

insistence on *Shari'ah* and Sufism's insistence on Union, he was forced to create a paradox; that imaginative essence of poetry, "which lies between two extremes, not logical and apparently a violation of common sense and science... which welds together the contradictory and discordant".²⁶ Creative, but not necessarily useful as a compromise between forces rooted in political and legal reality. Or was his task simply impossible, for how could he hope to mend the split through manipulation of the same split-causing symbol? Since it is the nature of the symbol to split 'human from human', he could only magnify the original impact. Such are the questions arising from Nābulsi's modified moth symbol. Whether the political realities of his days forced him into paradox, deceit or simply confusion, is beyond the scope of this paper to determine. It can only be observed that in the stagnant literature of the late Ottoman period there was at least a flutter of creativity in this intriguing attempt at compromise through symbol.

King Saud University, Riyadh

MUHAMMAD MANSOUR ABARHAIN

²⁶ The importance of paradox in the poetry of Wordsworth and Donne, among others, is discussed by C. Brookes in "The Languages of Paradox", *20th Century Literary Criticism*, Ed. D. Lodge, (N.Y.: Longman, 1972), 292-305.

THIS IS MY NAME, BY ADONIS

Erasing every wisdom/
This is my fire/

No sign remained—my blood is the sign/
This is my beginning/

I entered your pelvis/

Earth revolving around me your organs are a Nile flowing/
We drifted we settled/ You were separated in my blood my waves cut
your chest you broke apart let's begin: love forgot the blade-edge¹ of
night/ Shall I scream that the flood is coming?/ Let's begin: a scream
cripples the city and the people are walking mirrors/ If the salt crosses
we shall meet. Is it you?/

—“My love is a wound,

my body a rose upon the wound unpluckable except as death. My
blood is branches the leaves of which settle when I surrender.”

Are the stones an answer? Is your sleeping death-master leading
astray?

I have aureoles of craving for your breasts; for your tender face, a face
like it...

You? I did not find you

And this is my flame erasing

I entered your pelvis, I have a city beneath my sorrows

I have what makes vipers of the green branches and of the sun a black
lover, I have.../

The meek of the earth approached, they immersed this age in ragged
dreg-drops and tears, they immersed the searching body, away from its
warmth... The city is arcs of madness/ I saw that the revolution bore its
children, I buried millions of songs and I came (are you in my grave)?
Come that I may touch your hands. Follow me, my time has not come
though the graveyard of the world has/ I have ashes for all the sultans/
Give me your hands, follow me...

¹ In those places where ambiguity seems intentional, I have elected to combine the relevant meanings. ‘Blade-edge’ is one such composite word, as is ‘dreg-drops’ a few lines further on.

I am able to change: the mine of civilisation—this is my name!
(a sign)

... The footsteps of life stopped at the chapter-door of a book. I erased it with my questions: what do I see? I see pages in which they say the civilisations rest (do you know a fire that weeps?) I see the hundred as two, I see the mosque, the church as executioners and the earth as a rose/

An eagle flies

in my face/ I sanctified the scent of anarchy/ Let the time of sorrow come
Let the nations of flame and refusal² awaken/ My deserts are growing/
I loved a willow that confused a wandering tower for a decrepit minaret
I loved a street upon which Lebanon was arranged, its entrails in pictures
and mirrors and in amulets³/

I said: now I give myself to the abyss of sexuality and give the conquest of the world to the fire. I said: embed yourself like a javelin in the brow of creation, Nero, Rome is every house, Rome is fantasy and reality, Rome is the city of God and history. I said: embed yourself like the javelin, Nero.../

I ate nothing but sand for supper, my hunger revolves like the earth, stones, palaces, temples, I appease my hunger like bread/ I saw in my third blood, a traveler's eyes mixing people with the waves of his eternal dream carrying the torch of distances, in prophetic knowledge and in savage blood/

...and Ali they threw him into the cistern and covered it with straw while the sun carried her dead and passed on/ Does the light know its way in the land of Ali? Does it come across us? We heard blood saw wailing/

We shall speak the truth: this is a country
I elevated its thigh
as a banner...

We shall speak the truth: it is not a country
it is our lunar stable
it is the staff of the sultans, the rug of
the prophet

² It is difficult to decide whether Adonis has any particular peoples in mind. *Rafî* (refusal) certainly evokes the Shia.

³ These have divinatory associations.

We shall speak the plainness: in existence there is a thing called those
 present and a thing called those absent,
 we speak the truth:

we are the absent

sky did not beget us dust did not beget us
 indeed, we are a foam evaporating from rivers of words

Rust in the sky and its celestial bodies, rust in life!

(a secret pamphlet)

My homeland finds refuge in me

And let my face be a shadow

Time from the rocks the lover walks around me I am the first lover to
 the fire fire binds my days a female fire blood beneath her breasts a rattle
 and the armpit is wells of tears a wandering river and the sun clings to
 them like clothes slipping/A wound it derived and diluted from coitus and
 from spice (is this your fetus?) My dreams are roses

I entered the school of grass my forehead split open and my blood
 deposes its sultan: I asked myself what should I do? Do I wrap the city
 up in bread? I scattered myself in tentscreens of fire/ We divided up the
 blood of the kings, we hurt

We carry the times

blending the pebbles with the stars

corralling the clouds

like a herd of stallions

I am able to change: the mine of civilisation—this is my name!

The nation rested

in the honey of the rabab⁴ and the mihrab

The Creator fortified it like a ditch

and plugged it up

not a soul knows where the door is

not a soul asks where the door is

(a secret pamphlet)

⁴ A Near Eastern fiddle, having between one and three strings.

...And Ali threw him into the cistern the embers were a garment for him we blazed we clung to his severed limbs I blazed good evening O rose of ashes/ Ali is a homeland whose name has no language bleeding exile proving the grass and the water Ali is an émigré/

Where does the master of sadness drowse how does he carry his eyes? My skies are strangled my shoulder slumps and the earth is a helmet filled with sand and straw become restless I gallop a sparrow plunged into me I started up its breasts are a flame I open a window: fields meadows I am the last conqueror and the earth is a game a mare entering the clouds/

The loving tree leaves a branch shakes me the water gushes the time of ancient man has ended I have begun my face is orbits and in the light is revolution

A village woke me in the home of the winds,⁵/ The silence broke, embrace me creator of fatigue grant me your cradle test me I am the stone and the search and the question not a festival and not a heart I am the watchful spectre in the opening of the city while the people sleep/ I entered a trap of light pure as violence as brilliant as the trackless wilderness lightly my limbs are lightning my limbs are hewn winds/ My bone is savoury bait for a crown or for silver I am not royally my blood is the exodus of the sky and my eyes are birds/ They say your skin is a thorn let my skies be done with and let them be from your skin yellow they say your skin is destiny sediment in the bottom of the dream/

Let the spears of the eternal battle be born
there is a pit of destruction between us and my voice
is the ravings of the raider the staff shatters the songs and tears out the
alphabet/

...And the women relaxed by the mihrab
filling up the invoked books with fire
and transforming the sky
into an effigy or a guillotine
and Ali opens his sorrows
to the jesters of misery
to those who became like eagles and those who shattered...

⁵ An imprecise translation of *mahabb*, the place from which the wind comes.

The legaced dust is in the bone/ Has it taken refuge? Does dust take refuge? Death is of no use and is of no consequence...this is vertigo whoever sees the corpse of the ages on his face and stumbles feels old age like a childhood dream

I am able to change: the mine of civilisation—this is my name!

Return to your cave histories are swarms of locusts this history lives in the bosom of a whore grieving moaning in the belly of a she-ass and yearning for the putrefaction of the earth walking in a maggots return to your cave and lower your eyes!

I notice a word⁶

Around it everyone of us is a mirage is clay. *Imru' al-Qays* did not shake it *al-Ma'arrī* is its child and *al-Junayd* twists below it *al-Hallāj* and *an-Niffārī*⁷ twist/ *al-Mutanabbī* related that it is the voice and the echo/ You are the ruled it is the ruler/ Remove yourself from the path of its steps it is lost become a demon become an abattoir/ It is the dream of the dreamer and it is the owner/ The nation is engraved in it as a kernel/ Return to your cave/

What? Did they banish him or did they kill him?!

They killed him...no, I shall not speak of the death of my friend: a countryside of yellow roses crowded me/ But I shall write about the last branch in the house cedar⁸ about the flight of the dove pulling the carpet of night high away from the dream like a tower/ They killed him, no I shall not utter the names of the witnesses or the murdered and I shall not weep/ I shall never weep for a nation that gives birth to mutes, for the conclusion embracing the blueness of the shores weeping: why weep over a child over a poet?/ I shall write about the end of a shadow of house cedar about the flight of a dove dragging the carpet of night high away from the dream high like the mountains!

His eminence the caliph produced a law from the water his people broth clay molten swords. His eminence produced a throne inlaid with

⁶ Adonis deliberately uses the regional *kilma* (so vowelled) here instead of the conventional *kalima*. Unfortunately, English cannot capture the nuance.

⁷ An early mystic, philosopher and prosodist whom Adonis greatly admires. Adonis named his journal *Mawāqif* (Stations) after *an-Niffārī*'s provocative *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* (The Book of Stations). He died in 965.

⁸ This is most probably a private symbol, perhaps meant to evoke the legendary Cedars of Lebanon.

the eyes of the populace/ Is this city signs? Is the clothing of the women
made from the pages of Scripture?/

I admitted my dungeon into a mountain-
pass dug out by the hours, I wondered are my people a river with no
mouth?

I sing

the language of the spearhead I shout that time is punctured and its walls
have perished in my bowels I vomited history has not returned to me nor
has the present/ I am solar insomnia the imprecise chasm and the deed
wait for me rider of the clouds my things are misguided and the sun
strikes my sides I am the one who lives the expanse and the psalms and
I am the branches in refuge: listen do you hear this wailing in the heart
of the world? I listen to death in my wrinkles/ We raved/ I raved to die
well I selected the two breasts from among my tradition/

Is your skin the fall? Are the thighs
a wound I filled?/ The world coalesced/ Are you the stone quarry of night
in my skin? My pickaxe is honed I have become another spring my bank
flows your arms are a lading an arc carried you my face is a clamor on
the wing divided by the voice. Ask me and I shall reply.../ *Jaff*⁹ spoke
its horses lay in wait for me the whisper died down (do I, do you, now
have that which whispers?)/ Bridled fire ships stranded pacified sea/ The
Norseman opened his eyes shut the oblivion of the *fatha* in his disheveled
eyelash water and sparks/ If only the thunder was, if only the thunder
knew, if only the thunder were in my hand/

Calmly. This is a dome and my sojourn in a breast's chasm/ I dig still
Were I to change, were dust to change its cheeks, if fire were a *hamza*.../

You dissolved in my sex

my sex with no frontiers and no sword annihilate yourself dwindle. I
annihilated myself we are a solitary face my shirt is not an apple and you
are not an Eden we are a field and a harvest and a protecting sun, I
ripened you. Come from that green side this is our yield our two bodies
are a sower a reaper/ My only organs come from that side/ I summoned
up my death/ Connect me to our sovereignty as the live coal of time,
longing is our sovereignty, the opulence of being while it wraps humanity
guide us.../

⁹ Either the predictions of the destinies of nations and dynasties, or the application of
an esoteric and spiritual science by the Shia in the mystical interpretation of the Qur'an.
Ali is said to have been the source of this esoteric knowledge (*al-baḥīth*).

I read in yellow
 pages that I shall die in exile the deserts lit up. My people go to
 extremes.../ We exhumed the buried words their flavor the flavor of
 virgins/ Damascus enters into my clothing as fear as love fusing my
 bowels talking nonsense.../

You enunciated your skin. Vacate your
 lips between my teeth I am night and day I am time we melted away take
 root in my wilderness.../

Thus did I love a tent
 and make of the sand upon its eyelash edges
 a raining tree while the deserts are a cloud
 I saw God as a beggar in the land of Ali
 and I ate the sun in the land of Ali
 and I baked the minaret
 and I saw the coming in the mist of the smokestack
 astir whispering:

“Who fashioned us?

his fashioning was nothing more than a roofed passage
 convulsed by the whirlwinds, it was demolished and then became
 wood burned in the house of a caliph”
 Seldom does the sea pronounce and yet
 the sea pronounces: “we have become dry
 history has become dry from its own repetition
 in the millgrounds of the air
 the creator fell in his casket
 the creation fell in its casket...”

And the women relax by the mihrab
 rescuing the night from its well raising it aloft
 and they sew the sky
 and they sing: “Ali is a flame

a magician ablaze in every water”

and they quiz the sky:

“is this earth

a star or a mummy?” And they tear apart the sky
 and they patch up the sky

“The antichrist buried a people in his eyes
 the antichrist exhumed a people from his eyes
 and we heard him praying above them
 and we saw him bringing them to life and kneeling

and we saw
how the people became water in his palms
and we saw
how the water became a windmill?'

Islands for a flame, Asia rising in it, tomorrow rising/ A sun is
extinguished we dream without the murmurs of night/ My day is
measured by the flame/ I cried for help, the voice of the peoples conquers
being and leads astray/

I am neither the ashes nor the wind

My bed is more sensuous and more distant/ Cages abandoned paths
horses of the past ashes and the tint of God a different hue/

Not a hand on me

Ali is the eternity of the fire and of childhood/ Do you hear the light-
ing of the times do you hear the means of the footsteps? Is the path a book
or a hand?/ The finger of dust is like a dervish who has no need for the
sovereignty of the fables/ Bring a homeland draw close the cities shake
the trees of dreams change the trees of sleep into words of the sky for the
earth/

A child wandering beneath the navel of a black woman searching
a child who grows
and for the earth a blind god dies.../

peace

to faces walking to the East in the solitude of the deserts wearing grass
and fire peace to the earth washed by the sea peace to its love...

Your thundering nakedness is proffered
its rains swallow me thunder in my breast time fermented. Move forward
this is my blood the brilliance of the East ladles me. And vanish hurry
me to your things echoing with thunder ladle me absorb my body/ My
fire is attention and the planet is my wound a satirized gift.../

I satirize a star that I draw
fleeing from my homeland in my homeland
I satirize a star that it draws
in the footsteps of its routed days
O ashes of the word

Is there a child in store for my history in your nightfall?

No-one returned but the madman

Yes I notice it now upon the window of my house
wakeful between the wakeful rocks
like a child taught by a sorceress
in the sea there is a woman
she carried his history in a seal-ring
and she shall come
when the fire of the stove dies out
and the night melts from its sadness
in the ashes of the stove.../

....and I saw history in a black banner walking like a forest/ I did not
record it/

Living in the longing in the fire in the revolution in bewitchment
poisoned by the creator my homeland is this spark this lightning in the
darkness of the time remaining...

(Early January, 1969)

RRALL/University of Pennsylvania Translated by S.M. TOORAWA