicine looks like
Fall down like corpses beneath the light.

في ليالي الشرق لمَّا يبلغُ البدرُ تَمَامَهْ
يتعرَّى الشرقُ من كُلِّ كرامَهْ
ونِضَالِ
فالملايينُ التي تركضُ من غير نِعَالِ
والتي تؤمِنُ في أَرْبَعِ زَوْجَاتٍ..
وفي يوم القيامَهْ..
الملايينُ التي لا تلتقي بالخبز إلّا في الخيالِ
والتي تسكنُ في الليلِ بيوتاً من سُعَالِ
أبداً ما عرفتْ شكلَ الدواءْ..
تتردَّى جُثَثاً تحت الضياءْ

In my country, where the foolish people weep

And die of weeping

Whenever the face of the crescent moon appears before them

And weep even more

Whenever they are moved by a lowly lute, and "Layālī"[1]

That death which we call in the East "Layālī", and singing.

في بلادي .. حيثُ يبكي الأغبياءْ
ويموتُونَ بُكَاءْ
كُلَّما طالَعَهُمْ وجْهُ الهلالِ
ويزيدونَ بُكَاءْ
كُلَّما حرَّكَهُمْ عُودٌ ذليلٌ .. و« ليالي »
ذلكَ الموتُ الذي ندعوه في الشرق « ليالي » .. وغناءْ

---

[1] A type of modern Arab song describing the sufferings of lovers in the night. Among the best known is Umm Kulthūm's Awwāh yā Layl.

In my country, the country of the simple people

Where we ruminate over long tawāshīḥ'

That consumption which kills the East, the long tawāshīḥ,

Our East, which ruminates over history, idle dreams

And empty legends

Our East, which looks for every heroism

In Abū Zayd² al-Hilālī.

في بلادي في بلاد البُسَطَاء
حيثُ نجترُّ التواشيحَ الطويلَهْ
ذلكَ السُلُّ الذي يفتكُ بالشرق .. التواشيحُ الطويلَهْ
شَرْقِنا المُجْتَرِّ تاريخاً وأحلاماً كسُولَهْ
وخرافاتِ خوالي ..
شَرْقِنا الباحثِ عن كُلِّ بُطُولَهْ
في أبي زيد الهلالي ..

لندن ١٩٥٤

---

[1]Religious poems recited by groups of people on such occasions as Laylat al-Qadr, the birth of the Prophet and the beginning of the Islamic year. They are composed in a stanzaic form similar to that of the Andalusian muwashshahāt.
[2]Hero of the popular verse epic entitled Sīrat Abī Zayd al-Hilālī, and symbol of Arab valour and victory.

3. THE STORY OF RACHEL SCHWARTZENBURG'

I write for the children

For the young Arabs, wherever they may be

For them,

Despite their differences in colour

Ages

And eyes.

I write for those who will be born,

قصــةُ راشـيل شـوارزنـبرغ

أكتُبُ للصغارْ ..
للعرب الصغار حيث يُوجَدونْ
لهُـمْ ،
على اختلاف اللونِ ،
والأعمارِ ،
والعيونْ
أكتُبُ للذينَ سوف يُولَدونْ

'We have no record of a person of this name. From the poem it would seem that the reference is to a person who settled in Palestine in the 1940's, but it may be possible that the name has been invented by the poet.

For them I write

For the children

For eyes in whose pupils the daylight runs

I write in brief

The story of a recruited terrorist

Whom they call Rachel

Who spent the war years in a solitary cell

Built by the Germans in Prague.

لهُمْ أنا أكتُبُ..
للصغارْ..
لأعينٍ يركُضُ في أحداقها النهارْ
أكتُبُ باختصارْ
قِصَّةَ إرهابيَةٍ مُجَنَّدَهْ
يدعونَها (راشيلْ)
قضَتْ سنينَ الحرب في زَنْزَانَةٍ منفرِدَهْ
شيَّدَها الألْمَانُ في براغْ

Her father was one of the dirtiest Jews
Counterfeiting money
And she ran a house of ill-fame in Prague
Which was frequented by the soldiers.

* * *

The war came to an end
Peace was declared
And the great powers signed -
Four, who called themselves great -
The Document of the United Nations.

* * *

كان أبُوها قَذِراً من أقذر اليهودْ
يزوِّرُ النُقُودْ
وهي تُديرُ منزلاً للفُحْشِ في براغْ
يقصده الجُنُودْ..

° ° °

وآلتِ الحربُ إلى ختامْ
وأُعْلِنَ السَلَامْ
ووقَّعَ الكبارْ
أربعةٌ .. يلقبّونَ نفسَهم كِبَارْ
صكَّ وجود الأمم المُتَحِدَهْ

° ° °

And there set sail from the East of Europe

At dawn

A ship, cursed by the winds

Heading south

Crammed with rats, plague and Jews.

They were a mixture of the dregs of nations

From the land of Poland,

From Austria,

From Istanbul,

From Prague,

... وأبْحَرَتْ من شرق أوروبا

مع الصباحْ ...

سفينةٌ تلعنُها الرياحْ

وجْـهَـتُها الجنوبْ

تغصُّ بالجرذان ، والطاعونِ ، واليهودْ

كانوا خليطاً من سُقاطة الشعوبْ

من أرض بولندا ،

من النمسا ..

من استمبولَ ،

من براغْ ..

From the ends of the earth, from hell.

They came to our little country,

Our peaceful little country,

And defiled our soil,

Killed our women,

And orphaned our children

While the United Nations

And its weighty Charter

Continued to discuss the freedom of nations,

The right of self-determination

And abstract ideals.

من آخر الأرض ، من السعيرْ
جاؤوا إلى موطننا الصغيرْ
موطِنِنا المُسَالِم الصغيرْ
فلطّخوا ترابَنا
وأعدموا نساءنا
ويتَّموا أطفالَنا
ولا تزالُ الأُمَمُ المتَّحدهْ
ولم يزل ميثاقُها الخطيرْ
يبحثُ في حريّة الشعوبْ
وحقِّ تقرير المصيرْ
والمُثُلِ المُجرَّدَهْ

* * *

So let the children remember,

The young Arabs wherever they are,

Those of them who have been born, and those who will be born,

The story of a recuited terrorist

Whom they call Rachel

Who took the place of my extended mother

On the land of our green plantation in Galilee,

My own mother, who was murdered and martyred.

So let the children remember

The story of a land which was destroyed by the Great Powers

And the United Nations.

فلِيَـذْكُرِ الصِغَارْ ..
العربُ الصغارُ حيث يُوجَدونْ
من وُلدوا منهُمْ ، ومَنْ (سَيولَدُونْ)
قصَّةَ إرهابيَّةٍ مجنَّـدَهْ
يدعُونَها (راشيلْ)
حلَّتْ محلَّ أُمِّيَ الممدَّدَهْ
في أرض بيّارتِنا الخضراء في الجليلْ
أُمّي أنا الذبيحةُ المُسْتَشْهَدهْ ..
وليذْكُرِ الصغارْ ..
حكايةَ الأرض التي ضيَّعَها الكبارْ ..
والأُمَـمُ المتَّحدهْ ..

° ° °

I write for the children

The story of Beersheba, Laṭrūn', and Hebron

Do the lemons in Ramla

In Lydda

And in Galilee

Remember my sister whom the Jews hung up in the evening

By her long hair?

My own sister Nuwār

My own sister, who was dishonoured,

أكتُبُ للصغارْ
قصَّةَ بئر السبعِ ، واللطْرُونِ ، والخليلْ
هل يذكُرُ الليمونُ في الرملةَ ،
في اللدِّ ..
وفي الجليلْ
أختي التي علَّقَها اليهودُ في الأصيلْ
من شعرها الطويلْ
أختي أنا نُوارْ
أختي أنا الهتيكةُ الإزارْ

'A town in Palestine overlooking the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem. The Laṭrūn salient was held by the Arab forces in 1948-9, and became a symbol of Arab resistance. It was taken by the Israelis in 1967 and razed to the ground.

My sister, whose unavenged wound

Still awaits

For one day of vengeance,

A day of vengeance

At the hand of the children

A fidā'ī[1] generation of children

Who know about Nuwār

Her long hair,

And her grave lost in the wilderness,

More than the adults know.

* * *

أختي التي ما زال جرحُها الطليلْ
ما زال بانتظارْ
نهارِ ثأرٍ واحدٍ..
نهارِ ثارْ..
على يد الصغارْ
جيلٍ فدائيٍّ من الصغارْ
يعرفُ عن نُوارْ
وشَعْرِها الطويلْ
وقَبْرِها الضائعِ في القفارْ
أكثرَ مما يعرفُ الكبارْ..

* * *

[1]The word fidā' means "self-sacrifice". The adjective from this, fidā'ī, means "someone who is prepared to give his life for his country", i.e. guerilla, freedom-fighters etc.. It is a term often used of P.L.O. guerillas.

I write for the children

I write of Jaffa, of its old harbour

Of a place whose stones are precious

Whose oranges shine like a tent of stars

Which enfolds the grave of my father

And my little brothers

Do you know my father

And my little brothers?

اكتُبُ للصغارْ
أكتُبُ عن يافا ، وعن مرفئها القديمْ
عن بقعةٍ غالية الحجارْ
يُضيءُ بُرْتُقَالُها كَخَيْمَةَ النُجُومْ
تضمُّ قَبْرَ والدي ..
وإخوتي الصغارْ
هل تعرفونَ والدي ؟
وإخوتي الصغارْ ؟

When we had, in Jaffa, a garden and a house

Wrapped in bliss

My merciful father

Was an old farmer who loved the sun and the soil

God, olives and vineyards.

He loved his house

His wife

And the trees laden with stars

* * *

إذْ كان في يافا لنا ، حديقةٌ ودارْ..
يلفُّها النعيمْ..
وكان والدي الرحيمْ
مزارعاً شيخاً يُحِبُّ الشمسَ والترابْ
واللهَ ، والزيتونَ ، والكُرُومْ
كان يُحِبُّ بيتَهُ..
وزوجَهُ..
والشَجَرَ المُثْقَلَ بالنجومْ..

* * *

And strangers came with the sunset

From the East of Europe

From the gloom of prisons

And destroyed the fruit,

Broke the branches,

Kindled fires in the threshing-floors of the stars.

The five children were speechless,

The night was speechless

And the nobility of the soil was kindled in my father

And he shouted at them, "Go to Hell!

You will not pillage my land, you descendants of dogs!"

.. وجاء أغْرابٌ مع الغيابْ
من شرقِ أوروبا ..
ومن غياهب السجونْ
فأتْلَفُوا الثمارْ ..
وكسَّروا الغصونْ
وأشعلوا النيرانَ في بيادر النجومْ
والخمسةُ الأطفال في وُجُومْ
والليلُ في وجومْ ..
واشتعلتْ في والدي كرامةُ الترابْ
فصاح فيهم : إذهبوا إلى الجحيمْ
لن تسلبوا أرضيَ يا سُلَالةَ الكلابْ ! !

* * *

And my merciful father died

From a shot which one of the dogs aimed at him

My great father died

In his great home

With his hand firmly grasping the soil.

So let the children remember,

The young Arabs, wherever they may be,

Those of them who have been born, and those who will be born

What is the value of the soil,

For the battle of the soil awaits them.

... ومات والدي الرحيمْ
بطَلْقةٍ سدَّدَها كلبٌ من الكلابْ
عليه ، ماتَ والدي العظيمْ
في الموطن العظيمْ
وكَفُّهُ مشدودةٌ شَدّاً إلى التُرَابْ
فليذكُرِ الصغارْ
العربُ الصغارُ حيثُ يوجَدونْ
مَنْ وُلِدُوا منهُمْ .. ومَنْ سَيُولَدُونْ
ما قيمةُ التُرابْ
لأنَّ في انتظارهمْ معركةَ التُرَابْ ...

١٩٥٥

4. LETTER OF A SOLDIER ON THE SUEZ FRONT

First letter

29.10.1956

Father,

These rebellious letters

Come to you from Suez

Come to you from Suez, the patient,

I can see them, father, from my trench, the brigand's ships,'

Assembled at the strait.

Have highwaymen come back,

Climbing our walls

And threatening our existence?

The land of my fathers is ablaze.

رسالةُ جنديٍّ في جبهة السويس

الرسالة الأولى

١٩٥٦/١٠/٢٩

يا والدي !

هذي الحروفُ الثائرَهْ

تأتي اليكَ من السُوَيْسْ

تأتي إليكَ من السُوَيْس الصابرَهْ

إنّي أراها يا أبي ، من خندقي ، سُفُنَ اللُصُوصْ

محشودةً عند المضيقْ

هل عادَ قُطّاعُ الطريقْ ؟

يتسلّقُونَ جدارَنا ..

ويُهدِّدونَ بقاءنا ..

فبلادُ آبائي حَرِيقْ ..

The poet is referring to the British and French ships which were used to invade the Suez Canal area in 1956.

I can see them,

Father, blue-eyed

Black of conscience,

Father, blue-eyed.

Their pirate-chief, an eye of crystal, with motionless eyelids

And the troops on deck

Getting drunk,cursing.

The barrels of wine are empty, and the scoundrels

Are still making threats.

إنِّي أراهُمْ..
يا أبي ، زُرْقَ العيونْ..
سُودَ الضَمائرِ..
يا أبي ، زُرْقَ العيونْ
قُرْصَانُهُمْ ، عَيْنٌ من البلّلور ، جامدةُ الجُفُونْ
والجُنْدُ في سطحِ السفينةِ..
يسكَرُونَ.. ويشْتُمُونْ..
فرغتْ براميلُ النبيذِ.. ولا يزالُ الساقطونْ
يتوعَّدُونْ..

Second letter

30.10.1956

This letter, father

Is from Port Said.

A new order

For my first batallion, to begin the battle

The paratroops have landed behind our lines ...

A new order.

الرسالة الثانية

١٩٥٦/١٠/٣٠

هذي الرسالةُ يا أبي ..

مِنْ بُور سعيدْ

أمْرٌ جديدْ

لكتيبتي الأولى ، ببدء المعرَكَهْ

هَبَط المظليُّونَ خلفَ خُطُوطنا ..

أمْرٌ جديدْ ..

They landed like swarms of locusts,
Like a destroying flock of crows
At half past one
And I must finish my letter -
I am going on my mission
To drive back the highwaymen, and the plunderers of my freedom,
To you,
To everybody,
My greetings.

هبطوا كأرتالِ الجَرَادِ ،
كسِرْبِ غربانٍ مُبيدْ ..
النصفَ بعد الواحدَهْ ..
وعليَّ أن أُنهي الرسالَهْ
أنا ذاهبٌ لمهمتّي ..
لأردَّ قُطّاعَ الطريق ، وسالبي حريّتي ..
لكَ ..
للجميعِ ..
تحيّتي ...

Third letter

31.10.1956

Now, we have destroyed the remnants of the paratroops

Father

If you had seen them falling

Like the fruit of an old apricot tree

Falling

Swaying

Beneath their pierced parachutes

Like a hanged man quietly dangling

الرسالة الثالثة

١٩٥٦/١٠/٣١

.. الآنَ .. أفْنَيْنَا فُلُولَ الهابطينْ
أبَتَاهُ ،
لو شاهدتَهُمْ يتساقطونْ
كثمار مشمشةٍ عجوزْ ..
يتساقطونْ ..
يتأرجحونْ ..
تحتَ المِظلّاتِ الطعينةِ
مثلَ مشنوقٍ تدلّى في سُكُونْ ..

While the rifles of our great people hunted them,

Blue-eyed ...

Not a peasant stayed at his plough without coming,

Nor a child, father, without coming,

Not a knife, an axe, a stone by the side of the road,

Without coming

To drive back the highwaymen,

To write a single letter,

A letter in the battle of survival.

وبنادقُ الشعبِ العظيمِ ، تصيدهُمْ
زُرْقَ العيونْ
لم يبقَ فلّاحٌ على محراثِهِ ، إلا وجاءْ ...
لم يبقَ طفلٌ ، يا أبي ، إلّا وجاءْ ..
لم يبقَ سِكّينٌ .. ولا فأسٌ .. ولا حَجَرٌ على كتِفِ الطريقْ
إلّا وجاءْ ..
ليرُدَّ قُطّاعَ الطريقْ
ليَخُطَّ حرفاً واحداً ..
حَرْفاً بمعركة البقاءْ ..

Fourth letter

1.11.1956

The locusts are dead

Father, all the swarms of locusts are dead.

Not a woman remained,

Nor a child,

Nor a bedridden old man,

In the countryside, in the big cities,

In Upper Egypt,

الرسالة الرابعة
١٩٥٦/١١/١

ماتَ الجرادْ ..
أَبَتاهُ ، ماتتْ كلُّ أسراب الجرادْ
لم تبقَ سيّدةٌ ..
ولا طفلٌ ..
ولا شيخٌ قعيدْ
في الريفِ ، في المُدُن الكبيرةِ ،
في الصعيدْ ..

Without taking part, father,

In burning the swarms of locusts

In crushing them,

In cutting their throats.

This letter, father, is from Port Said

Where heroism is mixed with wounds and steel.

From the factory of heroes I write, father,

From Port Said.

إلّا وشاركَ يا أبي
في حَرْق أسراب الجرادْ
في سَحْقِهِ ،
في ذبحهِ حتى الوريدْ
هذي الرسالةْ ، يا أبي ، من بور سعيدْ
من حيث تمتزجُ البطولةُ بالجراح وبالحديدْ
مِنْ مصنع الأبطال أكتُبُ يا أبي ..
مِنْ بور سعيدْ ..

5. JAMĪLA BŪ ḤAYRAD

I

Name: Jamīla Bū Ḥayrad'

Cell Number: Ninety

In the military prison, Oran

Age: Twenty two

Eyes like two temple lamps

And the black Arab hair

Like the summer, like a cataract of sorrows.

جميلة بوحيرد

١

الإسمُ : جميلةُ بوحَيْرَدْ
رَقَمُ الزنْزَانَةِ : تِسْعُونا
في السجن الحربيّ بوَهْرَانْ
والعمرُ : إثنانِ وعِشْرُونا
عينانِ كقنديلَيْ معبَدْ
والشَعْرُ العربيُّ الأسودْ
كالصيفِ ، كشلّال الأحزانْ

'Jamīla Bū Ḥayrad (French spelling Djamila Bouhired) was a leading member of the F.L.N. in Algeria. She was captured and badly wounded in 1957, and was then taken from her hospital bed by the French army and brutally tortured. Her case caused such an international outcry that she was reprieved from a sentence of death and sent to prison in France.

A jug of water and a gaoler

A hand clasping the Qur'ān

And a woman in the light of dawn

Recalling as if making a confession

Verses with a mournful resonance

From the Sūrat Maryam[1]

And al-Fath[2]

إبريقٌ للماء .. وسجَّانْ
ويدٌ تَنْضَمُّ على القُرآنْ
وامرأةٌ في ضوء الصُبْحِ
تَسْتَرْجِعُ في مثل البَوْحِ
آياتٍ مُحْزِنَةَ الإِرْنَانْ
مِنْ سُورةِ (مريَمَ) ..
و(الفَتْحِ) ...

---

[1]The 19th Sūra of the Qur'ān.
[2]The 48th Sūra of the Qur'ān.

II

Name: Jamīla Bū Ḥayrad

The most beautiful song in the Maghrib',

The tallest date-palm

Which the oases of the Maghrib have seen,

The most beautiful child

Which has tired the sun, and has not grown tired.

O Lord, is there under the stars

A human being

Who is content to eat, to drink,

From the flesh of a crucified woman freedom-fighter?

الإسمُ : جميلةُ بو حَيْرَدْ
أجملُ أُغنيةٍ في المَغْرِبْ
أطولُ نَخْلَهْ
لَمَحتْهَا واحاتُ المغْرِبْ
أجملُ طِفْلَهْ
أتْعَبَتِ الشمسَ ، ولم تَتْعَبْ
يا ربيَ . هل تحتَ الكوكَبْ ؟
يوجد إنسانْ
يرضى أن يأكُلَ .. أن يَشْرَبْ
من لحم مُجَاهدةٍ تُصْلَبْ ..

'North Africa.

III

The lights of the Bastille are dim
And the coughing of a consumptive woman
Whose lungs have been eaten away by fetters
Eaten away by despicable cowards,
Lacoste', thousands of cowards
From the defeated French army
Who have now triumphed over a woman,
A woman crucified like a candle.

أضواءُ (الباستيل) ضئيلَهْ
وسُعالُ امرأةٍ مَسْلُولَهْ
أكلَتْ من رئتيها الأغلالْ
أكَلَ الأنذالْ ..
(لاكوستُ)، وآلافُ الأنذالْ
من جيش فرنسا المغلوبَهْ
انتَصَروا الآنَ على أُنثى ..
أُنثَى كالشَمْعة مصلوبَهْ

'Robert Lacoste, French Governor of Algeria from 1956 to De Gaulle's assumption of power in 1958.

The fetters gnaw her feet,

Cigarettes are extinguished on her breasts.

There is blood in her nose

And on her lips ...

The wounds of Jamīla Bū Ḥayrad,

They and freedom, will meet again.

القَيْـدُ يعضُّ على القَدَمينْ
وسجائرُ تُـطْـفَأُ في النهدينْ
ودمٌ في الأنف ..
وفي الشفتينْ ..
وجراحُ جميلةَ بو حَيْرِدْ
هي والتحريرُ .. على موعِدْ ..

A guillotine is erected, and the evil men
Amuse themselves with an unclothed woman
And Jamīla, between their rifles
Is a sparrow in the middle of rain storms.
The golden-brown, dark body
Is shaken by the touches of electric current
And a burning in the left breast,
In the nipple,
In...in...O shame.

مِقْصَلَةٌ تُنْصَبُ .. والأشرارْ
يلهونَ بأُنثى دونَ إزارْ
وجميلة ، بين بنادقهمْ
عصفورٌ في وَسَط الأمطار ..
الجَسَدُ الخمريُّ الأسمَرْ
تنفضُهُ لمسَاتُ التيَّارْ
وحُروقٌ في الثدي الأيْسَرْ
في الحَلْمةِ ..
في .. في .. يا للعارْ ..

IV

Name: Jamīla Bū Ḥayrad

A history which my country relates,

Which my children will remember after me,

The history of a woman in my country

Who lashed the executioner's guillotine

٤

الإسمُ : جميلةُ بو حَيْرَدْ
تاريخُ ترويهِ بلادي
يحفظهُ بعدي أولادي
تاريخُ امرأةٍ من وطني
جَلَدتْ مقصلةَ الجلّادِ..

A woman who subdued the sun,
Wounded the dimensions of the dimensions.
A revolutionary from the Atlas Mountains
Of whom the lilac and the narcissus speak,
Of whom the citron blossom speaks,
How small is the Joan of Arc of France
Beside the Joan of Arc of my country!

إمرأةٌ دَوَّخت الشمسا
جرحتْ أبعادَ الأبعادِ
ثائرةٌ من جبل الأطْلَسْ
يذكرُها اللَّيْلَكْ والنرجسْ
يذكُرُها زَهَرُ الكبَّادِ..
ما أصغَرَ (جانْ دارْكَ) فَرَنْسا
في جانب (جانْ دارْك) بلادي

١٩٥٧

6. LOVE AND PETROL

I

When will you understand?

When, Sir, will you understand

That I am not one,

Like the others, of your lady-friends

Nor a female conquest to be added to your others

Nor a transient number in your records

When will you understand?

الحبُّ والبترول

١

متى تَفْهَمْ ؟
متى يا سيِّدي تَفْهَمْ ؟
بأنيَ لستُ واحدةً ..
كغيري ، من صديقاتِكْ
ولا فَتْحَاً نسائياً يُضاف إلى فتوحاتِكْ
ولا رَقَماً من الأرقام .. يعبُرُ في سِجِلَّاتِكْ
متى تفهَمْ ؟

II

When will you understand?

O unbridled camel from the desert,

O you whose face and wrist are eaten by smallpox,

That I will never be

Ash in your cigarette

A head, among thousands of others, on your pillows,

A statue for whom you raise the bidding in the fever of your auction,

A breast on whose marble you record your fingerprints,

When will you understand?

متى تَـفْـهَـمْ ؟
أيا جَمَلاً من الصحراء لم يُـلْجَمْ ..
ويا مَنْ يأكُلُ الجُـدَرِيُّ منكَ الوجهَ والمِعْصَمْ ..
بأنيَ لن أكونَ هنا ..
رماداً في سجاراتِكْ
ورأساً .. بين آلاف الرؤوس على مخدَّاتِكْ
وتمثالاً تزيدُ عليه في حُـمَّى مزاداتِكْ ..
ونَهْداً فوق مرمرِهِ .. تسجِّلُ شَـكْلَ بَصْماتِكْ ..
متى تفهَـمْ ؟

III

When will you understand

That you will not drug me

With your rank, or your principalities?

You will never own the world

With your oil, your concessions,

Your petrol, of which your cloak reeks,

The cars which you fling at the feet of your mistresses

Without number ... what of the backs of your camels?

٣

متى تفهَمْ ؟
بأنّكَ لن تُخَدِّرني ..
بجاهِكَ ، أو إماراتِكْ ..
ولَنْ تتملَّكَ الدُنيا ..
بنفْطكَ .. وامتيازاتِكْ
وبالبترول ، يعبَقُ من عباءاتِكْ
وبالعَرَباتِ تطرحُها على قَدَمَيْ عشيقاتِكْ
بلا عَدَدٍ .. فأينَ ظُهُور ناقاتِكْ ؟ .

What of the tattoo on your hands?

What of the holes in your tents?

You with the cracked feet, O slave of your sensations,

You whose wives have become one of your hobbies

Whom you pile up by the dozen on the bed of your enjoyments,

Whom you embalm like insects

On the walls of your drawing-rooms,

When will you understand?

وأينَ الوَشْمُ فوق يديْكَ ؟
أينَ ثُقُوبُ خَيْماتِكْ ؟
أيا مُتَشَقِّقَ القدميْنِ .. يا عَبْدَ انفعالاتِكْ
ويا مَنْ صارت الزوجاتُ بعضاً من هواياتِكْ
تُكدِّسُهُنَّ بالعشَرَات فوق فراش لذَّاتِكْ ..
تُحنّطُهُنَّ كالحَشَراتِ ..
في جدران صالاتِكْ ..
متى تَفْهَمْ ؟

IV

When, O satiated man,

When will you understand

That I am not someone who is concerned

With your Hell or your Paradise,

And that my nobility is nobler

Than the gold piled between your hands,

And that the climate of my thoughts is strange to your climate?

You, in the atoms of whose atoms feudalism hatches,

You, whom the desert is ashamed even to address,

When will you understand?

متى يا أيُّها المُتْخَـمْ ؟
متى تَـفْـهَـمْ ؟
بأنيَ لستُ من تَـهْـتَـمْ
بنارِكَ أو بجنَّاتِكْ
وأن كرامتي أكْـرَمْ
من الذَهَب المكدَّسِ بين راحاتِكْ
وأن مناخَ أفكاري ، غريبٌ عن مناخاتِكْ
أيا مَنْ فرَّخَ الإقطاعُ في ذَرَّات ذَرَّاتِكْ
ويا مَنْ تخجلُ الصحراءُ حتّى من مناداتِكْ
متى تَـفْـهَـمْ ؟

V

Wallow, O oil prince

In the mire of your pleasures

Like a floorcloth

Wallow in your error.

You have petrol, so squeeze it out

On the feet of your lady-friends

The night caves in Paris have killed your manliness;

On the feet of a prostitute there

You have buried your vengeances.

o

تَمرَّغْ يا أميرَ النفْطِ ..
فوقَ وُحُول لذَّاتِكْ
كمَمْسَحَةٍ ..
تمرَّغْ في ضلالاتِكْ
لكَ البترولُ ، فاعصُرْهُ
على قَدَمَيْ خليلاتِكْ
كهوفُ الليل في باريسَ قد قَتَلَتْ مُرُوءاتِكْ ..
على أقدام مومسةٍ هناكَ ..
دفنتَ ثاراتِكْ ..

And you have sold Jerusalem,

Sold God,

Sold the ashes of your dead,

As though the bayonets of Israel had not aborted your sisters,

Nor destroyed our houses,

Nor burnt our Qur'ān̄s,

And its banners had not been raised

Over the dismembered corpses of your banners.

فبِعْتَ القُدْسَ ..
بِعْتَ اللهَ ..
بِعْتَ رمادَ أمواتِكْ
كأنَّ حِرَابَ إسرائيلَ لم تُجهِضْ شقيقاتِكْ
ولم تهدُمْ منازلَنا ..
ولم تُحْرِقْ مصاحفَنَا ..
ولا راياتُها ارتفعتْ ..
على أشلاء راياتِكْ ..

As though all of those who were crucified
On the trees in Jaffa, in Haifa
And in Beersheba were not of your stock.
Jerusalem sinks in its own blood
While you are brought low by your passions.
You sleep, as though the tragedy were not your tragedy -
When will you understand?
When will the human being in you awake?

كأنَّ جميعَ مَنْ صُلِبُوا ..
على الأشجار في يافا .. وفي حيفا ..
وبئرِ السَبْع .. ليسوا من سُلالاتِكْ
تغوصُ القدسُ في دمها ،
وأنتَ صريعُ شَهْواتِكْ
تنامُ .. كأنّما المأساةُ ليستْ بعضَ مأساتِكْ
متى تفهَمْ ؟
متى يستيقظُ الإنسانُ في ذاتِكْ ؟

١٩٥٨

EX BIBL. UNIV. EDINBURGH

7. FOOTNOTES TO THE NOTEBOOK OF THE SETBACK[1]

I

I announce, my friends, the death of the old language

And the old books.

I announce the death

Of our speech, full of holes as old shoes,

Of the vocabulary of prostitution, satire and reviling.

I announce the death,

I announce the death,

Of the thinking which led to the defeat.

هـوامشُ ..
على دفـترِ النَكْسَة

١

أنْعي لكُمْ ، يا أصدقائي ، اللُّـغَـةَ القديمَهْ
والكُـتُبَ القديمَهْ
أنْعي لكُـمْ :
كلامَنَا المَـثْـقُوبَ كالأحذية القديمَهْ
ومُفْرداتِ العُهْرِ ، والهجاءِ ، والشتيمَهْ ..
أنْعي لكُـمْ ..
أنعي لكُـمْ ..
نهايةَ الفِكْرِ الذي قادَ إلى الهزيمَهْ .

---

[1]The "setback" was the name officially used in the Arab world for the defeat of 1967 (as opposed to the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948).

II

Salt in our mouths are the poems,

Salt are the women's braids,

The night, the curtains, the armchairs

Salt in our eyes are all things.

مالِحَةٌ في فمنا القصائدْ
مالِحَةٌ ضفائرُ النِسَاءْ
والليلُ ، والأستارُ ، والمَقَاعِدْ
مالحةٌ أمَامَنا الأشياءْ ..

III

O my sorrowful country,

You have turned me in a moment

From a poet writing poetry of love and longing

To a poet writing with a knife.

يا وَطَني الحزينْ
حَوَّلتَني بلحظةٍ
من شاعرٍ يكتُبُ شِعْرَ الحُبِّ والحنينْ
لشاعرٍ يكتُبُ بالسِكِّينْ ..

IV

Because what we feel

Is greater than our pages

We cannot help being ashamed of our verses.

لأنَّ ما نُحِسُّهُ
أكبَرُ من أوراقِنا ..
لا بُدَّ أن نَخْجَلَ من أشْعَارِنا

V

If we lose wars, it is not surprising,

Because we enter them

With all the oratorical gifts which the Easterner possesses,

With heroic epics[1] which never killed a fly.

Because we enter them

With the logic of the drum and the rabāba[2].

٥

إذا خَسِرْنَا الحربَ ، لا غَرَابَهْ
لأنَّنا ندخُلُها
بكلِّ ما يملِكُهُ الشَرقيُّ من مواهب الخِطابَهْ
بالعَنْتَرِيَّاتِ التي ما قَتَلَتْ ذُبابَهْ
لأنَّنا ندخُلُها
بمنطق الطَبْلَةِ والرَبَابَهْ ..

---

[1]Literally ʿAntariyyāt, the verse epics celebrating the heroic deeds of ʿAntar (more correctly ʿAntara) al-ʿAbsī, the pre-Islamic hero, poet and lover of ʿAbla, the champion of his tribe.

[2]A traditional instrument resembling a fiddle, with one or three strings, used as an accompaniment to epic poetry, particularly by gypsies.

VI

The secret of our tragedy:

Our shout is louder than our voices,

And our sword

Is longer than our bodies.

السِرُّ في مأساتِنا
صراخُنا أضْخَمُ من أصواتِنا
وسيفُنا ..
أطْوَلُ من قَامَاتِنا ..

VII

The essentials of the problem

Can be summed up in a single expression:

We dressed ourselves in the husk of civilisation

While our soul remained uncivilised.

٧

خُلاصَةُ القضيَّـهْ
تُوجَزُ في عبارَهْ
لقد لبِسْنَا قِشْرةَ الحضارَهْ
والروحُ جاهليَّهْ ...

VIII

By means of the reed-flute and the mizmār'

Victory does not come about

بالناي والمِزْمارْ
لا يحدثُ انتصارْ ...

'A wood-wind instrument similar to a clarinet.

IX

Our improvisation cost us

Fifty thousand new tents.

كلَّفَنا ارتجالُنَا
خمسينَ ألفَ خَيْمةٍ جديدَهْ ..

X

Do not curse Heaven

If it abandons you.

Do not curse circumstances,

For God gives the victory to whom He wills'

And is not a blacksmith for you,

Forging swords.

١٠

لا تَلْعَنُوا السَمَاءْ
إذا تخلَّتْ عنكُمُ
لا تَلْعَنُوا الظُروفْ
فاللهُ يُؤتي النَصْرَ من يشاءْ
وليسَ حدَّاداً لديكُمْ ..
يَصْنَعُ السُيُوفْ ..

---

[1]A reference to the Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Anfāl, verse 10 and Sūrat al-Rūm, verse 5.

XI

It hurts me to hear the news in the morning.

It hurts me

To hear the barking.

يُوجِعُني أَنْ أسمَعَ الأنباء في الصَبَاحْ
يُوجِعُني ..
أَنْ أسمَعَ النِبَاحْ ...

XII

The Jews did not enter by our borders

But simply

Crept in like ants through our faults.

ما دَخَلَ اليهودُ من حُدُودنا
وإنَّما ..
تَسَرَّبُوا كالنَمْل من عُيُوبِنَا ..

XIII

Five thousand years,
While we have been in the cellar.
Our beards are long,
Nobody recognises our money',
Our eyes are havens for flies.

خمسةُ آلاف سَنَهْ..
ونحنُ في السِرْدَابْ
ذُقُونُنَا طويلةٌ
نُقودُنَا مجهولَةٌ
عيونُنا مرافيءُ الذُبابْ..

'The poet is alluding to the Qur'anic story of the People of the Cave. See Sūrat al-Kahf, verse 19.

My friends,

Try to break down the doors,

To cleanse your thoughts,

And to cleanse your clothes.

My friends,

Try to read a book,

To write a book,

يا أصدقائي :
جَرِّبُوا أن تكسروا الأبوابْ
أن تغسلوا أفكاركُمْ
وتغسِلُوا الأثوابْ
يا أصدقائي :
جَرِّبُوا أن تقرأوا كِتَابْ ..
أن تكتُبُوا كتابْ ..

To cultivate letters,

Pomegranates,

And grapes,

To set sail for the lands of snow and fog.

For people are ignorant of you

Outside the cellar.

People think you

Some kind of wolves.

أن تزرعُوا الحُرُوفَ ..
والرُمَّانَ ..
والأعْنَابْ ..
أن تُبْحِرُوا إلى بلاد الثلج والضَبَابْ
فالناسُ يجهلونكُمْ ..
في خارج السِرْدَابْ
الناسُ يحسَبُونَكُمْ
نوعاً من الذِئابْ ...

XIV

Our skins are dead to feeling,

Our souls complain of bankruptcy,

Our days are spent between the Zār',

Chess,

And sleep,

Are we "The best community which has been made for mankind"?[2]

١٤

جُلودُنا ميِّتَةُ الإحسَاسْ
أرواحُنا تشكو من الإفلاسْ
أيَّامُنا تدورُ بين الزارِ ..
والشَطْرَنْجِ ..
والنُعَاسْ ..
هَلْ (نحنُ خَيْرُ أُمَّةٍ قد أُخْرِجَتْ للناسْ) ؟

'A popular ritual which is employed to cast out demons (ʿafārīt) which have taken possession of people. It consists of certain dances, accompanied by loud, rhythmical beating on the tambourine and the burning of incense. It is generally supposed to be of African origin.
[2]Qur'ān, Sūrat Āl ʿImrān, verse 110.

XV

Our oil, gushing in the deserts,
Could have become a dagger
Of flame and fire
But,
To the shame of the nobles of Quraysh'
And the shame of the noble men of Aws[2] and Nizār[3]
It is poured beneath the feet of slave-girls.

١٥

كانَ بُوسْع نفْطِنَا الدافِقِ في الصحاري
أن يستحيلَ خنجراً ..
من لَـهَبٍ ونارِ
لكنَّـهُ ..
واخَجْلَةَ الأَشرافِ من قُرَيْشٍ
وخَجْلَةَ الأحرار من أَوْسٍ ومن نِزَارِ
يُراقُ تحتَ أرجُل الجواري ..

---

[1]Quraysh: the tribe of the Prophet.
[2]Aws: one of the two main tribes of Medina, the first capital of the Islamic state.
[3]A major Arab tribal grouping, which included Quraysh and many other northern tribes.

XVI

We run in the streets
Carrying ropes under our arms,
Killing indiscriminately,
Smashing glass and locks,
Praising like frogs
And reviling like frogs.

١٦

نركُضُ في الشوارعِ
نحملُ تحتَ إبْطِنا الحِبَالا
نمارسُ السَحْلَ بلا تبصُّرٍ
نُحَطِّمُ الزجاجَ والأقْفَالا
نمدحُ كالضفادعِ
نَشْتُمُ كالضفادعِ

Making heroes of our pygmies,

Making cowards of our nobles,

Improvising heroism,

Sitting in the mosques

Idly, lazily,

Adding extra lines to verses, composing proverbs

And begging for victory against our enemy

From God, be He exalted.

نجعلُ من أقزامنا أبطالا
نجعلُ من أشرافنا أنْذَالا
نرتجلُ البطولةَ ارتجالا
نقعدُ في الجوامعِ
تنابلاً ، كُسَالى
نُشَطِّرُ الأبياتَ ، أو نؤلِّفُ الأمْثَالا
ونشحذُ النصْرَ على عدوِّنا
من عندِهِ تَعَالَىٰ ...

XVII

If anybody gave me a guarantee of security,

If I were able to meet the Sultan,

I would say to him:

My master the Sultan

Your predatory dogs have torn my cloak to shreds

And your secret policemen are always behind me

١٧

لو أَحَدٌ يمنحني الأَمَانْ
لو كنتُ أستطيعُ أن أقابلَ السُلْطَانْ
قلتُ لَهُ :
يا سَيِّدي السُلْطَانْ
كِلابُكَ المفترسَاتُ مَزَّقتْ ردائي
ومُخْبِرُوكَ دائماً ورائي ..

Their eyes behind me

Their noses behind me

Their feet behind me,

Interrogating my wife

And writing down the names of my friends.

Your Majesty the Sultan,

Because I approached your massive walls,

Because I tried to reveal my sorrow and my misfortune

I was beaten with a shoe.

عُيونُهُمْ ورائي ..
أنوفُهُمْ ورائي ..
أقدامُهُمْ ورائي ..
يستجوبونَ زوجتي ..
ويكتُبُونَ عندهُمْ أسماءَ أصدقائي ..
يا حضرةَ السُلْطَانْ
لأنّني اقتربتُ من أسوارِكَ الصَمَّاءِ ..
لأنّني حاولتُ أن أكشفَ عن حُزْني وعن بلائي
ضُرِبتُ بالحِذَاءِ ..

Your army forced me to eat from my shoe,

My master, my master the Sultan,

You lost the war twice

Because half our people have no tongue -

Of what value is a people without a tongue?

Because half our people are besieged, like ants or rats

Inside the walls.

أرْغَمني جُنْدُكَ أن آكُلَ من حِذَائي ..
يا سيِّدي .. يا سيِّدي السلطانْ
لقد خسرتَ الحربَ مرتَّينْ
لأنَّ نصفَ شعبنا ليس له لِسَانْ
ما قيمةُ الشعب الذي ليس له لسَانْ ؟
لأنَّ نصفَ شعبنا محاصرٌ كالنَمْل والجُرْذَانْ
في داخل الجدرانْ ..

If anyone gave me a guarantee of security

From the army of the Sultan,

I would say to him: Your Majesty the Sultan,

You lost the war twice

Because you separated yourself from the fate of the people.

لو أحَدٌ يمنحُني الأمانْ
من عسكر السُلْطَانْ
قلتُ لهُ : يا حضرةَ السُلْطَانْ
لقد خسرتَ الحربَ مرتَّينْ
لأنَّكَ انفصلتَ عن قضيّة الإنسانْ

XVIII

If we had not buried unity in the soil,

If we had not torn up its moist body with bayonets,

If it had remained within the eyes and the eyelashes,

The dogs would not have made free with our flesh.

لو أنّنا لم ندفن الوحدةَ في التُرَابْ
لو لم نُمزِّقْ جسمَها الطريَّ بالحِرابْ
لو بَقِيَتْ في داخل العيون والأهدابْ
لما استباحتْ لحمَنا الكِلابْ ..

IXX

We want an angry generation -

We want a generation which tills the horizons,

Hoes up history by its roots,

Hoes up thought from the depths.

We want a coming generation with different features

Which does not forgive mistakes, is not easy-going,

Does not bow, and does not know hypocrisy.

We want a pioneering, giant generation.

نُريدُ جيلاً غاضباً
نُريدُ جيلاً يَفْلَحُ الآفاقْ
وينكُشُ التاريخَ من جُذُورهِ
وينكُشُ الفكْرَ من الأعماقْ
نريدُ جيلاً قادماً مختلفَ الملامحْ
لا يغفرُ الأخطاءَ .. لا يُسامِحْ
لا ينحني .. لا يعرفُ النفاقْ ..
نريدُ جيلاً ، رائداً ، عملاقْ ..

XX

Children:

From the Ocean to the Gulf, you are the ears of corn of our hopes

You are the generation which will break the fetters,

Kill the opium in our heads,

And kill the fantasy.

يا أيُّها الأطفالْ :
من المحيط للخليجِ ، أنتُمُ سنابلُ الآمَالْ
وأنتُمُ الجيلُ الذي سيكسرُ الأغلالْ
ويقتُلُ الأفيونَ في رؤوسنا
ويقتُلُ الخيالْ ..

Children:

You are still good,

Pure as the dew and snow, pure -

Do not read about our defeated generation, children,

For we are disappointed;

We are as trivial as a melon rind

And are full of holes,

Full of holes

Full of holes, like old shoes.

يا أيُّها الأطفالُ :
أنتُمْ ـ بَعْدُ ـ طَيِّبُونْ
وطاهرونَ ، كالندى والثلج ، طاهرونْ
لا تقرأوا عن جيلنا المهزُومِ ، يا أطفالْ
فنحنُ خائبونْ
ونحنُ ، مثل قِشْرة البطِّيخ . تافهونْ
ونحنُ مَنْخُورونَ ..
مَنْخُورونَ ..
مَنْخُورون كالنِعَالْ ..

Do not read our accounts,

Do not accept our thoughts,

Do not follow in our footsteps,

For we are the generation of vomit, venereal disease, and coughing,

We are the generation of deceit, and dancing on ropes.

Children:

Spring rain, ears of wheat of our hopes,

You are the seeds of fertility in our barren life

And you are the generation which will defeat defeat.

لا تقرأوا أخبارَنا
لا تقبلوا أفكارَنا
لا تقتفوا آثارَنا
فنحنُ جيلُ القيءِ .. والزُهْريِّ .. والسُعَالْ ..
ونحنُ جيلُ الدجْلِ ، والرقْصِ على الحِبَالْ
يا أيُّها الأطفالْ :
يا مَطَرَ الربيعِ ، يا سنابلَ الآمالْ
أنتُمْ بذورُ الخصْب في حياتنا العقيمَهْ
وأنتُمُ الجيلُ الذي سيهزمُ الهزيمَهْ ..

١٩٦٧

8. THE ACTORS

I

When thought in a city becomes
Flattened like a horseshoe
Rounded like a horseshoe
And any rifle raised by a coward
Can crush a man,

الممَثّلون

١

حينَ يصيرُ الفِكْرُ في مدينةٍ
مُسَطَّحاً كَحَدْوَةِ الحِصَانْ
مُدوَّراً كحَدْوةِ الحِصَانْ
وتستطيعُ أيُّ بندقيةٍ يرفعُها جبانْ
أن تسحقَ الإنسانْ

When a town, in its entirety,

Becomes a mousetrap, and men are like mice

And the controlled newspapers become

Obituaries which fill the walls,

Everything dies

Everything dies

Water, plants, sounds, colours,

The trees leave their roots,

Place flees from place,

And man comes to an end.

حين تصيرُ بَلْدَةٌ بأسْرها
مَصْيَدَةً .. والناسُ كالفئرانْ
وتُصْبحُ الجرائدُ المُوَجَّهَهْ
أوراقَ نَعْيٍ تملأ الحيطانْ
يَمُوتُ كلُّ شيءٍ ..
يموتُ كلُّ شيءٍ ..
الماءُ ، والنباتُ ، والأصواتُ ، والألوانْ
تهاجرُ الأشجارُ من جُذُورها
يهربُ من مكانه المكانْ
وينتهي الإنسانْ

II

When writing in a city becomes

Hashish which the law forbids

And thinking becomes

Like prostitution

Sodomy

And opium,

A crime which the law punishes.

حينَ يصيرُ الحَرْفُ في مدينةٍ
حَشيشَةً يمنعها القَانُونْ
ويصبحُ التفكيرُ
كالبَغَاءِ ..
واللُّواطِ ..
والأفيونْ ..
جريمةً يطالُها القَانُونْ ..

When the people in a city become

Frogs with gouged-out eyes

And do not revolt or complain

Sing or weep

Or die or live,

The forests burn, and the children, and the flowers

The fruits burn

And man, in his country, becomes

Lower than a cockroach.

حين يصيرُ الناسُ في مدينةٍ
ضفادعاً مفقوءةَ العُيُونْ
فلا يثورونَ ولا يشكُونْ
ولا يُغنُّونَ ولا يبكُونْ
ولا يموتونَ ولا يحيونْ
تحترقُ الغاباتُ ، والأطفالُ ، والأزهارْ
تحترقُ الثمارْ
ويُصبحُ الإنسانُ في موطنِهِ
أذلَّ من صَرْصَارْ..

III

When justice in a city becomes
A ship boarded by pirates
And man in his bed becomes
Besieged by fear and sorrows
When tears in a city become
Bigger than the extent of the eyelids,

٣

حين يصيرُ العدلُ في مدينةٍ
سفينةً يركبُها قُرْصانْ
ويصبحُ الإنسانُ في سريرِهِ
مُحاصَراً ، بالخوف والأحزانْ
حينَ يصيرُ الدمعُ في مدينةٍ
أكبرَ من مساحة الأجفانْ

Everything falls

The sun

The stars

The mountains

The valleys

The night, the day, the seas, the coasts

God

And man.

يسقُطُ كلُّ شيءْ
الشمسُ ..
والنجومُ ..
والجبالُ ..
والوديانْ ..
والليلُ ، والنهارُ ، والبحارُ ، والشطآنْ ..
واللهُ ..
والإنسانْ ..

IV

When a helmet becomes

Like the Lord in Heaven

Doing what it wishes with mankind,

Pounding them

Crushing them

Causing them to die

Bringing them back to life,

Doing what it wishes with mankind,

ﺣﻴﻦ ﺗﺼﻴﺮُ ﺧُﻮذَةٌ
ﻛﺎﻟﺮﺏِّ ﻓﻲ اﻟﺴَﻤَﺎءْ
ﺗﺼﻨﻊُ ﺑﺎﻟﻌﺒﺎد ﻣﺎ ﺗَﺸَﺎءْ
ﺗَﻤْﻌَﺴُﻬُﻢْ ..
ﺗَﻬْﺮُﺳُﻬُﻢْ ..
ﺗُﻤِﻴﺘُﻬُﻢْ ..
ﺗَﺒْﻌَﺜُﻬُﻢْ ..
ﺗﺼﻨﻊُ ﺑﺎﻟﻌﺒﺎد ﻣﺎ ﺗﺸﺎءْ

When the régime in a city becomes
A kind of prostitution
And history in a city becomes
A floorcloth
And thought becomes like shoes
When the breeze of wind
Comes by decree from the Sultan,

حين يصيرُ الحُكْمُ في مدينةٍ
نوعاً من البَغَاءْ
ويصبحُ التاريخُ في مدينةٍ
مَمْسَحَةً ..
والفِكْرُ كالحِذَاءْ
حين تصيرُ نَسْمَةُ الهواءْ
تأتي بمرسومٍ من السُلْطَانْ

And the grain of wheat which we eat

Comes by decree from the Sultan,

And the drop of water which we drink

Comes by decree from the Sultan,

When a nation in its entirety becomes

Cattle fed in the pen of the Sultan,

The children are throttled in their mothers' wombs

Women miscarry

And the sun falls on our squares

Like a black gallows.

وحَبَّةُ القمح التي نأكُلُها
تأتي بمرسومٍ من السُلْطَانْ
وقَطْرةُ الماء التي نشربُها
تأتي بمرسومٍ من السُلْطَانْ
حين تصيرُ أُمّةٌ بأسرها
ماشيةً تُعْلَفُ في زريبة السُلْطَانْ
يختنقُ الأطفالُ في أرحامهمْ
وتُجْهضُ النساءْ ..
وتسقُطُ الشمسُ على ساحاتِنا
مَشْنَقَةً سوداءْ ..

V

When will you go?

The theatre has collapsed on your heads

When will you go?

The people in the auditorium are reviling you and spitting,

Palestine

Was your hen, whose precious eggs you used to eat.

Palestine

Was your ʿUthmān's shirt', in which you traded

o

•

متى سترحلون ؟
المسرحُ انهارَ على رؤوسكُمْ
متى سترحلونْ ؟
والناسُ في القاعة يشتمونَ .. يبصقُونْ ..
كانت فلسطينُ لكمْ
دجاجةً ، من بَيْضِها الثمينِ تأكُلُونْ ..
كانت فلسطينُ لكمْ
قميصَ عثمانَ الذي به تتاجرونْ

'When the Caliph ʿUthmān (577 - 656) was murdered, his relative Muʿāwiya (603 - 680), the governor of Syria, displayed his blood stained shirt in the mosque in Damascus in order to incite his people to vengeance against ʿUthmān's killers. In conversational Arabic, the "shirt of ʿUthmān" means "making a mountain out of a molehill".

Bless you

At your hands, our borders have become

Made of paper -

A thousand thanks.

At your hands our country has become

A woman who is lawful for everybody -

A thousand thanks.

طُوبَى لكُمْ ..
على يدِيْكُمْ أصبحتْ حدودُنا
من وَرَق ...
فألفُ تُشْكرونْ ..
على يدِيْكُمْ أصبحتْ بلادُنا
إمرأةً مُبَاحَةً ..
فألفُ تُشْكَرونْ ..

VI

The June war has ended

So may we have good health in every war after it

Our news is excellent

And we are as well as could be, praise be to God,

The burning coals in the narghiles are as well as they could be

The backgammon boards are still

As well as they could be

And the moon planted in our sky,

Round-faced, is as well as it could be

حربُ حُزَيْرَانَ انتَهَتْ ..
فكُلُّ حربٍ بعدَها ، ونحنْ طيِّبُونْ ..
أخبارُنَا جيِّدةٌ
وحالُنا ـ والحمدُ للهِ ـ على أحسنِ ما يكُونْ ..
جَمْرُ النراجيلِ .. على أحسنِ ما يكُونْ
وطاولاتُ الزَهْرِ ـ ما زالتْ ـ
على أحسن ما يكُونْ
والقَمَرُ المزروعُ في سمائِنا
مُدَوَرْ الوجهِ ، على أحسنِ ما يكُونْ ..

Fayrūz's[1] voice

Comes from paradise

"We shall return"

The Jews have penetrated into our clothes

And "we shall return"

They have come to within two metres of our doors

And "we shall return"

They have slept in our beds

And "we shall return"

All that we possess is to say

"We shall return to God"[2]

وصوتُ فيروزَ ،
من الفردوس يأتي ،
« نحنُ راجِعُونْ » ..
تَغَلْغَلَ اليهودُ في ثيابنا
و« نحنُ راجِعُونْ » ..
صاروا على مِتْرَيْنِ من أبوابنا
و« نحنُ راجِعُونْ » ..
ناموا على فراشِنا ..
و« نحنُ راجعونْ » ..
وكلُّ ما نملكُ أن نقولَهُ
« إنّا إلى اللهِ لراجِعُونْ » ..

---

[1]A well-known Lebanese singer. The words are taken from one of her songs which became popular after the 1967 war.
[2]This is derived from the Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Baqara, verse 156. The saying is one used when one is faced with catastrophe.

VII

The June war has ended

And we are as well as .. could be, praise be to God

Our writers are idling on the pavement of thought

Eating from the Sultan's kitchen,

Striking with his long sword.

Our writers have not engaged in thinking for centuries

Have not been killed

Have not been crucified

And have not stood at the borders of death and madness.

V

حربُ حزيرانَ انتَهَتْ ..
وحالُنا ـ والحمدُ للهِ ـ على أحسنِ ما يكُونْ
كُتَّابُنا على رصيف الفكر عاطِلونْ
من مطبخ السلطان يأكُلُونْ
بسيفه الطويل يضربُونْ
كُتَّابُنا ، ما مارسوا التفكيرَ من قُرُونْ
لم يُقْتَلُوا ..
لم يُصْلَبُوا ..
لم يقفوا على حدود الموت والجُنُونْ

Our writers live on holiday

And dwell outside history

The June war has come to an end

The morning newspapers have not changed

The big red letters have not changed

The disgusting naked pictures have not changed

And the people are panting,

Panting beneath the whips of sex

Falling beneath the whips of big red letters.

People are like bulls in our country,

Attracted by deep red.

كُتَّابُنا يحيونَ في إجازةٍ
وخارجَ التاريخ يسكُنُونْ ..
حربُ حزيرانَ انتهتْ
جرائدُ الصباح ، ما تغيَّرَتْ
الأحرُفُ الكبيرَةُ الحمراءُ .. ما تغيَّرَتْ
الصُوَرُ العاريةُ النَكْراءُ .. ما تغيَّرَتْ
والناسُ يلهثونْ ..
تحت سياط الجنْس يلهثونْ
تحت سياط الأحرفِ الكبيرةِ الحمراءِ .. يسقُطُونْ ..
الناسُ كالثيران في بلادنا ..
بالأحمرِ الفَاقِعِ يُؤخَذُونْ ..

VIII

The June war has ended

And everything has been lost

Lofty honour

Fortresses and castles

Wealth and sons

But we

Remain in the broadcasting station

٨

حربُ حزيرانَ انتَهَتْ ..
وضاعَ كلُّ شيءْ ..
الشرفُ الرفيعُ ،
والقلاعُ ، والحصونْ
والمالُ ، والبنُونْ ..
لكنّنا ...
باقُونَ في محطّةِ الإذاعَهْ ..

"Fāṭima sends her greetings to her father"

"Khālid asks about his uncles in Gaza,

And where are they living?"

"Nafīsa has had her baby"

"Sāmir has got his certificate of competence"

"So reassure us about yourselves,

Our address is camp number ninety"

« فاطمةُ تُهدي إلى والدها سلامَها .. »
« وخالدٌ يسألُ عن أعمامِهِ في غزَّةٍ ..
وأين يقطُنونْ ؟ . »
« نفيسةُ قد وضعتْ مولودَها .. »
« وسامرٌ حازَ على شهادة الكفاءةْ .. »
« فطمئنونا عنكُمُ ..
« عنوانُنا المُخيَّمُ التسعونْ .. »

IX

The June war has ended
As though nothing had happened
The faces and eyes in front of us are no different
The Inquisition has returned, and the Inquisitors
And the Don Quixotes are still performing
And the people, because it is so hard to weep,
Are laughing.

٩

حربُ حزيرانَ انتَهَتْ ..
كأنَّ شيئاً لم يكُنْ ..
لم تختلفْ أمامَنا الوجوهُ والعُيُونْ
محاكمُ التفتيش عادتْ .. والمفتِّشُونْ ..
والدونكشوتيُّونَ .. ما زالوا يُشَخِّصُونْ
والناسُ من صُعُوبة البكاءِ ..
يضحكونْ ..

And we are contented,

Contented with war, and contented with peace,

Contented with heat, and contented with cold,

Contented with sterility, and contented with offspring,

With everything in our Preserved Tablet' in Heaven,

Contented ...

And all that we possess is to say,

"We shall return to God".

ونحنُ قانِعُونْ ..
بالحربِ قانعُونْ .. والسِلْم قانعُونْ ..
بالحَرِّ قانعُونْ .. والبَرْد قانعونْ ..
بالعُقْم قانعونْ .. والنَسْل قانعُونْ
بكُلِّ ما في لَوْحِنَا المحفوظِ في السماءِ ..
قانعونْ ..
وكلُّ ما نملكُ أن نقولَهُ :
« إنَّا إلى اللهِ لراجِعُونْ » ...

'The Preserved Tablet is the original of the Qur'ān preserved in Heaven.

X

The theatre has burned down to its foundations

But the actors have not, yet, died.

إحترقَ المَسْرَحُ من أركانِهِ
ولم يَمُتْ ـ بَعْدُ ـ الممثلونْ ..

١٩٦٨

9. THE INTERROGATION

I

Who killed the Imam?

The detectives fill my room

Who killed the Imam?

The soldiers' boots are on my neck

Who killed the Imam?

الإستجواب

١

مَنْ قَتَلَ الإمَامْ ؟
المُخْبِرُونَ يملأونَ غُرْفَتي
مَنْ قَتَلَ الإمَامْ ؟
أحذيةُ الجُنُود فوقَ رَقْبَتي
مَنْ قَتَلَ الإمَامْ ؟

Who stabbed the dervish, the leader of the order,

And tore up his jubba',

His collecting-bag

And his elegant prayer-beads?

Gentlemen:

Do not pull out my finger-nails

Searching for the truth ...

The truth always resides in the murdered man's body.

مَنْ طعَنَ الدرويشَ صاحبَ الطريقَهْ ؟
ومزَّقَ الجُبَّـةَ ..
والكشْـكُولَ ..
والمَسْبَـحَـةَ الأنيقَهْ ..
يا سادتي :
لا تقلعوا أظافري ..
بَحْثَاً عن الحقيقَـهْ ..
في جُثَّةِ القتيل ، دوماً ، تسكُـنُ الحقيقَهْ

---

[1]A long outer garment, open in front, and with wide sleeves, worn by dervishes.

II

Who killed the Imam?

Fully-armed soldiers go in

Fully-armed soldiers go out:

Reports,

Tape recorders,

Photographers ...

٢

مَنْ قَتَلَ الإمَامْ ؟
عساكرٌ بكامل السلاح يدخُلُونْ ..
عساكرٌ بكامل السلاح يخرجونْ
محاضرٌ ..
آلاتُ تسجيلٍ ..
مُصوِّرونْ ..

Gentlemen,

What use is my statement

As long as,

Whether I speak or not,

You are going to write?

What use is it for me to ask for help

As long as,

Whether I speak or not,

You are going to beat me?

As long as, ever since you came to rule my country,

You have been doing my thinking for me?

يا سادتي :
ما النَفْعُ من إفادتي ؟
ما دمتُمُ ..
ـ إنْ قُلْتُ أو ما قُلْتُ ـ
سوفَ تكتُبُونْ ..
ما تنفعُ استغاثتي ؟ .
ما دمتُمُ ..
ـ إن قلتُ أو ما قُلْتُ ـ
سوفَ تضربُونْ ..
ما دمتُمُ منذُ حكمتُمْ بَلَدي
عَنِّي تُفكِّرُونْ ! ! !

III

I am not a communist

As you have been told, respected gentlemen,

Nor a rightist

As you have been told, respected gentlemen.

I was born in Damascus ...

Does anyone among you

Know where Damascus is?

٣

لستُ شُيُوعيّاً ..
ـ كما قيل لكُمْ ـ يا سادتي الكِرَامْ
ولا يَمينيّاً
ـ كما قيل لكُمْ ـ يا سادتي الكِرَامْ
مَسْقَطُ رأسي في دمشقَ الشامْ ..
هل واحدٌ من بينكُمْ
يعرفُ أينَ الشامْ ؟

Has anyone among you

Become addicted to living in Damascus,

Had his thirst quenched by the water of Damascus

Been cauterised by the love of Damascus?

Be sure, gentlemen,

You will never find, in all the rose-markets, a rose like Damascus

Or in all the jeweller's shops

A pearl like Damascus

You will never find

A sad-eyed city like Damascus.

هل واحدٌ من بينكُمْ
أدْمَنَ سُكْنَى الشامْ ؟
رواهُ ماءُ الشامْ ..
كواهُ عِشْقُ الشامْ ..
تأكَّدُوا يا سادتي
لن تجدُوا في كلِّ أسواق الورود ، وردةً كالشامْ
وفي دكاكين الحُلَى جميعها ..
لؤلؤةً كالشامْ
لن تجِدوا ..
مدينةً حزينةَ العَيْنَيْنِ مثل الشامْ ..

IV

I am not a filthy agent

As your informers say, respected gentlemen,

I have never stolen a grain of wheat

Or killed an ant.

I have never been inside a police-station,

Respected gentlemen,

I am known by young and old in my neighbourhood

Known by the children, the trees and the pigeons.

{

لستُ عميلاً قَذِراً ..
كما يقولُ مُخْبِروكُمْ ، سادتي الكرامْ
ولا سَرَقْتُ قمحةً ..
ولا قتلْتُ نَمْلَةً ..
ولا دخلتُ مركزَ البوليس يوماً ،
سادتي الكرامْ ..
يعرفني في حارتي الصغيرُ والكبيرْ .
يعرفني الأطفالُ .. والأشجارُ .. والحَمَامْ ..

God's prophets know me,

Blessings and salvation upon them,

I never miss the five daily prayers,

Respected gentlemen,

The Friday sermon never passes me by,

Respected gentlemen;

For a quarter of a century

I have been performing rukūᶜ and sujūd[1],

Standing up and sitting down.

وأنبياءُ اللهِ يعرفونني
عليهمُ الصلاةُ والسلامْ
الصَلَوَاتُ الخَمْسُ لا أقطعُها ..
يا سادتي الكرامْ
وخُطْبَةُ الجُمْعةِ لا تفوتُني
يا سادتي الكرامْ
من رُبْعِ قَرْنٍ وأنا ..
أُمارسُ الركوعَ والسُجُودْ
أُمارسُ القيامَ والقُعُودْ

---

[1]Various postures in Islamic prayer. The rukūᶜ is a kind of bowing, and the sujūd is prostration.

Performing theatricals behind his reverence the Imam.

He says, "O God, obliterate the State of the Jews"

And I say, "O God, obliterate the State of the Jews"

He says, "O God, scatter them"

And I say, "O God, scatter them"

He says, "O God, cut off their progeny"

And I say, "O God, cut off their progeny"

He says, "Drown their tillage and their crops"

And I say, "Drown their tillage and their crops"

أُمارسُ التَشْخِيصَ خلف حضرة الإمامْ
يقولُ : (اللهُمَّ إمْحَقْ دولةَ اليهُودْ)
أقولُ : (اللهُمَّ إمْحَقْ دولةَ اليهُودْ)
يقولُ : (اللهُمَّ شَتِّتْ شَمْلَهُمْ)
أقولُ : (اللهُمَّ شَتِّتْ شَمْلَهُمْ)
يقولُ : (اللهُمَّ إقطَعْ نَسْلَهُمْ)
أقولُ : (اللهُمَّ إقطَعْ نَسْلَهُمْ)
يقولُ : (أَغرِقْ حَرْثَهُمْ وزَرْعَهُمْ)
أقولُ : (أَغرِقْ حَرْثَهُمْ وزَرْعَهُمْ)

And thus, respected gentlemen

I have spent twenty years

Living in a sheep-pen

Grazing like a sheep

Sleeping like a sheep

Urinating like a sheep

Going round like a bead on the Imam's prayer-beads,

Without a mind

Or a head

Or feet.

وهكذا ، يا سادتي الكرامْ
قضيتُ عشرينَ سَنَهْ
أعيشُ في حظيرة الأغنامْ
أُعْلَفُ كالأغنامْ
أنامُ كالأغنامْ
أبُولُ كالأغنامْ
أدورُ كالحَبَّة في مَسْبَحَة الإمامْ
لا عقلَ لي ..
لا رأسَ ..
لا أقْدَامْ ..

Sniffing the catarrh in his beard

And the consumption in his bones.

I have spent twenty years

Piled up like a bale of straw on the red carpet

Lashed every Friday by a magnificent sermon,

Swallowing rhetoric

Figures of speech,

Splendid poems,

Swallowing nonsense.

For twenty years, while I, gentlemen

Live in a windmill

Which has never ground anything but air.

اسْتَنْشِقُ الزُكامَ من لحيتهِ
والسُلَّ في العظامْ
قضيتُ عشرينَ سَنَهْ
مُكوَّماً كرزمة القشّ على السُجَّادةِ الحَمْراءْ ..
أُجْلَدُ كلَّ جُمْعَةٍ بخُطْبَةٍ غرّاءْ
أبتلعُ البيانَ ..
والبديعَ ..
والقصائدَ العصماءْ ..
أبتلعُ الهُرَاءْ ..
عشرينَ عاماً .. وأنا يا سادتي
أسكُنُ في طاحونةٍ
ما طَحَنَتْ قطُّ سوى الهواءْ ..

V

Gentlemen:

With this dagger of mine which you see

I stabbed him in the chest and neck.

I stabbed him in his mind which was wormeaten like wood.

I stabbed him in my own name

And the name of millions of sheep.

٥

يا سادتي :
بخنْجَري هذا الذي تَرَوْنَهُ
طعنتُـهُ في صدرِهِ والرقَـبَهْ
طعنتُـهُ في عقلهِ المنخُور مثل الخَشَـبَـهْ
طعنتُـهُ باسمي أنا ..
واسْمِ الملايينِ من الأغنامْ

Gentlemen:

I know that what I am accused of

Is punishable by death

But

I killed, when I killed him

All the crickets that sing in the darkness

And those who rest on the pavements of dreams.

I killed, when I killed him

All the parasites in the garden of Islam,

يا سادتي :
أعرفُ أن تُـهْمَتي ..
عِقَابُها الإعدامْ ..
لكـنني ..
قَـتَلْتُ إذْ قَـتَلْتُـهُ
كُلَّ الصراصير التي تُنشِدُ في الظلامْ
والمستريحينَ على أرصفةِ الأحلامْ
قَـتَلْتُ إذْ قَـتَلْتُـهُ
كلَّ الطُـفَـيْلِيَّاتِ في حديقة الإسلامْ

All those who seek their daily bread from the shop of Islam.

I killed, when I killed him,

Respected gentlemen,

All those who, for the last thousand years,

Have been fornicating with speech.

كُلَّ الذين يطلُبُونَ الرزْقَ من دُكَّانة الإسلامْ
قَتَلْتُ إذْ قَتَلْتُهُ ..
يا سادتي الكرامْ
كُلَّ الذين منذُ ألفِ عامْ
يَزْنُونَ بالكَلَامْ ...

١٩٦٨

10. FATH'

I

After we were killed

After they prayed over us

After we were buried

After our bones calcified

After our feet became rigid

After we became threadbare,

فتح

١

... وبعدَما قُتِلْنَا ..
وبعدَما صلَّوا علينا ،
بعدَما دُفِنَّا ..
وبعدَ أن تكلَّسَتْ عظامُنا
وبعدَ أن تخشَّبَتْ أقدامُنا
وبعدَما اهترأْنا ..

---

[1]The Palestinian guerilla movement, founded in the years before the 1967 war, which rose to prominence after that war and came to dominate the P.L.O..

After we hungered and thirsted

After we repented and lost faith,

After ... and after ...

We had despaired of our despair,

Fath came to us,

Like a beautiful rose appearing from a wound,

Like a spring of cold water watering salt deserts.

And suddenly, we revolted against our shrouds, and arose

And suddenly,

Like the Lord Jesus, we arose after our death.

وبعدَ ، أن جُعنَا وأن عطِشْنَا
وبعدَ ، أن تُبْنَا وأن كَفَرنا ..
وبعدَما .. وبعدَما ..
من يأسِنَا يئِسْنَا ..
جاءتْ إلينا (فَتْحْ)
كوردةٍ جميلةٍ طالعةٍ من جُرحْ ..
كنبع ماءٍ باردٍ يروي صحارى ملحْ
وفجأةً .. ثرنا على أكفاننا ، وقُمْنَا ..
وفجأةً ،
كالسَّيِّدِ المسيحِ .. بعد موتنا نَهَضْنَا ..

II

However late they are, they will come
In the grain of wheat,
Or in the olive
They will come in the trees, the winds, the branches,
They will come in our speech,
They will come in our voices,
They will come in our mothers' tears,
In the eyes of our precious dead.

٢

مهما هُمُ تأخَّروا ، فإنَّهُمْ يأتُونْ
في حَبَّة الحنطةِ ..
أو في حَبَّة الزيتُونْ ..
يأتونَ في الأشجار ، والرياح ، والغُصُونْ
يأتونَ في كلامِنا ..
يأتونَ في أصواتِنا ..
يأتونَ في دُمُوع أمَّهاتنا
في أعيُن الغالينَ من أمواتِنا ..

However late they are, they will come
From the alley of Ramallah, or from the Mount of Olives
They will come like manna and quails, from heaven,
From the children's dolls, from the women's bracelets
And will live in the night, the stones, and all things
They will grow from our beautiful sorrow
Like trees of pride
They will be born from the crevices of the rocks
Like a bouquet of prophets.
They have no identity, they have no names
But they will come
But they will come.

مهما هُمُ تأخّروا .. فإنّهُمْ يأتونْ
من درب رامَ الله ، أو من جَبَل الزيتُونْ
يأتونَ مثل المَنِّ والسلوى .. من السماءْ
ومن دُمَى الأطفال .. من أساور النساءْ
ويسكنُونَ الليلَ .. والأحجارَ .. والأشياءْ
من حزننا الجميل ينبُتُونْ
أشجارَ كبرياءْ
ومن شُقُوق الصخر يولدونْ
باقةَ أنبياءْ
ليستْ لهم هوَيّةٌ .. ليستْ لهُمْ أسماءْ
لكنّهمْ يأتونْ ..
لكنّهمْ يأتونْ ..

III

O Fatḥ, our shore after we were lost,
O midnight sun which has appeared,
After we were grieved,
O tremor of spring in us
After we had dried up,
When we read all that we read about you
We grew up fifty centuries because of you
Our stature was heightened
And our life burst into blossom
After we had been dessicated.

يا (فَتْحُ) يا شاطِئَنا من بعد ما فُقِدْنَا ..
يا شمسَ نصفِ الليل لاحَتْ ..
بعدما ضَجِرْنَا ..
يا رِعْشَةَ الربيع فينا
بعدما يَبِسْنَا ..
حين قرأنَا عنكُمُ كُلَّ الذي قرأنا ..
خمسينَ قَرْنَاً بكُمُ كبُرْنا ..
وارتفعتْ قاماتُنا
وأزْهَرَتْ حياتُنا
من بعدما نشِفْنَا ..

O Fatḥ, our beautiful horse

Which bears Baysān' and Galilee on its forehead

And Gaza, Jerusalem, birds and fields

Carries seas in its glance

And carries plains

Our water, our snow, our cool shade

Our child whose face we have long awaited,

O Fatḥ, we are Mecca,

Awaiting the Messenger.

يا (فَتْحُ) يا حصانَنَا الجميلا
يحملُ في غُرَّتِهِ بيسانَ والجليلا
وغزَّةً ، والقدسَ ، والطيورَ ، والحُقُولا
ويحمل البحارَ في نظرتِهِ ،
ويحمل السُّهُولا
يا ماءنا .. يا ثلجَنا .. يا ظلَّنا الظليلا ..
يا طفلَنا الذي انتظرنا وجهَهُ طويلا
يا (فَتْحُ) نحنُ مكَّةٌ
تنتظرُ الرَسُولا ..

'A town in Palestine, in the Jordan Valley. It has been part of Israel since 1948.

IV

O Fatḥ, the tears have grown grey in our eyes,
The dagger of Israel is still in our backs,
We are still searching in the dark for our graves,
And still as foolish as we were yesterday.
We repeat silly fairy-stories
"Patience is the key to deliverance"
Still think that God in heaven
Will restore us to our houses
And still think that victory
Is a banquet which will come to us while we are in our beds

يا (فَتْـحُ) شابَ الدَمْعُ في عُيُونِنَا
ولم يزلْ خِنْـجَرُ إسرائيل في ظُهورِنَا
ولم نزل نبحثُ في الظلام عن قُبورِنا
ولم نزل كالأمس أغبياءْ
نردّدُ الخُرَافَـةَ البلْـهَاءْ
(الصبرُ مفتاحُ الفَرَجْ)
ولم نَزَلْ نظنُّ أنَّ اللهَ في السماءْ
يُعيدُنا لدُورنا ..
ولم نزلْ نظنُّ أنَّ النصرْ ..
وليمةٌ نأتي لنا .. ونحنُ في سريرِنا ..

We still sit, as we have done for years,

On the pavement of the United Nations,

Begging for milk and flour from its committees,

For humiliation, sardines and second-hand clothes.

We still chew over, naively,

Our favourite piece of wisdom

"Patience is the key to deliverance"

Bullets alone,

Not patience, are the key to deliverance.

ولم نزلْ نقعُدُ من سنينْ
على رصيف الأمم المُتَّحدهْ
نشحذُ من لجانِها الحليبَ .. والطحينْ ..
والذُلَّ .. والسردينَ .. والملابسَ المُسْتَعْمَلَهْ ..
ولم نزلْ نمضغُ ساذجينْ
حكمتَنا المُفَضَّلَهْ :
(الصبرُ مفتاحُ الفَرَجْ)
إنَّ الرصَاصَ وحدَهُ
لا الصبرَ مفتاحُ الفَرَجْ .

V

O Lord

We refuse after today to be good

For the good, all of them, are half-dead.

They stole our country,

They killed our children

So allow us, O Lord -

To be killers.

٥

يا رَبَّنا :

نرفُضُ أن نكونَ بعد اليوم طَيِّبينْ
فالطيِّبُونَ كلُّهُمْ أنصافُ ميِّتينْ
هُمْ سرقُوا بلادَنا ..
هم قتلوا أولادنَا
فاسمحْ لنا ، يا ربَّنا ،
نكونُ قاتلينْ ..

O vengeance

We refuse to be meek like sheep

O drum

O Zār[1]

O qāt[2]

We refuse to remain drunk and befuddled

O poetry, be angry

O prose, be angry

O minds, be angry

For the age in which we live is an age of angry men

O hatred, be burning

So that we do not all become a herd of refugees.

يا ثَأْرَنا ..
نرفُضُ أن نكون كالخِرَافِ وادعينْ
يا طَبْلَنا ..
يا زارَنا ..
يا قاتَنا ..
نرفضُ أن نظلَّ مسطولينَ .. دائخينْ
يا شِعْرَنا كُنْ غاضباً ..
يا نَثْرنا كُنْ غاضباً ..
يا عَقْلَنا كُنْ غاضباً ..
فَعَصْرُنا الذي نعيشُ عصرُ غاضبينْ
يا حقدَنا .. كُنْ حارقاً
كي لا نصيرَ كلُّنا قطيعَ لاجئينْ ..

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[1]See note 1, p.67.

[2]A shrub (Catha edulis) which grows in Yemen and adjacent parts of Africa. Its leaves, when chewed, have a mildly intoxicating effect.

11. POETS OF THE OCCUPIED LAND

I

O poets of the Occupied Land
You whose notebooks' pages
Are plunged into tears and mud,
You whose throats' voices
Are like hanged men's death-rattles,

شعراءُ الأرض المحتلّة

١

شُعَرَاءَ الأرضِ المُحتلَّهْ
يا مَنْ أوراقُ دفاترِكُمْ
بالدمع مُغَمَّسَةٌ ، والطينْ
يا مَنْ نَبَراتُ حناجرِكُمْ
تُشْبِهُ حَشْرَجَةَ المشنوقينْ

You whose inkwells' colours
Seem like murdered men's necks,
We have learned from you for years,
We the defeated poets,
We the strangers to history,
And to the sorrows of the grieved,
We have learned from you
How the letter can have the shape of a knife.

يا مَنْ ألوانُ محابركُمْ
تبدو ، كرقاب المذبوحينْ
نَتَعلَّمُ منكُمْ منذُ سنينْ
نحنُ الشعَراء المهزُومينْ
نحنُ الغُرباء عن التاريخِ ،
وعن أحزان المحزونينْ
نتعلَّمُ منكُمْ
كيف الحرفُ يكونُ له شكلُ السِكِّينْ

II

O poets of the Occupied Land,

O most beautiful bird which comes to us from the night of captivity

O sorrow with transparent eyes

Pure as the dawn prayer

O rose bushes growing from the entrails of the burning coals

O rain falling despite injustice and despite oppression,

We have learned from you

How the drowning man sings from the depths of the well

We have learned how the grave walks on its feet.

شُعَرَاءَ الأرض المُحْتَلَّهْ
يا أجملَ طيرٍ يأتينا من ليل الأَسْرْ
يا حُزْناً شفَّافَ العَيْنَيْنِ ،
نقيَّاً مثل صلاة الفجرْ
يا شَجَرَ الورد النابت من أحشاء الجَمْرْ
يا مَطَراً يسقُطُ رغمَ الظُلْم ، ورغمَ القهرْ
نتعلّمُ منكمْ ..
كيف يُغنّي الغارقُ من أعماق البئرْ
نتعلَّمُ كيف يسير على قَدَميه القَبْرْ ..

We have learned what poetry can be like

For among us poets have died, and poetry has died

Among us poetry is a dervish

Reeling in the circles of sufi religious ceremonies,

And the poet works as a coachman for the castle's commander.

The poet's lips are castrated in this age

He brushes the ruler's coat

And pours out glasses of wine for him

The poet's words are castrated,

And how wretched are the eunuchs of thought!

نتعلَّمُ كيف يكونُ الشِّعْرْ
فلدينا قد مات الشعراءُ .. ومات الشِّعْرْ
الشِعْرُ لدينا درويشٌ ..
يترنَّحُ في حَلَقات الذِّكْرْ
والشاعرُ يعملُ حوذيّاً لأمير القصرْ
الشاعرُ مخصيُّ الشَفَتَيْنِ .. بهذا العَصْرْ
يمسحُ للحاكم معطفَهُ ،
ويصبُّ له أقداحَ الخَمْرْ
الشاعرُ مَخْصِيُّ الكَلِمَاتِ ..
وما أشْقَى خصيانَ الفِكْرْ ..

III

O poets of the Occupied Land,

O sunlight escaping from the chink in the doors,

O drumbeat coming from the depths of the forests,

O all the names engraved on the eyelashes

What shall we tell you, friends,

About the literature of the setback

The poetry of the setback

The thought of the setback

O friends?

شُعَرَاءَ الأرض المُحْتَلَّهْ
يا ضوءَ الشمس الهاربَ من ثقب الأبوابْ
يا قَرْعَ الطبل القادمَ من أعماق الغابْ
يا كُلَّ الأسماء المَحْفُورَةِ في ريش الأهدابْ
ماذا نخبركُمْ يا أحبابْ ؟
عن أدَب النَكْسَةِ ..
شِعْرِ النكْسَةِ ..
فِكْرِ النكْسَةِ ..
يا أحبابْ ..

Ever since June we, the writers,

Have been mounted on our pillows,

Amusing ourselves with morphology and syntax.

Terrorism tramples on our skulls

And we kiss terrorism's feet.

We ride wooden horses

And fight phantoms

And a mirage.

ما زلنا منذُ حزيرانٍ .. نحنُ الكُتَّابْ
نتمطَّى فوق وسائِدِنا ..
نلهو بالصَرْفِ وبالإعْرَابْ
يطأ الإرهابُ جماجمَنا ..
ونُقَبِّلُ أقدامَ الإرهابْ
نركبُ أحصنةً من خَشَبٍ
ونقاتلُ أشباحاً ..
وسَرَابْ ..

And we call out:

O Lord of Lords

We are weak, and you are the Victorious, the Conqueror

We are poor, and you are the Provider, the Giver.

We are cowards, and you are the Forgiving, the Pardoner

O poets of the Occupied Land.

My nerves are no longer nerves,

The Holy Places of Jerusalem have been violated

And Saladin' taken captive,

And do we call ourselves writers?

ونُنَادي :
يا ربَّ الأربابْ
نحنُ الضعفاءُ .. وأنتَ المنتصِرُ الغلَّابْ
نحنُ الفقراءُ .. وأنتَ الرزّاقُ الوهَّابْ
نحنُ الجُبَنَاءُ .. وأنتَ الغفَّارُ التوَّابْ
شُعَرَاءُ الأرض المُحْتَلَّهْ
ما عاد لأعصابي أعصابْ
حُرُماتُ القُدْس قد انتُهِكتْ
وصلاحُ الدين من الأسْلابْ ..
ونُسَمِّي أنْفُسَنَا كُتَّابْ ؟ ؟

---

[1]Salāḥ al-Dīn Yusuf b. Ayyūb, known in the West as Saladin (1137 - 1193) was the greatest of the Muslim leaders who resisted the crusaders. He destroyed a Crusader army at Ḥiṭṭīn in July 1187 and recaptured Jerusalem in October of the same year. He died in Damascus in 1193, where his tomb still stands.

IV

Maḥmūd Darwīsh, greetings!

Tawfīq Zayyād, greetings!

Fadwa Ṭūqān', greetings!

You who sharpen your pens on your own ribs,

We have learned from you

How to explode mines in our words.

٤

محمودَ الدرويش .. سلاما
توفيقَ الزيَّاد .. سلاما
يا فدوى طوقان .. سلاما
يا مَنْ تبرونَ على الأضلاع الأقلاما
نتعلَّمُ منكُمْ ..
كيف نُفَجِّرُ في الكلمات الألغاما

'These poets who emerged after the 1967 war, are known collectively as shuʿarā' al-Muqāwama, poets of the resistance. See our introduction.

O poets of the Occupied Land

The dervishes of speech,

In the East, are still shooing pigeons,

Drinking green tea, ruminating over dreams.

If our poets were to stand before your poems

They would seem pygmies ...pygmies.

شُعَرَاء الأرض المُحْتَلَّهْ
ما زالَ دراويشُ الكلِمَهْ
في الشرقِ ، يَكُشُّونَ حماما
يحسُونَ الشايَ الأخضرَ .. يجترُّونَ الأحلاما ..
لو أنَّ الشعراء لدينا ، يقفونَ أمام قصائدكمْ
لبَدَوْا أقزاماً .. أقزاما ..

١٩٦٨

12. JERUSALEM

I wept until my tears came to an end,

I prayed until the candles melted,

I bowed until I became tired of bowing,

I enquired after Muḥammad

In you, and about Jesus,

O Jerusalem, O city who spreads the fragrance of prophets

O shortest path between earth and heaven.

القُـــدس

بَـكَيْتُ .. حتّى انتهتِ الدُّمُوعْ
صلَّيْتُ .. حتى ذابتِ الشُّمُوعْ
ركعتُ .. حتّى مَلَّني الرُّكوعْ
سألتُ عن مُحَمَّدٍ ..
فيكِ ، وعن يَسُوعْ
يا قُدْسُ . يا مدينةً تفوحُ أنبياءْ
يا أقْصَرَ الدُّرُوب بين الأرض والسماءْ

* * *

O Jerusalem, O lighthouse of religions,

O beautiful child with burned fingers,

Your eyes are sorrowful, O City of the Virgin,

O shady oasis through whom the Prophet passed,

Sorrowful are the stones of the streets,

Sorrowful are the minarets of the mosques,

O Jerusalem, O city wrapped in blackness.

Who will ring the bells in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

On Sunday mornings?

Who will bring toys to the children

On Christmas Eve?

يا قُدْسُ .. يا منارةَ الشرائعْ
يا طفلةً جميلةً مَحْرُوقَةَ الأصابعْ
حزينةٌ عيناكِ يا مدينةَ البَتُولْ
يا واحةً ظليلةً مرَّ بها الرَسُولْ
حزينةٌ حجارةُ الشوارعْ
حزينةٌ مآذنُ الجوامِعْ
يا قدسُ .. يا مدينةً تلتفُّ بالسَوَادْ
من يقرعُ الأجراسَ في كنيسة القيامَهْ ؟
صبيحةَ الآحادْ ..
من يحملُ الألعابَ للأولادْ ؟
في ليلة الميلادْ ..

° ° °

O Jerusalem, O city of sorrows

O large tear moving in the eyelids

Who will halt the aggression

Against you, O pearl of religions?

Who will wash the blood from the stones of the walls?

Who will rescue the Gospel?

Who will rescue the Qur'ān?

Who will rescue Christ from those who killed Christ?

Who will rescue mankind?

يا قُدْسُ .. يا مدينةَ الأحزانْ
يا دمعةً كبيرةً تجولُ في الأجفانْ
مَنْ يوقفُ العُدْوَانْ ؟
عليكِ ، يا لؤلؤةَ الأديانْ
من يغسل الدماءَ عن حجارة الجُدْرَانْ ؟
من يُنْقِذُ الإنجيلْ ؟
من يُنْقِذُ القُرآنْ ؟
مَنْ يُنْقِذُ المسيحَ ممَّنْ قتلوا المسيحْ ؟
من يُنْقِذُ الإنسانْ ؟

O Jerusalem, O my city,

O Jerusalem, my beloved,

Tomorrow, tomorrow the lemon trees will blossom

And the green ears of corn and the branches will rejoice.

Eyes will laugh,

The departed doves will return

To the pure roofs,

The children will play again,

And fathers and sons will meet

On your shining hills

My town, O town of peace and olives.

يا قُدْسُ .. يا مدينتي
يا قُدْسُ .. يا حبيبتي
غداً .. غداً .. سيُزْهِرُ الليمونْ
وتفرحُ السنابلُ الخضراءُ والغُصُونْ
وتضحكُ العُيُونْ
وترجعُ الحمائمُ المهاجِرَهْ
إلى السُّقُوف الطاهرَهْ
ويرجعُ الأطفالُ يلعبونْ
ويلتقي الآباءُ والبنون
على رُبَاكِ الزاهرَهْ ..
يا بَلَدي .. يا بَلَدَ السلام والزيتُونْ ..

13. FIDĀ'Ī' PROCLAMATIONS ON THE WALLS OF ISRAEL

I

You will never make our people
A people of Red Indians
For we shall remain here
In this land which wears on its wrist
A bracelet of flowers,
For this is our country;
In it we existed from the dawn of life,
In it we played, loved
And wrote poetry.

منشوراتٌ فدائيّةٌ على جُدران إسرائيل

١

لَنْ تَجْعَلُوا من شَعْبِنا
شَعْبَ هُنُودٍ حُمْرْ
فنحنُ باقُونَ هنا ..
في هذه الأرض التي تلبسُ في مِعْصَمِها
إسوارةً من زَهْرْ ..
فهذه بلادُنا
فيها وُجِدْنا منذُ فجر العُمرْ
فيها لَعِبْنَا .. وعشِقْنَا ..
وكتبنا الشِّعْرْ ..

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[1]See note 1, p.23.

We have taken root in its bays

Like seaweed,

We have taken root in its history,

In its flat bread, in its olives,

In its yellow wheat,

We have taken root in its consciousness.

We shall remain in its March,

We shall remain in its April,

We shall remain like the engraving on its crosses,

We shall remain in its noble Prophet, and in its Qur'ān

And in the Ten Commandments.

مُشَرَّشُونَ نحنُ في خُلجانِها
مثلَ حشيش البحرْ
مُشَرَّشونَ نحنُ في تاريخِها
في خُبْزِها المرقُوقِ .. في زيتونِها
في قمحِها المُصْفَرّْ ..
مُشَرَّشُونَ نحنُ في وجدانِها
باقونَ في آذارِها ..
باقُونَ في نَيْسانِها ..
باقُونَ كالحَفْرِ على صُلْبَانِها
باقُونَ في نبيِّها الكريمِ ، في قُرآنِها
وفي الوصايا العشرْ ..

II

Do not be drunk with victory
If you kill Khālid
'Amr' will come
And if you crush a rose
The perfume will remain.

٢

لا تسكَرُوا بالنَصْرْ
إذا قَتَلْتُمْ خالداً
فسوفَ يأتي عَمْرو
وإنْ سحقتُمْ وردةً
فسوف يبقى العِطرْ..

'At one level, Khālid and 'Amr are representative Arab names, so that the poet is saying "if you kill one of us, another will come". However there is also an allusion here to Khālid b. al-Walīd (d. 642), the conqueror of Syria from the Byzantines, and 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ (574 - 664), the conqueror of Egypt.

III

Because Moses' hands were cut off
And he is no longer skilled at magic,
Because Moses' staff has been broken
And he is no longer able
To part the waters of the sea,
Because you are not like America
And we are not like the Red Indians,
You shall perish to the last man
On the deserts of Egypt.

لأنَّ موسَىٰ قُطِعَتْ يَدَاهْ
ولم يَعُدْ يُتْقِنُ فنَّ السِّحرْ
لأنَّ مُوسَىٰ كُسِرَتْ عَصَاهْ
ولم يَعُدْ بوسعِهِ
شَقَّ مياه البَحْرْ
لأنَّكُمْ لستُمْ كأمْريكَا
ولسنا كالهُنُود الحُمْرْ
فسوفَ تهلكونَ عن آخِرِكُمْ
فوق صحارىٰ مِصرْ..

IV

The al-Aqṣā mosque is a new martyr'
Which we add to the old account
And the fire and the blaze
Are no more than lamps lighting the road.

٤

المسْجِدُ الأقْصَى ، شهيدٌ جديدْ
نُضيفُهُ إلى الحساب العَتيقْ
وليست النارُ ، وليسَ الحريقْ
سوى قناديلَ تُضِيء الطريقْ

[1]The al-Aqṣā mosque, the ancient Friday mosque of Jerusalem, was the victim of an attempt by a deranged Australian to burn it down in 1969. The damage was not severe, but it caused outrage in the Islamic world.

V

From the cane of the forests

We come out to you like Jinn,

From the cane of the forests,

From postal parcels, from the seats of buses,

From packets of cigarettes, from tins of petrol,

From tombstones

From chalk, from blackboards, from girls' pigtails,

From the wood of crosses, from incense holders,

From head-coverings used in prayer.

o

مِنْ قَصَب الغَابَاتْ
نخرجُ كالجِنِّ لكُمْ
مِنْ قَصَب الغاباتْ
مِنْ رزَم البريد ، من مقاعد الباصَاتْ
من عُلَب الدخانِ ، من صفائح البنزينِ ،
من شواهد الأَمواتْ
من الطباشير .. من الألواح .. من ضفائر البَنَاتْ ..
من خَشَب الصُلْبَان .. من أوْعِيةِ البخورِ ..
من أغطية الصلاةْ ..

From the leaves of the Qur'ān we come to you,

From lines and verses,

You will not escape from our hand

For we are scattered in the wind, in the water, in the plants

And we are kneaded in the colours and the sounds.

You will not escape

You will not escape

For in every house there is a rifle

From the bank of the Nile to the Euphrates.

مِنْ وَرَق المُصْحَفِ ، نأتيكُمْ
مِنَ السُطُور والآياتْ
لَن تـفلِتوا من يدِنا ..
فنحنُ مبثوثُونَ في الريح .. وفي الماء .. وفي النَبَاتْ
ونحنُ معجونونَ بالألوان والأصواتْ
لنْ تُـفْلِتُوا ..
لَنْ تُـفْلِتُوا ..
فكُلُّ بيتٍ فيه بُـنْدُقيَّةْ
من ضفَّة النيل إلى الفُراتْ ..

VI

You will never get any rest with us ..

Among us every man who is killed

Dies thousands of times.

لنْ تستريحُوا مَعَنا ..
كُلُّ قتيلٍ عندنا
يموتُ آلافاً من المرَّاتْ ..

VII

Pay heed,

Pay heed.

The lamp posts have claws

The lattice-windows have ten eyes

And death is waiting for you

In every passing face, or glance, or waist.

Death is lying hidden for you

In the comb of every woman

And every lock of hair.

V

إنْتَبِهُوا ..
إنْتَبِهُوا ..
أعمِدَةُ النُور لها أظافِرٌ
وللشبابيكِ عُيُونٌ عَشْرْ
والموتُ في انتظاركُمْ
في كُلِّ وجهٍ عابرٍ .. أو لَفْتَةٍ .. أو خَصْرْ ..
الموتُ مخبوءٌ لكُمْ
في مِشْط كُلِّ امرأةٍ ..
وخُصْلَةٍ من شَعْرْ ...

VIII

O children of Israel, do not be siezed by delusion.
Even if the hands of the clock have stopped
They must go round eventually.
The usurpation of our land does not frighten us,
For the feathers may fall from vulture's wings
And long thirst does not frighten us,
For water always remains within the rocks.
You have defeated armies, but you have not defeated feelings;
You have cut down the trees at the top
But the roots remain.

٨

يا آلَ إسرائيلَ ، لا يأْخُذْكمُ الغُرُورْ
عقاربُ الساعة إن توَقَّفتْ
لا بُدَّ أن تَدُورْ ..
إنَّ اغتصابَ الأرض لا يُخيفُنا
فالريشُ قد يسقُطُ من أجنحة النُسُورْ
والعَطَشُ الطويلُ لا يُخيفُنَا
فالماءُ يبقى دائماً في باطن الصُخورْ
هزمتُمُ الجيوشَ .. إلّا أنّكمْ لم تهزموا الشُعُورْ
قطعتُمُ الأشجارَ من رؤوسِهَا
وظَلَّتِ الجُذُورْ ..

IX

We advise you to read

What is written in the Psalms.

We advise you to carry your Torah

And follow your Prophet to Mount Sinai

For you have no bread here, no existence.

From the door of every mosque,

From behind every shattered minbar[1],

Al-Ḥajjāj[2] will come out one night

And al-Manṣūr[3] will come out.

ننصحكُمْ أن تقرأوا
ما جاء في الزَبُورْ ..
ننصحكُمْ أن تحملوا تَوْرَاتَكُمْ
وتتبعوا نبيَّكُمْ للطُورْ
فما لكُمْ خبزٌ هنا .. ولا لكُمْ حُضُورْ

من باب كُلِّ جامعٍ
من خلف كُلِّ منبرٍ مكسُورْ
سيخرجُ الحجَّاجُ ذاتَ ليلةٍ ..
ويخرجُ المنصُورْ ...

---

[1]The Muslim equivalent of the pulpit, from which the sermon (khutba) is delivered.
[2]Governor of Iraq (665 - 714) under the Umayyad Caliphs ʿAbd al-Malik (646 - 705) and al-Walīd (668 - 715).
[3]The second ʿAbbasid Caliph (714 - 775), who founded Baghdad in 762.

X

Expect us always

In every unexpected thing

For we are at all the airports,

In all the travel tickets ..

We appear in Rome, in Zurich,

From beneath the stone,

We appear from behind statues

And flower-beds.

١٠

إنْتَظِرُونا دائماً ..
في كُلِّ ما لا يُنْتَظَرْ
فنحنُ في كُلِّ المطارات ..
وفي كُلِّ بطاقات السَفَرْ ..
نطلع في روما .. وفي زوريخَ ..
من تحت الحَجَرْ
نطلعُ من خلفِ التماثيلِ ..
وأحواض الزَهَرْ ..

Our men come without appointment,

In the anger of thunder, and the downpour of rain.

They come in the cloak of the Prophet,

Or the sword of ʿUmar'.

Our women

Draw the sorrows of Palestine on the tears of the trees

Bury the children of Palestine in the conscience of mankind.

Our women

Carry the stones of Palestine to the land of the moon.

رجالُنا يأتُونَ دونَ موعدِ
في غَضَبِ الرعد .. وزَخّاتِ المَطَرْ
يأتونَ في عباءة الرسولِ ..
أو سَيْفِ عُمَرْ ..
نساؤُنا ..
يَرْسُمْنَ أحزانَ فلسطينَ على دمع الشَجَرْ
يقبرنَ أطفالَ فلسطينَ بوجدان البَشَرْ
نساؤنا ..
يحملنَ أحجارَ فلسطينَ إلى أرض القَمَرْ ..

'The second Caliph (584 - 644), one of the greatest figures of the early days of Islam, under whom many of the Islamic conquests were made.

XI

You stole a country

And the world applauded the adventure.

You confiscated thousands of our houses

And sold thousands of our children,

And the world applauded the dealers.

You stole the oil from the churches,

You stole Christ from his house in Nazareth

And the world applauded the adventure.

Yet you hold a funeral ceremony

If we hijack an aeroplane.

لقد سَرَقْتُمْ وطناً ..
فصفَّقَ العالَمُ للمُغامَرَهْ
صادرتُمُ الأُلوفَ من بُيُوتنا
وبعتُمُ الألوفَ من أطفالنا
فصفَّقَ العالَمُ للسماسِرَهْ
سرقتُمُ الزيتَ من الكنائِسِ
سرقتُمُ المسيحَ من منزله في الناصِرَهْ
فصفَّقَ العالَمُ للمغامَرَهْ
وتنصبُونَ مأتماً
إذا خَطَفْنا طائرَهْ ..

XII

Remember,

Remember always,

That America, strong as it is

Is not God Almighty and Powerful,

And that America, mighty as it is,

Cannot prevent birds from flying.

A big man may be killed by a small

Gun, in the hand of a young child.

تذكروا ..
تَذَكَّروا دائماً ..
بأنَّ أمْريكا ـ على شأنِـها ـ
ليستْ هي اللهَ العزيزَ القديرْ
وأنَّ أمْريكا ـ على بأسِها ـ
لنْ تمنَعَ الطيورَ من أن تطيرْ
قد تقتُلُ الكبيرَ ، بارودةٌ
صغيرةٌ ، في يد طفلٍ صغيرْ

XIII

What is between us and you will not end in a year,

Will not end in five, ten or a thousand years.

Battles for liberation are as long as fasting

And we shall remain on your chests, like the carving in the marble,

Shall remain in the sound of the drainpipes, in the wings of the doves,

Shall remain in the memory of the sun, in the notebooks of the days,

Shall remain in the naughtiness of boys, in the scribbling of pens,

Shall remain in the verse of Imru' al-Qays[1] and in the verse of Abū Tammām[2],

Shall remain in the lips of those we love,

Shall remain in the articulation of speech.

ما بيْنَنَا .. وبينكُمْ .. لا ينتهي بعامْ
لا ينتهي بخمسةٍ ، أو عشْرَةٍ ، ولا بألفِ عامْ
طويلةٌ معاركُ التحرير كالصِيَامْ
ونحنُ باقونَ على صدوركم كالنَقْشِ في الرخَامْ
باقونَ في صوت المزاريب .. وفي أجنحة الحَـمَامْ
باقونَ في ذاكرة الشمس ، وفي دفاتر الأيَّامْ
باقونَ في شَيْطَنَة الأولاد ، في خَرْبَشَة الأقلامْ
باقونَ في شعر امريء القَيْسِ ، وفي شعر أبي تمَّامْ
باقُونَ في شفاه من نُحِبُّهمْ
باقُونَ في مخارج الكَلَامْ ..

---

[1]The most famous of the pre-Islamic poets, said to have lived from c. 500 to 560 a.d.. He is credited with having been the first to lay down definite rules for Arabic verse and to have used the campsite theme at the beginning of his poems.

[2]Ninth century poet and anthologist (796 - 845) of Syrian origin, he wrote poems in praise of a number of Caliphs and viziers, in particular the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (795 - 842), who took him on his famous expedition against Amorium (838).

XIV

We shall meet again when sunset comes
We shall meet again in Tel Aviv

"Victory from God, and a near conquest"[1].

XV

June is nothing but a day like any other
And the most beautiful rose is that which grows in the garden of sorrows.

١٤

موعدُنا حين يجيءُ المَغِيبْ
موعدُنا القادمُ في تل أبيبْ
« نَصْرٌ من اللهِ ، وفَتْحٌ قريبْ » .

١٥

ليس حُزَيْرَانُ سوى يومٍ من الأيَّامْ
وأجملُ الورود ، ما ينبُتُ في حديقة الأحزانْ ..

---

[1] Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Ṣaff, verse 13.

XVI

Sorrow has sons who will grow up,

Long pain has sons who will grow up,

Those whom you killed in Palestine have children who will grow up.

The land, the neighbourhoods, the doors, have children who will grow up,

And these, all of them, have gathered together for thirty years

In the interrogation rooms, in the police stations, in the prisons,

Have gathered together like tears in the eyes,

And these, all of them,

At any, any moment,

From all the doors of Palestine, will come in.

للحزن أولادٌ سيكْبُرونْ ..
للوَجَعِ الطويلِ ، أولادٌ سيكبُرونْ ..
لمَنْ قتلتُمْ في فلسطين صغارٌ سوف يكبُرُونْ ..
للأرضِ .. للحارات .. للأبواب .. أولادٌ سيكبُرونْ
وهؤلاء كلُّهُمْ .. تَجمَّعُوا منذ ثلاثينَ سَنَهْ
في غُرَف التحقيق .. في مراكز البوليس .. في السُجُونْ
تجمَّعوا كالدمع في العُيُونْ ..
وهؤلاء كُلُّهُمْ ..
في أيٍّ .. أيٍّ لحظةٍ
من كلِّ أبواب فلسطينَ سيدخُلُونْ ..

XVII

It is said, in the book of God, be He exalted:

That you will come out from Egypt

That you will hunger and thirst in its wilderness

That you will worship the calf instead of your Lord'

That you will be ungrateful for God's bounty to you.

In the proclamations which our men carry

We have added two extra lines to what God, be he exalted, said:

"You will leave - the summits of Jawlān[2],

You will leave the bank of the Jordan

You will leave : by force of arms."

.. وجاء في كتابه تعالى :

بأنَّكُمْ من مصرَ تخرجُونْ ..

وأنَّكمْ في تيهها سوف تجوعونَ وتعطشونْ

وأنَّكمْ ستعبدونَ العِجْلَ دونَ ربِّكُمْ

وأنَّكُمْ بنعمة اللهِ عليكُمْ ، سوف تكفرونْ .

وفي المناشير التي يحملها رجالُنا

زِدْنا على ما قالهُ تعالى ، سَطْرَيْنِ آخَرَيْنْ :

« ومن ذُرى الجْولان تخرجُونْ .. »

« وضفَّةِ الأردُنَّ تخرجُونْ .. »

« بقوَّةِ السلاح تخرجُونْ .. »

---

[1]The story is mentioned in Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Baqara, verses 51 - 54.

[2]The highlands to the east of Lake Tiberias, taken from Syria by the Israelis in 1967 and partly liberated by Syria in 1973.

XVIII

The one-eyed Antichrist will die,

The one-eyed Antichrist will die,

And we shall remain here.

Like gardens, and the perfume of oranges,

Shall remain in what God drew on the notebooks of the mountains,

Shall remain in the olive-presses, in the looms,

In the ebb and the flow, and the sunrise and the sunset,

Shall remain in the fishing boats,

In the shells, and in the sand,

سوفَ يموتُ الأعْوَرُ الدجَّالْ
سوفَ يموتُ الأعورُ الدجَّالْ
ونحنُ باقونَ هُنا ..
حدائقاً .. وعِطْرَ برتُقَالْ
باقونَ فيما رسم اللهُ على دفاتر الجبالْ
باقونَ في معاصر الزيتِ .. وفي الأنْوَالْ
في المدّ .. في الجَزْر .. وفي الشُرُوق والزَوَالْ
باقونَ في مراكب الصيدِ ..
وفي الأصداف والرمالْ ..

Shall remain in the love-poems,

In the battle-poems,

Shall remain in poetry, and in the azjāl[1],

Shall remain in the perfume of the handkerchiefs, in the dabka[2] and the mawwāl[3]

In folk-tales, and in proverbs,

Shall remain in the white kūfiyya, and the ʿiqāl[4],

Shall remain in the manliness of the horse, and the manliness of the horseman,

Shall remain in the mihbāj[5] and the coffee-beans

And in the greetings of men to men,

باقونَ في قصائد الحُبِّ ..
وفي قصائد النضالْ
باقونَ في الشِّعْر .. وفي الأزْجَالْ ..
باقُونَ في عطر المناديلِ .. وفي (الدبْكةِ) و(المُوَّالْ) ..
في القَصَص الشعبيِّ .. في الأمْثَالْ
باقُونَ في الكُوفيَّة البيضاء .. والعُقَالْ
باقُون في مروءة الخيل ، وفي مروءة الخيَّالْ
باقُونَ في المِهْبَاج .. والبُنِّ ..
وفي تحيَّة الرجالِ للرجالْ ..

---

[1]A kind of popular strophic poetry.
[2]Dabka: the typical folk-dance of Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan.
[3]Mawwāl: Arab folk-song, often sung to the accompaniment of a reed pipe.
[4]The kūfiyya is the typical chequered Arab headdress, and the ʿiqāl is the heavy cord which holds it in place.
[5]The mihbāj is a kind of large morter, used with a pestle for grinding coffee by the Beduin.

Shall remain in the army greatcoats,

In the wounds, in the coughing,

Shall remain in the ears of wheat, in the breezes from the north,

Shall remain in the cross,

Shall remain in the crescent,

In the student revolt, shall remain, and in the workmen's picks,

Shall remain in the engagement rings, in the children's beds,

Shall remain in the tears,

Shall remain in the hopes.

باقُونَ في معاطف الجنودِ ..
في الجراح ، في السُعَالْ
باقونَ في سنابل القمح ، وفي نسائم الشمالْ
باقُونَ في الصليبْ ..
باقُونَ في الهلالْ ..
في ثورة الطُلّاب ، باقُونَ ، وفي معاول العُمّالْ
باقُونَ في خواتم الخُطْبةِ .. في أسِرَّة الأطفالْ
باقُونَ في الدُموعْ ..
باقُونَ في الآمالْ ..

XIX

Ninety million Arabs

Are angry over the horizon

Beware of their vengeance

When they appear from the magic bottle.

تِسْعُونَ مليونـاً من الأعرابِ ..
خلفَ الأُفْقِ غاضِبُونْ
يا ويْلَكُمْ من ثأرِهِمْ
يومَ من القُمْقُمِ يطلعُونْ ..

XX

Because Hārūn al-Rashīd[1] died long ago
And there are no longer slaves in the palace, or eunuchs
Because we ourselves killed him, and fed him to the fish
Because Harun al-Rashid is no longer a man
Because he, on his soft throne,
Does not know what Jerusalem is, or Baysān,
We cut off his head yesterday
And hung it up in Baysān[2]
Because Hārūn al-Rashīd is a cowardly rabbit
We have made his palace the headquarters of the general staff.

٢٠

لأنَّ هارونَ الرشيدَ ماتَ من زمانْ
ولم يعُدْ في القصر غِلْمانٌ .. ولا خِصْيانْ
لأنّنا نحن قتلناهُ ، وأطعمناهُ للحيتانْ
لأنَّ هارونَ الرشيدَ لم يَعُدْ إنسانْ
لأنَّهُ في تخته الوثيرِ ..
لا يعرفُ ما القُدْسُ .. وما بيسَانْ
فقد قطعنا رأسَهُ أمسِ ..
وعلَّقْنَاهُ في بيسانْ
لأنَّ هارونَ الرشيدَ أرنبٌ جبانْ
فقد جعلنا قصرَهُ .. قيادةَ الأركانْ ..

---

[1]The fifth ᶜAbbasid Caliph (766 - 809), famous for wars against the Byzantines and the splendour and intellectual brilliance of his court.
[2]See note 1, p.119.

XXI

The Palestinian remained for years at the gates,
Begging for the bread of justice from the tables of wolves,
Complaining of his torment to the Forgiving Creator
And when
He brought his horse out of his stable,
Oiled his rifle which was flung down in the cellar,
It became possible for him
To begin the reckoning.

٢١

ظلَّ الفلسطينيُّ أعواماً على الأبوابْ
يشحذُ خبزَ العدل من موائد الذئابْ
ويشتكي عذابَهُ للخالق التوَّابْ
وعندما ..
أخْرَجَ من إسطبله حصانَهُ
وزيَّتَ البارودةَ المُلْقَاةَ في السردابْ
أصبَحَ في مقدورهِ
أن يبدأ الحِسَابْ...

XXII

We are those who draw the map

And draw the slopes and the hills.

We are those who begin the trial

And lay down the reward and the punishment.

XXIII

The Arabs whom you used to think of

As exporters of dreams

Have turned, after June, into a minefield.

Hanoi has moved from its place,

And Vietnam has moved.

٢٢

نحنُ الذينَ نرسُمُ الخريطَهْ
ونرسُمُ السفوحَ والهضابْ
نحنُ الذين نبدأُ المحاكَمَهْ
ونفرضُ الثوابَ والعِقَابْ ..

٢٣

العَرَبُ الذين كانوا عندكُمْ
مُصَدّري أحْلَامْ
تحوّلُوا ـ بعد حزيرانَ ـ إلى حقلٍ من الألغامْ
وانتقلتْ (هانوي) من مكانِها ..
وانتقلتْ (فيتنامْ) ..

XXIV

The gardens of history are always in flower
In the hills of Sudan the red anemones wave
And in the deserts of Libya
A green branch has burst into leaf,
And the Arabs, of whom you said that they had petrified,
Have changed,
Have changed.

٢٤

حدائقُ التاريخ دوماً تُزْهِرُ
ففي ربى السودان قد ماجَ الشقيقُ الأحمَرُ
وفي صحارى ليبيا
أوْرَقَ غُصْنٌ أخْضَرُ
والعَرَبُ اللذينَ قلتُمْ عنهُمُ تحجَّروا ..
تغيَّرُوا ..
تغيَّرُوا ..

XXV

I, the Palestinian.
After a journey of perdition and mirage
Appear like greenery from the ruins,
Gleam like lightning on your faces,
Pour down like the clouds,
Appear every night
From the courtyard of the house, from the door handles
From the mulberry leaves, from the ivy bush,
From the pool of water,
And from the chattering of the drainpipe.

أنا الفلسطينيُّ
بعد رحلة الضَياع والسَرَابْ
أطْلَعُ كالعُشْب من الخَرَابْ
أُضيءُ كالبرق على وجوهكُمْ
أهطُلُ كالسَحَابْ
أطْلَعُ كلَّ ليلةٍ ..
من فُسْحَة الدار .. ومن مقابض الأبوابْ
من وَرَق التُوت .. ومن شجيرة اللبلابْ ..
من بِرْكة الماءِ ..
ومن ثَرْثَرة المِزْرابْ ..

I appear from my father's voice,

From my mother's face which is good and attractive,

I appear from all the black eyes and eyelashes,

From sweetheart's lattice-windows,

From lover's letters.

I appear from the smell of the dust

I open the door of my house

Enter it, without waiting for an answer,

Because I am the question and the answer.

أطلعُ من صوت أبي ..
من وجه أُمّي ، الطيِّبِ ، الجذّابْ
أطلَعُ من كُلّ العيون السُود .. والأهدابْ
ومن شبابيك الحبيبات ..
ومن رسائل الأحبابْ
أطلعُ من رائحة التُرابْ
أفتحُ بابَ منزلي ..
أدْخُلُهُ . من غير أن أنتظرَ الجوابْ
لأنّني أنا السؤالُ واالجَوَابْ ..

XXVI

You are besieged by rancour and hatred

And from here, the army of Abū ᶜUbayda[1]

And from here, Muᶜāwiya[2].

Your peace is torn to shreds,

Your house is surrounded

Like the house of any prostitute.

٢٦

مُحَاصَرونَ أنتُمُ بالحقد والكراهِيَهْ
فمِنْ هنا .. جَيْشُ أبي عُبَيْدَهْ
ومِنْ هُنا معاويَهْ
سلامُكُمْ ممزَّقٌ
وبيتُكُمْ مُطَوَّقٌ
كبيت أيِّ زانِيَهْ ...

---

[1]Abu ᶜUbayda (584 - 693) was responsible for completing the conquest of Syria after the dismissal of Khālid b. al-Walīd by ᶜUmar.
[2]Muᶜāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (603 - 680) was the first Caliph of the Ummayad dynasty, who came to power after the defeat of ᶜAlī and established his capital at Damascus.

DAMAGED

TEXT

IN

ORIGINAL

XXVII

We shall come,

With our black and white kūfiyyas[1]

We shall draw on your skin

The sign of self-sacrifice

From the womb of the days we shall come, like gushing water

From the tent of humiliation which is chewed by the wind

From the pain of al-Ḥusayn[2] we come

From the grief of Faṭima al-Zahrā'[3].

نَـأْتي ..
بِكُوفيَّاتِنا البيضاءِ والسوداءْ
نرسُمُ فوق جلدكُمْ
إشارةَ الفِدَاءْ
مِنْ رَحِـمِ الأيَّام نأتي كانبثاق الماءْ
من خَيْـمَة الذُلِّ التي يعلكها الهواءْ
مِنْ وَجَع الحسين نأتي ..
من أسى فاطمةَ الزَهْرَاءْ ..

[1]See note 4, p.157.
[2]al-Ḥusayn (d. 680) was the younger son of the fourth Caliph ʿAlī and Faṭīma, the daughter of the Prophet. After the death of his elder brother al-Ḥasan he became the leading contender for power among the descendants of the Prophet. He was killed at Karbalā' in 680 by the troops of Yazīd, the son of Muʿāwiya, during an unsuccessful attempt to arouse a revolt against the Umayyads.
[3]Faṭima al-Zahrā' (632 - 605) was the daughter of the Prophet and Khadīja, wife of ʿAlī and mother of al-Ḥusayn.

From Uḥud we come, and from Badr[1]

And from the sorrows of Karbalā'[2]

We shall come, in order to correct history and all things

And we shall expunge the letters in the streets with Hebrew names.

مِنْ أُحُدٍ ، نأتي ، ومن بَدْرٍ ..
ومن أحزان كربَلاءْ
نأتي .. لكي نصحِّحَ التاريخَ والأشياءْ ..
ونطمسَ الحروفَ في الشوارع العِبْريَّةِ الأسماءْ ..

١٩٧٠

---

[1]Battles fought by the Prophet against the pagan Meccans. Badr (March 624) was the first battle in which the Muslims were victorious. At the battle of Uḥud, which took place in March 625, the Muslims suffered heavy casualties, but the Meccans were forced to withdraw.

[2]The battle at which al-Ḥusayn and his supporters were killed in 680 (see note on previous page) Karbalā' is in Iraq, about 70 miles south of Baghdad.

14. WEDDING-FEAST OF PALESTINIAN HORSES [1]

I

In Verdun Street the beautiful horses were dying

In silence

Choosing their rare death

They say that horses by their nature

Suffer from love also,

And know the meaning of separation, and the meaning of grief

And read better than all of us

The book of the motherland.

عُـرْسُ الخيـول الفلسطينية

١

بشارع (فردانَ) كانتْ تموتُ الخيولُ الجميلَهْ
بصمتٍ ..
وتختارُ ميتَتَها النادرَهْ
يقولونَ : إنَّ الخُيُولَ بفِطْرتِها
تعاني من العشق أيضاً ،
وتعرفُ معنى الفراقِ ، ومعنى الشَجَنْ
وتقرأُ أحسنَ منَّا جميعاً
كتابَ الوَطَنْ ..

---

(1) Written for the Palestinian Resistance leaders Kamāl Nāṣir, Kamāl ʿAdwān, and Abū Yūsuf al-Najjār and his wife, who were murdered in their houses in Verdun Street, Beirut in April 1973.

II

Why do they call it a funeral ceremony?

It was the most splendid wedding-feast the city had seen.

Umm Yūsuf', you were the bride

And we were your witnesses on the night you were conducted to the most beautiful of young men.

We threw sweetmeats and roses at you

We danced the sword and shield dance² before you,

٢

لماذا يُسَمُّونَهُ مأتماً ؟
لقد كان أروعَ عرسٍ رأتْهُ المدينَهْ
ويا أُمَّ يوسفَ ، أنتِ العروسُ
ونحنُ شهُودُكِ ليلَ زُفِفْتِ لزيْنِ الشَبَابِ ،
ونحنُ رشقناكُما بالمُلبَّسِ والوردِ ،
نحنُ رقصنا أمامكما رقْصَةَ السيفِ والتُرْسِ ،

'i.e. the wife of Abū Yūsuf al-Najjār; see introductory note.
²A popular Syrian dance, traditionally danced at weddings.

We sat you on the bridegroom's horse
And your wedding-dress touched
The trees of Gaza and Nazareth.
Why do they say, that horses,
When they are killed, lose their memory?

نحنُ وضعناكِ فوق حصان العريسِ
وثوبُ زفافكِ كان يُلامِسُ
أشجارَ غزَّةَ والناصِرَهْ
لماذا يقولونَ : إنَّ الخيُولَ
ـ إذا قُتِلَتْ ـ تَفْقدُ الذاكرَهْ ؟ ؟

III

It was a beautiful wedding
Palestine met the guests in her national dress,
The journalists were taking pictures of her
Among her four children
Whom she was giving in marriage all at once.
All the horses were stretching their long necks to the sun
And running ... running
Running towards the fields of Jericho
And playing on her orchards of silk brocade.
Why do they say that noble horses
Do not know love, and romantic stories?

لقد كان عُرْسَاً جميلاً ..
وكانتْ فلسطينُ تستقبلُ الناس في زِيِّها الوطنيِّ
وكان رجالُ الصحافة يلتقطون تصاويرَها
بينَ أولادها الأربعَهْ
لقد زَوَّجَتْهُمْ جميعاً ..
وكانت جميعُ الخيول تمدُّ إلى الشمس أعناقَها العاليَهْ
وتركض .. تركض ..
تركُضُ نحو حقول أريحَا ..
وتلعبُ فوق بساتينها السُنْدُسِيَّهْ
لماذا يقولونَ إنَّ الخيولَ الكريمةَ ،
لا تعرفُ الحُبَّ .. والقصصَ العاطفيَّهْ

IV

My friend Kamāl,

Friend of notebooks, ink, and new words,

Were all the bullets they fired at you

Meant to kill a poem?

Were all the bullet-holes they left on your lips

Meant to kill a poem?

٤

صديقي كمالْ :
صديقَ الدفاترِ .. والحِبْرِ .. والكلماتِ الجديدَهْ
أكُلُّ الرصاصِ الذي أطلقوهُ عليكْ ؟
لقَتْلِ قصيدَهْ ..
أ كُلُّ الثُقُوب التي تركُوها على شَفَتَيْكْ ؟
لِقَتْلِ قصيدَهْ ..

It was a beautiful wedding

And we conducted you to the sound of the tambourines

And the light of torches,

And you sang,

And we plucked from your lips

Thousands of ears of corn,

And you taught us how to abolish the distance

Between the man of letters and the fighter.

You taught us, my friend,

That the revolver cannot murder nightingales.

لقد كانَ عُرْساً جميلاً ..
وكُنَّا نزُفُّكَ بين رنينِ الدُفوفِ
وضوءِ المشاعلْ
وكُنْتَ تُغَنّي ..
ونحنُ نَلَمْلِمُ عن شَفَتَيْكَ
أُلوفَ السنابلْ
وكُنْتَ تعلِّمُنا كيفَ نُلغي المسافةَ
بين الأديب وبين المُقاتِلْ ..
وكُنْتَ تُعَلِّمنا يا صديقي
بأنَّ المسدَّسَ لا يستطيعُ اغتيالَ البلابِلْ ..

V

On Verdun Street the thoroughbred horses were dying
And the politicians in their dolce vita
Were living like lazy snails on waste scraps of newspaper'
The ideologues were quoting the thoughts of Mao
And engaging in struggle on empty Marlboro packets.
The spies were openly accompanying women,
Sipping wine from the Bekaa[2]
And enjoying the sun of our magical coasts,
While Palestine, between the Ocean and the Gulf,
Was looking for an unoccupied room.

٥

بشارع (فردانَ) كانتْ تموتُ الخيولُ الأصيلَهْ
وكان رجالُ السياسة في الـ (دولتشي ڤيتا)
يعيشونَ كالحَلَزُونِ الكَسُولِ على فَضَلات الجرائدْ
وكان رجالُ العقيدةِ يستشهدونَ بأفكار (ماوْ)
ويحترفونَ النضالَ على عُلَبِ (المالبورو) الفارغَهْ
وكان الجواسيسُ يصطحبونَ النساءَ علانيةً ،
ويرتشفونَ نبيذَ البقاعِ ..
ويستمتعونَ بشمس شواطئنا الساحرَهْ
وكانتْ فلسطينُ بين المحيط .. وبين الخليجْ ..
تُفَتِّشُ عن غرفةٍ شاغرَهْ ..

'The 1985 edition omits the following three lines:
Abusing every great man
Every small man
And all the governments and régimes

[2]The valley lying between the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon ranges, famous for its wines.

15. INVITATION TO THE FIFTH OF JUNE TO SPEND A SUMMER HOLIDAY'

I

For a fifth year you come to us
Carrying your sack on your back..barefoot
With the sorrows of the Heavens on your face
And the pains of al-Ḥusayn.[2]
We shall meet you at all the airports with bouquets of flowers
And shall drink rivers of wine in your honour;
We shall sing you our songs, shall recite
Before you the most untrue of poems
And you will grow accustomed to us
As we have grown accustomed to you.

دعـــوةُ اصطيـافٍ للخامس من حـــزيران

١

سَنَةٌ خامسةٌ تأتي إلينا ..
حاملاً كيسَكَ فوق الظهر .. حافي القَـدَمَيْنْ ..
وعلى وجهكَ أحزانُ السماواتِ ..
وأوجاعُ الحُسَيْنْ ..
سنلاقيكَ على كلِّ المطارات بباقات الزُهُورْ
وسنحسُو ـ نَخْبَ تشريفِكَ ـ أنهارَ الخُمُورْ
سَنُغنِّيكَ أغانينَا .. ونُلقي
أكذَبَ الأشعار ما بينَ يَدَيْكْ
وستعتادُ علينا ..
مثلما اعْتَدْنَا عليكْ ...

---

[1] Written on the 5th June 1972, five years after the defeat.
[2] See note 2, p.167.

II

We invite you to spend a summer holiday with us
Like all the other tourists.
We shall give you a royal suite
Which we have prepared for you for the last five years.
You will enjoy the night, the neon lights,
Dancing the "jerk", jazz, blue films,
For here
We do not know sadness, or those who are sad.

نحنُ ندعوكَ لتصْطَافَ لدينْا
مثلَ كُلّ السائحينْ
وسنُعطيكَ جَنَاحاً ملكيَّاً
لكَ جهّزناهُ من خمس سنينْ
سوف تستمتعُ بالليل .. وأضواء النِيُونْ
وبرقص (الجيرك) و(الجاز) وأفلام الشذوذْ ..
فهُنا ..
لا نعرفُ الحزنَ ، ولا مَنْ يحزنُونْ ..

You will find in my country something to make you happy,

Furnished apartments for lovers,

Glasses set in rows for drinkers'

And a harem for the Commander of the Faithful.[2]

Why, then, are you defeated,

O visitor with a sorrowful face,

When we have water,

Greenery

And beautiful women?

سوفَ تلقى في بلادي ما يَسُرُّكْ
شِقَقاً مَفْرُوشَةً للعاشقينْ
وكؤوساً نُضِّدَتْ للشاربينْ
وحريماً لأمير المؤمنينْ ! ! .
فلماذا أنتَ مكسورُ الجَنَاحْ ؟
أيُّها الزائرُ ذو الوجه الحزينْ
ولدينا الماءُ ..
والخُضْرَةُ ..
والبِيضُ الملاحْ ..

'A reference to Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt, verse 46.
[2]The title of the Caliph.

Why do you hesitate?

We shall make you forget Palestine,

Uproot the trees of tears in your eyes,

Abolish the Sūrat al-Raḥmān[1]

And al-Fatḥ[2]

And assassinate Jesus.

We shall give you an Arab passport

With its return visas cancelled.

فلماذا تتردَّدْ ؟
سوفَ نُنْسِيكَ فلسطينَ ..
ونستأصِلُ من عينيكَ أشجارَ الدُمُوعْ
وسَنُلْغي سورة (الرحمنِ) .
و(الفَتْحِ)
ونغتالُ يَسُوعْ
وسنُعطيكَ جوازاً عربيّاً
شُطِبَتْ منه إشاراتُ الرُجُوعْ ..

---

[1]The 55th Sūra of the Qur'ān
[2]The 48th Sūra of the Qur'ān

III

A fifth year

A sixth

A seventh

An eighth

A ninth

A tenth

What do the years matter?

All the major cities from the Nile to the bank of the Euphrates

Have no recollection or memories.

Whoever has travelled in the Sinai des ert, we have forgotten him,

And whoever has died, has died.

سَنَةٌ خامسةٌ ..

سادسةٌ ..

سابعةٌ ..

ثامنةٌ ..

تاسعةٌ ..

عاشرةٌ ..

ما تَهُمُّ السَنَواتْ ؟

إنَّ كلَّ المُدُن الكبرى من النيل إلى شطِّ الفُراتْ

ما لها ذاكرةٌ أو ذكرياتْ ..

كلُّ من سافر في التيهِ ، نسيناهُ ..

ومَنْ قد ماتَ ماتْ ..

What do the years matter?

We have prepared the garlands, made the kerchiefs ready

And composed all the words.

We have carved the marble tombstones a week ago,

O East which devours the paper of communiqés

And walks like a lamb behind all the placards,

O East which writes the names of its victims

On the surface of mirrors

And the bellies of dancing-girls.

What do the years matter?

What do the years matter?

What do the years matter?

ما تَهُمُّ السَنَواتْ ؟

نحنُ أعددنا الأكاليلَ ، وهيأنا المناديلَ
وألَّفنا جميعَ الكَلِماتْ
ونَحَتْنَا قبل أسبوعٍ رُخَامَ الشاهداتْ
أيُّها الشرقُ الذي يأكلُ أوراق البلاغاتِ
ويمشي ـ كخَرُوفٍ ـ خلف كُلِّ اللافتاتْ
أيُّها الشَرْقُ الذي يكتُبُ أسماءَ ضحاياهُ
على وجه المرايا ..
وبُطُون الراقصاتْ ..
ما تهُمُّ السَنَواتْ ؟
ما تَهُمُّ السَنَواتْ ؟

16. CONVERSATION WITH AN ARAB WHO HAS LOST HIS HORSE

I

If the desert could hear me

I would ask it

To stop hatching millions of poets

And to liberate this good nation from the sword of words.

Ever since the seventh century we have been eating the fibres of words,

Sliding over the gum of r's,

Rolling down from the top of h's,

Going to sleep to Jarīr's[1] satires,

And waking up to the tears of al-Khansā'.[2]

حـــوارٌ مـــع عـــربيّ
أضـــاع فَـــرَسَـــه

١

لو كانتْ تسمعني الصحراءْ
لطلبتُ إليها ..
أن تتوقَّفَ عن تَفْريخ ملايينِ الشُعَراءْ
وتُحرّرَ هذا الشعبَ الطيّبَ من سيف الكَلِمَاتِ ..
ما زلنا منذ القرن السابع نأكُلُ أليافَ الكَلِمَاتْ
نتزحلقُ في صَمْغ الراءاتْ
نتدحرجُ من أعلى الهَاءاتْ
وننامُ على هجو جريرٍ ..
ونُفيقُ على دمع الخَنْسَاءْ ..

---

[1]Jarīr (640 - 728 or 733) is one of the best-known poets of the Umayyad period, particularly noted for his satires and his rivalry with al-Farazdaq and al-Akhṭal.
[2]al-Khansā' (575 - 664), noted female poet famous for her elegies on her brothers Ṣakhr and Muʿāwiya.

Ever since the seventh century

We have been outside the map of things,

Waiting for ʿAntara al-ʿAbsī[1]

To come on a white horse

To dispel our cares

And drive back the columns of our enemies;

We are still crunching like mice

On the exhortations of our masters the jurisprudents

And reading Maʿrūf al-Iskāfī,[2]

ما زلنا منذُ القرن السابعِ ..
خارجَ خارطة الأشياءْ
نترقَّبُ عَنْتَرةَ العَبْسيَّ ..
يجيءُ على فَرَسٍ بيضاءْ ..
ليفرِّجَ عنَّا كُرْبَتَنَا
ويردَّ طوابيرَ الأعداءْ ..
ما زلنا نقضُمُ كالفئران ..
مواعظَ سادتِنا الفُقَهَاءْ
نَقْرَأُ (معروفَ الإسكافيَّ) ..

---

[1]Famous pre-Islamic warrior poet, author of one of the Muʿallaqāt, who died c. 600 A.D.. He became one of the best-known Arab folk-heroes and the subject of a popular epic, the Sīrat ʿAntar.

[2]A hero of popular folk-tale, like Sinbad, Shāṭir Ḥasan or Ali Baba.

The Akhbār al-Nudamā',[1]

The anecdotes of Juḥā,[2]

The Ruǰūᶜ al-Shaykh,[3]

And the tale of Dāḥis and Ghabrā'.[4]

O my good country, my country

Words were a sparrow

And we have made of them

A market of prostitution.

ونقرأ (أخبارَ النُدَماءْ) ..
ونُكَاتِ جحا ..
و(رجوعَ الشيخ) ..
وقصّةَ (داحسَ والغَبْرَاءْ) ..
يا بَلَدي الطيّبَ يا بَلَدي ..
الكِلْمَةُ كانَتْ عُصْفُوراً
وجَعَلْنَا منها ..
سُوقَ بَغَاءْ ..

* * *

[1] No such work is mentioned by Brockelmann or Sezgin; perhaps the poet made the title up.

[2] A legendary figure famous for his foolishness, who nevertheless usually manages to get the better of wise men: the subject of many humorous anecdotes in the Arab world.

[3] More fully Ruǰūᶜ al-Shaykh 'ilā Ṣibāh, composed by Ibn Kamāl Pasha (d. 1533) for the Ottoman Sultan Selim, a medical manual dealing with the restoration of sexual powers.

[4] A series of wars, initiated by a dispute over a horse race, which took place in the pre-Islamic period among the tribes of Ghaṭafān, and in which ᶜAntara played a notable part.

II

If Najd would listen to me

And the Empty Quarter would listen to me,

I would seal the Market of ʿUkāẓ[1] myself with red wax.

I would hang all the carpenters

And all the farriers of words;

Ever since our birth

We have been crushed by the wheels of words.

٢

لو كانتْ نَجْدٌ تسمَعُني
والربْعُ الخالي يسمَعُني
لختمتُ أنا بالشمع الأحمر سوقَ عُكَاظْ
وشَنَقْتُ جميعَ النجَّارين ..
وكُلَّ بياطرة الألفاظْ
ما زلنا منذُ ولادتنا
تسْحَقُنَا عَجَلاتُ الألفاظْ

---

[1] A fair which was held near Mecca in the pre-Islamic period and which was frequented by poets who engaged in poetic contests.

If I were given power in my country

I would pull out the teeth of the Khaṭībs at midday on Friday,[1]

I would cut off the fingers of those who colour the Caliph's shoes with words

And would flog all those who profit by a dinar

Or a bowl of soup.

I would flog the hamza in my language

Would flog the yā'

Would slaughter the sa and the sawfa

The stupid tā' al-ta'nīth,[2]

لو أُعطى السُّلْطَةَ في وطني
لقلعتُ ثمارَ الجُمْعةِ أسنانَ الخُطَبَاءْ
وقطعتُ أصابعَ من صبغوا بالكِلْمةِ أحذيةَ الخُلَفَاءْ ..
وجَلَدْتُ جميعَ المُنْتَفعِينَ بدينارٍ ..
أو صحن حِسَاءْ ..
وجَلَدْتُ الهَمْزَةَ في لغتي ..
وجَلَدْتُ اليَاءْ ..
وذبحتُ (السينَ) .. و(سوفَ) ..
و(تاء التأنيثِ) البلْهَاءْ ..

---

[1]The Khaṭīb is the man who delivers the Friday sermon or Khuṭba in the mosque.
[2]The poet is here complaining of what he sees as artificial grammatical complications of the Arabic language, such as the difference between hamzat al-qaṭ' and hamzat al-waṣl, the difficulty of spelling words containing a weak third radical, the expression of the future, and the formation of the feminine.

Ornament ... and Kufic script -

All the tricks of the eloquent.

I would sweep away the dust of our rhetoric,

All of our thoroughbred poems.

O my country,

How is it that horses die,

And nothing remains but poets?

والزُخْرُفَ .. والخَطَّ الكوفيَّ ..
وكُلَّ ألاعيب البُلَغَاءْ
وكَنَسْتُ غُبارَ فصاحتِنا
وجميعَ قصائدنا العصماءْ ..
يا بَلَدي ..
كيف تموتُ الخَيْلُ
ولا يبقى إلا الشُعَرَاءْ ؟ ؟

III

If I were given power in my country

I would execute all those who sprawl at the doors of our cafés.

I would cut off the tongues of our singers,

Put out the eyes of the moon which laughs at the sorrows of our nights,

Break its green glass,

And give you rest, night of my country,

From this wild animal which is devouring the flesh of the simple.

٣

لو أُعطَى السُّلْطَةَ في وطني
أعدمتُ جميعَ المنبطحينَ على أبواب مقاهينَا
وقَصَصْتُ لسانَ مُغَنِّينَا
وفَقَأْتُ عيونَ القمر الضاحكِ من أحزان لياليا
وكَسَرتُ زُجَاجَتَهُ الخضراءْ
وأرحتُكَ يا ليلَ بلادي
من هذا الوحش الآكِلِ من لحم البُسَطَاءْ ..

IV

O my good country .. my country,
If the oil-wells were to dry up, and the water were to remain,
If all the perverts were castrated
And all the brokers of breasts,
If the air-conditioning in the red rooms were abolished
And the rubies in the crowns
Were to turn to soles on the feet of the poor.

٤

يا بَلَدي الطيِّبَ .. يا بَلَدي
لو تنشَفُ آبارُ البترول ، ويبقى الماءْ
لو يُخْصَى كلُّ المنحرفينَ ..
وكلُّ سماسرة الأثْدَاءْ ..
لو تُلغَىٰ أجهزةُ التكييفِ من الغُرَف الحمراءْ
وتصيرُ يواقيتُ التيجانِ ..
نِعَالاً في قَدَم الفُقَراءْ ..

If I had a whip in my hands,

I would strip the emperors of the desert of their town clothes

Would pull off all their rings,

Wipe away their nail-polish,

Crush their gleaming shoes,

And gold watches.

I would give them back their camel's milk

And their horse's saddles,

And would give them back

Even their Arab names.

لو أملكُ كرباجاً بيدي ..
جرَّدْتُ قياصرةَ الصحراء من الأثواب الحَضَريَّهْ
ونَزَعْتُ جميعَ خواتمهمْ
ومَحَوْتُ طلاءَ أظافرهمْ
وسَحَقْتُ الأحذيةَ اللمَّاعةَ ..
والساعاتِ الذهبيَّهْ ..
وأعَدْتُ حليبَ النُوق لَهُمْ
وأعَدْتُ سروجَ الخَيْل لَهُمْ
وأعدتُ لهُمْ
حتّى الأسماءَ العربيَّهْ ...

V

If the lemons in Jaffa could write, they would send thousands of kisses;
If Lake Tiberias could give us some of its letters,
The reader and the pages would burn up.
If Jerusalem had lips, the prayers in her mouth would be choked.
If only ..
But what use is "if only" when we are travelling through the tragedy,
Stretching a rope of poetic words to the Occupied Land
And extending a kerchief embroidered with tears and prayers to Jaffa.
O my country .. my country,
The knives of words have slaughtered you.

٥

لو يكتُبُ في يافا الليمونُ ، لأرسلَ آلافَ القُبُلاتْ
لو أنَّ بحيرة طبريّا تعطينا بعضَ رسائِلها ..
لاحترقَ القاري، والصَفَحَاتْ ..
لو أن القدسَ لها شفةٌ ، لاختَنَقَتْ في فمها الصَلَواتْ
لو أنَّ ..
وما تُجْدي (لو أنَّ ..) ونحنُ نسافرُ في المأساةْ
ونَمُدُّ إلى الأرض المُحْتَلَّةِ حَبْلاً شعريَّ الكَلِمَاتْ
ونَمُدُّ ليافا منديلاً طُرِّزَ بالدمع .. وبالدَعَواتْ
يا بَلَدي الطِّيبَ .. يا بَلَدي
ذَبَحَتْكَ سكاكينُ الكَلِمَاتْ ..

17. A CRIME OF HONOUR BEFORE ARAB COURTS

I

You have lost, my country, your virginity.

Nobody was concerned.

The court found against a person unknown

And the curtain was lowered.

Our tribes have forgotten how to use their fingernails;

Femininity and masculinity have become alike in their functions,

The horses have turned to stones,

Razors are no longer of any use, nor is killing of any use,

For flesh has lost its power to arouse.

جريمةُ شرفٍ
أمام المحاكم العربيّة

١

... وفَقَدْتَ يا وطَنيَ البَكارَهْ ..
لم يكترثْ أحَدٌ ..
وسُجِّلتِ الجريمةُ ضدَّ مجهولٍ
وأُرْخِيَتِ الستارَهْ ..
نسيَتْ قبائلُنا أظافرَها
تشابهتِ الأُنوثةُ والذُكُورَةُ في وظائفِها ،
تحوّلتِ الخيولُ إلى حجارَهْ ..
لم تَبْقَ للأمواس فائدةٌ .. ولا للقَتْل فائدةٌ
فإنَّ اللحمَ قد فَقَدَ الإثارَهْ ..

II

They burst in upon us;

ᶜAntara[1] was selling his mount for a couple of cigarettes

Some shirts embroidered with trees

And some new shaving cream.

ᶜAntara was selling the Jāhiliyya.[2]

They burst in upon us;

The victim's uncles were drinking gin and lemon,

Spending their summer holiday in Lebanon,

Relaxing in Aswān,

Buying, in the Khān al-Khalīlī[3], rings, bracelets,

And eyes of Fāṭima.[4]

٢

دَخَلُوا علينا ..
كانَ عَنْتَرَةٌ يبيعُ حصانَهُ بلُفَافَتَيْ تَبْغٍ ..
وقمصانٍ مُشجَّرةٍ ..
ومعجُونٍ جديدٍ للحلاقةِ ..
كان عَنْتَرَةٌ يبيعُ الجاهليَّهْ
دَخَلُوا علينا ..
كان أخْوَالُ القتيلة يشربونَ (الجِنَّ) بالليمونِ ..
يصطافونَ في لبنانَ ..
يرتاحونَ في أسْوَانَ ..
يبتاعونَ من (خان الخليليِّ) الخواتمَ .. والأساورَ ..
والعُيُونَ الفاطِميَّهْ ...

---

[1]See note 1, p.183.
[2]The pre-Islamic period of Arabia, famous for its martial valour.
[3]The main traditional market in Cairo, where antiquities are sold.
[4]A kind of amulet to ward off the evil eye.

III

'Udhrī

Qays still writes his/poetry

While the Jews have crept into the bed of Laylā al-'Āmiriyya.[1]

Not even the neighbourhood's dogs barked;

Not a rifle bullet was fired at the adulterer.

"Lofty honour is not safe!"[2]

٣

ما زالَ يكتبُ شِعْرَه العُذْريَّ ، قَيْسٌ
واليهودُ تَسَرَّبُوا لفِراش ليلى العامريَّهْ
حتى كلابُ الحيِّ لم تَنْبَحْ ..
ولم تُطْلَقْ على الزاني رصاصةُ بندقيَّهْ
« لا يَسْلَمُ الشَرَفُ الرفيعُ » !

---

[1]Qays b. Mulawwaḥ, otherwise known as Majnūn Laylā, (d. 688) a semi-legendary poet of the Umayyad period, who composed platonic ('Udhrī) love-poetry to his beloved Laylā (al-'Āmiriyya).

[2]Part of the first hemistich of a line of al-Mutanabbī; the full line is:
Lofty honour is not safe from harm
until blood is shed around it.

We have lain with the invaders three times,

Have lost our chastity three times,

And said farewell to our manhood , with ceremonies and military

honours.

"Lofty honour is not safe!"

We have changed our evidence, denied our relationship,

And burned the files on the case.

ونحنُ ضَاجَعْنَا الغُزَاةَ ثلاثَ مرَّاتٍ ..
وضَيَّعْنَا العفافَ .. ثلاثَ مرَّاتٍ ..
وشَيَّعْنَا المُروءةَ بالمراسمِ ، والطُقُوس العسكريَّهْ
« لا يَسْلَمُ الشَرَفُ الرفيعُ » !
ونحنُ غيَّرنا شهادتَنا .. وأنْكَرْنا علاقتَنا ..
وأحْرَقْنَا مِلفَّاتِ القضيَّهْ ..

IV

The sun shines once again.

The street cleaners are gathering up the fingers of the dead,

And children's toys.

The sun shines once again.

The memory of the cities is like the memory of whores and seas.

The sun shines once again,
The cafés are full again,
And conversation is furious:

٤

الشمسُ تُشْرقُ مرةً أُخرى ..
وعُمَّالُ النظافة يجمعونَ أصابعَ الموتى ..

وألعابَ الصغارْ ..
الشمسُ تُشْرِقُ مرةً أُخرى ..
وذاكرةُ المدائن مثل ذاكرة البغايا والبِحَارْ
الشمسُ تُشْرِقُ مرةً أُخرى ..
وتمتلئ المقاهي مرةً أُخرى
ويحتدمُ الحِوَارْ :

- It is a crime of passion.
- Women are reckless, all of them; our law is against the victim.
- Gentlemen, the whole scheme is America's doing; the oil of the Gulf is the basis, and everything else is side issues.
- To hell with politics, we like Aznavour, whisky with crushed ice, and foreign perfumes.
- Women have only half a brain, our law is against the victim.
- .....
- .....
- All our ancient and modern laws are against the victim.

- إنَّ الجريمةَ عاطفيَّهْ ..
- إنَّ النساءَ جميعَهنَّ مُغامِراتٌ والشريعةُ عندنا ضدَّ الضحيَّهْ ..
- يا سادتي .. إنَّ المخطَّطَ كلَّهُ من صُنْع أمْريكا ، وبترولُ الخليج هو الأساس ، وكلُّ ما يبقى أمُورٌ جانبيَّهْ ..
- مَلْعُونَةٌ أُمُّ السياسةِ ... نحنُ نُحِبُّ أزنافورَ ، والوِسكيَّ بالثلج المكسَّرِ ، والعُطُورَ الأجنبيَّهْ ..
- إنَّ النساءَ بنصف عقلٍ .. والشريعةُ عندنا ضدَّ الضحيَّهْ ...
- .....
- .....
- كلُّ القوانين القديمة والحديثة عندنا ضِدَّ الضحيَّهْ ...

V

The Arab world swallows its tablet (a live broadcast)

"How wonderful is patience, how wonderful[1]".

And the Arab world

Laughs at the Jews advancing on it

From beneath its fingernails.

٥

العالَمُ العربيُّ يبلعُ حَبَّةَ (البَتِّ المباشِرْ)
(يا عِيْني عالصَبْرْ ، يا عِيْني عليهْ)
والعالمُ العربيُّ ..
يضحكُ لليهود القادمينَ إليهِ ..
من تحت الأظافِرْ ...

---

[1]A line from a song of 'Umm Kulthūm in praise of those who are patient.

VI

June comes and goes,

Al-Farazdaq plants a knife in Jarīr's[1] lungs.

The Arab world is a game of chess

Scattered chessmen

And flying papers.

The horses are thirsty, and the tribes are asked for protection but do not give it.

(The official spokesman announces that at five past one the Jews drank tea in Beirut, had a little rest in its hotels, and returned safely)

٦

يأتي حزيرانٌ ويَذْهَبُ ..
والفرزدقُ يغرُزُ السِكِّينَ في رِئَتَيْ جريرْ ..
والعالَمُ العربيُّ شطرنْجٌ ..
وأحجارٌ مبعثرةٌ ..
وأوراقٌ تطيرْ ..
والخيلُ عطشى .. والقبائلُ تُسْتَجَارُ ولا تُجِيرْ ..
(الناطقُ الرسميُّ يعلنُ أنَّهُ في الساعة الأولى
وخَمْسِ دقائقٍ ، شربَ اليهودُ الشايَ في بيروتَ ،
وارتاحوا قليلاً في فنادقها ، وعادوا سالمينْ ...)

---

[1]See note 1, p. 182.

There is nothing like gin and lemon, in wartime, and the most beautiful of breasts to touch is the full and round.

(The official spokesman announces that they roamed round the city markets, bought newspapers and apples, and danced the "jerk" in hatred, assassinating all the dancers)

- Swedish girls are the best at making love.

- Sex in Stockholm can be drunk like wine at the tables.

- Sex can be read in Sweden with the newspapers.

- لا شيءَ مثل (الجِنِّ) بالليمون .. في زمن الحروبِ ..
وأجْمَلُ الأثْداء ، في اللّمْسِ ، المليءُ .. المُسْتديرْ ..
(الناطقُ الرسميُّ يعلنُ أنَّهُم طافوا بأسواق
المدينة ، واشتروا صُحُفاً وتُفَّاحاً ، وكانوا
يرقصون (الجيرك) في حقدٍ ، ويغتالونَ كلَّ الراقصينْ)
- إنَّ السويديّات أحسنُ من يمارسنَ الهوى ...
- والجِنْسُ في ستوكهولمَ يُشْرَبُ كالنبيذ على الموائدْ ...
- الجِنْسُ يُقْرَأُ في السويد مع الجرائدْ ...

(The official spokesman announces in a subsequent communiqué:

The Jews have married our wives

And have gone off with them, may they have prosperity and sons).

VII

The Arab world is a whore

Sleeping on a pillow of jasmine.

War is decreed by the Lord of the Worlds

And cowardice is decreed by the Lord of the Worlds.

(الناطقُ الرسميُّ يعلنُ في بلاغٍ لاحقٍ :
أنَّ اليهودَ تزوَّجوا زوجاتِنا ..
ومَضَوْا بهنَّ .. فبالرفاه وبالبنينْ ..)

٧

العالمُ العربيُّ غانيةٌ ..
تنامُ على وسادة ياسمينْ
فالحربُ من تقدير ربِّ العالمينْ
والجُبْنُ من تقدير ربِّ العالمينْ ...

VIII

I have decided, my country, to assassinate you by travelling.

I have booked my ticket,

Said farewell to the ears of wheat, the streams and the trees,

And have taken pictures of the fields in my pocket.

I have taken the signature of the moon,

The face of my beloved,

And the smell of the rain.

My heart is with you, while you, my country,

Sleep on stone.

٨

قرَّرتُ يا وطني اغتيالَكَ بالسَفَرْ..
وحجزتُ تذكرتي ،
وودَّعْتُ السنابلَ ، والجداولَ ، والشَجَرْ
وأخذتُ في جيبي تصاويرَ الحقولِ ..
أخذتُ إمضاءَ القَمَرْ ..
وأخذتُ وجهَ حبيبتي ..
وأخذتُ رائحةَ المَطَرْ ..
قلبي عليكَ .. وأنتَ يا وَطَني
تنامُ على حَجَرْ ..

IX

O country who travels in oratory,

Poems and dramatic texts,

O country portrayed in picture postcards,

Maps and school songs,

O country besieged

Between the teeth of the Caliphate, inheritance and authority,

And all the nouns of admiration and demonstratives,

O country whose poets

Put on - to please the authorities -

False eyelashes.

يا أيُّها الوطنُ المسافرُ في الخطابةِ ..
والقصائدِ .. والنصوص المسرحيَّهْ
يا أيُّها الوطنُ المصوَّرُ في بطاقات السياحةِ ..
والخرائطِ .. والأغاني المدرسيَّهْ ..
يا أيُّها الوطنُ المُحَاصَرُ
بين أسنان الخلافةِ ، والوراثةِ ، والإمارَهْ
وجميع أسماء التعجُّب والإشارَهْ
يا أيُّها الوطنُ الذي شُعَرَاؤه
يضَعُونَ ـ كي يُرضُوا السلاطينَ ـ
الرُّمُوشَ المُسْتَعَارَهْ ! ! .

X

Dear Public, I am resigning;

The script does not suit me, my clothes are patched, and my rôle is impossible.

The direction is useless, the loudspeakers are useless,

The poetry is useless, and so are al-Khalīl's measures.'

١٠

يا سيِّدي الجمهورَ .. إنِّي مُسْتَقيلْ ..
إن الروايةَ لا تناسِبُني ، وأثوابي مُرَقَّعَةٌ ، ودَوْري مستحيلْ
لم يبق للإخراج فائدةٌ .. ولا لمكبرّات الصوت فائدةٌ ..
ولا للشعر فائدةٌ .. وأوزانِ الخليلْ

'Al-Khalīl b. 'Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (718 - 786) is known as the founder of the Arabic science of prosody.

Dear Public, forgive me if I have lost my memory,

Have lost the art of writing and the use of my fingers,

And have forgotten the names of the streets.

I have killed you, my country which is extended over postal cancellations

And over the paper of the stamps,

I have slaughtered my horses who have gone on strike against neighing;

I have killed you, and discovered that it is I who am the victim.

Dear Public, forgive me

For the rôle of the Sultan's clown is an impossible one.

يا سيِّدي الجمهورَ سامحني إذا ضيعتُ ذاكرتي ..
وضيَّعتُ الكتابةَ والأصابعْ ..
ونسيتُ أسماءَ الشوارعْ ..
إنيَ قتلتُكَ أيُّها الوطَنْ الممدَّدُ فوق أختام البريدِ ،
وفوق أوراق الطوابعْ ..
وذبحتُ خَيْلي المُضْرِبَاتِ عن الصهيلْ
إنيَ قتلتُكَ ، واكتشفتُ بأنَّني كنتُ القتيلْ ..
يا سيِّدي الجمهور سامحْني ..
فدَوْرُ مُهرِّجِ السلطانِ دورٌ مُسْتَحيلْ ...

18. THE GOVERNOR AND THE SPARROW

I

I wander through the Arab homeland

To read my poetry to the public.

I am satisfied

That poetry is a loaf baked for the public,

And I have been satisfied from the beginning

That letters are fish

And that the water is the public.

الحاكمُ والعصفُور

١

أَتَجوَّلُ في الوطن العربيِّ
لأقرَأَ شِعْري للجُمْهُورْ
فأنا مُقْتَنِعٌ
أنَّ الشعرَ رغيفٌ يُخْبَزُ للجُمْهُورْ
وأنا مُقْتَنِعٌ ـ منذُ بدأتُ ـ
بأنَّ الأَحْرُفَ أسماكٌ
وبأنَّ الماء هو الجُمْهُورْ ..

II

I wander through the Arab homeland

With nothing but a notebook.

One police-station sends me to another,

One army throws me to another,

Yet I carry nothing in my pocket but a sparrow.

But the officer stops me

And wants a pass for the sparrow;

In my homeland speech needs

A travel-pass!

أَتَجوَّلُ في الوطن العربيِّ
وليسَ معي إلَّا دفْتَرْ ..
يُرْسِلُني المخْفَرُ للمخْفَرْ ..
يَرْميني العَسْكَرُ للعَسْكَرْ ..
وأنا لا أحملُ في جيبي إلا عُصْفُورْ
لكنَّ الضابطَ يُوقِفُني
ويريدُ جوازاً للعُصْفُورْ
تحتاجُ الكِلْمَةُ في وَطَني
لجَوَازِ مُرُورْ ! ! .

III

I remain discarded for hours
Waiting for the chief's edict,
Looking at sandbags
While the tears in my eye are like seas
And before me a signboard rises up
Talking of "One Country",
Talking of "One People".

٣

أبقى مَرْمِيَّاً ساعاتٍ ..
مُنتظِراً فَرمَانَ المأمُورْ
أتأمَّلُ في أكياسِ الرَمْلِ ،
ودَمْعي في عينيَّ بُحُورْ
وأمامي ، ارْتَفَعَتْ لافِتَةٌ
تتحدَّثُ عن (وَطَنٍ واحِدْ) ..
تتحدَّثُ عن (شعبٍ واحِدْ) ...

While I, like a rat, am sitting here,

Vomiting up my sorrows,

Treading underfoot all the chalk slogans

And remaining at the gate of my country,

Discarded like a broken glass.

وأنا ، كالجُرْذِ ، هُنا قاعِدْ
أتقيَّأُ أحزاني ..
وأدوسُ جميعَ شعارات الطَبْشُورْ
وأظلُّ على باب بلادي
مَرْمِيَّاً كالقَدَح المكْسُورْ ...

19. THE WILL

I

I open my father's chest
And tear up the will.
I sell what I have inherited by auction:
A collection of ivory prayer-beads,
His turkish fez, his woollen socks,
His snuff-box, his old samovar, his umbrella.
I draw my sword in anger
Cut off heads, and loose joints,
Demolish the East over its inhabitants
Takiyya by Takiyya.[1]

الوصيّة

١

أَفْتَحُ صندوقَ أبي ..
أُمَزِّقُ الوصيَّهْ .
أَبيعُ في المزاد ما وَرِثْتُهُ :
مجموعةُ المسابح العاجيَّهْ
طربُوشُهُ التركيُّ ، والجواربُ الصُوفيَّهْ
وعُلْبَةُ النُشُوقِ ، والسَمَاوَرُ العتيقُ ، والشَمْسِيَّهْ
أَسْحَبُ سيفي غاضباً
وأَقطعُ الرؤوسَ ، والمفَاصِلَ المَرْخِيَّهْ
وأهدمُ الشرقَ على أصحابِهِ
تَكِيَّةً .. تَكِيَّهْ ...

[1]The Takiyya is a meeting-place for dervishes.

II

I open my father's chest
And see nothing
But Mevlevi dervishes'[1]
The lute .. the qānūn[2] .. Eastern bashārif.[3]
The story of al-Zīr[4] on his horse,
Idlers drinking turkish coffee.
I draw my sword in anger,
Kill the ten Mu'allaqāt[5] and the Alfiyya[6]
Kill the caves, and the tambourines,
And the foolish tombs.

٢

أفتحُ صُندوقَ أبي ..
فلا أرى ..
إلّا دراويشَ ومَوْلَوِيَّهْ
والعُودَ .. والقانُونَ .. والبشارِفَ الشرقيَّهْ
وقِصّةَ الزيرِ على حصانِهِ
وعاطلينَ يشربونَ القهوةَ التُرْكيَّهْ
أسحبُ سيفي غاضباً
وأقْتُلُ المعلّقاتِ العَشْرَ .. والألْفِيَّهْ
وأقتلُ الكهوفَ ، والدُفوفَ ،
والأضرِحَةَ الغبيَّهْ ..

---

[1] An order of Sufis, followers of Mevlana Jalāl-al-Dīn al-Rūmī (1207 - 1273). Their main centre was in the Turkish town of Konya. They are sometimes known in the West as the Whirling Dervishes.
[2] A kind of musical instrument similar to a zither.
[3] A type of old popular song, like the mawwāl and tawshīh, popular in the Ottoman period.
[4] The hero who fought in the pre-Islamic Basūs wars and was fond of women.
[5] A collection of ten (or seven) outstanding pre-Islamic poems.
[6] A rhymed grammatical treatise, composed in the 13th century by the Spannish grammarian Ibn Mālik (1203 - 1274).

III

I open my father's history,

I open my father's days.

I see what others cannot see,

Prayers .. religious eulogies

Pots .. beneficial herbs,

Medicines for sexual potency.

I search for knowledge which may benefit me,

I search for writings which are relevant to this age or relevant to me,

And see around me nothing but sand and an Age of Ignorance.[1]

٣

أَفْتَحُ تاريخَ أبي ..
أَفْتَحُ أيَّامَ أبي ..
أرى الذي ليسَ يُرى
أدْعِيَةٌ ... مدائِحٌ دينيَّـهْ
أوعيةٌ ... حشائِشٌ طبيَّهْ
أدويةٌ .. للقُدْرةِ الجِنْسيَّهْ
أبحثُ عن معرفةٍ تنفعني
أبحثُ عن كتابةٍ تخُصُّ هذا العصر .. أو تَخُصُّني
فلا أرى حولي سوى رملٍ .. وجاهليَّهْ

---

[1]An allusion to the original Age of Ignorance (Jāhiliyya), the pre-Islamic period.

IV

I reject my father's heritage.

I reject the garment in which he clothed me,

Reject the knowledge which he taught me,

And all the sexual complexes which he bequeathed to me.

I reject the Thousand and One Nights,

The wondrous bottle, the genie, the flying carpet

I reject the heedless Sayf al-Dawla' and the abject, silly poems,

I burn the picture of my family, I burn my alphabet,

And from Palestine, from its steadfastness,

From the shots in its hills

From its wheat soaked in tears, from its roses

I make an alphabet.

٤

أرفضُ ميراثَ أبي .
وأرفضُ الثوبَ الذي ألْبَسَني
وأرفضُ العلمَ الذي عَلَّمني
وكلَّ ما أوْرَثَني من عُقَدٍ جِنْسيَّهْ
أرفضُ (ألفَ ليلةٍ) ..
والقمقُمَ العجيبَ ، والماردَ ، والسُجَّادةَ السحريَّهْ
أرفضُ سيفَ الدولة المغرورَ .. والقصائدَ الذليلةَ الغبيَّهْ ..
أُحْرِقُ رسْمَ أُسْرتي .. أُحْرِقُ أبْجَديَّتي ..
ومن فلسطينَ ، ومن صُمودِها
من طَلَقات النار في جُرُودها
من قمحها المغموس بالدمعِ ، ومن ورودِها
أصْنَعُ أبْجَديَّهْ ...

'The ruler of Aleppo (915 - 967) and patron of the poet al-Mutanabbī.

V

I enter the Caliph's window like lightning.

I see that he is still as I left him

Seven centuries ago

Lying with a Greek concubine.

I read verses from the Qur'ān above his head

Written in Kufic letters

About Holy War for the sake of God, and the Prophet,

And the Islamic Holy Law.

٥

أدْخُلُ مثل البَرْق من نافذة الخليفَهْ ..
أراهُ لا يزالُ مثلما تركتُهُ
منذ قرونٍ سَبْعَةٍ
مضاجعاً جاريةً رومِيَّهْ
أقْرَأُ آياتٍ من القرآنِ فوق رأسِهِ
مكتوبةً بأحرفٍ كُوفِيَّهْ
عن الجهاد في سبيل اللهِ ، والرسُولِ ،
والشريعةِ الحنيفَهْ ..

I say to myself:

May the Holy War be blessed in bosoms

Breasts

And soft wrists.

O Lord Caliph,

I pass through the pavilions of the harem like fate

Walking on bodies, slaves

And flung down bracelets,

Walking on the pain of silk and velvet.

أقولُ في سريرتي :
تبارَكَ الجهادُ في النُحُورِ ..
والأثْدَاءِ ..
والمعاصمِ الطريَّـهْ ..
يا حضرةَ الخليفَـهْ ..
أعبُرُ من سُرَادِقِ الحريم كالمنيَّـهْ
أمْشي على الأبْدانِ .. والغِلْمانِ ..
والأساور المَرْميَّـهْ ..
أمشي على توجُّع الحرير والقطيفَـهْ ..

VI

I enter the Caliph's window like death.

He supposes that I am a mercenary

Who has composed in his praise a poem rhyming in hamza;[1]

He orders that I should receive from the treasury of the faithful all that I ask,

A cloak of gold brocade,

A gold watch,

A concubine from the women of his palace.

٦

أدخُلُ مثلَ الموت من نافذة الخليفَـهْ
يَحسبُني مرتزقاً ..
دبَّجْتُ في مديحه قصيدةً هَمْزيَّـهْ
يأمُرُ لي من بيتِ مالِ المؤمنينَ كلَّ ما أطلبُـهُ ..
عباءةً من قَصَبٍ
وساعةً من ذَهَبٍ
ومن نساء قصره مَحْظيَّـهْ ..

---

[1] i.e. a poem whose final rhyming consonent is the glottal stop (hamza). There is a famous hamziyya by the Egyptian sufi poet al-Būṣīrī (1212 - 1296) in praise of the Prophet; perhaps Qabbānī is thinking of this.

I spit in his face,

And in the face of the Exalted Empire.

"Who are you?

Executioner! Cut off his head

And bring me the head on a tray!"

O king of the time, even if you kill me,

It is impossible to kill freedom.

أَبْصُقُ فوق وجههِ ..
وفوق وجه الدولة العَلِيَّـهْ
من أنتَ ؟
يا سيَّافُ . إقطَعْ رأسَهُ ..
وهاتِ لي الرأسَ على صينيَّـهْ
يا مَلِكَ الزمانِ ، إنْ قتلتَني
فمستحيلٌ تقتُلُ الحريَّـهْ ...

VII

Arise, O Long-Lived One

From your rosy chamber

And open your lattice windows

To the sun, to justice, to your subjects

For the people have not seen you since the last days of the Umayyads.[1]

Are you really one of the Umayyads?

Go out into the street, our Prince,

And read, even a daily newspaper.

٧

قُمْ يا طويلَ العُمْرِ ..
من حُجْرتكَ الورديَّـهْ
وافْتَحْ شبابيكَكَ ..
للشمسِ ، وللعدلِ ، وللرعيَّـهْ
فما رآكَ الشعبُ من آخرِ أيَّامِ بني أُميَّـهْ ..
هل أنتَ حقّاً من بني أُميَّـهْ ؟..
أخرُجْ إلى الشارع يا أميرَنا ..
واقرأ .. ولو صحيفةً يوميَّـهْ ..

---

[1]The dynasty of Caliphs who ruled the Islamic world from 661 - 750 A.D..

Read

About Suez, Jordan, Jawlān,'

The captive cities,

About those who cross the river to the West Bank.

Do you have in your court, O Long-Lived One,

A little map of the West Bank?

إقْرأْ ..
عن السويس ، والأرْدُنِّ ، والجُولان ،
والمدائن السَبِيَّـهْ ..
عن اللذينَ يعبرونَ النهرَ نحو الضفَّةِ الغربيَّـهْ ..
هل يا طويلَ العُمْر .. في بلاطكُمْ
خريطةٌ صغيرةٌ .. للضفَّةِ الغربيَّـهْ ؟ ؟ ...

'See note 2, p. 155.

20. THE SPEECH

I

They arrested me

As I was laughing by myself like a madman

At a speech which the Commander of the Faithful' was delivering.

My laughter cost me ten years.

الخطـَاب

١

أوْقَفُوني ..
وأنا أَضحكُ كالمَجْنُونِ وحدي
مِنْ خطابٍ كان يُلقيهِ أَميرُ المؤمنينْ
كلَّفتْني ضِحْكَتي عَشْرَ سنينْ ..

'See note 1, p. 178.

They asked me,

While I was in the interrogation room, who had instigated me

And I laughed.

And they asked about the money, and who had financed me

And I laughed.

They wrote down all my statements

And did not cross-question me.

سَأَلوني ،
وأنا في غُرْفَة التحقيقِ ، عمَّن حرَّضوني
فَضَحِكْتْ ..
وعن المال .. وعمَّنْ مَوَّلُوني ..
فضَحِكتْ ..
كَتَبُوا كلَّ إفاداتي ..
ولم يَسْتجوبُوني ..

The public prosecutor said of me.

And the soldiers said when they arrested me,

That I was against the government.

I did not know that laughter

Needed a government permit,

Fees and stamps.

I did not know anything

About brainwashing

Or chopping off fingers.

قال عَنِّي المُـدَّعي العامُ ..
وقال الجُنْدُ حين اعتقلوني
إنَّني ضدَّ الحُكُومَـهْ ..
لم أكُنْ أعرفُ أن الضِحْكَ ..
يحتاجُ لترخيص الحكُومَـهْ ..
ورُسُومٍ .. وطوابِعْ ..
لم أكُنْ أعرف شيئاً ..
عن غسيل المُـخِّ ..
أو فَرْم الأصابعْ ! ! .

In my country

It is possible for man to write against God

But not against the government.

So forgive me, gentlemen,

If I laughed.

I should have liked to weep,

But I laughed.

في بلادي ،
ممكنٌ أن يكتُبَ الإنسانُ ضدَّ الله ..
لا ضِدَّ الحكومَهْ ..
فاعذرُوني ، أيُّها السادةُ ،
إنْ كنتُ ضحِكْتْ ..
كان في وُدّيَ أن أبكي ..
ولكنيَ ضَحِكتْ ..

II

I was in the cafe in the afternoon.

The acrobat

Was wearing a clown's cap on his head

And reciting "What the listeners want"[1]

About Palestine, which had become, as days went by,

"What the listeners want"

And a celebration, like ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, and ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā,[2]

Swings, pastries, rolls,

And visits to cemeteries.

كنتُ بعدَ الظُهْرِ في المقهى ..
وكان البَهْلَوانْ ..
يلبسُ الطرطورَ بالرأسِ ..
ويُلْقي كلَّ (ما يطلبُهُ المستمعُونْ)
عن فلسطينَ التي صارت مع الأيّام ،
(ما يطلبُهُ المستمعُونْ)
واحتفالاً مثل عيد الفِطْر .. والأَضْحَى ..
أراجيحَ ، وكَعْكاً ، وفَطَائرْ ..
وزياراتِ مقابرْ ..

---

[1]Name of a popular programme of listener's requests.
[2]The two major festivals of the Islamic year, marking the end of Ramadan and the conclusion of the Pilgrimage.

I was trying to recall my thoughts

And the informers,

Like germs, were in all the cups, on all the plates.

I was listening, like the thousands of good simple folk

To the acrobat's words

As he spoke, then spoke, then spoke

Like a peep-show.[1]

I remembered the nights of Ramadan

And Karagöz[2] who had a thousand tongues and a tongue.

كنتُ أسْتَرجِعُ أفكاري ..
وكانَ المُخبرُونْ
كالجراثيم ، على كلِّ الفناجينِ ، وفي كُلِّ الصُحُونْ
كنتُ أُصْغي كألوف البُسَطَاء الطيِّبينْ
لكلام البهْلَوانْ
وهْوَ يحكي .. ثمَّ يحكي .. ثمَّ يَحْكي ..
مثلَ صندوق العجائبْ
... وتذَّكرتُ ليالي رمَضَانْ
وأراجُوزَ الذي كان له ألفُ لسانٍ .. ولسانْ

---

[1] Ṣandūq al-ʿajā'ib; a kind of travelling show which used to be popular a generation ago. The showman turns a handle to reveal pictures of legendary heroes such as Abū Zayd al-Hilālī, accompanying the pictures by a running commentary.
[2] Karagöz is the main character of the shadow-theatre, which was particularly popular during Ramadan.

I remembered Palestine which had become a suitcase
Without a friend in the world.
There was salt in my throat
And my grief was the size of the stars.
So forgive me, gentlemen
If I have broken the peep-show,
Vomited in the face of the Commander of the Faithful'
And the chief adjutant,
And have taken my rest.
I should have liked to weep,
But I laughed.

وتذكَّرتُ فلسطينَ التي صارتْ حقيبَهْ
ما لها في الأرض صاحبْ
كان في حنجرتي ملْحٌ ..
وحُزْني كان في حجم الكواكبْ
فاعذُروني ، أيُّها السادةُ ،
إنْ حطّمتُ صُندوقَ العجائبْ
وتَقيَّأتُ على وجه أمير المؤمنينْ
وكبيرِ الياوَرَانْ ..
واسترحتْ ..
كانَ في وُدّيَ أن أبْكي ..
ولكنّي ضحِكْتْ ..

'See note 1, p. 178.

III

They published in today's newspapers

My pictures on the front page

And my confessions, on the front page,

And I laughed.

They presented me as fodder for the radio

And the teeth of the press.

They made me, without my knowing, into a fable;

They linked me with embassies, and foreign allies

And I laughed.

نَشَرُوا في صُحُفِ اليوم ..
تصاويري على أوّل صفْحَهْ
واعترافاتي ، على أوّل صَفْحَهْ
فضَحِكْتْ
قَدَّموني للإذاعاتِ طَعَاماً
ولأسنان الصِحَافَهْ ..
جَعَلُوني ، دونَ أن أدري ، خُرافَهْ
ربطوني بالسفاراتِ .. وأحلافِ الأجانبْ
فضَحِكْتْ ...

I had never worked as a procurer

And had not been a mount for foreigners.

I am one of God's servants, decent,

Obscure,

Of limited talents.

I listen to the news like everyone else,

Meet the tax-inspector;

My wife is a good-hearted woman, and I have two sons.

My father fought against the Turks in Syria

And died.

إنّني لم أشتغِلْ من قَبْلُ قَـوّاداً ..
ولا كنتُ حصاناً للأجانبْ
أنا عَبْدٌ من عبادِ الله مستورٌ ..
ومَغْمُورٌ ..
ومحدودُ المواهِبْ
أَسْمَعُ الأخبارَ كالناسِ ،
وأستقبِلُ مأمورَ الضرائبْ
زوجتي طيِّبةُ القلب ، وعندي وَلَدانْ
وأبي حاربَ ضدَّ التُرْكِ في الشامِ ..
ومات ..

I do not understand syntax or morphology

Or 'ilm al-Kalām'

But I no longer understand the meaning of speech

And I can no longer digest a single letter

Of the lies of the Commander of the Faithful.[2]

Words have become rubber

And the language of the rulers has become gum and dough.

أنا لا أفهمُ في النَحْو .. وفي الصَرْفِ ..
وفي عِلْم الكلَامْ ..
غير أنيَ لم أعُدْ أفْهَمُ ما معنى الكَلامْ ..
لم أعُدْ أهضم حَرْفَاً
من أكاذيب أمير المؤمنينْ
صارت الألفاظُ مطَّاطاً ..
وصارَتْ لغةُ الحُكّام صَمْغَاً .. وعَجينْ ..

---

[1]The scholastic theology of the early Islamic centuries. The term literally means "the science of speech" (i.e. God's speech, or the Qur'ān).
[2]See note 1, p.178.

They drugged me

With millions of slogans, and I slept.

They showed me Jerusalem in a dream

But I could not find Jerusalem, or its stones, when I awoke.

So forgive me,

Gentlemen, if I laughed.

I should have liked to weep,

But I laughed.

خَدَّروني ..
بملايين الشعاراتِ .. فَنِمْتْ
وأرَوْني القُدْسَ في الحُلْمِ .. ولَمْ
أجِدِ القدسَ ، ولا أحجارَها ، حين استَفَقتْ
فاعذُروني ..
أيُّها السادةُ ، إن كنتُ ضحكتْ ..
كانَ في وُدِّيَ أن أبكي ..
ولكنّي ضَحِكتْ ..

IV

I was in the police-station, broken like church crystal,
Blowing the Sūrat Yāsīn[1] in the faces of the killers.
I had nothing but patience
- "God loves the patient"[2] -
And my wounds were like the orchards of Jericho,
Raining rubies
And emitting the fragrance of jasmine,

٤

كنتُ في المخفر مكْسُوراً كبِلَّور كنيسَهْ
نافخاً (سورةَ ياسين) بوجه القاتلينْ
لم أَكُنْ أملكُ إلا الصبْرَ ..
(واللهُ يُحِبُّ الصابرينْ)
وجراحي كبساتين أريحا
يُمْطِرُ الياقوتُ منها ..
ويضوعُ الياسمينْ ..

---

[1]The 36th Sūra of the Qur'ān.
[2]Part of Sūrat Al ʿImrān, verse 146.

While Palestine in the world is a dove
Which has fallen beneath the soles of informers.
I was alone.
Nobody visited me in prison, except
Mount Carmel, the sea, and the sun of Nazareth.
I was alone
While the kings of the East were corpses
Floating on the waters of memory.

وفلسطينُ على الأرض حَمَامَهْ
سقَطَتْ تحت نعالِ المُخْبِرينْ
كنتُ وحدي ..
لم يَزُرني أحَدٌ في السجنِ .. إلَّا
جَبَلُ الكرمل ، والبحرُ ، وشمسُ الناصرَهْ
كنتُ وحدي ..
وملوكُ الشرق كانوا جُثَثاً
فوقَ مياه الذاكِرَهْ ..

I was wounded,

Flung on my face, like sacks of flour.

Gentlemen, do not be amazed -

All of us, in the eyes of the ruler, are sacks of flour;

All of us, in the abattoir of authority, are sheep

Diverting ourselves with the hashish of patience

- "God loves the patient"[1] -

So may God prolong the life of the Commander of the Faithful,[2]

The representative of God on earth,

The chief of the just.

كنتُ مَجْرُوحاً ..
ومَطْرُوحاً على وجْهي ، كأكياس الطحينْ
أيُّها السادةُ : لا تَنْدَهِشُوا ..
كلُّنا في نَظَرِ الحاكمِ ، أكْيَاسُ طحينْ
كلُّنا في مَذْبح الحكم ، خِرافْ
نتسلَّى بحشيش الصَبْر ..
(واللهُ يُحبُّ الصابرينْ) ..
فأطالَ اللهُ في عمرِ أمير المؤمنينْ
نائبِ الله على الأرضِ ..
كبيرِ العادلين ..

---

[1]See note 2, p. 231.
[2]See note 1, p. 178.

V

Gentlemen:

I am the inheritor of the wasteland.

Whenever I come to the Caliph's gate

Asking about Sharm al-Shaykh

Haifa,

Ramallah

And Jawlān'

He gives me a speech.

Whenever I speak to him, may he be exalted,

About June which became hashish,

Which we take morning and evening,

o

ايها السادة :

إنّي وارثُ الأرض الخَرَابْ

كلّما جئتُ إلى باب الخليفَهْ

سائلاً عن (شَرَمِ الشيخ) ..

وعن حَيْفا ..

ورامَ الله ..

والجُولان ..

أهداني خِطَابْ ..

كلّما كلّمتُهُ ـ جلَّ جلالُهْ ـ

عن حزيرانَ الذي صار حشيشاً

نتعاطاهُ صباحاً .. ومساءْ ..

'See note 2, p. 155.

Celebrating it like ʿĪd al-Fiṭr and al-Aḍḥā'

And the memory of Karbalā',[2]

He gets into his open-topped car,

Covers his chest with medals,

And bribes me with a speech.

Whenever I call out to him

"O commander of the sea and the land, O exalted personage,

The sword of Israel is at our necks

The sword of Israel is at

The sword of Is....."

واحتفالاً مثل عيد الفطر والأضحى ..
وذكرى كَرْبَلاءْ ..
ركِبَ السيَّارةَ المكشوفَةَ السقفِ ،
وغَطَّى صدرَهُ بالأوسِمَهْ ..
ورَشَاني بخطابْ ..
كُلمَّا ناديتُهُ :
يا أميرَ البحر ، والبَرِّ ، ويا عالي الجَنَابْ
سيفُ إسرائيلَ في رقْبتِنا ..
سيفُ إسرائيلَ في ..
سيفُ إس....

---

[1]See note 2, p.224.
[2]See note 2, p.168.

He gets into his open-topped car and goes

To the broadcasting station,

Bribes me with a speech,

And throws me between the teeth of the spies

And the fangs of the dogs.

So forgive me, gentlemen, if I have lost faith.

They prescribed the patience of Job to me as a medicine, and I drank it

Then they fed me

Blotting paper night and day

And I ate it.

رَكِبَ السيارةَ المكشوفةَ السَقْفِ ..
إلى دار الإذاعَهْ ..
ورَشَاني بخطابْ ..
ورماني بين أسنان الجواسيسِ ..
وأنياب الكلابْ ..
فاعذُروني ، أيُّها السادةُ ، إنْ كنتُ كَفَرتْ
وَصَفُوا لي صَبْرَ أيوبَ دواءً .. فَشَرِبتْ
أطعَمُوني ..
وَرَقَ النَشَّاف ليلاً ونهاراً ..
فأكلتْ ...

They made me enter Palestine

To the notes of "What the listeners want".[1]

Then made me enter the corridors of madness.

So forgive me, gentlemen, if I laughed.

I should have liked to weep,

But I laughed.

أَدْخَلُوني لفلسطينَ ..
على أنغام (ما يطلبُهُ المستمعونْ)
أَدْخَلُوني في دهاليز الجُنُونْ
فاعذُروني ، أيُّها السادةُ ، إنْ كنتُ ضَحِكتْ
كانَ في وُدّيَ أن أبْكي ..
ولكنّي ضَحِكْتْ ....

---

[1] See note 1, p. 224.

21. WAITING FOR GODOT

I

We are waiting for the train,

Waiting for the traveller, hidden like the fates

Who will emerge from the cloak of the years,

Will emerge from Badr[1]

From Yarmūk[2]

From Ḥiṭṭīn[3]

Will emerge from the sword of Saladin,[4]

بانتظـــار عنـــودُو

١

نَـنْـتَظِرُ القطارْ
نَـنْـتَظِرُ المسافرَ الخَفِـيَّ كالأقدارْ
يخرجُ من عباءة السنينْ
يخرجُ من بَدْرٍ ..
من اليَرْمُوكِ ..
من حِطِّينْ ..
يخرجُ من سيفِ صلاحِ الدِّينْ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.168.
[2]The River Yarmūk is an eastern tributary of the Jordan, which today forms the border between Jordan and Syria. Here the Muslims under the command of Khālid b. al-Walīd (d. 642) defeated the Byzantine army, thereby ensuring the conquest of Syria. (636 A.D.).
[3]The decisive battle in which Saladin (1138 - 1193) defeated the Crusaders, thereby gaining control of Syria and Palestine (1187 A.D.). Ḥiṭṭīn is a village in north-eastern Palestine.
[4]See note 1, p.130.

Ever since 1920'

We have been piled up in the railway station of history

Like sardines.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Do you know what sardines' liberty is?

When a man is compelled

To say, despite himself, "Amen",

When the wound is compelled

To kiss the knife.

مِنْ سنة العِشْرينْ
ونحنُ مرصُوصُونَ في محطّة التاريخِ
كالسَرْدِينْ ..
يا سيِّداتي ، سَادَتي :
هل تعرفونَ ما حُريّةُ السَرْدِينْ ؟
حين يكونُ المرءُ مضطرّاً
لأن يقولَ ـ رغْمَ أنفِهِ ـ (آمينْ)
حين يكونُ الجرْحُ مضطرّاً
لأنْ يُقَبِّلَ السِكّينْ ..

'The year of the French occupation of Syria, when the country became a quasi-colony under the Mandate system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ever since 1920

We have been like chickens in our cages

Looking stupidly

At the railway lines.

Our life is horizontal

Like railway lines;

Our days are narrow

Like railway lines;

يا سيِّداتي ، سَادَتي :
مِنْ سنة العشرين
ونحنُ كالدجاج في أقفاصِنَا
ننظُرُ في بلاهةٍ ..
إلى خطوطِ سِكَّة الحديدْ
أُفْقِيَّةٌ حياتُنا ..
مثلَ خطوطِ سِكَّة الحديدْ ..
ضيِّقَةٌ أيّامُنا
مثلَ خطوطِ سِكَّة الحديدْ ..

Our clocks have stopped

And neither God nor the postman comes to us

Ever since 1920

Up to 1970

We have been sitting waiting for the face of the auspicious king.'

All kings are alike

And the old king

Is like the new king.

ساعاتُنا واقفةٌ ..
لا اللهُ يأتينا .. ولا موزّعُ البريدْ
من سنة العشرين
حتى سنةِ السبعين
نجلسُ في انتظار وجه الملكِ السعيدْ
كلُّ الملوك يُشْبهونَ بعضَهُمْ
والملكُ القديمُ ..
مثلُ المِلكِ الجديدْ ...

'An expression borrowed from the Thousand and One Nights. This is the title by which Scheherezade addresses the king to whom she tells her stories.

II

We are waiting for the train

Carrying red flags and flowers,

Chewed

By loudspeakers, day and night -

The state radio saws us in half:

"Pay attention!

Pay attention!

The train is - perhaps - fifty days late

The train is - perhaps - fifty years late

The train is - perhaps - fifty centuries late."

نَنْتَظِرُ القطارْ ..
ونحملُ البيارقَ الحمراء .. والأزهارْ
تَمْضَغُنَا ..
مُكبِّراتُ الصوت في الليل ، وفي النهارْ
تنشُرُنا إذاعةُ الدولة بالمنشارْ
إنْتَبِهُوا ! ...
إنْتَبِهُوا ! ...
خمسينَ يوماً ـ رُبَّما ـ تأخَّر القِطَارْ ..
خمسينَ عاماً ـ رُبَّما ـ تأخَّر القِطارْ ..
خمسينَ قَرْناً ـ رُبَّما ـ تأخَّر القطارْ ..

Our thighs are suppurating

From long sitting.

The thoughts in our heads are suppurating

And the flesh of our backs has become

A part of the wall.

They have brought us, twenty thousand times,

In the wailing of the wind and the rain,

Have hired buses to carry us,

Have distributed the roles,

تَقَيحَتْ أفخاذُنا ...
من كثرة الجُلُوسْ
تقيَّحتْ في رأسنا الأفكارْ ..
وصارَ لحمُ ظَهْرِنا ..
جُزْءاً من الجدارْ ..
جاؤوا بنا ، عشرينَ ألفَ مرّةٍ
تحت عويل الريح والأمطارْ
واستأجَرُوا الباصاتِ كي تنقلَنا
ووزَّعُوا الأدوارْ ..

And have taught us,

Like apes, to dance

And to play the pipe,

And have trained us

Like hunting dogs, to bow

To the one who is coming, haunted by bewilderment and secrets,

When the train comes.

وعَلَّمونا ..
كالقُرُود الرقْصَ ..
والعَزْفَ على المزمارْ
ودَرَّبُونا ..
ككلاب الصَيْد .. كيف نَنْحَني
للقادم المَسْكُونِ بالدهْشَةِ والأسرارْ ..
إذا أتى القطارْ ...

III

We have not seen him,

But those who have seen him, on the small screen,

Swallow glass,

Walk over fire like Indians,

Bring white rabbits out of his pockets

And turn coal into gold

Assert that he

Is one of God's saints, be He Exalted,

And that the light of his face dazzles the eyes;

٣

لم نَرَهُ ..
لكنَّ من رأوهُ فوق الشاشة الصغيرَهْ
يبتلِعُ الزُجَاجَ ..
أو يسيرُ كالهُنُود فوق النارْ
ويُخْرِجُ الأرانبَ البيضاء من جُيُوبهِ
ويقلبُ الفَحْمَ إلى نُضَارْ
يؤكِّدون أنَّهُ ..
من أولياء اللهِ ، جلَّ شأنُهُ
وأنَّ نُورَ وجههِ يُحيِّرُ الأبْصَارْ ..

That he will carry wheat to our houses

And clarified butter and flour by the hundredweight,

Will make the blind see,

Will make the dead rise up,

Will plant wheat in the seas

And, in the years of his reign,

Will cause us to enter Paradise

Beneath which flow rivers.'

وأنَّه سيحملُ القمحَ إلى بيوتنا
والسمنَ .. والطحينَ .. بالقنطارْ
ويجعلُ العميانَ يُبْصرونْ
ويجعلُ الأمواتَ ينهضُونْ
ويزرعُ الحنطةَ في البحارْ
وأنَّهْ ـ في سَنَوات حُكْمِهِ ـ
يُدْخِلُنا لجنَّة ..
من تحتِها تَنْسكِبُ الأنْهَارْ ..

'An allusion to a phrase which occurs repeatedly in the Qur'ān, e.g. Sūrat al-Baqara, verse 25 and Sūrat Āl ʿImrān, verse 136.

We have not seen him,

Have not kissed his hand,

But those who have gained his blessing

Say that his voice

Moves stones

And that he

And that he

He is the Mighty, the One, the Subduer.

لم نَرَهُ ..
ولم نُـقَـبِّلْ يَدَهُ ..
لكنَّ مَنْ تَبَرَّكُوا يوماً بِهِ ..
قالُوا بأن صوتَهُ
يُحَرِّكُ الأحجَارْ ..
وأنَّهُ ..
وأنَّهُ ..
هو العزيزْ .. الواحدُ .. القَـهَّارْ ..

IV

We are waiting for the train .

The clock of time, ever since we came, has been broken.

Time does not pass,

The seconds have no legs,

The loudspeakers

Chew us,

Tear us with their teeth.

"Pay attention!

Pay attention!"

Nobody can leave his place

نَـنْـتَظِرُ القطارْ ..
مَـكْسُورَةٌ ـ منذُ أتَـيْـنَا ـ ساعةُ الزَمَانْ
والوقتُ لا يمُرُّ ..
والثواني ما لها سِيقَانْ
تعلكُنا ..
تَـنْهَشُنا ..
مكبِّراتُ الصَوْت بالأسنانْ
إنْـتَبِهُوا ! ...
إنْـتَبِهُوا ! ...
لا أحَدْ يقدرُ أن يغادرَ المكانْ ..

To buy a newspaper

Or a pastry

Or a little piece of lubān.[1]

No-one can say to his Lord,

"O Lord!"

No-one

Can even go to the lavatory.

Come, Godot

Save us from tyrants and tyranny.

ليشتري جريدةً ..
أو كَعْكَةً ..
او قطعة صغرى من اللبان
لربِّهِ ، لا أَحَدٌ ، يقدر أن يقولَ :
(يا ربَّاهْ) ..
لا أَحَدٌ ..
يقدر أن يدخلَ ، حتَّى ، دورةَ المياهْ ..
تعالَ يا غُودُو ..
وخلِّصْنَا من الطغاةِ والطُغْيَانْ ..

---

[1] A sort of resin used like chewing gum.

We are imprisoned in the railway station of history like lambs.

Our children are asleep on our shoulders,

Our lungs have been poisoned by coal and smoke

And the petitions which we carry

About the lack of medicine

And high prices

And privation

Have been confiscated by the Sultan's entourage.

Come, Godot, dry our tears

And rescue man from the claws of man.

فنحنُ محبوسُونَ في محطَّة التاريخ كالخِرفَانْ
أولادُنا ناموا على أكتافِنَا ..
رئاتُنا ، تسمَّمَتْ بالفحم والدُخانْ
والعَرْضحالاتُ التي نحمِلُها
عن قلّة الدواءِ ..
والغلاءِ ..
والحِرْمَانْ ..
صادَرَها مُرافِقُو السُلْطَانْ
تعال يا غُودُو .. وجَفِّفْ دمْعَنا ..
وأنقِذِ الإنسانَ من مخالب الإنسانْ ..

V

Come, Godot,

Our legs have stiffened from waiting

And the skin of our faces

Has become like pieces of ancient ruins.

Our rivers have evaporated,

Our mountains have emigrated,

The seas have dried up

And our lives have become lifeless.

٥

تعالَ يا غُودُو ..

فقد تخشَّبَتْ أقدامُنا انتظارْ

وصار جِلْدُ وجهنا

كقطعة الآثارْ ..

تبخَّرَتْ أنهارُنا

وهاجَرَتْ جبالُنا

وجَفَّتِ البحارْ

وأصبحتْ أعمارُنا ليس لها أعمارْ ..

Come, Godot, for the rains
Refuse to visit our lands,
Trees refuse to grow tall in our soil.
Come, for the women do not conceive
And the cows do not give milk.
If you do not come for our sake
Then come for the sake of the millions of children,

تعالَ يا غُودُو .. فإنَّ أرضَنا
ترفضُ أن تزورَها الأمطارْ
ترفضُ أن تكبُرَ في ترابنا الأشجارْ
تعالَ .. فالنساءُ لا يَحْبَلْنَ ..
والحليبُ لا يدرُّ في الأبقارْ
إنْ لم تجيءْ من أجلنا نحنُ ..
فمن أجل الملايين من الصِغَارْ ..

For the sake of a good people

Which still, in its dreams,

Crunches stones,

Crunches the ten Mu^callaqāt,[1]

Old newspapers

And the news broadcast.

من أجل شعبٍ طيِّبٍ
ما زالَ في أحلامِهِ
يُقَرْقِشُ الأحْجَارْ ..
يُقَرقِشُ المُعَلَّقاتِ العَشْرَ ..
والجرائدَ القديمَهْ ..
ونَشْرةَ الأخبارْ ..

---

[1]See note 4, p.211.

22. MORPHINE

I

The word is a rubber ball
Which the ruler throws from his balcony to the street
And the people run after the ball
And pant like a starving dog

II

The word in the Arab East
Is a skilled Karagöz'
Who speaks seven languages,
Appears in a red hat,
And sells simple folk paradise
And bracelets of glistening pottery
And sells them white mice and frogs

مُورفين

١

اللفْظَةُ طابَةُ مطَّاطِ
يقذفُها الحاكمُ من شُرْفَتِهِ للشارعْ
ووراءَ الطابة يجري الشَعْبُ
ويلْهَثُ كالكلبِ الجائعْ...

٢

اللفْظَةُ في الشرق العربيِّ
أراجُوزٌ بارِعْ
يتكلَّمُ سَبْعَةَ ألسِنَةٍ
ويُطِلُّ بقبَّعةٍ حمراءْ..
ويبيعُ الجنَّةَ للبُسَطَاءْ..
وأساورَ من خَرَزٍ لامِعْ..
ويبيعُ لهُمْ.. فئراناً بِيضَاً.. وضفادِعْ..

[1] See note 2, p.225.

III

The word is a tattered body

With whom the writer sleeps, and the journalist,

And with whom sleeps

The Shaykh of the mosque.

IV

The word is a morphine needle

Which the ruler has injected into the people

Since the seventh century.

The word in my country is a woman

Who has practised debauchery since the seventh century.

٣

اللفْظَةُ جَسَدٌ مهتَرِيءٌ
ضاجَعَهُ الكاتبُ ، والصُحُفيُّ ،
وضاجعَهُ ...
شيخُ الجامعْ ..

٤

اللفْظَةُ إبرةُ مُورفينٍ
يحقنُها الحاكمُ للجُمْهُورِ
من القَرْن السابعْ ..
اللفْظَةُ في بلدي امرأةٌ
تحترفُ الفُحْشَ من القَرْن السابعْ ..

23. RECITATION OVER MADMEN'S TOMBS

I

I reject you all

And close the conversation.

I no longer have a language;

I have set fire to my vocabularies

And to my clothes.

قراءةٌ على أضرحة المجاذيب

١

أرفُضُكُمْ جميعَكُمْ
وأختُمُ الحِوارْ
لم يبقَ عندي لغةٌ
أضرمتُ في معاجمي
وفي ثيابي النارْ ..

I have fled from ᶜAmr b. Kulthūm[1]

And from al-Farazdaq's Rā'iyya[2]

I have emigrated from my voice

And from my writing,

I have emigrated from my birth,

Emigrated from the cities of salt[3]

And from earthenware poems.

هَرَبْتُ من عمرو بنِ كُلْثُومٍ
ومن رائيَةِ الفرزدق الطويلَهْ
هاجرتُ من صوتي ..
ومن كتابتي ..
هاجرتُ من ولادتي ..
هاجرتُ من مدائن الملحِ .
ومن قصائد الفخّارْ ..

---

[1]A chief of the tribe of Taghlib and a famous pre-Islamic poet (d. c. 600 A.D.). His most famous poem is one of the Muᶜallaqāt.

[2]A rā'iyya is a poem ending in the rhyme-letter rā' (r). Qabbānī is referring to the poem beginning ᶜaraftu bi-aᶜlā rā'is al-fa'wi baᶜdamā (pp. 362 - 370 of the Dār Ṣādir edition, vol. 1).

[3]Presumably a reference to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, used here as an allusion to the Arab world.

II

I have carried my trees to your desert
And the trees have committed suicide
In their despair.
I have carried my rains to your drought
And the rains have failed.
I have planted my poems in your wombs
And they have been strangled
O womb, which conceives thorns and dust ...

٢

حملتُ أشجاري إلى صحرائكُمْ
فانتحرتْ ..
من يأسها الأشجارْ
حملتُ أمطاري إلى جفافكُمْ
فشَحَّتِ الأمطارْ
زَرَعْتُ في أرحامكم قصائدي
فاختنقَتْ ..
يا رَحِماً .. يَحْبَلُ بالشَوْكِ وبالغُبَارْ ..

III

I have tried to uproot you

From the birdlime of history,

From the almanac of fate,

From Qifā Nabkī'

And from the worship of stones;

I have tried to raise the siege of Troy,

But the siege besieged me.

٣

حاولتُ أن أقلَعَكُمْ
مِنْ دَبَقِ التاريخِ ..
مِنْ رُزْنامةِ الأقدارْ ..
ومِنْ (قِفَا نَبْكِ) ...
ومن عبادة الأحجَارْ ..
حاولتُ أن أفكَّ عن طَرْوَادةٍ حِصَارَها ،
حاصَرَني الحِصَارْ .

'The first two words of the Mu'allaqat of Imru' al-Qays, the most famous of the pre-Islamic poets. See note 1, p.152.

IV

I reject you,

I reject you ...

You who have made dried dates your lord.[1]

You have built a dome for every madman

And have erected a shrine around every Antichrist.

I have tried to rescue you

From the hourglass which swallows you

Night and day,

٤

أَرفُضُكُمْ..
يا مَنْ صنعتُم ربَّكُمْ من عَجْوَةٍ..
لكُلِّ مَجْذُوبٍ بَنَيْتُمْ قُبَّةً
وكُلِّ دَجَّالٍ أقمتُمْ حوله مَزَارْ
حاولتُ أنْ أنقذَكُمْ
من ساعة الرمل التي تبلعُكُمْ
في الليل والنهارْ

---

[1] In the pre-Islamic period the Arabs used to make idols of dates, which they would eat after a time.

From the amulets on your chests,

From the recitations which are read over your graves,

From the Sufi gatherings.

From reading palms

And the Zār dance;[1]

I have tried to drive a nail into your skins

But I have despaired of your skins,

I have despaired of my fingernails,

Have despaired of the thickness of the walls.

مِنَ الحِجَابَاتِ على صدوركُمْ
مِنَ القراءاتِ التي تُتْلَى على قُبُوركُمْ
مِنْ حَلَقَاتِ الذِكْرِ ،
مِنْ قراءة الكفِّ ،
ورَقْصِ الزَارْ ..
حاولتُ أن أدقَّ في جلودكم مِسْمَارْ
يئستُ من جلودكُمْ
يئستُ من أظافري
يئستُ من سَمَاكة الجدارْ ...

---

[1]See note 1, p.67.

V

In my boredom

I hanged myself yesterday with my beloved's plaits.

I could not make love to her as I was used to -

The lines of her body were strange,

Her bed was cold,

And the cold was cold.

The breast of the one I loved was a melancholy lemon.

After June, I lost my passion;

I fell on the arms of my beloved

Like a tattered banner.

o

مِنْ مَلَلي ..
شنقْتُ نَفْسي أمْسِ ، في ضفائر الحبيبَهْ ..
لم أستطِعْ أن أفعلَ الحُبَّ .. كما عوَّدتُها ..
كانتْ خُطُوطُ جسمها غريبَهْ
كان السريرُ بارداً ..
والبَرْدُ كان بارداً ..
ونَهْدُ من أحبُّها ليمونة كئيبَهْ
بعد حزيرانَ ، أضَعْتُ شهوتي
سقطتُ فوق ساعديْ حبيبتي
كالرايةِ المَثْقُوبَهْ ..

VI

I look like one bewildered at the map of the Arab world;
In every span a caliphate has been proclaimed,
One ruling by God's command,
And a pitched tent.
The flags make me laugh, and the seals,
The heterogeneous kingdoms,
The sultanates of straw and cardboard,
The amazing laws
The oil sheikhdoms, the mutʿa marriages,'
And the fiery instincts.

٦

أنظُرُ كالمشدوه .. في خريطة العروبَهْ
في كُلِّ شِبْر أُعْلِنَتْ خلافةٌ
وحاكمٌ بأمرِهِ ..
وخَيْمةٌ مَنْصُوبَهْ
تُضحِكُني الأعلامُ .. والأخْتَامُ ..
والممالِكُ التركيبَهْ ..
وسلطناتُ القشِّ .. والكرتونِ ،
والشرائع العجيبَهْ ..
ومَشْيَخَاتُ النفطِ .. والزَواجِ بالمُتْعةِ ..
والغرائزِ المشْبُوبَهْ ..

'A kind of temporary marriage contracted for a fixed period (the word mutʿa means 'pleasure'). There was some dispute in Early Islam as to whether the practise was lawful, but today only the Shiʿa accept it as lawful. Since the mutʿa marriage may be regarded as not greatly different from prostitution, Qabbānī uses it here in the latter sense.

VII

I walk with a strange face in Granada,[1]

Embracing children,

Trees,

And minarets turned upside down.

Here the Almoravids took up their position[2]

And the Almohades camped[3]

Here there were parties of wine and women

And stupor,

Here there was a bloody cloak,

Here a gallows was set up.

V

أَمْشِي غريبَ الوجه في غرناطةٍ ..
أَحتضِنُ الأطفالَ ..
والأشجارَ ..
والمآذنَ المقْلُوبَهْ ..
فهاهُنا المرابطونَ رابَطُوا ..
وهاهُنا الموحِّدونَ خيَّموا ...
وهاهُنا .. مجالسُ الشرابِ .. والنساءِ ..
والغيبوبَهْ ..
وهاهُنا .. عباءةٌ داميةٌ
وهاهُنا ... مَشْنَقَةٌ منصُوبَهْ ..

---

[1]For Arabs, Granada is the symbol of the loss of al-Andalus, Islamic Spain.
[2]The Almoravids were a dynasty of Berber origin who ruled Morocco and Islamic Spain between 1056 and 1147.
[3]A North African dynasty of religious reformers who ruled the whole of North Africa and Islamic Spain, replacing the Almoravids. They were defeated by the Christians of Spain in 1235 and were finally destroyed in 1269.

VIII

Scatter

Like dry leaves, tribes of the Arabs

And fight one another,

Be at enmity

And commit suicide

O second edition

Of the biography of conquered Andalus.

٨

تَـنَاثَري ..
كالوَرَق اليابِسِ ، يا قبائلَ العُرُوبَهْ
واقـتِـلِي ..
واخـتَصِمي ..
وانـتَحِري ..
يا طَبْعَةً ثانيةً ..
من سيرةِ الأندلسِ المغلُوبَهْ ..

24. CONVERSATION WITH THE KING OF THE MONGOLS

I

O king of the Mongols,

O inheritor of the boot and the whip

From your grandfather Ertoghrul,[1]

O you who sees us all as horses

Which you ride

In a procession of bugles and drums;

There is no difference - from palace windows -

Between men and horses.

حوارٌ مع ملك المَغُول

١

يا مَلِكَ المَغُولْ ..
يا وارثَ الجَزْمةِ .. والكِرْبَاجِ
عن جَدِّكَ أرطُغْرُولْ ..
يا مَنْ تَرَانا كلَّنا خُيُولْ ..
تركَبُها ..
في زَفَّةِ الأبواقِ والطُّبُولْ
لا فَرْقَ - من نوافذ القُصُور -
بين الناسِ والخُيُولْ ..

---

[1]The father of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty.

II

O king of the Mongols,

O you who are angry at our neighing,

You who are afraid of the fields' blossoming,

I wish to say

Before your executioner Masrūr' kills me,

And before the false witnesses come,

٢

يا مَلِكَ المَغُولْ ..
يا أيُّها الغاضبُ من صهيلنا ..
يا أيُّها الخائفُ من تفتُّح الحُقُولْ
أريدُ أن أقولْ ..
من قَبْل أن يقتلَني سيَّافُكُمْ مَسْرُورْ ..
وقَبْلَ أن يأتي شهودُ الزُورْ ..

'The stock name for the executioner which occurs widely in Arabic popular literature, like Jack Ketch in English.

I wish to say a couple of words

To my wife who is several months pregnant,

To all my friends,

And to my oppressed nation.

I wish to say that I am a poet

Carrying a sparrow in my throat

Which I refuse to sell

While you wish to expropriate

The sparrow from my throat.

أريدُ أن أقُولَ كِلْمتَيْنْ..
لزوجتي الحاملِ من شُهُورْ..
وأصدقائي كلِّهِمْ
وشَعْبيَ المقهُورْ..
أريدُ أن أقولَ : إنيِّ شاعرٌ..
أحمِلُ في حنجرتي عُصْفُورْ..
أرفُضُ أن أبيعَهُ..
وأنتَ من حُنْجرَتي..
تريدُ أن تُصَادِرَ العصفُورْ..

III

O king of the Mongols,

O conqueror of armies, O roller of heads,

O subjugator of seas,

O kneader of steel, O crumbler of rocks,

O eater of children, O ravisher of virgins,

O preyer upon perfumes,

How strange!

How strange!

You, and the police, and the army

Against a sparrow?

يا مَلِكَ المَغُولْ ..
يا قاهِرَ الجيوش ، يا مُدَحْرِجَ الرؤوسِ ،
يا مُدَوِّخَ البُحُورْ ..
يا عاجِنَ الحديد ، يا مُفَتِّتَ الصُخُورْ
يا آكلَ الأطفالِ .. يا مُغْتَصِبَ الأبْكَارِ ..
يا مُفْتَرِسَ العُطُورْ ..
واعَجَبي ! ...
واعَجَبي ! ..
أأنتَ .. والشُرْطَةُ .. والجَيْشُ ..
على عُصْفُورْ ؟ ؟ ؟ ...

25. TO THE UNKNOWN ARAB SOLDIER

I

If they had been killed as you were killed
If they had known

That they would die as you did,

If the addicts of speech in our land
Had spent half of what you spent,
If they, behind their tables,
Had gone forth as you went forth,

إلى الجندي العربيّ المجهول

١

لو يُقْتَلُونَ .. مثلما قُتِلْتْ
لو يَعْرِفُونَ أن يموتُوا .. مثلما فَعَلْتْ ..
لو مُدْمِنُو الكلام في بلادنا
قد بَذَلُوا نِصْفَ الذي بَذَلتْ ..
لو أنَّهُمْ من خلف طاولاتِهِمْ
قد خَرَجُوا .. كما خرجتَ أنتْ ..

And had burned

In the flame of glory as you burned,

Christ would not have fallen slaughtered

On the soil of Nazareth,

Taghlib[1] would not have been given over to pillage

And the Manādhira[2] would not have been broken,

If they had read

- As they slept on the breasts of their mistresses -

Part of what you wrote.

واحْتَرَقُوا ..
في لَهَبِ المجدِ ، كما احْتَرَقْتْ ..
لم يَسْقُطِ المسيحُ مذبوحاً ..
على تُراب الناصِرَهْ ..
ولا استُبِيحَتْ تَغْلِبٌ
وانْكسَرَ المناذرَهْ ..
لو قَرَأُوا ..
ـ وهُمْ ينامُونَ على صدور مَحْظِيَّاتِهِمْ ـ
بَعْضَ الذي كَتَبتْ ..

---

[1]A large and powerful tribe of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods who produced a number of poets such as ʿAmr b. Kulthūm and al-Muh alhil. They were Christian, but played a major role in supporting certain rulers of the Umayyad dynasty. They were later attacked by the rival tribe of Qays.
[2]The collective name for the Lakhmid rulers of Ḥīra in Iraq during the pre-Islamic period, many of whom bore the name Mundhir (pl. Manādhira). Some of them are said to have become Christian.

II

But those whom you knew

Remained in the state which you knew,

Smoking,

Getting drunk,

Killing time,

Feeding the people on the papers of communiqués - as you knew -

Some sinking in their mire,

Some choking in their oil,

Some of them closing the door on their harem -

The utmost extent of their struggle

A girl in the bed!

لكنَّ من عرفْتَهُمْ ..
ظَلُّوا على الحال التي عَرَفتْ ..
يُدَخِّنُونَ ..
يَسْكَرُون ..
يقتُلُونَ الوقتْ ..
ويُطعمونَ الشعبَ أوراقَ البلاغاتِ ـ كما عَلِمتْ ـ
وبعضُهُمْ يغوصُ في وُحُولِهِ ..
وبعضُهُمْ يغُصُّ في بترولِهِ ..
وبعضُهُمْ .. قد أغلقَ البابَ على حريمِهِ ..
ومُنْتَهى نضالِهِ ..
جاريةٌ في التَخْتْ ! ! .

III

O most noble of the dead

Who flowered on our eyelids,

The first step to our liberation

Was begun by you.

O you who drown in your blood;

All of them have lied

And you have told the truth.

All of them have been defeated

And you alone have been victorious.

٣

يا اشرف القتلى ..
على أجفاننا أزْهَرْتْ ..
الخطوةُ الأولى إلى تحريرِنا
أنتَ بها بدأتْ ..
يا أيُّها الغارقُ في دمائِهِ
جميعُهُمْ قد كَذَبُوا ..
وأنتَ قد صَدَقتْ ..
جميعُهُمْ قد هُزِمُوا ..
ووحدَكَ انتصَرْتْ ...

26. ONE ROAD

I

I want a rifle.

I sold my mother's ring

For a rifle,

I pledged my wallet,

I pledged my notebooks

For a rifle.

The language we used when we studied,

The books from which we read,

The poems which we memorized,

Are not worth a dirham

Compared to a rifle

طـريـقٌ واحـد

١

أُريدُ بُـنْدُقيَّهْ ..
خاتَمُ أمّي بعتُهُ
من أجل بُـنْدُقِيَّهْ
محفظتي رهَنْـتُها
دفاتري رهَنْـتُها
من أجل بندقيَّهْ
اللغةُ التي بها دَرَسْنَا
الكُتُبُ التي بها قَرَأْنا
قصائدُ الشعر التي حفظنا ..
ليستْ تُساوي درهماً
أمامَ بُـنْدُقيَّهْ ..

II

Now I have a rifle.

Take me with you to Palestine,

To sorrowful hills like the face of Mary Magdalene,

To the green domes and the prophetic stones.

For twenty years I have been

Searching for a land and an identity

Searching for my house which is over there,

For my country surrounded by wire

Searching for my childhood, for my neighbourhood friends,

For my books and my pictures,

For every warm corner and every flower-bowl.

أصبحَ عندي الآنَ بُـنْدُقيَّهْ ..
إلى فلسطينَ خذوني معكُمْ
إلى رُبىً حزينةٍ كوجه مجدليَّهْ
إلى القِباب الخُضْرِ ، والحجارةِ النبيَّهْ
عشرونَ عاماً .. وأنا ..
أبْحثُ عن أرض .. وعن هويَّهْ ..
أبحثُ عن بيتي الذي هناكْ
عن وطني المحاطِ بالأسلاكْ ..
أبحثُ عن طفولتي .. وعن رفاق حَارَتي
عن كُتُبي .. عن صُوَري ..
عن كُلِّ ركْنٍ دافيءٍ .. وكُلِّ مَزْهريَّهْ ..

III

Now I have a rifle.

Take me to Palestine with you, men,

I want to live or die like men;

I want to grow in its soil, like an olive or a field of oranges

Or a scented flower.

Say to whoever asks about my cause:

My rifle has become my cause.

IV

Now I have a rifle.

I have joined the list of revolutionaries,

I recline on thorns and dust

And clothe myself in fate.

The will of the fates does not turn me back;

I am he who changes the fates.

أصبحَ عندي الآنَ بُـنْدُقيَّهْ
إلى فلسطينَ خذوني مَعكُمْ ، يا أيُّها الرجالْ
أُريدُ أن أعيشَ أو أموتَ كالرجالْ
أُريدُ أن أنبتَ في ترابِها .. زيتونةً أو حَقْلَ برتُقَالْ
أو زهْرَةً شَذِيَّهْ ..
قُولوا لمن يسأل عن قضيَّتي ..
بارُودتي .. صارتْ هي القضيَّهْ ..

٤

أصبحَ عندي الآنَ بُـنْدُقيَّهْ
أصبحتُ في قائمة الثُـوَّارْ
أفْـتَرِشُ الأشواكَ والغُبارْ
وألبسُ المنيَّهْ ..
مشيئةُ الأقدار لا تردُّني

V

O revolutionaries -

In Jerusalem, in Hebron, in Baysān', in the Aghwār,[2]

In Bethlehem,

Wherever you are, O free men

Advance,

Advance.

The story of peace is theatre,

Justice is theatre;

There is only one road to Palestine

Which leads through the barrel of a rifle.

يا أيُّها الثُوَّارْ ..
في القدسِ ، في الخليلِ ، في بيسانَ ، في الأغوارْ
في بيت لَحْم ..
حيثُ كنتُمْ أيُّها الأحرارْ ..
تقدَّمُوا ...
تقدَّمُوا ..
فقصَّةُ السلام مسرحيَّهْ
والعَدْلُ مسرحيَّهْ ..
إلى فلسطينَ طريقٌ واحدٌ
يمرُّ من فَوْهةِ بُنْدُقيَّهْ ...

---

[1]See note 1, p.119.

[2]The Aghwār (sing. Ghawr) are a series of ravines and depressions branching off to the east from the main depression of the Jordan Valley. This was the region in which the P.L.O. fighters were based up to 1970.

27. MUSEUM BURGLARS

We raid the museums of history in darkness

And steal the horses,

The coats of mail

And the flags.

We steal Khālid's[1] sword,

Steal the Dīwān of Abu Tammām,[2]

Steal the glory which belongs to them

And steal their battles.

It is better for us to bury naiveté

And to leave history in the refrigerator.

لصُـوصُ المتَاحِف

نَسْطُو على متاحف التاريخ في الظلامْ
ونسرقُ الخيولَ ،
والدُرُوعَ ،
والأعْلامْ ..
نسرُقُ سيفَ خالدٍ ..
نَسْرُقُ ديوانَ أبي تَمَّامْ ..
ونسرقُ المجدَ الذي يَخُصُّهُمْ
ونسرقُ الأيَّامْ
خيرٌ لنا أن ندفنَ السذاجَهْ
ونتركَ التاريخَ في الثلاجَهْ

---

[1] i.e. Khālid b. al-Walīd, called by the prophet Sayf Allāh al-Maslūl (the drawn sword of God). See note 1, p.139 and note 2, p.238.
[2] See note 2, p.152.

28. NON-CLASSICAL DEFINITION OF THE COUNTRY

My country!

The simple people understand you as sweet basil and wine

And think you are a dervish shaking his head,

Or a samāḥ-dance,[1]

And think, in their ignorance, that you are

A note on the buzuq,[2]

Bottles of arrack

And mawwāls[3] sung to the morning.

تعريفٌ غير كلاسيكيّ للوطـن

وطني !
يَفْهَمُكَ السُذَّجُ رَيْحَاناً وراحْ
ويظنُّونكَ درويشاً يهزُّ الرأسَ ..
أو رقْصَ سَمَاحْ..
ويظنُّونَكَ في غَفْلَتِهِمْ
نَغْمَةً من بُزُقٍ..
وقَنَاني عَرَقٍ..
ومواويلَ تُغَنَّى للصباحْ

---

[1]The samāḥ is a type of Syrian dance in which men and women dance together; it is also a dance particular to dervishes.
[2]A type of musical instrument, the same as the Greek bouzouki.
[3]A type of folksong. See note 3, p.157.

My country!

O breast covered with wounds,

My country -

Who are you, if you do not explode

Beneath Israel like an ammunition-chest?

وَطَني !
يا أيُّها الصدرُ المُغَطَّى بالجراحْ
وَطَني ..
مَنْ أنتَ ؟ إنْ لم تنفجِرْ
تحت إسرائيلَ ، صندوقَ سلاحْ ...

29. PERSONAL ADDRESS TO THE MONTH OF JUNE

I

Be, O June, an explosion

In our ancient skulls.

Sweep away thousands of words,

Sweep away proverbs and ancient aphorisms,

Tear up our worn-out cloak,

Tear up the skin of our ugly faces;

Be change and extremism

And a departure from the straight lines.

خطابٌ شخصيٌّ
إلى شهر حزيران

١

كُنْ يا حزيرانُ انفجاراً ..
في جماجمنا القديمَهْ ..
كَنِّسْ ألوفَ المفرداتِ ،
وكَنِّسِ الأمثالَ ، والحِكَمَ القديمَهْ
مَزِّقْ عباءتَنا التي بليَتْ
ومَزِّقْ جِلْدَ أوجُهِنا الدميمَهْ ..
وكُنِ التغيُّرَ .. والتَطَرُّفَ ..
والخُروجَ على الخطوطِ المُسْتقيمَهْ ..

Fire bullets at the past,

Be the revolver

And the crime.

After God has died on the gallows

At the city gate

Prayers no longer have any worth;

Faith no longer has any worth, nor disbelief.

أطْلِقْ على الماضي الرصاصَ ..
كُنِ المسدَّسَ ..
والجريمَهْ ..
من بعـد موت الله مَشْنُوقاً ..
على باب المدينَهْ ..
لم تَبْقَ للصَلَواتِ قيمَهْ ..
لم يَبْقَ للإيمان .. أو للكُفْر قيمَهْ ..

30. A POEM OF APOLOGY TO ABŪ TAMMĀM'

I

My friends:

If we have come to attend a Zār[2] gathering

More boring than boredom,

If the drums of poetry, gentlemen,

Are going to scatter us and unite us,

Put sleeping pills in our mouths,

Make us drunk, and break us

As leaves are broken in October,

Then I shall make my apologies.

قصيدةُ إعتذار لأبي تمّام

١

أحِبَّائي :
إذا جئنا لنَحْضَرَ حفلةً للزارِ ..
مِنْها يَضْجرُ الضَجَرُ
إذا كانتْ طُبُول الشِعْرِ ، يا سادَهْ .
تُفَرِّقُنَا .. وتَجْمعُنَا
وتُعطينا حُبُوبَ النوم في فَمِنا
وتسْطُلُنَا .. وتكسِرُنا ..
كما الأوراقُ في تشرينَ تَنْكسِرُ
فإنيّ سوفَ أعْتَذِرُ ..

'Delivered at the Abū Tammām Festival, Mosul, December 1971.
²See note 1, p.67.

II

My friends:

If we are going to dance without legs, as we usually do,

Make speeches without teeth, as we usually do,

Believe without belief, as we usually do,

And hang all those who come to the hall

From a long rope of our eloquence,

I shall gather together all my papers

And make my apologies.

٢

أحِبَّائي :
إذا كُنَّا سنرقُصُ دون سيقانٍ .. كعادتِنا
ونخطُبُ دونَ أسنانٍ .. كعادتِنا ..
ونؤمنُ دون إيمانٍ .. كعادتِنا ..
ونشنُقُ كلَّ من جاؤوا إلى القاعَهْ
على حَبْلٍ طويلٍ من بلاغتِنا ..
سَأجمعُ كلَّ أوراقي ...
وأعتذِرُ ...

III

If we are going to stay, gentlemen,

Until Judgement Day, differing about the spelling of hamza

Or a poem attributed to ʿAmr Ibn Kulthūm,[1]

If we are going to read out once again

Our poems which we have already read,

And chew over once again

The particles governing the accusative and the genitive which we have already chewed over,

If we are going to lie again,

And deceive once again the masses whom we have already deceived,

And thunder once again, without producing rain,

I shall gather together all my papers

And make my apologies.

٣

إذا كُنَّا سنبقى أيُّها السَادَهْ
ليَوْمِ الدينِ .. مختلفينَ حول كتابة الهَمْزَهْ ..
وحول قصيدةٍ نُسِبَتْ إلى عَمْرو بنِ كُلْثُومِ ...
إذا كُنَّا سنقرأ مرةً أُخرى
قصائدَنا التي كُنَّا قرأناها ..
ونمضغُ مرةً أُخرى
حُروفَ النَصْبِ والجَرِّ .. التي كُنَّا مَضَغْنَاها
إذا كُنَّا سنكذبُ مرةً أُخرى
ونَخْدعُ مرةً أخرى الجماهيرَ التي كُنَّا خدعناها
ونُرْعِدُ مرةً أخرى ، ولا مَطَرُ ...
سأجمعُ كلَّ أوراقي ..
وأعتذِرُ ..

---

[1] See note 1, p.257.

IV

If we are going to meet

In order to exchange toasts, or get drunk

And sprawl out on a bed of sweet basil and ambergris,

If we are going to think that poetry is a dancer, hired for celebrations,

And hired for birthdays and commemorations

And recite it as we recite the words of al-Zīr' and ʿAntar,[2]

If the aims of poetry, gentlemen,

Are to entertain Caesar's mistress

And to bribe all the guards and soldiers in the palace,

If we are going to steal al-Ḥajjāj's[3] speech

Al-Ḥajjāj himself, and the minbar,[4]

And slaughter one another in order to find which of us is the best poet

So that the greatest poet among us is the dagger ...

٤

اذا كُنَّا نلاقِـنَا
لكيْ نتبادلَ الأنْخَابَ ، أو نَسْكَرْ ..
ونَسْتَلْقي على تَخْتٍ من الريحان والعَنْبَرْ
إذا كُنَّا نظُنُّ الشِعْرَ راقصةً .. مع الأفراح تُسْتَأجَرْ
وفي الميلاد ، والتأبين تُسْتأجَرْ
ونتلوهُ كما نتلو كلامَ الزير أو عَنْتَرْ
إذا كانتْ همومُ الشِعْر يا سادَهْ
هي الترفيهَ عن معشوقة القيصَرْ
ورشْوةَ كلٍّ من في القصر من حَرَسٍ .. ومن عسكَرْ ..
إذا كُنَّا سنَسْرُق خطْبةَ الحجَّاجِ .. والحجَّاجَ .. والمِنْبَرْ .
ونذبحُ بعضَنا بعضاً لنعرفَ مَنْ بنا أشْعَرْ ..
فأكبَرُ شاعرٍ فينا هو الخِنْجَرْ ...

---

[1]See note 3, p.211.
[2]See note 1, p.183.
[3]See note 2, p.147.
[4]See note 1, p.147.

V

Abu Tammām', where are you, where is your perfumed speech?

Where is an adventurous hand, travelling in unknown territory, creating?

Abu Tammām -

Our poems are widowed, and our writings are widowed,

The words and the images are widowed.

No water flows on our notebooks,

No wind blows on our ships,

No sun, and no moon.

Abu Tammam, poetry has turned full circle;

Speech and the dictionary have revolted,

The Beduin and the settled folk have revolted.

o

أَبَا تَمَّام .. أينَ تكونُ .. أينَ حديثُكَ العَطِرُ ؟
وأينَ يدٌ مغامرةٌ تسافرُ في مجاهيلٍ ، وتَبْتَكِرُ ..
أَبَا تمَّام ..
أرْمَلةٌ قصائدُنا .. وأرْمَلةٌ كتابتُنا ..
وأرْملةٌ هي الألفاظُ والصُوَرُ ..
فلا ماءٌ يسيلُ على دفاترِنا ..
ولا ريحٌ تهُبُّ على مراكبنا
ولا شمسٌ ، ولا قَمَرُ
أَبَا تمَّام ، دار الشِعْرُ دَوْرَتَهُ
وثَارَ اللفظُ .. والقاموسُ ..
ثارَ البَدْوُ والحَضَرُ ..

'See note 2, p. 152.

The sea has grown tired of its blueness,

The tree has grown tired of its roots,

And we here

Are like the People of the Cave', without knowledge or information;

Our revolutionaries have not revolted

And our poets have not composed poetry.

Abu Tammām²: do not read our poems

All our palaces are paper

And all our tears are stone.

ومَلَّ البَحْرُ زُرْقَتَهُ ..
وملَّ جُذُوعَهُ الشَجَرُ
ونحنُ هُنا ..
كأهلِ الكهفِ .. لا عِلْمٌ ولا خَبَرُ
فلا ثُوَّارُنا ثارُوا ..
ولا شُعراؤنا شَعَرُوا ..
أَبَا تمَّام : لا تقرأْ قصائدَنا ..
فكُلُّ قصورنا وَرَقٌ ..
وكلُّ دُمُوعِنَا حَجَرُ ..

---

¹The story is found in Sūrat Ahl al-Kahf of the Qur'ān.
²See note 2, p. 152.

VI

Abū Tammām[1]: poetry, in its depths, is a journey,
A setting sail to the future, and an unexpected discovery
But we have made of it something like a wedding celebration,
And a brass beat, tolling like fate.

٦

أَبَا تَمَّام : إنَّ الشعرَ في أعماقِهِ سَفَرُ
وإبْحَارٌ الى الآتي .. وكَشْفٌ ليسَ يُنْتَظَرُ
ولكِنَّا .. جعلنا منهُ شيئاً يشبهُ الزفَّهْ
وإيقاعاً نُحاسيَّاً ، يدقُّ كأنَّه القَدَرُ ..

[1] See note 2, p. 152.

VII

O prince of words, forgive us

For we have all betrayed the occupation of words

And have exhausted it with tashṭīr, tarbīʿ, takhmīs[1] and description.

Abū Tammām[2], the fire is devouring us

And yet we still quarrel with one another

About triptotes and diptotes;[3]

But the army of the occupying usurper cannot be turned away![4]

٧

أميرَ الحَرْف .. سامِحْنا
فقد خُنَّا جميعاً مهنةَ الحَرْفِ
وأرهقناهُ بالتشطير ، والتربيع ، والتخميسِ ، والوصْفِ
أَبَا تَمَّام .. إنَّ النارَ تأكُلُنا
وما زلنا نجادلُ بعضَنا بعضاً ..
عن المَصْرُوفِ .. والممنوعِ من صَرْفِ ..
وجيشُ الغاصبِ المُحْتَلِّ ممنوعٌ من الصَرْفِ !!.

---

[1]Various forms of poetical word-play, in which an original piece of verse is expanded by the addition of other lines or part-lines.
[2]See note 2, p.152.
[3]Types of Arabic inflectional endings.
[4]The Arabic contains a pun which cannot be translated.

We still crack the bones of our feet,

Sit in God's houses and wait

For the Imam ʿAlī to come, or for ʿUmar[1] to come to us

But they will never come, they will never come,

For no-one conquers with anyone else's sword.

ومازلنا نُطَقْطِقُ عَظْمَ أرجُلنا
ونقعدُ في بيوت الله ننتظِرُ ..
بأنْ يأتي الأمامُ عليٌّ .. أو يأتي لنا عُمَرُ
ولنْ يأتُوا .. ولنْ يأتُوا ..
فلا أحَدٌ بسيف سواه ينتَصِرُ ..

---

[1] ʿAlī (600 - 661) was the fourth Caliph, and ʿUmar (584 - 644) the second.

VIII

Abū Tammām[1]: Men have lost faith in words
And have lost faith in poets.
So tell me, O poet
Why have the joints of our Arab poetry grown dry
And its ears of wheat grown yellow from repetition?
Tell me, O poet
Why does poetry, when it grows old
Not draw a knife and kill itself?

٨

أَبَا تَمَّام : إنَّ الناس بالكلمات قد كَفَرُوا
وبالشعراء قد كَفَروا ..
فقُلْ لي أيُّها الشاعِرْ
لماذا شعرُنا العربيُّ قد يبستْ مفاصلُهُ
من التكرارِ ، واصْفَرَّتْ سنابلُهُ ..
وقُلْ لي أيُّها الشاعرْ
لماذا الشِعْرُ ـ حينَ يشيخُ ـ
لا يستلُّ سِكّيناً .. وينتحِرُ ؟ ؟

---

[1]See note 2, p. 152.

31. JAMĀL ʿABD AL-NĀSIR

I

We have killed you, O last of the prophets,

We have killed you.

It is not a new thing for us

To assassinate the Prophet's Companions and the holy men;[1]

How many a prophet have we killed,

How many an Imam have we slaughtered as he prays the evening prayer!

Our whole history is a tribulation

And all our days are Karbalā'[2]

جمال عبد الناصر

١

قَتَلْنَاكَ .. يا آخِرَ الأَنْبِيَاءْ
قَتَلْنَاكَ ..
ليسَ جديداً علينا
اغتيالُ الصحابة والأولياءْ
فكَمْ من رسولٍ قَتَلْنَا ..
وكم مِنْ إمامٍ ذَبَحْنَاهُ وهْوَ يصلّي صلاةَ العشاءْ ..
فتاريخُنا كلُّهُ مِحْنَةٌ ..
وأيَّامُنا كلُّها كَرْبَلاءْ ...

---

[1]Of the first four Caliphs, who were the Prophet's closest companions, three met a violent death.
[2]See note 2, p. 168.

II

You descended upon us like a beautiful book,
But we are not good at reading.
You travelled among us to the land of innocence,
But we did not agree to depart.
We left you alone under the sun of Sinai,
Speaking to your Lord alone on Mount Sinai,[1]
Enduring nakedness, misery and thirst alone,
While we were here, sitting crosslegged,
Selling slogans to the foolish,
Stuffing the masses with hay and straw
And leaving them chewing on the wind.

٢

نَزَلتَ علينا كتاباً جميلاً
ولكنَّنا لا نُجيدُ القراءهْ ..
وسافرتَ فينا لأرض البراءهْ ..
ولكنَّنا ما قَبِلنا الرحيلا
تركناكَ في شمس سيناء وحْدَكْ ..
تُكلّمُ ربَّكَ في الطُور وحْدَكْ ..
وتَعْرَى .. وتَشْقى .. وتعطشُ وحْدَكْ ..
ونحنُ هُنا .. نجلسُ القرفُصَاءْ
نبيعُ الشعارات للأغبياءْ
ونحشُو الجماهيرَ تِبْنَاً .. وقَشَّا ..
ونتركُهُمْ يعلكونَ الهواءْ

[1]The story of Moses is mentioned in the Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Aʿrāf, verses 143-4.

III

We have killed you, O mountain of pride,
O last oil-lamp
Who shines for us in the winter nights,
O last sword of al-Qādisiyya;[1]
We have killed you with both our hands
And have said: it is fate.
Why did you agree to come to us?
For one like you is too much for us.

٣

قَتَلْنَاكَ .. يا جَبَلَ الكبرياءْ
وأَخِرَ قنديل زيْتٍ
يُضيءُ لنا ، في ليالي الشتاءْ
وآخِرَ سَيْفٍ من القادسيَّهْ
قتلناكَ نحنُ بكِلْتَا يَدَيْنَا ..
وقُلْنَا : المَنِيَّهْ
لماذا قبلتَ المجيء إليْنَا ؟
فمِثْلُكَ كانَ كثيراً عَلَيْنَا ..

[1]The decisive battle between the Muslim Arabs and the Persians which opened the way to the Arab conquest of Iran. The battle took place in 635 A.D..

We have fed you the poison of the Arabs, until you have grown sated.

We have cast you into the fire of Amman,[1] until you burned.

We have shown you the treachery of the Arabs, until you lost faith.

Why did you appear in the land of hypocrisy?

Why did you appear?

سَقَيْنَاكَ سُمَّ العُروبةِ ، حتى شَبِعتْ ..
رمَيْنَاكَ في نار عَمَّانَ ، حتى احْتَرقْتْ
أريناكَ غَدْرَ العروبة ، حتى كَفَرتْ
لماذا ظَهَرتَ بأرض النفاقِ ..
لماذا ظَهَرتْ ؟

---

[1]The reference is to the events of September 1970 when the Jordanian army evicted the P.L.O. forces from Amman and the major part of Jordan. The resulting fighting nearly provoked an inter-Arab war, and Nasser, already a very sick man, spent the last of his energies in attempting to settle the problem. He died immediately afterward.

For we are tribes of the Time of Ignorance

We are instability

We are oscillation

We are the Bāṭiniyya[1]

Who swear loyalty to our lords in the morning

And eat them when the evening comes.

فنحنُ شعوبٌ من الجاهليَّهْ
ونحنُ التقلُّبُ ..
نحنُ التَذَبْذُبُ ..
والباطِنيَّهْ ..
نُبايعُ أرْبَابَنا في الصَبَاحِ
ونأكُلُهُمْ .. حينَ تأتي العَشِيَّهْ ..

---

[1]The reference is to the Ismāʿīlī sect who became famous in the eleventh and twelth centuries as the Assassins.

IV

We have killed you,

Our love and our passion,

You were our friend, you were the faithful one,

You were our father

And when we washed our hands

We discovered

That we had killed our hopes

And that your blood on the pillow

Was our blood.

قَتَلناكَ ..
يا حُبَّنا وهَوَانا ..
وكُنتَ الصديقَ ، وكنتَ الصَدُوقَ ،
وكُنْتَ أبانا ..
وحينَ غَسَلنا يَدَيْنا ..
اكْتَشَفْنَا ..
بأنَّا قَتَلْنَا مُنَانا ..
وأنَّ دماءكَ فوق الوسادةِ ..
كانتْ دِمَانا ..

You shook off the dervish's dust from us,

You gave us back our boyhood

And you travelled with us to the impossible,

You taught us splendour and vigour

But we,

When the journey became too long for us,

And our nails and our beards grew too long,

We killed the steed

So perish our hands

Perish our hands.'

نَفَضْتَ غُبارَ الدراويش عنَّا
أعَدْتَ إلينا صِبَانا
وسافرتَ فينا إلى المُسْتَحيلِ
وعلَّمْتَنَا الزَهْوَ والعُنْفُوانا ..
ولكنَّنا ..
حين طال المسيرُ علينا
وطالتْ أظَافِرُنا .. ولِحانَا ..
قَتَلْنَا الحِصَانَا ..
فَتَبَّتْ يدانا ..
فَتَبَّتْ يَدَانا ..

'A reference to Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Masad, verse 1.

We brought you our maladies,

Our hatreds and our perversions,

Until we utterly slaughtered you

With the sword of our grief.

Would that you had never appeared in our land,

And would that you had been the prophet of some other people!

أتَيْنَا إليكَ بعاهاتِنا
وأحقادِنا .. وانْحِرَافَاتِنا
إلى أنْ ذبَحْنَاكَ ذَبْحَاً
بسيف أسانَا
فليتَكَ في أرضِنَا ما ظَهَرْتَ ..
وليتكَ كُنتَ نبيَّ سِوَانا ..

° ° °

V

Abū Khālid', O poetic ode

Who is spoken,

And who makes the ink green and fertile ...

Whither,

O horseman of dreams, are you going?

What is the distance, when will the stallion die?

Whither?

All of the legends have died

With your death, and Scheherezade has killed herself.

o

أَبَا خالدٍ .. يا قصيدةَ شِعْرٍ
تُـقَالُ ،
فَيَخْضَرُّ منها المِدَادْ ..
إلى أينَ ؟
يا فارسَ الحُـلْـم تَمْضي ..
وما الشَوْطُ .. حين يموتُ الجَوَادْ ؟
إلى أينَ ؟
كلُّ الأساطير ماتَتْ
بِمَوْتِكَ ، وانْتَحَرَتْ شَهْرَزادْ ..

'Nasser's Kunya; his eldest son was named Khālid, hence he was known as Abū Khālid, or "father of Khālid".

Behind the funeral procession march Quraysh[1]

Here is Hishām[2]

Here is Ziyād[3]

Here is one shedding tears over you

With his dagger under his mourning garments.

Here is one waging war in his sleep

Over whom the holy war weeps when he is awake.

Here is one who seeks kingship after you ...

But after you

All the kings are ashes.

وراءَ الجنازة .. سارتْ قُرَيْشٌ
فهذا هشامٌ ..
وهذا زِيَادْ ..
وهذا ، يُريقُ الدموعَ عليكْ
وخِنْجَرُهُ ، تحت ثوب الحِدادْ
وهذا يُجاهِدُ في نومِهِ ،
وفي الصحو ، يبكي عليه الجِهَادْ
وهذا يحاولُ بَعْدَكَ مُلْكاً ..
وبَعْدَكَ ..
كلُّ المُلُوكِ رَمَادْ ...

---

[1]See note 1, p.68.
[2]The Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (690 - 743).
[3]Ziyād b. Abīh (622 - 673) the governor of Iraq for the caliph Muʿāwiya, noted for the severity of his rule and the conquests which took place during his governorate.

The delegations of Kharijites[1] have all come
To compose love-epics upon you
And those who declared you an unbeliever,
Those who called you a traitor,
And those who crucified you at the Damascus Gate.[2]
I call upon you, Abū Khālid,[3]
Though I know that my voice is too distant to be heard
And know that you will not answer
And that miracles cannot be repeated.

وُفُودُ الخوارج .. جاءتْ جميعاً
لتنظُمَ فيكَ ملاحِمَ عِشْقْ ..
فَمَنْ كَفَّروكَ ..
ومَنْ خَوَّنُوكَ ..
ومَنْ صلبوكَ بباب دِمَشْقْ ...

* * *

أُنادي عليكَ .. أبا خالِدٍ
وأعرفُ أنيَ أُنادي بِوَادْ
وأعرفُ أنَّكَ لن تَستجيبَ
وأنَّ الخَوارقَ ليستْ تُعادْ ..

---

[1]A group of religious dissidents in the early Islamic period who believed that any Muslim had the right to the Caliphate and that rule should be according to God and the Qur'ān alone. They fought in a number of revolts against the central government before being almost wiped out.
[2]The northern gate of the walled city of Jerusalem, from which the road leads to Damascus.
[3]See note 1, p.301.

32. THE FOURTH PYRAMID'

The Lord is sleeping

The Lord is sleeping

The Lord is sleeping like the sword which has returned from an expedition,

The Lord is resting like a child dozing in the embrace of the forests,

The Lord is sleeping

For how can I believe that the Fourth Pyramid is dead?

الهـــرمُ الرابـــع

١

السيِّدُ نَامْ ..
السيِّدُ نَامْ ..
السيِّدُ نامَ كنوم السيفِ العائدِ من إحدى الغَزَوَاتْ
السيِّدُ يرقُد مثل الطفل الغافي في حضن الغَابَاتْ
السيِّدُ نامَ ،
وكيفَ أُصَدِّقُ أن الهَرَمَ الرابعَ ماتْ ؟

'There are three great pyramids at Giza. By the "Fourth Pyramid", the poet means Nasser.

The Leader has not gone at all,

But has gone into his room to rest

And will wake up when the sun rises

As does the perfume of the apple.

He will eat bread with us

And drink his coffee with us

And we will speak to him

And he will speak to us.

The Leader feels fatigued,

So leave him to doze for a few hours.

القائدُ لم يَذْهَبْ أبداً
بل دخَلَ الغُرْفَةَ كي يرتاحْ
وسيصحُو حين تُطِلُّ الشمسُ
كما يصحُو عطرُ التُفَّاحْ
الخبزُ سيأكُلُهُ مَعَنا ..
وسيشربُ قهوتَهُ مَعَنا ..
ونقولُ لَهُ ..
ويقولُ لنا ..
القائِدُ يَشْعُرُ بالإرْهَاقِ ،
فَخَلُّوهُ يَغْفُو سَاعَاتْ ...

II

You who weep for Nasser -

The Lord was the friend of the sun,

So desist from shedding tears.

The Lord is still here,

Walking on the Nile bridges,

Sitting in the shade of the date-palms,

Visiting Giza at dawn

To kiss the stone of the Pyramids,

To ask about Egypt, and those in Egypt,

Watering the flowers on the balconies,

٢

يا مَنْ تبكونَ على ناصِرْ
السيِّدُ كانَ صديقَ الشمسِ ،
فكُفُّوا عن سَكْبِ العَبَراتْ
السَيِّدُ ما زالَ هُنا ..
يتمشَّى فوق جسور النيل ،
ويجلس في ظلِّ النَخْلاتْ
ويزورُ الجيزةَ عند الفجر
ليلثُمَ حَجَرَ الأهراماتْ
يسألُ عن مِصْرَ .. ومَنْ في مِصْرَ ..
ويَسْقي أزهارَ الشُرُفاتْ

Performing the Friday prayer, and the two ʿĪds,[1]

And granting people's requests[2]

ʿAbdu'l-Nāṣir is still here

In the Nile silt, the cotton-flowers,

In the peasant-women's necklaces,

In the nation's joy

And the people's sadness,

In proverbs and sayings.

ʿAbd al-Nāṣir is still here.

Who says that the Fourth Pyramid is dead?

ويُصَلّي الجُمْعَةَ .. والعِيدَيْنِ ..
ويقضي للناس الحاجاتْ
ما زالَ هُنا عبدُ الناصرْ
في طَعْمِ النيلِ ، وزَهر القُطْن ،
وفي أطواق الفلّاحاتْ ..
في فَرَح الشعب ..
وحُزْنِ الشعب ..
وفي الأمثال وفي الكلِمَاتْ ..
ما زالَ هُنا عبدُ الناصرْ
من قالَ الهرمُ الرابعُ ماتْ ؟

---

[1] See note 2, p.224.

[2] The Friday prayer and the ʿĪds are traditional times in the Arab world for the ruler to receive petitions and to grant them if possible.

III

O you who ask, "Where has ʿAbd al-Nāṣir gone?"

You who ask

"Will ʿAbd al-Nāṣir come?"

The Lord is here among us,

Here in the loaves of bread,

In the flowers in our vases,

Written over the summmer stars

And over the sands of our shores.

٣

يا مَنْ يتساءلُ : أين مضى عبدُ الناصرْ ؟
يا مَنْ يتساءلُ :
هل يأتي عبدُ الناصرْ ؟
السيِّدُ موجودٌ فينا ..
موجودٌ في أرغفة الخبزِ ،
وفي أزهار أوانينا
مرسومٌ فوق نجوم الصيفِ ،
وفوقَ رمال شواطينا ..

Here on the pages of the Qur'ān,
In the worship of our worshippers,
Here in the words of love
And in the voices of our singers,
Here in the sweat of labourers
In Aswan, in Sinai,
Written above our rifles,
Written above our challenge.
The Lord is sleeping, and if
The flocks of birds come back
He will come to us.

موجودٌ في أوراق المُصْحَفِ ،
في صَلَوات مُصَلِّينَا ..
موجودٌ في كَلِمَات الحُبِّ ،
وفي أصوات مُغَنِّينا
موجودٌ في عَرَق العُمَّالِ ،
وفي أسْوَانَ ، وفي سِينَا
مكتوبٌ فوق بنادقنا ..
مكتوبٌ فوقَ تَحَدِّينا
السَّيِّدُ نامَ .. وإن رجَعَتْ
أسْرابُ الطيرِ ،
سَيَأْتينا ...

33. LETTER TO JAMĀL ʿABD AL-NĀṢIR

I

This is an urgent letter to you

From the good land of Egypt

From its nights, embroidered with turquoise and jewels,

From the cafés of Sayyidī al-Ḥusayn[1], and the gardens of al-Qanāṭir[2]

From the Nile canals which you have left with sorrowful braids.

رسالةٌ إلى جمال عبدالناصر

١

هذا خطابٌ عاجلٌ إليكْ
من أرضِ مِصْرَ الطيِّبَهْ
مِنْ ليلها المشْغُولِ بالفيروز والجواهِرِ
ومن مقاهي سيّدي الحُسَيْنِ ، من حدائق القناطِرِ
من تُرَع النيل التي تَرَكْتَها .. حزينةَ الضفائرِ

---

[1]Sayyidī al-Ḥusayn is a shrine in which, the Egyptians believe, the head of al-Ḥusayn is buried. See note 2, p.167.
[2]District of Cairo.

This is a hasty letter to you

From the millions who are addicted to loving you,

From the millions who wish to see you.

I have a letter which is all grief

But I, but I, O Lord,

Do not know the address.

هذا خطابٌ عاجلٌ إليكْ
من الملايينِ التي قد أدْمَنَتْ هَوَاكْ
من الملايينِ التي تُريدُ أن تَرَاكْ
عندي خطابٌ كلُّهُ أشْجَانْ
لكنّني .. لكنّني يا سيِّدي
لا أعرفُ العُنوانْ ..

II

The crops in the fields, and the lads in the country

The Prophet's Birthday celebrations,

The blue minarets

The Sunday bells

This Cairo which sleeps

Like a white flower in the hair of eternity

All send you their greetings,

All kiss your hands

And ask every visitor to the country

When you will return to the country.

٢

الزَرْعُ في الغيطان ، والأولادُ في البَـلَدْ
ومَوْلِدُ النبيِّ ،
والمآذِنُ الزرقاءُ ،
والأجْرَاسُ في يوم الأَحَدْ
وهذه القاهرةُ التي غَفَتْ
كزَهْرةٍ بيضاء في شَعْر الأبَدْ
يُسلِّمُونَ كلُّهُمْ عليكْ
يُقبِّلُونَ كلُّهُمْ يَدَيْكْ
ويسألونَ عنكَ كلَّ قادمٍ إلى البَـلَدْ
متى تَـعُودُ للبَـلَدْ ؟..

III

The doves in the Azhar[1], O dearest one, give you their greetings

The Nile ferries, O dearest one, give you their greetings

The cotton in the fields, the date-palms, the clouds

All of them, all of them, give you their greetings,

Your empty chair in Manshiyyat al-Bakrī[2] weeps for the horseman of dreams

حَمَائمُ الأزْهَرِ ، يا حبيبَنَا ، تُهدي لكَ السلَامْ
مُعَدِّيَاتُ النيل ، يا حبيبَنَا ، تُهدي لكَ السلامْ
والقطنُ في الحقول ، والنخيلُ ، والغَمَامْ
جميعُها .. جميعُها .. تُهدي لكَ السَّلَامْ
كُرْسِيُّكَ المهجورُ في (مِنْشيَّة البكري) يبكي فارسَ الأحلامْ

---

[1]The Azhar is a mosque in Cairo, built in 972 by Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī, the nucleus of the famous al-Azhar religious university.
[2]The district of Cairo where Nasser's modest house was situated.

Patience has no patience,

Sleep cannot sleep,

And the clock on the wall is bewildered and has lost count of the days.

O you who lived in time, and history, and days

I have an urgent letter for you

But, my Lord, I cannot find the words.

والصبرُ لا صبرَ لَهُ ..
والنَوْمُ لا يَنَامْ ..
وساعةُ الجدارِ : من ذُهولها ، ضيَّعتِ الأيّامْ
يا مَنْ سكَنْتَ الوقْتَ ، والتاريخَ ، والأيّامْ ..
عندي خطابٌ عاجلٌ إليكْ ..
لكنّني يا سيِّدي .. لا أجِدُ الكَلَامْ

IV

Sorrow is written on the clouds, the trees and the curtains

And you have gone, and have not gone.

You are in the scent of the earth, in the burgeoning of the flowers,

In the sound of every wave, the voice of every bird,

In children's books, in letters, in note-books,

In the greenness of eyes, in the shaking of bracelets,

In the heart of every believer, the sword of every avenger.

I have an urgent letter

But, but, O Lord,

My feelings are overwhelming me.

الحزنُ مرسومٌ على الغيوم ، والأشجار ، والسَتَائِرِ
وأنتَ سافرتَ .. ولم تُسافِرِ ..
فأنتَ في رائحة الأرض ، وفي تَفَتُّح الأزَاهِرِ ..
في صوت كُلِّ موجةٍ ، وصوت كُلِّ طائرِ ..
في كُتُب الأطفال ، في الحُرُوفِ ، في الدفاتِرِ
في خُضْرَة العيون ، وارتعاشة الأساورِ ..
في صدرِ كُلِّ مؤمنٍ ، وسيف كُلِّ ثائِرِ
عندي خطابٌ عاجلٌ ..
لكنَّني .. لكنَّني يا سيِّدي
تَسْحقُني مشاعِري ..

V

O great teacher,

How great is our sorrow

How great is our wound.

But we,

We swear by God the Exalted, the Almighty,

That we will imprison our tears in our eyes

And stifle our weeping.

We swear by God the Exalted, the Almighty,

That we will preserve the Charter'

And preserve the Revolution.[2]

٥

يا أيُّها المُعَلِّمُ الكبيرْ
كم حُزْنُنَا كبيرْ
كم جُرْحُنا كبيرْ
لكنَّنا ..
نُقْسِمُ بالله العليِّ القديرْ
أن نَحبِسَ الدُموعَ في الأحداقْ
ونخنقَ العَبْرَهْ ..
نُقْسِمُ بالله العليِّ القديرْ
ان نحفظ الميثاق
ونحفظَ الثورَهْ ..

---

1. Title of a book written by Nasser (Arabic al-Mīthāq)

2. Perhaps a reference to Nasser's book Falsafat al-Thawra (The Philosophy of the Revolution), or possibly simply to the 1952 revolution.

VI

And when our children ask us:

Who are you?

In what age did you live?

In the age of what inspired leader?

In the age of what magician?

We shall answer them: In the age of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir

God, what a marvellous testimony

That man should live in the time of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir

٦

وعندما يسألُنا أولادُنا
مَنْ أنْتُمُ ؟
في أيِّ عصرٍ عِشْتُمُ ؟
في عصرِ أيِّ مُلْهَمِ ؟
في عصر أيِّ ساحِرِ ؟
نُجيبُهُمْ : في عَصْر عبدِ الناصِرِ
اللهَ .. ما أرْوَعَها شهادةً
أن يُوجَدَ الإنسانُ في زمان عبدِ الناصرِ

١٩٧٠/١٠/٢٥

34. TO HIM ON HIS BIRTHDAY'

Your time is a garden, your age is green,

Your memory is a sparrow pecking from within the heart

We have filled our glasses to you, you with whose love

We have become drunk, as the Sufi becomes drunk with God.

You entered our history one night

And the scent of history is musk and ambergris.

إليــهِ في يــوم ميــلاده

زَمَانُكَ بُسْتانٌ .. وعَصْرُكَ أخضرُ
وذكراكَ ، عصفورٌ من القلب يَنْقُرُ

ملأْنا لكَ الأقــداحَ ، يا مَنْ بِحُبِّهِ
سَكِرْنا ، كما الصُوفيُّ بالله يَسْكَرُ

دخلتَ على تاريخنا ذاتَ ليلــــةٍ
فرائحةُ التاريخ مِسْكٌ وعَنْبَــــرُ

'Delivered in January 1971 at the commemoration of the Leader Gamal Abdul Nasser.

You were, and there were ears of wheat in the fields
There were sparrows and there were pine-trees.
You touched our hopes, and they became streams
You caused love to rain upon us, and you never ceased to rain.
O dearest one, you are late for our tryst
Though you used not to be late for trysts.
We cannot sleep, we think, our tears have grown old
Our nights have grown grey, and you have still not come.
Your memory comes back to me every evening
And my thoughts grow leafy when I think of you.

وكُنْتَ ، فكانتْ في الحقول سنابلٌ
وكانتْ عصافيرٌ .. وكان صَنَوْبَرُ

لَمَسْتَ أمانينا ، فصارتْ جداولاً
وأمْطَرتَنَا حُبّاً ، ولا زلتَ تُمْطِرُ

تأخَّرتَ عن وعد الهوى يا حبيبَنَا
وما كنتَ عن وعد الهوى تتأخَرُ

سَهِدْنَا .. وفكَّرنا .. وشاختْ دموعُنا
وشابتْ لياليْنا ، وما كنتَ تحضُرُ

تعاودني ذكراكَ كلَّ عَشِيَّـــةٍ
ويورقُ فِكْري حين فيكَ أُفكِّرُ ..

My wounds refuse to close their lips
As though the wounds of love do not coagulate.
I love you. I have no explanation for my yearning
What is there to explain, when passion cannot be explained?
You are late, most precious of men, and our night
Is long, and the lights of the lamps keep vigil.
You are late and the hours devour themselves
And our days stumble over one another.
Do you ask about our lives? You are our life
You are our Mahdī', you are our liberator.

وتأبى جراحي أن تَضُمَّ شفاهَهَـا
كأنَّ جراحَ الحُبِّ لا تَتَخثَّـرُ

أُحِبُّكَ . لا تفسيرَ عندي لصَبْـوَتي
أُفَسِّرُ مـاذا ؟ والهـوى لا يُفَسَّرُ

تأخَّرتَ يا أغْلى الرجال ، فليلُنـا
طويلٌ ، وأضواءُ القناديل تسهـرُ

تأخَّرتَ .. فالساعاتُ تأكُلُ نَفْسَها
وأيّامُنا في بعضِهـا تتعثَّـرُ

أتسألُ عن أعمارِنَا ؟ أنتَ عُمْرُنا
وأنتَ لنا المَهْديُّ .. أنتَ المُحرِّرُ

'The Mahdī (or "The Rightly-Guided One") is a figure believed by some Muslims, particularly the Shīʿa, to be coming in the last days of the world to bring about a reign of righteousness. Various historical figures have claimed to be the Mahdī.

You are the father of revolutions, you are their fuel

You are the revival of the land, you are the change.

The graves of the dead grow narrow together with their occupants

While you grow greater every day you are in the grave.

* * *

You are late, and the stallions are sorrowful

And your sword almost loses faith from its passions.

Your steed in Sinai drinks its tears

O the torment of horses, when they remember.

Your green banners chew their path

And above you thousands of crowns are plaited.

وأنتَ أبو الثَوْرات ، أنتَ وَقُودُها
وأنتَ انبعاثُ الأرض ، أنتَ التَغَيُّرُ

تضيقُ قبورُ الميِّتينَ بمنْ بها
وفي كُلِّ يومٍ أنْتَ في القبر تكبُرُ

* * *

تأخَّرتَ عنّا .. فالجيادُ حزينةٌ
وسيفُكَ من أشواقِهِ ، كادَ يكفُرُ

حصانُكَ في سيناءَ يشربُ دمعَهُ
ويا لعذاب الخيلِ ، إذْ تتذكَّرُ

ورايَاتُكَ الخضراءُ تمضغُ دَرْبَها
وفوقكَ آلافُ الأكاليلِ تُضْفَرُ

You are late, and Christ is in torment

There, and Mary Magdalene's wounds are red.

The women of Palestine annoint their eyes with grief

And in Bethlehem are women with downcast eyes and young lads.

The lemons of Jaffa are dry in their fields

Can a tree blossom in the grip of injustice?

* * *

Companion of Saladin[1], will you return

For the armies of the Byzantines forbid and command;[2]

Your companions in the Aghwār[3] have saddled their mounts

And your army in Ḥiṭṭīn[4] have prayed and praised God.

تأخّرتَ عنّا .. فالمسيحُ مُعَـذَّبٌ
هناكَ ، وجُرحُ المجدليّـة أحْمَرُ ..

نســاءُ فلسطينٍ تكَحَّلْـنَ بـالأسى
وفي بيت لحمٍ قاصراتٌ .. وقُصَّرُ

وليمونُ يافا يابسٌ في حُـقُولِـهِ
وهل شَجَرٌ في قبضـة الظلم يُزْهِرُ؟

* * *

رفيقَ صلاحِ الدين .. هل لكَ عودةٌ
فإنَّ جيوشَ الرُوم تَنْهَى وتـأْمُرُ

رفاقُكَ في الأغوار شَدُّوا سُرُوجَهُمْ
وجُنْدُكَ في حِطّينَ ، صلُّوا .. وكبَّرُوا ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.130.
[2]Qabbānī uses this as a metaphor for the enemies of the Arabs in general.
[3]See note 2, p.277.
[4]See note 3, p.238.

The world sings of you as though you were Ṭāriq'

Anchoring and setting sail with God's blessings.

The minarets of Mecca call upon you passionately

And Badr and Khaybar[2] call upon you, my dearest one.

The willows and roses of Damascus weep for you

And the flowers of the two Ghūṭas[3] and of Dummar[4] weep for you

تُغَنِّي بكَ الدُنْيا .. كأنَّـكَ طـارقٌ
على بَرَكات الله ، يَرْسُو .. ويُبْحِرُ

تناديكَ من شوقٍ مآذِنُ مـكَّـةٍ
وتبكيكَ بَدْرٌ ، يا حبيبي ، وخَيْبَرُ

ويبكيكَ صفصاف الشآمِ ووردُهـا
ويبكيكَ زَهْرُ الغُوطَتَيْنِ ، ودُمَّـرُ

* * *

---

[1]i.e. Ṭāriq b. Ziyād (670 - 720), the first Islamic leader to set foot in Spain, sent by Mūsā b. Nuṣayr (640 - 715), who later conquered Spain. Ṭāriq gave his name to Gibraltar (Jabal Ṭāriq).

[2]A highly fortified oasis to the north of Medina, which was besieged and conquered by the Prophet in 628. For Badr see note 1, p.168.

[3]The Ghūṭa is the irrigated area around Damascus, famous for its orchards, here used to mean Damascus itself. It is divided into two parts, East and West, each of them given the name Ghūṭa.

[4]A village which lies on the last mountain pass leading to Damascus, nowadays a suburb of Damascus itself. It was visited by the poet Shawqī, who commemorates it in the following line:

والحُوْرُ في دُمَّرٍ أَوْ حولَ هامتِها حُوْرٌ كواشفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَوِلْدَانِ

Come to us, for manly virtues hang their heads

And the land of my fathers is broken glass.

We have been defeated, and are still scattered tribes

Living and taking revenge with hidden hatred.

تعالَ إلينا .. فالمرُوءاتُ أطْرَقَتْ
وموطنُ آبائي زُجاجٌ مُكَسَّرُ ..

هُزِمْنَا .. وما زلنا شِتَاتَ قبائلٍ
تعيشُ على الحقد الدفين وتَثْأَرُ

Companion of Saladin[1], will you return
For the armies of the Byzantines forbid and command.[2]
A thousand caliphs besiege us like death
In the East is Hulagu, and in the West Caesar.[3]

* * *

Abū Khālid[4], I complain to you of my pains
One like me has some excuse, and one like you forgives.
I am the tree of sorrows, forever bleeding;
In the snow and the rains I give and bear fruit.
June arouses my madness and my fury
I murder my idols, weep, and lose faith

رفيقَ صلاحِ الدّينِ .. هل لكَ عَوْدَةٌ
فإنَّ جيوشَ الروم تَنْهَى ، وتأْمُرُ

يحاصِرُنا كالموت ألْفُ خليفـــةٍ
ففي الشرق هولاكُو .. وفي الغَرْب قَيْصَرُ

* * *

أبا خالدٍ أشكُو إليكَ مواجِعـــي
ومثلي لهُ عُذْرٌ .. ومثْلُكَ يعـذرُ

أنا شَجَرُ الأحزان ، أنزفُ دائمـاً
وفي الثلج والأنواءِ .. أُعطي وأُثْمِرُ

يُثيرُ حزيرانٌ جُنوني ونقْمَـــتي
فأغتالُ أوثاني .. وأبكي .. وأكفُرُ

---

[1]See note 1, p.130.
[2]See note 2, p.322.
[3]Hulagu (1217 - 1265) the grandson of Genghiz Khan, was the Mongol conqueror of Baghdad, which he utterly destroyed in 1258. He is a symbol of total evil for the Arabs. Caesar is a title generally given to the Byzantine Emperors.
[4]See note 1, p.325.

I slaughter the People of the Cave' in their beds,
All of them, and pass through the gateway of death.
I leave behind me my camel and my cloak
And walk, I am a dagger in the neck of the sun.
I shout: O land of fables, become pregnant;
Perhaps a second Christ will appear.

وأذبحُ أهلَ الكهف فوق فراشِهِمْ
جميعاً ، ومن بَوّابة الموت أعْبُرُ

وأتْرُكُ خلفي ناقتي وعباءتي
وأمْشي .. أنا في رَقْبة الشمس خِنْجَرُ

وأصْرَخُ : يا أرض الخرافاتِ .. إحْبَلي
لعلَّ مسيحاً ثانياً .. سوفَ يَظْهَرُ ..

'The story of the People of the Cave is found in the Qur'ān, Sūrat Ahl al-Kahf. Qabbānī uses them as a metaphor for the Arabs, who sleep and do nothing.

35. STATEMENT BEFORE THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF POETRY[1]

Welcome, Iraq, I have come to sing to you
But a part of singing is weeping -
Welcome, welcome, do you recognise a face
Which has been etched by the days and the rain-stars?
Love has eaten away the core of my heart
And what remains has been divided up by women.

إفادةٌ في محكمة الشِعْر

مَرْحَباً يا عِرَاقُ .. جئتُ أُغنِّيكَ
وبَعْضٌ من الغنـــاءِ بُكـــــاءُ

مَرْحَباً .. مَرْحَباً .. أتعرفُ وجهاً
حَفَرَتْـهُ الأيَّـامُ والأنـــــــواءُ

أكَلَ الحُبُّ من حُشَاشة قلـــبي
والبقايا ، تقاسَمَتْها النســـــاءُ

---

[1]Delivered at the 9th Poetry Festival, Baghdad, April 1969.

All of my old loved ones have forgotten me

And neither Nuwār nor ʿAfrā' answer me,[1]

The perfumed lips have turned to ashes

And the tents of passion have been scattered by the wind,

Sorrow has settled, like sparrows, in my heart

Grief is the wine, and my heart is the goblet.

I am a wound walking on foot

Since my horses have been sapped by exhaustion.

The wounds of al-Ḥusayn[2] are part of my wounds

And in my breast, from grief, there is a Karbalā'.[3]

كُلُّ أحبابيَ القُدَامَى نَسَوْني
لا نُوارٌ تُجيبُ أو عَفْراءُ

فالشفاهُ المُطَيَّباتُ رَمَادٌ
وخيامُ الهوى رماها الهَواءُ

سَكَنَ الحُزْنُ كالعصافيرِ قلبي
فالأسى خَمْرَةٌ ، وقلبي الإناءُ

أنا جُرْحٌ يمشي على قَدَميهِ
وخُيُولي قد هدَّها الإعياءُ

فجراحُ الحُسَيْن ، بعضُ جراحي
وبصدري من الأسى ، كَرْبَلاءُ ...

---

[1]Nuwār was the wife of al-Farazdaq, whom he divorced at her request and afterwards longed for. ʿAfrā' (d. c. 670) was the beloved of the poet ʿUrwa b. Ḥizām. They were childhood sweethearts, but ʿAfrā' was married to another while ʿUrwa was absent and went to Syria. The names are used as symbols of Arab sweethearts.
[2]See note 2, p. 167.
[3]See note 2, p. 168.

Sorrow has long been my companion

And friends are few in our time.

* * *

Welcome, Iraq, how are the women's ʿabā'āt[1]

How are the oryx, and how are the gazelles?

Welcome, Iraq; has Samarra',

After so many years, forgotten me?

How are our loved ones on the river-bank,

How are the carpets and the boon-companions?

Here I once had a princess of love,

But then my beautiful princess was lost.

وأنا الحُزْنُ من زمانٍ صديقـــي
وقليلٌ في عصرنا الأصدقـــــاءُ

* * *

مَرْحَباً يا عِراقُ .. كيف العَبَـاءاتُ ،
وكيفَ المَهَا ، وكيف الظِبـــاءُ ؟

مَرْحَباً يا عِراقُ .. هل نَسِيَتْنِي
بعد طول السنين سامُـــــرَّاءُ ؟

كيف أحبابُنا على ضفَّـــة النَهْـرِ
وكيف البســـاطُ والنُـــدَمَـــاءُ ؟

كان عندي هُنـا .. أميرةُ حُـبٍّ
ثُـمَّ ضاعَتْ أميرتي الحَسْـنَـاءُ

---

[1]The typical outdoor covering of women in Iraq, a long black sheet of cotton wrapped round the whole body.

Where is a sweet face in al-Aʿẓamiyya'

Which would cause the very sky to be jealous, if it saw it?

I am Sinbad, who has been torn to pieces by the sea,

And my beloved's two eyes are the harbour.

The waves have chewed my ship, and my brow

Has been pierced by the raging storms;

Within me are ages of sorrow,

But shall I find a refuge in Iraq?

I am the great lover, but

My blue notebooks are not enough for me.

أين وجهٌ في (الأعْظَمِيَّةِ) حُلْوٌ
لو رأتْـهُ ، تَغـارُ منـه السَمَـاءُ

إنّي السندبادُ ، مَزَّقَهُ البَحْـرُ
وعَـيْـنَـا حبيبتي الميـنـاءُ

مَضَغَ الموجُ مَرْكَبي ، وجَبيـني
ثَقَبَتْـهُ العواصـفُ الهَـوْجـاءُ

إنَّ في داخلي عُصُوراً من الحُـزْنِ
فهل لي إلى العراق التجـاءُ ؟..

وأنـا العاشقُ الكبيرُ ... ولكـنْ
ليس تكفي دفـاتِري الزَرْقـاءُ

---

[1]A suburb of Baghdad, in which al-Imām al-Aʿẓam Abū Ḥanīfa is buried. The poet's wife's family's house was situated here.

O June, what has poetry done,

And what have poets given us?

The collections of verse in our hands are miscarriages

And all of our expressions are stilted.

Every year we come to the fair of ʿUkāẓ[1]

Wearing green turbans

We move our heads like dervishes

While Sinai is seared by fire

Every year we come, here is Jarīr[2]

Singing, and here is al-Khansā'.[3]

يا حُزَيْرَانُ .. ما الذي فَعَلَ الشِعْرُ
ومـاذا أعطى لنا الشُعَـــراءُ ؟

الـدواويـــنُ في يدينا طُـــرُوحٌ
والتعابيرُ كُـلُّهـــا إنشـــاءُ

كُلَّ عامٍ نأتي لسُـوقِ عُكَـــاظٍ
وعلينـــا العمائـــمُ الخَضْـــراءُ

ونهـــزُّ الرؤوسَ مثـل الدراويشِ
وبالنـــار تكتـــوي سينـــاءُ ..

كُلَّ عامٍ نأتي .. فهذا جـــريـــرٌ
يَتَغَنَّـــى ، وهـــذه الخَنْسَـــاءُ

---

[1]See note 1, p.185.
[2]See note 1, p.182.
[3]See note 2, p.182.

Still, still we suck at the rind
While Palestine is stained by blood -
All eloquences have fallen into the mire,
And al-Khalīl and al-Farrā' have died[1]
O June, you are greater than us:
You are a father without sons.
If we had any remnant of pride
We would act with dignity, but we are cowards

* * *

O ages of the Muʿallaqāt[2], we have grown tired,
For even the garment may grow tired of the body

لم نَزَلْ .. لم نَزَلْ نُمَصْمِصُ قِشْراً
وفلسطينُ خَضَّبَتْهـا الدمـــاءُ

سَقَطَتْ في الوحول كلُّ الفَصَاحاتِ
ومـاتَ الخليـلُ و الفَـــرَّاءُ ..

يا حُزَيْرانُ .. أنتَ أكبرُ منَّـا
وأبٌ أنتَ مالـــه أبْنَـــاءُ

لو مَلَكْنَا بقيـةً من إبـــاءٍ
لا نتخيْـنَا .. لكنّنا جُبَنَـــاءُ

* * *

يا عُصُـورَ المُعلـقَّـاتِ مَـلَلْنـا
ومن الجسم قد يَمَـــلُّ الـــرِداءُ

---

[1]Two famous early Arab grammarians. Al-Khalīl (718 - 786) was famous as a lexicographer and inventor of Arabic prosody. Al-Farrā' (761 - 822) was the most famous Kufan grammarian.
[2]See note 4, p.211.

Half of our poems are inscriptions, but what
Use is an inscription when the building is falling down?
The Maqāmāt[1] are a game, and al-Ḥarīrī
Is hashish, and so are the ghūl and the phoenix.[2]
Mosaics have slaughtered us for many ages,
And idols, and foolish ornamentations.
We reject poetry as alchemy and magic.
The alchemical poem has killed us,
We reject poetry as royal theatre,
From whose thrones the simple are banned

نِصْفُ أشعارنا نُـقُـوشٌ .. وماذا
يَـنْـفَـعُ الـنَـقْـشُ حين يهوي البِـنَاءُ ؟

المقاماتُ لُـعْـبَـةٌ ... والحـريـريُّ
حشيشٌ .. والغُـولُ .. والعَـنْـقَـاءُ

ذَبَحَـتْـنَـا الفُـسَـيْـفُـسَـاءُ عُـصُـوراً
والـدُمَى .. والزخارفُ البَـلْـهَـاءُ

نرفُـضُ الشعرَ كيمياءً وسِـحْـراً
قَـتَـلَـتْـنَـا القصيـدةُ الكيمِيَـاءُ

نرفضُ الشعرَ مسرحاً مَـلَـكِـيَّـاً
من كراسيـهِ ، يُـحْـرَمُ الـبُـسَـطَـاءُ

---

[1]The Maqāmāt are a typical Arab literary genre, consisting of pituresque stories with much linguistic ornamentation. The two most famous practitioners were al-Hamadhānī (968 - 1007) and al-Ḥarīrī (1054 - 1122).
[2]These are used to symbolise Arab mythology. The Ghūl is a kind of evil genie, and the ʿanqāʾ, here translated 'phoenix' is a mythical bird, similar in some ways to the phoenix of western mythology, although it does not burn itself.

We reject poetry as a steed

Ridden by tyrants and the strong

We reject poetry as darkness and symbols

For how can darkness see ?

We reject poetry as a wooden rabbit

Which has no aspiration or passions.

We reject the idlers in the coffee-house of poetry

Their days are smoke and lassitude.

Our poetry today excavates the sun

With its hands, and everything is illuminated

نرفُضُ الشِعْرَ أن يكونَ حصانـــاً
يمتطيــه الطُغَــاةُ والأقويـــــاءُ

نرفُضُ الشِعْرَ عُتْمـةً ورُمُـــوزاً
كيف تَسْطيـعُ أن ترى الظَلْمـاءُ ؟

نرفضُ الشعرَ أرْنَبـاً خَشَبيَّـــاً
لا طموحٌ لــهُ ولا أهـــــواءُ

نرفضُ العاطلينَ في قَهْـــوَةِ الشِعْرِ ..
دُخَانٌ أيَّامُـهُـمْ ، وارتخـــــاءُ

شِعْرُنا اليوم يحفـرُ الشمسَ حَفْـراً
بيَدَيْــهِ .. فكُـلُّ شيءٍ مُضَـــاءُ

Our poetry today is attack and discovery,
Not Kufic lines', or singing camel-drivers' songs.
All contemporary poetry which does not contain
The anger of the age, is a lame ant.
What is poetry, if it becomes an acrobat
Whose dancing amuses the Caliphs?
What is poetry when it becomes a mouse,
Whose concern is a piece of bread and food,
If the thinker becomes a trumpet
Thought and footwear are all the same to him.

شِعْرُنا اليومَ هَجْمَـةٌ واكتِشَـافٌ
لا خطوطٌ كوفيَّـةٌ .. وجِـدَاءُ ..

كلُّ شِعْرٍ معاصرٍ .. ليس فيـهِ
غَضَبُ العصر ، نَمْلَـةٌ عَرْجَـاءُ

ما هو الشِعْرُ ؟ إنْ غـدا بَهْلَـوَاناً
يَتَسَلَّـى برقْصِهِ الخُـلَفَـاءُ

ما هو الشِعْرُ ؟ حينَ يصبحُ فَـأْراً
كِسْرةُ الخُبْزِ .. همُّهُ .. والغِذَاءُ

وإذا أصبَحَ المُفكِّرُ بُـوقَـاً
يستوي الفِكْـرُ عندها والحِـذَاءُ ...

'Kufic is an early form of Arabic script.

Prophets are crucified for an idea,

So why are poets not crucified?

The <u>fidā'ī</u>[1] alone writes poetry

And all that we have written is nonsense;

He is the real writer of the age,

While we are the doormen and the hirelings.

When the rifles begin to play

The thoroughbred poems die

* * *

What ails us, what ails us, that we blame June

When all of us are partners in the crime?

يُصْلَبُ الأنبياءُ من أجل رأيٍ
فلماذا لا يُصْلَبُ الشُعَراءُ ؟

° ° °

الفدائيُّ وحَدَهُ .. يكْتُبُ الشِعْرَ
وكُلُّ الذي كَتَبْنَا هُراءُ ..

إنَّهُ الكاتبُ الحقيقيُّ للعصرِ
ونحنُ الحُجَّابُ والأُجَراءُ

عندما تبدأُ البنادقُ بالعَزْفِ
تموتُ القصائدُ العَصْمَاءُ ..

° ° °

ما لَنَا .. ما لَنَا .. نلومُ حُزَيْرَانَ
وفي الإثْمِ كلُّنا شُرَكَاءُ

---

[1] See note 1, p.23.

Who is innocent? All of us

Bear its shame, without exception

Our intellect, our thought, our feeble songs

Our visions, our hollow utterances

Our prose, our verse, our yellow newspapers

The ink, and the servile letters.

The heroisms are stage scenery

And the faces of the actors are grease-paint;

Among them Palestine is like an auction,

In which every buyer increases the bidding when he wishes.

مَنْ هُمُ الأبْرياءُ ؟؟ نحنُ جميعاً
حامِلُو عارِهِ .. ولا استثناءُ

عقْلُنا .. فِكْرُنا .. هُزَالُ أغانينا ..
رُؤَانا .. أقوالُنا الجَوْفَاءُ

نَثْرُنا .. شِعْرُنا .. جرائدُنا الصفراءُ ..
والحِبْرُ .. والحروفُ الإمَاءُ

البُطُولاتُ موقفٌ مَسْرحيٌّ
ووجوهُ المُمَثّلينَ طِلاءُ

وفلسطينُ بينهُمْ كَمَزَادٍ
كلُّ شارٍ يزيدُ حينَ يَشَاءُ

Supporters of Arab unity, while the country is splintered,

Every piece of its flesh split into pieces?

Marxists, while the masses are miserable!

Why is the hunger of the poor unsatisfied?

Descendants of Quraysh![1] If Quraysh had ever seen them,

The desert would call for help against their sands!

No right will come to our aid, and no left -

Under the blade of the knife we are all equal.

If we had read history, Jerusalem would not have been lost,

Though the Alhambra[2] was lost before it.

وَخْدَوِيُّــونَ !! والبــلادُ شَظَايـا
كــلُّ جزءٍ من لحمهـــا أَجـزاءُ

ماركِسِيُّونَ !! والجماهيرُ تَشْقَى
فلمـــاذا لا يشبَـــعُ الفُـقَـــراءُ

قُرَشِيُّونَ !! لـو رأَتْهُـمْ قُـرَيْشٌ
لاستجـــارتْ مـن رملِهـا البَيْـدَاءُ

لا يَـمينٌ يُـجيرُنا أو يســـارٌ
تحتَ حَدِّ السِكّين نحنُ سَـوَاءُ

لو قرأَنـــا التاريخَ .. ما ضاعتِ القُـدْسُ
وضاعـــتْ من قبلهـــا (الحَمْرَاءُ)...

* * *

[1]Quraysh are the tribe of the Prophet, from whom all Caliphs are supposed to be descended.

[2]The famous palace in Granada, used to symbolise the loss of Islamic Spain.

O Palestine, you are still thirsty,
While the desert sleeps in the possession of oil;
The cloaks are all of silk,
And the nights are cheap and given to lust,
O Palestine, do not call upon them,
For the living and the dead are equal.
Oil has killed the qualities which they have
For wealth may kill the wealthy
O Palestine, do not call upon Quraysh'
For pride has died in Quraysh.

يا فلسطينُ .. لا تزالـين عَطْشَىٰ
وعـلى النفْـطِ نامـتِ الصَحْـراءُ

العبـاءاتُ كلُّهـا من حريـرٍ ..
والليـالي رخيصـةٌ حمـراءُ ..

يا فلسطينُ .. لا تُنَادي عليهمْ
قد تساوى الأمواتُ والأحيـاءُ

قَتَلَ النفْـطُ ما بهمْ من سجايـا
ولقـد يقْتُلُ الثريَّ الثَـرَاءُ

يا فلسطـينُ .. لا تُنَـادي قُرَيْشاً
فقريْشٌ ماتـتْ بهـا الخُيَـلاءُ

---

[1]See note 1, p.68 and note 1, p.338.

Do not call upon the men of ᶜAbd Shams[1]

Do not call - there is no-one left but women.

The summit of humiliation is that manly qualities die

While backwardness goes backward.

Two years have gone by, while the invaders remain

And the history of my nation lies dismembered.

Two years have gone by, while Christ is captive

In their hands, and the Virgin Mary.

Two years have gone by, while the minarets weep

And the bells are all dumb.

لا تُنادي الرجالَ من عَبْـدِ شَمْسٍ
لا تُنادي .. لم يَبْقَ إلا النِسَـــاءُ ..

ذَرْوَةُ الذُلِّ أن تموتَ المُـــــرُوءاتُ
ويَمْشي إلى الـــــوراء الــوراءُ ...

* * *

مرَّ عامانِ .. والغُــزَاةُ مُقيمـــونَ
وتـــــاريخُ أُمَّــتي أشْـــــــــلاءُ

مرَّ عامانِ .. والمسيــحُ أســـيرٌ
في يديْــهِـــمْ .. ومَريَـمُ العــذراءُ ..

مرَّ عامان .. والمـآذِنُ تَبْـــكي
والنواقيسُ كلُّهـــا خَرْســـــاءُ

---

[1]ᶜAbd Shams is the ancestor of the Caliph ᶜUthmān and of the Umayyad dynasty.

O you who pray in the temple of the word,
We have had enough of dizziness and fainting.
Tear off the dervishes' jubba'
And take off the wool[2], O godfearing men,
Leave our saints in peace -
What land has been recovered by the saints?

* * *

In my mouth, O Iraq, is much water[3]
How can he in whose mouth is much water complain?
They claim that I have attacked my country
Yet I am all love and faithfulness.

أيُّهـــا الراكِعُونَ في معبد الحَرْفِ
كفـــانا الدُوارُ والإغْمـــــــاءُ

مَزِّقُـــوا جُبَّـــةَ الدراويش عنكُمْ
واخلعُوا الصُوفَ أيُّها الأنقيـــاءُ

أُتركُـــوا أولياءنـــا .. بســـلامٍ
أيُّ أرضٍ أعادها الأوليـــــاءُ ؟

* * *

في فَمِي ، يا عِراقُ ، مـاءٌ كثيرٌ
كيف يشكو من كانَ في فِيهِ ماءُ ؟

زَعَمُوا أنّني طعنتُ بـــــلادي
وأنا الحـبُّ كلُّـهُ والوفـــاءُ

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[1]See note 1, p.101.
[2]The traditional material of the Sufis' attire.
[3]An idiom meaning, "I am overwhelmed by problems".

Do they wish me to suck my blood?

I am not a wall, or a parrot -

I am my freedom, and if they steal it,

The earth and all the heavens will fall

I have never for a day made a practice of hypocrisy; my poetry

Has never been bought by kings and princes.

Every letter I have written has been

An Arab sword, from which light radiates;

Little of speech is purity

And much of speech is prostitution.

أيُـريدونَ أن أمُـصَّ نَـزِيفي ؟
لا جـدارٌ أنا .. ولا بَبَغَاءُ

أنا حُـريّتي .. فإنْ سَرَقُـوها
تسقُـطِ الأرضُ كلُّـها ، والسَمَاءُ

ما احترفتُ النفاقَ يوماً .. وشِعْـري
ما اشـتراهُ الملـوكُ والأُمَـرَاءُ

كلُّ حرفٍ كتبتُـهُ .. كان سيفـاً
عَـرَبيَّـاً ، يشِعُّ منـه الضيـاءُ

وقليـلٌ مـن الكلام نَـقِـيٌّ
وكثيرٌ مـن الكلام بَـغَـاءُ ...

° ° °

How much torment have I suffered from what I have written;
In our East the noble suffer.
The pain of the letter is splendid, but does the
Red rose complain to the gardens?
All those who have fought with a brave word
And have then died, are martyrs.
Do not punish, O Lord, those who have stoned me
Forgive them, for they are ignorant
My love for the land is a far-sighted love
While their passion is blind emotion

كـم أُعاني مما كَتَبْـتُ عَـذَاباً
ويُعـاني في شرقنـا الشُـرَفَـاءُ

وَجَـعُ الحرف رائعٌ .. أوَتشكُـو
للبساتـينِ ، وردةٌ حمـــــراءُ

كـلُّ من قاتَـلُوا بحرفٍ شُجَاعٍ
ثـمَّ ماتوا .. فإنَّهُـمْ شُهَـدَاءُ

لا تُعاقِـبْ ، يا ربِّ ، من رَجَمُوني
واعـفُ عنهُـمْ ، لأنَّهُـمْ جُهَـلاءُ

إن حُـبّي للارض حـبٌّ بصـيرٌ
وهـواهُـمْ عـواطفٌ عَـمْيَـاءُ

If I have cauterised the flesh of my country,

Yet the cure may come from cauterisation.

* * *

From the seas of grief, and the night of orphans

There rises now a white flower;

From the paleness of autumn, from the pain of the earth

There appear green ears of corn.

Fidā''[1] looks down on us like a sun

What would we be without fidā'?

From the wounds of the fighter we are born

And from the wound is born pride.

إنْ أكُنْ قد كَوَيْتُ لَحْمَ بلادي
فمن الكيِّ .. قد يجيءُ الشفاءُ

* * *

مِنْ بحار الأسى ، ولَيْلِ اليَتَامى
تطلعُ الآنَ ، زهْرَةٌ بَيْضَاءُ

من شُحوب الخريفِ ، من وَجَعِ الأرضِ
تلوحُ السنابلُ الخَضْراءُ

ويُطِلُّ الفداءُ شمساً علينا
ما عسانا نكونُ لولا الفِدَاءُ

مِنْ جراح المناضلين وُلِدْنَا
ومن الجُرْح تُولَدُ الكبرياءُ

---

[1]Self-sacrifice, or guerilla action. The word is difficult to translate into English. See also note 1, p.23.

Before them? There was no before;
History begins from the day they came.
They descended over our land as prophets
After the prophets died among us;
They rescued our honour on the day they appeared
And our black faces lit up.
They gave us a passport to life;
Before then we did not have names.
O friends of letters, do not reproach me
If I explode, O friends

قَبْلَهُمْ ؟ لم يكُنْ هنالكَ قَبْـلٌ
إبتداءُ التاريخ منْ يَـوم جـاؤوا ...

هبطوا فوق أرضنـــا أنْبيَـاءً
بعد أن مات عندنا الأنبيـــاءُ

أنْقَذُوا ماءَ وجهنـــا يومَ لاحُـوا
فأضاءتْ وجوهُنـــا الســـوداءُ

منحُونا إلى الحيـاة جـــوازاً
لم تكُـنْ قَبْلَهُـمْ لنـا أسْمَـاءُ

• • •

أصـدقاءَ الحروف .. لا تعـذلوني
إنْ تفجَّرتُ ، أيُّها الأصـدقـاءُ

I am storing thunderbolts in my breast
As the winter stores thunderbolts,
I have not come to be an orator
For my country has been destroyed by orators.
I reject my time, and my age;
From rejection, things are born.
My friends: I have told what has not been told
And my childlikeness and my purity intercede for me.
I am coming to you, and my heart
In my hands is a white dove.

إنّني أخـزِنُ الرُعُودَ بصـــــدري
مثلما يخزنُ الرُعُـــودَ الشِتَـــاءُ

أنا ما جئتُ كي أكونَ خطيبـــاً
فبـــلادي أضاعَهَـــــا الخُطَبَـاءُ

إنني رافضٌ زماني ، وعَصْـــــري
ومن الرفضِ ، تُـولَدُ الأشيـــاءُ

أصدقائي : حكَيْـــتُ ما ليس يُحْكى
وشفيعـي طفولـــتي .. والنَـقَـــاءُ ..

إنّني قادمٌ إليكُـــــمْ .. وقـــلبي
فوق كفّـي حمـــامةٌ بيضـــــاءُ

Understand me, for I am nothing but a child
In whose eyes the evening bathes.
I do not know duality of thought;
My soul is a blue lake
My poetry is for my country, and I do not care
Whether heaven rejects it or blesses it.

إفْهموني .. فما أنا غيرُ طفلٍ
فوق عَيْنَيْهِ يسْتَحِمُّ المَسَاءُ

أنا لا أعرفُ ازدواجيّةَ الفِكْرِ
فَنَفْسي بُحَيْرةٌ زَرْقَاءُ ..

لبلادي شِعْري .. ولستُ أبالي
رَفَضَتْهُ ، أم بارَكَتْهُ السَمَاءُ ..

36. FROM THE DIARY OF A DAMASCENE LOVER'

I have spread my eyelashes on your pure soil

So why, O Damascus, do we begin with reproaches?

You are my beloved, so lie like a song

In my arms, and do not seek to know the reason.

You are all women; there is not a woman

Whom I have loved after you, without thinking her a lie

مِنْ مُفَكّرة عاشقٍ دمشقيّ

فَرَشْتُ فوق ثَرَاكِ الطاهرِ الهُدُبَا
فيا دمَشْقُ ، لماذا نبدأُ العَتَبَا ؟

حبيبتي أنتِ .. فاسْتَلْقي كأُغْنِيَةٍ
على ذراعي ، ولا تَسْتَوْضِحي السَبَبَا

أنتِ النساءُ جميعاً .. ما مِنِ امرأةٍ
أحْبَبْتُ بَعْدَكِ ، إلّا خِلْتُها كَذِبَا

'Delivered at the Damascus Poetry Festival, December 1971.

O Damascus, my wounds have no banks
So wipe the sorrow and exhaustion from my brow
And return me to the walls of my school
And bring back the ink, the chalk and the books.
How many a treasure have I buried in those narrow alleys
And how many boyhood memories have I left there,
How many pictures have I drawn on their walls
How many toys have I broken on their steps?
I have come from the womb of sorrows, my country,
To kiss the ground, the doors, and the shooting stars.

يا شامُ .. إنَّ جراحي لا ضِفَافَ لها
فَمَسِّحي عن جبيني الحُزْنَ والتَعَبَا

وأَرْجِعيني إلى أســـوار مدرســـتي
وأرجِعي الحِبْرَ .. والطبْشُورَ .. والكُتُبَا

تلكَ الزواريبُ كم كَنْزٍ طَمَرْتُ بها
وكم تركتُ عليها ذكريـــاتِ صِبَا

وكم رَسَمْتُ عـلى حيطانِها صُوَرَاً
وكم كَسَرْتُ على أدراجِها لُعَبَا

أتَيْتُ من رَحِمِ الأحزانِ ، يا وَطَني
أُقَبِّلُ الأرضَ ، والأبوابَ ، والشُهُبَا

My love is here, and my sweethearts were born here

And who will restore for me the life which has gone?

I am a tribe of lovers in their entirety

And from my tears I have watered the sea and the clouds

Every willow I have turned into a woman

And every minaret I have studded with gold.

These gardens were among my possessions

When I departed from Damascus into exile.

And I do not put on a single shirt

Without finding grapes on its threads.

حُبِّي هُنا .. وحبيباتي وُلِدْنَ هُنا
فَمَنْ يعيدُ لِيَ العُمْرَ الذي ذَهَبَا

أنا قبيلةُ عُشَّاقٍ بكامِلِها
ومن دُمُوعي سَقَيْتُ البحرَ والسُحُبَا

فكُلُّ صَفْصَافَةٍ حوَّلْتُها امرأةً
وكُلُّ مِئْذَنَةٍ رصَّعْتُها ذَهَبا ..

هذي البساتينُ كانَتْ بين أمتعتي
لمّا ارتحلتُ عن الفَيْحَاءِ ، مُغْتَرِبَا

فلا قميصَ من القمصانِ ألبسُهُ
إلا وجدتُ على خيطانه عِنَبَا

How many a man puts to sea, haunted by the cares of dry land
And how many a man flees from the verdict of love, but cannot escape?
O Damascus, where are Muᶜāwiya's[1] eyes
And where are those who jostled the shooting stars with their shoulders?
The horses of the Banū Ḥamdān[2] do not dance
Proudly, nor does al-Mutanabbī fill Aleppo;[3]
We touch the grave of Khālid[4] in Hims
And the grave quivers in anger at its visitors.
Many a living man there is whose dwelling-place is the marble of the grave
And many a dead man who stands erect on his feet.

كم مُبْحِرٍ ، وهُمُومُ البَرِّ تسكُنُـهُ
وهاربٍ من قضاء الحُبِّ ، ما هَرَبَا
يا شامُ .. أينَ هُمَا عينا مَعَاويـةٍ
وأينَ من زَحَمُوا بالمنكـب الشُهُبَا
فلا خيولُ بني حمدانَ راقِصَـــةٌ
زَهْـــواً ، ولا المتنبّي ماليءٌ حَلَبَا
وقَبْرُ خالدَ في حِمْصٍ ، نلامِسُهُ
فيرجفُ القبرُ من زُوَّاره غَضَبَا

يا رُبَّ حيٍّ ، رخامُ القـبر مسكنُهُ
ورُبَّ مَيْتٍ على أقـدامه انْتَصَبَا

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[1]See note 2, p.166.
[2]The dynasty who ruled Aleppo and north Syria in the time of al-Mutanabbī. The most famous ruler of the dynasty was Sayf al-Dawla (944 - 967).
[3]A reference to the well-known words of Ibn Rashīq on al-Mutanabbī, mālī' al-dunyā wa-shāghil al-nās, al-Mutanabbī, (915 - 965) one of the greatest of Arab poets, composed poems in praise of Sayf al-Dawla and satirised Kāfūr, ruler of Egypt. He was a proud, brave and adventurous poet who excelled in the description of battle-scenes.
[4]i.e. Khālid b. al-Valīd, d. 642 in Ḥimṣ. See also note 1, p.139 and note 2, p.238.

O Ibn al-Walīd', is there not a sword which you can hire out,
Since all of our swords have turned to wood?
Damascus - treasure of my dreams, my fan,
Shall I complain of the Arabs to you, or to the Arab world?
The whips of June have made their backs bleed,
And they have grown accustomed to them, and kiss the hand of the one who beats them,
They have read books of history and been satisfied,
But when have rifles dwelt in books?
They have given Palestine coloured dreams to drink
And have fed her on foolish words and speeches;

يا ابنَ الوليدِ .. ألا سَيْفٌ تُؤَجِّرُه
فكُلُّ أسْيَافِنا قد أصبحتْ خَشَبا !!.

* * *

دمشْقُ .. يا كَنْزَ أحلامي ، ومَرْوَحَتي
أشكُو العروبةَ ، أم أشكو لكِ العَرَبَا

أدْمَتْ سياطُ حزيران ظُهُورَهُمُ
فأدْمَنُوها ، وباسُوا كَفَّ من ضَرَبَا

وطالَعُوا كُتُبَ التاريخِ .. واقْتَنَعُوا
متى البنادقُ كانت تسكُنُ الكُتُبَا ؟

سَقَوْا فلسطينَ أحلاماً ملوَّنةً
وأطْعَمُوها سخيفَ القَوْل ، والخُطَبَا

[1] See note 4, p.351.

They have lived in the margin of events, and have not risen up
For plundered land and violated honour.
They have left Jerusalem in the mire, naked
Disclosing the pride of her breasts to whoever desires.
Is there a letter from Palestine to reassure me
About the person to whom I wrote, who has not written to me,
About the lemon-groves, about a dream,
Which grows further away from me the more it approaches?
O Palestine, who will give you a lily,
Who will restore to you the house which was ruined?

عاشُوا على هامشِ الأَحْدَاثِ ، ما انْتَفَضُوا
للأرض منْهُوبَةً ، والعِرْضِ مُغْتَصَبَا

وخلَّفُوا القُدْسَ فوق الوحل ، عاريةً
تُبيحُ عــزَّةَ نهديْهـــا لمــن رَغِبَا

هل من فلسطينَ مكتــوبٌ يُطَمْئِنُني
عمَّنْ كتبتُ إليهِ ، وهْوَ ما كَتَبَا

وعن بساتين ليمونٍ ، وعن حُلُــمٍ
يزدادُ عنّي ابتعــاداً كُلَّمـا اقتربا

أيا فلسطينُ .. مَنْ يُهديكِ زَنْبَقـةً
ومَنْ يُعيدُ لكِ البيتَ الذي خُــرِبَا

Turn round, and you will find us in our slippers,

Some worshipping sex, and some worshipping gold;

One man's vision has been blinded by a life of ease

And everything which he gives goes to vice and prostitutes.

Another bathes in seas of oil,

Has tired of coarse cloth as a garment, and has put on gold brocade.

Another is narcissistic in his soul,

And another has drunk the blood of free men.

If those who have murdered history are my kin

Over the ages, then I reject the kinship.

تَلَفَّتي .. تَجدِينـــا في مباذِلِنـــا
من يَعْبُدُ الجِنْسَ ، أو مَنْ يعبُدُ الذَهَبَا

فَوَاحِدٌ .. أعْمَتِ النُعْمَى بصيرتَهُ
فللخَنَى .. والغواني .. كلُّ ما وَهَبا ..

وواحِدٌ .. ببحار النفْطِ مُغْتَسِلٌ
قد ضاقَ بالخَيْش ثوباً ، فارتدى القَصَبا

وواحدٌ .. نَرْجِسِيٌّ في سريرتِـــهِ
وواحدٌ .. من دَمِ الأحرار قد شَرِبا

إنْ كانَ من ذَبَحُوا التاريخَ .. هُمْ نَسَبي
على العُصُور ، فإنّي أرفُضُ النَسَبَا ..

* * *

O Damascus, O Damascus, I have no merriment in my quiver -

I beg the pardon of poetry, if it begs for merriment.

What shall I read of my poetry and my literature?

Among us horse's hoofs have trampled down literature

Then have besieged us and harmed us, and no pen

Has spoken the truth, without being murdered or crucified.

* * *

O you who reproach the murdered man for bleeding,

For the gushing of his artery, how easy is reproach!

Whoever has experienced cautery will not forget its agony

And whoever has seen poison will not suffer like the one who has drunk it.

يا شامُ .. يا شامُ .. ما في جُعْبَتي طَرَبُ
أسْتَغْفِرُ الشِعْرَ أن يَسْتَجْدِيَ الطَرَبَا

ماذا سأقرأُ من شعري ومن أدَبـي
حوافرُ الخيل دَاسَتْ عندنا الأدَبَا

وحَاصَرَتْنا ، وآذَتْنا ، فلا قَـلَـمٌ
قالَ الحقيقةَ ، إلّا اغتيلَ أو صُلِبَا

* * *

يا مَنْ يُعَاتِبُ مَذْبُوحاً .. على دمِـهِ
ونَزْف شِرْيانِهِ ، ما أسْهَلَ العَتَبَا

مَنْ جَرَّبَ الكيَّ ، لا يَنْسَى مواجِعَهُ
ومَنْ رأى السُـمَّ ، لا يَشْقَى كمَنْ شرِبَا

The rope of disaster is wound around my neck;
Who, then, will reproach the hanged man when he sways?
Poetry is not pigeons whom we release
Towards the sky, nor a reed-flute or a gentle wind,
But it is anger with long claws
How cowardly is poetry, if it does not ride on anger!

حَبْلُ الفجيعة مُلْتَفٌّ على عُنُقي
مَنْ ذا يُعاتِبُ مشنوقاً إذا اضطرَبا

الشِعْرُ ليس حَمَامَاتٍ نُطيِّرُها
نحو السماء ، ولا ناياً وريحَ صَبَا
لكنَّهُ غَضَبٌ طالتْ أظافِرُهْ
ما أجْبَنَ الشعرَ ، إنْ لم يَرْكبِ الغَضَبَا ..

37. GOLD INLAY ON A DAMASCENE SWORD

Do you suppose that Maysūn' loves me?

Or am I under an illusion, since women are uncertainty?

How many messengers have I sent to her father

Whom eyes behind veils have slaughtered?

O my cousin, since my love is Umayyad

How can I conceal my love, and how can I reveal it?

ترصيعٌ بالذهب
على سيفٍ دمشقيّ

أتراها تُحِبُّني مَيْسُونُ ؟
أم تَوَهَّمتُ .. والنساءُ ظُنُونُ

كَمْ رَسُولٍ أرسلتُهُ لأبيها
ذَبَحَتْهُ تحت النِقَابِ العُيُونُ

يا ابنةَ العَمِّ ، والهوى أُمَوِيٌّ
كيف أُخفي الهوى ، وكيف أُبِينُ

'Wife of Muᶜāwiya and mother of Yazīd (d. c. 700). She was a poetess of beduin origin, who found life in Damascus intolerable. When she composed a poem expressing preference for the desert life, Muᶜāwiya divorced her and sent her back to her tribe.

How many times have we been killed in our love, and been resurrected

After death? There is no need to swear to this.

Why do I stand at the deserted campsite, while my heart,

Like my brow, is embroidered with furrows.

The gazelles of the game-park do not return my greeting

And the anklets do not resound.

O, that generous time in al-Ṣāliḥiyya'

Where is my folly, where my infatuation?

O my bed, my mother's sheets

The sparrows, the scent, the branches,

كـــم قُتِلْـنا في عشقِنـــا .. وبُعِثْنَا
بعد مَوْتٍ ، وما علينا يميـــنُ

ما وُقُوفي على الديـــار ، وقـلبي
كجبيـني ، قد طرَّزَتْـهُ الغُضُـونُ

لا ظِباءُ الحِمَى رَدَدْنَ ســـلامي
والخلاخيـــلُ ، مالهُـنَّ رنيـــنُ

يا زماناً في الصالحيَّـــة سَمْحَـاً
أين منّي الغِـوَى ، وأينَ الفُـتُونُ

يا سريري .. ويا شراشِـــفَ أُمّي
يا عصافـيرُ .. يا شذا .. يا غُصُونُ

---

[1]A district of Damascus.

O narrow alleys of my quarter, hide me
Between your eyelids, for time is niggardly
And forgive me, if I appear sad;
The face of a lover is a sad face.

* * *

Here is Damascus, after an age long separation
Seven rivers[1], and dark-eyed maidens.[2]
The fountains in the houses are speech
And the bunches of grapes are ground sugar;
The blue sky is a book of verse
And the letters upon it are swallows.

يا زواريبَ حَـارَتي .. خَبِّئيني
بين جفنيْـــكِ ، فالزَمـــانُ ضنيـن
واعذُريني ، إذا بدوتُ حزينـــاً
إنَّ وجـهَ المُحبِّ ، وجْـهٌ حزيـن

* * *

ها هي الشـامُ ، بعد فرْقَـة دهـرٍ
أنْهُرٌ سبعـةٌ .. وحُـورٌ عِـينُ

النوافـــــيرُ في البُيُـوت كَلَامٌ
والعناقيدُ سُـــكَّرٌ مطحـــــونُ

والسماءُ الزَرْقَـــاءُ دفـترُ شِعْـــرٍ
والحروفُ التي عليـه .. سُنُـونُو

---

[1]The number of streams which feed the irrigated area around Damascus (the Ghūṭa) is well above seven. The poet has perhaps selected this number as an auspicious one. The best-known streams are in addition to the Barada itself, the Thawra, the Nahr Yazīd, the Banās, the Mizzāwī, the ᶜAqrabānī, the Dārānī and the Qanawāt.
[2]The phrase is one which occurs three times in the Qur'ān (Sūrat al-Dukhān, verse 54; Sūrat al-Ṭūr, verse 20; and Sūrat al-Wāqiᶜa, verse 22). The word ḥūr which we have translated "dark-eyed" means "with intensely black irises and white corneas".

Did Damascus - as they say - come into being
When, in the night, the jasmine dreamed?
Alas, Damascus - how can I explain what ails me
When I am always haunted by you?
Forgive me if I do not reveal my love for you,
For the sweetest part of love is allusion.
We are captives together, for in the cage of love
The gaoler and the prisoner suffer alike.

* * *

O Damascus, whose guise I have adopted,
Am I the cypress, or am I the larch?

هل دمشقُ ـ كما يقولونَ ـ كانتْ
حين في الليل ، فَكَّرَ الياسمينُ ؟

آهِ يا شامُ ـ كيفَ أشْرَحُ مـــا بي
وأنا فيـــكِ دائمـــاً مَسْـــكُونُ

سامحيني ، إنْ لم أُكاشِفْـــكِ بالعشقِ ،
فأحلى ما في الهـــوى التضْمِيـنُ

نحنُ أسْرَى معـاً .. وفي قَفَص الحُبِّ
يُعـــاني السجَّـــانُ والمَسْجُـــونُ

* * *

يا دمشقُ ، التي تقمَّصْتُ فيهـــا
هل أنا السَرْوُ ، أم أنا الشَّرْبـينُ ؟

Am I the Arabian jasmine in my mother's vases
Or am I the vegetation, and the rainy clouds?
Or am I the favourite cat in the house
Which answers when longing for home calls her?
O Damascus, whose fragrance has diffused itself
Beneath my skin, as though it were a zizyphus,
Forgive me if I am disturbed, for
My love is not rhymed or metrical
So plant me like a comb beneath your braids
And I will show you how passion can be.

أم أنا الفُلُّ في أباريق أُمِّـــي
أم أنا العُشْبُ ، والسَحَابُ الهَتُونُ ؟
أم أنا القِطَّـةُ الأثيرةُ في الـــدارِ
تُلَبِّي ، إذا دعاها الحنـــينُ ؟

يا دمشقُ التي تَفَشَّى شذاهـــا
تحت جِلْـدي ، كأنَّهُ الزَيْزَفُونُ

سامحيـني إذا اضطربتُ .. فإنّي
لا مُقَفَّى حُبّي .. ولا مَوْزُونُ
وازْرَعيني تحت الضفائـر مِشْطَـاً
فأريـــكِ الغَـرَامَ كيفَ يكُـــونُ ..

° ° °

I am coming alone from the cities of the wind

So embrace me like a child, Qasiyūn[1]

Embrace me, and do not argue with my madness;

The summit of intellect, my friend, is madness.

Embrace me fifty thousand times and a thousand times

For embracing is not permissible with immobility.[2]

Is she mad with my love for her,

This Damascus, or is it I who am mad?[3]

I have been carrying love for her for thirty centuries

On my back, with none to assist me.

قادِمٌ مِن مدائن الريح وحـــــدي
فاحْتَضِنّـي كالطفل يا قاسِيُـــــونُ

إحْتَضِنّي .. ولا تُناقش جُنونـي
ذروةُ العقـــل ، يا حبيبي ، الجُنُونُ

إحْتَضِنّي خمسين ألفـــاً وألفـــاً
فمع الضَـــمِّ لا يجـوزُ السُـكُونُ ..

أَهْيَ مجنونَـــةٌ بشوقي إليهـــــا
هذه الشامُ ، أم أنا المجنـــــونُ

حاملٌ حُبَّهـا ثـلاثينَ قَـرْنـــاً
فوقَ ظهري ، وما هناكَ مُعيـــنُ

---

[1]The mountain range overlooking Damascus to the North.
[2]The allusion is to the grammatical terms ḍamm (vocalisation with u) and sukūn (non-vocalisation) which are incompatible.
[3]al-Majnūn; an allusion also to the early Islamic poet Majnūn Laylā. See note 1, p. 194.

Whenever I come to her to pay back my debts

To the fair maidens, I am besieged by debts.

If all the fates leave me alone

I shall seek aid from my sweetheart's eyes.

O my God, you have made my love a sea;

Is immobility forbidden to the seas?

O my God, is writing a wound

Which cannot be cured, or an accursed genie?

How many a beautiful death do I suffer in poetry

As ships suffer from the wind?

كُلَّما جئتُهـــا أردُّ دُيُـــــــونـي
للجميلاتِ .. حاصَرَتْـــني الدُّيُونُ

إنْ تَخلَّـــتْ كلُّ المقادير عـــنِّي
فبِعَيْنَيْ حبيبتي أَسْتَعِـــــــينُ

يا إلهي ، جعلتَ عِشْـقيَ بحـراً
أحرَامٌ عـــلى البحـــار السُّكُونُ ؟

يا إلهي ، هـــل الكتابـــةُ جُرْحٌ
ليسَ يُشْفَـى ، أم ماردٌ ملعـونُ ؟

كم أُعاني في الشعر موتـاً جميـلاً
وتُعـــاني من الرياح السَفِـــــينُ

* * *

October came, O beloved of my life;

October is the best time for love[1]

We have a rendezvous on Mount Hermon[2]

How warm and loving is the snow!

I have not embraced you for a long time

I have not conversed with you, though conversation is endless,

I have not addressed love poetry to you, though love-poetry is a part of me;

Love has its faith, and the sword has a faith.

Seven years of sadness have gone by

In which the willow and the olive-tree have died,

جاءَ تشريـــنُ .. يا حبيبـــةَ عُمْري
أحْسَـنُ الوقت للهــوى تِشْريـــنُ

ولنا موعدٌ على (جَبَـــل الشَيْـخِ)
كم الثلجُ دافـــيءٌ وحَـنُـــــونُ

لم أُعانِقْـــكِ من زمـــانٍ طويـــلٍ
لم أُحَدِّثْـكِ ، والحديثُ شُجُونُ

لم أُغَازِلْـكِ .. والتَغَزُّلُ بعضـــي
للهــوى دينُـــهُ ، وللسيف دِيـــنُ

سَنَواتٌ سَبْـعٌ من الحُزْنِ مـرَّتْ
ماتَ فيها الصَفْصَـــافُ والزيتُــونُ

---

[1]the poet is refering to the October war of 1973.
[2]A high mountain in the Anti-Lebanon range on the boundary between Syria and Lebanon, occupied by Israel since 1967. It was the scene of heavy fighting in 1973.

Years in which I resigned from love
And melodies dried up on my lips,
Seven years when we were assassinated by despair
Scholastic theology[1], and aniseed[2]
And we divided into tribes and nations,
The sanctuary was violated, and the lions' den lost.
How can I love you, when around my bed
Prowl the Jews and the plague?
How can I love you, when the sanctuary is violated?
Is it easy for a prisoner to love?

سَنَواتٌ فيها اسْتَقَلْتُ من الحُبِّ
وجَفَّتْ على شفاهي اللُحُـــــونُ

سَنَواتٌ سَبْعٌ .. بها اغتالَنَا اليأْسُ
وعِلْـــمُ الكلام .. واليانَسُـــونُ ..

فانقسمنا قبائـــلاً وشُعُـــــوباً
واسْتُبِيحَ الحِمَـى ، وضاعَ العرينُ

كيفَ أهواكِ ، حينَ حولَ سريري
يتمشَّـى اليهودُ والطـــاعـــــونُ

كيفَ أهواكِ ؟ والحِمَـى مُسْتَبَاحٌ
هل من السَهْل أنْ يُحِبَّ السجينُ ؟

---

[1]See note 1, p.229.
[2]The poet is probably referring to the ʿaraq, an Arab spirit flavoured with aniseed.

Do not say, "You have forgotten"; I have not forgotten anything.

How can the eyelids forget their lashes?

However love becomes humbled

Whenever men's brows are humbled.

* * *

Damascus, O Damascus, O Princess of my love

How can the madman[1] forget his love?

Light the fire, for the conversation is long

And the yearning is long for the one we love

The sun of Granada[2] has risen over us

After we had despaired, and Maysalūn[3] has uttered cries of joy

لا تَقُولي : نسيتَ . لم أنْسَ شيئاً
كيف تنسى أهْدَابَهُـنَّ الجُفُونُ ؟
غير أنَّ الهـوى يصـيرُ ذليـــلاً
كُلمَّا ذلَّ للرجـــال جبـــينُ

شامُ .. يا شامُ .. يا أميرةَ حُبِّي
كيف ينسى غرامَـهُ المَجْنُـــونُ ؟

أَوْقِدي النارَ .. فالحديثُ طويلٌ
وطويلٌ لَمَنْ نُحِبُّ الحنـــــينُ

شمسُ غَرْنَاطـةٍ أطلَّتْ علينـــا
بعد يأسٍ ، وزغردتْ (مَيْسَلُونُ)

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[1]See note 3, p.362.
[2]See note 1, p.264.
[3]The site of the battle at which the French defeated the forces of the Syrians under Yūsuf al-ʿAẓma in 1920, after which Syria lost its freedom for twenty-five years.

October[1] came .. your face is sweeter,

By far - what is October's secret?

How did the ears of wheat become higher?

How did your eyes become a swallow's nest?

The land of Jawlān[2] resembles your eyes

Flowing water, almonds and figs;

Every wound in it is a garden of roses,

Spring, and a hidden pearl[3]

O Damascus, array yourself in my tears as a bracelet

And hope, for every difficult thing becomes easy.

جاءَ تِشْرينُ .. إنَّ وجْهَكِ أحْلَىٰ
بكثيرٍ .. ما سِرُّهُ تِشْريـــــــنُ ؟

كيفَ صارتْ سنابلُ القمح أعْلَى ؟
كيفَ صارتْ عيناكِ بَيْتَ السُّنُونو ؟

إنَّ أرضَ الجولان تُشْبهُ عينيْـكِ
فماءٌ يجري ، ولـــوزٌ ، وتِينُ ..

كُلُّ جُرْحٍ فيها حديقـــةُ وردٍ
وربيـــعٌ .. ولُؤْلُـؤٌ مَكْنُـــونُ

يا دمشـقُ الْبِسي دمُـــوعي سِوَارا
وتَمنَّـي ، فكُـلُّ صعبٍ يهـــونُ

---

[1]See note 1, p.364.
[2]See note 2, p.155.
[3]An allusion to the Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Ṭūr, verse 24, Sūrat al-Wāqi'a, verse 23.

Put on the bride's veil, for my sake;

The dowry of fighting women is costly.

God and the Prophet are pleased with Damascus'

Coming victory, and manifest conquest[2]

Tear up, Damascus, the map of humiliation

And say to fate, "Be, and it is".[3]

Badr[4] has reclaimed her days through you

And Ḥiṭṭīn[5] has regained her youth;

Through you Quraysh[6] are mighty after having been humbled

And tribes and clans have met together.

وضَعي طَرْحةَ العروس .. لأَجْلي
إنَّ مَهْرَ المُنَاضلاتِ ثميـــــــن
رضي اللهُ والرَسُـــولُ عن الشـامِ
فَنَصْـرٌ آتٍ .. وفَتْـحٌ مُبِـينُ ..
مَـزِّقي يا دمشـقُ خارطـةَ الـذُلِّ
وقولي للدهرِ : كُـنْ .. فيكـونُ
إستردَّتْ أيّـامَهـا بـكِ بَـدْرٌ
واستعادتْ شبابَهـا حِطّـينُ
بكِ عـزَّتْ قريشُ بعـد هَـوَانٍ
وتلاقـتْ قبائـلٌ وبُطُـونُ ..

---

[1]A phrase which occurs frequently in the Qur'ān, for example, in Sūrat al-Mā'ida, verse 119; Sūrat al-Tawba, verse 100; Sūrat al-Fatḥ, verse 18 and Sūrat al-Bayyina, verse 8.
[2]From Sūrat al-Saff, verse 61.
[3]A phrase which occurs frequently in the Qur'ān, for example, in Sūrat al-Anʿām, verse 73; Sūrat al-Naḥl, verse 40; Sūrat Maryam, verse 35 and Sūrat Yāsīn, verse 36.
[4]See note 1, p.168.
[5]See note 3, p.238.
[6]See note 1, p.68.

ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜĀṣ[1] advances to the east

And al-Ma'mūn advances to the west[2]

God has decreed that you shall be Damascus;

With you creation begins and ends.

The sea has no choice in becoming the sea,

And the goldfinch does not choose his song.

This is the life of swords, there is no sword

Which is not either a creditor, my beloved, or a debtor.

The Byzantines have been defeated[3] after seven lean years[4]

And our wounded consciousness has recovered.

إنَّ عَمْرَو بنَ العاصِ يزحفُ للشرقِ
وللغَـرْب يزحـفُ المأمُـــونُ
كَتَبَ اللهُ أن تكُـــوني دمشقـاً
بكِ يَبْـدَا وينتهـي التكـويـــنُ
لا خِيَارٌ أن يُصْبحَ البَحْـرُ بَحْـراً
أوَ يَخْتَارُ صوتَهُ الحَسُّـــونُ ؟

ذاكَ عُـمْرُ السيوف .. لا سيفَ إلّا
دائِـنٌ يا حبيبتي أو مَـــدِينُ

هُـزِمَ الرومُ بعد سَبْعٍ عِجَـــافٍ
وتعافَى وُجْدَانُنـــا المطعُـــونُ

---

[1]ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜĀṣ (574 - 664) was the Arab conqueror of Egypt. He is used here to symbolise Egypt. See also note 1, p.139.
[2]al-Ma'mūn (786 - 833), an ᶜAbbasid caliph who was famous for fighting the Byzantines, used to symbolise Iraq. Both Egyptian and Iraqi troops fought in the 1973 war.
[3]An adaptation of Sūrat al-Rūm, verse 2.
[4]From Sūrat Yūsuf, verse 43 and verse 46.

We killed the Phoenix[1] on Mount Hermon,[2]

And the dragon[3] shed his teeth.

The sword was true to its promise[4], O my country

But politics are all opium.[5]

The sword is a true governor and sage,

The sword alone, O Damascus, is certain

وقَتَلنا العَنْقَاءَ في (جَبَلِ الشَيْخِ)
وألقى أضراسَهُ التِنِّينُ

صَدَقَ السيفُ وَعْدَهُ يا بلادي
فالسياساتُ كُلُّها أَفْيُونُ

صَدَقَ السيفُ حاكماً وحكيماً
وحْدَهُ السيفُ ، يا دمشْقُ ، اليقينُ

---

[1]See note 2, p.333.
[2]See note 2, p.364.
[3]The Arabic word is tinnīn, a kind of huge many-headed serpent.
[4]An allusion to the first line of the ode by Abū Tammām (804 - 846) on the capture of Amorium; Al-Sayfu aṣdaqu anbā'an min al-Kutubi.
[5]A reworking of the saying of Marx that "religion is the opium of the people".

Trail your skirt[1] Qunaytra[2] of glory

And annoint your eyes with kohl, Hermon[3]

The horses of Hishām[4] have raced ahead, leaving their shadows behind,

And the knife has awakened from its sleep.

* * *

إسْحَبي الذَّيْلَ ، يا قنيطرةَ المجد
وكَحِّلْ جفنيْكَ يا حَرَمُونُ

سَبَقَتْ ظِلَّها خيولُ هشامٍ
وأَفَاقتْ من نومها السِكِّينُ

---

[1]The expression means "walk proudly".
[2]Qunaytra was occupied by Israel in 1967 and recaptured by Syria in 1973.
[3]See note 2. p.364.
[4]i.e. Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (690 - 743) the Umayyad Caliph under whose rule extensive conquests were made in Transoxiana and France.

Teach us the knowledge of Arabism, Damascus
For you are the eloquence and the exposition[1]
Teach us deeds, for words of defeat[2]
Have slaughtered us, and doughy utterances.
Teach us to read the lightning and the thunder
For half of our words are mire and mud.
Teach us to think, for no victory is to be hoped for
As long as the whole nation are sardines.
The thing which angers God most greatly
Is tamed thinking, and an impotent writer.

عَلِّمينا فِـقْـهَ العروبة يا شـــامُ
فأنتِ البيـــــانُ والتَبْيِـيـــن

عَلِّمينا الأفعـالَ .. قد ذَبَحتْنَـا
أحْـرُفُ الجَـرِّ .. والكـلامُ العَجِينُ

عَلِّمينا قـراءةَ البَرْقِ والـرَعْـدِ
فنِصْـفُ اللُّغَـاتِ وحْـلٌ وطِينُ

عَلِّمينا التفكيرَ .. لا نَصْرَ يُرْجَى
حينمـا الشعبُ كُلُّه سَرْدِيـن

إنَّ أقصـــى مـــا يُـغْضِبُ اللهَ
فِكْـرٌ دَجَّنُـوهُ .. وكاتِـبٌ عِنِّينُ

---

[1] Al-Bayān wa'l-Tabyīn: an allusion to the book by al-Jaḥiẓ (780 - 869).
[2] Another play on words borrowed from the terminology of Arabic grammar. Afʿāl means "verbs" as well as "deeds" and aḥruf al-jarr means "particles governing the genitive" as well as words of defeat.

My country, O poem of fire and roses,
The centuries sing of what you have done
The river of history wells up in Syria;
Shall history be abolished by a mongrel miscarriage?
We are Acre - we are Carmel of Haifa
The mountains of Galilee, and Laṭrūn[1]
Every lemon will give birth to a child
And it is impossible that lemons will come to an end.

* * *

Damascus, O Damascus, change the sun's decree,
And say to fate: "Be, and it is."

وَطَني ... يا قصيدةَ النار والـوَرْدِ
تَغَنَّتْ بمـا صنعـتَ القُـــــرُونُ

إنَّ نَهْرَ التاريـخ ينبُـعُ في الشـام
أيُلْغي التاريخَ طِرْحٌ هَجـــــينُ

نحنُ عَـكَّا .. ونحنُ كَرْمِلُ حيفا ..
وجبالُ الجليل .. واللَّطْـــــرُونُ

كلُّ لَيْمُونةٍ ستنجـــبُ طِفْـــلاً
ومُحَالٌ أن ينتهـي الليمـــونُ ..

* * *

شامُ .. يا شامُ .. غيِّري قَـدَرَ الشمسِ ..
وقولي للدهرِ : كُنْ .. فيكُـونُ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.22.

38. OBSERVATIONS IN A TIME OF LOVE AND WAR

I

Have you noticed something?

Have you noticed that the relationship between you and me, in time of war

Takes on a new shape

And enters a new stage,

That you have become more beautiful than in any day gone by

And that I love you more than in any day gone by?

Have you noticed how we have crossed the walls of time

And the area of your eyes has become

Like the area of this country?

ملاحظاتٌ
في زمن الحبِّ والحرب

١

أَلاحَظْتِ شيئاً ؟
أَلاحَظْتِ أن العلاقةَ بيني وبينكِ ، في زمن الحربِ
تأْخُذُ شكلاً جديدا ..
وتدخُلُ طوراً جديدا ..
وانكِ اصبحتِ اجمل من اي يومٍ مضى ..
وأنيَ أُحِبُّكِ أكثرَ من أي يومٍ مضى ..
أَلاحَظْتِ كيف اخترقْنَا جدارَ الزَمَنْ ؟
وصارت مَسَاحةُ عينيْكِ ..
مثلَ مَسَاحةِ هذا الوطَنْ ..

II

Did you notice this change in the colour of your eyes

When we listened together to the announcement of the Crossing?[1]

Did you notice how I embraced you like a madman

How I squeezed you like a madman

How I lifted you up, then flung you down

Then lifted you up, then flung you down?

Today is a wedding-feast, and October[2] is the lord of all the months.

Have you noticed how I overflowed all my banks,

How I have flooded you like the waters of the rivers?

٢

أَلاحَظْتِ هذا التَحوُّلَ في لون عينيْكِ ؟
حين استمعنا معاً لبيانِ العُبُورْ ..
ألاحَظْتِ .. كيف احْتَضَنْتُكِ مثل المجانينِ ..
كيف عَصَرْتُكِ مثل المجانينِ ..
كيفَ رفَعْتُكِ .. ثم رميتُكِ ..
ثمّ رفعتُكِ .. ثم رميتُكِ ..
فاليومَ عُرْسٌ .. وتِشْرينُ سَيِّدُ كُلِّ الشُهورْ
ألاحَظْتِ .. كيفَ تجاوزتُ كُلَّ ضفافي ؟
وكيف غمرتُكِ مثل مياه النُهُورْ

---

[1]The Crossing is the crossing of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian army on 16th October 1973 which signalled the beginning of the October War between Syria and Egypt and Israel.
[2]See note 1, p.364.

Did you notice how I rushed toward you

As though I were seeing you for the first time?

Did you notice how we were in harmony

How we panted

How we sweated

How we turned to ashes

How we were resurrected

As though we were making love

For the first time?

ألاحَظْتِ .. كيفَ اندفعتُ إليكِ ..
كأنّي أراكِ لأوَّلِ مرَّهْ
ألاحظْتِ كيف انسجَمْنا ..
وكيف لَهَثْنَا ..
وكيفَ عَرِقْنا ..
وكيف استحلنا رماداً ..
وكيفَ بُعِثْنَا ..
كأنَّا نُمارسُ فِعْلَ الغرامِ
لأوَّل مرَّهْ ...

III

Have you noticed

How I have been liberated from a guilt complex,

How the war has given me back all my old facial features?

I love you in a time of victory;

Passion does not live long

In the shadow of defeat.

٣

أَلاحظْتِ ..
كيف تحرَّرتُ من عُقْدَةَ الذَنْبِ
كيف أعادتْ ليَ الحربُ كلَّ ملامحي وجهي القديمَهْ
أُحِبُّكِ في زَمَنِ النَصْرِ ..
إنَّ الهوى لا يعيشُ طويلاً
بظِلِّ الهزيمَهْ ..

IV

Does war rescue us after we have been long lost,

Kindle our dormant passions

Make me Beduin in nature

And you another woman?

٤

هل الحربُ تُنْقِذُنا بعد طول الضَيَاعْ ؟
وتُضْرِمُ أشواقَنا الغافيَهْ
فتجعلَني بَدَويَّ الطِبَاعْ
وتجعلَكِ امرأةً ثانِيَهْ ..

V

Have you noticed how we have discovered our childhood

After six years?'

How we have finally returned to the kingdom of love and lovers?

Did you feel like me that the paratroopers

Were descending like doves on our hands,

That the commandos were passing over the veins of our hands?

Have you noticed how we have scattered over them

Garlands of violets and jasmine,

٥

أَلاحَظْتِ كيف اكْتَشَفْنا طفولَتنا
بعد ستٍّ سِنينْ؟
وكيفَ رجعنا أخيراً لمملكة العِشْقِ والعاشِقِينْ
أأحسَسْتِ مثلي .. بأنَّ رجالَ المظَلَّات كانوا
يحطُّونَ مثلَ الحَمَام على راحَتَيْنا
وأنَّ جُنودَ المغاوير كانوا يمَرونَ فوق عُرُوق يَدَيْنا ..
ألاحظْتِ كيف نثرنا عليهمْ
عُقُودَ البَنَفْسَجِ والياسمينْ؟

How we ran to them

How we bowed

Humbly before their rifles?

Did you notice how we laughed

How we wept

And how we crossed the bridges with those who crossed?

وكيف ركضنا إليهمْ
وكيف انْحَنَيْنا ..
أمامَ بنادقهمْ خاشِعِينْ
أَلاحَظْتِ كيفَ ضحِكْنا ؟
وكيفَ بكَيْنَا ؟
وكيفَ عَبَرْنا الجسورَ مع العابرينْ ..

VI

I have left my ages of decadence behind me,
Left the ages of drought,
And have come on a horse of wind and pride
To buy you a wedding dress.

تَرَكْتُ عُصورَ انحطاطي وَرَائي ..
تركتُ عصورَ الجَفَافْ
وجئتُ على فَرَسِ الريح والكبرياءِ
لكي أشتري لكِ ثوبَ الزَفَافْ ..

VII

You become, in time of war,
Polished like mirrors
Drawn out like a giraffe'
Between our hands boundaries melt
And distance is abolished.

٧

تصيرينَ في زَمَن الحربِ
مصقولةً كالمرايا ..
ومَسْحُوبةً كالزُّرافَهْ
وبين يَدَيْنا تذوبُ الحدودُ
وتُلْغَى المسافَهْ

'The giraffe is regarded by the Arabs as a symbol of grace and beauty.

VIII

I have read the maps of your body in my school books
And still remember the names of all the rivers,
The forms of all the rocks,
The customs of all the deserts.
I still remember the lives of all the thoroughbreds
So how can I distinguish
Between the heat of your body
And the heat of the ground of my country?

٨

قرأتُ خرائطَ جِسْمِكِ في كُتُبي المَدْرَسِيَّهْ
ولا زلتُ أحفظُ أسماءَ كُلِّ النُهورْ
وأشْكَالَ كُلِّ الصُخُورْ
وعاداتِ كُلِّ البَوَادي
ولا زلتُ أحفظُ أعمارَ كُلِّ الجِيَادِ
فكيف أُفَرِّقُ ..
بين حرارة جسمِكِ أنتِ ..
وبين حرارة أرض بلادي ؟؟

IX

We have found at last the boundaries of our mouths,
We have stumbled upon a language for conversation.
June was sitting in our hands
And imprisoning us in caves of dust.
I loved you
But the night of defeat confiscated my day;
I wanted to reach you
But they made me get off just before the train started.

٩

وَجَدْنا أخيراً .. حُدُودَ فَمَيْنَا
عَثَرْنا على لُغَةٍ للحوارْ
وكان حزيرانُ يجلسُ فوقَ يديْنَا
ويَحْبِسُنَا في كهوف الغُبَارْ
وكنتُ أُحِبُّكِ ..
لكنَّ ليلَ الهزيمةِ صادرَ منيِّ النَهَارْ
وكنتُ أريدُ الوصولَ إليكِ ..
ولكنَّهُمْ أنزلوني قُبَيْلَ رحيل القطارْ

I used to think about you a lot,

Dream about you a lot,

I used to smuggle my poetry to you

Despite the seige,

But they executed me again and again

And lowered the curtains upon me

But, despite my repeated death

I still loved you, my pomegranate flower.

وكنتُ أُفكِّرُ فيكِ كثيرا
وأَحلُمُ فيكِ كثيرا ..
وكنتُ أُهَرِّبُ شِعْري إليكِ
برَغْم الحِصَارْ
ولكنَّهُمْ أعْدَمُوني مراراً
وأَرخُوا عليَّ السِتَارْ
ولكنْ برغم تعدُّد مَوْتي
بقيتُ أُحِبُّكِ .. يا زهْرَةَ الجُلَّنَارْ

X

I love you, you

I write my love for you on the face of every cloud

And give my love-letters

To every pigeon.

I love you in a time of violence -

Who says that I want peace?

I love you, O woman from my country

And desire to remain on your lips.

١٠

أُحِبُّكِ أنتِ ..
وأَكْتُبُ حُبِّي على وجه كلِّ غَمَامَهْ
وأُعْطي مكاتيبَ عِشْقي
لِكُلِّ يَمَامَهْ
أُحِبُّكِ في زمن العُنْفِ ..
مَنْ قال إنِّي أُريدُ السَلامَهْ
أُحِبُّكِ .. يا امرأةً من بلادي
وأَنْوي ، على شَفَتَيْكِ ، الإقامَهْ

XI

Have you noticed how much you resemble beautiful Damascus,

How much you resemble the minarets, the Umayyad mosque[1], the samāḥ[2]-dance,

My mother's ring,

My school playground,

And the madness of childhood?

Have you noticed how feminine you have become

And how I have become full of masculinity?

١١

أَلَاحَظْتِ .. كم تُشْبِهينَ دمشقَ الجميلَهْ ؟
وكم تُشْبِهينَ المآذنَ .. والجامعَ الأمَويَّ .. ورقْصَ السَمَاحْ ..
وخَاتمَ أمّي ..
وساحةَ مدرستي ..
وجُنُونَ الطُفُولَهْ ..
أَلَاحظْتِ كم كُنْتِ أُنثى ؟.
وكم كُنْتُ ممتلئاً بالرُجُولَهْ ..

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[1]The chief mosque in Damascus, built by al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik (665 - 715) on the site of a church and before that of a pagan temple. It is one of the most outstanding buildings of Islam.
[2]See note 1, p.279.

Did you notice

How your face gleamed beneath the fires

And how your hairpins became rifles?

Did you notice how the history of your eyes changed in a few moments

And you became a sword in the form of a woman,

Became a nation in the form of a woman,

And became the whole heritage, the whole tribe?

أَلَاحَظْتِ ..
كيف تألّقَ وجْهُكِ تحت الحَرَائقْ ؟
وكيف دبابيسُ شعركِ صارت بَنَادِقْ ؟
أَلَاحظتِ كيف تغيَّر تاريخُ عينيْكِ في لَحَظاتٍ قليلَهْ ؟
فأصبحتِ سيفاً بشكل امرأَهْ ..
وأصبحتِ شعباً بشكل امرأَهْ ..
وأصبحتِ كلَّ التُرَاثِ ، وكُلَّ القبيلَهْ ..

XII

Did you notice

How amazingly beautiful you were, that evening

How you sat before me like a capital city of pride,

How the rhythm of your voice changed

Until your voice took on the appearance of a spring of water

Or an oleander flower

In the hair of Mary Magdalene?

١٢

أَلاحَظْتِ ؟
كم كنتِ رائعةَ الحُسْنِ ، ذاكَ المسَاءْ
وكيف جلستِ أمامي كعاصمة الكبرياءْ ..
وكيف تَغَيَّرَ إيقاعُ صوتِكِ ..
حتى تصوَّرتُ صوتَكِ يُنْبُوعَ ماءْ
وزَهْرَةَ دِفْلَى
على شَعَرِ المَجْدليَّهْ ..

Have you noticed that you have become Damascus

With all its Umayyad flags,

And Egypt, with all its Fatimid mosques,

Have become forts and sandbags

And a long convoy of martyrs?

Have you noticed

That you have become a résumé of all women

And have become writing and the alphabet?

أَلاحَظْتِ أنَّكِ صِرْتِ دمشقَ ..
بكُلِّ بيارقها الأَمَويَّهْ
ومِصْرَ .. بكُلِّ مساجدها الفاطميَّهْ
وصِرْتِ حصوناً .. وأكياسَ رَمْلٍ ..
ورَتْلاً طويلاً من الشُهَداءْ
ألاحَظْتِ ..
أنَّكِ صرتِ خلاصةَ كُلِّ النساءْ
وصرتِ الكتابةَ والأبْجَديَّهْ ...

XIII

I love you when the storms grow strong,

Not by candle light, or by moonlight.

I announce to men that I am opposed to moonlight

And hate moonlight ...

I love you when the streets are washed with rain's tears

And when the trees' clothing takes on the colour of bronze,

I love you planted in the eyes of children,

Obsessed by the cares of mankind,

١٣

أحِبُّكِ عند اشتداد العواصفِ ،
لا تحتَ ضوء الشُمُوعِ ، ولا تحتَ ضوء القَمَرْ
وأُعلنُ للناس أنيّ أُعارضُ ضوءَ القَمَرْ
وأَكرَهُ ضوءَ القَمَرْ ..
أُحِبُّكِ حين تكون الشوارعُ مغسولةً بدموع المَطَرْ ..
وحين تصيرُ بلون النُحاسِ ثيابُ الشَجَرْ
أُحِبُّكِ مزروعةً في عيون الصِغَارْ
ومسكونةً بهموم البَشَرْ ..

Born from the waters of the seas,

And appearing from the mind of the stone.

I love you

When your hair travels in the wind without a passport

And when your breast murmurs like a wolf at moments of danger.

Do you know a lover

Who has ever loved you so much?

ومولودةً من مياه البِحَارْ
وطالعةً من ضمير الحَجَرْ
أُحِبّكِ ..
حين يسافرُ شَعْرُكِ في الريح دونَ جواز سَفَرْ
وحين يُغَـمْغِمُ نهدُكِ كالذئبِ .. في لَحَظَات الخَطَرْ
فهل تعرفينَ عشيقاً ..
أَحَبَّكِ يوماً بهذا القَـدَرْ ؟

XIV

I love you, precious one

I love you, precious one

I love you with head raised up like the domes of Damascus,

Like the minarets of Egypt.

Will you permit me to kiss your high forehead?

Will you permit me to forget my old face

And my old poetry

And to forget my past mistakes?

١٤

أُحِبُّك أيَّتُها الغاليَهْ

أُحِبُّكِ أيَّتُها الغاليَهْ ..

أُحِبُّكِ مرفوعةَ الرأسِ مثلَ قِبَابِ دمشقَ ،

ومثلَ مآذِنِ مصرَ ..

فهل تسمحينَ بتقبيل جَبْهتكِ العاليَهْ

وهل تسمحينَ بِنِسْيَانِ وجْهي القديمْ ؟

وشِعْري القديمْ ؟

ونِسْيَانِ أخطائيَ الماضيَهْ ..

Will you you allow your clothes to be changed ?

June is dead

And I am in a passion to see your fine clothes.

I love you more than you can imagine,

More than the seas can imagine, or the ships.

I love you amid dust,

Destruction

And ruins.

وهل تسمحينَ بتغيير ثوبِكِ ؟
إنَّ حزيرانَ ماتَ ..
وإنِّي بشوقٍ لرؤية أثوابكِ الزاهيَهْ
أُحِبُّكِ أكثَرَ ممّا ببالِكِ ..
أكثرَ ممّا ببال البحارِ ، وبال المراكِبْ
أُحِبُّكِ تحت الغُبَارِ ..
وتحتَ الدمارِ ..
وتحت الخرائبْ ..

I love you more than in any day gone by

Because you have become my warrior love.

أُحِبُّكِ أكثرَ من أيِّ يوم مَضَى ..
لأنَّكِ أصبحتِ حُبِّي المُحَارِبْ ..

تشرين الأول (أكتوبر) ١٩٧٣

39. REVOLUTIONARY CONVERSATION WITH ṬĀHĀ ḤUSAYN[1]

Is this the light of your eyes, or are they two stars?

All other men do not see, but you see me.

I do not know where to begin my confession:

The trees of tears have grown hoary in my eyelids.

Love has been decreed for us, my friend

And it has made you weep, as it has made me weep.

حـــوارٌ ثـــوريٌ
مع طـــه حســـين

ضوءُ عَيْنَيكَ .. أَمْ هُما نَجْمَتَانِ ؟
كلُّهُمْ لا يَرَى .. وأنتَ تَـــرَاني

لستُ أَدري من أينَ أَبـــدأُ بَوْحي
شَجَرُ الدمـــع شاخَ في أجفـــاني

كُتِبَ العِشْقُ ، يا حبيبي ، علينا
فهو أبكاكَ مثلمـــــا أبكـــــاني

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[1] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889 - 1973) was one of the outstanding Egyptian men of letters of the early twentieth century. Blind from infancy, he studied at the Azhar and the Egyptian University and then studied in France. In addition to his writings on literary subjects, he is known for his three-volume autobiography al-Ayyām.

The age of my wound is a million years and a year
Can you see the wound through the smoke?
Love has portrayed in the notebook of my heart
All of its names, but has not named me.
It said: "You must surely die a martyr
Like all lovers." I said "Perhaps."
I spent the hours of darkness asking myself,
"Has love struck me with a sword or a rose?
How does love come, and from where does it come?
Love always knows my address.

* * *

عُمْرُ جُرحي .. مليون عامٍ وعامٍ
هل تَرَى الجرحَ من خلال الدخانِ؟

نَقَشَ الحُبُّ في دفاتر قلبي
كلَّ أسمائِه .. وما سَمَّاني

قالَ : لا بُدَّ أن تموتَ شهيداً
مثلَ كلِّ العشَّاقِ ، قلتُ عساني

وطويتُ الدُّجى أُسائِلُ نفسي
أبِسَيْفٍ .. أم وردةٍ قد رماني ؟

كيف يأتي الهوى .. ومن أينَ يأتي ؟
يعرفُ الحبُّ دائماً عُنْواني ..

* * *

The beautiful tryst has been fulfilled, at last
My friend, and friend of eloquence
Why do we not sit in a corner
And open the suitcases of sorrows,
Read Abu'l-ʿAlā'' a little
And read the Risālat al-Ghufrān?
I am in the presence of all the ages,
For the time of the man of letters is all time.

* * *

Is this the light of your eyes, or a conversation of mirrors,
Or are they two birds burning?

صَدَق الموعدُ الجميلُ .. أخيراً
يا حبيبي ، ويـــا حبيبَ البَيَانِ
ما علينا إذا جلسنـــا برُكْـــنٍ
وفَتَحْنَا حقائبَ الأحـــزانِ
وقَرَأنا أبـــا العَلاءِ قليـــلاً
وقرأنـــا (رسالـةَ الغُفْـرانِ)
أنا في حَضْرة العُصُور جميعـاً
فزمانُ الأديـبِ .. كلُّ الزمـانِ ..

* * *

ضوءُ عينيكَ .. أم حِوارُ المرايا
أم همـــا طائرانِ يحترقـــانِ ؟

'Abu'l-ʿAlā' al-Maʿarrī (973 - 1057), one of the outstanding Arabic poets, was born and died in the town of Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān in northern Syria. Much of his verse is of a philosophical and sceptical nature. He was also the author of some prose works including Risalāt al-Ghufrān, an account of an imaginary visit to Paradise. Abu'l-ʿAlā', like Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, was blind, and the latter always felt a strong sense of identification with him, writing two books on him.

Are the eyes of the man of letters a river of flame
Or are the eyes of the man of letters a river of songs?
O my master, who has made the night
Day, and the world like a festival,
Throw down your spectacles so that I may behold
How the coral shores weep,
Throw down your spectacles, you are not blind,
It is we who are a troop of blind men.

* * *

O knight who stormed the sun
And cast down his purple cloak

هـل عُيُونُ الأديبِ نهـرُ لهيـبٍ
أم عُـيُـونُ الأديب نَـهْـرُ أغـــاني ؟

آهِ يا سيِّـدي الذي جعـــلَ الليـــلَ
نهـــاراً .. والأرضَ كالمهرجانِ ..

إرْمِ نَـظَّارتَيْـكَ كـــي أتَمَلَّـى
كيف تبكـي شواطـيءُ المَرْجـانِ ..

إرْمِ نَـظَّـارتيكَ .. مـا أنتَ أعمىً
إنّما نحـنُ جَوْقـــةُ العُمْيـانِ ..

* * *

أيُّها الفارسُ الذي اقتحـــم الشمسَ
وألقـــى رِدَاءَهُ الأُرجُـــــوانـــي

Upon the dawn is a wave of neighing

And upon the Pleiades is the charger's hoof.

Lightning gleams in your five fingers

And two sparrows fly to the west,

You are the river .. how many glasses has it given us to drink

And how often has it clothed us with roses and daisies?

What you have written still intoxicates the universe

And flows like honey beneath my tongue

In the book al-Ayyām[1] there is a kind of drawing

And in it there is thinking with colours.

فعلى الفجـــر موجـــةٌ مـن صهيـلٍ
وعلى النجـــم خافرٌ لِحصَـــانِ ..

أزْهَرَ البَرْقُ في أناملـك الخَمْسِ
وطارتْ للغـــرب عُصفُـورتَـانِ

إنَّـكَ النهـــرُ .. كم سقانا كؤوساً
وكسانـــا بالـــورد والأقحـــوانِ

لم يَزَلْ ما كَتَبْتَهُ يُسْكِرُ الكونَ
ويجري كالشَهْـــد تحت لســـاني

في كتاب (الأيّام) نوعٌ من الرَّسْم
وفيـــه التفكيرُ بالألـــــوانِ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.396.

These pages are a field of wheat

Where will the lips begin?

You alone are the sighted one who revealed the soul

And travelled by night in the darkness of the emotions,

It is not difficult for us to meet a god,

But for a man to meet a man ...

* * *

O Azhari, you who stole the fire,

You who broke the boundaries of the seconds

Return to us, for your age is an age

Of gold, and we are a second age.

إنَّ تلكَ الأوراق حقلٌ من القمـح
فَـمِـنْ أيــنَ تبـــدأُ الشَّفَتَـــانِ ؟

وَحْدَكَ المُبْصِرُ الذي كشَفَ النَّفْسَ
وأسْرَى في عُـتْـمـــة الوجـــدانِ

ليس صعباً لِـقَـاءُنا بإلَـــــهٍ ..
بل لقـاءُ الإنسانِ .. بالإنســانِ ..

* * *

أيُّها الأزهــريُّ .. يا سارقَ النـار
ويـــا كاسراً حدودَ الثـــــواني

عُدْ إلينا .. فإنَّ عصرَكَ عصـــرٌ
ذهبيٌّ .. ونحـــنُ عصرٌ ثـــــاني

Thought has fallen into political hypocrisy
And the man of letters has become like an acrobat
Engaging in incense-burning, dancing for a living
And praying for victory for the Sultan.
Return to us, for what is being written today
Is small in vision, and small in content,
Poetry has been murdered, and the poem has become
A singing-girl who is purchased like all singing-girls;
They have stripped it of everything, and bloodied
Its feet with going round in circles.

سَقَطَ الفكـــرُ في النفاق السياسيِّ
وصـــار الأديـــبُ كالبهْـلَـــوانِ

يتعاطى التبخيرَ .. يحترفُ الرَّقْصَ ..
ويدعـــو بالنصـــر للسلطـــانِ ..

عُدْ إلينا .. فإنَّ ما يُكْتَبُ اليـومَ
صغيرُ الرؤى .. صغيرُ المعـــاني

ذُبِـــحَ الشعرُ .. والقصيدةُ صـارتْ
قينةً تُشْتَرى ككلِّ القِيَـــانِ

جَرَّدُوها من كلِّ شيءٍ .. وأدمَوْا
قَدَمَيْهـا .. باللَّـفِّ والـــدَّوَرانِ

Do not ask about the masterpieces of al-Mutanabbī'

Or al-Sharīf al-Raḍī[2], or Ḥassān[3]

What is poetry? You will find no-one to answer

It is between madness and delirium.

* * *

Return to us, my master, return to us

And drag us out of the clutches of the flood

You have nourished us on the milk of challenge

And we have ground the stars with our teeth,

Torn off our skins with our hands,

Loosened the stones of the universes,

لا تَسَلْ عن روائـــع المتنبّـــي
والشريفِ الرضيِّ ، أو حَسَّانِ ..

ما هُوَ الشعرُ ؟ لَنْ تُلاقي مُجيباً
هُوَ بين الجُنُـــون والهَـذَيـــانِ

* * *

عُدْ إلينا ، يا سيِّدي ، عُدْ إلينـا
وانْتَشِلْنا من قَبْضَـــة الطُّـوفَـانِ

أنتَ أرضَعْتَنا حليبَ التحـــدّي
فَطَحَنَّا النجـــــومَ بالأسنانِ ..

واقتلعنَـــا جلـــودَنـا بِيَدَيْنَا
وفَكَكْنَا حجـــارةَ الأكـــوانِ

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[1]See notes 1 and 2, p.351.
[2]Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (970 - 1015) was a poet and man of letters of the Buwayhid period. Apart from his dīwān he is known as the collector of the Nahj al-Balāgha, the supposed sayings of ʿAlī.
[3]Ḥassān b. Thābit, the poet of the Prophet (d. 674).

Refused all the sultans on earth

And refused to worship idols.

O great angry one, see

How writers have become like lambs

Satisfied with living in the sun, with pasturage

At ease with water and pools.

The most harshly oppressive thing to the soul

Is a pen in the hand of the craven coward

ورَفَضْنَا كلَّ السلاطينِ في الأرضِ
رَفَضْنـــا عبـــادةَ الأوثـــانِ

أيُّهـا الغاضبُ الكبيرُ .. تأمَّـــلْ
كيف صـار الكُتَّـــابُ كالخِرْفانِ

قَنِعُوا بالحيـــاة شمســاً .. ومرعىً
واطمأنّـوا للمـــــاء والغُدْرانِ

إنَّ أقسى الأشيـــاء للنَفْس ظُلمـاً ..
قَلَـمٌ في يـد الجبانِ الجبـــانِ ...

° ° °

O prince of letters, here is Egypt,

A rose which bathes in my artery,

I am in the sanctuary of al-Ḥusayn[1], and in the night,

The remaining verses of the Surat al Rahman;[2]

Sorrows tyrannise me, and I call out,

"Alas, O Egypt, for the sons of Qaḥṭan!"[3]

They have traded you, bargained over you, taken possession of you

And have sold you false hopes,

They have withheld the water from the lips of orphans

And have poured it into the lips of prostitutes

يا أميـــرَ الحُرُوفِ .. ها هـيَ مصرٌ
وردةٌ تَسْتحِـمُّ في شِرْيـــــاني

إنَّني في حِمَى الحُسَيْنِ ، وفي الليل
بقايا مـــن سُـورَةِ الرحمـــنِ ..

تَسْتَبِـدُّ الأحـــزانُ بي .. فأُنـادي
آهِ يا مِصْرُ من بـــــني قحطـــانِ ..

تاجَرُوا فيكِ .. ساوَمُوكِ .. اسْتَبَاحوكِ ..
وباعـــــوكِ كاذبـــاتِ الأمـــاني

حَبَسُـــوا المـــاءَ عن شِفاهِ اليتـــامى
وأراقُـــوه في شفـــــاه الغـــواني

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[1]This phrase refers to Egypt, since the head of al-Ḥusayn is said to be buried in Cairo.
[2]The 55th sūra of the Qur'ān.
[3]Qaḥtān is one of the ancestors of the Arabs. Hence the phrase means "the Arabs".

They have left the sword and the horse sorrowful
And have sold history to the devil.
They buy palaces, but is there a purchaser
For the graves of the heroes in Jawlān?[1]
They buy women, but is there a purchaser
For the tears of the children in Baysān?[2]
They buy wives by flesh and bone,
But is beauty to be bought by weight?
They buy the world, while the people of my country
Scratch in the soil like worms

* * *

تركوا السيفَ والحصانَ حزينيْـــنِ
وباعوا التاريخَ للشيطـــــــــانِ
يشترونَ القصورَ ... هل ثَـــمَّ شارٍ
لقُبـــــور الأبطال في الجُولانِ ؟

يشترونَ النساءَ .. هل ثَـــمَّ شـارٍ
لدموع الأطفال في بِيسَـــــانِ ؟

يشترونَ الزوجاتِ باللحـــم والعظم
أيُشْرَى الجمـــالُ بالميـــزانِ ؟.

يشترونَ الدُّنيا ... وأهلُ بـــــلادي
ينكُشُونَ التـــــرابَ كالديدانِ ...

* * *

[1]See note 2, p.155.
[2]See note 1, p.119.

Alas, O Egypt, how much you suffer from them
But the great, the great, always suffers.

* * *

For whom is the red blood shed in Sinai,
Which resembles scarlet anemones?
Egypt has devoured her own liver, while others
Strut in silk and hooded gowns;
O utter humiliation, has oil become
More precious to us than human beings?
O you who drown in God's blessings
And the bliss of plump beauties

آهِ يا مصرُ .. كم تعانينَ منهُـــمْ
والكبيرُ الكبيــرُ .. دومــاً يُعاني ..

لِمَـنِ الأحمـــرُ المُـــراقُ بسيناءَ
يُـحـــاكي شقائـــقَ النُّـعْـمَـانِ ؟

أكَلَتْ مِصْرُ كِبْدَها .. وسواها
رافـلٌ بالحـــرير والطَّيْلَسانِ ..

يـا هَـوَانَ الهوان .. هل أصبح النفطُ
لدينا .. أغـلى من الإنســـانِ؟

أيُّهـــا الغـارقـونَ في نِـعَـمِ اللهِ ..
ونُـعْـمَى المُـرَبْـرَباتِ الحِسَـــانِ ..

We have driven back the Byzantine hordes[1] from you
And driven back Kisra Anushirwan[2]
We have protected Muḥammad and ʿAlī[3]
And preserved the nobility of the Qur'ān,
So pay the jizya[4] of the swords,
For swords do not live on charity.
Forgive me, Egypt, if my poetry is headstrong
But there is a taste of burning beneath my tongue;
Forgive me, for you are the mother of manly qualities
And the mother of forgiveness and pardon

قد رَدَدْنَا جحافلَ الـــرُوم عنكُمْ
ورَدَدْنا .. كِسْرَى أنوشِـــرْوانِ
وحَمَيْنَـــا مُحمّـــداً ... وعَلِيّـاً
وحفظنـــــا كـرامـــة القـــرآنِ ..
فادفَعُوا جِـــزْيَةَ السيوف عليكُـــمْ
لا تعيشُ السُّيـــوفُ بالإحســـانِ ..
سامحيني يا مِصْرُ .. إن جمحَ الشِّعْرُ
فطَعْـمُ الحريق تحت لســـــاني
سامحيني .. فأنـــتِ أمُّ المُـــرُوءاتِ
وأمُّ السمـــــاحِ والغُفْـــــرانِ ..

---

[1]See note 2, p.322.
[2]One of the most famous of the Sassanian emperors of Persia (531 - 579), who fought the Romans under Justinian and briefly occupied Antioch. He also occupied Yemen (570).
[3]See note 1, p.291.
[4]The jizya was a poll-tax paid by non-Muslim subjects of Islamic states as a substitute for military service. By suggesting that non-combatant Arab states should pay this Qabbānī is being far from complementary. In fact certain Arab states paid Egypt a large subsidy until the conclusion of the Camp David agreements.

Forgive me, if I burn and burn others

But neutrality is not within my power.

Egypt, O Egypt, my love is weighty

So pardon me if I have lost my equilibrium.

سامحيني .. إذا احترقْتُ وأحْرَقْتُ
فليس الحيـــادُ في إمْكـــــاني

مِصْرُ .. يا مِصْرُ .. إنَّ عشقي خطيرٌ
فاغفري لي إذا أضعتُ اتّـــزاني ...

40. DECREE FOR THE DISMISSAL OF KHĀLID B. AL-VALĪD

I

They have stolen the Arab time from us

They have stolen the radiant Faṭima' from the house of the Prophet

O Saladin,[2]

They have sold the first copy of the Qur'ān

And sold the sorrow in the eyes of ʿAlī[3]

مرسومٌ بإقالة
خالد بن الوليد

١

سَرَقُوا منّا الزمانَ العربيْ
سَرَقُوا فاطمةَ الزهراءَ من بيت النبيْ
يا صلاحَ الدينِ ،
باعوا النسخةَ الأولى من القرآنِ ،
باعوا الحزنَ في عينيْ عليْ ..

---

[1]The daughter of the Prophet and the wife of ʿAlī. It is a notable feature of Qabbānī's poetry that he so often makes mention of persons and events who are dear to the Shīʿa, although he himself is a Sunnī Muslim.
[2]See note 1, p.130.
[3]See note 1, p.291.

They have exposed the Messenger of God's back at Uḥud,[1]

Sold the seven rivers[2] in Damascus

And sold the Umayyad jasmine

O Saladin,[3]

They have sold you and us all together

At a public auction

كشفوا في أُحُدٍ ظهرَ رسول اللهِ ..
باعوا الأنهرَ السبعةَ في الشامِ ،
وباعوا الياسمينَ الأمَويْ ..
يا صلاحَ الدينِ ،
باعوكَ ، وباعونا جميعاً ..
في المزادِ العَلَنيْ ..

---

[1]At the battle of Uḥud the prophet instructed his archers to cover his rear against the Meccan cavalry. However when the Meccans seemed to be defeated the archers deserted their post in order to join in the plunder. This allowed the Meccan cavalry (led, in fact, by Khālid b. al-Walīd, who had not yet accepted Islam) to attack the Muslims and inflict severe casualties upon them.
[2]See note 1, p.359.
[3]See note 1, p.130.

II

They have stolen Arab ambition from us,

Dismissed Khālid[1] on the heels of the conquest of Syria,

And appointed him ambassador in Geneva

Wearing a black hat

Enjoying cigars and caviar

Frothing in French,

Walking among the blondes of Europe

Like a paper cock.

Do you suppose that they have tamed this prince of Quraysh?

This is the way we emasculate heroism in our country, my son.

٢

سَرَقُوا منّا الطموحَ العربيْ
عَزَلوا خالدَ في أعقاب فَتْح الشامِ ،
سمَّوهُ سفيراً في جنيفٍ ،
يلبسُ القُبَّعَةَ السوداءَ ..
يستمتعُ بالسيجار .. والكافيارِ ..
يُرغي بالفرنسيَّةِ ..
يمشي بين شقراوات أوروبّا ..
كديكٍ وَرَقيْ ..
أتراهُمْ دجَّنوا هذا الأميرَ القرشيْ
هكذا تُخْصَى البطولاتُ لدينا يا بُنَيْ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.139.

III

They have stolen from Ṭāriq[1] his Andalusian overcoat
Taken away his medals, dismissed him from the army
Handed him over to the Security Court
And condemned him for the crime of victory; has a time come
In which victory is forbidden to us, my son?
Then has a time come
When the sword stands accused
At the doors of the court-martial?

٣

سَرَقُوا من طارقٍ معطفَهُ الأندلسيْ
أخذوا منه النياشينَ ، أقالوهُ من الجيشِ ،
أحالوهُ إلى محكمة الأمن ،
أدانوهُ بجرم النصر ، هل جاء زمانٌ
صار فيه النصرُ محظوراً علينا يا بُنَيْ ؟.
ثُمَّ هل جاءَ زمانٌ .؟
يقفُ السيفُ به مُتَّهماً
عند أبواب القضاء العسكريْ

---

[1]See note 1, p.323.

Then has a time come

When we greet Israel with roses, and thousands of doves

And the National Anthem?

I no longer understand anything, my son,

I no longer understand anything, my son.

ثُمَّ هل جاءَ زمانٌ ؟.
فيه نستقبلُ إسرائيلَ بالورد .. وآلافِ الحمائمْ
والنشيدِ الوطنيْ ..
لم أَعُدْ أَفهمُ شيئاً يا بُنَيْ ..
لم أَعُدْ أَفهَمُ شيئاً.يا بُنَيْ ..

IV

They have pawned the sun with all the money-lenders,

Sold the moon for millièmes

Broken ʿUmar's' sword,

Hanged history by its feet,

Sold the horses and the white Kūfiyya.[2]

Sold the stars of the night, and the leaves of the trees,

Stolen the kohl from the eye,

Sold the blackness from the eyes of the Beduin women,

٤

رَهَنوا الشمسَ لدى كلِّ المرابينَ ،
وباعُوا بالملاليم القَمَرْ ..
كَسَرُوا سَيْفَ عُمَرْ ..
شَنقوا التاريخَ من رجليْهِ ..
باعُوا الخيلَ ، والكوفيَّةَ البيضاءَ
باعُوا أَنجُمَ الليل ، وأوراقَ الشَجَرْ ..
سرقوا الكحلَ من العينِ ،
وباعُوا في عيون البدويّاتِ الحَوَرْ

---

[1]See note 1, p.291.
[2]See note 4, p.157.

Caused us to abort before we become pregnant,

Given us pills

Which prevent history from giving birth to children,

Given us an injection

Which prevents Damascus from becoming Baghdad,

Given us pills

Which prevent the Palestinian wound from becoming a date-grove,

Marijuana to kill horses, or to kill their neighing,

Given us wine to drink

Which makes man without standpoints

And then given us the keys of states

And have called us "Petty Kings"[1]

أجْهَضونا قبلَ أن نَحبَلَ ..
أعطونا حبوباً
تمنعُ التاريخَ أن يُنجبَ أولاداً ..
وأعطونا لقاحاً
يمنع الشامَ بأن تصبحَ بغداداً ..
وأعطونا حبوباً ..
تمنعُ الجرْحَ الفلسطينيَّ أن يصبحَ بستانَ نخيلْ
وماريجوانا .. لقتل الخيل ، أو قتل الصهيلْ ..
وسقونا من شرابٍ ..
يجعلُ الإنسانَ من غير مواقفْ
ثمَّ أعطونا مفاتيحَ الولاياتِ ..
وسَمَّونا مُلُوكاً للطوائفْ ..

---

[1]Arabic Mulūk al-Ṭawā'if, the phrase used to describe kings of petty states, in the period after the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain, for example.

V

O Saladin[1]

Do you hear the radio commentary,

Do you listen to this public harlotry?

They have taken the bait, and have urinated

In the face of the prime of Arab youth.

What is taking place on the stage?

Who is pulling the strings of the velvet curtain?

Who is the writer? We do not know.

Who is the director? We do not know.

Nor does the public know, my son.

يا صلاحَ الدينِ ..
هل تسمعُ تعليقَ الإذاعاتِ ..
وهل تُصغي إلى هذا البغاء العَلَنيْ ؟
أكَلوا الطُعْمَ .. وبالوا
فوق وجه العُنْفوان العربيْ
ما الذي يجري على المسرح ؟
مَنْ يجذُبُ خيطانَ الستار المُخْمَليْ ؟
مَنْ هوَ الكاتبُ ؟ لا ندري
مَن المُخْرِجُ ؟ لا ندري
ولا الجمهورُ يدري .. يا بُنَيْ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.130.

They are in the wings
And they are violating the woman we call the homeland,
Selling the anklets on her legs,
Selling the orchards in her eyes,
Selling the sparrows which
Have lived in the window of her breasts since the beginning of time,
Selling, for two glasses of whisky,
The estates of the homeland.

إنَّهُمْ خلفَ الكواليسِ ..
وهُمْ يغتَصِبونَ امرأةً تُدْعى الوطنْ ..
ويبيعون الخلاخيل برجلَيْها ..
يبيعون البساتينَ بعينيْها ..
يبيعونَ العصافيرَ التي
تسكنُ في نافذة النهدين من بدء الزَمَنْ
ويبيعونَ بكأْسينِ من الويسكيِّ ..
أملاكَ الوطنْ ..

VI

They have stolen the Arab time from us,
Extinguished the coals which burn the Beduin's breast
Hung a "for sale" sign on all the mountains
Handed over the wheat, the olives, the night
And the scent of oranges,
Have prevented dreams from dreaming, driven off
All the kinds of small birds which write poetry
To prison ... has a time come
When everyone who carries an ammunition chest
Is like someone who carries a chest of hashish, my son?

سَرَقُوا منّا الزمانَ العربيْ
أطفأوا الجمرَ الذي يُحرق صدرَ البَدَويْ
علَّقُوا لافتةَ البيع على كلّ الجبالْ
سَلَّموا الحنطَةَ .. والزيتونَ .. والليلَ ..
وعِطْرَ البرتُقَالْ ..
مَنَعُوا الأحلامَ أن تحلُمَ .. ساقُوا
كلَّ أنواع العصافير التي تكتُبُ أشعاراً
إلى السجنِ .. فهل جاءَ زمانٌ ؟
صار فيه كُلُّ من يحملُ صندوقَ سلاحٍ
كالذي يحملُ صُندوقَ حشيشٍ .. يا بُنَيْ

Then has a time come

When liberation and narcotics are twins?

Then has a time come

When the deed is against the hands?

Then has a time come

When the word is against the lips?

ثم هل جاءَ زمانٌ ؟
أصبحَ التحريرُ والتخديرُ فيه توأَمَيْنْ ..
ثمَّ هل جاءَ زمانٌ ؟
أصبَحَ الفِعْلُ به ضِدَّ اليَـدَيْنْ
ثم هل هل جاءَ زمانٌ ؟
صارَ فيه الحَرْفُ ضدَّ الشَـفَـتَـيْـنْ ؟.

VII

O Saladin[1]

This is the time of the Apostasy[2]

And the powerful Shuᶜūbī[3] tide.

They have burnt the house of Abū Bakr[4]

Arrested the family of the Prophet at night

And the noblewomen of Quraysh

Have come to wash the foreigner's dishes.

٧

يا صلاحَ الدينِ ..
هذا زَمَنُ الرِدَّةِ ..
والمَدُّ الشعوبيُّ القويُّ
أحْرَقُوا بَيْتَ أبي بَكْرٍ ..
وألقُوا القبضَ في الليل على آلِ النبيْ
فشريفاتُ قُرَيْشٍ
صِرْنَ يغسِلْنَ صُحونَ الأجنبيْ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.130.
[2]i.e. the Ridda, the period after the death of the Prophet when the Beduin tribes sought to break away from Islam.
[3]The Shuᶜūbīs were a group of non-Arabs, particularly Persians, in the early Abbasid period, who rejected Arab cultural values and glorified their own, thus threatening the unity of the Islamic state.
[4]The first successor to the Prophet and first Caliph (513 - 634). He ruled from 622 to 624, and fought against those who took part in the Ridda.

VIII

O Saladin[1]

What use are words in this Bāṭinī[2] time

And why do we write poetry, when

God has forgotten the Arabic speech?[3]

٨

يا صلاحَ الدينِ ..
ماذا تنفعُ الكِلْمةُ في هذا الزمانِ الباطنيْ
ولماذا نكتُبُ الشِعْرَ .. وقد
نَسِيَ اللهُ الكلامَ العربيْ ؟؟

١٩٧٧

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[1]See note 1, p.130.
[2]See note 1, p.297.
[3]In the Muslim belief Arabic, the language of the Qur'ān, is the speech of God.

41. DAMASCUS FOLK-SONGS TO THE MOON OF BAGHDAD'

Bilqīs[2] awoke me in the blueness of the dawn

And sang a melody from Iraq

She let down her hair like the river Diyālā;[3]

Have you seen hair which recites poetry?

In her voice were al-Rusāfa[4], and al-Karkh[5]

Sun and wheat, and lavender.

مواويلُ دمشقيّة
إلى قمر بغداد

أيْقَظَتْني بلقيسُ في زُرْقَة الفَجْر
وغَنَّتْ من العراقِ مَقَاما ..

أرْسَلَتْ شَعْرَها كنَهْر (ديَالى)
أرأيْتُمْ شَعْراً يقولُ كَلَاما ؟

كان في صَوْتِها الرصَافَةُ ، والكَرْخُ ،
وشَمْسٌ .. وحِنْطَةٌ .. وخُزَامى

'Delivered at the Festival organised by the General Union of Iraqi Women, Baghdad 10.2.79 under the slogan "For Poetry which Expresses the Aspirations of the Nation for Unity"

[2]The poet's wife, Bilqīs al-Rāwī.

[3]A tributary of the Tigris, which joins it just below Baghdad.

[4]A district of Iraq, in the province of Baghdad.

[5]A suburb of Baghdad.

She brought me the day's newpapers, and tea
And overflowed with motherliness and smiles
Why does my wife make love to me
When passion was forbidden to us?
"I have some good news for you, dear,
The people have done exactly what we have done.
Remind me," she said, "Of my wedding night,
The fluttering of desires, and the witticisms of the guests".
Before the era of unity we became united
And made Rāwā' into Syrian Damascus

حَمَلَتْ لي جرائدَ اليوم ، والشايَ ،
وفاضَـــتْ أُمومةً وابتســامـــــا

ما لها زوجتي تُـطارحني الحُـــبَّ ؟
وكانَ الهـــوى علينـــا حَـرَامَـا

لكَ عنـــدي بِشَارَةٌ يا حبيـــــي
فَعَلَ القـــومُ ما فعلنـــا تمامـــا

ذكَّروني ـ قالتْ ـ بليلة عُـرْسي
ورفيفِ المُنَى ، وظُرْف النَـــدَامى

قبل عصر التوحيد نحنُ اتَّحدْنَـــا
وجعلنا (راوا) دِمَشْـــقَ الشامـــــا

---

[1]A town on the Euphrates, the ancestral home of Bilqīs' family.

They have taken love and passion from us
And forgotten that we invented love.
They may have learned the language of ardour
But we are the passionate lovers of old
My commitment is to my sweetheart's face
For is not a great love a commitment?
The accusation of love still pursues me;
May my Lord not see me rebutting the accusation.
I have married my wife anew;
We have laughed, when before we were orphans.

* * *

أَخَذُوا الحُبَّ ، والصبابـةَ عنَّـا
ونَسَوْا أنّنا اخترعنـا الغَـرَامـا

إنْ يكونوا تَعَلَّمُوا لُغَةَ العِشْـقِ
فنحـنُ المتيَّمـونَ القُـدَامَـى

إلتزامي أنا .. بوجـه حبيـبي
أوَليسَ الحبُّ الكبيرُ التزامـا ؟

تُهْمَةُ الحُبِّ لا تزال ورائـي
لا رآني رَبِّي أُرَدُّ اتِّهَـامَـا

.. وتَزَوَّجتُ زوجتي من جـديدٍ
وضحِكْنا .. وقَبْلُ كنَّا يَتَامَى

* * *

O sail flowing beyond the Tigris,

Approach ... I am dying of longing,

I have on the bank a date-palm which has filled me with passionate desire

For her, so give her my greetings.

How can I forget a gazelle in al-Aʿẓamiyya[1]

Who kindled fire in my blood, and abandoned me.

This is Baghdad, after ten years,

Clad in water, with the stars as a belt;

The Tigris is a lover visiting Damascus

And a noble who has come to visit nobles,

يا شِراعـاً وراءَ دَجْـلـةَ يجـري
إقتربْ .. إنّني أمـوتُ هُيامـا

لي عـلى الشـطِّ نَخْـلـةٌ تَيَّمَتْـني
بهواهـا .. فاقـرأْ عليهـا السَلامَـا

كيفَ أنسى في (الأعظميَّةِ) ظَبْيَـاً
أشْعَلَ النارَ في دمائي .. ونَـامَـا

تلكَ بغدادُ .. بعد عَشْر سنيـنٍ
تلبسُ المـاءَ ، والنجـومَ حِـزَاما

دَجْلـةٌ عاشـقٌ يزورُ دمَشْقـاً
وكريمٌ أتـى يزورُ كِـرامَا ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.330.

Al-Ma'mūn is hand in hand with Marwān'

And the water of the Euphrates has turned to wine.

Is what I see before me the Laylat al-Qadr²

Or is what I see a dream?

إنَّ كفَّ المأمون في كـفٍّ مَـرْوَانَ
ومـــــاءُ الفُراتِ صـــــار مُـــدامَا

ليلةُ القَـدْر ، ما أراهُ أمـــــامي ،
أم يكـــــونُ الـــذي أراهُ منامـا

'Al-Ma'mūn, the seventh ᶜAbbasid caliph (786 - 833), one of the greatest rulers of his dynasty and famous for his intellectual pursuits, and Marwān b. ᶜAbd al-Malik (d.710), one of the best-known of the Umayyad caliphs, are used to symbolise the so far unrealised unity between Syria and Iraq.

²The Laylat al-Qadr is a night during the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'ān was first revealed to the Prophet, and when Muslim's wishes are believed to be granted. Since there is some difference of opinion as to the exact date, special celebrations are usually held during the last ten days of Ramadan.

Babylon illumines, and ᶜAlī's tomb¹
Has left the earth, and turned to clouds.
We have been waiting long for this wedding celebration
And have drunk our tears for years
The beloved's letters do not come to us
No, nor is sleep capable of sleeping.

بابــلٌ ضَــوَّأَتْ .. وقَبْــرُ عَــلِيٍّ
تركَ الأرضَ ، واستحالَ غمـــاما

إنتظرنا هذا الـــزفافَ طــويــلاً
وشربنـــا دموعَـنــا أعـــوامــا

لا بريدُ المحبــوب يأتي إلَيْـنَـــا
لا ولا النومُ قابِـــلٌ أن ينامَــا

---

¹ᶜAlī's tomb is in the town of Najaf, to the south ot Baghdad.

An amazing dream, for which I fear;

For how many dreams have they shattered for us!

Barada, O father of all rivers,

O steed who gallops ahead of the days,

Be a prophet for our sorrowful history

Who receives inspiration from his Lord,

The millions have sworn allegiance to you

As an Arab prince, so lead them in prayer,

Marry the date-palms of Iraq and give birth

To a second Khālid[1], and give birth to Hishām.[2]

* * *

حُلُمٌ مُذْهِشٌ .. أخافُ عليهِ
فَلَكَمْ كَسَّرُوا لنا أحلاما

بَرَدَى . يا أبا النُهُور جميعاً
يا حصاناً يسابقُ الأيَّاما

كُنْ بتاريخنا الحزين نبيَّاً
يتلقَّى من ربِّهِ الإلهاما

المَلايينُ بايَعَتْكَ أميراً
عربيّاً .. فَصَلِّ فيها إمَامَا

وتَزَوَّجْ نَخْلَ العراقِ .. وأنْجِبْ
خالداً ثانياً .. وأنْجِبْ هشاما ..

* * *

[1]See note 1, p.139.
[2]See note 2, p.302.

O eyes of the oryx in the Syrian desert,

Look down - this is the time of lavender.

They have imprisoned you in the tents for a long time

And we have spun tents from your tears.

They have demanded that we return the Hanging Bridge'

And have demanded that we return the sunset and the breezes.

As God is our witness, we have not broken our promise

And have not betrayed those whom we would like to protect

* * *

Yet the winds have blown on us

And cast us up on the Gulf, shattered into fragments

يا عُيُونَ المَهَا ببادية الشَّامِ
أطِلِّي .. هذا زمانُ الخُزَامى

حَبَسُوكُنَّ في الخيام طويلاً
فَغَزلْنَا من الدمُوع خياما

واسْتَرَدُّوا (الجِسْرَ المُعلَّقَ) مِنَّا
واسْتَرَدُّوا الغُروبَ والأنساما

شَهِدَ اللهُ ، ما حَنَثْنَا بوَعْدٍ
أو خَفَرنا لمن نُحِبُّ الذِمَامَا ..

غيرَ أنَّ الرياحَ هبَّتْ علينا
ورَمَتْنَا على الخليج حُطَاما

---

[1]A bridge over the Tigris in Baghdad, so called because it is a suspension bridge.

They have taught us not to love, and we have been afraid
That if we do so, we shall turn to marble
We have refused any substitute love
And have rejected threats and compulsion
All of this enmity was artificial;
When love becomes strong, it turns to enmity.

* * *

O fragrance of Rāziqī[1] wine in the night of Baghdad
We have loved, and who can deflect the arrows?
O roses of Damascus, who ask after me,
O fields, in which I ran as a boy -

عَلَّمُونا أنْ لا نُحِبَّ .. فخِفْنَـــا
لو فَعَلْنا ، أن نستحيـــلَ رُخاما
واعْتَذَرْنا عـن أيِّ حُبٍّ بديـــلٍ
ورفَضْنَا التخويـــفَ والإرغامـــا

كلُّ هذا الخصام ، كان افتعـــالاً
حين يقوى الهَوَى ، يصيرُ خِصاما ..

* * *

يا شَذَا (الرَازِقيِّ) في ليل بغدادَ
عَشِقْنَا .. فَمَنْ يردُّ السِهَـــاما
يا سؤالَ الورد الدِمشقيِّ عـــنّي
يا حقولاً ، ركَضْتُ فيهـــا غُلَامَا

---

[1]A particular kind of long, white grape grown in Iraq, and the wine made from it.

Ten years ... I have forgotten my letters

And my inkwell, as I have forgotten speech.

We have not written, for how can anyone write poetry

Who suffers from being torn apart and from schizophrenia?

May God forgive those who, unintentionally,

Stole years from my childhood.

I have two friends who fill my life,

Who have exhausted me with their discord and harmony.

We have made no differentiation between nation and nation,

So how can the colour of the heavens agree to be divided?

سَنَواتٌ عَشْرٌ .. نسيتُ حُـــروفي
ودَواتي ، كما نسيـــتُ الكـــلاما

ما كَتَبْنَا .. وكيف يكتُبُ شِعْراً
مَنْ يُعاني تَمَزُّقــاً وانْفِصَامــا ؟

سامَحَ اللهُ مَنْ على غير قَصْـــدٍ
سَرقــوا من طُفُولتي أعـــــواما

لي حبيبانِ ، يملأان حيـــــاتي
أتْعَباني تنافُـــــراً وانسِجَامَــا

لم نُفَرِّقْ ما بينشعـــبٍ وشعـبٍ
كيف يرضى لونُ السماء انقساما ؟

One fatherland, which we have drawn as wheat

Date palms, stars, and doves

Nineveh, Abū Kamāl, Ṭarṭūs, Ḥimṣ

Babylon, Karbalā', return my greetings ...

One fatherland ... may my poetry cease to exist

If it sings the praise of a tribe, or a régime.

وَطَـنٌ واحِـدٌ .. رَسَمْنَاهُ قَمْحَاً
ونخيلاً ، وأنْجُماً ، ويَمَامـــــا

نَيْنَوَى .. البُوكَمَالُ .. طرطوسُ .. حِمْصٌ
بابلٌ ، كَرْبَلاءُ ، رُدِّي السلامـا ..

وَطَنٌ واحِدٌ .. ولا كان شِعْري
لو يُغنّي قبيلةً .. أو نظامَـــــا ..

* * *

Has the news come to you, O Mutanabbī,[1]

That Kāfūr[2] has dismantled the pyramids?

Egypt has fallen into the hands of a villager[3]

Who has found nothing to sell but the trams[4]

هــل أتَـنْكَ الأخبارُ يا مُتَنبِّـــي
أنَّ كافُورَ فكَّـكَ الأهـــــرامَا ؟

سقَـطَتْ مِصْرُ في يَـدَيْ قُـــرَوِيٍّ
لم يَجِدْ ما يَبيعُ إلا (التُـــرامَـا) ..

---

[1]See note 3, p.351.
[2]Kāfūr (905 - 968) rose from being an Abyssinian slave to become ruler of Egypt. al-Mutanabbī wrote some poems in praise of him, and then composed one of his most famous satires against him. The poet here refers to President Sadat as the new Kāfūr, the most insulting way in which he could possibly speak of him, particularly as Sadat himself was the descendant of a black slave on his father's side. In this poem, written after the Camp David agreement, Qabbānī attacks Sadat for dismantling Nasser's heritage.
[3]Sadat always made great play of his village origins and was often photographed at his home village of Mit Abul Kom.
[4] See Ch. Six, section III, 3a.

A man of theatrical ambitions[1], wearing one face
For comedy, and another for drama;
He is Farouk[2] in gluttony and conceit
And the Khedive[3] in tyranny and revenge.
He promised people wine and honey
But he gave them illusions to drink,
He took those who thought before the Security Court
And abolished ink and pens.[4]

مَسْرَحيُّ الطموحِ ، يلبس وجهـاً
للكُـومِيدْيَا .. وثانيـاً للدِرَامَـا

هو فاروقُ .. شهوةً ، وغُـرُوراً
والخديوي .. تسَلُّطاً وانتقامـا

وَعَدَ الناسَ بالرحيقِ وبالشَّهْـدِ
ولكـنْ سَقَـاهُـمُ الأوهامـا

سَاقَ من فَكَّرُوا لمحكمـة الأَمْنِ
وألغى المدادَ والأقلامـا ..

---

[1]A sarcastic reference to Sadat's youthful ambitions to be a film star. See Hirst and Beeson, Sadat, p.75.
[2]Farouk (1920 - 1965) was effectively the last king of Egypt, and was compelled to abdicate after the 1952 revolution. In his later years he was mainly remembered for being vastly overweight as a result of his taste for good living. Sadat was also said to be very interested in his food.
[3]The title of the rulers of Egypt up to 1914, who ruled very autocratically before the British occupation of 1882.
[4] See Chapter six, Section III, 3 d.

He appointed the Nile as his consultant
And led the millions along like sheep,
He kindled fire in the houses of ᶜAbs
And Tamīm, and ignored the ties of blood,[1]
A nervous man, crowing in Egypt like a cock
And licking boots in Jerusalem.[2]
They stripped him of everything, and when
They had drained him dry, they threw him the bones

* * *

وَظَّــفَ النيــلَ مُسْتَشَــاراً لديهِ
والملايينَ ، ساقَهــا أغْـنَامــا

أَضْرَمَ النارَ في منازل عَبْــسٍ
وتميــمٍ ، وأنْــكَرَ الأرْحَـامــا

عَصَبِيٌّ .. يصيحُ في مصرَ كالديكِ ..
وفي القُـدْس يمسحُ الأقدَامَــا

جَرَّدُوهُ من كُـلِّ شيءٍ .. ولَمَّــا
اسْتَـهْـلَـكُوهُ ، ألقوا إليه العِظَامَــا

* * *

[1]ᶜAbs and Tamīm are the names of two ancient Arab tribes. What Qabbānī means by this line is that Sadat betrayed the Arabs.
[2]A reference to Sadat's visit to Israel and Israeli-occupied Jerusalem in November 1977, which ultimately led to Camp David.

The revolutionaries have changed the map of the world
And sowed mines around it
We have woken up with those others who have woken up
So give us freedom and food!
The civilisation of oil has not changed a fingernail
Of ours, nor a thumb.
We have become pregnant by oil without marriage
And have given birth, after our birth-pangs, to soot.

غيَّرَ الثائرُونَ خارطـةَ الأرضِ
وشَدُّوا من حولهـــا الأَلْغَامـــا

واسْتَفَقْنَا مع اللذين استفاقُـــــوا
فامنحُونـــا حُرِيَّـــةً .. وطعامـــا

لم تُغيِّرْ حضارةُ النـفْطِ ظفـــراً
من أظافيرِنا .. ولا إبْهامَـــــــا

قد حَبِلْنـــا بالنفْط .. دونَ زواجٍ
ووضعنا ، بعد المَـخَاض ، سُـخَامـا ..

* * *

Bilqis woke me in the blueness of the dawn
And sang a melody from Iraq.
She let down her hair like the river Diyālā[1]
Have you seen hair which recites poetry?
In her voice were al-Ruṣāfa and al-Karkh[2]
Sun, and wheat, and lavender.

Iraq will never be anything but Iraq
And the great Hishām will remain Hishām.[3]

أيْقَظَتْني بلقيسُ في زُرْقَةِ الفجر
وغَنَّتْ من العـــراقِ مَقَـــاما ..

أرْسَلَتْ شَعْرَها كنهر (دِيالَـــى)
أرأيْتُـمْ شَعْـراً يقولُ كلامـــا ؟

كانَ في صوتها الرَصَافَةُ والكَرْخُ
وشَمْسٌ .. وحِنْطَةٌ .. وخُـــزَامى

لنْ يكونَ العراقُ إلّا عراقـــاً
وهشـــامُ العظيـمُ يبقى هِشَـاما ..

---

[1]See note 3, p.423.
[2]See notes 4 and 5, p.423.
[3]See note 2, p.302

42. DAMASCUS FOLK-SONG

We have written - and sent letters

We have wept - and moistened our handkerchiefs.

Say to those who have settled in the land of Damascus

That the one whom you have killed with love is still killed.

O Damascus, O beauty - spot of the world, O rose of the world

O you who with your beauty have pained the sculptor's chisel,

موَّالـُ د مشـقيّ

لقد كَتَبْنَا .. وأرسَلْنَا المراسيـــلا
وقد بكَيْنَا .. وبلَّلْنا المنـــــاديلا

قُلْ للذينَ بأرض الشام قد نَـزلُوا
قتيلُكُـمْ لم يَـزَلْ بالعشق مقْتُـولا ..

يا شامُ . يا شامةَ الدُنْيا ، وَوَردْتَها
يا مَنْ بحسنكِ أوجَعْتِ الأزاميـلا

I would like to be planted in you as a minaret

Or hung at your gates like a lamp

O city of the seven rivers', O my city

O shirt embroidered with peach blossom

O horse which has abandoned its reins

And has set off to conquer the known and the unknown.

Love for you, O Barada, haunts me like a sword

And I have no replacement for your love

وددْتُ لو زَرَعُوني فيــكِ مِئْذَنَـةً
أو علَّقُوني على الأبواب قِنْـديلا

يا بَلْـدةَ السَّـبْعَةِ الأنهارِ .. يا بَلَدي
ويا قميصاً بزَهْر الخوخ مَشْغُولا

ويا حِصَاناً تخلَّى عن أعِنَّتِـــــهِ
وراحَ يفتحُ معلومــاً ، ومَجْهُولا

هواكَ يا بَرَدى ، كالسيف يسكُنُنِي
وما ملكتُ لأمــر الحُبِّ تبديــلا

---

[1]See note 1, p.359.

Why does the Damascene girl who was our sweetheart
Not remember now the taste of our first kiss?
Days when we were in Dummar[1] - and my mouth
Was on her braids, carved and revealed
While the river caused us to hear its sweetest poems
And the cypresses wore anklets on their legs.
O you who writes me on the willow-leaves
As poetry, and paints me on the earth as September

ما للدمشْقِيَّـةِ الكانَتْ حبيبَتَنَـا
لا تذكُرُ الآنَ طَعْمَ القُبْلة الأُولى

أيَّامَ في دُمَّرٍ كُنَّا .. وكان فَمـي
على ضفائرِها .. حَفْراً .. وتَنْزِيلا ..

والنَهْرُ يُسْمِعُنا أحـلى قصائـدِهِ
والسَرْوُ يلبس بالسـاقِ الخلاخيـلا

يا مَنْ على ورق الصفصاف يكتُبُني
شِعْراً .. وينقشُني في الأرض أيلولا

---

[1]See note 4, p.323.

O you who brings back my exercise books, my school,

The wheat, the almonds, and the sweet folksongs

O Damascus, although I may conceal what I am suffering,

Yet the most beautiful love is a love which has not yet been spoken.

يا مَنْ يعيدُ كراريسي .. ومدرسَتي
والقمحَ ، واللوزَ ، والزُرْقَ المواويلا

يا شامُ . إنْ كنتُ أُخفي ما أُكابدُهُ
فأجملُ الحُبّ حُبٌّ ـ بَعْدُ ـ ما قِيلا ...

43. BAGHDADI FOLK-SONG

Spread my carpet, and fill my cups

And forget to reproach me, for I have forgotten my reproach.

Your eyes, O Baghdad, since my childhood

Have been two suns sleeping in my eyelids

Do not refuse to recognise my face, for you are my beloved,

The roses on my table, and my glass of wine.

Baghdad - I have come to you exhausted like a ship

Hiding my wounds beneath my clothes

مَوَّالك بغـــداديّ

مُدّي بساطيَ .. واملأي أكوابي
وانسي " الأبَ ، فقد نسيتُ عتابي

عَيْنَاكِ يا بغدادُ ، منـذُ طفولـتي
شَمْسَانِ نائمتانِ في أهدابـــــي

لا تُنْكري وجْهي .. فأنتِ حبيبتي
وورودُ مائدتي ، وكأسُ شَرَابي

بغدادُ .. جئتُكِ كالسفينـــة مُتْعَباً
أُخْفي جراحاتي وراءَ ثيابـــــي

And have flung down my head on the bosom of my princess,

And our lips have met after a long absence.

I am that sailor who has spent his life

In a search for love and for lovers

Baghdad - I have flown on a silken gown

And the braids of Zaynab and Rabāb'

I have come down like a sparrow searching for his nest

While the dawn is a wedding-party of minarets and domes

So that I beheld you like a piece of jewellery

Resting between date-palms and vines.

ورمَيْتُ رأسي فوق صدر أميرتي
وتلاقَتِ الشَفَتانِ بعد غيـــــــابِ

أنا ذلكَ البَحَّارُ أنفقَ عُمْـــرَهُ
في البحث عن حُبٍّ .. وعن أحبَابِ

بغدادُ .. طِرْتُ على حرير عباءةٍ
وعلى ضفائر زينبٍ وربَـــــابِ

وهَبَطْتُ كالعصفور يقصُـدُ عُشَّهُ
والفَجْرُ عُرْسُ مآذِنٍ وقِبَـــــابِ

حتى رأيتُـــكِ قطعـةً من جوهـرٍ
ترتاحُ بين النَخْل والأعْنَـــــابِ

'Zaynab and Rabāb are names often used in older Arabic poetry to denote the poet's beloved.

Wherever I turn, I see the features of my homeland
And smell in this soil my own soil
I have never felt like a stanger, for every blue
Cloud has in it the pride of my clouds
The stars which inhabit your hills
Are the same stars which inhabit my hills.
Baghdad, I have lived beauty in all its forms
But your beauty is something which I have never reckoned on
What shall I write of you in the books of love
When a thousand books would not suffice for love of you?

* * *

حيثُ الْتَفَتُّ ، أرى ملامحَ موطني
وأَشُمُّ في هذا الـــتراب تُـــرابي

لم أَغْتَرِبْ أبداً .. فكُلُّ سَحَابةٍ
زَرْقَـاءَ .. فيها كِبْرِياءُ سَحَـابي

إنَّ النجومَ الساكناتِ هضابَـكُمْ
ذاتُ النجومِ الساكناتِ هضابي ..

بغدادُ عِشْتُ الحُسْنَ في ألوانِـهِ
لكنَّ حُسْنَكِ ، لم يكُنْ بحسـابي

ماذا سأكْتُبُ عنكِ في كُتُب الهوى
فهواكِ لا يكفيـهِ ألْفُ كتـابِ

* * *

My poetry murders me, for every poem
Sucks me dry, sucks dry the oil of my youth,
The golden dagger drinks of my blood
And sleeps in my flesh and my sinews.
Baghdad, O music of bracelets and jewellery
O treasury of lights and perfumes
Do not treat unkindly the rabāba-string in my hand
For passion is greater than my hand and my rabāba;
Before our sweet meeting you were my beloved
And you will remain my beloved after my departure.

يغتالُـني شِعْري .. فكلُّ قصيـــدةٍ
تَـمْتَصُّني .. تمتصُّ زيْتَ شبابـي
الخِـنْـجَرُ الذهبيُّ .. يشربُ مـن دمي
وينامُ في لحمي ، وفي أعصابـي

بَـغْـدادُ . يا هَـزْجَ الأساور والحُـلَى
يا مخزنَ الأضواءِ والأطْيَـــــابِ

لا تظلمي وترَ الرَبَـابة في يدي
فالشوقُ أكْبَرُ من يـــدي ورَبَابي

قَـبْـلَ اللقاء الحُـلْوِ .. كنتِ حبيبتي
وحبيبتي تَـبْـقِينَ بعدَ ذَهَـــابي ..

44. ANDALUSIAN DIARIES

I

In Spain

I have no need of an inkwell

Nor of ink to quench the thirst of the paper

The eyes of Morena Rosalia

Besprinkle me with black passion

The eyes of Morena Rosalia are a black inkwell

In which I immerse myself without asking questions

And they drink my life without asking questions

Like an Arab camel-litter which etches its destiny in the dimensions,

Etches its destiny in my destiny.

مُذكّرات أندلسيّة

١

في إسبانيا
لم أحْتَجْ إلى داوةْ
ولا إلى حبرٍ أسقي به عَطَشَ الوَرَقْ
عُيونُ مورينا روساليا
ترشُّني بالشوق الأَسْوَدْ
عيونُ مورينا روساليا .. دواةٌ سوداءْ
أغُطُّ فيها ولا أسألْ ..
وتشربُ حياتي .. ولا تسألْ
كهَوْدَجٍ عربيٍّ يحفرُ مصيرَهُ في الأبعادْ
يحفُرُ مصيرَهُ في مصيري

مدريد ١٩٥٥/٨/٥

II

The thick hair of Miranda Alavedera
Breathing like an African jungle
Is the longest love-story I have heard in my life
How many are the love-stories which I have heard in my life;
And which have devoured my life.

٢

شَعْرُ ميراندا آلافيدرا الكثيفْ
المُتَنَفِّسُ كغابةٍ إفريقيَّهْ
أطولُ حكاية شوقٍ سمعتُها في حياتي
ما أكثرَ حكايا الشوق التي سمعتُها في حياتي
وأكَلَتْ حياتي ...

III

The Spanish dancer
Says everything with her fingers
And the Spanish dance is the only dance
In which the finger turns into a mouth,
A hot appeal, thirsty trysts
Satisfaction .. anger .. desire .. and hope;
All of this is said with the sob of a finger,
With the tap of a finger.

٣

الراقصةُ الإسبانيةُ ..
تقولُ بأصابعها كلَّ شيءْ
والرقصُ الإسبانيُّ هو الرقْصُ الوحيدْ
الذي يستحيلُ فيه الإصبعُ إلى فَمْ
النداءُ الساخنُ .. والمواعيدُ العطشى ..
والرضى .. والغَضَبُ .. والشهوةُ .. والتمَنّي
كلٌّ هذا يقالُ بشَهْقَة إصبعْ ..
بنَقْرةِ إصبعْ ..

I am in my place

And the symphony of fingers over there

Harvests me

Picks me up

And puts me down on an Andalusian skirt

Which has stolen all the flowers of Andalusia and asked no questions

And stolen the daylight of my eyes

And asked no questions

* * *

أنا في محلِّي ..
وسَمْفُونيَّةُ الأصابع هناكْ
تحصدني ..
تشيلُني
تحطُّني على تَنُّورةٍ أندلسيَّهْ
سرقَتْ زهْرَ الأندلس كلَّهُ ولم تسألْ ..
وسرقَتْ نهارَ عُيوني
ولم تسألْ ...

* * *

I am in my place

And the twentieth glass is in its place,

The symphony of fingers

Is at the apogee of its ebb and flow

And the black rain falling from the apertures of the wide eyes

Is something of which the history of rain knows nothing,

Which the memory of rain does not remember.

I am in my place

And, O rain of the black eyes,

I beg of you .. do not cease.

أنا في مَحَلِّي ..
والكأسُ العشرونَ في محلِّها
وسَمْفُونيَّةُ الأصابع
في أَوْج مدِّها وجَزْرها
والمطرُ الأسودُ المتساقطُ من فَتْحَات العيون الواسعَهْ
شيءٌ لا يعرفُهُ تاريخُ المَطَرْ
لا تذكرُهُ ذاكرةُ المَطَرْ
أنا في محلِّي ..
فيا مَطَرَ الأعين السُودْ
سألتُكَ .. لا تَنْقطِعْ ..

غرناطة ١٠/٨/١٩٥٥

IV

I never wished to be a buttonhole in a cloak
Except in the War Museum in Madrid
The cloak belongs to Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṣaghīr[1]
And the sword is his sword.
The foreign tourists are not detained by the cloak
Or by the sword.

٤

ما تَمنَّيتُ أن أكونَ عُرْوةً في رداءْ
إلَّا في المتحف الحربيِّ في مدريدْ
الرداءُ لأبي عبد اللهِ الصغيرْ
والسيفُ سيفُهْ ..
السائحونَ الأجانب لا يستوقفُهم الرداءْ ..
ولا السيفْ ..

[1]The last Muslim ruler of Granada, expelled by the Spanish in 1492, known in the west as Boabdil (d. 1533 A.D.).

As for me

I am tied to the cloak and its owner

By a thousand reasons.

Do you know how an orphan child stops

Before his departed father's clothes?

In this way I stopped before the closed glass cabinet

Imploring the brocade,

Devouring the textile in my imagination

Thread

By thread.

أما أنا ..

فيربطني بالرداءِ .. وبصاحب الرداءْ ..
ألفُ سَبَبْ
هل تعرفونَ كيف يقف الطفلُ اليتيمْ
أمام ثياب أبيه الراحلْ ؟.
هكذا وقفتُ أمام الخزانة الزجاجيَّة المغلقَهْ
أسْتَجْدي الزَرْكَشَاتْ
آكُلُ بخيالي النسيجَ ..
خيطاً ..
خيطاً ..

And yet

Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Ṣaghīr[1] has not left me

Alone in the city

Every night he put on his cloak

And left the glass cabinet

In the War Museum

To walk with me in the Boulevard de la Castellana in Madrid

To introduce me to his female Andalusian heirs

One by one

ومع هذا ..
لم يتركني أبو عبد اللهِ الصغيرْ
وحدي في المدينَـهْ ..
كانَ كلَّ ليلةٍ يلبسُ رداءَهُ
ويتركُ الخزانةَ الزجاجيَّة ..
في المتحف الحربيّ
ليمشي معي في (بولفار الكاستيانا) في مدريدْ
ليدلَّني على وريثاتِهِ الأندلسيَّاتْ
واحدةً .. واحدهْ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.452.

"Do you know this beauty?"

"No"

"This one's name used to be Nuwār bint ᶜAmmār, and her father was ᶜAmmār b. al-Aḥnaf', a man of virtue and riches, and this Nuwār used to walk like a sand-grouse among us, and rise up like a swaying date-palm among her young friends in the district.."

"Why do we not call out to her, Abū ᶜAbd Allah?"[2]

"She does not know her name."

"Can anybody forget his name?"

ـ هل تعرفُ هذه الجميلَهْ ؟

ـ لا

ـ هذه كان اسمُها (نُوار بنت عمَّار) وكان
أبوها عمّار بن الأحنف ، رجلاً ذا فَضْلٍ ويسار ،
وكانت نُوارُ هذه ، تدرجُ كالقَطَاة بيننا ، وتنهضُ
كالنَخْلة المَيْسَاء بين صويحباتها في الحيّ ...

ـ لماذا لا نُنَاديها يا أبا عبد الله ؟

ـ إنَّها لا تعرفُ اسمَها ! !

ـ وهل ينسى أحدٌ إسمَهْ ؟

---

[1]These are purely fictitious names created by the poet.
[2]See note 1, p.452.

"Yes, this happens in history

Her name now is Nora Al Amaro[1]

Instead of Nuwār bint ʿAmmār."

"Nora"

"What do you want?"

"Nothing .. it is just that this man was a friend of your father's in Damascus,

and

he would like to pay his respects."

"A friend of my father's in Damascus?"

"Yes, you do not remember this, because you were a child then"

"Perhaps"

"Good evening"

"Buenas Noches"

ـ نعم .. هذا يحدث في التاريخ ...

إنَّ اسمَها الآن أصبحَ NORA AL AMARO

بدلاً من نُوار بنت عمَّارْ ..

ـ يا نورا ...

ـ ماذا تريدان ؟

ـ لا شيء .. كلُّ ما في الأمر أنَّ هذا الرجل
كانَ صديقاً لأبيكِ في دمشق .. وهو يرغبُ
في تحيَّتك ...

ـ صديقاً لأبي في دمشقْ ؟؟

ـ نعم .. أنتِ لا تذكرينَ ذلك .. لأنَّكِ كنتِ
يومئذ طفلة ...

ـ ربّما ..

ـ عمي مساءً ...

BUENAS NOCHES ـ

قرطبة ١٢/٨/١٩٥٥

[1]A name created by the poet to fit his Arabic name Nuwār bint ʿAmmār.

V

The long earring

In the ear of Analisa Donalia

Is a tear which has left the ear centuries ago

And has not yet reached the haven of the shoulder

This long earring

And every long earring

In the ear of every Spanish lady

Is a desperate attempt

To reach the quarry of light in her shoulders

٥

القُرْطُ الطويل

في أُذُن آناليزا دونالِيا

دمعةٌ تركت الأُذُنَ منذ قرونْ

ولم تصل إلى مرفأ الكَتِف بَـعْـدْ ..

هذا القُرْطُ الطويلْ

وكلُّ قُرطٍ طويلْ

في أُذُن كلِّ سيِّدةٍ إسبانيَّهْ

محاولةٌ مستميتة ..

للوُصُول إلى مَقْـلَع الضوء في الكَـتِـفَـيْنْ ...

O earring of Analisa Donalia

May you never reach what you desire

And may your journey never end

For you to live in the illusion of the shoulder

Is a thousand times better

Than having your ambition buried in its marble

O earring of Analisa Donalia

O hunger of light for light

My heart goes with you

يا قُرْطَ أناليزا دونالِيا ..
لا وصلتَ أبداً إلى مُشْتَهَاكْ
ولا انتهتْ رحلتُكْ
لأن تعيشَ بوهم الكَتِفْ ..
خيرٌ لكَ ألفَ مرَّة ..
من أن تدفنَ طموحَكَ في رخامِها ..
يا قُرْطَ أناليزا دونالِيا
يا جُوعَ الضوء إلى الضوء ..
قلبي معكْ ..

VI

In the narrow alleys of Cordoba'
I stretched my hand out to my pocket more than once
To get out the key of our house in Damascus
The beds of gladioli, lilac and dahlias,
The central pool, the house's blue eye,
The jasmine climbing on the shoulders of the bedrooms
And on our shoulders
The golden fountain, the spoilt daughter of the house
Whose throat never dries up
And the shady courts, receptacles and hiding-places of moisture,

في أزقَّة قرطُبة الضيقَّة ..
مددتُ يدي إلى جيبي أكثرَ من مرَّة ..
لأُخرجَ مفتاحَ بيتنا في دمَشْقْ ..
أحواضُ الشمشير .. واللَّيْلَكِ .. والقُرطاسيا ..
البِرْكَةُ الوسطى ، عَيْنُ الدار الزرقاءْ
الياسمينُ الزاحفُ على أكتاف المخادعْ ..
وعلى أكتافنا ..
النافورةُ الذهبيَّةُ ، طفلةُ البيت المُدَلَّلَهْ ..
التي لا تنشفُ لها حُنجُرَهْ ..
والقاعاتُ الظليلةُ أواني الرطوبة .. ومخبؤها ..

'Cordoba was one of the main cities of Islamic Spain and became the capital of the Umayyad state. It was captured by the forces of Ferdinand in 1236.

All of this perfumed world which embraced my childhood in Damascus

I found here

So, O lady leaning on her wooden window

Do not be afraid if I wash my hand in your little pool

And pluck one of your jasmine blossoms

And then go up the staircase to a little room

An eastern room inlaid with mother-of-pearl

Whose lattice windows the sun climbs .. without asking questions

And whose curtains the lilac climbs without asking questions,

An eastern room

In which my mother put together my bed.

كلُّ هذه الدنيا المطيَّبة التي احتضنتْ طفولتي في دمَشْقْ ..
وجدتُها هُنا ..
فيا سيِّدتي المُتَّكئة على نافذتها الخشبيَّهْ
لا تُراعي .. إذا غسلتُ يدي في بِرْكتِكِ الصغيرَهْ
وقطفتُ واحدةً من ياسميناتكْ ..
ثم صعدتُ الدرج .. إلى حُجْرَة صغيرَهْ ..
حُجْرَة شرقيّةٍ مُطَعَّمةٍ بالصَدَف ..
تتسلَّقُ شبابيكَها الشمسُ .. ولا تسألْ
ويتسلّقُ أستارَها اللَّيْلَكُ .. ولا يسألْ
حُجْرةٍ شرقيّة ..
كانت أمّي تنصبُ فيها سريري ...

قرطبة ١٨/٨/١٩٥٥

45. SPANISH PAPERS

I

THE BRIDGE

Spain

A bridge of weeping

Stretched between earth and heaven

أوراقٌ إسبانيـة

(١)
الجسر

إسبَانيا

جِسْرٌ من البُكـاءْ ..

يمتدُّ بين الأرض والسماءْ

II

SONATA

On the bosom of a weeping guitar

Spain dies - and is born

(٢)

سوناتا

على صدر قيثارةٍ باكيَهْ
تَمُوتُ .. وتولدُ إسبانِيَهْ ...

III

THE HORSEMAN AND THE ROSE

Spain

Delicate fans which comb the air

And black eyes .. without beginning or end

A hat thrown before the beloved's balcony

And a moist rose

Flying from the women's quarters

Carrying worship and prayer in its leaves

To a horseman from the south with a red cloak

Who courts death

All that he owns a sword, and pride.

(٣)

الفارسُ والوردة

إسْبَانيا
مراوحٌ هفهافَةٌ تُمَشِّطُ الهواءْ
وأعينٌ سوداءُ .. لا بدءٌ لها ، ولا انتهاءْ
قُبَّعَةٌ تُرمى أمام شرفة الحبيبَهْ
ووردةٌ رطيبَهْ ..
تطيرُ من مقصورة النساءْ
تحمل في أوراقها الصلاةَ والدعاءْ
لفارسٍ من الجنوب ، أحمرِ الرداءْ
يداعبُ الفناءْ
وكلُّ ما يملكُهُ سيفٌ .. وكبرياءْ ..

IV

THE SPARROW'S NEST

In Seville

Every beautiful maiden wears

A scarlet rose in her hair

Upon which, in the evening

All the sparrows of Spain descend.

(٤)
بيتُ العصافير

بإشْبيليَهْ
تُعلِّقُ كلُّ جميلَهْ
على شَعْرها وردةً قانيَهْ
تحطُّ عليها مساءً
جميعُ عصافير إسبانيَهْ ..

V

THE SPANISH LADIES' FANS

When summer gathers together its possessions

And the spring dies on the hills

A thousand new springs flower

On a thousand gorgeous fans

(٥)

مراوحُ الإسبانيّات

إذا لَـمْـلَـمَ الصيفُ أشياءَهُ
ومات الربيعُ على الرابيَهْ
تفتَّحَ ألفُ ربيعٍ جديدٍ
على ألفِ مَرْوَحَةٍ زاهيَهْ ..

VI

THE BLACK PEARL

The streets of Granada at noon
Are fields of black pearls
And from my chair
I see my country in the big eyes
I see the minarets of Damascus
Portrayed in every braid of hair.

(٦)

اللؤلؤ الأسود

شوارعُ غرناطةٍ في الظهيرَهْ
حقول من اللؤلؤِ الأسودِ ..
فمِنْ مقعدي
أرى وطني في العيون الكبيرَهْ
أرى مئذناتِ دمشقَ ..
مُصَوَّرةً فوق كلِّ ضفيرَهْ ...

VII

DOÑA MARIA

Doña Maria tears me apart

With two eyes wider than a desert

And a face upon which are the suns of my country

And the splendour of its clear horizons

I remember our house in Damascus

The lisping of its pure pool

The dancing of the shadows in its courtyards

Its tall lemon trees

(٧)

دونيا ماريا

تُمزِّقُني دونيا ماريَهْ
بعينيْنِ أوسعَ من باديَهْ
ووجهٍ عليه شموسُ بلادي
وروعةُ آفاقها الصاحِيَهْ ..
فأذكُرُ منزلَنا في دمشقَ ..
ولَثْغةَ بِرْكتِهِ الصافيَهْ
ورقْصَ الظلال بقاعاتِهِ
وأشجارَ ليمونه العاليَهْ

And an old door on which I wrote,

In bad handwriting, my stories.

In your eyes, Doña Maria,

I see my country again.

وباباً قديماً .. نَقَشْتُ عليه
بخَطٍّ رديءٍ حكاياتِيَهْ
بعَيْنَيْكِ يا دونيا ماريَهْ
أرى وطني مرةً ثانيَهْ...

VIII

THE AMBITIOUS EARRING

In the ears of this beautiful girl

A long earring swayed

Like light laughing in a glass

Stretching out its hands but unable

To reach .. the naked shoulder

(٨)

القُـرْطُ الطموح

على أُذُنَيْ هذه الغانيَهْ
تأرجَحَ قُـرْطٌ رفيعْ
كما يضحكُ الضوءُ في الآنِيَهْ
يَمُـدُّ يديْهِ .. ولا يستطيعْ
وُصُولاً .. إلى الكَتِفِ العاريَهْ ..

IX

THE BULL

Despite the loss of blood which afflicts him

Despite the darts buried in him

The killed animal is still, with all of this,

More majestic, and greater, than his killers.

(٩)

الثور

برغْمِ التزيف الذي يعتريهِ
برغْمِ السهامِ الدفينةِ فيهِ
يظلُّ القتيلُ على ما بهِ ..
أَجَلَّ ، وأكبرَ .. من قاتِليهِ ...

X

THE BLOOD OF THE PROPHETS

Corrida

Corrida

The bull rushes at the cape

Strong, headstrong,

And falls in the bullring

Like any martyr, like any prophet

And does not relinquish his pride.

(١٠)

نزيفُ الأنبياء

كُوريدَا ..
كوريدا ...
ويندفعُ الثورُ نحو الرداءْ
قويَّاً ، عنيدا
ويسقُطُ في ساحة الملعبِ
كأيِّ شهيدٍ ، كأيِّ نبي
ولا يَتَخلَّى عن الكبرياءْ ..

XI

THE REMNANTS OF THE ARABS

Flamenco

Flamenco

And the drowsy tavern wakes up

To the laughing of the wooden castanets

And the hoarseness of a sad voice

Flowing like a fountain of gold

And I sit in a corner

Gathering together my tears

Gathering together the remnants of the Arabs.

(١١)

بقايا العرب

فْلاَمِنْكُو ..
فْلاَمِنْكُو ..
وتستيقظُ الحانةُ الغافيَهْ
على قَـقْهَـقَاتِ صُنُوج الخَـشَبْ
وَبَـحَّـة صوتٍ حزينِ
يسيلُ كنافُورةٍ من ذَهَبْ
وأجلسُ في زاويَهْ
أَلُمُّ دموعي ..
أَلُمُّ بقايا العَرَبْ ..

46. SORROWS IN ANDALUSIA

You wrote to me, precious one

You wrote asking about Spain

About Ṭāriq'

Conquering, in God's name, a second world

About ᶜUqba b. Nāfiᶜ[2]

Planting date-palm seedlings

In the heart of every hill

أحـزانٌ في الأنـدلس

كَتَبْتِ لي .. يا غاليَهْ
كَتَبْتِ تسألينَ عن إسبانيَهْ
عن طارق ،
يفتحُ باسمِ اللهِ .. دُنْيا ثانيَهْ
عن عُـقْبة بن نافعٍ
يَـزْرَعُ شَـتْـلَ نَـخْـلةٍ
في قلب كُلِّ رابيَهْ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.323.

[2]ᶜUqba b. Nāfiᶜ (621 - 683) was one of the great generals of early Islam, who conquered much of North Africa and advanced as far as the Atlantic Ocean. He was the founder of the city of Qayrawān in Tunisia and built the mosque there which bears his name to this day.

You asked about the Umayyads[1]

You asked about their prince Muʿāwiya[2]

About the splendid squadrons

Carrying from Damascus in their stirrups

Civilisation -

And well-being ...

* * *

سألتِ عن أُمَيَّةٍ
سألتِ عن أميرها مُعاوِيَهْ
عن السرايا الزاهيَهْ
تحملُ من دمَشْقَ في رِكابِها
حضارةً ..
وعافيَهْ ...

* * *

---

[1]See note 1, p.218.
[2]See note 2, p.166.

There is nothing left in Spain

Of us

And of our eight centuries

Except for the wine which remains

In the depths of the vessels

And big, big eyes

In whose blackness

There still sleeps the night of the desert.

لم يبقَ في إسْبَانيَهْ
مِنَّا ..
ومِنْ عُصُورنا الثمانيَهْ
غيرُ الذي يبقى من الخَمْرِ
بجوف الآنيَهْ ..
وأعْيُنٍ كبيرةٍ .. كبيرةٍ ..
ما زالَ في سَوَادِها
ينامُ ليلُ الباديَهْ ..

There is nothing left of Cordoba[1]

But the tears of the weeping minarets

But the perfume of the roses

The bitter oranges

And the dahlias.

There does not remain of Wallāda[2]

And of the stories of her love

A rhyme

Or the remains of a rhyme.

* * *

لم يَبْقَ من قُرْطُبةٍ
سوى دموع المئذنات الباكيَهْ
سوى عبير الوردِ ،
والنارَنْجِ ،
والأضَالِيَهْ ..
لم يَبْقَ من (وَلَّادةٍ)
ومن حكايا حُبِّها ..
قافيةٌ ...
ولا بقايا قافيَهْ ..

* * *

---

[1]See note 1, p.459.
[2]Wallāda bt. al-Mustakfī (d. 1091), a Spanish poetess and beloved of the poet Ibn Zaydūn (1004 - 1070), who addressed a number of poems to her.

There is nothing left of Granada

Or of the Banū al-Aḥmar[1]

But what the narrator says

And the words "There is no conqueror but God"[2]

Which meet you at every corner

There is nothing left but their palace

Like a naked woman of marble

Living - still - on

A bygone love-story.

لم يَبْقَ من غَرْنَاطةٍ ..
ومن بني الأحْمَرِ ..
إلَّا ما يقولُ الراوِيَهْ
وغيرْ (لا غالبَ إلا الله) ..
تلقاكِ بكلِّ زاويَهْ
لم يبقَ إلا قصرُهُمْ
كامرأةٍ من الرُخام عاريَهْ
تعيشْ ـ لا زالتْ ـ على
قصَّةِ حُبٍّ ماضيَهْ ..

* *

[1]The dynasty who ruled Granada from 1232 to 1492, better known to western historians as the Nasrids.
[2]This inscription is repeated again and again on the walls of the Alhambra.

Five centuries have gone by
Since the little Caliph[1] departed from Spain
And our petty hatreds are still
As they were
The mentality of the tribe is still
In our blood as it was
And freedom of thought here
Is still
A chicken, slaughtered
By the sword of every tyrant.

مَضَتْ قرونٌ خمسةٌ ..
مُذْ رَحَلَ (الخليفةُ الصغيرُ) عن إسبانيَهْ ..
ولم تزلْ أحقادُنا الصغيرَهْ
كما هِيَهْ ..
ولم تزلْ عقليّةُ العشيرَهْ ..
في دمِنَا كما هِيَهْ ...
ولم تَزَلْ
حُريّةُ الرأي هُنا
دجاجةً مذبوحةً ..
بسيف كُلِّ طاغيَهْ

[1] i.e. Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Ṣaghīr. See note 1, p.452.

Our daily conversation is carried out with daggers ..

Our thoughts are more like claws.

Five centuries have gone by

And the word "The Arab World" is still

Like a sorrowful flower in a vase

Like a hungry, naked child

Whom we crucify

On the wall of hatred and loathing.

حِوارُنا اليوميُّ بالخناجِرِ ..
أفكارُنا أشْبَهُ بالأظافِرِ
مَضَتْ قرونٌ خمسةٌ
ولا تزالُ لَفْظَةُ العُرُوبَهْ
كزهرةٍ حزينةٍ في آنيَهْ ..
كطفلةٍ جائعةٍ ، وعاريَهْ
نصلُبُها ..
على جدار الحقد والكراهيَهْ ..

* * *

Five centuries have gone by,

Precious one,

And it is as though

We were leaving Spain today.

مَضَتْ قرونٌ خَمْسَةٌ ..

يا غاليَهْ

كأنَّنا ..

نَخْرُجُ هذا اليومَ من إسبانيَهْ ! !.

47. GRANADA[1]

We met in the entrance to the Alhambra[2]

What a delightful meeting, quite unexpected,

Two black eyes, in whose sockets

Dimensions are generated from dimensions

"Are you Spanish?" I asked her

She said, "Yes, and I was born in Granada"

غَـرْناطَـة

في مَـدْخَل (الحمراءِ) .. كان لقاؤُنا
ما أطيبَ اللُّـقْيَا بلا ميعـــــادِ

عَيْـنَانِ سوداوانِ .. في حَـجَرَيْهِما
تتوالَدُ الأبعادُ من أبعـــــادِ ..

هل أنتِ إسبانيـــةٌ ؟ ساءلتُـهـــا
قالتْ : وفي غرناطةٍ ميـــــلادي

---

[1]See note 1, p.264.
[2]See note 2, p.338.

Granada! Seven centuries have awoken
In those eyes after a long sleep,
The banners of the Umayyads[1] are raised high
And their thoroughbred steeds are unending.
How strange is history, in the way it has restored me
To one of my dark-skinned granddaughters,
A Damascene face .. through which I saw
The eyelids of Bilqīs, and the neck of Suʿād[2]

غَرْنَاطَةٌ ! وصَحَتْ قُرُونٌ سَبْعَةٌ
في تَيْنِكَ العينْنِ بعـــدَ رُقَـــادِ

وأُميَّةٌ راياتُهـــــا مرفوعـــــةٌ
وجيادُهـــــا موصولـــــةٌ بجيادِ

ما أغْرَبَ التاريخَ كيف أعادنـــي
لحفيدةٍ سمراءَ من أحفـــــادي ..

وجْـهٌ دِمَشْقيٌّ .. رأيتُ خلالَـــهُ
أجفانَ بلقيسٍ ، وجيـــدَ سُعَـادِ

---

[1]See note 1, p.218.
[2]Bilqīs is the Arab name of the Queen of Sheba. Suʿād is the woman mentioned by Kaʿb b. Zuhayr (d. 645) in his famous ode Bānat Suʿād. The two names are used to signify Arab beauty.

And I saw our old house .. and a room
In which my mother used to straighten my pillow
And the jasmine bush, was studded with its stars,
And the golden-voiced pool.
"Damascus .. where is that?" I said, "You see it
In your hair which flows like a river of blackness,
In your Arab face, in your mouth which
Still keeps in store the suns of my country,

ورأيتُ منزلَنا القديمَ .. وحُجْرَةً
كانتْ بها أُمّي تَمُـدُّ وسَـادي

والياسمينةَ ، رُصِّعَـتْ بنجومها
والبِرْكَـةَ الذهبيَّـةَ الإنشـادِ ..

* * *

ودمشقُ ... أين تكونُ ؟ قلتُ تَرَيْنَها
في شعركِ المُنْسَابِ نَهْرَ سَـوَادِ

في وجهكِ العربيِّ ، في الثغر الذي
ما زال مختزناً شموسَ بـلادي ..

In the scent of the Generalife[1] and its water

In the Arabian jasmine, in the sweet basil, in the citrons."

* * *

She went with me, her hair whispering behind her

Like ears of wheat left unharvested,

The long earring glittering in her ear

Like candles at Christmas Eve

And I walked like a child behind my guide,

With history a pile of ashes behind me,

في طيب (جَنَّاتِ العريفِ) ومائِها
في الفُلِّ ، في الرَيْحَان ، في الكبَّادِ

* * *

سارتْ معي .. والشَعْرُ يلهث خلفَها
كسنابلٍ تُرِكَتْ بغير حصـــادِ

يتألَّقُ القُرْطُ الطويـــلُ بأُذْنِهـــا
مثـــلَ الشموع بليلـــةِ الميـــلادِ

ومشيتُ مثلَ الطفل خلـف دليلتي
ووراءيَ التاريـخُ كَوْمُ رَمَـــادِ

---

[1]Arabic Jannāt al-ʿArīf, a palace to the north-west of the Alhambra, surrounded by a beautiful garden.

Almost hearing the pulse of the decorations,

The ornamentations on the ceilings calling out to me.

She said, "Here is the Alhambra', the pride of our ancestors

So read my glories on its walls."

Her glories! I wiped a bleeding wound,

And wiped another wound in my heart.

If only my beautiful heiress understood

That the people she meant were my ancestors!

الزَخْرَفاتُ أكـــادُ أسمـعُ نَبْضَها
والزَرْكَشَاتُ على السقوف تُنَادي

قالتْ : هُنَا (الحمراءُ) زَهْوُ جدودنا
فاقـرأْ على جُدْرانِها أمجـــــادي

أمْجَادُها !!! ومسحتُ جرحاً نازفاً
ومسحتُ جُرْحَـاً ثانيــاً بفـؤادي

يا ليتَ وارثَتي الجميلـةَ أدركَـتْ
أنَّ الذينَ عَنَتْهُـمُ أجـــــدادي

* * *

[1]See note 2, p.338.

When I said farewell to her I embraced in her

A man called Ṭāriq b. Ziyād'

عانَقْتُ فيها عنـدما ودَّعْـتُـــها
رَجُلاً يُسمَّى (طارقَ بنَ زيـادِ)..

'See note 1, p.323.

48. O QUEEN OF THE WORLD, O BEIRUT

I

O Queen of the World, O Beirut

Who has sold your bracelets inlaid with rubies?

Who has confiscated your magic ring

And cut your golden braids?

Who has murdered the joy sleeping in your green eyes?

يا سِتَّ الدنيا يا بيروت

١

يا سِتَّ الدنيا يا بيروتْ ...
مَنْ باعَ أساورَكِ المشغولةَ بالياقُوتْ ؟
مَنْ صادرَ خاتَمَكِ السحريَّ ،
وقصَّ ضفائرَكِ الذهبيَّهْ ؟
من ذَبحَ الفَرحَ النائمَ في عينيكِ الخضراوينْ ؟

Who has slashed your face with a knife

And thrown vitriol on your wondrous lips?

Who has poisoned the sea-water, and scattered hatred on the rosy beaches?

We have come, apologising and confessing

That we opened fire on you in a tribal spirit

And killed a woman who was called freedom.

من شَطَبَ وجهكِ بالسكّينِ ،
وألقى ماء النار على شفتيكِ الرائعتينْ
من سمَّمَ ماء البحر ،ورشَّ الحقدَ على الشُطْآنِ الورديَّهْ؟
ها نحنُ أتَيْنا .. معتذرينَ .. ومُعْتَرفينْ
أنَّا اطلقنا النارَ عليكِ برُوحٍ قَبَليَّهْ ..
فقتلنا امرأةً .. كانتْ تُدعى (الحريَّهْ) ...

II

What shall we say. O Beirut,

When the essence of human sorrow is in your eyes

And the ashes of the civil war are on your burning breasts

Who would have thought that we would meet, O Beirut, when you were in ruins?

Who would have thought, that the rose would grow thousands of fangs?

Who would have thought that the eye would one day fight against the eyelashes?

٢

ماذا نتكلَّمُ يا بيروتُ ..
وفي عينيكِ خلاصةُ حُزْن البشريَّهْ
وعلى نهديكِ المُحْتَرقَيْن .. رمادُ الحرب الأهليَّهْ
من كان يُفكّرُ أن نتلاقى ـ يا بيروتُ ـ وأنتِ خرابْ؟
من كانَ يُفكّرُ أن تنمو للوردة آلافُ الأنيابْ ؟
من كانَ يُفكّرُ أنَّ العينَ تقاتلُ في يومٍ ضدَّ الأهدابْ؟

What shall we say, my pearl,

My ear of wheat, my pens, my dreams,

My pages of poetry?

From where did this savagery come to you, O Beirut

When you were as delicate as a houri?

I do not understand how the house-sparrow turned

Into a wild night-cat

I do not understand at all, O Beirut,

I do not understand how you forgot God

And returned to the era of idolatry.

ماذا نتكلَّمْ يا لؤلؤتي ؟ .
يا سُنْبلتي .. يا أقلامي .. يا أحلامي ..
يا أوراقي الشعريَّهْ ..
من أينَ أتتْكِ القَسْوَةُ يا بيروتُ ،
وكنتِ برقَّةِ حُورِيَّهْ ..
لا أفهمُ كيف انقلب العُصْفورُ الدُوريُّ ..
لقطّةِ ليلٍ وحشيَّهْ ..
لا أفهمُ أبداً يا بيروتْ
لا أفهمُ كيف نسيتِ اللهَ ..
وعُدْتِ لعصر الوثنيَّهْ ..

III

Arise from beneath the blue wave, Astarte,

Arise like a poem of roses

Or arise like a poem of fire

There is nothing before you .. nothing after you .. nothing like you

You are essences of lives

O field of pearls,

O harbour of love,

O peacock of water.

٣

قُومي من تحت الموجِ الأزرقِ ، يا عَشْتَارْ
قُومي كقصيدة وردٍ ..
أو قُومي كقصيدة نارْ
لا يُوجَدُ قَبْلَكِ شيءٌ .. بَعْدَكِ شيءٌ .. مِثْلَكِ شيءٌ ..
أنتِ خلاصاتُ الأعمارْ ..
يا حقلَ اللؤلؤِ ..
يا ميناءَ العشقِ ..
ويا طاووسَ الماءْ ..

Arise for the sake of love, and the sake of poets,

Arise for the sake of bread, and the sake of the poor,

Love wants you, O sweetest of queens

And the Lord wants you, O sweetest of queens.

You have paid the tax on your beauty, like all beauties

And have paid the jizya[1] for all your words.

قُومي من أجل الحُبّ ، ومن أجل الشعراءْ
قومي من أجل الخبز ، ومن أجل الفقراءْ
الحبُّ يريدُكِ .. يا أحلى الملكاتْ ..
والربُّ يريدُكِ ، يا أحلى الملكاتْ
ها أنتِ دفعتِ ضريبةَ حسنكِ مثلَ جميع الحسناواتْ
ودفعتِ الجِزْيةَ عن كُلِّ الكَلِماتْ ..

[1]See note 4, p.408.

IV

Arise from, your sleep

O Empress, O blossom, O lamp kindled in the heart,

Arise so that the world may survive, O Beirut

And we may survive

And love may survive

Arise, O sweetest pearl which the sea has given.

٤

قُومي من نومكِ ..
يا سُلْطانةُ ، يا نوَّارةُ ، يا قنديلاً مشتعلاً في القلبْ
قُومي كي يبقى العالمُ يا بيروتُ ..
ونبقى نحنُ ..
ويبقى الحُبْ ...
قُومي .. يا أحلى لؤلؤةٍ أهداها البَحرْ

Now we know the meaning

Of killing a sparrow at dawn.

Now we know the meaning

Of tipping a bottle of ink over the summer sky.

Now we know

That we were against God .. and against poetry.

الآنَ عرفنا ما معنى ..
أن نقتل عُصْفُوراً في الفجرْ
الآنَ عرفنا ما معنى ..
أن ندلقَ فوق سماء الصيف زُجَاجةَ حِبرْ
الآنَ عرفنا ..
أنَّا كنَّا ضِدَّ اللهِ .. وضِدَّ الشِّعرْ ..

V

O Queen of the World, O Beirut,

O place of the first promise .. and the first love,

O place where we wrote poetry - and concealed it in bags of velvet,

We confess now that we used, O Beirut,

To love you like nomadic Beduin,

And to make love completely

Like nomadic Beduin.

We confess now that you were our mistress

In whose bed we took refuge all night

And left, like nomadic Beduin, at dawn.

o

يا سِتَّ الدنيا يا بيروتْ ..
يا حيثُ الوعدُ الأوَّلُ .. والحبُّ الأوَّلْ ..
يا حيث كتبنَا الشعرَ .. وخبَّئناهُ بأكياسِ المُخْمَلْ ..
نعترفُ الآنَ .. بأنَّا كُنَّا يا بيروتُ ،
نُحِبُّكِ كالبَدْو الرُحَّلْ ..
ونُمارسُ فِعْلَ الحُبِّ .. تماماً
كالبَدْو الرُحَّلْ ...
نعترفُ الآنَ .. بأنَّكِ كُنْتِ خليلَتَنَا
نأوي لفِراشِكِ طولَ الليل ...
وعند الفجر ، نهاجرُ كالبدو الرُحَّلْ

We confess now that we were illiterate

And did not know what we were doing,

We confess now that we were among the killers

And we saw your head

Falling beneath the rocks of al-Rawsha like a sparrow.

We confess now

That we were, at the time when the sentence was carried out,

False witnessess.

نعترفُ الآنَ .. بأنَّا كُنَّا أُمِّيِّينَ ..
وكنّا نجهلُ ما نفعلْ ..
نعترفُ الآنَ ، بأنَّا كُنَّا من بين القَتَلَهْ ..
ورأينا رأسَكِ ..
يسقُطُ تحت صُخُور الرَوْشَةِ كالعصفورْ
نعترفُ الآنَ ..
بأنَّا كُنَّا ـ ساعةَ نُفِّذَ فيكِ الحُكْمْ ـ
شُهُودَ الزورْ ..

VI

We confess before the One God
That we were jealous of you
And that your beauty pained us.
We confess now
That we did not treat you fairly .. did not forgive you .. and did not understand
you,
And in place of a rose, we gave you a knife.

٦

نعترفُ أمامَ الله الواحِدِ ..
أنَّا كنَّا منكِ نَغارُ ..
وكانَ جمالُكِ يؤذينا ..
نعترفُ الآنَ ..
بأنَّا لم نُنْصِفْكِ .. ولم نَعْذُرْكِ .. ولم نَفْهَمكِ ..
وأهدَيْنَاكِ مكانَ الوردةِ سِكِّينَا ...

We confess before the just God

That we tempted you', lived with you, slept with you

And charged you with our sins.

O Queen of the World, the world does not satisfy us after you.

Now we know that your roots were sunk deep in us;

Now we know what sin our hands have committed.

نعترفُ أمامَ الله العادلِ ...
أنّا راودناكِ .. وعاشرناكِ .. وضاجعناكِ ..
وحَمَّلناكِ معاصينا ..
يا سِتَّ الدنيا ، إنّ الدنيا بعدكِ ليستْ تكفينا ..
الآنَ عرفنا .. أنَّ جذوركِ ضاربةٌ فينا ..
الآنَ عرفنا .. ماذا اقترفتْ أيدينا ..

'The word rāwadnāki is an allusion to the Qur'ān, Sūrat Yūsuf, verses 23 and 26.

VII

God is searching on the map of Paradise for Lebanon
The sea is searching in its blue notebook for Lebanon
And the green moon
Has come back recently to marry Lebanon.
Give me your hand, O jewel of the night, and lily of countries -
We confess now
That we were sadists, and men of blood
And were the Devil's agents.

٧

اللهُ .. يفتِّشُ في خارطة الجنّة عن لُبنانْ
والبحرُ يفتّشُ في دفتره الأزرقِ عن لُبنانْ
والقَمَرُ الأخضرُ ..
عادَ أخيراً كي يتزوَّجَ من لُبنانْ ..
أعطيني كفَّكِ يا جوهرةَ الليل ، وزنبقةَ البلدانْ
نعترفُ الآنَ ..
بأنَّا كنَّا ساديينَ ، ودَمَوِيينَ ..
وكُنَّا وكلاءَ الشيطانْ

O Queen of the World, O Beirut,

Arise from beneath the rubble, like an almond-blossom in April,

Arise from your sorrow,

The revolution is born from the womb of sorrows.

Arise to honour the forests,

The rivers

And the valleys

Arise to honour mankind.

We have sinned, O Beirut,

And have come seeking forgiveness.

يا سِتَّ الدنيا يا بيروتْ ..
قومي من تحت الرَدْم ، كزهرة لوزٍ في نيسانْ
قومي من حُزْنكِ ..
إنَّ الثورةَ تُولَدُ من رَحِمِ الأحزانْ
قومي إكراماً للغاباتِ ..
وللأنهار ..
وللوديانْ ..
قُومي إكراماً للإنسانْ ..
إنَّا أخطأنا يا بيروتُ ..
وجِئْنَا نلتمسُ الغُفْرانْ ..

VIII

I still love you, O mad Beirut

O river of blood and jewels

I still love you, O good-hearted Beirut,

O Beirut of anarchy,

O Beirut of pagan hunger, and of pagan satiety,

I still love you, O Beirut of justice,

O Beirut of injustice,

O Beirut of captivity,

O Beirut of the killer and the poet.

٨

ما زلتُ أُحِبُّكِ يا بيروتُ المجنونَهْ ..
يا نهرَ دماءٍ وجواهرْ ..
ما زلتُ أُحبّكِ يا بيروتُ القلبِ الطيّبِ ..
يا بيروتُ الفَوْضَى ..
يا بيروتُ الجوعِ الكافرِ ... والشَبَعِ الكافرْ ..
ما زلتُ أُحبّكِ يا بيروتُ العدلِ ..
ويا بيروتْ الظلمِ ..
ويا بيروتْ السَلْمِ ..
ويا بيروت القاتلِ والشاعرْ ..

I still love you, O Beirut of love

O Beirut of slaughter, from artery to artery.

I still love you, despite the follies of man

I still love you, O Beirut ...

Why do we not start now?

ما زلتُ أُحبّكِ يا بيروتُ العِشْقِ ..

ويا بيروتُ الذبحِ من الشِرْيانِ إلى الشِرْيانْ ..

ما زلتُ أُحبّكِ رغمَ حماقات الإنسانْ

ما زلتُ أُحبّكِ يا بيروتُ ..

لماذا لا نبتدىءُ الآنْ ؟؟

49. SEVEN LETTERS LOST IN THE BEIRUT MAIL

I

My darling:

After two long years of exile and banishment

I remembered you this evening.

I was driven mad by your eyes,

Driven mad by my papers,

Driven mad because love had come.

سَبْعُ رسائلَ ضائعةٌ
في بريدِ بيروت

١

يا حبيبَهْ :
بعد عامينِ طويلينِ من الغُرْبةِ والنَفْي ..
تَذَكَّرتُكِ في هذا المساء ..
كنتُ مجنوناً بعينيكِ ..
ومجنوناً بأوراقي ..
ومجنوناً لأنَّ الحبَّ جاء ..

And poetry had come.

I was crying and laughing like a madman because

I could remember now, my lady.

It is astonishing that I remember,

Astonishing that I remember.

ولأنَّ الشعرَ جاءْ ..

كنتُ أبكي ضاحكاً مثلَ المجاذيبِ .. لأنّي
أستطيعُ الآنَ ، يا سيّدتي ، أن أتذكَّرْ ..
مُذْهِشٌ أن أتذكَّرْ ..
مدهشٌ أن أتذكَّرْ ..

It is not easy for a man to recollect in time of war
The face of a woman whom he loves,
For war is against memory.
It is not easy in a time of ugliness
To gather magnolia flowers
And the butterflies which emerge at night from the windows of the rainy eyes.
This war has flung me far from the circumference of the circle
And has abolished the milky line which descends from your breasts
Towards your waist.

ليس سهلاً في زمان الحرب أن يسترجعَ الانسانُ
وجه امرأةٍ يعشقُها ..
فالحربُ ضدَّ الذاكرَهْ ...
ليس سهلاً في زمان القبح ..
أن أجمعَ أزهارَ المانوليا ..
والفراشاتِ التي تخرجُ ليلاً من شبابيك العيون الماطرَهْ
قَذَفَتْني هذه الحربُ بعيداً عن محيط الدائرَهْ ..
أَلْغَتِ الخطَّ الحليبيَّ الذي ينزل من ثديكِ ..
نحو الخاصرَهْ ..

II

My friend:

I am coming back from the time of non-poetry, barefoot,

Coming back without lips,

Coming back without hands.

The two-year war

Has broken me,

Broken the ear of wheat growing between my lips,

Has put me out of action as a lover,

So that I have not read my psalms to your eyes

Or met a strange sparrow

Or poem.

٢

يا صديقهْ :

عائدٌ من زَمَنِ اللاشِعْر .. عاري القدمينْ

عائدٌ دونَ شفاهٍ ..

عائدٌ دون يدينْ ..

إنَّ حربَ السنتينْ

كَسَرتْني ..

كسرتْ سنبلةَ القمح التي تنبتُ بين الشفتينْ ..

جعلتْني عاطلاً عن عَمَل الحُبّ ...

فلم أقرأْ مزاميري لعينيكِ ..

ولا قابلتُ عصفوراً غريباً ...

أو قصيدَهْ ...

The war has made me lose that childlike purity which admits me to the Kingdom of God

And gives me the keys of rare languages,

So forgive me, if I am a little later than I promised

For it was impossible for me to come

And impossible to correspond.

Thousands of barriers

Stood between your eyes and myself.

أفقدتني ذلكَ الطهرَ الطفوليَّ الذي يُدخلني مملكةَ الله ،
ويعطيني مفاتيحَ اللغات النادرَهْ ..
فاعذريني .. إن تأخرّتُ عن الوعد قليلا ..
فلقد كانَ وصولي مستحيلا ..
وبريدي مستحيلا ..
إنَّ آلافَ الحواجزْ
وقفتْ ما بين عينيكِ .. وبيني ..

They opened fire on dreams and flung them down dead,
They opened fire on love and flung it down dead,
They opened fire on the sea, on the sun, on the crops
On the children's books, they cut Beirut's long hair,
Stole the beautiful life.

أطلقوا النارَ على الحُلْم فأردوه قتيلا ..
أطلقوا النارَ على الحُبّ فأردوه قتيلا ..
أطلقوا النارَ على البحر ، على الشمس ، على الزرع ،
على كُتُب الأطفال ، قصّوا شعرَ بيروتَ الطويلا ..
سرقوا العمرَ الجميلا ...

III

O distant one:

What news do you want of poetry and myself?

They took Beirut from me

They took Beirut, my lady, from you and from me,

They stole the bread baked with wild thyme from our hands,

They stole the Corniche, and the shells,

And the sand which used to cover our bodies.

They stole the time of poetry from us, my pearl

And the writings which fell like red cherries

From my fingers.

٣

يا بعلبكْ :

أيَّ أخبارٍ تُريدينَ عن الشِّعْر وعنّي ؟..

أخذوا بيروتَ منّي ..

أخذوا بيروتَ ، يا سيّدتي ، منكِ ومنيّ ..

سرقوا (مَنْقُوشَةَ الزَعْتَر) من بين يدينْا ..

سرقوا (الكورنيشَ) .. والأصدافَ ..

والرملَ الذي كان يغطّي جسدينْا ..

سرقوا منا زمانَ الشعر ، يا لؤلؤتي ،

والكتاباتِ التي تسقُطُ مثل الكَرَزِ الأحمر

من بين الأصابعْ ..

They stole the aroma of coffee beans,

The dreams of the cafés, and the street lamps.

This voice which comes out of me is not my voice -

I write from within my death.

Where are you now? I never found in this jungle

A breast which embraced me, except yours.

سرقوا رائحةَ البُنّ ..
وأحلامَ المقاهي .. وقناديلَ الشوارعْ
ذلك الصوتُ الذي يصدر عنّي ليس صوتي ..
انني أكتبُ من داخل موتي ..
أينَ أنتِ الآنَ .. يا مَنْ لم أجد في هذه الغابةِ ..
صدراً يحتويني .. غيرَ أنتِ ؟..

They stole from me my windmills, my horsemen, my brushes
My colours, and my little things,
And the rubies which I had brought from the ends of the earth for the princess's dress.
I did not know, my lady,
That my little things
Were my big things.

سرقوا مني طواحيني .. وفُرساني .. وفُرْشَاتي .
وألواني ... وأشيائي الصغيرهْ ..
واليواقيتَ التي جئتُ بها من آخر الدنيا لفستان الأميرَهْ
لم أكنْ أعلم يا سيّدتي ..
أنَّ أشيائي الصغيرَهْ ..
هي أشيائي الكبيرَهْ ..

IV

My Delicate One:

Your phone call, bashful as the scent of orange-blossoms, came to me today

Asking about me .. is there any question more beautiful?

I am alive

But what does it mean, my lady,

For a man to be alive?

If you love me, ask me how my words are;

A thousand shots have entered the body of poetry.

٤

يا رقيقهْ :
جاءني هاتفُكِ اليومَ خجولاً مثل عطر البرتقالْ
سائلاً عني .. وهل أجملُ من هذا السؤالْ ؟..
إنني أحيا ..
ولكنْ ما الذي يعنيه يا سيّدتي
أن يكونَ المرءُ موجوداً على قيد الحياةْ ؟ ..
إنْ تُحِبّيني اسأليني كيفَ حالُ الكلِماتْ
دخلتْ في جَسَد الشعر .. ألوفُ الطَلَقاتْ ..

For two years

We have not blossomed, not produced leaves, not borne fruit

For two years we have not lightened, and not thundered

Not run like two madmen, my lady, in the rain.

For two years

We have not departed from what we are used to in love,

Not gone against the everyday and the usual,

Not entered the regions of strangeness.

نحنُ من عامينِ ..
لم نُزْهِرْ .. ولمَ نورِقْ..ولم نطرحْ ثَمَرْ ..
نحنُ من عامينِ لم نُبْرقْ .. ولم نُرعِدْ ..
ولم نركض كمجنونيْنِ ـ يا سيّدتي ـ تحت المطَرْ ..
نحن من عامينِ ..
لم نخرج عن المألوف في العشقِ ..
ولم نخرج على اليوميِّ والعاديِّ ..
لم ندخُلْ أقاليمَ الغرابَهْ ..

Alas .. how much have I endured from the sickness of despondency.

Alas .. how much have I endured from the death of writing.

They hanged me with the strings of vocabulary,

Drove me out

Beyond the walls of languages

Closed the streets in the face of my love

Searched me.

I was carrying nothing but the rose of poetry,

My grief

And my madness.

آهِ .. كم عانيتُ من داء الكآبَهْ
آهِ .. كم عانيتُ من موت الكتابَهْ
شنقوني بخيوط المفردات
طَرَدُوني ..
خلفَ أسوار اللغاتْ ..
أغلقوا في وجه حُبّي الطُرُقَاتْ ..
فَتَّشوني ..
لم أكنْ أحمل إلا وردةَ الشعر ..
وحزني ..
وجنوني ..

I was carrying nothing but you, my lady, between my eyes

And for this they sent me back.

I was fighting, my lady, in the ranks of love

And for this reason I was not among the victors.

I was, my lady, on the side of poetry, and for this reason

They classified me as a petty bourgeois

And added me to the list of deviationists.

I was not ugly in a time of ugliness

But was only a friend of the jasmine.

لم أكنْ أحملُ ـ إلا أنتِ يا سيّدتي ـ بين عُيوني ..
ولهذا أرجَعوني
كنتُ ، يا سيّدتي ، في موقِع الحبِّ ..
لهذا لم أكنْ في جملة المنتصرينْ ..
كنتُ يا سيّدتي ، في جانب الشِّعرْ .. لهذا ..
صنَّفوني بورجوازياً صغيراً ..
وأضافوني إلى قائمة المنحرفينْ ..
لم أكنْ في زمن القبح قبيحاً ..
إنما كنتُ صديقَ الياسمينْ ...

V

O precious one:

Where are you now, you whose eyes' address I do not know

On any of the maps?

Where are you now, you whose footprints I could not find in any of the hotels?

I no longer know anything about you.

In what country are you?

What are you doing today?

What are you feeling now?

Have you lost faith like me in all the gods,

And the tribes' traditions?

٥

يا أثيرَهْ :

أين أنتِ الآنَ يا مَنْ لم أجد عنوانَ عينيكِ
على كلّ الخرائطْ ..
أينَ أنتِ الآنَ يا مَنْ لم أجد آثارَ أقدامكِ في كلّ الفنادقْ
لم أعدْ أعرف شيئاً عنكِ ..
في أيّ بلادٍ أنتِ ؟
ماذا تفعلينَ اليومَ ؟.
ماذا تشعرين الآنَ ؟.
هل ضيّعتِ إيمانكِ مثلي بجميع الآلهَهْ ..
وتقاليد القبائلْ ؟ .

Do you love as you did,

Care about poetry as you did

And long for passion as you did?

Or has the war trampled down the rose-leaves, and the necks of the ears of corn?

This base war has scattered us,

Made us hideous, deformed us,

Burnt all the old files.

Do not answer me if my questions are strange:

All that occupies my mind, my love,

Is that you yourself should be well, and your eyes should be well.

هل تُحِبّينَ كما كنتِ ؟
وتهتمّينَ بالشِّعْرْ كما كنتِ ؟
وتشتاقينَ للشوق كما كنتِ ؟.
أم انَّ الحربَ داستْ ورقَ الورد.. وأعناقَ السنابلْ؟
بعثَرَتْنا هذه الحربُ اللئيمَهْ ..
بشَّعَتْنا .. شوَّهتْنا ..
أحرقتْ كلَّ الملفّات القديمَهْ ..
لا تُجيبيني .. إذا كانتْ سؤالاتي غريبَهْ ..
كلُّ ما يشغل بالي يا حبيبَهْ ..
أن تكوني أنتِ في خيرٍ .. وعيناكِ بخيرْ ..

VI

Where is Beirut who swaggers with a blue hat like a queen?

Where is Beirut Who used, on our pages,

To dance like a fish?

They have murdered her,

Murdered her

As she meets the light of dawn like a jasmine flower.

Who is the gainer from the murder of a city?

They lost Beirut, my lady,

And lost themselves when they lost her.

She fell, like a magic ring, into the water, and they could not pick her up

They chased her like a spring sparrow until they killed her,

٦

أينَ بيروتُ التي تختالُ بالقُبَّعةِ الزرقاءِ مثلَ المِلِكَهْ ؟
أينَ بيروتُ التي كانتْ على أوراقنا ..
ترقصُ مثلَ السمَكَهْ ..
ذَبَحُوها ..
ذَبَحُوها ..
وهي تستقبلُ ضوءَ الفجر مثل الياسمينَهْ ..
من هو الرابحُ من قتل مدينَهْ ؟

ضيَّعوا بيروتَ ، يا سيِّدتي
ضيَّعوا أنفسَهُمْ إذْ ضيَّعوها ..
سقطت كالخاتَم السحريِّ في الماء .. ولم يلتقطُوها ..
طاردُوها مثلَ عصفورٍ ربيعيٍّ إلى أن قتلوها ...

This rosy-bodied one who wears the sea on her wrist like a bracelet.
How often have we plucked coffee-beans from the trees of her breasts,
Turned the snowy mountains into fire,
Discovered her pavement by pavement,
And built her wall by wall!
How often have we entered her sea-house like small children
Played, danced,
And come out carrying the sun in our hands
And fish, bread and shells!
So why did they kill her,
This woman who used to sprinkle water in the face of the deserts?

هذه الورديَّةُ الجسم التي تلبس في معصمها البحرَ سِوارا
كم قطفنا البُنَّ من أشجار نهديها ..
وحوَّلنا جبالَ الثلج نارا ...
واكتشفناها رصيفاً .. فرصيفا ..
وبنيناها جداراً فجدارا ...
كم دخلنا بيتَها البحريَّ أطفالاً صغارا ..
فلعبنا .. ورقصنا ..
وخرجنا نحمل الشمسَ بأيدينا ..
وأسماكاً .. وخبزاً .. ومَحَارا ...
فلماذا قتلوها ؟
هذه الأنثى التي كانت ترشُّ الماء .. في وجه الصحارىٰ؟

VII

Alas, O Beirut .. my woman among millions of women,
O orange-coloured departure, lying on roses, plum-blossoms and water,
O my ambition - when I write my poems - to bring the sky closer,
What news do you want about love and me
When my writings are ashes
And my feelings are ashes?

٧

آهِ يا بيروتُ .. يا أُنثايَ من بين ملايين النساءْ
يا رحيلاً برتقالياً على وردٍ .. وبرقُوقٍ .. وماءْ ..
يا طموحي ـ عندما أكتب أشعاري ـ لتقريب السماءْ
أيَّ أخبارٍ تريدينَ عن الحُبِّ .. وعنيّ ..
ومكاتيبي رمادٌ ..
وأحاسيسي رمادْ ..

They stole from me areas of blueness which cannot be regained,

Areas of amazement which cannot be regained

Possibilities of birds which will come

Possibilities of speech which will come

Possibilities of love which has not come yet

But will come,

Will come,

Will come!

سرقوا مني مساحاتٍ من الزُرْقةِ ليست تُستعادْ
ومساحاتٍ من الدهشةِ ليست تستعادْ ..
واحتمالاتِ طيورٍ سوف تأتي ..
واحتمالاتِ كلامٍ .. سوف يأتي ..
واحتمالاتِ لعشقٍ ما أتى بعدُ ...
ولكنْ سوفَ يأتي ...
سوفَ يأتي ...
سوفَ يأتي ...

50. BEIRUT YOUR MISTRESS - BEIRUT MY BELOVED

I

Forgive us

If we have left you to die alone

And crept out of the room weeping like fleeing soldiers;

Forgive us

If we have seen your rosy blood pouring out like rivers of carnelian,

Been spectators at an act of adultery,

And have remained silent.

بيروتُ محظيَّتكُمْ
بيروتُ حبيبتي

١

سَامحِينا ..
إنْ تركناكِ تموتينَ وحيدَهْ ..
وتسَلَّلْنا إلى خارج الغرفة نبكي كجنودٍ هاربينْ
سامحينا ..
إن رأينا دَمَكِ الورديَّ ينسابُ كأنهار العقيقْ
وتفرَّجْنا على فِعْلِ الزِنا ..
وبقينا ساكتينْ ...

II

Alas .. how ugly we were, and how cowardly
When we sold you, Beirut, in the slave-market,
Reserved luxurious flats in the Elysée, and in London's Mayfair,
Washed away sadness with wine, sex and gambling halls
And remembered, at the roulette table, news of our country,
Missed the oleander-season in Lebanon,
And the time of pomegranate-blossom,
And wept as women weep.[1]

٢

آهِ .. كم كُنَّا قبيحينَ ، وكُنَّا جُبَنَاءْ ..
عندما بعناكِ ، يا بيروتُ ، في سُوقِ الإماءْ
وحجزنا الشقَقَ الفخمةَ في حيِّ (الإليزيه) وفي
(مايْفير) لندنْ ..
وغسَلنا الحزنَ بالخمرةِ ، والجنْسِ ، وقاعاتِ القِمارْ
وتذكَّرْنا ـ على مائدة الروليتِ ـ أخبارَ الديارْ
وافتقدنا زمنَ الدِفْلى بلبنانْ ..
وعصرَ الجُلَّنارْ ..
وبكَيْنا مثلما تبكي النساءْ ...

---

[1] An echo of the words of the mother of Abū ʿAbd Allah, the last Arab ruler of Granada, "Weep as women weep for a lost kingdom which you were not able to preserve as do men".

III

Alas, O Beirut,

Golden-hearted one,

Forgive us

If we have made you into fuel and firewood

For the disputes which have torn at the Arabs' flesh

Ever since the Arabs have existed.

٣

آهِ .. يا بيروتُ ،
يا صاحبةَ القَلْبِ الذَهَبْ
سامحينا ...
إن جعلناكِ وقُوداً وحَطَبْ
للخلافاتِ التي تنهشُ من لحم العَرَبْ
منذُ أن كانَ العَرَبْ ! !

IV

Reassure me about yourself, O sad-faced one -

How is the sea?

Have they killed it with sniper's bullets like the rest?

How is love?

Has it, too, become a refugee among thousands of refugees?

How is poetry?

Is there any poetry being sung after you, O Beirut?

٤

طمئنيني عنكِ ... يا صاحبةَ الوجه الحزينْ
كيف حالُ البحرِ ؟
هل هُمْ قتلوهُ برصاص القنص مثل الآخرينْ ؟
كيفَ حالُ الحبِّ ؟
هل أصبح أيضاً لاجئاً ... بين ألوف اللاجئينْ ...
كيف حالُ الشِّعْر ؟
هل بَعْدَكِ ـ يا بيروتُ ـ من شِعْرٍ يُغنَّى ؟

This meaningless war has murdered us,

Completely exhausted us of ideas

Scattered us to the ends of the earth,

Rejected .. crushed .. ill .. exhausted,

And made of us - contrary to the prophecies - wandering Jews.

ذَبَحَتْنَا هذه الحربُ التي من غير معنى ..
أفرغَتْنا من معانينا تماماً ..
بَعْثَرَتْنَا في أقاصي الأرضِ ..
منبوذينَ .. مسحوقينَ .. مَرْضَى ... مُتْعَبِينْ ..
جَعَلَتْ مِنَّا ـ خلافاً للنُبُوءاتِ ـ يهوداً تائهينْ ....

V

Forgive us, my lady Beirut -

We did not abandon you by choice, but we were disgusted

By the latrines of politics

And grew tired

Of the circus kings, the circus, and the fraudulence of the players

٥

إصفحي ، سيّدتي بيروتُ ، عنَّا
نحنُ لم نهجركِ مختارينَ .. لكنَّا قرِفْنَا ..
من مراحيض السياسَهْ ..
وَمَلَلْنا ..
من ملوكِ السيركِ ... والسيركِ .. وغِشِّ اللاعبينْ

And lost faith
In the shops which filled all sides of the city
And sold men hatred and loathing,
Blankets, carpets and smuggled petrol.
Alas, my lady, how we are tortured
When we read that the sun in Beirut has become
A ball at the feet of mercenaries.

وكفَرنَا ..
بالدكاكين التي تملأ أرجاء المدينَهْ ..
وتبيعُ الناسَ حقداً وضغينَهْ ..
وبطاطينَ .. وسجّاداً .. وبنزيناً مهرّبْ ..
آهِ يا سيدتي كم نتعذَّبْ ..
عندما نقرأ أن الشمسَ في بيروتَ ، صارتْ
كُرَةً في أرجُل المرتزقينْ ...

VI

What shall we write, my lady?

We are sentenced to death if we speak the truth

And then sentenced to death if we lie.

What shall we write, my lady?

We are not able to protest,

Shout,

Spit,

Reveal our despair

Or hope;

This meaningless war has made us dumb.

٦

ما الذي نَكتُبُ ، يا سيِّدتي ؟
نحنُ محكومونَ بالموتِ ، إذا نحنُ صَدَقْنَا ...
ثمَّ محكومون بالموتِ ، إذا نحنُ كذبْنَا
ما الذي نكتُبُ يا سيِّدتي ؟
نحنُ لا نملكُ أن نحتجَّ ..
أو نصرخَ ..
أو نبصقَ ..
أو نكشفَ عن خَيْبَتِنا ..
أو نتمنّى ...
أخرَسَتْنا هذه الحربُ التي من غير معنى ...

VII

They demanded that we enter the school of killing,

But we refused.

They demanded that we cut the Lord in half,

But we were ashamed to.

We believe in God -

Why did they make God meaningless here?

They demanded that we testify against love,

But we did not testify.

They demanded that we revile Beirut, which fed us

On wheat, love, and compassion;

٧

طَلَبوا منَّا بأن ندخلَ في مدرسة القتلِ ..
ولكنّا رفضنا ..
طلبوا أن نشطُرَ الربَّ لنصفينِ ..
ولكنَّا اختجلنا ..
إننا نُؤمنُ باللهِ ..
لماذا جعلوا اللهَ هُنا .. من غير معنى ؟
طلبوا منَّا بأن نشهَدَ ضَدَّ الحبِّ ..
لكنْ ما شَهِدنا ..
طلبوا منَّا .. بأن نشتُمَ بيروتَ التي قمحاً .. وحبّاً ..
وحناناً ... أطعَمَتْنا ...

They demanded

That we cut off the breast from whose bounty we were suckled

And we excused ourselves,

Stood against all the killers

Stayed with Lebanon, plains and mountains,

Stayed with Lebanon, North and South,

Stayed with Lebanon, cross and crescent,

Stayed with Lebanon, the springs,

Lebanon the bunches of grapes,

Lebanon the ardent love,

Stayed with Lebanon which taught us poetry

And gave us writing.

طلبوا ..
أن نقطعَ الثديَ الذي من خيرِهِ ، نحنُ رَضِعْنا
فاعتذرنا ..
ووقفنا ضدَّ كلِّ القاتلينْ
وبقينا مع لبنانَ سهولاً .. وجبالا ..
وبقينا مع لبنانَ جنوباً .. وشِمالا ..
وبقينا مع لبنانَ صليباً .. وهلالا ..
وبقينا مع لبنانَ الينابيعِ ..
ولبنانَ العناقيدِ ..
ولبنانَ الصَبَابَهْ ..
وبقينا مع لبنانَ الذي علَّمنا الشِعرَ ..
وأهدانا الكتابَهْ

VIII

Alas, my lady Beirut,

If peace were to come

And we were to return, like sparrows dead from exile and cold

To look for our nests among the ruins,

To look for the fifty thousand

Who were killed meaninglessly,

To look for our family and friends

Who went meaninglessly,

And houses, fields, swings, children,

Toys, pens, and drawing books

Which were burnt meaninglessly ...

اهِ يا سيدتي بيروت ..
لو جاء السلامْ ..
ورجعنا ، كالعصافير التي ماتَتْ من الغُرْبَة والبَرْدِ ..
لكي نبحثَ عن أعشاشِنا بين الحُطَامْ ..
ولكيْ نبحث عن خمسينَ ألفاً ..
قُتلوا من غير معنى ...
ولكي نبحثَ عن أهلٍ وأحبابٍ لنا
ذَهَبوا من غير معنى ..
وبيوتٍ .. وحقولٍ .. وأراجيحَ .. وأطفالٍ ..
وألعابٍ .. وأقلامٍ .. وكرَّاساتِ رَسْمٍ ..
أُحرِقَتْ من غير معنى ...

Alas, my lady Beirut,

If peace were to come

And we were to return

Like seabirds, killed by passion and longing,

And we had a passion for bread baked with wild thyme, night,

And those who used to sell strings of jasmine,

It is possible, Beirut, that you would not know us.

You have changed greatly

And we have changed greatly

And have aged, in two years, by thousands of years.

آهِ ... يا سيّدتي بيروتُ ..
لو جاء السلامْ
ورجعنا ..
كطيور البحر ، مذبوحينَ شوقاً وحنينا
وبنا شوقٌ إلى (منقوشة الزعتر) .. والليل ..
ومَنْ كانوا يبيعون عقودَ الياسمينْ
فمن الجائز ، يا بيروتُ ، أن لا تعرفينا ..
قد تغيَّرتِ كثيرا ...
وتغيّرنا كثيرا ...
وكبرنا نحنُ ـ في عامينِ ـ آلافَ السنينْ

IX

We have endured our banishment for twenty months,

Swallowed our tears for twenty months,

Searched for a new love in the corners of the earth

But we have not loved.

We have drunk wine from all the vines

But we have not become drunk.

We have searched for a substitute for you,

O greatest Beirut,

O best Beirut,

O purest Beirut,

But we have not found one.

إحتملنا نَفيَنا عشرينَ شهرا ..
وشربنا دمعنا عشرين شهرا ..
وبحثنا في زوايا الأرض عن عشقٍ جديدٍ
غير أنَّا ما عشقنا ..
وشربنا الخمرَ من كلّ الدوالي ..
غير أنَّا ما سكِرنا ..
وبحثنا عن بديلٍ لكِ ،
يا أعظمَ بيروتَ ..
ويا أطيبَ بيروتَ ..
ويا أطهرَ بيروت ...
ولكنْ ما وجدنا ...

And we have returned,

Kissing the land whose stones write poetry,

Whose trees write poetry,

Whose walls write poetry,

And taken you to our breast,

Fields, sparrows, Corniche and sea

And we shouted like madmen on the ship's deck:

"You are Beirut

And there is no other Beirut!"

ورجعنا ..
نلثُمُ الأرضَ التي أحجارُها تكتُبُ شِعْرا ..
والتي أشجارُها تكتُبُ شعرا ..
والتي حيطانها تكتُبُ شعرا ...
وأخذناكِ إلى الصدرِ ..
حقولاً .. وعصافيرَ .. وكورنيشاً .. وبحرا ..
وصرخنا كالمجانين على سطح السفينَهْ :
أنتِ بيروتُ ...
ولا بيروتَ أُخرى ...

51. TO THE WOMAN BEIRUT. WITH AN APOLOGY

Lebanon was a fan for you

Scattering colours, and cool shade.

How often did you flee there from your deserts

Seeking water, and a beautiful face,

Wash yourselves in the dew of its forests,

Hide long beneath its eyelids,

إلى بيروت الأنثى مع الإعتذار

كانَ لبنانُ لكمْ مروحةً ...
تنشُرُ الألوانَ ، والظلَّ الظليلا

كم هربتُمْ من صحاراكمْ إليهِ ..
تطلبونَ الماء .. والوجهَ الجميلا ..

واغتسلتُمْ بندى غاباتهِ
واختبأتمْ تحت جَفْنَيْهِ طويلا

Climb its trees,

Wander in its wildernesses like mountain goats,

Drink wine from its casks

Hear the cooing of doves from its singers,

Pluck lavender from its hills

And green eyes, and a smooth cheek,

Obtain its sun as a pearl,

And ride the stars of night as horses?

وتسلّقتُـــمْ عـلى أشجـــــاره
وسرحتُـمْ في بـراريـه وعُـولا

وشربتُـمْ من خوابيـــه نبيـــذاً
وسمعتُـــمْ من شواديـــه هديـلا

وقطفتُمْ من روابيـــه الخُـــزَامَى
والعيونَ الخُضْرَ .. والخدَّ الأسيلا ..

واقتنيتُـــمْ شمسَـــهُ لـؤلـــؤةً
وركبتُـمْ أنجمَ الليل خيـــولا ..

It taught you to love

Lebanon was not niggardly with love.

It taught you to read

Do you say to it "Thank you very much"?

Alas, old lovers of Beirut,

Have you found a substitute after Beirut?

Beirut is the woman who

Grants fertility, and gives us the seasons.

إنه علَّمكُـــمْ أن تعشقـــــوا ..
لم يكن لبنانُ في العشـق بخيــلا ..

إنَّهُ عَلَّمكُـمْ أن تقـــــرأوا ...
هل تقولــونَ لهُ : « شُكْراً جزِيلاً » ..

*

آهِ يا عشَّاقَ بيروتَ القُــدامَـــى
هل وجدتمْ بعد بيروتَ البديلا ؟

إن بــيروتَ هي الأنثى التي ...
تمنحُ الخصْبَ ، وتُعطينا الفُصُولا ..

If Lebanon dies, you will die with it -

Everybody who kills it is killed.

Everything ugly in it is ugly in you

So bring it back, beautiful as it was.

A universe in which Lebanon is not

Will remain non-existent, or impossible.

All that Lebanon demands from you

Is that you love it .. love it a little.

إن يمُـتْ لبنانُ .. متُّـمْ معـهُ
كلُّ من يقتُلُـه .. كانَ القتيـلا ..

كلُّ قُبْحٍ فيـهِ ، قُبْـحٌ فيكُمُ
فأعيدوهُ .. كما كـانَ جميلا ..

إنَّ كوناً ليس لبنـانُ بـه
سوف يبقى عَدَماً أو مستحيلا ..

كلُّ مـا يطلُبُـه لبنـانُ منكـمْ
أن تُحِبُّـوهُ .. تُحِبُّـوه قليـلا ...

52. BEIRUT BURNS - AND I LOVE YOU

I

When Beirut was burning

And the firemen were spraying her red gown with water

And trying to rescue the imprisoned sparrows

On the tiles of her rosy houses

I was running barefoot in the streets

On the blazing embers, and the collapsing pillars,

And the pieces of broken glass scattered everywhere,

Searching for your face, besieged like a dove

Among the tongues of flame.

بـيروت تحـــترق .. وأحبُّكِ ..

١

عندما كانتْ بيروتُ تحترقْ ..
وكان رجالُ الإطفاء يرشّونَ ثوبَها الأحمرَ بالماءْ
ويحاولون إنقاذَ العصافير المحبوسة ..
في قرميد بيوتها الورديَّهْ ..
كنتُ أركضُ في الشوارع حافياً
على الجمر المشتعل ، والأعمدة المتساقطة
ونثاراتِ الزجاج المكسورْ
باحثاً عن وجهكِ المحَاصَرِ كحمامَةٍ ..
بين ألسنة اللهيبْ ..

I wanted to rescue, at any price,

The second Beirut,

The Beirut which belongs to you, and to me,

The Beirut which conceived us both at the same time,

Suckled us from one breast

And sent us to the school of the sea

Where we learned from the little fishes

Our first lessons in travel

And our first lessons in love.

كنتُ أريدُ أن أُنقذ بأيِّ ثمنْ
بيروتَ الثانيهْ ...
بيروتَ التي تخصُّكِ .. وتخصُّني ..
بيروتَ التي حبِلتْ بنا في وقتٍ واحدْ ..
وأَرضَعَتْنا من ثديٍ واحدْ ...
وأرسَلَتْنا إلى مدرسة البحرْ
حيث تعلّمنا من الأسماكِ الصغيرهْ
أوّلَ دروس السَفَرْ ..
وأوّلَ دروس الحُبّ ..

Beirut,

Which we carried with us in our schoolbags

And put in our loaves of bread,

Our sesame halva

And our corn-cobs,

And which we used to call

In the hours of our great love,

Your Beirut

And my Beirut.

بيروتَ ..
التي كنَّا نحملُها معنا في حقائبنا المدرسيَّهْ
ونضعُها في أرغفة الخبزْ ..
وحلاوةِ السمسمْ ..
وأكواز الذُرَة ..
والتي كنا نُسمّيها ..
في ساعاتِ عشقِنا الكبيرْ
(بيروتَكِ) ..
و (بيروتي) ...

II

When our country was fleeing from our country
And the children slept on top of their toys
In the Beirut International Airport
While their fathers weighed their cases, full of tears
And were compelled to pay a surcharge
For every additional kilo of tears
And for every additional kilo of sorrow,
When our country put its hands to its face
And wept

٢

عندما كانَ الوطنُ يهربُ من الوطنْ ..
وكانَ الأطفالُ ينامون فوق ألعابهمْ
في مطار بيروتَ الدوليّ ..
بينما آباؤهم يزنونَ الحقائبَ الملأى بالدموعْ
ويضطرّون إلى دفع أجرة ..
عن كل كيلو زائد من الدمعْ ..
وعن كل كيلو زائد من الحزن ..
عندما كان الوطنْ يضع يديه على وجههِ ..
ويبكي ...

And the autumn clouds

Coming from the Greek islands

Were afraid to approach the shores of Lebanon

For fear that they would be hit by a sniper's bullets,

When the street lamps

Trembled with fear

And the pavement cafés

Folded up their sunshades and left,

And the seabirds carried their young on their shoulders

And departed ...

وكانت الغيومُ الخريفيّةُ ..
القادمةُ من جُزُر اليونانْ
تخافُ أن تقترب من سواحل لبنانْ
مخافةَ أن تصابَ برصاص قنّاصْ ..
عندما كانت مصابيحُ الطرقاتْ
ترتعشُ من الخوفْ ..
ومقاهي الرصيفْ ..
تطوي مظلاّتِها وتهاجرْ ..
وطيورُ البحر ، تحمل أولادَها على أكتافها
وترحلْ ..

When our country strangled our country
I was a few metres away from the crime,
Observing the killers
As they lay with Beirut like a girl
And took turns with her
One
By one
In accordance with tribal protocol,
Family prerogative,
And military rank ...

عندما كان الوطنُ يشنق الوطنْ
كنتُ على مسافة أمتارٍ من الجريمَهْ
أراقبُ القَتَلهْ ..
وهم يضاجعونَ بيروتَ كجاريَهْ ...
ويتناوبون عليها ..
واحداً ..
واحداً ..
وفقاً لبروتوكولات القبيلَهْ
والامتيازات العائليَّهْ ..
والرُتَبِ العسكريَّهْ ..

I was not the only witness who saw thousands of knives

Flashing in the sun

And saw thousands of masked men

Dancing to the tom-tom

Around the body of a burning woman

But I was the only poet

Who realised

Why the sea of Beirut had changed its name

From the White Mediterranean Sea

To the Red Mediterranean Sea.[1]

لم أكُنِ الشاهدَ الوحيد الذي رأى ألوفَ السكاكينْ
وهي تلتمعُ تحت الشمسْ ..
ورأى ألوفَ المقنَّعينْ
وهم يرقصونَ رقصة (التامْ ـ تامْ)
حول جسد امرأةٍ تحترقْ ..
ولكنني كنتُ الشاعرَ الوحيدْ
الذي أدرك ...
لماذا غيَّر بحرَ بيروت اسمَهْ ..
من البحر الأبيض المتوسّط ..
إلى (البحر الأحمر المتوسّط) ! !.

[1] In Arabic, the Mediterranean is known as the "White Sea".

III

When Beirut was burning

And everybody

Was thinking about rescuing what was left of his personal wealth

I remembered, suddenly,

That you were still my beloved

And that you were my greatest wealth, which I had not declared,

And that I was compelled

- Even though that were to cost me my life -

To rescue our common inheritance

And our emotional possessions ...

٣

عندما كانت بيروت تحترق ..
وكان كلٌّ واحدْ ..
يفكّر في إنقاذ ما تبقّى له من ثروة شخصيَّهْ
تذكّرتُ ـ فجأةً ـ
أنكِ لا تزالينَ حبيبتي ...
وأنكِ ثروتي الكبرى التي لم أصرِّحْ عنها ...
وأنني مضطرٌّ ..
ـ ولو كلفني ذلك حياتي ـ
لإنقاذ تراثنا المشتركْ ..
وممتلكاتِنا العاطفيَّهْ ..

In this wondrous capital

Which was, once,

The magic box in which we hid

All our little treasures,

My secret drawings, and yours,

Which no-one had seen,

Pencil drafts

Of poems which I had written to you

And which no-one was aware of ...

في هذه العاصمة الرائعَهْ ..
التي كانتْ ذاتَ يومْ ..
الصندوقَ السحريَّ الذي خبَّئنا فيه ..
كلَّ مدخّراتنا الصغيرَهْ ..
من رسومٍ سِرّيةٍ لي .. ولكِ ..
لم يرَها أحَدْ ..
وتخطيطاتٍ بالقلم الرصاصْ
لقصائدَ كتبتُها لكِ ..
ولم يطلّعْ عليها أَحَدْ ...

Books

Pictures

Records

Ceramic plates

Postcards

Keyrings

On which was written in all the languages of the world

"I love you",

وكُتُبٍ ..
ولوحاتٍ ..
وأسطواناتٍ ..
وصحونِ سيراميكْ ..
وبطاقاتٍ بريديّهْ ..
وعَلاَّقاتِ مفاتيحْ ..
مكتوب عليها بكلِّ لُغاتِ العالم كلمة :
(أُحبّكِ) ...

Dolls dressed in national costume which you brought back with you .. souvenirs of

a lover

From Greece, the Balkans,

Morocco, Florence

Singapore, Thailand

Shiraz, Nineveh

And Soviet Uzbekistan

وعرائسَ فولكلورية حملتِها معكِ .. تذكاراتِ محبَّهْ

من اليونان ، والبلقانْ ..

ومرّاكش ، وفلورنسه ..

وسانغافورة ، وتايلاند ..

وشيراز ، ونَيْنَوى

وأزبكستان السوفييتيةْ ...

A shawl of red silk

Which I gave to you when I came back from Spain -

Whenever you put it on your shoulders

I understood

Why Ṭariq b. Ziyād fought

To enter Spain

And why I fought

And still fight

That my ships may be allowed

To enter the territorial waters of your eyes.

وشالٍ من الحرير الأحمرْ ..
أهديتُهُ إليكِ ، يومَ عدتُ من إسبانيا ..
وكنتُ كلّما وضعتِهِ على كَتِفيكِ ..
فهمتُ ..
لماذا قاتَلَ طارقُ بنُ زيادْ
من أجل دخول الأندلسْ ..
ولماذا قاتلتُ أنا ..
ولا أزال أقاتلْ ..
حتى يُسمَحَ لسُفُني
بدخول مياه عينيكِ الأقليميّهْ ...

IV

When Beirut
Was falling apart like a Byzantine candle-stick
Inlaid with gold and platinum,
When the masses were expressing their sorrow
In a single way
And weeping in a single way

٤

عندما كانت بيروتْ ..
تتساقطُ كشمعدانٍ بيزنطيّ ..
مُطَعَّمٍ بالذهبِ والبلاتينْ ..
وعندما كانت الجموعُ تعبّر عن حزنِها ..
بشكلٍ واحدْ ..
وتبكي بشكلٍ واحدْ

I was searching for my private sorrow

For a woman like no other,

A city like no other,

And poems like no others

On everything which men have written about love for women.

كنتُ أفتّشُ عن حزني الخصوصيّ
وعن امرأةٍ لا شبيهَ لها ..
ومدينةٍ لا شبيهَ لها ..
وقصائدَ لا شبيهَ لها ..
في كلّ ما كتبه الرجالُ في حُبّ النساء ..

When the women

Were estimating the tragedy in numbers of metres of burning material

In the value of cases, overcoats, necklaces

Which they were dreaming of acquiring,

When the men were estimating their losses

In whatever funds they had left in the banks,

عندما كانت النساءْ ..
يقسنَ المأساة بعدد أمتار القماشِ المحترقْ ..
وبقيمة الحقائب ، والمعاطف ، والعقودِ ..
التي كنَّ يحلمنَ باقتنائها ..
وعندما كان الرجال يقيسونَ خسارَتَهُمْ
بما بقيَ لهم من أرصدةٍ في المصارفْ ..

I was sitting on a stone, round as a teardrop,

Estimating my losses

In numbers of cups of coffee which we could have drunk

And numbers of questions which my hands

Could have asked of your hands

If Beirut had not burned ...

كنتُ أنا جالساً على حجرٍ دائريٍّ كدمعَهْ ..
أقيسُ خسارتي ..
بعددِ فناجين القهوة التي كان يمكن أن نحتسيها..
وعددِ الأسئلة التي كان يمكن أن تطرحَها
يدايَ على يديكِ ..
لو لم تحترقْ بيروتْ ..

I was estimating my losses

In thousands of words which we could have spoken

Dozens of ships and trains

On which we could have travelled

And hundreds of dreams which we could have realised

If Beirut had not burned ...

كنتُ أقيس خسارتي ،
بألوف الكلمات التي كان يمكن أن نقولَها ..
وعشراتِ السُفُن والقطارات ..
التي كان يمكن أن نسافرَ عليها ..
ومئاتِ الأحلام التي كان يمكن أن نحقّقها ..
لو لم تحترق بيروتْ ..

I was estimating my losses

In the amount of rain which could have fallen upon us

And which we could have defied

With two bodies crammed together in one overcoat

With a head inclining to a head

And an arm travelling round a waist

If Beirut had not burned ...

كنت أقيسُ خسارتي ..
بكميَّة المطر التي كان يمكن أن يسقُطَ علينا ..
فنجابَهُ ..
بجَسَدَيْنِ محشورَيْن في معطفٍ واحدْ ..
وبرأسٍ مائلةٍ على رأسْ ..
وذراعٍ مسافرةٍ حول خاصرَهْ ..
لو لم تحترقْ بيروتْ ...

V

When Beirut was sinking

Like a ship wounded in her waist

And the passengers

Were flinging themselves into the sea

And hanging onto the first piece of wood they came across,

I was searching in the corridors of my inner mind

For you

And ascending and descending the spiral staircases

In search of your royal quarters ...

٥

عندما كانت بيروتُ تغرقْ ..
كسفينةٍ مطعونةٍ في خاصرتها ..
وكان المسافرون ..
يرمونَ بأنفسهم في البحرْ ..
ويتعلّقون بأوّل خشبةٍ يصادفونَها
كنتُ أبحثُ في دهاليز عقلي الباطن ..
عنكِ ..
وأصعد .. وأهبط .. السلالم الحلزونيّة
بحثاً عن مقصورتكِ الملكيَّهْ ...

I did not care

Whether you were asleep or awake,

I did not care

Whether you were naked or half-naked,

I did not care whether I knew

Who was sharing the room with you

Or who was sharing the bed with you -

All these things are marginal matters

But the main thing,

And this is my discovery,

Is that I still love you,

لم يكن يهمّني ..
أن تكوني نائمةً .. أو صاحيَهْ ..
لم يكنْ يهمّني ..
أن تكوني عاريةً .. أو نصفَ عاريَهْ ..
لم يكن يهمّني أن أعرفَ ..
من يشاركك الغرفة ..
أو من يشاركك الفراشْ ..
هذه كلّها أشياءٌ هامشيَّهْ
أما القضية الكبرى ..
فهي اكتشافي ..
أنني لا أزال أحبُّكِ ..

And that you still float like a lotus blossom

On the waters of my memory

And grow between my fingers

As fresh vegetation grows

Among the stones of a historical church;

I did not care whom you love now

And what you were thinking about ...

وأنكِ لا تزالين تعُومين كزهرة لوتُسْ

على مياه ذاكرتي ..

وتنبتينَ بين أصابعي ،

كما ينبت العُشب الطازج ..

بين حجارة كنيسةٍ تاريخية ..

لم يكن يهمّني من تحبّينَ الآن ..

و بماذا تفكّرينْ ..

These are things we can talk about later;
The fateful thing now
Is that I love you
And consider myself responsible for the protection of the two most beautiful
violets
In the world
You .. and Beirut.

فهذه أمور نتكلّمُ عنها فيما بعد ..
فالقضية المصيرية الآن ..
هي أنني أحبّك ..
وأعتبر نفسي مسؤولاً عن حماية أجمل بَنَفْسَجَتَيْنِ
في العالم ..
أنتِ .. وبيروت ..

VI

Do not find fault with me

If I burst through the door of your room without a prior appointment.

Put any rag you come across on your body

And do not ask me why.

Beirut is burning outside,

Our Beirut is burning outside

And I - in spite of all your past follies and misbehaviour -

Still love you

٦

لا تُؤاخذيني ..
إذا اقتحمتُ بابَ غرفتك دون موعدٍ سابقْ
ضعي أية خرقةٍ تصادفينها على جسدِكْ ..
ولا تسأليني لماذا ؟
إنّ بيروتَ تحترق في الخارج ..
إنّ (بيروتَنا) تحترق في الخارج ..
وأنا ـ رغم كلّ حماقاتك وكلّ إساءاتك الماضيّهْ ـ
لا أزالُ أحبّكِ ..

And here I have come

To carry you on my shoulder like a little cat

And take you out

From the ship of fire, death and madness,

For I am against the burning of beautiful cats

And beautiful eyes

And beautiful cities.

وهاأنذا قد جئتُ ..
لكي أحملكِ كقِطّةٍ صغيرةٍ على كَتِفي ..
وأخرجَ بكِ ..
من سفينة النار ، والموت ، والجنونْ ..
فأنا ضدَّ احتراق القِطَطِ الجميلَهْ ..
والعُيُون الجميلَهْ ..
والمُدُن الجميلَهْ ..

53. I AM TIRED, MY FRIEND, OF BEING AN ARAB'

I

O Green Tunis² .. I have come to you as a lover,

With a rose and a book on my brow.

I am the Damascene who pursues the profession of love

On account of whose singing the vegetation becomes green.

I have burned all my boats behind me -

Love means that there is no going back.

I have been broken to pieces on the eyelids of women

And my life consists of waves and pieces of wood.

أنـا ياصديقـةُ ..
مُتْعَبٌ بعـروبَـتي

يا تُـونُسُ الخضراءُ .. جئتُكِ عاشقاً
وعـلى جبينـي وردةٌ وكـتـــابُ

إنّـي الدمشـقيُّ الـذي احترفَ الهوىٰ
فاخْضَـوْضَـرَتْ لغنائـهِ الأعشـــابُ

أحْرَقْـتُ من خلفي جميـعَ مراكبي
إنَّ الهـوى أنْ لا يكـونَ إيـــابُ

أنا فـوقَ أجفـان النســاءِ مُكـسَّـرٌ
قِطَعـاً ، فعُـمْري الموجُ والأخشـابُ

---

[1]Delivered at the festival organised by the Secretariat-General of the Arab League, Tunis, on 22.3.1980 to mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the League

[2]The traditional appellation of Tunis in Arabic.

I have not forgotten the names of women

Beauty has reasons, and I have reasons.

O inhabitants of the sea .. in Carthage

The fragrance has dried up, and the friends have parted company.

Where are those women to love whom is an act of worship

And whose absence and closeness is torture?

Who wear my poems and my tears,

Whom I reproach, though reproach is useless,

Whom I love, though they do not love me,

To whom I am faithful, though their promise is deceitful.

لم أَنْسَ أسماءَ النساء .. وإنّما
للحُسْن أسبابٌ ، ولي أسبابُ

يا ساكناتِ البحر .. في قَرْطَاجَةٍ
جَفَّ الشذا ، وتفرّق الأصحابُ

أينَ اللواتي حُبُّهُنَّ عبادةٌ
وغيابُهُنَّ ، وقُرْبُهنَّ ، عَذَابُ

اللابساتُ قصائدي ومَدَامعي
عاتبتُهُنَّ فما أفادَ عِتابُ

أحْبَبْتُهُنَّ ، وهُنَّ ما أحْبَبْنَني
وصَدَقْتُهُنَّ ، ووعْدُهُنَّ كِذَابُ

I feel giddy .. some women

Trust me .. and some are suspicious of me.

Has the state of love, which I founded

Fallen upon me, and have the doors been barred?

The glasses weep, and, after the mouth of my beloved has been lost,

The grapes have sworn that they will not become drunk.

Does the bosom which I have grown tired of depicting reject me,

And do the earrings and the clothes betray me?

What has happened to my kingdoms and my banners?

I call to Rabāb[1], but Rabāb does not answer.

إنيّ لأشعُرُ بالدُوار .. فناهدٌ
لي يطمئنُّ .. وناهدٌ يرتابُ

هل دولةُ الحبِّ التي أسَّسْتُها
سَقَطتْ عليَّ .. وسُدَّتِ الأبوابُ

تبكي الكؤوسُ ، فبعد ثغر حبيبتي
حَلَفَتْ بأن لا تَسْكرَ الأعنابُ

أيصدُّني نَهْدٌ تعبتُ برسمِهِ؟
وتخُونُني الأقراطُ والأثوابُ؟

ماذا جرى لممالكي وبيارقي؟
أدعو ربابَ .. فلا تُجيبُ رَبَابُ

---

[1]A woman's name, used conventionally to denote the beloved.

Shall I hold a woman to account for forgetting me?

When did holding to account have any effect with women?

I have not repented of my love, or asked forgiveness for it

How foolish would lovers be if they repented.

II

A Damascene moon travels in my blood

And nightingales, ears of wheat, and domes.

The whiteness of the Arabian jasmine begins from Damascus

And perfumes are perfumed by its fragrance.

Water begins from Damascus .. for wherever

You rest your head, streams flow.

أأُحاسبُ امرأةً على نسيانِها
ومتى استقامَ مع النساء حِسَابُ؟
ما تُبْتُ عن عِشْقي .. ولا استغفرتُهُ
ما أسْخَفَ العُشَّاقَ لو هُمْ تابُوا...

٢

قَمَرٌ دمشقيٌّ يسافرُ في دمي
وبلابلٌ .. وسنابلٌ.. وقِبَابُ
الفُلُّ يبدأ من دمشقَ بياضَهُ
وبعطرها تتطيَّبُ الأطيابْ

والماءُ يبدأ من دمشقَ .. فحيثُما
أسندتَ رأسَكَ ، جدولٌ ينسابْ

Poetry is a sparrow which stretches its wing

Above Damascus .. and a wandering poet.

Love begins from Damascus .. for our people

Worship beauty, melt it and melt in it.

Horses begin their journey from Damascus

And press their spurs for the great conquest

Time begins from Damascus .. there

Languages survive, and pedigrees are preserved.

Damascus gives the Arab identity its form,

And in its land the epochs take shape.

والشِعْـرُ عصفورٌ يمـــدُّ جـنـاحَـــهُ
فـوق الشـــآم .. وشـاعـرٌ جـوَّابُ

والحبُّ يبدأ من دمشقَ .. فـأهلُنا
عبدوا الجمـالَ ، وذوَّبُـوهُ .. وذابُوا ..

والخيلُ تبـدأ من دمشـقَ مســـارَها
وتُشَـدُّ للفتـح الكبـير رِكَـــــابُ

والدهـرُ يبـدأ من دمشـقَ .. وعنـدها
نبقـى اللغـاتْ ، وتُـحفَـظُ الأنســابُ

ودمشـقْ تعطـي للعـروبـة شكلَهـا
وبأرضِهـــا : تتشكَّـــلُ الأحـقـــابُ

III

The wedding-party has begun, so who will be my hostess

This evening, and who will be the godfather?

Am I a palace singer .. O Carthage,

How are the audience .. I am not dressed

What shall I say? My mouth searches for my mouth

And the words are stones and dust.

Arab banquets .. poems

Rhyming in hamza, cushions and bubbles in wine;

The glass does not make us forget the extent of our sorrow

For a day, and not everything that we drink is wine.

٣

بـــدأ الزِفـافُ ، فمـن تكونُ مُضيفتي
هذا المســاء ، ومنْ هـو العَـــرَّابُ ؟

أأنـا مُغنّـي القصر .. يا قـرطَاجَةٌ
كيـفَ الحضـورُ ؟ ومـــا عليَّ ثيابُ

ماذا أقـولُ ؟ فمـــي يفتِّـشُ عـن فمي
والمُفْرَداتُ حجـارةٌ وتُـــــرابُ ..

فمـآدبٌ عـربيـــةٌ .. وقصـائدٌ
همـزيَّـــةٌ .. ووســائـــدٌ وحُبَابُ

لا الكأسُ تُنسينـا مسـاحـةَ حـزنـنـا
يومـــاً .. ولا كـــلُّ الشـــرابِ شَـرَابُ

From where does poetry come, Carthage,

When God has died and the idols have returned?

From where does poetry come, when our daytime

Is repression, and our evening is terrorism?

They have stolen our fingers, and the perfume of our letters

So with what will the writers write

When the régime is a policeman who follows behind us

In secret, until the aroma of our bread is interrogation?

Poetry, despite their whips and their prisons,

Is a king, and they are chamberlains at its doors.

من أين يـأتي الشعـرُ يا قَـرْطاجَـــةٌ
واللهُ مـــاتَ .. وعـــادتِ الأنْصَـــابُ

من أينَ يأتـي الشِعْرُ ؟. حيـن نهارُنـا
قَـمْـعٌ ، وحيـنَ مسـاؤنـا إرهـــابُ

سَـرَقـوا أصـابعَنـا .. وعِطْـرَ حُرُوفنا
فبـأيِّ شـيءٍ يكتُـبُ الكُـــتَّـابُ ؟

والحُكْـمُ شُـرْطـيٌّ يسـيـرُ وراءنـا
سِـرّاً .. فَنَكْـهَـةُ خُـبْـزِنـا استجوابُ

الشِعْـرُ .. رغْـمَ سِياطِـهِـمْ وسُجُونِهِمْ
مَلِـكٌ .. وهُـمْ في بـابـهِ حُجَّابُ ..

IV

From where shall I enter my poem, I wonder,
When the gardens of beautiful poetry are in ruins?
Not a nightingale is left in the abode of nightingales
Nor is al-Buḥturī[1] here, or Ziryāb;[2]
The poets of this day are a third sex;
Speech is anarchy, and utterance is fog.
They speak in a vacuum, yet they are not
Persians when they give utterance, nor Arabs.
They pant on the margins of our life,
But it is all the same whether they are present or absent.

٤

من أينَ أدخُـلُ في القصيـدة يا تُرىٰ؟
وحدائقُ الشعرِ الجميـلِ .. خـرابُ
لم يبـقَ في دار البـلابـل بُلْبُلٌ
لا البحـتريُّ هُـنـا .. ولا زِرْيَـابُ
شُعَرَاءُ هـذا اليوم ، جِنْـسٌ ثـالثٌ
فالقـولُ فوضـى .. والكـلامُ ضَبَابُ
يتكلَّمـونَ مـع الفـراغ .. فمـا هُـمُ
عَـجَـمٌ إذا نَـطَـقُوا .. ولا أعْـرابُ
الـلاهثـونَ عـلى هـوامش عُـمْـرِنا
سِيَّان إن حَضَرُوا ، وإنْ هُـمْ غـابُوا ..

[1] Al-Buḥturī (821 - 897) was one of the outstanding poets of the 9th century, and was particularly prominent in the reign of al-Mutawakkil. He was a protegée of Abū Tammām, and like him of Syrian origin.
[2] Ziryāb (d. c. 845) was the most famous musician of Islamic Spain. He was a pupil of Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī. He had a prodigious memory, and is said to have memorised over a thousand melodies.

They make fun of old wine

But are nothing but flies on the surface of the wine.

Wine remains wine, even though it be old,

But the glasses may change.

V

From where shall I enter my poem, I wonder,

When the sun is a cellar over our heads?

My poem is not what my hands write,

But it is what my eyelasheswrite.

The fire of writing has burnt up our lives

And our life is matches and firewood.

يتهكَّمُـونَ عـلى النبيـذ مُعَتَّقـــاً
وهُـمُ عـلى سطـح النبيـذ ذُبَـابُ
الخمـرُ تبقـى ، إنْ تقـادَمَ عَـهْـدُ ها
خمـراً .. وقـد تتغيَّـرُ الأكـــوابُ

٥

من أيـن أدخُـلُ في القصيـدة يا تُرى ؟
والشمسُ فـوق رؤوسنـــا سِـرْدابُ
إنَّ القصيـدة ليـسَ ما كتبـتْ يـدي
لكنَّـهـا ما تكتُـبُ الأهـــــــدابُ ..

نارُ الكتابـة أحـرقـتْ أعمـــارَنـــا
فـحيـاتُـنـــا الكبريـــتُ والأحطـابُ

What is poetry? What is the pain of writing? What are visions?

The first of our victims are the writers.

They give us beautiful joy, and their lot

Is the lot of harlots .. they have no reward.

O Tunis the Green, this is a world

In which the illiterate and the swindler grow rich,

And from the Gulf to the Ocean there are tribes

Who are arrogant, and without thought or culture

In the age of oil, a poet searches for

A garment, and whores strut along in silk.

ما الشِعْرُ ؟ ما وَجَعُ الكَتَابةِ ؟ ما الرؤىٰ ؟
أُولى ضحايانا هُمُ الكُتَّـــابُ

يُعْطُونَنَـا الفَرَحَ الجميلَ .. وحظُّهُمْ
حظُّ البغايـا .. ما لهُـنَّ ثَـوابُ

يا تـونُـسُ الخضـــراءُ .. هــذا عالـمٌ
يُثـري بـه الأُمِـيُّ .. والنصَّـابُ ..

فمـن الخليـج إلى المحيط .. قبـائلٌ
بَطِـرَتْ ، فـلا فِـكْـرٌ ولا آدابُ

في عصـر زَيْـتِ الكـازِ .. يطلُـبُ شاعرٌ
ثوبـاً ، وترفُـلُ بالحـرير قِحَـابُ !!!

VI

Is there, in Tunisian eyes, a shore
On whose sand nerves can relax?
My friend, I am tired of being an Arab
Is it a curse and a punishment to be an Arab?
I walk on the paper of the map in fear,
For on the map all of us are strangers.
I speak in Classical Arabic in front of my tribe
And do so again .. but there is no answer.
If not for the cloaks in which they have wrapped themselves
I would not have supposed that they were Arabs.

٦

هل في العُيُـون التُـونُسيَّـةِ شـاطِـيٌ
ترتـاحُ فـوق رمـالِـهِ الأعصـابُ ؟

أنا يا صـديقةُ مُتْعَبٌ بِعُرُوبـتـي
فهـل العروبـةُ لَعْنَـةٌ وعِـقـــابُ ؟

أَمْشـــي على وَرَق الخـريطـــة خائفاً
فعـــلى الخريطـة كلُّنـــا أغْـــرابُ ..

أتكلَّـمُ الفُصْحَى أمام عشـيرتـي
وأُعيـدُ .. لكـنْ ما هنـاكَ جـوابْ

لـولا العبـاءاتْ الـتـي التفُّـوا بهـا
ما كنـتْ أحسَـبُ أنَّـهُـمْ أعـرابُ ..

They fight for the remains of a date

With raised daggers and javelins;

Their kisses are Arab .. but who has seen,

Ever, kisses with fangs?

VII

O Tunis the Green .. my glass is bitter as colocynth

Do we drink toasts to the defeat?

The map of our great homeland is a scandal -

Barriers, border posts and dogs

While the Arab world is either a slaughtered

Ewe, or a ruler who is a butcher

يتقاتلون على بقايا تَمْرَةٍ
فخناجرٌ مرفوعةٌ وحِرابُ
قُبُلاتُهُمْ عربيّةٌ .. من ذا رأى
فيما رأى ، قُبَلاً لها أنيابُ

٧

يا تونُسُ الخضراءُ .. كأسيَ عَلْقَمٌ
أعَلَى الهزيمة تُشْربُ الأنخابُ ؟

وخريطةُ الوطن الكبير فضيحةٌ
فحواجزٌ .. ومخافِرٌ .. وكِلابُ

والعالمُ العربيُّ .. إمَّا نَعْجَةٌ
مذبوحةٌ ، أو حاكمٌ قَصَّابُ

While the Arab world pawns its sword,

For the story of lofty honour is a mirage -

While the Arab world stores its oil

In its testicles and your Lord is the Munificent[1]

While men, before oil or after it,

Are bleeding to death, some masters and some beasts of burden.

VIII

O Tunis the Green - how can we be saved?

Not one book remains of the books of Heaven.

The horses of the Umayyads[2] have died, all of them

Of shame, while morphology and inflection remain.

والعالمُ العربيُّ يرهُنُ سَيْفَهُ
فحكايةُ الشَرَف الرفيع سَرَابُ
والعالمُ العربيُّ يَخزِنُ نَفْطَهُ
في خِصْيَتَيْهِ .. وربُّكَ الوهَّابُ

والناسُ قَبْلَ النفط أو من بعدِهِ ،
مُسْتَنْزَفونَ ، فسَادَةٌ وَدَوَابُ

٨

يا تُونُسُ الخضراءُ .. كيف خلاصُنا؟
لم يبقَ من كُتُب السماء كِتابُ ..
ماتَتْ خيولُ بني أميَّةَ كلُّها
خَجَلاً .. وظَلَّ الصَرْفُ والإعرابُ

---

[1]By his use of the word Wahhāb the poet is perhaps alluding to the Saudis, who follow the religious teachings of the reformer Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703 - 1792).
[2]See note 1, p.218.

It is as though the works of classical literature
Were a big myth, and there were no ᶜUmar and no Khaṭṭāb,[1]
And the banners of Ibn al-ᶜĀṣ[2] wipe away their tears
And the mighty ruler of Egypt[3] is afflicted by schizophrenia,
Who would believe that Egypt has turned Jewish
And that the shrine of our Lord al-Ḥusayn[4] is desolate?
This is not Egypt .. for its prayers
Are Hebrew, and its Imam is a liar;
This is not Egypt .. for its sky
Has grown small, and its women have been taken as plunder.

فكأنَّما كُتُبُ التراث خُـرَافـةٌ
كُبرى ، فـلا عُـمَـرٌ .. ولا خطَّابُ

وبيـارقُ ابـنِ العـاص تمسـحُ دمْعَـها
وعـزيـزُ مصـرٍ بالفُـصَـام مُصَـابُ

مَـنْ ذا يُصـدّقُ أنَّ مصـرَ تهـوَّدَتْ
فمُـقَـامُ سيِّـدِنـا الحُسَـيْـنِ يَـبَـابُ

ما هـذِهِ مصرٌ .. فـإنَّ صَـلَاتَـها
عِبْـرِيَّـةٌ .. وإمـامَـهـا كـذَّابُ

مـا هـذه مصـرٌ .. فـإن سـمـاءها
صفُـرتْ ، وإنَّ نسـاءهـا أسلابْ

---

[1]See note 1, p.149.
[2]See note 1, p.139.
[3]A reference to the ruler of Egypt mentioned in Qur'ān, Sūrat Yūsuf, verses 30 and 51.
[4]See note 2, p.167 and note 1, p.310.

Even if Kāfūr[1] has come, yet how many a ruler
Has crushed nations, though his crown is a clog?

IX

O town with sea-blue eyes, O Carthage,
Time has grown hoary, but you are still youth,
Have I half an island in the middle of the sea,
Or is my Tunisian love a mirage?
I am tired, and my notebooks have grown tired with me
Do notebooks, I wonder, have nerves?
My sorrow is a violet moistened by dew
And the edges of my wound are a grassy meadow.

إنْ جاءَ كافورٌ .. فكم من حاكمٍ
قَهَرَ الشعوبَ ، وتاجُهُ قُبْقَابُ...

٩

بَحْرِيَّةَ العَيْنَيْنِ .. يا قَرْطَاجةٌ
شاخَ الزمانُ ، وأنتِ بَعْدُ شبابُ

هل لي بِعَرضْ البحر نِصْفُ جزيرةٍ؟
أم أنَّ حبّي التونسيَّ سَرَابُ

أنا مُتْعَبٌ .. ودفاتري تَعِبَتْ معي
هل للدفاترِ يا تُرى أعصابُ؟

حُزْني بَنَفْسَجَةٌ يُبلِّلُها النَدَىٰ
وضِفافُ جرحي روضةٌ مِعْشَابُ

---

[1]See note 2, p.434.

Do not reproach me, if I reveal my pains;
The face of truth has no veil.
Madness lies behind half of my poems;
Is there not truth in some madness?
So put up with my beautiful anger, for perhaps
Hills have revolted against the command of Heaven
And if I shout in the faces of those whom I love
It is so that love and my loved ones may live,
And if I am harsh to the Arab World sometimes
Even eyelashes may be irked by their kohl.

لا تَعْذُلِيني .. إن كشَفْتُ مواجعي
وجهُ الحقيقةِ ما عليه نِقَابُ

إنَّ الجُنُونَ وراءَ نِصْفِ قصائدي
أَوَليسَ في بعض الجنون صَوَابُ؟

فتحمّلي غَضَبي الجميلَ ، فَرُبّما
ثارتْ على أمر السماء هِضَابُ

فإذا صرختُ بوجه من أَحْبَبْتُهُمْ
فلكيْ يعيشَ الحُبُّ والأَحْبَابُ

وإذا قسوتُ على العروبة مَرَّةً
فلقد تضيقُ بكُحْلها الأهْدابُ

Perhaps the Arab world will find itself

And a meteor may light up the heart of darkness;

Perhaps a dove may fly up from the 'iqal'[1]

And vegetation may appear from the cloak.

X

Carthage .. Carthage .. Carthage

Shall I return in penitence to your breast?

Do not be angry with me, if passion overcomes me;

Passion is overwhelming by its nature.

The sins of my poetry are all forgiven

For God, be He magnified, is the Forgiver.

فلربَّما تَجِدُ العروبةُ نَفْسَها
ويضيءُ في قلب الظلام شِهابُ
ولقد تطيرُ من العقَال حَمَامةٌ
ومن العباءة تطلع الأعشابُ

١٠

قَرْطَاجةٌ .. قَرْطَاجةٌ .. قَرْطاجَةٌ ..
هل لي لصدركِ رَجْعَةٌ ومَتَابُ؟

لا تغضبي منّي .. إذا غَلَبَ الهوىٰ
إنَّ الهوى في طبعه غَلَّابُ

فَذُنُوبُ شِعْري كُلُّها مَغْفورَةٌ
واللهُ ـ جلَّ جلالُهُ ـ التَّوَّابُ ..

[1] See note 4, p. 157.

54. QAṢĪDAT BILQĪS'

Thank you

Thank you

For my beloved has been killed, and you can now

Drink a glass at the grave of the martyr

And my poem has been assassinated.

Is there any nation on earth,

Apart from us, who assassinates a poem?

Bilqīs

Was the most beautiful queen in the history of Babylon,

قصيدة بلقيس ..

شكرًا لكم ..

شكرًا لكم ..

فحبيبتي قُتِلَت .. وصار بوسعكم

أن تشربوا كأسًا على قبر الشهيدة

وقصيدتي اغتِيلَتْ ..

وهل من أُمَّةٍ في الأرضِ ..

- إلّا نحنُ - نغتالُ القصيدة ؟

بلقيسُ ..

كانَتْ أجمَلَ المَلِكاتِ في تاريخ بابِلْ

'This poem is addressed to Qabbānī's wife, Bilqīs al-Rāwī, who was killed in an explosion at the Iraqi embassy in Beirut, in which she was employed, on 15th December 1981. She was Iraqi by birth, and there are many references to Iraq in this poem. Bilqīs is also the Arabic name of the Queen of Sheba.

Bilqis

Was the tallest palm-tree in the land of Iraq;

When she walked,

Peacocks would accompany her

And stags would follow her.

Bilqis .. O my pain,

O pain of the poem when fingers touch it,

Will, I wonder,

Ears of corn rise up after your hair?

بلقيسُ ..
كانَتْ أطولَ النخلاتِ في أرضِ العراقْ
كانَتْ إذا تمشي ..
ترافقُها طواويسٌ ..
وتتبعُها أسائِلْ ..
بلقيسُ .. يا وَجَعي ..
ويا وَجَعَ القصيدةِ حينَ تلمسُها الأَنامِلْ
هل ياثُرى ..
من بعد شَعْرِكِ سوفَ ترتفعُ السنابلْ؟

O green Nineveh,[1]

O my blonde-haired gypsy,

O waves of the Tigris

Which wears on her leg in spring

The sweetest of anklets,

They killed you, Bilqīs ...

What an Arab Nation

Is this, which

Assassinates the voices of nightingales?

يا نينوى الخضراء ..

يا عجرتي الشقراء..

يا أمواج دجلة ..

تلبسُ في الربيع بساقها

أحلى الخلاخل ..

قتلوكِ يا بلقيسُ ..

أيةُ أمةٍ عربيةٍ..

تلكَ التي

تغتالُ أصواتَ البلابلْ؟

---

[1]The ancient capital of Assyria, in the north of Iraq.

Where is al-Samaw'al?[1]

Where is al-Muhalhil[2]

And the nobles of old?

They are tribes which have devoured tribes,

Foxes which have killed foxes,

And spiders which have killed spiders.

أين السموأل ؟

والمهلهل ؟

والغطاريف الأوائل ؟

فقبائل أكلت قبائل ..

وثعالب قتلت ثعالب ..

وعناكب قتلت عناكب ..

---

[1]Al-Samaw'al b. Gharīḍ b. ʿĀdiyā' al-Azdī was a famous pre-Islamic poet and warrior. He lived sometimes in Khaybar and sometimes in his castle, al-Ablaq which was near Khaybar. He has become a symbol of loyalty on account of his refusal to surrender the armour which Imru' al-Qays had deposited with him, even at the cost of his son's life.

[2]Al-Muhalhil was a famous poet of the tribe of Taghlib and early Arab hero. See note 3, p. 211.

I swear by your eyes in which

Millions of stars take refuge ...

I shall speak amazing things, my moon, of the Arabs;

Is heroism an Arab lie

Or is history a liar, like us?

قسماً بعينيكِ اللتينِ إليهما ..

تأوي ملايينُ الكواكبْ ..

سأقولُ ، يا قمري ، عن العربِ العجائبْ

فهل البطولةُ كِذبةٌ عربيةٌ ؟

أم مثلنا التاريخُ كاذبْ ؟ .

Bilqīs

Do not absent yourself from me

For the sun, after you,

Does not shine on the coasts.

I shall say at the investigation

That the thief has started to wear the clothes of the fighter,

And I shall say at the investigation

That the gifted leader has become like a contractor,

بلقيسُ

لاتستغيبي عنّي

فإنَّ الشمسَ بعدكِ

لاتُضيءُ على السواحلْ ..

سأقول في التحقيق :

إنَّ اللصَّ أصبحَ يرتدي ثوبَ المُقاتِلْ

وأقولُ في التحقيق :

إنَّ القائدَ الموهوبَ أصبحَ كالمُقاوِلْ ..

And I shall say

That the story of diffusion of culture is the silliest joke ever uttered

For we are a tribe among tribes.

This is history, Bilqīs -

How can man distinguish

Between gardens and rubbish-heaps?

Bilqīs O martyr, O poem

Pure, unsullied -

Sheba is searching for its Queen,

So return the public's greetings.

وأقولُ :

إن حكايةَ الإشعاع ، أسخفُ نُكتةٍ قيلَتْ ..

فنحنُ قبيلةٌ بين القبائِلْ

هذا هو التاريخُ .. يا بلقيسْ ..

كيف يُفَرِّقُ الإنسانُ ..

ما بينَ الحدائقِ والمزابلْ

بلقيسُ ..

أيَّتها الشهيدةُ .. والقصيدةُ ..

والمُطَهَّرةُ النقيَّهْ ..

سَبأٌ تفتِّشُ عن مليكَتِها

فرُدّي للجماهيرِ التحيَّهْ ..

O greatest of queens,

O woman who embodies all the glories of the Sumerian ages,

Bilqīs

My sweetest sparrow,

My most precious ikon

O tears scattered over the cheek of Mary Magdalene,

Did I, I wonder, do you wrong when I brought you,

One day, from the banks of al-Aʿẓamiyya?[1]

Beirut kills one of us every day

And looks for a victim every day,

يا أعظمَ الملكاتِ ..

يا امرأةً تجسّدُ كلَّ أمجادِ العصورِ السومريّه

بلقيسُ ..

يا عصفوريتي الأحلى ..

ويا أيقونتي الأغلى

ويا دمعاً تناثرَ فوقَ خدِّ المجدليّه

أترى ظلمتُ إذ نقلتُ

ذاتَ يومٍ .. من ضفافِ الأعظميّه

بيروتُ .. تقتلُ كلَّ يومٍ واحداً منّا ..

وتبحثُ كلَّ يومٍ عن ضحيّه

---

[1]See note 1, p.330.

And death is in our cup of coffee,

In the key of our flat,

In the flowers on our balcony,

In the pages of the newspapers

And the letters of the alphabet.

Here we are, Bilqīs

Entering once again the age of the Jāhiliyya;

Here we are entering savageness,

Backwardness, ugliness and humiliation,

Entering once again the ages of barbarism

والموتُ .. في فِنجانِ قَهوتِنا ..

وفي مفتاحِ شِقَّتِنا ..

وفي أزهارِ شُرفَتِنا ..

وفي وَرَقِ الجرائدِ ..

والحُرُوفِ الأبجَدِيَّهْ ...

ها نحنُ .. يا بلقيسُ ..

ندخُلُ مرةً أُخرى لعصرِ الجاهليَّهْ ..

ها نحنُ ندخُلُ في التَوَحُّشِ ..

والتخلُّفِ .. والبشاعةِ .. والوَضاعةِ ..

ندخلُ مرةً أُخرى .. عُصُورَ البربريَّهْ ...

Where writing is a journey

Between shrapnel and shrapnel,

Where killing a butterfly in its field

Has become the cause.

Do you know my beloved Bilqis?

She is the most important thing they have written in the books of love;

She was a marvellous mixture

Of velvet and marble.

The violets between her eyes

Slept and did not sleep.

حيثُ الكتابةُ رِحلةٌ

بين الشظيّةِ .. والشظيّة

حيثُ اغتيالُ فَراشةٍ في حقلِها ..

صارَ القضيّة ..

هل تعرفونَ حبيبتي بلقيسَ ؟
فهي أهمُّ ما كَتبوهُ في كُتُبِ الغرامْ
كانتْ مزيجاً رائِعاً

بين القَطِيفةِ والرخامْ ..

كان البَنفسَجُ بين عَينَيها

ينامُ ولا ينامْ ..

Bilqīs

O perfume in my memory,

O grave travelling in the clouds,

They killed you in Beirut like any gazelle

After they had killed language.

Bilqīs

This is not an elegy

But ..

Farewell to the Arabs!'

بلقيسُ ..
ياعِطراً بذاكرتي ..
ويا قبراً يسافرُ في الغمامْ ..
قتلوكِ، في بيروت، مثلَ أيِّ غزالةٍ
من بعدما .. قتلوا الكلامْ ..

بلقيسُ ..
ليستْ هذه مرثيةً
لكنْ ..
على العربِ السلامْ

' An idiom meaning "the Arabs are finished".

Bilqīs,

We are longing .. longing .. longing

And our little house

Is asking after its princess with perfumed skirts,

Listening to the news .. but the news is obscure

And does not give details.

Bilqīs -

We are slaughtered, even to our bones

The children do not know what is happening

And I do not know myself - what can I say?

بلقيسُ ..

مُشْتاقُونَ .. مُشْتاقُونَ .. مُشْتاقُونَ ..

والبيتُ الصغيرُ ..

يُسائِلُ عن أميرتِهِ المعطَّرةِ الذُيُولْ

تُصْغي إلى الأخبار .. والأخبارُ غامضةٌ

ولا تردي فُضُولْ ..

بلقيسُ ..

مُذْ بُحْنَ حتى العَظْم ..

والأولادُ لا يدرونَ ما يجري ..

ولا أدري أنا .. ماذا أقُولْ ؟

Will you knock on the door in a few minutes?

Will you take off your winter overcoat?

Will you come, smiling,

Blooming,

And radiant like the flowers in the fields?

Bilqis,

Your green plants

Are still weeping on the walls

And your face is still moving

Between the mirrors and the curtains.

هل تقرعينَ البابَ بعد دقائق ؟

هل تخلعينَ المعطفَ الشتويَّ ؟

هل تأتينَ باسمةً ..

وناضرةً ..

ومُشرقةً كأزهار الحُقول ؟

بلقيسُ ..

إنَّ زُرودَ عنكبِ الخضراءَ ..

مازالتْ على الحيطانِ باكيةً ..

ووجهكِ لم يَزَلْ متنقلاً ..

بينَ المرايا والستائرْ

Even the cigarette you lit

Has not gone out

And its smoke

Still refuses to travel.

Bilqis

We are wounded, wounded in our depths;

Our eyes are haunted by bewilderment.

Bilqīs

How you took up my days and my dreams

And abolished gardens and seasons!

حتى سجارتُكِ التي أشعلتِها ..

لم تنطفئ ..

ودخانُها

مازال يرفضُ أن يسافر

بلقيسُ ..

مطعونونَ .. مطعونونَ في الأعماقِ ..

والأحداقُ يسكنها الذهولْ

بلقيسُ ..

كيف أخذتِ أيّامي .. وأحلامي ..

وألغيتِ الحدائقَ والفصولْ ..

My wife ..

My beloved .. my poem .. light of my eyes,

You were my beautiful sparrow.

Why did you run away from me, Bilqīs?

Bilqis

This is the time for the scented Iraqi tea,

Mellowed like old wine.

Who will hand out the cups, my giraffe'

Who brought the Euphrates to our house

And the roses of the Tigris and al-Ruṣāfa?[2]

يا زوجتي ..

وحبيبتي .. وقصيدتي .. وضياءَ عيني

قد كنتِ عصفوري الجميلَ ..

فكيف هَرَبتِ يا بلقيسُ مني ؟..

بلقيسُ ..

هذا موعدُ الشاي العراقيِّ المُعَطَّرِ ..

والمُعَتَّق كالسُلافَهْ ..

فَمَنِ الذي سيوزِّعُ الأقداحَ .. أيتها الزُرافَهْ؟

ومن الذي نَقَلَ الفُراتَ لِبَيتنا ..

ودورَ دِجْلَةَ والرَصافَهْ ؟

---

[1]See note 1, p.382.
[2]See note 5, p.423.

Bilqīs

Sorrow pierces me

And Beirut, who killed you, does not know her crime.

Beirut, who loved you,

Does not know that she has killed her beloved

And extinguished the moon.

بلقيسُ ..

إنَّ الحُزنَ يثقُبُني ..

وبيروتُ التي قَتَلَتْكِ .. لا تدري جريمتَها

وبيروتُ التي عَشِقَتْكِ ..

تجهلُ أنَّها قَتَلَتْ عشيقتَها ..

وأطفأتِ القَمَرْ ..

Bilqīs

O Bilqīs

O Bilqīs

Every cloud weeps for you,

Who, I wonder, will weep for me?

Bilqīs - why did you depart silently

And not put your hands in my hands?

بلقيسُ ..

يا بلقيسُ ..

يا بلقيسُ

كلُّ غمامةٍ تبكي عليكِ ..

فَمَنْ تُرى يبكي عليَّا ..

بلقيسُ .. كيف رحلْتِ صامتةً

ولم تضَعي يديكِ .. على يدَيَّا ؟

Bilqīs -

Why did you leave us in the wind,

Trembling like the leaves of trees,

And leave us, we three, lost

Like a feather in the rain?

Did you not think of *me* ?

I need your love, just like Zaynab or 'Umar'

بـلـقيسُ ..

كيفَ تركتِـنا في الريح ..

نرجِفُ مثلَ أوراق الشَجَـرْ ؟

وتركتِـنا - نحنُ الثلاثةَ - ضـائعينَ

كريشةٍ تحتَ المَطَـرْ ..

أتُراكِ ما فكَّرتِ بي ؟

وأنا الذي يحتاجُ حبَّكِ .. مثلَ (زينبَ) أو (عُمَرْ)

---

[1]The poet's daughter and son.

Bilqīs

O fabulous treasure,

O Iraqi spear,

And forest of canes,

You who challenged the stars in pride

From where did you bring all of this vigour?

بلقيسُ ..

يا كنزاً خُرافياً ..

ويا رُمحاً عِراقياً ..

وغابةَ خيزُران ..

يا مَن تحدَّيتِ النجومَ ترفُّعاً ..

مِن أينَ جئتِ بكلِّ هذا العُنفُوان ؟

Bilqīs

My friend and companion,

Delicate as a daisy-flower,

We are oppressed by Beirut, oppressed by the sea,

Oppressed by our home.

Bilqīs .. you will not repeat yourself;

There will never be another Bilqīs.

بلقيسُ ..

أيتها الصديقةُ .. والرفيقةُ ..

والرقيقةُ مثلَ زَهرةِ أُقحُوان ..

ضاقتْ بنا بيروتُ .. ضاقَ البحرُ ..

ضاقَ بنا المكانْ ..

بلقيسُ: ما أنتِ التي تَتَكَرَّرينَ.

فما لبلقيسَ اثْنَتان ..

Bilqīs

The petty details of our relationship are killing me,

The minutes and the seconds are lashing me,

Every little hairpin has a story behind it

Every one of your necklaces has two stories.

بـلقيسُ ..

تذبحُني التفاصيلُ الصغيرةُ في عَلاقتِنَا ..

وتجلُدني الدقائقُ والثواني ..

فلكُلِّ دبّوسٍ صغيرٍ .. قصّةٌ

ولكلِّ عِقدٍ من عُقودكِ قصّتانِ

Even your gold hair-tweezers

Flood me, as usual, with rains of tenderness.

The beautiful Iraqi voice covers

The curtains

The armchairs

And the ornaments.

حتّى ملاقطُ شَعْرِكِ الذَهَبِيِّ ..

تغمُرُني ، كعادتِها ، بأمطارِ الحنانِ

ويُغَرِّشُ الصوتُ العراقيُّ الجميلُ ..

على الستائرِ ..

والمقاعدِ ..

والأوَاني ..

You appear in the mirrors,

You appear in the rings,

You appear in the poem,

In the candles,

In the glasses,

And in the purple wine.

ومن المرايا تطلعين ..

من الخواتم تطلعين ..

من القصيدة تطلعين ..

من الشموعِ ..

من الكؤوسِ ..

من النبيذ الأرجواني ..

Bilqīs .. O Bilqīs

If only you knew how painful the place is -

In every corner you are hovering like a sparrow

And are as fragrant as a forest of black elder.

Here you used to smoke,

Here you used to read,

There you used to comb your hair, like a date-palm,

And go in to the guests

As though you were a Yemeni sword.

بلقيسُ .. يا بلقيسُ ..

لو تدرينَ ما وَجَعُ المكانِ ..

في كُلِّ ركنٍ .. أنتِ حائمةٌ كعصفورٍ ..

وعابقةٌ كغابةِ بَيْلَسانِ ..

فهناكَ .. كنتِ تُدخِّنينَ ..

هناكَ .. كنتِ تُطالعينَ ..

هناكَ .. كُنتِ كنخلةٍ تتمشَّطينَ ..

وتدخُلينَ على الضيوفِ ..

كأنَّكِ السَيفُ اليَمانِي ..

Bilqis

Where is your bottle of Guerlain

And your blue lighter?

Where is the Kent cigarette which

Never left your lips?

Where is the hāshimī[1] singing

Above your form, like a festival?

بلقيسُ ..

أين زجاجةُ (الغيرلَانِ) ؟

والولاَّعةُ الزرقارُ ..

أينَ سِجَارةُ ال (كَنْتِ) التي

مافارقَتْ شَفَتَيكِ ؟

أين (الهاشِميُّ) مُغنّياً ..

فوقَ القوامِ المُهرَجانِ ..

---

[1] A kind of long Iraqi evening dress.

The combs remember their past

And their tears roll down;

Do the combs, now, suffer from their passions, I wonder?

Bilqis - it is difficult for me to leave my blood behind

While I am besieged by tongues of flame

And tongues of smoke.

تتذكّرُ الأمشاطُ ماضيها ..

فتُخرِجُ دَمعَها ..

هل يا تُرى الأمشاطُ من أشواقها أيضاً تُعاني ؟

بلقيسُ : صَعبٌ أن أُهاجرَ من دمي ..

وأنا المُحاصَرُ بين ألسِنَةِ اللهيبِ ..

وبين ألسِنَةِ الدُخانِ ...

Bilqīs - O princess,

Here you are, burning in a war of tribe and tribe.

What shall I write about the departure of my queen?

Poetry reveals my inmost secrets.

Here we are, searching among heaps of victims

For a star which has fallen,

For a body which has shattered like a mirror;

Here we are, asking, my beloved,

If this grave is your grave

Or the grave of the Arabs.

بلقيسُ : أيّتُها الأميرَهْ

ها أنتِ تحترقينَ .. في حربِ العشيرةِ والعشيرَهْ

ماذا سأكتُبُ عن رحيلِ مليكتي ؟

إنَّ الكلامَ فضيحتي ..

ها نحنُ نبحثُ بين أكوامِ الضحايا ..

عن نجمةٍ سَقطَتْ ..

وعن جَسَدٍ تناثَرَ كالمرايا ..

ها نحنُ نسألُ يا حبيبَهْ ..

إن كان هذا القبرُ قبرَكِ أنتِ

أم قبرَ العُروبَهْ ..

Bilqīs

O willow who lowered her tresses upon me,

O proud giraffe,[1]

Bilqīs,

Our fate as Arabs is that Arabs murder us.

Arabs eat our flesh,

Arabs rip open our bellies

And Arabs open our graves.

How can we flee from this fate?

بلقيس :

ياصفصافةً أرخَتْ ضفائرَها عليَّ ..

ويازرافةَ كبرياءْ ..

بلقيس :

إنّ قضاءَنا العربيَّ أن يغتالَنا عربٌ ..

ويأكلَ لحمَنا عربٌ ..

ويقتُلَ بطلَنا عربٌ ..

ويفتحَ قبرَنا عربٌ ..

فكيفَ نفرُّ من هذا القضاءْ ؟

[1]See note 1, p.382.

For the Arab dagger does not make any distinction
Between the necks of men
And the necks of women.
Bilqīs
Even if they blew you up .. among us
All funerals begin in Karbalā''
And end in Karbalā'.

فالخنجرُ العربيُّ .. ليسَ يُقيمُ فَرْقاً
بين أعناقِ الرجالِ ..
وبين أعناقِ النساءْ ..
بلقيسُ :
إنْ هم فجَّروكِ .. فعندنا
كلُّ الجنائزِ تبتدي في كربلاءَ ..
وتنتهي في كربلاءْ ..

---

[1]See note 2, p. 168.

I shall never read history after today.

My fingers are on fire

And my clothes are covered in blood.

Here we are, entering our Stone Age

Going back a thousand years every day.

The sea in Beirut,

After your eyes have departed, has resigned.

Poetry is asking after its poem

Whose words are incomplete

And no-one answers the question.

لَن أقرأَ التاريخَ بعد اليوم
إنَّ أصابعي اشتَعلَتْ ..
وأثوابي تُغطّيها الدماءْ ..
ها نحنُ ندخُلُ عصرَنا الحجَريَّ ..
نرجعُ كلَّ يومٍ، ألفَ عامٍ للوَرَاءْ ..
البحرُ في بيروتَ ..
بعد رحيل عينَيكِ انتَقَالْ ..
والشِعرُ .. يسألُ عن قصيدَتِهِ
التي لم تكتمِلْ كلماتُها ..
ولا أحَدٌ .. يُجيبُ على السؤالْ

Sorrow, Bilqīs,

Wrings out my life-blood like an orange;

Now I know the dilemma of words

And know the problem of language which does not come easily.

I am the one who invented letters'

But I do not know how to begin this letter.

الحُزنُ يا بلقيسُ ..

يعصُرُ مهجتي كالبُرتُقالَهْ ..

الآنَ .. أعرفُ مأزَقَ الكلماتِ

أعرفُ وَرطَةَ اللغةِ المُحالَهْ ..

وأنا الذي اخترعَ الرسائلَ ..

لستُ أدري .. كيفَ أبتَدِئُ الرسالَهْ ..

'Qabbānī is the author of a collection of verse love-letters entitled Mi'at Risālat Ḥubb. It is possible that he is referring to this here.

The sword cuts into the flesh of my waist

And the waist of expression.

You, Bilqīs, are the whole of civilisation, for woman is civilisation;

Bilqīs, you are my greatest good tidings

But who has stolen the good tidings?

You were writing before writing existed;

You were the island and the lighthouse.

Bilqīs -

My moon, whom they buried under stones.

Now the curtain is lifting,

Now the curtain is lifting.

Now the curtain is lifting.

السيف يدخل لحم خاصرتي

وخاصرة العبارة ..

كل الحضارة، أنت يا بلقيس، والأنثى حضارة

بلقيس : أنت بشارتي الكبرى ..

فمن سرق البشارة ؟

أنت الكتابة قبلما كانت كتابة ..

أنت الجزيرة والمنارة ..

بلقيس :

يا قمري الذي طمروه ما بين الحجارة ..

الآن ترتفع الستارة ..

الآن ترتفع الستارة ..

I shall say at the investigation
That I know names, objects, the prisoners,
The victims, the poor and the oppressed,
I shall say that I know the executioner who killed my wife
And the faces of all the informers.

I shall say that our chastity is whoredom
And our piety is filth,
I shall say that our struggle is lies,
And that there is no difference
Between politics and debauchery.

سَأقُولُ فِي التحقيقِ ..
إنّي أعرفُ الأسماءَ .. والأشياءَ .. والسُجناءَ ..
والشهداءَ .. والفُقراءَ .. والمُستضعفين
وأقولُ إنّي أعرفُ السيّافَ قاتلَ زوجتي ..
ووجوهَ كُلّ المُخبرين ..

وأقولُ : إنّ عفافَنا عُهرٌ ..
وتَقْوانا قَذارَة ..
وأقُولُ : إنّ نضالَنا كَذِبٌ
وأنْ لا فَرقَ ..
ما بين السياسةِ والدَعارَة !!

I shall say at the investigation

That I know the killers

And I shall say

That our Arab time specialises in killing jasmine,

Killing all the prophets

And killing all the messengers.

Even green eyes

Are devoured by the Arabs,

Even locks of hair and rings

Bracelets, mirrors and playthings.

Even the stars fear my country

And I do not know the reason.

سَأقُولُ في التحقيق :

إنّي قد عَرَفتُ القاتلين

وأقُولُ :

إنّ زماننا العربيّ مُختَصٌّ بذَبحِ الياسَمين

وبقَتْلِ كُلِّ الأنبياءِ ..

وقَتْلِ كُلِّ المُرسَلين ..

حتّى العيونُ الخُضْرُ ..

يأكُلُها العَرَبْ

حتّى الضفائرُ .. والخواتمُ

والأساوِرُ .. والمرايا .. واللُّعَبْ ..

حتّى النجومُ تخافُ من وطني ..

ولا أدري السَبَبْ ..

Even the birds flee from my country,

And I do not know the reason

Even the planets and the ships, and the clouds

Even the notebooks, and the books.

And all of the things of beauty,

All of them, are against the Arabs.

When your shining body was broken into pieces

O Bilqīs,

Like a precious pearl,

I thought - "Is killing women an Arab pastime

Or are we, at bottom, professional criminals?"

حتى الطيورُ تفرُّ من وطني ..

ولا أدري السببْ ..

حتى الكواكبُ .. والمراكبُ .. والسُحُبْ

حتى الدفاترُ .. والكُتُبْ ..

وجميعُ أشياءِ الجمالِ ..

جميعُها .. ضِدَّ العَرَبْ ..

لمّا تناثرَ جسمُكِ الفضّيُّ

يا بلقيسُ،

لؤلؤةً كريمهْ

فكّرتُ : هل قتلُ النساءِ هوايةٌ عربيّةٌ

أم أنّنا في الأصل، مُحترِفُو جريمهْ ؟

Bilqīs,

My beautiful horse,

I am ashamed of all my history.

This is a land in which they kill horses,

This is a land in which they kill horses.

Ever since the day they murdered you,

O Bilqīs,

My most beautiful country,

People do not know how to live in this country

People do not know how to die in this country

بلقيسُ ..

يافَرَسي الجميلةُ .. إنَّني

من كُلِّ تاريخي خَجُولْ

هذي بلادٌ يقتلُونَ بها الخُيُولْ ..

هذي بلادٌ يقتلُونَ بها الخُيُولْ ..

مِن يومِ أن تَحرُوكِ ..

يابلقيسُ ..

يا أُحلَى وَطَن ..

لايعرفُ الإنسانُ كيف يعيشُ في هذا الوَطَن ..

لايعرفُ الإنسانُ كيف يموتُ في هذا الوَطَن ..

I am still paying, with my blood,[1]

The highest penalty

So that I may make the world happy - but Heaven

Wished that I should remain alone

Like winter leaves.

Are poets born from the womb of misery?

Is poetry a thrust

In the heart, for which there is no cure?

Or am I the only one whose

Eyes sum up the history of weeping?

مازلتُ ادفعُ من دمي ..

أعلى جـزاءْ

كي أُسعِدَ الدُنيـا .. ولكنَّ السَمـاءْ

شاءَتْ بأن أبـقى وحيداً ..

مثلَ أوراق الشتاءْ

هل يُولَدُ الشُعَراءُ من رَحِمِ الشقاءْ؟

وهل القصيدةُ طَعنَةٌ

في القلب .. ليس لها شِفاءْ؟

أم أنَّني وحـدي الذي

عَيناهُ تختصرانِ تاريخَ البُكاءْ؟

---

[1]i.e. his writing.

I shall say at the investigation

How my gazelle diedby the sword of Abū Lahab'

All the bandits from the Gulf to the Ocean

Are destroying, burning

Plundering, taking bribes,

Attacking women,

As Abū Lahab wishes.

سَأقُولُ في التحقيق :

كيف غَزَالتي ماتَتْ بسيف أبي لَهَبْ

كلُّ اللصوص من الخليج إلى المحيطِ ..

يُدمّرونَ .. ويُحرِقُونَ ..

وَيَنْهَبُونَ .. ويرتَشُونَ ..

وَيَعْتَدُونَ على النساءِ ..

كما يُريدُ أبو لَهَبْ ..

---

[1]Abū Lahab was an uncle of the Prophet who was notable for his fierce opposition to Islam and its Prophet. He died shortly after the battle of Badr; he is mentioned by name in the Qur'ān (Sūrat al-Masad). He is used here to symbolise tyrannical government.

All the dogs are officials

They eat

And get drunk

On the account of Abū Lahab.[1]

There is not a grain of wheat in the land

Which grows without the approval of Abū Lahab

There is no child born among us

Whose mother has not visited one day

The bed of Abū Lahab.

كُلُّ الكِلابِ موظَّفُونَ ..

ويـأكُلُونَ ..

ويَشكُرُونَ ..

على حسابِ أبي لَهَبْ ..

لا قَمحَةٌ في الأرض ..

تَنبُتُ دونَ رأيِ أبي لَهَبْ

لا طفلَ يُولَدُ عندنا

إلا وزارتْ أمُّهُ يوماً ..

فِراشَ أبي لَهَبْ !!...

---

[1]See note 1, p.618.

There is no prison opened
Without the approval of Abū Lahab,[1]
There is no head cut off
Without the command of Abū Lahab.

I shall say at the investigation
How my princess was violated,
And how they divided up the turquoise of her eyes,
And her wedding ring.
I shall say how they divided up the hair which
Flows like rivers of gold.

لا سِجْنَ يُفْتَحُ ..
دونَ رأيِ أبي لَهَبْ ..
لا رأسَ يُقْطَعُ
دونَ أمرِ أبي لَهَبْ ..

سأقولُ في التحقيق :
كيفَ أميرتي اغْتُصِبَتْ
وكيفَ تقاسَموا فيروزَ عينيها
وخاتمَ عُرسِها ..
وأقولُ كيفَ تقاسَموا الشَعرَ الذي
يجري كأنهارِ الذَهَبْ ..

---

[1]See note 1, p.618.

I shall say at the investigation

How they assailed the verses of her Noble Qur'ān

And kindled fire in them.

I shall say how they drained away her blood,

And how they took possession of her mouth,

And left no roses in it, and no grapes.

سَأَقُولُ فِي التحقيق :

كيفَ سَطَوا على آياتِ مُصْحَفِها الشريفِ

وأضرَمُوا فيهِ اللَهَبْ ..

سَأَقُولُ كيف استَنْزَفوا دَمَها ..

وكيفَ استَمْلَكُوا فَمَها ..

فما تركُوا بِهِ وَزداً .. ولا تركُوا عِنَبْ

Is the death of Bilqīs

The only victory

In all the history of the Arabs?

Bilqīs

Whom I love to the point of intoxication,

The lying prophets

Sit cross-legged

And ride the nations,

But have no message.

هل مَوْتُ بلقيسٍ ...

هو النَصْرُ الوحيدُ

بكُلِّ تاريخ العَرَبْ ؟؟...

بلقيسُ ..

يامَعْشُوقتي حتى الثُمالَهْ ..

الأنبياءُ الكاذبُونَ ..

يُقَرفِصُونَ ..

ويَرْكَبُون على الشعوبِ

ولا رِسالَهْ ..

If they had brought us

From sorrowful Palestine

A star

Or an orange

If they had brought us

From the shores of Gaza

A little pebble

Or a shell

لو أنّهم حَمَلُوا إلَينَا ..

من فلسطينَ الحزينةِ ..

نَجْمَةً ..

أو بُرْتُقَالَهْ ..

لو أنّهم حَمَلُوا إلَينَا

من شواطئ غَزَّةٍ

حَجَراً صغيراً

أو مَحَارَهْ ..

If, after a quarter of a century, they had liberated

An olive

Or had restored a lemon

And had wiped clean its shame from history

I would thank those who killed you, Bilqīs

Whom I worship to the point of intoxication

But they abandoned Palestine

To murder a gazelle.

لو أنّهم من رُبع قرنٍ حرّروا ..
زيتونةً ..
أو أرجعوا ليمونة
ومحوا عن التاريخ عارَهْ

لشكرتُ من قتلوكِ .. يا بلقيسُ ..
يا معبودَتي حتى الثُمالَهْ ..
لكنّهم .. تركوا فلسطيناً
ليغتالوا غزالَهْ !!...

What does poetry say, Bilqīs,

At this time?

What does poetry say

In this age of Shuᶜūbīs'[1],

Of Magians[2]

Of cowardice?

ماذا يقولُ الشِعْرُ، يا بلقيسُ ..

في هـذا الزَمـانِ ؟

ماذا يقولُ الشِعْرُ ؟

في العَصْرِ الشُعُوبيِّ ..

المَجُوسيِّ ..

الجَبَـانِ ..

---

[1]The Shuᶜūbīs were a group of non-Arabs in early Islam who challenged the values of Arab civilisation. In a modern sense it refers to cosmopolitans who undermine the Arab world. See also note 3, p.421.

[2]Followers of the old Iranian religion which was replaced by Islam.

The Arab world

Is crushed, suppressed

Its tongue cut off.

We are crime at its height

What are al-ʿIqd al-Farīd[1] and al-Aghānī[2] in comparison?

والعالمُ العربيُّ .

مَسْحُوقٌ .. ومَقْمُوعٌ ..

ومَقْطُوعُ اللسانِ ..

نحنُ الجريمةُ في تفوُّقِها

فما (العِقْدُ الفريدُ) .. وما (الأغاني)؟؟

---

[1]An encyclopaedic work devoted to Arab culture, literature, language and history, composed by the Andalusian scholar Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (860 - 940).
[2]Another encyclopaedic work on Arab poetry and music, composed by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (897 - 967).

They took you, my darling, from my hands
Took the poem from my mouth,
Took writing and reading,
Childhood, and hopes.

Bilqīs, O Bilqīs,
O tears dropping on the eyelids of the violin,
I taught those who killed you the secrets of love
But, before the end of the course
They killed my horse.

أخذوكِ أيتها الحبيبةُ من يدي
أخذوا القصيدةَ من فمي ..
أخذوا الكتابةَ .. والقراءةَ ..
والطفولةَ .. والأماني

بلقيسُ .. يا بلقيسُ ..
يا دمعاً يُنقّطُ فوق أهداب الكمانِ
علّمتُ من قتلوكِ أسرارَ الهوىٰ
لكنهم .. قبلَ انتهاء الشوطِ
قد قتلوا حِصاني

Bilqīs

I ask your forgiveness, for perhaps,

Your life was a sacrifice for mine.

I know very well

That the aim of those who embroiled themselves in killing

Was to kill my words.

Sleep in God's keeping, O beautiful one

Poetry after you is impossible,

And femininity is impossible.

بلقيسُ :

أسألكِ السماحَ ، فربّما

كانتْ حياتُكِ فديةً لحياتي ..

إنّي لأعرفُ جيّداً ..

أنّ الذين توَرّطوا في القتْل ، كانَ مُرادُهمْ

أن يقتُلوا كلماتي !!!

نامي بحفظِ اللهِ .. أيّتُها الجميلَهْ

فالشعرُ بعدَكِ مُستحيلٌ ..

والأنوثةُ مُستحيلَهْ

Generations of children will continue

To ask about your long tresses,

And generations of lovers will continue

To read about you, O true teacher.

And the Arabs will recognise one day

That they killed the prophetess,

Killed the prophetess,

Killed

The prophetess.

ستظلُّ أجيالٌ من الأطفالِ ..

تسألُ عن ضفائركِ الطويلَهْ ..

وتظلُّ أجيالٌ من العُشّاق

تقرأ عنكِ .. أيَّتُها المعلّمةُ الأصيلَهْ

وسيعرفُ الأعرابُ يوماً ..

أنَّهُمْ قَتَلوا الرَسُولَهْ ..

قَتَلُوا الرسُولَهْ ..

ق .. ت .. ل .. و .. ا

ال .. ر .. س .. و .. ل ...ه

بيروت ١٥/١٢/١٩٨١

55. THE CHILDREN OF THE STONES

They dazzled the world

With nothing in their hands but stones

They shed light like lamps, and came like good news

They resisted, exploded, and were martyred -

And we remained like polar bears

Whose bodies are armoured against the heat

* *

أطفالُ الحِجَارة

بَهرُوا الدُّنْيَا . .
وما فى يَدِهِمْ إلاَّ الحِجَارَهْ . .
وأضَاؤوا كالقناديلِ ، وجاؤوا كالبشَارَهْ.
قَاوَمُوا . . وانْفَجَرُوا . . واسْتُشْهِدُوا . . .
وبقينا دُبَباً فُطْبِيَّةً
صُفِّحتْ أجسادُها ضدَّ الحرارَهْ . . .

*

They fought on our behalf, until they were killed

And we sat in our cafés

Like slugs -

One person is looking for business from us

Another wants another thousand million

قَاتَلُوا عنَّا . . إلى أن قُتِلُوا . .

وجلسنا في مقاهينا . . كبَصَّاقِ المَحَارَهْ

واحدٌ . . يبحثُ منّا عن تجارَهْ . .

واحدٌ . . يطلبُ ملياراً جديداً . .

A fourth marriage

And breasts polished by civilisation,

Another is searching for a lofty palace in London

Another works as an arms dealer

Another is seeking his vengeance in bars

Another is searching for a throne, an army

And an Emirate.

* *

وزَوَاجاً رابعاً . .

ونُهُوداً صَقَلَتْهُنَّ الحَضَارَهْ . .

واحدٌ . . يبحثُ في لندنَ عن قصرٍ مُنيفٍ

واحدٌ . . يعملُ سِمْسَارَ سلاحٍ . .

واحدٌ . . يطلبُ في الباراتِ ثارَهْ . .

واحدٌ . . يبحثُ عن عرشٍ ، وجيشٍ ، وإمارَهْ . .

*

Alas .. O generation of treacheries

O generation of deals

O generation of rubbish

O generation of pimping

You will be swept away, however long history delays,

By the children of the stones.

18.12.1987

آهِ . . يَا جيلَ الخياناتِ . .

ويا جيلَ العُمُولاتِ . .

ويا جيلَ النِفَايَاتِ . .

ويا جيلَ الدعارَهْ . .

سوفَ يجتاحُكَ ـ مهما أبطأَ التارِيخُ ـ

أطفالُ الحجارَهْ . .

56. The Angry ones

School children of Gaza, teach us
Some part of what you know, for we have forgotten.
Teach us to be men
For we have men who have become dough
Teach how stones become,
In the hands of children, precious diamonds
How a child's bicycle becomes a mine
And a strip of silk becomes an ambush,
How a baby's bottle, when they
Arrest it, becomes a knife.

School children of Gaza, take no notice
Of our broadcasts, and do not listen to us.
Hit, hit with all your forces
Be resolute, and do not ask us.

الغـــاضِبُون

يـاتـلاميـذ غـزّةَ .. عَلمُـونـا بعض مـا عندكم . فنحن نسينـا
غلمُـونـا .. بـان نكـون رجـالاً فلدينا الـرجال .. صـاروا عجينا
علمـونـا كيف الحجـارة تغـدو بين ايدى الاطفال .. ماسا ثمينا
كيف تغـدو دراجة الطفل لغما وشريط الحـرير .. يغـدو كمينـا
كيف مصاصة الحليب .. إذا ما اعتقلـوهـا .. تحـولت سكينـا ..

● ● ● ..

يـاتـلاميـذ غـزة .. لا تبـالـوا بـإذاعـاتنـا .. ولا تسمعـونـا ..
اضربوا .. فاضربوا .. بكل قواكم واحـزمـوا امـركم ولا تسـألـونـا

We are men of calculation, addition and subtraction,
So go into your wars and leave us.
We are the ones who have fled from army service
So bring your ropes and hang us.
We are dead men who have no grave
And orphans who have no eyes
We have kept inside our burrows, and have asked
You to fight the dragon.
We have diminished, faced by you, by a thousand centuries
And you have grown, in a month, by centuries.

School children of Gaza, do not return
To our writings, and do not read us.
We are your fathers, but do not be like us
We are your idols, but do not worship us.

نحن اهل الحساب والجمع ، والطرح فخوضوا حروبكم واتركونا
إننا الهاربون من خدمة الجيش .. فهاتوا حبالكم واشنقونا ..
نحن موتى ، لا يملكون ضريحاً ويتامى ، لا يملكون عيونا
قد لزمنا جحورنا .. وطلبنا منكمُ ، ان تقاتلوا التنينا
قد صغرنا ، امامكم ، الف قرن وكبرتم ، خلال شهر ، قرونا ..

• • •

يا تلاميذ غزة .. لا تعودوا لكتاباتنا ، ولا تقراونا ..
نحن اباؤكم .. فلا تشبهونا نحن اصنامكم .. فلا تعبدونا

We take political qāt, repression ...
And build graveyards and prisons.
Liberate us from the fear complex within us
And drive the opium from our heads
Teach us the art of clinging to the land,
And do not leave Christ sorrowful.

***

Our young loved ones ... greetings ...
May God make your day jasmine -
From the cracks in the waste land you appeared
And sowed our wounds with wild roses
This is the revolution of exercise books and ink
So be melodies on men's lips.

نتعاطى القات السياسى .. والقمع .. ونبنى مقابراً وسجوناً
حررونا من عقدة الخوف فينا واطردوا من رءوسنا الافيونا
علمونا فن التشبث بالارض . ولا تتركوا المسيح حزيناً ..

● ● ●

ياأحبابنا الصغار .. سلاماً .. جعل الله يومكم ياسمينا
من شقوق الارض الخراب .. طلعتم وزرعتم جراحنا . يُسرينا
هذه ثورة الدفاتر .. والحبر .. فكونوا على الشفاه لحونا

Rain on us heroism and loftiness

And wash away our ugliness ... Wash it away.

Do not fear Moses, or Moses' magic

And prepare yourselves to pluck olives.

This Jewish age is an illusion

Which will collapse, if we have belief in ourselves

* * *

Madmen of Gaza - a thousand greetings

To the madmen, if they liberate us.

The age of political sense has departed

Long ago, so teach us madness.

امطرونا .. بطولة وشموخاً واغسلونا من قبحنا .. اغسلونا
لا تخافوا موسى .. ولا سحر موسى واستعدوا لتقطفوا الزيتونا
إن هذا العصر اليهودى وَهْمٌ سوف ينهار، لو ملكنا اليقينا

● ● ●

يامجانين غزة .. الف اهلاً .. بالمجانين .. إن هُمُ حررونا
إن عصر العقل السياسى .. ولّى من زمان، فعلمونا الجنونا ..

نزار قبانى
جنيف ١٩٨٨/١/٢١

57. AN HONORARY DEGREE IN THE CHEMISTRY OF STONES

I

He throws a stone
Or two.
Cuts the serpent of Israel in half
Chews the flesh of tanks
And comes to us ...
Without hands
In moments
Land appears above the clouds
And a country is born in two eyes.
In moments
Haifa appears,
Jaffa appears
Gaza comes in the waves of the sea
Jerusalem shines
Like a minaret between two lips ...

دكتوراه شَرَف في كيمياءِ الحَجَر

١

يرمي حَجَراً . .
أو حَجَرينْ .
يقطعُ أفعى إسرائيلَ إلى نصْفَيْنْ .
يمضغُ لَحْمَ الدبَّاباتِ،
ويأتينا . .
من غير يَدَينْ .
في لَحَظَاتٍ . .
تظهرُ أرضٌ فوق الغَيْمِ ،
ويولَدُ وَطَنٌ في العَيْنَيْنْ .
في لَحَظَاتٍ . .
تظهرُ حيفا .
تظهرُ يافا .
تأتي غَزَّةُ في أمواج البحرِ .
تُضيءُ القُدْسُ ،
كمِئْذَنَةٍ بين الشَفَتَيْنْ . .

II

He draws a horse
From the ruby of dawn
And enters
Like Alexander with the two horns.
He wrenches off the doors of history,
Brings to an end the age of the Assassins
Locks the market of the pimps
Cuts off the hands of the mercenaries
And throws the heritage of the People of the Cave ٢
From his shoulders ...
In moments
The olive trees become pregnant
Milk flows in the breasts ...
He draws a land in Tiberias,
Sows two ears of wheat in it.
He draws a house above Carmel

يرسُمُ فَرَساً . .
من ياقُوت الفجرِ . .
ويدخل . .
كالإسكندرِ ذي القَرْنَينْ
يخلعُ أبوابَ التاريخِ ،
ويُنْهي عصرَ الحَشَّاشينَ
ويُقْفِلُ سوقَ القَوَّادِينَ ،
ويقطعُ أيدي المرتزِقِينَ
ويُلقي تِرْكَةَ أهلِ الكَهْفِ
عن الكتِفَينْ . . .
في لَحَظاتٍ . .
تحبلُ أشجارُ الزيتُونِ ،
يَدُرُّ حليبٌ في الثَدْيَينْ .
يرسُمُ أرضاً في طَبَريَّا
يزرعُ فيها سُنْبُلَتينْ .
يرسُمُ بيتاً فوق الكَرْمِلِ

Draws a mother grinding coffee at the door,

And cups ...

In moments ... the scent of lemons attacks

And a country is born in two eyes.

III

He throws a moon from his black eyes

And may throw two moons ...

Throws a pen

Throws books

Throws ink

Throws glue

Throws drawing-books

And a paint-brush.

Maryam cries out "My son!.."

And takes him in her arms.

يرسُمُ أُمّاً . . تطحنُ بُنّاً عند البابِ
وفِنْجَانَيْنْ . . .
في لَحَظاتٍ . . تهجُمُ رائحةُ الليمونِ
ويُولَدُ وطنٌ في العينيْنْ

٣

يرمي قَمَراً من عينَيْهِ السَوْدَاوَيْنِ
وقد يرمي قَمَرَيْنْ . .
يرمي قَلَماً .
يرمي كُتُباً .
يرمي حِبْراً .
يرمي صَمْغاً .
يرمي كرَّاسَاتِ الرَسْمِ ،
وفُرْشَاةَ الألوانْ
تصرخُ مريمُ : «يا وَلَداهُ . . » .
وتأخُذُهُ بينَ الأحضَانْ .

A child falls.
In moments
Thousands of boys are born
The Gazan moon is eclipsed
In moments ...
A moon rises from Baysān[1]
A country enters the dungeon,
A country is born in two eyes.

يسقُطُ وَلَدٌ.
في لَحَظاتٍ . .
يُولَدُ آلافُ الصِبْيَانْ
يُكْسَفُ قَمَرٌ غَزَّاويٌ
في لحظاتٍ . . .
يطلعُ قَمَرٌ من بيسَانْ
يدخُلُ وَطَنٌ للزَنْزَانةِ ،
يُولَدُ وَطَنٌ في العَينَيْنْ

IV

He shakes the sand from his shoes
And enters the kingdom of water.
He opens another horizon
Creates another time
Writes a new text
Breaks the memory of the desert
Kills a language used up
From hamza to yā'

٤

ينفضُ عن نَعْلَيْهِ الرَمْلَ . .
ويدخُلُ في مملكة الماءْ.
يفتحُ أُفُقاً آخَرَ .
يُبْدِعُ زمناً آخرَ.
يكتُبُ نَصّاً آخَرَ.
يكسر ذاكرةَ الصحراءْ .
يقتلُ لغَةً مُسْتَهْلَكَةً
منذ الهمزة. . حتى الياءْ. .

---

1. See note 1, p. 119.

Opens a hole in the dictionary

Announces the death of grammar, the death of morphology.

And the death of our thoroughbred poems.

V

He throws a stone

The face of Palestine starts

To take shape like a poem

He throws the second stone

Acre floats above the water like a poem

He throws the third stone

Ramallah appears like a violet from the night of oppression

He throws the tenth stone

Until God's face appears

And the light of dawn appears.

يفتحُ ثقباً في القاموسِ ،
ويعلنُ موتَ النَحْو . . وموتَ الصَرْفِ
وموتَ قصائدنا العَصْمَاءْ . .

٥

يرمي حَجَراً.
يبدأ وجهُ فلسطينٍ
يَتَشَكَّلُ مثلَ قصيدة شِعْرْ . .
يرمي الحَجَرَ الثاني
تطفُو عكّا فوق الماء قصيدةَ شِعرْ
يرمي الحَجَر الثالثَ
تطلعُ رامَ الله بنَفْسَجةً من ليل القهرْ
يرمي الحَجَر العاشرَ
حتى يظهرَ وجهُ اللَّهِ . .
ويظهرَ نورُ الفجرْ . .

He throws the stone of revolution
Until the last
Of the Fascists of the age falls.
He throws
He throws
He throws
Until he wrenches out the Star of David
With his hands
And throws it in the sea ...

VI

The major newspapers ask about him:
"What prophet is this person coming from Canaan?
What boy
Is this person coming from the womb of sorrows?
What mythical plant
Is this person appearing from the walls?

يرمي حَجَرَ الثورةِ
حتّى يسقطَ آخرُ فاشِسْتيٍّ
من فاشِسْتِ العصرْ
يرمي . .
يرمي . .
يرمي . .
حتى يقلَعَ نَجْمةَ داوُودٍ
بيَدَيْهِ ،
ويرميها في البحرْ . .

٦

تسألُ عنه الصُحُفُ الكُبْرَى :
أيُّ نبيٍّ هذا القادمُ من كنعانْ ؟
أيُّ صَبيٍّ ؟
هذا الخارجُ من رَحِمِ الأحزانْ ؟
أيُّ نَبَاتٍ أسطوريٍّ
هذا الطالعُ من بين الجدرانْ ؟

What rivers of ruby

Have overflowed from the pages of the Qur'ān?"

The soothsayers ask about him

The Sufīs ask about him

The Buddists ask about him

The kings of the mortals ask about him

And the kings of the Jinn ask about him

Who is this child appearing

Like a red peach

From the trees of oblivion?

Who is this child fleeing

From the images of ancestors

From the lies of grandchildren

From the underpants of the Banū Qaḥṭān?

Who is this boy searching

For the flowers of love

And the sun of mankind?

أيُّ نُهُورٍ من ياقُوتٍ
فاضَتْ من وَرَق القُرآنْ . ؟

يسألُ عنهُ العرَّافُونَ .
ويسألُ عنه الصوفيُّونَ .
ويسأل عنه البُوذيُّونَ .
ويسألُ عنهُ ملوكُ الإنْسِ
ويسألُ عنهُ ملوكُ الجَانْ
مَنْ هُوَ هذا الوَلَدُ الطالعُ
مثلَ الخَوْخِ الأحمرِ . .
من شَجَر النِسْيَانْ ؟
مَنْ هُوَ هذا الوَلَدُ الطافشُ
من صُوَر الأجدادِ . .
ومن كَذِبِ الأحفادِ . .
ومن سِرْوَال بني قَحْطَانْ ؟
مَنْ هو هذا الولدُ الباحثُ
عن أزْهَار الحُبِّ . .
وعن شَمْسِ الإنسانْ ؟

Who is this boy with inflamed eyes

Like a Greek goddess?

VII

The persecuted ask about him

The oppressed ask about him

The exiles ask about him

And the sparrows behind bars ask about him.

Who is this person coming

From the pains of the candle

And from the books of the monks?

Who is this boy

In whose eyes begin

The beginnings of the universes?

Who is

This boy sowing

The wheat of the revolution

In every place?

من هو هذا الوَلَدُ المشْتَعِلُ العينَيْنِ
كآلهةِ اليُونَانْ ؟

٧

يسألُ عنهُ المضْطَهَدُونَ .
ويسألُ عنه المقْمُوعُونَ .
ويسألُ عنه المنفيُّونَ .
وتسألُ عنه عصافيرٌ خَلْفَ القُضْبَانْ
مَنْ هُوَ هذا الآتي
من أوجاعِ الشَمْعِ
ومن كُتُبِ الرُهْبَانْ ؟
من هو هذا الوَلَدُ
الْتَبْدَأُ في عَيْنَيهِ . .
بداياتُ الأكوانْ ؟
مَنْ هُوَ ؟
هذا الولَدُ الزارعُ
قَمْحَ الثورةِ . . .
في كُلِّ مكانْ ؟؟

VIII

The story-tellers write about him
And the riders tell his story
Who is this child fleeing from infantile paralysis
And the liquorice of words?
Who is
This person fleeing from the dunghill of patience
And the language of the dead?
The world newspapers ask
How a boy like a rose
Rubs out the world with rubber?
The newspapers from America ask
How a boy from Gaza
From Haifa
From Acre
From Nablus
Can turn over the lorry of history
And break the crystal of the Torah?

يكتُبُ عنه القَصَصيُّونَ ،
ويروي قصَّتَهُ الرُّكْبَانْ.
مَنْ هُوَ هذا الطفلُ الهاربُ من شللِ الأطفالِ
ومن سُوسِ الكَلِمَاتْ ؟
من هُوَ؟
هذا الطافشُ من مَزْبَلةِ الصبرِ
ومنَ لُغَةِ الأمواتْ ؟..
تسألُ صُحُفُ العالمِ ،
كيفَ صبيٌّ مثلَ الوردةِ . . .
يمحو العالَمَ بالمِمْحَاةْ؟؟.
تسألُ صُحُفٌ من أمْريكَا
كيف صَبيٌّ غَزَّاويٌّ ،
حيفاويٌّ،
عَكَّاويٌّ ،
نابُلْسيٌّ،
يقلبُ شاحنةَ التاريخِ ،
ويكسِرُ بلَّلورَ التَوْراةْ ؟؟.