

Poet of Jordan

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Poet of Jordan

The Political Poetry of Muhammad Fanatil al-Hajaya

Translated, explained, and introduced by

William Tamplin

With a Foreword by

Clive Holes



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Cover illustration: Hajaya on his property in Sadd al-Sultānī.

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Foreword

There is an old saying in Arabic: الشعر ديوان العرب 'Poetry is the historical record of the Arabs'. This might seem an unusual function for an art like poetry to fulfil. Poetry in the West, at least in its modern incarnations, is the crafted artistic response of an individual to the world as s/he experiences it, an intensely personal act of verbal creation in which originality of thought and expression are imaginatively and artfully intertwined. Traditional Arabic poetry is the polar opposite of this: it treats a fixed set of traditional, even hackneyed, themes (of which 'recording' history is just one), it does so in a time-honoured fashion (even if the poet's tongue is sometimes firmly in his cheek, as in this book), and it speaks in a communal voice. The traditional Arab poet speaks *on behalf of* his community—his tribe, his social class, or, increasingly these days, his nation state—and he speaks on matters of communal interest, in particular controversial political and social issues, national and international. Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajjāyā, the Arab poet who is the subject of this study, has gone so far as to say that to him poetry is 'a weapon'. But in 'weaponizing' his words, whether with serious or jocular intent, the traditional Arab poet must follow strict rules of scansion and rhyme handed down by innumerable generations of forebears. This has been true of Arabic poetry since at least the 6th century CE. The notion of 'creativity' in traditional Arabic poetry is highly culturally specific and bound by formal rules.

Alongside poetry written in the formal pan-Arab register of Arabic, there exists in every Arab country a 'popular' poetic tradition of the type outlined above which retained its oral character for much longer. In several Arab countries, Egypt being one, there are separate popular traditions, one 'bedouin' and one 'urban' which have distinctly different forms and origins. But in both cases, 'popular' means 'composed by ordinary people'—people that often have only a modest level of education, and sometimes no education at all. Anybody can be a 'popular' poet—all it takes is the application to learn the conventions of the art, acquired in the 'bedouin' case by sitting and listening for years to established practitioners recite their works at social gatherings, and a talent for poetic composition, something which many Arabs seem to possess innately. The hallmark of all Arabic popular poetry is that its language is the Arabic of everyday speech rather than that of formal writing and public speaking (so-called Modern Standard Arabic, which is learnt at school and is no Arab's native language). To some Arabs, generally the cultural elites, this disqualifies it from being considered poetry at all. Such people consider its subject matter too banal, its frames of reference too local and its language too lacking in dignity to

express the elevated thoughts which to them is the essence of poetry. These judgments are often based on ignorance and cultural prejudice; but they are a prevalent attitude of mind nonetheless, aptly described by one contemporary (Saudi Arabian) expert on the 'bedouin' poetic tradition as 'ahistorical, unscientific, politically motivated and elitist'.¹ Seven centuries ago, in his monumental work *The Prolegomenon to History*, the great Tunisian philosopher and polymath Ibn Khaldūn, when defining the essence of 'eloquence' (*balāgha*), made the following observations on the bedouin vernacular poetry of his day:

Most contemporary scholars, philologists in particular, disapprove of these types of poems [...] and refuse to consider them poetry. They believe that their literary taste recoils from them because they are linguistically incorrect and lack case and mood vowel endings [...]. But vowel endings have nothing to do with eloquence. Eloquence is the conformity of speech to what one wants to express and to the requirements of a given situation, regardless of whether the u-ending indicates the subject or the a- ending the object, or vice-versa. [...] If the indicated meaning is in conformity with the requirements of the situation, we have eloquence. The rules of the grammarians have nothing to do with it.²

The negative attitudes towards vernacular poetry which Ibn Khaldūn complained of still explain the lack of attention to it in university departments of language and literature in the Arab World, and to some extent also in western academe, though an additional factor here is that western university training in Arabic did not, until relatively recently, require the acquisition of a knowledge of spoken dialectal Arabic sufficiently deep to enable an understanding of poetry composed in it. And what you can't understand, you often don't appreciate. This situation has now begun to change, and western academics like the late Pierre Cachia (on the Egyptian tradition), Clinton Bailey, Lila Abu Lughod, Marcel Kurpershoek, Saad Sawayan and Bruce Ingham (on the 'bedouin' tradition), Steve Caton (on Yemen) and Clive Holes & Sa'īd Salmān Abu Athera (on Jordan, Sinai and the Gulf) have all produced editions and annotated English translations of modern Arabic popular poetry.

The approach in all these studies has been more ethnographic than aesthetic or literary-historical, given the fact that popular poetry occupies such a different niche in Arab societies and cultures compared with any form of

1 My translation of the words of Sa'ad Sawayan in his (Arabic language) introduction to the tradition: *Nabati Poetry: Popular Taste and Textual Authority*, London: Saqi Books, 2000, p. 68.

2 Erwin Rosenthal's translation.

poetry in Western ones. In the Arab World it is a true ‘voice of the people’, and when it speaks truth to power, as it quite often does, the poet can find himself/herself in very hot water. Three examples: (1) in 2010, a female Saudi poet received death threats for a poem critical of the Saudi religious authorities which she performed live on the Abu Dhabi satellite TV programme ‘Poet of the Million’, a talent competition for vernacular poets which has a mass following; (2) a couple of years later, a Qatari poet was sentenced to life imprisonment for a poem of his deemed to be critical of the Qatari royal family, reduced on appeal only after Amnesty International intervened; (3) the recently deceased doyen of the Egyptian popular tradition, Aḥmad Fu’ād Nigm, spent several years in prison during the 1960s for poems of his that offended the then President of Egypt, Gamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir. In all these cases, the threat to the powerful resided in the fact that the language was the pungent, sometimes scabrous, and often highly amusing demotic Arabic in which popular poets recite and write—and which everyone in the social pyramid, down to the cab-driver and the doorman, understands perfectly. Poetry in the standard language, by contrast, lacks such popular resonance, and so never seems to be ‘weaponized’ in the same way.

It is a great pleasure to welcome this latest addition by Will Tamplin to the study of a still neglected but vigorous tradition. Tamplin’s book is highly unusual in that it is a study of the life and work of just one poet, Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajjāyā, albeit a very well-known one in his native Jordan and in the bedouin cultural commonwealth which knows no political borders. The meat of the book consists of more than forty long poems in English translation covering the last twenty years of events in Jordan and the wider Arab World. There is almost nothing of political significance during this period on which the poet does not provide a poetic commentary... and a judgement. The selection begins with a lament on the death of King Hussein in February 1999—a disaster to a staunch Jordanian loyalist like Ḥajjāyā—and ends with a poem on Donald Trump’s visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2017, in which the words addressed to Trump are put in the mouths of the Gulf Rulers whom the poet has always regarded as contemptible lackeys and supporters of Israel. When, these rulers wistfully ask in the final lines, will Trump deliver on his promise to ‘make America great again’ (and, by implication, protect them from what they see as the dark forces unleashed by the Arab Spring)? As in a number of his poems, this puppeteer’s tactic of ventriloquizing his real message enables the poet to avoid seeming to lecture his listeners. It often has incongruous and amusing results, as in one of Ḥajjāyā’s most famous poems ‘Oh Condoleezza Rice!’ in which he depicts George W. Bush as a bedouin poet declaiming a typical ‘tribal boasting poem’ (called in Arabic *fakhr*) and triumphantly celebrating his

‘victory’ in Iraq in 2003. In one of its multiple versions (though not the one presented here for reasons explained at the beginning of the translation), this poem contains a stinging and grossly insulting attack on Arab leaders such as Bashar al-Asad and Mu‘ammar al-Qadhafi and in particular Bush’s Gulf backers, but by putting these insouciant slurs into the bombastic Bush’s mouth, the poet artfully fends off any potential criticism of himself.

Translating a verbal art like poetry is a demanding, perhaps even an impossible task, all the more so when the language and imagery of the source texts is as removed from the audience’s cultural frame of reference as they are here. Will Tamplin makes no attempt at imitating the formal features of the original poems by making his translations scan and rhyme, and goes for fairly literal line-by-line renderings. This is understandable, even if adherence to strict rhyme-schemes and metrical regularity is one of the defining features of Arabic popular poetry, and one which gives it its particular punch and savour: the audience is often on tenterhooks as they listen for the inevitable next rhyme, gauging the appositeness of linguistic form to poetic message, and often shouting out comments like *ṣaḥḥ lisānak, wallah!* (‘By God, your words ring true!’) after a particularly brilliant or inventive verse. If rhymed and metrically regular translations are both difficult to sustain and run the risk of sacrificing subtleties of meaning in the originals, over-literal ones can have the opposite defect of sounding limp, stilted and even obscure. Will Tamplin’s translation strategy avoids these potential pitfalls admirably and succeeds in combining faithfulness to the sense of the originals with commendable lucidity and smoothness of diction. To further aid the reader, he provides contextualising information on the occasion of each poem’s composition, and an interpretative steer at transitional points in the structure of each poem. The work as a whole succeeds superbly in painting a warts-and-all portrait of a thoroughly post-modern bedouin poet, a past-master of the art who brilliantly manipulates and re-invents its technical nuts and bolts to instruct, warn, persuade and amuse his listeners. Bravo! Or *yā salām*, as the Arabs say!

Clive Holes

Oxford, September 2017

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Preliminary Note

Scholarly Literature

This work is most closely influenced by and indebted to four books. Its first two forbears, Saad Sowayan's *Nabati Poetry* (1985) and Clinton Bailey's *Bedouin Poetry from Sinai and the Negev* (1991), were for me excellent surveys of the field that I returned to frequently as reference works. Its second two forbears, Marcel Kurpershoek's *The Poetry of al-Dindān* (1994), the first volume in his five-volume work *Oral Poetry and Narratives from Central Arabia* (1994-2005), and Clive Holes' and Said Salman Abu Athera's *Poetry and Politics in Contemporary Bedouin Society* (2009), served me as examples to emulate in my study of the poetry, politics, and life of Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajāyā. In 2009 Holes and Abu Athera presented to the English-reading world ten of Hajaya's political and social poems translated, transliterated, introduced, and elucidated with footnotes. In so far as my work presents forty-five of Hajaya's political poems translated (but not transliterated), introduced, and elucidated with footnotes, it is best understood as a rather lengthy appendix to the pioneering 2009 work of Holes and Abu Athera.¹ Indeed, my work does not pretend to advance any particular argument but rather to reaffirm what Holes and Abu Athera have already shown: that "the modern use of *nabaṭī* poetry to express opinions and emotions on [political and social topics], with the poet acting as a 'communal voice' on behalf of an oppressed group, is on the increase" and that Bedouin poetry "has become a means for voicing political dissent."² I hope that my work appositely complements theirs.

I cannot stress enough that this work also does not pretend to be more than an intense study of one Bedouin poet and an attempt to understand him on his own terms through his biography, his poetry, four frank interviews, and three years of acquaintance and friendship. What this work offers in terms of personal ideological deconstruction, close reading, and empathetic engagement with a subject and a friend, however, comes at the expense of a more meaningful engagement with the long, rich, ever burgeoning tradition of Bedouin poetry. For an excellent review of the critical literature on Bedouin poetry, I would

1 This book contains my translation of "Oh Condoleezza Rice!" which was formerly translated and published by Holes & Abu Athera in *Poetry and Politics in Contemporary Bedouin Society* (2009) and in their article "George Bush, Bedouin Poet" (2007) in the journal *Middle Eastern Literatures*.

2 Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 10-11.

direct the reader to the Introductions of Holes' and Abu Athera's *The Nabati Poetry of the United Arab Emirates* (2011), their aforementioned *Poetry and Politics in Contemporary Bedouin Society* (2009), and the Introduction to Sawayan's *Nabati Poetry* (1985).

Because my primary interest lies in Hajaya's ideology, worldview, and politics and their relation to his upbringing, life experiences, and identity, this work does not engage with formal aspects of his poetry such as scansion and rhyme, as one might perhaps expect in a book of translated poetry. This interest also accounts for my translation style, which is somewhere, I hope, between the literal and the readable. Bedouin poetry ancient and modern is full of references to places, people, texts, historical figures, proverbs, poetic conventions, social conventions, and a way of life that are often so alien to Westerners that reading a Bedouin poem without an introduction and footnotes would be frustrating at worst and unfulfilling at best for the uninitiated reader. Thus the extensive footnotes, often suffused with Hajaya's voice, my introductions to individual poems, breaks between sections within poems, and interviews with Hajaya.

Translation of the Poems

Before Hajaya and I went about translating a poem, I would familiarize myself with the text and look up words I did not know. Then, he and I would go through the poem line by line. I would first tell him what I thought the line meant in my Arabic, which, when I speak with Hajaya, straddles the cultured/citified Jordanian Bedouin Arabic (*badawī mutamaddin/muthaqqaf*) that I have, through his influence, come to speak and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). He would tell me if I was correct and, if I was not, would correct my understanding or deepen it by pointing out some nuance of meaning or allusion that I had missed. Such an observation would often become a footnote if I could not work it into the text of the poem. If I was not sure about a certain line, I would back-translate the English I had composed into MSA, and Hajaya would either give it his approval or not. Once Hajaya and I had finished this phase, I would type the translated poem, a step which, as a first review of the poem, would often raise more questions. These I would review with Hajaya, usually in a later session or over WhatsApp's text messaging service.

Once the poem had been translated "literally," I tried to give it a more pleasing, beautiful cast. Clive Holes was the first to translate Hajaya into English, and his ability to turn rhyming, metered Bedouin poetry into rhyming, metered English poetry is admirable, enviable and, for me, inimitable. Despite his self-

effacing Notes on Translation, Holes is a poet. And I simply do not have his talent for bringing Bedouin poetry into rhyming, metered English verse, much less to adapt voice and tone to fit each poem. In one such Note, Holes remarks that “English is not as rich in Arabic in rhyme resources,”³ perhaps unwittingly revealing what English poetry and lesser poets have relied on since *Beowulf*: alliteration. If I could wrangle an alliterative or assonantal phrasing out of a line without significantly changing its meaning, I did. The same goes for rhythm and rhyme, although rhyme was harder for me to manage, and it is rare in my translations.

To give the reader a sense of my translation process, I will walk through the process from the Arabic original to my final English version. Here is the second line from Hajaya’s poem “Nevermore, oh Muammar” (*Hēhāt yā M‘ammar*), which he read aloud before Muammar al-Qaddafi in August 2006 and, in a confidential, mournful tone, tells the Brotherly Leader his concerns about the Arab World’s problems as well as difficulties he has faced as a politically engaged poet:

لك ساقني ربّي إله السماوات
وهو يدري إنهما من أعزّ أمنياتي

Here is the transliteration:

lak sāganī rabbī ilāh as-samāwāt
wa-hū yidrī in-hā min a‘azz umniyātī

Here is a fairly literal English translation of the above line:

To you drove me my Lord, god of the heavens
And he knows that it is among my dearest wishes

Here is how I reworked the line:

The Lord of the Heavens has carried me here
He knows that to be here’s my most cherished wish

In the first hemistich, “To you drove me my Lord, god of the heavens,” I fashioned one epithet (“The Lord of the Heavens”) from two (“my Lord” and “god of

3 Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 43.

the heavens"). I rendered "drove me," as one would drive a car, a camel, or any other type of mount, and as God drives whom He wills, as "carried me." I also rendered "to you" as "here," as Hajaya was standing in front of Qaddafi, his direct addressee, as he read him this poem. I think these are all justifiable modifications that do not change the meaning of the line too much but that allow for a meter that I return to in certain other lines throughout the poem: one iamb followed by three anapests. For example, there is "By trúth that's borne out by the fácts and by próof" (line 6), "As I cárry the wóes of my tríbe on my báck" (line 7), "From fárthest Morócco to the Éuphrates' móuth" (almost; line 8), "Aggréssions intráctable, bóund lock and káy" (line 10), "I cóme to you nów from a fáraway lánd" (line 11), "Oh sýmbol of súccor in báttle, of vírtue! (again, almost; line 12)," "A hélp to the hélpless in dáys of disásster" (line 14), "In Gáza and Qána, while Árab states sléep" (line 19), "Nevermóre, oh Muámmar, the chánce is long góne / That mínds drowned in slúmber would éver awáke" (line 20). On reflection, and upon writing this note, I realize that my decision to translate so many lines with one iamb followed by three anapests is probably a product of the rhythm of Hajaya's Arabic original's second hemistiches: *ḥa gā yi gin 'in dī 'a lē hin ith bā tī*.

In the second hemistich of the second line, "And he knows that it is among my dearest wishes," I have rendered "to be here" for "it" because God's driving/carrying Hajaya there, and thus "to be here," is the meaning of "it." For "among my dearest wishes," I have favored meter over meaning and rendered the superlative construction "my most cherished wish," at the risk of giving the reader the impression that Hajaya is pandering to Qaddafi a bit too much. Being there in front of Qaddafi is only *one* of Hajaya's dearest wishes in the Arabic, while in the English it is his *most* cherished wish. I think that this substitution is acceptable because the two meanings differ so little: Hajaya is expressing his happiness at being there with Qaddafi and is flattering his host. Also, this line does not contain any touchy ideological points. So here I favored meter over meaning.

Why "cherished"? Because "my most cherished wish" has a ring to it with the voiceless palato-alveolar sibilant affricate and fricative (the "ch" and "sh" sounds). And the alliteration of "my" and "most" builds on that of the esses and aitches of the first hemistich's "Heavens," "has," and "here" and the second hemistich's "He" and "here's."

As proud as I am of the above lines, not all my translations came out so well. Below is an example of a translated line from the same poem that I am not so proud of artistically but that might yet be best rendered so. First, here is Hajaya's Arabic line:

جيتك رجل لكن قبائل وخمسات
وجيتك قصايد حبرها من دواتي

Here is the transliteration:

jētak rajul lākin gabāyil u-khamsāt
u-jētak ḡaṣāyid ḥibir-hā min dawātī

Here is a fairly literal translation:

I've come to you [as] a man but [in the name of] tribes and clans
And I've come to you [with] poems whose ink's from my inkwell

My final version reads thus:

As a man I've come to you, but in the name of clans and tribes
With poems penned with ink from my own inkwell

Hajaya means:

Though I am merely one man, I have come to you, Qaddafi, representing
clans and tribes from across the Arab world. And the poems I have read
to you, including the one I am now reading, are sincere expressions of my
political and personal convictions—not those of anyone else.⁴

In this line I had to add a lot of what Clive Holes calls “stuffing” in order to render just *how* Hajaya understands his appearance before Qaddafi: *as a man, in the name of* clans and tribes, *with* poems.⁵ In the Arabic these nouns function as adverbs, and the prepositions that precede them in the English translation are implied in the Arabic.

If there is anything redeeming about this line, it is the alliteration of “poems penned.” However, the same hemistich’s “ink from my own inkwell” sounds awkward for the repetition of “ink.” In Arabic the word “inkwell” (*dawāt*) does

4 This line contains an internal contradiction, for if Hajaya’s thoughts and feelings are indeed his and only his, then how could he represent the whole of the Arab nation? To what extent can one represent both oneself and one’s people? Perhaps this line is illustrative of the “perfect sandpit” of Bedouin poetry that Clive Holes writes literary critics could play in (Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 5).

5 Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 43.

not contain the word “ink” (*hibr*). And leaving out “ink” from “inkwell” rings, even in translation, too much of the Bedouin “well” (*bīr*), so essential to life in the desert and central to Bedouin life and poetry. So for me there is no escaping “inkwell” and “ink.” I suppose I could have translated “ink from my own quill,” which instrument’s existence may be implied by the inkwell. But here I prefer the awkward proximity of ink and inkwell to the interpolation of a word that is not in the Arabic original.

I would also like to discuss a mistake in my translation that Clive Holes kindly pointed out to me at a late stage in this work. Here is line 6 of “Balm of the Wound” (*Yā Balsam al-Jarḥ*), an elegy that Hajaya wrote to King Ḥusayn:

أبو عبد الله سيدي وش يجيبه
ألي خذته مبعديات الركائب

Here is the transliteration:

abū ‘abdallāh sēdī wish iyjībah
allī khadhinnah mib‘idāt ar-rakāyib

Here is my translation that Holes objected to:

Abu Abdullah, my *sayyid*, what can bring him back now?
He left on a journey from which he won’t return

Holes noted that the second hemistich reads more like “He who has been spirited away by riding camels/horses that cover long distances.”⁶ In the Arabic those mounts are the *mib‘idāt ar-rakāyib*, or those “mounts” (*rakāyib*) that “cover long distances” (*tib‘id*) who have “taken him [King Husayn]” (*khadhinnah*). Holes pointed out, on Kurpershoek’s authority, that the *mib‘id* is “an archetypal Bedouin word meaning ‘long distance raider’ ... here, though, the [feminine plural] forms on *mib‘id* and the verb *khadhannah* indicate it is the *rakāyib* ‘mounts’ (could be horses or camels) of which *mib‘id* is predicated.”⁷

So in the poem, these metaphorical mounts have taken King Ḥusayn on a journey from which he will not return—death—but those mounts did not make it to the text of my translated poem or even the footnotes. Upon Holes’ consulting Kurpershoek on my behalf, Kurpershoek cited, apparently off the cuff, numerous instances of the word *mib‘id* in the Bedouin poetic tradition

6 In an email to me on September 27, 2017

7 Ibid.

and agreed with Holes that Hajaya's *mib'idāt ar-rakāyib* referred to King Ḥusayn's "[going] far away (on indefatigable mounts), so far that he leaves no trace and is not heard of again ... In this example, it also implies praise for the deceased: he is an energetic, undaunted hero who goes on daring and risky journeys without a second thought and has the courage, stamina, and experience to do so with confidence."⁸

I asked Hajaya over WhatsApp's voice messaging service to explain to me again what exactly he meant by *mib'idāt ar-rakāyib*, and he told me that he meant "those mounts that take away or remove the traveler from the area where he lives ... by which I mean death ... by 'mounts' here I mean 'death'" (*al-rakā'ib allatī tub'id al-musāfir 'an al-minṭaqah allatī yaskunuhā ... wa-hīya al-manāyā ... al-rakā'ib hunā aqšid bi-hā al-manāyā*). Hajaya also gave the singular form of *rakāyib* as *rkūbah* or *markūbah*, not *rikāb*, as I had thought. Hajaya was also not familiar with the meaning of *mib'id* as a long-distance raider. This may be an instance of a poet's using the terms of a tradition that he is part of but whose origin he may ignore. Indeed, Kuerpershoek here seemed to know more about the *mib'id* than anyone else.

In the end, my initial translation was not far off the mark, but it did lack a reference to those metaphorical camels and their endurance. This may be because Hajaya and I translated this poem in December 2015, and the English text probably went through a bit of re-rendering (and, on my part, forgetting, after years of not touching the poem) before Holes noticed my oversight. This is all to say that my translations may not be perfect and may sometimes contain mistakes and oversights. But as the Arabs say, *al-kamālu lillāh!*

Note on the Transcription of the Poems

Finally, I would like to point out some things about transliteration. I have used the Library of Congress' Arabic transliteration system, ill-suited as it can be to the transliteration of certain Bedouin Arabic words.⁹ Proper names and words probably already familiar to the reader of English, like Qaddafi, Hashemite, fedayeen, Amman, Aqaba, al-Qaeda, and Bashar, are not transliterated, except for Ḥusayn, in order to distinguish Jordan's King Ḥusayn and the current crown prince from Saddam Hussein, whose name has been left thus. I have transliterated the first instance of many place and personal names that recur in Hajaya's biography, such as Hajaya, Ahmad, and Fanatil, but I have left later instances of

⁸ From an email Holes forwarded to me on September 29, 2017.

⁹ For more on this, see Sowayan, *Nabati Poetry*, 6.

those words free of transliteration in an effort to ease the burden on the reader's eyes. All Qur'an translations are from Arberry.¹⁰

A note about the Arabic rendering of the poems is also in order. It seems that there is no standard orthography for the transcription of Bedouin poetry, an oral art. For example, many a final *tā' marbūṭah* (ة) is rendered as a *hā'* (ه) in Bedouin orthography so that the reader knows that it is not pronounced as a *tā'*, as it could be in high MSA. Often the *alif maqṣūrah* of MSA is rendered as an *alif* in Bedouin orthography, as in سرا (he walked/went by night) for سرى. I have made final *hā's* into *tā' marbūṭahs* where they express a noun in order to distinguish them from expressing possession, and I have made the *alif* in *sarā* into an *alif maqṣūrah* in my transcription. However, where an *alif hamzah* in MSA has become an *alif* in Bedouin Arabic, as in قرأ (he read) from قرأ, I have left the *alif* standing in an effort to point to the MSA origin of the Bedouin word.

The dialectal *tanwīn* I have tried to render consistently with either a *tanwīn fathah* or a *tanwīn kasrah*, as in محكماتِ اقفاله (miḥkamātin iqfālah; locks shut tight) or فلا تلومي شاعراً (fa-lā talūmī shā'iran ... ; don't blame a poet ...) depending on Hajaya's pronunciation or personal orthography.

Certain Jordanian city dialect words, like *illi* (that) and *indafan* (was buried) are pronounced, and written, *allī* (ألي) and *andafan* (اندفن) in Bedouin Arabic. The Hajaya tribe is given to pronouncing the *ṣād* like a *sīn*, as in سار for صار (he became), so I have transcribed many a *sīn* where in MSA I would have written a *ṣād*.

Many Bedouins write a liaison *alif* to express the transposition of vowels that occurs in dialect poetry. For example, *dawwir lak 'an idyārahum dār* (seek yourself a home far from their homelands) is often written دورلك عن اديارهم دار, with an *alif* written before the word *dyār* in order to account for the "i" that precedes *dyār* in the dialect. In order not to confuse the reader of the Arabic text, I have done my best to elide these liaison *alifs* except where they occur at the beginning of lines, as in إقلوب النشامى (the hearts of gallant lads). The same goes for certain prepositions, such as أعطوا الشوارب للابسات القنوعي (aṭaw ash-shawārib il-lābisāt al-gnū'ī; give your moustaches to mask-wearers [women]), which is sometimes written أعطوا الشوارب إل لابسات القنوعي in order to account for the transposition of the *kasrah* before the prepositional *lām*. I have kept the former version.

There are other cases of liaison *alifs* in which the *alif* preceding a word, such as in the above محكماتِ اقفاله, derives from the MSA plural *aqfāl* (sing. *qufl*); I have

10 Arberry, A.J. *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*. New York: Macmillan, 1955.

kept the *alif hamzah* for clarity's sake (محكماتٍ أقاله), again as a way to point to the word's MSA origin, although a Bedouin poet would probably not.

I hope that with these decisions I have made the meaning, if not the scansion, more readily available to the reader interested in the Arabic texts. I can, however, foresee very many objections to this method and apologize in advance for any confusion that it causes.

Finally, the footnotes to the poems are often derived from Hajaya's running commentary as we translated and thus do not necessarily express my views.

Introduction

In the late summer of 2006, the Bedouin poet Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajāyā found himself standing in front of Libyan dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi to perform his poem “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” Hajaya had written the poem from the perspective of George W. Bush bragging about his recent conquests in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Hajaya had published the poem two years earlier in the Jordanian weekly paper *al-Ittijāh*, whose “Desert Page” he edited. The poem’s set of incongruities—a Bedouin poet writing from the perspective of George Bush and George Bush’s describing his conquests in terms of the obsolete Bedouin practice of raiding—made its readers and listeners shake with laughter. In the poem Hajaya’s George Bush insults Qaddafi by comparing him to a he-camel groaning from sexual frustration, which the Bedouin pacify by beating with a stick. Hajaya was understandably nervous as he stood up to perform the poem in front of Qaddafi himself.

Despite Hajaya’s apprehension, Qaddafi loved the poem, and Hajaya performed three more poems for Qaddafi that night. After “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” Hajaya performed “Camel Dung” (*Ḥuzmat Ba’r*) a response to Bush’s poem that Hajaya imagined from Qaddafi’s perspective. The final poem Hajaya called “Not Anymore, Muammar” (*Hēhāt yā M’ammar*) a mournful ode on the petty differences and political disasters that by 2006 had divided and weakened the Arab world. Qaddafi loved the poems so much that he declared Hajaya “The Great Poet” (*al-shā’ir al-aẓīm*) and ordered one of his attendants to offer Hajaya anything he asked for, a custom that has existed between rulers and poets in the Arab world for centuries (Hajaya graciously refused). Once Hajaya returned to Jordan, he uploaded a video of his reciting “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” to YouTube, where it received hundreds of thousands of views and shares. In 2009 the poem appeared alongside nine other of Hajaya’s political poems in Clive Holes’ and Said Abu Athera’s English translation and is now taught at Oxford. The story of “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” reflects the experience of a talented poet from southern Jordan with few means and no formal education who became a regional celebrity through his wit, work and willingness to confront sensitive political issues.

My experience as one of Hajaya’s translators may shine some light on his celebrity status. When I appear at passport control at the airport in Amman and tell the Bedouin officers that I am visiting Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajāyā, they inevitably perk up and exclaim “Ah, the poet!” More often than not, they ask me to recite some of Hajaya’s poetry. When Hajaya and I step into a shop in Amman for a pack of Marlboros before a poetry reading, the shop owner often

recognizes Hajaya and calls out “*shā’irnā!*”—“Our poet!” Hajaya has been performing his poetry on Jordanian national holidays and celebrations since 1989, and his friendship with members of Jordan’s ruling Hashemite family, such as the Sharīf Fawwāz Zaban ‘Abdullāh, Prince Hāshim ibn al-Ḥusayn, and Prince Ghāzī ibn Muḥammad, has provided the impetus behind some of Hajaya’s best-known works: “Our Jordan” (*Urdunnā*), a 253-line poem on Jordan’s history, people and spirit that Hajaya read on Jordan’s 65th independence day, and “Free Arabs’ Revolt” (*Thawrat ‘Arab Aḥrār*), a 100-line poem about the Great Arab Revolt that Hajaya performed on the Revolt’s centennial in 2016.

Given the environment in which Hajaya came of age, the politics of the Middle East has been a constant subject of his poetry. Born in 1955, he began writing poetry at age fourteen on traditional topics like love and tribal affairs. But Hajaya could not ignore the political events that changed his life as a Jordanian: two wars with Israel, the Jordanian Civil War, the Iran-Iraq War, both Gulf wars, and the Arab Spring and its fallout, all in the context of Jordan’s precarious position as a bastion of Arab Nationalism on good terms with the United States and Israel. In 1988 Hajaya began writing political poetry in support of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, and since then, his poetry has addressed most national and regional issues of consequence. Because of the unique cultural power that Bedouin poetry projects in Jordan, I will provide a brief overview of the history of the land east of the Jordan river, the Bedouins that once roamed it, their poetry, Jordanian national identity as informed by the above, and the life of Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajāyā in light of it all.

Bedouins and Jordan

Over the last century Jordan has evolved from a series of frontier outposts east of the Jordan River in the ailing Ottoman Empire, to a British mandate, to an independent modern state. Many Palestinian Jordanians—and even some East Bank Jordanians themselves—scoff at the idea that Jordan ever had a culture or a place in history aside from nomadic Bedouins in the east raiding terrified townspeople and farmers in the villages of the west. (One hundred years ago Amman was a small Circassian village.) Nevertheless, a national identity predicated on territory, kinship, and leadership by the Prophet Muhammad’s Hashemite descendants has taken root in Jordan and now informs many Jordanians’ conception of themselves.

Jordan comprises a variety of climates: the northwestern reaches of the Arabian Desert in the east, the temperate north-south spine of the Transjordanian Highlands (*bilād al-sharāt*) in the west, and the fertile Dead Sea Valley on the

western border with Israel and the West Bank. Situated across the river from the continental crux of Palestine, Jordan has been a major Middle Eastern crossroads and home to settled and nomadic populations for millennia. In the Arabic language, the word “Bedouin” (*badawī* pl. *badw*) refers to nomadic pastoralists who spoke Arabic and whose economy depended until recently on camel husbandry and raiding.¹ Throughout history Bedouin tribes like the Rūwallah and the Ḥwētāt roamed Jordan’s eastern deserts while peasants and townspeople inhabited the villages of the western highlands and the Dead Sea Valley. Semi-nomadic tribes occupied the eastern slopes of the highlands, where they pastured sheep and goats as well as camels and horses.

Throughout the millennia migration and settlement patterns have subjected Jordan to the process of Bedouinization, articulated here by historian of modern Jordan Kamal Salibi. When the villages of western Jordan would become impoverished and strong government would disappear,

wave after wave of bedouin tribes penetrated the highlands to terrorize the local peasants, and ultimately to settle among them. With the arrival of every new wave of bedouin tribes, the older ones, having already lost their original desert vigour, made common cause with the local peasants to resist the invaders. As this happened again and again, the local peasants became bedouinized in their folkways, and the Christians among them, in particular, found it expedient to enter into tribal or quasi-tribal alliances with the settlers from the desert.²

According to classical sources, some of the earliest people who settled in southern Jordan were the Nabateans, a Bedouin people “skilful in desert warfare, [who] derived considerable wealth from dabbling in the caravan trade.” Like waves of Bedouin before and after them, the Nabateans “took advantage of the recession of ... Persian imperial control over the lands of the Near East, starting from the late fifth century BC, to infiltrate and settle in the highlands south-east of the Dead Sea.”³

However, the meaning of the term “Bedouin” has changed as Jordanian national identity was created and developed over the last century. Jordan’s native

1 The word *badawī* is etymologically related to one of the Arabic words for “desert” (*bādīyah*), and some speculate that, as Bedouin culture is popularly regarded in the Arab world as the origin or fount of all Arab culture, the word “Bedouin” may be related to the word for “beginning” or “appearance” (*bidāyah*).

2 Salibi, *Modern History of Jordan*, 21.

3 Salibi 11.

Bedouin culture became the new state's foundational myth-symbol complex, and modern Jordanians whose ancestors were peasants or semi-nomadic shepherds and goatherds on the East Bank of the Jordan River now often refer to their ancestors as "Bedouins" in order to distinguish themselves from Palestinians who fled to Jordan after 1948. Nowadays most Jordanians who identify as Bedouin no longer raise camels, and they certainly do not raid other tribes for plunder and booty. Many inhabit newly-built villages and towns where their tribes' goat-hair tents dotted the landscape just decades ago.

The Bedouins of Jordan continued their roaming and raiding until the 1920s, when Jordan's first king, 'Abdullāh I, convened Jordan's tribes at the central town of al-'Amagah in 1925 to settle once and for all the tribal differences that had been the cause of blood feuds and reciprocal intertribal raids—the Bedouins' way of life—for centuries. The agreement was called "Digging and Burying" (*al-Ḥafār wa-l-Dafān*), a move to bury the hatchet before coming together in a modern state in which nation would replace tribe. With the help of British officers, 'Abdullāh I recruited Bedouin tribesmen to form the "Desert Forces" (*quwwāt al-bādīyah*) to suppress intertribal raiding and guard Jordan's borders with the newly-formed Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Syria. Later the Bedouin were integrated into Jordan's police, army and intelligence services and today form their cores.

The ethic of tribalism (*'ashā'irīyyah*), once essential for social cohesion in a harsh desert environment, is embedded in modern Jordanian society. Yoav Alon writes that "in modern Jordan, tribalism and nationalism are not contradictory phenomena. Rather, they inform and enhance one another, thus allowing the majority of the population hailing from a Transjordanian origin to identify with the state in an intimate way, which is rare in the new states of the Third World."⁴ Moreover, without tribalism and the people's concomitant commitment to the Hashemites, many Jordanians believe the country would fall apart. Many Jordanians, for instance, insist that no Ḥwēṭāt tribesman would accept a man from the Banī Ṣakhr tribal confederation to govern Jordan as head of state; the outcome of such a situation, they reason, would be civil war. Over the years, the tribes of Jordan gradually united under the Hashemite Compact (*al-'ahd al-hāshimī*), an expanding franchise of loyalty to the Hashemites and intertribal cooperation in exchange for the stability of rule by the Hashemite family, who fled to Transjordan after 'Abdullāh ibn Sa'ūd conquered their lands in the Hijaz in the early twentieth century.⁵ The Hashemites are

4 Alon, *Making of Jordan*, 156.

5 Indeed, Jordan's crown prince (currently Ḥusayn ibn 'Abdullāh II) is known as the "Protector of the Compact" (*walī al-'ahd*) in reference to the interdependent nature of political authority in Jordan.

Muslim Arabs descended from the Prophet Muhammad who for centuries administered the holy sites in Mecca. Their status in Jordan as a remarkably cohesive family of political outsiders with 1400 years of experience governing and direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad remains the source of their political authority. The *idea* that tribalism would tear Jordan apart if not for the mediating, paternal effect of the Hashemites began as a reality in the early twentieth century and has remained an unquestioned principle that holds together the state of Jordan. Whether such a reality is still necessary is up for debate, but many Jordanians are content to suppose as much given the chaos of the Arab world during the last ten years.

Whether or not the country would erupt in civil war without them, the Hashemite family has continued to use the dynamics of tribalism and genealogic national cohesion to rule Jordan. Jordanian national identity has been shaped for the last seventy years by ideas of genealogy and kinship, which “inform the political imagination of royals and commoners alike.”⁶ In Jordan the nation is conceived of as one big family with the king as its father.⁷ Shryock writes that southern Jordan’s Nabatean heritage along with “Arab nationalism, the Hashemite legitimacy to rule as descendants of the Prophet, [and] King Husayn as the embodiment of Jordan ... were invoked as components of the new identity alongside tribalism or ‘Bedouinism.’”⁸

Social organization along tribal lines is so pervasive in the Arab Middle East that within it, “the genealogical component of tribalism is rarely singled out as its distinctive feature ... the intelligentsia of the region have, throughout the Muslim era, posed tribal society as the antithesis of proper Islam and just government, and even today, tribes (and tribalism) are eagerly portrayed by the same learned elites as an obstacle to ‘full participation in the nation-state.’”⁹ While “tribes and tribal leaders lost many of their traditional functions,” as the state expanded, they “successfully adapted to the new circumstance.”¹⁰ In a more recent book Alon confirms that “tribal shaykhs remain an important and influential political elite” in the Arab world, and where government has re-

6 Shryock, *Nationalism*, 326-7.

7 Shryock 327; Shryock also writes that “[t]he presence of tribalism and pervasive clan organization, a form of community that imagines itself *genealogically*, in terms of identities based metaphorically (and oftentimes actually) on shared substance” characterizes Jordan’s ideological landscape and is a “feature [Benedict] Anderson’s European model of national development does not take fully into account” (318).

8 Shryock 156.

9 Layne, “The Dialogics of Tribal Self-Representation in Jordan,” 26.

10 Alon, *The Making of Jordan*, 111.

cently collapsed because of the Arab Spring, “shaykhs are now sought-after power brokers and often hold the key to stability.”¹¹

Bedouin Poetry

Though the Bedouins’ lifestyle of raiding, roaming the desert, and camel husbandry has disappeared, their poetry, a resilient product of nomadic life, has continued to flourish after the sedentarization of the Bedouin in the state of Jordan. Clive Holes writes that

no one in Arabia and its contiguous territories leads a life of seasonal migrations and pastoralism, but some members of the older generations still remember (just) a time when they did, and others from more recent generations who remember nothing of the old way of life, nonetheless retain a set of social and moral values, an outlook on life, and an artistic sensibility which they inherited from their forefathers, reinforced by attendance from an early age at tribal *majālis* where such poetry is often recited and discussed.¹²

Bedouin poetry is composed in a refined, artful register of the Bedouin vernacular of Arabic. The direct descendant of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, Bedouin poetry shares with its forbear common vocabulary, imagery, and concerns. Such continuity is natural given that the socioeconomic and geographic context that informed the poetic tradition of the Arabian desert remained largely unchanged for over 1500 years. The most common themes in Bedouin poetry remain the traditional ones of love, boasting, praise, wisdom, nature description, hunting and elegy. In the last three decades, scholars of Bedouin poetry have demonstrated the art’s resilience.¹³ As many scholars of modern Bedouin poetry have shown, Bedouin poetry has successfully adapted itself to the modern world. Conventions of rhyme and meter have persisted, and imagery has kept pace with modernization. Kurpershoek has shown the “ability of this ancient poetic tradition to reinvent itself: today’s poets think nothing of taking traditional forms, diction, and topoi, and unceremoniously recycling them for

¹¹ Alon, *Shaykh of Shaykhs*, 4.

¹² Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 3.

¹³ Pioneering scholars of modern Bedouin poetry include Saad Sowayan, Lila Abu Lughod, Clinton Bailey, Heikki Palva, Marcel Kurpershoek, Bruce Ingham, Clive Holes, Said Salman Abu Athera, Ghassan al-Hasan, and Moneera al-Ghadeer.

new purposes.¹⁴ For example, Bedouin poets once boasted of the strength of their raiding camels and their mounts' ability to produce lots of milk; in contemporary Bedouin poetry, some poets have replaced the camel with the car and praise the off-road capabilities of their GMC, known colloquially as the *jims* (pl. *jmūs*).¹⁵ Moreover, the modern descendant of the traditional Bedouin *gaṣīdah* engages with "national issues such as rural poverty, government corruption, and favouritism, or international ones such as the recent American invasion of Iraq."¹⁶

Poetry plays a larger role in Arab, especially Bedouin, public life than it does in the United States or Western Europe. Conversation among Bedouins flows from prosaic conversation to poetry and back again. Poetry can be recited to scold a youngster, to pass on a proverb, or to signal an end to a topic of discussion. For example, the Bedouin poetic form of *hjenī*, like the Greek epigram or the Japanese haiku, consists of rhyming couplets that relatives, friends or enemies pass to each other through the community by word of mouth. Most Bedouins have at least some poetry memorized, and many Bedouins can judge, according to shared aesthetic standards, what constitutes good poetry. Marcel Kurpershoek has best articulated the poetic standards that apply to Bedouin poetry:

In a traditional society ... the concepts of convention and originality cannot be applied in the same way as they are in the West. Outside the circles of the urban literate elite, poetry in Arabia is still an art to be enjoyed orally and collectively. Therefore poetry must answer to certain expectations of the audience, based on the audience's previous experience, in order to be understood and appreciated. For the poet to step too far outside the bounds of tradition would be tantamount to poetic suicide. The Najdi [from Najd, a region in central Saudi Arabia] poet is imbued with this tradition the first day he sits in the *majlis* (the circle of men assembled on the carpet to discourse freely on any subject of common interest

14 Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 5.

15 Many Bedouins refer to Bedouin poetry as "Nabatean poetry" (*shī'r nabaṭī*) for "[i]t seems that after the Arab conquest and Arabization of the [northern fringes of Arabia] from the 7th century on, the Arabic adjective originally associated with this lost people, *nabaṭī*, came to be used to describe the imperfect 'broken' Arabic they are supposed to have spoken, and it is this transferred sense of the word that seems, much later, to have been applied to tribal poetry not composed in Classical Arabic but in the dialects of the nomadic Arabian Bedouin, which, by the grammatical standards of the Classical written language, were incorrect" (Holes & Abu Athera, *Nabati Poetry*, 2).

16 Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 5.

while sipping tea and coffee), and feels the lure of rhyme and metre when listening to the poetry that is routinely declaimed on such occasions.¹⁷

Excellence in the context of Bedouin poetry, as in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, means the inventive reworking of stock images and motifs in “the old vocabulary of war, raiding, animal husbandry, and agriculture.”¹⁸

Another Western assumption about good poetry that may mislead the Western reader of Bedouin poetry is that of the unity of the poem. In Bedouin poetry, the “dynamic dimension of this poetry’s mode of existence, including its functional side and the peculiarities of oral composition, equally militates against the pursuit of such ideals ... these characteristics of cultural expression faithfully reflect a social situation in which the collectivity is always present as a determining factor.”¹⁹ Before approaching Bedouin poetry, the Western reader should cast off his or her assumptions about what a poem should be and try to imagine a world of raiding, camel-raising, and roaming the desert, where beautiful women are compared to oryxes and a man’s worth is measured in terms of his willingness to come to one’s aid in battle, where genealogical ties matter more than national ones, and where the collective memory is hundreds, if not thousands, of years old.

In such a traditional society, Bedouin poetry can function as an outlet for feelings that could not otherwise be expressed without bringing a degree of shame on the speaker, such as passionate love for a woman outside one’s kin group, or as an outlet for expressing controversial political views.²⁰ Holes and Abu Athera write that in the twenty-first century, Bedouin poetry “functions as a vehicle for commentary on all kinds of national, religious and ... international political issues, providing a ‘grassroots’ view of the world—and in a witty and pungent vernacular idiom—that is usually absent from news and comment forums of Arab public life.”²¹ Though expressing one’s dissenting political views in a repressive Arab political culture is risky in the prose of media discourse, it is no less risky in poetry. Indeed, Hajaya maintains that one can attack an Arab country’s leadership with missiles and it will not mind, but if one attacks it with poetry, it means war. As the Arabic proverb goes, “the wound received by a sword heals; that received by a tongue doesn’t” (*jarḥ al-sēfyabrā*,

17 Kurpershoek, *The Poetry of ad-Dindān, a Bedouin Bard in Southern Najd*, 59-60.

18 Kurpershoek 57.

19 Kurpershoek 24.

20 Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 233.

21 Holes & Abu Athera, “George Bush, Bedouin Poet,” 273.

jarḥ al-lisān mā yabrā). Bedouin poetry is indeed a legitimate way to speak truth to power, but doing in verse makes it no less dangerous for the poet.

There are a number of Western analogs to the politically engaged, vernacular art of Bedouin poetry. In terms of witty political commentary, it resembles *The Daily Show*, with Jon Stewart's clever, impassioned monologues. In terms of pungency, it resembles the political hip hop of Chuck D or The Roots. In terms of Bedouin poetry's sheer popularity, it resembles Khalil Gibran's popular book of poetic prose *The Prophet* (1923), which outsold all American poets from Walt Whitman to T.S. Eliot but which is seldom included in anthologies of modern American poetry.²² Another analog is the once booming but now extinct tradition of politically engaged newspaper poetry practiced in the United States. During the American Revolution, Philip Freneau and Phyllis Wheatley served Washington and the American cause with their stirring verse as Bedouin poets now serve their leaders. The American Civil War era represented another zenith for political poetry in America.²³

Today in the United States, politically engaged poetry is regarded by mainstream taste as lowbrow and hackneyed. Despite the efforts of certain academics, spoken word poetry—"the death of art" according to Harold Bloom²⁴—and hip hop rarely receive the scholarly attention that, say, Frank O'Hara's and John Ashbery's poetry does. Poetry written or performed in support of a cause is often shrugged off as passing, topical scribbling with no aesthetic commitment. It is not regarded as canon fodder, if I can coin a phrase. In fact, one vestige of the once booming politically engaged newspaper poetry tradition in

22 Shahid, "Gibran Kahlil Gibran Between Two Millennia," 4.

23 See, for example, Ruth Graham's interview with Civil War poetry scholar Faith Barrett in which the latter says that "[p]oetry in mid-19th-century America was ubiquitous in a way that it just isn't now. It was everywhere in newspapers and magazines, children were learning it in school ... Americans were encountering poetry on a weekly basis, if not a daily basis, in the Civil War era, and that's a profound difference from contemporary poetry and its place in our culture. There are so many accounts in newspapers of soldiers dying with a poem in their pockets, poems written on a scrap of paper folded up inside a book; so many accounts of songs or poems being sung or read to political leaders at particular moments. For example, after Lincoln announced the second call for a draft ... James Sloan Gibbons wrote this song-poem called 'Three Hundred Thousand More,' which he supposedly sang to Lincoln in his office one day. So there's a kind of immediacy of impact, that poetry is actually, I suggest, shaping events, not just responding or reflecting on them" (Graham, "A Poetry-Fueled War").

24 Harold Bloom, "The Man in the Back Row Has a Question vi," *Paris Review* 154, Spring 2000, 379.

the United States is Calvin Trillin's *Deadline Poet* column in *The Nation*, routinely criticized for its cringeworthy political incorrectness.

As the aforementioned proverb indicates, political poetry is a force to be reckoned with in the Arab world. Its affective power far outstrips that of Western political poetry. An example from a century ago might illuminate its affective force. When the Rashīd tribe conquered a large swath of territory in northern Arabia at the beginning of the twentieth century and expelled the native Qaṣīm tribe, a Qaṣīmī poet urged

the people of al-Qaṣīm who had sought refuge in Kuwait, Mesopotamia, and Syria, to unite and rally ... and liberate their homeland...[W]hen the poem was recited in al-Mēdān, the quarter of Damascus where the people of al-Qaṣīm had established themselves, the Qaṣīmīs were so moved by it that they sold all their possessions, bought all the guns and horses available in Damascus, and sallied forth to liberate their homeland. Some of them are even supposed to have left their shops and homes open and unattended in their haste to join the others.²⁵

Contemporary political Bedouin poetry may not be quite as affective as the Qaṣīmī poet's, but its popularity is nevertheless widespread, and its affective power is considered dangerous and influential enough for poets like the Qatari Muḥammad al-'Ajāmī and the Bahraini Āyāt al-Qurmuzī to earn prison terms because their political poetry crossed their governments' red lines. On the other side of those red lines, ruling Gulf Arab families in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain hold contests in which poets gather to compete to praise their rulers for a generous cash prize. The TV show "Million's Poet" (*Shā'ir al-Milyōn*), inspired by *American Idol*, has many a would-be poet in the Arab world digging up a Bedouin ancestor to justify writing poetry in the Bedouin vernacular for the chance to win five million Emirati dirhams—the equivalent of \$1.3 million.

My experience as the unwitting subject of a viral video on Bedouin poetry and the myriad of responses it evoked illustrates this art form's affective power. Through Yāsir al-Bashābsheh, a Bedouin poet from Jordan whom I befriended, I was given the opportunity to present my research on Jordanian television and ended up reciting Hajaya's well-known poem "Oh Condoleezza Rice!" mentioned earlier and translated below. It is worth pointing out again that Hajaya wrote the poem from the perspective of George W. Bush gloating about the US' conquests in Afghanistan and Iraq and bragging about the world leaders he

²⁵ Sowayan, *Nabati Poetry*, 81.

has “put under his foot.” But the video editors cut my introduction to the recitation, in which I clarified that the poem was both written by Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajjāyā and imagined from the perspective of George Bush. To the YouTube viewer, I appeared to be wiping the floor with the collective honor of the Arabs and Muslims. I also appeared to be a talented translingual poet who had appropriated a native Arabic cultural form.

My perceived poetic insult to the Arab and Muslim worlds inspired three rhyming, metered responses in YouTube’s comments section. The Saudi poet Ḥamzah al-Hāshimī, for example, chimed the bell of cultural appropriation, writing that

My anguish is that of the Faw [Peninsula] upon losing the Wolf [Saddam]²⁶
After the stallion Saddam, the West came and conquered

Oh Wolf!—the foreigners even have Bedouin poetry!
What of ours remains in which they haven’t joined or competed?²⁷

The Saudi poet Mājid al-Ḥarbī threatened me in a xenophobic vein, writing:

Oh poet of America, take the truth from me,
In the days when talk’s all bought and sold,

If rifle shots of war begin to sound
We’ll trample you like pebbles, oh foreigner!²⁸

And finally, an unidentified Kuwaiti poet adopted the tone of *takfirī* Islamic fundamentalism to threaten America with death, writing:

26 During the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranians invaded the Faw Peninsula in southern Iraq; because Saddam fought hard to win it back, Hashimi imagines that the Faw loves Saddam.

27 wajdī wujūd al-fāw fī faḡdat adh-dhib
ba’d al-faḡal ṣaddām jūnā u-ṭūnā
shī’r al-badū yā dhib ‘ind al-ajānīb
wish bagā hum fih mā khāsharōnā?
From “*Amrikī yuṭqin al-shī’r al-‘arabī fī laylat qaṣīd*” <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFZBJ-6PiAo>>; published 1 March 2014; accessed 21 August 2016.

28 yā shā’ir amrikā khudh al-‘ilim minnī
yōm as-sawālif bēn bāyī’ u-sharrāy
lā man zīr al-ḡarb ḡāmat tarinnī
indūsakum dūs al-ḡaṣā yā khūjāy

I'll sum it up—go tell your people for me
Go tell Obama that your death's coming soon

I'm a sure, true, firm believer
With no doubt in my faith in the life of this world.²⁹

The fuss did not end there. A month later the Facebook page of the Jordanian cartoon Abu Mahjoob posted the video,³⁰ inspiring comments as diverse as

He's insulting Arabs and Muslims and they're happy with him ... they really must be Arabs.

I think his father's Lawrence of Arabia.

I'd like to understand those two Arab animals repeating after him [in Bedouin poetry, one's listeners repeat the line's last word after each line] who don't understand what he's saying about them. He's insulting the Arabs, all of them, and they just laugh ... Quite frankly, he summarized the Arabs' shameful state as well as the goals and the policies of the Americans in the Arab and Islamic countries ... May God curse them, and him, and the channel that broadcast this!

These respondents, whether self-deprecating, impressed, or morally outraged, responded to Hajaya's poem in a fashion typical of Arab public discourse. The fact that many listeners supposed that I had written the poem inspired a sense of outraged Arab national dignity, self-deprecation, curses, and the oft-repeated claim that the Arabs had returned to the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance. In short, Hajaya's twenty-seven lines expressed from my point of view drove the Saudi and Jordanian Facebook communities to a world-historical, clash-of-civilizations discourse. Thankfully, a Jordanian Facebooker corrected the crowd, commenting that I was reciting a poem by Muhammad Fanatil al-Hajaya, who loved Saddam Hussein and had written him many elegies. The engaged vehemence of these reactions speaks to Hajaya's talent as a provocative poet and Bedouin poetry's ability to tap a sensitive popular vein.

29 nubdhah basīṭah raddahā l-yōm 'annī
rūḥ balligh ōbāmā tarā mōtakum jāy
mu'min u-mit'akkid wa-lā rāwadannī
shukūk fī dinī ṭarat lī bi-dunyāy

30 *Shū ra'ykū na'tih 'alāmat al-jūdah al-urduniyyah??*, Emad Hajjaj (Abu mahjoob) Facebook page, March 26, 2014.

Despite Bedouin poetry's widespread popularity, it is not universally popular in the Arab world. The biggest opposition Bedouin poetry faces within the Arab world comes from the well-educated urban elite, who regard Bedouin poetry as a quaint relic of their country cousins who made the leap from barbarity to civilization sometime in the last two generations. Indeed, the age-old enmity in Jordan between nomads and settlers did not disappear with the Bedouins' integration into the state apparatus. Despite the fact that East Bank Jordanians have formed the core of the country's legislative, advisory, military, and intelligence establishments, many urban Jordanians are uncomfortable with the tribal basis of their country's makeup. Shryock has captured the sentiment best: the Bedouins' relative tardiness in relinquishing their traditional nomadic life of herding camels and raiding has caused the Bedouin tribesman to remain in the imagination of the "metropolitan elites of Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo ... a reminder of pre-Islamic ignorance: he is ungovernable; irreligious; a menace to all refinement ... Despite the fact that tribes are seemingly everywhere in Jordan (or perhaps *because* tribes seem to be everywhere), 'tribalism' ... remains a source of political friction and, to the self-consciously sophisticated, a cause for embarrassment."³¹ The embarrassment of the self-consciously sophisticated obtains equally with regard to Bedouin poetry.

The greatest opposition that Bedouin poetry faces from without the Arab world is the (slowly dissipating) disregard it receives from the Arabic literary studies establishment in the United States. In the American academy, Arabic literature studies is more concerned with reading and rereading classical Arabic poets and modern novelists whom many ordinary Arabs do not know, read, or care about. As a popular, native, vernacular art form, Bedouin poetry lacks the roots in Western poetic modernism that qualify Tammūzī poets such as Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, Khalīl Ḥāwī, and Adūnīs for serious study and comparison with T.S. Eliot.

The self-consciously sophisticated of both the urban Arab elite and the US Arabic literature studies establishment misunderstand Bedouin poetry's power and purpose. Both are unfortunately out of touch with the Arabs' vernacular art that is at once better known than much of their classical literature and that also happens to share with that classical literature a common ancestor in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. Small wonder, then, that the critical aversion to Bedouin poetry mirrors that of many English literature departments toward American hip hop, popular poetry written in the black vernacular that "bears a stronger affinity to some of [English] poetry's oldest forms, such as the strong-stress

³¹ Shryock 6-7.

meter of *Beowulf* and the ballad stanzas of the bardic past.”³² With respect to Bedouin poetry, the critical folly lies not just in elitism but also in the insistence on applying Western poetic standards of excellence to a traditional art form from the Arab world.

In the Bedouin poetic tradition, poets represent their tribes; in the age of nationalism, the nation-state has taken the place of the tribe for many Bedouin poets. Perhaps inspired by the encouragement he has received from Muammar al-Qaddafi, Jordan’s Hashemite family, and millions of his Arab supporters and followers, Hajaya considers his “tribe” to be not just Jordan but the whole of the Arab Nation, from Yemen to Syria, from Morocco to Iraq. In the final poem Hajaya performed before Qaddafi, “Nevermore, Muammar,” Hajaya paints himself as a politically engaged Bedouin poet in the contemporary Arab world:

My thoughts are sound—not corrupt—and my weapon’s a pen
As I carry the woes of my tribe on my back

To be precise, I speak for two hundred million
From farthest Morocco to the Euphrates’ mouth

Their lives have become mirages, labyrinths
Their leaders just add to their misery and division

Twenty countries divided by petty aggressions
Aggressions intractable, bound lock and key.

The Hajaya Tribe

The biography of a Bedouin poet would be incomplete without the poet’s genealogy, the stories of his ancestors, and a concise description of the landscape in which he was reared. The Bedouin have a loyalty to place, family and tradition that is difficult for urban Westerners to understand but that might have been more comprehensible for those of their ancestors who, decades ago, farmed the land on which they were born and died and who, centuries ago, roamed the forests or the seas. Such an observation may be dismissed as

32 Bradley, *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*, “Introduction,” xv; Clive Holes struck upon this truth in his decision to translate “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” according to a hip hop rhythm.

romantic, orientalist rubbish or an implicit, orientalist allegation that the Bedouin are basically backward and underdeveloped as a people among peoples. But as Clive Holes writes, “while the tribal structure is undoubtedly weaker [now] than it was in political terms, it remains a major formative element in the social structure of all Arabian societies and in many of those that border it.”³³ Politics of the western academy aside, the Bedouin retain a unique connection to their tribe and their homeland and a romantic self-conception that may be difficult for the urban Westerner to understand.

Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajjāyā hails from Jbāl, the steppe country east of the Transjordanian Highlands and northeast of the town of al-Ṭafilah. He spent his childhood roaming the hills of Jbāl with his father’s flock of sheep and goats, his guard dog ‘Armān, and a donkey laden with a saddlebag full of discarded school textbooks. His ancestors in the Ḥajjāyā tribe, buried under cairns on the tops of Jbāl’s hills, conquered and settled those hills some centuries before and dominated them along with Ḥwētāt tribesmen, whose star rose gradually from the south throughout the last few centuries. For centuries the Ḥajjāyā extracted protection money from the townspeople of al-Ṭafilah and raided other tribes and villagers for plunder and booty as far away as Jerusalem. They supported the Hashemites during the Great Arab Revolt, were conscripted into the Arab Legion, and fought and died in Jordan’s many wars against Israel. In Hajaya’s teenage years his tribe moved from goat-hair tents to villages built by the Hashemite princes whom their grandfathers supported. Those princes visited them to convince them to settle down permanently in return for running water, electricity, public schools, and a clinic. This historical, cultural, and genealogical imaginary so alive in the modern Bedouin’s mind is worth approaching before one reads the political poetry written by one.

The Ḥajjāyā tribe’s “ancestral lands” (*dyār*, sing. *dīrah*) lie southeast of the Dead Sea on the eastern slopes of the Transjordanian highlands. Known colloquially as the “Hills” (*Jbāl*), the heights northeast of the town of al-Ṭafilah are mostly steppe and feature a dry and temperate climate. As the land slopes eastwards, it turns into the “gravel plateau of the Syro-Arabian desert, patched with areas of basalt and tilting gradually eastwards towards the frontier with Iraq.”³⁴ The Swiss Orientalist Johann Ludwig Burckhardt wrote of Jbāl’s agreeable climate, pure air, and refreshing breezes and cited the ancient Romans, who called the area *Palaestina tertia, sive salutaris*, “salubrious and healthful.”³⁵ The Finnish Orientalist Georg August Wallin later wrote of the area’s plentiful

33 Holes & Abu Athera, *Poetry and Politics*, 3.

34 Salibi, *Modern History of Jordan*, 5.

35 Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, 402.

vegetation and pasture, noting the abundance of wormwood (*shīh*), or artemisia, growing in the hills of Jbāl.³⁶

Hajaya echoed Wallin's romantic evocation of his homeland's hills and sang of Jordan's artemisia in his poem "Our Jordan," writing that "[t]he scent of artemisia and achillea in the air / Thrills my heart every time the wind blows."³⁷ Memories of his family and of Jbāl's lofty mountains—heightened by his friend 'Alī al-Sā'ī's poetic evocations of them in "Braids of the Dawn" (*Zafāyir al-Fajr*)—was one of many factors that contributed to Hajaya's abandoning his job on a military base in steamy Bahrain and returning home.³⁸ Sā'ī begins the poem by recalling to Hajaya his native land of Jbāl: "Musk emanates from the braids of the dawn / From a land whose scents as refreshing as basil's / Recalling to you Ḥisā's haunts, where rain now falls / For today the spring season's upon us." (Sā'ī claims that the day after this poem was published, Hajaya quit his job and returned to Jordan; Hajaya denies this.)

In the mid-1800s the Ḥajāyā tribe, which consisted of the 'Aliyyīn, the Maḥmūdiyyīn, and the Mannā'īyyīn clans, was the only one to roam permanently in Jbāl.³⁹ Like many a Bedouin tribe's origin story, the Ḥajāyās' is possibly apocryphal but nonetheless worthy of recounting. I will quote the account recorded by the British Army officer Frederick Peake, who founded the Arab

36 Wallin, *Narrative*, 130.

37 "Our Jordan," line 18.

38 *zafāyir al-fajr minhā l-misk fawwāhī / tihdik min dirtak rawḥin u-rayhānī*
tadhkur rbū' al-ḥisā fihā al-maṭar ṭāhī / wal-yōm faṣl ar-rabī' u-mōsimah ḥānī
 Sā'ī then imagines Hajaya meeting his wife, Umm Sāmīr, after a long absence in Bahrain before closing by reminding Hajaya of the fame and success he achieved in Jordan with his love poetry:

You'd wish to see your beloved upon your return / To explain to her the pain and pangs of distance

With the rising sun you'd find her wide awake / With eyes, the neck and chest of a gazelle
 If you talked to her, she'd turn away and hide / Embarrassed that passion and patience
 oppressed her

Oh nightingale! You used to sing from the branches / To the love-stricken folk you'd sing
 songs and tunes

If you go to a desert, sand-covered and sun-filled / Then swap your songs for tears and
 sorrows"

widdak ib-shōfīt 'ashīrak 'ugub marwāhī / tashraḥ laha l-bu'd wal-fargā wal-aḥzānī
 ma' ṭal'at ash-shams talgā ṣwēḥbak ṣāhī / abū 'ayūnin thalīlah u-jīd ghuzlānī
 ilyā ḥakētah tawārā 'annak u-shāhī / khajlān iygūl al-hawā waṣ-ṣabar awzānī
 yā bulbulin kint fōg al-ghuṣun ṣaddāhī / ghannēt l-ahl al-hawā ash'ār w-alḥānī
 lā jīt ṣahrā ghatāhā ar-ramal waṣ-zāhī / baddil aghānīk bi-dumū'in w-aḥzānī
 (al-Sā'ī, *Shujūn Ṣahrāwīyyah*, 89).

39 Oppenheim, *Die Beduinen*, vol. 2, 283.

Legion and spent years as a military advisor in Jordan. The Ḥajjāyā claim descent from an

offshoot of the Abdah Section of the Shammar and even say that they are from the Jaafar sub-Section, which is that of the noble Ibn Rashid family. In support of their claim they tell the following story:

“At one time Al Abdah used to camp during the summer in the Kerak District. One year during their sojourn in Kerak two of the sheikhs quarreled, and one had to flee with his followers to the Najd. A year or two later he returned and inflicted a crushing raid on his rival near Mezar. Many were killed and the remnants fled eastward. One of the wounded, however, was unable to keep up with his party and so was forced to take refuge with Sheikh Wail of the Roallah with whom he lived for many years. Eventually he quarreled with his adopted tribe over the division of loot after a successful raid, and he and his family had to take refuge in the Kerak District. From this fact, they became known as Al Hajaya or ‘the refugees.’”⁴⁰

Throughout the nineteenth century the Ḥajjāyā tribe was a source of constant trouble for the region. The townspeople of al-Ṭafilah and Jbāl, in addition to the Na‘ēmāt tribe of al-Karak, paid the Ḥajjāyā tribe *khuwwah*, or protection money.⁴¹ At the turn of the nineteenth century, Ḥajjāyā raiders made an incursion into Palestine and laid siege to the Mar Saba monastery after the local Bedouin had left to fight Napoleon at Acre and so left their lands unguarded. In retaliation for their raid, the universally despised Htēm tribe counter-raided and slaughtered Ḥajjāyā men, women and children, sparking a blood feud that lasted at least half a century afterwards.⁴² Around the same time, the Ḥajjāyā

40 Peake, *A History of Jordan and its Tribes*, 209-10.

41 “the village of Altafilé, of which the Hegâîâ call themselves the masters and protectors, on account of the Khâwé tax the inhabitants pay them” (Wallin, *Notes*, 1845, 129); Burckhardt wrote that “[t]he inhabitants of Djebel are not so independent as the Kerekein, because they have not been able to inspire the neighbouring Bedouins with a dread of their name. They pay a regular tribute to the Beni Hadjaya, to the Szaley, but chiefly to the Howeytat, who often exact also extraordinary donations.” (*Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, 1822, 403); Oppenheim, *Die Beduinen*, vol. 2, 283.

42 “Unsere Gesellschaft eilte, um ein Nachtquartier aufzusuchen, weil mit dem Uebersetzen der ganze Tag verlossen war. Achmed war nicht wenig besorgt, als wir uns auf einmal allein sahen. Er hatte unter den Arabern des andern Ufers zwey vom Stamme der Hadshája, die in dem Lande Kárah herum ziehen, und welche Todfeinde seins Stammes sind, bemerkt, welche weiter hinab über den Jordan geschwommen waren, und er befürchtete, dass uns diese überfallen möchten. Die Ursache dieses tödtlichen Hasses war folgende.

plundered the town of Deir Dibwan north of Ramallah, and sparked a feud with the local Ta‘āmirah Bedouins.⁴³ Indeed, Musil wrote in 1907 that the Ḥajāyā were “infamous robbers.”⁴⁴

In the mid-nineteenth century Wallin speculated that the Ḥajāyā were a

rich and mighty tribe, to judge from the abundance of horses they possess, which is always a criterion of the opulence and power of [Bedouin], and [the Ḥajāyā] frequently go out on warlike expeditions in the desert of

Zu der Zeit des französischen Einfalls in Syrien waren die Beduinen auf der Westseite des todten Sees und des Jordans wider die Franzosen zu Felde gezogen, und hatten ihre Familien ohne Schutz zurückgelassen. Die Hadschāja und etliche andere Beduinen auf der Ostseite des todten Sees benutzten diese schöne Gelegenheit, um ihre Raubsucht zu befriedigen. Sie machten einen Einfall in Palästina, plünderten das griechische Kloster Mār Szāba in der Wüste und streiften bis vor Jerusalem und Bethlehem. Die Htēm, welchen die Beschützung jenes Klosters mit obliegt, nahmen dies sehr übel auf, und sannnen auf Rache. Sie machten einen Streifzug in das Gebiet der Hadschāja, überfielen etliche Dauāre, und die grausamen Neger schonten weder Weib, noch Kind. Es war also leicht begreiflich, dass die so behandelten Hadschāja auf Blutrache dachten, und Achmed konnte den gewissensten Tod erwarten, wenn er in ihre Hände fallen würde. Wir eilten daher so schnell als möglich, um aus dieser gefährlichen Lage herauszukommen, und uns wieder an unsere Gesellschaft anzuschliessen.” (Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten* (1854) vol. 2, 322).

43 Smith wrote that “[t]he road we had been travelling to-day, is the great Arab track through the desert along the Dead Sea; by which the Arabs of the southern deserts, and those who come from the East around the southern end of the sea, are able to penetrate far to the North, without letting their movements be known to the tribes or villages further West. About thirty years before, a large party of some three hundred and fifty of the Hejāya from the mountains of Jebāl, S. of Kerak, had in this manner passed along this route quite to Deir Dîwân, and stolen and carried off the flocks of the people of that place. As these people were in league with the Ta‘āmirah, both belonging to the Yemen party, the latter pursued the Hejāya and overtook them near Wady Derejeh. In the attack which ensued, the Hejāya proved the strongest; they routed the Ta‘āmirah, and killed two or three. One man, to save his life, leaped off from a precipice into the valley, and although much hurt, escaped and recovered. Ever since that time a feud of blood has existed between the two tribes.—After this the Hejāya came and plundered the convent of Mār Sāba. The door was of wood covered with iron on the outside; they contrived to burn it away, by pouring on oil and setting it on fire in the night. But, as our Sheikh remarked, Mār Sāba is a Wely (holy place); and the Hejāya, after they had done this wickedness, fell to fighting among themselves.” (Edward Robinson and Eli Smith, *Biblical researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petraea: A journal of travels in the year 1838* (1841) vol. 2, 247-248).

44 Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, vol. 3, 64

the interior. The booty they collect from such expeditions is very easily disposed of in the neighboring towns, and their horses are in general valued and in great request in Syria and Egypt.⁴⁵

By 1845 the Ḥwētāt and the Ḥajāyā had become the “largest and mightiest tribes in this part; the others, who live here intermingled with them, being of no importance, and totally absorbed by these two.”⁴⁶ At the height of the Ḥajāyās’ power, their tribe’s land extended around 150 kilometers from Dabbat Ḥānūt in the south to al-Dāmkhī in the north. Later in the nineteenth century, however, the Ḥajāyās’ power began to wane, and by the end of Ottoman rule in the early twentieth century, their borders had shrunk considerably.

During the mid-nineteenth century the Ḥwētāt took advantage of fighting between two of the Ḥajāyā’s clans, the ‘Aliyyīn in the north and the Mannā’iyyīn in the south, to conquer the Ḥajāyās’ southern lands.⁴⁷ The northern ‘Aliyyīn clans, from whom our poet Hajaya descends, owned lands extending east from al-Ṭāfilah,⁴⁸ but the Mannā’iyyīn clan drove the ‘Aliyyīn north over Wādī al-Ḥisā. So the ‘Aliyyīn fled to settle the lands that extended from the village of Mḥayy, abandoned years before by the Ḥajāyā’s clients the Banī ‘Amr, to al-Dāmkhī in the north. The Mannā’iyyīn meanwhile took the land south of Wādī al-Ḥisā that the ‘Aliyyīn had fled. As for the water-rich lands that the Mannā’iyyīn and the Maḥmūdiyyīn clans had left in their northward pursuit of the ‘Aliyyīn, they were either conquered by the Ḥwētāt or sold to the Ḥwētāt and the residents of Ma‘ān, a city inhabited at the end of the nineteenth century by Ḥwētāt and Na‘ēmāt tribesmen.

In the late nineteenth century, the Ottomans began consolidating their hold over the southern Jordanian borderlands. In response to the Ottomans’ taxation, conscription, and disarmament policies, the Ḥajāyā joined the tribes of

45 Wallin, *Notes Taken*, 133.

46 Wallin, *Narrative*, 130; in the 1840s the Ḥajāyā tribe sheltered the Bani ‘Amr and some southern-straying families of the Bani Sakhr (Wallin, *Notes Taken*, 300).

47 “Ḥajāyā once encamped on the east slopes of As-Sera, but were pushed northwards by the Ḥwētāt. After long struggles they made the Na‘emat tributable and occupied most of their territory between at-Twane and al-Leggun.” (Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, vol. 3, 64); the information here is from the testimony of ‘Abd al-Karīm Muḥammad ‘Awēz al-Manāy’ah al-Ḥajāyā (b. 1937?).

48 To this day lands east of al-Ṭāfilah carry the same old toponyms, like al-Mkhēliṣiyyah (land of the Makhāḷṣah family), al-Ṭūlāniyyah (the ‘Awwādiyyīn’s land), and al-Ḥarīr (the Baṭānah family’s land).

al-Karak, Ma‘ān and al-Ṭafilah in the 1910 revolt.⁴⁹ Less than a decade later, the Ḥajāyā tribe declared its allegiance to the Hashemites as soon as the Hashemite armies of the Great Arab Revolt swept through Jbāl, and the Ḥajāyā shaykhs Jallāl Abū Jfēn, Jallāl Abū Hwēmīl, and Sālīm al-Ṣawwā were killed in the battles of al-Rashādiyyah, al-‘Īṣ, and Jurf al-Darāwīsh, respectively. The three shaykhs’ bravery was reported in a telegram sent from Prince Zayd to his brother ‘Abdullah, the future king of Jordan: the two Jallals “were martyred after they displayed bravery that the mind cannot fathom. And they were ... among the most devoted servants of the Hashemite cause.”⁵⁰ After the Hashemites began to rule Jordan under the British Mandate, the Ḥajāyā tribes’ borders were more or less fixed: from the town of al-Gaṭrānah in the northeast, following the Desert Highway south to al-Ḥsēniyyah, west to the northeastern outskirts of al-Ṭafilah, north to Jisr al-Dabbah, and back east to al-Gaṭrānah.⁵¹

49 Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921*, 206-7.

50 From a telegram sent from Zayd to ‘Abdullah on 18 September 1918: “Our losses are few: our martyrs are ten, from whom are two shaykhs from the Manna‘iyyin, Jallal al-Hawamiyah and Jallal Abu Jfen, may God have mercy upon them. They were martyred after displaying bravery that the mind cannot fathom. And they were, may God have mercy upon them, among the most devoted servants of the ‘Lofty Lintel’ [i.e. the Hashemite Court and cause].” (*khasā’irunā qalīlah: shuhadā’unā ‘asharah, minhum ithnayn min shuyūkh al-mannā’iyyīn wa-humā jallāl al-hawāmilah wa-jallāl abū jufayn, raḥimahumā allāh. wa-qad istashhadā ba‘da an abrazā shajā‘ah lā tataṣṣawaruhā al-‘uqūl. kamā annahumā raḥimahumā allah kānā min aṣḍaq al-khadam lil-‘atabah as-sanīyyah, Mudhakkarat al-Amir Zayd: al-Harb fi al-Urdunn, 1917-1918*, ed. Sulayman Musa (1990), p. 139). Hajaya reports that Jallāl Abū Jfēn and Jallāl Abū Hwēmīl were apparently the best of friends. When Abū Jfēn was killed in the battle of al-Rashādiyyah, Abū Hwēmīl famously declared that life had no more value for him and threw himself into the fray at al-‘Is such that he was wounded and died later that day at Rijm Bākhīr, a cliff overlooking Wādī al-Ḥisā. Ḥajāyā tribesmen also fought in the battles of Jurf al-Darāwīsh, al-Ḥisā, Frēfrah, and al-‘Īṣ.

51 The only change made to their tribal lands was the British general John Bagot Glubb’s addition of a group of Banī ‘Atīyyah clans from southern Jordan, by way of al-Azraq, to between al-Qatranah and al-Damkhi in the Ḥajāyā’s northern lands, probably the result of a dispute (Alon, *The Making of Jordan*, 160); despite the fixity of the Ḥajāyās’ northern, southern, and eastern borders, their western lands’ border around Mḥayy is still in dispute with certain clans and tribes in the nearby city of al-Karak.

Muhammad Fanatil al-Hajaya⁵²

Muḥammad Fanāṭil al-Ḥajāyā was born on August 3, 1955 in Mḥayy, a village in central Jordan.⁵³ Spending the first five years of his life in his family's tent in the surrounding countryside, Hajaya studied for five years at the public elementary school in Mḥayy and would spend school nights in Mḥayy with his mother Falḥā and younger brother Aḥmad, born in 1958. On weekends, his father Fanāṭil would come with his camels to take the family to his tent in the country.

Hajaya had a difficult childhood, full of suffering, hardship and deprivation. After Hajaya finished the fifth grade, Fanatil took him out of school to pasture the family's flock of sheep and goats. At age eleven, Hajaya left Falḥa and Ahmad in Mḥayy and began living in a tent with his father and his father's new wife, whom I will call Ṭurfah, a hilly ten kilometers to the south between Umm al-Šyērāt, al-Kumkhah, and west of al-Ḥāmdiyyah. Fanatil was a moody, harsh father. Hajaya attributes his father's emotional instability to Ṭurfah, who was "merciless" (*kānat lā tarḥam*) and who would goad Fanatil into punishing his

52 Muhammad Fanatil al-Hajaya provided me with the following details of his life in a series of WhatsApp messages during the summer of 2016. I then worked those details into legible English prose and filled in the gaps where necessary. Much of the language he used in Arabic I have merely translated, and there are sections of this biography which should be considered the work of Hajaya as much as my own.

53 Hajaya's full name is Muḥammad Fanāṭil Bazī Rabāḥ Thaljī Shtēwī Ma'yūf al-Makhālṣah al-Ḥamādāt al-Ḥajāyā; his tekonym is Abū Sāmīr. He comes from the Makhālṣah family of the Ḥamādāt clan of the 'Aliyyin branch of the Ḥajāyā tribe. The Ḥajāyā tribe (sing. *ḥjūwī*) consists of three branches—the Mannā'iyin, the 'Aliyyin, and the Maḥmūdiyyin—and claims descent from a branch of the 'Abdah clan, from Shammar, a large Arabian tribe. (Kaḥḥālah, *Mu'jam Qabā'il al-'Arab, al-qadīmah wal-ḥadīthah*, 1949, vol. 1, 243). The *nakhwah* ("war-cry & epithet") of Shammar's 'Abdah is *ḍayāghim* ("Lions!"); the Ḥajāyā tribesman thus often refers to himself as a Ḍayghamī; however, the Ḥajāyā have their own *nakhwah*: *shannī'in al-lig' 'ajjilīn al-grā* ("Fierce in battle, quick to serve food [to guests]"). Hajaya's Ḥamādāt clan is composed of five families: the 'Awwādiyyin, the Zawāhrah, the Baṭānah, the Hayāysah and the Makhālṣah. The poet's father's name, Fanāṭil, is extremely rare; Hajaya says that in his father's generation he knew of only three Fanatils in the whole of Jordan; he knows of none alive now. Hajaya maintains that the name comes from the Bedouin dialectical verb *fanṭal*, "to look at with rage such that one's eyes protrude," as in "*lēsh itfanṭal i'yūnak bī?*" ("Why are you ogling me?"); Hajaya's grandfather's name, *Bazī* means "recklessly brave." The name "Ḥajāyā" comes from the verb *ḥajā* ("to seek refuge"), in reference to the Ḥajāyās' legendary ancestor who was injured in a raid, failed to keep pace with his withdrawing tribe, and sought refuge with the Ruwallah tribe until he founded a tribe of his own.

son for petty mistakes. To add to his loneliness, Hajaya's natural mother was busy caring for his younger brother Ahmad, still in school in Mḥayy.

Roaming between the villages of Mu'tah and al-Mazār in the summer and al-Ḥāmdīyyah,⁵⁴ al-Thghār and al-Kumkhah in the winter, young Hajaya spent most of his time pasturing his sheep between the rocky steppe of Mḥayy and al-Ḥāmdīyyah and the lush, verdant Wādī al-Ḥisā.⁵⁵

He would work every day from sunup till sundown and had to endure difficult terrain, an unforgiving summer sun, and a frigid winter. Hajaya's clothes were thin, and his shoes consisted of strips of plastic. Besides hunger, thirst, and constant fear of wolf and hyena attacks on his herd, Hajaya was lonely. His only companion was his guard dog 'Armān, with whom he shared all his food. Though these bitter days were full of suffering and hardship, Hajaya now longs for them from the comfort of his home.

Rebel without a Cause

Given Fanatil's intense devotion to and love for Jordan's ruling Hashemite family and King Ḥusayn, Hajaya became attached to King Ḥusayn and the Hashemites from an early age. By way of introduction to the political events of 1967-1970 that dramatically influenced Hajaya's life, he emphasizes his father Fanatil's "insane" (*junūnī*) love for King Ḥusayn. Not only did Fanatil hang a black-and-white photo of a young King Ḥusayn on one of their family tent poles; Fanatil would also constantly make reference to it and to anything that reminded of him of King Ḥusayn—whether it was a plane ("our master Ḥusayn's plane!"), troops, or government buildings he saw. Indeed, Fanatil related everything positive about the country to "our master" (*sayyidnā*) Ḥusayn.⁵⁶

54 Named for the Ḥamādāt clan.

55 The *ḥisā* (pl. *aḥsā'* or *ḥisā'*) of Wādī al-Ḥisā refers to "soft, or plain, ground, in which water remains and collects" (Lane, vol. 1, 572-3), which calls to mind the verb *iḥtasā*, "to draw away the topsoil in order for the water underneath to pour forth" (572). "Wādī al-Ḥisā" has a number of local pronunciations: while city-dwelling Jordanians pronounce the wadi's name as "Wādī al-Ḥisā," the Ḥajāyā and Ḥwēṭāt tribes call it "Wādī al-Iḥsā"; the Beersheba Bedouins who moved to and through the wadi in 1948 call it "Wādī al-Iḥsī." The wadi's name is given in most Western sources as "Wadi al-Hasa" although no Jordanians pronounce it so; Burckhardt came close with "Wady el Ahsa" and T.E. Lawrence with "Wadi Hesa." The wadi is mentioned twice in the Bible as Naḥal Zered (Deuteronomy 2:13-14, Numbers 21:12); it was the border between the kingdoms of Moab and Edom just as today it divides Jordan's Karak and Tafilah governorates. The wadi is full of oleander bushes (*diflā*) and is the only place in Jordan where one can find the North Indian Rosewood tree (*Dilbergia sissoo*) (Haviv, *Trekking and Canyoning*, 103).

56 Salibi, *Modern History of Jordan*, 65-66.

Hajaya was eleven years old when the Six-Day War broke out. To save face among the Arab countries, and to save his country from tearing itself apart, King Ḥusayn was obliged to enter the war on the side of Egypt and Syria.⁵⁷ Hajaya was too young to understand the reasons behind the war; all he understood was that the Israelis had taken Jerusalem and were advancing. In tears, Fanatil was glued to the radio as father and son pastured their sheep and goats. During King Ḥusayn's speech during the war, Fanatil wept and kept repeating "May God grant you victory, Ḥusayn!" (*allāh yunṣurak yā ḥsēn!*). Seeing his father in tears brought Hajaya to tears, and he understood that King Ḥusayn, so beloved of the family, was in danger. The next national and personal trauma occurred the following year during the Battle of al-Karamah. The Israelis sought to destroy the headquarters of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the Jordanian town of al-Karamah, just east of the Jordan river. The Jordanian army and the Palestinian fedayeen fought the Israelis for fifteen hours. During the battle Fanatil again kept the radio pressed to his ear for news while Israeli planes circled overhead on their way to bomb Jordanian and Egyptian positions in the village of al-Mazār, in central Jordan. Hajaya saw Arab artillery fell an Israeli plane that day and remembers feeling very proud. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim writes that the "Arab media presented the battle as a turning point and as the first defeat inflicted on the IDF by the Arabs. In the forty-eight hours after the battle, 5,000 new recruits applied to join Fatah."⁵⁸

Two Junes later Hajaya and his family moved to their elevated summer pastures near the town of Mu'tah. The fields where they camped were full of wheat and barley, but they were also full of thorns that pricked Hajaya through his thin plastic shoes. Fed up with the life of a shepherd and an unhealthy family dynamic that had begun as soon as he moved in with Fanatil and Ṭurfah five years earlier, Hajaya decided to run away.

In August 1970, at the age of fifteen, Hajaya entrusted his flock to his cousin and instructed him to return it to Fanatil and to tell him that "Muhammad left and won't be returning to this miserable life." That day Hajaya went to the nearby town of al-Karak, where the Palestinian fedayeen organizations kept offices. An obliging shop owner directed Hajaya to an office that turned out to be that of the "Shock Troops" (*al-quwwāt al-ṣā'iqaḥ*). He went in the office and told an employee that he wanted to enlist as a *fidā'i*; the man told him to come by the next day because work had just ended for the day. So Hajaya turned the corner and found Fatah's Karak office, where he was told the same thing.

57 Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 244.

58 Shlaim 279-80.

Hajaya spent that night at the tent of his sister, Umm Yāsir, and her husband Maḥmūd Rfēfān al-Baṭānah; they were camped outside the village of al-‘Adnāniyyah, about three kilometers south of Fanatil’s camp at Mu’tah. His sister encouraged him in his decision to enlist, and the next day Hajaya returned to the Shock Troops’ office in al-Karak. When Hajaya told the employee his name, the man laughed and told him that Fanatil had come by earlier that day and instructed him not to let young Hajaya enlist. The same was true at the Fatah office. Hajaya spent that day wandering around directionless, wondering where he could go and how his father had known that he would try to enlist with the fedayeen. He recalled that he had once threatened to join and supposed that his father must have taken note.

While retracing that day’s steps through al-‘Adnāniyyah, he saw an old man pasturing his flock. Hajaya approached him, greeted him, and stood there hesitating. The man asked him if he was looking for something, and Hajaya told him he was looking for work. The man offered to let Hajaya pasture his flock for a generous monthly salary of 15 dinars, about \$265 in 2017 dollars. Hajaya accepted immediately. In the midst of such youthful misery and desperation, the man, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz took Hajaya back to al-‘Adnāniyyah, introduced him to his family, and showed him the enclosure where his sheep and goats slept. Hajaya started work the next day, and he maintains that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and his family treated him like a son. Every day Hajaya could see his family’s tent and his father’s flock from afar, and he would stay far enough away that his father’s shepherds could not recognize him. During the month Hajaya spent in ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s employment, Hajaya’s family left for their winter grounds in al-Marbaṭ and al-Kumkhah. He began to miss them terribly.

When September came, skirmishes erupted between the Jordanian army and the Palestinian fedayeen, who were attempting to take over the country. Hajaya felt that he was in danger, asked for his salary from ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, and fled to his father’s tent. They welcomed him with a mixture of anxiety and relief, but he promised himself that he would only stay temporarily.

In December Hajaya’s natural mother Falḥa and Fanatil fell out again, and Hajaya went to live with Falḥa and Ahmad at the house in Mḥayy. After Hajaya arrived in Mḥayy, Falḥa told him that his sister’s fifteen-year-old son ‘Umar had recently joined the Jordanian army—“*Ḥusayn’s army!*”—and that ‘Umar was now back home on leave. Hajaya left immediately to see ‘Umar and, after sitting with him for a while, asked ‘Umar if he could join the army as well. ‘Umar told Hajaya that enlistment was open, and ‘Umar returned to the Jordanian military’s camps in Zarqa with Hajaya in tow.

For the first time, Hajaya saw Jordanian army camps and felt as if he were just a few steps away from his beloved King Ḥusayn. He registered his name,

had a routine physical and within days became a new recruit who wore King Ḥusayn's emblem, a crown supported by two crossed swords and surrounded by a laurel, pinned to his military cap. Nevertheless, the training, orders, protocol and cohesion of military life was a rude awakening for Hajaya. Once he finished training, Hajaya and a number of his friends were assigned to the 4th division of the 1st brigade in the Royal Guard, and he could have almost flown with joy. He was assigned to the 1st Armored Car Battalion (*al-mudarra'āt*) to guard the Royal Palace Complex in Raghadān in central Amman. On his first leave, he told his father about his new position in King Ḥusayn's Royal Guard, and the proud, mercurial old man hugged, kissed, and congratulated his son.

Falling in Love

During one of his leaves, Hajaya's sister Umm 'Abdallāh suggested that he marry one of the tribe's girls. She had one in mind and praised her beauty, intellect, morals and family. Hajaya, still less than sixteen, assented. Hajaya suspected that his father may have put Umm 'Abdallāh up to the task, for the Bedouin father, Hajaya avers, is "eager" (*mutalahhif*) to marry off his sons and daughters early. Within minutes of his assenting, Fanatil asked Hajaya to accompany him to visit the girl's father, Salāmah Rshēd al-Zawāhirah, to ask for her hand. Few tribesmen possessed a car in 1971, so Hajaya and his father set out from their encampment near Mḥayy on foot and walked the ten kilometers to the girls' family's tent, located three kilometers southeast of al-Kumkhah.

Fanatil and the young Hajaya arrived just before sundown. The girl's family greeted them warmly because they were relatives; the girl was a Zawāhirah from Hajaya's own Ḥamādāt clan, and their fathers were on good terms. After Salāmah served Hajaya and Fanatil the traditional Arabic coffee, they sat around the fire under the tent chatting while the girl's brother Khālid slaughtered the *dhabīḥah*, the animal ever ready to be sacrificed in honor of passing guests. Then the hosts started preparing *mansaf*, a meal of white rice with boiled sheep, goat, or chicken (the aforementioned *dhabīḥah*), garnished with cilantro and peanuts, and soaked in a yogurt broth called *jamīd*. While Hajaya was whiling away the time before dinner with his hosts, he spied the girl whose hand he and his father had come to ask for. She was helping her brother with the *dhabīḥah* and bringing logs to the fire. It was love at first sight.

So after dinner there sat Fanatil with his fifteen-year-old son Muhammad, dashing and proud in his military uniform with an American-made M14 slung across his shoulder. But the girl's family still did not know why Fanatil and his young son Muhammad had come. After dinner, however, Fanatil asked Salāmah for his daughter's hand on behalf of his son. Salāmah told Fanatil to let him consult the the girl and her brothers first; he promised to give Fanatil news

soon. After parting, Hajaya and his father walked the ten kilometers back to Mḥayy. Hajaya returned to his battalion, and months passed without his hearing anything from the girl or her father.

Military life was especially difficult for Hajaya. He could not endure the arduous tasks, the constant training, the orders, and what he regarded as inhumane treatment at the hands of ignorant officers. His sensitivity and love of freedom did not suit army life. In 1976 Hajaya left the army and returned to his family's lands in al-Kumkhah, al-Marbat and Wādi al-Ḥisā and began to breathe the breath of life again. For all his newfound freedom, Hajaya was out of work. When his father would see him downcast, Fanatil would remind him that the family's finances were in order and that Hajaya did not need to work. Fanatil encouraged Hajaya to stay with his immediate family and help with whatever household tasks appealed to him. Hajaya could sense that his father wanted to keep him close to home. He could also sense that Ṭurfah, who by now had had two children by Fanatil, wanted to "ensure their future" and did not want Hajaya around to interfere. One night as Hajaya sat with his father, uncle and cousins, he kept bringing up the idea of traveling to Saudi Arabia for work. Intensely opposed to this idea, Fanatil considered Hajaya a "foolhardy" (*mutahawwir*) young man and began worrying about him. He thought that by marrying his son off he could pacify him and keep him close. Fanatil begged his son to forget his crazy plan.

Despite his father's remonstrations, Hajaya and 'Umar, with whom he had run away to the army, and who was close to him in age, together planned to steal across the border into Saudi Arabia. One day Hajaya and 'Umar went to Aqaba, a port city in southern Jordan on the Red Sea and, without any knowledge of the terrain, they set out east into the mountains and then south towards the Saudi border. All they took with them were some fruit and water, and what Hajaya now refers to as their "blind journey" (*riḥlah 'amyā'*) took them across rugged terrain under an intense desert sun. They quickly finished off the fruit and water but pressed on toward Saudi Arabia as their journey grew more difficult.

Thirst and fatigue had almost gotten the better of the young men when they spotted a man riding a camel, also heading south. They stopped him and spoke with him for a while, noticing in the meantime the waterskin hanging alongside his saddlebags. They asked the rider for a drink, but the man responded with hostility, refusing them any water, and leaving them to their thirst in the desert. Hajaya and 'Umar continued their journey and were on the verge of collapse when they spotted a white tent in the distance and waved in greeting, deciding to stop there. The tent was near a large wadi, and the young men reached it just before sunset. As they got closer they noticed a large jeep parked

outside, which meant a government presence. Yet they had come too close to the campsite to turn and flee on foot. Upon their arrival at the tent, they were received very warmly by the Saudi Border Guard.

The guards asked Hajaya and ‘Umar where they were headed, and they confessed. When the guards heard the truth, they had a good laugh at the two boys’ foolhardy manner of infiltration (on their feet, across open desert, during the day). They invited Hajaya and ‘Umar to sit down and, in line with the age-old Bedouin method of rehydration, served the boys dates, coffee, and a small portion of water; after their bodies had begun working again, they drank their fill.

After a routine interrogation, Hajaya and ‘Umar were served dinner and put in the jeep. They were not told where they were going. After a few kilometers the jeep stopped in front of another tent. A man in handcuffs was retrieved and put in the Jeep, and Hajaya and ‘Umar recognized him as the rider on the camel who had refused them water. ‘Umar spit on the man, and the soldier driving the Jeep asked him why he had done so. ‘Umar and Hajaya told the soldier how the man had refused them water in the desert, so the soldier told ‘Umar to spit on him again. (The camel driver turned out to be a drug smuggler.) That night the group spent the night at the Border Guard’s headquarters. The next morning Hajaya and ‘Umar were turned over to Jordanian Border Guard, who again interrogated them and transferred them to al-Karak. They were released only after promising never to repeat their mistake.

Upon his return to al-Marbat, Hajaya told his father what had happened over the last few days. At first annoyed, Fanatil decided after a few days to redouble his efforts in marrying off his son. Fanatil again visited Salāmah’s family, from whom they still had not heard anything, and Salāmah refused their request on the grounds that Hajaya had no job. The man had a point, Hajaya now concedes. Fanatil then offered to open a shop for Hajaya in the newly-built town of al-Ḥāmdīyyah.⁵⁹ Hajaya agreed to the plan immediately because Salāmah’s family lived nearby. Fanatil’s close friend Hwēmīl had built some stores in al-Ḥāmdīyyah and gave Hajaya retail space for free. Hajaya and Fanatil drove to al-Karak to buy goods for the store and transported them to the shop in al-Ḥāmdīyyah in a rented car. Hajaya later suspected that his father arranged this job for him so that Hajaya would not concoct any more crazy plans. Hajaya only worked at the store for a few months, during which time he took advantage of his proximity to Salāmah’s family to pay them many visits. Though according to Bedouin rules of propriety Hajaya and the girl could not

59 In 1975/1976, the Ḥamādāt clan decided to establish the town of al-Ḥāmdīyyah in order to live in houses, have electricity and water, schools, health centers, etc.; they had been living in tents before that; the town is named after the Ḥamādāt.

converse with each other or spend any time alone together, they managed to exchange “glances of love and admiration.”

The next year the romantic visits came to an end. The winter of 1976-77 failed to bring rain, and Salāmah decided to move his family 150 kilometers north to Wādī Sh‘ēb, near the city of al-Salt, in search of pasture for his sheep and goats. After the girl’s departure, Hajaya got fed up with life in al-Ḥāmdiyyah, sold his shop to his relative, close friend, and neighbor Muḥammad Thānī al-Hayāysah, and set up another shop in the busier, more populated town of al-Ḥisā, where he thought business would be better. After a few months, that store failed to turn a profit, so he sold it too.

Hajaya’s quest for work then took him to Aqaba, where his younger brother Ahmad was working as a personnel manager in the port. The brothers found an apartment together, and Hajaya found work as a longshoreman. As in the military, Hajaya found manual labor arduous and odious, but he had no other options. After two months of work in Aqaba, Hajaya visited his family, and his father encouraged him to visit Salāmah’s family in Wādī Sh‘ēb, saying “perhaps God will convince her father to let you marry her.” When they arrived at Wādī Sh‘ēb, they found Salāmah very sick, and Fanatil decided that talk of marriage was out of the question. The next morning, Hajaya, Fanatil, and Salāmah’s son Khālīd all took Salāmah to the hospital on a donkey. The visitors stayed with Salāmah for a bit in the hospital, but Fanatil excused Hajaya and himself in order to return home. But Salāmah sat up, called Khālīd over, and said to him “Listen, Khālīd, I want to entrust you with something. If I die from this disease, then your sister shall be Muhammad Fanatil al-Hajaya’s wife.” That news was the happiest Hajaya had heard his whole life. Hajaya returned to Aqaba for work, and one month later heard the bittersweet news that Salāmah had died. At age 21, Hajaya attended Salāmah’s funeral, and two months later on April 15, 1977, married the “girl of his dreams,” Umm Sāmīr, who remains his wife to this day.

After the marriage, Hajaya and his new wife⁶⁰ moved into Fanatil’s tent two kilometers north of al-Ḥāmdiyyah. After a few months Fanatil once again lost his temper with Hajaya: Fanatil wanted Hajaya and his new wife to move into the family home in Mḥayy along with Fanatil, Ṭurfah, her children, and Hajaya’s natural mother Fallḥa. Hajaya did not think the Mḥayy house would be big enough for so many people, and told Fanatil that he wanted to live with his new wife in a tent in the desert. Unhappy with that news, Fanatil then forced Hajaya and his new wife out of his tent. Luckily the young couple found a

60 Bedouin rules of propriety make the disclosure of female relatives’ names to outsiders difficult or impossible.

single room in al-Ḥāmdiyyah. While Hajaya's financial situation was indescribably bad at that time, he managed to borrow ten dinars from his wife's brother Khālīd to buy some bare essentials—sugar, tea, lentils, rice, tomato sauce and oil; he got water from the well in al-Ḥāmdiyyah; and he smoked cheap natural tobacco (*hīshī*). Once he had gotten himself and his wife on their feet, he began working construction for a building contractor.

Farmer, Builder, Miner, Shepherd

In February 1978 the contractor finished his work in al-Ḥāmdiyyah, and Hajaya found himself unemployed and living in a single room with his wife of one year. One day a farmer from Mādabā, Muḥammad al-ʿAwdah al-Azāyidah (Abū Nāyif) proposed that he and Hajaya farm tomatoes and cucumbers in Wādī al-Ḥisā. Hajaya liked the idea and moved with his wife to a tent near the farm in the wadi. Hajaya loved farming in Wādī al-Ḥisā because of the wadi's "water, greenery and freedom." To add to his happiness, his wife gave birth to his first son Sāmīr on March 3, 1978. While Hajaya was blessed with a son, the vegetable market was cursed with low prices, and Hajaya and Abū Nāyif lost money that season. But luck was on its way.

In September a group of foreigners passed Hajaya's tent in the wadi in search of fish and crabs. One of them approached Hajaya and asked him in broken Arabic where they could go fishing and crabbing. Barefoot, Hajaya led the foreigners, who turned out to be Bulgarians, down the wadi to a pool where he knew they could find fish and crabs. Fasko, the Bulgarian with the broken Arabic, asked Hajaya when they arrived at the pool why he was not wearing any shoes. Suspecting that Fasko wanted to give him some shoes, Hajaya shrugged off the question and told Fasko that he was used to going barefoot. A few hours later the Bulgarians passed Hajaya's tent in the other direction and called out for him. Fasko told Hajaya that he worked for Electroimpex, a Bulgarian electricity company that was installing overhead transmission lines and substations throughout Jordan, and offered Hajaya a job assembling electrical transmission towers for a monthly salary of 75 Jordanian dinars, or \$892 in 2017 dollars. Hajaya accepted and the next day moved his family back to al-Ḥāmdiyyah, leaving his farm to his neighbor's sheep. Hajaya worked for Fasko for a year.

In late 1979, just before Electroimpex finished its work in Jordan, Fasko gave Hajaya a certificate that attested to his skill at assembling parts, or welding (*fann al-tarkībāt*). Hajaya spent the next year as a building contractor, and Fasko's certificate helped Hajaya get a job in late 1980 with Jordan Phosphate Mines, a local phosphate mining company, where he worked for an excellent

monthly salary—around 120 JD, or \$1200 in 2017 US dollars—until early 1987.⁶¹ At the phosphate company, Hajaya used his knowledge of assembling and disassembling parts to build conveyor belts and drums that moved the phosphate from the cleaning area to the rotary phosphate dryers to the trucks or rail-cars that would transport it. During this period Hajaya bought some sheep and goats and settled his family in a tent near the Wādī al-Abyaḍ mine.

The Iran-Iraq War

In 1982, during the Iran-Iraq War, Jordan's King Ḥusayn announced that he would send a number of volunteers to Iraq to help defend it in the war against Iran. Without delay Hajaya began coordinating with his friends and relatives to travel to Amman to register for the Yarmouk Brigade, a "special logistics and supply unit...[that] did not take part in actual fighting, but [that] freed Iraqi personnel for front-line duty."⁶² After registering, Hajaya rented a house for his family in the village of Sadd al-Sultānī, sold his sheep and goats, and entered the Yarmouk Brigade's training camp in Zarqa along with twenty-four other Ḥajāyā tribesmen.⁶³ After two months of training, a Jordanian military

61 Philip Robins writes that the "the state showed a particular preference for investment in large, capital-intensive schemes ... Investment in [the exploitation of Jordan's limited natural resources] saw the development of the kingdom's extensive phosphates deposits, making it the world's fourth-largest exporter, as well as potash resources in the Dead Sea. There was also much profligacy here ... The potential of the Jordan Phosphates Mines Company was dragged down by chronic over-manning" (*A History of Jordan*, 145).

62 Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 416; "From the outset Jordan backed Iraq against Iran. The war transformed the personal friendship between [King Ḥusayn and Saddam Hussein] into an enduring strategic alliance between their countries. Jordan began to support Iraq so as to contain the spread of the Islamic Revolution, defend the Arab homeland and protect the Gulf monarchies" (Shlaim 416). Though some of the Yarmouk Brigade's units were moved close to the front, they did not participate in any battles. However, when one unit stationed close to the front lost a few men in a surprise skirmish with Iran, the whole brigade returned to Jordan.

63 The name of the village where Hajaya now lives is Sadd al-Sultānī, called al-Sultānī for short, in reference to a "dam" (*sadd*) the Ottomans built east of the village. The village was founded when Prince Muhammad ibn Talal visited the Hajaya tribe in 1972. Prince Muhammad permitted and encouraged the Hajaya tribe to settle and build there and guaranteed that the state would provide them with free public schools and water if they stayed. So the Hajaya divided amongst themselves the land where Sadd al-Sultānī now lies, and the village was founded. Now the village has become the Hajayas' largest, with one school for boys and another for girls, a large medical center, nine mosques, electricity and running water. More than this, it has become a community.

transport plane took them to Iraq, where they stayed at the Rāshidiyyah camps north of Baghdad. King Ḥusayn and Saddam Hussein came for an official visit, and the Yarmouk Brigade's volunteers were soon assigned to different areas across Iraq. Hajaya was placed in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit in Salah al-Din province.

While Hajaya and the members of the Yarmouk Brigade were under the impression that they were going to war, they spent most of their time eating, drinking and sleeping on Iraqi military bases. In fact, every week the volunteers were taken to a different Iraqi city to visit its markets in their dazzling uniforms. One day Hajaya asked an Iraqi officer why they did not go to the front. The officer told Hajaya: "But we have a big army, *'ēnī*," a term of endearment. "You're here for moral support; we don't want to trouble you." Though Hajaya was happy with his experience in Iraq because of the wonderful Iraqis he met, he requested to be sent back to Jordan after six months.

In 1983 Hajaya resumed work at the phosphate company. But his stint in the Yarmouk Brigade left him much affected by the Arab nationalist idea, which he considered threatened by Iran's "export" of its Islamic Revolution. King Ḥusayn's strong stance in support of Iraq during the war increased Hajaya's attachment to Arab nationalism, and Hajaya began following current events to the extent that he would hitchhike twenty-five kilometers every day from his tent in al-Abyaḍ to al-Ḥisā in order to buy the Jordanian daily papers *al-Raṭī* or *al-Dustūr*. When he got lucky, friends from al-Ḥisā would bring him copies. Reading increased his knowledge about and exposure to all areas of life, and indeed, 1983 was the year he read the book he claims most affected him: *Les Misérables*. Moreover, his ambitious and intelligent younger brother Ahmad had just gone to college and began imparting to his older brother much of his learning.

Beginnings as a Poet

Hajaya loved poetry from a young age. His earliest opportunity to hear poetry was during the traditional *dihīyyah* and *sāmīr* dances at weddings, in which poetry was sung and recited. Hajaya also attended his tribe's "sittings" (*majālis*), during which tribesmen discuss tribal history and affairs over hours of coffee, tea, and cigarettes, and which are graced by talk that floats from news to poetry, from proverb to story. To a shepherd boy with only five years of formal schooling, these convivial gatherings were the closest thing to an education that Hajaya received. In Bedouin parlance, Hajaya is not a "graduate" of the public school system (*mukhrajāt al-madāris*) but of these educational, informal sittings (*mukhrajāt al-majālis*).

In addition to the *majālis*, Hajaya's family would gather around the radio every Monday night to hear the voice of Ibrāhīm al-Kēlānī⁶⁴ present the weekly program "Desert Literature" (*adab al-bādiyah*), which broadcast stories, riddles and poetry sung to a *rabābah*, a one-stringed instrument. The program mostly broadcast Bedouin poetry from the culturally richer areas of the Hijaz, Syria, and Iraq alongside selections from the classical Arabic tradition. The only well-known Jordanian Bedouin poet during Hajaya's childhood was 'Id Bandān, who sang his poetry to the *rabābah*, but "Desert Literature" also broadcast poems by the Jordanian folk hero Nimr ibn 'Adwān. Hajaya used to memorize poems by his father Fanatil, who wrote brief, lyric poetry, and by his relatives, the poets 'Awwād 'Abdallāh al-Rdēsāt al-Ḥajāyā and Muḥammad Salāmah al-Hayāysah al-Ḥajāyā. And of course, he memorized some poems by Nimr ibn 'Adwān. As a teenager, and before he was married, in his days of "love and passion" (*ishq wa-gharām*) Hajaya was especially influenced by the Saudi poet Ḥijāb ibn Naḥīt, who sang his poetry to the *'ūd*, a stringed instrument that resembles the lute or the guitar.

When Hajaya was around twenty years old, he showed his cousin, the poet Ḥamad Salāmah 'Awēmīr al-Hayāysah some of his early poetry of "love and complaint" (*ghazal wa-ḥubb wa-shakwā*), and Ḥamad strongly encouraged him, raising his morale at the start. Indeed, Hajaya credits Ḥamad's moral support for his continuing to write poetry, and the two cousins would exchange poetic correspondences (*musājalāt*) throughout Hajaya's youth. Hajaya's early attempts dealt mostly with tribal affairs, his personal suffering, and his feelings about the events he experienced. Few of his poems written before 1988 survive, however, because his sheep and goats ate them as they were rifling through his briefcase, an occupational hazard of the Bedouin poet.

Apart from the poetry Hajaya heard on the radio, at community gatherings, and from his relatives, Hajaya read voraciously. As a shepherd Hajaya had long stretches of time to read and think, and he credits reading with allowing him to discover "life and the world." During his days as a shepherd, Hajaya would read everything he could find, from newspapers he found discarded in the desert and in wadis to books that his younger brother Ahmad brought home from school. At the end of every school year, Hajaya would travel with his donkey to Mḥayy to fill his saddlebags with the books schoolchildren had left strewn about the streets before the summer holiday. He focused his collection efforts on books of poetry, stories, and the rules of Arabic grammar. While children lucky enough to attend school discarded their books during their summer vacation, Hajaya would collect a library to occupy him for the next year.

64 And later Ibrāhīm al-Mbayḍīn, and later Maḥmūd al-Ḥuwīyān.

An intellectually curious man, Hajaya has developed a wide variety of literary tastes. At age fourteen, he began reading epics of Arabic literature like the “Epic of Banī Hilāl” (*Taghrībat Banī Hilāl*), the story of al-Zīr Sālīm, and the “Days of the Arabs” (*Ayyām al-Arab*). Soon Hajaya discovered Arabic translations of Maurice Leblanc’s detective stories featuring Arsène Lupin. The book that Hajaya claims has had the biggest influence on him is Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, which he first read at age 28 and has reread countless times since. In the manner of an eighteenth-century English reading public, Hajaya would read *Les Misérables* to the interested inhabitants of the surrounding few tents for a few hours each night, often bringing his listeners to tears.

Hajaya remains an engaged reader, and his sons Sāmīr and Amjad often remark to me on how much their father reads. Hajaya has lately read the poetry of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, the Arab conqueror of Egypt, the Egyptian writer ‘Abbās al-‘Aqqād’s novels, and more political and historical fare: Hind Abū al-Sha‘r’s *History of Transjordan in the Ottoman Era* and Suleiman Mousa’s *Hussein bin Ali and the Great Arab Revolt*. Hajaya has also read Arabic translations of Aleksei Vasil’ev’s *History of Saudi Arabia*, T.E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Marcel Kurpershoek’s *The Last Bedouin*, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Nāṣir al-Shamrānī’s exposé on Saudi Arabia, *Kingdom of Disgrace: Secrets of the Saudi Royal Palaces*. King Ḥusayn’s memoir *My Job as King*, and Maḥmūd Khafīf’s biography of Abraham Lincoln are two of Hajaya’s favorite books. Nowadays Hajaya reads the same eleven suras from the Qur’an every night: *al-baqarah*, *al-sajadah*, *yā sīn*, *fuṣṣilat*, *al-dukhān*, *al-aḥqāf*, *qāf*, *al-dhāriyāt*, *al-mulk*, *al-hāqqah*, and *nūḥ*. After his morning devotions, he does not know what to do with himself if he does not have something to read.

Hajaya’s love of reading must have something to do with his excellence as a poet. When I was in Jordan searching for the country’s best Bedouin poets, I would ask people whom they considered the best Bedouin poets. Once I contacted those Bedouin poets, I would ask them the same question, and so on and so forth. Two names kept coming up: Muhammad Fanatīl al-Hajaya and ‘Alī ‘Abēd al-Sā‘ī. When I asked Hajaya and Sā‘ī the same question, they named each other. Sā‘ī maintained that Hajaya’s poetry was the best in the country because of the immensity of Hajaya’s vocabulary, surely a product of his extensive reading. Hajaya also uses language and imagery from the dying culture of pastoral nomadism that he lived and that many other contemporary Bedouin poets—Sā‘ī included—know of only by hearsay; Hajaya is one of Jordan’s many Bedouin poets who actually lived the Bedouin life (*ḥayāt al-badāwah*) and whom other poets refer to as of the “nomadic Bedouin” (*badū ruḥḥal*), as a “pure Bedouin” (*ibdīwī baḥt*). Sā‘ī’s evaluation of Hajaya’s aesthetic greatness jibes with what Musil wrote on the subject one hundred years ago: “[The

Bedouins] also hold that the words used in a poem must be out of the ordinary, not those heard in common everyday life. The more unusual words the Bedouin can put into his composition, the better he thinks it.”⁶⁵

Poetry accompanied Hajaya through all phases of his life, and he maintains that his talent developed especially during periods of love and deprivation. His best love poetry came out of the days of poverty and insecurity that followed his marriage, as he farmed with Abū Nāyif in Wādī al-Ḥisā and lived barefoot in a tent with Umm Sāmir. Only after his marriage did Hajaya begin keeping his poems, most of which were on the subject of love, and for which he became famous throughout Jordan. In the early 1980s Hajaya began recording his poetry on cassette tapes and giving them free of charge to Yūsuf al-Smēḥāt at “Stereo Fadi,” a cassette tape shop in al-Karak. Though Hajaya made no profit by giving his tapes away, he distributed his poetry for the sake of “sacrifice” (*min bāb al-taḍḥīyyah*) and in order to increase his “fame and presence” (*shuhrah u-zuhūr*) throughout Jordan.

Throughout the early 1990s, Hajaya remained poor and continued to support his large family by farming. In 1995 he published his first collection of poetry, *Wādī al-ʿAdhīr*, an archaic name for his beloved native Wādī al-Ḥisā.⁶⁶ In 1997 Hajaya received a call from the Iraqi embassy; it was Khalīl Ṣabāḥ al-Shammārī, the president of the Union of Iraqi Bedouin Poets (*rābiṭat shuʿarāʾ al-bādiyah al-ʿirāqīyyah*) and a personal friend of Saddam Hussein, calling to invite Hajaya to participate in a Bedouin poetry festival (*mahrajān shuʿarāʾ al-bādiyah*) in Baghdad. Hajaya borrowed some money for the trip and toured Baghdad, Fallujah and Mosul, where he witnessed Iraq crumbling from within because of the international sanctions regime. He returned to the Bedouin poetry festival with such poets as ʿĀyid al-Hājārī and ʿAtāllāh al-Hgēsh held in Iraq every year until 2003.

Abroad and Alone in Bahrain

After two years at the phosphate company, Hajaya began feeling seriously alienated from his work. Convinced that God had created him a poet, not a phosphate worker, he was searching for himself and finding nothing at work. Work was boring and repetitive, and he was surrounded all day by clouds of phosphate dust. He felt like a machine. Moreover, his coworkers could not have cared less about poetry, literature and politics; all they talked or thought about was eating, drinking, and making money.

65 Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 284.

66 In olden days, the wadi used to be much greener and more wooded than it is now, and the name *ʿadhīr* is in reference to the the horses that people would let graze (*miʿdhirāt*) in the wadi.

In the midst of this internal discord with respect to his work, Hajaya continued writing and began reading his poems on the radio program “Desert Literature,” the same one he and his family had waited for with bated breath every Monday night when he was a child. Hajaya also began publishing his poems in the Jordanian newspaper *Shihān*. Dedicated to poetry and fed up with his work, Hajaya tendered his resignation at the phosphate company in 1987, claimed his financial entitlements, bought a tent, sheep, and goats, left his home in Sadd al-Sulṭānī, and set out with his young family for the life of the desert.

Hajaya finally returned to the Bedouin life of freedom. He pitched his tent next to that of his cousin Abū ‘Āyid, who pledged to look after Hajaya’s sheep and goats as if they were his own. Hajaya indeed enjoyed himself. He spent the evenings talking with family and neighbors around the light of a gas lamp and, after they had all gone to bed, he would stay up reading. He woke up around ten o’clock every morning, for in those days he did not pray. He spent his days driving around in the hills surrounding al-Ḥāmdīyyah and al-Ḥisā in his Toyota pickup truck, occasionally stopping to buy supplies for his home in the nearby villages of al-Ḥsēniyyah, Dhāt Rās or Mḥayy. For all Hajaya’s enjoyment, Abū ‘Āyid grew discontent taking care of Hajaya’s sheep and goats and returned them to him after only a few months. Abū ‘Āyid’s decision put Hajaya in a dilemma: he could undertake the taxing work of pasturing the sheep and goats himself or repeat his father Fanatīl’s mistake and take his eldest son Sāmīr out of school to pasture them. Determined not to repeat that mistake, Hajaya sold his livestock. Yet again he found himself out of work and running low on money. As he tells it, the solution came from God.

Hajaya’s only relative with a landline telephone, the village headman (*mukhtār*) Muḥammad Ḥamad al-Hayāysah in 1988 summoned Hajaya, telling him that someone from Bahrain had called asking for him and had left a number. Hajaya called the number the next day from a post office in al-Karak, and the caller turned out to be one of his Hajaya relatives from the Maḥmūdiyyīn, Sa‘ūd ‘Alī al-Adhēnāt al-Ḥajāyā, who worked in Bahrain. Sa‘ūd told Hajaya that the Bahraini Royal Guard sought to recruit young men from Jordan and proposed registering Hajaya’s name as an applicant. Such an opportunity was a way for Hajaya to escape his predicament, so he accepted. After a few days Sa‘ūd called back to tell him that his enlistment had been accepted and that Hajaya’s presence was requested at once. Hajaya moved his family to the small house he had built for them in Sadd al-Sulṭānī and left for Bahrain.

When he arrived at the international airport in Manama on February 3, 1988, he felt choked from the heat. The first pangs of nostalgia hit him as he recalled the refreshing breezes atop his childhood haunts on the ridges of

al-Kumkhah and Mwagga‘ al-Ṭēr. That night Hajaya was taken to the camp of the Royal Guard in West Riffa, a wealthy residential area, and he began training the next day. After a few days Hajaya was summoned to meet with the leader of the Royal Guard, a Jordanian colonel named Ibrāhīm al-Khlēfāt from the town of Wādī Mūsā. Ibrāhīm welcomed Hajaya warmly and asked him how he was getting along. Hajaya told him frankly that he felt like he had willed himself into hell on earth from all the hot weather. Ibrāhīm laughed, assured Hajaya that he would adjust, and told Hajaya that he would appoint him to a cushy position in the Guard. Hajaya thanked him and returned to his training.

One month later, Colonel Ibrāhīm called Hajaya to his office with a special request. Ibrāhīm wanted Hajaya to write a poem in praise of Bahrain’s reigning Prince ‘Īsā bin Salmān Āl Khalīfah. Ibrāhīm told Hajaya that he would take him to meet Prince ‘Īsā the following Friday. Hajaya wrote the requested poem, and Ibrāhīm indeed took him to meet with Prince ‘Īsā, to whom he read it. Prince ‘Īsā was pleased and welcomed Hajaya warmly, asking him where he worked. When Hajaya replied that he worked under Ibrāhīm, the prince called one of his attendants over and whispered something to him. Hajaya could not hear what he said, but he assumed, as was customary, that the prince had ordered his attendant to give Hajaya some money in appreciation of the praise poem.

Months passed, and Hajaya did not receive any money. Hajaya’s colleagues in the Royal Guard would ask him how much money he had received from the prince, and when he replied that he had not yet received anything, they either found it strange or thought that he was lying. Some of his coworkers speculated that the prince had ordered a respectable sum to be given to him but that his corrupt retinue divided the sum amongst themselves. Only with great difficulty did Hajaya remain in the Royal Guard. He worried about his children, who did not have any men around to raise them, for Fanatil had moved to Mḥayy, and Ahmad was studying at the University of Jordan in Amman. The only way to communicate with his family was through letters, which took weeks to arrive to Jordan from Manama.

In Bahrain Hajaya had culture shock. He had trouble sleeping and found everything strange—“the people, the trees, the rocks” (*al-nās, al-shajar, al-ḥajar*). Just as at the phosphate company, Hajaya felt that he did not fit in at work. Apart from that, he had trouble accepting the income inequality he witnessed daily in Bahrain. As a guard, Hajaya witnessed the shaykhs and the ruling family, who lived in grand palaces and spent lavishly—they would feed their horses dates and dried fish. But he could also see Shiite women digging through garbage cans for bread just outside the palace walls. In the late 1980s, sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shiites were not as pronounced as they are now, and Hajaya sympathized with the oppressed Shiite majority and began to

despise Bahrain and its extravagant shaykhs. One day in June Hajaya received a letter from his father with the news that he was sick. Fanatil also hinted to Hajaya that he should return to Jordan and give up living abroad once and for all. Hajaya maintains that without that letter from his father, he would not have been able to endure the two more months he spent in Bahrain. Given the striking inequality, his father's letter, and the reward money that never arrived, Hajaya determined that he would return to Jordan.

One day Hajaya was sitting with his colleagues in his office and told them about his decision to leave. They opposed the idea—why would Hajaya give up a job in a country that Arabs from all over the Arab world were flocking to for work? Yet despite the fact that his material needs were covered, his mental health was deteriorating. He explained to them that his father was getting old and that he missed his family and Jordan's mild climate compared to the sweltering pit of languor he still felt Bahrain to be. One of Hajaya's Syrian colleagues, after he realized that Hajaya was serious, told him to "go die of hunger at your master Ḥusayn's" (*baddak itrūḥ il-'ammak iḥsēn u-tmūt min al-jū'*). The two traded words, almost came to blows, and had to be pulled apart by their coworkers. (Characteristically, Hajaya responded to the Syrian's insult with a poem, "God Damn Living Abroad!" [*Mal'ūn Abū al-Ghurbah*]).

Shortly thereafter Hajaya met with Colonel Ibrāhīm and informed him of his decision. Ibrāhīm tried to persuade Hajaya to stay by all means, even offering to transfer him to the Prince's personal bodyguard, to give him a house, and to move his family to Bahrain from Jordan. Hajaya responded by asking Ibrāhīm, rhetorically, if a fish could live in a pool of gold. If Hajaya were a fish, he said, then Jordan was the water where he belonged. Ibrāhīm told him resignedly that the termination process would take a long time, and Hajaya suggested that Ibrāhīm give him a vacation in the meantime. Ibrāhīm did, and when Hajaya left for Jordan, he never returned.

A Poet's Hand in Business

Hajaya returned from Bahrain with no work and a large family to feed. At this point he had five children: Sāmīr, Rīm, Amjad, Samīr and Fāṭimah. Because he had become a well-known poet, friends and fans were constantly paying him visits, the expenses for which caused him to go into debt. The debts piled up, and Hajaya often had so little money that he could not buy cigarettes and had to smoke the rancid, cheap natural tobacco (*hīshī*) that the Bedouin farm nearby. Umm Sāmīr pitied him and gave him her gold jewelry to pawn, which he promised to retrieve.

Hajaya soon found work building houses. He bought some lumber and building materials and found an Egyptian master builder, Sa'd, from Naj' Sab'

in Asyut, as a business partner. Once his financial situation started to improve, Hajaya bought himself an unlicensed white 1979 Toyota pickup. One of his relatives from the Ḥamādāt, whom I will call Jāsim, proposed to buy a share in Hajaya's and Sa'd's company and thereby increase the amount of lumber and building materials they owned; Hajaya and Sa'd were glad to have Jāsim as a partner. But in 1989, Hajaya's truck broke down and needed both a new motor and 500 Jordanian dinars' worth of repairs—about \$920 in 1989 dollars. Jāsim offered to lend Hajaya the money and assured him that he would not need repayment for a long time. But a month after Hajaya fixed his car, Jāsim came asking for the money, insisting that Hajaya produce it then and there. Hajaya told Jāsim that the only thing he owned was the car and that he was otherwise penniless. Jāsim began sending other relatives Hajaya's way to demand the five hundred dinars back, and Hajaya began to worry about his reputation within the tribe. After Hajaya made it clear to Jāsim through his insistence that he really could not repay him, Jāsim demanded Hajaya's share in the company, which Hajaya was forced to sell. Hajaya now describes Jāsim as a “base man” (*nadhil*) who took advantage of his poverty to buy him out. Yet they seem to have buried their enmity for the sake of social cohesion, for I have seen them trading jokes and stories at weddings.

Once again Hajaya returned to a life of unemployment. As miserable as his work prospects were, his fame as a poet was soaring. Indeed, the only thing he did during that period, he claims, was write poetry. As he did before leaving to join the Yarmouk Brigade, Hajaya would record his poetry on cassette tapes and give them free of charge to shop owners, who sold them. The tapes spread like wildfire. After his poetry was aired on the Jordanian radio program “Desert Literature,” Hajaya's name and fame spread throughout Jordan and the surrounding countries, especially those with Bedouin populations, such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt's Sinai peninsula, and Israel's Negev. In the wake of his fame, governors and ministers from Jordan's twelve governorates began inviting Hajaya to perform his patriotic poetry at Jordan's many national festivals and celebrations, such as the King's birthday, the Anniversary of the King's Accession, Army Arabization Day, Battle of al-Karamah Memorial Day, Independence Day, and the Anniversary of the Great Arab Revolt. Because Hajaya did not have enough money for gas, he would take public transportation to travel to the events.

One day in late 1989, Muḥammad Hwēmīl al-Hayāyah, whose father had supported Hajaya early on by giving him space for a store in al-Ḥāmdīyah, stopped by his house. Muḥammad Hwēmīl was on his way to Wādī al-Ḥisā to start a farm, and he invited Hajaya to join him for the ride. Hajaya fell back in love with the wadi and decided to try his hand at farming once again.

Muḥammad Hwēmīl gave Hajaya ten dunams (about 2.5 acres) to farm. While Hajaya farmed, Muḥammad Hwēmīl managed the farm's expenses, and they split the profits evenly. The winter of 1989-90 was a great season, and Hajaya was able to pay off all his debts. Because of the difficulty of descent into Wādī al-Ḥisā—incidentally described by Burckhardt as “the most dangerous route I ever travelled in my life”—Hajaya would spend three or four nights at a time away from his family at the farm in the wadi.⁶⁷ After the windfall season, he rented ten dunams in Wādī al-Abyaḍ, ten kilometers south of Sadd al-Sulṭānī. He preferred this farm to his farm in the wadi for its proximity to the markets in Amman and to his family up the road.

Then on August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, and Hajaya took to poetry to attack the Gulf Arab countries and support what he considered Saddam's “liberation” (*taḥrīr*) of Kuwait. He wrote this poetry at night by the light of a lantern on his farm in al-Abyaḍ. The season was bad that year, and prices for tomatoes, cucumbers, and zucchini were low. The farm faltered, so Hajaya moved to a farm near the “Abyaḍ Pool” (*birkat al-abyaḍ*), a stone's throw away from Sadd al-Sulṭānī.

His Brother Ahmad

Understanding Hajaya would be difficult with no knowledge of his relationship with his brother Aḥmad Fanāṭīl al-Ḥajāyā, three years his junior, and a precocious and ambitious man whose cosmopolitan career took him to Fort Bliss in Texas, the universities of Jordan and Aberdeen, Scotland, the 1993 parliamentary campaign trail in Jordan, and the Jordanian foreign service. The brothers loved and supported each other, and Ahmad's failures and successes influenced the course of Hajaya's life, the nature of his poetry, and his perspective on international affairs.

While Fanatīl took Hajaya out of school to pasture the family's flock, he favored Ahmad with an education at the public school in Mḥayy and a stable, settled childhood. In 1976 Ahmad dropped out of high school and began working at the port in Aqaba. Two years later he was drafted into the Jordanian air force for two years of mandatory military service. In view of the intelligence and aptitude he showed in military training courses and his facility with English, the Jordanian army sent Ahmad on a training course to Fort Bliss in Texas in 1979. Hajaya, Fanatīl, and their Ḥamādāt relatives were impressed by Ahmad's talent and delighted at his success. Ahmad was the first of the Ḥajāyā to travel to America, a journey considered quite a feat for a poor Bedouin from southern Jordan. Before Ahmad left, Hajaya gave him twenty dinars—all the

67 Burckhardt, *Travels*, 400.

money that he had—and the brothers corresponded through monthly letters. Ahmad spent a year at Fort Bliss and, upon his return, received a hero's welcome, which meant a meal of *mansaf* at a different relative's house every night of his leave.

Hajaya noticed that Ahmad's thinking and worldview had changed after he returned from the US. Ahmad told his older brother that he wanted to study again and take private lessons, and Hajaya encouraged him. A year later in 1980, Ahmad took the Jordanian college entrance exam (*tawjihī*) and scored a stunning 97.5%, putting him in the top ten percent of students in Jordan. The process of matriculation in Jordan often entails an unmeritocratic next step: Ahmad asked Hajaya to help him find a *wāṣṭah*, a well-placed and influential personal connection who could help him get a scholarship to begin his university studies. Despite Ahmad's wishes, the brothers found no such *wāṣṭah* and could not circumvent the Jordanian army's denial of Ahmad's request to study at the University of Jordan.

Disappointed by the army's decision, the Hajaya brothers tried a different tack. In the early 1980s, the most influential Bedouin shaykh in southern Jordan was Fēṣal Ḥamad Ibn Jāzī of the Ḥwēṭāt, whose well-known father Ḥamad had fought under Prince Faysal in the Great Arab Revolt and later served in Jordan's National Consultative Council from 1928-47.⁶⁸ Hajaya suggested to Ahmad that he ask for Fēṣal's help in convincing the army to let Ahmad pursue his university studies. In the best tradition of Bedouin appeal, Ahmad had Hajaya write Fēṣal a poem to ask for his help. Hajaya wrote the poem, in which he *ex ante* praised Fēṣal's *nakhwah*, or willingness to come to someone's aid in time of need, as well as the qualities of the shaykh and his illustrious father Ḥamad. The poem of course ended with a plea for help on Ahmad's behalf.

Hajaya and Ahmad hitchhiked 55 kilometers from al-Ḥāmdīyyah to Fēṣal's beautifully furnished new house in al-Ḥsēniyyah and were greeted outside in Fēṣal's Bedouin tent; it is typical of modern Bedouins to preserve a connection to desert life with a tent outside their houses, especially as a space to greet guests. There the brothers were served cold coffee and tea, which in Bedouin culture signifies the host's inattention and indifference. When they requested to see Shaykh Fēṣal himself, Fēṣal told the brothers through his intermediary to meet him instead at his office at the Jordanian House of Representatives (*majlis al-nuwwāb*) in Amman. For two years Fēṣal failed to make any of the many appointments he made with the Hajaya brothers. After two years of futile trips to Amman, Hajaya attacked Fēṣal in a poem, convinced that the shaykh had

68 Abu Jaber, "The Jordanian Parliament" in *Man, State and Society in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Jacob M. Landau, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972.

refused to help Ahmad because he envied the young man's intelligence. Hajaya and Ahmad then tried to take Ahmad's case directly to King Ḥusayn, but to no avail.

By 1981, every door had shut in Ahmad's face. His response was to come up with a crazy, desperate plan: he would hijack a military transport plane on its way from al-Jafr Airbase to Amman and land it in Israel or the United States. Then, he reasoned, he would have the king's ear and be in a position to publicly shame the corrupt officials who had ignored him and prevented him from pursuing his studies. When Ahmad told Hajaya his plan, Hajaya implored him not to carry it out. Hajaya did not sleep the night after Ahmad told him, and the next morning Hajaya made Ahmad promise not to carry out his plan until he gave Hajaya a few months to try to solve the problem on Ahmad's behalf.

At first, Hajaya considered informing on his brother but realized that he would be informing on him to the very corrupt officials who were the source of his brother's problem. Hajaya heard that the advisor to the king for tribal affairs, the Sharīf Fawwāz Zaban 'Abdullāh⁶⁹ had been appointed the leader of Jordan's Desert Forces, the original branch of Jordan's military that grew out of the border forces established by King Abdullah I. Hajaya took Ahmad's high school diploma and his acceptance letter from the University of Jordan to the Sharif and wrote him a poem lamenting Ahmad's situation. After Hajaya read Fawwāz the poem and explained him his brother's lot, Fawwāz told Hajaya he would do all he could to help Ahmad. Hajaya passed the news on to Ahmad, who was delighted, and a few months later, Fawwāz arranged for Ahmad to be transferred from the army to the air force where, under Jordanian military protocol, he could complete his studies. Ahmad moved to Amman, where he worked as an avionics specialist at the Queen Alia International Airport by day and studied Political Science at the University of Jordan by night. He graduated four years later with honors in Political Science and for the next two years the University of Jordan sent him to Scotland on scholarship, where he obtained a master's degree in Strategic Studies and International Relations from the University of Aberdeen.

The Hajaya brothers' experience with Shaykh Fēṣal caused Hajaya to hate all forms of oppression and to become convinced that states and regimes are not destroyed except as a result of the forms of oppression they practice, including depriving people of their rights. The treachery, baseness, and envy of officials who only look out for their own interests are detrimental to Jordan, where, fortunately, many citizens can appeal directly to Hashemite officials about

69 A member of the Hashemite royal family; his maternal uncle was the Sharīf Zayd ibn Shākir, a cousin and close confidant of the late King Ḥusayn.

their problems, bypassing the corrupt local officials and their short-term interests.⁷⁰

Ahmad Runs for Parliament

In 1993 there came another brush with politics for Hajaya through his accomplished younger brother Ahmad. By now an air force veteran, the recipient of a diploma in aviation and electrical engineering from Fort Bliss, a bachelor's degree in Public Administration and Political Science from the University of Jordan, and a master's degree in Strategic Studies and International Relations from the University of Aberdeen, Ahmad had returned to Jordan. Ahmad founded a tribal advocacy organization, the "Association of the Sons of the Hajaya Tribe" (*tajammu' abnā' qabīlat al-ḥajāyā*). The Association's founders were cultured, educated men of the Hajaya tribe who sought to reverse the Hajaya tribe's poverty and lack of education. The first meeting called by the Association, to which the whole Hajaya tribe was invited, was cancelled preemptively by officers of the *mukhābarāt*, the intelligence services, so its members met instead in a house in al-Ḥisā. The *mukhābarāt* spoke again with the Association's leaders, and the organization was disbanded.

Ahmad then quit his job as an avionics specialist at the airport to form a political party with a number of his peers, the "Party of Justice and Progress" (*Ḥizb al-Adālah wa-l-Taḡaddum*), whose platform was economic development in Jordan's impoverished Bedouin areas. Ahmad ran for Jordan's House of Representatives as one of two representatives from the "Southern Bedouin District" (*dā'irat badw al-janūb*) in the November 1993 parliamentary elections,

70 Indeed, Hajaya is convinced that Āl Sa'ūd controls a number of Jordanian shaykhs and that corrupt Jordanian officials purposefully distort the Hashemites' understanding of the tribes. For example, the Hajaya tribe used to be so poorly represented in parliament that King Ḥusayn thought they were part of the Ḥwētāt (see also Prince Ghāzī ibn Muḥammad's book *The Tribes of Jordan*, in which he claims innocently that the "unaffected" Hajaya split off from the Ḥwētāt [pp. 10-11]). Most recently, Jordan's Royal Court (*al-dīwān al-malikī al-hāshimī*) asked officials from each governorate to present it with a list of shaykhs and prominent local personalities it could invite to attend the celebrations of the centennial of the Great Arab Revolt. Many of the names put forward by Hajaya's Karak governorate received no invitation, and many people who did not represent anything at all were invited instead. Hajaya and his friends, who had expected an invitation, found out that a similar phenomenon had occurred in all twelve governorates. They blame this phenomenon on corruption and the deliberate separation of the Hashemites from their most loyal supporters by "bought" or "rented" shaykhs. Hajaya considers the Hashemites an oppressed family, constantly under attack from corrupt Jordanian officials and other Arab regimes.

the first since 1956 in which political parties were allowed to participate. Ahmad's decision to run was revolutionary. In Jordan, parliamentary seats are almost always apportioned according to tribal affiliation, and voters cast their ballots not on ideological lines but according to tribal voting blocs. The Southern Bedouin Voting District is massive, extending from al-Gaṭrānah in the north to Aqaba in the south and from Wādī 'Arabah in the west to the borders of Saudi Arabia in the east, and it encompasses not only the Hajaya tribe but also the Banī 'Aṭīyyah, the Na'ēmāt, the Ḥwēṭāt, the Zawāyдах, the Aḥyawāt, the Sa'īdiyyīn, the Rawājfah, and others. The massive Ḥwēṭāt tribe, big brother to the Hajaya ever since their mid-nineteenth century conquests drove the Hajaya north, dominated the electoral field and relied on all the Hajaya tribe's votes. This power imbalance meant that Ahmad needed his older brother's support during the campaign. Even though the brothers had no funds to campaign with, Hajaya and Ahmad campaigned by paying many visits to their relatives in the Hajaya tribe. Because Ahmad was a cultured, educated, and likable man, he received a positive response from not just the Hajaya tribe but also friends and supporters from the Ḥwēṭāt, Banī 'Aṭīyyah and other tribes of the south. However, rumors were spread to the effect that Ahmad was a collaborator working for the US or the Mossad who wanted to snatch the rug from under the shaykhs' feet and destroy the shaykhly order. Ahmad and Hajaya are convinced that these rumors and Ahmad's failure in the election were the result of the work of the *mukhābarāt* and the Sharif Fawwāz.

Despite his success among the people, Ahmad faced stern opposition from the Hajaya tribe's shaykhs, who feared for their positions within the tribe from ambitious, educated young men like Ahmad and the young men who supported him. The shaykhs, who Hajaya insists were "rented, hired, or bribed" (*ma'jūrīn*), began an intense, slanderous media war against Ahmad and ran another young man, Sālīḥ al-Hadāyāt, from Hajaya's own 'Aliyyīn branch, in order to split the vote in favor of the Ḥwēṭāt such that the Shaykh Fēṣal would win. Indeed, the same Ḥwēṭāt potentate, whose refusal to help Ahmad attend university had caused two years of distress for Ahmad, had been the local favorite for years. The Hajaya shaykhs' plan succeeded in splitting the tribe's vote, and the Southern Bedouin District's two seats went to Muḥammad ibn Injād of the Ḥwēṭāt and Sālīm al-Zawāyдах, both of whom Hajaya now likes and knows well. And to Ahmad's delight, Shaykh Fēṣal lost. Ahmad's courageous and principled run "sowed seeds of ambition" (*zara' indahum ṭumūḥ*) amongst the Hajaya tribe, and many Hajaya tribesmen began to run for office in the succeeding years, reclaiming their tribe's votes for themselves and not the ever larger, more powerful Ḥwēṭāt. Hajaya of course wrote political poetry in support of Ahmad during his run.

After the election, Ahmad remained out of work for a year. Moreover, the Sharif Fawwāz, who had both supported Shaykh Fēṣal in the election and who had secured Ahmad's education, was furious with Ahmad. Indeed, the Sharif Fawwāz had been upset with Ahmad since before the elections because of his efforts to found the Association. Apprehensive about the power that a Western-educated scholar of political science could wield in his native, backward, impoverished tribal lands, Fawwāz and Fēṣal wanted to see Ahmad lose. In Hajaya's words, Ahmad was a gifted, exceptional man (*mubdi'*) for whom, once he began speaking of oppression in Jordan's Bedouin areas and the need for education and economic development, all doors began to close. Sharif Fawwāz's anger only increased after Ahmad's run caused Shaykh Fēṣal to lose. But the Hajaya brothers' relative 'Alī Muḥammad al-Shtēwiyyīn (Abū Lēth), an officer in the General Intelligence Directorate (*dā'irat al-mukhābarāt al-āmmah*), Jordan's intelligence service, helped repair the relationship between Sharif Fawwāz and Ahmad with a congenial meeting. And despite the rancor that existed between Fawwāz and Ahmad, Hajaya remained good friends with them both throughout this period.

Shortly after Ahmad and the Sharif were reconciled, Ahmad was appointed to Jordan's foreign ministry, and a year later, he was appointed to a four-year post as consul in Jordan's embassy in Yemen. Ahmad was a different person when he returned. He was colder to Hajaya and, despite the brothers' lifelong rapport and mutual support, Ahmad began treating Hajaya very harshly. Hajaya was shocked, saddened, and disappointed by his changed brother, and to this day Hajaya does not know how to account for Ahmad's coldness toward him. To many Western readers it may sound ridiculous, but Hajaya sincerely suspects that black magic might have had something to do with it.

During Ahmad's stint in the Jordanian embassy in Riyadh in 2009, he was struck with an unknown ailment in his stomach. He returned to Jordan and from the University of Jordan hospital, called Hajaya, who went to see him in Amman. The brothers made up, forgot their former estrangement, and forgave each other. A large part of Ahmad's stomach was removed, and he was released from the hospital after a few weeks and resumed work at the Jordanian consulate in Jeddah. Afterwards, however, his health deteriorated even more, and he returned to Jordan. He was admitted to the Ibn Haitham Hospital, where Hajaya stayed by his side night and day until he died in June 2010. Hajaya shed many tears over Ahmad, for he had lost him twice: once when he began treating him harshly with no explanation, and once more when he died. Though Ahmad's death was a great blow for Hajaya, it increased his faith and trust in God.

Da'wa Days

Two years before Ahmad's run for parliament, Hajaya had a series of religious experiences that permanently changed his perspective. Hajaya has mentioned to me many times that the Bedouin are not especially renowned for their piety, often quoting in his conversation and poetry the Qur'anic passage that the Bedouin (*al-a'rāb*) are "more stubborn in unbelief and hypocrisy, and apter not to know the bounds of what God has sent down on His Messenger."⁷¹ Indeed, Hajaya is often the first, or the only, person in many a *majlis* to rise upon hearing the call to prayer and go to the mosque, often gently chiding the other men about shirking their prayers. But in his younger days, Hajaya did not used to pray.

In the late afternoon on a summer day in 1991, Hajaya was napping in his house in Sadd al-Sulṭānī when his thirteen-year-old son Sāmīr woke him. Sāmīr told him that "men of religion" (*rijāl dīn*) had come to call on him and were waiting outside. Hajaya got up and stepped out of the house, where he saw a group of men with long beards and short *thōbs*, superficial markers of piety in Islam. Hajaya greeted them and invited them in.

One of the men introduced the group as the "Group of Missionary Work and the Transmission [of God's word]" (*Jamā'at al-Da'wah wa-l-Tablīgh*), saying, "We're a missionary group that goes about calling people to God. We learned that you were a poet and we'd like you attend evening prayers with us and hear words of religion and faith." Hajaya promised the men that he would attend prayers that night and hear the lesson. He prayed the evening prayer with them in the little village mosque—in 1991, Sadd al-Sulṭānī was still a small village—and heard the lesson, an affecting message that dealt with knowing God, and how that knowledge begins with self-improvement, according to the example of the Prophet Muhammad, and missionary work. The men cited the Qur'anic verse: "Say, 'This is my way. I call to God with sure knowledge, I and whoever follows after me. To God be glory! And I am not among the idolaters.'"⁷²

After the lesson the bearded shaykhs asked the crowd, "Who of you is prepared to go out with us to teach religion and do missionary work?" Won over by their peaceful method of calling people to God, Hajaya's hand shot up, and he accompanied them for three days. Upon his return, he stopped shirking prayers and began praying five times a day.

Other groups of missionaries from the Jamā'ah made frequent stops in Sadd al-Sulṭānī, and on the next trip, Hajaya accompanied them for two weeks. A

⁷¹ 9:97.

⁷² 12:108; indeed, a common theme in Hajaya's poetry on the Arab Spring is that one should focus on self-improvement before one begins criticizing the government.

year later, he accompanied them for forty, during which period he learned more about Islam and became a more committed Muslim. On the example of his group's leaders, Hajaya let his beard grow, shortened his *thōb*, and stopped wearing the *'igāl*, the black cord that holds the *shimāgh* in place and that serves as a symbol of the Bedouin's worldly pride. Hajaya came to understand from his teachers that love poetry, for which Hajaya became famous, is forbidden in orthodox Islam and that poetry is permitted only in order to call people to God and to encourage Muslims to perform good works and foster good moral character. Of the many Islamic groups that roam Jordan calling believers to repent and return to the faith, the Jamā'ah won over Hajaya for their calling people to Islam through wisdom and instruction.⁷³ The Jamā'ah's approach to proselytizing is peaceful. They oppose violence and terrorism and even refuse to talk about the political problems of the world and the world community of Muslims (*al-ummah*) as well as differences between religions and countries.

Once in 1992 Hajaya visited his friend 'Alī Mar'ī al-Hajaya, who was in prison for smuggling drugs. When 'Alī saw Hajaya with the long beard and the short *thōb* and no *'igāl*, he was astonished and thought Hajaya had gone crazy. After Hajaya told him about his sincere change of heart, the man grew happy but scolded Hajaya for abandoning poetry, his true calling. 'Alī asked Hajaya to write him a poem and send it to him in jail, so Hajaya wrote him a poem called "Dialogue with the Devil" (*Ḥiwār ma' al-Shayṭān*). In it Hajaya debates the devil, who is disappointed in him for leaving his past life of love poetry and who is not totally convinced of the sincerity of Hajaya's change of heart and habit. (Hajaya spends the latter part of the poem discussing social issues and the strangeness of the times.)

Today Hajaya remains a devout Muslim and one of the Jamā'ah's most fervent supporters. Many people, he claims, were guided to the right path by them. Yet after a little over a year's worth of mission work with the Jamā'ah, Hajaya began distancing himself from them, occupied as he became with poetry, politics and the problems of the Arab Nation. He began wearing the *'igāl* again because he learned that it was indeed *not* forbidden in Islam. Though Hajaya never shaved his beard, as he had worn it before his *da'wah* days, he trimmed it and has since kept it short as a reminder of the piety to which he aspires. Reconciled to his nature as a poet and a night owl, Hajaya admits that he could not devote himself and his time to the Jamā'ah, with all their talk of "God said this and the Prophet said that" but that he is nevertheless good

73 Hajaya quotes the Qur'anic passage: "Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them in the better way" (16:125).

friends with the men of the Jamā‘ah and regularly hosts them when they visit Sadd al-Sulṭānī.

Hajaya the Shaykh

From an early age, Hajaya was a staunch defender of the rights of his clan, the Ḥamādāt, one of the six clans within the ‘Aliyyīn branch of the Ḥajāyā tribe. For most of his life he has enjoyed his relatives’ good graces and, he maintains, has never hesitated to help any of his relatives in need. In most disputes the Ḥamādāt faced with other clans and tribes, they would turn to Hajaya for his literacy and eloquence to draw up documents, agreements and claims on their behalf. The Ḥamādāt also began turning to Hajaya to make demands of the government or to dispute other clans’ claims, and Hajaya began representing the Ḥamādāt in every case that affected them. His reputation as a poet served only to boost his standing within the tribe and before other tribes. After he began reading poems in front of King Ḥusayn in the 1990s, his status continued to grow, and the Ḥamādāt relied on him yet more. In 1997 the Jordanian general al-Ḥmēdī al-Fāyiz took Hajaya and around fifteen notables from the Jordanian desert to the Royal Court, informing them that King Ḥusayn had appointed Hajaya shaykh of the Ḥamādāt and put him on the payroll of the Royal Hashemite Court at 170 JD per month. The position is primarily honorary, and unfortunately the money does not cover Hajaya’s expenses.

Meeting Qaddafi

Since 1997 Hajaya had been attending national and international poetry festivals several times a year, and by 2005 Hajaya had become a local and regional celebrity following the fame of his poem “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” In August 2005 Hajaya performed at the Camel Festival (*Mahrajān al-Hijīn*) held in al-‘Arīsh in Egypt’s North Sinai Governorate. Though camels were the main event, there was poetry on the side, and Hajaya took his twelve-year-old son Hāshim along with him dressed in a colonel’s uniform. The delegations for the Jordanian Camel Club (*Jam‘iyyat al-Hijīn al-Urdunniyyah*) and the Libyan Mehari Club (*Nādī al-Mahārī al-Lībī*) struck up a friendship, and a few months later, the Libyans invited the Jordanians to visit Libya at the expense of the Libyan government. They told Hajaya to bring along his son Hāshim.

The Jordanian club, who numbered twenty-three men from the Aḥyawāt, Hwēṭāt, Zalābiyah and Zawāydah tribes, were greeted in Tripoli by the Colonel Muṣṭafā Ḥammādī, a close friend of Qaddafi and a Tuareg whom Hajaya suspected of being an intelligence officer. Ḥammādī and his attendants took them to the swank seaside Radisson Blu Al Mahari Hotel. For the first few days of the trip, Ḥammādī and his men took their Jordanian guests on excursions to

different Libyan cities, such as Ijdadiyah, Misrata, Tajoura, Ghat, and Sirte, where they visited beaches, markets and Byzantine ruins. Two weeks into the trip, Ḥammādi invited Hajaya and the delegation to meet the “Brotherly Leader” (*al-akh al-qā'id*), Muammar al-Qaddafi.

They flew from Tripoli to Sirte, Qaddafi's hometown, and drove two hours southeast into the Libyan desert on a narrow, paved road. They finally entered an area surrounded by barbed wire. A machine gun-mounted jeep stood before the gate, and a Libyan soldier slept nearby on the ground. He did not heed their passing or stop their cars. One kilometer into the compound, Hajaya spotted a large white tent surrounded by cars and camels. About 300 meters away from the tent, the cars came to a halt and the men got out to walk the rest of the way. They passed through security, had their cell phones taken from them, and walked as a group toward the large tent.

The cars surrounding the large tent turned out to be brand-new jeeps, and though they could not see it yet, there was a pickup in whose bed sat a *g'ūd*, a two-year-old he-camel. They could not see the *g'ūd* yet, but they could see a man standing outside the entrance to the large tent to welcome the guests. It was Qaddafi. He told the approaching Jordanians to be careful lest the camel's blood get on the men's clothes, and the men turned in surprise to see a group of men slaughtering the *g'ūd*, a custom to honor one's guest.

One of Qaddafi's secretaries, Nūr, took Hajaya to the side just before they greeted Qaddafi outside the tent and told him to ask of Qaddafi anything Hajaya liked. “Qaddafi really likes you, and he'll give you whatever you want,” he said. The gracious Hajaya demurred, however, telling himself that he would not ask anything of anyone save God.

The Jordanians advanced and lined up to greet the Brotherly Leader. Twelve-year-old Hāshim was in his colonel's uniform and stood in front of Hajaya in line. Qaddafi greeted young Hāshim by kissing the back of his hand and putting it to his forehead, filling Hajaya with great pride. Then, Hajaya says, he and Qaddafi greeted each other warmly, as if they had known each other for a long time. Their eyes met, and Hajaya saw in them “affection and respect” (*mawaddah w-ihtirām*). The men entered the tent and were seated in magnificent chairs; Qaddafi, meanwhile, was brought a simple plastic chair. Cameras of Libyan state TV were filming.

Ḥammādi began the *majlis* by introducing the camel club to Qaddafi. 'Alī Miḥsin al-Ahyawāt of the Jordanian Camel Club came forward to speak of the concerns and problems of camel owners and asked Qaddafi for financial support for those camel owners present. Afterward Hāshim presented some lines of poetry in praise of Libya and Qaddafi written by his father. Hajaya's turn came to speak, and he told Qaddafi that from a young age, he had been

following his speeches over a weak radio signal from goat-hair tents in the Jordanian desert. Indeed, Hajaya used to fashion antennas out of aluminum and copper and place them on tent tops in order to hear Qaddafi's admonitions to the Arabs about Western neocolonialism. Qaddafi predicted that "the West" would destroy all the natural, local seeds (*budhūr baladiyyah*) that the Arabs had inherited from their ancestors.⁷⁴ Hajaya told Qaddafi that he remembered him warning that the West would fight the Arabs over the very sun that rose in their lands, in reference not only to the metaphorical natural resources in the Arabs' lands but also to the solar energy more readily available in the sunny Middle East. "Dear Brotherly Leader," Hajaya continued, "I have a poem called 'Train of Death' (*Gītār al-Mōt*) which I hope you'll permit me to perform. I also have a poem from the perspective of Bush, in which he mentions you, as well as a response from your perspective." Qaddafi laughed and let Hajaya proceed. Hajaya read the poems, and after he finished, Qaddafi praised his talent, calling him "the Great Poet" (*al-shā'ir al-'aẓīm*) and going so far as to say, as Hajaya claims, that "the whole world must hear your poetry."

Qaddafi took the stage and said, "Brothers, I've tried for a long time to unite the Arab Nation (*al-ummah al-'arabiyyah*). I dismantled the border posts between Libya and Tunisia and between Libya and Egypt with a bulldozer. But they all said, 'Muammar's crazy.'" Citing Hajaya's poem, he continued, "I warned them about the train of death that will soon overcome them, country by country. By God, brothers, all of us Arab rulers line up to please America. But she won't be pleased with us. By God, brothers, America could seize me right now from among you if it so wished, from this very tent.

"Brothers, all that happens to the Arab Nation in terms of destruction and disunity is due to that corrupt Zionist family, the House of Saud. You in Jordan live in an arid desert. You must march on the Hijaz and return to your land. My son, King Abdullah II, can't demand the return of that land because of international conditions. But you, as tribes, have to march on it and take it back. The House of Saud has plundered the Saudi people's natural resources and given them to the Americans in order to protect their throne. I have intelligence that one day, after a telephone call from Bush to King Fahd, Fahd transferred Bush 11 billion dollars."⁷⁵

74 Indeed, Hajaya claims, this came true, and the only seeds available in the Arab world now are those imported from abroad. This is perhaps in reference to hybrid seeds, produced by cross-breeding two strong strains, whose fruit is often inferior to that of the "native, local, homegrown seeds" (*budhūr baladiyyah*), many of which have gone extinct.

75 Lord knows how much of the preceding is accurate in terms of both Qaddafi's reporting and Hajaya's reporting of that reporting, sifted through eleven years of memories,

When it came time for the evening prayer, Qaddafi ordered one of his colonels to begin the call to prayer (*adhān*). Qaddafi served as their imam and, during the first prostration, recited *sūrat al-naṣr* and, during the second prostration, recited a relevant verse from *sūrat al-ghāshiyah*: “What, do they not consider how the camel was created, how heaven was lifted up, how the mountains were hoisted, how the earth was outstretched?”⁷⁶ After prayers, Qaddafi told them that the *gūd* had been slaughtered in their honor, and that their dinner was ready in the military base. The men took a group photo with Qaddafi, said their goodbyes, and returned to the cars, which took them to their dinner at the base. After dinner, they bedded down in the base and returned to Tripoli the next day.

After their meeting with Qaddafi, the club stayed in Libya awaiting the financial support Qaddafi had promised them. After one week, they lost patience and decided to return home. This experience harmonizes with Hajaya’s 1982 encounter with Bahrain’s Prince ‘Īsā, for the members of the Camel Club did not receive any sum of money according to what they told Hajaya, supposing that Qaddafi’s aides split amongst themselves the money promised to the Camel Club. I suppose it did not occur to them that Qaddafi simply may have made them an empty promise.

Despite Qaddafi’s political positions and personal conduct that people consider childlike and unreasonable, Hajaya’s meeting with Qaddafi only increased the love and respect he had for him. Apart from the poems Hajaya wrote to and about Qaddafi in 2006, Hajaya also elegized Qaddafi after his death in 2011 and has mentioned him in countless other poems about Libya and the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Hajaya admired Qaddafi first and foremost because he was a Bedouin who came to rule a state. He also loved Qaddafi’s candor and his Arab nationalist ideas, what Hajaya refers to as Qaddafi’s striving to unite the Arab Nation and liberate it from colonialism and oppression. Hajaya thought that Qaddafi, among Arab leaders, was especially possessed of “loyalty and devotion” (*wafā’ wa-ikhhlās*) and despite what Hajaya regards as the “suspicions and propaganda” (*shukūk u-dī‘āyāt*) about Qaddafi that circulated after his death, Hajaya still thinks so.

Prince Hāshim’s Office

A few months after Hajaya returned from Libya, his finances were in shambles. His daughter Rīm had just graduated from the University of Mu’tah with a BA

recountings, and possible imaginative elaboration. Despite this, I cannot say that the story of the meeting does not ring true given what the world knows about Qaddafi.

in History, and his daughter Fāṭimah had just finished high school and wanted to follow in her sister's footsteps at Mu'tah. As Hajaya tells it, he put his trust in God and had Fāṭimah enter the university as he waited for God to intervene. A month after Fāṭimah had entered the university, Hajaya decided to ask for financial support from the Royal Hashemite Court. Because he knew that any petition presented by a Jordanian citizen to the king that dealt with study would be subject to the temperament of the official who received the petition, Hajaya chose a route guaranteed to put him in touch with the king: he would go directly to the king's advisor on tribal affairs, the Sharif Fawwāz Zaban 'Abdullāh, who had helped Hajaya's brother Ahmad pursue his university studies and had found him a job in the foreign service.

Hajaya went to the Tribal Advisory Office (*mustashāriyyat al-'ashā'ir*) in southern Amman to call on Fawwāz, but he was not in. Hajaya instead met Fawwāz' secretary Jum'ah al-Shakhānbah. When Jum'ah asked Hajaya why he wanted to meet with the Sharif, Hajaya explained that he was looking for financial aid from the Court to send his daughter to the University of Mu'tah. Jum'ah explained to Hajaya that the office did not have allocations for such requests and insisted that the Sharif Fawwāz could not help Hajaya at all. Besides, Jum'ah said, the Court already had thousands of petitions to handle. So Hajaya asked Jum'ah what he should do. Jum'ah told him to go home, perform his ritual ablutions, pray, and ask God to help him with regard to his daughter's studies. Wide-eyed Hajaya, then oblivious to Jum'ah's bureaucratic irony, thanked him for leading him to the noble, generous Lord and did exactly as Jum'ah had told him. After his prayers, Hajaya stopped thinking about asking anyone for help.

A month later, 'Ārif al-Zaban,⁷⁷ an employee at the Tribal Advisory Office, called Hajaya and told him to come back the next day about a very important matter. When Hajaya pressed him for details, 'Ārif told him that he did not in fact know, but that it was imperative that Hajaya come. Hajaya did not sleep that night. He racked his brains about what the office could possibly want from him; he had not submitted any formal request for help. The next morning he set out for Amman and arrived early. He met with 'Ārif and immediately after Hajaya drank his coffee, a tacit acknowledgement of accepting one host's welcome and reassuring him of one's goodwill. Before Hajaya had a chance to ask, 'Ārif told Hajaya that Prince Hāshim ibn al-Ḥusayn had requested his presence. The news came as a surprise to Hajaya, who had never before met Prince Hāshim, and he repaired to Prince Hāshim's office in Ma'wā Palace in the Raghadan complex in Amman.

77 No relation to Sharif Fawwāz; 'Ārif is from the Zaban clan of the Banī Ṣakhr tribe.

Dazed and surprised, Hajaya arrived at the palace, where a soldier escorted him into an elegant office with a photo of Prince Ḥamzah ibn al-Ḥusayn on the wall and brought him a cup of tea. Another soldier came in and asked Hajaya to follow him. They walked down yet another hallway, at the end of which Hajaya saw a lean young man standing outside the door of an office. As Hajaya approached, he realized that the young man was Prince Hāshim. He greeted him, and they embraced warmly and entered his office. Hajaya noted that the humble prince sat down not at his grand desk chair but facing Hajaya on one of the more modest chairs in his office. After a soldier brought them some Arabic coffee, filled the cup, and offered it to Hajaya, Hajaya asked the soldier to give the cup first to the prince. Prince Hāshim refused vehemently, telling Hajaya that he was his guest and handing him the cup himself. The prince's gesture moved Hajaya, and Hajaya swears that that was the best cup of coffee that he has ever drunk. Hajaya understood himself as a simple Bedouin who had lived in Wādī al-Ḥisā, al-Kumkhah, al-Marbaṭ, and al-Ḥāmdīyah, and here was Prince Hāshim ibn al-Ḥusayn offering *him* a cup of coffee. The prince's humility and respect for Hajaya embarrassed him, and Hajaya swears that the Hashemites are kings and the sons of kings and that they understand people and act with humility, morality and respect.

After all these rather flattering introductory gestures, the Prince opened the conversation by asking Hajaya about his affairs and those of the people of Jordan's south in general. Then, the Sharif Fawwāz Zaban 'Abdullāh entered the office, greeting Hajaya and the prince and taking a seat next to Hajaya. Prince Hāshim asked Hajaya, "Shaykh Muḥammad, I asked you here because I have an idea I'd like you to help me with—how to carry it out, what's necessary to carry it out. The idea is to collect all of Jordan's Bedouin poetry from the beginning of the Great Arab Revolt until today. I'd like to hear your opinion about how we can do such work."

Hajaya told the prince that he was ready and happy to serve him and that all he needed was a car, a driver, and a recording device. Hajaya suggested visiting living poets, recording their poems by sound and in writing, and submitting them to the prince's office for collection, categorization, editing and printing. Prince Hāshim told the director of his office, 'Amir al-Fāyiz, to coordinate with Hajaya and give him everything he needed for the project. The Sharif Fawwāz assigned 'Ārif al-Zaban to accompany Hajaya during his trips because of his connections with shaykhs, poets, and important personages (*wujahā'*) among Jordan's Bedouin.

Thereafter, the Prince's office outfitted Hajaya and 'Ārif with two cars, recording devices, and paper. They also sent an officer, Khzayyim al-Khālīdī, to help them document and transcribe the poetry. Hajaya and his team of two

began making trips to all parts of Jordan, meeting all the living poets they could find, and transcribing the poems of dead poets from transmitters (*ruwāt*). For every journey that they completed, the team submitted the collected poems to a group of soldiers responsible for transcribing the material. At the end of the first month, ‘Āmir informed Hajaya that the Prince had arranged for him a good monthly salary.

The trips to visit Bedouin poets continued, and Prince Hāshim met with Hajaya and his team once every month or two to ask about their progress. The happiest moments, Hajaya says, were when Prince Hāshim would meet with them and discuss poetry and methods of collecting and documenting it. According to Hajaya, Prince Hāshim referred to Hajaya as “Muhammad Bey,” a Turkish title of respect that sounds like “mister” or “sir.” As did Qaddafi, Prince Hāshim instructed ‘Āmir to give Hajaya whatever he wanted, but Hajaya maintains that he never asked him for anything, happy as he was with his work in the prince’s office. (Though the goal of the project was publishing the Bedouin poetry Hajaya and his team collected, the poems were never printed.) Such was God’s intervention, Hajaya believes, in helping his daughter Fāṭimah to study.⁷⁸

To say that Hajaya has a sense of place and history would be an understatement. Born within ten years of the founding of the state of Jordan and raised on the heights and haunts of Ḥisā’s hills, to quote Sāṭī’s poem, Hajaya spent his formative years pasturing his flock, reading, and writing poetry in the land of Jbal under a Bedouin father devoted to King Ḥusayn and the Hashemites. Hajaya spent his adventurous youth between the army, the farms of Ḥisā, the burgeoning settlements of southern Jordan, and work abroad. But his life can be described as a struggle between the settler and the nomad inside him: his Bedouin father broke with tradition in marrying a farmer girl from the Gḏāh tribe, and Hajaya has spent his life between his longing for *badāwah* (Bedouinness)—living off his sheep and goats and roaming the desert in a tent—and the village, farm, and stability necessary to raise a family in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

78 To this day Hajaya does not know who nominated him to Prince Hāshim for that task. Hajaya loves and takes pride in the Hashemites for their proximity to the people and their humility. He once sent me a video of an interview with King Ḥusayn in which he kept calling his interviewer “*sēdi*,” which sounds in conversation a bit like “my good sir,” just to demonstrate how humble the Hashemites are. In addition to his youngest son Hāshim (b. 1993), Hajaya has already named one of his grandsons Hāshim, and his daughter Fāṭimah intends to name her first son Hāshim. In fact, before I left Jordan, Hajaya made me promise to name my first son Hāshim as long as my future wife agreed. He still calls me Abū Hāshim.

Hajaya is perhaps a kind of romantic ur-poet, the Wolfram von Eschenbach of modern Bedouin poetry. With next to no formal education, a large store of books assembled from abandoned schoolyards, a keen and perceptive mind, and the Wordsworthian shepherd's communion with nature, Hajaya produced both love poetry that inflamed the hearts of Bedouins across the Middle East and fiery nationalistic poetry for his country's rulers, the sincerity of which cynics may scoff at but which Hajaya knows to be true.

Hajaya is a committed Arab nationalist, and a practical one. He appreciates Qaddafi's views and ambitions but chooses to remain in the land of his birth under rulers whose ancestors brought the world Islam and led and fought the Great Arab Revolt. Politically engaged since the late 1980s, Hajaya helped his brother Ahmad Fanatil al-Hajaya run for parliament and ran himself unsuccessfully in 2011 as part of the "Dignity Bloc" (*katlat al-karāmah*). He has rubbed shoulders with Bahrain's Prince 'Isa, dialogued with Qaddafi, traveled with Khalil al-Shammari, Saddam's poet, and has sent Tzipi Livni poems care of the Knesset. He views the world in terms of kinship and religious piety and believes that for the Arabs to be retrieve their former glory, they must return to the true faith and unite under strong Hashemite leadership. The man embodies Jordan, and his life represents poetry's political relevance in the contemporary Arab world.

PART 1

The Poems



يا بلسم الجرح

إلى مقام الصقر الهاشمي جلالة الملك عبد الله الثاني بن الحسين مع صادق العزاء ،
لقد كان الوقع عظيمًا جلالاً . . أذهل الجميع ، وتركهم في حيرة من أمرهم . . إنها وفاة
المغفور له جلالة الملك حسين رحمه الله . . وتغمده بواسع رحمته .

يا لله يا منشي خلايق عجيبة
يا منزل الماء من غمام السحاب

يا عالم كل الخفايا دري به
وموري الإنسان خلق العجايب

يا خالق الإنسان يا معتي به
ما بين صلب الآدمي والتراب

ترحم فقيد كلنا تقتدي به
اللي على قبره بنون النصايب

Balm of the Wound

February 1999

Hajaya wrote this elegy shortly after King Husayn's death from cancer on February 7, 1999. Husayn had ruled Jordan for 46 years and saw the young state through difficult days: the influx of millions of refugees from Palestine, rival Arab governments' plots against him, a coup attempt, two wars with Israel, the loss of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, a civil war, an unpopular peace treaty with Israel, and unpopular aid agreements with the US and the UK. The fact that King Husayn brought Jordan safely and successfully through the latter half of the twentieth century in the Middle East is nothing short of remarkable.

To the presence of the Hashemite falcon His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn al-Husayn with my sincere condolences. His death was a great blow that stunned and bewildered us all. I speak of the death of His Majesty, the late King Husayn, may God have mercy on him and shelter him with his abounding grace.¹

In lines 1-5, Hajaya praises the wonders of God's creation and asks God to have mercy on King Husayn:

Oh God, founder of wondrous creation
Who sends us down rain from the fog of the clouds

Who knows all the secrets of His creation
Who shows man that creation's wonders

Who cares for man, who creates him
From between the backbone and the ribs²

Have mercy on the departed, whom we all emulate
Upon whose grave they've built a tombstone

1 This poem first appeared in *Oh Arabs! (Yā 'Urūbah*, 2006), pp. 13-14.

2 A reference to verses from the Qur'an about humans' origins: "So let man observe from what he was created. He was created from a fluid, ejected, emerging from between the backbone and the ribs." (86:5-7).

5 عساه بالفردوس يلتقى حبيبه
يلتقى السعادة والهنا والرغائب

أبو عبد الله سيدي وش يجيبه
اللي خذته مبعديات الركائب

يا سيدي فقدك علينا مصيبة
وأنا أشهد إنها من بكار المصايب

يا ابو عبد الله يا كريم النقيبة
يا فارس الفرسان يوم الحرايب

تبيك يا مولاي القدس السلبية
اللي لها قدمت أعلى الضرايب

10 وتبيك الأردن بالدموع السكية
كثبانها وسهولها والهضاب

والشعب يا مولاي بيكي حبيبه
بيكي عليك ولا بهذا غرايب

يا ابو المكارم والأخلاق النجبية
بكي عليك الكل شبّ وشايب

- 5 I hope he's in paradise meeting his Beloved³
And there finds happiness, joy, all that he desires

In lines 6-25, Hajaya praises King Husayn's bravery, generosity, humility and political savvy and expresses the Jordanian people's sadness:

Abu Abdullah, my *sayyid*, what can bring him back now?⁴
Carried off by riders on a long journey

Oh *sēdī*, your loss is for us a calamity⁵
I swear—it's among the greatest disasters

Abu Abdullah, of such noble nature
A knight among knights in the heat of battle⁶

My king, stolen Jerusalem cries for you
For which you paid the heaviest tax⁷

- 10 Jordan sheds copious tears for you,
Her sand dunes, plains and hills

The people, my king, mourn their beloved,⁸
And cry for you, for that's only natural

With such noble qualities and superior morals,
Everyone, young and old, cries for you

3 The Prophet Muhammad.

4 'Father of Abdullah' (*Abū 'Abdullāh*), another name for King Husayn; Jordanians also refer to their Hashemite ruler as their *sayyid* or *sēdī*, from Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, pp. 65-66.

5 Hajaya considers King Husayn's death a loss for all the Arabs, not just the Jordanians, for the connections and respect he enjoyed and the wisdom and reason he possessed.

6 King Husayn was known for raising his soldiers' morale.

7 King Husayn sold his mansion in London to pay for the gold dome over the al-Aqsa mosque; he fought to keep East Jerusalem in the 1967 War and negotiated for it for years; Jerusalem was also where, at the age of 15, a young King Husayn witnessed his grandfather Abdullah I's assassination and barely survived himself.

8 This time, "beloved" refers to King Husayn.

يا بلسم الجرح العظيم وطيبه
ويا ماسح دموع يهتّن سكايب

يا جاعل كل الأمانى قريمة
والي تحزّم فيك ما عاد خايب

يا والد كيف تتحمّل مغيبه 15
وكيف السرى بالليل والبدر غايب

يا درعنا اللي دايم نحتمي به
ويا ملجئ اللي حاربوه القرايب

يا غامر الأيتام بعطفه وطيبه
وأسكتهم قصر كبير الجنايب

يا محلحل عسر الأمور الصعبة
مرحوم يا جزل العطا والوهايب

تواضعك زادك جلال وهيبة
وسويت من كل الأعادي حبايب

وحميت الأردن بالظروف العصيبة 20
وما زلزلتلك عاتيات الهبايب

ودفعت في درب الكرامة ضريبة
وصبرت ع شدّاتها والنوايب

الأردن من فراقك صارت كئيبه
يابن الهواشم يا عريق النسايب

The balm of a great wound, its doctor
Who wiped away oppression's flowing tears⁹

Who made our furthest hopes draw near
And never disappointed those who relied on you

- 15 Jordan's father! How to endure your absence?
How to travel at night without a full moon?

Our shield, who always protected us
A refuge for those refused by their kin¹⁰

You showered orphans with kindness, with goodness
And housed them in a wide-winged castle¹¹

You picked apart tight knots of politics
You gave gifts and charity—may God's mercy be upon you!

Your humility raised your greatness and stature
You turned all your enemies into good friends¹²

- 20 You protected Jordan in her most critical days
No raging gales ever shook you¹³

You paid a price on the path of dignity
And endured adversity's blows¹⁴

Jordan's dejected from your departure
Oh son of Hashemites, of noble, deep-rooted descent!

9 Ordinary people could contact King Husayn, and he would often visit his subjects and intervene directly in their affairs.

10 King Husayn accepted refugees on an unprecedented scale; Jordan still does. Refugees from 45 nationalities now call Jordan home.

11 In 1997 King Husayn learned of the harsh conditions orphans were living in in Amman and donated the Hashimiyah Royal Palace to house them.

12 E.g. the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Israelis.

13 I.e. regional wars and crises.

14 E.g. a coup attempt by 'Ali al-Hiyari in 1957.

والشعب ما والله ينسى حبيبه
لو أندفن تحت الثرى والتراب

والله لولا القبر سنّة رتيبة
والله ما تنحطّ تحت النصاب

25 حيث مكانك بالقلوب الرحيبة
إقلوب صارت من فراقك عطائب

وعسى عوّضنا في خيار الشيبية
أشبال هاشم يدركون الوجائب

وعبد الله شبل الهاشمي نتخي به
شال الأمانة واحترم للصعائب

قرم شجاع والإرادة صليبة
يمشي على نفس الخطى غير هايب

وحتّا معه من غير شكّ وريبه
سيف يمينه في نهار الحرايب

Your people, by God, won't forget their beloved
 Just because he's buried in the ground

By God, if burial weren't a religious duty,
 Then I swear we wouldn't put you under a tombstone¹⁵

25 For your place is in your people's wide hearts
 Wide hearts now rent from your departure

*In lines 26-29, Hajaya praises Jordan's ruling Hashemite family and King
 Husayn's son and successor, Abdullah II:*

How we hope God's recompense is a choice youth!
 Lion cubs of Hashem's clan who fulfill their duties

We'll call on 'Abdullah, the Hashemite cub
 Girded for difficulty, he's shouldered his charge

A brave warrior with an iron will
 Who walks fearlessly in his father's footsteps

Without doubt or qualm, we're with him all the way
 A sword in his right hand in the days of war

15 I.e. they would keep King Husayn above ground with them from the intensity of their love for him.

ماني بيعتي ولا ني شيوعي

إلى كل عربي أبكاه استباحة عذرية بغداد الكرامة والكبرياء أمام أعيننا جميعاً على
أيدي تثار العصر الحديث وعصابات المجرمين بوش وبلير وأذنا بهم وإلى الشاعر الأخ
العزیز خليل صباح الضيغمي في العراق .

يا صاحبي لا تحرق الخدّ بدموع
خلّ الدموع للابسات القنوعي

وبدال ما تبكي وتركي على الكوع
أشعل بقايا ما بقي من الشموعي

مثلك أنا قلبي له شهور مفجوع
وكتمت حزنه بين هجف الضلوعي

من خوف يشمت بي من الناس مخدوع
ويقول عتي بالمصايب جزوعي

ألي صغير وبالمهانات منقوع
وباع الكرامة في رخيص البيوعي

Not a Baathist, Not a Commie

August 16, 2003

Writing five months into the US occupation of Iraq, Hajaya was inspired to write this poem after a telephone conversation with his friend and relative, the poet Khalil Ṣabāḥ al-Ḍayghamī, who lived in Baghdad. Saddened but not scared by the US occupation, Khalil was crying over the phone.

To every Arab brought to tears by the plunder of virgin Baghdad, majestic and noble, before our very eyes, at the hands of the Mongols of the modern era:¹ Bush's and Blair's gangs of criminals and their henchmen. To the dear poet and brother Khalil Ṣabāḥ al-Ḍayghamī in Iraq.

In lines 1-5, Hajaya consoles his friend Khalil and tells of him of his own apprehension:

Oh friend, don't burn your cheeks with tears
Leave all the tears for the mask-wearing women²

Instead of weeping and lying around
Light the candles that remain³

Like you, my heart's been anguished for months
I suppressed its sadness between my bending ribs

From fear that the duped ones would gloat over me⁴
And claim that I can't endure misfortune

5 Small men, soaked in shame,
Who sold their honor for cheap

1 A reference to the Mongols' siege of Baghdad in 1258, which marked the end of the Islamic Golden Age

2 In Bedouin Arabic, the *niqāb* is called a *gun'ah* (pl. *gnū'*), or mask

3 I.e. fight the US and resist the occupation; from the proverb "better to light a candle than curse the darkness" (*idā'at sham'ah khayr min la'n al-ḏalām*)

4 I.e. those Arabs duped by the US that regime change in Iraq would bring peace, security, happiness and economic stability

وابقى وفي لى به الراس مرفوع
مهما يقولوا فاسدين الطبوعي

وإذا يقولوا عنه اليوم مخلوع
يكفيه إنه ما رضى بالخنوعي

رفض بيع وقالها بصوت مسموع
الموت أشرف من حياة الركوعي

والموت في شرع الرجاجيل مشروع
لأجل الكرامة ما يصيبه صدوعي

ما أنحنى يوم أنحنى كل جربوع
طبعه شريف وما يطبق الخضوعي

10

يا مانحنى ما جاه نجدات وفروع
ومن العروبة ما لفته فزوعي

وطال الحصار ودمر واكل مشروع
وتيبست بالأرض كل الزروعي

وثار الإعصار وطاحت أوراق وفروع
والحمد لله سالمات الجذوعي

تجاوزوا في غيهم كل ممنوع
وعليه كانوا يجمعون الجموعي

In lines 6-14, Hajaya praises Saddam Hussein's pride and bravery:

Stay loyal to him whose head's held high⁵
Whatever they claim, their natures are corrupt

If now they say he's been deposed
Then at least he wasn't content with servility

He refused to sell out and said aloud that
Death is nobler than a life of submission⁶

To die on manhood's path is most correct
In order to preserve one's dignity intact

10 He didn't yield when did every jerboa⁷
His noble character wouldn't suffer submission

Despite all his calls, no help to him came
The Arabs didn't send him any back-up

The siege was long, they destroyed all his plans⁸
And all Iraq's crops dried up

The storm raged, strewing leaves and branches⁹
But thank God, for the trunks stand strong

In their transgression, they broke every law,¹⁰
And united the powers of evil against him

5 Saddam Hussein

6 I.e. he refused to relinquish Iraq, his principles, and the cause of Arab nationalism

7 The jerboa is a nocturnal desert rodent that represents cowardice in Bedouin culture; Hajaya means Arab rulers who didn't oppose the occupation of Iraq

8 The economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the UN Security Council from 1990 to 2003
Second Iraq War

10 I.e. the United States broke the laws of war by using illegal weapons like white phosphorous and MK-77 bombs

15 يا صاحبي لا تحرق الخدّ بدموع
إدموع عينك غير كلّ الدموعي

خلّ الأمل في ساحة القلب مزروع
لا بدّ من فجرٍ قريب السطوعي

مليون صدمّام أنولد بأوّل أسبوع
وثارت براكين الغضب بالنجوعي

وصدّام عنوان الوفي نادر النوع
شريف مبدأ في جميع الربوعي

ولو كنت أنا قلبي له شهور مفجوع
أزداد حيّ للشجاع القطوعي

20 شفته شجاع وأكثر الناس مضبوع
وكتبت به شعري بكيفي وطوعي

وأنا معه قلبٍ وقالب وموضوع
وماني بيعتي ولايني شيوعي

أنا أردني ماني مزيف ومرقوع
ومن العرب دميّ وعظمي ونوعي

In lines 15-22, Hajaya encourages Khalil to be hopeful and explains why he still loves Saddam:

- 15 Oh friend, don't burn your cheeks with tears
The tears of your eyes aren't just any tears¹¹
- Keep hope's seeds sown in the plot of your heart
For soon a bright dawn will be breaking
- One million Saddams were born in the first week¹²
Volcanoes of anger erupted in the villages
- Saddam, a model of loyalty, a rare type
In every land known for high, noble principles
- Although my heart's been anguished for months,
My love's increased for that intrepid man
- 20 While most men are hyenas, I consider him brave¹³
And I've written him poetry of my own free will
- On every issue, I'm with him heart and soul
And I'm neither a Baathist nor a Communist¹⁴
- I'm Jordanian, and not one forged or patched up¹⁵
I'm Arab in blood, bone and make

11 I.e. because Khalil is a poet and an exemplary man (*qudwah*) whose tears could destroy the morale of those who look up to him

12 I.e. the first week of the Second Iraq War

13 I.e. most Arab rulers are cowardly; the hyena, like the jerboa, represents cowardice in Bedouin culture

14 Hajaya is neither a Baathist, like Saddam Hussein, nor a communist, in reference to Iraq's close relationship with the Soviet Union

15 I.e. Hajaya is not a foreigner with Jordanian citizenship; he is a Bedouin from the East Bank of the Jordan River whose ancestors have been in the Transjordan long before the founding of the state

ويا صاحبي دنيا بها نزول وطلوع
ولا بدّ من بعد النزول الطلوعي

كم تابع أصبح بها اليوم متنوع
وكم حاكم به يحكمون الطقوعي

وكم بالغ موته على يد مبلوع 25
راجع تواريخ الأمم والشروعي

ويا ابو عدي احمد ولا تعطي الطوع
وجفّر برأكين الغضب بالنجوعي

وإذا يقولوا إنك اليوم مخلوع
عجل لهم يا ابو عدي بالرجوعي

In lines 23-25, Hajaya reminds Khalil that fortune is like a wheel:

Oh friend, this world has its ups and downs
And what goes down must come up

How many followers have become the followed?¹⁶
How many leaders are totally worthless?¹⁷

- 25 How many gluttons die choking on food?¹⁸
Just read the histories of nations and laws

In lines 26 & 27, Hajaya urges Saddam Hussein, then in hiding, to lead the resistance:

Oh Abu 'Uday, stand your ground and don't give in!¹⁹
Set off anger's volcanoes in the villages!

If today they say that you're deposed,
Then, Abu 'Uday, hurry back for them soon!

-
- 16 A reference to the Shiite Iraqis, who became leaders after "following" Saddam for years
17 Lit. "how many rulers are ruled by farts?"
18 I.e. Hajaya expected that America would die choking while it "devoured" Iraq
19 "Father of 'Uday" (*Abū 'Uday*) is the tekonym, or *kunya*, of Saddam Hussein

يا كند ليزارايس!

الكيف طاب وأضحك الله سني
تودي طاب الكيف واتزاحوا أعداي

يا بول هات من القرايز ودي
ويا رامسفلد احضر لنا عازف التاي

وعازف ربابة من الخليج المغني
وقل للعروبة كلها تتبع خطاي

Oh Condoleezza Rice!

January 17, 2004

In this poem Hajaya imagines US President George W. Bush as a Bedouin shaykh who has just completed successful raiding expeditions in Iraq and Afghanistan. At a traditional Bedouin “sitting” (*majlis*) with his advisors, Bush sips whiskey and brags about his conquests in a vernacular Bedouin Arabic sprinkled with English words like “today,” “people” and “whiskey.” At this point in the Iraq War, the US had just captured Saddam Hussein, and despite the spike in insurgent attacks, many Iraqis were still optimistic about their country’s future. This poem first appeared in the Jordanian weekly newspaper *al-Ittijāh*, whose “Desert Page” (*ṣafḥat al-bādiyah*) Hajaya edited from 2003 to 2006. The version of the poem that I’ve translated, however, is the slightly altered version Hajaya read before Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya in August 2006. A translation of the version that appeared in *al-Ittijāh* can be found in Holes & Abu Athera (2009).¹

In lines 1-6, Hajaya imagines Bush sitting in the Oval Office with his advisors and a bottle of whiskey, composing a poem in vernacular Bedouin Arabic to justify his conquests to the Arabs:

My mood’s good—God’s brought a grin to my face
My mood is good today, for my enemies have gone away!

Powell—bring some bottles and come join me!²
Rumsfeld—fetch us a ney player!³

And a rebab player from the melodious Gulf,⁴
And tell the Arabs to follow my lead

1 Holes & Abu Athera also published this poem in the 2005 newsletter of the Council for British Research in the Levant and in *Middle Eastern Literatures* 10:3 (2007) pp. 273-289. I chose to translate this slightly modified version to give the interested reader an idea of how Bedouin poems can change in terms of diction depending on audience or context.

2 Colin Powell, US Secretary of State at the time of writing; Hajaya imagines that Bush presses a button on his desk in the Oval Office and that Powell comes running, saying “yes, sir!”

3 Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense at the time of writing; a ney is a type of flute

4 A rebab is a one-stringed instrument played with a bow that Bedouin poets often play while they sing their poetry; the “melodious Gulf,” i.e. the Gulf Arab countries that are

وهاتولنا وسكي وبيرة وجتي
وذكندليزارايس هاته لنا جاي

5 آي وودلايك هاف أشرب وأعطي
وكلّ العرب تطرب وترقص على غناي

وإذا سأل يبيل ولايات عتي
أنا على الإرهاب حربي ومبداي

من شرق باكستان دقيت بني
وفي ديرة البشتالنا اليوم كرزاي

أبقارنا في كابل يحومني
أمنت مفلاهن بسيفي ويمناي

غصباً على الملا عمر يرتعني
والطالبان أفضيتهم عنه إقصاي

10 وبالرافدين أبقارنا يسرحني
وسيف العرب مسجون ما بيده الراي

صدّام في سجنني وارعه يوتي
من عقب ما هو للعرب كان حمّاي

Bring us whiskey, beer and gin
And Condoleezza Rice—bring her to us too!⁵

- 5 Tonight I'd like to drink and sing
While the Arabs dance and sway to my song⁶

If the American people ask what I'm doing, say:
"In principle, in war, I stand against terror!"

In lines 7-15, Bush brags about his conquests in Afghanistan and Iraq and explains the principles behind them:

In East Pakistan have I ground my coffee⁷
In the land of the Pashto, Karzai's now on our side

Our cattle roam in Kabul⁸
I've secured their pastures with my sword, my right hand

In spite of Mullah Omar do they graze⁹
I've driven the Taliban from him, I have!

- 10 In Iraq our cattle also roam
The Sword of the Arabs is in prison with no power!¹⁰

Yes, Saddam's in my prison—watch him moan!
After protecting the Arabs so!

well-known throughout the Arab world for the entertainment industry that has emerged around local music and poetry.

5 National Security Advisor at the time of writing

6 I.e. fall under Bush's spell, come under his control

7 I.e. Bush has conquered it and now lives there in his tent, where he grinds coffee with a mortar and pestle and invites passing guests to honor him with a visit—a true Bedouin shaykh

8 "cattle," i.e. female American soldiers, whose presence in the occupation forces many Arabs and Muslims found humiliating

9 Leader of the Taliban

10 Saddam Hussein

جبناه بالدولار ماهو تمّتي
خلوه ربعه بين بايع وشراي

وهذا جزى اللي لأمرنا ما يصّتي
وحاول يحطّ إيده على النفط والمالي

وقل للعرب إني مصمّم وإني
أبرج العالم على كيف مشهاي

15 مناهج التعليم ما يعجبني
فيها إرهاب ويدرسه كلّ قرّاي

وقل للعقيد إن أخباره لفتني
عفية عليه إته فهم كلّ مغزاي

وبمعمّر المحبوب ما خاب ظني
عقب الهدير اليوم أصبح له رغاي

وقل للأسد يمشي بعقل وتأني
ويتبع خطي معمّر إذا وده رضاي

وابن العجم لا يحوجن للتعتي
واجب عليه اليوم يصغي لي إصغاي

We got him with the mighty dollar, not with hopes and dreams
His tribe put him up for sale¹¹

That's your reward if you don't heed my command
And try to touch my oil and water

Tell the Arabs that I'm determined and that
I program the world according to my will

- 15 Their educational curricula don't please me
'Cause they're full of terrorism—everyone studies it¹²

In lines 16-22, Bush gives his advisors messages to pass to leaders of hostile countries, like Libya, Syria, Iran and North Korea:

Tell the Colonel that his news has reached me¹³
Bravo, Qaddafi! You really got my drift!

Beloved Muammar didn't disappoint me
After all his roaring, he finally started to grumble¹⁴

Tell Assad to walk with reason and care¹⁵
To follow in Qaddafi's footsteps if he wants to keep me happy¹⁶

As for that Persian boy, he can't wear me out¹⁷
Today he's obliged to hear me out!

11 The Gulf Arabs

12 Bush criticized Saudi textbooks, which “promote hatred rather than tolerance, along with the blatantly racist propaganda in the tightly-controlled Saudi media.” See Henderson and Clawson, “The Crawford Summit: High Noon for U.S.-Saudi Relations?”

13 “the Colonel,” i.e. Muammar al-Qaddafi; “his news,” i.e. the news that Qaddafi dismantled his WMD program in December 2003

14 A reference to the male camel's roaring (*hadīr*), usually during December, as a result of sexual frustration; the Bedouin beat it with a cane in order to silence it, after which it emits a defeated grumble (*rqhā*). In this metaphor, Qaddafi is the camel, and Bush has just finished beating him.

15 I.e. Bashar al-Assad, president of Syria

16 I.e. by dismantling his WMD program

17 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of Iran at the time of writing

20 والكوري المنحوس لا يحسب إني
نسيت تهديده وصفعه بمقفاي

فلا يغرّه إنّ عندي تأني
ولا بدّ من غزوة ولو طال مسراي

أنا ولد بوش الدول يعرفني
كلّ الدول حطيتهن تحت ماطاي

كلّه لعينه من غلاها فتني
وعزيزنا شارون سيدي ومولاي

يا كندليز احبّها قد سكتني
ولو نهاية حبّها تقطع رشاي

25 طلاق من الحرمة أقوله وأثني
من يكره اسرائيل هو أكبر أعداي

حييتي اسرائيل هي جزء مني
ريحتها من شرّ جيش أبو عداي

وأنا زعيم الأرض والفرنّ فتني
أقول وأفعل وأضرب الخصم بجداي

20 That luckless Korean had better not suppose¹⁸
That I forgot his threat, his smack on my behind

May he not be deceived! I know how to bide my time
A raid's inevitable no matter how long the path!¹⁹

I'm Bush's son—all the countries know me
And I've put them all under my foot²⁰

In lines 23-27, Bush reveals the motive behind all his actions—his love for Israel:

It's all for the sake of her whose love's enthralled me²¹
And our dear Sharon, my lord and master²²

Oh Condoleezza, love for her dwells deep in my heart²³
Even if that love gets my well-rope cut²⁴

25 I swear by divorce of my wife—I say and repeat:²⁵
Whoever hates Israel is my biggest enemy!

Beloved Israel! She's a part of me
I put her at ease from Saddam's evil army²⁶

I rule the world, and I do as I please
I say, I do, and I beat my enemy with my shoe!²⁷

18 Kim Jong-il, leader of North Korea at the time of writing

19 Lit. "the path of night-travel"; Bedouin raiders set out at night in order to surprise their enemies with a dawn attack

20 I.e. Bush has not only controlled but also humiliated them all

21 I.e. Israel

22 Ariel Sharon, prime minister of Israel at the time of writing

23 I.e. love for Israel

24 I.e. even if Bush's love for Israel were to cause his death; in Bedouin culture, if you lose access to water in the desert, you die, so cutting someone's well-rope is as good as killing them

25 One of the most serious oaths a Bedouin man can utter

26 A reference to the conspiracy theory that the US invaded Iraq for Israel's sake

27 Hajaya claims that this last line inspired the Iraqi journalist Muntazar al-Zaydi, a Bedouin Iraqi who, Hajaya reasons, must have heard this poem, to throw his shoe at Bush during a press conference on December 14, 2008.

هذه القصيدة ردّ من القائد الرعيم معمر القذافي على قصيدة الرئيس الامريكى جورج بوش الابن والتي نشرت في مجلة سي بي آر آل البريطانية والتي كانت بعنوان "يا كندا ليزار ايس!"

وقد أقيت هذه القصيدة على مسامع معمر القذافي في خيمته في منطقة سرت
الليبية عند ما زرته ومعى وفد من العشائر الاردنية

طاب المزاج وأبعد الهمّ عني
وزال الحصار وزانت اليوم دنيائي

سود الليالي والشور بعدتي
والوضع باهي والصناديد بحداي

قم يا قهوجي بالعجل لا توتني
وصبوا لنا القهوى وهاتوا لنا شاي

ونادوا لجان الشعب لازم يجيتي
ودّي أسولف بالوضع حسب رؤياي

ولبوش ودي بالهزيمة أهتي
الله كسر جاهه الإهي ومولاي

Camel Dung

August 2006

As with “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” and “Not Anymore, Muammar,” Hajaya performed this poem for Muammar al-Qaddafi on his visit to Libya in 2006 with a delegation of Jordanian tribes. This poem is Qaddafi’s response to Bush’s poem “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” Hajaya has imagined a “poetic exchange” (*musājalah shi’riyyah*) between the two leaders, as used to occur between Bedouin shaykhs of old, in which the respondent’s poem must match the original poem’s rhyme and meter and surpass its number of lines. Hajaya wrote the poem with Qaddafi’s political language in mind, and after he read it, Qaddafi gave Hajaya the nickname “The Great Poet” (*al-shā’ir al-‘azīm*) and told Hajaya that the poem accurately represented his views.

In lines 1-4, Qaddafi rejoices and calls the Peoples’ Committees to hear his poem:

My mood is great, and God’s cast off my cares
The sanctions are lifted, and today my world’s just grand!¹

Dark nights and evils have passed, and now:
A splendid situation with brave men by my side²

Coffee man, barista, hurry up, don’t dilly dally
Pour us some coffee and bring the tea!

Call the Peoples’s Committees to come to me³
I want to talk about things from *my* point of view

In lines 5-9, Qaddafi gloats over Bush’s failures in Iraq:

5 First, I’ll congratulate Bush on the defeat
My lord, my protector, my God broke his power

1 The US lifted sanctions after Qaddafi suspended his chemical weapons program

2 The words for “splendid” (*bāhī*) and “by my side” (*biḥdāy*) are characteristically Libyan expressions Hajaya put in for credibility

3 The General People’s Committees were the liaison between the Libyan public and government leadership under Qaddafi

هيز كراينق بعد ذاك التجتي
وبالرافدين اليوم جيشه له عواي

ورط أمريكا بالوحل واستكتي
وبالبيت الأسود يقضي الليل رغاوي

نسمع خوار أبقارهم يخرتي
ودم العجول أروى ترى الأرض إرواي

البوش حاول بالخطا يمتحتي
ما يدري إني للعسيرات لوأي

يا بوش دورات الزمن علمتي
وأنا ذكي من صغر ستي ومنشاي

10

أنا معمر والدول يشهدتي
مثل الجبل شاخ على الأرض مرساي

وريات شعبي بالعللا رفرقتي
وحميت شعبي من أذى كل غزاي

وع بلادنا يا بوش احذر تشتي
ترجم قصيدي وافهم اللغاز معناي

ساحاتنا يا بوش ما ينوطي
نار ولهبا يحرق الي لها جاي

He's whimpering after all his incriminations⁴
 Today in Iraq his army's whining like a dog

He marched America into the mire—then turned tail and fled
 To the Black House, where he spends his nights groaning⁵

We hear their cows' lowing as they're slaughtered⁶
 As calves' blood waters the soil of Iraq

Mistakenly did Bush decide to put me to the test
 Not knowing that I know my way out of a fix

*In lines 10-18, Qaddafi boasts of his savvy, warns Bush about attacking
 Libya, and encourages Bush to focus his energies on occupying the Gulf
 Arab countries:*

10 Bush, the course of time has taught me⁷
 And I've been sharp since the days of my youth

I'm Muammar—witnessed by the nations!
 A lofty mountain anchored over the land

The flags of my people flutter up in the heights
 I've protected them from raiders like you

Beware, Bush, of attacking my country
 Translate this poem, ponder its riddles of meaning

No one treads on our fields, oh Bush
 Blazing fires burn those who try

4 I.e. that Iraq had nuclear weapons; Hajaya wrote "*hiz krāying*" for "he's crying," in Qaddafi's imitation of Bush's use of English words in "Oh Condoleezza!"

5 I.e. as opposed to the White House; in Arabic culture the color black represents ill fortune or evil; the word "groaning" (*raghghāy*) is a reference to line 17 in "Oh Condoleezza Rice!" where Bush brags that he has made Qaddafi groan

6 I.e. female American soldiers; see line 8 of "Oh Condoleezza Rice!"

7 I.e. Qaddafi is a student of experience

15 سرح أبقارك بالخليج المغتي
ألي بها أصبحت للربع وظاي

يرعن بأمان ونوب ما يجفلتي
ما عاد بالديرة رجاجيل شرواي

ارتع بساحات العمالة وغتي
وركزع الي جيمهم تنقلب ياي

أبقاركم لديارنا يكرهني
أنا أسد ما يرتع الثور بحماي

يا شارب الوسكي اخبارك لفتي
صبرك تدني وقالها اليوم زلماي

20 وشعيتك متواصلة بالتدني
وجرايمك بانت بعد كل الإخفاي

وبلغ زلامك يادبليو إني
منهم بري كل البراءة والإبراي

وأنا لأفريقيا توجهت لتي
شفت العرب حزمة بعر ما لهم راي

حاولت أوحدهم وما طاوعتي
روس العمالة خربوا كل مسعاي

15 Pasture your cows in the melodious Gulf⁸
Whose Arabs you've got used to treading on

They can graze there in safety and won't ever scare
'Cause in all the Arabs' lands, there are no more men like me

Pasture them in the collaborators' fields and sing⁹
And focus on those whose *jīm* comes out *yā*¹⁰

Your cows loathe our lands
For I'm a lion—the bull doesn't graze near my pride

*In lines 19-34, Qaddafi describes his attempts to build Arab strength,
thwarted by collaborators in the Gulf Arab countries:*

Oh whiskey-drinker, your news has reached me
You're all out of patience—Zalmay said so today!¹¹

20 Your popularity sinks lower and lower
You tried to hide them, but your crimes became clear¹²

Tell your henchmen, Dubya, that I'm
Innocent of their crimes—I have no truck with them

Thus the pivot toward Africa¹³
For the Arabs are a bunch of camel dung, with no resolution¹⁴

Once I tried to unite them, but they wouldn't heed me
The head collaborators wrecked all my plans

8 I.e. the Gulf Arab countries; a reference to line 3 of "Oh Condoleezza Rice!"

9 "collaborators," i.e. Gulf Arab rulers who collaborated with the US to bring down Saddam

10 I.e. Gulf Arabs; in Gulf Arabic, the letter "j" is often pronounced like a "y"

11 In April 2006, Zalmay Khalilzad, US ambassador to Iraq, said that Bush was losing his patience with the Shiites' and Kurds' inability to form a government. See Mascolo and Zand, "Running Out of Patience in Iraq"

12 E.g. Abu Ghraib

13 Qaddafi called for the establishment of the African Union in the Sirte Declaration in September 1999

14 Just like camel dung can not be tied together in a bundle, the Arabs can't be united

نصحتهم لكن يصدّون عتي
الذلّ أعماهم عن العزّ إعمامي

آذانهم للنصح ما يسمعي 25
عيوا يطيعوني ولا ذوا بالإقفاي

وحتى أفكارني عندهم يمني
ويحاولوا تشويه نهجي ومشاي

وصارت عليا كلا بهم ينجني
وشتوا عليا الحرب وآذوني آذاي

جربتهم يا سيف من صغر سني
ما فيهم الي كان للسركمي

يا سيف أوضاع العرب عقدي
وخابت بهم كل أميائي ورجواي

ميتين مليون أعدادهم يبلغني 30
ويمكن ثلث مية إذا دق الإحصاي

مثل النعاج السارحة يمرحني
وأفعالهم وأقوالهم تخزي إخزاي

وثرواتهم وأوطانهم ينيهي
وجزارهم يعزف على الأورق والناي

وش فودهم بالله ما دام إني
ألي أقوله عندهم يا صل أعداي

I gave them advice, but they turned away
 Their shame has blinded them to strength

- 25 Their ears won't hear good counsel
 They refused to obey me, took refuge in flight

With them, even hearing my thoughts is forbidden
 They misrepresent my method, my path¹⁵

Their dogs have begun barking at me¹⁶
 Launched a media war, causing all kinds of harm

I figured 'em out, Sayf, in the days of my youth¹⁷
 None of them can keep a secret¹⁸

Sayf, the Arabs' problems have me all tied up
 They've disappointed all my hopes and aspirations

- 30 Their numbers reach to two hundred million
 A more precise count might give three hundred million

They're like gleeful ewes dumbly grazing
 Whose words and deeds shame them to no end

Their wealth and lands all get plundered
 While their butchers play the keyboard and flute¹⁹

Dear God, what use are they if
 Everything I tell them reaches the enemy

15 I.e. Qaddafi's style of government and plans for Arab strength and unity.

16 The collaborators' "dogs" have begun "barking" at Qaddafi in the media.

17 Qaddafi addresses his son Sayf al-Islam.

18 I.e. Gulf Arab rulers are collaborators who tell Israel and the US all his plans.

19 "their butchers," i.e. those foreign powers that prey on the Arab countries; "play the keyboard and flute," i.e. rejoice and delight because no Gulf Arabs resist them.

وحتى قمهم فاشلات أتعبتي
الغرب موصّيهم على إفشالها إوصاي

35 بغداد ضاعت والعذاي بكّي
واحناسولف ضاعت اشلون وازاي

سلام يا بغداد ياتيك مّي
وانتي ذبيجة مالك اليوم بكّاي

صيححتكي يا طاهرة أوجعني
يا شاكية لك أشكي اليوم شكواي

يا جرحنا النازف بهم خاب ظني
أذنا بوش أخلوا له الساحة إخلاي

أضخم قواعد عندهم انبني
براً وجرّاً يملك البوش وسكاي

40 وحتى سفاراته بهم يحكمتي
وإذا طلب منهم سخّين الإعطاي

صاروا مطايا طايعة يركبتي
وقولة هلا يا مرحبا أصبحت هاي

عمي البصيرة عقولهم ما يرتي
طرشان عيوا يسمعوا عالي نداي

وصدّام له سود الياي رمّي
أسير قيده ماله اليوم دعّاي

Even their summits are tiresome failures
The West commands them to fail, so they do

In lines 35-44, Qaddafi laments the state of Baghdad and the Gulf Arab states' subservience to the US:

35 Baghdad's gone, and her virgins all weep
While we sit around talking, asking "hm ... say ... how?"

I send you peace, Baghdad
Today no one mourns you, our sacrifice, our slaughter

Your cries pain me, pure Baghdad,
Who suffer so—today I raise my voice for you

Oh bleeding wound of ours! They've disappointed me:²⁰
Bush's henchmen who cleared for him their fields²¹

There they've built huge military bases
Where Bush's men control air, land and sea²²

40 Even his embassies control them,
So eager to give and please whenever Bush asks

They've become Bush's mounts, his trusty old steeds
As *halā* and *marḥaba* turn into "hi!"²³

With myopic minds and unseeing reason,
They're deaf and wouldn't hear my loud appeals

Poor Saddam—the blackest of nights have now made him
A shackled prisoner with no one on his side

20 Gulf Arab collaborators.

21 I.e. so that Bush's soldiers could move in. At the time of writing there were US soldiers in Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

22 Hajaya wrote *skāy* for "sky," again interspersing English words into the poem.

23 *Halā* and *marḥaba* are two ways to say hello in Arabic; in many Gulf Arab countries, English has now become the language of public space.

أوكار وأججار الخيانة بدّي
وكلّ على سيف العرب صار نخاي

The burrows and dens of betrayal now clear,
All now condemn the poor Sword of the Arabs²⁴

24 I.e. Saddam Hussein.

جيتك بقايا شاعرٍ عندي أبيات
كبتهن بيني وبينك لذاتي

لك ساقني ربّي إله السموات
وهو يدري إنها من أعزّ أمنيّاتي

يا سيدي بالشعر خضنا خصومات
وقول الحقيقة صار من مشكلاتي

الشعر سبّب لي خصومة حكومات
إجيوشها تملأ الخلا والفلاّتي

وتملك بوارج بالبحر مستنذلات
على شواطئ ذلّها راسياتي

ضاقوا بعشرة أبيات ما هن كثيرات
حقايقٍ عندي عليهن إثباتي

Nevermore, Oh Muammar

August 2006

Hajaya read Qaddafi this mournful lyric after the more humorous poems “Oh Condoleezza Rice!” and “Camel Dung.” In this poem Hajaya claims to speak for the Arab people as he expresses his respect for Qaddafi’s policies, the helplessness he feels from the Arabs’ “bleeding wounds” in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon, and his enmity for Gulf Arab rulers.

In lines 1-6, Hajaya addresses himself to Qaddafi and tells him of the trouble that writing political poetry has brought him:

The remains of an old poet, I’ve come to you with some lines¹
I wrote them for myself, to be shared with you²

The Lord of the Heavens has carried me here
He knows that to be here’s my most cherished wish

Poetry’s a battle, friend—I’ve entered the fray
And speaking the truth’s now become my big problem

Poetry’s brought me the enmity of nations
Whose armies fill plains and fields³

5 Who command disgraced battleships
Anchored on the shores of shame

Annoyed and upset by just ten lines
By truth that’s borne out by the facts and by proof

1 I.e. Hajaya is letting Qaddafi know that he has life experience.

2 An old convention in the Bedouin “poetic exchange” (*musājalah shi’riyyah*) is to write that the two correspondents will be the only ones to hear the poem; that is obviously not the case here.

3 In reference to the Gulf Arab countries, which Hajaya has attacked repeatedly in his poetry; poets from the Gulf, such as Sulṭān al-‘Inizī, have attacked Hajaya in kind; Hajaya’s friends in the Jordanian intelligence services have warned him against traveling to the Gulf because of his harsh criticism, and Hajaya has never traveled to any Gulf country, not even to perform the hajj in Saudi Arabia; Hajaya is also convinced that the Saudis poisoned his brother Ahmad while the latter was serving in the Jordanian embassy in Riyadh.

سلاحي قلم وأفكار ما هن سقييات
وهوموم قومي شلتهن في عباتي

عبّرت عن ميتين مليون بالذات
من المغرب الأقصى لشطّ الفراتي

حياتهم صارت سراب ومتاهات
وحكامهم زادوا الشقا والشتاتي

عشرين دولة يفصلنها عداوات 10
وقيودها بأقفالها محكماتي

واليوم جيتك من بعيد المسافات
ما هو جن ولا هروب بجياتي

يا منبع النخوة ورمز المروءات
أكيد ما تقبل علينا الشماتي

في خيمتك ألقيت كلّ المهمّات
وعبّرت عن آلامنا الموجداتي

يا فرعة الشاكي بيوم الملهّات
ويا جابر العاثرات بالمكرماتي

جيتك رجل لكن قبائل وخمسات 15
وجيتك قصايد حبرها من دواتي

جيتك عروبة نازفة بالجرّاحات
عوراتها بين الأمم بادياتي

In lines 7-10, Hajaya claims to speak for the Arab people:

My thoughts are sound—not corrupt—and my weapon's a pen
As I carry the woes of my tribe on my back⁴

To be precise, I speak for two hundred million
From farthest Morocco to the Euphrates' mouth

Their lives have become mirages, labyrinths
Their leaders just add to the misery and division

- 10 Twenty countries divided by petty aggressions
Aggressions intractable, bound lock and key

In lines 11-20, Hajaya praises Qaddafi's reliability and laments the Arab world's disasters:

I come to you now from a faraway land
But by my life I'm no coward, no fugitive

Oh symbol of succor in battle, of virtue!
Surely you won't put up with our enemies' gloating

The important things I've just spoken here in your tent
I've spoken of us Arabs and our smarting wounds

A help to the helpless in days of disaster
With generosity, you help the stumbler to his feet⁵

- 15 As a man I've come to you, but in the name of clans and tribes
With poems penned with ink from my own inkwell⁶

In the name of the Arabs' bleeding wounds do I come
Wounds naked and ridiculed before the world's nations

4 "my tribe," i.e. the Arabs; "on my back" here is literally "in my cloak".

5 I.e. Qaddafi supported many national resistance movements and terrorist groups.

6 I.e. Hajaya's poetry is sincere.

وجيتك دموعاً في عيون العفيفات
 بابو غريب ودتسو هن غزاتي

هن جرجي النازف وماله مداوات
 وهن بالحقيقة يا معمر خواتي

وجيتك طفولة دمررها الخواجات
 ابغزة وقانا والدول راقدا تي

20 هيهات يا معمر وهيهات هيهات
 تصحى العقول الغارقة بالسباتي

For the tears of chaste women do I come
Women ravished in Abu Ghraib by the raiders⁷

Those women are my bleeding wound, and there's no remedy⁸
Matter of fact, Muammar, those women are my sisters

For childhoods destroyed by foreigners do I come
In Gaza and Qana, while Arab states sleep⁹

20 Nevermore, oh Muammar, the chance is long gone
That minds drowned in slumber so would ever awake

7 I.e. the Americans.

8 I.e. women do not recover from the trauma of rape.

9 Qana is a village in southern Lebanon where in 1996 and 2006 Israeli airstrikes killed many civilians.

البارحة من ضيقة القلب جطيت
جرحي عظيم ولايتي ما دروا به

واليوم أسقونا مرارٍ وحلتيت
وكلّ العرب عيد الضحية بكوا به

وكسا سواد الحزن سنّة هل البيت
وكسا سواد العار ناسٍ مشوا به

راح الرعيم الي بعزمه تهقويت
على مشانق ذلنا يشمتوا به

My Pain is Great

December 30, 2006

Hajaya wrote this poem within ninety minutes of Saddam Hussein's execution on Eid al-Adha, the Islamic Festival of the Sacrifice (*īd al-aḏhā*), on December 30, 2006. The poem begins with a description of Hajaya's feelings and continues with a description of the situation in the Arab world and the method of Hussein's execution. Hajaya praises Hussein, insults his enemies, promises to take Hussein's blood-revenge, and laments the broken power of the Arab Nation, whose great leader is now gone. There are two principal "theys" in this poem: one refers to the Americans, the Iranians, and their Shiite Iraqi lackeys who executed Saddam; the second "they" in the poem refers to the Arab rulers who promised Saddam their help and then failed to come to his aid when the US invaded. Hajaya scolds President Bush for punishing the Arabs before directing a pithy barb at the Arabs who, in Hajaya's estimation, abandoned Saddam.*

In line 1, Hajaya describes his consternation:

Yesterday I winced from the anguish in my heart
My people don't know it, but my pain is great¹

In lines 2-4, Hajaya describes the manner of Hussein's death and its aftermath:

Today they made us drink a bitter draught and asafetida²
On the Feast of the Sacrifice all the Arabs cried for him

The black shroud of mourning covers the Sunnis
The black shroud of shame covers those who tread its path³

He left: the leader from whose power I expected so much
They gloated over him on the gallows of our disgrace

* My translation of this poem first appeared in *Middle Eastern Literatures* 19(1) 2016, pp. 111-118

1 Hajaya's people, i.e. the Arabs.

2 Asafetida has an acrid and bitter taste and an awful smell; it is used by the Bedouin to induce vomiting and treat colds.

3 I.e. Americans, Iranians, and their Shiite Iraqi lackeys who executed Saddam.

5 مرحوم يا قمة شموخ ترقيت
ورقيت مرقى كلهم ما رقوا به

وعن المباذي والشرف ما تخليت
صنت الشرف يوم الشرف تاجروا به

وحاولت في عزّ العروبة وناديت
وأتعبت خيلك في مدارج دروبه

أنشهد إنك كل ما تملك أعطيت
وعيّت عن ممشي مذلة رضوا به

أوفيت يا راس الكرامة وضحيّت
وعرّيت ناسٍ ذلهم يمدحوا به

10 حتى بموتك شامخ الراس وأوفيت
ولبست سربال الكرامة وثوبه

عشت بشموخ وفي ممانك تعلّيت
وأظهرت إنك في زمانك أعجوبة

وللهوت في قمة شموخك تمشيت
مشية أسد وكلابهم ينهشوا به

حرّ شجاع وللأعادي تحدّيت
والحرّ لا يمكن يغير أسلوبه

وبالصبر في ساعة صعودك تحلّيت
وشرفتنا يا رمز عزّ غدروا به

In lines 5-18, Hajaya praises Hussein and insults his enemies:

- 5 May God's mercy be upon you, lofty pinnacle of pride
 You scaled a peak none of them ever did⁴
- You didn't relinquish your honor or your principles
 You guarded your honor while they sold theirs
- You raised a cry to empower the Arabs
 You wore out your horse on the path of Arab empowerment
- I swear that you gave all that you had
 And refused the path of disgrace they were content with
- You kept your word, oh doyen of dignity, and you sacrificed
 And exposed those whose disgrace they praised⁵
- 10 Even in death you held your head high, stayed true to your word,
 And donned dignity's robe and its coat of mail⁶
- You lived in pride and in death were exalted
 You proved yourself a wonder in your time
- At the peak of your glory, you walked to your death
 With a lion's swagger while their dogs snapped at you
- A brave, free, noble man, you challenged your enemies
 And free men don't change their ways
- You embodied composure at the time of your ascent,⁷
 You honored us, oh symbol of strength whom they betrayed

4 I.e. Gulf Arab rulers.

5 I.e. Saddam exposed Gulf Arab rulers in their subservience to the us.

6 In reference to the composed manner in which Saddam met his executioners and his death.

7 I.e. to the gallows.

15 سَطَّرْتَهَا بِالْمَرْجَلَةِ حِيٍّ وَمِيَّتٍ
وَحَتَمْتَهَا فِي وَقْفَةٍ يَشْهَدُ وَابَهُ

وَشَرَّفْتَ أَرْضٍ فِي رِبَاهَا تَرِيَّتٍ
لِلَّهِ دَرَكٌ يَا شِبْجَاعَ الْعَرُوبَةِ

يَا مَفْخَرَةَ تَسْكُنُ ثَرَى أَرْضِ تَكْرِيَّتٍ
رَحَلْتَ عَنَّا وَالْعِرَاقَ مَغْصُوبًا بِهِ

عَسَاكَ بِالْفَرْدُوسِ يَا طَاهِرَ الْبَيْتِ
يَا مَفْخَرَةَ كَلِّ الْعَرَبِ يَفْخَرُ وَابَهُ

رَحَلْتَ يَا رَأْسَ الزُّعَامَةِ وَأَقْفِيَّتٍ
وَحَمَلْتَ ثَارَكَ عَزُوقَةَ يَنْهَضُوا بِهِ

20 وَبِالْيَلِيِّ جَرَى صَبُوبًا عَلَى نَارِ نَارِ زَيْتٍ
وَلَا بَدَّ تَأْتِي سَاعَةً يَحْرِقُوا بِهِ

وَلَا بَدَّ مَا تَنْدَاسُ رُوسِ الطَّوَاغِيَّتِ
وَالْكَلِّ مِنْهُمْ يَنْسَأَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهِ

وَيَا رَغْدَ لَا تَبْكِي عَلَى ذَائِعِ الصَّيْتِ
إِبْكِي عَلَى أُمَّةٍ زَعِيمِهِ غَدَّ وَابَهُ

إِبْكِي عَلَى أُمَّةٍ وَلَوْهَا الْعَكَارِيَّتِ
وَيَبْدُ الْعَجْمِ وَالْغَرْبِ صَارَتْ أَلْعُوبَةُ

لَيْتَ الْعَرَبُ تَصْحَى مِنَ الذَّلِّ يَا لَيْتَ
مَارَ الْأَمَانِي كَالْأَحْلَامِ الْكَذُوبَةِ

15 You lived and died like a man
And sealed your life in a stance they all witnessed

You honored the land where you grew up
How much you achieved, oh hero of the Arabs!

Oh source of pride dwelling in Tikrit's soil!
You left us, and they've occupied Iraq

I hope you're in paradise, oh son of a noble house!
Oh source of all the Arabs' pride!

In lines 19-21, Hajaya promises to take Hussein's blood-revenge:

You departed, oh leader of leaders, you left
And entrusted your blood-revenge to men who will take it

20 With what happened, they poured oil on our fire,
And one day it will burn them

One day the tyrants' heads will be trampled,
And all of them held to account for their sins

In lines 22-24, Hajaya comforts Hussein's eldest daughter, Raghad, and describes the Arabs' pitiful lot:

Oh Raghad, don't cry for a man of renown
Cry for a Nation whose leader they took⁸

Cry for a Nation that crooks now rule,
A plaything in the hands of the Persians and West

I hope that the Arabs wake up from disgrace,
But hopes are like deceptive dreams

8 I.e. the Arab Nation.

25 ويا بوش بإذلال العروبة تماديت
وعاقتنا يا بوش أبشع عقوبة

ذبحت صنديد العروبة وكفّيت
وثورت بركان الغضب في شعوبه

واخترت للفتنة ضحية وتوقيت
وحققت للفرس الذي يجهلوا به

هذا الذي بالقلب وأخفيت وأبديت
وتوّ العرب فقد البطل فكّر وا به

In lines 25-27, Hajaya addresses then US President George W. Bush:

- 25 Oh Bush, you went too far in disgracing the Arabs
Oh Bush, you punished us most vilely

You slaughtered the Arabs' brave leader, you did
And set off a volcano of anger in his people

For sectarian strife you chose a date and a lamb⁹
For the Persians, you realized their dream

In the 28th and final line, Hajaya ends on a bitter, gnomic note:

I revealed and concealed some of what's in my heart
Only now the Arabs have lost their hero do they remember him

9 Lit. "[animal] sacrifice" (*dahiyyah*), or sacrificial lamb that Muslims slaughter on Eid al-Adha.

إحرس على رأسك من الحبل يازول

يا الله يا عالم خفاكل نية
إنت العظيم وبيدك المون والطول

يا عالم بأسرارنا الداخلية
وتعلم عن اللي للمخاليق مجهول

يا الله تهدينا طريق سوية
ومن غير أمرك ما لنا قوة وحول

يا فارح الشدات لو هي قوية
يارب تهدينا على راي معقول

ويا كندليز احضري لك مطية
أسرع من اللي بالسما يطرح الجول

ودّي تروحي بالعجل يا بنية
لابن البشير اللي له سنين معزول

Fear the Noose

2005

To Hajaya, George W. Bush was nothing more than a Bedouin shaykh who wanted to raid the Arabs' lands and plunder their natural resources. Written from Bush's perspective, this poem is Bush's message to Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan, regarding the Darfur genocide. Ever the raider, Bush tells Bashir to stop the genocide, come back into the fold, and give the US access to the oil in Darfur. Like Bedouin shaykhs of old, Bush is delivering this poem through a messenger, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

In lines 1-4, Bush praises God and asks for His help:

Oh God, who knows humans' every intention
Omnipotent! Providence lies in Your hand

You know all our interior secrets¹
Omniscient! You know all that your creatures cannot

Oh God, guide us on a straight path
For without your command, we've no power, no might

You solve all our troubles, no matter how trying
Oh Lord, guide us to a reasonable decision

In lines 5-16, Bush instructs Condoleezza on her journey to Sudan:

5 Condoleezza—go make ready your mount!
Faster than falcons striking flocks in the sky²

Make haste, oh girl, for I want you to go
To the son of Bashir, isolated for years³

1 A pun on peoples' "interior" lives and the secrets of governments' "Interior" ministries.

2 I.e. get your airplane ready; many Bedouin poems traditionally call on a messenger to deliver them; Bedouin poets have had fun with this trope in the age of cars, planes, space travel, internet, and text messaging; for more on this see Holes & Abu Athera (2011).

3 I.e. Omar al-Bashir, President of Sudan; "isolated for years"; UN-imposed sanctions have been in effect since 2005.

اللون لونه والقراة دنية
كوني وسيطتنا معه واشبجي فول

وتلغي على الخراطوم حين العشيّة
وعلى عمر سوقي مطيتك على طول

وعقب السلام وعقب زين التحية
قولي معي خط من العمّ مرسول

قولي لابن عمك أقوال طرية 10
ابن البشير اللي عن الوضع مسؤول

بينك وبينه سولفي يا صبية
وقولي من الآخر ترى العمّ مشغول

مشغول أنا في دار فور العذية
فلا يوازيني أحرك له سطول

وله بيني كلّ الأمور الخفية
ولا يحسب إن المسألة لعب فتبول

ولا همنا ذبح الأرواح البرية
وما هي حقوق إنسان لا شك بتروول

ولا عاد ينخي بالربع والحمية 15
ولا يرتجي من عمرو موسى له حلول

ولا يحتزم بالصين والبربرية
ولا يغرّه قولهم قول معسول

You two are both black—perhaps you're near kin!
Be our go-between with him and fill up on *fūl*⁴

Try to arrive in Khartoum after nightfall⁵
And steer your mount without delay to Omar

After the niceties and all the greetings,
Tell him: "I have a letter sent from Master Bush"⁶

10 Speak sweet, tender words to your dear cousin
Bashir's son, responsible for the mess⁷

Keep the talk between you and him, old girl,
And tell him, most importantly, that Master Bush is upset

Troubled about pure, untouched Darfur!
It wouldn't cost me very much to send a fleet his way

Explain to him all of our hidden affairs⁸
The issue's not a soccer game—he'd better take it seriously!

We really don't care about the slaughter of innocents
Or human rights, for that matter—but we care about oil!

15 He'd better stop calling on his tribe and his protectors⁹
He'd better not hope that Amr Moussa's got solutions¹⁰

He'd better not rely on the Chinese and the Barbarians¹¹
He'd better not let their honeyed words deceive him

4 Traditional Sudanese food; warm, mashed fava beans served with oil and spices and eaten with bread.

5 I.e. so that no one will recognize Condoleezza because her dark complexion will blend in with the night.

6 Or "Master Bush"; in Bedouin Arabic, "paternal uncle" (*'amm*) can also mean "master," as opposed to "slave" (*'abd*).

7 I.e. the genocide in Darfur.

8 US foreign policy.

9 Other Arab rulers.

10 Secretary-General of the Arab League at the time of writing.

11 I.e. "criminal" states like Russia and North Korea, Hajaya says.

إرجع لنا يا زول وافهم عليّا
عندي ترى كلّ القضايا لها نول

مع راينا يا زول قود الرعيّة
واتبع خطى ربعك ولا تصير مهبول

صديقتنا تبقى حياته هنيّة
ومهما فعل فعله على طول مقبول

حتّا بنبي تكساس في كلّ هيّة
ألبي سلم من ضربنا عاش مذهول

20

قبلك كبير الصرب والعنجهيّة
جنبناه ع لا هاي بالقيد مكبول

وصدّام قبلك في نهار الضحيّة
ضحوا به اللي قولهم لا حكوا قول

وبرزان عقبه زار حوض المنية
عالمشقة راسه عن الجسم مفصول

يا بن البشر اجهد بحلّ القضية
واحرس على راسك من الحبل يا زول

In lines 17-25, Bush tells Bashir to obey him and threatens him if he does not:

Come back to us, brotha, and listen up:¹²
If problems are tangled string, then I've got me a loom

Lead your flock just like I tell you, homeboy¹³
Follow the steps of your tribe—don't act a fool!¹⁴

The life of our friend's full of comfort and joy
Whatever he does is all right with us

20 We're the Tribe of Texas! We win every battle!
Survive our attacks, but you'll live stupefied

Before you, Bashir, there was the Serbs' savage tyrant¹⁵
We brought him handcuffed all the way to The Hague

Before you, on Eid al-Adha, Saddam was
Slaughtered by those who do what they say¹⁶

After him, Barzan visited the basin of death
On the scaffold they severed his head from his body¹⁷

Oh son of Bashir, try to solve this issue!
Beware, homie, and fear the noose¹⁸

12 In Sudanese Arabic, the vernacular word for “man,” “friend,” “brotha,” “homes,” etc. is *zōl*; see also line 46 of “Khalid ibn al-Walid”.

13 “your flock,” i.e. the Sudanese people.

14 “your tribe,” i.e. Arab leaders obedient to the US.

15 Slobodan Milosevic, former President of Serbia, who was tried for genocide and crimes against humanity at the International Court of Justice.

16 In this line Hajaya slips out of character, referring to the Americans as “they” and addressing Bashir directly.

17 I.e. Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, Saddam's half-brother and former head of Iraqi intelligence, who was beheaded by the long drop when he was hanged.

18 This poem's talk of hanging alongside jokes about blackness may recall lynching to an American or Western reader; Hajaya denied knowing about the lynching of blacks in the US and insisted that he mentioned hanging in reference to the way Saddam Hussein and Barzan al-Tikriti were executed.

إحرس على رأسك من الحبل يا زول

25 الحكم جاهز والشهود عريّة
والحبل عندي له أسابع مقتول

25 The sentence is ready, and the witnesses are Arabs
I have the noose here with me—it's been tied for weeks

زهرة البيض والسود

قلبي تولّع في هوى السمر يا حمود
والشوق به كلّ ما عدلته يزودي

حاولت منعه باذلٍ كلّ مجهود
عيّا يطاوعني وضاعت جهودي

من قبل بابه عن هوى السمر مسدود
أعماه عنهن حبّ شعل الخدودي

واليوم أصبح في هوى السمر موجود
توّصني من عقب طول الرقودي

وحبّ النقي ما فيه عيبٍ ومنقود
وأنا وقعت بحبّ سمر انودي

Flower of the Whites and the Blacks

2009

Hajaya wrote “Flower of the Whites and the Blacks” in early 2009 and performed it at the al-Ḥasan Cultural Center in Karak alongside other Jordanian poets. Hajaya frames the poem as a “poetic exchange” (*musājalāh*) between himself and Ḥmūd, an imaginary correspondent charged with consoling him from his love’s woes. As much as Hajaya relies on traditional language to describe his beloved, praising her long neck, large front teeth, and magical eyes, he seized on language Rice herself used, such as “existential threat,” “new Middle East,” and “creative chaos,” vogueish discourse at the time of writing. Hajaya conceptualizes the United States as a Bedouin tribe that has mastered the practice of raiding and lauds Bush as an honorable enemy worthy of praise for his bravery and loyalty. The poem’s tone alternates between humor and bitterness.*

In lines 1-7, Hajaya addresses Ḥmūd, an imaginary poetic correspondent, to whom he confesses his new-found love of black women:

My heart’s caught fire from the love of black girls, oh Ḥmūd!
Whenever I repress its yearning, it only increases

I’ve tried to stop it, exerting every effort
But it refused to obey me, and my efforts went to waste

Beforehand, my heart’s door was shut to black girls
Blinded it was by the love of fair cheeks

But today, for black girls, my heart’s really fallen,
Finally awakened after a long rest

5 There’s no shame in pure love¹
And I’ve fallen for an antelope leading the herd

* My translation of this poem first appeared in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, nuova serie (11) 2016.

1 I.e. “chaste and unfulfilled love,” from Sowayan, *Nabati Poetry*, p. 25.

سمر اثناياها كما الدرّ مبرود
وعنقٍ كما عنق الغزال الشرودي

ولّي سلب قلبي توجهت مجهود
بشكوى محبّ نار قلبه وقودي

يا كوند ليزا السحر بعيونك السود
إحتلّ قلبي واستباح الحدودي

يا كندلي كلّ الحلا فيك موجود
وحسنك على حسن الصبايا يزودي

ويا عشقتي حبي لكي دايم الزود 10
ويزداد يوم تراسين الوفودي

يا ضاربة روس الملاعين بالعود
يا ليت جدك من موالي جدودي

وأنا مواطن أردني صرت مقرود
واليوم في حبك بلتني قرودي

من بعد كي كني على جمر مفهود
جودي عليّ يا هوى البال جودي

القلب لك يا منية الروح مشدود
وكثر الجفامتك يهدّد وجودي

أحبّكي يا زهرة البيض والسود 15
والحبّ أحياناً بالأرواح يودي

A Negress whose front teeth are polished pearls,
With the long, slender neck of a stray gazelle²

Exhausted, I turn to her who stole my heart
With the lament of a lover whose heart blazes

In lines 8-20, Hajaya addresses his beloved and praises her beauty:

Oh Condoleezza, the magic in your black eyes
Has occupied my heart and seized its borders

Oh Condoli, you possess all the world's beauty
More stunning than all the young women on Earth

10 My passion! My love for you only increases
And especially so when you lead delegations

You, who beat up the cursed with a cane,³
How I hope that your ancestors allied with mine!⁴

A Jordanian citizen, I'm frankly worn out
For today in your love, I'm afflicted by apes!⁵

Your absence is to sit on a bed of live coals
Return my love, oh heart's devotion, return it!

My heart's tied to you, oh soul's desire,
And when you ignore it, that's an existential threat!

15 I love you, oh flower of the whites and the blacks,
And sometimes love can kill a man

2 The antelope leading the herd (*'anūd*), pearly-white buck teeth, and a long, slender neck are all conventional signs of beauty in pre-Islamic Arabic and modern Bedouin poetry.

3 I.e. she punishes countries that disobey the US.

4 I.e. so that a union between Hajaya and Rice would have precedent.

5 The Bedouin refer to petty, annoying demons as *grūd* ("apes, monkeys," sing. *gird*); these *grūd* have beset Hajaya by causing him to love Condoleezza Rice.

يقودني هالقلب يا كدي قود
وإن شفتكي تزداد ناره وقودي

أشوف بعيونك أساطيل وجنود
ومخططات الي رسمهن يهودي

وأشوف بعيونك مذايح وبارود
وغدر اليعارب ناكثين العهودي

والمح بهن كبش على الدور موجود
بعيونكي تظهر عليه الحشودي

والشرق الأوسط ينتظر شوف مولود 20
من فاتنة مثلك ودود ولودي

من أقصى جبال أطلس لك الحبل ممدود
شرق وجنوب ولأطراف الشام رودي

ربعك غدوا وياكوند ليز النابذود
طوال السنم مجمعات الديودي

This heart of mine leads me, oh Condoli
And if I saw you, its fire would only blaze stronger⁶

I see in your eyes fleets, soldiers,
And plans drawn up by a Jew⁷

I see in your eyes massacres, gunpowder,
And the betrayal of the oath-breaking Arabs⁸

I behold in them a ram next in line for the slaughter⁹
And mobilized troops, they flash from them too

20 The Middle East awaits the birth of a child¹⁰
From an enchantress like you: affectionate and fertile¹¹

In lines 21-26, Hajaya likens the United States' invasion of Iraq to a Bedouin raid:

We've let you down a rope from the farthest Atlas Mountains
Explore east, south, to the edge of the Levant

Oh Condoleezza, your tribe robbed us of some she-camels
With big humps and milk-amassing udders¹²

6 I.e. saw her in the flesh; Hajaya has only ever seen Condoleezza on TV.

7 I.e. plans for the US' invasion of Iraq.

8 Specifically the Gulf Arabs who helped the US invade Iraq.

9 Bashar al-Assad; at the time of writing, Hajaya thought the US would destroy Bashar al-Assad after it finished off Saddam Hussein.

10 In reference to Rice's remarks about a new Middle East: "What we're seeing here is, in a sense, the growing—the birth pangs of a new Middle East, and whatever we do, we have to be certain that we're pushing forward to the new Middle East, not going back to the old Middle East," from "Secretary Rice Holds a News Conference".

11 I.e. fertile in her ability to bear children and to spread "creative chaos" (*fawḍā khallāqah*), part of the US neoconservatives' plan to remake the Middle East, from Yassin-Kassab "How neoconservatives led US to war in Iraq."

12 Big humps mean that a camel's meat is fatty and tasty; milk here is a metaphor for the Arabs' oil.

سقمة أيتام العرب من ورثة جدود
نج النحور مفتلات العضودي

نطلبكم العقلا وانتم هل الجود
عادتكم ترو ووايباس الكبودي

تشهد نقازاكي وسايقن وكمبود 25
والي فعلتونه بحمر الهنودي

كم سيّد من ضربكم صار مسيود
وكم فارس صكت عليه لحودي

يا كندليز أحلام والقلب ملهود
على بناء إن الجماعة أسودي

أحلم أحلام مالهن سقف محدود
وأهيم في وديان شعري وأعودي

بفيالقي دربه على القدس مهود
عنها عساتعمي عيون الحسودي

وأعود للواقع من الضيم مضهود 30
وأشوف دمع منقّضات الجعودي

The orphaned Arabs' source of life, their ancestors' bequest¹³
 Broad-chested she-camels with powerful thighs¹⁴

So we'll demand reparations, for you're good, generous folk¹⁵
 After all, it's your custom to water the thirsty

25 Just take Nagasaki, Saigon, Cambodia,
 And what you did to the Native Americans

How many rulers, from your air strikes, have become the ruled?
 How many graves have closed over brave men?

In lines 27-29, Hajaya fantasizes about strong, brave Arab leaders and a liberated Jerusalem:

Mere dreams, oh Condoleez, and my heart's defeated¹⁶
 'Cause I figured my tribesmen for lions¹⁷

My dreams have no limits
 As I wander in my poetry's valleys and return¹⁸

With legions whose path to Jerusalem's smooth,
 And may he who envies those legions be blinded

In lines 30-39, Hajaya describes the conditions in Iraq and Palestine:

30 But I return to a reality beset by injustice
 To see the tears of disheveled women

13 I.e. "orphaned" after their "father" Saddam was killed.

14 Broad chests indicate a she-camel's ability to produce lots of milk (oil); powerful thighs refer to her strength and fitness for traveling, bearing loads and raiding.

15 Bedouin tribes whose goods had been plundered would often demand reparations from the tribe who had raided them.

16 Hajaya's pet names for Condoleezza change according to the meter.

17 I.e. Hajaya figured that Arab rulers would defend the Arabs' lands and natural resources

18 An oft-cited reference to the Qur'an on poets and their hypocrisy: "And the poets—the perverse follow them; hast thou not seen how they wander in every valley and how they say that which they do not?" (26:224-6).

بغزة ورام الله تمخّش لنا حدود
وجرح تزيفه كل يوم يزودي

وبالرافدين أشلاء وحطام ووعود
وعود ما جابت لنا أي فودي

وحرير فرهد بهن كل فرهود
وما قشعرت منا غلاظ الجلودي

وفتح وحماس حروبهم مالها حدود
كل على الثاني عدو اللدودي

يا قدس منهم احذري ترجي فود
يا كود ترجي قوم عاد وثمودي

35

ولا تحسين الأسر يا القدس محدود
ما هقوتي بالوقت هذا تعودي

هذا زمان البوم والطيرة أبو الدود
وحرارها وسط المجاحر لبودي

وما دام واشنطن غدت عد مورود
ومزاحم منا عليها الورودي

وما دام بوش بكرسي الحكم موجود
لا تحسون حسابنا باليهودي

In Gaza and Ramallah, clawing at their cheeks for us
I see a wound that bleeds more every day¹⁹

In Iraq I see body parts, wreckage and promises,
Promises that brought us no benefit

I see pure women violated by every rogue
We've even stopped shuddering from how thick our skin's got

Fatah and Hamas—their war has no end
With each one the other's worst enemy

35 Oh Jerusalem, don't expect any good from them soon
Unless you were counting on 'Ad and Thamud²⁰

Jerusalem, don't think your captivity's limited
I don't think you'll return in our time

This is the Age of the Owl and the Vulture,
The Falcons of our time now cower in burrows²¹

As long as Washington's a coveted waterhole
We all compete to drink from,²²

As long as Bush sits in the seat of power,
Don't fret about us, oh Jew²³

19 I.e. Iraq, a "wound" in the "body" of the Arab Nation.

20 Two pre-Islamic Arabian tribes extirpated for their stubborn unbelief; in popular culture, "paradigm cases of impiety and obsession with material things" from Holes & Abu Athera, *Nabati Poetry*, p. 20.

21 In Bedouin culture owls symbolize doom and gloom, weakness and lack of artifice; vultures also symbolize weakness because they scavenge instead of hunt. Falcons, on the other hand, represent independence and power.

22 I.e. Arab businessmen and politicians hurt one another in their competition to serve and please the US.

23 I.e. Israeli Jew.

40 مخلص لكم في ما فعل وا في عهد
أفنى جراده مخضرات النجودي

هذا سجله بالبطولات مشهود
داس الأسود وداس روس الفهودي

فارس شجاع وبالرجا جيل معدود
بكروز عن أذنا ب ربه يدودي

أنهى الذي فيه ابتدى قبله العود
والعود قبله بالمواقف سدودي

أقولها ولا ني عن القول مردود
في ظل سيدنا شريف الجدودي

45 عبد الله الثاني له الأمر مسنود
صقر ومقره عاليات البنودي

أحرار ما جرّد لنا سيف مرنود
بحريّة ما مثلها بالوجودي

In lines 40-43, Hajaya praises Bush's loyalty and bravery:

- 40 Devoted to you in his deeds, he honors his oaths
His locusts have stripped all the highlands' verdure²⁴

That's his bravery's record—well witnessed by all
He treads on lions and tramples on cheetahs²⁵

A brave knight, numbered among great men,
He defends his tribe's minions with Cruise missiles²⁶

He finished what his father before him started,²⁷
And his father always stood by his commitments

In lines 44-46, Hajaya praises Jordan's ruling Hashemite family, King Abdullah II, and the relative freedom of speech Jordanians enjoy:

I say this 'cause I'm not forbidden to speak,
In the shadow of our *sayyid* of honorable ancestors²⁸

- 45 Abdullah the Second: to rule is his right
A falcon perched atop the highest of flagpoles

We're free! He's drawn for us no sharpened sword
And we've a freedom unequalled in all of creation

24 I.e. Bush's "locusts" (planes, soldiers and tanks) have stripped the "highlands" (Iraq's and Afghanistan's) "verdure" (economies and regional power).

25 I.e. Arab heroes.

26 I.e. Israel and the Gulf Arab countries.

27 George H.W. Bush, US president during the First Gulf War.

28 Jordanians refer to their Hashemite king as their *sayyid* ("lord, master"); "The [sharifs] who came to hold the emirate were addressed as *sayyidna* (meaning 'our lord') even by their immediate families" from Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 65-66.

احتل قلبي

يا خال أنا بالحبّ ضاع اتراني
والحبّ غيرني وانا فوق خمسين

الحبّ حوّلي إلى إنسان ثاني
وخلّاني أنسى ما جرى بدير ياسين

ويا سامعين الصوت هذا بياني
إعلان واضح يدعمه براهين

يا ليفني بالحبّ سحرك غزاني
واحتلّ قلبي يا عنود المزايين

Occupy My Heart

2006-8

This poem is the first of six love poems Hajaya wrote to Livni, in all of which Hajaya uses love as a pretext to talk politics. Hajaya frames the poem as an imaginary poetic exchange with a sympathetic correspondent to whom he complains of his love for Tzipi Livni, then the Israeli foreign minister. Hajaya mixes conventional devices of Bedouin love poetry—the beloved’s “thin incisors” (*rahīf al-thamānī*) and her resemblance to a “gazelle leading the herd” (*‘anūd*)—and political language heard in Arabic news media, such as “normalization” (*taṭbīr*), occupation (*iḥtilāl*), the Zionist “entity” (*kiyān*), and a litany of political leaders’ names. Beyond the jest, this poem is an earnest call for Jewish-Arab cooperation based on kinship, geographical proximity, and shared opposition to regional problems like terrorism and Iran’s growing influence.

In lines 1-11, Hajaya complains of his love and woos Livni:

Oh Uncle, I’m in love—I’ve lost my balance¹
Love has changed me, and I’m over fifty years old!

Love’s made me into a different person,
Made me forget what happened at Deir Yassin²

To all who can hear me, this is my declaration
As clear as day, and well supported by proof

Oh Livni, the magic of your love has conquered me
It’s occupied my heart, you beautiful gazelle³

1 “uncle” (*khāl*), i.e. Hajaya’s poetic correspondent to whom he laments of his love for Livni; “balance,” i.e. Hajaya’s impartiality, or neutrality, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2 A Palestinian village outside Jerusalem and the site of a massacre of around 107 Palestinian civilians by Irgun and Lehi paramilitary groups in 1948; the village was razed, and its land now houses, poetically, a home for the mentally ill.

3 Specifically, a “female gazelle that leads the herd” (*‘anūd*); Hajaya chose this word for “beautiful” (*mazāyīn*, sing. *mazyūnah*) because of the sexual connotations of the similar-sounding modern Hebrew word *lezayén* (“to fuck”).

5 وقعت في حبك وموجه غشائي
يا أجمل الحلوات ليتك تعرفين

واليوم حبك مستحلّ يكاني
ومع كند ليزا في فؤادي سكتين

يا ليتني لك ابن عمّ وداني
وانتي على دينك وانا على دين

أحبك حبّ العرب للهواني
وأحبك حبّ اليهود لفلسطين

وأحبك حبّ العرب للغواني
وأحبك حبّ البدو للبعارين

10 أحتلني حبك وهذا دعائي
أبدى بتطبيع العلاقة من الحين

وانا مع التطبيع لاجلك تراني
وأعزّ أهلك قاهرين المعادين

وحنّا قرايب يا رهيف الثماني
ولا تحسيننا يا لحبيبة بعيدين

موسى وسيّدنا محمد اخواني
اعيال عمّ وفرّقونا الملاعين

- 5 Submerged in your love's ocean, its waves cover me
The prettiest of pretty girls, oh how I wish you knew!

Today your love's occupied my very being⁴
Along with Condoleezza you inhabit my heart

How I wish I were your cousin, and a close one!⁵
You with your religion, and I with mine

I love you as much as the Arabs love disgrace
I love you as much as the Jews love Palestine

I love you as much as the Arabs love women⁶
I love you as much as the Bedouin love camels

- 10 Your love's occupied me and made me
Start normalizing relations, starting right now

For your sake I swear I'm for normalization
I respect your fierce people, who vanquish their foes

In lines 12-17, Hajaya emphasizes the Jews' and the Arabs' kinship:

After all, we're related, you thin-toothed beauty!⁷
Oh beloved, don't think that we're so far apart!

Our dear Moses and Muhammad were brothers
We're cousins! But cursed people have split us apart⁸

4 "being" or "entity," as in the "Zionist Entity" (*al-kiyān al-ṣahyūnī*).

5 I.e. paternal cousin; in Bedouin culture, matches between paternal cousins are favored because they replicate the male line. See Abu-Lughod, "Shifting Politics in Bedouin Love Poetry," 122-123.

6 Hajaya believes that Arabs love women more than other races of people do; according to him, the West's culture of sexual promiscuity has spoiled Western men's love for women.

7 I.e. "whose eight front teeth are thin"; a mark of beauty in Bedouin culture is for the four top and four bottom front teeth to be thin, white and evenly spaced.

8 I.e. Europeans and Americans.

كلاب البحر والبرّ سود الأماي
من بيننا شبّوا فتنهم شياطين

15 وش فادنا القتل ودمار المباي
والدمّ واحد والضحايا مساكين

ماتوا ملايين العرب واعتراي
إحساس إن كلّ متا مجانين

حتّا ضحايا الغرب والغرب جاني
وهتلر حرق منكم يا روجي ملايين

يا ليفني بالحبّ نقضي أماي
نشوفها أحلام ليلٍ وتخمين

وأنا بحبّك غارقٍ للأذاني
رو في بجالي واحذري لا تلومين

20 وما دام حبّك في شباكه رماي
لازم نحاول نجمع الشمل يا زين

وترا العرب زينين وأهل المعاني
بالطيب يعطوا أوطان ما هم بخيلين

كرام النفوس وعزّ جارٍ وعاني
عدنانهم يا منوتي والقحاطين

والصلح خير وما لنا ربّ ثاني
إلهنا واحد يهود ومسلمين

Dogs of the land and sea, with evil ends⁹
 Devils who sowed their strife between us

- 15 Where's the benefit in killing, in destroying homes?
 Our blood is one—all the victims should be pitied

Millions of Arabs have died, and I've got
 The feeling that all of us are crazy¹⁰

We're all the West's victims—the criminal West!
 Oh my soul, Hitler burned millions of you

In lines 18-29, Hajaya sues for peace and clarifies his political stances:

Oh Livni, in love can we live out
 The dreams we only see in sleep and hope

I'm up to my ears in love with you, girl
 Have mercy, and please make sure not to blame me!

- 20 As long as your love's cast me into its nets,
 We have to try to reunite, darling¹¹

For Arabs are good people, with good qualities!
 Never stingy, open-handed, they'll offer you homelands¹²

Generous of spirit, they protect the neighbor, the prisoner¹³
 All of them—sons of Adnan and Qahtan

The best solution is peace, for we've only one God
 For Jews and Muslims alike, our God is one!

9 I.e. the same as the "cursed people" of line 13; see line 9 of "Message to Putin".

10 I.e. the Arabs and the Jews.

11 E.g. in negotiations.

12 I.e. ask them nicely, and the generous Arabs will be more than happy to move over and give Israel land; take it from them by force, however, and they will never be content, Hajaya says.

13 I.e. Arabs are known for looking out for their neighbors and for taking good care of prisoners of war.

مدي لنا حبل الوصل لا تواني
الحرب ما هي حلّ يا ساحر العين

الأرض أرض الله والكلّ فاني 25
والأب آدم كلّنا به مقرّين

وانا مواطن أردني مسلماني
ومع السلام الي لشكله تريدين

وأكره نجاد ومقتدى وطالباني
وضدّ الإرهاب وضدّ قتل البريين

وعاديت لأجلك كاسترو ومن زماني
وصادقت بوش ولي علاقة برايين

يا بنت عمّي حبّك احتواني
لا بل سكن بالدمّ وسط الشرايين

أشكي لابو طارق غراماً كواني 30
أشكي هوى بنت اليهود العزيزين

يا خال خبرها بصادق إعلاي
غرامها فجرّ بقلبي براكين

وأرسل لها من كبارنا والعياني
علّ وعسى في مشتهى القلب تاتين

Let us down reunion's rope, and don't delay!
Oh bewitching-eyed girl, war is not the solution!

- 25 The land is God's land, and all the world's passing
Adam's our father—on that we're all agreed

I'm a Jordanian citizen, a Muslim
And I'll support the kind of peace you want

I hate Ahmadinejad, Muqtada and Talabani¹⁴
I'm against terrorism and the killing of innocents

For your sake I've opposed Castro for years¹⁵
I've befriended Bush and even warmed up to Rabin!¹⁶

Oh sweet cousin, your love has engulfed me
And settled in my very veins!

In lines 30-33, Hajaya charges Abū Ṭāriḡ to deliver the poem and asks for Livni's hand before closing with a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad:

- 30 To Abu Tarig do I lament of this heart-branding passion¹⁷
Of this love for the dear Jews' daughter

Oh uncle, go tell her of my sincere declaration
Of my heart's rumbling volcanoes, of my passion for her

Send her a party of notables and elders¹⁸
From the depths of my heart, how I hope that you come!

14 Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of Iran from 2005-13; Muqtada al-Sadr, Shiite Iraqi cleric; Jalal Talabani, president of Iraq, 2005-14.

15 I.e. because Castro is a communist and an atheist.

16 I.e. George W. Bush and Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli general, ambassador, prime minister and Nobel Peace Prize recipient assassinated for his role in the Oslo Accords.

17 Abū Ṭāriḡ, or Muḥammad al-Gḏāh, Hajaya's friend and poetic correspondent to whom he laments of his love for Livni; he had al-Gḏāh send Livni the poem through an Arab member of the Knesset whom al-Gḏāh knew.

18 I.e. to ask for Livni's hand.

وصلاة ربّي عدّ عشب المحاني
على الرسول الهاشمي مشعل الدين

I pray to God as many times as there are blades of grass in twisting
streams¹⁹
For the Hashemite prophet, the kindler of belief

19 I.e. because water pools in twisting streams, allowing grass to grow; also, Hajaya added, because politics' path is twisted.

بنت الرجال الصليبة

يا سايق الفنجال يا معتي به
عدى عن اللي روسهم مثل الأقدام

عدى على بنت الرجال الصليبة
بنت الشيوخ اللي بهم يفتخر سام

صفوة بني صهيون يوم المنية

Daughter of Tough Men

2008

Hajaya wrote “Daughter of Tough Men” in late 2008 during Operation Cast Lead, when Livni was serving as foreign minister. He has written a series of political love poems to Livni: “Occupy my Heart” (*Iḥtall Galbī*, 2008), “Stock Market of My Love” (*Yā Bōrṣit Ḥubbī*, 2008), “The Lost Right” (*al-Ḥagg Dā*, 2009), “Flower of the Mossad” (*Yā Zahrat al-Mōsād*, 2010), and “Lehitra’ot” (*Lahitra’ōt*, Hebrew for “see you later,” 2014). He performed this poem at a Bedouin poetry festival in Wadi Rum in southern Jordan and was confronted after his reading by a journalist who publicly scolded him for writing poems of love instead of condemnation; Hajaya responded with “The Lost Right.” In this poem Hajaya imagines that he and a group of Arab men are attending a traditional Bedouin “sitting” (*majlis*) with Livni and some fierce Ashkenazi Zionists, whom Hajaya praises for their strength and success. This poem imagines Arab generosity and Zionist territorial ambition taken to their logical extremes as Hajaya invites Israel to take all of the Arab world “from Yemen to Syria,” for “the Arabs are a generous people.” This poem’s tone alternates between the resignedly droll and the bitterly earnest. It is not clear where Hajaya draws the line between jest and earnest; he had his friend Muḥammad al-Gḍah attempt to send Livni his early poem “Occupy my Heart” through an Arab member of the Knesset whom al-Gḍah knew.*

In lines 1-9, Hajaya imagines a majlis in which he and the Arabs welcome Livni and her tribe with praise:

Oh coffee-pourer, oh you who attend to it,
Pass by those whose heads are like their feet,¹

But pour for the daughter of tough men,
The daughter of those shaykhs in whom Shem takes pride²

* My translation of this poem first appeared in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, nuova serie (11) 2016.

1 I.e. the humiliated Arabs; refusing to pour coffee for a guest in a *majlis* indicates that that guest is a shame and a disgrace to the community.

2 “Those shaykhs” refers to the fierce Ashkenazi Zionists who founded the state of Israel; Shem is the father of the Jews and the Arabs, and Hajaya reasons that the patriarch must take more pride in his Jewish descendants because of their success.

عدوهم يسقوه كأسات الأسقام

وصديقهم بالعزّ ياخذ نصيبه

واللي يخالفهم يحطوا به خزام

يا مرحبا باللي لفت عقب غيبة 5

ضيقة عزيزة والعرب ناس كرام

وتبشّري يا ليفني بالحبيبة

بس تامري حتا لكي اليوم خدام

ما دام أهلكي بالظروف العصيبة

سيوفهم تجزر بنا جزر الأغنام

صارت أمانيك البعيدة قريبة

وكرمال عينك يرخص الخاصّ والعام

وفي دوحة العربان ماتتي غريبة

كلّ يرحّب فيك يا بنت الأعمام

يا سكرة يا ناعمة يا حلّية 10

غياتنا يا ليفني وصل الأرحام

وحبّك غدى بقلوبنا له ديبية

صغارنا واللي كبيرين الأجسام

نشوف بعيونك براءة وطيبة

وشوقاً لخير والذي صاروا عظام

The essence of Zion's tribe in days of war,
They make their enemies drink draughts of malady

They allot their friend his share of power
But put a camel's nose-ring in whoever opposes them³

5 Welcome to her who's returned after a long absence!
A dear guest, for the Arabs are a generous people

Your wish is my command, oh Livni, my beloved
Just ask, for today we're at your service

As long as your people are in dire straits,
Their swords butcher us like sheep

Your furthest hopes have become near, and for your sake
Our holdings public and private are worth little—so take them!

In the Arabs' tent, you're no stranger⁴
Everyone welcomes you, dear cousin!

In lines 10-20, Hajaya woos Livni with politically tinged language:

10 You're sugar, milk and softness
My desire, oh Livni, is the reunion of wombs⁵

Your love's begun crawling in our hearts,
The hearts of men both large and small

We see in your eyes innocence, goodness⁶
And a longing for Khaybar, for your ancestors' bones⁷

3 I.e. control completely; with a camel's nose-ring (*khzām*) even a small child can lead a camel around.

4 In reference both to the "tent" (*dōḥah*) of the imaginary *majlis* where he sits with Livni and to the capital of Qatar, which Livni visited in April 2008.

5 I.e. because the Jews and the Arabs sprang from the same womb.

6 *Ṭibah* ("goodness") is a homonym that also refers to the Saudi Arabian city of Medina, where Jews lived in pre-Islamic times.

7 I.e. Livni's ancestors from the Jewish Arabian tribes that inhabited Khaybar, a city in Saudi Arabia's Hijaz. This line is a reference to the quote often attributed to former Israeli Prime

فيها نخلكم والتمور الرطبية
وحصونكم تشهد بها مثل الأعلام

حقّ لكم يا ليفني طالبي به
الحقّ حقّ وصاحب الحقّ ما يلام

أحد شهود الحقّ لو تدّعي به 15
العاشق اللي بحتّكي مغرم إغرام

وحنّا بني عمّو علينا ضريبة
والحبّ يعمي والجفا يطرم إطرام

مدّي لنا حيل الهوى واجهدي به
إن كان لك قلب على الوصل عزّام

وروفي بجالي يالهنوف الأدبية
نيران حبك بالحشا تضرم إضرام

بالخصّ يوم إني أشوف الذوية
على جبين كالبدر عند الأظلام

ياما حلا يا ليفني بالعزيمة 20
إنتي وأنا ما حولنا حاييم حام

وإذا التطرّف مزعجك وش نبي به
حتّامعك نزعل شعوب وحقّام

هذا التطرّف داء وانتي طيبة
والكلّ متّابالذوا ملزم إلزام

There are your date palms and their succulent dates
 There your fortresses witness your presence like flags⁸

It's your right, Livni, so demand it
 A right's a right, and the rightful aren't to blame

- 15 One of that right's witnesses, if you claim it,
 Is this passionate lover, so enamored of you

After all, we're cousins, and such is our duty
 If love returned blinds, unrequited love deafens!⁹

Let me down the rope of love, and pull!
 That is, if your heart seeks reunion with mine

Have mercy on me, you beautiful, refined girl,
 For inside me blaze the fires of your love

Especially when I spy a lock of your hair
 On your forehead: a full moon on a dark night

- 20 How wonderful it would be, Livni, in *Azēbah*!¹⁰
 Just you and I without a bird in the sky

In lines 21-27, Hajaya turns to the issues of terrorism, the Gaza blockade, and the Iraq War:

If extremism's troubling you, what do we want with it?
 Our people, our rulers are sick of it too

Extremism's a disease, you're a doctor,
 And we're all committed to our treatment

-
- Minister Golda Meir while she was apparently facing south on the beach at Eilat: "I smell the scent of my ancestors in Khaybar" ("*innī ašhammu rā'iḥat ajdādī fi khaybar*"). Whether or not she said this, the quote figures large in the popular imagination in the Arab world.
- 8 Fortresses of the Jewish tribes of Banī al-Naḍīr, Banī Qurayḍah and Banī al-Qaynuqā' still dot the cliffs outside Medina and Khaybar.
- 9 I.e. Hajaya's love for Livni "blinds" him to Israel's crimes; her "coldness" and "harshness" (*jifā*) inflames his passion, "defeating" him to Israel's crimes.
- 10 A desolate region in the desert of eastern Jordan and the ideal lovers' retreat.

وحصار غرّة شدّدي واثقلي به
لما الجماعة يبصموا لك بالإبهام

ألي يداعوا بالبلاد السليبية
عصبة قليلة والبقية ترى نيام

25 ماتوا أشباه الزير وابن زبيبة
وآخرهم الي ما خضع يوم الإعدام

ألي بأيام الوزى نتخي به
ويوم اندج صرنا كما حال الأيتام

وأهل الردى نسيوا شموخه وطيبه
وما زال بعيون الشريفين ضرغام

وكثيرنا يا بنت ضان بزربية
فلا يغرك بالعرب كثر الأرقام

أهمّ حاجة لا تكوني كميبة
تبسمي واستبشري كلّ الأيام

30 ويا بعد حيّي حبّنا سولفي به
حبّ النقى ما هو دعايات بفلام

As for the Gaza blockade, intensify it!
So the folks there'll do all that you say¹¹

Those who claim the stolen land
Are a small clique—and the rest of us are sound asleep

25 The likes of Zīr and 'Antarah have died¹²
The last of them did not submit on execution day,¹³

Whom we called on for help in times of distress
And when he was slaughtered, we all became orphans¹⁴

The debased forgot his greatness, his goodness¹⁵
The honorable still consider him a mighty lion

In lines 28-34, Hajaya writes of the Arabs' defeat and his own amorous failures with Livni:

Most of us Arabs, girl, are sheep in a pen,
So don't let our huge numbers fool you

Most importantly, though, don't be sad or distressed
Wear a smile every day and hope for the best

30 You, more precious than my life—speak of our love!
Real, pure love—not fake like a TV commercial¹⁶

11 I.e. Hamas; lit. so that they “make an impression for you with their thumbprint” in reference to the practice illiterate Bedouin once used to indicate total approval, similar to making your mark by signing an X.

12 Two pre-Islamic Arab heroes.

13 Saddam Hussein.

14 Hajaya often refers to Saddam Hussein as the “father” of the Arabs; this line is also a reference to Saddam's well-advertised munificence toward orphans. See Finer, “Orphans in Iraq's Storm.”

15 I.e. Gulf Arab rulers, who abandoned Saddam Hussein to the Americans.

16 See line 5 of “Flower of the Whites and the Blacks”.

أحبّكي حبّ العرب للغليبة
وأحبّكي حبّ اليتامى لصدام

طال التريّجى والمدامع سكية
وأنا على نار الغضى صار لي عام

وأرسل لك القاضي رجالٍ عريية
جاهة كبيرة كلّها شيوخ و زلام

وللآن يا بنت الرجال المنيبة
ما جابكي حظّي وأنا هايم هام

يفدالك أبو مازن وساكن شعيبه 35
وفدوى لك فحولٍ طويلين وأقزام

وفدوى لكي روس البكاش المرية
وروس العمالة من جديدين وقدام

وفدوى لكي يا بنت شيب وشييبة
لهم فضائياتٍ عهرٍ وأنعام

وفدالك من باع الكرامة بخيبة
ومضى حياته كلّها أوهام بأوهام

I love you like the Arabs love defeat
 I love you like our orphans love Saddam¹⁷

I've yearned and hoped for long, and my cheeks are wet with tears
 As if for a year sitting on a fire of *ghaḍā* wood¹⁸

A *Gḍāh* man sent you some Arab men,¹⁹
 Brave men and shaykhs to ask for your hand

Until now, oh girl of tough men,²⁰
 My luck couldn't get you—and I love you so much!

In lines 35-38, Hajaya lists all the Arabs unworthy of Livni:

35 Not worthy of you are Abu Mazen and he who hides with him in valleys²¹
 Neither are studrams large and small²²

Not worthy of you are the dubious rams²³
 Neither are the collaborators, both old and new

Not worthy of you are our youth and our elders
 With their satellite channels, music videos, porn

Not worthy of you are those who gave up, who sold out their pride
 Who lived their lives from delusion to delusion²⁴

17 See line 23 of "Flower of the Whites and the Blacks" and line 26 of "Daughter of Tough Men".

18 *Ghaḍā* is a desert tree whose wood burns hot and long; also known as white sauxal (*Haloxylon persicum*).

19 Hajaya had his friend Muḥammad al-Gḍāh send Livni one of his earlier love poems to her through an Arab member of the Knesset whom al-Gḍāh knew.

20 Lit. "men whose incisors are fully grown"; to the Bedouin, prominent incisors in people or camels indicate age, wisdom, strength, and sometimes ferocity.

21 Mahmoud Abbas; living in a valley represents cowardice; if Abbas were brave, Hajaya reasons, he would be fighting Israel from the mountaintops.

22 Gulf Arab rulers, who Hajaya claims care more about having sex than running their countries.

23 I.e. Arab rulers who resemble rams in their credulity and weakness; they are easily controlled by the us.

24 I.e. Palestinian peace negotiators with high hopes whose efforts have come to nothing.

وإذا تريدني راس أحمد نجيبه
إن كان ما شفى غيظكي راس صدام

40 وإن كان ودك مال ما هي صعيبه
كرمال عينك من يمنها إلى الشام

تنخي يجيبه بوش حامي صليبه
الفارس اللي للعدى دوم هزام

إمرح ميزان من يرتكي به
غصباً على روس اليعارب والأعجام

بترولنا والمال كله بجيبه
وأنشهد إته مروى سيوف الإجم

المدح به وسط المجالس نجيبه
يوم أكثر الشعار تمدح بالأصنام

45 يستاهل بيوت القصيد العجيبه
وحطيت من شعري على صدره وسام

أبوه قبل أنذالنا تحتجي به
وخلّى العدى ما بين ميّت ومنضمام

In lines 39 & 40, Hajaya takes Arab hospitality to its logical conclusion and offers Livni all the Arab world's assets:

Want Ahmadinejad's head? We'll get it for you
That is, if Saddam's head didn't cure your wrath

40 Want money? No problem
For your sake, take all of it from Yemen to Syria

In lines 41-48, Hajaya praises Bush and criticizes Gulf Arab rulers before closing with a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad:

We'll call on Bush to help us get it, carrying his cross²⁵
The great knight, ever vanquishing his enemies

He tips the scales for all his protégés
In defiance of the Arabs and the Persians

Our oil and money are all in his pockets,²⁶
I hereby witness: he bloodies the swords of criminality²⁷

In every *majlis* we'll praise him
While most poets praise idols²⁸

45 The man deserves wondrous lines of poetry,
And with mine, I'll place a medal on his chest

Our debased ones were protected by his father,²⁹
Who left his enemies either dead or disgraced

25 A reference to George W. Bush's use of the word "crusade" to refer to the War on Terror in his remarks on September 16, 2001: "This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient." From Bush, "Today We Mourned, Tomorrow We Work".

26 And, Hajaya adds, the pockets of the Western oil companies that sell Iraqi oil back to Iraqis at high prices.

27 Lit. Bush "slakes the thirst of the swords of criminality".

28 Gulf Arab rulers, who employ court poets to praise them.

29 George H.W. Bush.

من مطلع الشمس لنهاية مغيبه
سيطر على سامٍ وسيطر على حام

وصلاة ربّي عدّ ما ينحكي به
على الرسول الهاشمي نور الإسلام

From the rise of the sun to the end of its setting,
He dominated Shem and he dominated Ham³⁰

I pray to the Lord as many times as He's mentioned
For the Hashemite prophet, the light of Islam

30 I.e. George W. Bush did; Shem and Ham refer to the Jews, Arabs and Africans whom Bush, son of Japheth, has dominated.

نام المريخ وراعي العشق ما نام
قلبه على نارٍ سناها وقيدي

الله من قلبٍ من البعد منضام
وبين الضلوع اليوم يرجد رجيدي

يا ليفني حبك شكيتها من العام
ولليوم ما جاني جوابٍ مفيدي

وش فائدة خطّ القصايد والأقلام
لا صار ما ياصل جوابك بريدي

شكيت لّي بالكرك صار نؤام
وعيّ يقوم بلازمي يا وديدي

5

وطيفك يطاردني بصحوي والأحلام
وغلاك يسري مع مجاري وريدي

Flower of the Mossad

2008

Hajaya read this poem at a festival in Wadi Rum in 2008, when Tzipi Livni was the acting prime minister of Israel. The Jordanian journalist Raddād al-Gallāb publicly chastised Hajaya after the festival for writing love poems to Livni, telling him that he should instead be writing harsh poems of attack and criticism. Hajaya responded to Gallab's censure in the poem "The Lost Right." Of all Hajaya's poems, to Livni, "Flower of the Mossad" contains perhaps the most concentrated dose of love poetry. Hajaya follows his amorous lead with very harsh attacks on Gulf Arab rulers and sincere praise for Jordan's king Abdullah II.

In lines 1-16, Hajaya recounts the story of his love for Livni:

The content man rests but passion's shepherd lies awake
With a heart on a fire of blazing flames

Oh God, my heart! Oppressed by separation!
Between my ribs it pounds, it thunders!

Livni, a year ago today I told you of my love
And till today haven't gotten your response

What's the use of writing poems
As long as your reply doesn't reach my mailbox?

5 I opened my heart to a Karak man, a lazy idler¹
He refused to help me in my need, my beloved

I see your face before me, awake and asleep
And love for you courses in my veins

1 In reference to Hajaya's friend Muḥammad al-Gḡah, whom he charged with delivering his first love poem to Livni; al-Gḡah is from the city of Karak in southern Jordan, west of the Hajayas' ancestral homeland.

ليتك تروفي بالذي هايم هيام
ومعلل قلبه بنظم القصيدي

والحب ما يعرف عداوات وخصام
يرمي الضديد بحب بنت الضديدي

يا شبه عين اللي بجوف السما حام
ونظراتها ترمي الشجاع العنيدي

والحدّ بدرًا لابداء وقت الأظلام 10
والعنق يا عنق الغزال الفريدي

والصدر روضة والزبيدي بها زام
ويذوب قلبي يوم أشوف الزبيدي

يا ساحرة كل الملايين من سام
ولك يخضعون أحرارها والعبيدي

يا بنت منهم لا بدت حرب وصدام
عدوهم يسقوه كاس الصديدي

يا زهرة الموساد يا طبّ الأجسام
من شمها يشفى وعزمه زيدي

في حضنك جهتم لمن عاف الإسلام 15
وعن جنة الفردوس يبقى بعبيدي

يا ضاربة روس الأعادي بالأقدام
ومفترة عزم الكباش الشديدي

Oh please, have mercy on this lover in your thrall!
Who occupies his heart by writing poems

Love's a stranger to hostility and feuds
As one's thrown into love with his enemy's daughter

You've the look of a female falcon circling in the sky
Whose glances fell brave, willful men

10 Your cheek's a full moon when it shines in the dark
And your neck! That of the herd's lead gazelle²

Your breast's a garden bursting with white desert truffles³
And my heart melts when I see those truffles

Enchantress of Shem's millions of sons⁴
Their freemen and slaves all bow down to you

Oh daughter of men who during the clash of war
Make their enemies drink cups of pus!⁵

Flower of the Mossad! Cure for love-pained bodies!
With a whiff of you one's cured, his resolution restored

15 Your embrace is Hell for those who loathe Islam,
They'll remain far from the gardens of paradise

You strike your enemies' heads with your feet⁶
And sap the rams' strong resolution⁷

2 The female gazelle that leads the herd (*'anūd, farīdah*) has a long neck, a mark of beauty in Bedouin culture; as a natural female leader, the *farīdah* is a perfect metaphor for Tzipi Livni, Hajaya adds; see also line 6, "Flower of the Whites and the Blacks".

3 The *zbēdī* is a white truffle (*kam'ah*) that appears in the desert.

4 I.e. Jews and Arabs.

5 I.e. completely defeat and humiliate their enemies.

6 I.e. humiliate one's enemies.

7 A reference to the popular belief in the Arab world that as a Mossad agent Tzipi Livni had sex with Arab rulers; the "rams" are one of Hajaya's terms for sex-addicted Gulf Arab rulers.

وحنّا العرب يا بنت في هذا الأيام
أضعف عباد الله ربي شهيدي

مليون شيخ مايسا وون حاخام
شيوخ الطبايح ماكلين الثريدي

ولا تصدّقين المدح بالربع الأقرام
الكلّ كارهم وما لهم مريدي

20 فلا تلومي شاعراً عندهم قام
صيّاد من تفلاتهم يستفيدي

للغرب خدام وللشعب ظلام
روس الفساد وعاهرين المديدي

ربيع طراطير ونواطير وزلام
الله يدمّر عودهم والوليدي

عسا يجيهم تالي الليل ردّام
زلزال ليوت المفاسد يبيدي

وتصبح دمار هامة كلّ اركام
وبالعين منهم ما نشوف الشريدي

25 قصور الخنا والعيب بديار الإسلام
عسا يجيها مثل يوم الحصيدي

In lines 17-26, Hajaya laments the Arabs' weakness and attacks the Gulf Arab rulers:

These days, we Arabs, oh girl,
Are the weakest of God's worshippers, the Lord as my witness

One million shaykhs aren't worth one rabbi
Shaykhs who sit around, filling their bellies with *tharīd*⁸

Don't be fooled by the praise of dwarves⁹
Everyone hates them—they've no admirers

20 So don't blame poets who stand before them
Prize-hunters profiting from their rulers' spittle¹⁰

They're servants of West, oppressors of their people
Corrupt leaders whose ways are fornication

A tribe of pushovers, henchmen, and wardens¹¹
May God destroy their old men and their children

I hope they're struck late one night by a *raddām*¹²
A great earthquake to extinguish their corrupt houses

To turn them into lifeless rubble
To leave no survivors

25 Their palaces of shame and betrayal in Islam's lands—
May there come to them a kind of apocalypse¹³

8 A former staple of the Bedouin diet consisting of meat, bread and yogurt mixed together.

9 Gulf Arab rulers.

10 In reference to the prizes Gulf Arab rulers give poets who praise them.

11 I.e. of the West.

12 "late one night" in reference to the Gulf Arabs' infamy throughout the Arab world for their parties; a *raddām* is the most intense kind of earthquake (megathrust), which can destroy entire communities near the epicenter.

13 Lit. *yawm al-ḥaṣīd*, "the day of the harvest [of souls]," i.e. Judgment Day.

تنعق بها البومة ويسكن بها الهام
عبرة يراها كلّ جيلٍ جديدي

لكن أنا أمدح شريفٍ وضرغام
جدّه رسول وبه يجوز الحميدي

جدّه وطا بالرجل هامات الأصنام
وبين البشر ما له شبيه ونديدي

عبد الله الثاني سلالات الأكرام
أبو الحسين بضيقٍ وقتي سنديدي

ما طاع بي حاقد وحاسد ونّمّام 30
وكلّ ما اشتكوا عطفه عليا يزيدي

ما هو بمتّانٍ وما هو بلوّام
جزل العطايا ما يمدّ الزهيدي

به أفتخر بين اليعارب والأعجام
وأشهد إنّه يا بن الأكرام سيدي

So that owls will hoot and black snakes burrow there¹⁴
 A lesson for each new generation to see

In lines 27-32, Hajaya praises Abdullah II:

But I praise a noble man, a brave lion,
 Whose forbear's a prophet, to whom praise is due¹⁵

His forbear trampled on the heads of idols
 With no equal or rival among men

Abdullah II, a noble scion,
 Abu al-Husayn, my support in times of distress¹⁶

30 He didn't heed the envious, the scornful, the slanderers,¹⁷
 For their every objection, I warm to him more!

He doesn't censure or lord his goodness over anyone
 Rather, he gives liberally—not mere handouts

I take pride in him among Arabs and non-Arabs
 I hereby witness that he, oh son of good men, is my lord¹⁸

14 Specifically, the large whip snake (in Arabic *hām*; *dolichophis jugularis*); in Bedouin culture, owls and large whip snakes represent destruction because they inhabit ruins.

15 I.e. Hajaya praises Abdullah II, whose forbear is the Prophet Muhammad.

16 "Father of Husayn" (Abu al-Husayn) is Abdullah II's tekonym, or *kunya*.

17 Abdullah II's advisers who have criticized Hajaya for his harsh poetry about Arab rulers, especially Gulf Arab rulers.

18 Lit. "lord and master" (*sēdī*, from MSA *sayyidī*), the epithet Jordanians apply to their Hashemite rulers.

وش بك تعاتبني وانا يا بن قلاب
إجروح قلبي لها سنين عطية

تلومني في حبّ تلعات الأرقاب
شقر الحدود معطرات الذوية

اللي بهن سحر للأرواح جذاب
وكم طوعن راس أفكاره صعبة

حلّى السياسة دربها كلّها أتعاب
وحال العروبة نوب لا تعتي به

ذلّ العرب ما فاد به كلّ الأطباب
واحتار يانسل النشامى طيبه

راحت عروبة وانتهت يابن قلاب
وشمس العروبة طوّلت في مغيبه

The Lost Right

2008

At a poetry festival in Wadi Rum in 2008, Hajaya read “Daughter of Tough Men” and “Occupy My Heart.” After his performance, a Jordanian journalist, Raddād al-Gallāb, approached him and scolded him publicly for calling the Jews “dear” and “beloved” instead of condemning Israel’s crimes. Hajaya responded with this poem, addressed to al-Gallab, in which he faults the Arabs’ valuing talk over action with respect to Palestine. Hajaya also puns on al-Gallab’s name, which can refer to the vicissitudes of time.

In lines 1-11, Hajaya addresses al-Gallab, advising him to tone down his fiery rhetoric and praising Livni’s qualities:

Why do you scold me so, Ibn Gallab,
When my heart’s wounds have been smarting for years?¹

Why blame me for loving long-necked women
With fair cheeks, with perfumed forelocks?

Women whose magic attracts the soul!
Who melt down and recast our cast-iron minds

Forget about politics and its tiresome trails
Stop worrying about the Arabs’ condition

5 All the world’s doctors couldn’t cure the Arabs’ shame
The Arabs’ doctor’s at a loss, oh son of gallant men

Gone, ended is the Arabs’ national dream
Its sun has long set, Ibn Gallab

1 I.e. from the Arabs’ disgrace and from Livni’s unrequited love.

والقدس ما ودّها تلا عين وسباب
أو قسوة على كان الحبيبة

وان كان حيي ليفني أمر ينعاب
أنشهد إني حبّتها مبتلي به

أحبّها لتها لوت عكف الأشناب
عيال القبائل والأصول العريية

وان كان حظّي لاشقر الحدّ لي جاب 10
لكم أحرر كلّ أرضٍ سلبية

هذا وانا ضدّ التطرف والإرهاب
ورفعت صوتي ما ختفيت بزربية

يا ما نخينا باليعارب والأعراب
من قبل ما بغداد توخذ غصيبة

ويوم العرب جابو له جيوش الأحزاب
قلنا لهم يالربع هذه معيبة

Jerusalem doesn't need your insults and curses
Or harshness toward our beloved's existence²

Even if there were shame in loving Livni
Then I swear I'd still be drowning in it!

I love her for the way she twists the moustaches
Of tribesmen's sons with pure Arab roots³

10 If my luck ever brought me that girl of fair cheeks
Then for you I'd free the whole stolen land

All that, and I'm against extremism, terrorism
I've raised my voice against them—didn't hide it in a sheepfold!⁴

In lines 12-18, Hajaya attacks the Gulf Arab states for their collaboration with the US:

How often did we call on the Gulf Arabs' help?
Even before the rape of Baghdad⁵

When the Arabs brought Baghdad the Armies of Factions⁶
We told them, "Listen, folks, this is shameful!"

2 "existence" (*kiyān*) in reference to the "Zionist Entity" (*al-kiyān aṣ-ṣahyūnī*), a term many Arabs use to refer to the state of Israel; see line 6 of "Occupy My Heart".

3 I.e. controls and humiliates Arabs, especially Gulf Arab rulers.

4 I.e. like a cowardly sheep; many Arab leaders have refrained from condemning terrorism outright.

5 Many Gulf Arab states are *de facto* neutral with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have had unofficial relationships with Israel for a long time. Hajaya cites the Qur'an's *surat al-tawbah* to explain the Gulf Arabs' behavior, whom he regards as the "Bedouins" (*a'rāb*) whom the Qur'an singles out for their unbelief: "The Bedouins (*al-a'rāb*) are stronger in disbelief and hypocrisy and more likely not to know the limits of what [laws] Allah has revealed to His Messenger. And Allah is Knowing and Wise." (9:97).

6 I.e. the US military and the Coalition forces; in reference to early Islamic history's "Armies of Factions" (*juyūsh al-aḥzāb*), the Arab tribes allied against the Muslims in the Battle of the Trench in 627 CE.

قالوا بها حاكم على الشعب قصاب
وأفتت بها الحوزة وصرح خطيبه

15 واحتلتها بوش الغبي أصفر الناب
ويعاربك كلِّ لبد في شعبيه

روس العمالة ما ستر عيبها ثياب
وشعوبهم تدري وهذه مصيبة

مثل النعاج ان أروحت ريحة ذياب
إبكارهم وصغارهم والشيبية

كلِّ على راسه من الخوف مرتاب
يرقص على أنغام بوش العجبية

ستين عام وكلها شجب وخطاب
والجرح ينزف والمدامع سكببة

20 وبكامب ديفيد قالوا الحال ينجاب
وقوطر لها أنور يسوق النجبية

They claimed that a ruler there butchered his people
So the Hawza decreed, its preachers expounded⁷

- 15 And Bush occupied it, the Yellow-Canined Idiot⁸
And your Arabs all fled to hide in the hollows⁹

Collaborators whose clothes can't cover their shame¹⁰
Shame their people have to live with—that's the real misfortune

Like ewes who've smelled the scent of wolves,
Every last one of them, old and young¹¹

Every one of them doubtful and scared for his head
So they go dancing to the melodies of Bush¹²

In lines 19-27, Hajaya laments the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Arab inaction:

Sixty years' worth of condemnation and speeches
But the wound still bleeds, the tears still pour

- 20 They said a solution would one day be reached
Sadat rode his mount all the way to Camp David

7 A *hawzah* is a seminary for Shiite Muslim clerics; the two most prominent seminaries are found in Qum, Iran, and Najaf, Iraq; Gulf Arab preachers—both Sunni and Shiite—advanced a Shiite-Sunni Gulf alliance against Saddam Hussein.

8 I.e. one of Hajaya's epithets for Bush, like Homer's "swift-footed Achilles" or "giant-killer Hermes." Having yellow canines can indicate monstrosity and criminality; it can also indicate age, wisdom and experience, as in line 34 of "Daughter of Tough Men".

9 I.e. the Gulf Arabs whom Ibn Gallab apparently takes pride in cowered in their "statelets" (*dwēlāt*) when Iraq was invaded.

10 See line 23 of "Camel Dung".

11 Compare line 31 of "Camel Dung" for the "ewe" metaphor.

12 I.e. they do whatever Bush tells them to do; see line 5 of "Oh Condoleezza Rice!" and line 32 of "Camel Dung".

فيها عزل مصر وتعذر بالأسباب
وأم العروبة صار حنظل حليبه

والي ترجى أو سلو مطلبه خاب
والي ترجى بوش يندب نصيبه

والحق ضاع وما بقي اليوم طلاب
وخرط السوالف حقنا ما يجيبه

الحق وده خيل وسيوف وركاب
وفرسان من لون الأسود الغضبية

ما هو فضائيات شعرٍ وألعاب 25
ومزينة للإبل وسباق خيبه

وعهرٍ على الشاشات كالسم ينساب
وغرّة لهب نيرانهم تسطلي به

ويمكن زمتا يقتلب يابن قلاب
وتهدم مآذنها ويكسر صليبه

ما دام هذا الحال والوقت دولاب
وتحالف الراعي وكلبه وذيبه

There Egypt was isolated and made excuses¹³
 The Arabs' Mother—her milk went bitter as a colocynth¹⁴

Whoever counted on Oslo—his demands were dashed
 Whoever counted on Bush now bemoans his lot

Our right is lost—we've even stopped demanding it
 And talking a big game won't get our rights back

For that we'd need war horses, swords and camels
 And knights as fierce as angry lions

25 Not satellite TV, poetry and games
 Not camel beauty pageants and races of failure¹⁵

Not the sex on TV, seeping like poison into our blood
 While the flame of Zion's fire scorches Gaza

Our ages' fortunes could reverse, Ibn Gallab¹⁶
 Our minarets could be destroyed and our crosses broken¹⁷

In lines 28-31, Hajaya defends his writing sarcastic love poetry to Livni:

As long as this endures, as long as fortune's a ferris wheel
 As long as the shepherd's allied with his dog and the wolf¹⁸

13 I.e. Sadat isolated Egypt by signing a peace treaty with Israel; he "made excuses" in order to justify the treaty—that he had to do so for his people—and in so doing made the Arabs' position weak and divided; Hajaya believes that had the Arabs negotiated as one bloc, they could have achieved a better, lasting peace with Israel.

14 A common epithet for Egypt is "Mother of the World" (*Umm ad-Dunyā*); here Egypt is "Mother of Arabism" (*Umm al-Urūbah*) in reference to Gamal Abdel Nasser's Arab nationalism. The colocynth (*ḥanḍal*) is an edible desert plant with bitter fruit that has remained a symbol of bitterness in Arabic poetry for 1500 years.

15 I.e. for which the Gulf Arab states are well known; "races of failure" (*sbāg khēbah*) is a pun on "horse races" (*sbāg khēl*).

16 A pun on Ibn Gallab's name; the root *q-l-b* has to do with overturning or being upside down.

17 I.e. things could in fact be worse, and Arabs both Christian and Muslim could suffer more under Israel.

18 I.e. in order to attack the sheep, or the Arabs.

وخيراتنا ينهب بها كل نهاب
والخبز هو هم الشعوب الكئيبة

30 وش حيلة الشاعر إذا ما كل تراب
ودون الخطوط الحمر نار لهيبة

غير التغزل في جميلات الأهداب
وبعيون شقراهم وطلّة زبيبة

واللي يقول إن الوطن حفنة تراب
كبه بوجهه واعتذر لا تجيبه

صار يتججح بالوفاكل كذاب
وراحت فلسطين البلاد الحبيبة

As long as every thief plunders our riches
 As long as bread's an oppressed people's only concern

30 What can this dirt poor poet do?¹⁹
 When past the red lines lie a raging fire²⁰

What can I do besides flirt with those pretty eyelashes?
 A fair maiden and the aura of Zabibah²¹

In lines 32-33, Hajaya reaffirms his love of the Arabs and their national dream while criticizing that dream's insincere supporters:

Whoever says the homeland's just a handful of dirt²²
 Throw some dirt in his face and forget him for all time

These days every liar goes flaunting his loyalty
 And Palestine, our beloved land, is gone

19 I.e. by insulting and condemning Israel.

20 I.e. if he insulted certain Arab leaders too harshly, they could have him killed.

21 I.e. Condoleezza Rice, in reference to the black slave mother of 'Antarah ibn Shaddad, pre-Islamic Arab warrior-poet.

22 I.e. the Arabs' homeland.

"يا بورصة حيّ" هي قصيدة موجهة إلى السيّدة ليفني لأني من عشاقها بعد أن رفض حزب شاس المتطرّف مشاركة ليفني في تشكيل الحكومة ، أقول :

يا ملّ قلبٍ فيه مثل المناشير
وعينٍ تساوي ليلها مع نهاره

ومن ما جرى هبّت بقلبي معاصير
غطى على كلّ النواحي غباره

الله لا يثني على شاس بالخير
والزبن فيهم يطفي الربّ ناره

ربع التطرّف ذابحين العصافير
الله يبلاهم بقوّ اقتداره

عن ليفني عيوّاكبار العراير
وما ساندوها ريسة للوزارة

Stock Market of My Love

September 2008

Hajaya used the Shas party's rejection of Livni as prime minister in order to return to some of his favorite subjects: sarcastic love poetry, vitriol for the Gulf Arabs, and longing and admiration for Saddam Hussein. He closes his politically controversial poem with praise for Jordan's ruling family. Hajaya was truly disappointed by Livni's rejection as prime minister, as, in his words, she tends toward peace and reconciliation with the Arabs. In the poem, he consoles her for her loss, telling her that if she could not win the prime ministry, then she is still the princess of his heart. This poem stands out among others of Hajaya's oeuvre for its use of many rare Bedouin words.

'Stock Market of My Love' is a poem addressed to Mrs. Tzipi Livni—because I'm one of her loving admirers—after the extremist Shas party refused her participation in forming a government.

In lines 1-8, Hajaya complains of his love and his lot and consoles Livni:

Woe is my heart, as if shredded by saws!
Woe is my eye, whose night is as its day!

After what happened, there raged in my heart storms
Whose dust covered all its sides

May God never reward Shas with good
May the Lord put out the fire of their best men¹

An extremist group, they slaughter sparrows²
May God afflict them as much as He can

5 The fat-naped dolts refused Livni³
And didn't support her for prime minister

1 I.e. may He destroy Shas' smartest, strongest, most effective leaders.

2 I.e. Palestinian children.

3 To the Bedouin, a fat nape symbolizes stupidity.

ويا ليفني هاذي حظوظ ومقادير
والأمر عند الله نهاية قراره

يفداك بوش وكندليزا وشامير
وأحمد نجاد ومن مشى في مساره

وفدوى لكي معهم جزيرة صنابير
وتيران والي ما يعرفوا أخباره

يامنيتي من بين كل الغنادير
إنتي على قلبي أميرة إمارة

الحب غير وحبكي عندنا غير 10
أحتل قلبي واستقرّ بقراره

وكل ما أطلّ بعاليات الشناضير
وأشوف أنا ديارك تقادح أنواره

أقول ليت إن لي جناحين وأطير
وأزوركي يا ست كل العذارة

يا أجمل الي يلبسن التنانير
حبك بقلبي ناشبات أظفاره

بالليل عيوني بالحبيبة مساهير
من واهج بالقلب تشتت ناره

مشتاق لك شوق العرب للدنانير 15
من عقب حرب البورصة والخسارة

Livni, that's just you're lot, your fate,
The will of God, the result of His decision

Bush, Condoleezza and Shamir aren't worthy of you⁴
Neither are Ahmadinejad and his followers

Neither are the islands Sanafir and
Tiran, and those ignorant of them⁵

In lines 9-19, Hajaya devotes himself entirely to praise of Livni's beauty:

Of all the world's beauties, you're my desire
As for my heart, you rule as its princess

10 Love is one thing, but my love for you is another:
It's occupied my heart and dwells fixed in its depths

Whenever I look down from the heights of hills
And see your cities' lights blinking⁶

I say "Would that I had two wings to fly
And visit you, oh woman among women!"

The prettiest of all who wear a skirt,
Your love's talons clutch my heart

At night, my beloved, my eyes find no sleep
For the burning of my heart's blazing fire

15 I long for you like Arabs long for *dinars*
Lost in the financial crisis⁷

4 In Arabic the expression for "not to be worthy of" also means "could/should die/be sacrificed in one's stead".

5 Sanafir and Tiran are islands in the Strait of Tiran; Israel captured the islands in 1967 and later ceded them to Egypt, which later ceded them to Saudi Arabia; at the time of this poem's composition, Hajaya, along with many Arabs, believed that Israel still controlled the islands.

6 From the hills in the Hajaya tribe's ancestral lands (*dyār*), one can see the lights of cities in the West Bank and Israel.

7 The dinar is the Jordanian unit of currency; this line is in reference to the financial crisis of 2007-8.

يا بورصة حيّي فداك المخاسير
وبتر ولنا واللي يمصّوا ابياره

يا حاصدة بالشرق حبّ الجماهير
وبالغرب متّا مجلسك بالصدارة

لك طلّة تجلا ظلام الدياجير
ولك بسمّة تملّا فؤادي حرارة

وأحسّ دميّ يحترق بالمواسير
يوم أتأمل بالحدود وشقاره

يا ضاربة روس الفحول النواظير 20
شباه الحصاني مدّعين النارة

الشاربين الذلّ من قاعة البير
وغرّة لها سنين تعاني حصاره

اللي بهم أنجس صفات الخنازير
ويين الأمم للذلّ صاروا منارة

بغداد خلّوها عيال القراقير
وكثير منهم ساهموا في دماره

وأبو عديّ خلّوه سود الأضابير
سيف العروبة شاركوا بانكساره

Stock market of my love, those losses aren't worthy of you
Neither is our oil nor those who suck at its wells

You harvest the love of the Orient's masses
And from here west, they sit you at the head of the table

You've a visage that banishes the gloom of the dark
And a smile that fills my heart with fervor

I feel my blood burning in my veins
When I think on your cheeks and their fairness

In lines 20-24, Hajaya praises Livni and insults the Gulf Arab rulers:

20 You who strike the heads of studrams, of watchmen⁸
The likes of foxes who claim leopard status⁹

Who drink disgrace from the depths of its well
While Gaza's suffered for years from the blockade

Who possess the filthiest properties of the pig¹⁰
Among the nations they're shame's shining symbol

They abandoned Baghdad, those sons of ewes
Many of them even shared in its destruction¹¹

They abandoned Abu 'Uday, those of black deeds¹²
They shared in breaking the Sword of the Arabs¹³

8 Studrams represent cowardice and baseness; this line is in reference to Gulf Arab rulers who, according to Hajaya, resemble studrams in that they favor having sex to dealing with their people's concerns; they resemble watchmen in that they guard their nations' lands and resources for their masters in the West.

9 In Bedouin culture the fox represents cowardice and is a bad omen; the leopard represents bravery and ferocity.

10 The most prominent of which is their lack of protective jealousy (*ghērah*) for the lands and resources of the Arab Nation.

11 I.e. in letting the US use their land for military bases.

12 Lit. "of black dossiers," in reference to intelligence agencies' dossiers (*dibārah* pl. *aḍābīr*) that contain their lives' grisly details.

13 I.e. Saddam Hussein.

25 الشاىخ الوافى صظام المناىر
الكوكب اللى ما يطولوا مداره

اللى عن ادروب الخنا عاكس السىر
من صغر سنّه ماشياً بالطهارة

صان الكرامة والمنايا مكاشير
وأسدل على قصة رجولة ستاره

وقفة أسد ما ذلنّه جنازير
مات بشموخ وعزّ نفس وجسارة

عسى على قبره تهلّ الشخاتير
قبر الشريف اللى كبر اعتماره

30 ويا لله يا عالم خفى التدابير
عساه بجنانٍ تجارى أنهاره

ويا رغد يا أخت الأسود الكواسير
ويا أخت أحرارٍ تنادوا بثاره

صدّام واحد فى سجلّ المشاهير
ورمز الكرامة فى صريح العبارة

ولا بدّ ما يومٍ تحيك التباشير
يا بنت من ساد العراق بجدارة

In lines 25-33, Hajaya praises Saddam Hussein, laments his loss, and comforts Saddam's daughter Raghad:

25 The lofty, the virtuous, who clashed with brave men¹⁴
The shining star whose orbit they can't reach

In treachery's brook he waded upstream
From a young age did he walk in purity

And maintain his dignity when death bared its teeth
And thus lowered the curtain on a legend of manhood

With a lion's stance, not shamed by fetters
He died with self-respect, worth and pride

May plenty of rain pour down on his grave
The grave of an esteemed, noble man

30 Oh God, knower of hidden designs
I hope he's in Your gardens beneath which rivers flow¹⁵

Oh Raghad, sister of fierce lions!¹⁶
Oh sister of free men who call for his blood-revenge!¹⁷

Saddam ranks first in the register of renown
He is, quite frankly, dignity's very symbol

One day good news will come to you¹⁸
Oh daughter of him who ruled Iraq with valor

14 Iran, Israel, the US.

15 A reference to a verse in the Qur'an: "God has promised the believers, men and women, gardens underneath which rivers flow..." (9:73).

16 I.e. the eldest daughter of Saddam Hussein; "fierce lions" is in reference to her brothers 'Uday, Qusay and Mustafa, who were killed fighting US forces.

17 I.e. sister to her brothers in "Arabism" (*'urūbah*) who call for her father's blood-revenge.

18 I.e. good news that Saddam's blood-revenge has been taken and that Iraq has risen up to resist the US occupation.

أقولها وأنا أردني التعابير
في ظلّ حرّ هاشمية أوكاره

أحرار ما سلّط علينا بواتير 35
أمن وأمان وما سكنا الجحارة

In lines 34-35, Hajaya praises Jordan's Hashemites and his life in Jordan:

I say this as a Jordanian in thought and expression
In the shadow of a falcon from the Hashemites' aerie¹⁹

35 In Jordan we're free men—he's imposed on us no keen blade—
With safety, security, and no need to hide in burrows

19 I.e. Abdullah II; this "aerie" of the Hashemite "falcons" is high and lofty both in position and in pedigree, as the Hashemites are direct descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.

هذه القصيدة بعد أن فاز السيد أوباما في الانتخابات الأمريكية ، فاز برئاسة الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية ، كتبها وطبعاً مثل ما يقولوا كل شيء في أمريكا ممكن ، وهي موجهة أصلاً للعرب

اليوم وجه أميركا يا عرب غير
تبصروا يا فاقدين البصيرة

الراي فيها صار راي الجماهير
شعب عظيم وهو يقرّر مصيره

عدل وتزاهة ما به أي تزوير
وأكبر دليل اليوم شفنا بشيرة

قرار شعب ويحكّمته دساتير
وشمس العدالة عندهم مستديرة

5 ابن مهاجر وار تفع فوق كئها طير
وبالبيت الأبيض جهّز واله سريره

يستاهل أوباما يقود المناير
ويقود أمة بالمعالي جديرة

Obama's Victory

November 2008

In this poem, written shortly after Obama's victory over John McCain in 2008, Hajaya praises the American people before engaging in textbook Arab self-criticism. The poem ends on a note of distraction and frustration; for Hajaya, Obama's victory exists as a foil to criticize the Arabs.

This poem [was written] after Mr. Obama won the American election, won the presidency of the United States of America. I wrote it and, of course, as they say, everything's possible in America. The poem is originally intended for the Arabs.

In lines 1-7, Hajaya praises the United States and the American people:

The face of America's changed today, Arabs!
Just look! You who've lost your reason¹

There decisions are the public's opinion
A great people that decides its own destiny

Fairness, impartiality, no fraud in it²
The greatest proof lies in the good news we saw today

The decision of a people governed by a constitution
For them the sun of justice shines full and round³

5 The son of an immigrant who ascended like a falcon
In the White House his bed's been made ready

Obama deserves to lead brave men
To lead a nation worthy in all respects

1 In Arabic the words for sight (*başar*) and insight (and thus reason, *başirah*) are related.

2 I.e. no fraud in the electoral system.

3 Hajaya adds that the light of the "sun of justice" in other countries is split into weak rays of light.

شعب بعد لنكن بدا بخطّ تغيير
واليوم أوباما يقود المسيرة

شعب تخصّص في إنتاج المشاهير
وإنتاجنا سوس وأليس وسميرة

وإنتاجنا رقص وقصيد ومزامير
وعهرٍ على الشاشات عرضٍ كبيرة

ومسابقات أشعار مدح وتكبير
ومزايين في الإبل في كلّ ديرة

10

وتبر ولنا بيدين شلة مختاير
والكلّ منهم صار حاكم عشيرة

وبالبورصة راحت مئات الملايير
كسب حرام وعجل الله مطيره

راحت غنايم في جياب السماسير
وغنيّنا عقب بالغنا عالخصيرة

A people Lincoln led down the path of change
 And today Obama leads the march

In lines 8-13, Hajaya criticizes the Arabs:

A people given to producing great men⁴
 While we produce Susu, Elissa, and Samira⁵

We produce dance, poetry, and music
 A big show of fornication on the TV screens

10 Competitions of poetry and praise
 Every country with camel beauty pageants

Our oil's in the hands of a clique of *mukhtārs*⁶
 Each one of whom's become the ruler of a tribe

In the stock market hundreds of our billions—gone!⁷
 Forbidden profit, and may God speed its demise

The loot's all gone, in the pockets of middlemen
 And there's our rich man, sitting in his lawn chair⁸

4 Hajaya means specifically scientists and military leaders.

5 Arabic pop singers.

6 I.e. village chiefs or mayors; Hajaya means the Gulf Arabs.

7 Actually millions, Hajaya says, but "billions" (*malāyīr*) better fits the rhyme scheme.

8 As opposed to a nice chair; this line is in the spirit of "Oh how the mighty are fallen!"

بديت بخير اسمًا يتدى به
باسم الله وأرجوه الإجابة

فيارتي بديت القاف باسمك
فسدّ دني بقولي والكتابة

لأنّ الشعر دربه غير آمن
خطير وشايك ليّ مشى به

Our Jordan

May 25, 2011

Hajaya's magnum opus, this 253-line poem is a response to the "unfair question" (*su'āl jāyir*) posed to many Jordanians: "What is Jordan?" In this poem Hajaya depicts Jordan as the "oasis of free Arabs" (*wāḥat aḥrār al-ʿurūbah*), as the "pure homeland of security" (*dīrat al-amn al-ʿadhiyyah*), and as a fertile land whose national unity is a tapestry (*nasīj*) of loyalty and whose essential foundation is as an idea, not a tribe. Hajaya also draws a parallel between the Hashemites who rule the state of Jordan and their noble ancestor, the Prophet Muhammad, whose supporters and followers conquered the land of Jordan 1400 years ago and whom Hajaya regards as the legitimate leaders of the Arab Nation (*al-ummah al-ʿarabiyyah*). This poem, then, is a nationalistic love poem (*ghazal waṭanī*), a history lesson and revision of history, a pledge of allegiance, a call for national unity, a warning against letting the Arab Spring into Jordan, and a threat to Jordan's enemies within and without. Most of all, it is a document that affirms Jordan's existence as a land with a people, a history, a culture, and standing as a nation among nations.

"Our Jordan" is also the product of close cooperation between Hajaya and Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad, who provided Hajaya with many of the facts cited below. Hajaya performed the first version of this poem before King Abdullah II on Jordan's 65th Independence Day celebration on May 25, 2011 and, out of breath 130 lines into the poem, famously asked the king for a cup of water. This poem is now taught at the University of Jordan. The footnotes below are supplemented by those compiled by Dr. Hasan al-Saqqaf, which appear in the version Hajaya revised in 2014.

In lines 1-10, Hajaya calls on God's help in composing the poem:

I begin with the best name that one can—
The name of God, and may He hear my prayer

Oh Lord, I've begun the poem in Your name
So guide me in my speech and writing

For the path of poetry is not safe
But dangerous and thorny for those who tread it

وبالقرآن آية روعتني
وعفت الشعر خوفاً من عقابه

5 وبالشعراء قد أنزلت آية
بها بينت نهجاً يقتدى به

فألهمني بنظم الشعر رشداً
وقول صائبٍ يجلو ضبابه

وعن الغاوين ابعديني وقدني
إلى درب مصابيح الهدى به

وأهديني وسدّدي لأتّي
كما العطشان متقّي سراه

واشرح صدر عبدك يا إلهي
واحلل عقدة لسانٍ حكى به

10 لعلّي أوفى الأردن حقّه
بشعرٍ يطرب الناس الحدابه

ويا من تسألوني عن بلادي
سؤالٍ جايرٍ هذا جوابه

هو الأردن تاريخ وحضارة
جذوره عزّ وفروعه مهابة

A verse from the Qur'an scared me into
Hating poetry for fear of punishment¹

- 5 But in the chapter "The Poets" you sent down a verse
And put down an example to emulate²

Inspire me with virtue as I write my poetry,
With striking words that clear the fog

Deliver me from the deviators and lead me
To a path lit by the lamps of right guidance

Guide me and lead me, for I'm
As a thirsty man following a mirage³

Open this humble servant's heart, oh God
And untie the twisted tongue he speaks with

- 10 I hope I can give Jordan its due
With sung poetry to enchant the people⁴

In lines 11-29, Hajaya speaks of his love for Jordan:

To whoever asks me about my country
That's an unfair question but here's the answer:⁵

Jordan is all history and civilization
With roots of power and branches of fame

1 "And the poets—the perverse follow them; hast thou not seen how they wander in every valley and how they say that which they do not?" (26:224-226); this verse is in reference to Hajaya's temporary abandoning writing poetry in 1991.

2 "Save those [poets] that believe, and do righteous deeds, and remember God oft, and help themselves after being wronged; and those who do wrong shall surely know by what overturning they will be overturned" (26:227).

3 I.e. without God's help, Hajaya is lost.

4 I.e. sung as a *hidā*, or the type of singing characteristic of Bedouin raiders used to spur on their camels during long rides.

5 In reference to the question posed to many Jordanians—"What is Jordan?"—with the subtext that the country of Jordan is a synthetic modern invention devoid of history or culture.

وشعري فيه من زود المحبة
وعشقي بالحشا زاد التها به

مشاعر شاعرٍ يعشق بلاده
وكم من عاشقٍ عشقه شقى به

15 فهي أُمِّي وأبوياء والعشيرة
وهي عظمي وديّ والقراية

وانا اللي في هوى الأردن متيم
هيامٍ في شراييني سرى به

بها أحلم وانا أسكن حماها
وبالغربة تميت اصطحابه

فعطر الشيخ والقيصوم فيها
إذا هبّ الهوا القلب انتشى به

وإذا نوار دفلاها بدالي
يزول الهمّ عني والكآبة

20 وإذا دحنونها بنيسان أزهر
يذكرني بها بدم الصحابة

أحبّ جبالها وأعشق سهلها
وأحبّ طيورها وأعشق ذيا به

My poetry on Jordan comes from so much love
From my heart, inflamed with its love

The feelings of a poet who loves his country, and
How many lovers are so pained by their love?

- 15 Jordan's my mother, my father, my tribe
My blood, my bone, my relations

I'm enthralled in my love of Jordan
With a passion that flows through my veins

I dream of Jordan when I live within her borders
And abroad I wish I could take her with me

The scent of artemisia and achillea in the air⁶
Thrills my heart every time the wind blows

When the oleander blossoms appear
My worries and sorrows disappear⁷

- 20 When her anemones bloom in April
They remind me of the blood of the Prophet's Companions⁸

I cherish her mountains and her plains,
Her birds and her wolves

6 Artemisia, or wormwood (*shīḥ*; *artemisia arborescens*), is an herb known for its medicinal properties and sweet smell; long ago it was used by the Bedouin to treat wounds; it is still used to flavor tea, and it grows in abundance in the hills of Jbāl, where Hajaya grew up. Achillea (*gēṣūm*; MSA *qayṣūm*), is a plant known for its bitter taste and is used to flavor tea and as a medicine for indigestion and stomach pains.

7 Oleander (*diflā*) grows in abundance in Wadi al-Hisa, where Hajaya spent much of his childhood.

8 The poppy anemone (*dahṇūn*; also known as *shaqā'iḳ al-nu'mān*), whose red petals are associated in Arab culture with the blood of the pre-Islamic Arabian king al-Nu'man III ibn al-Mundhir; here they remind Hajaya of the blood of the Prophet Muhammad's companions spilled while conquering Jordan from the Byzantines.

من الدرّة إلى الرمثا أراها
حبيبة لابسة أزهى ثيابه

لها حيّي تعدى كلّ حبّ
تجاوز حبّ عشاق الصباة

بها أحيّا عزيز النفس حرّ
ولا أرجو سوى الله وثوابه

لأنّها ديرتي وأخر بأهلها
لأنّها درع عزّ يحتنى به

25

ولي فيها من الأسياد خيره
صناديد وفاهم يحتدى به

أسود من سلاّات الهواشم
هم التاريخ والقاري قرابه

فياربيّ بها أبقى مقامي
لأن القلب ما طاق اغترابه

وياربيّ بها اجعل مماتي
شهيدٍ يحتضن جسمي ترابه

بلادٍ زرعها طيب ومكارم
بها شعب الرجولة والصلابة

30

ثلاث قارّاتٍ فيها قد أحاطن
وهي كالقلب والله اعتنى به

From Durra to Ramtha I see her
As a bride dressed in gorgeous robes⁹

My love for her knows know bounds
And exceeds the most ardent lovers' longing

In Jordan I live free and proud
And hope for nothing save God and His reward

25 Because she's my homeland and her people are my pride,
Because she's a shield of strength protecting us¹⁰

In Jordan we have the best of leaders¹¹
Brave leaders, very models of devotion

Lions of the Hashemite line
They are history, and every reader of history knows this

Dear God, keep me here forever
For my heart won't endure its separation

Dear God, may I one day die here
A martyr whose body embraces her land

In lines 30-34, Hajaya reviews Jordan's geological characteristics:

30 A land that sprouts goodness and nobility
Home to a strong, brave, manly people

Surrounded by three continents,
She's as their heart with God watching over her

9 Al-Durrah is the southernmost city in Jordan; al-Ramtha is the northernmost.

10 I.e. Jordan protects those who seek her protection, especially refugees from Palestine, Iraq and Syria.

11 Lit. "masters" (*sādah* sing. *sayyid*), a term Jordanians use to refer to their Hashemite rulers.

بلادٍ بارك الخلاق فيها
ثلاث أنواع مخلوقٍ ترابه

يحيطن به ثلاث من الصحاري
وهي كالروض في جودة إخصابه

وأخفض نقطة بالأرض توجد
بجرٍ ميتٍ أملاحه مذابة

وأقدم قرية بالأرض بانت 35
فهبي عين الغزال وفي شعابه

مليء بالحضارات القديمة
وبني كنعان بانهم بنى به

وبها كان الأشوريين وقتٍ
وهذا الوقت عجل انقلابه

وأيضاً السومريون القدامى
على ما قيل ماشيهم مشى به

وبها أمضى الأموريين دورٍ
وحكم سيحون للهوجب عثابه

A land blessed by the Creator¹²
Who created here three types of soil¹³

Surrounded by three types of desert¹⁴
Yet Jordan's as a meadow in her fertility¹⁵

The lowest point on the earth is found
At the Dead Sea, of melted salts¹⁶

In lines 35-40, Hajaya reviews the ancient civilizations that settled in Jordan:

35 The oldest village in the world was built
In 'Ayn Ghazāl and in her gorges¹⁷

So rich in ancient civilizations
The Canaanites built their houses here

The Assyrians too were here for a time
But that time was short; they were soon overthrown

And also the ancient Sumerians
It's said that they passed through here

Here the Amorites took their turn
And King Sihon's rule stretched south to the Mujib¹⁸

12 In reference to the Qur'an, which mentions the whole Levant as blessed: "O my people, enter the Holy Land which God has prescribed for you, and turn not back in your traces, to turn about losers" (5:21); "Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing" (17:1).

13 I.e. terra rosa (It. "red soil"), steppe, and sandy soil.

14 I.e. the Sinai Desert, the Syrian Desert, and the Arabian Desert.

15 In reference to both geography and geopolitics, in that Jordan is an oasis of peace and plenty compared to many of her neighbors.

16 I.e. Dead Sea salts contain many natural resources, such as potash, magnesium, and phosphate.

17 'Ayn Ghazal is one of the oldest Neolithic farming villages discovered in the Near East and dates from the eighth millennium BCE. It is now located off the main road between the capital Amman and the city of Zarqa.

18 I.e. Wadi Mujib, the ancient border between the Amorites and the Moabites.

40 بعمّون ومؤاب قد تسمت
وحورانٍ وأيدوم بكتابه

وبها كان الرسل في كلّ عهدٍ
وزاروها وحاموا في بيابه

فإبراهيم جامن أرض سومر
وشرب من ماء الأردن وارتوى به

وشعيب أردني والياس مثله
ولوط به سكن والله نجا به

وموسى في ربي الأردن توفى
وجبل نبو مقام قد ثوى به

45 وهارون أخو موسى مقامه
ثرى الأردن في عالي هضابه

ويحيى عاش بالأردن دهرًا
وعيسى فيه بشر في شبابه

وفي نهره تعمد قبل يدعو
بماء طاهرٍ عذبٍ شرابه

وبها أقدم كنيسة في زمنها
بأرض القدس مرفوع البناء به

وأهل الكهف بالأردن عاشوا
وهذا الكهف رمتنا خرابه

- 40 Jordan was then known as Ammon and Moab,
Hauran and Edom, in the Bible

In lines 41-49, Hajaya recounts the prophets who passed through Jordan:

In every age the prophets
Visited her and traversed her wastes

Abraham came from the Land of Sumer
And quenched his thirst on the Jordan's waters

Shu'ayb was Jordanian, and Elijah was too¹⁹
And here lived Lot, whom our Lord saved

Moses died in Jordan's hills
And rests forever on Mount Nebo

- 45 And Moses' brother Aaron—his tomb
Lies in Jordan's soil, in its high hills²⁰

John the Baptist lived in Jordan for a time
And Jesus here preached the gospel in his youth

Before his mission he was baptized in its river
In pure water, sweet to drink

And here lies the oldest church in its time
A tall building in the land of Jerusalem²¹

The Seven Sleepers lived in Jordan
And that cave—we repaired its ruins²²

19 In Islamic tradition, Shu'ayb was a prophet sent to the Midianites and renowned for his eloquence; the tombs of both Elijah and Shu'ayb are located in Jordan.

20 The tomb of Aaron lies atop Jabal Hārūn ("Aaron's Mountain") in southern Jordan.

21 I.e. the Centacle, where the Last Supper took place.

22 According to Islamic tradition, the Seven Sleepers were a group of youths who fell asleep in a cave during a time of religious persecution and woke up centuries later; the ruins of the cave—alleged to be near the village of Rajib, south of Amman—have been cleared up, and the area is now home to a mosque.

50 ومجد سيدي قبل الرسالة
على الأقدام ديرتنا وطى به

تظلل في ظلال من شجرها
وإذا ما سار ظلته السحابة

وفي الإسراء للأقصى المبارك
فضا الأردن في ليلٍ سرى به

رسولٍ أرسله ربّ البرية
بأشرف دعوةٍ قام ودعا به

رؤوفٍ صادق المداكريم
عظيم الخلق في محكم كتابه

55 أمينٍ ملهم حرّ جوادٍ
أصيلٍ هاشمي في انتسابه

فصلى الله على الهادي وسلم
عدد ما الذّاكر لسانه هذى به

وصلى الله على آله وصحبه
عدد من طاف بالبيت وسعى به

فعمّان بمديته قد ذكرها
بوصف الحوض يوم إنّه بدا به

In lines 50-58, Hajaya recalls the Prophet Muhammad's sojourn in Jordan:

50 And our master Muhammad, before his prophecy,
On his feet tread our lands

He sat in the shade of one of her trees²³
And when he set out again the clouds sheltered him²⁴

On the Night Journey to the blessed al-Aqsa
He traveled by night through Jordan's sky

A prophet sent by the Lord of Creation
To undertake the noblest calling

Kind, principed, and noble
With lofty morals, in the Perfect Book²⁵

55 Reliable, inspired, free and generous
In his lineage a noble Hashemite

May God bless and save our guide
As many times as pious tongues recall him

May God bless his family and his companions
As many times as people have walked around the Kaaba

He recalled Amman in the beginning
Of his description of the Pond of Abundance²⁶

23 In Islamic tradition, Muhammad sat under a "blessed tree" on a business trip with his uncle from Mecca to Damascus. The tree is located in the region of al-Bgē'āwīyah or al-Şafāwī on the road between al-Mafrag and al-Rwēshid.

24 In Islamic tradition, a cloud followed Muhammad and his uncle on the same trip, providing them with shade for the rest of their journey.

25 In reference to the verse in the Qur'an in which God praises Muhammad's moral characters: "surely thou art upon a mighty morality" (68:4).

26 In reference to the "Pond of Abundance" (*ḥawḍ al-kawthar*) mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad that stretched from Aden to Amman of the Balqa'.

ومؤتة بالكرك يشهد تراها
وعطر أرضها دم الصحابة

60 فزيد حامل راية محمد
إلى الجنة سعى سعي وفي به

شهيد كرمه رب البرية
وجعفر أرضها جمل خضابه

تقدم حامل الراية وسيفه
كما الحصاد بزروع خضابه

وأشد قاتلاً والموت يدنو
ألا حي الجنان واقترابه

وعبد الله سيدي بن راحة
وردحوض المنايا وارتمى به

65 لحق زيد وجعفر في مديده
فأرشد غازي مر وغزابه

تلاميذ الفدا عصبة نبينا
معلمهم وكل اقتدى به

وباليرموك بالأردن دارت
معارك طهرت غالي ترابه

In lines 59-73, Hajaya recounts the Islamic conquest of Jordan:

And in Karak, Mu'tah's soil bore witness as
The blood of the Companions perfumed its ground²⁷

60 Zayd carried Muhammad's banner²⁸
Fought to the death and strove for martyrdom

A martyr exalted by the Lord of Creation
And Ja'far's blood adorned the ground like henna²⁹

He advanced carrying the banner and his sword
Like a harvester through a field of fresh crops

He cried out as death approached
"How wonderful heaven is! And how close!"

The commander 'Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah³⁰
Joined the fray and drank from death's basin

65 He followed Zayd and Ja'far in his journey
The best guided of raiders who passed and raided³¹

Students of self-sacrifice from the inner circle of
Muhammad, their teacher, whose example they followed

In Jordan's Yarmouk battles raged³²
And purified her precious ground

27 I.e. at the Battle of Mu'tah in 629 CE in modern Jordan's Karak province. The Muslims were heavily outnumbered but defeated by the Byzantines.

28 Zayd ibn Ḥārithah, a companion of the Prophet and military commander.

29 Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, companion of the Prophet and second-in-command at the Battle of Mu'tah, said to have been stabbed ninety times during the battle.

30 Companion of the Prophet and third-in-command at Mu'tah.

31 This line quotes a line of poetry 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah said shortly before he died: "So that they say when they pass by my grave / God bless him who raided with right guidance in the path of God".

32 The Battle of Yarmouk took place in 636 CE and sealed the Muslim Arab conquest of the Levant.

بحافل قادها خالد بحكمة
وزلزل دولة الروم وسطابه

صناديد العرب من كل فج
بحور الموت ما هابوا عبا به

70 وللإسلام والنور أدخلوها
تفرغ فوقهم راية عقابه

مشاعل نور في مظلم دجاها
بنوا مجد العرب وأعلوا قبا به

هرقل ادبر يجرّ أذيال ذلّه
وماهان اندهل ممّا أصابه

وبها مدفون آلاف الصحابة
أديم قبورهم فوح الشدا به

وقد سادت بها دولة أمية
وهاذي قصورهم وقت الهنا به

75 وبني العباس سادوها زمان
وأرض حميمة مفتاح باب به

Legions led by the wise Khalid³³
Who shook the Roman state and took it

Brave Arab leaders from all four corners
Feared not the breakers of death's seas

70 They brought to Jordan the light of Islam
And above them fluttered the Banner of the Eagle³⁴

Torches of light in the gloom of the dark
They built the Arabs' glory and raised its domes³⁵

Heraclius fled with his tail between his legs³⁶
And old Vahan was struck dumb³⁷

In Jordan are buried thousands of Companions
Whose graves exude the fragrance of musk³⁸

In lines 74-79, Hajaya reviews the dynasties and kingdoms that have ruled Jordan:

Here once ruled the Umayyad caliphs
Their castles attest to their happy old days³⁹

75 The Abbasid caliphs ruled here too
The key to their success lay in the land of Humayma⁴⁰

33 Khālid ibn al-Walid, companion of the Prophet and extremely successful military commander under Muhammad and the Rashidun caliphs.

34 I.e. one of the standards used by Muhammad and the early caliphs, also known as Muhammad's Banner and the Black Standard.

35 I.e. they gave the Arabs standing among the nations.

36 Byzantine emperor from 610 to 641 CE who lost the Levant and Egypt to the conquering Muslim Arabs.

37 Supreme Byzantine commander in the Battle of Yarmouk.

38 In Islamic tradition, the bodies of martyrs are said not to rot.

39 The Umayyad caliphs built a series of castles (al-Mshattā, al-Mwaggar, al-Ṭūbah, al-Ḥallābāt, and 'Amrah) in the Jordanian desert for rest and for hunting.

40 An ancient Edomite, Nabataean, and later Roman village in southern Jordan where the Abbasids plotted their takeover of the Umayyad caliphate.

وبني أيوب سادوها وكانوا
لها أسياد في وقتٍ مضى به

وبها كان الممالك الأشاوس
أسود الحرب في يوم اشتبا به

وبني عثمان سادوها قرونٍ
وقاسي جورهم ذقنا عذابه

إلى أن ثار مقدم مجرب
حسين بن علي عالي جنابه

وأطلق طلقة الثورة بمكة 80
وقول الله أكبر قد علا به

معه أشراف وأحرار العروبة
وإلى تحريرها وجه ركا به

أسود الثورة الكبرى وجنده
بواسل والخطر داسوا هضابه

وقادوها إلى العليا بواسل
غطاريف وأسودٍ بالحرابة

صناديد العرب من آل هاشم
مشاعل نور حقٍ يهتدى به

أزاحوا دولة الطغیان عنها 85
وجور الترك جدوا في ذهابه

The Ayyubids reigned in Jordan and were for her⁴¹
Masters during the time they spent here

The bold Mamluks also were here⁴²
Lions of war when it broke out

The Ottomans too ruled Jordan for centuries
We tasted the torment of their cruel tyranny

Until a bold, seasoned warrior rose up
Husayn ibn ‘Ali, of honor and dignity

In lines 80-113, Hajaya reviews Jordan’s Hashemite rulers:

80 He fired the Revolt’s first shot in Mecca⁴³
Where there arose cries of “God is great!”

With him went the Arabs’ free noble men
He sent troops and riders to liberate Jordan

The Great Revolt’s lions and soldiers
Intrepid, they trampled the hills of danger

They led it to the heights—fearless,
Intrepid, noble and bountiful, and lions in war

The Arabs’ brave leaders from Hashem’s line⁴⁴
Torches of truth guiding our way

85 They drove away from Jordan the State of Oppression⁴⁵
Determined to expel the Turks’ tyranny

41 The Ayyubids were a Muslim dynasty led by Saladin that ruled much of the Middle East during the 12th and 13th centuries CE.

42 The Mamluks were a dynasty descended from slaves that overthrew the Ayyubids.

43 I.e. the Great Arab Revolt, begun on June 10, 1916 with a shot fired by Husayn ibn ‘Ali.

44 Jordan’s ruling Hashemite family is descended from Hāshim ibn ‘Abd Manāf, great-grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad.

45 The Ottoman Empire.

وأرسوا به قواعد شيدوها
لمملكة عريب انتسابه

وبها أربع ملوك قد توالوا
أباً أسسوا مجد سما به

فعبد الله هو الجد المؤسس
بخدمة أمته أفنى شبابه

شهيده المسجد الأقصى وأرضه
فقيده أوجع الأردن مصابه

وبعده قادها شهيم عفيف 90
كتب دستورها وأعلى خطابه

طلال العبدتي راعي الهدلا
فيا معبودنا جزل ثوابه

وتولاها الحسين بصغر سنه
يحرها يجر زاد اضطرابه

تحمل عسرها وأثبت وجوده
ورفع بنيانها والخير جابه

They laid Jordan's foundations and built her up
To a kingdom in the Arabs' camp⁴⁶

Four kings here reigned in succession
Majestic kings who founded a glory and exalted Jordan

Our founding father Abdullah⁴⁷
Whose service to the Nation consumed his life⁴⁸

A martyr of al-Aqsa and its ground⁴⁹
The departed whose death so pained Jordan

90 After him a gallant man of virtue led her
Who wrote the constitution and raised its discourse⁵⁰

Talal *al-'abdālī, rā'ī al-hadlā!*⁵¹
Oh Lord, reward him well

In his young years Husayn took charge⁵²
In a raging sea whose surging only increased⁵³

He bore Jordan's burdens, affirmed her existence,
Established her, developed her, brought her the good⁵⁴

46 The Emirate of Transjordan was created as a British mandate in 1921; Jordan achieved full independence from the British on May 25, 1946.

47 Abdullah I, first king of Jordan who ruled from 1921 to 1951.

48 I.e. the Arab Nation, not just the state of Jordan, Hajaya adds.

49 Abdullah I was assassinated in Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque in 1951 by a Palestinian while on a peacemaking visit to Reuven Shiloah, head of the Mossad.

50 King Talal ruled Jordan for a little over a year from 1951-1952 and was forced to abdicate for mental health reasons; by "raised its discourse," Hajaya means that under Talal the constitution was written and many freedoms were guaranteed.

51 The battle cry (*nakhwah*) of the Hashemite clan of 'Awn, from which Jordan's ruling family descends, is *rā'ī al-hadlā 'abdālī*, inverted here for the meter.

52 King Husayn ibn Talal became king of Jordan at the age of 18.

53 I.e. the Middle East.

54 E.g. he eradicated malaria and tuberculosis.

وعرّب جيشها صقر الهواشم
والاستعمار أنهي اتدابه

95
ملك يعرف العالم مكانه
فقيدي زلزل العالم غيابه

ففقده كان للأمة مصيبة
بحور الشعر ما توفي رثابه

وسلّمها لمن صان الأمانة
زعيم للعالي قد رقى به

إلى عبد الله الثاني سندها
رفع من مستواها واعتلى به

سليل حسين من دمه ولحمه
حبيب الشعب والشعب أكتفى به

100
حكيم الراي محمود السجايا
وبجرهاج عند اضطرابه

جعلها واحة أحرار العروبة
وعلى الإصلاح موكبها مشى به

وصان حدودها من كلّ عابث
بسيف صارم يمسك نصابه

That Hashemite falcon Arabized her army⁵⁵
 As colonization under the Mandate came to an end⁵⁶

95 A king whose rank the whole world knows
 When he died, his absence shook the world⁵⁷

For the Nation his loss was a disaster
 Lines of poetry can't do him justice

But he passed her off to him who preserved the trust,
 To a leader who led her onward and upward

To Abdullah II, her trusty support
 He raised her standing and exalted her more

Husayn's scion in flesh and blood⁵⁸
 Beloved of his people, ever content with him

100 A wise decision-maker of laudable qualities
 But a surging sea when he's upset

He's made her an oasis of free Arab men⁵⁹
 And has led Jordan's march to reform⁶⁰

He defends her borders from every zealot
 With a sharp sword whose hilt he holds

55 King Husayn Arabized the Jordanian army in 1956 by firing the British general John Bagot Glubb (Glubb Pasha) and appointing Rāḍī 'Ināb as head of the army.

56 The British Mandate in Jordan came to an end in 1946.

57 The world was indeed shaken after King Husayn died, Hajaya adds; he also added that King Husayn himself predicted shortly before his death that if the world (and the Middle East) continued the way it was going, there would be many wars and much destruction.

58 The forty-third in a line of direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad. Born in Amman on January 30, 1962, the eldest son of King Husayn. He took power on February 7, 1999.

59 Especially refugees from surrounding Arab countries who refused to endure oppression and tyranny in their home countries.

60 In reference to the reforms in the constitution, the judiciary, and the electoral process that Abdullah II initiated.

ودرع للوطن جيشٍ مجفل
بأكباد العدا تطعن حرا به

سياج الأردن الغالي جنوده
إذا ما داعي الهيجاد عابه

105 هم أبناءه وأسواره وعزّه
فداه أرواحهم يوم اللقاء به

سيوف الحق في أيدي كمة
صوارم والعدا تقطع رقابه

وتراب القدس يشهد للنشامى
فدا لثرا بها صفوة شباب به

وفي أرض الكرامة كان يوم
على الأعداء مصبوبٍ عذابه

وبالجولان في أرض العروبة
تقدّم جيشنا مثل الذبابه

110 وأمن ساهرٍ طول الليالي
على أهل العبت يفرض رقابه

والأردن بارزة بالشرق الأوسط
وبالعالم لها ذكر ومهابة

The homeland's shield is a stocked, trained army
Whose bayonets stab their enemies' livers

Her soldiers are precious Jordan's walls
Whenever the leaders call for war

105 They're her sons, her fences, her power
Who'd sacrifice their lives for her on the day of battle

Swords of truth in brave men's hands,
Sharp and keen, that cut her enemies' necks

Jerusalem's soil will attest to the gallant lads
Who died for her—the flower of Jordan's youth⁶¹

There was a day in the land of Karamah when⁶²
We poured down pain on our enemies

And in the Golan Heights, on Arab land,
Our army advanced like wolves⁶³

110 With security vigilant each and every night
Casting its gaze on frivolous folk⁶⁴

In the Middle East, Jordan stands out
And in the world, she commands respect and mention

61 Two of Hajaya's close relatives died defending Jerusalem: his cousin Sanad Nāsir al-Hgēsh, and 'Īd Kāyid al-Ḥajāyā; Jordan fought Israel in 1948, 1956, 1966, 1967, 1968, and 1973.

62 Pun on the word "dignity" (*karāmah*) and the village, al-Karamah, where the Battle of Karamah took place on March 21, 1968 between Israel and the PLO, whom the Jordanians supported. Both sides claimed victory.

63 In reference to Jordan's nominal participation in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Although it is widely accepted in historical scholarship that Jordan's participation in the war was a symbolic gesture to save face among the Arab nations—indeed, King Husayn flew to Tel Aviv to warn Golda Meir about the Egyptians' and the Syrians' imminent attack—many Jordanians consider Jordan's participation real and refuse to believe the scholarship. See Sini-ver ed. (2013), Shlaim (1988), and Rabinovich (2004). Hajaya's brother-in-law Muḥammad Thānī al-Hayāysah al-Ḥamādāt, who commanded a Jordanian tank in the Golan, is one such skeptic.

64 "Frivolous Folk" (*ahl al-'abth*), or people who intend to harm Jordan's safety and security.

ولاية عهده أسندها لابن
قلوب الشعب قالت مرحبا به

حسين ابن عبدالله شبلي
إلى نبيل الهواشم المنجذابه

وصروح الجامعات اليوم فيها
ثلاثين تقصينا حسابه

بها اثني عشر مركز محافظ
جواهر تاج عزّ يحتفى به

115

ففيها نغرنا الباسم جنوباً
عروس البحر من سندس ثيابه

عشايرها ويا نعم العشاير
إذا ما حبلها زاد أكثرابه

وفي أطراف صحرانا العزيزة
معان اللي عزيزات رحابه

عشايرها إلى العلياء تسمو
هل الجردا إذا ناس انتخى به

بها البتراء عجيبة في زمنها
وما زالت مليئة بالعجابه

120

وإذا ما رحت غرباً للطفيلة
شموخ العرّ يسكن في هضابه

Abdullah II entrusted his throne to a son⁶⁵
 The people's hearts have responded with "Welcome!"

Husayn ibn 'Abdullah, a lion cub,
 Reflecting the best of the Hashemites' nobility

In lines 114-152, Hajaya reviews Jordan's geography and history:

Today Jordan's universities' halls now number
 Thirty—I looked it up!

115 She boasts twelve governorates:
 The jewels in the crown of strength, so celebrated

In the south lies our smiling port⁶⁶
 Our mermaid dressed in silk brocade⁶⁷

Her tribes, indeed, the best of tribes!
 When the rope of affairs becomes tense

On the edges of our dear desert lies
 The town of Ma'an, powerful and generous

Her tribes tower above in the heights
 "Men of Jarda" when folks call on them⁶⁸

120 There lies Petra, wondrous in her time,
 That still remains full of wonder

And if you went west to Tafilah
 There lofty pride resides in her hills

65 Lit. entrusted the "protection of the covenant" (*wilāyat al-'ahd*).

66 I.e. an epithet of Jordan's southern port city of al-'Aqabah.

67 "Silk brocade" (*sindis*), or "sarcenet," worn by heaven's dwellers in Islam.

68 The "war cry" (*nakhwah*) of Ma'an's tribes is "*ahl al-jardā*!" "Jarda" was the name of a brigade (*liwā'*) sent to fight the Ottomans in the Great Arab Revolt.

عشايرها ريفعات المبادي
بفعلٍ طاول القمّة جنابه

مقام الحارث الأزدي فيها
وأقصى حدّها واد الحسابه

وشماله بالكرك صرحاً تعلّى
لها التاريخ يشهد بالصلابة

عشايرها لها ذكرٍ مسجّل 125
بصفحات الوفي قوشان طابه

صلاح الدين حرّرها بسيفه
ونور الدين قبله قد ولى به

وشماله مادبا أرض التآخي
بها الوالة قراج انسكابه

بها كرام القبائل والحمائل
إذا يوم الوطن صار الندابه

كنايسها مناراتٍ تعلّت
ومساجدها مصابيح الضيا به

وما عثمّان إلا مثل يثرب 130
فمن هاجر لها قالت هلا به

عشايرها كرامٍ من كرام
سلاح للوطن وافر زها به

Her tribes have high principles
And deeds that attain the height of peaks

There's the final resting place of al-Ḥārith al-Azdī⁶⁹
And her farthest border is Wadi al-Ḥisā

To its north in Karak there looms a castle
History witnesses her toughness

125 Her tribes' renown is as fixed, as recorded
As a title deed in the pages of history

Saladin freed her with his sword
And Nur ad-Din before him ruled there⁷⁰

To the north lies Madaba, land of brotherhood⁷¹
And Wadi al-Walah, gushing pure, clear water

Home to noble, generous tribes and clans
If ever the homeland called on them

Her churches are lights towering above
Her mosques are illumined lamps

130 Amman's nothing but a modern-day Yathrib⁷²
Who greets with welcome all who emigrate there

Her tribes are the noblest of the noble
The homeland's protection, her ammunition abounding

69 Al-Ḥārith ibn 'Amīr al-Azdī, a companion of the Prophet who was killed on a proselytizing mission to the king of Buṣrā by Sharḥābil ibn 'Amr al-Ghassānī; his death precipitated the Battle of Mu'tah.

70 Saladin captured the Karak Castle in 1188; Nur al-Din al-Zengi, of the Turkish Zengid dynasty, ruled Syria for the Seljuks from 1146 to 1174.

71 Muslims and Christians live together in peace in Madaba.

72 Pre-Islamic name for the city of Medina located in modern-day Saudi Arabia's Hijaz; Yathrib was a place of refuge for the early Muslims just as Amman has become a place of refuge for displaced Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians.

بظلّ الهاشميين النشامى
لأحرار الأمم مفتوح بابهُ

وغربه ديرة السلط العذية
بلاد الخير والعلم انتشى به

عشايرها منيعات الجوانب
وأصل طيب ما عيب عابه

135 وادي شعيب ينبع من رباها
خطيب الأنبيا جزل الخطابة

ومجلون العزيزة يوم تذكر
ألايت المطر يروي جنبه

عشايرها لها عزٍ وفخرٍ
على صفحات تاريخ مضى به

مقام إلياس مبني في تراها
وهي جلعاد اسم يندرى به

وجرش آثارها تشهد لماضي
عريق ظاهر كاشف نقابه

140 عشايرها بيوم الضيق تظهر
إذا ما غاوي عقله غوى به

وهود ابن شالح له مقام
على إحدى روايهها قبا به

In the shadow of the gallant Hashemites,
Her door's open to the world's free men

To the west lies the pure land of al-Salt
Land of plenty where learning flourished⁷³

Her tribes' borderlands are impregnable
With good lineage, unblemished by shame

135 Wadi Shu'ayb flows forth from her hills
The most eloquent preacher from among the prophets

And dear 'Ajlun, whenever she's mentioned,
May rain water her whole expanse⁷⁴

Her tribes possess strength, pride and honor
In the pages of history

Elijah's tomb is built on her ground
For another name she's known by is Gilead⁷⁵

The ruins of Jarash attest to a past,
An evident, ancient, deep-rooted past

140 In days of distress her tribes emerge
If a misguided man's mind led him astray⁷⁶

Hūd ibn Shālikh has a resting-place⁷⁷
In one of the domes on her hills

73 The village of al-Salt is home to the first public high school in Jordan and was a center of Islamic learning in the nineteenth century.

74 A province with a capital city of the same name located in northern Jordan and surrounded by hills forested with olive and oak trees.

75 The Amorite name for the modern-day land of 'Ajlun, which means "toughness and roughness" (*ṣalābah wa-khushūnah*).

76 I.e. if someone tried to bring the Arab Spring to Jordan, in Hajaya's words.

77 Islamic prophet.

وبها الزرقاء من أجمل مدنا
بها نهر عذبي انسيابه

عشايرها شريفين النوايا
حماة حدودها يوم المجابهة

ممر لموكب الحجاج كانت
وشيبب التبعي قصره بنى به

وبها المفرق على خط الكرامة 145
وكم رحالة ذكره أتى به

عشايرها كريمين الفعايل
أسود الحرب في يوم انتشابه

تسمى بالفدين بوقت ماضي
هنوف البادية تلبس عصابه

وإذا شملت شامل صوب إربد
بلاذ يبهج الناظر خصابه

عشايرها نقيين الضماير
رجال للوطن كل الوفي به

ومقام الملك داوود المكرم 150
على إحدى روايها زها به

وبها الرمثا على الحد الشمالي
جذور العرّ تنبت في ترابه

There lies Zarqa', one of our most beautiful cities,
With a river who pours forth clean and pure

With noble intentions, her tribes
Guard her borders on the day of battle

She was a path for hajj caravans
Shabīb at-Tubba'ī built his castle there⁷⁸

145 Mafraq lies on the Road of Dignity,⁷⁹
And how many travelers mentioned it!

Her tribes do generous deeds
Brave as lions when war breaks out

Called *Faddayn* in days of yore
A Bedouin beauty, wearing her headband

And if you went north toward Irbid
A country whose greenery gladdens the eye

Her tribesmen have pure hearts
Men of the homeland, endowed with devotion

150 The tomb of the honored King David
Lies, beautiful, on one of her hills

Ramtha lies on the northern border
Roots of strength grow in her ground

78 Shabīb al-Tubba'ī al-Ḥamīrī was a Yemeni prince who fought Bani Hilal and "governed major parts of Jordan including Ma'an in the 10th century AD on behalf of the Ikhshidid dynasty in Egypt." (Abudanh, *Settlement Patterns and Military Organization in the region of Udhruh (southern Jordan) in the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, 235).

79 In reference to *Khaff al-Karāmah* ("The Road of Dignity"), the name of the road that runs from Amman to Baghdad.

عشايرها حلا حيل الصعايب
 سياج حدودها والي لجابه
 وبالأردن منيعات القبائل
 سياج للوطن يوم الفدا به
 به حويطات يا نعم القبيلة
 إذا ما نارها زاد اشتبا به

155 وبها أحيوات فرسان أصايل
 مرابعهم ينابيع السخا به

وسعيديين به عزّ وفر
 لهم بالقلب موقع يحتفى به

وبها نعيمات يا نعم العشائر
 كرام فعلهم كلّ الثنا به

يجاورهم به ربعي الحجايا
 ضياغم كلّ من قام اعتزى به

يجاورهم بها أبناء عطية
 لهم بالفعل موقع يندرى به

160 يحدّوهم بها حمر النواظر
 أسود الحرب وفروع النجاة

وسليط الي لهم ذكر مؤكّد
 شنيعين اللقا يوم الحراة

Her tribes are clever, strong in hardship
 Her borders' fences, her refugees' shields

In lines 153-180, Hajaya reviews the many tribes and ethnic groups that live in Jordan:

In Jordan there are mighty tribes
 The homeland's fences on the day of sacrifice

The Ḥwētāt—what a noble tribe!
 If the fire of war broke out and spread

155 The Aḥyawāt, noble knights
 Whose parlors are founts of generosity

The Sa'īdiyyīn of strength and pride
 With an esteemed place in our hearts

The Na'ēmāt—what a noble tribe!
 Of noble deeds, who're due thanks and praise

They live next to my tribe the Ḥajāyā
 Lions! In whom all take pride⁸⁰

And we live next to Bani 'Aṭīyyah
 Who indeed have a place of renown

160 After their borders live Red-Eyed Men⁸¹
 Lions of war and branches of nobility

And the Salāyṭah, with a definite renown,
 Fierce in battle in the days of war

80 The battle cry (*nakhwah*) of the Hajaya tribe is "lions" (*dayāghim*) in reference to an alleged ancestor of the Hajayas' named Ḍaygham; this is also the battle cry of the 'Abdah sub-tribe of the Shammar tribe, from whom the Hajaya tribe claims descent. Often every clan within the tribe has its own battle-cry, taken from the name of a prized horse, camel, mountain, female relative, or male ancestor.

81 "Red-eyed men" (*ḥumr al-nawāḍir*) is the epithet applied to the Bani Sakhr tribe for their bravery and intensity.

وبها السرحان هم أهل البويضا
قلايد خيلها كلَّ يهابه

وبني خالد كرمين السجايا
وصايفهم أسودٍ حول غابة

وبه العيسى ويا نعم المستمى
سلايل طيِّ قحطانٍ مجابه

وبها أهل الجبل والنعم منهم 165
حماة حدودها من اللي عدا به

وسردية يصدّون الأعادي
عرينٍ للذي جا واحتمى به

وبني حسنٍ بها قوم أباة
حماة للوطن لو شرّ صابه

وبني عبّاد يا حيّ القبيلة
رماحٍ والعدى تطعن لبابه

وصبيان الصباح والنعم منهم
سيوفٍ صارمة يوم اللقاء به

وبها العدوان صدّام الأعادي 170
هل الضبطى شديدين الصلابة

وبهاربع كرمين الفعايل
دعجة والنعم اسمٍ يعتزى به

The Sirḥān, people of *Bwēḏā*,⁸²
All respect their horses' breast collars

Bani Khalid have such noble qualities
The qualities of lions prowling a forest

The ʿĪsā tribe, the best of names,⁸³
From good Ṭayy stock with roots in Qaḥṭān⁸⁴

165 And the Mountain People, good, noble men⁸⁵
Guarding the borders from who'd creep across them

The Sardiyyah repel enemies
A lion's den for whoever came seeking their protection

Bani Ḥasan, a tribe of strong men
Who protect the homeland if evil struck

Bani ʿAbbād—praise the best of tribes!
Whose spears stabs the enemies' chests

"Lads of the Morning"—good, noble men⁸⁶
Sharp swords on the day of battle

170 The ʿAdwān, they clash with the enemy
"Men of *Ḍabṭā*" firm and intense⁸⁷

There's a tribe of noble, generous deeds
The Daʿaja, whose name we take pride in

82 The battle cry of the Sirḥān tribe is *Bwēḏā*, in reference to the name of a famous she-camel of theirs.

83 ʿĪsā means "Jesus".

84 Tayy and Qahtan are large Arabian tribes.

85 A group of tribes in northern Jordan along with border with Syria.

86 "Lads of the Morning" (*ṣibyān al-ṣabāḥ*) is the battle cry of the ʿAjārmah tribe.

87 "Men of *Ḍabṭā*" (*ḥal ḏabṭā*) is the battle cry of the ʿAdwan tribe.

وبني وايل عريين السلايل
فعايلهم مفاخر ينحكي به

وشمر كاسين الصيت شمر
رجال فعلها يحسب حسابه

وبلقاوية بالعهد توفى
إلى الفرعة سريعين الإجابة

وبها السباح من لابة حميدة 175
سيوف صارمة عطب صوابه

وبدو السبع يا نعم القبائل
لها باليسر وأيام الصعابة

وبني معروف يا نعم القبائل
عرب أحقاد مشهور انتسابه

وبها الشيشان والشركس أصايل
بيوم الحرب درع يتقى به

وأهل الغور يا غور المحبة
بياض قبولهم كل الصفا به

وألف النعم في كل القبائل 180
بكل بلاد مخلوق مشى به

ويا من تنكر الأردن فإنا
نراك اليوم في حجم الذبابة

Banī Wāyil of pure Arab roots⁸⁸
 Their deeds cause for pride we recount

And Shammar—such winners of fame!—Shammar!
 Men whose deeds are well considered, renowned

The Balgā's tribes are loyal to the Compact⁸⁹
 Quick to respond when called on for help

175 And the “*Sīyyāh*” from Ḥamīdah's tribe⁹⁰
 Keen swords whose blows bring ruin

The Bedouin from Beersheba, good, noble tribes!
 Who've seen both easy and difficult days

Banī Ma'rūf, good noble tribes!⁹¹
 Pure, complete Arabs whose ancestry's known

The noble Chechens and Circassians
 Protecting shields in days of war

The Valley People, oh valley of love
 With white hearts full of purity⁹²

180 One thousand times' respect and welcome to all the tribes
 In every country where God's creatures walk

In lines 181-191, Hajaya writes of Jordan's national unity and its acceptance of the Palestinians into the national fabric:

As for those who reject and disavow Jordan,
 Today we consider you as small as a fly

88 Banī Wāyil are from 'Anazah, a large Arabian tribe.

89 I.e. the Hashemite Compact (*al-'ahd al-hāshimī*) between native Jordanian tribes and the Hashemite rulers, who came from the Hijaz and were appointed by the British to rule Jordan.

90 “*Sīyyāh*” is the battle cry of the Banī Ḥamīdah.

91 The Druze tribes that live in al-Azraq, al-Zarqa, and Amman.

92 I.e. in contrast to their dark skin; *ahl al-ghōr*, or the *ghawārnah*, are the descendants of African slaves.

فأردنا وطن كل الطوايف
نعيش اخوان وأحرارٍ سوى به

ومن هو يحبنا منا وحتا
له العزوة إذا جور أصابه

به الأنصار في وقت الشدايد
لشعبٍ تمّ طرده واستلابه

185 هدفنا واحدٍ والقلب واحد
والأردن بيتنا واحنا اصحابه

بها صار المخيم جزء منا
نسيج واحد ألوانه تشابه

من البقعة إلى أصغر مخيم
تخالط دمنا ودّ وقراة

ومن المفتي إلى الزرقا الحبيبة
إلى الوحدات أحوال ونسابة

نسيج محكم محبب وكرامة
وعرش الهاشمي الكلّ أكفى به

190 وهي ستة ملايين وزيادة
تلاحم شعبها زاده صلابة

والأردن فكرة ليست عشيرة
ومن شتى المنابت يلتقى به

Our Jordan's a homeland for every sect and creed
 We live as brothers, as a free folk, all equal

And whoever loves us is one of us, and for him
 We're his help when he's struck by oppression

In times of distress we're the champions
 Of a people expelled from and robbed of their homeland⁹³

185 Our aim is one, our heart is one, and
 Jordan's our home and we're its people, its owners

The refugee camp has become a part of us
 We're one woven fabric, whose colors resemble each other

From al-Bag'ah to the smallest of camps,
 Our blood has mingled in affection and kinship

From al-Mufti to beloved Zarqa
 To al-Waḥadāt, we're all uncles and cousins⁹⁴

A tightly-woven fabric with love and dignity,
 We're all content with the Hashemite throne

190 We're six million and then some
 Strengthened by her people's coherence

For Jordan's an idea, not a tribe, and
 All kinds of origins can be found here

93 I.e. the Palestinians.

94 In reference to the national unity that has been established between East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian descent through intermarriage.

مواكبنا يسيرن للأعالي
ونسبح خلفها نبج الكلابه

ومن يطمح بها تصبح بديلة
لأرضٍ تمّ سلبه واغتصابه

فإنه واهمّ صادر بغيه
ولا يعلم عواقب ما حكي به

195 فالأردن دونها نارٍ تلظى
سيوفٍ صارمة ما هي دعابة

لأنها واحة أحرار العروبة
ملاذ ومن شكى جور التجابه

ففي يوم الكرامة كان درسٍ
لمن حاول يطا غالي ترابه

وطنا نفتديه بكلّ غالي
وعدوّ أسيانا نكسر أيابه

In lines 192-199, Hajaya warns those who would make Jordan an alternative homeland for the Palestinians:

As our convoys head for the heights
And we hear behind them the barking of dogs⁹⁵

Whoever dreams she'll become the alternative
To a land stolen and seized by force⁹⁶

He's wrongly mistaken, resolute in his error,
Not aware of the consequences of his words

195 Before Jordan there blazes a fire, and
Sharp swords guard her—I'm not joking around

For she's an oasis for free Arab folk
A shelter for those who've suffered oppression

The day of Karamah was a lesson
For those who tried to tread our precious ground⁹⁷

For our homeland we'll sacrifice everything precious to us
We'll break the teeth of our lords' enemies⁹⁸

95 I.e. those who slander the Hashemites, Jordan, and the Jordanian people; this line is in reference to the Arabic proverb "The caravan marches on and the dogs bark [behind it]" (*al-qāfilah tasīr wa-l-kilāb tanbah*), used to express slanderers' pettiness, weakness, and inability to harm what's important.

96 In reference to the idea that Jordan has become or should become an alternative homeland for the Palestinian people.

97 I.e. the Battle of Karamah on March 21, 1968 was a "lesson" (*dars*) to Israel. Israel launched an operation to destroy the PLO and Fatah camp near the Jordanian town of Karamah, from which Palestinian guerrillas were launching attacks into Israel. Though the battle was a tactical victory for the Israelis—they destroyed the camps, captured 141 PLO members, and suffered just 30 casualties compared to the Jordanians (40-84?) and Palestinians (156)—the PLO claimed victory. Many Jordanians believe that Israel's given reason of dismantling the PLO camp was just a pretext for the ulterior Israeli motive of capturing the Balga Governorate because of its strategic elevation in order to annex it.

98 I.e. the Jordanians will break the power of the Hashemites' enemies.

ووحدها ترى خيطٍ مقدّس
نقصّ أقدام من حاول يطابه

200 ويا من تطلب الإصلاح زوراً
وغرّك بالربيع اسمٍ لفي به

ربيع الشرّ ما مرّ ببلدنا
بفضل الله تجاوزنا صعابه

ربيع أسودٍ هبّت رياحه
وأمطاره حجيمٍ يكتوى به

تحرك به عقولٍ خارجية
وتنفذ به أيادي بالنيابة

فكم من دولةٍ حرقت بناه
لأنّ الحاكمين بها عصابة

205 وكم من أمةٍ صارت طوايف
سببها حاكم الشعب ابتلى به

وكم من شعب ضاعت منجزاته
طيور اليوم تنعق في خرابه

مجازر هزّت العالم بأسره
عصاباته فحورة بارتكابه

وأنحن بالقلوب جروح حزين
وغير القتل والتدمير ما به

Our unity is a hallowed line
 And we'll cut the feet off of whoever tries to cross it

In lines 200-214, Hajaya recounts the horrors brought by the Arab Spring:

200 To you who falsely demand reform,
 Deceived by a new-fangled spring⁹⁹

A spring of evil that didn't pass through our country
 By God's grace we've averted its hardships

A Black Spring bringing raging winds
 With hellish rain that burns one's skin

A spring controlled by external minds
 And hands that do their dirty work¹⁰⁰

How many countries were burned by its fire
 Because their rulers are no more than a gang?

205 How many nations have dissolved into sects
 Because of a ruler who's made his people suffer?

How many achievements of peoples have been lost
 In whose ruins and wastes owls now hoot and cry?

Massacres that have shaken the whole world
 Slaughter that gangs are so proud of committing

Wounds of sadness have heaved our hearts in this
 Spring that's all death and destruction

99 I.e. the Arab Spring.

100 In reference to the conspiracy theory that the Arab Spring was manufactured by foreign enemies of the Arab Nation.

فكم من أرملة تشكو أساها
وكم من والدة تشكو مصابه

210 وكم طفلٍ بليل البؤس يصرخ
على أمه وأبوه ما جرى به

شعوبٍ شردت شرقاً وغرباً
وأعراضٍ بها تمّ اغتصابه

غياب الأمن والقانون أرسى
قواعد شرّ أوجهها تشابه

باسم الدين كم قامت عصابة
وكلّ يفتخر في شرّ جابه

ربيع الدم والأشلاء أسود
جزى الله شرّ من أطلق ركابه

215 وربيع الأردن أخضر ما تلون
بلون الدم والغير اكتسى به

ربيع هاشميّ أردنيّ
وشعبٍ حكم العقل بخطابه

وقايد قام بالإصلاح طوعاً
سبق وقت الربيع وما أتى به

بتعديلات للدستور تمّت
وإصلاحات ملهوسة بدا به

How many widows lament their grief?
How many mothers lament their loss?

- 210 How many children on miserable nights cry out
From what happened to their mothers and fathers?

Entire peoples dispersed east and west in flight,
Families' honor destroyed, women and girls raped

The absence of safety and law has fixed
Foundations of evil that all look alike¹⁰¹

How many gangs arose in the name of religion,
All of whom take pride in the evil they've brought?

A Black Spring of blood and body parts
May God punish whoever sent forth its riders

In lines 215-234, Hajaya speaks of Jordan's green Spring:

- 215 Jordan's spring has been green, not stained
By the color of blood, which covered the others

A Hashemite Spring, a Jordanian Spring
A people that used reason in its discourse¹⁰²

A leader who started on reform voluntarily¹⁰³
Well before the Spring came and brought what it brought

With amendments to the constitution
And tangible reforms did he begin

101 I.e. terrorist groups; "foundations of evil" (*qawā'id sharr*) is a play on the word for "foundation" or "base" (*qā'idah*), as in al-Qaeda; for similar word play see line 19 of "Child Killer".

102 I.e. in its discourse when addressing the Jordanian government about reform.

103 I.e. King Abdullah II began serious reform at the beginning of his reign in 1999 with no pressure from an Arab Spring.

وقانون انتخاب به مميّز
واستقلال كامل للقضا به

220 وطناً ولا يمكن نخونه
ونصبر لو أكلنا من ترابه

لأنه ديرة الأمن العديّة
إذا ما لاجئ ضاق الفضا به

نعيش أحرار في واحة وطناً
ولا نخشى به أمن ورقابة

ومن ينوي به شرّ فإنّه
بعدلٍ محكم يلقى عقابه

ليصحو من جهالاته وغيّه
ويضبط ما تحرّبط من حسابه

225 ليصلح أوّلاً نفسه وبيته
لأنّ ما حدا متاً أنابه

لأنّ الشعب عارف بالنوايا
نوايا حاقدٍ شرّه نوى به

له أهدافٍ خبيثاتٍ وخفيه
عليها دايماً ينعق غرابه

فلا والله ما نسلك طريقه
ولا تقبل بفكره واحتزابه

A distinguished election law
And an independent judiciary

220 We can never, not ever, betray our homeland
We'll wait patiently even if we have to eat dirt

For it's the pure, good land of safety
When a refugee's home country oppresses him

We live as free folk in our homeland's oasis
Here we don't fear state security or surveillance

Whoever intends it any evil
Will find his punishment in the rule of law

May he wake from his error and transgression
And fix what he threw into confusion¹⁰⁴

225 May he first reform himself and his house
For none of us appointed him in our stead¹⁰⁵

For the people are aware of designs and schemes
Of the hateful, the spiteful, who seek only evil

They harbor hidden, wicked designs
For which crows are always cawing¹⁰⁶

No, by God, we won't travel that road or
Accept such factious, partisan thought

104 I.e. may provocateurs who would bring an Arab Spring to Jordan undo their harmful work.

105 For this sentiment see also line 21 of "The Arab Spring".

106 I.e. designs that lead to destruction (*kharāb*), in reference to the Arabic proverb "Follow the crow; he'll lead you to ruins/destruction" (*itba' al-ghrāb yidillak 'al-kharāb*).

ولا تقبل خراب الدار حتى
ينال المنصب اللي احترى به

230 قيادتنا سلالة هاشمية
هم الحزب الأصيل وكلنا به

هم اللي يجمعون الأغلبية
وإذا نادى الوطن يلقي استجابة

وهم القلب الكبير ويحتضنا
ولا تقبل عليهم انقلابه

فيا أرض السلام والله يديمك
ويكفيك الشرور ومن بدا به

ويا من تسألوني عن بلادي
فإنّ الأردني هذا جوابه

235 وداعي ما نظمته فكر حرّ
له الفكرة وأعطاني نصابه

مفكر زادني فكره بصيرة
تقيّ للهدى تمشي ركابه

أمير عالم قول مؤكّد
بدكورا ه ثنتين احتظى به

We won't accept the house's ruin just so
Someone can get a job he expected¹⁰⁷

230 Hashemite lineage is our leadership!
The noble, original party we all belong to

They bring together the majority
If the nation cried out, it would find a response

They're the great heart that embraces us all
We'd never accept their overthrow

Oh land of peace, may God preserve you
And keep you from evil and those who'd commit it

To whoever asks me about my country
My country's Jordan—there's your answer

In lines 235-250, Hajaya credits Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad with the idea for the poem and praises him before leaving his own signature in verse:

235 The motivation for this poem was the thought of a free man¹⁰⁸
The idea was his sword, but he handed me the hilt

A thinker who enriched me with his thought and reason
A believer who guides his mounts on God's path

A learned prince, my word's for certain
Who's earned no less than two doctorates¹⁰⁹

107 In reference to the Jordanian government's practice of neutralizing opposition members by giving them government jobs; this phenomenon has led to many people's calling for "reform" who in fact seek not reform but only a stable job; see line 15 of "The Arab Spring".

108 Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad.

109 Prince Ghazi has a doctorate in Modern and Medieval Languages and Literatures from the University of Cambridge (1993) and a doctorate in Islamic Philosophy from al-Azhar University (2010); he is the "personal envoy and advisor to King Abdullah II and the president of the Council of Trustees of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought. He is the forty-third direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad" (*Urdunnā*, 21).

فغازي بن محمد من سلالة
لهم بالدين حقّ ينوفى به

كرامٍ من كرامٍ من كرامٍ
فروع الطيب من أصل الطيابة

240 وآل البيت سادتنا وحتّا

لهم عزوة وباللله الإنابة

ومجمل فكرته تحمل معاني
إشاراتٍ شديدٍ اقتضابه

نظمته في قصيدة تقرأؤها
وموزونة على عزف الربابة

بها استدركت ما فات القريحة
وانصفت الذي جاني عتابه

حكمتنا الوقت فيما فات غصبًا
وجيت اليوم أكل ما غدا به

245 وما كامل سوى ربّ البرية

وانا عبدٍ ضعيفٍ واحتى به

عدد أبياتها ميتين بيت

وخمسين وثلاثٍ في رتابه

نظم أبياتها محمد فناطل

مواطن أردني من خير لابة

Ghazi ibn Muhammad's from a line
 To whom by religion we owe loyalty and allegiance

Noble and generous, liberal and kind,
 Branches of goodness from goodness' roots

240 Our masters are the Prophet's family, and we're
 Their help and support—on God we rely

The sum of his idea bears signs, symbols
 And meanings that are quite frankly hard to condense

I've arranged them in the poem you now read
 In metered verse to be played to the *rabābah*

Here I've put right what my talent first missed
 I've appeased those who came scolding me¹¹⁰

We were earlier constrained by time, against our will
 And I've come today to complete what I left out

245 But who's truly complete save the Lord of Creation?
 I'm just a weak servant who seeks his protection

As it is, its lines number two hundred
 And fifty-three

Muhammad Fanatil wrote its lines
 A Jordanian citizen from the best of tribes

110 In the version of this poem that Hajaya performed for King Abdullah II on national television on May 25, 2011, he failed to mention certain Jordanian tribes, who scolded him; later he worked them into the poem.

كتبها من صميم القلب حبّ
وفاءً للوطن واللي نشابه

ولاءه هاشميّ ما مال يوم
إذا ما تاجرٍ باع وشري به

بعام ألفين وأربع عشر منه ²⁵⁰
من الميلاد لّي ما درى به

وصلىّ الله على مشعل هدانا
عدد ما الغيث يهطل من سحابه

وعدد ما طائرٍ رفرّف جناحه
وعدد ذرّات هالكون وحسابه

صلاةٍ دائمة ليل ونهارٍ
إلى أن نلتقي حضرة جنابه

He wrote it with love from the bottom of his heart
In devotion to the homeland and all who live there

His loyalty's to the Hashemites—he never wavered for a day
Even if other traders would buy and sell it¹¹¹

250 As for its date, it was written in the year
Two thousand and fourteen after the birth of Christ

In lines 251-253, Hajaya closes with a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad:

Pray to God for him who lights our path
As many times as rain falls from the clouds

As many times as birds flap their wings
As many times as there are atoms in the universe

Perpetual prayers, night and day,
Until we meet his honored presence¹¹²

111 I.e. poets and writers who would sell out their homeland.

112 I.e. that of the Prophet Muhammad, in heaven.

أزعم وأكرم قتيل

يا سلام الله على قمة شموخ الجبال
ووداعة الله يا أزعم وأكرم قتيل

أبيت إلا الصمود ومّت مينة رجال
في زمانٍ رجاله مثل عبد الذليل

يا شهيد الكرامة يا قليل المثال
كنت قمة تحدي بالزمان الهزيل

يا شهيد العروبة يا صدوق المقال
مّت صامد مجاهد مثل موت النخيل

في ذمة الله يا مالك جميل الخصال
وكنت نعم العقيد وكنت نعم الدليل

ما قبلت المذلة يوم قالوا تعال
ويوم قالوا تحيّ قلت ذا مستحيل

Noblest of the Fallen

October 21, 2011

Like his elegy on Saddam Hussein, Hajaya's elegy on Libyan dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi was written the day Qaddafi was killed, October 21, 2011. Hajaya begins the poem with a greeting and a farewell to Qaddafi's soul, praise for Qaddafi, insults for his enemies, an address to Sirte, Qaddafi's hometown, and promises of revenge.*

In line 1, Hajaya salutes Qaddafi and takes leave of him:

God's peace be upon you, oh glorious mountain peak¹
Farewell to the best leader, the noblest of the fallen

In lines 2-11, Hajaya praises Qaddafi and insults his enemies:

You defied everything except defiance and died a man's death
In an age whose men are like 'Abd al-Disgrace²

Oh dignity's martyr with so few equals
A paragon of defiance in this absurd age

Oh Arabs' martyr, true to your word³
A fighter, you died standing up, like a palm tree⁴

5 Oh man of good qualities, I hope you're in God's protection
You were the best leader, the best guide

You didn't accept disgrace when they said "C'mere!"⁵
When they told you "Step aside!" you said "That's impossible"

* My translation of this poem first appeared in *Middle Eastern Literatures* 19(1) 2016, pp. 111-118.

1 Lit. "I commend you to God".

2 I.e. *'abd al-dhalil*, a pun on the last name of the chairman of the National Transitional Council (NTC), Muṣṭafā *'Abd al-Jalil*.

3 In a televised address on February 22, 2011, Qaddafi said he would die a martyr and, as far as Hajaya is concerned, did.

4 In reference to how palm trees remain standing even after they have died.

5 "they," i.e. NATO.

وخضتها نار حمرا يا زعيم النضال
ضدّ ثورة عمالة فاسدين الحصيل

من عيال الجراذي والخنا والضلال
فاقدين الكرامة ناكرين الجميل

فاسدين المبادي فاتحين المجال
للصليبي يدنس طاهرات الشليل

10 أشهد إتك وفيت وما عليك الخمال
ويوم إعلن ممتك صار عمرك طويل

يا معمر ممتك صار صعب المنال
حيّ تبقى مخلد رغم نصر العميل

وسرت صارت مزار وذوي حقيقة تقال
أنتثر في ثراها دم حرّ أصيل

يا سلام الله على صخرها والرمال
وكلّ حرّ وحرّة ما رضى بالبديل

أرتحل يا الحبيبة فارس ما يزال
في قلوب النشامى مستمرّ النزيل

15 كيف بالله ترضي بعد كلّ الدلال
يحكمك يا الحبيبة فاسدين الصميل

يا بلاد الشهادة رملكي استحال
جمر تحت الرماد وتحت عبد الجليل

You entered the red-hot fire of battle, oh leader of the resistance
Against a revolution of collaborators, a depraved lot

Sons of rats, sons of fornication, sons of error
Ungrateful sons, bereft of dignity

With corrupt principles, they opened the door
For the Crusader to sully our maidens' pure gowns

10 I witness that you kept your word, and you gave your all
When your death was announced, your life became long

Oh Muammar, your death has become impossible
You'll remain alive and immortal despite the collaborators' victory

*In lines 12-17, Hajaya addresses Sirte, Qaddafi's hometown, as well as
Libya:*

Sirte's become a pilgrimage site—this fact will be proclaimed
Pure blood of a free nobleman has watered its earth

How proud are Sirte's stones and her sands!
How proud her freeborn folk discontent with the alternative⁶

Beloved Sirte, a knight departed, one fixed
Deep in the hearts of the brave

15 By God, how do you bear it, after such good treatment,
To be ruled, oh beloved, by rotten fruit?

Oh land of martyrdom, your sands have turned into
An ember under the ashes, under 'Abd al-Jalil

6 I.e. the National Transitional Council (NTC), *de facto* government of Libya at the time of writing.

وفيك ما زال ربيع يعشقون القتال
مثل عشق الأعراب لناقضات الجدائل

يا جواب لمن هم يطرحون السؤال
يوم خيل الكرامة تبتدي بالصهيل

يوم باب الكرامة يفتح للعيال
العيال الشامى مرويين الصقيل

يوم تاتي خيولٍ مسرجة بالفعال 20
وقولة الله أكبر فوق صوت الصليل

Oh Libya, you still have men who love to fight
As much as Gulf Arabs love long-haired girls

The answer to those who ask "what's next?": that ember
When the horses of dignity begin braying for battle

When the door of dignity opens to the youth:
Brave, heroic youth who'll slake their swords' thirst

20 When horses come saddled with deeds
And over the swords' clang ring the words "God is great!"

أبدي بذكر اللي لما راد فعّال
سبحانه المعبود جلّ جلاله

ألي على خلقه جميعاً له أفضال
زجو يجنّبنا دروب الضلالة

نشوف هالدينا بها قفاي وقبال
هذا مقيم وذاك شدّت رحاله

بهذا الربيع اللي لفي عقب الأحمال
حقيقته نارٍ سريع اشتعاله

رمل حريم طاهرة وأيتم أطفال
من أقصى اليمن للشام سودٍ ظلاله

The Arab Spring

2012

Hajaya remarked to me as we were translating this poem that one should not call for political reform if one's own house was not in order. Hajaya was and remains skeptical of the Arab Spring's ability to bring positive change to the region, and especially to Jordan. When I was in Jordan in 2013-14, many Jordanians speculated to me that, if a civil war or some Arab Spring-style chaos were to break out in Jordan, authority would revert to individual tribes and villages, as it has in rural areas of Syria and Iraq. One would see tribe fight against tribe and family against family, as before the establishment of the emirate of Transjordan. Hajaya believes that western intelligence agencies took advantage of Arab protesters' zeal to fan the flames of strife, and it is in this light that he reaffirms his and his tribe's support of the Hashemite ruling family and Jordan's king, Abdullah II. Indeed, Abdullah II started enacting reforms well before the Arab Spring started and continued to do so afterward. Hajaya performed this poem before the Hajaya tribe at a festival in the town of al-Hisa in southern Jordan.

In lines 1-8, Hajaya calls for God's help and describes the Arab Spring:

I begin by remembering Him who effects what he desires
Praise be to God, the most high, may His glory be exalted

He who graces His creation
We implore Him to guide us from paths of error

In this world leaders come and go
This one's staying, and that one's saddled his camels

This spring that followed a drought¹
Is nothing but a fast-spreading fire

5 It widowed pure women and orphaned children
 Its black shadow stretches from Yemen to Syria

1 I.e. the oppression of Arab regimes pre-Arab Spring.

مصر العروبة أصبحت حالها حال
تنهش بها الحيتان والبين فاله

وطرابلس عقب الهنا حظها مال
ولا هقوتي بيوم نشوف اعتداله

وشعب العرب ما بين راقص وطبال
ما فرقوا بين الحرام وحلاله

هذا ربيع دبره أسود الفال
وبعض العرب للهوت قدّم عياله

10 خطة لتدمير العرب ما بها جدال
غربه وشرقه مع جنوب وشماله

لا شكّ بديار العرب صار زلزال
وسكرت عقول الناس حتى الثمالة

الكلّ للتغيير يهتف وشغّال
لعبة تحركها يدين العمالة

يا ناشد عن الحال هذا هو الحال
مؤامرة كبرى كبير احتماله

وحنّا بالأردن عارفين بالأحوال
والشعب واعى للذي ينبغي له

15 والله ما نسمع خبيثات الأقوال
والاتتهازية علينا عوالة

Egypt's situation has become a *situation*
Whales tear it apart, and disaster is its destiny²

After such joy and bounty, Tripoli's luck turned
I don't think we'll ever see it set right

The Arab people are either dancing or drumming³
And don't know right from wrong

In lines 9-18, Hajaya calls the Arab Spring a vast conspiracy and pledges not to let it enter Jordan:

Men with evil motives planned this Spring
And many Arabs offered their children to die

- 10 A plan to destroy the Arabs, no doubt about it
From the north to the south, from the east to the west

An earthquake's struck the land of the Arabs
Their minds as if drunk, all reason banished

Everyone's calling and working for change
But it's just a game in the hands of collaborators

To whoever wants to know, what we have on our hands
Is most likely the biggest of conspiracies

We in Jordan know what's really going on,
And the people are aware of what's being crept toward⁴

- 15 By God, wicked words we will not hear!
With us, opportunism is a vice⁵

2 Whales represent greed in Bedouin culture.

3 I.e. moving to (and thus controlled by) a beat they do not understand.

4 I.e. the Jordanian people are aware of the chaos that an "Arab Spring" would lead to in Jordan.

5 In reference to the popular belief that those Jordanians who call for change are actually in search of cushy government jobs; Hajaya claims that after the Jordanian government neutralized local Arab Spring opposition leaders by giving them government jobs, "opposition figures" began appearing everywhere.

والله ما نطّوع خيشين الأعمال
ونرسل لهم من كلّ موقع رسالة
مضمونها لا تفتحوا باب الأهوال
وأبواب شرِّ محكّاتِ أفضاله

هذا الوطن من دونه الروح والمال
واللي يريد إصلاح يبدى بحاله

يا طالب الشهرة على ظهور جهّال
ودك تسويهم لحبلك محاله

الشعب ما يسمع شعارات دجّال 20
قوله معاكس بالحقيقة أفعاله

من وكلّك عتّا تكيّل وتكّال
و بأسماءنا تعلن وتكتب مقالة

ربع الحجايا للوطن عزّ ورجال
يوم الوطن بالضيق ينخي رجاله

عقال لا صارت مجالات عقّال
وجهّال لا صارت علينا جهالة

نمشي على ممشى ممشى فيه جلال
وجلال والصوّا رجال الشكّالة

By God, wicked men we'll not obey!
We'll send them a message from all points instead

Its content: don't open catastrophe's door
Doors of evil with locks now shut tight

For this homeland we'll lay down our lives and our fortunes
Whoever wants reform should start with himself

In lines 19-21, Hajaya addresses Jordanian opposition politicians:

To those who seek fame on the backs of the ignorant,
You just want to make them a pulley for your well-rope⁶

20 The people won't listen to the slogans of an impostor
Whose words belie his actions

Who ever charged you to measure our grain,
Proclaim in our stead, or write columns in our name?⁷

In lines 22-27, Hajaya recalls his tribe's past sacrifice for the Hashemites during the Great Arab Revolt and reaffirms its present loyalty to them:

For the homeland, the Hajaya tribe is all power and men
When the homeland's in trouble, it calls on Hajaya men

Reasonable as long as reason's called for,
We'll meet violence with violence

We'll walk down the same path Abu Jfen did
And Jallāl and Şawwā, all fierce men⁸

6 I.e. opposition politicians want to use the masses' ignorant enthusiasm as a means to their own political ends.

7 In reference to Jordanian opposition politicians who claim to represent the interests of all Jordanians.

8 Jallāl Abū Jfen, Jallāl Abū Hwēmīl, and Sālim al-Şawwā were three men from the Hajaya tribe who died in the late summer of 1918 while fighting for the Hashemite cause during the Great Arab Revolt.

25 ألي بغالي دمهم أرو واجبال
والجرف يشهد لو تكلم رماله

بصمة كرامة تثبوتها للأجيال
في صفحة التاريخ فعل وبسالة

والله ما نسمح لها بيوم تنزال
ما دام فينا حرّ يلبس عقاله

والي يريد إصلاح ويقدم مثال
نصيحتي ياربع يبدأ بحاله

مسيرة الإصلاح تمشي بالإمهال
يقودها حرّ شريف السلالة

30 يقودها الي للصعوبات حلال
عبد الله الثاني بعزم ارتكى له

شبل الهواشم كلنا حوله شبال
سيف يمينه يوم ياتي بحاله

نضرب خشوم الي يريد والننا اذلال
وعبد الله ابن حسين حنّا رجاله

وصلاة ربّي عدّ ما هلّ همّال
على محمّد والصحابة وآله

25 Who watered *Jbāl* with their precious blood
The *Jurf* would bear witness if its sands could speak⁹

A mark of dignity fixed for all generations
Deeds and courage in the pages of history

By God, we'll never let her fall¹⁰
As long as a free Hajaya man wears an 'igāl¹¹

*In lines 28-33, Hajaya encourages reform on a personal level and praises
Jordan's King Abdullah II:*

To whoever wants to set an example for reform—
My advice to him, tribe, is that he start with himself

The journey of reform proceeds slow and deliberate
Led by a free man of noble lineage

30 Led by a man who resolves difficulties
Abdullah II, by his firm will, shoulders the burden

Hashemite lion cub! With him we're all lion cubs
With a sword in his right hand when the time comes

We'll defeat those who seek our disgrace
For we're the men of Abdullah, son of Husayn

May the Lord's blessings fall as many times as does the rain
Upon Muhammad, his companions and his family

9 *Jbāl* is the local name for the hills northeast of the town of Tafilah, where the two Jallals fell; *Jurf* is short for the town of Jurf al-Darawish, southeast of Tafilah, where Sawwa fell.

10 I.e. Jordan.

11 The 'igāl is worn to keep the *shimāgh* in place and represents one's dignity.

رسالة إلى الأسد بشار

يا من يوصل لي رسالة لبشار
أنصح بها والنصح غاية مرادي

ويبلغه بالعلم وبصدق الأخبار
وينقل له الصورة بشكلٍ حيادي

شاعر وياتيني من الجنّ زوّار
بالبيت الأبيض يدخلون اعتيادي

والجنّ ريع يعرفوا بعض الأسرار
وبعض الأمور المبهمات البعادي

الغرب قرّر يشلّعك شلّع مسمار
حتّى ولو تذبج جميع العبادي

وقّع على خلّعك صغيرين و كبار
خلّعة معمر من هذيك البلادي

ذبحك بشعبك يا أسد سرّ وجهار
حرّك ضمائر بايعين المبادي

Message to the Lion Bashar

February 16, 2012

Written one year into the Syrian Civil War, this poem advises Bashar al-Assad to stop the bloodshed and to leave Syria. Hajaya was told by his friends in the Jordanian intelligence service (*mukhābarāt*) that they heard from their counterparts in the CIA that the US' plan was then to oust Bashar al-Assad. This claim, along with the grisly images of massacres broadcast daily by the news networks Hajaya follows so faithfully, impelled him to write this poem.

In lines 1-4, Hajaya calls on a messenger to deliver his poem to Bashar al-Assad:

Who will send this message to Bashar?
A message of advice, for to advise him is my goal

Who will inform him of the facts and the truth
And show him an unbiased picture of the situation?

I'm a poet, and genies sometimes visit me
Genies that frequent the White House¹

Genies are a folk who know secrets
And certain unknown, obscure affairs

In lines 5-21, Hajaya describes his view of the Syrian Civil War and urges Bashar to flee:

5 Bashar, the West has decided to rip you out like a nail
Even if you're slaughtering all the believers²

Both young and old have agreed to remove you
Just like they did Qaddafi, not too far away

To slaughter your own people, Assad, whether secret or public,
Has even pained the consciences of unprincipled men

1 By "genies" Hajaya means his friends in the Jordanian intelligence service.

2 I.e. because the West would not object to Muslims' being killed.

وتحالفت ضدك إسلام وكفار
والكلّ منهم بالتحرّر ينادي

يقولوا إنك صرت بالشعب جرّار
منهم صديق وفيه منهم معادي

والكلّ ضدك واتتهت كلّ الأعذار 10
غاب السلام وأصبح الموت بادي

والروس مبداهم دراهم ودولار
والصين تبحث عن مجال اقتصادي

سوّوك سلعة وانت بالوضع مختار
وحصدت زرعك قبل يوم الحصادي

وذبحك لشعبك صبّ كازٍ على النار
فرصة لقوقها حاقدين الكبادي

ألبي بوار جهم سريعة بالأبحار
من فوقها الموت الحمر لك ينادي

حالوا عليك وأصبح الوضع منهار 15
وما ينفعك حسّون وأحمد نجادي

الحرب صارت بين جيشك وثورار
وتطايرت فيهار وؤوس وأيادي

شفنا البشاعة والمجازر بالأخبار
بحمص وحماة وكلّ حارة ووادي

Both Muslims and unbelievers have allied against you
And every one of them calls for freedom

Both your friends and your enemies say it—
You've become a butcher of your people

- 10 All are against you, and your excuses have run out
Peace has vanished, and your death looms close

The Russians' guiding principle is dirhams and dollars³
And the Chinese are looking for an economic opportunity

They made you into a product; now you don't know how to act
You reaped what you sowed well before the harvest

To slaughter your people is to pour gas on a fire
A chance snatched by those of hate-filled livers⁴

Those whose battleships split the seas,
Above them a red death calls you

- 15 They tricked you, and the situation's collapsed
Ḥassūn and Ahmadinejad can no longer help you⁵

The war is now between your army and the rebels,
And heads and hands have gone flying

On the news we've seen the monstrosity, the massacres
In Homs and Hama, every alley and valley

3 I.e. financial benefit, because the Syrian Army buys weapons from Russia.

4 I.e. the Americans; the Bedouin regard the liver as the seat of the passions.

5 Aḥmad Badr al-Dīn Ḥassūn, the Grand Mufti of Syria since 2005, a Sunni, and an ardent supporter of the Assad regime.

وما عقب هذا الصلح والدم فوار
خسرتها بالعون حسب اعتقادي

إرحل ودور لك عن ديارهم دار
إنجي بنفسك والأهل والولادي

إقبل نصيحة شاعر ذاق الأمرار 20
وارحم أطفال راقدة بالمهادي

الدايم الله والليالي ترى دوار
والظلم زایل لو يطول التماذي

هذا كلام اللي يمرّوه زوار
شاعر ولكن مصدره غير عادي

وصلاة ربّي عدّ ذرّات الأمطار
على محمد وآل بيته وكادي

As long as blood gushes, there'll be no peace
I'm convinced—you've lost the war for sure

Leave and find you a home far from theirs⁶
Save yourself, your family and your children

- 20 Accept the advice of a poet who's tasted bitterness
And have mercy on babies lying in their cribs⁷

Each day is different, but God's everlasting
Injustice will pass no matter how long it takes⁸

In lines 22-23, Hajaya recalls the sources of his knowledge and closes the poem:

Such are the words passed to me by guests
I'm just a poet, but my source is unusual

I pray to God as many times as there are drops of rain
For Muhammad and his family members

6 I.e. the Syrian people's.

7 In reference to the Syrian Army's use of barrel bombs.

8 A core belief in Islam.

رسالة إلى بوتن الروس

يامن لبوتن يا عرب يوصل القاف
فيه المعاني وظفت خير توظيف

قولاً منقياً كالذهب بيد صراف
مكفول ومصقّى عن الغشّ والزيف

السيف ما يقطع بلا يد سيّاف
والعقل بعض أوقات يكفي عن السيف

Message to Putin of the Russians

April 17, 2014

A short piece of occasional verse written after Putin's annexation of the Crimea, Hajaya's message to Putin stands out in a number of ways. First, there is the irony, all the more bitter in 2017, that the Russians may not be the dupes of the God-like American security planners and strategists that Hajaya imagined them to be. Hajaya considered the trouble in the Ukraine the third front in the West's "war on Russia," the first two being Afghanistan and Syria. Next, Hajaya uses a number of Hebrew words, such as *ganáv* (thief) and *mehláf* (round-about, traffic circle), which he learned from his Bedouin Israeli relatives on a trip to Israel and used in poems written prior to this one.¹ He also uses the word *hujrūf* (pl. *hajārīf*), a word unique to the Hajaya tribe that means "rugged ground." Finally, Hajaya likens "the West's" trapping of Putin in the Ukraine to an old Bedouin technique of catching sheep rustlers.

In lines 1-3, Hajaya boasts about his poem and quotes a proverb:

Who, oh Arabs, will deliver Putin this poem?
A poem with senses and meanings best employed

Words purified like gold in a goldsmith's hands
Gold guaranteed against forgery and fraud

The sword doesn't strike without a swordsman's hand,
But more than the sword, the mind often suffices²

1 See also Hajaya's 2003 poem from the perspective of Ariel Sharon, "I have written verses of poetry" in Holes & Abu Athera (2009), pp. 196-199.

2 I.e. Russia is not as powerful as the US, and Putin should use reason, not force, to deal with the Ukraine.

والغرب يا بوتن سياسي وعرف
وإن حاربوا فصل الشتاء ينقلب صيف

5 بكرانيا خشوا والأهداف تنشاف
وعن شامنا خلوك تبلش بكيف

لك خططوا تخطيط بدو لقتاف
وتمرسوا لك فوق روس المشاريف

وإذا نوا بالفعل وصلوا للأهداف
وتخطيطهم لا شك ماشي على الكيف

مشوك دربًا ما بها أي مخلاف
ولزوك عن درب السهل للحجاريف

تحالفوا ضدك من الكاف للكاف
ذياب البحر والبر ما هي سواليف

In lines 4-9, Hajaya warns Putin of the West's snares:

Putin, the West is political and savvy,³
When they make war in winter, the season turns to summer⁴

5 They entered the Ukraine, and their goals are clear
Far from our Levant, they made you trouble in Kiev

They planned for you what Bedouin do for thieves
And sat waiting in their lookouts on the tops of hills⁵

When they resolve to act, they reach their goals
Their planning's no doubt going just as they wish⁶

They forced you down a road without a roundabout
They steered you from a level path to rugged ground

They've allied against you all over the map,⁷
Wolves of the sea and the land, it's no idle chatter⁸

3 Hajaya adds that the US has strategists and planners preparing for the next 100 years but that the Russians are short-sighted and politically inexperienced; indeed, he added that vodka has destroyed their minds.

4 I.e. from the intensity of the bombing.

5 Here is how Bedouins catch a sheep rustler as Hajaya explained it to me. First, they put scarecrows on the hilltops surrounding their camps until the rustler realizes that the scarecrows are not people and begins stealing again. But in the meantime, the Bedouins have dug hideouts near the scarecrows and placed lookouts there so that when the rustler returns, the lookouts shout "stop thief!" from different, calculated points such that the rustler runs from them and falls into a pit covered with branches and leaves. As Hajaya imagines it, the US resembles the Bedouins in that it sets a trap for Putin, the rustler who stole the Crimea. The US watches him like Bedouin lookouts, with their spies and drones, and, with economic sanctions, can pressure him into running where they want him.

6 This conviction represents the tautological conspiracy theory that everything that happens in the world happens just as the US wants it to because the US is all-powerful; to Hajaya there is always a greater *mudabbir* (fixer, arranger), the most powerful being God.

7 I.e. many nations condemned Russia's annexation of the Ukraine; Hajaya specifically means the US, Europe, and the Arabs.

8 I.e. the land and naval forces of the US, Europe, and the Arabs.

عشرين دولة ودولة

يا للأسف عشرين دولة ودولة
ترجح بهن بالفعل دولة اسرائيل

والنتن ياهو بالعلن يركعوا له
وبذبح غرّة قد مواله تساهيل

وغرّة غدت مصنع رجال وبطولة
بأنفاقها تصنع طيور الأبايل

سلام يادار الشرف والرجولة
يا مشعلًا للعرّ في عتمة الليل

منصورةً بالله في كلّ جولة
رغم التامر من أشباه الرجاجيل

5

Twenty-One Countries

August 1, 2014

Written during the 2014 Gaza war, this poem is a desperate lament about Arab inaction on Palestine and complicity with Israel. Affected by the carnage in Gaza in 2014, Hajaya uncharacteristically praises Hamas' leader Khalid Mash'al, whom he pillories in other poems.

It's so unfortunate—twenty-one countries¹
All leaned on by Israel's power

Openly do they bow down to Netanyahu²
And offer him help in Gaza's slaughter

Gaza's become a wellspring of men and heroes
In her tunnels birds of *abābīl* are made³

God's peace upon you, oh land of honor and manliness!
Oh torch of strength in the gloom of night!⁴

5 May God give you victory in every battle!
Despite the conspiring of would-be men

1 The Arab countries.

2 Hajaya writes *al-natan yāhū*, separating the Israeli prime minister's name to bring out the Arabic word *natan* (foul stench).

3 I.e. rockets; birds of *abābīl* are mentioned in the Qur'an (105:3) as having attacked the enemy's elephants with "stones of baked clay".

4 A pun on the last name of Hamas chairman Khalid Mash'al; *mish'al* means "torch"; according to Hajaya, the Arabs' darkest days are now.

بدت نظم أبيات فوق الثلاثين
عشرة وبالله الكريم أستعيني

سبحانه الي خالق آدم من الطين
قاهر أعداه وناصر المؤمنيني

وأنا أو بما راس كلّ السلاطين
كبيرهم والبيت الأبيض عريني

أبوي كيني هاجر بماضي سنين
إلى أمريكا قبة الطامحيني

ثانكس بي تو قاد بالعسر واللين
من أم أمريكية وأب كيني

ومع الوسيط أرسل ثمين المضامين
إلى خليفة دولة المسلميني

Think of Poor Steven!

August 2014

This poem is a plea for mercy (*shifāʿat khēr*) for the American-Israeli journalist Steven Sotloff written from the perspective of Barack Obama and addressed to Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Obama congratulates Abu Bakr on ISIS' recent successes, appeals to him to spare Sotloff's life, complains of America's geopolitical problems, and tells Abu Bakr of America's true red lines. This forty-line poem's form is traditional, with a beginning invocation to God, mention of a go-between (*wasīṭ*) to deliver the poem, and an introduction of the poet and praise of his addressee. Hajaya then begins the main subject and closes with a prayer for the prophet.

In lines 1-7, Hajaya's Obama calls on God's help, introduces himself, and names his addressee:

I'll start writing this forty-line poem
By calling on the help of a beneficent God

Praise Him who created Adam from clay!
Who vanquishes His enemies and grants victory to the believers!¹

I'm Obama, ruler of world rulers,
Their chief! And the White House is my lair

My Kenyan father emigrated in years past
To America, the Mecca of ambitious men

5 Of an American mother and a Kenyan father,
I thank God in times of ease and distress²

With a go-between I send this precious message
To the Caliph of the Islamic State

1 Obama attempts to flatter Abu Bakr by implying that it was God's will that ISIS has been as successful as it has.

2 Hajaya wrote *thānks bī tū gād*, the Bedouin Arabic transliteration of the English "Thanks be to God" (*al-ḥamdu lillāh*), as he does in several of the following lines.

هير مايي ووردز وافهمه زين
شعرٍ على المسحوب ما هو هيجيني

أبو بكر قود مورنينغ ناو والحين
قود إيفنينغ وقت المسا وكلّ حيني

ومن لحيتك يا شيخ نعمٍ ونعمين
يا مقتحم للشام والرافديني

ونعمٍ بر برك بالمعارك عنيفين
على الشهادة والفدا عازميني

10

المالكي أسقوه كاس الأمرين
وعقب المراحل صار مثل الحصيني

بمفخخاتٍ تنفجر كالبراكين
ركبوهن اللي للعمر بايعيني

وهذي شفاة خير يابن الميامين
الله حللها بدينك وديني

بسم الإسلام واسم الأخلاق والدين
آي آييل تو يو وانت الفطيني

Hear my words and understand them well³
 This poetry's metered *mashūb*, not *hjent*⁴

In lines 8-12, Obama salutes Abu Bakr and praises ISIS' success:

Abu Bakr, good morning to you and *ṣabāḥ al-khēr*
 Good evening in the *masā'*, greetings every hour!⁵

By your beard, oh shaykh, generous, manly and brave,
 Who's taken Iraq and Syria by storm!

10 Greetings to your brave men, fierce in battles
 Resolved to die for God and the cause

They made al-Maliki swallow a bitter draught⁶
 He thought he was a man; now he's running like a fox⁷

With car bombs that exploded like volcanoes
 Driven by those who sold their lives

In lines 13-22, Obama appeals to Abu Bakr to spare Steven Sotloff's life:

This is an intercession for mercy, oh son of good believers,
 Which God permits in my religion and yours

In the name of Islam, in the name of religion and morality
 I appeal to you, for you're an astute man⁸

3 As in the above footnote, Hajaya writes *hūr māy wōrdz* for "Hear my words" (*isma' kalāmī*).

4 Obama lets Baghdadi know that he is using a more difficult meter than the simple *hjent*.

5 *Gūd mōrnīngh nāw* for "Good morning now"; *gūd ifnīngh* for "Good evening"; *masā'* means "evening" in Arabic; here I am writing Arabic for English words where Hajaya does the opposite.

6 In reference to Nuri al-Maliki, former prime minister of Iraq.

7 In Bedouin culture foxes represent cowardice, and leopards represent strength and bravery; see also line 20 of "Stock Market of My Love".

8 *Āy ābīl tū yū* for "I appeal to you".

15 والجلود شيمة من شيم جدك حسين
والعفو عند المقدرة يا الحسيني

ذس إز ستيفن يابن الأجواد مسكين
وما حلل المعبود ذبح السجيني

لأنّ ذبحه ما يغير موازين
لكن يشوّه صورة المسلميني

ذبح الأسير إجماف ما حلله دين
الدين رحمة وانتم العارفيني

ومعروف عنكم ياليعارب كريمين
فكأكة العاني كرام اليميني

20 أطلق سراحه يا سليل الشريفين
هذه أخلاق أجدادك السابقيني

ألي لهم بالعفو سابق عناوين
وقبل الإحسان لغيظهم كاظميني

فرّح به أمّه واكسب الأجر ضعفين
سابق عليك الله لا تبتليني

وبالوقت هذا لا تثير البراكين
وتقطع حبال الصلح بينك وبينني

إجعل مساحة للصلح بيننا وبين
دولتكم الي طيرت نوم عيني

- 15 Generosity's a virtue of your ancestor Husayn⁹
And with great power comes great mercy, oh son of Husayn

Oh son of generous men, think of poor Steven!
Slaughtering captives isn't God's law

Slaughtering him won't tip the scales
But it *will* tarnish the image of Islam

Slaughtering captives is unjust; no religion permits it
Religion is mercy, and you all know that

You Arabs are known for your generosity,
For releasing captives, for treating them well

- 20 Release him, oh son of *sharīfs*, for
That's what your ancestors would have done

They were known for their mercy on many occasions
And were good men because they curbed their anger

Give his mother joy, and God'll reward you twice over
I entreat you, by God, don't cause me a disaster

In lines 23-31, Obama reminds Abu Bakr of the additional problems he is facing:

This is not the time to set off a volcano
And sever the lines of peace between us

Leave room for peace between us and between
Your state, which has driven the sleep from my eyes

9 In reference to claims that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is descended from Husayn, the son of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

25 وضع انتخابات وكوالس ملاعين
وأوكرانيا والروس متناشيين

ومن اليمن للشام حتى فلسطين
نار الحرايب مشعلة يا ظنيني

والسيبي اللي في بلاد الفراعين
خالف أوامرنا وعيّي يجيني

وصور بهالإخوان إنهم شياطين
خربط حساباتي وثرّ طحيني

وايران بأنيابه سموم الثعابين
وابن الأسد يا شيخ بيج كيني

30 اخطوطي الحمرا جعلها ميادين
والي توطأ فوق خطي وطيني

ومعه تحالف ضدنا الروس والصين
والشرق الأوسط صار مثل العجيني

أما بعد بالمختصر هاك سطين
وانا أعرف إنك بالمعاني ذهيني

إعلم ترانا عندنا اليوم خطين
إحذر تجاوزهن وتظهر دفيني

الأول اسرايل هي قرّة العين
فدوى لها الركاع والساجديني

25 Election season's here, with my enemies working behind the scenes
 Meanwhile Ukraine and Russia are clashing in war

From Yemen to Syria, even in Palestine,
 Battle fires are blazing, oh friend, ever on my mind

Al-Sisi, in the land of the Pharaohs,
 Disobeyed my orders and refused to visit me!

He made the Muslim Brothers look like devils
 And wrecked my calculations, tossed my flour to the winds

Iran has snake's venom in its fangs
 And Assad, oh shaykh, laid bare my heart

30 He turned my red lines into a public square,
 And stepping on my red lines is like stepping on me!

And with him, Russia and China have allied against us
 And the Middle East has become a ball of dough

In lines 32-37, Obama informs Abu Bakr of his true priorities:

Finally, in short, here are two lines of poetry for you
 And I know that you're an intelligent man

Know well that we have two red lines
 Beware of crossing them and exposing my secrets

The first: Israel, as precious as my eye,
 More precious than all the world's Muslims

35 وثاني خطوطي إجعله بين قوسين
أمريكا مع شعبها جفن عيني

وزلا منا اللي بالدويلات باقين
نحمي الذي منهم خدوم أميني

كلّ حسب دوره على الخطّ ماشين
أعاب كلّ خيوطهم في أيديني

وضّحت أنا بعض الخفايا لأبو حسين
ويين السطور أشياء عندك تبيني

وصلاة ربّي عدّ نبت البساتين
وبأعداد آيات الكتاب المبيني

40 على رسول الله ختام النبيّين
وآله وصحبه والذي تابعيني

35 My second red line—and write this down:
America and her people, the eyelid to my eye¹⁰

Our lackeys in the Gulf's statelets will remain,
For we protect those loyal servants

Each according to his role, marching to my drum
Puppets! And my hands hold the strings

In lines 38-40, Obama closes the poem:

I've shared some secrets with you, Abu Husayn¹¹
Others will later appear from between the lines

I pray to God as many times as there are plants in gardens,
As many times as there are verses in the Qur'an,

40 For God's messenger, Muhammad, the last of the prophets
And for his family, his companions, and his followers

¹⁰ I.e. in so far as America (the eyelid) protects Israel (the eye).

¹¹ A nickname derived from *abū* plus a prominent family name, in this case Husayn, in reference to his claimed ancestor.

يا شام جرحك بالضمائر عطبي
مالك صديق وكلها ضدك ذياب

بعيدهم يا شام هو والقريبي
على دمارك عاضين بالانياب

ما ينسمع بك غير صوت النحيبي
ويوم اغتصابك ما اهترت له أشناب

ومن يدعي إته لجرحك طيبي
كل الأمراض اللي خبيثة لكي جاب

وجميع ما سوى بحقك مريبي
وعليك من كل البلاوي فتح باب

شعبك يصيح وما لقي له مجيبي
والدعم كله متجه ضد الإرهاب

ولا فرق بين اهلالنا والصلبي
تدميرنا مطلوب مدفوع الأتعاب

Day of Succession

September 8, 2014

Hajaya wrote this poem more than three years into the Syrian Civil War and after about one quarter million Syrians had died. In this poem he laments the 1400 years of division and strife that followed the Day of Succession (*yawm al-saqifah*), when the Sunnis and Shiites were divided over who should succeed Muhammad as the Muslims' leader.

In lines 1-9, Hajaya laments Syria's destruction and the world's indifference:

Oh Syria, your wound wrenches our hearts
You've no friend, and all your enemies are wolves

Near and far, oh Syria, they come,¹
Their incisors gnawing on your destruction

From you nothing's heard save the sound of sobs
When you were raped, no one batted an eye²

Whoever claims he can doctor your wounds is
In fact he who gave you your vile disease

5 Dubious are those who acted in your name
Yet opened on you the doors of disaster

Your people cry out but none hears or responds
All the aid goes to "fighting terrorism"³

There's no difference between the crescent and the cross⁴
Our destruction's been ordered, its fees paid⁵

1 Iran and Russia come from nearby; the US, UK, and France come from afar.

2 Lit. "no moustaches quivered," i.e. no one objected or was affected or disturbed.

3 There are no scare quotes in the Arabic but the quotes here emphasize the sarcasm of the original.

4 I.e. Syrian Christians and Muslims are dying alike.

5 I.e. the Arabs' destruction, not just Syria's.

والحال بك يا شام حالٍ عجيب
وحرب المحاور فيك دقوالها أطناب

وكلّ لأخوه اليوم سار الحربي
ومن عرق واحد أحمّر الدم سكاب

10 ستة وشيعة جرحنا ما يطيب
أنهار سالت من دمانا بلا أسباب

صعب التعايش عقب دمًا سكيبي
ضاع الدليل المعتبر والعقل غاب

الحقد سار اليوم زرعه خصيبي
والداء مزمن ما يفيدن به أطباب

يوم السقيفة كان يومًا عصيبي
منّه دخل مكر الأعاجم والأعراب

ومنّه دخل بالدين طرحًا غربي
تفرقت بعده جماعات وأحزاب

15 ولو تصرخي يا شام مالك مجيبي
مالك سوى من أنزل الدين بكتاب

شمس العروبة طوّلت بالمغيبي
وسيف العروبة بادح وماله نصاب

Your situation's mighty strange, Syria
A war of axes with tent ropes fastened tight⁶

Today brother fights brother and
From one vein does the blood gush⁷

In lines 10-14, Hajaya laments the history of strife between Sunnis and Shiites:

10 Sunnis and Shiites—our wounds won't heal
Rivers of our blood flow for no reason

After so much blood spilled, coexistence would be hard
Any hard evidence was lost, and reason has vanished⁸

The seeds of strife so sown today proved fertile
A chronic disease that doctors can't cure⁹

The Day of Succession was a critical one
After it the cunning of Persians and Arabs entered Islam

After it strange propositions entered the faith
After it groups and parties split off

In lines 15-16, Hajaya returns to Syria's abandonment and the Arabs' weakness:

15 If you scream, Syria, no one will answer
You've no one save He who sent down the faith in a book

For too long has the Arabs' sun not shined¹⁰
The Arabs' sword is dull, without a handle

6 Sing. "axis," not "ax"; "with tent ropes fastened tight," i.e. the war is here to stay.

7 A pun on *'irg*, which can mean "vein" or "root," in reference to the Arabs' shared ethnic roots/blood.

8 I.e. any hard evidence about whom Muhammad indeed wanted to succeed him.

9 I.e. 1400 years of internecine strife between Sunnis and Shiites.

10 I.e. the Arabs' power, glory, and standing among the nations.

لاهيت راؤوت

بعد أن عزل بنيامين نتياهو حبيبتنا الوزيرة الجميلة المعتدلة تسيبي ليفني من حكومته ، أقول لها :

بس نتصر يا ليفني عندي آمال
أبني لكي قصرًا على راس تلّه

والتنن ياهو عندك يصير زبال
من أجل عينك ناويين ندلّه

يا حبنا اللي ما تغيّر ولا زال
القلب لك يا زهرة البيض كلّه

محتلّة قلبي من الجال للجال
وفوق احتلال الأرض له مستحلّة

والحبّ قلمي طيح رجال ورجال
يا لايبي في حبّها اللوم خلّه

لاهيت راؤوت ولنا فيك آمال
والصبر مفتاح الفرج ما نملّه

Lehitra'ot

December 2, 2014

A “thought” poem (*khawāṭir*), “*Lehitra'ot*” is the latest—let us dare not say the last—of Hajaya’s love poems to Tzipi Livni. Hajaya wrote it after Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu fired justice minister Livni, along with finance minister Ya’ir Lapid, from his coalition government.

After Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed our beautiful beloved, the moderate minister Tzipi Livni, from his government, I said to her:

As soon as we Arabs triumph, Livni, I have hopes
To build you a palace on top of a hill

That Netanyahu of yours can be the garbageman¹
For your sake will we disgrace him

My love for you’s not changed or faded
Oh flower of the whites, my whole heart’s yours

Far and above the occupation of land,
You’ve occupied my heart from A to Z

5 Before me your love felled many men
Whoever’d blame me for my love, lay off it!²

Lehitra'ot—we’ve placed our hopes in you³
Patience is the key to success, and I won’t weary⁴

1 As in line 2 of “Twenty-One Countries,” Hajaya separates the Israeli prime minister’s name into *al-natan yāhū* in order to emphasize the Arabic word *natan* (foul stench) and accord with his profession in Hajaya’s fantasy universe.

2 In reference to the conventional “censurer” or “blamer” of Arabic love poetry.

3 Hebrew for “till we meet again” or “see you later”.

4 *Al-ṣabr miftāḥ al-faraj*, an Arabic proverb.

إنطح النار بالنار

يا عمّ صافي وكلّ الله بما صار
الأمر أمر الله ويده قراره

يا بو جواد الموت واحد والأقذار
تقضى بخلق الله ليل ونهاره

يا بو جواد أصبحت رمزاً للأفكار
رحل معاذ وقعدك بالصدارة

رحل معاذ وكلنا صغار وبكار
عزوة معاذ ونفتخر باختياره

يا بو الشهيد احنا لك عيال وأنصار
إرفع بنا الهمة على نيل ثاره

Fight Fire with Fire

February 2015

Hajaya wrote this poem immediately after footage was released by ISIS showing the Jordanian fighter pilot Mu'adh al-Kasāsbah being burned alive inside a cage. The elegy comforts Mu'adh's father Šāfi (Abū Jawād), extols Mu'adh's virtues and his choice to fight ISIS, reaffirms the Jordanian people's allegiance to Abdullah II, and calls for Mu'adh's blood-revenge (*thār*). Before the footage was shown, Jordanian public opinion was split over whether to continue participating in the US-led coalition against ISIS. This poem, full of talk of revenge and national pride, captures the national mood shortly after the release of the footage. The Kasāsbah family lives in the village of 'Ayy, a few miles west of Hajaya's village of Sadd al-Sultani, and Hajaya read this to Safi himself during a funeral service held for Mu'adh on February 5, 2015.¹

In lines 1-5, Hajaya consoles Mu'adh's father Safi (Abu Jawad):

Oh Safi, entrust what happened to God
For God is Almighty, and decision rests in His hands

Oh Abu Jawad, death comes only once, and God's decrees
Unfold day and night throughout His creation

Oh Abu Jawad, you've become a symbol of pride
Mu'adh left and so sat you on a pedestal²

Mu'adh left, and all of us, young and old,
Are Mu'adh's men, we're proud of his decision

5 Oh father of the martyr, we're your sons and supporters
Raise our morale so we can take his blood-revenge

1 My translation of this poem first appeared online at *Muftah* on October 8, 2015 <<http://muftah.org/jordans-rage-fighting-isis-through-poetry/#.wQ-BJrvyUo>>.

2 Lit. in the most favored and central spot in the *majlis* (*šidārah*).

معاذجي واحترق جمع الأشرار
وفي ساحة الأجماد أصبح منارة

شمعة شموخ بنورها أضوت ديار
حدّ لنا درب الفدا في مساره

مثل الأسد استقبل الموت والنار
شامخ شموخ الأردني في جسارة

إعيون صقر وشفقتها تطلب بالثار
وملعون أب اللي ما يطالب بثاره

10 نعم رحيله هزّنا هزّ الأشجار
لكن ثبتنا رغم شدة إعصاره

نعم بكينا والبكا طبع الأحرار
نبكي على صقرٍ رفيعٍ مطاره

صقرٍ تعلّى وانحدر عقب ما طار
عاقوا جناحه فاقدين البصارة

ما هو بكا ضعف ومذلة للأشرار
لا والذي أرسل محمد بشارة

نبكي بطل في وقفته هزّ الأقطار
مثال عزّ وعزّنا في وقاره

15 مرفوع راسه ما خضع بذلّ وانهار
لله وحده كان كلّ انكساره

In lines 6-15, Hajaya praises Mu'adh's virtues and the fortitude with which he died:

Mu'adh is alive! It's the wicked ones who'll burn
In the field of men's glories, his light shines bright

A candle of pride that brightened our Jordan,
He showed us the path of self-sacrifice

Like a lion did he greet death and fire
A true Jordanian—proud and fearless

His falcon's eyes demanded blood-revenge—I saw them!
And as for those who don't demand it—damn them!

10 It's true—his departure shook us like trees
But we stood firm despite the storm's strength

Yes, we cried, for crying's the mark of free men
We cry for a falcon flying high in the skies

A falcon high up, who soon descended
They injured his wing—those who've lost their reason

Crying's not weakness or submission to the wicked
No! Not by Him who sent Muhammad the good news

We cry for a hero whose composure shook nations,
A model of strength whose dignity's our pride

15 Never cowed, shamed or broken, his head always raised
Only to God did he submit

لأته ابن أحرار ما يقبلوا عار
من مدرسة عزّ وشموخ وجسارة

لأته ابن رجال وافيين الأشبار
عزّ الوطن لا قام ينخي حراره

برارشة في يوم صكّات الأخطار
ومثل الأسود إن شبت الحرب ناره

وكساسة والنعم في كلّ الأدوار
بالمرجلة والغائمة والنهارة

وهذا الوطن حتّا لها جدار وأسوار 20
نموت لأجله ما يمّسوا جداره

بقيادة اللي للعلا شبت الأنوار
عبد الله الثاني سليل الطهارة

حتّا جنوده للوفا دوم حظار
حتّا أسود الحرب يوم استعاره

إبشر بعزّك يا ملكنا ونختار
درب الكرامة في صريح العبارة

الشعب شعبك وإنطح النار بالنار
الجيش جيشك والنشامى حراره

ويا عمّ صافي وكلّ الله بما صار 25
رحل معاذ وقعدك بالصدارة

In lines 16-19, Hajaya praises Mu'adh's family:

For he's the son of free men who don't accept disgrace
From a tradition of strength, pride and daring

He's the son of men endowed with all the manly virtues
The homeland's reserve when it calls up its falcons

Barārshah! There for the perilous battles³
Like lions whenever the war's fire's blazing

Kasasbah! Praiseworthy men no matter the scene⁴
Brave, generous men—no, brave leopards!

In lines 20-27, Hajaya affirms the Jordanian people's loyalty to Abdullah II and returns to comfort Safi:

20 For the homeland we're the walls and fences
And we'll die for its sake before they touch its walls

Under a leader who lights our way to the heights,
Abdullah II, scion of pure blood

We're his loyal soldiers, always on guard
We're lions of war when war breaks out

Call on our strength, oh king, and we'll choose
The path of dignity, loud and clear

The people are with you—fight fire with fire!
The army is with you, and brave men are its falcons

25 Oh Safi, entrust to God what happened
Mu'adh left and so sat you on a pedestal

3 The Barārshah are Mu'adh's tribe.

4 The Kasāsbah are the sub-tribe (*fakhdh*) of the Bararshah that Mu'adh belongs to.

صدارةٍ بالعرّ ما بين الأخيـار
اللي بهم عزّ الوطن وافتخاره
صدارةٍ للأردني مصدر أـفـخـار
ومعاذ صافي نالها في جداره

A pedestal of pride, among the best of men,
In whom lie Jordan's strength and pride

A pedestal for the Jordanian, our source of pride,
Earned by Safi's son, the worthy Mu'adh

إلى روح فقيد العراق والأمة العربية المرحوم بإذن الله الشيخ حارث الضاري

شعري أحطّ اسمك على صدره وسام
واسمك كما بدرٍ بليلة عتيمة

مرحوم يا شيخاً على الذلّ ما نام
وسارت ركابك للعالى هميمة

سارت بهمة صادق العزم مقدام
صلب المواقف زويعي العزيمة

وبعزم مؤمن ما خضع ذلّ وانسام
وما صار بيع الدين عنده غنيمة

إلى جنان الخلد يا نسل الأكرام
رحلت عنّا والمصايب مقيمة

يا شايل هموم العروبة والإسلام
قبل العراق اللي جروحه أليمة

Brave Men Slaughtered

March 15, 2015

Hajaya met the Iraqi cleric and “Shaykh of the Resistance” Ḥārith al-Ḍārī at the latter’s house in Amman six months before his death on March 12, 2015. Al-Ḍārī opposed the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, and Hajaya had known about and admired him in his capacity as cleric from the early 1990s. During the visit, al-Ḍārī warned Hajaya about the division of Iraq into statelets and the “Safavid” threat from Iran. In keeping with the tradition of the Arabic elegy, Hajaya praises al-Ḍārī and extols his virtues and his deeds before lamenting the Arab Nation’s dark days with apocalyptic rhetoric.

To the soul of a man whose death was a great loss to Iraq and the Arab Nation. May God have mercy on you, Shaykh Ḥārith al-Ḍārī.

In lines 1-12, Hajaya praises al-Ḍārī and remembers his deeds:

Your name’s a medal on my poetry’s chest¹
A full moon on a gloomy night

God’s mercy on you, oh shaykh, not content with disgrace
You stirred your mount toward lofty goals²

With the endeavor of a resolute, intrepid man
With firm stances and the will of a Zoba’i³

With a believer’s will, he didn’t submit in shame
And didn’t sell his religion for profit

5 On to eternity’s gardens, oh son of noble men!
You’ve departed, but the disasters are here to stay

You bore the Arabs’ and Muslims’ sorrows,
From before Iraq’s, Iraq of the grievous wounds

1 An inversion of the trope of putting the medal of one’s poetry on someone’s chest, as in line 45 of “Daughter of Tough Men”.

2 I.e. by leading the Iraqi resistance to Paul Bremer’s government and the US occupation.

3 I.e. al-Ḍārī’s tribe, descended, like the Hajaya tribe, from Shammar; Hajaya claims that of all of Iraq’s tribes, the Zoba’i fought the hardest against the occupation.

يوم المشايخ باعوا الخاصّ والعام
عراقنا ما جاه منك ثليمة

شلتته بقلبك واحتضنته بالأحلام
أحلام فارس له مبادي عظيمة

ويوم أصبح عراق العرب ساحة إجرام
توحّدت حولك قلوباً سليمة

أحرار ما باعوا ولا خانوا ذمام
تعاهدوا ما آمنوا بالهزيمة

10

يبغوا فكاهه من عجمها والأروام
أعداء الامة من عصورٍ قديمة

لك هيبةً فاقت شيوخاً وحكام
متخاذلين وفيهم الذلّ شيمة

اللي مع المحتلّ صاروا له زلام
ضدّ العراق وشاركوا بالجريمة

وهذا العراق اليوم يشكي ومنضام
يشكي من أوجاعه وينخي حريمه

يشكي ضعف أمة عرب حظّها نام
وأبناءها جرّوا عليها الظليمة

15

بأفعال قشرا شوّهت وجه الإسلام
ذبح وتطرّف والمصايب عميمة

When the shaykhs sold holdings public and private⁴
 You did Iraq no harm

You carried Iraq in your heart, embraced it in your dreams
 The dreams of a knight with lofty principles

When the Arabs' Iraq became a killing field,
 Men of strong hearts united around you

- 10 Free men who didn't sell out or break their pledges,
 Who united as allies and refused to accept defeat

They sought to free her from Persia and Rome
 Enemies of the Nation since ancient times⁵

In prestige you excel rulers and shaykhs
 Effete rulers for whom disgrace is a virtue⁶

In lines 13-21, Hajaya laments the Arab Nation's dark days:

Those with the occupation became its henchmen and
 Shared in the crime against Iraq

Iraq now complains of oppression and disgrace,
 Complains of its woes, calls on her women for help!⁷

- 15 She laments the weakness of the Arab Nation, whose luck's run out
 Whose very sons caused her the injustice⁸

With heinous deeds that marred Islam's face⁹
 With slaughter and extremism and disasters left and right

4 I.e. Iraqi shaykhs, Sunni and Shiite, who "sold" Iraq to the occupation forces.

5 I.e. they sought to free Iraq from Iran and the US; referring to the US and Western Europe as Rome and to Iran as Persia evokes the apocalyptic rhetoric engendered by the early Muslims' wars with Byzantium and Persia.

6 I.e. Gulf Arab rulers.

7 I.e. Iraq is so weak that its men no longer suffice to defend her.

8 Hajaya means specifically terrorists, collaborators and Gulf Arab rulers.

9 Hajaya adds that apart from terrorism, extremism and slaughter, conditions like ignorance, poverty, backwardness, and dictatorship distort the face of Islam.

مصائباً كآلة عظيماً وجسام
وسود الحوادث دائرة مستديمة

أيام سودا مظلمة كلها ظلام
وما عاد للأمة بها أي قيمة

غثا سيل وكلها راحت أقسام
تقاسموها ماكلين الوليمة

سارت شتات وفعلمها كآلة أوهام 20
تأكل بعضها والعواقب وخيمة

شجاعها مذبوح وغيالها أيتام
عشرين راس بغيها مستهيممة

يا بو مثنى يرحمك رب رحام
وعساك بالفردوس وأعلى نعيمه

قبلك فقدنا شامخ الراس صدام
وهذا انت ترحل يا عزيز الشكيمة

وصلاة ربي عالذي هد الأصنام
أشرف جميع الخلق خلقاً وقيمه

الهاشمي نور الهدى وقت الأعتام 25
طبّ القلوب الموجعة والسقيمة

Disasters great and grave
Black days forever revolve

Dark and gloomy days, all obscurity
The Nation no longer has weight¹⁰

As split as the scum of a strand line
They divided it and ate their feast¹¹

20 Scattered, its power a mere fancy
It's eating itself, and the consequences spell disaster

Her brave men are slaughtered, her children are orphans
Twenty heads for one body, all smug in their error¹²

In lines 22-25, Hajaya takes his leave of al-Ḍārī:

Abū Muthannā, may a merciful lord have mercy on you¹³
I hope you're in paradise, in the heights of its delight

Before you we lost the lofty-headed Saddam
And here you depart, oh resolute friend

I pray to the Lord for the destroyer of the idols¹⁴
Noblest of creation in his character and valor

25 The Hashemite, light of guidance in dark times
Medicine for a pained and ailing heart

10 I.e. regional military or economic power to balance that of Iran, Russia, Israel, etc.

11 I.e. foreign powers with interests in causing chaos in the Arab world; "scum of a strand line" (*ghuthā' sayl*) and the "feast" (*walīmah*) are in reference to the prophetic hadith that the end of times is near when the Muslims are as weak and divided as the scum and driftwood left at the flood line, or strand line, by a river or stream after its flood recedes; the same hadith says that the nations will then fall upon the Muslims like diners upon a dish

12 I.e. twenty heads, or countries, for the body of the Arab Nation.

13 Abū Muthannā is Ḥārith al-Ḍārī's tekonym, or *kunya*.

14 I.e. the Prophet Muhammad.

ضاع اليمن والربع في نوم وسبات
يطبخ به الحوثي على جمر هادي

الفقر والدولار والثالث القات
مع الجهل سبب خراب البلادي

وما فادعربان الجهل قول هيهات
يلعب به الحوثي وصالح وهادي

يا ويلكم من شرهم يالدويلات
حاطت بكم إيران فعلاً وكادي

بين المزاين والشعر والملذات
ضيعتوا أمة يابكار التنادي

5

هادي يصيح ومجهداً بالنداءات
مثل الذي ينفخ بكومة رمادي

Yemen's Gone

March 25, 2015

Written just before Operation Decisive Storm (*'āṣifat al-ḥazm*), the Saudi-led intervention in the Yemeni Civil War to restore ousted president 'Abd Rabbuh Maṣūir Hādī to power, this poem is a piece of occasional political verse that diagnoses Yemen's problems and pokes fun at the Gulf Arab nations for their inaction.

Yemen's gone, the Arabs slumber
And Houthi's cooking on Hadi's coals¹

Poverty, the dollar, *gāt*, and
Ignorance: the reasons for Yemen's destruction²

It doesn't help the ignorant Arabs to lament her loss
While Hadi, Houthi and Salih play with Yemen³

Their evil's now your woe, oh statelets!
For Iran's surrounded you for certain⁴

5 Between camel beauty contests, poetry and pleasure
You've lost a nation, you fat asses!

Hadi cries out, worn out from yelling
Like one who blows upon a pile of ashes⁵

1 A pun on the last name of 'Abd Rabbuh Mansur *Hadi*, the president of Yemen; to cook on "calm coals" (*jamr hādī*) means that one has patience to cook a meal over a slow fire and thus that the Houthis are here to stay; 'Abd al-Malik Badr al-Din al-Huthi is one of the leaders of the Zaydi militant uprising in Yemen supported by Iran; Hajaya adds that they are cooking the "dish of occupation".

2 *Gāt*, or *qāt*, is a plant whose leaves are chewed in Yemen for their stimulant effect; Hajaya attributes the Houthis' takeover of Yemen to their taking advantage of people's ignorance, poverty, and addiction to *gat*.

3 'Alī 'Abdullāh Ṣāliḥ is the former president of Yemen who allied with the Houthis.

4 I.e. Iran's evil is now the Gulf countries' woe; Iran has surrounded the Arabian peninsula like a pair of pliers (*zarrādīyah*), Hajaya adds, in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

5 I.e. to no avail; ashes only blow back in one's eyes.

لا تفكر بمريم

ردّ على الأخ اليمني الذي يريد الزواج من الطيارة الإماراتية مريم المنصوري

يا بن اليمن لا تشتكي حبّ مريم
قبلك فؤادي من هواها تحطم

وإن كنت فيها يا بن الأجواد مغروم
أنا بها قبلك متيمّ ومغرم

مريم مهرها عاليًا غالي السوم
مهرة جزرع اللي لمريم تقدّم

طنبًا وطنب اللي بهن شعب مكلوم
وأيضًا أبو موسى لمن كان يعلم

اللي يحرّهن بها يبشر اليوم
وبشرع ربّه بالهنوف يتنعم

5

Don't Think about Maryam

April 24, 2015

After the well advertised participation of the first female Emirati fighter pilot, Maryam al-Mansuri, in the coalition bombing of ISIS, an anonymous Yemeni poet who styled himself “The Poet of Ma’rib” (*shā’ir ma’rib*) wrote her a tongue-in-cheek love poem. Hajaya responded to the poem using the same rhyme and meter by discouraging him in his “love” for her, lamenting the Iranian “occupation” of certain islands in the Strait of Hormuz and expressing his fear of Iranian encroachment in the Middle East.

A response to my Yemeni brother who wants to marry the Emirati pilot Maryam al-Mansuri

In lines 1-7, Hajaya discourages the Yemeni poet in his love for Maryam:

Oh son of Yemen, don't complain of Maryam's love
She shattered my heart well before she did yours

If you, oh son of good men, are infatuated,
Then before you was I too in her thrall

Bidding for Maryam's dowry starts high
Whoever steps up should know: islands are her dowry

Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, home to a wounded people
And Abu Musa too, for those who knew¹

5 Whoever frees them can today expect,
By God's law, to delight in that pretty, young girl

¹ I.e. islands captured by Iran in 1971 and claimed by the UAE; Hajaya claims that many Arabs do not know about this conflict.

وأنا ترى ماين على ابن مكتوم
هات المهر وابشر لأنك ولد عم

يابن اليمن هذا المهر صار مفهوم
إن ما دفعته لا تفكر بمرير

ومن عبد ربه لا تحرى لك علوم
خله بحاله يشتكي واهج الهم

صنعا بها الحوئي تترس ومد عوم
وهاذي جموعه كل يومًا تقدّم

وماهي بعيدة يا بن عمي يبي يوم 10
يحكم بهاروس اليعارب معتم

وعلي ابن صالح حايطين به قروم
ومن أجل عينه أخصوا غالي الدم

وايران في وسط البحر سفنها تعوم
والمرجعية للأوامر ترى قم

وبوتن يراقب بالخفا قصعة القوم
والعم أو باما بها اليوم يلهم

I guarantee you Maktum's approval²
 So get the dowry, hope for the best, for you're her cousin³

Son of Yemen, her dowry's become known
 So if you can't pay it, don't even think about her

In lines 8-12, Hajaya warns of the Iranian threat to Yemen:

Don't seek help from 'Abd Rabbuh⁴
 Leave him alone to lament his burning woes

In Sanaa the Houthis are fortified and reinforced
 And their gangs advance more every day

10 Oh cousin, there may soon come a day
 When a turbaned Shiite rules the Arabs⁵

Around 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih warriors stand guard⁶
 Who for him count cheap their precious blood

Iran's boats float in the midst of the sea
 Their orders' authority comes from Qom⁷

In lines 13-18, Hajaya reviews the Arab world's problems:

Putin spies on the Arabs' dish in secret⁸
 The dish Master Obama today devours⁹

2 I.e. Shaykh Muhammad ibn Rashid Al Maktum, vice president and prime minister of the UAE and emir of Dubai.

3 I.e. recapture the Tunb islands and Abu Musa from Iran, and Shaykh Muhammad will accept them as Maryam's dowry; the marriage of paternal cousins (*wilād amm*) in Bedouin culture is favored because it replicates the male line.

4 'Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, president of Yemen since 27 February 2012 and leader of the resistance to the Houthis and to 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih in the Yemeni Civil War.

5 I.e. when Iran takes over the Arabs' lands in Yemen or elsewhere.

6 I.e. the president of Yemen from 1990-2012.

7 The "largest center for Shia scholarship in the world" from "Qom," Wikipedia.

8 In reference to the prophetic hadith that the end of times is near when the nations fall upon the Arabs like diners upon a dish; see also line 19 of "Brave Men Slaughtered".

9 "uncle" (*'amm*), or "master" in Bedouin Arabic.

وحنًا نعيش بملهنا نصر مزعوم
وبغداد قبل الشام تدميرها تم

15 ومصر العروبة بين ظالم ومظلوم
شبت بها نار الفتن والبلاعم

وفي ليبيا حقت على خط مرسوم
وكل على ذبحة معمر تدم

هذا الربيع اللي به الشر محتوم
بالذبح جانا والدمار المحتم

وحنًا قصيد ومهرجانات وفلوم
وحبّ وغزل وأحلام وسباق وقم

ومريم تطير وفي سما حزننا تحوم
وما همها حيّ وحبك وتفهم

20 لا بدّ تلقا له من بلاد مكتوم
صقرٍ بها يغرم وهي فيه تغرم

We live on our dreams of alleged victories¹⁰
And before Syria Baghdad was destroyed

- 15 The Arabs' Egypt is either oppressing or being oppressed
As fires of strife and distress break out

In Libya Haftar walks his prescribed path¹¹
While everyone regrets Qaddafi's slaughter

This Spring, in which evil's ordained
And ruin's written, came to us full of slaughter

Yet we're all about poetry, festivals, films,
Love, flirtation, fantasies, camel races and summits¹²

In lines 19-20, Hajaya tells the Yemeni poet the bitter truth:

While Maryam flies in our sadness' skies, know this:
She's not thinking about my love or yours

- 20 No doubt she'll find herself, in the land of Maktūm,¹³
A falcon she'll fall for, who'll fall for her too

10 I.e. over Israel, Iran, and the United States; the Arabs did not so much "win" the 2006 Lebanon war, the 1980s Iran-Iraq War, the Second Iraq War, or the 1973 War, but many of them congratulate themselves and claim that they did.

11 Khalifah Haftar, Libyan general and commander of the Libyan National Army in the Second Libyan Civil War; i.e. he walks his path as prescribed by the CIA, Hajaya explains.

12 I.e. distractions that do not help the Arab Nation or advance the cause of Arab Nationalism; Hajaya explained over WhatsApp: "if you sit in any sitting in the Gulf and many Arab countries you don't hear anything but talk about marriage and women. And you feel that those people don't have any concerns except in the area of women and flirting with them. And the concerns and pains and catastrophes of the [Arab] Nation don't occupy but a small area of their thought" (*idhā tajlis fī ayy jalsah fī al-khalīj wa-kathīr min ad-duwal al-'arabiyyah la tasma' illā al-ḥadīth 'an az-zawāj wa-n-nisā', wa-tash'ur inna ha'ulā' an-nās laysa lahum hamm illā fī mawdū' an-nisā' wa-l-ghazal bihin, wa-humūm wa-awjā' al-ummah wa-maṣā'ibhā la tahtall illā masāḥah ṣaghīrah min tafkīrhum*; 20 January 2016).

13 I.e. the United Arab Emirates.

متابعة الأخبار عبر الجزيرة

كيري يصرح عبر نشرات الأخبار
من ضمن تصريحات عنده كثيرة

ما هو ضروري يرحل اليوم بشار
يهذي لحاله ما حدا مستشير

تكشفت يا كيري اليوم الأسرار
وحليفكم يبشر بذل وكسیره

الروس روس وأثبتوا إنهم كبار
وما هرتهم نج وكلام الجزيرة

شعاركم يا كيري الفيل وحمار
والدب ياكل فيلكم مع حميره

وبشار عند الروس ناطور للدار
ناطورها وابن المعلم وزيره

والشيخ خامثي مصمم على الثار
ودم الحسين بكر بلا يستشير

Following the News on Al Jazeera

September 19, 2015

Hajaya wrote this poem out of frustration with Obama's and US Secretary of State John Kerry's hesitation on Syria, the Russians' decisiveness, and the human cost of the incessant war. Hajaya here expresses his belief, expressed elsewhere, that the Arab Spring was planned and executed by Western intelligence agencies with help from local collaborators.*

In lines 1-5, Hajaya points out Kerry's prevarications and the Russians' power:

Kerry's always declaiming over the news
He sure has made a lot of public statements

"Bashar doesn't have to leave *today!*"
As he babbles to himself with no one to advise him

Oh Kerry, today your secrets were revealed
Your allies can expect nothing but defeat and disgrace

The Russians are firm men, and they've proven their power¹
Not shaken by Al Jazeera's barking

5 Kerry, aren't America's mascots the elephant and the donkey?
The bear can devour them both

In lines 6-11, Hajaya describes the situation in Syria:

Bashar's another watchman for the Russians' house
Along with Mu'allim, his foreign minister²

Shaykh Khamenei is bent on blood-revenge
Still upset by Husayn's blood spilled at Karbala³

* My translation of this poem first appeared online at *ArabLit* <<https://arablit.org/2015/09/24/muhammad-fanatil-al-hajayas-following-the-news-on-al-jazeera>>.

1 There is a pun here on "Russians" (*rūs*, sing. *rūsi*) and "firm men" (*rūs*, sing. *rās*; lit. "heads").

2 Walid al-Mu'allim, Syrian foreign minister since 2006.

3 In reference to the Prophet Muhammad's grandson and son of the prophet's companion 'Ali, Husayn, who was killed at the battle of Karbala in the year 61AH/680AD.

ضاعت عربنا بين بايع وسمسار
وطلابِ ثار الحقد ماكل ضميره

والغرب منهم صنع اليوم ثوار
فصايلِ والكلّ يتبع أميره

واللاجئين اليوم في كلّ الأقطار 10
متشتتين بكلّ دولة وديرة

وناسٍ كلاها الحوت في غبّ البحار
وناسٍ غدى ما يعرف وش مصيره

واللي تسبّب بالخطايا والأخطار
جالس بقصره بين وسكي وبيره

عنده جوارى والخدم دوم حظار
ويتابع الأخبار عبر الجزيرة

Our Arabs are caught between merchants, middlemen,
And men of vendettas, their hearts eaten by spite⁴

From the beginning has the West been fabricating rebels
And squadrons, with each one following its own commander

10 Now refugees are everywhere
Scattered over every land and country

Some of them eaten by whales in the sea's depths,
Some of them lost, their fates unknown

In lines 12-13, Hajaya lays the blame for the chaos on an archetypal Arab lackey of the West:

Behind all the outrage and harm is
A man sitting in his palace sipping whiskey and beer⁵

He has slave girls and servants always at the ready
And follows the news on Al Jazeera

4 I.e. in reference to the popular Sunni Arab belief that the "spiteful" (*hāgidīn*) Shiite Iranians seek vengeance for the hundreds of thousands of Persians killed during the conquest of Persia around 1400 years ago.

5 I.e. one of the us' Arab collaborators.

بعيون روحاني دموع التماسيح
على الذي ماتوا بيوم التدافع

وبسوريا ينسى ألوف المذايح
تحت الركام وفي حجيم المدافع

شبيح فعلاً يدعم اليوم شبيح
و بين الأمم عنه بقوة يدافع

أشبعتنا وعود وكلام وتصاريح
ومتك يا أوباما ما لقينا منافع

أربع سنين مفاوضات وتلويح
أنشهد إنك بالفعل مانت نافع

5

بوتن بيده صار كلّ المفاتيح
كلّ يوم بك يصفع وما زال صافع

Crocodile Tears

September 28, 2015

On September 24, 2015, a crowd collapse occurred in the neighborhood of Mina in Mecca, causing the deaths of over two thousand people. Iranian president Hassan Rouhani was quick to blame the Mina stampede on Saudi incompetence; Hajaya was quick to point out the hypocrisy of Rouhani's indignation while hundreds of thousands of Syrians had died at the hands of Iran's ally Bashar al-Assad.

Rouhani's shedding crocodile tears
For those who died in the Mina stampede

He's forgotten Syria's slaughtered thousands
Under the rubble and in cannons' hellfire

Today one *shabbīh* supports another¹
And defends him with vigor among the nations

You've sated us with promises, talk and declarations²
In you, Obama, we've found no benefit

5 Four years of negotiations and threats³
I hereby witness that you're no use at all

All the keys are now in Putin's hands
He slaps you every day, and he's still slapping

1 In reference to the Alawite militia led by Bashar al-Assad's family and known for killing people randomly; here Hajaya means that Rouhani supports Bashar al-Assad.

2 E.g. "we'll support the moderate Syrian opposition," "chemical weapons are a red line," "Assad will go soon," etc.

3 E.g. Arab League/UN, Russian, Vienna, Geneva II.

خطة دهاة الغرب بوتن وقع به
لعبروا بعقله لعب الأسيان بالثور

جافازع ليّ ذبح نصّ شعبه
وكله يصبّ لمصلحة وعد بلفور

والفارسي يلعب على نفس لعبه
متقاسمين الأرض والفعل والدور

لعبه على العريان بالحيل صعبة
طبخة سياسة عاسها ألف دكتور

صرنا لهم قصعة وزاد الطمع به
متخالفين الراي والسيف مكسور

بغدادنا الشيب المجوسي درع به
والشام سارت حصّة لدبّ مسعور

The West's Crafty Men

October 1, 2015

Hajaya wrote this shortly after Russia began intervening directly in the Syrian Civil War. The poem contains apocalyptic rhetoric, the conviction that conspiracies are at work and that Putin is the US' dupe, and a survey of the Arab world's problems.*

The West's crafty men laid a trap, and Putin fell in
They messed with his mind the way Spaniards do with bulls

Putin went to help a man who slaughtered half his people
And it all goes to help the Balfour Declaration¹

The Persians are playing at the same game,
Divvying up the land and the work and the roles

A conspiracy against the Arabs, so hard for us to bear
A dish of politics cooked up by one thousand specialists²

5 For them we're just a plate of food—their greed's only increased
With our divided opinions and broken power

The Arabs' Baghdad? A Zoroastrian *shīb* tears it to pieces³
The Levant? Now a rabid bear's slice of the pie⁴

* My translation of this poem first appeared online at *The Conversation* <<https://theconversation.com/in-the-verses-of-jordans-most-popular-poet-the-hopes-and-fears-of-the-arab-world-49424>>.

1 I.e. the Arab world's chaos benefits Israel.

2 In reference to the prophetic hadith that the end of times is near when the nations descend upon the Muslims like diners upon a dish; see also line 19 of "Brave Men Slaughtered" and line 13 of "Don't Think About Maryam".

3 The *shīb* is a ferocious animal described by Bedouin communities and recorded by Western travelers to the Levant; it may be a rabid wolf or a cross between a hyena and a wolf, or between a dog and a wolf; see William Bingley, "Animal Biography; or Anecdotes of the Lives, Manners, and Economy, of the Animal Creation, Arranged According to the System of Linnaeus" vol. 2, 1803, pp. 224-225; Burckhardt also heard tell of this "voracious animal ... stated to be a breed between the leopard and the wolf. Of its existence little doubt can be entertained, though its pretended origin is probably fabulous, for the Arabs, and especially the Bedouins, are in the common practice of assigning to every animal that is seldom met with, parents of two different species of known animals" (Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, 534).

4 I.e. Russia's.

وبيروت نصر الله وحزبه رثع به
وأرض اليمين في يد حوثي ومأجور

وأرض العروبة كل شرّ انزع به
كثرت فتنها وأصبح الدم مهدور

والقدس بعض أجيالنا ما سمع به
نكبة قديمة تنتظر فزعة صقور

10 عالم ظلوم وحقنا ما اقتنع به
الظلم له مبدا ومنهج ودستور

يا مجلس الأمن الذي صرت لعبة
أنشهد إتك مجلس الظلم والجور

Lebanon? Nasrallah and Hezbollah mangle it
Yemen? Contracted out to the Houthis

Every form of evil's been sown in the Arabs' lands
Sectarian strife has increased as blood's spilled in vain

Jerusalem? Our younger generations haven't even heard of it
An old *nakba* is waiting for a cast of falcons⁵

10 A world of injustice, convinced we Arabs have no rights
For that world, injustice is a principle, a way, a constitution

Oh Security Council, you're also just a game and
I hereby witness that you're a council of injustice and oppression

5 I.e. to liberate it; by "falcons" Hajaya means warriors.

إن ما وقفنوا بالعرب موقف رجال
تبشروا بهلال شيبي شيوعي

إلا يجون الفرس رجلي وخيال
ويحققوا أحلامهم بالرجوعي

الفرس فعلاً أثبتوا قول وبأفعال
والفعل ما هو مثل هرج الطقوعي

اللي يندد عبر موجات الإرسال
يشرب من الدلة وياكل قدوعي

ما ينفع الأمة بكانا عالاً طلال
عدونا مجرم وقلبه قطوعي

توحدوا فالسيل من تحتكم سال
تجهزوا له والبسون الدروعي

وإذا عجزتوا تطحوا غزو الأندال
أعطوا الشوارب للابسات القنوعي

Stand Together

October 2, 2015

Hajaya wrote this short poem in response to widespread fear among Sunni Arabs about Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the Arab World. Hajaya draws on King Abdullah II's warning in 2004 about the emergence of a Shiite Crescent in the Middle East and the increased possibility of Sunni-Shiite conflict.¹ Hajaya believes that Iran intends to reconquer the land that the Sasanian Empire lost to the Arabs in the seventh century CE.

Oh Arabs, if you don't stand together like men,
Then expect to see a Shiite-Communist Crescent

Otherwise, the Persians will come with infantry and cavalry
To realize their dreams of Reconquest

The Persians proved their words with deeds
Deeds! Not the talk of worthless men²

Those who denounce over airwaves and broadcasts
Sit around drinking coffee and eating dates

5 Weeping over our past glories doesn't help our people
Our enemy's a criminal, and his heart's merciless

Unite! The water's rising in the wadi
Prepare for war, and strap on your shields

If you can't resist the scumbags' raid, then
Cut off your moustaches and give them to your women³

¹ See, for example, Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat To Election From Iran," *Washington Post*, 8 December 2004.

² Lit. of "farts" (*tugū*).

³ The moustache represents manliness and bravery in Bedouin culture.

تحالف الشيعة مع أحفاد لينين
يثبت بأن الفكر كله شيوعي

تحالف رجال على الحرب صلفين
مار استعداداً ويا بكار الضروي

واتوا هدهم يا هواة البعارين
وحليفكم بالغرب فعلاً طقوعي

الفاعل الفعلي بها اليوم بوتين
وع قصعة الشام العذبة دشوعي

شرس الفعايل ما يهاب المعادين
وإذا تقدّم ما يحب الرجوعي

بالأمس حظّ القرم تحت الجناحين
واليوم سوريا رثع به رثوعي

ما هو لأجل بشار أو منطلق دين
طماع ما هو بالقليلة قنوعي

Stalin

September 27, 2015

In lines 1-3, Hajaya warns the Arabs of the Russian-Iranian alliance:

The Shia have allied with Lenin's grandsons
Which proves that their thought's really communist¹

Such tough veterans have allied in war
So get ready, big-nippled Arabs²

You camel-loving Arabs are their target, and
Your Western ally is good for nothing but farting³

In lines 4-9, Hajaya describes Putin and his principles and goals:

The real actor in Syria now is Putin
If Syria the Pure's a plate of food, he's hogging it all to himself⁴

5 Vicious and fierce, he doesn't fear his enemies
And once he advances, he doesn't like to retreat

He just put Crimea under his wing
And today he's devouring Syria

For the sake of neither religion nor Bashar
He's just greedy! And never content with a little⁵

1 Hajaya believes that Shiites are like communists because they "have no religion" and, according to him, do not understand Islam; contrast this view with his conciliatory attitude toward Shiites in "Day of Succession."

2 I.e. the Gulf Arabs resemble she-camels with big nipples in that they have lots of oil, land, money and natural resources; the West, the US, and Iran are "milking the Arabs' camel," Hajaya says.

3 I.e. worthless; see also line 3 of "Stand Together".

4 In reference to the apocalyptic hadith; see also line 19 of "Brave Men Slaughtered," line 13 of "Don't Think About Maryam" and line 4 of "The West's Crafty Men".

5 "What's next," Hajaya asks, after Crimea and Syria, "Africa?" Hajaya believes that Putin wants to return Russia to its imperialist, czarist days.

وما هم بوتن لو يموتوا ملايين
وما هو على ذبحة عربنا جزوعي

يمشي على مبدأ مشابه ستالين
المجرم النازي ركع له ركوعي

والفرس في بغداد ما هم قنوعين 10
أهدافهم مكة وذيك الربوعي

إرع اليمن به ثائرات البراكين
نيرانها أفنت خصيب الزروعي

واحنا قصيد بعامرات الدواوين
نتنا من أوباما تجينا الفزوعي

ثوراتنا تحت قيادة شياطين
للهافية صاروا يقود الجموعي

ورجب مع الإخوان وسط الميادين
لليوم ع مرسي يهّل الدموعي

Putin couldn't care less if millions died
 He's not sad about the slaughter of us Arabs

He's following the footsteps and the principles of Stalin,⁶
 Who brought the Nazi criminal to his knees

In lines 10-14, Hajaya laments Arab inaction:

- 10 Neither are the Persians content with just Baghdad
 Their aim is Mecca and the surrounding lands⁷

Look at Yemen, where volcanoes erupt,
 Whose fires have ruined its fertile, green crops

While we write poetry in lavish salons
 And wait for Obama to come save us

Our revolutions are led by devils
 Leading people straight to hell

With the Muslim Brothers in the middle of the squares, Erdogan
 Pours out tears for poor old Mursi

6 I.e. Hajaya believes that Putin is willing to kill millions of his own people in order to stay in power, like Stalin.

7 Hajaya believes that Iran wants to take over the Arabs' lands and convert everyone to Shiism.

وحد يهودك والعرب

في ظلّ فوضى عارمة كلّها سرّ
وفي وقت تشّيت العرب وانكساره

يا كيري اسمع كلمتي وأكم السرّ
ما دمت يا كيري كبير الوزارة

الشرق الأوسط كالعجين المبعثر
يريد أيدي تصنعه في مهارة

فرصة ثمينة مثلها قبل ما مرّ
وإن ضاعت الفرصة شربنا المرارة

وحد يهودك والعرب لا تأخّر
وقود السلام اللي تعثر مساره

5

شجع أو بما قول له معتدل سر
ولا زم بهذا الوقت ياخذ قراره

حمارنا يمشي إذا قلت له حرّ
وحمارهم أطرم وعمياً أبصاره

حمارنا عبّاس إن قلت له سر
يمشي وما فكر برح وخسارة

Unite the Jews and the Arabs!

October 11, 2015

Upon hearing that then-US Secretary of State John Kerry was coming to speak at Harvard, I asked Hajaya to write him a poem and suggested as a topic Israeli-Palestinian peace. This was during the Stabbing Intifada.

In the shadow of violent chaos, all of it evil
In the time of the Arabs' division and defeat

Oh Kerry, hear my advice and keep it a secret
Oh Kerry, ever the State Department's power!

The Middle East is as scattered pieces of dough
And needs skilled hands to reshape it

A golden opportunity whose like's never occurred
And if lost, we'll drink a bitter draught¹

5 Unite your Jews and the Arabs—don't delay!
And peace, which stumbled on its path—guide it!

Embolden Obama, tell him "Forward march!"
Now especially must he make the decision

Our donkey trots if you tell it "giddy-up"²
But the Israelis' donkey is deaf and blind

Our donkey—Abbas—if you tell him "march!"
Will march, and won't think of his own gain or loss

¹ I.e. Jews and Arabs.

² I.e. the Arabs "donkey of peace".

أسس لهم دولة ترى الوضع يفتر
وخرب على شلة حماس التجارة

10 إن تم هذا الأمر والعالم انسّر
جائزة نوبل تاخذه في جدارة

وإن ما حصل هذا ترى الكلّ يخسر
ويسيل دم الجانبين بغزارة

ومسيرة الإرهاب تصعد وتكبر
ويمكن نهايتها دمار الحضارة

هاذي نصيحة وانت يا صاحبي حرّ
واسمع كلامي يا كبير الوزارة

While the situation's a tilt-a-whirl, found them a state
And destroy Hamas' reason for profit³

- 10 If you found them a state and gladden the world
You'll take—and deserve—a Nobel Prize

But if you don't, everyone will lose
And blood on both sides will flow freely

As the march of terrorism rises and grows
And seeks to end human civilization

This is advice, and you, friend, are free
But do hear my words, dear Secretary

3 I.e. destroy Hamas' ability to profit off the Palestinians' suffering, especially with the help of Iran; contrast with Hajaya's encouraging tone toward Hamas in "Twenty-One Countries".

يا سيرجي هات القلم واكتب جمل
ودّي لأوباما أوجه كلامي

سلم عليه وبالحي لا تعجل
وتبلغه مّي كثير احترامي

وعن سوريا قل له إذا كان يسأل
أنا فرضت الحلّ والسيف دامي

سيفي سلاحاً في سما الشام يصهل
المبج والسيخوي فيها أقلامي

5 في جوّ سوريا تحوم وتجوّل
واليايركوهن يعرفون المرامي

يرمن على أوكار العدا نار تشعل
مثل الصقور إن واشع الحمامي

أرسلتهن يوم أصبح الوضع مختل
وفي قاسيون اليوم تخفق أعلامي

I'm the Leader!

October 30, 2015

Hajaya's first in the poetic exchange (*musājalah*) between Putin and Obama, this poem is Putin's overture to Obama to share with him in divvying up Syria and the rest of the Middle East. Hajaya's Putin begins in the tradition of an illiterate nineteenth-century Bedouin shaykh who has composed his poem orally and calls on a scribe to transcribe and deliver it. Putin boasts of his air force's effectiveness and criticizes America's inaction, weakness and hypocrisy regarding Syria before making his offer: that he and Obama "split the Arabs' cake between [themselves]."

In lines 1-7, Hajaya's Putin greets Obama and boasts of his attacks in Syria:

Hey Sergei, get out a pen to write this down
I've got something to say to Obama

Say hello and don't hurry your words¹
And give him all my respect

If he were to ask about Syria, tell him
I've imposed the solution with a bloody sword

My sword's a war-horse neighing in Syria's skies,
Where MiGs and Sukhois write like pens

5 In Syrian airspace they fly and patrol
And their riders know their targets

On enemy nests they hurl blazing fire
Like falcons striking doves

I sent them in when the situation got shaky
Now my flag flies atop Mount Qasioun²

1 I.e. because Obama is a bit slow, Putin thinks.

2 A mountain near Damascus, Syria.

طلاق من راسي وأنا أقول وأفعل
ما يمشي إلا يا أوباما كلاي

من دمهم لأخلي الأرض تبطل
إن ما تبعوا خطتي مع نظامي

أنا الرعيم ويدي الربط والحل 10
أنا أسدها وأصبح الشام شامي

عميلنا نحميه لو إنه أحول
وندوس روس أذنا بكم بالصراي

عندي أمل تفهم كلاي وتعقل
في سوريا أصبح طويلاً مقامي

بشار يرحل إن أنا قلت يرحل
الراي راوي والحصيلة كلاي

وأريكا موضوعها اليوم فسحل
تكشفت عوراتها للأناي

في عهد أوباما غدت مثل الأهبل 15
متخبطة ما بين ظلم وظلامي

على مدار الوقت تدبج وتحتل
واليوم ودّهم يفرضون السلامي

أرض العرب ساحة بها يلعب الكل
ومانت عليهم يالأمريكي محامي

In lines 8-13, Putin boasts that he controls Syria:

I swear by my head! I say and I do
And only my word goes, Obama

With rebel and civilian blood I'll water the earth
If you don't follow my plans and my method

10 I'm the leader! In my hands are the knot and it's untying
I'm the Lion of Syria! The Levant is mine!³

We'll protect our collaborator even if he's cross-eyed⁴
We'll crush your lapdogs' heads with our shoes

I'm hopeful you'll come around and be reasonable
Because my stay in Syria's just begun

Bashar will leave when I tell him to leave
The decision's mine, and my words are the essence

In lines 14-21, Putin points out the United States' weak and hypocritical position:

America's skirts just flew up
And showed everyone what's under there

15 In the Era of Obama, America's acting a fool
Stumbling between injustice and darkness⁵

All throughout history she's slaughtered and occupied,
And now America's suing for peace?

The Arabs' lands are a playground for all
And you, American, don't need to play defense

3 A pun on the word for "lion" (*asad*), the family name of Bashar al-Assad.

4 I.e. even if he cannot see straight and therefore has no discernment/reason.

5 I.e. indecision; Hajaya quotes the Arabic proverb "*al-lēl aswad wa-rāyah aswad*" or "The night is black [i.e. bad] and so are decisions made in it."

أحكي معي وأعطيك شرحاً مفصّل
وكعكة عربكم نقسمه بالتامي

ودنا نقسمها حواكير ودول
وزيغ اسرائيل كلّ الأعوامي

وتبقى هي الأقوى وهم يتقوا شلل 20
وفي يدنا يبقى الرسن والخزامي

حنّا الرجال وبيدنا السيف الأصقل
وما همنا بيوت الشعر والحيامي

نشرب من اللي بالخلايا تسلّل
مفعولها يدخل صميم العظامي

الفودكا مشروبها يشفي الغلّ
كاساتها تروي بكاد المضامي

إذا شربناها لزوم تتدخل
ونحوّل طوال المباني هدامي

وما همنا لو كلّ الأعراب تزعل 25
وما همنا حاقد يعضّ البهامي

تمت وصلّ الله عدد ما المطر هلّ
على رسول الله شريف المقامي

Just talk to me—I'll explain to you the details
And we can split the Arabs' cake between us!

Into courtyard gardens and tiny statelets
To put Israel at ease for all time⁶

20 So she'll stay the strongest while they're all small cliques
And the bridle and nose-ring remain in our hands

You and I are the masters and hold a burnished sword!
And don't care about Arabs in their goat-hair tents

In lines 22-26, Putin reveals the method behind his madness:

Our drink seeps into our cells
And enters the marrow of our bones:

Vodka! It quenches our burning thirst
And cups of it water our thirsty livers

Once we take a sip, we have to intervene
And turn the tallest buildings into rubble

25 We don't care if we upset all the Arabs
We don't care if you bite your thumb at us, sir

Pray to God as many times as there are drops of rain
For God's Messenger of noble rank. This poem's over.

6 Putin does not actually care about Israel, according to Hajaya; he is just saying this to appease Obama.

ياقاتل الأطفال

ردّ الرئيس الأمريكي الشاعر أوباما على قصيدة الرئيس الروسي بوتين

أبدي بذكر اللي كتابه منزل
على محمد خير كل الأنامي

ومذكور بالإنجيل قولٍ مفصل
إنه رسول الله ومسك الختام

ويا مرحبا بأعداد برقاً يشعل
في ليلةٍ ظلها بوسط الغمامي

ترحيبه البدوان بالضيف لا حل
من بعد غيبة زائراً للغمامي

يا مرحبا باللي لنا اليوم مرسل
بوتن زعيم الروس عال المقامي

ويا كيري هات الكيف ودّنا تتعل
مشروب كنتاكي يزيد انسجامي

أنا الرئيس وحاكم البيت والكل
وأنا الرعيم وماسكاً بالزمامي

5

Child Killer

January 2016

Written using the same rhyme and meter as Putin's first salvo in the poetic exchange, Obama's reponse is a rejection of Putin's overture to divide the Middle East between them: America is omnipotent, and protecting Israel is her priority.

In lines 1-9, Hajaya's Obama returns Putin's greetings and calls on Kerry to transcribe his poem:

I begin by remembering Him whose book was revealed
To Muhammad, the best of mankind

It's stated clearly in the Gospel
That he's God's messenger, His crowning touch¹

Welcome as many times as lighting bolts flash
In the midst of clouds on a dark night

A Bedouin welcome as to the guest who comes
Visiting relatives after a long absence

5 Welcome to him who wrote us today
Putin, leader of the Russians, of high station

Kerry, bring the bourbon, for tonight we're staying up
Kentucky's drink improves my flow

I'm the president, the White House's ruler, the ruler of all!
I'm the leader, and I hold the reins

¹ In reference to the popular Islamic belief that the Bible contains predictions of Muhammad's prophecy.

وأكتب لبوتن واحترص لا تنجبل
أعطيه صورة عن هواي ومرامي

وقله على هونك واحذر تعجل
هاذي بداية والخوارط أمامي

والشام فيها يا غبي لا تأمل 10
صارت لنا لا تنخدع بالأوهامي

حتاهل التفكير والربط والحل
أهل الحروب وبالسياسة فهامي

ويوجد لنا ثوار للأرض تحتل
جيش الأسد خلوا دروعه حطامي

نمدهم بسلاح فتاك وحيل
بالمعركة ما يعرفون انهزامي

نحفر وياقع بالحفر كل محتل
ونمشي كما الأعمى بوقت الظلامي

ما تذكر السوفييت بجمال كابل 15
ذاقوا بها خازوق بالنار حامي

طلعوا فرار ولبسوا العار والذل
وباقى حطام دروعهم والعظامي

وأنا أظنك يا بويتن مغفل
وبجر السياسة تجهله بالتامي

Write to Putin and don't be shy
Give him an idea of my wish, my desire

Tell him slowly, and don't hurry, that
This is just the beginning, and I've got the maps before me

In lines 10-23, Obama boasts of America's hegemony and warns Putin about his designs on Syria:

10 Don't even dream about the Levant, you idiot
It's ours, so don't get any crazy ideas

We're people of thought, the problem and its solution²
A warlike people who understand politics

We have rebels who'll invade any land
Who've turned Assad's defenses to debris

We supply them with strategies and weapons
And in battle they know no defeat

We dig holes for retards like you to fall in³
While we walk more carefully than a blind man at night⁴

15 Don't you remember the Soviets in the mountains of Kabul?
There they took a fire-heated stake up the ass⁵

They fled wearing the clothes of shame and disgrace
Their bones and shattered defenses all that remained

Little Pootie, I think you're a dimwit⁶
Totally ignorant of politics' vast sea

2 A word-for-word echo of "the knot and its untying" from line 10 of "I'm the Leader".

3 See also line 6 of "Message to Putin of the Russians" and line 1 of "The West's Crafty Men".

4 As if a blind man would have trouble seeing at night.

5 In reference to the slow, humiliating method of torture and execution by which people were impaled through their anus on a sharp, fire-hardened stake; see also the poem "Fire-Hot Stakes".

6 Hajaya's Obama addresses Putin as *Bwētin*, a diminutive form of the Arabic *Būtin* or *Būtīn*.

يجيك يوماً للأمر يكي توّسل
 يساعداك بالحلحلة بالحرامى

وان كنت فى داعش و غيره تمرجل
 حتا لنا فىها فروع وقرامى

ولو رحت للهرىخ فىها تجوّل 20
 تلقى لنا فىها رموز وأسامى

فى كلّ ديرة تزرع أذنا ب وعلل
 حتا الدوا والداء بالانتقامى

نصبر كثر وبالقرار تتمهل
 وما نجرف وقت الغضب للصدامى

ننصب فخاخ وللعقول ننتسل
 وعدونا يفقد لذىذ المنامى

وما دام ست الكلّ بالوضع الأفضل
 هذا المهمّ وهو محطّ اهتامى

القلب يا بوتىن من حبّها فل 25
 هى حىّ الأوّل وقصّة غرامى

وإذا تعرض للخطر أو تزلزل
 من أجلها أسحب شطىر الحسامى

A day will come when you plead with America
To help you solve all your problems, you thief

If you brag about ISIS and the like⁷
We already have branches and bases⁸

20 If you went to Mars and wandered around
You'd find there our names and signs carved in the rocks

In every country we plant henchmen and defects
So when time comes for revenge, we're the sickness and the cure⁹

We're very patient; our decisions take time and
When angry, we're not swept into the clash

We lay traps and infiltrate minds, and make
Our enemies miss the sweetness of sleep

In lines 24-28, Obama tells of his love for Israel:

As long as the Mistress of All is sitting pretty¹⁰
That's what's important, that's all I care about

25 Putin, my heart is full of her love¹¹
She's my first love, my only love story

If danger ever strikes or shakes her,
For her sake I'd unsheathe a keen sword,

7 I.e. as if Putin created and supported ISIS.

8 A pun on the "bases" or "stumps" (in the Hajaya dialect, *gurmīyyah* pl. *garāmī*) of the "trees" of terror organizations that America controls (those organizations' leadership) along with those trees' "branches" (those organizations' foot soldiers); a synonym for "base" or "foundation" is *qā'idah*, as in al-Qaeda, which Hajaya believes the United States created and controls.

9 I.e. Hajaya's omnipotent US can create, and resolve, chaos anywhere it wants.

10 I.e. Israel.

11 Hajaya uses the English word "full" here; it fits the rhyme scheme and adds a bit of humor.

وإذا سحبتة تمسح منه دول
الخط الأحمر أمنها بالتزاي

أحبها حبّ العاريب للبل
وحبك إلى الفودكا وكسب الحرامي

يا قاتل الأطفال لا بدّ تسأل
عن كلّ فعلٍ اقترفته إجرامي

وبشّارك المهزوم وضعه مهلهل 30
وما عاد له بالشام أيّ مقامي

وما دام قلنا له من العام يرحل
يرحل ولازم نحكمه بالإعدامي

صدّام قبله راح ما فاده الكلّ
سيف العرب والي لهم كان حامي

ومعمرّ وحسني سقينا هم الذلّ
وعلي عبدالله منه الجرح دامي

هاذي حقايق وانت بالشرق تجهل
اليوم لك عنها أزحت اللثامي

تمّت وصلّ الله على خير مرسل 35
الهاشمي نور الهدى بالظلامي

That, when unsheathed, wipes countries off the map¹²
I'm committed—her security's my red line¹³

I love her as much as the Arabs love camels,
As much as you love vodka and taking what's not yours

In lines 29-35, Obama issues a final threat to Putin and Bashar:

Oh child-killer, you'll be held to account
For every crime you've committed¹⁴

30 With flimsy defenses, your little Bashar's beat,
There's no place for him anymore in all the Levant

As long as we told him from the beginning to leave
He'll leave, and we'll sentence him to death

Saddam went before him, and nothing helped him
The Sword of the Arabs who protected his people¹⁵

We made Hosni and Muammar drink cups of disgrace,
And Ali Abdullah's wound's still bleeding¹⁶

This is the truth, for you don't know the East
So today for you I've removed the veil

35 I pray to God for the best of messengers
The Hashemite, light of guidance in the dark

12 I.e. a nuclear weapon.

13 See also lines 33 and 35 of "Think of Poor Steven!"

14 I.e. by the ICC, not God; Hajaya believes that Putin is an atheist and a communist and that Obama would not threaten him with divine punishment.

15 A common epithet Hajaya applies to Saddam Hussein.

16 Husni Mubarak of Egypt, Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi of Libya, and 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih of Yemen.

كرهت أحرف روسيا وأكره الروس
نفس الحروف المقترس والفريسة

بوتن زعيم إجرام بالشّرّ متروس
وياكبر خيبة شعب هذا رئيسه

مبدأ شيوعي اضطهادي ومنجوس
والمرجعية للأفكار الخسيسة

بالشام يذبح ذبح مجرم ومهوس
وماهو موقر جامعاً أو كنيسة

تشعر بأن الكلّ طايب له العوس
وما بالعرب واحد سمعنا حسيسه

Theater of Corruption

January 23, 2016

Hajaya usually reserves his hate for governments, not people; in this poem, he attacks the Russian people for not objecting to Russia's military intervention in Syria and for supporting Putin. According to Hajaya, the Russian people are just as stupid and criminal as Putin, and such is the legacy of communism and the effect that a lack of religious belief has had on their society. Hajaya was inspired to write this poem after he checked his Facebook and saw a friend's post with pictures of Syrian civilians killed in Russian airstrikes.

In lines 1-4, Hajaya condemns Putin, the Russian people, and Russian military action in Syria:

I've come to hate the letters R-U-S-I-A along with the Russians
The same letters for the predator as for the prey¹

Putin's a criminal leader, full of evil, and
Leads you, the biggest failure of a people

With a filthy, oppressive, communist ideology,
The authority for your contemptible thoughts

In Syria he slaughters like an insane criminal
And doesn't distinguish between mosques and churches²

In lines 5-13, Hajaya laments the Arabs' division and the world's indifference to their suffering:

5 One feels like everyone's content with his cooking³
And from the Arabs we haven't heard a peep

¹ In Arabic, the letters for "Russia" (*rūsiyā*), when scrambled, yield "Syria" (*sūriyā*).

² I.e. because, according to Hajaya, Putin has no religion; Hajaya hints as much about Putin in line 29 of "Child Killer" and about Shiite Muslims in line 1 of "Stalin".

³ I.e. what Putin is cooking up in the Middle East.

متخالفين أفكار وأهداف ونفوس
والكلّ منهم يستشكّ بجليسه

متخالفين قلوب ومتوالفة روس
وسعى الأعادي بينهم بالدسياسة

وربعنا الأسود محطّط ومدروس
صقّق له اللي ما يعرفوا رسيه

وشعب العرب ما بين خاضع ومدعوس
وجيعان للقمّة بحاجة مسيسة

والغرب تاجر رأسمالي ومهووس 10
بالمال ينهب والكنوز النفيسة

ما همّهم كم مات بالشرق متعوس
وما همّهم وضع الشعوب التعيسة

الكلّ أصبح مبدأه مبدأ فلوس
والدم أرخص شي ممكن تقيسه

موت الضمير العالمي صار محسوس
عالم يقوده للنهاية إبليسه

وضع الأمم يابان مخزي ومنكوس
والوضع بأس وانت حالك بئيسة

Divided in thought, goal, and spirit
Every one of them distrusts his neighbor⁴

Their hearts divided though their heads be present⁵
Between them the enemies have spread their intrigues

Our Black Spring's been planned, investigated⁶
Applauded by those who couldn't tell it was just the beginning⁷

The Arab people are either submissive, trampled,
Or hungry, in desperate need of a bite

10 The West's a capitalist trader, infatuated
It plunders money and precious treasures⁸

They don't care how many wretched folk die in the East
They don't care about the state of a wretched people

Money's become everyone's first principle, and
The cheapest thing one can measure is blood⁹

The death of the world's conscience is now tangible
A world led to its end by the Devil

In lines 13-19, Hajaya condemns the UN's inaction and ineffectiveness:

Ban, the UN's condition's shameful, turned on its head¹⁰
Its situation's miserable, and so is yours

4 Lit. everyone doubts the intentions of whomever he's sitting with; i.e. the Arab leaders mutually distrust each other.

5 In reference to the Bedouin proverb "*rūs mitwālfah u-glūb mitkhālfah*" ("Heads together, hearts divided"); i.e. Arab leaders may be physically present in the same room (*mitāwlfīn*) but their hearts are divided and they have different goals (*mitkhālfīn*).

6 I.e. the Arab Spring.

7 I.e. by those Arab protesters who thought revolutionary democratic change would be quick and easy.

8 E.g. ruins and ancient treasures.

9 I.e. especially that of Arabs and Muslims, Hajaya adds.

10 Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General.

15 تاريخها بالجور أعطى لنا درس
إنها مطية للقوى يالفطيسة

ميت ولكك محنط ومحروس
وما باقي إلا لك نسوي ونيسه

الظلم ساد وأصبح العدل ميئوس
وأرض العرب يابان صارت بسيسة

تاكل بها الحيتان وينعث بها السوس
مسرح فساد وكل يملا بكيسه

تبيّن اللي بالخفا كان مدسوس
إلا على أهل العقول الخريسة

- 15 Its history's a very lesson in oppression
As the Great Powers' vehicle, and you're as good as a corpse¹¹

Dead but nonetheless mummified, protected
There's nothing left to do save slaughter an animal¹²

Oppression reigns, and we've lost all hope for justice
And the Arabs' lands have become a *basīṣah*¹³

Eaten by whales and bored through by woodworms¹⁴
A theater of corruption where all fill their bags

What was once buried in secret has now become clear
Except to those who are total dolts

-
- 11 I.e. because the UN's decisions mean nothing.
- 12 A reference to the Bedouin practice of slaughtering a *wanīṣah*, a camel, sheep or goat after burying the dead both to entertain guests with a meal after the funeral and to send another spirit to the afterlife to keep the dead company.
- 13 A simple, delicious, easily digestible Bedouin meal that consists of flour, butter, sugar, and honey; Hajaya means that the Arabs' lands have become "eaten" by all in reference to the hadith that the end of times is near when the nations fall upon the Muslims like diners upon a dish; see also line 19 of "Brave Men Slaughtered," line 13 of "Don't Think About Maryam," line 4 of "The West's Crafty Men," and line 4 of "Stalin".
- 14 Whales represent greed in Bedouin culture.

زري فشلنا ع اليهود المساكين
وزري عليهم ضعفنا والهزائم

وحتا بلانا البعد عن منهج الدين
حتى الذي متا مصلي وصايم

المشكلة ان مئآت الملايين
عمي البصاير حظنا دوم نايم

وجيراننا رغم ان عدد هم قليلين
في كل جولة غانمين وسلايم

وحتا انشغلنا في مزاين بعارين
وصيد الحباري والتهام الولايم

ونبي ابراج بالسما طالت الغين
في جوفها تجري أمور عضايم

Spring of Disaster

May 15, 2016

Part lament and part criticism, this poem expresses Hajaya's frustration with what he identifies as the ethic common to popular Arab society of blaming problems large and small on "the Jews." To Hajaya, most Arabs care about the wrong things—camel beauty contests, falcon hunting, filling their bellies—while the Arab's enemies are busy tearing their countries apart. Why, I asked him, does he criticize the above ethic while simultaneously blaming outside forces for the Arab Spring? He answered that the current situation is a combination of Arab indifference and Western machinations: the Arabs are *mughaffalīn*—heedless and inattentive—to their enemies' depredations.

We blame our failure on the serious, hardworking Jews¹
We blame on them our weakness and defeats

Afflicted, we've strayed from the path of religion
Even those of us who pray and fast²

The problem is that our hundreds of millions
Have no vision, no reason, and their luck's forever asleep³

Our neighbors, though their numbers be small,
Leave every battle successful and unscathed⁴

5 While we busy ourselves with camel beauty contests,
Hunting houbara bustards, and devouring feasts,

And building towers that touch the clouds⁵
Inside of which occur abominations, enormities⁶

1 The word *miskīn* (pl. *masākīn*) refers in most Arabic dialects to humble, poor or pitiful folk; here Hajaya intends its sense of "serious and hard-working" as found in the Qur'an's in the story of Khidr and Musa (18:79); for a similar use of *al-yahūd al-masākīn*, see line 28 of "Taste the Honey!"

2 In reference to many Muslims' superficial piety.

3 I.e. the Arabs.

4 I.e. the Israelis.

5 In reference to the skyscrapers in the Gulf countries.

6 Like fornication (*fuhsh*), adultery (*zinā*), and taking interest (*ribā*).

صدق بنا فعلاً ختام النبيين
غشاء سيل وخايرين العزائم

الدين شوّهناه بالمسلك الشين
وجبنا البلا لهل الحى والعمائم

عن منهج الدعوة حملنا السكاكين
نذبح بخلق الله ذبح البهايم

ويمكن فرقنا أصبحن فوق سبعين
وكلٍ يقول أنا على الدين قائم

10

والكلّ متأيّد عي إته الزين
هو الصقر والناس كلّ حمايم

وعدد دولنا أصبحن حول عشرين
تفاعطوهن طالبين الغنايم

جابوا لنا أسوأ ربيع الملاعين
ربيع دمّر كلّ ما كان قائم

The Seal of the Prophets was right about us:
Scum of a strand line, weak of will⁷

We've defamed our religion on the path of dishonor
And so brought disaster on good, turbaned, bearded men⁸

On the path of salvation, we've brought knives
And slaughter God's creation as one would on beasts⁹

10 Perhaps the number of our sects has surpassed seventy
With everyone saying, "It's *I* who keep the true faith"¹⁰

Every one of us claims he's good and in the right
He's a falcon, but the rest are doves¹¹

The number of our countries has reached about twenty
Raided by those in search of plunder¹²

The cursed bastards brought us the worst of springs¹³
A spring that destroyed everything standing

7 In reference to the apocalyptic hadith that at the end of days, the Muslims will be as divided as "the scum of a strand line" (*ghuthā' sayl*); see also see also line 19 of "Brave Men Slaughtered," line 13 of "Don't Think About Maryam," line 4 of "The West's Crafty Men," line 4 of "Stalin," and line 17 of "Theater of Corruption".

8 I.e. good, pious Muslim shaykhs are nowadays regarded as terrorists, surveilled, and imprisoned.

9 In reference to *takfīrī* terrorist groups who force people to convert to Islam in contravention of the Qur'an, which instructs Muslims to proselytize peacefully: "Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and dispute with them in the better way" (16:125).

10 In reference to the prophetic hadith that at the end of days the Jews would split into seventy-one sects, the Christians into seventy-two, and the Muslims into seventy-three, and that only one of those many sects would enter heaven: those who emulate the Prophet and his companions.

11 I.e. in his mind he lives in pride and dignity while others live in humiliation (*al-dhull wa-l-hawān*).

12 I.e. the West, in search of the East's resources.

13 I.e. in reference to the popular belief that outside forces, like Western intelligence services, created the chaos and destruction of the Arab Spring.

لا ياربيع البين أشبعتنايين
وفي موسمك شفنا شنيع الجرائم

15 ونرمي فشلنا ع اليهود المساكين
واحنا سبب كل الخطا والهزائم

وعلى بعضنا بالتآمر خيرين
وشطار في كيل التهم والشتائم

Oh spring of disaster, of disaster we've had our fill
In your season we've seen the most atrocious of crimes

- 15 We blame our failure on the serious, hardworking Jews
While we're the cause of our mistakes and defeats

Experts at conspiring against each other and
Clever in hurling accusations and insults

ثورة عرب أحرار

أبدي بذكر الله وأصلي على النبي
قبل القصيدة ما أوجه مسارها

يارب ألهمني وسدد مقالتي
واختار لي دربي وأشعل أنوارها

إختار لي أبيات شعرٍ محكمة
عقول من يسمع تثير انبهارها

دلة قصيد وينعش الراس بتها
في حب آل البيت فايح أبهارها

Free Arabs' Revolt

June 10, 2016

In this poem Hajaya commemorates the Hashemites who led the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in 1916-18, a “revolt of dignity that freed the Arab Nation” (*thawrat karāmah ḥarrarat ummat al-‘arab*) led by “free Arab men” (*aḥrār al-‘urūbah*). As in “Our Jordan,” Hajaya depicts Jordan as an “oasis” (*wāḥah*) of security during the tumultuous Arab Spring, Jordanian national unity as a “tapestry of loyalty” (*nasījin min al-wafā*), and Jordan’s enemies as barking dogs. Hajaya also writes that the Arabs in Jordan were living in Jāhiliyyah-like conditions before the Hijazi Hashemites came to liberate them, thus drawing a parallel between the Hashemites and their ancestor, the Prophet Muhammad. The poem is also a pledge of allegiance to King Abdullah II and a warning about the Arab Spring that echoes many of the sentiments expressed in “Our Jordan” and “The Arab Spring.” Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad commissioned Hajaya to write this hundred-line poem, their second major collaboration, for the hundredth anniversary of the Great Arab Revolt in May 2016. Hajaya performed it at the al-Husayn Public Park (*ḥadā’iq al-ḥusayn*) in Amman on May 25, 2016 in front of a crowd of thousands, who chanted after him the last word of each line. He also had the occasion to perform it at numerous national celebrations throughout the summer of 2016.

To my lord, his royal highness Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad

In lines 1-7, Hajaya begins with an invocation to God:

I begin by remembering God and praying for the Prophet
Before I steer the poem on its course

Oh God, inspire me, make my words hit their mark
Choose me a path and illumine its lamps

Choose me expert lines of poetry
That impress and dazzle my listeners’ minds

A coffee pot of a poem whose grounds revive men’s heads
Whose spices waft in love of the Prophet’s family¹⁴

14 And by extension, the Hashemites who rule Jordan.

5 بك أستعين وأسألك صادق المدد
وبرأت من نفسي وضعف اقتدارها

يا لله يا وهّاب يا مجزل العطا
إنت المدد في نظمها واختيارها

إختار لي يا ربّ في ثورة العرب
شعرٍ يناسبها وينصف أحرارها

ثورة أحرارٍ قدّ مواكّل ما غلا
يوم الثعالب لا يذة في وجارها

ثورة كرامة حرّرت أمة العرب
من ذلّ استعمار حارب أفكارها

10 أبطال شالوا همّ أمة تعدّبت
تحت احتلال وظلم طال انتظارها

نير احتلال الترك والجور والجهل
سبّب تخلفها وسبّب دمارها

عثر تقدّمها وهدم طموحها
وحرب المغازي بالفتن شبّ نارها

غذى عداوات القبائل وأعادها
للجاهلية والمغازي وثارها

الكلّ ضدّ الكلّ والخاسر العرب
وكلّ ما طفت نارٍ يعيد استعارها

- 5 I call on Your help, ask You, who give genuine succor
I've surrendered myself to You and my frail powers

Dear God, ever giving and generous
You're my aid in writing this poem, in choosing it

Choose for me, Lord, for the Arabs' Revolt
Poetry that becomes it, that does justice to its free men

In lines 8-22, Hajaya describes the state of Jordan before the Great Arab Revolt:

A revolt of free men who offered all that was precious and dear
When foxes slunk in their holes¹⁵

A revolt of dignity that freed the Arab Nation
From the shame of colonialism that waged war on its thoughts¹⁶

- 10 Heroes who shouldered the burdens of a nation that suffered
Under occupation and oppression of long duration

The yoke of the Turks' occupation, its injustice and its ignorance
Made the Nation backward, caused its ruin,

Crippled its progress, destroyed its striving,
Fanned the flames of intertribal raiding and strife,

Fed the fire of tribal enmities, and returned them
To the *Jāhiliyyah*, raiding, and blood-vengeance¹⁷

All against all, and the Arabs the losers
As soon as the fire would die out, they'd reignite it¹⁸

15 I.e. those Arabs who hesitated to join the Great Arab Revolt.

16 I.e. the Arabs' way of thinking, way of life, language.

17 I.e. to the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance marked by incessant blood-feuding and raiding.

18 I.e. the Turks would reignite the Arabs' internal problems and encourage them to fight one another.

15 سياسة التجهيل والفقير والقهر
قَطَعَ مفاصلها وزاد انهيارها

أربع قرون الي تواتت على العرب
أبناءها من الجور ذاقوا مرارها

محتلّ ماراعا لها أي حرمة
طمس حضارتها وزاد احتقارها

وزود على الإعدام والسجن والقهر
للحرب ساق أبناءها ما استشارها

حكّام جور بكلّ مفصل تحكّموا
والي شكى من جورهم ذاق نارها

20 على المشانق بالشوارع تعلّقوا
وضاقت على أبناء العروبة أقطارها

جمال باشا حاقد القلب ع العرب
ومعه وحوش مجرمة في مسارها

سياسة التتريك كانت هي الهدف
ومنارة الأحرار أطفأ فنارها

ولا ذوا بعد ما استحكّم الجور ضدّهم
إلى زعيمٍ كان نعم اختيارها

إلى الحسين بن علي طاهر النسب
أشرف زعامات العرب من أطهارها

- 15 Through imposed ignorance, poverty and subjugation
They severed its joints, and it collapsed even further¹⁹

Four such centuries followed upon the Arabs
Her sons tasted the bitterness of oppression

An occupier who didn't respect any values²⁰
Who wiped out a civilization whose esteem decreased²¹

In addition to the executions, the imprisonment and the subjugation
It drove its sons to war without asking them first²²

Oppressive rulers who controlled every aspect of life
And whoever complained of their oppression tasted its fire

- 20 They hung from gallows in the streets and
All the world's countries became too small for the Arabs' sons²³

Djemal Pasha, with a heart full of spite for the Arabs
And with savage beasts criminal in their ways

Turkification was the goal
The free men's lighthouse—its light was extinguished²⁴

In lines 23-39, Hajaya praises the Hashemites who led the revolt:

After oppression so surrounded them, they sought protection
In the choicest of leaders:

Husayn ibn 'Ali, of pure lineage
The noblest of Arab leaderships and the purest

19 I.e. the joints and the collapse of the Arab Nation.

20 I.e. Arab customs and traditions.

21 I.e. among the nations of the world.

22 In reference to the late Ottoman practice of forced conscription (Turk. *seferberlik*).

23 I.e. in their flight from the Turks' oppression, Arab nationalists could not flee far enough.

24 An epithet for the Arabic language.

25 من ساس آل البيت من آل هاشم
أشرف سلالات العرب من أشجارها

اليوم طاب الموت يا أمة العرب
نادى بها ونحوات الأمة أثارها

ثورة عرب أحرار عقد لها اللواء
أعلن مبادئها وحدد مسارها

شيخ العرب تاج العرب سيّد العرب
أطلق رصاصتها وثور إعصارها

حطم قيود الذلّ واستنهض الهمم
وع سكة التحرير مشى قطارها

30 ثورة على طغيان دولة تجبرت
أبهاءه الشجعان خاضوا غمارها

هم قادة الثورة ومن قدّم الثمن
وهم سادة الأمة وسادة قرارها

علي وعبدالله وفيصل وزيد
قادوا جحافلها وصلوا أوارها

قادوا رجال أبطال للأمة أخلصوا
أصحاب همّة ما ننتهم أخطارها

ودفع بهم في ساحة العزّ والشرف
شدّوا ركاب العزّ وركبوا أكوارها

25 From the root of the Prophet's family, from the family of Hāshim
The noblest of Arab stock

"It's a good day to die, oh Arab Nation!"
He called, and awakened the Nation's support²⁵

He raised the banner of the free Arabs' revolt
Announced its principles and determined its path

The Arabs' shaykh, the Arabs' crown, the Arabs' master
He fired the first bullet and set off the storm

Broke the chains of shame, aroused the Arabs' ambition,
And sent their train on the railway of liberation

30 A revolt against the tyranny of an oppressive state,
Its brave sons plunged into the fray

They led the revolt and payed the price²⁶
They're the Nation's masters and decisionmakers²⁷

'Ali, 'Abdullah, Faysal, and Zayd
Led her legions and bore her blaze²⁸

They led heroic men devoted to the Nation
Ambitious and zealous, not hindered by danger

He pushed his sons into the field of strength and honor²⁹
They readied their mounts of power and mounted their camel-saddles

25 Husayn ibn 'Ali's alleged words before he fired the first bullet of the Great Arab Revolt.

26 I.e. the Hashemites paid the price.

27 Hajaya adds that the Hashemites are the Arabs' oldest ruling house, having governed before the arrival of Islam.

28 I.e. the blaze of the fire of the revolt.

29 I.e. Husayn ibn 'Ali.

35 ما تاجر وأبأ واحهم ساعة الفدا
وهم بالطليعة في وقايح مغارها

ومعهم قبائل ناصرتهم وقدمت
كل الذي تملك لأجل انتصارها

خاضوا بحيم الحرب ما هابوا العدا
بالروح جادوا ما تغالوا أسعارها

من دمهم أرووا جبلها وسهلها
نالوا الشهادة واعتلوا في مدارها

هواشم من دمهم كان حبرها
وأقلامها واللي انكتب في أسفارها

40 وتحررت أرض العروبة وشعبها
وحكومة التريك تم اندحارها

لكن أطماع الغادرين وججودهم
بدد بها الآمال وأبعد مزارها

غدر الخوارج كان طعنات بالظهر
وعليهم بالتاريخ يبقى شنارها

غدر الأجانب والتخلي عن العهد
في سايكس بيكو بان خافي عوارها

- 35 They didn't haggle over their lives at the hour of sacrifice
In the vanguard, on the front line of battle

With them were tribes who aided them and offered
Everything they owned for victory's sake

They plunged into war's hell, not fearing the enemy
Liberal with their lives, counting them cheap

With their blood they watered mountains and plains
They won martyrdom and were raised to Heaven

Hashemites—their blood the very ink of the revolt
And its pens, and lines written in its books

In lines 40-56, Hajaya laments foreigners' post-revolutionary treachery and Husayn ibn 'Ali's death:

- 40 The Arabs' land and people were free
The government of Turkification was defeated and destroyed

But the greed of traitors and their rejection³⁰
Scattered its hopes and pushed them far away

The dissenters' treachery was a stab in the back³¹
For all history their shame will remain³²

The foreigners' treachery, oath-breaking
In Sykes-Picot, and their hidden shame were revealed

30 I.e. rejection of the Hashemites as the Arab World's legitimate rulers on the part of both Arabs and foreigners, but especially Ibn Sa'ud, says Hajaya.

31 In reference to Ibn Sa'ud, who after the revolt routed the forces of King Husayn and drove him and his family from Mecca; the word Hajaya uses for "dissenters" is *khawārij*, in reference to the first sect of Islam that split from 'Ali's camp after he agreed to arbitration with his rival Mu'āwiyah in battle.

32 Ibn Sa'ud sent the Ikhwān, an extremist group of fighters, to attack Amman; they were repulsed by the Hajaya tribe at Wadi Maghar and later by the Bani Sakhr.

والطاعنين بثورة حسين بن علي
ركاب الثورة ما يساوا وأثفارها

45 مرضى قلوب وقاصراتِ أحلامهم
وأمرض الأمة هم أسباب انتشارها

هم العدو وهم أدواته وعدته
ثعالبٍ بالمكر تحفر أججارها

نعم بعض أهدافها ما تحققت
والذنب ذنب الغادرين بشعارها

تبددت أحلام شيخٍ بدا بها
وغدر الأجنبي من أسباب انحسارها

وبالرغم من هذا تمسك بمبدأه
ودرب التنازل ما دخل في أوكارها

50 وحافظ على كل المبادي وصانها
وثبت ثبات الراسيات بقرارها

ما باع دينه لأجل دنيا يجوزها
يوم كثير الناس باعت أستارها

رحل عزيز النفس ما خان وانحنى
وما ارتضى بعد العلو انحدارها

هذا الحسين بن علي راعي الذم
ما خان عهد وما شرب من عكارها

The defamers of Husayn ibn 'Ali's revolt
Aren't worth the cruppers of the Revolt's mounts³³

- 45 With sick hearts and short-sighted dreams
The spreaders of the Nation's maladies³⁴

They're the enemy, its instruments and weapons
Crafty foxes digging their holes

Fair enough—not all of the Revolt's goals were accomplished
But it's the fault of the traitors, declared in their principles³⁵

The dreams of a shaykh who began it—dissipated
And subsided from the foreigners' treachery

And in spite of this, he held on to his principles
And didn't start down the road of cession with its dens

- 50 He preserved and maintained all his principles
In his resolution he stood firm as a mountain

He didn't sell his religion to possess the world
When many people were selling their very clothes³⁶

Never disloyal or deviant, he departed honorably, with self-respect
Not content with descent from the heights of greatness

Husayn ibn 'Ali kept his oaths
Never broke a pledge, never drank disloyalty's muddy water

33 The crupper is a strap attached to the back of a saddle to keep it from slipping forward; it is covered in dung from being so close to the camel's anus.

34 I.e. those who criticize the Hashemites' revolt.

35 I.e. the French, English and Saudis.

36 I.e. when people relinquished, or sold, the principles that covered them, like clothes.

ضحتي بعرشه يوم صارت مساومة
ع الديرة الي بارك الله جوارها

55 رحل شريف وجاور المسجد الذي
سرى إليه أشرف وأطهر خيارها

مجد المختار من صفوة البشر
شفيعنا من نار يقدح شرارها

والله عوّضنا بدار نجبها
الأردن الأعلى وأجل أقطارها

نجيا بها في مملكة هاشمية
بين الدول أصبح كبير اعتبارها

أسس قواعدها شريف من العرب
عبدالله الأوّل مؤسس فخارها

60 وتوارثوا إياها قادة الهدى
هواشم بالعدل صانوا أسوارها

ومهما يدور الوقت دورات منكرة
هم سادة الأمة ويقوا كبارها

دستورها أرسى أساسه وثبته
طلال هاديها وقدوة أحرارها

He sacrificed his throne when they started haggling
Over the land whose surroundings were blessed by God³⁷

- 55 Noble, he died with honor and moved next to the mosque that
The noblest, purest and best of men traveled to by night³⁸

Muhammad, the Chosen One, the best of mankind
Our intercessor from a spark-emitting fire³⁹

In lines 57-66, Hajaya is thankful for what the Hashemites received in Jordan:

God recompensed us with a home we love
Most precious Jordan, the most beautiful of countries

We live in a Hashemite kingdom
Become well esteemed among the nations

A noble man of the Arabs established its foundations
‘Abdullah the First, the founder of its pride

- 60 Leaders of integrity inherited its banners⁴⁰
With justice did Hashemites guard its walls⁴¹

Whenever we pass through detestable days
They're the Nation's *sayyids* and remain its most eminent

Her constitution set forth and fixed by
Talal, her Guide, her free men's ideal⁴²

37 I.e. the al-Aqsa mosque, Palestine, and the surrounding lands in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt; by "they" Hajaya means the English and the Zionists.

38 I.e. Husayn ibn 'Ali was buried next to al-Aqsa, which Muhammad traveled to from Mecca (and back again) in one night, on the back of the heavenly horse Buraq.

39 I.e. Hell.

40 I.e. inherited the leadership of Jordan.

41 I.e. not only by the sword but also with justice, Hajaya adds.

42 In reference to the epithet of Jordan's King Talal ibn Husayn, the "Guide of Jordan" (*hādī al-urdun*).

وبعدہ تولّاهَا الحسين ونهض بها
رغم الظروف القاسيات وحصارها

رفع مبانيها وعلا صروحها
وأسس لها جيش حماة لديارها

جيش العروبة هاشمي إذا اتخى 65
المملكة بالسيف يحمي ذمارها

ومخبرات تعرف الخافي الخفي
واللايذالي خافي من أسرارها

وسلم لواها من به نفاخر الأمم
أبو الحسين اللي بحكمه أدارها

عبدالله ابن حسين الوافي الوافي
الثاني الباني معلي جدارها

قاد الإصلاح بحكمة الواعي الذي
يعرف مسالكها ويسبر أغوارها

بحكمة زعيم شاييل همّ أمة 70
ما حارب الشعب وتجاوز أقدارها

بالعطف والإحسان واللين والعفو
صحّ مسار اللي غدا عن مسارها

ربيعنا خلاه خضر مرابعه
وتفتحت من فضل ربي أزهارها

After him King Husayn took charge and raised her up
In spite of a siege of tough, harsh conditions

He raised its buildings and exalted its halls⁴³
And founded an army to guard its lands

65 The Arabs' army, its loyalty is to the Hashemites
With the sword does it protect the cherished kingdom

Its intelligence service knows the secrets of secrets
And hidden matters concealed in their mysteries

In lines 67-77, Hajaya praises Abdullah II and his rule:

Accepted its banner he in whom we take pride before the nations
Abu al-Husayn who directs her in his wisdom

‘Abdallah ibn al-Husayn, complete and faithful,⁴⁴
The Second, the builder, who raised its walls⁴⁵

He led reform with the wisdom of a conscious man who
Knows its paths, has fathomed its depths

70 With the wisdom of a leader who carries the Nation's burdens,
Refused to fight his own people, and passed over the Arab Spring

With sympathy, charity, accommodation, and pardon
He corrected the path that had lost its way

He made our Spring's meadows green
Her flowers bloomed thanks to our Lord

43 I.e. he developed Jordan's infrastructure and educational system; the word used here for "hall" or "palace" (*ṣarḥ* pl. *ṣurūḥ*) can also refer to *ṣarḥ al-‘ilm*, or a university.

44 I.e. complete in that he possesses all the virtues.

45 I.e. who further developed Jordan and heightened its standing in the world.

يحكم بها الدستور والأمر شورى
وحرية التعبير عالي منارها

واليوم وحدتنا نسيح من الوفا
بأجل صفات الحبّ تمّ انصهارها

وحدة مصير واحد وشعب واحد 75
الله من كيد الأعداء أجارها

ودافع عن الإسلام وأوضح مناهجه
وأزال عن وجه الحقائق غبارها

وحصن ووطنًا عن أذى كلّ باغي
وشعار الأردنّ أولاً هو شعارها

وحمي ووطنًا وسط بحرٍ من الفتن
ونيران حمرا تشتعل في جوارها

نار الربيع الأسود اليّ غشى العرب
عشبه مذابح والقنابل أمطارها

كم دولةٍ من حولنا عمها البلا 80
حظم قواعدها وخرّب عمارها

وكم أنظمة مالت وزالت وانهت
الجور كان أول أسباب انهيارها

واحنا بسلام وأمن في واحة الوفا
الأردن اليّ بالقلوب اختصارها

The constitution governs it and counsel's the imperative⁴⁶
Freedom of expression, her tower raised high

Today our unity is a fabric of loyalty
Fused and melded by the most beautiful characteristics of love

75 The unity of one destiny and one people
God protected her from the enemies' tricks

He defended Islam, made clear its true path,
Wiped the dust away from the face of the truth⁴⁷

He fortified our homeland against the harm of every oppressor
The motto "Jordan First" became the country's motto

In lines 78-89, Hajaya warns his fellow Jordanians about the perils of the Arab Spring:

He guarded our homeland in the midst of an ocean of strife
While red fires blazed around it

The fire of the Black Spring that covered the Arabs
With massacres for grass and bombs for rain

80 How many countries around us were swept by disaster
That wrecked their foundations and destroyed their buildings?

How many regimes swayed, fell, and toppled?
Oppression was the first of the reasons for their collapse

We're in peace and security in the oasis of loyalty
Our hearts are filled with love of Jordan

46 I.e. dialogue exists between the king and his government in his advisory council (*majlis al-shūrā*) and the senate (*majlis al-a'yān*).

47 I.e. King Abdullah II defended Islam in the West in response to the actions of violent *takfirī* groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda.

ويا أردني بالله أنظر لما جرى
من حولنا بأوطان خربت ديارها

وشوف العذارى الطاهرات ومصيرهن
من عقب لبس العزّ لبسن صغارها

85 وشوف الأجساد اللي أشلاءٍ تناثرت
وكم طاهرة بالذات شقّوا خمارها

وشوف الخيام اللي تكّدس بها البشر
ماله ظلال وما تقي من أمطارها

ومراكب الموت الذي تمخر البحر
وأطفال ضاعوا في غياهب أبحارها

يا أردني بالله لا تسمع الذي
يسعى إلى الفوضى ويشعل بنارها

حافظ على الأردن واحرس حدودها
وقصّ اليدين اللي يريدن دمارها

90 يا سيدي إبشر بعرك وعزوتك
شعبٍ وجيشٍ وانت مصدر أبقارها

قود المسيرة وارتي فوق للعلا
معك نشامى ما يهابوا أخطارها

أبناء الأردن حضرها والبوادي
سيوف الكرامة في أيادي أثمارها

Jordanian! By God, look at what's happening
 Around us in homelands whose houses lie in ruins

Look at the pure virgin women and their fates:
 After wearing clothes of pride they wear those of shame

85 Look at the bodies now become scattered limbs
 How many pure women had her clothes torn from her?⁴⁸

Look at the tents where humans are heaped together
 Tents without shade, unguarded from rain

Ships of death traverse the seas
 And children are lost in their gloomy depths

Jordanian! By God, don't listen to he who
 Strives for chaos and kindles its fires

Protect Jordan and guard its borders
 And cut the hands of those who would destroy it

In lines 90-97, Hajaya pledges his allegiance to King Abdullah II:

90 *Sēdī!* Count on us, your power, your men,
 People and army, and you the source of their pride

Lead the way and climb to the heights!
 With you are gallant men who don't fear danger

Jordan's sons from its cities and deserts
 Swords of dignity in the hands of its leopards

48 I.e. and were raped.

الشعب شعبك والأمانة أمانتك
والجيش جيشك وانت صاحب قرارها

معك سيوفٍ أردنيةٍ مجردة
ومعك قلوبٍ ما تغيرٍ مسارها

95 عهدوهم لله والملك والوطن
عهدو صدق وعائشين بإطارها

ونعاهدك بالله ونؤكد العهد
نمضي معك لو خضت فينا بحارها

بك الثقة ياسيدي ما يهزها
نبح الكلاب النابجة في أوكارها

هذا وصلّى الله على مشعل الهدى
بأعداد ما شال الشجر من ثمارها

وصلّى عليه الله بأعداد ما هطل
غيثٍ مغيثٍ من سحابٍ أمطارها

100 مجد المختار من صفوة البشر
ثان الإثنين اللي تواروا بغارها

The people are yours, your charge and trust
 The army is yours, and you its decision-maker

With you are drawn Jordanian swords
 With you are hearts whose paths haven't changed⁴⁹

95 Their pledges are to God, the homeland, and you
 Truthful pledges in whose scope they live

We pledge and charge you by God and reaffirm the covenant⁵⁰
 We'd proceed with you if you had us rush into the sea

Our trust is in you, *sēdī*, unshaken by
 Dogs barking in their dens

In lines 98-100, Hajaya closes with a prayer for the Prophet Muhammad:

May God bless him who lit the right path
 As many times as the world's trees bear fruit

May God bless him as many times as there fall
 Drops of deliverance from rain clouds

100 Muhammad, the Chosen One, the best of mankind
 The second of two who hid in the cave⁵¹

49 I.e. whose loyalties have not changed.

50 I.e. the Hashemite Compact (*al-'ahd al-hāshimī*), the Hashemites' source of political authority in Jordan.

51 In reference to Muhammad, the "second of two" whom God helped out of a desperate situation, from *sūrat al-tawbah* (9:40).

لله نشكو حشد خان المواثيق
اللي بها الإسلام أوصى جنوده

حشد الجرائم والخزي والمطافيق
وقاسم سليمانى بجنبته يقوده

حقد المجوس وجند واله زناديق
بأرض العرب وده يوسع حدوده

متى العرب تصحى من الذلّ وتفيق
من قبل لا يبسط عليها وجوده

نيران حرب الفرس غرب ومشاريق 5
حسب المخطط مستمرّ وقوده

راح العراق ولاحقن به لواحيق
والشام راحت والعرب في رقوده

حرب على السنة مخطط وتنسيق
حقد المجوس وانفلت من قيوده

Fire-Hot Stakes

June 19, 2016

Hajaya wrote this poem in response to the actions of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU; *al-ḥashd al-shaʿbī*), which were called up by the Iraqi government in June 2014 in response to ISIS' occupation of Mosul. Many of the Shiite gangs and militias of which the PMU is composed have committed atrocities against Sunni Iraqis and are supported directly by Iran.

To God do we lament the militias, who broke the covenant
That Islam entrusted its soldiers with

Militias of crimes, shame, and outlaws
Led by Qasem Soleimani in his malice¹

The Zoroastrians' scorn, for which they've recruited heretics²
He wants to push his borders into the Arabs' lands

When will the Arabs awake from this ignominy
Before Iran imposes its presence on them?

5 The Persians' war fires burning east and west
In line with their plans, their flames ever blazing

Iraq's gone, and soon more countries will follow
Syria's gone, and the Arabs lay down to rest

A war on the Sunnis, planned and arranged
The Zoroastrians' scorn was unleashed from its chains

1 Major general in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and commander of the extraterritorial, clandestine Quds Force.

2 In reference to the "scorn" (*hiqd*) that many Sunni Arabs believe Iranians—known colloquially, and pejoratively, as "Persians" (*furs*), "Safavids" (*ṣafawīyyīn*), or "Zoroastrians" (*majūs*)—harbor toward Sunni Muslims, the source of which, according to Hajaya, is the Sasanian Empire's crushing defeat by the Arabs and Muslims 1400 years ago.

بنيران حقدّه طوّق الكلّ تطويق
طوفان شرّ وحاصرتنا حشوده

واحننا انشغلنا بالأبراج الشواهيق
وصيد الحباري في خمائل نفوده

10 دول كثيرة قاعدة عالخوازيق
إمخدرة والذلّ كاسر عموده

With their scorn's fire they've encircled us all
 A flood of evil whose troops besiege us

While we've busied ourselves with vertiginous towers,³
 Hunting houbara bustards in dense desert scrub⁴

- 10 Many countries sit impaled on fire-hot stakes⁵
 Lethargic, their power's big stick broken by shame

3 I.e. skyscrapers in the Gulf.

4 For Hajaya's criticism of Arabs' love of hunting houbara bustards, see line 5 of "Spring of Disaster" and line 17 of "Khalid ibn al-Walid".

5 In the Arabic language's semantic field, the "stake" (*khāzūg*) refers specifically to the humiliating method of torture and execution by which people were impaled through their anus on a sharp, fire-hardened stake; in Jordanian Arabic *tḵawzag khāzūg* or *akal khāzūg* ("to eat/be impaled on a stake") can be used to mean "to get a bad deal," "to have really bad luck"; see also line 15 of "Child Killer." For a literary analog, see the last chapter of Emile Habibi's *al-Waqā' al-Gharībah fi Iḵhtifā' Sa'īd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashā'il* (translated as *The Secret Life of Said the Pessimist*), in which Habibi literalizes the metaphor of sitting on a stake to describe the condition of a Palestinian citizen of Israel forced to work as a collaborator.

قصيدة استعطاف إلى جميلة الجميلات رئيسة صندوق النقد الدولي كريستين
لا غارد المحترمة

يا ذا مجتنا بالغلا يا كرستين
مشان ربك والمسيح ارحمينا
ضغظك علينا يرفع الضغظ يا زين
الله يرحم والديك ارحمينا
خقي علينا ارتفع مستوى الدين
وصندوقك الملعون شره علينا
لدي لنا بالعين يا زينة العين
وأقل حاجة بالربا سامحينا
إنتوا جماعة قاسيين ومرايين
واحنا كرام وبالقروض ابتلينا

Don't Slaughter Us!

June 22, 2016

Hajaya explained during our translation of this poem that generosity is “implanted in us [Arabs]” (*maghrūs binā*), and that when Arabs receive a loan from the bank, they invite their friends over for dinner parties and gatherings (*walā'im wa-ʿazā'im*), refurbish their homes, or buy a new car, all with no thought to the future repayment of the loan. Arab countries, Hajaya claims, are no different. Hajaya wrote this poem two days after the IMF agreed to give Jordan a three-year extended fund facility, which was negotiated at \$700 million one month later. He addressed the short, occasional piece to Christine Lagarde with flirtation characteristic of his poems to Livni and Condoleezza.

A poem of entreaty to beauty of beauties, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, the eminent Christine Lagarde.

Your preciousness is killing us, *chère* Christine¹
Have mercy on us, for God's sake, and Christ's

Financial pressure raises blood pressure, oh beauty
May God have mercy on your parents—and you on us

Go easy on us, for our debt level's risen
And on us fell the evil of your accursed Fund²

Pretty-eyed beauty, look on us kindly
And at the very least, forgive us the loan's interest

5 You're a cruel and unbending group of usurers
While we Arabs are generous, and loans are our downfall

1 A pun on the word *ghalā*, which, like the French *cher*, can mean “dear/precious” or “costly/expensive”.

2 Hajaya explains that whenever prices go up in Jordan, the Jordanian people immediately think that it is because the IMF has demanded repayment on a loan.

ترح علينا في بلدنا ملايين
واليوم فيهم ياكريس ابتلينا

حتّا بحالة حرب من خمسة سنين
وعنّا تخلّوا من يسار ويمينا

مار ادعمينا يا هنوف المزايين
ولدي لنا بالعين لا تخسرنا

وقولي لها الملقى عسى يلقه البين
لا يرفع أسعار العلف والطحينا

لا يرفع أسعار تمسّ المساكين
ويصنع لنا أزمة وما تنفعينا

10

رصيدنا حكمة ملكنا أبو حسين
والأردن اللي في حماها ربينا

وفدوى لهم ياكريس دم الشرايين
مهما قست سود الليالي علينا

يا ذابحتنا بالغلا ياكريستين
سابق عليك الله لا تذبجينا

Many millions have immigrated to our country³
 A burden we still suffer from today, Chris

We've been as if at war for five whole years⁴
 And they've abandoned us left and right⁵

Oh but help us, you beauty of beauties!
 Look upon us kindly, and don't lose us⁶

Tell al-Mulqi, "May disaster strike you!"⁷
 May he not raise the prices of fodder and flour⁸

10 May he not raise prices that afflict the poor, the humble
 And cause us such a crisis—then to us you'd be no use

Our true reserve's the wisdom of our king, Abu Husayn
 And in Jordan, the sanctuary where we grew up

For them, oh Chris, we'd sacrifice our blood
 No matter how many dark nights we must suffer

Your preciousness is killing us, *chère* Christine
 I entreat you!—swear to God!—don't slaughter us!

3 I.e. from Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

4 I.e. because of the Arab Spring in neighboring countries and the problems it has caused Jordan.

5 Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia, which stopped giving Jordan aid.

6 I.e. don't lose our cooperation and friendship by making us repay a loan.

7 Hani al-Mulqi, the Prime Minister of Jordan since June 1, 2016.

8 I.e. food for livestock and humans.

ما همهم ذبيان

من لحظة وصول الأخبار عن قيام الأمن بإزالة خيمة الاعتصام في ذبيان ،
انطلقت أقلام التثوير وأبواق التعاطف الزائف
لسكب الزيت على النار،
ليس حباً بذيان وأهلها وشبابها الذين يطالبون بما يرونه حقاً لهم على الدولة،
أقصد الأقلام الخبيثة التي لا تظهر إلا عند اشتعال الأحداث،
وتستغل عواطف الناس لإثارة الفوضى وجرد الشعب إلى مستنقع
الدمار الذي حلّ في دول مجاورة لنا،
أقصد الأقلام القذرة التي يقبض أصحابها من مجاري سفارة الجحش ،
وهم يعرفون أنفسهم
وكثير من الأردنيين يعرفونهم ،
كلّ الاحترام للأقلام الأردنية الصادقة والجريئة في قول الحق ،
حول كلّ القضايا التي تهّم الوطن ،
وتخسأكل الأقلام المأجورة
وأصحابها جرابيع الليل وخفافيش الضلام ،،

ما همهم ذبيان وأوجاع ذبيان
أهل الأقلام الحاقدة والحقيرة

They Don't Care about Dhiban

June 24, 2016

Hajaya wrote this poem in response to what he perceived as media incitement following protests against unemployment that took place in the impoverished Jordanian town of Dhiban. While Hajaya praises the Bani Hamida, the tribe that inhabits Dhiban, and does not fault them for protesting against unemployment and poverty, he condemns those “rented pens” (*aqlām ma'jūrah*) who wrote editorials calling for more protests and, in Hajaya's view, sought to drag Jordan into the Arab Spring.

From the moment the news arrived about the security forces' removal of the protest tent in Dhiban, the pens of provocation and the trumpets of false sympathy began to sound, pouring oil on the fire—not out of love for Dhiban, its people, and its youth, who are demanding what they consider their right from the government. I mean the malicious pens that never appear except when events flare up and that take advantage of peoples' feelings to incite chaos and drag the [Jordanian] people into the swamp of destruction that has befallen neighboring countries. I mean the filthy, impure pens whose writers take money from the the sewers of the embassy of the Young Donkey.¹ They know who they are. Many Jordanians know who they are. All respect is due to the Jordanian pens that are honest and brave in speaking the truth regarding the issues that concern the homeland. To hell with all the rented pens—their owners are jerboas of the night and bats of the darkness.

They don't care about Dhiban and its woes
The people of hateful, scornful, despicable pens

1 I.e. Bashar al-Asad, whose last name means “the Lion”; Hajaya calls him *bashshār al-jaḥsh*, “The Young Donkey” in reference to his stupidity.

أهدافهم فتنّة وإشعال نيران
ببشر الأخبار الكاذبة والمثيرة

ذبيان باب العزّ للعزّ عنوان
ورجالها دوم لوطنهم ذخيرة

بني حميدة والنعم قول مليان
لأجل الوطن هم العيون السهيرة

5 لو يزعلوا على الوطن بعض الأحيان
دون الوطن هم السيوف الشطيرة

يشهد لهم تاريخ فعلاً وبرهان
إنهم بهم عزّة ونخوة وغيره

وإنهم حماة الدار من كلّ خوآن
إن صاحت الزينات وين العشيرة

سيّاح في سوح الوغى خير فرسان
بكار المناسف بالسنين العسيرة

ويا ليلي تمرّض بالصناديد غلطان
الشعب واعى للظروف الخطيرة

10 وذبيان ديرة من لهم بالوفاشان
بني حميدة طاهرين السريرة

Their goals are sowing discord and igniting civil strife
By publishing fake, provocative news

Dhiban's a gate of strength and its sign
For their homeland her men ever an arsenal

Bani Hamida, the best men, in all sincerity
For the homeland's sake they're sleepless eyes

- 5 Even if irritated by the homeland sometimes
Before the homeland they're as honed, cleaving swords

For them indeed history and proof are my witness
They're strong, reliable, and protective

They guard our home from every traitor
When pretty girls shout "Where's the tribe?"²

Sīyyāh! In the field of battle, the best of knights³
Who serve the largest feasts in difficult days⁴

He's in the wrong, who provokes and incites these brave men
With the folk awake and aware to such dangerous conditions⁵

- 10 Dhiban's home to a folk marked for their loyalty
Bani Hamida, pure of heart, mind and soul

2 In reference to the practice of Bedouin women, during raids or attacks, of urging on their tribe's men with shouts of support such as "*wēn al-'ashīrah?*"

3 The "war cry" (*nakhwah*) of Bani Hamida is *sīyyāh!*

4 I.e. who are generous even in financial straits.

5 In reference to the Jordanian people's awareness of the strife in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, and their wariness about letting such strife into Jordan.

إلا تذوقوا شهدها

أسمر ولوني لونكم يالبدوين
والقلب أبيض والنوايا بعدها

أبوي مسلم محترم واسمه حسين
من كينيا هاجر لدولة قصدها

لأمريكا دار الفرص للذكيين
اللي بهاكل العدالة وجدها

وأقصى طموحه كان يلتقى عمل زين
هروب من بؤس الحياة ونكدتها

5 وفيها تزوج من خيار المزاين
بنت الرجال اللي كبير سعدتها

جابت حصان اليوم يحكم ملايين
يحكم أمريكا والتوابع بعدها

جابت له أوباما خزام المعادين
يدوس في روس الحوافر أسدها

Taste the Honey!

July 28, 2016

Hajaya imagined that after his second term as US president, Barack Obama would run for the Jordanian House of Representatives (*majlis al-nuwwāb*) to represent Jordan's Southern Bedouin Voting District (*dā'irat badw al-janūb*), which was allotted three seats in 2016. Elections were held on 20 September 2016, and Hajaya's Obama announced just under two months beforehand, promising debt forgiveness, cheap oil and food prices, economic and agricultural development, an anti-corruption campaign, and a fight against terrorism.

In lines 1-11, Hajaya's Obama introduces himself, reviews his ancestry, and boasts of his power:

Brown-skinned, my color's your color, oh Bedouins!
My heart's white, and below are my intentions:

My father's a respectable Muslim, and his name's Hussein
From Kenya he emigrated, headed to a land...

To America! Land of opportunity for smart men
There he found nothing but justice and fairness

His greatest aspiration was to find good work
In flight from life's misery and misfortune

5 There he married the prettiest of pretty girls
The daughter of men of much good fortune¹

She birthed a stallion that today rules millions,
Rules America and all her satellite states

She birthed Obama, nose-ring of enemies,²
Whose hooves trample enemy lions

1 Americans have great luck, Hajaya adds, in that they are inventive/creative (*mubdi'in*) and are the masters of the world (*sādat al-ālam*).

2 I.e. controller of America's enemies; for a similar use of "camel's nose-ring" (*khzām*) as a metaphor for control and hegemony, see line 4 of "Daughter of Tough Men" and line 20 of "I'm the Leader".

خوالي أمريكان ما هم بسيطين
ضرباتهم بالأرض ما حدّ مجدّها

وأحكم أم أخرى وأعين سلاطين
وأدوس روس وروس سيفي حصدها

10 بالعقل أحارب وأتهجج منهج اللين
وأتابع سياساتٍ طويلٍ أمدّها

أنا اتخني شعب ثبت قوانين
على قناعة بالحياة اعتمدها

طلاق من ميشال مريوشة العين
مالي بكم غاية فؤادي نشدها

لكن بدافع حيي الأردنيين
رشحت نفسي للبدو في بلدّها

ومن كثر حيي للبدو والبعارين
ودّي مشاكلكم أحلحل عقدها

15 وإن فزت أبشركم ترى وضعكم زين
عندي خطط تحسين يصعب عددها

وأول هدف ودي أعفيكوا من الدين
وأرفع رصيد اللي فلوسه رصدها

والنفط مجاناً يجيكموا من العين
غصباً على روس التيوس وفهدّها

My maternal uncles are Americans, not simple people
No one can deny their strikes and blows over the Earth

I rule other nations and appoint sultans
I crush Russians and my sword harvests heads

- 10 I make war with reason, keep to soft power's path,
And follow long-term policies

Elected by a people who've laid down laws
Convinced that law's this life's authority³

In lines 12-24, Obama lays forth his election pitch and platform:

By divorce of Michelle, of mascaraed, ebony eyes
I swear my heart aims at no hidden purpose

Rather, because of my love for the Jordanians
Am I running for office in the Bedouin's land

From my great love of Bedouins and camels,
I'll solve and sort out all your complex problems

- 15 If I win, then I promise, your situation will be great
I have countless, untold plans for improvement

My first goal: I'll forgive you your debt⁴
And raise your balances if you've funds in the bank

Oil will be free and come to you straight from the well
In defiance of billy goats and cheetahs⁵

3 I.e. Americans are a people convinced that human laws (*qawānīn*), not divine law, are this life's authority.

4 Jordan's national debt to the IMF.

5 Gulf Arab rulers subservient to the United States.

امكثِرِ بالشرق ديزل وبنزين
بمواصفات عالية نعتمدها

وكونوا على أسعار العلف مطمئنين
على حساب الربع ياتي مددها

وأحوّل الصحرا جنان وبتاتين 20
بأمطار نصنع برقها مع رعددها

بالعلم والتفكير نستمطر الغين
ونروي صحاريكم ونحيي جلددها

والكلّ منكوا غير ياخذ ملايين
صعب علينا الآن نحصي عددها

وأهل الفساد الماكرين الملاعين
إرقابهم ودّي أجزّ غددها

وفكر التطرف والتشدد ماهو زين
شريعة الإسلام فعلاً وأدها

وبلاش من تكرار بعض العناوين 25
وحوادث ماتت قديم عهددها

وانسوا أخبار القادسية وحطين
والأندلس واللي خسرتوا بعدها

وأهمّ حاجة لا تطرّوا فلسطين
بلفور باشا في حياته وعددها

Diesel and benzene, refined in the East,
With high, sanctioned specifications

Rest assured about the prices of fodder⁶
It'll come as foreign aid on the tab of the tribe⁷

20 I'll turn the desert into gardens and orchards
With rain we'll produce, with its lightning and thunder

With science and good thinking we'll seed the clouds,
Water your deserts, revive their barren wastes

And every one of you will get millions
But just how much now it's hard for me to say

And corrupt people, crafty and cursed,
I'll burst all the glands in their blasted necks⁸

Extremist and violent thought's not religion
The true way of Islam—terror's buried it alive

In lines 25-32, Obama tells the Jordanians what he needs from them:

25 And please let's not recount certain episodes
Events that have faded, whose ages have passed

Forget the battles of Qadisiyyah and Hattin⁹
And the Andalus and what you lost afterward¹⁰

Most importantly, forget about Palestine
In his life Lord Balfour promised it,

6 I.e. for their livestock.

7 Gulf Arab rulers.

8 Corrupt Jordanian politicians who have siphoned off the state's money and caused the country to go into debt.

9 The Battle of Qadisiyyah in 636 CE, in which the Muslim Arab army defeated the Sassanid Persian army, preceded the conquest of Iraq and Persia; the Battle of Hattin in 1187 CE, in which Muslims under Saladin defeated the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, led to the Muslims' recapture of Jerusalem.

10 The last Muslim kingdom in Spain was recaptured by the Christians in 1492.

قطعة صغيرة لليهود المساكين
وأرض العرب فيحاورني مهدها

وبغداد ما ودي تظّلوا مصرين
على عربتها وطهارة جسدها

أصبح بها أمة ملاي عبيدين 30
بالحدّ الأسود كلّ قوة حشدها

والشام راحت لا تكونوا حزينين
إتوا سبب ويلات شرّ همدها

وأرض العقيد الي بعد طسّها البين
فيها خططنا لا أحد ينتقدّها

ولا شكّ إن صرتوا لأمرى مطيعين
فوق السمن إلا تذوقوا شهدها

ومن منطلق قوّة وانتم ضعيفين
نفسى لكم أبذل أقاصي جهدها

وذي أنوركم على الزين والشين 35
وعيونكم وذي أداوي رمدّها

إنتم رجال بالسياسة غشيمين
وما تفهموا بحدورها من سندّها

وانتم تعرفوا حكمتي بالبدوزين
والحي منكم في عيونّه شهدّها

A small stretch of land for the serious, hard-working Jews
While my Lord laid the Arabs' lands out wide and vast

About Baghdad—I don't want you to insist
On the pure, Arab character of her body¹¹

30 A nation of stubborn mullahs now abides there
That's amassed all her might with rancor and spite

Syria's gone, but don't be sad, for
You Arabs are the reason for her evil woes

The land of the Colonel where afterward disaster struck¹²
Our plans there no one can criticize

In lines 33-44, Obama gives his final pitch:

No doubt that if you all obey my command
Beyond just butter, you'll all taste honey¹³

From a position of power while you all are weak
I wish to make every effort for you

35 I'll enlighten you all to the good and the bad
And I'll cure your eyes' conjunctivitis¹⁴

You men are unseasoned, unpracticed in politics
And you don't know up from down

Oh Bedouins, you know my rule well
If you're alive, you've seen it with your own eyes¹⁵

11 Because, in Hajaya's words, the Persians and Zoroastrians have taken it over.

12 I.e. Libya.

13 I.e. it will be very good for them.

14 I.e. Obama will open their eyes and make them see with reason and discernment; granular conjunctivitis (*al-ramad*) is an infection in which the eye secretes a white mucus that, once dried into granules, can cause the eyes to be sealed shut.

15 I.e. for the past eight years.

بالفعل لي تشهد بكار الميادين
كم دولة طيحت شاخ عمدها

بس اسمعوني وافهموا مقصدي زين
حتى تهتوا بالحياة ورغدها

نوابكم وأذناهم مستفيدين 40
وحظوظهم ربي مغيب سعدها

وإذا التختوني وكنتم أمينين
إبطونهم والله لأفري معدها

وانتوا تقهوا في بكار الدواوين
وتغرلوا باللي تحبوا نهدها

وتفاخروا بأفعال موتي قديمين
وأعجاد مدفونة تقادم عهدها

تمت وصلوا ع ختام النيئين
بأعداد ماع الأرض يهطل بردها

Indeed, the great battlefields bear me witness¹⁶
 How many countries' high tent-poles have I felled?¹⁷

Just listen to me, understand what I'm getting at
 In order to enjoy life and its luxury

40 Only your representatives and their lackeys benefit
 And my Lord has removed their their luck and good fortune

If you elect me, and remain faithful and true,
 Then by God I'll split their stomachs lengthwise¹⁸

Now go and drink your coffee in grand salons,
 Flirt with girls whose breasts you love!

Boast of the deeds of men long since dead
 And their buried glories whose age has long passed

So much for this poem—pray for the last of the prophets
 As many times as hailstones shower the earth

16 E.g. Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen.

17 I.e. how many countries' systems of government and power has Obama destroyed?

18 I.e. to recover all the money that corrupt Jordanian politicians have swallowed.

ردّ الرئيس الأمريكي دونالد ترامب على شاعر أردني يطلب يد ابنة الرئيس

سار القلم يكتب من الشعر ما طاب
أبيات يزهي فوق الأوراق رسمه

سبك الجواهر فيهن الخبر سكب
جواب أمراً واجب اليوم حسمه

أنا الرئيس ترامب يا جاهل ترامب
واللي يجادل في حججنا نخصمه

أنا رئيس أمريكا واحسب حساب
ومن كان مثلي ذيب لا تستغشمه

يا مرحبا مليون مرّة وترحاب 5
بالشاعر اللي يعرف الكلّ اسمه

إسمه علم مشهور في راس مراقب
وقصايداه في كلّ الأغراض حشمة

مرسل قصيدة يطلب البنت خطاب
ومن عشق بنتي ناحل اليوم جسمه

Ivanka

November 23, 2016

After Trump's victory in November 2016, the Jordanian poet Flayyih al-Jbūr wrote him a poem asking for his daughter Ivanka's hand. This poem is Hajaya's response from Trump's point of view, written of course with the same rhyme and meter as Flayyih's poem, in which he roundly rejects Flayyih's request and mocks him and his love.

In lines 1-4, Hajaya's Trump introduces himself and boasts:

The pen begins to write the best of poems
With lines whose patterns bloom upon the page

Lines cut like jewels, cast with ink
An answer of an issue that must be settled today

I'm President Trump, for those who don't know me
Whoever disputes our deeds—we'll defeat him

I'm the president of America, so watch out
Wolves like me aren't inexperienced, foolish¹

In lines 5-16, Trump addresses Flayyih al-Jbur and addresses the issue at hand:

5 Welcome one million times and more
To the poet whose name all men know

His name's a flag flying atop a hill
With beautiful poems from every genre

That poem's sender wants to marry my girl
And whoever loves my girl—his body's worn thin²

¹ Wolf, i.e. a strong, brave man.

² I.e. from the extent of his love for Ivanka, Flayyih has stopped eating, drinking and sleeping.

جمالها مذهل وبالفعل وجذاب
واللي لها ينظر برغبة تعشمه

فقع الزبيدي تحت شقاف الأثواب
والشعر مغري للذي راد لثمه

10 وده نسبنا ناسي بعض الأسباب
وحواجز من دونها اليوم عسمة

وده قطوف دانية ما هن قراب
داني نواهن حابن اليوم فصمه

يا فليح احنا ما نجوزع الأعراب
وعندك ترى عمشا وطرفة وقسمة

يا كثرهن ببلادكم سود الأهداب
إخدودهن باهي بهن خط وشمه

حتى لو إتكم خير متا بالأنساب
إيفانكا ترفع عن الكلّ خشمه

15 وعيال عمه لأجلها جوني أسراب
كلّ بها مغرم بجسمه وكسمه

كلّ يقول إيفانكا دونها رقاب
واللي بها يطمع دماغه نهشمه

Her beauty's stunning, indeed, and enticing
Whoever desires her is struck with *'ashmah*³

Those white desert truffles burst under flimsy robes⁴
And her lips so alluring to those who'd kiss them

- 10 He wants to be our kin but forgets certain things,
Those unyielding obstacles lying before her

He wants a ripe, high-hanging bunch of fruit
Ripe grapes ready to be squeezed and tasted

Flayyih, we don't marry our daughters to Bedouins⁵
And you've already got *'Amshā* and *Ṭurfah* and *Gismah*⁶

How many black-eyelashed beauties you have in your land!
With beautiful cheeks adorned with tattoos

Even if your lineage is nobler than ours,⁷
Ivanka turns her nose up to all

- 15 Her American cousins came seeking her in swarms
All enamored of her, her body, her dress

All of them saying "For Ivanka we'd cut many throats!
And whoever desires her, we'll crush his skull!"⁸

3 *'ashmah* is a psychological illness defined by the Bedouin as anxiety stemming from jealousy at what others have as well as not getting what one wants.

4 I.e. her breasts; for Hajaya's use of the white desert truffle (*zbēdī*) to refer to breasts, see line 11 of "Flower of the Mossad".

5 The word Hajaya uses for "Bedouins" here is *a'rāb*, in reference to their mention in the Qur'an: "The Bedouins are more stubborn in unbelief and hypocrisy, and apter not to know the bounds of what God has sent down on His Messenger; and God is All-knowing, All-wise" (9:97; trans. Arberry).

6 I.e. common names for Bedouin girls whom Flayyih could marry instead, much like "Mary, Jane, and Kate"; in this line Hajaya claims Trump shows off his surprising knowledge of Bedouin culture.

7 In reference to many Arabs' belief in the superiority of their race.

8 I.e. all of them protecting Ivanka with classic Arab *ghērah*, or protective jealousy for one's female relations; marriage of paternal cousins (*'yāl 'amm*) in Bedouin culture is

وانتم عرب تبقوا لنا كنز وأصحاب
والشرق الأوسط جاري اليوم قسمه

اليوم نحتله من الباب للباب
أصبح لنا واتوا لكوا ألف عشمه

هاذي بوار جنا بها الموت لها ب
وهاذي مدافعنا وراكل دشمة

واللي يخالفنا نوذي له أسراب 20
وكل الدول من شرتنا ما تعصمه

وبغداد ضاعت وانتهد ما بها طلاب
والفرس حصتهم بها اليوم دسمه

والشام فيها ربوعنا يلعبوا طاب
بوجوه أهلها ما ترى اليوم بسمه

بالسيف بيها بوتن اليوم قصاب
والذل بوجوه العرب صار وصمه

وصنعا بها الحوثي تمرکز بالأهصاب
وكيس الأفاعي انفلت عقب عصمه

وعلي ابن صالح خاضها حرب ما هاب 25
ما زلله خرط التحالف وبشمه

In lines 17-28, Trump boasts of America's hegemony and describes the state of the Arab world:

You Arabs—keep being our friends and our treasure
While the Middle East is being reapportioned⁹

Today we occupy it from one end to the other
It's become ours while you're struck with a thousand types of *'ashmah*¹⁰

See here our battleships whence death comes blazing!
See there our guns behind every covert!

20 Whoever opposes us, we'll send him swarms¹¹
No country can protect itself from our evil

Baghdad's lost, it's over, with no more claimants
The Persians have taken their fatty, rich share

In Syria our people are playing *tāb*¹²
You won't see a smile on a Syrian's face

With the sword does Putin there butcher and slaughter
Disgrace has become a blot on every Arab's face

In Sanaa, the Houthi made his redoubt in the hills
A bag of snakes once bound so tight, now set free

25 'Ali ibn Salih fearlessly plunged into battle
The lying alliance and its empty boasting didn't shake him

encouraged, as it replicates the paternal line, and male paternal cousins often have the right to refuse their female cousins' marriage to more distant relations, or non-relatives altogether.

9 I.e. while the Middle East is being divided into spheres of influence (*manāṭiq nufūdh*) and statelets (*dwēlāt*).

10 I.e. the aforementioned psychological illness.

11 I.e. of planes, Marines, soldiers.

12 I.e. messing around; *tāb* is a Bedouin children's game.

والقدس ضاعت بين خاين وسلاب
وباصم عليها أكثر الربع بصمة

أرخصتوا اليّ كان حامي لكم باب
صدّام ليثٍ كاسرٍ راس خصمه

وأبعدتوا عن الدين يا صفر الأنياب
وظهوركم ربّ الملا راد قصمه

والمعدرة يا الطيّب اليّ من أطياب
قل للعرب تاكل ترابٍ وحصمه

قاسم سليمانى لكم يصرك الناب 30
وباب الخطر بيدي ترى اليوم لصمه

شيبٍ مجوسي مجرمٍ قايد أشياب
وأنا عليا ضرب خشمه وكصمه

عنكم ندافع بس تقوموا بالأتعاب
من الأرصدة بالغرب كلّه نخصمه

حتّا حماة عروش عطرين الأشناب
ع نياقهم بوش الابن خطّ وسمه

وصلاة ربّي عدّ ما هبّ هباب
على رسول الله طهرٍ وعصمه

Jerusalem's lost between traitors and thieves
 Most Arabs themselves have signed on in support¹³

You counted cheap him who guarded your gates¹⁴
 Saddam the lion, breaker of enemies' heads

You've strayed from religion, you idiot Arabs, so¹⁵
 The Lord of Creation is breaking your backs

In lines 29-34, Trump promises to protect the Arabs from Iran:

Pardon me, oh good man of good men,¹⁶
 But tell the Arabs to go eat dirt and gravel

30 Qasem Soleimani gnashes his teeth at you, and
 The lock to danger's door's now in my hand

A criminal, fire-worshipping *shīb* leading *shībs*,¹⁷
 Now it's on me to strike his nose, to break him¹⁸

We'll defend you Arabs, just pay the bills on time
 We'll deduct them from your accounts in the West

We protect the thrones of the Perfumed Moustaches!¹⁹
 Bush the Son put his brand on their she-camels²⁰

I pray to my Lord as many times as the wind blows
 For God's messenger, pure and infallible

13 I.e. in support of Jerusalem's capture and occupation.

14 I.e. Saddam Hussein, whose nickname during the Iran-Iraq War was "Guardian of the Eastern Gates" (*hāmī al-bawwābah al-sharqīyah*).

15 Lit. "men of yellow incisors," which refer to one's stupidity and filth.

16 Now addressing Flayyih al-Jbur again.

17 I.e. a ferocious desert animal that may be a rabid wolf or a cross between a hyena and a wolf, or between a dog and a wolf; see also line 6 of "The West's Crafty Men".

18 To strike someone's nose means to utterly defeat and humiliate; see also line 32 of "The Arab Spring".

19 One of Hajaya's many derogatory epithets for the Gulf Arab rulers.

20 I.e. George W. Bush declared the Gulf states US property.

خَلَّ البكى عَنكَ على روس الأطلال
الدمع مارَجَّع لنا الفايَاتي

هَيَّجَتني بِيكاك في روس الأقدال
وأبكِتني وأبَكَّكَ المعضلاتي

أرجوك لا تفتح للأندال مدخال
ويشمت بنا اللي يفرحوا بالشماتي

وبالوضع يا مشكاي لا تشغل البال
في مثل سَتَّكَ هالبي ما يواتي

وَقَرِّ دموعك للذي جاي يا خال
واسمع كلامي والتزم بالسكاتي

5

كفكف دموعك واقرب هاك فنجال
وأسولفك بالسولفة يا شفاتي

Khalid ibn al-Walid

December 10, 2016

Hajaya imagines that Khalid ibn al-Walid, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad and a remarkably successful military commander during the Islamic Conquests, returns from the dead and stumbles upon a group of young men from the Gulf Arab countries. Hajaya describes a twenty-first-century Gulf Arab *majlis*, replete with flashy cars, smart phones and pills as well as the traditional falcons, *mansaf*, and tales of the Arabs' heroic past. Hajaya emphasizes the differences between heroes like Khalid and the lazy, fat, ancestry-obsessed, oil-rich youth of the Gulf Arab countries. He has put this poem into the mouth of such a youth to give himself plausible deniability of the views expressed here.

In lines 1-7, Hajaya consoles a confidant and friend he finds crying on a hilltop:

Old man, stop your crying on the hilltops
Tears can't bring back the past

I'm troubled at your crying here on these high mountains
You've brought me to tears just as problems did you

I beg you, don't give base men a chance
To gloat at us, rejoice at our misfortune¹

About the matter, my confidant, don't trouble your mind²
At your age such crying doesn't suit you

5 Instead save your tears for what's coming, old man
Hear my words and keep silent for a spell

Dry your tears and come closer, have a cup³
And I'll tell you something worth hearing, my friend

1 I.e. by seeing them crying.

2 The matter, i.e. the trouble in the Arab world.

3 I.e. of coffee.

الشمس لا يمكن تغطى بغربال
ما فات فات ومقبل الوقت ياتي

كأ بجلسة عندنا نار ودلال
ومفطحات للغدى جاهزاتي

وشعر وسوالف صيد وأخبار وأمثال
وعازف ربابة حافظٍ للبياتي

10 وحبوب وجيوب حديثات وعيال
إهدو مهمم بكتوفهم ضايقاتي

ومعنا كذوب كان بالكذب يكال
يسرد لنا اللي زيفوه الرواتي

وبأفعال جدّه أذهل عقولنا إذ هال
متفاخر بأعضامه البالياتي

نضحك كما يضحك على السرك جهال
معنا مهرج حافظٍ للنكاتي

The sun's rays won't be stopped by a sieve
 What's past is past, and the future's on its way

In lines 8-18, Hajaya describes a youth majlis typical of the Gulf:

Friends and I once sat in a *majlis*, coffeepot on the fire
 With fresh meat on the *mansaf*, a ready meal⁴

We had poetry, hunting tales, stories, proverbs and
 A *rabābah* player who'd memorized his lines⁵

- 10 And pills for drugs, the newest Jeeps, and us kids
 Whose clothes fit our shoulders snugly⁶

We had with us a tall-tale-teller, scooping lies like grain
 Telling us lies prior liars had forged⁷

Impressing us all with his grandfather's deeds
 Boasting of his rotten old bones⁸

And we laughed as children would laugh at a circus⁹
 We had with us a big mouth who'd memorized his jokes

4 The word for "fresh meat," *mfattahāt*, is a Gulf Arabic word; in Jordan one says *dhabiḥah* to refer to the meat placed on top of the *mansaf*; *mansaf* is a traditional Bedouin meal that consists of rice garnished with cilantro and nuts, topped with fresh boiled meat, and often soaked in *jamīd*, a sauce made from dried yogurt.

5 The *rabābah* is a one-stringed musical instrument that Bedouin poets play as they sing their poetry.

6 I.e. because they are fat.

7 I.e. about their ancestors' heroic deeds (*buṭūlāt*) and glories (*anjād*); to Hajaya the current young generation of Arabs love talking about their past glories and live on dreams (*aḥlām*), illusions (*awḥām*), and imagination (*khayāl*).

8 I.e. boasting of his grandfather's deeds while the young man himself has not done anything with his life. According to Hajaya, a typical Bedouin boast about one's grandfather's deeds would go something like: "my grandfather raided, stole, guarded, slaughtered, killed, was a hero." The Bedouin lifestyle and economy of raiding and plunder is still very much glorified by Hajaya and modern-day Bedouins.

9 The word Hajaya used for "children" is *juhhāl*, another Gulf Arabic word.

وكلّ مشغل له على الوتس جوال
نسمع نكت والكلّ منا يهاتي

والكلّ بطنه منتفخ كنه شوال 15
مثل الجمال المتخمة باركاتي

وصقورنا من حولنا ألوان وأشكال
امبرقعات وللهدد حاضراتي

نبغى الحباري في عذيات الأسهال
نعم الطلب ولحومهن زايكاتي

وكلّ بطيره مفتخر ناكس عقال
يقول طيري يرمي الحايماي

وجانا على غفلة من الوقت خيال
له رهبة خلى بعضنا شتاتي

له هيبه ما شفتها بأي رجّال 20
وما شفت مثله فارس في حياتي

سلم وقلنا يا هلاحي هالفال
إرحب تقهوى والغدى الآن ياتي

قال أنا ماشي بدرب ولايني بأكال
الله بعثني عقب طول الماتي

ودّي تدلوني على الدرب يا عيال
ودّي أزور القدس من أمنياتي

With our smart phones out, all of us on WhatsApp
And we heard his jokes, all of us senseless and babbling

- 15 All of us with our stomachs inflated like sacks
Like overstuffed camels kneeling on their haunches

With our falcons about us, of all forms and types
Sitting hooded and ready to fly off to hunt¹⁰

We sought houbara bustards in soft, virgin plains¹¹
The best we could ask for, with their delicious meat

Each one of us proud of his falcon, his *'igāl* pulled low¹²
Boasting "My falcon can *best* strike the little birds"

In lines 19-29, Khalid ibn al-Walid appears:

Suddenly and unawares a soldier came upon us
With dread such that some of us scattered

- 20 With an awe I'd not beheld in any man
In all my life I'd never seen a man like him

He greeted us and we said "How good that you've come!
"Welcome, have some coffee, dinner's just on its way!"

He said "I must be on my way, and I'm not a big eater.
"God's sent me back after long years in the grave.

"I want you to point me on my way, young men
"I want to—I long to—go visit Jerusalem"

¹⁰ Like Arab tanks, planes, men, and power, Hajaya adds, whose potential lies unused.

¹¹ A common object of prey for falcon hunters in the Arab world, especially the Gulf.

¹² A sign of swagger and pride in Bedouin culture is to pull low on one's forehead the *'igāl*, the black cord that holds the *shimāgh* in place.

قلنا تتعرّف قال أنا فخر الأجيال
كاسر خشوم الفرس بأرض الفراتي

25 أنا الذي بالقادسية لي أفعال
خلّيت رايات العرب عالياتي

قلت إنت خالد قال أنا سيف الأهوال
ابن الوليد وقاهر كل عاتي

قلت استمع لي وافهم الوضع والحال
وقبل الكلام أرجوك أمن حياتي

خايف على راسي عن المتن ينشال
سيفك مجرد يا حمى الخايفاتي

قال إنت آمن هات ما عندك أقوال
واصدق معي والصدق باب النجاتي

30 قلت الحقايق كنها السم كمال
وأعلمك بأخبارنا الحاصلاتي

اضبط أعصابك واترك السيف عاجال
واسمع علوم ربوعنا الحاضراتي

القدس راحت وأصبحت حولها رتال
تحاوطنها من جميع الجهاتي

فيها بني صهيون قاسيين الأفعال
واليوم فيها يكن الباياتي

We said, "Let's meet you first"; he, "I'm the pride of generations
"Who defeated the Persians in the land of the Euphrates

- 25 "With my great deeds I conquered Qadisiyyah¹³
"There I raised the Arabs' banners"

I said, "Are you Khalid?"; he, "I'm terror's very sword,¹⁴
"The son of Walid who topples every tyrant!"

I said, "Listen to me and understand the situation
"But before I speak, please promise you won't kill me.

"I fear you'll tear the head off of my body
"For your sword is drawn, oh protector of fearful women"¹⁵

He said, "You're safe with me; now let's hear what you know
"Be truthful with me, for in honesty lies salvation."¹⁶

In lines 30-53, Hajaya describes the Arab world's situation to Khalid:

- 30 I said, "These truths are like a deadly poison
"And I'll tell you what's happening right now.

"Calm your nerves and leave your sword to the side
"And hear the current news of our people

"Jerusalem's gone, surrounded by tanks
"They've surrounded it on all sides

"Now home to the Tribe of Zion, of cruel deeds
"And to crying women, it's home to them too

13 The battle in 636 AD that led to the conquest of Iraq and the Persian Empire; see also line 26 of "Taste the Honey".

14 *Sayf al-ahwāl* ("the sword of terror/fright") is close to Khalid's epithet, *sayf Allāh al-maslūl* ("the Drawn Sword of God").

15 And in so far as Khalid is protecting these young men, Hajaya adds, they are like a bunch of scared little girls.

16 An Arabic proverb, *al-ṣidq bāb al-najāt*, lit. "Truthfulness is the door to salvation/deliverance".

يا بو سليمان الدهر عقبكم مال
وجنوا علينا بالحياة الجناتي

35 عشرين دولة للعرب بينها أشكال
وعشرين جيش وكلهن هاجعاتي

بغداد ضاعت بين بايع ودلال
وبين الدول راحوا أهلها شتاتي

عادوا لها الفرس وغدت حالها حال
وتنكست راياتها الخافقاتي

واليوم أهلها بين لاجي ومغتال
داسوا حرايرها بكار العتاتي

واسم العروبة من منصاتها زال
وفيها الروافض ماسكين العصاتي

40 والشام فيها بوتين اليوم شغال
ومعه مجوس مجرمين عصاتي

وحمص العذبة صابها شبه زلزال
صارت خرايب عقب طول الثباتي

وحلب حلبها الموت والذبح ما زال
بشيوخها وأطفالها والبناتي

وصنعا استباحوها من الجال للجال
وأصبح بها الحوثي شبيه الزناتي

“Abu Sulayman, after your time fortune turned¹⁷
 “And criminals have harmed and outraged our lives

35 “Twenty countries for the Arabs, all with problems between them
 “Twenty armies, and all of them slumbering

“Baghdad’s lost between salesman and agent
 “With her people dispersed among the nations

“The Persians returned for her, and her situation’s bad¹⁸
 “Her once-waving flags now lowered, trampled on

“Her people now either dead or refugees
 “Her women raped by the worst of criminals

“From pride’s podium the name of Arabism’s vanished
 “In Baghdad, the Rejectionists now hold power’s staff¹⁹

40 “Putin’s now at work in Syria
 “Along with the criminal, disobedient Zoroastrians²⁰

“Pure virgin Homs struck by the like of an earthquake
 “Now become ruins after such stability

“Aleppo milked dry by death, and the slaughter continues²¹
 “Of her old men, women, an children

“They’ve occupied Sanaa from one side to the other
 “al-Houthi’s become there the like of Zenata²²

17 Abu Sulayman (“Father of Sulayman”) is Khalid ibn al-Walid’s *kunya*, or tekonym.

18 I.e. after 1400 years, the Persians have returned to reconquer Iraq.

19 The Rejectionists (*al-rawāfiḍ*) is a pejorative term used by many Sunni Muslims to refer to Shi’a Muslims for rejecting Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthman as the first legitimate caliphs.

20 I.e. the Iranians, who practiced Zoroastrianism before Islam and whose Shiism Hajaya, along with many Sunnis, considers disobedience to God.

21 A pun on the name of Aleppo (*ḥalab*) and the verb “to milk” (*ḥalab*).

22 In reference to the Zenata caliph in the Epic of Bani Hilal (*Taghribat Banī Hilāl*), known for his bravery.

وفي ليبيا حربٍ بها الدم سيّال
ومن خيرها يرموا أهلها الفتاتي

45 ومصر العروبة صابها داء سلال
بها بذور الشرّ مستنبتاتي

ويحدّها السودان والربع الأزوال
في كلّ جهة يطلبوا حكم ذاتي

ولو شفت بالصومال وش حال الأطفال
هياكلٍ تمشي عراةٍ حفاتي

ولو شفت بذخ اللي جنواروس الأموال
أيقنت إنا فاسدين وطغاتي

ثروات الأمة بيد دنسين الأعمال
وبالغرب راحت فات فيها الفواتي

50 ونملك محطّات كثيرة للإرسال
وكلّ يقول اليوم شوفوا قتاتي

عهرٍ على الشاشات يعرض وينهال
تعرض أجسادٍ كلّها عار ياتي

وترامب جانا اليوم يصهل له صهال
حاقد وربعة بالسياسة دهاتي

متوحّش كنه لفانا من الأدغال
أوصاه بوش وحافظٍ للوصاتي

“In Libya the war rages and the blood flows
 “Her people thrown the last scraps of her bounty”²³

45 “The Arabs’ Egypt’s been struck with an insidious disease
 “That sows there seeds of evil

“She’s bordered by the Sudan, the land of the brothers”²⁴
 “From every direction they demand self-government

“If you saw the state of Somalia’s children,
 “Skeletons going forth naked and barefoot,

“If you saw the luxury accumulated by rich men
 “You’d be sure of our corruption and tyranny

“The Arab Nation’s riches lie in unclean hands
 “Disappeared in the West, never to return

50 “With our countless TV and radio stations
 “Everyone now says ‘Have you seen *my* channel?’”²⁵

“Promiscuity abundant as rain on TV
 “Showing bodies—all of them naked”²⁶

“Trump showed up today neighing like a charger
 “Hateful and spiteful, his political clique cunning

“A savage man—he might as well have come from the bush
 “Entrusted by Bush with commands that he’ll keep”²⁷

23 I.e. natural resources.

24 My rendering of *al-rab’ al-azwāl*, in reference to the informal word for “man” or “dude” used by the Sudanese: *zōl* pl. *azwāl*; see also line 17 in “Fear the Noose”.

25 Arabs compete in broadcasting their own TV shows, Hajaya adds, while in the West people compete over meaningful things like manufacturing, inventions, planes, and missiles.

26 I.e. which naked bodies corrupt the morals of the Arab Nation’s youth (*shabāb al-ummah*), according to Hajaya.

27 An accidental pun on Bush the 43rd US president and the word for jungle, thicket, forest, or bush (*adghāl*), whence Trump came.

قال اسمعوني واصدقوني بالأقوال
إتتوا وش اتتوا يا كبار اللهاتي

55 إتتوا عرب قلت آه قال اتتوا أنذال
ومن العرب ما فيكوا أي صفاتي

اللي أعرفه بالعرب إنهم رجال
تثور ليا سمعوا صياح البناتي

واللي أعرفه بالعرب كانوا أبطال
وعيونهم على القذى ما تباتي

وعلى حسب علمي كانت الخيل تتثال
بسيوف أهلها بايعين الحياتي

إن سار من روس العدى الدم شلال
صهيلها يملا الفضا والفلاتي

60 واللي خبرته بالعرب كانوا جبال
إن طبوا الميدان عالصافناتي

وعلمي بهم رهبان بالليل لو طال
وفرسان بالهيجا أسود غزاتي

In lines 54-71, Khalid chastises the youth:

Khalid said, "Listen to me and tell me the truth
"What are you, who are you, with your jowls drooping down"²⁸

55 "Are you Arabs?" he asked; I said, "Yes" he: "You're scum!"
"Of the Arabs' noble qualities, you possess none

"What I know about Arabs is that they're men
"Who run to assist when they hear women's screams

"What I know about Arabs is that they were heroes
"Whose eyes never closed when they witnessed oppression"²⁹

"As far as I know their chargers strutted and reared
"Under the swords of their riders, who sold their lives"³⁰

"When the enemies' blood came cascading down
"Their neighs would then fill space and sky

60 "What I know about Arabs is that they were mountains
"As they stood in the field on their battle-ready steeds

"What I know is that they were as monks by night"³¹
"And by day knights, warriors, lions of battle

28 Hajaya says he is quoting Qaddafi ("Who are you [pl.]?" [*man antum?*]) in his speech during the first days of the revolution that led to his overthrow and death; jowls here indicate fatness and stupidity.

29 Lit. "whose eyes didn't rest on granules [caused by conjunctivitis]." Hajaya is likening the early Muslim Arab conquerors' vigilance and refusal to tolerate oppression to the vigilance of someone afflicted with granular conjunctivitis (*al-ramad*) who will not sleep (rest content) until his eyes have been cleared of granules, which here represent oppression.

30 I.e. who sold their lives for the sake of the religion (*dīn*), the community of believers (*ummah*), honor (*sharaf*), and dignity (*karāmah*).

31 I.e. in that they would stay up reading the Qur'an as monks would stay up late reading the Bible.

أُكِّد خنتوا عهدنا وصرتوا أضحال
وضيِّعتوا الدين الحنيف الثباتي

ختوا رسول الله في كلّ ما قال
أعمامكم حبّ المال والكاسياتي

واليوم صرتوا أضعف الناس وهزال
وداستكم قدام العدى بالوطاتي

والله خذلكم وابتلاككم بجهّال 65
روس الكباش ويلبسون العباتي

قصورهم للذّل منزل ومدهال
أوكار فحش وتارकिन الصلاتي

يحاربون الدين في كلّ الأحوال
وبالظلم قاموا يسجنون الدعاتي

وما دام اتتوا أكثر الناس بالمال
وين السلاح الي يصدّ الغزاتي

إتفوا عليكم يا خسيسين الأفعال
يا بايعين الدين بالمغرياتي

يا شاربين العار من كّف الإذلال 70
لعنة عليكم في جميع اللغاتي

وتفل علينا واحد واحد وقال
موتوا مذلّة يا شباه الخواتي

“You’ve surely broken our covenant, become baby nanny goats
 “And lost the sure, true faith³²

“You’ve betrayed God’s messenger in all that he said
 “Blinded by the love of money and of women scantily clad³³

“Today you’ve become the weakest and most ridiculous of peoples
 “Trampled on the ground by the enemies’ feet

65 “God’s forsaken you, afflicted you with ignorant men
 “With rams for rulers, rams dressed in *thobs*³⁴

“With their palaces as humiliation’s very parlor and
 “Dens of fornication, their rulers stopped praying long ago

“They wage war on religion in every context
 “With their oppression they’ve begun jailing the pious³⁵

“As long as you Arabs are the richest of peoples
 “Where are your arms to repel the invaders?

“I spit on you men of base deeds
 “Who’ve sold religion for worldly temptations

70 “Who drink shame from the hand that disgraces you
 “A curse upon you in all the world’s languages!”

And he spit on us one by one and said
 “May you all die in shame, you bunch of sissies!”³⁶

32 I.e. they have betrayed the principles, values, and commands of the true religion (*al-dīn al-ḥanīf*), i.e. Islam.

33 This line is in reference to the hadith that women who are clothed yet naked—scantily clad—will not enter heaven.

34 *ʿubāt* (sing. *ʿabāyah*), also called the *thōb*, is Bedouin garb worn often by Gulf Arab rulers; for Hajaya’s many comparisons of Gulf Arab rulers to rams, see also line 16 of “Flower of the Mossad,” lines 35-36 of “Daughter of Tough Men,” and line 20 of “Stock Market of My Love”

35 Lit. those who call others to Islam (*al-duʿāt*).

36 Lit. “oh you who resemble your sisters”.

وفزيت كئي مستني جن بهبال
وصحيت وانه حلم أزج مباتي

حلم حلمته أزج الفكر والبال
وحرّك جروج بالخفي كامناتي

وصلاة ربي عدّ ما هل همّال
على رسول الله كريم الصفاتي

مجد المختار من بيت الأفضال
الهاشمي مفتاح باب النجاتي

In lines 72-75, Hajaya wakes up:

Then I started, as if touched with madness by a jinn
And woke up, for it was a dream that disturbed my sleep

A dream I had that troubled mood and mind
And stirred up wounds concealed deep within me

I pray to the Lord as many times as the rain falls
For God's messenger of noble virtues

75 Muhammad the Chosen from that eminent family
Of Hashemites, the key to salvation's door

حظوا الأبو إيفانكا بصمة إعجاب

يوم العرب نامت ونور السعد غاب
وأذهل بنات الشام هول المصيبة

صيحجتهن شقت سما ذلّ الأعراب
ودموعهن والدم جاري سكية

سبحان من صخر لهن فزعة ترامب
فارس شجاع وذيب من بطن ذيبة

أنشهد إته ذيب من لابة ذياب
وثدي المراجل راضع من حليبه

إن قال يفعل يكسر الخشم ما هاب
ضربات كفه بالأعادي عطية

5

أمطر صواريخه على راس الإرهاب
وخلّ مطار الشرّ ناره لهيبة

السيف تياهوك بالنار لهّاب
خلّ الأهداف اللي ضربها حطية

حظوا الأبو إيفانكا بصمة إعجاب
كسار روس الروس قاهر حريمه

Abu Ivanka

April 9, 2017

Hajaya wrote this short praise poem to Donald Trump after the US struck Bashar al-Assad's Sh'ērāt airfield in retaliation for the Syrian Air Force's chemical attack on the town of Khan Shaykhūn.

When the Arabs slept, luck's light long gone,
Disaster's terror struck Syria's women

Their cries rent the sky of the Arabs' shame,
Along with their tears, and the blood poured forth

Praise be to Him who brought them Trump's help
A brave knight, a wolf from a she-wolf's belly

I swear that he's a wolf from a pack of wolves
Suckled on milk from the teat of manliness¹

5 If he says—he does—he breaks noses—he's not afraid!²
His hands' blows destroy the enemy

He sent his missiles raining down on the head of terrorism³
And let blazing fires devour the airport of evil⁴

His sword's a Tomahawk, a blazing fire
He left the targets that he hit like dry wood

So give a thumb's up for Abu Ivanka⁵
Breaker of the Russians' heads, vanquisher of enemies

1 In reference to the Bedouin belief that one derives many qualities from one's maternal uncles through one's mother's milk.

2 To break someone's nose means to defeat and humiliate someone; see also line 32 of "The Arab Spring" and line 31 of "Ivanka".

3 I.e. Bashar al-Assad.

4 I.e. the Sh'erat airfield, which US President Donald Trump ordered attacked with 59 Tomahawk missiles from two destroyers in the Mediterranean.

5 Lit. "give a thumbprint of approbation/admiration for Abu Ivanka," which Hajaya compared to "liking" on Facebook.

متى لأمرىكا تعود الزعامة

يا مرحبا بترامب واللي مع ترام
ترحيبة الخايف بفرعة أعمامه

خايف وحا طوا به رجا جيل ظلام
وجوه الأعمام وكلّ ساحب حسامه

أهلاً بابو إيفانكا سيف الأروام
ضيغاً عزيز وحافظين مقامه

وطيت سهلاً يا ذراكل منضام
وحليت أهلاً يا حفيظ السلامة

5 بك رحبت كلّ اليعارب والإسلام
حيثك شجاع وبك تلوق الزعامة

تستاهل الفنجال مع عشرة أنعام
يا أفخم الحكام وابو الفخامة

When Will America Lead Again?

May 20, 2017

Hajaya wrote this poem on the occasion of Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia on May 20, 2017. He wrote the poem from the perspective of Gulf Arab rulers, loyal servants of the United States in Hajaya's eyes and afraid of Iran for their lives and their thrones. Hajaya avers that this poem's title and final line (lit. "when will leadership return to America?") were not in reference to Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," often translated into Arabic as *i'adat haybat Amrikā*. Nevertheless, the resemblance is telling.

In lines 1-6, Hajaya's Gulf Arab rulers greet Trump:

Oh welcome to Trump and whoever's with him!
The welcome a fearful man gives to his paternal uncles!¹

Afraid, and surrounded by oppressive men
Yet his masters came to him, each one with his sword drawn

Welcome to Abu Ivanka, Sword of the Romans!²
A dear guest whose place we hold dear

You've alighted on level ground, oh protector of the oppressed!³
And come to your family—may God protect you!

5 All the Arabs and Muslims welcome you
For you're brave and deserve to lead

The best of men ten times over, you deserve a cup⁴
The greatest of rulers, the very Father of Greatness!⁵

1 Or "masters" (*a'māmah*); paternal uncles are responsible for one's protection.

2 I.e. the US and Western Europe; many Arabs refer to the US and Western Europe as "Rome," echoing early Islamic discourse, in which "Rome" referred to Byzantium.

3 In reference to the traditional Arabic greeting *waṭi'ta saḥlan wa-ḥalalta aḥlan* ("you've alighted on level ground and come to [your] family"), source of the shortened *aḥlan u-saḥlan*.

4 I.e. of coffee.

5 Hajaya chose "*Abū al-Fakhāmah*" ("Father of Greatness") for its resemblance to "*Abū Ivānkā*".

واسمح لنا لك نشتكي همنا العام
شكوى ضعيف جابر الوضع ضامه

ولك نشتكي يا عمنا شرّ الأعمام
هم العدو الي خبيثاً نظامه

طمعوا بنا يا عمّا عقب صدام
وحاطوا بنا من أقصى يمتا لشامه

10 واليوم دورك وانت فارس وعزام
ودنا جهودك يا كبير الفخامة

جند لنا في حربنا كل الإعلام
يكشف مكانينه ويظهر إجرامه

مخططاته كلها إرهاب وإجرام
وناوي على مكة يروع حمامه

وانت الحليف المخلص الصادق الهام
يا ذخرنا لا صار يوم التحامه

يالذيب يا لجسار للروس كصام
ودار الأعادي ما تهاب اقتحامه

15 ودنا يا ابو الايفانكا دعمك التام
جواً وبحراً في نهار اصطدامه

وإن كان ودك مال إبشر بالإكرام
إبشر بما يرضيك حبّ وكرامة

In lines 7-17, the Gulf Arab rulers complain of their situation and ask for Trump's help:

Let us lament to you our greatest concern
The complaint of the weak, oppressed by their condition⁶

Oh master, we complain to you of the Persians' evil
They're the enemy with a wicked regime

They coveted us after Saddam left⁷
They've surrounded us from Yemen to Syria

10 Now it's your turn, and you're a resolute knight
We want your support, oh man of magnificence!

Enlist for us all forms of media in our war
To expose their dark secrets, bring to light their crimes⁸

Their plans are all criminality and terrorism
They intend to take Mecca and terrify her doves⁹

And you're our ally, devoted, truthful and important
Our arsenal when days of battle come

Oh wolf! Oh bold man! Oh crusher of Russians!
Not afraid of storming the enemies' home

15 We want, Abu Ivanka, your complete support
From the air and the sea on the day of the clash

If you want money, ask and you'll receive
Take whatever you like, with our love and honor

6 I.e. by the Iranian threat.

7 I.e. the Persians coveted the Gulf Arabs' lands and resources.

8 I.e. the Persians' "crimes" of religious and political hegemony over the Arab world, occupation, and their age-old hatred (*hiqd*) for the Arabs.

9 In reference to the doves that live in the Great Mosque of Mecca (*al-haram al-sharif*) and do not fear people.

المال واجد والذهب عندنا أكوام
وحقاً علينا الضيف واجب إكرامه

وحلّوا لنا وضع اليمن وانتم فهم
حظّوا أصابعكم بياقي حطامه

وضع اليمن يحتاج حكمة وإحكام
قابل علي صالح واسمع كلامه

20 تراه مثلك ذيب حازم وجرّام
وبالحرب هاذي مستحيل انهزامه

معها قبائل كلّها عزم وإقدام
والكلّ منهم وافيّاً بالتزامه

والصلح خير ويعتبر سيد الأحكام
واصلح عيال العمّ وأنهى الخصامة

حرب العجم تحتاج وحدة وإبرام
وحدة جديدة عقب طول انقسامه

وتكفوا ابو إيفانكا مجرم الشام
كسر أنياب الوحش وأحكم لجامه

25 المجرم السقّاح سوي له خزام
في محكمة لاهاي رتب إعدامه

وقطعان حزب اللات قذرين الأجسام
أبرم لهم حبلاً متين إبرامه

We've lots of money and heaps of gold
And it's our duty to honor the guest

In lines 18-38, the Gulf Arab rulers ask Trump to solve the problems in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Libya and to preserve Israel's security:

Solve for us the situation in Yemen, for you're perceptive people
Put your fingers in what's left of its ruins

The situation in Yemen needs wisdom and closure
Meet 'Ali Salih and hear the man out

- 20 For he, like you, is a wolf, intense and insistent
And in this war, defeating him's impossible¹⁰

With him are the tribes, all of them resolute and intrepid
All of them devoted and committed

Peaceful resolution is the master of decisions¹¹
So make peace between the cousins and end the enmity

The War on Persia calls for unity and resolution
A new unity after so much division

You're up to it, Abu Ivanka, so for the criminal in Syria,
Break the monster's incisors and tighten his bridle¹²

- 25 The bloodthirsty criminal—make him a camel's nose-ring
And arrange his execution at the court in The Hague

As for the flocks of *Ḥizb al-Lāt*, of disgusting constitution¹³
Tie them up with a tight rope

10 I.e. because he has the support of the tribes.

11 In reference to the Arabic proverb *al-ṣulḥ sayyid al-aḥkām*.

12 In reference to the alleged surname of one of Bashar al-Assad's ancestors, Sulaymān al-Waḥsh ("Sulayman the Monster"), who apparently killed many people.

13 A pun on *Ḥizb Allāh* (Hezbollah), which Hajaya refers to as *Ḥizb al-Lāt*, in reference to the pre-Islamic Arabian deity al-Lāt for what he considers Hezbollah's un-Islamic nature.

وعراقنا اللي أصبحت ساحة إجرام
تحتاج منك موقفاً به صرامة

بوش الغبي في حكمها عيّن أصنام
كلاب الحميني لابسين العمامة

قضى على صدام واحنا له حزام
وعنه تخلينا وزدنا الملازمة

30 سيف العرب ختاه في ذيك الأيام
واليوم متنا عقب موته ندامة

وبغداد كل أطفالها صاروا أيتام
وتسكن حرايرها بيالي خيامه

وصارت عصابات وجماعات وزلام
والفرس فيها ماسكين الزعامة

وفي ليبيا بعض الدول عندها أحلام
مار احضر الكعكة نهار اقتسامه

وازرع بها لك ذيل مخلص وخدام
إن لاحت الفرصة عليك اغتنامه

35 وتكفيا بو إيفانكا سيف الإسلام
في سجنهم بالذيب طول مقامه

إرحم عزيزاً خانة الحظ وانضمام
فرح به أمه وأخرجه من ظلامه

As for our Iraq, become a field of criminality,
It needs from you a position of rigor

Bush the Idiot in his rule appointed idols
Khomeini's turban-wearing dogs

He killed Saddam and we were his supports¹⁴
We abandoned him and spread scandals and rumors¹⁵

30 We betrayed the Sword of the Arabs in those days
And today after his death we're dying of regret

All Baghdad's children have become orphans
Her pure women live in ragged tents

It's become gangs, groups, and agents
And the Persians there hold the leadership

Of Libya certain countries have dreams
So be near the cake when it's split up!¹⁶

Plant there a lackey, devoted and servile
If the opportunity's ripe, you must take it

35 You're up to it, Abu Ivanka, and Sayf al-Islam—
His stay in prison, oh Wolf, has gone on too long¹⁷

Have mercy on a powerful man betrayed by fortune and oppressed¹⁸
Make his mother happy and bring him out of the darkness¹⁹

14 Lit. we were his belts, put on to undertake the task of removing Saddam Hussein.

15 I.e. about Saddam.

16 I.e. the "cake" of Libya's land and resources.

17 I.e. Qaddafi's son Sayf al-Islam, whose five-year bid in prison many Arabs consider too long.

18 In reference to the Arabic proverb *irhamū 'azīza qawmin dhall* ("Have mercy on a powerful/noble man of a nation who has been humiliated").

19 I.e. the darkness of prison.

يا محلحل الصعبات يا رمز الإقدام
زيد الولايات العظيمة صرامة

وحيدتک حافظ علی أمنها التام
سلامنا يا عمنا من سلامه

قبلک أوباما عيش الناس بأوهام
كنا نحسبه صقر واته حمامه

كذب علينا وانكشف وجهه الخام 40
جبان راسه مثل راس النعامه

هيبة أمريكا حظها بين الأقرام
واليوم ما عادت كما كان قامه

أمريكا أم الضعافا والأيتام
والقوة العظمى بكل احترامه

اليوم فيها الروس تلعب بالأقدام
متى لأمریکا تعود الزعامة

Oh solver of difficulties, oh symbol of courage
 Increase the United States' fierceness, strength, and power

As for your beloved, preserve her total security²⁰
 For her peace and security, oh master, are ours²¹

In lines 39-43, the Gulf Arab rulers express their disappointment in Obama and close with a rhetorical question:

Before you, Obama had us living on illusions
 We figured him a falcon, but he turned out to be a dove

40 He lied to us and his artless face was exposed
 A cowardly leader with a head like an ostrich's²²

He put America's awe and prestige among dwarves
 It hasn't yet returned to its former standing

America, mother of the weak and the orphaned
 With all due respect, the greatest power

But today the Russians play it like a soccer pitch
 So when will America lead again?

PART 2
Interviews



Interview #1

October 2016, after our translation of “Noblest of the Fallen” (*az‘am wa-akram qatīl*)

WCT: Why, frankly, do you like Qaddafi?

Hajaya: Of course, William, I’m frank with you to the fullest extent. Like you said, I love Qaddafi for his *‘urūbah* (Arabness; Arab pride), because he was an Arab nationalist, and in the end because he was a Muslim. I consider him a brother to me in religion and in *‘urubah*. The man really tried to build Arab power and tried to develop Libya. But unfortunately, in Libya there was what we call reverse tensile strength (*quwwat al-shadd al-‘aksī*): as hard as he tried to build, there were those who tried to destroy. As for the arrests and crimes they say he committed, I don’t believe that those crimes happened. Seriously. Maybe there were arrests and maybe there were some mistakes, but not from Qaddafi himself. Maybe from those around him, while he didn’t know about [the mistakes].

But in general I don’t believe the media. I don’t believe the news sources that broadcast all this news and all these crimes of Qaddafi’s. You could say that I don’t believe what was rumored about Qaddafi in terms of crimes (*ijrām*). Because there was an opposition, and this opposition was trying to instigate a coup. And this opposition wasn’t respectable or honest or legitimate (*sharīf*). A hired opposition (*mu‘aradah ma’jūrah*), I think, on the payroll of world intelligence services, maybe Western, maybe Arab, maybe Eastern, God knows. But in the end the man was defending himself and his rule, and he was defending Libya and the Libyan people.

And if there were crimes that, well, happened, then perhaps they happened. That happens in every government, and even in America there may be violations and excesses, crime. In the West and the East and in every country, crimes occur, arrests occur, torture occurs. Do you remember, for example, the American crimes at Abu Ghraib? I beg you, return to the crimes of Abu Ghraib and see for yourself how many crimes the Americans committed on innocent Iraqis who were resisting the occupation. It got to the point where American soldiers raped, killed and burned a young girl named ‘Abīr al-Janābī. So maybe there were mistakes made by people around Qaddafi.

But Qaddafi as an idea (*fikr*)—I consider him an idea of Arab nationalism who tried to build Arab power and who worked tirelessly to build Libya and to

Note: The following four interviews were conducted using WhatsApp’s audio messaging service and have been edited for clarity.

raise Libya up. He tried to unite the Arab Nation, and in the end he created the African Union. He tried to unite the African Union, but you know that the superpowers wouldn't accept that. The superpowers prefer the dissolution and division of the Arab Nation so that it stays weak and so that they remain in control of these countries' natural resources and peoples.

On the whole, as I said to you, I like Qaddafi because he's an Arab, a nationalist, a Muslim, a Bedouin. He built Libya. He made the Great Man-Made River (*al-nahr al-'azīm*). He worked hard. In his speeches he would talk about the Libyan people and tell them "you're backward people who don't want to progress or advance." He would accuse the Libyan people of being a lazy people, a people that didn't want to work. The man tried to the extent of his capacity, but he just couldn't. In the end the conspiracies succeeded, and they put an end to Libya. And you know what Libya looks like now after the Rats' Revolution.¹ In Libya now, this alley fights that one, this tribe makes war on that one, this city makes war on that one. Libya has been utterly destroyed. And they'll have no standing or power, and there will remain continuous war until God knows when. Qaddafi's staying in power would have been preferable to all this chaos, destruction and killing. Just like what happened in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. And the current situation bears witness. Look at what happened in Libya after Qaddafi left, look at what happened in Iraq after Saddam left, look at what's happening in Syria now, look at what happened in Yemen after 'Ali 'Abdullah Salih went. The real name of this Arab "spring" is the "Arab Destruction" (*al-damār al-'arabī*) or the "Arab Darkness" (*al-sawād al-'arabī*).

Then, William, ask the Westerners, as long as they've got the idea that Qaddafi was such a criminal, why did their countries work with him? Britain, America, France, and Italy—all the Western countries used to do business with Qaddafi. They'd visit him, he'd receive them and they him, they'd eat and drink with him. That's not the issue. The issue is that the media is a lying media. There is no truthful media outlet. That man, Qaddafi, was subjected to intense misrepresentation, and finally I think that he disobeyed the commands of the "Whiskey and Cigar Club" (*jamā'at al-wiskī wa-l-sigār*)² and for that reason they tried to get rid of him. And they did get rid of him, perhaps because he disobeyed them. The entire goal was Libya's resources. Libya's foreign capital is now gone. Libya's become a thing of the past.

1 Qaddafi referred to the revolutionaries as "rats" (*jarādhī, jurdhān*).

2 A group of old American men who smoke Cuban cigars, drink whiskey, and hatch conspiracies for the future of the world from a boardroom in Washington, D.C. To Hajaya this shady group of men really runs the United States and the world.

Interview #2

May 15, 2017

WCT: The first question I want to ask you is on your view of the ideal Arab world. In your poems you always speak about the Arabs' humiliation (*dhull*) and the miserable situation of the Arabs. What, then, do you wish for the Arab world exactly?

Hajaya: I don't wish, like Plato, for an ideal state. I hope that the Arabs will be powerful and that justice will exist between the ruler and the ruled; that the Arabs will have freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, true—not false—democracy; that the Arabs will be the masters of their own decisions; that they won't follow the West, or the East, or the South, or the North; that they will be the masters of themselves, that the world will deal with them with justice (*ʿadālah*) and fairness (*niddīyyah*); that peace and security reign; and that citizens' situations improve in all the Arab countries. The Arabs have many natural resources (*tharwāt*), but they're not distributed with justice. For example, there's oil to be found in the oil-producing countries while the rest of the Arab peoples eat sometimes, from hunger, dead animals' remains. So there's no justice in the distribution of resources, and there's no justice between the ruler and the ruled, there's no true democracy, and there's no true sovereignty (*siyādah*) for many Arab countries. They're governed, in my view, from without, whether by America or by other countries. The important thing is that [the Arabs'] decisions aren't in their own hands.

WCT: How can the Arabs build international power? There were Arab nationalists, like 'Abd al-Nāṣir, who wanted to unite all the Arab peoples under one leadership from Morocco to Iraq, from Syria to Yemen. Do you want to see a United States of Arabia? Do you want to see, as in the Arabs' summits, for example, an Arab council that rules the Arabs in which every [Arab] country is represented?

Hajaya: The experience of Arab unity's demands, in the days of 'Abd al-Nasir and after him, proved that it's unrealizable. I think that the reason was outside interference (*tadakhkhul khārījī*). I consider it impossible for the Arab Nation ever to be united in one country. Maybe there could be a union like the European Union, for example, maybe. But a single country I consider very difficult.

WCT: From my readings and our relationship I know that the most used words in your poems are variations on the word “humiliation,” “disgrace,” or “shame”—*dhull*, *hawān*, *‘ār*, *idhlāl*, *mustadhillāt*, etc. In your opinion, what are the biggest reasons for the Arabs’ current humiliation?

Hajaya: The reasons for humiliation (*dhull*) and being humiliated (*idhlāl*) is first of all their straying from the true, orthodox, Islamic religion. And various other reasons, such as rulers’ holding on to their offices. The important thing for the [Arab] ruler is to remain [in power], for his family to remain [in power], regardless of the interest of the people or the Nation (*al-ummah*). Not to mention external reasons, other countries’ designs on the natural resources present in the Arab region and their desire that this Nation remain weak and fragmented, her decision subject to the West or the East. Many factors and many reasons.

WCT: What would happen if all the Arabs and Muslims returned to orthodox religion?

Hajaya: In my opinion the first thing that would happen would be justice (*al-‘adālah*). Social justice would be realized in the shadow of Islam, there would be true social justice for the Muslim, the Jew, the Christian, and for any religion found within the Arab region. When justice is realized, loyalty and devotion to the homeland and the Nation are realized, and people excel in their work, with sincerity. But what do you expect from someone who sees that his rights are harmed, someone who’s oppressed and unjustly treated—how does he become a productive person and how does he become a person with allegiance (*walā’*) for and belonging (*intimā’*) to his homeland or his nation in the shadow of that oppression, that injustice, that tyranny?

WCT: In the West we’re more or less convinced that if one has food, drink, housing, healthcare, and the opportunity to learn, one can be productive and excel. Your thought regarding production (*intāj*) and excellence (*ibdā’*) is through orthodox religion, but I don’t see any intrinsic connection between things like healthcare and university education and orthodox religion.

Hajaya: When orthodox religion is applied and becomes widespread, so does justice. When justice becomes so, every person comes to obtain his full rights in terms of education, healthcare, work, freedom of expression and opinion. When justice is achieved, so are all the things that humans wish for in order to continue living, whether that’s education, housing, healthcare—anything that

humans hope for, like equality. We Arabs have a proverb that “Justice is the foundation of dominion” (*al-‘adl asās al-mulk*).

WCT: Don’t you think there’s a secular way that the Arabs can arrive at a better situation? For example, don’t you distinguish between church and state?

Hajaya: Impossible. In my view it’s impossible for full justice to be realized except in the shadow of Islam, true Islam. I’m not calling for an Islamic state that rules by the sword and by cutting off people’s hands and legs and such. I mean Islam, the principles of Islam, the justice present in Islam. In Islam the state guarantees everything. The essence of it all is justice. Islam says that religion is how you treat people (*mu‘āmalah*). So when justice (*‘adl*) is realized, there reigns peace (*salām*), security (*amn*), and comfort (*rafāhiyyah*). Everything people desire can be achieved in the shadow of justice. As I see it there is no justice in secularism. My point of view is that it’s about benefit (*maṣāliḥ*), advantage (*imtiyāzāt*), business.

Interview #3

May 18, 2017

wct: The first question I have today is on the apocalypse. You speak a lot in your poetry about “scum of a strand line” (or a “high-water line” [*ghuthā’ sayl*]) and “the dish of Syria” (*qaṣ’at al-shām*) and say that the “sects have become more than seventy,” all references to apocalyptic hadith. So I, from my readings, suppose you think that the apocalypse is near. Do you?

Hajaya: Yes. I, and a large number of Muslims, think that the apocalypse is near because of all the signs that our master Muhammad spoke of—the signs of the day of resurrection—many of which have appeared. We’ve witnessed them here and now. There are many such hadiths, like the one that states that “when you see the barefoot and the shepherds build extravagantly, wait for the hour.” Also, all these wars and the stories of wars and killing. Also, there’s the “dish” (*al-qaṣ’ah*), in reference to when the Prophet said that you [Muslims] will be like the dish, that the nations will fall upon you. That is, the nations will gather around the Muslims as around a dish. One of the companions asked Muhammad about the meaning of his words. I don’t remember it word for word, but I’ll give you the meaning of the hadith. He asked, “Will our number then be few, oh prophet of God?” Muhammad replied, “No, you will be many, but you will be as the scum of a strand line.” And we now are many—I mean now Muslims number around 1.5 billion and Arabs around three hundred million—but we have no power or strength, our natural resources and treasures have been plundered, and we’re governed and humiliated by the powers of oppression and world tyranny. All the indicators show that the apocalypse is near. But how great God is! Our measure of time differs from God’s, praise be to Him.

wct: There were many periods in the past, especially in the early days of Islam, that were full of sectarian wars and internecine strife, and everyone thought that the apocalypse was near. But it didn’t happen of course. And later in the Middle Ages, many people thought likewise, and under the Turks they thought likewise, and with the Crusaders they thought likewise. And today many people think that the apocalypse is near. What differentiates now from the time of the Crusades or the strife that occurred early in the history of Islam?

Hajaya: That’s correct that there were wars, as you said, but they weren’t on this scale, and weapons hadn’t been developed to this extent. The indicators about the closeness of the apocalypse are the rapid, startling development in

the sciences, means of communication, means of destruction. Also the extravagance of building (*taṭāwul al-bunyān*) and tall towers. Especially about the Bedouins, by whom the Prophet Muhammad meant “the barefoot and the shepherds.” It is now considered a miracle of a hadith when Muhammad said the barefoot (*al-ḥufāt*), the shepherds (*al-ru’āt*), the sheep herders (*ru’āt al-shāh*) [Hajaya forgot “the naked” (*al-‘urāt*)] will build extravagantly. Nowadays the height of certain skyscrapers in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries is one kilometer. The mutual approach, or shortening, of time (*taqārub al-zamān*)—the fastness of time and of the nights and the days. The corruption that has appeared, that is present in a big way in the world. There’s even a verse in the Qur’an—I haven’t memorized it—that says “Corruption has appeared in the land and sea, for that men’s own hands have earned, that He may let them taste some part of that which they have done, that haply so they may return.”¹ This [apocalyptic] way of thinking is widespread to the extent that regardless of what happened in the past in terms of wars, killing and [apocalyptic] expectations, today even the religious scholars, the greatest religious scholars in Islam, expect it. And in the end only God knows. I told you that our human measure of time differs from God’s knowledge and God’s measure of time.

WCT: I remember, Abū Sāmir, one year ago I asked you a lot about the apocalypse in Islam, especially in relation to the Syrian Civil War. You said then that all the destruction in Syria could be considered purification (*taṣfiyah*) of the Arab world from flaws or defects. Could you elaborate on that a bit more?

Hajaya: I think—and there are a lot of people who think—that what’s happening in Syria is a purification of the Muslims. They cite the example of gold, which, when you want to extract pure gold, is put on a hot fire so that the defects and flaws all leave and the pure gold remains. So what’s happening in Syria and in the Levant in particular is exactly that—it’s a purification in order that all the defects go from the people present in Syria and there remains the essence, the pureness of good, righteous people, true Muslims. Just like he who purifies with fire must burn gold in order to extract pure gold, while the defects and flaws leave with the ashes and with the burning.

WCT: It seems that much of the “essence” (*ṣafwah*) that remains in Syria is actually not a pure essence. It’s Bashar and his lackeys of all stripes and sects, and the fighters. The righteous people seem to have fled, and the people present in Syria are killers and murderers.

1 30:40; trans. Arberry.

Hajaya: Of course, until now things haven't ended, we're awaiting the result. Until now the picture hasn't become clear. The picture will become clear after the war ends. If the result is like what we expected, then there was something to it. And if the result is the opposite, then we'll have been wrong. There is still time to come for this purification to take place, which purification we expect and talk about.

WCT: Now I want to talk about your hate or scorn for the people of the Gulf—or rather, the rulers of the Gulf countries. Why do you hate them? They've brought much good to the [Arab] Nation, in terms of universities and the sciences. Now one sees Gulf Arabs as well-educated, cultured and productive people, so why don't you go easy on them? Yet you hate them for many reasons. Could you explain why exactly?

Hajaya: By God, William, this question would need pages to answer. We would have to read and trace their history and enumerate the disasters that they have brought to the Nation. The summary of events is that they are the reason for the Nation's humiliation, the Nation's loss, the Nation's dispersion and weakness, the loss of the Nation's natural resources. They're no more than—in the popular sense—*ṭarāṭīr*, pushovers. They don't own their own decisions, and they can't do anything without directives from America, Britain or Israel. To be clearer, I think that all of them are collaborators with the enemies of the Arabs.

WCT: Without going into many pages, then, give me an example of one disaster that the Gulf Arab countries have brought the Nation, and the humiliation that followed that disaster.

Hajaya: The most obvious of the disasters was their conspiring against Saddam and Iraq and the help they gave the enemies of Iraq in order to destroy it. That's the most obvious of the disasters that they've brought.

WCT: Pardon me, but I don't have much information on their conspiring against Iraq. I know that, for example, Kuwait demanded from Saddam that he repay the money he borrowed from them during the Iran-Iraq War, and that that is what led to so many problems. But what else have they brought to Iraq in terms of disasters?

Hajaya: By God, William, history books are full of things like this. It's hard to answer, but I've given you the summary of the situation. Those statelets which were set up [artificially] and which control huge amounts of natural

resources—*that* is considered the greatest disaster visited upon the [Arab] Nation and upon the large [Arab] countries like Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Statelets some of whose populations are one hundred thousand—yet they own hundreds of billions of dollars. This is a Nation's wealth that should be employed to serve the Nation and not to serve the Nation's enemies. Their conspiring against Iraq is old, from the days of 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim and before him. They're instruments in the hands of the Nation's enemies, who use them any time and in any situation they want.

WCT: You speak about statelets that were set up, but Jordan is a state, or a statelet, that was set up by the Nation's enemies, the very same Britain, America, and Israel. And Jordan is a great help to America, Britain and Israel in terms of security issues. So what differentiates Jordan from the Gulf Arab statelets?

Hajaya: First of all, William, Jordan was established following the treachery of its allies, who betrayed the Arabs in the Great Arab Revolt. The Arabs were promised—the Sharif Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī was promised—that there would be a large, powerful, independent Arab state, and afterwards the foreigners betrayed Jordan—or the Hashemites—and confined them to this area—Jordan—that has no oil, water or natural resources. Jordan differs radically from those statelets. And Jordan's political positions are well-known, its positions regarding the Nation in general and its people's issues in particular. Its positions are honorable, contrary to those statelets I told you about. Jordan's situation is different. And if cooperation [with America and Israel] exists, it's cooperation within the boundaries of Jordan's interests, not in the interest of America or Israel or any other country, and the boundaries of the Jordanian people's interest. The Bedouin proverb says, "Nothing forces you to do something bitter except something bitterer." That is, Jordan doesn't have material capabilities or natural resources or billions of dollars, so sometimes one is forced to cooperate in order to preserve oneself, one's existence.

Interview #4

June 8, 2017

WCT: What are the characteristics of the excellent, the ideal poem to you, as a Bedouin poet?

Hajaya: For me the good poem speaks of people's concerns, their situations, their suffering, their dreams, their demands. That is in my view the successful, the beautiful poem, that which expresses the voice of those who are not able to speak.

WCT: Do you think that poetry has other goals besides political ones?

Hajaya: Of course, poetry has many goals, and those depend on the view of the poet and his goals. Sometimes poetry is for material gain, such as with poets who beg for money; sometimes it has noble, lofty goals; sometimes it has religious goals; sometimes it has social goals; and sometimes it has tribalistic goals. According to the nature of the poet and the poet's laments (*tawajju'āt*), such is poetry. Poetry is a weapon (*silāh*), but it must be used safely, cleanly.

WCT: How do you respond to people like Yāsir al-Bashābsheh who accuse you of begging (*tasawwul*) with regard to the Hashemites, who say that you are not sincere (*mukhlis*), who doubt your devotion?

Hajaya: That's the talk of poets, a kind of defamation (*tajrīh*) and insult (*isā'ah*) because they're not able to achieve what Muhammad Fanatil has in terms of the Hashemites' respect and love. And the Hashemites know, themselves, how much I love and support them. I've never once asked them for any service or any thing from among the needs of this world. And they know that—from the king to the smallest prince. Actually, perhaps the only person among the Hashemites whom I asked for help was Prince Ghazi, and only him. And if I were a beggar poet, then I would beg from those who have money—Al Sa'ud, Al Thani, Al Khalifah, the Gulf Arabs, who pay poets hundreds of thousands.

WCT: If you don't mind me asking, what did you ask for from Prince Ghazi?

Hajaya: Man, you ask me about everything. I asked Prince Ghazi to help me in a particular matter, and the man spared no effort. He helped me, but not in a material (*māddī*) matter. He found me work, a job.

WCT: All right, excuse me for so many questions, but I'm interested.

Hajaya: God greet you, William, ask anything you like. Even if you ask me about my sins, I won't get upset, so ask. But you must know that I'm not a beggar, and that I'm not one of those beggar poets who go to the doors of embassies, to the Emirates, to Qatar, to Saudi Arabia, or to the doors of palaces and diwans begging for material goods with their poetry. Also, William, if I were a beggar poet, well, you've seen my house, what my situation is like, how I live. If I begged with my poetry, you'd have found me in a castle with ten cars, servants, and an entourage.

WCT: How do you respond to the people, for example, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA; *fushā*) poets, who claim that your poetry has no poetic or artistic flavor, that it is merely the arrangement of words (*tarkīb kalām*). In short, rhymed and metered words with no poetic flavor?

Hajaya: What governs poetry nowadays—whether my poetry or that of any Bedouin poet—is reality and the people who listen to poetry. For your information, MSA poetry has more or less no value for the Arab peoples nowadays. No one listens to MSA poetry save the educated elite (*al-nukhbah al-muta'allimah*). Bedouin poetry is the only poetry that reaches all classes of people—the educated, the cultured, the shepherd, the illiterate. Nowadays what rules the square is Bedouin poetry, no matter what MSA poets say. MSA poets of course feel that this poetry has come to compete with them and threaten their existence. And it really has gotten close to erasing the presence of MSA poets. You can see it on the level of all the Arab countries—the entire Arabian Gulf, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Sinai in Egypt, a large part of Libya, Yemen—all of them now are affected by and follow Bedouin poetry, while MSA poetry has no listeners at the present moment.

WCT: I hear what you're saying, and, by the way, I agree. But have you read, for example, the poetry of Adunis, Khalil al-Hawi or Badr Shakr al-Sayyab, whom I love? Have you read their work and been influenced by them? Many people say that your poetry is not poetry because they're influenced by Western poetic and literary theory that entered the Arab world by way of Adunis, al-Hawi and al-Sayyab. How would you respond to them? Have you read their poetry? Do you consider *their* poetry poetry?

Hajaya: I actually haven't heard their poetry. I've heard their names, but I haven't heard or read their poetry. I *have* read a lot of pre-Islamic poetry and been influenced by it. I've read al-Mutanabbi, al-Jarir, al-Farazdaq, 'Antarah,

Dhu al-Rummaḥ, and many other poets whose names I can't recall right now. And I've even been influenced by more recent MSA poets, the poetry of the Jordanian poet 'Arār, Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall. I've read his collected works, liked them, and was influenced by them.

WCT: Who else, besides 'Arar, influenced you from among recent MSA poets?

Hajaya: Habib al-Zyudi, a Jordanian poet, I've also read his poetry and been influenced by it. And Nizar Qabbani, I've also been influenced by some of his poems.

WCT: Now I'd like to ask you about conspiracy theories. You've told me many times that the Arabs see a conspiracy behind everything. But you sometimes say that there is indeed a conspiracy behind, for example, the destruction of Libya and the division of the Arab Nation. How do you live with those two feelings—the conviction that there actually is a conspiracy behind what happens in the Arab countries and the conviction that the Arabs always think there's a conspiracy?

Hajaya: Of course, it's a tangible reality. Conspiracies exist, and most Arabs are convinced, especially the people (*al-shu'ūb*), that behind every event that happens to the Arab and Islamic Nations is a conspiracy, either from Zionism or from Western countries. That conviction exists. My feelings, however, are of disappointment (*iḥbāt*). Because there's no resistance that I see to these conspiracies, I feel disappointed. And my only role is to make people aware, to alert people to fight and resist these conspiracies.

WCT: What are these conspiracies, for example?

Hajaya: Most of the conspiracies on the Arab homeland are to plunder its natural resources, to control it by any means, and to preserve the security and welfare of Israel.

WCT: From my perspective, those cultures and peoples that blame others for conspiring against them are actually those cultures and peoples most given to conspiring in the first place. For example, the Arab and Russian peoples always say that there's a conspiracy behind this or that because they are the people most given to conspiratorial thinking. They talk about division (*tashtīt*) yet they're the people least given to building power and unity. And to some extent I see that as their fault, not America's or Israel's fault.

Hajaya: I'm with you on that theory, that's correct. But conspiracies really do exist. America, Israel, and the entire Western world strive to achieve their own interests by any means. And like I said, the Arabs sometimes even conspire against themselves. It's present in history that their conspiracies against each other outnumber their conspiracies against others. The Arabs have never conspired against America, Israel, China, or Russia in the first place. That's something that we know. It's become a culture among the Arabs that for any failure or occurrence that happens to us nowadays, we'll say "it's a conspiracy." So we blame our failure and our division on conspiracies.

WCT: For the sake of guessing, what do you think is going to happen in the near future in the Arab world? What expectations do you have? What are the "Whiskey and Cigar Club" cooking up?

Hajaya: Hahaha, God help you, William, may the Lord preserve you, oh shaykh. They're working. As the saying goes, "You want, and I want, and God does what he wants." My faith is very, very strong that all these events will in the end be for the benefit of the Arab and Islamic Nations, that the plans of the West and the East will, God willing, fail, that Islam, the Muslims, and the Arabs (*urūbah*) will be victorious, and that they'll have a country and power. And that's a promise from God, Praise be to Him.

PART 3

Pictures





FIGURE 1
*Hajaya on his property in Sadd
al-Sultānī*



FIGURE 2
*The hill known as Mwagga' al-Tēr
("Falcons' Roost," from its height)
from the north, looking south from
the village of Mḥayy. Hajaya spent
much of his childhood and youth
pasturing his flock on Mwagga'
al-Tēr, and his family's winter
camps were just to the east of the
hill.*



FIGURE 3 *Basalt desert east of the Transjordanian Highlands with electrical transmission towers dotting the landscape*



FIGURE 4 *Hajaya overlooking Wādī al-Ḥisā*



FIGURE 5

The room where Hajaya's family slept with a view of Mḥayy and the surrounding countryside. Byzantine and Ottoman ruins and arches dot the surrounding hilltops, but this structure was built by a man from Hajaya's mother's tribe, the Gḏāh. Hajaya's father believed the building's foundations to be those of a Byzantine temple: he and Abū Maḥmūd al-Gēṣī, the Palestinian builder whom Fanāṭil hired to build the house, found earthenware jars full of intact but hollow eggshells, earthenware tools, glass cups, and an ancient millstone, said to be a grape press, as they excavated to lay the foundations. When Abū Maḥmūd one day disappeared without demanding his salary, the family found some scattered gold pieces and concluded that he had come across gold treasure and fled with it.



FIGURE 6

Two of the three rooms of Hajaya's childhood home. The door on the left housed the family's sheep and goats. The door on the right housed a storage room, used to store animal feed: barley, wheat and straw. It also served as a kitchen. To the right of this door there is another (not pictured), now closed off with rocks, where the family slept. During construction of the house, Fanāṭil discovered a perfectly good well, also closed over with rocks, just outside that door.



FIGURE 7

A view of the rear of Hajaya's childhood home in the village of Mḥayy. The rear wall has since collapsed, and a house built by Hajaya's brothers, rebar protruding from the roof, lies in the background.



FIGURE 8 *The perilous descent into Wādī al-Ḥisā*



FIGURE 9
Hajaya on a cliff overlooking the region of al-Harhērah in Wādī al-Ḥisā



FIGURE 10 *Farmland in Wādī al-Ḥisā overgrown with oleander bushes*



FIGURE 11
*Twenty-first-century badāwah: tea, cigarettes,
and an iPhone.*



FIGURE 12
Fanāṭil Bazī al-Hajaya, the poet's father



FIGURE 13
From left to right: Hajaya's wife's cousin Miṣṭiḥ Jallāl al-Zawāhīrah; Hajaya's cousin Muḥammad Ḥarb al-Makhāṣṣah; and Hajaya in downtown Amman in 1974 during a visit to a sick relative at the Italian Hospital.



FIGURE 14 *Hajaya in 1976*

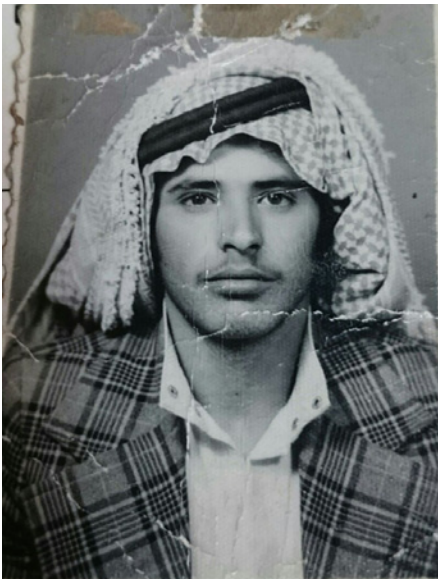


FIGURE 15 *Hajaya in 1977*



FIGURE 16 *Wādī al-Ḥisā*



FIGURE 17 *Wādī al-Ḥisā*



FIGURE 18
*Hajaya walking through
Wādī al-Ḥisā in May 2016*



FIGURE 19
*Hajaya (third from the
right) with his young son
Sāmīr at a majlis in 1979
in the region of Tlā'
al-Ṣabāḥ, north of
al-Ḥāmdīyyah*



FIGURE 20
Hajaya (center) with his relatives from the Makhālṣah family at a wedding in Wādī al-Abyaḍ in 1982



FIGURE 21
Hajaya at the Yarmouk Brigade's headquarters in the Rāshidiyyah camp outside of Baghdad on January 14, 1982



FIGURE 22
Selfie of Hajaya with his mentor, friend and fellow Bedouin poet 'Ali 'Abd al-Sā'ī at the Khāldiyyah poetry festival, organized by Sā'ī, in August 2016



FIGURE 23 *Hajaya and the Iraqi Minister of Culture Hammām 'Abd al-Khāliq 'Abd al-Ghafūr in Baghdad in 1998*



FIGURE 24 *Hajaya and Iraqi Colonel General Kāmil Yāsīn Rashīd, former Director General of the Ba'th Party Central Bureau and relative of Saddam Husayn, in Fallujah in 1999*



FIGURE 25
Hajaya and Iraqi Major General Latīf Maḥal Ḥamūd al-Sab'āwī, governor of Karbala province under Saddam Husayn, at the annual Bedouin Poetry Festival in Fallujah in 1999



FIGURE 26
Hajāya and his ten-year-old son Sāmīr in 1987



FIGURE 27
Hajāya and his sister's son Slēmān Šbēḥ al-Makhāḥṣah, who served with him in the Bahraini Royal Guard, in 1988.



FIGURE 28
Aḥmad Fanāṭīl al-Ḥajāyā, the poet's brother, during his service in the Jordanian Air Force. This photograph was taken in approximately 1978, a year before Aḥmad traveled to Fort Bliss in Texas for a year-long training program in 1979.



FIGURE 29

*From left to right:
Jordanian Prince Mir'ad
ibn Ra'd, Hajaya, and
Prince Zayd ibn Ra'd at a
celebration held by
then-Crown Prince
al-Ḥasan ibn Ṭalāl at the
ʿAmrah Castle in 1998 for
the Jordanian Desert
Forces, led then by Sharif
Fawwāz Zaban ʿAbdallāh.
At the celebration Hajaya
read some of his poems.*



FIGURE 30 *Hajaya with Libyan Colonel Muṣṭafā Ḥammādī during his visit to
Libya in 2006*



FIGURE 31 *A group picture featuring the Jordanian Camel Club on its visit to Muammar al-Qaddafi (center) at a military base outside of Sirte in 2006. Hajaya's son Hashim, wearing a colonel's uniform, stands between Qaddafi, whose left hand rests on his shoulder, and Hajaya (seventh face from the right).*



FIGURE 32 *Hajaya with Jordan's Prince Hāshim ibn al-Ḥusayn at a military base in al-Ḥmēmah in 2016. Hajaya performed his poem "Free Arabs' Revolt" to commemorate the completion of training exercises by the "Wolf Brigade 61," a special forces unit commanded by Prince Hāshim.*

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