

Every Robe He Dons Becomes Him

Shawkat M. Toorawa

SAMAW'AL, A JEWISH POET of sixth-century Arabia, was once given five valuable coats of mail for safekeeping by the prince-poet Imru-1-Qays while he was fleeing his enemies. Imru-1-Qays died before he was able to retrieve them so his pursuers, on learning that Samaw'al still held the coats in trust, kidnapped Samaw'al's son and assured him that if he did not release the treasure to them, they would put his son to death. Samaw'al decided them for their idle threat; idle, not because he thought they were bluffing, but idle because he could not be coerced. He had given his word and would not violate that trust. His son was consequently put to death and Samaw'al's actions resulted in the proverb "More trustworthy than Samaw'al," or "More honorable than Samaw'al." Samaw'al's grief can only be imagined, but in the opening lines of a poem attributed to him we read:

When a man's honor is not stained by iniquity,
Every robe he dons becomes him.
When a man's soul cannot bear the burden of injustice,
He finds the road to honest praise cut off.
She revels us for being few in number;
"The noble," I reply, "are few."²

The opening metaphor is one of the first recorded images of the robe of honor in Arabic literature. From it we see that it is not the external garment that reveals the beauty of an individual but rather unstained honor, "the inner garment in which the soul is clad."³ For Samaw'al, keeping his robe/soul untainted involves

losing his son. The echoes of the prophet Ibrâhîm's (Abraham) near-sacrifice of his son Ishâk are unmistakable. So too, the echoes of a ritual that came to be associated with Ibrâhîm: ritual ablutions and the donning of the *ihrâm* garments for the performance of the *hajj*. The *hajj* is the pilgrimage to Mecca, home of the Ka'ba, the House of God built by Ibrâhîm. Male pilgrims emulate Ibrâhîm by wearing two white unsewn woolen or linen wraps, the *izâr* on the lower half of the body, and *ridâ'* on the upper half. The skullcap, required at other times, here is forbidden: the male worshipper's head must be bare. The requirements for men and women vary. Women's hair must always be covered, and those who wear a face-veil—although under Islamic law it is not a veil but something to cover the hair that is required—must remove it for the duration of the *hajj*. Women do not put on the two white cloth wraps but wear instead their traditional clothing. The uniformity of the men's clothing is to represent the blurring of differences in status, wealth, education and ethnicity of the Muslims; the assorted dress of the women is to symbolize the diverse and creative character of Islam.⁴

Menstruation, both a literal and figurative staining of the cloth, which at other times limits ritual practices and observances, and which for some is a mark of dishonor, cannot invalidate or devalue the *hajj* for the worshipper as she is invested by God with the power, status and honor of

the *ihrâm*, a garment the very name of which evokes the sacred and the holy. The state, and attire, of *ihrâm* can only be quit by wilful violation of the proscriptions or by ritual trimming or shearing of the hair. This can be traced to the first shearing, when Adam shears the lamb God orders him to sacrifice. The wool is to be used for clothing that will cover the *'awra*, that part of the body that he must conceal out of shame.⁵ (Muslim mystics too don garments of wool, or *sif*, the habit proper to renunciants and devotees for its plain appearance and modesty. For this they are called *sûfis*.) Quran 7:26 elaborates by unfolding the metaphor and expanding its semantic and ritual range:

We have revealed to you a garment to conceal your shame, and splendid vesture too; but the garment of piety is superior. The intimate association of covering with modesty and chastity or, more powerfully, of uncovering with immodesty and dishonor is made plain throughout the Quran, but the discountenance of uncovering is captured also in the following line by the ninth-century poet, Abû Tammâm:

Fair maids who, when beheld unveiled, were idols,
And when they beheld, were a herd of oryx.

An extension of this metaphor may be seen in *The Slave Market*, a painting (housed in the Williamstown Museum) by the nineteenth-century orientalist painter Jean Léon Jérôme. It depicts a naked, young, fair-skinned woman being examined by a potential buyer, for she is a captive. For us, looking at the painting, and no doubt for the painter, the young woman is an idol to be worshipped. For the turbaned man who is appraising her to determine whether he should buy her, she is an animal: he is inspecting her teeth, as he would a horse, or an oryx perhaps. His almost total disregard for her naked sexuality is not a denial of it but a frightening subversion of it. His elaborate head-covering confers on him the honor he sorely

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needs; and the canvas affords her the dishonor she so little needs. Although Qatari, the intrepid Kharijite rebel of the early eighth century writes that

Life [read 'dignity'] is no hero's robe of honor.
Even the vile coward must remove it at last,⁶

the young woman in the painting deserves the honor of a robe.

The following lines by the late seventh-century poet al-'Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf, for example, show a more stylized metaphorical interconnection of honor and garment, though the conceit tries to disguise the relationship:

How often I try, in shame, to hide my tears from
some friend!

When he looks at me closely, he scoffs.

Then I say: I am not crying.

The cloak grazed my eye as I was putting it on.⁷

And the story of Ahmad ibn Hanbal—an eminent jurist of the early ninth century who resisted the caliph Ma'mûn's required belief in a rationalist theology—shows the working of God's vestmental hand. Ahmad suffered house arrest and imprisonment for his intransigence but was not put to death (perhaps because Ma'mûn unexpectedly died before he could issue the order). He did, however, suffer the ignominy of beating during the course of which his clothes were torn from his body, and were then later magically restored by God. The honorableness of his disobedience to the caliph

and the measure of his piety are tangibly confirmed by the restored robes.⁸

THE CONNECTION between recompense and garment is an organic one in Arabic. The word *thawb*, meaning garment, dress, cloth, material, cloak, robe, shares its root letters with the word *thawāb*, meaning requital, reward, recompense. In Islamic practice, *thawāb* refers to the credit or merit earned for performing a pious deed. And perhaps Samaw'al's home may, for the fugitive Imru-ī-Qays, have been a *mathāb*, a place of refuge (from the same root).

Imru-ī-Qays is the most famous of the poets who composed the seven (or ten) pre-Islamic poems that have come to be known as the *Mu'allaqāt* or *Suspended Odes*. The belief is that these poems were of such great merit and beauty that they were suspended from the Ka'ba. This belief was perhaps responsible for generating the phrase "he clung to the curtains of the House of God," literally "he hung on to the clothes of God," employed to describe the worshipper's grasping of the Ka'ba's black covering.⁹ The use of the phrase "the clothes of God" here, though it metonymically refers to the Ka'ba, weaves the numerous connotations of garment/recompense into a fabric of divinely inspired tailoring. That fabric, the physical covering of the Ka'ba, is called the *kiswa*, attire, raiment, draping. In some ways, the *kiswa*, a black, silver- and gold-brocaded covering, transported annually to Mecca from Cairo with the pilgrimage caravan, is the Ka'ba's own *ihām*. The strips of which it is composed are, resonantly, called *athwāb*, tying, as it were, the draping to the idea of repentance and recompense. The Ka'ba's decorative bands are called belts and its door-covering is called the *biḥān*, or veil. These appurtenances have occasioned the suggestion that the Ka'ba is dressed as a bride.¹⁰

Riddā' is the word used by Samaw'al to describe his unsewn, roughly cut cloak and

is the name, too, of the top half of the *ihām* garment. Its root letters can also mean ruin and destruction, the ruin, no doubt, brought on by dishonorable deeds, and by the unclasping of the robe/soul. The connection between the soul and the garment is also evident in the Arabic of Christian communities where *qamis*—shirt, dress, gown, covering, wrap—shares its root with the words for metempsychosis and transmigration.

It was a *qamis* that the prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) wore and that protected his honor. The *qamis al-ḡalb*, literally "shirt of the heart," is the pericardium. Uncannily, most commentaries gloss the phrase "I sought to tempt him [from himself]" (12:30)—referring to the excessive and illicit feelings of Zulaikha, the wife of King 'Aziz (Potiphar) for their adoptive son Yūsuf—as meaning that "he so affected her that her love for him reached her pericardium." (Others have the love she feels end her midriff, or *hijāb*. Hijāb is, incidentally, one of the principal words used to mean veil.) In a resonant ethical resolution, Quran commentators alleviate the gravity of her iniquity by having Pharaoh give the widowed and virgin Zulaikha—'Aziz has since died, their marriage unconsummated—as wife and reward to Joseph after the latter's accession to power. Quran 2:186 amplifies the licit relationship between men and women as follows: "They (your wives) are garments for you, and you are garments for them." Zulaikha's love is made licit, Joseph re/covers his honor, and Pharaoh in/vests Joseph with the mantle of kingship.

Yūsuf's shirt makes three appearances in the chapter devoted to him in the Quran. In the first instance, Yūsuf's brothers bring a bloodied shirt before their father Ya'qub (Jacob) as evidence of Yūsuf's death, but the shirt is stained "with false/lying blood" (12:18). Ya'qub is not deceived; the commentators have him quizzing his scheming sons about a wolf that bloodies a shirt but does not rend it. A shirt appears again as

evidence in 12:25-28. Zulaikha, claiming that it is she who has been dishonored (and disobeyed?), essentially and effectively uses Yūsuf's garment to tell a lie.¹¹ A witness then proclaims: "If his shirt is rent from in front, then she tells the truth and he is lying; and if it is rent from behind, then she lies, and he is telling the truth." The shirt thus exonerates Yūsuf from the seduction and rape of which he is accused. In the third instance (12:93), Yūsuf instructs his brothers to drape his shirt over their father's face. This shrouding restores Ya'qub's sight and confirms the measure of his, and Yūsuf's, piety. Not only is truth established by the garment, but honor also restored. Yūsuf is a man of truth and his shirt mirrors the *tehdie* of that truth. In the vestimentary code of the Qur'anic account, the shirt does not cover and conceal, it uncovers and reveals.¹²

INSTANCES OF THE transformations undergone by garments in the Arabic literary imagination and in representations of Islamic ritual are legion. In an anecdote reported by Ibn al-jawzī and Tanūkhī, for example, a cloth seller is robbed by a man who disguises himself as the cloth seller. In order to recover the goods, the cloth seller then pretends to be the thief. Here, cloth/ing is used both as an instrument of deceit and of integrity. Fedwa Maltī-Douglas elaborates:

The owner of the shop was a cloth seller and it is through the medium of clothing (a disguise) that the thief begins his attempt to identify himself as the shop owner. When the rightful owner finally uncovers his parcels in the thief's room, he wraps them in a cloth that is hanging in that room. I est we think that this is unimportant, it becomes the object which the thief retrieves. . . . Hence, there is a constant interplay between the occupation of the shop owner, the clothing of the thief that he dons to make believe that he is the owner, the clothing that is in the thief's room . . . and this very piece of clothing which the thief then retrieves at the end of the anecdote. And, of course, we are not told what the stolen parcels contain, but since the shop owner is a cloth seller, we can assume that it is a cloth.¹³

A relationship between recompense (and recovery) and clothing is quite clearly articulated. And here, as elsewhere, the cloak serves to uncover and reveal rather than to cover and conceal.

In all its guises, clothing inscribes ideologies of truth and deception, echoing the words of Sunay' al and of Scripture, and revealing—and unweaving—that honor can only be attained when every robe donned is a robe of honor and every garment a garment of piety.

□

NOTES

1. Abū al-Faraj al-Isbahānī, *The book of songs* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1868), v. 19, 99.
2. Translation based on S. Stekelyevich in *Al-Bīṭ Ṭammūn and the Poetics of the 'Abbasid Age* (Leiden, 1991), p. 291.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
4. F. M. Denny, *In Introduction to Islam* (New York, 1985), p. 118; M. Asad, *The Road to Mecca* (Lahore, 1982), p. 358.
5. Tabari, *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, tr. F. Rosenthal (Albany, 1988), I, p. 294.
6. R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London, 1966), p. 213.
7. Translation by A. Hamori in *Al-Basid belles-lettres* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 216.
8. Ibn al-jawzī, *The virtues of Ahmad ibn Hanbal* [in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.), p. 332.
9. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1984, reprint), I, p. 362.
10. See W. C. Young, "The Kabā, Gender, and the Rites of Pilgrimage," in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, XXV (1993), pp. 2, 288, 291-93.
11. F. V. Greifenhagen, "Garments of Disheure and Deception," unpublished paper (Duke University, November 1992).
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 13.
13. F. Maltī-Douglas, "Classical Arabic Costume Narratives: Thieves and Thievery in *Al-Bīṭ Ṭammūn*," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, v. XIX (1988), p. 107.

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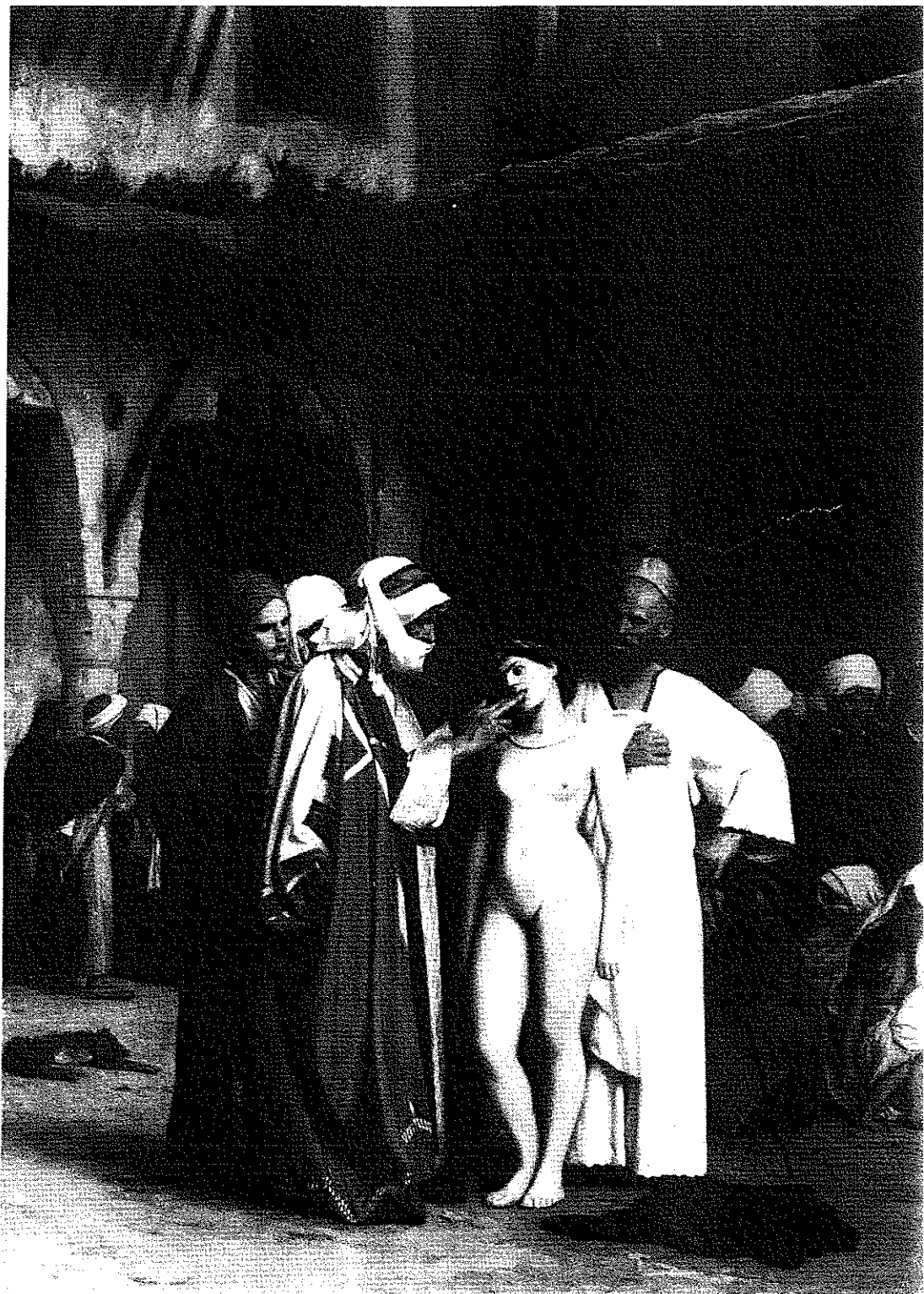
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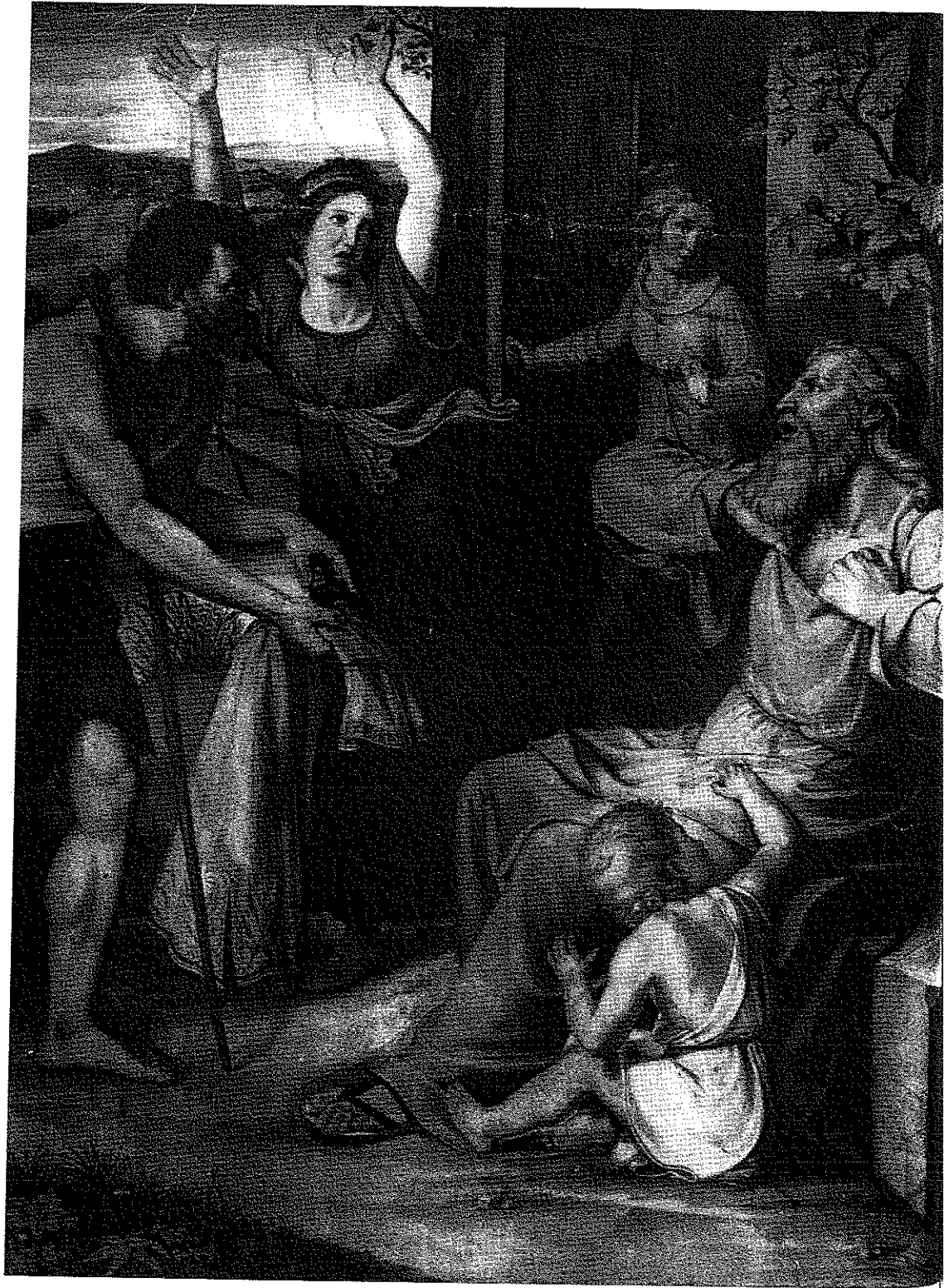
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The Slave Market



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Page 128 "Open Access Maze." From David Anson Russo, *The Ultimate Maze Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.)

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Shawkat M. Toorawa

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The opening metaphor is one of the first recorded images of the robe of honor in Arabic literature. From it we see that it is not the external garment that reveals the beauty of an individual but rather unstained honor, "the inner garment in which the soul is clad."³ For Samaw'al, keeping his robe/soul untainted involves

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An extension of this metaphor may be seen in *The Slave Market*, a painting (housed in the Williamstown Museum) by the nineteenth-century orientalist painter Jean Léon Jérôme. It depicts a naked, young, fair-skinned woman being examined by a potential buyer, for she is a captive. For us, looking at the painting, and no doubt for the painter, the young woman is an idol to be worshipped. For the turbaned man who is appraising her to determine whether he should buy her, she is an animal: he is inspecting her teeth, as he would a horse, or an oxen perhaps. His almost total disregard for her naked sexuality is not a denial of it but a frightening subversion of it. His elaborate head-covering confers on him the honor he sorely

The connection between recompense and garment is an organic one in Arabic.

needs; and the canvas affords her the dishonor she so little needs. Although Qatârî, the intrepid Khârijite rebel of the early eighth century writes that

Life [read 'dignity'] is no hero's robe of honor;
Even the vile coward must remove it at last,⁶

the young woman in the painting deserves the honor of a robe.

The following lines by the late seventh-century poet al-Abbâs ibn al-Ahnaf, for example, show a more stylized metaphorical interconnection of honor and garment, though the conceit tries to disguise the relationship:

How often I try, in shame, to hide my tears from
some friend!

When he looks at me closely, he scoffs.

Then I say: I am not crying.

The cloak grazed my eye as I was putting it on.⁷

And the story of Ahmad ibn Hanbal—an eminent jurist of the early ninth century who resisted the caliph Ma'mûn's required belief in a rationalist theology—shows the working of God's vestimental hand. Ahmad suffered house arrest and imprisonment for his intransigence but was not put to death (perhaps because Ma'mûn unexpectedly died before he could issue the order). He did, however, suffer the ignominy of beating during the course of which his clothes were torn from his body, and were then later magically restored by God. The honorableness of his disobedience to the caliph

and the measure of his piety are tangibly confirmed by the restored robes.⁸

THE CONNECTION between recompense and garment is an organic one in Arabic. The word *thawb*, meaning garment, dress, cloth, material, cloak, robe, shares its root letters with the word *thawâb*, meaning requital, reward, recompense. In Islamic practice, *thawâb* refers to the credit or merit earned for performing a pious deed. And perhaps Samaw'al's home may, for the fugitive Imru-l-Qays, have been a *mathâb*, a place of refuge (from the same root).

Imru-l-Qays is the most famous of the poets who composed the seven (or ten) pre-Islamic poems that have come to be known as the *Mu'allaqât* or *Suspended Odes*. The belief is that these poems were of such great merit and beauty that they were suspended from the Ka'ba. This belief was perhaps responsible for generating the phrase "he clung to the curtains of the House of God," literally "he hung on to the clothes of God," employed to describe the worshipper's grasping of the Ka'ba's black covering.⁹ The use of the phrase "the clothes of God" here, though it metonymically refers to the Ka'ba, weaves the numerous connotations of garment/recompense into a fabric of divinely inspired tailoring. That fabric, the physical covering of the Ka'ba, is called the *kiswâ*, attire, raiment, draping. In some ways, the *kiswâ*, a black, silver- and gold-brocaded covering, transported annually to Mecca from Cairo with the pilgrimage caravan, is the Ka'ba's own *ihrâm*. The strips of which it is composed are, resonantly, called *athwâb*, tying, as it were, the draping to the idea of repentance and recompense. The Ka'ba's decorative bands are called belts and its door-covering is called the *buqû'*, or veil. These appurtenances have occasioned the suggestion that the Ka'ba is dressed as a bride.¹⁰

Riddâ' is the word used by Samaw'al to describe his unsewn, roughly cut cloak and

is the name, too, of the top half of the *ihrâm* garment. Its root letters can also mean ruin and destruction, the ruin, no doubt, brought on by dishonorable deeds, and by the unclasping of the robe/soul. The connection between the soul and the garment is also evident in the Arabic of Christian communities where *qamis*—shirt, dress, gown, covering, wrap—shares its root with the words for metempsychosis and transmigration.

It was a *qamis* that the prophet Yûsuf (Joseph) wore and that protected his honor. The *qamis al-qalb*, literally "shirt of the heart," is the pericardium. Uncannily, most commentaries gloss the phrase "I sought to tempt him [from himself]" (12:30)—referring to the excessive and illicit feelings of Zulaikhâ, the wife of King 'Aziz (Potiphar) for their adoptive son Yûsuf—as meaning that "he so affected her that her love for him reached her pericardium." (Others have the love she feels rend her midriff, or *hijâb*. Hijâb is, incidentally, one of the principal words used to mean veil.) In a resonant ethical resolution, Quran commentators alleviate the gravity of her iniquity by having Pharaoh give the widowed and virgin Zulaikhâ—'Aziz has since died, their marriage unconsummated—as wife and reward to Joseph after the latter's accession to power. Quran 2:186 amplifies the licit relationship between men and women as follows: "They (your wives) are garments for you, and you are garments for them." Zulaikhâ's love is made licit, Joseph re/covers his honor, and Pharaoh in/vests Joseph with the mantle of kingship.

Yûsuf's shirt makes three appearances in the chapter devoted to him in the Quran. In the first instance, Yûsuf's brothers bring a bloodied shirt before their father Ya'qûb (Jacob) as evidence of Yûsuf's death, but the shirt is stained "with false/lying blood" (12:18). Ya'qûb is not deceived; the commentators have him quizzing his scheming sons about a wolf that bloodies a shirt but does not rend it. A shirt appears again as



The Slave Market

evidence in 12:25-28. Zulaykhâ, claiming that it is she who has been dishonored (and disrobed?), essentially and effectively uses Yûsuf's garment to tell a lie.¹¹ A witness then proclaims: "If his shirt is rent from in front, then she tells the truth and he is lying; and if it is rent from behind, then she lies, and he is telling the truth." The shirt thus exonerates Yûsuf from the seduction and rape of which he is accused. In the third instance (12:93), Yûsuf instructs his brothers to drape his shirt over their father's face. This shrouding restores Ya'qûb's sight and confirms the measure of his, and Yûsuf's, piety. Not only is truth established by the garment, but honor also restored. Yûsuf is a man of truth and his shirt mirrors the *tehné* of that truth. In the vestimentary code of the Quranic account, the shirt does not cover and conceal, it uncovers and reveals.¹²

INSTANCES OF THE transformations undergone by garments in the Arabic literary imagination and in representations of Islamic ritual are legion. In an anecdote reported by Ibn al-Jawzi and Tanûkhi, for example, a cloth seller is robbed by a man who disguises himself as the cloth seller. In order to recover the goods, the cloth seller then pretends to be the thief. Here, cloth/ing is used both as an instrument of deceit and of integrity. Fedwa Maltî-Douglas elaborates:

The owner of the shop was a cloth seller and it is through the medium of clothing (a disguise) that the thief begins his attempt to identify himself as the shop owner. When the rightful owner finally uncovers his parcels in the thief's room, he wraps them in a cloth that is hanging in that room. Let us think that this is unimportant, it becomes the object which the thief retrieves. . . . Hence, there is a constant interplay between the occupation of the shop owner, the clothing of the thief that he dons to make believe that he is the owner, the clothing that is in the thief's room . . . and this very piece of clothing which the thief then retrieves at the end of the anecdote. And, of course, we are not told what the stolen parcels contain, but, since the shop owner is a

A relationship between recompense (and recovery) and clothing is quite clearly articulated. And here, as elsewhere, the cloak serves to uncover and reveal rather than to cover and conceal.

In all its guises, clothing inscribes ideologies of truth and deception, echoing the words of Samaw'al and of Scripture, and revealing—and unraveling—that honor can only be attained when every robe donned is a robe of honor and every garment a garment of piety. □

NOTES

1. Abî al-Faraj al-Isbahânî, *The book of songs* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1868), v. 19, 99.
2. Translation based on S. Stekelyevych in *Abî Tammâm and the Poetics of the Abbasid Age* (Leiden, 1991), p. 291.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 294.
4. F. M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York, 1985), p. 118; M. Asad, *The Road to Mecca* (Lahore, 1982), p. 358.
5. Tabarî, *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, tr. F. Rosenthal (Albany, 1988), I, p. 294.
6. R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London, 1966), p. 213.
7. Translation by A. Hamori in *Abbasid Letters* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 216.
8. Ibn al-Jawzi, *The virtues of Ahmad ibn Hanbal* [in Arabic] (Cairo, n.d.), p. 332.
9. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1984, reprint), I, p. 362.
10. See W. C. Young, "The Ka'ba, Gender, and the Rites of Pilgrimage," in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, XXV (1993), pp. 2, 288, 291-93.
11. F. V. Greifenhagen, "Garments of Disclosure and Deception," unpublished paper (Duke University, November 1992).
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 13.
13. F. Maltî-Douglas, "Classical Arabic Cinne Narratives: Thieves and Thievery in *Adab Literature*," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, v. XIX

FULL CIRCLE

A readers' forum

THIS LETTER IS IN regard to your Fall 1994 issue [Vol. XIX, No. 3, "Clothing"]. The essay by Shawkat M. Toorawa links the name of the Sufis etymologically with the word *sūf* (wool). The error of this connection is made quite clear in *The Way of the Sufi* by Sayed Idries Shah. The widely accepted theory is that the early Muslim mystics wore coarse woolen garments in emulation of Christian monks as a sign of their modesty and humility. Although this theory seems likely from an etymological point of view, it is nevertheless in error. Idries Shah points out that the Sufis, ever conscious of symbolism, would never adopt the garb of animals as their name since they are concerned with the perfection of the highest aspects of humanity. Also, there are other plausible origins for the name of the Sufis. There is a theory that the name was derived from the phrase *Ashab as-Safa*, "The Companions of the Bench" who were mystics at the time of Mohammed and who formed an esoteric group in the year 623. Due to the transcendent nature of Sufic beliefs and practices, the term has been linked with the Greek word for divine wisdom (*sophia*) and the Kabbalistic term *Ain Sof* (the absolutely infinite).

Idries Shah points out that all of these etymological theories are incorrect. The fact is that there is no etymology for the Sufi name. The eleventh-century Persian author Hujwîrî made this point explicit-

ly: "The answer is that the Sufis regard the sounds of the letters *s, u, f* (in Arabic, the signs for *Soad, Wao, Fa*) as significant, in this same order of use, in their effect upon human mentation." This problem of etymology is significant not only as a specific issue of linguistics and history, but it also serves as an example of the complexity of Sufic study.

—Timothy King
Chelmsford, Massachusetts

The author responds:

Mr. King is correct in pointing out that the link between *sūf*, wool, and *sufi*, mystic, is the widely accepted etymological theory. (That this was in emulation of Christian monks, on the other hand, is not widely accepted, though admittedly possible.) Hujwîrî (d. 1071), whom Mr. King quotes in support of the fact that there is no etymology to the name *sufi*, himself explains the practice of wearing wool, by invoking the explanation of the great mystic Junayd (d. 910):

Sufism is founded on eight qualities exemplified in eight apostles: the generosity of Abraham, who sacrificed his son; the acquiescence of Ishmael . . . the patience of Job . . . the symbolism of Zacharias, to whom God said "Thou shalt not speak unto men for three days save by signs" (Sûra 3:36) . . . the strangerhood of John, who was a stranger in his own country . . . the pilgrimhood of Jesus, who was so detached therein from worldly things that he kept only a cup and a comb—the cup he threw away when he saw a man drinking in the palms of his hand, and the

(Continued on page 123)

Full Circle (continued from page 5)

comb likewise when he saw another man using his fingers instead of a comb; the wearing of wool by Moses, whose garment was woolen; and the poverty of Muhammad . . . (The "Kashf al-Mahjûb," the Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism by al-Hujwîrî, trans. R.A. Nicholson [London, 1922; 1959], pp. 39-40; italics mine).

It is clear that Hujwîrî, who postdates Junayd by a century and a half, at least acknowledges the ritual origin of the wearing of a woolen garment.

Mr. King's statement "The fact that there is no etymology for the Sufi name" is I fear—like my own statement "For this [i.e. the woolen sûf] they are called sûfis"—too categorical. The study of sufism is complex, yes, but the starting point must be the sufis themselves. And the great sufi thinkers, whether they accept or reject the wool etymology, all make explicit mention of it: in addition to Junayd and Hujwîrî, see Kalâbâdhî (d. 990), *The Doctrine of the Sufis*, trans. A.J. Arberry (Cambridge, 1935), p. 5, and Farîduddîn 'Attâr (d. 1220), *Musibainâme*, ed. N. Fisâl (Teheran, 1959), p. 70, to name but two authors.

I thank Mr. King for his thoughtful letter and appreciate his shared interest in *étymos*; and I thank my friend and RRALL colleague Jamal Elias, of Amherst College, for vetting my response.

—*Shawkat M. Toorawa*
Port Louis, Mauritius

I READ "CLOTHING" [Fall 1993] from cover to cover. I particularly enjoyed "Pascal's Jacket" and "The Dancer's Sleeve." Of these I felt an insight that might have heretofore gone unnoticed.

Kathleen Norris' "A Glorious Robe" captures well the clothing ceremony of my Benedictine brothers. It seems that the men have kept the important forms better than my sisters and myself. Whenever an "outsider" writes a novel or a piece on monastic life I find that they usually capture it and yet there is more. I have not found that anyone has exaggerated it yet. The significance is awesome from the inside even on the everyday level.

—*Mary Margaret Funk, O.S.B.*
Beech Grove, Indiana

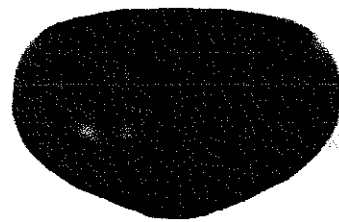
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