THE POLITICAL POETRY OF NIZĀR QABBĀNĪ
A CRITICAL STUDY AND TRANSLATION

by

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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 ...

إيضاح إلى قراء شعرِي

... ويقول عني الأغنياء:
إني دخلت إلى مقصى النساء وما خرجت
وتطالبون بنصب مشققي
لأني عن شؤون حبيبي شعرًا كتب
بأنا لم تنجز مثل غيري بالحشيش
ولا سرقت
ولا قتلت
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.

لكني .. أحببت في وضح النهار ..
فهل تراني قد كفرت ؟؟

وينقول عنى الأغبياء :
إني أشعر بسماء .. حرجت على تعاليم السماء
من قال إن الحب عدوان على شرف السماء ؟
إن السماء صديقى ..
نبيك إذا أبكى ..
وتحكي إن ضحكتك ..
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,

وَتَزْيدُ أَنْجُمَتِهَا بَرِيقًا ..
إِنّ أَنَا يُومَانَا عَشَقَت..
مَاذا .. إِذَا غُنِيَتْ بَاسْمٍ حُبِّي؟
وَرَزَّعْتَهَا فِي كُلّ عَاصِمَةٍ
كَتَابَةً كُبْسَتَتْا ..

اسْأَلْ ذُلُّ أحْتَرَفَ المُدْجَبَةِ
مِثْلَ كُلّ الأَنْبِيَاءِ
وأَظَلْ ذُلُّ أحْتَرَفَ الطَّفُولَةِ، وَ
الْفِتَائِ ..
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 wall 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.
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.

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.
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.
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?
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
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?

وَيَهْزُونَ قُبُورَ الأُولِياءْ
عَلَّهَا تَرْزُقُهُمْ رَزَاً .. وأَطْفَالَاً ..
قُبُورُ الأُولِياءْ
وَيَمْدُونَ السَّجَاحِيَّةَ الأَنْقِيَّاتِ الطُّرُّرَ
يَتَسُلُونَ بَأْفِيَانِ نَسْمَيْهِ قَدَرٌ
وَقَضَاءٌ ..
فِي بَلَادِي ،
فِي بَلَادَ البُسْطَائِ ..
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

أي ضعف وانحلال
يُتولانا إذا الضوء تدفق
فالسجاحيد .. وآلاف السيلال
وقداح الشاي ..
والأطفال ..
تختل السيلال
في بلادي
ويكفي الساذجون
ويعيشون على الضوء الذي لا يُبصرون
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
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".
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.

٤
في ليالي الشرق لما يبلغ القدر تمامةً
تغذى الشرق من كل كرامته
ويسال
فالملايين التي تركض من غير يعوال
والتي تؤمن في أربع زوجات...
وفي يوم القيامة ..
الملايين التي لا تلتقي بالخبر إلا في الخيال
والتي تسكن في الليل يبتوا من سعال
ابداً ما عرفت شكل الدواء ..
تتردّى جنّنا تحت الضياء ..
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 "Layāli"!
That death which we call in the East "Layāli", and singing.

'Å type of modern Arab song describing the sufferings of lovers in the night. Among the best known is Umm Kulthūm's "Awwāb yā Layl".
In my country, the country of the simple people
Where we ruminate over long tawashih!
That consumption which kills the East, the long tawashih.
Our East, which ruminates over history, idle dreams
And empty legends
Our East, which looks for every heroism
In Abū Zayd al-Hilālī.

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.

Hero of the popular verse epic entitled Sirāt Abī Zayd al-Hilālī, and symbol of Arab valour and victory.
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.

"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.
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 -
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,
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 السعير
جاؤوا إلى موطنا الصغير
وطينا المصلي الصغير
فلطخوا طرابنا
и أعدموا نساءنا
ويضموا أطفالنا
ولا تزال الأمم المتحدة
ولم يزل مبانيها الخطيئة
يبحث في حرية الشعوب
وحق تقرير المصير
والمحترمة المجردة

وووو
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 recruited 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.

فلذيذَّكِر الصَّنّارُ  
العربُ الصَّنَّارُ حيث يُوجَّدُونَ  
من وُلدا منهم، ومعن (سيَلُدُونَ)  
قصة إرهابية مجهولة  
بدعُنها (راشيلى)  
حلت محل أمي المُدَّدة  
في أرض يبارَّنا الخضراء في الجليل  
أمٌّ أتا الذِّيحة المُستَشُهدة  
وليذَّكِر الصَّنَّارُ  
حِكَاية الأُرْض التي ضيِّعَها الكبار  
والأمَّ المُتَحَّدة  
٠٠٠٠٠
I write for the children
The story of Beersheba, Latrūn, 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 Nuwar
My own sister, who was dishonoured,
My sister, whose unavenged wound
Still awaits
For one day of vengeance,
A day of vengeance
At the hand of the children
A *fidā'i* generation of children
Who know about Huwär
Her long hair,
And her grave lost in the wilderness,
More than the adults know.

---

'The word *fidā*' means "self-sacrifice". The adjective from this, *fidā'i*, 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?
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
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!"
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.

... وماتَ والدي الرحيم
بطَلْقَة سَدَّهَا كلْبٌ من الكلاب
عليه ، ماتَ والدي العظيم
في الوطن العظيم
وكفته مشدودة شدًا إلى التراب
فليذكِر الصغار
العرب الصغار حيث يوجدون
من وُلِدُوا منهم .. ومن سيُلدُون
ما قيمة التراب
لأن في انظارهم معركة التراب ...
1900
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.

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.
Second letter

30.10.1956

This letter, father

Is from Port Said.

A new order

For my first battalion, to begin the battle

The paratroops have landed behind our lines ...

A new order.

الرسالة الثانية

1956/10/30

هذى الرسالة يا أبي ..
من بور سعيد
أمر جديد
لكتيبتي الأول، بدء المعركة
هبط المظليون خلف خطوطنا ..
أمر جديد ..
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 كأرزال الجراد،
كسرّب غربان ميّدٍ
النصف بعد الواحدة
وعليّ أن نهي الرسالة
أنا ذاهبٌ منّي
لأردَّ قطاع الطريق، وسالي حريّتي
لكّ
للجميع...
نحيّي...
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
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.
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.

ملاحظة الملاحظة الرابعة
1956/11/1

مات الجرادْ...
أبناهُ، مات كل أسراب الجرادْ
لم تبقى سيدةٌ ...
ولا طفلٌ ...
ولا شيخٌ قعيدٌ
في الريف، في المدن الكبيرة،
في الصعيد..
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.

إِلَّا وَشَارَكْتِ يَا أُبي
في حَرْقِ أَسَرَابِ الجَرَاءُ
في سَحْقِهِ
في ذِبَحِهِ حَتَّى الْوَرِيدُ
هَذِهِ الرِّسَالَةُ ؛ يَا أُبي ؛ مِنْ بُورُ سَمِيدٍ
مِنْ حِيْثُ تَمْنَزْجُ الْبَطُولَةُ بَالْجَراحِ وَالْحَدَبُ
مِنْ مَصْنَعِ الأَبْطَالِ أَكْتَبْ يَا أُبي ؛
مِنْ بُورُ سَمِيدٍ...
Name: Jamila 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.

Jamila Bouhired (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'an
And a woman in the light of dawn
Recalling as if making a confession
Verses with a mournful resonance
From the Sūrat Maryam¹
And al-Fāth²
II

Name: Jamīla Bu 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?

North Africa.
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.

1Robert 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 Jamila Bü Hayrad,
They and freedom, will meet again.

القيود يعض على القدمين
وسجائر تطفأ في النهدين
ودم في الأنف...
وفي الشفتين...
وجراح جميلة بو حُبر...
هي والتحرير ... على موعد...
A guillotine is erected, and the evil men
Amuse themselves with an unclothed woman
And Jamīlā, 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... 0 shame.
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
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!
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?
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?
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?
What of the tattoo on your hands?
What of the holes in your tents?
You with the cracked feet, O slave of 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?

وأين الوشم فوق بديك؟
أين تقرب عيناك؟
أبا مشفق القدمين.. يا عبد الفعالانك.
ويا من صارت الزوجات بعضا من هواياتك.
نكدستهن بالعشرات فوق فراش لذاتيك..
نحتطهن كالحشرات...
في جدران صالائك..
منى تفهم؟
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?

إِنْ تَأْمَلْ أَفْكَارَيْنَ غَرِيبًّا عَنْ مِنَاخَكْ
وَأَبَا مَنْ فِرَّقَ الإِقْطَاعُ فِي ذَرَّاتٍ ذَرَّاتِكَ
وَبَا مَنْ تَخْجِلُ الْصَّحْرَاءَ حَتَّىٰ مِنْ مَنَادَاكِ
مَتْىٰ تَفَهَّمْ؟
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.
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'âns,
And its banners had not been raised
Over the dismembered corpses of your banners.
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?
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.

The "setback" was the name officially used in the Arab world for the defeat of 1967 (as opposed to the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948).
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.
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.
Because what we feel
Is greater than our pages
We cannot help being ashamed of our verses.
If we lose wars, it is not surprising,

Because we enter them

With all the oratorical gifts which the Easterner possesses,

With heroic epics¹ which never killed a fly.

Because we enter them

With the logic of the drum and the ṭabāba².

---

¹Literally "Antarîyyât", the verse epics celebrating the heroic deeds of "Antar (more correctly "Antara") al-"Absî, the pre-Islamic hero, poet and lover of "Abla, the champion of his tribe.

²A 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.
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.
By means of the reed-flute and the mizmār\textsuperscript{1}

Victory does not come about

\textsuperscript{1}A wood-wind instrument similar to a clarinet.
Our improvisation cost us
Fifty thousand new tents.
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.

A reference to the Qur'ân, Sūrat al-Anfāl, verse 10 and Sūrat al-Rūm, verse 5.
It hurts me to hear the news in the morning.
It hurts me
To hear the barking.
XII

The Jews did not enter by our borders
But simply
Crept in like ants through our faults.

ما دَخَلَ اليهودُ من حُدُودُنا
وإِنَّمَا ..
تَسْرَبُوا كَالْنَّملَ مِن عَيْبَيْنَا ..
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.

1

خمسة آلاف سنة...
ونحن في الجَرَّدَاب
ذَفَونا طويلة
نُقودنا مجهولة
عيوننا مرافي، الذِّباب...

1 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,
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.

أَنْ تَزْرَعُوا الْحُرُوفَ ..
والرُّمَانَ ..
والأَعْبَابَ ..
أَنْ تُبِّيِّنُوا إِلَى بَلَادِ الثَّلَجِ وَالضَّبَابِ ..
فَالْنَاسُ يِجْهَلُونَكُمْ ..
فِي خَارِجِ الْجِرْدَابِ
الْنَّاسُ يَحْسَبُونَكُمْ ..
نوعًا مِنَ الْذِّيَابَ ..
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"?

'A popular ritual which is employed to cast out demons (ṣafārit) 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.

2Qur'ān, Sūrat Al-İmran, verse 110.
Our oil, gushing in the deserts,
Could have become a dagger
Of flame and fire
But,
To the shame of the nobles of Quraysh¹
And the shame of the noble men of Aws² and Hizār³
It IS poured beneath the feet of slave-girls.

¹Quraysh: the tribe of the Prophet.
²Aws: one of the two main tribes of Medina, the first capital of the Islamic state.
³A major Arab tribal grouping, which included Quraysh and many other northern tribes.
We run in the streets
Carrying ropes under our arms,
Killing indiscriminately,
Smashing glass and locks,
Praising like frogs
And reviling like frogs.
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.

نجعل من أقراننا أبطالا
نجعل من أشرافنا أندلآا
نراقُ البطولة ارتجالا
نغد في الجوامع
تابلاً، كباباً
نَشْطِرُ الأبيات، أو نؤلفُ الأمثال
وتشجع النصر على عدونا
من عندي تعاَلِى...
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
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

نريد جيلا غاضبا
نريد جيلا يَفْتَلَحُ الآفاق
وينكش التاريخ من جذوره
وينكش الفكر من الأعمق
نريد جيلا قادما مختلف الملامح
لا يغفر الأخطاء .. لا يسامح
لا يحن .. لا يعرف التفاؤل ..
نريد جيلا .. رائدا .. عملاق ..
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.
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 أيها الأطفالُ :
أنتمُ بَعْدَ طَيْبٍ
وَطَاهُرٍ كَالَّدَى وَالَّلُّجَاءَ طَاهُرٍ
لا تُقْرَأَوا عَنْ جِيلِنا المَهْزُومِ ، يا أَطْفَالُ
فَنَحْنُ خَائِبُونَ
وَنَحْنُ مَخْجُورُونَ
وَنَحْنُ مَخْجُورُونَ ..
مَخْجُورُونَ ..
مَخْجُورُونَ كَالَّتَيَاءَ ..
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 أخبارنا
لا تقبلوا أفكارنا
لا تقتموا آثارنا
نحن جيل القيء.. والزهرى.. والسعال...
نحن جيل الدجال، والرقص على الجبال
يا أيها الأطفال:
يا مطر الربيع ، يا سنابل الآمال
أنتم بذور الخصب في حياتنا العميقة
وأنتم الجيل الذي سيهزم الهمزه..
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,
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 تصير بَلدَةً بَاسِرَها
 مَصيَّدةً .. والناس كالفتان
 وتُصْبحُ الجُرَائِدُ المُوجَّهَةُ
 أوراق نَعْيُ مَّلا الحيطان
 يَمُوتُ كُل شِيء ؟ ..
 يموت كل شيء ..
 الماء ، والنبات ، والأصوات ، والألوان
 تهاجر الأشجار من جُذورها
 يهرَبُ من مكانه المكان
 وينتهي الإنسان
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.
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.
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,
Everything falls
The sun
The stars
The mountains
The valleys
The night, the day, the seas, the coasts
God
And man.
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,
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,
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 wombs
Women miscarry
And the sun falls on our squares
Like a black gallows.

وحبة القمح التي نأكلها
تأتي بمرسوم من السلطان
وقطرة الماء التي نشربها
تأتي بمرسوم من السلطان
حين تسير أمها بأسها
ماشية تتغلف في زرية السلطان
يختنق الأطفال في أرحامهم
وتجهض النساء
وتسقط الشمس على ساحاتنا
مشتقة سوداء..
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 'Uthmān's shirt', in which you traded

When the Caliph 'Uthmān (577 - 656) was murdered, his relative Xuʿāwiya (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 'Uthmān's killers. In conversational Arabic, the "shirt of 'Uthmān" 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.

طُوبَي لكُم ..
على يديكم أصبحت حدودنا
من ورق ..
فألَفْ تَشْكُرٍ ..
على يديكم أصبحت بلادنا
المرأة مباحة ..
فألف تشكر ..
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
Fayrûz's 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

A well-known Lebanese singer. The words are taken from one of her songs which became popular after the 1967 war.
²This is derived from the Qur'ân, Sûrat al-Baqara, verse 156. The saying is one used when one is faced with catastrophe.
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.
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.
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
"Fâṭima sends her greetings to her father"

"Khâlid asks about his uncles in Gaza,
And where are they living?"

"Nafîsa has had her baby"

"Sâmîr has got his certificate of competence"

"So reassure us about yourselves,
Our address is camp number ninety"
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.
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".

'Ve shall return to God'.

ونحنُ قانعونَ...
بالحربِ قانعونَ... والسلام قانعونَ...
بالحر قانعونَ... والبرد قانعونَ...
بالعقم قانعونَ... والنسل قانعونَ...
بكل ما في لوعيّة المحفوظ في السماء...
قانعونَ...
وكل ما تملك أن تقوله: "إِنِّا إِلَى اللَّهِ لِرَاجِعُونَ..."

'The Preserved Tablet is the original of the Qur'an preserved in Heaven.'
The theatre has burned down to its foundations
But the actors have not, yet, died.

1968
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?

الإجابة

١

من قتل الإمام؟
المخترعون يملأون غروفي
من قتل الإمام؟
أحدية الجنود فوق رفتي
من قتل الإمام؟
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.

'A long outer garment, open in front, and with wide sleeves, worn by dervishes.
Who killed the Imam?

Fully-armed soldiers go in

Fully-armed soldiers go out:

Reports,

Tape recorders,

Photographers ...
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?
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?
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 واحد من بنيكم
أدمَّنَ مسكنى الشام؟
رواى ماء الشام ..
كواها عيش الشام ..
تأكدوا يا سادي
لن تجدوا في كل أسواق الورود، وردة كالشام ..
وفي دكاكين الحلي جميعها ..
لؤلؤة كالشام ..
لن تجدوا ..
مدينة حزينة المدينين مثل الشام ..
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.
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 rukū and sujūd',
Standing up and sitting down.

1Various postures in Islamic prayer. The rukū 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"
And thus, respected gentlemen
I have spent twenty years
Living in a sheep-pen
Grazing like a sheep
Sleeping like a sheep
Uriminating like a sheep
Going round like a bead on the Imam's prayer-beads,
Without a mind
Or a head
Or feet.
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.
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.
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.
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.

كلُّ الذين يطلبون الرزق من دُكَانة الإسلام
فَتَلَّتْ إِذْ فَتَلَّتْهُ..

بَا سَادِتِي ال كِرَامُ
كُلَّ الذين منذ ألف عام
يُرْثَونَ بالكِلامُ...

١٩٦٨
10. FATH

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,

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.
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.
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.
O Fath, 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.
O Fath, our beautiful horse

Which bears Baysan¹ 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 Fath, we are Mecca,

Awaiting the Messenger.

¹A town in Palestine, in the Jordan Valley. It has been part of Israel since 1948.
IV

O Fath, 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
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 ننزل نقعد من سنين
على رصيف الأمم المتحدة
نشحذ من جلائها الحليب .. والطحين ..
والذل .. والسردين .. والملابس المتسعمالة ..
ولم ننزل ممتع ساذجين
حكمتاألفضلائه :
( الصبر مفتاح الفرج )
إن الرصاص وحده
لا الصبر مفتاح الفرج.
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 -

be killers.

يا ربنا:

نرفض أن نكون بعد اليوم طَيِّبينَ،
فالطيبين كلهم أنصار ميتين
هم سرقوا بلادنا ..
هم قتلوا أولادنا
فاعمج لنا يا ربنا
نكون قاتلين ..
O vengeance

We refuse to be meek like sheep

O drum

O Zārī'

O qāṭī'

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.

ٍنَفْسٍ أَن نَكُونَ كَالْخَرَافِ وَادْعِينُ
ٍبَأْ طَبَّلْنَا ..
ٍبَأْ زَازْرَنَا ..
ٍبَأْ قَانِنَا ..

نَفْسٍ أَن نَقْلَ مُسْتَوَلِينَ .. دَائِخَينَ
ٍبَأْ شَيْعَرَنَا كُنْ غَاضِبًا ..
ٍبَأْ شَيْعَرَنَا كُنْ غَاضِبًا ..
ٍبَأْ عَقْلُنَا كُنْ غَاضِبًا ..
ٍفَعَصْرُنَا الَّذِي نَعِيشُ عَصرُ غَاضِبِينَ
ٍبَأْ حَقَّدَنَا .. كُنْ حَارِقَا ..
ٍكَيْ لَا نَصِيرُ كُلُّنا قَطْعٍ لِأَجَّيْنِ ..

---

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.
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.
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.
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.

شُرَةَةُ الأرض المُحتلة•
يا أجمل طير يأتينا من ليل الأسر•
يا خزانتُ شفاف العينين•
نقيًا مثل صلاة الفجر•
يا شجرة الورد الثابت من أحشاء الجمر•
يا مطرًا يسقط رغم الظُلم، ورغم الفجر•
نتعلّم منكم•
كيف يغذى الغارق من أعماق البحر•
نتعلّم كيف يسير على قدميه القمر•
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!
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?

شُعْرَيْاَءُ الأُرْضِ المَحْتَلَةُ
يا ضوء الشمس المارد من ثقب الأبواب
يا قُرْعَ الطبل القادم من أعمق الغاب
يا كُلُّ الأسماء المَحَفَّزُةُ في ريش الأهداف
ماذا تخبركم يا أحباب؟
عن أذب النَكْسَةِ ..
شعري النَكْسَةِ ..
فَكْرُ النَكْسَةِ ..
يا أحباب ..
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 منذ حزيران .. نحنُ الكتاب ..
نتمطّلُ فوق وسائلنا ..
نهو بالصرّف وبالإعراب ..
يضا الإرهابُ جماجمنا ..
ونقّبُ أقدامَ الإرهاب ..
نركبُ أحصنةً من خشب ..
ونقاطل أشباحا ..
ونسراه ..
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's taken captive,

And do we call ourselves writers?

'Salāh 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 Hīṭṭīn in July 1187 and recaptured Jerusalem in October of the same year. He died in Damascus in 1193, where his tomb still stands.
Mahmūd 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.

‘These poets who emerged after the 1967 war, are known collectively as shuṭarā‘  
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 المُحتلة
ما زالَ دراويشُ الكلمة
في الشرقِ، يُكْشُونَ حماما
يحسونَ الشاي الأخضرَ.. يبترُونَ الأحلاما ..
لو أن الشعراء لدينا، يقفنَ أمام قصائدكم
لَبَدْوَا أقراما .. أقراما ..

1968
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 Muhammad
In you, and about Jesus,
O Jerusalem, O city who spreads the fragrance of prophets
O shortest path between earth and heaven.
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?
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 قُدسُ .. يا مدينة الأحزان
يا دمعة كبيرة تجول في الأفان
من يوقف العذابان؟
عليكَ، يا لؤلؤة الأديان
من يغسل الدماء عن حجارة الجدران؟
من ينقذ الإنجيل؟
من ينقذ القرآن؟
من ينقذ المسيح ممن قتلوا المسيح؟
من ينقذ الإنسان؟
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.
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.

\begin{align*}
\text{منشورات فندائية}
\text{على} & \text{جدران إسرائيل}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{لَن تَجِلَّوْا من شَعْبِنا}
\text{شَعْبُ هُنَا وَحْرُنا}
\text{فَنَحْنُ بَاقُونَ هَنا ..}
\text{في هذه الأرض التي تلبس في مَعَصِمِها}
\text{إِسْوَارَةً} \text{من زَهْرٍ ..}
\text{فهِذه} \text{بلادُنا}
\text{فيها وَجِدَنا منذ فَجَر العُمَرَ}
\text{فيها لَبُسْنا ..} \text{وعَشَْيْنا ..}
\text{وكتنا الشَّعر ..}
\end{align*}

\footnote{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.

مَسْرَعُونَ نحنُ في خُلُجانها
مثل حشيش البحر
مَسْرَعُونَ نحنُ في تاريخها
في خُبْرَها المَرْفُوقِ.. في زينتها
في نسحها المُصْرَعِ..
مَسْرَعُونَ نحنُ في وجدانها
باقونَ في آذارِها ..
باقونَ في نَسَانِها ..
باقونَ كالحَنْتَر على صُلْبَانِها
باقونَ في نَبِيّها الكريم، في قُرآنيها
وفي الوصايا العشر ..
Do not be drunk with victory
If you kill Khālid
‘Amr will come
And if you crush a rose
The perfume will remain.

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-Valīd (d. 642), the conqueror of Syria from the Byzantines, and ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (574 - 664), the conqueror of Egypt.
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.

لأن موسى قطعت يداه.
ولم يعد ينقي فن السحر.
لأن موسى كبرت عصاها.
ولم يعد بوعيه.
شق مياه البحر.
لأنتم لستُم كأمريكا.
ولسنا كالهنود الحمر.
فسوف تهلكون عن آخركم.
فوق صحاري مصر...
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.
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.
From the leaves of the Qur'an 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.
VI

You will never get any rest with us..

Among us every man who is killed

Dies thousands of times.
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.

 إنْبِهَا ..
 إنْبِهَا ..
 أَعْمِدَةُ النُّورِ لَهَا أَظافِرٌ
 وَالشَّبايْكِ عَيْنَاتُ عَشْرٍ
 وَالموتُ في انتظارُكَمْ
 في كُلَّ وجهٍ عَلَيْهِ .. أو لَفْسِهِ .. أو خَصِرَ ..
 الموتُ مخْبِئٌ لَكُمْ
 في يِبْطُ كُلَّ امرأَةٍ ..
 وَخُصَلَةٌ من شَغْرَ ..
VIII

O children of Israel, do not be seized 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.

يا آلل إسرائيل، لا يأخذكم الغرور
عقارب الساعة إن توقفت لا بدين أن تدور...
إن اغتصاب الأرض لا يخفينا فالريش قد يسقط من أجنحة النسور
والعلول الطويل لا يخفينا فاما يبقى دائما في باطن الصخور
هزمتهم الجيوش إلا أنكم لم تهموا السور قطعتم الأشجار من رؤوسها
وظلت الجذور...
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',
Al-Ḥajjāj\(^2\) will come out one night
And al-Mansūr\(^3\) will come out.

\(^1\) The Muslim equivalent of the pulpit, from which the sermon (khutba) is delivered.
\(^2\) Governor of Iraq (665 - 714) under the Umayyad Caliphs "Abd al-Kalik (646 - 705) and al-Valīd (668 - 715).
\(^3\) The second "Abbasid Caliph (714 - 775), who founded Baghdad in 762.
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.

إنَّتَظَرُونا دائمًا ..
في كلٍّ ما لا يُنتَظَرُ
فنحنُ في كُلٍّ المطارات ..
وفي كُلٍّ بطاقات السفر ..
نطلع في روما .. وفي زوريخ ..
من تحت الحجر ..
نطلع من خلفي التماثيل ..
وأحواض الزهر ..
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 'Umar'.

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.

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 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.
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.
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-Qays¹ and in the verse of Abū Tammām²,
Shall remain in the lips of those we love,
Shall remain in the articulation of speech.

¹The 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.
²Ninth century poet and anthologist (795 - 845) of Syrian origin, he wrote poems in praise of a number of Caliphs and viziers, in particular the Caliph al-Mu'taṣim (795 - 842), who took him on his famous expedition against Amorium (838).
We shall meet again when sunset come
We shall meet again in Tel Aviv

"Victory from God, and a near conquest".

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

"Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Saff, 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 أولادٍ سيكبرون.. 
للرِجَحُ الطويلٍ، أولادٍ سيكبرون.. 
لمَنْ في فلسطين صغارٌ سوف يكبرون.. 
للأرض.. للحارات.. للأبواب.. أولادُ سيكبرون.. 
وهؤلاء كلُّهم.. تجمعُوا منذ ثلاثين سنة.. 
في غرف التحقيق.. في مراكز البواب.. في السجون.. 
تجمعْوا كالدم في العيون.. 
وهؤلاء كلُّهم.. 
في أي.. أي لحظة.. 
من كل أباب فلسطين سيدخلون..
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, 1
You will leave the bank of the Jordan
You will leave by force of arms."

---

1 The story is mentioned in Qur'an, Surat 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.
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,
Shall remain in the love-poems,
In the battle-poems,
Shall remain in poetry, and in the aziāl',
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 küfiyya, and the "iqāl".
Shall remain in the manliness of the horse, and the manliness of the horseman,
Shall remain in the mihbāl\(^6\) and the coffee-beans
And in the greetings of men to men.

\(^1\)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 küfiyya is the typical chequered Arab headdress, and the "iqāl" is the heavy cord which holds it in place.
\(^5\)The mihbāl is a kind of large mortar, 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.
Ninety million Arabs
Are angry over the horizon
Beware of their vengeance
When they appear from the magic bottle.
Because Hārūn al-Rashīd' 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 Baysān²
Because Hārūn al-Rashīd is a cowardly rabbit
We have made his palace the headquarters of the general staff.

²See note 1, p.119.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

أطلَعُ من صوت أبي ..
من وجه أمي ، الطيب ، الجذاب ..
أطلَعُ من كل العيون السود .. والأهداب ..
ومن شبابك الحبيبات ..
ومن رسائل الأحباب ..
أطلَعُ من رائحة التراب ..
فتح باب منزلي ..
أدخلْه .. من غير أن أنظر الجواب ..
لأنني أنا السؤال والجواب ..
You are besieged by rancour and hatred
And from here, the army of Abū 'Ubayda
And from here, Mu'āwiya².
Your peace is torn to shreds,
Your house is surrounded
Like the house of any prostitute.

⁠¹Abu 'Ubayda (584 - 693) was responsible for completing the conquest of Syria after the dismissal of Khālid b. al-Valīd by ʿUmar.
²Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (603 - 680) was the first Caliph of the Ummayad dynasty, who came to power after the defeat of ʿAlī and established his capital at Damascus.
We shall come,

With our black and white küfiyyas'

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-Ḥusayn2 we come

From the grief of Faṭima al-Zahrā'3.

---

1 See note 4, p. 157.
2 al-Ḥusayn (d. 680) was the youngest of the four Caliphs of the 1st and 2nd Umayyad Caliphates. He was the son of al-Ḥasan, the second son of the Prophet Muhammad, and 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 Mu'tawwila, during an unsuccessful attempt to arouse a revolt against the Umayyads.
3 Faṭima al-Zahrā' (632 - 605) was the daughter of the Prophet and Khadija, wife of ʿAlī and mother of al-Ḥusayn.
From 'Uḥud we come, and from Badr'.
And from the sorrows of Karbalā'.
We shall come, in order to correct history and all things
And we shall expunge the letters in the streets with Hebrew names.

'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.

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.'
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.

Written for the Palestinian Resistance leaders Kamāl Nāṣir, Kanāl ʿAdwān, and Abū Yūsuf al-Ḥajjār and his wife, who were murdered in their houses in Verdun Street, Beirut in April 1973.
Why do they call it a funeral ceremony?

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

Umm Yusuf', 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,

---

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?
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?
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?
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.
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 Bekaa²
And enjoying the sun of our magical coasts,
While Palestine, between the Ocean and the Gulf,
Was looking for an unoccupied room.

¹The 1985 edition omits the following three lines:
Abusing every great man
Every small man
And all the governments and régimes

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

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

⁴'A reference to Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Sāffāt, verse 46.
²The 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-Rahmān'
And al-Fath.²
And assassinate Jesus.
We shall give you an Arab passport
With its return visas cancelled.

فلماذا تتردُّ؟
سوف ننسيك فلسطين...
و تستغِّل من عينيك أشجار الدموع
و سُلْطِي سورة (الرحمن).
(الفتح).
و نغتال يسوع
و سُعِطلك جوازاً عربيًا
شُطِّيت منه إشارة الرُجُوع ...

¹The 55th Sūra of the Qur'ān
²The 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 desert, we have forgotten him,
And whoever has died, has died.

ما تُهم السنوات؟
إن كل المدينة الكبرى من النيل إلى نهر الفرات
ما لها ذكراً أو ذكريات.
كل من سافر في النهر، نسياه.
ومن قد مات مات.
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 communiqués
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?
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 Jarir’s satires,
And waking up to the tears of al-Khansā’.

Jarir (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-Akhtal. al-Khansā’ (575 - 664), noted female poet famous for her elegies on her brothers Sakhr and Ku‘awiya.
Ever since the seventh century
We have been outside the map of things,
Waiting for ‘Antara al-‘Absî’
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 Ma‘rûf al-Iskâfî,²

---

1Famous pre-Islamic warrior poet, author of one of the Ku‘llallaqât, who died c. 600 A.D.. He became one of the best-known Arab folk-heroes and the subject of a popular epic, the Sirat Antar.

²A hero of popular folk-tale, like Sinbad, Shâṭîr ʿHasan or Ali Baba.
The Akhbār al-Nudamā',

The anecdotes of Juḥā, ²

The Rūfūṣ 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.

1 No such work is mentioned by Brockelmann or Sāzjīn; 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 Rūfūṣ al-Shaykh’īlā Sībāh, 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 Ghatafān, and in which "Antara played a notable part.
If Najd would listen to me
And the Empty Quarter would listen to me.
I would seal the Market of 'Ukāţ 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.

'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 Khatība at midday on Friday.
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'īnith.\(^2\)

\(^1\)The Khatība is the man who delivers the Friday sermon or Khutba 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-qiṣṭ\(^*\) 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?
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.
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,
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.
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.
0 my country .. my country,
The knives of words have slaughtered you.
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.
They burst in upon us;

"Antara was selling his mount for a couple of cigarettes

Some shirts embroidered with trees

And some new shaving cream.

"Antara was selling the Jähiliyya."

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, rings, bracelets,

And eyes of Fāṭima."

---

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.
Qays still writes his poetry

While the Jews have crept into the bed of Laylā al-ʿAmiriyya.¹

Not even the neighbourhood’s dogs barked;

Not a rifle bullet was fired at the adulterer.

“Lofty honour is not safe!”²

---

¹Qays b. Mulawwah, otherwise known as Majnūn Laylā, (d. 688) a semi-legendary poet of the Umayyad period, who composed platonic (ʿUdhri) love-poetry to his beloved Laylā (al-ʿAmiriyya).

²Part of the first hemistich of a line of al-Mutanabbi; 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.
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 cafes are full again,
And conversation is furious:
- 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.

- إن الجريمة عاطفية
- إن النساء جميعهن مُعاصيرات والشريعة عندنا ضدَّ الضحيَّة
- يا سادي.. إن المخطط كلُّه من صنع أمريكا، وبترول
- الخليج هو الأساس، وكلّ ما يبقى أمرٌ جانبي
- مُتعونة أم السياسة... نحن نحبَّ أزفلور
- والوسكي بالثلج المكشر، والمغْرَظُ الأجنبي
- إن النساء بنصف عقلي.. والشريعة عندنا ضدَّ الضحيَّة
- .......
- .......
- كل القوانين القديمة والحديثة عندنا ضدَّ الضحيَّة
The Arab world swallows its tablet (a live broadcast)

"How wonderful is patience, how wonderful!"

And the Arab world

Laughs at the Jews advancing on it

From beneath its fingernails.

A line from a song of Umm Kulthüm in praise of those who are patient.
June comes and goes,
Al-Farazdaq plants a knife in Jarīr's' 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)

---

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 شيء مثل (الجين) بالليمون .. في زمن الحروب ..
وأجمل الأنداء، في اللُّمس، الملي .. المُستديرة ..
(الناطق الرسمي يعلن أنهم طافوا بأسواق المدينة، واشتروا صحفا وتفاحا .. وكانوا يرقصون (الجيرك) في حقد، ويتقاتلون كل الراقصين ..)
- إن السويدات أحسن من يمارس الموهَي ..
- الجنس في ستوكهولم يشرب كالنبيذ على الوالدين ..
- الجنس يقرأ في السويد مع الجرائد ..
(The official spokesman announces in a subsequent communique:
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.
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.

قرَرتْ يَا وَطَنِي اغْتِيَالَكَ بِالسَّفَرِ ..
وَحَجَّرَتْ تَذَكَّرِي ،
وَوَوَدَّعَتْ السِّنَابِيلَ ، والجِدَالِ ، والشَّجَرَ ،
وَأَخَذَتْ بِمَزْيَةُ نِسَايَةِ الحَقْوَلِ ..
أَخَذَتْ إِمْضَاءَ السَّفَرِ ..
وَأَخَذَتْ وَجْهَ حِبَيْبِي ..
وَأَخَذَتْ رَائِحَةُ المَقْرِرَ ..
قَلِي عَلَيْكَ .. وَأَنتَ يَا وَطَنِي
تَنَامُ عَلَى حَجْرٍ ..
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.
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-Khalîl's measures.'

'Al-Khalîl b. 'Ahmad al-Farâhîdî (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 role of the Sultan's clown is an impossible one.
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.

الحاكم والعصفور
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!

أَنَجَوَّلُ في الوطن العربي
وليس معي إلا دفتر..
یرسيلي المختر للمحتر..
یرميي العسكر للعسكر..
وأنا لا أحمل في جيب إلا عصفور.
لكن الضابط يرقيق
ويريد جوازاً للعصفور
نحتاج الكلمة في وطني
لجواز مُرْوَّر!!
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".

أبقى مَرْفَقًا ساعاتٍ ..
مُنتظراً قُرْمان الأمور
أتَمَلُ في أكباش الرمل،
وَدُمِي في عيني بحورٍ
وأمامي، ارتفعت لفيفة
تتحدث عن (وَطْنٍ واحِدٍ) ..
تتحدث عن (شَعْبٍ واحِدٍ) ..
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.

والأنّا، كالجُرُدُزِ، هُنا قاعِدُ
انقيّائي أحزاني ..
أودوس جميع شعارات الطُّباشيرُ
وتظل على باب بلادي
مُرْمِيًا كالقدّاح المكسُورُ ..
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

¹The Takiyya is a meeting-place for dervishes.
I open my father's chest
And see nothing
But Mevlevi dervishes'
The lute .. the qānūn² .. Eastern ḥašāřif.³
The story of al-Žir⁴ on his horse,
Idlers drinking turkish coffee.
I draw my sword in anger,
Kill the ten Mu'allaqāt⁵ and the Alfiyya⁶
Kill the caves, and the tambourines,
And the foolish tombs.

"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.

²A kind of musical instrument similar to a zither.
³A type of old popular song, like the mawāl and tawshīḥ, popular in the Ottoman period.
⁴The hero who fought in the pre-Islamic Basūs wars and was fond of women.
⁵A collection of ten (or seven) outstanding pre-Islamic poems.
⁶A rhymed grammatical treatise, composed in the 13th century by the Spanish grammarian Ibn Mālik (1203 - 1274)."
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.’

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

1The ruler of Aleppo (915 - 967) and patron of the poet al-Mutanabbi.
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'an above his head
Written in Kufic letters
About Holy War for the sake of God, and the Prophet,
And the Islamic Holy Law.
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 سريرتيِ:

تباركَ الجهادَ في التحورِ...

والأنثىِ...

المعاصم الطريقةِ...

يا حضرةُ الخليفةُ...

أعبرُ من سراديق الحرم كالنبيهِ

أمشي على الأبدانِ والقلائدِ...

والأساور المرميهِ...

أمشي على توجع الحير والقطيفهِ...
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.

¹i.e. a poem whose final rhyming consonant 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.
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."

Are you really one of the Umayyads?

Go out into the street, our Prince,

And read, even a daily newspaper.

---

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?

\[\text{See note 2, p.155.}\]
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.

الخطـاـب

أَوَّلُ مُفَظْنٍ ..
وَأَنَا أُضَحْكُ كَالْمَجْنُونٍ وَحَدِي
مِنْ خَطَابٍ كَانَ يُلْقِيَ أَمِيرُ المُؤِمِنِينَ
كَلْفَنِي ضَحْكِي عَشَرَ سِنَينَ ..

1

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.
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 عني المدعي العام ..
وقال الجنود حين اعتقلوني
إني ضد الحكومة ..
لم أكن أعرف أن الضحك ..
يحتاج لترخيص الحكومة ..
ورسم .. وطوابع ..
لم أكن أعرف شيئا ..
عن غسيل المخ ..
أو قرَّم الأصابع ！
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 ،
يمكن أن يكتب الإنسان ضد الله ..
لا ضده الحكومة ..
فاعذروني ، أيها السادة ،
إن كنت ضحيت ..
كان في ودي أن أبكي ..
ولكني ضحيت ..
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"

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

"What the listeners want"

And a celebration, like "Īd al-Fiṭr, and "Īd al-Adhā, 2

Swings, pastries, rolls,

And visits to cemeteries.

---

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 on 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 Karagöz² who had a thousand tongues and a tongue.

¹Şandık al-‘alâ‘îb; 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 Abû Zayd al-Hilâlî, accompanying the pictures by a running commentary.
²Karagöz 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.

See note 1, p.178.
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.
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.
I do not understand syntax or morphology
Or "ilm al-Kalam"
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 أفهم في النحو.. وفي الصرف..
وفي عِلّم الكلام..
غير أنني لم أعد أفهم ما معنى الكلام..
لم أعد أهضم حرفًا من أكاذيب أمير المؤمنين
صارت الألفاظ مطأطًا..
وصارت لغة الحكّام صمعًا.. وعجين..

¹The scholastic theology of the early Islamic centuries. The term literally means "the science of speech" (i.e. God's speech, or the Qur'ān).
²See 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.
I was in the police-station, broken like church crystal,
Blowing the Sūrat Yāsīn' in the faces of the killers.
I had nothing but patience
- "God loves the patient" -
And my wounds were like the orchards of Jericho,
Raining rubies
And emitting the fragrance of jasmine,

كنت في المخفر مكسورة كِبلَّور كنيسة
نافخًا (سورة ياسين) بوجه القاتلين
لم أكن أملك إلا الصبر...
(وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ)
وجراحي كبساتين أريحا
يُمطرُ اليافوتُ منها...
ويضوعُ الياسمين...

1The 36th Sūra of the Qur'ān.
2Part of Sūrat Al İmran, 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.

وفلسطين على الأرض حمامة
سقطت تحت نعال المخبرين
 كنت وحدي ..
لم يزريني أحد في السجن .. إلا
جبيل الكرمل، والبحر، وشمس الناصرة
 كنت وحدي ..
 ولملك الشرق كانوا جُفتنا
 فوق مياه الذاكره ..
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" -
So may God prolong the life of the Commander of the Faithful,  
The representative of God on earth,
The chief of the just.

See note 2, p. 231.
See note 1, p. 178.
Gentlemen:

I am the inheritor of the wasteland.

Whenever I come to the Caliph's gate

Asking about Sharm al-Shaykh

Haifa,

Ramallah

And Jawlân'

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.

---

أيها السادةُ:
إِلَيْ وَارثُ الأَرْضِ الخَرَابِ
كُلَّمَا جَبَتُ إِلَى بَابِ الخَليْقَةِ
سَائَلاً عَنْ (شَرَمُ الْشَهْيْخِ)
وَعَنْ حُيِّقَا
وْرَامَ اللَّه
وَالجُولَانِ
أُهدِيْنِي خِيَاطٍ
كُلَّمَا كَلَّمَتِهِ جُلَلَ جِلَالُهُ
عَنْ حُزِيرَانَ الَّذِي صَارَ حُشْيَا
نَتِعَاطَا صِبَاحًا وَمساءً

1See note 2, p. 155.
Celebrating it like 'Īd al-Fitr and al-Adḥā'

And the memory of Karbalā',

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......"

والاحتفالاً مثل عيد الفطر والأضحى ...
وذكرى كربلاء ... 
ربى السيارة المكشوفة السفلى ، 
وعطى صدره بالأوسمة ..
ورشائي بخطاب ..
كلما ناديته : 
يا أمير البحر ، والبر ، ويا عالي الجناب
سيف إسرائيل في رفيتنا ..
سيف إسرائيل في ..
سيف إس ....

See note 2, p.224.
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.
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.

¹See note 1, p. 224.
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
From Yarmûk
From Hittîn
Will emerge from the sword of Saladin.

باهلَاء عَدُودُو

۱

۱See note 1, p.168.
۲The River Yarmûk is an eastern tributary of the Jordan, which today forms the border between Jordan and Syria. Here the Muslims under the command of Khâlid b. al-Walîd (d. 642) defeated the Byzantine army, thereby ensuring the conquest of Syria. (636 A.D.).
۳The decisive battle in which Saladin (1138 - 1193) defeated the Crusaders, thereby gaining control of Syria and Palestine (1187 A.D.). Hîttîn is a village in north-eastern Palestine.
۴See 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.

 Minh سنة العشرين
ونحن مرصوصون في محطة التاريخ
كالسّرّدين... 
با سيداني، ساذبي:
هل تعرفون ما حرية السّرّدين؟
حين يكون المرء مضطراً
لأن يقول رغم أنفيه (آمين)
حين يكون الجرح مضطراً
لأن يقبل السيكين...

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;

با سيداني ساتي: 
من سنة العشرين
نحن كالدمج في أفقتنا
ننظر في بلاه.. 
إلى خطوط سكة الحديد
افظينا حباتنا ..
مثل خطوط سكة الحديد ..
ضيقة أبنا ..
مثل خطوط سكة الحديد ..
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.¹
All kings are alike
And the old king
Is like the new king.

¹An expression borrowed from the Thousand and One Nights. This is the title by which Scheherezade addresses the king to whom she tells her stories.
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."
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,

نَقَبَحَتُ أفخاذنا...
من كثرة الجُلوس نقيحت في رأسنا الأفكار ...
وصار لحم ظهيرنا ...
جزء من الجدار ...
جاؤوا بنا ، عشرين ألف مرة تحت عويل الريح والأمطار واستأجرُوا الباصات كي ننقلنا ...
ووزعُوا الأدوار ....
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.

وعَلِمُونَا ..
 كَالْقُرُود الرِّقصَ ..
 والْعِرْفَ على المَمْرَ ..
 وَدَرْبُونَا ..
 كَكِلَابِ الصَّيد .. كَفَفْ نَنْحَيٍ
 للقَادِمِ المَسْكُونُ بالدَّهْنَةِ والأَسْرَ ..
إِذَا أَتَى القَطَّارُ ..
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;
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.'

\[\text{An allusion to a phrase which occurs repeatedly in the Qur'ān, e.g. Sūrat al-Baqara, verse 25 and Sūrat ʿAl-Īmra, verse 136.}\]
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 نَقبل يَدَهُ ...
لكَن مَنْ يَبْرِكُوا بِهَا بِوَاَللهُ ...
قالُوا بَان صوْتْهُ 
يُحَرَّكُ الأَحْجَارَ ..
وَأَنَّهُ ..
وَأَنَّهُ ..
هو العزيز .. الواحد .. الفَهَارُ ..
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...
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.

¹A 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.

فحنُ محبوسُونَ في محطة التاريخ كالخربان
أولادنا ناموا على أكتافنا...
رئاْتنا ، تسمَّنت بالفحم والدخان
والعُرَضَحالات التي نحيلها
عن كلَّة الدواء..
والغلاه..
والجْرَمان..
صادرها مراهقُ السُلطان
تعال يا غودو.. وجدف دمغنا...
واَنْقِز الإنسان من مخلب الإنسان..
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.
Come, Godot, for the rains

Refuse to visit our lands,

Trees refuse to grow tall in our ًأًٌ،

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.
For the sake of a good people
Which still, in its dreams,
Crunches stones,
Crunches the ten Mu'allagāt,¹
Old newspapers
And the news broadcast.

¹See 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

See note 2, p. 225.
The word is a tattered body
With whom the writer sleeps, and the journalist,
And with whom sleeps
The Shaykh of the mosque.

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.
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.
I have fled from ‘Amr b. Kulthûm’
And from al-Farazdaq’s Râ’iyya
I have emigrated from my voice
And from my writing,
I have emigrated from my birth,
Emigrated from the cities of salt
And from earthenware poems.

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 Mu'allaqât.

A Râ’iyya is a poem ending in the rhyme-letter râ’ (r). Qabbânî is referring to the poem beginningサーフュ_بی_ر_ر_یس_ال_فاً_بی_بازم (pp. 362 - 370 of the Dâr Sâdir edition, vol. 1).

Presumably a reference to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, used here as an allusion to the Arab world.
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 ...
I have tried to uproot you
From the birdlime of history,
From the almanac of fate,
From Qifā Nabīt
And from the worship of stones;
I have tried to raise the siege of Troy,
But the siege besieged me.

'The first two words of the Muḥallāqat of Imru' al-Qays, the most famous of the pre-Islamic poets. See note 1, p.152.
I reject you,
I reject you ...
You who have made dried dates your lord.'
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,

‘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;
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.

See note 1, p. 67.
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.
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 mut'a marriages,'
And the fiery instincts.

' A kind of temporary marriage contracted for a fixed period (the word mut'a means 'pleasure'). There was some dispute in Early Islam as to whether the practise was lawful, but today only the Shi'a accept it as lawful. Since the mut'a marriage may be regarded as not greatly different from prostitution, Qabbâni uses it here in the latter sense.
I walk with a strange face in Granada, ' 
Embracing children, 
Trees, 
And minarets turned upside down. 
Here the Almoravids took up their position² 
And the Almohades camped³ 
Here there were parties of wine and women 
And stupor, 
Here there was a bloody cloak, 
Here a gallows was set up. 

For Arabs, Granada is the symbol of the loss of al-Andalus, Islamic Spain.
The Almoravids were a dynasty of Berber origin who ruled Morocco and Islamic Spain between 1056 and 1147.
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.
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.
I

O king of the Mongols,
O inheritor of the boot and the whip
From your grandfather Ertogrul,'
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.

1

يا مَلِكَ الْمُغُولْ...
يا وَارِثَ الْجَزِمَةَ.. وَالْكَرْبَاجَ
عَنْ جَذَلَهُ أَرْطَغُولْ...
يا مَنْ تَرَاناً كَلَّنا خَيْولٌ...
تَرْكُبُهَا...
في زَفُّوْهِ الأَبْراَقَ وَالطَّبُورِ
لا فَرْقٍ مِنْ نوافذ القُصُورِ —
بَيْن النَّاسِ والْحُيْلَ...

'The father of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty.
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,
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.
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?
25. TO THE UNKNOWN ARAB SOLDIER

I

If they had been killed as you were killed
If they 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 العرفي المجهول

1

لو يقُشُّلون.. مثلما قَتِلتُ
لو يَغْرُفون أن يموتوا .. مثلما قَتَلتُ ..
لو مُدِينُو الكلام في بلادنا
قد بَذَلْوا نصْف الذي بَذَلتُ ..
لو أنْهُم من خلف طاولانيهم
قد خَرَجوا .. كما خرجت أنت ..
And had burned
In the flame of glory as you burned,
Christ would not have fallen slaughtered
On the soil of Nazareth,
Taghlib' would not have been given over to pillage
And the Kanādhira\(^2\) would not have been broken,
If they had read
- As they slept on the breasts of their mistresses -
Part of what you wrote.

\[\text{واحترفوا}.. \\
\text{في لَحَب المحب.. كما احترف..} \\
\text{لم يستفرط المسيح مذبوحاً..} \\
\text{على تراب الناصرة..} \\
\text{ولا استيقتحت تغلب..} \\
\text{وانكسر المناذرة..} \\
\text{لو قرأوا..} \\
\text{وهم ينامون على صدور مَحِيطيَّاتهم..} \\
\text{بعض الذي كتب..}..\]

\(^1\)A large and powerful tribe of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods who produced a number of poets such as 'Amr b. Kulthūm and al-Muh al-hil. 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 Hira in Iraq during the pre-Islamic period, many of whom bore the name Mundhir (pl. Kanādhira). 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!
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.

يا أشرف الفتى ..
على أقفاتنا أزهرت ..
الخطوة الأولى إلى تحريرنا
أنت بها بدأت ..
يا أيها الغارق في دمائى
جميعهم قد كذبوا ..
وانت قد صدق ..
جميعهم قد هربوا ..
ووجدك انصارت ..
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.
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 الآن بُنِثْقَيْةٌ ..
إلى فلسطين ذُوْنِي مَعْكُمْ
إلى رُبِّي حَزْيْنِ كورِجَةٍ بِجِدَلِيَةٍ
إلى القيَاب الخُضْرِ، والحجَارَة النَبِيَةٍ
عشرونَ عامًا .. وأنا ..
أَبْحَثُ عن أرْضِي .. وعن هُوَيْهَي ..
أَبْحَثُ عن بئِي الَّذِي هَنَاكْ
عن وَطِني المحاطٍ بالأَسْلَاك ..
أَبْحَثُ عن طفولي .. وعن رِفَائِ حَارَتي
عن كُتِبِي .. عن صُوْرِي ..
عن كُلِّ رِكنٍ دَافِي .. وكُلِّ مَرْحَبَي ..
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.

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.
O revolutionaries -
In Jerusalem, in Hebron, in Baysan', in the Aghwar,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.

See note 1, p.119.
²The Aghwar (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.
We raid the museums of history in darkness
And steal the horses,
The coats of mail
And the flags.
We steal Khālid's sword,
Steal the Dīwān of Abu Tammām,
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.

لصُوْصُ المتاحف

َنْسَبُو عَلَى متاحف التاريخ في الظلام
ونسرق الخيول،
والدربوع،
والعلام... نسرق سيف خالد
ونسرق ديوان أبي نعَم... نسرق المجد الذي يخصهم
ونسرق الأيام
خير لنا أن ندعم السذاجة
وتترك التاريخ في اللاجة

*i.e. Khālid b. al-Valīd, called by the prophet Sayf Allāh al-Kasālūl (the drawn sword of God). See note 1, p.139 and note 2, p.238.

*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 *samāh*-dance,¹

And think, in their ignorance, that you are

A note on the *buzuq*,²

Bottles of arrack

And *mawâls*³ sung to the morning.

---

¹The *samāh* is a type of Syrian dance in which men and women dance together; it is also a dance particular to dervishes.

²A type of musical instrument, the same as the Greek *bouzouki*.

³A 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?
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.

خطاب شخصي
إلى شهور حزيران

١

كُنْ يا حزيران انفجاراً...
في جماعتنا القديمة...
كتَسَنِ ألفَ المفرداتِ،
وكتَسَنِ الأمثالَ، والحكَمَ القديمةَ
مرَقَ عباءتنا التي بليتَ
ومرقُ جلدُ أوجَها الدميةَ...
وكنِ التغيير.. والتطرفَ...
والخروج على الخطوط المُستقيمةَ...
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..
كنَّ المسدسَ..
والجريمةَ..
من بعدمَوت الله مَشْتَوْقاً..
على باب المدينةَ..
لم يَبق للصلاة قيمةً..
لم يَبق للايمان.. أو للكفر قيمةً..
30. A POEM OF APOLOGY TO ABŪ TAMMĀM

I

My friends:

If we have come to attend a Zār² 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.

قصيدة اعتذار لأبي تمام

1

أحبائي: 

إذا جينا لتحضير حفلة للزائر ..
منها يضجر الضجر
إذا كانت طيور الشعرا، يا سادة ..
نفرقننا .. ونجمعنًا
وتعيننا حقوب النوم في فينا
وتسطونا .. وتكيرنا ..
كما الأوراق في تشرين تتكير
فإن سوف اعتذر ..

¹Delivered at the Abū Tammām Festival, Mosul, December 1971.
²See note 1, p. 67.
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.
If we are going to stay, gentlemen,
Until Judgement Day, differing about the spelling of hamza
Or a poem attributed to 'Amr Ibn Kulthūm,'
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.

See note 1, p.257.
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 ' Antar, 3
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 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 ...
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.

\[ \text{See note 2, p. 152.} \]
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.

---

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

See note 2, p. 152.
O prince of words, forgive us
For we have all betrayed the occupation of words
And have exhausted it with taḥtir, taḥlīl, taḥnīs' and description.
Abū Tammām, the fire is devouring us
And yet we still quarrel with one another
About triptotes and diptotes;¹
But the army of the occupying usurper cannot be turned away!²

¹Various forms of poetical word-play, in which an original piece of verse is expanded by the addition of other lines or part-lines.
²See note 2, p. 152.
³Types of Arabic inflectional endings.
⁴The 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 "Alī to come, or for "Umar' to come to us
But they will never come, they will never come,
For no-one conquers with anyone else's sword.

"Alī (600 - 661) was the fourth Caliph, and "Umar (584 - 644) the second.
Abū Tammām': 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?

"See note 2, p. 152."
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

¹Of the first four Caliphs, who were the Prophet's closest companions, three met a violent death.
²See note 2, p.168.
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,'
Enduring nakedness, misery and thirst alone,
While we were here, sitting cross-legged,
Selling slogans to the foolish,
Stuffing the masses with hay and straw
And leaving them chewing on the wind.

'The story of Moses is mentioned in the Qur’an, Sūrat al-Āṭrāf, verses 143-4.
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.

¹The 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, 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?

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 Báṭiniyya'¹

Who swear loyalty to our lords in the morning

And eat them when the evening comes.

¹The reference is to the Ismā'īlī sect who became famous in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the Assassins.
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.
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.'

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!
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.

---

'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.

Here is Hishām.

Here is Ziyād.

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.

وراء الجنازة سارت قريش
فهذا هشام
وهذا زياد
وهذا يريّب الدموع عليك
وسيّرّجوه، تحت ثوب الحداد
وهذا يجاجده في يومه،
وفي الصحراء يكيّ عليه الجهاد
وهذا يحاول بعذّاك ملكاً...
وبعذّاك...
كل الملوك رماد...

---

1See note 1, p. 68.

2The Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (690 – 743).

3Ziyād 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' 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.

---

¹A 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'an alone. They fought in a number of revolts against the central government before being almost wiped out.
²The northern gate of the walled city of Jerusalem, from which the road leads to Damascus.
³See note 1, p. 301.
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?

الهرم الرابع

1

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.
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.

يا مَنْ تَبْكَ عَلَى نَاصِرٍ
السَّيِّدُ كَانَ صَدِيقٌ الشَّمْسِ;
فَكُفُّوا عَنْ سَكِبَ التَّعْبَاتٍ
السَّيِّدُ مَا زَالَ هُناَ.
يَتَمَشَّى فَوَقَ جِسُورِ النَّيلِ
وَيَلْبِسُ فِي ظَلِّ النَّهْلَاتِ
ويَزُورُ الْجِيزةَ عِنْدَ الفَجْرِ
لِلَّيْلِمَ حَجْرَ الأَهْرَاماتِ
يَسَالُ عَنْ مَيْسِرَ.. وَمَنْ فِي مَيْسِرَٰ
وَيَسْتَفْقِي أَزْهَارَ السُّرْفَاتِ
Performing the Friday prayer, and the two *‘īds,*
And granting people's requests²

`Abd al-`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.

`Abd al-`Nāṣir is still here.

Who says that the Fourth Pyramid is dead?

---

¹See note 2, p. 224.
²The Friday prayer and the *‘īds* are traditional times in the Arab world for the ruler to receive petitions and to grant them if possible.
O you who ask, "Where has 'Abd al-Nūr gone?"

You who ask

"Will 'Abd al-Nūr come?"

The Lord is here among us,
Here in the loaves of bread,
In the flowers in our vases,
Written over the summer stars
And over the sands of our shores.
Here on the pages of the Qur'an,
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.
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', and the gardens of al-Qanāṭīr₂ 
From the Nile canals which you have left with sorrowful braids.

 رسالة إلى جمال عبد الناصر

هذا خطاب عاجل إليك 
من أرض مصر الطيبة 
من لياليها المشغولة بالفيروز والجواهر 
ومن مقاهي سيدي الحسين، من حدائق القناطر 
من نرع النيل الذي تركتها .. حزينة الضفائر

¹Sayyidī al-Ḥusayn is a shrine in which, the Egyptians believe, the head of al-Ḥusayn is buried. See note 2, p.167.
²District 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 خطاب عاجل إليك
من الملايين التي قد أذِنت هواك
من الملايين التي تريد أن تراك
عندى خطاب كله أشجاك
لكني يا سيدي
لا أعرف العُنان..
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.
The doves in the Azhar', 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-Bakrī² weeps for the horseman of dreams

²The district of Cairo where Fasser'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.

والصبر لا صبر له ..
واليوم لا يَتَّلَم ..
واسعة الجدار .. من ذهولها .. ضيَّعت الأيام ..
يا من سكنت الوقت ، والتاريخ ، والأيام ..
عندي خطاب عاجل ليلك ..
لكني يا سُرَّدي .. لا أجد الكلام ..
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.
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

aybe bâhâ l-mällmûl kabbâr
kâm hâzînâ kabbâr
kâm jâhînâ kabbâr
lêkââ...
nûqiyyîm bâllâh âlîyîl qaddîr
ân tâhîsîl dûmûwîlîn l-lâhidâq
ânhînîl âyêrâ...
nûqiyyîm bâllâh âlîyîl qaddîr
ân nhôfîsîl mîthâq
ânhôfîsîl thûrâ...

²Title of a book written by Nasser (Arabic al-Mîthâq).
²Perhaps a reference to Nasser's book Falsafat al-Thawra (The Philosophy of the Revolution), or possibly simply to the 1952 revolution.
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 `Abd al-Nāṣir God, what a marvellous testimony
That man should live in the time of `Abd al-Nāṣir
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.

'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.

وكنت في الحقول سنابل
وكنت عصافير .. وكان صَمْوَّر
لمستَ أمانينا ، فصارت جداً
وامطرتنا حباً .. ولا زلت تَمْتِير
تأخرت عن وعد الهوى يا حبيباً
وما كنت عن وعد الهوى تتأخر
سُهِّدنا .. وفْكَرنا .. وشاخت دموعنا
وشابت ليالينا .. وما كنت تحضر
تعودني ذكراك كل عشيقية
وبورق فكري حين فلك أفكر ..
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 flight
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.

'The Mahdī (or "The Rightly-Guided One") is a figure believed by some Muslims, particularly the Shi'a, 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.

وأنتُ أبو الثوراتِ، أنتُ وُقُودُها
وأنتُ انبثاثُ الأرضِ، أنتُ التغييرُ
نضيقُ قبورُ الميتينِ بمنْ بهـا
وفي كُلِّ يومٍ أنتُ في القبرْ نكُروُ

تأخَّرتَ عـًا .. فالجيادُ حزينًا
وسيفُكِنْ من أشواقيهِ، كادَ بكفرُ
حصانَكِ في سَبَاء يشربُ دمَـهُ
ويا لعذاب الخيلِ، إذْ تذكَّرُ
وربابكَ الخضراء، تمضغُ دربِهـا
وفوقَكِ آلافُ الأكاليلِ تضفِـرُ
You are late, and Christ is in torment
There, and Mary Magdalene's wounds are red.
The women of Palestine anoint 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', will you return
For the armies of the Byzantines forbid and command;²
Your companions in the Aghwär³ have saddled their mounts
And your army in Hitṭīn⁴ have prayed and praised God.

²Qabbānī uses this as a metaphor for the enemies of the Arabs in general.
³See note 2, p. 277.
⁴See 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 Khaybar² call upon you, my dearest one.

The willows and roses of Damascus weep for you.
And the flowers of the two Ghūtas³ and of Dummar⁴ weep for you.

¹i.e. Ṭāriq b. Ziyād (670 - 720), the first Islamic leader to set foot in Spain, sent by Muṣā b. ʿUṣayr (640 - 715), who later conquered Spain. Ṭāriq gave his name to Gibraltar (Jabal Ṭāriq).
²A highly fortified oasis to the north of Kedina, which was besieged and conquered by the Prophet in 628. For Badr see note 1, p. 168.
³The Ghūta 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 Ghūta.
⁴A 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:

دَارَكُ الْدَّارِ ۖ أَوْ حُرُّ هَامَّةٍ حُرُّ كَوْاسِفٍ ۡعَنََّ ۖ سَلَّامُ ۗ وُلْدُّ أَنَّ
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.

تَّعَالِ إِلَيْنَا .. فَالرُّوَءَاتُ أَطْرَقَتُ
وَمَوْطِنُ أَبائِي زَجَّاجٌ مُّكَسَّرٌ ..
هُرِمَتَا .. وَمَا زَلَّتَا شَيَّاتٌ قَبَائِلٌ
تَبْيِشُ عَلَى الحَقَدِ الدَّفِينِ وَتَنَأَّرٌ
Companion of Saladin', 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°, 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

---

See note 1, p. 130.
See note 2, p. 322.

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.

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: 0 land of fables, become pregnant;
Perhaps a second Christ will appear.

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

Delivered at the 9th Poetry Festival, Baghdad, April 1969.
All of my old loved ones have forgotten me
And neither Nuwär nor 'Afrā' answer me,'n
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-Ḥusayn² are part of my wounds
And in my breast, from grief, there is a Karbalā'.³

¹Nuwär was the wife of al-Farazdaq, whom he divorced at her request and afterwards longed for. 'Afrā' (d. c. 670) was the beloved of the poet 'Urwa b. Ḥizām. They were childhood sweethearts, but 'Afrā' was married to another while 'Urwa was absent and went to Syria. The names are used as symbols of Arab sweethearts.
²See note 2, p. 167.
³See note 2, p. 168.
Sorrow has long been my companion
And friends are few in our time.

Welcome, Iraq, how are the women's 'abā'āt'
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.

وثأنا الحزن من زمان صديقي
وقليل في عصرنا الأصدقاء

مرحبًا يا عراق.. كيف العبابات،
وكيف اللهاء، وكيف القلبا؟

مرحبًا يا عراق.. هل نيئني
بعد طول السنين سامراء؟

كيف أحبابنا على ضفّة النهر
وكيف البساط والندماء؟

كان عندي هنا.. أميرة حب
نُمّ ضاعت أميرتي الحسناء؟

'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-ʿAzamiyya'
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.

A suburb of Baghdad, in which al-Imām al-ʿAzām 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 'Ukáz'
Wearing green turbans
We move our heads like dervishes
While Sinai is seared by fire
Every year we come, here is Jarîr²
Singing, and here is al-Khansâ‘³.

"أَيَا حِزْرِيَّانٌ .. ما الَّذِي فَعَلَ الشِّعْرُ؟ وَمَاذَا أعْطَى لَنا الشُّعُرَاءُ؟
والدِّروَائِنُ فِي بِدَنَا طُرُوحٌ،
والتعابيرُ كُلُّهَا إِنْشَائَةٌ
كُلَّ ٍعَامٍ نَائِي لَسُوقٍ عَكْفَاظ،
وعَلِينَانَا ٍعَايَمَا ٍالْخَضْرَاءِ
وَنِهْزُ ٍالرُؤوسُ مِثْلَ الدِّروَائيَّ
وَبَالنَّاسِ تَكَتَّسَوِي سِنَانَاً ..
كُلَّ ٍعَامٍ نَائِي .. فهَذَا جَرِيرٌ
يَتَغَشَّىٓ، وَهَذَا الخَشْنَاةٓ

¹See note 1, p.185.
²See note 1, p.182.
³See 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-Khalîl and al-Farrâ' have died'
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 Mutallâqân², we have grown tired,
For even the garment may grow tired of the body

\[\text{لَمْ نَزَلَ فَلَسْتَ نَصَصْيَصُ يَقْـرَأَ وَفَلَسْتَ خَضْبَبَتِهَا الدَّمَاءُ}
\[\text{سُقِطْتُ في الوحَلَ كَلُّ الفَصَـاـحَاتِ وَمَاتَ الخَلِيلُ وَالْقَـرَأَةُ ~}
\[\text{يَا حَزَّيْرِانِ ~ أَنَّ أَكْبَرُ مَنَّا ~ أَوْبَ أَنَّ مَالِهِ أَبْنِـاءًُ}
\[\text{لَوْ مَلْكَتْ بَيْتٌ مِن إِبَاءٍ لا تَحْكُنَا ~ لَكَنَا جُبَنَـاءً ~}
\[\text{بَا عُصْوَرُ المَعْلُوْقَاتِ مَلَّنـا ~ ومن الجَـسَمِ قد يَـعْيَلُ السَـرِّيـاءً ~}

¹Two famous early Arab grammarians. Al-Khalîl (718 - 786) was famous as a lexicographer and inventor of Arabic prosody. Al-Farrâ' (761 - 822) was the most famous Kufan grammarian.
²See note 4, p.211.
Half of our poems are inscriptions, but what
Use is an inscription when the building is falling down?
The Maqâmât are a game, and al-Ḥarîrî
Is hashish, and so are the ghûl 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

The Maqâmât are a typical Arab literary genre, consisting of picturesque stories with much linguistic ornamentation. The two most famous practitioners were al-Hamadhânî (968 - 1007) and al-Ḥarîrî (1054 - 1122).
²These are used to symbolise Arab mythology. The Ghûl is a kind of evil genie, and the ‘lanqâ‘, 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

We refuse the poem that is a fortress
Protecting the darkness and the fools.
We refuse the poem as darkness and symbols
How can darkness see?
We refuse the poem as a wooden rabbit
Which has no aspiration or passions.
We refuse the idlers in the house of poetry
Their days are smoke and lassitude.
Our poetry today excavates the sun
With its hands, and everything is illuminated.
Our poetry today is attack and discovery,
Not Kufic lines¹, 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.

¹Kufic is an early form of Arabic script.
Prophets are crucified for an idea,  
So why are poets not crucified?  
The *fidā'ī* 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?

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.

من هم الأبرياء؟ نحن جميعاً
حاملو عارٍ.. ولا استثناءً
عقلنا.. فكرنا.. هزَّال أغانينا..
روائنا.. أقولنا الجُوقُنِنَا..
نُشرنا.. شعرنا.. جرائدنا الصفراء..
والحروف الإِنْساَانَاء
البطولات موقف مشرقٍ
وجوه المُمثلين طيلةً
فلسطين بينهم كم زاد
كل شارٍ يزيد حينَ ينالٍ
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 Alhambra2 was lost before it.

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.

See note 1, p.68 and note 1, p.338.
Do not call upon the men of 'Abd Shams'
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 تنادي الرجال من عبْد شمس
لا تنادي .. لم يُنبِئ إلا النساء ..
ذروة الذل أن تموت النورات
ويُنبِئ إلى الظوار العراء ..

مرَّ عامان .. والغزاة مقيمنون
وتاريخ أمتي أضحلاً
مرَّ عامان .. والسيح أسير
في يدهم .. ومرت عذراً
مرَّ عامان .. والآذان تنبكي
والنوافيس كُلها خَرَضت ..

١٠٢ 'Abd Shams is the ancestor of the Caliph 'Uthmān 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, O godfearing men.
Leave our saints in peace —
What land has been recovered by the saints?

* * *

In my mouth, O Iraq, is much water²
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.

أيها الراكعون في معبد الحَرْفِ
كُفُّانا الدُّوارُ والإَغْمَانُاءُ
مَرِقْوا جُبَّةَ الدَّراويسِ عَنْكمَ
واعْلَعُوا الصُّوفَ أيها الأنْقِيَاءُ
أَرَكُّوا أولئكُنا .. سَلَامٌ
أي أرضٍ أعادها الأولياءُ؟

بَيْنِ فَميِّي، بِعِيرَقِي، ما أَلَّكْ كَثِيرٌ
كيف يشكو من كأنَّ في يَوْهُ ما؟
زَعُمُوا أنَّى طَعِنتُ بِاللادِّي
وأنا الحَبُّ كُلُّهُ والوَفَّاءُ;

---
¹See note 1, p.101.
²The traditional material of the Sufis' attire.
³An 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.

أَيْ بَدْونَ أَن أُصِبْ نَزْيَّي؟
لا جُدَادَ أنا .. ولا مَبْغَاتَ
أنا حُرِيّي .. فإن سَرْقُوهَا
تسقُط الأرض كلها، والسُماَءُ
ما احترفت النفاق يوماً .. وشيّري
ما اشترأ الملوك والأمَّرَاءُ
كلُّ حرف كتابته .. كان سيفاً
عَرَيْيَاً، يُحَبِّ منه الضُبَاءَ
وقليلُ من الكلام نَقِيْيُ
وكثرُ من الكلام بَغَاءُ ..
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

كم أعاني مما كتبته عذاباً
وبعاني في شرقنا الشاذ
وجمع الحروف رائع.. أو تشكوك
للباطنين، وردة حرارة
كل من قاتلوا بحرف شجاعة
ثم ماتوا.. فإنهم شهداء
لا تعالىه رب، من رجولي
وعطف عنهم، لأنهم جهلاء
إن حبي للأرض حب بصير
وهواهم عواطف عملياء
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' 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.

إن أكن قد كَرِيتُ لَحمٍ بلادي
فمن الكي .. قد يجيّ الشفاء

من بحار الأسى ، ولِيل الَّيِّامي
تطلعُ الآن ، زهْرةُ بِيضَةٌ

من شُحوب الخريفٍ ، من وَجَع الأَرض
تَثُلُوجهُ السَّابِلُ الخَضّةُ

ويظلُّ الفداه شَمسًا علينا
ما عسانا تكونُ لولا الْيَسَدَاء

من جراح المناضلين وُلِدْتِنَا
ومن الجُرحُ نُولَدُوهُ الكبْرِيَاء

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

قَبَلَهُمْ؟ لم يكن هالك قِبَلُ
إبتداء التاريخ من يوم جاؤوا...
هبطوا فوق أرضنا أُنْبِيَاءُ
بعد أن مات عندنا الأنبياءُ
أنقذوا ماء وجهننا يوم لاحقوا
فأخذتنا وجهننا السواداء
منحونا إلى الحياة جبهواً
لم تكن قَبَلُهُمْ لنا أسماء

أصدقاء الحروف .. لا نذلوني
إن تفجرت .. أبها الأصدقاء
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.

إِنِّي أَخْزِينُ الرَّعْوَدَ بِصَدْرِي
كَمَا يَخْزِنُ الرَّعْوَدَ الْيَتَّاءَ
أَنَا مَا جَعَلَ كَيْ أَكُونَ خَطِيبًا
فَبَلَدِي أَضْعَّهَا-ْاَلْخَطَٰبَةُ
إِنِّي رَافِضٌ زِمَانِي، وَعَضُّرِي
وَمِن الرَّفْضِ، تُولَدُ الأَشْبَاءُ
أَصِدَاقِيٌّ: حُكِيَتُ مَا لَيْسَ يُحْكَى
وَشَفِيعِي طَنُولُهُ.. وَالْنَفَّاءُ...
إِنِّي قَادِمُ إِلَيْكُمٌْ.. وَنَلِي
فِوقَ كُفّي حَمَامٌ بِضَاءَاٰ
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.

إنهوني .. فما أنا غير طفل
فوق عيني يضيء السماء
أنا لا أعرف ازدواجية الفكر
نفسي بخيره زرقاء ..
لمنادي شعرني .. ولست أبال سي
رفضته .. أم باركنه السماء ..
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

1 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.
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.
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 Mu'awiyah's eyes
And where are those who jostled the shooting stars with their shoulders?
The horses of the Banu Hamdan do not dance
Proudly, nor does al-Mutanabbi fill Aleppo;
We touch the grave of Khālid 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.

See note 2, p.166.
The dynasty who ruled Aleppo and north Syria in the time of al-Mutanabbi. The most famous ruler of the dynasty was Sayf al-Dawla (944 - 967).
A reference to the well-known words of Ibn Rashiq on al-Mutanabbi, mali' al-dunya wa-shaghil al-nas al-Mutanabbi, (915 - 965) one of the greatest of Arab poets, composed poems in praise of Sayf al-Dawla and satirised Kāfur, ruler of Egypt. He was a proud, brave and adventurous poet who excelled in the description of battle-scenes.
I.e. Khālid b. al-Valīd, d. 642 in Hims. See also note 1, p.139 and note 2, p.238.
O Ibn al-Walîd', 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 ابن الوليد .. ألا سينف تُوجَرَه
فكلما أسيّننا قد أصبحت خشمباا!!

دمشق .. يا كنوز أحلامي ، ومروحي
أشكر العروبة ، أم أشكر لك العرباا
اذنت سباط حزين ان ظهرته م
فاضتهنها ، وباسوا كف من ضرباا
وطالعوا كتب التاريخ .. واكتسحاوا
متى الباندا قاين تسكن الكتببا ؟

---

*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?

عاشوا على هامش الأحداث، ما انتفصوا
للأرض منهوبة، والعرض مغتصباً
وخلفوا القدس فوق الوحل، عارية
تُبيح عزة نيديها لمن رغباً
هل من فلسطين مكتوب يطلغني
عمَّ كتب إليه، وهو ما كتَب
وعن بستان ليمون، وعن حُلم
يزداد عني ابتعادا كثما اقتربا
أيا فلسطين.. ممن يهديك زَنَبَقة
ومن يبعد لك البيت الذي خُلّبًا
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.
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.
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!

خُبَلُ النحيلة مَلَتَفٌ على عْنْقِي
مَنْ ذا يُعَالِمُبُ مشْوَقًا إِذَا اضْطَرَبَ
الشِّعْرُ لَيْسَ حُمَائِاتٍ نُطِبُهَا
نَحوَ السَّمَاءِ، وَلا نَابَاً وَرِيحًا صِبَاءَ
لَكَنْهُ غَضَبٌ طَالِتُ أَطَايَهُ
ما أَجْبَنَ الشِّعْرَ، إِنَّمَا يُرْكِبُ الغَضِبَاءَ ..
37. GOLD INLAY ON A DAMASCENE SWORD

Do you suppose that Maysun' 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?

أَتَأْهَى أَنْ أَحْبَبْتُهُ؟
أَمْ تَوَهَّمْتُ .. وَالسَّمَاءَ ظُنْنُونَ
كَمْ رَسُولٌ أُرْسِلَ لَأَبَيْنَاءَ
ذَلِكَ فَتْحَةٌ تَحْتَ الْيَقَابِ الْمُسْيُونَ
يا بَنَٰٰذَ الْمَلْكِ ، وَالْهَوْرَى أَمْسَرِي
كِيفُ أَخْفِي الْهَوْرَى ، وَكَيْفُ أَيْبَنُ

Wife of Mu'awiya and mother of Yazid (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, Mu'awiya 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 arrows.

The gazelles of the game-park do not return my greeting, and the anklets do not resound.

O, that generous time in al-Sâlihiyya'

Where is my folly, where my infatuation?

O my bed, my mother's sheets

The sparrows, the scent, the branches,

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', 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.

1 The number of streams which feed the irrigated area around Damascus (the Ghūţa) 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 Yazid, the Banūs, the Kizzāwī, the Qanawāt, the Agrabāmī, the Dārānī and the Qanawāt. 2The phrase is one which occurs three times in the Qur'ān (Sūrat al-Dukhān, verse 54; Sūrat al-Ṭūr, verse 20; and Sūrat al-Yāqūt, verse 22). The word ḥārī 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?
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.
I am coming alone from the cities of the wind
So embrace me like a child, Qasîyûn\(^1\)
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.

\(^{1}\)The mountain range overlooking Damascus to the North.
\(^{2}\)The allusion is to the grammatical terms *damm* (vocalisation with u) and *sukûn* (non-vocalisation) which are incompatible.
\(^{3}\)al-Majnûn; an allusion also to the early Islamic poet Majnûn 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?
October came, O beloved of my life;
October is the best time for love'
We have a rendezvous on Mount Hermon²
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,

1 the poet is refering to the October war of 1973.
²A 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	extsuperscript{1}, and aniseed	extsuperscript{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?

\textsuperscript{1}See note 1, p.229.
\textsuperscript{2}The poet is probably referring to the "araq, 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' 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 Maysalün\(^3\) has uttered cries of joy

---

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 Yusuf al-Azma in 1920, after which Syria lost its freedom for twenty-five years.
October 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.

\(^1\)See note 1, p.364.
\(^2\)See note 2, p.155.
\(^3\)An allusion to the Qur'an, Sūrat al-Tūr, verse 24, Sūrat al-Vaqi'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 conquest²
Tear up, Damascus, the map of humiliation
And say to fate, "Be, and it is".³
Badr° has reclaimed her days through you
And Ḥitṭīn° has regained her youth;
Through you Quraysh° are mighty after having been humbled
And tribes and clans have met together.

¹A phrase which occurs frequently in the Qur’ān, for example, in Sūrat al-Kā’ida, verse 119; Sūrat al-Tawba, verse 100; Sūrat al-Fath, verse 18 and Sūrat al-Bayyina, verse 8.
²From Sūrat al-Saff, verse 61.
³A phrase which occurs frequently in the Qur’ān, for example, in Sūrat al-Anṣām, verse 73; Sūrat al-Yāḥš, verse 40; Sūrat Maryam, verse 35 and Sūrat Yāsīn, verse 36.
⁴See note 1, p.168.
⁵See note 3, p.238.
⁶See note 1, p.68.
Amr b. al-‘Āṣ advances to the east
And al-Xa’mün advances to the west
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 after seven lean years
And our wounded consciousness has recovered.

إنَّ عَمْرُو بْنُ الْعَاصِي يَزْحَفْ لِلشَّرْقِ
وَالغَزْرِ يَزْحَفُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ
كَتَبَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَكُونِي دِمَثْقاً
بِكَ يَنْتَهِي التَّكوِينُ
لَا خَيَارُ أَنْ يَصْبِحَ الْبَحْرُ بِبَحْرٍ
أَوْ يَخْتَارَ صُوْنُهُ الحَسُّونُ؟
ذَالِكَ عُمْرُ السَّيْفِ .. لَا سَيِّفٌ إِلَّا
دَائِنٌ بَيْ حِبْيَةٍ أَوْ مُسْتَدِينٌ
هُزَمُ الَّذِينَ بَعْدَ سَيْفٍ عِجْفَافٍ
وَتَعَافَى وَجَدَأُنَا المَطْفُوْنُ

1Amr b. al-‘Āṣ (574 - 664) was the Arab conqueror of Egypt. He is used here to symbolise Egypt. See also note 1, p. 139.
2al-Xa’mün (786 - 833), an “Abbasid caliph who was famous for fighting the Byzantines, used to symbolise Iraq. Both Egyptian and Iraqi troops fought in the 1973 war.
3An adaptation of Surat al-Rūm, verse 2.
4From Surat 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\(^4\), 0 my country
But politics are all opium.\(^5\)
The sword is a true governor and sage.
The sword alone, 0 Damascus, is certain

\(^1\)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 asdaqu anbā\'an min al-Kutubi.
\(^5\)A reworking of the saying of Marx that "religion is the opium of the people".
Trail your skirt\textsuperscript{1} Qunayṭra\textsuperscript{2} of glory
And anoint your eyes with kohl, Hermon\textsuperscript{3}
The horses of Hishām\textsuperscript{4} have raced ahead, leaving their shadows behind,
And the knife has awakened from its sleep.

\textsuperscript{1}The expression means "walk proudly".
\textsuperscript{2}Qunayṭra was occupied by Israel in 1967 and recaptured by Syria in 1973.
\textsuperscript{3}See note 2. p.364.
\textsuperscript{4}i.e. Hishām b. "Abd 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
Teach us deeds, for words of defeat
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.

"Al-Rayān wa'l-Tabyīn; an allusion to the book by al-Jahiz (780 - 869).
2Another play on words borrowed from the terminology of Arabic grammar. Afāl means "verbs" as well as "deeds" and ahruf al-larr 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 Latrûn'
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."

---

1See note 1, p. 22.
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?

38. OBSERVATIONS IN A TIME OF LOVE AND WAR

I

ملاحظات
في زمن الحب وال الحرب

1

لاحظت شيئًا؟
لاحظت أن العلاقة بيني وبينك، في زمن الحرب
تأخذ شكلًا جديدًا ..
وتدخل طورًا جديدًا ..
وأنذاك أصبحت أجمل من أي يوم مضى ..
وأتي أحبك أكثر من أي يوم مضى ..
لاحظت كيف اختفقتا جدار الزمن؟
وصارت مساحة عينيك ..
مثل مساحة هذا الوطن ..
Did you notice this change in the colour of your eyes
When we listened together to the announcement of the Crossing?'
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 October² 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?

²The 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.
²See 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?

الأحْظَتِي.. كَيْفَ اندفعتُ إِلَيْكِ ..
كَابِئَيْ أَرَالِي لَأوْلِيَة مَرَة
الأحْظَتِي كَيْفَ اسْجَمْنَا ..
وَكِيفْ لَحَنَّا ..
وَكِيفْ عَرْقُنا ..
وَكِيفْ اسْتَحْلَنا رِمَادًا ..
وَكِيفْ نُعِيشْنَا ..
كَأَنَّا نُمارِسُ فَعَلَ الغُرَام
لَأوْلِيَة مَرَة ..
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.
Does war rescue us after we have been long lost,
Kindle our dormant passions
Make me Beduin in nature
And you another woman?

هل الحرب تُشِيدُنا بعد طول الضياع؟
وتضَرَمُ أشواقنا الفائقة
فتجعلني بَدْويَ الطِياعُ
وتحملك امرأة ثانية ..
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,

أنتَ لْخَلَقْتِ كِفَ إِكْتَشَفْنا طفولِنا
بعد ستِ سنِين؟
وكيِف رجعنا أخيرا لملكة العَشَق والعَاشقين
أحسستُ مثلي.. بأن رجال المظلات كانوا
يحلون مثل الحَمَام على راحِتِنا
وأن جَنود المغازِل كانوا يمرون فوق عَرْوَق بَدِينَا..
لاحظتْ كيف نشرنا عليهم
عُقود البَسْفَسْج والنِاسمين؟
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 إليهم
وكيف انحنينا ..
أمامَ بنادقهم خانينَ
ألاحظت كيف ضحكتنا؟
وكيف بكينَا؟
وكيف عبرنا الجسور مع العابرين ..
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.
You become, in time of war,  
Polished like mirrors  
Drawn out like a giraffe\textsuperscript{1}  
Between our hands boundaries melt  
And distance is abolished.

\textsuperscript{1}The giraffe is regarded by the Arabs as a symbol of grace and beauty.
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?
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.

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.
I used to think about you a lot,
Dream about you a lot.
I used to smuggle my poetry to you
Despite the siege,
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.

و كنت أفكر فيك كثيراً
و أحلم فيك كثيراً...
و كنت أحب شعرك إليك
بغض الحصار
ولكنهم أعدموا ماراً
وطردوا علي السيارة
ولكن برغم تعدد مواتي
بقيت أحبك آه يا زهرة الجلنانار
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.

أحبك أنت ..
وأكتب حبي على وجه كل غمامة
وأغطي مكتوب عشقي
لكل سمامة
أحبك في زمن العنف ..
من قال إني أريد السلامة
أحبك .. يا امرأة من بلادي
وانني ، على شفتيك ، الإقامة
Have you noticed how you resemble beautiful Damascus,

How much you resemble the minarets, the Umayyad mosque\(^1\), the samāh\(^2\)-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?

---

\(^1\) 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?
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?
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?

أَلْحَظْتِ أَنَّكِ صِرْتِ دِمَشْقَ ..
بِكُلِّ بِارَتِها الأُمُوَّيَةِ
وِمَسَرَّ .. بِكُلِّ مُسَاجِدهَا النَّافَضِيَّةِ
وِصِرْتِ حَصُونَا .. وأَكِياسَ رَمْلٍ ..
وَرُئَآِ طَرِيبًا مِنْ الشَّهَادَةِ
أَلْحَظْتِ ..
أَنَّكِ صِرْتِ خِلاصَةٌ كُلِّ النِّسَاءِ
وصِرْتِ الكِتَابَةَ وَالأَبْجِدَيْةَ ..
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,
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?

ومولودة من مياه البحار
وطالعة من ضمير الحجر
أحبك
حين يسافر شعرك في الرياح دون جواز سفر
حين يعزمون نهادك كالذئب .. في لحظات الخطر
فهل تعرفين عشيقا ..
أحبك يوما بهذا القدر؟
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?

14

أَحِبَّكَ أَيْنُ هَا الْعَالَيْةَ
أَحِبَّكَ أَيْنُ هَا الْعَالَيْةَ...
أَحِبَّكَ مَرَفَعَةُ الرَّأْسِ مَثَلَ بَيْتَانِ دِمْشَقٍ،
وَمثَلُ مَآذِنِ مِصْرَ..
فَهَلْ تَسْمِحَنَ تَنْتِبِلْ جَبْهَتَكِ الْعَالَيْة؟
وَهَلْ تَسْمِحَنَ بِنَسْبِيَنِ وَجُهَي الْقَدِيمَ؟
وَشَيْعُري الْقَدِيمَ؟
وَنَسْبُيَانِ أَخْطَائِيَ الْمَاضِيَةُ..
Will 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.
I love you more than in any day gone by
Because you have become my warrior love.
39. REVOLUTIONARY CONVERSATION WITH ṬĀḤĀ HUSAYN

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.

ハウスوية
مع طه حسين

ضوء عينيك... أَمْ هُمَا نَجْمَتَانِ؟
كُلُّ هُمَ لا يَرَى... وَأَنَّ نَجْمَتَانِ
لست أَدري مِن أَيْنَ أَبْدأ بَوْحِي
شَجَرُ الدَمَّع شَافٌ في أَجْفَانِي
كُبَبَ اللَمْشَقِ، يا حبيبي، علينا
فِهِرَ أَبَاكَ يَمْلِكَا أَبَاكُانِي

‘Ṭāḥā 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 جُرْحِي .. مليون عامٍ وعامٍ
هل نَرَى الجْرَحَ من خلال الدخان؟
نَقَشَ الحُبُّ في دفاتر قلبي
كلُّ أسمائه .. وما سَمَّائي
قالَ : لا بَدَّ أن مَوتَ شهيدًا
مثلَ كُلٌّ العَشَاقِ، قُتِّ عَانِي
وطروتُ الدُّجَّى أسِئلُ نفسي
أَيْسَيْفٌ .. أم وردة قد رماني؟
كيف بَأتي المرى .. ومن أينَ بأتي؟
يُعرفُ الحُبُّ دائمًا عُشَواني ..
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'1-'Alâ' a little
And read the Risâlat al-Ghufrân?
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?

*Abu'1-'Alâ' al-Ma'arî (973 - 1057), one of the outstanding Arabic poets, was born and died in the town of Ma'arrat al-Huṣmân in northern Syria. Much of his verse is of a philosophical and sceptical nature. He was also the author of some prose works including Risâlat al-Ghufrân, an account of an imaginary visit to Paradise. Abu'1-'Alâ', like Tâhâ Husayn, 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
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' there is a kind of drawing
And in it there is thinking with colours.

٥ـ٤٠

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.

إن تلك الأوراق حقل من القمح
فَيُنَّ أَيْنْ تُبْدِي السَّفّان؟
وَحَدِّكَ الْمُبْيِنُ الذِّي كَشَفَ الْنَّفْسَ
وَأُسَرَى فِي عُقْبَة الوجودِ،
ليس صعباً لِقَآئِنا بِاللّهِ ..
بل لقاء الإنسان .. الإنسان ..

أيها الأوهَي .. يا سارق النار
ويا كاسراً حدوداً الثَّقَائِلِ
عَدْ إِلَنا .. فإنَّ عصرَ عصرُ
ذهبي .. ونحنُ عصرُ ثاناني
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 التَّفْكِيرُ في النَّفَاقِ البَيَاتِيّ
وِصْارَ الأَدِبُبُ كَالْبَلَْلُوْانِ
يَطَاطِي البَخَيْرٌ .. يَحْتِرَفُ الرَّقُصٍ ..
وِبِدْعُوَّ بالْنَصْرِ لِلسَّلَتِّرِ ..
عَدِّيْناِ .. فَإِنَّمَا يَكُتْبُ الْيَوْمُ
صَغِيرُ الرُّؤْيَ .. صَغِيرُ المعْتَمِّي
ذَٰلِكَ الشَّعْرُ .. والْقِصَّٰدُ صَارَتْ
قَيْنَةٌ نُشِّرَى كَكُلِّ الْقِبَابُـانِ
جَرَّدُوهَا مِن كُلِّ شِيِّءٍ .. وَأَدْمَّؤَا
قَدْمُهَا .. بِالْبَلَفِ وَالْمَـدُورَانِ
Do not ask about the masterpieces of al-Kutanabbī¹
Or al-Sharīf al-Rādi², or Ḥassān³
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.

¹See notes 1 and 2, p. 351.
²Al-Sharīf al-Rādi (970 - 1015) was a poet and man of letters of the Buwayhid period. Apart from his diwan he is known as the collector of the Nābi al-Raṣāla, the supposed sayings of Ḥassān b. Thābit, the poet of the Prophet (d. 674).
³Ḥassān 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
O prince of letters, here is Egypt,
A rose which bathes in my artery.
I am in the sanctuary of al-Ḥusayn, and in the night,
The remaining verses of the Surat al-Rahmān: 2
Sorrows tyrannise me, and I call out,
"Alas, O Egypt, for the sons of Qaḥṭān!" 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 أمير الحروف .. ها هي مصر
ودرة تسحب في شرباني
إني في جم الحسيني، وفي الليل
بقايا من سورة الرحمن ..
ستبيذ الأحمران بي .. فانادي
أو يا مصر من بني قحطان ..
تاجروا فلك .. ساوموك .. استباحوك ..
وباعوك كاذبات الأملاني
حبحوا الماء عن شفا اليمامي
وأراقوه في شفاه الغزافي"

1This phrase refers to Egypt, since the head of al-Ḥusayn is said to be buried in Cairo.

2The 55th sura of the Qurʾān.

3Qaḥṭān 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 السيف والحصان حزينين
وأعادوا التاريخ للشيطان
يشترون القصور ... هل تَمّ شار
لقيض الأبطال في الجولان؟
يشترون النساء ... هل تَمّ شار
لدموع الأطفال في بَيْضان؟
يشترون الزوجات باللحم والعظم
أبْشَرُوا الجمال باليُهان؟
يشترون الدنيا ... وأهل بلادي
ينكَشُون التّراب كالديدان ...

¹See note 2, p.155.
²See 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
We have driven back the Byzantine hordes from you
And driven back Kisra Anushirwan.
We have protected Muḥammad and ʿAlī.
And preserved the nobility of the Qur'ān.
So pay the jiyya 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 رّدتُنا جحافل الرُّوم عَنْكُمْ
وَرّدتُنا .. كُنْرُى أُنْيْسُرُواْنَ
وَحَفْظَنَا مُحْمَدًا .. وَعَلِيًا
وَحَفْظَنَا كَرَامَةَ الْقُرْآن
dافغْنَا جَزْيَةَ السَّيْف عَلَيْكُمْ
لا تَعْبُشُ السَّيْفُ بالإحسان ..
سامحني يا مَسْرً .. إن جمع الشَّعْرُ
فطَعْنُمُ الحريق تحت لساني
سامحني .. فَأَنْتَ أَم المَرْوَاءات
وَأَمُ السَّماح والغْفَرَان

See note 2, p.322.
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).
See note 1, p.291.
The jiyya 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.

سأحميني .. إذا احترقتُ وأُحرقتُ
فليس الحبُّ في إمكاني

 يا مصر .. إن عشقي خطير
فاغفري لي إذا أضعت انتزاني ..
They have stolen the Arab time from us
They have stolen the radiant Fatima' 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 'Alī³

1

The daughter of the Prophet and the wife of 'Alī. It is a notable feature of Qabbānī's poetry that he so often makes mention of persons and events who are dear to the Shī'a, although he himself is a Sunni Muslim.

²See note 1, p.130.
³See note 1, p.291.
They have exposed the Messenger of God's back at Uhud, 

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

---

$^1$ At the battle of Uhud 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-Valid, 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.
They have stolen Arab ambition from us,
Dismissed Khālid\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{1}See note 1, p.139.
They have stolen from Ṭāriq’ 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?

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.
They have pawned the sun with all the money-lenders,
Sold the moon for milliemes
Broken 'Umar'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,

1See note 1, p. 291.
2See 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"

"Arabic Kulük al-Ţawā'if, the phrase used to describe kings of petty states, in the period after the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain, for example."
O Saladin

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.

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.

إنهم خلف الكواليس ..
وهم يغتصبون امرأة تدعى الوطن ..
وبيعون الخلافيل بجلبها ..
بيعون البساتين بعينها ..
بيعون العصافير التي 
تسكن في نافذة النهدين من بدء الزمان ..
بيعون بكاسين من الويسي ..
أملاك الوطن ..
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?
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 جاء زمان؟
أصبح التحرير والتخدير فيه توأمين ..
ثم هل جاء زمان؟
أصبح الفعل به ضيد البدين.
ثم هل جاء زمان؟
صار فيه الحرف ضد الشفتيين؟
O Saladin\textsuperscript{1}

This is the time of the Apostasy\textsuperscript{2}
And the powerful Shu\textsuperscript{übî} tide.
They have burnt the house of Abû Bakr\textsuperscript{4}
Arrested the family of the Prophet at night
And the noblewomen of Quraysh
Have come to wash the foreigner's dishes.

\textsuperscript{1}See note 1, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{2}i.e. the Ridda, the period after the death of the Prophet when the Beduin tribes sought to break away from Islam.
\textsuperscript{3}The Shu\textsuperscript{übîs} 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.
\textsuperscript{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.
O Saladin

What use are words in this Bāṭinī time

And why do we write poetry, when

God has forgotten the Arabic speech?

---

1See note 1, p.130.

2See note 1, p.297.

3In the Muslim belief Arabic, the language of the Qur’ān, is the speech of God.
41. DAMASCUS FOLK-SONGS TO THE MOON OF BAGHDAD

Bilqūs awoke me in the blueness of the dawn
And sang a melody from Iraq
She let down her hair like the river Diyālā;
Have you seen hair which recites poetry?
In her voice were al-Rūsāfa, and al-Karkh
Sun and wheat, and lavender.

 مواويل دمشقية
 إلى قمر بغداد

أيقطُنتى بقيس في زرقة النج
وحْنَتْ من العراقي مْثِقاها ..
أرسلت شعرًا كنتُه (ديَالى)
أراكَم شعراً يقلُّو كلاما؟
كان في صوتيها الرصافاة، والكرخ،
وشمس .. وجنَّة .. وخازامى

1Delivered 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"
2The poet's wife, Bilqūs al-Rāwī.
3A tributary of the Tigris, which joins it just below Baghdad.
4A district of Iraq, in the province of Baghdad.
5A suburb of Baghdad.
She brought me the day's newspapers, 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 Räwä' into Syrian Damascus

'A town on the Euphrates, the ancestral home of Bilqîs' 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.

***

أّخُذُوا الحُبَّ، والصبابة عنَا
وَنَسَّوا أَنَّا أخْرَعْنَا الغَرَامَا
إِنْ يَكُونُوا تَعْلُمُوا لِغَةَ العَشْقِ
فَنَحْنُ الْيَمِينُونَ الْقُدُّاسَانَ
التزامي أنا.. بوجه حيبي
أوليس الحب الكبير التزامنا؟
نُهْمَة الحُب لا تزال ورائي
لا رأي رأي أردَّ اتهامُنا
.. وتزوجت زوجتي من جديد
وضَعِكُّنا .. وقبل كنا يَنامَا

...
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-Azamiyya'
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 شراعاً وراء دَجَلَةٍ يجري
إقتريب ... إنَّي أمرتُ هُيامًا
لي على الشط نَجْلَةٌ تَبَسْتَني
بهاها ... فاقرأ عليها السلامًا
كيف أنسي في (الأعظمية) ظلمًا
أشعل النار في دمائي ... ونامًا
تلك بغداد ... بعد عُمر سنين
تلبس الماء، والنجموم حِرارًا
دَجَلَةً عاشق يزورُ دُمنَقًا
وكريم أنى يزورُ كـرَامًا ...

1See note 1, p.330.
Al-Ka’āmūn is hand in hand with Marwān\(^1\)

And the water of the Euphrates has turned to wine.

Is what I see before me the Laylat al-Qadr\(^2\)

Or is what I see a dream?

\[\text{إنَّ كفَّ المأمون في كفَّ مَروَّانَ}
\text{وَمَانِهِ الْقُرَاتَ صَارَ مُدَادًا}
\text{لِيَلَةِ الْقَدرَ، ما أرَاهُ أَمَامِيَ،}
\text{أَمْ يكَانُ الْذِّي أرَاهُ مَنَاَّماَ}]

\(^1\)Al-Ka’āmūn, the seventh Abbasid caliph (786 - 833), one of the greatest rulers of his dynasty and famous for his intellectual pursuits, and Marwān b. ‘Abd 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.

\(^2\)The 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 ‘Alī's tomb’
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.

"Alī's tomb is in the town of Najaf, to the south of 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', and give birth to Hishām.\[2\]

---

See note 1, p. 139.
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 Bridge¹
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

¹A 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' 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—

ٌعَلِمُونَا أَنْ لَا نُحِبْ، فَخُفِّصْنَا
لَوْ قَمَلْنَا، أَنْ نَتَجَيَّلْ رَخَامًا
وأعَتَّدَنَا عَنْ أيَّ حُبٍّ بديلٍ
وَرَفَضْنَا التَخْوِيفَ والإرَغَامَا
كُلُّ هذَا الخَصَامُ، كَانَ افْتَعَالًا
حِينَ يَقُوى الْيَهَوَى، يَصِبُّ خَصَامًا ..

يا شَذَا (الْرَائِزِيُّ) فِي لِيلٍ بَغدادٍ
َعُشِّقْنَا .. فَمَنْ يَرْدُ الْيَهَوَى
با سؤالَ الورد الْيَشَقْيِ عَنْنِي
با حَقَوْلاً، رَكَضَتْ فِيهَا عَلَامًا

*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?

سنوات عشر نسيت حروفني ودواتي، كما نسيت الكلام ما كنتا.. كيف يكتب شعرأ من يعاني تضرقنا وأنقضنا؟
سامح الله من على غير قصد سرقوا من طفولي اعمونا لي حيي، يلان حياني أنعباني تنافراً وانقيادا
لم نفرق ما بين شعب وشعب كيف يرضى لون السماء انقساما؟
One fatherland, which we have drawn as wheat
Daté palms, stars, and doves
Nineveh, Abū Kamāl, Țarṭūs, Hims
Babylon, Karbalā', return my greetings ...
One fatherland ... may my poetry cease to exist
If it sings the praise of a tribe, or a régime.

وَطَنُ وَاحِدٌ .. رَسَّمْناهُ فَنَحْنَا
ونَخْلَا ، وَأنْجُما ، وَيَمَامَا
نَبُوَي .. الْبُروْكَمَالُ .. طَرْطُوسُ .. جَمَصُ
بَابِلُ ، كَرَّبْلَاهُ ، رُدُّي السَلامَا ..
وَطَنُ وَاحِدٌ .. لَّا كَانَ شَيْرِي
لَوْ يَغْنِي قِبْلَةٌ .. أَوْ نَظَامَا ..
Has the news come to you, O Mutanabbî,
That Kāfûr has dismantled the pyramids?
Egypt has fallen into the hands of a villager
Who has found nothing to sell but the trams

هل أنتَ الأخبار يا متنبَّي
أنَّ كأفّر فكّك الأهّامًا؟
سقطت مصر في يدّي قرّوي
لم يجد ما بيع إلا (الثرّامًا).

\[\text{See note 3, p. 351.}\]
\[\text{Kāfûr (905 - 968) rose from being an Abyssinian slave to become ruler of Egypt. al-Mutanabbî wrote some poems in praise of him, and then composed one of his most famous satires against him. The poet here refers to President Sadat as the new Kāfûr, the most insulting way in which he could possibly speak of him, particularly as Sadat himself was the descendant of a black slave on his father's side. In this poem, written after the Camp David agreement, Qabbânî attacks Sadat for dismantling Nasser's heritage.}\]
\[\text{Sadat always made great play of his village origins and was often photographed at his home village of Mit Abul Kom.}\]
\[\text{See Ch. Six, section III, 3a.}\]
A man of theatrical ambitions', wearing one face
For comedy, and another for drama;
He is Farouk in gluttony and conceit
And the Khedive 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.¹

¹A sarcastic reference to Sadat's youthful ambitions to be a film star. See Hirst and Beeson, Sadat, p. 75.
²Farouk (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.
³The title of the rulers of Egypt up to 1914, who ruled very autocratically before the British occupation of 1882.
⁴See Chapter Six, Section III, 3d.
He appointed the Nile as his consultant
And led the millions along like sheep.
He kindled fire in the houses of "Abs
And Tamīm, and ignored the ties of blood."
A nervous man, crowing in Egypt like a cock
And licking boots in Jerusalem.
They stripped him of everything, and when
They had drained him dry, they threw him the bones

---

Abs and Tamīm are the names of two ancient Arab tribes. What Qabbānī means by this line is that Sadat betrayed the Arabs.

2A 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.

غَيَّرَ الثائرون خارطة الأرض
وُسُدو من حولها الألغامًا
واستفقونا مع الذين استفقونا
فامنحونا حريةً .. وطعامًا
لم تغيِّر حضارة النفط ظفرًا من أظافرنا .. ولا إبهامًا
قد حيلنا بالنفط .. دون زواج
وضعنا .. بعد المخاض، سُحَاما ..
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-Remfā and al-Karkh2
Sun, and wheat, and lavender.
Iraq will never be anything but Iraq
And the great Hishām will remain Hishām.3

1See note 3, p.423.
2See notes 4 and 5, p.423.
3See 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,

موَالِدْ دِمْشِقَّة

لقد كُتِبَتْ .. وأُرْسِلَتْ النَّاسِبَلَا
وَقَدْ يَكُنَّا .. وَبَلَّنَا النَّاسِدَيْلا

قُلُّ لِلَّذِينَ بِأَرْضٍ الشَّامِ قد نَزَّلَوْا
قُبْلُكُمْ لم يَزَّلَ بالشَّقِّ مُقْتَمْوَلَا ..

يَا شَامُـ، يا شَامَةُ الدُّنْيا، وَوُرْدَتَهَا
يَا مَنْ بِحِسَنِكْ أَرْجَعُتِ الأَزَامِيْلا
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

وَدَّتُ لَوْ زَرَعْنِي فِيْكَ بِنَدْنَةٍ
أَوْ عَلَقْنِي عَلَى الأَبَابِ قَنْدِيلَا
يَا بَلْدَةُ السَّبعَةِ الأَنْهَارِ .. يَا بَلْدِي
وِيَا قَمِيصًا بِرَكْرُ السَّلْعِيْمَ وَاشْغُولا
يَا حِجَانًا تَلْقَى عَنْ أَعِينِيِّيَةٍ
وَرَاحَ يَفْتَحُ مَعْلُومٌا ، وَمَجْهُولا
هَوْالَّا يَا بَرَدٌ ؛ كَالسَّيْفِ يَسْكُنَيْنِي
وَمَا مَلِكْتُ لأَمْرِ الحُبَّ تَبِدِيلاً

\(^{1}\text{See note 1, p.359.}\)
Why does the Damascene girl who was our sweetheart
Not remember now the taste of our first kiss?
Days when we were in Dummar' - 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

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 مَّن يعيد كراربي .. ومدرسي
والقمح ، واللوز ، والزرق الماويلا
يا شام .. إن كنت أخفى ما أكادها
فأجمل الحب حبد .. بعد .. ما قيل ..
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

موئال ببغدادي

مُدُي باتِي .. واملاي أكوابي
وَسَيُ 發َابِ، فَقَدْ نُسِيتُ عَتَابي
عيْنِيّ كِ يا بَغدادُ ، مِنْذُ طَفْوِيِّ
شَمْسٌ نُائِمٌ في أَهِدادَي
لا تَنْكَري وَجْهي .. فَأنْتِ حبَيتي
وورودُ مائِدنِي ، وكُأسُ شَرآبِي
بغدادُ .. جَشْكِ كَالسَّينَة مُنْعَبًا
أخْفي جراحاتي وراء ثيابي
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.

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 stranger, 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?

***

حيثَ الفَتَّاحَةُ، أرى ملامِحَ موُطني
وأشمُ في هذا الرَّابِ تُرابِي
لم أَغْرَبَ أَبداً .. فكلُ سَحَابَةٍ
رَأَقَاءٍ .. فيها كِبَرىَةٌ سَحَابِي
إنَّ النجوم الساكِناتِ هضابَكمُ
ذاتُ النجومِ الساكِناتِ هضابِي ..
بغدادُ عِيْشَتُ الحُسَنَ في ألوانِه
لكنَّ حُسنَكِ، لم يكنَ بحساني
ماذا سأَكُتِبُ عِنكِ في كِتَابِ الهوى
فهوالِ لا يكُنِّي أُلفُ كِتابٍ
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 rababa-string in my hand
For passion is greater than my hand and my rababa:
Before our sweet meeting you were my beloved
And you will remain my beloved after my departure.
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.
The thick hair of Xiranda 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.
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.

الراقصة الإسبانية ..
تقول بأصابعها كل شيء ..
والرقص الإسباني هو الرقص الوحيد ..
الذي يستحيل فيه الإصبع إلى فم ..
النداء المانه .. والمواعيد العطش ..
والرضى .. والغضب .. والشهوة .. والتنع ..
كل هذا يقال بشهقة إصبع ..
بنقرة إصبع ..
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 مَحْلِّي ..
وُسَمَّفَنَّي الأصابع هناك
تحصني ..
تشيي
تحطّني على نُورَة أندلسياً
سرقت زهْرَ الأندلس كُلْهُ ولم تَسْألَ ..
وسرقت نهارٍ عِيوني
ولم تَسْألَ ..

***
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 مَحْلِي ..
والكأس العشرون في محلها
وسمْئُورونُهُ الأصابع
في أوج مدّها وجزّرها
والمطر الأسود المتساقط من فتحات العيون الواسعة
شيء لا يعرفُ تاريخ المطر
لا تذكرُه ذاكرة المطر
أنا في محلي ..
فيا مطر الأعين السود
سألت .. لا تقطع ..
I never wished to be a buttonhole in a cloak
Except in the War Museum in Madrid
The cloak belongs to Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣaghīr
And the sword is his sword.
The foreign tourists are not detained by the cloak
Or by the sword.

\[\text{ما تمنيت أن أكون عروة في رداء}
إلا في المتحف الحربي في مدريد}

\[\text{الرداء لأبي عبد الله الصغير}
والسيف سيفه}

\[\text{السائحون الأجانب لا يستوقفهم الرداء}
ولا السيف.}

---

1The 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.
And yet
Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Ṣaghīr' 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

See note 1, p. 452.
"Do you know this beauty?"

"No"

"This one's name used to be Ḫuwār bint "Ammār, and her father was "Ammār b. al-ʿAhnaf', a man of virtue and riches, and this Ḫuwār 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 "Abd Allah?"

"She does not know her name."

"Can anybody forget his name?"

---

هل تعرف هذه الجميلة؟

لا

هذه كان أسمها (نوار بنت عمارة) وكان أبوها عمارة بن الأحنف، رجلاً ذا فضل ويسار، وكانت نوار هذه، تدرج كالفَطَّاة بنتاً، وتبض كالنخلة المُبِينَاء بين صوبيبحاتها في الحي...

لماذا لا نُنادَيها يا أبا عبد الله؟

إنها لا تعرف اسمها!!

وهل تنسي أحد اسمه؟

---

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'
Instead of Huwâr bint 'Ammâr."

"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"

'A name created by the poet to fit his Arabic name Huwâr bint 'Ammâr.'
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
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 قَرْطَةً أَنَالِيْزَا دُوَنالْيا ..
لا وَلَكَ أَبْدَا إِلَى مُفْسَدَهَاكَ
ولا اِنْتَهِتْ رَحْلُكَ
لَأَنْ تَعَيْشَ بْوُهُمْ الْكَتَيْفَ ..
خَيرُ لَكَ أَلْفَ مَرَةً ..
مَنْ أَنْ تَدْفَنَ طَمْوَحَكَ فِي رَحَامِهَا ..
يا قَرْطَةً أَنَالِيْزَا دُوَنالْيا
يا جُوُعُ الْضَّوءِ إِلَى الضَّوءَ ..
قَلِي مَعْكَ ..
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,
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.

كل هذه الدنيا المطيَّة التي احتضنت طفولتي في دمشق ..
وجدتها هنا ..
فيا سيديتي المتكئة على نافذتها الخشبية
لا تراعي .. إذا غسلتُ بدي في بكيك الصغيرة
وقطعت واحدة من باسمانتك ..
ثم صعدت الدرج .. إلى حجرة صغيرة ..
حجرة شرقيَّة مطعمة بالصداف ..
تسلَّق شبابيكها الشمس .. ولا تسأل
وبتسلَّق أستراحها ليصلك .. ولا يسأل
حجرة شرقيَّة ..
كانت آمي تنصب فيها سريري ..

١٩٥٥/٨/١٨
فرطية
45. SPANISH PAPERS

I

THE BRIDGE

Spain

A bridge of weeping

Stretched between earth and heaven

إسبانيا

(1)

الجسر

إسبانيا

جسر من البكاء...

يتمتد بين الأرض والسماء
II
SONATA

On the bosom of a weeping guitar
Spain dies - and is born

(٢)
سوناتا

على صدر قيثارة باكية
تموت وتولد إسبانيَّة...
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.

الفارس والوردة

إسبانيا
مراوح هفاحنة تمشط الهواء
وأعين سوداء .. لا بدِّ لها ، ولا انتهاء
قُبَعَةُ تُرمِي أمام شرفة الحبيبة
وردة رطبة ..
بتائر من مقصورة النساء
تحمل في أوراقها الصلاة والدعاء
لفارسِ من الجنوب ، أحمر الرداء
بداعب البناء
وكَلُّ مَا يملكُ سيف .. وكبيراه ..
In Seville
Every beautiful maiden wears
A scarlet rose in her hair
Upon which, in the evening
All the sparrows of Spain descend.
When summer gathers together its possessions
And the spring dies on the hills
A thousand new springs flower
On a thousand gorgeous fans
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.
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

Doña Maria

Doña Maria مزقتني دونيا ماريا
بينين أوسط من باديًة
وجه عليه شمس بلادي
وروْعِة آفاقها الصاحبة...
فأذكرُ منْزلَا في دمشق...
وَلَنْغَة قَرْكيه الصافية
ورَفْضَ الظلال بقاعاتها
وأشجار ليمونه العالية
And an old door on which I wrote,
In bad handwriting, my stories.
In your eyes, Doña Maria,
I see my country again.
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
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.

(9)

الثور

برغم التريف الذي يعترف
برغم السهام الدفينة فيه
يظل القتيل على ما بيو
أَجَل، وأكبر.. من قاتليه..
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.

(1)

نزيف الأنياء

كُوريدا...
كُوريدا ...
ويندفع الثور نحو الرداءّ
قويّاً، عنيدا
ويسقط في ساحة الملعب
كأي شهيد، كأيّ نبي
ولا يُتخلى عن الكبرياء...
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.
46. SORROWS IN ANDALUSIA

You wrote to me, precious one
You wrote asking about Spain
About ʿṬariq ᶧ
Conquering, in God’s name, a second world
About *Uqba b. Ṣafiʾ*
Planting date-palm seedlings
In the heart of every hill

أحزان في الأندلس

See note 1, p. 323.

*Uqba b. Ṣafiʾ* (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 Umayyads¹
You asked about their prince Muʿāwiya²
About the splendid squadrons
Carrying from Damascus in their stirrups
Civilisation -
And well-being ...

---

¹See note 1, p.218.
²See 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.

لا تبقى في إسبانيا
منا
وبين عصورنا الثمانية
غير الذي يبقى من الخمر
بحروف الآية
وأعين كبيرة .. كبيرة ..
ما زال في سواها
ينام ليل البادية ..
There is nothing left of Cordoba’
But the tears of the weeping minarets
But the perfume of the roses
The bitter oranges
And the dahlias.
There does not remain of Wallâda²
And of the stories of her love
A rhyme
Or the remains of a rhyme.

---

1See note 1, p. 459.
2Wallâda bt. al-Mustakfî (d. 1091), a Spanish poetess and beloved of the poet Ibn Zaydûn (1004 - 1070), who addressed a number of poems to her.
There is nothing left of Granada
Or of the Banū al-Aḥmar’
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.

\(^1\)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' 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 قرونُ خمسةٌ ..
مَذْ رَحَلَ (الخليفةُ الصغيرُ ) عن إسبانِيَّةٍ ..
وَلَمْ تَزَلْ أَحَقَّادُنا الصغِيرَةَ
كَمَا حِيَّةٍ ..
وَلَمْ تَزَلْ عَقْلُيَّةُ العشيرة ..
فِي دِينِا كَمَا حِيَّةٍ ..
وَلَمْ تَزَلْ
حُرِيَّةُ الرأي هَنَا
دِجاجةً مَذَبُوحَةً ..
بِسيفٍ كُلٌّ طَاغِيَةٌ

‘i.e. Abū ‘Abd 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.

---

جوارنا اليومي بالخلاج
أفكارنا أشبه بالأظافر
مضت قرون خمسة
ولا تزال لغظة العروبة
كرهنا حزينة في أنثى
كطفلة جائعة، وعارية
نصبها
على جدار الحقد والكراهية
Five centuries have gone by,
Precious one,
And it is as though
We were leaving Spain today.
We met in the entrance to the Alhambra²

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"

---

1See note 1, p.264.
2See note 2, p.338.
Granada! Seven centuries have awoken
In those eyes after a long sleep,
The banners of the Umayyads' 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.

 غَرْنَالَةٍ ! وَضَحْتَ قَرْونَ سَبْعَةً
في تَبْيِكَ الْبَيْنَينَ بَعْدَ رُقَادٍ
وأَمْيَةُ رَايَتِهَا مَرْفوعَةُ
وجِيَادُهَا مَوْصُولَةُ بِبيُبٍ
ما أُغْرِبَ التاريخَ كيف أعادني
لحنديثْ سِمْرَاءَ من أَحْنَايَدٍ ..
وجَهْ دَمْشِقْيَ .. رايتُ خلَءَالَّهُ
أَجْنَانَ بَلْقِيَّي .. وَجِيَادَ سَعَاوُ

See note 1, p. 218.

1Bilqīs is the Arab name of the Queen of Sheba. Suʿād is the woman mentioned by Kaʿb b. Zuhayr (d. 645) in his famous ode Bānāt 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,

ورأيت منزلنا القديم .. وحجرة
كانت بها أمي تسد وسادي
والياسمينة .. رسمت بنجمتها
والبركة الذهبية الإنسان ..

ودمشق .. أين تكون ؟ قلت تريثتها
في شعرك المنساب نهر سواد ..

في وجهك العربي .. في النغ رذيما
ما زال مختزننا شمسا بلادي ..
In the scent of the Generalife 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 (جَنَاتٍ العريف) ومائها
في الفُنُل، في الرُيحان، في الكباد

سارت معي.. والشعرُ بلهد خلفها
كسمالٍ تركته بغير حصادٍ

يتألقُ القَرْطُ الطويلُ بأذنه
 مثل الشموع بليلة الميلاد

مشيت مثل الطفل خلف دليلي
وراني التاريخ كَعُوم رمادٍ

'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!

See note 2, p.338.
When I said farewell to her I embraced her
A man called Ṭāriq b. Ziyād'

عَانَتْنا هِيَا عِنْدَا وَدَعَتْهَا
رَجُلًا يُسَمَّى (طَارِقَ بِنَ زِيَادِ)...

'See note 1, p. 323.'
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 سيت الدنیا يا بيروت

من باع أساورك المشغولة بالياقوت؟
من صادر خاتمك السحري؟
وقص ضفائرك الذهبية؟
من ذبح الراحّ النائم في عينيك الخضراء؟
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 شُطَّبَ وجهك بالسكينَ،
وألقي ماء النار على شفتيك الرائعة
من سمَّمَ ماء البحر ورضّ الحقد على الشُطَّان الورديَّة؟
ها نحن أتَينا معتذرِين ومُعترِفين
أنا أطلقنا النار عليك بروح قُبلِيَّة
فقتلنا امرأة كانت تدعو (الحرية) ...
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?

ماذا نتكلم يا بيروت ..
وفي عينيك خلاصة حزن البشرية
وعلى نسيادك المحرقين .. رماد الحرب الأهليّة
من كان يفكر أن نتلاقى - يا بيروت - وأنت خراب؟
من كان يفكر أن تنمو للوردة آلاف الأيدي؟
من كان يفكر أن العين تقاتل في يوم ضد الأهداب؟
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 نتكلمُ يا لؤلؤي؟
يا سنبتي .. يا أفلامي .. يا أحلامي ..
يا أوراقي الشعرية ..
من أينَ أتَك الفسحةُ يا بيروت ؛
وكنت برقة حوربى ..
لا أفهم كيف انقلب العصفر الدوّري ..
لقلة ليل وحشيّة ..
لا أفهم أبداً يا بيروت ..
لا أفهم كيف نسيت الله ..
وعدت لعصر الوثنى ..
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.
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' for all your words.

قُومِي من أجل الحُبِّ، ومن أجل الشعراء
قُومِي من أجل الخبز، ومن أجل الفقراء
الحب يريدك، يا أجل الملكات
والرب يريدك، يا أجل الملكات
ها أنت دفعت ضريبة حسنك مثل جميع الحسنات
ودفعت الجرية عن كل الكلمات

1'See note 4, p. 408.
IV

Arise from, your sleep
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.
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.
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.

يا سيت الدنيا يا بيروت ..
يا حيث وعد الأول .. والحب الأول ..
يا حيث كتبنا الشعر .. وخبثناه بأكياس المخمل ..
نعترف الآن .. بأننا كنا يا بيروت ..
نحبك كالبدو الرحل ..
وتعامل حب .. تمامًا
كالبدو الرحل ..
نعترف الآن .. بأنك كنت خليلتنا
نأتي لفرشك طول الليل ..
وعند الفجر .. نهاجر كالبدو الرحل ..
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 witnesses.

نَعْتَرَفُ الْآَنَ.. بِتَاَكَّنَا أُمِيِّينَ..
وَكَنَا نُجِبَلُ مَا نَفَعَ..
نَعْتَرَفُ الْآَنَ، بِتَاَكَّنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ الْقَتَّالِ..
وَرَأَيْنَا رَأَيْكَ..
يُقْطَعُ تَحْتُ صُخْورِ الرَّوْشَةِ كَالْعَصْفُورٍ
نَعْتَرَفُ الْآَنَ..
بِتَاَكَّنَا.. سَاعَةٌ نُقَدَ فِيْكَ الْحُكْمُ..
شُهُودُ الزُّورُ..
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.
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.

ناعترفُ أمامَ الله العادل... 
أنا راودناك... وعاشرناك... وضاجعناك...
وحمّلناك معاصينا...
يا سِبْتُ الدنيا، إنّ الدنيا بعدك ليسَ تكفينا...
الآن عرفنا.. أن جذورك ضارة فيها...
الآن عرفنا.. ماذا أفترت أيدينا...

'The word ṭawaddāki is an allusion to the Qur'an, Surat 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.

الله.. يفيش في خارطة الجنّة عن لبنان
والمَرْيَم الأخضر..
عاداً أخيراً كي يتزوج من لبنان..
أعطيني كفلك يا جوهرة الليل، وزنبق البلدان
تعرفُ الآن..
بأننا كتاّ ساديين، ودمويين..
وكتَا وكلاه الشيطان
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 سَيْتَ الْدُنْيَا يا بِيروتُ ..
قوميّ من تحت الزَّدَمِ كرَهَة لوزٍ في نِسَانٍ
قوميّ من حُزْنِكِ ..
إنَّ الثُّوِّرَةَ تُولِدُ من رَجُمِ الأَحْزَانِ
قوميّ إِكْرَاماً للْغَابَاتِ ..
وَلِلْأَهْيَارِ ..
وُلِلْرِّدِينَ ..
قوميّ إِكْرَاماً للإِنْسَانِ ..
إِنَّا اخْتَانَنَا يا بِيروتُ ..
وَجَيْحُنَا تَلْمِيِسُ الغُفْرَانِ ..
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.

ما زلت أحبك يا بيروت المجنونة
يا نهر دما وجواهر
ما زلت أحبك يا بيروت القلب الطيب
يا بيروت الفوضى
يا بيروت الجموع الكافر و الشيع الكافر
ما زلت أحبك يا بيروت العدل
ويا بيروت الظلم
ويا بيروت السني
ويا بيروت القاتل والشاعر
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 زلت أحبك يا بيروت العشت..
ويا بيروت الديح من الشريان إلى الشريان...
ما زلت أحبك رغم حماقات الإنسان
ما زلت أحبك يا بيروت...
لماذا لا نبتدي الآن؟
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.

49. SEVEN LETTERS LOST IN THE BEIRUT MAIL.

I

سَبْعُ رسائل ضائعة
في بريدة بيروت

يا حبيبة :
بعد عامين طويلين من الفراغ والألم ..
تذكرتِ في هذا المساء ..
كنتُ محنوناً بعينيك ..
وجنونا بالآراني ..
وجنونا لأنَّ الحب 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.
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 زمن الحرب أن يسترجع الإنسانُ وجه امرأةً يعشقها ..
فالحرب ضد الذاكرة ..
ليس سهلاً في زمن القيح ..
أن أجمع أزهار المانوليا ..
والفراشات التي تخرج ليلًاً من شبابيك العيون الماطرة ..
قد تقتني هذه الحرب بعيدًا عن محيط الدائره ..
أعلمت الخط الحليبي الذي ينزل من ثديك ..
نحو الخاصرة ..
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.

 يا صديقة:
عائدٌ من زمنِ اللامِنْصَر .. عاري القدمينْ
عائدُ دون شفاو ..
عائدُ دون يدينْ ..
إن حرب السنتينْ
كَسَرْتني ..
كسرت سنبلة القمح التي تنبتُ بين الشفتينْ ..
جعلْتِي عاطلاً عن عَمَل الحُبَ ..
فلم أقرأ مازمي لعينيْ ..
ولا قابلتُ عصفورًا غريبًا ..
أو قصيدة ..
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.

أفقدني ذلك الطهر الطفولي الذي يدخلي مملكة الله،
ويعطبني مفاتيح اللغات النادرة.
فاعذربني إن تأخرت عن الوعد قليلاً.
فلقد كان وصولي مستحيلًا.
وبريدي مستحيلاً.
إن آلاف الحواجز.
وقفت ما بين عينيك 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 النار على الحلم فاردوه قتيلا ..
أطلقوا النار على الحب فاردوه قتيلا ..
أطلقوا النار على البحر ، على الشمس ، على الزرع ،
على كتب الأطفال ، قصّوا شعر بروت الطويل ..
سرقوا العمر الجميل ..
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.

3

يا بعيدة:
أيُ أخبار تريدين عن الشعر وعطني؟
أخذوا بيروت مني ...
أخذوا بيروت، يا سيدتي، منك ومني ...
سرقوا (منقوشة الزعتر) من بين يدينا ...
سرقوا (الكورنيش) والأصداف ...
وأرمل الذي كان يغطي جسدينا ...
سرقوا منا زمان الشعر، يا لولتي ،
والكتابات التي تسقط مثل الكرز الأحمر
من بين الأصابع ..
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 رائحة البن ..
وأحلام المناهي .. وقناديل الشوارع ..
ذلك الصوت الذي يصدر عني ليس صوتي ..
ائي أكتب من داخل موتى ..
أين أنت الآن .. يا مي لم أجد في هذه الغابة ..
صردا يحتويني .. غير أنت ؟ ..
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 .. وفرساني .. وفرشتي ..
وألواني .. وأشيائي الصغيرة ..
والبوائق التي جئت بها من آخر الدنيا لفستان الأميره ..
لم أكن أعلم يا سيدتي ..
أن أشيائي الصغرى ..
هي أشيائي الكبيرة ..
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.

4

يا رقيقة:
 جاءني هاتفتك اليوم خجولاً مثل عطر البرتقال
 سائلاً عني .. وهل أجمل من هذا السؤال ؟ ..
 إنني أحب ..
 ولكن .. ما الذي يعنيه يا سيدتي
 إن تجنيسي أنسالي كيف حال الكلمات ..
 دخلت في جسد الشعر .. ألف الطلقات ..
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 عامين...
لم نزهر .. ولم نورق .. ولم نطرح نمر ..
نحنُ من عامين لم نبرق .. ولم نرعى ..
و لم نركض كمجنونين يا سيديي تحت المطر ..
نحنُ من عامين ..
لم نخرج عن المألوف في العشق ..
و لم نخرج على اليومي والعادي ..
لم ندخل أقاليم الغرابه ..
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.

آو .. كم عانيتُ من داء الكَابَةُ
آو .. كم عانيتُ من موت الكَابَةُ
شَقَوني بَخِيوط المَفْرَداتَ
طَوْرَدُونِي ..
خَلَفَ أَسوار اللَغاتِ ..
أَغلقوا في وجه حُبِّي الْطَرَقَاتِ ..
قُشْشُونِي ..
لَم أُكن أحمل إلا وَرَدَةُ الْشَعْرِ ..
وَحَزَني ..
وَجَنُوْنِي ..
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 أكن أحملُ – إلا أنتِ يا سيّديتي – بين عَينيُني...

وِلَوْلَا أُرجَعْتْ في...

كنتُ يا سيّديتي، في موقع الحبِّ...

لهذا لم أكنُ في جُمْلَة المُتَصِّرِينّ...

كنتُ يا سيّديتي، في جانب الشَّعْرُ... لهذا...

صنَّفوني بورجوازايا صغيراً...

وأضافوني إلى قائمة المتحرفينّ...

لم أكنُ في زمن القبح قبيحةً...

إذا كنتُ صديقُ الياسمينّ...
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?

يا أبتَرَهَ ؟
أين أنتِ الآن يا مَنْ لم أجد عنوانَ عينيكِ
على كلّ الخرائط ..
أين أنتِ الآن يا مَنْ لم أجد آثارَ أقدامكِ في كلّ الفنادقِ
لم أعرف شيئاً عنكِ ..
في أيّ بلد أنتِ ؟
ماذا تفعلين اليومَ ؟
ماذا تشعرين الآنَ ؟
هل ضِبعت إيمانكِ مثل بجميع الآلهة ..
وتقاليد القبائل ؟.
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 تُحبَينَ كما كنتِ؟
وتهمنَين بالشعر كما كنتِ؟
وتشتاقين للشوق كما كنتِ؟
أم ان الحرب داست ورق الورد وأفاع السببل؟
بِعَرَّنا هذه الحرب اللثيمَةْ ..
بِشَعَّنا .. شوهَتنا ..
أُحرَفت كل الملفات القديمة ..
لا تُحبَيني .. إذا كانت سؤالي غريبة ..
كل ما يشغِّل بالليِّ يا حبيبة ..
أن تكوني أنتِ في خير .. وعيتاكِ بخير ..
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,
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 الورديّة الجسم التي تلبس في معصمها البحرّ بيارا

كم قطعنا اللّبن من أشجار نميدها ..

وحولنا جبال اللّنج نارا ..

واكتشفناهما فصيفا .. فصيفا ..

وبنيها جداراً فجداراً ..

كم دخلنا بيّتها البحري أطفالاً صغارا ..

فلعبنا .. ورقصنا ..

وخرجنا نحمل الشمس بايدينا ..

واحساكاً .. وخليها .. ومشرحا ..

فلمذا قتلها ؟

هذه الأنين التي كانت ترعُّ الماء .. في وجه الصحاري؟
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?

آو يا بيروت .. يا أنتايّي من بين ملايين النساء
يا رحيلًا برناقيًا على ورد .. وبرقوق .. وما ..
يا طموحي .. عندما أكتب أشعاري .. لتقرب السماء
أي أخبار تريدين عن الحب .. وعيني ..
ومكاتبتي رماد ..
وأحاسيدي رماد ..
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 مساحات من الزُرْفِةِ ليست تستعذَ
واسحاقات من الدهشة ليست تستعذَ ..
واحتمالات طيور سوف يأتي ..
واحتمالات كلام .. سوف يأتي ..
واحتمالات لعشق ما أتى بعد ..
ولكن سوف يأتي ..
سوف يأتي ..
سوف يأتي ..
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.

بيروت حبيبي
بيروت محظيتكم

سامحينا ...
إن تركناك تموتين وحيدتان ..
وتسلتنا إلى خارج الغرفة نبكي كجنود هاربين ..
سامحينا ..
إن رأينا دمك الوردي ينساب كأنهار العقيق ..
وتفرجنا على فعل الزيانا ..
وبقينا ساكتين ...
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

¹ An echo of the words of the mother of Abū “Abd 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.

آو.. يا بيروت،
يا صاحبة القلب الذهب.
سامحنا ...
إن جعلناك وقودا وحطب
للخلافات التي تنبث من لحم العرب
منذ أن كان العرب!!
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?
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.

ذَبَحْنَا هذه الحربُ التي من غير معنى ..
أفرغْنَا من معانيّا تماماً ..
بُعْرَنَا في أفاصي الأرض ..
منبوذين .. مسحوقين .. مَرْضَى .. مُتَعْقَينَ ..
جَعَلْتُمُ بِما — خلافًا للنَّبَوَّات — يهوذا تائهين ..
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
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.

وَكَفَرْنَا ..
بَالدِكَاكِينِ الَّتِي عَمْلَا أَرِجَاءَ المدِينَةِ ..
وَتَبْيِعُ النَّاسُ هَقَاداً وَضْغُيَّةٌ ..
وِبِطَاطِينِ .. وَسْجَادَاً وَبِنِزِيَّةٍ مُهَرٌبٍ ..
آُوُا سِيَدِيَ كَمْ نَتَعْذَبُ ..
عَنْمَا نَقُرُّ أَنَّ الْشَّمَسَ فِي بَيْرُوتٍ ، صَارَتْ
كَرَةً فِي أَرْجُلِ الْمُرْتَزِقِينِ ..
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.
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;

بعد ذلك بلغهم الله، حيناً، عن ندم في مدرسة القتل ..
ولكننا رفضنا ..
طلبوا أن نشطر الرب لنصفين ..
ولكننا اختلفنا ..
إننا نؤمن بالله ..
لماذا جعلوا الله هنا .. من غير معنى ؟
طلبوا منا بأن نشهد ضد الحب ..
لكن ما شهدنا ..
طلبوا منا .. بأن نشتم بيوت التي قضها .. وحياه ..
وحنانا .. أطمئنا ..
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 نقطع الثدي الذي من خير ونحن رضيعنا
فاعذرتنا ..
ووقفنا ضد كل القاتلين
وبقينا مع لبنان سهولا .. وجبالا ..
وبقينا مع لبنان جنوبا .. وشمالا ..
وبقينا مع لبنان صليبا .. ونحالا ..
وبقينا مع لبنان البياب ..
و لبنان العناقيد ..
و لبنان الصباة ..
وبقينا مع لبنان الذي علمنا الشعر ..
و أهدانا الكتابة ..
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 ...
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.
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.
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!"
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 بيرون الأنشى مع الاعتنار

كان لبنان لكم مروحة ...
تنثر الألوان ، والظل ظليلًا
كم هربتم من صحاراكم إليه ..
تطلبون الماء .. والوجه الجميلا ..
واغتلتتم بندى غاباتـٍ
واختبأتكم تحت جفتي طويلًا
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?

وَتَلْقَىْهُمْ عَلَى أَشْجَاهٍ
وَسَرْحَتْهُمُ فِي بِرَابِه وَعَوَّرَاهَا
وَشَرْبَتْهُمْ مِن خَوَايِهِ نِيْبًا
وَسَعَتْهُمْ مِن شَوَابِهِ هَدِيَالَهَا
وَقَطَفَتْهُمْ مِن رُوَايَهِ الرَّبَاعَيْنَ
وَالعِبْنَ الْخَضْرَ.. وَالخَذَّ الأُسِيَلَا ..
وَقَتَنَّـتْهُمْ شَمْسُهُ لَؤْلؤً
وَرَكَبَتْهُمْ أَنْجَمَ اللَّيْلَ خَيْـوَلا ..
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 علمكم أن تمشتقوا ..
لم يكن لبنان في العشق بإيالا ..

إنه علمكم أن تقترأوا ...
هل تقولون له : "شكراً جزيلاً " ..

آو يا عشاق بيروت القدامى
هل وجدتم بعد بيروت البديل؟

إن بيروت هي الأنشى التي ...
تمتع الخصبة، وتُعطينا الفصولا ..
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 يُسْتَهْلِكُ لبنان .. يُقَضِّمُ معهُ
كلٌّ من يُقْتَلُهُ .. كانَ القتلا ..
كلٌّ يُقِعُ فيه ، يُقِعُ فيكمُ
فأعيدوه .. كما كانَ جميلا ..

إن كُوناً ليس لبنانُ به
سوف يبقى عدماً أو مستحيلا ..
كلٌّ ما يطلبُه لبنانُ منكمُ
أن تِجَبُوه .. تِجَبُوه قليلا ..
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.

بيروت تحترق .. وأحبب ..

عندما كانت بيروت تحترق ..
وكان رجال الإطفاء يرشون ثوبها الأحمر بالماء ..
وبحاولون إنقاذ العصافير المحبوبة ..
في قرميد بيوتها الوردية ..
كنت أركض في الشوارع حافياً
على الجمر المشتعل ، والأعمدة المتساقطة
وتلال الزجاج المكسور
باحفاً عن وجهك المخاصِر كحمامة ..
بين ألسنتلبس ..
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.

 كنت أريد أن أنقذ باري من
 بيروت الثانية ... 
 بيروت التي تخصك ... وتخصي ...
 بيروت التي حيلت بنا في وقت واحد ...
 وأرضعتنا من ثدي واحد ...
 وأرسلتنا إلى مدرسة البحر
 حيث تعلمنا من الأسماك الصغيرة 
 أول دروس السفر ...
 وأول دروس الحب ..
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.

بيروت ..
التي كنا نحملها معنا في حقيبينا المدرسية ..
وتضعها في أرشفة الخبز ..
وخلاوقة السمسم ..
وأكواب الزهرة ..
والتي كنا نسميها ..
في ساعات عشقتنا الكبير ..
( بيروت لك ..)
و ( بيروتي ..) ...
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

عندما كان الوطن يهرب من الوطن
وكان الأطفال ينامون فوق ألعابهم
في مطار بروت الدولي
بينما آباؤهم يزنون الحقائب الملأى بالدموع
ويضطرّرون إلى دفع أجرة
عن كل كيلو زائد من الدموع
وعن كل كيلو زائد من الحزن
عندما كان الوطن يضع يديه على وجهه
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 cafes
Folded up their sunshades and left,
And the seabirds carried their young on their shoulders
And departed ...

وكانت الغيوم الخريفية ..
القادمة من جزر اليونان
تخاف أن تقترب من سواحل لبنان
مخافة أن تصاب برصاص قناص ..
عندما كانت مصابيح الطرقات
ترتعش من الخوف ..
ومثاني الرصيف ..
تطوي مظلاتها وتهاجر ..
وطيور البحر، تحمل أولادها على أكتافها
وترحل ..
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 الوطن يشق الوطن
كنت على مسافة أمتار من الجريمة
أراقب القتلة ..
وهم يضاعون بروت كجارية ..
وبناوبون عليها ..
واحدا ..
واحدا ..
وفقًا لبروتوكولات القبيلة
والامتيازات العائلية ..
والرتب العسكريّة ..
I was not the only witness who saw thousands of knives
Flash 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

¹In Arabic, the Mediterranean is known as the "White Sea".
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 ...

عندما كانت بيروت تحترق... 
وكان كل واحد... 
يفكر في إنقاذ ما تبقى له من ثروة شخصية... 
تذكرتُ فجأة... 
أنك لا تزالين حبيبي... 
وأنك تروتي الكبرى التي لم أصرح عنها... 
وأني ممسؤل... 
- ولو كنتي ذلك حياتي... 
لإنقاذ ثروتنا المشتركة... 
وممتلكاتنا العاطفية...
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 ...
Books
Pictures
Records
Ceramic plates
Postcards
Keyrings

On which was written in all the languages of the world

"I love you", 

ومكتبت
ولاوحات
واسطوانات
وصحون سير اميكن
وبطاوات بريدية
وعلاقات مندوب

مكتوب عليها بكل لغات العالم كلمة:

أحبك...
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
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.

وشال من الحرير الأحمر ..
أهديته إليك ، يوم عدت من إسبانيا ..
وكنت كنما وضعته على كتفيك ..
فهمت ..
لماذا قاتل طارق بن زياد ..
من أجل دخول الأندلس ..
و لماذا قاتلت أنا ..
ولا أزال أقاتل ..
حتى يسمح لنفسي
بدخول مياه عينيك الأقليمية ..
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
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 أفشِّل عن حزني الخصوصيَ
وعن امرأةٍ لا شبيهةً لها ..
ومدينةٍ لا شبيهةً لها ..
وقصائدٍ لا شبيهةً لها ..
في كلِّ ما كتبه الرجالُ في حُبٍّ النساءَ ..
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,
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 حجر دائريٍّ كدمغةً ..
أقيسُ خسارتي ..
بعددٍ فناجين التمهوة التي كان يمكن أن نحتسِها ..
وبعد الأسئلة التي كان يمكن أن تطرحَها
يدايٍ على بديك ..
لو لم تتحترف بيروت ..
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 أُقيِسْ خِسارِيِّا ،
بأَلُوف الكُلُمَاتِ الَّتِي كَانَ يَكْنَى أَنْ نُقْوُلُهَا ..
وَعَشْرَاتِ السَّنَانِ وَالْقَطَارَاتِ ..
الَّتِي كَانَ يَكْنَى أَنْ نَسَافِرَ عَلَيْها ..
وِمِئَاتِ الأَحَالَمِ الَّتِي كَانَ يَكْنَى أَنْ نَحْتَقِقَهَا ..
لَوْ لَمْ نَحْتَقِقِ بِيِرُوْتِ ..
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 ...
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 ...
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,
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 ...

والأنك لا تزالين تعُومين كزهرة لوتس
على مياه ذاكرتي ..
وتنبتين بين أصابعي ،
كما ينبت العُشب الطازج ..
بين حجارة كنيسة تاريخية ..
لم يكن يهمي من تحيي الآن ..
وبماذا تفكرين ..
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 نتكلم عنها فيما بعد ..
فالقضية المصرية الآن ..
هي أناي أحبك ..
وأعتبر نسي مسؤولًا عن حماية أجمل بنتفسجتين
في العالم ..
أنت .. وبيروت ..
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

لا تُؤاخذني ..
إذا اقتحمت باب غرفتك دون موعد سابقٍ
فاضعي أبى خروقتك تصادفتها على جسدي ..
ولا تسألني لماذا ؟
إن بيروت تحترق في الخارج ..
إن ( بيروت ونا ) تحترق في الخارج ..
و أنا رغم كل حماقاتك وكل إساءاتك الماضيّة ..
لا أزال أحبك ..
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.

وهل أنا قد جاءت ..
لكي أحملكِ قطة صغيرةً على كتفي ..
وأخرجَ بكِ ..
من سفينة النار، والموت، والجنون ..
فأنا ضدَّ احرقّ القطة الجميلة ..
والعيون الجميلة ..
 والمدن الجميلة ..
O Green Tunis... 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.

انْشَأْتُ قُصْدُوْرَيْكَ
يا تُونُسُ الخضراَل.. جعِّثْكِ عاشقاَ
وعلى جبيني وردة وكتابُ
إني الدمشقي الذي احترف الهوى
فاختَضَرْتُ لغنائي الأعشابُ
أحْرَقْتُ من خلفي جميع مراكبي
إن الهوى أن لا يكون إيبابُ
أنا فوق أنفان النساء مكسَر
قُطْعاً، فعمِّري المرج والأحشابُ

¹Delivered 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
²The 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.
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 Rabâb¹, but Rabâb does not answer.

---

¹A 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.

أُحَاسِبُ امرأةً على نياينها
ومنى استقامَ مع الناية حسابُ؟
ما نَتْبَتْ عن عشيقي .. ولا استغيرتهُ
ما أَسْحَفَ العشاقُ لَو هُمْ تابوا...

قمرُ دمثقيُ سافرُ في دمي
وبلابل.. وسابل.. وقبال
الفَلُ يبدأ من دمشق بياضاتهُ
وبعدها تنطيَبُ الأطباقُ
والماء يبدأ من دمشق .. فحيَّما
أُسندت رأسك ، جدول يسباب
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.

والثَّيَّـر عصَفَرٌ بَّــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــ&nbs
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.

بدأ الزفافُ ، فمن تكونُ مضيفٌ هذا الماءٕ ، ومن هو المقتربُ؟
أنَا مغني القصر . . يا قرطاجَةُ كيف الحضورُ؟ وما علي ثيابُ
ماذا أقولُ؟ نسي يتشُّ عن في والمفرّدات حجراء وتشرقابٌ
فمآدب عربيةٍ . . وقصائدٌ همزيَّةٍ ووسائد وحبابٌ
لا الكأسُ نُسِبنا ماحة حزناً يوماً . . ولا كل الشراب شرابٌ
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.
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-Buḥtūrī here, or Ziryāb;¹
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.

¹Al-Buḥtūrī (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 protege of Abū Tammām, and like him of Syrian origin.
²Ziryāb (d. c. 845) was the most famous musician of Islamic Spain. He was a pupil of Ishāq al-Mawsili. 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 eyelashes write.
The fire of writing has burnt up our lives
And our life is matches and firewood.
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.
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.
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 عل بقابا تّمّرة;
فخنجرٍ مرفوعة وحجارٍ
فبـِنـَـِلـِـهـِـم عربٍة .. من ذا رأي
فما رأي ، فبـِلـِـَـِلـِها أنيـَّـَــابٌ

يا تونس الخضراء .. كأسي علّقـم
أعـِلـِّى الهزيمة تشرب الأئـَـِـِّـِـَـابٌ؟
و خريطة الوطن الكبير فضيحة
فحراـَـَـِـِّـِـِـِّـِـِـِّـِ~
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!
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 Umayyads² have died, all of them
Of shame, while morphology and inflection remain.

¹By his use of the word Wahhāb the poet is perhaps alluding to the Saudis, who follow the religious teachings of the reformer Muhammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703 - 1792).
²See note 1, p.218.
It is as though the works of classical literature
Were a big myth, and there were no 'Umar and no Khattāb,'
And the banners of Ibn al-‘Āṣ wipe away their tears
And the mighty ruler of Egypt² is afflicted by schizophrenia,
Who would believe that Egypt has turned Jewish
And that the shrine of our Lord al-Ḥusayn⁴ 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.

⁴See note 2, p.167 and note 1, p.310.
¹See note 1, p.149.
²See note 1, p.139.
³A reference to the ruler of Egypt mentioned in Qur’an, Sūrat Yūsuf, verses 30 and 51.
Even if Kāfūr' 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.

\[\text{1}^{\text{See note 2, p.434.}}\]
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 تعذِّليني .. إن كشفت مواجهي
وجهُ الحقيقةَ ما عليه نِقَابُ
إن الجنْونُ وراءَ يَضْعُفُ قِصائي
أو ليسَ في بعض الجنون صَوابُ؟
فتحلْي غَضبي الجميل، قَرباً
ثارتْ على أمر السماء هضابُ
إذا صرخت بوجه من أخْبِنِهم
فلْكي يعيش الحُب والأحْبَابُ
إذا قوت على العروبة مَرَةً
فقد تفتق بكُحلها الأهدابُ
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'
And vegetation may appear from the cloak.

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 Forifier.

فلربما تجد الموتيبة تفشيها
ويضيء في قلب الظلم شهاب
ولقد تطور من العقال حمامته
ومن العبادة تطلع الأعشاب

هل لي لصدرك رجعة ومثاب؟
لا تغضبي مني.. إذا غلب الهوى
إن الهوى في طبعه غلالب
فذنوب شعرى كله مغفرة
والله جل جلاله التواب

See note 4, p. 157.
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?

Bilqis

Was the most beautiful queen in the history of Babylon,

This poem is addressed to Qabbānī's wife, Bilqis al-Rāwi, 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. Bilqis 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?

بجع..
كانت أطول النخلة في أرض العراق
كانت إذا تمشي
ترافقتها طاووسين
وتسбегاً يا أيال
بجع.. يرافعين
ويأتي القصيد ويجلساً أفلات
هل يعمري
من بعد شكرك سون أرجع إلى الأعلى؟
O green Nineveh,¹
O my blonde-haired gypsy,
O waves of the Tigris
Which wea her leg in spring
The sweetest of anklets,
They killed you, Bilqis ...
What an Arab Nation
Is this, which
Assassinates the voices of nightingales?

¹The ancient capital of Assyria, in the north of Iraq.
Where is al-Samaw'al?
Where is al-Muhalmil?
And the nobles of old?
They are tribes which have devoured tribes,
Foxes which have killed foxes,
And spiders which have killed spiders.

'Al-Samaw'al b. Gharid b. 'Adiyah al-Azdi 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.

Al-Muhalmil 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?

قَسِيَتْ بِعيَانٍ الَّتِينَ أَيْما
فِي مُلُونِ النَّجَومِ..
سَأُقُولُ، بِأَحْيَنٍ أَيْمًا، عَنّ النَّارِ إِمَا
فِي الْجَمِيلِ ذَلِكَ مُكَذَّبٌ عَرَبِيٌّ ؟
أَمْ مَشْتَيْنَا الْمَسْتَابُ كَاذِبٌ ؟
Bilqis

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.
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, Bilqūs -
How can man distinguish
Between gardens and rubbish-heaps?

Bilqūs O martyr, O poem
Pure, unsullied -
Sheba is searching for its Queen,
So return the public's greetings.
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-ʿAzāmiyya?
Beirut kills one of us every day
And looks for a victim every day,

'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
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.
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!

'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?
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 تقرعين الباب بعد وقت؟
هل تتخلين المطرع السرمي؟
هل تأتيين بسحر؟
وإياك نشيرة؟
ومره يد قنهر التحول؟
ملطين؟
إنْ رُوتو كَبِيَت مُخَنْنأةٌ
مآزالت على أخيلان بَكَيْهُ؟
ووجهك لم يزال مستقلاً
بين الرياء والأتيار.
Even the cigarette you lit
Has not gone out
And its smoke
Still refuses to travel.

Bilqīs
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!
My wife ..
My beloved .. my poem .. light of my eyes.
You were my beautiful sparrow.
Why did you run away from me, Bilqīs?

Bilqīs
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

١See note 1, p. 382.
²See 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.

بلقیس

إنّ الحزن يصغيّني
و بيروت التي قتلتك لا تقري جريّتها
و بيروت التي شقت
تدمّل أنا قتلت عشقيّتها
و أطفأت الرّمز.
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?
Bilqûs -

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.'

1The 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?
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
Bilqis

Where is your bottle of Guerlain
And your blue lighter?
Where is the Kent cigarette which
Never left your lips?
Where is the āshší' singing
Above your form, like a festival?

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.

ستَنْظُرُ الأَنْتَسْطَالُ مَاضِيًا...
فيَنْتَرَبُّ رَمْعُها...
هل أَحْضَرْتُ الأَنْتَسْطَالُ أَشْرَاطًا أُيُّضَّاتُها كَأَيْنَ؟
بلقَينَ: أَصْنِفَ أَنَا أَهَاجُرُ مِنْ دِيّ...
وَأَنَا النَّاصِبُ بَيْنَ أَبْيَاضِ اللُّبَيْبِ...
وَبِيْنَ أَلْبَيْنِ الزَّهَقَانِ...
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.

بِلْقِیَسُ، أَمْۚ اِلْمَحۡمَرَةُ
هَا أَنْتِ حَقۡرَئَتُنَّ، لِبَنِ عَرَبِ الشَّیۡخَةِ وَالمَشۡهُرَةِ
مَا زَانَ سَأۡلَتُكُنِّي حَیۡلَ مِلۡکِی؟
يِنَّ الْعَلَامَةَ فِضۡلِیۡهِ

هَا خَوَّثُتُ بَینَ أَکَرَمِ الْقُلُوۡعِ
وۡنِ هَٰذِهِ تُنَزُّهَ اِلْأَرَبَیۡةَ
هَا خَوَّثُتُ لِيْنَا أَخَوَبِیۡثُ
يَنَّ كَانَ هَذَا الْقَبۡرُ یۡکْبِرَ أَنۡتُ
أَمَّ نَزِرَ الْبَرَبَیۡثُ
Bilqīs

O willow who lowered her tresses upon me,

O proud giraffe, ']

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?

١See 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‘.

\[\text{ناختی العشبي .. ليس يستسلم زرتا}
\text{بين أعناق الرجال ..}
\text{و بين أعناق النساء ..}
\text{بقبلين:}
\text{إن هم قصو كك .. فعندنا}
\text{كل أبنائنا مستديرين جزباً ..}
\text{و تستحي في جربة ..}

\[\text{See note 2, p.168.}\]
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.
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.

Qābbānī is the author of a collection of verse love-letters entitled Mi‘āt 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, Bilqīṣ, are the whole of civilisation, for woman is civilisation;
Bilqīṣ, 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.

Bilqīṣ -
My moon, whom they buried under stones.
Now the curtain is lifting,
Now the curtain is lifting.
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.
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.
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 Bilqis,
Like a precious pearl,
I thought - "Is killing women an Arab pastime
Or are we, at bottom, professional criminals?"

حتى الطيور تتوتر من دلسي ..
ولا أدرى اليأسب ..
حتى أكراك .. والراكب .. والسرب ..
حتى الدفأر .. واكتب ..
حتى أشياء اجمل ..
جميلة .. فده الغريب ..
لًا إنا ننكسر الفردي
إبلتين ..
وزمر كريم ..
قرت .. هل تنل الفاره يا عزيز ..
أم أنا في الأصل .. محتوفا بريت 
Bilqis,
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 Bilqis,
My most beautiful country,
People do not know how to live in this country
People do not know how to die in this country
I am still paying, with my blood,' 

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?

\[\text{مازلت أغني من ديني ..} \\
\text{أعلى جَّناً;} \\
\text{كي أُشيّي الدنيا.. وكون السّا؛} \\
\text{شَتّت بن أسقى وحيدا .. مثّل أوالم الشّنا;} \\
\text{هل تؤلّد الشّعرٌ، من رحم الشّقاء؟} \\
\text{هل التّميمة طغّةٌ;} \\
\text{في القلب .. ليس لها شفّافة؟ أَم أسّني وحدين الذي} \\
\text{عُينتُهُّ تختصّب، أَيّةً الحَبّ؟} \]

\[\text{i.e. his writing.}\]
I shall say at the investigation

How my gazelle died by 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.

'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.

¹See 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.

¹See note 1, p. 618.
I shall say at the investigation
How they assailed the verses of her Noble Qur'an
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.

ستاول في التحقيق:
كيف سطووا على آيات مُخفِّفِها الشريف
وأضرعوا في الْلَّبَبِ ..
ستاول كيف استمروا وَزَّاماً ..
كيف استمروا قَبْطًا ..
فما تركوا بآذاراً .. ولا تركوا عُرْبَـبَ
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.
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
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, Bilqis
Whom I worship to the point of intoxication
But they abandoned Palestine
To murder a gazelle.
What does poetry say, Bilqîs, 
At this time?
What does poetry say
In this age of Shu'ūbîs',
Of Xagians?
Of cowardice?

ماذا يقول الشعر، يا بلال؟
في هذا العصر؟
ماذا يقول الشعر،
في العصر الشعوبي؟
ماذا يقول الشعر،
في هذا الزمان؟
ماذا يقول الشعر،
يا بلال؟

1 The Shu'ūbîs 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-"Iqd al-Farīd" and al-Aghānī² in comparison?

¹An encyclopaedic work devoted to Arab culture, literature, language and history, composed by the Andalusian scholar Ibn "Abd Rabbihi (860 - 940).
²Another encyclopaedic work on Arab poetry and music, composed by Abū al-Faraj al-İşfahānī (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.
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.
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.

ستظل أجيال من الأطباق...
تظل على ضفافك الطويلة...
وستظل أجيال من العشاق...
لفترة كبي.. أنتي أمل المرأة الأميّة...
وسيعرف الأعراب يوماً...
آمنهم قتلوا الرسولأ...
قتلوا الرسولأ...
قل .. ت .. ل .. و .. أ...
ال .. ر .. س .. و .. ل .. د

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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

*****

أطفال الجبارة

بهرُوا الدنيا...
وما فِي يِدْهُمْ إلَّا الجَجَارَةْ...
وأضاؤُوا كالقناديل، وُجِّهُوا كالبَشَارَةْ.
قَامُوا... وانبِجْرُوا... واستَجِهُوا...
وَبِيَنَا دُنْيَا فَطَيْنَةٌ
صُفِّحَتِ الأَجْسَادُهَا ضِدَّ الحرارة...
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

قُتِلُوا عِنْدًا. إِلَى أن قُتِلُوا.
وَجِلَّسْنا فِي مَتَاهِينا. كَبِصَارِقْيَ الْمَحَارَةُ
واحِدٌ. يَبْحَثُ مَنَا عَنْ تَجَارَةً.
واحِدٌ. يَتَلَبْ مَليارًا جَدِيدًا.
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.

* * *

وزواجاً رابعاً ..
وئنهوداً ضقائهن الحضارة ..
وأحد .. يبحث في لندن عن قصر منيف ..
وأحد .. يعمل سبسان سلاح ..
وأحد .. يطلب في البارات ثارة ..
وأحد .. يبحث عن عرش ، وجيش ، وإمارة ..

*
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

أو .. يا جيل الخيانات ..
ويا جيل العقولات ..
ويا جيل النفايات ..
ويا جيل الدهارة ..
سوف يجتاحك .. مهما أبطأ التاريخ ..
أطفال الحجار ..
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.
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.
We take political gät, 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.
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.

皈依正信的部落和人民，我们洗涤你们的罪名；
不要相信摩西，也不要相信摩西的魔术。
准备自己去摘橄榄。
这个犹太时代是一个幻觉，
如果我们要相信自己，它将会崩溃。

《加沙的疯子》
一千个问候
给那些疯子，如果他们解放我们。
政治时代已经过去很久了，
要教我们疯狂。

Nazir Qibiani
1988/7/21
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 ...
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
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
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.
A child falls.

In moments

Thousands of boys are born

The Gazan moon is eclipsed

In moments ...

A moon rises from Baysān

A country enters the dungeon,

A country is born in two eyes.

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'
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 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.
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?

...
What rivers of ruby
Have overflowed from the pages of the Qur'an?
The soothsayers ask about him
The Sufis ask about him
The Buddhists 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?

أي نهر من باتور
فاضت من ورق القرآن؟
يسأل عنه السويساءين.
ويسأل عنه الصوفيين.
ويسأل عنه البَوكَيْمْ.
ويسأل عنه ملوك الإنس.
ويسأل عنه ملوك الجَان.
من هو هذا الولد الطالع
مثل الخَوْج الأحمر.
من شَجَر البَسْبِيْان؟
من هو هذا الولد الطافش
من صَوْر الأجداد.
من كُتب الأحفاد.
من سيَرَأَال بنى فَحْطَان؟
من هو هذا الولد الباحث
عن أَزْهَار الحَبِّ.
ومن شَمَس الإنسان؟
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?
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?