Should Blood Blend with Milk

A History of Incitement to Vengeance in Arabic Poetry from Jahili Voice to Militant Jihadist Verse

DENA FAKHRO

ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND HISTORY

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Should Blood Blend with Milk

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A History of Incitement to Vengeance in Arabic Poetry from Jahili Voice to Militant Jihadist Verse

By

Dena Fakhro

BRILL

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The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at https://catalog.loc.gov
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2025010652

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 3050-6018
ISBN 978-90-04-72549-2 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-72550-8 (e-book)
DOI 10.1163/9789004725508

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For the arbitrators of conflict, the negotiators for peace, and the generations to come

And that's the borderline that poetry
Operates on too, always in between
What you would like to happen and what will –
Whether you like it or not.

SEAMUS HEANEY, *The Cure at Troy*

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PREFACE

Background to the Study

My first encounter with the Arabic "blood vengeance poem" was during research for a Master's degree, in 2012, when I puzzled over why I found it so familiar. On the one hand, I thought that this was due to its similarities with verse belonging to the western epic tradition, in which I was better schooled. As I enjoy the popular culture of my own time, it is more likely that structurally it struck me as similar to the lyrics of gangster rap music, whereas anecdotally I was also reminded of movies, in which a vengeful outlaw seeks redress for the societal norms that have failed him. At that time, what seemed most significant to me was the poem's vitality and adaptability. I wondered whether this was because "blood vengeance poetry" necessarily reflects a universal truth about the very human desire for revenge, or if individuals retaliate in a bid to emulate their respective heroic traditions. Concurrently, I despaired as Arab nations erupted collectively into a conflagration of conflict and retaliation, most of which was due to decades of simmering resentments and unresolved issues about poor governance and poverty. I had previously applied to join a humanitarian mission providing assistance in areas of conflict, but after a lengthy interview process I stumbled at the last hurdle. My unresolved quest to make a small and positive contribution may have been another reason why I decided to approach conflict from the direction of my research, albeit from the perspective of literature. What began with a research question about the origin and the meaning of a poetic genre, which this analysis will go on to define, has grown into a study about the ideology of blood vengeance, embarked upon through the gateway of the poem.

It is my hope that this book can add to the existing literature, by showing that poetry is an ideological tool that carries the classical message of blood vengeance into the modern period, by using repetition and also through broadcast media that incite to violence. It will argue that blood vengeance is an ancient ethos, which different groups in various countries have embraced over time, culminating most recently in the dogma of modern jihadist fighters. In referring to jihadist poetry, the analysis will categorically state that modern jihadist verse contains this same message. By making this connexion, the research can make a contribution to the analysis of "blood vengeance poetry" within its classical context and also to current discourses about motivational factors that influence jihadist fighters. I should like to qualify my research, by stating that blood vengeance is a universal phenomenon and not specific to Arabia.

It has also been institutionalised in Albania, Sicily, Papua New Guinea and Rwanda, to name but a few examples. As an artistic genre, ancient Greek and Anglo-Saxon epic poetry, contemporary music and cinema prolifically celebrate revenge.

D.F.
August 2024

Acknowledgements

Some of these research findings were submitted for examination as a doctoral thesis, in 2018. In bringing this project to fruition, I am indebted to my research supervisory team, my parents for their financial support and patience, my sister, Anisa, for sympathetic telephone calls during periods of isolation while I was writing this book, and the kindness of friends. At SOAS (University of London), I extend particular thanks to Professor Stefan Sperl, Dr Marlé Hammond, and Dr Gabriele vom Bruck. I am also grateful to my external examiners, Professor Robert Gleave (University of Exeter) and Professor Abir Hamdar (Durham University), for equipping me with fresh insights that I have developed in the revised edition. My teachers are many; Professor Geert Jan van Gelder helped me to translate a baffling piece of Classical Arabic poetry that did not appear in the original thesis, and Dr Elisabeth Kendall, a specialist in jihadist poetry, enabled me to navigate some of the most challenging terrain. I also wish to thank Mr Abdurraouf Oueslati, my editor at Brill, for his patience and for encouraging me to bring this project to a wider readership. Critical to its realisation, the blind peer review refined this work immeasurably, and I feel privileged to have been the recipient of expert tutelage and guidance from two anonymous contributors. I also thank Pieter te Velde and his production team for their diligence in generating the final product. This study includes hate speech that is targeted at particular identity groups and therefore I wish to forewarn the reader of offensive rhetoric that I in no way advocate, nor condone. Some of the ideas referred to in this work are also expressed in my journal article (Fakhro 2020) that is based upon the same body of research.

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Author's Note

To avoid unnecessary duplication, translation notes will only appear under a poem that is transmitted in its entirety, rather than when subsequently quoting individual verses in the analysis. Specific dictionaries have aided translation from Arabic to English, such as Edward Lane's *Arabic English lexicon* (1863) and Hans Wehr's *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1979). The former best conveys lexical usage in the Classical Arabic language. The latter, frequently dismissed as a non-academic dictionary, provides a good understanding of how the Arabic language is popularly understood by native speakers, today. In referring to Lane (1863), I have cross-referenced with Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab* (1997[689/1290]), al-Zamakhsharī's *Asās al-balāgha* (2012[d. 538/1143]) and also A de B Kazimirski's *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français* (1860). This book, *Should blood blend with milk*, provides a translation of Arabic source texts to facilitate the analysis but also so that they can be readily understood by non-Arabic speakers, or those who are not specialists in Classical Arabic poetry. Many translations are by well-known scholars, but when these are archaic, or the permissions for their reproduction has been difficult to obtain, or they are non-existent, then I have provided the translation instead. For words that do not have an English equivalent, the study transliterates (and italicises) Arabic terms, e.g. *qaṣīda*, but not "jihad". It uses the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*) transliteration guidelines, including vocalisations on Arabic names that have not been standardised, e.g. Abū Tammām. In quoting passages of verse, I transliterate according to the poetic metre. Because of the function of broadcast media in the communication of revenge narratives, this study refers to newspaper articles and internet sources as complement to more scholarly research, when citing anecdotal evidence.

Some Key Dates

AH	CE	Event
	–2100	The dying Humbaba, Guardian of the Cedars, utters a mighty oath of revenge in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet V
	494	al-Basūs incites the Banī Bakr to vengeance
	d. 620	Qays b. al-Khaṭīm avenges his father's and grandfather's deaths at the hands of the ʿAbd al-Qays
1	**622**	**The *Hijra***
35–41	656–661	The First Fitna
41–60	661–680	The Second Fitna
66–82	685–701	Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal al-Kalbī lampoons the Umayyads and the Qays
68–78	687–697	Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa goads his opponent into fighting
126–132	744–750	The Third Fitna
193–204	809–819	The Fourth Fitna
222/3	837/838	Abū Tammām presents "The Amorium Poem" to the Caliph, al-Muʿtaṣim
345/6	956/957	*Sayfiyya* composed towards the end of al-Mutanabbī's tenure at court
656	1258	The sacking of Baghdad by the Mongols
1183	1769	Kāẓim al-Azrī laments clan chief, ʿAbd Allāh b. Nuṣayf b. Shāwī
1235	1820	Asmāʾu dan Fodio praises her dead brother, Muḥammad Bello, and states his jihad
1334–1340	1916–1922	The end of the Ottoman Empire. The "Sykes-Picot" agreement redraws the map of the Near and Middle East
1367	1948	The *Nakba*
1387	1967	The *Naksa*
1395–1411	1975–1990	The Lebanese Civil War
1399	1979	The Iranian Islamic Revolution
1400–1408	1980–1988	The Iran-Iraq War, in Arabic, the First Gulf War
1411	1990–1991	Iraq invades Kuwait and the Second Gulf War
1422	2001	9/11
1424–1432	2003–2011	The Iraq War, or the Third Gulf War
1432	2011	The Arab Spring begins, a series of popular revolts that sweep across the Arab world that ignites the Syrian Civil War
1435	2014	Aḥlām al-Naṣr laments an ISIS jihadist soldier

General Introduction

On Writing a Revised Edition

This book is a revised edition of a study that began as a doctoral thesis. Written several years after it was first examined, it includes new chapters as well as updates of evolving information. It also seeks a wider readership than specialists in Classical Arabic poetry, so excluding some tangential details that formed part of the original work, while further elucidating less familiar concepts. Its objective is to bring a controversial form of Arabic poetry out of the shadows. The Arabic poetic tradition, like Shakespeare in the English-speaking world, is generally accepted as high culture while not being universally understood. Arabic is a complex language, even for native speakers who speak vernacular dialects that differ from both Modern Standard and Classical Arabic. Contemporary poets and literary scholars are justifiably protective of poetry's treasures, but, by caressing poems in eloquent prose and revering them, these custodians have unintentionally distanced verse from criticism. This is ironic, considering that poetry once belonged to an oral culture that embraced lampoon, and served as more popular media.

The analysis is a critique of a genre of poetry containing incitement to violence; problematic in societies with humanistic values, but celebrated within groups that regard cohesive force as a social imperative. It originates with some of the oldest poems in the Arabic language, meaning that the casting of long celebrated works in a less than flattering light may vex some, or result in the dismissal of such a view. Without challenge, militants will continue to emulate and exploit poetic incitement, in the classical canon, by claiming authenticity and legitimacy, in their own messaging. It should therefore be possible to appreciate literary merit, while pointing out shortcomings such as prejudicial statements, or indicating where classical social *mores* are incompatible with contemporary standards for behaviour. Some poems are downright objectionable and so, like a distasteful wine without plaudits, they will likely fade from view. Others need not be censored, nor dismissed, but they require context and warning. This book aims to provide both.

Research Questions, Themes and Structure

The reader can approach this book as either: (1) a chronological evolution of the Arabic "blood vengeance poem", from late antiquity until the present

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day; (2) an investigation into different types of Arabic poem, from Jahili to jihadi, which are united by the common theme of blood vengeance; or (3) a study of the cultural matrix that is blood vengeance. This layering will demonstrate that the "blood vengeance poem" has evolved over time, has been co-opted by other poetic genres, and has mapped out an ideology into language that is both encoded, recognisable and transferable. By deconstructing a culture of blood vengeance, in Arabic verse, the analysis will elaborate upon how blood vengeance was and continues to be a way of life, and should be understood as extending beyond a single retaliatory act. Chapter One will approach blood vengeance as an institution, by tackling the "how should we live" aspect. In other words, it examines blood vengeance from the dimension of economics, in a society for which resources are scarce, and survival depends upon either the cooperative exchange of goods and services or the exchange of blood. Within this trading mechanism, blood is a measure of human value that acts in lieu of currency when the kinship relationship breaks down. The Jahili "blood vengeance poem" best illustrates this basic horizontal exchange.

Chapters Two and Three will interrogate two other aspects of the institution, the "where do we come from" and "what do we believe in" dimensions of culture. The shedding of blood is not only confined to the vengeance rite but is also present in the sacrificial rite that the former often resembles. Therefore, the analysis will reveal how the blood vengeance theme is integrated into Jahili and early Islamic anecdotes that conflate retaliation with sacrifice. Early Arabic literature includes verse within descriptions of battle, generating both an understanding of the history of Arabia and a reinforcement of its creation myths. The revenge narrative is a popular subject in both folkloric and historical accounts that portray bloodshed as heroic, while show-casing collective pride in a glorious past. As a practice, the blood vengeance rite is a bloody libation, which in pre-Islamic history was paid by a worshipper to prolong survival in the earthly domain, and following the inception of Islam was spent to afford life in the hereafter. The spiritual dimension of retaliation is the pathway for ideological transformation of blood revenge from the Jahili Arabic terminology of *al-tha'r*, a term not used in the Qur'an (and very seldom in the "canonical" Hadith collections), to subsequent Islamic jihad. Ingraining blood revenge into a system of belief as ritual worship is a powerful means for the perpetuation of its practice. Because of this, the "blood vengeance poem" is a hymn, and the jihadist poem yet another form of testimony.

Chapters Four, Five and Six will further scrutinise the politics of blood vengeance and the "how should we live" aspect as lifestyles changed from simple subsistence in desert dwellings towards city structures with growing consump-

tion habits. Reciprocal exchange was more complicated in a hierarchal society, in which class division was an additional source of conflict. Consequently, within this environment, "blood vengeance poetry" became a propaganda tool of the establishment, by rallying support against a designated internal, or external threat. For those rejecting unjust patronage, it was also a form of protest against the ruling classes. During a period of rapid urbanisation and economic expansion, "blood vengeance verse" became highly differentiated, facilitating a vertical exchange between patron and subject, and manifesting in lampoon and sectarian poetry.

Chapters Seven and Eight will approach the communicative aspect of blood vengeance, the "how do we express and reflect" culture. Language is integral to the creation of an institution, to the communication of its ideology, and to its promotion between group members who in turn become prospective disciples and recruiting sergeants. Poetry is widely regarded as the Arabs' greatest articulation of culture, and therefore as a store of cultural values it occupies an assured and influential position. Although traditional and repetitive, the "blood vengeance poem" remains versatile and adaptable to minor changes in content. It is more digestible than a long manifesto, easier to remember, and can work in complement to prose, music and visual media. Therefore, as well as considering ideology, this part of the analysis will determine what conditions need to be fulfilled to enable a poem to incite violence, as opposed to functioning purely as artistic production.

Finally, the conclusions, Chapters Nine and Ten, will indicate potential uses for the study's findings, or how these can be further developed by other scholars working in the field. This book is not the first to analyse jihadist poetry, nor the last word. If it can facilitate a discussion on preventive strategies that can effectively undermine incitement, in verse, then it will have achieved its goal.

An Introduction to the Methodology

The methodology theorises blood vengeance as a multifaceted cultural construct that grows like a tree, and branches out into different chapters. Each chapter concerns a specific evolution of the "blood vengeance poem", and/or an individual theme concerning economics, history, religion, politics, or incitement. Each theme is more or less present in any given period, but, by way of an example, Chapter Seven will focus upon the role of incitement in more recent history because of its particular resonance with militant jihadist verse, whereas Chapter One will concentrate on the blood economy because it is fundamental to outlining the argument. As well as using western theory, the study

will employ the Jahili poem as a practical lens that can afford an ancient insight into blood vengeance. In so doing, Nadia Jamil's (2017) approach for decoding verse, when analysing ethical values in sixth-century Arabic poetry, serves as inspiration. The research tree is pragmatically rooted within a poetic anthology, the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām, that provides early examples of conflict and retaliation, in verse. Chapter One will extract different verses from this work as illustrations that help to define Bedouin values and other terminology pertaining to blood vengeance. It will also pick out recurrent motifs, so facilitating a definition of the "blood vengeance poem", and will thereafter test subsequent poetry for conformance to this design. The methodology will conclude with two prototypes of "blood vengeance poetry", these serving as the ultimate bases for comparison. In other words, the *Ḥamāsa* is a tool that proves that an early culture of blood vengeance existed, while acting as a relational platform for subsequent analysis.

Literature Review: A Summary

This book owes a debt to Suzanne Stetkevych's pioneering research in the field of Classical Arabic poetry, namely her study (1991) of the creative output of Abū Tammām, and her analysis (1993) of pre-Islamic ritual, this concluding that Classical Arabic poetry that contains the blood vengeance message is a sub-genre of the Jahili *qaṣīda* ("ode"), and is a mechanism for restoring tribal honour. The sacrificial quest, of which blood vengeance is derivative, was critical for the Jahili hero, who followed a tripartite ritual process of separation, journey and re-aggregation into his tribe over the course of his perilous lifetime. Stetkevych has applied Van Gennep's (1960) rites of passage paradigm to the poetic form, arguing that it is a reflection of the same process. The secondary literature has treated poetic messaging about "blood vengeance", and "militant jihadism", as generically distinct. The use of poetry as jihadist propaganda has been the subject of extensive research by Elisabeth Kendall, Robyn Creswell and Bernard Haykel, among others; Kendall (2015) has considered the use of poetry as part of al-Qa'ida's ideological weaponry, in Yemen, whereas Creswell and Haykel (2015) have reviewed the verse output of the so-called "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria" (ISIS). More recently, Kurstin Gatt (2022) has examined the modern jihadist poem, by looking at its strategic objective, noting that it is purposely manipulative, functioning even as a form of coercive control.

While the secondary literature has explained blood vengeance as a rite for honouring a lost relative, worshipping a deity, and ensuring the survival of kin,

it has not fully explored the political and economic circumstances that underpin blood feuds and so has largely confined the paradigm to the pre-Islamic period. This study will argue instead that blood vengeance can re-emerge in any period, and, through intertextual comparison, will connect the blood vengeance narrative into a continuum of conflict.

CHAPTER 1

Methodology

1.1 Argument

The central premise of this book is that the blood vengeance ritual complex is a tribal construct, its origins pre-date Islam, it is intimately connected to poetry, and it is four-tiered and cathartic. Blood vengeance is not a spontaneous act, but a calculation belonging to a social process that agents perform with due ceremony: (1) it can often begin with poetic incitement to violence as response to an injury to honour, which this analysis terms "blood vengeance poetry"; (2) homicidal bloodshed then follows, simulating the repayment of an economic debt to life; (3) this execution of violence leads to further rituals of triumph, or defeat, restoring a sense of tribal identity; and finally (4) another poetic ritual serves to close the blood vengeance cycle if honour has been restored, or to provoke its repetition if injury has escalated.

1.1.1 *Different Perspectives on Blood Vengeance*

As a practice, there are at least three theoretical positions on blood vengeance that are mutually compatible, but dependent on different perspectives of tribal conflict. One view, advocated by Jacob Black-Michaud (1975), draws upon Marcel Mauss' (2011[1954]) gift exchange theory, proposing that the blood feud is an aberration of ritual gift exchange so that tribes are obliged to trade in blood during war time as compensation for lost honour.[1] Another interpretation compares blood vengeance with sacrifice, both of these rituals serving as survival mechanisms; William Robertson Smith (2005[1894]) and James Frazer (2011[1906–1915]) have concurred that creation myths were man's early attempt to poeticise a dramatic cycle of life and death such that ritual sacrifice sustains tribal regeneration.[2] A third view, deriving from Marxist theory about class structure and the phenomenon of social dominance, is that tribal conflict has always reflected an eternal struggle between conflicting forces, while blood is a proxy for financial investment in the social institution enabling a tribe to survive.

1 See Section 1.4.5, on the "Blood Feud".

2 See Section 2.5.3, on "Blood Vengeance as Ritual Sacrifice".

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1.1.2 *Blood Vengeance, Liquidity and Capital*

During the act of blood vengeance, which in Arabic is called *al-tha'r* (and less commonly as *al-witr*/*al-watr*, *al-tira*, and *al-dhaḥl*), blood is currency, meaning that it can settle a score when one tribe is injured by another and claims due compensation. In such a case, blood acts as a proxy for honour, making it a tangible substance. This is not unique to Arabia. The notion of an "economy of blood" is present in another region that has a long history of blood feuds. The ancient statutory system of *Kanun*, which still governs communities in the northern Albanian highlands, has historically been regulated by gift and blood exchange. Within this structure, Ismail Kadare has directly compared the enactment of the blood feud to a capitalist master narrative, in his novel, *Broken April*. In a dialogue between two intellectuals, *Kanun* is the institution that uses "blood" as its "commodity" (Kadare 2003[1982]:194–195):

> "In other words, as I told you right at the beginning, often, behind the semi-mythical décor, you have to look for the economic component. Perhaps you'll accuse me of being cynical, but in our time, as with everything else, blood has been transformed into merchandise."
>
> "Oh, no," Bessian said. "That's a somewhat simplistic way of looking at things. Of course economics plays a part in many things, but it won't do to go too far in that direction. And on that subject, I'd like to ask if you aren't the person who wrote an article on the blood-feud that was banned by the royal censor."
>
> "No," the doctor said shortly. "I supplied the facts, but I was not the author."
>
> "I think I remember reading in that article the same phraseology – blood has been turned into merchandise."
>
> "That is an incontestable truth."
>
> "Have you read Marx?" Bessian asked. …
>
> "Blood, precious stones, cloth, it makes no difference. To me, it concerns a debt, and that is all."

At this point, it is necessary to go back in time to the Jahiliyya, a general term for the pre-Islamic period, for which the Jahili poems in this study coincide with approximately 500 to 622, of the Common Era, whereas the folktales are likely to be much older. In pre-Islamic Arabia, blood (honour) was a repository of value, functioning much like money.[3] The ancients believed that the primary

3 Blood is a more intimate substance than money, the sight of which arouses profound emotions and therefore this analogy is not exact.

function of blood that was shed during a retaliatory killing was its ability to expunge shame, but, because it bore some comparison with sacrificial blood, it also possessed the power to transform life and to prolong survival. Metaphorically, Jahili blood vengeance served as a blood transfusion: (1) blood for blood was the most basic exchange, for which retaliation enabled one tribe to reclaim its honour through another's disgrace; while (2) dismemberment of the enemy's body could cause to accrue some additional benefits. Because raiding was an important aspect of tribal life, the seizure of property (or its repossession) often accompanied the act of revenge, so increasing a tribe's portfolio of capital assets, this also representing honour.[4] Depending on the size of an insult to honour, tribes did not always take recourse to fighting and so compensation in material form was sometimes acceptable, instead of blood revenge, this "blood-wit" (*diya*, in Arabic) usually taking the form of livestock. An appropriate exchange for a life taken was often difficult to measure, a chieftain more valuable to his kin than a less senior tribal member, but, irrespective of whether it was made in blood or spoils, payment had to be of a measure that was prized and also had the potential to transform, or prolong the life of a family left behind. As a commodity of exchange for honour, the advantage of blood was that it possessed an intrinsic characteristic akin to a fetish, meaning an almost mystical quality that was both highly coveted and enabled it to function as a substitute for a life lost.

There are various definitions of what exactly a "fetish" constitutes, but most concur that it is an inanimate object invested with supernatural properties that are accepted as a matter of faith, rather than being visible to the naked eye, so that this object can mediate with an intangible omnipotent power. While he did not speak of blood as a fetish object *per se*, Charles de Brosses (the eighteenth-century writer) first used the word when detailing the worship of stones, effigies and animals, in late antiquity Arabia (and West Africa), describing this practice as fetish worship while providing a number of examples that were either directly worshiped, interceded with deities, or were assimilated into ritual pilgrimage (Morris and Leonard 2017:45–48, 77–91).[5] Karl Marx, an avid student of European Enlightenment thinkers, such as de Brosses, Hegel and Kant, then coined a derivative term in *Capital*, a work containing many classical references that belong to the western literary tradition. Marx (2008[1867–1894]:42–50) defined a "commodity fetish" as an objectified form of labour that

4 See Johnstone (2012), s.v. *ghazw*, meaning "raiding" as a redistributive activity. Raiding did not warrant blood vengeance provided that it did not cause death.

5 In the Jahiliyya, particular stones were an altar upon which to offer a blood libation, perhaps accounting for their sacred status (see Section 2.5.2).

assumes its own independent character in the markets where it is coveted and exchanged; what seems to occur is a process in which a desirable commodity can assume a mystical quality and so transcend the social value of the labour that has gone into its production. A "commodity fetish" usually refers to money, but what this study proposes is its valid application to the blood of men that Arabian tribes invested with honour, this acting as an early form of capital that was drawn upon, supplemented and transferred during times of conflict in the manner of a cooperative bank that contained each warring tribe's respective deposits. In the Jahiliyya, the institution of blood vengeance enabled society to function according to a given set of tribal codes. Those who upheld the codes were regarded as honourable and rewarded with prestige and wealth, whereas those who disobeyed lost honour and so were obliged to pay a price in blood and spoils.

At first glance, Marx's theory of capital as this applies to industrialised western economies may sound an inappropriate basis for analysing blood vengeance in pre-Islamic tribal Arabia. However, this lens is helpful for understanding exploitation that predates the popular notion of "capitalism" because Jahili poems about blood revenge also document a hierarchal struggle between tribes for social dominance. Fredric Jameson (1983[1981]:19–20) has posited that the struggle between man's desire for freedom and his necessary obligations for survival should not be confined to the industrial age because this condition is eternal, and therefore that historical texts are "unconsciously political", providing philosophical evidence of a master narrative that can only be explained by Marxism:[6]

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles; freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman – in a word, oppressor and oppressed – stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes.[7] It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity.

6 Extract used with permission of Taylor & Francis Informa UK Ltd – Books, from *The political unconscious: narrative as a socially symbolic act*, Fredric Jameson, 1983; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

7 See also Marx and Engels (1971[1848]:81).

Jameson's argument is a generalist one, rather than being culturally and chronologically specific. It also concurs with what is sometimes called "historical materialism", meaning that if social evolution can be mapped along a strait resembling a railway line that is punctuated by progressive stages of human development, then it is possible to connect a simple power struggle between two tribes with the relationship between "freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman" until a final revolution transforms class struggle into a just communist society that is more sophisticated, but ideologically compatible with a point of origin, i.e. the ancient cooperative, the hospitality contract, the gift-exchange agreement that existed before all the troubles began.[8]

There are two further theories by William Pietz (2000[1999]) and David McNally (2011) that also argue for a Marxist dimension in tribal conflict, although they pertain to nineteenth and twentieth-century West Africa, helping to explain the concept of pay-back as this relates to blood. Pietz (2000:61–62) has opined that the Marxist "commodity fetish" is the means by which different societies have historically translated human value into material form to facilitate a means of exchange, or the settlement of a debt. By drawing comparison between nineteenth-century West African sacrificial rituals and imperial capitalism as well as between tribal and civil law, he has explained "fetishism" to be a religious and economic institution, whereby value is derived from commodification (or destruction) of the human body as the means of paying off a debt, and that within this institution there are circumstances for which sacrificial blood is comparable with money as a measure of human value (Pietz 2000:56–57). McNally (2011:140–143), whose argument is most pertinent to the chapters that deal with modernity, has alternatively stated that: (1) the accumulation of capital in the industrial age has really been an economic struggle for economic and cultural dominance; (2) this has been intrinsically exploitative; and (3) poetically, this can be compared with cannibalism and vampirism, in examples of literature that range from nineteenth-century Romantic and Gothic tales to post-colonial, sub-Saharan African folklore. He has situated war as a weaponised form of capitalism reflecting an intense competition for scarce resources, and has described colonialism as yet another manifestation of capitalism (McNally 2011:143, 222–223). Like Marx, he has argued "capital" is the "vampire", rather than the individual who chases after it, suggesting that it is the institution of blood vengeance that is bloodthirsty, instead of the avenger who can become its victim. McNally's focus upon the importance of blood-sucking, in folklore, will also be relevant for Chapter Two.

8 See Section 1.4.3, "Capital", for Marx and Engels exposition of tribal ownership.

1.1.3 *Blood Vengeance, Ideology and Language*

The trajectory of this study will demonstrate that the blood vengeance message is starkest in poems that combine many explicit words, or images for "revenge", "biting" and "drinking" (i.e. consumption), "body parts" and "blood".[9] Subsequent chapters will also consider the importance of "weaponry" as a "blood vengeance motif". What this means is that Jahili poets first codified the tribal ideology of blood vengeance, in verse, their "blood vengeance poetry" serving to communicate and spread awareness about how fighting men should conduct themselves during a conflict.

This position is not unique. Steven Caton (1990:267) has assumed that pre-Islamic poetry is the earliest antecedent of twentieth-century Yemeni poetry. In his ethnographic study of a north Yemeni tribe, he has argued "tribalism" is a form of ideology, whereas poetry typically enshrines tribal codes, meaning that poetry is a communication tool that "helps to constitute tribal ideology" (Caton 1990:26, 264). By using Marx's theory of culture and language, Caton (1990:260–264) has proposed that: (1) a dominant class imposes its own ideology upon an underclass, while tribalism fits this form of ideology, or cultural system of codes; (2) an ideology is a "collection of signs"; (3) ideology and communication are intimately connected, they are created and understood through dialogue between internal and external signs, and poetry as a genre of speech is a communication tool which can create ideology and also become a store of cultural values; (4) tribal Arabic poetry exhibits structural parallelism, this acting subliminally to drive the point home; and (5) if poetry is a speech act, then verse is an integral and inseparable part of the social institution, or cultural practice that it facilitates.[10] Put more simply, Reynold Nicholson (1930[1907]:72) has expressed a similar idea about the function of pre-Islamic poetry, stating that the poetic ideal is the glue that binds together a "national community of sentiment" just as blood ties forge tribal networks.

1.2 Evolution of Chapters

Most verse selections, in the first three chapters, derive from one source, the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām, that is both a foundation document for the study and

9 See Table 1, in Section 1.3, for the "Blood Vengeance Motif" test.

10 In presenting his arguments, Caton has referred to Marx and Engels (1970[1846]), Volosinov (1986[1929]), Bakhtin and Medvedev (1985[1928]), Peirce (1932), Jakobson (1981[1968]) and Austin (1962).

a reflection of the tribal value system from which blood vengeance has sprung and continues to perpetuate. This chapter, on the methodology, discusses the nature of the *Ḥamāsa* before it considers recurrent terminology, using verse to demonstrate how such terms are poetically encoded. Finally, it analyses two poems from the *Ḥamāsa* that reflect an ethos rooted in the Jahiliyya. Locating each poem in chronological time is difficult because they were composed orally, but it is likely that *Ḥamāsiyya* 176 precedes *Ḥamāsiyya* 37, the latter emerging close to the foundation of Islam. Whether these poems are historically accurate or folkloric is difficult to ascertain. Certainly, *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, a retrospective prosimetrum account of pre-Islamic history, confirms some of the battles they allude to. Unfortunately, these records do not provide reliable information either about the excesses of war or about which tribes were culpable for which insults, but they are useful for what they reveal about the rules of engagement in battle.

Chapters Two and Three will go on to provide an early literary history of blood vengeance. Chapter Two will explore two particular aspects of the argument, blood vengeance as gift exchange and blood vengeance as ritual sacrifice from the perspective of pre-Islamic folklore and historical *akhbār*. This is because early examples of "blood vengeance poetry" accompany oral narratives that both describe epic battles and provide some historical context that is otherwise undocumented. Chapter Three will extend the historical argument to the early Islamic period, so demonstrating how the institution of blood vengeance transforms into the poetry of inheritance, the poetry of rebellion and the poetry of deterrent. It will also highlight how the tribal blood feud mutates into sectarianism, class conflict and jihad.

Chapters Four and Five will establish how "blood vengeance poetry" became thoroughly absorbed within the Abbasid state apparatus, rendering it indistinguishable from the poetry of patronage. Principally, they will review two poems by Abū Tammām and one from al-Mutanabbī, all the while exploring intertextuality with other verse. Moreover, they will elucidate upon how early tribal gift exchange could transform to accommodate an increasingly hierarchal society, for which kinship allegiance was political, rather than genealogical, and "weaponry" is highly significant as a "blood vengeance motif".

Chapter Six will serve as a bridge between the classical and the modern world of poetry and storytelling, its purpose to demonstrate both continuity and rupture, by citing the perpetuation of a traditional poetic form while assessing the impact of political decline, technological revolution and colonisation upon the poetic contest between one group and another. In terms of poetry, the analysis will focus upon Andalusian poetry and eighteenth-century Iraqi sectarian verse, but the chapter will also indicate the geographical spread

of nascent jihadist poetry in the Arabic language, this ranging from nineteenth-century Nigeria to twentieth-century Egypt. Moreover, this chapter will introduce a poetic innovation of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, demonstrating that rap protest poetry, *al-muqāwama bi-l-kalām*, is a relative of lampoon that has ample scope for the creation of counter-narratives to the "blood vengeance poem", the examples cited expressly not violent, but nevertheless uncomfortable listening for incompetent authorities, the rappers, the inheritors of a poetic tradition that they understand, while wielding its power wisely and using verse to serve as constructive dialogue and not for destructive ends. Chapter Six will also assess the adaptation of folklore in the media age, through the use of new forms of storytelling, the novel, film and television.

Chapters Seven and Eight will examine "blood vengeance poetry" in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, by exploring its incarnation as jihadist poetry that provides a cultural aesthetic for militant Islamist organisations. In particular, these chapters will examine one poem in the neoclassical style by Maḥmūd Ghunaym, two elegies by the (so called) Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) poet, Aḥlām al-Naṣr, an anonymous jihadist *nashīd* that is commonly sung by militants involved in different conflicts, and an anonymous al-Qaʿida poem. Much of this poetry comes from jihadist websites. Earlier chapters discuss poetic language as this relates to conveyance of the blood vengeance ideology, but these later chapters will scrutinise theories about incitement because the poems under review correlate to media accounts of violent acts.

In the book as a whole, what binds most, but not all of the poems is their incorporation of "blood vengeance motifs" and their description of conflicts that are comparable with the tribal blood feud. The study sources verse from distinct historical periods to demonstrate thematic continuity despite their separation in time. It also chooses poems that conform to the classical form, and whose quality has either been highly endorsed (when they belong to the tradition) or is emulative of the tradition (when they belong to the modern period). Another criteria for their selection is to disorient the reader, the poems appearing to transcend their chronology should background information be absent. Across the following chapters, "blood vengeance" is an umbrella term for various forms of conflict including the localised blood feud, but also extending to wider-reaching war. When retaliation is the motivation for conflict, verse frequently conveys blood vengeance as a dialogue of varying pitch. So, for example: (1) a blood feud pits tribe against tribe; (2) a sectarian conflict positions sect against sect; (3) a conflict of empires is a confrontation between religions, ideologies and vast territory; and (4) anti-colonial resistance is a land struggle between the nation possessing and the nation possessed. The core method is based upon textual comparison over fifteen hundred years, using

verse that fighters have recited orally as battle poetry at each extreme. This is not an ethnographic account that is location and audience specific and so one limitation of its approach is a lack of statistical data that can measure the direct impact of incitement upon a target group, either because of distance in historical time or because the author has not lived among jihadist fighters. Consequently, it has been unable to gauge the immediate response to poetry transmitted *in situ*, or around the camp-fire so to speak. Notwithstanding this detachment from an oral reality, the study's position is that oral and written compositions can also bear witness, and therefore it has been able to compare a trajectory of poems so as to assess their impact upon the collective memory of an event that has been inherited by subsequent generations. The task is not to prove that any particular poem has definitely prompted a war, but to argue that a powerful message, which a celebrated artistic form has sufficiently repeated throughout history (this assumed to pertain to real events), has become a cultural inheritance that has gone on to influence future conflicts.

1.3 Platform for Classifying the "Blood Vengeance Poem"

The first three chapters, of this study, will cite examples of poetry from the *Ḥamāsa* anthology of Ḥabīb b. Aws al-Ṭā'ī, better known by his *kunya*, Abū Tammām.[11] Also a feted Abbasid poet, who died in 231/846, Abū Tammām compiled the *Ḥamāsa* in the first half of the third/ninth century, its collation coinciding with his journey across what is currently Iraq and Iran (Stetkevych 1991:282). The poems, or *ḥamāsiyyāt* (s. *ḥamāsiyya*) contained therein could possibly be fragments of lost, or longer poems by a wide range of poets, some of them unknown, but all assumed to have lived in the Jahili, Umayyad and early Abbasid periods. For example, *Ḥamāsiyya* 37 is abridged from a poem that is twice the length, the longer appearing in the Appendix. However, common occurrence of a metrical feature called *kharm*, which is the suppression of a short syllable at the beginning of a verse and is a distinguishing feature that usually only occurs within opening lines, suggests that many *ḥamāsiyyāt* were composed as independent units, meaning they are not extracts. To a greater or lesser degree, all poems in the work are bound together by the common thread of *ḥamāsa*, i.e. the "fighting spirit" required to uphold Bedouin values.[12] While

11 A *kunya* is often a "teknonym", but it can also be a "nickname", or a *nom de guerre*.

12 See Lane (1863), s.v. *ḥamāsa*, meaning "courage, defence and conflict", but, within the literary tradition, it may also mean "an anthology of poetry extolling tribal virtues and valour".

Abū Tammām considered different poetic themes in his *Ḥamāsa*, these lending themselves to ten chapters, this study draws mainly from *Bāb al-ḥamāsa*, which is by far the longest chapter, *Bāb al-marāthī* ("lamentations") and *Bāb al-hijāʾ* ("lampoon"). The other *abwāb* ("chapters") concern: *al-adab* ("manners"); *al-nasīb* ("amatory longing"); *al-madīḥ wa-l-aḍyāf* ("praise and guests"); *al-ṣifāt* ("descriptions"); *al-sayr wa-l-nuʿās* ("journeying and lethargy"); *al-mulaḥ* ("witticisms", or "pleasantries"); and *madhammat al-nisāʾ* ("censure of women"). The four chapters, last mentioned, are very short.

There are many other celebrated collections of poetry that document the oral poetic tradition of the Jahiliyya, such as the *Muʿallaqāt*, the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* and the *Aṣmaʿiyyāt*. Unlike these other selections that comprise lengthy polythematic odes, a *ḥamāsa* collection is instead a selection of shorter verses, either abridged or composed as *qiṭaʿ* (s. *qiṭʿa*),[13] meaning "short poems in mono-rhyme" that contain a distinct theme, or a constrained number of themes. The advantage of the *qiṭʿa* form over the *qaṣīda*, at least as far as expressing "fighting spirit" is concerned, is that it is intensively expressive, a feature that was seized upon by early Islamic fighters, like the Kharijites (Badawi 1980:6). The *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām is the first to organise its selections by *gharaḍ*,[14] to be selective and to celebrate lesser known poets. Consequently, subsequent anthologies, categorised by *gharaḍ*, are also called *ḥamāsāt*. Some of these collections are attributed to al-Buḥturī, al-ʿAskarī and al-Shantamarī, among others.

Al-Tibrīzī (2000[d. 502/1109]), the medieval commentator, has edited the principal *ḥamāsiyyāt* which this study will cite, i.e. the verses from the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām that both describe and inspire fighting spirit, but editorial variations will sometimes appear in the footnotes, most usually by al-Marzūqī (2003[d. 421/1030]). The analysis will also look for narrative context in historical literary compendiums, such as *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih 2013[d. 328/940]), *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (al-Iṣfahānī 2002[d. 356/967]), and *Ayyām al-ʿArab* (Abū ʿUbayda 1987[d. 210/825]). While commentaries and translations are supportive resources, they frequently rely upon the dominant interpretations of the *Ḥamāsa*, by al-Tibrīzī and al-Marzūqī. This study's task is not to dispute the opinion of experts but to offer additional meaning to lines of verse, while supporting the premise that these poems reflect human life as part of an economy.

See also Wehr (1979), s.v. *taḥmīs*, as a literary genre it is associated with "the process of filling someone with *ḥamāsa*".

13 See comment about *kharm*, above.

14 See Hammond (2018), s.v. *gharaḍ*, meaning "the object, aim, intention, or purpose of poetry, its genre".

TABLE 1 Blood vengeance motifs

Explicit images or words	**Percentage of poems in *Bāb al-ḥamāsa***
Blood vengeance: sacrifice, killing, death, blood money	42%
Biting, eating, grinding	17%
Drinking, irrigating	27%
Body parts, mutilation, dismemberment	45%
Blood, wound	42%

Even though the blood vengeance theme is most evident in *Bāb al-ḥamāsa*, that concerns conflict, it also infuses the *Ḥamāsa* anthology as an integrated whole because fighting is essential for the defence of tribal identity (Stetkevych 1991:354–355). Chapter One will develop two Jahili poems from this *bāb*, so demonstrating the fundamental structural nature of the blood vengeance theme, in poetry. In order to recommend constancy of this theme across the entire *Bāb al-ḥamāsa*, which contains 261 poems, or fragments of verse,[15] Table 1 provides a conservative estimate, also detailing consistent use of particular imagery and vocabulary that relates to blood.[16]

Incidentally, al-Buḥturī's (2007[d. 284/897]) *Ḥamāsa*, referred to earlier, contains many shorter chapters than Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa*. These exhibit fragments of brief poems, each lending itself to a specific motif, such as in Chapter 10: *Fī-mā qīl fī-l-taḥrīḍ ʿalā-l-qatl bi-l-thaʾr wa-tark qabūl al-diya*, or "What has been said about incitement to blood vengeance, and abandonment of acceptance of the blood-wit" (18 pieces); Chapter 11: *Fī-mā qīl fī-l-imtināʿ min al-ṣulḥ*, or "What has been said about the refusal of peace" (11 pieces); and Chapter 13: *Fī-mā qīl fī idrāk al-thaʾr wa-l-ishtifāʾ min al-ʿaduww*, or "What has been said about the realisation and the satiation of blood vengeance from the enemy" (9 pieces). By way of an example, Chapter 10 opens with two verse selections by Kabsha b. Maʿdī Karib, the first example comprising two verses of incitement from a well-known poem that will feature again (al-Buḥturī 2007:84–85):[17]

15 The entire *Ḥamāsa* work contains between 881 and 895 poems, depending on source. Abū Tammām's smaller anthology, *Kitāb al-Waḥshiyyāt* (also known as *al-Ḥamāsa al-ṣughrā*), has an additional 199 poems in the chapter on *Ḥamāsa*.

16 Section 1.1.3 first identified these "blood vengeance motifs".

17 Section 1.4.6, on "Blood", refers to this particular *ḥamāsiyya*, a *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mī*, in the *ṭawīl* metre. It is *Ḥ*53/52, in Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa*.

***Ḥ*53**

وَأَرْسَلَ عَبْدُالله إِذْ حَانَ يَوْمُـهُ إِلى قَوْمِهِ أَلا تَعَلُّوا لَهُـمْ دَمِـي
وَلا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُمْ إِفَالًا وَأَبْكُرًا وَأُنْزَلُ فِي بَيتٍ بِصَعْدَةَ مُظْلِمِ

When his time had come
‘Abd Allāh sent word to his clan
“Do not accept the bloodwite
for my blood.
“Do not accept from them
camels small and young.
While I am left in Ṣaʿdah
in a black abode.

Translation by Stetkevych (1993:193)[18]

1.4 Terminology in Context

As well as motifs, the “blood vengeance poem” is underpinned by certain social pillars, upon which this section proceeds to elaborate, namely: (1) the Tribe; (2) Honour; (3) Capital; (4) Debt; (5) the Blood Feud; as well as wider associations concerning the liquids (6) Blood; (7) Milk; and (8) Wine.[19]

1.4.1 *Tribe*

The simple definition of a “tribe” is a group of people who derive from a common ancestor, share an ethical system of codes, live in a territory with a border, and organise themselves according to a simple hierarchy, in which men of equal rank bear equal responsibility. However, the term is also a socially imagined construct that belies the complexity of local relations and wider geopolitical factors (Eickelman 2016:223). Some anthropologists have suggested that tribal hierarchy follows a segmentary pattern which is binary such that one common ancestor spawns two male heirs, four male grandchildren and eight male great-grandchildren, while any feuds are resolved among peers in a particular generational grouping (Meeker 1979:184). E. Evans Pritchard (1949) pioneered

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19 Water as liquid will be discussed, in Section 1.5.1.

much work on segmentary theory, this relating to Bedouin tribes, but E. Gellner (1981), Michael Meeker (1979) and Black-Michaud (1975) also adapted and revised his conclusions. More recent theorists have found this framework far too static, suggesting that the notion of a "tribe" is more fluid and adaptable. In the contemporary Yemeni context, for example, Shelagh Weir (2007:4–5) has opined that tribes are small political entities that negotiate with larger state actors. Moreover, tribal space is not always delineated by geography, but is instead determined by economic considerations, which in turn influence migratory patterns, like nomadism, or urbanism (Cherstich 2014:419). In Saudi Arabia, Nadav Samin (2015:5) has situated the definition somewhere between genealogy and more practical considerations. Notwithstanding modern living arrangements, in rural and more traditional societies, the relationship between the "tribe" and its "abode" is straightforward and similar to the Jahili definition, which verse 11, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 249, well expresses:[20]

***Ḥ*249**

لِكلِّ أُناسٍ مِنْ مَعَدٍّ عِمَارَةٍ عَرُوضٌ إلَيْهَا يَلْجَؤُونَ وَجَانِبُ

All men from Maʿadd belong to a tribe // with routes of access to get to them, when seeking refuge, and a tract of land

This translation of the verse is based upon al-Tibrīzī's (2000) more expansive commentary upon the vocabulary:

العِمَارَة: دون القبيلة، وهو بدل من أُناس، وأصل العَرُوض الطَّريقُ، يُقال: أخذ في أعاريضَ مختلفةٍ: أي طُرُقٍ مختلفةٍ، والمراد ههنا الظَّهر الذي يستندون إليه ويعوّلون في الخطوب عليه، ولجأت إلى كذا: فزعت إليه.

al-ʿimāra: less than a "tribe", an alternative to "men"; whereas the origin of *al-ʿarūḍ* is "the road", it is said: he took different routes, or different roads; what is meant here is the household that they lean against for support,

20 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). This is *Ḥ*248, in al-Marzūqī (2003). Al-Akhnas b. Shihāb al-Taghlibī composed the verses in the *ṭawīl* metre, ending in *-bū*. The *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* (al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī 1964[d. 168–178/784–794]) includes a longer version that Alan Jones (2011:373–426) has analysed, calling this *Qaṣīda bāʾiyya*, in his anthology. Jones (2011:379) has also provided an alternative translation of this verse.

and depend upon during adversities; while sought refuge in something means fled towards it.

Because poetry is able to delineate territory and descent, in verse, nineteenth and twentieth century Yemeni tribes have continued to find it a particularly useful vehicle for cementing tribal identity (Dresch 1993[1989]:80).

1.4.2 *Honour*

"Honour" is the ability of an individual, or a collective to uphold social, or tribal values. Within this umbrella term, there are subcategories of honour: *nasab* is "ancestral honour" and renown that is inherited; whereas *ḥasab* is an additional component that is offered in a meritocratic manner to an individual, and is based upon his "noble deeds" and open-handed behaviour.[21] The latter category can be awarded, like a prize, in a series of competitions with other individuals and tribes (Caton 1990:27–28). In more traditional societies, the nature of these competitions typically includes gift exchange, war and speech so that the most honourable person is also the most generous, the most courageous and the most eloquent. In twentieth-century northern Yemen, because of the hierarchal structure of the tribe, equals have usually been pitched against each other in accordance with their tribal status, while the notion of an honourable, or ignoble inheritance (that has been passed from father to son) has meant that some tribesmen have been perceived as being born more noble than others (Caton 1990:34). In the Jahili case, although competition sometimes led to an excess of aggression, the noble ones were commonly expected to exhibit self-control and forbearance, and not to degenerate into ignoble tyranny. Verse 3, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 15, explains this concept of "inherited honour",[22] while verses 6 and 7 convey the accumulation and loss of honour over the course of a battle:

***Ḥ*15**

3	إِنّا بَنِي نَهْشَلٍ لا نَدَّعِي لأَبٍ	عَنْـهُ ولا هُـوَ بالأَبْنَـاءِ يَشْرِينَـا
6	إِنَّا لَنُرْخِصُ يومَ الرَّوعِ أَنْفُسَنَـا	وَلَوْ نُسامُ بِهَا في الأَمْنِ أُغْلِينَا
7	بيضٌ مفارِقُنـا تَغْلـي مَرَاجِلُنـا	نَأْسُـو بأَمْوَالِنـا آثـارَ أَيْدِينَـا

21 See Bearman (2012), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. *nasab* and *ḥasab*.

22 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). This is *Ḥ*14, in al-Marzūqī (2003). Bashāma b. Ḥazn composed the *nūniyya*, ending in *-nā*, in the *basīṭ* metre. Charles Lyall (1986[1930]), the translator, has numbered it as "Poem XI".

3 Sons of Nahshal are we: no father we claim but him,
nor would he sell us for any other sons.
6 Cheap do we hold our lives when the day of dread befalls;
but if we should set them for sale in peace, they would cost men dear.
7 White are our foreheads and worn: for ever our cauldrons boil:
we heal with our rich store the wounds our hands have made.[23]

Translation by Lyall (1986:18–19)

No definition of honour would be complete without reference to *murūʾa* (also *muruwwa*), which are "manly virtues" that forge kinship alliances between relations and allies, and an opposite feeling of rancour towards enemies. *Murūʾa* is an evolutionary and holistic concept of what constitutes virtuous behaviour in a man, and is not confined to the Bedouin ideal. In the Jahiliyya, according to Farès et al. (2012), *murūʾa* was more quantifiable, including physical attributes well suited to defensive capability and social stature, whereas after the foundation of Islam, greater weight was given to moral rectitude and self-restraint, and within urbanised society, polite sophistication became an added characteristic of the male exemplar. At least in their Jahili context, *murūʾa* includes valour, loyalty, generosity (hospitality), chivalry towards women, an obligation towards blood revenge, and noble lineage (Nicholson 1930:82–100). Within a man's character, their development is necessary for counteracting the vicissitudes of fate, an ever present threat to any tribe's survival (Jamil 2017:93).

In the extreme, these virtues are related to *al-ʿaṣabiyya*, a form of collective pride that means an "intense feeling of tribal loyalty". This form of chauvinism is highly effective for building unity among kinship members, but can also be problematic because of its destructive capability towards others. During blood vengeance, in particular, *al-ʿaṣabiyya* is lethal in its ferocity, when the collective will entirely sublimates the individual self, and pride that is based on talk is meaningless should action not follow proud speech (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān 1984:44, 236–252). For example, the last two verses, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 37, demonstrate a ferocious loyalty to kin:[24]

23 According to Lyall, this verse means that the tribe settles its own honour debts by "blood-wit", rather than "blood", because rivals fear antagonising them.

24 See Section 1.5.2 for the complete version of *Ḥ*37. It is a *hamziyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-ʾ*ahā*, in the *ṭawīl* metre.

***Ḥ*37**

8 مَتَى يَأْتِ هَذَا الموتُ لا تُلْفَ حاجةٌ لِنَفْسِيَ إلاَّ قَدْ قَضَيْتُ قَضَاءَهَا

9 ثـأرتُ عَدِيًّـا والخَطِيـمَ فلـمْ أُضِـعْ ولايـةَ أشْيـاخٍ جُعِلـتُ إزَاءَهَـا

8 When death comes, there will be no more need // left for me that I have not fulfilled

9 I avenged ʿAdī and Khaṭīm and so I was not made to forfeit // the noble ancestors' legacy, I was made its vigorous executor

Ibn Khaldūn (2010[777–781/1375–1379]:1:109–111), the philosopher, sociologist and historian, noted in his *Muqaddima* that *al-ʿaṣabiyya* is a "community bond" felt most intensely among nomadic communities that need to defend themselves due a scarcity of resources, but which also varies in pitch according to the degree of civilisation and cycles of decline and fall, also arguing that tribal equilibrium is a situation for which one tribe's chauvinism is equally pitched against another's, resulting in a temporary status quo.[25]

1.4.3 *Capital*

Although honour is an intangible quality (once believed to be distilled in blood), and is based upon a community's perception of past and present virtue, its most visual manifestation is the ability to own land, property and livestock. Tribesmen have been rural farmers because land and property give a degree of measurable "value" to honour, while land rights have sometimes been forfeited if a wealthy individual has been perceived to be unworthy (Caton 1990:33). The country of Yemen provides a useful lens on a traditional society in transition because "land use for cultivation" continues to be called *māl* (pl. *amwāl*), an appellation consistent with its pre-Islamic application (Dresch 1993:43, 81). Classical translators have more usually interpreted its contextual meaning as "livestock", but this is because the word describes any assets that make a material contribution to a tribe's wealth. Within the tribal construct, the link between material wealth and honour typically distinguishes landowners from their protégés, separates the tribe from enemies, and is hierarchal. It also demonstrates a form of "pre-capitalism", here meaning an early system of "asset ownership", which Marx and Engels (1970:43–44) have defined as follows:[26]

25 See also Ibn Khaldūn (2005[1967]:108).

26 From *The German ideology*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, translated by C.J. Arthur; ©

> The first form of ownership is tribal ownership [*Stammeigentum*]. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture .... The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.

This is the "historical materialism" argument alluded to by Jameson (1983:19–20), which compares early tribal society with a class system that feudal, industrial and financial ages have subsequently perpetuated.[27] Unsurprisingly then, an ancient Arabic term that once conveyed wealth as property and livestock has gone on to indicate financial assets; in Modern Standard Arabic, *māl* means "capital", and *al-ra'smāliyya* "capitalism". Within the modern context, the correlation between honour and wealth is less distinct. For mid-twentieth-century Yemen, Gabriele vom Bruck (2005:259–262) has observed that noble behaviour remained closely associated with generosity, the cultural production of poetry and a language of honour, whereas in the latter half of the same century conspicuous displays of consumption and wealth increasingly competed with traditional values, resulting in increased social inequality. By comparison, in his examination of the Negev Bedouin, Gideon Kressel (1996:158) has suggested "honour" is the highest form of "capital", while in the modern age economic power is sometimes a measure of tribal status.

In the Jahiliyya, at least, the relationship between capital and honour was reasonably straightforward. *Ḥamāsiyya* 161 is an interesting example for what it reveals about how an honourable tribe measures its wealth and budgets during times of hardship.[28] The final line sums up the tribe's financial penury divided into three payments:[29]

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27 See Section 1.1.2.

28 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). This is *Ḥ*160, in al-Marzūqī (2003). ʿAmr b. Kulthūm composed the *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lī*, in the *ṭawīl* metre.

29 The translation refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) interpretation:

كأنه قال: أموالنا أثلاث: ثُلثٌ نشتري به الخيل، وثُلثٌ نشتري به أقواتنا، وثُلثٌ نعطيه في الدِّيَات

***Ḥ*161**

ثَلاثَةُ أثْلاثٍ: فَأثْمَانُ خَيْلِنا وأَقْوَاتُنا، وَمَا نَسُوقُ إِلَى القَتْلِ

Three-thirds: for the estimated value of our horses // and our food, and what we hand over [in the payment] of blood-wits

Al-Marzūqī (2003) found another version of the same verse, with the ending *al-ʿaqlī*, instead of *al-qatlī*, thereby avoiding repetition of the rhyme word, in the opening verse (not cited here). Contextually, the word *ʿaql* means "blood-wit", instead of its usual definition, i.e. "intellect, intelligence, or reason".[30] According to al-Tibrīzī (2000), each of these categories of wealth, that are "horses", "food" and a fund for "blood-wits", are capital assets and so necessary for a tribe's survival.

1.4.4 *Debt*

When an honour slight leads to a feud, the nature of compensation for the insult is directly related to the scarcity of the prize stolen (Black-Michaud 1975:205). The two previous poems show that, in the past, when an injury was not grievous, or if a tribe was afraid of taking vengeance against another because it was clearly outnumbered, then sometimes a blood-wit could suffice. Be that as it may, verses 6 and 7, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 131,[31] convey that honour remains a man's most prized possession; even if many treat it like just another commodity, he who trades in it ultimately loses his social standing in society:

***Ḥ*131**

6 وَلَسْتُ وإِنْ قُرِّبْتُ يومًا بِبائِعٍ خَلاقِي وَلا دِينِي ابتغاءَ التَّحَبُّبِ

7 ويَعْتَدُّهُ قَوْمٌ كَثِيرٌ تِجارَةً ويَمْنَعُنِي مِنْ ذَاكَ دِينِي ومَنْصِبِي

6 I would not, even if one day I should be made an associate, deal in // my portion of righteousness nor my [social] obligation, in the craving of affection[32]

30 See Section 1.4.2. Incidentally, both al-Marzūqī and al-Tibrīzī have compared the meaning of this verse to "we heal with our rich store the wounds our hands have made", i.e. the second hemistich of verse 7, of *Ḥ*15 (*Ḥ*14 in al-Marzūqī), i.e. *naʾsū bi-amwālinā āthāra aydīnā*.

31 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). This is *Ḥ*130, in al-Marzūqī (2003). Al-Baʿīth b. Ḥurayth composed this *bāʾiyya*, ending in *-bī*, in the *ṭawīl* metre.

32 Al-Marzūqī's version, of verse 6, has *qawmī*, instead of *dīnī*.

7 For there are many people who trade [in honour] // but what prevents me from that is my [social] obligation and my excellent origin

Commerce lends itself well to a comprehensive understanding of honour and "debt", this particular poem employing terms referring to "dealing" (or "selling") and "trading" in honour as well as *dīn*, here meaning an obligation that is either a "religious duty" or a "social custom". *Dīn* is a complex word, sometimes associated with *dayn*, i.e. a form of "debt".[33] In other words, what has prevented the poet from selling his own honour is his debt to society. This approach is consistent with Jamil's (2017:191, 330) treatment of the term as it pertains to Jahili ethics, comparing the relationship between *dīn* and *dayn* to a system of checks and balances. Moreover, these verses bear comparison with Q[2:16] that cautions against trading in righteousness for ignominy:[34]

أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُاْ الضَّلَالَةَ بِالهُدَى فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُواْ مُهْتَدِينَ

They have bought error in exchange for guidance, so their trade reaps no profit, and they are not rightly guided.

Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (2010:4)[35]

Locating *Ḥamāsiyya* 131 in chronological time is inexact, but it most likely resonated with audiences because the language of commerce was readily accessible to early Meccans who engaged prolifically in trade both before and after the establishment of Islam (Buckley n.d.). At that time, honour likely assumed such importance because: (1) there was an absence of legal contracts; (2) the market was an extension of the concept of "mutual aid", i.e. the hospitality contract and gift exchange; (3) God was perceived to be the ultimate fixer of prices; and (4) there was an implicit trust in the free market that would tame man's competitive spirit for the common good (Graeber 2015a). By contrast, in the modern capitalist age, the institution for centralising a society's debts is the

33 See Lane (1863), s.v. *dīn*, meaning "obedience in the service of God", "social customs", or even "requital", and s.v. *dayn*, meaning "debt". See also *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

34 According to Izzi Dien (2012), *shirā'* implies "barter", and both "buying" and "selling". By way of another example of exchange, the Kharijite, or *Shārī*, interpreted Q[2:207] to mean that self-sacrifice is also transactional and results in a heavenly reward. See also Section 3.7.1.

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Central Bank, money acts as a promissory note, and a man's credit is his honour (Graeber 2015b).

1.4.5 *Blood Feud*

A very simple definition of a "blood feud" is that it is a mechanism for the restoration of lost honour that can also refer to "blood vengeance", or *al-thaʾr*, although anthropologists are more precise. In his study of Libyan Bedouin tribes, Emrys Peters (1967:265, 269) has differentiated between "blood feud" and "blood vengeance", designating the former to conflict between specific segments of tribal hierarchy, and explaining that "while retaliatory killings provide the propulsive force in the feud a vengeance killing may be the means whereby a settlement of hostilities is made possible". By referring to Siegfried Nadel's (1947) ethnographic research of the Nuba blood feud, Black-Michaud (1975:27–28) has alternatively expressed the concept as: (1) group responsibility for a member's behaviour; (2) group obligation to avenge injury to a member; and (3) the terms of retaliation should be proportional to the slight, to be settled in kind, or in some circumstances by material compensation in lieu. In his respective study of the peoples of Polynesia, Melanesia and northwest America, Mauss (2011:3–11) termed the mutual exchange of benefits between distinct groups, or individuals as honourable "gift exchange". Extending this idea into the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Black-Michaud (1975:238–239) observed that some societies practising gift exchange also engage in the blood feud, and therefore that the latter serves as a means of redistributing honour when one group becomes indebted to another, although gift exchange is voluntary, and feud, a measure of last resort.

By way of an illustration, it is helpful to consider the physical act of blood vengeance in a hypothetical social model made up of only two communities bound together by an honour (hospitality) contract that is subsequently broken. Prior to rupture, both groups co-exist in a desert, by sharing cattle-grazing rights that grant each access to water and pasture. Historically, each community is protective of the other. Furthermore, in the spirit of friendly cooperation, they intermarry and trade in goods and services. Unfortunately, a man from tribe "A" becomes inordinately rich and unwilling to share, whereupon an envious rival from tribe "B" murders him in a fit of pique. As settlement, the law of blood vengeance requires that the man from tribe "B" faces the death penalty, and that this be executed by the victim's kin from tribe "A". In Jahili terminology, *ḥāmil al-dam* and *walī al-dam* refer respectively to "the bearer" and "the executor of the blood", the former, the murderer bearing a debt, the latter, the avenger as the claimant. Metaphorically, the errant carries a burden of blood and discharges it to an avenger; this burden assigned to a leader, or the

collective if the errant cannot be brought to justice (Zinātī 1991:42–44). Henri Lammens (1926:89–90) has compared this burden to a kinship debt, attributing ultimate responsibility for its weight upon a tribal chief, also positing that the poet should reflect society's conscience, praising a leader as "blood's porter",[36] reminding him of his responsibility in accounting for its loss, and situating the blood vengeance message in poetry both as elegy for the dead and as broadcast news. *Ḥāmil al-dam* usually indicates the murderer, but Lammens has also pointed to his leader. Muḥammad Zinātī (1991:44) has reconciled any discrepancy in the definition, for a chief must account for the errant if he has jurisdiction over him:

> وحاملو الدم هم من يحملون المسئولية عن الدم المسفوك، وهم بالتالي الأشخاص المعرضون للثأر، وحاملو الدم هم القاتل وأعضاء قرابته وعشيرته، ويهدف ولي الدم أول ما يهدف الى قتل القاتل نفسه إن استطاع اليه سبيلاً، فإن تعذر عليه الثأر من القاتل، انتقم من أحد أقاربه الأقربين، وإلّا فمن أحد أقاربه الآخرين، ففي المجتمعات القبلية يسود مبدأ المسئولية الجماعية، حيث تسأل الجماعة عن جناية كل فرد من أفرادها، وقد عبر أكثم بن صيفي عن هذه المسئولية الجماعية بقوله: ((في الجزيرة تشترك العشيرة)). غير أن من العرب من كان يسرف في القتل أخذًا بالثأر، فلم يكن ولي الدم في بعض الأحيان يرضى بقتل القاتل أو أحد أفراد عشيرته بل كان يعمد الى الشريف من قبيلة القاتل فيقتله بوليه، وقد يعمد الى قتل العديد من قرابة القاتل انتقامًا لقتيله.

> "The Bearers of the Blood" are those who bear responsibility for the bloodshed, and therefore they are the persons exposed to blood vengeance. "The Bearers of the Blood" are the murderer as well as members among his relatives and his next of kin. If he can get to him, "The Executor of the Blood" first aims to kill the murderer himself. If taking vengeance against the killer is not feasible, he will take revenge against one of his closest relatives; failing this, against another from among his relations. In tribal societies, the principle of collective responsibility prevails, where the collective is answerable for the crime[s] of each individual among them. On this collective responsibility, Aktham b. Ṣayfī has elucidated,[37] by say-

36 See Lammens (1926:89), *"porteur de sang"*.

37 Aktham b. Ṣayfī al-Tamīmī (d. 9/630) was a well-known Jahili judge and a poet.

> ing: "In Arabia, next of kin collaborate as associates". However, among the Arabs there are those who would be excessive in the taking of vengeance. "The Executor of the Blood" is sometimes not satisfied by only killing the murderer nor one who is his next of kin, instead intent upon the chief of the murderer's tribe, killing him since he bears responsibility for him, and possibly intending to kill numerous relatives of the murderer in revenge for his slain.

With reference to the Arabic poetic tradition, Stetkevych (1993:64) has also considered blood vengeance as a transaction, drawing comparison with Mauss' analysis while describing a tension between gift exchange and blood vengeance that simultaneously "binds tribes or clans together and keeps them separate". Albeit with caveats, Black-Michaud and Stetkevych have concluded that blood exchange is the inverse of gift exchange, the exchange of dishonour, an inversion of the exchange of honour, the blood feud functioning as an institutionalised form of conflict management, so requiring a blood offering for the injured group. Moreover, the very threat of blood feud is a preventive strategy which should act as a deterrent. Verse 4, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 2, explains the blood feud when agnates of the same tribal ancestor come to blows, the poem referring to the War of al-Basūs that the following chapter will discuss in more detail.[38] This is the most simple case of blood exchange, where it is still possible to draw lines of parity between opposing tribal members:

Ḥ2

وَلَمْ يَبْقَ سِوَى العُدْوَا نِ دِنَّاهُمْ كَمَا دَانُوْا

> And nought was left but bitter Hate – // we paid them in the coin they gave
>
> Translation by Lyall (1986:5)

A more literal, but less poetic translation of this same verse (*wa-lam yabqa siwā-l-ʿudwā // -ni dinnā-hum kamā dānū*) is "Only injustice prevailed // we requited them in the manner that they requited [us]". Al-Tibrīzī and al-Marzūqī, the medieval commentators, have noted that *al-ʿudwān* refers to *al-ẓulm*, meaning

38 See al-Tibrīzī (2000) and al-Marzūqī (2003). Either al-Find al-Zimmānī or Shahl b. Shaybān, an ally of the Bakr tribe during the War of al-Basūs, composed *Ḥamāsiyya* 2, a *nūniyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*nū*, in the *hazaj* metre.

"injustice, tyranny, or transgressive behaviour", whereas *al-dīn* (and the verbs so deriving) refers to *al-jazāʾ*, meaning "requital, or recompense", but which can also be synonymous with *al-ʿāda*, *al-ṭāʿa*, and *al-ḥisāb*, successively, "custom", "obedience", and "reckoning". Therein lies a paradox; here, the principal of reciprocal justice permits injustice provided that it is dished out in equal measure, and the debt settled according to the law of exact retaliation, *lex talionis*.[39] In view of this line of reasoning, Lyall's translation is relevant, not only because has he understood that the act of homicide invokes a debt that must be repaid but also since he has conveyed that the emotion of hatred propels a very violent catharsis.[40] This study maintains that during the blood vengeance rite hate speech incites violent action, which far from resulting in feelings of guilt, or remorse, instead promotes a sense of poetic justice.

Be that as it may, in the spirit of reconciliation, the "blood-wit" has often been used in cases of arbitration between feuding tribes, albeit insufficient for grave cases of injury to honour. Consequently, *Ḥamāsiyya* 52 explains that blood is the most prized asset, in the transaction of recompense:[41]

***Ḥ*52**

فَلَوْ أَنَّ حَيًّا يَقْبَلُ المَالَ فِدْيَةً لَسُقْنَا لَهُمْ سَيْلاً مِن المَالِ مُفْعَمَا
وَلَكِنْ أَبَى قَوْمٌ أُصِيبَ أَخُوهُمُ رِضا العَارِ فاخْتَارُوا على اللَّبَنِ الدَّمَا

If a tribe had accepted livestock as ransom,
We would have sent livestock,
A torrent brimming over.

But a clan whose brother was slain
Disdained contentment with shame,
And chose blood over milk.

Translation by Stetkevych (1991:300)[42]

39 In the extreme, *lex talionis* demands "an eye for an eye", as per the Hebrew Bible; Exodus 21:22–24 and Leviticus 24:19–21.

40 For the relationship between *dīn* and *dayn*, see Section 1.4.4 and "Debt".

41 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). *H*51, in al-Marzūqī (2003). This *mimiyya*, ending in *-mā*, is unattributed, and was composed in the *ṭawīl* metre.

42 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, blood vengeance was the institution for centralising and resolving society's debts; blood, a form of liquidity that acted as settlement for short-term debts; property, transferable between tribes over a longer period of time. In an environment of scarcity, feud can become a means of redistribution when the growth of other economic and political institutions common to civil society is impeded (Black-Michaud 1975:122). At its most intense, the blood feud is a competition for land and water rights between analogous economic "corporations", this resembling a hostile takeover (Peters 1967:279). In economic theory, the blood feud is a "zero-sum game", which occurs when resources are scarce and one group's gains are always equivalent to another group's losses (Lipsey and Chrystal 2011[1999]:190). Determining parity in blood revenge becomes more complicated when outsiders are involved, this interference throwing equilibrium out of balance.

1.4.6 *Blood*

"Blood" is fundamental to the institution of blood vengeance, representing "life", "the soul",[43] "honour" and genealogical ties of "kinship". As a measure of value, it serves as a means of exchange between two parties when gift exchange fails, although the blood-wit can work, in lieu. This is because blood possesses "universal value", the blood-wit a less reliable alternative if only it can result in a socially desirable outcome.[44] On "universal value", Marx (2008:52–53) posited that any repository must be socially acceptable and proportionally exchangeable with all other commodities, money usually fulfilling this function. In the Jahiliyya, blood was more valuable than money because it was a repository of honour as well as helping to pay off a debt. Pietz (2000:57) has aligned "sacrificial blood" with "monetary debt" as the means of assigning value to human life, calling both "competing social modes of material valuation".

Notwithstanding the economic dimension, "blood" has wider associations, in Jahili poetry, that both confirm and complement its application to the blood vengeance model. Just as the blood of an errant possesses the ritual power to cleanse disgrace from a tribe, so does unavenged blood defile. "Menstrual blood" is analogous to "unavenged blood", the application of which was perceived to contaminate both the slain and the living (Stetkevych 1993:66–67,

43 In Section 3.7.3, *Ḥ*14 will demonstrate an equivalence between "blood" and the "soul".

44 In the Jahiliyya, compensation for murdering a man sometimes included the provision of subsistence to the slain man's kin, and even the offer and the service of women (al-Asadī 2004:523).

193–195). So, for example, an unburied corpse could be further desecrated when assaulted by a menstruating hyena (verse 25, from *Ḥamāsiyya* 273):[45]

***Ḥ*273**

تَضْحَكُ الضَّبْعُ لِقَتْلَى هُذَيْلٍ وَتَرَى الذِئْبَ لَهَا يَسْتَهِلُّ

The hyena laughs over the slain of Hudhayl;
you see the wolf grinning
above them.

Translation by Stetkevych (1993:60)[46]

The hyena, as motif, is closely associated with revenge, in Jahili poetry. According to Stephanie Poindexter, a behavioural ecologist, hyenas are capable of enacting revenge against other members of their species (Berlin 2021). It is debatable whether or not the Jahili poet was aware of this phenomenon, and more likely that he despised the creature as an eater of carrion. What is more pertinent, when analysing the verse, is Stetkevych's observation that a Biblical story and pre-Islamic poetry share language, this allowing for a different interpretation of the "laughing" hyena metaphor as description of "menstrual defilement and lost honour".[47] This view is consistent with another poem, in which virile Jahili men who do not follow the code of vengeance live in a state of defilement akin to consorting with menstruating women, either by bathing in the same water or by engaging with them in the act of sexual congress (verse 5, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 53):[48]

45 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). In al-Marzūqī (2003), this is verse 21. Ta'abbaṭa Sharran (d. 540) composed the lament, from which the verse is drawn, in the *madīd* metre. It is a *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lū*.

46 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Cornell University Press, from *The mute immortals speak: pre-Islamic poetry and the poetics of ritual*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1993; publisher's permission granted according to the terms of Fair Use.

47 Stetkevych (1996:13–41) has expanded upon this line of reasoning in an article.

48 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). In al-Marzūqī (2003), it is *Ḥamāsiyya* 52. The opening verses have already been cited, in Section 1.3. The female poet, Kabsha (d. 19/640), composed the verse, which belongs to a poem of incitement, in the *ṭawīl* metre, compelling her half-brother and fellow kinsmen to avenge her slain brother, ʿAbd Allāh, and not to accept the blood-wit. While much of Kabsha's poetry describes a Jahili world view, she converted to Islam, and was also therefore a *Mukhaḍram* poet.

***Ḥ*53**

وَلَا تَرِدُوا إِلاَّ فُضُولَ نِسَائِكُمْ إِذَا ارْتَمَلَتْ أَعْقَابُهُنَّ مِنَ الدَّمِ

"And do not come to water
but in your women's leavings
When their heels are stained
With blood."

Translation by Stetkevych (1993:193)[49]

By contrast, "sacrosanct blood" is both "purifier" and "fertiliser", this because of Jahili society's dependence on agriculture and animal husbandry for survival. In farming, the bloodshed of a blameless sacrificial victim, human or animal, was at one time associated with rituals intended to yield a bountiful harvest (Smith 2005:413–414, 426). Closer to home, daubing a bride in "henna" is still symbolic of "blood", and celebrates the act of sexual consummation because of the generative nature of the marital contract (al-ʿĀriḍa 2012:103).[50]

Contractually, "blood" also enables two (or more) parties to "commit" to an oath, or covenant, individuals replicating the kinship bond by letting, comingling, or sucking blood from each others veins, instead using sacrificial blood and sacred stones if the requirement is communion with the deity (Smith 2005:314–320). In Section 2.3.5, "imbibing wine" will go on to symbolise "drinking blood", this serving either to underwrite the hospitality contract or to quench a thirst for vengeance. But quite aside from its social function, the sight of "blood" can evoke a profound psychological response that manifests as "revulsion", "fear", "compassion", "sadness", or "celebration", this depending upon its source and its context (al-ʿĀriḍa 2012:104–105). Five verses below, from the *Muʿallaqa* of Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā (d. 607/9), portray the gruesome nature of Jahili conflict in such a way that draws comparison between "human endurance in war", and "camels grazing from blood soaked fields and watering holes" (ʿAtwī 1969; cited in al-ʿĀriḍa (2012:104):[51]

49 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Cornell University Press, from *The mute immortals speak: pre-Islamic poetry and the poetics of ritual*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1993; publisher's permission granted according to the terms of Fair Use.

50 Section 3.7.4 will again refer to "henna", albeit as a "blood" marker of victory in battle.

51 See also al-Tibrīzī (2012:182–232). The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mī*, is *al-ṭawīl*. There are many commentaries upon the poem, including those by al-Tibrīzī and al-Aʿlam that relay these verses differently.

***Mu'allaqa* of Zuhayr**

16 سعى ساعِيًا غَيظِ بنِ مُرَّةَ بَعْدَما تَبَزَّلَ ما بَينَ العَشيرَةِ بِالدَمِ
36 رَعَوا ظِمْأَهُم حتّى إذا تَمَّ أوردوا غِمارًا تَفَرَّى بالسِّلاحِ وبالدَّمِ
37 فَقَضَّوا مَنَايا بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْدرُوا إلى كَلَأٍ مُستَوبِلٍ مُتَوَخِّمِ
44 لَعَمْرُكَ ما جَرَّتْ عليهِم رِماحُهُمْ دَمَ اِبنِ نَهيكٍ أَو قَتيلِ المثَلَّمِ
45 وَلا شارَكت في الموتِ في دَمِ نوْفَلٍ وَلا وَهَبٍ منها وَلا اِبنِ المُخَزَّمِ

The two conciliators from Ghaiz bin Murra laboured for peace
after the tribe's concord had been shattered by bloodshed:
They pastured their flocks awhile, thirsting, then brought them down
to deep pools gushing with weapons and gouts of blood;
there they fulfilled dire doom together; then they led back
their beasts to a pasture noisome and unstomachable.
By your life, it was not their lances that drew on them the blood
of Ben Naheek, or of him slaughtered at El-Muthallam,
their spears shared not on the battlefield in the blood of Naufal,
no part had they in Wahb's slaying, or Ben El-Mukhazzam's;

Translation by A.J. Arberry (2016[1957]:115–117)[52]

The conflict described, spanning much of the latter half of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh (of the Common Era), concerns the forty-year War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrāʾ (between the Banī ʿAbs and the Banī Dhubyān), this poem advocating peace over bloodshed (Arberry 2016:97–99).

Historically, the fetishisation of blood and its ritual release have not been confined to "blood vengeance poetry", nor to the Jahiliyya. Another topic, tangentially relevant to this study, is Arabic "blood-letting (*faṣd*) poetry" of the Abbasid court, for which blood loss was still precarious but its intention benign (Bray 1999:81–83). In the first stage of the Abbasid ritual, the ailing Caliph was restored when he allowed a physician to draw some of his blood, this, a sacred offering to sustain the livelihood of his people, the physician, the lancer charged with guaranteeing its liberal flow. In the second stage of ritual, blood release precipitated gift exchange in the form of tidings of "thanksgiving" and

52 Used with permission of Taylor & Francis Informa UK Ltd – Books, from *The seven odes: the first chapter in Arabic literature*, A.J. Arberry, 2016; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

panegyric "*faṣd* poetry" (Bray 1999:83). In the final stage of ritual, the blood offering (allegedly) resulted in fertility, prosperity and security. This particular interpretation of the "blood" motif and its intrinsic value is consistent with "blood vengeance poetry", inasmuch as its association with gift exchange, verse and the lancing of a wound. However, in this case, the blood offering is not intended to precipitate death. Blood is fundamental to existence, and so it stands to reason that it cannot be detached from different meanings, some of these culturally prescribed, and others based upon personal memories. In modernity, few would argue that reference to a hospital blood transfusion is both life-saving and curative, while the bloody carnage of war suggests death and disease. The psychological associations of "blood" with "wounds" and "pain" will always be particularly strong, likely explaining why blood vengeance continues to be a fear inducing enterprise that can serve as its own deterrent. In this section, treatment of blood and its wider applications are illustrative, but not exhaustive, so demonstrating that blood is a powerful medium for messaging because it applies to different scenarios.

1.4.7 *Milk*

Like blood (and water), milk is life-sustaining, possessing an intimate value that is difficult to quantify, its loss keenly felt. Maybe this is because some ancient agricultural societies believed that milk-giving animals were sacred (Smith 2005:355). In the context of the War of al-Basūs, an event that will be elaborated upon in the following chapter, the killing of a milk-producing camel was an aberration, as was the mixing of her blood with her milk.[53] As brief summary, while grazing, an arrow pierced a camel's udder, an act which dishonoured a protected guest (al-Basūs, the owner of said camel) and broke the bonds of kinship between two tribes. The blending of the camel's blood with milk signifies the pollution of one liquid by another, this requiring an act of ritual cleansing. In collective memory, this is not an isolated incident; the Qur'an relays that in Thamūd, God's gift of a milk-producing camel was desecrated, this act prompting divine retribution.[54]

Negative connotations aside, the mixing of blood with milk can have positive associations, should it help to forge kinship links, or prevent undesirable marriages. Milk-kinship, in Arabia (and other societies), refers to the phenomenon of child-fostering whereby a baby's wet-nurse is also the milk-mother. Through suckling, the wet-nurse's milk blends with the suckling's blood, this act har-

53 See Section 2.3.

54 See Section 2.4.4.

monising ties between the baby's biological family (blood relatives) and her own, while simultaneously prohibiting marriage to her own children, the milk-siblings. Islam compares milk-kin with blood-kin, decreeing that milk-siblings are relations closer than cousins, who commit incest should they marry. In Q[4:23]:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ وعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ مِنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَائِبُكُمُ اللَّاتِي في حُجُورِكُمْ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمُ اللَّاتي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

> You are forbidden to take as wives your mothers, daughters, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts, the daughters of brothers and daughters of sisters, your milk-mothers and milk-sisters, your wives' mothers, the step-daughters in your care – those born of women with whom you have consummated marriage, if you have not consummated the marriage, then you will not be blamed – wives of your begotten sons, two sisters simultaneously – with the exception of what is past: God is most forgiving and merciful –
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:82)[55]

Wet-nursing used to be common practice for a number of reasons, among these the forging of a matrilineal counterpoint to a patrilineal system of genealogy, this helping to structure social life and societal duties (El Guindi 2012:551–553).[56] In other words, not only does the genealogy of the forefather (and the biological mother) run through a child's veins but also milk of the milk-mother, this facilitating another family of relationships and the formation of a potential army, in war. Verse, by al-Aʿshā, helps to illustrate this relationship, by describing two milk-brothers who further cement their defensive alliance, when becoming blood-brothers (al-Aʿshā 1950[d. 4/625]:225):[57]

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56 Fadwa El Guindi, the anthropologist, has studied the population of Qatar as a case study.

57 See Lane (1863), s.v. *sīn-ḥāʾ-mīm* and *asḥam*, meaning "blood into which the hand is dipped on the occasion of swearing with another or others". As contextual example, Lane has cited

Ariqtu wa-mā hādhā-l-suhādu-l-muʾariqqū

53 رَضِيعَيْ لِبَانٍ ثَدْيَ أُمٍّ تَحَالَفَا بِأَسْحَمَ دَاجٍ عَوْضُ لَا نَتَفَرَّقُ

Two milk-brothers swore to an alliance // an oath never to part, committed to in blood

To be clear, milk is no substitute for a blood relationship, but complementary, having the power to both unify and separate groups of people. Milk kinship is therefore generative, although it can also undermine order through its prohibitions. This study assumes that members of a tribe are linked by consanguinity, but blood as the essential matter of lineage is contested by Fadwa El Guindi (2012:547–549), stating instead that kinship is more nuanced, involving ties of *ʿaṣab*, i.e. "nerve"; the strength of the tribe, a function of the resilience of its central nervous system, i.e. the nerves of its members, *al-ʿaṣabiyya*, meaning the "cohesive force" that links them all together.[58] In pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabia, children born in towns were often fed by a Bedouin wet-nurse so as to foster a greater sense of tribal solidarity. The Prophet Muḥammad was no exception, his milk-mother, Ḥalīma of the Banī Saʿd. Subsequently, political leaders, among them the Abbasid Caliphs, recruited local governors from among their milk-kin (Parkes 2003:746–747).

Notwithstanding the importance of milk, because of the wider associations of blood in pre-Islamic Arabia, and the belief that the soul resided therein, it is impossible to disassociate blood from honour rites, or from sacrificial libation. Kinship is a layered construct, this brought about through bloodline (*al-nasab*), milk relationships (*al-raḍāʿa*), unions brokered by marriage (*al-muṣāhara*), even the kind of political alliances that will feature in subsequent chapters.[59] However, the notion of a central nervous system is relevant for understanding the strength of relationships, for conveying a network of intimate connexions, and for assessing the underlying current of electricity running between them. An imperfect analogy, using two-football teams, helps to clarify some terms

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this particular verse, his translation: "Two foster-brothers by the sucking of the breast of one mother swore together, by dark blood into which they dipped their hands, that you, or they, i.e. a tribe, should not ever become separated." In Lane's translation, *lā natafariqqu* is relayed as *lā tatafariqqu*. The metre of this *qāfiyya*, ending in *-qū*, is *al-ṭawīl*. See also Smith (1885:48); cited in Parkes (2003:741).

58 See Section 1.4.2, for *al-ʿaṣabiyya* as "tribal chauvinism".

59 According to Islamic law, kinship is forged in three ways: via blood (*al-nasab*), via milk (*al-raḍāʿa*) and via marriage, or affinity (*al-muṣāhara*) (Altorki 1980:233).

and their relationship to one another.[60] In a football match, eleven members of each tribe, "A" and "B", represent two-sides with reservists located at the side of the pitch, other relations on the stands. The manager of each team is the respective milk-mother, while the club (and the fanbase) belong to an extended tribe. During a match, each manager performs a limiting and a unifying function, by selecting players, and by ensuring that each team conforms to a strategy, cooperates, and does not score goals for the other side. The manager also insists that each player drinks a glass of milk for sustenance, at half-time, when bonding with team-mates in the locker-room. Ball possession, a marker of a team's cohesion and connectivity, is *al-ʿaṣabiyya*; the higher and more targeted it is, the greater the chance of scoring a goal. Blood, the living substance, is what propels any striker to move across the pitch, but which also makes him vulnerable to injury from the other side. *Ḥamāsa* is the loud roar cheering on and fortifying each side from the stands. Football chants represent an anthem, or poem. The manager has the ability to recruit new team members, in the future, bringing them into the brother-hood, also preventing them from playing for other sides.

1.4.8 *Wine*

For the Jahili poet, the act of seeking of vengeance, i.e. the satiation of the soul's thirst with enemy blood, meant forgoing the usual cup of wine, a popular social custom which also preceded a morning raid. Upon learning of his father's murder, for example, Imruʾ al-Qays proverbially declared that he would drink his fill, before embarking upon a vengeance mission to honour the Kindite king. As avenger, he committed to wholly abstaining from imbibing and eating meat (Ibn Qutayba 1958[d. 276/889]:1:107–108):[61]

> ثم قال: ضيَّعني صغيرًا، وحَمَّلني دمَه كبيرًا، لا صحوَ اليومَ، ولا سُكر غدًا، اليومَ خمرٌ، وغدًا أَمرٌ

> Then he said: He neglected me when I was a boy, but as a man has charged me with the responsibility for avenging his blood; [so] there will be no sobriety today, but tomorrow there will be no drinking; i.e. wine today, what is ordained tomorrow.

60 The analogy is limited because the recruitment of players is governed largely by financial considerations, while contracts are finite, meaning that one-time opponents may well be team-mates at another stage of their footballing careers. Soccer, nevertheless, is an example of a contemporary social practice that replicates tribal behaviour.

61 There is another anecdotal version about Imruʾ al-Qays, in al-Iṣfahānī (2002:9:66).

Khalīlayya mā fī-l-yawmi maṣḥan li-shāribin

ثم قال:

خَلِيلَيَّ ما في اليومِ مَصْحًى لشارِبٍ ولا في غدٍ إذْ كان ما كان مشْرَبُ

Then he said, [in verse]:[62]

Friends![63] Today, there will be no sobering up from drinking // while tomorrow, the tavern will seem never to have existed

ثم آلى لا يأْكلُ لحمًا ولا يشرب خمرًا حتَّى يثْأَر بأَبيه

After which, he vowed not to eat meat, nor drink wine, until he had avenged his father's killing.

This form of abstinence is not only about self-denial. Thirsting for the blood of vengeance is a direct substitute for wine, the blood cup being a metaphorical representation of the wine cup that it has displaced. It is as though the ritual act of vengeance is so transformative that blood and wine have become substitutes for one another, a concept that is consistent with ancient rites that do the opposite, by transforming wine into sacrificial blood.[64]

Depending upon which version of his *Muʿallaqa* one refers to, ʿAmr b. Kulthūm (grand-son of the infamous avenger, al-Muhalhil, who will feature in the next chapter) was another Jahili poet who used his thirst for wine and his thirst for revenge interchangeably, first by subverting his enemy's mother into his cupbearer as response to his mother being asked to serve her like a maid, later by becoming the server who pours out Death (al-Tibrīzī 2012:233):[65]

***Muʿallaqa* of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm**

1 أَلاَ هُبِّي بِصَحْنِكِ فَاَصْبَحِينَا وَلاَ تُبقِي خُمُورَ الأَنْدَرِينَا

62 The metre is *al-ṭawīl*. The single verse is a *bā'iyya*, ending in *-bū*.

63 As in the opening verse of his *Muʿallaqa*, Imru' al-Qays has addressed two boon companions.

64 For the Catholic Church, for example, wine of the Eucharist (through a process of transubstantiation) is quite literally assumed to be the blood of the Saviour, Jesus Christ. See also Section 2.5.2.

65 The poem is a *nūniyya*, ending in *-nā*, and the metre is *al-wāfir*.

Ha, girl! Up with your bowl! Give us our dawn-draught
and do not spare the wines of El-Andarīna,
Translation by Arberry (2016:204)[66]

***Muʿallaqa* of Amr b. Kulthūm**

سَقَيناهُم بِكَأسِ المَوتِ صِرف وَلاقوا في الوَقائِعِ أَقوَرينا

We poured out a pure cup of Death for them // and they encountered
dreadful events on the battle-fields[67]

The interchangeable nature of liquids, in Jahili poetry, can be confusing. Sometimes, as in another verse from ʿAmr's *Muʿallaqa*, the notions of honour, pollution and a state of disgrace are compounded, by the actions of drinking impure versus pure water (al-Tibrīzī 2012:288, n. 2):

***Muʿallaqa* of Amr b. Kulthūm**

وأَنّا الشَارِبُونَ الماءَ صَفْوًا ويَشربُ غيرُنا كَدِرًا وطينا

we the drinkers of the purest water
that others perforce drink sullied and muddy.
Translation by Arberry (2016:208)[68]

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67 This particular verse, number 122, appears near the poem's conclusion, on the website, *al-Dīwān*, a Saudi Arabian resource established in 2013 (see https://www.aldiwan.net). It does not appear in most versions of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm's *Muʿallaqa* and it has not been translated by Arberry, which may bring into question its authenticity, but it does lend a certain symmetry to the poem's introduction. According to *Lisān al-ʿArab* (1997), s.v. *qaf-waw-rāʾ*, *aqwarīn* means *al-dawāhī al-ʿiẓām*, i.e. "great calamities, or dreadful events". In this, it cites a standalone verse, also in the *wāfir* metre, by the Umayyad poet Nahār b. Tawsiʿa:

وَكُنَّا قَبْلَ مُلْكِ بَنِي سُلَيْمٍ نَسُومُهُمُ الدَّواهِي الأَقْوَرِينا

Before the Banī Sulaym's property, we would have brought down dreadful events upon them.

68 Used with permission of Taylor & Francis Informa UK Ltd – Books, from *The seven odes: the first chapter in Arabic literature*, A.J. Arberry, 2016; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Other times, the notion of "disgrace" is comparable to the action of sullying bathing water with menstrual blood, or it uses polluted milk as analogy, like in the War of al-Basūs narratives. In Jahili poetry, wine is a substitute for blood, which is unsurprising given its colour. In the next section, *Ḥamāsiyya* 176 will build equivalence between blood and water, by comparing the avenger to a water bearer drawing up buckets of blood from a well. In *Ḥ*176, wine is only present through allusion; the water bearer, of verse 2, staggering (like a drunkard) under the weight of his buckets:[69]

***Ḥ*176**

2 إِذْ أَرْسَلُونِي مائِحًا بِدِلائِهِمْ فَمَلَأْتُها عَلَقًا إِلى أَسْبَالِها

When they sent me drawing with their buckets // so I filled them with blood to their brims

The word root for *mā'iḥ*, i.e. "someone drawing up a bucket from a well", is *mīm-yā'-ḥā'*. In its sixth form (*tafā'ala*), the verb *tamāyaḥa* conveys the action of walking with "a drunken swagger".[70] In other words, after the avenger (*walī al-dam*) has taken his vengeance, by drawing up metaphorical buckets of blood from a well, a derivative of the same verb suggests that he sways from side to side because he is discharging a heavy load. However, if the act of taking vengeance not only calls for abstinence but is a substitute for imbibing, this is because its satiation is also intoxicating.

Blood vengeance is carried out by men, and directed against other men. Women can incite to vengeance, but they are not meant to be directly implicated in acts of violence, whether as actors, or as subjects. Having said this, the female persona, in Jahili poetry, is not always representative of the beloved, but is sometimes compared to a wine vessel, this signifying the cup of death, or containing the sacrificial blood of conquest (Jamil 2017:311–313). On the equivalence between women, wine and sacrificial blood, Jamil (2017:298–300) has cited verses by Imru' al-Qays:[71]

69 The metre of this *lāmiyya*, ending *-lihā*, is *al-kāmil*.

70 See Lane (1863), s.v. *mīm-yā'-hā'*.

71 The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*mī*, is *al-kāmil*.

Li-mani-l-diyāru ghashītu-hā bi-Suḥāmī

6 حُـورٌ تُعَلَّـلُ بالعَبيـرِ جُلُودُهـا بِيضُ الوُجُوهِ نَواعِمَ الأَجْسامِ

7 فَظَلِلْتُ في دِمَنِ الدِّيارِ كَأَنَّني نَشْـوانُ بَاكَـرَهُ صَبُـوحُ مُـدامِ

8 أُنُـفٌ كَلَـوْنِ دَمِ الغَـزَالِ مُعَتَّـقٌ مِنْ خَمْرِ عانَةَ أو كُرُومِ سِبـامِ

6 Doe-eyed ones (*ḥūr*), white faces, soft frames, skins severally rubbed over with saffron-laced scent (*ʿabīr*).

7 There I remained in the dung-blackened abodes, as though drunk (*nash-wān*), served a dawn-cup (*ṣabūḥ*) of long-kept wine (*mudām*).

8 A virgin draught (*unuf*), gazelle's blood in hue; matured, unbroached (*muʿattaq*), of the wines of ʿĀna, or the vines of Shibām;

Translation by Jamil[72]

According to Jamil (2017:311–312), these verses indicate:[73]

> The identification of doe-eyed *ḥūr* with the wine pitcher of communion – whether that of boon-companions, or sexual mates – also offers a poetic logic for the equation of the contents of such a pitcher with, for example, the blood of a gazelle, as in verse 8. The wider poetry lets us understand this as an allusion to an analogue of sacrificial blood, or that of a creature that is called *dhabīḥ* ('a sacrifice') – a concept which, of itself, applies both to a broached wine-jug and a penetrated maiden (as also to the expressed musk with which maiden and wine are typically associated).

In view of the underlying theme of vengeance, in *Ḥ*176, the "tying" and the "unravelling" of wraps (verses 5 and 6) could therefore be symbolism for sacrifice if women represent the vessels of tribal honour:

72 From *Ethics and poetry in sixth-century Arabia*, Nadia Jamil; © The E.J. Gibb Memorial Trust and Nadia Jamil 2017; reproduced with permission of Edinburgh University Press Limited through PLSclear.

73 Quotation from *Ethics and poetry in sixth-century Arabia*, Nadia Jamil; © The E.J. Gibb Memorial Trust and Nadia Jamil 2017; reproduced with permission of Edinburgh University Press Limited through PLSclear.

***Ḥ*176**

5 وخِمارِ غانِيَةٍ عَقَدْتُ بِرَأْسِها أُصُلًا وكـانَ مُنَشَّـرًا بِشِمالِهَـا
6 وعَقِيلَـةٍ يَسْعـى عليهـا قَيِّـمٌ مُتَغَطْرِسٌ أَبْدَيْتُ عنْ خَلْخَالِهَا

5 Many a young beauty's veil have I tied upon her head // in the evening when it was spread out with her wraps
6 Of many a prized woman, whose guardian supervises her // haughtily, have I exposed her anklets

More will be said about these verses, in Section 1.5.1.2, notably how they portray an ambivalence about covering and exposing women that struck medieval commentators as curious. Suffice it to state here that exposure of women to danger was proscribed by the Jahili honour code, a man possessed of *murū'a*/*muruwwa* commonly expected to behave chivalrously.[74] In Jahili verse, any insinuation that female honour has been violated is rare, and more likely to be a feature of Abbasid poetry. Notwithstanding the confines of Jahili expression, it is unrealistic to suggest that Jahili women were not casualties of conflict. Therefore any reference to humiliating practices towards them is more likely to be allusive, through the use of metaphor. It may be possible to infer what a particular metaphor concerning the wrapping and the exposing of women can mean by working backwards from a point in time when descriptions of sexual assault were not suppressed. This results in a view which is not definitive, but highlights an ambiguity which may, or may not have been intentional on the part of a Jahili poet. In Arabic poetry, one of the most prolific and explicit users of the "wine as woman" motif is Abū Nuwās, an Abbasid poet (Kennedy 1997:30). The example below describes a tavern scene, the unwrapping of wraps here covering a vessel of wine that is gendered female. However, in this poem, the imagery is violent, equating the act of stripping the vessel with a power dynamic, namely the poet's boast about sexual domination and a sacrifice made libation (Abū Nuwās 2010[d. 198/814]:60):[75]

ʿAfā-l-muṣallā

15 فقُمتُ أحْبُو إلى الرِّضاع كما تحامـل الطِّفْـلُ مسَّـهُ سَغَـبُ
16 حتـى تخيَّرْتُ بنْـتَ دَسْكَـرَةٍ قد عَجَمَتْهَا السُّنُونُ والحِقَبُ

74 See Section 1.4.2, on "Honour".
75 The metre of this *bā'iyya*, ending in *-bū*, is *al-munsariḥ*.

17 هتَكْـتُ عنهـا والليـلُ مُعْتَكِـرٌ مُهَلْهَـلَ النّسْـجِ مـا لـه هُـدُبُ
18 مـنْ نسـجِ خَرقـاءَ لا تُشَـدُّ لهـا آخِيَّـةٌ فـي الثـرى ولا طُنُـبُ
19 ثـم تَوَجَّـأْتُ خَصْرَهـا بِشَبَـا ال إشفَـى فجاءتْ كأنهـا لهـبُ
20 فاسْتَوثَقَ الشُّربَ للنَّدامـى وأجْ رَاهـا علينـا اللُجْيـنُ والْغَـرَبُ

15 So I rose, crawling to be suckled, as a child struggles to its feet, touched by hunger,
16 And chose the choice daughter of a tavern, one that had experienced the ages.
17 I tore from her, when the night was dark, a fine robe of light texture, one without fringes –
18 The fabric of a skilled seamstress (i.e. a spider) who needs [no loom to be set up] with stakes in the ground and ropes attached.
19 I stabbed her waist with the point of an awl, and she poured forth like flames,
20 So that drinking became possible for the carousers – vessel of silver and gold passed it around to us;

Translation by Philip Kennedy (1997:266)[76]

1.5 Two Jahili "Blood Vengeance Poems"

The following are two prototypical Jahili poems that concern blood vengeance and serve as a point of origin for subsequent examples of verse.[77]

1.5.1 *On Blood and Water*

Ḥamāsiyya 176, by Bāʿith b. Ṣuraym, is an example of "blood vengeance verse" that is structured as *fakhr* with strong association to water.[78] The poem contains eight verses that can be broken down into four stages: (1) the first two verses form a defiant demand, posed as a rhetorical question followed by a response, the poet asking if he has avenged the death of his brother Wāʾil, and

76 From *The wine song in Classical Arabic poetry: Abū Nuwās and the literary tradition*, Philip F. Kennedy; © Philip F. Kennedy 1997; reproduced with permission of Oxford Publishing Limited through PLSclear.

77 By point of origin, this does not mean that they are the first of this type.

78 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). *Ḥ*175, in al-Marzūqī (2003). It is a *lāmiyya*, ending *-lihā*, composed in the *kāmil* metre.

subsequently affirming that the deed has been accomplished; (2) the second two verses contain the poet's oath of blood vengeance; (3) the third couplet conveys two aspects of the poet's nature, his ability to both cover and expose women, i.e. to defend, or to threaten; (4) the final lines are descriptive and proud, vaunting the poet's military leadership and the quality of his army:

***Ḥ*176**

1	سَائِلْ أُسَيِّدَ هلْ ثَأَرْتُ بوائِلٍ	أَمْ هلْ شَفيتُ النَّفْسَ مِنْ بَلْبَالِها
2	إذْ أَرْسَلُونِي مائِحًا بِدلائِهِمْ	فَمَلَأْتُها عَلَقًا إلى أسْبَالِها
3	إنّي ومَنْ سَمَكَ السَّماءَ مكانَهَا	والبدْرَ ليلَةَ نِصفِهَا وهِلالِهَا
4	آليتُ أَثْقَفُ مِنْهُمُ ذا لِحْيَةٍ	أَبَدًا فتَنْظُرُ عَيْنُهُ في مَالِهَا
5	وخِمارِ غانِيَةٍ عَقَدْتُ بِرَأْسِها	أُصُلًا وكانَ مُنَشَّرًا بِشِمالِهَا
6	وعَقِيلَةٍ يَسْعى عليها قَيِّمٌ	مُتَغَطْرِسٌ أَبْدَيْتُ عنْ خَلْخَالِهَا
7	وكَتِيبَةٍ سُفْعِ الوُجُوهِ بوَاسِلٍ	كالأُسْدِ حينَ تَذُبُّ عن أشْبَالِهَا
8	قَدْ قُدْتُ أَوَّلَ عُنْفُوانِ رَعِيلِهَا	فَلَفَفْتُهَا بِكَتِيبَةٍ أَمْثَالِهَا

1 Ask the Usayyid, have I avenged Wā'il // or have I cured the self from its anxiety

2 When they sent me drawing with their buckets // so I filled them with blood to their brims[79]

3 For I, by the One who raised the firmament in its place // and the full-moon, on the night when [the month] is half complete, and [the night of] the crescent-moon[80]

4 I swore to clip the bearded one from them // so that his eye will never consider its own property

5 Many a young beauty's veil have I tied upon her head // in the evening when it was spread out with her wraps

79 See Lane (1863), s.v. *sabal*, Lane provides translation of this same verse. In al-Marzūqī (2003), *mā'ihan* and *asbāli-hā* are replaced with *mātihan* and *isbāli-hā*.

80 The commentators agree on this meaning, al-Marzūqī having paraphrased that the second hemistich means: *laylata kamāli-hi fī niṣf al-shahr, wa-laylata ihlāli-hi*, i.e. the night when [the moon] is complete in the middle of the month, and the night when it crescents. The implication is that Bā'ith's oath does not waver; it applies whether the moon waxes or wanes.

6 Of many a prized woman, whose guardian supervises her // haughtily, have I exposed her anklets
7 Many a brave and ferocious battalion, faces burnished // like lions when they defend their cubs
8 Have I steered the forefront of their regiment // and enveloped it with a battalion of its equal

The first half of the poem, with some variance, appears in the entry for the "Day of al-Ḥājiz", of *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih 2013:6:68–69). In their respective analyses, the medieval commentators, al-Tibrīzī (2000) and al-Marzūqī (2003), have provided context, citing a background *khabar*, in which the speaker seeks vengeance for the murder of his brother, Wāʾil, a tax collector: the Banī Usayyid refuse to pay their taxes; this results in a dispute where Wāʾil is pushed into a well and stoned to death; and Bāʿith thereafter punishes the culprits. The first two lines are rich with metaphors referencing a structural theme of drinking the blood of the culprit as a restorative for an anguished soul. These verses are also a rhetorical response to the Banī Usayyid's song, when setting upon the unfortunate Wāʾil:[81]

Yā ayyuhā-l-māʾiḥu dalwī dūnakā

يَا أَيُّهَا المَائِحُ دَلْوِي دُونَكَا إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ النَّاسَ يَحْمَدُونَكَا

O water bearer, beware of my bucket // should I see people rewarding you

According to al-Marzūqī (2003), this taunt was composed by a *jāriya*, a "servant", or "slave" from the Banī Māzin, suggesting that she may be the subject of verses 5 and 6, although those likely refer collectively to women of enemy tribes. The introduction begins on a strong imperative note and is dialogical because it is a poetic response to a provocation. Revenge poetry fights fire with fire, repeating and reinforcing an ethical code. Therefore, the analysis interrogates this poem from two perspectives, one of drinking blood (i.e. settling the blood debt),[82] and a second of settling a score through the seizure of property.

81 The metre of this *kāfiyya*, ending in *-kā*, is *al-rajaz*.
82 See Section 3.7.5. In *Ḥ*231, the theme of imbibing will take the form of serving the enemy a deadly drink.

1.5.1.1 Restoring Honour through the Drinking of Blood

Although he asks if his vengeance is complete, in the first verse, Bāʿith as the protagonist alludes to fluids. The description of "buckets filled with blood", in the second verse, serves as a transitional metaphor, switching the use of a container for carrying water to collecting blood. Blood is substitute for water so as to satiate the poet's thirst for vengeance, but also in order to cleanse. In another example, verse 22, of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm's *Muʿallaqa*, blood is a substitute for water, when expunging a stain of disgrace from the standards of tribal honour (al-Tibrīzī 2012:250–251):[83]

***Muʿallaqa* of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm**

22 بِأَنَّا نُورِدُ الرَّاياتِ بيضًا ونُصْدِرُهنَّ حُمْرًا قد رَوينا

how we take the banners white into battle
and bring them back crimson, well-saturated;[84]
Translation by Arberry (2016:205)[85]

Returning to *Ḥ*176, at first glance, the poem spreads the news of a vengeance killing. However, Bāʿith's statement is complex, requiring further unravelling to be fully understood. Implicit behind the literal meaning of the poem, it compares blood to a liquid stored and drawn from different receptacles, and requiring replenishment. As such, *Ḥ*176 is a prime example of Classical Arabic poetry that is ritualistic, speaking of emptying, filling, giving and receiving, while also reflecting gift exchange theory (Hamori 1974; Mauss 2011).[86] This is because pre-Islamic poetry typically iconises certain stock images, making these powerful reminders of "the exchange system" (Hamori 1974:26). In this poem, the icons are liquids, verse 2 referring to "water" and "blood". The poet occupies the role of a "water bearer", *māʾiḥ*, albeit one who instead transports "buckets of blood".

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83 See Section 1.4.8, for other verses from ʿAmr b. Kulthūm's *Muʿallaqa*. The metre is *al-wāfir*, the poem a *nūniyya*, ending in *-nā*.

84 *Nūridu* and *nuṣdiru* are antonyms, meaning "we import" and "we export", but also "we bring to water" and "we return from the watering place". Therefore the verse means that: We bring our standards [washed] white // but after we have saturated them [with the blood of our enemies], we return them red.

85 Used with permission of Taylor & Francis Informa UK Ltd – Books, from *The seven odes: the first chapter in Arabic literature*, A.J. Arberry, 2016; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

86 Andras Hamori has spoken specifically about the *qaṣīda*, rather than *ḥamāsa* poetry.

Although *ʿalaq* represents "blood", mirroring the use of *al-nafs* (in the preceding verse),[87] the word roots *sīn-bāʾ-lām* and *ʿayn-lām-qāf* allude to the action of "suspending" (in their fourth and first verbal forms respectively), this suggestive of another image, "hanging" buckets drawn from a well by rope.

Verses 3 and 4 focus upon the firmament, and the enemy's bearded head. In so doing, they introduce classical tropes pertaining more to elegy than *ḥamāsa* poetry, namely the night sky and the human eye. Whereas the dominant imagery of the poem is bloody, this canvas signifies astrology and the various constellations of stars: in verse 2, Aquarius is "the water bearer", *al-dalw*, that provides a celestial mirror for Bāʿith carrying his buckets; in verse 3, *samaka* suggests *al-simāk*, or "Arcturus and Spica Virginis".[88] The "clipped head", of verse 4, is consistent with the hanging well "buckets", of verse 2, since the dripping cranium is another container from which to imbibe. Chapter Two will reveal, in a folkloric tale about blood vengeance, a Jahili avenger famously drinking from his victim's jugular vein, i.e. the spout of the skull, after taking his vengeance.[89] Use of the skull, as a drinking vessel, has been one legacy of Jahili poetry that informs its treatment in subsequent periods. For example, al-Mutanabbī drew upon a comparable transitional image, between irrigation and hanging heads/bodies suspended upon the Ḥadath fortress, in his fourth/tenth-century poem beginning *ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū*. In verses 7 and 8:[90]

ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū

7 هَلِ الحَدَثُ الحَمراءُ تَعرِفُ لَونَها وَتَعلَمُ أَيُّ الساقِيينِ الغَمائِمُ

8 سَقَتْها الغَمَامُ الغُرُّ قَبلَ نُزولِهِ فَلَمّا دَنا مِنها سَقَتْها الجَماجِمُ

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

87 See al-Zamakhsharī (2012[d. 538/1143]), s.v. *ʿayn-lām-qāf*, *ʿaliqa fulānun dama-fulānin*, double reference to "blood" within the context of two different individuals implies that "one person kills another". Moreover, al-Zamakhsharī has quoted another verse, by al-Mufaḍḍal al-Nukrī, *wa-sāʾilatin bi-Thaʿlabata-bni Sayrin // wa-qad ʿaliqat bi-Thaʿlabata-l-ʿalūqū* (*al-wāfir*), explaining that this use of blood imagery implies "[fate of] death".

88 See Lane (1863) and Wehr (1979), s.v. *dāl-lām-wāw* and *sīn-mīm-kāf*.

89 See Section 2.3.1, and Section 2.5.4.2.

90 The metre of this *mīmiyya* ending in *-mū* is *al-ṭawīl*. Other verses from the same Abbasid poem feature in other chapters, in Section 4.5.2, Section 4.5.5, Sections 4.5.6 and Section 5.1.

8 The white clouds watered it before he descended, then when he drew near it the skulls watered it (again).
Translation by Arberry (1965:84–85)[91]

In *Ḥ*176, allusion to the well system and the constellation of Aquarius is highly significant for what this study terms "blood vengeance poetry", signalling a Jahili metaphor that draws connexion between retaliation, the well and the stars. This is because tribal ancestral virtues are like a liquid to be replenished, or depleted in the manner of a watering well, or cooperative bank, the well a multifarious metaphor expressing the revolution of stars, time, weather, life and war (Jamil 2017:106, 331–335).

1.5.1.2 Settling a Debt through the Seizure of Property

The institution of blood vengeance specifies that the blood of the victim's killer is the most suitable substitute, when restoring honour to a family whose son has been murdered. However, it stands to reason that other more practical forms of asset transfer accompany the act of blood vengeance because feuding tribes, who are living in a climate of scarcity, seize property as compensation for an honour slight. In view of this, an alternative interpretation, of verse 5, is that it concerns the seizure of property, particularly since the close, of verse 4, refers to the "sight of property". The women are chattels of the enemy slain and therefore potential booty. Bāʿith assesses the scene of his enemy's tribal abode, possibly tempted by plunder and pillage. Verse 6 conveys the language of domination and submission, coinciding with blood vengeance, and referring to licit male protection of the female, in the first hemistich, and female fear and vulnerability to attack, in the second. Verses 5 and 6 are more suggestive than they initially appear. In their respective editorial versions of the poem, al-Marzūqī (2003) and al-Tibrīzī (2000) have treated these two verses with ambivalence, interpreting them to mean that when the avenging poet embarks upon his raid of her tribe, a woman prepares her anklet-ed legs for flight, so revealing her face because she is caught unawares, thereafter reassured by the poet that she is safe, so refastening her veil. Both have acknowledged that verse 6 conveys some kind of threat, Bāʿith expressing that while he can offer protection, he can also choose to menace.

In view of the commentators' assertion, it is worth unpacking these verses further. Verse 5 refers to a dishevelled "beautiful girl", or *ghāniya*, who the aven-

91 From *Arabic poetry: a primer for students*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1965; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

ging poet arrives upon at dusk and shields, while verse 6 indicates a "startled maiden", a "perfect pearl", a "wife", all meanings for *ʿaqīla*, who exposes her legs to the poet when trying to escape.[92] The "tying" and the "unravelling" of wraps, in verse 5, suggests more ambivalent imagery, the poet's attitude to a captive woman becoming much more sinister. By objectifying her, he insinuates that her fate is his to decide. But if this female image is figurative, rather than literal, then the actions of wrapping and unwrapping are doubly significant for expressing the severance of tribal relations. In her analysis of Jahili ethics as conveyed by a highly complex vocabulary, Jamil (2017:195–196) has quoted and translated a verse by Imruʾ al-Qays, in which *ghāniya* refers to a "seductive beauty", a term that is symbolic for what it reveals about the hospitality contract (Jamil 2017:195–196):[93]

Ḥayyi-l-ḥumūla bi-jānibi-l-ʿazlī

يا رُبَّ غانيةٍ صَرَمْتُ حِبالُها ومَشَيْتُ مَتَّئِدًا عَلى رِسْلي

> I think of those beauties, unassailable, seductive, whose ties I've severed, then, calmly, gone my way.
>
> Translation by Jamil[94]

This is because the "female" motif, in Jahili poetry, is not confined to the beloved of the *nasīb*, but also represents the tying and untying of kinship as well as death and treachery that can provoke an act of retaliation (Jamil 2017:200–201). In verse 8, the poet targets the enemy battalion with a similar gesture of "envelopment", this consistent with his earlier treatment of the veil.[95]

1.5.2 *Blood and Wounds*

Ḥamāsiyya 37 is a poem by Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, as this appears in the *Ḥamāsa*, but an extended version within the poet's own *Dīwān* ("collection of poems")

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92 See Lane (1863), s.v. *ghāniya* and *ʿaqīla*, the former is a "young woman who is sufficed by her husband", or "sufficed by her beauty"; the latter a "woman of generous race, that is kept behind a curtain, held in high estimation", or the "pearl, or large pearl, in its shell".

93 This *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lī*, is composed in the *kāmil* metre.

94 From *Ethics and poetry in sixth-century Arabia*, Nadia Jamil; © The E.J. Gibb Memorial Trust and Nadia Jamil 2017; reproduced with permission of Edinburgh University Press Limited through PLSclear.

95 Incidentally, use of *al-usd*, or "lions", in line 7, is not only a symbol of courage on the battlefield but indicates the enemy tribe's name, first addressed in the opening verse, this time drawing closure.

consists of eighteen verses, which is double the length (Qays b. al-Khaṭīm 1962[d. 620]).[96] Qays supposedly composed the verses during an interesting crossover period when Islam had not yet tempered Jahili values, although the language defers to the new religion since his wife may have been a convert (al-Aṣmaʿī 2008[d. 216/831]:246). The poem is a prime example of unrestrained Jahili vengeance; al-Marzūqī (2003), the medieval commentator, considered its opening to be excessively gratuitous and vulgar:

*Ḥ*37

1	طَعَنْتُ ابْنَ عبدِ القَيْسِ طَعْنَةَ ثائِرٍ	لها نَفَذٌ لولا الشَّعاعُ أَضاءَهَا
2	ملكتُ بها كَفِّي فأَنْهَرْتُ فَتْقَها	يَرَى قائِمٌ مِنْ دُونِها ما وَرَاءَهَا
3	يَهُونُ عَلَيَّ أَنْ تَرُدَّ جِرَاحُها	عُيُونَ الأَواسِي إِذْ حَمِدْتُ بَلَاءَهَا
4	وَسَاعَدَنِي فِيهَا ابْنُ عَمْرِو بْن عَامِرٍ	خِداشٌ فَأَدَّى نِعْمَةً وأَفَاءَهَا
5	وكنتُ ٱمْرَءًا لَا أَسْمَعُ الدهرَ سُبَّةً	أُسَبُّ بِها إلا كَشَفْتُ غِطَاءَهَا
6	فإنِيَ في الحَرْبِ الضَّرُوسِ مُوَكَّلٌ	بإِقْدَامِ نَفْسٍ مَا أُرِيدُ بَقَاءَهَا
7	إِذَا مَا ٱصْطَبَحْتُ أَرْبَعًا خَطَّ مِئْزَرِي	وَأَتْبَعْتُ دَلْوِي في السَّمَاحِ رِشَاءَهَا
8	مَتَى يَأْتِ هَذَا الموتُ لا تُلْفَ حاجةٌ	لِنَفْسِيَ إلاَّ قَدْ قَضَيْتُ قَضَاءَهَا
9	ثأرتُ عَدِيًّا والخَطِيمَ فلمْ أُضِعْ	ولايةَ أَشْياخٍ جُعِلتُ إِزَاءَهَا

1 I pierced a son of ʿAbd al-Qays with an avenger's thrust // were it not for the blood spatter then the wound's passage would have shone with light [rays of the sun][97]

96 See al-Tibrīzī (2000). This is *Ḥ*36 in al-Marzūqī (2003), for which verses 6 and 9 are absent, and for which verse 8 appears as verse 6. The poem is a Jahili *hamziyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*ʾahā*, that the poet composed in the *ṭawīl* metre. See Appendix for the extended version.

97 Klein-Franke (1972:158) has translated this verse as: "Out of vengeance I wounded ʿAbdal-qais with a spear and made a wound so great that it would have been filled with light had not blood poured from it on all sides"; used with permission of Brill, from *Journal of Arabic Literature*: "The Ḥamāsa of Abū Tammām: part two", Felix Klein-Franke, vol. 3, 1972; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. See also Lane (1863), s.v. *nafadh*, and *ṭaʿnatun la-hā nafadhun*, this same verse has been translated by Lane as "I pierced the son of ʿAbd-El-Keys with the wound of one making an angry assault, that had a passage through, which, but for the spirtling blood, would have made it show the light through him". In translating "one making an angry assault", from *thāʾir*, Lane has used the word root *thāʾ-waw-rāʾ*, rather than *thāʾ-alif-rāʾ*. Al-Marzūqī has chosen *thāʾ-alif-rāʾ*, but, by adding *fātik*, he may have alluded to *thāʾ-waw-rāʾ*, whereas al-Tibrīzī has interpreted it as

2 I firmly kneaded the wound with my spear, and made its cleavage flow like a river [with blood] // he who is standing sees through it to what is behind[98]

3 It matters little to me if its wounds repel // the nurses' eyes, since I approved its affliction

4 A son of ʿAmr b. ʿĀmir helped me with it // Khidāsh, he carried out a favour and produced its boon[99]

5 I was a man who would never hear a disgrace // by which I am slandered, without lifting the lid on it

6 For in the devouring war I am charged // with the fearlessness of a soul, which I do not wish to remain[100]

7 Whenever I have drunk four morning draughts, my waist-wrapper traces a line [upon the ground] // and I have made to follow my bucket of generosity, its rope[101]

8 When death comes, there will be no more need[102] // left for me that I have not fulfilled

9 I avenged ʿAdī and Khaṭīm and so I was not made to forfeit // the noble ancestors' legacy, I was made its vigorous executor[103]

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coming from *thāʾ-alif-rāʾ*. In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, the verse is given under *thāʾ-alif-rāʾ*. Al-Tibrīzī (2000) has been consistent with al-Marzūqī (2003), in explaining that *al-nafadh* is what the action of piercing in an attack produces, i.e. "the wound of a spear".

98 Klein-Franke (1972:158) has translated this verse as "I kneaded it (the wound) with the palms of my hands and widened the opening, so that there could be seen what lay behind it (i.e. so that one could look right through it)"; used with permission of Brill, from *Journal of Arabic Literature*: "The Ḥamāsa of Abū Tammām: part two", Felix Klein-Franke, vol. 3, 1972; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. See also Lane (1863), s.v. *anhara*, "it [blood] flowed like a river". There are other variations on the verse: for example, in al-Marzūqī (2003), the second hemistich has been transmitted as *yurā qāʾiman*, implying that through it can be seen what is stationed on the other side (he has cited from al-Aṣmaʿī, in support of this view); whereas al-Tibrīzī (above) has transmitted the second hemistich as *yarā qāʾimun*, suggesting that the person standing before the victim is actively looking through the wound, rather than being seen. According to al-Marzūqī, the verse can also mean assuming dominance over someone, while use of the word *anhartu* implies the action of "stretching the wound so wide that it is like a river".

99 In al-Marzūqī (2003), Khidāsh is Zuhayr.

100 See Lane (1863), s.v. *ḍarūs* and *ḥarb ḍarūs*, meaning "devouring, biting war or vehement war". "Grinding war" is most accurate.

101 See Lane (1863), s.v. *atbaʿa* and *atbiʿ al-dalwa rishāʾa-hā*, meaning "make thou its rope to follow the bucket", an expression of drunken generosity. In al-Marzūqī, *aṣṭabaḥtu* has been replaced with *sharibtu*.

102 In al-Marzūqī (2003), *lā tulfa* has been replaced by *lā tabqa*, implying that "no need upon me remains".

103 See al-Zamakhsharī (2012), s.v. *thāʾ-alif-rāʾ*; this particular verse has been cited to explain

Qays was a noble chief of the Aws tribe, and two background *khabar*, from *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, explain that he composed this poem after taking his vengeance upon the two different men that he held responsible for killing his father, al-Khaṭīm, and his grandfather, ʿAdī, this loss blighting his early boyhood (al-Iṣfahānī 2002:3:5–6). The narratives differ in naming the assassins, and in ascribing a particular agent to one death or the other, but they concur when explaining that Qays had a companion in arms, Khidāsh b. Zuhayr, who assisted him. Al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the poem contains nine verses, which can be broken down into three sections: (1) the first three verses describe the bloody wound that Qays has inflicted upon his enemy; (2) verses 4 to 6 portray Qays and his boon companion plundering enemy property and dividing up the spoils of war; and (3) verses 7 to 9 speak of liquidity and liberality, as the means for replenishment of the tribe and settlement of the blood debt. Therefore, this analysis addresses several complementary perspectives: one of inflicting an injury to restore honour; another of settling debt through the seizure of property; a third of settling a score through the drinking of blood; and, finally, as a conflict between the forces of light and dark. The extended version contains further implications of vengeance.

1.5.2.1 Inflicting an Injury to Restore Honour: Body Parts as Tokens of Value

The use of body parts as proxies for value as well as idioms to communicate the language of honour and disgrace, during times of conflict, is widely prevalent in the literature, letters and scripture of antiquity, where the body frequently serves as a metaphor for unity and division of the body politic (Finney 2012:183). Blood is a measure of honour, but desecration of the human body can also compound an insult, or add value to disgrace. Marx (2008:121) employed "surplus value" as a term to explain how incremental value can accrue from the production process. The mechanics of Jahili blood vengeance suggest that "surplus value" can also accumulate during the process of destruction. The first two lines, of *Ḥ*37, albeit gory, introduce the theme of possession that follows on from a revenge killing. Qays, as persona, punctures his opponent, he debilitates him, by driving his spear through to the other side of him, he seizes the wound, and possibly he tears out the rot. There is also a suggestion that he behaves like a physician performing a necessary operation that transforms

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the concept of "a retaliatory killing for a close relation"; *wa-tha'artu ḥamīmī wa-bi-ḥamīmī idhā qatalta qātila-hu*, i.e. "[you might say] "*tha'artu* (*bi-*)" my close relation if you had killed his killer".

the cavity, and floods a fatal wound with blood, or light. Verse 3, concluding the surgical section of the poem, introduces the common Jahili trope of "eyes" belonging to "nurses", for the "wounds" that Qays inflicts on his opponent are such a terrible affliction, they repel the sight. Qays, as surgeon, performs an operation, which the "nurses" (*al-awāsī*) and his own tribe (named after Aws) witness.

In verse 4, Khidāsh, Qays' boon companion, is an agent of injury.[104] In verse 5, it is likely that the word root *sīn-bā'* conveys the action of "wounding" as well as "disgrace", for Qays states that he cannot be injured without retaliating in kind.[105] The use of body imagery as a proxy for value runs through verse 6, this referring to "teeth" as metaphor for a war that chews and spit out the enemy.[106] Choice of the word *muwakkal* decrees that Qays is this war's "prosecutor", but, in association with "teeth", it also plays upon *mu'ākil*, so meaning that Qays "takes and devours the possessions of men".[107] In other words, eating (and drinking) are the means of investing and divesting value from one tribe to another, via consumption of the body (and blood). Such an analogy is unsurprising and goes to the root of metaphorical representations of value. In his own study of vampire narratives, McNally (2011:118–120) has stated that the process of capital accumulation and the dissection of the human body are conceptually consistent, reflecting what Marx called a "primitive", or a "pre-history" of capitalism that:

> involves attending to Marx's persistent use of body imagery in his account of the commodity and to the dialectical reversals of the material and the immaterial that he locates at the very heart of value.

1.5.2.2 Settling a Debt through the Seizure of Property

Verse 4 begins the process of apportioning the property of the enemy between Qays and Khidāsh, the former stating his debt claim upon his foe and how this is discharged. Not only does Qays claim the right to blood vengeance as settlement but he also demands compensation in the form of property. The term *fa-addā niʿmatan*, or "he carried out a favour", can mean "he paid a boon", so reinforcing the notion of a debt payment.

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104 See Wehr (1979), *khadsh* (pl. *akhdāsh*) meaning "scratch(es)".

105 See Lane (1863), s.v. *sabbahu*, meaning "he reviled him, he wounded him, he pierced him".

106 See translation note, for verse 6.

107 See Lane (1863), s.v. *mu'ākil*.

1.5.2.3 Restoring Honour through the Drinking of Blood

Classical Arabic vocabulary has many lexical uses, particularly within verse that very succinctly conveys a multitude of meanings. In verse 6, although *al-ḍarūs* first and foremost conveys the "devouring" nature of war, al-Tibrīzī (2000) has concluded that Qays compares himself to the strong "stone wall casing" that is erected, like "teeth", around the mouth of a well.[108] Unpacking the word root *sīn-bā'*, in verse 5, generates the nouns *sababu* and *sibbu*, that means a "well-rope",[109] so foreshadowing the action of drinking and descriptions of a well, in verse 7. Qays' similarity to a well means that he is a source of strength and generosity to his tribe, by giving succour. Verse 7 conveys the notion of exchange, for Qays' strength is sustained not only through his own resources of honour but by the errant tribe's blood. Alternatively, and as per Jamil's (2017:106, 114) interpretation of *muruwwa*, this hero confronts the Fates through withdrawal and replenishment of a store of virtue that the well here symbolises:[110]

> … if the 'bank' of community power is a heritage that affords the living 'waters' upon which to draw to preserve or assert themselves, and if maintaining this vital resource requires virtue, then actions may be conceptualised as the drawing and wielding of 'liquid force', whilst virtue should serve as guarantor of the life-supply.

The symbol of a well also binds together other images of drinking and liquidity that recur throughout the poem. In verse 2, a liberal flow of blood pours from a wound that Qays "stretches wide like a river". Already alluded to, verse 3 contains a homonym that is *'uyūna-l-awāsī*, meaning not only the "nurses' eyes" nor the "eyes of the Aws" but also the "springs of the Aws tribe", this implying that Qays' action refills the Aws' wells with honour that has poured out from the wounds of the enemy. Incidentally, *'uyūn* can also mean "ready money", or "gold", meaning that this well is the repository of tribal wealth.[111] In other words, Qays stakes his claim in blood, in ready currency, and in property. In

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108 See al-Tibrīzī (2000:139):

الضَّرُوس: الشديدة، من ضَرْس البئر، وهو طيُّها بالحجارة، ويُروَى (العَوَان) وهي التي قوتل فيها مرّةً بعد مرّة.

109 See Lane (1863), s.v. *sababu* and *sibbu*.

110 Quotation from *Ethics and poetry in sixth-century Arabia*, Nadia Jamil; © The E.J. Gibb Memorial Trust and Nadia Jamil 2017; reproduced with permission of Edinburgh University Press Limited through PLSclear.

111 See Lane (1863), s.v. *'uyūn*, s. *'ayn*, meaning "eyes", "springs", "ready money", or "gold".

Jahili poetry, liquid virtues are distilled in water, blood, milk and wine. Within the broader context of generosity, verse 7 refers to a common morning drinking habit that occurs before a raid.[112]

1.5.2.4 The Battle between Light and Dark

In the introductory verse (of *Ḥ*37), radiating blood, or light permeates a man's wound, this feeding into another theme that is a battle between the forces of light and darkness. What is implicit behind the wound's appearance of radiance, is sight of the "sun rays", *al-shuʿāʿ*, the vocalisation of which varies from *al-shaʿāʿ*. In his commentary, al-Marzūqī (2003) has explained that although *al-shaʿʿu wa-l-shaʿāʿu* can sometimes convey the action of "dispersal of people", this occurring during a raid, this particular verse states that the subject smites a man with the merciless ferocity of an avenging assassin, thereby inflicting a serious wound and causing a cavity that would be illuminated were it not for the profusion of blood; it is as though he said: "If the scattered rays had not been so prevented, then they would have illuminated the cavity". Those commentators who have transmitted the verse with a different pronunciation, *al-shuʿāʿu*, have implied that it is sunlight that is the source of illumination. In view of this interpretation, if blood can be as illuminating as sunlight, as the opening verse would suggest, then *Ḥ*37 draws moral equivalence between bloodshed and revelation. Because the blood vengeance poem reflects a system of justice, this verse demonstrates how more earthly matters integrate with a cosmic battle between the forces for light and darkness, good and evil. The message is subtle but nevertheless has powerful implications for subsequent periods.[113]

1.5.2.5 Further Implications of the Extended Version

The extended version of this poem, from Qays' *Dīwān*, contains a *nasīb* opening, for which Qays remembers Laylā and brags about his sexual prowess, and a *fakhr* closing, in which he praises his own martial skills, his protective powers towards the women of his own tribe, and the threat he poses to the women of enemy tribes.[114] However, it is also possible that this lady, Laylā, not only represents the beloved but also the "Lilith" archetype,[115] a motif that acts in opposi-

112 See Section 1.4.8. ʿAmr b. Kulthūm's antagonistic *Muʿallaqa* opens with a drinking scene.

113 For example, "The al-Afshīn Poem", in Section 4.3.2, will refer to fire as illuminating so as to justify the action of burning.

114 The Appendix contains version and translation of the full poem.

115 Jewish folklore associates "Lilith" with the "night" (Britannica 2018): she was an elemental woman, or demon, who refused to conform to male desire and so was the antithesis of Eve; she also has roots in Mesopotamian legend.

tion to the Jahili hero and becomes the object of his retaliation. Any mention of the feminine "Laylā", in Jahili poetry, while initially suggestive of "lost love", can also imply something quite different. This may be a "ghoulish act of treachery", usually gendered female, or alternatively it can refer to "Umm Laylā", an epithet for "wine" and intoxication (Jamil 2017:192–193). In view of this, righting a wrong is sometimes presented as a gendered combat, the male principal of virtue conquering the female principal of upheaval (Jamil 2017:194–195, 207). Versification of rape as an act of vengeance is usually absent from Jahili poetry. However, the concluding verse of Qays' poem suggests that an act of aggression is committed against the enemy tribe and its women, a form of revenge that goes beyond the institutional requirements of blood vengeance:

Tadhakkara Laylā ḥusna-hā wa-ṣafā'a-hā

18 وإناّ مَنَعْنَا في بُعَاثٍ نساءنا وما مَنَعَتْ مِ الْمُخْزِياتِ نِساءَها

18 Verily, we defended our women, on the Day of Buʿāth, and they did not defend their women from disgraceful acts

Much has been written about the code of chivalry and the protected status of women, in Jahili poetry, and so suggesting otherwise is contentious.[116] In view of an absence of adequate documentary evidence, this conclusion does not negate the ethical ideal underpinning many poems. Instead, it questions how thoroughly the code of chivalry was practised, while allowing another discussion to take place about the degree to which women have historically borne testimony to violence. On this subject, anthropology and other studies of human behaviour can likely reveal more than can poetry. Veena Das (1995:212) is one who has argued that the female body (as well as the land) is often tied up with notions of kinship, and can "bear permanent witness to the violence" as part of a discourse between men, however her research concerns the Indian Partition, of 1947, and not pre-Islamic Arabia. Chapter Five will more thoroughly discuss rape as a weapon of war, through analysis of an Abbasid poem by Abū Tammām, so confirming that retaliation against women sometimes occurred within a similar poetic and geographical landscape, if not the same time period.

116 See Section 2.5.4.3 for an example from folklore, concerning the War of al-Basūs, in which Bakr women are humiliated. See also Section 1.4.8, on "Wine".

CHAPTER 2

A Folkloric History of Blood Vengeance

2.1 Introduction

In Classical Arabic poetry, the theme of blood vengeance is embedded within a rich complex of ritual practices. As impetus to retaliation, the poetic ritual contains incitement and descriptions of bloodshed, these serving as the means for consolidating tribal identity, but oral literature that is folklore also contains important information about social codes concerning blood vengeance, sacrifice and an associated mythology.[1] The premise of this chapter is that the presence of the blood vengeance theme, in storytelling, not only qualifies as entertainment but likely reflects its historical practice, for the very act of relaying tales both repeats and cements an ideology that underlies the narrative. Because anecdotal evidence was originally oral and only documented much later, it is not possible to categorically prove that blood vengeance took place during the Jahiliyya. However, retrospective narratives can at least confirm a cultural context for the practice of blood vengeance. Moreover, these stories weave an imaginative history that remains a powerful tool for shaping tradition.

If a book is a form of journey, then this one continues with a popular folktale about blood vengeance, originating from the pre-Islamic period. The story of *al-Zīr Sālim: Abū Laylā al-Muhalhil* is an heroic tale, both orally conceived and widely thought to draw upon an event that is the War of al-Basūs, a forty year conflict between two tribes, preceding the inception of Islam by a century. Among other battles, a similar narrative is transmitted via another source, *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, this collating a pre-history of the Arabs. The Folktale is vivid in its depiction of Jahili rituals, these indicating social customs of the period, while the *Ayyām* confirms aspects of the story, although its own historical authenticity is unreliable, this leading Klein-Franke (1971:23) to suggest that the War of al-Basūs narrative is either misappropriated or entirely fictitious. A discussion will then follow, concerning the ritual aspects of folklore and myth creation, before comparing blood vengeance with sacrifice.

1 "Folklore" is widely understood to be a form of storytelling, but anthropologists sometimes prefer "oral literature" as a term.

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2.2 Storytelling as Documentary

2.2.1 Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim

The recurring terms "Folktale", or "Anonymous",[2] will refer to a Lebanese variant of *Qiṣṣat al-zīr Sālim*, "The Tale of Sālim, the Ladies' Man", that is undated and unattributed, but consistent anecdotally with a Syrian manuscript called *Sīrat al-zīr Sālim* (Matar 2005). The Folktale possesses particular literary features identifying it as folkloric, including: (1) the framing of smaller tales within tales; (2) the use of magical instruments of prophecy (crones, dreams, sand); (3) the suspension of time (al-Muhalhil never seems to age); and (4) the use of certain repetitive motifs (lions, drinking and animal sacrifice). The plot-line, to be elaborated upon shortly, concerns an epic adventure about the titular character, al-Muhalhil, who goes on a journey, faces many trials, fights several wars and then returns back home.

2.2.2 Ayyām al-ʿArab

In the Arabic tradition, folklore and history are intertwined, a coupling much in evidence in *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, or "The [Battle] Days of the Arabs", that is a collection which many regard as an historical source for the study of pre-Islamic Arabia. As a set of "accounts", or "reports" that are commonly known as *akhbār* (s. *khabar*), the *Ayyām* follows in an ancient Near and Middle Eastern tradition of recording history as legend and epic. This practice dates back to the fifteenth century BCE, at least, prose narratives making use of the third person so as to distinguish the historical elements of a complex story employing legend, while including codes of conduct (wisdom literature) to instruct an audience about acceptable and undesirable behaviour (Archi 1995:2370–2373). Anecdotes from the *Ayyām* concern battles of varying duration and importance that occurred in Arabia, in the two hundred or so years prior to the foundation of Islam. The form of these narratives is a combination of prose and poetry, the poems giving voice to the protagonists of battle, the prose placing these poems within their situational context (Oller 2005:233). Within an epic cycle, the battles are ordered according to the principle of tribal grouping, but, less formally, they are also categorised by reference to a central character responsible for driving forward the action (Oller 2005:235–236). The "War of al-Basūs" is a battle cycle within the *Ayyām*, but it is also the story of al-Muhalhil, a warrior-poet and bon vivant. The widespread popularity of this particular story means that some names, like "Kulayb" and "al-Basūs", have become proverbial; these two

2 "Anonymous n.d." refers to citations from the Folktale.

are used as expressions of "might" and "the sinister, or inauspicious" (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih 2013:6:70):

... قالت العرب: أعز من كليب وائل ... تقول العرب: أشأم من سراب، وأشأم من البسوس!

... The Arabs said: Mightier than Kulayb Wā'il ... the Arabs say: More sinister that Sarāb, and more sinister than al-Basūs!

Names, in the *akhbār*, are invested with great importance, both as a means of providing information about the genealogy of tribes, and in order to identify the reliability of witnesses along a narrative chain of transmission. A "chain of transmission", or *isnād* (pl. *asānīd*), is a literary attribution, preferably from a reputable source, that can corroborate a narrative. Typically, a narrative is delivered with a "bill of lading" that tracks details of its journey from witness to recipient. If information can also be gleaned about the reputation of transmitters and when they lived, then a long list of transmission may indicate that a story is very old, or that it is authentic, but when it is unconfirmed by wholly independent sources along a chain, then a narrative remains unreliable. The term, *isnād*, is most frequently associated with hadith, another type of "narrative" detailing the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muḥammad. Medieval scholars saw such a chain of transmission as critical to the study of Islam as well as being a means of separating truth from falsehoods (Brown 2009:3–4). By their relation to *akhbār*, the study of associated *asānīd* is worthy of further analysis, although beyond the scope of this chapter. It is sufficient to state that the *akhbār* are collaborative reports arranged by different authors in such a way that their documentation occurred long after their original oral composition (Leder 1992:281). Compilers such as al-Iṣfahānī, in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, have then collated and transmitted *akhbār* as anecdotes dependent upon *asānīd* by different narrators, these both disparate and similar (Leder 1992:280–281).

The original manuscript containing the collected *Ayyām al-ʿArab* is a legendary text, frequently alluded to, but which no longer exists. Instead, it has been assimilated into subsequent books including *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd, Amthāl al-ʿArab*, and various poetry anthologies, or other proverbial sources. This chapter will refer to *akhbār* about the War of al-Basūs, in Volume 5, of *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, Volume 6, of *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, al-Tibrīzī's commentary to *Ḥamāsiyya* 315, and a contemporary integrated version of the principal texts by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (2013:115–145). The *Ayyām*'s principal author is most likely a second/eighth to third/ninth-century Abbasid polymath called Abū ʿUbayda

(Oller 2005:234).[3] He is believed to have documented the narratives contained within, using a couple of sources that have since been lost. Others composers of *akhbār* include Ibn al-Kalbī, whom Shady Nasser (2009:247) has described as acting as the story filler.[4] By way of an example, al-Iṣfahānī (2002:5:24) transmitted the epic cycle that is the "War of al-Basūs", in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, by stating that it originates from Abū ʿUbayda,[5] adding for good measure that it includes a contrasting account from Ibn al-Kalbī.[6] By citing all the authorial sources, al-Iṣfahānī has demonstrated scholarship and distanced himself from discrepancies in the narratives. Far from being random, the *akhbār* contain a distinct narrative strategy that combines the relaying of facts with storytelling (Leder 1992:278–279). This encourages the reader to adopt a correspondent strategy involving the comparison and the contrast of narratives, so as to form an understanding of an account. Through this process, the same reader becomes complicit in the chain of transmission, albeit several steps further along the chain. Invariably, any transmitter in the chain conveys a story according to a particular perspective and so the lens effect (and any accompanying distortions that different transmitters have had upon the text) is very difficult to measure. Consequently, a lengthy process of transmission can have two outcomes: greater variation in material; but also heightened perspective when looked at from above (Leder 1992:304).

2.2.3 *A Critical Assessment of the* Ayyām *as an Historical Source*

In Arabic literary criticism, the *Ayyām* is frequently seen as all good things: a compendium of historical events; an extraordinary source of storytelling; an exemplary study in prose, poetry and wisdom literature; and the go-to for eloquence of speech (Ibrāhīm 2013:5). As enthusiast, Ibrāhīm (2013:5) has even claimed that it is as artistic as it is truthful, in its description of exemplary Bedouin virtues such as *ḥamāsa*. This is somewhat confusing, but suggests that the collection is a "Sylvan historian", i.e. the Grecian urn that by virtue of its beauty speaks the truth of its time.[7]

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3 Muʿammar b. al-Muthannā.

4 Among others, the principal historical sources of *akhbār* are al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. 168–178/784–794), Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204–206/819–821), Abū ʿUbayda (d. 210/825) and al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967), who unified the accounts and from whom other accounts derive (Nasser 2009: 245).

5 Via Muqātil al-Aḥwal b. Sinān b. Marthad b. ʿAbd b. ʿAmr b. Bishr b. ʿAmr b. Marthad, the brother of Banī Qays b. Thaʿlaba.

6 Via Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās al-Yazīdī, via his uncle ʿUbayd Allāh via Ibn Ḥabīb, via Ibn al-ʿArabī, via al-Mufaḍḍal.

7 From "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (Keats 2000[1820]:65–66).

In western literary criticism, by contrast, the historical accuracy of the *Ayyām* is regarded as suspect. Werner Caskel (1930; cited in Retsö 2004:113–114) first identified the literary character of the *Ayyām* narratives, and questioned their qualification as documentary reporting, by providing examples of literary features that include: (1) folkloric stock motifs that are deployed repetitively, but in different contexts within short stories and epic cycles; (2) epic cycles designed to glorify ancestral lineage and convey Jahili ideology, particularly the codes of honour and blood vengeance; and (3) embellishment in the characterisation of heroes and the descriptiveness of battle scenes. Nicholson (1930:100) wrote an engaging and abridged version of the *Ayyām*, in translation, in which he described the literary history of the Arabs, the proud boasts and the battles as a process of building "ancestral renown", integral to the tribal institution of honour. As such, for Jan Retsö (2004:114), the *akhbār* are historical records only insofar as they account for the names of individuals, tribes and battles. He has proposed that narratives within the *Ayyām* are unreliable because they romanticise a turbulent period in Arab history, and do not really take into account the broader political context that likely drove feuding in the Jahiliyya, thereby suggesting that the *akhbār* are originally tribal anecdotes localising the broader clashes between the titan states of Persia, Byzantium and Abyssinia, and their client states, in Syria, Yemen and Iraq (Retsö 2004:112).[8] According to this view, the Jahili Bedouin was driven by necessity because he was living in an unstable world made up of conflicting allegiances to his surrounding superpowers. In his own assessment of the *Ayyām*, Alfred-Louis de Prémare (1999:341–351) has suggested that narratives resemble an historical novel, in which battles and their respective heroes conform to stock characters, or stereotypes, and so their authenticity is questionable. Stefan Leder (2005:126) has seen the *Ayyām* as a form of storytelling that contains more realistic features than folklore, but still draws on facts in unreliable ways. He has described one of its narrative strategies as a series of variant stories that are connected by recurrent motifs and a recast set of characters. Because signs within the narratives "sometimes contain elements of prophecy", this consolidates their speculative quality (Leder 2005:133). The creators of the *akhbār* have been motivated to tell stories that mirror a particular set of values, for which they have employed popular folkloric devices, rather than report them factually. Walter Oller (2005:253–254) has been less dismissive of the *Ayyām's* historical veracity, while indicating that the *akhbār* have transformed broader historical events into personalised nar-

8 In his book tracing the advent of Islam and its aftermath, Tom Holland (2012) has suggested that this political decline caused a power vacuum, in central Arabia, that was the catalyst for the growth of a new religion and political order.

ratives, thereby suggesting that character flaws are the drivers of conflict, rather than economic and political rivalries between tribes competing for power and influence.

What this amounts to is that the *Ayyām* is contrary; a collection of witness statements that are unreliable, but at the same time revealing. The series itself, constructed as it is of epic cycles, can provide some clues about its origins in time because, according to Vladimir Propp (1984:53–54), folklore that is tribal in origin (and has predated the formation of centralised government) can almost be carbon dated, by identifying key markers that coincide with its own period that subsequently adapt in later variants.[9] These witness statements should not be underestimated, for their power lies in creating a foundation myth for Arabia, one rooted in the Jahiliyya, while the battle poetry and folkloric variants of the heroic narratives belong to a ritual process of repetition.

2.3 The Plot of the War of al-Basūs

2.3.1 *The Folktale*

The First Revenge: The folkloric story of *Abū Laylā al-Muhalhil*, or *al-Zīr Sālim*, is dynastic and set in the Jahiliyya, which is to say that events occur at the turn of the sixth century. It begins with the story of Rabīʿa al-Taghlibī, a leader of the Banī Qays, who refuses to submit to Yemeni conquest of north Arabia. Following his beheading by al-Tubbaʿ Ḥassān, his brother, Murra, acquiesces to Yemeni rule and accepts token governorship of Lebanon. When Ḥassān attempts to seal this alliance through marriage to Murra's daughter, al-Jalīla, he arouses the wrath of Wā'il Kulayb, the eldest son of Rabīʿa, who is her patrilineal cousin and to whom she is betrothed. The aggrieved Kulayb exacts his vengeance upon Ḥassān for the death of his father, with the help of Murra and the Bakr tribe.

Counter-Revenge: Like his own father, Kulayb assumes the kingship, making him responsible for the prosperity of the Taghlib and Bakr tribes, a position that he manages wisely. Unfortunately, al-Jalīla and her family feel threatened by his brother, al-Muhalhil, and conspire against him. However, al-Muhalhil proves to be a natural survivor and overcomes a series of tests. Although fiercely loyal to

9 The epic cycles of the *Ayyām* are believed to originate in tribal Arabia prior to the formation of the Islamic Caliphate. Strictly speaking, Propp's argument for carbon dating accords with the folklore and epic poetry of the central Asian states of the former Soviet Union. Arabic poetry is not epic poetry, by definition, and so these conclusions can only be extended with reservation.

Kulayb, he eventually leaves home. During his absence, Kulayb becomes vulnerable to duplicity and betrayal. Ḥassān's sister, al-Basūs, appears on the scene to exact vengeance for her brother's death, ingratiating herself with Murra's son, Jassās, who clearly envies his cousin. She engineers a ruse, in which her she-camel then trespasses onto Kulayb's property and is killed by him, this action effectively severing the hospitality contract between the Bakr and the Taghlib. Upon death, the mixing of the she-camel's blood with her milk signifies pollution and disgrace, and also the ruination of livelihood because of the high net worth of such mounts for sustenance, companionship and transportation across intractable terrain.[10] The now incensed al-Basūs incites Jassās into murdering Kulayb, impressing upon him that because she is his guest he is duty bound to restore her honour. Jassās complies, but immediately regrets his impetuosity, so granting Kulayb his last request for a drink of water.

Blood Revenge as War Cycle: When the Bakr tribe fails to offer up Jassās' life as compensation for Kulayb's murder, in the ambitious hope that he will inherit the same man's title, the surrounding tribes are thrown into a period of civil war that endures for forty-years. During this time al-Muhalhil usually triumphs in battle, and hence acts as regent. War is prolonged because Jassās manages to elude justice for its duration. Without the requisite requital payment, al-Muhalhil swears to wipe out the Bakr, following incitement by Kulayb's daughter, al-Yamāma (Anonymous n.d.:59):

al-Yamāma's Incitement 1

مـات أبـي فـي طعـن القنـا غدر به جساس ذا الكلب المشؤم
وأنت اليوم جالس في صفاك يـا مهلهـل بالعجـل انهـض وقـوم
يا مهلهل ضاقت الدنيا عليّ وسقانـي البيـن كاسـات السمـوم

My father died by the spear's thrust // betrayed by Jassās that vile dog
And today you are sitting there being complacent // O Muhalhil make haste, rise up and take a stand
O Muhalhil the world has become too narrow for me // for separation has given me bitter cups of poison to drink

Kulayb's daughter demands the impossible, the revival of her father, and so as long as Jassās lives, recompense for Kulayb's death appears to be irredeemable (Anonymous n.d.:99):

10 See Section 1.4.7, for wider associations of milk with kinship.

al-Yamāma's Incitement 2

أنا لا أصالح حتى يعيش أبونا ونراه راكب يريد لقاكم

I will not make peace until our father lives // and we see him mounted
demanding your encounter

Still overwhelmed by grief, al-Yamāma also rejects her pregnant mother, who moves back to the Bakr family seat and raises a son, in secret. Meanwhile, al-Muhalhil atones for Kulayb's death by way of a massive campaign of blood vengeance against the Bakr. During this time, he is seriously injured, presumed dead and thrown into the sea, after which he re-emerges to fight against the Byzantines, before resuming his campaign against the Bakr. The revenge cycle is finally broken when Kulayb's son, al-Jarw (al-Hijris), realises his true identity and becomes the revived Kulayb, so to speak. He renounces his kinship with the Bakr, turns on his former guardian, Jassās, and stabs him. His uncle, al-Muhalhil, decapitates the body, and the ritualistic nature of the killing culminates in al-Muhalhil drinking the victim's blood, and al-Jarw eating his flesh (Anonymous n.d.:122).[11] Thereafter, the Bakr tribe are further humiliated and disperse.

2.3.2 *The* Akhbār

The *akhbār* provides an alternative version of the story. Kulayb Wā'il b. Rabī'a is the proud ruler of Ma'add, after expelling the Yemenites and appropriating the crown. However, he becomes tyrannical and neglects his duty of care towards his extended family, denying them equal access to water and pasture. Matters come to a head when Jassās, Kulayb's brother-in-law, is paid a visit by his maternal aunt, al-Basūs, who is accompanied by her prized camel, Sarāb. When Sarāb strays into the grazing compound of Kulayb's camels, Kulayb pierces her udder with an arrow, causing her to bolt. Jassās, accompanied by his cousin,[12] then confronts Kulayb. Accusing him of violating the covenant of protection, the two men stab Kulayb from the front and back, and deny him his last request, a drink of water.

After Kulayb's death, the Bakr move to another area beside a watercourse. Kulayb's brother, al-Muhalhil, prepares for war against the Bakr, renouncing drink, women and gambling.[13] He sends men to Murra b. Dhuhl b. Shaybān so

11 Section 2.5.4.2 will provide a citation from the text.

12 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith b. Dhuhl b. Shaybān.

13 See Section 1.4.8, for ritual abstinence during blood vengeance.

as to seek recompense for Kulayb's death, this requiring the fulfilment of one of four conditions: (1) to revive Kulayb;[14] (2) to offer up Jassās' life in recompense; (3) to offer up Hammām's life which has parity;[15] or (4) to kill Murra. In response, Murra states that: (1) reviving Kulayb from the dead is impossible; (2) Jassās has acted impulsively and has fled to some unknown place; (3) Hammām is the father of ten, the brother of ten and the uncle of ten, who will not be forsaken by his people; and (4) he, himself, is already so old that he will soon be ready for the grave. Instead, he offers the life of any of his other sons (blood), or a thousand black camels (milk), but this counter-offer offends the Banī Taghlib, leading them to wholeheartedly refuse what they consider to be insufficient recompense for Kulayb's blood. Kulayb's wife returns to her father's house, and war ensues. As in the Folktale, al-Hijris eventually avenges his father's death. Unlike the Folktale, he also reunites the Bakr and Taghlib tribes through marriage to Jassās' daughter.

Throughout the narratives, al-Muhalhil lays out the blood vengeance code, in verse. His poetry and back story are particularly noteworthy because they form a model, from which parallels can readily be drawn, no less so than in two *Muʿallaqa* poems, by ʿAmr b. Kulthūm and Imruʾ al-Qays b. Hujr, the former his alleged grandson and the latter his nephew (Nasser 2009:243).[16] As Chapter One has described, the prototypical war of two tribes, Bakr and Taghlib, represents the breakdown in the original hospitality contract and its substitution with the blood feud.

2.3.3 *The* Ḥamāsa *Version*

In the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām, there are five *ḥamāsiyyāt* concerning the War of al-Basūs; *Ḥamāsiyya* 2 and 177, by al-Find al-Zimmānī, *Ḥamāsiyya* 168, by Saʿd b. Mālik, *Ḥamāsiyya* 169, by Jaḥdar b. Ḍubayʿa, and *Ḥamāsiyya* 315 (Klein-Franke 1971:24).[17] Unlike the first four poems belonging to the chapter on *ḥamāsa*, *Ḥ*315 is a lament for Kulayb, by al-Muhalhil:[18]

14 This condition is not cited in the *Aghānī*, but is transmitted in *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*.

15 Hammām is Jassas' brother and also al-Muhalhil's boon companion.

16 See Section 1.4.8, and also a footnote, in Section 5.4.1.

17 These poem numberings correspond to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and coincide with *Ḥ*2, *Ḥ*176, *Ḥ*167, *Ḥ*168 and *Ḥ*315, in al-Marzūqī's (2003). Section 1.4.5 has already referred to verse 4, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 2. This chapter makes only limited reference to the other *ḥamāsiyyāt*.

18 Al-Muhalhil composed it in the *kāmil* metre, with the end rhyme in *sīn*, ending *-sū*. The medieval commentator, al-Marzūqī (2003), has transmitted only the first two verses.

*Ḥ*315

1	نُبِّئْتُ أنَّ النَّارَ بَعْدَكَ أُوقِدَتْ	واسْتَبَّ بَعْدَكَ يَا كُلَيْبُ المَجْلِسُ
2	وَتَكَلَّمُوا فِي أمْرِ كُلِّ عَظِيمَةٍ	لَوْ كُنْتَ شَاهِدَهُمْ بِهَا لَمْ يَنْبِسُوا
3	وَإذَا تَشَاءُ رَأَيْتَ وَجْهًا وَاضِحًا	وَذِرَاعَ بَاكِيَةٍ عَلَيْهَا بُرْنُسُ
4	تَبْكِي عَلَيْكَ ولَسْتُ لائِمَ حُرَّةٍ	تَأْسَى عَلَيْكَ بَعَبْرَةٍ وَتَنَفَّسُ

1 I have been made to announce that the fire, after you, has been lit // and after you, O Kulayb, the assembly have reviled one another

2 And they have conversed, upon the matter of every disaster // for which, had you been present among them, they would not have uttered a word

3 And whenever you so will, you would see a face uncovered // and the forearm of a weeping woman, upon her a mourning shroud

4 She weeps for you and I am no censurer of a free woman // she grieves for you with tears and sighs

*Ḥ*315 genders the grieving process and in so doing reveals that the emotional response to Kulayb's death involves squabbling among men, and the shedding of tears by women. In the War of al-Basūs narratives, more generally, the anger and sorrow of grief are ritually released through vengeance and weeping. More recently, Lila Abu Lughod (1999[1986]:197), an anthropologist, has observed this same phenomenon in an Egyptian Bedouin community, explaining that: (1) anger results in compulsion to blame, resembling the desire for vengeance; and (2) sorrow prompts the need to weep and lament, through poetry.[19] On this subject of gender, and as pretext to *Ḥ*315, al-Tibrīzī (2000) has specified that female poetic incitement was provocation for Jassās to retaliate, this leading to Kulayb's death. This incitement is more formally known as *al-Muwaththibāt*, or "the Instigators":[20]

19 Her study has focussed upon the Bedouin of the Western Desert of Egypt, in the 1970s and 1980s, but has also provided context to their lifestyle.

20 Al-Basūs composed this *tā'iyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*tī*, in the *ṭawīl* metre. Ibrāhīm (2013) has also transmitted these verses. Nicholson (1930:57) has provided an alternative translation in rhyming couplets.

al-Muwaththibāt

1	أيَا سَعْدُ لاَ تُغْرَرْ بِنَفْسِكَ وَاحْتَرِزْ	فَإِنِّيَ فِي قَوْمٍ عَنِ الجَارِ أمْوَاتِ
2	وَدُونَكَ أذْوَادِي إلَيكَ فَإنَّنِي	مُحَاذِرَةٌ أنْ يَغْدِرُوا بِبُنَيَّاتِي
3	لَعَمْرُكَ لَوْ أصْبَحْتُ في دَارِ مِنْقَرٍ	لَمَا ضِيمَ سَعْدٌ وَهْوَ جَارٌ لأَبْيَاتِي
4	وَلكِنَّنِي أصْبَحْتُ في دَارِ مَعْشَرٍ	مَتَى يَعْدُ فِيهَا الذِّئْبُ يَعْدُ عَلَى شَاتِي

1 O Sa'd, do not delude yourself! Beware! // For I am among people who turn their protégé into carrion[21]

2 Take care of my camels, for I am even // fearful that they will behave treacherously towards my little girls

3 Upon your life, had I been in the House of Minqar // Sa'd would not have been harmed while he was a protégé belonging to my own compound

4 However, I was in the house of a community // when the wolf transgresses within it, he attacks my sheep

2.3.4 *Points of Comparison between the Folktale and* Akhbār

The *akhbār* and the Folktale share in common some structural features that Table 2 summarises below. A series of events (marking cooperation, coronation, crises and resolution) drive forward the story-line, but there are also other textual features, so indicating that the *akhbār* and the Folktale are variants of one another. Although their historical accuracy is unreliable, these narratives provide valuable information concerning the practice of blood vengeance during the Jahiliyya, as well as relaying what is commonly believed to have occurred.

Even though there are similarities between the Folktale and the *akhbār*, there are key differences, namely: (1) there is mutability in location, for the *akhbār* focus upon the Arabian peninsula and the Syrian desert, whereas the Folktale incorporates Lebanon and Palestine; (2) the inciter, al-Basūs, is a relative of the Yemeni king, in the Folktale, rather than a relation of the Bakr, in the *akhbār*; (3) agency varies about who is to blame for the war cycle as well as how this is resolved; and (4) the *akhbār* are generally more succinct than the Folk-

21 See Lane (1863), s.v. *amwāt*, s. *mayyit* and *mayta*, meaning "that which has not been slaughtered in the manner prescribed by the law, i.e. carrion". This includes a protected animal, such as the she-camel of al-Basūs, killed by a violent act. What al-Basūs is alternatively saying is: "I am among people who turn their guest's livestock into carrion".

TABLE 2 Events which lead to the war of al-Basūs

Plot development	Shared features
Kinship	Strengthened when Kulayb marries al-Jalīla
Kingship	Kulayb is king of Taghlib and Bakr
Crisis 1: Kinship weakened	Hospitality contract severed when Kulayb slaughters camel of al-Basūs
Crisis 2: Kinship broken	Jassās kills Kulayb
Crisis 3: No negotiation of blood-wit	Jassās escapes justice according to blood vengeance code
Crisis 4: War	Al-Muhalhil swears to wreak vengeance on the Bakr
Resolution and reinstatement of rightful kingship	Blood vengeance achieved – Kulayb's son kills Jassās – peace settlement recognises he is a son of both Taghlib and Bakr

tale. Nasser (2009:250) is one who has treated *akhbār* about the War of al-Basūs as a category distinct from *siyar sha'biyya* concerning al-Muhalhil, where the former are "historical narratives", and the latter are "folktales". In order to draw this conclusion, he has followed in the tradition, conferring authorial integrity on the composers of the *akhbār*, as opposed to the folkloric narratives. He has also argued that although both narratives deploy similar motifs, they vary in how they characterise the protagonists; in the *akhbār*, Kulayb is a bad king, al-Muhalhil is an anti-hero, and Jassās is heroic; in the *sīra*, Kulayb is a good leader, al-Muhalhil is a loyal brother who follows the honour code, and Jassās is a traitor. Unfortunately, this approach ignores the political dimension of the *akhbār* that portrays an ongoing power struggle between two tribes. Retsö (2004:111–118) has examined the *Ayyām* from a local standpoint, opining that its victorious tribes were conveniently the antecedents of a political elite governing at the time its author was commissioned to write his version of history. Therefore, it is feasible that the *akhbār* about the War of al-Basūs are prejudicial narratives that depict characters in a particular way so as to serve a political agenda. In view of their bias, this chapter will treat these *akhbār* as folkloric variants containing more realistic features than does the Folktale, while considering the Folktale as a culturally historic document. Since "folktales" subvert the reality of "historical narratives" (such as the *akhbār*), by reflecting events as these are perceived by another group, or "class", these cannot be treated purely as fiction (Propp 1984:17, 120). Questioning the veracity of the *akhbār* about

the War of al-Basūs is by no means a dismissal of their content for it is likely that they fall along a spectrum of truth. Legends and tales are derived from real events, actual people and recognisable cultural values. As such, they concern themselves with epic sagas, genealogy, battles and migration (Propp 1984:50). In this case, the *akhbār* are cautionary tales, or "mirrors for princes", describing a ruler who is killed because he favours his own tribe above others, while his brother is an example of unrestrained excess.

2.3.5 *"Drink" as a Folkloric Motif in the* Akhbār

> The Jahili Arabs believed that dead men in their graves become owls and, if a man's killing was unavenged by his kinsmen, then the owls would rise from the earth crying, 'Give me to drink! Give me to drink!' (Irwin 1999:2)

"Drink" is a distinctive and prolific motif in poetry about blood vengeance that usually satiates the "thirst for revenge". In the War of al-Basūs narratives, "drink" also indicates hospitality and good relations, so revealing the health of the kinship bond. This is because, historically, it was often associated with the opening and severance of relationships, for example: (1) an ancient drinking ritual promoted non-kinsmen into fellowship with the tribe (Smith 2005:363); (2) Mesopotamian historical records from as far back as the Hittite period have described the hospitality contract as sacred, while bad governance was akin to "drinking the blood of the country" (Archi 1995:2369); (3) in an Egyptian tale about Sinuhe, dating from the nineteenth century BCE, a traveller describes "thirst" as the "taste of death", while another man who offers water and milk as a quencher opens the hospitality contract (Parkinson 1997:29); (4) in ancient Greece, Dionysus was the "god of wine", but originally he was the "god of homicidal fury" (Girard 2005[1972]:141);[22] (5) the Nigerian Ibo also placed high importance upon the ritual function of drink, when opening and severing tribal relations.[23] The following examples of verse from the

22 The "blood vengeance motifs" of "drinking" wine and "dismemberment" are present in the ancient Greek tragedy, *The Bacchae*, when Dionysus wreaks terrible vengeance upon the House of Cadmus because his maternal cousin, King Pentheus of Thebes, refuses to recognise his paternity by Zeus, and to worship him as a god. In a state of Bacchic intoxication and frenzy, Pentheus' mother (Agaue) mistakes him for a threat and rips his body apart, scattering it on the ground with the help of her associates, the Bacchants (Euripides 2005[405 BCE]:156–157).

23 *Things fall apart*, a novel set in the late nineteenth century, reveals that: the hospitality contract opens with a drinking ceremony; a thirst for blood expresses a desire for ven-

akhbār also describe the function of "drink", the first attributed to Saʿd b. Mālik (Ibrāhīm 2013:125):[24]

***Ḥ*168**

الموت غايَتُنَا فلا قَصر ولا عنه جِمَاحُ
وكأنما وِرْدُ المنيّ ـة عندنا ماءٌ وَرَاحُ

Our destination is death, from which there is no // falling short nor escape
The watering place of death // according to us, is like water and wine

By comparing "death" to drinking "water and wine", Saʿd hopes to persuade a pacifist, al-Ḥārith b. ʿUbād, to side with the Bakr, in the War of al-Basūs. As well as demonstrating a willingness to confront death, the verses convey some ambiguity about the reviving powers of bloodshed. Aside from the more obvious associations, it is possible for a description about a campaign of vengeance to transform the motifs of "drink", or "watering", so as to assume mythic proportions, a celebrated example of which is the storm scene from the *Muʿallaqa* of Imru' al-Qays (Stetkevych 1993:227, 279–280). Upon hearing that al-Muhalhil has both killed and insulted his nephew, by comparing his value to a worthless item that is Kulayb's sandal strap, al-Ḥārith then states that Bujayr's slaying has brought about "lamentation" and "heavy rainfall", the latter likely an expression of copiousness, but possibly a metaphor for war (Ibrāhīm 2013:129):[25]

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geance; while drinking palm wine from the head of a decapitated foe reinforces martial ferocity (Achebe 2001[1958]:9, 15).

24 Versions of the same poem, a *ḥāʾiyya* ending in -(*ā*)-*ḥū*, composed in the *kāmil* metre, also appear as *Ḥamāsiyya* 168, as well as featuring in the *Aghānī*, but do not include these two verses.

25 Ibrāhīm's is one version belonging to a *lāmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*lī*, composed in the *khafīf* metre. Shaykhū (1991[1890]:272) has instead transmitted this as:

قُل لِأُمِّ الأَغَرِّ تَبكي بُجَيرًا حيـلَ بَيـنَ الرِجـالِ وَالأَمـوالِ
وَلَعَمـري لَأَبكِيَـنَّ بُجَيـراً ما أتى الماءُ مِن رُؤوسِ الجِبالِ

Tell Umm al-Agharr weeping tears for Bujayr // men have been denied access to [their] properties
Upon my life, I weep as many tears for Bujayr // as the water coming from the mountain tops.

al-Ḥārith's *lāmiyya*

قلْ لأم الأغرِ تبكي بُجَيرا ما أتى الماءُ من رؤوس الجبالِ

Tell Umm al-Agharr, she weeps as many tears for Bujayr // as the water coming from the mountain tops

The verse evokes the name of an agitator; although "Umm al-Agharr" literally means "the mother of the noble one", here the epithet more likely refers to a sister of Kulayb, herself, a Jahili poet (Shaykhū 1897; Muhannā 1990). She is mainly known for her lament for Gharthān, the brother of al-Burāq, that incited the Bakr to avenge him, and so al-Ḥārith's command bears some comparison with its last verse:[26]

Lament for Gharthān

فقلْ لنويرةٍ وكليبَ مهلًا أَقيما إنَّ خزيكما طويلُ

Muhannā 1990:284–285

So tell Nuwayra and Kulayb: Wait! // Take a stand for your disgrace is long

Thereby persuaded to join in the war, al-Ḥārith echoes the sentiment of Saʿd, this time warning the Taghlib that "swallowing a cup of death" is not fearsome for the Bakr, but rather as sweet and "pure as cool water":[27]

al-Ḥārith's *lāmiyya*

يا بني تغلب خذوا الحذر إنّا قد شربنا بكأسِ مَوْتٍ زُلَالِ

O sons of Taghlib beware, for we // have already drunk a pure cup of death

26 Her poem is a *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lū*, composed in the *wāfir* metre.

27 See Lane (1863), s.v. *zulāl*, which means "Cool, or cold, or sweet, clear, or limpid, pure, easy in its descent, that slips into the throat". The translation of *bi-kaʾsi mawtin zulālī* literally means "a cup of death that is like fresh pure water". For metre, see above.

TABLE 3 Use of the "drinking" motif in the war of al-Basūs narrative

Liquid	Incident
Water	Kulayb forbids access to drinking water without his permission
Blood and milk	Kulayb shoots the udder of al-Basūs' camel, and so blood blends with milk
Water	Jassās complains that Kulayb has killed his people with thirst
Water	The dying Kulayb pleads for water to drink
Death	Jassās tells his father, in verse, that he has dealt Kulayb the cup of death
Alcohol	al-Muhalhil forswears the drinking of alcohol, in verse
Milk, or blood	Murra offers 1,000 camels (milk)/(blood of) one of his younger sons, in lieu of the blood of Jassās/Hammām/himself
Death, wine and water	Sa'd declares, in verse, that the drink of death is like wine and water for the Bakr
Water	Hammām is killed by al-Muhalhil, while drinking from his water-skin and well
Water	The first battle between Bakr and Taghlib occurs by water
Tears, rain and death	al-Ḥārith laments his nephew Bujayr, whose death has caused tears and rain. He also refers to drinking from the cup of death
Water	A plot is conceived to defeat the Taghlib, by entrusting Bakr women to lure the enemy with small vessels of drinking water, before clubbing them over the head

Table 3 provides further examples of the use of the "drinking" motif, in the War of al-Basūs *akhbār*. It is worth noting, because Kulayb denies the Bakr water, raging thirst accompanies his death.

2.4 What Is Folklore?

> Folklore: The traditional beliefs, stories, and customs of a community, passed on by word of mouth (*Paperback Oxford English Dictionary* 2006).

Unlike epic poetry, Arabic verse is not narrative in structure and so cannot be classified as such. However, when found *in situ*, *ḥamāsa* poetry and elegy that calls for vengeance are accompanied by *akhbār*, or other media (such as folkloric accounts), these driving forward the narrative and collaborating

together in the creation of an heroic epic. This chapter has already distinguished between the Folktale (pure folklore), and *akhbār* (historical narratives with folkloric features) about the War of al-Basūs, but it has also argued that they are storytelling complements that offer different perspectives on an anecdote. The presence of poetry, in the *akhbār*,[28] as well as multiple voices are traits that defend the treatment of *Ayyām al-ʿArab* as generically complex.

2.4.1 *Approaching a Definition*

At this point, a more theoretical definition of the nature of folklore is required. Vladimir Propp (1984:7, 44), a scholar of the "wondertales" of Russia and the central Asian states, has argued that folklore and epic poetry are variants of one another, also comparing folklore to an ever evolving spoken language with a common audience and authorship, so implying that folklore is highly adaptable to variation, and can also exist as a ritual drama. By extension, then, the War of al-Basūs narratives, their epic grandeur, their folkloric features and their inclusion of verse render them variants of epic poetry. On the other hand, James Frazer (2011:1090), the anthropologist, has described folktales as a "faithful reflection of the world as it appeared to the primitive mind". His suggestion that folkloric knowledge is sincere, but unenlightened is a harsh indictment that is inaccurate,[29] even if the historical value of folklore is limited, or unreliable. Tales are ambiguous because, although they always contain elements of reality, they are also implausible (Propp 1984:17–19).[30] Therefore, folklore can be most useful when it informs about a community's values, in a given period (or stage of development), rather than as a chronicle of actual events (Propp 1984:12–13).

As alluded to, in Section 2.3.4, folktales are also helpful as political documents because they afford another perspective to the established view of an educated elite. The *akhbār* and the Folktale work in dialogue with each other as have broadsheets and tabloid newspapers,[31] the former being officially

28 The Folktale also contains a more accessible form of poetry.

29 In 1817, John Keats (the poet and doctor) coined the term, "Negative Capability", to convey how verse and other forms of literature can help to express, or make sense of that which escapes logic and scientific thought (Britannica 2017).

30 With regard to its base in reality, Propp (1984:38) has stated that all folklore is derived from reality, folklore reflects reality even if this is a poetic representation, and the folklorist aims to represent reality.

31 Tabloid journalism here refers to the "popular press", as opposed to the "smaller format" of newspaper that is replacing former broadsheets. The analogy is limited, in that media corporations increasingly own both the popular press and officially endorsed newspapers, so that both peddle similar views.

endorsed accounts, the latter appealing to popular grievances while subverting understanding about some of the characters, or the underlying causes of events. Chapter One has already expressed that blood vengeance narratives reflect class conflict at its most acute, and therefore that the rituals surrounding blood vengeance can be understood from both political and economic perspectives. In light of this, it is worth drawing attention to two particular arguments of Propp (1984:17, 112, 120) concerning folktales, namely, the identification of: (1) a Marxist dimension concerning class struggle; and (2) economic factors as the drivers behind the formation of specific types of folktales that contain rituals and myths.

2.4.2 *An Ideological Vision of History*

The study of Classical Arabic poetry is also a study of its associated narratives,[32] all of which deliver a common ideology. As such, an ideology can motivate soldiers to fight in order to defend their honour and system of values, and so Propp (1984:14–15) has proposed that (Russian) folklore taps into a community's "strength of spirit", and promotes emotional resilience in conflict. By comparison, it is likely that Arabic folklore also contains important information about Bedouin values such as *ḥamāsa*. One advantage that folklore has over a factual account of battle is that it connects an event to a possibility, rather than a realised outcome. While it may be exaggeration, the dramatisation can be powerful if it captures the imagination, and allows victory to triumph over defeat.[33] This is the standard to which a community aspires, and therefore folklore contains valuable information about what may yet happen. In other words, folklore is propagandistic, while promoting an ideological vision of history. For example, a news item that relays a miserable account of a group that has led successive military campaigns against another, resulting in failure, suggests that the group will eventually concede defeat. However, a folkloric account that depicts the same group facing repeated adversity, but ultimately emerging triumphant, suggests another conclusion entirely, i.e. that this community will persist with a war cycle until the desired outcome is attained. Because of this, the folkloric account is helpful for explaining the phenomenon of perpetual conflict that occurs in epic cycles and vicious circles of blood vengeance. Folklore possesses not only historical value but conveys "evidence of

32 Jonathan Brown (2003:31, 43) has disagreed with this premise, and has instead opined that historical narratives derive from Jahili poetry, while to use them to explain the poetry is a circular argument.

33 "The folktale canon requires that false heroes be put to shame and the real hero exalted" (Propp 1984:26).

continuity in human behaviour through time" (Georges and Jones 1995:67). The Folktale does not end with al-Muhalhil, but is open-ended, continuing with the adventures of Kulayb's son, al-Hijris/al-Jarw. An historical account contains important news about the past as understood in retrospect. A folkloric account, on the other hand, conveys valuable information about aspiration if the outcome of conflict is yet to be fully realised. Historical reports about the Middle East tend to be punctuated by humiliating periods of foreign occupation, whereas folkloric versions resolve armed struggle with optimistic outcomes, in which land will eventually be won over through Arab forbearance and resistance. The evolution of the tale that is *Qiṣṣat al-zīr Sālim* demonstrates folklore's ability to hope and dream, by drawing upon events beyond its own Jahili time frame, an example of which is when the Yemeni king, Ḥassān, foretells the history of the Arabs as his last will and testament before he is executed by Kulayb (Anonymous n.d.:23–25).

2.4.3 *A Point of Origin for the Blood Feud*

Folktales are particularly helpful for conveying historical information about specific cultural practices, but unfortunately they are seldom specific about connecting events to calendrical dates.[34] Nevertheless, much can be understood about blood vengeance, by attempting to date folktales that contain references to killing rituals and blood feuds. This is because folklore conveys particular historical information when it describes the origins of a ritual (Propp 1984:106).[35] Even if narratives about the War of al-Basūs are unreliable, chronologically, they at least confirm that a Jahili audience was receptive to stories about the ritual practice of blood vengeance,[36] and may therefore implicate the same as cultural practice. If a folktale is told during the practice of an ancient ritual, as is often the case, then it can become a performative element within that same ritual (Propp 1984:119). In other words, folktales both reflect ritual and help to generate ritual. In the absence of documentary evidence to the contrary, this section maintains that such tales convey information about customs, which, to have been readily understood by their audience, must already have been in practice.[37]

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34 The historical dimension of folklore is ever present, but also abstract because it belongs to an oral tradition, which is ancient and unrecorded (Lévi-Strauss 1977[1973]:131).

35 Propp has applied his analysis to "wondertales", rather than epic tales, but his argument remains relevant to this study.

36 Blood vengeance rituals did not begin in the Jahiliyya, for they are likely a legacy of ancient regional sacrificial rites that pre-date the period under review.

37 By way of a comparative and contemporary example, if, centuries from now, researchers

Folktales are also useful sources of information about rituals because they are able to trace the evolution and reinterpretation of the latter over time (Propp 1984:106–108). In the case of Arabian folktales, for example, the "blood vengeance" motif is highly adaptable. During the Islamic period, its reinterpretation is associated with the conquest of land, this serving as evidence that re-confirms the practice of blood vengeance.[38] In more recent times, its reinterpretation even functions as a cautionary tale about not engaging in retaliatory behaviour as in Alfrīd Faraj's (1967) play, *al-Zīr Sālim*, that argues for a more peaceful future, using bloodshed to signify hatred of the Other, rather than the ritual cleansing of honour. In Act Two, [al-]Hijris expresses his frustration with the cycle of blood vengeance, thus:

> هكذا انطلقت المأساة اذن. وتفجرت الأحقاد وتدفقت الدماء. ألم يكن في وسع أحدكم أن يصد الطوفان؟ أن يقيم الجسور؟ أن يدفع ذلك الخراب الشامل؟ ألم يكن لأحدكم الحكمة أو البرء من الضغينة فيفطن الى ما سيعم البلاد من دمار وفوضى وموت؟
>
> Faraj 1967:52
>
> So this is how misfortune occurred then. And hatred exploded and blood ran. Was not one of you capable of stemming the flood? Of building bridges? Of pushing back total ruin? Was not one of you possessed of wisdom, or guiltless of hatred, to be astute enough to foresee what destruction and chaos and death would befall the countries?

On this note, folktales that contain deliberate inversions of reality, i.e. exemptions to the ritual of blood vengeance, when the hero chooses to be merciful, or to express a position contrary to his peers, serves as evidence not only of a custom but of a society undergoing a period of transition (Propp 1984:107). This is an important principle, for it can help with the construction of counter-

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observe a group of people enjoying an evening pint of ale, or lager at the fictional public house known as "The Queen Vic" during an episode of the British television show *Eastenders*, this serves as evidence that many Londoners enjoy a drink at the "pub" after work in the present age.

38 There are many epic stories which refer to the Muslim conquest, including *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* and *Qiṣṣat Ḥamza*. With respect to the former, which underpins the spread of the Muslim empire, this confirms identity and reconciles disparate groups that coexist in harmony and conflict (Connelly 1986:224).

narratives to the blood vengeance ritual that engage in the reconciliation of feuding parties and the promotion of diplomatic dialogue, instead of war.

2.4.4 *A Gateway to Myth*

The previous definitions have treated folklore as a form of cultural history, a political document, a ritual drama and even a variant of epic poetry, but these are not its only functions. Because it can also convey a system of beliefs, some have argued that folktales are mini-myths, which are localised and re-enacted so that they eventually become tales in their own right. However, the direction of causality between a folktale and myth is difficult to ascertain. In all likelihood, each relies upon and completes the other. Propp (1984:109–111) has opined that myth is a master folktale about divinities, belonging to a society's historical development that therefore has been integrated into associated rituals. This is certainly consistent with Near and Middle Eastern oral tradition for folklore dates back to the sixteenth century BCE, at least, frequently integrating history and myth within a tale, with a view to imparting ideological, religious and political codes (Holland and Zorman 2007:91–92). One example is Kulayb's slaughter of the she-camel of al-Basūs that is both a folkloric and a mythic event, because, if the Folktale preceded it's inception, Islam later transformed the "camel" motif into a retrospective narrative about the she-camel of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ,[39] a coincidence suggesting an intertextual relationship between the relaying of the War of al-Basūs and the story of Thamūd (Stetkevych 1993:207).

The Prophet Ṣāliḥ lived long before the foundation of Islam, but his attempt to redeem the tribe of Thamūd (some of them guilty of unbelief, the community itself corrupted by nine-men, and rent in two by inner factionalism), their repudiation of his efforts, and God's subsequent vengeance against them is transmitted as a warning, in several Qur'anic chapters.[40] In this, the hamstringing of a milk-producing she-camel is not only a wilful act of cruelty towards a protected mount but represents the desecration of a gift from God. Because of the ritual significance of "blood" mixing with "milk", in the Folktale, as well as reference to the destruction of Thamūd, in verse 44, of "The al-Afshīn Poem",[41] the incident, as it appears in Q[11:61–68], is included below:

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39 It is feasible that the Thamūd narrative was already widely known and orally transmitted before its inclusion in either the Folktale or the Qur'an.

40 For example, Q[7:73–79], Q[11:61–68], Q[26:141–159] and Q[27:45–53] collectively flesh out the narrative, but Thamūd is also referred to elsewhere.

41 See Section 4.3.2.

وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم
مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تُوبُواْ إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ قَالُواْ يَا
صَالِحُ قَدْ كُنتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا أَتَنْهَانَا أَن نَّعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِنَّنَا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا
تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَآتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَن
يَنصُرُنِي مِنَ اللّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ وَيَا قَوْمِ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةً
فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ
تَمَتَّعُواْ فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوبٍ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَمِنْ خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُواْ الصَّيْحَةُ فَأَصْبَحُواْ فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْاْ فِيهَا أَلَا إِنَّ ثَمُودَ كَفَرُواْ
رَبَّهُمْ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُودَ

To the Thamud, We sent their brother, Salih. He said, 'My people, worship God. You have no god other than Him. It was He who brought you into being from the earth and made you inhabit it, so ask forgiveness from Him, and turn back to Him: my Lord is near, and ready to answer.' They said, 'Salih, We used to have such great hope in you. Will you forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? We are in grave doubt about what you are asking us to do.' He said, 'My people, just think: if I did have clear proof from my Lord, and if He had given me mercy of His own, who could protect me from God if I disobeyed Him? You would only make my loss greater. My people, this camel belongs to God, a sign for you, so leave it to pasture on God's earth and do not harm it, or you will soon be punished.' But they hamstrung it, so he said, 'Enjoy life for another three days: this warning will not prove false.' And so, when Our command was fulfilled, by Our mercy We saved Salih and his fellow believers from the disgrace of that day. [Prophet], it is your Lord who is the Strong, the Mighty One. The blast struck the evildoers and they lay dead in their homes, as though they had never lived and flourished there. Yes, the Thamud denied their Lord – so away with the Thamud!

Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:229–230)[42]

42 Used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

But although a folktale can closely resemble a mythic event, Propp (1984:120) has been careful to describe the folktale as both derivative and generically distinct, stating that it also develops an independent character such that subsequent generations can inherit a story without knowing the myth from which it was originally spun. Another way of stating this is that a folktale is more flexible than myth for it can be a story and it can also act like a myth. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1977:127–128), the anthropologist, has concurred that myth and a folktale function in very similar ways; he has compared the structure of folklore to myth in that it belongs to the past, but can also be timeless and ritually re-enacted each time a tale is repeated; he has also argued that a folktale is derivative from myth, seeing it as a local re-enactment of a wider metaphysical issue, a myth variant that by virtue of its oral nature reinforces the original myth. However, he has stated that a folktale is not so much contingent on myth, nor independent of it, as it is its logical replacement (Lévi-Strauss 1977:130).

2.5 The Purpose of Myth

The formulation of a myth follows a logical sequence of understanding phenomena that predates the scientific method, and for this reason is appropriate for analysing the values of ancient societies (Lévi-Strauss 1972[1963]:230). In its conception, an interesting aspect is that different versions of a myth as well as their repetition seem to reinforce the myth (Lévi-Strauss 1972:218, 229).

2.5.1 *Myth in Language*

Myth relies upon a distinct form of speech and the formulation of a narrative that predates the present, but is timeless and can be projected into the future (Lévi-Strauss 1972:209–210). Typically, it operates through language and speaks of eternal truths that transcend the period of a folktale. Propp (1984:120) has expressed the difference between a myth and a folktale as follows:

> Unlike the wondertale, whose plot content is a relic, myth provides a living link between a tale and the entire reality of a people, their economic production, social structure and beliefs.

But if a myth and a folktale are generically distinct even when related, then so too is a myth and a poem. At this point, an analogy may be helpful for myth here can be read as a "well pool of truth", whereas poetry is the "vessel" that draws up its water to the drinker. A poem can convey a myth to the drinker, while repetition of the poem, or variation reinforces belief that a myth exists in

the fountain. The same argument applies to folktales. Whether a folktale is the ritual re-enaction of myth, or even a type of myth, the Folktale of al-Muhalhil reinforces certainty in the requirement to take blood vengeance so as to fulfil a noble objective.

Typically, mythical thought attempts to resolve life's contradictions (Lévi-Strauss 1972:224). In so doing, it tends to focus upon ways of mediating between opposing forces, such as life and death, in order to make sense of the universe. Mythical figures who fluctuate between these contradictions are usually ambivalent, and thus are able to bring about both outcomes (Lévi-Strauss 1972:226). This means that an avenger, like al-Muhalhil, is first and foremost a folk-hero, but arguably he is also a mythical figure because he exists in a liminal state, negotiating between life and death in his attempt to revive a dead king. Susan Ackerman (2005:88–94) has suggested that the mythic narrative is essential when a liminal hero transgresses normal social boundaries, or dissolves the bonds of kinship. By "liminal state", she has referred to Van Gennep's (1960) "rites of passage" model, in which a person undergoes, or enacts transformation outside the normal confines of society.[43] The War of al-Basūs *akhbār*, the Folktale and its associated poetry all act in consort in complementary ways to reinforce a myth, this being through the repetition of ritual practices and folkloric motifs that enable the original myth to project its ideology into the future. The protagonist, al-Muhalhil, is not only a folk-hero but the exemplar to follow, in the taking of blood vengeance.

2.5.2 *The Myth of Tammūz and a Man Called Kulayb*

The Folktale does not explain the exact nature of beliefs that are thought to have proliferated during the Jahiliyya. Some Jahili tribes were Christian and so their neighbours were no doubt familiar with a faith that provides one of the most violent examples of sacrifice and martyrdom, its purpose the salvation of mankind. In the final commensal meal, prior to his crucifixion and coinciding with the Jewish Passover, Jesus Christ offered his flesh and blood to his disciples as bread and wine, and thereafter his followers ritually continue to re-enact "the Last Supper" as an act of worship, remembrance and renewal during Holy Communion. Other Jahili tribes were Jewish. But despite an Abrahamic precedent, most communities were not monotheistic, this circumstance requiring further exposition of other belief systems that existed at that time.

43 Stetkevych (1993) has also adopted Van Gennep's (1960) approach for her study of Classical Arabic poetry, arguing that the poetic form chosen by the Jahili poet is a faithful reflection of the same ritual process.

In their respective explications of *Ḥamāsiyya* 315, both al-Tibrīzī (2000) and Nicholson (1930:56–57), his translator, have identified a series of oaths beginning "By the stones of Wā'il", or *wa-anṣābi-Wā'il*, these invoked by different characters, so indicating that sacred stones were integral to the Jahili system of ritual worship. In ancient Arabia, stones (*anṣāb*) served as the altar over which the blood of a sacrificial victim was poured as an offering to a deity (Smith 2005:201). Moreover, this libation belonged to a belief system poeticising a sacred drama of death and resurrection, a creation myth repeated annually through the ritual performance of hymns as well as war and blood sacrifice, in both animal and human form. In the ancient Near and Middle East, annual sacrifices of atonement were common practice, these commemorating the death of a god of vegetation, sometimes called Tammūz, but also recognisable from other incarnations such as the Greek god Adonis (Smith 2005:410–413). The ritual ceremony involved a period of lamentation and wailing, this followed by the burning of a human sacrifice, or some substitute to represent the death of the god. The Tammūzian creation myth, variously interpreted, states that the harvest marks the death of the corn god and the end of a benign period of fruition. His death is then mourned by his consort who goes in search of him, his dismembered physical remains are scattered to fertilise the soil, his blood blossoms into anemones and reddens the silt flowing through the rivers of Lebanon, and he resides in the underworld until the Spring, whereupon he is resurrected and renews his vital contract with the goddess (Smith 2005; Frazer 2011).

It is no coincidence then that the Folktale has invested Kulayb with traits of the fertility god.[44] Like Tammūz, Kulayb is responsible for the prosperity of his people and the fertility of the land that has been jeopardised by drought and a series of power struggles. Symbolically, he is custodian of a beautiful and forbidden garden that he defends against perceived trespassers such as the camel of al-Basūs:

> ... ذلك البستان وكان روضة جنان كثير الاشجار والفواكه والاثمار وكان كليب قد اعتنى به حتى صار من احسن المنتزهات في الدنيا وكان لا يسمح لاحد ان يدخله سوى هو وعياله فقط ...
>
> Anonymous n.d.:48

44 Lūwīs ʿAwaḍ (1968) has also identified parallels between the plot of *al-Zīr Sālim* and ancient Near Eastern mythology, in his book, *Usṭūrat Ūrīst wa-l-malāḥim al-ʿarabiyya* (Pormann 2009:220).

> … that garden, which was a meadow of Paradise with copious amounts of trees and all manner of fruits, and Kulayb had taken care of it until it became one of the best reserves in the world, and he did not allow anyone to enter it, save for himself and his dependents …

After Kulayb is killed, al-Muhalhil attempts to revive him from the dead. Finding this impossible, he atones for his death through a campaign of blood vengeance. The Tammūzian motif for "bloodshed" is the "anemone", whose bloom signifies the blood of sacrifice as well as the blood of revitalisation. In a couple of scenes, when al-Muhalhil appears victorious at the end of a battle while spattered in the "blood of knights", he looks like a "purple anemone" (Anonymous n.d.:95–97). This means that by slaughtering his enemy, al-Muhalhil has honoured both the deity and Kulayb, also reinvigorating his tribe:

> … وغنمت بنو قيس منهم غنائم عظيمة ومكاسب جسيمة ورجعت الى الديار بالعز والانتصار والبطش والاقتدار في مقدمتهم الامير المهلهل الجبار وهو مثل شقيقة الارجوان مما سال عليه من ادمية الفرسان …
>
> Anonymous n.d.:95
>
> … the Banū Qays plundered great spoils of war, and obtained large profits, and returned to the abodes in glory and victory and strength and power, before them mighty Prince al-Muhalhil, like the purple anemone, soaked as he was in the blood of knights …

Establishing such connexion between a human king and a sacred king is the work of myth and ritual for many myths provide divine analogies of human society that people can readily understand through their own experience. If rituals around myth act as a form of dialogue linking the human and cosmic worlds, then the Folktale relates Kulayb to the god of food and survival. With Kulayb gone and the prosperity of his tribe endangered, al-Muhalhil ritually destroys his enemy in retaliation and as defence.

2.5.3 *Blood Vengeance as Ritual Sacrifice*

Chapter One has demonstrated that "poetic incitement", in Arabic, *taḥrīḍ*, is a ritual means of conveying the blood vengeance message which thereafter consolidates tribal identity. *Taḥrīḍ* frequently occurs in Arabic poetry that extolls *ḥamāsa*, or "fighting spirit", and laments a fallen hero, and so Stetkevych (1993:161) has termed it the "call to vengeance". In particular, female lamenta-

tion containing *taḥrīḍ* goads heroes to perform their duty, and ridicules those who do not (Hammond 2010:48–49). This phenomenon occurs during the plotline of the War of al-Basūs, for example: (1) as incitement directed against Kulayb by al-Basūs, in *al-Muwaththibāt*; and (2) as incitement directed against Jassās by al-Yamāma, in the Folktale.[45] In the Jahiliyya, at least, this type of poetry made women complicit in an act of violence. Consequently, their role in war as either inciters to battle or actual fighters was often resented (Nicholson 1930:60). Because women were not supposed to be targets of homicide in the blood vengeance ritual, and may even have been offered some kind of protection during an offensive, they were instead more vulnerable to other forms of humiliation. In the Folktale, the disgracing of women is insinuated, but not elaborated upon, meaning that reviled women are left to the mercy of the conquering tribe once their men-folk are killed.[46] The role of rape as a means of dishonouring women will be considered more thoroughly in the Abbasid and modern periods, in Sections 5.1.3 and 8.10. This postdates the Jahiliyya, for although the Jahili poet was not coy about objectifying women, most notably when describing the beloved, he was still honour bound by codes of chivalry requiring him to protect the defenceless. Consequently, documentary evidence of rape is scarce, verse 18, of *Tadhakkara Laylā ḥusna-hā wa-ṣafā'a-hā*, serving as a rare example.[47]

Incitement aside, poetry does not act alone in weaving a culture around blood vengeance; a folkloric ritual serves to reinforce both belief and a collective sense of history before any provocation can take hold. Therefore, this section explores the role of sacrifice as a ritual step in the creation, or the consolidation of myth. The War of al-Basūs narratives commonly demonstrate that although blood vengeance is propelled by a very human desire for revenge, it can also be a form of ritual sacrifice. In the Jahiliyya, human sacrifice, like animal sacrifice, was thought to sustain the life of a kinship group, especially when formally sanctioned through the recitation of poetry (Stetkevych 1993:80–81).[48] This is to say that the slaughter of a sacrificial victim was perceived as heroic, killing emulated the behaviour of predecessors, bloodshed cemented group solidarity and identity, and verbal incitement to vengeance was typically poetic. Anthropologists and sociologists on religion have con-

45 See Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.3.

46 See Section 2.5.4.3.

47 Section 1.5.2.5 has already cited verse 18, of *Tadhakkara Laylā ḥusna-hā wa-ṣafā'a-hā*.

48 Lammens (1926:108–110) has also linked the poetic ritual to the formalisation of the blood vengeance ritual.

firmed that, in ancient Arabia, the notion of blood vengeance also played into a persistent theme of religious sacrifice (Smith 2005:243).[49]

Smith (2005:361, 420) has distinguished between two types of killing, "kin-murder" (a killing of one's own kinsman for which an individual is held responsible), and "manslaughter" (a killing of a member of another tribe for which the killer's own kin is also responsible).[50] He has argued that an execution, or a social death resolves the former case, i.e. by removing, or exiling the errant from the kinship group, this not qualifying as sacrifice, whereas in the case of "manslaughter" its resolution is a ritual form of sacrifice whereby a community atones for the death of a member, by transferring its guilt for this death onto the tribe of the killer, and demanding recompense in either blood or blood-wit (Smith 2005:420–424). This process of transference means that even if the killer cannot be found, his punishment can be appropriated to other members of his kin for generations until they can offer up a fitting substitute. In this case, sacrifice takes the form of collective punishment and a ceremonial execution, this notionally offered up to a higher authority.[51]

In late antiquity, an alternative way of viewing blood vengeance is that it was seen to contain a spiritual dimension, a means of honouring the divinity with a libation of blood. This may go some way to explain how the cultural practice of blood vengeance could later conflate with a religious obligation such as

49 Religious sacrifice, post-dating the Jahiliyya, will be addressed in subsequent chapters. Following the establishment of Islam, public sacrificial ceremonies assumed the form of the Abrahamic sacrifice at the time of *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā*, and the mourning and atonement for al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī during ʿĀshūrāʾ.

50 This definition should not be confused with "manslaughter", in current legal terminology, which usually implies some form of diminished responsibility, or lack of pre-meditation. What Smith has described here is "homicide".

51 This practice is not confined to antiquity. Following Hamas' collective attack on Israeli citizens of kibbutzim, on October 7th, 2023, the State of Israel has imposed retaliatory collective punishment upon citizens of Gaza as proxies for Hamas insurgents. This form of scapegoating has precedent, for Jews were scapegoated in the Holocaust. The disproportionate scale of retaliation, particularly against a disempowered Palestinian population largely made up of children, suggests that this particular vendetta has been exacerbated by the traumatic memory of European pogroms as well as an inability to retaliate against former persecutors who have escaped justice. Van Leeuwen (2007:373–374) is one who has argued that previous trauma can exacerbate violent behaviour (Van Leeuwen 2007:373–374). Section 7.6 will elaborate upon this, and explain how political actors can employ narrative strategies to both launch and counteract violence. See also Section 1.4.5, on "Blood Feud", and how collective punishment is a tribal response to injury, when the perpetrator eludes accountability for his crime. Cycles of retaliation and counter-retaliation between tribes often result in war.

jihad, or even lead to acts of martyrdom. Here, good fortune is an honour prize that the gods bestow to reflect their pleasure, whereas bad fortune (such as a poor harvest) implies that the gods are disappointed and demand further sacrifices. Those who ritually perform sacrifice conform to social custom, and are bestowed with honour, while those who fail to comply are ignoble. The sacrificial offering is a gift exchanged between the mortal and immortal principles, i.e. the payment of a debt in exchange for longevity of life. It is also an "act of communion" enabling the worshipper to reconcile himself with the deity, through "partaking together of the flesh and blood of a sacred victim" (Smith 2005:226–227). This communion between man and deity has political ramifications for wider society, should an enemy of war fulfil the conditions of ritual sacrifice. Moreover, sacrifice as sacred defence is the means for transforming an heroic leader into a sacred king, which is to say that it not only makes him a target but invests him with the kind of licence to kill that derives from what Stefan Sperl (1977:20–35) has termed "mythic power".

2.5.4 *Examples of Sacrificial Rituals from the Folktale*

The *akhbār* are not as florid as the Folktale, in their descriptions of death rituals. Instead, these are replaced by the "drinking" motif that implies both life and death so that when a man "drinks the cup of death", this means that he has been "killed", and when a person "thirsts", they are either "dying" or "thirsting for blood vengeance".[52] More descriptive than the *akhbār*, the Folktale clearly conflates the practice of blood vengeance with ancient sacrificial rituals as a few corresponding examples demonstrate:

1. After the Bakr have stabbed al-Muhalhil, and left his sister, Ḍabāʿ, to satiate her vengeance for his killing of her husband and son, she first contemplates burning his body, but instead decides to bury him at sea (Anonymous n.d.:77–78).[53]
2. The significance of the liver as the source of life is first conveyed by Kulayb's last will and testament entrusting al-Muhalhil with custody of his sons and the soul of his liver (Anonymous n.d.:52). When al-Muhalhil finally attains his blood vengeance against Jassās with the help of his nephew al-Jarw (al-Hijris), one stabs him in the chest, while the other beheads him, each then performing a ritual consumption of his body; al-

52 Section 2.3.5 and Table 3 have presented the "drinking" motif as it appears in the *akhbār*.

53 Although presumed dead, it transpires that al-Muhalhil has not been fatally injured after all, and fortuitously goes on to be cured by a king's skilled physician.

Muhalhil drinks blood from his jugular; al-Jarw bites into his wounded flesh, satiating his own heart's thirst for vengeance (Anonymous n.d.: 122):[54]

... طعنه الجرو بالرمح في صدره خرج يلمع من ظهره فتقدم الزير وقطع رأسه ثم وضع الزير فمه على عنق جساس وشرب دمه وكان الجرو ينهش في لحمه حتى بلغ مراده وشفي فؤاده وسلموا رأس جساس إلى بعض العبيد ليعطوه إلى إخوته ...

... al-Jarw stabbed him [Jassās] in his chest with the spear [that] exited gleaming from his back, whereupon al-Zīr approached and cut off his head, then al-Zīr placed his mouth upon Jassās' neck and drank his blood, while al-Jarw was biting into his flesh, until he attained his purpose and quenched his heart's thirst for vengeance, and they handed Jassās' head over to some of the slaves so that they would give it to his brothers ...

3. After al-Muhalhil finally takes his vengeance against Jassās, the Bakr men are humiliated and granted amnesty, in exchange for servility, eviction and enforced vagrancy. Without male protection, the Bakr women, who actively participate in war against the Taghlib, are forced into dissolute living (Anonymous n.d.:122).
4. In both the Folktale and the *akhbār*, shearing the hair of Bakr soldiers is the means by which Bakr women can identify their own wounded on the field of battle so as to offer them reviving drink, while clubbing injured Taghlibites over the head to finish them off (Anonymous n.d.:108–109). Jaḥdar b. Ḍubayʿa refers to this practice, in verse 4, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 169,[55] protesting that he does not want to be shorn for fear it will make him less attractive. Instead he attempts to persuade the Bakr, in verse, that he can make himself even more useful, by acting as a watchman for the enemy:

54 The Folktale does not specify exactly what al-Jarw has eaten, but, in view of Smith's premise, this likely involves absorbing the life force from either the heart or the liver.

55 This corresponds of al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*. It is *Ḥ*168, in al-Marzūqī's (2003) version. The poem is a *tā'iyya*, ending in *-tī*, in the *rajaz* metre. Nicholson (1930:59–60) has provided an alternative translation which rhymes.

*Ḥ*169

1 قَدْ يَتِمَتْ بِنْتِي وَآمَتْ كَنَّتِي
2 وَشَعِثَتْ بَعْدَ الرِّهَانِ جُمَّتِي
3 رُدُّوا عليَّ الخَيلَ إن أَلَمَّتِ
4 إِنْ لَمْ يُنَاجِزْهَا فَجُزُّوا لِمَّتِي
5 قَدْ عَلِمَتْ وَالِدَةٌ مَا ضَمَّتِ
6 مَا لَفَّفَتْ في خِرَقٍ وَشَمَّتِ
7 إِذَا الكُمَاةُ بِالكُمَاةِ التَفَّتِ
8 أَمُخْدَجٌ في الحَرْبِ أَمْ أَتَمَّتِ

1 My daughter has been orphaned and my sister-in-law has no husband[56]
2 And after its pledging, my hair has become matted
3 When they alight, let the horsemen be diverted from their course towards me
4 If one has not been made to hasten to fight them, then cut off my hair
5 A mother already knew what she embraced
6 What she wrapped up in a patchwork garment and smelt
7 When brave armed men size up [other] brave armed men
8 [They note] the one who is deficient, in war, and the one who is fully grown[57]

To further elucidate upon the examples above, in ancient Arabia: (1) human sacrifices were frequently burned after blood was released as a libation, while

56 In his commentary to *Ḥ*169, al-Tibrīzī (2000) has explained that Jaḥdar's sister-in-law and his wife may have been one and the same woman. This is because of an anecdote that relays a story about two brothers from the same tribe (possibly Jaḥdar and his sibling) involved in a complex love triangle with a woman, this resulting in his brother divorcing his wife so that the love-sick one would cease wasting away and could marry her instead. As it transpired, the sick man refused to marry his brother's wife, and so perished.

57 This verse literally means "one who is not-fully formed, in war, or one who is perfectly formed". Arguably, the meaning is conveyed by a metaphor, beginning, in verse 5, and concerning a mother's awareness of the health of her new-born child; whether or not his gestation period has been premature or complete, so explaining the state of foetal development, or impairment. According to al-Tibrīzī, Jaḥdar was small in stature, and possibly afflicted by a deformity, but his hair was his crowning glory.

burial at sea was also considered an alternative form of sacrificial burial rite (Smith 2005:364–366); (2) drinking blood and eating the liver of a human victim may have been a Jahili practice because these acts represented the absorption of the life force and courage of the victim (Smith 2005:313–314); (3) female captives are degraded, in the Folktale, but this does not conform with any particular ritual practice and therefore is more likely to have been a form of punishment; (4) hair was another means of offering atonement, the ritual act of shearing intimately connected with lamentation, warfare, imprisonment, and other encounters with adversity and death. By way of an example, Smith (2005:324) has confirmed that there is a notable scene, in the War of al-Basūs, when the Bakr shave their hair before a battle with the Taghlib as a devotional act to death.

From an ideological perspective of building one community, Islam, from its foundation, was explicitly opposed to the excesses of the Jahili institution of blood vengeance that the Folktale describes as being symptomatic of *al-nakhwa-al-jāhiliyya*, or "the haughty pride of the Jahiliyya" (Anonymous n.d.:33).[58] However, Bedouin sacrificial practices that honoured the dead proved to be more difficult to eradicate, continuing well into the Islamic period (Goldziher 1967:217–227). For example, Kharijite warriors also sheared their hair in a ritual act of mourning and rebellion (Goldziher 1967:225).[59] Sacrificial rituals aside, for the practice of blood vengeance itself to have persisted in the Islamic period, it needed to be rebranded, i.e. the enemy had to be dehumanised, castigated, or categorised as a fundamental threat to the survival of an Islamic community so that universal law no longer applied. The following chapter will explore the transformation of blood vengeance during the early Islamic period.

2.6 Other Views about Myth and Ritual

While Smith's (2005) analysis is invaluable, there are other views about the origins of myth and blood sacrificial rituals that are more persuasive for a secular age because they directly attribute agency to the perpetrators of violent acts. The Smith school has opined that sacrifice is a ritual re-enactment of a

58 Oral societies had codes prohibiting violence that excluded those who did not belong to the community, whereas the written word of a religion, like Islam, was universal in its condemnation of violence against all (Goody 1986:12–13).

59 Kharijite verse will feature in the following chapter.

myth,[60] but a later school of thought has suggested that blood sacrifice precedes myth creation. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1981[1964]:81–82) have argued that an unrelated animal sacrifice is more likely to have been the inspiration behind a narrative describing the murder of a hero, which then goes on to inspire a divine story about the sacrifice of a god. This process enables further sacrificial rituals to be driven by myth, for "once the myth has taken shape it reacts upon the rite from which it sprang and is realised in it" (Hubert and Mauss 1981:88). What is significant about this approach is that it does not ennoble, nor sanctify the initial violent impulse, instead suggesting that the act of killing is self-gratifying, while sacrificial rites are a means of channelling this impulse in a purposeful fashion (Hubert and Mauss 1981:34).

René Girard (2005:97–98) belongs to this same school of thought, but has gone further, by arguing that sacrificial rituals are the means by which a community can sanction violence as an inevitable aspect of human nature, simultaneously finding a convenient scapegoat from outside that will unite the same community in the destruction of a common external threat. This demonstrates why wars against a common enemy can reconcile a divided nation, by deflecting attention away from economic crises at home. Girard (2005:99–101) has posited that rivalry is the point of origin for violence, not the creation myth of seasonal change for which an act of murder can accrue collective benefits and fertility for society. He has also presented communities as seething hotbeds of pent-up rivalries and frustrations that without outlet are destined to explode, proposing a model of ritual sacrifice in which the original victim, perhaps a king who once died at the hands of the community, is then replaced by a substitute who should come from outside the community (Girard 2005:104, 107–108). This act of substitution acts as the release mechanism upon a pressure valve that is designed to prevent greater acts of violence in the future. Violence here is a compulsive act that will always seek an outlet unless it is released in an appropriate way, while jealous rivalry is frustration of the same violent impulse (Girard 2005:2–4). Far from denying that myth and ritual exist, this model demonstrates that both serve the violent impulse, by imposing a cultural framework upon society from which to enact homicide in an orderly way (Girard 2005:98, 115).

60 This school is sometimes known as the Cambridge Ritualists (Girard 2005:101).

2.7 The Bigger Picture

Heroic narratives, in a manner comparable to nationalist ideology, seem to grow out of some idea about an "immemorial past" (Anderson 1991[1983]:11–12, 28). In the Folktale, al-Muhalhil is not only a liberator of the Arabs but also the Jews whom he defends against the colonial occupier of the day, the Christian Byzantines whose leader acts like an earlier despot, the Babylonian Nimrod (Anonymous n.d.:83–88). Other variants of the story seem to connect the dots between violent periods in Near and Middle Eastern history that go back millennia. The themes of "zeal" and "triumph" that they convey may even inform the names of two contemporary Palestinian nationalist movements, *Ḥamās* (Hamas) and *Fatḥ* (Fatah), which are also acronyms for *Ḥarakat al-muqāwama al-islāmiyya* (or the "Islamic Resistance Movement") and *Ḥarakat al-taḥrīr al-waṭanī al-filasṭīnī* (or the "Palestinian National Liberation Movement"). However, it is important to stress that these terms are more closely associated with the Muslim conquest, also resonating with anti-colonial discourses and a struggle against occupation.

In Act Three, of Faraj's (1967) dramatic version of the Folktale, Jassās refers to the ritual practice of "drinking" the blood of a sacrificial victim from his decapitated "skull". He declares this in a unique twist to the tale when he places a bounty upon the head of his nephew, [al-]Hijris (Faraj 1967:95–96):

... حيا أو ميتا، قبل سبعة أيام. سنشرب خمر النصر في جمجمته.

> ... Alive or dead, before seven days [are up], we will drink the wine of victory in his skull.

Faraj's take on the story builds a bridge between the Folktale, contemporary Arab political events (in the 1950s and 1960s) and the western tradition of revenge plays, for he has united motifs such as the "drinking" of blood across comparative literary traditions. Here, the slain king's son, [al-]Hijris, is reluctant to shed more blood, like Hamlet, while his daughter laments and incites blood vengeance, like Electra, in the plays that bear their names. In his criticism of the play, Sa'd Allāh Wannūs (1992:413–414) has suggested that this makes it overly ambitious and causes the play to lose its way, but he has only considered its literary merit and has not given weight to this variant's potential to persuade against violent outcomes as counter-narrative. The pacifist message has context for the play was first performed against a violent backdrop, in modern Egyptian history, characterised by revolution against a king, the Suez crisis and war against the State of Israel (Badawi 1987:171). Kulayb's heir, in this play, does

not engage in bellicosity, but instead reveals his own internal struggle about being caught in between families, a metaphor for a modern world of complex political allegiances. Conversely, a more recent television drama, *al-Zīr Sālim* (2000), does not attempt to reinterpret the Folktale, nor to allude to contemporary politics, this time demonstrating folklore's adaptability to new popular media.

In Chapter Six, in what is arguably another variant of the Folktale, a television series, called *al-Hayba*, will be discussed in detail, while conflict more specific to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries will be the subject of Chapters Seven and Eight. Suffice it here to state, albeit briefly, that folklore does not cease to be a valuable lens through which to view contemporary strife, some conflicts still alluding to a break in the hospitality contract, and drawing upon a similar style of heroics when re-enacting blood vengeance. The events leading up to the War of al-Basūs bear some similarity with the build-up to civil war, in Syria, in terms of the binding and unbinding of social ties. One of the factors that inflamed the crisis was an incident that occurred in the town of Dar'ā, early in 2011 (Fisk 2011). A situation of kinship between tribal leaders and the state legislature broke down after a group of children were incarcerated, for scrawling anti-regime graffiti in a public area. When local shaykhs intervened and approached the governor to negotiate for the children's release, they removed their turbans before him in a traditional gesture. The hospitality contract was severed when the governor allegedly cast a turban on the ground, and stamped upon it. After that, the rebellion escalated. In the wider conflict that ensued and then diversified, Robyn Creswell and Bernard Haykel (2015) have compared the emergence of a contemporary jihadist culture to a medieval romance, in which the heroic identity transcends nationality and chronological time, and embraces earlier battle codes of honour.

2.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has located blood vengeance within its early history, by evaluating this theme in Arabian folklore, meaning a series of narrative artefacts that reflect the practice of blood vengeance and sacrifice in the Jahiliyya. As variants, folklore can assemble combinations of realistic and fictional features in consistent and alternative ways. However, anecdotes that describe retaliation during the Jahiliyya are culturally, rather than factually historic, when conveying important information about social *mores* and belief systems. Through its repetition, folklore also possesses a ritual nature that can either be the re-enactment of a myth or replace the myth entirely. Because of this, it belongs

to a ritual complex that connects blood vengeance and sacrifice to mythical thought. Although the motivation for killing rituals is often ascribed to spiritual worship, the nobility of blood vengeance is highly questionable, competitive rivalry more often its driver. The phenomenon is firmly rooted in the material world, and propelled by: (1) basic needs, for those defending their basic right to subsistence when facing an existential threat; and (2) status, for those wanting to satisfy aspirational political and territorial desires at the expense of the opposition. This is also in evidence in the period that follows.

CHAPTER 3

Poetry of the Early Islamic Period

3.1 Introduction

Even though the early Islamic period was plagued by civil war, reflecting dissension between disparate groups, individual battles continued to involve two opposing camps, and therefore a binary relationship remains manifest in poetry of the period. For example, there are poems demonstrating: (1) conflict between early converts and non-believers during the transition between Jahili and Islamic governance; (2) the views of more radical Muslim groups that opposed the establishment, subsequent to the Prophet Muḥammad's death; and (3) internal divisions such as when its own military criticised the Umayyad elite. This chapter's analysis addresses the kind of strife that confirms an underlying ideology of blood vengeance, rather than the nature of specific battles. Because the rules of engagement have already been encoded, in earlier verse, a literary analysis of history continues to be relevant for understanding the cultural context and outcome of disputes. All poems illustrate how an Islamic identity evolved from Jahili values, how early tribal life united around a new collective, and how this group then fragmented and re-defined the enemy within. Chapter One scrutinised two poems, *Ḥ*176 and *Ḥ*37, for evidence of "blood vengeance motifs". Chapter Two explored these themes further, through the scrutiny of *akhbār* as well as conventional folkloric narratives. Having established an early precedent for blood vengeance, Chapter Three does not subject verse to the same degree of focus. Instead, when mapping out the reach and proliferation of the blood vengeance ideology, it demonstrates the recurrence of motifs across a selection of poems, treating these as stepping stones that foreshadow treatment in later periods. It is not possible to include an exhaustive selection, and so the criterion is a poem's inclusion in the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām that develops a literary history of the Arabs into the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries.

3.2 Epic Literature

Early "blood vengeance poetry" does not exist in isolation, but serves as an accent to heroic narratives which as a literary pattern do not end with the Jahiliyya. A class of heroic literature that portrays the opponent as the infidel

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becomes the overlay to an older story about the tribal enemy, for which declamatory verse punctuates a prose narrative before a ritual test, this transforming the hero from a peaceful tribesman into a warrior (Lewis 1998:148–149).[1] Within such epics, "blood vengeance motifs" continue to feature in poems of war, religious conversion, political rebellion, praise and lampoon. Upon the establishment of Islam, the heroic genre was elevated into the *Sīra*, a word that means the "biography" of the Prophet Muḥammad, while simultaneously conveying events that resemble an "heroic epic".[2] Different versions of the *Sīra* as well as other Islamic epics bear comparison with *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, in their treatment of the challenges faced by a role model.

3.2.1 Sīra *Poetry*

Early Islam had an ambivalent attitude towards poetry, seeing it as both problematic and a culturally ingrained celebration of artistic talent. The problematic dimension concerned its relationship to the supernatural, for the poet was commonly believed to be a soothsayer inspired by the jinn.[3] After the inception of Islam, the jinn were accused of leading one astray, the poet, by association, immoral in continuing to consort with them, instead of seeking divine guidance. This accusation was also levelled at the Prophet of Islam by his enemies, as addressed in Q[26:210–227]:[4]

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1 G. Lewis' argument pertains to the Turkish folkloric epic *Dede Korkut*, and not to Arabic literature, but the tribal traditions of the two regions bear comparison. Peter Phillips' (2014) review of the poetry of heroism has also demonstrated that a verse utterance can invest a hero with the power of word and deed, in early Arabian folktales.

2 Also *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, or *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*. Ibn Isḥāq (2004[d. 151/768]) wrote a well known version that A. Guillaume (1982[1955]) has translated.

3 The jinn are more commonly anglicised as "genies", or "genii".

4 Abdel Haleem, a Qur'anic scholar, has chosen to translate *al-shayāṭīn* as "the jinn", twice in this passage, cross-referencing with Q[72:8–9] and Q[37:7–10], but it literally means "the devils", and is translated as such in other translations, the most recent of these by Habib and Lawrence (2024). Because "jinn", rather than "devils", were thought to inspire poets, he has deduced that non-believing jinn here are either the devils in question or their agents. See also, Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Shaʿrāwī (1991[d. 1419/1998]:17:10701), the twentieth-century Islamic scholar, for his exegesis of Q[26:210], i.e. *Wa-mā tanazzalat bi-hi al-shayāṭīn*:

لأنهم قالوا: إنما تنزَّلت الشياطين على محمد بالقرآن، وكانوا يقولون ذلك لكل شاعر ماهر بشعره عندهم، فلكل شاعر شيطان يُملِيه الشِّعْر، وعندهم وادٍ يُسمَّى وادي ((عبقر)) هو وادي الجن، فيقولون: فلان عبقري أي: موصول بالجن في هذا الوادي.

Because they [i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad's opponents] had said: Rather, "*al-shayāṭīn*" brought down the Qur'an to Muḥammad; for they [i.e. the Jahilis] used to say that about

وَمَا تَنَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعْزُولُونَ
فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللهِ إِلهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ وَاخْفِضْ
جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ وَتَوَكَّلْ
عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ وَتَقَلُّبَكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ
الْعَلِيمُ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَى مَن تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيَاطِينُ تَنَزَّلُ عَلَى كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ
وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ كَاذِبُونَ وَالشُّعَرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ وَأَنَّهُم
يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُواْ اللّهَ كَثِيرًا وَانتَصَرُواْ مِن
بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُواْ وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ أَيَّ مُنقَلَبٍ يَنقَلِبُونَ

It was not the jinn who brought down this Qur'an: it is neither in their interests nor in their power, indeed they are prevented from overhearing it. So [Prophet] do not invoke any gods beside God, or you will incur torment. Warn your nearest kinsfolk and lower your wing tenderly over the believers who follow you. If they disobey you, say, 'I bear no responsibility for your actions.' Put your trust in the Almighty, the Merciful, who sees you when you stand up [for prayer] and sees your movements among the worshippers: He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing. Shall I tell you who the jinn come down to? They come down to every lying sinner who readily leads an ear to them, and most of them are liars: only those who are lost in error follow the poets. Do you not see how they rove aimlessly in every valley; how they say what they do not do? Not so those [poets] who believe, do good deeds, remember God often, and defend themselves after they have been wronged. The evildoers will find out what they will return to.

Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:377)[5]

Because of this contention, poetry developed two different natures: one that was permitted as preserving public morals; and one that was regarded as dangerously subversive and a threat to centralised governance. Poetry in the *Sīra*

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every poet skilled in verse amongst them; for each poet had his own "*shayṭān*" dictating verse to him; they [i.e the Jahilis] even had a valley called "*'Abqar* Valley", which was the valley of the jinn; when saying that someone is a "genius", meaning intimately connected with the jinn of this valley.

5 Used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

belongs to the former camp, by: (1) reassigning meaning to an old vocabulary as this applies to cultural practices and historical events occurring during the Medina period of the Prophet's lifetime; and (2) working as a counter-dialogue to Jahili poetry, moving away from existential themes while gravitating towards the hereafter (Tawfiq 1996:258–263). But borrowing from a celebrated tradition, albeit with circumspection, was bound to result in its perpetuation. Like the *Ayyām*, the first versions of the *Sīra* are generically complex, containing folkloric and poetic stylistic features (namely miraculous, or fantastical motifs, poetic interludes, and storytelling) that strictly deviate from documentary reporting (Kister 2009[1983]:356–358).[6] The poetry of the *Maghāzī* literature, a subcategory of the *Sīra*, is directly comparable with its counterpart in the *Ayyām*, exhibiting strong structural affinity to tribal *fakhr* (Jones (2009[1983]:344, 351). Among its many aims, *Sīra* poetry seeks not only to spread the news about the outcome of a battle but also to be a dangerous weapon of incitement, only including verse that inspires piety to Islam (Kister 2009:352, 359).

3.2.2 *The Poetry of Conversion*

According to James Monroe (2009[1983]:370), the poetry of the *Sīra* literature differs from what came before because it is invested with transformative power, meaning that it can convert the non-believer. This ritual quality suggests that any poetic incitement can then persuade a hero to fight for a religious cause. However, it is important to note that poetry can also reconcile feuding parties, and end conflict. Just as poetry incites to blood vengeance, it marks the state of peace, the cessation of hostilities, and sometimes even prevents violence for fear of reprisal. Poetically, at least, Jahili and Islamic discourses about the rules of engagement during conflict culminated in a famous panegyric that inhabits the *Sīra*. *Bānat Suʿād*, a poem by Kaʿb b. Zuhayr,[7] is an instrument of power "harnessing" the Jahili tradition while "redirecting" this in the service of the Prophet Muḥammad (Zwettler 1984:361, 370–371). Kaʿb initially offered the poem as an act of contrition, for insulting the Prophet. Its composition and relaying was an exercise in conversion that demonstrated gift exchange: the offering of an apology in exchange for forgiveness; and the granting of praise in return for protection (Stetkevych 2010:33, 37, 67). *Bānat Suʿād* has been the subject of much

6 For early versions of *Sīra* literature that contain distinct features of the miraculous, M. Kister has cited the compilers Mūsā b. ʿUqba, al-Zuhrī and Wahb b. Munabbih. A comprehensive version, containing a large collection of poetry, is *al-Zahr al-Bāsim* by Mughulṭāy (d. 762/1361).

7 Kaʿb b. Zuhayr was the son of a celebrated poet who composed the *Muʿallaqa* of Zuhayr (see Section 1.4.6). Kaʿb also composed *Ḥ*339 (see Section 3.6.2) and *Ḥ*347 (see Section 3.6.3).

scrutiny, Stetkevych (2010:31–32) finding that it transforms Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet from a personal account of conversion into the realm of myth so that its commitment to memory and its repetition become part of another ritual test that can then convert others to Islam. What is particularly relevant to this discourse about blood vengeance is how the poem transforms retaliation into an admirable trait of the new heroism. The praise section portrays the Prophet of Islam as both defender and aggressor, saviour, avenger, the lion and the Sword of Allāh (Stetkevych 2010:56–57). On this point, the following verses are particularly relevant:[8]

Bānat Suʿād

36 أُنْبِئْتُ أنَّ رسولَ اللهِ أَوْعَدَني والعَفْوُ عندَ رَسولِ اللهِ مَأْمولُ
41 حتّى وَضَعْتُ يَميني لا أُنازِعُهُ في كَفِّ ذي نَقِماتٍ قِيلُهُ القيلُ
44 يَغْدو فَيَلْحَمُ ضِرْغامَيْنِ عَيْشُهُما لَحْمٌ مِنَ القَوْمِ مَعْفورٌ خَرَاذيلُ
48 إنّ الرَّسولَ لَسَيفٌ يُسْتَضاءُ بهِ مُهَنَّدٌ من سُيُوفِ اللهِ مَسْلولُ

36 I was told God's Messenger
had threatened me,
But from God's Messenger
pardon is hoped.
41 Until I placed my right hand,
without contending,
In the hand of an avenger,
his word the word.
44 Who in the morning feeds flesh
to two lion whelps
That live on human flesh,
flung in the dust in chunks
48 The Messenger is surely a sword
from whose flash light is sought,
One of the swords of God,
an Indian blade unsheathed,

Translation by Stetkevych[9]

8 *Bānat Suʿād* is a *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lū*, composed in the *basīṭ* metre. The verses and translation appear in Stetkevych (2010:47–48, 242).

9 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Indiana University Press, from *The mantle*

The "Sword of God" epithet is a particularly powerful image that recurs in subsequent panegyrics of the Abbasid era. The metaphor suggests that the Jahili warrior surrenders his weapon to the leader of the Islamic community, who goes on to become the agent of God's vengeance. The final destination point of the poem is the afterlife that is obtained through drinking the "water of death" at the behest of the sword (Stetkevych 2010:58).

3.2.3 *War Poetry*

The *Battle of Ṣiffīn* was a cataclysmic battle, in which Muslim identity fractured along sectarian lines. Already well-documented, it is not the subject of this study beyond making a few salient points. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib,[10] the Prophet's cousin and the hero, features in poetry and epic literature about the event in much the same way as his Jahili predecessor. Peter Webb (2013:130–134) has examined the *Battle of Ṣiffīn* from the perspective of historical accounts that include poetry as well as those in which verse is absent, drawing comparison with both the *Ayyām* and folkloric stories that include subversive elements.[11] He has identified the poetry of *Ṣiffīn* as similar to pre-Islamic verse contained within the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām because it is dramatic, drives forward narrative and provides an ethical layer to the account of battle such that the heroes are given an opportunity to explain their ideological motivation for going to war, in verse (Webb 2013:140).

3.3 Historical Background to the Poems in Storytelling

A certain ambivalence to the code of blood vengeance inhabited the early Islamic period, a phenomenon amply demonstrated by Muḥammad al-Mawlā

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odes: Arabic praise poems to the Prophet Muḥammad, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 2010; publisher's permission granted according to the terms of Fair Use.

10 For the Sunni, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was the fourth and last of the "Rightly Guided" Caliphs, for the Shiʿa, he was the first Imam, and his progeny the rightful successors to lead the Muslim community. The "Rightly Guided" Caliphs succeeded the Prophet Muḥammad, in leading the Islamic community after his death, the total duration of their tenure, in Medina (and in Kufa, under ʿAlī), lasting nearly thirty-years between the Prophet's death in 11/632, and ʿAlī's assassination in 40/661: (1) Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (11/632–13/634); (2) ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (13/634–23/644); (3) ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (23/644–35/656); and (4) ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (35/656–40/661). The Caliphate that they established was succeeded by dynastic rule, the Umayyads in Damascus (41/661–132/750), and the Abbasids in Baghdad (132/750–656/1258).

11 He has primarily compared al-Ṭabarī's (1967[d. 310/923) tenth-century prose version, in *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, with Ibn Muzāḥim's (1981[d. 212/827]) late second/eighth, or early third/ninth-century prosimetrum, in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*.

et al. (2012:231–275), in devoting a chapter of their book, *Qiṣaṣ al-ʿArab*, to well-known stories about revenge.[12] The persistence of vengeance as practice cannot be attributed to authority. In 11/632, in *Khuṭbat al-wadāʿ* (or "The Farewell Sermon"), the Prophet Muḥammad unequivocally stated that the institution of blood vengeance should cease (Ibn Isḥāq (2004[d. 151/768]):670):

> وأن كل دم كان في الجاهلية موضوع، وإن أول دمائكم أضع دم ابن ربيعة بن الحارث بن عبد المطلب، وكان مسترضعا في بني ليث، فقتلته هذيل فهو أول ما أبدأ به من دماء الجاهلية ...

> Every claim upon blood that took place in the Jahiliyya should now be set aside, even if the first among your claims that I set aside is for the blood of Rabīʿa b. al-Ḥārith b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib's son whose milk-mother came from among the Banī Layth, for the Hudhayl killed him and so I give him precedence from among the claims upon blood of the Jahiliyya.[13]

This said, its long cultural practice proved to be both pernicious and difficult to eradicate. The Prophet's succession was disputed after his death, becoming a renewed source of conflict, while the subsequent and successive murders of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī provoked a demand from their followers for bloody retribution against the rebels. Early Islamic history was plagued by tribal blood feuding, this stubborn persistence demonstrating that notwithstanding wise counsel there was very little consensus about how to police violence by alternative means. Within the command structure, justice was typically enforced by the Caliph, and mercy was a spiritual concept that was presented as the preferable route for those who were strong-minded. Perhaps because peace proved to be fragile, the enforcement of justice became a precarious balancing act; leadership required force, strong leadership required clemency, but clemency also brought with it mortal risk. On his deathbed, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb declared that he had been forewarned of his own death by Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (al-Ṭabarī 1967:4:192–193):[14]

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12 The authors have abridged their chosen stories from other well-known works: (1) "After the stabbing of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb", from al-Ṭabarī's *Ṭārīkh* and *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*; and (2) "The plotters against ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr", from the authors al-Masʿūdī, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Ibn al-Athīr and al-Marṣafī.

13 The Hudhayl killed Rabīʿa b. al-Ḥārith's little son when he was accidentally caught in the cross-fire between two warring tribes. The Prophet's declaration effectively cancelled Rabīʿa's claim to vengeance for the killing. Guillaume (1982:651) has also provided an alternative translation of this passage. On milk-kinship, see Section 1.4.7.

14 This couplet is a *bāʾiyya*, ending in *-bū*, composed in the *ṭawīl* metre.

Fa-awʿadanī Kaʿbun thalāthan aʿuddu-hā

فأوعَدَنِي كعبٌ ثلاثًا أَعُدُّها ولا شكَّ أن القولَ ما قال لي كعبُ
وما بي حِذارُ الموتِ إنّي لَميّتٌ ولكنْ حِذارُ الذَّنبِ يتْبَعُهُ الذَّنْبُ

Kaʿb gave me an evil prediction on three distinct occasions; there can be no doubt that what Kaʿb told me was right.
I am not afraid of death; I shall surely die; but I am afraid of the one transgression followed by another.

Translation by G. Rex Smith, in al-Ṭabarī (1985–1999:14:92–93)[15]

Because blood vengeance had been dismissed as an indulgence of the Jahiliyya, any continuation in its practice could only have been treated in one of two ways: a social aberration that had to be eradicated; or a rebranding for a new age. Despite its condemnation, retaliation continued to achieve sanction through *qiṣāṣ* ("fair retribution"), *qitāl* ("fighting") and jihad ("striving"). These words are disassociated, in the Qurʾan, although some interpretations have conflated the meanings of "fair retribution is prescribed for you" (Q[2:178]), and "fighting is ordained for you" (Q[2:216]), to represent the obligation that is "Strive hard for God as is His due" (Q[22:78]). For example:

1. Q[2:178–179]:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلى الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنْثَى بِالأُنْثَى فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُوْلِي الأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

You who believe, fair retribution is prescribed for you in cases of killing: the free man for the free man, the slave for the slave, the female for the female. But if the culprit is pardoned by his aggrieved brother, this shall be adhered to fairly, and the culprit shall pay what is due in a good way. This is an alleviation from your Lord and an act of mercy. If anyone then

15 From *14. The history of al-Ṭabarī: the conquest of Iran*, G. Rex Smith; © 1994 State University of New York; reproduced with permission of SUNY Press for the English language translation only.

exceeds these limits grievous suffering awaits him. Fair retribution saves life for you, people of understanding, so that you may guard yourselves against what is wrong.

2. Q[2:216]:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَن تَكْرَهُواْ شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَن تُحِبُّواْ شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

'Fighting has been ordained for you, though it is hard for you. You may dislike something although it is good for you, or like something although it is bad for you: God knows and you do not.'

3. Q[22:78]:

وَجَاهِدُواْ فِي اللّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِن قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُواْ شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُواْ باللّهِ هُوَ مَوْلاكُمْ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ

Strive hard for God as is His due: He has chosen you and placed no hardship in your religion, the faith of your forefather Abraham. God has called you Muslims – both in the past and in this [message] – so that the Messenger can bear witness about you and so that you can bear witness about other people. So keep up the prayer, give the prescribed alms, and seek refuge in God: He is your protector – an excellent protector and an excellent helper.

Translations by Abdel Haleem (2010:28, 35, 342)[16]

As permitted by the Qur'an, military campaigning in defence of Islam is "jihad", while the killing of a tribesman for a life taken by another is called *qiṣāṣ*, i.e. "fair retribution", or "retaliation".[17] More generally, when conflict is permitted,

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17 Jihad will be defined, in Section 3.4. See also Farid (2006), s.v. *qiṣāṣ*, meaning "retaliation".

the Muslim community is the kinship group under threat, whereas the target is either external, or excommunicated by the tribe, or defined as illegitimate. This said, there is little doubt that wise men have always been aware that blood vengeance is counterproductive, should it lead to further cycles of violence. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's ambivalent stance in exacting retaliation for ʿUthmān's murder bore some relation to his attitude to his own killer (al-Mawlā et al. 2012:263):

فقال عليّ: إن أعِشْ فالأمرُ إليَّ، وإن أُصَبْ فالأمر لكم، فإن آثرتُمْ أن تقتصُّوا فضربةٌ بِضَرْبة، وأن تعفوا أقرب للتقوى

So ʿAlī said: Should I live, then the matter is up to me, and if I'm mortally wounded, then the matter is up to you; so should you choose to retaliate, then retaliate one blow for one blow, and should you pardon, this is closer to piety

The sentiment behind his statement is an echo of Q[42:40]:

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَة مِّثلها فمَنْ عفا وَأَصْلحَ فأَجْرُهُ على اللّٰهِ إِنهُ لا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمينَ

Let harm be requited by an equal harm, though anyone who forgives and puts things right will have his reward from God Himself – He does not like those who do wrong.

Translation in Abdel Haleem (2010:488)[18]

ʿAlī's perspective was one of restraint so as to avoid an escalation. Even his Kharijite assassin, Ibn Muljam, was in no doubt as to the punishment for regicide and wavered in his resolve. However, he was incited into action by his new bride, who challenged his honour and demanded that her groom avenge the killing of her father and brother at the Battle of Nahrawān. In the following verses, a poet has described the action (Ibn Ḥabīb 2021[d. 245/860]:138–139):[19]

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19 This is a *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mī*, in the *ṭawīl* metre. The verses are attributed to Ibn Abī Mayyās al-Murādī, in al-Ṭabarī (1967:5:150), and in ʿAbbās (1974[1963]:35–36), who provides more references. In verse 3, *qatl* is sometimes transmitted as *fatk*.

Wa-lam ara mahran sāqa-hū dhū samāḥatin

ولـم أرَ مَهْـرًا ساقَـهُ ذو سَماحـةٍ كَمَهْرِ قَطَامٍ من فَصيحٍ وأعْجَـمِ
ثلاثـــةُ آلافٍ وعبـــدٌ وقَيْنـــةٌ وضرْبُ عليٍّ بالحُسَام المصمِّمِ
فلا مَهْرَ أَغْلَى مِنْ عليٍّ وإن غَلا ولا قتْلَ إلَّا دُونَ قتْـلِ ابـنِ مُلْجَـمِ

I never saw a bride-price paid by a generous man,
either eloquent or inarticulate,[20] like that of Qaṭām:
Three thousand, a slave, a slave-girl,
and slaying ʿAlī with piercing sword.
No bride-price, no matter how dear, was dearer than ʿAlī,
and no murder was lower than Ibn Muljam's.
Translation by Van Gelder[21]

Thereafter, the succession question continued to divide the Muslim polity, which fractured along sectarian lines, each accusing the other of false worship and corruption.

3.4 Defining Jihad

The term, "jihad", stemming from the word root, *jīm-hā'-dāl*, is conceptually complex and can be understood variously. Lexicons, dictionaries and some analysis of early renunciant literature offer more general meanings, for example: (1) a fight of some kind, or a holy war against infidels (Wehr 1979); (2) a struggle, involving great exertion, whether this be against a tangible threat, the devil, or oneself (Lane 1863); and (3) a force uniting "the individual, the community and God" that is most frequently associated with the battlefield (Bonner 1996; cited in Melchert 2015:59, 69). This last definition may account for why second/eighth-century proto-Sufi fighters were able to reconcile their asceticism with jihad, in that they perceived death as an opportunity to be reconciled with the Beloved (Cook 2007:64). As a Qur'anic obligation, the verb

20 The translator and editor, Geert Jan van Gelder, has noted that *faṣīḥ aw aʿjam* likely means "either Arab or non-Arab".

21 Used with permission of Brill, from *Prominent murder victims of the pre- and early Islamic periods including the names of murdered poets*, Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb, 2021; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

jāhada conveys the act of "exertion", endeavour and steadfastness of faith, as expressed by [Q29:6]:

وَمَن جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

> Those who exert themselves do so for their own benefit – God does not need His creatures –
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:397)[22]

While this interpretation of "jihad" conveys a struggle that is ultimately spiritual, through a process of abrogation, incidence of struggle, in the Qurʾan, came to mean physical fighting because historically there once was a border fight between Muslims and external threats for both territory and belief (Rippin 2015:43–48). The debate surrounding the justifiability of violent struggle has proven to be very controversial, but it often centres around the "*Āya* of the Sword", whether or not this is Q[9:36], how it should be interpreted, and if it abrogates other verses that teach greater tolerance (Kamali 2003[1989]:223):

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِندَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُواْ فِيهِنَّ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُواْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

> God decrees that there are twelve months – ordained in God's Book on the Day when He created the heavens and earth – four months of which are sacred: this is the correct calculation. Do not wrong yourselves in these months – though you may fight the idolators at any time, if they first fight you – remember that God is with those who are mindful of Him.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:193)[23]

Within its religious context, Abir Hamdar (2009:86–95) has argued "jihad" is frequently misconstrued as aggression when its nature is multifaceted, reflecting a defence against injustice that can be noble and intellectual, also investing

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a woman with the role of speaking truth to power and preserving memory in the tradition of the daughter and granddaughter of the Prophet Muḥammad.[24] This nuance aside, violent jihad bears a remarkable resemblance to other forms of combat, so much so that Rippin (2015:47–48) has qualified that "*jihād* has become the Islamised term for the secular *qitāl*". However, it may be possible to extrapolate further, by returning to Bonner's (1996) earlier definition of jihad, i.e. a force that unites "the individual, the community and God", this most usually associated with conflict. In substituting "retaliation" for "jihad", it is likely that it was the ancient obligation to retaliate that once was the institutional force uniting "the individual and the community" against a common enemy, for the Jahili avenger was the cultural antecedent of the jihadist with whom he shared a common landscape, customs and folklore, and from whom he is separated only by historical time and belief. For the early Islamic period, if "jihad" is an extension of blood vengeance, then retribution began to be enacted in God's name, in defence of the Muslim community, against a common enemy. From a legal standpoint, at least, M. Hardy (1963:11, 27) has compared tribal law to Shariʿa law, arguing that the latter is somewhat ambivalent towards blood vengeance since it reinterprets the archetypal tribal feud as a battle between a "super-tribe" of believers (the *umma*) and non-believers, in which the community allows requital that fulfils the conditions for divine retribution.

3.5 Arguing the Case for Jihad as a Form of Blood Vengeance

Within the Islamic narrative tradition, there are certain motifs, among these "boiling blood", that refer not only to jihadist martyrdom but also to "unavenged blood" (Cook 2007:117). The Prophet Muḥammad's uncle, Ḥamza, ranking among the first of Muslim martyrs, died in the Battle of Uḥud (3/625) in gory circumstances that coincide with other narratives about blood vengeance from *Ayyām al-ʿArab* (Cook 2007:24–26). An earlier template for Ḥamza's messy end, in which his enemy's wife, Hind, both ripped out and ate his liver,[25] is Jassās' demise at the hands of al-Muhalhil and his nephew, in the Folktale.[26]

24 Juxtaposed against pacifist women, there are also female inciters to vengeance, who interpret jihad differently. Section 6.4 will present a jihadist poet from nineteenth-century Nigeria, Sections 7.4.4 and 7.4.5, a jihadist poet from twenty-first-century Syria.

25 See Ibn Isḥāq (2004:342).

26 See Sections 2.3.1 and 2.5.4.2.

Ḥamza's enemy was Jahili and therefore a taste for cannibalism is identifiable not only with excesses of the Age of Ignorance but also with the depravity of a symbolic Other that jihadist poetry rails against.

Aside from motifs, there are instances of speech acts that closely align the call for jihad with the call for blood vengeance. For example, the Umayyad dynasty exploited the slogan, "Vengeance for ʿUthmān", in their violent campaign for political legitimacy during the early Islamic period (Cook 2007:48). This was not underclass protest, but rather state propaganda aiming to justify an ancient form of tribal retaliation as response to the assassination of the third Caliph, from whom the Umayyads derived a bond of kinship.

Another example of incitement involves a final act of testimony. At the point of death, a Muslim "martyr" (i.e. one who dies for his community and belief) may make two invocations: one expressing "piety" to God; and one expressing injury, the dying person directly asking for God's vengeance in a prayer termed "*duʿāʾ al-maẓlūm*, (the call of the oppressed, or the one treated unjustly)" (Cook 2007:22). This speech act prior to death, and associated with jihad and Islamic martyrdom, can include a poem (as well as prayer), the Kharijite, a specific example of an early Islamic fighter bearing a striking similarity to his Jahili predecessor and so accounting for the inclusion of Kharijite poetry in the *Ḥamāsa* anthology of Abū Tammām (Cook 2007:30, 62).[27] Poetry that incites retaliation is often the first stage of vengeance rites, this preceding bloodshed and the consolidation of tribal identity. It is no coincidence then that jihadist poetry functions as a recruiting campaign for battle, for which most references are heroic rather than Islamic.

3.6 The Poetry of Conflict in Transition

The background set, the following poems demonstrate evolution of the blood vengeance theme in early Islamic poetry. Some poems represent how armed struggle played out between groups with different interests; others, how retaliation continued to be connected to honour and its loss.

3.6.1 *Blood Vengeance as a Cultural Phenomenon*

Ḥamāsiyya 16 may, or may not have been composed after the foundation of Islam since it is variously attributed to al-Samawʾal b. ʿĀdiyāʾ al-Yahūdī, and

27 By way of example, Cook has cited as evidence *Ḥ*14, by Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa (see Section 3.7.3).

ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥārithī. Although the entire poem is much longer, this analysis concerns only verses 6 through 12:[28]

***Ḥ*16**

6	لنـا جَبَـلٌ يَحْتَلُّـهُ مَـنْ نُجِيـرُهُ	مَنِيـعٌ يَـرُدُّ الطَّـرْفَ وهْـوَ كَلِيـلُ
7	رَسَا أصلُهُ تَحْتَ الثَّرى وَسَمَا بِـهِ	إلـى النجـم فـرعٌ لا يُـرام طويـلُ
8	هو الأَبلقُ الفردُ الذي سار ذكرُهُ	يعـزّ علـى مـن كـادَهُ ويطـولُ
9	وإنـا لقـومٌ مـا نَـرَى القتـلَ سُبَّـةً	إذا مـا رَأَتْـهُ عامِـرٌ وسَلُـولُ
10	يُقـرِّبُ حُـبُّ المـوتِ آجالَنـا لنـا	وتكرَهُـهُ آجالُهُـمْ فتَطُـولُ
11	ومـا مـاتَ مِنَّـا سيِّـدٌ فـي فِراشِـهِ	ولا طُـلَّ مِنَّـا حيـثُ كَـانَ قتِيـلُ
12	تسيلُ على حَدِّ الظُّباتِ نُفوسُنـا	وليسَتْ على غيرِ الظُّباتِ تَسيلُ

6 We have a mountain where those we grant protection may alight,
Impregnable, it repels the glance and tires the eye.
7 Its root is fixed in the moist earth;
A branch, long and unreachable, lifts it to the stars.[29]
8 It is the unrivalled al-Ablaq, whose reputation was commonly known //
it is unattainable to the one who plots against it, and it endures.[30]
9 We are a tribe who do not think that to be slain is a disgrace,
When the tribes of ʿĀmir and Salūl see it so.
10 Our love of death brings our fixed term closer;
Their fixed term hates death and grows the longer.
11 No lord of ours dies quietly in bed,
And none of us, once slain, lies unavenged.
12 Our souls flow out from us on sword-blades,
And save for on the sword, they don't flow out.

Translation by Stetkevych (1991:292)[31]

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28 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version, of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*15, in al-Marzūqī (2003). A *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lū*, it appears in the *ḥamāsa* chapter. The poetic metre is *al-ṭawīl*. The translation, by Stetkevych, is based upon the al-Marzūqī version which does not include verse 8. In his notes to verse 6, al-Tibrīzī has explained that some versions contain the additional verse (8, here translated by Dena Fakhro).

29 In Arabic poetry, *al-najm* usually refers to *al-Thurayyā*, i.e. "the Pleiades".

30 According to al-Tibrīzī (2000), the "unrivalled al-Ablaq" is the fortress of al-Samaw'al. The word, *ablaq*, literally means "piebald", or "of variegated colours".

31 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics*

The entire twenty-three-verse poem has been translated by Arberry (1965), Lyall (1986) and Stetkevych (1991), while there remains some uncertainty about whether it was composed by a Christian, a Jewish, or a Muslim poet.[32] Consequently, *Ḥ*16 is an interesting example of a poem for which the blood vengeance message overrides any specific religious context. Retaliation for the slain, in verse 11, is an obvious reference to the practice of blood vengeance, leading some to identify this poem as Jahili.[33] Verse 12 employs other "blood vengeance motifs", such as "souls/blood" and "swords". Verses 6, 7 and 8 describe a mountain fortress that is intimately connected to the tribe's identity and the earth.[34] Here, the abode is not only a symbol of dominion but is also a sign of life. The tribe defends its property for failure to do so invites death and destruction. Verses 8 and 9 suggest that, although conflict has been driven by rivalry, the tribe will ultimately triumph because they are noble and brave and will fight to the death. Death is inevitable and so "love of death", in verse 10, is an expression of welcome towards the same familiar visitor, i.e. death is greeted with the same reception as any other guest.[35] An intertextual marker, in verse 7, could be Islamic, should it refer to Q[14:24] that compares a "firmly rooted tree" to a "good word" (Stetkevych 1991:294–295):

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

[Prophet], do you not see how God makes comparisons? A good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky,

Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:259)[36]

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of the ʿAbbāsid age, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

32 This is in part due to the contested authorship. According to al-Marzūqī (2003), it was composed by a Muslim poet; al-Tibrīzī (2000) has described him as a Jahili who died in 560; Lyall (1986:21) has claimed that the branch of the al-Ḥārithi, to which the poet belonged, was a protected Christian tribe that emigrated to Syria from Najrān (Lyall 1986:21); the description al-Yahūdī, for one of the possible authors, may indicate that he was Jewish.

33 The second hemistich means *lam yabṭul damu qatīlin min-nā*, or "the blood of our fallen is not spent in vain" (al-Tibrīzī 2000).

34 The mountain fortress is a popular symbol of defence and honour, this informing the name of a hero, in Section 6.7.5.

35 Section 5.3 will present a poem, by Muslim b. al-Walīd, that compares an avenger to a generous host.

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If this poem has Islamic undertones, then spiritual resonance can be brought to bear upon poetic metaphors for which death is beloved, the tribal abode is a fortress defended by both sword and word, and bloodshed in battle offers the soul its final release and resting place.

3.6.2 *Juwayy Has Consigned His Oath*

Mukhaḍram poets, those whose lives bridged the Jahiliyya and early Islamic periods (and who converted to Islam), most comprehensively combined Jahili and Islamic themes, in verse. *Ḥamāsiyya* 339,[37] by Kaʿb b. Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā, refers to a specific case of blood vengeance:

Ḥ339

1	لقَـدْ وَلَّـى أَلِيَّتَـهُ جُـوَيٌّ	مَعاشِـرَ غيـرَ مَطلـولٍ أَخُوهـا
2	فإِنْ تَهْلكْ جُوَيٌّ فكُلُّ نَفْسٍ	سَيَجْلِبُهـا لذلِـكَ جالِبُوهـا
3	فإِنْ تَهْلِـكْ جُـوَيٌّ فـإِنَّ حَرْبًـا	كظَنِّكَ كانَ بعدَكَ مُوقِدوها
4	وما ساءَتْ ظُنُونُكَ يوْمَ تُولِي	بأَرمـاحٍ وَفـى لـكَ مُشْرِعوهـا
5	ولـوْ بَلَـغَ القَتِيـلَ فَعـالُ قَـومٍ	لَسَرَّكَ مِنْ سُيُوفِكَ مُنْتَضُوها
6	لِنَـذْرِكَ والنُّـذُورُ لهـا وَفَـاءٍ	إذا بَلَـغَ الخَزايَـةَ بالِغُوهـا
7	كأَنَّك كنْتَ تَعلمُ يومَ بُزَّتْ	ثِيابُـك مـا سَيَلْقَـى سالِبُوهـا
8	فما عُتِرَ الظِباءُ بِحَـيِّ كَعْـبٍ	ولا الخَمْسُونَ قَصَّرَ طالِبُوهـا
9	صَبَحْنَ الخَزْرَجِيَّةَ مُرْهَفاتٍ	أَبـانَ ذَوي أُرُومَتِهـا ذَوُوهـا

1 Juwayy has consigned his oath // to a people who will not leave their brother's blood unavenged

2 If you have perished, Juwayy, [then so be it] because every soul // will be reaped by its reapers

3 If you have perished, Juwayy, then a war // will be kindled by those who come after you, as was your opinion

4 On the day you took an oath, your opinions [of those] with the spears was not in vain // for it is on your behalf that they point them

37 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*340, in al-Marzūqī (2003), for which verses 2, 6, 8 and 9 do not appear. The poetic metre is *al-wāfir*, and the poem is a *hā'iyya*, ending *-ū-hā*.

5 And if the tribe's deeds could reach [the ears] of the slain man // then you would be delighted by those who draw your swords
6 For the sake of your vow, for vows are owed allegiance // when the attainers of the utmost shame have attained it
7 It was as if you knew, the day when you were stripped // of your garments what would befall its plunderers
8 In Kaʿb's community, the gazelles were not slaughtered [instead of livestock] // nor did its claimants demand less than the fifty [men]
9 [Swords], in their sharpness, gave the Khazraj a morning draught [of death] // whose noble pedigree is embossed upon them[38]

Because the subject of the poem was already dead, Abū Tammām included the poem in his chapter on elegy. The poet, a fellow tribesmen of the slain man, was a Muslim convert, becoming one of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, but the subject matter clearly reveals that his early years were lived during the Jahiliyya.[39] The historical context, for *Ḥ*339, is the Day of Buʿāth occurring just before the Hijra. During this battle, in approximately 615, the Aws tribe and their Jewish allies defeated the Khazraj, this splitting the city of Medina (Nicholson 1930:170). The Day of Buʿāth was characterised by such intensity in feuding that it paved the way for a new Islamic order so as to effectively restore peace (Shamsie 1984:312–313). Therefore, these verses are useful for describing the nature of conflict, for which the Prophet sought to mediate and integrate warring factions into a politically stable Islamic community. Al-Tibrīzī (2000) has transmitted the backstory to the poem, in which the deceased, Juwayy of the Muzayna, had earlier passed by the warring tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Because his own tribe was allied to the Aws, he decided to join in the fighting, but was mortally injured. Before dying, he swore to a friend belonging to the opposing tribe of Khazraj, Thābit b. al-Mundhir b. Ḥarām,[40] that his

38 The editor, of the Al-Marzūqī (2003) version, has only referred to verses 8 and 9 by way of a footnote. Al-Tibrīzī (2000) has explained that *al-arūma* means "origin, as though the poet wishes to convey that the swords are engraved with the names of the kings to whom they have previously been assigned":

الأرومة: الأصل، كأنه يريد أنَّ الذين طبعوا هذه السيوف كتبوا عليها أسماء الملوك الذين ضُرِبَتْ لهم أو في أيّامِهم ...

39 Kaʿb b. Zuhayr also composed *Bānat Suʿād* (see Section 3.2.2).

40 He was the father of Ḥassān b. Thābit, the poet who also became a Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad.

own kin would go on to avenge his death, and that fifty able-bodied men would not be spared. When word of his death reached his own tribe (the Muzayna), they were predictably incited into action, capturing Thābit and swearing that his only acceptable ransom could be a black-haired goat. The Helpers of the Prophet initially refused to comply with this demand, but Thābit persuaded them otherwise, saying that they should reclaim their own brother, by exchanging him for one of his captors' brothers, i.e. a goat. A goat was then slaughtered, and Thābit released.

Like many poems about vengeance, or war, the poetic metre is the rousing tempo known as *al-wāfir*, a metre shared with six other poems belonging to this chapter.[41] This is important for understanding the nature of incitement because the rhythm is catchy and provocative, like the sound of striking.[42] The opening contains an oath, and incitement to "blood vengeance"; the slain man commanding his tribesmen to avenge his death, in verse 1, his tribesmen providing their assent, in verses 2 and 3. What follows is a description of weaponry: the "spears" and "swords" in the hands of the Muzayna, in verses 4 and 5; and the enemy's action of divesting Juwayy of his weaponry, in verse 7.[43] Verses 6 and 9 juxtapose the enemy's shameful behaviour against the tribe's honourable conduct in battle, while verse 8 compares the act of retribution to "sacrifice". A metaphor refers to the habit of slaughtering cattle to feed the poor, for when herds became too numerous, the killing of a gazelle, instead of a goat, was a particular mark of generosity and nobility (al-Tibrīzī 2000). Verse 9 allies retaliation with the serving up of a "deadly drink". The combined motifs of "weaponry", "sacrifice", "drink" and "retaliation" indicate that this is a poem about blood vengeance that conforms strongly to the Jahili tradition. Kaʿb's brother, Bujayr (an earlier convert to Islam), later conveyed similar martial imagery, in his description of the Battles of Khaybar and Ḥunayn, albeit without direct reference to revenge:[44]

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41 These six poems are: (1) the following, by Bujayr b. Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā; (2) *Ḥ*347; (3) *Ḥ*22; (4) *Ḥ*14; (5) a verse extract from ʿAntara b. Shaddād; (6) and a poem about the Battle of Marj Rāhiṭ.

42 Both pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry used percussion, in the form of frame drums and a beater called the *qaḍīb* (Wright 2009[1983]:439–440). In more recent times, hand drums have sometimes been banned by authorities because of the powerful feelings they evoke.

43 "Garments" likely include "weaponry".

44 This verse, a *fāʾiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*fī*, is also in the *wāfir* metre. It comes from the *akhbār* of Kaʿb b. Zuhayr (al-Iṣfahānī 2002:17:67). See Section 3.6.4, for another poem about Ḥunayn, i.e. *Ḥ*22.

Ṣabaḥnā-hum bi-alfin min Sulaymin

صَبَحْناهُمْ بأَلْفٍ من سُلَيْمٍ وأَلْف من بني عثمان وافِ
فرُحْنا والجيادُ تجول فيهم بأَرْماحٍ مُثَقَّفَةٍ خِفافِ
وفي أَكتافهم طعْنٌ وضَرْبٌ ورَشْقٌ بالمُرَيَّشةِ اللِّطافِ

We gave them a morning draught [of death], with a thousand from Sulaym // and a full thousand from the Banī ʿUthmān
And we returned by evening, and the swift horses circled around them // with light and straightened spears
In their shoulders, a piercing and a striking // and a shooting with the slender feathered arrows

3.6.3 *An Unresolved Quest for Vengeance*

In the elegy that is *Ḥamāsiyya* 347,[45] by Kaʿb b. Zuhayr, an honourable death is an heroic end delivered by battle, but lamentably the subject, Ubayy, perished of "thirst" in a desert (al-Tibrīzī 2000). No doubt dehydration was an unfortunate hazard when traversing, or getting lost in an arid environment, but here it is a metaphor for an unresolved quest for vengeance:

***Ḥ*347**

1 لَعَمْرُكَ ما خَشِيتُ على أُبَيٍّ مَصارِعَ بينَ قَوٍّ فالسُّلَيِّ
2 ولكنِّي خَشِيتُ على أُبَيٍّ جَرِيرَةَ رُمْحِهِ في كُلِّ حَيِّ
3 من الفِتيانِ مَحلُولٍ مُمِرٍّ وأَمَّارٌ بإِرشادٍ وَغَيِّ
4 ألا لَهْفَ الأَرامِلِ واليَتامَى ولَهْفَ الباكِياتِ على أُبَيِّ

1 Upon your life, I did not fear for Ubayy // the places of slaughter between Qaww and al-Sulayy
2 However, I feared for Ubayy // on account of the injurious actions of his spear in every tribe
3 Among the sweetest of young men, [but also] bitter // one who commands [people] to do right and wrong

45 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*348, in al-Marzūqī. Like the two previous poems, it has also been composed in the *wāfir* metre. It is a *yā'iyya*, ending in -(*ay*)-*yī*.

4 How sorrowful are the widows[46] and the orphans // and the wailing of weeping women for Ubayy

Because Ubayy did not expire upon the battlefield, the poem regrets a life wasted. This opinion is not universal. Much later, the poem's ideological tone so sickened al-Mubarrad, the third/ninth-century grammarian, that he described it as one of the coarsest examples of Arabic poetry because death in battle is lauded as preferable to dying of thirst (al-Tibrīzī 2000):[47]

وقال المبرّد: هذا الشعر من أجفى شعر العرب لانه يُنْبِىءُ عن تقدير في المرثي أن تكون مَنِيّته قتلاً، ويتأسّفُ حَتْفَ أنفِه، قال أبو هلال: إنما تَأَسَّفَ على موتِه عطشًا.

And al-Mubarrad said: this verse is among the coarsest poetry of the Arabs because, as elegy, it regrets his death by natural causes, indicating instead an appreciation for death by killing. Abū Hilāl said: whereas, it has regretted his death by thirsting.

Setting this controversy aside, the poem is rhetorically compelling, and useful for demonstrating the near cult status of fighting to the death. Verse 3 provides an example of paronomasia (*tajnīs*), in its word choice between *mumirrun*, or "bitter", and *ammārun*, or "one who commands". Antithetical ideas (*muṭābaqa*) help to situate the conflict logistically and psychologically, it raging not only between two tribes but also within the persona of Ubayy, whose name means "One who is unyielding". The poem describes a man possessed of very human contradictions, one who: (1) incites others into war, while being ambivalent of nature; (2) is fearsome to enemies, but sweet to his friends; (3) is bloodthirsty in battle, but willing to sacrifice his life for his tribe; and (4) is sometimes right, but other times wrong. Verse 2 speaks of Ubayy's dreaded "spear" representing his aggression against his enemies. Suitably for an avenger, albeit one frustrated in his objective, he dies in a liminal fighting zone situated between the hills of

46 Al-Marzūqī (2003) has interpreted *arāmil* to mean the "poverty stricken" of both sexes, and so it could also feasibly mean the "destitute". More commonly, this word means "widows" that have been left destitute, aligning with the grief of female weepers.

47 Incidentally, a version of the poem, in *al-Kāmil* (al-Mubarrad 1997[d. 285/898]:1392), contains some variation. For example, it is about Qusayy, rather than Ubayy, whereas the "places of slaughter" are "places of perdition" located between Ḥajr and Sulayy:

لَعَمْرُكَ ما خَشِيتُ على قُصَيٍّ مَتَالِفَ بينَ حَجْرٍ والسُّلَيِّ

Qaww and the valley of al-Sulayy, these regions belonging respectively to the Banī Asad and the Banī ʿAbs (al-Tibrīzī 2000).[48]

3.6.4 *The Battle of Ḥunayn*

Ḥamāsiyya 22 is attributed to different men, two of these *Mukhaḍram* poets, al-Ḥarīsh b. Hilāl al-Qurayʿī and al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās al-Sulamī, the latter possibly the warrior son of al-Khansāʾ:[49]

***Ḥ*22**

1	شَهِدْنَ مع النَّبِيِّ مُسَوَّماتٍ	حُنَيْنَا وهْيَ دامِيةُ الحَوَامِي
2	ووقعةَ خالدٍ شهِدتْ وحكَّتْ	سَنَابِكَها على البَلَدِ الحَرَامِ
3	نُعرِّضُ للسُّيُوفِ إذا التَقَيْنا	وُجُوْهَا لا تُعَرَّضُ لِلّطام
4	ولَسْتُ بِخالِعٍ عَنّي ثيابِي	إِذَا هَرَّ الكُماةُ ولا أُرَامِي
5	ولكنِّي يجولُ المهرُ تَحْتِي	إلى الغَارَاتِ بالعَضْبِ الحُسَامِ

1 With the Prophet, [the horses] witnessed [the battle of] // Ḥunayn, well marked out [by their owners] and with bloodied hooves
2 They witnessed the onslaught of Khālid // scraping their hooves upon the Sacred Place[50]
3 When we met in battle, we exposed to swords // faces which are not exposed to slaps
4 I am not one to remove my armoury // when the valiant armed men whine [in dread] and not fight back
5 However, the colt races beneath me // into the raids with a sharp sword

If by al-ʿAbbās (d. 18/639), he converted prior to the Muslim conquest of Mecca, but his Jahili background meant that he was very familiar with incitement, and how to invoke the code of blood vengeance. A *khabar*, from the *Aghānī*, relays how al-ʿAbbās issued a warning to Kulayb b. ʿAhma during a period of hardship,

48 Qaww suggests a "wasteland", from the word *qawāʾ*, al-Sulayy, a "place of comfort", from *sulwa*. The thwarted hero negotiates an area between society and the desert, at peace in one and at war in the other.

49 The numbering refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*21, in al-Marzūqī (2003). This *mīmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*mī*, has been composed in the *wāfir* metre. According to Abu ʿUbayda, al-ʿAbbās was al-Khansāʾs son, although Ibn al-Kalbī did not recognise him as such.

50 Epithet of Mecca.

his verses echoing Jassās b. Murra, in the events preceding the al-Basūs war (al-Iṣfahānī 2002:5:26):[51]

A-Kulaybu mā la-ka kulla yawmin ẓāliman

أَكليبُ ما لكَ كلَّ يوم ظَالمًا والظلمُ أَنكدُ وجهُه مَلعونُ
فافعَلْ بقومك ما أَرادَ بوائلٍ يومَ الغّديرِ سَمِيُّكَ المطعونُ

Kulayb what is the matter with you, every day unjust // for tyranny is painful, its face contemptible
So do with your people what was meant by Wā'il // on the Day of Ghadīr, your own stabbed namesake

According to al-Tibrīzī (2000), the poem could have been composed by a later poet, Jaḥḥāf b. Ḥakīm al-Sulamī (d. 90/709), a notorious assassin, poet and avenger. If so, it provides an Islamic justification for war, albeit allied more closely with anti-establishment poetry. Al-Akhṭal, the Taghlibite poet, famously said of Jaḥḥāf's ferocity:[52]

On Jaḥḥāf

لَقَدْ أَوْقَعَ الجَحَّافُ بالبشْرِ وَقْعة إلى اللهِ مِنْهَا المُشْتَكَى وَالمُعَوَّلُ

Should Jaḥḥāf have delivered an onslaught onto the people // then it is to God that the complainers and wailers go

Also known as al-Jaḥḥāf b. Ḥakīm b. ʿĀṣim, he was a rebel in the Damascus uprising between supporters of Marwān I and al-Zubayr, launching a particularly bloody campaign against the Banī Taghlib. The fifth Umayyad Caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān,[53] licensed his blood for vengeance. In response, Jaḥḥāf escaped to Byzantium, but returned seven years later, following ʿAbd al-Malik's death and a pardon from his son, al-Walīd (al-Mawlā et al. 2012:267).

Whomever the author, *Ḥ*22 clearly specifies that holy war is a sanctioned practice as at the Battle of Ḥunayn,[54] thereby echoing a description of the same

51 A *nūniyya*, ending in *-nū*, in the *kāmil* metre.
52 This *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lū*, is in the *al-ṭawīl* metre.
53 ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān is the subject of *Ḥ*631, *Ḥ*632 and *Ḥ*633 (See Section 3.8).
54 See "Hunayn" (Lammens and Kamal 2012).

battle, in Q[9:25–26], verses that concern a struggle between believers and disbelievers for regional dominance:

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنكُمْ شَيْئًا وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُم مُّدْبِرِينَ ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ اللهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنزَلَ جُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الكافِرِينَ

> God has helped you [believers] on many battlefields, even on the day of the Battle of Hunayn. You were well pleased with your large numbers, but they were of no use to you: the earth seemed to close in on you despite its spaciousness, and you turned tail and fled. Then God sent His calm down to His Messenger and the believers, and He sent down invisible forces. He punished the disbelievers – this is what the disbelievers deserve –
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:191)[55]

*Ḥ*22 refers to the battle that consolidated the Muslim conquest of Mecca. It is unusual for featuring more than one hero across a brief interlude, including: (1) the Prophet, in verse 1; (2) the military commander, Khālid b. al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra (who was instrumental in destroying the pre-Islamic idols of Arabia), in verse 2; (3) the poet's tribe, in verse 3; and (4) the poet and his horse, in verse 5. This alliance represents the Muslim community. In *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, another version associates the second verse with the Battle of Marj Rāhiṭ,[56] and a longstanding battle between the Qays and Kalb tribes that will feature in Section 3.8. Different descriptions of horses bind the verses together, at beginning and close, serving as metaphors for strength, speed and nobility. Companionship between the poet and his mount is a distinctive feature of Classical Arabic poetry that harks back to the Jahiliyya, the poet either embarking on a raid or negotiating a lonely journey. At the opening, blood is a dye staining the "hooves" of horses that presumably leave a trace upon the ground. Historically, bloodstain upon horses is a marker of victory, in war poetry.[57] Although revenge is not

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56 See Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (2013:1:98):

ووقعةَ راهطٍ شهِدتْ وحلَّت سنابكُهُنَّ بالبلد الحرامِ

57 See Section 3.7.4.

cited as the provocation for war, verse 3 features "faces which are not exposed to slaps", a euphemism for "men who will retaliate". The dominant weapon is the "sword(s)", in verse 3 and verse 5, while use of the verbal root for "bearing witness" (*shīn-hā'-dāl*), in the first two verses, means that a commitment to battle and oath-taking, previously features of Jahili verse, take on an Islamic nature.

3.6.5 *The Cult of the Dead*

The authorship of *Ḥamāsiyya* 306 is contested,[58] as is often the case with *ḥamāsiyyāt* by lesser known poets that are easier to promote by association with celebrated names. *Al-ʿIqd al-farīd* attributes the poem to Ḥassān b. Thābit (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih 2013:1:105), a man bearing the distinction of becoming the Prophet's own poet in his mature years, also notable for a very long life spanning the end of the Jahiliyya and the beginning of the Islamic period. In the *Ḥamāsa*, *Ḥ*306, from the chapter on lamentation, is attributed to both Ḥassān b. Thābit and Ḥafṣ b. al-Aḥnaf al-Kinānī, (al-Tibrīzī 2000). The *Aghānī* notes Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihrī and ʿAmr b. Shaqīq as other possibilities, as well as a *khabar* from Abū ʿUbayda explaining the circumstances around the death of a man called Rabīʿa, who died at the hand of Nubaysha on the Day of al-Kadīd (al-Iṣfahānī 2002:16:39–54). The poem, more generally, is a pre-Islamic apology for failing to make a sacrifice (the hocking of a camel) at the gravestones of a celebrated hero (Goldziher 1967:219–220):

***Ḥ*306**

1	لا يَبْعَـدَنَّ رَبِيعَـةُ بْنُ مُكَـدَّمٍ	وسَقَـى الغَـوَادِي قَبْرَهُ بِذَنُـوبِ
2	نَفَرَتْ قَلُوصِي مِنْ حِجارَةِ حَرَّةٍ	بُنِيَتْ على طَلْقِ اليَدَيْنِ وَهُوبِ
3	لا تَنْفِـري يـا نـاقُ منـهُ فإنَّـه	شِرِّيـبُ خَمْـرٍ مِسْعَـرٌ لِحُـرُوبِ
4	لَوْلا السِّفـارُ وبُعْـدُ خَـرْقٍ مَهْمَـهٍ	لتَرَكْتُهـا تَحْبُـو على العُرْقُـوبِ

1 [May God] not keep Rabīʿa, the son of Mukaddam, far // may the clouds water his grave with great buckets[59]

2 My camel shied from the stones of the Ḥarra country which were erected over the man with open hands, the generous one;

58 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*306, in al-Marzūqī (2003). This *bā'iyya*, ending in -(*ū*)-*bī*, has been composed in the *kāmil* metre.

59 Translation of the first verse is by Fakhro, the rest by Goldziher.

3 Do not flee from him, O camel, he knew how to circulate
wine and instigate wars;
4 If it were not for the journey and the immense desert I would not
have failed to leave it behind crawling on the ground with cut sinews.

Translation by Goldziher (1967:219–220)[60]

*Ḥ*306 refers intensively to motifs commonly associated with vengeance; "imbibing", military "zeal", "generosity", "weaponry" and "sacrifice". In the second hemistich, of the first verse, the action of "watering the grave with buckets" conveys an act of atonement. Here, rain water is as reviving as any bloodshed,[61] but al-Marzūqī (2003) has also cited Q[51:59] that affords the word *dhanūb* additional intertextual complexity if taken to mean a "portion", or "share". This particular Qurʾanic verse is situated alongside others that compel believers to worship only, and absolves them of any need to make such sacrificial offerings:

فَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ ذَنُوبًا مِّثْلَ ذَنُوبِ أَصْحابِهِمْ فَلَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونِ

The evildoers, like their predecessors, will have a share of torment – they need not ask Me to hasten it –

Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:524)[62]

In verse 3, water gives way to "wine", the "stoking of war", and hence the blood of battle. The dead man's zeal for fighting follows a description of his "generosity", marking him as an exemplar of Bedouin virtues.[63] Verse 4 alludes to the ritual practice of venerating the dead, by hocking a camel.

Notwithstanding the poem's pre-Islamic sympathy, there is little doubt that early Islamic poets also venerated the dead, at least in verse, for the cult of the dead was associated with the cult of the ancestor that panegyrists continued to perpetuate (Goldziher 1967:210–212). Even the Kharijites, a group claiming to be Islamic fundamentalists, venerated the dead, albeit by shaving their hair near the grave of their leader, Ṣāliḥ b. al-Musarriḥ, an act that: (1) identified

60 From the English language translation of *Muslim Studies*, vol. 1, Ignaz Goldziher, 1967; translation © 1966 by George Allen & Unwin Ltd; reproduced with permission of SUNY Press.

61 A point raised, in Section 2.3.5.

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63 See Section 1.4.2, for a definition of "Honour" and "manly virtues", *murū'a* (also *muruwwa*).

them to each other as members of the same group;[64] (2) was a mourning rite; and (3) related to the ancient custom of shaving the hair before battle in honour of death itself (Goldziher 1967:225–227). Although informed by some sense of divinity to which a debt to life is paid, this practice is an understandable Jahili position and largely existential. However, the new religion tried to eradicate the cult of the dead, by stating that death is inevitable, but not final. For example: (1) Q[3:185] explains to the early Muslim polity that the hereafter is the ultimate destination, a mortal life only transitory; (2) Q[3:144] prepares for the death of the Prophet Muḥammad as part of the same inevitability that should not cause faith in God to waiver; and (3) upon the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, the first Rightly Guided Caliph, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq,[65] declared to all mourners that excessive grief is akin to hero worship, an act inappropriate for a true believer (al-Bukhārī 870:3668):[66]

> ألا مَن كانَ يَعْبُدُ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللهُ عليه وسلَّمَ فإنَّ مُحَمَّدًا قدْ مَاتَ، وَمَن كانَ يَعْبُدُ اللهَ فإنَّ اللهَ حيٌّ لا يَمُوتُ
>
> Whoever used to worship Muḥammad, may God bless and save him, Muḥammad has died, and whoever used to worship God, God is alive and will never die

Arguably, there is an ethical contradiction that is difficult to reconcile with religious edict, in early Islamic elegy and poems of military zeal. The cult of the dead is an understandable form of human attachment, a left-over from the Jahiliyya, never fully eradicated even after the dismissal of idolatry. However, those who see no contradiction argue that a preoccupation with death may have carried over into the early Islamic period, particularly in Kharijite poetry, because death is not a final encounter, but instead a celebration representing reconciliation with God in the hereafter, i.e. a noble death is a transformative act leading to eternal life (Badawi 1980:6). Even so, as new converts to Islam, the *Mukhaḍram* poets attempted to dispense with the past. Prior to Kaʿb b. Zuhayr's conversion, his brother Bujayr told him in no uncertain terms that idol worship would result in a woeful death and destruction:[67]

---

64 See *Ḥ*169, in Section 2.5.4, for a Jahili comparison.

65 Al-Ṣiddīq, "the Truthful One", is an attribution that Sunni Muslims give to Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Quḥāfa.

66 Hadith 1242.

67 The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mū*, is *al-ṭawīl*. The verse and translation is cited in Stetkevych (2010:34, 240).

Man mublighun Kaʿban fa-hal la-ka fī-l-latī

مَنْ مُبْلِغٌ كَعْبًا فَهَلْ لَكَ فِي الَّتِي تَلُومُ عليهـا بـاطلًا وَهْـيَ أَحْـزَمُ
الى اللهِ لا العُزَّى واللاَّتِ وَحْـدَهُ فتَنْجُـو إذا كـان النَّجَـاءُ وتَسْلَـمُ
لَدَى يَوْمٍ لا ينْجُو وليس بمُفْلِتٍ من النَّارِ إلاّ طاهرُ القَلْبِ مُسْلِمُ
فدِيـنُ زُهَيْـرٍ وَهْـوَ لا شيءَ دِينُـه ودِينُ أَبِـي سُلْمَـى علَـيَّ مُحَـرَّمُ

Who will take Kaʿb a message, "Will you accept the religion for which you falsely blame me, though it is the more judicious course?
To God alone, not to al-ʿUzzā nor al-Lāt, make for safety, while you can, and submit,
Before a day when no one is safe or escapes from the Fire, except the submissive Muslim, pure of heart.
To me the religion of Zuhayr – and it is nothing – and the religion of Abū Sulmā are now forbidden."

Translation by Stetkevych[68]

As the Islamic period evolved, poetic incitement to avenge the dead was in no way diminished. This phenomenon owes much to how a believer interprets "idolatry". If its definition is confined to the "worship of material objects" alone, whereas the "cult of the dead" becomes a form of "martyrdom", then such a practice will inevitably pave the way to a Heavenly reward, rather than Hell-fire. The following poems will address how Jahili sacrificial rites and fate of death metamorphosed, at least in Kharijite poetry, into self-sacrifice and the love of death.

3.7 Anti-Establishment Poetry

3.7.1 *An Introduction to Kharijite Poetry*

After the Prophet's death, tribal alliances in urban centres fractured along economic and sectarian lines, and poetry became a political expression of crisis. When the third Caliph, ʿUthmān, was murdered, his kinsmen (the Banī Umayya) charged his successor, ʿAlī of the Banī Hāshim, with exacting the

68 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Indiana University Press, from *The mantle odes: Arabic praise poems to the Prophet Muḥammad*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 2010; publisher's permission granted according to the terms of Fair Use.

tribal code of blood vengeance upon the killers, but his reluctance, or inability to do so resulted in a tribal succession struggle between the two groups. What R. Rubinacci (2008[1990]:197) has termed a form of "proto-Shiʿism" then evolved as a political opposition movement to the dominant Sunni ideology, but the background grew more complex when some of ʿAlī's initial supporters found ʿUthmān's death unworthy of vengeance, and objected to ʿAlī's willingness to negotiate his own leadership. In 37/657, these *Khawārij* (s. *Khārijī*), or "Dissenters", refused to give their oath of allegiance to either ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib or ʿUthmān's dynastic successors (Marsham 2009:100–101).[69] The Kharijites of Mosul, in particular, became outlaws operating on the margins of society, very decisively taking matters into their own hands (Cooperson 2015:193–195). Like many other revolutionary movements, this form of "banditry", as defined by Hobsbawm (1969; cited in Cooperson 2015:191), was social protest against exploitation of the poor as well as a call for vengeance against an elite.

Kharijite poetry calling for class-based insurrection reflects a polarised conflict between the haves and the have-nots, incitement and news spreading, its particular features (Rubinacci 2008:187). Among Kharijite poets of note, al-Ṭirimmāḥ b. Ḥakīm, Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa, and ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān al-Sadūsi are examples of men who would fight to the death because they also identified as *Shurā* (s. *Shārī*), i.e. those "who have sold their life to God" (Rubinacci 2008:187–188).[70] This terminology, in turn, draws upon Q[9:111] (Rippin 2015:37):[71]

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ أَشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِى التَّوْرَاةِ وَالإِنجِيلِ والقُرْآنِ ومَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُواْ بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِى بَايَعْتُم بِهِ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

> God has purchased the persons and possessions of the believers in return for the Garden – they fight in God's way: they kill and are killed – this is a true promise given by Him in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an. Who could be more faithful to his promise than God? So be happy with the bargain you have made: that is the supreme triumph.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:205)[72]

69 Kharijites (s. Kharijite) is the anglicisation of the same term.

70 See also footnote, in Section 1.4.4.

71 Incidentally, this verse is also cited by contemporary jihadists and suicide bombers.

72 Used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Religious precedent aside, this principle of "buying and selling", which the Kharijite vehemently expounded, alludes to the tribal hospitality contract; in times of peace, gift exchange results in cooperation between tribes; during war, a relationship deteriorates into blood exchange. Nicholson (1930:193, 207) has suggested that the Kharijite worldview is a radical interpretation of Islam, frequently resulting in bloodshed. However, this extremity in position is by no means unique, at least within the tribal construct. Fanaticism for a cause is comparable with *al-ʿaṣabiyya*, or an "intense feeling of tribal identity", that in Jahili terminology is related to *ḥamāsa* and is the culmination of incitement and blood vengeance rites.[73] Kharijite poetry is "blood vengeance poetry", pure and simple, and the following examples demonstrate how Jahili ethics transformed into Islamic beliefs, through a structural development of the poetic form, rather than by its elimination, or displacement. By citing another example of Kharijite poetry, albeit for evidence of Qur'anic references,[74] Wadād al-Qāḍī (1994:172–173, 177, 179–180) has concluded that it conflates the very ideology of jihad with the pre- and early Islamic motifs of "war" and "bloodshed", and that this occurs because the poetic form is so well-suited to accommodating Jahili lamentation, battle imagery, and even the insertion of Qur'anic *āyāt*, i.e. "verses".

3.7.2 *Vengeance and Punishment: The Denial of a Burial*

Unlike most selections in this chapter, *Humū naṣabū-l-ajsāda li-l-nabli wa-l-qanā* is sourced from *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*.[75] Farwa b. Nawfal al-Ḥarūrī,[76] also a Kharijite, dedicated these elegiac verses to his people, composing them during a period of intense fighting, in Kufa. The scene depicts the fate either of *Khawārij* fighters or the enemy laid low. Whichever the case, the poem conveys a battle between believers in two camps, competing for hearts and minds:

Humū naṣabū-l-ajsāda li-l-nabli wa-l-qanā

1	هُمُ نصبوا الأجساد للنَّبْل والقنا	فلم يَبق منها اليوم إلا رميمها
2	تظَل عِتاقُ الطير تحجِل نحوهم	يُعلِّلْنَ أجسادًا قليلا نعيمُها
3	لِطاف بَراها الصوْم حتى كأنها	سُيوف إذا ما الخيْل تَدْمى كلومُها

73 See Section 1.4.2.

74 The poem is a *rāʾiyya*, by ʿAmr b. al-Ḥuṣayn al-ʿAnbarī (al-Qāḍī 1994:165).

75 See Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (2013:3:254). This is a *mīmiyya*, ending *-mu-hā*, in the *ṭawīl* metre.

76 He died in the early part of the rule of Muʿāwiya I (Cook 2003[1981]:201).

1 They erected the bodies upon which to shoot arrows and spears // of which, today, only old decayed bones remain
2 The eagles persist in hopping towards them // they come back, for seconds, to corpses, yielding little tender flesh
3 Thin and lean from fasting until they are like // swords whenever horses' wounds are made to bleed

The introductory verse describes the active use of conventional weapons of war, such as "arrows" and "spears", whereas the last verse compares flying eagles with "swords", as well as depicting the "blood" that pours from horses' "wounds". In the ancient world, a common indicator of a vengeance killing was the denial of normal burial rites, so enabling further mutilation of the human body by birds and scavengers (Stetkevych 1993:67–70). Across verses 1 and 2, "body parts" occur twice as "old decayed bones" and as the scant leftovers of "tender flesh". In the first hemistich, of verse 3, the "fasting" hunger of birds of prey replaces the usual blood vengeance trope of a raging "thirst", this image juxtaposed against the act of eating human flesh, in the previous verse. Taken altogether, this is a gruesome scene of carnage, conveying intensive usage of motifs common to vengeance, such as "blood", "wounds", "weapons", "body parts" and "eating". The poem also exhibits a strange inversion that is connected to Jahili religious rights involving sacrifice and the veneration of stones, but which here is another kind of ritual performance. In verse 1, corpses are ruthlessly positioned; *naṣabū*, meaning "they erected", belongs to the same word root as *anṣāb*, meaning "idols". The corpses, like idols of false worship, are systematically degraded. These verses stage the desecration of human bodies through a process of objectification and destruction, an act that is significant for its later development in militant jihadist execution scenes.[77]

3.7.3 *Death Is Unavoidable*

Among the *Khawārij*, there were degrees of adherence to doctrine, which Robinson (2000:116) has broadly termed "activist" and "quietist". The *Azāriqa* belonged to the activist camp, Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā'a, leader of a branch, also the composer of *Ḥamāsiyya* 14:[78]

77 Mutilation as a performative act will be discussed further, in Section 7.6.

78 This particular *Ḥamāsiyya* does not appear, in al-Marzūqī (2003). Qaṭarī composed the *ʿayniyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*ʿī*, in the *wāfir* metre.

***Ḥ*14**

1	أقولُ لها وقد طَارَتْ شَعاعًا	مـن الأبطـالِ وَيْحَـكِ لا تُراعـي
2	فإنَّـكِ لـو سألْـتِ بقـاءَ يـومٍ	علَى الأجلِ الّذي لَكِ لم تُطاعِي
3	فَصَبْرًا في مَجَالِ الموْتِ صَبْرًا	فمـا نيـلُ الخُلُـودِ بِمُسْتَطَـاعِ
4	ولا ثـوبُ البقـاءِ بثـوبِ عِـزٍ	فيُطوَى عـن أخـي الخَنَـعِ اليـراعِ
5	سبيلُ المـوتِ غايةُ كـلِّ حـيٍّ	وداعيــهِ لأهْــلِ الأرضِ دَاعِ
6	ومـنْ لا يَعتبـطْ يهـرمْ ويَسْـأَمْ	وتُسْلِمُـهُ المَنُـونُ إلـى انْقِطـاعِ
7	ومـا للمـرءِ خيـر فـي حيـاةٍ	إذا مـا عُـدّ مـنْ سَقَـطِ المتـاعِ

1 I said[79] to it when it had already scattered // from the heroes, fear not
2 For you, should you ask to live another day // beyond your appointed time, you would not be granted your wish
3 Be steadfast on the battlefield of death, be steadfast // for attainment of eternal life is impossible[80]
4 A protective garment for remaining cannot replace a garment of honour // for it reveals the one possessed of dishonour and cowardice[81]
5 Every living being reaches the end of the road, in Death // its summoner calls the people of this earth
6 For whom it does not take, when young, becomes senile and weary // Death hands him over to severance
7 So what is the benefit for a man in life // whenever he is counted among rubbish

Qaṭarī was a rebel knight, a hero, and a figure-head for some thirteen years before he died around 78/697 (al-Tibrīzī 2000). During a period of civil war, he drove his armies against the forces of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and ʿAbd al-Malik

79 *Aqūlu la-hā* literally means "I say to her", or "I say to it", that accounts for variations in translation of this verse. Because "it had already scattered", this translation has adopted the past-tense "I said to it".

80 This sentiment of not being able to avoid death is an ancient one. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the tavern-keeper tells Gilgamesh, "The life that you seek you never will find: when the gods created mankind, death they dispensed to mankind, life they kept for themselves" (George 2000:66).

81 See al-Tibrīzī (2000) and Lyall (1986), s.v. *al-yarāʿ*, means "cowardice", or "a man with no heart, like a particular reed instrument which has no cavity".

b. Marwān (Lyall 1986:17), both of these men laying claim to the Caliphate. Aside from the *Ḥamāsa*, there are many other sources for these verses.[82] For example, the first two verses are transmitted, with variation of the second, in *al-ʿIqd al-farīd* (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih 2013:1:96), but they also have precedent, in *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (al-Jāḥiẓ (1996[d. 255/869]:6:426–427). Far from being an historical anomaly, Kharijite verse, and the output of Qaṭarī in particular, inspires the poetry of al-Qaʿida (Kendall 2015:251).[83] In the opening verse, the pronoun, *hā* (from *aqūlu la-hā*), refers to *al-nafs*, meaning either the "soul" or "blood" (al-Tibrīzī 2000).[84] In their respective translations of the poem, both Lyall (1986:17) and Nicholson (1930:213) have translated it as "soul", for blood was once thought to house the soul as the source of life, while Nicholson (citing Ibn Khallikān) has noted that these verses were believed to possess the ritual power to transform a coward into a hero:

LYALL	I said to her when she fled in amaze and breathless before the array of battle – Why dost thou tremble?
NICHOLSON	I say to my soul dismayed – Courage! Thou canst not achieve,

Unlike Lyall and Nicholson, "it" means "blood" which "scatters" in a pattern of rays during a revenge killing,[85] in the promoted translation of the first verse. Arguably, this is because it echoes the opening of *Ḥ*37, and so an intertextual precedent can set the tone for blood vengeance from the outset.[86] "Death", as motif, occurs four-fold: in verse 2, as the "appointed time"; in verse 3, as the "battlefield of death"; in verse 5, as the "end of the road"; and in verse 6, as "destiny". Life and death belong to a simple exchange; the Jahili virtue of "steadfastness" in battle, when confronted by the fates, transforming into a duty to die (verse 3); whereas "death" as a "garment of honour" cannot reasonably be exchanged (verse 4). The final verse of the poem juxtaposes death against the here and now, reiterating that a life full of temporary blessings is meaningless. In this manner, a series of binary oppositions represent conflict: (1) life and death; (2) honour and disgrace; (3) youth and old age; (4) what flies as blood spatter, and

82 These are transmitted by Iḥsān ʿAbbās (1974:108–109), in his particular compendium of Kharijite verse.

83 See Chapters Seven and Eight.

84 See al-Zamakhsharī (2012) and Lane (1863), s.v. *nafs*, meaning "blood", or "vital principle", as in the phrase *dafaqa nafsa-hu ayy dama-hu*, meaning "he shed his blood".

85 See Lane (1863), s.v. *shaʿāʿ*, the phrase *dhahaba damu-hu shaʿāʿan* means "his blood went scattered, or dispersed".

86 See Section 1.5.2.

what falls as rubbish; and (5) courage and cowardice. The battlefield is not only a confrontational space between sectarian forces but also a face-off between metaphysical concepts, this echoing a similar ethical treatment in *Ḥ*37.[87]

For Qaṭarī, conflict is a noble act assuming the quality of good deeds, and incorporating his own understanding of jihad as a righteous struggle. In a motivational speech for his followers (not reproduced here), he elucidated upon his philosophy, commenting about the transitory nature of life on earth as compared with the more rewarding afterlife (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih 2013:4:225–228). In so doing, he referred to Q[11:15–16]:

مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ
أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِى الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُواْ فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُواْ
يَعْمَلُونَ

> If any desire [only] the life of this world with all its finery, We shall repay them in full in this life for their deeds – they will be given no less – but such people will have nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire: their work here will be fruitless and their deeds futile.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:224)[88]

3.7.4 *Blood Smear on Horses*

Ḥamāsiyya 21,[89] also by Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa, again deals with military zeal and overcoming fear in battle:

***Ḥ*21**

1	لا يَرْكنَنْ أحدٌ إلى الإحْجامِ	يومَ الوَغَى مُتَخَوِّفًا لِحِمامِ
2	فلقَدْ أَرانِي للرِّماحِ دَرِيئَةً	مِنْ عَنْ يَمِينِي مَرَّةً وأَمامِي
3	حَتَّى خَضَبْتُ بِمَا تَحدَّرَ مِنْ دَمِي	أَكْنَافَ سَرْجِي أو عِنانَ لِجَامِي
4	ثُمَّ انْصَرَفْتُ وقد أَصَبْتُ ولم أُصَبْ	جَذَعَ البَصِيرَةِ قَارِحَ الإِقدامِ

87 See Section 1.5.2.4.

88 Used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

89 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa* and is *Ḥ*20, in al-Marzūqī (2003). It is a *mīmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*mī*, in the *kāmil* metre.

1 Let nobody incline towards retreat // on the day of battle, fearful of death
2 Indeed, I saw myself as the ring for the spears to be aimed at[90] // for spears came at me once from the left and from in front
3 Until I dyed, with what flowed of my blood // my saddle-bag or the rein of my bit[91]
4 Then I left, when I had already hit the target and not been hit // perspicacious as a young horse and forward charging as an older war horse[92]

Poems about blood vengeance contain very particular motifs that serve as identification, such as "death", "conflict", "weaponry" and "blood". Verse 1 speaks of the "fate of death", as well as its summoning through "battle". Verses 2 and 3 convey action by "spears" that causes "blood" to flow. The last verse expresses martial prowess, using a metaphor for a horse in different stages of development. Although there is no direct reference to "retaliation", or "drinking", use of *khaḍabtu* ("I dyed"), in verse 3, indicates that this is likely to be a poem about blood vengeance. When blood is compared with a dye such as henna, this is either a sign of fertility or an indication of victory in battle, a phenomenon made clearer in the following verses, the first by ʿAntara b. Shaddād and the second by al-Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī, both of them Jahili poets:[93]

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90 See Lane (1863), s.v. *darīʾa*, a "ring for the spears"; this refers to the practice of using a ring, in learning to fight with spears. Lane has cited a verse by ʿAmr b. Maʿdīkarib that also appears in Ibn Manẓūr (1997[1290]):

ظَلِلْتُ كَأَنِّي لِلرِّمَاحِ دَرِيْئَةً أُقَاتِلُ عَنْ أَبْنَاءِ جَرْمٍ وَفَرَّتِ

I passed the day as though I were a ring for the spears to be aimed at, fighting in defence of the sons of Jarm, when they had fled.

91 This is a complex image which can also mean that the poet pours forth the blood of his opponent, who in turn is trying to kill him (al-Tibrīzī 2000). Like the previous verse, its meaning depends upon whether or not Qaṭarī is in the stronger position at this point in the battle. The last verse suggests his victory.

92 This particular verse compares two metaphors for a horse at different ages; the poet may be saying that he is both as clear-sighted as an ungroomed two-year old foal, and as brave as a five-year old horse (al-Tibrīzī 2000). According to al-Tibrīzī, al-Maʿarrī's interpretation suggests another meaning entirely, which is that the poet only sees clearly towards the end of his life, and once he becomes a Kharijite.

93 See ʿAntara b. Shaddād (1992[d. 608, or 615], and al-Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī (1997[d. 609/10]; cited in al-ʿĀriḍa 2012:102–103). *Uʿādī ṣarfa dahrin lā yuʿādā* (a *dāliyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*dā*) is in the *wāfir* metre, whereas *Bi-al-ʿufri dārun min jamīlata hayyajat* (a *bāʾiyya*, ending in -*bī*) is in the *ṭawīl* metre.

U'ādī ṣarfa dahrin lā yu'ādā

وَعُدتُ مُخَضبًا بِدَمِ الأعادي وكربُ الرَّكضِ قد خَضَبَ الجوادا

And I returned besmeared with the blood of the enemy // and the reins had already stained the racing horse

Bi-al-'ufri dārun min jamīlata hayyajat

طَوامحُ بالطَّرفِ الظِّرابَ إذا بَدَت مُحَجّلة الأيدي دمًا بالمخضَّبِ

[Horses] that raise their eyes at the hills when // their white fore-legs appear to be bloodied with henna[94]

Returning to *Ḥ*21, because the poem states that the saddle bag and reins are stained with blood, this likely means that Qaṭarī as protagonist is victorious. It is unclear to whom the bloodshed belongs, but even if the enemy is unharmed a mortal wound for a Kharijite warrior implies reconciliation with death that is equally glorious. In her study of blood, in Jahili poetry, as well as the psychological effect of its sighting, Nahīl al-'Āriḍa (2012:73) has explained that the motif most usually symbolises vengeance as an honour cleansing mechanism:

وهكذا يصبح الدم عبئًا ثقيلًا على كاهل من يتصدر لهذا الحمل، ويغدو الدم رمزًا للثأر وتجسيدًا لقانون قبلي لم تزل آثاره بادية للعيان حتى يومنا هذا، فالدم يطلب الدم، والثأر يستدعي ثأرًا آخر، ولا يزال العقل العربي مسكونًا بنظرية أن الدم لا يمسح عاره إلا الدم.[95]

94 Lane (1863), s.v. *ṭāmiḥ*, the expression *faras ṭāmiḥ al-ṭarf* means a "horse that raises, or elevates, his eye". See also Lane (1863), s.v. *sakina*, meaning "the part, of the neck, which is the resting-place of the head". While not the subject of this section, noteworthy is another verse from the same poem, strongly indicating its blood vengeance theme: *Bi-ḍarbin yuzīlu-l-hāma 'an sakināti-hī // wa-yanqa'u min hāmi-l-rijāli bi-mashrabī*, meaning "With a smiting that removes the heads from their resting-places on the necks // this [action] slaking a thirst, from the drinking place that is men's heads". The first hemistich of the verse, i.e. "With a smiting …", is cited from and translated by Lane, albeit attributed to various poets.

95 Arabic quotation © Nahīl al-'Āriḍa, 2012, *Al-Dam fī al-shi'r al-jāhilī*, al-Najāḥ National University. Reproduced with kind permission from the author.

> In this manner, blood becomes a heavy burden upon the neck of one who is dispatched with this load, and blood becomes a symbol of vengeance and an embodiment of tribal law, its impressions still apparent to eye-witnesses until this day; for blood asks for blood, and a vengeance [killing] demands another vengeance [killing], and the Arab mind is still possessed by a theory that blood only wipes aways its own shame with [more] blood.

In view of Qaṭarī's inheritance of the Jahili tradition, it is likely that his use of the same motif is consistent.

3.7.5 *Incitement to Blood Vengeance*

Another useful example of verse, by Qaṭarī, is *Ḥamāsiyya* 231.[96] This couplet is a verbal taunt, for which the objective is to goad the opponent into fighting. Incitement is a key component of "blood vengeance poetry", a speech act that serves as threat with real intent to commit a violent act:

***Ḥ*231**

1	ألا أيُّهـا الباغِـي البِـرازَ تَقَرَّبَـنْ	أُساقِكَ بالموتِ الذُّعافَ المُقَشَّبَا
2	فما في تَساقي الموتِ في الحربِ سُبَّةٌ	على شارِبَيْـه فاسْقِنـي منـهُ واشْرَبـا

1 You who want to fight me, come here right now // so that I can give you a poisonous drink of death

2 For in war, there is no disgrace in the exchange of the drink of death // upon its two drinkers, so give me a draught of it and drink yourself in turn

Chapter One has already explained that incitement often forms the first stage of a ritual process that drives forward fighting, which subsequently culminates in the consolidation of tribal identity. Such a warning relies on oral recitation of an intertextual and repetitive hymn, which, when invoked, sustains ancient myth and tribal values within the Arab collective memory. These particular verses feature repeated use of the imperative voice; there are only two people identified in this poem, the first and second person singular. While the poem

96 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*229, in al-Marzūqī (2003). Qaṭarī composed this *bā'iyya*, ending in *-bā*, in the *ṭawīl* metre. The poem also comes from the chapter on *ḥamāsa*.

does not allude to "imbibing" wine, because Islam prohibits it, it nevertheless draws heavily upon the Jahili motif of satiating a "thirst" for vengeance. Pouring a "drink" occurs three times, the action of "drinking", twice. Instead of wine, or blood, Qaṭarī both gives and is served "drink" from the cup of "death". His own offer to drink from the same cup as his enemy is testament to his courage, while goading his opponent to match his zeal and ferocity. Unusually, the two verses contain no explicit reference to conventional weapons, although these may be implied by the nature of warfare described in his other poems. Instead, these are replaced by a metaphorical "poisoned chalice". This image introduces an added layer of complexity, invoking the tribal honour code and hospitality contract; the guest is obliged to drink from the cup, for to refuse to do so is to dishonour the code of hospitality, and to insult his host.[97] Essentially, the poem accuses the opponent of dishonour, and challenges him to disprove this.

Although brief, *Ḥ*231 is political. Use of the term *al-bāghī*, in the opening verse, conveys a provocateur who "wants" [to fight], but since Arabic vocabulary is multifaceted, this description insinuates that the adversary is also a "tyrant".[98] In an unassociated speech, Qaṭarī expressed his own view that a ruler is vulnerable to the mortal world, which is the source of all corruption. While his address appropriates blame to the world, as its agent, a despot can also be guilty of self-aggrandisement, pride and immorality, thereby forcing his people into hellish poverty (Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih 2013:4:226):

> وكم من ذي أبَّهة فيها قد صيَّرته حقيرًا وذي نخوة فيها قد ردّته ذليلًا، وذي تاج قد كبَّته لليدين والفم؛ سلطانها دوَل، وعيشها رنْق، وعذبُها أجاج، وحُلوها مرّ، وغذاؤها سِمام، وأسبابها رمام وقطافها سَلَع؛
>
> How many a man possessed of majesty has it made despicable, and possessed of pride has it turned contemptible, and possessed of a crown has it thrown onto his hands and mouth; [the world's] dominion is changeable, its life is turbid, its sweet water is scalding, its sweetness is bitter, its food is poisonous, its means of subsistence is rotten, its harvest of grapes is the bitter aloes tree;

By suggesting that the enemy drink from a bitter cup, the poem intends that he should be given a taste of his own medicine. Here, Qaṭarī is the class-conscious

97 See Section 2.3.5.

98 See Wehr's (1979), s.v. *bāghin*, an "oppressor, tyrant".

warrior protesting against exploitation of the poor by the political elite. The idea that human tyranny can only be eradicated through civil insurrection is far from unique, also reflected by other verse traditions that speak truth to power. John Milton (2000[1674]:272), who published *Paradise Lost* following the seventeenth-century English Civil War, expressed that although men are created free and equal, one man will always be inclined to subject his fellows to bondage, this reflecting the cosmic battle between forces for good and evil. Verses 23 to 32, from Book XII, and attributed to the Archangel Michael (the fighter against heresies), somewhat echo Qaṭarī's opinion of tyranny:

BOOK XII, ***Paradise Lost***

> Long time in peace by families and tribes
> Under paternal rule; till one shall rise
> Of proud ambitious heart, who not content
> With fair equality, fraternal state,
> Will arrogate dominion undeserved
> Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
> Concord and law of Nature from the earth,
> Hunting (and men not beasts shall be his game)
> With war and hostile snare such as refuse
> Subjection to his empire tyrannous:

3.7.6 *A Counterpoint*

Just as the Kharijite claimed insight into truth, while denigrating his enemy as an infidel, his political opponent allied him with false worship and demonic possession. This is because, in the early Islamic period, a poet's legitimacy depended upon him proving that verbal virtuosity and inspiration came from God, and not the jinn that was the mark of pre-Islamic verse (Zwettler 1984: 332).[99] In early Islamic poetry, blood vengeance is often sectarian, in that it takes place between religious factions competing for endorsement. While honour is still associated with earthly victory in battle, heroes can also attain it by sacrificing themselves at the altar of death in a holy war. In his historical compendium, al-Ṭabarī (1967:6:304–308) has included a *qaṣīda*, by Kaʿb al-Ashqarī, describing Qaṭarī's eventual defeat by his opponent, al-Muhallab. This is an establishment poem, for which some verses depict the ferocity of the *Khawārij*, by comparing them with the jinn and not other human beings. Verses 34 to 37,

99 See Section 3.2.1.

of *Yā ḥafṣa innī ʿadānī ʿan-kumu-l-safarū*, serve as a counter-balance to Qaṭarī so that the two poets work polemically against each other:[100]

Yā ḥafṣa innī ʿadānī ʿan-kumu-l-safarū

34 حتى اجتمعنا بسَابورِ الجنود وقد شُبَّتْ لنا ولهم نارٌ لها شَرَرُ

35 نَلقَى مساعِيرَ أَبطالًا كأَنهمُ جِنٌّ نقارعُهُمْ ما مثلُهم بَشَرُ

36 نُسْقَى ونَسْقِيهمُ سَمًّا عَلَى حنَقٍ مُستأْنِفِى الليْلِ حتّى أَسْفَرَ السَّحَرُ

37 قَتْلَى هنالك لا عقلٌ ولا قَوَدٌ مِنَّا ومنهم دِماءٌ سَفكهَا هدَرُ

34 Until we gathered the soldiers at Sābūr // fire already emitting sparks burnt for us and for them

35 We meet courageous fire stokers; it is as though they are // jinn, we come to blows with them, there are no humans like them

36 We are given to drink and give them to drink poison, enraged against // the harbingers of night, until the last part of night shone[101]

37 The slain over there have no recourse to retaliation and no blood-wit // from us, and from them is blood pouring forth unavenged

The verses above pick up common motifs of blood vengeance, such as "weaponry", "blood" and "revenge". In this case, the "fire stokers" of war are Kharijite soldiers bearing weapons. The motif of "imbibing" is transformed into an image of "poisoning" the enemy through deadly intoxication, in the manner of *Ḥ*231, while victory on the part of al-Muhallab is so complete that the defeated have no recourse to compensation, nor means of "retaliation".

3.7.7 *The Honour and Dishonour Dialectic*

Al-Ṭirimmāḥ b. Ḥakīm (d. 125/743), composer of *Ḥamāsiyya* 57,[102] was a master poet. Like Qaṭarī, he was likely a member of the *Azāriqa* faction of the Kharijite

100 The poem is a *rāʾiyya*, ending in *-rū*, and the metre is *al-basīṭ*.

101 The verse means that al-Muhallab's army confronted the first of the *Khawārij* at dusk, fought through the night, and saw off the last of them at daybreak. See Ibn Manẓūr (1997), s.v. *istaʾnaf* and *anf*, from the lexical expressions *istaʾnaftu al-shayʾa idhā abtadaʾtu-hu*, meaning "I began something", and *wa-anfu al-shayʾi: awwalu-hu wa-mustaʾnafu-hu*, meaning "the beginning of something and that which precedes it". Therefore, *mustaʾnif* conveys a person, or thing that either "begins" something, is "first", or "precedes" it, like a "nose". See also Lane (1863), s.v. *miʾnāf*, a "man journeying in the beginning, or first part of the night".

102 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*56, in al-Marzūqī (2003).

sect (al-Tibrīẓī 2000). Although of South Arabian origin, he grew up in Greater Syria, later moving to Kufa with other fighters from Damascus. Allegedly, he relayed the poem in response after he walked by a Basran mosque with a swaggering gait, and overheard a bystander asking, "Who is the lion?" (al-Iṣfahānī 2002:12:25–32):[103]

*Ḥ*57

1	لقـد زادنـي حُبًّا لِنَفْسِـي أَنَّنِـي	بَغِيـضٌ إِلـى كُـلِّ ٱمْرِئٍ غَيْـرِ طَائِـلِ
2	وإِنِّـي شَقِـيٌّ باللِئـام ولا تَـرَى	شَقِيًّـا بِهِـمْ إِلّا كَرِيـمَ الشَّمائِـلِ
3	إِذا مـا رآنِـي قَطَّـعَ الطَّـرْفَ بَيْنَـهُ	وبينِـي فِعْـلَ العـارِفِ المُتَجَاهِـلِ
4	مَلَأْتُ عَلَيْهِ الأَرْضَ حتَّى كأنَّهـا	مِـنَ الضِّيـقِ فـي عَيْنَيْـهِ كِفَّـةُ حابِـلِ
5	أَكـلُّ ٱمْرِئٍ أَلْفَـى أَبـاهُ مُقَصِّـرًا	مُعـادٍ لأَهْـلِ المَكرُمـاتِ الأَوائِـلِ
6	إذا ذُكِرَتْ مَسْعاةُ والِدِهِ اضْطَنَى	ولا يَضْطَنِي مِنْ شَتْمِ أَهْلِ الفَضَائِلِ
7	ومـا مُنِعـتْ دارٌ ولا عَـزَّ أَهْلُهـا	مـن النـاسِ إلّا بالقَنَـا والقَنَابِـلِ

1 I love myself more for being hated by anyone of no consequence,
2 And verily, I am distressed by the vile ones for the only one you see //distressed by them is the one possessed of honourable character
3 When he sees me, he looks away like one who knows but pretends not to.
4 I blocked his every move, like a hunter tightening the net to judge from the panic in his eyes.[104]
5 Will each man who finds that his father falls short // denigrate the forefathers of the noble traits?
6 When the exploits of his father were mentioned, he would have sickened // and yet he does not sicken from vilifying the kin of the virtuous

---

Al-Ṭirimmāḥ composed this *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lī*, in the *ṭawīl* metre. Both the *Aghānī* and the al-Marzūqī versions do not contain verses 5, 6 and 7.

103 In the *Aghānī*, this chain of transmission has come by way of al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī, who have in turn cited their source as al-Ḥasan b. ʿUlayl al-ʿAnazī, who was told by Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbbād, who was told by Abū Tammām al-Ṭāʾī.

104 In a note to verse 4, Gruendler has explained that the literal translation of the first hemistich is "I filled the earth before him" (al-Ṣūlī 2015[d. 947]:287).

7 An abode was guarded from people and its kin became glorious // only by the spear and the cavalries

Verses 1, 3 and 4 translated by Beatrice Gruendler (al-Ṣūlī 2015[d. 947]:287)[105]

Although composed during the Umayyad period, *Ḥ*57 refers to the Jahili honour code. From its outset, the poem structurally sets out oppositions across hemistichs between the poet and his enemy, expressing these in terms of honour: (1) the first two verses praise the poet, while insulting his dishonourable foe, for the poet has stated that he is hated by a worthless man; (2) in verses 3 and 6, the enemy is a hypocrite who knows the truth, but denies it; (3) verse 4 describes the outcome of a confrontation between the poet and his enemy, for which the latter is overwhelmed; (4) verses 5 and 6 convey the importance of genealogy and a noble heritage, in determining an honourable character;[106] and (5) verse 7 delivers a strong statement that underlines the importance of *ḥamāsa*, expressing the sentiment that fighting in defence of one's abode is truly noble and delivers glory. Throughout this dialogue of honour, some words and phrases convey love of the self, a concept associated with bloodline and the soul, i.e. *al-nafs*. Others speak of hatred, by and for the other, and general differences in worth between fighting men that determine the outcome of battle. Hatred is key to understanding *Ḥ*57, which never adopts the language of moderation. Far from distancing himself from the code of blood vengeance, or drawing upon the new state apparatus for inspiration, al-Ṭirimmāḥ has wholeheartedly rejected the establishment. If *Ḥ*57 is his protest, then verse draws upon an ancient tradition in order to overthrow the ruling order. For the Kharijite, reinterpreting the code of blood vengeance is a political strategy that re-emerges in the language of rebellion against state control.

At the time of composition, Kharijite poetry sought to delegitimise Umayyad rule, but these examples are not straightforward lampoons. For this reason Abū Tammām did not categorise them as such, in his anthology. Rather they act as catalysts for revolt, which is to say that they fulfil the criteria of fighting zeal (*ḥamāsa*) and incitement (*taḥrīḍ*), which subsequently results in the taking of blood vengeance. The early Islamic period was a tumultuous period, its political poetry varied, ranging from the Kharijite who composed antagonistic verse against the Umayyads, to the dissenter who sometimes colluded in praising the

105 Used with permission of New York University Press, from *The life and times of Abū Tammām*, Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, 2015; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. Fakhro has translated verses 2, 5, 6 and 7.

106 See *nasab* and *ḥasab*, in Section 1.4.2.

regime, to the state supporter who was disaffected and lampooned a ruler. The remainder of this chapter will present poems that fall somewhere along this spectrum.

3.7.8 *Moderation vs. Violence*

Using narrative strategies to challenge the blood vengeance message is by no means a recent phenomenon, for the Prophet Muḥammad and his son-in-law, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, actively promoted counter-messaging, unequivocally stating that moderation in conflict is preferable to violence.[107] Therefore, it is interesting to compare verse 6, of al-Ṭirimmāḥ's poem, with the first verse of *Ḥamāsiyya* 803, relayed by his contemporary, al-Kumayt b. Zayd, who died around the same time and was a fellow composer of "well-woven poems" (*aṣḥāb al-mulḥamāt*).[108] Even though the two men were politically misaligned, they shared a friendship as well as a deep knowledge of Classical Arabic poetry. Being pro-ʿAlid,[109] al-Kumayt was technically at odds with the Umayyad establishment, but he was moderate in his adherence to any doctrine (Jayyusi 2009 [1983]:414). He composed *Ḥ*803, in praise of Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik, who was a famous defender of the Umayyad dynasty.[110] The following offers an alternative perspective of their governance, albeit from a position of ambivalence:

***Ḥ*803**

1	فما غَابَ عَنْ حِلْمٍ ولا شَهِدَ الخَنَا	ولا استَعْذَبَ العَوْرَاءَ يوْمًا فقالَهـا
2	يَدُومُ عَلَى خَيْرِ الخِلالِ وَيَتَّقِي	تَصَرُّمَهَـا مِـنْ شِيمَـةٍ وانْتِقَالَهـا
3	وتَفْضُـلُ أَيْمـانَ الرِّجَـالِ شِمَالُـهُ	كَمَا فَضَلَتْ يُمْنَى يَدَيْـهِ شِمَالَهَا
4	ومَا أَجِمَ المَعْرُوفَ مِنْ طُـولِ كَـرَّهِ	وأَمْـرًا بِأَفْعَـالِ النَّـدَى وافْتِعَالَهَـا
5	ويَبْتَـذِلُ النَّفْـسَ المَصُونَـةَ نَفْسَـهُ	إِذَا مَـا رَأَى حَقًّـا عَلَيْـهِ ابْتِذَالَهَـا
6	بَلَوْنَاكَ في أَهْلِ النَّـدَى فَفَضَلْتَهُـمْ	وَباعَكَ في الأَبْـوَاعِ قِدْمًـا فَطَالَهَـا
7	فأَنْتَ النَّدَى فِيمَا يَنُوبُكَ والسَّدَى	إِذَا الخَوْدُ عَدَّتْ عُقْبَةَ القِدْرِ مَالَهَا

107 See Section 3.3.

108 This refers to al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*, and is *Ḥ*811, in al-Marzūqī (2003). Al-Kumayt composed this *lāmiyya*, ending in *-la-hā*, in the *ṭawīl* metre, which appears in the chapter on "praise and guests".

109 ʿAlids denote the successors of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

110 The son of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān, a general but not a successor, who at one point led a campaign in Iraq to fight the Kharijites.

1 He did not abstain from moderation nor bear witness to obscene speech // nor one day find ugly words sweet and utter them
2 He is constant in the best qualities of friendship guarding against // their severance or departure from his character[111]
3 His nature surpasses the blessings of men // just as the right of his two hands is superior to their left
4 He did not tire of a good deed from the duration of repeating it // commanding others to deeds of magnanimity and their performance
5 He expends the well-guarded self, himself, without reservation // whenever he sees that it is incumbent upon him to draw upon its reserve
6 We put you to the test among the people of magnanimity and you exceeded them // for your generosity was more far-reaching than the generosity of yore
7 You are the dew of morning and night, in what befalls you // when the young beauty counts the remainder at the bottom of the kettle to be [all that's left of] her wealth

Verse 4 makes an intertextual link to Q[3:104–105] that argues for the importance of "good deeds", and against recourse to sectarian conflict:

وَلْتَكن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَأُوْلئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ وَلَا تَكُونُواْ كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُواْ واخْتَلَفُواْ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

> Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones. Do not be like those who, after they have been given clear revelation, split into factions and fall into disputes: a terrible punishment awaits such people.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:64)[112]

This is a somewhat subjective assessment because verses 5 and 6 then convey that Maslama is a fierce fighter, invested with the manly virtues of his

111 In al-Marzūqī (2003) the second hemistich, of verse 2, has been transmitted as: *taṣarrufa-hā min shīmatin w-anfitāla-hā*.

112 Used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

ancestors such as generosity. Whether or not al-Kumayt was genuinely tolerant of the regime, or was a pragmatist relying upon panegyric as income, the sentiment underwriting *Ḥ*803 is difficult to measure, this demonstrating the unreliable nature of Classical Arabic poetry as historical record as well as the powerful role of political propaganda. This is a praise poem that is very much at odds with the previous example, i.e. *Ḥ*57. Both poems are censorious of those who slander others, but in their respective recommendations for dealing with dissent, the opening verse, of *Ḥ*803, states that moderation as a tactic of governance is preferable to violence, whereas *Ḥ*57 promotes the idea that violence is the most honourable action, this drawing upon the deeds of the noble ancestors.

3.8 Lampoon in Establishment Poetry

This section presents lampoons by one particular poet who defended the establishment, but was disgruntled. In the *Ḥamāsa*, they appear in succession to each other as *hijā'* relating to a longstanding feud between two tribes, the Kalb and the Qays, each vying with the other for prestige. The Kalb were aggrieved loyalists, whereas the Qays were Zubayrites who the Umayyad Caliph tried to bring on to his side during the Second Civil War.[113]

3.8.1 *The Threat of Revenge as Deterrent*

Ḥamāsiyya 631 is attributed to ʿAmr b. Mikhlāt al-Ḥimār al-Kalbī, by al-Tibrīzī (2000), and Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal al-Kalbī, by al-Marzūqī (2003).[114] If authorship belongs to Jawwās, then this same poet composed all the remaining poems in this chapter; three of these from the *Ḥamāsa* (*Ḥ*631, *Ḥ*632 and *Ḥ*633), and possibly *Humū qatalū bi-Rāhiṭa jadda Qaysin*, this appearing separately in the *Aghānī*. Conflict, again, is a contest between two warring tribes, for this is a poem by a member of the Banī Kalb (regime loyalists), which slurs the other, the Banī Qays (regime antagonists), also reminding the presiding Caliph of their treachery. The addressee is the Umayyad ruling class, specifically, the Banī Marwān

113 ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was opposed to the Umayyad dynasty and set up a rival Caliphate in the Hijaz region after the death of Yazīd I, its goal the expansion into Egypt, the Levant and Iraq.

114 This corresponds to *Ḥ*632, in al-Marzūqī (2003). The poet composed this *rāʾiyya*, ending in *-rā*, in the *ṭawīl* metre. It is located in the chapter about lampoons. In al-Marqūzī (2003), there is some variation so that the end of the first hemistich, of verse 2, is *qad ʿalimtumū*, instead of *qad ʿaraftumū*.

(al-Marzūqī 2003). Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal (d. 70/689),[115] the likely poet, was a contemporary of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (the fifth Umayyad Caliph), the following, the first example of lampoon:

***Ḥ*631**

1	ضَرَبْنا لكُمْ عنْ مِنْبَرِ المُلْكِ أَهْلَهُ	بِجَيْرونَ إذ لا تستطيعون مِنْبَرا
2	وأيّامَ صِدقٍ كُلَّها قد عَرَفْتُمُ	نَصَرْنا ويومَ المَرْجِ نَصْرًا مُؤَزَّرا
3	فلا تَكْفُرُوا حُسْنَى مَضَتْ مِنْ بَلائِنا	ولا تَمْنَحُوها بعدَ لِينٍ تَجَبُّرا
4	فكَمْ مِنْ أميرٍ قبلَ مروانَ وابنِهِ	كشَفْنا غِطاءَ الغَمّ عنهُ فَأَبْصَرا
5	ومُسْتَسْلِمٍ نَفَّسْنَ عنه وقد بدَتْ	نَواجِذُهُ حتَّى أَهَلَّ وكَبَّرا
6	إذا افْتَخَرَ القَيْسِيُّ فاذكرْ بلاءَهُ	بِزَرَّاعةِ الضحّاكَ شرقيَّ جَوْبَرا
7	فما كانَ في قيسٍ مِن ابنِ حفيظةٍ	يُعَدُّ ولكنْ كُلُّهُمْ نهْبُ أشْقَرا

1 For your [benefit], we removed from the pulpit of kingship its holders // at Jayrūn, when you were incapable of ascending any pulpit

2 On many days of bravery, all which you already knew about // we strengthened [you], and on the Day of al-Marj, with effective and powerful aid[116]

3 Do not show ingratitude for a good deed, performed from our tribulation // and do not award us with proud disdain after tender treatment

4 From many a prince, before Marwān and his progeny[117] // did we remove the cover of gloominess, so that he became rightly sighted?

5 How many a surrenderer did [our horses] relieve // when his teeth were already bared,[118] so that he invoked and exalted [God]?

115 This date is at best an estimate, confirmed by some versions of the *Aghānī* and also by Gruendler (2016:23*n*127).

116 See verse 2, and Lane (1863), s.v. *naṣr*, the infinitive form from the verb *naṣara-hu*, i.e. "he aided or assisted him against his enemy or he avenged him".

117 According to al-Tibrīzī (2000), this verse was addressed to Muʿāwiya and Yazīd, but Klein-Franke (1972:162) has alternatively translated this verse as: "From many a prince of Marwān and his son, we have drawn away the veil of sorrow so that he could more easily see!"; used with permission of Brill, from *Journal of Arabic Literature*: "The Ḥamāsa of Abū Tammām: part two", Felix Klein-Franke, vol. 3, 1972; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

118 According to al-Tibrīzī (2000), this is a direct reference to Muʿāwiya I, and what afflicted him during the Battle of Ṣiffīn. Klein-Franke (1972:162) has alternatively translated this

6 Should the Qays man brag, then mention his "tribulation" // by the field of al-Ḍaḥḥāk on the east [bank] of the [river] Jawbar
7 One cannot count among the Qays a single honourable defender // for all of them are [like] a galloping white mare[119]

As brief background, the enmity between the Banī Marwān, i.e. the sons of Marwān I (the fourth Umayyad Caliph), and the Banī Qays was longstanding, harking back to Yazīd I's succession of his father, Muʿāwiya I (a second cousin of Marwan I).[120] After the death of both Yazīd and his son, Muʿāwiya II, and the period of civil insurrection that followed, Marwān I managed to hang on to territory around Damascus, killing al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays al-Fihrī on the Day of Marj Rāhiṭ (64/684).[121] Al-Ḍaḥḥāk had been a regime loyalist, but then rebelled, taking on the governorship of Damascus for himself, while allying himself with Ibn al-Zubayr. After al-Ḍaḥḥāk's death, Marwān I's victory consolidated Umayyad rule over Syria. This poem about antagonism directs Jawwās' ire both against the Qays, his enemy, and the Umayyads, with whom he is politically aligned, but accuses of neglect. Unlike Kharijite poetry, these verses were not conceived as incitement to violence against the establishment, for the Banī Kalb were related to the Banī Umayya by marriage. Rather they serve as a warning, by pointing out that the Caliph owes his dominant position to the strength of his military. Here, the threat of revenge acts as a deterrent. This is also a poem about disloyalty: (1) the Qays' disloyalty to an Umayyad Caliph; (2) the Qays' abandonment of their ally, al-Daḥḥāk; (3) the Qays' neglect of the true religion, according to the Kalb; and (4) the Caliph's disloyalty towards his own guards, the Kalb. While *Ḥ*631 does not cite any specific term for blood vengeance, it refers to a feud between two tribes, as well as bravery and the rescue of an ally in need, this frequently involving an act of revenge.

From the opening verse, there is "fighting" so as to prevent the enemy from reaching political ascendancy. The second verse refers to "[battle] days" of great

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verse as: "Many a one who would yield has been saved by our horsemen, when already his molar teeth were visible (gesture of despair), so that he praised and worshipped God!"; used with permission of Brill, from *Journal of Arabic Literature*: "The Ḥamāsa of Abū Tammām: part two", Felix Klein-Franke, vol. 3, 1972; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

119 According to al-Tibrīzī (2000), *ashqarā* refers to the fair-maned mare of Ṭufayl b. Mālik, who was a fugitive from justice. The purpose of the metaphor is to compare the flight of the Qays to a fugitive's steed.

120 Yazīd's appointment was also opposed by the ʿAlids, although they are not the focus of this poem.

121 See background to the poem, in al-Tibrīzī (2000).

courage and the Day of al-Marj. Verse 3 underscores the "tribulation", or heroic action of the Kalb tribe when they came to the aid of Marwān I, juxtaposed against the "tribulation" of the Qays, which verse 6 ridicules as cowardice. Most of the poem reiterates the concept of "aid", while verses 4 and 5 specify that the Kalb have rescued many princes before Marwān, all of whom would otherwise have surrendered. By contrast, verse 6 accuses the Qays of abandoning their former commander, al-Daḥḥāk, and the needy, in verse 7. The divergence in behaviour between the Kalb and the Qays, presented as a set of structural oppositions across the poem, helps to underscore the theme of conflict and the principle of honourable behaviour.

3.8.2 *More on the Battle of Marj Rāhiṭ*

The previous poem, *Ḥ*631, alludes to blood vengeance, in verse 2, by associating retaliation with aiding an ally in need (against an enemy), but it does not explicitly employ a term for revenge. Therefore it is helpful to know that a history of blood feuding led up to the Battle of Marj Rāhiṭ (Stetkevych 2002:85). Examining this particular conflict from the perspective of another poem, sourced from the *Aghānī* (rather than the *Ḥamāsa*), is useful as background, irrespective of the political sympathies of its author; it was composed either by Jawwās al-Kalbī or a man with the same name from another tribe, this time politically aligned with the Qays.[122] Verse 3 clearly associates the conflict with "retaliations", whereas verse 5 alludes to the "drinking" motif that is common to "blood vengeance poetry":[123]

Humū qatalū bi-Rāhiṭa jadda Qaysin

1	هُـمُ قَتلُوا براهِـطَ جـدَّ قَيْـس	سُلَيْمـا والقبائـلَ مـن كلابِ
2	وهـم قَتَلُـوا بَنـي بَـدْر وَعَبْسًـا	وأُلصِـقَ حُـرُّ وَجْهِـك بالتُّـرابِ
3	تَذكَّرتَ الذُحول فلن تُقَضَّى	ذحولُك أَو تُساقَ إلى الحِسابِ
4	إذا سارتْ قبائـلُ مـن جَنـابٍ	وعـوفٍ أَشْحنـوا شُـمَّ الهضـابِ
5	وقـد حاربْتَنـا فوجَـدْتَ حَرْبًـا	تُغِصُّك حين تشـرَب بالشَّـرابِ

122 The author of this poem has been credited as Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal al-Kilābī, in the *Aghāni* (al-Iṣfahānī 2002:19:143–144). "Kilāb" and "Kalb" were distinct tribes fighting on different sides of the conflict, and so his identity may be separate and distinct from Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal al-Kalbī, but the coincidence is difficult to ignore.

123 See al-Iṣfahānī (2002:19:143–144): *Akhbār ʿUwayf wa-nasabu-hu*. The poem is a *bāʾiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*bī*, in the *wāfir* metre.

1 At Rāhiṭ, they killed the ancestor of Qays // Sulaym and the tribes from Kilāb
2 And they killed the Banī Badr and [Banī] ʿAbs // and your cheek-bones were pressed against the dust
3 You have remembered the retaliations, so your retaliations will not be settled // or conveyed towards the Reckoning[124]
4 When tribes have travelled from Janāb // and ʿAwf, they have filled the lofty mountains with troops
5 And you had already waged war against us and so you found a war // which is made to choke you when you drink from the beverage

3.8.3 *Honour and Abasement*

Both al-Tibrīzī (2000) and al-Marzūqī (2003) have incontrovertibly attributed *Ḥamāsiyya* 632 to Jawwās al-Kalbī.[125] It also concerns the feud between the Qays and Kalb tribes, each contesting the other's claim to the noblest of heritage. The Qays declared that they would never recognise the son of a Kalb bride, when the much despised Yazīd I ascended to the throne, and so a war broke out (al-Tibrīzī 2000). Although Ḥumayd b. Baḥdal al-Kalbī (cited in verse 2) was instrumental in the death of Ibn al-Zubayr, thereby securing peace for the Caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān then made peace with the Qays, so angering his traditional allies. This action propelled the invective:

***Ḥ*632**

1	أَعَبْدَ المَليكِ ما شكرتَ بلاءَنا	فَكُلْ في رخاءِ الأَمْنِ ما أَنْتَ آكِلُ
2	بِجابِيَةِ الجَوْلانِ لولا ابنُ بَحْدَلٍ	هلكتَ ولَمْ يَنْطِقْ لِقَوْمِكَ قائِلُ
3	فلمّا عَلَوْتَ الشَّام في رأس باذخٍ	مِنَ العِزِّ لا يسطيعُهُ المُتَناوِلُ
4	نَفَحْتَ لنا سجْلَ العداوَةِ مُعْرِضاً	كأنّك مما يُحدِث الدَّهرُ جاهِلُ
5	وكُنْتَ إذا أَشْرَفْتَ في رَأْسِ هَضْبَةٍ	تَضاءَلْتَ إنَّ الخائِفَ المُتَضائِلُ
6	فلوْ طاوَعُوني يومَ بُطْنانَ أُسْلِمَتْ	لِقَيْسٍ فُرُوجٌ منكُمُ ومَقاتِلُ

124 The meaning of the second hemistich is ambiguous, either informing the enemy that his scores will never be settled or that he will have to wait until the end of time for his scores to be settled.

125 This corresponds to *Ḥ*633, in al-Marzūqī (2003). It is a *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lū*, in the *ṭawīl* metre.

1 O ʿAbd al-Malīk, you did not thank us for our trials // so eat what you eat in comfort and safety
2 Were it not for Ibn Baḥdal, by the watering place of Golan, // you would have perished and no one would speak for your people
3 When you became exalted over Syria, at the peak // of greatest might, which no one could have [hoped to] attain
4 You struck us with a bucket full of enmity, turning away [from us] // as if you were ignorant of [the benefit which] fate has brought about
5 When you surveyed [us], from the top of a hill,[126] you would // shrink [in fear], truly the fearful one is the one who shrinks[127]
6 Had they obeyed me on the Day of Buṭnān // then vulnerable tracts and vital organs would have been surrendered to Qays[128]

The opening verse adopts the verbal imperative, but it also subverts the power dynamic between subject and ruler, by way of an act of speech. The word *al-Malīk* is here poetic licence for *al-Malik* and so is a direct address to the ruler, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān. However, it can also quite literally mean *al-mamlūk*, or *al-ʿabd*, i.e. "the slave". *A-ʿAbd-al-Malīk*, vocalised differently, becomes *aʿbad al-malīk*, an insulting pun on the ruler's name, disparaging him for pacifying the Qays and therefore being "the most servile slave". Themes of "honour" and "pride" recur, in *Ḥ*632, in which the physical topography of mountains and valleys conveys the heights of pride and the depths of abasement. In verse 6, the [Battle] Day of Buṭnān refers to a location that literally means "low, or depressed tracts of land", while *maqātil* means "vital places in a man where a wound causes death".[129] The concluding verse contains the strongest blood vengeance message of the entire *ḥamāsiyya*, threatening incitement to violence as a preventive strategy, rather than as a desirable outcome. Commentators have acknowledged that the poem warns ʿAbd al-Malik that his people are vulnerable to attack: al-Marzūqī (2003) interpreting the word *furūj* as "places of dread"; al-Tibrīzī (2000), more grimly explicit, explaining this as *uslimat furūju-nisā'in*, i.e. the "sexual surrender of women". This lampoon claims to spare its

126 In al-Marzūqī (2003), *ra'si rāmatin*.

127 Klein-Franke (1972:162) has translated this verse as: "As you stood above on the hill, you became weak; true he that is fearful is weak"; used with permission of Brill, from *Journal of Arabic Literature*: "The Ḥamāsa of Abū Tammām: part two", Felix Klein-Franke, vol. 3, 1972; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

128 See al-Marzūqī (2003), and Lane (1863), s.v. *furūj*, meaning *wa-hiya mawāḍi' al-makhāfa*, i.e. "places of fear", or "vaginae". The poet is effectively saying: If it was up to me, then on that dreaded Day, I would have left the Qays to plunder your homes, and rape your women.

129 See Lane (1863), s.v. *maqātil*, and s.v. *buṭnān al-arḍ*.

target abject humiliation, but sabre-rattling conveys real menace. Through the use of a hierarchy of surrender and a condition (in the ultimate verse), a so-called impotent ruler is rendered a slave, the Qays submit to the command of a Kalbite, while protected women remain vulnerable to attack. The following example, that is *Ḥ*633, also re-genders the Umayya, comparing them with a female slave.

3.8.4 *Insult as Warning*

Messaging in *Ḥamāsiyya* 633,[130] also by Jawwās, is consistent with his other poems, in denigrating both the Caliph and the Qays tribe. The poem states that: (1) the Caliph has not rewarded his army; (2) it is the Banī Kalb's faith in God that makes them strong; and (3) the Qays are savage aggressors. *Ḥ*633 reiterates an insult from the previous poem, *Ḥ*632; the subject of the introductory verse, Umayya, refers to the "Umayyad" dynasty, but can also mean a "contemptible female slave".[131] In other words, the poem mocks the Caliph, by affording him the lowest status in the social hierarchy:

***Ḥ*633**

1	صَبَغَتْ أُمَيَّةُ بالدِّماءِ رِماحَنا	وطَوَتْ أُمَيَّةُ دُونَنا دُنْيَاهَا
2	أَأُمَيَّ رُبَّ كتيبَةٍ مَجْهُولةٍ	صِيدِ الكُماةِ عليكُمُ دَعْوَاهَا
3	كُنَّا وُلاةَ طِعانِها وضِرَابِها	حَتَّى تَجَلَّتْ عنكُمُ غُمَّاهَا
4	فاللّٰهُ يَجْزي لا أُمَيَّةُ سَعْيَنَا	وَعُلاً شَدَدْنا بالرِّماحِ عُرَاها
5	جِئْتُمْ مِنَ الحَجَرِ البَعيدِ نِيَاطُهُ	والشَّامُ تُنكِرُ كَهْلَها وَفَتَاها
6	إذْ أَقْبَلَتْ قيسٌ كأنَّ عُيونَهَا	حَدَقُ الكِلابِ وأظْهَرتْ سِيمَاهَا

1 Umayya has dyed our spears with blood // and Umayya has concealed their worldly possessions, disregarding us

2 Umayya, how many an unknown battalion // of haughty, courageous men, whose curse was upon you[132]

130 In al-Tibrīzī's (2000) version of the *Ḥamāsa*. In al-Marzūqī (2003), this is *Ḥ*634. Jawwās composed this *hā'iyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*hā*, in the *kāmil* metre. Klein-Franke (1972:161) has also translated this poem.

131 See Lane (1863), s.v. *umayya*, from the root *alif-mīm-wāw*, is a diminutive of *ama* and *umaywa*, meaning "a female slave".

132 See Lane (1863), s.v. *ṣiyad* and *ṣayad*, a "proud stiffness" of the neck. The latter can also refer to "a man who seeks another to execute blood revenge upon him."

3 have we charged with blows and thrusts // until their clouding was cleared from you?[133]

4 It is God, not Umayya, who will repay our effort, and // [our] high endeavours, whose bond we tightened with spears

5 You came from the stone[-filled] land, whose desert expanse is far away // and Syria is unacquainted with your middle-aged men and youth[134]

6 When the Qays advanced, it was as though their eyes // were like the pupils of dogs, revealing their [same] mien[135]

Chapter One explained that during the act of revenge, honour is divested from one tribe and invested in another, via the medium of bloodshed. Kharijite poetry demonstrates that when lampoon contains incitement to violence, this calls for the physical overthrow of a ruling class. But before things escalate to this degree, there is a form of *hijāʾ* that can deliver an insult, without inciting violence, through the use of ridicule. *Ḥ*633 clearly lauds Jawwās' tribesmen, while accusing the Umayya of neglect. The poem as criticism, without a call to arms, puts the elite in their place, at least in words. Since the Kalb are politically aligned with the Umayyads, lampoon instead serves as warning, its design, the prevention of change, or challenge to the status quo. The speaker asks the Caliph to heed his words, for failure to do so might result in a military coup by his own side, or further attacks by the enemy.[136] "Weaponry" is present, in the first verse, as "spears", in the third verse, as "blows" and "thrusts", and, in the fourth verse, as "a bond tightened by spears". The motif of "blood", in the opening hemistich, marks the Banī Kalb's vengeance against enemies of the Caliph. Analysis of *Ḥ*21, as well as verse by ʿAntara b. Shaddād and al-

133 See Section 1.4.5; *walī al-dam*. Klein-Franke (1972:161) has translated this verse: "We were exposed to their lances and their swords until the intolerable burden fell from you"; used with permission of Brill, from *Journal of Arabic Literature*: "The Ḥamāsa of Abū Tammām: part two", Felix Klein-Franke, vol. 3, 1972; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

134 Al-Tibrīzī (2000) has stated that, in some versions, al-Ḥajar is replaced by al-Ḥajaz, which denotes the Hijaz and forms the stony boundary between the desert steppe and Greater Syria. Both he and al-Marzūqī (2003) have interpreted the second hemistich as meaning, "*al-Shām* does not recognise you because you are not of her people".

135 In Klein-Franke (1972:161): "As Qais advance, with their eyes like the greedy eyes of dogs, which thus display the characteristics of dogs"; used with permission of Brill, from *Journal of Arabic Literature*: "The Ḥamāsa of Abū Tammām: part two", Felix Klein-Franke, vol. 3, 1972; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

136 Stetkevych's (2002) study of panegyric rituals has explained how the classical poet is a formidable power broker, using poetry to legitimise (or de-legitimise) different rulers.

Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī,[137] notes that blood smear often represents the blood of the enemy, and is therefore a sign of victory in battle. Blood likely carries with it the same connotation, in this poem, in which case it demonstrates a victory for the Banī Kalb over the Qays. According to the code of blood vengeance, bloodshed bestows honour upon the avenger. However, the second verse states that the Caliph has failed to reward the Kalb accordingly. A key difference between jihad and blood vengeance is agency; apologists for the former argue that actors retaliate in the service of God, whereas proponents of the latter insist that the responsibility for retaliation lies with kin members of the dead man alone so as to restore family honour. The second verse, of *Ḥ*633, states that the Umayyads are unpopular and cursed by many tribes. However, *daʿwā* can also suggest a "claim" awaiting recompense, while verse 4 asserts that only God will ultimately repay "our effort", or *saʿyanā*. This somewhat echoes Q[76:11–12]:

فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا وَجَزَاهُم بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا

> So God will save them from the woes of that Day, give them radiance and gladness, and reward them, for their steadfastness, with a Garden and silk [robes].
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:580)[138]

The dispute with the Qays was a feud, rather than a religious war, and so there are no overt references to jihad, in *Ḥ*633. However, in legitimising his claim, the speaker suggests that the Kalb perform a religious obligation in their defence of the Caliph, unlike other disaffected tribes seeking only material gain. What *Ḥ*633 demonstrates is that gift exchange and the attainment of honour can assume a cosmic dimension, when a worldly ruler is perceived as being deficient.[139]

3.9 Concluding Remarks

"Early Islamic poetry" is a catch-all phrase that includes *Mukhaḍram*, Kharijite and Umayyad verse, while avoiding the alignment of some dissenting poets and

137 See Section 3.7.4.

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139 See Section 1.5.2.4, for the cosmic dimension of blood vengeance.

tribes with the establishment. During the period, some ritual forms of retribution are so similar to those of late antiquity that this suggests they are not unique, and that Islam went on to absorb a ritual complex of cultural practices, rather than initiating them.[140] This chapter has focussed upon the poetry of the period about warfare, by plotting examples of *ḥamāsiyyāt* that reveal how the blood vengeance theme has evolved, thereby avoiding duplication of analysis about the *Sīra* literature, and dissection of events about the foundation of Islam that other commentators have already well documented.

Chapter Two explained that collectively sanctioned violence is often a response to a perceived threat that an ideology can enable and ennoble. This chapter has maintained that any suggestion of holy war, in early Islamic poetry, is subordinate to the blood vengeance theme, and moreover that it is a rebranding of the old code. Jihad, in its broadest sense, implies a struggle over faith and an Islamic identity. While this does not necessarily mean violence, at its most benign conveying the struggle between the spirit and worldly temptations, jihad is more usually associated with physical force that Islam permits in defence of the faith. In other words, like blood vengeance, jihad involves a struggle between opposing forces that threaten to overwhelm a community. By mining a more geographically diverse spectrum of poetry, Chapters Six, Seven and Eight will explain further how blood vengeance transforms into a jihadist obligation. The transformation began in the early Islamic period, and so this particular chapter is vital for mapping out its origin, but "jihad" is not distinct as a poetic term, at least in this chapter's selection, because politics and economics are the main drivers of conflict, as opposed to any religious ideology. Instead, poetic language that relates to jihad reflects descriptions of "striving" for the community, when confronting existential challenges. During this period, the unification and fragmentation of tribal life evolved into sectarianism that assumed a religious aspect, rather than being its cause.

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140 For example, in his essay about the burning of heretics in the early Islamic period, Andrew Marsham (2015:126) has noted, "In this representation of fire as an extreme penalty, which could rebound negatively on those who inflicted it, the Islamic traditions perpetuate a motif already established in pre-Islamic antiquity".

CHAPTER 4

Blood Vengeance and Empire

4.1 Revisiting the Anthropology of Gift Exchange

Patrilineal descent does not exclusively determine political allegiance, which, up to this point in the analysis, segmentary theory might suggest. In reality, groups can form bilateral, or multilateral bonds as seen in blood vengeance patterns where jihadist fighters define "brotherhood" according to "a shared system of belief", as opposed to consanguinity. In Jahili poetry, at least, the execution of blood revenge is binary since it concerns a feud between two rival groups, even though this can spiral into a wider reaching war. With increased urbanisation during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, the practice of revenge as reflected in verse became a more complex affair. Since blood vengeance is closely associated with the Jahiliyya, the new authorities only endorsed it with the *proviso* that retaliation be enacted in defence of the faith, without undermining the establishment, the Islamic community of believers and Islam's founding sites. However, because feud is a means of restoring a measure of equality between tribes, an ascending political class effectively outlawed the dispossessed from using it as a protest against the elite (if not other tribes in remote regions), this stance designed to prevent descent into factionalism.[1] The authoritarian state proved to be contrary, and did not dispense with the practice entirely, instead employing it as state justice so as to eradicate internal rebellion, or encroaching foreign threats.[2] As a matter of social policing, blood ties ceased to revolve around the patrilineal groups of old, while political allegiances increasingly depended upon patronage, marital connexions, economic prospects, sectarian sympathies and a need for territorial protection. This meant that kings, retainers, patrons and poets circumnavigated one another in court to enhance their reputations and survive Machiavellian intrigues (Stetkevych 2002:34). It is unsurprising then that an ambitious poet who paid homage to a king at court composed verse combining tribal eulogy of an heroic leader with war propaganda of an expanding empire. Sperl

1 In practice, the establishment only succeeded in driving opposition movements underground, a factor that later contributed to community fracture and disintegration of the Abbasid Caliphate.

2 See Section 3.5, the seeds of state propaganda were sown by the Umayyads who campaigned for "Vengeance for ʿUthmān".

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(1977), Stetkevych (2002) and Majd al-Mallah (2009) have all argued for the role of panegyrists as king-makers, by using poetic speech, myth and ritual to empower a leader. In the early Abbasid period, the blood feud became not only a mechanism for restoring lost honour but a political dialogue between tribes in their competition for power and territory (Orthmann 2002:215–222).

John Hill (1995) has provided a useful anthropological framework for understanding blood revenge when it transcends local boundaries. This tool facilitates a move away from the tribal exchange rituals of gifting and feud, in previous periods, towards the hierarchal medieval court, for which kinship was dynamic and kingship regulated wider social relations.[3] Through an analysis of *Beowulf*, an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon epic about Scandinavian politics of the late fifth to early sixth centuries,[4] Hill (1995:103) has shown that gift exchange can be both horizontal and vertical, whereby horizontal exchange enables reciprocity between equals, and vertical exchange reinforces social hierarchy between patron and subject. Gift exchange can also be used to manipulate relationships for political gain, while "aristocratic exchanges" taking place in a hall enable a leader to draw upon economic and political allegiances, rather than kinship (Hill 1995:106, 151–152). As in Abbasid poetry, both gifting and feuding are very much in evidence, in *Beowulf*, the poem. The *Beowulf* poet has also connected his own time to a glorious and bloody heritage, by extolling the cultural value of blood vengeance; the poem "recreates an epic memory" of the fifth and sixth centuries so as to cement an ideology in the ninth, tenth, or eleventh centuries (Hill 1995:7–8).[5] Here, because patronage is not constrained by patrilineal descent, Beowulf the Geat is able to come to the aid of a Danish king, whose kingship is reinforced by victory in war, and who thereby grants knight-hood to Beowulf as reward for political loyalty and military prowess. The theme of blood vengeance, in the *Beowulf* poem, operates on a social level as the breakdown in gift exchange, and on a cultural level as a ritual re-enactment of myth so that the hero is not only an avenger but an agent of the god of war (Hill 1995:145, 149). Although God is the underwriter of revenge, Norse pagan myths help to shape the heroic world, for which swords

3 Vertical exchange is unlikely to have begun in the medieval period, or with the Caliphate, but it is simpler here to focus upon its development during the Islamic period. Nathaniel Miller (2017:22–24) has examined subtle variations in pre-Islamic poetry, noting that verse production from the Najd and Hijaz regions is underpinned by different structural relationships, the former more associated with urban centres of power.

4 The *Beowulf* manuscript dates from the eleventh century, of the Common Era, but pertains to Anglo-Saxon cultural values that were pervasive in the ninth and tenth centuries. The age of the poem is estimated, but not known.

5 Hill, in turn, has referred to D.H. Green (1965:166).

are "identical with their histories", and ancestral kinship provides a continuous group identity, possessed with certainty (Hill 1995:38–39, 41, 47, 53).[6]

4.2 Extending the Methodology

The present chapter gives focus to the political dimension of gift exchange, for which comparative literature can help with the evaluation of attitudes to retaliation in a medieval court. While there is a degree of thematic continuity from the Jahili and early Islamic periods, there is also a development. Although the poetic method for styling a contest remains, through praise of the hero and lampoon of the enemy, it is noteworthy that medieval blood vengeance evolved as practice from a localised tribal (or sectarian) battle into a contest between two rival empires, the Arabs and the Byzantines. While Jahili poems, known as the *Mu'allaqāt*, continue to be celebrated as masterpieces,[7] Abbasid compositions represent a period of literary distinction as three panegyric poems by two distinguished Abbasid poets, Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī, will amply demonstrate. As the previous chapters have shown, the former was also a scholar in the poetry of his peers and predecessors; al-Ṣūlī (2015:130–131),[8] the medieval commentator, has argued that Abū Tammām was widely acknowledged to be an expert in poetry which belonged to the ancients and the moderns, by citing the recommendation of al-Ḥasan b. Rajā', via the grammarian al-Mubarrad:

حدثنا محمّد بن يزيد الأزديّ قال سمعت الحسن بن رجاء يقول:
ما رأيت أحدًا قطّ أعلم بجيّد الشعر قديمه وحديثه من أبي تمّام.

> I cite al-Mubarrad, who heard al-Ḥasan ibn Rajā' say: I never saw anyone more knowledgeable about fine poetry, both ancient and modern, than Abū Tammām.
>
> Translation by Gruendler[9]

6 Hill (1995:49) has explained that, in the medieval court, while killing was considered to be sinful, "Even churchmen could find it hard not to approve when revenge is taken for the murder of a Christian king".

7 See Section 1.3. The *Mu'allaqāt*, numbered at seven (or ten) are pre-Islamic polythematic odes that set a quality standard for Arabic poetry. Section 1.4.6, Section 1.4.8, Section 1.5.1.1, and a footnote, in Section 5.4.1, provide extracts as examples.

8 See his comment 65.1.

9 Used with permission of New York University Press, from *The life and times of Abū Tammām*, Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, 2015; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Unlike some examples of verse, in previous chapters, the poems for review are well known, and so this analysis attempts not to duplicate chains of transmission, nor commentaries that have been extensively documented. However, the approach to recording these poems will shift slightly, considering each poem as an integrated whole, rather than as shorter soundbites of verse. In part, this is because they are longer, but another reason is because the poems' thematic content informs a broader understanding of what they are about.[10] Abū Tammām, the compiler of the *Ḥamāsa* anthology (that has informed previous chapters) also infused his own poetry with *ḥamāsa*, or "fighting spirit", while at the same time transforming ancient heroic verse into the substance of state propaganda. He was not the first, nor last poet to do so as examples such as *Ujrirtu ḥabla khalīʿin fī-l-ṣibā ghazilī* and *Sa-abkīka bi-l-bīdi-l-Yamāniyyati-l-latī* will subsequently make clear,[11] but he was particularly successful at endorsing state violence as a substitute for Jahili vengeance. Born a Christian, he was a Muslim convert, but showed no political sympathy to the Byzantines, at least in verse. "The Amorium Poem" and "The al-Afshīn Poem" vividly convey the blood vengeance theme and its rituals, while also spinning a personality cult around the fearsome Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim. The illustrious al-Mutanabbī also composed verse approaching "blood vengeance poetry", an example of which is a poem that celebrates the hero Sayf al-Dawla, by transforming him into a "weapon" of retaliation.[12] Al-Mutanabbī is the martial poet extraordinaire, who refined the genre to such degree that it became legacy for future generations. Through the creation of mythical metaphors, al-Mutanabbī also inspired others to imitate his poetic language, which subsequent chapters will address further.

10 To employ a musical analogy, the *Ḥamāsa* poetry that features in previous chapters is like a compilation of "singles", whereas subsequent poems represent individual "albums", verses from which help to inform an understanding of the integrated whole.

11 Because of intertextuality within the classical tradition, Section 5.3 will refer to an earlier Abbasid poem, by Muslim b. al-Walīd, which likely influenced his successors, while Section 6.3 will provide verse and translation of an eighteenth-century Iraqi poem that follows in the Abbasid scheme.

12 Chapter Five will open with an analysis of "weaponry" because heavy investment in the military was a distinct feature of empire building, when the sword seemed to acquire a life of its own.

4.3 Historical Background to the Selection of Poems

4.3.1 *Collective Punishment*

In either 222/837 or 223/838, Abū Tammām presented his panegyric, "The Amorium Poem", as gift to the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim after the Muslim conquest of Amorium, a city located in Anatolia:[13]

The Amorium Poem

1	السَّيْفُ أَصْدَقُ أَنْبَاءً مِنَ الكُتُبِ	فِي حَدِّهِ الحَدُّ بَيْنَ الجِدِّ وَاللَّعِبِ
2	بِيضُ الصَّفَائِحِ لا سُودُ الصَّحَائِفِ فِي	مُتونِهِنَّ جِلاءُ الشَّكِّ وَالرِّيَبِ
3	وَالعِلْمُ فِي شُهُبِ الأَرْمَاحِ لامِعَةً	بَيْنَ الخَمِيسَيْنِ لا فِي السَّبْعَةِ الشُّهُبِ
4	أَيْنَ الرِّوَايَةُ أَمْ أَيْنَ النُّجُومُ وَمَا	صَاغُوهُ مِنْ زُخْرُفٍ فِيهَا وَمِنْ كَذِبِ
5	تَخَرُّصًا وَأَحَادِيثًا مُلَفَّقَةً	لَيْسَتْ بِنَبْعٍ إِذَا عُدَّتْ وَلا غَرَبِ
6	عَجَائِبًا زَعَمُوا الأَيَّامَ مُجْفِلَةً	عَنْهُنَّ فِي صَفَرِ الأَصْفَارِ أَوْ رَجَبِ
7	وَخَوَّفُوا النَّاسَ مِنْ دَهْيَاءَ مُظْلِمَةٍ	إِذَا بَدَا الكَوْكَبُ الْغَرْبِيُّ ذُو الذَّنَبِ
8	وَصَيَّرُوا الْأَبْرُجَ العُلْيَا مُرَتِّبَةً	مَا كَانَ مُنْقَلِبًا أَوْ غَيْرَ مُنْقَلِبِ
9	يَقْضُونَ بِالأَمْرِ عَنْهَا وَهِيَ غَافِلَةٌ	مَا دَارَ فِي فَلَكٍ مِنْهَا وَفِي قُطُبِ
10	لَوْ بَيَّتَتْ قَطُّ أَمْرًا قَبْلَ مَوقِعِهِ	لَمْ تُخْفِ مَا حَلَّ بِالأَوْثَانِ وَالصُّلُبِ
11	فَتْحُ الفُتوحِ تَعَالَى أَنْ يُحِيطَ بِهِ	نَظْمٌ مِنَ الشِّعْرِ أَوْ نَثْرٌ مِنَ الخُطَبِ
12	فَتْحٌ تَفَتَّحُ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ لَهُ	وَتَبْرُزُ الْأَرْضُ فِي أَثْوَابِهَا القُشُبِ
13	يَا يَوْمَ وَقْعَةِ عَمُّورِيَّةَ انْصَرَفَتْ	مِنْكَ المُنَى حُفَّلًا مَعْسُولَةَ الحَلَبِ
14	أَبْقَيْتَ جَدَّ بَنِي الإِسْلامِ فِي صَعَدٍ	وَالمُشْرِكِينَ وَدارَ الشِّرْكِ فِي صَبَبِ
15	أُمٌّ لَهُمْ لَوْ رَجَوْا أَنْ تُفْتَدَى جَعَلُوا	فِدَاءَهَا كُلَّ أُمِّ بَرَّةٍ وَأَبِ
16	وَبَرْزَةُ الوَجْهِ قَدْ أَعْيَتْ رِيَاضَتُهَا	كِسْرى وصَدَّتْ صُدُودًا عَنْ أَبِي كَرِبِ
17	بِكْرٌ فَمَا افْتَرَعَتْهَا كَفُّ حَادِثَةٍ	وَلا تَرَقَّتْ إِلَيْهَا هِمَّةُ النُّوَبِ

13 "The Amorium Poem" is a *bāʾiyya*, ending in *-bī*, that Abū Tammām composed in the *basīṭ* metre, and is *Qaṣīda* 4, from the *Dīwān* of Abū Tammām (2011:29–42) as edited by Darwīsh al-Juwaydī. In al-Tibrīzī's version as edited by Muḥammad ʿAbduh ʿAzzām (1951–1964[d. 1109]), it is *Qaṣīda* 3.

18 مِنْ عَهْدِ إِسْكَنْدَرٍ أَوْ قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ قَدْ شَابَتْ نَواصِي اللَّيَالِي وَهْيَ لَمْ تَشِبِ
19 حَتَّى إِذَا مَخَّضَ اللّٰهُ السِّنِينَ لَهَا مَخْضَ البَخِيلَةِ كانَتْ زُبْدَةَ الحِقَبِ
20 أَتَتْهُمُ الكُرْبَةُ السَّوْدَاءُ سَادِرَةً مِنْهَا وكانَ اسْمُهَا فَرَّاجَةَ الكُرَبِ
21 جَرَى لَهَا الفأْلُ بَرْحًا يَوْمَ أَنْقِرَةٍ إِذْ غُودِرَتْ وَحْسَةَ السَّاحَاتِ وَالرَّحَبِ
22 لمَّا رَأَتْ أُخْتَهَا بِالْأَمْسِ قَدْ خَرِبَتْ كانَ الْخَرَابُ لَهَا أَعْدَى مِنَ الجَرَبِ
23 كَمْ بَيْنَ حِيطَانِهَا مِنْ فَارِسٍ بَطَلٍ قَانِي الذَّوَائِبِ مِنْ آنِي دَمٍ سَرِبِ
24 بِسُنَّةِ السَّيْفِ وَالخَطِّيِّ مِنْ دَمِهِ لا سُنَّةِ الدِّينِ وَالإِسْلامِ مُخْتَضِبِ
25 لَقَدْ تَرَكْتَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِهَا لِلنَّارِ يَوْمًا ذَلِيلَ الصَّخْرِ وَالخَشَبِ
26 غَادَرْتَ فِيهَا بَهِيمَ اللَّيْلِ وَهْوَ ضُحًى يَشُلُّهُ وَسْطَهَا صُبْحٌ مِنَ اللَّهَبِ
27 حَتَّى كَأَنَّ جَلَابِيبَ الدُّجَى رَغِبَتْ عَنْ لَوْنِهَا وكَأَنَّ الشَّمْسَ لَمْ تَغِبِ
28 ضَوْءٌ مِنَ النَّارِ وَالظَّلْمَاءُ عَاكِفَةٌ وظُلْمَةٌ مِنْ دُخَانٍ فِي ضُحًى شَحِبِ
29 فالشَّمْسُ طَالِعَةٌ مِنْ ذَا وَقَدْ أَفَلَتْ وَالشَّمْسُ وَاجِبَةٌ مِنْ ذَا وَلَمْ تَجِبِ
30 تَصَرَّحَ الدَّهْرُ تَصْرِيحَ الْغَمَامِ لَهَا عَنْ يَوْمِ هَيْجَاءَ مِنْهَا طَاهِرٍ جُنُبِ
31 لَم تَطْلُعِ الشَّمْسُ فيهِ يَوْمَ ذَاكَ عَلَى بانٍ بِأَهْلٍ وَلَمْ تَغْرُبْ عَلَى عَزَبِ
32 مَا رَبْعُ مَيَّةَ مَعْمُورًا يُطِيفُ بِهِ غَيْلَانُ أَبْهَى رُبًى مِنْ رَبْعِهَا الخَرِبِ
33 ولا الْخُدُودُ وَقَدْ أُدْمِينَ مِنْ خَجَلٍ أَشْهَى إِلى نَاظِرٍ مِنْ خَدِّهَا التَّرِبِ
34 سَمَاجَةً غَنِيَتْ مِنَّا العُيونُ بِهَا عَنْ كُلِّ حُسْنٍ بَدَا أَوْ مَنْظَرٍ عَجَبِ
35 وَحُسْنُ مُنْقَلَبٍ تَبْدُو عَوَاقِبُهُ جَاءَتْ بَشَاشَتُهُ مِنْ سُوءِ مُنْقَلَبِ
36 لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْكُفْرُ كَمْ مِنْ أَعْصُرٍ كَمَنَتْ لَهُ المَنِيَّةُ بَيْنَ السُّمْرِ وَالقُضُبِ
37 تَدْبِيرُ مُعْتَصِمٍ باللّٰهِ مُنْتَقِمٍ للّٰهِ مُرْتَقِبٍ فِي اللّٰهِ مُرْتَهِبِ
38 ومُطْعِمِ النَّصْلِ لَمْ تَكْهَمْ أَسِنَّتُهُ يَوْمًا وَلَا حُجِبَتْ عَنْ رُوحِ مُحْتَجِبِ
39 لَمْ يَغْزُ قَوْمًا وَلَمْ يَنْهَدْ إِلى بَلَدٍ إِلّا تَقَدَّمَهُ جَيْشٌ مِنَ الرُّعُبِ
40 لَوْ لَمْ يَقُدْ جَحْفَلًا يَوْمَ الْوَغَى لَغَدَا مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَحْدَهَا فِي جَحْفَلٍ لَجِبِ
41 رَمَى بِكَ اللّٰهُ بُرْجَيْهَا فَهَدَّمَهَا وَلَوْ رَمَى بِكَ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ لَمْ يُصِبِ
42 مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَشْبُوهَا وَاثِقِينَ بِهَا وَاللّٰهُ مِفْتَاحُ بَابِ المَعْقِلِ الأَشِبِ
43 وَقَالَ ذُو أَمْرِهِمْ لا مَرْتَعٌ صَدَدٌ لِلسَّارِحِينَ وَلَيْسَ الوِرْدُ مِنْ كَثَبِ
44 أَمانِيًا سَلَبَتْهُمْ نُجْحَ هَاجِسِهَا ظُبَى السُّيوفِ وأَطْرَافُ القَنَا السُّلُبِ

45 إِنَّ الحِمَامَيْنِ مِنْ بِيضٍ ومِنْ سُمرٍ دَلْوَا الحَيَاتَيْنِ مِنْ مَاءٍ ومِنْ عُشُبِ
46 لَبَّيْتَ صَوْتًا زِبَطْرِيًّا هَرَقْتَ لَهُ كَأْسَ الكَرَى ورُضَابَ الخُرَّدِ العُرُبِ
47 عَدَاكَ حَرُّ الثُّغُورِ المُسْتَضَامَةِ عَنْ بَرْدِ الثُّغُورِ وَعَنْ سَلْسَالِهَا الحَصِبِ
48 أَجَبْتَهُ مُعْلِنًا بِالسَّيفِ مُنْصَلِتًا ولَوْ أَجَبْتَ بِغَيْرِ السَّيْفِ لَمْ تُجِبِ
49 حَتَّى تَرَكْتَ عَمُودَ الشِّرْكِ مُنْقَعِرًا وَلَمْ تُعَرِّجْ عَلَى الأَوْتَادِ وَالطُّنُبِ
50 لَمَّا رَأَى الْحَرْبَ رَأْيَ العَيْنِ تُوفَلِسٌ وَالحَرْبُ مُشْتَقَّةٌ المَعْنَى مِنَ الحَرَبِ
51 غَدَا يُصَرِّفُ بِالأَمْوَالِ جِرْيَتَهَا فَعَزَّهُ البَحْرُ ذُو التَّيَّارِ وَالعُبُبِ
52 هَيْهَاتَ! زُعْزِعَتِ الأَرْضُ الوَقُورُ بِهِ عَنْ غَزْوِ مُحْتَسِبٍ لا غَزْوِ مُكْتَسِبِ
53 لَمْ يُنْفِقِ الذَّهَبَ المُرْبِي بِكَثْرَتِهِ عَلَى الحَصَى وبِهِ فَقْرٌ إلى الذَّهَبِ
54 إِنَّ الأُسودَ أُسُودَ الغِيلِ هِمَّتُهَا يَوْمَ الكَرِيهَةِ في المَسْلُوبِ لا السَّلَبِ
55 وَلَّى وَقَدْ أَلْجَمَ الخَطِّيُّ مَنْطِقَهُ بِسَكْتَةٍ تَحْتَهَا الأَحْشَاءُ فِي صَخَبِ
56 أَحْذَى قَرَابِينَهُ صَرْفَ الرَّدَى ومَضَى يَحْتَثُّ أَنْجَى مَطَايَاهُ مِنَ الهَرَبِ
57 مُوَكَّلًا بِيَفَاعِ الأَرْضِ يُشْرِفُهُ مِنْ خِفَّةِ الْخَوْفِ لا مِنْ خِفَّةِ الطَّرَبِ
58 إِنْ يَعْدُ مِنْ حَرِّهَا عَدْوَ الظَّلِيمِ فَقَدْ أَوْسَعْتَ جاحِمَها مِنْ كَثْرَةِ الحَطَبِ
59 تِسْعُونَ أَلْفًا كَآسَادِ الشَّرَى نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ قَبْلَ نُضْجِ التِّينِ وَالعِنَبِ
60 يَا رُبَّ حَوْبَاءَ لَمَّا اجْتُثَّ دابِرُهُمْ طابَتْ وَلَوْ ضُمِّخَتْ بِالمِسْكِ لم تَطِبِ
61 وَمُغْضَبٍ رَجَعَتْ بِيضُ السُّيُوفِ بِهِ حَيَّ الرِّضَا عَنْ رَدَاهُمْ مَيِّتَ الغَضَبِ
62 وَالْحَرْبُ قَائِمَةٌ فِي مأْزِقٍ لَجِبٍ تَجْثُو الرِّجَالُ بِهِ صُغْرًا عَلى الرُّكَبِ
63 كَمْ نِيلَ تَحْتَ سَنَاهَا مِن سَنَا قَمَرٍ وتَحْتَ عارِضِهَا مِنْ عَارِضٍ شَنِبِ
64 كَمْ كَانَ فِي قَطْعِ أَسْبَابِ الرِّقَابِ بِهَا إِلى المُخَدَّرَةِ العَذْرَاءِ مِنْ سَبَبِ
65 كَمْ أَحْرَزَتْ قُضُبُ الهِنْدِيِّ مُصْلَتَةً تَهْتَزُّ مِنْ قُضُبٍ تَهْتَزُّ فِي كُثُبِ
66 بِيضٌ إِذا انتُضِيَتْ مِنْ حُجْبِهَا رَجَعَتْ أَحَقَّ بِالبِيضِ أَتْرَابًا مِنَ الحُجُبِ
67 خَلِيفَةَ اللهِ جَازَى اللهُ سَعْيَكَ عَنْ جُرْثُومَةِ الدِّينِ وَالإِسْلَامِ وَالحَسَبِ
68 بَصُرْتَ بِالرّاحةِ الكُبْرَى فَلَمْ تَرَها تُنَالُ إِلَّا عَلَى جِسْرٍ مِنَ التَّعَبِ
69 إِنْ كَانَ بَيْنَ صُرُوفِ الدَّهْرِ مِن رَحِمٍ مَوْ صُولَةٍ أَوْ ذِمَامٍ غَيْرِ مُنْقَضِبِ
70 فَبَيْنَ ايَّامِكَ اللَّاتي نُصِرْتَ بِها وبَيْنَ أَيَّامِ بَدْرٍ أَقْرَبُ النَّسَبِ
71 أَبْقَتْ بَنِي الأَصْفَرِ المُصْفَرِّ كَاسْمِهِمُ صُفْرَ الوُجُوهِ وَجَلَّتْ أَوْجُهَ العَرَبِ

1 The sword is more veracious than the book,
Its cutting edge splits earnestness
From sport.
2 The white of the blade, not the black on the page,
Its broadsides clarify uncertainty
And doubt.
3 Knowledge lies in the bright spears gleaming
Between two armies, not in the seven
Gleaming stars.[14]
4 Where now is their report? Where are the stars?
Where the elaborate contrivances
They forged?
5 Forgeries and fabrications which, when considered,
Are neither trees for bows, nor trees
For balm!
6 Marvels which they claimed the days would reveal
In the mighty month of Ṣafar
Or in Rajab.
7 They terrified the populace with dark disaster
When the western star appeared
With fiery tail.
8 They let the high Houses of the Zodiac decide
What was overturned and what
Stood firm.
9 They decree the affair from Houses that are unaware
Whether they revolve in orbit or rotate
Round the pole.
10 If the stars could foretell anything before its time,
The fate of idols and crosses would not have been
Kept hidden.
11 Conquest of conquests that is beyond
What poets' measured verse could ever encompass
Or orators' unbound prose!

14 Stetkevych's translation of *al-shuhub*, as "stars", is logical, especially by comparison with the parallel context of flashing spears, but Arberry (1965:50–51) has preferred to translate this as "luminaries", the seven indicating: the Sun, the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

12 A conquest for which the sky's gates opened
And the earth appeared decked out
In new attire.
13 O Battle-Day of ʿAmmūriyya!
Desires went forth from you yielding milk
Abundant, honeyed.
14 You left the fortune of the Banū al-Islam ascendent
And in decline the fortune of idolaters
And their abode.
15 In her they had a mother, had they hoped to ransom her,
They would have given every dam among them
And every sire.
16 Refractory, Chosroes failed to tame her,
And the advances of Abū Karib
She blocked.
17 A virgin whom the hand of fate had not deflowered,
And to whom time's ambition
Could not aspire.
18 From the Age of Alexander, or before,
The forelocks of the night had hoaried, but she
Had not grown old.
19 Till when God churned the years for her,
Churning like a stingy hag, she was the cream
Of the ages.
20 She brought them black grief, rending its robes,
She whose name had once been
"Dispeller of Griefs."
21 Sinister was her omen when Anqira fell
Abandoned, her squares and her courtyards
Laid waste.
22 When she saw her sister's ruin the day before,
Ruin was more contagious
Than the mange.
23 How many a heroic horseman lay between her walls,
His forelocks reddened by
Hot flowing blood!
24 His hair hennaed by the way of the sword
– blood his henna – not by the way of Religion
And Islam.

25 In her, O Commander of the Faithful,
You abandoned to the fire a day
When wood and stone succumbed.
26 You left in her a black night bright as forenoon,
For in her midst a dawn of flame
Dispelled it,
27 Until it seemed as if the robes of night
Refused their colour, as if the sun
Had never set.
28 There was light from the fire while darkness still clung
And dark from the smoke in the ghastly
Noonday sun.
29 The sun was rising from one, when it had set
And setting from the other, when
It had not.
30 As rainclouds clear to reveal a limpid sky,
Fate revealed to her a battle-day
Pure and polluted.
31 The sun did not rise on a married man that day,
Nor did it set upon
A celibate.
32 No spring abode of Mayya, full of folk, where Ghaylān roamed,
Was lovelier in its hills than ʿAmmūriyya's
Ruined abode.
33 Nor did any cheek blushing with bashfulness
Stir the gazer's passion more than
Her dirt-streaked cheek,
34 Its ugliness curing our eyes of any need
For a vision of beauty or
Wondrous spectacle,
35 The reversal of our fortunes brought forth
From their unfortunate reversal
Auspicious issue.
36 If only Infidelity had known how many ages
This outcome lay in ambush midst
The spears and swords,
37 Directed by one relying on God, avenging for God,
Striving and yearning
Toward God,

38 Nourished on victory, his spearpoints never blunt
On battle-day, nor hindered from
A soul in armour clad,
39 Who never assaults a people or goes forth against a land
But that there goes before him a foreguard
Of dread,
40 Who, had he not led forth a vast force on battle-day,
Would have gone forth that morn, he alone
A clamorous host.
41 God hurled you against ʿAmmūriyya's two towers and destroyed her –
Had any other hurled you, he would have
Missed the mark –,
42 After they had entangled her in spears,
Putting their trust in her – but to each entangled stronghold
God is the key! –
43 And their commander had said, "There is no nearby pasture
For those that drive their flocks, nor is there nearby
A water-hole",
44 Out of a hope whose attainment was plundered
By the swords' edges and the sides
Of long rapacious spears.
45 Two types of death, by white blade and dun spear,
Were two pails of life –
Water and hay.
46 To the Zibaṭrian cry you replied,
Pouring out a cup of drowsiness and the sweet saliva
Of loving wives.
47 Heat from outraged frontiers diverted you
From their cool teeth and sweet
Pebbled waters.
48 You replied baring the sword, penetrating
– To reply without the sword would have been
No reply –
49 Till, undistracted by tent-pegs and ropes,
You left Polytheism's tent-pole fallen
In the dust.
50 When Theophilus beheld war (*ḥarb*) with his own eyes,
And the word war is taken
From plunder (*ḥarab*),

51 He tried with money to divert war's course,
But the sea, its currents and billowing waves,
Overwhelmed him.
52 Far from it! The steady earth shook beneath his feet,
From the attack of a reckoner, not a seeker
Of gain,
53 Who had not dissipated gold that numbered
More than pebbles so that he was
In need of gold.
54 For the lions, the lions of the thicket,
Aspire to the plundered on the day of battle,
Not to plunder.
55 Theophilus turned his back, his tongue bridled
By the Khaṭṭī spear, while below, his innards
Were in uproar.
56 Death he issued to his intimates,
And spurred on flight, the fleetest
Of his steeds.
57 Entrusting himself to the heights, he surveyed the field,
Nimble from fear, not
Spry from joy.
58 If he fled the heat of war as an ostrich flees,
It was because you fed its flames
With fuel aplenty.
59 Ninety thousand like Mount Sharā's lions,
Their lives were ripe for plucking before the ripening
Of figs and grapes.
60 How many a bitter soul did the plucking of their root make sweet –
Had it been drenched in musk it would not
Smell so sweet!
61 How many an angry warrior did the blades bring back,
His contentment quickened by their perishing,
His anger dead!
62 War stood firm in a tight predicament
Where standing armies, in ignominy,
Sank to their knees.
63 How many a beaming moon they took beneath war's lightning beam!
How many a white-toothed maid
Beneath war's cloud!

64 How many corridors were opened to secluded maids
By severing in war
The cords of necks!
65 How many a reed trembling on a sand-dune,
Did the drawn and trembling Indian swords
Obtain!
66 The white blades, once drawn from their sheaths, returned
Worthier companions to the white-skinned damsels
Than their veils.
67 O Caliph of God, for your striving
For the root of Religion, honour, and Islam,
God reward you!
68 You have beheld the greater ease and have perceived
That it is not attained but by
The bridge of toil.
69 If among fate's vagaries there is
Any tie of kinship or
Unsevered bond,
70 Then the closest lineage connects
The days of Badr to your
Victorious days.
71 They have left the faces of the Banū al-Aṣfar jaundiced,
The Arabs' faces burnished
With triumph.

Translation by Stetkevych (1991:187–196)[15]

"The Amorium Poem's" subject matter is the "payback" dealt by al-Muʿtaṣim upon his internal and external enemies: Bābak who rebelled against the state, and the Byzantine emperor, Tūfalis.[16] The insult that provoked revenge was an earlier Byzantine offensive when Muslim women were raped and Muslim men dismembered at Zibaṭra. Al-Afshīn, a Persian general (and the subject of "The al-Afshīn Poem"), was still a supporter of the Caliph at this point, having achieved an historical victory over Tūfalis in an earlier battle. This action prompted Tūfalis to surrender to al-Muʿtaṣim during the course of the

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16 Bābak's punishment is also referred to, in "The al-Afshīn Poem". In Stetkevych's translation "Tūfalis" is "Theophilus".

Amorium war, but victory was aided by a disaffected Muslim resident of Amorium, who alerted the Arab army to weaknesses in the city's walls.[17] As a "blood vengeance poem" about collective punishment, "The Amorium Poem" belongs to an ancient narrative tradition; storytelling, poetic rituals, historical events and mythology have all conspired to create a cultural context for violent retaliation, in which the hero can operate with social endorsement.[18] The first ten lines also refer to Q[2:101–102], by aligning the predictions of fortune-tellers with witchcraft, so dismissing them:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ وَاتَّبَعُواْ مَا تَتْلُواْ الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُواْ يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُم بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنفَعُهُم وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُواْ لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُواْ يَعْلَمُونَ

When God sent them a messenger confirming the Scriptures they already had, some of those who had received the Scripture before threw the Book of God over their shoulders as if they had no knowledge, and followed what the evil ones had fabricated about the Kingdom of Solomon instead.[19] Not that Solomon himself was a disbeliever; it was the evil ones who were disbelievers. They taught people witchcraft and what was revealed in Babylon to the two angels Harut and Marut. Yet these two never taught anyone without first warning him, 'We are sent only to tempt – do not disbelieve.' From these two, they learned what can cause discord between man and wife, although they harm no one with it except

17 For further background, Stetkevych has pointed to anecdotal evidence from Michael the Syrian, al-Tibrīzī and al-Ṭabarī (Michael I 1905; al-Tibrīzī 1951–1964; al-Ṭabarī 1967; cited in Stetkevych 2002:152–154).

18 A narrative that morally justifies a brutal war, particularly a war of vengeance, is the matter of state propaganda. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, establishment media campaigns and political spin doctors perform a similar function. Aesthetically, filmmaking consolidates a particular version of history.

19 See Section 3.2.1, on the translation of *al-shayāṭīn*, in Q[26:210–227], which here is "the evil ones".

> by God's leave. They learned what harmed them, not what benefited them, knowing full well that whoever gained [this knowledge] would lose any share in the Hereafter. Evil indeed is the [price] for which they sold their souls, if only they knew.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:16–17)[20]

However, the poem is distinct for other reasons that have caused it to be a popular subject for literary criticism. For example, Stetkevych (2002:152–179) has interpreted "The Amorium Poem" to be a panegyrical ritual gift to the ruler, whereas Bray (2000:73) has stated that the poem caters to and shapes popular sentiment, explaining that although informed by an event, it also reflects an Abbasid cultural framework, in which a holy war is able to unify local support in confronting a foreign enemy. The poem's rhetorical features have been extensively analysed by Hamori (1974:119, 128–132), who has concluded that poetic devices, broadly termed *badīʿ*, create ambiguity of meaning so that an audience can absorb both consistent and contrary language along with agreeable and subversive logic and revelatory and obscure concepts.[21] More generally, western literary criticism about "The Amorium Poem" is widely laudatory of the poet's clever use of language, and, although sometimes expressing unease, insufficiently condemning of the disturbing gender juxtaposition and violent sexuality described therein. Perhaps this treatment is appropriate, when assessing a provocative work of high artistic merit that belongs to a bygone century. Stetkevych (2002:152–179) has concluded that the dynamic is not an elaborate mating ritual involving aggressive masculinity and passive female supplication, but rather a poetic discourse on power.

Arabic medieval criticism is directed against Abū Tammām's innovative use of literary conceits which break away from the tradition, rather than his world view that is predictable for its time. Writing some time after his death, al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967) was largely complimentary about Abū Tammām's merit as a poet,[22] but still remarked upon the controversial reception of some of his poetry, while al-Ṣūlī (2015[d. 336/947]) more robustly defended his reputation. Both singled out "The al-Afshīn Poem" for particular merit.[23] Most vividly, cen-

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21 Much of Hamori's analysis has referred to al-Jurjānī's *al-Wasāṭa*, but another useful tool is Ibn al-Muʿtazz's *Kitāb al-badīʿ*.

22 See al-Iṣfahānī (2002:16:265–278).

23 See Section 4.3.2. Al-Ṣūlī (2015:106–109) recommended the lampoon of al-Afshīn as one of Abū Tammām's finest poems.

sure was less restrained in a fragment of *hijāʾ* that includes *mujūn*, i.e. "rude", or "obscene" verse by a contemporary, Khālid al-Kātib (d. 262/876):[24]

Yā maʿshara-l-murdi innī nāṣihun la-kumū

يا معشَرَ المُرْدِ إنّي ناصِحٌ لكُمُ والمرءُ في القَوْلِ بَيْنَ الصِّدْقِ والكَذِبِ
لا يَنْكِحَنَّ حبيبًا مِنْكُمُ أَحدٌ فإنّ وَجْعَاءَهُ أَعْدَى مِنَ الجَرَبِ
لا تَأْمَنُوا أَن تَحُولوا بعد ثالِثَةٍ فتركَبوا عُمُدًا ليسَتْ مِنَ الخَشَبِ

Young beardless men! [As] I am your faithful counsellor // the man by his word is between truth and falsehood
None among you should lie with Ḥabīb // for his anus is more contagious than the mange[25]
Do not trust that you can leap and ride after a third // for then you will mount tent-poles that are not made of wood[26]

Across three verses, Khālid has clearly lampooned Abū Tammām in explicit detail, while also accusing him of hypocrisy. The invective is so effective because he has adopted the same poetic form as "The Amorium Poem", by composing a *bāʾiyya* (ending in *-bī*), in the *basīṭ* metre, while referring to specific verses, for example: "truth and falsehood" could refer to verses 1, 4 and 5; "more contagious than the mange", to verse 22; "wood", to the end-rhyme of

24 The poem appears in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, and two different editorial versions of Khālid al-Kātib's *Dīwān*. See: (1) *The akhbār of Khālid al-Kātib* (al-Iṣfahānī 2002:20:176–177); (2) Appendix "No. 10", of Khālid al-Kātib's *Dīwān* (Arazi 1990:249); and (3) Appendix to the *Dīwān* as edited by al-Sāmarrāʾī (al-Kātib 1981:500–501). Variations appear in anthologies that post-date production of the *Dīwān*, such as: (1) *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*; (2) *Fawāt al-wafayāt*; and (3) *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*.

25 Ḥabīb, besides being Abū Tammām's first name, means a "lover", or a "beloved". In al-Ṣafadī (2000[d. 764/1363]:13:170), the first hemistich of the second verse is: *lā yankiḥanna ḥabībun min-kumū aḥadan*, i.e. "Ḥabīb should not lie with any of you". The recension suggests that "Ḥabīb" is the active sexual participant, whereas the promoted text insinuates that he is passive. In Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1993[d. 626/1229]:3:1244), al-Kutubī (1973[d. 764/1363]:1:401–402) and al-Ṣafadī (2000:13:170), the second hemistich of the second verse is: *fa-dāʾu wajʿāʾihī aʿdā min al-jarabī*, i.e. "for the disease of his anus is more contagious than the mange".

26 The meaning of the final line of verse is obscure. See Lane (1863), s.v. "*ḥāʾ-wāw-lām*", *ḥāla fī matni farasi-hi* means "he leaped, and rode, upon the back of his horse", which is consistent with the action of "mounting", in the second hemistich. In Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1993:3:1244) and al-Kutubī (1973:1:401–402), the first hemistich, of the third verse, is *lā taʾmanū an taʿūdū baʿda thālithatin*, i.e. "Do not trust that you can repeat/return after a third".

verse 25; and "tent-poles", to verse 49. Khālid's poetic stance is more likely to be a personal attack, rather than moral censure of revenge as violent practice. The *akhbār* reveal that Abū Tammām was his rival for the attentions of a group of young men, and the particular affection of one of them, after Abū Tammām accused Khālid, in verse, of lacking vigour.[27] As response, Khālid was careful to satirise "The Amorium Poem" and its author, but not its subject, the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim, for that would have been a fatal mistake. Whatever his motive, this insult serves as polemic and counter-discourse to Abū Tammām's celebration of male power. As for the creation of a counter-narrative to the blood vengeance message, what is important to take away from the extract is that satire, ridicule, and comedy have the potential to undermine any poem's ability to incite.[28]

4.3.2 *Enemy of the State*

"The al-Afshīn Poem", also by Abū Tammām, is a dramatic sequel to "The Amorium Poem", for which the ambitious general, al-Afshīn, or Khaydhar b. Kāwūs, credited as having helped al-Muʿtaṣim to secure his victory at Amorium, is framed as a turn-coat and an enemy of the state:[29]

The al-Afshīn Poem

1	الحَـقُّ أَبْلَـجُ وَالسُّيـوفُ عَـوارِ	فَحَـذَارِ مِـنْ أَسَـدِ العَرِيـنَ حَـذَارِ
2	مَلِـكٌ غَـدَا جَـارَ الخِلَافَـةِ مِنْكُـمُ	وَاللّٰهُ قَـدْ أَوْصَـى بِحِفْـظِ الجَـارِ
3	يَـا رُبَّ فِتْنَـةِ أُمَّـةٍ قَـدْ بَزَّهـا	جَبَّارُهـا فِـي طَاعَـةِ الجَبَّـارِ
4	جَالَـتْ بِخَيْـذَرَ جَوْلَـةَ المِقْـدَارِ	فَأَحَلَّـهُ الطُّغْيَـانُ دَارَ بَـوَارِ
5	كَـمْ نِعْمَـةٍ للّٰه كانَـتْ عِنْـدَهُ	فكأَنَّهـا فِـي غُرْبَـةٍ وإِسـارِ

27 See al-Iṣfahānī (2002:20:176–177).

28 Chapter Six will discuss in more detail the power of "blood vengeance poetry" to incite, depending upon where it is generated. In remote communities, poetic messaging is more likely to go unchallenged. In urban spaces, counter-narratives can thrive. In this particular instance, Khalid's poem was not widely publicised, and did not diminish the power of "The Amorium Poem".

29 The poem is a *rāʾiyya*, ending in *-(ā)-rī*, that Abū Tammām composed in the *kāmil* metre. It is *Qaṣīda* 77, from al-Juwaydī's version of the *Dīwān* (Abū Tammām 2011:434–443). In al-Tibrīzī (1951–1964), it is *Qaṣīda* 72, and the order of verses and some words vary. The translation, consistent with al-Tibrīzī's version, is by Stetkevych, with the exception of the supplemental verse 24. Al-Juwaydī's version is informed by a large range of sources and contains 62 verses, in total, compared with 61, in al-Tībrīzī.

6 كُسِيَتْ سَبَائِبَ لُؤْمِهِ فَتضَاءَلَتْ كتَضَاؤُلِ الْحَسْنَاءِ فِي الأَطْمَارِ
7 مَوْتُورَةٌ طَلَبَ الإِلـهُ بِثَأْرِهـا وكفَى بِرَبِّ الثَّأْرِ مُدْرِكَ ثَارِ
8 صَادَى أَمِيرَ المُؤْمِنِينَ بِزِبْرِجٍ فِي طَيِّهِ حُمَةُ الشُّجاعِ الضَّارِي
9 مَكْرًا بَنَى رُكْنَيْهِ إلا أَنَّهُ وَطَدَ الأَساسَ عَلَى شفِيرٍ هَارِ
10 حتَّى إذا مَا اللهُ شَقَّ ضَمِيرَهُ عَنْ مُسْتَكِنِّ الكُفْرِ وَالإِصْرَارِ
11 وَنَحا لِهَذا الدِّينِ شَفْرَتَهُ انثَنَى وَالحَقُّ مِنْهُ قَانِئُ الأَظْفَارِ
12 هَذَا النَّبِيُّ وكانَ صَفْوَةَ رَبِّهِ مِنْ بَيْنِ بَادٍ فِي الأَنامِ وقَارِي
13 قَدْ خَصَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ النِّفاقِ عِصابَةً وهُمُ أَشَدُّ أَذًى مِنَ الكُفَّارِ
14 وأختَارَ مِنْ سَعْدٍ لَعِينَ بني أَبي سَرْحٍ لِوَحْيِ اللهِ غَيْرَ خِيَارِ
15 حتَّى أستَضاءَ بِشُعْلَةِ السُّوَرِ الَّتي رَفَعَتْ لَهُ سَجْفًا عَنِ الأَسْرَارِ
16 وَالهَاشِمِيُّونَ اسْتَقَلَّتْ عِيرهـمْ مِنْ كَرْبَلاءَ بِأَثْقَلِ الأَوْتارِ
17 فشَفاهُمُ المُخْتَارُ منه وَلَم يكُنْ فِي دِينِهِ المُخْتارُ بِالمُخْتارِ
18 حتَّى إذا انكَشَفَتْ سَرائِرُهُ اغْتَدَوْا مِنْهُ بِرَاءَ السَّمْعِ وَالأَبْصَارِ
19 مَا كانَ لَوْلا فُحْشُ غَدْرَةِ خَيْذَرٍ لِيكونَ فِي الإِسْلامِ عَامُ فِجَارِ
20 مَا زالَ سِرُّ الكُفْرِ بَيْنَ ضُلُوعِهِ حتَّى اصطَلَى سِرَّ الزِّنادِ الوَارِي
21 نارًا يُساوِرُ جِسْمَهُ مِنْ حَرِّها لَهَبٌ كما عَصْفَرْتَ شِقَّ إزَارِ
22 طَارَتْ لَها شُعَلٌ يُهَدِّمُ لَفْحُها أَرْكانَهُ هَدْمًا بِغَيْرِ غُبَارِ
23 فَصَّلْنَ مِنْهُ كُلَّ مَجْمَعِ مَفْصِلٍ وفَعَلْنَ فاقِرَةً بِكُلِّ فَقَارِ
24 للهِ مِنْ نَارٍ رَأَيْتُ ضِيَاءَهَا ضَاقَ الفَضَاءُ بِهَا عَلَى النُّظَّارِ
25 مَشْبُوبَةً رُفِعَتْ لأَعظمِ مُشْرِكٍ مَا كانَ يَرفَعُ ضَوْءَها لِلسَّارِي
26 صَلَّى لَها حَيًّا وكانَ وَقُودَها مَيْتًا ويَدخُلُها مَعَ الفُجَّارِ
27 وكذَاكَ أَهْلُ النَّارِ فِي الدُّنيا هُمُ يَوْمَ القِيامَةِ جُلُّ أَهْلِ النَّارِ
28 يَا مَشْهدًا صَدَرَتْ بِفَرْحَتِهِ إلى أَمْصَارِهَا القُصْوَى بَنُو الأَمْصَارِ
29 رَمَقُوا أَعَالِي جِذْعِهِ فكأَنَّما وجَدُوا الهِلالَ عَشِيَّةَ الإِفْطارِ
30 واسْتَنشَأُوا مِنْهُ قُتَارًا نَشْرُهُ مِنْ عَنْبَرٍ ذَفِرٍ ومِسْكٍ دَارِي
31 وتَحدَّثُوا عَنْ هُلْكِهِ كحديثِ مَنْ بِالْبَدْوِ عَنْ مُتَتابِعِ الأَمْطَارِ
32 وتَبَاشَرُوا كَتَباشُرِ الحَرَمَيْنِ في قُحَمِ السِّنينَ بِأَرْخَصِ الأَسْعَارِ

33 كانَتْ شَماتَةُ شامِتٍ عارًا فَقَدْ صَارَتْ بِهِ تَنْضُو ثِيَابَ العَارِ
34 قَدْ كَانَ بَوَّأَهُ الخَلِيفَةُ جانِبًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ حَرَمًا عَلَى الأَقْدَارِ
35 فَسَقَاهُ ماءَ الْخَفضِ غَيْرَ مُصَرَّدٍ وأَنَامَهُ فِي الأَمْنِ غَيْرَ غِرارِ
36 ورَأَى بِهِ مَا لَم يكُنْ يَوْمًا رَأَى عَمْرُو بْنُ شَأْسٍ قَبْلَهُ بِعَرَارِ
37 فإذا ابنُ كافِرَةٍ يُسِرُّ بِكُفْرِهِ وَجْدًا كَوَجْدِ فَرَزْدَقٍ بِنَوارِ
38 وإذا تَذَكَّرَهُ بَكَاهُ كما بَكَى كَعْبٌ زَمانَ رَثَى أبا المِغْوَارِ
39 دلَّتْ زَخارفُهُ الخَلِيفَةَ أَنَّهُ مَا كُلُّ عُودٍ ناضِرٍ بِنُضارِ
40 يَا قابِضًا يَدَ آلِ كاوُسَ عادِلًا أَتْبِعْ يَمِينًا مِنْهُمُ بِيَسَارِ
41 ألْحِقْ جَبِينًا دَامِيًا رَمَّلْتَهُ بِقَفًا، وصَدْرًا خائِنًا بِصِدارِ
42 واعْلَمْ بِأَنَّكَ إِنَّما تُلْقِيهِمُ فِي بعْضِ مَا حَفَرُوا مِنَ الآبارِ
43 لَوْ لَمْ يَكِدْ لِلسَّامِرِيِّ قَبِيلُهُ مَا خَارَ عِجْلُهُمُ بِغَيْرِ خُوَارِ
44 وثَمُودُ لَوْ لَمْ يُدْهِنُوا فِي رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ تَدْمَ ناقَتُهُ بِسَيْفِ قُدَارِ
45 ولَقَدْ شَفَى الأَحْشَاءَ مِنْ بُرَحائِها أَنْ صَارَ بَابَكُ جارَ مَازَيَّارِ
46 ثانِيهِ في كَبِدِ السَّماءِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لاثنيْن ثانٍ إِذْ هُما فِي الغَارِ
47 وكأَنَّما انتَبَذا لِكَيْمَا يَطْوِيَا عَنْ ناطِسٍ خَبَرًا مِنَ الأَخْبارِ
48 سُودُ الثِّيابِ كأَنَّما نَسَجَتْ لَهُمْ أَيْدِي السَّمُومِ مَدَارِعًا مِنْ قَارِ
49 بَكَرُوا وأَسْرَوْا فِي مُتُونِ ضَوامِرٍ قِيدَتْ لَهُمْ مِنْ مَرْبِطِ النَّجَّارِ
50 لا يَبْرَحُونَ ومَنْ رآهُمْ خالَهُمْ أَبَدًا عَلَى سَفَرٍ مِنَ الأَسْفارِ
51 كادُوا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالهُدَى فتَقطَّعَتْ أَعنَاقُهُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ المِضْمَارِ
52 جَهِلُوا فَلَمْ يَسْتَكْثِرُوا مِنْ طاعَةٍ مَعْرُوفَةٍ بِعِمارَةِ الأَعْمَارِ
53 فاشْدُدْ بَهارُونَ الْخِلافَةَ إِنَّهُ سَكَنٌ لِوَحْشَتِها ودَارُ قَرَارِ
54 بِفَتَى بني العَبَّاسِ وَالقَمَرِ الَّذي حَفَّتْهُ أَنْجُمُ يَعْرُبٍ ونِزَارِ
55 كَرَمُ العُمُومَةِ وَالْخُؤُولَةِ مَجَّهُ سَلَفَا قُرَيْشٍ فِيهِ وَالأَنْصَارِ
56 هُوَ نَوْءُ يُمْنٍ فيهِمُ وَسَعَادَةٍ وسِرَاجُ لَيْلٍ فيهِمُ ونَهَارِ
57 فاقْمَعْ شَياطِينَ النِّفاقِ بِمُهْتَدٍ تَرْضَى البَرِيَّةُ هَدْيَهُ وَالبَارِي
58 لِيَسِيرَ فِي الآفاقِ سِيرَةَ رَأْفَةٍ ويَسُوسَها بِسَكينَةٍ ووَقَارِ
59 فالصِّينُ مَنْظُومٌ بِأَنْدَلُسٍ إِلى حِيطانِ رُومِيَةٍ فَمُلْكِ ذِمَارِ

60 وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُ بِأَنَّ ذلك مِعْصَمٌ مـا كُنْـتَ تَتْرُكُـهُ بِغَيْـرِ سِـوَارِ
61 فـالأَرْضُ دَارٌ أَقْفَرَتْ مَا لـم يَكُنْ مِـنْ هاشِـم رَبٌّ لِتِلْـكَ الـدَّارِ
62 سُـوَرُ القُرانِ الغُـرُّ فِيكُـمْ أُنْزِلَـتْ وَلَكُمْ تُصَاغُ مَحَاسِـنُ الأَشْعَـارِ

1 The truth is gleaming and the blades are bared
So beware the lion of the thicket,
Beware!
2 A prince among you became the Caliph's client,
And protection of the client
Is God's command.
3 Many a rebellion has the nation's mighty restorer
Quelled in obedience to
The Restorer Almighty!
4 It led Khaydhar round fate's full circuit,
Then sedition set him down
In ruin's abode.
5 How much of God's grace was bestowed on him,
As if it were a virgin captive
In foreign hands,
6 Clothed in the long robes of his baseness, concealed
As if it were a beauty rare
Attired in rags.
7 Unavenged, God sought vengeance for her;
The Lord of Vengeance is indeed
The best avenger!
8 Afshīn deceived the Commander of the Faithful
By a rainless, many-coloured cloud,
Its folds with viper-venom filled.
9 Two pillars he erected out of deception,
But founded them
On shifting sands.[30]

30 Stetkevych (1991:231) has indicated in her translation that this verse refers to Q[9:110]. In Abdel Haleem's translation, this is Q[9:109]:

أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيانَهُ عَلَى تَقْوَى مِنَ اللهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَم مَّنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهِ فِى نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ وَاللهُ لَا يَهْدِى القَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

Which is better, the person who founds his building on consciousness of God and desire for His good pleasure, or the person who founds his building on the brink of

10 Till when God cleft his secret thoughts,
Revealing infidelity and wilfulness
Concealed,
11 And relied upon His sword for that religion,
He was brought down; truth's talons bright red
With his blood.
12 The Prophet himself, who was of all mankind,
Both bedouin and townsman,
His Lord's elect,
13 Had picked out of the hypocrites,
More baleful than the Infidel,
A band,
14 And chose a son of Saʿd, cursed son of Banū Abī Sarḥ,
For the writing of God's revelation
Most ill-chosen.
15 Till he was illumined by the *sūras*' firebrand
That raised the veil that hid
His hidden thoughts.
16 The camels of the Hāshimites bore back from Karbalāʾ
The weightiest of the burdens
Of revenge.
17 Then of it al-Mukhtār relieved them –
And Mukhtār in his religion was not
Well-chosen.
18 Till when his secrets were revealed,
The Hāshemites went forth from him restored
In hearing and in sight.
19 But for Khaydhar's vile abomination,
There would have been no year of violation
In Islam.
20 Infidelity lay secreted between his ribs
Till it was set ablaze by the secret
Of the fire-yielding flint,

---

a crumbling precipice that will tumble down into the Fire of Hell, taking him with it? God does not guide the evildoers:

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21 A fire whose flame swept through his corpse
As yellow dye spreads up the side
Of a long veil,
22 From which leapt flames
Whose searing heat destroyed his frame
In dustless demolition.
23 The flames disjointed every joint
And made misfortune bore
Through every bone.
24 What a fine fire it was! I saw its light // for the watchers, the space
became narrow with it[31]
25 Once kindled, it was raised on an idolater's bones,
One who had never raised its light
For night-sojourners.
26 Fire's worshipper in life, its fuel in death;
With the wicked he
Shall enter it.
27 Thus the people of the fire in this world
On Resurrection Day
Will populate the Fire.
28 O sacred spectacle! whose joy
The people of the metropoles have spread
To the farthest metropoles!
29 They gazed at the palm-trunk's top,
As though they spied the crescent moon
That breaks the fast.
30 They caught wind of his roasting flesh,
Its odour wafting like fine ambar
And Darian musk.
31 They spoke incessantly about his death
As desert Bedouin speak
Of ceaseless rain.
32 They spread good tidings, as in al-Ḥaramān
News of the lowest prices spreads
In years of dearth.

31 This means that the firelight was so intense, it was overwhelming and able to displace darkness. Verse 24 is included in al-Juwaydī's version (Abū Tammām 2011) and not al-Tibrīzī's (1951–1964). The translation, of verse 24, is by Fakhro.

33 Gloating, before this, had been a sin,
But now it shed its robe of shame
For him.
34 The Caliph had lodged him
Close by his heart,
Safe from fate's wiles.
35 He offered him a cup of ease in no way mean,
And bade him sleep in safety
In no way wanting.
36 He looked on him more adoringly
Than ʿAmr ibn Shaʾs
Upon ʿIrār.
37 Then that godless woman's son revealed
A passion for ungodliness
Like Farazdaq's rapture for Nawār.
38 Recalling him, Muʿtaṣim wept
As Kaʿb wept when he mourned
Abū'l-Mighwār.
39 From his embroidered lies the Caliph learned
That not every bright green bough
Is tamarisk.
40 O you who seized Kāwus's people by the right hand,
Now, out of justice,
Seize the left!
41 Cut the bloodied forehead clear to the nape
And clothe each treacherous breast
In mourners' weeds!
42 And know that the pits
In which you cast them
They dug themselves.
43 Had the Samaritan's tribe not plotted with him,
Their Calf-God would have been nothing
But a lowing calf.
44 Had Thamūd's people not dissembled to their Lord,
His she-camel would not have bled
By Qudār's sword.
45 Hearts were cured of sorrows
When Bābak became the neighbour
Of Māzyār,

46 His partner when suspended in the sky,
Though they were never partners
Down below.[32]
47 They seemed to withdraw from Nāṭis,
As if to hide a secret
From a spy.
48 Their clothes were black as if the Simoon's hand
Had woven them long cloaks
Of pitch.
49 Mounted morn and night on emaciated mounts
Led forth to them
From the carpenter's stable,
50 Thus they remained, and those that saw them
Thought they were forever
On a journey.
51 They plotted against Prophethood and Right Guidance,
And in that arena
Their necks were cut.
52 They were ignorant and thus fell short
In that obedience known to be the edifice
Of everlasting life.
53 With Hārūn bind fast the Caliphate!
When it is desolate he will be its habitation,
Its permanent abode,

32 Stetkevych (1991:218) has indicated that this refers to Q[9:40]:

إِلَّا تَنصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا فَأَنزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَى وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

> Even if you do not help the Prophet, God helped him when the disbelievers drove him out: when the two of them [The Prophet and his companion Abū Bakr] were in the cave, he [Muḥammad] said to his companion, 'Do not worry, God is with us,' and God sent His calm down to him, aided him with forces invisible to you, and brought down the disbelievers' plan. God's plan is higher: God has the power to decide.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:194); used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

54 With the young brave of the Banū'l-ʿAbbās,
The moon whom the stars of Yaʿrub and Nizār
Surround,
55 In whom nobility avuncular was spurted forth
By forebears from Quraysh
And the Anṣār.
56 He is a star of good fortune and felicity among them,
A moon for them by night,
By day, the sun.
57 Subdue the satans of hypocrisy by a right-guided youth
In whose guidance the creation and Creator
Both rejoice,
58 So that he may journey to the horizons a journey of mercy
And rule them with serenity
And dignity,
59 Till China is strung with al-Andalus
To Byzantine walls,
Then to the dominion of Dhamār.
60 Full well I knew he was a wrist
You would not leave
Unbraceleted,
61 For the earth is a house that is desolate
As long as its lord is not of the House
Of Hāshim.
62 Among you the bracelet-bright *sūras* were sent down,
And for you the poet sets
His brilliant gems.

Translation by Stetkevych (1991:212–220)[33]

By condemning the subject, the irony is stark, for al-Afshīn is celebrated in earlier poetry by the same poet, as demonstrated by verses 21 and 22, of *Ālat umūru-l-shirki sharra maʾālī*, in which he is both like a "star" and a medical practitioner "treating a wound":[34]

33 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

34 This is *Qaṣīda* 138, in al-Juwaydī's version (Abū Tammām 2011), and 130, as noted by Stetkevych and al-Tibrīzī. Abū Tammām composed this *lāmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*lī*, in the *kāmil* metre. *Ḥ*37, in Section 1.5.2, also portrays "doctors" and "wounds".

Ālat umūru-l-shirki sharra ma'ālī

21 فَرماهُ بالأَفْشِين بالنَّجمِ الذي صدَع الدُجَى صدْع الرِّداءِ البَالِي
22 لاقَاهُ بالكَاوِي العَنِيفِ بدَائِه لمَّا رَآهُ لَمْ يُفِقْ بالطَّالِي

21 He flung at him Afshīn, the star
That rips the darkness as a worn-out cloak is ripped.
22 The fierce cauteriser he sent to cure the wound
When he saw that ointments were of no avail.
Translation by Stetkevych (1991:158, 372)[35]

By contrast, in verse 56, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", al-Muʿtaṣim is the luminary who resembles "the sun" and "moon". "The al-Afshīn Poem" is an example of blood vengeance directed at an individual, rather than a collective. It would seem that the once deemed heroic al-Afshīn became disaffected after the Amorium campaign, subsequently playing an ambivalent role during a rebellion led by Māzyār, after which his political and physical decline was swift. A year after the Battle of Amorium, he was imprisoned for apostasy before his transformation into a votive sacrifice.[36] "The al-Afshīn Poem" is a particular example of how state endorsed violence is able to exploit both the Islamic and Jahili traditions, which Stetkevych (1991:222–223) has termed the "Islamicisation of Jahili values". In both poems, tribal defence of a female captive ("The Amorium Poem", verse 46; "The al-Afshīn Poem", verses 5–7) is prompt for a campaign of revenge. What "The al-Afshīn Poem" has in common with "The Amorium Poem" is in its depiction of the ruthlessness of Abbasid machinery against external and internal threats, and against former loyalists. From the perspective of Jahili society, the enemy was always external to the tribe for whom killing was permissible, the punishment of errant kin often taking the form of social ostracism and expulsion into the wilderness, rather than homicide.[37] By using the death penalty for the act of treason, the Abbasid perspective first invalidated any ties of kinship, or client protection with the target, playing up his foreign nature before invoking the code of blood vengeance. Al-Afshīn was

35 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

36 For additional background to "The al-Afshīn Poem", Stetkevych (1991) has provided a chapter study of the poem.

37 See Section 2.5.3.

of Persian origin, this propagandistic label contributing to his undoing at his end (Stetkevych 1991:170–171).

4.3.3 *Jihad as a Confrontation between East and West*

Conflict with the Byzantines did not end in the third/ninth century. A famous documenter, al-Mutanabbī, is widely considered to be one of the greatest of poets and war propagandists of the Abbasid age, his collection of *Sayfiyyāt* being extravagant panegyrics dedicated to a famous leader, Sayf al-Dawla, containing passages of *ḥamāsa*.[38] One such *Sayfiyya*, *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, is an example of praise that al-Mutanabbī composed and recited to his patron, in Āmid, when he left Byzantium, in 345/956:[39]

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

1	الـرَّأْيُ قَبْـلَ شَجَاعَـةِ الشُّجْعَـانِ	هُـوَ أَوَّلٌ وَهْـيَ المَحَـلُّ الثَّانِـي
2	فَـإِذَا هُمَـا اجْتَمَعَـا لِنَفْـسٍ مِـرَّةٍ	بَلَغَـتْ مِـنَ الْعَلْيَـاءِ كُـلَّ مَكَـانِ
3	وَلَرُبَّمَـا طَعَـنَ الفَتَـى أَقْرَانَـهُ	بِالـرَّأْيِ قَبْـلَ تَطَاعُـنِ الأَقْـرَانِ
4	لَـوْلَا العُقُـولُ لَكَـانَ أَدْنَـى ضَيْغَـمٍ	أَدْنَـى إِلَـى شَـرَفٍ مِـنَ الإِنْسَـانِ
5	وَلَمَـا تَفَاضَلَـتِ النُّفُـوسُ وَدَبَّـرَتْ	أَيْـدِي الكُمَـاةِ عَوَالِـيَ المُـرَّانِ
6	لَـوْلَا سَمِـيُّ سُيُوفِـهِ وَمَضَـاؤُهُ	لَمَّـا سُلِلْـنَ لَكُـنَّ كَالْأَجْفَـانِ
7	خَـاضَ الحِمَامَ بِهِـنَّ حَتَّـى مَا دُرَى	أَمِـنِ احْتِقَـارٍ ذَاكَ أَمْ نِسْيَـانِ
8	وَسَعَـى فَقَصَّـرَ عَـنْ مَـدَاهُ فِـى العُلَـى	أَهْـلُ الزَّمَـانِ وَأَهْـلُ كُـلِّ زَمَـانِ
9	تَخِذُوا المَجَالِسَ فِى البُيُـوتِ وَعِنْـدَهُ	أَنَّ السُّـرُوجَ مَجَالِـسُ الفِتْيَـانِ
10	وَتَوَهمُّـوا اللَّعِـبَ الْوَغَـى وَالطَّعْـنُ فِـى الْهَيْجَـاءِ غيرُ الطَّعْـنِ فِـي المَيْـدَانِ	
11	قَـادَ الجِيَـادَ إِلَـى الطِّعَـانِ وَلَـمْ يَقُـدْ	إِلاَّ إِلَـىَ الْعَـادَاتِ وَالأَوْطَـانِ
12	كُـلُّ ابْـنِ سَابِقَـةٍ يُغِيـرُ بِحُسْنِـهِ	فِي قَلْبِ صَاحِبِهِ عَلَى الأَحْزَانِ
13	إِنْ خُلِّيَـتْ رُبِطَـتْ بِـآدَابِ الْوَغَـى	فَدُعَاؤُهَـا يُغْنِـي عَـنِ الأَرْسَـانِ

38 The poet's full name is Abū al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mutanabbī al-Kindī. He was born in Kufa, in Iraq, in 303/915.

39 This *Sayfiyya*, by al-Mutanabbī, is sourced from his *Dīwān*; with reproduction and translation by Arberry. It is a *nūniyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*nī*, and the metre is *al-kāmil*.

14 فـي جَحْفَـلٍ سَتَـرَ العُيُـونَ غُبَـارُهُ فَكَأَنَّمَـا يُبْصِـرْنَ بـالآذَانِ
15 يَرْمِـي بِهَـا الْبَلَـدَ البَعِيـدَ مُظَفَّـرٌ كُـلُّ الْبَعِيـدِ لـهُ قَرِيـبٌ دَانِ
16 فَكَـأَنَّ أَرْجُلَهـا بِتُرْبَـةِ مَنْبِـجٍ يَطْرَحْـنَ أَيْديَهـا بِحِصْـنِ الرَّانِ
17 حَتَّـى عَبَـرْنَ بِأَرْسَنـاسَ سَوَابِحًـا يَنْشُـرْنَ فِيـهِ عَمَائِـمَ الفُرْسَـانِ
18 يَقْمُصْـنَ فـي مِثْلِ المُـدَى مِـنْ بَـارِدٍ يَذَرُ الْفُحُولَ وَهُـنَّ كالخِصْيَانِ
19 وَالمَـاءُ بَيـنَ عجَاجَتَيـنِ مُخَلِّـصٌ تَتَفَرَّقَـانِ بِـهِ وَتَلْتَقِيَـانِ
20 رَكَـضَ الأَمِيـرُ وَكَاللُّجَيْـنِ حَبَابُـهُ وَثَنَـى الأَعِنَّـةَ وَهْـوَ كالْعِقْيَـانِ
21 فَتَـلَ الحِبَـالَ مِـنَ الْغَدَائِـرِ فَوْقَـهُ وَبَنَى السَّفِينَ لَـهُ مِـنَ الصُّلْبَانِ
22 وَحَشَـاهُ عادِيَـةً بِغَيْـرِ قَوَائِـمٍ عُقْـمَ الْبُطُـونِ حَوَالِـكَ الأَلْـوانِ
23 تَأْتِـي بِمَـا سَبَـتِ الخُيُـولُ كَأَنَّهَـا تَحْتَ الحِسَانِ مَرَابِضُ الغِزْلَانِ
24 بَحْـرٌ تَعَـوَّدَ أَنْ يُـذِمَّ لِأَهْلِـهِ مِـنْ دَهْـرِهِ وَطَـوَارِقِ الحِدْثَـانِ
25 فَتَرَكْتَـهُ وَإِذَا أَذَمَّ مِـنَ الـورَى رَاعَـاكَ وَاسْتَثْنَى بَنِي حَمْـدَانِ
26 المُخْفِرِيـنَ بِكُـلِّ أَبْيَـضَ صَـارِمٍ ذِمَمَ الدُّرُوعِ عَلَى ذَوِي التِّيجَانِ
27 مُتَصَعْلِكِيـنَ عَلَـى كَثَافَـةِ مُلْكِهِـمْ مُتَوَاضِعِينَ عَلَـى عَظِيـمِ الشَّـانِ
28 يَتَقَيَّلُـونَ ظِلَالَ كُـلِّ مُطَهَّـمٍ أَجَـلِ الظَّلِيـمِ وَرِبْقَـةِ السِّرْحَـانِ
29 خَضَعَتْ لِمُنْصُلِكَ المَنَاصِلُ عَنْوَةً وَأَذَلَّ دِينُـكَ سَائِـرَ الأَدْيَـانِ
30 وَعَلَى الدُّرُوبِ وَفِي الرُّجُوعِ غَضَاضَةٌ والسَّيْـرُ مُمْتَنِـعٌ مِـنَ الإِمْكَـانِ
31 والطُّـرْقُ ضَيِّقَـةُ المَسَالِـكِ بِالْقَنَـا وَالكُفْـرُ مُجْتَمِـعٌ عَلَـى الإِيمَـانِ
32 نَظَـرُوا إِلَـى زُبَـرِ الحَدِيـدِ كَأَنَّمَـا يَصْعَدْنَ بَيْـنَ مَنَاكِـبِ العِقْبَانِ
33 وَفَـوَارِسٍ يُحْيِـي الحِمَـامُ نُفُوسَهَـا فَكَأَنَّهَـا لَيْسَـتْ مِـنَ الحَيَـوانِ
34 مَـا زِلْـتَ تَضْرِبُهُـمْ دِرَاكًـا فـي الـذُّرَي ضَرْبًـا كَـأَنَّ السَّيْـفَ فيـهِ اثْنَـانِ
35 خَـصَّ الْجَمَاجِـمَ وَالْوُجُـوهَ كَأَنَّمَـا جَاءَتْ إِلَيْكَ جُسُومُهُـمْ بِأَمَـانِ
36 فَرَمَـوْا بِمَـا يَرْمُـونَ عَنْـهُ وَأَدْبَـرُوا يَطَـأُونَ كُـلَّ حَنِيَّـةٍ مِرْنَـانِ
37 يَغْشَاهُـمُ مَطَـرُ السَّحَـابِ مُفَصَّلًا بِمُثَقَّـفٍ وَمُهَنَّـدٍ وَسِنَـانِ
38 حُرِمُـوا الَّـذِي أَمَلُـوا وَأَدْرَكَ مِنْهُـمُ آمَالَـهُ مَـنْ عَـادَ بِالْحِرْمَـانِ
39 وَإِذَا الرِّمَـاحُ شَغَلْـنَ مُهْجَـةَ ثَائِـرٍ شَغَلَتْـهُ مُهْجَتُـهُ عـنِ الإِخْـوانِ
40 هَيْهَـاتَ عَـاقَ عَـنِ الْعَـوَادِ قَوَاضِـبٌ كَثُـرَ الْقَتِيـلُ بِهَـا وَقَـلَّ الْعَانِـي

41 وَمُهَـذَّبٌ أَمَـرَ المَنَايَـا فِيهِـمِ فأَطَعْنَـهُ فِـي طَاعَـةِ الرَّحْمَـنِ
42 قَـدْ سَـوَّدَتْ شَجَرَ الْجِبالِ شُعُورُهُـمْ فَكَـأَنَّ فِيـهِ مُسِفَّـةَ الْغِرْبَـانِ
43 وَجَرَى على الْـوَرَقِ النَّجِيعُ الْقَانِي فَكَأَنَّـهُ النَّارَنْـجُ فِي الأَغْصَـان
44 إِنَّ السُّيُـوفَ مَـعَ الَّذِيـنَ قُلُوبُهُـمْ كَقُلوبِهِـنَّ إِذَا التَقَـى اَلْجمْعـانِ
45 تَلْقَـى الْحُسَـامَ على جَرَاءَةِ حَـدِّهِ مِثْلَ الْجَبَانِ بِكَـفِّ كُـلِّ جَبَانِ
46 رَفَعَـتْ بِكَ الْعَرَبُ العِمادَ وَصَيَّرَتْ قِمَـمَ المُلُـوكِ مَوَاقِـدَ النِّيـرَانِ
47 أَنْسَـابُ فَخْرِهِـمِ إِلَيْـكَ وَإِنَّمَـا أَنْسَـابُ أَصْلِهِـمِ إِلَـى عَدْنَـانِ
48 يَـا مَـنْ يُقَتِّـلُ مَـنْ أَرَادَ بِسَيْفِـهِ أَصْبَحْتُ مِنْ قَتْلَاكَ بِالإِحْسَانِ
49 فَـإِذَا رَأَيْتُـكَ حَـارَ دُونَـكَ نَاظِـرِي وَإِذَا مَدَحْتُكَ حَارَ فِيكَ لِسَانِي

1 Judgement comes before the courage of the courageous; the former is
first, and the latter the second place;
2 so when they are combined in a haughty spirit, that spirit reaches every
place of elevation.
3 Perchance a lad spears his competitors with judgement even before the
adversaries thrust one against the other.
4 But for reason, the meanest lion would be nearer to nobility than man,
5 and souls would not compete for superiority, neither would the hands of
warriors wield the points of the supple lances.
6 But for him who is named after his swords, and his impetuosity, the
swords, when they were drawn, would have been like eyelids.
7 He plunged with them into death, so that it was not known whether he
did so out of contempt or forgetfulness,
8 and he strove mightily, and the people of his time and of every time
lagged behind his reach
9 They took their places of sitting in the houses, whilst it was his view that
saddles are the proper seats for noble lads;
10 they imagined that war was a game, whereas thrusting in the battlefield
is different from thrusting in the arena.
11 He led the steeds into the jousting, and did not lead them save to his
habits and familiar haunts,
12 every son of an outstripping mare with its beauty scattering all sorrow
in its owner's heart;
13 if they were left to themselves, they were bound by the manners of
battle, and calling them was enough, so that there was no need of
halters,

14 in a mighty army whose dust veiled the eyes, so that it was as though they saw with their ears.
15 A victorious prince, to whom every distant place is near and nigh, flings them at a distant land
16 and it is as though their feet were on the soil of Manbij, whilst they cast their arms into the fortress of al-Rān,
17 until they crossed the Arsanās, strongly swimming, scattering in it the turbans of the horsemen,
18 galloping as it were against knives, so cold was the water which left the stallions as though they were geldings,
19 and the water was keeping clear between two clouds of dust which there separated and met.
20 The prince galloped, its bubbles being like silver, then he turned the reins, and it was like gold:
21 he twisted over the river ropes of women's tresses, and constructed ships for it of crosses,
22 and stuffed the water with racers having no feet, barren of belly, very black in colour,
23 bearing what the horsemen had taken captive, as though they were the pens of gazelles under the lovely women.
24 A river that was accustomed to protect its people from time and its chance vicissitudes;
25 and so you left it, and when it thereafter protected from men, it was mindful of you, and made exception of the Banū Ḥamdān,
26 breaking with every trenchant sword the covenants of mailcoats upon the wearers of crowns,
27 like to the destitute for all the abundance of their possessions, humble at heart despite their mighty position,
28 passing the siesta in the shade of every full-bodied steed, which is death to the ostrich and a noose to the wolves.
29 The blades have submitted to your blade perforce, and your religion has abased all other religions.
30 Upon the passes – and to return were a disgrace, and to proceed was utterly impossible,
31 and the roads were completely choked with lances, and unbelief was massed against faith –
32 they gazed at the steel strips as if they were mounting between the pinions of eagles,
33 and at horsemen whose souls death revived, so that it was as though they were not of the animal kingdom.

34 You ceased not to smite them continuously on the upper parts with a smiting as if the single sword were two,
35 singling out their crania and faces, as if their bodies came to you in safe-conduct.
36 So they flung away what they were flinging with and turned their backs, trampling upon every twanging bow,
37 overwhelmed by the rain of the cloud, distinctly spaced with straight shaft and Indian sword and spear-head.
38 They were denied what they had hoped for, and those of them who returned with denial attained their hopes.
39 When the lances occupy the soul of a seeker of revenge, his own soul preoccupies him to the exclusion of his brothers.
40 Alas, they were barred from returning by sharp blades whereby many had been slain, and few taken captive,
41 and by a well-schooled warrior who had commanded the fates regarding them, and the fates obeyed him in obedience to the All-Merciful.
42 Their hair had blackened the trees of the mountains, so that it was as though ravens were skimming amongst them,
43 and the scarlet blood flowed over the leaves as if it were oranges on the twigs.
44 Swords side with those whose hearts are sturdy as their hearts, when the two hosts meet.
45 You will find the sword, for all the boldness of its edge, like a coward in the hand of a coward.
46 The Arabs have raised with you the pillar, and converted the tops of the heads of kings into the kindling-places of fires;
47 the genealogies of their glory mount to you, and only the genealogies of their origin to ʿAdnān.
48 O you who slaughter whom you will with your sword, I have become one of those slain by your beneficence,
49 so that when I behold you, my eyes are too dazzled to gaze on you, and when I praise you, my tongue is bewildered concerning you.

Translation by Arberry (2009:82–89)[40]

As background to the poem, Sayf al-Dawla (meaning "Sword of the State") had already crossed the river between greater Aleppo and Byzantium, thereby raiding enemy territory (Arberry 2009[1967]:82–89). This attack was a preemptive

40 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

strike designed to deter Byzantine designs upon Āmid (Ḥusayn 1962:227–228). Sayf al-Dawla was not an Abbasid Caliph, but, like his politically ambitious forebears (the Banī Ḥamdān), he walked with kings.[41] He had already succeeded in establishing an Emirate in Aleppo and Northern Syria, close to the border with the Byzantine empire and remote from the command structure of the Caliphate at Baghdad. However, his popularity at home was in large part due to military campaigns against his western neighbour, these promoted as jihad. From this point on, jihad increasingly became associated with binary confrontations between a Muslim east and a Christian west, a gross over-simplification for in reality minority religious and ethnic groups have always lived in both communities and formed state allegiances, but the framework of two warring communities still resonates because it draws upon the Jahili model.

Al-Mutanabbī composed the poem towards the end of his tenure at court, from 337/948 to 346/957, which, though marked with great literary prowess, ended in his disaffection with his status for he was an inordinately proud man. Andras Hamori (2008[1990]:308–310) has briefly alluded to a couple of distinguished verses from this poem,[42] but for the most part has cited the *Sayfiyya*, beginning *ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū*, as exemplary of an "epic grandeur" that is typical of al-Mutanabbī's verse and unprecedented in Classical Arabic poetry, adding that the Arab-Byzantine wars that provided the backdrop for Sayf al-Dawla's adventures seemed to stoke al-Mutanabbī's rather cinematic imagination. Hamori (1992), Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1962) and Raymond Farrin (2011) are amongst those who have agreed that al-Mutanabbī was a tactician who devised a poetic strategy to describe a military campaign. The forthcoming analysis does not dispute these assertions, but it maintains, since a poem can also be used as a tool of incitement to battle, *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī* qualifies as a "blood vengeance poem" because it serves as inspiration for subsequent jihadist poetry.[43] According to the poem, this is also because: (1) retaliation is required to restore honour and Muslim cultural dominance in contested lands of the eastern Mediterranean; (2) Sayf al-Dawla's legitimacy is underpinned by the Jahili and the Islamic traditions, making him commander of both men and the natural kingdom;[44] (3) the verses are intentionally rous-

41 Sayf al-Dawla's real name is ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī al-Hayja b. Ḥamdān b. al-Hārith al-Taghlibī.

42 Specifically, verses 42 and 43.

43 The impact of al-Mutanabbī's poetry on contemporary jihadist verse will be picked up later, in Chapters Seven and Eight.

44 The prototypical leader, to which Abbasid panegyrics aspire, is inspired by King Solomon (Sperl 1977:24–25).

ing so as to inspire fighting spirit within a leader and his men; and (4) the poem sufficiently meets the "blood vengeance motif" test, which Table 1 has already outlined.[45] As legacy, al-Mutanabbī has arguably been an early proponent of the model for Arab nationalism (al-Mallah 2009:108). For a modern audience, Sayf al-Dawla is long since dead, while his staggering charisma is a matter of poetic record, rather than of living memory. However, the cult of this particular hero persists into the modern age, via the imitation and repetition of al-Mutanabbī's poetry.

4.4 Blood Vengeance and Gift Exchange

This chapter uses blood vengeance and gift exchange as structuring tools in order to analyse the content of the poems. As first discussed, in Chapter One, blood vengeance is the inverse of gift exchange, which is to say that when the hospitality contract between peacefully co-existing tribes is broken then homicidal rights are exchanged, instead of gifts.[46] Chronologically, in this study, this rupture in relations occurred during the build-up to the War of al-Basūs, and was re-enacted in the early Islamic period, as earlier examples of poetry reveal. However, illustrious poets of the Abbasid period also waxed lyrical on blood vengeance, demonstrating that it remained an element of political economy in those societies that not only practised gift exchange, feud and drinking rituals but which also exhibited a courtly hierarchy. Of the three principal texts that feature in this chapter, "The al-Afshīn Poem", by Abū Tammām, most explicitly refers to "the blood vengeance" ritual, in verses 7, 16 and 17, these conflating Jahili retaliation with a religious obligation on behalf of God's vengeance. Across these same lines, there are interesting linguistic plays. In verse 7, the Arabic word, *tha'r*, is repeated so as to drive home the "blood vengeance" message, the term, *mawtūra*, deriving from another word for "revenge", i.e. *watr/witr*. In verse 17, the act of having "relieved them", *fa-shafā-hum*, is prominent, which in poems about revenge can either mean the "curing" of the polity or imply the "satiation of a thirst for vengeance". Even verse 1 employs the Arabic word, *al-ḥaqq*, two-fold, to mean "the blood debt" (as well as "the truth"), particularly since the poem associates it with the "baring" of swords. What this vocabulary suggests is that manifestations of blood revenge continued to be propelled by political and economic considerations, in the Abbasid

45 See Section 1.3, for Table 1.
46 See Section 1.4.5.

era, but also became more associated with jihad, imperial expansion and the civil punishment meted out for treason against a Muslim king. In "The al-Afshīn Poem", the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim is the divinely appointed avenging hero. This reflects some repetition of the poetic tradition, but also rupture, through use of Jahili motifs to indicate a continuous heroic passage, while promoting an Islamic identity to indicate a change in values, and a detachment from the past.[47] Stetkevych (1991:153) has described the transition between both periods as a rite of passage between an "Old Testament" and an "Islamic New Testament that both abrogates and fulfils it".

"The Amorium Poem" does not explicitly refer to *al-thaʾr* in the same way as "The al-Afshīn Poem", but instead elaborates upon a broken gift exchange contract between Arabs and Byzantines, so implying that the ensuing war is underwritten by its inverse, i.e. blood revenge. Anecdotally, this is made clear from a twelve-verse section, which begins the second half of the poem; in verse 37, the same Caliph, al-Muʿtaṣim, is an "avenger", *muntaqim*, who acts on behalf of God; and in verse 39, he is portrayed as justified, in launching an attack as retaliation against an earlier aggressor. In verse 41, he is God's agent wreaking "destruction", whereas verse 43 refers to the broken hospitality contract, meaning that the Byzantines have earlier denied Arabs access to life-giving "water" and "pasture". As retaliation, in verse 45, the "swords" and "spears" secure success for the Arab army, by sowing "twin death-blows" and reaping "twin buckets of life" (the kinship covenant is mentioned again, in verse 69).[48] Al-Muʿtaṣim obeys "a female cry" to vengeance, in verse 46, indicating that his response is honourable because, in Classical Arabic poetry, a female kinship member frequently incites the male to vengeance. However, this is a highly questionable assertion that pertains only to his own community.[49] The succeeding verses, 47 and 48, explain that in response to her cry, he leaves behind comfort to cross into enemy territory.

By contrast, there is only one explicit reference to a "seeker of revenge", in the *Sayfiyya* that is *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*. This occurs, in verse 39, although the message is cryptic for according to one interpretation, the "avenger" described in the two hemistichs is not the same man, this meaning that al-Mutanabbī intended to lampoon the Byzantine, while praising Sayf al-

47 Here, poetry performs a similar function to folktales. See Section 2.4.2 and Section 2.4.3.

48 Verse 45, as well as verse 44, is what Stetkevych (2002:171) has termed the "blood-vengeance dialectic", which uses the sword and the spear to replace food and water as sources of sustenance.

49 "Female honour" denotes Arab female honour, as opposed to Byzantine, because in redeeming one woman, al-Muʿtaṣim violates the other, i.e. he retaliates.

Dawla as extraordinary. According to ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Barqūqī (1979), this verse means that whenever the jousting spears approached the avenger, he was preoccupied with self-preservation and distracted from avenging his brothers. He has qualified this statement, by stating that it describes the Byzantines who forsook one another when confronted by perdition. However, he has also contrasted his view with that of Ibn al-Qaṭṭāʿ (d. 515/1121),[50] who saw the verse as antithetical across hemistichs: a lampoon of an ordinary avenger, in the first hemistich; and praise of Sayf al-Dawla, in the second, i.e. it could mean that "whenever an avenger is preoccupied with saving his own life against the approaching spears, then it is Sayf al-Dawla who can be relied upon to risk life and limb in defence of the brothers". It is noteworthy that *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī* conforms to the worldview of "The Amorium Poem", particularly in its juxtaposition of an Arab army that confronts a Byzantine enemy, for the middle of the poem states that the "sword" breaks the "covenant of protection". In other words, the exchange of blood replaces the exchange of gifts. The interchangeable relationship between gift giving and blood-letting also occurs in the penultimate verse, comparing Sayf al-Dawla's "beneficence" to the act of "slaying", for the poem promotes the best warrior as the best protector, blood-letting and gift-giving being two sides of the same coin. Similarly, bloodshed not only brings about "death" but "revives", affording the gift of life, in verse 33. Gift exchange is threefold: as a contract between co-existing communities that is broken; as a contract between client and patron; and as a contract between God and his worshipper(s).

4.5 Other Structural Features of the Poems

Aside from "blood vengeance motifs", which will be analysed more intensively in the following chapter, the three principal poems of this chapter exhibit other structuring devices that are summarised below.

4.5.1 *The Poem as Rite of Passage*

Abū Tammām's poem about Amorium integrates the pre-Islamic theme of blood vengeance into a panegyric to the Abbasid Caliph, al-Muʿtaṣim. "The Amorium Poem" redefines the old code of blood vengeance as God's vengeance so that the hero is compelled to embark on a killing expedition as rite of pas-

50 Ibn al-Qaṭṭāʿ was a medieval commentator upon al-Mutanabbī's *Dīwān*. Al-Barqūqī's comment to the verse likely comes from an older commentary, by Abū al-Baqāʾ al-ʿUkbarī (2006[d. 616/1219]:4:183).

sage in order to fulfil his Muslim duty. If the *qaṣīda* represents a ritual process of transformation, in verse form, then this poem is highly significant because it ritualises the blood vengeance paradigm for the Islamic Age (Stetkevych 1991:197). In earlier sections (which deal with the *Ḥamāsa*), *qiṭaʿ* and selections of poetry from longer odes convey the blood vengeance theme. Within his own poetry, Abū Tammām employed the blood vengeance theme to structure some panegyrics. In these poems, the hero gazes upon lost territory, in the *nasīb*, retaliates, in the *raḥīl*, and celebrates the victory of military conquest, in the *madīḥ* (Stetkevych 1991:152). In this way, his compositions conform to the tripartite ritual journey proposed and studied by Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969), whose form Stetkevych (1993) has frequently applied to the Classical Arabic *qaṣīda*. This is to say that the motif of "blood vengeance", a Jahili institution, is notionally integrated into the Islamic concept of jihad, and structurally re-integrated into the classical ode form. For example, in a panegyric to Abū Saʿīd al-Thaghrī,[51] Abū Tammām has framed his subject's bloodlust as a ritual act of worship that originates in the Jahiliyya. The following verse describes a pre-Islamic "sacrificial ritual" that is a metaphor for an attack upon the enemy (Stetkevych 1991:140, 150, 371):

Lā anta anta wa-lā-l-diyāru diyārū

42 سَمَقَتْ بِهِ أَعرَاقُه في مَعْشَرٍ قُطْبُ الوَغَى نُصُبٌ لهُمْ وَدَوَارُ

42 His ancestors he has ennobled, in a warrior band
Who make the pivot of war's mill their idol,
Then make their ritual circuit round it.

Translation by Stetkevych[52]

In the cultural transition between the Jahili and the Islamic periods, successful poetry absorbed the new political climate. Because poetry is intimately associated with the Jahili institution of blood vengeance and other (sacrificial) rituals, to effectively counteract this message, the authorities could either have abolished this type of poetry entirely, or adapted it to suit their own purpose. Therefore, in the Islamic era, the task of any poet seeking legitimacy was to

51 In al-Juwaydī's version of the *Dīwān* (Abū Tammām 2011), this is *Qaṣīda* 73. It is *Qaṣīda* 68, in al-Tibrīzī. Abū Tammām composed this *rāʾiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*rū*, in the *kāmil* metre.

52 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

invest the tradition with socially sanctioned metaphors.[53] Abū Tammām was one particularly skilled in accomplishing this transition, both by resurrecting the Jahili poetic tradition and by reinterpreting its motifs (Stetkevych 1991:123). His approach is classical and modern, by continuing to use the classical form of poetry, but also by adapting content to accommodate new meaning. In other words, his poems attach renewed significance to the old signs, while reassigning them to newly appointed signifieds.[54] Abū Tammām was by no means the first poet to do this, but he was certainly one of the most successful and creative.

4.5.2 *A Hierarchy of Honour in the Natural World*

Some poems which contain a strong blood vengeance message present honour in terms of "noble", versus "ignoble" beasts. In "The Amorium Poem" and "The al-Afshīn Poem", by Abū Tammām, the animal and natural world are not significant features, honour and dishonour expressed by the interaction between a dominant participant who desecrates a human body and his victim. *Al-Ra'yu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, by al-Mutanabbī, is more abstract, its verses littered with allegorical references to Solomon's kingdom and the natural order of life, a hierarchy of desert creatures ranging from lion to bird set out in a pattern of dominance and submission. In verse 5, of another *Sayfiyya* that is *ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi ta'tī-l-ʿazā'imū*, even eagles submit to Sayf al-Dawla's will:[55]

ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi ta'tī-l-ʿazā'imū

يُفَدِّي أَتَمُّ الطَيرِ عُمرًا سِلاحُهُ نُسورُ المَلا أَحداثُها وَالقَشاعِمُ 5

5 The longest-living of birds, even the eagles of the desert, the young ones and the old ones of them, offer (themselves as) ransom for his armoury;

Translation by Arberry (1965:84–85)[56]

53 Stetkevych (1991:126) has argued that "The urban *badīʿ* poetry of the Moderns, … – not the bedouinising romanticism of al-Buḥturī and others – is responsible for the revitalisation – that is the survival – of the Classical Arabic poetic tradition".

54 According to Roland Barthes (1973:133–134), the fixed form of classical poetry means that a significant word's placement in one poem, and repetition in another poem, conveys both a language sign and a mythical sign to the same word. Modern poetry, on the other hand, reverses this process so that a significant word is divorced from its mythical meaning, and reassigned to an original meaning devoid of any association.

55 The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mū*, is *al-ṭawīl*. For other verses from the same poem, see also Section 1.5.1.1, Section 4.5.5, Section 4.5.6, and Section 5.1.

56 From *Arabic poetry: a primer for students*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1965; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

This particular device forges a strong intertextual link between Sayf al-Dawla, the archetypical Bedouin hero of the Jahili *qaṣīda*, and the mythological might of Solomon who spoke to all animals. Sperl (1977:24) has explained that in panegyric poetry such mythical underpinning of a Near and Middle Eastern king is key to the conveyance of his sacred legitimacy. In Chapters Seven and Eight, a jihadist poem will feature that makes extensive use of an "eagle" motif.[57] This has precedent, in the classical tradition, al-Ṣūlī (2015:184–187) citing how Abū Tammām and others used the "eagle" motif with respect to vengeance, leadership and fighting:[58]

1. Abū Tammām about al-Afshīn, and praising al-Muʿtaṣim (*al-ṭawīl*):

Ghadā-l-mulku maʿmūra-l-ḥimā wa-l-manāzilī

تَسَرْبَلَ سِرْبَالًا مِنَ الصَّبْرِ وَارْتَدَى عَلَيْهِ بِعَضْبٍ فِي الْكَرِيهَةِ قَاصِلِ
وَقَدْ ظُلِّلَتْ عِقْبَانُ أَعْلَامِهِ ضُحًى بِعِقْبَانِ طَيْرٍ فِي الدِّمَاءِ نَوَاهِلِ
أَقَامَتْ مَعَ الرَّايَاتِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّهَا مِنَ الْجَيْشِ إِلَّا أَنَّهَا لَمْ تُقَاتِلِ

He wears forbearance next to his skin and in adversity fastens a sword over it
The eagle-standards are over-shadowed by eagles, quenching their thirst for blood in the forenoon
The birds camp beside the banners until they seem to be part of the army – although they do not fight.

2. Muslim b. al-Walīd (*al-basīṭ*):[59]

Ujrirtu ḥabla khalīʿin fī-l-ṣibā ghazilī

قَدْ عَوَّدَ الطَّيْرَ عَادَاتٍ وَثِقْنَ بِهَا فَهُنَّ يَتْبَعْنَهُ فِي كُلِّ مُرْتَحَلِ

He trained the birds to habits they grew to trust and they follow his each and every move

57 See Section 7.4.4, for *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*.
58 Jahili poets are also included in this list.
59 See also Section 5.3, for more verses from the same poem.

3. Abū Nuwās about ʿAbbās b. ʿUbayd Allāh (*al-madīd*):

Ayyuhā-l-muntābu ʿan ghufurih

وإذا مـجَّ القَنـا عَلقًـا وتراءَى الموتُ في صُوَرِهْ
راحَ في ثِنْيَيْ مُفَاضَتِهِ أسَـدٌ يدْمَـى شبَـا ظُفُـرِهْ
تَتَآيَـا الطيْـرُ غُدْوتَـه ثِقَـةً بالشبْـع مـن جَـزرِهْ

When spears spit black blood and death shows itself in its guises
His ample coat of mail is draped around a lion whose claws drip with blood.
At forenoon the birds follow him as a sign, confident they will be sated from his kill.

4. al-Nābigha (*al-ṭawīl*):

Kilīnī li-hammin yā Umaymata nāṣibī

إِذَا مَا غَدَوْا بِالْجَيْشِ حَلَّقَ فَوْقَهُمْ عَصَائِبُ طَيْرٍ تَهْتَـدِي بِعَصَائِـبِ
جَوَانِـحَ قَـدْ أَيْقَـنَّ أَنَّ قَبِيلَـهُ إِذَا مَا الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ أَوَّلُ غَالِبِ

When they march off with the host, squadrons of birds circle above them, following the troops.
The birds hover, confident that when the hordes meet, his tribe will be first to win.

5. al-Afwah al-Awdī (*al-ramal*):

In tarā raʾsiya fī-hī qazaʿun

يَا بَنِي هَاجَرَ سَاءَتْ خُطَّةً أَنْ تَرُومُوا النِّصْفَ مِنَّا وَمَحَارْ
فَتَـرَى الطَّيْـرَ عَلَـى آثَارِنَـا رَأْيَ عَيْـنٍ ثِقَـةً أَنْ سَتُمَـارْ

Sons of Hagar, it is a bad plan to demand justice and withdrawal from us
You can see the birds following us, assured that they will be fed.

The translations are all by Gruendler[60]

60 Used with permission of New York University Press, from *The life and times of Abū*

4.5.3 *Gender*

"The Amorium Poem" exhibits an interesting physical structure relating to gender for it juxtaposes the feminine city against the male Caliph, and the Muslim army against Byzantine women. Abū Tammām used gender to display the social hierarchy of the Abbasid period, which is comparable with patriarchy. Most commentators on this poem have seen conquest and submission, honour and dishonour, as concepts that are expressed in sexual terms, i.e. as conquest by the male over the female. However, the act of "veiling", or "unveiling" a woman is also distinct for signifying her status as either "honourable" or "ignoble". Verse 66 is sinister, not only because it justifies the act of rape as a weapon of war but also because it implies that, like the unveiled city (of verse 16), the women who are raped are perceived as fair game.[61] Stetkevych (2002:176) has detailed the gender dynamic between male and female, in "The Amorium Poem", by (1) exploring rape of a female city and its womenfolk by male soldiers; (2) framing the male principle as hero, and the female principle as enemy; and (3) presenting Byzantine Christianity as feminine, against a masculine Islamic identity. M. Badawi (1978:51–52) has also indicated that feminisation of the city of Amorium is highly intertextual, this deriving from Scripture and the depiction of Babylon, in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 17.

4.5.4 *Colour*

Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī have used colour to evoke a visual and sensual response to the blood vengeance theme and the mechanics of honour. Red, white and black clearly proliferate. Some examples include the use of white to denote "honourable" swords and "purified" garments, red, to signify "bleeding" and the taking of "blood revenge", and black, to indicate the "dishonourable" state of the enemy.

4.5.5 *Speech Acts*

The role of speech in incitement to blood vengeance is a vital component of any "blood vengeance poem". The means for theorising speech incitement will be

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Tammām, Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, 2015; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

61 The "female" motif in this poem describes a "mother", a "virgin", an "immodest woman", a "widow", a "sister" and a "wife", while the male describes a "ruler", a "father", a "conqueror", a "soldier", a "son", a "husband" and a "bachelor". There is no female persona, in the poem, who is described as a "daughter" because such description negates a sexual relationship with the male.

the subject of later analysis.[62] This section is only concerned with the Abbasid poet's viewpoint, i.e. while a spoken intention is precursor to a deed, it is pointless without subsequent action. For example: (1) verse 11, of "The Amorium Poem", claims that verses can do no justice to a military conquest because they fall short of action, while linguistically the phrase, "*fatḥu-l-futūḥi taʿālā*", subtly invokes the name of the Almighty "*al-Fattāḥ*"; (2) in verses 46 and 48, of "The Amorium Poem", al-Muʿtaṣim responds to a woman's plea for vengeance, his action speaking louder than words because of address, via the sword; (3) verse 39, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", states that speech can bear false testimony, and that while al-Afshīn is eloquent of speech, his deeds have proven him to be insincere; and (4) the closing verse, of *Al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, expresses that Sayf al-Dawla's heroic actions are so dazzlingly effective that they have rendered (an unusually modest) al-Mutanabbī speechless. For blood vengeance to take effect, it is essential that the catharsis of anger (for a slight to honour) occurs through a physical act that expresses a spoken intention. Hill (1995:73) has confirmed that the heroic act reconciles the word with action, by referring to a section of the *Beowulf* poem, in which a king's coastguard declares: "a sharp shield-warrior shall be a judge, a decider of words and works, one who thinks well". In Seamus Heaney's (1999) translation, of verses 286–289:[63]

Beowulf

> Undaunted, sitting astride his horse,
> the coast-guard answered, 'Anyone with gumption
> and a sharp mind will take the measure
> of two things: what's said and what's done.

This sentiment accords not only with the first verse, of *Al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, but also with the titular verse of the renowned *Sayfiyya*, *ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū*:[64]

62 In Section 7.7, there will be a greater exposition on the role of speech and incitement in honour rituals.

63 Extract used with permission of Faber and Faber Limited, from *Beowulf*, Seamus Heaney, 1999; publisher's permission granted according to the terms of Fair Use.

64 A *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mū*, the metre is *al-ṭawīl*. For other verses from the same poem, see also Section 1.5.1.1, Section 4.5.2, Section 4.5.6, and Section 5.1.

ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū

عَلى قَدرِ أَهلِ العَزمِ تَأتي العَزائِمُ وَتَأتي عَلى قَدرِ الكِرامِ المَكارِمُ

According to the degree of the people of resolve come the resolutions,
and according to the degree of noble men come the noble actions.
Translation by Arberry (1965:84–85)[65]

4.5.6 *Fetishising the Word*

After the inception of Islam, some Jahili rituals, like the veneration of stones, were dismissed as idolatry. Because it is easier to substitute one ritual with another, rather than to dispense with it entirely, the spoken word and (with the advent of literacy) the written word were very important.[66] This is because a carefully chosen word with an intertextual link to the Qurʾan could be associated with the "Word of God", and therefore may have been interpreted as a source of truth and meaning. Concurrently, Islamic calligraphy, which began as a method for the transcription of the Qurʾan into manuscript form (and as decorative relief upon the structure of sanctified spaces), developed during the Abbasid period into a flourishing art-form. Abū Tammām was ambivalent about the role of magic, the opening of "The Amorium Poem" dismissing the claims of fortune-tellers, a group he would have encountered in court. As a poet, he did not dare to claim prophecy for himself.[67] Notwithstanding this precaution, he shrewdly adopted a ritualised approach to the empowerment of vocabulary, which in the extreme conveys "fighting spirit", but at other times is like a spell offering protection to his subject of praise. Stylistically, this poet employed a creative technique of word play in order to invest ancient words and motifs with complex meaning. Alternatively, one could argue that he transformed verse into amulet, talisman, or curse. For example, the following verse 63, which belongs to the same panegyric to Abū Saʿīd al-Thaghrī cited earlier,[68] compares Abū Tammām's own poems to "magic" charms:

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65 From *Arabic poetry: a primer for students*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1965; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

66 See Section 1.1.2, for a definition of the term "fetish". See also Section 2.5.2, for a discussion about the Jahili veneration of stones.

67 Poets (and in particular Jahili poets) were frequently accused of exaggeration and lies, as endorsed by Q[26:221–224]. See Section 3.2.1.

68 See Section 4.5.1. In al-Juwaydī's version of the *Dīwān* (Abū Tammām 2011), this is *Qaṣīda* 73. It is *Qaṣīda* 68, in al-Tibrīzī. The metre of this *rāʾiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*rū*, is *al-kāmil*.

Lā anta anta wa-lā-l-diyāru diyārū

63 وَلِذَاكَ شِعْرِى فيكَ قد سَمِعُوا بهِ سِحْرٌ وأَشْعَارِى لهُم أَشعَارُ

63 So my poems for you are magic;
My poems for them
But poems.
Translation by Stetkevych (1991:142, 372)[69]

In another example, the last verse alludes to Jahili poetic incantation (Farrin 2011:168):[70]

Ara'ayta ayyu sawālifin wa-khudūdī

كَرُقَى الأَسَاوِدِ وَالاَرَاقِمِ طَالَمَا نَزَعَتْ حُمَاتِ سَخَائِمِ وحُقُودِ

Like the charms for black snakes and speckled vipers, that have long extracted the venoms of resentments and rancour.
Translation by Farrin (2011:166)[71]

The notion of the poem being a charm, or a series of charms is demonstrated succinctly, in verse 41, of *ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū*, this referring to al-Mutanabbī as the arranger. In this case, words of praise and encouragement help to shape Sayf al-Dawla's renown:[72]

ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū

41 لك الحمدُ في الدرّ الذي لِيَ لفظُهُ فإنّك مُعطيه وإنّيَ ناظم

69 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

70 In al-Juwaydī's version of the *Dīwān* (Abū Tammām 2011), this is the last verse of *Qaṣīda* 39. The metre of this *dāliyya*, ending in *-dī*, is *al-kāmil*.

71 Abū Tammām, "Ara'ayta ayyu sawālifin wa-khudūdī," translated and published in Raymond Farrin, *Abundance from the Desert: Classical Arabic Poetry* (Syracuse University Press © 2011), 166. Reproduced with permission from the publisher.

72 For other verses from the same poem, see also Section 1.5.1.1, Section 4.5.2, Section 4.5.5, and Section 5.1.

41 Yours is the praise in regard to the pearl which I spit out; you were the giver of it, and I the arranger,

Translation by Arberry (1965:90–91)[73]

The "necklace" motif coincides with ceremony, be this praise/protection of the Caliph, or the celebration of a military victory. This may be because social rituals attempt to bring life full-circle, reimagining fortunate, or malign events as part of a chain, rather than a set of random occurrences. For example: (1) in verse 60, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", "a bracelet" of charms indicates al-Muʿtaṣim's legacy and his heir; and (2) verse 37, of *Al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, refers to "the necklace" motif *mufaṣṣalan*, albeit in reference to the arrangement of "weaponry". Not only confined to Arabic rhetoric, the talismanic value of words is significant in other parts of the Islamic world. For example, in some West African cultures, amulets bearing Qur'anic inscriptions are worn so as to ward off misfortune (Caseley-Hayford 2015; Nolte 2015).

4.6 Old Signs, New Outposts

In particular, it is Abū Tammām's stylistic innovations in poetry that helped to transform the Jahili heroic model of blood vengeance into state violence at the behest of the Caliph. Al-Mutanabbī's poems followed suit, but it is his predecessor's verse which lauds vengeance, legitimising bloodshed in retaliation against foreign occupation. Abū Tammām's poetry sanctions kinship, by affording the Abbasid dynasty political legitimacy, and by tracing their genealogy to the Hashimite line among other tribal ancestors (Stetkevych 1991:127). What makes these poems particularly relevant is that their language is still in use. Abū Tammām conceptualised the heroic battle between two tribes as a battle between east and west, of belief in Islam against unbelief, and of truth against falsehood (Stetkevych 1991:148–149).

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CHAPTER 5

Abbasid Motifs and Blood Vengeance

The previous chapter has already reviewed direct references to "revenge" and "gift exchange", in "The Amorium Poem", "The al-Afshīn Poem" and *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.[1] Therefore, this chapter analyses Abbasid verse for conformance to other "blood vengeance motifs", these introduced in Chapter One. The treatment does not tackle verses in sequence, nor align them to their position within the classical polythematic *qaṣīda* structure. Individual verses from the poems reappear within the analysis, but thereafter are aforementioned. This approach processes 61% of verses, in "The Amorium Poem", 58% of verses, in "The al-Afshīn Poem", and 69% of verses, in *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, persuasive evidence that each poem conforms strongly to the blood vengeance theme. As in the previous chapter, translation of citations from "The Amorium Poem" is from Stetkevych (1991:187–196), from "The al-Afsḥīn Poem" is from Stetkevych (1991:212–220), whereas translation of citations from *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī* is from Arberry (2009:82–89).[2]

5.1 Honour and Weaponry

Aside from direct reference to revenge, one of the most distinctive motifs in Abbasid poetry dealing with blood vengeance is "weaponry". In both "The Amorium Poem" and "The al-Afshīn Poem", by Abū Tammam, the opening depicts a "sword(s)", whereas *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, by al-Mutanabbī, describes good "judgement" as the bravest weapon of all. As illustrations:

The Amorium Poem

السَّيْفُ أَصْدَقُ أَنْبَاءً مِنَ الكُتُبِ فِي حَدِّهِ الحَدُّ بَيْنَ الجِدِّ وَاللَّعِبِ

The sword is more veracious than the book,
Its cutting edge splits earnestness
From sport.

Translation by Stetkevych[3]

1 See Section 4.4.

2 Section 4.3 contains the entire poems.

3 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of*

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The al-Afshīn Poem

الحَقُّ أَبْلَجُ وَالسُّيوفُ عَوارِ فَحَذَارِ مِنْ أَسَدِ العَرِينَ حَذَارِ

The truth is gleaming and the blades are bared
So beware the lion of the thicket,
Beware!

Translation by Stetkevych[4]

al-Ra'yu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

الرَّأْيُ قَبْلَ شَجَاعَةِ الشُّجْعَانِ هُوَ أَوَّلٌ وَهْيَ المَحَلُّ الثَّانِي

Judgement comes before the courage of the courageous; the former is first, and the latter the second place;

Translation by Arberry[5]

The first example juxtaposes serious resolve against a game, using *ṭibāq* (i.e antithesis), while repetition of *ḥadd* conveys the sword's "edge" and "the boundary" that divides sobriety from frivolity. In association with a battlefield, there are also ample descriptions of weaponry: it is the tool by which an avenger can exact vengeance; it is his companion in battle; it is an extension of his manhood; and it is inseparable from his personality.[6] In verse 41, of "The Amorium Poem", al-Muʿtaṣim is the weapon that is shot, like an arrow, at Twin Towers:

The Amorium Poem

41 رَمَى بِكَ اللّٰهُ بُرْجَيْهَا فَهَدَّمَها وَلَوْ رَمَى بِكَ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ لَمْ يُصِبِ

the ʿAbbāsid age, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

4 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

5 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

6 This is not a novel treatment, for Khālid b. al-Walīd, the military commander at the Battle of Yarmuk (15/636), was frequently known as the "Sword of Islam" (Kennedy 2016:14).

41 God hurled you against ʿAmmūriyya's two towers and destroyed her –
Had any other hurled you, he would have
Missed the mark –,
Translation by Stetkevych[7]

Likewise, al-Mutanabbī has compared Sayf al-Dawla to the "sword", just as his epithet means the "Sword of the State". In verse 6, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, Sayf al-Dawla's eye-lids appear like scabbards:

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

لَوْلَا سَمِيُّ سُيُوفِهِ وَمَضاؤُهُ لَمَّا سُلِلْنَ لَكُنَّ كَالْأَجْفَانِ 6

6 But for him who is named after his swords, and his impetuosity, the swords, when they were drawn, would have been like eyelids.
Translation by Arberry[8]

This particular treatment is consistent with *ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū*, another *Sayfiyya*, for which Sayf al-Dawla appears as sword, in the closing verses:[9]

ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū

أَلا أَيُّهَا السَّيْفُ الذي لَيسَ مُغْمَدًا وَلا فِيهِ مُرْتَابٌ وَلا منهُ عَاصِمُ 44
هَنِيئًا لِضَرْبِ الهَامِ وَالمَجْدِ وَالعُلَى وَرَاجِيكَ وَالإِسلامِ أَنَّكَ سَالِمُ 45
وَلِمْ لا يَقي الرَّحمنُ حدَّيْكَ ما وَقى وَتَفلِيقُهُ هَامَ العِدا بكَ دائِمُ 46

44 O sword who are never sheathed, concerning which no one is in doubt and against which no one gives immunity!
45 Rejoice, smiting of crania, and glory and elevation, and those who put their hopes in you, and Islam, that you are safe!

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7 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

8 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

9 Other verses from this same poem have been cited previously, in Section 1.5.1.1, Section 4.5.2, Section 4.5.5, and Section 4.5.6. This is a *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mū*. The metre is *al-ṭawīl*.

46 And why should the Merciful not protect your two edges as He has
done, seeing that through you He ever splits the skulls of the enemy?
Translation by Arberry (1965:90)[10]

Verse 15, of *al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī*, does not confine Sayf al-Dawla's resemblance to a sword, only. *Muẓaffar* variously means a "victorious one" (as in the translation), or a "bow" (by implication), this later distinction describing a leader who victoriously directs his arsenal of weapons at his enemy:

al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī

15 يَرْمِي بِهَا الْبَلَدَ البَعِيدَ مُظَفَّرٌ كُلُّ الْبَعِيدِ لهُ قَرِيبٌ دَانِ

15 A victorious prince, to whom every distant place is near and nigh, flings
them at a distant land
Translation by Arberry[11]

Both "The Amorium Poem" and "The al-Afshīn Poem" were composed in praise of the Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, but the significance of swords and spears is sometimes at variance. Under Abū Tammām's treatment, the sheer intensity of the "weaponry" motif is striking. "The Amorium Poem" is vicious in its martial campaign, descriptions of conventional weaponry (sword, spear, or bow and arrow) occurring in fifteen out of seventy-two verses (21%), fire, in eight verses (11%), and rape, in eleven verses (15%).[12] Moreover, verse 65 contains a compounded "weaponry" motif referring to both swords and rape.

In "The al-Afshīn Poem", conventional weaponry features in only five out of sixty-two verses (8%), whereas reference to fire/flame dominates in over thirteen verses (21%).[13] A crucifixion scene features in two verses (3%), while there is a suggestion of the enemy's debasement of a woman, in verse 6.

In *al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī*, conventional weapons proliferate in 21 out of 49 verses (43%), female captives mentioned twice, their vulnerability possibly under threat, as opposed to expressly violated.[14]

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10 From *Arabic poetry: a primer for students*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1965; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

11 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

12 See Table 4.

13 See Table 5.

14 See Table 6.

TABLE 4 Use of the "weaponry" motif in "The Amorium Poem"

Verse/weapon	Sword	Spear	Fire	Rape	Bow/arrow
1	×				
2	×				
3		×			
5		×			
13				×	
24	×	×			
25			×		
26			×		
27			×		
28			×		
29			×		
31				×	
32				×	
33				×	
34				×	
36	×	×			
38	×	×			
41					×
44	×	×			
45	×	×			
46				×	
47				×	
48	×				
55		×			
58			×		
59			×		
60			×		
61	×				
63				×	
64				×	
65	×	×		×	
66	×			×	

TABLE 5 Use of the "weaponry" motif in "The al-Afshīn Poem"

Verse/weapon	Sword	Spear	Fire	Rape	Crucifix
1	×				
6				×	
11	×				
15			×		
20			×		
21			×		
22			×		
23					×
24			×		
25			×		
26			×		
27			×		
28			×		
29					×
30			×		
31			×		
41	×				
44	×				
48			×		
51	×				
62			×		

TABLE 6 Use of the "weaponry" motif in *Al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī*

Verse/weapon	Sword/blade	Spear	Bow/arrows	Female captives
3		×		
5		×		
6	×			
7	×			
10		×		
15			×	
18	×			
21				×

TABLE 6 Use of the "weaponry" motif in *Al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī* (*cont.*)

Verse/weapon	Sword/blade	Spear	Bow/arrows	Female captives
23				×
26	×			
29	×			
31		×		
32		×		
34	×			
35	×			
36			×	
37	×	×		
39		×		
40	×			
41	×			
44	×			
45	×			
48	×			

5.1.1 *Conventional Weaponry*

The *Sayfiyya*, that is *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, is a good point to continue a discussion about conventional weaponry because it fuses Sayf al-Dawla, the man, into the weapon he is named for. Sayf al-Dawla also deploys a spear, appearing in seven verses, but it remains secondary in importance. The "weaponry" motif is most intensive in the second half of the poem, in which the sword "severs" the covenant of protection (verse 26); "submits" the infidel (verse 29); "decapitates" the enemy (verses 35 and 46); "spaces" the army's military arsenal (verse 37); "multiplies" the numbers of slain and "minimises" the number of captives (verse 40); "distinguishes" the brave-heart from the coward (verse 45); and serves as a sceptre of power, by which a sovereign "gifts", or "severs bonds" (verse 48). The blade is so distinctive, in this poem, that even freezing river tides (verse 18) are "knives" that can castrate stallions:

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

18 يَقْمُصْنَ في مِثْلِ المُدَى مِنْ بَارِدٍ يَذَرُ الْفُحُولَ وَهُنَّ كالخِصْيَانِ

26 ألمُخْفِرِينَ بِكُلِّ أَبْيَضَ صَارِمٍ ذِمَمَ الدُّرُوعِ عَلَى ذَوِي التِّيجَانِ

29 خَضَعَتْ لِمُنْصُلِكَ المَنَاصِلُ عَنْوَةً وَأَذَلَّ دِينُـكَ سَائِـرَ الأَدْيَـانِ
35 خَـصَّ اَلْجمَاجِـمَ وَالْوُجُـوهَ كَأَنَّمَـا جَاءَتْ إِلَيْكَ جُسُومُهُـمْ بِأَمَـانِ
37 يَغْشَاهُـمُ مَطَـرُ السَّحَـابِ مُفَصَّلًا بِمُثَقَّـفٍ وَمُهَنَّـدٍ وَسِنَـانِ
40 هَيْهاتَ عَاقَ عَنِ اِلْعـوَادِ قَوَاضِـبٌ كَثُـرَ الْقَتِيـلُ بِهَـا وَقَـلَّ الْعَانِـي
45 تَلْقَـى الْحُسَـامَ على جَرَاءَةِ حَـدِّهِ مِثْلَ الْجَبَـانِ بِكَـفِّ كُـلِّ جَبَـانِ
46 رَفَعَتْ بِكَ الْعَرَبُ العِمادَ وَصَيَّرَتْ قِمَـمَ المُلُـوكِ مَوَاقِـدَ النِّيـرَانِ
48 يَـا مَـنْ يُقَتِّـلُ مَـنْ أَرَادَ بِسَيْفِـهِ أَصْبَحْتُ مِنْ قَتْلَاكَ بِالإِحْسَانِ

18 galloping as it were against knives, so cold was the water which left the stallions as though they were geldings,
26 breaking with every trenchant sword the covenants of mailcoats upon the wearers of crowns,
29 The blades have submitted to your blade perforce, and your religion has abased all other religions.
35 singling out their crania and faces, as if their bodies came to you in safe-conduct.
37 overwhelmed by the rain of the cloud, distinctly spaced with straight shaft and Indian sword and spear-head.
40 Alas, they were barred from returning by sharp blades whereby many had been slain, and few taken captive,
45 You will find the sword, for all the boldness of its edge, like a coward in the hand of a coward.
46 The Arabs have raised with you the pillar, and converted the tops of the heads of kings into the kindling-places of fires;
48 O you who slaughter whom you will with your sword, I have become one of those slain by your beneficence,

Translation by Arberry[15]

In "The Amorium Poem", the sword features in eleven verses, frequently in conjunction with the spear that is mentioned in nine. Unlike *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, which states at its opening that a weapon is secondary to human perspicacity, this sword possesses a superior intelligence, and is able to "distinguish truth" from fiction. In other words, justice at the behest of the

15 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

"sword" is preferable to speculation. Moreover, verse 36 celebrates a form of violent confrontation:

The Amorium Poem

36 لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْكُفْرُ كَمْ مِنْ أَعْصُرٍ كَمَنَتْ لَهُ المَنِيَّةُ بَيْنَ السُّمْرِ وَالقُضُبِ

36 If only Infidelity had known how many ages
This outcome lay in ambush midst
The spears and swords,
Translation by Stetkevych[16]

Just as the swords can gift, they can dispossess, by severing the hospitality contract and requiting injury with blood, this made clear, in verse 45. Furthermore, swords are companions that help to "articulate" a Caliphal decree, or action, as in verse 48; whereas spears can "bridle" speech, as in verse 55 that juxtaposes vocal sound against silence:

The Amorium Poem

48 أَجَبْتَهُ مُعْلِنًا بِالسَّيفِ مُنْصَلِتًا وَلَوْ أَجَبْتَ بِغَيْرِ السَّيْفِ لَمْ تُجِبِ

55 وَلَّى وَقَدْ أَلْجَمَ الخَطِّيُّ مَنْطِقَهُ بِسَكْتَةٍ تَحْتَهَا الأَحْشَاءُ فِي صَخَبِ

48 You replied baring the sword, penetrating
– To reply without the sword would have been
No reply –
55 Theophilus turned his back, his tongue bridled
By the Khaṭṭī spear, while below, his innards
Were in uproar.
Translation by Stetkevych[17]

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More disturbingly, the human properties of swords and spears include male and female sexuality, as in verses 65 and 66 that convey sexual subjugation of Byzantine women by Arab men, thereby conflating the image of the sword with rape:

The Amorium Poem

65 كَمْ أَحْرَزَتْ قُضُبُ الهِنْدِيِّ مُصْلَتَةً تَهْتَزُّ مِنْ قُضُبٍ تَهْتَزُّ فِي كُثُبِ

66 بِيضٌ إذا انتُضِيَتْ مِنْ حُجْبِهَا رَجَعَتْ أَحَقَّ بِالبِيضِ أَتْرَابًا مِنَ الحُجُبِ

65 How many a reed trembling on a sand-dune,
Did the drawn and trembling Indian swords
Obtain!

66 The white blades, once drawn from their sheaths, returned
Worthier companions to the white-skinned damsels
Than their veils.

Translation by Stetkevych[18]

Through the use of *tajnīs*, Abū Tammām has played on the words *quḍub*, meaning either "branches, rods, sticks or twigs" (which is metaphorically often used for "swords", or "human bodies"),[19] and *bīḍ*, meaning either "blades" or "white-skinned" women, thereby rendering these both male and female. The description of "white blades" echoes the opening image, of verse 2, depicting striking swords:

The Amorium Poem

2 بِيضُ الصَّفَائِحِ لا سُودُ الصَّحَائِفِ فِي مُتونِهِنَّ جِلاءُ الشَّكِّ وَالرِّيَبِ

2 The white of the blade, not the black on the page,
Its broadsides clarify uncertainty
And doubt.

Translation by Stetkevych[20]

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19 Incidentally, the singular of *quḍub*, *qaḍīb*, can also mean "phallus".

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Most usually a violent tool, a sword can also turn back time, restore the tribal abode, and offer consolation for anger, as described in verse 61 that uses *ṭibāq* to contrast "contentment" with "anger":

The Amorium Poem

61 وَمُغْضَبٍ رَجَعَتْ بِيضُ السُّيُوفِ بِهِ حَيَّ الرِّضَا عَنْ رَدَاهُمْ مَيِّتَ الغَضَبِ

61 How many an angry warrior did the blades bring back,
His contentment quickened by their perishing,
His anger dead!
Translation by Stetkevych[21]

It is difficult to understand the ethical reasoning behind a poem that celebrates the use of brutal force, while also claiming the moral high ground. According to the values of the classical world, Hill (1995:109–115) has opined that anger served a noble purpose, revenge, an ordered legal response to a crisis; while not citing rape, he has commented upon notions of masculinity among some communities, for which semen contains the "moral and jural aspects of personhood".[22] If a similar psychology pervaded the Abbasid world then this could explain why the poem lauds hyper-sexuality as heroic, but this does not excuse the content of "The Amorium Poem" that is arguably dangerous. Paradoxically, verses 1 to 10 dismiss the agenda of fortune-tellers, while investing trust in the daemonic violence and human intelligence of weaponry. For example:

The Amorium Poem

3 وَالعِلْمُ فِي شُهُبِ الأَرْمَاحِ لامِعَةً بَيْنَ الخَمِيسَيْنِ لا فِي السَّبْعَةِ الشُّهُبِ

3 Knowledge lies in the bright spears gleaming
Between two armies, not in the seven
Gleaming stars.
Translation by Stetkevych[23]

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21 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

22 Hill has cited the New Guinea Highlanders, by way of example.

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"The al-Afshīn Poem" also makes use of conventional weaponry, but this is subordinate to the use of fire. "Blades" feature as threat, in the opening verse, i.e. as the means of extracting the blood debt, but also as sources of protection. The term, "His sword", represents a divinely bestowed weapon, in verse 11:[24]

The al-Afshīn Poem

11 وَنَحا لِهَذا الدِّينِ شَفْرَتَهُ انثَنَى وَالحَقُّ مِنْهُ قَانِئُ الأَظْفَارِ

11 And relied upon His sword for that religion,
He was brought down; truth's talons bright red
With his blood.
Translation by Stetkevych[25]

5.1.2 *Fire*

"The Amorium Poem" and "The al-Afshīn Poem" share in common fire as a weapon of war. However, in "The Amorium Poem", fire is a conflagration, which, in verses 25 to 32, razes Amorium to the ground, and converts Byzantine abodes to "ruins". Such a destructive legacy is keenly felt, in verse 32:

The Amorium Poem

32 مَا رَبْعُ مَيَّةَ مَعْمُورًا يُطِيفُ بِهِ غَيْلَانُ أَبْهَى رُبًى مِنْ رَبْعِها الخَرِبِ

32 No spring abode of Mayya, full of folk, where Ghaylān roamed,
Was lovelier in its hills than ʿAmmūriyya's
Ruined abode.
Translation by Stetkevych[26]

In "The al-Afshīn Poem", fire is associated with enlightenment, and revelation of truth, or sin. As such, fire represents creative destruction and the triumph

24 There is some overlap here with Section 5.4.3.

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26 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

of light over darkness.[27] For example, in verses 15 and 62, Qur'anic verses also provide "a blaze of illumination":

The al-Afshīn Poem

15 حتَّى أستَضاءَ بِشُعْلَةِ السُّوَرِ الَّتي رَفَعَتْ لَهُ سَجْفًا عَنِ الأَسْرَارِ

62 سُوَرُ القُرانِ الغُرُّ فِيكُمْ أُنْزِلَتْ وَلَكُمْ تُصَاغُ مَحَاسِنُ الأَشْعَارِ

15 Till he was illumined by the *sūras*' firebrand
That raised the veil that hid
His hidden thoughts.

62 Among you the bracelet-bright *sūras* were sent down,
And for you the poet sets
His brilliant gems.

Translation by Stetkevych[28]

In verses 20 to 30 (The al-Afshīn Poem), fire also signifies the immolation of al-Afshīn, a very particular burning ritual that is pre-Islamic in origin, but used subsequently in the burning of heretics. Marsham (2015:107) has described the burning of heretics and rebels as a ritual process, for which the victim's "body becomes a kind of text" communicating various authoritarian messages from late antiquity and the early Islamic period. Historically, the burning ritual relates to the honour/shame dynamic because it conveys a very public humiliation. Moreover, it is important to note that just as retaliation can conflate with sacrificial ritual, so is the scattering of ashes (usually in a river) a fertility ritual akin to distributing the dismembered remains of a sacrifice. As practice, burning is a terrifying deterrent to prospective political dissidents, representing Hell-fire to the God-fearing, and a ritual purification to the traditionalist. It is designed to shame; by denying customary burial rites,[29] but also when used as indictment against homosexuality.[30] So as to justify such brutal treatment,

27 See Section 1.5.2.4. *Ḥ*37 also refers to the triumph of light over darkness, albeit by comparing blood spatter to the rays of the sun, not through the use of fire.

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29 Marsham (2015:120) has indicated that cremation obviated the need for customary burial, and helped to prevent an iconic figure from becoming the object of a cult, which was akin to idol worship.

30 Medieval Arab society had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards homosexuality, see

"The al-Afshīn Poem" presents the avenger, al-Muʿtaṣim, as a figure of justice who is an antidote to a sociopath. As such, Hill (1995:36) has termed his counterpart, in the western poetic tradition, a "juristic warrior" settling a feud against an outlaw. By burning al-Afshīn,[31] the Abbasid establishment framed him as a social aberration, guilty of idolatry and all manner of forbidden practices, some attributed to his Persian roots and the important role of fire, in Zoroastrianism, the faith he professed before converting to Islam.[32] This is succinctly expressed, in verse 26, using the antithetical concepts of "life" and "death" as follows:

The al-Afshīn Poem

26 صَلَّى لَها حَيًّا وكانَ وَقُودَها مَيْتًا ويَدخُلُها مَعَ الفُجَّارِ

26 Fire's worshipper in life, its fuel in death;
With the wicked he
Shall enter it.
Translation by Stetkevych[33]

5.1.3 *Rape*

"The Amorium Poem" expresses the act of rape as the conquest of the feminine principle by the male, this enacted by the victors upon the city of Amorium and the women of the city, who represent vessels of Byzantine honour. The female "cry", in verse 46, suggests that enemy atrocities were the original precursor to Arab retaliation:

Khālid al-Kātib's poem, *Yā maʿshara-l-murdi innī nāṣihun la-kumū*, in Section 4.3.1. In the Abbasid period, homosexual practice was celebrated in verse (particularly by Abū Nuwās), but was closeted because it is not sanctioned by Islam.

31 Stetkevych (1991:220–221) has clarified that according to record, al-Afshīn was not burnt alive; rather he was imprisoned, and then starved, before his body was dismembered and burnt.

32 "Fire's worshipper" (verse 26) was an incorrect assumption made by Abū Tammām and many of his contemporaries about the practice of Zoroastrianism, an ancient Persian monotheistic religion, for which fire is not sacred in itself, but instead a symbolic representation of the divine.

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The Amorium Poem

46 لَبَّيْتَ صَوْتًا زِبَطْرِيًّا هَرَقَتْ لَهُ كَأْسَ الكَرَى ورُضَابَ الخُرَّدِ العُرُبِ

46 To the Zibaṭrian cry you replied,
Pouring out a cup of drowsiness and the sweet saliva
Of loving wives.

Translation by Stetkevych[34]

There is no explicit, nor implicit reference to rape, in "The al-Afshīn Poem", but verse 6 frames al-Afshīn as a degenerate. A complex metaphor begins, in verse 5, continuing through verses 6 and 7, in which the poet compares "God's favour" to a "virgin bestowed" to al-Afshīn. By dishonouring this gift, al-Afshīn provokes divine wrath:

The al-Afshīn Poem

5 كَمْ نِعْمَةٍ للهِ كانَتْ عِنْدَهُ فكأَنَّها فِي غُرْبَةٍ وإِسارِ
6 كُسِيَتْ سَبَائِبَ لُؤْمِهِ فَتَضَاءَلَتْ كتَضَاؤُلِ الْحَسْنَاءِ فِي الأَطْمَارِ
7 مَوْتُورَةٌ طَلَبَ الإِلهُ بِثَأْرِها وكفَى بِرَبِّ الثَّأْرِ مُدْرِكَ ثَارِ

5 How much of God's grace was bestowed on him,
As if it were a virgin captive
In foreign hands,
6 Clothed in the long robes of his baseness, concealed
As if it were a beauty rare
Attired in rags.
7 Unavenged, God sought vengeance for her;
The Lord of Vengeance is indeed
The best avenger!

Translation by Stetkevych[35]

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5.2 Restoring Honour by Drinking and the Function of Liquidity

Usually a "blood vengeance poem" refers to the drinking of a liquid, the denial of access to water, the drawing of water from a well, the sating of a thirst for vengeance, or fertility that is associated in some way with blood, water, or milk. For example, in verse 13, of "The Amorium Poem", the city is a kind of sacred cow, or sacrificial offering, that is highly fertile, abounds in "milk" and is therefore coveted:

The Amorium Poem

13 يَا يَوْمَ وَقْعَةِ عَمُّورِيَّةَ انْصَرَفَتْ مِنْكَ المُنَى حُفَّلًا مَعْسُولَةَ الحَلَبِ

13 O Battle-Day of ʿAmmūriyya!
Desires went forth from you yielding milk
Abundant, honeyed.
Translation by Stetkevych[36]

In this way, the blood normally associated with battle is replaced with milk, a female symbol of fertility that appears again, in verse 19. The blood vengeance process is frequently tied to fertility rites involving sacrifice that are designed to prolong the life of the polity. Consequently, these rituals are sometimes indistinguishable. Both Sperl (1977:30) and Stetkevych (2002:174) have drawn analogy between the Amorium massacre and the sacrificial benefits reaped by a reinvigorated Caliphate, Sperl, citing verse 45 (of "The Amorium Poem"), where "death" brings about "life". Comparatively, in Norse mythology, Hill (1995:81) has explained that the resolution of feud, via retaliation, is equivalent to the onset of Spring.[37] Another vital liquid that is drinking water is present, in verses 43 and 45, of "The Amorium Poem", these explaining that the Muslims have been denied sustenance, and therefore that "bloody action" releases "water" for their consumption:

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37 In the Finn cycle of the *Beowulf* poem, the enacting of blood revenge is termed "the ending of winter's icy bonds" (Hill 1995:81).

The Amorium Poem

43 وَقَـالَ ذُو أَمْرِهِـمْ لا مَرْتَـعٌ صَـدَدٌ لِلسَّارِحِينَ وَلَيْسَ الـوِرْدُ مِـنْ كَثَـبِ
45 إِنَّ الحِمَامَيْنِ مِنْ بِيضٍ ومِنْ سُمرٍ دَلْوَا الحَيَاتَيْنِ مِنْ مَاءٍ ومِنْ عُشُبِ
47 عَدَاكَ حَرُّ الثُّغُورِ المُسْتَضَامَةِ عَنْ بَرْدِ الثُّغُورِ وَعَنْ سَلْسَالِهَا الحَصِبِ

43 And their commander had said, "There is no nearby pasture
For those that drive their flocks, nor is there nearby
A water-hole",
45 Two types of death, by white blade and dun spear,
Were two pails of life –
Water and hay.
47 Heat from outraged frontiers diverted you
From their cool teeth and sweet
Pebbled waters.

Translation by Stetkevych[38]

The "drinking" motif is reinforced, in the aforementioned verse 46,[39] in which a woman invokes the code of blood vengeance, this causing al-Muʿtaṣim to dispense with the "cup of drowsiness" and the "sweet saliva of loving wives". In her own analysis, of verse 46, Bray (2000:45) has indicated that al-Muʿtaṣim's motivation may not only have stemmed from female incitement to blood vengeance (as per the Jahili model) but also the poetic call to jihad by his uncle, Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī, as transmitted by al-Masʿūdī's notes on the poem. If so, then this is an example in which the rituals of poetic incitement, blood vengeance and jihad are intimately connected, and near-impossible to separate from one another. The following verse, verse 47, alludes to drink again when the Caliph as per the cultural precedent set by earlier avengers rides off into dangerous territory, forgoes the metaphorical drink of "cool teeth and sweet pebbled waters", and becomes continent.[40]

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39 Verse 46 is citied, in Section 5.1.3.

40 See also Section 1.4.8. Stetkevych (2002:171) has described this as the classical indicator, when a hero enters the ritual state required for him to become an avenger. In comparative literature, Hill (1995:26) has also described an heroic world, for which revenge is capable of restoring lost honour, and is frequently launched through female poetic incitement.

In "The al-Afshīn Poem", the "drinking" motif features, in verse 17, by referring to the "slaking of a thirst" for vengeance, *shafā*.[41] This alludes to the early Islamic tradition, when an avenger of al-Ḥusayn's murder turned against the Umayyad establishment. In verse 35, the Caliph is the model of a generous host who "gave him water to drink", i.e. *fa-saqā-hu mā'a*, but following al-Afshīn's duplicity, in verse 42, al-Muʿtaṣim throws him and his tribesmen into the "watering wells", *al-ābār*, that they have "dug themselves":

The al-Afshīn Poem

17 فشَفاهُمُ المُخْتَارُ منه وَلم يكُنْ فِي دِينِهِ المُخْتارُ بِالمُخْتارِ

35 فَسَقَاهُ ماءَ الْخَفضِ غَيْرَ مُصَرَّدِ وأَنَامَهُ فِي الأَمْنِ غَيْرَ غِرارِ

42 واعْلَمْ بِأَنَّكَ إِنَّما تُلْقِيهِمُ فِي بعْضِ مَا حَفَرُوا مِنَ الآبارِ

17 Then of it al-Mukhtār relieved them –
And Mukhtār in his religion was not
Well-chosen.

35 He offered him a cup of ease in no way mean,
And bade him sleep in safety
In no way wanting.

42 And know that the pits
In which you cast them
They dug themselves.

Translation by Stetkevych[42]

"Drink" as a proxy for "honour" is not exclusive to Classical Arabic poetry, for drinking rituals sealed the honour contract in the Norse medieval court, signifying acceptance of a gift and a requisite obligation in turn (Hill 1995:75, 103). Of liquids, milk is also present (albeit indirectly), in verse 44, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", this alluding to a Qur'anic precedent for which God's gift of a milk-producing "she-camel" was slaughtered by the inhabitants of Thamūd:[43]

41 *Shafā* also means "he relieved", "he cured", or "he slaked a thirst" for revenge.

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43 For Thamūd, see Section 2.4.4; see also Section 1.4.7, on "Milk".

The al-Afshīn Poem

44 وَثَمُودُ لَوْ لَمْ يُدْهِنُوا فِي رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ تَدْمَ نَاقَتُهُ بِسَيْفِ قُدَارِ

44 Had Thamūd's people not dissembled to their Lord,
His she-camel would not have bled
By Qudār's sword.
Translation by Stetkevych[44]

This act of disobedience called down God's vengeance in the form of a mighty earthquake (Stetkevych 1993:27–28). The association of a slaughtered she-camel with revenge, and the mixing of its blood with milk, is conceptually consistent with the provocation that led to the War of al-Basūs revenge cycle, in Chapter Two.

In the *Sayfiyya*, *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, the "drinking" motif is implicit, in verse 43, "oranges" being a metaphor for "blood flow":

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

43 وجرى على الورق النجيع القاني فكأنه النارنج في الأغصان

43 and the scarlet blood flowed over the leaves as if it were oranges on the twigs.
Translation by Arberry[45]

The type of orange that the poem describes, *al-nāranj*, can either be sweet or bitter to the taste; the blood-red fruits are full of juice for the drinking, ripe for the plucking, sweet for the eating, but may also taste bitter with enmity. When a war poem does not explicitly convey the "drinking" motif, it is worth examining it further for other signs of liquid. *Al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī* has ten verses (20% of the poem) for which water is present. Nine of these are verses 17 to 25,[46] i.e. they roof the centre of the poem, concerning the Arsanās river whose properties include: the castrating action of sword-"blades"

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46 Section 5.4.1 cites verse 17.

(verse 18); the ability to "separate" Arabs from Byzantines (verse 19); acting as a conduit to pump valuable "silver" water and red-"gold" blood to sustain the Arabs (verse 20); transporting "ships" and booty (verses 21–23); and offering "protection" (verses 24 and 25):[47]

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

18 يَقْمُصْنَ في مِثْلِ المُدَى مِنْ بَارِدٍ يَذَرُ الْفُحُولَ وَهُنَّ كالخِصْيَانِ
19 وَالمَاءُ بَيْنَ عجَاجَتَيْنِ مُخَلِّصٌ تَتَفَرَّقَانِ بِهِ وَتَلْتَقِيَانِ
20 رَكَضَ الأَمِيرُ وَكَاللُّجَيْنِ حَبَابُهُ وَثَنَى الأَعِنَّةَ وَهْوَ كالْعِقْيَانِ
21 فَتَلَ الحِبَالَ مِنَ الْغَدَائِرِ فَوْقَهُ وَبَنَى السَّفِينَ لَهُ مِنَ الصُّلْبَانِ
22 وَحَشَاهُ عادِيَةً بِغَيْرِ قَوَائِمٍ عُقْمَ الْبُطُونِ حَوَالِكَ الأَلْوانِ
23 تَأْتِي بِمَا سَبَتِ الخُيُولُ كَأَنَّهَا تَحْتَ الحِسَانِ مَرَابِضُ الغِزْلَانِ
24 بَحْرٌ تَعَوَّدَ أَنْ يُذِمَّ لأَهْلِهِ مِنْ دَهْرِهِ وَطَوَارِقِ الحِدْثَانِ
25 فَتَرَكْتَهُ وَإِذَا أَذَمَّ مِنَ الورَى رَاعَاكَ وَاسْتَثْنَى بَنِي حَمْدَانِ

18 galloping as it were against knives, so cold was the water which left the stallions as though they were geldings,
19 and the water was keeping clear between two clouds of dust which there separated and met.
20 The prince galloped, its bubbles being like silver, then he turned the reins, and it was like gold:
21 he twisted over the river ropes of women's tresses, and constructed ships for it of crosses,
22 and stuffed the water with racers having no feet, barren of belly, very black in colour,
23 bearing what the horsemen had taken captive, as though they were the pens of gazelles under the lovely women.
24 A river that was accustomed to protect its people from time and its chance vicissitudes;
25 and so you left it, and when it thereafter protected from men, it was mindful of you, and made exception of the Banū Ḥamdān,

Translation by Arberry[48]

47 According to al-Barqūqī (1979), the "black racers" are "ships covered in pitch".
48 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

Moreover, verse 37 compares sheeting "rain" to "swords", suggesting that individual droplets are blood dripping off such weaponry.[49] Rain is an indisputable image of fertility, serving as antidote to drought. Al-Mallah (2009:123) has described al-Mutanabbī's comparison of blood vengeance to fertility as a poetic ritual of purification, renewal and reinvigoration that is based upon both Jahili and early Islamic treatment of the same themes, albeit by referring to earlier work by Stetkevych and also another *Sayfiyya*.[50] Therefore rain and the river can play into the "weaponry" motif, or represent the execution of vengeance. In this manner, the poet has followed the example set by Imruʾ al-Qays in the climactic storm scene of his *Muʿallaqa*.[51]

5.3 Restoring Honour by Fasting and Feeding

As accompaniment to "drinking", the symbolic "eating" of the victim after a period of famine is frequently present in a "blood vengeance poem". This taps into ancient rituals, for which consuming the sacrifice reinvigorates the polity, but it also refers to the forswearing of the avenger of comfort and adequate sustenance until the taking of his vengeance.[52] Because of this notion of abstinence, a poem featuring blood vengeance sometimes describes a meal that combines thirst with food preparation (hunting, grinding, carving with swords), wounding, bloodletting, mutilation, dismemberment of the body, and then

49 Section 5.1.1 cites verse 37. According to al-Barqūqī (1979) and al-Yāzijī (1995), "clusters of clouds" represent the "troops", while the "rain" symbolises a "battering of alternating blows" from different weaponry. For their sources, see: (1) Ibn Jinnī (2004[d. 392/1002]: 3:645): *yaʿnī "bi-l-saḥāb": al-jaysh, shabbaha-hu bi-hi li-kathāfati-hi*; and (2) al-Wāḥidī (1999[d. 468/1076]:3:1621–1622): *yaʿnī anna waqʿa-l-silāḥ bi-him ka-waqʿi-l-maṭar, yaʾtī dafʿatan. Wa-arāda "bi-l-saḥāb", al-jaysh, wa-"bi-l-maṭar", al-waqaʿāt allatī taqaʿu bi-him min hādhihi-l-asliḥa allatī dhakara-hā, wa-hiya taqaʿu bi-him mufaṣṣalatan, li-anna-hum yaṭʿanūna tāratan bi-l-rimāḥ, wa-tāratan bi-l-suyūf yaḍribūna.*

50 This poem is the *ʿayniyya*, commencing:

غيري بأكثرِ هذا الناسِ ينخدعُ إن قاتلوا جبُنوا أو حدثوا شجعوا

In the poem he reviews, al-Mallah (2009:117) has also explained that al-Mutanabbī may have been drawing parallels between Sayf al-Dawla, in battle, and the Prophet Muḥammad during the Battles of Ḥunayn and Uḥud.

51 The blood vengeance sequence of this *Muʿallaqa* has been fully explored by Stetkevych (1993:279).

52 See Section 1.4.8, and Imruʾ al-Qays' relationship to abstinence and "Wine". See also Section 7.4.1, for a contemporary context, specifically verse 15, of *Lā Naksa*.

consumption.[53] Verses 6 and 7, of *Ḥamāsiyya* 272, by the Jahili poet, Durayd b. al-Ṣimma, show precedent, these associating "meat for the sword" with "vengeance":[54]

***Ḥ*272**

6 فَإِنّا لَلَحْمُ السَّيْفِ غَيْرَ نَكِيرَةٍ وَنُلْحِمُهُ حِينًا وَلَيسَ بِذِي نُكْرِ

7 يُغَارُ عَلَيْنَا وَاتِرِينَ فَيُشْتَفَى بِنَا إِنْ أُصِبْنَا أَوْ نُغِيرُ عَلَى وِتْرِ

Then we, no doubt, are meat for the sword and, doubtless, sometimes we feed it meat.

By a foe bent on vengeance, we are attacked, our fall his cure; or we, vengeance-bent, attack the foe.

Translation by Stetkevych (1991:317, 386)[55]

Muslim b. al-Walīd, an early Abbasid poet, also drew upon this same theme in his panegyric to the general Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī. As well as "feeding the sword", in verse 19, of *Ujrirtu ḥabla khalīʿin fī-l-ṣibā ghazilī*,[56] a meal of revenge is served up in direct contrast to the meal of hospitality. In verse 12, wine and song are distinct, but as the themes of "eating" and "drinking" develop, it becomes clear that a good host is transformed into a formidable avenger, this particularly marked, in verse 36 (Muslim b. al-Walīd 1907[d. 208/823]:58–62):

Ujrirtu ḥabla khalīʿin fī-l-ṣibā ghazilī

12 قَد كانَ دَهري وَما بي اليَومَ مِن كِبَرٍ شُربَ المُدامِ وَعَزفَ القَينَةِ العُطُلِ

18 يا مائِلَ الرَأسِ إِنَّ اللَيثَ مفترسٌ ميلَ الجَماجِمِ وَالأَعناقِ فَاِعتَدِلِ

19 حَذارِ مِن أَسَدٍ ضِرغامَةٍ بَطَلٍ لا يولِغُ السَيفَ إِلّا مُهجَةَ البَطَلِ

26 كَم قد أَذاقَ حِمامَ المَوتِ مِن بَطَلٍ حامي الحَقيقَةِ لا يُؤتى مِنَ الوَهَلِ

53 Stetkevych (1993:65) has compared the blood vengeance paradigm to an "inverted commensal meal" which revitalises the tribe.

54 This is a *rāʾiyya*, ending in *-rī*, composed in the *ṭawīl* metre.

55 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

56 The poem is a *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lī*, composed in the *basīṭ* metre, from which this example is an extract. See Section 4.5.2, for another verse from the same poem.

36 يَقـري الَمنِيَّـةَ أَرواحُ الكُمـاةِ كَمـا يَقري الضُيوفَ شُحومَ الكُومِ وَالبُزُلِ
37 يَكسـو السُيـوفَ دِمـاءَ الناكِثيـنَ بِـهِ وَيَجعَـلُ الهـامَ تيجـانَ القَنـا الذُبُـلِ
38 يَغـدو فَتَغـدو الَمنايـا فـي أَسِنَّتِـهِ شَوارِعـاً تَتَحَـدّى النـاسَ بِالأَجَـلِ

12 It was my habit, and I am not yet old // [enjoying] wine drinking and the musical accompaniment of a beautiful songstress
18 O you turning your head away, the rapacious lion attacks // [those who] turn their heads and necks away, so straighten up
19 Be wary of an heroic, powerful lion // who only feeds the sword the lifeblood of the heroes
26 How many a hero has he made taste [the fate of] death // the defender of those whom it is necessary for him to defend, who is not brought down by fear
36 He offers the souls of warriors to death, as hospitality, just as // he offers the fat of camels and goats to the guests
37 He drapes the swords in the blood of those who are disloyal[57] to him // and he makes the heads crowns [upon] the shafts of spears
38 He goes forth [early in the morning], so the fates of death go forth on his spear tips //pointing [their weapons], inciting people with death

This is significant because verse 38, of "The Amorium Poem", also compares al-Muʿtaṣim's conquest of that city with a feast:

The Amorium Poem

38 ومُطْعِمِ النَّصْلِ لَمْ تَكْهَمْ أَسِنَّتُهُ يَوْمًا وَلَا حُجِبَتْ عَنْ رُوحِ مُحْتَجِبِ

38 Nourished on victory, his spearpoints never blunt
On battle-day, nor hindered from
A soul in armour clad,
Translation by Stetkevych[58]

Stetkevych's translation, of verse 38, states that al-Muʿtaṣim is "nourished on victory" which his "spearpoints" facilitate as other commentators (also relying

57 I.e. those who have broken a covenant.
58 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

upon al-Tibrīzī's notes to the verse) have concurred.[59] However, al-Juwaydī's rendition of the verse (in Abū Tammām 2011) is *wa-muṭʿimi-l-naṣli*, suggesting that the Caliph is the "feeder of the blade", instead. Al-Juwaydī (in Abū Tammām 2011:36) has qualified his own interpretation, by explaining that al-Muʿtaṣim is generous to the degree that he even gives his sword blood to drink.[60] His interpretation taps into the function of an avenger as a generous host even to guests, like weapons, or death, which is comparable with his role in Muslim's poem. On the theme of eating, verses 43 and 45 (of "The Amorium Poem"), also contain references in the form of cattle grazing over "pasture".[61] These indicate that consumption is vital, and that when mutual cooperation cannot afford it then the institution of blood vengeance is an alternative strategy for feeding an ailing community.

Also associated with eating is cooking, when the enemy is not only food but fuel.[62] In verses 58 and 59 ("The Amorium Poem"), al-Muʿtaṣim stokes the fire, by "feeding the flames" with enemy soldiers while watching their skins "ripen like fruit" that is ready for harvesting:

The Amorium Poem

58 إِنْ يَعْدُ مِنْ حَرِّهَا عَدْوَ الظَّلِيمِ فَقَدْ أَوْسَعْتَ جاحِمَها مِنْ كَثْرَةِ الحَطَبِ

59 تِسْعُونَ أَلْفًا كَآسَادِ الشَّرَى نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ قَبْلَ نُضْجِ التِّينِ وَالعِنَبِ

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59 Al-Tibrīzī (1951–1964): has explained that *wa-muṭʿami-l-naṣri* (meaning "nourished on victory") refers to the object of praise, who is compared with a successful huntsman, and that *qaws muṭʿama* is an expression that conveys the success of the marksman in hitting a wild beast, from which sustenance is obtained.

Arberry (1965): "(A huntsman) glutted by victory, unblunted ever his spearpoints, never debarred from (taking) the spirit of any well-protected (foeman)"; from *Arabic poetry: a primer for students*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1965; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

Bray (2000): "With victory his daily bread, his spearheads, undulled, beg audience of no shielded soul".

60 The quote is:

... إنه كريم حتى إنه لا يبخل على السيف فهو يرويه من دماء الأعداء، ...

... he is generous to the degree that he does not even withhold from the sword, giving it drink from the enemies' blood ...

61 Section 5.2 refers to these verses.

62 See Section 7.6. A more contemporary poem that borrows from the classical tradition, by using a description of soldiers as the "fuel of war", is *Nashīd al-waṭan al-salīb*, by Maḥmūd Ghunaym.

58 If he fled the heat of war as an ostrich flees,
It was because you fed its flames
With fuel aplenty.
59 Ninety thousand like Mount Sharā's lions,
Their lives were ripe for plucking before the ripening
Of figs and grapes.[63]

Translation by Stetkevych[64]

Converting the enemy into fuel is particularly explicit, in verse 25, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", in which the unfortunate al-Afshīn's pyre has been used as a beacon for "night-sojourners". Furthermore, verse 30 gruesomely whets an appetite for vengeance, by invoking the smell of "roasting flesh":

The al-Afshīn Poem

25 مَشْبُوبَةً رُفِعَتْ لأَعظمِ مُشْرِكٍ مَا كانَ يَرفَعُ ضَوْءَها لِلسَّارِي
30 واسْتَنشَـأُوا مِنْـهُ قُتَـارًا نَشْـرُهُ مِـنْ عَنْبَـرٍ ذَفِـرٍ ومِسْـكٍ دَارِي

25 Once kindled, it was raised on an idolater's bones,
One who had never raised its light
For night-sojourners.
30 They caught wind of his roasting flesh,
Its odour wafting like fine ambar
And Darian musk

Translation by Stetkevych[65]

63 In al-Tibrīzī (1951–1964), upon which Stetkevych's (1991) translation is based, *julūdu-hum* is replaced by *aʿmāru-hum*, suggesting that it is "lives" and not "skins" that have ripened. See Lane (1863), s.v. *naḍija*, may reference Q[4:56], in which "the skin of one tormented in Hell became thoroughly burned". Therefore, while a literal translation means "lives have ripened", implicit in this image is the "ripening/burning of skins", this consistent with al-Juwaydī's version of the verse reproduced here. Al-Juwaydī (in Abū Tammām 2011) has explained that seasonal reference to the harvest is a direct response to the fortune tellers, who tried to discourage al-Muʿtaṣim from launching his attack at this time.

64 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

65 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

As contrast, by adopting a cooking theme, in verse 46, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*,[66] al-Mutanabbī has employed this not as a sensory response to vengeance, but rather to describe the "kindling-places" of the tribal abode where the community traditionally prepares their food. According to al-Yāzijī (1995), who has cited al-Wāḥidī (1999:3:1624), the metaphor of the "heads as cooking stones upon the hearth" means that the Arabs ignite the fire of war upon the heads of enemy kings.

5.4 Body Parts as Tokens of Value

Body parts are associated with the five senses which feature strongly in "blood vengeance poetry", evoking an emotional response to revenge, and integrating sensual gratification into the physical act of blood-letting. Therefore, allusions to eating and drinking are deployed in part to arouse sensation. Chapter One has discussed in some detail how "body parts" can be used as a "blood vengeance motif", in poetry. For Abū Tammām, this treatment is complicated by the fact that he also used "body parts" as a particular literary conceit in other poems not concerned with revenge. His panegyric, "In Praise of an Abbasid Caliph" (or *Raqqat ḥawāshī-l-dahru fa-h-ya tamarmarū*), evokes the female form, by using different features across verses so that the poem itself represents an integrated body (Abū Tammām 1996[d. 231/846]:80–85, 418–419).[67] "In Praise of an Abbasid Caliph" and "The Amorium Poem" are thematically antithetical to each other; the former is a poem about a composite unity, in which the Caliph al-Maʾmūn weds and glorifies nature, whereas in the latter, the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim destroys and brutally ravishes the female city of his enemy as revenge. A "blood vengeance poem" usually exhibits "body parts" because the objective is not only to kill the enemy but first to divest him of his weapons and/or clothing,[68] or to spoil or rip the garments,[69] before desecrating, destroying and dismembering the body, at least in verse. In the three principal poems belonging to this chapter, "body parts" more usually refer to this process of dismemberment. However, Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī have also employed the device to change the focus of a verse, by differentiating the female body

66 Section 5.1.1 also refers to this verse.

67 The poem has been translated by Julia Ashtiany, but is not reproduced here. Section 8.9 provides a limited selection of verses, from "In Praise of an Abbasid Caliph", albeit related to another theme.

68 See verse 7, of *Ḥ*339, Section 3.6.2.

69 See verse 48, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", which also appears, in Section 5.4.3.

from the male, for example, or the face from the body. In both "The Amorium Poem" and "The al-Afshīn Poem", body parts feature in nearly one quarter of the verses, while in *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, they occupy over forty per cent of all verses.[70]

As discussed, in Section 1.1.2, Pietz (2000:56–57) has stated that commodification and desecration of the body can be expressions of human value and its devaluation. Body parts are significant, in "blood vengeance poetry", because the sum of dishonouring the parts exceeds the value of the integrated whole. To expand, if an avenger spears his opponent and leaves his body intact, he derives from this killing a value, which in the economy of blood revenge is the minimum price he can bank for his kin as token of redeemed honour, i.e. a given value called "B". If the avenger decapitates his opponent, in the process of killing him, then this act represents another humiliation of his enemy, for which he derives additional value equivalent to "B plus H". If the avenger further mutilates his opponent, or violates areas of his enemy's body, then he derives value equivalent to "B plus H plus X plus Y plus Z", and so on. This is a simple example, but it stands to reason that the greater the number of his victims, or the longer the period of a campaign of vengeance, the greater is the compound value wrought through vengeance. The idea that value from a source can be made to accumulate, through its objectification and sub-division into incremental units of value, is comparable with earning interest on capital.[71] It is not the intention of this analysis to be cavalier about killing, nor to ignore the ethical implications of taking vengeance, but it is helpful to compare the institution of blood vengeance with a modern financial institution, in which capital is deposited and accrues interest. For example, if a sum of money is stored under the mattress for a rainy day, it has a minimum value equivalent to "B".[72] If the same sum of money is placed in an interest-bearing savings account, then it acquires an additional value equivalent to "B (capital) plus H (interest on capital)". If, on the other hand, the same sum of money is invested in a portfolio of sound investments, then the initial sum acquires further value equivalent to "B plus H plus X plus Y plus Z", and so on, depending on the number of constituent investments, the level of reward associated with each, and the duration of investment. The economy of "honour" operates in a similar way to the "capitalist" economy because "honour", like "capital",

70 See Tables 7, 8 and 9, for further detail.

71 There are limitations to this analogy. In practice, "money" conveys tangible worth, whereas "honour" reflects intangible value and sentiment that is more difficult to measure.

72 Which may even depreciate subject to external factors.

appreciates and depreciates in value, subject to positive and negative transactions with other parties of exchange. When honour is lost by one tribe, at the expense of another, and a debt is incurred, this obligation may be redeemed either by wresting it in kind or by additionally extracting a compound interest payment.

TABLE 7 Incidence of "body parts" in "The Amorium Poem"

Verse/ body part	Cheek/ teeth/ mouth	Eyes/ face	Hair/ skin	Inner core/ spirit/ heart	Neck	Knee/ legs	Sexual features
13							×
16		×					
18			×				
23			×				
33	×						
34		×					
38				×			
47	×						
50		×					
55				×			
59			×				
60				×			
62						×	
63	×						
64					×		
65						×	×

TABLE 8 Incidence of "body parts" in "The al-Afshīn Poem"

Verse/ body part	Eyes/ brow	Nape/ neck/ joints	Chest/ heart/ribs/ innards	Back/ flesh	Torso/sexual features/ flanks	Hands/ wrist/ nails
11						×
20			×			
21					×	
22					×	
23		×				
28	×					
30				×		
34			×			
40						×
41	×	×	×			

TABLE 8 Incidence of "body parts" in "The al-Afshīn Poem" (*cont.*)

Verse/ body part	Eyes/ brow	Nape/ neck/ joints	Chest/ heart/ribs/ innards	Back/ flesh	Torso/sexual features/ flanks	Hands/ wrist/ nails
45			×			
48						×
49				×		
51		×				
60						×

TABLE 9 Incidence of "body parts" in *Al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*

Verse/ body part	Head/ skull/ face	Ear/ mouth/ eyes	Hair	Inner core/ spirit/heart/ trunk	Hands	Legs	Sexual features
4	×						
5				×	×		
6		×					
12				×			
14		××					
16						×	
17	×						
18							×
21			×				
22				×		×	×
26	×						
33				×			
34	×						
35	×			×			
39				×			
42			×				
44				×			
45					×		
46	×						
49		××					

5.4.1 *Head and Neck*

Tables 7, 8 and 9 give examples of "body parts" which the "blood economy" fetishises, this conveying an honour system that requires vengeance to settle homicidal scores. The "head" motif features across six verses, of the *Sayfiyya* that is *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, suggesting that the head is a highly

coveted body part, both as the source of good sense in a leader and as the prized scalp of a disgraced enemy.[73] By way of example: (1) in verse 4, "reason", or *al-ʿuqūl*, represents the distinguishing feature that differentiates man from beast; (2) verse 17 features the decapitated "turbaned heads" of the enemy that course upon the river current, while unravelling and bleeding; (3) in verse 26, Sayf al-Dawla severs alliances and breaks the "crowns" of leaders; (4) in verses 34 and 35, Sayf al-Dawla ceaselessly strikes his enemies upon the "head", severing head from body so quickly that the decapitated bodies appeared to carry on moving towards him in an act of mindless surrender; and (5) in verse 46, the "heads of kings" are converted into the cooking tripod, to feed the tribe, or to fuel the war:[74]

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

4 لَـوْلَا العُقُـولُ لَكـان أَدْنَـى ضَيْغَـمٍ أَدْنَى إِلَى شَرَفٍ مِنَ الإِنْسَانِ

17 حَتَّـى عَبَـرْنَ بِأَرْسَنـاسَ سَوَابِحًـا يَنْشُـرْنَ فِيـهِ عَمَائِـمَ الفُرْسَـانِ

34 مَا زِلْتَ تَضْرِبُهُمْ دِرَاكًا فِي الذُّرَى ضَرْبًا كَأَنَّ السَّيْفَ فيهِ اثْنـانِ

4 But for reason, the meanest lion would be nearer to nobility than man,

17 until they crossed the Arsanās, strongly swimming,[75] scattering in it the turbans of the horsemen,

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73 "Decapitation" is also a popular motif in comparative revenge poetry, drama and folklore: (1) in verses 1550 to 1590, of the epic that bears his name, Beowulf finally decapitates the monster Grendel (Heaney 1999); (2) the *Dede Korkut* tale, of "How Basat killed Goggle-eye", relays a similar story, in which the hero slays his nemesis in vengeance, while claiming his head as the final prize (Lewis 1974:149); (3) in the ancient Greek tradition, in a Bacchic state, Agaue presents her own son's head to her father Cadmus (Euripides 2005:160).

74 See Section 5.1.1, for verses 26, 35 and 46.

75 In *Kitāb Asrār al-balāgha* (al-Jurjānī 1991[d. 474/1081]:55*n*54), the term *sābiḥāt* (coursers/swimmers) is a loan word for horses, and is an example of *al-istiʿāra al-qarība min al-haqīqa* (metaphor proximate to literal meaning) because they are so fast that their legs blur and their bodies appear to float across the terrain. See Wehr (1979), s.v. *sawābiḥ*, literally meaning "floating ones" that is the epithet for "racehorses". See also verse 53, the *Muʿallaqa* of Imruʾ al-Qays, s.v. *sābiḥāt* (al-Tibrīzī 2012:74–75):

مِسَحٍّ، إذا ما السّابِحاتُ علَى الوَنَى، أَثَرْنَ غُبارًا، باكَدِيدِ المُرَكَّلِ

A fast-flowing horse, when the coursers are tired, they stir up dust over rugged horse-trodden land.

34 You ceased not to smite them continuously on the upper parts with a smiting as if the single sword were two,

Translation by Arberry[76]

The "decapitated head" is also associated with the "severed neck" motif, vividly evident in "The Amorium Poem", verse 64, depicting the beheading of the male guardians of the city's virgins. Grimly, the poem makes use of *tajnīs* across each hemistich of this verse to draw a parallel between "neck cords", *asbāb al-riqāb*, and "routes of access", *sabab*:

The Amorium Poem

64 كَمْ كَانَ فِي قَطْعِ أَسْبَابِ الرِّقَاب بِهَا إِلى المُخَدَّرَةِ العَذْرَاءِ مِنْ سَبَبِ

64 How many corridors were opened to secluded maids
By severing in war
The cords of necks!

Translation by Stetkevych[77]

The "cutting" of the arterial vein in the "neck" to bring about death is also evident in "The al-Afshīn Poem", verses 41 and 51, without necessarily implying severing the head from the body. A more exhaustive dismembering of the body, "joint by joint", is the subject of verse 23:

The al-Afshīn Poem

23 فَصَّلْنَ مِنْهُ كُلَّ مَجْمَعِ مَفْصِلٍ وفَعَلْـنَ فاقِـرَةً بِكُـلِّ فَقَـارِ
41 أَلْحِـقْ جَبِينًـا دَامِيًـا رَمَّلْتَـهُ بِقَفًا، وصَدْرًا خائِنًا بِصِدارِ
51 كادُوا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالهُدَى فتَقطَّعَتْ أَعنَاقُهُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ المِضْمَارِ

23 The flames disjointed every joint
And made misfortune bore
Through every bone.[78]

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76 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

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78 Al-Ṣūlī (2015:106–109) has transmitted the introductory verb, in the verse, as *fa-faṣalna*

41 Cut the bloodied forehead clear to the nape
And clothe each treacherous breast
In mourners' weeds!
51 They plotted against Prophethood and Right Guidance,
And in that arena
Their necks were cut.

Translation by Stetkevych[79]

5.4.2 *Unsexing the Enemy*

As weapon of war, a particular method for humiliating the enemy involves either sexual abuse or "unsexing" the target of their gender. Some "blood vengeance verse" refers to the primary, or secondary sexual characteristics of the enemy as well as degradation, or destruction. The frequently cited verse 65, of "The Amorium Poem", describes rape of the enemy's womenfolk through the use of metaphors to describe the physical act.[80] Verse 13, of the same poem, provides a foreboding sense of the rape act that evolves over the course of the poem, also including references to rapacious "desire" and voluptuous fertility, "yielding milk".

By contrast, verses 21 and 22, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", refer to al-Afshīn's stained "waist-wrapper", *izār*, thereby insinuating that fire has assaulted his "frame", and so unsexed and destroyed him:[81]

The al-Afshīn Poem

21 نارًا يُساوِرُ جِسْمَهُ مِنْ حَرِّها لَهَبٌ كما عَصْفَرْتَ شِقَّ إزَارِ
22 طَارَتْ لَها شُعَلٌ يُهَدِّمُ لَفْحُها أَرْكانَهُ هَدْمًا بِغَيْرِ غُبَارِ

---

rather than *faṣṣalna*. The latter is how the verse more commonly begins. In combination with the definitive (which is not included here), *al-fāqira* means "the Resurrection", the notion of which is implicit. Al-Ṣulī and his translator, Gruendler, have explained that this verse references Q[75:25].

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80 Section 5.1.1 cites verse 65, of "The Amorium Poem", while Section 5.2 cites verse 13.

81 See Lane (1863), s.v. *arkān*, variously means "supports", or, when associated with *al-insān*, "the members, or limbs, of the man, with which things are gained or earned, or with which he works". The former meaning draws a parallel with "the pillars he has built for himself", in verse 9.

21 A fire whose flame swept through his corpse
As yellow dye spreads up the side
Of a long veil,
22 From which leapt flames
Whose searing heat destroyed his frame
In dustless demolition.

Translation by Stetkevych[82]

Verse 18, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, positions enemy soldiers and their horses as impotent, by comparing the paralysing effect of riding through icy river water to a castrating "blade" neutering a stallion.[83] At the same time, the enemy's womenfolk are vulnerable to threat by Arab soldiers. Verse 22 achieves this through the juxtaposition of two antithetical concepts, the "sterility" of the body of a boat, resembling the "geldings" (of verse 18), against its plundered and "fertile" cargo, i.e. the "women" (in verse 23).

5.4.3 *Hand*

"Weaponry" and "body parts" are usually distinct motifs in "blood vengeance poetry", for which the former act upon the latter, which is to say that swords cut off hands and heads. Notwithstanding their vulnerability to injury, there are instances in which body parts can also act as weapons and accrue value. This is the case when rape serves as a weapon of war. Another example occurs in "The al-Afshīn Poem", verses 10 and verse 11,[84] which compares the Divine's hand and nails with "talons", or the "sword" that extracts al-Afshīn's treachery from his body:

The al-Afshīn Poem

10 حتَّى إذا مَا اللّٰهُ شَقَّ ضَمِيرَهُ عَنْ مُسْتَكِنِّ الكُفْرِ وَالإِصْرَارِ

10 Till when God cleft his secret thoughts,
Revealing infidelity and willfulness
Concealed,

Translation by Stetkevych[85]

82 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

83 Section 5.2 cites verses 18, 22 and 23, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

84 Section 5.1.1 cites verse 11, of "The al-Afshīn Poem".

85 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics*

In this same poem, more generally, the "hand" motif is distinguishable as an agent of power, reward, or destruction, such as in verses 40, 48 and 60: (1) in verse 40, the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim extends his "right hand" to al-Afshīn's kin, but, because they abuse the privilege, he then "seizes them by the left" to dispose of them; (2) in verse 48, "weaving hands" personify the hot sun and desert winds that have burnt the skins of the enemies of Islam; and (3) in verse 60, a complex metaphor unfolds about a "wrist" and a "bracelet":

The al-Afshīn Poem

40 يَا قابِضًا يَدَ آلِ كاوُسَ عادِلًا أَتْبِعْ يَمِينًا مِنْهُمُ بِيسَارِ
48 سُودُ الثِّيابِ كأَنَّما نَسَجَتْ لَهُمْ أَيْدِي السَّمُومِ مَدَارِعًا مِنْ قَارِ
60 وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُ بِأَنَّ ذلك مِعْصَمٌ ما كُنْتَ تَتْرُكُهُ بِغَيْرِ سِوَارِ

40 O you who seized Kāwus's people by the right hand,
Now, out of justice,
Seize the left!
48 Their clothes were black as if the Simoon's hand
Had woven them long cloaks
Of pitch.[86]
60 Full well I knew he was a wrist
You would not leave
Unbraceleted,

Translation by Stetkevych[87]

Stetkevych's (1991:230) translation marks out the "bracelet" as a gift, this identifying the heir to be the future Caliph, and beloved, but, according to al-Juwaydī's notes to the poem (in Abū Tammām 2011), the "wrist" motif refers to the United States of the Caliphate that are firmly clasped by al-Muʿtaṣim, while the "brace-

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86 In both al-Iṣfahānī (2002) and al-Ṣūlī (2015), "clothing" has been referred to as *al-libās*, rather than as *al-thiyāb*. Al-Tibrīzī (1951–1964) has chosen the former, but has noted that the latter is also acceptable. Al-Ṣūlī has replaced *al-samūm* with *al-shumūs*, i.e. that "the sun's" hands weave, rather than a "sandstorm's" hands.

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let" represents his son.[88] These differences in meaning are reconcilable; nuance aside, verse 60 serves as contrast to the power dynamic present, in verse 40. In other words, the "bracelet" may well identify al-Muʿtaṣim's successor, but it is also antithetical to suggestion of a fettered enemy in "handcuffs".

The "hand" motif is also present, in verse 5, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, for the powerful "hands of warriors" grip weapons with which to fight their enemy, an image in direct contrast to the "weak grip" of cowards, in verse 45:[89]

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

5 وَلَمَا تَفَاضَلَتِ النُّفُوسُ وَدَبَّرَتْ أَيْدي الكُماةِ عَوَالِيَ المُرَّانِ

5 and souls would not compete for superiority, neither would the hands of warriors wield the points of the supple lances.

Translation by Arberry[90]

5.4.4 *Innards/Heart*

The avenger, in a "blood vengeance poem", is often like a purger of disease who stems the rot from the innards of his victim. In Chapter One, *Ḥ*37 compares the Jahili avenger, Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, to a surgeon, juxtaposing his "open hands" with his foe's "dark soul".[91] The body interior is also present in poems belonging to the Abbasid period. In "The Amorium Poem", verse 38, the Caliph directs his spearpoints at "souls" that are "hidden" from view by an impenetrable armoured aspect.[92] In verse 55 (of the same poem), fear provokes a growling sound from "the innards" of Tūfalis, in direct contrast with the "spear" silencing his speech.[93]

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88 The "wrist" motif is also a pun on al-Muʿtaṣim's name. See al-Juwāydī, in (Abū Tammām 2011), in his note to this verse:

المعصم: موضع السّوار من الساعد، يقصد الشاعر بذلك اتّحاد تلك البلاد. السوار: حلية تتزيّن المرأة في يدها به، ويقصد الشاعر بذلك الواثق ابن المعتصم

Al-miʿṣam: Upon the forearm, the location for the bracelet, by that the poet means a confederation of those states. *Al-siwār*: a trinket that the woman adorns her hand with, for which the poet means al-Wāthiq, son of al-Muʿtaṣim.

89 Section 5.1.1 cites verse 45, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

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91 See Section 1.5.2.

92 Section 5.3 cites verse 38, of "The Amorium Poem".

93 Section 5.1.1 cites verse 55, of "The Amorium Poem".

By comparison, in "The al-Afshīn Poem", verse 20, his treachery is a "secret" buried deeply within him, which only "fire" can reveal; whereas, in verse 45, his plight serves as contrast to the "gibbeting" of other enemies of the Abbasid state, Bābak and Māzyār. This surgically invasive form of vengeance is ordered so as to cure the polity of its own internal ailment:

The al-Afshīn Poem

20 مَـا زالَ سِـرُّ الكُفْـرِ بَيْـنَ ضُلُوعِـهِ حتَّى اصطَلَى سِرَّ الزِّنادِ الوَارِي

45 ولَقَدْ شَفَى الأَحْشَاءَ مِنْ بُرَحائِها أَنْ صَـارَ بَابَـكُ جـارَ مَازَيَّـارِ

20 Infidelity lay secreted between his ribs
Till it was set ablaze by the secret
Of the fire-yielding flint,
45 Hearts were cured of sorrows
When Bābak became the neighbour
Of Māzyār,

Translation by Stetkevych[94]

The physical nature of the soul relates to the treatment of the "heart". In verses 34 and 41,[95] of "The al-Afshīn Poem", the true and generous "heart" of the Caliph, who extends protection to al-Afshīn, serves in direct opposition to the "treacherous breast" of the latter:

The al-Afshīn Poem

34 قَدْ كَانَ بَوَّأَهُ الخَلِيفَةُ جانِبًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ حَرَمًا عَلَى الأَقْدَارِ

34 The Caliph had lodged him
Close by his heart,
Safe from fate's wiles.

Translation by Stetkevych[96]

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94 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

95 Section 5.4.1 cites verse 41, of "The al-Afshīn Poem".

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In "The Amorium Poem", verse 60, the seat of a man's inner nature is the "soul", to be found in the "heart", that must be lanced if found to be corrupt:[97]

The Amorium Poem

60 يَا رُبَّ حَوْبَاءَ لمَّا اجْتُثَّ دابِرُهُمْ طابَتْ وَلَوْ ضُمِّخَتْ بِالمِسْكِ لم تَطِبِ

60 How many a bitter soul did the plucking of their root make sweet –
Had it been drenched in musk it would not
Smell so sweet!

Translation by Stetkevych[98]

Likewise, in *al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī*, verses 12, 33, 39 and 44, the "heart" and the "soul" are sources of the merit, the honour and the life-blood of a man:

al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī

12 كُلُّ ابْنِ سَابِقَةٍ يُغِيرُ بِحُسْنِهِ فِي قَلْبِ صَاحِبِهِ علَى الأَحْزَانِ
33 وَفَوَارِسٍ يُحْيِي الحِمَامُ نُفُوسَهَا فَكَأَنَّهَا لَيْسَتْ مِنَ الحَيَوانِ
39 وَإِذَا الرِّمَاحُ شَغَلْنَ مُهْجَةَ ثَائِرٍ شَغَلَتْهُ مُهْجَتُهُ عنِ الإِخْوَانِ
44 إِنَّ السُّيُوفَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ قُلُوبُهُمْ كَقُلوبِهِنَّ إِذَا التَقَى الْجَمْعانِ

12 every son of an outstripping mare with its beauty scattering all sorrow in its owner's heart;
33 and at horsemen whose souls death revived, so that it was as though they were not of the animal kingdom.
39 When the lances occupy the soul of a seeker of revenge, his own soul preoccupies him to the exclusion of his brothers.
44 Swords side with those whose hearts are sturdy as their hearts, when the two hosts meet.

Translation by Arberry[99]

97 See Lane (1863), s.v. *ḥawbā'*, meaning the "soul", or the "soul whose seat is in the heart".
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99 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

5.4.5 *Legs*

There are numerous examples of other body parts which feature across the lines of each poem, each vulnerable to injury. Verse 65, of "The Amorium Poem", compares the "limbs" of humiliated female captives to "reeds".[100] As echo, an image of male captives brought low occurs, in verse 62, for war has buckled men at the "knees":

The Amorium Poem

62 وَالْحَربُ قَائِمَةٌ فِي مأْزِقٍ لَجِبٍ تَجْثُو الرِّجَالُ بِهِ صُغْرًا عَلى الرُّكَبِ

62 War stood firm in a tight predicament
Where standing armies, in ignominy,
Sank to their knees.
Translation by Stetkevych[101]

The "limbs" belong to horses, in *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, verses 16 and 22,[102] as a measure of the "breadth and reach" of the Arab army, the quality of horses, and their ability to transport, this making them like "ships":

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

16 فَكَأَنَّ أَرْجُلَها بِتُرْبَةِ مَنْبِجٍ يَطْرَحْنَ أَيْديَها بِحِصْنِ الرَّانِ

16 and it is as though their feet were on the soil of Manbij, whilst they cast
their arms into the fortress of al-Rān,
Translation by Arberry[103]

In more current terminology, the poet has described the productive capacity of "horse-power" and so the body parts of cavalry accrue more value when the enemy's body has been desecrated.

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100 Section 5.1.1 cites verse 65, of "The Amorium Poem".

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102 Section 5.2 cites verse 22, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

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5.4.6 *Facial Features*

The last category, of this section on "body parts", concerns the treatment of "facial features", and how the expressions of the conqueror and the vanquished sometimes reveal a state of honour, or disgrace. With regard to "The Amorium Poem", verse 16 initially focuses upon the beautiful, proud and "uncovered face", *wa-barzatu-l-wajhi*, of Amorium, adopting the conventional lover's tone of the *nasīb*, when referring to his beloved:

The Amorium Poem

16 وبَـرْزَةُ الوَجْـهِ قَـدْ أَعْيَـتْ رِيَاضَتُهَـا كِسْرى وصَدَّتْ صُدُودًا عَنْ أَبِي كَرِبِ

33 ولا الْخُدُودُ وَقَدْ أُدْمِينَ مِنْ خَجَلٍ أَشْهَـى إلـى نَاظِـرٍ مِـنْ خَدِّهَـا التَّـرِبِ

34 سَمَاجَـةً غَنِيَـتْ مِنَّـا العُيـونُ بِهـا عَـنْ كُـلِّ حُسْـنٍ بَـدَا أَوْ مَنْظَـرٍ عَجَـبِ

63 كَمْ نِيلَ تَحْتَ سَنَاهَا مِن سَنَا قَمَرٍ وتَحْـتَ عارِضِهَـا مِـنْ عَـارِضٍ شَنِـبِ

16 Refractory, Chosroes failed to tame her,
And the advances of Abū Karib
She blocked.

33 Nor did any cheek blushing with bashfulness
Stir the gazer's passion more than
Her dirt-streaked cheek,

34 Its ugliness curing our eyes of any need
For a vision of beauty or
Wondrous spectacle,

63 How many a beaming moon they took beneath war's lightning beam!
How many a white-toothed maid
Beneath war's cloud!

Translation by Stetkevych[104]

However, it soon becomes clear, in verses 33 and 34, that this is a deceptive *nasīb* for the Caliph spurns and humiliates the city, causing her "cheeks to blush" with shame while his army delights in her degradation. A flushed countenance, i.e. hot blood rushing to the face, is comparable with the stain of disgrace upon

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a garment.[105] Verse 63, instead, focuses upon "dazzling teeth" belonging to the humiliated women of Amorium. The poem's strategy is first to frame Amorium as a virginal city when confronted by *Kisrā* (Chosroes) and Abū Karib, then to reinvent her as Babylon the Great, the city as prostitute, or idol of false beliefs, whom the Caliph punishes for her immodesty.[106]

In verse 41, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", the disgraced "brow" of the anti-hero is defiled with "blood", an image that is antithetical to his composure upon a pedestal, in verse 9, of the same poem, for his face later reveals a state of disgrace as punishment for hubris.[107] Verse 28 contrasts the humiliation of al-Afshīn with the delighted gaze of condemnatory onlookers:

The al-Afshīn Poem

28 يَا مَشْهدًا صَدَرَتْ بفَرْحَتِهِ إلى أَمْصَارِهَا القُصْوَى بَنُو الأَمْصَارِ

28 O sacred spectacle! whose joy
The people of the metropoles have spread
To the farthest metropoles!
Translation by Stetkevych[108]

In verse 33,[109] such "gloating" is deemed shameful, but justified because vengeance has removed the stain of "disgrace" from the community.

Al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī uses facial features to praise the hero's perspicacity. In verse 6, Sayf al-Dawla's flickering "eyelids" are like a scabbard which "sheathes and unsheathes" a sword.[110] This suggests that Sayf al-Dawla's weapon is as insightful as his eye, personification of the sword connected to the introductory verses which stress the importance of Sayf al-Dawla's "clear-sightedness" during war. The "eye" motif recurs, in verse 14, when "ears" become proxies for sight, and the "numerous eyes" of Sayf al-Dawla's army are clouded by dust. In verse 49, Sayf al-Dawla dazzles so brilliantly that he confounds the poet's "eyes" and "tongue":

105 This interpretation is contrary to the translator, Stetkevych (1991), who has interpreted the "blush" to be symptomatic of the modesty usually exhibited by the beloved of the *nasīb*.

106 See Badawi (1978:51–52).

107 Section 5.4.1 cites verse 41, of "The al-Afshīn Poem". Section 5.7 cites verse 9.

108 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

109 Section 5.6 cites verse 33, of "The al-Afshīn Poem".

110 See Section 5.1.

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

14 في جَحْفَلٍ سَتَرَ العُيُونَ غُبَارُهُ فَكَأَنَّمَـا يُبْصِـرْنَ بِـالآذَانِ
49 فَإِذَا رَأَيْتُكَ حَارَ دُونَكَ نَاظِرِي وَإِذَا مَدَحْتُكَ حَارَ فِيكَ لِسَانِي

14 in a mighty army whose dust veiled the eyes, so that it was as though
they saw with their ears.
49 so that when I behold you, my eyes are too dazzled to gaze on you, and
when I praise you, my tongue is bewildered concerning you.

Translation by Arberry[111]

5.5 Blood, Wounds, or Injury

"Blood", or "wound" motifs are more obvious features of poems about blood revenge. Most usually, blood is described as flowing freely, but it can also appear as a daub, or a stain. In "The Amorium Poem", verses 23 and 24, "hot blood" flows copiously and daubs the "forelocks" and "hair" of knights:

The Amorium Poem

23 كَمْ بَيْنَ حِيطَانِهَا مِنْ فَارِسٍ بَطَلٍ قَانِي الذَّوَائِبِ مِنْ آنِي دَمٍ سَرِبِ
24 بِسُنَّةِ السَّيْفِ وَالخَطِّيِّ مِنْ دَمِهِ لا سُنَّةِ الدِّينِ وَالإِسْلامِ مُخْتَضِبِ

23 How many a heroic horseman lay between her walls,
His forelocks reddened by
Hot flowing blood!
24 His hair hennaed by the way of the sword
– blood his henna – not by the way of Religion
And Islam.

Translation by Stetkevych[112]

111 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

112 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Moreover, both verses 38 and 45 convey that blood provides nourishment to "spears" and to the "life" of the land, while verse 60 alludes to blood's "sweet musk".[113]

"The al-Afshīn Poem" expresses the "blood" motif variously, by way of its colour, its shameful stain, its historical precedent, and also by way of an injury for which retaliation is the only cure. For example: (1) in verses 11, 21 and 41, al-Afshīn "bleeds" in response to vengeance; and (2) by allusion to animal sacrifice, in verse 44, he resembles Qudār, the slaughterer of Ṣāliḥ's camel.[114] Blood once poured from the neck of the "she-camel" at the behest of "Qudar's sword", thereby aligning al-Afshīn's treachery with a Qur'anic precedent.[115]

In *al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī*, "blood" is where the soul resides, and is the source of distinction, vigour and life. In verse 2, intelligence and courage are qualities which reside in a "noble soul", or "spirit" (*nafs*) that is a synonym for "blood":

al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī

2 فَإِذَا هُمَا اجْتَمَعَا لِنَفْسٍ مِرَّةٍ بَلَغَتْ مِنَ الْعَلْيَاءِ كُلَّ مَكَانِ

2 so when they are combined in a haughty spirit, that spirit reaches every place of elevation.

Translation by Arberry[116]

In verse 5, competitive souls are rivals who fight one another for superiority of "blood line", whereas in verse 33, fighting to the death is reinvigorating because blood that is shed for a noble cause (e.g. jihad) will afford the victim new life, in the hereafter. Looking momentarily to the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Beowulf and his army also fight with a view to striking the soul of their enemy so as to deplete them of their power:

113 In "The Amorium Poem", Section 5.3 cites verse 38, Section 5.2 cites verse 45, and Section 5.4.4 cites verse 60.

114 In "The al-Afshīn Poem", Section 5.1.1 cites verse 11, Section 5.4.2 cites verse 21, Section 5.4.1 cites verse 41, and Section 5.2 cites verse 44.

115 See Section 2.4.4.

116 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

Beowulf

> Stalwart in action, they kept striking out
> on every side, seeking to cut
> straight to the soul.
>
> Verses 797–799 of Heaney (1999)[117]

Moving swiftly back to *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, verse 39, blood serves as a direct marker of vengeance such that retaliation not only requires bloodshed from the heart of its victim but also engages the very "soul/heart's blood of a noble avenger". Finally, verse 20 refers to the colour and the value of blood, by its relation to water. When the river runs clear, it is like "silver", but when the river is filled with the blood of slaughter, it is as red as the more precious "gold".[118]

5.6 Laundering Honour and Garments

As previous sections demonstrate, "blood vengeance poetry" is dense with allusion, exhibiting more than one motif as well as layers of meaning within a memorably potent verse. In such poems, honour may also be depicted as a white, or unblemished garment, whereas dishonour is portrayed as a stained cloth. Therefore, laundering honour involves the symbolic cleansing of a garment belonging to either an individual or a community. This process requires the blood of the enemy as a cleaning agent, as well as the besmirching of the enemy's garment, in kind. The "stained garment" motif is not very distinctive, in *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, although verse 17 reveals bloodied "turbans" unravelling, which belong to the decapitated heads of the enemy and litter the Arsanās river.[119] The image is an inversion of the washing ritual because water usually cleans a stain, whereas here the river is engorged with blood, transforming it from water vein to artery. A more tenuous link to the "stained garment" motif occurs, in verse 42, when "black (hair)" covers verdant "trees", although this colour change is more like the perching of "ravens" upon the branches, rather than any process of staining:

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117 Extract used with permission of Faber and Faber Limited, from *Beowulf*, Seamus Heaney, 1999; publisher's permission granted according to the terms of Fair Use.

118 In *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, Section 5.4.3 cites verse 5, Section 5.2 cites verse 20, Section 5.4.4 cites verse 33 and verse 39.

119 Section 5.4.1 cites verse 17, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī

42 قَدْ سَوَّدَتْ شَجَرَ الْجِبالِ شُعُورُهُمْ فَكَأَنَّ فِيهِ مُسِفَّةَ الْغِرْبانِ

42 Their hair had blackened the trees of the mountains, so that it was as
though ravens were skimming amongst them,
Translation by Arberry[120]

Perhaps this image can be more easily aligned with the action of shrouding with a mourning garment, in which case it is comparable with verse 20, of "The Amorium Poem", that this section later cites. This is not to suggest that *al-Ra'yu qabla shajā'ati-l-shuj'ānī* is a weak example of a "blood vengeance poem", but rather that al-Mutanabbī has made fuller use of some other motifs, favouring "weaponry" in particular.

The "garment" motif is very present, in "The Amorium Poem", verse 12, and in the interplay between verses 27 and 30. In verse 12, nature celebrates al-Mu'taṣim's conquest of Amorium, by appearing like a woman who wears "new attire" because requital cleans the earth of shame.[121] In verse 27, the night sky illuminated by a purging and purifying fire is like dark "robes" whose colour drains to brightness. Verse 30 clarifies that the sky watching over Amorium provides a window onto honour rituals, and suggests that what at first appears to be dimmed by "clouds", fate subsequently "reveals", via a purifying storm which is analogous to a "battle-day":

The Amorium Poem

12 فَتْحٌ تفَتَّحُ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ لَهُ وتَبْرُزُ الْأَرْضُ فِي أَثْوَابِهَا القُشُبِ
27 حَتَّى كَأَنَّ جَلَابِيبَ الدُّجَى رَغِبَتْ عَنْ لَوْنِهَا وكَأَنَّ الشَّمْسَ لَمْ تَغِبِ
30 تَصَرَّحَ الدَّهْرُ تَصْرِيحَ الْغَمَامِ لَهَا عَنْ يَوْمِ هَيْجَاءَ مِنْهَا طَاهِرٍ جُنُبِ

12 A conquest for which the sky's gates opened
And the earth appeared decked out
In new attire.

120 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

121 The poem, "In Praise of an Abbasid Caliph" (or *Raqqat ḥawāshī-l-dahru fa-h-ya tamar-marū*), by Abū Tammām, also portrays nature as a Caliphal bride.

27 Until it seemed as if the robes of night
Refused their colour, as if the sun
Had never set.
30 As rainclouds clear to reveal a limpid sky,
Fate revealed to her a battle-day
Pure and polluted.
Translation by Stetkevych[122]

The veil is another garment which this poem invests with a measure of honour. While the veil does not bear a stain, its presence (or absence) and the literary device of *ṭibāq* indicate pride and the abasement of Amorium. In verse 16,[123] Amorium appears as a disdainful "unveiled woman", *wa-barzatu-l-wajhi*; in verse 20, she is humiliated, her hair curtaining her face in "black grief":[124]

The Amorium Poem

20 أَتَتْهُمُ الكُرْبَةُ السَّوْدَاءُ سَادِرَةً مِنْهَا وكانَ اسْمُهَا فَرَّاجَةَ الكُرَبِ

20 She brought them black grief, rending its robes,
She whose name had once been
"Dispeller of Griefs."
Translation by Stetkevych[125]

Incidentally, Bray (2000:50) has offered an interesting insight, from al-ʿĀmidī, into an alternative interpretation of the "black sorrow", possibly indicating the appearance of the black standards of the Abbasid Caliphate.[126]

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122 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

123 Section 5.4.6 cites verse 16, of "The Amorium Poem".

124 Arberry has interpreted *sadira* to mean "being bewildered", but Stetkevych has explained that the female city has rent grief's robes. In Lane (1863), s.v. *sadara*, the verb, as well as conveying the "rending of a garment" may also refer to someone "letting down their hair to fall like a curtain". This image is consistent with the female described in the verse.

125 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

126 Al-Ḥasan b. Bishr al-Āmidī (d. 370/980) was the author of *al-Muwāzana bayna shiʿr Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī*.

The "garment" motif also features strongly, in "The al-Afshīn Poem", in a series of verses, most of which have been cited earlier. Verse 33 demonstrates that when blood revenge takes the form of burning, this is also a means of "shedding the robe of shame" from the Abbasid community:

The al-Afshīn Poem

33 كانَتْ شَماتَةُ شامِتٍ عارًا فَقَدْ صَارَتْ بِهِ تَنْضُو ثِيَابَ العَارِ

33 Gloating, before this, had been a sin,
But now it shed its robe of shame
For him.

Translation by Stetkevych[127]

Other examples include:[128] (1) in verse 21, the colour of "saffron" stains al-Afshīn's "waist-wrapper"; (2) in verse 41, al-Afshīn is shrouded in defilement and "mourning"; and (3) in verse 48, al-Afshīn and his collaborators are either "clothed" in tarnished armour or are stripped naked and wear only their sunburnt skins. In each case, the "garment" motif is a literary device indicating a state of disgrace. It is noteworthy, in verse 6, that the honour and shame dynamic is conveyed through use of a torn garment, albeit without specific use of the bloodstain. In this case, God's favours to al-Afshīn are personified as a once "beautiful woman" who is diminished by "rags".[129]

5.7 Settling a Debt

"Blood vengeance poetry" also refers to the settling of a debt through the reclamation of property. As Hill (1995:83) has stated (albeit with respect to an escalation in fighting), this is because "war as law is a settlement, a drawing of boundaries, a taking of land". In Section 5.4, concerning the fetishisation of blood and body parts, blood revenge is comparable with the value that accrues to a financial institution from monetary deposits. By extending this analogy, land possession is akin to seizing the assets of an individual who has defaul-

127 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

128 See Sections 5.4.2, 5.4.1 and 5.4.3, for verses 21, 41 and 48, of "The al-Afshīn Poem".

129 See Section 5.1.3, for verse 6, of "The al-Afshīn Poem".

ted upon a mortgage payment as complement to blood vengeance, which in its turn settles an honour debt. In "The Amorium Poem", the Byzantines owe the Arabs a debt, for dishonouring the hospitality contract, this succinctly expressed, in verse 43.[130] As the poem progresses, the Caliph settles this debt through blood revenge and the possession of the city and its women. Rape is primarily a "weapon of war" that degrades, but it also signifies the forcible possession of another man's property, when women are treated as the chattels of men. Verse 31 conveys that the Muslim army enters the abodes of Byzantine men, slaughtering them during a campaign which lasts throughout the entire day:

The Amorium Poem

31 لَم تَطْلُعِ الشَّمْسُ فيهِ يَوْمَ ذَاكَ عَلَى بانٍ بِأَهْلٍ وَلَمْ تَغْرُبْ عَلَى عَزَبِ

31 The sun did not rise on a married man that day,
Nor did it set upon
A celibate.

Translation by Stetkevych[131]

In terms of the ruination of the city, the *aṭlāl* scene is strategic, occurring halfway through the poem. In verse 32,[132] Amorium becomes the ruined abode of Jahili times. What is unusual about this treatment is that perception of its ruination grieves only the Byzantines, simultaneously delighting the Muslim army. In this way, the poem introduces antithesis (*ṭibāq*) into the scene, comparing the beauty of the abode with the ugliness of its ruination, also using parallelism (*tajnīs*) with respect to the word for "beauty/a good thing", *ḥusn*, across verses 34 and 35:

The Amorium Poem

34 سَمَاجَةً غَنِيَتْ مِنَّا العُيونُ بِها عَنْ كُلِّ حُسْنٍ بَدَا أَوْ مَنْظَرٍ عَجَبِ
35 وَحُسْنُ مُنْقَلَبٍ تَبْدُو عَوَاقِبُهُ جَاءَتْ بَشَاشَتُهُ مِنْ سُوءِ مُنْقَلَبِ

130 See Section 5.2, for verse 43, of "The Amorium Poem".
131 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.
132 Section 5.1.2 cites verse 32, of "The Amorium Poem".

34 Its ugliness curing our eyes of any need
For a vision of beauty or
Wondrous spectacle,
35 The reversal of our fortunes brought forth
From their unfortunate reversal
Auspicious issue.

Translation by Stetkevych[133]

By inverting the traditional *aṭlāl*, the poem reveals a literary conceit; here the Caliph is not the subject of separation, but rather has wrested Amorium from her old Byzantine lover who thereafter is separated from her. Stetkevych (2002:152, 169) has described this section of the poem as belonging to an unconventional *nasīb* enclosed by a *madīḥ*-dominated structure.[134] She has also indicated that the "ruined abode" sign has been used earlier, in verse 21, to describe the fate that befalls Anqira (Stetkevych 2002:166):[135]

The Amorium Poem

21 جَرَى لَهَا الفأْلُ بَرْحًا يَوْمَ أَنْقِرَةٍ إِذْ غُودِرَتْ وَحْسَةَ السَّاحَاتِ وَالرَّحَبِ

21 Sinister was her omen when Anqira fell
Abandoned, her squares and her courtyards
Laid waste.

Translation by Stetkevych[136]

The Caliph (and his army) take possession of the property so as to settle an honour debt. However, the poem also alludes to the *aṭlāl* scene, in verses 14 and 49, this time explicitly stating that the Caliph bears responsibility for destroying Amorium's campsites because she is Jahili in her practices, and not Muslim:[137]

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134 *Madīḥ* means the "panegyric", or the "praise" section of a poem, the *nasīb* usually describes a "nostalgic prelude", for which the *aṭlāl* represents the "abandoned campsite of the beloved"(Stetkevych 1993:3–4).

135 Anqira is ancient Ancyra/Angora, or modern day Ankara (Arberry 1965:54).

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137 This statement supports Stetkevych's (2002:172) interpretation of the "campsite" as the "ruined abode".

The Amorium Poem

14 أَبْقَيْتَ جَدَّ بَنِي الإِسْلامِ فِي صَعَدٍ وَالمُشْرِكِينَ وَدارَ الشِّرْكِ فِي صَبَبِ
49 حَتَّى تَرَكْتَ عَمُودَ الشِّرْكِ مُنْقَعِرًا وَلَمْ تُعَرِّجْ عَلَى الأَوْتَادِ وَالطُّنُبِ

14 You left the fortune of the Banū al-Islam ascendent
And in decline the fortune of idolaters
And their abode.
49 Till, undistracted by tent-pegs and ropes,
You left Polytheism's tent-pole fallen
In the dust.[138]

Translation by Stetkevych[139]

For al-Muʿtaṣim, verse 52 explains that reclamation of this debt is an honour obligation, and not motivated by financial considerations. In verse 51, the Byzantine commander tries to pay off his debt with money, but is spurned because the Caliph deems the blood-wit inadequate compensation for an insult to honour. Through his claim to divine agency, this becomes a holy war, from which al-Muʿtaṣim cannot be swayed by greed, nor profit:

The Amorium Poem

51 غَدَا يُصَرِّفُ بِالأَمْوَالِ جِرْيَتَهَا فَعَزَّهُ البَحْرُ ذُو التَّيَّارِ وَالعُبُبِ
52 هَيْهَاتَ! زُعْزِعَتِ الأَرْضُ الوَقُورُ بِهِ عَنْ غَزْوِ مُحْتَسِبٍ لا غَزْوِ مُكْتَسِبِ

51 He tried with money to divert war's course,
But the sea, its currents and billowing waves,
Overwhelmed him.[140]

138 In al-Tibrīzī (1951–1964), this verse is:

حَتَّى تَرَكْتَ عَمُودَ الشِّرْكِ مُنْعَفِرًا وَلَمْ تُعَرِّجْ علَى الأَوْتَادِ وَالطُّنُبِ

Thus, Stetkevych's translation of this verse conveys that the tent-poles of idolatry are left "defiled by dust", whereas al-Juwaydī's version (in Abū Tammām 2011) suggests that tent-poles have been "uprooted", which is the meaning of *munqaʿir*.

139 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

140 Al-Juwaydī, in (Abū Tammām 2011), has explained that this tax is the *jizya*. This was more usually the tax of free non-Muslims under Muslim rule, but, within the context of war

52 Far from it! The steady earth shook beneath his feet,
From the attack of a reckoner, not a seeker
Of gain,

Translation by Stetkevych[141]

Therefore, this is an example of a poem where a blood vengeance obligation conflates with a jihadist obligation.

In "The al-Afshīn Poem", by comparison, al-Afshīn owes the Caliph a debt for dishonouring his expansive generosity, this expressed succinctly, in verses 34 and 35.[142] Al-Afshīn has erected for himself a property (verse 9), from which the Caliph evicts him (and his relatives), by pulling him down from its "pillars". Instead, al-Muʿtaṣim ties him to a new post (verse 29) that is the "palm-trunk":

The al-Afshīn Poem

9 مَكْـرًا بَنَـى رُكْنَيْـهِ إِلا أَنَّـهُ وَطَدَ الأَساسَ عَلَى شفِيرٍ هَارِ

29 رَمَقُوا أَعَالِي جِذْعِهِ فكأنَّما وجَدُوا الهِلالَ عَشِيَّةَ الإِفْطارِ

9 Two pillars he erected out of deception,
But founded them
On shifting sands.

29 They gazed at the palm-trunk's top,
As though they spied the crescent moon
That breaks the fast.[143]

Translation by Stetkevych[144]

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and between two warring factions, it was some form of reparation payment. In al-Tibrīzī, *al-ʿububī* has been rendered *al-ḥadabī*, which indicates "large and rolling waves of water".

141 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

142 See Section 5.4.4, for verse 34, of "The al-Afshīn Poem", Section 5.2, for verse 35.

143 See Wehr (1979), s.v. *jidhʿ*, meaning "stem, trunk, stump, tree-stump and torso". This interpretation of the word may find an echo in a *nashīd* attributed to al-Qaʿida, in Section 7.4.3. According to al-Juwaydī's notes to the verse, in his version of the *Dīwān* (Abū Tammām 2011:438), it means *al-ṣalību-l-ladhī ṣuliba ʿalay-hi*, i.e "the cross that he is crucified upon". Implied, in al-Juwaydī's interpretation, is a scene that affirms Islamic, and not Christian belief. Gruendler has translated this verse as: "They stared at the top of his gibbet, as if they were looking for the crescent moon on the eve of breaking the fast" (al-Ṣūlī 2015:109); used with permission of New York University Press, from *The life and times of Abū Tammām*, Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, 2015; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

144 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics*

In verse 4, the Caliph dispatches Khaydhar (al-Afshīn) to the "abode of perdition", after having placed al-Afshīn "close by his heart", in verse 34:[145]

The al-Afshīn Poem

4 جَالَتْ بِخَيْذَرَ جَوْلَةَ المِقْدَارِ فأَحَلَّهُ الطُّغْيَانُ دَارَ بَوَارِ

4 It led Khaydhar round fate's full circuit,
Then sedition set him down
In ruin's abode.[146]
Translation by Stetkevych[147]

These two verses exhibit parallelism, through the indication of property as a place of lodging. Moreover, because the lodge is ruined, in verse 4, and protective, in verse 34, this is also an example of the use of *ṭibāq*, when describing the antithetical concepts of "reward" and "punishment"; al-Afshīn has been evicted from the heart's comfort and dispatched to his end. Parallelism, in the linguistic choice of word for "abode" (*dār*), extends to verses 53 and 61, where the Caliph possesses not only the title deed to the Caliphate (that he has inherited from Hārūn al-Rashīd), but (as an indirect descendant of the Prophet) his claim also extends to the entire earthly domain:

The al-Afshīn Poem

53 فاشْـدُدْ بَهـارُونَ الْخِلافَـةَ إِنَّـهُ سَكَنٌ لِوَحْشَتِها ودَارُ قَـرَارِ
61 فالأَرْضُ دَارٌ أَقْفَرَتْ مَا لم يَكُنْ مِنْ هاشِم رَبٌّ لِتِلْكَ الدَّارِ

53 With Hārūn bind fast the Caliphate!
When it is desolate he will be its habitation,
Its permanent abode,

of the ʿAbbāsid age, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

145 See Section 5.4.4, for verse 34, of "The al-Afshīn Poem".

146 Khaydhar b. Kāwūs, aka al-Afshīn. This image plays upon the Jahili image of the hero, or in this case anti-hero, alighting upon the ruined abode.

147 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

61 For the earth is a house that is desolate
As long as its lord is not of the House
Of Hāshim.

Translation by Stetkevych[148]

The abode/*dār* is a particularly resonant word choice, in "The al-Afshīn Poem", because it is a *rāʾiyya*, for which each verse strikes the same end-note, *-ārī*. In the penultimate verse (verse 61), *dār* occurs in each hemistich as an example of *tajnīs*. Parallelism of *dār* also occurs midway through the poem, in verse 30, where *Dārī* describes the "port" that exports perfume.

In the *Sayfiyya*, that is *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, claiming property from the Byzantines as a debt payment features in the river boat scene, in verses 21 to 25.[149] Verse 23 expressly states that the Arab army fills its ships with plunder and that this includes Byzantine women. As in "The Amorium Poem", women are exchanged among the property of men as settlement. Meanwhile, verses 24 and 25 imply that the river is a conduit which submits to the will of Sayf al-Dawla. While it affords passage to two armies, on opposing sides of a hostile border, it chooses to side with Sayf al-Dawla and so to become part of his dominion. Verse 46 consolidates Sayf al-Dawla's role as conqueror, by referring to the desert encampment and by confirming that his conquest of enemy lands enables him to sustain the hearth of home.[150] His action, by example, is antidote to the portrait of idle youth whiling away their time in an urban house, in verse 9:

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

9 تَخِذُوا المَجَالِسَ فى البُيُوتِ وَعِنْدَهُ أَنَّ السُّرُوجَ مَجَالِسُ الفِتْيَانِ
10 وَتَوَهمُّوا اللَّعِبَ الْوَغَى وَالطَّعْنُ فى الْهَيْجَاءِ غيرُ الطَّعْنِ في المَيْـدَانِ
11 قَـادَ الجِيَـادَ إلَـى الطِّعَـانِ وَلَـمْ يَقُـدْ إلاَّ إِلَى الْعَـادَاتِ وَالأَوْطَـانِ

9 They took their places of sitting in the houses, whilst it was his view that saddles are the proper seats for noble lads;

148 Used with permission of Suzanne Stetkevych and Brill, from *Abū Tammām and the poetics of the ʿAbbāsid age*, Suzanne P. Stetkevych, 1991; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

149 See Section 5.2, for verses 21 to 25, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

150 See Section 5.1.1, for verse 46, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

10 they imagined that war was a game, whereas thrusting in the battlefield is different from thrusting in the arena.
11 He led the steeds into the jousting, and did not lead them save to his habits and familiar haunts,

Translation by Arberry[151]

In verse 11, it is Sayf al-Dawla's honouring of the habits of his forebears, and his rejection of leisurely urban pastimes such as "thrusting in the battlefield" (verse 10), that enables him to protect the tribal abode and fulfil the requirement of the prototypical Arab hero. Sayf al-Dawla defends his claim to property which succumbs to his spell, in pursuit of vengeance against his enemy's territorial claims. The reason for his success is not only because of his stature as a respected leader but also because he conforms to the tribal model set up by his forebears. In verse 47, this is made clear through repetition of the word for "lineage", *ansāb*,[152] which can be traced to the ancestral abode and from which emanates Sayf al-Dawla's glory:

al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī

47 أَنْسَابُ فَخْرِهِمِ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْسَابُ أَصْلِهِمِ إِلَى عَدْنَانِ

47 the genealogies of their glory mount to you, and only the genealogies of their origin to ʿAdnān.

Translation by Arberry[153]

In *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, Sayf al-Dawla makes two claims; on the enemy, by capturing territory; and on his ancestors, by claiming their legacy as his inheritance. In this, he follows the heroic model; the heroic world is ethical, rather than temporal, which not only enables the past to merge with a given present but allows ancient feuds to persist because they belong to a wider cosmic plan (Hill 1995:18–19).

151 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.
152 See Section 1.4.2, on "Honour", and the subcategory of *nasab* (pl. *ansāb*) that is "ancestral honour".
153 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

5.8 From Avenger to Hero

Heroism is a complex construct to unpack, and one that this book does not fully explore, beyond explaining it as a subjective category corresponding to an individual's ability to conform to an honour code and socially prescribed rules of engagement, in warfare. Encoded in the motif of the "Jahili avenger" and his successor, the "jihadist", is his heroic action, which means that his recourse to violence can be justified by some as honourable. Be that as it may, the political sympathies of an audience also determine heroic behaviour in any given period, meaning that any connexion between honourable conduct and violence is difficult to justify as a means to an end. No doubt, the discerning reader will have noticed that poetry (and epic folk literature) differentiates between "heroic action" and "anti-heroic violence", even though their agents behave in comparable ways and are frequently well-matched in battle. Although heroes are usually expected to demonstrate restraint and mercy when so required, there is not always a clearly defined boundary that separates excessive aggression from proportionate defence, a conundrum that is particularly clear in "The Amorium Poem". By referring to another folkloric tradition, specifically the Turkish national epic of *Dede Korkut* about the Oghuz Turks of Central Asia and Anatolia, Meeker (1992:403) has explained that violence that is purely self-serving appears as "anti-heroic", or "bestial" violence that instead should be redirected to a socially good purpose. In the tale of "Basat and the one-eyed monster Tepegoz", the former is self-sacrificing, whereas the latter is purely selfish (Meeker 1992:406). Returning to Arabia, this may help to explain how Bedouin "manly virtues" (*muruwwa*) and excessive "tribal chauvinism" (*al-ʿaṣabiyya*) can belong to the same body politic, while also exhibiting chirality, in describing the actions of heroes and outlaws. When it is possible to clearly distinguish a hero from his nemesis, then the boundaries between community defence and sociopathic violence are less blurred. But in the case of a designated hero/anti-hero, like al-Afshīn (The al-Afshīn Poem), the hypocrisy of the Abbasid command structure is clear. His brutal treatment is an example of preemptive state vengeance designed to instil fear and silence in prospective dissenters, a practice that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the Second Rightly Guided Caliph, once cautioned against, in a passage of verse that explains why he did not prevent his own murder.[154]

154 See Section 3.3.

CHAPTER 6

Alternatives, Decline and the Ascent into Modernity

6.1 A View from a Bridge

As a bridge, the following sections will provide some examples of poetry from the intervening centuries, between the fourth/tenth centuries until more recent history. Arguably, it is reductive to confine a millennium of verse containing the blood vengeance message (as well as alternative forms of protest poetry) to one chapter alone, but this is because the period contains poetry that is largely emulative of the tradition, established in earlier chapters as a feature of *ḥamāsa* poetry and some panegyrics to a military leader. This study's position is that strict chronological evolution of the blood vengeance theme is not as useful as magnifying the evolution between Jahili, Kharijite, Abbasid poetry and contemporary militant jihadist verse, especially since the latter is retrospective. Some innovation in verse containing the blood vengeance message belongs to the Abbasid period, meaning that Abbasid poetry transforms "blood vengeance poetry" into the stuff of state propaganda. According to Huda Fakhreddine (2015:13), Abbasid poetry is revolutionary, compared with successive experiments in verse that are retrospective of content, the true marker of innovation being whether or not "metapoesis" has taken place, this meaning "a poet's response to poetic heritage". Abbasid poets, such as Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī, transformed the thematic content of poetry, inheriting the *qaṣīda* form and metrics from the Jahiliyya, instead using its tripartite structure to engage with greater figurative complexity as well as psychological passage and metaphysical issues (Fakhreddine 2015:55, 58, 103). It is not the intention of this analysis to dismiss the creative merit of poetry which is not Abbasid, but this is a study about revenge poetry, a genre which is consistent in content. So as to avoid undue repetition of messaging, this chapter addresses surprising incarnations of the blood vengeance poem, in terms of its reach and spread, this demonstrating that present-day conflicts, some of these in the very same locations, echo earlier problems that have been simmering in the background for centuries. Some of these poems are long, and while it is possible to convey their provocative nature by way of extracts, this would not do sufficient justice to the importance of repetition, a driving factor for conveyance of the blood vengeance message. In this chapter, the focus falls upon Andalusian

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Spain (a region far removed from the tribal conflict model of the Arabian peninsula), eighteenth-century Iraq, nineteenth-century Nigeria, early twentieth-century Egypt, and the post-1945 landscape that is the modern Middle East, each example conforming to an unifying underlying message. Poems gradually move the focus away from empire building and the malaise associated with tribal, sectarian and class conflict, while introducing a theme common to the following chapter that is resistance against colonisation. The Iraqi poem, *Saabkīka bi-l-bīdi-l-Yamāniyyati-l-latī*, is of particular interest because the events it alludes to occurred prior to the cultural renewal of the *Nahḍa* (of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), so reflecting a period of political neglect, when an ensuing power vacuum became ripe ground for conflict between local tribes, sects and competing foreign powers.

6.2 Andalusian Verse

The Muslim presence in Spain endured from the Conquest, in 92/711, until the last days of the Emirate of Granada, in 897/1492, the final expulsion of Spanish Muslims occurring more than a century later, in 1023/1614. Ethnically, some of the new conquerors were Berbers from North Africa, others, Arabs venturing from the eastern side of the Mediterranean. Aside from a religion shared in common, the cultural background of these two groups differed substantially, although successive generations of rulers created a new community and formed political alliances, via marriage, with Spanish nobility (Monroe 2004[1968]:3). A strategically located melting pot then, Muslim Iberia became a thriving cultural, economic and political sphere. At its inception, the Umayyad Caliphate, in Damascus, was too far away to exert real political influence and so the transformed state, al-Andalus, became largely self-governing under successive dynastic rule (Monroe 2004:3). The Emirate of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II (206/822–238/852) established an Abbasid cultural aesthetic within medieval Córdoba, the first capital city of Andalusia, amply assisted by the dandy Ziryāb (d. 243/857),[1] an accomplished musician, aesthete and favoured courtier, whose refined tastes were reputedly cultivated in the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd, in Baghdad (Buendía 2023:408–409). Given that Abbasid literature was the gold standard, panegyric poetry by the "moderns", or *muḥ-*

1 A nickname, possibly referring to a Persian bird, Ziryāb's given name was Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Nāfiʿ. Dwight Reynolds (2022:115–151) has provided an English translation of Ziryāb's biography from a variety of sources, including Ibn Ḥayyān (2003[d. 469/1076]:307–335), this detailing his talents and magnetic charisma.

dathūn, was fashionable: Abū Tammām was celebrated at the court of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II's son, Muḥammad I (238/852–273/886); al-Mutanabbī, a later influence coinciding with the establishment of the Caliphate of Córdoba (317/929–422/1031), under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (299/912–350/961), his successors, al-Ḥakam II and Hishām II, and then al-Manṣūr (Buendía 2023:409, 412–413).[2] The subsequent dynasties that followed included *Mulūk al-Ṭawāʾif* (399/1009–422/1031), the Almoravids (484/1091–540/1145), the Almohads (540/1145–627/1230), and finally, the Naṣrids (627/1230–897/1492).[3]

6.2.1 *The Pogrom of Granada*

In view of "The Amorium Poem" and "The al-Afshīn Poem", both showcased in the previous two chapters, the first illustration, composed in the fifth/eleventh century, evokes very similar themes. Startlingly, *Alā qul li-Ṣinhājatin ajmaʿīn* reveals that one of the first pogroms, in Europe, was instigated by a Muslim of Arab descent, in 459/1066, this prompted by a sectarian power struggle, in Granada (Monroe 2004:27–28). At this point in time, Iberian Umayyad rule had already come to an end. The poet, Abū Isḥāq of Elvira (d. 460/1067), bitterly resented the marginalisation of Arabs by the now ruling Zīrids, representative of the Ṣinhāja Berbers, who instead formed a political alliance with the Jewish Banī Naghrīla.[4] The Berbers found the Arabs difficult to govern, whereas the minority Jewish community was cooperative (Monroe 2004:27). The forty-seven line invective accuses the ruler of disloyalty to his own kinship group, fellow Muslims, before scapegoating the target (Monroe 2004:206–213):[5]

Alā qul li-Ṣinhājatin ajmaʿīn

1 أَلا قُـلْ لِصِنْهاجَـةٍ أَجْمَعِيـنْ بُـدورِ الزمـانِ وأُسْـدِ العَرِيـنْ
2 لَقَـــدْ زَلَّ سَيِّدُكُـــمْ زَلَّـــةً تقَـرُّ بهـا أَعْيُـنُ الشامِتِيـنْ

2 Al-Manṣūr, or Almanzor, is another iconic figure, his ascent to power, a vivid story of ambition, serialised in the Syrian drama *Rabīʿ Qurṭuba* ("The Spring of Córdoba"), in 2003. When Hishām II inherited the Caliphate, he was still a minor and so his mother, Ṣubḥ, the chamberlain, al-Manṣūr, and the prime-minister, Jaʿfar al-Muṣḥafī, governed as regents in his name. An ethnic Arab, and a strong proponent of jihad, al-Manṣūr became the effective ruler between 367/978 and 392/1002.

3 See Monroe (2004:1).

4 See Section 3.8. This condition of resentment against a group bears some comparison with Jawwās' complaints to an Umayyad Caliph about the Banī Qays, in *Ḥ*631, *Ḥ*632, and *Ḥ*633.

5 The metre of this *nūniyya*, ending in *nūn al-sākina*, is *al-mutaqārib*. The poem, with limited variations, can also be found in Nykl (1949:141–143).

3 تَخَيَّـــرَ كاتِبَـــهُ كافِـــرًا ولـو شـاءَ كـانَ مِـن المُؤْمِنيـنْ
4 فَعَـزَّ اليَهـودُ بـه وٱنْتَخَـوْا وتَاهُـوا، وكانـوا مِـن الأَرْذَلِيـن
5 ونالـوا مُناهـم وحـازوا المَـدَى فَحـانَ الحَلاكُ ومـا يَشْعَـرُونْ
6 فَكَـمْ مُسْلِـمٍ فاضِـلٍ قانِـتٍ لِأَرْذَلِ قِـرْدٍ مِـن المُشْرِكِيـنْ
7 ومـا كـانَ ذلـك مِـن سَعْيِهِـمْ ولكِـنَّ مِنَّـا يَقـومُ المُعِيـنْ
8 فَهَلَّا ٱقتـدى فيهـمُ بالْأولـى مِـن االقـادةِ الخِيـرَةِ المُتَّقِيـنْ
9 وأَنْزَلَهُـم حيـث يَسْتَأْهِلـون وردَّهـمُ أَسْفَـلَ السافِلِيـنْ
10 فطافـوا لَدَيْنـا بأَخْراجِهِـمْ عليهـم صِغـارٌ وذُلٌّ وَهُـونْ
11 وقَمُّـوا المَزابِـل عـن خرقـةٍ مُلَوَّنَـةٍ لِدثـارِ الدَّفيـنْ
12 ولـم يستخفُّـوا بأَعْلامِنـا ولم يستطيلوا على الصالِحينْ
13 ولا جالسوهـم وهـم هِجْنَـةٌ ولا راكبوهـم مـع الأَقْربيـنْ
14 أَبـاديس، أَنْـتَ ٱمْـرؤٌ حـاذِقٌ تُصيـبُ بِظَنِّـكَ نَفْـسَ اليَقيـنْ
15 فكَيْـفَ خَفِـيَ عنـك مـا يعْبَثونْ وفي الأَرضِ تُضْرَبُ مِنها القُرونْ
16 وكَيْـفَ تُحِـبُّ فِـراخَ الزِّنـا وقـد بَغَّضـوكَ إلـى العالَمِيـنْ
17 وكَيْـفَ يَتِـمُّ لَـكَ المُرْتَقَـى إذا كُنْـتَ تَبْنِـي وهُـمْ يُهْدِمـونْ
18 وكَيْـفَ ٱستَنَمْـتَ إلـى فاسِـقٍ وقارَنْتَـهُ وهـو بِئْـسَ القَريـنْ
19 وقـد أَنْـزَلَ اللّٰهُ فـي وَحْيِـهِ يُحَـذِّرُ عـن صُحْبَـةِ الفاسِقيـنْ
20 فلا تَتَّخِـذْ مِنهـم خادِمًـا وذَرْهُـم إلـى لَعْنَـةِ الَاعِنِيـنْ
21 فقد ضجَّتْ الأَرضُ مِن فِسْقِهِمْ وكـادَتْ تَميـدُ بِنـا أَجْمَعيـنْ
22 تَأَمَّـلْ بِعَيْنِـكَ أَقْطارَهـا تَجِدْهُـمْ كِلابًـا بهـا خاسِئيـنْ
23 وكَيْـفَ ٱنْفَـرَدتَّ بِتقْرِيبِهِـمْ وهُـمْ فـي البِلادِ مِـن المُبْعَدِيـنْ
24 علـى أَنَّـكَ المَلِـكُ المُرْتَضَـى سليـلُ المُلـوكِ مِـن الماجِديـنْ
25 وأَنَّ لَـكَ السَّبْـقَ بَيْـنَ الـوَرَى كما أَنْـتَ مِـن جِلَّـةِ السابِقيـنْ
26 وإِنِّـي حَلَلْـتُ بِغَرْنَاطَـةٍ فكُنْـتُ أَرَاهُـم بهـا عابِثيـنْ
27 وقـد قَسَموهـا وأَعْمالَهـا فَمَنْهـم بِكُـلِّ مَكـانٍ لَعيـنْ
28 وهـم يقبضـون جباياتَهـا وهم يخضمون وهم يقضمونْ
29 وهـم يلبسـون رَفيـعَ الكِسَـا وأَنْتُـم لِأَوضعِهـا لابِسـونْ

30 وهـم أُمَنَاكُـمْ علـى سِـرِّكُمْ، وكيـف يكـون أمينًـا خَـؤُونْ
31 ويَأْكُـلُ غَيْرُهـم دِرْهَمًـا فيُقْـصَ ويُدْنَـوْنَ إذ يَأْكُلُـونْ
32 وقـد ناهَضوكـم إلـى رَبِّكـم فمـا يُمْنَعـونَ ومـا يُنْكَـرونْ
33 وقـد لابَسوكـم بأَسْمارِهـم فمـا تسمعـون ولا تُبْصِـرونْ
34 وهـم يذبحـون بأَسْواقِنـا وأنتـم لإِطْرِيفِهـم آكِلـونْ
35 ورَخَّـمَ قِرْدُهُـمُ دارَهُ وأَجْـرَى إليهـا نَمِيـرَ العُيُـونْ
36 وصـارَتْ حوائجُنـا عنـدَهُ ونحـن علـى بابِـه قائِمُـونْ
37 ويَضْحَـكُ مِنَّـا ومِـن دِينِنـا فإنَّـا إلـى رَبِّنـا راجِعُـونْ
38 ولـو قُلْـتُ فـي مالِـه إنَّـه كَما لِكَ كُنْتُ مِن الصادِقِينْ
39 فبَـادِرْ إلـى ذَبْحِـهِ قُرْبَـةً وضحِّ بـه فَهْـوَ كبـشٌ سَمِينْ
40 ولا ترفـع الضَغْـطَ عـن رَهْطِـهِ فقـد كنـزوا كـلَّ عِلْـقٍ ثَمينْ
41 وفَـرِّقْ عُراهـم وخُـذْ مالَهـم فأَنْـتَ أَحَـقُّ بِمَـا يَجْمَعـونْ
42 ولا تَحْسَبَـنْ قَتْلَهـم غَـدْرَةً بَـل الغَـدْرُ فـي ترْكِهـم يَعْبُثُـونْ
43 فقـد نَكَثـوا عَهْدَنـا عنـدهم، فكَيـفَ تُلَامُ علـى الناكِثِيـنْ
44 وكَيْـفَ تَكـونُ لَهُـم ذِمَّـةٌ ونحـن خُمـولٌ وهـم ظَاهِـرونْ
45 ونحـن الأَذِلَّـةُ مِـن بينهـم كأَنَّـا أَسأْنـا وهـم محْسِنـونْ
46 فلا تَـرْضِ فينـا بأَفْعالِهـم فأَنْـتَ رَهيـنٌ بِمـا يَفْعلـونْ
47 وَرَاقِـبْ إِلَاهَـكَ فـي حِزْبِـهِ فَحِـزْبُ الإِلـهِ هُـمُ المُفْلِحـونْ

1 O say to all of the Ṣinhāja, the full moons of the time, and the lions of the thicket:
2 "Your lord has made a [fatal] slip whereby the enemy derive joy.
3 "He chose a nonbeliever to be his secretary, whereas had he so wished he could have chosen a Muslim.
4 "Thus the Jews have waxed arrogant because of [that secretary] and have behaved with insolence and pride, whereas before they were base.
5 "They obtained their desires going beyond the utmost limit, yet those living in misery have perished while [the Jews] have not noticed it.
6 "For how many a Muslim of noble origin has abased himself before a miserable monkey from among the nonbelievers!

7 "Nor was all this the result of their own efforts, but rather, their helper comes from us!
8 "Why did he not follow with regard to [the Jews] the example of those good and pious leaders of yore,
9 "And throw them down to the place they deserve, pushing them back to the [company of] the lowest of the low?
10 "Then would they go about among us with their poll taxes upon them; being demeaned, contemptible, and base,
11 "And they would rummage in the dung heaps for a coarse cloak variegated in colour with which to cover their dead,
12 "Nor would they hold our noble ones in light esteem, nor would they scorn our pious men.
13 "Nor would they sit with them, since they are baseborn; nor would they ride with those near [to the King]!"
14 O, Bādīs! You are an intelligent man whose thoughts attain the essence of certain truth,
15 Yet how have their evil deeds been concealed from you when their trumpets resound on this earth?
16 And how do you show partiality for these offshoots of adultery when they have made you appear loathsome in the eyes of all the worlds?
17 And how will you consolidate your ascent to power when they are tearing down what you have built?
18 How can you be generous in favouring a scoundrel and make him your boon companion when he is the worst of partners?
19 For God has revealed in His Revelation, warning us against the company of scoundrels!
20 Therefore do not choose any minister from among the [Jews], but rather hand them over to the curses of those who curse,
21 For the whole earth has cried out because of their evil and [soon] it will quake with all of us [and cause us to perish].
22 Contemplate with your own eyes [the earth's] different regions, and you will observe that [the Jews] are [treated] like dogs in them [all], being driven away with stones.
23 Why are you alone in favouring them when they are rejected throughout the land?
24 Over and above the fact that you are the King approved of [by God], offspring of glorious kings,
25 And that you have precedence among men, while you are a leader of great ones.

26 I myself arrived in Granada and saw that these [Jews] were meddling in its [affairs].
27 They had already divided up the city and its provinces [among themselves] and one of these cursed ones is in every place.
28 They collect its taxes, they eat in the enjoyment of a plentiful life, and they crunch with their teeth.
29 They don the high ranking robes while you [O Muslims] are dressed in their cast-off clothes.
30 They are entrusted with your secrets [of state], yet how can traitors be trusted?
31 Others eat a dirham's worth of food and consider that a lot, yet they consider it insufficient when they eat.
32 They have struggled to supplant you in the favour of your lord, yet you do not forbid or disapprove [of this act].
33 They have obscured you by reason of [the noise] of their evening congregations, yet you neither listen nor see.
34 They slaughter [their animals] in our marketplaces, while you eat their non-kosher leftovers.
35 Their monkey has covered his house with marble ornaments and caused the purest spring water to flow to it.
36 Yet when we had need of him, we cooled our heels at his door,
37 And he mocks us as well as our religion. Verily it is to God that we will return!
38 Were I to say, regarding his wealth [O Bādīs], that it is like your wealth, I would say the truth.
39 So hasten to slaughter him as a good work whereby you will earn God's favour, and offer him up in sacrifice, for he is a [well] fattened ram,
40 And do not pardon his people for they have hoarded up all sorts of valuable treasures.
41 Distribute their property and seize their wealth, for you have a greater right to what they have collected.
42 Do not consider the slaying of them to be a breach of faith; nay, the real breach of faith would consist in leaving them to cause harm,
43 For they have already broken their pact with us; so how could you be blamed among pactbreakers?
44 How can they enjoy [the security of] the *dhimma* when we are abased and they are notorious?
45 We are downtrodden in comparison with them, as though we were the wrongdoers and they, the righteous.

46 Therefore do not permit what they are doing to us, for you are answerable for their deeds.
47 And fear your God insofar as his chosen people are concerned, for the elect of God are the ones who will enjoy eternal bliss!

Translation by James Monroe (2004:206–213)[6]

This is a deeply unpleasant poem, but it is important to reproduce it in its entirety so as to understand the power of hateful invective and also to address why the persecution of Jews throughout history cannot be underestimated, reinforcing the need to find a safe space. Verse, like this, serves to reinforce the hypothesis that blood vengeance is a ritual process, launched by poetic incitement to violence, this resulting in the taking of revenge as well as the reenactment of elements of the ritual, be this repetition of the message, or repetition of the act of killing.[7] It also presents retaliation as a form of jihad against those accused of "unbelief", and therefore aligns a pre-Islamic precedent with an Islamic duty, this the matter of state propaganda in the Abbasid age, but here manipulated by an anti-establishment poet and directed against a successful minority that is portrayed as being alien.[8] In this case, poetic incitement resulted in the massacre of three-thousand Jews including the vizier, Yūsuf b. Naghrīla (Monroe 2004:27). As is typical of a "blood vengeance poem", the enemy group is portrayed as ignoble, the poet's own group, honourable, but gravely insulted (verses 3–13). There are references to garments of shame: in verse 11, a funereal shroud for a Jewish burial is depicted as being smeared in excrement; whereas, in verse 29, the Jews wear robes of rank, the Muslims, discarded cast-offs. Arguably, the entire poem is incitement, but the last ten verses are most provocative, following a character assassination. The ancient covenant of protection should have guaranteed the safety of the Jews of Granada as an important principle of Muslim honour, but, in verses 43–44, the poem invalidates this because of an accusation (verses 35–36) that the vizier has left Muslims thirsting for "the purest spring water".[9] The poem also evokes the

6 From *Hispano-Arabic poetry: a student anthology*, James T. Monroe; © 2004 by Gorgias Press LLC; reproduced with permission of James Monroe and Gorgias Press.

7 See Section 1.1, for the argument. The poem also bears comparison with *Lā Naksa*, a poem that will feature, in Section 7.4.1.

8 See Section 4.3.2. "The al-Afshīn Poem" also abases an illustrious political player, by playing up his Persian roots, and by accusing him of worshipping Fire.

9 See Section 2.3.2 and Section 2.3.5. The theme of "thirsting" evokes an ancient precedent. According to the War of al-Basūs *akhbār*, the Banī Bakr accused Kulayb, from the Banī Taghlib, of denying them access to water.

blood vengeance motifs of "sacrifice" and "eating", the Jews ritually sacrificing their own cattle for consumption, in the marketplace (verse 34), verse 39 compelling the ruler to kill the vizier, in lieu. As well as blood, in keeping with the Jahili "blood vengeance poem", *Ḥ*37, *Alā qul li-Ṣinhājatin ajmaʿīn* calls for blood vengeance as settlement, via the seizure of Jewish property (verses 40–41).[10] Like the Kharijite poet, Abū Isḥāq has called for class insurrection against an elite, but instead of railing against the ruling dynasty, he has chosen a scapegoat, aiming his ire at an alliance that he both delegitimises (God's "chosen people", in verse 47, are Muslims) and dehumanises (the Jews are compared with "dogs", in verse 22, the vizier is called "a monkey", in verse 35, and a sacrificial "ram", in verse 39). Like militant jihadist poetry, in the following chapter, verse 7 assumes a binary argument of "Us" (meaning faithful Muslims) and "Them" (non-Muslims). Like Jahili poetry, this process of othering renders the Jews external to the tribe (of Muslims), and therefore treats them as a suitable target for blood vengeance as a form of ritual sacrifice.[11]

Multicultural societies are more usually vibrant and positive spaces, demonstrating that human beings flourish when individuals are exposed to new ideas with contrasting perspectives, under the *proviso* that different identity groups posses equal rights under the law. However, as *Alā qul li-Ṣinhājatin ajmaʿīn* demonstrates, cosmopolitan cities are also vulnerable to sectarian hatred should one identity group benefit at the expense of another, or when the economy is in recession and jobs are scarce. Be that as it may, there is little dispute that al-Andalus at its height was a highly successful experiment in sociocultural integration between east and west, north and south. Abbasid political decline, in Baghdad, coupled with disintegration of the Umayyad Caliphate, in al-Andalus, signalled the eventual genesis of a more authentic Andalusian poetry, this exhibiting a level of skill rising beyond pastiche (Monroe 2004:8). Literary scholars are divided as to whether Hispano-Arabic poetry written in Arabic is a subset of Arabic poetry, or if it is essentially Spanish poetry that has absorbed Arabic influences. The truth probably lies somewhere in between, some genres at greater variance from Classical Arabic poetry, such as *muwashshaḥāt* ("strophic poems") and *nauriyyāt* ("floral poems"), others even more exceptional, like Medieval Hebrew Poetry. What is indisputable is that martial messaging, in verse, very clearly draws from the Arabic tradition (Monroe 2004[1968]:7).

10 See Section 1.5.2, for *Ḥ*37.

11 See Section 2.5.3, on "Blood Vengeance as Ritual Sacrifice".

6.2.2 *Elegies for Lost Cities*

Evidentially, Iberia underwent a renaissance after the Muslim Conquest, but paradoxically fault lines between different actors became entrenched during times of economic need and political instability. Notwithstanding creative experiments in verse, the departure of Muslims from Spain evoked retrospective elegies mourning lost cities, like Ronda, Seville and Granada, these inciting to vengeance and calling for jihad against the Christian usurpers (Hanna 2000:51–56). Another example, this time by Abū al-Baqā' al-Rundī (d. 684/1285), refers to the capture of Seville from the Berber Almohads by Ferdinand III of Castile,[12] in 646/1248, and the outrages committed, before inciting the Muslim community more generally to vengeance (Monroe 2004:332–337):[13]

Li-kulli shay'in idhā mā tamma nuqṣānū

22	على دِيارٍ من الإسْلامِ خالِيَةٍ	قد أَقْفَرَتْ ولها بالكُفْرِ عُمْرانُ
25	يا غافلًا ولَهُ في الدهرِ مَوْعِظَةٌ	إنْ كُنْتَ في سِنَةٍ فالدهرُ يَقْظانُ
30	وراتِعِينَ وَرَاءَ البَحْرِ في دَعَةٍ	لَهُمْ بِأَوْطانِهِم عِزٌّ وسُلْطانُ
33	ماذا التَّقَاطُعُ في الإسلامِ بَيْنَكُمْ	وأَنْتُمُ يا عِبَادَ اللهِ إخْوانُ
34	أَلَا نُفُوسٌ أَبِيَّاتٌ لَهَا هِمَمٌ	أَما على الخَيْرِ أَنْصارٌ وأَعْوانُ
35	يا مَن لِذُلَّةِ قَوْمٍ بعدَ عِزِّهِم	أَحالَ حالَهُم حَوْرٌ وطُغْيَانُ
36	بِالأَمْسِ كانوا مُلوكًا في مَنازِلِهِم	واليومَ هم في بِلادِ الكُفْرِ عَبْدانُ
37	فَلَوْ تَراهم حَيَارَى لا دَليلَ لهم	عليهِمُ مِن ثِيابِ الذُلِّ أَلْوَانُ
40	وطِفْلَةٍ مثلِ حُسْنِ الشمسِ إذ طَلَعَتْ	كأَنَّما هِيَ يَاقُوتٌ ومَرْجَانُ
41	يَقودُها العِلْجُ لِلْمَكْرُوهِ مَكْرَهَةً	والعَيْنُ باكِيَةٌ والقَلْبُ حَيْرَانُ

22 Over dwellings emptied of Islam that were first vacated and are now inhabited by unbelief;

25 O you who remain heedless though you have a warning in Fate: if you are asleep, Fate is always awake!

12 In Spanish history, the conquering of Muslim Iberian territory is termed the "Reconquista".

13 The metre of this *nūniyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*nū*, is *al-basīṭ*. Another source is Nykl (1949:200–202), again with some variation. The addressee is the Muslim community, including the Almohads of Morocco, the Hafsids of Tunisia, the Ayyubids of Egypt, most whom were in political decline at home, and so were unable to prevent the loss of Seville (Farrin 2018:117).

30 And you who are living in luxury beyond the sea enjoying life, you who have strength and power in your homelands,[14]
33 What means this severing of the bonds of Islam on your behalf, when you, O worshippers of God, are [our] brethren?
34 Are there no heroic souls with lofty ambitions; are there no helpers and defenders of righteousness?
35 O, who will redress the humiliation of a people who were once powerful, a people whose condition injustice and tyrants have changed?
36 Yesterday they were kings in their own homes, but today they are slaves in the land of the infidel!
37 Thus, were you to see them perplexed, with no one to guide them, wearing the cloth of shame in its different shades,
40 And many a maiden fair as the sun when it rises, as though she were rubies and pearls,
41 Is led off to abomination by a barbarian against her will, while her eye is in tears and her heart is stunned.

Translation by Monroe[15]

An insult to honour is always integral to the call for revenge. In *Li-kulli shay'in idhā mā tamma nuqṣānū*, shame appears as a garment, in verse 37, honour and abasement compared to the conditions of kingship and slavery, in verse 36. As is common in verse of this nature, the rape of women provides a spur to retaliation (verses 40–41), this cited along with the dispossession of Muslims by non-Muslims (verse 22), the call to vengeance therefore taking on the nature of jihad that will restore Muslims to positions of high office. It is interesting to compare narrative slogans in campaigns for territory; for Muslims, holding on to land acquired after the Muslim Conquest of Iberia is jihad, whereas in Spanish Christian history, the seizure of the same is termed the "Reconquista", i.e. the Reconquest.

Elegies that mourn lost cities, *rithā' al-mudun*, was an Abbasid innovation, for which Ibn al-Rūmī's "Basra Elegy" is a particularly evocative model, describing the sacking of Basra, in 257/871, by humiliated Zanj slaves from southeast Africa (who were compelled to drain the salt-marshes under intolerable conditions), while inciting the Abbasid Caliph to vengeance for the revolt (Farrin

14 "Living in luxury" is a common issue of complaint, or blame that is issued to privileged kin, in Arabic poetry, also known as *'itāb*. See Section 3.8.3, verse 1, of *Ḥ*632. See also Section 6.7.5.4, verse 1, of *al-Habū*; and Section 7.4.1, verse 33 of *Lā Naksa*.

15 From *Hispano-Arabic poetry: a student anthology*, James T. Monroe; © 2004 by Gorgias Press LLC; reproduced with permission of James Monroe and Gorgias Press.

2018:98–99). By comparing the ruined city of Basra to the muted ruins of the *aṭlāl*, as in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, the elegy's closure uses the imperative to call for revenge and to deliver brutal action on the ground (Sperl 2013:12–16). To expand, as Ibn Qutayba (1958:i:74–75), the early Abbasid scholar, once specified, the *qaṣīda* often begins with the poet nostalgically standing by a deserted encampment (*al-aṭlāl*) with a companion:

> أَنَّ مُقَصّدَ القصيدِ إِنَّما ابتدأ فيها بذكرِ الديارِ والدِّمَنِ والآثارِ، فبكَى وشَكَا، وخاطَبَ الرَّبْعَ، واستوقَفَ الرفيقَ، ليجعلَ ذلك سببًا لذكر أَهلِها الظَاعنينَ (عنها)، إِذْ كان نازلَةُ العَمَدِ في الحلول والظَّعْن على خلاف ما عليه نازلةُ المَدَرِ، لانتقالِهم عن ماءٍ إلى ماءٍ، وانتجاعهم الكَلأَ، وتَتَبُّعِهِمْ مساقطَ الغَيْثِ حيثُ كَانَ.
>
> In the *qaṣīda*, the poet began by remembering the abodes, the ruins,[16] and the traces of the past; whereupon he wept, issued complaint, addressed the locals,[17] and halted the close companion; that serving as means for remembering the departed inhabitants; in view of the fact that the tent-dwellers,[18] by settling [for a while] then departing, were unlike the town-dwellers; on account of their roaming from watering place to watering place, their foraging for fresh pasture, and their pursuit of abundant rain, wherever it happened to fall.

In view of the significance of the *aṭlāl* scene, "The Basra Elegy", verses 72–83, provides an example of incitement to violence on behalf of the city as represented by the metaphorical "silent ruins" of the *qaṣīda* (Sperl 2013:15):[19]

16 See Ibn Manẓūr (1997) and Lane (1863), s.v. *diman* (s. *dimn*); *diman* is here translated as "ruins" which, by implication, have been blackened under "dung heaps".

17 See Ibn Manẓūr (1997) and Lane (1863), s.v. *rabʿ*; because Ibn Qutayba has distinguished between nomads and sedentary folk, in a subsequent clause, *rabʿ* refers to the inhabitants of "a settled place of abode".

18 See Ibn Qutayba, note 52*n*1: *nāzilat al-ʿamad* literally means "the owners of lofty structures, who move around with their structures", i.e. *hum aṣḥābu-l-abniya al-rafīʿa al-ladhīna yatanaqalūna bi-abniyati-him*.

19 The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*mī*, is *al-khafīf*. The verses have been sourced from Arberry (1965:70–73). See also the *Dīwān* of Ibn al-Rūmī (2002[d. 283/896]:3:341–342).

The Basra Elegy

72 إنفـرُوا أيهـا الكـرامُ خِفافًـا وثِقـالًا إلـى العبيـدِ الطَّغـام
73 أبْرَمُـوا أمرَهُـمْ وأنتُـمْ نِيـامٌ سوءةً سوءةً لنـوْمِ النيـام
74 صدِّقـوا طـنَّ إخـوة أمَّلوكـم ورجوْكُـمْ لنوبـةِ الأيّـامِ
75 أدْرِكـوا ثأْرَهُـمْ فـذاك لديْهِـم مثلُ ردِّ الأرواحِ في الأجسامِ
76 لـم تُقِـرُّوا العيـونَ منهـم بِنَصْـرٍ فأقِـرُّوا عيونهـمْ بانتقـام
77 أنقِـذُوا سَبْيَهُـمْ وقـلَّ لهُـمْ ذا ـك حفاظًـا ورعْيَـةً للذِّمـام
78 عارُهُـمْ لازمٌ لكُـمْ أيُّهـا النَّـا ـسُ لأنَّ الأديـانَ كالأرحـام
79 إن قعدتُـمْ عـن اللعيـنِ فانْتُـمْ شركـاءُ اللَّعيـنِ فـي الآثـامِ
80 بـادروهُ قبـلَ الرويَّـةِ بالعَـزْ ـم وقبـل الإسـراج بالإلجـام
81 من غدا سرجُهُ على ظهرِ طِرفٍ فحـرامٌ عليـه شـدُّ الحـزام
82 لا تطيلوا المقام عن جنَّة الخل ـدِ فأنتـمْ فـي غيـر دار مُقـام
83 فاشتـروا الباقيـات بالعَـرَضِ الأد نـى وبيعـوا انقطاعـه بالـدَّوام

72 Go forth, you nobles, light and heavy, against the vile slaves;
73 They managed well their enterprise whilst you were sleeping – shame, shame upon the sleep of the sleepers!
74 Make true the belief of (your) brothers who had (high) expectations of you, and put their hopes in you (to help them) in all vicissitudes.
75 Exact vengeance for them, for that will be (grateful) to them as the restoring of their spirits to their bodies.
76 You did not comfort them by coming to their assistance, so do you now comfort them by taking revenge.
77 Deliver them that are captives: little (enough) is that by way of protection and observance of obligations.
78 The shame they suffered attaches to you, O men, because the ties of religion are as the ties of kinship.
79 If (now) you neglect (to punish) the accursed one, you will all be partners of the accursed one in his crimes.
80 Hasten against him with resolution before deliberation, and with bridling before saddling;
81 He who has put his saddle on the back of a generous steed, prohibited to him (thereafter) is the binding of the girth.

82 Do not tarry long away from eternal Paradise, for you are not in an abode of tarrying;
83 So purchase the abiding things with (the price of) the meanest (mundane) goods, and sell detachment from them for eternal life.

Translation by Arberry (1965:70–73)[20]

Although generically distinct, "The Basra Elegy" bears comparison with "The Amorium Poem", one poem calling for revenge on behalf of the city of Basra, the other, inciting to revenge against the city of Amorium and its inhabitants.

6.2.3 *Lament for Granada*

An anonymous poet composed a lament for the loss of Granada at the turn of the tenth/sixteenth century, by entreating the Ottomans, an ascendant power, to intervene and help their Muslim brethren. This came as no surprise. Muslim Spain had been progressively shrinking, in terms of the size of its territory. Initially, Muslims who surrendered to the Spanish crown, in 897/1492, were granted religious freedom as part of a peace treaty, but their revolt, in 904/1499, resulted in an ultimatum; expulsion from Spain, or forced conversion to Christianity (the Spanish Inquisition), and so the poem forms an appeal to Bāyazīd II who ascended the Ottoman throne, in 886/1481 (Monroe 2004:68–71, 376–389). *Salāmun karīmun dā'imun mutajaddidun* consists of 105 verses, the selection below, a lengthy abridgement. Most verses detail complaint, this concerning varying degrees of humiliation, coercion, incitement to vengeance (verses 71–72), appeal for military aid and jihad:[21]

Salāmun karīmun dā'imun mutajaddidun

2 سَلامٌ على مَوْلَايَ ذِي المَجْدِ والعُلا ومَنْ أَلْبَسَ الكُفَّارَ ثَوْبَ المَذَلَّةِ
9 سَلامٌ عليكُمْ مِن عَبِيدٍ تَخَلَّفُوا بِأَنْدَلُسٍ بِالغَرْبِ في أَرْضِ غُرْبَةِ
11 سَلامٌ عليكُمْ مِن عَبِيدٍ أَصابَهُمْ مُصابٌ عَظيمٌ يَا لَهَا مِن مُصِيبَةِ
12 سَلامٌ عليكُمْ مِن شُيُوخٍ تَمَزَّقَتْ شُيُوبُهُمُ بالنَّتْفِ مِن بَعْدِ عِزَّةِ
13 سَلامٌ عليكُم مِن وُجوهٍ تَكَشَّفَتْ على جُمْلَةِ الأَعْلاجِ مِن بعد سَتْرَةِ

20 From *Arabic poetry: a primer for students*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1965; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

21 The metre of this *tā'iyya*, ending in *-tī*, is *al-ṭawīl*. The poem is also relayed in al-Maqqarī (1939[d. 1042/1632]:1:108–115).

14 سَلامٌ عليكُـمْ مِـن بَنـاتٍ عَوَاتِـقٍ يَسُوقُهُـمُ اللَّبَّـاطُ قَهْـرًا لِخَلْـوَةِ
15 سَلامٌ عليكُـمْ مِـن عَجَائِـزَ أُكْرِهَـتْ على أَكْـلِ خِنْزِيرٍ ولَحْـمٍ لِجِيفَـةِ
19 شَكَوْنَـا لَكُـمْ مَـوْلَايَ مـا قـد أَصابَنَـا مِـن الضُّـرِّ والبَلْـوَى وعَظْـمِ الرَّزِيَـةِ
20 غُدِرْنَـا ونُصِّرْنَـا وبُـدِّلَ دِينُنَـا ظُلِمْنَـا وعُومِلْنَـا بِكُـلِّ قَبِيحَـةِ
21 وكُنَّـا علـى دِيـنِ النَّبِـيِّ مُحَمَّـدٍ نُقاتِـلُ عُمَّـالَ الصَّلِيـبِ بِنِيَّـةِ
22 ونَلْقـى أُمـورًا فـي الجِهـادِ عَظِيمَـةً بِقَتْـلٍ وأَسْـرٍ ثُـمَّ جُـوعٍ وقِلَّـةِ
23 فجَاءَتْ علينا الرُّومُ مِن كُـلِّ جانِبٍ بِسَيْـلٍ عَظِيـمٍ جُمْلَـةً بَعْـدَ جُمْلَـةِ
30 فلَمَّـا تَفَانَـتْ خَيْلُنـا ورِجالُنَـا ولَـمْ نَـرَ مِـن إِخْوَانِنَـا مِـن إِغَاثَـةِ
31 وقَلَّـتْ لَنَـا الأَقْـوَاتُ واشْتَـدَّ حالُنـا أَطَعْنَاهُمُ بالكَـرْهِ خَـوْفَ الفَضِيحَـةِ
52 ومَن جَاءَهُ المَـوْتُ ولَـمْ يُحْضِرِ الـذي يُذَكِّرُهُـمْ لـم يُدْفِنُـوهُ بِحِيلَـةِ
53 ويُتْـرَكُ فـي زِبْـلٍ طَرِيحًـا مُجَـدَّلًا كَمِثْـلِ حِمَـارٍ مَيِّـتٍ أَوْ بَهِيمَـةِ
54 إلـى غَيْـرِ هـذا مِـن أُمُـورٍ كَثِيـرَةٍ قِبـاحٍ وأَفْعَـالٍ غِـزَارٍ رَدِيَّـةِ
60 وآهًـا علـى تِلْـكَ المَسَاجِـدِ سُـوِّرَتْ مَزابِـلَ لِلْكُفَّـارِ بعـد الطَّهـارَةِ
64 وصِرْنَـا عَبِيـدًا لا أُسَـارَى فَنُفْتَـدَى ولا مُسْلِمِيـنَ نُطْقُهُـمْ بِالشَّهـادَةِ
66 فَيَـا وَيْلَنَـا، يَـا بُـؤْسَ مـا قـد أَصابَنـا مِـنَ الضُّـرِّ والبَلْـوَى وثَـوْبِ المَذَلَّـةِ
67 سَأَلْنَـاكَ يـا مَـوْلَايَ باللهِ رَبِّنَـا وبالمُصْطَفـى المُخْتَـارِ خَيْـرِ البَرِيَـةِ
68 وبالسَّـادَةِ الأَخْيَـارِ آلِ مُحَمَّـدٍ وأَصْحابِـهِ أَكْـرِمْ بهـم مِـن صَحابَـةِ
69 وبالسَيِّـدِ العَبَّـاسِ عَـمِّ نَبِيِّنَـا وشَيْبَتِـهِ البَيْضـاءِ أَفْضَـلِ شَيْبَـةِ
70 وبالصَّالِحِيـنَ العَارِفِيـنَ بِرَبِّهِـمْ وكُـلِّ وَلِـيٍّ فاضِـلٍ ذي كرامَـةِ
71 عَسَـى تَنْظُـرُوا فينـا وفيمـا أَصابَنـا لَعَـلَّ إلـهَ العَـرْشِ يَأْتِـي بِرَحْمَـةِ
72 فقَوْلُـكَ مَسْمُـوعٌ وأَمْـرُكَ نافِـذٌ ومـا قُلْـتَ مِـن شيءٍ يَكُـونُ بِسُرْعَـةِ
73 ودِينُ النَّصارَى أَصْلُهُ تَحْتَ حُكْمِكُمْ ومِـن ثَـمَّ يَأْتِيهِـمْ إلـى كُـلِّ كُـورَةِ
74 فَبِاللهِ يـا مَـوْلَايَ مُنُّـوا بِفَضْلِكُـمْ علينـا بِـرَأْيٍ أَوْ كَلامٍ بِحُجَّـةِ
75 فَأَنْتُـمْ أُولُـو الإِفْضـالِ والمَجْـدِ والعُلَا وغَـوْثُ عِبـادِ اللهِ فـي كُـلِّ آفَـةِ
76 فَسَـلْ بَابَهـم أَعْنِـي المُقِيـمَ بِرُومَـة بِمـاذا أَجـازوا الغَـدْرَ بَعْـدَ الأَمانَـةِ؟
77 ومالَهُـمُ مالـوا علينـا بِغَدْرِهِـمْ بِغَيْـرِ أَذى مِنَّـا وغيـرِ جَرِيمَـةِ
78 وجِنْسُهُـمُ المَغْلُوبُ فـي حِفْـظِ دِينِنـا وأَمْـنِ مُلـوكٍ ذي وَفَـاءٍ أَجِلَّـةِ

79 ولـم يُخْرَجُـوا مِـن دِينِهـم ودِيارِهِـمْ ولا نَالَهُـمْ غَـدْرٌ ولا هَتْـكُ حُرْمَـةِ
80 ومَـن يُعْـطِ عَهْـدًا يَغْـدرُ بِعَهْـدِهِ فـذاكَ حَـرامُ الفِعْـلِ فـي كُـلِّ مِلَّـةِ
81 ولا سِيَّمَـا عنـدَ المُلـوكِ فإِنَّـهُ قَبِيـحٌ شَنِيـعٌ لا يَجُـوزُ بِوَجْهَـةِ
93 وسَـلْ بِلِّفِيقَـا عـن قَضْيَـةِ أَمْرِهَـا لَقَدْ مُزِّقُوا بالسَّيْفِ مِن بعد حَسْرَةِ
94 وَمُنْيَافَـةُ بالسَّيـفِ مُـزِّقَ أَهْلُهَـا كـذا فَعَلُـوا أَيضًـا بِأَهْـلِ البُشَـرَّةِ
95 وَأَنْـدَرَشُ بِالنـارِ أُحْـرِقَ أَهْلُهـا بِجَامِعِهِمْ صَـارُوا جَمِيعًـا كَفَحْمَـةِ
97 عَسَـى دِينُنَـا يَبْقَـى لَنـا وَصَلاتُنـا كَمَـا عَاهَدُونـا قَبْـلَ نَقْـضِ العَزِيمَـةِ
101 ومِـنْ عندكُـمْ نَرْجُـو زَوَالَ كُرُوبِنَـا ومـا نَالَنَـا مِـن سُـوءِ حـالٍ وذِلَّـةِ

2 Peace be upon highness, the possessor of glory and lofty stature, who has clothed the infidel in a robe of humility;

9 Peace be upon you on behalf of some slaves who have remained in a land of exile, in Andalus in the west,

11 Peace be upon you on behalf of some slaves smitten by a dire misfortune. What a misfortune it was!

12 Peace be upon you on behalf of some old men whose white hair has come to be torn from [much] plucking, after [they have enjoyed a life of] glory;

13 Peace be upon you on behalf of some faces that have been bared to the company of non-Arabs after having been veiled;

14 Peace be upon you on behalf of some young girls whom the priest drives by force to a bed of shame;

15 Peace be upon you on behalf of some old women who have been compelled to eat pork and flesh not killed according to ritual prescriptions.

19 We have complained to you, your majesty, of the harm, the misfortune and the enormous calamity that has afflicted us.

20 We have been betrayed and converted to Christianity; our religion has been exchanged for another; we have been oppressed and treated in every shameful way.

21 Yet under the Prophet Muḥammad's religion we used to oppose the agents of the Cross with our inner intentions,

22 Facing grave dangers in Holy War because of killing and capturing, hunger and dearth.

23 But the Christians attacked us from all sides in a vast torrent, company after company

30 So when our cavalry and foot soldiers had perished and we observed
that no rescue was forthcoming from our brethren,
31 And when our victuals had diminished and our lot had become hard
indeed, we complied, against our will, with their demands, out of fear
of disgrace,
52 Whosoever lay dying, and did not have in attendance one who could
preach [their religion to him], in their deceit, they would refuse to
bury him,
53 Instead, he was left lying prostrate on a dung heap like a dead donkey or
[some other] animal.
54 [They committed] many other similar, shameful deeds, as well as
numerous wicked acts.
60 Alas for those mosques that have been walled up to become dung heaps
for the infidel after having enjoyed ritual purity!
64 We have become slaves; not captives who may be ransomed, nor even
Muslims who pronounce their declaration of faith!
66 So alas! Alas for us! Alas for the misfortune that struck us, namely harm,
sorrow, and the robe of oppression!
67 We besought you, your majesty, by the Lord our God, and by the chosen,
the elect, the best of creatures,
68 And by those goodly lords, the family of Muḥammad and his compan-
ions – what noble companions are they! –
69 And by the lord al-ʿAbbās, our Prophet's paternal uncle, by his white
hair, the most excellent white hair,
70 By those upright ones who grant recognition to their Lord, and by every
excellent saint endowed with nobility.
71 Perchance you will look upon us and what has smitten us; perhaps the
God of the Throne will bring mercy,
72 For your speech is hearkened to and your order is effective, while
everything you command is swiftly executed.
73 As for the Christian faith, its [place of] origin is ruled by your authority,
and it was from there that it spread to them in every region.
74 So, by God, your highness, be pleased to favour us with some advice or
some words of protest,
75 For you possess excellence, glory, rank, and [the power] to rescue God's
worshippers from all evil.
76 Therefore ask their Pope, that is to say, the ruler of Rome, why they per-
mitted treason after having [granted] amnesty,
77 And why they harmed us with their betrayal with no wrong or crime on
our part?

78 When their people who had been conquered [by us] were under the safeguard of our religion and the protection of [our] glorious kings who fulfilled their promises,
79 Neither were they converted from their faith, nor expelled from their homes, nor did they suffer betrayal or dishonour.
80 As for him who grants a treaty and then betrays it, that is a deed forbidden by every faith,
81 Especially on the part of kings, for it is a disgraceful, infamous deed; unlawful everywhere.
93 And ask Belefique what was the outcome of their affair: they were cut to pieces by the sword after undergoing anxiety.
94 As for Munyāfa, its inhabitants were sundered by the sword. The same was done to the people of Alpujarra.
95 As for Andarax, its people were consumed by fire. It was in their mosque that they all became like charcoal.
97 Could our religion not be left to us as well as our ritual prayer, as they swore to do before the agreement was broken?
101 From you do we hope for an end to our anxieties and to the evil lot and humiliation that have overcome us,

Translation by Monroe (2004:376–389)[22]

In verse 2, the poet flatters the Ottoman Sultan, stating that he is at the apex of glory under God, and that he has already conquered non-Muslims. This verse makes reference to a garment of shame, this conveying the honour/shame dialectic that is integral to "blood vengeance poetry". What follows is a description of various kinds of abasement that Christian rulers have subjected Muslims to, in Spain: (1) in verses 9 and 11, Spanish Muslims are rendered into slaves; (2) in verse 12, elderly men who should be respected pull out their hair in an act of despair; (3) in verses 13–15, different stages of womanhood have been humiliated, verse 14 insinuating rape. The poet then comes to his purpose, in verse 19, which is an explicit note of complaint about a humanitarian disaster afflicting Muslims. If the Sultan is unmoved about specific crimes, then the poet amplifies his plea by calling for help and by evoking memory of jihad (verse 20–31). In verse 15, the poem states that elderly women are being forced to eat pork and non-halal meat, but verses 20 and 31 express that Muslims are also being compelled to convert to Christianity. Verse 22 explains further that

22 From *Hispano-Arabic poetry: a student anthology*, James T. Monroe; © 2004 by Gorgias Press LLC; reproduced with permission of James Monroe and Gorgias Press.

Muslims are starving and subject to siege. Verses 52 and 53 complain of a particular outrage; the dead are not afforded a dignified burial, their bodies instead carrion, the implication being that they have been left to the mercy of wild animals to eat, or to desecrate further. Although not explicitly stated, according to Jahili belief, the defiled corpse calls out for vengeance.[23] Verse 54 continues the theme of Muslim abasement; in verse 60, contrasting the condition of purity with pollution, places of worship are desecrated, verse 66 explaining consequently that the garment of shame is worn by Muslims, and not the designated infidel.[24] Verse 67 pleas for aid and succour, the following verses invoking God, the Prophet Muḥammad, *Ahl al-Bayt* and the Companions of the Prophet. The poem, recognising that the Ottoman king may not want to go to war with Spain, then implores him to at least intervene, by using the power of diplomatic speech (verse 72): (1) perhaps he has influence considering that the Holy Land is being governed by a Turkish authority (verse 73); (2) perhaps a word with the Pope may suffice (verse 76); (3) perhaps a reminder of the covenant of protection, this granting non-Muslims freedom of worship in historical al-Andalus (verses 78–79), might be opportune. The importance of honouring an agreement is highlighted, in verses 80–81, the breaking of an oath tantamount to dishonourable conduct. Verses 93–95 detail atrocities including mutilation committed by Christians against Muslims in other Spanish towns. Verse 97 implores the Sultan to reestablish the original peace treaty permitting Muslims religious freedom, this compacted with Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, in 897/1492. To further reinforce this request, verse 101 asks the Sultan to put an end to humiliation. In reality and as events transpired, Bāyazīd II was already aware of the situation and had begun granting political asylum to Spanish Muslims and Jews within the Ottoman Empire, this resulting in a cultural revival. He did not go to war with Spain.

The purpose of the illustrations above is not exhaustive, nor the subject of extensive analysis. Rather they demonstrate the persistence of the revenge theme and "blood vengeance motifs". They also show that the revenge tradition, in verse, is rather rigid, repetitive and lengthy, and not the subject of creative experimentation, unlike other genres. Andalusian poetry reveals that when a

23 See Section 2.3.5. In the Jahiliyya, an unburied corpse was fodder for scavengers, an extremely dishonourable death. The ancient Arabs believed that a killing that has not been put to rest ritually, via burial and the seeking of vengeance, means that the departed soul cannot rest and so is transformed into a thirsting owl. See also Section 3.7.2, for a Kharijite example.

24 Contrasting the condition of purity with pollution in its various forms is comparable to the roiling of pure white milk with blood. See the Folktale, in Section 2.3.1.

poet, even a poet from an ethnically diverse and culturally experimental society, wanted to compel a political leader to vengeance, he inclined towards the tradition. The last example also demonstrates that despite incitement, vengeance was not Bāyazīd II's chosen solution, this boding well for the establishment of counter-narratives to the revenge message. As an astute political leader, Bāyazīd perceived that by not promoting further bloodshed, and instead providing refuge, Spain's brain-drain could become the Ottomans' gain. Notwithstanding this benefit, the Ottoman empire and the Turkish presence went on to stoke resentment in Arab lands, no less so than in an illustrious country that once was the engine of the Caliphate.

6.3 Iraqi Sectarian Verse

Dissolution of the Caliphate of Abbasid times was an eventual process. Abbasid rule first fractured along tribal lines, its dominion challenged by the Fāṭimids in North Africa and, as the previous section has revealed, the Umayyads in Spain. Then came other Muslim challengers. Unlike the zenith of the Abbasid age, when the Caliphate revolved around Baghdad and its environs, from the fourth/tenth century onwards a series of foreign invasions occurred, first by the Buyids and then by the Seljuqs. However, it was the sacking of Baghdad by the Mongols, in the seventh/thirteenth century, that marked the end of an era associated with great cultural achievement in the Arabic language. Following intervals of both Mongol and Turkmen rule, Iraq was eventually surrendered to the Ottomans, in the tenth/sixteenth century. Ottoman control of the region was briefly interrupted by Safavid rule, and then devolved to Mamluk administrators (who were frequently out of touch and had an ambivalent relationship with the tribal intermediaries and governors that were required for intercession with the local population), before it was re-consolidated under the Turks, their rule ending after World War One. By the twelfth/eighteenth century, because there had been no marked innovations to the structure of Classical Arabic poetry, in Iraq, nor significant changes to the blood vengeance narrative across the intervening centuries, the following example of Shiʿi patriotic verse is the subject of translation, but not of deep scrutiny.[25] This poem pits the prototypical contest

25 M. Winter has used the word "patriotism" to describe proto-Arab nationalism that emerged after the Ottoman decentralisation of the tenth/sixteenth century, but prior to the formation of the thirteenth/nineteenth-century nationalist movements (Winter 2006:187).

between two tribes as both a sectarian (Shiʿi/Sunni) and a patriotic (Iraqi/Ottoman) struggle.[26] More generally, Jubayr Ḥamādī (2016:55) has cited poets, such as al-ʿAshārī, al-Azrī and al-Baṣrī, as eulogists of the al-Shāwī clan. The clan chiefs bore a strong resemblance with earlier heroes for they too drew upon an intense bond of kinship, exhibited traditional Bedouin virtues, stood up to external threats, and were necessary assets for urban governors. But this co-dependence made them vulnerable, their light sometimes extinguished during the act of serving their community, i.e. they died with honour, but possibly as the victims of political intrigue and conspiracy.

The subject of *Sa-abkīka bi-l-bīdi-l-Yamāniyyati-l-latī* is ʿAbd Allāh b. Nuṣayf b. Shāwī, a head of the ʿUbayd clan, a visionary and a man true to the heroic model of Arab tribal leaders (Ḥamādī 2016:51, 65). The governors of Baghdad had already bestowed upon him the honorific title of "prince", asking him to intercede in local difficulties, but his position was precarious. He was assassinated surreptitiously by the Mamluk Baghdad governor, ʿUmar Bāsha,[27] in 1183/1769, while trying to solve a local dispute, and this prompted a revolt against the governor in the same year. His elegist, Kāẓim al-Azrī, then called for insurrection as the following passage about the event reveals:

> ولا يقل الشاعر كاظم الأزري عن العشاري حماسة وصدق عاطفة وهو يرثي بطل عبد الله الشاوي. فالأزري ليس مجرد شاعر يرثي زعيمًا سقط في معترك النضال ضد الأجنبي، بل هو جزء من قضية يمثلها هذا الزعيم، يرى لزامًا عليه أن ينهض بالواجب الذي يفرضه عليه هذا الانتماء، لذا كان الأزري ثائرًا وداعيًا إلى الثورة.
>
> Ḥamādī 2016:70

> In lamenting the hero, the poet, Kāẓim al-Azrī, was no less enthusiastic, nor sincere in his sympathy for ʿAbd Allāh al-Shāwī than al-ʿAshārī. For al-Azrī is not only a poet lamenting a leader who fell upon the battleground in the struggle against the foreigner, but an integral part of the issue which this leader represents; he feels compelled to take up the duty which this commitment imposes upon him. Thus, al-Azrī was a revolutionary and a caller for revolution.

26 The Ottoman Empire was essentially a Caliphate that projected Sunni Islam.

27 The Mamluks governed Ottoman Iraq during the twelfth/eighteenth and early thirteenth/nineteenth centuries.

In so doing, al-Azrī created a poem that invokes the blood vengeance rite,[28] through a spoken appeal to a community that in its turn prompts bloody action, followed by consolidation of tribal identity and the repetition of the poem below (Ḥamādī 2016:71–72):[29]

Sa-abkīka bi-l-bīdi-l-Yamāniyyati-l-latī

1	سأبكيكَ بالبيضِ اليَمانيةِ التي	تَهُدُّ مِنَ الأطوادِ كُلَّ مَشيدِ
2	وأرثيكَ بالطَّعنِ الدّراكِ كأنّهُ	قَصيدُ مَنونٍ مُردَفٌ بقَصيدِ
3	إلى أنْ أرى دمعَ الصِّعادِ كأنَّه	مُلتّ يروّي قَلبَ كُلِّ صعيدِ
4	وأنعي على أيامِكَ الغُرَرَ التي	تَقضَّتْ بعيشٍ للكَمالِ رَغيدِ
5	بني حِمْيَرٍ لا تَطرَحوا الحَزْمَ خَلْفَكُمْ	فأنّ اطراحَ الحَزْمِ غَيرُ سَديدِ
6	ولا تَصْبروا عن اخذِ ثاراتِ يومِهِ	ألا رُبَّ صَبْرٍ لَمْ يَكنْ بحميدِ
7	قُتِلْتَ على أيدي الأذلّينَ عُنْوةً	وما ذاكَ مِنْ أهلِ التُّقَى ببعيدِ
8	مَضَى كُلَّ حُرٍ طَيَبِ الفِعْلِ يشْتكي	أذى كُلِّ جَبّارِ الفِعَالِ عنيدِ
9	فأينَ عَليٌّ مِنْ مَقامِ ابنِ مُلْجمٍ	وأينَ حسينٌ من مَحَلِ يزيدِ
10	ولِمْ تَبْرَحِ الدنيا تُذِّلُ كرامَها	فلا سَيِّدٌ إلا بِكَفِ مَسُودِ
11	أما والعُلا ما زِلْتَ في المَجْدِ راميًا	إلى أنْ أُصيبَ الحَظُّ حَظٌّ شَهيدِ
12	لقد فُزْتَ بالمغْنى الجِنانيّ وافِدًا	كما فازَ في مغْناكَ كُلُّ وفودِ
13	مكانُكَ في الفِردوسِ أعلى مَكانَةٍ	وأنتَ حميدٌ في جِوار حَميدِ
14	زُفِفْتَ الى الظِلِّ الظَّليلِ مُبَشَّرًا	بحورٍ وولدانٍ هنالِك غَيدِ

1 I will weep over you, with Yemeni swords which // demolish every [gypsum] wall from the mountains

2 And I elegise you with the uninterrupted piercing [which attains blood vengeance], as though // it is foreordained by the fates, [and] followed by poetry

3 Until I see the tears of spears as though // they are an enduring rain,[30] which satiates the heart of every highland

28 Section 1.1 has outlined the blood vengeance rite.

29 The metre is *al-ṭawīl*. The poem is a *dāliyya*, ending in *-dī*.

30 See Lane (1863), s.v. *latta*, "to moisten and mingle with water or fat". The word *mulitt* has been reproduced as it appears in the source text, but is more likely to be *mulithth*, mean-

4 I bemoan your luminous days which // have been spent in a life of perfect delight
5 Banī Ḥimyar, do not cast good judgement behind you // for casting aside good judgement is not correct
6 Do not restrain yourself from taking blood revenge when it is due // Indeed, often self-restraint is not commendable!
7 You have been slain at the hands of the base ones, violently // and this is not far away from the people of piety
8 Each noble one who performs good deeds continues to complain // of the injury of each one who is tyrannical in deeds and intractable
9 How can Ibn Muljam compare to ʿAlī // and how can Yazīd compare to Ḥusayn?
10 The world continues to debase its people of honour // there is no Sayyid who is not in the hand of a stooge
11 Verily, in the acquisition of high rank, you are still a marksman in honour // until Fortune hit the mark, a martyr's fortune
12 You have been made to attain the heavenly abode [of contentment], an envoy // just as all envoys have attained your abode of contentment
13 Your position in Paradise is the highest position // one worthy of praise close to The Praiseworthy One
14 You have been escorted to the cool refreshing shade bearing glad tidings // of houris and serving boys, over there, young and yielding

The second verse is particularly noteworthy because, like the opening verse, of *Ḥ*37,[31] it contains the continuous avenging action of "piercing a wound":

وحين يشرع الأزري في رثاء هذا البطل نراه مُعرضًا عن الشعر – مع جلال قدره – معتمدًا صليل السيوف التي تزلزل ضرباتها الجبال، لغة، جاعلًا تتابع الطعنات كتتابع الأبيات، عاقدًا العزم على أن يروي الثرى دمًا سعيًا لإدراك ثأره.

Ḥamādī 2016:70

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ing "rain". In his explanatory notes to the verse, Ḥamādī (2016) has cited al-Zamakhsharī's definition of *latata*, but cross-checking the latter reveals that the reference instead accords to *lathatha*. See al-Zamakhsharī (2012), s.v. *lathatha*, meaning *alaththa-l-saḥābu: dāma, wa-saḥābun muliththu-l-ʿazālī*, or "the clouds watered: clouds continuing to pour down rain". See also Lane (1863), s.v. *laththa*, for *saḥābun muliththu-l-ʿazālī*. On vengeance, and its satiation of highlands, see Section 8.2, and verse 26, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*.

31 See Section 1.5.2.

> When al-Azrī begins his lamentation on this hero, we see him turning away from poetry – so far as he can – relying upon the rattling of swords whose blows shake the mountains, [its own] language, substituting the succession of thrusts for the succession of verses, binding the resolve in so far as the moist earth is irrigated by coursing blood in attaining vengeance.

In this poem, the central message is that the respective rituals of vengeance and poetry are associates that complement and complete one another. On the Arabic vocabulary, in verse 2, and its relation to blood vengeance, Ḥamādī has noted equivalence between *al-dirāk* and *dārak al-ṭaʿni*, or *tābiʿa-hu*.[32] For the English, Lane has translated *ṭaʿana-hu ṭaʿnan dirākan*, to mean "he thrust him, or pierced him, with an uninterrupted thrusting or piercing".[33] To expand further, *darrāk*, that means "one who attains", is often used in connexion with blood vengeance when it is associated with *al-witr*, or *al-awtār*. Another term that is *qaṣīd*, in verse 2, can refer to "a poem", but when it is linked to time/fate (as in *aqṣadat-hu al-maniyya*), means "destiny killed him on the spot".[34] Verse 6 asks the community to avenge the dead man's murder, by explicitly citing a term for the "taking of blood revenge", *akhdh thaʾrāt*.[35] However, it is the final line that connects the poetic mission to a religious obligation; verse 14 states that the dead man can rest in peace because he has paid his debt to life through his noble deeds. Here, *al-ẓill al-ẓalīl* refers to Q[4:57]:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَّهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلاً

> As for those who believe and do good deeds, We shall admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams and there they will remain forever. They will have pure spouses there, and We shall admit them into cool refreshing shade.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:88)[36]

32 See al-Zamakhsharī (2012), *daraka*.

33 See Lane (1863), s.v. *daraka* and *dirāk*.

34 Lane (1863), s.v. "*qaṣada*".

35 The plural form of *thaʾr* is also *athʾār*, and *āthār*.

36 Used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

By extension, honouring the dead man through lamentation and vengeance is another duty. Associated with this poem, in Ḥamādī's analysis, there are other elegiac verses for ʿAbd Allāh b. Nuṣayf b. Shāwī by the same poet, Kāẓim al-Azrī (Ḥamādī 2016:71–72):[37]

Wa-warāʾa thaʾri-ka kullu rākibi himmatin

ووراءَ ثَـأرِكَ كُـلُّ راكِـبِ هِمَّـةٍ حَلَّـتْ بـه بيـنَ السُّهـا والفرْقَـدِ
مِنْ كُلّ منصوصِ الأمامةِ في الوَرى يهْدِي إلى الأجلِ النُّفوسَ فَتَهْتَدي
مِـنْ آلِحِمْيَـرٍ الذيـنَ تَخالُهُـمْ خَـالًا بوجنَتَـيْ النَّـدى والسُّـودَدِ

Vengeance, on your behalf, is every rider's ambition // to set him to rest between the stars of al-Suhā and al-Farqad
For each stipulation of the Imamate, among mankind // which guides the souls towards their appointed end, give them guidance
Of Ḥimyar, whom you imagine to be // birthmarks on the cheeks of liberality and princeship

Sa-abkīka bi-l-bīdi-l-Yamāniyyati-l-latī and *Wa-warāʾa thaʾri-ka kullu rākibi himmatin* insinuate a relationship between blood vengeance and a religious obligation termed "jihad", but are not explicit. These poems only propose the hereafter for the deceased, and not for his kin. However, the act of invoking vengeance, in two poems that simultaneously recall the hereafter, is one step closer to performing vengeance so as to attain a heavenly reward, a gap that will be fully reconciled in "blood vengeance poetry" of the modern period.

6.4 Thirteenth/Nineteenth-Century Jihadist Verse

Jihadist verse, to be more thoroughly discussed in the following chapter, is similar to Kharijite poetry, but it also owes a debt to Jahili verse, for which a close female relative of the murdered man often goads to vengeance, this incitement termed *taḥrīḍ*.[38] This section demonstrates parallel development of the

37 Al-Azrī composed these in the *kāmil* metre. The poem is a *dāliyya*, ending in *-dī*.

38 Al-Basūs was an instigator of the war that bore her name (*al-Muwaththibāt*, Section 2.3.3), as was al-Yamāma, the daughter of the murdered Waʾil Kulayb (see Section 2.3.1). Another example of spoken incitement to vengeance is by the female Jahili poet Kabsha (see Section 1.4.6). In the following chapters, the examples by Aḥlām al-Naṣr (in Sections 7.4.4 and 7.4.5) will also demonstrate *taḥrīḍ* as spoken by a female poet.

jihadist poem, by employing an example from northern Nigeria, composed (in Arabic) by a woman, drawing upon the classical form, but also demonstrating the sheer reach of "blood vengeance poetry" across the Islamic world, and no doubt serving as cultural inheritance for contemporary, but far more extreme jihadist movements such as Boko Haram. The notion of a Caliphate is not confined to the Middle East and North Africa, nor to the Ottoman Empire that was nascent across Turkic territories in Anatolia and Central Asia, thereafter spreading out. In West Africa, at the turn of the nineteenth century, a battle for leadership emerged between two tribes called the Hausa and the Fulani. This was not a sectarian battle, both groups subscribing to Sunni Islam, but it involved the revolt of a disgruntled community who decided to term it "jihad".[39] In 1219/1804, the pre-existing Hausa leadership was displaced by the Fulani, who then established the Sokoto Caliphate. Since the conflict was inter-tribal, it fulfils the conditions of the blood feud model first presented in Chapter One. The resultant status quo endured for a century prior to annexation of the region by Great Britain and Germany.

Asmā'u dan Fodio (d. 1282/1865), a distinguished female poet, versified the successful Fulani jihadist movement in both Fulfulde and Arabic. The Fulani army had initially been led by her father, Shehu ʿUthmān (d. 1232/1817), in a campaign that was perceived by many to be a continuation of the legacy of ʿUqba b. Nāfiʿ al-Fihrī (d. 62/682), the ancestral forefather of the Fulani and believed to have converted the Berbers of Africa to Islam (Cook 2007:89–90). Before his daughter, Shehu ʿUthmān also incited to jihad, using poetry, most notably in *al-Qādiriyya* (1212/1797), this composed in Fulani (Fulfulde), then translated into Arabic by his brother, ʿAbd Allāh. The term "jihad" does not appear in M. Hiskett's translation of this poem, but is nonetheless implied in the following verse (Ibn Muḥammad 1963[d. 1245/1829]:51–54, 105–107):[40]

al-Qādiriyya

10 أَرْنِي بِدِينِكَ غَالِبًا فِي هذِهِ الْ بلْدَانِ مِنْ دَرَجَاتِ عَبْدِ الْقَادِرِ

10 Show me as a conqueror by your religion in these countries, through the rank of ʿAbd al-Qādir.

Translation by Hiskett

39 A more thorough exposition of factors driving the Fulani jihad has been addressed by Marilyn Waldman (1965:333–355).

40 The metre is *al-kāmil*, the end-rhyme, *-al-Qādirī*.

More explicitly, in verse 18, of a sophisticated poem conforming to the *qaṣīda* form, Asmāʾu integrated the word "jihad" into praise of her dead sibling, Muḥammad Bello, before detailing how he pursued his own struggle against local tribes to consolidate Fulani dominion over the Sokoto Caliphate. Although this poem was composed in Fulfulde, the Arabic word for "jihad" appears in the hand-written transcript, not reproduced here, but instead provided by Jean Boyd's translation below:

In Praise of Muḥammad Bello, or Gawakuke Maʾunde

> He valiantly fought the Jihad, following the example of the Prophet,
> He resolutely defended the Faith and strengthened
> the Way of the Prophet.
>
> Translated by Boyd (1996:360–361)[41]

Stanza 17, of *Marthiya* Bello, an Arabic lament for Asmāʾu's brother, suggests jihad, this time by way of a God given triumph over adversity (Fodio 1820–1865:A13/1). The main message is that without a leader, like her brother, the community is vulnerable, the best defender also a defender of Islam:[42]

***Marthiya* Bello**

الهى اكْفِنا بعده كل ضر وقى الخليقة عنه بنصر
ومـد لـه بتطـاول عمـر يدافع للدين يقفى لاثر
بحرمة من عنده استجير

41 Used with permission of Brill, from *Qaṣīda poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa: Eulogy's bounty, meaning's abundance: an anthology*, Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, vol. 2, 1996; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

42 The metre is *al-mutaqārib*, the poem a *rāʾiyya*, ending in *raʾ al-sākina*. The promoted translation is literal; it differs from Beverly Mack and Jean Boyd's translation of the same stanza, but the meaning is essentially the same, the latter situating it in context with other stanzas that refer directly to the Prophet of Islam:

> Let us pray that God will help us now that Bello is gone
> And give victory to his successor.
> May he have a long life
> And defend religion, as Bello did.
> In the name of the Prophet I make this plea.
>
> Translation by Mack and Boyd (2000:96); permission granted by Indiana University Press according to terms of Fair Use.

After him, O God, protect us from every harm // Safeguard[43] all Creation[44] against [harm] with assistance[45]
Prolong his life // [so that] he follows suit and defends the Faith
By the Grace of One by his side, I appeal for aid

6.5 The *Nahḍa*

The following chapter will not interrogate the Arabic *Nahḍa* period, the cultural renaissance that occurred in the nineteenth to early twentieth century (of the Common Era), beyond adopting a neoclassical poem by the lesser known Maḥmūd Ghunaym that postdates pioneering examples of this form by a good fifty years. The *Nahḍa* movement was receptive to cultural change, but, in Egyptian poetry, the neoclassical position reflects everyday frustrations: a disappointment with the instability that modernity presents; and an opposite desire to leave behind cultural baggage. For example, Aḥmad Shawqī's (d. 1932) verses from *Shahīd al-ḥaqq*, or "Martyr of Truth",[46] were composed in response to political crisis in Egypt, in 1925:[47]

Shahīd al-ḥaqq

22 وَلينا الأمرَ حِزبًا بَعدَ حزبٍ فَلَم نَكُ مُصلِحينَ وَلا كِراما
23 جَعَلنا الحُكمَ تَولِيَةً وَعَزلًا وَلَـم نَعْـدُ الجَـزاءَ والِانتِقامـا

Shawqī 1973; cited in al-Muḥayyish 1997:86

43 See Lane (1863), s.v. *waqā*, *waqā-hu Allāh al-sūʾa*, meaning "God preserved him from evil" and *waqā-ka Allāh kulla māḥdhūrin*, meaning "God preserve thee from all fear", or "May God preserve thee from everything that is feared".

44 "Creation", or *al-khalīqa*. Mack and Boyd, specialists in Asmāʾu's catalogue of poetry, may have assumed that the handwritten manuscript reads *al-khalīfa*, i.e. "the successor". However, Asmāʾu has consistently adopted a Maghribian letter "*qāf*", in other verses of the same poem, which, when scripted, appears like the Mashriq Arabic letter "*fā*".

45 *Naṣr*, or "aid" that is provided by a person, here, recalls *al-Anṣār*, i.e. "The Assistants of the Prophet".

46 The poem was dedicated to Muṣṭafā Kāmal, an Egyptian political activist and a national hero who campaigned for independence from colonisation, his death occurring in 1908.

47 The poetic metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*mā*, is *al-wāfir*, a metre more usually associated with war and vengeance.

22 We have given authority [to] one party after another // and therefore we were neither reformers nor honourable
23 We have made governing a matter of appointing and discharging // and we have not gone beyond retaliation and revenge

The same poet also lampooned the expansionist designs of colonial powers and western influences, by polarising the conflict as an affront to Islamic values at a time when this trend was gaining in momentum. For example, in an extract from a poem entitled *Rithāʾ al-khilāfa*, or "Elegy for the Caliphate", Shawqī lampooned Muṣṭafā Kamāl Atatürk, the Turkish modernist, accusing him of ending the Islamic Caliphate, "infidelity" to Islam, and "alcoholism":[48]

Rithāʾ al-khilāfa

16 بَكَتِ الصَلاةُ وَتِلكَ فِتنَةُ عابِثٍ بِالشَرعِ، عِربيدِ القَضاءِ وَقاحِ
17 أفتى خُزَعبِلَةً، وَقالَ ضَلالَةً وَأَتى بِكُفرٍ في البِلادِ بَواحِ
29 إِنَّ الغُرورَ سَقى الرَئيسَ بِراحِهِ كَيفَ اِحتِيالُكَ في صَريعِ الراحِ

Shawqī 1973; cited in al-Muḥayyish 1997:127

16 Prayer wept and this is the calamity of one who tampers // with the Law, and is shameless
17 He has expounded a hoax, and he has told an error // and he has openly brought about infidelity in the lands
29 Delusion [personified as if a cupbearer] has poured the President a drink with its hand // how can you outwit someone stone drunk (who has no wits)

In 1933, Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī (d. 1955), another Egyptian poet, described "fasting swords" longing for the taste of blood, a theme expanded upon in the previous chapter, consistent with verses belonging to *Ḥamāsiyya* 272 and classical poems, such as "The Amorium Poem" and *Ujrirtu ḥabla khalīʿin fī-l-ṣibā*

48 The poetic metre of this *ḥāʾiyya* is *al-kāmil*, the end-rhyme, -(*ā*)-*ḥī*. The third verse does not follow on consecutively from the previous two, in the poem from which they have been extracted. Incidentally, drink in this poem does not seal the hospitality contract, but instead results in its unravelling.

ghazilī.[49] In view of his reputation as a Romantic poet, rather than a neoclassicist, this was more likely to have been composed as a form of pastiche, as opposed to reflecting an ideological position:[50]

ʿĪdān

7 مُنِيَـت بأحـزابٍ تُعَـدُّ وكلُّهـا يومَ البطولةِ ليس في الحُسْبانِ

10 يا ليتَ صائمةَ السيوفِ تذوّقت مِن هذه الأحزابِ دونَ توانـي

Abū Shādī 1926; cited in al-Muḥayyish 1997:86

7 We have been afflicted by parties which are numerous and all of them // on the Day of Heroics are not taken into account

10 If only the fasting swords could taste // from these parties without falling short [in their duty]

In Egypt, a distinct literary preoccupation with nationalism manifested during the *Nahḍa*, in which community revenge was relevant, but subordinate to experimentation with western ideas. During this period, "blood vengeance poetry" was not exactly dormant, but it was somewhat removed from urban letters, remaining localised in the vernacular form of Arabic that pertains to the Bedouin of the Western Desert,[51] and also remote rural areas of Upper Egypt. In other parts of the Arab world, as blood vengeance narratives became less fashionable with elites, who were preoccupied with nation building and the establishment of civil institutions to police national affairs, the custodians of codes became clans, those leading more traditional lives remote from urban centres of power. In nineteenth-century Iraq, Austen Layard (1853:305–306, 319–320) noted that the law of blood vengeance was a custom binding nomadic tribes that predated Islam, transcended Islamic law, and encoded heroic values in verse. During his travels among the Iraqi Marsh Arabs, in the twentieth century, Gavin Young (1989[1977]:152–160) also observed a world bound by

49 See Section 5.3.

50 The metre of this *nūniyya* is *al-kāmil*, the end-rhyme -(*ā*)-*nī*. The poem, *ʿĪdān*, was presented to King Fu'ād on the occasion of the anniversary of his reign. According to Robin Ostle (2000:77–79), Abū Shādī, albeit with respect to his founding of the *Apollo* magazine (1932–1934), was an innovator in poetry, looking not only to the past but also embracing the future and new talent.

51 See Abu Lughod (1999).

ancient codes of "honour" and "blood feud". Meanwhile, just as the medieval Caliphate was accompanied by retrospective folkloric tales about tribal ancestors, a second wave of feisty oral narratives from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, also known as *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, provided a folkloric backdrop to the formation of the nation state that is Saudi Arabia (Kurpershoek 1995:22). Marcel Kurpershoek (1995:4–5), in his study of *nabaṭī* poetry (or Bedouin colloquial poetry), has explained that even though the tribal poetry of incitement is antithetical to maintaining civil order in a modern state, the Bedouin tribes of Saudi Arabia have nevertheless continued to "understand the concept of honour" as "accumulated capital", but with the rise of industrialisation following the oil boom competitive rivalry for honour has increasingly become about wealth, "political power and social prestige". This is what Kressel (1996:60), in his respective examination of blood feuds among the Negev Bedouin, has called "conspicuous consumption".[52] In any case, while vivid *nabaṭī* "blood vengeance poetry" is officially banned, in Saudi Arabia, a more watered-down version is tolerated as folklore with the *proviso* that it does not become too political. In north Yemen, Caton (1990) has also provided a comprehensive ethnographic study into tribal ethics underpinning twentieth-century verse that includes the language of conflict.[53]

6.6 Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

Localism aside, in the second half of the twentieth century, the theme of blood vengeance moved back into the Classical, or more formal Arabic register. The following chapters will explore this legacy, by taking up the blood vengeance paradigm when liberal experiments with the European Enlightenment and socialism foundered. As in the case of Saudi Arabia, Arab nation states have adopted an ambivalent approach to *al-thaʾr*, in recent years. In its purest form, it either operates in remote and forgotten regions on the margins of civil society (like in the northern Albanian highlands)[54] or is embraced by outlaws such as militant jihadist fighters who continue to channel the spirit of old brigands. This analysis is not a substitute for conflict studies, nor does it consider all the factors driving wider regional conflict and more localised feuding. The continuing struggle between Arab, Persian and Turkish forces for control of the Fertile

52 The Negev Bedouin, or *Badū al-Naqab*, are Arabs tribes living in a region of Israel.

53 See Section 1.1.3, for Caton's arguments.

54 See Section 1.1.2.

Crescent is particularly complex, as is identifying the exact catalyst for disputes when there are so many vested interests in abundant mineral resources and geopolitically vital trade routes, these participants including the United States of America, Russia, China and other world powers. Even the most casual observer will note that some regional players bear comparison with the past, and will likely continue to shape future battles.

An anatomisation of blood vengeance can be useful, when evaluating the cyclical nature of tensions at the grass-roots level. However, a more comprehensive analysis of war would no doubt integrate a top-down approach, by affording greater weight to regional power struggles and wars by proxy. Retsö (2004:115) is one who has turned back the clock, assessing pre-Islamic warfare from the perspective of political tectonic plates and great empires in decline. By extension, the substitution of state entities from late antiquity for their successors paints a similar picture of external superpowers impinging upon a volatile region for control and influence. Within this landscape and particularly in areas where state control is weak, what has emerged in more recent history are hotspots that encounter periodic cycles of reprisal killings and unrest.

6.7 The Future of Poetry and a New Kind of Folklore

One of the biggest changes that took place, both during and after the Arabic *Nahḍa* period, was a fundamental reassessment of the role that poetry would continue to play in Arabic media and popular culture of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, of the Common Era. It was not so much that the poetic form was changing with the times and absorbing cross-cultural influences, this indisputable, but rather that new technologies were propelling the "Register of the Arabs" away from verse and into print journalism, novel-writing and dramatic theatre.[55] With the advent of photography, cinematography and then television, the nature of audiences and their preferences was also changing. Consequently, this section is a discussion about the influence of soft power. Folkloric narratives that accompanied classical poetry, by word of mouth (or as oral accompaniment in literary salons,[56] a public square, a

55 The saying, *al-shʿir dīwān al-ʿArab*, probably originated with the Prophet's cousin, Ibn ʿAbbās (see Ibn Rashīq 1907[d. 463/1071]:11). It is also the opening verse of a poem by the Abbasid poet, Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī (d. 357/968), i.e. *al-shiʿru dīwānu-l-ʿArab // abadan wa-ʿunwānu-l-nasab*, meaning "Poetry is forever the Arab's register of accounts and the sign of pedigree". The metre is *al-kāmil*.

56 Samer Ali (2010) has provided an account of entertainment and cultural venues of the medieval period.

majlis, or a coffee house) were absorbed into new forms of broadcast media specifically designed as entertainment. These alternatives did not contradict the traditional method, but assumed a trajectory of their own. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, storytelling is generically distinct from documentary, but it continues to contribute to an idealised sense of history that can even seep into jihadist propaganda. These narratives vary in their treatment of the theme, some critical of blood vengeance and the escalating cycles of violence that can result, and therefore are useful in counter-narrative strategies designed to de-escalate tension, whereas other tales are more sympathetic to the avengers that they depict. Regardless of the portrayal of their protagonists, they collectively ensure that a culture of blood vengeance continues to be understood and can be studied.

This book focuses upon poetry and folklore, rather than other forms of literature and entertainment, but neglecting entirely to mention the influence of novels, film and popular songs upon modern audience tastes reflects a false impression, not only of our times but also of how the blood vengeance message is conveyed to those without an appetite for poetry. Therefore, this section will briefly move away from the principal subject of poetry so as to describe other influential media productions of the past fifty years that also contain a blood vengeance narrative, or that express ambivalence about revenge. The embracing of different periods and an array of media is intentional for it seeks to convey one of the biggest challenges that modernism presents: a world that is in flux; a sense of being bombarded by different voices concurrently; rapidly advancing technology that allows messages to be transmitted ever faster; and an interconnectivity between all of these influences. The next chapter will make clear that jihadist cultural production differs from popular media, for it occurs in an echo chamber without contradictory messaging, but the following examples introduce the broader environment in which jihadist sub-cultures can thrive and derive their own vocabulary. Without exception, modern outlets for storytelling reflect ancient cultural practices, ensuring that these continue to be understood by younger generations while broadly coinciding with the chronology and context of poems that will be reviewed, in the following chapter, if not their precise location.

The Folktale, of Chapter Two, that is a reimagining of the *akhbār* surrounding the War of al-Basūs, has in its turn informed more contemporary forms of entertainment. The story was adapted into a dramatic play by Faraj, in 1967, this challenging the idea of blood vengeance as a solution,[57] and also a tele-

57 See Section 2.4.3, and Section 2.7.

vision broadcast called *al-Zīr Sālim*, in 2000. Aside from the internet, television is a universally popular and influential form of entertainment, no less so than during Ramaḍān, the holy month of abstinence in the Islamic calendar, when high-profile, big budget productions are broadcast to mass audiences after the breaking of the fast.[58] Of late, the archetypal story of revenge and counter-revenge has been redefined in the form of a recent blockbuster that is inter-generational. Section 6.7.5 will discuss this in greater detail because of its folkloric roots; its conveyance of a wider culture of blood vengeance in the Levant, as practised by clans, the Bedouin and state representatives; and also its portrayal of drug-smuggling on the Lebanese and Syrian border that is a daily reality. Beforehand, four other contemporary examples of storytelling, transmitted either exclusively in the Arabic language or as complement to a second or third language, are provided below, among them three films and one novel. These reveal a deeply conflicted post-colonial world, frequently resorting to blood vengeance while continuing to search for an identity that is rooted in the past.

6.7.1 *Film:* The Battle of Algiers

The Battle of Algiers (1966), the film, is a recreation of the resistance effort which preceded Algerian independence from French rule. Guerrilla fighting tactics, also adopted in contemporaneous Zionist, Cuban and South American nationalist movements, underpin the trajectory towards Algerian independence. France's history of internal resistance against German occupation also foreshadows events. Targeted bombing campaigns in public places, acts of retaliation and the self-sacrifice of Algerian fighters draw disturbing parallels, at least in terms of the use of asymmetric warfare, with western Europe's recent experiences of violent expression by radicalised groups. In the film, the viewer is placed in uncomfortable territory, judging between the Guevara-esque romanticism of Marxist armed struggle and violence as terrorism.

6.7.2 *Film:* Paradise Now

Paradise now (2005), the film, revolves around the planning of a suicide attack in Tel Aviv by two Palestinian friends who are systematically humiliated by agents of Israeli occupation. The great burden propelling one bomber to sacrifice his life is shame over his father's collaboration with the Israeli authorities, knowledge of which is ruthlessly exploited by his recruiters. Notably, the dom-

58 Muhammed Ayish (2002) has assessed the cultural impact of satellite television on audiences, in Arab countries.

inant/victim dynamic that propels acts of revenge is explored half an hour into the film, when a recruiting sergeant explains to his acolyte that death is preferable to inferiority. Suicide bombing is a particular case of blood vengeance, when the target is not only the enemy but also the perpetrator prepared to die for his cause.[59]

6.7.3 *Film:* Ajami

Ajami (2009) is a film that displays the complexity of the "revenge" motif in the daily life of a modern and violent city. Events revolve around a district of Jaffa, called Ajami, and involve several plot lines, including: (1) the practice of *al-thaʾr* in a Palestinian community, when a Bedouin killing results in a contractual obligation for blood revenge; (2) the regular cycles of gang violence between Arabs and Jews; (3) the thirst for vengeance of a grieving policeman, whose brother has been killed by Arabs in revenge for Israeli occupation of Palestinian land; and (4) the rage of a Christian restaurateur who discovers that his daughter has transgressed the sectarian divide, and wants to marry his Muslim employee. In each case, revenge is a carried out as a response to injured honour.

6.7.4 *Novel:* Frānkishtāyin fī Baghdād

Aḥmad Saʿdāwī's (2014) novel, *Frānkishtāyin fī Baghdād*, or "Frankenstein in Baghdad", draws upon east and west through allusion to the gothic in Mary Shelley's Victorian novel, *Frankenstein: or the modern Prometheus* (1994[1818]), and also to magic realism in the famous capital city that features in so many of *The Arabian Nights*.[60] The plot concerns the adventures of a zombie/vampire composed from the dismembered remains of the victims of local atrocities, in war-torn Iraq, whose sole purpose is to avenge the lives of the slain. Saʿdāwī has viewed his creature through the sectarian prism that is Iraqi society, variously portraying him as the heroic ancestor, the model Iraqi citizen, the redeeming Mahdi, and the avenging angel of death and destruction. Paradoxically, he is a unifying figure whose lifetime and purpose are short-lived; he lives as long as chaos reigns, while resolving injustices according to the ancient code of blood vengeance when civil justice proves to be impotent.[61]

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59 See Section 8.4, for more on the psychology of suicide bombing.

60 The famous folktales that have also entered the western storytelling canon, as relayed by Shahrazād.

61 Section 8.4 will provide a greater exposition of the novel.

6.7.5 *Television series:* al-Hayba

In 2017, the archetypal revenge story of two tribes was re-cast according to a contemporary real life situation in Lebanon, i.e. the revenge killings that are regularly carried out between rival clans of the Bekaa Valley.[62] *Al-Hayba* (2017–2021) is a television series directed by Sāmir al-Barqāwī.[63] The longevity of the production makes it comparable with other lengthy "heroic epics", or *siyar* (s. *sīra*) that belong to the folkloric tradition. Because of this story's function, in both rejuvenating and completely transforming the Folktale (as presented in Chapter Two), this section affords it greater attention than other contemporary narratives. The series demonstrates that the Jahili blood vengeance model can easily accommodate more recent events, while a larger than life folk-hero continues to be relatable to contemporary audiences.

Either by coincidence or design, *al-Hayba* features as its central character (Jabal), Taym Ḥasan, the same Syrian actor who played Wā'il Kulayb's son, al-Hijris, under Ḥātim ʿAlī's direction of the television dramatisation of *al-Zīr Sālim* (2000). Nearly twenty-years on, he has been typecast as another duty-bound son of a murdered chief, this time the inheritor of a feud that initially plays out between two clans, *Bayt* Shaykh al-Jabal and *Bayt* al-Saʿīd.[64] In a subplot, the Shaykh al-Jabal clan is also beset by internal rivalry over its leadership, this playing out between two patrilineal cousins, Jabal and Shāhīn, who are also loyally bound to one another so that conflict, forgiveness and reconciliation are ongoing features of a complicated relationship. After his father's murder, Jabal b. Sulṭān Shaykh al-Jabal inherits the title of clan chief in a small fictional Lebanese village, the titular "al-Hayba" that is located near to the Syrian border and has for generations been neglected by corrupt elites. In his own words, Jabal expresses his background as follows:[65]

> أنا جبل. أنا جبل سلطان شيخ الجبل. ابن الهيبة. شقفة من هاي البلد. انحكم بالظروف مثل ما [ا]بيّ قبلي وجدي قبلي انحكم بالظروف. خلقنا والمنطقة منسيّة.

62 Sunniva Rose (2021) has expanded upon environmental factors fuelling cyclical violence, in a newspaper article, but these can be summarised here as: drug-smuggling; arms trading; a lack of alternative forms unemployment; and a Syrian refugee crisis.

63 A mark of *al-Hayba*'s success is its transition to an international market. All five series have been produced by MBC and made available on *Shāhid*, its online streaming platform. Three seasons are also available via another that is *Netflix*.

64 *Bayt* is an Arabic term, meaning "House".

65 See *al-Hayba*: *al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3), Episode 13, "Interview scene" (30.30 mins to 38.21), colloquial dialogue that provides context for the clan's history. Jabal's name reveals his nature, i.e. he is like a "mountain". See *Ḥ*16, in Section 3.6.1, for the significance of the mountain fortress in the heroic tradition.

لما الدنيا كانت ماشية بالمدايم وناس عم تكبر كان نحنا بالعتم. بالعتم. الحياة ميتة والرزق واقف. ما حدى اللي الله خلقه التكش فينا ولا هوى بصوبنا. من زمن جدودي انبح صوتنا ونحنا عم نحكي بحقوقنا. ما في مسؤول يوحّد الله عم يسمع. ما في مسؤول واحد.

I'm Jabal. I'm Jabal Sulṭān Shaykh al-Jabal. A son of al-Hayba [that is] a piece of this country. Governed by circumstances, just as my father and my grandfather before me were governed by circumstances. We were born in a forgotten area. When the world was in constant motion, and people were growing, we were in the dark. In the dark. Life dead and livelihood at a standstill. No-one (made by God) intervened on our behalf, nor went down beside us. From the time of my ancestors, our voice was made hoarse by speaking out for our rights. No-one in charge (and professing to believe in God) was listening. Not a single person in charge.

6.7.5.1 Blood of Kinship, Blood of Vengeance

Being an outlaw is a way of life in al-Hayba, initially for reasons of basic survival, but also because the forefathers have passed on their own profession to their sons. Although Jabal and his men are smugglers, they are honour bound by the same "manly ethics" first introduced, in Section 1.4.2. Day to day, they live by *al-uṣūl*, a frequently repeated term that means "codes of conduct", but, unlike *muruwwa*, is not gender specific. Among these codes, the hospitality contract is valued as sacred, but when severed this swiftly switches into an obligation to take blood vengeance. Revenge killings are cyclical and far too numerous to mention beyond listing a few examples:

1. ʿĀdil, Jabal's (younger) brother, avenges their father's murder, by mistakenly attributing his death to Sulaymān al-Saʿīd, thereby prompting a war that is only tempered by an arranged marriage between the two clans;[66]
2. Sumayya, Sulaymān al-Saʿīd's daughter, incites her kin to vengeance for her father's death.[67] Niḍāl, Sulaymān's nephew (and Sumayya's fiancé), swears to avenge this slight even if it takes him "forty-years",[68] and follow-

66 See Episodes 4 and 5, from *al-Hayba: al-ʾAwda* (Series 2).

67 See Episode 5, from *al-Hayba: al-ʾAwda* (Series 2), (10 to 15 mins). See also Section 2.3.1, for a comparison with the Folktale, when al-Yamāma incites her uncle to avenge Kulayb's death.

68 See Episode 19 (26.38 to 27.20 mins) and Episode 29 (25.25 mins), from *al-Hayba* (Series 1). As well as the forty-year War of al-Basūs, the Jahili War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrāʾ between

ing his failure, brought about by an untimely death, the blood vengeance obligation passes to Sāmī, Sulaymān's son, when he comes of age;[69]

3. Ṣakhr, another brother of Jabal, burns alive his cousin Rīmā's blackmailer, a criminal who makes a habit of photographing women in compromising situations;[70]
4. Hanā', Jabal's paternal aunt by marriage, calls for revenge against Jabal's mother, for engineering her husband's prolonged incarceration so that Jabal can inherit the clan title, and collaborates with the al-Saʿīd clan in their vendetta. She demands that "*qalb awlād al-Shāmiyya*", or the "hearts of the sons of the Syrian [woman]", be brought to her as dowry payment before she will allow Sāmī to marry her daughter;[71]
5. Jabal pays heavy prices for his stance against his nemesis, Zaydān (and Zaydān's allies), the first being a car bomb that kills his wife and son,[72] this act prompting him to kill Zaydān,[73] which in turn leads to the car bombing of his brother, Ṣakhr.[74] Jabal vows to dispense with Zaydān's network, entering the ritual state of an avenger and stating his oath in front of his community.[75] Following scenes of carnage and multiple executions demonstrating that Ṣakhr's life has no equal, the ritual state closes when Jabal stands before his brother's grave, stating "O Ṣakhr, it has been accomplished, your blood has not been squandered in vain!", or "*Mintʾhiyya yā Ṣakhr, dammak mā rāḥ hadr!*".[76] As a ritual practice, this statement is directly comparable with verse 4, from *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*.[77] When Jabal later discovers that the arch-villain who has orchestrated events

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the Banī ʿAbs and the Banī Dhubyān also lasted for the same duration. It is therefore no coincidence that avengers often state that they will patiently bide their time even if it takes forty-years to realise vengeance.

69 See Episode 2, from *al-Hayba: al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3), (22.19 to 23.30 mins).

70 See Episode 28, from *al-Hayba* (Series 1), (29.06 to 36.18 mins).

71 See Episode 11, of *al-Hayba: al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3), (16.15 to 16.52 mins). This echoes both the Jahili and the early Islamic traditions. See Chapter 3: (1) The Prophet Muḥammad's uncle Ḥamza's demise was compounded when his liver was ripped out and fed to his enemy's wife (Section 3.5); (2) Ibn Muljam, the Kharijite assassin of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, was incited to vengeance by his new bride as dowry payment (Section 3.3).

72 See closing scene of Episode 30, of *al-Hayba: al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3).

73 See closing scene of Episode 30, of *al-Hayba: al-Radd* (Series 4).

74 See Episode 1, of *al-Hayba*: *Jabal* (Series 5).

75 See Episode 2, of *al-Hayba*: *Jabal* (Series 5), (5.30 to 8.07 mins).

76 See Episode 5, of *al-Hayba*: *Jabal* (Series 5), (18.11 mins). *Mintʾhiyya* is a colloquialism that Jabal uses frequently, meaning "It's Over!", "I'm Done!", or "We're Through!". *Damm* is a dialectical variant of *dam* that means "blood".

77 See Section 7.4.3.

is still at large, he renews his vow to avenge Ṣakhr's death, this time by ripping the culprit apart limb from limb, his decision endorsed by a statement of incitement from his mother.[78]

6.7.5.2 Roiled Milk and Troubled Water

If Jabal is a formidable opponent when angered, then unprovoked he is also a generous employer. Day to day, he runs a local dairy, a contemporary representation of the milk-producing camel that sustained the community of Jahili times,[79] and is determined not to drive people out of business through overmechanisation, nor by creating economies of scale. The authorities suspect that the dairy serves as a money-laundering operation for his illegal interests, but this is largely hearsay. Originally, his mother (Umm Jabal) founded it as a cottage industry that is artisan, employing local men and women while also feeding their families and claiming as its premium product *laban*, or "yoghurt" made from the best cow's milk,[80] this being a staple accompaniment to traditional Lebanese cuisine. In one episode,[81] a disgruntled local called Burhān insults Umm Jabal, by throwing a pot of *laban* at her retreating back. This goes on to prompt retaliation by her sons, in this case a beating but not death. Matters escalate when the dairy is leased to Nimr al-Saʿīd, a seemingly innocuous new neighbour who later transpires to be a drug-lord looking for a local production site so that he can conceal and smuggle "Captagon" pills within pots of *laban* for distribution, in Lebanon and Syria.[82] "Captagon" is a drug that claims to turn militants into heroes when swallowed.[83] This time, "drugs" have mixed with "milk", so marking the severance of the hospitality contract between Jabal, the landlord, and Nimr, the guest who has violated their agreement. If the plot-line has failed to resonate with audiences unfamiliar with the ritual significance of polluting milk then they will nonetheless recognise the

78 See closing scene of Episode 23, from *al-Hayba: Jabal* (Series 5). See also Episode 27, (29.02 to 20.10 mins).

79 See Section 2.4.4 and Section 5.2. A milk-producing camel was a God-given gift to the people of Thamūd, its desecration an act that provoked divine wrath. Moreover, the slaying of al-Basūs' she-camel by Wāʾil Kulayb al-Taghlibī, and the mixing of its "blood" with "milk", provoked the forty-year war that bore her name (Chapter Two).

80 *Laban*, in Arabic, means "milk", or other "milk-related products". In different parts of the Arab world, it can range from a "butter-milk drink" to "curds and whey". In Lebanese parlance, it is usually associated with "yoghurt".

81 See closing scene of Episode 6, from *al-Hayba: al-Radd* (Series 4).

82 See closing scene of Episode 16, from *al-Hayba: al-Radd* (Series 4).

83 "Captagon", or Fenethylline Hydrocholoride, is an amphetamine that has helped exhausted militants in the Syrian Civil War to perform the tasks that are required of them without inhibition (Drahl 2015).

everyday reality of drug-smuggling, in Lebanon, for the same pills have been hidden inside pomegranates, in recent times.[84]

In Series 5, the function of liquidity that is central to narratives about blood vengeance concerns water. Some years on (and because of drought), Jabal has allowed a dam to be built on his land so as to sustain local farms equitably, however problems arise when the project manager, Wadīʿ, engineers a ruse to deny water access rights to one of the clans, thereby stoking conflict between the landowner and some of his dependents. Wadīʿ's role as a provocateur is comparable with al-Basūs, in the war that bears her name;[85] he is a trouble-making outsider who manipulates events for his own gain, in this case collaborating with both an organised crime network and the (so-called) Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in order to smuggle precious artefacts from Palmyra to Beirut and then on to an illegal international art market, through the use of a secret tunnel to the dam and also water-trucks. When Jabal learns of his plan, he realises that Wadiʿ is a formidable power-broker, one who if thwarted in his objective could choose to: (1) poison the water reservoir (that is a contemporary representation of the Jahili well); (2) cut off the water supply; or (3) flood the plains, by bombing the reservoir and unleashing a massive wave upon local residents.[86]

6.7.5.3 Governance

Like many heroes, Jabal is flawed and makes mistakes, but overall he is well-intentioned and represents good governance: (1) he resolves local disputes; (2) succours the needy; and (3) defends his protectorate. He is presented as a God-fearing man believing that he acts with divine sanction, which makes him comparable with the Abbasid leader. However, in view of the dire economic situation and the challenge of daily realities, he is also a pragmatist who permits consignments of light weapons that are crossing the Lebanese-Syrian border to pass through his own land, for which he is paid a commission, in kind. He also enables the growth and the trade of hashish so as to support local livelihoods, a phenomenon that is tolerated by the Lebanese authorities with the *proviso* that it does not escalate into a situation they can no longer ignore.[87]

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84 In 2021, Saudi Arabia imposed an import ban on Lebanese fruit and vegetables after pomegranates were found to contain "Captagon" pills that the Lebanese authorities claimed had originated in Syria (Spencer 2021).

85 See Section 2.3.

86 See Episode 22 from *al-Hayba: Jabal* (Series 5), (39 to 40 mins). See also Episode 27, (30 to 31 mins).

87 See Episode 1, from *al-Hayba: al-ʾAwda* (Series 2), (31.14 to 35 mins). Sulṭān, Jabal's father, states the nature of the family business and what they will and will not engage in.

Jabal has clear limits about what amounts to harmful goods, insisting on the examination of the contents of all consignments while strictly prohibiting the passage of highly addictive substances and heavy arms-dealing. Because of this stance, he stands in the way of powerful local and national interests, and is a marked man. Jabal's task is Herculean, his enemies the Hydra; after eliminating one, he must confront another that has grown back in its place.[88] All have been recruited, at one point or the other, by Zaydān, an influential figure operating from the shadows, who is not only intimately acquainted with his employees weaknesses, but also engages in human-trafficking, the smuggling of heavy-artillery and prolific drug-dealing. Zaydān's representatives are many; as Jabal discovers to his dismay, they even include members of his own extended family.

In the final series, it transpires that Zaydān is not the head of the snake-like monster after all, and so Jabal faces yet more trouble from an even more powerful foe. Moreover, this overlord of an organised crime network has struck a deal with the ultimate existential threat, ISIS, so as to transport precious monuments from Syria across the border. Jabal foils the plot, but in so doing faces retaliation from different vested interests, including an army of ISIS militants. As response, Jabal unifies his own men with a call to arms and the expression of a counter-narrative to ISIS' claim to a Caliphate, stating first that God is for all and does not privilege sect, nor religious belief over another. He then delegitimises their ideology and objective, by defining it as colonisation by a foreign occupier:[89]

> اللي بأقدر أخبركن إياه إنه في غرب دعى صوب أرضنا سلبوها واحتلوها ورخّصوا بأرواح شبابنا. ليش؟ لحتى يمرّ اشرارهن. ما بس هيك. حَطوا ايدهن بايد ناس – وحرام الشؤم – وين محله بيحِل معهن الخراب. مجموعين مجمّعين من كل جو ومن كل صوب. ما عندهن منطقة ولا عشيرة ولا قبيلة ولا دولة. ومسمّين حالهن الدولة الإسلامية. الدواعش إذا بدكن. سيْل جائف. ما بيعرف الحلال من الحرام. ما فيك تسألِيه "شو بدك"؟

88 See Episode 30, *al-Hayba: al-Radd* (Series 4), (25.05 to 28.40 mins). This series more generally refers to the motif of the "serpent", but in one scene, in which Jabal is teaching his nephew, Ghāzī, how best to catch a "snake", he receives a sudden visit from Sitt Thurayyā, who is Zaydān's right-hand.

89 See Episode 28, of *al-Hayba: Jabal* (Series 5), (5.47 to 7.15 mins). The dialogue is relayed in the vernacular and so does not comply with grammatical conventions, nor spelling.

> What I am able to tell you is that there are strangers called up toward our land, who have looted it, occupied it and cheapened the souls of our youth. Why? In order to pass along their wickedness. It's not only that. They have put their hands in the hands of people – pity the bad luck – wherever it is, they bring ruination with them. Groups consolidated from every environment and every direction. They have no region, no clan, no tribe and no state. And they call themselves the Islamic State. DĀʿISH,[90] if you like. A waterless flood. It doesn't know what is permitted from what is forbidden. You cannot ask it "what do you want"?

6.7.5.4 Rap as a Form of Protest

Unlike the Folktale that is punctuated with verse, *al-Hayba* is a dramatic representation that gives its characters voice through dialogue. Nevertheless, one episode contains a catchy hip-hop song,[91] this combining references to Lebanese folk music and the Arabic poetic tradition. Lyrically, the song features a rap by Jaʿfar al-Ṭuffār (c. 2015) called *al-Habū*, or "The Rising Up", that he recites in a Lebanese dialect as follows:[92]

al-Habū

1 المصاري بتفضّي الراس وبتعبي الكروش
2 عالم عم تنهش ب بعضها صارت كلها وحوش
3 واللي معه مال
4 ليرة منّه ما بتنال
5 غير ما تعمّله زبال وتنكش عنده بالمنكوش

6 بس الفقر عزم الفتى موَلّج بكفّه
7 إتكل ع زنودك زنودك وحدن بيكفو

90 DĀʿISH is an Arabic acronym for *al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya fī-l-ʿIrāq wa-l-Shām*, i.e. ISIS, or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

91 See Episode 9, of *al-Hayba: al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3), (27.42 to 28.55 mins).

92 © Jaafar Touffar, c. 2015, *al-Habū* [Music Score]. Lyrics reproduced with kind permission of the artist. This section transcribes most words according to the published lyrics that have been expressed phonetically, see al-Ṭuffār (c. 2015). However, this transcription substitutes *baʿḍ-hā*, for *baʿḍā*, and *maʿa-hu*, for *maʿū*, so as to reflect the possessive pronoun. As this is colloquial speech, grammatical conventions have been suspended.

8 والعُطشان البدّه ماي يشرب بكفه
9 لأنه من غير كفوفه ما بيروي الشراب

10 اشتغل تحت دَين العالم حتى تشبع ذلّ
11 فلاحة ومن دون التعويض ع بيتك بتفل
12 من الجمل إدنو بيعطوك تعمل منها أكل
13 بس العترة ع محابيس بين الجرد وبين السهل

The Rising Up

1 Money empties the head and fills up fat bellies
2 People are tearing one another to pieces, they have all have turned into wild beasts
3 And as for the one with money
4 You won't get paid a *līra* by him
5 Unless you work for him as a garbage collector, and plough for him with the hoe[93]

6 Only poverty makes the young man undertake [work] with his bare hand[s]
7 Rely upon your fore-arm, your fore-arm, just one of them will do
8 The one who thirsts, who wants for water, drinks from his hand
9 Because, for those without [many] hands,[94] the drink cannot quench him

10 Toil under the world's debt until you are filled with humiliation
11 Farmers, and those without compensation, from your home you [are forced to] flee
12 With the sum of all the paltry amounts they give you, you convert it into food
13 Only the destitute are held captive,[95] between the barren slope and the soft plain

93 A common reference to the absence of municipal waste collection in Beirut, in recent years, as well as the requirement for casual labour to perform the task, many of whom that have migrated from rural areas in search of work.

94 I.e. without a life of ease.

95 In Lebanese dialect, *ʿatra* means "destitute", but is more formally derived from that which is "forsaken".

The musical score was not commissioned for *al-Hayba*, specifically, but instead reflects Jaʿfar al-Ṭuffār's background as a delivery driver negotiating a difficult path in Hermel, his home town, while resisting recruitment by either Hizbullah or the drug-lords or the army.[96] The stage name, *al-Ṭuffār*, is a colloquialism meaning "the have-not", an identity that not only appeals to unemployed youth but which phonetically evokes the name of Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār, a Muslim martyr known for his charity.[97] Incidentally, al-Ṭuffār as a hip-hop moniker is shared with another Hermel rapper, called Bū Nāṣir al-Ṭuffār, who specialises in *al-muqāwama bi-l-kalām*, i.e "Resistance by Speech" (Khalīl 2024). Generically, a form of authentic protest rap, spoken with a Baalbek accent, and generated by marginalised and impoverished youth of the Bekaa Valley, is growing in popularity. While Jaʿfar al-Ṭuffār's verses, in *al-Habū*, are not sectarian, there are inconclusive indicators that the impoverished groups referred to in both the song and the television series belong to the Shiʿa, and that sectarian tension that fuelled the Lebanese Civil War, between 1975 and 1990, is unresolved.[98] Even so, it is important to add that, such is the ongoing economic crisis in Lebanon, protest against the political elite is commonly shared between all sects and most social classes.[99] Both the musical interlude, in the episode, and a music video meander through urban quarters known as *al-ʿashwāʾiyyāt* that are off-grid and home to many marginalised communities.[100] The song title, *al-Habū*, is a colloquialism that derives from the verb *habb* that can either mean to "rise up" in support of something or to "revolt" against it,[101] a term for which a Lebanese army recruitment *nashīd* can provide some context (al-Quwwāt al-Lubnāniyya Maṣlaḥat-al-Ṭullāb n.d.):[102]

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96 See CBC Arts (2015), for an article about Jaʿfar al-Ṭuffār.

97 See Section 8.9; Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār was a Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and the older brother of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

98 Some characters in the series speak with a Baalbek accent, while most clans that, in reality, live in this area are Shiʿa. However, the series does not refer to *Ahl al-Bayt*, and while the family is clearly Muslim they do not bear names that indicate their religious denomination. Therefore, it is likely that the director did not want sectarianism, a painful and provocative subject in Lebanon, to be a theme of the narrative.

99 Following the port explosion in August 2020, Jaʿfar ʿAbd al-Karīm (2021), a popular television host working for the German news network, *Deutsche Welle* (DW), has interviewed a wide range of Beirut locals about their many grievances.

100 In Arabic, *al-ʿashwāʾiyyāt* refers to "unplanned urban areas" that typically house economic migrants from impoverished rural areas and war-torn neighbouring countries.

101 See Wehr (1979), s.v. *habb* and also *habā*. See also verse 54, and verse 84, of *Lā Naksa*, in Section 7.4.1. Alternatively, the word derives from the verb *habā* and refers to "rising dust". Reference to the YouTube video shows impoverished working-class men labouring in sweatshops, or bearing guns on a wild steppe. Therefore the ambiguity is likely to be intentional.

102 Lexical use of *habū* occurs in stanza 4, of a nine-stanza motivational *nashīd* for young

Tahaddada Lubnān al-maṣīr

لما القوات تنادي بهبو رجال بلادي
من الجبل للوادي كلهن معهن زوادي
صوت البشير هدية

> When the forces call for the rising up of my country's men
> From the mountain to the valley, all of them armed with guns[103]
> The voice of Bashīr is a guide[104]

Returning to the rap, *al-Habū*, further scrutiny of its verses reveals very limited reference to what this study calls "blood vengeance motifs": (1) line 2 suggests "dismemberment" as people "tear one another to pieces"; (2) lines 8 and 9 refer to the "thirsting" of deprived workers that has not yet been sated; (3) line 12 implies that "food" is insufficient on a meagre salary, leaving people short of supplies to "eat", which is why they have turned into wild beasts; (4) the final line concludes that the forgotten poor have been "sacrificed" at the hands of rich. However, as the rap does not explicitly call for retaliation, it is important to state that *al-Habū* is not a "blood vengeance poem". Instead, like *Ḥamāsiyya* 632,[105] this is verse of complaint and *hijā'*, i.e. a "lampoon" that targets the political classes. It is reasonable of tone, unlike examples of militant jihadist verse that will feature in the following chapters, but it still calls for protest, and strikes a note of warning. In the music video, the rapper is armed as he stands on the plains, at the song's close, and shoots his gun into the distance, but his poetic stance remains ambivalent and the weapon he carries in the video is argu-

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cadets called *Tahaddada Lubnān al-maṣīr*, or "Lebanon Has Been Determined of the Outcome".

103 The literal meaning of *zawād* is "provisions"; in the context of a war, it means "military equipment".

104 *Al-Bashīr* literally means "the Herald", but here refers to Bashīr al-Jumayyil (Bachir Gemayel), a divisive figure, formerly President of Lebanon, Leader of the Phalanges (*Ḥizb al-Katā'ib al-Lubnāniyya*), and Commander of the Lebanese Forces, who was assassinated, in 1982. His death prompted a terrible campaign of vengeance against scapegoated Palestinian Sunni refugees and Lebanese Shi'a living in the Shatila Refugee Camp and the Sabra district of West Beirut. It later transpired that a Syrian Maronite member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party was responsible for the attack, blaming the Lebanese Maronite, al-Jumayyil, for collaborating with Israel and alienating Lebanon from Bilad al-Sham, i.e. Greater Syria.

105 See Section 3.8.3. Verse 1, of *Ḥ*632, refers to an Umayyad ruler eating in luxury and comfort.

ably a hunting rifle, rather than a direct call to arms.[106] In other words, there is insufficient evidence to prove intent to incite violence. If there is a spectrum of political poetry, from lampoon, on the one hand, to incitement to insurrection, on the other, then this lyric is benign if it stands alone, but it also has potential to escalate a cause should any follow up verse include a more comprehensive set of "blood vengeance motifs" and a direct command to commit violence against a target group. This poem lies on the cusp of intent and is difficult to categorise, in view of an ambiguous title that feasibly can be interpreted as "The Revolt". Provided that its author steers well clear of any calls for death, or killing, then it can serve as a useful counter-narrative to "blood vengeance poetry", by demonstrating how verse can challenge the status quo as a catchy lyric, without resorting to actual violence.[107]

More generally, the series that is *al-Hayba* demonstrates another important facet of storytelling, which is in providing a platform for the discussion of deeply rooted social issues that Lebanese newspapers are reluctant to touch for fear of litigation, or some form of violent reprisal. Such has been the controversial reception of the series that episodes carry a disclaimer disavowing any relationship with that reality (Farhat 2018). The third series, in particular, demonstrates the consequences that befall a television anchor, Nūr Raḥma, who threatens to expose a corrupt system that she initially courted. In this, she seeks a solution that challenges the state, but does not resort to the ruthlessness of blood vengeance. Nūr's series of questions, below, has been taken from an episode in which she has been admitted as a guest to interview Jabal, who here is a fugitive from justice:[108]

> والقتلى اللي برقبتك. والمعارك اللي عم بتصير ع[لى] الحدود. والناس اللي عم بتموت. ما الها اهل؟ ما الها اولاد؟ ما الها ام[ه]ات؟ ولا هيك الموت بالنسبة لإلك مثل شربة الماي.
>
> And those killed on your watch. The skirmishes that are taking place on the borders. The people who are dying. Don't they have families? Don't they have children? Don't they have mothers? Or is death according to you like a drink of water?

106 In 2021, the music video could be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SArNl8Vy8OM.

107 What constitutes incitement will be later discussed, in Section 7.6.

108 See *al-Hayba*: *al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3), Episode 13, "Interview scene" (30.30 to 38.21 mins).

The house they sit in belongs to an area of Beirut that is governed by an elder, according to the terms of the hospitality contract, i.e. gift exchange, while not being subject to civil law. As a stranger, Nūr is offered protection to interview Jabal, but is also instructed in no uncertain terms that if she betrays the trust invested in her then she will be killed.[109] All episodes of this television production post-date the generation of poems that will be presented, in the following chapter. With the exception of Series 5, the story does not concern jihadism, nor even the same Lebanese cities as the poem *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*,[110] but the events it describes are relevant for conveying a broader culture of blood vengeance, in Lebanon, to modern audiences, a culture that is so entrenched that it can periodically erupt into sectarian conflict, civil war, or even propel a jihadist narrative. As in the Jahiliyya, storytelling is a tool for relaying the ways of the forefathers, for building a bridge from the tradition into the present, and for contextualising other forms of cultural production, like poetry.

6.8 Palestinian Rap

As a medium for local protest, rap music is a fascinating area for further exploration that deserves its own chapter, but is largely beyond the scope of this study because the form originates in America, most often reflecting the social disaffection and problems faced by inner-city, impoverished black youth. Nevertheless rap music, relayed in Arabic, is generically compatible with *ḥamāsa* poetry, while carrying greater kudos with today's young people than does the classical canon. Palestinian protest is more usually associated with criticism of Israel, as the Occupier, rather than the many short-comings of Palestinian leadership. Israel frequently portrays the population of Gaza as a monolith, blindly obedient to Hamas since becoming the governing authority, in 2006, instead of recognising the daily reality of disgruntled citizens caught between a rock and a hard place. Muḥammad Lāfī is an example of a Palestinian rapper singing about problems that his community faces in a Gaza ghetto, while protesting to local leadership about abject social conditions. A solitary figure, Lāfī's lyrics provide the poetic function of *ʿitāb*, i.e. he holds his own kinship group responsible for his community's decline, his songs and music videos exposing daily hardships, also providing catharsis for his own intense feelings of frustration (*Fann li-l-*

109 See *al-Hayba*: *al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3), Episode 13, "Hospitality Scene", (14.44 to 16.28 mins) and "Preparation Scene" (19.40 to 20.58 mins). The former reveals the hospitality contract that Nūr has entered into and its conditions. The latter expresses what will occur if she violates its terms.

110 See Section 7.4.5.

Ḥayāh 2023).[111] His lyrics are authentic and provocative, this resulting in his frequent incarceration for incitement to civil unrest as well as being on the receiving end of trumped up accusations of collaboration with the Occupation so as to discredit him (Yāghī 2017):[112]

صوته القوي يعلو من بين زقاق مخيّم جباليا شمال غزّة كأيّ فلسطيني لاجئ يعيش في المخيمات مع معاناته في ظل الانقسام الفلسطيني والاحتلال والحصار وعدم الحصول على حقّه، حتى أن صوته يزعج السياسيين كثيرًا، والاعتقال بالنسبة له وقت عادي يقضيه في الزنزانة لا يؤثّر على فكره القائم على إحياء حقّ المظلومين وحرية تعبيره عبر الراب والفيديو، هكذا يحب أن يكون محمد لافي مغنّي الراب ابن مخيم جباليا ... أول عام ٢٠١٧ كان فارقًا أمام لافي فجملته ((الثورة من المخيم جاية)) في أغنيته "حقك" أشعلت مواقع التواصل الأجتماعي، وعلى أثرها دفع الكثيرين للخروج ومساندة سكّان المخيم الذين قرّروا النزول للشارع منذ الإعلان عن الحراك الشعبي للمطالبة بحقوق الغزيين بالكهرباء، وشاركوا في مسيرات خرجت في الرابع عشر من يناير / كانون الثاني من العام الحالي من بين زقاق المخيم وصولًا لساحة ترنس المخيم للحراك الذي أطلق ثورة ضد سياسة قطع الكهرباء على البيوت الغزية، في المقابل كان السياسيون ينعمون بها على مدار اليوم، لتنتقل شمالًا وصولًا إلى حنوب مخيّمات مدينة رفح.

His strong voice rings out from Jabalya Refugee Camp's alleys, Northern Gaza, just like any Palestinian refugee living with hardship in the Camps, under shadow of Palestinian Partition, Occupation and Siege, and unable to attain his due. Even though his voice greatly alarms the political classes, according to him, detention is normal, his time spent in a prison cell not deterring him in commemorating the rights of the oppressed, while expressing himself via rap and video. So it is that Muḥammad Lāfī, a son of the Camp, loves being Jabalya's rapper ... The beginning of 2017 was distinctive for Lāfī, for his lyric, "Revolution from the Camp is Coming", in his

111 Lāfī's interview was broadcast on the television programme, *Fann li-l-Ḥayāh*, on 30 November 2023, but was conducted in November 2022.

112 Arabic quotation extracted from "Muḥammad Lāfī: yanbaḍ ka-ughniyat rāb", Amjad Yāghī, 8 July 2017 © Alaraby Aljadeed (The New Arab Newspaper) 2017; reproduced with permission of the publisher, URL https://alaraby.co.uk.

> song *Haggak* ("Your Due"),[113] went viral on social media. In its wake, many were prompted to go out in support of the residents of the Camp, who had decided to take to the streets ever since the Popular Movement made an announcement demanding Gazans right to electricity. They took part in public demonstrations, on 14th January (2017), starting from the Jabalya Camp's alleyways before arriving at Trans Market Place in order to agitate and launch a rebellion against the policy of cutting power to Gazan houses. While the politicians conferred about it throughout the day, the protests moved from north to south of the Camps, in Rafaḥ City.

The quotation above comes from *al-ʿArabī al-Jadīd* (The New Arab), a Qatari owned media outlet that is based in London. In this particular instance, the article serves as a form of *khabar*, i.e. "an account", that provides context for the lyrics to *Haggak*, much in the same way that witness statements in medieval Arabic compendia support historical verse.[114] The controversial verses prompting revolt are as follows (Lāfī 2017):[115]

Ḥaggak

1 الذُّل طعمه مُر
2 ما بطيقُه الحر
3 خمسة ستّة بينعدّوا عَ الأصابع
4 كلامهم طالع بيفِش الغُل
5 اثنين مليون ما لهم لُزوم
6 وين الحِلم اجتاحك الهَم
7 قوم طالِب بحقّك اِعمل Zoom
8 لكل فضايحهم ... ولك
9 زيّي زيّك بطالب بعدالة
10 بس مش زيّك لأنه صوتي عالي
11 وانتَ مليان همالة

113 In Modern Standard Arabic, *Ḥaggak* is *Ḥaqqak*, meaning "Your Due", or "Your Right".

114 See Section 2.2.2.

115 © MOHAMMED LAFI, 2017, *Ḥaggak* [Music Score]. Lyrics reproduced with kind permission of the artist and his music agent, Ahmed Mustafa.

12 بيكفّي نذالة ما بعترف بقيادة
13 يسقط كل حد ساكت
14 ومداري الوجع
15 وتمر أيام تحت الحرام
16 بيفرّغ الوجع قبل ما ينام
17 تجمّعنا كلنا نتوحّد نرفع نفس الرّاية
18 الثّورة بالمخيّم من المخيّم جايّة
19 الحريّة نعمة بايديك
20 سرقوها منّك في البداية
21 ارفع علامة النّصر ظُلمه كفاية
22 أُوقَفْ ضد كل حد ماكِل حقّك كاتم صوتك
23 كسّر قلمك وأصبحِت مُنهار
24 إيدكم في إيد بعض
25 ما تنسى حلمك
26 ما تنسى ألمك
27 جوّاك إعصار
28 بكرة حييجي نهار
29 مخيم جباليا بأعلى صوت بينادي
30 بنطالب بالحريّة
31 الحريّة لكل بلادي
32 شباب الشّاطئ لبّوا النِدا
33 من المغازي بيطلع الصدى
34 من الشّمال للجنوب رح يوصل لأبعد مدى
35 كيف بدي أحرّر بلدي ومَطْلبي أساسي
36 بموت عشرين ساعة قطعة كهرب وأربع ساعات مهموم
37 شكّيتوا بانتمائي لأني حكيت ما بيدوم الظلم

38 يا أخي سيبوا الكراسي فش شَبَكْ ولا Goal
39 تجمّعنا كلنا نتوحّد نرفع نفس الراية
40 الثّورة بالمخيّم من المخّيم جايّة
41 الحريّة نعمة بإيديك
42 سرقوها منّك في البداية
43 ارفع علامة النّصر ظُلمه كفاية

Your Due

1 Disgrace, its taste is bitter
2 The noble one can't stand it
3 Five, six, we count off [a list of complaints] on [our] fingers
4 Their words, when they come out, let out a raging thirst[116]
5 Two million [people][117] have no basic necessities
6 Where is the dream? Worry has struck you
7 Rise up! Demand your due! Get on "Zoom"[118]
8 For all their shameful acts, and for yourself
9 Like me, like you, demanding justice
10 But [I'm] not like you because my voice is loud
11 Whereas you are filled up and overflowing with tears
12 Disgraceful behaviour, it's more than enough. [I] don't recognise any leadership
13 Everyone has fallen silent
14 Pain is circling all around
15 Days pass under sin
16 Pain frees itself before it calms down
17 We have all rallied together, uniting, raising the same banner
18 Revolution in the Camp, from the Camp it's coming
19 Freedom is a benefit at your disposal
20 They stole it from you, in the beginning

116 Note on the translation. The rapper speaks in a vernacular Palestinian dialect that combines Levantine Arabic with Bedouin pronunciation of the letter *qāf*, instead of the glottal stop. See Wehr (1979), s.v. *ghull*, *ghill*, *ghalīl*, and *fash ghilla-hu*, meaning respectively "burning thirst", "rancour", "thirst for revenge", and "to vent anger".

117 When the song came out, in 2017, the population of Gaza was around two million people.

118 "Zoom" is a reference to video conferencing, which enables Gazans to publicise their plight to the outside world. This verse somewhat evokes Bob Marley and the Wailers singing "Get Up, Stand Up".

21 Raise the sign of victory! Enough of injustice!
22 Take a stand against everyone who eats your due and silences your voice!
23 Shatter your pen![119] You've had a nervous breakdown
24 Your hands are in the hands of others
25 Don't forget your dream!
26 Don't forget your pain!
27 There is a whirlwind inside you
28 Tomorrow,[120] daylight will come
29 Jabalya Camp calls out, in its loudest voice
30 We demand freedom
31 Freedom for all my country
32 The Beach Boys keep on calling[121]
33 From Maghazi Camp,[122] the echo resounds
34 From North to South, it will reach the farthest distance
35 How is it that I want to liberate my country, when my claim is basic
36 With twenty-hours dead in a power-cut, and four-hours in a state of worry
37 You have complained about my connexions,[123] because I have spoken up, as long as there is injustice
38 O Brother, leave your seats! There is no net, and no goal[124]
39 We have all rallied together, uniting, raising the same banner
40 Revolution in the Camp, from the Camp it's coming
41 Freedom is a benefit at your disposal
42 They stole it from you, in the beginning
43 Raise the sign of victory! Enough of injustice!

As in the case of Ja'far al-Ṭuffār's rap, *al-Habū*,[125] *Ḥaggak* does not call for violent retaliation, and therefore is categorically not a "blood vengeance poem", but rather a poem that lies lower on the spectrum of dissent, this demonstrating how protest poetry can be both powerful and peaceful. However, Lāfi's

119 *Kassir qalamak* is an expression of finality and sadness that means "there is nothing else to write, or say, so you may as well snap your pen in two".
120 In Levantine Arabic, *bukra* can mean "tomorrow", but also "in the near future".
121 Literally, "Youth of the beach remained calling".
122 *Mukhayyam al-Maghāzī* is another Palestinian refugee camp, in Gaza.
123 *Intimā'ī*, or "my connexions", is employed sarcastically, meaning "baseless accusations concerning collaboration with the Israeli authorities so as to divide the community".
124 In Palestinian vernacular, *fish* means *lā yūjad*, or, "cannot be found"; "net", for *shabak*, is at best guess-work informed by "no goal".
125 See Section 6.7.5.4.

periodic incarceration demonstrates that the authorities consider him to be a provocateur, fearing that his lyrics provoke to protest and potentially to civil insurrection. Lāfī is clearly aware of the poetic tradition, employing recognisable markers such as sleeplessness and worry (verse 6), a storm (verse 27),[126] well known oppositions that compare enforced silence with calling out for help (verse 10–11, verse 13, verse 22, verse 29, verse 32, verse 33), and complaint, be this the community's list of grievances (verse 3), or the authorities' objections that have been directed against the poet (verse 37). Most importantly, as does Ibn al-Rūmī, in "The Basra Elegy," Lāfī is a poet who gives voice to the silence (verses 10–11).[127] As is typical, in *ḥamāsa* poetry, shame and honour are deeply rooted themes; verses 1–2 state that the noble citizen has been humiliated, whereas verse 8, verse 12 and verse 15 accuse the authorities of disgraceful behaviour. Lāfī and his community, like the Bakr tribe in the *akhbār* about the War of al-Basūs,[128] live under oppression, this denying them access to the most basic of utilities that are necessary for daily living, in this case electricity, instead of water. Lāfī frequently refers to injustice and theft (verse 9, verses 20–21, verse 23, verse 37, verse 43), and basic want (verse 5, verses 35–36). In verse 4, he also speaks of a raging thirst that is intentionally vague, and can be interpreted either as an expression of hunger or of anger. Direct prompts to protest occur in verses that contain the imperative voice; rise up and demand your due (verse 7), raise the sign of victory (verse 21, verse 43), take a stand (verse 22), demand freedom (verse 30), give up your chairs (verse 38). Lāfī, most controversially, alludes to a whirlwind, in verse 27; the storm, in Classical Arabic poetry, is a metaphor for war. The following chapter will address many of the same themes, particularly, in *Lā Naksa*, a poem that more comprehensively addresses the subject of Palestinian displacement and suffering, while reflecting a contrasting position that calls for jihad.[129]

To be clear, the rap lyrics, in *Ḥaggak* by Muḥammad Lāfī, and *al-Habū* by Jaʿfar al-Ṭuffār, are at the vanguard of a type of poetry that this study promotes as a counter-narrative to the blood vengeance message, in verse. With youthful verve, these rappers understand the poetic tradition, but also possess the cre-

126 Sleeplessness, worry and a storm are tropes that many classical poets employ, the most well-known example of which is Imruʾ al-Qays, in his *Muʿallaqa*.

127 See Section 6.2.2. Giving voice to the silence has precedence in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, when the poet stands beside the deserted encampment, and issues complaint. In the case of the Abbasid poet, Ibn al-Rūmī, complaint takes on the nature of incitement to blood vengeance. Here, there is yet another variation on the *aṭlāl* theme. Muḥammad Lāfī stands beside the still inhabited Camp, instead prompting to protest, rather than to retaliation.

128 See Section 2.3.2.

129 See Section 7.4.1.

ative impulse to move on and make verse resonate with new audiences, also harmonising with contemporary social movements that exert their democratic right to speak truth to power, and call for restraint from all sides. In Chapter Nine, narrative strategies will be proposed for peace-making between feuding parties. Poets like Lāfī and al-Ṭuffār are already exemplary, for demonstrating how to reach new audiences with powerful protest songs that promote social justice, using peaceful messaging.

6.9 Concluding Remarks

This above list of influential storytelling media is not exhaustive. *Fauda* (2015–) is an example of a television series portraying the daily struggles between Israel Defence Forces (IDF) operatives and Hamas and ISIS recruits, in Gaza and the West Bank.[130] Relayed in Hebrew and Arabic, it has divided critics who both laud and criticise, but it offers a valuable insight into conflict as told from an Israeli perspective, also demonstrating that vengeance can be propelled by agents from both sides. Aside from presenting examples of verse that pave a route into the present, this chapter has demonstrated that contemporary storytelling also recalls the past, and that recent narratives, like folktales, contain both fixed and variable motifs that hark back to earlier anecdotes, while adapting to the times in which they are being conveyed. In Chapter Two, folklore and "historical narratives" helped to situate and contextualise Jahili "blood vengeance poetry", most notably in the case of *Ayyām al-ʿArab*. Modern entertainment can provide alternative forms of cultural production so that the blood vengeance theme continues to thrive,[131] also providing a forum for the discussion of more recent social issues. It is by relation to this platform that the following chapter's militant jihadist poetry can derive a relationship, and be more readily understood.

130 The series is available on *Netflix*. The title has been derived from the Arabic word *fawḍā*, that means "chaos".

131 As vengeance is a universal theme, cultural production includes international cinema.

CHAPTER 7

Language, Branding & Incitement

7.1 Revisiting Jihad

Chapter Three made the argument that jihad can manifest as a form of blood vengeance, this also celebrating heroic "fighting spirit", i.e. *ḥamāsa*. As the prompt for action, jihad is recognisable in early "blood vengeance poetry", such as Kharijite sectarian verse railing against the Umayyad establishment, also Abū Tammām's and al-Mutanabbī's panegyrics directing war against a Byzantine enemy. Notwithstanding the earlier introduction, intensive usage of "jihad", at least as a poetic term, corresponds more closely with twentieth-century anti-colonial discourses, for which the symbolic enemy is an imperial power. Contemporary militant cultural narratives tend to frame jihad as an "anti-crusader alliance" (Lohlker 2013:86), a phrase referring to wars of the medieval period which polarised east and west, Islam and Christianity, particularly in the battle for Jerusalem. Although jihadists often direct the alliance binding them together against an Other, which is notionally Christian, poems featuring in this chapter will demonstrate that they can also target Zionist Jews, or denounced Muslims (Holtmann 2013b:58). Denounced Muslims can be either non-conformist or western collaborators. When blood vengeance is presented as a tale of two communities, hostility is directed at a perceived threat, irrespective of whether this is a tribal, ethnic, political, religious, or sectarian identity. In the previous chapter, an Iraqi Shiʿi poem follows in the classical blood vengeance model, this also invoking a jihadist obligation against Sunni Mamluk and Ottoman rule.[1] From northern Nigeria, short examples demonstrate that jihadist poetry can be directed at Sunni Muslims by other Sunni Muslims, albeit from different tribes, when one group judges the other to be unjust.[2] Chapter Seven's position is that this type of poetry is not exclusive. It can be coopted by any sect as long as it positions itself against a rival community. There is a structural affinity between jihad and blood vengeance. In each case, verse incites retaliation against another tribe, this following a breakdown in cooperation.

Modern jihadist poetry requires a narrative, much in the same way that early *ḥamāsa* verse requires *akhbār* and folkloric tales in order to provide con-

1 See Section 6.3.

2 See Section 6.4.

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text for the action. The previous chapter provided more recent examples of storytelling across a variety of popular media, these ensuring that blood vengeance as practice continues to be understood. Because they do not belong to the establishment, militant jihadist sub-cultures depend upon the internet to spread awareness of their own particular message. Online magazines, for example, provide historical anecdotes to demonstrate continuity of a cause as well as an ideology, these initiating the acolyte into a better comprehension concerning the quest for revenge. The most disturbing material (which this study does not cover) is of performative revenge acts that are filmed and then uploaded onto internet viewing platforms. Irrespective of visual differences in delivery, there continues to be many similarities between "blood vengeance poetry" and jihadist poetry. Blood vengeance is rooted in the tradition, be this Classical Arabic poetry, folklore, sacrificial rituals, or myth. Likewise jihadist verse, which Holtmann (2013a:105–106, 117–118) has compared to the poetry of Samurai and Norse mythology, in that the actions of war and self-sacrifice help to preserve a community.[3] While Jahili poetry was once thought to invoke the supernatural, jihadist poetry similarly possesses an almost talismanic power that is transformative.[4] Despite these connexions with the past, jihadist poetry is very much part of the present, rapidly advancing technology permitting its ideology to be re-cast within a virtual world, this projecting "myths" about "community, conspiracy and salvation" (Holtmann 2013b:19). Jihadist sub-cultures typically frame war as part of a greater design; motifs, colours and signs significant for conveying a cultic meaning which Holtmann (2013b:11) has termed "idol value".

There are also other points of comparison between the poetry of blood vengeance and jihadist verse. Blood vengeance is a vital institution which Chapter One compared with a blood bank, i.e. following an unlawful act of homicide, a debtor tribe is compelled to donate blood as reparation, for which a claimant tribe receives a transfusion. This form of accountability resonates with jihadist narratives that consider their dead soldiers to be *shuhadāʾ* (s. *shahīd*), or "martyrs" to the cause of jihad.[5] For example: (1) Mortaza Motahhery (1980; cited

3 In Chapters Four and Five, Abbasid "blood vengeance poetry" was compared with Anglo-Saxon epic poetry.

4 Philipp Holtmann (2013a:103–120) has discussed the talismanic power of jihadist poetry, in a chapter focussed upon the verse of an eminent al-Qaʿida ideologue.

5 Definition of "martyr": a person who is killed because of their religious or political beliefs (*Paperback Oxford English Dictionary* 2006). In the 2023/2024 conflict between Israel and Hamas, the term has come to mean any Arab killed by Jews, irrespective of religious, or political affiliation.

in Cook 2007:140–141) has compared the blood shed by the slain fighters of the Iranian revolution (of the late 1970s) to a blood transfusion required by an anaemic society, i.e. the blood of self-sacrifice acts in lieu of enemy blood, and will be deemed sufficient only when the enemy is defeated; (2) Sayyid Quṭb (n.d.; cited in Cook 2007:139), an influential Muslim Brotherhood thinker, has argued that martyrdom is an alternative to victory because the martyr is involved in a long game; (3) ʿAbd Allāh ʿAzzām (2002; cited in Cook 2007:159), a founding member of al-Qaʿida, has stated that the provision of human sacrificial blood is a religious obligation required for nation-building. These descriptions of the drivers behind both Shiʿi and Sunni martyrdom draw parallels not only with the blood vengeance ritual but with the sacrificial act, when a debt to life is paid to both society and the divinity.[6]

7.2 Defining the Jihadist Poem

In his study of twentieth-century Egyptian jihadist verse, Nabīl al-Muḥayyish (1997:212) has defined a "jihadist poem" as one which: (1) unites Muslims; (2) reaches across boundaries; and (3) is a symbolic position of resistance against an Other. He has added that, at heart, jihadist poetry is *ḥamāsa* poetry:

> تتميز لغة شعر الجهاد بجزالة الألفاظ وفخامتها، لأنه في غالبه شعر حماسي، فهو إما حض على الجهاد والمقاومة أو مدح للبطولة أو تصوير للمعارك الحربية ...
> al-Muḥayyish 1997:256

> The language of the poetry of jihad is distinct, in its purity of style and emphasis because, in the main, it is *ḥamāsa* poetry and is either incitement to jihad and resistance or praise for heroism or a depiction of wartime conflicts ...

Generically, the jihadist poem is very flexible and can embrace lampoon, praise and lamentation. When it serves as elegy, mourning the loss of land replicates the act of grieving over the desert traces and a more glorious past, this connecting the past with the present (al-Muḥayyish 1997:155, 246–247).[7] Jihadist poets typically employ longer metres for describing battles and heroes, and shorter metres for expressions of *ḥamāsa* and *anāshīd* (al-Muḥayyish 1997:272–277).

6 See Section 2.5.3.

7 See also Section 6.2.2, and Sperl's (2013:12–16) comments on "The Basra Elegy".

Abū Tammām's "The Amorium Poem" has frequently been cited as an influence upon jihadist poetry, as has al-Mutanabbī more generally.[8] One example is a lament for the Palestinian loss of Haifa, *Yā ukhta ʿAmmūriyya* ("O Sister of Amorium") by Maḥmūd Ghunaym,[9] while another is *Filasṭīn wa-nakbatu-l-lājiʾīn* ("Palestine and the Catastrophe of the Refugees") by Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najmī (al-Muḥayyish 1997:160–161, 267). Abū Tammām's and al-Mutanabbī's poems are also conspicuous influences upon the verse content of jihadist magazines (Kendall 2016:228).

Yā ukhta ʿAmmūriyya

25 يا أختَ عمُّوريَّة، لبَّيكِ! قد دقَّت حُماتُك للحروبِ طبولا

26 ناديتِ مُعتصمًا؛ فكان غياثُهُ جيشًا شَرُوبًا للدماء، أكولا

Oh Sister of Amorium, I am at your service (*labbayki*) // your defenders have already struck the drums of war

You have summoned al-Muʿtaṣim; whose aid was a voracious blood-drinking army

Typical uses of jihadist poetry include: (1) resistance against imperialism, Zionism and Communism; (2) defence of the Caliphate; and (3) the promotion of an Islamic awakening (al-Muḥayyish 1997:288). A well-composed poem can successfully win over hearts and minds because of its aesthetic and acoustic qualities, also lending itself well to *nashīd*, i.e. a "sung military anthem". It can also form an effective counter-discourse to pre-Islamic verse (al-Muḥayyish 1997:11). Early Islamic poems sought to challenge the legitimacy of Jahili values within the same locale, but contemporary jihadist poetry works polemically against the world order, describing colonial powers as degenerates. Paradoxically, jihadist poetry also celebrates Jahili heroic virtues, by calling for war as the source and the restorer of justice, by challenging the political dialogue of pluralism, and by judging it to be ineffective:

8 See Section 4.3.

9 *Yā ukhta ʿAmmūriyya* can be found on the internet, one source: www.poetsgate.com. Note the vengeance markers of "thirsting" for blood, of "devouring" the enemy. The metre of this *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lā*, is *al-kāmil*. See Section 4.3.1, al-Muʿtaṣim was the famous defender of Amorium, who responded to a female voice calling for aid (verse 46, "The Amorium Poem").

وقد كان حض الشعراء على الجهاد نابعًا من إيمانهم بأن الجهاد هو اللغة الوحيدة التي يفهمها المستعمرون أما الحوار والمحاديث فهي وسيلة من وسائل الخداع وتضليل الشعوب وامتصاص غضبها. والأمم لا تنال حريتها إلا بالدماء ...

al-Muḥayyish 1997:98

> Already, poets have been used to inciting jihad, stemming from their belief that jihad is the only language that the colonisers understand, whereas dialogue and discourses are among the means of outwitting and misleading peoples while soaking up their anger. For the nations will only achieve their freedom through bloodshed ...

The jihadist poet acts as a witness, broadcaster, warner and inciter, in much the same way as his earliest forebear. However, this poet also calls upon the wider Islamic community to reach across boundaries and unite against oppression, rather than asking his immediate kin to defend their commonly shared borders (al-Muḥayyish 1997:212). The jihadist poem offers a political position of resistance, but it can also reconfigure territorial space, albeit within a poetic landscape, to include a notional pan-Islamist State.

7.3 Extending the Methodology into Modernity

The premise of an "Islamic State" is not new, rooted as it is in the history of a Caliphate that achieved greatness in art, culture, commerce, philosophy and science. Hopes for its restoration have been and continue to be driven by nostalgia for the past, but these aspirations are not only wishful thinking. The renaissance of an Islamic State is an ideology that expounds a powerful argument, namely that the adoption of Shariʿa law across all institutions of governance will achieve a just and utopian society, whereas its misapplication, or diminished influence has been responsible for economic and political decline (Hourani 1983[1962]:1–24). Methods for achieving its reinstatement, be this at the national, or the pan-national level are both activist and quietist, the former a progressively militant jihadism that has become ever more extreme as the twentieth century has evolved into the twenty-first. This chapter, and the following, will focus upon five poems so as to demonstrate the reach of the blood vengeance message where this applies to jihadist poetry over the past fifty, or so years. They reflect a hardening of ideological stance that at the time of writing shows little sign of abating.

Three of the poems, *Lā Naksa* (Section 7.4.1), *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* (Section 7.4.4) and *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā* (Section 7.4.5), are composed in the traditional *qāṣīda* format with extensive reference to the tradition, this demonstrating considerable dexterity. The first poem, *Lā Naksa*, celebrates the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood that Ḥasan al-Bannā founded in Egypt, in 1928. Over its near one-hundred year history, the Muslim Brotherhood has been considered both a legitimate political party and a banned terrorist organisation, at home and abroad.[10] Accusations of militancy have resulted in its suppression and the elimination of its most charismatic leaders and associates, but the party has declared its own ambitions to be peaceful and gradually reformist, also professing that political pluralism is ineffective and only Shariʿa law can achieve the objective of fair and just governance (Hourani 1983:359–360). The poems, *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl* (Section 7.4.2) and *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq* (Section 7.4.3), are sympathetic to the ideology of al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), in the aftermath of 9/11.[11] AQAP is a jihadist militant movement that is an affiliate of al-Qaʿida, but territorially focussed upon Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The parent organisation was established, in 1988, in the border zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ideologically sprung from the Muslim Brotherhood, Ayman al-Ẓawāhirī and Osama bin Laden devolved al-Qaʿida into an organisation that calls for the violent imposition of Shariʿa law (Kepel and Milelli 2008[2005]:30–31, 58–59, 150–151, 286–287). The poems, *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* and *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, instead express the ideology of the (so-called) Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), while describing events that have taken place in both Syria and Lebanon, since 2011. An off-shoot of al-Qaʿida, albeit with a different territorial focus, ISIS was founded by a Jordanian battle-hardened veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, Abū Muṣʿab al-Zarqāwī. The organisation is well-known and widely reported on, proclaiming that it established a Caliphate centred upon Raqqa, in Syria, between 2014 and 2017, and under the leadership of Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī.

The selection of poems is carefully mined from internet websites, book publications and online-periodicals. In terms of internet search engines, both Google and Aaron Zelin's comprehensive "Jihadology" website serve as gate-

10 For a short period, from 2012 to 2013, a reformed party triumphed in the Egyptian parliamentary and presidential elections only to be ousted from power soon after.

11 9/11, or 11 September 2001, refers to the al-Qaʿida terror attacks on New York City and Washington D.C., when four commercial aero-planes were hijacked by jihadist militants and flown *kamikaze*-style into the side of landmark buildings, using the planes' own massive fuel tanks as explosive capability.

ways to prolific material.[12] The anthologies of jihadist fighters, published by media outlets such as *al-Furqān*,[13] are helpful for understanding the psychology of individual fighters, but they are not exemplary models of poetic incitement to blood vengeance. The most effective inciters are authoritative motivational speakers, rather than field fighters. When sourcing poems, a range of filters assess conformity to: (1) the "blood vengeance motifs" test;[14] (2) the classical poetic form as a measure of quality and continuity with the tradition; (3) the promotion of a cause, be this within a military journal, a poetry collection, or the secondary literature; and (4) incitement potential, by situating it within an ongoing conflict.[15] Each poem is bench-marked against a degree of endorsement, this either testifying to its literary merit or confirming its effectiveness as a tool of recruitment. For example, not only has al-Muḥayyish (1997) claimed Maḥmūd Ghunaym, the author of *Lā Naksa*, as an influential jihadist poet, but this has been confirmed by both Kendall (2015) and Lohlker (2013), who have located other examples of his poetry in at least two jihadist journals. *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl* and *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq* are sourced from two AQAP publications, their inclusion in these journals evidence of their potency as ideological tools. *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* and *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā* closely conform to the blood vengeance theme, Creswell and Haykel (2015 and 2017) recommending their author, Aḥlām al-Naṣr, to be a poet of literary merit.

7.4 Historical Background to the Selection of Poems

This section presents the historical background to five poems from the mid-twentieth to early twenty-first centuries, these inspiring to jihad and strongly conforming to the blood vengeance theme. With the exception of *Lā Naksa*, these are anti-establishment poems by poets affiliated to militant jihadist organisations. They all draw upon the classical tradition, by evoking *ḥamāsa* poetry while provoking an emotional response that is sympathetic to calls for global jihad. This analysis into militant jihadism begins with a poem suggesting that the experiments in both secularism and socialism have failed, in 1950s

12 This refers to the website: https://jihadology.net/.

13 This is the name of the media outlet of al-Qaʿida, in Iraq (Holtmann 2013b:57).

14 See Section 1.1.3, Section 1.3, and Table 1.

15 The selection has been narrowed down from a long-list, including the entire publication outputs of *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim* and *Muʿaskar al-Battār* magazines, and the anthologies of seven jihadist poets. Al-Naṣr's *Dīwān* alone consists of one-hundred and seven poems.

and 1960s Egypt and under Gamal Abdel Nasser,[16] culminating in the humiliating loss of land to the State of Israel. *Lā Naksa* posits that only militant Islamic jihad can right the wrongs of the past, by drawing the next political horizon closer towards Islamic fundamentals, in the Arab world.

7.4.1 *No Setback*

In *Lā Naksa*, or "No Setback", composed sometime between 1967 and 1972, Maḥmūd Ghunaym (1979:117–121) has incited a retaliatory war against the State of Israel in defence of occupied Palestinian territory:[17]

Lā Naksa

1	مَنْ قال: إن اللَّيْث ولّى مُدْبِرَا؟	الأُسْدُ إن وثبتْ، تعود القَهْقَرى
2	إن الشجاع يَفرُّ في سَاح الوَغَى	لِيَكُرَّ من بعد الفرار مُظَفَّرا
3	لا يَفْرَحَنَّ المُفْترون بَجَولَة	كسبوا بدَايَتَها، وخابَ مَنِ افتَرى!
4	قل للآلى بدءوا بدَايةَ هتْلَر:	سَتُجَرَّعُون غدًا نهايةَ هتْلَرَا
5	إنا تركنا الخصْم يضحك أَوَّلًا	ليزيد نَوْحًا حين نَضْحَكُ آخرا
6	وَلَرُبَّ ضرْغَام أُصيب بلدْغَة	من عَقْربٍ دبَّتْ على وجه الثَّرى
7	يا شعبَ إسرائيل، غَرَّكَ ماردٌ	في الحرب لاقي غَيْرَ كُفْءٍ؛ فازْدَرى!
8	إنَّا جُنودُ بني النضير، وخَيْبَر	ولَتَلْحَقَنَّ بني النضيرِ، وخيبرا
9	كذب اليهودُ؛ فما أقاموا دَوْلَةً	في أرضنا، لكن أقاموا مَنْسَرا
10	الغدرُ دَيْدَن شعبهم؛ فلوَ انَّهُ	يومًا وَفَى، لعجبت ألاَّ يَغْدرا!
11	قالوا: عبدنا ربَّ موسى وحدَهُ	قلنا: عبدتم ذا الرَّئين الأَصْفرا
12	ليست لإبراهيمَ نسْبَتكُم، وَلاَ	لبنيه؛ لكنْ تُنْسَبُون لآزرا
13	لو تسألون أبا البَرايا آدمًا:	هل من سلالِتكَ اليهودُ؟ لأَنْكَرا
14	يأيها العربي، لا ذُقْت القرَى	أبدًا، ولا نعِمَتْ جُفونُكَ بالكرى!

16 Nasser's Arab Socialist Union party and the Muslim Brotherhood were politically opposed. Nasser drove the party underground, following a failed assassination attempt upon his life, in 1954, by a Muslim Brotherhood member.

17 *Lā Naksa* is a *rā'iyya*, ending in *-rā*, in the *kāmil* metre. The date is an estimate based upon the poet's reference to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war as well as his call for retaliation. Ghunaym died, in 1972, before this poem was published in book form, in 1979.

15 لا يرقـد العربـيُّ ملءَ جفونـه ويـذوقَ طعـمَ الـزادِ حتـى يَثْـأَرا
16 شـرفُ العروبـةِ بـات وَهْـوَ مُلَـوَّثٌ بالعـار، لا تَلْبَسْـه حتـى يَطْهُـرا
17 عـارٌ علينـا لُبْسُـهُ حتـى يُـرَى مُتَطَهِّـرًا، بـدم العِـدا متعطِّـرا
18 ليـث العروبـة مـا عَـرَا أظْفـارَه؟ ويلاه مـن هِـرٍّ علـى الليـث اجْتَـرا!
19 نَمِـرُ العروبـة مـا دَهَـا أنيـابَهُ؟ أوَ مَـا رأى ذئـبَ الفلاةِ تَنَمَّـرا؟
20 نَسْـرُ العروبـة مـا أصـاب جَنـاحَهُ؟ قولـوا لـه: إن البُغَـاثَ اسْتَنْسَـرا!
21 صاروخُكُـمْ سَمَّيْتُمُـوه قاهِـرًا مـا عاقَـهُ يـوم الوغـى أن يَقْهـرا؟
22 صاروخكـم سميتمـوه ظافِـرًا مـا عاقـه يـوم الوغـى أن يَظْفـرا؟
23 صاروخكـم سميتمـوه عابِـرًا مـا عاقـه يـوم الوغـى أن يَعْبُـرا؟
24 ويحـي علـى تلـك الصواريـخ التـي تَأْبَـى غَـدَاةَ الـرَّوْع أن تتفجَّـرا!
25 لا تَحْلُمـوا بالنصـر حـول موائـدٍ أضْفَـى عليهـا الزَّيْـفُ لونًـا أخضـرا
26 بـل عنـه فـي سُـود الوقائـع فَتِّشُـوا أو فَاسْأَلُـوا عنـه النَّجيـعَ الأحمـرا
27 قالوا: الحقوقُ، فقلت: لفظٌ لم أجدْ عنـه كَألْسِنـة اللَّهيـب مُعَبِّـرا
28 أنصِـتْ إليـه إذا المَدَافـعُ أَطلَقـتْ تَسْمَعْـهُ مـن أفواههـن مُفَسَّـر
29 النصـر ليـس يَنالـه بسؤَالـه شعبٌ ضعيفُ الحَوْل، مَحْلُولُ العُرا
30 للنصـر جيـشٌ فـي الحـروبِ مُـزَوَّدٌ مـن عزمـه الماضـي بجيـش آخـرا
31 يـا رُبَّ فـرد فـي الكريهـة واحـد بالصـدق والإيمـان يَعْـدلُ عَسْكَـرا
32 مـن عـاش فـي جـوِّ القصـورُ مكَيَّفًـا فعلـى الحـروب وهولهـا لَـنْ يصبـرا
33 مـن بـات بيـنْ وسائـد ونَضائـد فَعَلَـى المبيـت بخنـدق لـن يَقْـدرا
34 للحرب جندٌ يصبرون على الطَّوى يـوم اللقـاء، ويلبسـون العِثْيَـرا
35 ويـرون جَـوْف الرمـل أجمـلَ فُنْـدُق وروائـحَ البـارُود تنفـح عَنْبَـرا
36 ويـرون قَصْـف المِدْفعيَّـة أُرْغُنًـا يَشجي، وقعقعـةَ الحناجـر مِزْهـرا
37 ويَـرون أن الجُـرح يحكـي مُقْلـةً حـوراء، والـدم كالشـراب مُعَصْفـرا
38 ويـرون أن مـن اسْتُبِيـحَ لـه حمًـى يلقـى المنايـا، أو يعيـشُ مُحَـرَّرًا
39 منّـي علـى فيتنامَ ألـفُ تحيَّـة حَيُّوا معي الشعبَ الذي بَهَـرَ الورى
40 يـا أيهـا الشعـب الـذي مـا هَالَـهُ عـددُ العـدو؛ فكـان منـهُ أكثـرا
41 عَلَّمْـتَ أهْـلَ البغـي: أن البغـي لا يُغني، وأنَّ جنـودَهُ لـن تُنْصـرا

42 وأريتَــهُ أن الضَّعيــف بحقِّــه بطــلٌ يُــذلُّ العَاتــيَ المتجبِّــرا
43 كتبــتَ فــي التاريــخ أروعَ قصَّــة عن غَضْبَة الآسـادِ إن ديسَ الشَّرَى
44 قالـوا لواشنطـونَ تسحـبُ جيشَهـا فمواطـنُ الأحـرارِ لـن تُسْتَعْمَـرا
45 أيسيطـرون علـى شعـوبٍ حـرَّةٍ وعليهمـو شعـبُ اليهـود تسيْطَـرا؟
46 شعـبَ العروبـةِ، مـا فعلـتَ بخالـد وتُـرَاثِهِ؟ أتـرى التـراث تبعثـرا؟
47 إنّـي لأَلمـح روحـهُ مـن فوقنَـا قـد رفرفت، مثلَ الخيـال إذا سَرَى
48 تَرْنُـو إلـى اليَرْمُـوك وَهَـي مَشيحَـةٌ وتقـول: إنـي لا أُصـدِّقُ مـا أرَى!
49 أيـن الفتوحـاتُ التـي استخلصتُهـا من دولتَيْ: كِسْرى العظيم، وقَيْصَرا؟
50 بِـمَ كـان يُنْصـرُ خالـدٌ؟ ألأنَّـهُ مـن جَنْـدَل، لا مـن تـراب صُـوِّرا؟
51 قـد كـان ذا رأس يطيـرُ بضربـة ودم إذا جُرِحَـتْ جوارحُـهُ جـرى
52 لكنـهُ يغْشَـى الوغـى مُتَقَلِّـدًا: بالصبـر دِرْعًـا، والعقيـدة مغْفـرا
53 اللهُ أكبـــر سيفُـــهُ وقناتُـــهُ مـا خـاب عنـد الحـرب شَعْـبٌ كَبَّـرا
54 يـا قـوم، هبُّـوا هبـةً مُضَرَّبَةً إن الفتـى العربـيَّ إن دُعي، انْبَـرى
55 ضُمُّوا الصفوفَ، ووحِّدوا أَشْتَاتكمْ فـي الوحـدة النصـرُ المبيـنُ مُـؤزَّرا
56 قالوا: الوباء، فقلـت: إن القُـدْسَ قَـدْ نـزل اليهـودُ به، فكانـوا أخطـرا
57 لـم يتركـوا للمسجـد الأقصى، ولا للعُـرْب فيـه مَنْسَكًـا، أو مَشْعَـرا
58 أن يظْهـرُوا، يـا قـوم، لـم يُبْقُـوا لنـا أو للأذان، أو الحَنيفَـةِ مَظْهَـرا
59 إنـي لأَشْهِدُكـم علـى مـا قلتـهُ وعليـه قـد أَشْهَـدْتُ هـذا المِنْبـرا
60 مـاذا أقـولُ؟ أقـولُ: فيـلٌ صـادَهُ جُـرَذٌ، وسرْحَـان أذلَّ غضَنْفَـرا؟
61 أنـا إن عَـذَرْتُ، فإن جيلًا بعدكـم يـا قـوم، مـن أبنائكـم لَـنْ يَعْـذُرا
62 أنـا إن غَفَـرْتُ، فليـس للتاريـخ إنْ يَكْتُـبْ لعصـر مقبـل أن يَغْفـرا
63 لا يرحم التاريـخُ فـي الأَحكـام، إنْ قَاضَـى مُسِيئًـا، أو أدَانَ مقصَّـرا
64 أعلـى الفدائييـن نلْقـى عبْئَنَـا ونُطِـلُّ مـن خلـف الستـار لنَنْظُـرا؟
65 أيـن الـذي يَلْقَـى الأعـادي جَهْـرَةً ممَّـنْ يُغِيـرُ عَلَيْهِمُـو مُتَسَتِّـرا؟
66 يـا مَعشَـر الفتـح المبيـن وجنـدَهُ حُيِّيتُمُـو جنـدًا وطِبْتُـمْ معشـرا
67 أنقذتمـو شـرفَ العروبـةِ بعدمَـا أمسـى علـى وجـه التُّـراب مُعَفَّـرا
68 وبذلتمـو أرواحَكُـم لبلادكُـمْ ثَمَنًـا، وجَـلَّ المشتـرِي والمشتَـرَى!

69 ياليتني قد كُنْتُ في يَد بعضكُمْ لغمًا يصيب به العدُوَّ مدمَّرا!
70 أو حرْبةً مَسْنُونَةً، أو مدْفَعًا متفجرًا، أو صَارمًا، أوْ خِنْجَرا!
71 ما ضَرَّ شعبًا أنتمو من أهله أن يستطيل على الشعوب ويَفْخَرا
72 إنا لنرجو أن يكون صُمُودُكمْ لِنُكُوصنَا يوم الحسابِ مكفِّرا
73 النصر حَسْبُكمو إذا فُزْتُم به فَخْرًا، وحَسْبُ شهيدكم أن يُؤْجَرا!
74 لو يعلمُ الشهداء أجرَ جهادهمْ ودُّوا لَوَ انَّ الموت فيه تكرّرا
75 قولوا لمن رُزِق الشهادة منكمو يَصِفِ الجِنَانَ، وحُورَها، والكوثرا
76 واللهِ، ما خدم البلادَ كَمُفْتدٍ قد ذاد عنْ حُرُماتها متنكِّرا
77 لا المجد أمَّل من وراء جهادهِ كلَّا، ولا اتَّخذ الإغارةَ مَتْجَرا
78 من يذكرُ الأوطان يَنْسى غيرَها أجْدِرْ بها هي وحدَها أن تُذْكَرا!
79 شُنُّوا عليهم كلَّ يومٍ غارةً في كل وادٍ، في المدائِن، في القُرى
80 وقفوا لهم في كلِّ دربٍ، واكْمُنُوا تحت السُّفُوح، وحَلِّقُوا فوق الذُّرا
81 لا تتركوهم يَنْعَمُون برَوْضَةٍ في القُدْس، أو يجنون كَرْمًا مُثْمِرا
82 إن يَطْعَموا، وَجَدُوا الطعام مسَّممًا أو يشربوا، وجدوا الشراب مُكَدَّرا
83 أو يَدْرُجُوا فوق الثَّرى، لا تلبث ال أقدام بالألْغام أن تتعثَّرا
84 أو يرقدوا، حلموا بضرٍّ منكمو قد هبَّ من تحت السرير مُشَمِّرا
85 وثقوا بأنَّا لاحقون بكم غدًا ولسوف نُعْلِنُهُ جهادًا أكبرا

1 Who says that the lion has fled? // Even when lions pounce, they withdraw
2 Truly, the brave one runs off the battle fields // so as to return in triumph after flight
3 Let those who spread lies not rejoice in a battle // of which they won (only) the first round: the hope of those who spread lies will be dashed!
4 Tell those who started the way Hitler began: // tomorrow you will be made to swallow the end of Hitler
5 We leave the antagonist to laugh first // so that he may lament all the more when we laugh last
6 How many a lion was injured by the sting // of a scorpion which crawled on the surface of the moist earth
7 O people of Israel, a demon deceived you // in war, he found one who was not his equal; and therefore despised [you]!

8 We are the armies [that confronted] the Banī Naḍīr and Khaybar[18] // you are going to meet up with the Banī Naḍīr and Khaybar
9 The Jews lied: they did not set up a state // in our land, rather they set up a gang of robbers
10 Treachery is the custom of their people, for should they // be faithful one day, I should be amazed if they were not treacherous!
11 They said: we worshipped the Lord of Mūsā alone // we said: you worshipped this yellow clinking [of gold]
12 You are not related to Ibrāhīm nor // to his sons, but you are related to Āzar[19]
13 Should you ask Adam, the father of the people: // are the Jews of your family, he would deny it
14 O Arab, may you not taste a hospitable meal // and may your eyelids not savour sleep!
15 The Arab does not sleep his eye-lids fill // [nor] taste food until he takes blood vengeance
16 Arab honour has become stained // with shame, do not wear it until it is purified
17 Wearing honour as a garment is shameful for us until it is seen // to be purified, and made fragrant with the blood of the enemy

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18 The Banī Naḍīr was a Jewish tribe expelled from Medina to Khaybar, the verse also referencing other Jewish and Arab associates, in Khaybar, who collaborated with the Meccans against a new order. In 622 CE, the Prophet Muḥammad's arrival, in Medina, as an arbitrator between warring tribes, exacerbated political tensions among some client tribes who preferred the old order. At this time, Islam was a nascent belief system that was opposed by many, including members of the establishment. At first, some Jewish tribes were exiled because of their unwillingness to integrate into a new Muslim community, this involving commitment to a social covenant of mutual protection. In 5/627, some joined the Meccan army under the leaders of the Quraysh at the Battle of the Trench. Ghunaym has framed disloyalty to the Prophet of Islam as being rooted in a different faith tradition, which is remiss. It was more likely due to tribal in-fighting that was rife during a very unsettled period.

19 The poet refers to Q[6:74], when Ibrāhīm addresses his unbelieving father, Āzar:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ آزَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

Remember when Abraham said to his father, Azar, 'How can you take idols as gods? I see that you and your people have clearly gone astray.'

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18 Lion of Arabness, what happened to his talons? // Woe upon him because a tom-cat dared to attack the lion!
19 Tiger of Arabness, what has afflicted his fangs? // Did he not see the wolf of the waterless desert claim to be a tiger?
20 Eagle of Arabness, what has injured his wing? // Say to him: the sparrows in our land are behaving like eagles
21 Your rocket which you named *Qāhir* (Vanquisher) // what impeded it on the day of battle from vanquishing?
22 Your rocket which you named *Ẓāfir* (Conqueror) // what impeded it on the day of battle from conquering?
23 Your rocket which you named *ʿĀbir* (Cruiser) // what impeded it on the day of battle from crossing?[20]
24 Woe upon those rockets which // refuse to explode on the morning of terror!
25 Do not dream of victory around tables // over which falseness spreads a green colour
26 Instead search for it [victory] in the blackness of battles // or ask after it in red blood
27 They said: Rights, and so I said: an expression for which I can find no // interpretation, like the tongues of flames
28 Listen to it [the expression], when the guns fire // from their mouths they give you explanation
29 Victory is not obtained through begging for it // by people weak in power and dissolved of bonds
30 For victory has an army supplied in wars // from the past resolve, by another army
31 How many an individual faced with an adversity // with truth and belief is the equal of an army[21]

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20 *Qāhir*, *Ẓāfir* and *ʿĀbir* are the names of Soviet-made ballistic missiles.

21 This verse refers to Q[8:65]:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ إِن يَكُن مِّنكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرونَ يَغْلِبُواْ مِاْئَتَيْنِ وَإِن يَكُن مِّنكُم مِّاْئَةٌ يَغْلِبُواْ أَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ

> Prophet, urge the believers to fight: if there are twenty of you who are steadfast, they will overcome two hundred, and a hundred of you, if steadfast, will overcome a thousand of the disbelievers, for they are people who do not understand.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010: 186); used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

32 Whoever lives in air-conditioned palaces // will not be steadfast in wars and their horror
33 Whoever sleeps between cushions and pillows // will be unable to spend the night in a trench
34 War needs soldiers who are steadfast on an empty stomach // on the day of the meeting, wearing dust
35 Who think a hollow in the sand is a most beautiful hotel // and [that] the smells of gunpowder diffuse a pleasant fragrance of ambergris
36 And they consider that the thundering of artillery is an organ // moaning, the rattle of throats, a tambourine[22]
37 And they consider that the wound resembles the eye[s] // of fair women, and [that] the blood is like the drink [which is dyed red] with safflower
38 And they consider that the one whose protected enclosure is violated // meets with the fates of death, or is liberated
39 From me to Vietnam a thousand salutations // greet with me the people who dazzled mankind
40 O people, who were not frightened // by the sheer number of the enemy, and who turned out to be more than them
41 You taught the followers of injustice, that injustice does not // succeed, and that his armies will not triumph
42 And you showed him [the unjust] that the weak one by his right // is a hero who abases the corrupt tyrant
43 And you wrote into history the most awesome story // about the anger of lions, when *al-Sharā* is trampled upon[23]
44 They told Washington to withdraw her army // for the homelands of the free-born will not be colonised
45 Will they rule over free peoples // when over them the Jewish people dominate?
46 People of Arabism, what did you do with Khālid[24] // and his heritage? Do you think that heritage dissipates?
47 I sense his spirit above us // fluttering its wings like a ghost when it travels by night

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22 *Mizhar* can also mean a "lute", but is more likely here to mean a "tambourine" because of the sound-effect.
23 See Lane (1863), s.v. "*shīn-rā'-yā'*", *al-Sharā* is a classical reference and refers to a "road in the Salma mountains" once notable for its prides of lions.
24 Khālid refers to Khālid b. al Walīd, the "Sword of Islam".

48 It looks intently towards Yarmuk,[25] while averting the eyes // and saying: I do not believe what I am seeing!
49 Where are the conquests which I have claimed // from the two empires of (the Persian) Chosroes and (the Roman) Caesar?
50 How was Khālid made victorious? Is it because he was // formed from stone and not of dust?
51 He had a head which would have flown off at a stroke // and blood which would have run, if his limbs were wounded
52 However, he overcomes war by hanging upon himself a sword: // by his steadfastness which is armour, and by his belief which is a helmet
53 "*Allāhu Akbar*" is his sword and his spear // people who say "*Allāhu Akbar*" will not fail in war[26]
54 People, rise up, in a violent fashion[27] // when called upon the strong Arab youth embarks upon [action]
55 Join together in ranks, and bring together your dispersals // in unity, clear victory is mutual support
56 They said: The Plague and I said: Behold Jerusalem // the Jews have already taken up quarters, and they would be the more dangerous
57 They did not leave behind a place of ceremony, nor a ritual site // for either the al-Aqṣā mosque, nor the Arabs within it
58 If they prevail, O people, they will not leave for us, // nor for the call to prayer, nor for the True Religion, a place to show itself
59 Regarding what I am saying, I call upon you to be a witness // and I make this pulpit a witness
60 What am I saying? I am saying: a rat hunted an elephant // and a wolf abased a lion?
61 Even if I was to absolve you now, then the generation which comes after you // O people, from your own children, will not
62 Even if I was to forgive, then history would not // prescribe for the next era to forgive
63 History does not show mercy in its verdicts, when // it condemns an evil doer, or blames someone who falls short

25 The Battle of Yarmuk (15/636) is an example of a series of confrontations between Byzantine and Muslim Arab armies, in Syria and Iraq, that cemented the Caliphate, while demonstrating strategic warfare and concentrated tactics by a relatively small number of volunteers (Kennedy 2016:14–16).
26 The Exaltation (*Takbīr*), that is *Allāhu Akbar*, literally means "God is Supreme".
27 *Muḍarraba*, meaning violent, also rousing to violence.

64 Is it upon [the shoulders of the] the Fadayeen,[28] that we burden our load // peeping out from behind the curtain so that we can watch?
65 Where is the one who meets the enemies openly // compared with the one who is concealed and attacks them in hiding?
66 O community of the Clear Triumph[29] and its army // may you be saluted as an army and may you be wonderful as a collective
67 You rescued the honour of the Arab character after // it became soiled with dust
68 You sacrificed your souls for your country // a costly price, and the buyer and what was bought were exalted!
69 If only I had been a destructive grenade in the hand of some of you // by which the enemy is struck!
70 Or a sharpened spear, or a blasting cannon // or a cutting sword or a dagger!
71 Displaying arrogant behaviour and being disdainful towards peoples // does not hurt a people to which you belong
72 We should hope that your staying power // will be an atonement for our retreats, on the Day of Reckoning
73 Victory is sufficient reckoning for you should you accomplish it // in glory, and sufficient reckoning for your martyr is his reward!
74 Should the martyrs know the reward of their jihad // then they would wish that death could be repeated
75 Say to the one, among you, who is blessed with martyrdom // he will describe Paradise and its Houris and *al-Kawthar*[30]

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28 Freedom fighters for Palestine/ones who sacrifice themselves.

29 *Al-Fatḥ al-Mubīn* also refers to Fatah (the Palestinian National Liberation Movement), but mainly to Q[48:1]:

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا

Truly We have opened up a path to clear triumph for you [Prophet]
Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010: 512); used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

30 *Al-Kawthar* means a "river in Paradise", or "abundance" as in Q[108:1]:

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

We have truly given abundance to you [Prophet] –
Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010: 603); used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

76 By God, no one can serve the homeland as a self-sacrifice // who protects its sacred places in disguise
77 Behind his jihad, he did not expect glory // certainly not, nor did he take on the attack as business
78 Who remembers his homeland forgets everything else // he finds that they alone are worthy of being remembered!
79 Launch an attack upon them everyday // in every valley, in the towns, in the villages
80 Stall them in every path and ambush them // at the feet of the mountains and circle over the summits
81 Do not leave them enjoying a life of ease in a meadow // in Jerusalem, nor harvesting a fruitful vineyard
82 Should they taste [something], then they would have found the food poisoned // or if they drank [something], then they would have found that the drink was roiled
83 Or if they proceeded over the moist earth, it does not take long before // their feet trip over land-mines
84 Or if they were sleeping, make them dream of a calamity from you // which rises up from under the bed, ready to strike
85 Trust that we are your followers tomorrow // so that we will proclaim it as a greater jihad

Ghunaym was not a Palestinian, but rather an award-winning Egyptian poet and playwright born at the turn of the twentieth century, his poetry widely published in Egyptian media.[31] *Lā Naksa* is a *qaṣīda* that is comparable in length with the classical odes of tradition.[32] Modernism did not much influence Ghunaym's own poetic style. Instead, he followed in the neoclassical model, like Aḥmad Shawqī,[33] his world view remaining conservative. Verses 34 to 38 contain a description of the classical hero, employing some of the erotic imagery of the *nasīb*, whereas verses 21 to 31 and verses 46 to 53 convey *ʿitāb*, this blaming the Arabs for dishonouring the heroic model set by Khālid b. al-Walīd.[34] The poem also refers to sleep, this thematically consistent with the

31 Background has also been sourced from http://mahmoudghoneim.com/poetry/. This is no longer available.
32 See Section 6.2.1. For incitement potential, and its list of complaints directed against Jews, *Lā Naksa* bears comparison with *Alā qul li-Ṣinhājatin ajmaʿīn*, a poem prompting the Pogrom of Granada.
33 See Section 6.5, *Shahīd al-ḥaqq* and *Rithāʾ al-khilāfa*, for verse by Shawqī.
34 *ʿItāb* is a form of "censure" that is directed at a member of the same kinship group, whereas *hijāʾ* is a "lampoon" directed at an alienated group (El Tayib 2009[1983]:80–81).

classical canon: in verse 15, the Arab does not "sleep" because he has yet to take vengeance; in verse 33, the corrupt and the pampered "sleep" in luxury and are unfit for trench-warfare; and in verse 84, the Jews are woken up from "sleep" by the agents of vengeance. Politically, Ghunaym was concerned with the quest for Arab independence from colonial authority after the Second World War. *Lā Naksa* belongs to his anthology, *Rajʿ al-ṣadā*, this published posthumously, in 1979, and coincidentally around the same time of the Camp David Peace Accords. It conveys the poet's sentiments about the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, "The Naksa", while predicting Egypt's subsequent counteroffensive, in 1973, and framing this as revenge. The poem draws heavily on "blood vengeance motifs", which is highly significant because of its application to the subject of Palestinian displacement, an unresolved issue that continues to provoke acts of vengeance.[35]

Palestinian poetry, or verse about Palestinian dislocation by non-nationals, like Ghunaym, are among the best examples of experiments, in poetic time and space, for which the poem itself attempts to recapture territory that has been lost through occupation.[36] *Ḥarakat al-muqāwama al-islāmiyya* (*Ḥamās*), the Palestinian Islamist territorial movement, also uses poetry to express its ideology through loss and recapture of Palestine and (eventually) an Islamic Caliphate (Alshaer 2009:217–224). But while this strategy is successful in spreading awareness of the Palestinian cause, it has not resulted in the restoration of tangible land. The State of Israel possesses overwhelming military capability, a united and highly organised defence force and a broad coalition of international support. The 1967 War was a decisive military victory for Israel, which also resulted in the annexation of Jordanian, Egyptian and Syrian territory. The occupied Sinai peninsula and Suez Canal were eventually returned to Egypt, by diplomatic negotiation and not through the 1973 military counteroffensive. The Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remain under varying degrees of Israeli control.[37] Even so, the continuation of regional conflict and the proliferation of poetry by jihadist fighters suggests that Ghunaym has passed on a torch, i.e. that his representative stance

35 Sections 6.7.2 and 6.7.3 have provided examples of two films that relay through storytelling some of the drivers behind vengeance that relates to Palestinian displacement. See also Chapter Nine.

36 When comparing Palestinian poetry with German-Jewish verse, Sperl (2000:126–127) has concluded that by recalling a traumatic event, the poetry of a marginalised community is not only an act of survival, but a weapon, this "defining the perimeters of shared experience and calling for its defence in confrontation with the enemy".

37 In 2005, Israel technically disengaged from the Gaza Strip and, in 2006/2007, Hamas (*Ḥamās*) took over its governance, but so pronounced is the humanitarian crisis that

possesses the power to incite further poetry and subsequent action. Kendall has attributed an anonymous verse that appears in al-Qaʿida's military journal, *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim*, to Ghunaym, stating that it is an editorial device designed to rally jihadists to the cause of Islam, this position strengthened by its positioning between two Qur'anic citations (al-Ḥaḍramī 2008; cited in Kendall 2015: 255–256, 265):

Mā lī wa-li-l-najmi yarʿānī wa-arʿā-hū

6 أنّى اتجهت الى الإسلام في بلد تجده كالطير مقصوصًا جناحاه

Wherever you turn to Islam in any country,
you find it like a bird with its wings clipped.
Translation by Kendall[38]

Rüdiger Lohlker has also identified unattributed verses by Ghunaym (2004; cited in Lohlker 2013:66) that appear in another journal associated with militant Islam, *Muʿaskar al-Battār*, specifically within an article detailing attributes of the M-16 rifle. Coincidentally, these verses are from the same poem, *Mā lī wa-li-l-najmi yarʿānī wa-arʿā-hū*, or "Why Should It Matter that the Star Watches Over Me When I Follow It With My Eyes":[39]

Mā lī wa-li-l-najmi yarʿānī wa-arʿā-hū

25 الله يشهد ما قلبت سيرتهم يومًا وأخطأ دمع العين مجراه
26 ماضٍ نعيشُ على أنقاضه أممًا ونستمد القوى من وحي ذكراه
27 لا در در امرئ يُطري أوائلهُ فخرًا، ويُطرق إن ساءلته ما هو؟

Ghunaym 2004:13

effectively it is still occupied. Since 7th October 2023, following a revenge attack by Hamas upon Israeli civilians living in kibbutzim near the border, the Israel Defence Forces have launched a counter-revenge mission that has razed Gaza to the ground.

38 © Elisabeth Kendall and Ewan Stein, 2015, *Twenty-first-century jihad: law, society and military action*, I.B. Tauris, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc; reproduced with permission of the publisher.

39 This poem is not included in Ghunaym's three principal anthologies, but can be found via the web-link http://forums.arabsbook.com/threads/48629/. The metre of this *hā'iyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*hū*, is *al-basīṭ*.

25 God be [my] witness: I never read through their histories // without [my] tears missing their course
26 A bygone past, we live as nations after its collapse // and we ask the forces for help from the inspiration of remembrance
27 May a man not thrive [who] is made to laud his ancestors // with pride, yet is made to lower his head should you ask him who he is?

7.4.2 *Message to the Heroes*

The following examples of verse, *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl* (in this section) and *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq* (in Section 7.4.3), are anonymous although associated with al-Qa'ida, a notorious militant Sunni Islamist territorial movement founded, in 1988, by Osama bin Laden, amongst others. Both poems appear in two contemporary military journals, *Mu'askar al-Battār*, from Saudi Arabia, and *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim*, from Yemen, that celebrate the jihadist life as an heroic ideal. These journals contain information ranging from basic camping advice, the latest developments in weaponry, fighting tactics for strategists, references to historical conquests for the culturally aware, Islamic references for the spiritually inclined, and military motivational speeches for those seeking an outlet for feelings of aggression. The poems are designed as incitement for fighters, and demonstrate the ritual role that language and propaganda can play in provoking violence. Kendall (2015:247–269) has argued that the poetic content of *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim*: (1) has created an emotional landscape through subliminal messaging; (2) has forged an identity within a tribal community; (3) has followed earlier examples of Kharijite verse; and (4) has served as an expressive act which precedes fighting. Philipp Holtmann (2013b:31) has also opined that jihadist journals, like *Mu'askar al-Battār*, belong to an "incitement paradigm", for which textual guidance can incite execution by the sword, also drawing parallels between jihadism and the motivation strategies of other extremist ideologies, i.e. neo-Nazism, and comparing the jihadist journey to an heroic passage and Van Gennep's (1960) ritual paradigm.

'Adhb al-qawl: Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl

1 يـا شَبـابَ الحـقّ لا تنتظِـروا من أساطيل الأعادي مَرحَمَة
2 وصـلَ الويـلُ إلـى أوطانكـم سترون اليـومَ بَطـش الظّلَمَـة
3 حَشدُوا فـي المـاء ترسانتهـم لِيسوؤُوكُـم بِنَـارٍ حُطَمَـة
4 يا ضحَايا المُلْكِ لا تنخدعوا بِمُلـوكٍ جَعَلُونـا مَلطَمـة

5 إنمـا حكّامكـم أدمغـةٌ خاويـاتٌ، وجسـومٌ هرمـة
6 زُمْـرةٌ أرزَأنَـا الدّهـرُ بِهِـا أخطر الأَفعـال منهـم كلمـة
7 هَمهـم إرضَـاءُ أمريكـا فلـو قامَ حرٌ، سفـك الوالـي دَمَهَ
8 هُم أسُود الحربِ في شَاشَاتِنا ونعـامٌ فـي الزَّوايـا المُعتِمـة
9 لـم يـرَ الإسلامُ فـي سُلطتِهـم غيرَ إزهاقِ النّفُوسِ المُسْلِمَـة
10 نفطُنـا كالبحـرِ مـن وَفرَتـهِ ويَقُولُـون بشـدِّ الأحزِمـة
11 ارهقُـوا الإسلامَ مـن دَاخِلِـهِ بِفنـونٍ مـن بريـقِ العَولمـة
12 استباحـت أمريكـا أهلَـهُ والسّلاطيـنُ اسْتباحُـوا قِيَمَـه
13 لا تموتـوا يـا رفاقـي غِيلَـةً واسْتَعِـدّوا للرّزايـا المبهمَـة
14 هـا هـو المارشـالُ فـي مَربَعِكُـم يَشحَذُ السيفَ ويبـري قَلَمَـه
15 أحضرَ الجيش لكي يُحضِرَكُم لِنُبوءات اليهـودِ الشّرذِمـة
16 أيهـا الركـب أفيقـوا، إنمـا لحظةُ الضّربة بَدْءُ الملْحَمَـة
17 اصنعـوا مـن جَسَـدٍ قُنْبُلَـةً إنها أرقى صُنـوفِ الأوسِمَـة
18 عَبّئـوا أنفاسكـم وابتـدروا حاديَ المهدي وحيوا عَلَمَه
19 كـلُّ صنديـدٍ يُرينـا أسطـرًا من جهادٍ في كتابِ العَظَمة
20 ماشيًـا مشيـةَ ليـثٍ هادئٍ حـولَ جنبيـه يُـواري لَغَمَـه
21 اجعَلـوا ارضَ الحِمـى مقبـرةً للأعادي يـا حُماةَ المَكرُمة
22 وارصدوا بالمـوتِ أمريكـا فَفِـي موتها سَوفَ تموتُ الأنظِمَة

1 O youth of the Truth, do not expect // the enemies' fleets to be merciful
2 Woe has arrived in your nations // today you will see the violence of the unjust
3 They have mobilised their navy in the water // in order to torment you with Hell-fire
4 O victims of domination, do not be misled // by kings who have made us a cheek for anyone to slap
5 Your rulers are utterly devoid of brains // and decrepit in bodies
6 They are a gang with which fate has afflicted us // the most notable of their deeds are mere words
7 Their concern is the gratification of America and so, should // a noble one rise up, then the ruler sheds his blood

8 They are lions of war upon our screens // and ostriches in the dark corners[40]
9 Islam has not seen in their sovereignty // anything other than the stifling of Muslim spirits
10 In its abundance, our oil is like the sea // and they tell us to tighten our belts
11 They have oppressed Islam from within // with varieties of the lustre of globalisation
12 America has plundered its people // and absolute rulers have plundered its values
13 O my companions, do not die secretly murdered // and prepare yourselves for untold heavy losses
14 Here is the field marshal in your living quarters // he whets the sword and trims the nib of his pen[41]
15 He fetches the army so as to prepare you for // the prophecies of the gang of Jews
16 O you troop/riders, wake up // the moment of the blow is the beginning of the bloody fight[42]
17 Make a bomb from a body // for it is the noblest category of the badge of honours
18 Hold your breath and hasten // to follow the Mahdi and salute his flag
19 Every brave leader makes known to us lines // of jihad in the Book of Majesty
20 Walking the gait of an unruffled lion // around his sides is concealed his mine
21 Make the land of sanctuary a graveyard // for the enemies, O guardians of honours[43]
22 Requite America with death, for in // her death will the regimes die

Islamist violence in Saudi Arabia, primarily directed against US targets, took place in a series of waves, beginning in 1979, continuing during the 1991 Gulf war, gaining momentum in 1995, and culminating in a progression of events between 2000 and 2005 (Hegghammer 2010:8–9). *ʿAdhb al-qawl: Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*, or "Sweet Words: A Message to the Heroes", was published in the Saudi

40 In the dark corners, i.e. "in private".
41 Or "sharpens his pencil".
42 See Wehr (1979), s.v. *malḥama*, also means an "heroic epic".
43 *Al-makruma* is a "noble deed".

magazine *Mu'askar al-Battār* (2004:16), in January 2004.[44] The opening article, of this particular issue, states that the objective behind a call for jihad, that is *Badr al-Riyāḍ*, is as a global broadcast setting out the nature of conflict between Muslims and "infidels", clarifying the role jihadists are expected to play, reminding people of the role of the enemy and his practices (America is portrayed as a Crusader), and inciting jihadists to fight in order to preserve God's order (al-Najdī 2004:3):

> ثم يأتي الهدف النهائي وهو التحريض على سلوك طريق النجاة امتثالا لقوله تعالى (يا أيها النبي حرض المؤمنين على القتال ...)
>
> ... then the final goal comes, which is incitement in the manner of redemption, by following in the example of God's saying: (Prophet, urge the believers to fight ...)[45]

The editorial note is self-righteous and dedicated to Muslim fighters, who are compelled to attack so-deemed "infidels" as reprisal for their violation of protected lands (*Mu'askar al-Battār* 2004:2):

> فالهدف من الإعداد ليس فقط لأجل القتال في ساحات الوغى، بل هو أيضًا لأجل إرهاب العدو واكتساب قوةٍ رادعة تجعله يحسب للمسلمين ألف حساب، ولأجل إرهاب الأعداء المتخفين بلباس الإسلام من المنافقين والذين في قلوبهم مرض.
>
> And so the purpose of preparedness is not for fighting in the battle-fields alone, but also for terrorism of the enemy and for the acquisition of a deterrent, by forcing the enemy to pay a thousand dues to the Muslims. And moreover, for terrorism of the hidden enemies cloaked in Islam, from among the hypocrites and those who are diseased of hearts.

The article, in which the poem appears, also suggests that verse is a tool that can goad fighters into battle within an ongoing military campaign (*Mu'askar al-Battār* 2004:16):

---

44 The metre is *al-ramal*, the poem an anonymous *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mah*.

45 Translation, of part of Q[8:65], is from Abdel Haleem (2010:186); used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc. For the same Qur'anic verse, see Section 7.4.1, and the footnote to verse 31, of *Lā Naksa*.

كما عودناكم، يتوقف برنامجنا العسكري في هذه المحطة الشعرية القصيرة، لكي تُشحذَ الأذهان ولا تمل، ولكي يلامس حداء الجهاد آذان الشباب، فيحدوهم إلى ميادين العمل ...

> As we have accustomed you, our military programme stops with this short poetic interlude, in order that the intellects are sharpened and not bored, and in order that the chant [driving on the train] of jihad touches the ears of the youth, spurring them on towards the fields of action ...

7.4.3 *Blood Vengeance Is One's Due*

Yemen has been an intense point of focus for America's "War on Terror" following 9/11. Domestically, contemporary Yemeni politics revolves around a complicated sectarian power struggle, this influenced by conflicting ideologies that entered Yemen's political landscape after a period of Ottoman governorship and then British colonial rule. Like many places, in the Arab world, models for self-governance are disparate, these including communism, socialism, secularism and Islamic fundamentalism. Notwithstanding its rich cultural history, and its status as the ancestral homeland of notable Arab tribes, Yemen was two-states, prior to 1990, and is currently the poorest Arab country, a condition exacerbated by a vicious civil war. The environment is a fertile ground for Islamist radicalisation. Unlike neighbouring states, there are few civic institutions, this ensuring that governance remains intensively hierarchal, rather than devolved. Political groups are highly dependent upon sponsors: the Houthis (*Anṣār Allāh*) are allied to Iran; AQAP is associated with underground branches in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Osama bin Ladin, a Saudi national, had roots in Hadhramaut); Islamic State is tied to operations in Syria and Iraq; the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood is tolerated, although periodically there are assassination attempts upon individual representatives. Within this dangerous mix, the United States of America is sometimes directly involved in drone attacks, but also outsources "special operations" to both mercenaries and regional actors, these designed to keep threats to wider economic and political interests in check (*ʿAn Qurb* 2024).

The poem, *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*, is sourced from the periodical, *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim*,[46] in 2010. The focus is Yemen, and the dedication is to the followers of Naṣr al-ʿAnsī, an AQAP leader subsequently killed, in 2015. The verse can

46 *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq* is composed in the *kāmil* metre, and ends in the letter *qāf al-sakina*. It is from the section of the magazine entitled, *Rasāʾil taḥmilu-hā amwāj ʿamaliyyat*

also be played in a *nashīd* format, featuring in several YouTube videos, while the authorship is unattributed:

Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq

1	الثـأر إن الثـأر حـق	والكفر عربد واسترق
2	قسمًا إذا حضر الوغى	سيصيبهم قتل وحرق
3	فديارنـا ليسـت لهـم	نهبًا تكون لمن سبق
4	ودماؤنـا ليسـت هـدر	ستعيد مجدًا قد أبـق
5	يـوم الكريهـة يومنـا	هـام هنـاك ستنفلـق
6	سنعيدهـا جذعًـا علـى	الكفار نقتل من مرق
7	أسدٌ مضت أسدٌ غدت	فـي اثـر أسـدٍ تنطلـق
8	قسمًا سنثـأر قـد مضـى	عهد التخاذل والفرق

1 Blood vengeance, truly blood vengeance is one's due // when unbelief is riotous and pilfers[47]
2 I swear that when war comes // they will be stricken with killing and burning
3 For our abodes do not belong to them // by robbery, they belong to those who came before
4 And our blood is not squandered // it will restore honour, which had escaped [from us]
5 The Day of Adversity is our day // there, heads will be cleaved open
6 We will repeat it again towards // the unbelievers, we kill who renounces the true faith
7 Lions have passed away; lions have gone forth // in the traces of lions, which burst forth
8 I swear that we will take blood vengeance for the era // of disunion and separation has passed

---

'Adan, or "Messages which the waves carry: The Aden Operation", sent by the Military Council, from the First Message / "To our distinguished martyrs and their relatives"; (al-Lajna al-'Askariyya 2010:65).

47 *Istaraq* means "pilfers", whereas *istaraqq* means "enslaves", meaning that the second hemistich could also be interpreted as "when unbelief is riotous and enslaves".

This particular issue, of *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim*, issue 14 (June 2010), is linked to an attack by Yemeni militants on an intelligence building in Aden (Associated Press 2010). The attack followed in the wake of an attempt, in December 2009, to blow up a plane in Detroit (Sturcke 2009). The poem forms part of a five-tiered set of messages, from the military council to its readership, concerning the aftermath of the Aden exercise: (1) the first message including the poem is dedicated to martyrs and their families; (2) the second message provides resolve to militants locked up in Yemeni prisons; and (3) the third message is addressed to all Muslims, who are called upon to give up life for death so as to follow in the example of Khālid b. al-Walīd.[48] Although God is the ultimate recipient of jihadist sacrifice, death is also summoned as the deliverer of honour and glory. This suggests that the jihadist message conflates with the blood vengeance message, in which the fates of death thrive:

> إن منازل الموت وساحات البطولات لا تَهب الحياة فحسب، بل تهب حياة العزّ والشرف، وتسجّل تاريخ البذل والصمود، وتمسح العار وتزيل الهوان، فللّه درهم من مجاهدين أشاوس، أرخصوا دماءهم للّه تعالى، وما بالوا بخذلان المخذلين، ولا تهيّبوا غطرسة المرتدين.
>
> al-Lajna al-ʿAskariyya 2010: 66

> The camp-sites of death and the fields of heroics not only give life, but also give the life of honour and glory, they record the history of sacrifice and of staying power [in the face of an opponent], they wipe away shame and they remove disgrace, for their coinage [paid] from the bold jihadists is [due] to God, for God they reduced [the price of] their blood and they did not care about being abandoned by the weak, nor fear the insolence of the apostates.

The wording concerns an internal struggle between AQAP and Houthi fighters as well as frustration with American interference in the region. AQAP, in Yemen, is concerned with two types of threat; one the local leadership that it deems to be corrupt (or a stooge of the West), the other the United States of America (and the State of Israel). Consequently, as the journal article progresses: (4) the fourth message seeks to threaten the "internal enemy", inside Yemen; while (5) the fifth message threatens the "external enemy", that is America:

48 See Section 7.4.1; in *Lā Naksa*, Khālid b. al-Walīd is also held up as the jihadist's role model.

الرسالة الخامسة / إلى رأس الكفر أمريكا:
أما أنتم يا عباد الصليب فانتظروا مفاجئاتنا عما قريب.

al-Lajna al-ʿAskariyya 2010: 66

The fifth message: To the head of unbelief, America
As for you, O worshippers of the Cross, wait for our surprises in the near future.

More generally, there are strong echoes of classical themes concerning gift exchange (in this case, the exchange of life for death) and the use of blood vengeance as a cleansing and warning mechanism.

Incidentally, the opening line of this poem (also verse 4) echo different statements made by the protagonist, Jabal, in a television series featuring in the last chapter, the overriding theme of which is blood vengeance.[49] Jabal is not a jihadist, in the militant sense of the word, but his life is one continuous "struggle" against numerous enemies that a corrupt system enables. For example, when asked about death and dying, Jabal states as an inevitability:[50]

الموت حق. والناس هيّ اللي راحت تخطئتهن برقبة المسؤولين عنهن. لو كانوا منلاقين شي[ء] أحسن ما كانوا رموا حالهن ها الرمية هيك. الناس اللي صورهن ع[لى] صناديق الانتخابات. هدول اللي بينسانوهن. شو قدّموا إلى ها العالم هاى لا. نحنا شايلين الكفن على اكتافنا طول عمرنا. ما بس أنا. الكبار. الصغار. ختايرى. نسوان. الكل. أنا اللي قاعد قدامك. بيجوز بعد تكة لعيني ميت. ما مشكلة. الموت حق. بس وربي ورب الظلم بيوجع. وبعد كل هذا اللي سمعتي تيجي واحدة راكزة وفهمانة وبتقعد بتق[و]لي الناس اللي تحت القانون هنّ اللي عايشين بالسلام وأنا هو المجرم؟

49 See Section 6.7.5.1.5.

50 See *al-Hayba: al-Ḥaṣād* (Series 3), Episode 13, towards the close of the "Interview scene", (30.30 to 38.21 mins), and in response to Nūr's statement, in Section 6.7.5.4. Grammatical conventions have been suspended because this is colloquial Arabic. *Khatāyira* is the plural of *khatyār*, meaning an "old man". This word is derived from Turkish, and so the plural is derivative, the pronunciation, variable.

> Death is one's due.[51] As for those people who have passed, the charge of blame [for their death has been] under the watch of those responsible for them. Had they found something better, they would not have thrown in their lot in such a way. The people whose pictures are on the election boxes. Those are the ones who forget them. What have they contributed to this world, no? We have lifted the shroud[ed dead] upon our shoulders our entire lives. Not just me. The old. The young. Old men. Women. Everyone. I, who am sat before you. It's possible that I could be dead after blinking my eye. No problem. Death is one's due. But, I swear, by my God, and by the one who is responsible for this injustice that causes [such] suffering, after all this that you have heard, one comes who is focused and knowledgeable and sits and tells me that people under the law, they are the one's living in peace, while I am the one who is a criminal?

In other words, the fatalistic note of *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq* is very familiar, resonating not only with historical blood vengeance narratives and verse but also with messaging from current popular media that criticises the establishment.

7.4.4 *Is It Not "'Uqāb" Who Is the Eagle's Model?*

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū ("Is it not "'Uqāb" who is the eagle's model?"), like the subsequent poem, was published online, in 2014, by the Syrian jihadist poet, Aḥlām al-Naṣr, also known as the "Poetess of the Islamic State":[52]

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51 *Haqq* means what is "right and true", and therefore what is "one's due". In this case, it also resonates with Q[50:19]:

وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ

> The trance of death will bring the Truth with it: 'This is what you tried to escape.' Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010: 520); used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

52 *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* is a *bā'iyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*bū*, that al-Naṣr has composed in the warlike metre of *al-wāfir*. This rhythm suggests from the outset that the poem will contain incitement. The sub-heading states: "An Elegy for the Hero ʿUqāb al-Marzūqī, May God Receive Him!" (al-Naṣr 2014:62–63).

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

(فـي رثـاء البطـل "عُقـاب المرزوقـي" تقبّلـه الله تعالـى)

1 إذا ما طارَ في الجوِّ العُقابُ وَكـانَ بـهِ رفيعًـا ذا الجَنـابُ
2 رأيـتَ سماءَنـا قصـرًا منيفًـا أميـرُ القصـرِ فيهـا كـمْ يُهَـابُ!
3 وَتخشـاهُ الطُّيـورُ إذا تـراهُ وَيجتنـبُ اللِقـاءَ بـهِ الغـرابُ
4 كـأنَّ سماءَنـا سـاحٌ لديـهِ فلا تعلـو الهَـوامُ وَلا الذُّبـابُ
5 فمـا ظـنُّ الأنـامِ إذا (عُقـابٌ) يكونُ بنـا كمـا كـانَ العُقـابُ؟!
6 هـوَ الاسـدُ الهصـورُ بكـلِّ فـجٍّ وَفي اللَّيـلِ البهيـمِ هـوَ الشِّهـابُ
7 يَحُثُّ خُطاهُ في دربِ المعالي وَلا تُرضِيـهِ دنيانـا الخَـرابُ
8 مضـى فـي دربِ حـقٍّ مستنيرٍ فمـا نَحَّـاهُ وهـمٌ أو هُبَـابُ
9 أراد بلـوغَ أمجـادِ الخوالـي وَللتَّقـوى بـدا منـهُ انتسـابُ
10 وَفـي سـاحِ الوغـى: حـقٌّ بهيٌّ، وَفيهـا باطـلٌ أَشِـرٌ مُعَـابُ
11 وَسـارَ النَّصـرُ للأبطـالِ طوعًـا كمثـلِ الفُلْـكِ يُحْريهـا العُبـابُ
12 وَزمجرتِ الأسـودُ وَكـانَ فتحًـا وأينعـتِ الـرُّؤوسُ كـذا الرِّقـابُ
13 وَتاقـتْ منهـمُ الأرواحُ شوقًـا إلى الجنَّاتِ؛ إذْ كَمُلَ النِّصابُ
14 بطـولاتٌ بهـا توفيـقُ ربِّي، يَـذِلُّ الكفـرُ؛ أعيـاهُ انسحـابُ
15 بطـولاتٌ يسطِّرهـا أسـودٌ دمـاءُ المعتـدي: لهـمُ الشَّـرابُ
16 وَشِلْـوُ الكافريـنَ: لهـمْ أنيـسٌ نواسفُهـمْ كواتُمهـمْ: ثيـابُ
17 وَمهما حِيكتِ الشُّبهاتُ تبقى ممزَّقـةً وَمـا فيهـا صـوابُ
18 فـإنَّ الحـقَّ عـدلٌ مـعْ مَضـاءٍ وَأمجـادٍ بهـا تسـري الرِّكـابُ
19 فهذي عيشـةُ الأبطـالِ كانـتْ حيـاةَ (عُقابنـا) معـهُ الصِّحـابُ
20 إلـى أنْ كـانَ يـومٌ مَلْحَمِـيٌّ عَرى كأسَ الحياةِ بِهِ انسكـابُ
21 وَأُفْـرِغَ مـاؤُهُ الرَّقـراقُ موتًـا وَأُشْرِعَ للفتى فـي الخُلْـدِ بـابُ
22 فودَّعنـا وَأوصانـا بحـرصٍ؛ بأنْ نسعى وَفي الجِدِّ أحتسابُ
23 وَأنْ نحيـا جبـالًا شامخـاتٍ ترى (طوبى) وَيحدوهـا أغتـرابُ
24 عـنِ الدُّنيـا وَعـنْ كـلِّ الرَّزايـا إلى هَدْيٍ وَإنْ كذبَ الضَّبـابُ

25 ونثبتَ ما حيينا في صمودٍ وَلو في النَّاسِ قدْ سادَ ارتيابُ
26 وَلا نختارَ غيرَ الحقِّ نهجًا تَفِلُّ إزاءَهُ تلكَ الذِّئابُ
27 فإنَّ الحقَّ ماءٌ سلسبيلٌ وَإنَّ سواهُ أوهامٌ سرابُ
28 وَأنهى، ثمَّ ساءلنا بلطفٍ: أيا أحبابُ هلْ فُهِمَ الخطابُ؟!
29 وَإذْ بالرُّوحِ طارتْ نحوَ خُلْدٍ وَقدْ ذُهلِ الصِّحابُ فما أجابوا
30 كأنَّ الرُّوحَ توقيعٌ نديٌّ يدومُ وَليسَ يَعْرُوهُ غيابُ
31 وَإذْ بدمائهِ سَطَرَتْ خطابًا جديدًا، فَانْبَرَوا: فُهِمَ الخطابُ!
32 وَصيَّتُكَ التي مُهِرَتْ بِدَمٍّ ثمينٍ: لنْ تضيعَ، وَذا جوابُ
33 ستلقى عُصْبَةٌ الظُّلام منَّا شديدَ البأسِ ترسمهُ الحِرابُ
34 فإنَّ جهادَنا: سيفٌ صقيلٌ، وَإنَّ جهادَنا: هذا الكتابُ
35 وَلنْ ننسى شهيدًا صَاغَ فينا دروسًا ليسَ يطويها التُّرابُ
36 سموتَ بكلِّ عزٍّ يا (عُقابُ) وآلمَ جرحَنا ذاكَ الغيابُ
37 جبالُ الغابِ تشتاقُ المُجَلِّي كذا ستظلُّ ترقبهُ الهضابُ
38 تسائلني وَلا أدري جوابًا، وَيهربُ عندَ إفصاحيْ الجوابُ
39 فما حالُ الرَّوابي حينَ صمتي وَذاكَ النَّهرُ يغمرهُ العتابُ؟!
40 وَما حالُ السَّماءِ إذا شجاها وَلا يُخفي حقيقتَها النِّقابُ؟!
41 تحاولُ أنْ تزيحَ الحزنَ لكنْ إذا نسيتْ: يُذَكِّرها السَّحابُ
42 فَتَذْكُرُ كيفَ كانَ (عُقابُ) فيها، وَفيها اليومَ – إذْ رحلَ – اكتئابُ
43 وَكيفَ ستمرحُ الغربانُ جورًا إذا ما عادَ يردعها عِقابُ
44 تسائلُ نفسَها حينًا وَحينًا وَقدْ عظمَ النَّحيبُ كذا المُصابُ:
45 لقدْ ضحَّى لديني مستجيبًا وَإنَّ إباءَهُ عزٌّ عجابُ
46 فهلْ هوَ للعُقابِ غدا شبيهًا؟! أمِ العُقبانُ قدوتُها (عُقابُ)؟!
47 فصبَّرها وَذكّرها كلامٌ مِنَ القرآنِ آياتٌ عِذَابُ
48 بأنَّ الدِّينَ باقٍ لو فنينا هوَ المغزى العظيمُ هوَ اللُّبابُ
49 جماجمُنا لهُ خُلِقتْ فداءً نفوزُ بهِ قامَ الحسابُ
50 وَرحمةَ ربِّنا القيُّومِ نرجو بأنَّ جِنانَ رضوانٍ مآبُ
51 لأبطالٍ بواسلَ قدْ أفاضوا وَمسكُ شهادةِ الأُسْدِ الخِضابُ

52 دماهـمْ فـوقَ أعدائـي لهيـبٌ وَنـارٌ بـاتَ يحدوهـا اقتـرابُ
53 بإسلامـي نفـوزُ وَلـنْ يفـوزوا فإسلامـي هـوَ الحـقُّ الصَّـوابُ
54 سيبقى في حِمَى الرَّحمنِ دومًا، وَرايتُـه أيـا صحبـي (العُقـابُ)

1 Whenever the Eagle, this majestic being, flies through the air //and soars up high
2 You see our sky as a lofty palace // the prince of the palace within [the sky] how awesome is he!
3 Even the birds fear him when they see him // and the crow avoids the encounter with him
4 In his presence, it is as if our skies are arenas // so the vermin do not rise and neither do the flies
5 So what is the opinion of mankind, should ʿUqāb // be among us, who has the same qualities as the Eagle?[53]
6 He is the lion which slays from all sides // and in the pitch black of night he is the shooting star
7 He quickens his pace in the pursuit of noble deeds // and our world of ruin does not bring him satisfaction
8 He advanced upon a path of enlightened truth // and so neither delusion nor dust diverted him
9 He wanted to reach the glorious feats of bygone times // and as for piety, a relation to it emanated from him
10 On the battlefield: there is radiant Truth // and there is Falsehood, insolent and blameworthy
11 And victory passes in obedience to the heroes // just like the ships are conducted by the ocean's waves
12 And the lions roared when he was victorious // and the heads ripened as did the necks[54]
13 From them the spirits aspired to Paradise longingly // when the matter was fully settled

53 See Section 7.8; for "the Eagle" may also refer to the "Aquila constellation".

54 See al-Jāḥiẓ (1985:2:308–310, 393–394; cited in Qutbuddin 2019:363); in Arabic oration, this threat was issued by al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī, a ruthless Umayyad governor in the time of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān, to both the Kharijites and other dissident residents of Kufa (a city in present day Iraq):

أما والله إنّي لأحتمل الشرّ بحمله وأحذوه بنعله وأجزيه بمثله. وإنّي لأرى رؤوسًا قد أينعت وحان قطافها وإني لصاحبها. وإنّي لأنظر إلى الدماء ترقرق بين العمائم واللّحى.

14 Heroic deeds whose success is granted by my God // unbelief is humbled; retreat rendered it incapable
15 Heroic deeds written into legend by lions // the blood of the aggressor: their drink
16 The infidels severed remnants: their consolation // explosives and guns with silencers:[55] their armour
17 Whatever doubts[56] have been concocted remain // torn apart, there is no truth to them
18 For the truth is justice with sagacity // and honours, the mounts go on a night journey with them[57]
19 For this life of the heroes was //the life of (our ʿUqāb) with his companions
20 Until an epic day arrived // when his cup of life was struck by being poured out
21 His glittering water was poured out in death // and a door unto eternity was opened for the hero
22 And so he took leave of us and urged us to be on our guard; // that we should carry on striving, for in endeavour there is reward in the hereafter
23 And that we should live like lofty mountains // which see Ṭūbā[58] and are spurred on by exile
24 from the world and from all heavy losses // to the right path, even when mist deceives [the eye]
25 And we hold our ground, for as long as we live, with staying power // even should misgiving gain the upper hand over people
26 We only choose the true path // those wolves run away [when] face to face with it

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Indeed by God, I shall contain evil by its own scabbard, have it shod with its own shoe, and reward it with its like. Beware! I see heads ripe for plucking, and I am the one to gather them in. I see blood oozing in the space between turbans and beards.

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55 *Kātim*, pl. *kawātim* is associated with *musaddas kātim al-ṣawt*, i.e. *musaddas yakhruju min-hu al-raṣāṣ wa-lā yuḥdithu ṣawtan*, which means a "gun bearing a silencer". See http://www.almaany.com.

56 See Wehr (1979), s.v. *shīn-bā'-hā'*, *aṣḥāb al-shubuhāt*, means "people of ill repute".

57 An ancient idiom meaning that "they become widely known".

58 The Tree of Paradise.

27 For the Truth is the water of the Paradisiacal Spring // and everything other [than the Truth] are delusions and mirage
28 After he had finished, he questioned us gently: // O beloveds, is the speech understood?
29 And in doing so, the spirit flew towards eternity // and the followers were stupefied and therefore did not answer
30 It is as though the spirit is a moist dropping [of dew] // which endures and which absence does not befall
31 And since it wrote a new speech with his blood // they burst out: "Your speech is understood!"
32 Your legacy which has been ransomed in costly blood: // it will not be lost, and that is [our] answer
33 The leagues of oppression will find [emanating from] us // vehement fortitude, of which lances emboss their traces
34 For our jihad is: a burnished sword // and our jihad is: this Book
35 And we shall not forget a martyr who embedded in us // lessons[59] which dust will not bury
36 You ascended with every honour, O ʿUqāb // and your absence causes our wound pain
37 The mountains of the forests miss the winning horse // likewise, the hills will persist in awaiting him
38 They ask me but I know not the answer, // for the answer escapes my eloquence
39 So what is the condition of the hills in my silence // and that river which floods with censure?
40 And what is the condition of the sky when she is filled with anxiety // and whose true state no veil can conceal?
41 She [the sky] tries to draw back the sadness however // should she forget the clouds give her cause to remember
42 So that she [the sky] remembers how ʿUqāb was within her, // and since he has departed, grief is within her today
43 And how the straying crows will rejoice, wantonly deviating from the right course // should a punishment[60] no longer keep them at bay

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59 *Durūs* also means "effaced roads" which have been covered by dust, and so the verse suggests that these lessons are like deserted tracks which cannot be erased, an image which in its turn alludes to the traces that the pre-Islamic poet encountered at the abandoned campsite of a departing tribe. On the role of the abandoned campsite, in the *qaṣīda*, see a quote from Ibn Qutayba (1958:i:74–75), in Section 6.2.2.

60 The word *ʿiqāb*, i.e. "punishment", puns on ʿUqāb's name.

44 She [the sky] asks herself from time to time // when the lamentation had become great, likewise the misfortune:
45 He has sacrificed [himself] obediently, for my religion // and his stubborn resistance was an astonishing strength
46 So did he become just like an eagle? // Or is ʿUqāb the exemplar of the eagles?
47 Then speech from the Qurʾan, sweet verses // fortified her and made her remember
48 That though we perish, the religion is what remains // it is the great meaning and it is the essence of understanding [which is put into the heart of a man]
49 Our skulls were created as a ransom for it [the religion] // through which we are victorious when judgement comes
50 [By] the mercy of our Everlasting God, we hope // that [Paradise] gardens of delight are the place of return [through death]
51 for brave heroes who shed [blood] // for the musk of the lions' martyrdom is [red] dye
52 Their blood upon my enemies is flame // and fire, which approaching [death] continues to spur on
53 By my Islam,[61] we win [a victory] and they will not win // for my Islam is the Truth which is right and proper
54 He will remain in the sanctuary of the Merciful always // and his banner, O my friend, is the *ʿUqāb* [the Banner of the Prophet][62]

Al-Naṣr is reportedly a young woman, formerly schooled in Saudi Arabia, from an educated background, while also thought to have moved to Raqqa during the Arab Spring, i.e. sometime during, or after 2011 (Creswell and Haykel 2015). Her immediate family members are also ISIS supporters.[63] The poems are from her first anthology, *Uwār al-Haqq* ("The Blaze of Truth"), and are distinct because they conform to the classical tradition and employ motifs that Abū Tammām

61 "By my Islam" can also be read as "by my submission to the will of God".

62 See See Lane (1863), s.v. "*ʿayn-qāf-bā*", the poet repeatedly uses the word, *al-ʿUqāb*, which variously refers to: (1) the name of the deceased; (2) the "eagle"; (3) the "Aquila constellation"; (4) the "banner which is attached to a lance" (derived from the standard of a Roman legion, which was an eagle); and (5) the "Banner of the Prophet".

63 Al-Naṣr's mother, Īmān al-Bughā, is reported to have left her post as a university lecturer, in Saudi Arabia, to join her children, in Syria, while her teenage brother, a jihadist soldier, is thought to have been killed in fighting (al-Ṣāliḥ 2016). On the other hand, her cleric grandfather and wider family are respected scholars, in Damascus, also thought to have been regime supporters (al-Jabīn 2015).

and al-Mutanabbī popularised. Al-Naṣr is an example of female agency providing incitement into battle, for which she performs a similar function to al-Basūs, or Kabsha, or Asmā'u.[64] Moreover, she presents an interesting counterbalance to the stereotypical image of a jihadi bride as she is married to a propagandist, both of them possessing the power of rhetorical speech.[65] Although many of her poems are inspired by protest against the Syrian regime, she has redrawn the political map through poetry, by speaking about a Caliphate and commenting on other conflicts, in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iran and Kosovo, all as part of a wider Islamic malaise (Creswell and Haykel 2015).[66] Her role has been particularly assured in her lamentations for a jihadist hero (*Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*) and for lost land (*Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*). These poems follow the classical model, for which the female poet laments through elegy, while the male fighter is charged with the taking of blood vengeance. Jihadist poetry, in al-Naṣr's dexterous and dangerous hands, frames fighters as romantic heroes belonging to a fantasy world without borders, a magnetic recruitment tool that reconciles an idealised image of the early Islamic period with the virtual reality of the internet (Creswell and Haykel 2015 and 2017).

7.4.5 *A Breeze Called out from the Hills of Lebanon*

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā, or "A breeze called out from the hills of Lebanon", is also by al-Naṣr.[67] The polythematic content of this poem contains: (1) a crime scene, which contains echoes of the *aṭlāl*; (2) a *nasīb*, in which Lebanon is pined for as the lost beloved; and (3) *hijā'*, or invective, directed against Lebanese Christians and Shi'a Muslims, demanding that the Sunni rise up against them while juxtaposing bravery against cowardice:

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64 See Section 2.3.3, for *al-Muwaththibāt*, a poem by al-Basūs that serves as an example of Jahili female incitement. Sections 1.3 and 1.4.6 offer examples from *Ḥ*53, by Kabsha. See also Section 6.4, for verse by Asmā'u.

65 See Section 3.4, Hamdar's (2009) has posited that "jihad" is a spoken position of resistance (albeit one which does not call for aggression) that for its conveyance includes the female jihadist.

66 Prior to joining ISIS, al-Naṣr claimed that she considered becoming a suicide bomber in order to blow up an American military base, in the Gulf (al-Shāmānī 2014).

67 *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, by al-Naṣr (2014:82–83), has been sourced from *Uwār al-Haqq*. It is also composed in the *wāfir* metre and, like ʿAmr b. Kulthūm's *Muʿallaqa*, is a *nūniyya*, ending in *-nā*. The action of arousal, *alā habbū ilay-hā* ("go and rush to her"), in verse 25, recalls the opening of that poem, although the context is different. In Arberry (2016:204), *alā hubbī bi-ṣaḥniki* means "Up with your bowl". See also Section 7.4.1, for verse 54 of *Lā Naksa*, and Section 6.7.5.4, for the rap *al-Habū*; *habbū*, i.e. "go rush", also means "rise up".

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

1 نسيـمٌ مِـن ربـا لبنـانَ نـادى وَلا يـدري أنسمعُـهُ يقينـا؟!
2 وَفيـهِ أريـج أزهـار الروابـي كـذا مسـكُ الشهـادةِ يلتقينـا
3 وَعلَّـلَ: إنَّـني قـدْ كنـتُ دومًـا أسـوقُ لكـمْ عطـورًا أو سكونـا
4 وَلكـنَّ الرَّوابـي بحـرُ دمٍّ فكيفَ لِذا النَّسيمِ بأنْ يكونـا؟!
5 لقدْ سلَّ الظَّلـومُ سيـوفَ حقـدٍ وَقـدْ قتـلَ الأنـامَ هنـا جنونـا
6 فصاحـتْ ربـوةٌ فيهـمْ: كفاكـمْ فإنَّـا بالدِّمـاءِ لقـدْ رُوِينـا
7 وَأيُّ مهانـةٍ كانـتْ لَبوسًـا تزيـدُ عليكـمُ حقـدًا دفينـا؟!
8 إذا كنتـمْ رجـالًا فلتخوضـوا حروبًـا دونْ أن تضعـوا الكمينـا
9 وَلكـنْ قـدْ جَبَنْتُـمْ فَاغْتَنَمْتُـمْ غيابَ الأُسْدِ كي تَلِجُوا العرينا!!
10 وَمـا فقـهَ الطُّغـاةُ وَمـا استجابـوا وَكـانَ الشَّـرُّ شيطانًـا لعينـا
11 قلوبهـمُ لقـدْ مُلِئـتْ بغـدرٍ حَقـودٍ فاسـقٍ وَبـهِ كُوِينـا
12 وَقـدْ صـارَ الأسـودُ وراءَ قيـدٍ أثيـمٍ سامهـمْ قهـرًا مَهينـا
13 عَدَا الأعدا على الحُرماتِ شرًّا وَواهًـا للحرائـرِ إنْ سُبِينـا!!
14 فَـذِي لبنـانُ يـا صحبـي تنـادي وَبـاتَ القلـبُ مكلومًـا حزينـا
15 تقـولُ لكـمْ: أمَـا فيكـمْ أسـودٌ تفكُّ الأسرَ أو تُنجِي السَّجينا؟!
16 أمـا فيكـمْ أيـا قومـي شجـاعٌ لِيُـردي الكفـرَ يغتـالُ الخؤونـا؟!
17 فحزبُ اللاَّتِ وَالشَّيطانِ يعوي وَقـدْ دعسـتْ شرورُهـمُ الجبينـا
18 صليبُ الغدرِ يعضـدهُ حماسًـا وَيفـرحُ إنْ بـآلامٍ رُمِينـا
19 طرابلـسٌ تناديكـمْ وَأَمْسَـتْ جـروحُ الآهِ للبلـدِ القرينـا
20 وَيختلطُ النِّداءُ بصـوتِ قصـفٍ عنيـفٍ سـاقَ للبلـدِ الشُّجونـا
21 بـبـابِ تَبَانَـةٍ يعـوي صليـبٌ فجـورًا ضاريًـا فَتِكًـا مشينـا
22 تكابـدهُ وَلا تقـوى عليـهِ وَمـا مِـنْ فـارسٍ يغـدو معينـا
23 وَبيـروتٌ بهـا دوَّى نحيـبٌ إليكـمْ يبعـثُ اليـومَ الأنينـا
24 لَكَـمْ عاثـوا بهـا فسقًـا وَجُرمًـا وَقـدْ فاقـوا بـهِ الشَّـرَّ اللَّعينـا
25 ألا هبُّـوا إليهـا كـي تفـوزوا وَتحموا الدِّيـنَ وَالمجـدَ الثَّمينـا

26 فإنَّ حديدَ أجنادِ الأعادي يُفَلُّ بمثلهِ، وَبِذا رُوِينا
27 كواتمَ جندنا صوغي انتصارًا على الأرفاضِ مهدارًا مكينا
28 كذاكَ مفخَّخاتٌ وَالتحامٌ تدكُّ صروحَهمْ دكًّا مبينا
29 سَبَا صيدا نداءُ الحرِّ لهفًا: ألا قَرِّي أبا أمِّي عيونا
30 سيشرقُ فجرُكِ المزدانُ يومًا وَإنْ جارَ الطُّغاةُ عليكِ حينا
31 تبسَّمتِ الأسيرةُ إذْ شجاها بذكرِ بواسلٍ حلفوا اليمينا
32 وَنادتْ: يا إلهيَ جُدْ عليهمْ وَزوِّدهمْ بعزمٍ لنْ يلينا
33 وَأَمْدِدْهمْ بِجُنْدٍ معْ ثباتٍ ليُهزمُ جمعُ كلِّ الكافرينا
34 وَنعبدَ ربَّنا حقًّا وَصدقًا وَنحكمَ بالشَّريعةِ ما حَيِينا

1 A breeze from the hills of Lebanon called out // and it does not know if we can hear it with [any] certainty
2 And in it is the fragrance of hill-flowers // in that way the musk of martyrdom meets us
3 And it explained: Truly, I always used // to send perfumes or tranquillity for you
4 However, the hills are a sea of blood[68] // and so how then is the breeze to be?
5 The tyrant has already drawn swords of hatred [from the scabbards] // and here, [he] has already killed mankind in a frenzy
6 And so the hills shout at them: That's enough for you // for we are already saturated with blood
7 And which disgrace, which you wear as a garment // compounds your buried hatred [for the enemy]?
8 Should you be men then you should boldly embark upon // war without relinquishing the ambush[69]
9 And yet, you have been cowardly and you have taken advantage // of the lions' absence so that you can enter the den!!
10 The tyrants did not understand and they took no heed // when evil was a cursed devil

68 The Arabic for "blood" should be *dam*, but is *damm*, in the poem, so as to suit the metre. While this is strictly a fault, in *Fuṣḥā*, the Levantine vernacular also employs this pronunciation for "blood".
69 I.e. without making peace.

11 Their hearts have been filled with spiteful, wanton treachery // and by it we were stung
12 The lions were overcome by transgressive restraint // which humiliated them with disgraceful force
13 The enemies have attacked the women, maliciously // woe upon the free-women if they were captured!
14 That is why Lebanon calls out, O my companions // and the heart remained wounded and sad
15 She says to you: Are there no lions among you // who can break open the shackles or rescue the prisoners?
16 Is there not a brave one among you, O my people // to bring about the fall of infidelity, to murder the treacherous one?
17 The Party of *al-Lāt*[70] and the devil howls // and their evil ways have treated the forehead with contempt
18 The Cross of Betrayal supported it,[71] in fighting spirit // and delights, should we be thrown into agonies
19 Tripoli is calling out to you and the wounds // alas have become a companion to the country
20 The appeal blends with the sound of violent explosion // driving the country to sorrows
21 By Bab al-Tabana,[72] a cross howls // [in a way which is] depraved, injurious, murderous and disgraceful
22 She [Tripoli] endures it and is not strong enough to cope with it // and there is no knight who comes to assist
23 And Beirut, a loud weeping rang out from her // to you, bringing on moaning today
24 Truly, how many of them wreaked havoc by her, in a depraved and sinful way // in this they [even] outstripped the cursed evil
25 Go and rush to her, in order to defeat [the enemy] // and to protect the religion and the precious glory
26 Then the steel of the enemies' soldiers // will be dented by [steel] like it and in that way we would have been satiated

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70 The poet here lampoons Hizbullah, the "Party of God", by changing its name into *Hizb al-Lāt*, the "Party of al-Lāt", the pre-Islamic pagan goddess.

71 The "Cross of Betrayal" here refers to the Christians; the poet is referring to Lebanon's complex sectarian make-up, stating that the Christians and the Shi'a (v. 17) do not represent the country's best interests. Note the reference to "fighting spirit", i.e. *ḥamāsa*.

72 Bab al-Tabana is a district of Tripoli. The cross, here, refers to Christians, as in verse 18.

27 O silent guns of our army, forge a revenge // against the apostates, resolute and with impunity[73]
28 In this manner, booby-trapped [cars] and close combat // demolish their palaces in a clear devastation
29 Sorrowfully, Sidon's appeal to be freed was scattered by the wind:[74] // Let yourself be consoled,[75] O mother
30 One day, your [Lebanon/Sidon] beautiful dawn will rise // even if the tyrants oppress you for a while
31 The female captive smiles in her sorrow // when she remembers brave ones who took the oath
32 And she cried: O my God, be generous to them // and endow them with resolve, which will be unbending
33 Reinforce them with soldiers with endurance // so that the gathering of all infidels is defeated
34 And we worship our God truthfully and faithfully // and we shall rule by the Shari'a law, for as long as we live

The passage refers to cycles of unrest, in Lebanon, focusing principally upon more recent events, although crisis has been exacerbated by renewed conflict with Israel (particularly in 2006), in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990). Unresolved issues have eroded the fragile peace, these concerning the legacy of colonial rule, sectarian tensions and the Palestinian question. Moreover, Lebanon's status as a client state of Syria has been severely tested by the latter's implosion into civil war, resulting in a heavy influx of

73 See translation note for verse 16, of *Ami-l-'uqbānu qudwatu-hā 'Uqābū*, s.v. *kātim*, pl. *kawātim*. *Intiṣār* can mean "victory, triumph, or revenge". *Ṣūghī* is the imperative form, when addressing the guns collectively as *anti* ("you"), deriving from the verb *ṣāgha*, meaning "create, fashion, or forge". Incidentally, acting with impunity suggests a victory that cannot be avenged, since the word *mahdūr* (and not *mihdār*) usually refers to "unavenged blood". See also Section 3.7.6 and verse 37, of *Yā ḥafṣa innī 'adānī 'an-kumu-l-safarū*, by Ka'b al-Ashqarī, for this same sentiment of attaining a revenge so complete that the enemy cannot retaliate in kind.

74 The translation of this verse recalls both the title and the opening verse. It assumes that *sabā* is being used here as a verb, which in turn refers to an ancient proverb about a tribe from Sheba (Yemen) who were dispersed. Here it is short-hand for *dhahabū*, or *tafarraqū aydī sabā*, meaning "they were scattered in the same way as [those of] Sheba", or "they were dispersed on the winds".

75 In Abdel Haleem's (2010:308) translation of the Qur'an, *qarrī 'aynan*, in Q[19:26], means "be glad". See also Lane (1863), s.v. *qāf-rā'*, the expression *qarirtu bi-hi 'aynan* means: "I became refreshed by eye".

refugees, high unemployment and also smuggling.[76] The three largest cities in Lebanon, cited in the poem, are particularly vulnerable to sectarian tension. From 2014/5, Tripoli has experienced a series of showdowns between Islamist fighters, ʿAlawite forces and also the Lebanese army, a resurgence in the violence that occurred during the Lebanese Civil War. In October 2014, sectarian conflict was particularly severe between two neighbourhoods that are separated by one street, Bāb al-Tabāna (a Sunni district of Tripoli, cited in verse 21, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*) and Jabal Muḥsin (an ʿAlawite district of the same city).[77] Islamist militias concentrated in Bāb al-Tabāna have not only been confined to ISIS but also include *Jabhat al-Nuṣra* (The al-Nuṣra Front), another Salafi organisation calling for militant jihad. In 2015, Lebanese officials estimated that between twenty to thirty per cent of inhabitants in this district were of Syrian origin and recent refugees, while armed dissidents of the Syrian regime were also among this population (Strickland 2015). A Salafi, albeit affiliated to ISIS, al-Naṣr's political stance is vehemently opposed to the Syrian regime, the State of Israel, the West (more generally) as well as Lebanon's complex sectarian identity. As such, she calls for restoration of the Caliphate, albeit by ignoring the medieval Caliphate's cosmopolitan nature.

7.5 The Role of Speech Acts in Blood Vengeance

Chapter One, on the methodology, opened by arguing that poetry can be inflammatory and directly provoke violence which thereafter cements solidarity within a community. The premise is controversial for a number of reasons, but mainly because "blood vengeance poems" and jihadist poems do not have the same impact upon all audiences. Moreover, although Arabic poetry remains prestigious in the age of multi-media, it is difficult to justify that it is more effective as a communication tool than social media, or even television. The previous chapter elucidated upon the theme of blood vengeance as television entertainment for a multi-generational audience, operating in much the same way as traditional oral narratives. It demonstrated that TV dramatisations are particularly effective when local censorship laws make it is easier to inform audiences about social issues, using fictional narratives, rather than by standard documentary reporting. But entertainment, as such, is usually transmitted within a situational context that is also subject to censorship and classification.

76 Section 6.7.5 has cited an example of storytelling that reveals a general culture of blood vengeance on the Lebanese border with Syria.

77 In its entirety, Tripoli is predominantly made up of Sunni residents.

It is insufficient in and of itself to promote, or prompt copy-cat behaviour. In other words, unless the violence is excessively gratuitous, television entertainment is frequently benign.

Incitement of sectarian hatred through speech is the subject of a BBC documentary focusing on the specific role that television satellite channels (that rally politically, rather than entertain) can play in incitement to violence (*ʿAn Qurb* 2014). The access that such channels have into people's living rooms render these media agents provocateurs, particularly in regions of intense sectarian conflict, when speech takes the form of a hectoring sermon for which the enemy sect is lampooned in highly offensive language. The rhetorical form of such speech is not poetic, but, like verse, it castigates the target and affords praise to the preferred sect/tribe. Likewise, social media has similar potential for the delivery of hate speech to a receptive audience. Where there is a culture of blood vengeance, i.e. where blood vengeance is practised locally on a regular basis, when artistic production also reflects this practice, and when aggravating economic and political factors warrant some form of re-dress that is then seized upon by a political group to motivate protest, then poetry (which possesses the power of broadcast speech and the memorable appeal of the sound-bite) has the ability to incite. This phenomenon is by no means exclusive to the Arab world, and therefore wider research provides a useful window onto what qualifies as speech incitement.

Opinion is divided as to whether freedom to speak violently prevents dangerous ideas from being driven underground, or if free speech provokes greater acts of violence. For example, in her study about the impact of American rap music upon local gang violence, Amal Malek (2008:111–114) has concluded that verbal fencing is a preventive art form which obviates a recourse to arms. Conversely, by highlighting the twentieth-century experience of some Latin American countries, Eric Hobsbawm (1969:51–57) has stated that vengeful outlaws (and their poetry) thrive in tumultuous environments of rapid social change and inequality, which also have a history of blood revenge. Hobsbawm has not gone so far as to posit that poetry is capable of inciting revenge, but this direction of causation is implicit because he has also argued that artistic expression is compatible with violence, in cases of social banditry. In referring to research by Chase Robinson, Michael Cooperson has argued that the Arab experience (at least in the case of the Kharijites of Mosul) is close to the Hobsbawm model, and that revolt against the system will persist as long as there is a narrative of class struggle (Robinson 2000; cited in Cooperson 2015:193–195).

It stands to reason then that class struggle serves as a catalyst for blood vengeance, this occurring when the hospitality contract breaks down and blood exchange replaces gift exchange. Blood vengeance is one of the oldest mech-

anisms in the world for identifying and tackling social inequality, much in the same way that Marxist thought identifies poverty that is created by capitalism and exacerbated by colonialism. Be that as it may, it is helpful to theorise more specifically: (1) why some environments are more prone to outbreaks of violence than others; (2) which are the factors to watch out for (and alleviate) when attempting to resolve conflict; and (3) what role does poetic speech play, if any, in inciting violence in the first place? For example, in recent cases of militant jihadism, the poetic call to vengeance seems to resonate loudest in locations where the target audience values the traditional authority of the spoken word, is a victim of social injustice, is easily roused, and is physically able to fight.

7.6 Theorising Poetic Incitement

Section 4.5.5 has already demonstrated that, for the Abbasid poet, violent action is related to the commitment of a speaker, his eloquence and the sympathy that a cause evokes. The following quote is attributed to a chain of transmission that includes Abū Tammām:[78]

حدّثنا أحمد قال حدّثنا أحمد قال حدّثنا أبو تمّام قال حدّثني أبو عبد الرحمن الأُمَويّ قال
تكلّم رجل عند هشام فأحسن فقال هشام إنّ أحسن الحديث ما أحدث بالقلوب عهدًا

> We cite Aḥmad, citing Aḥmad, citing Abū Tammām, who cites Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Umawī as follows: A man who was at Hishām's place spoke eloquently. "The best speech," Hishām said, "is that which wins the heart's commitment."
>
> Translation by Gruendler[79]

This study has set out a case, over consecutive chapters, that it is also possible to identify a "blood vengeance poem" containing incitement, by checking for the use of certain motifs and commands that evoke blood vengeance. A poem can incite to vengeance in various ways. For example, it may ennoble ritual violence

78 This is Section 151, from al-Ṣūlī (2015:296–297).

79 Used with permission of New York University Press, from *The life and times of Abū Tammām*, Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, 2015; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

through myth building and the creation of an aesthetic ritual. Alternatively, it can serve as broadcast news, or brainwash through the repetition of certain stock images and messages. Furthermore, it can project a violent history into the present through the use of a fixed and repetitive form. This and the following section's focus is upon the role of language, examining the way in which poetic speech can produce an imperative to commit a revenge killing. When violence is integrated within language, and repeated, this coupling can easily result in violent behaviour, but similarly a preventive language ritual can also negate the use of force and act as an antidote. The UNESCO Section for Youth (2006) and the TakingITGlobal initiative have defined "violence" as a "social, economical, cultural and political issue, instilled in language. Language acts as a map that mediates reality through everyday communications; so violence becomes instilled in reality".[80] In his study of storytelling and performance, Richard van Leeuwen (2007:363–376) has spoken of a strategic and political motive behind narrative repetition which is ritualistic, and can either shape violent behaviour or serve to correct it. He has assumed that: (1) rituals possess qualities that are transformative and habit forming; (2) these enable the collective unconscious to displace individual thought; (3) these allow myth to displace reality; and (4) these can easily condition behaviour into violence,[81] although violent behaviour can also be transformed through cognitive counter-ritual. By analysing the vengeful behaviour of a fictional Middle Eastern tyrant, he has also suggested that violence may be exacerbated by an earlier trauma (Van Leeuwen 2007:373–374).[82]

It is also useful to consider a practical explanation for a violent campaign, whereby sung speech incitement has played a key role in assigning honour to death rituals. Gregory Gordon has discussed various legal methods for criminalising language incitement, or at least mitigating against it, by citing a more recent case of sung incitement, and referring to Carol Pauli's model of warning signs (Pauli 2010; cited in Gordon 2010:607–646).[83] Both Gordon's and Pauli's arguments pertain to tribal genocide in Rwanda, in 1994, for which members of the Hutu tribe slaughtered members of the Tutsi. The Rwandan legal case that followed, in the 2000s, addressed a particular conflict, in the 1990s, in which Hutu songs against the Tutsi were broadcast on the radio, at political rallies

80 See "Preface", of the UNESCO document.

81 See Section 1.4.2, on "Honour", and the condition of *al-ʿaṣabiyya*.

82 His study has explained how Shahrazād tempers the violent behaviour of her kingly consort through nightly storytelling, in *The Arabian Nights*.

83 Gordon has cited Pauli's analysis as part of his own proposed solution, rather than as a comprehensive cure.

and at "pre-killing meetings" (Gordon 2010:617). Judgement in the case did not draw a clear conclusion about sung incitement, finding that such broadcasts could be considered incitement, although the intent of the composer may not have been such (Gordon 2010:619). However, the law did successfully indict the same composer of songs on a separate count, when he blatantly used a bullhorn to incite "Hutu militia to attack Tutsi civilians" (Gordon 2010:608). The case has proven that it is very difficult to legislate over what constitutes incitement, but, notwithstanding this reticence, it has raised important issues about the power of broadcast speech as well as the cumulative impact of spoken and sung broadcasts. Pauli (2010:665–700) has proposed therefore that for there to be a causal link between incitement and killing, seven conditions need to be met, these paraphrased as follows:

1. within the media environment, there is evidence of brain washing, repetition and no competing messages;
2. within the political context, there is evidence of instability;
3. the authority of the source is respected and perceived as honourable;
4. the audience characteristics are young and tribal;
5. the message content appeals to basic instincts and emotions;
6. there is evidence of overt acts of weapons stockpiling and danger is perceived as being proximate; and
7. with respect to the channel of communications, broadcast seems to be more effective than the written word.

Pauli has argued for the potency of broadcast, rather than promoting any particular lyric power. However, observers of online jihadist cultures have associated the content of broadcast with action, seeing execution scenes as performance acts that are frequently filmed and accompanied by speech acts, poems and *anāshīd*. In his research into ISIS propaganda and the ritualisation of violence, Luis Velasco-Pufleau (2015:1–27) has indicated that jihadist anthems help to structure an execution scenario that is often filmed and published online. Kendall (2015:256–257) has also argued that jihadist poetry is an "expressive cultural act" that inspires a performance and reinforces a jihadist message.[84] In other words, execution scenarios belong to a ritual performance which includes and may be enabled by poetic incitement.

It is usually easier to build a case for incitement when the message is direct and the response is immediate. The idea that an act of violence can be cul-

84 Kendall has described the "cultural act" as having a three-fold meaning, which is "objective, expressive and documentary", and in so doing has referred to Karl Mannheim (1952:43–47).

tivated through artistic expression that gains momentum gradually, and then explodes into violence, is much harder to prove, and yet this form of communication is potent because of its subtle evocation of a culture of violence and an heroic past. The poetic experience seems to move the recipient from a factual and rational awareness of a political issue to an emotional connection with the topic (al-Muḥayyish 1997:209–210). Music, or (where disavowed) the musicality of the poem, can play an important role, this akin to fuelling incitement, or inspiring zeal for a cause (al-Muḥayyish 1997:226–227). The *nashīd*, or "military sung anthem", is a particularly effective means of emotionally engaging the listener, also stirring up religious fervour and feelings of *ḥamāsa*. The opening of *Nashīd al-waṭan al-salīb*, "Anthem for the Stolen Nation", by Ghunaym, that was composed in defence of the Palestinian nation, serves as an example, the first three lines a refrain (al-Muḥayyish 1997:103):[85]

Nashīd al-waṭan al-salīb

1	أَثِيرُوها فنحن لها جُنُود	وهُمْ لجحيمها الحامي وَقُودُ
2	تطَلَّعَ نحونا وطنٌ سليبٌ	بـه وبأَهلـه عبـث اليهـودُ
3	إلى الوطن السليب غدًا نعودُ	
4	أثيروهـا فأَشـرارُ البَرَايَـا	لها دون الأَنام هُـمُ الضَّحايا
5	ولَو أَنَّ الأبالس أنجدتهم	سعيناهـم وإيَّاهـا المنايـا

Ghunaym 1979; cited in al-Muḥayyish 1997:103

1 Stir her up, for we are soldiers for her [Palestine] // and they are fuel for her burning inferno[86]

2 A stolen nation raised its eyes towards us // the Jews acted in vanity with it and with its people

3 Tomorrow we return to the stolen nation

85 The metre is *al-wāfir*.

86 According to another version of the poem, from *Rajʿ al-ṣadā*, this verse opens up a longer *nashīd*, in which this verse is relayed (Ghunaym 1979:146):

أَثِيرُوها، فنحن لها جُنُود وهُمْ بدلَ الهشيم لها وَقُودُ

Stir her up, for we are soldiers for her [Palestine] and they are fuel for her, instead of straw.

4 Stir her up, for the evil ones among created things // for her, those which are the lesser of mankind are the victims[87]

5 And should the devils assist them // then we should zealously exert ourselves against them together with the fates of death[88]

These verses imply a burning ritual, for which "fuel" is either the martyred "soldiers" or the incinerated enemy. Here, Ghunaym has alluded to both the poetic tradition and the Qur'an. An historic precedent is *Yā ḥafṣa innī ʿadānī ʿan-kumu-l-safarū*, the poem which refers to the fires of war and Hell.[89] Other examples are Q[2:24], Q[3:10], Q[66:6], Q[85:5], *āyāt* that compare disbelievers to "fuel" (*wuqūd*) for Hell-fire, while Q104 amplifies the eternal condition of Hell:

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ كَلَّا لَيُنبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ وَمَآ أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ نَارُ اللهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِم مُّؤْصَدَةٌ فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ

> Woe to every fault-finding back-biter who amasses riches, counting them over, thinking they will make him live for ever. No indeed! He will be thrust into the Crusher. What will explain to you what the Crusher is? It is God's Fire, made to blaze, which rises over people's hearts. It closes in on them in towering columns.
>
> Translation by Abdel Haleem (2010:602)[90]

Jihadist poetry that alludes to the Qur'an is a highly effective and concise tool that can tap into the vulnerable sentiments of its target audience, and cement doctrine about a divine and continuous plan (Kendall 2016:242). In a comprehensive survey of poetry, in the magazine *Ṣadā al-Malāḥim*, the incidence of

87 The syntax is confusing when relayed literally, but means: Stir her up, for the evil ones, those who are the lesser of mankind, are the victims.

88 Alternatively (Ghunaym 1979:146):

ولَو أَنَّ المَنَايا حَالَفَتْهم سقيناهم وايَّاها المنايا

> And should the fates enter into an alliance with them // then we should give them to drink together with the fates of death.

89 See Section 3.7.6, for *Yā ḥafṣa innī ʿadānī ʿan-kumu-l-safarū*, by Kaʿb al-Ashqarī.

90 Used with permission of Oxford University Press – Books (US & UK), from *The Qur'an: English translation and parallel Arabic text*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, 2010; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

verse is prolific; half of it cites the classical tradition, while eight per cent is pre-Islamic in its evocation of heroism (Kendall 2016:226–229). This is emulative of an earlier verse tradition, Chapter Three demonstrating the conflation of jihad with Jahili conflict. Specifically, Kharijite verse accommodates motifs from *ḥamāsa* poetry, elegy and phrases from the Qur'an (al-Qāḍī 1994:172–173, 177, 179–180).[91]

7.7 Speech Acts in Poetry and Use of the Imperative

Musicality is another important aspect, when considering poetry's suitability for converting hearts and minds. However, this study is more concerned with specific "blood vengeance motifs", this the focus of the next chapter, as well as distinct features of the poetic speech act. As discussed, incitement is a key component for recruitment, but the poet may also speak in an authoritative tone, by issuing direct commands to the audience, or by instructing the avenger as to exactly how he should enact his vengeance. Alternatively, the poet could take an oath of vengeance, for which the audience's role is to bear witness, or to articulate stages of grief so as to precipitate an angry response. Finally, the speaker often strikes a note of warning, by promising deliverance for those who obey the command, and woe to those who refuse to listen. This accords with Beatrice Gruendler's (2000:157–169) "Speech Act" theory proposing that poetic speech shapes memory, conditions behaviour and results in a contract between the poet and the listener so that the latter is honoured, or shamed for behaviour that either conforms to or deviates from the poet's design.[92]

One of the aims of the *qaṣīda* is to enact justice, by demonstrating how this can be carried through into action, the poetic utterance possessing a ritual ability to provoke action particularly through use of "the imperative, the vocative and the apostrophe" (Sperl and Dedes 2013:247–248, 251–252). In other words, the classical ode can redress injustice, in verse, just as the social avenger can overturn an injury, using action. These speech acts are very much in evidence in the five jihadist poems (of Section 7.4), via use of grammatical features that imply action at the prompt of the word. In particular, *Lā Naksa* makes intensive use of the exclamatory voice, and can be structured according to whom is being addressed. For example: (1) the first six verses address a defeated audience with familiar maxims that allude to their situation; (2) verses 7 to 13 directly address

91 See Section 3.7.1.

92 Section 4.5.5 first presented the role of speech acts, in verse, with respect to Abbasid poetry.

the Jews, by de-legitimising their claim to the State of Israel, questioning their hereditary peerage and also questioning their humanity; (3) verses 14 to 20 form another direct address, this time to the Arab subject, by stating that he has lost his honour and lives in a state of disgrace; (4) verses 21 to 33 are aimed at the Egyptian army, blaming them for military failure; (5) verses 34 to 38 describe the model hero; (6) verses 39 to 45 allude to the Viet Cong, holding them up as a post-colonial example of heroism; (7) verses 46 to 53 censure the Arabs again, while chastising them for dishonouring the example set by the early Islamic hero, that is Khālid b. al-Walīd; (8) verses 54 to 63 form a military address to the Arabs, commanding them into action against the enemy while also warning of the consequences of failure; (9) verses 64 to 78 express gratitude to the martyrs who have lain down their lives to liberate the Palestinian nation; and (10) verses 79 to 85 incite the Arabs into direct action, while aiming to predict the future. Across the entire poem, exclamation marks are used emphatically and rhetorical questions abound. The verbal tense is frequently imperative, whether affirmative or negative. In verse 15, the term for "blood vengeance", or *al-tha'r*, is introduced. Over the course of the poem, this concept is gradually transformed by speech into "jihad", cited in verses 77 and 85.

In *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*, direct incitement features in the last seven lines of the poem as does the term "jihad" (verse 19). Within the grand scheme of the poem, the poet has given verses of incitement greater emphasis, this logical when considering that it comes from a military journal, and not from an anthology. There is no use of punctuation marks across the poem (a tool used in Modern Standard Arabic, rather than Classical Arabic), presumably because emphasis has already been implied by the vehemence of language, for which the jihadist must turn himself into a weapon of war against America and her allies. Use of the imperative occurs across phrases such as: (1) "do not be misled" (verse 4); (2) "do not die" (verse 13); (3) "make a bomb" (verse 17); and (4) "requite America" (verse 22). Unlike *Lā Naksa*, the address is always to jihadist recruits, who are considered to be friends, victims, protectors and heroes, while the enemy is referred to in the third person. *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl* also strikes a note of warning and reserves blame for corrupt rulers, who are juxtaposed against pious Muslims. The first three verses warn of an invasion by the American navy; verses 4 to 7 warn readers not be fooled by rulers presented as America's stooges; verses 8 to 12 juxtapose brave lions fighting in the cause of Islam, against the oppressors of Muslims, both at home and abroad; and verses 13 to 15 prepare recruits for battle, by warning them not to fall prey to the same fate that besets the Palestinians.

In *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq*, incitement to vengeance takes the form of an oath made in the first person. In this case, speech is an inspirational response

to the call for blood vengeance so that the avenger commits to his mission, in verse. While there is no use of the imperative, as such, the gravity of the oath of retaliation lends this poem its urgency. The oath is expressed, in both the second and the final verses of the poem, strongly resembling the oaths of *Ḥ*37 and *Ḥ*339.[93] It is noteworthy that "blood vengeance", i.e. *al-thaʾr*, is invoked in this poem, rather than the term "jihad".

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū laments a hero, and sets up his behaviour as an exemplary standard for subsequent jihadists. This is an interesting example of gendered speech, female provocation inciting male members of the community to avenge a fallen hero. The imperative voice features, in verse 31, roughly around the apex of the poem, commanding the audience to respond. What then follows are the conditions for an oath of vengeance that al-Naṣr has termed "jihad", this including verses 32 to 35. For most of the poem, the language is contemplative and flattering to the male ego. Sometimes it is questioning, rather than commanding, urging the audience to endure adversity and to listen to "speech from the Qurʾan", as in verse 47. Nevertheless, this tone is deceptively gentle, for this is a female lament goading men into battle. Chapter Two has demonstrated that the inciter of revenge, in Jahili poetry, is often a woman calling for the laundering of tribal blood as a stage in the poetic lament (Hammond 2010:48). Thus, in verse 52, the female poet has directly spoken of the "blood" of slain heroes as further provocation to fight to the "death".

In *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, speech (and listening) are key, principally in Lebanon's imploring call for aid. The word root for "calling", *nun-dāl-wāw*, occurs across six verses (verses: 1, 14, 19, 20, 29, 32). There are also terms for: (1) "shouting" (*ṣāḥat*), in verse 6; (2) "howling" (*yaʿwī*), in verse 21; (3) "weeping" (*naḥīb*), in verse 23; and (4) "wailing" (*al-anīn*), also in verse 23. Verbal imperatives and appeals are directed at: (1) the enemy, in verse 6; (2) jihadist fighters, in verse 25; and (3) God, in verse 32. Verse 27 commands guns to take vengeance. Sometimes the poem speaks for al-Naṣr, but it also assumes the voice of the hills (verse 6). By exploiting her own gender as a woman, al-Naṣr has played upon an honour/shame dynamic that can incite men to action, in verses 7 and 8. In verses 15 and 16, a rhetorical question, "Is there not among you", compels jihadists to listen, while also rebuking them and prompting them into action. In portraying Lebanon as female, the poem's aim is to provoke a protective response in male fighters. Such devices are comparable with classical poetic speech strategies adopted, in the third/ninth century, by

93 See Section 1.5.2, for *Ḥ*37 by Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, Section 3.6.2, for *Ḥ*339 by Kaʿb b. Zuhayr.

Abū Tammām in the "The Amorium Poem", and Ibn al-Rūmī in "The Basra Elegy".[94] For example, in verses 49 and 52, Ibn al-Rūmī censured the men of Basra as follows:[95]

The Basra Elegy

49 بل ألِمَّا بساحةِ المسجدِ الجا مع إنْ كُنْتُما ذَوِي إلمام

52 أيـن فِتيانـه الحِسـانُ وجُوهًـا أين أشياخُهُ أولو الأحلام

49 Rather, (my comrades), repair to the congregation mosque, if you be men apt to tarry,

52 [And enquire of it] "Where are its young men with their handsome faces? Where are its old men prudent and wise?"

Translation by Arberry (1965:68–69)[96]

Verse 31, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, provides an example of speech transmitted in retrospect, i.e. the "oath", by which the "brave ones" swear to defend their country and their women folk. No explicit word for "jihad" occurs as utterance, in the same poem, although verses 16, 27 and 33 call for the defeat of the "faithless", while invoking Islamic law, in the final verse.

7.8 Idolatry: Poems about Jihad and Poems about Blood Vengeance

Notwithstanding the proposal that jihad is conceptually comparable with blood vengeance, poetry and narratives about jihadist martyrdom frequently exhibit sectarian features that layer upon them yet another dimension of complexity.[97] A further complication is that jihadist poems often combine Islamic and Jahili themes within one poem. A strange contradiction about elegies is that these can idolise the deceased, which is similar to the iconography of

94 In particular, Gruendler (2000) has applied "Speech Act" theory to the poems of Ibn al-Rūmī.

95 See Section 6.2.2, for verses 72–83 from "The Basra Elegy". The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*mī*, is *al-khafīf*. The verses have been sourced from Arberry (1965:68–69). See also the *Dīwān* of Ibn al-Rūmī (2002[d. 283/896]:3:340–341).

96 From *Arabic poetry: a primer for students*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1965; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

97 In particular, Shi'i martyrdom which often refers to the killing, in battle, of al-Ḥusayn, while also citing other members of *Ahl al-Bayt* that belong to this history of persecution.

Jahili poems that call upon an avenger to follow in the path of a hero (Cook 2007:161). While iconography is easier to recognise in Shi'i martyrologies, it is also present in Salafi messaging that paradoxically objects to the veneration of human beings. Atef Alshaer (2014:122–125) has discussed "sacrifice and martyrdom" as a form of Palestinian political liberation within "Hizbullah poetry", this deploying Shi'i narratives and idolising fighters. Meanwhile, David Cook (2007:161) has stated that one irony, in jihadist poems about martyrdom, is that praise of the martyr (and calling upon him to guide others) both idolises and creates a mythology around him, even though radical Islam objects to the veneration of sainted figures. In other words, there is an ethical contradiction that appears at the heart of many jihadist poems, lending further weight to the argument that blood revenge is an ancient and powerful code which can overwhelm the jihadist ideology, and bring its very motivation into question.

Al-Muḥayyish (1997:225–226) has also recognised the slippage of jihad into Jahili themes, this time by two neoclassical Egyptian poets who focussed upon nation building, in Egypt and Libya.[98] Although he has lauded their early twentieth-century poetic resistance against British and Italian colonial expansion into Ottoman protectorates, he has objected to the portrayal of circumambulation around graves, this being a Jahili practice that many poets well-meaningly, but misguidedly reiterate. In memorial for the death of Muṣṭafā Kāmal, the Egyptian national hero, Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (d. 1932) offered:[99]

Ṭūfū bi-arkāni hādhā-l-qabri wa-(i)stalimū

طوفوا بِأَركانِ هَذا القَبرِ وَاِستَلِموا وَاِقضوا هُنالِكَ ما تَقضي بِهِ الذِمَمُ

Go around the corners of this grave and touch [it like the holy stone] //
and perform there what obligation demands

Ibrāhīm (1937); cited in al-Muḥayyish 1997:226

While Aḥmad Muḥarram (d. 1945) stated, on the martyrs of Tripoli:[100]

98 Mounah Khouri (1971:103–104) has also discussed how poetic resistance against western colonisation, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has sometimes carried a distinctly Islamic character as well as a secular one.

99 See also Section 6.5, for *Shahīd al-Ḥaqq*, by Aḥmad Shawqī, about the same Egyptian political activist. The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mū*, is *al-basīṭ*.

100 The metre of this *dāliyya*, ending in *-dī*, is *al-kāmil*.

Fazaʿa-l-dujā li-anīni-hi-l-mutaraddidī

وَاِسأَل عَنِ الشُهَداءِ أَينَ قُبورُهُم فَإِذا عَرَفتَ فَطُف بِها وَتَعَبَّدِ

Muḥarram (1984); cited in al-Muḥayyish 1997:226

Ask about the martyrs: Where are their graves? // And when you know,
circle them and worship

In their defence, Ibrāhīm and Muḥarram were more likely to be concerned with adherence to the classical poetic tradition, rather than compliance with strict religious principle. Chapter Three has demonstrated that even early Islamic poets embraced both Jahili and Islamic motifs during their careers, both in *ḥamāsa* poetry and lamentation. By preserving Jahili motifs, and assigning them to the cause of jihad, celebrated poets may have indirectly influenced the future trajectory of poetry composed about jihad. This phenomenon is in evidence, in verses 4 and 5, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, where the dead hero has been enshrined in the "sky" as well as in verse. Use of the definitive for the "Eagle", in the second hemistich of verse 5, may imply the "Aquila constellation".[101] In poetic memory, al-Naṣr's focus upon the dead hero's place in the firmament evokes verses 3 and 5, of al-Muhalhil's vengeful lament for Kulayb, during which he weeps and may even imagine that his brother is immortalised among the first stars of a constellation (either Orion or the Gemini) that gaze down upon him from the night sky:[102]

Ahāja qadhā'a ʿaynī-l-idhdhikārū

3 وَبِتُّ أُرَاقِبُ الْجَوْزَاءَ حَتَّى تَقَارَبَ مِنْ أَوَائِلِهَا انْحِـدَارُ

5 وَأَبْكِي وَالنُجُومُ مُطَلَّعَـاتٌ كَأَنْ لَمْ تَحْوِهَا عنّي البِحَارُ

101 *Al-nasr al-ṭā'ir*, or the "Flying Eagle". In English, the most prominent star of Aquila retains the transliteration "Altair".

102 Al-Muhahil's lament is a *rā'iyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*rū*, in the *wāfir* metre. The suggestion that Wā'il Kulayb has been transformed into a constellation does not accord with Stetkevych's translation of this verse. Instead, it is based upon word play of *awā'ili-hā*, which, whether by coincidence or design of the poet, frames the name of "Wā'il". *Al-Jawzā'* also refers to the constellation of Orion, but, irrespective of which stars are here objectified, the essence of the translation is the same.

All night I watched the Gemini
until the first of them
began to set
And weeping till the stars blazed forth
as if no vast expanses held them
back from me

Translation by Stetkevych (1993:216, 310)[103]

"Star gazing" is a common feature of Jahili poetry, but even at the risk of overstretching a metaphor, it is noteworthy that al-Naṣr has echoed the infamous Jahili avenger in her very style of lamentation.[104]

7.9 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented jihadist poetry as a contemporary poetic trend, while also drawing comparison with the classical "blood vengeance poem" traced from the Jahiliyya and finessed by celebrated poets of the Abbasid court. It has also explored a final facet of the blood vengeance paradigm, this first introduced in Chapter One and alluded to in subsequent chapters, which is ultimately fundamental to the argument. By explaining poetry's evolving function as both spoken commitment and ritual incitement to violence, this chapter has demonstrated its ongoing value as a form of ideological weaponry as well as its ability to perpetuate a long legacy of blood vengeance. The next chapter will continue to highlight use of "blood vengeance motifs", in jihadist poetry, as these pertain to earlier periods and the chronology of chapters.

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104 Al-Muhalhil is a central character in the War of al-Basūs narratives, as detailed in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER 8

Reacquaintance with Motifs

8.1 Overview of Key Themes

The previous chapter has provided an assessment of a poem's ability to incite, through the use of direct commands and the invocation of an oath. This chapter will also assess the five poems, *Lā Naksa* (Section 7.4.1), *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl* (Section 7.4.2), *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq* (Section 7.4.3), *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* (Section 7.4.4), and *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā* (Section 7.4.5), but this time for evidence of "blood vengeance motifs". Tables 10 and 11, below, plot some of these indicators against corresponding Arabic and translated terms, in each poem, which will be further elucidated in subsequent sections. Although the poems are of different lengths, one might expect *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq* to be the most varied in its usage of motifs because it explicitly refers to "blood vengeance". Instead, *Lā Naksa* and *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* most closely adhere to the model, even though the latter does not directly cite *al-thaʾr*. Of the five, *Lā Naksa* is the longest poem, is distinctly Jahili in its polythematic content, aligns most closely with the *qaṣīda* structure, and is the sole poem that refers to hunger and the "eating" motif. *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* conforms more to Abbasid panegyric and elegy, in its use of conceits; in verse 12, the "ripening" and bleeding "heads" compare with verse 59, of "The Amorium Poem", or even verse 43, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, each of them suggesting that the enemy has been reaped as fruit during a harvest:[1]

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

12 وَزمجرتِ الأسودُ وَكانَ فتحًا وأينعتِ الرُّؤوسُ كذا الرِّقابُ

12 And the lions roared when he was victorious // and the heads ripened as did the necks

All five poems test positive for motifs directly associated with (1) "blood vengeance", or "sacrifice"; (2) the dismemberment of "body parts"; and (3) "blood",

1 "The Amorium Poem" and *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī* feature, in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.3. See also Section 3.6.2, for reaping the enemy occurs, in verse 2, of *Ḥ*339.

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TABLE 10 Conformity with the "blood vengeance motifs" test

Explicit images or words	*Lā Naksa*	*Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*	*Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq*	*Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*	*Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*
Blood vengeance: sacrifice, killing, death, blood money	يَثْأَرا المنايا	الموت ضحايا غِيلَة المُلْحَمَة مقبرة ارصدوا	الثأر قتل حرق هدر	مهرَتْ بِدَمّ ضحى، فَدَاء اقتراب [الموت] يومٌ مُلْحَميٌّ الموت بات يحدوها	مهدارًا التحام
Biting, eating, grinding	يذوقَ طعمَ الزادِ إن يَطْعَموا، وَجَدُوا الطعام مسَّممًا الطَّوى				
Drinking, irrigating	الدم كالشراب أو يشربوا، وجدوا الشراب مُكدَّرا سَتُجَرَّعُون			لهمُ الشَّراب كأسَ الحياة أُفْرِغَ ماؤُهُ أفاضوا	رُوِينا
Body parts, mutilation, dismemberment	صاروخ تتفجرا رأس يطيرُ بضربة ألغام مدْفَعًا متفجرًا	من جَسَدٍ قُنْبُلَةً لَغَم	هام ستنفلق جذع	الرُّؤوس الرِّقاب ممزَّقة جماجمُنا شِلْوُ الكافرين نواسفهم	مفخَّخات قصف
Blood, wound	النَّجيعَ الأحمرا دم جُرِحَتْ جوارحه الجُرح	دم	دماؤنا	دماء المعتدي دمائه آلمَ جرحَنا الخِضاب	دم، الدماء مكلومًا، جروح
Total no. of verses in poem	85	22	8	54	34

or "wound" imagery. *Lā Naksa*, *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* and *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā* exhibit the "drinking" motif, while referring to the satiation of a "thirst". *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* and *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā* have been composed by the same poet, this explaining their thematic connexion and strong classical underpinning.

TABLE 11 Conformity with the "blood vengeance motifs" test (English)

Explicit images or words	***Lā Naksa***	***Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl***	***Al-thaʾru innal-thaʾra ḥaqq***	***Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū***	***Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā***
Blood vengeance: sacrifice, killing, death, blood money	"he takes blood vengeance" (v15); "the fates of death" (v38).	"death" (v13, v22); "victims" (v4); "secretly murdered" (v13); "bloody fight" (v16); "graveyard" (v21); "Requite" (v22).	"blood vengeance" (v1, v8); "killing" (v2, v6); "burning" (v2); "squandered" (v4).	"ransomed in blood" (v32); "he has sacrificed [himself]" (v45); "ransom" (v49); "an epic day" (v20); "death" (v21, v48, v50–52); "spur on" (i.e. incites) (v52).	"with impunity" i.e. unavenged (v27); "close combat" (v28).
Biting, eating, grinding	"[nor] taste food" (v15); "Should they taste [something], then they would have found the food poisoned" (v82); "on an empty stomach" (v34).				
Drinking, irrigating	"the blood is like the drink" (v37); "if they drank [something], then they would have found that the drink was roiled" (v82); "you will be made to swallow" (v4).			"whose drink" (v15); "cup of life" (v20); "poured out" (v21); "shed [blood]" (v51).	"satiated", "saturated" (v6, v26).

TABLE 11 Conformity with the "blood vengeance motifs" test (English) (*cont.*)

Explicit images or words	***Lā Naksa***	***Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl***	***Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq***	***Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū***	***Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā***
Body parts, mutilation, dismemberment	"rocket(s)" (v21–24); "to explode" (v24); "a head which would have flown off at a stroke" (v51); "grenade, land mines" (v69, v83); "blasting cannon" (v70).	"Make a bomb from a body" (v17); mine (v20).	"heads will be cleaved open" (v5); "headless torso" (v6).	"heads" (v12); "necks" (v12); "torn apart" (v17); "our skulls" (v49); "severed remnants of the infidels" (v16).	"[booby-trapped] cars" (v28); "violent explosion" (v20).
Blood, wound	"red blood" (v26); "blood" (v17, v37, v51); "wounded limbs" (v51); "wound" (v37).	"blood" (v7).	"our blood" (v4).	"the blood of the aggressor" (v15); "his blood" (v31); "causes our wound pain" (v36); [red] dye (v51).	"blood" (v4, v6); "wounded heart" (v14); "wounds" (v19).
Total no. of verses in poem	85	22	8	54	34

8.2 Restoring Honour by Drinking

*Ḥ*176 is the prototypical Jahili "blood vengeance poem" that demonstrates a thirst for blood, while alluding to water.[2] By way of another Jahili example, al-Muhalhil (the heroic avenger, of Chapter Two, who also composed *Ḥ*315) expressed his "thirst", in verse, as follows (Stetkevych 1993:234–235, 312–313):[3]

2 See Section 1.5.1, for *Ḥ*176.

3 The metre of this *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lā*, is *al-khafīf*. See also Section 2.3.3, for *Ḥ*315.

Bāta laylī bi-l-anʿamayni ṭawīlā

5 كَيْفَ أَنْسَاكَ يَا كُلَيْبُ وَلَمَّا أَقْضِ حُزْنًا يَنُوبُنِي وَغَلِيلَا

How can I forget you, O Kulayb, when I
have not yet quelled the grief that overwhelms me,
or quenched revenge's thirst?
Translation by Stetkevych[4]

Pre-Islamic verse such as the above informs jihadist verse, which also refers to the satiation of a thirst for vengeance, albeit by not equating cup-drinking with the imbibing of wine. *Lā Naksa*, directly addresses the Jews of Israel, by telling them that they will be obliged to "swallow death" (verse 4);[5] and the Arabs, by comparing the "blood" of the enemy to a "safflower infusion" (verse 37), and by feeding a poisoned chalice to the enemy, i.e. an "unpleasant tasting drink" (verse 82):

Lā Naksa

4 قـل للآلـى بدءوا بدَايـةَ هتْلَـر: سَتُجَرَّعُـون غـدًا نهايـةَ هتْلَـرَا
37 ويَـرون أن الجُـرح يحكـي مُقْلـةً حوراء، والدم كالشراب مُعَصْفـرا
82 إن يَطْعَموا، وَجَدُوا الطعام مسَّممًا أو يشربوا، وجدوا الشراب مُكَدَّرا

4 Tell those who started the way Hitler began: // tomorrow you will be made to swallow the end of Hitler
37 And they consider that the wound resembles the eye[s] // of fair women, and [that] the blood is like the drink [which is dyed red] with safflower
82 Should they taste [something], then they would have found the food poisoned // or if they drank [something], then they would have found that the drink was roiled

The act of serving a drink here is thematically consistent with *Ḥ*231,[6] this time representing retaliation against Israel for the seizure of Palestinian land.

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5 The poet conflates Jewish survivors of the Holocaust with Israelis.

6 See Section 3.7.5, for *Ḥ*231 by Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā'a.

In verses 20 and 21, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, the "drinking cup" is the container of "lifeblood" and so the hero is vital when it is full, and blood sacrifice made libation when it is empty:

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

20 إلى أنْ كانَ يومٌ مَلْحَمِيٌّ عَرى كأسَ الحياةِ بهِ انسكابُ
21 وَأُفْرِغَ ماؤُهُ الرَّقراقُ موتًا وَأُشْرِعَ للفتى في الخُلْدِ بابُ

20 Until an epic day arrived // when his cup of life was struck by being poured out
21 His glittering water was poured out in death // and a door unto eternity was opened for the hero

Blood vengeance is an inverse type of sacrificial ritual, for which enemy blood sustains the community, rather than the blood of animal sacrifice (Stetkevych 1993:80). In jihadist poetry, sacrificial blood can either be enemy blood or the blood of a fellow kinsman. So, for example, verse 15 tells the heroes that a "drink of enemy blood" will sustain them in battle, while verse 51 explains that "brave heroes" should also be willing to give up their own "blood":

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

15 بطولاتٌ يسطِّرها أسودٌ دماءُ المعتدي: لهمُ الشَّرابُ
51 لأبطالٍ بواسلَ قدْ أفاضوا وَمسكُ شهادةِ الأُسْدِ الخِضابُ

15 Heroic deeds written into legend by lions // the blood of the aggressor: their drink
51 for brave heroes who shed [blood] // for the musk of the lions' martyrdom is [red] dye

As is consistent with Kharijite poetry, the blood vengeance ritual conflates with self-sacrifice. Because *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* is an elegy that celebrates the life of a jihadist, al-Naṣr has been careful to compare blood with water, and not wine. This is largely because of the Islamic prohibition of alcohol, but it also draws from the tradition and the association between the shedding of water and the spilling of blood during lamentation. Pre-Islamic elegy frequently refers to redemption of the "liquid soul" of the slain, whereby the female sheds tears and the male takes blood vengeance (Lammens 1926;

cited in Stetkevych 1993:168).[7] In the classical canon, blood and water indicate purification, or fertility, which can displace tears of grief as in Abū Tammām's "The Amorium Poem" (Sperl (1977:30).[8] This last interpretation invests al-Naṣr's poem with the ritual power of rejuvenation, explaining why verse 27 allies "Truth" with the "water of the Heavenly Spring":

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

27 فإنَّ الحقَّ ماءٌ سلسبيلٌ وَإنَّ سواهُ أوهامٌ سرابُ

27 For the Truth is the water of the Paradisiacal Spring // and everything other [than the Truth] are delusions and mirage

Verses 4 and 6, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, more clearly convey the fertile properties of bloodshed because the Lebanese hillsides have been "saturated with blood" of the community:

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

4 وَلكـنَّ الرَّوابـي بحـرُ دمٍّ فكيفَ لِذا النَّسيمِ بأنْ يكونا؟!

6 فصاحتْ ربوةٌ فيهمْ: كفاكمْ فإنَّـا بالدِّمـاءِ لقـدْ رُوِينـا

4 However, the hills are a sea of blood // and so how then is the breeze to be?

6 And so the hills shout at them: That's enough for you // for we are already saturated with blood

Because the verb, *ruwīnā*, also means "we [the hills] were irrigated", this simultaneously alludes to the Tammūzian fertility god, whose blood, at least metaphorically, has always sustained Lebanese agriculture.[9] At the poem's opening, the dead are so numerous that their blood has over-saturated the soil. To signify a change in fortune, the same motif features again near the poem's close, this following passages of incitement and the description of retaliatory acts.[10] A ritual exchange of bloodshed occurs, over the course of the poem, between

7 Abu Lughod (1999:197) has expressed a similar idea, in her study of male and female ways of expressing the sentiments of grief.

8 See Section 4.3.1.

9 For greater elaboration on the Tammūzian creation myth, see Section 2.5.2.

10 See Section 6.3, and verse 3, of *Sa-abkīka bi-l-bīdi-l-Yamāniyyati-l-latī*: "Until I see the tears

the community and enemy tribes as local reserves are replenished. The same verb, *ruwīnā*, brings about closure, in verse 26, "satiation" here implying the quenching of a thirst for revenge:

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

26 فإنَّ حديدَ أجنادِ الأعادي يُفَلُّ بمثلهِ، وَبِذا رُوِينا

26 Then the steel of the enemies' soldiers // will be dented by [steel] like it and in that way we would have been satiated

8.3 Restoring Honour by Fasting and Feeding

Lā Naksa is the only poem that refers to the "eating" motif as this relates to the blood vengeance ritual. Verse 15 alludes to a Jahili requirement for abstinence during the blood vengeance quest:

Lā Naksa

15 لا يرقد العربيُّ ملءَ جفونه ويذوقَ طعمَ الزادِ حتى يَثْأَرا

15 The Arab does not sleep his eye-lids fill // [nor] taste food until he takes blood vengeance

This elucidates upon two aspects of the blood vengeance ritual: a ritual state of self-denial as well as predation, i.e. the necessity for hunting out the perpetrator in order to bring him to justice. Blood vengeance is a symbolic "meal of death", a variant offering of sacrificial food to the deity and kinsmen (Stetkevych 1993:65). Thereby, the target becomes both prey and a meal for the avenger, so replacing his ordinary regime.[11] Verse 34 also conveys the symbolic hunger for blood vengeance, albeit in reference to the model soldier who enacts it "on an empty stomach":

---

of spears as though // they are an enduring rain, which satiates the heart of every highland".

11 On a similar theme, see *Ujrirtu ḥabla khalīʿin fī-l-ṣibā ghazilī* by Muslim b. al-Walīd, in Section 5.3. On the ritual state of abstinence, see also Section 1.4.8.

Lā Naksa

34 للحرب جندٌ يصبرون على الطَّوى يوم اللقاء، ويلبسون العِثْيَرا

34 War needs soldiers who are steadfast on an empty stomach // on the day of the meeting, wearing dust

Ghunaym has deployed the "eating" motif two more times, when suggesting that greed is its own trap. Verse 25, through reference to hospitality "tables" covered in cloths, councils the Arabs not to seek honour in feasting, whereas verse 82 orders the Arabs to bait the Israelis with "poisoned food":[12]

Lā Naksa

25 لا تَحْلُموا بالنصر حول موائدٍ أضْفَى عليها الزَّيْفُ لونًا أخضرا

25 Do not dream of victory around tables // over which falseness spreads a green colour

8.4 Body Parts as Tokens of Value

Both Chapter One and Section 5.4 have explained that destruction of the human body is a feature of "blood vengeance poetry", by drawing particular attention to *Ḥ*37, "The Amorium Poem", "The al-Afshīn Poem", and *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.[13] In this, they have concluded that: (1) "dismemberment" is related to an ancient ritual whereby sacrificial remains were scattered in order to maximise agricultural yield from the land; and (2) mutilation of the body reflects a deeper psychological motive, for in debasing his enemy, the avenger can compound humiliation and derive greater value from killing. This destructive objective has been summarised by al-Muhalhil, who vowed to avenge the death of his brother, as follows (Stetkevych 1993:230, 312):[14]

12 Section 8.2 cites verse 82.

13 See also Section 1.5.2, for *Ḥ*37, Section 4.3.1, for "The Amorium Poem", Section 4.3.2, for "The al-Afshīn Poem", and Section 4.3.3, for *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

14 The metre of this *ʿayniyya*, ending in *ʿā*, is *al-kāmil*.

Lammā naʿā-l-nāʿī Kulayban aẓlamat

6 حَتَّى نَرَى أَوْصَالَهُمْ وَجَمَاجِمًا مِنْهُمْ عَلَيْهَا الْخَامِعَاتُ وُقُوعَا

Until we see their limbs torn from them
and the lame hyenas
fall upon their skulls;
Translation by Stetkevych[15]

This section will proceed, by extending this argument into modernity through a reassertion that commodification of the human body and the fetishisation of its parts are comparable with capitalism. This is not to suggest that capitalism and blood vengeance are equivalent, but rather that capitalism seeks to maximise the value of capital in a competitive market just as blood vengeance seeks to maximise the reward to honour, albeit via retaliation against a competitor. As a measure of human value, then, blood vengeance is capitalism's earliest antecedent. Karl Marx (2008:159) has referred to capital's exploitative nature as akin to blood-sucking, i.e. "[…] the vampire thirst for the living blood of labour".[16] This quote of comparison between blood and money, in *Capital*, is not unique; by referring to the mythical hero, Ulysses, Marx (2008:158, 377) also compared commodified labour with the souls of the slain in a war of vengeance, while adding:[17]

> If money, according to Augier, 'comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek' capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.

Some other literary examples may help to elaborate, for David McNally has reiterated that capitalism operates like a "vampire economy" (Marx 2008; cited in McNally 2011:113–115). By allusion to Shelley's (1994) *Frankenstein*, he has interpreted this tale of "corporeal dismemberment" to be a metaphor for how

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the working classes survived by "selling their bodily capacities on the labour-market", in Victorian Britain (McNally 2011:12–13). Meanwhile, Shelley's story has directly informed *Frānkishtāyin fī Baghdād* (Saʿdāwī 2014), a contemporary Arabic novel, in which another man-made creature, called *Shisma*, survives by avenging the lives of the slain, in war-torn Iraq.[18] *Shisma* lives by the ethical code of *al-thaʾr*. In this, his outlaw status is a ritual state designed to resolve the injustices of Iraqi society; his body is made up of the atomised victims of various executions, or car and suicide bombings, while his spirit belongs to a man robbed of his physical body by one such explosion. Chapter One and Section 7.1 have already compared the blood vengeance ritual with a blood transfusion, enabling one tribe to survive by absorbing the lifeblood of the other.[19] A particularly gruesome passage from the novel supports this premise, when *Shisma* hunts for "spare parts" that can revitalise his decomposing body and one of his followers so obliges him, by offering up his own life as a "sacrificial offering", whereupon the vampire "bleeds" him slowly:

> في ليلة أخرى كان يعاني من تعفنات خطيرة في جسده، والتقى بالصدفة أيضًا بأحد الاتباع المؤمنين بأنه المخلص. قاده الى بيته في حي الفضل ونجح في تجنب الجيران والأعين الفضولية، وحين صارا داخل فناء البيت دخل هذا المؤمن الى المطبخ وجاء بسكين كبيرة واعطاها للشسمه. قال له إنه فداءٌ له. فليقتله ويأخذ منه الأجزاء التي يحتاجها كقطع غيار ... قطع أوردة الرسغين في ذراعي المؤمن كي يموت ببطء ويدخل في الغيبوبة بسبب النزيف قبل أن تفيض روحه.
>
> Saʿdāwī 2014:235–236

> Another night, he was suffering from dangerous decompositions in his body when he coincidentally met with one of the followers who believed him to be the Saviour. He steered him into his house, in the Faḍl district, and succeeded in the avoidance of neighbours and curious eyes, and when they started entering the courtyard of the house, this believer entered upon his kitchen and returned with a large knife and offered it to *Shisma*. He said to him that he was a sacrifice for him. So that he should kill him and take from him the parts he needs as spare parts ... He cut the

18 This novel has also been cited, in Section 6.7.4. *Shisma* is a much used colloquialism, in Iraq and the Gulf, that literally means "What's his (or its) name?"

19 In Section 7.1, blood vengeance is conflated with jihadist martyrdom.

veins in both wrists of the believer so that he would bleed slowly, entering into a coma because of the blood loss before giving up the ghost.

Returning to the subject of verse, jihadist poetry also refers to similar acts of self-sacrifice and the type of "dismemberment" that results from bomb explosions, or knives. In *Lā Naksa*, for example, Ghunaym has compared both old and new methods for dismembering the body. Verse 51 describes "decapitation" as the classical method of warfare in early Islamic battles:

Lā Naksa

51 قد كان ذا رأس يطيرُ بضربة ودم إذا جُرِحَتْ جوارحُهُ جرى

51 He had a head which would have flown off at a stroke // and blood which would have run, if his limbs were wounded

Verses 24 and 70 portray the "exploding rockets" of modern warfare, which can dissect the human body as effectively as more traditional weaponry, namely "the sword", "the spear" and "the dagger":

Lā Naksa

24 ويحي على تلك الصواريخ التي تَأْبَى غَـدَاةَ الـرَّوْع أن تتفجَّـرا!
70 أو حرْبـةً مَسْنُونَـةً، أو مدْفَعًـا متفجرًا، أو صَارمًا، أوْ خِنْجَرا!

24 Woe upon those rockets which // refuse to explode on the morning of terror!
70 Or a sharpened spear, or a blasting cannon // or a cutting sword or a dagger!

Verse 69 and verse 83 also explore the explosive capability of "hand" and "landmines" that can be used as "grenades", or even ripen from the "moist earth", like fruit trees:

Lā Naksa

69 ياليتني قد كُنْتُ في يَـد بعضكُـمْ لغمًا يصيب به العدُوَّ مدمَّرا!
83 أو يَدْرُجُوا فوق الثَّرى، لا تلبث ال أقـدام بالألْغـام أن تتعثَّـرا

69 If only I had been a destructive grenade in the hand of some of you // by which the enemy is struck!
83 Or if they proceeded over the moist earth, it does not take long before // their feet trip over landmines

What distinguishes Ghunaym's poem from more classical "blood vengeance poetry", is verse 69, which is suggestive of self-sacrifice, i.e. the poet hopes to be the exploding weapon so that his own body parts are annihilated in the act of destroying others. To a degree, this recalls the classical poet's treatment of the hero, when fusing him to his weapon so that one is indistinguishable from the other. However, verse 69 also highlights an important discovery about verse that operates as jihadist poetry. When honour has been stolen, and the desire for blood vengeance results in defeat, the blood fetish may be directed both inwards and outwards as suicide bombing. John Rosenberger (2003:17) has described suicide bombing as:

> a grisly kind of performance art – and the audience is clearly the suicide bomber's group. For this group, the suicide bombers are always identified and are always considered heroes by those who sent them to their deaths. This celebratory response is quickly and decisively associated with a curious reversal in roles for the victim/victimiser dyad.

Ghunaym composed this poem before suicide bombings became a regular tactic in jihadist asymmetric warfare, but his personification of the hand grenade presages the appearance of the suicide belt in subsequent decades.

This same idea that the human body can be used as a bomb has been explored further by an anonymous poet, in verse 17, of *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*, when the suicide bomber is elevated to the "noblest" status. Recalling the belligerent stance of earlier poets, verse 20 compares the suicide bomber's "gait" to a "lion" of yore:[20]

Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl

17 اصنعوا من جَسَدٍ قُنْبُلَـةً إنها أرقى صُنوفِ الأوسِمَة
20 ماشيًا مشيةَ ليثٍ هادئٍ حـولَ جنبيـه يُـواري لَغَمَـه

20 See Section 3.7.7. For example, the poetry of al-Ṭirimmāḥ b. Ḥakīm, who relayed *Ḥ*57 while allegedly "strutting down the street like a lion".

17 Make a bomb from a body // for it is the noblest category of the badge of honours
20 Walking the gait of an unruffled lion // around his sides is concealed his mine

Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq, by contrast, more closely resembles a *ḥamāsiyya*, and does not identify modern technological warfare as a means for desecrating the body. Instead, verses 5 and 6 convey the classical method of dismemberment, where "heads are split open" by "swords":

Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq

5 يـوم الكريهـة يومنـا هـام هنـاك ستنفلـق
6 سنعيدها جذعًا على الكفار نقتل من مرق

5 The Day of Adversity is our day // there, heads will be cleaved open
6 We will repeat it again towards // the unbelievers, we kill who renounces the true faith

The execution videos of extremist groups visually enact this method, which may be due to its conformity with the tradition as well as its ability to induce terror. In verse 6, because of the poetic metre and the absence of vocalisations, the word *jadhaʿ* means a "repetitive act" [of war]. However, implicit within the imagery of the verse is *jidhʿ*, that means a "headless torso".

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū, the poem, exhibits a torn jumble of heads, necks, skulls and limbs. Some parts belong to the enemy, but others to community fighters because martyrdom is a key theme. Verse 12 details a decapitation scene,[21] in the style once favoured by al-Mutanabbī. Verses 16 and 17 describe the "shredded remains" of the enemy, which have been decimated and scattered by "explosives". Verse 49 is also significant, for it suggests that the heroes' "skulls" are "votive offerings" that simultaneously take on an Islamic nature. If *jamājim*, meaning "skulls", signifies "drinking cups",[22] then this verse closes a drinking scene initiated, in verse 15.[23] The heroes, who have formerly "drunk the blood" of the enemy, then present their "heads" to be filled with their own blood:

21 Section 8.1 cites verse 12, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*.
22 See Kazimirski (1860), s.v. *jamājim*.
23 Section 8.2 cites verse 15.

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

16 وَشِلْـوُ الكافريـنَ: لهـمْ أنيـسٌ نواسفُهمْ كواتُمهمْ: ثيابُ
17 وَمهما حِيكتِ الشُّبهاتُ تبقى ممزَّقةً وَما فيها صوابُ
49 جماجمُنا لـهُ خُلِقـتْ فـداءً نفـوزُ بـهِ قـامَ الحسـابُ

16 The infidels severed remnants: their consolation // explosives and guns with silencers: their armour
17 Whatever doubts have been concocted remain // torn apart, there is no truth to them
49 Our skulls were created as a ransom for it [the religion] // through which we are victorious when judgement comes

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā directly incites soldiers to blow up the enemy. Although a human cost is implied, the poem focuses more upon the devastation of buildings and the landscape because territory is the subject, and has been personified. In this manner, the poet has drawn an equivalence between "broken body parts" and "ruined buildings"; "crying" and the "sound of explosion". In verse 20, a Lebanese city "protests" against injuries inflicted by the enemy. As response, verse 28 demonstrates what the community's own explosions can achieve, by "decimating the infrastructure" (breaking the body) of the enemy:

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

20 وَيختلطُ النِّداءُ بصوتِ قصفٍ عنيفٍ ساقَ للبلدِ الشُّجونا
28 كـذاكَ مفخَّخـاتٌ وَالتحـامٌ تدكُّ صروحَهـمْ دكًّا مبينـا

20 The appeal blends with the sound of violent explosion // driving the country to sorrows
28 In this manner, booby-trapped [cars] and close combat // demolish their palaces in a clear devastation

Because "explosion" here is a metaphor for "voice", and "incitement" is a rallying "cry" for a vengeful act, violent speech and action reach a kind of parity within the structure of the poem.

8.5 Settling a Debt

Chapter One proposed that when two communities live side by side, and equitably share access to food and water, then the hospitality contract is in equilibrium, but when one community is marginalised by another, then gift exchange breaks down and is likely to result in conflict. Colonisation is an extreme example of how one community can become displaced by a dominant group that uses force to maintain its position. Because occupation forces first impose this state of affairs by an act of aggression that they then proactively maintain through the use of institutions, anti-colonial narratives frequently promote armed resistance as a means of counteracting the military advantages of the coloniser.[24] In the 1950s and 1960s, and following in the Latin American experience, anti-colonial narratives of the Arab world sometimes adopted a Marxist tone by allusion to the exploitation of an impoverished local population by a foreign occupier.[25] In the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, when the Egyptian socialist experiment was dealt a severe blow, anti-colonial narratives became increasingly jihadist, protesting against the exploitation of Muslim lands by technologically advanced and materialistic western powers. Irrespective of whether the revolutionary banner is Marxist, or jihadist, poets who subscribe to either ideology commonly employ motifs that hark back to an ancient narrative for righting wrongs.

Section 1.4 has provided definitions for words and phrases that are associated with blood vengeance. For example, a "blood feud" is the mechanism for settling a debt that is usually paid for in blood and spoils, but which can also be settled through the blood-wit.[26] "Blood vengeance poetry" therefore calls for the restoration of property to its rightful owner, in addition to punishment by death for those who have stolen honour and plundered land. The size and the duration of an injustice can compound the effect of blood vengeance, which may explain how the size of the debt can escalate into successive interest (or blood) payments if property is not quickly returned. Each poem, in this chapter,

24 See Franz Fanon's (2001[1961]) work, *The wretched of the earth*, this informed in part by his experiences in Algeria. See also Section 6.7.1, about the film, *The Battle of Algiers*.

25 For example, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt was an admirer of the leadership of the Cuban Revolution, of 1953–1959 (Frankel 1960).

26 If the damaged, or stolen commodity is honour which has no substitute then compensation usually takes the form of bloody retribution, whereas if the lost commodity is livestock which is readily available then a practical tribal merchant will likely demand that compensation should be paid for in kind, or at least in some currency that can be a useful substitute.

concerns the appropriation of Arab land, or the exploitation of its resources by non-Arabs over the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Lā Naksa is concerned with the colonisation of Palestine by Jewish settlers, this presented as a raid (performed by a rival tribe), resulting in a blood feud. Verse 9 makes the charge clear, accusing the State of Israel of "land-theft", which is a dishonourable activity. By using Jahili imagery, verse 38 charges the enemy tribe with committing a serious violation of Arab honour, by entering "the protected enclosure", while verse 44 equates this behaviour with American aggression, in Vietnam. Verse 49 asserts that it is the Arabs who used to conquer land and refused to be subjected to regional superpowers, in the early Islamic period, whereas verses 56 and 57 stress the size of the grievance, highlighting that even "Jerusalem's holy sites" have been occupied. This cumulative state of disgrace culminates in the call to reclaim Jerusalem, in verse 81:

Lā Naksa

9	كـذب اليهـودُ؛ فمـا أقامـوا دَوْلَـةً	فـي أرضنـا، لكـن أقامـوا مَنْسَـرا
38	ويـرون أن مـن اسْتُبِيـحَ لـه حمًـى	يلقـى المنايـا، أو يعيـشُ مُحَـرَّرًا
44	قالوا لواشنطـونَ تسحـبُ جيشَهـا	فمواطـنُ الأحـرارِ لـن تُسْتَعْمَـرا
49	أين الفتوحاتُ التي استخلصتُها	من دولتَيْ: كِسْرى العظيم، وقَيْصَرا؟
56	قالوا: الوباء، فقلت: إن القُدْسَ قَدْ	نـزل اليهـودُ به، فكانـوا أخطـرا
57	لم يتركوا للمسجـد الأقصى، ولا	للعُـرْب فيـه مَنْسَكًـا، أو مَشْعَـرا
81	لا تتركوهـم يَنْعَمُـون برَوْضَـةٍ	فـي القُـدْس، أو يجنـون كَرْمًـا مُثْمِـرا

9 The Jews lied: they did not set up a state // in our land, rather they set up a gang of robbers

38 And they consider that the one whose protected enclosure is violated // meets with the fates of death, or is liberated

44 They told Washington to withdraw her army // for the homelands of the free-born will not be colonised

49 Where are the conquests which I have claimed // from the two empires of (the Persian) Chosroes and (the Roman) Caesar?

56 They said: The Plague and I said: Behold Jerusalem // the Jews have already taken up quarters, and they would be the more dangerous

57 They did not leave behind a place of ceremony, nor a ritual site // for either the al-Aqṣā mosque, nor the Arabs within it

81 Do not leave them enjoying a life of ease in a meadow // in Jerusalem, nor harvesting a fruitful vineyard

In *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*, property theft concerns the appropriation of Saudi oil by America and her allies at the expense of an exploited population. Verses 10 and 11 express that the country's natural resources have been sold out from under them, and used to finance "globalised capitalism", while poor Muslims at home must "tighten their belts" and not complain. Verse 12 also accuses the regime of complicity in such "robbery":

Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl

10 نفطُنا كالبحرِ من وَفرَتِهِ ويَقُولُون بشدِّ الأحزِمة
11 ارهقُوا الإسلامَ من دَاخِلِهِ بِفنونٍ من بريقِ العَولمة
12 استباحت أمريكا أهلَهُ والسّلاطينُ اسْتباحُوا قِيَمَه

10 In its abundance, our oil is like the sea // and they tell us to tighten our belts
11 They have oppressed Islam from within // with varieties of the lustre of globalisation
12 America has plundered its people // and absolute rulers have plundered its values

Unlike *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*, which uses modern financial terminology, *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq* employs the classical vocal tone, referring to the enemy as a villain who has "stolen the Arab abodes". The enemy is less easy to identify, in this poem, because of the precarious nature of Yemen's political situation, but the series of messages from which it derives splits into respective "internal" and "external" threats.[27] In 2010, when the poem was published and from AQAP's Sunni perspective, the "internal threat" refers to the Shi'i Zaydi sect, whereas the "external threat" is America.[28] Verse 3 asserts legitimacy over land, using a populist reasoning of "Us" and "Them", rather than considering regional political economy:

27 See Section 7.4.3, for the historical background to *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq*.
28 The Zaydi sect was originally allied to ʿAlī ʿAbd Allāh Ṣāliḥ, but, by the end of 2017, Houthis deemed him to be a collaborator with the Saudis and assassinated him. At the time of writing, the "external threat" includes Iran, accused by AQAP of weaponising the Houthis (Zaydis).

Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq

3 فديارنا ليست لهم نهبًا تكون لمن سبق

3 For our abodes do not belong to them // by robbery, they belong to those who came before

"Us" and "Them", as a strategy for identifying the "home group" and the "enemy", is a common feature of jihadist poetry that alludes to the classic tale of two tribes at loggerheads. It also manipulates the audience into simplifying the modern world, in terms of black and white (Kendall 2015:258–259).

In *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, verses 23 and 24 more generally express what has been lost and what needs defending, without referring to territory other than the hereafter, designated by the "Tree of Paradise", or *Ṭūbā*:[29]

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

23 وَأنْ نحيا جبالًا شامخاتٍ ترى (طوبى) وَيحدوها أغترابُ
24 عنِ الدُّنيا وَعنْ كلِّ الرَّزايا إلى هَدْيٍ وَإنْ كذبَ الضَّبابُ
25 ونثبتَ ما حيينا في صمودٍ وَلو في النَّاسِ قدْ سادَ ارتيابُ
35 وَلنْ ننسى شهيدًا صَاغَ فينا دروسًا ليسَ يطويها التُّرابُ

23 And that we should live like lofty mountains // which see Ṭūbā and are spurred on by exile
24 from the world and from all heavy losses // to the right path, even when mist deceives [the eye]
25 And we hold our ground, for as long as we live, with staying power // even should misgiving gain the upper hand over people
35 And we shall not forget a martyr who embedded in us // lessons which dust will not bury

29 See Q[13:29]:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَى لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَآبٍ

"those who believe and do righteous deeds: joy awaits these, and their final homecoming will be excellent".

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Notwithstanding this spiritual aspiration, because this poet is affiliated with ISIS, an Islamist organisation intent upon restoring the medieval Caliphate, verse 25 then establishes a "territorial" resolve. In so doing, the poem states that what ISIS seizes is not theft, but rather the restoration of land to its rightful Muslim custodian, following its improper acquisition by a succession of illegitimate rulers. Verse 35 explicitly speaks of "lessons" learnt, but also alludes to the remains of the early Arab abode, *durūs*, that have been buried. This act distinguishes between lost physical space belonging to a glorious past, and memory that cannot be erased and is instrumental for its recapture.

If *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* generalises the subject of land claim, then *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā* localises ISIS's claim to the plundered hills and city-ports of Lebanon. Aḥlām al-Naṣr has not been the first poet to lament Lebanon's exploitation as a country. By mourning another lost Levantine city, other Arab poets set a precedent, for example: (1) Egyptian neoclassical poets such as Shawqī and Abū Shādī expressed regret for the colonial experience in the cities of Bilad al-Sham, and in their respective poems, *Nakbat Bayrūt* (Shawqī), *Nakbat Dimashq* (Shawqī), and *Kārithat Dimashq* (Abū Shādī) (al-Muḥayyish 1997:118–119); (2) Ghunaym composed a poem about Haifa called *Yā ukhta ʿAmmūriyya*, this alluding to the famous poem by Abū Tammām ("The Amorium Poem");[30] (3) Kahlil (Khalīl) Gibran (1933:14–15), the Mahjar poet,[31] penned gentle verses, in English, that express regret about the division of Greater Syria under the Sykes-Picot agreement, of 1916 (as well as its prior absorption by the Ottoman empire), beginning "My friends and my road-fellows, pity the nation that is full of beliefs and empty of religion", and concluding "Pity the nation divided into fragments, each fragment deeming itself a nation". But it was in 1958, and well before the Lebanese Civil War, that Muḥammad al-Māghūṭ dedicated a secular poem to Lebanon, in which he complained about the corrupting effects of western influence, while calling upon the helpless Arab to engage with the country's welfare. Verses 52 to 54, of *Ḥarīq al-kalimāt*, or "A Conflagration of Words", state (al-Māghūṭ 1981[1973]:[32]

30 See Section 7.2.

31 As complement to the *Nahḍa*, the Mahjar movement represents literary endeavour among the Arab diaspora, living in North and South America. "Pity the Nation" is an extract that belongs to *The Garden of the Prophet* that was published posthumously, in 1933. The work was completed shortly before Gibran's death, in 1931, and is non-violent.

32 *Ḥarīq al-kalimāt*, the poem, has also been translated by John Asfour 1993[1988] as "When the words burn", also the title of his anthology. In this, he has translated *imraʾa bayḍāʾ* as "white woman". The most accurate meaning is "candid woman", meaning "white", "pure", "honourable" and "faultless", although use of this term, at least in English, is now obsolete.

Ḥarīq al-kalimāt

52 لبنان ... يا امرأة بيضاء تحت المياه
53 يا جبالا من النهود والأظافر
54 إصرخ أيها الأبكم

52 Lebanon ... O noble woman submerged underwater
53 O mountain ranges of rounded breasts and long finger-nails
54 O you who is dumbstruck, cry out for help!

More than fifty years later, after decades of war and reconstruction, al-Naṣr has also called Lebanon a victim, this time attributing the cause to her sectarian make-up. Because she has attributed the country's reduced state to its infidelity to Islam, she has attempted to rescue its territory, using poetry, on behalf of the Caliphate. In other words, Lebanon will remain a victim unless jihad intervenes. Verse 24 denigrates Lebanon's leaders, who stand accused of "plundering" the country.[33] The ultimate line of the poem "recaptures" Lebanon, in verse, and celebrates the onset of a new Islamic order:

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

24 لَكَمْ عاثوا بها فسقًا وَجُرمًا وَقدْ فاقوا بهِ الشَّرَّ اللَّعينا
34 وَنعبدَ ربَّنا حقًّا وَصدقًا وَنحكمَ بالشَّريعةِ ما حَيِينا

24 Truly, how many of them wreaked havoc by her, in a depraved and sinful way // in this they [even] outstripped the cursed evil
34 And we worship our God truthfully and faithfully // and we shall rule by the Shari'a law, for as long as we live

Aside from this discussion about lost "property", settling a "debt" also concerns the debt to life that requires a sacrifice.[34] For example, the introductory verse, of *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq*, explains that blood vengeance is a form of "claim upon a debt":

33 Different sides of the political spectrum agree that Lebanon has been poorly governed. It is interesting to compare verse 24, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, with Jabal's speech, in Section 6.7.5.

34 On debt and sacrifice, see Section 1.4.4.

Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq

الثأر إن الثأر حق والكفر عربد واسترق 1

1 Blood vengeance, truly blood vengeance is one's due // when unbelief is riotous and pilfers

By comparison, the transactional nature of blood revenge is expressed a little differently in a more exclusively jihadist poem. In *Lā Naksa*, verse 68 expresses the concept of "blood value" as the sacrificial debt:

Lā Naksa

وبذلتمو أرواحَكُم لبلادكُمْ ثَمَنًا، وجَلَّ المشترِي والمشترَى! 68

68 You sacrificed your souls for your country // a costly price, and the buyer and what was bought were exalted!

While this verse concerns a deadly transaction, the exchange of blood is not only contracted between a jihadist and his enemy but also between the jihadist and God because the same soldier is willing to "sacrifice" his mortal life so as to attain the hereafter. Verses 32 and 49,[35] of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, also state that the jihadist is willing to pay this "price":

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

وَصيَّتُكَ التي مُهِرَتْ بِدَمٍّ ثمينٍ: لنْ تضيعَ، وَذا جوابُ 32

32 Your legacy which has been ransomed in costly blood: // it will not be lost, and that is [our] answer

8.6 Motifs Directly Relating to Blood Vengeance

For identifying the theme of blood vengeance, in a given poem, the most basic test is the presence of words that specifically refer to "blood vengeance", "sacrifice", "killing", the "fates of death", or the "blood-wit". Table 10 (also Table 11)

35 Section 8.4 cites verse 49, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*.

demonstrates that *Lā Naksa* and *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq* mention *al-tha'r*. For example, verse 15, of *Lā Naksa*, uses this term, whereas verse 38 associates the "fates of death" (*al-manāyā*) with defence of the "protected enclosure".[36] *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq* declares *al-tha'r*, at its opening and closing,[37] threatens the enemy with "killing and burning" (verse 2), and also states that the community's blood will not flow "unavenged" (verse 4):

Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq

2	قسمًا إذا حضر الوغى	سيصيبهم قتل وحرق
4	ودماؤنا ليست هدر	ستعيد مجدًا قد أبق
8	قسمًا سنثأر قد مضى	عهد التخاذل والفرق

2 I swear that when war comes // they will be stricken with killing and burning
4 And our blood is not squandered // it will restore honour, which had escaped [from us]
8 I swear that we will take blood vengeance for the era // of disunion and separation has passed

Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl invokes "requital" against America, at the poem's close, the last two verses also conjuring up the image of a "graveyard", and "death" that is cited three-times:

Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl

21	اجعَلوا ارضَ الحِمى مقبرةً	للأعادي يا حُماةَ المَكرُمة
22	وارصدوا بالموت أمريكا فَفِي	موتها سَوفَ تموتُ الأنظِمَة

21 Make the land of sanctuary a graveyard // for the enemies, O guardians of honours
22 Requite America with death, for in // her death will the regimes die

36 Section 8.3 cites verse 15, of *Lā Naksa*, Section 8.5 cites verse 38.
37 Section 8.5 cites the opening verse, of *Al-tha'ru inna-l-tha'ra ḥaqq*.

Verse 4 calls upon the "victims" of domination to rise up, verse 13 cautions the heroes to beware of subterfuge and "assassination", and verse 16 summons up the "bloody fight":

Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl

4 يا ضحَايا المُلْكِ لا تنخدعوا بِمُلـوكٍ جَعَلُونـا مَلطَمـة
13 لا تموتـوا يـا رفاقـي غِيلَـةً واسْتَعِـدّوا للرّزايـا المبهمَـة
16 أيهـا الركـب أفيقـوا، إنمـا لحظةُ الضّربة بَدْءُ الملْحَمَة

4 O victims of domination, do not be misled // by kings who have made us a cheek for anyone to slap
13 O my companions, do not die secretly murdered // and prepare yourselves for untold heavy losses
16 O you troop/riders, wake up // the moment of the blow is the beginning of the bloody fight

The ISIS poet also deploys words that relate to blood vengeance as sacrifice. Verse 32, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, refers to the hero's legacy that has been "ransomed in blood", while verse 49 alludes to a "ransom".[38] Verse 45 also notes the "self-sacrifice" that is martyrdom. Verse 20 cites an "epic day", whereas verses 21 and 52 speak of "death" and "approaching death":[39]

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

45 لقدْ ضحَّى لديني مستجيبًا وَإنَّ إباءَهُ عـزٌّ عجـابُ
52 دماهمْ فوقَ أعدائي لهيـبٌ وَنارٌ باتَ يحدوها اقترابُ

45 He has sacrificed [himself] obediently, for my religion // and his stubborn resistance was an astonishing strength
52 Their blood upon my enemies is flame // and fire, which approaching [death] continues to spur on

38 Sections 8.5 and 8.4 respectively cite verses 32 and 49, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*.
39 Section 8.2 cites verses 20 and 21, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*.

As for *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, verse 18 refers to "fighting spirit", albeit in relation to the enemy, verse 27 speaks explicitly of a revenge attack against the apostates that will be "unavenged" (*mihdār*), while verse 28 explains that the nature of such action is in "close combat":[40]

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

18 صليبُ الغدرِ يعضدهُ حماسًا وَيفـرحُ إنْ بـآلامٍ رُمِينـا
27 كواتَم جندنا صوغي انتصـارًا على الأرفاضِ مهدارًا مكينا

18 The Cross of Betrayal supported it, in fighting spirit // and delights, should we be thrown into agonies
27 O silent guns of our army, forge a revenge // against the apostates, resolute and with impunity

8.7 Blood and Wounds

It goes without saying that a poem which calls for blood vengeance is also going to deploy vocabulary that indicates "blood" and "wounds". For example, verse 17, of *Lā Naksa*, speaks of the "fragrance of enemy blood", verse 26, compelling to search for victory from "red blood":

Lā Naksa

17 عـارٌ علينـا لُبْسُـهُ حتـى يُـرَى مُتَطَهِّـرًا، بـدم العِـدا متعطِّـرا
26 بل عنه في سُود الوقائع فَتِّشُوا أو فَاسْأَلُوا عنه النَّجيعَ الأحمرا

17 Wearing honour as a garment is shameful for us until it is seen // to be purified, and made fragrant with the blood of the enemy
26 Instead search for it [victory] in the blackness of battles // or ask after it in red blood

In verse 37, the "wound" is styled like a seductive "eye" that provides a "drink of blood".[41] Furthermore, this jihadist poem encourages the bearing of wounds

40 Section 8.4 cites verse 28, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*.
41 Verse 37, of *Lā Naksa*, has been cited, in Section 8.2.

with pride. In verse 51, even Khālid b. al-Walīd's "blood would have run" from his "wounded limbs" had he been injured because of his mortality.[42] What is noteworthy about some, but not all of these descriptions of blood is that they involve the senses, suggesting that the taking of vengeance affords not only emotional but sensual gratification.[43] This accords with the tradition, for al-Muhalhil also evoked the sensory aspect of "blood vengeance poetry":[44]

Alaylatanā bi-dhī ḥusumin anīrī

5 فَإِنّي قَدْ تَرَكْتُ بِوَارِدَاتٍ بُجَيْرًا فِي دَمٍ مِثْلِ الْعَبِيرِ

At the water paths
of Wāridāt
I left Bujayr in blood
like compound perfume.
Translation by Stetkevych (1993:225, 311–312)[45]

In *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*, blood is referenced a couple of times; explicitly, in verse 7, as the lost "blood of a noble one", and implicitly, in verse 9, as the "stifling of Muslim spirits":[46]

Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl

7 هَمهـم إرضَـاءُ أمريكـا فلـو قامَ حرٌّ، سفـك الوالـي دَمَـهَ

9 لم يرَ الإسلامُ في سُلطتِهم غيرَ إزهاقِ النّفُوسِ المُسْلِمَة

42 Verse 51, of *Lā Naksa*, has been cited, in Section 8.4.

43 Section 5.4 has explained that blood vengeance provides a release, as well as sensual gratification.

44 The poem is a *rā'iyya*, ending in *-rī*, in the *wāfir* metre. See also Lane (1863), s.v. *'ayn-bā'-rā'*. Stetkevych has translated *'abīr* as "compound perfume", but it also refers to a principal component which is "saffron", and therefore al-Muhalhil was likely evoking the vivid sight of blood, rather than its smell.

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46 The "spirit" is sometimes synonymous with "blood", for according to ancient belief therein it resides.

7 Their concern is the gratification of America and so, should // a noble one rise up, then the ruler sheds his blood

9 Islam has not seen in their sovereignty // anything other than the stifling of Muslim spirits

Similarly, in verse 4, of *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*,[47] "blood" is associated with the "restoration of honour".

In verse 36, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, the "wound" motif represents "pain". The same poem also refers to the "aggressor's blood" as "drink", in verse 15; ʿUqāb's "blood" as "the ink of treatise", in verse 31; "blood" as "ransom payment", in verse 32; and "blood" as "the fragrant smear of martyrdom and war", in verses 51 and 52:[48]

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

31 وَإِذْ بدمائِهِ سَطَـرَتْ خطابًـا جديدًا، فَانْبَرَوا: فُهِمَ الخطابُ!

36 سموتَ بكلِّ عزٍّ يا (عُقابُ) وآلــمَ جرحَنــا ذاكَ الغيــابُ

31 And since it wrote a new speech with his blood // they burst out: "Your speech is understood!"

36 You ascended with every honour, O ʿUqāb // and your absence causes our wound pain

Blood smear evokes the Jahili motif of the "blood tattoo" that appears upon the cavalry of war, which, in Section 3.7.4, was a sign of fertility, or victory in battle (al-ʿĀriḍa 2012:102–103). By evoking a perfume, *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* suggests that only jihadist blood smells pleasant, this contrasting with the exclusive depiction of enemy blood as fragrant, in *Lā Naksa*. In narratives of martyrdom (as opposed to narratives about blood vengeance), what usually differentiates the blood of the enemy from the blood of the martyr is its smell, the former rank and the latter pleasant (Cook 2007:74, 117–119).[49]

47 Verse 4 of *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq* has been cited, in Section 8.6.

48 Of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, Section 8.2 cites verses 15 and 51, Section 8.5 cites verse 32, and Section 8.6 cites verse 52.

49 This in turn accords with a tradition: "Anyone who is wounded in the path of Allah [*jihad*] comes on the Day of Resurrection when [his] colour is the colour of blood, [but] his scent is the scent of musk" (al-Bukhārī 1991[d. 256/870] and al-Tirmidhī n.d. [d. 279/892]; cited in Cook 2007:119).

This is because the blood of martyrdom alludes to the sacrificial ritual, and is therefore invested with the power of purification and atonement (Cook 2007:127).

With this in mind, the "musk" that pervades the opening scene, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, is the bloody smell of "martyrdom". The olfactory sense gives way to the sight of a "sea of blood", in verse 4, the soil of the hills well and truly "saturated with blood", in verse 6.[50] Verse 14 describes a "wound to the heart", whereas verse 19 states "wounds have made complaint" to Syria:

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

1	نسيـمٌ مِـن ربـا لبنـانَ نـادى	وَلا يـدري أنسمعُـهُ يقينـا؟!
2	وَفيـهِ أريـج أزهـار الروابـي	كذا مسكُ الشهادةِ يلتقينـا
3	وَعلَّـلَ: إنَّـني قـدْ كنـتُ دومًـا	أسوقُ لكـمْ عطورًا أو سكونا
14	فَذِي لبنانُ يا صحبي تنادي	وَبَاتَ القلبُ مكلومًا حزينـا
19	طرابلـسٌ تناديكـمْ وَأَمْسَـتْ	جـروحُ الآهِ للبلـدِ القرينـا

1 A breeze from the hills of Lebanon called out // and it does not know if we can hear it with [any] certainty
2 And in it is the fragrance of hill-flowers // in that way the musk of martyrdom meets us
3 And it explained: Truly, I always used // to send perfumes or tranquillity for you
14 That is why Lebanon calls out, O my companions // and the heart remained wounded and sad
19 Tripoli is calling out to you and the wounds // alas have become a companion to the country

8.8 Laundering Honour

A tribe's genealogy and deeds determine honour, whereas "blood vengeance poetry" expresses the exchange of blood between an oppressor and a victim, for which the latter seeks ritual purification. The process of "laundering hon-

50 Section 8.2 cites verses 4 and 6, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*.

our" sometimes involves the cleansing of a "polluted garment". The opening verse, of *Ḥ*16, expresses this succinctly as:[51]

***Ḥ*16**

1 إذا المرءُ لم يدْنَسْ مِنَ اللُّؤم عِرْضُهُ فكلُّ رِدَاءٍ يرتَدِيهِ جَمِيلُ

When a man's honour is not stained by iniquity,
Every robe he dons becomes him.
Translation by Stetkevych (1991:291, 382)[52]

It is no coincidence then that verses 16 and 17, of *Lā Naksa*, convey a similar metaphor, for here the Arabs exist in a ritual state of "shame", but they can also "purify" their honour, by spilling enemy blood that acts like a detergent:[53]

Lā Naksa

16 شرفُ العروبةِ بات وَهْوَ مُلَوَّثٌ بالعار، لا تَلْبَسْه حتى يَطْهُرا

16 Arab honour has become stained // with shame, do not wear it until it is purified

Verses 7 and 8, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, also present the same motif of a "blood stained garment" as a proxy for defeat and "disgrace", while explaining how to expunge the blemish by "embarking upon war":

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

7 وَأيُّ مهانـةٍ كانـتْ لَبوسًـا تزيـدُ عليكـمُ حقـدًا دفينـا؟!
8 إذا كنتمْ رجالًا فلتخوضوا حروبًا دونْ أن تضعوا الكمينا

51 See Section 3.6.1, for verses 6–12, of *Ḥ*16, a *lāmiyya*, ending in *-lū*, in the *ṭawīl* metre.

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53 Section 8.7 cites verse 17, of *Lā Naksa*.

7 And which disgrace, which you wear as a garment // compounds your buried hatred [for the enemy]?
8 Should you be men then you should boldly embark upon // war without relinquishing the ambush

In verses 51 and 52, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, al-Naṣr has inverted the motif, by "dying" the garments of the "enemy" with the "blood of brave heroes".[54] Strictly speaking, it is an image of defeat, but the poet has afforded honour upon the jihadists because this is the "blood of martyrdom". Far from being defeated by a mortal death at the hands of his enemy, the martyr triumphs through his reward of the afterlife. Thus, this poem equates blood with the violence of death, but also with rebirth in the hereafter.

In *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl* and *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*, blood is a measure of honour, but this is not brought into relief against a garment. In verse 7, of *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*,[55] the ignoble Arab despot sheds the "blood" of the "noble" Muslim in order to gratify a western master. Similarly, in verse 4, of *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*,[56] the "bloodshed" of the noble ones will be "avenged" and will restore "honour". This stratification of honour, in which a tyrant violates a noble underclass, applies to both Marxist narratives that call for revolution and antagonistic verse that demands the restitution of honour. Section 1.1.3 has already alluded to Yemeni tribal poetry, positing that social values are promoted through verse about honour that sometimes reflects the language of conflict (Caton 1990:260–264).

8.9 Honour and the Natural World

Polarity between the "noble" and the "lowly" is a structural method for cementing ideology according to a binary opposition (Kendall 2015:259). Between the extremes, honour is sometimes a hierarchal concept where individuals exhibit more fluid traits. In other words, honour can accord to a pyramid structure of men and animals, for which survival in the worldly domain is based upon economic circumstances, or different psychological profiles. Within this dynamic, the Arabs are encouraged to behave as lions and eagles, and not as wolves,

54 In *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, Section 8.2 cites verse 51, and Section 8.6 cites verse 52.
55 Section 8.7 cites verse 7, of *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*.
56 Section 8.6 cites verse 4, of *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*.

nor snakes. For example, in the opening verse of *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*, although "unbelief" is "riotous" (*ʿarbada*), implicit is the image of a treacherous "viper" (*ʿirbadd*) which steals along stealthily.[57] By contrast, in verse 7, only true believers are "lions":

Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq

7 أسدٌ مضت أسدٌ غدت في اثر أسدٍ تنطلق

7 Lions have passed away; lions have gone forth // in the traces of lions, which burst forth

The symbol of the "lion" as a metaphor for the Arab hero is common, in the classical tradition, and features across each of the five poems. Section 4.5.2 first explained how al-Mutanabbī structured his poems, by positioning events in their perceived rightful meritocratic order, where the Caliph is strong, man masters beast, the lion is the noblest of animals and the Islamic world view goes unchallenged, in Arab lands. Verse 4, of *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*, evinces this in particular.[58] Following this precedent, *Lā Naksa* and *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* also express that the restoration of a Caliphate will promote stability in a world that is in flux. This in turn re-establishes Solomon's world, in which a hero (and a leader) should rule under God, follow in the footsteps of kings and prophets, and subordinate the natural world to a fitting order (Sperl 1977:23–24). Nevertheless, there are also subtle differences. Unlike al-Mutanabbī, Ghunaym has structured *Lā Naksa* from a position of weakness, this demanding the restoration of a previous order because the world has been turned on its head if the dishonourable can debase the noble.[59] Consequently, the poem demands human and cosmic intervention to right a wrong, such that: (1) verses 1 to 6 compare "brave" Arabs to "lions", and the enemy to the "scorpion"; (2) verses 7 to 13 dehumanise the "Jews", by allying them with false worship; (3) verses 14 to 20 project the modern urban Arab into the liminal desert zone of the *raḥīl*,[60] so he can re-learn the natural order of the past, better understand the true instinct of the "lion", the "tiger" and the

57 Section 8.5 cites verse 1, of *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*.

58 See Section 4.3.3, for the poem, *al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*.

59 Section 7.4.1 reproduces *Lā Naksa*, in its entirety. This is not the only structuring device that Ghunaym has employed as Section 7.7 has already indicated.

60 The *raḥīl* represents the departure and desert journey section, of the Classical Arabic *qaṣīda*.

"eagle", and not allow "alley-cats", "wolves" and "small birds" to get the better of him; (4) verses 39 to 45 provide a model description of righteous soldiers, the "Vietnamese", who have rejected colonisation; (5) verses 46 to 53 describe the prototypical heroic male as "Khālid" b. al-Walīd, who is portrayed in much the same way as al-Mutanabbī described a subsequent hero, Sayf al-Dawla; (6) verses 54 to 58 identify the enemy as a "plague" of rats that needs to be eliminated; (7) verses 59 to 63 show the natural world disordered, where a "rat hunted an elephant" and a "wolf abased a lion"; and (8) verses 64 to 78 propose "self-sacrifice" on behalf of the "community" and "God". In summary, Ghunaym's war strategy is based upon compensation for injured honour and an ordering system that points out protectors and predators, by rewarding and punishing each accordingly. In his view, only blood revenge and jihadist martyrdom can succeed in reinvigorating the polity.

The female poet, al-Naṣr, has also deployed an animal hierarchy, in *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, albeit by focusing upon the sky and the eagle with which the dead hero shares his name.[61] This treatment is not unique and is compatible with al-Mutanabbī and other classical poets from both Arabic and non-Arabic poetic traditions.[62] Like Sayf al-Dawla, "'Uqāb" commanded eagles, but as their exemplar, he also ransomed his own life and encouraged others to do the same. This poem reconfigures a mortal world that contemplates the heavens, in which the eagle commands the animal kingdom, but is ultimately subordinate to a man with wings. For example: (1) in verses 1 to 4, a "super-eagle" soars through the sky, the master of all birds and a deterrent to the "crow", the "scorpion", the "serpent" and the "flies"; (2) in verses 5 to 10, the hero is a "lion", a "super-nova", a "seeker of truth" and a "beacon of light"; (3) in verses 11 and 12, he is compared to "waves steering ships" and is a "leader of lions"; (4) in verse 26, those who follow in the path of ʿUqāb are distinguished from enemy "wolves"; and (5) in verse 43, ʿUqāb's absence prompts the "crow's" return and thus implies a necessity for others to follow his lived experience. But even though ʿUqāb is only a man, he is also endowed with heroic superpowers, as the opening verses make clear:[63]

61 Section 7.4.4 provides *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, in its entirety.

62 See Section 4.5.2.

63 Jihadist martyrologies are frequently mystical, whereby martyrs' corpses emit musk and are pictorially depicted on jihadist internet forums with saintly halos (Holtmann 2013b:55).

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

1 إذا ما طارَ في الجوِّ العُقابُ وَكانَ بهِ رفيعًا ذا الجَنابُ

2 رأيتَ سماءَنا قصرًا منيفًا أميرُ القصرِ فيها كمْ يُهَابُ!

1 Whenever the Eagle, this majestic being, flies through the air //and soars up high

2 You see our sky as a lofty palace // the prince of the palace within [the sky] how awesome is he!

This differs from Ghunaym's position for which the heroic exemplar (Khālid b. al-Walīd) is only human, in verses 50 and 51, of *Lā Naksa*:[64]

Lā Naksa

50 بِمَ كان يُنْصرُ خالدٌ؟ ألأنَّهُ من جَنْدَل، لا من تراب صُوِّرا؟

50 How was Khālid made victorious? Is it because he was // formed from stone and not of dust?

Returning to *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, ʿUqāb's wings are highly significant and this is because al-Naṣr has dug deep into the iconography of martyrology, by evoking the image of Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār, literally Jaʿfar the "Flier".[65] In so doing, she has sanctified the hero, ʿUqāb, albeit through an elegy that her fundamentalist position does not strictly permit.[66] Here a brief digression will help to explain. Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār is the sobriquet of Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib, both cousin and Companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and a commander of Muslim forces during the Battle of Muʾta (8/629), who was martyred in the conflict, so becoming one of Islam's earliest heroes. He was also the older brother of ʿAlī, and was reputed to have been charitable and generous during his life-time, making him a bearer of great honour.[67] Some have regarded the Battle of Muʾta as the first

64 Section 8.4 cites verse 51, of *Lā Naksa*.

65 The definition of *ṭayyār* can also mean a "spirited horse". The transitional image between flying horses and eagles has been played up by al-Mutanabbī, in his *Sayfiyya, ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū*.

66 Al-Naṣr's poetry has been influenced by Jahili poetry and martyrology, which suggests that she has adopted a degree of poetic licence and cherry-picking from different sectarian traditions.

67 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was the son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad. Section 6.7.5.4 has also referred to Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār's charitable reputation.

Muslim/Byzantine war during the pre-conquest period of early Islam (Cook 2007:25–26). Jaʿfar went into this battle, holding the Prophet's standard, while spurring himself on with battle poetry even after his horse was hamstrung. During the course of fighting, his arms were severed, and, following his death, the Prophet envisioned him in heaven with two-wings, instead of arms. Thereafter, he has either been called Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār, or *Dhū-l-janāḥayn*, meaning the "Possessor of Two-Wings". It is no coincidence then that the final verse, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*, compares ʿUqāb to the iconic "Flier" bearing "the Prophet's Standard":

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

54 سيبقى في حِمَى الرَّحمنِ دومًا، وَرايتُه أيا صحبي (العُقابُ)

54 He will remain in the sanctuary of the Merciful always // and his banner,
O my friend, is the *ʿUqāb* [the Banner of the Prophet]

To be clear, in this poem, *ʿuqāb* variously refers to: (1) the name of the deceased; (2) the "eagle"; (3) the "Aquila constellation"; (4) the "banner which is attached to a lance"; and (5) the "Banner of the Prophet".[68] Moreover, the "Banner of the Prophet" is a significant motif for other reasons, and so the poet's choice of interplay between "eagle" and "banner" has been intentional. In jihadist narratives, this usually symbolises the arrival of an apocalyptic judgement (Lohlker 2013:82). The "Banner of the Prophet", "*rāyat al-ʿuqāb*", or "*al-ʿuqāb*", is also integral to jihadist iconography and depicted as black in colour with an eagle embossed (Holtmann 2013b:44). Indeed, each page of al-Naṣr's *Dīwān* is watermarked by a logo featuring an eagle that hatches from a globe and a horse that gallops, combined with the banner of ISIS.

Intertextuality is a hallmark of Classical Arabic poetry, and al-Naṣr has been keen to prove the authenticity of her verse by virtue of her scholarship. In contrast to birds, verses 1 through to 6, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, evoke the natural world by way of Spring time imagery, such as the hills, the wind, the sea, flowers and the feminine.[69] In this, the poem arguably recalls both the theme of Tammūzian sacrifice, in early Arabic poetry, and verses 17 to 19, of

68 See Lane (1863), s.v. *ʿuqāb*.

69 Of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, Section 8.7 cites the first three verses, Section 8.2 cites verses 4 and 6, while the next section will cite verse 5.

Abū Tammām's "In Praise of an Abbasid Caliph" that depicts two "rival bands" fighting:[70]

In Praise of an Abbasid Caliph

17 حتَّى غدت وَهَداتُها و نِجادُها فئتيـن فـي خِلَـع الربيـعِ تَبختـرُ
18 مصفـــرَّةً محمـــرَّةً فكأنَّهـــا عُصَبٌ تيمَّنُ في الوغى وتمضَّرُ
19 مـن فاقـعٍ غـضِّ النبـات كأنَّـهُ دُرٌّ يُشَقَّـقُ قبـلُ ثـمَّ يُزعفَـرُ

17 Till all the earth and all its combes and hills form rival bands, both strutting in spring's favours,
18 One yellow and one red, for all the world like clashing Yemenis and Mudaris,
19 Brilliant yellow, succulent, as it were pearls that have first been split, then dipped in saffron,

Translation by Ashtiany from (Abū Tammām 1996:82–83)[71]

Section 2.5.2 has already explained that anemones are the Tammūzian symbol of both bloodshed and fertility. "Red anemones", in Arabic, are called *shaqā'iq al-Nuʿmān*, a phrase that derives from the word root *shīn-qāf* that usually means to "split", but subject to context can also mean to "sprout".[72] Therefore, in verse 19, of Abū Tammām's poem above, there is word play upon *durrun yushaqqaqu* that literally means "pearls that have been split", but which also insinuates the "anenomes" of bloodshed, i.e. the troops on the hills are first distinguished by their battle standards, so appearing like coloured pearls, but their bloodshed subsequently generates variegated flowers. By alluding to this tradition, then, al-Naṣr's verses convey a metaphor for which the bloodshed of martyrdom and the sacrifices of decades of war have been spilt upon the "hills" of Lebanon, fertilising the flowers that are anemones. In describing the natural world dishonoured, she has also evoked the oldest epic poem, albeit unintentionally. *Tablet v*, from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, dates from between the second and third millennia BCE, describing a foreign incursion into Lebanon

70 This *rā'iyya*, ending in *-rū*, is in the *kāmil* metre. Sections 5.4 and 5.6 have already referred to the same poem.

71 Used with permission of Brill, from *Qaṣīda poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa: Eulogy's bounty, meaning's abundance: an anthology*, Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, vol. 2, 1996; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

72 See Wehr (1979), s.v. *shaqqa* and *shaqā'iq*.

by two allied soldiers, King Gilgamesh of Uruk and his companion Enkidu, a kind of noble savage. Against his better judgement, Enkidu supports Gilgamesh's plans for colonial expansion, thereby violating the sacred ground of the cedars, angering the gods, and dishonouring Humbaba, the fierce Guardian of the Cedars. Humbaba is powerless to stop them, but, prior to his slaying, he utters a mighty oath of revenge, and sows the seeds of Enkidu's eventual demise:

Tablet v*, from *The Epic of Gilgamesh

> '[Now] in treachery you bring before me Gilgamesh,
> and stand there, Enkidu, like a warlike stranger!
> I will slit the throat and gullet of Gilgamesh,
> I will feed his flesh to the locust bird, ravening eagle and vulture!'
>
> Verses 91–94 of George (2000:41)

Because of the exclusive nature of al-Naṣr's religious beliefs, it is unlikely that she would credit her inspiration to an ancient poetic tradition that predates Islam. However, because this epic has inspired the classical poems from which she too has drawn influence, she has also been its inheritor. A jihadist, like al-Naṣr, claims to be a purist (she is both Sunni and Salafi), but however skilled she is as a poet, what her verse simultaneously demonstrates is an intertextual debt to Shi'i martyrologies, and also ancient Near and Middle Eastern religions that generated their own mythologies. This paradox is key to the delegitimisation of both her message, and the motivation of others like her, those who embrace the Jahili practice of blood revenge and its associated poetry, while simultaneously claiming to abhor everything that they deem to be the product of unbelief.

8.10 Honour and Weaponry

A final motif, which Section 5.1 has already expanded upon at some length (albeit in relation to Abbasid poetry), is "weaponry",[73] this chapter closing with the reiteration that weaponry continues to be the means for the defence of lost honour. The poetic and the lived experience are consistent, even for men not

73 Section 8.4, on "Body Parts as Tokens of Value", contains many of the verses that this section refers to because weapons are the means for dismemberment of the human body.

fighting jihad. Among Yemeni tribes, for example, the possession of weapons symbolises honour so that when a man is seen to break the sheath of his dagger, this implies that his honour is damaged, or when a man fingers his weapon, this warns a provocateur that his honour is smarting and may soon need defending (Dresch 1993:39). *Lā Naksa* responds to injured honour with the requisite machismo, revealing a mighty defensive capability that consists of: (1) "rockets" (verses 21 to 24); (2) "guns" (verse 28); (3) the smell of "gunpowder" (verse 35); (4) the music of "artillery" (verse 36); (5) "sword", "shield", "helmet" and "spear" as modelled by Khālid b. al-Walīd (verses 52 to 54); (6) "grenade", "sword", "cannon", "spear", "dagger" (verses 69 and 70); (7) "poison" (verse 82); and (8) "landmines" (verse 83). Aside from verses already cited,[74] some other examples, here, follow:

Lā Naksa

21	صاروخُكُمْ سَمَّيْتُمُوه قاهِرًا	ما عاقَهُ يوم الوغى أن يَقْهرا؟
22	صاروخكم سميتموه ظافِرًا	ما عاقه يوم الوغى أن يَظْفرا؟
23	صاروخكم سميتموه عابِرًا	ما عاقه يوم الوغى أن يَعْبُرا؟
28	أنصِتْ إليه إذا المَدَافعُ أَطلَقتْ	تَسْمَعْهُ من أفواههن مُفَسَّر
52	لكنهُ يغْشَى الوغى مُتَقَلِّدًا:	بالصبر دِرْعًا، والعقيدة مغْفرا
53	الله أكبر سيفُهُ وقناتُهُ	ما خاب عند الحرب شَعْبٌ كَبَّرا
54	يا قوم، هبُّوا هبةً مُضَرَّبَةً	إن الفتى العربيَّ إن دُعي، انْبَرى

21 Your rocket which you named *Qāhir* (Vanquisher) // what impeded it on the day of battle from vanquishing?

22 Your rocket which you named *Ẓāfir* (Conqueror) // what impeded it on the day of battle from conquering?

23 Your rocket which you named *ʿĀbir* (Cruiser) // what impeded it on the day of battle from crossing?

28 Listen to it [the expression], when the guns fire // from their mouths they give you explanation

52 However, he overcomes war by hanging upon himself a sword: // by his steadfastness which is armour, and by his belief which is a helmet

74 Of *Lā Naksa*, Section 8.4 has cited verse 24, 69, 70 and 83, while Section 8.2 has cited verse 82.

53 "*Allāhu Akbar*" is his sword and his spear // people who say "*Allāhu Akbar*" will not fail in war
54 People, rise up, in a violent fashion // when called upon the strong Arab youth embarks upon [action]

The imagery of jihadist poems derives not only from what can by seen but from all of the five senses. Colour excites "vision" and manifests as red (blood, death, fates of death), black (bad luck, rancour, bad hearts), and white (purity, cleanliness) (al-Muḥayyish 1997:247–249). In *Lā Naksa*, cannon-fire alerts "hearing", blood and gunpowder trigger "smell", bitterness prompts "taste", and so on. Section 8.7 has already explained that sensation is particularly acute in the opening sequence, of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, by relation to the smell of blood, but it is also distinct, in verses 35 and 36 (of *Lā Naksa*), when considering the smell and sound of weaponry:

Lā Naksa

35 ويرون جَوْف الرمل أجملَ فُنْدُق وروائـحَ البـارُود تنفـح عَنْبَـرا
36 ويـرون قَصْـف المِدْفعيَّـة أُرْغُنًـا يَشجي، وقعقعةَ الحناجر مِزْهرا

35 Who think a hollow in the sand is a most beautiful hotel // and [that] the smells of gunpowder diffuse a pleasant fragrance of ambergris
36 And they consider that the thundering of artillery is an organ // moaning, the rattle of throats, a tambourine

In *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*, the anonymous poet has celebrated "the suicide belt", in verses 17 and 20, as response to an "American naval presence", in verse 3.[75] Moreover, it expresses that any jihad that is underwritten in ink, "*jihād bi-l-qalam wa-l-bayān*", will incite jihad by the sword, "*jihād bi-l-sayf wa-l-sinān*" (Holtmann 2013b:63). Verse 14 equates the "sword" with the "pen", demonstrating that the poem itself is a call to arms:

Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl

3 حَشدُوا في المـاء ترسانتهـم لِيسوؤُوكُـم بِنَـارٍ حُطَمَـة
14 ها هو المارشالُ في مَربَعِكُم يَشحَذُ السيفَ ويبرِي قَلَمَه

75 Section 8.4 has cited verses 17 and 20, of *Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*.

3 They have mobilised their navy in the water // in order to torment you with Hell-fire

14 Here is the field marshal in your living quarters // he whets the sword and trims the nib of his pen

In so doing, verse 14 bears an intertextual link to a well-known line by al-Mutanabbī:[76]

Wā ḥarra qalbā-hu mimman qalbu-hū shabimū

22 فالخَيْلُ وَاللَّيْلُ والبَيْدَاءُ تَعْرِفُني وَالسَّيْفُ والرُّمْحُ والقِرْطَاسُ والقَلَمُ

for the horsemen know me, and the night, and the desert, and the sword and lance, and the paper and pen.

Translation by Arberry (2009:72–73)[77]

In *Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*, the weapons of choice are implied by the injuries that they cause, but they are not specifically itemised in the same manner as *Lā Naksa*. Similarly, *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū* does not extensively catalogue weaponry, citing only "loud explosives" and "silent guns" (verse 16), "lances" (verse 33) and "the sword" (verse 34).[78] Noteworthy, in verse 34, is the association of "this Book" with "jihad" and the "sword", demonstrating how this jihadist seeks not only to weaponise verse but also the most sanctified of language:

Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū

33 ستلقى عُصْبَةُ الظُّلام منَّا شديدَ البأسِ ترسمهُ الحِرابُ

34 فإنَّ جهادَنا: سيفٌ صقيلٌ، وَإنَّ جهادَنا: هذا الكتابُ

33 The leagues of oppression will find [emanating from] us // vehement fortitude, of which lances emboss their traces

34 For our jihad is: a burnished sword // and our jihad is: this Book

76 The metre of this *mīmiyya*, ending in *-mū*, is *al-basīṭ*.

77 From *Poems of al-Mutanabbī: a selection*, A.J. Arberry; © Cambridge University Press 1967; reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press through PLSclear.

78 Section 8.4 has cited verse 16, of *Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*.

In *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, verses 5 and 26 refer to "swords", verse 27 cites "guns", and verse 28 mentions "bombs".[79] More generally, these have been used by men in defence of women, but also against one particular weapon that verse 13 implies is "rape":

Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā

5 لقدْ سلَّ الظَّلومُ سيوفَ حقدٍ وَقدْ قتلَ الأنامَ هنا جنونا

13 عَدَا الأعدا على الحُرماتِ شرًّا وَواهًا للحرائرِ إنْ سُبِينا!!

5 The tyrant has already drawn swords of hatred [from the scabbards] // and here, [he] has already killed mankind in a frenzy

13 The enemies have attacked the women, maliciously // woe upon the free-women if they were captured!

As in "The Amorium Poem",[80] rape continues to be a metaphor for occupation and the humiliation of a feminine city, or country. This is not surprising because the Arabic word for "rape", or *al-ightiṣāb*, is synonymous with "illegal territorial occupation", even though it is not employed as a term in any of these illustrations. It is interesting to compare the male and female poet, in *Lā Naksa* and *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, for how they have treated the motif of "weaponry" as it pertains to lost honour. Honour is gendered male when redeemed through an act of aggression, whereas honour is female when injured. Ghunaym is an example of a poet who has taken an inventory of his own nation's weaponry as a measure of his country's defensive capability, in safeguarding honour. This is similar to ʿAmr b. Kulthūm's treatment of weaponry, in *Ḥamāsiyya* 161, this explaining how a Jahili tribe measured its wealth and budgeted during times of hardship.[81] By contrast, al-Naṣr has invested land [and women] with honour so that occupation by an invading army is a humiliating act.

79 Of *Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*, Section 8.2 has cited verse 26, Section 8.6 has cited verse 27, and Section 8.4 has cited verse 28.

80 See Section 4.3.1, for "The Amorium Poem" in its entirety.

81 See Section 1.4.3, for *Ḥ*161.

8.11 Closing the Circle

Chapters Seven and Eight have stated that jihadist poetry often contains a revenge narrative that remains traditional and repeats classical motifs, even when it is modern in terms of its chronology. Jihadist poets deliberately present modern problems through an old prism because they idealise the past, and ask that poetic time moves backwards so as to reflect the same ethical values that pertained at the inception of the Caliphate. Reinterpretation of classical motifs into modern settings also enables jihadists to portray their struggle as continuous and inevitable (Kendall 2016:235). However, this process can be easily undermined because classical motifs often predate Islam, particularly with respect to blood vengeance. Challenging the poetic narrative of militant jihadism is a critical step to undermining ideology. By deconstructing a selection of poems according to a set of "blood vengeance motifs", Chapter Seven's and Chapter Eight's positions are to identify them as being fundamentally Jahili, a condition which is an anathema to the jihadist, rather than Islamic. The analysis has also identified what amounts to incendiary rhetoric in order that these poems (and those that are similar) can be classified as ideological weapons, and not slip under the radar. Of themselves, the poems do not necessarily require censorship, but in view of their incitement potential, they should always be situated within a balanced cultural and historical context, and presented as inherently flawed.

CHAPTER 9

The Promised Land: A Case Study

9.1 A Road Map Forward

The purpose of this analysis has been in the examination of a type of conflict, further inflamed by rhetorical speech, that can result in successive acts of retaliation. Political solutions are beyond its scope, state actors and professional negotiators better placed to form counter-narratives to revenge as an integral part of the process of conflict resolution. Notwithstanding this reticence, at the time of writing, one of the worst cycles of retaliatory violence has erupted, this demolishing the Gaza Strip, targeting the State of Israel, the West Bank, Lebanon, the Red Sea, and also periodically extending to Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Yemen and Iran. What is the point of a study about revenge if it has no practical application with respect to two peoples, the Arabs and the Jews, who are a contemporary representation of two rival tribes, defined by a territorial claim, and grid-locked within a conflict that features terrible campaigns of blood vengeance?

Despite the Israeli government's protestations to the contrary, extreme violence as practised by Hamas, on 7th October 2023, did not occur in a vacuum, but rather as response to sustained Israeli aggression over the course of a century. The Land of Israel, once inhabited by the ancient Israelites, is predominantly made up of an immigrant population since its inception, in 1948, this deploying a highly trained military capability to occupy what was once Palestinian land. Even stating this is contentious, for committed Zionists argue doctrinally that they are the indigenous population, albeit displaced for millennia. Semantics aside, for the native Arab population that has been displaced over the past century, it has been near impossible to resist mass immigration without recourse to revolt. This compares with the historical experience of other colonial settler projects, most notably the bloody Algerian War of Independence. To be clear, this is not an excuse for the atrocities that Hamas committed against citizens of Israel, which are deplorable, unjustifiable and which fundamentally undermine the integrity of the Palestinian cause. If terrorism is synonymous with militant jihadism, in the minds of many, then the accusation should recognise that hatred is corrosive to its victims and its perpetrators, for the group, or the individual that destroys another, also destroys their own moral probity. Politically astute bystanders observe that Islamist radicalisation is not only a violent force, but an ideology; in

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the Palestinian case, it has grown as response to Zionism, a nationalist ideology, underpinned by military might, as ruthless in dispossessing as repossessing.

Undermining Islamist radicalisation, using censorship, is highly unlikely to be successful, instead driving recruitment underground. So as to negate the impact of hate speech, greater resilience against some of the dangerous ideas that militant jihadism promotes needs to be built into any counter-strategy, also considering that incitement to violence and dehumanisation tactics are deployed by both sides. Empathy for human suffering which can be directly attributed to colonisation is not a capitulation for the Israelis, nor does it prevent more sensible policing of armed resistance. On a practical level, a fairer society is inherently more stable, and easier to govern. Advocating for stronger engagement with hostile actors, such as Hamas, strives to: (1) understand what propels jihadist thought; (2) restore political, economic and social justice to disenfranchised groups, some of whom are being proactively recruited by extremist groups; and (3) create alternative narratives when addressing hate speech and incitement to violence that are not prejudicial. Hardliners who fear the strength of the Palestinian cause typically argue for a sledge-hammer approach, determining that individual threats should be neutralised and their family members indefinitely detained. However, killing and incarceration are short-term solutions that can fuel reprisal killings and retaliatory hostage taking, particularly among avengers who accrue honour in the eyes of their community when practising revenge. An ideology thrives upon injustice. A more moderate view suggests that extenuating circumstances can help to determine sentencing, not by pardoning acts of brutality, but instead by considering a longer time horizon for the righting of wrongs. This should inspire hope, by offering: (1) a rigorous examination of the sources of conflict; (2) a comprehensive method for addressing injustice from different sides of a dispute; (3) a possibility for the rehabilitation of offenders; and (4) a plan for the prevention of future acts of violence. Notwithstanding more recent history, Section 6.2.1 has indicated a medieval pogrom, this also justifying why a homeland is absolutely integral to the defence of Jewish identity. If politics can grow to be holistic, kinder, and equal, an ambitious social integration project between Arabs and Jews might be capable of displacing the scare resource model which Chapter One addressed. At the current time, this is arguably a naive sentiment. There are limits to what any counter-narrative strategy can achieve while brutality prevails. To put it bluntly, it is doubtful whether Israel's current strategies for the elimination of threats, these involving the ethnic cleansing of the West Bank and genocide in the Gaza Strip, can ever be forgiven by the Palestinians in this author's life-time, particularly when the current governments of Israel

and the United States of America dispute rulings by international organisations, like the International Court of Justice,[1] that speak an unpopular truth to power.

9.2 The Judgement of Solomon

For a peace initiative to successfully undermine cyclical violence that is being propelled by a mutually destructive desire for revenge, it should be rooted in acts of renunciation, rather than of possession. This can be via the use of counter-messaging and the establishment of just treatment, all the while undermining incitement to blood vengeance. This chapter makes some suggestions which are grounded in concepts that the analysis has already presented. Revenge is a blunt instrument; a crude attempt by an opponent to level the playing field, using force. By contrast, renunciation is a non-violent means of restoring equilibrium, which is within the gift of the bestower, an act of good will that goes some of the way to restoring the ancient hospitality contract and the notion of honourable gift exchange (as presented in Chapter One). On the power of renunciation, the Judgement of Solomon, a well-known anecdote from the Hebrew Bible, is instructive. When two women came to the wise king, each claiming to be the mother of a contested baby, he solved the riddle of maternity with a test; when he judged that the infant be cut in half so that each woman could claim her rightful share, the real mother renounced her relationship to spare the child's life. A selfless act of love triumphed over capture and the ultimate loss.

In the case of a territorial dispute, dividing up land between feuding parties is a real possibility, but even if the enforcement of recognisable boundaries is effective, the metaphorical infant may yet die. Specifically, with respect to peaceful coexistence between Israel and a future Palestinian State, hope is dying because one-land is unable to accommodate two-people with competing claims to title. So far, this is an existential conflict, a zero-sum game with negotiation an anathema to each side because the territory is strictly defined in respective collective memory, belonging to each party alone. Section 1.4.1 explained that ancient tribes once cemented their identity using particular tracts of land, this intimate association presently at the root of an intractable problem. Mount Zion and its environs is the point of origin for the Jewish

1 On Friday, 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice ruled that Israel has unlawfully annexed Palestinian territory. The judgement is largely symbolic and unenforceable, albeit damaging to Israel's reputation at home and abroad.

people, from which they have suffered displacement, but, since 1948, have the right of return. In the intervening period, the land has continued to be inhabited by people who are not intergenerational tenants, but custodians, and yet have been forcibly dispossessed of their homes. As solution, partitioning the contested territory has so far been unsuccessful. Perhaps this is because the act of territorial partition, of 1967, has not been cemented by a symbolic marriage (in contemporary parlance, meaning integration), therefore not solving the problem of excessive tribal chauvinism, i.e. *al-ʿaṣabiyya*, a term (defined in Section 1.4.2) that explains how special interest groups can seek justification and vindication for terrible acts, via collective action at the expense of an Other. Another possible reason for failure is because partition has not been accompanied by compensation payment, or blood-wit provided to the Palestinian population for the families, the homes and the land that they have lost. The creation of the Jewish State is an unfinished project; a demarcation line alienates Israel from the West Bank (i.e. Judea and Samaria), an area that the most committed of Zionists are unwilling to relinquish, embracing as it does Biblical sites. Then, there is the matter of illegal Israeli settlement expansion beyond the Green Line, a violation of both political trust and international law that has well and truly torn up the existing "Two-State Solution".

Within Israel and Palestine's shared history, there has been little ongoing assimilation between the feuding parties that has brought together future generations of Israelis and Palestinians, but Neve Shalom, or *Wāḥat al-Salām* ("The Oasis of Peace"), a small cooperative village established between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, in 1970, can serve as a promising example for peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Jews, provided that the experiment is practised widely, and does not remain a unique and remote outlier. This social integration project is the subject of *Children of Peace* (2022), a documentary film which interviews Arabs and Jews who grew up contentedly together, in Neve Shalom, but feel alienated from wider Israeli society as adults. Outside Neve Shalom, some former residents do not wholly identify with their own ethnic group, who sometimes perceive them as traitors, but they also find that they are mistrusted by the other ethnicity. In young adulthood, compulsory conscription of Israeli Jews (but not Israeli Arabs, who are exempt) has strained friendships; among the conscripts, the act of joining the IDF has resulted in a conflicted sense of self-hood. It would seem that Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, in 1995, by an Israeli right-wing extremist who objected to his ratification of the Oslo Accords, marked a water-shed moment for inhabitants of Neve Shalom; they experienced the kind of emotions that accompany social rejection. Shirīn, a Palestinian fluent in Hebrew, later went on to marry an Arab, moved to Jerusalem's Old City, and adopted the *ḥijāb*, however she expresses that she

feels invisible since leaving Neve Shalom, after presenting herself as recognisably Muslim in a divided city. Sadly, the experiment has been a rare experience, and so its offspring have become isolated, instead of serving as examples for others to follow. The lesson is that for an oasis, like *Wāḥat al-Salām*, to generate into a forest across the entire country, and not stand alone in a hostile environment, many more trees must be planted.

9.3 A Narrative Strategy

As elucidated upon, in Section 7.6, there have been few effective counter-narratives to the blood vengeance message, in this particular case, but it is a matter which can be corrected. Typically, aggrieved groups retreat behind a wall of silence, Israeli and Palestinian educators inclining to teach one-sided narratives without full commitment to the other. Chapter Seven has explained that incitement to violence will always be a very real prospect, should a group be subject to social isolation, fear and unchallenged messaging, while also having access to weaponry. This analysis proposes that an effective counter-narrative strategy is critical for restoring a peaceful equilibrium as is the establishment of social justice projects for all. The following plan serves as a narrative strategy, for mitigating against the deleterious effect of incitement to vengeance, a form of hate speech that is universal and not exclusive to Arabic cultural production. Some of the steps speak to the broader macroeconomic environment in which a feud can thrive, while others are culturally specific, particularly for societies that form intense loyalties to specific ethnic and religious groups:

Economic Welfare

I. Chapter One provides terminology that explains the mechanics of honour and disgrace in traditional societies that are organised according to tribal groupings, and are regulated by ancient codes;
II. Notwithstanding any safety measures, Chapters One and Two posit the fundamentals; blood feuds arise in environments of scarcity, meaning that their avoidance requires the maintenance of decent living standards for all so that marginalised communities do not grow in number, nor in the scale of their resentment; the taking of prisoners and hostages across the sectarian divide is counter-productive, marking a state of war and inhibiting the formation of lasting peace;
III. Because migration is a source of conflict, Section 6.2.3 (by reference to Andalusian Spain and specifically the issue of forced migration) demon-

strates that wide reaching initiatives for integrating refugees (from both Arab and Jewish backgrounds) is essential, this not only enabling them to flourish but also benefitting a progressive nation with cultural revival.

Storytelling

IV. By reference to Alfrīd Faraj's (1967) play, *al-Zīr Sālim*, Section 2.4.3 proposes that challenging revenge narratives can be achieved through the creation of new forms of storytelling (that do not portray revenge as a solution), instead inverting the blood vengeance theme, providing exemptions to its practice, and promoting reconciliation;

V. With respect to the building of counter-narratives through storytelling, Section 6.7.5.3 presents a more recent example of how to challenge militant jihadist ideology, in this case using dialogue spoken by a contemporary hero who features in a popular television series, called *al-Hayba*.

Poetry as a Deterrent

VI. In discussing the ability of poetry to convert hearts and minds, Section 3.2.2 alludes to the transformative power of verse because it is so rhetorically compelling, at least in the Arab world, suggesting that just as it can incite to violence, or prepare a fighter for battle (as does *Ḥ*14, in Section 3.7.3), it also has the potential to reconcile feuding parties;

VII. As to one form of counter-messaging, Section 3.7.8, in juxtaposition with Section 3.7.7, demonstrates how verse that calls for moderation, instead of violence, belongs to rich poetic tradition;

VIII. More controversially, in Section 3.8, *Ḥ*631, *Ḥ*632 and *Ḥ*633 provide examples of lampoons that can also serve as deterrent to blood vengeance (akin to protest demonstrations), by threatening action, but without employing as many triggers to violence, this serving as a warning system to authoritarian rulers.

Satire and Rap

IX. Through the presentation of two provocative poems, "The Amorium Poem" and *Yā maʿshara-l-murdi innī nāṣihun la-kumū*, Section 4.3.1 illustrates how satire, in the second poem, can potentially undermine poetic incitement, in the first poem, although it is important to note that challenging narratives is easier to achieve in urban spaces, rather than in isolated communities;

X. Section 6.7.5.4 and Section 6.8 also demonstrate the function of rap as protest poetry (*al-muqāwama bi-l-kalām*), this a less provocative form of defiance that is non-violent, in so doing, presenting contemporary

examples of lampoons that appeal to youth, but which also serve as self-criticism. Protest poetry, which is expressly non-violent, also meets the criteria of a classical lampoon that speaks truth to power. In other words, for traditionalists, it is authentic, even if it is delivered in a more contemporary format. What is key, is that it helps to build resilience into the environment in which feuds can thrive, by acting as a vaccine against further revolt, provided that the social malady it is addressing does not reach epidemic proportions.

Prevention and Delegitimisation

XI. Table 1, in Section 1.3, provides a "Blood Vengeance Motif" test, while analysis throughout demonstrates how verse can be checked for conformance to this test, thereby assessing both the intent of a poem and its capacity for conveyance of the revenge message;

XII. Sections 7.5 and 7.6 opine that retaliation against a particular group may be prevented by outlawing (or at least regulating) hate speech, by identifying which combination of seven conditions are warning signs that have the potential to inflame an already dangerous situation, and which can result in killing;

XIII. Section 8.9 demonstrates that delegitimising a message can help to undermine the potency of a jihadist poem, particularly if the message iconises an individual fighter (an act of hero-worship that Islam discourages), or refers to the pre-Islamic poetic tradition that celebrates revenge (which the Prophet of Islam notably criticised, see Section 3.3).

Rituals and Commitment

XIV. Section 7.6 explains that rituals have a role to play, in both conditioning and undermining violent behaviour, this because they transform individual differences into collective action, which in the extreme can result in a negative form of group chauvinism, *al-ʿaṣabiyya*, but when used correctly can forge a real sense of solidarity and community;

XV. Section 7.7 explains that poetic speech which employs the imperative as well as oath-taking intimately connect an audience to a motivational speaker, this helping to forge ritual by identifying what meets the standards of honourable and shameful behaviour;

XVI. It is important to recognise the full implications of blood vengeance as retaliatory behaviour, i.e. it is practised by two sides in a conflict, and therefore commitment to renouncing violence must be mutual if it is to cease.[2]

2 See Mehdi Hasan's (2024) interview with Gershon Baskin, an Israeli negotiator and special-

9.4 Two States

A noble initiative for its time, the "Two-State Solution" to the Palestine–Israel Conflict, proposed by the Oslo Accords thirty-years ago, is unlikely to work today. The visceral hatred fostered during successive wars, and the increased polarisation of both societies between their respective extremist groups, translates to no goodwill upon which to build a lasting Oslo Agreement. A rigidly formal treaty, at this juncture, is probably too soon. A functional relationship between the feuding parties, themselves beset by internal factionalism, will likely take many generations to build. The reality on the ground is that Israeli Jews and Palestinians will fight until the price becomes too high for each side, for continuing to contest title to land that becomes uninhabitable serves no-one's purpose. This chapter does not dismiss a "Two-State Solution" out of hand, provided that each side is willing and able to build new initiatives for economic cooperation across the borders of a partitioned land, to engage in trade that is mutually beneficial, and to arrange for educational exchanges between students and teachers as well as home visits.

It may sound counterintuitive, but the safest place for a Jewish citizen of Israel to be when visiting the West Bank is within an Arab home, for the host is honour bound to protect a visitor, like kin. Chapter Two demonstrated that for those Arabs who still practise blood vengeance, they are simultaneously honour bound to protect a guest according to the terms of the ancient hospitality contract, to the degree that a host is directly responsible for any harm that befalls his visitor and to punish the perpetrator accordingly. The slow building of trust is key, so requiring cross-institutional participation. "Women Wage Peace" is a grass-roots movement that recruits across the sectarian divide and is exemplary in this regard. Any peace treaty would therefore need to prioritise relationship building, first, before determining respective areas of control. Israel has already demonstrated that she is quite capable of ignoring UN Resolution 242 because territorial expansion is in her interest. Sanctions are a possible deterrent to rule-breaking, but unlikely to be implemented by major global players because of Israel's strategic importance to the United States of America. Regional and international actors should therefore create incentives for the expansion of Israel's economic and political spheres of influence outside Israel, by supplementing and extending her soft power, instead of turning a blind-eye to a land-grab, these conditional upon abiding by the agreement.

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ist in the peace process. Seven minutes in, Baskin expresses that Israel's military response to Hamas' actions, on October 7, 2023, is not about a long-term strategic objective, rather "It's about Revenge".

Palestinians hoping to rectify the outrage when the British Mandate dispossessed them will be disappointed by the reminder that Israel has military might and powerful allies on her side. But without international support, and a new generation of pragmatic Palestinian politicians prepared to compromise, there will be no fledgling Palestinian State. Ultimately, it is up to Arabs and Jews to enforce a workable solution. Technology governs today's warfare, a battle is won at the push of a button, a massive death toll is a calculation that may or may not swing an election cycle. The era of the Muslim Conquest is long past, but, at its height, the Caliphate flourished because it was cosmopolitan and pragmatic, and embraced different faith traditions, or none.

9.5 Restoration of the Hospitality Contract

Maintaining the ancient hospitality contract is key to community welfare within communities that value the role of tradition. Table 2, in Section 2.3.4, summarised how a series of events led to the War of al-Basūs between two warring tribes, as well as how this was resolved. Table 12 is an adaptation, demonstrating that the Israel/Palestine Conflict is also the result of a series of crises, or insults to honour which have never been resolved.

9.6 One State

Preparedness for renunciation does not mean that either party should necessarily be uprooted from their current home, but any ideology, religious or political, that promotes one group's over-riding right to title and deed over this broken land will fundamentally need to be undermined by a new generation of politicians. Israel is a military superpower, but it cannot morally justify "Occupation", a realisation which in and of itself must be a terrible burden for citizens of conscience. Israeli Jews cannot credibly expect non-Jews to accept the theory of divine entitlement to land, when Arabs have been living there for centuries and a theocracy is contrary to the creation of a democratic secular country. In view of a painful history of pogroms, it is wholly understandable why the Jewish people should want their own state, but, paradoxically, this is not creating a refuge for victims of persecution. True freedom means being able to walk down the street safe in the knowledge that no one bears you ill will, not by spending billions of tax dollars on an "Iron Dome", nor in building houses with a panic room.

TABLE 12 Events Leading to the Israel–Palestine War (beginning October 2023)

Crisis development	Shared features
Kinship	Arabs and Jews co-exist peacefully, in Greater Syria and other Arab lands
Kingship	Ottoman rule
Crisis 1: Kinship weakened	Ottoman Empire dissolved after World War I. Balfour Declaration creates a Jewish homeland, in Palestine
Crisis 2: Kinship broken	The displacement of Palestinians from their ancestral villages culminates in The *Nakba*, of 1948. In response, Arab-Jews living in Iraq and Egypt come under threat, and migrate to Israel
Crisis 3: War	The Arab-Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973, and Partition
Crisis 4: No negotiation of blood-wit	Cyclical unrest over decades: (1) forced displacement; (2) the continued ethnic cleansing of Palestine; (3) the massacres of Palestinian refugees, in Sabra and Shatila (Lebanon); (4) Jewish settlement expansion within the West Bank
Crisis 5: War	First Intifada (1987–1993): the first of a series of *intifāḍāt* (s. *intifāḍa*), or "popular uprisings", followed by "military operations" to quell them
Crisis 6: No negotiation of blood-wit	The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, and the subsequent failure of the Oslo Accords, following a steady swing to the political right, in Israel
Crisis 7: War	Second Intifada (2000–2005)
Crisis 8: War	Following escalations, in 2014 and 2021, matters explode on October 7th 2023. Hamas, a militant Islamist territorial movement, vows to wreak the ultimate vengeance on Israel, and Israel retaliates seismically against the Palestinian populations of Gaza and the West Bank, conducting a genocide
Resolution and reinstatement of rightful kingship	Either a "One-State" or "Two State" solution – an enforceable peace settlement for which all parties will recognise that the land will either continue to be partitioned, or shared

The particular historical circumstances of The Promised Land, containing as it does sacred sites of common interest to different religions, suggest that the division of territory will continue to be contested. "One-State", as solution, is quite literally less divisive, but whether participants negotiate for "One-State", or "Two-States", enforcement of any prospective agreement is key. If "One-State" is the only possible solution, then the city of Jerusalem should ideally be

united (as recommended, in 1947), and then taken off the table, Arabs and Jews renouncing their claim to the most sacred point of division for a finite period, e.g. twenty-years, this act of detachment enabling an independent third party such as a UN peace-keeping force to run the city as a state until custody can return to its own citizens without rancour. This is easily done; Jordan is currently custodian of the al-Aqṣā Mosque, among other cross-denominational sacred sites, demonstrating that a cooperative agreement between key outsiders for the protection of city shrines is at least a possibility. Only extensive demolition of Jewish settlements will restore 1967 boundaries, this act of destruction likely to result in further conflict, which is inadvisable. As reparation, the State of Israel could make a more meaningful sacrifice: (1) by publicly renouncing the ideology of Zionism, a nationalist movement unsuited to modern migratory patterns; and (2) by either removing the Star of David from the Israeli flag, or by integrating more inclusive imagery within the same standard. The Israeli flag is inspired in part by the *tallit*, which is a fringed Jewish prayer shawl. By way of two examples, the *kūfiyya* scarf, a non-religious symbol of Palestinian identity (depicting a fishing-net, olive-leaves and trade-routes), could be easily integrated into a new state banner, as could the national bird of Israel, the Eurasian Hoopoe bird, that has mythical significance. No doubt, any rebranding will be painful, possibly even sacrilegious, but it would serve as a negotiation. Optics matter; there are different insignia which the Children of Abraham, tourists, and pilgrims to the Promised Land share in common. Moreover, an agreement of this nature allows different groups, on either side of the argument, to save face; settlers can legitimately continue to live in the West Bank, without being called "Occupiers", and Palestinians can return to their ancestral villages, in Israel, without special permits that classify them as strangers. Moreover, extremist members of the Palestinian Resistance movement can claim notionally to have dismantled the State of Israel as a political construct, by neutralising the ideology of Zionism, more moderate politicians creating in its place an inclusive and tolerant state for Jews and Arabs that no longer requires human sacrificial blood in order to survive. The advantage of One-State, rather than "Two-States", is that the IDF (and policing, more generally) can retain some power of oversight, but would cease to become an occupying force, instead transforming into the defender of the peace, with the *proviso* that recruitment comes from both sides of the sectarian divide and is subject to rigorous accountability.

The entity could also be renamed to help the new country chart a secular identity. For example, "Canaan" was an ancient civilisation that was geographically and ethnically similar to Israel and Palestine, prior to conquest of the Promised Land by the original Israelites. Notwithstanding the return to an

historical precedent, this name would likely be problematic because it undermines the trajectory of Jewish history, Biblical prophecy, and the foundation of the original state of Israel. "Aram", from which the name for the ancient Semitic language, "Aramaic", derives, might be less contentious. If "One-State" is the preferred solution, perhaps a more suitable name can be decided upon that both embraces popular aspirations and helps the new country to redefine itself. It may sound trite, but Jerusalem cuisine already demonstrates what can happen when Israelis and Palestinians break bread together, their gastronomic experiments inspiring one another and cross-fertilising. Coming up with creative solutions to the conflict is not difficult; the central issue concerns the strength of political will to enforce them because the scale of the task is monumental, and even if there is a respite in the violence, it could so easily resurrect again. Generations of Palestinians and Israelis are physically and mentally traumatised by the most recent cycles of violence, from which many will never recover. With total commitment, it could take a century of peace-building to repair the torn fabric of both societies, let alone weave them together. The unresolvable problems that are not addressed by either a "One-State" or "Two-State" solution are two-fold: (1) one is premised upon a fundamental belief that the Jewish people are entitled to all of the land of Israel, and therefore any negotiation that undermines this position is illegitimate; and (2) there is an implicit presumption, in the west, that the Jews possess a moral authority because they appear to be sophisticated and western, whereas the Arabs are perceived to be irrational regressive actors who are in thrall to rogue states. It is difficult to undermine belief and prejudice, but if future generations of Arabs and Jews are enabled to thrive in a truly democratic country, which is a role model to neighbouring states, why would they then want to destroy it?

Of course, the political landscape is further complicated by American foreign policy that underwrites the State of Israel, a useful ally within the Middle East that can provide intelligence on neighbours and help the United States to anticipate and manage developments in a sensitive region that is resource rich and riven with conflict. Despite this reality, if the American and Israeli positions do not shift, stoked by fear of Iran's expansionist designs and the increasing role of political Islam on the world stage (factors that enable Israel to also forge alliances with other Arab states that fear popular uprisings of their own), then the tragic reality on the ground will continue. Sadly, the Palestinian question is not only about a state; as throughout history, it is a proxy battle for power and influence on a geopolitical chess board. Paradoxically, Israel's enemies will only grow in strength, the longer an intolerable situation persists. It is really important that modern Israelis understand a principle that would not have been lost on the ancient Israelites; by neither conceding territory, nor

protecting their clients from social deprivation, they have broken a sacred covenant, the ancient hospitality contract (discussed in Chapters One and Two). This is a dishonourable act, which for many traditional Arabs delegitimises claim to a Jewish State, in the land of Israel.

9.7 Pro-active and Universal Engagement

This is a summary, for there are many details that need to be worked out, many institutions required at the national and international level to address these. Israel is a vulnerable nation, but the overwhelming number of casualties, in any conflict, have been Palestinians. Without intending to undermine an heroic effort, in the current conflict, it is insufficient for foreign aid workers to treat wounded Gazans and West Bankers; Israeli health workers and volunteers should also venture into difficult territory: to bear witness to the scale of the damage; to humanise their enemy; to attempt to heal. Without this endeavour, the Israeli identity, in Palestinian memory, will be forever associated with brutal aggression, and not with protection, friendship and care. Legitimacy is not only about recognition on the world stage, for Israel is a Middle Eastern country seeking a healthy relationship with neighbours. The kings of Israel must restore the ancient hospitality contract, which to this day is upheld as prerequisite for good governance, by Arabs. Continued failure to honour this pledge means that future generations of Jews will never truly see the Arabs who live within a shared space. The act of studiously ignoring the Other so that it becomes an unconscious state of being is a psychological phenomenon proactively cultivated by narratives about the founding of the Jewish State, its critics stigmatised as anti-Semites, or traitors to the cause of Zionism. Unseeing as an act of social conditioning is the subject of *The city and the city*, a novel about a fictitious Eurasian location, by China Miéville. To solve the homicide of a political dissident, a detective must "breach" the boundary between twin-states that occupy the same physical space, but in so doing he commits the state-level crime of truly seeing his society, this condemning him to a life of social exclusion (Miéville 2010[2009]:312):

> We are all philosophers here where I am, and we debate among many other things the question of where it is that we live. On that issue I am a liberal. I live in the interstice yes, but I live in both the city and the city.

This "interstice", which lies at the margins of existence between one state and another, one system and another, was once a political reality for East European

countries separated from Western Europe by the Iron Curtain. The "interstice" is also a cipher for the borders that inhabitants of Israel and the Occupied Territories negotiate when travelling between two countries located within the same geographical space. Albeit in describing the limitations of international law, the same author, as scholar, has commented upon the illegality of the West Bank Barrier, a wall and fence which separates and facilitates the Israeli colonisation of Palestinian land (Miéville 2005:297–298). Time is long overdue for its dismantlement. The future can lie in building one truly inclusive state with equal rights for Jews and Arabs, making compulsory a fully integrated educational system for prospective generations to learn a shared and very painful history together.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusions of the Study

ولأنه الثار ما بيموت بينام على قولة إمي ...

> And because blood vengeance never dies, but, as my mother says, only sleeps ...[1]
>
> Munā Shaykh al-Jabal

⁘

10.1 The Nature of Blood Vengeance and Exchange

Blood vengeance is an ancient institution that seeks to resolve conflict, either by acting as a deterrent, affording blood-wit as compensation, or encouraging the victim's kin to retaliate against the crime of murder. Blood vengeance poetry can therefore act as a warning, as in the examples of some Umayyad lampoons (*Ḥ*631, *Ḥ*632 and *Ḥ*633), or as direct incitement to vengeance, which is the main concern of this research. The evolution of chapters has demonstrated that far from being confined to the Jahiliyya, the paradigm persists to the present, and that incitement and repetitive messaging exacerbate this phenomenon. Fundamentally, its design is flawed and unresolvable because it perpetuates cycles of killing. In part, this is because any system of violent retribution is difficult to reconcile between different temperaments; while the dove might find it preventive, the hawk will be drawn to its invocation such that accidents can happen through haste. By way of a couple of twenty-first-century examples: (1) those who are in favour of nuclear proliferation propose that fear of reprisal means that weapons can act as a deterrent; whereas, (2) the United States anti-gun lobby argues that a weaponised society increases the likelihood of a resort to arms. As a system of justice, blood vengeance is also limited because the applicability of a blood-wit depends upon the degree of injury to honour, meaning that a reparation payment alone may not satisfy a great

1 See *al-Hayba: Jabal* (Series 5) (2021), Episode 12, (12.16 mins). Munā, Jabal's sister, relays this to an outsider, when explaining the concept of blood vengeance and her own family's tragic circumstances.

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insult. Even if a pragmatic individual prefers to receive financial compensation, rather than to engage in a deadly settlement, should a blood-wit insufficiently expunge a slight, this can result in lingering resentment and the future prospect of further reprisal. After its inception, Islam recognised the problem and attempted to eradicate the practice of blood vengeance altogether, by prohibiting homicide and proactively encouraging use of the blood-wit, in lieu. However, the obligation that is jihad ("striving") came to express something more militant and culturally ingrained, that is *qitāl*, ("fighting") and *qiṣāṣ* ("fair retribution").

This study has formed a comparative study of verse, demonstrating thematic recurrence: (1) in the early Islamic period, when blood vengeance featured in sectarian conflicts and anti-establishment revolts against tyranny; (2) during the Abbasid period, when revenge was transnational and the Caliph confronted a foreign enemy across the borders of an expanding empire; and (3) in the centuries thereafter, when retaliation persisted either where state justice was unable to resolve local grievances or in response to colonisation by a foreign power. The analysis has not suggested that there is moral equivalence between Jahili blood vengeance, Islamic jihad, wider war, or resistance against violent oppression. Rather, it has argued that blood vengeance can escalate beyond feud should reprisal result in counter-reprisal, and that vengeance can be redefined as divine retaliation, or any group defence of the communal interest against an external aggressor. Indeed, most justice systems find ways of prohibiting homicide as socially disruptive, while permitting the same when it serves as a sacrifice for the common benefit. Perhaps violence is so fundamental to our evolution as a species that it seems to be biologically ingrained (Kristó-Nagy and Gleave 2015:3–6). Even among other primates, there is evidence to suggest that it is an innate response to threat, meaning that a very primal imperative underwrites the foundation of cultural institutions such as blood vengeance. During 2021, in India, a troop of monkeys retaliated against a pack of dogs that killed one of their young, by purging at least one village of the offenders and throwing more than two-hundred and fifty canines to the ground from a great height (Berlin 2021)!

10.2 An Historical Precedent for Blood Vengeance

Chapters have tackled poems chronologically so as to present an historical evolution of the blood vengeance theme, but an alternative method for conceptualising the study follows the design of Fig. 1, in which case Kharijite poetry and modern jihadist poetry work together as anti-establishment poems. Because

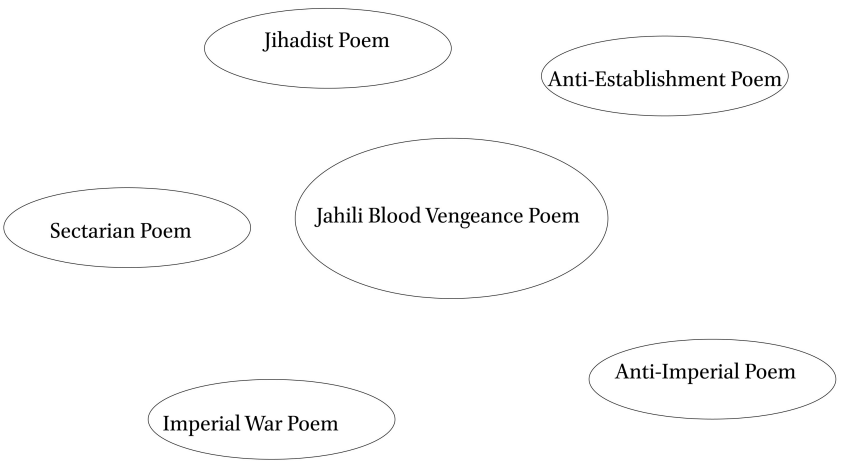

FIGURE 1 Thematic Subcategories of the "Blood Vengeance Poem"

some poems exhibit multiple characteristics, i.e. they are jihadist, sectarian, anti-establishment and their nature has evolved over time, it is difficult to subdivide this book according to this criterion alone.

If an act of blood vengeance connects the past with the present, through the powerful re-enactment of ritual, this process is also intimately associated with poetry that launches action, consolidates identity, and carves an ideology into cultural memory through the use of repetition. While there are different perspectives on the origins of blood vengeance, including gift exchange gone awry and sacrificial ritual, the central premise of this book is that politico-economic factors and scarcity drive feuds, whereas poetic motifs belonging to the paradigm serve as evidence of an early form of capitalism pitting patron against protégé, this evolving into a battle between imperialism and its resistance. As such, this is an historical materialist position. Chapter One, on the methodology, has established that an institutional structure commodifies and fetishises blood-letting as a measure of exchange in order to settle honour debts and promote survival. Here, healing one tribe's "wound" involves the infliction of another "wound" upon an enemy. Aside from the transference of physical and emotional pain from the injured to the injurer, these "wounds" are gateways for the transfusion of blood between the parties, which respectively allow for the restoration and depletion of each other's stock of wealth and honour. The exchange is most stark, in *Ḥ*37 (Section 1.5.2), which, like many examples in this study, is a *ḥamāsiyya*, i.e. a short poem that reflects "fighting spirit". Sub-

sequent chapters have demonstrated consistent use of the "blood" motif as a form of liquid currency, for the trading of insults.

Chapter Two has put forward a Jahili precedent for blood vengeance, through evaluation of this theme in wider oral literature, where the poetic journey begins. The analysis has argued that although folkloric narratives may at first appear to be intrinsically unreliable, they remain cultural artefacts reflecting the historical practice of blood vengeance and sacrificial rituals. According to Propp's (1984) definition of folklore, each variant of a narrative combines different proportions of realistic and fictional features designed to cater to audience tastes. Because of the early oral nature of Arabic literature, and the conspicuous absence of historical documentation until long after events took place, the study has treated both traditional folktales and historical *akhbār* as variants of folklore. As well as noting its historical dimension, Chapter Two has also examined the ritual nature of folklore, opining that it can variously act as re-enactment of myth, or even as a myth substitute. Moreover, it connects folklore into the same ritual complex as blood vengeance so that early rites bear some connexion with mythical thought and sacrificial rituals. While the motives driving vengeance and sacrificial rituals often conflate, and are frequently attributed to an adherence to myth, the main thrust of the argument is that competitive rivalry more likely drives violence and therefore that blood vengeance is a convenient mechanism for the release of anger, by ennobling blood lust. Chapter Two has not denied that some avengers are convinced they are engaged in a spiritual quest, and so it has explored linkages between the establishment of a creation myth and the practice of scapegoating. Existing scholarship has well documented the connexion between religious belief and sacrifice, but this analysis has some reservations about directly aligning the blood vengeance ritual with sacrificial rites, without offering additional perspectives on sacrifice. This is because a myth-oriented approach to blood vengeance suggests that the motive for killing stems from a spiritual requirement to atone, rather than a baser instinct such as uncontrolled rage, or jealous rivalry. It is noteworthy that Girard (2005:14) has spoken about the tendency of theorists of sacrificial rituals to attribute social violence to sacred obligations, rather than those basic desires that require violence so as to eliminate threats. Another reservation that this study has about drawing parallels between the sacrificial rite and blood vengeance is that the former typically requires that the victim be pure and blameless, so that it can purify (Smith 2005:361). By contrast, the blood vengeance ritual requires that the victim's blood belongs to a deemed criminal who has perpetrated murder. In the former, the individual is performing a personal act of atonement (Smith 2005:356). In the latter, the avenger demands that the killer atone by offering up his own blood in compensation

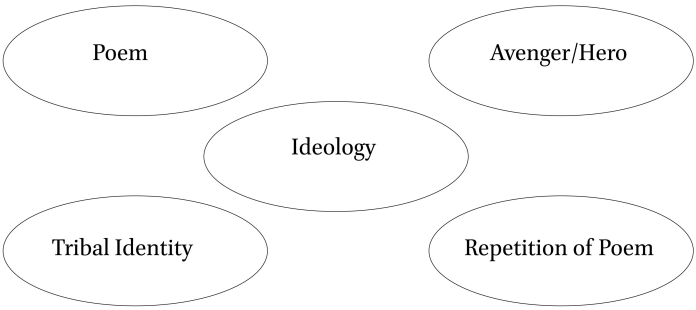

FIGURE 2 The Blood Vengeance Matrix

for that which he has earlier shed. If the blood vengeance ritual is purifying, then this is a special case in which the blood of a dishonourable person has the power to cleanse. Defenders of Smith's position might argue that this is because sacrificial blood performs two functions, not only cleansing but also revitalising the community so as to enable it to survive (Smith 2005:401, 427).

10.3 Blood Vengeance and Islam

Chapter Three has risked either implicating religion as the primary driver of conflict (without consideration of the overriding ideology of blood vengeance), or insufficiently addressing how early Islam attempted to eradicate the practice of blood vengeance through recourse to the blood-wit. Instead, the analysis has argued that early Islamic legislature absorbed blood vengeance into a new political terminology. Although some have argued that it is the pursuit of an ideal that drives conflict, this book's premise is that this cause and effect are bidirectional, so that violence has also sought legitimacy through doctrine. Therefore, the study has posited that ideology can enable and ennoble collectively sanctioned violence for its own sake. The hypothesis is predominantly concerned with the language ritual, stating that poetry communicates the blood vengeance ideology and therefore that the poet and the heroic avenger are agents of this message, but an alternative explanation of the relation between violence and a system of belief is from the perspective of heroism (Fig. 2).

In poetry, this is particularly evident in Kharijite verse as well as more recent jihadist poems. Therefore, what seems to separate an heroic act of violence from its antithesis is not the manner of the deed itself, but whether or not its consequence will aid the perpetrators' own community. The enactment of violence is a subjective category; that which is self-serving is routinely con-

demned, whereas that which gratifies the community is commended. Political machinations, in the Abbasid period, made it very clear that the state could monopolise violence for its own purposes, thereby consolidating the role of the authoritarian state. The purpose of Chapter Three has been to show how the pre-Islamic ethos of blood vengeance, which is intimately connected with heroism, has evolved across the early Islamic period. On the surface, the old code of blood vengeance seems to be a Jahili relic that was dismissed, in the Islamic Age, as a symptom of an excess that gratifies the self more than it does the community. Nevertheless, Islam was founded in a cultural context of conflict and acquired legitimacy, at least among its early converts, through its pragmatic relation to that context (Urvoy 2015:31). It was easier to redefine the institution of blood vengeance than it was to eradicate it, and so the motif of the "dominant tribe" was transformed into "God's tribe", "tribal retribution" into "God's retribution", while social "debts and obligations" (*dīn/dayn*) continued to underwrite the religion. Stating this does not suggest that the notion of "divine retribution" is unique to Islam. As Chapter Two has explained, the folklore of early communities demonstrates that "divine wrath" is often manifest in inclement weather patterns threatening the harvest. Moreover, Persian epic poetry from the *Shahnama* (composed at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries, but showcasing a pre-Islamic mythology) demonstrates a worldview where "God's vengeance" is necessary to restore Persian dominion over its empire (Ferdowsi 1992:50).

10.4 The Abbasid "Blood Vengeance Poem" and Its Legacy

Chapters Four and Five have explored poetry composed during the Golden Age of Arabic letters, with particular focus upon Abū Tammām, who was also the architect of the *Ḥamāsa* anthology. Abū Tammām developed the blood vengeance theme, in the Abbasid *qaṣīda*, the pinnacle of which has arguably been "The Amorium Poem", this demonstrating how the early "blood vengeance poem" was absorbed into panegyric and state war propaganda. It is noteworthy that Abū Tammām's poetry both drew upon and intensified the effect of *ḥamāsiyyāt* (poems of antagonistic zeal). The publication of the *Ḥamāsa* during his lifetime prompted some to speculate (although there is no consensus) about whether it was purely a work of scholarship, or not also a creative enterprise that promoted Abū Tammām's own poetry and political agenda at court (Klein-Franke 1972; Stetkevych 1991).

While this research is not a study in comparative literature, it has also demonstrated parallel development in the Arabic and Anglo-Saxon heroic tra-

ditions of the medieval period. This is because they exhibit similar features concerning feud, gift exchange, the uniting of a tribal and folkloric past, a growing courtly culture, and a preoccupation with empire building. The Crusades do not feature far beyond their Byzantine/Levantine context, but further research could explore more closely the violent encounter between European and Arab/Muslim cultural projects of empire.

10.5 Broadcast Media, the Poetic Imagination and Modernity

Chapter Six has constructed a bridge into modernity, through reference to Andalusian verse, eighteenth-century Iraqi poetry, nineteenth-century Nigerian jihadist verse, twentieth-century Egyptian neoclassical verse, and contemporary Arabic rap music. These poems are not all "blood vengeance poems", but they demonstrate that a protest poem can easily shift into violent speech, by inclusion of more motifs pertaining to direct action and/or revenge, or by existing in a volatile environment in which danger and weaponry are proximate. Protest poetry belongs to the same continuum that variously includes lamentation, praise of the hero, lampoon of the enemy, incitement to blood revenge, drinking scenes, dismemberment, decapitation, weaponry, wounds and defensive bombast. This approach has demonstrated that popular motifs, as these pertain to the poetry of conflict, were already well established during the classical period, and have not changed much. On the other hand, the twentieth and twenty-first-century media environments bear scant resemblance to news spreading in late antiquity and the medieval periods. While poetry has continued to thrive, it is not as prolific a propaganda tool as in earlier incarnations. Moreover, other forms of broadcast and soundbites have challenged its status as the official line of communication. Perhaps it is fair to say that poetry has always been a complementary tool in the periods under review, but the nature of cultural output is always in a state of flux. In the distant past, poetry served to accentuate oral narratives, some of these historical and others more popular folklore, whereas, in the current sphere, poetry accompanies political anthems, television and internet broadcasts, novels and screenplays. A catalogue of information accompanies fighting talk.

With this in mind, Chapter Seven has expanded upon how poetic incitement can provoke a war within a modern media environment, and has discussed a theoretical construct that demonstrates the conditions that need to be fulfilled for hate speech to result in violence. This is an alternative way of viewing the hypothesis, which is that poetic incitement is a ritual step that precedes blood-letting, after which the consolidation of tribal identity then fol-

lows. Chapter Seven has argued that poetry remains an effective media tool for inciting violence because it appeals to the emotions, while also maintaining that emotional manipulation can only occur according to a given set of circumstances. Chapter Eight has cited verse by Ghunaym and al-Naṣr as particularly eloquent examples of the revised "blood vengeance poem", but it has also quoted anonymous al-Qaʿida poetry because these selections broadly coincide with violent attacks that have been reported in the press. Even so, the premise that speech has the power to incite remains a controversial assertion. Critics of this position will counter that freedom of speech is a vital tool for the airing of disagreements, thereby enabling conflict to be resolved through verbal discourse. While this conclusion agrees that freedom of speech exposes social injustice, and may even afford emotional catharsis, it maintains that there remain forms of speech that are problematic. One has only to think of a pressurised system that responds favourably to the opening of a valve if this releases excess pressure into the external environment (free speech), but which can also explode should ambient hot air flow back in and put additional pressure on to the system (provocative speech). Thus, while there are economic and political conditions where limitless free speech is possible (the utopian just and equal society), there are also circumstances for which social tensions have reached such a critical impasse (the dystopian divided society) that certain forms of speech can exacerbate these same tensions. This argument posits that speech has the power to incite, subject to the fulfilment of certain economic and political conditions that exacerbate inequality and class division. A related theme is the sometimes gendered nature of incitement, in "blood vengeance poetry". Chapters Seven and Eight have picked up the role of a female poet, in shaming male heroes into action, although it has not been the book's intention to associate this phenomenon with modernity and feminism. In her study of classical female elegy, Hammond (2010) has demonstrated that female incitement is deeply ingrained, in the classical tradition, and is yet another dimension of the blood vengeance paradigm that can open up further lines of enquiry.

10.6 Prevention Strategies

Unlike previous chapters, Chapter Nine does not focus upon poetry. Instead, it foreshadows this conclusion and applies concepts presented, in earlier chapters, to a real case scenario, the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis for title and deed to a small portion of land, proposing how the analysis can be used practically for the formation of counter-narratives to the blood vengeance message.

10.7 Closure

The book has argued that blood vengeance, as a form of conflict, prevails in the Middle East as a means of restoring lost honour, and, as a poetic theme, serves as verbal incitement in regional campaigns of resistance. Although the prospect of retaliation can act as deterrent, it has posited that the form and the content of the "blood vengeance poem" is a living and breathing speech act, which, through repetition, perpetuates the ritual. While the journey has begun in late antiquity, chapters have aimed to show how the same tropes have been carried through in subsequent poems and periods. These terms are not interchangeable, but "blood vengeance poetry" may variously be called *ḥamāsa* poetry, battle poetry, Kharijite poetry, and jihadist poetry. Thematically, such verse also contains elements of praise, lampoon, bombast and lamentation, which in turn lend themselves to other poetic genres. The geographical range of examples has demonstrated how messaging can operate across the width and breadth of a region, also suggesting that the paradigm extends beyond borders. There are many other poems that fulfil the criteria of "blood vengeance poetry", or that incorporate the theme of blood vengeance within polythematic verse. There is no one point of origin, but a study of this nature cannot include every possible example without losing its way. No doubt, some critics will find the poems of ʿAntara b. Shaddād more vivid and vehement, while the War of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrāʾ serves as another Jahili epic cycle of conflict. If this analysis has prompted readers to think again about the poems with which they are more familiar as well as how they also fit into the paradigm then it will have attained a reach beyond the limitations of its scope.

By comparing and contrasting perspectives of blood vengeance as different facets of a prism, the study has explained how economic scarcity, political instability and moral uncertainty underpin environments where the hospitality contract unravels and feuds can thrive. The pattern re-emerges in locations where state control is weak, local governance is failing, and identity is in crisis. The practice of blood vengeance is not straightforward in its origin, nor can it be resolved as a means to an end. While revenge serves as an existential response to social malaise, it can also reflect a cynical nihilism that fanatics and even criminals have disguised as a religious compulsion. Moreover, although blood vengeance is a form of conflict resolution that re-appropriates honour through death, it seldom adequately restores honour to individuals, and is prone to cyclical flare-ups that can result in wider warfare. This is because determining parity in revenge can get more complicated when outsiders are involved, which throws equilibrium out of balance. Political, legal and anthropological frameworks for theorising retaliation have led to the consideration of other

arguments about why blood vengeance persists in modernity. The book opened by arguing that it is possible to prove that a poem contains incitement, through further examination of its content, its situational context and its effect. It closes by asserting that counteraction of the blood vengeance message requires the creation, or restoration of political and economic stability in regions where feuds persist as well as an educational method for challenging the pre-existing meaning of motifs that continue to be intimately associated with the exchange of honour and self-defence. Countering the blood vengeance message is the direction towards which this research can be most useful. The book does not offer a specific plan, nor has it examined the role of social media in proliferating the message, but it has shone light on a route for dismantling the practice, by presenting the institution of blood vengeance as a matrix constructed from motifs and rituals that are flexible and receptive to adaptation.

An example of a counter-ritual that reinterprets blood-letting (as concerns sacrifice and not vengeance) relates to the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson. This is already gaining ground, in Shiʿa communities, whereby an individual can ritually release his own blood to a local blood bank, by way of making a mourning gift. Citing this example, widely reported in various news outlets, does not negate the ritual significance of blood-letting during the month of Muharram, but rather suggests that since blood has measurable value this can be reinvested within the community and thus continue to honour the legacy of a noble ancestor, without resulting in personal injury. By extension, sensitively countering the blood vengeance message, in traditional multi-faith communities, could include similarly considered measures, without entirely eradicating the legacy of a tradition that places human dignity, if not human life, ahead of wealth creation. Successful measures can and should involve the repetitive use of counter-ritual, the reassignment of motifs, educational outreach, interdisciplinary cooperation, and social and economic initiatives. They should stress the importance of life preservation, irrespective of whether or not the individual is kin or an enemy, all the while ensuring the protection of vulnerable and impressionable populations. Since reconciliation restores the hospitality contract between disputing parties, poetry may have an important role to play, in restoring peace to feuding tribes. Through a better understanding of the blood vengeance dynamic, it may be possible to circumvent violence entirely, by confining conflict to ritual speech, poetic, or otherwise. In other words, to use a real-world example, when parties proactively commit to renouncing violence, they increasingly turn to the power of diplomatic speech within both state and transnational institutions. Reinterpreting ritual is one way of undermining a destructive pattern, but counteracting the blood vengeance message entirely is a far greater chal-

lenge, requiring an adequate restitutive justice framework to redistribute honour between warring parties. It is unlikely that human beings' propensity for revenge will ever be eradicated entirely, but a more achievable goal for conflict resolution is by rewarding negotiation, so that win-win becomes a more attractive resolution than a trade-off. Every war has ended in a negotiation, which begs the eternal question of why compromise is so hard to achieve from the outset. An important lesson can yet be drawn from the common sense of a *Mukhaḍram* poet, al-Nābigha al-Jaʿdī, who recognised the social cost of cycles of blood revenge and war, even as they showed little sign of abating in his own lifetime:[2]

Ta'abbada min Laylā rumāḥun fa-ʿādhibū

9 أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَـرْزَأُ الْحَـرْبُ أَهْلَهَـا وَعِنْدَ ذَوِي الْأَحْلَامِ مِنْهَا التَّجَارِبُ

10 لَهَا السَّادَةُ الْأَشْرَافُ تَأْتِي عَلَيْهِمُ فَتُهْلِكُهُـمْ وَالسَّابِحَـاتُ النَّجَائِـبُ

11 وَتَسْتَلِبُ الدُّهْمَ الَّتِي كَـانَ رَبُّهَـا ضَنِينًا بِهَا وَالْحَرْبُ فِيهَا الْحَرَائِـبُ

Do you not know what war robs its people of?
Men of forbearance have experience of this.
It overcomes and kills its noble leaders
and its galloping thoroughbreds.
It takes as plunder the black steeds prized so highly by their owner –
in war there are spoils.

Translation by Gruendler

2 A poem in the *ṭawīl* metre, rhyming in *-ā.ibū*, quoted in al-Ṣūlī (2015:60–61). Gruendler's translation is used with permission of New York University Press, from *The life and times of Abū Tammām*, Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī, 2015; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Appendix

***Tadhakkara Laylā ḥusna-hā wa-ṣafā'a-hā* (*Ḥ*37)**
The entire poem as it appears in the *Dīwān* of Qays b. al-Khaṭīm (1962:3–12).[1]
Metre: *al-ṭawīl*; rhyme: *hamziyya*, ending in -(*ā*)-*'ahā*

1	تَذَكَّـرَ لَيْلَـى حُسْنَهـا وَصَفاءَهـا	وَبانَـتْ فَأَمْسَـى مـا يَنَـالُ لِقاءَهـا
2	وَمِثْلِكِ قَدْ أَصْبَيْتُ، لَيْسَـتْ بِكَنَّـةٍ	وَلا جَـارةٍ، أَفضَـتْ إِلـيَّ حَياءَهـا
3	إِذا ما اصْطَبَحْتُ أَرْبَعًا خَـطَّ مِئْزَرِي	وَأَتْبَعْتُ دَلْوِي في السَّخَاءِ رِشَاءَها
4	ثَـأَرْتُ عَدِيًّا والخَطِيـمَ فلـم أُضِـعْ	ولاَيَـةَ أَشْيـاءٍ جُعِلْـتُ إِزَاءَهـا
5	ضَرَبْـتُ بِـذِي الزِّرَّيْـن رِبْقَـةَ مالـكٍ	فأُبْتُ بنَفْسٍ قـد أَصَبْتُ شِفَاءَها
6	وَسامَحنِي فيها ابـنُ عمـرِو بـنِ عَامِرٍ	خِـدَاشٌ فـأَدَّى نعْمَـةً وَأَفاءَهـا
7	طَعَنْـتُ ابـنَ عبـدِ القَيْسِ طعنـةَ ثائـرٍ	لهـا نَفَـذٌ لـولا الشعَـا عُ أَضَاءَهـا
8	مَلَكْـتُ بهـا كَفِّـي فأَنْهَـرْتُ فَتْقَهـا	يَـرَى قَائمًا مِـنْ خَلفِهـا مَـا وَرَاءَهـا
9	يَهُـونُ عَلَيَّ أن تَـرُدَّ جِرَاحُـهُ	عُيُونَ الأَواسِي إِذْ حَمِدْتُ بَلاءهـا
10	وكنـتُ ٱمْرَءًا لا أَسْمـعُ الدَّهْـرَ سُبَّـةً	أُسَـبُّ بهـا إِلاَّ كَشَفْـتُ غِطَاءَهـا
11	وإِنِّيَ فـي الحـرب الضَّـرُوسِ مُوَكَّـلٌ	بِإِقْـدامِ نَفْـسٍ مـا أُرِيـدُ بَقاءَهـا
12	إِذا سَقِمَـتْ نَفْسـي إِلـى ذِي عَـدَاوةٍ	فإِنِّـي بِنَصْـلِ السَّيْـفِ بـا غٍ دَواءَهـا
13	متى يأْتِ هذا الموتُ لا تَبْقَ حاجـةٌ	لنفسِـيَ إِلا قـد قضَيْـتُ قضاءَهـا
14	وكانت شَجًا في الحَلْقِ ما لم أَبُؤْ بها	فأُبْـتُ بنفسٍ قـد أصبـتُ دواءَهـا
15	وقـد جَرَّبَـتْ منِّـي لَـدَى كُـلِّ مَأْقِـطٍ	دُحَيٌّ إِذا ما الحَرْبُ أَلْقَتْ رِدَاءَهـا
16	وإِنَّـا إِذا مـا مُمْتَـرُو الحَـربِ بَلَّحُـوا	نُقيـم بأَسْبَـادِ العَرِيـنِ لِوَاءَهـا
17	ونُلْقِحُهـا مَبْسُـورةً ضَرْزَنِيَّـةً	بأَسْيافِنـا حتَّـى نُـذِلَّ إِبَاءَهـا
18	وإِنـاّ مَنَعْنَـا فـي بُعَـاثٍ نساءنـا	ومـا مَنَعَـتْ مِ الْمُخْزِيـاتِ نِساءَهـا

1 Verses 3, 4 and 6 differ slightly in vocabulary from verses 7, 9 and 4, in *Ḥ*37.

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1 He remembered Laylā, her beauty and her purity // she went away and he was no longer able to meet her
2 How many like you have I already captivated, neither daughter/sister-in-law // nor spouse, who revealed to me her modesty
3 Whenever I have drunk four morning draughts, my waist-wrapper traces a line [upon the ground] // and I have made to follow my bucket of generosity, its rope
4 I avenged ʿAdī and Khaṭīm and so I was not made to forfeit // the noble ancestors' legacy, I was made its vigorous executor
5 I struck the noose of Mālik's [neck] with both edges of the sword // therefore I returned with a soul whose cure I have obtained
6 A son of ʿAmr b. ʿĀmir helped me with it // Khidāsh, he carried out a favour and produced its boon
7 I pierced a son of ʿAbd al-Qays with an avenger's thrust // were it not for the blood spatter then the wound's passage would have shone with light [rays of the sun]
8 I firmly kneaded the wound with my spear, and made its cleavage flow like a river [with blood] // he who is standing sees through it to what is behind
9 It matters little to me if its wounds repel // the nurses' eyes, since I approved its affliction
10 I was a man who would never hear a disgrace // by which I am slandered, without lifting the lid on it
11 For in the devouring war I am charged // with the fearlessness of a soul, which I do not wish to remain
12 Should my soul sicken because of a hostile man // then verily I, by the blade of the sword, am seeker of its remedy
13 When death comes, there will be no more need // left for me that I have not fulfilled
14 Whatever [obligation] I had not avenged[2] was a lump at the back of the throat // therefore I returned with a soul, whose cure I have obtained
15 Duḥayy[3] have already been put to the test by me upon every battle-field // whenever war cast off its outer garment
16 Whenever the generators of war have wearied, then we // erect its standard, by the wolves[4] of the thicket

2 Notes, in Qays' *Dīwān*, indicate that *mā lam-abu' bi-hā* can be alternatively read as *mā lam-athar bi-hā*. This is probably a typographical error for *mā lam ath'ar bi-hā*.
3 The name of a tribe belonging to the enemy.
4 According to Qays b. al-Khaṭīm's (1962 [d. 620]) *Dīwān*, *asbādi-l-ʿarīn* can also mean "lions".

17 We fecundate it, when it is reluctant and disobedient, with our swords
until we abase its disdain[5]

18 Verily, we defended our women, on the Day of Buʿāth, and they did not
defend their women from disgraceful acts

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5 According to al-Asad's interpretive notes, of Qays' *Dīwān*, *ḍarzaniyya* means *ʿāṣiya*, i.e. disobedient (but this is likely to be speculative because the word is uncommon), while *mabsūra* can be explained lexically by the following expression that is used to describe the action of: "impregnation of the female camel by the male, when it imposes himself upon her when she does not desire him":

يقال: بَسَر الفحلُ الناقةَ، إذا ضربها غير ضَبَعةٍ – على غير ضبعة: أي على غير شهوة منها للفحل.

In this translation, of verse 17, the pronoun, *hā*, refers to "war", whereas in the subsequent verse, the same pronoun, *hā*, refers to the "enemy tribe". This is because "war" is also the subject of the preceding verse 16, and verse 17 is somewhat consistent with Zuhayr's description of war, in his *Muʿallaqa* (see Section 1.4.6). However, if the pronoun instead refers to the "enemy tribe", then the meaning of verse 17 foreshadows the implication of rape, in verse 18.

Glossary

ʿāda custom

adab good manners, erudition, belles-lettres, literature

akhbār reports about an event that are widely considered to be historical (s. *khabar*)

Ahl al-Bayt the kin of the Prophet Muḥammad; for the Shiʿa, this referring to his direct blood-line; i.e. his daughter, Fāṭima, his cousin and son-in law, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and his grand-sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn

anṣāb sacred stones integral to the Jahili system of worship (s. *nuṣb*, or *nuṣub*)

ʿaql see also *diya*; blood-wit; also "reason" and "intellect"

al-ʿaṣabiyya tribal chauvinism, or cohesive force

aṣḥāb al-mulḥamāt composers of poetry that is well-woven with warp and woof

al-ʿashwāʾiyyāt unplanned urban areas

aṭlāl the traces and remnants left at an abandoned campsite and usually belonging to the departed beloved

Ayyām al-ʿArab literally, the [Battle]Days of the Arabs; a prosimetrum account of tribal battles from the Jahiliyya, including the War of al-Basūs

āyāt signs, or Qurʾanic verses (s. *āya*)

bāb a chapter in an anthology (pl. *abwāb*); also a door, or gateway

badīʿ innovative rhetorical devices popularised by Abbasid poets that include the use of complex metaphors and literary conceits

bayt a tent; a house (pl. *buyūt*); a verse, or a line of poetry (pl. *abyāt*)

dār abode

dayn a debt

dīn religion, a religious obligation, a social duty, custom, obedience, reckoning

dīwān a poetry collection

al-diya the blood-wit; derives from the word root *wāw-dāl*-yāʾ, also from which the verbs *wadā* (first form *faʿala*) means "he paid blood money" and *awdā* (fourth form *afʿala*) means "he killed"

al-dhaḥl see *al-thaʾr*

duʿāʾ al-maẓlūm the call of the oppressed (a prayer of supplication)

faṣd blood-letting (particularly in the context of a genre of poetry)

fakhr vaunting, or boasting poetry

ghāniya a beautiful girl, or woman

gharaḍ genre (in poetry)

ghazw raiding

hadith a narrative about the sayings and the practices of the Prophet Muḥammad

ḥamāsa zeal, fighting spirit; a thematically arranged poetic anthology of which *ḥamāsa* often forms the opening chapter, as in Abū Tammām's trend-setting *Ḥamāsa* (pl. *ḥamāsāt*)

ḥamāsiyya a short poem extolling fighting spirit (pl. *ḥamāsiyyāt*)

ḥāmil al-dam the bearer of the blood, in vengeance

ḥaqq one's due, one's right, a claim, truth (pl. *ḥuqūq*)

ḥasab honour that is based upon noble deeds

hijā' lampoon

ḥisāb reckoning

intifāḍa a popular uprising (pl. *intifāḍāt*)

isnād a narrative chain of transmission (pl. *asānīd*)

'itāb censure that is spoken in verse, usually at kin

Jahiliyya/Jahili pre-Islamic Arabia/anything pertaining to this era. Sometimes called the Age of Ignorance. This is a literal translation, but the indictment is misleading because Arabs consider the poetry of this period to be exemplary. The term is rooted in the word *jahl*, meaning "ignorance", although the derivative refers to a period when pagan deities were worshipped because of an absence of knowledge about Islam

jāriya a female servant, or slave that occasionally can also infer a concubine

jazā' requital, or recompense

jihad (*jihād*) striving, as an act of faith that is commonly associated with violent struggle

jinn genies, or genii (s. *jinnī*, *jinniyya*)

Kanun Albanian tribal law

khamr wine

Kharijite a "Dissenter", a member of a breakaway group in the First Muslim Civil War (also *khārijī*, pl. *khawārij*)

kharm (in poetry) the suppression of a short syllable at the beginning of a verse

kunya a teknonym, or a nickname, or a *nom de guerre*

laban milk, or other milk-related products

lex talionis the law of exact retaliation; let the punishment (and the compensation) match the crime; "an eye for an eye" is an extreme form of this principle

madhamma censure

māl wealth, i.e. land use for cultivation, livestock, capital, or money (pl. *amwāl*)

madīḥ praise, panegyric

marāthī lamentations (also *rithā'*)

muʿallaqa one of seven (or ten) exemplary pre-Islamic poems that possibly hung in display

mujūn rude, or obscene poetry

Mukhaḍram a person whose life-span bridges the Jahiliyya and early Islamic period

al-mulaḥ witticism

al-muqāwama bi-l-kalām resistance by speech

murū'a manly virtues (also *muruwwa*)

muṭābaqa the use of antithesis, in a line of verse (also *ṭibāq*)

muwashshaḥāt strophic poems (s. *muwashshaḥa*)

nabaṭī (poetry) Bedouin colloquial poetry pertaining to the Arabian peninsula

al-nafs the soul; but also "blood" in which the soul resides

nakhwa pride, especially *al-nakhwa-al-jāhiliyya*, i.e. haughty Jahili pride

nasab lineage, descent, genealogy, pedigree; ancestral honour (pl. *ansāb*)

nashīd a sung military anthem (pl. *anāshīd*), in this context

nasīb amatory longing (in poetry)

nauriyyāt floral poems (s. *nauriyya*)

al-nuʾās lethargy

qaḍīb a stick, a percussion stick, a rod, a branch, a slender sword, a slender arrow

qaṣīda an Arabic poem of some length in one of the traditional metres, in mono-rhyme

qiṣāṣ (fair) retribution, retaliation

qiṣṣa a story, or tale (pl. *qiṣaṣ*)

qiṭaʿ short poems in mono-rhyme (s. *qiṭʿa*), also *muqaṭṭaʿāt*

qitāl fighting

al-raʾsmāliyya see also *māl*; the economic system that is "capitalism"

raḥīl the departure and desert journey section of the *qaṣīda*

rithāʾ al-mudun lamentation for lost cities

al-sayr journeying

shahīd martyr (pl. *shuhadāʾ*), also one who bears witness

Shārī another term for Kharijite, i.e. one who has sold his life to God

shayṭān devil, or demon, or evil one (pl. *shayāṭīn*)

shirāʾ barter, buying and selling

ṣifāt descriptions (in poetry)

sīra an heroic epic tale, biography (pl. *siyar*),

al-Sīra the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (the *Sīra*)

siyar shaʿbiyya folktales, folklore (also *sīrāt shaʿbiyya*)

sura Qurʾanic chapter (*sūra*, pl. *suwar*)

ṭāʿa obedience

taḥmīs the process of filling someone with *ḥamāsa*

taḥrīḍ incitement (in poetry)

tajnīs a word pun, for which similar words convey a different meaning (also *jinās*)

al-thaʾr also (*al-witr*/*watr*, *al-tira*, and *al-dhaḥl*) the act of blood vengeance, that is also pronounced *al-tār* in some dialects

al-tira see *al-thaʾr*. See also *al-witr*/*watr* from which it derives, from the same root *w-t-r*.

ʿudwān like *ẓulm*, i.e. injustice, or tyranny, or transgressive behaviour

al-uṣūl roots, origins; codes of conduct (in the television series *al-Hayba*)

walī al-dam the executor of the blood in vengeance, the avenger

al-witr/*watr* see *al-thaʾr* and also *al-tira*

ẓulm injustice, or tyranny, or transgressive behaviour

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Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
16–17, 30–31	*Ḥ*53	Kabsha b. Maʿdī Karib	*mīmiyya -mī*	*al-ṭawīl*	وَأَرْسَلَ عَبْدُالله إِذْ حَانَ يَوْمُهُ
18	*Ḥ*249	al-Akhnas b. Shihāb al-Taghlibī	*bāʾiyya -bū*	*al-ṭawīl*	لِكلِّ أُناسٍ مِنْ مَعَدٍّ عِمَارَةٍ
19–20, 23*n*30	*Ḥ*15	Bashāma b. Ḥazn	*nūniyya -nā*	*al-basīṭ*	إِنّا بَنِي نَهْشَلٍ لا نَدَّعِي لأَبٍ
22–23	*Ḥ*161	ʿAmr b. Kulthūm	*lāmiyya -lī*	*al-ṭawīl*	ثَلاَثَةُ أَثْلاثٍ: فَأَثْمَانُ خَيْلِنا
23–24	*Ḥ*131	al-Baʿīth b. Ḥurayth	*bāʾiyya -bī*	*al-ṭawīl*	وَلَسْتُ وإِنْ قُرِّبْتُ يومًا بِبائِعٍ
27	*Ḥ*2	*al-Find al-Zimmānī	*nūniyya -(ā)-nū*	*al-hajaz*	وَلَمْ يَبْقَ سِوَى العُدْوَانِ
28	*Ḥ*52	Unattributed	*mīmiyya -mā*	*al-ṭawīl*	فَلَوْ أَنَّ حَيًّا يَقْبَلُ المَالَ فِدْيَةً
30	*Ḥ*273	Taʾabbaṭa Sharran	*lāmiyya -lū*	*al-madīd*	تَضْحَكُ الضَّبْعُ لِقَتْلَى هُذَيْلٍ

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
31–32	*Muʿallaqa* of Zuhayr	Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā	*mīmiyya -mī*	*al-ṭawīl*	أَمِن أُمِّ أَوفَى دِمْنَةٌ، لَم تَكَلَّمِ
34–35	*Ariqtu wa-mā hādhā-l-suhādu-l-muʾariqqū*	al-Aʿshā	*qāfiyya -qū*	*al-ṭawīl*	أَرِقْتُ وَمَا هَذَا السُّهَادُ الْمُؤَرِّقُ
37	*Khalīlayya mā fī-l-yawmi maṣḥan li-shāribin*	Imruʾ al-Qays	*bāʾiyya -bū*	*al-ṭawīl*	خَلِيلَيَّ ما في اليومِ مَصْحًى لشارِبِ
37–38, 45	*Muʿallaqa* of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm	ʿAmr b. Kulthūm	*nūniyya -nā*	*al-wāfir*	أَلاَ هُبِّي بِصَحْنِكِ فَاصْبَحِينَا
39–40	*Li-mani-l-diyāru ghashītu-hā bi-Suḥāmī*	Imruʾ al-Qays	*mīmiyya -(ā)-mī*	*al-kāmil*	لِمَنِ الدِّيارُ غَشِيتُها بِسُحامِ
41–42	*ʿAfā-l-muṣallā*	Abū Nuwās	*bāʾiyya -bū*	*al-munsariḥ*	عفا المُصلَّى، وأقوتِ الكُثُبُ
39–41, 42–44	*Ḥ176*	Bāʿith b. Ṣuraym	*lāmiyya -lihā*	*al-kāmil*	سَائِلْ أُسَيِّدَ هلْ ثَأَرْتُ بوائِلٍ
44	*Yā ayyuhā-l-māʾiḥu dalwī dūnakā*	The Banī Usayyid	*kāfiyya -kā*	*al-rajaz*	يَا أَيُّهَا المَائِحُ دَلْوِي دُونَكَا
46*n*87	*Wa-sāʾilatin bi-Thaʿlabata-bni Sayrin*	al-Mufaḍḍal al-Nukrī	*qāfiyya -qū*	*al-wāfir*	وسائلة بثعلبة بن سيْرٍ

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
46–47, 182, 186–187, 188–189, 192–193	*Sayfiyya: ʿAlā qadri ahli-l-ʿazmi taʾtī-l-ʿazāʾimū*	al-Mutannabī	*mīmiyya -mū*	*al-ṭawīl*	على قَدرِ أَهلِ العَزمِ تَأتي العَزائِمُ
48	*Ḥayyi-l-ḥumūla bi-jānibi-l-ʿazlī*	Imruʾ al-Qays	*lāmiyya -lī*	*al-kāmil*	حَيِّ الحُمولَ بِجانِبِ العَزلِ
20–21, 48–50	*Ḥ37*	Qays b. al-Khaṭīm	*hamziyya -(ā)-ʾahā*	*al-ṭawīl*	طَعَنْتُ ابْنَ عبدِ القَيْسِ طَعْنَةَ ثائِرٍ
62	al-Yamāma's Incitement 1	al-Yamāma	*mīmiyya*		مات أبي في طعن القنا
62–63	al-Yamāma's Incitement 2	al-Yamāma	*mīmiyya*		أنا لا أصالح حتى يعيش أبونا
64–65	*Ḥ315*	al-Muhalhil	*sīniyya -sū*	*al-kāmil*	نُبِّئْتُ أَنَّ النَّارَ بَعْدَكَ أُوقِدَتْ
65–66	*al-Muwaththibāt*	al-Basūs	*tāʾiyya -(ā)-tī*	*al-ṭawīl*	أَيَا سَعْدُ لاَ تُغْرَرْ بِنَفْسِكَ وَاحْتَرِزْ
69	*Ḥ168*	Saʿd b. Mālik	*ḥāʾiyya -(ā)-ḥū*	*al-kāmil*	الموت غايَتُنَا فلا
69–70	al-Ḥārith's *lāmiyya*	al-Ḥārith b. ʿUbād	*lāmiyya -(ā)-lī*	*al-khafīf*	قلْ لأم الأغرِ تبكي بُجَيرا
70	Lament for Gharthān	Umm al-Agharr	*lāmiyya -lū*	*al-wāfir*	فقلْ لنويرةٍ وكليبَ مهلًا

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
85–86	*Ḥ*169	Jaḥdar b. Ḍubayʿa	*tāʾiyya -tī*	*al-rajaz*	قَدْ يَتِمَتْ بِنْتِي وَآمَتْ كَنَّتِي
96–97	*Bānat Suʿād*	Kaʿb b. Zuhayr	*lāmiyya -lū*	*al-basīṭ*	بانَتْ سُعادُ فَقَلْبي اليومَ مَتْبولُ
98–99	*Fa-awʿadanī Kaʿbun thalāthan aʿuddu-hā*	ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb	*bāʾiyya -bū*	*al-ṭawīl*	فأوعَدَنِي كعبٌ ثلاثًا أَعُدُّها
101–102	*Wa-lam ara mahran sāqa-hū dhū samāḥatin*	Ibn Abī Mayyās al-Murādī	*mīmiyya -mī*	*al-ṭawīl*	ولم أرَ مَهْرًا ساقَهُ ذو سَماحةٍ
105–107, 379	*Ḥ*16	*al-Samawʾal b. ʿĀdiyāʾ al-Yahūdī	*lāmiyya -lū*	*al-ṭawīl*	لنا جَبَلٌ يَحْتَلُّهُ مَنْ نُجِيرُهُ
108–109	*Ḥ*339	Kaʿb b. Zuhayr	*hāʾiyya -ū-hā*	*al-wāfir*	لقَدْ وَلَّى أَلِيَّتَهُ جُوَيٌّ
110–111	*Ṣabaḥnā-hum bi-alfin min Sulaymin*	Bujayr b. Zuhayr	*fāʾiyya -(ā)-fī*	*al-wāfir*	صَبَحْناهُمْ بأَلْفٍ من سُلَيْمٍ
111–112	*Ḥ*347	Kaʿb b. Zuhayr	*yāʾiyya -(ay)-yī*	*al-wāfir*	لَعَمْرُكَ ما خَشِيتُ على أُبَيٍّ
113, 115*n*56	*Ḥ*22	*al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās al-Sulamī	*mīmiyya -(ā)-mī*	*al-wāfir*	شَهِدْنَ مع النَّبِيِّ مُسَوَّماتٍ

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
113–114	*A-Kulaybu mā la-ka kulla yawmin ẓāliman*	al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās al-Sulamī	*nūniyya -nū*	*al-kāmil*	أَكليبُ ما لكَ كلَّ يوم ظَالمًا
114	On Jaḥḥāf's	al-Akhṭal	*lāmiyya -lū*	*al-ṭawīl*	لَقَدْ أَوْقَعَ الجَحَّافُ بالبشْرِ وَقْعة
116–117	*Ḥ306*	*Ḥassān b. Thābit	*bāʾiyya -(ū)-bī*	*al-kāmil*	لا يَبْعَدَنَّ رَبِيعَةُ ٱبْنُ مُكَدَّمٍ
118–119	*Man mublighun Kaʿban fa-hal la-ka fī-l-latī*	Bujayr b. Zuhayr	*mīmiyya -mū*	*al-ṭawīl*	مَنْ مُبْلِغٌ كَعْبًا فَهَلْ لَكَ في الّتي
121–122	*Humū naṣabū-l-ajsāda li-l-nabli wa-l-qanā*	Farwa b. Nawfal al-Ḥarūrī	*mīmiyya -mu-hā*	*al-ṭawīl*	هُمُ نصبوا الأجساد للنَّبْل والقنا
122–124	*Ḥ14*	Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa	*ʿayniyya -(ā)-ʿī*	*al-wāfir*	أقولُ لها وقد طَارَتْ شَعاعًا
125–126	*Ḥ21*	Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa	*mīmiyya -(ā)-mī*	*al-kāmil*	لا يَرْكَنَنْ أحدٌ إلى الإحْجامِ
126*n*90	*Wa-murdin ʿalā jurdin shahidtu ṭirāda-hā*	ʿAmr b. Maʿdīkarib	*tāʾiyya -tī*	*al-ṭawīl*	ظَلِلْتُ كَأَنّي لِلرِّمَاحِ دَرِيْئَةً
126–127	*Uʿādī ṣarfa dahrin lā yuʿādā*	ʿAntara b. Shaddād	*dāliyya -(ā)-dā*	*al-wāfir*	أُعادي صَرفَ دَهرٍ لا يُعادى

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
126–127	*Bi-al-ʿufri dārun min jamīlata hayyajat*	al-Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī	*bāʾiyya -bī*	*al-ṭawīl*	بِالعُفْرِ دارٌ مِن جَميلَةَ هَيَّجَت
128	*Ḥ*231	Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa	*bāʾiyya -bā*	*al-ṭawīl*	أَلا أَيُّها الباغِي البِرازَ تَقَرَّبَنْ
130	BOOK XII, Paradise Lost	John Milton	*blank verse*	*iambic pentameter*	Long time in peace by families and tribes
130–131	*Yā ḥafṣa innī ʿadānī ʿan-kumu-l-safarū*	Kaʿb al-Ashqarī	*rāʾiyya -rū*	*al-basīṭ*	يا حفْصَ إِني عَداني عنكم السفرُ
131–133	*Ḥ*57	al-Ṭirimmāḥ b. Ḥakīm	*lāmiyya -lī*	*al-ṭawīl*	لقد زادني حُبًّا لِنَفْسِي أَنَّنِي
134–135	*Ḥ*803	al-Kumayt b. Zayd	*lāmiyya -la-hā*	*al-ṭawīl*	فما غَابَ عَنْ حِلْمٍ ولا شَهِدَ الخَنَا
136–138	*Ḥ*631	Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal al-Kalbī	*rāʾiyya -rā*	*al-ṭawīl*	ضَرَبْنا لكُمْ عنْ مِنْبَرِ المُلْكِ أَهْلَهُ
139–140	*Humū qatalū bi-Rāhiṭa jadda Qaysin*	Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal	*bāʾiyya -(ā)-bī*	*al-wāfir*	هُمُ قَتلُوا براهِطَ جدَّ قَيْس
140–141	*Ḥ*632	Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal al-Kalbī	*lāmiyya -lū*	*al-ṭawīl*	أَعَبْدَ المَليكِ ما شكرتَ بلاءَنا

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
142–143	*Ḥ633*	Jawwās b. al-Qaʿṭal al-Kalbī	*hāʾiyya -(ā)-hā*	*al-kāmil*	صَبَغَتْ أُمَيَّةُ بالدِّماءِ رِماحَنا
150–158, 190–192, 198–201, 204–206, 212–214, 220, 226–228, 230, 233–234, 236–239	The Amorium Poem	Abū Tammām	*bāʾiyya -bī*	*al-basīṭ*	السَّيْفُ أَصْدَقُ أَنْبَاءً مِنَ الكُتُبِ
161	*Yā maʿshara-l-murdi innī nāṣihun la-kumū*	Khālid al-Kātib	*bāʾiyya -bī*	*al-basīṭ*	يا معشَرَ المُرْدِ إِنِّي ناصِحٌ لكُمُ
162–170, 191, 201–204, 207–208, 214, 220–225, 229, 235, 239–241	The al-Afshīn Poem	Abū Tammām	*rāʾiyya -(ā)-rī*	*al-kāmil*	الحَقُّ أَبْلَجُ وَالسُّيوفُ عَوارِ
170–171	*Ālat umūru-l-shirki sharra maʾālī*	Abū Tammām	*lāmiyya -(ā)-lī*	*al-kāmil*	آلَتْ أُمُورُ الشِرْكِ شَرَّ مَآلِ
172–176, 191–193, 196–197, 208–209, 219–220, 224, 226–227, 230–231, 233, 241–242	*al-Raʾyu qabla shajāʿati-l-shujʿānī*	al-Mutannabī	*nūniyya -(ā)-nī*	*al-kāmil*	الرَّأْيُ قَبْلَ شَجَاعَةِ الشُّجْعَانِ
181, 187–188	*Lā anta anta wa-lā-l-diyāru diyārū*	Abū Tammām	*rāʾiyya -(ā)-rū*	*al-kāmil*	لا أَنتَ أَنتَ وَلا الدِيارُ دِيارُ
183	*Ghadā-l-mulku maʿmūra-l-ḥimā wa-l-manāzilī*	Abū Tammām	*lāmiyya -lī*	*al-ṭawīl*	غَدا المُلكُ مَعمورَ الحِمى والمَنازِلِ

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
184	*Ayyuhā-l-muntābu ʿan ghufurih*	Abū Nuwās	*rāʾiyya -rih*	*al-madīd*	أيها المُنْتابُ عَنْ غُفُرِهْ
184	*Kilīnī li-hammin yā Umaymata nāṣibī*	al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī	*bāʾiyya -bī*	*al-ṭawīl*	كِلِينِي لِهَمٍّ يَا أُمَيْمَةَ نَاصِبِ
184, 185*n*60	*In tarā raʾsiya fī-hī qazaʿun*	al-Afwah al-Awdī	*rāʾiyya -(ā)-r*	*al-ramal*	إن تَرى رَأسِيَ فيهِ قَزَعٌ
186, 205*n*37, 231–232	*Beowulf*	The Beowulf poet			What's said and what's done
188	*Araʾayta ayyu sawālifin wa-khudūdī*	Abū Tammām	*dāliyya -dī*	*al-kāmil*	أَرَأَيتَ أَيَّ سَوالِفٍ وَخُدودِ
210*n*50	*Ghayrī bi-akthari hādhā-l-nāsi yankhadiʿū*	al-Mutannabī	*ʿayniyya -ʿū*	*al-basīṭ*	غَيْرِي بِأَكْثَرِ هذَا النَّاسِ يَنْخَدِعُ
211	*Ḥ*272	Durayd b. al-Ṣimma	*rāʾiyya -rī*	*al-ṭawīl*	فَإِنّا لَلَحْمُ السَّيْفِ غَيْرَ نَكِيرَةٍ
183, 211–212	*Ujrirtu ḥabla khalīʿin fī-l-ṣibā ghazilī*	Muslim b. al-Walīd	*lāmiyya -lī*	*al-basīṭ*	أجرِرتُ حَبلَ خَليعٍ في الصِبا غَزِلِ
219*n*75	*Muʿallaqa* of Imruʾ al-Qays	Imruʾ al-Qays	*lāmiyya -lī*	*al-ṭawīl*	مِسَحِّ، إذا ما السّابِحاتُ علَى الوَنَى،
246–251	*Alā qul li-Ṣinhājatin ajmaʿīn*	Abū Isḥāq of Elvira	*nūniyya -nūn al-sākina*	*al-mutaqārib*	أَلا قُلْ لِصنْهاجَةٍ أَجْمَعِينْ

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Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
253–254	*Li-kulli shay'in idhā mā tamma nuqṣānū*	al-Rundī	*nūniyya* *-(ā)-nū*	*al-basīṭ*	لِكُلِّ شَيءٍ إذا ما تَمَّ نُقْصَانُ
255–257, 347	The Basra Elegy	Ibn al-Rūmī	*mīmiyya* *-(ā)-mī*	*al-khafīf*	ذَادَ عن مُقْلِتِي لذيذَ المنامِ
257–261	*Salāmun karīmun dā'imun mutajaddidun*	Anonymous	*tā'iyya* *-tī*	*al-ṭawīl*	سَلامٌ كَريمٌ دائمٌ مُتَجَدِّدٌ
265–266	*Sa-abkīka bi-l-bīdi-l-Yamāniyyati-l-latī*	Kāẓim al-Azrī	*dāliyya* *-dī*	*al-ṭawīl*	سأبكيكَ بالبيضِ اليَمانيةِ التي
268	*Wa-warā'a tha'ri-ka kullu rākibi himmatin*	Kāẓim al-Azrī	*dāliyya* *-dī*	*al-kāmil*	ووراءَ ثَأرِكَ كُلُّ راكِبِ هِمَّةٍ
269	*al-Qādiriyya*	Shehu ʿUthmān	*al-Qādirī*	*al-kāmil*	يَا رَبِّ عَالِمَ بَاطِنٍ كَالظَّاهِرِ
270	In Praise of Muḥammad Bello	Asmā'u dan Folio			He valiantly fought the Jihad
270–271	*Marthiya* Bello	Asmā'u dan Folio	*rā'iyya* *-rā' al-sākina*	*al-mutaqārib*	لجأت إلى الله ذي العرش ربي
271–272	*Shahīd al-ḥaqq*	Aḥmad Shawqī	*mīmiyya* *-(ā)-mā*	*al-wāfir*	إلامَ الخُلفُ بَينَكُمُ إلاما
272	*Rithā' al-khilāfa*	Aḥmad Shawqī	*ḥā'iyya* *-(ā)-ḥī*	*al-kāmil*	عادَت أَغاني العُرسِ رَجعَ نُواحِ

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Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
273	*Ī'dān*	Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī	*nūniyya -(ā)-nī*	*al-kāmil*	مولايَ عيدُك عيدُ مصرَ الباني
285–286	*al-Habū*	Jaʿfar al-Ṭuffār	n/a	n/a	المصاري بتفضّي الراس وبتعبي الكروش
287–288	*Tahaddada Lubnān al-maṣīr*	The Lebanese Forces			تَحَدَّدَ لبنان المصير بالأمن والحرية
292–295	*Ḥaggak*	Muḥammad Lāfī			الذُّل طعمه مُر
301	*Yā ukhta ʿAmmūriyya*	Maḥmūd Ghunaym	*lāmiyya -lā*	*al-kāmil*	قلْنَا، وأصْغَى السامعون طويلا
305–314, 355, 358–359, 362–363, 367, 372, 375, 379, 383, 387–388	*Lā Naksa*	Maḥmūd Ghunaym	*rā'iyya -rā*	*al-kāmil*	مَنْ قال: إن اللَّيْث ولىّ مُدْبِرَا؟
316–317	*Mā lī wa-li-l-najmi yarʿānī wa-arʿā-hū*	Maḥmūd Ghunaym	*hā'iyya -(ā)-hū*	*al-basīṭ*	مالي وللنجم يرعاني وأرعاهُ
317–319, 363–364, 368, 373–374, 376–377, 388–389	*Risāla ilā-l-abṭāl*	Anonymous	*mīmiyya -mah*	*al-ramal*	يا شَبابَ الحقّ لا تنتظِروا
321–322, 364, 368–369, 371–373, 381	*Al-thaʾru inna-l-thaʾra ḥaqq*	Anonymous	*qāfiyya -qāf al-sākina*	*al-kāmil*	الثأر إن الثأر حق

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Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
325–331, 351, 356–357, 364–365, 369, 372, 374, 377, 382–384, 389	*Ami-l-ʿuqbānu qudwatu-hā ʿUqābū*	Aḥlām al-Naṣr	*bāʾiyya -(ā)-bū*	*al-wāfir*	إذا ما طارَ في الجوِّ العُقابُ
332–336, 357–358, 365, 371, 375, 378–380, 390	*Nasīmun min rubā Lubnāna nādā*	Aḥlām al-Naṣr	*nūniyya -nā*	*al-wāfir*	نسيمٌ مِن ربا لبنانَ نادى
342–343	*Nashīd al-waṭan al-salīb*	Maḥmūd Ghunaym		*al-wāfir*	أَثِيرُوها فنحن لها جُنُود
348	*Ṭūfū bi-arkāni hādhā-l-qabri wa-(i)stalimū*	Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm	*mīmiyya -mū*	*al-basīṭ*	طوفوا بِأَركانِ هَذا القَبرِ وَاِستَلِموا
348–349	*Fazaʿa-l-dujā li-anīni-hi-l-mutaraddidī*	Aḥmad Muḥarram	*dāliyya -dī*	*al-kāmil*	فَزَعَ الدُجى لِأَنينِهِ المُتَرَدِّدِ
349–350	*Ahāja qadhā'a ʿaynī-l-idhdhikārū*	al-Muhalhil	*rāʾiyya -(ā)-rū*	*al-wāfir*	أَهَاجَ قَذاءَ عَيْنِي الاِدِّكَارُ
354–355	*Bāta laylī bi-l-anʿamayni ṭawīlā*	al-Muhalhil	*lāmiyya -lā*	*al-khafīf*	بَاتَ لَيْلِي بِالأَنْعَمَيْنِ طَوِيلَا
359–360	*Lammā naʿā-l-nāʿī Kulayban aẓlamat*	al-Muhalhil	*ʿayniyya -ʿā*	*al-kāmil*	لَمَّا نَعى الناعِي كُلَيْبًا أَظْلَمَتْ
370	Pity the Nation	Kahlil (Khalīl) Gibran			Pity the nation divided into fragments

(*cont.*)

Page	Title	Poet (* indicates that authorship is contested)	Rhyme	Metre	Hemistich/verse sample
370–371	*Ḥarīq al-kalimāt*	Muḥammad al-Māghūṭ			سئمتك أيها الشعر، أيها الجيفةُ الخالدة
376	*Alaylatanā bi-dhī ḥusumin anīrī*	al-Muhalhil	*rā'iyya -rī*	*al-wāfir*	أَلَيْلَتَنَا بِذِي حُسُمٍ أَنِيرِي
215, 233*n*121, 385	In Praise of an Abbasid Caliph	Abū Tammām	*rā'iyya -rū*	*al-kāmil*	رَقَّت حَواشي الدَهْرُ فَهْيَ تَمَرْمَرُ
123*n*80, 386	*The Epic of Gilgamesh*	Sīn-lēqi-unninni			[Now] in treachery you bring before me Gilgamesh,
389	*Wā ḥarra qalbā-hu mim-man qalbu-hū shabimū*	al-Mutannabī	*mīmiyya -mū*	*al-basīṭ*	وَا حَرَّ قَلْبَاهُ مِمَّنْ قَلْبُهُ شَبِمُ
416	*Ta'abbada min Laylā rumāḥun fa-'ādhibū*	al-Nābigha al-Ja'dī	*-ā.ibū*	*al-ṭawīl*	تَأَبَّدَ مِنْ لَيْلى رُمَاحٌ فَعَاذِبُ
55, 417–419	*Tadhakkara Laylā ḥusna-hā wa-ṣafā'a-hā*	Qays b. al-Khaṭīm	*hamziyya -(ā)-'ahā*	*al-ṭawīl*	تَذَكَّرَ لَيْلَى حُسْنَها وَصَفاءَها

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In *Should Blood Blend with Milk*, Dena Fakhro offers an account of Middle Eastern conflicts told from the perspective of Arabic poetry and the blood feud. Far from being confined to antiquity, verse promoting bloody retribution continues to be generated by armed groups, whereas among moderates there are lampoons which instead serve as protest and warning.

Traditionally, blood vengeance is a requirement for settling scores and restoring honour to injured parties. By making wide use of poems ranging from pre-Islamic Arabia, the medieval caliphates and the modern map of the Middle East, Fakhro proves these texts belong to an epic continuum, employing recurrent language, while contextualising revenge as an aspect of sectarianism, border conflict between empires, anti-colonial resistance, and militant jihadism.

Dena Fakhro, Ph.D. (2018), SOAS, University of London, is a researcher of Arabic poetry. Her publications include the article "Tracing the movement of the blood vengeance theme within Arabic Poetry" (*BJMES*, 2020). She is also an award-winning poet.

ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND HISTORY | 03

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ISSN 3050-6018

ISBN 978-90-04-72549-2