

THE POLITICAL POETRY OF NIZĀR QABBĀNĪ

A CRITICAL STUDY AND TRANSLATION

by

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CRITICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, the first serious study of Nizār Qabbānī in any language, has two main objectives. The first is to undertake a critical analysis of his political poetry, while the second is to offer a translation of the poetry which forms the basis of this study.

The Introduction to Part One treats the critical approach used, reviews previous works on Nizār and discusses the sources for a study of the poet. Chapter One gives an account of Nizār's life and cultural formation, and is largely based on material not previously available, or scattered through a number of different sources. Chapter Two deals with Nizār's concept of poetry, covering his definition of poetry, his revolt against old poetical forms and his views on the relationship between the public and poetry. Chapter Three reviews the origins of Arabic political poetry and then goes on to discuss Nizār's view of the relationships between political power and the poet and between poetry and revolution, and goes on to discuss his attitude to "committed poetry". Chapter Four analyses Nizār's nationalist poetry, and deals with his criticisms of Arab society, his reactions to such events as the British, French and Israeli attack upon Egypt of 1956, the Algerian War of Liberation, the Palestine disaster of 1948 and Arab unity. Chapter Five concentrates on the results of the Arab defeat in the June War of 1967 and the rise of the Palestinian movement as these are reflected in Nizār's poetry. Chapter Six analyses the poems composed by Nizār on the October War in which he tried to forget the wounds of the 1967 defeat. Chapter Seven deals with his elegies upon the death of Nasser. Chapter Eight discusses the Civil War in Lebanon and the destruction of Beirut, which ushered in the final stage of Nizār's poetic development. These chapters are followed by a short conclusion and a full bibliography.

Part Two of the thesis is a translation of the political poetry, accompanied by the original Arabic poetic texts.

DECLARATION

I declare that the composition of this thesis is entirely my own work.

Abdullah al-Shahham

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, without whose self-sacrifice and great patience this work could never have been completed. It is also dedicated to my children Yazan, Awfā and Dāniya, who have had to endure long separation from me in the course of my research.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The system of transliteration adopted here is that followed by the Department of Islamic Studies in the University of Edinburgh.

In the case of a number of politicians whose names are well known to the Western reader, we have generally followed the popular form, e.g. Nasser, Sadat, Jumblatt, Yasir Arafat etc. When these names occur in transliteration from an Arabic text or in a fully Arabised form we have retained the full use of diacritics, etc., e.g. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, Anwar al-Sādāt, etc.

INTRODUCTION

This introduction consists of four sections: aims of the thesis and reasons for the selection of the subject; the critical approach adopted for the analysis of the poetry; a review of previous studies together with an attempt to show their weak and strong points; and a discussion of the primary and secondary sources upon which they are based. A detailed examination of each of these subjects follows.

I

AIMS OF THE THESIS AND REASONS FOR THE SELECTION OF THE SUBJECT

1. Aims

This thesis has two aims, which are to analyse the political poetry of Nizār Qabbānī in a critical and extensive manner which will reveal the ideas and questions explored there, and to offer an English translation of it which will give an opportunity to researchers in the West to become acquainted with the culture and thought of the Middle East in the second half of the twentieth century.

2. Reasons for the selection of the political poetry of Nizār Qabbānī

There are four principal reasons for this:

(a) The newness and uniqueness of his political poetry

Nizār Qabbānī's political poetry can be regarded as a completely new phenomenon in modern Arabic poetry. It is true that there are other poets as

well as Nizār who have composed political poetry in the Arab world, but Nizār was the only one able to create for himself an independent direction and an independent personality which distinguished him from others. The newness, or uniqueness, of his poetry, lies in three points:

(i) His striking ability to transform the political questions which concern the Arab citizen on the street into beautiful poetry which is recited in the majority of Arab countries. Perhaps Nizār was the first Arab poet to embark upon such an experiment with complete success.

(ii) His rare courage in plunging into the world of Arab politics and saying what no-one else was able to say honestly, without ambiguity or hesitation, and without fearing any ruler or authority. Accordingly we feel in his poetry the spirit of the fighter or the spirit of bitter resistance to all forms of contemporary political violence.

(iii) The span of time over which he has regularly composed political poetry, and the way in which he has specialised in this subject, to the extent that he has given it a great proportion of his time and his life without being overcome by exhaustion or boredom.

(b) The possibility of regarding his political poetry as an introduction to the study of modern Arab poetry

A study of Nizār's political poetry, and equally of his love poetry, and a close acquaintance with his position on the map of modern Arabic poetry, could well form an introduction to the study of modern Arabic poetry in general. Indeed, the two together would probably throw more light on its most recent artistic developments than the work of any other poet. In his early poems Nizār followed the old forms, although he avoided using difficult

vocabulary, chose light metres, and varied his rhymes. Before long he joined the Free Verse movement while it was still in its beginnings (1940-1950). In our view, free verse was at that time a positive development for modern Arabic literature because it set free new powers of expression without which it could not have set off on its path. Now, however free verse has begun to reach a dead end, and, at least in our own view, has become little more than an excuse for the sabotage of sound language and style, though Nizār has kept himself distant from anything like this.

Anyone who reads the whole of his poetry will find that it is always haunted by ideas of change and revolt against the old forms, and indeed against some new forms (i.e. free verse). He thought that this revolt should be without boundaries. It is not merely a revolt against old poetic genres (satire, praise, elegy, boasting(fakhr)etc.) but is also a revolt against the stagnation which has been inherited generation from generation; a stagnation of thought, expression and metre.

From this belief in revolution, Nizār moved to the writing of the prose poem, and achieved a tangible development of the form. We shall discuss all the above questions in detail in Chapter Two.

(c) The fact that his political poetry is an excellent example of the two-way relationship between society and literature

Nizār derives his poems from Arab society, which teems with events on the political, cultural, social and religious levels. He states frankly that the sources of his poetry are "human" sources,¹ and that it is the fundamental task of poetry, wherever it is, to derive its material from life.²

Nizār's poetry is rich in its realistic experiences. In it we feel

that the political situation of Arab society is embodied as it truly is. The atmosphere, personalities and thoughts with which his poetry pulses are the atmosphere, personalities and thoughts of Arab society. The Lebanese critic Ahmad Abū Sa'd was aware of this aspect when he said:

His poetry is cut out from the flesh of life and intertwined with its daily details. It has a mission which believes in its popularity, and in the importance of bringing itself to the largest possible number of people. Hence this insistence of his upon not abstracting it from the nature of mankind, and not masking it or cloaking it in the garb of prophets, and equally his eagerness to compose it so clearly and openly that it leaps to the heart and runs along the paths of sensation.³

(d) The effect of Nizār's poetry upon modern Arab poetry

For more than forty five years Nizār has built up a poetic school of his own which is still working to polish the talents of the new generation of Arab poets. The simplicity of his language, the wealth of his melodies and the newness of his subjects are among the factors which have helped its diffusion and its imitation by others. Thus in Kuwait there is a new poet, Su'ād al-Ṣabāḥ, who is almost an exact replica of Nizār. In reading some of her output, for example Fatāfit Imra'a, Baghdad 1986, or Fi al-Bad' Kānat al-Unthā, London 1988, we find that it is Nizār's voice which dominates in her own. In our view, the effect of Nizār's poetry upon Arab poetry today is a large subject in itself which requires extended study. However much views may differ about Nizār today or tomorrow, no-one can deny that he constitutes a centre of attraction which no Arab poet and no student of modern Arabic literature can ignore.

THE CRITICAL APPROACH

The reader will observe that we have taken the poetic text as a basis for criticism, as we believe that it always forms the proper starting-point for any serious critical study. Within the framework of this approach, which may be called the textual approach, we consider that analytical criticism means living with the text, discovering its deep secrets, and sharing in the creative act itself. This approach is likewise an attempt to embrace the text as an aesthetic expression and a human and social expression, without there being any mechanical separation between the two.

This approach has imposed two necessities upon us - to liberate ourselves from any prejudgment of Nizār and his poetry, whether negative or positive, and to avoid taking any of our intellectual or critical views, whatever they may be, as an arbitrary basis for the analysis of his poetry.

This approach draws upon all relevant information, past and present, and employs whatever parts of it it considers appropriate to throw light upon certain poems or to explain certain matters connected with them. Thus we have, for example, to prepare the ground for certain chapters by giving brief pieces of historical or political background material which will help us to understand the poetry of Nizār himself. In the writing of this thesis we have found that the critic himself has to be a poet, a historian, a politician and something of a philosopher. Perhaps this textual method, by virtue of rubbing against various kinds of human information, guarantees a certain amount of flexibility and removes any possibility of stagnation.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

We shall now briefly review the most important writings on Nizār, whether on his political or his love poetry, with the exception of certain studies which it has not been possible to obtain,⁴ in an effort to ascertain their value. We shall begin with a review of these writings according to the date of their publication, beginning with the earliest and finishing with the most recent.

1. Mārūn 'Abbūd, Naqadāt 'Abir, Beirut 1959.

This book consists of critical investigations of certain creative works which appeared in the Arab world in the fifties. In one short chapter the author (1886-1962) pauses over Nizār's collection Qaṣā'id min Nizār Qabbānī (Beirut, 1959) and accuses Nizār of partially imitating the Lebanese poets Sa'id 'Aql and Michel Trād, although his poetry is a little different from theirs.⁵ He claims that these three poets are lofty summits in modern Arab poetry,⁶ and also that Nizār's style resembles that of Jarir (653-733) with the difference that Nizār excels him in imagination because he portrays in one word what Jarir portrays in several.⁷

He also compares him to 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a (644-711) and says that he resembles him in his self-reliance and in being an adored object upon whom women throw themselves, but differs from him in his constant attempts to speak of sexual desire and woman's body.⁸ He denies utterly that Nizār has been influenced by Sufism, Metaphysics or any theory which glorifies the soul.⁹ He asks him to direct his poetry toward Arab political life and to criticise those in authority, because he believes that he is capable of this.¹⁰

In our view, this chapter does not rise to the level of critical analysis, and is more like a panegyric. 'Abbūd's attempt to link Nizār and Sa'id 'Aql and Michel Trād, or Nizār and Jarir or 'Umar b. Abi Rabi'a, lacks precision and satisfactory evidence.

2. Ahmad al-Jundi, Shu'arā' Sūriyā, Beirut 1965.

The Syrian author gives in this book biographies of certain Syrian poets of the twentieth century. He observes that Nizār's poetry is a new leap in Arab poetry, but that it is marked by two major faults: deliberate affectation and the use of trite ordinary words.¹¹ He considers that these two faults have made Nizār "closer to European poets than to Arab poets".¹² Later he denies two things said widely of Nizār - that he is influenced by Baudelaire, and Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarmé, and that he is influenced by the Lebanese symbolism of which Sa'id 'Aql is the leading exponent.¹³

Despite all of the above, he admits that Nizār is a poet in all the meanings of the word,¹⁴ that he is truthful in his feelings and expressions,¹⁵ that he is extremely sensitive,¹⁶ and that he represents the age-old environment of Damascus in the best way possible.¹⁷ Finally he asks him to forget about the free verse style because, he claims, it is a sign of inability and is not a guaranteed way to renewal.¹⁸

3. Sāmi al-Kayyāli, al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āsir fī Sūriyya 1850-1950, Cairo 1966.

This book gives literary biographies of fifty eight Syrian men of letters who appeared in the period between 1850 and 1950. The Syrian author usually begins his account of a writer by giving a brief outline of his life, and then goes on to comment on some of his poems in a few words. The discussion of Nizār

comes in a short chapter at the end of the book. The author says of Nizār that he broke with the old poets in his expressions, with all contemporary neoclassical poets, and even with the young men of his own generation who preferred imitation to innovation.¹⁹ He says that Nizār's poetry is realistic, but that a group of the followers of the old forms believe that it is "muddled, disordered and unmetrical words"²⁰. At the same time he observes that he meets approval from young poets and critics, and that to deny his worth is a kind of idle folly.²¹

He notes that some of his poetry is "sensual" and that another part is "patriotic and social"²². He then abruptly gives his biography in a few lines,²³ and then gives three of his poems, Gharnāṭa, Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya and Turīdīn, without saying a word about them.²⁴ It may be observed of this chapter that the discussion of Nizār's poetry is disjointed and is full of judgments which lack adequate evidence to support them.

4. Sāmī al-Kayyālī, al-Adab wa-al-Qawmiyya fī Sūriyā, Cairo 1969 .

This book deals with a number of questions, including the history of Syria, the relationship of nationalism to literature, and nationalism in Syria. It contains a brief gesture to Nizār in which the author affirms that at the beginning of his life Nizār led a bohemian existence which inspired his poetic talent,²⁵ that he was influenced by the romantic and symbolist poets of the West and by the 'Udhri and "dissolute" (mājin) poets of the Arabs, and that he sometimes inclined toward portrayal of the painful life which the Arab has to live.²⁶

5. John A. Haywood, Modern Arabic Literature 1800-1970: An Introduction With Extracts in Translation, London 1971 .

Haywood devotes this book to a study of Modern Arabic Literature in roughly the last two hundred years. In the course of his discussion of modern poetry in Syria and Lebanon he gives a paragraph about Nizār in which he alludes to his great popularity in the Arab world, even among women, because of his poetry on love.²⁷ He gives an excellent translation of his poem Ilā Mayyita (Qasā'id, Beirut 1956) without commenting on it with a single word.²⁸

6. Māhir Ḥasan Fahmī, Nizār Qabbānī wa-'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a: Dirāsa fī Fann al-Muwāzana Cairo 1971 .

This book is divided into three sections:

(a) Comparison and the general framework

In this the Egyptian author briefly reviews the history of comparison (muwāzana) from the pre-Islamic period to modern times in a crude fashion which lacks any depth.²⁹ Then he tries to define it, and says that it "basically stands between two poets who are directed in a similar direction, when the common characteristics are strongly apparent."³⁰ He asserts that in the poetry of 'Umar and Nizār there are common features which call for a comparison between them.³¹ He does not explain these features, but simply says that the comparison between the two poets will be interesting.³² He affirms that the circumstances of the period in which 'Umar lived - luxury and social openness - greatly resembled Nizār's time, even though they were separated by more than a thousand years.³³

He quotes several historical accounts in order to establish that 'Umar was a handsome, rich young man, who gave a great deal of attention to his attire and his perfume,³⁴ and that he used to follow the women of the aristocratic class and to be captivated by them.³⁵ Then he moves to Nizār,

and sees in him someone similar to 'Umar, especially in his love of luxury and his pursuit of women, as a result of his diplomatic work in a number of countries.³⁶

(b) Comparison and experience

Here the author studies the meaning of poetic experience in a general way without touching on its relevance to the poetry of 'Umar or Nizār.³⁷ Suddenly he leaps to an observation of the similarity between them, and arrives at the following points:

(i) The bold introduction of love-stories into poetry. Both of them have spoken openly of the relationship between man and woman through the mediums of story-telling and conversation, and both of them have laid emphasis upon the fact that it must be an open relationship without embarrassment.³⁸

(ii) The employment of personal everyday experiences and realistic adventures in poetry.³⁹

(iii) The use of the style of poetic correspondence. 'Umar wrote poems to his beloved which consist of letters which have a beginning, a subject and an end. Nizār has done the same thing, using new expressions and a new form.⁴⁰

(iv) The suggestion that it is the woman who makes the approach to the man.⁴¹ With both these poets it is the liberated, daring woman who expresses her emotions and love to the man fearlessly.⁴²

(v) The open description of the woman's beauty. 'Umar is attracted to a slender, full, or rounded figure,⁴³ while Nizār is attracted to a luxurious city woman who knows the perfumes of Christian Dior and blue bathing costumes.⁴⁴ While 'Umar is concerned with lips, Nizār's concern with breasts is boundless.⁴⁵

(c) Comparison and literary values

Here the author tries to establish some points of similarity between the two poets, and considers that they coincide in their use of musical metres (the khafif metre occupies the first place in 'Umar's poetry, followed by ṭawīl and then kāmīl,⁴⁶ while for Nizār rajaz occupies the first place followed by mutaqārib and mutadārik),⁴⁷ and the employment of an easy style and common words.⁴⁸

After this the author addresses himself to certain of Nizār's collections, Tufūlat Nahd (1948), Sāmbā (1949), Qaṣā'id (1956), Ḥabibatī (1961), Yawmiyyāt Imra'a lā-Mubāliya (1968), Qaṣā'id Mutawahhisha (1970) and Mi'at Risālat Hubb (1970)), following each collection with a few words without being really able to explain the ideas and new formal developments which Nizār has put forward in them.⁴⁹ He mentions here a few political poems (Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, al-Istijwāb, Shu'arā' al-Ard al-Muhtalla, Manshūrāt Fidā'iyya 'alā Judrān Isrā'il, Ifāda fī Maḥkamat al-Shi'r and Qirā'a 'alā Adrihat al-Majādhīb), saying that Nizār has begun this new path, that his feelings in these poems are burning, and that he "is like a volcano which throws out the fire of its anger and burns the lazy ones among us... the garland of jasmine fell from his hand when he picked up the rifle with both hands."⁵⁰

Finally, the author concludes that 'Umar's poetry is unique of its kind in that it deals with the difficult part of life - love.⁵¹ He says that almost the

same thing applies to Nizār, because he has shocked many people with what he has written about love, in a way which none of his contemporaries has done.⁵²

The novelty of this study lies in the fact that it is a new attempt to link an ancient poet with a new poet. Apart from this, its ideas are shallow, especially as regards 'Umar, since there is nothing new in what is said of him. As for its major faults, they are a padding which has inflated the size of the book without any justification, the use of partial examples in order to reach general conclusions, an arbitrary comparison between Nizār and 'Umar, the use of glittering ideas and headings without the ability to explain them, superficiality and repetition.

7. Nadīm Nu'ayma, al-Fann wa-al-Ḥayāt; Dirāsāt Naqdiyya fi al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth, Beirut 1973.

This book is a selected collection of critical articles written between 1950 and 1973 in which the Lebanese author deals with a number of collections of poetry and literary questions and analyses them in the light of the relationship of literature to life. In the book there is a short chapter entitled "Poetry, woman and Nizār Qabbānī" in which the author touches upon Nizār's collection Qasā'id min Nizār Qabbānī (1959), announcing that his subject is woman and that poetry can never be poetry for Nizār unless it is about woman and for her.⁵³

He criticises Nizār for his concentration upon woman and sex in his poems and the absence of woman as a human being:

I am not exaggerating if I say that I searched for woman in Nizār Qabbānī's poetry and could not find her. I searched, trying to meet

a living human being who suffers like other people from the problems of life and existence, who hungers and is sated, who prays and disbelieves... I say, I tried... to meet woman... but I must have missed her, and instead I met woman... as she appears to the eye of the male. She is always wine-like of mouth, hungry-lipped, with twitching veins, fatal breasts, inflamed joints and hellish body.⁵⁴

He asks Arab poets, including Nizār, to give woman's human face more importance:

We have come to know woman in her flesh, her bone and her blood. But there is one thing about woman which we still do not know. That is that she is a human being. When does our poetry speak of the human being? When does one of our poets compose poetry in which he celebrates the human being from generation to generation?⁵⁵

8. Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry, Cambridge 1975.

Badawi devotes this book to a discussion of the development of Arabic poetry from Shawqī to al-Sayyāb and other poets who follow him. There are various references to Nizār in it. The author refers on one occasion to the fact that Nizār is influenced by 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (1902-1949), particularly in his poetic images and his hedonism, in the course of his discussion of Arab romanticism.⁵⁶ He also asserts that in the period from 1944 to 1955 he restricted his poetry to love and women, employing sensual, elegant and simple language.⁵⁷ He states that his first collection, Qālat li al-Samrā' (1944) revolved around sexual hunger. As for his second and third collections, Tufūlat Nahd (1948) and Sāmbā (1948), they revolve around eroticism.⁵⁸ After this he asserts that Nizār began, from 1955, to turn to the writing of social and political poetry. As an example of this, he quotes two poems: Khubbz wa-Hashish wa-Qamar, in which he criticises Arab society which lives in waking dreams and drug-induced hallucinations, and Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, in which he criticises the defeated Arab leaderships after the

June war of 1967.⁵⁹ Thus Badawi's observations upon Nizār are summarised, and not sufficient to give a real idea of the poet.

9. 'Alī Shalaq, Niqāt al-Tatawwur fi al-Adab al-'Arabī, Beirut 1975.

This is a medium-sized study of some of the manifestations of change in modern Arabic literature, poetry and prose. In the first chapter, "Vision in the poetry of contemporary poets", the Lebanese author mentions the names of some modern poets (Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, Sulaymān al-'Īsā, Maḥmūd Darwish, Fu'ād al-Khashīn, Yūsuf al-Khāl, Nizār) and says that they adopted similar attitudes to questions of poetry but differed in their treatment of Arab questions and human problems.⁶⁰

Instead of explaining their points of agreement or difference, we find him offering brief specimens of their poetry. When he turns to Nizār he says of him, "he diffused a new radiation into the temple of love poetry",⁶¹ and quotes one of his love poems, "Ikhtārī" from Qasā'id Mutawahhisha (1970). He says of this poem that it speaks, unconsciously, of changes in his psychological climate, such as arrogance, haughtiness and suppleness.⁶² Without doubt, the author has committed an error here, for he has neglected many examples of Nizār's poetry, on both love and politics, which embody important features of development in his poetry and are far more important than Ikhtārī.

10. S. Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry 1800-1970: The Development of its Forms and Themes Under the Influence of Western Literature, Leiden 1976.

This book comprises a number of chapters which deal with new forms and ideas in modern Arab poetry, to be precise, stanzaic poetry, blank verse and free verse, which were born as a result of cultural contact with the West. There are various references in it to Nizār. At the beginning the Israeli

author states that in some of his poems (Sayyida Hāqida, Hublā, Aw'iyat al-Ṣadīd) Nizār imitated French poets, in particular Jacques Prévert,⁶³ but he does not offer a single piece of evidence for what he says. In the framework of his discussion of the ideological tendencies in Free Verse, he mentions that Nizār, under the influence of socialist Arab poets, began to write nationalist poems in which he criticised the reactionary ideas of Arab rulers.⁶⁴ This is groundless, since never in his life did Nizār espouse a socialist idea, and indeed never allowed such ideas, as we shall see in Chapters 1 and 2, to infiltrate into his mind. In the same place the author mentions that Nizār composed "anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist" poems such as Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg.⁶⁵

In our view this bracketing together of the expressions "anti-Jewish" and "anti-Zionist" as though they meant the same thing, reflects a misunderstanding of what the poem is about. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the poem does not attack the Jews because they are Jews, and is not directed against Judaism. What it is against is those who come to Palestine from other countries to seize it by force, occupy it, and kill its people, whether the former be Jews, Buddhists or anything else.

The author goes on to say that the six-day war left an echo in Nizār's poetry, and that he began at this time to write angry nationalist poetry in which he castigated Arab leaders and intellectuals for their defeat in the war and accused them of being responsible, something which angered them all. As evidence of this he quotes four stanzas (3, 7, 8 and 9) from Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa⁶⁶ and says that Nizār never ceased after the defeat to aim accusations at the Arabs, and that after the death of Nasser in 1970 he began to accuse them in his poem Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir of killing their leader, quoting a few lines from this poem without commentary.⁶⁷

11. 'Umar al-Daqqāq, Tārīkh al-Adab al-Hadīth fi Sūriyā, Aleppo 1976.

This is a good reference work for the history of modern literature in Syria. It consists of four sections - literary prose, short stories, the theatre, and poetry. In the final chapter, "The art of poetry", the author discusses Nizār and describes him as one of the leading modern poets of Syria and the Arab world.⁶⁸ He adds that he has not kept to any single style, but has oscillated between the writing of traditional poetry and free verse in a manner which betrays his confusion and lack of direction and his inability to crystallise his literary ideas.⁶⁹

Turning to his poetry, he pauses over Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, describing it as "garbed in the darkness of pessimism and overflowing with the bitterness of disappointment, so that it seems as though the poet is taking vengeance upon himself, since he tortures himself, or as though the nation has come to hate itself."⁷⁰ He then pauses over the poem Faḥ and says of it that it is born of admiration for the fabulous exploits of the guerrillas and is illuminated by the sun of hope.⁷¹ Then he goes on to comment briefly on his love poetry and says that it has great worth from the social point of view because in it he sometimes defends women and condemns men who see nothing more in women than amusement or pleasure.⁷²

12. Ihsān 'Abbās, Iṭṭijāhāt al-Shi'r al-'Arabi al-Mu'āsir, Kuwait 1979.

This is a medium-sized critical study which discusses the attitudes of contemporary Arab poets to questions of time, love, society, city and the classical Arab heritage. In Chapter 4, "Attitudes to Love", the Palestinian author gives his point of view on the poetry of Nizār and Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr in particular. As regards Nizār, he makes the following observations:

- (a) He often speaks of love, considering it to be a world with distinctive dimensions which guarantee it an independent existence in his poetry.⁷³
- (b) He always creates a sharp conflict between woman and poetry. When woman becomes a reality in his life, poetry is obliterated. In the light of this conflict between these two sides of his life, we can understand his hate for the "destructive" woman who cannot inspire him with poetry.⁷⁴
- (c) In his poetry he deals with three aspects of woman: her body and possessions; her states and movements (as she is brushing her hair, or dancing); and her psychological and sexual problems.⁷⁵
- (d) When he writes love-poetry to a woman, he sometimes takes on the personality of an innocent child, especially when the woman is distant from him.⁷⁶
- (e) In some of his poetry he reflects an Oedipus complex. His beloved is his mother, and is always a source of love and beauty.⁷⁷

Despite their well-foundedness, these points cannot form a complete study of Nizār's poetry or any part of it. They are more like the broad lines which are needed for any detailed commentary. We wish very much that the author had spent more time over the poetic texts and derived his judgments from them, rather than delivering himself of the above generalisations.

13. Ghālī Shukrī, Adab al-Muqāwama, Beirut 1979.

This book traces the history of the idea of resistance in the novels, plays and poetry which appeared in the Arab world at the beginning of the twentieth century. The author observes the same idea in some of the works of

Aragon, Eluard, Neruda and Nazim Hikmet.

In Chapter 11, "Dimensions of heroism in the poetry of the Arab resistance", the Egyptian author discusses the new Arabic poetry which appeared after the defeat of 1967. Here he pauses over the Palestinian Resistance Poetry which gushed out from within Israel, regarding it as part of the Arab poetry of opposition to Zionist colonialism.⁷⁸ He also pauses at some of Nizār's political poetry, new then, and declares that it is not in harmony with his poetic past, that is, his poems on love and women, and that it plays a funereal melody which captivates our hearts and rubs on a wound which has not healed.⁷⁹

He considers for example that Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa is nothing but a kind of sadism which Nizār openly practices.⁸⁰ He adds that its "magical effect" was restricted to the beginning of the defeat, after which it soon came to an end. Accordingly he expects that this poem will drop out of the memory of history and that a heavy curtain of oblivion will be lowered upon it.⁸¹ He also considers that his other poems (Shu'arā' al-Ard al-Muḥtalla, al-Quds, Fath, al-Istijwāb and al-Mumaththilūn) are repeated attempts to say what he said in Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa. He concludes that all these poems are nearer to metrical propaganda manifestoes than they are to poetry, that they concoct open slogans and clichés, that they try to lacerate the Arab soul, and that they are devoid of depth and poetic ability.⁸²

It is clear that the author is visibly prejudiced against Nizār, something which is possibly due to Shukri's left-wing views and his prejudgment that Nizār is a bourgeois poet who does not write as a result of real suffering. As for his comments on the poems, they do not constitute a sound basis for judgment, because they are hasty and hostile.

14. Nāzik al-Malā'ika, al-Ṣawma'a wa-al-Shurfa al-Hamrā': Dirāsa

Naqdiyya fi Shi'r 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā, Beirut 1979.

This is a critical study of the poetry of 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (1902-1949) together with a selection of his poetry as an appendix to the book. In the first chapter, "Subjects of the poetry of 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā", the author states that this poet composes on most of the subjects of poetry without losing the heat of his creativity.⁸³ She compares him to Nizār and finds that Nizār is skilled in one aspect of poetry, that of love. She quotes his poem Imra'a min Dukhān from the collection Tufūlat Nahd (1948) and praises its style and its form.⁸⁴ She finds also that Nizār has failed in the composition of "social poetry", and quotes as an example of this failure Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg. Attacking this poem, she writes:

This is a prose utterance in spirit, even though it contains a smattering of metre... This prose nature is clearly evident in the poem as far as the language is concerned, since it is devoid of melody and images... and everything which makes verse verse... as for images... there is no trace of them in this poem, and the poet wrote it as though he were writing a political leader for a daily newspaper.⁸⁵

The author's verdict on Nizār's failure in writing "social poetry" is, in general, unsound. The poetry of love and women which Nizār began in the forties can be placed under the heading of the social poetry for which she calls. As for her observations about Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg, they are fairly accurate. The reader will find a detailed analysis of this poem in Chapter 4.

15. Rajā 'Īd, Dirāsa fi Lughat al-Shi'r: Ru'ya Naqdiyya, Alexandria 1979.

This is a slender critical study of the language of contemporary Arabic poetry in which two references to Nizār occur in different places. In a chapter entitled "Woman, symbol of love and personal cares", the Egyptian author

affirms that woman in modern Arabic poetry has become a symbol of the alienation, sorrow and existential disquiet from which the poet suffers, and that Nizār is the best example of a poet who portrays this symbolic woman clearly in his love poetry.⁸⁶ In another chapter, "Classical personalities between artistic employment and the historical dimension", he mentions the poem I'tidhār li-Abī Tammām and says that Nizār was successful in employing the character of Abū Tammām and made it a symbol of contemporary tears and sorrows,⁸⁷ but does not explain why.

16. Ihsān 'Abbās, Man alladhī Saraq al-Nār: Khaṭarāt fi al-Naqd wa-al-Adab, Beirut 1980.

This is a collection of various literary articles published by the author in Arab literary journals such as al-Adab and al-Adāb between 1952 and 1972. In one of them, entitled "The fingers of June and revolutionary literature" he asserts that the 1967 war had a positive effect on Arab poets, such as al-Bayyāti, Darwish and Nizār, because it impelled them to write poetry.⁸⁸ He mentions Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa and describes it as follows:

Hawāmish could not be a poem, but remained, as its author named it, commentaries: some very deep, and some like al-Bayyāti's cries and bitter satires.⁸⁹

He also mentions Manshūrāt Fidā'iyya 'alā Judrān Isrā'il, saying that it is a response to the spirit of negativism which predominates in Hawāmish, that it is more profound than it, and that it represents an exaggeration in imagery which expresses the poet's need for psychological stability more than the reality which he wishes to portray.⁹⁰

17. Muḥammad Dakrūb, al-Adab al-Jadīd wa-al-Thawra: Kitābāt Naqdiyya,

Beirut 1980.

This book discusses some questions of criticism, poetry and the short story in the Arab world in the light of the mutual relationships between literary work and society. In a chapter entitled "The popular appeal of the new poetry" the Lebanese author compares the popular appeal of Nizār with the popular appeal of Darwish, and considers that the public feels at ease with Nizār because "his poetry is clear, his words are elegant and his rhythm still has its direct ring".⁹¹ As for Darwish, he pushes the public to unsettlement and thought, because his poetry is visibly different from that of Nizār.⁹²

After this the writer praises Nizār's role in bringing poetry close to the Arab masses by turning simple language into beautiful poetic shapes, and turning poetry into daily bread.⁹³ He remarks that the distinguishing features of Nizār's poetry, in general, are clarity, directness, boldness in attitude, freedom from fanaticism, and condemnation of feudal residues.⁹⁴ He considers that his political poetry, which exploded in 1967, was dedicated to fighting backwardness and suppression.⁹⁵ He pauses over the poem al-Khiṭāb, saying that it gives an idea of Nizār's ability to condemn authorities and to consider current issues without revealing their essential nature.⁹⁶

Dakrūb's views are certainly open to discussion, but his most obvious faults are that his comparison of Darwish with Nizār lacks objective basis for its support, that he delivers general verdicts about the distinctive qualities of Nizār's poetry without demonstrating them by evidence, and that he jumps from one subject to another without giving the points he raises due discussion.

18. 'Abd al-Muḥsin Ṭāhā Badr, Hawl al-Adib wa-al-Wāqi', Cairo 1981.

This book comprises chapters on literature and experiment, realistic

literature, and Arabic poetry and human experience. It also has other chapters about Fadwā Tūqān, Nizār Qabbānī and Mutā' Şafadī. In the chapter devoted to Nizār the Egyptian writer notes that after the reverse of 1967 Nizār followed a new approach, the political approach.⁹⁷ In this context he comments upon the poem Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa and says that in it his voice is "the voice of a preacher condemning the whole of the old world in a direct and affirmative way."⁹⁸ He also comments on his poems Fath, al-Quds and Gharnā-ta, saying that in all of them he succeeded in achieving an organic synthesis between the voice of the poet and the voice of the preacher.⁹⁹

He then examines his collection Yawmiyyāt Imra'a lā-Mubāliya (1968), on which he makes the following points:

- (a) This collection contains two discordant and incompatible voices, the voice of a Don Juan who has an insatiable desire for women, and the voice of a person in revolt against her position.¹⁰⁰
- (b) It does not seem to be in the form of dairies, and the woman who speaks of herself in it is not apathetic. Indeed, the reverse is perhaps the case.¹⁰¹
- (c) Nizār does not offer in it any living and inspiring events or experiences, but only a collection of ready-made ideas (paternal tyranny, the confiscation of love and the virginity complex).¹⁰²
- (d) Nizār has failed in it to portray the Arab woman in her contemporary society, because he deals with woman in the abstract, that is, woman in every age and place.¹⁰³
- (e) Nizār treats the Eastern man too harshly, because he portrays him in

the form of a man of the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁴

(f) There are factors responsible for surrounding sex with feelings of sin and complexes which could have made the issue of woman more interesting, but Nizār has neglected them.¹⁰⁵

In our view, these points are very important but they suffer from two defects: the first is that they have no connection with Nizār's love poetry as a whole, and the second is that they fail to analyse his political poetry, and a superficial commentary on just a few of them is not sufficient to ensure a critical view of any weight.

19. Muḥammad al-Kittānī, al-Sirā' bayn al-Qadīm wa-al-Jadīd fi al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth, Casablanca 1982.

This book reviews the new currents in modern Arabic literature, especially poetry. In Chapter 4, "The struggle between the conservatives and the innovators", the Moroccan author explains that Arab poets in the forties felt the necessity of going beyond poetic traditions and boundaries and proceeded to free themselves from the fog of dreamy romanticism and the labyrinths of symbolism, and hastened to return to the reality of their society, which was wandering in the darkness of poverty, ignorance and oppression. Thus the school of Nāzik al-Malā'ika and al-Sayyāb appeared, these two being in the vanguard of the innovators.¹⁰⁶

He adds that with the publication of his first collection Qālat li al-Samrā' (194⁴), Nizār could be considered to be one of the first innovating pioneers. He goes on to say that his new poetry drew upon itself harsh criticism from society and critics at the time.¹⁰⁷ He links him with Luwīs 'Awad (b. 1915), whose first collection Blūtūlānd (Plutoland) appeared in

Cairo in 1948, saying that they created a revolution in the form of modern Arabic poetry when they smashed the rules of the old poetry.¹⁰⁸

20. Muhyi al-Din Ismā'il, Min Malāmiḥ al-'Asr, Beirut 1983.

This book contains various chapters on Arabic literature and its criticism. In a chapter entitled "A second reading of Nizār Qabbānī" the Iraqi author registers, by means of a reading of a number of poems by Nizār (which he does not specify), the following impressions:

(a) Nizār's personality in his poems is strong sometimes, and exalted at other times.¹⁰⁹

(b) His poetry relies upon the expression of the simple and the direct, and visual images which sometimes seem unconnected.¹¹⁰

(c) His poetry offers the reader a gloomy world like the gloomy world of Baudelaire.¹¹¹

(d) His poetry speaks of unparalleled nihilism, and thus "for him the world was a piece of wasteland, a piece of marble and nothing more than an aesthetic phenomenon."¹¹²

(e) His poetry is devoid of the element of rebellion, and does not reflect any kind of tragedy.¹¹³

This chapter about Nizār, as we see, is in total weak and disconnected. It is lacking in depth and in poetic examples to support it. In our view, it is a series of generalisations which cannot be accepted in any way at all.

21. Shawqī Dayf, al-Shi'r wa-Ṭawābi'uhu al-Sha'biyya 'alā Marr al-'Usūr, Cairo 1984.

The Egyptian author wishes in this book to correct the prevalent idea that Arab poets, past and present, have employed their poetry in the service of the upper classes and nobody else. Accordingly he gives some texts by various poets from the Jāhiliyya period to modern times which speak of ordinary people, their cares, relationships and activities.

In the final chapter, which is devoted to the modern period, the author explains that modern Arab poets have aligned themselves with their peoples through their attachment to certain burning issues like that of Palestine.¹¹⁴ He also says that the victory of the Arabs in the war of 1973 deepened the attachment of Arab poets to their nation, including Nizār, who was "dazzled by the victories of Damascus and Cairo and their strange wedding".¹¹⁵ He quotes a few verses from his poem Mulāḥazāt fī Zaman al-Ḥubb wa-al-Ḥarb, saying that in it Nizār developed a marvellous image of the beloved who ruled his heart, so that at the moment the canal was crossed he thought that it was her wedding-day.¹¹⁶ This commentary, with its few words, does not penetrate, unfortunately, to the depths of this long poem, and does not constitute an analysis of it.

22. Yūsuf Nawfal, al Sūra al-Shi'riyya wa-Istiḥā' al-Alwān, Cairo 1985.

The Egyptian writer explores the role of colours in the poetry of Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1828-1904), Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr (1931-1981) and Nizār Qabbānī. The works of Nizār which he has selected are Qālat li al-Samrā' (1944), Sāmbā (1949), Anti Li (1950), Qaṣā'id (1956) and Yawmiyyāt Imra'a lā-Mubāliya (1968).

In the first chapter, "The use of colours between art and science", the author quotes some of the ideas of al-Jāhiz, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Kindī, Ibn Khaldūn and Freud about colours,¹¹⁷ without connecting them or deriving anything clear or intelligible from them.

In chapter 2, "Drawing with words between the outer and the inner", he brings out three points, which are: Nizār's great eagerness in his poetry to use colour to load his poetic image with force and effect;¹¹⁸ al-Bārūdī's imitation of the forms and colours found in classical poetry, especially that of al-Mutanabbī, al-Buḥturī and Abū Nuwās;¹¹⁹ and the lack of attention on the part of 'Abd al-Ṣabūr in his poetry to colour in comparison with Nizār and al-Bārūdī.¹²⁰

In the third chapter, "The picture between colours", the author registers the following points:

(a) Nizār: The colour red has a strong influence on Nizār. It is the commonest colour in his poetry and appears in everything connected with woman, especially her body, such as her cheeks, her breasts and her mouth.¹²¹ It is followed in importance by white, which appears in images of candles, pearls, jasmine, marble, the sun and milk.¹²² As for other colours, green, black and blue, they are less widespread in his poetry, and each has a special reference - green is the colour of optimism,¹²³ black is the colour of beautiful hair, tresses and kohl, and also the colour of pessimism and sorrow¹²⁴ and blue is the colour of imagination and dreaming.¹²⁵ The writer goes on to speak a little more of Nizār, denying that he is a symbolist poet because he is dominated by sensualism.¹²⁶ He accuses him of having a narrow poetic horizon, of having a limited range of linguistic expression, of superficiality in his love poetry, and of sometimes repeating certain words.¹²⁷ These are accusations which are open to serious query, with perhaps the exception of the final point.

(b) al-Bārūdī: the colours which influence him most are black, white and red. They are derived from the worlds of death, women, the stars, horses, and wine.¹²⁸ Here the writer notes that al-Bārūdī's view of colour differs from that of Nizār, since colour for al-Bārūdī is an element of the poetic image, and not an objective in itself. As for Nizār, he gives it preference over other elements in his poetry.¹²⁹ The writer does not explain this idea here, but throws it at us as an accepted fact.

(c) 'Abd al-Ṣabūr: The colour which influences him most is black. It occurs in his poetry in conjunction with particular words which inspire sorrow like mu'tim (gloomy) ghamāma (cloud), dayjūr (darkness) ramādī (ashen) etc.¹³⁰ The writer ascribes the use of this colour by the poet to his sorrow over and anger at his society, and to his being influenced by Eliot, especially his Waste Land.¹³¹ As for the other colours less frequently used by 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, these are white (for good and purity),¹³² green (for hope)¹³³ and red (for beauty and freshness).¹³⁴

The idea of investigating colour in Arabic poetry is a new one which deserves to be looked at, but the writer has not been successful in reviewing it for a number of reasons; he gives only a few partial examples which are insufficient to prove his views (sometimes he does not give any examples); he neglects method and a recognisable scientific approach, so that his quotations are so mixed up with his comments that it is almost impossible to tell which is which; most of the time he is concerned with linguistic explanation of the poetry without analysing it in a rational manner, and without making any connection between his ideas and the images in the poetry; and he employs in his writing a bad style which is lacking in fluency and clarity, two necessary conditions for conveying information to the reader.

23. Nasim Mujalli, Qadāyā al-Ibdā' wa-al-Naqd, Cairo 1987.

This book consists of a number of critical articles published between 1975 and 1985 in the Egyptian literary journals al-Kātib, al-Thaqāfa, al-Hilāl and al-Qāhira. The articles fall into two divisions: a quick review of the works of Eliot, Brecht, Jean Anouilh, Tāhā Ḥusayn and Ṣalāh 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, and discussions of certain current critical views.

Under the heading "al-Bayyātī between Ṣalāh 'Abd al-Ṣabūr and Nizār Qabbānī", the Egyptian writer refers to al-Bayyātī's attack, which has no logical justification, upon 'Abd al-Ṣabūr and Nizār (al-Hilāl, February, 1977) where he claims that they are not poets.¹³⁵ He says that al-Bayyātī has erased the two greatest names in modern Arabic poetry and driven them from the realm of poetry, and seated himself on the throne alone without any competitor or peer.¹³⁶ After this he proceeds to refute al-Bayyātī, showing the position of these two poets in the modern poetic movement. He begins with 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, extolling his verse dramas (Ma'sāt al-Hallāj, Laylā wa-Majnūn, Musāfir Layl and al-Amira Tantazir), his ability in their composition and his superiority over his fellow poets in this branch of the art.¹³⁷

As for Nizār, he restricts himself to saying:

I believe that he is a great poet of the modern school, who has been able to reach the millions with the elegance of his language and to make a new leap in the world of Arabic song... and has also been able, after the setback of the 5th of June, to stir up with his political poetry the strongest of storms and tempests.¹³⁸

After this the writer draws attention to the fact that al-Bayyātī's denial of the poeticality of 'Abd al-Ṣabūr and Nizār has nothing to do with criticism, but is a kind of personal defamation marked by bitterness and harshness, which reminds us of the satires of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq.¹³⁹ He

also draws attention to the fact that this attack is something regrettable which does not benefit life or culture but simply adds more partiality and rancour to it.¹⁴⁰

We should now emphasise two facts connected to all the above studies: firstly, that they come in the form of impressions or brief commentaries which are lacking in depth, and secondly that they do not deal with all Nizār's poetry, either political or love poetry. Perhaps we can now say that the shortcomings of what has been written about Nizār and the lack of any comprehensive study of him are two of the main reasons, in addition to those given above, for our choice of him as the subject of this thesis.

IV

SOURCES

The sources for this study are very varied. They can be divided into two categories:

1. Primary sources

These are the works of Nizār Qabbānī, which may be divided into the following groups:

(a) Al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila

The third volume of the collected works, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, published in Beirut in 1985, (653 pp.) is the chief and primary source upon which this thesis has been built. Accordingly it has been subjected to

detailed analysis and has been translated in full. Volumes I and II, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila I, Beirut 1979, and al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila II, Beirut 1983, are devoted to love poetry. Nevertheless, both volumes have been carefully read in order to extract from them whatever is relevant, closely or distantly, to the subject of the present work.

To al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila I I have added three other works by Nizār which are directly relevant to this thesis: Bayrūt Tahtariq wa-Uhibbuki from the collection Ilā Bayrūt al-Unthā ma'a Hubbi, Beirut 1981. (All of the poems in this collection are to be found in al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila with the exception of the above poem); the poem Qaṣīdat Bilqīs, Beirut 1981, a long elegy; and Thulāthiyyat Aṭfāl al-Hijāra, Beirut 1988, three poems on the Palestinian intifāda.

It is also worth pointing out that we have made use of several poems from the collection Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, Beirut 1987, in the critical part of this thesis without translating them. There was a strong reason for making use of these poems, which was the occasional need to give supporting evidence for a particular opinion of argument.

Since Nizār is an extremely prolific poet, and this thesis had to be limited in terms of volume, we have had to respect its limitations, so that it has been impossible to introduce everything which Nizār has written. For this reason we have decided to stop at Thulāthiyyat Aṭfāl al-Hijāra, regarding this as the dividing line at which we must stop. Thus other works of Nizār have remained outside the scope of this study, i.e. the following collections: Sa-Yabqā al-Hubb Sayyidi, Beirut 1986, al-Sira al-Dhātiyya li-Sayyāf 'Arabi, London 1987, and Tazawajtuki ayyatuhā al-Hurriyya, Beirut 1988. All of these revolve around two major pivots - suppression and freedom in Arab society and exile and spiritual alienation. These two pivots deserve a special serious

study, which we intend to undertake in the future.

(b) Autobiography

In the book Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, Nizār wrote the story of his life, believing that he was the best qualified person to do it. This is a useful literary work, but in it Nizār fell into many errors, including the following:

(i) He turns it into a vehicle for the dissemination of his own ideas about poetry instead of making it a really valuable account of his personal life. Thus the first quarter of the book is devoted to a brief account of his life, while the rest is devoted to an account of his ideas on poetry.

(ii) He does not provide much factual information about himself. For example, there is not a word in the book about his first wife or his children by her, or his feelings about them as a father. Nor is there any mention of his feelings about the Syrian Ba'th party or its policies.

(iii) He is fascinated by himself, admires himself and promotes himself in a narcissistic fashion. He always sees himself as the centre of attention, whether as a child or as an adult.¹⁴¹ He is always aware of his own superiority, even in the presence of kings.¹⁴²

(iv) He commits some obvious mistakes, such as his claim that autobiography is almost unknown in Arabic literature,¹⁴³ his claim that he is the inventor of something which he calls the "third language", which is an eloquent simplified language lying between the literary and colloquial languages, though he was preceded in this by Tawfiq al-Hakim,¹⁴⁴ and his claim that the Muslim Arabs did not know meditation and philosophy.¹⁴⁵

(c) Critical works

Nizār is known as a poet, not a critic. Many people would be surprised to know that he is an excellent critic and that he has several works on theoretical criticism:

(i) 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, Beirut, 1972.

This is a long interview which the Lebanese critic Munir al-'Aksh held with Nizār in Beirut in October 1971. In it Nizār gives his responses to three main topics - poetry, the Arab woman between the residues of the past and the new values of liberation, and the inevitability of revolt against traditional structures in Arab Society.

(ii) al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, Beirut 1973.

This contains his long poem Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya, articles on some of the faults of the classical poem and on the attitudes of conservatives and innovators to modern poetry, and some short literary letters to his beloved. All of these writings go back to the fifties and sixties.

(iii) Mā huwa al-Shi'r?, Beirut 1981.

Perhaps this is the most important of his critical works. In it Nizār registers everything which goes through his mind on the definition of poetry, his relationship to it, his poetic public, his vocabulary, the prose poem, and poetry readings.

(iv) al-Mar'a fi Shi'ri wa-fi Hayāti, Beirut 1982.

This contains the interviews which Nizār gave to Arab newspapers and television stations in which he indicates his various views and attitudes to the Arab woman, especially as regards woman and love, the liberated woman and woman

and male dominance.

- (v) al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl. Beirut 1980.

These are the talks which Nizār gave in various Arab capitals (Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad, Cairo, Khartoum, Algiers, Abu Dhabi and Tripoli) before reading his poetry. They can truly be regarded as basic preliminaries for the understanding of his poetry.

- (d) Journalistic articles

These have been gathered together in three books:

- (i) al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī. Beirut 1979.

These are the articles published in the journal al-Usbū' al-'Arabi (Beirut) in the years 1973, 1974 and 1975. They are concerned with the October War, the Palestinian struggle, his critical ideas on poetry, and the death of his son Tawfiq.

- (ii) Shay' min al-Nathr. Beirut 1979.

These are the articles published in the journal al-Hawādith (Beirut) in the years 1977 and 1978. They are concerned with Camp David, Sadat, American policy in the Middle East, the Lebanese civil war, Israeli raids on South Lebanon, and the alliance between Israel and America.

- (iii) Wa-al- Kalimāt Ta'rif al-Ghadab. Beirut 1983. (2 Vols)

These are the articles published in the journal al-Mustaqbal (Paris) in 1982. They are concerned with current Arab politics, America and the Arabs, Egypt and the Arabs, the Palestinian problem, Israeli arrogance, and Israeli raids on Lebanon.

- (e) His impressions of the Lebanese Civil War.

Nizār recorded these impressions in a separate book, Yawmiyyāt Madīna Kāna Ismuhā Bayrūt, Beirut 1981, in which he summarises his point of view on: the civil war, sectarianism, the oscillation of Lebanon between the Arabs and Europe, Israeli intervention in the war, and his immense sorrow at the conflict between brothers which did not reach any decisive conclusion.

2. Secondary Sources

These comprise the following: the diwāns of certain Arab poets, studies on Syrian literature, studies on Arabic poetry and literature, Arab literary and intellectual journals, studies on the history of Syria, Arab encyclopedias, and the Encyclopedia of Islam (E.I.) These sources are mentioned at the end of the thesis.

FOOTNOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Nizār Qabbāni, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, p.193.
2. Ibid., p.195.
3. Ahmad Abū Sa'd, "Harakat al-Shi'r al-'Arabi al-Ḥadith: Qiyamuhā wa-Ittijāhātuhā wa-Tatawwurhā", al-Adāb, Beirut, no. 4, year 12, April 1973, p.69.
4. There are four of these studies: two unavailable books by Muhyi al-Din Subhi, Nizār Qabbāni Shā'iran wa-Insānan, Beirut 1958 and al-Kawn al-Shi'ri 'inda Nizār Qabbāni, Beirut 1961; and two books which the civil war circumstances in Beirut have made it impossible to obtain. The first is Christo Najm, al-Narjisiyya fi Adab Nizār Qabbāni, a Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Jesuit University in Beirut, date unknown. According to the Syrian newspaper al-Ba'th, the thesis contains five main chapters, each chapter representing a stage in Nizār's love poetry. The chapters are: "Thirst and hunger: 1944-1950", represented by Qālat li al-Samrā', Tufūlat Nahd, Sāmbā and Anti li; "Between self and others: 1956 - 1968", represented by Habibatī and Yawmiyyāt Imra'a lā-Mubāliya; "Satiety and introversion: 1969-1970", represented by Qaṣā'id Mutawāḥhisha; "Indigestion and bankruptcy of feeling: 1970-1972", represented by Ash'ār Khārija 'alā al-Qānūn; and "Sexual anxiety: 1977-1981", represented by Kull 'Am wa-anti Habibatī, Uhibbuki Uhibbuki wa-al-Baqiyya Ta'ti, Ashhadu an lā Imra'a illā Anti, Hākadhā Aktubu Tārikh al-Nisā' and Qāmūs al-'Ashiqin. See al-Ba'th, Damascus, no. 7626, 13 March 1988, p.9. The second is Shākir al-Nābulusi, al-Daw' wa-al-Lu'ba: Istiknāh Naqdi li-Nizār Qabbāni, Beirut 1986. We may observe that Nizār commented upon this book as follows:

An oil critic wrote a book about me... which consisted of a collection of poisons. When you look for this critic, you find that he works as a newspaper critic in the morning and works for Aramco in the afternoon. Let me say frankly that nowadays oil culture has become a source of danger to all Arab creative writers.

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52. Ibid., pp.210-211.
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66. Ibid., p.275-276.
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CHAPTER ONE

NIZAR QABBANI; HIS LIFE AND CULTURAL FORMATION.

The first section of this chapter gives a brief account of Nizār Qabbāni's aut. biography from his birth in Damascus in 1923 to the present day. The reader will find that his life is divided into four major parts: the stage of Damascus, the stage of diplomatic work in the Syrian Foreign Ministry, the stage of Beirut and the stage of homelessness and exile.

The first stage, the stage of childhood, adolescence and young manhood, is also the stage of growing awareness of the social and political experiences through which Syria lived during the French Mandate until independence in 1946. We shall see that the second stage of movement from one country to another was one of discovery of the culture and customs of various nations. It was an important stage which had the effect of polishing his character and ripening his awareness of life and people. It will be seen below that the third stage was that in which Nizār adopted Beirut as his centre for writing and printing his poetry and distributing it to the Arab world. Beirut was the centre which lay behind a success and fame which no other modern Arab poet at all was able to achieve. The fourth stage began to take form a few days before the Israeli invasion of 1982 and continues to the present day.

The second section of this chapter discusses the sources of Nizār's general cultural formation. We shall see that there are three of them: Classical Arabic literature, contemporary Arab culture, and Western culture.

We should mention here that we have not been able to obtain any extensive information from Nizār himself about his life. We have noticed during our correspondence with him that he has neglected to reply to some of

our questions and has given us no opportunities to become acquainted with his secret depths. Nevertheless we have been able, with the available information, to produce this short but, we hope, interesting chapter, which is perhaps the first near-complete account of his life and cultural formation to date.

I

HIS LIFE

As we have mentioned, Nizār Qabbānī's life falls into four main stages; the Damascus stage, the diplomatic stage, the Beirut stage and the present stage. In the following pages there will be a detailed discussion of each of these stages.

1. The Damascus stage

This lasted from 1923 to 1945, and may be described as follows.

(a) Birth and early years

Nizār¹ Tawfiq Qabbānī² was born on 21 March 1923 in the quarter of Mi'dhanat al-Shahm³ which is situated in the heart of old Damascus. At the time Syria was under the French mandate, which was imposed after the victory of the French forces under General Gouraud over the Syrian army led by Yūsuf al-'Azma (1884-1920) at the battle of Maysalūn on 24 July 1920.⁴

The year in which Nizār was born (1923) was filled with internal crises and acute disturbances. Syria was split up into little statelets (the state of Damascus, the state of Aleppo, the 'Alawī state and the state of Jabal

al-Durūz) and this aroused widespread protests among the Syrian people and led to resistance against the French.⁵ The French High Commissioner attempted to alleviate the anger of the Syrians by issuing on 5 January 1924 a decree announcing the creation of a Syrian republic in which he emphasised that France would observe the terms of the Mandate but that any decrees issued would be dependent upon his agreement first and last.⁶

The Syrians rejected the High Commissioner's decree, and their rejection became even more determined with the revolt of Sulṭān Pasha al-Aṭrash (1891-1982) and his victories over the French in the Jabal al-Durūz in July and August 1925. The entire population of the Jabal al-Durūz rallied around the banner of this revolt,⁷ and its spirit very soon spread to Syrian towns and villages. Syrian nationalist leaders began to volunteer to serve in its ranks, and this gave it the character of a national uprising.⁸ Its basic demands can be summed up as follows; recognition of complete independence, abolition of the Mandate, the formation of a constituent body to draw up a democratic constitution for the country, and the ending of military rule.⁹

The city of Damascus, where Nizār Qabbānī's family lived, was engulfed by the revolt, whose first spark appeared in the city on 18 October 1925.¹⁰ At that time the revolt contained in its ranks, in addition to the nationalists, many of those who were in revolt against law and order.¹¹ Nizār's father, Tawfiq Qabbānī (1895-1955) was one of those who gave this revolt moral support.¹²

Tawfiq Qabbānī belonged to the middle class¹³ of Damascus. He owned a sweetmeat factory in Mu'āwiya Street, one of the old streets of Damascus. His work in this street gave him the opportunity to be in close contact with the tradesmen and the shopkeepers. These men were, for the most part, and in one way or another, engaged in the struggle against the French.¹⁴

It may be noted that his father began to support the nationalist movement during the 1930s. His activity was restricted to offering financial support, holding meetings, public and secret, and exhorting the people against the French. Nizār did not have any role to play as he was still a young child. Describing this period, he says:

The leaders of the various quarters of Damascus, who were merchants, tradesmen and shopkeepers, financed the nationalist movement and led it from their shops and houses. My father, Tawfiq Qabbāni, was one of these men, and our house was one of those houses. How often I sat in the spacious courtyard of our eastern house, listening with abundant, childish enthusiasm to the Syrian political leaders as they stood in the portico of our house or made speeches in front of thousands of men, calling for opposition to the French occupation and urging them on to revolt for the sake of freedom. In our house in the quarter of Mi'dhanat al-Shahm political meetings were held behind closed doors, and plans were made for strikes, demonstrations and ways of conducting resistance. Behind the doors we eavesdropped on whispers, but understood hardly anything.¹⁵

It may be useful to mention that Tawfiq Qabbāni's relationship with the members of the nationalist resistance grew stronger later on when he himself came into contact with the quarter of al-Shāghūr¹⁶ which was close to his house in the quarter of Mi'dhanat al-Shahm.¹⁷ This quarter was a stronghold of resistance to the French.¹⁸ It seems that Tawfiq Qabbāni's activities against the French led in the beginning of the 1930s to his spending a period in prison. Recording this, Nizār says:

When I saw the Senegalese troops entering our house in the early hours of the morning with rifles and bayonets and taking my father with them in an armoured car to the desert prison camp in Palmyra, I knew that my father was engaged in other business than the manufacture of sweetmeats. He was engaged in the business of freedom.¹⁹

There are three points here which are worthy of mention:

(i) Nizār grew up in an atmosphere of political tension and struggle between the Syrians and the French. He was influenced by his surroundings and responded to them with observation and reflection. Perhaps this atmosphere did not permit him, relatively speaking, to live an innocent, peaceful childhood like other more fortunate children. Perhaps this atmosphere itself had an indirect influence on his psychological formation and his inclination to political poetry, and his specialisation in it in manhood.

(ii) His father's immersion in political activity prevented him from spending much time with him. This weak relationship between himself and his father strengthened his relationship with his mother.²⁰ She considered him, he says, her favourite son, singled him out over his other brothers by giving him presents, and answered his childish demands without complaint or grumbling.²¹ He mentions that she continued to breast-feed him until his seventh year²² and to feed him with her own hands until he was thirteen.²³

(iii) The beauty of nature in the quarter of Mi'dhanat al-Shahm was a centre of attraction for Nizār during his childhood. His house was surrounded by a large garden full of Seville oranges, jasmine, carnations and dahlias. Around this garden was a large green belt.²⁴ This environment left an impression on Nizār. On the one hand, it made him attached to natural beauty, and on the other it inclined him to contemplation and solitude:

Within this green belt I was born, crawled and spoke my first words. My collision with beauty was an everyday fate. When I stumbled, I stumbled over a pigeon's wing, and when I fell, I fell into the lap of a rose. This beautiful Damascene house overpowered all my emotions and took away from me the pleasure of going out into the street... from this there arose in me that domestic feeling which has accompanied me through all the stages of my life.²⁵

(b) School-days

In 1930 the young Nizār Qabbānī, then aged 7, entered the first school in his life,²⁶ the National Scientific College²⁷ in Damascus. This college lay only a few paces away from his house in Mi'dhanat al-Shahm. The young Nizār saw it as a natural extension of his house.²⁸

It is known that this school was a private teaching establishment which was frequented by the sons of the middle class in Damascus, merchants, farmers, office workers and professional men.²⁹ In its teaching policy it relied on a combination of two cultures, Arab and French. Nizār went to it in accordance with the wishes of his father:

My father's nationalist and Islamic feelings played their role in his wise decision to send us to a school which combined the two cultures. My father's commitment to the nationalist line on the one hand and his desire that our education should be engrafted and opened to the world on the other dictated to him that he should grasp the stick by the middle, and act in a manner that was national and cultural at the same time.³⁰

The influence of this school upon the young Nizār was great. It introduced him to a new language, French, and compelled him to master it completely.³¹ Through this language he came to know some of the French literary men like Corneille, Molière, Racine, Victor Hugo, Dumas, Baudelaire and Valéry.³² It also introduced him to the great poet Khalil Mardam (1895-1959)³³ who was the teacher of Arabic language and literature there. He worked skillfully to bring Arabic poetry closer to the minds of his pupils, among them Nizār Qabbānī. Nizār was attached to his teacher and became devoted to poetry as a result of his influence.³⁴ Speaking of Khalil Mardam's effect on his poetic formation he says:

It was my good fortune that I was among the pupils who were cared for

by this poet who was endowed with extreme poetic sensibility... and who guided them to the enchanted forests in which poetry lives. I am indebted to Khalil Mardam for that excellent store of poetry which he left in the layers of my inner mind. If poetic taste is a lump of dough which is shaped by what we see, hear and read in our childhood, then Khalil Mardam had the great merit of sowing the rose of poetry beneath my skin and preparing the leavens which formed my poetic cells and tissues.³⁵

It is interesting to note that during his time at this school he took part with the pupils of other schools in a prolonged strike in the year 1936.³⁶ In this year the Syrians rose up and demanded their independence, the whole country went on strike for sixty days, noisy demonstrations took place and a number of people were killed or wounded.³⁷ After this the French Popular Front Government declared their willingness to negotiate with the Syrian nationalists and to conclude an agreement with them which would specify Syrian independence within the space of three years. At the end of March 1936 a Syrian delegation went to Paris and reached an agreement with the French to conclude a treaty of friendship and alliance on 9 September 1936. The agreement stipulated French recognition of Syrian independence but at the same time preserved practical French rule over the country. After this agreement, Hāshim al-Atāsī (1875-1960) was elected president of the Syrian republic.³⁸

From his Arabic teacher Nizār heard the word "independence". Independence was his hope, as it was of all the pupils in his school. It pained him to see, on his way to school or home, groups of French soldiers patrolling the streets or arresting the inhabitants. His father warned him constantly of the danger posed by colonialism and of man's need to live freely, honourably, and without fetters.³⁹

In the summer of 1939 Nizār graduated from the National Scientific College at the age of about sixteen, having obtained a certificate of the first baccalaureate.⁴⁰ In the same summer of 1939 he went to Italy on a

school journey in the hope that he would learn something about individual independence and self-reliance. Nizār loved this journey. It lasted for about two weeks, but suddenly the first signs of the Second World War appeared on the horizon, and the Italian authorities were compelled to put him and his schoolmates on the first steamer travelling to Beirut.⁴¹ When the summer of 1939 came to an end Nizār transferred to the Pre-University School in Damascus, and spent two years there, graduating in 1941 with a certificate of second baccalaureate.⁴²

During his study at this school France entered the Second World War, on the allied side. Syrians began to discuss the possibility of liberation from France, believing that this war would weaken France sufficiently to compel her to withdraw peacefully from Syria. However things did not turn out this way. The French continued to run Syria by their traditional methods. But the Syrians did not forget their first goal, which was the demand for independence for the country.⁴³

(c) In the Syrian University

In the academic year 1941/42 Nizār Qabbāni enrolled in the Law School in the Syrian University⁴⁴ to study law.⁴⁵ It seems that he did not particularly wish to study law, but saw it as a means of obtaining a suitable government post, since at that time law graduates were more successful than others in obtaining white-collar employment.⁴⁶

Nizār's attachment to his subjects of study was not all that could be hoped for. He found great difficulty in understanding Roman Law, International Law, Constitutional Law and Political Economy.⁴⁷ He would have liked to have escaped from them all into a world of poetry, in which he began to take his first steps, but he was not able to do so. Thus the subjects of

his study lay upon his chest like walls of lead. He memorised the various laws like somebody swallowing a capsule which he must swallow.⁴⁸ By about the end of the first year Nizār's personality had developed noticeably in two directions. The first of these was a feeling of personal independence. During this stage his reliance on his parents lessened, he built new relationships within the university and he became powerfully aware of the existence of women around him:

When I reached the stage of manhood and began to yearn for the other sex, I read a sign on which was written, "Do not play with girls, boys." Since they were telling me not to play with girls, I decided to play with them.⁴⁹

The second was a romantic revolt against his society, with its rules, customs and moral and religious values. He used to find pleasure in examining the prevailing faults in his society and talking about them to his colleagues. He became very inclined to criticise and debate the views which presented themselves to him. He no longer accepted, as he had done previously, everything which was said to him. Now he had his own views, which he sometimes upheld fanatically.⁵⁰

It may be noted that Nizār's interest in politics grew relatively weaker at the beginning of the forties (1943/1944) since he was giving more attention to the writing of poetry, sometimes at the expense of his university studies. In September 1944 he had completed twenty-eight full-length poems and shorter pieces and had gathered them together in a small book with the title Qālat li al-Samrā'. He gave these to a printing-house in Damascus and 300 copies were printed, whose cost he paid from his own funds.⁵¹ Nizār felt pleased with himself because he had printed the first book in his life, and this encouraged him to prepare another book. He wrote a few scattered poems, but was prevented from putting his project into effect by the events

which took place in May 1945.⁵² In this year the Syrians demanded complete independence for their country, the formation of a national army and the evacuation of French forces from Syrian territory. However, France did not meet any of these demands.⁵³ As a result there were violent demonstrations, and sporadic clashes took place between Syrians and French. On the evening of 29 May 1945, French troops killed 28 Syrians guarding the National Assembly and shelled and bombed Damascus. Further demonstrations took place in Aleppo, Idlib and Dayr al-Zawr. The number of Syrians killed in the months of May and June 1945 came to 616 dead, while 2,072 were wounded.⁵⁴

These events did not prevent Nizār from taking his final examinations in the Syrian University, despite the deep sorrow at the Syrian losses which wrung his heart. When he learned that he had been successful he was not completely happy, because he was seized by another secret care. He wanted to see his country free from the French, and wanted a different, free life far away from tension and clashes.⁵⁵

In no more than a few months, his dream had come true. French actions in Syria attracted the disapproval of many countries, especially the British and American governments. On 15 February 1946 Syria made a complaint to the Security Council against France and demanded the immediate evacuation of foreign troops. Within two days a decision was made to comply with her demands. Syria celebrated the evacuation on 17 April 1946.⁵⁶ Nizār's joy at this cannot be described. He expressed his happiness and his deep identification with his country at that time in these words:

For my country and her stars,
 For her clouds, her fragrance and her dew
 I have poured out the vials of my colour in rivers
 Over my green country, for whom I would give my life.⁵⁷

2. The diplomatic stage

The second stage of Nizār Qabbānī's life begins when he joined the Syrian diplomatic corps in August 1945. During this stage Nizār spent about twenty years moving from one country to another. A detailed account of this stage follows below.

(a) Cairo (1945-1948)

In October 1945 Nizār was appointed an assistant to the cultural attaché in the Syrian embassy in Cairo, "the flower of cities, the capital of Arab capitals and a garden of thought and art without rival."⁵⁸ He was then about twenty-two years of age. He spent three years in Cairo, during which he was able to develop his poetry and widen his culture:

Cairo polished my perceptions, my eyes and my poetic language. It liberated me from the desert dust which had accumulated over my skin.⁵⁹

In Cairo Nizār came into contact with literary and artistic circles and became acquainted with the dramatist Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), the writer Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Qādir al-Māzinī (1889-1949), the poet Ibrāhīm Nāji (1898-1952), the poet Ḥmad Rāmī (b. 1920) and the critic Anwar al-Ma'addāwī (1920-1965).⁶⁰ In Cairo he printed his second collection, Tufūlat Nahd (1948), a collection of love poetry, in which his poetry developed from a description of stolen glances and love from afar to one of sexual encounters and naked women. For instance he says in his poem 'Ind Imra'a:

She was, then, stretched out
And the fireplace complained,
The forests wept
And the gulf foamed;
And within my heart was a cloud



Weeping, and black snow.⁶¹

(b) Ankara (1949-1951)

Nizār worked in the Syrian embassy in Ankara during the period 1949-1951. These were tense years in his life,⁶² since in this period he was alarmed and disturbed by the political and economic collapse in Syria and the occurrence of a series of military coups.⁶³ It appears that these coups distracted Nizār so much that he was not able to acquaint himself very fully with Turkish culture at first hand. However from time to time he visited the Islamic monuments of Turkey, especially in Istanbul, to look at them and to provide him with an excursion. Despite all the psychological pressures which swept over him in Ankara he was able to write two works which were later published in Beirut. These are a long poem entitled Sāmbā (1949) and the collection Anti lī (1950).⁶⁴ They are both about love.

(c) London (1952-1955)

In spring 1952, Nizār moved to the Syrian embassy in London. At that time political conditions in Syria were still in a state of disarray.⁶⁵ While in London Nizār was acutely aware of what was happening in Syria and suffered pain because of it. However he decided to make use of whatever London could offer him. He tried to clear his mind of the cares of his country and to interact with the new environment there.⁶⁶ Thus: "the grey skies rained upon his sheets of paper and his notebooks and the sun of the East disappeared behind the thick London fog".⁶⁷

In England Nizār found what he could not find in any other country. He found there a different culture, a firm sense of order and unlimited freedom. He spent four years there, during which he learned English, and was utterly

happy. Speaking of his life in London, he says:

The English experience placed me in a human and cultural framework of which I was of the most pressing need. In the Royal Festival Hall and the Albert Hall I lived with the most beautiful music in the world. In the Kent countryside, on the beach at Bournemouth and Brighton, on the ferries from Calais to Dover, on the green grass, on the walls of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and in the London theatres which bear all the glories of the Victorian period, I spent the most fruitful days of my life. London gave me intellectual peace of mind, its rains washed my thirsty eastern vegetation, and its limitless green open spaces gave me my first lessons in freedom. In this school of freedom I wrote my best poetic work, and that most linked to man, Qaṣā'id.⁶⁸

Indeed, his collection Qaṣā'id (1956) does contain something different from that which is found in his previous collections. In it the critic can feel certain influences of London life on the poet and his poetry. Among these influences are his discussion of swift emotional and sexual encounters with women (the poems Ilā Ṣadiqa Jadida⁶⁹, Risāla min Sayyida Hāqida⁷⁰), his introduction to sex, wine and the bohemian life ('Awdat Aylūl⁷¹), references to Christmas parties and the exchange of Christmas cards ('Id Milādiḥā⁷²), portrayal of treachery between male and female and dancing in night-clubs (Tawq al-Yāsamin⁷³), insistent discussion of cheap sex (Hublā, 74 Aw'iyat al-Ṣadīd⁷⁵, Ilā Ajira⁷⁶) and portrayal of two Lesbians making love while he watches them from the door (al-Qaṣida al-Shirriḥa⁷⁷). Nizār ended his term of duty in London at the end of 1955 and returned to Syria, where his father died shortly after. He composed an elegy on him in his poem Abī in which he says:

Has your father died?
That is wrong - my father does not die
For in the house there are
Fragrances of God and remembrance of the Prophet from him;
This is his corner, those are his things
Splitting open to reveal a thousand young branches,
His newspaper, his tobacco, his sofa,
As though my father had not yet gone yet,
The ashtray, his cup,
Not yet drunk from;
I have carried you in my eyes' consciousness until

It seems possible to people that I am my father.
 I carry you even in the intonation of my voice
 So how can you have gone, when you are still with me?⁷⁸

(d) China (1958-1960)⁷⁹

Nizār was transferred to the Syrian embassy in Peking in February 1958 and worked there until the end of 1960.⁸⁰ It seems that his life there was different from his life in Cairo, Ankara or London. In Peking Nizār suffered from two major problems, the first of which was isolation. He could not establish links with Chinese everyday life, get to know the Chinese people or benefit from Chinese thought or literature. Probably the severe restrictions imposed on diplomats were the main reason for this.⁸¹ On this subject, he mentions that his travels in China were restricted and did not extend beyond Peking and its suburbs. He never went on any journey by himself, but always travelled with other diplomats on "diplomatic journeys" arranged by the Bureau of Protocol in the Chinese Foreign Ministry.⁸² He says that he used to move on these journeys like an elementary school pupil going on an excursion with his headmaster.⁸³ He expressed his isolation in Chinese society, his longing to break through it and get to know China from close up, and his failure to do so in the following words:

I wanted to sit down by myself under a Chinese bamboo tree, or smell a lotus flower by myself, or to take a child with Chinese eyes into my arms. But my childish longings were impossible to realise. All the bamboo trees, all the lotus flowers and all the children in China do not talk to foreigners. If they do talk, there must be an official interpreter there who records what they say in a file. I wanted to see the Chinese as they really are - how they laugh, how they sing, how they paint beautiful dishes and how they drink jasmine tea... but I failed. I am very sad that I failed.⁸⁴

His second problem was sadness. This was a direct result of his isolation and his frustration. Thus he says:

I was overwhelmed by sadness for the first time in South-East Asia, like a seagull with wet wings, for I had not met it before... In China the flowers of pallor opened on my notebooks and grew so large that my pages became a forest of tears.⁸⁵

Nizār embodied his isolation and his sadness in two poems, Nahr al-Aḥzān and Thalāth Biṭāqāt min Asiyā. In them we read of a destructive feeling of futility, isolation, doubt and loss of direction. In the first he says:

My ships in the harbour are weeping,
Tearing themselves to pieces above the gulfs
My yellow destiny has smashed me,
Smashed my faith in my heart.
I am a non-existent person
Who does not know my place in the world.
My history? I have no history!
I am oblivious of oblivion.
I am an anchor which does not anchor,
A wound with the features of a man.
What can I give you? Answer me!
My unrest? My disbelief? My nausea?
What can I give you but a fate
Which dances in the hand of Satan?⁸⁶

In the other poem he says:

My turquoise, I am still in my ships
Wrestling with suns, bandits and seasickness
I have put into ports with poisoned waters
I have prayed in temples which have no god
And I have tasted the cheapest wine,
The cheapest lips.
I have been killed a thousand times
I have drowned a thousand times
I have been crucified on the wall of the day
And I have crossed seven of the widest seas;
Of the most dangerous seas.⁸⁷

One of the results of Nizār's isolation and misery in China is his eighth collection, Yawmiyyāt Imra'a Lā-Mubāliya (printed in Beirut 1968, about ten years after it was written). In it Nizār takes on the personality

of a woman from the Arab East who revolts against the authority of her father and all inherited social traditions, sanctifies sex in human life, wishes for fertility, waits for a man, and revolts even against herself because she is a woman.⁸⁸

(e) Spain (1962-1966)

In 1962 Nizār Qabbānī moved from Beirut⁸⁹ to Madrid. When he reached it he felt a strong sense of affinity with it.⁹⁰ For him Spain was a new window through which he could see the world and people anew, especially after his bitter isolation in China. Here he achieved a number of new objectives. He learned Spanish and became very proficient in it,⁹¹ he established firm relationships with Spanish orientalists, especially Pedro Martínez Montávez, who translated some of his poems in a book called Arab Love Poetry,⁹² and in addition to this he became acquainted with Spanish poetry, especially that of Lorca.⁹³ In this way Spanish society was opened up to him, and his life in Spain became pure enjoyment. He calls the period which he spent there, up to the summer of 1966, his "rosy period".⁹⁴

(f) The end of the diplomatic stage

In January 1966, during his stay in Spain, Nizār began to feel that the diplomatic life did not suit him. This feeling appears to have grown in him after all his previous collections had been published, especially Qasā'id (1956) and Habibatī (1961).⁹⁵ In short, Nizār felt that he was divided into two personalities, that of the poet and that of the diplomat. These two personalities clashed and utterly contradicted one another. While the personality of the poet represented truth and reality, the personality of the diplomat represented untruth, hypocrisy and deceit. It was nothing but a wax mask, he says, which he put on unwillingly for social occasions and diplomatic

parties.⁹⁶

Nizār often thought, when the personality of the poet overwhelmed him, that he would free himself of the diplomatic personality for ever.⁹⁷ This became reality in March 1966 when he found himself writing a letter of resignation and sending it to the Syrian ambassador in Madrid. He was flooded by joy, and felt certain that this step would rescue his real personality, that of the poet, and recreate it:

My resignation from the diplomatic career in 1966 was a rescue for the second man who had almost been ground to powder by the wheels of reckless cars, always breaking the law, bearing number plates on which was written "Corps Diplomatique". When I sat down at the desk in my study in Beirut, after the end of my diplomatic life, and lit my first cigarette, I felt the pride of a king who takes power for the first time.⁹⁸

3. The Beirut stage

This lasts from 1966 to 1982, a period of about sixteen years. We shall describe the most important events of this period below.

(a) Settling down and working

Nizār settled in Beirut in the middle of 1966, with the idea of starting his own private work. At that time Beirut was the centre of the production and marketing of books in the Arab world. Nizār quickly found that all the circumstances were available for founding his own publishing house which could have his books printed.⁹⁹ He called it "Dār Nashr Nizār Qabbānī", and his first collection to be published by this house was al-Rasm bi-al-Kalimāt (1966). This was his seventh collection of love poetry.

His delight at the appearance of this collection was great, and he

decided to follow it with other works and to give up travelling from country to country and pursuing women, announcing that he would devote himself to poetry since he found his salvation in it:

I am in all ages, and it is as though
 My life were millions of years
 My suitcases have grown tired of long journeying
 And I have grown tired of my horses and my raids
 There remains no white breast, or black,
 Upon which I have not planted my banners
 And today I sit on the deck of my ship
 Like a thief, seeking a way of escape
 And I turn the key of the harem, and see nothing
 In the shade but the skulls of the dead.
 Sex was a narcotic which I tried,
 But it did not put an end to my sorrows or my crises
 Your perfumed mouth does not solve my problem
 For my problem is in my notebooks and my inkwell.
 All paths before us are blocked
 And our salvation lies in drawing with words.¹⁰⁰

In 1968 Nizār published another collection of love poetry, Yawmiyyāt Imra'a Lā-Mubāliya, which was composed in China in 1958. During this period he began to publish his political poems in little booklets and to distribute them in the Arab world. They met with an unparalleled success,¹⁰¹ especially Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa (1968), al-Mumaththilūn (1968), Al-Istijwāb (1968), Faḥ (1968), Ifāda fī Maḥkamat al-Shi'r (1969), Manshurāt Fidā'iyya 'alā Judrān Isrā'il (1970) and Min Mufakkirat 'Ashiq Dimashqi (1971). His success and his wide circulation in the Arab world reinforced his desire to continue his work.

(b) Marriage to Bilqis al-Rāwī and increased poetic activity

In April 1969 Nizār visited 'Irāq to take part in the ninth poetry festival in Baghdad.¹⁰² There he met an Iraqi girl called Bilqis al-Rāwī. After a few months he married her and took her back to Beirut. She easily found work in 1970 in the Iraqi embassy in Beirut.¹⁰³ His marriage to her led

to a psychological settling down and to an increase in his poetic activity.¹⁰⁴ After this his collections followed one another regularly. By the early seventies four successive collections had appeared which added another success to his previous successes. These collections are Qasā'id Mutawāḥḥisha (1970), Kitāb al-Ḥubb (1970), Mi'at Risālat Ḥubb (1970) and Ash'ār Khārija 'alā al-Qānūn (1972). All of them make a frank appeal for love to be a natural phenomenon in Arab society, with no fear or embarrassment in its practise. His appeal met an ardent reception from adolescents and young people in the Arab world and from the generation which was in revolt against worn-out traditions and customs.¹⁰⁵

(c) The death of his son Tawfiq

Nizār's life in Beirut was almost perfect, but he was completely devastated on 10 August 1973 by the sudden death of his oldest son Tawfiq, born in 1949, in St. George's Hospital in London.¹⁰⁶ He commemorated him in the sorrowful poem Ilā al-Amīr al-Dimashqī Tawfiq Qabbānī which is discussed below in section III of Chapter Seven.

After the death of his son Nizār fell seriously ill as a result of this blow; he had a weak heart. Throughout 1974 he was receiving treatment in the American University Hospital in Beirut.¹⁰⁷ However this did not lessen his resolve as a poet. In no time at all another series of collections followed one another; these are Uḥibbukki, Uḥibbuki wa-al-Baqiyya Ta' ti (1978), Ilā Bayrūt al-Unthā ma'a Ḥubbī (1978), Kull 'Am wa-Anti Ḥabībatī (1978), Ashhadu an lā Imra'a illā Anti (1979) and Hākadhā Aktubu Tārikh al-Nisā' (1981).

A study of these collections would require an extended research, but we can say with confidence that in them Nizār developed the concept of love and

no longer restricted it simply to sex, but rather treated it from the human point of view, making it one of the important elements of life which the human being always needs.

Nizār did not restrict himself to poetry at this period, but also wrote a number of articles for the weekly Beirut magazine Al-Hawādith. After all his previous collections Nizār felt that he was part of Beirut and that Beirut was unlike any other Arab city.¹⁰⁸ This feeling seems to have been a sincere one.

In fact Beirut provided Nizār with a suitable cultural atmosphere, the natural beauty of sea, mountains and greenery, night life, friends and evening conversation, freedom of speech¹⁰⁹ and, more important than any of these, it gave him poetry. Everything in it aroused his feelings and his urge to write poetry. Beirut was also the source of his fame and his poetic advance upon the Arab world. All of these factors deepened his attachment to Beirut.

Explaining this, he says:

My attachment to Lebanon is not at all a tourist's attachment which ends at the borders of Byblos beach or the halls of the Casino... it is much older than this and much deeper. Lebanon was the vessel which contained my poetry and gave it its form, colour and smell. In the soil of Lebanon I sowed the first seeds of my poetry, and it took them to its bosom, fed them and watered them until they became a forest with many trees and long shadows.¹¹⁰

He also says:

Beirut was one of those rare cities which urged on my fingers against me and urged on my voice against me. It did not leave me in peace for a single moment. It did not prevent me from wandering over my pages after six o'clock. It did not take me to the state security court to pay customs duty on my thoughts and my poems. Beirut did not persecute me. Rather it brought me a cup of coffee, put it on my desk, and left me to get on with my business.¹¹¹

(d) Anxiety: Israeli raids and Civil War

Nizār's life in Beirut was a happy one on the whole, but anxiety began to invade his heart when on 15 January 1975, and 7 July 1975, and on subsequent occasions, Israel mounted naval and air operations against Palestinian guerrilla camps in the South of Lebanon.¹¹² This anxiety increased when the Lebanese Civil War began on 13 April 1975.¹¹³ We shall discuss this war and his views on it in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

The Civil War seems to have had a role in the killing of his wife Bilqīs al-Rāwī. On 15 December 1981 a terrifying explosion took place in the Iraqi embassy in Beirut which caused its destruction and the death of several employees. Bilqīs al-Rāwī was one of the victims.¹¹⁴ Nizār mourned her in his famous poem Qaṣīdat Bilqīs, to which we shall refer below, in section III Chapter Seven.

After this the situation in Beirut grew more and more dangerous. The civil war grew more savage, Israeli military operations in the South continued, and warnings of an Israeli invasion of Lebanon increased. At this time (June 1982) Nizār decided to leave Beirut. He managed to obtain a place on a Lebanese freighter making for Larnaca in Cyprus. He was accompanied by his two children by Bilqīs, Zaynab and 'Umar and fifty one other passengers. On the high seas of the Mediterranean they were intercepted by an Israeli warship which asked their identity. The Israeli captain ordered all the passengers to come on deck, and the Israelis counted the passengers one by one and looked at them through binoculars. When they were satisfied that they were a group of "peaceful sparrows" they allowed the freighter's captain to continue his journey.¹¹⁵ Nizār's heart was flooded by feelings of rage and

humiliation, and he wrote afterwards:

Non-place is the only place left for the Arab. All the other places have been occupied, taken over or confiscated. All geographical directions have become impossible. All the heavens are above me, with no ceiling. All horizons seem to me to stretch without end. All countries seem to me to be hypothetical.¹¹⁶

4. The present stage

This stage begins with his settling in Paris after leaving Lebanon. He moved to Paris to work for the magazine al-Mustaqbal, whose editor, Nabil Khūrī, engaged him to write a page called "A page outside the law".¹¹⁷ While he was in Paris, the Israeli army swept through Lebanon and entered Beirut (June 1982). This was an enormous shock to Nizār, and of it he writes:

At last the Israelis have reached our throat. They have crossed that cardboard barrier which they call Arab nobility, Arab heroics, Arab lies. They have arrived in our cups of coffee, our bedsheets and our tablespoons. They have pierced that hymen of the Arab East, which was thinner than cigarette paper, and turned us in one night into whores.¹¹⁸

He adds:

I feel, as a writer, degraded and humiliated, and feel that my spirit has been treated with limitless contempt.¹¹⁹

Nizār continued to work in Paris for about a year. After this he left this job and went to settle in Geneva. He remained there for a time and then moved to Cairo, and then Damascus.¹²⁰ At the moment of writing he is spending part of his time in each of these cities. He describes his present life in these words:

I am like a hitch-hiker. I have no links of employment, family, emotion, politics, party or sex. Nobody is waiting for me in the evening. I carry a suitcase full of my books on my shoulder and do not look at the number of the cars which carry me.¹²¹

II

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Nizār's cultural background can be divided into three parts, the Islamic-Arabic classical heritage, Modern Arab culture and Western culture.

1. The Islamic-Arabic Classical Heritage

(a) The classical heritage a basic element

Nizār Qabbānī considers that the Islamic-Arabic classical heritage is a basic element in his cultural formation, and that to deny this would be to deny his primary cultural roots.¹²² He insists that classical literature is not something fossilised, sacred or set outside time and space; it is one of the fruits of human thought. He compares it to a great river from whose water people continually drink, and denies that it is "a marble tomb in which aspirations are buried."¹²³

The main classical works from which he derived his traditional culture and which he continued to admire are the diwāns of the pre-Islamic poets - Imru' al-Qays, al-Nābigha al-Dhubayānī, Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā, 'Antara al-'Absī, al-A'shā and Labid, the diwān of al-Farazdaq, the Kalīla wa-Dimna of Ibn al-Muqaffa', the diwān of Abū al-'Atāhiya, al-Bayān wa-al-Tabayīn by al-Jāhiz, the diwān of Abū Tammām and his Diwān al-Ḥamāsa, al-'Iqd al-Farīd by Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, al-Mas'ūdī's Murūj al-Dhahab, the

Aghānī of Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, the diwān of al-Mutanabbī, al-Ma'arri's Risālat al-Ghufrān, Ibn Ḥazm's Tawq al-Hamāma, the Maqāmāt of al-Hamadhānī and al-Hariri, the Thousand and One Nights,¹²⁴ Ibn Khaldūn's Muqaddima and Subḥ al-A'shā fi Ṣinā'at al-Inshā' by al-Qalqashandī.¹²⁵

(b) The essential characteristics of classical literature

In his view these are the following:

(i) It is an expression of a religious culture whose values and ideas arise solely from religion.

(ii) It is based on mutual tolerance in the sense that it is an exchange of influences with other nations, and is not closed in upon itself or self-sufficient.

(iii) It is far removed from chauvinism, in that it never practised any kind of domination or subjugation over the nations over which it predominated.

(iv) It is a whole, interlinked and integrated, in the sense that it cannot be divided into conflicting parts.¹²⁶

(c) Negative aspects of classical literature

Nizār rejects the position of those Arab scholars who express doubts about the whole of the Islamic-Arabic heritage because it belongs, so they say, to the ages of decadence (i.e. the entire past of the Arabs), and because according to their concepts it is an anti-historical and anti-revolutionary movement.¹²⁷ He calls this kind of doubt a "base attack" which aims to

assassinate Arab history and Arab culture.¹²⁸ However his rejection of this position does not prevent him from recognising that this heritage comprises many negative aspects. He observes, for example, that a large proportion of Friday sermons, old qaṣīdas and traditional proverbs contain values which do not suit contemporary Arab life.¹²⁹

After the defeat of 1967 Nizār began to reject the negative sides of the classical heritage, because he regarded them as one of the chief factors in the making of the defeat. Perhaps the first stanza of Qirā'a 'alā Adriḥat al-Majādhīb is one of the best examples which demonstrates this rejection:

I have fled from 'Amr b. Kulthūm
 And from al-Farazdaq's Rā'iyya
 I have emigrated from my voice
 And from my writing,
 I have emigrated from my birth,
 Emigrated from the cities of salt
 And from earthenware poems.¹³⁰

2. Modern Arab culture

By this Nizār means the culture of the era of the naḥḍa or cultural revival of the 19th century and the cultural events and achievements which followed it in the Arab world up to the present day. This culture reached Syria in the mid 19th century through scientific and cultural contacts with neighbouring Arab countries and through the various Arab and Syrian magazines which appeared during this period.¹³¹

(a) First contacts

Nizār's first contacts with modern Arab culture seem to have taken place at the beginning of the forties when he read, and was dazzled by, the

works of certain Lebanese poets like Bishāra al-Khūrī (1890-1968), Ilyās Abū Shabaka (1904-1948), Amin Nakhla (b.1924), Ṣalāḥ Labkī (1906-1955), Sa'id 'Aql (b. 1912) and Michel Trād (b.1918).¹³² He later admired the works of the following poets and writers: Aḥmad Shawqī¹³³ (1868-1932), Khalīl Muṭrān (1871-1849), Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1872-1932), Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfi (1877-1945), Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān (1883-1931), Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973), 'Abbas Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād (1889-1965), Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), Fadwā Ṭūqān (b.1917), Nāzik al-Malā'ika (b.1923), Khalīl Ḥāwī (1925-1982), Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb (1926-1963), 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī (b.1926), and Adonis¹³⁴ ('Alī Aḥmad Sa'id) (b.1930).

(b) Faults of present-day Arab cultural life

According to Nizār, there are three main faults. The first is the regression of the general cultural level, and the tyranny of petro-dollar values. Commenting on this he says:

Oil, not poetry, has become the "register of the Arabs". Today al-Mutanabbī stands sad, orphaned and heartbroken before OPEC, and finds nobody to welcome him, offer him a cup of bitter coffee, or buy his dīwān for half a dollar.¹³⁵

The second fault is the way educated Arabs bandy about difficult and obscure expressions like ḥadātha (modernism), thawriyya (revolutionariness), taqaddumiyya (progressiveness) and mustaqbaliyya (futurism), which give those who use them the attribute of "learnedness" but in the long run do not achieve anything. Thus he says:

Under the slogan of ḥadātha and taḥdīth the time-bombs are planted beneath the foundations of Arab thought (verse, prose, language and philosophy), and dynamite is placed under all Arab epochs without exception. Under the sign-boards of thawriyya, taqaddumiyya and mustaqbaliyya everything is regarded as fair game and everything is blown up, and trust in everything is destroyed,

so that the Arab feels that he is a cultural foundling.¹³⁶

The final fault is the pervasiveness of hostile personal criticism, especially by literary critics, which aims to kill creativity. Thus he says:

It seems that there is a plan to kill beautiful horses in the Arab world. The horses I mean are the horses of poetry which have filled the skies of the Arab world with joy and neighing... the murderers are a group of mercenaries of criticism who wander about with their unlicensed weapon and shoot at random... at everything which moves, in order to satisfy their desire to kill and in the hope of obtaining quick fame at the expense of the murdered horses.¹³⁷

(c) The cultural revolution

Some educated Arabs repeatedly say that Arab life today has no relationship to the rhythm of life in the last third of the 20th century. The argument which they adduce for this is that this life is not homogeneous. Some Arab countries live in the bosom of Bedouin society with all its manifestations of tribalism and sectarianism. Some others live in the illusion of being touched by modern civilisation, though their essence, in word and deed, is still for the most part made up of elements from the distant past. In the same society values and customs may differ sharply from one class to another in a way which almost tears apart what we call the national framework, together with all the common ideas and feelings which it comprises.¹³⁸ All of this is a pretext for speaking of a "cultural revolution" which will bring things back to their proper state. Nizār has pondered greatly over what has been said about this revolution, and has carried away three impressions:

(i) This talk about a "cultural revolution" is a fashion whose object is to imitate other cultural revolutions, as in China or France; it is imposed upon

Arab society rather than springing from it in a natural manner.¹³⁹

(ii) The expression "cultural revolution" is a new one which is brought up and spread abroad in the Arab world by anarchists, trouble-makers and semi-illiterates. This is something which is reprehensible and perverse, since it is presumed that the cultural revolution will be undertaken by educated people and academics as has happened throughout the world.¹⁴⁰

(iii) This claimed revolution lacks a clear concept of the future, and likewise lacks a revolutionary programme based on an analysis of Arab society which expresses the interests of the masses. Thus this revolution aims at nothing specific except a breaking up and smashing of the whole Arab culture, motivated by vengeance, desire for dominance and hostility to history.¹⁴¹

3. Western culture

(a) The West: a new horizon

Nizār did not restrict himself to reading Arab literature, classical or modern, but went beyond this to new horizons, where he came in contact with Western culture. This took place during his diplomatic career in the West, particularly in London and Madrid. At this point we should make a number of observations. Firstly, Nizār's acquaintance with Western culture did not come about as a result of a preconceived plan, but was based on personal taste and being influenced by whatever he happened to see or hear.¹⁴² Secondly, this acquaintance was essentially directed toward Western literature itself rather than to thought or philosophy, as was the case with his Arab culture, classical or modern.¹⁴³ Next, his contact with this culture sprang from his philosophy that literature and art, whatever they are, and irrespective of their origin, are a common human heritage and the common property of all

generations, rather than the monopoly of one group or community to the exclusion of another.¹⁴⁴ Finally, his excellent command of three languages, French, English and Spanish, enabled him to have a good acquaintance with these cultures, and he drew on the culture of every country in which he lived, as far as personal circumstances and free time allowed.¹⁴⁵

(b) European writers

We shall now review the European writers and men of letters some of whose works Nizār read and admired. These have been divided into four groups.

(i) English writers

Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Browning, Somerset Maugham and T.S. Eliot.¹⁴⁶

(ii) French writers

Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hugo, Dumas, de Musset, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Paul Eluard, Aragon, Malraux, Sartre and Camus.¹⁴⁷

(iii) Spanish writers

Gustavo Adolfo Becquer, Antonio Machado, Juan Roman Jiménez and Federico García Lorca.¹⁴⁸

(iv) Other writers

Goethe, Tolstoy, Tagore, Ezra Pound and Hemingway.¹⁴⁹

(c) The West and the Arabs; a point of view

Nizār is a firm supporter of the necessity of contact with the West and

of benefiting from its civilisation, its literature and its sciences. However, he draws attention to two dangers which can threaten this contact and lessen its benefit for the Arabs. The first danger is the domination of consumerism. He points out that borrowing from the West lacks the logic of Arab control. In this transaction the Arabs play the role of the consumer of the products of modern culture, that is, the receiver who has only the ability to pay, but plays no part whatever in drawing up the plan of cultural creation. For this reason he says:

The basis of our problem, as I see it, is that we are consumers of a culture, not producers of it.¹⁵⁰

The second danger is the "Bedouinisation" of modern inventions. Nizār points out that the Bedouin mentality still rules the Arabs in their dealings with these inventions. This leads to a "Bedouinisation" of them, that is to say, the imprinting of a Bedouin stamp upon them. Explaining this, he says:

Our attitude to the products of civilisation is still a Bedouin attitude. We sit astride a car as we would sit astride a riding-animal, and try to conquer it and humble it until it dies under our hands in its first year of life. In the same barbarous manner we use the telephone to kill time, even though the telephone was invented to save time.¹⁵¹

What Nizār says is correct to a certain extent. For example, the Arabs import almost all the gifts of modern technology, but they cling to their agricultural or Bedouin mentality. They persevere in employing the tools of the industrial revolution, like computers, but at the same time they persevere in regurgitating the thoughts of the Middle Ages.¹⁵² This means that they live in a terrible duality. They doubt the sciences and their capabilities, from the theoretical point of view, but in practice they accept wholeheartedly the fruits which these sciences produce.¹⁵³ Thus they forget, or pretend to forget, deliberately or otherwise, that modern tools and inventions are not

merely a dumb assemblage of iron and steel, but are the fruits of Western thought and the Western heritage, and those of the human race in general. Thus the gulf between the Arabs and the spirit of the age widens, and their consumption of the achievements of the West is superficial and transient.¹⁵⁴

It may be of use to draw attention here to the fact that during his discussion of the West, Nizār addresses himself to modern American civilisation and accuses it of not aiming to raise the standard of living of mankind, to achieve the best human conditions for them, or to illuminate their lives with wealth, knowledge or happiness.¹⁵⁵ He claims that America's military and financial aid to Israel and Israel's aggression against the Arabs and her raids on the Palestinians in the South of Lebanon provide the most effective proof that American civilisation is an aggressive civilisation.¹⁵⁶

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Nizār was the second child in a family of four sons, al-Mu'tazz, the eldest, Nizār, Rashid and Sabāh, and two daughters, Wisāl and Hayfā'. All of them are still alive and live in Damascus with the exception of Wisāl, who committed suicide in 1939 because she could not marry the man whom she loved. See Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣatī ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, p. 19 and pp. 70-71.

2. Arab genealogical works never mention the name Qabbānī. It is certain that Nizār Qabbānī is not Arab, since he belongs to a Turkish family which used to live in Konya, but migrated to Damascus at the beginning of the 19th century and adopted it as their home. The original name of his family was Akbiyik, a Turkish word meaning 'white moustache'. The best known member of this family is Ahmad Abū Khalīl Akbiyik, born in Damascus in 1836. He learned Qur'ān-récitation and acquired a basic education in a kuttāb (Qur'ān-school), and when he became a young man he practised the trade of a public weighman (qabbān). People began to call him Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī and he continued to bear this name until his death in 1902. Likewise all of Akbiyik's descendants bore the name Qabbānī during this period, and the name Akbiyik was not used at all. Ahmad Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī was a famous poet, writer and musician in his time. He was the first person to found a theatrical troupe in Damascus, and he travelled with it in Syria and Egypt between 1878 and 1900. He is described as having been brave in his confrontation of reactionary traditions. Further details may be found in Muhammad Yūsuf Najm, al-Masrahiyya fī al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Hadīth: 1847-1914, Beirut 1956, pp. 61-62 and 115-124; Kāmil al-Khulā'i, al-Mūsiqā al-Sharqiyya, Cairo n.d., p. 137; Muhammad Kurd 'Alī, Khutāt al-Shām, Beirut 1970, Vol. IV, p. 128; 'Umar Ridā Kahhāla, Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn, Beirut n.d., Vol. II, p. 94; Adham al-Jundī, A'lām al-Adab wa-al-Fann, Damascus n.d., Vol. I, pp. 249-256; al-Ziriklī, al-A'lām, Beirut n.d., Vol. I, pp. 235-236.

It is known that Ahmad Abū Khalīl al-Qabbānī was the uncle of Nizār Qabbānī's father. Nizār describes him in these words, "He was an encyclopaedia of a hundred and one volumes; he composed dialogues, designed costumes, sang, acted, danced, set the words of his plays to music, and wrote poetry in Arabic and Persian." See Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 37.

3. The old city of Damascus contains a number of famous quarters, among which are al-Sālihiyya, al-'Uqayba, al-'Imāra, Masjid al-Aqsāb, al-Qaymariyya, Mi'dhanat al-Shahm, Bāb Sharqī, al-Qassā', Bāb Tūmā, al-Yahūd, al-Shāghūr, Bāb Misr, al-Qanawāt, Suwayqa, Qabr 'Atika and Shuwayka. The quarter of Mi'dhanat al-Shahm is situated in the south-east part of Damascus, inside the old wall. It is also called Hayy al-Kharāb. See: Ahmad Hilmī al-'Allāf, Dimashq fī Maṭla' al-Qarn al-'Ishrin, Damascus 1983, p. 12, p. 21, p. 398.

4. See al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.1200.

5. Muhyī al-Dīn al-Safarjalānī, Tārīkh al-Thawra al-Sūriyya: Safahāt Khālida min Rawā'i' Kifāh al-'Arab fī Sabil al-Hurriyya, Damascus 1960, pp. 52-54.

6. 'Abd al-Rahīm 'Abd al-Rahīm, Tārīkh al-'Arab al-Hadīth wa-al-Mu'āsīr, Cairo n.d., pp. 294-295.

7. The Egyptian historian and Professor of Modern Arab History at the University of Cairo Jalāl Yahyā says of the Druze revolt, "It is difficult to write a detailed history of this revolt even now, in view of the scarcity of sources and the fluctuation of personal feelings about it, from one side or the other". See Jalāl Yahyā, al-'Alam al-'Arabi al-Hadith: al-Fatra al-Wāqi'a bayn al-Harbayn al-'Ālamiyyatayan, Cairo 1975, p. 262.
8. Ibid., p. 263.
9. 'Abd al-Rahīm 'Abd al-Rahīm, op. cit., p. 295.
10. Hāfiz Abū Muṣliḥ, Thawrat al-Durūz wa-Tamarrud Dimashq, Beirut 1971, pp.116-117.
11. Ibid., p. 93.
12. Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 27. The Syrian revolt remained ablaze throughout 1926, but France relied upon her superior forces to maintain her power in the country, and the revolt turned into sporadic attacks. It continued to be active in the first month of 1927, but by August of that year it had been extinguished. See Jalāl Yahyā, op. cit., p. 264.
13. The generally accepted account of Nizār Qabbānī in the Arab world is that he belongs to a rich bourgeois family. The word 'bourgeois' can sometimes be misused in the Arab world to become an accusation which lowers the poet's value. We have established that his father was not excessively wealthy but was a man of ordinary and modest economic means. Describing his father Nizār says, "If I wished to classify my father, I would classify him without hesitation among the toilers, because he spent fifty years of his life inhaling the smell of coal and lying on sacks of sugar and wooden crates. He used to come back to us from his factory in Mu'āwiya Street every night through the water pouring from wintry gutters as though he were a holed ship. I remember my father's face, covered in coal-dust, and his clothes, spattered with stains and burns, whenever I read the words of those who accuse me of being a bourgeois and belonging to the leisured class and families with blue blood." See Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., pp. 29-30.
14. Ibid., p. 27.
15. Ibid., p. 27.
16. Hayy al-Shāghūr is one of the old quarters of Damascus, outside the old walls in the southern part. It used to have the name of Mahallat al-Shāghūr. See Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-'Allāf, op. cit., p. 399.
17. Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 27.
18. Hāfiz Abū Muṣliḥ, op. cit., p. 117.
19. Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 28.
20. Nizār does not mention the name of his mother or speak about her relationship with his father. However he speaks of the private world in which she lived when he says:

On the level of thought there was no meeting point between myself and my mother. She was very busy with her worship, her fasting and her

prayer-mat, hurrying off to cemeteries and funerals, making vows to holy men, cooking grain on 'Ashūrā', refraining from visiting the sick on Wednesdays and from doing the washing on Mondays, forbidding us to cut our nails when night fell, not pouring water down the drain for fear of devils, and hanging blue turquoise stones around the neck of each of us for fear of the evil eye."

See Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 74.

21. Ibid., p. 73.

22. Muhammad Mustafā Haddāra, Professor of Arabic Literature at the University of Cairo, comments on this point as follows:

Why does Nizār emphasise that his mother preferred him to her other five children? Is it not from a motive of narcissism in that she singled him out by breast-feeding him until his seventh year? Here the critic can deduce something which eluded Nizār, which is to put his hand on the secret of Nizār's attachment to nipples, since he kept them company in a peculiar way for seven years."

See Muhammad Mustafā Haddāra, Dirāsāt wa-Nuṣūṣ fī al-Adab al-'Arabī, Alexandria 1985, p. 246.

23. Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 73.

24. Ibid., p. 32.

25. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

26. Ibid., p.40.

27. The National Scientific College was a link in a long chain of private Islamic schools (the 'Uthmāniyya School, the Commercial School and the Charitable Relief Society School), which accepted only Muslim pupils and had been founded in response to the foreign schools (the Frères' School, the Lazarist School and the Church of England School). These latter schools were full of Christian and Jewish pupils, while Muslim pupils were a tiny minority. See Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-'Allāf, op. cit., pp.181-201.

28. Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 41.

29. Ibid., p. 42.

30. Ibid., pp. 42-43.

31. Ibid., p. 43.

32. Ibid., p. 44.

33. Khalīl Mardam: a Syrian poet and man of letters, born in Damascus into a family known for its standing and its wealth. He studied in elementary and preparatory schools in the Ottoman period, and relied for his linguistic and literary education upon his private reading. He was elected president of the 'Cultural Association' which was founded in Damascus in 1926. He travelled to London to study English language and literature, spending three years there. After his return he taught Arabic literature in the National Scientific College in Damascus. He was made Minister of Education twice, in 1942 and 1949. He was elected president of the Arab Academy in 1953. He published the

- diwān of Ibn 'Unayn, Ibn Hayyūs and 'Alī b. Jahm. See Sāmī al-Kayyālī, al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āṣir fi Sūriyā, Cairo 1968, pp. 280-286.
34. Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 45.
35. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
36. Nizār Qabbānī, personal communication to writer, 21 April 1988.
37. See Muḥammad Badī' Sharīf and Zakī al-Maḥāsīnī, Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyya fi al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya al-Ḥadītha, Beirūt 1984, p. 451.
38. Ibid., pp. 451-453. See also al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p. 44.
39. Nizār Qabbānī, personal communication, 21 April 1988.
40. Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p.40.
41. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
42. Ibid., p. 40.
43. See Muḥammad Badī' Sharīf and Zakī al-Maḥāsīnī, op. cit., pp.456-457.
44. The Syrian University was founded in 1923 as a merger of the School of Law (founded in 1913) and the Medical Institute (founded 1904). It was expanded in 1946, 1954 and 1956 with the addition of faculties of Arts, Science, Islamic Law, Commerce and Education. It was given the name of the University of Damascus after the union between Egypt and Syria. See al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.802.
45. Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 63.
46. Ibid., p. 64.
47. Ibid., p. 64.
48. Ibid., p. 64.
49. Nizār Qabbānī, Wa-al-Kalimāt Ta'rif al-Ghaḍab, Beirūt 1983, Vol. I, p. 26.
50. Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, pp.92-95.
51. Ibid., p.87
52. Nizār Qabbānī, personal communication, 21 April 1988.
53. See details of this in Ministry of Education and National Guidance, Min Ma'ārik al-Taharrur al-'Arabī: Qiṣṣat al-Jalā' 'an Sūriyā, Damascus 1962, pp. 35-36, p. 64.
54. For the sequence and details of events see op. cit., pp. 69-116.
55. Nizār Qabbānī, personal communication, 21 April 1988.
56. See Ministry of Education and National Guidance, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

57. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1979, Vol. I, p. 16.
58. Nizār Qabbāni, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 104.
59. Ibid., p. 104.
60. Ibid., pp. 104-105.
61. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila, Vol. I, p. 17.
62. Nizār Qabbāni, personal communication, 1 May 1988.
63. These coups are: the coup of Ḥusnī al-Za'im (1897-1949) on the 30th March 1949, the coup of Sāmī al-Hinnāwī (1897-1950) on 14th August 1949 and the coup of Adīb al-Shishaklī (1910-1964) on 19th December 1949. See 'Abd al-Rahīm 'Abd al-Rahīm, op. cit., pp.229-301.
64. Nizār Qabbāni, personal communication, 1 May 1988.
65. In April 1952 Adīb al-Shishaklī issued a decree forbidding the functioning of political parties. A group of sycophants and flatterers gathered round him, which increased popular hatred of his government. He was forced to relinquish power after the coup led by Ba'thist officers in Aleppo. Political disagreements allowed him to leave the country without being tried. See Muḥammad Badī' Sharīf, op. cit., p. 465.
66. Nizār Qabbāni, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 105.
67. Ibid., p. 105.
68. Ibid., p. 106.
69. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila, Vol. I, pp. 304-305.
70. Ibid., pp. 334-336.
71. Ibid., pp. 273-275.
72. Ibid., pp. 282-284.
73. Ibid., pp. 323-326.
74. Ibid., pp. 340-342.
75. Ibid., pp. 343-345.
76. Ibid., pp. 346-348.
77. Ibid., pp. 351-353.
78. Ibid., pp. 354-356.
79. We do not know much about Nizār's life during the years of 1956 and 1957. I have asked him about these years in my letters to him of March and May, 1988, but he gave no reply.
80. Nizār Qabbāni, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 110.

81. Ibid., p. 110.
82. Ibid., p. 111.
83. Ibid., p. 111.
84. Ibid., pp. 111-112.
85. Ibid., p. 113.
86. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila, Vol. I, pp. 405-406.
87. Ibid., p. 410.
88. See the poem Yawmiyyāt Imra'a la-Mubāliya, Ibid., pp. 575-640.
89. Nizār spent the year 1961 and a few months of 1962 in Beirut, where he worked in the Syrian embassy.
90. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 107.
91. Ibid., p. 53.
92. Ibid., p. 54.
93. Ibid., p. 55.
94. Ibid., p. 128.
95. Ibid., p. 101.
96. Ibid., p. 101. Nizār also comments as follows on the world of embassies and diplomacy:
- The world of embassies is a waxworks in which everything is artificial, fraudulent and unreal. All the exhibits in it are covered by a thick crust of pretence and hypocrisy, and no pin can pierce it.
- See Ibid., p. 102.
97. Ibid., pp. 101-103.
98. Ibid., pp. 102-103.
99. Māhir Hasan Fahmī, Nizār Qabbānī wa-'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a, Cairo 1971, p. 45.
100. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila, Vol. I, pp. 464-465.
101. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 234.
102. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1975, Vol. III, p. 391.
103. Nizār Qabbānī, personal communication, 1 May 1988.
104. Ibid.

105. No comprehensive study of Nizār's love poetry has appeared so far. All that has been written about it to date is superficial and only deals with marginal points which do not say anything. In fact his love poetry is still a virgin field.

106. His son was a third-year medical student at the University of Cairo. He fell ill suddenly and was moved to London. See Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, Beirut 1978, p.55.

107. Ibid., pp. 80-94.

108. Nizār's links with Beirut are long-standing and go back to the days of his childhood. For example he says, "As I say, my links with Lebanon are not a sudden development. I became entangled with Lebanon, existentially, culturally and poetically, from my earliest childhood, since my father used to take us to Beirut to spend our summer holidays on the sands of al-Awzā'i beach or on the banks of the river Baradūnī in Zahle." See Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 116.

109. Ibid., pp. 114-117.

110. Ibid., pp. 124-125.

111. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Aṣāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shirat Dukhūl, Beirut 1982, p.34.

112. See Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, Beirut 1979, pp. 31-36. For comprehensive information about Israeli raids on South Lebanon, see Muṣṭafā Ahmad Fu'ād, Duwalīyyat al-Ṣirā' al-Lubnānī: al-Tadakhkhulāt al-Ajnabiyya wa-Juhūd al-Munazzamāt al-Duwalīyya, Alexandria 1985, pp. 17-19.

113. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 149.

114. Nizār Qabbānī, Wa-al-Kalimāt Ta'rif al-Ghadab, Vol. 2, p. 34.

115. The whole story is in Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 110-116.

116. Ibid., p. 111.

117. Ibid., p. 25.

118. Ibid., p. 82.

119. Ibid., p. 100.

120. Nizār Qabbānī, personal communication, 1 May 1988.

121. Nizār Qabbānī, Wa-al-Kalimāt Ta'rif al-Ghadab, Vol. I, p. 32.

122. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r, Beirut 1981, p. 166.

123. Ibid., pp. 166-167.

124. Despite his admiration for the style of the Thousand and One Nights, Nizār believes that it has done much harm to the Arabs. Explaining this, he says:

The fact is that the Thousand and One Nights was not an ordinary book in our lives like all the books we have read and forgotten. But the danger

in the Thousand and One Nights is that it has turned from a written text into social, cultural and political behaviour, from a mental picture into an everyday fact, and from historical witticism into hostile testimony which is hung round our necks. The worst thing about the Thousand and One Nights is that it has become our only official image current in the world. Every tourist publication which appears in Europe about the Middle East inevitably features Shahriyār sprawling like a wild boar on twenty pillows, surrounded by an army of concubines carrying fans and dancing for the biggest pimp known to history.

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 187.

125. Ibid., p. 22. and 28. Further information in Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Tatlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p. 95 and Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 64.

126. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 206. See also 'Adil 'Abd al-Ghanī, Turāthunā wa-al-Hayāt, Beirut 1979, p. 71.

127. One of these is the Egyptian thinker Zakī Najib Maḥmūd, who says:

You ask me what we should do with all our traditional literature, arts and knowledge... my answer is that they are a matter for entertainment in our leisure hours. I no longer say, as I have said repeatedly, imitating Hume... that they are fit to be thrown of the fire.

See Zakī Najib Maḥmūd, Tajdid al-Fikr al-'Arabī, Beirut 1971, p. 241.

128. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, pp. 26-27.

129. Examples which Nizār gives in support of his views are the three proverbs, "Everyone who goes along the path will arrive," "The narcissus only grows from an onion" and "Other than we drink fouls water and mud." He also quotes the following line of the poet Ibn Hānī' al-Andalusī (938-973) in praise of the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh (931-970):

What you wish, and not what the fates wish; so rule, for you are the one and the conqueror.

He describes this as being "the line of a coward". See Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, Beirut 1973, pp. 119-120.

130. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol. III, p. 304.

131. Sāmī al-Kayyālī, op. cit., pp. 130-131.

132. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, pp. 116-117.

133. Nizār expresses his admiration of Aḥmad Shawqī's poetry as follows:

After forty-five years the poems of Aḥmad Shawqī emerge from their bedchamber as birds emerge into freedom. We notice that they are still young; they have no wrinkles on their body and no diminution in the aspiration of their breasts. A poem is a beautiful woman who does not grow old, and has no known date of birth. It is born whenever we read it and glows like Solomon's ring whenever we rub it.

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Tatlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p. 63.

134. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 28.

135. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Aṣāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shirat Dukhūl, p. 95.

136. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 222.

137. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 154. It should be noted that Nizār excludes from these critics who hate the modern poets the Lebanese critic Mārūn 'Abbūd. Addressing him in the fifties Nizār says:

For the first time language has become freed at your hands from filthy abuse to become a tool of worship and not a blacksmith's hammer. For the first time we know the meaning of tolerance, the meaning of forgiveness, the meaning of artistic co-existence. If I may borrow an expression from the lexicon of politics, where some politicians speak of peaceful co-existence between various political systems, despite the difference between their paths and their objectives, why do we not apply this theory to art, and call for an artistic co-existence in which the artistic schools can live, despite their differences, side by side, so that time can decide on these two schools and evaluate them?

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, pp. 86-87.

138. See Ghālī Shukri, al-Turāth wa-al-Thawra (Beirut 1979) pp. 43-44.

139. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 23.

140. Ibid., p. 23.

141. Ibid., p. 24.

142. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p. 48.

143. Ibid., pp. 48-50.

144. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 99.

145. Ibid., pp. 103-114.

146. See Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, pp. 108-109, Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p. 48 and p. 163, and Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 57. As regards T.S. Eliot, Nizār speaks of with him with great respect and says that he is very well known among modern Arab poets, especially in Egypt and Iraq. See Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, pp. 51-52.

147. See Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p.231 and Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p. 48.

148. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p. 55.

149. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p.48. and Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, pp. 79-80.

150. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, Beirut 1972, p. 69.

151. Ibid., p. 69. For a further discussion of the "Bedouinisation" of modern inventions see Turki 'Alī al-Rabī'ū, "al-Fikr al-'Arabī fi 'Asr

al-Tharwa al-Naftiyya" in al-Wahda, Paris No. 34, April 1988, pp. 101-111.

152. See Ghāli Shukrī, op. cit., p. 37. On precisely this point Nizār says:

We talk about Marxism, while al-Sayyid al-Badawī still visits us by night with his beard and his green jubba, hangs his amulets and charms around our necks and satisfies us with his miracles.

See Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p. 67. Al-Sayyid al-Badawī (1200-1276) was a famous Sufi whose tomb in Egypt is visited by those seeking blessings from it. What Nizār means is that those who profess Marxism do not dispute fables (like those connected with al-Sayyid al-Badawī, for example); educated Arabs may be Marxists, but at the same time they are submerged in mythological thinking.

153. See Zakī Najīb Mahmūd, Humūm al-Muthaqqafīn, Beirut 1981, p.19.

154. Ghāli Shukrī, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

155. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, pp. 199-200.

156. Ibid., p. 243 and p. 246; and Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 33.

CHAPTER TWONIZAR QABBANI'S CONCEPT OF POETRY

This chapter will deal with Nizār's concept of poetry in general. It is divided into three sections. The first discusses the definitions of poetry offered by Nizār and his contention that poetry is a beautiful world, and then examines the main conditions which he believes to be necessary for creativity in poetry. The second section examines the question of poetry and form, in particular the revolt against the old poetic forms and the adoption of free verse and of prose poem. The third section discusses the relationship between poetry and the public, and the way in which Nizār uses the attachment of the Arab to poetry from ancient times to build firm bridges between himself and the public in the Arab world. It also discusses his views on this subject and his dream of building an open republic of poetry. It should be noted that this chapter does not discuss the definitions of poetry given by Arab or Western critics, and equally does not touch on the literary history of attempts to revolt against the classical qasīda, or the rise of free verse and the prose poem in the Arab world, since these questions lie outside its frame of reference.

I

WHAT IS POETRY?1. Definitions of poetry:

Nizār Qabbānī confesses frankly that after forty years of working

with poetry he is still unable to define it. Indeed this confession is the first thing to strike us when we examine his comments on poetry. Thus for example he says:

What is poetry? I do not know. I do not know. Poetry pierces me from within, and I do not know how to describe how splendid the piercing is. Whoever says that he does know is a trainee broadcaster, a tenth-rate editor, an owner of a cultural café, a cassette seller, or a cock who tries out his culture on us every morning. As for me, with all the humility of one slain by the knife of poetry, I say to you that I do not know. The poet writes, but he is the worst person to explain the chemistry of writing.¹

Nizār's refusal to define poetry arises from two causes. The first is his belief that the definition of poetry is an impossible task for him, since any such definition quite clearly lies in the sphere of poetic theory, which is not his area; his main area is simply the writing of poetry.² The second cause is the fact that he is influenced by the caution of certain of his contemporaries (for example Fadwā Ṭūqān and 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī) about defining poetry. He believes that this caution is justified and that he should adhere to it.³

As a result of the insistence of certain critics Nizār has produced a number of short definitions which he describes as "schoolbook examples of definitions of poetry", that is to say definitions which say something, no matter what it may be, about poetry, and in which collectors of definitions will find what they are looking for.⁴ These definitions are as follows:

(a) Poetry is the engineering of letters and sounds by means of which we recreate in the minds of others a world which resembles our own interior world.⁵

(b) Poetry is the whispering of man to man.⁶

(c) Poetry is the conversation of things which are burning.⁷

(d) Poetry is that language possessed of high tension which abolishes every previous language and shapes it anew.⁸

(e) Poetry is the mad speech which summarises the intellect, and the anarchy which summarises every order.⁹

(f) Poetry is that successful cultural coup d'etat which mankind stages against itself, without violence and without the shedding of blood.¹⁰

(g) Poetry is that art which revolts against law and reflects the acme of justice.¹¹

(h) Poetry is that exceptional earthquake which comes and goes, leaving behind it wheat, roses and vine trellises.¹²

(i) Poetry is a ticket which permits us to travel within ourselves and to discover regions which we have never discovered before.¹³

(j) Poetry is that amazing hand which re-shapes time and re-arranges objects.¹⁴

(k) Poetry is a fireworks display which ignites water, trees, moments, players and spectators together.¹⁵

(l) Poetry is that medical prescription of whose formula we are ignorant; and if we did get hold of it, our breathing would no longer be natural, nor would our sleep, or our heartbeats.¹⁶

(m) Poetry is the one madness on account of which the government cannot take you to the hospital for mental illnesses, though it cannot leave you in society until you explode it.¹⁷

(n) Poetry is a collection of questions to which there are no answers, and a collection of dreams for which there is no interpretation.¹⁸

After Nizār has finished giving these definitions he says that he could produce many other examples, but that when he scrutinises them carefully he finds that they are marginal, and that if they say something about poetry, they neglect much else. Elucidating this, he says:

These definitions are not all-embracing or exclusive. They do not have the nature of a scientific law, and are not fixed and all-embracing like it. They are scribblings on the notebook of poetry, and I may be satisfied with them today and change my opinion about them tomorrow.¹⁹

He adds:

As long as poetry is that wild goat whose instincts and nature we do not know, or where it lives and how it is generated, then every attempt to define its features, and to discover its habits and characteristics, falls under the heading of myth.²⁰

In our opinion, Nizār's definitions of poetry cannot be accepted or regarded as final, for three reasons; the first being that they are not applicable in every case, the second that they lack precision, and the third that they are not convincing as a whole. The truth is that modern Arab critics differ greatly and quite clearly in their definitions of poetry.²¹ As for ancient Arab critics, they solved this problem to their own satisfaction when they said that poetry is rhymed, metrical speech.²² Apparently Nizār is not satisfied with this definition, although it is

unlikely that he is not familiar with it, since he does not quote it or give it any support. We shall find in the following subsections (2 and 3) some of Nizār's views about the nature of poetry. These are views which, when taken together, help to throw more light on the questions: What is poetry?

2. Poetry as a beautiful world

Nizār regards poetry as a new creation of what the poet sees, or a rebuilding of objects which the poet deals with. In this view, the poet creates a new world, as he is not content to transmit or to describe what he sees, but adds to it, drawing on his reactions and vision, and so makes poetry a beautiful world full of life, beauty and feelings. He calls this world "The face of God drawn on blank paper".²³

In his discussion of this world, he touches on Aristotle's theory of catharsis, which states that the arts in general lead to a purging of the emotions and a changing of the human spirit.²⁴ He considers, in this respect, that poetry is capable of strengthening peace of mind and inner well-being, and also that it is capable of deepening human awareness of beauty, and of giving people enjoyment and pleasure. From this he goes on to consider poetry itself an "oasis of salvation" for those who are tired and in despair, and who wish to find in it freedom from all else, a break from the daily routine, renewal and stimulation of the sensations:²⁵

Poetry is our journey outside the boundaries of objects, and outside ourselves. Poetry is our entry into the region of weightlessness, our final release from the earth's gravity, and the pressure on it of our ideas and our clothes.²⁶

He comments elsewhere:

Without poetry there is no ambition, no escape from the limitations of the five senses, no soaring above the earth's crust and the black asphalt roads. Without poetry the waters of life cannot flood, the leaves of the trees turn green, or promises of love be given or taken.²⁷

Nizār regards this "beautiful world" as being necessary for the Arab World and the West alike.

In his view, the Arab World is suffering from numerous problems, and its people are worried and tense. On the map of this world poetry is "a region of shade and security". It is also "the last thread of sympathy which joins the Arabs together, and the last postman which carries love-letters to tribes which are slaughtering one another, and which do not write love-letters or receive them".²⁸ Poetry is the first and last resort of the Arab, indeed it is the only remaining elevated language in a weak and corroding world:

I ask myself, whenever I recite my poetry in an Arab city, why poetry is not a region of shade and security on the map of the Arab World which is burning with its hatreds and its enmities. Why do we not release our poems like flocks of white pigeons above Arab cities which are embroidered with daggers, claws and impaling-posts? Why is poetry not the comfortable carpet which can accommodate all lovers? Why do we not take refuge in poetry, in this clean language, in our conversations with one another, we Arabs, after our teeth and claws have grown tired of tearing one another's flesh? Why is poetry not a tree whose fruits everybody eats, a garment which they put on, and a common language which they speak?²⁹

He adds:

The Arab world, my friends, needs a gulp of poetry, now that its mouth is dry and its heart has grown rigid. Poets, my friends, are called to plant green ears of wheat in every corner of the Arab nation.³⁰

As for the West, it is suffering from other problems which are different from the problems of the Arab World. It suffers from the tyranny of modern materialistic civilisation over human relationships, from the pressure of machines and inventions on its life, and from the pursuit of sex and material

things. All of these pressures have a negative influence on the life of Western man, have caused him to lose his balance at times, and have made him worried and confused at others.³¹ Nizār says that the computer in the West, despite its great services, has not been able to give man there an atom of warm feelings. In fact it is still unable to write a single love-letter.³² Thus Nizār thinks that the West must inevitably return to poetry:

Man [in the West], however long his journey in the jungles of intellect and sex, will inevitably return to his childhood state, that is to say, to poetry. The return to poetry is something inevitable in a civilisation which is killing itself with its own hands, and devouring its achievements.³³

3. Creativity in poetry

(a) Nizār lays down one condition which he considers to be of the first importance for creativity in poetry. This condition is the complete abandonment of any reliance upon the traditional Arab poetic heritage. Imitativeness is the weak point in all Arab poetry, classical as well as modern; a certain poet creates a certain poetic pattern, which is the poetic archetype, and this is then imitated by other poets.³⁴ He maintains that the Arab poetic memory has always relied on the poetic heritage which preceded it, and because of this the poets have always looked backwards and ignored the future.³⁵ He believes firmly that copying from others has been a blemish on Arabic poetry at all times, and that ultimately it is, "canning things in their previous state, and freezing them at low temperatures like meat or fish".³⁶ He maintains also that ever since the fall of Baghdad in 1258, right up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the Arabs have been living on this poetical memory in an absolutely unparalleled manner.³⁷ Thus they did not produce any real poetry and only "recollected" and practised a number of literary games.³⁸

For all of these reasons Nizār says that the first step on the road of poetic creativity is to forget the previous Arab poetic heritage:

Forgetfulness is a very important factor in the creative process. The poem which cannot forget the details of its infancy has no power to visualise its future.³⁹

He calls this forgetfulness the "revolutionary condition":

The basic condition in all new writing is the revolutionary condition. It is a condition which cannot be minimised or bargained over. Without this condition writing becomes a composition of what has already been commented on, and a knowledge of what is already known.⁴⁰

He calls upon Arab poets, wherever they are, to take the sea as example:

The sea is the best revolutionary example, since the water revolts against its previous condition at every moment, contradicts itself at every moment, and loses its memory at every moment.⁴¹

He explains that the successful poem is a unique pattern, which is not resembled by anything else:

The excellent poem is the first copy, which has no second copy, previous to it or following upon it. This means that it is a single time, separate from all times.⁴²

al-Talāmīdh Ya'tasīmūn fi Bayt al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī

is a powerful and striking example of a poem in which Nizār realises his objective of going beyond the old poetic heritage and of renewing poetry. It is a fresh and novel poem which speaks of a subject rarely discussed by other poets, and is, in brief, a personal statement in which Nizār explains his policy in writing poetry since he began writing in the forties to the present day. It reveals a fierce and bold desire to go beyond the ancient poetic

memory and to emerge to wider and more spacious poetic horizons, and in addition to create a change in poetry and in its subjects, and to write new poetry, in every sense of the word; poetry which resembles life itself, and draws its matter and its texture from the world around it, so that it is a new adventure which breaks the prevailing poetic rules. The poem reads as follows:

I commit the contemporary poem.
 I emerge like a sparrow from the squares of memory
 I emerge toward the sea
 I commit the greatest treachery, which
 Is called poetry.

I pull forms from their forms,
 I shake things loose from their place,
 I plant my knife in the chest of the age,
 I make love in my own way
 In public, not within curtains.
 I do it in the rain,
 I do it under the trees
 I do it on stone,
 Crossing over all the red lines.

I commit poetry, and it does not worry me
 If people say, "This is heresy"
 Or say "This is unbelief"
 For I do not want an amnesty from a caliph
 Or from a long-lived king
 And I do not want
 A single line I have written to be omitted
 Even if the Day of Judgement comes.

I commit the poem full of offences,
 I commit the poem with great sins,
 I say farewell to the text which I know.
 And write the text which invents ways
 I dislike the sun which rises at its appointed time
 And love the sun which rises without appointment
 From the lip of the beloved.

I imitate the poetry which children write,
 Draw the hare-poem and the gazelle-poem,
 Draw the bee-poem,
 The duck-poem,
 The peacock-poem,
 The squirrel-poem,
 And the poem blue as the new moon.
 I draw the hurricane-poem;
 And the earthquake-poem;
 I transform the earth into a beautiful butterfly,
 I transform this word into a question.

I commit the adventurous poem,
 Adventurous language,
 Adventurous images,
 I pant over the white paper like a madman.
 I drink the light of the rising moon from the gardens of the eyes,
 I enter the aroma of the mint,
 The denseness of the sumach,
 The accumulation of the waters under the earth,
 The fires of cornelian,
 The pain of lemons.
 I commit death against fickle breasts
 Which do not know what law is.

I commit wine,
 The green sofa,
 The gown with Egyptian patterns,
 The Iraqi earring which
 Roams like a gazelle on your long neck,
 The anklet on your legs,
 The fabulous perfume which pierces the depths like a knife,
 The waist which you consider to be reality
 And which, when you take hold of it,
 Disappears like fancies.
 I shout, in the black rain in your eyes,
 Like a madman;
 I travel from the harbours of the poetry which was
 To the harbours of the poetry which will be.⁴³

(b) There are four other conditions to which Nizār gives a particular importance for the success of the poem:

(i) Clarity

Nizār always leans to clarity in his poetry. Clarity is necessary, for him, for three reasons. The first is his belief that obscurity in poetry does not necessarily mean profundity. On the contrary, clarity is profundity.⁴⁴ Next is his belief that the old poetry, as a whole, was distinguished by clear expression and sound language.⁴⁵ Thirdly, he believes that clarity suits the Arab people to whom he is speaking, and that any departure from this clarity is treason to the people and to culture.⁴⁶

(ii) Truthfulness

Nizār states that poetry is first and foremost the art of truthfulness.⁴⁷ For this reason realism is not sufficient by itself for the success of a poem, if it is not accompanied by truthfulness. Truthfulness means two things, first that the poet should be honest to his art, and honest in the expression of visions and thoughts;⁴⁸ thus he says:

I have never in my life written a poem with half a reaction or half a feeling .⁴⁹

Secondly, the poet should be honest in his representation of peoples' lives and their concerns and not be a false witness against the people of his time:

Poems which do not change men's lives and do not open up a road or a horizon for them, convey their voices, or express their humanity, always remain outside the gates.⁵⁰

(iii) Simplicity

The achievement of simplicity in the language and content of poetry is not a simple matter, as Nizār points out, and the fact that the poet may be highly educated is not incompatible with writing simple poetry. On the contrary, education paves the way for simplicity and breathes life into it.⁵¹ Nizār boasts of being a simple poet:

I am a simple poet. I say this with all my strength, because I consider that simplicity is the source of my strength. Ever since 1944, I have been working on a formula for turning Arabic poetry into a popular piece of cloth which everyone will wear, and a popular beach which everyone will visit; and I have been successful. Ever since 1944, I have sworn that there will not be a single citizen in the Arab World who dislikes poetry, finds it tedious, or runs away from hearing it or reading it; and I have been victorious. Ever since 1944 I have dreamed of occupying the Arab World poetically; and I have occupied it.⁵²

(iv) Realism

This means that the idea of the poem should be taken from real life. If it is not taken from real life, it should contain a thread which links it to it. He believes that the poet's life, which is a specimen of real life, should be reflected in his poetry, with all its details and experiences, whether they are general or private to himself. Using himself as an example, he says:

My life and my poetry are bonded together as the flesh is bonded to the bone, and they can only be separated by death. The whole of my life is portrayed and poured out into this vessel which is my poetry. I have not left a single one of my experiences, however small, in darkness. I have released all of my experiences into the sky like birds, and I do not have a single bird embalmed on the walls of my internal world. Poetry is my official photograph which is distributed to all the cities and all the border checkpoints, and carries my distinguishing features and my fingerprints.⁵³

II

POETRY AND FORM

1. The revolt against the old form

Nizār maintains that the traditional form of the Arab poem is a regular, fixed and monotonous one.⁵⁴ As we know, the poem, within the bounds of this form, is composed of a number of lines. The line itself is composed of a definite number of feet, which are repeated in a fixed pattern throughout the poem. Equally, the line is divided into two halves, or hemistichs, the first known as the ṣadr and the second as the 'ajuz. In all of these lines there is a single unchanging rhyme-letter, and a single rhyme-vowel (rawī) which also does not change. Nizār has believed ever since the appearance of his first collection Qālat li al-Samrā' in 1944 in the necessity of intensifying the conflict between the old poetic form and the attempts at

renewal in the modern Arabic poem which began to appear in the first half of the century.⁵⁵

In this period he observed that the old poetic form was still firmly-rooted, and also that it still had its poets and its students among his contemporaries.⁵⁶ He calls these followers of the old poetry "the Right" or "the Right Wing" of modern Arabic poetry, and speaks of their general attitude to poetry as follows:

The right-wingers among our poets are that group of people who still see in the Mu'allāqa and the Qasīda 'Aṣmā' the summit of literary perfection and the goal of goals. Poetry, in their view, is that historical vessel which can accommodate everything which is poured into it, and that ready-made garment which fits all heights .. in their view, it is foreordained destiny which cannot be warded off or refused.⁵⁷

It is clear that Nizār openly opposed, even then, the followers of this old school. Since writing the above passage he has identified four of the most important defects and faults of the old form of poetry, which are:

(a) The absence of organic unity

Nizār reproaches the old poetry for its lack of organic unity, regarding it as being disjointed and containing a number of unconnected sections or subjects. The poet, he says, begins his poem with a certain subject, then jumps to a second and then a third, without giving any subject its due share of imagery and conviction. He then concludes that this poetry relies more on the single line than on organic unity:

Arabic poetry has no plan. The Arab poet is a hunter of coincidences of the first order. He moves from a description of his sword to the mouth of his beloved, and jumps from the saddle of his horse to the lap of the Caliph with the agility of an acrobat. As long as the rhyme keeps coming, every subject is his

subject and he rides in every field.⁵⁸

He adds:

The traditional poem is a kind of quick reporting, in which the poet gathers together all matters to do with love, life, death, politics, wisdom, ethics and religion. The poet offers all of these things on parallel lines which never meet. The traditional poem is a collection of coloured stones thrown down onto a carpet; you can roll any of the stones in any direction you like, and nevertheless the stones remain stones and the poem remains a poem.⁵⁹

There are two points which should be made here. The first is that Nizār's views on organic unity in the Arabic poem resemble to a great extent those of 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād (1889 - 1965), the leader of the Diwān Group which laid great stress on the necessity of organic unity in modern poetry. Al-'Aqqād subjected Aḥmad Shawqī to biting criticism because he did not adhere to the principle of organic unity in his poetry.⁶⁰ The second point is that even if this opinion is valid for some old poetry, (for example the Mu'allaqāt, in which the poet begins his poem by standing at the deserted campsite, then moves on to amatory poetry on his beloved, then to a description of his camel or his horse, then to a description of the desert, and goes on finally to the subject which he wishes to discuss, for example praise, boasting or elegy) it nevertheless is not applicable to all Arabic poetry at all its different periods. We know for example that there are various poems in which organic unity is achieved, for example the poem of Ibn al-Rūmī mourning his son, the poem of Abū Tammām on the conquest of Amorium and the famous rā'iyya of 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a.⁶¹

(b) The monotony of the poetic metres

Nizār maintains that the sixteen metres of classical Arabic poetry have

a relatively harsh rhythm whose main characteristic is that they have a high degree of repetitiveness and monotony.⁶² These metres may have had their role in the past, but he is nevertheless amazed that they have survived from the pre-Islamic period right up to the twentieth century.⁶³ This amazement is mixed with a kind of grudging admiration, but this does not prevent him from calling for them to be adjusted and developed. One reason for this is that these metres are linked to old poetic subjects such as praise, boasting and satire, and that they have failed so far to serve as a vehicle for new subject-matter or new topics.⁶⁴ In addition the modern poet has been influenced by Western music, particularly classical music, jazz, trumpets and cymbals.⁶⁵

His views on the adjustment of these metres are based on two essential points. The first of these is that the sixteen traditional metres should be used as a starting point for the generation of new musical equations which are appropriate to modern Arab life. Amplifying this point he says:

The fact that the buzug and the nāy are a part of our ancestors' heritage does not prevent you or me from enjoying a modern musical instrument like the piano, the clarinet, or the oboe, or from worshipping Chopin's Polonaise, Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony or Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. By the same criterion I say that the fact that al-Khalil b. Ahmad was the person who laid down the musical notation for our ancestors' ahāzīj does not prevent me, for my part, from laying down the musical notation for the framework of the life which I live, and indeed does not prevent any artist in the country from playing his own symphony, omitting a note or adding a note, and creating a poetic universe by using a thousand forms and a thousand styles.⁶⁶

Secondly, the traditional line of verse, which consists of two hemistichs which have an equal number of feet, should be broken down, and the poet should rely on a new musical unit, the single metrical foot (taf'īla), so that this becomes the foundation of the whole poem, rather than the unit of the metre:

In the art of poetry as in the art of architecture, innumerable forms can be generated. Just as the architect relies on a basic unit, the stone, to produce thousands of designs, it is possible for poetry to take the basic unit for the building of the Arabic poem, the foot, to generate an endless number of poetic forms.⁶⁷

(c) The restrictions of the rhyme

Nizār argues that the rhyme is the most difficult obstacle facing the Arabic poet in earlier ages and at the present day, since it restricts him and limits his creativity.⁶⁸ Speaking of the negative influence which the rhyme has had upon the Arab poem in general, and how it has made the single line of verse the first and last objective in the poem, without any attention to its cohesiveness, he says:

The rhyme, despite all its magic and excitement, is a point at which the poet's imagination stops in exhaustion. It is the red light which screams "Stop!" at the poet when he is at the peak of his momentum and his flow. It cuts his breath short, pours ice on his burning fuel, and forces him to begin his run again. Beginning again means that he has to return, after this shock, to the stage of wakefulness. As a result of this repetition of shocks the lines of the poem become isolated worlds, and separate storeys in a towering building. This method of construction in the Arab poem has made it a poem which consists of single lines, which we use in our conversation as everyday pieces of wisdom, and hang on the walls of our houses written in gold ink.⁶⁹

He argues that the rhyme should not be a main element in poetry, and demands that it should be optional:

We consider that the rhyme should be optional. Whoever wants to stop there can do so. Whoever wants not to stop can continue his journey and nobody will send him to prison.⁷⁰

(d) The restrictions of formal rhetoric

Nizār next considers a phenomenon of Arabic literature, that of formal rhetoric. He describes it as a "linguistic mosaic" or a "Chinese shoe", and indeed considers it responsible for impeding the growth and development of literature over a long period.⁷¹

As we know, formal rhetoric reached a high degree of elegance in the Abbasid period and became the highest criterion for success in literary circles, going far beyond that period to influence all stages of Arabic literary development. Since that period, up to quite recently, Arabic rhetoric consisted of rhymed, rhythmic prose (saj') coupled with linguistic and conceptual ornamentations.⁷²

Nizār argues that the fact that ancient writers clung to these ornamentations does not mean that modern writers have to imitate them,⁷³ and that the reform of modern poetry must begin with the avoidance of these "linguistic mosaics" and the rejoining of life itself, which is thronged with many aspects of beauty which are far better than useless inscriptions.⁷⁴ He expresses his rejection of this formal ornamentation in his poem Ifāda fi Maḥkamat al-Shi'r:

Half of our poems are inscriptions but what
Use is an inscription when the building is falling down?
The Maqāmāt are a game, and al-Harīrī
Is hashish, and so are the ghūl and the phoenix.
Mosaics have slaughtered us for ages
And idols and foolish ornamentations.⁷⁵

2. The adoption of free verse

(a) Free verse and its originality

Nizār states that Arabic poetry began to rise once more from the ages

of decline at the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of the activity of such poets as Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1839 - 1904) and Aḥmad Shawqī (1868 - 1932). These attempts to revive poetry were a part of the general Arab cultural revival which began at the same time.⁷⁶

We may observe that these attempts to revive Arabic poetry followed two trends; firstly the revival of the classical Arabic style, whose most notable exponent was Aḥmad Shawqī, and secondly the attempts made at the same time to profit by the experiences of Western poetry, in particular the Romantic school. The most promising representatives of this latter trend were the members of the Diwān Group, the Apollo Group and the Mahjar poets, that is the poets writing in New York and elsewhere in the Americas.⁷⁷ We may observe that neither neo-classicism nor romanticism were able to produce a new poetry⁷⁸, the reason for this being that both trends based themselves on a ready-made model, be it the classical Arabic qaṣīda or the European romantic poetry of the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ What modern Arabic poetry needed was to search for its own identity, and it was the task of the modern Arab poet to free himself from these trends and to find his own authentic values. He should equally begin to search for a new poetic form which suits his own attitudes towards life and existence, a search which led the modern Arab poet, and Nizār himself, to the adoption of free verse.⁸⁰ Free verse poetry, Nizār says, has begun to receive a great deal of attention among the Arab public and to compete with the traditional Arabic qaṣīda and to take its place.⁸¹ He defines free verse as a collection of "individual initiatives which have enriched and beautified Arabic poetry, and rescued it from perpetual residence within the single musical sentence".⁸²

He demands of the critics who oppose the spread of free verse that they should leave the door of individual initiative in poetry open, so that the Arabic poem does not turn into what he describes as a "fascist poem" or a

"poem of wood".⁸³ The killing of free verse on the charge of treachery to the old poetic form is a negation of creativity and freedom.⁸⁴

(b) Free verse: a new form

The new form adopted by Nizār is completely different from the old poetry. Within the framework of this form the poem takes as its basis the single foot. The feet which can be used are the following: fa'ūlun (u - -), fā'ilun (- u -), mustaf'ilun (- - u -), mafā'ilun (u - - -), fā'ilātun (- u - -), mufā'alatun (u - u u -), mutafā'ilun (u u - u -) and maf'ūlātu (- - - u).⁸⁵ These feet are the same as those of classical Arabic prosody, so that even in free verse there is an element of continuity with the older tradition.

There is no strict rule which compels the poet to use a given number of feet in every line, rather there is a great deal of flexibility, which gives the poet much freedom in choosing the number of feet in any line. In this way the poet escapes from the order of the old poem in which the line consists of two hemistichs. The line in the new form consists of a part of a foot, a foot, two or three feet, or any other number required by the poem.⁸⁶ As for the single repeated rhyme or monorhyme, it is no longer found in this form.⁸⁷

(c) Advantages of Free Verse

The advantages of free verse are said by Nizār to be the following:

(i) The avoidance of the prolixity and padding to which classical Arabic poetry has recourse in order to complete the metre or the rhyme.⁸⁸

(ii) The destruction of the intense symmetry found in the two-hemistich

verse, the relief of the ear from its monotonous rhythm, and the construction of a new inner rhythm, rich in music. He describes the music of free poetry in words which reveal his approval of it:

The musical construction in the free verse poem is a compound of melodic fragments which grow louder or quieter, clash and separate, are delicate or harsh, calm or excited. There is generated from this constant movement of the atoms of the poem an inner music which is closer to the construction of the symphony than to the monotonous ticking of a clock.⁸⁹

(iii) The freedom which it gives to the modern poet to discuss any subject he wishes, and to penetrate to new areas which have never been touched on before.⁹⁰

(iv) The avoidance of an oratorical style, in favour of the use of images and symbols.⁹¹

(v) Concentration on making the poem a single artistic unity which unifies its constituent elements and its objectives, even if it deals with different emotions or numerous experiences.⁹²

(d) Problems of free verse

Nizār observes that free verse has begun to create for itself a number of problems, of which the most important are the following:

(1) Sameness

He clarifies this by saying that free verse poems resemble one another in general in style, language and subject, and that the reading of one collection by a famous poet relieves one of the need to read other collections

by other poets. This sameness, he thinks, negates uniqueness in poetry, and makes the poets repeat themselves:

Modern poets have wished to free poetry from the game of sameness, repetition and parallel tracks, but have fallen into the same dilemma .. It is as though the whole of modern poetry is a single poem which is signed by a hundred poets in the same way as they sign a final communiqué at an Arab writers' conference. This is a serious phenomenon, which has not affected even the poets writing in the classical style, since every poet has his own taste, his own scent and his own rhythm. Al-Mutanabbī was unique, al-Buhturī was unique. In no age of all the ages of Arabic poetry has it happened that all the poets have dressed themselves in a single pair of pyjamas, all slept in a single bed, all drunk from a single feeding-bottle, as has happened to today's poets.⁹³

This sameness to which Nizār draws our attention is a fact, though it is closer to a mutual influence of poets upon one another, and indeed close also to indirect poetic theft. It can be felt clearly in many examples of free verse, for example the resemblance of the poems of Walid Sayf to those of Muẓaffar al-Nawwāb, the resemblance of the poems of Amal Dunqul to those of Nizār Qabbānī, or the influence of Mu'in Busaysū upon Darwish.⁹⁴ To give a final example we may remark that all the modern poets in Jordan echo the voice of Darwish without exception.⁹⁵

(ii) Obscurity

Nizār maintains that the insistence of some modern poets on writing unintelligible poems needs to be examined. He was taken aback by some examples of obscure poetry written in Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi literary journals in the sixties and seventies, and writes wonderingly:

Has Arabic poetry entered the stage of perversity? Have the poets who write natural poetry been found guilty of the crime of being in touch with the Arab people?⁹⁶

He comments that there are attempts aiming at the distortion of clarity in poetry, which in his opinion is one of its most essential elements. This obscurity, he says, destroys the beauty of the poem, damages its inner unity, and makes it into scattered piles of images and sentences which are not connected to one another.⁹⁷ He describes these obscure poems as follows:

They are nothing but flabby, doughy entities, which do not belong to this earth, do not speak its language, do not endure its cares and do not resemble it, closely or distantly.⁹⁸

He describes the poets who write such verse as hippies who carry pickaxes for destruction and sabotage, and who want to blow poetry up and strip it of any aim or meaning. Writing in 1974 he says:

Beware, for the hippies have arrived on the beach of Arabic poetry and begun to dig in the earth and beat on tin sheets in order to set up settlements of futuristic poetry, that is, the poetry of 2000 A.D. .. Just as the hippies advanced in the sixties upon the streets of Europe and filled them with rubbish .. God is trying us and Arabic literature with a gang of hippy poets carrying sandwiches made of their dried poetry and throwing banana-skins under the readers' feet.⁹⁹

He adds:

The hippies of modern Arabic poetry can do nothing but read you examples of drivel which have neither head nor tail. When you cry out in pain or fury, choke in the darkness of corridors or cellars, and feel giddy when faced by the crossword puzzle and the maps appended to the poem, and ask them, "But when does the poem begin?" they answer scornfully, "The poem begins and ends, and if you do not understand it, it is because you are mentally retarded, and your cultural level does not permit you to enter the inner world of the poem."¹⁰⁰

(iii) The severance of relationships with the public

Nizār repeats on more than one occasion that the obscurity of free

verse slowly reduces the number of those who have a taste for it, and that there are examples of it which have cut their bridges with this public and have chosen to live in exile.¹⁰¹ This is the first time, he says, that relationships between Arabic poetry and its public have been severed, after they have lived together in peace for a period of more than 1,400 years.¹⁰² He attacks the poets of riddles and obscurity, showing how they have turned their backs on the public and have withdrawn into themselves. Addressing them, he speaks as follows:

There are walls of mistrust between poetry and simple men. You are always talking about simple men. In your discussions you talk about simple men, and in your theorisation and your cultural journals you are hiding behind them. However in reality you do nothing for them, and do not light a single candle in the night of their sorrows. Frankly, you despise them and trade in their tears and their catastrophes.¹⁰³

He lays great emphasis on the idea that poetry is at the service of man and not the other way round, and demands of Arab poetry that it should "help to light the road and to make poetry a sun which shines on all the lost, fearful, despoiled and tortured people on earth".¹⁰⁴ He expects of poetry that it should be democratic in its language and style, since there is no future for a poet who practises dictatorship and linguistic terrorism against those who read him or listen to him.¹⁰⁵

3. The adoption of the prose poem

(a) The antiquity of the prose poem

Nizār recognises that the prose poem is an ancient style of writing¹⁰⁶, and maintains that it exists in some Sūras of the Qur'ān (among the long Sūras, Sūrat Maryam and Sūrat al-Rahmān, and among the short Sūras Sūrat al-Tāriq, Sūrat al-A'lā, Sūrat al-Ghāshiya, Sūrat al-Fajr, Sū-

rat al-Balad, Sūrat al-Shams, Sūrat al-Layl, Sūrat al-Duhā, Sūrat al-Sharḥ, Sūrat al-Tin, Sūrat al-'Alaq, Sūrat al-Qadr, Sūrat al-Bayyina, Sūrat al-Zalzala, Sūrat al-'Adiyāt, Sūrat al-Qāri'a, Sūrat al-Takāthur, Sūrat al-'Asr, Sūrat at-Humaza, Sūrat al-Fil, Sūrat Quraysh, Sūrat al-Mā'ūn, Sūrat al-Kawthar, Sūrat al-Kāfirūn, Sūrat al-Naṣr, Sūrat al-Masad, Sūrat al-Ikhlās, Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās.¹⁰⁷ He says that God's best poems are found in Sūrat Maryam, verses 16 - 33.¹⁰⁸

Nizār's opinion that the Qur'ān contains poetry in some of its Sūras invites some attention and reflection, since it has two implications, firstly the denial of the whole question of i'jāz (the doctrine of the divine inimitability of Qur'ānic style) and secondly the idea that the Qur'ān resembles any other prose utterance which contains similar stylistic features, for example the saj' (rhymed rhythmical prose) of the Jāhiliyya. We can hardly comment on these unorthodox views here, and may content ourselves with the words of Tāhā Ḥusayn, himself a free thinker, when he was asked what literary form the Qur'ān represented: "It is neither poetry nor prose. It is Qur'ān".¹⁰⁹

(b) The prose poem and uniqueness

Nizār explains that the new Arab prose poem is the natural production of the present time, which goes to extremes in its liberalism, its anger, its ennui and its changeability.¹¹⁰ He also explains that it is one of the ways of developing modern Arabic poetry:

We are exhausted, as a result of the ages of backwardness and decline, by linguistic accumulations, clichés of arabesque which have come to press upon our thoughts and our feet like Chinese shoes. In such a period of transition between Jāhiliyya and civilisation the prose poem appears as the only door to salvation, because we can use it to escape from the narrow bottle of history.¹¹¹

He indicates that he adopts and respects the prose poem because it is a new form which is unique in modern Arabic literature. Uniqueness here means creativity:

I cannot condemn the prose poem on the grounds that there is nothing in Arabic literature which resembles it. This theory of similarity makes literature a factory, like a textile or car factory, or a domestic appliance factory, which turns out thousands of similar commodities. Creativity is a revolt against similarity. Arabic poetry cannot remain for ever and ever produced by a stencil machine like government documents and commercial publications. The prose poem is a poem which has refused to pass through the copier, and I respect it for this.¹¹²

The Arabic prose poem has not merely cut its links with Arabic prosody and the old Arabic qaṣīda, but it also departs sharply from free verse itself, as it is without any rhythm or rhyme.

Before leaving this subject we should observe that modern Arab critics and prose poets, most of whom are from Syria and Lebanon, have on the whole been unable to define what a prose poem is, or to agree with one another on this point.¹¹³ In addition we should remark that Arab literary circles have failed to agree as to whether or not the prose poem is an acceptable form.

(c) The prose poem and the future

Nizār prophesies that the prose poem will be the poem of the future¹¹⁴ in the Arab world for two reasons:

(1) It is in harmony with the revolutionary aspirations of the Arab to reject the past and colonialism, and to free himself from old forms and ready-made linguistic clichés.¹¹⁵

(ii) It gives the modern poet greater freedom than the freedom given by free verse, in that he can say what he wants to say without any restrictions or fears.¹¹⁶

He compares it to a new plant which has been produced by the soil of Arabic poetry. He demands that it be given its right to live, and thinks that it is the future alone which will decide if it will continue to exist or not.¹¹⁷ Despite this prophecy he believes that the prose poem will most certainly not be the final and absolute form of poetry, because poetry itself creates its own particular form in accordance with circumstances and the changes which surround it, and because any form, if it becomes fixed, limits the development of poetry.¹¹⁸ Thus he says:

I insist on saying that form is clothing which comes and goes. I am against formal idol-worship in all its forms, against all geometrical forms which are imposed upon me like the seige of Troy, and against form when it turns with time into a Chinese shoe which we put upon our feet and our thoughts, and which we are not allowed to take off until we die.¹¹⁹

(d) Conclusion

(i) Nizār makes a connection between creativity in poetry and between revolt against form, whatever the form may be. He says that in Arabic prosody there are enormous possibilities for the generation of new poetic forms¹²⁰, but he does not explain in detail what these possibilities are. In this context he accuses those who believe in the saying "Nothing more creative than what has been is possible", of short-sightedness, and refutes them by saying, "In poetry there is only one real piece of wisdom, which is that there is nothing more creative than that which will be".¹²¹ He adds that with this conception of poetry the poem becomes a golden arrow pointing to the future,

not a hieroglyphical inscription engraved upon a stone sarcophagus.¹²²

(ii) Nizār believes firmly in being open to all poetic forms, and states:

I do not indulge in bigotry, either in my poetry or in my life. I do not accept, in any manner or form, that life should become a stone, or that poetry should become a marble tomb around which twenty centuries hover.¹²³

On the basis of this openness he leaves absolute freedom to any poet, including himself, to make use of all forms without restricting himself to any single form, asserting that "The form only turns into a grave when the poet agrees to live in it forever".¹²⁴

(iii) Nizār uses three forms of the modern Arabic poem. The first is the classical rhythmical, rhymed poem, especially in his collections Qālat lī al-Samrā' (1944), Tufūlat Nahd (1948) and Qaṣā'id (1956); the second is the free verse poem, especially in his collections Habibatī (1961), al-Rasm bi-al-Kalimāt (1966), Qaṣā'id Mutawahhisha (1970), Kitāb al-Ḥubb (1970), Ash'ār Khārija 'alā al-Qānūn (1972) and Uḥibbuki, Uḥibbuki wa-al-Baqiyya Ta'tī (1978); and the third is the prose poem, especially in his collections Mi'at Risālat Ḥubb (1970), Kull 'Am wa-Anti Habibatī (1978) and Hākadhā Aktubu Tārikh al-Nisā' (1981). As for his collection of political poetry, which is the subject of this thesis, its poetic forms are distributed among all of the above-mentioned forms. Commenting on all of these forms and the way he moves from one to another, Nizār says:

I will not hesitate for one single moment to change my skin; I always live in a state of wariness and fear of the future, and always feel that I am standing on shifting ground, that the horses of poetry are running around me in their hundreds, and that if I do not change the direction of my own running, and my horse's saddle, I shall fall under the hoofs of the racing horses. I try to change my voice every day, and my skin every hour, as the tree changes its leaves in order to remain standing on its feet ..

Thus you find me always moving, kneading, like children on the beach, the sand with my hands, in search for forms through which I can transcend my own poetic history.¹²⁵

III

POETRY AND THE PUBLIC

1. The Arabs and poetry

In Nizār's opinion, poetry alone, not oil, is the Arab's cultural heritage. It alone, also, is their literary and historical identity¹²⁶, and has ruled their intellects over a long period in the past, because of the great importance it had in their lives:

What I wish to register here is that poetry is a basic element in Arab life ... in no way less important than the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Information. Poetry was to be found in the ruler's palace, mosques, learned circles, cafés and popular quarters.¹²⁷

He notes here also that the importance of poetry in contemporary Arab society is no less than it was in the past:

Poetry is to be found in all the details of our daily life. At celebrations we offer it in place of white roses and carnations, at birthdays we offer it in place of a block of halwā, and on demonstrations we explode it like a bomb to bring the government down.¹²⁸

2. Elements of the poetic process: the poet, the text and the public

Nizār emphasises that the poetic process is made up of three elements, which are the poet, the poem and the public. The poet here is a transmitter who speaks through the poem to a receiver (the public). In this sense, the

poem is a message which is directed from one side to the other. In Nizār's words, it is a "kiss performed by two parties, the poet and the public".¹²⁹

Nizār gives particular importance to the public in the poetic process for two reasons:

(a) The poem only becomes complete and lives when it reaches the public:

Before it meets people, the poem is a dead experimental frog, but no sooner does it meet people than life flows into its extremities, and it shudders and jumps into the water ... Before it is read, the poem is a grain of wheat imprisoned in a drawer, but when we sow it beneath the skin of others, it becomes an ear of wheat and a loaf of bread.¹³⁰

(b) The relationship between Nizār and the public, whether negative or positive, gives him two valuable opportunities; the opportunity to evaluate his poetry himself, and the opportunity to inflate his ego and develop his feelings of narcissism, or in other words, the opportunity to be a star and to be popular:

People's eyes are the reflecting mirrors in which I see my face, and am sure of my youth. They are the compass which shows me my position in time and space ... Without contact with others we cannot discover the dimensions of our bodies or the dimensions of our thought. Knowledge begins with man and ends with him.¹³¹

He adds:

Just as Narcissus fell in love with his reflection in the water, the poet seeks out men's eyes in order to be reflected in them. He searches for all the reflecting surfaces which send back his images magnified a hundredfold. This is what they call narcissism. How sweet is narcissism if it allows me to make of your good eyes mirrors in which I see the form of my face and the form of my emotions.¹³²

3. Poetry as a right of all people

Nizār has a novel view of the relationship between poetry and people which is based on the idea that poetry is a natural right, common to all people, like water, air and public parks.¹³³ This view impels him to repeat, later on, that poetry is public property which belongs to the whole nation. Every member of the nation can claim that he has a specific share in it, indeed it is a cultural inheritance which nobody can dispose of by selling, buying, pawning or expropriating.¹³⁴ Going on from this, Nizār states that poetic evenings should be like an open-air theatre, which people enter at any time they wish, without discrimination between any individual.¹³⁵

Likewise he rejects the idea that poetry should be restricted to any limited group of people, since then it becomes a narrow, secluded circle, in which the desired object, the bringing to life of poetry itself, is negated:

I am against all poetic ghettos, and against turning the poem into a Troy living with itself in an historical siege, and against poetry being turned into a closed club, like bridge clubs or nudist clubs.¹³⁶

He adds:

I am against monopolisation in poetry, whether the monopolisation of kings and caliphs, of salons, of authority, or of the intelligentsia.¹³⁷

4. Nizār and the Public: A strong relationship

It is worth noting that Nizār has been successful in practice in building a strong relationship with the Arab masses everywhere. There are two clear pieces of evidence which support this. The first of these is the fact

that he has sold millions of copies of his collections in Arab bookshops. Probably he has excelled in this respect his famous fellow-poets like Darwish, Fadwā Tūqān, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī and Nāzik al-Malā'ika. As a result he has reaped riches which have assured him a respectable standard of living and caused him to say:

It is a great honour to me to be the first Arab poet to put an end to the myth of the beggar-poet. The Arab poet today stands on the feet of his pride and his talent. Whereas the old poet used to be a doorkeeper at the caliph's gate, the caliph today is a doorkeeper at the poet's gate.¹³⁸

The second piece of evidence is the fact that the Arab public in their thousands throng to his poetic evenings. This has happened in almost all Arab countries. For example, in 1969 he went to Sudan to read some of his poems in the House of Culture in Khartoum, and ten thousand Sudanese packed themselves into it. Nizār, astounded by this, wrote:

What is happening to me and my poetry in Sudan is something fabulous, something which has not happened in my dreams or legends, something which honours me, makes me happy and makes me weep. I always weep when poetry is turned into a temple and men into worshippers. I always weep when people cannot find a place to sit and have to sit on my eyelashes. I always weep when my boundaries become mixed with other people's boundaries so that I scarcely know which of us is the poet and which the listener.¹³⁹

After this every following poetic evening increased his love for and commitment to his Arab public, to the extent that he considered that he was dedicated to its service, and could be nothing but an Arab poet for an Arab public:

The Arab public is my destiny, just as I am its destiny. I am not, and cannot be, a Scandinavian poet, and I am not in the least interested in being given a Nobel Prize by the King of Sweden. The major prize is given me by that Arab citizen for whom I write without knowing his name ... I do not want awards of esteem from anyone, or honorary doctorates from anyone. The great Arab public

is my great reward.¹⁴⁰

Respect and trust are the basis of Nizār's relationship with the public. In his view, the respect of the public is acquired in two ways, firstly by giving expression to its causes, and secondly by not mistreating it.¹⁴¹ He believes that respect is a duty which every poet should fulfil to his public, and he denies that the Arab public is foolish or backward. His views on the public are summed up in the following words:

The public is not a prison, a gallows or a prison camp. It is an intelligent Arab horse, and if we know how to treat it we will win the race; but if we do not understand it, it will throw us onto the ground and trample upon us. The "public" is a word which frightens only those who are frightened and gives complexes only to those who have complexes.¹⁴²

He claims that many of today's poets have lost their ability to understand the public and the age. He calls upon these people to review their styles and to examine the ground upon which they stand before writing poetry.¹⁴³

5. Nizār and the poetic republic

In conclusion, Nizār says that his most lofty goal in the near future is to found a poetic republic which will truly transform Arab society into a poetic society in such a way that the "land of poetry" in it will be distributed equally among all its inhabitants, and the citizen will obtain what he wants from poetry without payment.¹⁴⁴ He also emphasises that he will continue to strengthen his strong links with his public, until his poetry reaches the whole of the Arab World:

I shall not be humble and say that I write for myself, or for my family or for my neighbours. There is in my mind a plan of poetry

from which I shall not retreat. This is to address any tree, cloud, fish, cat, star, or pigeon in the Arab homeland. As long as there is an ear of wheat which experiences difficulty in understanding poetry, I shall go to it in the field and read poetry to it before it goes to sleep.¹⁴⁵

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, Beirut 1981, PP.37-38.
2. Ibid., pp. 39-40.
3. Jamāl Basyūnī, Adwā' 'alā al-Adab, Cairo 1960, p. 11.
4. Nizār Qabbānī, op. cit., p. 33.
5. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, Beirut 1963, p.39.
6. Ibid., p. 40.
7. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, Beirut 1982, p.40.
8. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 33.
9. Ibid., p. 33.
10. Ibid., p. 33.
11. Ibid., p. 33.
12. Ibid., p. 34.
13. Ibid., p. 34.
14. Ibid., p. 34.
15. Ibid., p. 34.
16. Ibid., p. 34.
17. Ibid., p. 34.
18. Ibid., p. 35.
19. Ibid., p. 35.
20. Ibid., p. 36.
21. Tahā Husayn, Min Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī, Beirut 1975, Vol. I, pp.61-64.
22. Qudāma b. Ja'far, Naqd al-Shi'r, ed. S.A. Bonnebakker, Leiden 1956, p. 26.
23. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, pp. 76-77.
24. 'Abd al-Fattāh al-Didī, Falsafat al-Jamāl, Cairo 1985, p. 29.
25. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, pp. 87-88.
26. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p 41.
27. Ibid., p. 131.
28. Ibid., p. 79.

29. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
30. Ibid., p. 80.
31. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, Beirut 1972, p. 50.
32. Ibid., p. 50.
33. Ibid., p. 51.
34. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, Beirut 1978, p.11.
35. Ibid., p. 11.
36. Ibid., p. 11.
37. Ibid., p. 11.
38. Ibid., p.11. It may be mentioned that an Egyptian critic, Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī, has drawn attention to the problem of the poetic memory and its influence on the lack of innovation in Arabic poetry. He says:

Not one of our modern Arab poets chooses a specific metre or rhyme without a huge throng of repeated images pressing upon him one after another, and without an overwhelming mountain of repeated clichés collapsing upon him. However much effort he expends in resisting and fleeing from it, and however much he tries to invent for himself new forms and images which serve as a vehicle for his individual thinking and personal emotion... at the end of the day he is unable to resist and collapses under this immense pile of débris which falls upon him.

See Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī, Qadiyyat al-Shi'r al-Jadīd, Beirut 1971, pp. 91-92.

39. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 10.
40. Ibid., p. 7.
41. Ibid., p. 11.
42. Ibid., p. 7.
43. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, Beirut 1986, pp. 17-24.
44. Nizār Qabbānī, Wa-al-Kalimāt Ta'rif al-Ghadab, Beirut 1983, Vol. II, p. 143.
45. Ibid., p. 143.
46. Ibid., p. 144.
47. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 11.
48. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 170.
49. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p. 75.
50. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 172.

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51. Ibid., p. 92.
52. Ibid., p. 93.
53. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p.45.
54. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, pp.29-31.
55. Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, p.67. The attempts to rejuvenate modern Arabic poetry can be followed in particular in S. Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry 1800-1970, Leiden 1976, and Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry, 2 Vols., Leiden 1977.
56. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p.27.
57. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
58. Ibid., pp.33.
59. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
60. Further details on this subject are found in Muhammad Zaghlūl Sallām, al-Naqd al-Adabī al-Ḥadīth: Usūluh wa-Ittijāhāt Ruwādiḥ, Alexandria 1981, pp.322-325.
61. See 'Abd Allāh al-Shahhām, Mūsiqā al-Shi'r al-'Arabī, typescript MS., Amman 1983, Ch.2.
62. This view has many followers. Sayyid Nawfal for example says:
- The music of the metres of al-Khalil is the music of the first age of Bedouin life, where a single rhythm predominates throughout the poem from beginning to end. It is very similar to tribal drums which repeat one monotonous, boring rhythm, and which cannot in any way at all suit the variety of modern music and its rhythms.
- See Sayyid Nawfal, "Al-Jumūd fi Awzān al-Shi'r wa-Qawāfiḥ", al-Thaqāfa, Cairo, 10 September 1963, p. 110.
63. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p.40.
64. Ibid., p. It may be noted that Nizār's opinion resembles to a great extent the opinions of some modern Arab critics. Thus Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī says for example:
- Our traditional form is not several decades or a few generations old; it is more than thousand four hundred years old - fourteen centuries in which this form continued continuously until it wore out, and was no longer able to cope with new feelings. It has become so closely linked with traditional ideas, traditional attitudes, and traditional methods of expressing human emotions, that it is no longer able to bear a new idea, a new attitude, or a new method of expression.
- See Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī, op. cit., p. 89.
65. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p.41.
66. Ibid., pp. 91-92.

67. Ibid., pp.92-93.
68. Ibid., p. 37.
69. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, pp. 37-38.
70. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, pp. 124-125. On the problem of the rhyme and the desire to be freed of its bonds, see Ibrāhīm Khalīl, Tajdid al-Shi'r al-'Arabī, Amman 1987, pp. 17-21, and al-Nu'mān al-Qāḍī, Shi'r al-Taf'ila wa-al-Turāth, Cairo 1977, p.8.
71. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p. 30.
72. Anīs al-Maqdisī, Tatawwur al-Asālib al-Nathriyya fi al-Adab al-'Arabī, Beirut 1968, pp. 207-216.
73. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p. 35.
74. Ibid., p. 36.
75. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, Beirut 1985, p.399.
76. Khalīl Hassān, "Shu'arā' wa-Nuqqād", Dirāsāt no.5, May 1968, Beirut, p. 60.
77. For further details see Turād al-Kubaysī, "al-Shi'r al-'Arabī Mumkinan", Beirut, no.4, year 21, April 1973, pp. 50-57, and Ahmad Abū Sa'd, "Ḥarakāt al-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth", al-Adāb, Ibid., pp. 17-22.
78. Khalīl Hassān, op. cit., p. 61.
79. Ibid., p. 60.
80. Ibid., p. 62.
81. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p.177.
82. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 122.
83. Ibid., p. 123.
84. Ibid., p. 123.
85. See 'Abd Allah al-Shahhām and Maḥmūd al-Samra, al-Lugha al-'Arabiyya, Muscat 1985, p. 150.
86. Ibid., p. 151.
87. Ibid., pp. 151-153.
88. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, pp. 178-179.
89. Ibid., p. 35. It may be noted that there is a group of critics who do not support this view. Thus 'Izz al-Dīn al-Amin says for example:

The music of free verse is weak and partial. There is no harmony and balance in it. It does not create any complete rhythm. It is a monotonous music because it repeats one rhythm throughout the poem, the

rhythm of one foot (taf'īla).

See 'Izz al-Dīn al-Amin, Nazariyyāt al-Fann al-Mutajaddid wa-Tatbiqihā 'alā al-Shi'r, Khartoum 1964, p.52.

90. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p.184.
91. Ibid., pp. 180-181.
92. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, pp.34-35.
93. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, pp.126-127.
94. Compare the collection Watariyyāt Layliyya of Muzaffar al-Nawwāb, Baghdad 1970, with the poem Sirāt 'Abd Allāh b. Safiyyā in The Everlasting Song, tr. M.V. McDonald and A. A. al-Shahhām, typescript MS, Edinburgh 1987; compare the collection Maqtal al-Qāmar of Amal Dunqul, Cairo 1983, with the collection al-Rasm bi-al-Kalimāt of Nizār Qabbānī, Beirut 1966 and compare the poem al-Ittiḥād al-Sūveti li of Mu'in Busaysū in the collection of the same name, Moscow 1983, pp.5-8, with the poem Bahr al-Nashid al-Murr of Mahmūd Darwish in the collection Ḥiṣār li-Madā'ih al-Bahr, Amman 1986, pp.119-174.
95. 'Abd al-Rahmān Yāghī, al-Mawsim al-Thaqāfi li-Rābiṭat al-Kuttāb, Amman 1980, p.190.
96. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, Beirut 1979, p.213.
97. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābi, p. 28.
98. Ibid., p. 29.
99. Ibid., p. 21.
100. Ibid., pp.24-25.
101. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p.128.
102. Ibid., pp. 128-129.
103. Ibid., p. 158.
104. Ibid., p. 129.
105. Ibid., pp. 130-131.
106. Ibid., p. 115.
107. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar p.77.
108. Ibid., pp.63-65.
109. Ḥannā Fakhūrī, Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī, Beirut n.d., p.214.
110. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p.116.
111. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p.32.
112. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 120.

113. Yūsuf al-Khāl is of the opinion that "the prose poem is a form which differs from free verse in world literature in that it is based on prose and raises it to the ranks of poetry". See Yūsuf al-Khāl, "Qadāyā al-Shi'r al-Mu'āsir li-Nāzik al-Malā'ika", Shi'r, Beirut, no.24, Autumn 1962, p.147.

Adonis ('Alī Aḥmad Sa'id) writes:

The prose poem expresses our deep aspirations, our secret rejection of life, our obscure spiritual movements and the face hidden in shade and darkness, which is nevertheless more complex and rich in sound. It emerges from our human position in a flood which has no aim other than to go beyond this position and to exceed it.

He adds:

The age of conventions, traditions, finality and limitations is the age which rules thought and life in the Arab world. This world, then, must have the refusal which shakes it, must have the prose poem as a higher rebellion against it in the field of poetic form.

See Adonis, "Fī Qasīdat al-Nathr", Shi'r, Beirut, no. 14, Spring 1960, pp.82-83. Unsi al-Hājj considers that the prose poem is a simultaneous act of destruction and rebirth, and an act of rebellion against a thousand years of pressure, servitude and ignorance. He says, "Sabotage is vital and sacred", "The first of duties is destruction", and "Destruction, Destruction, Destruction". In his opinion the prose poet violates all sacred things in order to liberate himself. See Unsi al-Hājj, "Lan", Beirut 1960, p. 13.

Nāzik al-Malā'ika attacks the prose poem in the following words:

In Lebanon a strange claim has arisen, backed by certain men of letters, and adopted recently by the journal Shi'r, which has begun to support it noisily. The basic content of this claim... is that metre is not a condition of poetry. We can describe prose as poetry only when there is in it a specific content... They have given the prose which they write in this way the name "prose poetry", but this is a name which is no less strange and disjointed than the expression used by some others, "prose verse". This is because the poem is either a poem, in which case it is metrical and not prose, or it is prose, in which case it is not poetry. So what does "prose poem" mean?

See Nāzik al-Malā'ika, Qadāyā al-Shi'r al-Mu'āsir, Beirut 1962, pp. 130-131.

114. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p.116.

115. Ibid., p.120.

116. Ibid., p.116.

117. Ibid., p.119.

118. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p. 21.

119. Ibid., p. 31.

120. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, p. 40.

121. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p.45.
122. Ibid., p. 40.
123. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, p.3.
124. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, pp.29-30.
125. Ibid., p.29.
126. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p.9.
127. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
128. Ibid., p. 14.
129. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p.28.
130. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, pp. 133-134.
131. Ibid., p.84.
132. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p. 78.
133. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 72.
134. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p.67.
135. Ibid., p.68.
136. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p.73.
137. Ibid., p.75.
138. Ibid., p.174.
139. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p.75.
140. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, pp. 144-145.
141. Ibid., p.140.
142. Ibid., p.140.
143. Ibid., pp. 141-142.
144. Ibid., p. 74.
145. Ibid., p. 82.

CHAPTER THREE

POETRY AND POLITICS

The present chapter will deal with Nizār Qabbāni's theoretical critical views on the most important question in modern Arabic poetry, the interrelationship between poetry and contemporary Arab politics. Section I attempts to throw some light on the beginnings of political poetry in the Arab world, gives some explanatory examples without going too deeply into the dispute as to how it should be defined, and shows how Nizār's tendency toward political poetry became a factual and tangible reality after the June war of 1967. It then considers the causes for his orientation toward political poetry, of which the most important are the defeat of 1967 and the myriad problems into which the Arab world was plunged thereafter.

Section II explores the relationship between political power and the poet, the symbol of the intellectual in the Arab homeland. It begins with a review of the technique of 'taming' poets, which is the method most commonly used in order to bring over writers and poets to the government's side, considers Nizār's attitude to this, explaining the danger it poses to poetry and literature, and goes on to explain the restrictions which limit the poet's creativity, whether applied to the poet's words or to the poet himself.

Section III, "Poetry and Revolution" deals with three main issues, which are: the need of the Arab World for a total and comprehensive revolution, the necessity for cohesion between revolution and poetry so that Arab poetry may be revolutionised in form and content, and the tasks which poetry, regarded as a weapon in the service of mankind, can undertake, whether in times of adversity or not.

Section IV, "Poetry and Commitment" touches briefly on two points, which are: Nizār's rejection of commitment on the ground that it is a heavy restriction on the poet's freedom, and Nizār's own concept of commitment, which is based on the true portrayal of the lives of the poet and the people, without the poet's being subordinate to any ideology.

The reader will observe that Nizār has recorded some of his thoughts and ideas in certain poems; for this reason we have set down here all those poems which have a bearing on this chapter.

I

NIZAR'S MOVE TO POLITICAL POETRY

1. The connection between politics and modern Arabic poetry

Contemporary Arab critics are agreed on the difficulty of defining the term "political poetry" in modern Arabic literature.¹ Any researcher can uncover a wide variety of writings by various critics on the subject of political poetry, but in actual fact they are not of great value.²

The Egyptian critic Ni'māt Aḥmad Fu'ād points out that the modern Arab poet rose to a position of leadership when he plunged into political questions, realising that his mission could not be separated from his nation and that to refrain from expressing its hopes and sorrows would be blatant treachery to the nation, to poetry, to justice and to freedom.³ Poets, she says, despite their different inclinations, have begun to feel that it is their duty to record their political and patriotic views in poetry without inhibition. This may be attributed to their awareness of the oppressiveness

of colonialism, their struggle for independence, and their thirsty passion for freedom.⁴

Modern Arabic political poetry has a long history which goes back to the latter years of the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth century. Perhaps the Qasida Bā'iyya written by Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī (1848-1906) in 1880 is one of the earliest examples. It was regarded as the manifesto of Arab nationalism and has had a great importance in the history of Arab thought; in it al-Yāzījī criticises the weakness of the Arabs and the political and social ills inflicted upon them by the Turks, expresses pride in the ancient and glorious Arab past, calls for revolt against the Turks, exposes the political lack of weight of the Arabs in general, and asserts that the future will belong to the Arabs, while the Turks will disappear without any hope of return. The poem says:

Rouse yourselves and awaken, O Arabs,
 For the waters have risen and our knees are submerged!
 Why do you cherish vain hopes which deceive you
 While you are lying plundered at spear-point?
 Great God! Why do you sleep thus, while
 The land cries out to you and the soil yearns for you?
 Are you not those who held sway in the world and conquered
 East and West and were mighty wherever you went,
 And who built for the palaces of glory pillars
 From which thunderbolts fell back, overturned?
 Let me hear the clashing of glittering swords
 In the dust of battle, for I take joy in their ringing,
 And let me hear the sound of discharged rifles
 Resounding in every clamorous hall!
 You have no state to lend strength to your arms,
 And no helper who will answer your call in your hour of need;
 Your destiny has fallen low in the eyes of the Turks
 And your rights are usurped in the hands of the Turks
 None are aware of your standing and your honour
 Or of your existence, your name and your surname.
 Patience, O nation of Turks who have misruled
 For a period, soon now the veils will be lifted!
 Let us seek our goal with sword-blade
 For no goal will disappoint us with it at our side
 And let us leave the Turkish boors to regret
 And bewail their previous misdeeds.⁵

Among the poets of this period (the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth), we may mention Khalil Muṭṭrān (1871-1949), Fu'ād al-Khaṭīb (1880-1957), Bishāra al-Khūrī (1883-1969), Rashīd Salīm al-Khūrī (1887- ?), Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān (1883-1941) and Iliyā Abū Mādī (1889-1957) from Lebanon; 'Abd al-Masiḥ al-Antākī (1875-1922), Qustākī al-Ḥimṣī (1858-1941) and Fāris al-Khūrī (1883-1962) from Syria; 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Kāzīmī (1865-1935), Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (1873-1962) and Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfī (1877-1945) from Iraq; and Aḥmad Shawqī (1878-1932) and Ḥāfīz Ibrāhīm⁶ (1872-1932) from Egypt.

In general, the political or near-political poetry of these poets was the offspring of the problems from which their societies suffered. The problems were numerous - political, social and economic, and the poets felt their oppressive weight and expressed them in terms of revolt and sorrow. On the one hand, they resisted the tyranny and corruption of the Turkish governors and their heedlessness of the people's interests, and demanded that they be provided with security and basic amenities, while on the other hand they confronted colonialism and foreign occupation of their countries, and the way in which this suffocated every liberation movement. Their demands were clear; evacuation of foreign troops, development of their countries, the people's right to determine their own destiny, the establishment of national and constitutional government, and the revision of religious and civil law to make it more in accordance with the spirit of the age.⁷

They were equally tormented by backwardness, disintegration and loss of values in their societies, and in their poems they exposed these failings and set about propagating revolt against humiliation and submission, attacking the way their societies clung to outward appearances rather than to essentials, held on to outworn customs and traditions, and were submerged in ignorance and corruption.⁸

Arab politics became an important subject in the poetry of the second generation of Arab poets (those who were born at the beginning of the 20th century and grew to adulthood after the First World War) such as Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī (b. 1900) (Iraq), 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (1902-1949) (Egypt), Ilyās Abū Shabaka (1904-1947) and Ṣalāḥ Labkī (1906-1955) (Lebanon), Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān (1905-1941) (Palestine) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī⁹ (1909-1935) (Tunisia). The poetry of these poets rang with revolt against the enemies of their nation, and called for union between the Arabs, independence, struggle against external dangers and an opening up to world civilisation.¹⁰

For the generation of the free verse movement (Nāzik al-Malā'ika, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, Ṣalāḥ 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, Fadwā Ṭūqān, Maḥmūd Darwish and Nizār Qabbānī), Arab politics became a chief part of their poetry. Indeed, it can be said that what distinguishes all of these poets, with the exception of a small part of the poetry of Nāzik al-Malā'ika, is that they are political poets of the first rank.¹¹

It should be said here that to quote examples of political poetry to support the statements made above would take our research outside the general framework which we have laid down for it. For this reason we will content ourselves with pausing over two poets in order to clarify the essence of political poetry. These poets are, from the first generation, Aḥmad Shawqī and, from the second generation, Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān.

If we leaf through the four volumes of the diwān of Aḥmad Shawqī, we will find purely political poems, including one extolling the humanism of Gandhi, his struggle against British rule in India and his patient endurance of suffering while in prison,¹² another poem extolling Yūsuf al-'Azma

(1884-1920) while he was facing the French under Gouraud at the battle of Maysalūn,¹³ a third poem condemning the French for shelling Damascus on 18th October, 1925, accusing them of brutality and arrogance,¹⁴ a fourth lamenting the Islamic Caliphate when it was abolished by Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk)¹⁵ in 1923-4, and a fifth revealing Italian crimes in Libya written after the execution by Italy of the national hero 'Umar al-Mukhtār in 1931. In this poem Shawqī shows his anger at Italian colonialism, which acted in a revolting way in executing al-Mukhtār without showing any mercy to his old age of more than seventy years. Shawqī begins this poem as follows:

They planted your mortal remains on the sand like a banner
 Which arouses the valley morning and evening
 Woe betide them! They have erected a beacon of blood
 Which inspires tomorrow's generation with hatred.
 Would there have been any harm if they had made a link for the morrow
 Between the nations of love and brotherhood?
 A wound which cries out from afar, and a victim
 Who searches for a freedom bought with blood.
 O Sword, unsheathed in the desert,
 Clothing other swords in the fullness of time with sharpness!
 These deserts are a scabbard for every keen sword
 Which wreaks havoc on the enemy, and wreaks it well.¹⁶

Referring to the tragedy which his death represented for the Arabs and the Muslims, and to his valour in the battle against the Italians, he says:

You were given the choice, and you chose to spend the night hungry;
 You did not built high rank for yourself, or accumulate wealth.
 Heroism is to die of thirst;
 It is not heroism to gulp water.
 Africa, cradle of lions, and their tomb,
 Cries out to men and women to come to your aid
 And the Muslims, despite the difference of their lands
 Cannot be consoled for this affliction
 While the men of the Jāhiliyya, beyond their graves
 Weep for Zayd al-Khayl and al-Falhā,¹

* * *

In the care and guard of God the Noble
 A body lies in Cyrenaica, resting in the desert
 The millstone of events has left no bones
 To rot, and the spears have left no blood,

.....

1. The laqab of 'Antara al-'Absī .

Like the corpse of a vulture, or the remains of a lion
 Which have turned to dust beyond the winds.
 The hero of the Bedouin life, who used not to launch raids
 In a tank, and used not to ride the air.
 He was rather an owner of horses, who protected their backs
 And directed battle from their manes.¹⁷

Describing his bravery in facing death and the savagery of his enemies,
 he says:

He answered the judgment of earth yesterday with a life-blood
 Which feared nothing but the judgment of heaven;
 He met it with a lofty brow as though he were
 Socrates dragging his cloak to the judges -
 An old man who kept control of the dignity of his age
 And did not burst into tears like a child from fear of punishment
 A man who accepted the turns of fate, and lived in happy times;
 Then they changed, and he awaited adversity.
 Lions roar in their chains, and you will see
 No lion weeping submissively in captivity.
 The prisoner comes dragging his heavy irons,
 A lion pulling behind him a speckled serpent
 The fetters have bitten into his legs, but he does not bow under
 the weight,
 And the years have wrought destruction on his frame
 They chose the humiliating rope as a death
 For a lion spitting his soul out around him
 They forbade a death inflicted by sharp swords or spears
 To one who used to deal out gaping spear-thrusts
 I see that the hand of civilisation has a passion,
 Truly to destroy at one time and build at another.
 It has given the rights of man the force of law in their countries
 Except for those who refuse to accept oppression and for the weak.¹⁸

In the diwān of Ibrāhīm Tūqān there is a series of political
 poems which revolve around the glorification of Palestinian martyrs, as in
al-Shahīd ¹⁹ and al-Thalāthā' al-Ḥamrā' ;²⁰ criticism of spurious
 nationalist politicians who trade in the dreams and hopes of the people, as in
Tafā'ul wa-Amal ,²¹ Filastīn Mahd al-Shaqā' ,²² Ilā al-Ahrār ,²³
al-Shaykh Muẓaffar ,²⁴ Antum ,²⁵ and Yā Qawm ;²⁶ criticism of the British
 mandatory government, as in Ayyuhā al-Aqwiyyā' ,²⁷ Ayyatuhā al-Hukūma ,²⁸
Ya Ḥasratā ,²⁹ and Manāhij ;³⁰ attacks on Jewish immigration into
 Palestine, as in 1,000 ;³¹ and criticism of the middlemen who sell land to
 the Jews, pretending to be ignorant of the dire danger to Palestine and its
 people which lies behind these transactions, as in Ishtaraw al-Ard ,³² al-
Samāsira ,³³ Ni'ma ,³⁴ and Ilā Bā'i'i al-Bilād , in which he says:

They sold their country to their enemies, in greed for
 Wealth; but they sold their homeland.
 They might have been forgiven if they had been forced by hunger,
 But, by God, they never thirsted nor hungered for a day.
 Even with hunger, a sufficiency of shame is spat on
 By a soul which is held back from accepting shame.
 When you say, "This country is called our homeland",
 They do not understand, for greed prevents them from understanding.
 Our enemies, ever since they existed, have been money-changers
 And we, ever since we descended upon earth, have been cultivators.
 You have not reversed the decree of the Creator,
 But kinship and nature have brought you close to the Jews.
 O you who sell land, not caring about the consequence,
 And who have not learned that the enemy is deceitful;
 You have committed a crime against your grandchildren, alas!
 And they will be slaves, servants and subjects!
 You have been seduced by gleaming gold which you own;
 The mirage, as you know, is gleaming.
 Think of your death in a land in which you grew up,
 And leave two arm's length of land for your grave.³⁵

2. Nizār and the early stages of his move to political poetry

Directly after the June war of 1967, or twenty-three years after starting to write love-poetry, and after the appearance of seven collections devoted to this genre [Qālat li al-Samrā' (1944), Tufūlat Nahd (1948), Sāmbā (1949), Anti li (1950), Qaṣā'id (1956), Ḥabibatī (1961) and al-Rasm bi-al-Kalimāt (1966)] there came a sharp turning-point in Nizār Qabbāni's poetry. He stopped writing love-poetry for a while and published a series of long political poems (including, for example, Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa and al-Mumaththilūn). These are the poems which shook the reading public in the Arab world and stirred up many questions about this sudden change in Nizār, and the diversion of his poetry to a new subject, Arab politics. The curiosity of his readers impelled him to say:

The most serious thing was that the readers who had known me for thirty years, tattooed with love-poetry, had grown so used to my old face that when they saw me putting on a different face from the face of love they thought that I was in disguise and were disappointed with my new

features. Those who were enthusiastic for my lover's face were not happy with my other face and could not feel at ease with it. Then they were even more amazed when they saw me in battledress with a rifle slung over my shoulder.³⁶

This curiosity also impelled him to explain the following points:

(a) His movement from love-poetry to political poetry should not be regarded as inconsistent, as some critics suppose; or, if it is so regarded, he asserts, it is a virtue, not a fault or a shortcoming, as inconsistency is the only thing which distinguishes man from such inert objects as a millstone or a railway, and it is the poet's duty to be inconsistent, sometimes with himself and sometimes with other people, because inconsistency widens his poetic vision.³⁷

(b) His new political poetry is not borrowed from anyone. Thus it is not an imitation of anyone, but is a natural expression of the many feelings and impulses which are active within his soul. Here he compares himself to a musical instrument with a number of different interlocking sounds, which he has the power to produce in accordance with the circumstances through which he is passing.³⁸

(c) His new political poetry is not his last subject, but he does not know when he will abandon it, and indeed does not know if he can abandon it.³⁹

(d) His preoccupation with political poetry does not mean that he has abandoned love-poetry for ever, and does not imply in any way that he has repented of it or regrets portraying woman in his previous collections in an open way which sometimes goes against modesty and prevailing ethics.⁴⁰

(e) As a poet, he is not separate from life because he is a part of it. This means that it is his duty to portray, "all the fluctuations of life,

society and history" and not to restrict himself to one aspect, like love poetry, and nothing more.⁴¹

3. Reasons for Nizār's move to political poetry

These can be summarised as follows:

(a) The defeat of the Arabs in the June war

The defeat of the Arabs in the June war of 1967, as we have said above, was one of the most powerful reasons for this comprehensive shift toward political poetry. The great poet, as Nizār says, does not burst forth from nothingness or coincidence, but from upheavals and disasters.⁴² After June, Nizār felt a frightful spiritual sorrow which was perhaps the most acute pain he had ever felt in his life. As a result of this pain he felt that he was a new and different person.⁴³ It is from this that his sudden and swift change to politics came. In the third stanza of Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa he says:

O my sorrowful country
 You have turned me in a moment
 From a poet writing poetry of love and longing
 To a poet writing with a knife.⁴⁴

(b) The present sad situation in the Arab world

Nizār maintains that the ruin of the Arab nation began with the fall of Baghdad at the hands of Hulagu in 1258, and that it has continued to the present time.⁴⁵ He also maintains that the Arab-Islamic character is full of chronic historical complexes which have been inherited from the past and are still present today,⁴⁶ and that when he looks at present-day Arab life he sees

that "the worms are attacking it from every side, and that it is two bow-lengths or less from falling."⁴⁷

He divides the illnesses of the Arabs into two: internal illnesses like widespread illiteracy, consumerism, the diminution of man's value, the dominance of materialism,⁴⁸ divisions between the Arab states, the collapse of Arab-Arab relationships, national disintegration, regionalism,⁴⁹ the weakness of the masses in the face of governments and extensive social divisions between poor and rich;⁵⁰ and external illnesses, of which the most important is Israeli expansionism and its extension into Arab lands.⁵¹

Thus, the Arab world, in his view, is going from bad to worse. It is "a desert bounded by tribal factionalism to the east, by tumours caused by oil to the south, and police dogs to the north."⁵² It goes without saying that the events taking place in the Arab world one after another arouse the contemporary poet and impose upon him the duty of saying something. Thus, Nizār says:

How, then, can the Arab poet come to terms with his reality? How can he seal his mouth with red wax? How can he feel secure when the bird-merchants around him are outbidding one another for his plumage, his wings, the sweetness of his voice and the strength of his throat? How can he be a witness of this collective Arab suicide without weeping, screaming, protesting or throwing himself from the ninety-ninth floor? How can he remain in the ranks of the spectators, eating popcorn and pumpkin-seeds and drinking soft drinks, when tongues of fire are devouring the theatre and the play? How can the poet remain polite, well-mannered and reasonable when everything around him consists of non-stop scenes from the theatre of the absurd?⁵³

(c) The desire to give more variety to his poetic subject-matter

The subject matter of poetry cannot be restricted to a set number of themes, since the subject matter of poetry is life in its entirety, with all

its worlds of thought, emotion and fantasy.⁵⁴ It appears that Nizār's desire to write on new subjects rather than love-poetry, and in particular to write political poetry, had been nagging at him since the fifties, as he expresses this desire in his first political poems, for example Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg, or Risālat Jundī fi Jabhat al-Suways. There is no doubt that the desire to make his poetry more varied gave him a taste for a new language and images which had been unaccustomed before this time. He is certain that Arab politics, which he calls "the political jungle" is now a suitable subject for poetry, since it is rich in every possible novelty:

The political jungle seems richer, more novel, and more obscure than all the jungles of Africa, since in it there are peacocks, monkeys, hyenas, elephants, apes, tortoises, reptiles and moving plants... The child who lives in my depths asks me increasingly to take him to this jungle. In vain do I try to persuade him that the political jungle is full of ghosts and evil spirits - in vain do I try to explain to the inquisitive child who lives in my depths that whoever enters the jungle of Arab politics is lost, while whoever leaves is reborn; he is determined to live between the teeth of crocodiles.⁵⁵

(d) Preserving one's identity from annihilation

Poetry, Nizār says, is not a dead time, but is a bridge toward all times.⁵⁶ Man dies, but his poetry remains on men's tongues at all times and in every place. This means that poetry, whether political or to do with love, forms a protective armour which preserves and protects one's identity from annihilation. In Li-mādhā Aktubu he says:

Nothing protects us from death
Except woman and writing.⁵⁷

II

POLITICAL POWER AND THE POET

1. Power and the taming of writers

The Egyptian thinker Fu'ād Ḥasan Zakariyyā asserts that political regimes in power in the Arab world want nothing from the Arab citizen, wherever he may be, or from the poet and the man of letters, except that he should be obedient to their commands. This call to obedience may be quite open, so that the controlled media portray the authorities or the ruler as being the fount of wisdom and the source of infallible judgment. Accordingly all the citizens have to do is to entrust their affairs to the ruler and to rely upon him.⁵⁸ It is the ruler who thinks on their behalf and knows what is best for them better than they do. In exchange for this, any criticism, opposition or questioning is described as rebellion or unforgivable sin. The greatest of all sins is to refuse to obey. The greatest of crimes, as Sadat used to say, is for the educated to become corrupt and to meddle in political matters.⁵⁹

Accordingly the Arab political authorities set out to buy poets and writers, to guarantee them sources of income and to provide them with money and positions so that they will become their supporters. Gradually these authorities begin to 'break in' the poets until they rid them of their hostile feelings and turn them into tame creatures.⁶⁰ These "creatures", in Nizār's view, are as far removed as is possible from true literature, since by reason of their loyalty to the ruling regime they are obliged to write literature which makes the virtues of the regime seem brilliant and obvious and conceals their vices. Thus the tamed poets and writers are hypocrites and their literature is fraudulent, because it does not spring from real and true emotions. Furthermore, they are marked out by their fear and submissiveness,

and their characters are torn between loyalty to the ruling regime and a desire to free themselves from it:

In our society, writing is an official occupation which has all the security and the obligation to obey orders of the civil service. Three-quarters of Arab writers are "civil servants" who write with an insurance policy against poverty, illness, old age and forced exile in their pockets. For this reason they cannot announce any strike, march in any demonstration, or distribute any poem or secret proclamation to which their employer does not agree. Thus the Arab writer is torn between his "civil status" as a man married to the government and his "artistic status" as a man who desires to betray his wife, the government, but cannot do so because he wishes to secure the future of his children and the honour of his family. Until the courageous Arab writer who can tear up his marriage certificate to the government and practise conjugal infidelity, even once in his life, comes into being, our literary works will remain as far removed from the risk of being banned or confiscated as are books about domestic economy.⁶¹

We should mention here that Nizār has more than once referred in his poetry to the class of tame poets and writers. In his Shu'arā' al-Ard al-Muhtalla (1968) there is an allusion to the way in which modern Arab poets rally round ruling political regimes from fear of them and from desire for their favours. This has led to the "castration" of this class and its loss of "poetical virility":

For among us, poets have died, and poetry has died
 Among us poetry is a dervish
 Reeling in the circles of sufi religious ceremonies
 And the poet works as a coachman for the castle's commander.
 The poet's lips are castrated in this age
 He brushes the ruler's coat
 And pours out glasses of wine for him;
 The poet's words are castrated -
 And how wretched are the eunuchs of thought!⁶²

In Hiwār Thawrī Ma'a Tāhā Ḥusayn there is an allusion to the way writers and thinkers pursue rulers in order to gain their pleasure and the way they turn into willing henchmen or silent witnesses, and run away from their real function as intellectuals, being content to be calm and peaceful and to take on any colour or follow any prevailing wind, so that they become one of the elements which paralyse the Arab body. Speaking to Tāhā Ḥusayn,

Nizār says:

Thought has fallen into political hypocrisy
 And the man of letters has become like an acrobat,
 Engaging in incense-burning, dancing for a living
 And praying for victory for the Sultan.
 Return to us, for what is being written today
 Is small in vision, and small in content
 Poetry has been murdered, and the poem has become
 A singing-girl, who is purchased like all singing-girls,
 They have stripped it of everything, and bloodied
 Its feet with going round in circles.⁶³

Nizār calls on Ṭāhā Ḥusayn to examine very closely the "taming" of Arab writers, saying:

O great angry one, see
 How the writers have become like lambs
 Satisfied with living in the sun, with pasturage
 At ease with water and pools.
 The most harshly oppressive thing to the soul
 Is a pen in the hand of the craven coward.⁶⁴

In 'Azf Munfarid 'alā al-Ṭabla (1986) there is a major portrayal of "taming" which is not restricted merely to individuals, but extends to everything in the societies of the dominating regimes - Ministries of Information, News Agencies, newspapers and so on. Here Nizār portrays state and society as a whole as embodied in the person of the ruler; if the latter utters a word or issues a decree, his "retinue" has to glorify everything he says parrot-fashion. Thus the ruler brings all the propaganda mouthpieces under his domination and at the same time creates his own poets and writers to defend him:

The ruler beats on the drum
 And all the Ministries of Information beat on the same drum
 All the news agencies amplify the drum-beat
 And the newspapers, major and minor
 Act as dancers
 In a night-club owned by the state
 There is no sound in the whole of music

Uglier than the sound of the state.⁶⁵

Nizār considers that the authorities rely, for the operation of "taming", upon force - the police and the army - and that they bring down anyone who disagrees with them. At the same time he asks the Arab citizen to think well and to examine everything he reads, or hears, and, in brief, to be skeptical, because the authorities are always eager to spread abroad lies which support their position, and also to conceal facts which affect them in a negative way:

The state is good at composing words,
 Excellent at the accusative, excellent at the genitive, excellent at the possessive,
 Excellent at flexing its muscles
 There is no poetry worse than state poetry.
 No lie cleverer than state lies
 Newspapers, reports, commentaries.⁶⁶

At the end of the poem Nizār says that there is a collective "taming", which is a common and general phenomenon in all the countries of the Arab homeland. When the authorities want something, they set their media in motion in order to promote it. It is the people's task to respond positively; if they do not do so, the police force them to do it:

A drum.. a drum
 An Arab homeland united from the day of its birth by a drum
 And split up into tribes by a drum
 The members of the band, the scholars and the thinkers,
 The dervishes and the local judge,
 Tremble at the beat of the drum.
 Official music comes, like hours of inadvertence
 From every place
 Oil music tries to market the human being;
 The price of a single barrel is higher than the price of a man.
 Official music is rehearsed like the song of the devil
 And we are obliged to tremble when the authorities sing
 And to cry "Oh"! in front of the police
 Oh! ... Oh!
 Oh! ... Oh!
 Music imposed against our will
 Merrymaking imposed against our will

Death imposed against our will
 Oh! ... Oh!
 Has the ruler's singing become sacred
 Like the singing of God?⁶⁷

It is obvious that the drum is the voice of the authorities or the ruler. Perhaps Nizār wishes here to criticise the dictatorship of the single voice, the single opinion, which dominates everything and directs everything according to its will.

2. Nizār's attitude to the taming of literature and writers

Nizār refuses to be subject to any authority, even one which has relatively civilised features. He says forthrightly:

I do not want to live in the same house as the government, or sleep in the same bed as it, because living with the government is degradation at night and slavery by day.⁶⁸

Thus he prefers to remain independent, without being subject to any influence:

My poetry does not kiss men's hands, and it would be more proper
 For sultans to kiss its hands.⁶⁹

Likewise he rejects tamed poetry, in all forms and types as, "Poetry written by sheep to gain the favour of their shepherd."⁷⁰ In his opinion, the most serious aspect of the operation of taming is that it uproots all the roots of criticism and questioning from the personality of the individual, and leads to the destruction of the human intellect, whether that of the poet or the ordinary citizen, and the loss of any ability to take part in the solution of the problems of society. Equally, it gives rise in the ruler to an inflated feeling of importance, to the extent that he may imagine that he is

God's shadow on earth.⁷¹

When the poet is tamed he "falls into hypocrisy, or into evil, or into adultery".⁷² Taming means, first and foremost, the collapse of culture

This is the time in which culture
Writing
Honour
And manhood have sunk below the horizon!⁷³

3. Poetry and restrictions

Reading through the whole of Nizār's writings the researcher can deduce that the Arab poet in general, whether Nizār or any other serious poet, is exposed to two kinds of restrictions from Arab political authorities. These are:

(a) Restrictions imposed on poetry and speech

The Tunisian writer Hishām Ju'ayṭ enumerates five attributes of Arab political authority. These are anti-intellectualism, weakness, the dominance of tribalism and family relationships, exploitation and suppression.⁷⁴ Fu'ād Ḥasan Zakariyyā notes that governmental authority in the Arab countries is authoritarian in the political, economic and cultural fields, and that the state usually intervenes to impose its views on various forms of cultural production, whether political, economic, or artistic.⁷⁵ It is in the shadow of such an authority that poets and writers in the Arab world live. It appears that the most important problem facing them, as Nizār says, is their struggle with political authority.⁷⁶

It scarcely needs to be said that the view taken by Arab political

regimes of modern poetry, especially political poetry, is one of caution, suspicion and uneasiness. This poetry is a great danger, because it attacks their deformity, undemocratic conduct, regionalism and backwardness.

Nizār raises this problem in his poetry. In Taqrīr Sirri Jiddan min Bilād Qam'istān he refers to the general ban on the circulation of his poetry by official Arab political authorities. Poetry, as he understands it, is one of the ways of civilising the human race and raising men's moral values and feelings and broadening their knowledge. The authorities, however, are not interested in the idea that poetry brings the good news of civilisation and love, because they live in Sodom, the city of salt and stones, the city of non-civilisation:

My poems are forbidden
 In the cities which sleep over salt and stones
 My poems are forbidden
 Because they bring man the perfume of love and civilisation
 My poems are rejected
 Because they bring the goods news to every house.⁷⁷

In Ka's 4, Nizār presents a picture of regimes which publicly execute poetry, in the same way that they execute criminals, so that this execution can be confirmed by every one of their underlings - judges, ministers, aides and so on - without their having the ability to question, argue or object:

When the bottle loses its memory
 I draw the homeland in the shape of a gallows
 From which my poems dangle with awesome ceremony
 In the presence of the sublime Porte,
 Its Saluki dog,
 Its Saluki counsellor,
 The head of the Prisons Department,
 The head of the Department for Burying the Dead,
 The Minister of Higher Education
 The head of the Writers' Union
 The Chief Priest .. The Chief Qadi ...
 All the Ministers of State who were appointed by hasty decrees
 To kill the poet .. and walk in his funeral procession.⁷⁸

In al-Hākīm wa-al-'Uṣfūr Nizār speaks about the restrictions imposed upon the public recital of poetry, its dissemination and its movement from one Arab country to another. Here Nizār tries to achieve his basic objective, which is to bring his poetry to the public, because he knows that this poetry (the fish) will not assume its natural size, and its life will not take its proper shape, except through interaction and interconnection with the public (the water, the sea):

I wander through the Arab homeland
 To read my poetry to the public
 I am satisfied
 That poetry is a loaf baked for the public
 And I have been satisfied from the beginning
 That letters are fish
 And that the water is the public.⁷⁹

In the full flood of his enthusiasms Nizār forgets that the authorities have their own objectives and priorities, the chief of these being to maintain security and to arrest agitators and trouble-makers - whether this is done by means of poetry or in any other way. Thus the poet is arrested every time he goes to an Arab country to read his poetry to the people. The reason for this arrest is well known; it is forbidden to circulate poetry (the sparrow) unless the authorities have given their permission:

I wander through the Arab homeland
 With nothing but a notebook
 One police-station sends me to another
 One army throws me to another
 Yet I carry nothing in my pocket but a sparrow,
 But the officer stops me
 And wants a pass for the sparrow;
 In my homeland speech needs
 A travel pass!⁸⁰

In Hiwār ma'a Malik al-Maghūl there are two characters: the King of the Mongols, symbol of tyrannical Arab authority, and the weak poet, who is

completely without power. In this poem the authorities wish to silence the poet because he wishes to bring the good news of life (the neighing, the blossoming of the fields), while the poet refuses to become a hireling to any authority and also refuses to sell his bird (his voice, his poetry), or to allow anyone to confiscate it:

O King of the Mongols,
 O you who are angry at our neighing,
 You who are afraid of the fields' blossoming,
 I wish to say,
 Before your executioner Masrūr kills me,
 And before the false witnesses come -
 I wish to say a couple of words
 To my wife who is several months pregnant
 And to all my friends
 And my oppressed nation,
 I wish to say that I am a poet,
 Carrying a sparrow in my throat
 Which I refuse to sell
 While you wish to expropriate
 The sparrow from my throat.⁸¹

In Yawmiyyāt Kalb Muthaqqaf the poet takes on the guise of a dog who confronts his master (the authorities), asking him elegantly to listen to his poetry, since it brings him the voice and cares of the people:

Master,
 I do not want rubies or gold from you
 I do not want you to clothe me
 In brocade or cloth of gold -
 All I want is that you should listen to me
 Because in my poems I bring you
 All the voices of the Arabs,
 All the curses of the Arabs.⁸²

Before this poet-dog utters a single word of poetry, the decree is given for his execution, and he asks his tyrannical master politely to allow him to bark (i.e. to recite his poetry) because his weapon, barking, can do no harm, and will never be anything, now or in the future, in the face of the weapons and implements of authority:

If, Master,
 You do not like poetry and singing,
 Then tell your executioner to give me
 The freedom to bark.⁸³

(b) Restrictions imposed upon the poet

Some Arab sociologists are of the opinion that the contemporary Arab world has two main groups of wealthy people - those whose wealth comes from power, and those whose wealth comes from oil. Despite the obvious difference between these two types, they are united by one thing; fear of the educated classes, and a desire to humiliate them.⁸⁴ Without doubt writers and poets in the Arab world form a crushed and defenceless class as a result of their suppression by the authorities. Nizār portrays the dangers which beset the Arab poet today:

What does it mean to be a poet in the Arab homeland? It means swimming against gravity. It means sitting in the electric chair without being jolted by the current. It means walking on the edge of twenty-two knives without bleeding. It means having the ability of James Bond to jump over trains... and to pass through border checkpoints. It means putting on the cap of invisibility and walking barefoot on the writing-paper so that people cannot hear the sound of your breathing or the sound of your thoughts.⁸⁵

On the same point he says elsewhere:

We write without a parachute and we have no insurance policy for our words or thoughts. If we reach you at the end of the week it is because our life is a long one. But if we do not reach you, do not suppose that we have been involved in a traffic accident, and do not ask about us in the accident department or in the police station. We have not been involved in a traffic accident; we have been involved in a writing accident. What hit us was not a small touring car, but a heavy lorry called "authority".⁸⁶

This continuous suppression of poets and writers made Nizār shout out

loud that writing is "a curse which pursues [the poet] wherever he is",⁸⁷ and "a green revolution which the authorities will not permit to happen, and for which the Ministry of the Interior will not give a travel permit."⁸⁸ In his poem Anā ya Sadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī he states that Arab writers are the first victims of the Arab authorities, and despite the fact that they create poetry and make life beautiful with it, nobody recompenses them for this, and what they do does not meet with much approval. Poets and thinkers, a symbol of purity and beauty, have no existence on the Arab political map, while charlatans, hypocrites, ignoramuses and corrupt people enjoy the blessings of oil:

What is poetry? What is the pain of writing? What are visions?
 The first of our victims are the writers;
 They give us beautiful joy, and their lot
 Is the lot of harlots... they have no reward.
 O Tunis the green, this is a world
 In which the illiterate and the swindler grow rich⁸⁹

He also mentions the suppression of poetry and poets by regimes:

From where does poetry come, when our daytime
 Is repression and our evening is terrorism?⁹⁰

In fact, Nizār received his share of torment:

I want to emphasise that my political poetry has hung me on more
 than one cross and more than one gallow.⁹¹

He enumerates four methods followed by Arab regimes in order to suppress writers. These are:

1. Accusing writing of being dangerous

The poet is normally regarded as being a source of danger to Arab security services. For this reason his name is put on the blacklist at border

posts and airports and he is sometimes forbidden to enter other Arab countries:

Because I work with a substance whose circulation is forbidden among the Arabs, which is the truth; the doors of the Arab countries are slammed in my face, and their guards look at me through chinks in the doors, in surprise and fright, as though I were a rare poetic animal.⁹²

Nizār raised this matter in a recent poem entitled 'Alā al-Qā'ima al-Sawdā':

In the box "occupation" on my passport
There is a little, little expression
Which says
That I am a "writer and poet".

At the first moment, I believed that it was
A magical expression
Which would open the doors on my way
And make the guards prostrate themselves to me
And intoxicate the officers and soldiers...

Then I discovered that it was my great disgrace
And my serious accusation
And that it was the sword hanging over my head
Whenever I wanted to travel.⁹³

(ii) Pursuit

The authorities do not normally content themselves with accusing the poet, but pursue him everywhere in order to tear up his roots. Nizār has compared the Arab poet in this respect to the gazelle, who is born in fear, and is constantly pursued night and day, expecting someone to come and arrest him alive or dead.⁹⁴ This led him to say:

All of us, gentlemen, are pursued in one way or another. The Arab nation is pursued. The Arabic language is pursued. The Arab heritage is pursued. The Arab mind is pursued. Arab trees are pursued, so that they do not bear fruit. Arab women are pursued so that they do not give birth. Arab universities are pursued so that they are not impregnated by revolution. Arab minarets are pursued so that they do not call people to prayer. I am not

DAMAGED

TEXT

IN

ORIGINAL

telling you a dream!⁹⁵

(iii) Defamation

Arab authorities generally have recourse to defamation of poets and spreading rumours about them in order to bring them down. Perhaps the simplest of these rumours is an accusation of atheism, as happened with Nizār Qabbānī himself.⁹⁶ Of these campaigns against him he writes:

Campaigns have become so much a part of my body that I have become addicted to them, and have lost the ability to feel them. Ever since 1944 I have been living between the dragon's teeth. My permanent address is "between the dragon's teeth", and I have no other address.⁹⁷

He explains his firmness in the face of these campaigns in this way:

I do not feel that I am alive unless stones are continually falling on my window. At that moment I feel that the gulp of poetry which I have given to people has begun to reach their circulatory systems, and that the earthquake which I had been keeping within me has transferred itself to them. When I publish a poem and they do not attack me for it I feel that I am ill and my temperature is going up. In the third world, abuse does not mean that you have failed; it means that you have surpassed yourself.⁹⁸

(iv) Assassination

When the previous methods fail, the authorities resort to a purge of poets and writers. Some of them are assassinated.⁹⁹ Although Nizār has not suffered to date, he realises that it is a widespread practice:

We die An Arab death. When we sit down to write, is above all an Arab condition. The inquisitions to which we are led are Arab inquisitions. The barrier of fear from which we suffer is an Arab barrier. As for the rest of the foreign barriers, we take it upon ourselves to go straight through them. The problem of the Arab writer lies with Quraysh, not the Byzantines, and with the Guided Caliphs, not Louis XIV.¹⁰⁰

III

POETRY AND REVOLUTION1. The Arab world's need for revolution

Nizār believes that the Arab world is in need of a great revolution which will bring about a fundamental change in economic, political, social and cultural structures, and "will change the geography of the Arab man in its entirety and re-form him anew".¹⁰¹

He considers that a revolution of this sort will have a positive effect on culture and literature, in as much as it is to be hoped that it will develop the best traditions and values of Arab man, lead to a growth of his intellect and abilities in general, and free him from illusions, reflex reactions, fanaticism and inherited historical complexes.¹⁰²

The condition for the success of this revolution is that it should be strong and embrace all aspects of Arab life without exception:

To deserve its name, Arab thought should advance like a bulldozer to remove the ruins, debris and nails which have piled up on the land of this region since the ages of decline. Comprehensiveness is the first condition for revolutionary work. Revolutions cannot be by instalments. Like nuclear explosions, revolutionary explosions must take place instantaneously and comprehensively, or else the revolution will turn into another kind of bureaucracy and become an ancient Ottoman rifle which discharges bullets by instalments, and kills by instalments.¹⁰³

2. Cohesion between revolution and writing

Nizār stresses the necessity of creating a strong cohesion between poetry and revolution. Because of this he continually repeats that "the act of writing and the act of revolution are inseparable",¹⁰⁴ and that "it is the business of Arab revolutions which have broken out to make writing (poetry and prose) a part of themselves and consider them their allies and partners in the act of making changes."¹⁰⁵

He stresses that every Arab revolution demands the creation of a new literary form and a new revolutionary poetic writing in order to speak to man, who is the chief element in a revolution; this is because many of the old literary and poetic styles in use now, for example those of the Maqāmāt and the Alifiyya of Ibn Mālik, have been overtaken by history, and are no longer able to build the new Arab man.¹⁰⁶

He considers that the revolutionising of Arab poetry demands three things - contact with life, discovery of new concepts, and renewal in form. Nizār mentions these things in two poems, Qasīdat I'tidhār li-Abī Tammām and Ifāda fī Maḥkamat al-Shi'r; we shall now consider these poems in detail.

(a) Qasīdat I'tidhār li-Abī Tammām

In the first four stanzas of this poem Nizār rejects the idea that poetry is a means of calming and drugging the nerves, of competing in the display of rhetoric and eloquence, of repeating old and worn-out concepts or of deceiving the public. He also rejects the idea of turning Arab poetry festivals into occasions for poets to meet and exchange toasts. He claims that if poetry clusters around one class, such the ruling class, and absorbs its momentary personal concerns, it will be destroyed for ever.¹⁰⁷

In the fifth stanza he addresses himself to Abū Tammām (796-848), one of the greatest poets in the whole history of Arabic literature, compares his poetry with that of present-day Arab poets, and finds that the difference between them is enormous. Abū Tammām was firmly linked with his age and its people. He took great pains with the construction of his poems, and his poetry is also outstanding for seeking out new ideas, for its intellectual reflection, its reliance on old forms, and its excellence in describing battles and nature. The old critics took him to task for two things, hunting out obscure vocabulary and extravagance in figures of speech and ornamentation.¹⁰⁸

As a result of this comparison, Nizār finds that Abū Tammām was extremely creative in his poetry, while present-day Arab poetry lags behind this creativity because it fails to immerse itself in Arab society, to seek inspiration from the cares of ordinary people, and to open itself to the changes which have happened to poetry throughout the world. As a result Arab poetry has become a "widow", and its duty is to marry its society and the world:

Abū Tammām... where are you? Where is your perfumed speech?
 Where is an adventurous hand, travelling in unknown territory, creating?
 Abū Tammām
 Our poems are widowed, and our writings are widowed
 The words and the images are widowed
 No water flows on our notebooks
 No wind blows on our ships,
 No sun, and no moon.
 Abū Tammām, poetry has turned full circle
 Speech and the dictionary have revolted
 The Bedouin and the settled folk have revolted
 The sea has grown tired of its blueness,
 The tree has grown tired of its roots
 And we, here,
 Are like the People of the Cave, without knowledge or information.
 Our revolutionaries have not revolted
 And our poets have not composed poetry
 Abū Tammām - do not read our poems,
 All our palaces are paper,
 And all our tears are stone.¹⁰⁹

In the sixth and seventh stanzas of his address to Abū Tammām, Nizār insists that disclosing new concepts, inventing ideas, unusual and novel imagery, revealing facts of life, bringing hidden things to light and prophecy are the elements which create poetry and make it an art in every time and place. He believes that Arab poets forgot these elements when they took poetry away from its basic task and made it sometimes a medium for noise and shouting, and sometimes a medium for indulging in linguistic and prosodic games, like tashtir and takhmis, or for discussing incidental matters of grammar.

In this way poets took poetry far away from real Arab life and its major problems, like Israeli occupation of Arab lands. The problem is made more difficult by the fact that the people themselves have withdrawn from creative activity and politics and have come to expect salvation from religion (personified here as 'Alī b. Abī Tālib or 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb), so that the paralysis which has affected the poets seems to extend to the whole of life. With this withdrawal decay has begun to spread through poetry and poets, and poetry has begun to lose interest in being the voice of its nation and its society. In these circumstances it would be better for poetry to kill itself, since nothing useful can be expected from it:

Abū Tammām! poetry, in its depths, is a journey
 A setting sail to the future, and an unexpected discovery
 But we have made of it something like a wedding celebration
 And a brass beat, tolling like fate.

* *

O prince of words! forgive us
 For we have all betrayed the occupation of words,
 And have exhausted it with tashtir, tarbi, takhmis and description.
 Abū Tammām! the fire is devouring us
 And yet we still quarrel with one another
 About triptotes and diptotes
 While the army of the occupying usurper cannot be turned away!

* *

We still crack the bones of our feet,
 Sit in God's houses, and wait

For the Imām 'Alī to come, or for 'Umar to come to us
 But they will never come, they will never come,
 And no-one conquers with anyone else's sword

* *

Abū Tammām! Men have lost faith in words
 And have lost faith in poets
 So tell me, O poet,
 Why have the joints of our Arab poetry grown dry
 And its ears of wheat grown yellow from repetition?
 Tell me, O poet,
 Why does poetry, when it grows old
 Not draw a knife and kill itself?¹¹⁰

(b) Ifāda fī Maḥkamat al-Shi'r

Here Nizār takes modern Arabic poetry to court on the charge of inability to be in touch with Arab life, especially the June war and its tragedies. He points out that this inability reveals itself in an even more disgraceful manner at Arab poetry festivals, the new markets of 'Ukāz. Poets, male and female, instead of offering a new poetic vision of their society, gather together to chatter, flaunt themselves like peacocks, and think that they are great poets, giving themselves pompous titles, this one calling himself Jarīr and that one calling herself al-Khansā', while, in reality, they are ordinary or even minor poets.

After this Nizār moves to a portrayal of the tragedy through which all the Arabs are living. The fall of Palestine took place at the hands of Israel, and Israel now occupies other parts of the Arab homeland, for example Sinai. Nobody is doing anything about this catastrophe, not even the men of letters, whose task it is to direct people toward hope and victory.¹¹¹

Starting off from his basic principle, the connection between poetry and life, Nizār condemns six faults in Arabic poetry as a whole (especially older Arabic poetry) which are: regurgitating the past, oratorical ornamentation,

antique form (the Mu'allaqāt), emptying the poem of its socio-political content, subjugating poetry to the interests of kings and authorities, denying it to the masses, and obscurity:

O ages of the Mu'allaqat, we have grown tired
 For even the garment may grow tired of the body.
 Half of our poems are inscriptions, but what
 Use is an inscription when the building is falling down?
 The Maqāmāt are a game, and al-Hariri
 Is hashish, and so are the ghūl and the phoenix
 Mosaics have slaughtered us for many ages
 And idols, and foolish ornamentations
 We reject poetry as alchemy and magic,
 The alchemical poem has killed us.
 We reject poetry as royal theatre
 From whose thrones the simple are banned
 We reject poetry as a steed
 Ridden by tyrants and the strong
 We reject poetry as darkness and symbols -
 For how can darkness see?
 We reject poetry as a wooden rabbit
 Which has no aspirations or passions
 We reject the idlers in the coffee-house of poetry -
 Their days are smoke and lassitude.¹¹²

After this Nizār calls for the establishment of serious and specific links between poetic work and revolutionary activity in Arab life, or, putting it simply, between poetry and revolution. The reason for this is that the time at which he is writing, 1969, is a time of revolution, in its broad socio-political sense, against the defeat of 1967, and likewise the time of the birth of the insistent Palestinian revolution. It is the duty of the poet, any poet, to be aware of these two revolutions, and to make them the light by which he is guided in everything he writes. Any poetry which neglects one or both of these revolutions has no value.

If poetry is linked with revolution, the positive side of Arab life, it must illuminate the paths of freedom and penetrate to the heart of Arab society and make people see its chronic socio-political diseases. It must also be a sweeping attack upon everything which impedes this society and a

discovery of the elements of strength and growth in it, so that it rises above being a formal tool, an acrobat to amuse those in power, a little mouse which takes refuge with them, or a hollow mouthpiece for them. Nizār concludes that the guerrilla fighter is superior to the poet because he is doing something for his country and his people while the poet is doing nothing:

Our poetry today excavates the sun
 With its hands, and everything is illuminated.
 Our poetry today is attack and discovery
 Not Kufic lines, or singing camel-drivers' songs.
 All contemporary poetry which does not contain
 The anger of the age is a lame ant.
 What is poetry, if it becomes an acrobat
 Whose dancing amuses the Caliphs?
 What is poetry, when it becomes a mouse,
 Whose concern is a piece of bread and food,
 If the thinker becomes a trumpet,
 Thought and shoes become equal
 Prophets are crucified for an idea
 So why are poets not crucified?

* *

The fidā'i alone writes poetry
 And all that we have written is nonsense,
 He is the real writer of the age
 While we are the doormen and the hirelings.
 When the rifles begin to play
 The thoroughbred poems die.¹¹³

Perhaps Nizār realises that poets, being aware of their responsibility, find themselves in a dilemma when they only write poetry, and do not go to the battle-front. They describe revolution, battle and the positive side of Arab life but do not really participate in these things. Description is not revolution or reality. In such circumstances the voice of the rifle becomes the first and the highest voice. Nizār repeated this idea after the 1967 war:

After June, poetry is a piece of weaponry or it is nothing. It is a rifle, a trench, a mine, or it is nothing. Every word in this stage of our history which does not take the shape of a rifle falls into the waste-paper basket, and becomes fodder for animals.¹¹⁴

The gist of these two poems is that Nizār is calling for the revolutionising of poetry¹¹⁵ in two ways. The first is to smash the old form of poetry, since he feels that it has exhausted its objectives long ago, and should be replaced by a new form free of the faults of the old. The second is to link the subject-matter of poetry to present-day Arab life and Arab society, so that the poem becomes an inseparable part of the movement and aspirations of the masses. Nizār here considers realism in poetry to be one of the conditions for the success of a poem.

We have discussed these questions in detail in Chapter Two. We shall see in the following chapters that almost all Nizār's political poems are an application of his principle that poetry should be linked to life to create new concepts in a new artistic form.

3. The function of poetry as a weapon

Nizār found that his political poetry which revolted against present-day Arab life could be a weapon directed to the service of the Arabs and their nobler aspirations. This view of poetry as a weapon¹¹⁶ was expressed in three poems when he discovered that he had no other means with which to defend his existence as an independent individual.

In Shu'arā' al-Ard al-Muhtalla, he regards the Arab Palestinian poets¹¹⁷ who appeared between 1967 and 1969 in Israel (Maḥmūd Darwish, Samīḥ al-Qāsim and Tawfiq Zayyād), and who resisted with poetry the racialism of Israel and its attempts to destroy the Palestinian presence as an example to be followed in their use of the power of the word to resist:

We have learned from you for years

We, the defeated poets,
 We, the strangers to history
 And to the sorrows of the grieved
 We have learned from you
 How the letter can have the shape of a knife.¹¹⁸

He also says:

We have learned from you
 How to explode mines in our words.¹¹⁹

In al-Bawwāba he discovers that his poetry is almost the only art able to escape and rescue itself from the tyranny of those in power, and that this art is the only weapon with which he can face his enemies. They fear it because it is an effective weapon which can unmask them and reach the ears of the masses, bearing the blazing heat of his reactions:

If the authorities raise the sword of suppression
 I throw myself into the inkwell;
 If they order the executioner to kill me
 I escape from a secret door
 Which passes under the foundations of the palace
 There is always a way out
 From Pharaoh's violence... which is called poetry.¹²⁰

In Min Milaffāt Mahākim al-Taftīsh there is an allusion to the fact that to deprive the poet of his weapon, poetry, is to deprive him of his existence and destroy him completely:

The wise men of the tribe demand
 That I leave my poetry at the door of your tent
 And enter into your presence stripped of weapons
 What will be left of me
 If I forgo the horse of love
 And deposit my banners and my medals
 And my coat of beautiful words
 Of which I was so proud
 Like a spotted African leopard?¹²¹

Nizār has discovered that this weapon, poetry, allows him to carry out the following tasks:

(a) Expression of the Arab people's causes

Nizār claims that his main concern is to crystallise and express the causes of the Arab people, and that he is sometimes aware of events before they happen, just as horses are aware of rain before it falls.¹²² These causes, as far as he is concerned, begin from a loaf of bread and go on to freedom, Israel and other things. Political poetry is the most suitable tool for conveying these causes which the masses cannot express for fear of the consequences.¹²³

(b) Arousing the masses

Poetry can arouse the masses, because it fills them with a power which makes them able to face the future. One of the conditions for successful poetic arousal is that it should free itself from the urge to weep and bewail the catastrophes which have befallen the Arabs.¹²⁴ In times of despair and downheartedness it is the poem's task to "ignite the fire", to "go against traffic regulations"¹²⁵, and indeed it is the poem's task to rescue living people "from the cities of non-poetry, non-love, frustration and gloom".¹²⁶ The arousing poem does not soothe the reader, but disturbs him and exhausts him, because it impels him to think:

The poem is an act of agitation of the first order. It is not a rocking-chair which helps people to relax and brings drowsiness. The poem, in my view, is not a Valium pill, an air-conditioner or a feather pillow. The poem is not an air hostess to guarantee your comfort. On the contrary, it is an attempt to disturb your comfort.¹²⁷

(c) Spreading the spirit of victory

This can be achieved if poetry insists upon victory over its enemies, prepares men for this victory, enjoins them to take hold of the cultural, political and intellectual means of victory, draws them away from adherence to dreams and reliance upon others, and impels them to hold fast to honour, history, the present and the future:

I write
So that light may triumph over darkness
For the poem is victory.¹²⁸

(d) Resistance to tyranny and corrupt authority

The poet must always keep himself well away from following the thinking of the herd, and from submitting to anyone else at all, and must set free the abilities which lie latent in his own personality to resist tyrants and corrupt politicians who oppress without mercy:¹²⁹

My friends
I am the wound which always rejects
The authority of the knife.¹³⁰

Elsewhere he says:

I write
To rescue the world from Hulagu's fangs,
The rule of the militias
And the madness of the gangster boss
I write
To rescue women from the vaults of tyrants
From the cities of the dead
From polygamy
From the sameness of days

Hoarfrost and monotony.¹³¹

and:

My friends:

What is poetry if it does not proclaim revolt?

What is poetry if it does not say "Down with tyrants and tyranny"?

What is poetry if it does not cause an earthquake

In space and time?

What is poetry if it does not tear off the crown worn

By Kisrā or Anūshirwān?¹³²

(e) Defence of the oppressed

Political poetry, says Nizār, must raise its sword to free the oppressed from oppression.¹³³ Nizār can do nothing when faced by the suffering of these oppressed people but respond to their pains by expressing them: "My heart is the most accurate and sensitive radar for picking up the signals radiating from mankind."¹³⁴ Coming to the aid of the oppressed demands from the poet that he should summon up enough courage to expose rights which have been trampled underfoot and lay bare embezzlement and enslavement.¹³⁵

IV

POETRY AND COMMITMENT

1. Commitment: restrictions and freedom

The question of commitment in Arabic literature is a modern one¹³⁶ which has not been posed by classical Arab critics. This question became widely

current in the fifties and sixties in Arab literary circles. There were a number of factors behind its currency, among which were the growth of socialist and communist ideas in some Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq), the eagerness of Arab writers to revolt against political and economic backwardness, the foundation of open and secret Arab Communist parties¹³⁷ and the diffusion of translations into Arabic of some of the writings of Sartre which call for commitment, like Qu'est-ce que la littérature? (Mā al-Adab?).¹³⁸

The application of Marxist-Leninist ideas in literature and criticism by some Arab critics became an ideal to be imitated and a lofty aim.¹³⁹ Every Arab writer and poet who did not adopt commitment in his writings came to be accused of reaction and failure. It seems that a very minor part of this campaign was directed at Nizār. He was accused of being a poet of women, a poet of sex, and of lacking commitment in his poetry to the burning issues of his society.¹⁴⁰

Nizār embarked upon a rebuttal of these accusations and announced, without giving examples, that commitment had turned some modern Arabic poetry, into an ideological manifesto or "poetic abortions", that the harm it had caused to Arabic literature was immense, and that it would not last long in the Arab countries.¹⁴¹

He suggested that the interference of party, state or political régime to direct the course of poetry, for example, carried great danger for poetry itself:

The basic tragedy of poetry is that it has entered the sphere of programming, five or ten-year plans, and party planning. It has come to be planned in small rooms in the same way that collective farms, the paving of roads and the building of iron and steel mills are planned. This is the disaster of poetry, which is

living under house arrest and is forbidden to enjoy its own movement and its human freedom.¹⁴²

It is thus clear that Nizār regards freedom and commitment as being mutually exclusive. He understands commitment as meaning a restriction, compulsion or obligation on the poet to write poems in which he may not believe.

He demands that the poet should remain as free as a naughty child to do what he wants whenever he wants, because poetry demands of the poet that he should be free, and because commitment is a heavy restriction:

Poetry is the beautiful, naughty, mischievous, malicious son of childhood. It is required of poetry that it should not give up childhood at any cost, and that it should continue to keep the desire to play, to destroy and to be mischievous. It is required of poetry that it should not rest, not grow up, not go to sleep early, not obey its parents, not give up its bicycle, paint-box and paper darts, and not deny its friendship for the flowers, frogs and small insects for which it used to find a home in the pockets of its summer short trousers. It is required of poetry that it should not be too intellectual, and should not fall into the birdlime of slogans or of ideologies, or the birdlime of cameras and festivals. It is required of it that it should not marry, not graduate, and not put on a mortar-board, because all hats are smaller than the poets's head.¹⁴³

2 Commitment as understood by Nizār

The Egyptian critic 'Izz al-Dīn Ismā'il defines the meaning of commitment in literature in terms of the extent of the writer's contact with life and the role which literature plays in the direction of life itself:

Commitment is realised when the writer presents others with works which are positive in their influences, and which touch their lives and problems directly. People are constantly in need of art which will ease their way to successfully solve problems and difficulties.¹⁴⁴

This view is largely compatible with Nizār's views and poetry. The committed poet, as far as he is concerned, is the poet who is the conscience and tongue of the masses, and indeed their true and faithful son who lives with them, feels with them and suffers what they suffer. It is accordingly his duty to portray his age with all its faults, virtues, movements and oscillations.¹⁴⁵

In the whirlpool of explosive situations in which the Arab world is living neither Nizār nor any other poet can write about any experience or problems outside his age and his environment.¹⁴⁶ Any researcher will conclude that during the past twenty years, at the very least, Nizār has produced poems which touch deeply on Arab life and reflect its political and social problems. There may be some poems which have not achieved success, but these are rare and atypical.

In the coming chapters it will become clear that Nizār did not take up the attitude of a spectator of his society, and did not write to amuse, but plunged into the ranks of his people to address them, to learn from them and to teach them. In this sense he is a poet who is committed to his country and his people.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. See Ra'if Khūrī, al-Adab al-Mas'ūl, Beirut 1968, pp. 56-57.
2. Among these definitions we find for example:
Political poetry is the poetry which is good at reading the hand of the future. The political poet is the poet who is a prophet, a warner, an admonisher, an enquirer, a persuader and a seer.
See Shākīr al-Nābulusī, Raghīf al-Nār wa al-Hinṭa, Beirut 1968, p.86.
3. See Ni'māt Ahmad Fu'ād, "Khasā'is al-Shi'r al-'Arabī", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.1., Year 3, January 1955, p.42.
4. Among the sources in which this poem is to be found are:
Ibrāhīm al-Yāzījī, Dīwān al-'Iqd, Cairo 1920, pp.57-59; Ra'if Khūrī, 'Asr al-Ihyā' wa-al-Nahda: 1850-1950, Beirut 1957, pp.11-15; Salīm Sarkīs, Sīrr Mamlaka, Cairo 1899, Vol.I, p.73; and Anīs al-Maqdisī, al-Mukhtārāt al-Sā'ira, Beirut 1955, p.158.
6. See Hannā al-Fākhūrī, Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī, Beirut 1973, pp. 941-1032.
7. Ahmad Abū Hāqqa, al-Iltizām fī al-Shi'r al-'Arabī, Beirut 1979, p.153.
8. Ibid., pp. 153-154.
9. Ibid., p. 196.
10. Ibid., pp. 196-197.
11. See Muhyī al-Dīn Ismā'il, "al-Shā'ir al-'Irāqī al-Hadīth", al-Adāb, op. cit., pp. 49-57. See also Mahmūd Amīn al-'Ālim, "al-Shi'r al-Miṣrī al-Hadīth", al-Adāb, Ibid., pp. 14-21.
12. See Ahmad Shawqī, al-Shawqiyyāt, Beirut 1982, Vol.4, pp.84-85.
13. Ibid., Vol.2, pp.181-183.
14. Ibid., Vol.2, pp.74-77.
15. Ibid., Vol.1, pp.105-109.
16. Ibid., Vol.3, p.17.
17. Ibid., Vol.3, p.18.
18. Ibid., Vol.3, p.19.
19. Ibrāhīm Tūqān, Dīwān Ibrāhīm Tūqān, Beirut 1984, pp.40-41.
20. Ibid., pp.42-49.
21. Ibid., pp. 50-53.
22. Ibid., pp 60-63.
23. Ibid., p. 79.

24. Ibid., p. 81.
25. Ibid., p. 86.
26. Ibid., p. 88.
27. Ibid., p. 82.
28. Ibid., p. 89.
29. Ibid., p. 90.
30. Ibid., p. 93.
31. Ibid., p. 85.
32. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
33. Ibid., p. 84.
34. Ibid., p. 92.
35. Ibid., pp. 54-55.
36. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, Beirut 1979, p.13.
37. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, Beirut 1981, p.68.
38. Ibid., p. 69.
39. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 17.
40. Ibid., p. 17.
41. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 69.
42. Ibid., p. 114.
43. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, Beirut 1984, pp. 43-44
44. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1985, Vol.3, p. 73.
45. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 65.
46. Ibid., p. 91.
47. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 41.
48. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 90.
49. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 11.
50. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 156.
51. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, pp.105-107.

52. Ibid., pp. 70-71.
53. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, pp.63-64.
54. Jabbūr 'Abd al-Nūr, al-Mu'jam al-Adabī, Beirut 1979, p.150.
55. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, pp. 14-15.
56. Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣatī ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, p.11.
57. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, Beirut 1986, p. 16.
58. Fu'ād Ḥasan Zakariyyā, Khiṭāb ilā al-'Aql al-'Arabī, Kuwait 1987, p.80.
59. Ibid, p. 80.
60. It seems that the "taming" of Arab men of letters and writers began early in the present century. Ḥāmid Rabi' writes:
- At the beginning of the thirties the educated classes turned into hangers-on of those in authority whose function was to join the political bandwagon and to beat the drums and play the flutes with or without occasion. Successive disasters did not permit them to regain their position, but plunged them further into the mire, so that when we come to the seventies we find ourselves in a world of putrefaction which can create nothing but worms.
- See Ḥāmid Rabi', al-Thaqāfa al-'Arabiyya bayn al-Ghazw al-Ṣahyūnī wa-Irādāt al-Takāmūl al-Qawmī, Cairo 1983, p. 164.
61. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, Beirut 1978, pp. 16-17.
62. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kamila, Vol. 3, p. 154.
63. Ibid., p. 477.
64. Ibid., p. 479.
65. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p. 126.
66. Ibid., p. 129.
67. Ibid., pp. 132-133.
68. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 139.
69. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p.8.
70. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 52.
71. Ibid., pp. 132-133.
72. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 18.
73. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p.85.
74. 'Abd Allāh al-'Arawī, Mafhūm al-Dawla, Casablanca 1981, p. 146 and p. 168.
75. Fu'ād Ḥasan Zakariyyā, op. cit., p. 20.

76. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shirat Dukhūl, pp. 87-90. He also says:

Half the Arab regimes adopt a hostile and rejecting attitude towards political poetry, and forbid my books entry to their territories.

See Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, Beirut 1972, p. 15.

77. Nizār Qabbānī, Qasā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, pp. 41-42.

78. Ibid., p. 123.

79. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kamila, Vol.3, p.243.

80. Ibid., p. 244.

81. Ibid., pp. 316-317.

82. Nizār Qabbānī, Qasā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p. 48.

83. Ibid., p. 48.

84. Hāmid Rabi', op. cit., p. 155.

85. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, pp. 9-10.

86. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

87. Ibid., p. 10. We should note that Nizār sometimes goes to extremes in his claim that poetry is a curse. He believes that the poet harms not only himself but his family. This belief drove Nizār to feel that he was responsible for the death of his son Tawfiq on 10 August 1973. Explaining this, he wrote on 17 September of that year

I have been assailed all of this week by a strange thought which has continued to hover within my head like a black bird. This thought is to do with the laws of poetic heredity and the influence of poetry upon the organic composition of the poet's children. Since poetry is the craft of burning and being burned, and the poet is that man who carries explosive substances under his coat in order to plant mines in the world, what is so unlikely in the hypothesis that children are burned by the fire for their father? By the mere act of adopting the trade of writing, he puts his children in the danger zone. I have been writing poetry for twenty-five years, and my son Tawfiq died when he was twenty-two; in other words my poetry and my son were about the same age. Can I consider myself responsible for this abnormal defect in my son's heart? For twenty-five years I have been carrying an earthquake in my depths and running from burning flagstones and open-mouthed volcanoes... For me, love was a suicide operation on which I went with my will in my pocket. For me, love was a battle fought with cold steel from which I could only emerge either having killed or having been killed. My heart was always a city camouflaged for war, with its windows painted blue and its air-raid sirens screaming non-stop. This is my heart, which I gave to Tawfiq. Do you think that I am responsible for this faulty motor which I bequeathed to him? Am I an accomplice in the killing of my son? Answer me, for I am in torment!

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābi, Beirut 1979, pp. 64-65.

88. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p. 1.
89. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kamīla, Vol.3, pp.639-640.
90. Ibid., p. 637.
91. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p.15.
92. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p.121.
93. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, pp. 11-12.
94. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, pp. 137-138.
95. Ibid., pp. 140-141.
96. See Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Shaqra, "Ma'a Fahmī Huwaydī fī San'ā' al-Yaman", al-Dāstūr, Amman, no.7495, year 22, Friday 1 July 1988, p.7.
97. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 175.
98. Ibid., p. 177.
99. One example of this is what happened in Yemen. In its revolution of 1948 Yemen offered up its literary men as victims of the struggle for freedom. The poet al-Mūshkī was executed, as were the liberal writers Ahmad Mutā', Ahmad al-Hawrash, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shammāhī and al-Burāq. In addition two poets, Ibrāhīm al-Hadrāwī and Ahmad al-Shāmī were imprisoned, while the revolutionary poet 'Alī Muḥammad Mahmūd al-Zubayrī was sentenced to death in absentia. The latter was assassinated in an ambush after his return to his country in 1965.
See Nasīb Nashāwī, Madkhal ilā Dirāsāt al-Madārīs al-Adabiyya fī al-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Mu'āsīr, Damascus 1986, pp. 347-348.
100. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, pp. 23-23 ?
101. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p. 70.
102. On this point, Nizār says:
- Our revolution against backwardness must be complete and comprehensive. The liberation of the Arab soul and the Arab body from nightmares, schizophrenia and mental and physical congestion is no less important than the liberation of any part of the Arab homeland from Zionist colonialism. Regrettably, and despite all the claims of being liberated that we make, we are still obsessed by thousands of complexes and age-old perversions.
- See Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, pp.155-156.
103. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p. 71.
104. Ibid., p. 72.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.

107. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, pp.345-348.
108. See Shawqī Dayf, al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuhu fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1978, pp.219-274; 'Abd Allāh al-Tatāwī, al-Qasīda al-'Abbāsiyya: Qadāyā wa-Ittijāhāt, Cairo 1981, pp. 41-68; Al-Amīdī, al-Muwāzana bayn Shi'r Abī Tammām wa-al-Buhturī, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr, Cairo 1961, Vol.1, p. 245 ff.
109. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, pp. 349-350.
110. Ibid., pp. 351-352.
111. Ibid., pp. 397-398.
112. Ibid., pp. 398-400.
113. Ibid., pp. 400-402.
114. Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣatī ma'a al-Shi'r, pp. 232-
115. The link between poetry and revolution dominates the thinking of many Arab poets and critics. Perhaps the most outstanding of these is Adonis ('Alī Aḥmad Sa'id Asbar). Briefly speaking, he calls for the revolution of poetry to take place within poetry, that is in its internal structure, and not revolution in changing the living reality. See Mahmūd Amīn al-'Alīm, al-Thaqāfa wa al-Thawra: Maqālāt fi al-Naqd, Cairo 1970, pp.228-229, and Adonis, Zaman al-Shi'r, Beirut 1971, pp. 221-225.
116. Mahmūd Darwish was the first poet to regard the word and poetry as a weapon. Thus he says "Our literature has no life except when it is a weapon and provisions for the Palestinian man." He also says: "The word must perform its task among the masses in its character of revolutionary word." It seems that Nizār's above-mentioned view on this subject has been influenced by the views of Darwish. See Muhammad Dakrūb, al-Adab al-Jadīd wa-al-Thawra: Kitābāt Naqdiyya, Beirut 1980, p.104.
117. Among the most outstanding studies of the Palestinian resistance poets are Nazīh Abū Nīdāl, Jadal al-Shi'r wa-al-Thawra, Beirut 1979; 'Abd al-Rahmān Yāghī, Dirāsāt fi Shi'r al-Ard al-Muhtalla, Cairo 1969; Sālih Abū Isba', al-Haraka al-Shi'riyya fi Filastīn al-Muhtalla, Beirut 1970; and Kāmil al-Sawāfirī, al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āsīr fi Filastīn, Cairo, 1982.
118. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p. 152.
119. Ibid., p. 158.
120. Nizār Qabbānī, Qasā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p.13.
121. Nizār Qabbānī, Sa-Yabqā al-Hubb Sayyidī, Beirut 1986, p. 90.
122. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, p. 11.
123. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 187.
124. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Asāfir lā Tatlub Ta'shirat Dukhūl, p. 55.
125. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 50.

126. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p. 16.
127. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, pp. 49-50.
128. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p. 14.
129. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Aṣāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p.125.
130. Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p. 39.
131. Ibid., p. 15.
132. Ibid., p. 35.
133. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 52.
134. Ibid., p. 91.
135. Nizār Qabbānī, al-'Aṣāfir lā Taṭlub Ta'shīrat Dukhūl, p. 122.
136. Among Arabic books dedicated to the question of commitment are: Aḥmad Abū Ḥāqqa, op. cit.; 'Izz al-Dīn Ismā'il, al-Shi'r fī Itār al-'Asr al-Thawrī, Beirut 1974; Nabil Sulaymān, Amman 1986; and Nāji 'Allūsh, Min Qadāyā al-Tajdīd wa-al-Iltizām fī al-Adab al-'Arabī, Tunis 1978.
137. Aḥmad Abū Ḥāqqa, op. cit., p. 388.
138. Two Arabic translations of this book have appeared; Muhammad Ghunaymī Hilāl, Mā al-Adab?, Cairo 1961, and Jūrj Tarābīshī, al-Adab al-Multazīm, Beirut 1967.
139. Among these are for example Husayn Muruwwa in his book Dirāsāt Naqdiyya fī Daw' al-Manhaj al-Wāqī'i, Beirut 1974 and Mahmūd Amīn al-'Alīm, al-Thaqāfa wa-al-Thawra: Maqālāt fī al-Naqd, Cairo 1970.
140. See Ghālī Shukrī, Adab al-Muqawāma, Beirut 1979, pp.398-407.
141. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Shi'r Qindil Akhdar, Beirut 1973, p. 49.
142. Nizār Qabbānī, 'An al-Shi'r wa-al-Jins wa-al-Thawra, pp. 51-52.
143. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p. 42.
144. 'Izz al-Dīn Ismā'il, op. cit., p. 45. See also 'Izz al-Dīn Ismā'il, "Fikrat al-Iltizām fī al-Fann wal-al-Adab", al-'Arabī, Kuwait, no.95, year 8 October 1966, p. 133.
145. Nizār Qabbānī, Mā Huwa al-Shi'r?, p.19.
146. 'Izz al-Dīn Ismā'il, al-Shi'r fī Itār al-'Asr al-Thawrī, pp.23-24.

CHAPTER FOURNATIONALIST FEELING

This chapter pays particular attention to the nationalistic poems of Nizār Qabbānī, written in the fifties of the present century.

Section I begins with a general introduction to Arab nationalism, its circumstances and growth, and its development in the fifties, and then gives a brief account of the views of Arab critics and men of letters which call for a link between nationalism and poetry, of Nizār's own sympathy for Arab nationalism, and of the manner in which he understands it.

We should emphasise here that this introduction is not intended to give an in-depth review of all the details of the history of Arab nationalism and of its leading figures, since this is not its purpose.

The subsequent sections concentrate on an analysis of the issues addressed by Nizār's political poetry. Section II analyses the poems dealing with the first of these, criticism of Arab society. We shall see that Nizār's criticism was directed against a society which believed in the supernatural and sought after pleasure. He revolted violently against his society, declared war against backwardness, condemned the squandering of oil wealth, and called on the Arabs to embrace the twentieth century, the century of scientific discoveries and belief in human abilities and the human mind.

Section III analyses the poems dealing with the second issue, burning Arab political causes of the time. These are four in number: the Palestine disaster of 1948, the Tripartite Aggression of 1956, the Algerian struggle

against French occupation, and Arab unity.

Section IV analyses poems dealing with a third topic, the lessons to be learned from Arab-Islamic history. We shall see here that Islamic Spain, with its history and its culture, filled Nizār with poetry which overflowed with longing for the past and lamentation for the departure of the Arabs.

In Sections II, III and IV it will become clear that the poet is sometimes betrayed by his poetry, since on occasions his descriptions are lifeless and mechanical and he has been unable to endow them with any vitality. Finally section V comments on two points, firstly the lack of staying power of his nationalist feelings, and secondly the presence of certain faults in his poems.

I

INTRODUCTION

1. Arab nationalism: a general survey

It may be said that nationalist feeling arose with the beginnings of the "Arab awakening" in the latter years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. What is meant in general by the "Arab awakening" is the interest in literature and science, the demand for internal liberties and constitutional guarantees, the contact with Europe, especially the principles of the French revolution, and the growth of reformist religious teaching.¹

This nationalist feeling was clearly apparent in the Arab resistance to

the policy of Turkification, the desire of the Arabs for complete independence from Turkish rule, and finally in the revolt of 1916 against the Turks.² When the Arabs fell under European domination, Arab nationalism came to mean freedom from colonialism.³

After the Second World War and the appearance of Israel, Arab nationalism became a mass issue which spread beyond the traditional political and cultural elite to embrace wide sections of the Arab masses.⁴ One of the most prominent forms of this nationalism was the feeling that the Arabs had their own particular personality which distinguished them from other nationalities, whose most important components were language, culture and history.⁵

The period from the early fifties to the end of the sixties witnessed a perceptible development in Arab nationalist thinking, which first revealed itself with the formal creation of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party in 1947. This party espoused the Arab nationalist principle as the ideological basis of its theory of Arab revolution, and made unity a national goal so that an Arab state could be built on the territory of the Arab homeland.⁶ A second development was the revolution of 23 July 1952 in Egypt and the appearance of President Nasser (1918-1970). The Egyptian revolution has been described as "a new, powerful and daring departure in Arab nationalism",⁷ and "a vital departure in Arab liberation and the appearance of Arab nationalism in all its lofty concepts."⁸

It can be said that the objectives of Arab nationalism became clear in the fifties. Among these objectives were: the liberation of the Arab countries from foreign influence, their unification into one state, the elimination of every kind of backwardness in Arab society, the creation of a contemporary Arab way of life, the establishment of freedom of religion, the

recognition of the right of every nation to determine its own fate and build its own life within the human family, the support of world-wide liberation movements, participation in the achievement of progress and comfort for all the nations of the world, and the building of a new and peaceful world.⁹

From the fifties also writers and thinkers began to produce books about Arab nationalism.¹⁰ The Institute of Higher Arab Studies in Cairo (founded in 1953) began to teach special courses on the subject. One of the aims of this institute was to set the idea of Arab nationalism on sound scientific foundations and to invigorate national awareness in the Arab homeland. Sāṭī' al-Ḥuṣrī (1879-1968), the head of the Institute, made this objective clear in 1953 when he said:

We shall strive to strengthen the idea of Arab nationalism. But we shall do this in constant reliance upon scientific facts. We shall support all our studies, legal, economic, historical and literary, with studies and research which centre around nationalism in general, and Arab nationalism in particular. We shall discover the elements and constituents of nationalism by reviewing all of the theories which have appeared and all of the debates which have taken place on the subject, so that we can arrive at a knowledge of the elements and constituents of Arab nationalism ... We shall take a great interest in these studies because we are not content that Arab nationalism should be an obscure idea which occupies people's minds without taking a clear shape. We wish it to be a strong and shining idea based on sturdy and deep foundations of true science. We wish it to be a clear and effective idea which guides men's intellects, arouses their emotions, sharpens their aspirations, impels them to action and arouses their belief.¹¹

At that period there was a multiplicity of views on Arab nationalism. Some writers saw it as a political, social and economic belief which aimed at setting up a political entity common to all Arabs in which social justice would be realised.¹² Others thought that it meant optimism about the future, revolt against weakness and submission, and hope which would motivate struggle.¹³ Others began to propagate the view that Arab nationalism represented a humanitarian urge, and that accordingly it rejected racial and

sectarian discrimination, self-absorption, isolationism and the creation of barriers between nations and peoples which would hinder comprehensive cultural interaction.¹⁴

2. Nationalism, literature and poetry

It can be said that the link between Arab nationalism and literature became prominent in the fifties, the period in which Nizār wrote the nationalist poems which will be discussed below. This link can be seen from the literary standpoints adopted by certain Arab writers and critics, of whom we may mention the following:

- (a) The Syrian critic Jawdat al-Rikābī, who demanded that literature should become a tool in the service of Arab nationalism, because the latter forms a protection for the writer and the ordinary citizen and because it is the path to the sought-after Arab glory.¹⁵
- (b) The Lebanese critic and novelist Suhayl Idrīs, who declared that Arab nationalism had become an immense force leading Arab life, and that if literature wished to be truthful it had to be influenced by and express this nationalism.¹⁶
- (c) The Egyptian critic and scholar Suhayr al-Qalamāwī, who said that Arab nationalism was a literary force which should be exploited for the production of living and eternal literature, self-defence, the encouragement of self-sacrifice and the confrontation of external dangers.¹⁷
- (d) The doyen of Arabic literature, Tāhā Ḥusayn, who pointed out that

Arab writers are the builders of Arab nationalism, and the guardians of its growth and strength, and that modern Arabic literature should fulfil its duties by strengthening nationalism and creating unity among the Arabs.¹⁸

(e) The pioneer of the short story in Egypt and the Arab world, Mahmūd Taymūr, who maintained that "Arab nationalism was the prophethood of Arab society" and that it is the duty of Arab writers now to be "disciples of that truthful prophethood, causing it to grow with their pens, breathing life into it with their souls, and working so that it may have all that it needs to grow and flourish."¹⁹

Subsequently a number of studies were undertaken in the Arab world which investigated the relationship between Arab nationalism and Arabic poetry. These studies appear to have been a response to the preceding calls or a result of the feeling by scholars that Arab nationalism, as an idea or a belief, had penetrated deep into Arab poetry. Examples of such studies are al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa-al-Shi'r al-Mu'āsir, by 'Umar al-Daqqāq, Cairo, 1961; al-Ishtirākiyya wa-al-Qawmiyya wa-Atharuhumā fi al-Adab al-Ḥadīth, by Yūsuf 'Izz al-Dīn, Cairo 1968; and al-Qawmiyya wa-al-Insāniyya fi Shi'r al-Mahjar al-Janūbī by 'Azīza Muraydīn, Cairo, n.d. These studies are full of historical details which follow the nationalist idea from beginning to end, while they give insufficient attention to analysis of the poetry. This type of study appears to have ceased now, while Arab nationalism no longer occupies the attention of poets or forms a subject for their poetry.²⁰

3. Nizār and Arab nationalism

We must note here that Nizār did not remain untouched by Arab

nationalism, but on the contrary was very close to it. A number of factors assisted this, among which were his links with the Ba'th government in Syria, which believed in Arab nationalism, his admiration for Nasser's ideas, particularly his nationalist ideas, and his feeling of responsibility to his society and to the Arab nation to which he belonged.²¹

It appears that Arab nationalism, as Nizār understood it at that time (i.e. in the fifties) was a belief in the Arabs and in their right to a free and honourable life. It was also a sympathy with their political and social causes and a desire to defend their rights against their enemies.²²

Accordingly at the high-point of the blossoming of Arab nationalism, Nizār wrote ten nationalist poems. These are: Khubb wa-Hashish wa-Qamar, al-Hubb wa-al-Batrūl, Qiṣṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg, Risālat Jundi fi Jabhat al-Suways, Jamīla Bu Hayrad, Mawāl Baghdādī, Mudkhakkirāt Andalusīyya, Awrāq Isbāniyya, Ahzān fi al-Andalus and Gharnāṭa. To this may be added two poems which he wrote in 1979, Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād and Mawāl Dismashqī. Thus the number of his nationalist poems comes to twelve. We find that these poems speak of three issues, which are: criticism of Arab society, burning Arab political causes, and the lessons of Arab-Islamic history. The following pages will attempt to provide a detailed analysis of each of these issues.

II

CRITICISM OF ARAB SOCIETY

Nizār embodies this criticism in two poems, Khubb wa-Hashish wa-Qamar and al-Hubb wa-al-Batrūl.

1. Khubz wa-Hashish wa-Qamar

In this poem Nizār speaks of the relationship of people in Arab societies in general to the moon. After reading the whole poem, the critic notes that in these societies the moon acquires a special importance, and that it is treated with a kind of veneration.²³ Nizār begins his poem by giving a general picture of the journey which people undertake to the hills in order to meet the moon when it is full. The scene portrayed here is close to the way in which Muslims meet God on Mount 'Arafāt. When the moon is full the time is right to make a pilgrimage to it, not for self-purification but for enjoyment, relaxation and gratification of soul and body with song (the gramophone), food (bread and tea), narcotics (hashish) and sex (fornication).²⁴ Very soon admiration of the beauty of the moon's brightness and roundness, admiration which comes close to worship, turns in the second stanza to the rites used to address deceased holy men and to ask them to give their blessings and to grant requests. In these rites man abandons his logical thinking, suspends his faculties and submits himself to unseen forces:

What is it that Heaven has
 For lazy, weak people
 Who turn into dead men when the moon lives
 And shake the saints' graves
 In the hope that they will give them rice and children,
 The saints' graves.²⁵

It is clear that Nizār is here criticising supernatural thinking, recourse to legends and reliance upon fate and destiny, in an age in which man has become his own master and supernatural powers no longer have a great influence upon him. Equally, he is waging war upon reliance upon God, upon failing to make an effort to earn one's daily bread, and upon regarding miracles rather than science as the solution to life's problems.

It seems that these rites which accompany the new moon, as the third stanza suggests, are the only means of escape into which people can pour all the suppressed feelings and hidden desires which have been stifled by society and prevailing customs. It also seems that these rites generally provide man with pleasures which he does not always get from his society. It is for this reason that this entreaty to the moon to remain and to rise often takes the form of whispered individual or collective prayer:

O crescent,
 O spring which rains diamonds,
 Hashish and drowsiness!
 O marble suspended Lord
 O unbelievable thing
 May you remain for the East, for us
 A bunch of diamonds
 For the millions in whom the senses have ceased to function!²⁶

The moon is not, then, a heavenly body which derives its light from the sun, but is rather a great force which makes life cease to function (last stanza) and robs men of their will-power when it pulls them to look at it and contemplate its beauty. They hasten toward it because it is the only real light in their lives, in which there is no light and no hope. It seems that this attraction to the moon is nothing but flight from the bitter reality of poverty, backwardness and disease. When the objective solution to their problems is hidden from them they find nothing in front of them but the moon, from which they seek the answer:

The millions who do not meet with bread, except in fantasy
 And who dwell at night in houses of coughing,
 Never having known what medicine looks like
 Fall down like corpses beneath the light.²⁷

Nizâr does not restrict himself to criticising the way in which people glorify the moon and bring their lives to a halt, but goes on to criticise two kinds of popular song which also play their part in halting the wheel of life,

and which, it seems, are sung on moonlit nights. These are, firstly, songs about the night and the torments of lovers and, secondly, the religious tawāshih²⁸ with which shaykhs busy themselves on particular religious occasions, such as ceremonies of mourning and the celebration of the Prophet's birthday.

It is clear that Nizār wishes in this poem to say that the world around the Arabs is steadily progressing on every level of life and knowledge, while the Arabs are sunk in trivialities. It is as though he were asking: "Why do the Arabs not go beyond this bitter reality, a reality of idleness, fantasy and stagnation? Would it not be better for the Arabs to take one step forward and deal with their present problems, and open their eyes to the future?"

We should not overlook the fact that all Nizār is asking is that the Arabs should abandon rites which do neither harm nor good, reject illusion and legend, accept the real world, work with material and tangible facts, establish logical thinking, open themselves up to the world, and abandon ugly and harmful habits like smoking hashish and fornication.

Nizār throws more light on the subject of his poem when he says:

In it I attacked unconsciousness in all its manifestations. I raised my sword in the faces of dervishes, dreamers and drug addicts. I demanded of my Arab homeland that it throw its narghiles, narghile mouthpieces and fezzes to the Devil, and emerge from the cellars of instincts, dreams and the composition of mawwāls to join the train of science and technology and rise up like a giant in the face of a civilisation in a hurry which does not work with fortune-tellers, palmists and astrologers.²⁹

It remains for us to say that this poem aroused traditional Arab society against Nizār at the time. It was regarded as an attack on religion and prevailing customs, and a daring shout in the face of reaction. Nizār writes:

... But the club of those who profit by the moonlight ... and those who have taken up their permanent residence in the graveyard of history, emerged from their shrouds and marched in a demonstration in which they demanded that I be put on trial and that my head should be cut off, because I asked the municipality at that time to send a big bulldozer to sweep away their serpents, samovars, drums, amulets and Arab medical prescriptions with which they made fun of barren women.³⁰

He adds:

Damascus pelted me with stones, tomatoes and rotten eggs when in 1954 I published my poem Khubz wa-Hashish wa-Qamar ... Khubz wa-Hashish wa-Qamar was the first confrontation with cold steel between myself and fable and the men of history.³¹

2. al-Hubb wa-al-Batrûl

In this poem we meet two characters who are totally incompatible: an Eastern woman and an Arab oil shaykh who wants her body.

The woman speaks to the shaykh (stanza 1) in a strong voice, telling him that she is a woman who is different from all the other women he has known in his life since the coming of oil; she is a proud and haughty Eastern woman, and not an easy prey:

When will you understand?
 When, Sir, will you understand
 That I am not one
 Like the others, of your lady-friends
 Nor a female conquest to be added to your others
 Nor a transient number in your records;
 When will you understand?³²

The woman's tones become a little more vehement (stanza 2) and she begins to attack him; she makes him aware of his greed, his hunger and his

wildness when she compares him to an unbridled desert camel, and she also makes him aware of his backwardness. Despite his wealth, his skill at trade and bidding, and his transformation into a model capitalist, he lives in an environment which is infected with smallpox. For a second time the woman cries out that she will never be a body into which he pours his lusts and his sexual urges.³³

The woman refuses (stanza 3) all the temptations which the shaykh lays before her - wealth, power, oil, concessions and cars - and tells him that the fact that he possesses all these temptations does not mean that he has become the lord of his age, and does not mean that when he wants something it is for others to obey without question. This will not happen. She also tries to make him understand that he may be able to obtain women without number, and sleep with them whenever he wants, but he will never be able to obtain the true love which comes from the heart of a noble and honourable woman, because he is a hateful and heedless person who does not bear in his heart either pure love or noble emotion. Despite the husks of civilisation with which he covers himself he is still coarse and uncouth within. The woman asks herself what it is that has changed this human being so suddenly. Only yesterday he was a Beduin with tattooed hands who lived in a tattered tent, surrounded by a limitless desert over which he walked so that his feet became cracked. Yet overnight he became a different creature whose pride, extravagance, misuse of wealth and moral corruption, especially in his dealings with women, knew no bounds. What is it that happened to him?³⁴

The woman draws attention (stanza 4) to another matter, and thereby strips away more of the veils behind which the shaykh is hiding. She proclaims to the world that the shaykh is a feudalist who comes from the womb of the feudal class, and that his wealth is based on sucking the blood, life and toil of others. The woman pours her withering fire, as Nizār wishes her

to, upon the class of exploiting feudalists:

You, in the atoms of whose atoms feudalism hatches,
 You, whom the desert is ashamed even to address,
 When will you understand?³⁵

In the fifth stanza the woman unmasks the shaykh's depravity and immersion in sexual pleasures.³⁶ Perhaps this negative side of his character becomes clearer when he leaves his primal wilderness and arid desert, comes to stay in Paris and falls upon the prostitutes, forgetting his religion which bans fornication and enjoins virtue, his ancient and glorious history, the mortal threat posed to the Arabs by Israel, the Arab and Palestinian martyrs who were killed in the 1948 war between Israel and the Arab states, and his duty as an Arab to defend Jerusalem, the symbol of the Arabs and the Muslims:

On the feet of a prostitute there
 You have buried your vengeance
 And you have sold Jerusalem
 Sold God
 Sold the ashes of your dead
 As though the bayonets of Israel had not aborted your sisters,
 Nor destroyed our houses
 Nor burnt our Qur'āns
 And its banners had not been raised
 Over the dismembered corpses of your banners.³⁷

At the end of the poem Nizār draws attention to the fact that the oil wealth, the travel to Europe and the pleasure which this Beduin obtains have not made of him anything of any worth, but only a victim without any weight, from whom no benefit is to be expected to his Arab people:

Jerusalem sinks in its own blood
 While you are brought low by your passions.
 You sleep, as though the tragedy were not your tragedy -
 When will you understand?
 When will the human being in you awake?³⁸

In this cohesive poem Nizār criticises the Beduin Arab personality which has lost its equilibrium as a result of the discovery of oil in the Arab Gulf region. As we know, the traditional image of the Beduin is represented by tents, herds, swords, a desert value-system and constant travelling in the desert. All of these elements have permitted the establishment of a successful system of adaptation to a harsh environment. For long ages the Beduin has continued to resist any change which affects his life and his values. But the Beduin's life began to witness important changes in the forties and fifties of this century when he suddenly found himself in a new world -a world of oil and wealth. In this world the camel vanished and the car appeared: he himself abandoned herdsmanship, occupied himself with oil, and began to garner immense riches.³⁹

Thus the Beduin found himself besieged by this new world. As a result his morals and values changed, and it became possible for him to become a consumer and to satisfy his hunger, his thirst and his instincts.

It is clear that Nizār is here setting himself up as a judge, as he did in the previous poem; not here to put on trial a society believing in the supernatural, but to try this barbarous Beduin, the symbol of oil society, who understands nothing of this world except one thing, which is to squander wealth in search of women and sex. Nizār conceals himself behind the character of the woman and makes her speak on his behalf, without this lessening the woman's eloquence in her conversation with the predatory Beduin.

This is the first time in modern Arabic poetry, as far as I know, that a weak Arab woman stands up to a strong dominating man and defends herself with raised voice, in a convincing manner, in an attempt to unmask his vices and his negative understanding of life and human relationships in the twentieth

century.

The critic can extract from this poem a simple equation upon which Nizār insists; that is that Beduinity plus oil equals corruption,⁴⁰ pride, and pursuit of sex. This idea continued to pursue Nizār for many years, and he was unable to free himself from it.⁴¹

In Khuzb wa-Hashish wa-Qamar and al-Hubb wa-al-Batrūl Nizār is very close to the Arab society of the fifties, both in his characterisation and in putting his finger on the seat of the illness. Some writers have spoken of Arab society at that time; the Syrian writer Ḥakam Darwaza has described it as follows:

A society perverted and corrupt in all its national aspects - political, economic and social ... reigned over by injustice and lacking in social justice. It is a society in which are accumulated the sediments of corruption and stagnation inherited from the ages of decline, and in which are concentrated negativity and destruction with all their forces, expertise and possibilities,⁴²

and the Lebanese scholar Farid Abū 'Ayṭa has described it as follows:

The Arab reality is a humiliation which challenges Arab honour.⁴³

III

ARAB POLITICAL CAUSES

By these we mean the Palestine disaster of 1948, the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956, the Algerian struggle against French occupation, and Arab unity.

1. The Palestine disaster⁴⁴

There is one poem on the disaster, which is Qiṣṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg. It is written for young Arabs, the new generation, not for Nizār's defeated generation. If he directs it to this generation, it is because he sets his hopes upon it to do battle with the enemy.

The poem begins with a review of some simple facts concerning the life of a Jewish woman called Rachel Schwartzenburg. In this stage there are three prominent facts: the first that this Jewish woman was one of the victims of Nazism in the Second World War, the second that she followed in the footsteps of her father in indecency and corruption, since he was a forger, and she ran a brothel in Prague, and the third that she was an agent working on behalf of Israel:

I write in brief
 The story of a recruited terrorist
 Whom they call Rachel.
 Who spent the war years in a solitary cell
 Built by the Germans in Prague:
 Her father was one of the dirtiest Jews
 Counterfeiting money
 And she ran a house of ill-fame in Prague
 Which was frequented by the soldiers.⁴⁵

The second stage in the life of this character begins after the end of the Second World War and the foundation of the United Nations as an international organisation for the solving of disputes and the keeping of peace.⁴⁶ Immediately Rachel sees in the departure of the Germans from Prague at the hands of the Russian armed forces a favourable opportunity to escape from the world of rancour, hatred and war which surrounds her. She sets sail with other Jews for Palestine, intending to make it her homeland:

And there set sail from the East of Europe
 At dawn
 A ship, cursed by the winds
 Heading south
 Crammed with rats, plague and Jews.
 They were a mixture of the dregs of nations.⁴⁷

In Palestine Rachel settles down. Here the third stage of her life begins, a stage about which Nizār tells us nothing.

After this we are brought up against another story which is separate from the story of Rachel Schwartzenburg. It is the story of the crimes committed by the Jews in Palestine against its population in 1948. Nizār makes Nuwār, the woman whose honour was defiled, a symbol of Palestine. The object of all this is to arouse the ardour of Arab men to defend the plundered land. Nizār proclaims that this victim will continue to be a witness who will remind the new generation of Arab children of the barbarism of the Jews, and that because of this it is their duty to prepare themselves for vengeance.⁴⁸

With the end of this story the reader expects that the poem has ended. But his expectations are proved false when he suddenly encounters a third story in which Nizār almost repeats what he said previously in the first two stories. This time the story is about a Palestinian Arab family (a man, his wife, and his children) who live in Jaffa. We understand from the story that the man is a farmer who loves God and his land.⁴⁹ We are startled, as is the man himself one day, by the arrival of Jewish strangers on his land and their destruction of his trees:

And strangers came with the sunset
 From the East of Europe
 From the gloom of prisons
 And destroyed the fruit,
 Broke the branches,
 Kindled fires in the threshing-floors of the stars.⁵⁰

During the Jewish attack on his land, the father attempts to bar their way in defence of it, but is killed by a quick burst of fire as his heart beats with love for his country:

And my merciful father died
 From a shot which one of the dogs aimed at him
 My great father died
 In his great home
 With his hand firmly grasping the soil.⁵¹

We note here that Nizār portrays the Jews as vagabonds, forcible thieves of a country, and murderers. It is a portrayal toward which the reader can only feel anger. Nizār did exactly the same thing at the beginning with the character of Rachel, when he made her a heartless terrorist. It is obvious that there is a fixed concept in Nizār's mind of the evil character of the Jew⁵² in general which stamped itself upon him while he was writing this poem.

It remains for us to observe that Nizār's accusation that the United Nations failed to defend the rights of the Palestinian people is unjustified and that his treatment of the issue of Jewish Zionist colonisation in Palestine is a superficial one. This is Nizār's poem on the Palestine catastrophe, a colourless poem, devoid of poetic beauty and internal cohesion. Despite its flaws, however, it is an important example of his early poetic work.

2. The Tripartite Aggression against Egypt

In late October and early November 1956 the Tripartite Aggression, as it is known to the Arabs, took place. Britain and France, together with Israel,

took part in a lightning war against Egypt as a reaction to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by the Egyptian leadership under Nasser.⁵³ This war inflamed the Arabs' feelings of sympathy for Egypt, which reached its highest point when Syria officially asked Egypt's permission to enter the war on her side.⁵⁴

Nizār refers to this war in one poem, Risālat Jundi fi Jabhat al-Suways, which consists of four short letters. The first letter, dated 29.10.1956, the first day of the attack upon Egypt, describes an Egyptian soldier crouching in his trench on the Suez canal observing the invading ships as they anchor in Port Said. The environment surrounding the soldier - the sea, the ships, the one-eyed pirate, the drunken soldiers and their blue eyes - creates an impression on the Egyptian soldier that these new arrivals are nothing but a new offspring of the old highwaymen whose intentions toward Egypt are anything but good, and he threatens them in his own mind that he will stand firm and outlast them.⁵⁵

The second letter, dated 30.10.1956, the second day of the battle, describes the descent of paratroops (described as locusts, crows and highwaymen) upon Egyptian territory, and the preparations of the Egyptian soldier to meet them. It is interesting that the image of the foreign soldiers in the first two letters resembles the image of the Jews in Qissat Rachel Schwartzenburg in that both of them are coming from the West to the East (Palestine or Egypt) with the aim of occupation:

The paratroops have landed behind our lines.
A new order.
They landed like swarms of locusts,
Like a destroying flock of crows.⁵⁶

or again:

I am going on my mission
To drive back the highwaymen and the plunderers of my freedom.⁵⁷

The third letter, dated 31.10.1956, the third day of the battle, describes the defeat of the paratroops by the Egyptians, both troops and civilians, especially the fellahin:

Now, we have destroyed the remnants of the paratroops-
Father
If you had seen them falling
Like the fruit of an old apricot tree
Falling
Swaying
Beneath their pierced parachutes
Like a hanged man quietly dangling
While the rifles of our great people hunted them.⁵⁸

The fourth letter, dated 1.11.1956, repeats what Nizār said in the third letter.⁵⁹

It is clear that in the whole of this poem Nizār has neglected an important aspect, which is to pick up the anxiety and tension in the minds of the two opposing sides at the moment of confrontation. This poem could have had a much stronger impact had it penetrated, for example, into the minds of the invading troops and made some effort to analyse them, and acquainted us with their views of the battle. We would have liked to hear the voice of an invading soldier who rejects this war and the policy which planned it, but nothing of this sort happens. Nizār has obliterated the characters of his enemies, and has restricted himself to one side, speaking of the greatness of the Egyptians in defending their country.

3. The Algerian struggle against French occupation

The courage and suffering of the Algerians in their ten-year struggle for liberation from French colonialism made Algeria the main Arab cause after the 1948 Palestinian catastrophe.⁶⁰ Contemporary poets wrote on the struggle and gave it a major importance because it represented one of the chief aspects of the Arab struggle in the fifties.⁶¹ Nizār wrote one poem on it, Jamila Bū Hayrad.

The poem transports us to one of the victims of the French occupation in Algeria, Jamila Bū Hayrad (French spelling Djamila Bouhired), and we see her in a military prison in Oran, devoted to her cause and patiently enduring her torments.⁶² We also see her reciting verses from the two Qur'ānic sūras, Mayram and al-Fath. It may be asked here: why these two sūras? In answer to this, we may say that Maryam, or Mary, in the sūra which bears her name, is an example to be followed for the woman who is patient in her affliction, i.e., pregnancy without having known a man. Perhaps Nizār wants to say here that Jamila is a second Mary in her endurance of torment and humiliation. As for al-Fath, this sūra is a symbolic expression of Jamila's belief in the ultimate victory of her revolt. Nizār has made her read these two sūras in "the light of dawn", a background in time which reinforces the certainty of the poet and Jamila of victory:

A jug of water and a gaoler
 A hand clasping the Qur'ān
 And a woman in the light of dawn
 Recalling as if making a confession
 Verses with a mournful resonance
 From the Sūrat Maryam
 And al-Fath.⁶³

Reading on through the poem we find that he compares Jamila to a palm-tree (in allusion to her pride), and to a child (in allusion to her innocence). But suddenly he says that she has "tired the sun and has ^{not} grown

tired",⁶⁴ which is a somewhat obscure expression. This is followed by a few lines in which Nizār wishes to say that the French are savage barbarians, but which are flat and weak:

O Lord, is there, under the stars,
A human being
Who is content to eat, to drink
From the flesh of a crucified woman freedom-fighter?⁶⁵

In the second part of the poem we see Jamila in a French prison, suffering from confinement and illness and from the treatment of French soldiers led by Lacoste. In this prison we come to learn the methods used by the French to torture Jamila:

The fetters gnaw her feet
Cigarettes are extinguished on her breasts
There is blood in her nose
And on her lips⁶⁶

Despite the well-known fact that the French treatment of the Algerians was extremely brutal, these lines are a very superficial description of French brutality and as close as they could be to mere news items. Nizār has been unable in this description to penetrate into Jamila's psychological world or into the arrogance of the French troops when they turned into harsh barbarians with no pity in their hearts.⁶⁷

It is clear that Nizār treats Jamila here as though she were just a body, not an ideal example of resistance to the French. We notice this in the way he insists on mentioning specific parts of Jamila's body, legs, breasts, lips, her dark swarthy body, her left breast or her nipple.⁶⁸ In fact we do not see Jamila's heroic acts in the Resistance, but only see a shattered woman whom the French take delight in torturing and gazing at the beauties of her body. This view taken by Nizār of Jamila is enough to exclude this poem

from any anthology of Arabic poetry devoted to the Algerian issue.⁶⁹

4. Arab unity

Nizār wrote two poems on Arab unity, Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād and Mawwāl Baghdādi.

(a) Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād

Nizār begins this poem with an introduction which speaks of the relationship between two lovers, the Syrian Nizār Qabbānī and his Iraqi wife Bilqīs al-Rāwī.⁷⁰ In Nizār's view, his marriage to Bilqīs is an example in miniature of the sought-after Arab unity, and there is no difference between Syrian Damascus and Iraqi Rāwā, because both of them are Arab soil dear to his heart. He considers that the love which reigns between himself and his wife is the source of love for all lovers:

Before the era of unity we became united
And made Rāwā into Syrian Damascus.
They have taken love and passion from us
And forgotten that we invented love.
They may have learned the language of ardour
But we are the passionate lovers of old.⁷¹

Suddenly Nizār moves to his chief object in writing this poem, which is the great hope that understanding and harmony may reign between Syria (symbolised by the Umayyad Caliph Marwān b. 'Abd al-Malik) and Iraq (symbolised by the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mūn), and that complete unity may be achieved between them. This hope overwhelms the poet and makes him imagine that it is an actual fact. At this point he is overcome by a boundless joy which transcends the laws of nature and the universe. Suddenly the Euphrates turns to wine, Babylon, the ancient cradle of civilisation, is shining with

light, and the tomb of the Caliph 'Alī b. Abī Tālib in Najaf flies into the air in the form of a cloud.

There is no doubt that the mention of 'Alī, the most revered of men among the Shī'a, has a special significance. A proportion of the population of Syria consists of 'Alawī Shi'ites, while a large proportion of the population of Iraq is Shi'ite. We can thus say that Nizār is touching a sensitive nerve with Syrians and Iraqis when he mentions 'Alī. Perhaps he wishes to say that Syria and Iraq have a strong link uniting them, which is 'Alī, and that because of this they are suited to join in the hoped-for unity. Suddenly Nizār becomes confused and does not know whether what he sees and thinks is reality or dream:

The Tigris is a lover visiting Damascus,
 And a noble who has come to visit nobles
 Al-Ma'mūn is hand in hand with Marwān
 And the water of the Euphrates has turned to wine
 Is what I see before me the Laylat al-Qadr
 Or is what I see a dream?
 Babylon illumines and 'Alī's tomb
 Has left the earth, and turned to clouds.⁷²

After a while he realises for certain that what he sees is nothing but a dream. He wishes very much that this dream, the dream of unity, would remain in his mind forever, far from the hands of the enemies of unity who have destroyed all his beautiful dreams on this subject before:

An amazing dream, for which I fear;
 For how many dreams have they shattered for us!⁷³

After this Nizār addresses the river Baradā in Syria, describing it as a swift horse and asking it to be the first to begin Arab unity with a union between Syria and Iraq, in a sad period which has turned its back on unity. In Nizār's view, this union is something from God which the Baradā should

accept as an inspiration. He imagines the Baradā as having become a leader of all the Arabs, and finally commands it once again to unite with Iraq in the hope that this union will give birth to eternal heroes like Khālid b. al-Walid and Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik, both of whom were brave and daring horsemen who did not fear their enemies:

The millions have sworn allegiance to you
 As an Arab prince, so lead them in prayer
 Marry the date-palms of Iraq and give birth
 To a second Khālid, and give birth to Hishām.⁷⁴

After this Nizār returns once more to the theme of passion for his beloved, in a number of lines whose omission would have made no difference to the poem.⁷⁵ Then he returns once again to the question of Iraq and Syria, and states emphatically that the tense relationship between the two countries, and their change from love to hatred and back again, causes him the greatest grief. It gives him great happiness to reveal his deep faith in the idea that Arab unity will come about (above all through a union between Syria and Iraq) and to reject all the factors leading to division, weakness and regionalism:

I have two friends who fill my life,
 Who have exhausted me with their discord and harmony
 We have made no differentiation between nation and nation
 So how can the colour of the heavens agree to be divided?
 One fatherland, which we have drawn as wheat,
 Date-palms, stars, and doves,
 Nineveh, Abū Kamāl, Tartūs, Hims,
 Babylon and Karbalā', return my greetings.
 One fatherland; may my poetry cease to exist
 If it sings the praise of a tribe or a régime.⁷⁶

After this he criticises President Sadat, because he offered concessions to Israel, and Arab oil, which has lost its role as a weapon in the hands of the Arabs.⁷⁷

(b) Mawwāl Baghdādī

In this poem Nizār speaks of his long absence from Baghdad⁷⁸ and his constant longing for it. Baghdad, as he sees it, is a beloved woman for whom he searches like a sailor on an exhausting voyage, until he finds her:

Baghdad, I have come to you, exhausted, like a ship,
Hiding my wounds beneath my clothes
And have flung down my head on the bosom of my princess,
And our lips have met after a long absence.⁷⁹

When he is in Baghdad he feels that he is in his homeland (his "nest"), and he draws a beautiful and romantic picture of it:

I have come down like a sparrow searching for his nest
While the dawn is a wedding-party of minarets and domes
So that I beheld you like a piece of jewellery
Resting between date-palms and vines.⁸⁰

In Baghdad Nizār is overwhelmed by a belief that Iraq is an extension of Syria, that union between them will come as a first step in the national programme, and that this is the only way to Arab strength:

Wherever I turn, I see the features of my homeland
And smell in this soil my own soil.⁸¹

In conclusion, we may say that Nizār's words about unity between these two countries, as an example for other Arab countries, is a frank admission on the poet's part that unity is a vital necessity imposed by the need to continue and survive in the present and in the future.

THE LESSONS OF ARAB-ISLAMIC HISTORY AND LAMENTATION FOR THE GLORIOUS PAST

The common Arab history was one of the chief elements upon which Arab nationalism was built, in addition to land, descent, language, common traditions, classical Arab civilisation, religion and common purpose.⁸² In the earlier part of the twentieth century, particularly the thirties and the forties, a number of calls were made for writers and men of letters to return to Arab-Islamic history as a means of enriching the present.⁸³ It is clear that there are two factors which assisted this return to history, the first being the study of the Arabic language and Arabic literature, a study which brought to life the feelings of the Arabs for their past glories and the role played by their ancestors in founding the Islamic empire,⁸⁴ and the second the political and social developments which made the Arabs aware of their existence and their character. This awareness impelled them to turn to their ancient past, to the era of conquests and kingship, and the scientific flowering which followed it.⁸⁵

This interest in Arab-Islamic history led in turn to an interest in Arabic literature, verse and prose. Thus Anis al-Maqdisi, professor of Arabic Literature at the American University of Beirut, says:

The prevailing spirit in modern Arabic literature is that which is derived from Arab history and the culture of their language, which takes pride in their glories and calls for brotherhood and the solidarity of their countries.⁸⁶

Nizār addressed four poems, Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya, Awrāq Isbā niyya, Aḥzān fī al-Andalus and Gharnāṭa, to one corner of Arab-Islamic history, the history of Islamic Spain. It seems that his visit to Spain in

1955 and his residence there between 1962 and 1966 gave him a great love for the country, its people, culture and language, and that these are the underlying reasons for this direction in his poetry.

1. Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya

This poem consists of six short stanzas, four of which show his great admiration for this ancient country or for certain aspects of its life. In the first stanza he expresses an admiration for the black eyes of a Spanish woman, Morena Rosalia, which reaches the level of worship.⁸⁷ In the second stanza we find unbounded admiration for the hair of another Spanish woman, Miranda Alavedra, which he compares to an African jungle, alluding to its abundance, thickness and length.⁸⁸ In the third stanza we find further unbounded admiration for a scene of Spanish flamenco dancing. Here we meet the Spanish dancer, of whom the poet shows us nothing but her fingers. Here he gives us a new poetic picture which no poet has attempted before, in particular the way in which the fingers turn into a mouth, and the exhilaration which the fingers induce in the watchers during the dance:

The Spanish dancer
Says everything with her fingers
And the Spanish dance is the only dance
In which the finger turns into a mouth;
A hot appeal, thirsty trysts
satisfaction .. anger .. desire .. and hope;
All of this is said with ^{the} sob of a finger,
With the tap of a finger.⁸⁹

While the dancer continues her performance, the poet remains with the rest of the audience, gazing at what he sees and surrendering himself to the "symphony of fingers", the "twentieth cup" and the "black eyes" of which he spoke in the first stanza and which he here compares to a black rain.⁹⁰

In the fifth stanza he expresses his admiration for the long earrings of the Spanish women.⁹¹ We see that these four sections are introductions to stanzas four and six, which are the core of this poem. In stanza four, Nizār expresses his regret for the passing of the ancient Arab past in Spain when he stumbles across the last king of Granada, Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣaghīr (d.1532, known in the West as Boabdīl). Nizār uses the transformation of this character into a statue in the Military Museum in Madrid, to embody the fall of Arab civilization in Spain and its final decay into nothing but lifeless remains.⁹²

When Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣaghīr goes out with Nizār into the streets of Madrid, as the poem relates, he goes out in secret and by night, not wishing to be seen by anyone. He comes out of his glass display cabinet, hiding his eternal shame, the shame of the Arabs, in darkness, and slinking along like a thief. His object in coming out of the museum is to prove to Nizār that the Arabs still exist in Spain.⁹³ When they approach a Moorish woman who originates from Damascus (Nizār gives her a fabricated name, Nuwār bt. 'Ammār), and speak to her, they are amazed that she does not know her previous Arab name, or her previous Damascene roots:

"Why do we not call out to her, Abū 'Abd Allāh?"
 "She does not know her name."
 "Can anybody forget his name?"
 "Yes, this happens in history;
 Her name now is Nora al Amaro.
 Instead of Nuwār bint 'Ammār."⁹⁴

In this short conversation Nizār summarises the tragedy of the Arabs in Moorish Spain, and shows the loss of the Arab-Islamic identity and the dominance of the culture of the new Spanish conquerors.

In the sixth stanza the poet is brought to a halt in the narrow

alleyways of Córdoba by the strong resemblance between his house in Damascus when he was a child and his house in Córdoba as a tourist. This resemblance is personified for him by the profusion of flowers and gushing water in both. Nizār is bewildered in Córdoba, wishing to enter his house there, and he is confused and does not know whether he is really in Damascus or Córdoba,⁹⁵ because the natural beauty surrounding his house in Córdoba reminds him of the natural beauty in which he grew up as a child in Damascus:

All of this perfumed world which embraced my childhood in Damascus
I found here!⁹⁶

Nizār wishes to say that Córdoba and Islamic Spain are an extension of Umayyad Damascus, and that he really belongs to Spanish history just as much as he does to Damascus.

2. Awraq Isbāniyya

Awraq Isbāniyya consists of eleven stanzas. In the first, al-Jisr, and the second, Sūnātā, we meet Nizār lamenting the loss of Arab glory. He summarises here the feelings of the Arabs about Spain. In this summary Spain is no longer anything but a bitter memory and a symbol of a contemporary tragedy:

Spain
A bridge of weeping
Stretched between earth and heaven.⁹⁷

In the third stanza, al-Fāris wa-al-Warda, we meet a horseman, a bull-fighter surrounded by beautiful women with black eyes. The horseman declares his love for one of the women by throwing his hat onto her balcony and she likewise declares her love by showering him with roses. The bullfight begins,

and the horseman faces danger and death at the hands of his enemy, the bull, armed with his sword and his pride.⁹⁸ This stanza seems to be a realistic scene taken from a bullfight.

It seems most likely that this horseman is an extension of Nizār Qabbānī himself, the young man of Damascus who used to pursue women, confronting the restrictions of the reactionary society of the forties. The Damascene lover appears in Spain in the guise of a horseman, besieged by admiring women who pray for him until he overcomes the bull and becomes a hero, and conquers even more women. Spain, too, is an extension of Nizār's first environment, Damascus.

In the fourth and fifth stanzas, Bayt al-'Aṣāfir and Marāwiḥ al-Isbāniyyāt, Nizār repeats his previous admiration of the beauty of Spanish women. These two stanzas rely upon his mature artistic ability to create fragmentary poetic images which fill the verses with life. Take, for example, the fourth stanza:

In Seville
Every beautiful maiden wears
A scarlet rose in her hair
Upon which, in the evening
All the sparrows of Spain descend.⁹⁹

In the sixth and seventh stanzas, al-Lu'lu' al-Aswad and Doña María, we meet Spanish beauty embodied in the women's black eyes which remind him of Damascus.¹⁰⁰ The eyes here are the same eyes which he compared to black inkwells and black rain in Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya. In the eighth stanza, al-Qurt al-Ṭamūḥ, we encounter a beautiful poetic picture of the women's earrings¹⁰¹ which is almost a repetition of the fifth stanza of Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya. In the ninth and tenth stanzas, al-Thawr and Nazif al-Anbiyā', we encounter a bullfight whose main hero is the slain bull, for whom the poet

harbours all possible esteem and respect. When the bull dies, his death is not an ordinary event, for it embodies martyrdom, pride and refusal to accept humiliation:

Despite the loss of blood which afflicts him,
 Despite the darts buried in him,
 The killed animal is still, with all of this
 More majestic, and greater, than his killers.¹⁰²

Or again:

Corrida
 Corrida
 The bull rushes at the cape
 Strong, headstrong,
 And falls in the bullring
 Like any martyr, like any prophet,
 And does not relinquish his pride.¹⁰³

It seems likely that the image of the slain bull in these two stanzas symbolises the disappearance of the Arab presence in Spain, and that it is also another side of Nizār, a wounded poet who belongs to those Arabs who have died out in Spain, and who feels a sensation of shame and bleeds for their disappearance.

The eleventh stanza, Baqāyā al-'Arab, comes as a culmination of Nizār's personal feeling of defeat. We now find him consoling himself in a Spanish tavern, trying to forget his cares and historical shame. He finally realises that the Arabs no longer have any place in Spain, and that all he now has of them is these abundant memories which flood into his mind, for which he can do nothing but weep:

Flamenco
 Flamenco
 And the drowsy tavern wakes up
 To the laughing of the wooden castanets

And the hoarseness of a sad voice
 Flowering like a fountain of gold.
 And I sit in a corner
 Gathering together my tears
 Gathering together the remnants of the Arabs!¹⁰⁴

3. Ahzān fi al-Andalus

This poem raises, through the voice of an unidentified woman, some of the questions which arise about Spain - how it was possible for great conquering heroes like Ṭāriq b. Ziyād (670-720) and 'Uqba b. Nāfi' (621-683) to appear, and the role of the Umayyads in the rise of Arab-Islamic civilisation in Spain.¹⁰⁵ These questions, even if posed by a woman, are really Nizār's own urgent questions. The answer quickly comes back from Nizār: the Arabs remained in Spain for eight centuries (711-1492), and then disappeared, and nothing remains of them except glorious relics and the black eyes of the women.¹⁰⁶

His grief at the disappearance of Arab-Islamic civilisation reaches its peak when he speaks of the fall of two cultural strongholds, Córdoba and Granada. As for Córdoba, the centre of two cultures, Islamic and Jewish, nothing remains of it but the minarets which weep for the departure of those who built them. Everything in it has disappeared, even its great men of letters, at their head the poetess Wallāda bt. al-Mustakfi, whose own house in Cordoba was the meeting-place of literary men.¹⁰⁷

As for Granada, the capital of the Banū al-Aḥmar, its glory has departed. Nothing remains of it, Nizār says, but three things - its story, which is related by storytellers, its Islamic inscriptions which adorn the façades of its great buildings, for example the words Lā Ghālib illā Allāh (there is no conqueror but God), and the palaces of the Alhambra which Nizār compares to a marble statue of a naked woman.¹⁰⁸

After giving these simple historical facts, Nizār draws a comparison between the Arab character of 1492 (after the fall of Islamic Spain at the hands of Ferdinand and Isabella) and the Arab character today, five centuries later, and sees that both have features in common: internal divisions, narrow horizons, lack of freedom and tyrannical rule. There is no doubt, he thinks, that these are the cause of successive Arab defeats:

Five centuries have gone by
 Since the little Caliph departed from Spain
 And our petty hatreds are still
 As they were
 The mentality of the tribe is still
 In our blood as it was
 And freedom of thought here
 Is still
 A chicken, slaughtered
 By the sword of every tyrant.¹⁰⁹

Perhaps Nizār means here to suggest the following idea: the political circumstances which paved the way for the fall of Islamic Spain, in particular the political fragmentation, are similar to the political conditions which prevail today in the Arab world, where differences and conflicts between the various countries are at their strongest. What, perhaps, he wishes to suggest is that the Arabs should now learn from the mistakes of their ancestors in Islamic Spain and become, together, a single power in order to ensure their survival and their role in history.

4. Gharnāṭa

In this poem Nizār speaks of a fleeting encounter with a female guide to the antiquities of Spain, from which we learn more of Nizār's feelings toward Islamic Spain.

The meeting occurs accidentally in one of the palaces of the Alhambra, the most important Arab monument in Granada, and the most beautiful example of Islamic architecture there (built between 1248 and 1354). Nizār is spontaneously drawn to the guide's black eyes, and thinks that they are Arab. He wishes to dispel his doubts about her and asks her nationality. She tells him that she is Spanish, born in Granada.¹¹⁰

The name "Granada" resounds in his mind, and he recollects a long history of stories about the Umayyads and the Arab presence in Islamic Spain. He also links the face of this beautiful guide with the face of the beautiful women of Damascus, and is confused for a moment, thinking that she is one of them, especially when he looks at her long black hair and her gleaming earrings.¹¹¹

After this Nizār gazes at the decorations of the Alhambra, and feels that they are a part of him, and that an inner feeling is telling him that the hand which created them was an Arab hand. Apparently the claim of the Spanish guide that the Alhambra is a part of the Spanish heritage is the reason for his distress when he inspects these decorations:

Almost hearing the pulse of the decorations,
 The ornamentations on the ceiling calling out to me.
 She said, "Here is the Alhambra, the pride of our ancestors
 So read my glories on its walls."
 Her glories? I wiped a bleeding wound,
 And wiped another wound in my heart.
 If only my beautiful heiress understood
 That the people she meant were my ancestors!¹¹²

In fact, Nizār does not reject his guide, despite these blows which she aims at him. He forgives her ignorance of the history of the Alhambra and the other monuments of Islamic Spain. He still sees in her face the faces of his

ancestors, the conquerors of old like Ṭāriq b. Ziyād:

When I said farewell to her, I embraced in her
A man called Ṭāriq b. Ziyād.¹¹³

v

COMMENT

From the preceding poems it is clear that Nizār was flowing with a current which was widespread in the nineteen-fifties, that of nationalist poetry. It is also clear that Nizār's nationalist feeling at that time was a natural response to the social and political circumstances and events which surrounded him.

However, we must draw attention to the fact that this feeling was not strong, but on the contrary was weak and colourless. Perhaps the reason for this is that Nizār had no links with any particular political philosophy, and did not promote the nationalist ideas of the Ba'th party, which after 1963 was the ruling party in Syria. Nizār kept himself free from any ideological or political commitment, and this allowed him to be free both in his thinking and in his poetry. On this he says:

I did not join any political party. I was not a member of any association or society of any kind. I am one of those who believe that any affiliation, however pure and idealistic it may be, is bound to harness the chariot of poetry to the horse of temporal adventure, which will drag it away from its proper course.¹¹⁴

The truth is that this nationalist feeling was not merely weak, but was temporary, accidental and quick to disappear. There is nothing in his

political poetry to indicate that he wrote any nationalist poems after the fifties, with the exception of Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād and Mawwāl Dimashqī, which he wrote in 1979. (He wrote the first of these in response to the request of the General Union of Women of Iraq in Baghdad, which proposed the slogan, "For poetry which expresses the aspirations of the nation for unity.")

It seems that the limited nature of these nationalist feelings was not something unique to Nizār, but on the contrary was something natural to a large section of Arab writers and thinkers.¹¹⁵

The critic can underline the fact that the preceding poems are early poems and are not his best work. Perhaps, indeed, some of them, like Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg, Risālat Jundī fi Jabhat al-Suways, Jamila Bū Hayrad, Mawwāl Baghdādī, Aḥzān fi al-Andalus and Gharnāṭa are bad examples of modern Arab poetry.

With the exception of the beautiful poetic images of Spanish eyes which Nizār drew in Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya and Awrāq Isbāniyya, all his nationalist poems, in general, suffer from many faults, for example repetition of ideas or of lines without justification (the third stanza of Khubz wa-Hashish wa-Qamar is a repetition of the first, the fourth letter of Risālat Jundī fi Jabhat al-Suways is a repetition of the third, the amatory introduction to Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād is a repetition of its conclusion); the predomination of prose language over poetic (especially in Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg, Risālat Jundī fi Jabhat al-Suways, Mudhakkirāt Andalusīyya and Aḥzān fi al-Andalus); and the cramming of more than one subject into a single poem, which makes for the dissipation of the poem itself into scattered fragments (for example in Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg there are three separate stories, and in Mawāwil Dimashqiyya

ilā Qamar Baghdād there are three different subjects, which are love, unity between Syria and Iraq, and criticism of Sadat).

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Muhammad al-Mubāarak, al-Umma al-'Arabiyya fi Ma'rakat Tahqiq al-Dhāt, Damascus 1959, pp.49-50.
2. Majid Khaddūri, al-Ittijāhāt al-Siyāsiyya fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi: Dawr al-Afkār wa-al-Muthul al-'Ulyā fi al-Siyāsa, Beirut 1975, p.33. See also al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.1409.
3. 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Azzām, "The Arab Nation" in The Arab Nation: Paths and Obstacles to Fulfilment, ed. William Sands, Washington 1961, p.10.
4. Mu'assasat Nāsir li-al-Thaqāfa, Hasād al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Hadīth fi al-Qawmiyya al-Arabiyya, Beirut 1980, p.62.
5. Qusṭantin Zurayq, al-Wa'y al-Qawmī, Beirut 1939, pp.19.45.
6. See Walid Qazihā, "al-Tahlil al-Tārikhī li-al-Fikr al-Qawmī al-'Arabi: Tatawwur al-Haraka al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya", in al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya fi al-Fikr wa-al-Mumārasa, ed. Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, Beirut 1980, p.25. See also Akram 'Askar al-Nāsir, al-Dawla al-'Arabiyya, Amman 1976, p.24.
7. Nūr al-Dīn Hātūm, Muhādarāt 'an al-Marāhil al-Tārikhiyya li-al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, Cairo 1963, p.82.
8. Yāsīn Khalīl, al-Idiyūlūjiyā al-'Arabiyya, Baghdad 1966, p.79.
9. See Muhammad al-Mubāarak, op cit., p.81 and Ahmad Khāki, Falsafat al-Qawmiyya, Cairo, n.d., p.79 ff.
10. One of the most prominent of these nationalist thinkers is Sāti' al-Husri (1879-1968), whose nationalist writings totalled seventeen works, the most notable of which were Muhādarāt fi Nushū' al-Fikra al-Qawmiyya, al-'Urūba bayn Du'ātiha wa-Mu'āridihā, al-'Urūba Awwalan, Difā' 'an al-'Urūba, Mā hiya al-Qawmiyya?, Hawl al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya and Arā' wa-Ahādīth fi al-Wataniyya wa-al-Qawmiyya. All of these books were re-issued in a new edition in 1985 by the Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya in Beirut.
11. Sāti' al-Husri, Abhāth Mukhtāra fi al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, Beirut 1985, p.22.
12. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Bazzāz, "Difā' 'an al-'Urūba", in Arā' wa-Dirāsāt fi al-Fikr al-Qawmī, Kuwait 1985, p.80.
13. Mahmūd Taymūr, al-Qiṣṣa fi al-Adab al-'Arabi wa-Buhūth Ukhrā, Cairo 1971, pp.56-57.
14. Wizārat al-Tarbiya wa-al-Ta'lim, Amālī al-Thaqāfa al-Qawmiyya al-Ishtirākiyya, Damascus 1975, p.14.
15. Jawdat al-Rikābi, "al-Hurriyya fi Khidmat al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.1, year 6, January 1985, p.31.
16. Suhayl Idrīs, "Mu'tamarunā al-Adabi al-Thālith", al-Adāb, Ibid., p.1.

17. Suhayr al-Qalamāwī, "al-Naqd wa-al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya", al-Adāb, Ibid., p.19.
18. Tāhā Husayn, "al-Udabā' hum Bunāt al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya", al-Adāb, Ibid., pp.10-11.
19. Mahmūd Taymūr, op cit., pp.57-58.
20. Sa'dūn Hammādi, "al-Adab wa-al-Wa'y al-Qawmi: Arā' fi mā Yajib an Yakūn" in Dawr al-Adab fi al-Wa'y al-Qawmi al-'Arabi, ed. Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, Beirut 1980, p.33.
21. See interview with Nizār Qabbāni in al-Ba'th, Damascus, no.7626, 31 March 1988, p.9.
22. Ibid., p. 9.
23. This poem was written in 1954, that is at a time when the scientific information available to people in Arab society about the moon was weak or non-existent. We may add to this the fact that in this society at that time electricity was non-existent or very limited and on a very small scale. It is hardly a secret that the population of Arab countries, particularly in areas which have not been reached by electricity, still stretch out on the roofs of their houses to enjoy the beauty of the moon when it is full. Thus it is by no means improbable that what Nizār refers to in his poem is a fact. No doubt this attitude of veneration for the moon has almost disappeared from Arab society, especially after the Apollo moon landing of 1969. Many people now realise that the moon is a desolate world of barren rocks, high mountains and wide plains and valleys, and that it has no light of its own but reflects the light of the sun. However, this scientific knowledge about the moon in Arab society does not negate the great importance given to the moon by Islam; see for example the Qur'ān, al-A'rāf (7), v.54; Yūnus (10), v.5; al-Ra'd (13), v.2; Ibrāhīm (14), v.33; Yāsīn (26), v.39; al-Qamar (54), v.1; al-Rahmān (55), v.5; and al-Qiyāma (75), v.8. When the Prophet saw the Moon, he would say, "O God, let it rise upon us in security and belief, safety and Islam. My Lord and your Lord is God; a new moon of right guidance and good!" See al-Nawawī, Riyād al-Sālihīn min Kalām Sayyid al-Mursalīn, ed. Ridwān Muhammad Ridwān, Beirut n.d., p.447. Some people in Palestine and Jordan still regard the appearance of a new moon as a good omen and say something similar to the words of the Prophet.
24. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1985, Vol.3, pp.15-21.
25. Ibid., pp.18-19.
26. Ibid., p.22.
27. Ibid., p.23.
28. Ibid., p.24.
29. Nizār Qabbāni, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābi, Beirut 1978, p.185.
30. Ibid., p.185.
31. Nizār Qabbāni, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, p.39.

32. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol13, p.61.

33. Ibid., p.62.

34. Ibid., pp63-64.

35. Ibid., p.65.

36. Nizār is almost completely convinced that the Arab man today is a man who is sexually starved. In Yawmiyyāt Imra'a lā-Mubāliya he says:

The headache of sex tears at our skulls
A chronic, ugly headache from the desert
Has accompanied us
And made us forget our insight and forget
Our consciences.

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1979, Vol.1, p.639.

37. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol13, pp66-67.

38. Ibid., p.68.

39. For further information see Sa'd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, al-Nizām al-Ijtimā'i al-'Arabī al-Jadīd; Dirāsa 'an al-Athār al-Ijtimā'iyya li-al-Thawra al-Naftiyya, Beirut 1982, pp.24-26.

40. Some contemporary Arab writers go to extremes when they speak of the evils which Arab oil has inflicted upon Arab society, of the concessions which oil princes have offered to world imperialism, and how this oil has become a weapon directed against the Arabs instead of being in their service. One such writer is the Iraqi Ba'thist 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsīm, who says:

Oil revenues contribute to the building of the world imperialist structure and to the accumulation of immense amounts of capital. Imperialism uses a large part of them against the independence, self-liberation and security of the Arabs (in the form of arms, capital, expertise etc., with which Israel is supplied), and this means that Arab oil is the economic and strategic tool for Arab deprivation and backwardness, materially and culturally. It is a strategic commodity in the imperialist economy which is, in addition, aimed like a weapon at the heart of the Arab nation.

See 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsīm, "al-Dawr al-Istrātiǧī li-al-Naft fi Muwājahat al-Tahāluf al-Imbiryāli al-Ṣahyūnī", al-Sharāra, Beirut, no.3, 15 January 1975, p.100.

41. In some of Nizār's poems there are numerous references to misuse of Arab oil by the Arabs. Oil here is a marginal value controlled by a tiny minority of people, whose purpose is to accumulate wealth in order to obtain women and sex. Oil is an idle power which induces idleness, and which is part of an all-embracing backwardness instead of being a weapon in the hand of the Arabs to exert pressure on their enemies. Thus in Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa Nizār says:

Our oil gushing in the deserts,
 Could have become a dagger
 Of flame and fire
 But,
 To the shame of the nobles of Quraysh
 And the shame of the noble men of Aws and Nizār
 It was poured beneath the feet of slave-girls!

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.87. In Anā yā Ṣadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī, he says:

And from the Gulf to the Ocean there are tribes
 Who are arrogant, and without thought or culture
 In the age of oil, a poet searches for
 A garment, and whores strut along in silk.

See Ibid., p.640. In the same poem he says:

While the Arab world stores its oil
 In its testicles and your Lord is the Munificent
 While men, before oil and after it,
 Are bleeding to death; some masters and some beasts of burden.

See Ibid., p.643. In Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād he says:

The civilisation of oil has not changed a fingernail
 Of ours, nor a thumb
 We have become pregnant by oil without marriage
 And have given birth, after our birth-pangs, to soot.

See Ibid., p.513. In Akhir 'Uṣfūr Yakhruj min Gharnāta he says:

Oil stretches out happily beneath the trees of drowsiness
 And between the breasts of the harem
 This one who has come to us
 In the dress of an accursed devil,
 Oil, this seminal fluid
 Not nationalist,
 Not Arab,
 Not popular,
 This hare, defeated in all the wars,
 Oil, the drink of great emperors,
 Not the drink of the peoples.

See Nizār Qabbānī, Qasā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, Beirut 1968, pp.85-86. There are some other comparable passages about oil and corruption in the two poems Hajama al-Naft mithl Dhi'b 'alaynā and Li-mādhā Yasqut Mut'ib b. Ta'bān fi Imtihān Huqūq al-Insan?. See Qasā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p.44 and p.108.

42. Hakam Darwaza, "Munāqashāt Qawmiyya: Hawl Ma'nā al-Taḥarrur al-'Arabi", al-Adāb, Ibid., p.88.

43. Farīd Abū 'Ayta, "Munāqashāt Qawmiyya: Bayn al-Thawra wa-al-Iṣlāh", al-Adāb, Ibid., p. 88.

44. The Syrian people expressed their intense pain after Palestine fell to the Jews with a comprehensive strike at the beginning of December 1948. This is the strike in which the people demanded a resumption of fighting in order to regain Palestine. Immediately afterwards a political crisis compelled Jamil Mardam Bey (1890-1960), the Prime Minister, to resign. See Muhammad Jamil Bayham, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya bayn al-Madd wa-al-Jazr; 1876-1972, Beirut 1973, p.21.
45. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, pp.28-29.
46. Ibid., p.29.
47. Ibid., p.30.
48. Ibid., pp.33-34.
49. Ibid., pp.35-36.
50. Ibid., p.37.
51. Ibid., p.38.
52. This character occurs, for example, in the popular Arab stories known as ḥawādīt. See Fāyiz 'Alī al-Ghūl, al-Dunyā Hikāyāt, Jerusalem n.d., pp.36-41.
53. See Muhammad 'Ammāra, al-Umma al-'Arabiyya wa-Qadiyyat al-Wahda, Beirut 1981, p.150, and al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.640.
54. Sulaymān Muhammad al-Tammāwī, al-Tatawwur al-Siyāsī li-al-Mujtama' al-'Arabī, Cairo 1966, p.383.
55. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol3, pp.41-42.
56. Ibid., p.44.
57. Ibid., p.44.
58. Ibid., pp.45-46.
59. Ibid., pp.47-48.
60. Nūr al-Dīn Ḥātūm, op cit., p.63.
61. Mufid Qumayha, al-Ittijāh al-Insānī fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Mu'āṣir, Beirut 1981, p.231.
62. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.51.
63. Ibid., p.52.
64. Ibid., p.53.
65. Ibid., p.53.
66. Ibid., pp.54-55.
67. The torture carried out by the French against the Algerians affected

many Arab writers. Among these was 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Dā'im (Syria) who wrote:

Indeed, the horrors being committed in Algeria are a threat to every human being and a threat to the destiny of the human race. It is not possible for any individual who bears the name of a human being and is eager to guard his civilisation and his values to be silent in the face of this blatant violation of his existence by way of violation of the existence of the people of Algeria; indeed the only thing he can do is to participate in the victory of the Algerians by all the means at his disposal, direct or indirect ... the woman who is stripped naked so that electricity can travel around in the visible and hidden parts of her body is a symbol of the persecution of the things which the human being holds most holy, and of the violation of the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Convention which stipulates in its twenty-seventh article that women should be protected from any assault upon their honour or their modesty.

See 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Dā'im, "al-Insān wa-Azmat al-Jazā'ir", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.12, year 8, December 1960, pp.2-3.

68. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, pp.55-56.

69. The Arabic poetry written on Algeria is still scattered through Arab newspapers and journals, and has not yet been fully studied. There is a study by the Iraqi 'Uthmān Sa'dī entitled al-Thawra al-Jazā'iriyya fī al-Shi'r al-Irāqī, Baghdad 1981, in two volumes, in which he analyses dozens of poems by Iraqi poets on the Algerian revolution and Algerian independence.

70. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, pp.501-502.

71. Ibid., pp.502-503.

72. Ibid., pp.504-505.

73. Ibid., p.506.

74. Ibid., p.506.

75. Ibid., pp.507-509.

76. Ibid., pp.509-510.

77. Ibid., pp.510-513.

78. We can explain Nizār's love for Baghdad within the framework of his attachment to ancient historical cities which had a particular role in Arab-Islamic history. This attachment is a kind of nationalist feeling, which becomes clearly apparent from his love not only for Baghdad but for Damascus also. In Mawwāl Dimashqī he reveals his undying passion for Damascus; there are various reasons for this, including the fact that it is his birthplace, is a city of great natural beauty, and has an ancient heritage which dates back to the time when it was the capital of the Umayyads. Because of this passion Nizār wishes that he was one of its minarets or a lamp over one of its gates:

I would like to be planted in you as a minaret
Or hung at your gates like a lamp
O city of the seven rivers, O my city,
O shirt embroidered with peach-blossoms.

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.518. In Min Mufakkirat 'Ashiq Dimashqī he reviews his memories of Damascus, the "beautiful woman", especially his childhood and his school:

O Damascus, my wounds have no banks,
 So wipe the sorrow and exhaustion from my brow
 And return me to the walls of my school
 And bring back the ink, the chalk and the books
 How many a treasure have I buried in those narrow alleys
 And how many boyhood memories have I left there,
 How many pictures have I drawn on their walls,
 How many toys have I broken on their steps?

See Ibid., p.418. In Anā yā Ṣadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī, the attachment to Damascus is again shown to be strong. In it we read of a Damascus of nature and beauty, a Damascus of victory and ancient glory, and a Damascus of eternity, the well-spring of Arab national consciousness:

The whiteness of the Arabian jasmine begins from Damascus
 And perfumes are perfumed by its fragrance;
 Water begins from Damascus, for wherever
 You rest your head, streams flow.
 Poetry is a sparrow which stretches its wing
 Above Damascus, and a wandering poet.
 Love begins from Damascus, for our people
 Worship beauty, melt it and melt in it.
 Horses begin their journey from Damascus,
 And press their spurs for the great conquest.
 Time begins from Damascus, there
 Languages survive, and pedigrees are preserved,
 Damascus gives the Arab identity its form
 And in its land the epochs take shape.

See Ibid., pp.634-635. Nizār also feels a strong attachment to Tunis (see the above poem, Ibid., p.631), Carthage (the same poem, Ibid., p.645), and Granada (see Aḥzān fī al-Andalus and Ḡarnāṭa, Ibid., pp.559-566 and pp.569-574). As for Jerusalem and Beirut, there will be a detailed discussion of these in the following chapters.

79. Ibid., pp.523-524.
80. Ibid., p.524.
81. Ibid., p.525.
82. Nūr al-Dīn Ḥātūm, op cit., pp.18-25.
83. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, Thawrat al-Adab, Cairo 1978, p.219.
84. Majīd Khaddūrī, op cit., p.37.
85. Anīs al-Maqdisī, al-Ittijāhāt al-Adabiyya al-Ḥadītha fī al-'Alam al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth, Beirut 1973, pp.177-178.
86. Ibid., pp.191-192.
87. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.529.

88. Ibid., p.530.
89. Ibid., p.531.
90. Ibid., pp.532-533.
91. Ibid., pp.539-540.
92. Ibid., pp.534-535.
93. Ibid., p.536.
94. Ibid., p.537.
95. Ibid., p.541.
96. Ibid., p.542.
97. Ibid., p.545.
98. Ibid., p.547.
99. Ibid., pp.548-549.
100. Ibid., pp.550-552.
101. Ibid., p.553.
102. Ibid., p.554.
103. Ibid., p.555.
104. Ibid., p.556.
105. Ibid., pp.559-560.
106. Ibid., p.561.
107. Ibid., p.562.
108. Ibid., p.563.
109. Ibid., p.564.
110. Ibid., p.569.
111. Ibid., pp.570-571.
112. Ibid., p.573.
113. Ibid., p.574.
114. Nizār Qabbānī, Qisṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, p.100.
115. See Sālim al-Kiswānī, "Khutuwāt fi al-Ittijāh al-Sahih", al-Dastūr, Amman, no.7508, year 22, Sunday, 17 July 1988, p.7.

CHAPTER FIVETHE DEFEAT OF JUNE 1967

This chapter will study the poems written by Nizār after the June war of 1967 between the Arabs and Israel, in which the defeat of the Arabs was the central pivot. The chapter begins, in section I, with a general introduction dealing with the June war - its circumstances, its results, its relationship to modern Arabic poetry, and its effect on Nizār as a poet. The remaining three sections will be devoted to an analysis of the poetry.

In section II we shall study the poems in which Nizār criticises the Arabs for their defeat in the war. His criticism was harsh, and he shouted in the Arabs' face like someone who has lost his sense of direction, so strong was the blow which had fallen upon him.

In section III we shall study another group of poems of self-criticism in which Nizār draws attention to the superficial way in which the Arabs are coping with the defeat, turning it into memories, an occasion for the shedding of tears, or a means of drugging the masses and preventing them from thinking about the dangers which are staring them in the face. Here Nizār avenges himself upon the Arabs, since he feels that no-one can escape the tragic results of the defeat.

In section IV we shall study the poems composed on the Palestine resistance movement. We shall note here that Nizār's attachment to this movement was a natural reaction to the defeat, or a revolt against it, and that he found in it a new road leading to collective salvation. He was as optimistic as possible about its birth. Three new poems composed by Nizār on the intifāda, which form a part of the resistance movement in general, have

been added to this section.

I

INTRODUCTION

1. The June War and its results

On the Monday morning of 5th June 1967, the Israeli air force launched a wide-scale attack on the United Arab Republic, in which it was able to destroy most of the Egyptian air force. The Israeli armed forces, utilising the success of this operation, began to advance into Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian territory.¹ Following this, the Security Council issued, on 6th June, 7th June, 9th June and 12th June, a series of cease-fire resolutions.² Israeli forces paid no attention to these resolutions and continued to advance into Arab territory. The cease-fire was not observed by Israel until it had completely occupied the Gaza strip, the West Bank, the Sinai desert, all Egyptian territory to the East of the Suez canal with the exception of Port Fuad, and the whole of the Syrian heights, including the town of Qunaytra.³

Israel subsequently justified its attack on the Arabs by various pretexts, such as the state of war still maintained by the Arabs with Israel, the withdrawal of U.N. emergency forces, the massing of Arab forces in Sinai and along the armistice lines, Arab threats directed against Israel, the closing of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Tiran straits, the banning of the passage of Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal, and the increasing activity of Palestinian guerrillas across Arab-Israeli borders.⁴

Among the results of the June War (or the Six-Day War) for the Arabs were the death of innumerable victims, the departure of huge numbers of

Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to Jordan and Egypt, and a destructive economic collapse in the Arab countries.⁵

Whatever the facts may have been the June war had a number of serious effects for the Arabs:

(a) The shock of defeat

After the defeat the Arabs suffered a violent psychological shock.⁶ This was due to three factors - their inflated ideas about the capability of Arab armies to crush Israel, previous claims that the liberation of Palestine was an extremely simple matter, and underestimation and minimalisation of Israeli's military power.⁷

(b) Evasion of responsibility

The Arabs attempted to ascribe their defeat to external factors which had nothing to do with them, such as the claim that American and British aircraft had formed a protective umbrella over Israel and that they had carried out strikes on the Arabs; the claim that the desertion of the Soviet Union was the cause of the defeat, since it had not taken part in the war against Israel; and the claim that Zionism dominated the whole world, in particular the capitalist and communist systems.⁸

(c) The acceptance of Israel as a fait accompli

Before the June war the Arabs did not dare to say that Israel was a fait accompli which should be recognised and lived with. This view of Israel changed shortly after the defeat, and some Arab régimes tried to sow in the mind of their citizens the idea that Israel was the stronger side in the

struggle with the Arabs, and could not be ignored in any circumstances.⁹

2. The defeat and Arabic poetry

There is no disagreement that the defeat of 5th June was an important event in the history of modern Arab poetry. It had wide-ranging consequences for this poetry, and in the following pages we shall review the ideas of certain Arab critics on this subject.

(a) 'Abd al-Ghaffār Makka'ī (Egypt)

This critic says that the June disaster was a collective national disaster, and that Arab poets responded to it in a natural way, expressing themselves in different manners, each in his own style and in accordance with his own inclination.¹⁰ He maintains that the duties of the Arab poet now are: to reject oppression and defeat, to wage war against idleness and lethargy, to liberate minds from superstition and fear, to summon people to continue with the struggle, to disseminate hope in their souls, to emphasise the Arab nation's determination to live, to prophesy the future and to be a revolutionary and a poet at one and the same time.¹¹

He calls on poets to commit themselves to the truth when expressing their experiences. He calls likewise on critics to be indulgent in accepting the poets' poetry and not to apply harsh critical standards to them. He asks both groups to look at the poetry of the Palestinian resistance, because it is an outstanding example of truth and endurance, while warning them against the idle chatter and the wilful blindness to facts which the setback has created.¹² He comes to the conclusion that the poems and novels written after the defeat cannot liberate Palestine or return it to its people, but that they can be a bell which draws attention to the danger facing the Arabs, a clear

call to unity, and a rallying-call which will mobilise the masses.¹³

(b) Mahmūd Darwīsh (Palestine)

Darwish maintains that the Arab poet, like every other Arab citizen, was confronted in the setback with something totally sudden and unexpected, and that this explains the stupefying shock undergone by the poet and his continuous screaming in search of a way out.¹⁴ The poetry of the setback, he says, is distinguished by one major feature, which is self-satire (satire on language, on the Arab heritage, on the Arab nation, and on Arab rulers). By composing this satire, he thinks, the poet became a part of the weapon levelled against Arab self-liberation, since he took part in a campaign to sow doubt among the Arabs and spread lethal despair among them.¹⁵

At the same time Darwish hopes that Arab poets and men of letters will become more varied in their subject matter and will not stop at the Palestinian cause without going beyond it:

The Palestinian cause, from its origins until June, must not be the sole axis around which the whole of contemporary Arab literature revolves, since otherwise we shall be afflicted by the most extreme form of short-sightedness, and will consider all political and social developments in the Arab world over more than twenty years as unworthy of being dealt with by the man of letters simply because they have no direct relevance to the cause of Palestine.¹⁶

(c) Muhammad al-Jazā'iri (Iraq)

This critic believes that the Arabs' need for a revolution in literature, culture and life should run side by side with the psychological shock created by the June war in people's minds.¹⁷ He calls on Arab writers and poets to undertake the following tasks: to write about the Palestinian fighters who are resisting Israel from the standpoint of support for the Arab liberation movement; to plunge into military activity in order to see what is

happening within the army camps and to get to know the environment of the battle from within; to form national committees of writers and intellectuals in order to work side by side with other units in the national struggle; and to perform themselves the work and tasks of politicians.¹⁸ He says that the backwardness of writers in answering his call is a condemnation of their ideas, and shows that they do not comprehend the laws of life, and cannot even interact with it.¹⁹

3. Nizār and the defeat

The effect of the defeat upon Nizār was violent and resounding. It was, perhaps, one of the most important events in his life. It caused him great psychological pain, and as a result he felt an anguish which sank into his depths and did not heal over:

The June of which I shall speak was the psychological June whose effects, in my opinion, surpass the effects of the military June. All of the things which were broken in the war can be replaced. Aeroplanes, tanks, radars, and troop-carriers can be replaced. Only the broken spirit cannot be mended or stuck together. Only the heart cannot be patched up.²⁰

At that time Nizār announced that it was the duty of the Arab to rebel against the defeat, to resist Israeli occupation of Arab territory, to turn poetry into an active and effective part of the consciousness of the masses, and to be angry in every case:

After June, the poet only has one steed to ride, which is anger. But where do the bounds of this anger begin, and where do they end? It is very difficult for me to delineate the boundaries of my anger. As long as a single centimetre of my land is occupied and humiliated by Israel, and as long as settlements stand on it, my anger is a sea without shores. Perhaps someone will ask me: Why do I reject this? I answer in turn; Why should I accept? And what should I accept?²¹

Explaining this he also says:

It is not the duty of the poet to turn into a wolf. But when the spear of Israel penetrates this deep into our pride, and when it travels through our tissues and our nerves, and nobody asks, "How far?", then poetry becomes a suicide attack on the Japanese model which destroys earth and heaven together.²²

It is clear, as we have indicated in section I of Chapter Three of this work, that the defeat of the Arabs in the June War was one of the most important factors which directed Nizār toward the writing of political poetry.

Nizār refused to write about the defeat only years later, believing that to delay or postpone writing about it would be to rob the poetical experience of its warmth and its heat.²³ He refused, likewise, to be neutral, since the neutrality of literature, he says, is its death.²⁴ Nizār expresses the effect of the blow of defeat upon his psyche in a long series of poems; Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, al-Mumaththilūn, al-Istijwāb, Hiwār ma'a 'Arabī Adā'a Farasahu, al-Waṣiyya, Qirā'a 'alā Adriḥat al-Majādhīb, Khitāb Shakhsī ilā Shahr Hazirān, Da'wat Iṣṭiyāf li-al-Khāmis min Hazirān, Jarimat Sharaf amām al-Mahākīm al-'Arabiyya, Min Mufakkirat 'Ashiq Dimashqī, al-Khitāb, Bī-Intizār Godot, Luṣūs al-Matāhif, Fath, al-Quds, Manshūrāt Fidā'iyya 'alā Judrān Isrā'il, 'Urs al-Khuyūl al-Filastīniyya, Tariq Wāhid, Ifāda fi Maḥkamat al-Shi'r, Aṭfāl al-Hijāra, al-Ghādībūn, and Duktūrāh Sharaf fi Kimiyā' al-Hajar. In order to facilitate the analysis of these poems we have divided them into three groups corresponding to the sections of this chapter: firstly poems connected with self-criticism, secondly poems which unmask the negative Arab attitude to the defeat, and thirdly poems about the Palestinian cause. In the following pages we shall attempt to offer a complete analysis of these poems.

SELF-CRITICISM

Immediately after the defeat of 1967 Arab poets and intellectuals engaged in self-criticism on a wide scale, quite irrespective of their ideological affinities. The following are Nizār's poems on this subject.

1. Hawāmish 'alā Daftār al-Naksa

In this poem Nizār enumerates the factors which led to the June defeat: the stagnation of inherited Arab thought, the Arab heritage itself, the Arabic language²⁵ (stanza 1) and the waging of war with words rather than weapons (stanzas 5, 6 and 8). He says for example:

If we lose wars, it is not surprising
Because we enter them
With all the oratorical gifts which the Easterner possesses²⁶

Perhaps Nizār is speaking here of the Arab broadcasts before the war which constantly boasted that Israel would be thrown into the sea and that the Jews were nothing but a handful of vagrants who could be disposed of with ease.²⁷ There is also the backwardness of the Arab within himself - in his consciousness, and in his view of himself, life and the world, despite the external changes which have overtaken his economic and social circumstances (stanza 7):

The essentials of the problem
Can be summed up in a single expression
We dressed ourselves in the husk of civilisation
While our soul remained uncivilised²⁸

Nizār adds to all this seven other factors which had a part in the defeat: unpreparedness for war (stanza 9), the isolation of the Arabs and the

outside world's ignorance of them (stanza 13), immersion in the supernatural and irresponsibility (stanza 4), failure to make use of the oil weapon by applying pressure to enemies (stanza 15), the prevalence of internal repression and mob rule (stanza 16), terrorism against the masses by the authorities (stanza 17) and the abandonment of the cause of Arab unity²⁹ (stanza 18). In touching on all these negative factors, he is fully convinced that the defeat was the Arabs' doing, and that they are responsible for it first and last³⁰ (stanza 12).

After this Nizār gives two pictures of the condition of the Arabs immediately after the defeat. The first shows them blaming God for abandoning them and not coming to their aid in adversity³¹ (stanza 10), and the second shows them crying out in the fever of their affliction for vengeance against the various branches of the media and information agencies³² (stanza 11). He is entitled here to make fun of what the Arabs themselves are doing, and he is also entitled to seem sorrowful and angry (stanzas 2, 3 and 4), because the defeat is not a transient matter but a question of life and death.³³

As a result of his despair at his own generation Nizār dreams (stanzas 19 and 20) of a new, avenging generation, devoted to its country and to the Arab nation, which will be able to turn defeat into victory, and he finds his long sought after aim in the Arab children.³⁴ They appear to him as a new, hoped for force, a pure and pious generation at whose hands victory will come soon. His trust in them is almost absolute and final, and with it he regains his trust in life and the future, despite all the hardship and defeatism which has overwhelmed him:

O children,
 Spring rain, ears of wheat of our hopes,
 You are the seeds of fertility in our barren life,
 And you are the generation which will defeat defeat.³⁵

We should note that when this poem was published in 1967 it aroused various reactions, negative and positive.³⁶ It drew the attention of the Arab public to the birth of a great new political poet, Nizār Qabbānī. The poem was, as Nizār said himself, a manifesto for the rejection of defeat.³⁷

There is no doubt that this poem has still, twenty years after it was written, retained its strength. A great part of the negative attitudes of the Arabs of which Nizār speaks still remains in existence, without any change or alteration.

2. Al-Mumaththilūn

This poem is almost a completion of the preceding poem. It falls into two parts:

(a) Criticism of some factors in the defeat

At the head of these is Arab thinking (stanza 1). Nizār sees fit here to accuse it of being superficial, because it is as similar as it could be to a shallow, motionless pond, sanctifying and deepening the defeat, and neither rising up nor rebelling.³⁸

It is as well to point out that the word "thinking" which Nizār repeats here may mean the thoughts which circulate in the minds of the Arab people about their present and their future and their understanding of the circumstances of the defeat. It seems that after the defeat people accepted it as foreordained fate. It is this acceptance itself which Nizār criticises, because it does not lead to any counter-action against the enemy, and because it is a frightening foretoken of the continuation of the defeat

and of failure to rectify it.

Nizār likewise criticises the way in which Arab society treats speech and thought in general (stanza 2). Speech and thought are a crime on the list of forbidden things like fornication and opium. It is clear that he is referring to the heated confrontation between the authorities and the intellectual. The intellectual is a dangerous creature, and the authorities do not wish to listen to anybody else's opinion. They want people to be creatures who are devoid of sensation, ability to respond to events, or creativity. In brief, they want them to be dead without graves. In such an atmosphere non-existence rules, life becomes an intolerable hell, and people breathe in emptiness and become:

Frogs with gouged-out eyes
Who do not revolt or complain
Sing or weep
Or die or live³⁹

He attacks (stanza 3) the lack of justice, the disappearance of human worth, and a life spent in constant fear and permanent sorrow, warning that all of this is a sign of the collapse of society and of mankind, since no life can follow its natural course in the constant shadow of evil, oppression and piracy.⁴⁰

Equally, he attacks the military dictatorship which rules some Arab societies (stanza 4), symbolising them sometimes by the sultan, and sometimes by the helmet which is like God in Heaven.

Dictatorship is a primitive, decadent and backward system, and is the companion of absolute rule over everything; people can do nothing but accept it. But if they do so, life becomes a desolation:

When the breeze of wind
 Comes by decree from the Sultan
 And the grain of wheat which we eat
 Comes by decree from the Sultan
 And the drop of water which we drink
 Comes by decree from the Sultan
 When the nation in its entirety becomes
 Cattle fed in the pen of the Sultan
 The children are throttled in their mother's wombs,
 Women miscarry
 And the sun falls on our squares
 Like a black gallows.⁴¹

Nizār accuses these dictatorships of being the thing which has aborted the hopes of its societies and killed sensation, thought and movement (stanza 5), and demands that they vacate their places to others. After the defeat, nobody has any sanctity left, not even the authorities, whoever they may be. Addressing the symbols of this dictatorship, he says:

When will you go?
 The theatre has collapsed on your heads -
 When will you go?⁴²

He also says:

Bless you!
 At your hands, our borders have become
 Made of paper.
 A thousand thanks!
 At your hands, our country has become
 A woman who is lawful for everybody
 A thousand thanks!⁴³

(b) Portrayal of Arab societies after the War

Nizār makes it clear that the reaction of the Arabs to the defeat was temporary (stanza 6). They grieved for a while, but then returned to their ordinary ways as if the defeat had not taken place. He does no more than to

take a few living scenes from Arab societies which show his ideas; a scene of men gathering to smoke narghiles, play backgammon and look at the moon, and a scene which gathers them around a radio set listening to the Lebanese singer Fayrūz as she sings "We shall return" in order to heal their wounds and to lighten the pressure of the defeat upon them. The poet makes bitter fun of this immersion in non-stop listening to this song without achieving anything real.⁴⁴

Among other scenes which arouse his attention are (stanza 7); a scene of mercenary writers who have learned nothing from the lesson of the defeat, have submitted to serving the powers that be, and have killed their creativity and their ability to think; a scene of morning newspapers with red letters; and a scene of disgraceful sexual pictures which sap people's strength.⁴⁵

After the loss of Arab dignity, Nizār criticises (stanza 8) the Arab practise of using radio broadcasts as a means of sending greetings to scattered Arab families and telling one another their news.⁴⁶ In stanzas 8 and 9 he alludes to the political repression which prevailed before the defeat, to the appearance of the dictators (or the actors) whom he mentioned previously, to people's belief in what is destined for them, and to their submissiveness, humility, and acceptance of the fait accompli:

And we are contented
 Contented with war, and contended with peace,
 Contented with heat, and contented with cold,
 Contented with sterility and contented with offspring,
 With everything in our Preserved Tablet in Heaven
 Contented!⁴⁷

He also says:

The theatre has burned down to its foundation,
 But the actors have not yet died⁴⁸

3. Al-Istijwāb

Al-Istijwāb consists of three scenes which are:

(a) The search for the killer and the accusation

In this scene we become acquainted with the characters of the story (stanza 1); the murdered imam, the man accused of the murder (the pivotal character), and the soldiers of the authorities. They interrogate the suspect while searching his house for the real killer, and direct at him their first and last question, "Who killed the imam?", as he groans beneath their blows.⁴⁹

Suddenly the suspect is brought to something resembling the atmosphere of a trial (reports, tape-recorders, photographers) (stanza 2). He is interrogated. Suspicion hovers over him, and eyes are directed toward him, as though he were the killer. Thus, in the eyes of the political authorities he remains the accused, whether he confesses to being the killer or not. He is a victim of their oppression, and they take pleasure in torturing him. They prove to themselves that they are alive by oppressing weak people like himself. All of his entreaties for mercy will never have an effect on them:

What use is it for me to ask for help
 As long as
 Whether I speak or not
 You are going to beat me,
 As long as, ever since you come to rule my country,
 You have been doing my thinking for me?⁵⁰

(b) Self-defence

Here the accused denies that he is a leftist or a communist, or a

right-winger. He says that he was born in Damascus, the Paradise of the World, and the most beautiful of cities, that he belongs to his people and his city⁵¹ (stanza 3), that he is no-one's filthy agent (stanza 4), that he has not stolen a grain of wheat, nor killed an ant, never entered a police-station for a day, that all the people in his quarter know him, as does the beautiful natural scenery, and that he is on good terms with God; punctilious in performing all his prayers, and in particular the Friday prayer, where he has never missed a Khutba.⁵²

In his defence, the accused dwells upon on the religious dimension in his life (before the defeat), and speaks at a little length in his review of his case. He confesses that he has spent a quarter of a century of his life praying, standing and seated, behind the imam, and repeating his hateful words, of which he remembers:

He says: "O God, obliterate the state of the Jews"
 I say: "O God, obliterate the state of the Jews"
 He says: "O God, scatter them"
 I say: "O God, scatter them"
 He says: "O God, cut off their progeny"
 I say: "O God, cut off their progeny"
 He says: "Drown their tillage and their crops"
 I say: "Drown their tillage and their crops."⁵³

Thus the accused used to revolve in the imam's heaven, not thinking and not asking questions, content with him, his religious thinking, and his sermons adorned with rhetoric and ornamentation.⁵⁴

(c) Confession to the murder

While remembering the past - his relationship with the imam, the defeat and the shock - the accused character tries to find a powerful justification for confessing to the murder of the imam. At this point he recalls how the

Arabs were defeated (stanza 5) and how he himself awoke from a life of ease, idleness and religious observance (his nightmare life before the defeat) to an even more terrifying nightmare. He feels that faith did not strengthen him against the defeat, nor did it strengthen his people and his land. Israel occupied the land, and God did not hear his prayers or the previous prayers of the imam to wipe the Jews out of existence. At that point the accused drew his dagger and killed the imam, or the empty and ineffective dictatorship which led the Arabs to failure. For this reason the accused confesses, with complete frankness and boldness, to the crime, for whose commission he feels no repentance. He is now certain that when he committed it he was representing his whole nation. He knows that he will be executed for his deed, but he accords this no importance, because he has purified the land from evil:

Gentlemen:

With this dagger of mine which you see,
 I stabbed him in the chest and neck.
 Stabbed him in his mind, which was wormeaten like wood.
 I stabbed him in my own name
 And in the name of millions of sheep.

Gentlemen:

I know that what I am accused of
 Is punishable by death.
 But
 I killed, when I killed him,
 All the crickets that sing in the darkness.⁵⁵

It may be noted that Nizār has created some living dramatic characters, of whom the one with the most presence is perhaps the character of the accused and killer. Nizār has drawn his dimensions sharply and made us sympathise with him and feel his torment. We feel sometimes that this character does not move naturally or spontaneously, and this is because Nizār is hiding behind him and inspiring him with his own point of view which maintains that religion is responsible for the defeat. In the personality of the accused Nizār has found a way to propagate his attack upon religion. This is all that he aimed

to do.

4. Hīwār ma'a 'Arabī Adā'a Farasahu

Nizār announces his desire to escape from some of the ancient Arabic literature which no longer has any practical value worth mentioning in the modern era. His attack is unleashed in particular upon the obscene satires of Jarīr (640-728) and al-Farazdaq (641-733), the tearful elegies of al-Khansā' (575-664) upon her two brothers Mu'āwiya and Ṣakhr, the story of the race between the two horses Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' and the wars which followed it in the Jāhiliyya between 'Abs and Dhubyān, the story of 'Antara al-'Absī, the pre-Islamic poet and warrior-hero, and other things of this sort (stanza 1), because he considers that they have no relationship with the defeat, and that the Arab public cannot derive any positive value from them, such as arousal against the occupation, or raising human life to virtue and glory.⁵⁶

In expressing this desire, Nizār reverts to an earlier environment and an earlier time; he goes back to the desert, the first home of the Arabs, and to the pre-Islamic period and the following Islamic centuries which were the environment from which the poets were generated. He stops in that place and at that time (stanzas 1 and 2) and gives vent to his greatest wish:

If the desert could hear me
I would ask it
To stop hatching millions of poets
And to liberate this good nation from the sword of words.⁵⁷

He also says:

Ever since our birth,
We have been crushed by the wheels of words.⁵⁸

Without doubt, these words create the impression that the Arabs are still prisoners of the old literary culture, and that they are incapable, even now, of emerging from this captivity to the horizons of science and new developments.

When he has finished with this, he unleashes his attack upon other groups who have had a great effect in sanctifying the defeat and failing to overcome it. The first of these are the preachers at Friday prayers who sidle up to the authorities and take good care not to enlighten the people (stanza 2), and in fact play their part in misleading them. The second group are those who submerge themselves in the discussion of petty linguistic trivialities (stanza 2) and worship Kufic script and verbal ornamentation.⁵⁹ The third group are other elements in the nation, like the patrons of cafés who kill time with idle amusements (stanza 3) and the lovers of the moon who worship its beauty.⁶⁰ The fourth are the Gulf Arabs who have grown rich from oil and have surrounded themselves with women and external cultural husks (stanza 4). Nizār is particularly harsh with this last group, condemning their behaviour and seeing it as a waste of Arab wealth.⁶¹ Nizār's hope here is to silence these groups or to limit their frivolous activities, since they are distracted by marginal matters which are of no value in confronting the Arab's massive defeat.

Up to this point the poem seems coherent, but suddenly the reader is brought up against a fierce longing on the part of the poet for Palestine (stanza 5). In fact this stanza is almost a separate short poem, since there is nothing to justify its connection with any of the previous stanzas.⁶²

It is worth remarking that the title of the poem, Hiwār ma'a 'Arabi Adā'a Farasahu (conversation with an Arab who has lost his horse) is not really appropriate. The title presupposes at least two characters, who talk

with one another, but we find to our surprise that the poem reveals only one character, which is the character of the poet himself. It is this character which speaks to us directly. In brief, the poem is weak, and its language is close to that of prose.

5. Al-Wasiyya

In this poem there are two pivotal characters, a father and a son, each antithetical to the other.

The father is dying (stanza 1), leaving his son various things of no value (such as a Turkish fez and a box of snuff) in addition to his will. The son immediately rids himself of his father's bequest; he sells his ancient possessions and burns his will, because he realises in advance that it is no use to him.⁶³

The son ponders for a little (Nizār takes on his character) on his father's history, in the hope that he will find something which he can take, something of which he can make use, something which will be a support to him in his contemporary life, or something by means of which he can overcome his defeat or his brokenness (stanza 3), but can find nothing but religious prayers and panegyrics, and other things similar to this. He is amazed, and then cries out:

I search for knowledge which may benefit me
I search for writings which are relevant to this age or relevant to me
And see around me nothing but sand and an Age of Ignorance.⁶⁴

It is clear that the father is a symbol of a generation which represents the prevailing mentality of the past century. Perhaps the most outstanding features of this generation, as defined by the son/Nizār (stanzas 2 and 4)

are listening to old Eastern songs, plunging into Dervish prayer - circles, and a love for parts of the Arab literary heritage like stories of the horseman - poets 'Antara al-'Absī and 'Adī b. Rabī'a (better known as al-Muhalhil or al-Zīr), the ten pre-Islamic Mu'allaqāt, the Alfiyya of Ibn Mālik al-Andalusī (1203-1273), the stories of the Thousand and One Nights which are steeped in fantasy, and the poems of Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī (932-968) in praise of Sayf al-Dawla (915-967).⁶⁵

It is clear that the poet is indicating here that this generation with its vanished mentality - a generation which still exists in Arab society - also had a part in the defeat and in hastening its occurrence, because it continued to lag behind the life and the world which lay outside the boundaries of itself and its country.

This father, or past, devoid of the values of the modern world, and of power to struggle with the enemy, is absolutely rejected by the son/poet (stanza 4). He rejects the whole of his father's heritage: his sexual complexes, and his scanty literary heritage. He now throws this heritage behind him and adopts a new cause which he considers to be a yardstick of his humanity and of his existence; this is the cause of Palestine, and the struggle of its people for a free and noble life:

I burn the picture of my family, I burn my alphabet
 And from Palestine, from its steadfastness
 From the shots in its hills
 From its wheat soaked in tears, from its roses
 I make an alphabet.⁶⁶

It is curious that the remaining stanzas of this poem (5, 6 and 7) form together a separate poem. It is true that Nizār is a revolutionary in all of these stanzas, but this time he revolts against the Caliph (another face of the Sultan in al-Mumaththilūn, or of the imam in al-Istijwāb). In brief, he

is in revolt against some of the manifestations of contemporary Arab political authority, which boasts of its formal adherence to religion as a solution to all the Arab's problems, including the defeat of 1967.

Nizār draws a dark picture of the contemporary Arab Caliph (stanza 5) who is still an extension of the familiar evil Caliph known in earlier centuries of Arab-Islamic culture. For example, the Abbasid epoch knew a major social phenomenon, that of the wide-spread existence of slave-girls and slave-singers, who were treated by their owners in whatever way they pleased.⁶⁷ The contemporary Caliph, the poet considers, is still surrounded by women, and he hastens to satisfy his lusts with them, while neglecting his important national duties and responsibilities.

The poet passes close by the Caliph as he lies in bed with one of his slave-girls, and reminds him of the Holy War. He recites a part of the Qur'ān to him in the hope that he will respond to God's word. But the Caliph pays no attention to him. He is in another world, and striding into another war, with the slave-girl's body:

I read verses from the Qur'ān above his head
 Written in Kufic letters
 About holy war for the sake of God, and the Prophet
 And the Islamic Holy Law
 I say to myself:
 "May the Holy War be blessed in bosoms
 Breasts and soft wrists,
 O Lord Caliph!"⁶⁸

The contemporary Caliph suddenly wakes up to the poet's existence. He thinks that he is a mercenary poet who wishes to praise him in his poetry, and orders him to be given many gifts (stanza 6). The poet spits in his face, after which the Caliph cries out:

"Who are you?
Executioner! cut off his head
And bring me the head on a tray!"⁶⁹

revealing thereby his dictatorial nature and his blood-thirstiness; but
Nizār replies:

O King of the Time, even if you kill me,
It is impossible to kill freedom.⁷⁰

This second poem, appended without any justification to the first poem, has a successful dramatic touch. The two characters (the poet and the Caliph) converse intelligently and move skillfully.⁷¹ It is clear that there is a difference between the styles of these two poems; the first has a narrative style, while the second has a dramatic style.⁷² The common point between them is that the father and the Caliph represent the past; the first represents emptiness and weakness, and the second represents moral and political corruption, while neither of them is fitted to lead the struggle against the enemy.

6 Qirā'a 'alā Adriḥat al-Majādhīb

This is an angry poem, in which the poet sees Arab life as a stunted tree which does not bear fruit or flower. In his view, this life has two branches; an extinct cultural and literary past (stanza 1) (for example, in addition to the works he mentions in Hiwār ma'a 'Arabī Adā'a Farasahu and al-Waṣiyya, the Nūniyya of the pre-Islamic poet 'Amr b. Kulthūm,⁷³ in which he boasts of his prowess) and a political present in which there are no good features, and which makes nobody happy (stanza 6). Nizār contemplates this present a little, and sees small and fragmented Arab states which are incapable of achieving anything positive:

I look like one bewildered at the map of the Arab world;
 In every span a Caliphate has been proclaimed,
 One ruling by God's command
 And a pitched tent.⁷⁴

He makes fun of them, saying that they are a reincarnation of the extinct petty states of Islamic Spain. He predicts their ruin, destruction and disappearance (stanza 7). Nizār places himself in a future period of time and cries out:

I walk, with a strange face, in Granada
 Embracing children
 Trees
 And minarets turned upside down⁷⁵

It is true that Granada was the last Arab outpost in Spain, but here it is a symbol of every modern city which lives in isolation from its surroundings and does not submit to unity with the other Arab cities.

Nizār awakens from his reflections to a concrete truth, which is that the political present in the Arab world is full of negative features, and that the small states are on the verge of falling. All he can do is to condemn this present and refuse to have anything to do with it:

I reject you all
 And close the conversation.⁷⁶

This sterility which permeates Arab life, old and new, impels Nizār to do something - to make an effort at reform (stanza 2), and to restore growth and fertility to this life. The shock was severe when he discovered that he was doomed to failure and that this sterility had sunk so deep into Arab life as to make any reform impossible:

I have carried my trees to your desert
 And the trees have committed suicide
 In their despair,
 I have carried my rains to your drought
 And the rains have failed
 I have planted my poems in your wombs
 — And they have ~~been~~ strangled
 O Womb, which conceives thorns and dust!⁷⁷

The trees and drops of rain are nothing but the thoughts and principles which he disseminates in his poems. They all call for the frozen literary culture to be abandoned⁷⁸ (stanza 3), and likewise supernatural thinking (amulets, Sūfi ceremonies, palm-reading and the zār - ceremony) (stanza 4), and call for the defeat to be faced with a new weapon, power. But nobody listens to him. Backwardness is all-embracing and frightening. His powers collapse slowly before the barriers they encounter:

I have tried to drive a nail into your skins;
 But I have despaired of your skins,
 I have despaired of my fingernails,
 Have despaired of the thickness of the walls⁷⁹

It is not long before the sterility reaches out to Nizār himself and overwhelms him with its might. Nizār becomes a wandering atom within it (stanza 5). When he approaches his beloved to sleep with her, he finds that she is the greatest example of frivolous sterility and slow death:

I could not make love to her as I was used -
 The lines of her body were strange
 Her bed was cold
 And the cold was cold.
 The breast of the one I loved was melancholy lemon⁸⁰

After this we come to understand that this sterility was the atmosphere which prevailed over the Arabs after the defeat, and that the defeat was its main cause:

After June, I lost my passion;
 I fell on the arms of my beloved
 Like a tattered banner.⁸¹

Once again Nizār fixes his gaze upon the present Arab situation, and despair creeps into his soul; he realises that change or reform is impossible. He withdraws from his world, leaving it to collapse little by little. Its fall is imminent (stanza 8) even though it has an unforgettable example before it in the history of the petty kingdoms of Islamic Spain.⁸²

7. Khiṭāb Shakhṣī ilā Shahr Ḥazirān

In this poem the poet commands June, the month of the defeat, to be an occasion for the defeated (the Arabs) to destroy the frozen literary culture which is sown in their minds (proverbs, ancient adages, obsolete words), because they prevent the renewal of the Arab identity.⁸³

In it he announces also the death of God, as was announced by Nietzsche (1844-1900) in the previous century, and says that religion has lost its value. Addressing June, he says:

Fire bullets at the past
 Be the revolver
 And the crime
 After God has died on the gallows
 At the city gate
 Prayers no longer have any worth
 Faith no longer has any worth nor disbelief.⁸⁴

In our belief, the "death of God" means that Nizār has lost his faith in religion because it did not prevent the defeat.

III

EXPOSURE OF THE NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR OF THE ARABS AFTER THE DEFEAT

In order to complete the operation of self-criticism which was begun in Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, Nizār proceeds to expose the negative reaction of the Arabs to the June defeat. His poems on this subject can be divided into two sections, the first being the transformation of the defeat into memories, transient at one time or bitter at others, and the second the exploitation of the defeat itself in order to drug and hypnotise the masses. In the following pages we shall analyse each section separately.

1. The June War - memories

(a) Da'wat Iṣṭiyāf li-al-Khāmis min Ḥazirān

This poem was written on the 5th June, 1972, five years after the 1967 defeat. In it the poet imagines the 5th June as a burdened, sorrowful man who appears to the Arabs for the fifth time but cannot arouse in them any feelings of need to escape from him, or any realisation that he is a warning-bell in their lives (stanza 1). On the contrary they welcome him; they introduce him to the Arab world as a great occasion for celebration, and consecrate him as though he were an important victory or a shining morrow:

We shall meet you at all the airports with bouquets of flowers,
And shall drink rivers of wine in your honour.⁸⁵

Then Nizār calls upon this flabby old man (the month of June), in the name of a society which no longer cares about his defeat, to celebrate it himself in his own special way after he has been met by the people, since he

will find that everything has been made ready for him (stanza 2), and will be able to enjoy sensual pleasures as much as he wishes:

You will enjoy the night, the neon lights
Dancing the "jerk", jazz, blue films
For here
We do not know sadness, or those who are sad.⁸⁶

In fact, in these lines Nizār exposed Arab society after the defeat; the uncaring society which lives a life of enjoyment and pleasant evenings, as though there had been no setback and no victims of the setback, and as though its territories had been liberated and Israel did not exist.

The old man hesitates to accept the invitation which the poet offers him, because he is feeble and exhausted, and is carrying on his back a sack which weighs him down and from which he cannot free himself. What he is carrying on his back is the defeat of 1967. But Nizār promises the old man that he will make him forget his defeat, his pains, and everything which reminds him of the occupied land:

Why do you hesitate?
We shall make you forget Palestine,
Uproot the trees of tears in your eyes,
Abolish the Sūrat al-Rahmān
And al-Fath
And assassinate Jesus.⁸⁷

Nizār is saying that the arrival of the month of June after five years, or ten years, will not change anything in the actual fact which says that the Arabs will not care about their defeat, either today or tomorrow (stanza 3). The Arabs have forgotten the setback of 1967 and it has become nothing more than a memory:

All the major cities from the Nile to the bank of the Euphrates
Have no recollection or memories.
Whoever has travelled in the Sinai desert, we have forgotten him,

And whoever has died, has died.⁸⁸

He comes to the following conclusions; the years have no value, great or small, as far as the Arabs are concerned. The whole matter is in the Arabs' hands; if they want to change anything in their present life, it is up to them to change their negative behaviour toward their resounding defeat.⁸⁹

(b) Jarimat Sharaf amām al-Maḥākīm al-'Arabiyya

This poem is divided into two parts, of which the first is a recollection of the bitter memories of the defeat.

Nizār recalls some memories of the defeat of 1967. The defeat takes place, and the fatherland, which he compares to a virgin maiden whom he calls Laylā al-'Amiriyya (one of the symbols of love in classical Arab poetry) loses her virginity in the war. Time passes and none of the Arabs is interested in pursuing the culprit or arresting him, and in fact all the efforts expended to find out who it was end in failure (stanza 1). As a result, the rape is ascribed to a person unknown:

You have lost, my country, your virginity.
 Nobody was concerned,
 The court found against a person unknown
 And the curtain was lowered.⁹⁰

The poet condemns the scattered modern Arab tribes for failing to defend the virgin victim,⁹¹ and then continues to recall bitter memories.

In particular he pauses on the behaviour of the Arabs, both people and leaderships, during the sweeping Israeli attack of 1967. They were in a pitiable state of military weakness (stanza 2), for the modern Arab Knight (to

whom he alludes by the pre-Islamic poet 'Antara) cared nothing about the fate of his nation, and so sold his horse (the symbol of strength and self-defence) in exchange for trivial things. As for the uncles of the virgin maiden, they were spending their time in Lebanon and Cairo drinking, trading and relaxing.⁹²

The second theme is a portrayal of the present condition of the Arab world. Here Nizār draws attention to the fact that the Arab attitude of indifference is still in existence, even after the rape of the country (Laylā al-'Amiriyya) (stanza 3). Her lover Qays is still behaving as if nothing had happened to her, or as if danger were not staring her in the face.⁹³

Nizār mocks certain ancient tribal concepts, such as those of honour, vengeance and manhood, and announces that they have all fallen. In his view, if the Arabs had really clung to these concepts, they would not have been defeated three times in succession (1948, 1956 and 1967). He accepts that the Arabs were responsible for their defeats:

"Lofty honour is not safe"
 We have lain with the invaders three times
 Have lost our chastity three times,
 Have said farewell to our manhood , with ceremonies and
 military honours.⁹⁴

After this Nizār tries to show us the irresponsible conduct of the Arabs in general toward the defeat, and gives us a scene, which seems almost real, of the conversation which takes place in a café among a group of customers about the forcible seizure of the country. We should note that this conversation does not go into practical details about the rape of the country/Laylā, but only touches on various side-issues which cause more confusion and division among the men⁹⁵ (stanzas 4 and 6). The characters chatter for the sake of chattering; it is perhaps this chattering which drives

Nizār to say that the Arab cities have forgotten their defeat completely:

The sun shines once again;
The memory of the cities is like the memory of whores and seas.⁹⁶

Within the framework of this attitude of carelessness, Nizār criticises the Arab acceptance of the existence of Israel⁹⁷ (stanza 5) and also criticises the disputes between Arabs, Arab military weakness, and Arab inability to respond to Israeli attacks in the South of Lebanon⁹⁸ (stanza 6). He condemns the Arab belief that it is God who will decide how they should behave after the defeat (stanza 7); whether they should make war on the enemy, or stay in their burrows and act like cowards.⁹⁹

As a result of this indifference which is so predominant in Arab society, Nizār suddenly finds himself sinking into it. He has warned his people of the dangers of their behaviour, but no-one has responded to him. Now he punishes himself for this (stanzas 8 and 9), withdraws from his society and from involvement with its problems, and travels to a distant land, taking with him a few beautiful souvenirs of the country he loves.¹⁰⁰

He suddenly realises that he is incapable of performing his duty (stanza 10), in the same way that he did earlier in his poem Qirā'a 'alā Adriḥat al-Majādhīb. Because of this he is content to be a man, devoid of any thought or attitudes:

Dear Public, I am resigning;
The script does not suit me, my clothes are patched and my role is impossible.
The direction is useless, the loudspeakers are useless,
The Poetry is useless and so are al-Khalil's measures.¹⁰¹

We may make two observations on this poem. Firstly, Nizār's comparison

of his ravaged country to a woman whose modesty has been violated by the enemy is not a new one in Arab poetry. Some classical Arab poets have compared conquered cities to women who have lost their virginity. We find the best example of this in the poetry of the Crusades. Secondly, his use of conversation taken from the atmosphere of a popular café shows his skill in approaching Arab life in a way which convinces us of his truthfulness and devotion to his art.

(c) Min Mufakkirat 'Ashiq Dimashqī

In this poem Nizār emphasises his complete loyalty to Damascus, town, culture and history.¹⁰² He complains to it of the Arabs' reluctance to overcome defeat, their addiction to the tragedy caused by the June war, and their submission to and fear of the enemy. He criticises their behaviour over the cause of Palestine, since they were excellent in defending it with empty speeches, but did not do anything practical or sincere to save it from the enemy:

Damascus, treasure of my dreams, my fan
 Shall I complain of the Arabs to you, or to the Arab world?
 The whips of June have made their backs bleed
 And they have grown accustomed to them, and kiss the hand of the
 one who beats them
 They have read books of history and been satisfied
 But when have rifles dwelt in books?
 They have given Palestine coloured dreams to drink
 And have fed her on foolish words and speeches.¹⁰³

After this he expands a little on description of his longing for Palestine and his great alarm that it has fallen into the hands of the enemy, and then complains of some of the illnesses of the Arabs (worship of sex, money and oil, narcissism and tyranny) which represent their lack of concern for Palestine and their common fate:

O Palestine, who will give you a lily,
 Who will restore to you the house which was ruined?
 Turn around and you will find us in our slippers
 Some worshipping sex, and some worshipping gold;
 One man's vision has been blinded by a life of ease
 And everything which he gives goes to vice and prostitutes.
 Another bathes in seas of oil
 Has tired of coarse cloth as a garment, and has put on gold
 brocade.
 Another is narcissistic in his soul,
 And another has drunk the blood of free men.¹⁰⁴

As a result of all of this Arab negativity taken together, Nizār finds himself impelled to disown the Arabs:

If those who have murdered history are my kin
 Over the ages, then I reject the kinship.¹⁰⁵

This disavowal does not rescue him in any way from the defeat; rather it gives him a personal horizon within which he moves in an opposite direction to the defeat.

2. The June War - anesthesia

(a) Al-Khiṭāb

This poem speaks of an unending struggle between the Commander of the Faithful, the head of the existing authority in the Arab world, the police, the striking arm of the authorities and the intellectual, the rebellious hero.

(i) Confrontation between the intellectual and the authorities

The poem begins with a dramatic scene; the rebel laughs in mad mockery at a speech delivered by the Commander of the Faithful, and is then led to an

interrogation room on a charge of transgressing against law and order (stanza 1). There, questions are rained upon him about his grand conspiracy (laughing at the government). He answers these questions by laughing again, because he considers that they are making out a case which has no valid foundation. These are large and dangerous questions in return for a simple laugh:

They asked me,
 While I was in the interrogation room, who had instigated me
 And I laughed
 They asked about the money, and who had financed me
 And I laughed¹⁰⁶

The rebel remains sunk in laughter, and the investigators do not receive any satisfactory answers. They write the answers to their own questions themselves. Their conclusion is that his laughter is an anti-government activity. He makes fun of this conclusion and says:

In my country
 It is possible for man to write against God
 But not against the Government.¹⁰⁷

It is as though he is saying that if a man sins against God, God will forgive him, but the government never forgives sinners.

(ii) The Commander of the Faithful and his speech

The Commander of the Faithful delivers his historic speech, and the rebel finds it shallow and repetitious, comparing it to a popular radio programme in the Arab world, "What the Listeners Want" (stanza 2). The Commander of the Faithful chooses the subject of Palestine, the meeting point of the Arab-Israeli struggle, for his speech. The rebel comments of this choice that it suits the needs of the moment and is useful for drugging the masses. Palestine has become an appropriate occasion for tickling the

emotions of the masses, just like other social and religious occasions such as visiting cemeteries and the celebration of Islamic festivals like 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adhā.¹⁰⁸

While the speech is being delivered the rebel turns to the secret policemen who are scattered among the crowds to observe peoples' whispers and movements. He listens attentively to the speech, and suddenly recalls something which resembles it - the peep-show. He realises then that the Commander of the Faithful, or the leader, is acting, and that his movements and words before the masses are in no way different from the dramatic performances he used to see during Ramaḍān when he was a boy at the peep-show and the Karagöz performances. Then he grieves for Palestine, and feels that the efforts expended on it by the Commander of the Faithful are insincere. He feels that the Commander of the Faithful is himself another Karagöz, amusing the people and absorbing their anger for a time, but not liberating the occupied land.¹⁰⁹ Then the hero loses his faith in everything he sees. His anger at the Commander of the Faithful's theatricals overflows, and he confesses openly that he is against everything which is taking place - the ugliness of the scene, the fraudulence, and the continuous lying.¹¹⁰

(iii) The exposure and confession

The authorities publicly pillory the rebellious hero by presenting him in the media as a traitor and agent of a foreign power who is working against the country (stanza 3). The rebel denies all of these charges, emphasising that he is an ordinary man, no different from the other members of his society, and neither an outsider nor an agent.¹¹¹

He confesses that his inability to endure any more of the authorities' lies and promises to liberate Jerusalem and Palestine is the reason for his

rejection of them and of their leader, the Commander of the Faithful; for at the hands of these authorities words, meanings and slogans have lost their value, and have become a tool for drugging people like him:

And I can no longer digest a single letter
 Of the lies of the Commander of the Faithful;
 Words have become rubber
 And the language of the rulers has become gum and dough.
 They drugged me
 With millions of slogans, and I slept.
 They showed me Jerusalem in a dream,
 But I could not find Jerusalem, or its stones, when I awoke.¹¹²

(iv) Prison, and the hero's end

The natural result of the rebel hero's conduct is prison. The provisions upon which he feeds are endurance (stanza 4). In prison the rebel discovers a rare courage and a unique pride. He neither weakens nor collapses; rather his determination to survive, his true feelings for his country and his people, and his contempt for the Commander of the Faithful and others like him blaze forth:

I was alone.
 Nobody visited me in prison, except
 Mount Carmel, the sea, and the sun of Nazareth
 I was alone
 While the Kings of the East were corpses
 Floating on the waters of memory.¹¹³

(v) Memories of Prison

This is almost a separate poem (stanza 5) which summarises all the previous stanzas, and adds new dimensions to them. In prison the rebel hero recollects a part of his past and his relationship with the Commander of the Faithful. The rebel had been in the habit of going to him to ask him about the fate of the occupied Arab land - will it be liberated? When? How? The

Commander of the Faithful, in his turn, had been in the habit of decorating his chest with medals, getting into his car and heading for the radio station to deliver a speech directed at him and others like him who were asking questions and complaining, in which he summed up his point of view about the June war and heaped promises upon the people of victory over the enemy. When he had finished his speech, he set his secret police upon the rebel and others like him, to exact a dreadful revenge:

Whenever I call out to him,
 "O Commander of the sea and the land, O exalted personage,
 The sword of Israel is at our necks,
 The sword of Israel is at
 The sword of Is....
 He gets into his open-topped car and goes
 To the broad casting station,
 Bribes me with a speech
 And throws me between the teeth of the spies
 And the fangs of the dogs.¹¹⁴

At the end, the hero is living in a complete world of memories. Then the barriers between memory and fact melt away, he loses his mental balance and he goes mad.¹¹⁵

The following four points may be mentioned in connection with this poem. Firstly, like some of Nizār's previous poems, especially al-Waṣīyya, this poem portrays the character of a hero who rejects defeat, its atmosphere, and the hollow methods used by the Arabs to overcome it. In fact the character displays an amazing endurance which reflects the mood of popular opposition, but he falls under continuous blows.

Secondly, in this poem the poet unleashes a major war against the misleading propaganda campaign waged by the Arabs to conceal the facts from their people and to deceive them with resounding speeches which have nothing more than a temporary effect. The poem is saying that this propaganda policy

should have stopped after the June war, since there is no call for it to continue thereafter.

Thirdly, al-Khitāb resembles very closely a successful narrative poem which narrates in a condensed fashion the tragedy of the Arab people in both its aspects; the external, i.e. Israel, and the internal, i.e. their own régimes. In it Nizār successfully employs simple symbols and an even simpler language. If he had omitted the final stanza, the poem would have remained coherent, since there is no need for this last stanza, which is a repetition of all that has been said previously.

Fourthly, the reader sometimes feels that there is only one character in the poem, the character of the rebel against authority. However, if he scrutinises it carefully he sees that it contains two characters, the character of the rebel and Nizār's own character. We are almost convinced that the first is a mask which the poet puts on to mislead, and are almost convinced also that Nizār's voice is the voice of the first character in every stanza, and that the poem expresses his opinion, without equivocation, on every topic he has touched on concerning Arab politics.

(b) Bi-Intizār Godot

This poem consists of:

(i) The introduction

In this Nizār hints at the fact that the Arabs have lagged behind the caravan of progress and world culture (an idea upon which he dwelt in a previous poem, Khubz wa-Hashish wa-Qamar), explaining that ever since 1920 they have been living on the margin of history (stanza 1). They have

withdrawn from the world and are quite satisfied with their painful backwardness - the disappearance of democracy and of social and political freedom, and a superficial way of handling things. Their time is motionless and their days are uniform and unchanging:

Our life is horizontal
Like railway lines
Our days are narrow
Like railway lines.¹¹⁶

Because of the uniformity and discontent of their lives, they have come to expect somebody who will set their society in motion and smash the monotony of their time, since they have despaired of all their leaders, old and new, doing anything useful for them:

Our clocks have stopped
And neither God nor the postman comes to us
Ever since 1920
Up to 1970
We have been sitting, waiting for the face of the auspicious king.
All kings are alike
And the old king
Is like the new king.¹¹⁷

In brief, they are waiting for a saviour and imagining him as a great hero like the ancient saviours who strode into decisive battles in Islamic history,¹¹⁸ like the Prophet Muḥammad at the battle of Badr (624), Khālid b. al-Walīd, the hero of the battle of al-Yarmūk (636) and Saladin, the victor of Ḥiṭṭin (1187).

(ii) Waiting, broadcasts and stupefaction

The people stand in line, waiting for the unknown saviour who is coming from an unknown direction by train (the train indicates speed and surprise, as opposed to monotony), expressing pure and turbulent feelings of love toward

him (stanza 2). While they are waiting, the state radio announces to them:

Pay attention
 Pay attention!
 The train is - perhaps - fifty days late
 The train is - perhaps - fifty years late
 The train is - perhaps - fifty centuries late.¹¹⁹

The broadcast seems to be telling them that the hope for which they are waiting is still far from being realised (at the present stage, at least). The meaning of this is that the state itself is postponing the announcement of salvation, (e.g. the liberation of the land and regaining Arab honour). We note that the broadcast, i.e. Arab propaganda, is still being used as a means of drugging and misleading the masses.

The people comply with the broadcast orders and remain in their places, enduring the torment of waiting (stanza 2). They display an extraordinary capacity for endurance and patience, for they have been trained like animals to do what they are doing. They obey every command which comes to them from the authorities.¹²⁰

(iii) Waiting: stories about the leader

The people await the unknown saviour. They wait without complaint, but the train does not come (stanza 3). Suddenly a story begins to circulate among those waiting that there is someone who has seen the unknown saviour on the television screen, performing strange deeds which are closer to magic than to reality:

We have not seen him
 But those who have seen him, on the small screen
 Swallow glass,
 Walk over fire like Indians
 Bring white rabbits out of his pockets

And turn coal into gold
 Assert that he
 Is one of God's saints, be He exalted
 And that the light of his face dazzles the eyes.¹²¹

Another story circulates about him, that he will spread abroad security and justice, disseminate rest and peace, and be a miracle of miracles and a human pattern of the Lord.¹²²

(iv) Waiting; disbelief in the alleged saviour

While the people are whispering to one another about the alleged unknown saviour, the radio broadcast is heard once again (stanza 4):

Pay attention!
 Pay attention!¹²³

The people are rooted to the spot, waiting eagerly for the coming vision. They believe that what is required of them is that they should prepare themselves to meet him, not realising that the opposite is required.¹²⁴ At this point one of the people, whose role is played by Nizār, realises that it is useless to wait and useless to expect salvation from the official authorities and their agents. Instead, he waits for a new saviour, a new Messiah, Godot (stanza 5), who will perhaps rescue the people from the misery of waiting, humiliation and backwardness.¹²⁵ As for Godot, he represents, in our view, revolt against political corruption, contempt for people's feelings, and impotence.¹²⁶

(c) Lusūs al-Matāhif

This is a short and simple poem in which the poet tackles the way in which, after the defeat, the Arabs took refuge in their ancient glories - the

victories, especially those of Khālid b. al-Walid, and the poetic genius of Abū Tammām, in their search for security:

We steal Khālid's sword
 Steal the diwān of Abū Tammām
 Steal the glory which belongs to them
 And steal their battles.¹²⁷

Clothing oneself in the victories of others, in the poet's view, amounts to theft. It is a compensatory reaction for the feelings of defeat and deficiency, a new drug with which the Arabs have injected themselves. His first and last aim here is to unmask their weakness. Accordingly, the poet calls for previous glories to be kept in their rightful place in ancient history, and for an end to boasting of them. They do not belong to those who take refuge in them, and cannot be a positive factor in their true revival. They are dead, and have no value now:

It is better for us to bury naiveté,
 And to leave history in the refrigerator.¹²⁸

IV

THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE

After the defeat of 1967 the Palestinian cause became a principal pivot of Nizār's poetry. His poetry on this subject can be divided into two parts, that which deals with the Palestinian resistance and that which deals with the Intifāda.

1. The Palestinian resistance

After the June war the Palestinian resistance movement became very active, particularly in the period 1968 - 1970, and offered the Palestinians a great hope for the recovery of the rights which had been taken away from them.¹²⁹ This movement attained an unparalleled popularity in the Arab world as a whole, and the Arabs found in it a kind of "awaited Messiah" after the humiliation of defeat.¹³⁰

The movement was accompanied by an abundant literature which has not yet been fully studied - poetry, short stories, novels and studies - which drew its inspiration from it and spread its fighting spirit among the poets. Arab critics called upon poets in the Arab countries to adopt the Palestinian movement as their own, and accused every poet who deviated from this line of being a trivial poet who had no interest in the rights or fate of his nation.¹³¹ At this period writing about the guerrillas was regarded as a kind of certificate of respectability which the Arab writer took pride in displaying before his readers. Nizār responded to the resistance movement with sympathy, both emotional and intellectual, and supported their justified demands for the realisation of the hopes of the Palestinian people. He speaks on these themes in the following poems.

(a) Fath

Fath is Nizār's first poem on the resistance, written in 1968 when the Palestinian revolution, represented by its largest organisation, Fath, was at its peak. Fath had played a leading role in the rise of the resistance, and had acquired a world-wide fame. Nizār begins his poem by expressing his overwhelming joy at the birth of Fath at a time when the defeat of 1967 was still hovering with its black shadows over the Arabs (stanza 1):

After, and after
 We had despaired of our despair
 Fath came to us
 Like a beautiful rose appearing from a wound,
 Like a spring of cold water watering salt deserts.¹³²

With its birth the Arabs regained some of their lost dignity and felt that they were alive, when before Fath it was as though they were dead. With it, they themselves were reborn:

And suddenly, we revolted against our shrouds, and arose
 And suddenly....
 Like the Lord Jesus, we arose after our death.¹³³

Nizār hints (stanza 2) that his absolute trust in the birth of the guerrillas will not be shaken, despite the pressures of the defeat. He had had an absolute subconscious belief that the night of defeat would not last long, and that a generation of revolutionaries would soon appear. Now his prophecy is coming true, and he says, with all his force:

However late they are, they will come,
 From the alley of Ramallah, or from the Mount of Olives,
 They will come, like manna and quails from Heaven.¹³⁴

These three lines are virtually the essence of the second stanza; the rest of the stanza is little more than unjustified chatter. He hints at his immense admiration for Fath when he compares it to the coast of security, the midnight sun, the tremor of spring and a beautiful horse¹³⁵ (stanza 3). He says that the Arab's passionate reception of it as a revolutionary movement is in no way less than Mecca's passionate reception of the Prophet:

O Fath, we are Mecca
 Awaiting the Messenger.¹³⁶

Nizār complains (stanza 4) of Israel's continued occupation of Arab land, and of the Arabs' blind groping for a solution, their belief that God will come to their rescue, the way they fling themselves into the arms of the U.N., begging for help and support for their cause, and the way they quote their favourite proverb, "Patience is the key to deliverance".¹³⁷ He rejects these tortuous Arab methods of dealing with the defeat, saying that the bullets of the revolution are the only appropriate solution:

Bullets alone,
Not patience, are the key to deliverance.¹³⁸

As a result of his belief in revolution as a final solution, we see him addressing God (stanza 5) in the following words:

O Lord
We refuse, after today, to be good
For the good, all of them, are half-dead.¹³⁹

Here Arab goodness means foolishness, silent acceptance of Israeli oppression, and friendliness to the enemy. The poet clearly rejects this goodness, and looks upon his enemies with loathing, seeing them as a living example of savagery and tyranny. In fact he seems to be learning a lesson from them, for his own goodness and the goodness of his people are the secret of their failure and their defeat, while the savagery of his enemies is the secret of their success and their victory. For this reason he asks God to permit him to become a killer, so that he may attain victory:

They stole our country
They killed our children
So allow us, O Lord -
To be killers.¹⁴⁰

His rejection of goodness entails the rejection of some of the negative aspects of the life of Arab society (belief in the supernatural, the chewing of qāt, and lassitude), saying that anger is the distinguishing feature of this era, and that everything in Arab life must become angry in order to save itself from final destruction and loss of identity:

O minds, be angry
 For the age in which we live is an age of *angry men*
 O hatred, be burning
 So that we do not all become a herd of refugees.¹⁴¹

(b) Manshūrāt Fidā'iyya 'alā Judrān Isrā'īl

In this poem there are two main images. The first of these is the image of the Jews and Israel. This is the dark side of the poem, in which the poet warns Israel against absolute and final reliance upon the victory it has achieved in the June war (stanzas 2 and 8), because it will turn in the end into an utter failure.¹⁴² Israel, he says, has defeated the Arab armies, but has not defeated people's feelings by conquering them:

You have defeated armies, but have not defeated feelings;
 You have cut down trees at the top,
 But the roots remain.¹⁴³

This is a more or less true statement, for the desire of the Arab masses to fall upon Israel after the war was intense and unparalleled.

In stanza 4, Nizār presents the attempt to burn down the al-Aqṣā mosque in 1969 as an example of Israeli crimes, charging Israel with the responsibility.¹⁴⁴ However he does not mention any other Israeli actions against the Palestinian population. He prophesies an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories (stanza 17):

You will leave the summits of Jawlān
 You will leave the bank of the Jordan
 You will leave, by force of arms.¹⁴⁵

He goes further than this to prophesy their destruction at the end of their struggle with the Arabs¹⁴⁶ (stanzas 3, 7, 9 and 18), and recalls the story of Moses, his exodus from Egypt, and his wanderings in the desert of Sinai, using this as evidence to support his prophecies. He says that history will repeat itself and that the Jews will leave not only Egypt but Palestine also, and will wander once again in the Sinai desert.¹⁴⁷

The second, brighter aspect of the poem is the portrayal of the Palestinians. Here the poet emphasises that Palestine is Arab land (stanza 1) and that the Palestinians are not newcomers, but have been rooted there since the beginning of time.

Nizār speaks with a collective voice, the voice of the Palestinians, and says:

For this is our country
 In it we existed from the dawn of life
 In it we played, loved
 And wrote poetry.¹⁴⁸

He says that this ancient historical relationship between Palestine and its people gives them the right to remain there, whatever sacrifices this may cost them.¹⁴⁹ He hints (stanza 5) at the birth of guerrillas among the Palestinians, scattered here and there, and their acceptance of the mission of struggle, no matter where they are. The sons of the disaster of 1948 and the setback of 1967 are those who formed the core of the resistance to Israel (stanza 16). They have seen the crimes of Israel against their people and have risen against them, having no other choice.¹⁵⁰

As a result, the world's view of them has changed (stanzas 11, 22, and 25), and they have become a decisive factor in the Arab-Israeli struggle.¹⁵¹

Now they are preparing for their own battle and entering into it without consulting anyone else. They have become their own masters for the first time, and have become able to do what they want:

We are those who draw the map
 And draw the slopes and the hills
 We are those who begin the trial
 And lay down the reward and the punishment.¹⁵²

This growing belief in the guerrillas impels Nizār to adopt three other new positions; he minimises the June defeat (stanza 15), considering it to be nothing but a transient bad memory,¹⁵³ he attacks the role of America (stanza 12) in limiting the power of the guerrillas,¹⁵⁴ and he regards it as inevitable that the Arabs will triumph over Israel¹⁵⁵ (stanzas 6, 13, 14 and 18), despite the fact that the struggle will last over a long period:

We will meet when sunset comes,
 We will meet again in Tel Aviv -
 "Victory from God and a near conquest."¹⁵⁶

In our view, Nizār is contradicting himself in these positions, since the defeat, according to the poems analysed in Part I, is not transitory, while to ignore America's role in the Arab-Israeli struggle would be to misunderstand the nature of the struggle, since America is the artery which supplies Israel with its life blood. Without question, an absolute belief in victory over Israel is a hollow belief, which does not really differ from the Arab propaganda before the war, which deluged the public with daily promises of victory over Israel in a few hours.¹⁵⁷ More than twenty years have now gone by since 1967, and the Arabs have not achieved anything positive in their struggle with Israel: on the contrary, they have made one concession after another.

In his portrayal of the Palestinians, Nizār hints at the most important actions of the guerrillas; revolt against reactionary Arab régimes as a prelude to striking Israel¹⁵⁸ (stanza 20), and striking at Israeli targets overseas (stanzas 10 and 11), such as hijacking Israeli aircraft. He justifies these hijackings by saying that Israel has a past which is full of bloody crimes against the Palestinians and the Arabs.¹⁵⁹ This is the same justification upon which Nizār relies when he asks God to turn him into a killer in the fifth stanza of Fath. However, while we recognise the truth of these Israeli crimes, we believe that hijacking aircraft is an anti-human activity, whatever its reasons and motives, and an activity which displays a barbarism and criminality which no civilised human being can accept.

Nizār expects the resistance movement to grow stronger and become more powerful than before as the Arabs join forces with it. When this happens, the Arabs and the guerrillas will rise up together to put an end to Israel (stanza 19). Even now, the Arabs are waiting for the decisive moment to fall upon it:

Ninety million Arabs
 Are angry over the horizon.
 Beware of their vengeance
 When they appear from the magic bottle.¹⁶⁰

He does not doubt for a single moment that the birth of certain revolutionary régimes, like that of Ja'far al-Numayri in Sudan and that of Mu'ammār al-Qadhdhāfi in Libya, both of which came to power in 1969, will give a new revolutionary thrust to the resistance (stanzas 23 and 24).¹⁶¹ He imagines that Israel has become besieged by the hatred and vast crimes of the Arabs (stanza 26)¹⁶², but this fantasy, like his previous claims of imminent victory, is merely a type of boasting which is without any logic, of the kind which played a part, before the defeat, in nourishing hostile feelings towards the Arabs in Europe and in gaining sympathy for Israel. Finally, he imagines that this seige will result in the entry of the Arabs and the guerrillas into Palestine and its liberation¹⁶³ (stanza 27).

This poem suffers from four fatal blemishes. The first is its length, which is not an advantage but, on the contrary, a crippling defect, since it bores and exhausts the reader. These are things which every poet must avoid, because the object of poetry is to give pleasure, to arouse the reader's admiration, and to dispel his boredom, not the reverse. Secondly, it is lacking in continuity. The poem consists of twenty-eight stanzas which come one after another without, in our view, any continuity at all. For example, we find the Palestinians portrayed in stanzas 1, 5, 10, 11, 21, 22 and 25, while we find a portrayal of Israel in stanzas 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 17 and 28. This dispersion confuses reader and critic alike. The third fault is repetition; Nizār repeats certain ideas in a manner which weighs down his poem with additional stanzas for which there is no need. For example, he repeats his prophecy of Israel's doom in stanzas 3, 7, 9 and 18, and repeats his faith in the inevitability of victory over Israel in stanzas 6, 13, 14 and 18. He is not content to repeat ideas, but repeats the very same words in an irritating manner. Thus he repeats the word bāqūn (remaining), in stanzas 1, 3, 10 and 18, twenty-two times. The fourth is his occasional failure to construct an image, for example in his prophecy of the downfall of the Jews:

Death is waiting for you
 In every passing face, or glance, or waist
 Death is lying hidden for you
 In the comb of every woman
 And every lock of hair.¹⁶⁴

The imagery here is illogical and weak. Death cannot lie in a waist, or a comb, or lock of hair. It can only lie in other things, such as a bomb or a bullet.

(c) 'Irs al-Khuyūl al-Filastīniyya. This is a sad, emotional poem, commemorating certain resistance leaders, Kamāl Nāṣir, Kamāl 'Adwān,

Muhammad Yūsuf al-Najjār Abū Yūsuf, and his wife Umm Yūsuf, who were killed in their homes in Beirut in April 1973 by an Israeli assassination squad. The poem consists of the following sections:

(i) The Introduction

Here Nizār compares the three leaders to beautiful horses, intending by this to show their strength, their bravery and their nobility (stanza 1), and says that, despite these qualities, they are not immortal. They love, suffer, and die martyr's deaths, nobly and silently, in a way which marks them out from other men, wherever they may be.¹⁶⁵

(ii) The wedding scene

Nizār turns to the martyred man and wife, Muhammad Yūsuf al-Najjār and his wife Umm Yūsuf, and turns death into life and the funeral into a celebration (stanza 2), portraying them both as at a wedding party. Tonight Umm Yūsuf is a glittering bride being conducted to her husband. The guests make the atmosphere sparkle with movement and dancing and join with the bride and groom in their great joy and in their struggle on behalf of Palestine:

Umm Yūsuf, you were the bride
And we were your witnesses, on the night you were conducted to the
most beautiful of young men.

We threw sweetmeats and roses at you
We danced the sword and shield dance before you
We sat you on the bridegroom's horse;
Any your wedding dress touched
The trees of Gaza and Nazareth.¹⁶⁶

Next Nizār transports us to another side of the wedding; now Palestine is the mother, the four martyrs are her children, and she is not merely marrying Muhammad Yūsuf al-Najjār to Umm Yūsuf, but is marrying all the

others also (stanza 3) to complete her happiness. When the wedding party is over, the four begin to contemplate their loftiest goal in life, their distant freedom (the sun) and their occupied homeland (Jericho):

All the horses were stretching their long necks to the sun
 And running, running,
 Running toward the fields of Jericho
 And playing in her orchards of silk brocade¹⁶⁷

This wedding scene alludes to an important point in Islamic thinking about life and death, the immortality of martyrs. This is referred to by several verses in the Qur'ān, of which the most famous is perhaps, "Think not of those who are slain in the way of God as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision."¹⁶⁸

(iii) Conversation with Kamāl Nāṣir

The poet stops, taking on the role of one of the wedding guests, to talk to Kamāl Nāṣir, who was not merely a political leader but also a great national poet, one of the most prominent of the Palestinian poets who belonged to the generation of Fadwā Ṭūqān. The majority of his poems revolved around his love for his country or sought to reveal the methods used by the Zionists to Judaize it.¹⁶⁹ In Nizār's conversation with Kamāl Nāṣir there is some mention of the ferocity used by Israel against the Palestinians at all levels, political, military and cultural (stanza 4). Israel is not merely waging war against the existence of the Palestinians, but is also waging war on all the manifestations of this existence, whatever they may be. Thus Israel is a tool of suppression, and is always ready to fight the Palestinian poet because he represents a danger to it:

My friend Kamāl,
 Friend of notebooks, ink and new words -
 Were all the bullets they fired at you
 Meant to kill a poem?
 Were all the bullet holes they left in your lips
 Meant to kill a poem?¹⁷⁰

In Nizār's vision, the true poet who defends his nation's rights does not differ from the fighter who defends the same rights. Kamāl Nāṣir, the martyr - poet, is one of these fighter-poets. His death does not mean that he is no longer, but rather means that he still exists, because his poetry of struggle remains for the generations who will read it and will derive from it determination to resist their enemies.¹⁷¹

(iv) Criticism of Arab negligence

Nizār draws a comparison (stanza 5) between two forms of the Arab struggle - a true form, that of the four martyrs who died silently in Verdun Street, and a fraudulent form, the form of the Arab politicians and ideologues who fought with verbal vituperations. He hints, in a cryptic manner, that the latter make Arab sufferings greater. To them he adds the spies of Israel in Lebanon who prepared the way for the assassination of the four guerillas, mocking the Arab weakness which allowed them to move freely in an Arab country without being arrested or watched.¹⁷²

To sum up, the poem is beautiful in its images, especially the image of the wedding. It also reveals a great feeling of pride, challenge, disdain of trivialties and sincere love for the Palestinian Arab people.

(d) Tariq Wāḥid

In this poem we meet with a Palestinian character who gives his views to

the public. This character belongs to the generation who witnessed the defeat of 1967, and the defeat has become a grief which allows him no rest. When he cannot find any means of rescue from this situation he begins to set himself straight and to amend his errors. Through his resulting social and political awareness he has realised that deliverance from defeat will only come about through adopting the path of revolution, not through silence and withdrawing from life (stanza 1). Thus the character parts with all his wealth and material possessions to obtain a rifle, the tool with which to fight against the enemy. He also sacrifices his linguistic and cultural heritage for the same end:

The language we used when we studied
 The books from which we read
 The poems which we memorised
 Are not worth a dirham
 Compared to a rifle.¹⁷³

When the character obtains a rifle, his thoughts go back to the past, to his life in Palestine before the catastrophe of 1948. He remembers his childhood, the alleys of his neighbourhood, his books, his pictures, and his warm house (stanza 2). Suddenly he awakens from his memories to the bitter reality of dispersion and misery, and realises that he has spent twenty years in search of his country and that nobody will give that country back to him. Now he is convinced that it is he who is responsible for his country, and no-one else, and that the duty of defending this country falls upon him himself.¹⁷⁴ As soon as he affirms his total belief in revolution and struggle as a final solution to his problem of homelessness and loss of country (stanza 3) he decides to join those who are fighting for a noble life or a noble death:

I want to live or die like men;
 I want to grow in its soil like an olive or a field of oranges,
 Or a scented flower.¹⁷⁵

When the character's dream is realised and he joins the revolutionary fighters, the old memories disappear (stanza 4), his self-pity disappears, and he is filled with a feeling of strength and endurance in the face of danger, whatever it may be:

The will of the fates does not turn me back;
I am he who changes the fates.¹⁷⁶

The character now examines himself closely; he has for a long time been waiting for justice from the United Nations and the world community, but justice has not been realised. Then he examines his life, and sees that he is surrounded on every side by political deals. His feelings of revolt and rejection redouble:

There is only one road to Palestine
Which leads through the barrel of a rifle.¹⁷⁷

After this he calls on all revolutionaries in every part of the world to follow the path of armed struggle, since this is the best way, while every other way is a waste of time and effort.¹⁷⁸

(e) Ifāda fi Mahkamat al-Shi'r

The first part of this poem has been mentioned previously in Chapter Three, section III, within the framework of Nizār's interest in revolutionising Arab poetry. We shall now return to the second part of this poem in order to illustrate Nizār's attitude to the guerillas.

In the introduction to this part of the poem Nizār criticises the Arab

leaders, comparing them to actors who laugh at their peoples. Outwardly they assume heroic roles which show the nobility of their objectives, but in reality they talk but do not act.¹⁷⁹ He mocks three types of modern Arab authority:

The first are those who call for Arab unity and try to put this into practice but fail, so that their homeland remains as it is, split up into small states. The second are those who call for Marxism and equality between all classes of society, but fail to satisfy the poor. The third are those who claim descent from the Prophet and who should follow in his footsteps in waging the Holy War and defending the Muslims, but in fact do not do so:

Supporters of Arab unity, while the country is splintered
 Every piece of its flesh split into pieces?
 Marxists, while the masses are miserable!
 Why is the hunger of the poor unsatisfied?
 Descendants of Quraysh! If Quraysh had ever seen them,
 The desert would call for help against their sands!¹⁸⁰

To these three models Nizār adds the Arab Gulf states (or oil régimes) which pour out wealth on sex, but do nothing serious to save Palestine. He is so harsh to them that he says that the oil whose blessings they enjoy is nothing but a curse which has robbed them of the ability to respond to others' pleas for help, just as it has robbed them of their praiseworthy characteristics:

O Palestine, you are still thirsty,
 While the desert sleeps in the possession of oil,
 The cloaks are all of silk
 And the nights are cheap and given to lust,
 O Palestine, do not call upon them,
 For the living and the dead are equal
 Oil has killed the qualities which they have,
 For wealth may kill the wealthy.¹⁸¹

In this way Nizār becomes convinced that the Arab political régimes are the dark side of the whole of Arab life. He feels an immense joy when the

Palestinian revolution gushes forth from the heart of this life, like a white flower or green ears of wheat. It is a pure revolution which has not been defiled by the plottings of the régimes or by their partisan activities.¹⁸² It is a gift, growth and fertility in the whole of Arab life. It is the one absolute means of resisting internal Arab backwardness and external Israeli aggression. It is a source of liberation and light, and its birth is the birth of the free man himself and of genuine, noble values:

Fidā' looks down on us like a sun
 What would we be without Fidā' ?
 From the wounds of the fighter, we are born
 And from the wound is born pride.¹⁸³

Thus the Palestinian revolution is an important historical turning point in the life of the Arabs, and with it Nizār feels that he is living in a real atmosphere of self-reliance and certain coming victory. The revolutionary guerillas are the prophets of this time and it is they who have freed the Arabs a little from the humiliation which overwhelmed them after the defeat:

Before them? there was no "before";
 History begins from the day they came
 They descended over our land as prophets
 After the prophets died among us;
 They rescued our honour on the day they appeared
 And our black faces lit up.¹⁸⁴

(f) al-Quds

In this poem Nizār suffers from a persistent sadness caused by the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the Israelis in 1967 and the seizure of its holy places by Israeli troops. Jerusalem becomes, for him, a symbol of Muslim-Christian brotherhood, since it contains the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the al-Aqṣā mosque and the Dome of the Rock.¹⁸⁵

In this poem we read that the Israeli occupation has transformed its nature, so that it has become a sad city, swathed in blackness. It is as though its people had left it for ever, and the occupation is the only thing left in it. This is the black fate which weighs upon its breast, so that movement and flight are impossible. Islam and Christianity are in danger, and there is no call to prayer in its mosques, no ringing of bells in its churches, and no toys for the children on Christmas Eve.¹⁸⁶ From this the poet goes on to direct a series of rapid and urgent questions to Jerusalem:

Who will halt the aggression
 Against you,
 O pearl of religions?
 Who will wash the blood from the stones of the walls?
 Who will rescue the Gospel?
 Who will rescue the Qur'ān?
 Who will rescue Christ from those who killed Christ?
 Who will rescue mankind?¹⁸⁷

Although he does not answer these questions, and despite this flood of blackness, the poet offers Jerusalem the good news that the occupation will soon come to an end and that life and fertility will return to it:

Tomorrow, tomorrow, the lemon trees will blossom,
 And the green ears of corn and the branches will rejoice,
 Eyes will laugh
 And the departed doves will return
 To the pure roofs.¹⁸⁸

Perhaps Nizār's optimism was caused by the birth and growth of the resistance movement. In general the poem is beautiful and simple, and will remain living for generations.

2. The Intifāda

The Palestinian Intifāda which began in December 1987 may be regarded

as a direct reaction to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip in 1967. It forms the third link in the Palestinian struggle (the first link being the Palestinian revolt of 1936-1939, and the second the resistance movement of 1968-1982) although it differs from the earlier phases in its methods and its weapons.

The Intifāda emphasised certain major facts - the Palestinian people's rejection of Israel's occupation and its expansionist policy, the return of popular Arab confidence in the Palestinian struggle, a willingness to provide every form of material and moral support, and the importance of the Palestinian cause in the international arena.¹⁸⁹

The Intifāda moved the emotions of Arab poets, regardless of their intellectual and ideological leanings, to sympathy and support for its just and legitimate struggle against Israel.¹⁹⁰ Nizār was one of the first poets to respond to this movement, whose influence upon him was overwhelming, and he proclaimed that he was with it and for it in deed and word. Thus, for example, he says:

The children of the stones cancelled the leave of all the Arab poets, and forced them to put on camouflage battledress and go to the front line immediately. I myself interrupted my holiday in Switzerland and joined their ranks. I had no other choice. I had to be with them or be against poetry.¹⁹¹

The Intifāda impelled him to write three consecutive poems, Atfāl al-Hijāra (written on 18.12.1987), al-Ghādibūn (written on 21.01.1988), and Duktūrāh Sharaf fi Kimiyā' al-Hajar (written on 10.03.1988). All of them were published in many newspapers and journals in the Arab world. After this Nizār gathered them together in a new book entitled Thulāthiyyat Atfāl al-Hijāra, published by the Nizār Qabbānī Publishing House in Beirut in March 1988. An analysis of these poems will be offered in the

following pages.

(a) Aṭfāl al-Hijāra

In this poem Nizār makes a general comparison between the "children of the stones" in the occupied territories and the Arab men in the Arab homeland. As a result of this comparison he finds that there is a great difference between the two. The children are fighting a life-and-death battle for their existence, and are capable of sacrifice and generosity, giving their lives and achieving victory at a time of despondency and disillusionment:

They dazzled the world
With nothing in their hands but stones;
They shed light like lamps and came like good news.¹⁹²

As for the Arab men, their life lies on the margin of the Intifāda. They live without any national goal and without any comprehensive vision of their society. All they are looking for is a quick profit which will answer quick and immediate needs. They are self-centred egoists, isolated from their age, their circumstances and the danger which is staring them in the eyes, the danger of Israel, and of the obliteration of their identity and their existence at the hands of Israel. Thus the Arab is standing, according to Nizār, at the parting of many ways; he is looking for business, or a new million, or a fourth wife, or a lofty palace, or an ancient vengeance, or a position of authority.¹⁹³

After this comparison, the poet predicts the victory of the "children of the stones", a victory which will be total and decisive, however long the tyranny lasts. He also predicts that the Arab man, the representative of the present generation, will disappear if he does not throw in his lot with the fate of his nation, and seek the path of collective salvation:

Alas, O generation of treacheries
 O generation of deals,
 O generation of rubbish
 O generation of pimping
 You will be swept away, however long history delays,
 By the children of the stones.¹⁹⁴

(b) al-Ghādibūn

This is a medium - length poem which can be divided into three sections. Nizār begins the first section by drawing another comparison which is a continuation of the comparison in the previous poem - a comparison between the children of Gaza, the new fighters, and Nizār himself, a symbol of defeated Arab manhood. Here Nizār extols the heroism of these young schoolboys (especially their courage and bravery when facing Israeli troops) their belief in their rights, and their ability to transform their simple possessions and their accustomed toys into battlefield weapons. When faced with his immense admiration for them, the poet can only offer them his support, and ask them to explain how it is that they can do what they are doing, because he can scarcely believe that a young schoolboy can face a ruthless and heavily armed enemy on his own:

Teach us how stones become,
 In the hands of children, precious diamonds,
 How a child's bicycle becomes a mine
 And a strip of silk becomes an ambush
 How a baby's bottle, when they
 Arrest it, becomes a knife.¹⁹⁵

In the second section of the poem Nizār directs his criticism against the Arab personality in general. He criticises irresponsibility, the avoidance of confrontation with the enemy, lack of direction, inability to discover, analyse and plan, hiding in holes, cowardice, fear and lack of self-esteem.¹⁹⁶ His criticism reaches such a degree that he announces that he is dissociating himself almost totally from the contemporary Arab personality:

Schoolchildren of Gaza, do not return
 To our writings ... and do not read us
 We are your fathers, but do not be like us
 We are your idols, but do not worship us.
 We take political qāt, repression.
 And build graveyards and prisons.¹⁹⁷

In fact, this self-criticism is here nothing but a reflection of the self-criticism directed at the Arabs as a whole, which was begun by Nizār after the Arab defeat in the June War and which we find in Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, especially in the words:

For we are disappointed;
 We are as trivial as a melon rinds
 We are full of holes
 Full of holes,
 Full of holes like old shoes.¹⁹⁸

In the third section the poet hails the struggle of the young schoolboys, seeing it as a sign of goodness, health and fertility and comparing it to the transformation of derelict land into a land full of wild roses, a proof of nature's delight with it. It is notable that the poet's acclamation of this struggle contains certain requests with which he hopes the schoolboys will comply. These are that they should continue with their fierce revolt, have trust in themselves, and have no fear of what he calls "the Jewish period".¹⁹⁹ In the course of this acclamation Nizār also expresses his total adoption of "the Revolution of the Stones", now that the Arab political mind has failed to break the stagnation from which the Arab world is suffering:

Madmen of Gaza - a thousand greetings
 To the madmen, if they liberate us!
 The age of political sense has departed
 Long ago, so teach us madness.²⁰⁰

(c) Duktūrāh Sharaf fi Kimiyā' al-Hajar

This is the longest of these three poems. It is in the form of a song, and is divided into two main sections. In the first section Nizār draws a lively picture of the new, renewed Arab heroism^{embodied} in the Palestinian child, the symbol of the new Arab struggle. The picture is simple, indeed the last word in simplicity. Its sole foundation is a child who understands that he has fallen under Israeli occupation and realises that this occupation has become a barbaric hell in which life is impossible. Thus he turns to resisting his enemy with his sole weapon, stones. Perhaps the most outstanding characteristics of this new fighter are endurance, stubbornness, and an ability to endure and to resist. He is no mythical hero, but a child of flesh and blood whom nothing can oppose:

He throws a stone,
Or two,
Cuts the serpent of Israel in half,
Chews the flesh of tanks
And comes to us . . .
Without hands.²⁰¹

This, then, is the child-hero, who strikes his enemies in depth, defeats them, wounds them, and triumphs, but loses a part of his flesh. He loses his body, or part of it, but despite this loss he wins another victory. The dream of the child fighter grows greater, and the homeland is embodied in his mind as an accomplished fact, to which he clings and which he defends:

In moments
Haifa appears,
Jaffa appears
Gaza comes in the waves of the sea
Jerusalem shines
Like a minaret between two lips.²⁰²

This heroic child is not satisfied, in the poet's view, with simply

inflicting damage on his enemy, but also turns his attention to the present Arab era, the "era of assassins", as the poet calls it, or the "era of the People of the Cave", which is witnessing an infinite division at all levels. The child-hero's revolt against his time is an overwhelming one, and Nizār takes pleasure in comparing the child-hero to Alexander, the greatest conqueror of antiquity.²⁰³

In fact, the child-hero's revolt against his Arab time is a revolt against acquiescence, against the situation of no war and no peace, against defeat and submission, against repeated downfall, and against crushing despair. The hand which throws the stone is the hope which shines in the darkness of this era. While nothing is moving in the rest of the world, this hand is moving, and saying, "Human beings exist here on this land; they exist after Zionism and Israel had almost succeeded in obliterating their image". The stone and the hand, therefore, are a cry against tyranny and barbarism, and the child is a being without equal.

In time the victories of the child-hero will bear fruit, and life will offer him more victories. His movement will bring life to everything around him. The olive-trees will turn green, and the udders of the flocks will fill with milk. In return, he offers his life as a sacrifice for his country. This sacrifice seems to be a response to the tenderness of life toward him.²⁰⁴ His death will not be in vain, but is a condition for the continuation of his cause as something burning and living. His death is his birth. It is an embodiment and epitome of life. His death liberates others from fear, and makes of them fighters like himself. For this reason he does not die, but lives through others taking on his role:

Maryam cries out, "My son!"
And takes him in her arms.
A child falls.

In moments
 Thousands of boys are born
 The Gazan moon is eclipsed
 In moments
 A moon rises from Baysān.²⁰⁵

When this child-hero is killed, or martyred, Israeli repression weighs heavily on the people, and everyone feels as though he is in a huge prison called "occupation", freedom becomes an immense dream which transcends the generally accepted, the accustomed and the used-up; a rebellious and raging dream:

A country enters the dungeon,
 A country is born in two eyes
 He shakes the sand from his shoes
 And enters the kingdom of water
 He opens another horizon,
 Creates another time,
 Writes a new text,
 Breaks the memory of the desert.²⁰⁶

It may be noted that Nizār repeats at the end of this section the image of the heroic child-fighter and delineates his features once more - endurance and self-sacrifice in the face of the Zionists and in embracing the dream of victory, liberation and the defeat and destruction of the enemy:

He throws the stone of revolution
 Until the last
 Of the Fascists of the age falls
 He throws
 He throws
 He throws
 Until he wrenches out the Star of David
 With his hands
 And throws it into the sea.²⁰⁷

The second section of the poem is a section of questions asked by others about the child-hero after the amazement he has aroused in their minds: who is he, what is his nature, what is his secret? These questions come from many different groups, such as journalists, men of religion, politicians, the

persecuted, and nature itself. The questions are to do with the "magic" which the child-prophet has brought about in the universe, the change which he has bestowed upon all things²⁰⁸ and his unique ability to create a radical and comprehensive upheaval in the reigning climate of silence and defeat. These groups hail his arrival as an unusual event with which life can start and continue:

Who is this person coming
 From the pains of the candle
 And from the books of the monks?
 Who is this boy
 In whose eyes begin
 The beginnings of universes?
 Who is
 This boy sowing
 The wheat of revolution
 In every place?²⁰⁹

Two points remain to be added to the above. Firstly, all the poems are internally coherent, and we can hardly find any looseness of structure in any of them. In general they are clothed in a glowing air of absolute optimism in the victory of justice in Palestine, and the victory of the Palestinians, despite the violence of the oppressors. This optimism draws us to remark that Nizār has not lost his belief in the Arab personality, despite his severe criticism of it. Secondly, Nizār's concentration on the Palestinian children and his prophecy of their coming victories implies a concentration on the new generation throughout the Arab world, this new generation in which Nizār sees a rare heroism which did not exist in his own generation. We may observe that Nizār's faith in this generation (the children) goes back to 1948, since immediately after this disaster Nizār wrote the poem Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg, in whose opening lines he made it clear that he was writing for young Arabs, the generation upon which he pinned his hopes for the defeat of Israel. His faith in Arab children, the symbol of the future, was renewed, as we have noted above, in Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, when he turned to

the dream of the birth of a victorious pioneer generation which would revolt against defeat.

V

COMMENT

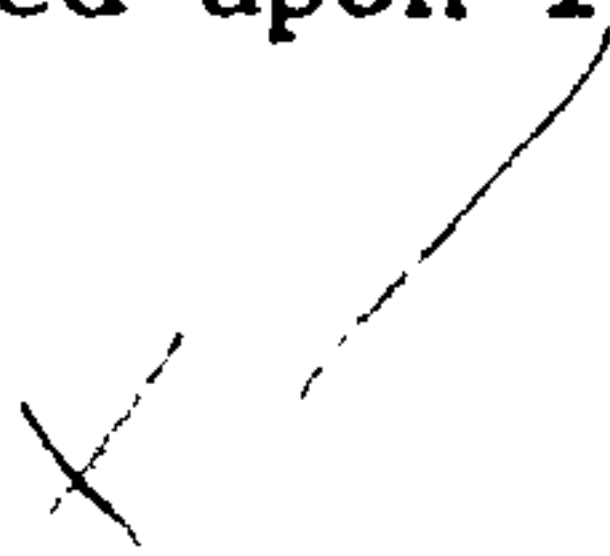
Self-criticism was a natural phenomenon in the climate after the defeat of 1967, a climate of decline and collapse, and of attempts to stand up again.²¹⁰ A large number of Arab poets and writers embarked upon an operation of self-criticism, impelled sometimes by a revolutionary spirit which tried to transcend the past and to discover the future.²¹¹ However, this criticism remained weak and tenuous, being based on the repetition of generalisations and worn-out clichés and exhorting the Arabs to adopt the scientific method and an intellectual approach in dealing with problems, whatever they might be.²¹²

Certainly, the self-criticism of this period was like a savage tidal wave from which nobody escaped. Nizār himself was a part of this wave. Because of his great sensitivity he could not remain silent about his people's mistakes, and he proceeded to identify the negative aspects of Arab behaviour and to cry out with utter sincerity that the ills of the Arabs lay within themselves and that their misfortunes were not the doing of their enemy so much as their own doing.

No doubt the Arab reader was astonished or outraged by Nizār's accusations, because he was not accustomed to hearing such things and because he liked to hear poetry which made him feel that he was the strongest and the best, even if he had been defeated. For this reason he regarded the self-

criticism which Nizār began to proclaim as an attack on the Arabs or a recitation of their shortcomings, and no Arab was prepared to accept this from him, particularly immediately after the defeat.

Though Nizār directs his criticism against outdated Arab thinking, supernatural beliefs, and political corruption, it is certain that he has not touched on all the factors which contributed to the defeat, and that his criticism is only partial. No doubt this partial criticism reflects contemporary Arab thinking, but he should have seen the defeat in a comprehensive fashion, and not have dealt with only one part of the events which ensued upon it while leaving other parts out of account.



NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. See Anthony Nutting, Nasser, London 1972, p.417, and Mordechai Nisan, Israel and the Territories: a study in control 1967-1977, Tel Aviv, p. ix.
2. Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council 1967, Security Council official Records: 22nd year. Resolution 233, 1967, pp. 2-4, June, 1967.
3. Taysir al-Nābulusī, Al-Ihtilāl al-Isrā'īlī li-al-Arādī al-'Arabiyya; Dirāsa li-Wāqī' al-İhtilāl al-Isrā'īlī fi Daw' al-Qānūn al-Duwalī al-'Amm, Beirut 1981, p.29.
4. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
5. Cecil Ḥawrānī, "Lahzat al-Musāraha", in Yehoshaphat Harkabi, Tayyārāt fi al-Siyāsa Wa-āl-Ijtimā' al-'Arabī ba'd Ḥazirān 1967, Tel Aviv, n.d., pp.36-37.
6. Perhaps the essay of Adonis, "Bayān al-Khāmis min Ḥazirān" is the most eloquent expression of the shock which afflicted the Arabs in general. He begins as follows:

Who am I? Do I know myself? Other people have entered the age of electricity, the machine, the electron and the atom. They reach the moon. They open a new page in the Book of Human Genesis. I have travelled a little. I have learnt a little. I possess riches like the sea, and I am now placing my hand on a land in which gold flows like rivers. I have tried to emerge from my agricultural primitiveness to a world of industry and machinery. I have tried to enter the world of thought. But am I really using a car, or am I using a steel horse?... The person putting these questions is the Arab man living today, in this second half of the twentieth century. With these questions (is it possible to ask many other questions), I am trying to reconsider myself, this man, before trying to reconsider Arab society. The question is not so much that this life should change (that is, society and its foundations), as that the Arab man should change. From here alone begins the importance of science, technology, and the changing of Arab life.

See Adonis, "Bayān al-Khāmis min Ḥazirān", al-Ādāb, Beirut, nos. 7-8, year 15, July and August 1967, p. 5.

7. See al-Sayyid Yāsīn, al-Shakhsiyya al-'Arabiyya bayn Sūrat al-Dhāt wa-Mafhūm al-Akhar, Beirut 1981, p.4; and Nadīm al-Bayṭār, Min al-Naksa ilā al-Thawra, Beirut 1981, p.8.
8. Ṣādiq Jalāl al-'Azm, al-Naqd al-Dhātī ba'd al-Ḥazīma, Beirut 1967, pp. 17-18, p.38., p.41, pp. 54-55.
9. 'Umar al-Khatīb, al-Waṭan al-'Arabī wa-A'wām al-Ḥazīma, Amman 1979, pp.111-112.
10. 'Abd al-Ghaffār Makkāwī, "al-Qasā'id", al-Ādāb, Beirut, no.8, year 17, August 1969, p. 59.
11. Ibid., p.14, p. 59.
12. Ibid., p.14.

13. Ibid., p.14.
14. Mahmūd Darwish, "Muqābala Adabiyya ma'a Mahmūd Darwish," al-Adāb, Beirut, no.9, year 18, September 1970, p.3.
15. Ibid., p.3.
16. Mahmūd Darwish, "Anqidhūnā min hādhā al-Hubb al-Qāsi", al-Adāb, Beirut, no. 8, year 17, August 1969, p.6
17. Muhammad al-Jazā'iri, "Adabunā wa-Muhimmātuhu al-Jadida", al-Adāb, Beirut, no. 7, year 16, July 1968, p.12.
18. Ibid., p. 13.
19. Ibid., p. 79.
20. Nizār Qabbāni, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, p.210.
21. Ibid., pp. 220-221.
22. Ibid., p.234.
23. Ibid., pp. 212-213.
24. Ibid., p.239.
25. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1985, Vol.3, p.71.
26. Ibid., p.75.
27. al-Sayyid Yāsīn, "al-Fikr al-'Arabi fi Muwājahat al-Hazīma", al-Kātib, Cairo, no. 136, July 1972, pp. 27-28.
28. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol. 3, p.77.
29. Ibid., pp. 74-94.
30. Ibid., p.82.
31. Ibid., p.80.
32. Ibid., p.81.
33. Ibid., p.72-74.
34. Ibid., p.95-98.
35. Ibid., p.98.
36. The poem was published in al-Adāb, Beirut, nos. 7 and 8, year 15, July and August 1967, pp.2-3. These issues were confiscated in some Arab countries and burnt in others. For details see; Nizār Qabbāni, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, pp. 236-241.
37. Ibid., p.211.

38. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol. 3, p.101.
39. Ibid., p.104.
40. Ibid., pp.105-106.
41. Ibid., pp.108-109.
42. Ibid., p.110.
43. Ibid., p.111.
44. Ibid., pp.112-113.
45. Ibid., pp.114-115.
46. Ibid., pp.116-117.
47. Ibid., p.119.
48. Ibid., p.120.
49. Ibid., pp.123-124.
50. Ibid., p.126.
51. Ibid., pp.127-128.
52. Ibid., p.129-130.
53. Ibid., p.131.
54. Ibid., pp.132-133.
55. Ibid., pp.134-135.
56. Ibid., pp.217-219.
57. Ibid., p.217.
58. Ibid., p.220.
59. Ibid., pp.221-222.
60. Ibid., p.223.
61. Ibid., pp.224-225.
62. Ibid., p.226.
63. Ibid., p.249.
64. Ibid., p.251.
65. Ibid., p.250,252.
66. Ibid., p.252.
67. See Shawqī Dayf, al-Fann wa-Madhāhibuh fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi, Cairo

1967, pp. 100-109. See also Mājida Makhlūf, "al-Harim fi al-Qusūr al-'Uthmāniyya", al-Manhal, Riyadh, no.466, Vol.50, October and November 1988, pp.166-171.

68. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, pp. 253-254.
69. Ibid., p.256.
70. Ibid., p.256.
71. Ibid., p.257.
72. Ibid., p.257-258.
73. Ibid., pp.303-304.
74. Ibid., p.310.
75. Ibid., p.311.
76. Ibid., p.303.
77. Ibid., p.305.
78. Ibid., p.306.
79. Ibid., p.308.
80. Ibid., p.309.
81. Ibid., p.309.
82. Ibid., p.312.
83. Ibid., p.341.
84. Ibid., p.342.
85. Ibid., p.209.
86. Ibid., p.210.
87. Ibid., p.212.
88. Ibid., p.213.
89. Ibid., p.214.
90. Ibid., p.229.
91. Ibid., p.229.
92. Ibid., p.230.
93. Ibid., p.231.
94. Ibid., p.231.
95. Ibid., pp.232-233 and pp.235-237.

96. Ibid., p.232.
97. Ibid., p.234.
98. Ibid., pp.235-236.
99. Ibid., p.237.
100. Ibid., pp.238-239.
101. Ibid., p.240.
102. Ibid., p.417-419.
103. Ibid., p.421.
104. Ibid., pp.422-423.
105. Ibid., p.423.
106. Ibid., p.262.
107. Ibid., p.264.
108. Ibid., p.265.
109. Ibid., pp.266-267.
110. Ibid., p.267.
111. Ibid., pp.268-269.
112. Ibid., p.271.
113. Ibid., p.273.
114. Ibid., pp.276-277.
115. Ibid., p.278.
116. Ibid., p.283.
117. Ibid., p.284.
118. Ibid., p.281.
119. Ibid., p.285.
120. Ibid., pp.286-287.
121. Ibid., p.288.
122. Ibid., p.289.
123. Ibid., p.291.
124. Ibid., pp.292-293.

125. Ibid., p.294-296.
126. It is clear that Nizār makes use in the construction of his poem of Samuel Beckett's play Waiting for Godot, and equally clear that the character of Godot in Nizār's poem is close to that found in Beckett. See Maḥmūd al-Samra, Mutamarridūn; Udabā' wa-Fannānūn, Beirut, 1982, p.36.
127. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.333.
128. Ibid., p.333.
129. Hishām Sharābī, al-Muqāwama-al-Filastīniyya fi Wajh Isrā'il wa-Amrikā, Beirut 1970, p.211.
130. John Laffin, Fedayeen: the Arab-Israeli Dilemma, New York 1973, p.25.
131. See Muhammad al-Jazā'irī, op. cit., p. 12. See also Mutā' Safadī, "al-Thawra al-Fidā'iyya wa-al-Thawra al-Naqdiyya", al-Ādāb, Beirut, no.3, year 17, March 1979, pp.5-6.
132. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol. 3, p.140.
133. Ibid., p.140.
134. Ibid., p.142.
135. Ibid., p.143.
136. Ibid., p.144.
137. Ibid., pp.145-146.
138. Ibid., p.146.
139. Ibid., p.147.
140. Ibid., p.147.
141. Ibid., p.148.
142. Ibid., p.169,172.
143. Ibid., p.176.
144. Ibid., p.171.
145. Ibid., p.185.
146. Ibid., p.170, p.175, p.177, p.186.
147. Ibid., p.170.
148. Ibid., p.167.
149. Ibid., p.168.
150. Ibid., p.184.
151. Ibid., p.191, p.192. & pp. 194-195.

152. Ibid., p.192.
153. Ibid., p.183.
154. Ibid., p.181.
155. Ibid., p.174, p.182, p.183.
156. Ibid., p.183.
157. See Nadīm al-Bayṭār, op. cit., p. 8 and see also Ahmad 'Abbās Sālih, "al-Thawra al-'Arābiyya wa-al-Fikr al-'Arabi", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.3, year 17, March 1969, p.2.
158. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p,190.
159. Ibid., pp.178-180.
160. Ibid., p.189.
161. Ibid., pp.192-193.
162. Ibid., p.196.
163. Ibid., pp.197-198.
164. Ibid., p.175.
165. Ibid., p.201.
166. Ibid., p.202.
167. Ibid., p.203.
168. Qur'ān, Surāt Al 'Imrān, verse 169.
169. Ya'qūb al-'Awdāt, Min A'lām al-Fikr wa-al-Adab fi Filastīn, Amman 1976, pp.361-362.
170. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.204.
171. Ibid., p.205.
172. Ibid., p.206.
173. Ibid., p.327.
174. Ibid., p.328.
175. Ibid., p.329.
176. Ibid., p.329
177. Ibid., p.330.
178. Ibid., p.330
179. Ibid., p.403.

180. Ibid., p.404.
181. Ibid., p.405.
182. Ibid., p.410.
183. Ibid., p.410.
184. Ibid., p.411. These are also two poems which resemble Ifāda fī Maḥkamat al-Shi'r, in which Nizār repeats his criticism of the Arabs and his call for struggle against Israel. These are Ilā al-Jundi al-'Arabi al-Majhūl, Ibid., pp.319-324, and Ta'rif Ghayr Klāsiki li-al-Waṭan, Ibid., pp.335-338.
185. Ibid., p.161.
186. Ibid., p.162.
187. Ibid., p.163.
188. Ibid., p.164.
189. See Nāji 'Allūsh, "Arba'ūn 'Aman min al-Iḥtilāl, Arba'ūn 'Aman min al-Nidāl", al-Waḥda, Rabat, no.44, year4, May 1988, pp.22-24.
190. It is difficult to enumerate the poems written by Arab poets on the Intifāda in various Arab newspapers and journals. However, if they were collected together they would form an enormous collection. Without doubt, they need a special study.
191. Nizār Qabbāni, Thulāthiyyat Aṭfāl al-Ḥijāra, Beirut 1988, p.15.
192. Ibid., p.19.
193. Ibid., pp.20-22.
194. Ibid., p.23.
195. Ibid., p.28.
196. Ibid., pp.30-32.
197. Ibid., p.33.
198. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.97.
199. Nizār Qabbāni, Thulāthiyyat Aṭfāl al-Ḥijāra, pp.36-38.
200. Ibid., p.40.
201. Ibid., p.43.
202. Ibid., p.44.
203. Ibid., p.46.
204. Ibid., p.47.

205. Ibid., pp.48-49.

206. Ibid., pp.49-50.

207. Ibid., p.54.

208. Ibid., pp.56-58.

209. Ibid., p.61.

210. 'Abd al-Mun'im Talima, "Qara'tu al-'Adad al-Mādi min al-Adāb", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.3, year 18, March 1970, p.14.

211. Among these writers is, for example, Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī (Egypt) who says:

What is the significance of this crushing defeat with which we were afflicted in the Six-Day War in June 1967? Is not its full, deep significance that we, the Arabs, are still full of grave errors and radical faults... and that it is our duty now, all of us, to embark upon a process of frank self-criticism, the like of which our nation has never seen before in all its history?

See Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī, Qadiyyat al-Shi'r al-Jadīd, Cairo 1971, p.527.

212. Ṣādiq Jalāl al-'Azm, op. cit., p.7.

CHAPTER SIXTHE WAR OF OCTOBER 1973

This chapter deals with the poems composed by Nizār on the October War of 1973 and the events which followed it, such as the recognition by Egypt of the State of Israel, and the signing of the Camp David agreements.

Part I of this chapter begins with a short introduction dealing with the October War: its development, its results, its evaluation by scholars, and its effect upon Arab writers, including Nizār Qabbāni himself.

Part II discusses the poems written about Syria in which Nizār shouts with joy and affirms his loyalty to his country and his people, and feels that he is his own master, after having been almost destroyed by the defeat of 1967.

Part III discusses the poems written about Egypt in which he condemns the failure of the Arabs to support Egypt and Syria in this war, and Arab attempts to surrender to Israel.

Finally part IV is a general commentary upon the poems analysed, which restricts itself to a limited number of points.

I

INTRODUCTION1. The October War: its course and development

(a) The disillusion caused by the defeat of 1967, and the breaking of the stalemate.

The defeat of June 1967 had a destructive effect upon the Arabs, especially upon intellectuals, leaders and politicians. The Syrian writer Muhyī al-Dīn Ṣubḥī has described it as a "mortal blow to the existence of the Arabs who hovered thereafter on the brink of destruction."¹ What caused the Arabs particular pain at that time was the fact that they saw the aggressive and victorious Israel enjoying American military and financial support, while their lands were occupied and they could do nothing to confront the escalating violence against them.²

After the defeat of 1967, Egypt, Syria and Jordan suffered, over a span of six years, a terrible period of stagnation and instability, of which the main stages were: the war of attrition and the appearance of the Palestinian resistance (1967-1970), the state of "no peace and no war" (1970-1973), and the continuing occupation by Israel of the lands overrun in 1967.³ The first and last dream of the Arabs was to evict Israel from these lands, and as a result they looked eagerly to the moment when they would be able to wipe away the national shame which had attached itself to them.⁴

Accordingly, the Egyptian and Syrian leadership coordinated plans to launch an attack upon the Israeli enemy in the territories which had been occupied in the 1967 onslaught. On Saturday 6 October 1973 (10 Ramadān 1393⁵) orders were given to Egyptian and Syrian forces on the Suez Canal and Jawlān fronts to open hostilities.⁶ The objectives of this attack, defined by President Sadat in his letter of October 5 to Lt. General Aḥmad Ismā'il 'Alī, the Minister of Defence and Commander in Chief of the Egyptian armed forces, were to break the military stalemate on the Canal front, to inflict

maximum losses upon enemy manpower, weaponry and supplies, and to liberate the occupied territories in stages by military means.⁷

(b) The war on the two fronts, and the events which followed it

(i) The Egyptian front

In the first days of the battle (7-8 October) Egyptian forces stormed the Suez Canal, crossed it under cover of an aerial bombardment, shattered the famous Barlev line, liberated a narrow strip of territory to the east of the Canal to a depth of 10-15 km, and succeeded in halting and destroying Israeli counter-attacks.⁸

At dawn on 15 October a new development began on the Egyptian front. Israel launched a powerful attack on the west bank of the Suez Canal, exploiting a gap in the Egyptian defences between the second and third armies. This was followed on the 17th by the crossing of an Israeli armoured brigade in the Deversoir region.⁹ Despite the limited strategic importance of this Israeli achievement, its moral effects upon Israel and its allies were enormous. It seemed as though the Egyptians were on the brink of a fourth defeat. There was a possibility, however, if not a great one, that this achievement would turn into a disaster for Israel, if the Egyptian forces were successful in closing this gap in their defences.¹⁰

On 20 October 1973, in the main command centre (centre 10), President Sadat felt that developments were moving in the favour of Israel and that Egyptian forces West of the Canal were in danger of collapse, and immediately decided to abandon hostilities.¹¹

(ii) The Syrian front

The situation on the Syrian front in the first three days of the war was of the utmost importance. The Syrian tanks had swept like a torrent through the Jawlān heights from East to West on three main axes. As a result the Northern Israeli Command hastened to evacuate women and children from the settlements located to the East of Lake Tiberias and the Jordan Valley.¹²

In fact, the intensity and ferocity of the Syrian attack came as a shock to the Israelis, who had not imagined that the Syrians would launch an attack along the whole length of the line of confrontation with five complete divisions containing about 1,000 tanks.¹³ With the fall of the Israeli observation post on the summit of Mt. Hermon on the first day of the battle Syria closed the eye with which Israel had been able to overlook Damascus.¹⁴

Israel launched a counter-attack against the Syrian forces on the Jawlān front on the fourth day of the war (9 October), and thus recovered part of its military prestige.¹⁵ The Israeli air force had a great effect in changing the nature of the battles, and Israeli fighter planes were able to inflict immense losses upon the Syrian tanks, forcing them to reduce their pace. They also directed fierce strikes against the Sam-2 and Sam-3 missile bases, inflicting crushing losses upon them, and struck supply and provision convoys moving on the Jawlān-Damascus road, thus hindering the effectiveness of the Syrian attack and reducing its impetus.¹⁶

Before long the Syrian tide was gradually turned back, and the Syrian armoured and mechanised brigades began to fall back in all sectors on the Eastern front, finally falling back on their fortified positions behind the 1967 cease-fire lines.¹⁷

On 11 October it became clear to Israel that it would not be able to

achieve any further advance on the Syrian front, especially after the arrival of Iraqi supporting forces and their effective entry into the battle at the side of the Syrians.¹⁸ On the 13th it became the first objective of Israel to hold out, not to advance, in the face of the Syrian-Iraqi forces, and to transfer the centre of its activities to the Suez and Sinai fronts.¹⁹

(iii) The end of the war

After sixteen days of fighting, on the 22 October, the Security Council issued its historical Resolution no.338 which laid down three inter-related conditions, which were: a cease-fire within twelve hours of the issuing of the resolution, with each side remaining in its positions; the putting into effect of resolution 242, which had been issued in November 1967, in all its provisions; and the beginning of negotiations between the parties concerned.²⁰ Israel, however, did not heed this resolution, and its forces raced ahead to expand the patch of land which it had occupied in Deversoir.

Thereupon the Security Council hastened to issue resolutions no.339 and 340 (23 and 24 October) to strengthen the cease-fire and to demand that Israel withdraw its forces to the positions it had been occupying on the 22 October. The two conflicting sides accepted the Security Council resolutions, and the cease-fire came into effect.²¹

After this the two sides began a new stage in their relationship in order to solve the dispute between them, the diplomatic stage. The most notable features were the Geneva conference of 21 December 1973, in which the Arabs and Israel sat together for the first time since 1948 at one negotiating table, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem on 19 November 1977, the signing of the Camp David agreements on 17 September 1978 by Sadat, Begin and Carter, and the signing of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in Washington on 26 March

1979.22

(c) The results

As some scholars see it, there was no victorious side and no defeated side in the October War. Hāla Su'ūdī, a lecturer in political science at Cairo University, says:

From one point of view there was no decisive victory for either side in the October War. Neither side was satisfied with the current military situation after the cease-fire. Despite the fact that Egyptian forces remained to the East of the Suez Canal, the Egyptian third army was surrounded on three sides, and the town of Suez was cut off from the rest of Egypt. As for Israel, which had been able to carry out the counter-crossing and had occupied a large pocket on the West bank of the Canal, it had become clear to it that tactical victory might turn into a strategic trap in which the forces in this pocket, surrounded in its turn on three sides, could themselves be destroyed. These possibilities gave rise to fears among the Israelis, although they pretended the opposite. As for the Syrian front, the Israeli forces had managed to regain their supremacy in all the territories of the Jawlān slope lying to the West of the 1967 cease-fire line, and had also been successful in opening a gap in the Syrian defensive lines in the Northern sector on the main road leading to Damascus.²³

The Egyptian scholar Jamāl Ḥamdān considers that Israel emerged from the October War with a semi-defeat, and that Syria and Egypt emerged with a semi-victory.²⁴ Muḥyī al-Dīn Ṣubḥī declares that this war turned into nothing but a transient campaign in contemporary Arab history, for a number of reasons connected with Arab-Arab disagreements, of which the most important were the Sinai agreement, the civil war in Lebanon, the Palestinian embroilment in the Lebanese Civil War, the Syrian intervention in Lebanon, and mutual suspicions among the Arabs over peace efforts.²⁵

Despite the fact that the Arabs realised very well that they had not won

this war, a considerable number of Arab intellectuals and politicians believe that it was the beginning of a new stage in the Arab-Israeli struggle and the Arab fight against Zionist expansionism²⁶, and that it achieved the following results:

(i) Proof of Arab military ability

What they mean by this is that the Arab military machine reached a high level in its confrontation with the Israeli army. For the first time in many years the Arab soldier was carrying his weapon and fighting a real battle.

Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal says:

We used to claim that we could teach our young men. Now we must be humble and learn from our young men. They fought for the first time in their lives, and fought in a new epoch, different from previous epochs, and fought with weapons which had not been tested before on the battlefield on such a wide scale. They proved that they were able to handle life, the times and their weapons. I do not mean weapons of battle alone, but all the weapons of cultural survival.²⁷

(ii) The strengthening of Arab solidarity

Solidarity was evident in the practical unity between the Egyptian and Syrian fronts from the first moment of the war until its end.²⁸ It was evident also in the help given by a number of Arab countries to Egypt and Syria by various means, including Arab fighting forces from Iraq, Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia on the fronts in Egypt and Syria, and a ban on the export of oil to Europe.²⁹

2. The October War and Arab literature

Arab writers in Egypt, Syria and the other Arab countries were inspired

by the atmosphere of the October War and the bravery and heroism of the Arab soldiers to write literary works which brimmed over with optimism and emotion and extolled freedom and dignity.³⁰ In the following pages we shall review the views of some Arab critics and writers on the influence of the October War upon Arabic literature in general, especially poetry, and what sort of poetry should be written in its aftermath.

(a) Hannā Mīna and Najāh al-'Aṭṭār (Syria)

These two writers, the first a famous novelist and the second now a minister of culture, consider that Arab literature should derive its basic creative material from the October War, so that writers can form from it what may be described as the "Literature of the October War".³¹ Successful war literature, they say, depends on certain conditions, the most important of which are: truthfulness in portrayal, ability to reach the readers, richness in the treatment of ideas, and the avoidance of photographic vision and a unitary view of things which can only distinguish two colours, black and white.³²

(b) Yūsuf al-Sibā'i (Egypt)

Yūsuf al-Sibā'i says that the Arab writer in time of war has two tasks which he can best perform: to illuminate the Arab citizen's consciousness with creative thought so that he can drive out the darkness which has crept into his soul since the defeat of 1967, and to support the internal front by, for example, giving help to the families of the soldiers, refuting rumours, and taking part together with the information media in making people aware of the circumstances and dangers of the war.³³

Al-Sibā'i seems to be confident that Arab writers will play their full

role:

I do not think writers and intellectuals need anyone to remind them of their role in these moments in which everything in the Arab nation is boiling with hope and life. They are the nation's thinking mind and its sharpened intellect. They perform their intellectual role in war and peace alike.³⁴

(c) Luwīs 'Awad (Egypt)

Luwīs 'Awad calls for regular visits by writers and poets to the battlefronts so that they can live with the Egyptian fighters and experience the battle. He explains what he means by 'living with' in the following words:

I mean that living with the living experience will bring the writer closer to reality in a single stage or in several stages. Perhaps this will inspire him with ideas or explode concepts and feelings in him which are unknown to those who satisfy themselves with transmission and handing down narratives. Perhaps a poet, a dramatist or a short-story writer may have described feelings, events or characters with better creative power and imagination than those who have come to know them from direct experience. But there is no doubt that living experience helps some talents to assemble the raw materials of life.³⁵

(d) Adonis ('Alī Aḥmad Sa'id Asbar) (Lebanon)

Adonis maintains that mechanical involvement with the October War will produce, not great literature, but a debased literature, whether it reflects defeat or victory.³⁶

(e) 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī (Iraq)

al-Bayyātī draws a connection between propaganda in war and the Arab writer. He considers that the writer can make this propaganda successful by

defending the just Arab cause, understanding the mentality of the Israelis, and making war against their anti-Arab lies.³⁷

3. The October War and Nizār

Nizār considered the defeat of 1967 to be a black chapter in Arab history (see Chapter Five). After the defeat he aspired in the depths of his soul to a more beautiful and juster world, to a world in which the Arabs would regain their rights and would stand bravely against Israeli arrogance.

When the October War broke out Nizār felt a childlike joy flooding over him, and it seemed to him that ^{the} sorrows and torments of the June War would recede from the horizons of his life for ever. He felt that he was being reborn:

I feel that the 6th October War is the moment of our true birth, which has made us feel that we are still capable of fertilising and siring.³⁸

He continues:

Today, the 6th October, my life begins. Only today have I visited the Registry Office and shown them the certificate of my birth, which took place in a mobile military hospital, which moved around with the fighters in Sinai and Jawlān; they recognised me as a lawful child, and entered me in the state register of births.³⁹

He compares his feelings after the defeat of 1967 with his feelings after the October War:

I take my Arab passport out of my desk drawer and kiss it ... on the third page I see my photograph for the first time. I see my true features ... before the 6th October my picture was distorted, clouded and ugly. My eyes were sunken, and bats and spiders had made their nests there. My mouth was a gulf full of the wreckage of sunken ships. The distinguishing feature on my passport was that I bore on my brow a deep scar called the Fifth of June.⁴⁰

As a result of these positive feelings diffused in his spirit by the October War, he announced that he was ready to make visits to European countries with the aim of giving poetry-readings about the war and gathering contributions for the wounded and the families of martyrs.⁴¹

Nizār's joy at the war was short-lived. After the cease-fire on all fronts on 22.10.1973 he felt a pain shaking him through and through. He realised that Israel was still on Arab land and that the danger it posed was still clear to see. His feelings turned from joy to anger, and personal pain, once again.⁴²

Nizār considered the October War to be a great poetic and literary event, and called upon Arab writers, despite the different groupings to which they belonged, to make it the subject-matter for poetry, short stories and novels, and to treat it carefully and seriously as soon as possible:

O Arab writers, all the trains are travelling to the front. All the trains are travelling to glory. Assemble quickly, for if you do not write today you will not write at all.⁴³

He drew attention to the fact that the poet who observes events from afar is finished. He criticised some Arab writers who "pretend to be ill, offer medical reports and observe the battle from the tenth floor and from air-conditioned flats furnished with moquette".⁴⁴

Nizār expresses the effect of the October War upon himself and his conflicting feelings toward it in six poems; Tarsi' bi-al-Dhahab 'alā Sayf Dimashqī, Mulāhazāt fi Zaman al-Hubb wa-al-Harb, Hiwār Thawri ma'a Tāhā Husayn, Marsūm bi-Iqālat Khālid b. al-Walīd, Mawāwil

Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād, and Anā yā Ṣadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī.

These poems may be divided into two groups: poems connected with love and attachment, to a beloved woman and to the homeland, and poems exposing the shortcomings of the Arabs in the war. We shall now undertake a detailed analysis of all these poems.

II

LOVE AND ATTACHMENT TO A BELOVED WOMAN AND TO THE HOMELAND

1. Tarṣī' bi-al-Dhahab 'alā Sayf Dimashqī

This is a long poem which may be divided into the following sections:

(a) Erotic prelude/campsite theme/memories:

In this section Nizār reveals a love-relationship between himself and a Damascene woman, his cousin Maysūn. Here Nizār adopts the role of the Umayyad poet who has no concern but love and women.⁴⁵ There are two motives for this: firstly Nizār's feeling that he belongs to Damascus and that Damascus still represents the ancient past, when it was the capital of the Umayyads; and secondly his feeling that the Umayyad period is the period which witnessed the birth of two new currents in Arabic poetry; the overt love-poem (ghazal) and the 'Udhri ghazal.

The ancient Umayyad history seems to Nizār now (the moment when he senses victory in the October War), to be reborn and to be giving birth to a new Umayyad ghazal-poet, Nizār Qabbānī, who may be added to the list of earlier poets, like 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'a (644-721) and Jamīl (d.c. 701).

When Nizār compares himself to the Umayyad love-poets, what he means is that his love is fierce and exuberant, and that nothing can halt it:

O my cousin, since my love is Umayyad,
 How can I conceal my love, and how can I reveal it?
 How many times have we been killed in our love and been resurrected
 After death? There is no need to swear to this.⁴⁶

But this fierce love is met with indifference from the other party, his beloved Maysūn. Now we find Nizār standing in her deserted campsite, as the pre-Islamic poet used to stand in order to remember his beloved, while silence reigns and Maysūn and her companions have disappeared, leaving the site desolate:

The gazelles of the game-park do not return my greeting,
 And the anklets do not resound.⁴⁷

At this moment, when Nizār is besieged by loneliness and desolation, there flash into his mind some old memories of his life in Damascus. These memories are a substitute for the absence of his beloved. They take her place and fill his spirit with joy. He now remembers his adolescence in Damascus and his pursuit of young women:

O, that generous time in al-Sālihiyya,
 Where is my folly, where my infatuation?⁴⁸

Then he remembers his childhood, the natural beauty which surrounded his house there, and the quarters in which he played with his friends. With these memories, he hopes that his links with Damascus will be everlasting:

O my bed, O my mother's sheets,
 The sparrows, the scent, the branches,
 O narrow alleys of my quarter, hide me
 Between your eyelids, for Time is niggardly.⁴⁹

(b) Entry into Damascus, the joy of nature at victory, and mutual love

After the first shock (Maysūn's absence, and her rejection of him), Nizār turns to Damascus and enters it. It appears to him in an amazingly attractive form, as though it were a piece of Paradise or of unequalled Divine beauty:

Here is Damascus, after an age-long separation,
 Seven rivers, and dark-eyed maidens
 The fountains in the houses are speech,
 The bunches of grapes are ground sugar;
 The blue sky is a book of verse
 And the letters upon it are swallows⁵⁰

Clearly Nizār has two objectives in drawing these romantic pictures of Damascus - to portray the joy of the city and of nature (for two reasons, his return to it and the victory of the Arabs in the war), and to re-emphasise his love for the city in place of his love for the woman. Damascus is a great, unending love which is constantly renewed, but Maysūn was a passing, unrequited love, short-term and leading to misery, and he has no desire to renew it. Nizār stands before Damascus as though he were standing before a goddess, and begins to tell it of his love. The reader feels that the relationship is not merely a mutual love-relationship but a relationship of destiny. It is a question of life and death; to be linked with Damascus means life, and to be separated from it means death. Now Nizār reveals a fervent love for Damascus, announcing that this mutual love has become a prison for both of them. Instead of fleeing from it, we find them living within it, content and happy despite their suffering:

We are captives together, for in the cage of love
The gaoler and the prisoner suffer alike⁵¹

In this moment of submission to Damascus Nizār reveals another fierce feeling within himself. He feels that Damascus has been embodied in him; now he is it, and now this natural beauty is part of him:

O Damascus, whose guise I have adopted,
Am I the cypress, am I the larch?
Am I the Arabian jasmine in my mother's vases
Or am I the vegetation, and the rainy clouds?
Or am I the favourite cat in the house
Which answers when longing for home calls her?⁵²

Faced with Damascus, Nizār can only act in accordance with his nature and disposition; he cannot control his love for it, or limit its onrush:

Forgive me if I am disturbed, for
My love is not rhymed or metrical⁵³

(c) Standing on Mt. Qāsiyūn, embracing and love

Now the poet stands on Mt. Qāsiyūn in order to give expression to the second stage of his love for Damascus - the stage of real union with it. The way in which he stands on Mt. Qāsiyūn, addressing Damascus and Syria, reminds us of the way the pilgrims stand on the mountain of 'Arafāt to address the Divine Being.

Qāsiyūn, the symbol of Damascus, turns into a beloved human being, and when Nizār asks it to unite with him in an embrace, he reaches the pinnacle of his love for his country. At that moment he feels that he has lost for ever the loneliness which he suffered when he stood in the empty dwelling-places of Maysūn and others like her, the "cities of the wind", the other

Arab cities:

I am coming alone from the cities of the wind
 So embrace me like a child, Qāsiyūn,
 Embrace me, and do not argue with my madness.
 The summit of intellect, my friend, is madness;
 Embrace me fifty thousand times and a thousand times,
 For embracing is not permissible with immobility.⁵⁴

In those heated moments when he stands on Qāsiyūn and converses with it, there flashes into his mind once more the form of the Umayyad lover with whom he aspires to identify himself. It is the form of Qays b. al-Mulawwah, or Majnūn Laylā, (d. 684 or 687), the love-poet who lost his reason through his passionate love for his beloved Laylā al-'Amiriyya. Nizār and Damascus share their madness, since each is a lover and each unites with the other:

Is she mad with my love for her,
 This Damascus, or is it I who am mad?⁵⁵

Nizār portrays himself as the only lover who has loved his country with this unique passion which has no equal in human history:

I have been carrying love for her for thirty centuries
 On my back, with none to assist me.⁵⁶

The figure "thirty centuries" is not intended literally, but means that he has been attached to Damascus since his birth. He says that his love for it has resulted in many benefits for him. His city has surrounded him with many gifts, and has given him a love which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, so that he feels that he has gained much from it and that he should give it back a little of what it gave him. When he comes to give it his love it surrounds him anew with its gifts and love. Thus he becomes totally

convinced that his city, his beloved, is his first and last saviour when he is overcome by disasters:

Whenever I come to her I pay back my debts
 To the fair maidens, I am besieged by debts.
 If all the fates leave me alone
 I shall seek aid from my sweetheart's eyes.⁵⁷

(d) The October War, love poetry, and memories

Nizār feels a strange exhilaration because he is living in the atmosphere of October, the month which, to him, differs from all other months, because it is the month in which the Arabs regained their self-confidence and achieved a victory over Israel, and because it is the month in which the temperature drops, snow falls on the mountain-tops, nature becomes more beautiful, and life becomes brighter.

The climate of October, then (victory and snow) impels the poet to celebrate it in his own particular way. It impels him to love, to love woman and to lose himself in her. With woman, cold has no importance; man feels warm, and joy fills his life. From this, Nizār proceeds to affirm to his beloved/his country that October is the month of ideal love, that he will meet her on the snow-covered Mt. Hermon and that this snow will be no obstacle to their love. Doubtless, his choice of Mt. Hermon as a meeting place is not accidental. He mentions it to emphasise the abilities of the Syrian forces in the October war, since it was liberated then:

October came, O beloved of my life;
 October is the best time for love -
 We have a rendezvous on Mount Hermon
 How warm and loving is the snow!⁵⁸

When Nizār is on the point of embracing his beloved on Mount Hermon, and of talking with her, he remembers that he has not seen her for almost seven years. He pauses over these seven years, the period between June 1967 and October 1973 (really closer to six years) and sees that they were a period of general disillusionment and slow death; the beauty of nature withered, the trees died, the great lover Nizār, who had dedicated his whole life to love, ceased to love, the masses were crushed by despair and spent their days in chatter and drunkenness, the Arabs, régimes and leaders, lived in bitter conflict, the occupied land continued to be occupied, and there was nothing new on the horizon:

Seven years of sadness have gone by
 In which the willow and the olive-tree have died
 Years in which I resigned from love
 And melodies dried up on my lips.
 Seven years when we were assassinated by despair,
 Scholastic theology, and aniseed,
 And we divided into tribes and nations,
 The sanctuary was violated, and the lions' den lost.⁵⁹

This period, then, was a tense one in his life, and in the life of his nation. For this reason he was not capable of love. His mind was preoccupied with survival, existence, and finding a way to drive the enemy from his land. These were the priorities which filled his life, and there was no place for love in it:

How can I love you when, around my bed
 Prowl the Jews and the plague?
 How can I love you, when the sanctuary is violated -
 It is easy for a prisoner to love?⁶⁰

(e) The October War - delight

Here Nizār directs the discussion toward his great love, Damascus, and reveals to her his delight at the victories of the Arabs in the war,

confirming that Damascus is his first and last love. He says that these victories remind him of the bygone glory of the Arabs in Spain, and also of the victories of the Syrians and their struggle against the French at the battle of Maysalūn:

Damascus, O Damascus, O Princess of my love -
How can the madman forget his love?

* * *

The sun of Granada has risen over us
After we had despaired, and Maysalūn has uttered cries of joy.⁶¹

Nizār makes Nature share in his delight and celebrate the Arab victories with him, and draws a beautiful and romantic picture of it which resembles, to a great degree, the romantic pictures which he remembered previously when he entered Damascus:

How did the ears of wheat become higher,
How did your eyes become a swallow's nest?
The land of Jawlān resembles your eyes,
Flowing water, almonds and figs;
Every wound in it is a garden of roses,
Spring, and a hidden pearl.⁶²

We may note that delight at the victories of October permeates not merely Nizār 's spirit and Nature, but even permeates the Divine Being and the Prophet's soul:

God and the Prophet are pleased with Damascus,
"Coming victory, and manifest conquest".⁶³

In our view, this reference to God and the Prophet is an obvious poetical exaggeration. Syria's deeds in the war were not great. Nizār should have been a little more modest in describing the impressions which the October War left on his spirit.

As long as Damascus fills his life with delight, he is ready to respond to all its hopes. How happy he is for her when he encounters her as a beautiful bride whose dowry is men, martyrs and fighters, and not a trifling amount of money:

O Damascus, array yourself in my tears as a bracelet
 And hope, for every difficult thing becomes easy.
 Put on the bride's veil for my sake;
 The dowry of fighting women is costly.⁶⁴

(f) Exhilaration with personal nationalist feelings

During his speech to Damascus, he is overwhelmed by nationalist feelings, and sees Damascus as a heart of the Arabs and an unequalled power. To him, the participation of Damascus in the October War and its victory therein has had a part in beautifying the image of the Arabs in their own eyes. They have come to feel glory and pride after the humiliation of the 1967 defeat. The victory of Damascus is a great victory not for Syria alone, but for all the Arabs. This victory is in no way less important than the victories of the Arab Muslims in such famous historical battles as Badr and Hittin:

Tear up, Damascus, the map of humiliation
 And say to fate, "Be", and it is.
 Badr has reclaimed her days through you
 And Hittin has regained her youth.⁶⁵

In the framework of this exhilaration Nizār mentions the Arab armies sent by Arab countries - Iraq, Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia - to help Syria in the battle against Israel. He borrows two characters from Arab history, 'Amr b. al'As (c. 575-663), the conqueror of Egypt, and al-Ma'mūn (786-883), the warrior against the Byzantines, to symbolise these armies, and maintains that the glory of the Arabs (Quraysh) were dependent upon the glory of Damascus. He addresses Damascus as follows:

Through you Quraysh are mighty after having been humbled
 And tribes and clans have met together
 'Amr b. al-'As advances to the east
 and al-Ma'mūn advances to the west.⁶⁶

The result of this Arab assistance, he says, is victory over the Israelis, and the achievement by the Arabs of the impossible, of which no-one could have dreamed:

The Byzantines have been defeated after seven lean years
 And our wounded consciousness has recovered
 We killed the phoenix on Mount Hermon
 And the dragon shed his teeth.⁶⁷

Our attention is caught by Nizār's use of three symbols to refer to the Jews and Israel - the Byzantines, the phoenix and the dragon. Here they are powerful symbols of indestructible evil and unsurmountable obstacles.

This Arab military solidarity bore fruit. For the first time Arab plans were fulfilled in the battle, and for the first time they entered into a real war far removed from political manoeuvrings. The battle is symbolised by the sword. It is this which establishes the outcome of the conflict, and is the decisive factor; indeed it is the difference between truth and falsehood and the one means of recovering the Arab's rights:

The sword was true to its promise, O my country
 But politics are all opium
 The sword is a true governor and sage,
 The sword alone, O Damascus, is certain.⁶⁸

(g) Syria and Arab nationalism

At the end of this poem Nizār repeats that Syria is the first source

of the idea of Arab nationalism. At a time when such an idea was beginning to die in some other Arab countries Syria remained devoted to it, working to promote its prestige. Nationalism, he suggests, is not an aimless idea, but the power which diffuses awareness among the masses and makes them an effective element in the battle against the enemy. Evil indeed is the nation which has no ideas and no beliefs, which is ruled by tyrants, and inhabited by creatures who can be programmed in accordance with the requirements of circumstances:

•

Teach us the knowledge of Arabism, Damascus,
 For you are the eloquence and the exposition
 Teach us deeds, for words of defeat
 Have slaughtered us, and doughy utterances
 Teach us to read the lightning and the thunder
 For half of our words are mire and mud
 Teach us to think, for no victory is to be hoped for
 As long as the whole nation are sardines.⁶⁹

He says that Syria is not merely the fountainhead of nationalism, but also has ancient cultural roots in the depths of history. The defeat of 1967, the "mongrel miscarriage", will never be able to abolish its ancient glories. History will continue to remember with pride the victories of Syria in October:

My country, O poem of fire and roses,
 The centuries sing of what you have done
 The river of history wells up in Syria -
 Shall history be abolished by a mongrel miscarriage?⁷⁰

He expresses his attachment to Palestine and his wish to defend it, and hopes that Damascus will perform miracles and have a strong will to face the challenges of the present and the future:

Damascus, O Damascus, change the sun's decree,
 And say to fate; "Be", and it is.⁷¹

In modern poetry the sun is a symbol of freedom and victory. When he says, "change the sun's decree", this does not really correspond the meaning he intends; it would have been more appropriate if he had said "change the decree of night", "the decree of darkness", "the decree of evil", or something of that sort. Why is this? Because Syria aspires to a free, noble life, and faces difficulties and an unknown fate in this aspiration. Then her ability to change things and to create a new, more just and more brilliant decree would become clear.

2. Mulāḥazāt fī Zaman al-Ḥubb wa-al-Ḥarb

This is a long speech addressed by Nizār to a woman, his beloved. He speaks and she listens. It is divided into the following sections:

(a) The effect of the war and love

The poem begins with certain questions directed by Nizār to his beloved on the subject of the change which has suddenly taken place in his character and in his relationship with her during the October war and after it. At that time an amazing power was reawakened in him, and he felt that he was moving from extinction to rebirth. This is embodied in two stages. The first is the inflammation of his feelings at the beginning of the war, when his love for his beloved grew fierce, and she became in his eyes even more beautiful than before, as though he were seeing ^{her} for the first time, so that he feels linked to her for ever (stanza 1):

Have you noticed something?
 Have you noticed that the relationship between you and me, in time of war,
 Takes on a new shape
 And enters a new stage?⁷²

The second stage is a sexual urge, which appears at the moment when the Egyptian forces crossed to the East bank of the Suez Canal (stanza 2):

Did you notice this change in the colour of your eyes,
When we listened together to the announcement of the Crossing?⁷³

Then he says:

Have you noticed how I have crossed all my banks
How I have flooded you like the waters of the rivers?⁷⁴

It is clear from these lines that two battles were taking place at the same time when the October War began. The first is the war on the battle fronts between the Arab forces, Egyptian and Syrian, and the Israeli forces, and the second is the war of Nizār the poet with the body of his beloved. If the aim of these Arab forces in the war was to affirm their capabilities and regain their self-esteem after the 1967 defeat, then Nizār's aim in his personal battle is to affirm his virility, which he sees as an affirmation of his own existence, after the defeat of 1967 had extinguished or almost extinguished it.

Now he confesses that the war, in its wider Arab dimension and its narrow personal dimension, has brought back his self-respect and his lost dignity, and freed him from the feelings of defeat which appeared after 1967; guilt, disillusion and humiliation (stanza 3):

Have you noticed
How I have been liberated from my guilt complex,
How the war has given me back all my old facial features?⁷⁵

He goes on to say that the ages of decline and drought (the 1967 defeat) have now come to an end in his life⁷⁶ (stanza 6). In this context, he insists on the idea with which he began his poem, i.e. that the time of defeat is a time of death of love and isolation, and that the time of victory is a time of growth of love and companionship⁷⁷ (stanza 3). He repeats this idea once more in the course of his persistent questioning (stanza 4):

Does war rescue us after we have been long lost,
 Kindle our dormant passions
 Make me Beduin in nature
 And you another woman?⁷⁸

If we cannot find an answer to this question from Nizār, we can suggest an answer ourselves and say, "Yes", basing ourselves on the idea that sexual instincts flare up in time of war because the human being fears his own extinction.⁷⁹ In accordance with this view, Nizār's feeling of virility during the war is a sound one. Suddenly his inability to love ceases, he overcomes his feeling of isolation and separation, the imaginary barriers between himself and his beloved collapse and she becomes a woman worthy of life and affection after having been a stranger to him.

(b) Partial image of the fighters

Suddenly there appears in the poem an image of the Syrian fighters. This image does not stand alone and isolated, but rather occurs in the context of the love and embraces which are exchanged between Nizār and his beloved. Now Nizār sees the paratroops as doves. This simile may have two justifications. Firstly that the paratroops are like doves when they are flying through the air, and secondly that they are like a protective shield for Nizār and his beloved. They are as gentle as doves with their fellow-countrymen, but harsh

and violent with their enemies in war (stanza 5):

Did you feel, like me, that the paratroops
Were descending like doves on our hands
That the commandos were passing over the veins of our hands?⁸⁰

If this image of the paratroops is acceptable, the image of the commandos which follows it does not seem acceptable to the modern critic, since nobody can envisage commandos passing over veins. If he had said, "passing over the horizons", "passing in the battle front", or "passing through the memory", the image would have seemed more acceptable. Nizār, or his fellow-countrymen, show great admiration for all the Syrian fighters. He hastens with his countrymen into the streets to reward the soldiers for the victory they have achieved by scattering flowers over them and bowing before their weapons (the same stanza):

Have you noticed how we scattered over them
Garlands of violets and jasmine,
How we ran to them,
How we bowed
Humbly before their rifles?⁸¹

(c) Nizār's union with his beloved, and ^{his} beloved's union with his motherland

Nizār's love for his beloved grows so strong that he feels that he has become united with her (stanza 7), and that the two of them have become united, with no barriers or distances between them.⁸²

We suddenly understand that the woman he loves has features other than her previous human features. Now she becomes united with Damascus and Syria in an organic unity which can never be broken. She now appears in the form of a wide country. When he looks at her body he sees rivers, rocks and deserts, and is at a loss to know whether what he sees are the features of his country

or the body of his beloved. He does not know how he can come to know either of them separately. Accordingly he asks forcefully (stanza 8):

So how can I distinguish
Between the heat of your body
And the heat of the ground of my country?⁸³

These same ideas are confirmed subsequently (stanza 11) when he confesses that the features of his beloved resemble certain features of the Damascus which he knew when he was young:

Have you noticed how you resemble beautiful Damascus
And how much you resemble the minarets, the Umayyad mosque, the samāh-dance
My mother's ring
My school playground
And the madness of childhood?⁸⁴

(d) Contemplation; memories of the 1967 defeat.

At the height of the celebration by Nizār and his beloved of their love and of the Syrian victory in the October War there suddenly flood into his mind memories of the hateful 1967 defeat, and he strives to recall ^{them} in order to compare his state then with his state now.

With the 1967 defeat Nizār withdrew into himself and began to brood over his individual sorrows. His beloved remained far from him (stanza 9). He became another person, different from what he was before. The violent misery of the June defeat had a dreadful effect upon his personality, and misery filled his depths with blackness, so that he seemed sometimes mournful and at other times angry, raging against the defeat, people's refusal to speak of it, and the regimes which did nothing to regain the occupied land. As a result he was persecuted, interrogated and threatened. Every time, he lost a

part of his self-respect, but as a result he felt his rebellion reborn once again. At this time also he continued to long for his beloved/his country and yearned to be close to her:

June was sitting in our hands
 And imprisoning us in caves of dust
 I loved you
 But the night of defeat confiscated my day.⁸⁵

Elsewhere he says:

But despite my repeated death
 I still loved you, my pomegranate flower.⁸⁶

(e) Joy and stubborn attachment to the beloved or the country.

Suddenly Nizār casts off the dejection of the 1967 defeat. He feels that the victories of October have restored him to his fitting position in society and in the world. Now his exhilaration and joy reach their highest pitch - joy at the victory and at reunion with his beloved/his country (stanza 10). Now he wishes that this joy would encompass the whole universe, and that his love would spread everywhere:

I love you, you
 I write my love for you on the face of every cloud
 And give my love-letters
 To every pigeon.⁸⁷

All of this is followed by a forceful expression of Nizār's desire to cling to his beloved/his country and to live with her for ever:

I love you, O woman from my country
 And desire to remain on your lips.⁸⁸

(f) Affirmation of his love throughout violence and life.

Nizār hints sometimes that his love for his beloved/his country becomes stronger when the circumstances surrounding him are full of violence. Thus in stanza 10 he says:

I love you in a time of violence -
Who says that I want peace?⁸⁹

He affirms this idea again in stanza 13 when he says:

I love you when the storms grow strong,
Not by candle-light, or by moonlight.⁹⁰

His objection to loving her by moonlight is understandable. It is enough for us to go back to Khubz wa-Hashish wa-Qamar to understand the reason. Here the moon becomes, as it still is, a symbol of the idleness, lethargy and drug-induced stupefaction of the masses.

By the side of violence we have here also life (stanza 13). The beloved/the city of Damascus becomes more beautiful when the rains fall upon it, moistening it, bringing the vegetation in its dead soil back to life, and washing away the filth. Likewise, men speak of it, cling to it, love it and belong to it, and it becomes a living city when people move around in it and it bears their features and speaks of all their cares:

I love you when the streets are washed with rain's tears
And when the trees' clothing takes on the colour of bronze;
I love you planted in the eyes of children,
Obsessed by the cares of mankind.⁹¹

Perhaps it will be useful here to make it clear that the violence which Nizār has in mind is the battle sparked off by Syria on the Israeli front in October 1973. This is made clear by his words (stanza 11);

Did you notice
How your face gleamed beneath the fires
and how your hairpins became rifles?⁹²

With this battle many things changed, and it became a dividing line between two periods - the period of the 1967 defeat, and the period of the achievements of the October War of 1973. With this new period, a new chapter was written in Arab history. Damascus/Syria/the beloved woman became a powerful warrior beneath whose banner the whole nation rallied. It likewise became a symbol of victory, the new heritage of which generations to come will speak (stanza 11):

Did you notice how the history of your eyes changed in a few moments
And you became a sword in the form of a woman
Became a nation in the form of a woman
And became our whole heritage, the whole tribe?⁹³

Nizār has created a new atmosphere of violence between himself and his beloved, corresponding to the violence raging on the fronts between Syria and her enemies (stanza 13) and has succeeded in expressing it by indicating the savagery of his beloved and the blazing up of her emotions:

I love you
When your hair travels in the wind without a passport
And when your breast murmurs like a wolf at moments of danger.⁹⁴

(g) Unification of the beloved with Syria and Egypt together

Nizār sees in his beloved another Arab dimension (stanza 12). He makes her one not merely with Syria, but with Syria and Egypt together, so that she may become a symbolic nucleus of Arab unity:

Have you noticed that you have become Damascus
With all its Umayyad flags
And Egypt, with all its Fatimid mosques?⁹⁵

Thus the beloved moves from the narrow regional area to the wiser Pan-Arab area, and chooses Egypt, the heart of the Arab world, in order to merge with it. Thus his beloved is no longer a body or a narrow patch of land, but is that Arab land which stretches from Syria to Egypt and which has become a battlefield and witnessed the self-sacrifice of the heroes of Arab armies. He addresses her as follows (stanza 12):

[You] have become forts and sandbags
And a long convoy of martyrs.⁹⁶

(h) Unaccustomed beauty - attraction to the beloved/the country once again

The woman/the Arab homeland fights her enemies and regains her honour, and is thus, in the eyes of the poet Nizār, worthy of honour, esteem and respect (stanza 12). Accordingly, he sees in her an unaccustomed beauty:

Did you notice
How amazingly beautiful you were, that evening,
How you sat before me, like a capital city of pride?⁹⁷

He likewise sees in her a living example of immortal beauty which embraces the beauty of all women in all times (stanza 12):

Have you noticed
That you have become a résumé of all women?⁹⁸

He goes beyond this to observe that her voice has changed, and compares it, at one time to a spring of water, and at another to an oleander flower in the hair of Mary Magdalene. The first simile seems reasonable and acceptable, but the second simile is distasteful and illogical. Faced with this beauty, Nizār rushes to attach himself to the woman/homeland once again. He reveals his love for her in a sweet confidential conversation, asking her to remain free and mighty, acknowledging no place for humiliation (stanza 14):

I love you, precious one
 I love you, precious one
 I love you with head raised up like the domes of Damascus
 Like the minarets of Egypt.⁹⁹

The link between the loftiness of the beloved/country and the domes and minarets is a successful one. The domes and minarets stretch into space towering and reaching upward, with nothing fettering them and nothing limiting their upward thrust. They are a marvellous symbol of pride and rejection of humiliation, and are also a beautiful and haughty symbol of firmness and endurance which appear perhaps for the first time in a modern Arab poem.

In his confidential conversation he asks his beloved to allow him to forget three things - his previous character, which was burned away in the fire of the 1967 setback, the poetry which he devoted to it and in which he listed the negative features of the Arabs, and the mistakes he committed then when he withdrew himself from the world and treated his nation harshly in his own self-criticism (stanza 14):

Will you permit me to forget my old face
 And my old poetry
 And to forget my past mistakes?¹⁰⁰

He also asks her to allow herself to be dressed in the new clothes of victory, since the October War has erased the defeat of June (stanza 14):

Will you allow your clothes to be changed?
June is dead
And I am in a passion to see your fine clothes.¹⁰¹

For the last time, he confesses before her, with all the human weakness within him, that he loves her because she proved her worthiness in the October War and proved to herself and her enemy that she was worthy of survival and life (stanza 14):

I love you more than in any day gone by
Because you have become my warrior-love.¹⁰²

III

EXPOSURE OF ARAB SHORTCOMINGS

Nizār believes that the Arabs committed a number of errors in the October war, which, taken together, worked to diminish the victory which they attained at that time. Nizār indicated these errors in four poems, Hiwār Thawrī ma'a Tāhā Husayn, Marsūm bi-Iqālat Khālīd b. al-Walīd, Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād and Anā yā Ṣadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī.

1. Hiwār Thawrī ma'a Tāhā Husaya.

This poem was written in 1974 and delivered in Cairo at the gathering held to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Tāhā Husayn.

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn had witnessed the October war, but died just after its end (28.10.1973). Thus it is as though the first anniversary of his death is also the first anniversary of the October war. This poem consists of the following section:

(a) The amatory prelude

Nizār complains to the doyen of Arabic literature, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, that he is living in the middle of a world of Arabs whose vision has been obscured and who have become unable to see things as they really are. He tells him that he is the only sighted person and the only intelligent person in the midst of this all-embracing darkness;

Is this the light of your eyes, or are they two stars?
All other men do not see, but you see me.¹⁰³

Because Ṭāhā is like this, Nizār feels a sense of security in his presence and reveals to him the problems and prepossessing ideas which are revolving in his mind. The first thing which he reveals to him is that he is a great lover. He has spent his life in love, which has been imposed upon him as though it were predestined fate which can never be turned back, but he has never reaped from it anything but rejection by women and tears:

Love has been decreed for us, my friend
-And it has made you weep as it has made me weep.

* * *

How does love come, and from where does it come?
Love always knows my address.¹⁰⁴

(b) Mention of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's genius and the immortality of his works.

Nizār mentions Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's unending struggle in life, for example

his taking the Azhar by storm, his journey to Europe, his praiseworthy efforts in education, the establishment of the foundations of scientific research, and the writing of many books. He says that his genius shines through his works, which will remain living and immortal through time:

You are the river; how many glasses has it given us to drink?
 And how often has it clothed us with roses and daisies?
 What you have written still intoxicates the universe
 And flows like honey beneath my tongue.¹⁰⁵

He also says:

I am in the presence of all the ages
 For the time of the man of letters is all time.¹⁰⁶

Nizār sees in al-Ayyām, the autobiography of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, one of the pinnacles of modern Arabic prose. He also speaks of the admiration of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn for Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (973-1057) and his affection for his works, especially his prose work Risālat al-Ghufrān.¹⁰⁷

(c) "Taming" writers

Suddenly Nizār moves to an idea which has been discussed previously in Chapter ^{Three} that of the 'taming' of writers, and attacks those who employ poetry in the service of political authority and divert it from its real objectives, the service of the people; he also attacks its decline into surrealism and nihilism.¹⁰⁸

(d) The October War : Arab shortcomings.

After all these preparatories, Nizār moves to the discussion of another heated subject of the hour. This is the subject of the October war and its results for Egypt.

From the beginning we feel his strong sympathy with Egypt, indeed his sense of belonging to it. He respects Egypt's fighting prowess and her readiness for self-sacrifice. On this account he attacks the Arabs who left Egypt to suffer alone the immense economic pressures which the October war created for her. He does not hesitate to accuse these Arabs publicly of grave shortcomings towards themselves, towards Egypt and towards the future of their nation.

He makes it clear that these shortcomings are manifest in certain actions which do not accord with the nature of the circumstances of war through which Egypt was passing at that time. Examples of such actions are the failure of the Arabs to honour their solemn promises to aid Egypt financially and economically after the war, the way they squander their wealth upon women who do not deserve it, while the orphans of those killed in the war have need of it, the way they shirk battle, supinely seeking tranquillity, ease and safety, and the way they rush upon the pleasures of this world (women and palaces):

Sorrows tyrannise me, and I call out -
 "Alas, O Egypt, for the sons of Qaḥṭān!"
 They have traded you, bargained over you, taken possession of you
 And have sold you false hopes,
 They have withheld the water from the lips of orphans,
 And have poured it into the lips of prostitutes
 They have left the sword and the horse sorrowful
 And have sold history to the devil
 They buy palaces, but is there a purchaser
 For the graves of the heroes in Jawlān?
 They buy women; but is there a purchaser
 For the tears of the children in Baysān?¹⁰⁹

Nizār concludes that the shortcomings of the Arabs towards Egypt were grave, and that her financial and economic difficulties were so great that nobody could have borne them but her, because she was a great country, capable

of miracles:

Alas, O Egypt! How much you suffer from them!
But the great, the great always suffers!¹¹⁰

He says that Egypt's reliance upon herself and her own resources has utterly exhausted her. Her rich sister Arab countries should have extended the hand of support to her, but none did so:

Egypt has devoured her own liver, while others
Strut in silk and hooded gowns.¹¹¹

He condemns the behaviour of the oil states towards Egypt in withholding aid from her at a time when she was in the greatest need of such aid. He demands that they commit themselves to offering what they can to Egypt for one simple reason, which is that Egypt has fulfilled a national duty in fighting the enemies of the Arabs in place of the Arabs as a whole. For this reason it is the duty of those who did not fight to pay her a monetary compensation for her efforts in the war. He likens those who did not fight to the "People of the Book" who must pay the jizya to the Muslims for their protection from the enemy:

We have driven back the Byzantine hordes from you
and we have driven back Kisrā Anūshirwān

* * *

So pay the jizya of the swords
For swords do not live on charity.¹¹²

There are two points connected with this poem. Firstly, it contains daring poetic images, for example when the poet says to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn:

O knight who stormed the sun
And cast down his purple cloak,
Upon the dawn there is a wave of neighing
And upon the Pleiades is the charger's hoof.¹¹³

Secondly, Nizār has skillfully progressed beyond the closed circle of elegy (lament and bewailing) to a more open circle which embraces vital, fateful questions, such as the value of the works of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, the political and economic situation of Egypt after the October war, and the attitude of the Arabs to Egypt during this war. In his treatment of these questions Nizār moves slowly and with great intelligence, without making us feel that there is an abrupt leap from one topic to another.

2. Marsūm bi-Iqālat Khālid b.al-Walīd.

This poem was written immediately after Sadat's visit to occupied Jerusalem on 19 November 1977. This visit was a shock to Nizār, as it was to other Arab writers and intellectuals, because it represented a historical change in the course of the Arab-Israeli struggle.¹¹⁴

On reading the first lines of the poem the reader realises two things; firstly that Nizār is speaking of a conspiratorial force which is working against the interest of the Arabs, and secondly that the whole poem is addressed to Saladin. The choice of Saladin has its own special significance here. He is a historical personage who has his own weight in Arab-Islamic history because of his major role in the battle of Ḥiṭṭīn (1187). At the same time he is a poetic symbol of Nizār's own dream of salvation and freedom from the political and economic frustrations through which the Arabs are passing, in particular their defeats by Israel. In addition to the character of Saladin, there is a second who appears sometimes, the character of the son who observes his father the poet when he is sad. We suppose that Nizār's aim with this character is to show his inability to explain events surrounding him to his son.

Nizār complains to Saladin of some of the fatal mistakes in the life of the Arabs today, for example:

(a) Their submission to Israeli domination. Nizār is almost absolutely certain here that Sadat's audacity in visiting Israel with the desire of concluding a peace treaty is a major tragedy in the life of Arabs. He says that this tragedy is nothing less than stealing the glorious Arab-Islamic history, with all its conquests and victories, and erasing it from the record of human civilisation; and also that it equals the crime of selling the original copy of the Qur'ān, of leaving the Prophet's rear open to attack at the battle of Uhud, or of selling part of the land of Syria, Saladin himself, or all the Arabs, to the enemy (stanza 1).¹¹⁵

(b) The elimination of the fighting spirit from the military leaders and those eager to fight (stanzas 2 and 3) by dismissing them from their proper positions on the battlefronts and putting them in positions which do not suit them, or putting them on trial on charges of disobeying their leader's orders and achieving victory over their enemies without his permission.

Nizār takes the two historical fighter-heroes, Khālid b. al-Walid (d.642) and Tāriq b. Ziyād (d.720), as examples to prove his contention. Apart from what these two heroes represent in Arab-Islamic history, they are symbols here of all the benevolent and patriotic forces in the contemporary Arab world, who defend it with their lives and their blood when dangers approach it. Thus Nizār says:

They have stolen Arab ambition from us
Dismissed Khālid on the heels of the conquest of Syria
And appointed him ambassador in Geneva.¹¹⁶

Elsewhere he says:

They have stolen from Tāriq his Andalusian overcoat
 Taken away his medals, dismissed him from the army,
 Handed him over to the Security Court,
 And condemned him for the crime of victory; has a time come
 When victory is forbidden to us, my sons?¹¹⁷

Nizār has been successful in introducing these characters into his discussion of the way in which Arab leaders dismiss their generals and assistants. As we know, 'Umar dismissed Khālīd b. al-Walīd after his victory over the Byzantines at the battle of Yarmūk in 636, and appointed in his place Abū 'Ubayda 'Amir b. al-Jarrāḥ because the latter was abler than Khālīd in the administration of the conquered lands.¹¹⁸ As for Tāriq, it is said that Mūsā b. Nuṣayr (640-715) dismissed him after he had conquered Toledo in addition to Seville, Malaga and Cordoba. Mūsā had ordered him not to conquer it, but he did not obey his orders, It is said that he later forgave him.¹¹⁹

It is clear that Nizār is alluding here to the actions taken by Sadat after the October war when he mistreated all the soldiers and civilians who had planned and carried out the war. This, in the view of many Egyptian intellectuals, was a negation and a waste of the heroism of the Egyptians at that time.¹²⁰

(c) The subsequent recognition by Egypt of the state of Israel and the exchange of ambassadors (stanza 3):

Then has a time come
 When we greet Israel with roses and thousands of doves
 And the National Anthem?¹²¹

This step by Egypt was an abrupt and startling change in its Arab policy, which had been based ever since the foundation of Israel in 1948 on two fundamental points - rejection of the Zionist entity, and the education of the Arab masses everywhere to the necessity of the abolition of Israel. Nizār was struck with amazement after this move, and was completely at a loss to know how to receive it or explain it:

I no longer understand anything, my son,
I no longer understand anything, my son.¹²²

(d) The support given by some Arab broadcasting stations to Sadat's visit to Israel, and their repetition of this support parrot-fashion, in a way which makes the listener feel that the Arabs have been cleverly deceived by their enemies (stanza 5):

O Saladin,
Do you hear the radio commentary?
Do you listen to this public harlotry?
They have taken the bait and have urinated
In the face of the prime of Arab youth.¹²³

Nizār asks here what is the driving power which has impelled the Arabs to make concessions to Israel and to plunge into humiliation once again, but cannot arrive at any certain answer. These are events taking place on the world stage which he cannot explain (same stanza):

What is taking place on the stage?
Who is pulling the strings of the velvet curtains:
Who is the writer? We do not know.
Who is the director? We do not know,
Nor does the public know, my son.¹²⁴

Nizār does not specifically name these enemies, but he is certain that

they exist. They are there, behind the wings, plotting against the Arabs and planning to weaken them. They are not imagined by the poet, but are real enemies of flesh and blood, who are not afraid to sell their country for the cheapest of prices (same stanza):

Selling, for two glasses of whisky,
the estates of the homeland.¹²⁵

It is worth noting that Nizār mentions here all the previous errors once again (stanzas 4 and 6); but he adds to them five other fatal mistakes; sacrificing national honour, drugging and keeping the populace in ignorance, rejecting unity, keeping the Palestinian wound open, and besieging thinkers and writers.¹²⁶

In the face of the negative situations through which the Arabs, especially Egypt, are living after Sadat's visit to Israel, Nizār is badly disillusioned. This feeling overwhelms him suddenly while he is comparing the state of the Arabs in the past, when they were strong, conquering the farthest parts of the earth, with their state today, when they are weak, fragmented and divided. When he turns to ancient Islamic history he pauses over three negative movements which were moving in a direction opposite to Arab-Islamic society at that time and which were agents of its destruction. These are the Ridda, or Apostasy, movement, the Shu'ūbī movement and the Bāṭinī movement.

It is clear that Nizār has not mentioned these movements without a purpose, but rather uses them to describe the present conditions through which the Arabs are now living. It is as though history is repeating itself; those who are working against the Arabs now are the new apostates, Shu'ūbīs and Bāṭinīs. The time in which they are living deserves to be described by

these names (stanza 7):

O Saladin,
This is the time of the Apostasy
And the powerful Shu'ūbi tide.¹²⁷

Later he says (stanza 8):

O Saladin,
What use are words in this Bāṭini time?¹²⁸

Nizār finishes the poem by asking about two points - the value of writing in a time of destruction, and God's power to support the Arabs:

And why do we write poetry, when
God has forgotten the Arabic speech?¹²⁹

Nizār answers the first point in Chapter Three, part III, when he says that the task of poetry is to express Arab causes, to incite the Arabs against injustice and to spread a spirit of victory and resistance to corrupt authority. As for God's forgetting of the Arabic language, this is a suggestion that God has become a Hebrew-speaking Jew after Sadat's acceptance of the existence of Israel, and that He no longer has any interest in the Arabs, since He has aligned Himself with the stronger side, Israel, and left the weaker side, the Arabs, without support. All of this means that Nizār's trust in the Divine Being as a great power is still lacking.

There are two points which should be registered about this poem; firstly, that Nizār's preaching voice rises high in it, as it did before in Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa for example, as he enumerates the Arab's negative aspects. We believe that such an enumeration is more appropriate to prose than verse. It can be said that this preaching lowers the standard of

his poetry. Secondly, the employment of historical characters - Saladin, Khālīd b. al-Walīd, Tāriq b. Ziyād, in the context of certain contemporary events - the October war and Sadat's action against the military men - shows Nizār's intelligence and his understanding of his people's past and present. It is certain that some of these characters, Khālīd b. al-Walīd, for example, arouse in the reader's mind two tragedies combined together; the first is the tragedy of Khālīd himself when he was dismissed and the second the tragedy of the military leaders who were dismissed by Sadat.

3. Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād

We have referred previously to this poem in Chapter Four, section III, and we mention it again here as it is relevant to the October War and what followed it. It was written in 1979, that is, about one year after the signing of the Camp David accord. Nizār devotes the final stanza to the crimes and errors committed by Sadat against himself and against his nation. He begins this stanza by attacking Sadat for chasing after the Camp David accord and clinging onto its stipulations. His attack comes in the form of a bitter satire, which is closer to a personal attack on Sadat, when he accuses him of destroying the ancient history of his nation and compares him to Kāfūr (905-968), the slave who ruled Egypt and Syria and maintained the Ikhshīdīd state for a period of twenty years:

Has the news come to you, O Mutanabbī,
That Kāfūr has dismantled the Pyramids?¹³⁰

In Nizār's view the dangers of the Camp David agreement are the following:

(a) In it Sadat surrendered rights which were not his to give, but which belonged to the Arab people. When he dragged Egypt's name through the mud he was very like a poor peasant who wanted to become rich and chose to do so by selling the trams (a means of transport belonging to the Egyptian state) to a foolish fellow-citizen:

Egypt has fallen into the hands of a villager
Who has found nothing to sell but the trams.¹³¹

(b) Sadat presented ~~this~~ agreements as though ~~it~~ were going to bring prosperity and peace to Egypt, but ~~it~~ did not do so. This means that he was deceiving and misleading the masses:

He promised people wine and honey
But he gave them illusions to drink.¹³²

(c) The agreement itself was like an iron fetter which shackled Egypt and separated it from its Arab nation ('Abs, Tamim) and cast it against its will into the snares of Israel:

He kindled fire in the houses of 'Abs
And Tamim, and ignored the ties of blood.¹³³

(d) In the course of the negotiations Sadat offered concession after concession and exposed the terrible Arab weakness, until he was completely naked before his enemies. His weakness encouraged his enemies to use him to carry out their objectives. When they had achieved what they wanted through him, they left him to struggle with his unknown fate:

They stripped him of everything, and when
They had drained him dry, they threw him the bones.¹³⁴

In the same stanza Nizār alludes to some of Sadat's characteristics and activities which became apparent, particularly after the October War. Among these were, for example, his love of appearing in public and taking his colour from situations in which he found himself:

A man of theatrical ambitions, wearing one face
For comedy, and another for drama.¹³⁵

Other faults were his moral corruption, his conceit and his oppression of people without paying any attention to the principles of justice and equality. In all of his conduct, he seemed to be like King Farouk, who was famous for his political and moral corruption, or one of the earlier Khedives of Egypt whose moral behaviour was equally unsatisfactory:

He is Farouk in gluttony and conceit,
And the Khedive in tyranny and revenge.¹³⁶

Yet another crime was his suppression of Egyptian thinkers and writers who opposed his initiative with Israel. This suppression happened on Sunday 21 May 1978, when he threw thousands of them into prison:

He took those who thought before the Security Court
And abolished ink and pens.¹³⁷

4. Anā yā Ṣadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī.

In the eighth stanza of this long poem Nizār attacks Sadat once again. The stanza begins with Nizār's amazement at what Sadat did to himself and to Egypt (the Camp David accord and the concessions). This amazement reveals itself more and more as he draws a comparison between the past (the Islamic conquests, the horses, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ) and the black

present represented by Sadat (the "Mighty ruler of Egypt").¹³⁸

He himself is full of anger and bewilderment when he sees Egypt, after Camp David, subject to an intruder (Israel), something which should never have happened:

Who would believe that Egypt has turned Jewish
And that the shrine of our Lord al-Husayn is desolate?¹³⁹

He repeats with confidence that Egypt is an Arab country with an Arab-Islamic history and with no links, close or distant, with the Jews. He describes Sadat as the "lying Imam"; perhaps this description comes from his observation of the acute contradiction between Sadat's words and his deeds. We know that Sadat gave himself the title "The Believer-President". This is a title which gives the impression that he was a firm adherent of Islam. If this had been so, he should have been strong, as befits one who supports the Faith, not weak and ready to surrender to his enemies:

This is not Egypt, for its prayers
Are Hebrew, and its Imam is a liar.¹⁴⁰

When Egypt became Jewish, it became a stranger to Nizār, and he can see nothing of it but a small sky and captive women, when once its sky had been limitless, its land had been free and mighty, and hordes of invaders had shattered themselves upon it:

This is not Egypt, for its sky
Has grown small, and its women have been taken as plunder.¹⁴¹

Nizār does not forget to mention that this new policy followed by Sadat in his dealings with Israel, the policy of submission, is not a strange one to

him. In his opinion, Sadat is the new Kāfūr, the black slave, who should be subject to a master stronger than he. Sadat has no glory, because his glory is spurious, and he has no roots because he is descended from slaves. He is like many rulers of base origin, who have attained power but are still base even after they have attained it. Instead of power raising them up spiritually, intellectually and socially, they continue to act in a way which lowers their humanity and shows their inferiority:

Even if Kāfūr has come, yet how many a ruler
Has crushed nations though his crown is a clog.¹⁴²

IV

COMMENT

1. Hidden within the above poems is the image of war - the image taken from the atmosphere of battle between the two warring sides. Thus Nizār pays no attention to description of the external world-fires, the dead, destruction, the tragedies of war or refugees, and only pays attention to the disclosure of his personal feelings after he has received the news of the October War; then he extends these feelings to the external world to bring them into touch with a part of this world - for example, Damascus, Syria, his beloved or Sadat. Here Nizār may perhaps have created a particular point of view of this part of the world, either negative or positive. Nizār has done this in his poems about the October War, in the same way as he did previously in his poems on the June 1967 war.

The question now is; why does Nizār not describe the battles? Is he incapable of doing so? The answer is extremely simple. It is not because of

inability, but because of his self-love - his absolute narcissism. He makes himself the focus of events, whatever they may be, and the world around him becomes marginal, and he sees nothing of it except what is connected to the revelation of this egoism of his or whatever can display it in some way or other.

Thus we can understand why Nizār gives this marginalised and partial image of the Syrian fighters in the poem Mulāḥazāt fi Zaman al-Ḥubb wa-al-Ḥarb (stanza 5) when he says:

Did you feel, like me, that the paratroops
 were descending like doves on our hands
 That the commandos were passing over the veins of our hands?¹⁴³

This image, as we have said, occurs in the context of a romantic scene (the two lovers who have a stormy meeting after a long separation). In it Nizār wished to indicate that he shared in the victory and to disclose his personal feelings about the war, and it is an image which was never intended to refer primarily to the soldiers.

If Nizār had exploited his poetic ability in order to describe what was happening on the battle fronts, he could have enriched his poems with new images and ideas and thereby added something new whose absence we feel in modern Arabic poetry.

2. In Tarṣī' bi-al-Dhahab 'alā Sayf Dimashqī and Mulāḥazāt fi Zaman al-Ḥubb wa-al-Ḥarb we repeatedly find the image of a woman whose features cannot be perceived with any real clarity. However, from these two poems we understand that she is the city of Damascus, or a beloved woman, or the city and the woman together, united in a single being. The striking point which really draws our attention here is Nizār's attitude to the beloved

woman. He treats her as a master would his slave, with absolute superiority, making her aware of his masculinity and virility, while she makes him aware of her submission to him. We never hear her saying anything in either of the poems, or expressing her point of view, but, on the contrary, we see her submitting and obeying his commands without a murmur. This image of the slave-woman and the male master at a time of war is not strange to Nizār, since he lived with it at time of peace and excelled in his portrayal of it in his early collections of love-poetry, Tufūlat Nahd, Anti Li, Qasā'id and Habibatī.

3. In his poems on Damascus/Syria Nizār emerges from the shell of the 1967 defeat into the external world, breathes the air of freedom and dignity and sings of the effect of war and supposed victory upon his spirit, as though he had been created anew. Existence and nature are at a pinnacle of perfection, and he is in harmony with them and with life. But before long he goes back once again to his shell of grief and pain, the shell of the 1967 defeat, in his poems on Sadat. Here his feelings change from optimism and hope to anger, complaint and pessimism.

4. Nizār's attacks upon Sadat, especially in Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād and Anā yā Ṣadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī, are caused by two things - Sādāt's decision to negotiate alone with Israel without consulting the other Arab states,¹⁴⁴ and his submission to the Israeli fantasy that peace was close to being achieved.¹⁴⁵ It is obvious that his attack upon Sadat was not meant to denigrate Egypt or its people. Nizār has spoken on this point in greater detail elsewhere:

Sadat is one thing and Egypt is something else. This is an essential point which must be the basis and starting-point for all our actions. It would be a fatal error if we were to mix the two things together and not distinguish, in the moments of our sweeping anger, between Sadat and Egypt, between the temporary and

passing person and the lasting Arab country. If the ruler of Egypt has made a mistake, it would be the most blatant injustice to punish Egypt ... Reason demands that we should not put the error right by committing a greater error, and that we should not kill a nation on the pretext of revenging ourselves upon one of its citizens.¹⁴⁶

5. The poems Marsūm bi-Iqālat Khālid b. al-Walid, Mawāwil Dimashqiyya ilā Qamar Baghdād and Anā yā Ṣadiqa Mut'ab bi-'Urūbatī are permeated by a critical spirit which reminds us of the self-criticism contained in Nizār's poems on the 1967 defeat. The self-criticism pursued by Nizār after this defeat is incontestably close to self-flagellation and flagellation of the Arabs at the same time. It is full of revolution and violence. As for the self-criticism connected with the October War, it is either a bitter satire upon Sadat or it draws attention to the Arabs and their failure to do their full duty to Egypt in the war.

6. In the first days of the October War Nizār believed that this war would have great positive results for the Arabs. He entertained the idea that it would change many things in the region; the occupation, Israeli arrogance, geography, boundaries.¹⁴⁷

He said also that the modern Arab poem itself would change, a little or greatly:

.... the Arab poem, of course, will not escape from the law of war, and will be compelled to abandon all its jewels, necklaces, embroidered garments and silver anklets if it wants to coexist with the new Arab society.¹⁴⁸

In the light of what Nizār says, we can ask whether his poems on the October War represent a change from, for example, his poems on the June defeat. The answer is no. His style is the same in both places. Perhaps the only change which has occurred to his poems here is this gushing joy mixed

with national pride and a sense of belonging to Damascus. This is embodied in his melodic masterpiece Tarṣī' bi-al Dhahab 'alā Sayf Dimashqī. Further, no noticeable change took place in poems written by other Arab poets on the October war.¹⁴⁹

7. The October War was exploited as an occasion for the production of literary works with various aims, including profit rather than artistic creation. The Syrian critic Sa'id Ḥūrāniyya speaks of this phenomenon in Syria a few months after the end of the October War:

If a tourist who was interested in Arab affairs had landed in our country in October and seen a number of productions on stage, television and cinema and read some of the literary works which adorned the newspapers and magazines ... he would have thought immediately that his aeroplane had been hijacked and that he had fallen into a mythical trap. The literary hacks rushed to the tables of public occasions, throwing down their quills and pens and unsheathing cleavers, knives and axes ... and all attacked the great mansif* of October whose pavilions had been erected in theatres, journals, newspapers, radio and television stations and cinemas. Meat is expensive, and the meat of October was justified, cheap and untouched by decay.¹⁵⁰

What distinguishes all of these works of which Sa'id Ḥūrāniyya speaks is the stamp of bad quality. This is the disease of cheap art which Nizār avoids in the preceding poems. Needless to say, Nizār gave his poems all the necessary artistic elements, in particular simple language, delicate music and fiery emotion.

* A Beduin dish made of meat cooked with rice and dried milk.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. Muhyi al-Din Subhi, al-'Arabi al-Filastini wa-al-Filastini al-'Arabi: Dirasat fi al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa-Sira'ihā ma'a al-Sahyuniyya, Damascus 1977, p.5.

2. Ibid., p.17.

3. Ahmad Sidqi al-Dajani, Madhā ba'd Harb Ramadan: Filastin wa-al-Watan al-'Arabi fi 'Alam al-Ghad, Beirut 1974, pp.21-22.

4. Fawzi 'Atawi, "Iradat al-Qital", al-Adib, Beirut, no.11, year 32, November 1973, p.2.

5. Some men of religion in the Arab world made a connection between the October war and the month of Ramadan and saw in its occurrence in this month an indication that the Arabs would be victorious over their enemies. The Egyptian 'alim Yusuf al-Qaradawi says:

Look at the defeat of June 1967, and look at the 10th Ramadan of 1393 A.H. In 1967 they used to say, "Our artillery challenges fate". But they did not do anything with this artillery, and indeed they left it as booty for the Jews. As for the 10th Ramadan, when they cried out "Allahu Akbar", the breezes of Ramadan blew over the soldiers and the people, and there took place the crossing and the storming of the Barlev line, where the myth of the invincible might was shattered, and we seized victory in proportion to the amount of faith we had. If we had had more faith, we would have expanded and penetrated more. We took only in proportion to our faith. Give me faith, and I will give you victory.

See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Qadaya I'lamiyya Mu'asira 'ala Bisat al-Bahth, Cairo 1987, p.122.

6. Ahmad Sidqi al-Dajani, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

7. Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, 'Ind Muftaraq al-Turuq: Harb Uktubir. mada Hadath fiha wa-madhā Hadath ba'daha, Beirut 1985, pp.14-15.

8. Muhammad Fawzi, "Harb Uktubir, Dirasa wa-Durus: al-Halqa 13", al-Dastur, Amman, no. 7537, year 22, 15 August 1988, p.21.

9. Sa'd al-Din Ibrahim, Kissinger wa-Sira' al-Sharq al-Awsat, Beirut 1975, pp.102-103.

10. Ibid., p.103.

11. Muhammad Fawzi, op. cit., p. 21.

12. Jamāl Hammād, Min Sinā' ilā al-Jawlān, Cairo 1988, p.413.

13. Ibid., p.412.

14. Ibid., p.413.

15. Sa'd al-Din Ibrahim, op. cit., p. p.101.

16. Jamāl Hammād, op. cit., p. 414.

17. Ibid., p.415.
18. Sa'd al-Din Ibrāhīm, op. cit., p. 102.
19. Ibid., p.102.
20. Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filastīniyya, Ittifāq Camp David wa-Akhtāruhu: 'Ard Wathā'qī, Beirut 1978, p.9.
21. Jamāl Hammād, op. cit., pp. 423-424.
22. For details see: Muhammad Ibrāhīm Kāmil, al-Salām al-Dā'i' fi Ittifāqiyyāt Camp David, Damascus 1979.
23. Hāla Su'ūdī, "al-Siyāsa al-Amrikiyya wa-al-Sirā' al-'Arabī al-Isrā'īlī ba'd Harb Uktūbir (Tishrīn al-Awwal) 1973", al-Ra'y, Amman, no. 6665, year 18, 13 October 1988, p.21.
24. Jamāl Hamdān, 6 Uktūbir fi al-Istrātiyya al-'Ālamiyya, Cairo 1974. p.127.
25. Muḥyi al-Din Ṣubḥī, op. cit., p. 20.
26. Aḥmad Ṣidqī al-Dajānī, op. cit., p. 11.
27. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal, op. cit., p. 83.
28. Aḥmad Ṣidqī al-Dajānī, op. cit., pp. 22-23.
29. Muḥammad Kāmil Ibrāhīm, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
30. See Aḥmad Muhammad 'Aṭiyya, Adab al-Ma'raka: Harb 6 Tishrīn 73, Beirut 1974, pp. 13-40.
31. Najāḥ al-'Aṭṭār and Ḥannā Mina, Adab al-Harb, Beirut 1979, p.12 and p.16.
32. Ibid., p.40.
33. Yūsuf al-Sibā'i, "Dawr al-Adab fi al-Ma'raka", al-Adāb, Beirut, nos.11 and 12, year 21, November and December 1973, p.40.
34. Ibid., p.40.
35. Luwīs 'Aḥwad, "al-Adab wa-al-Ma'raka", al-Adāb, ibid., p.48.
36. Adūnis, "al-Zahira wa-al-Dalāla", al-Adāb, ibid., p.13.
37. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyāṭī, "Muhimmat I'lāminā", al-Adāb, Ibid., p.102.
38. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, Beirut 1979, p.112.
39. Ibid., p.115.
40. Ibid., p.114.
41. Nizār Qabbānī, "Yatafarrajūn 'alā al-Ma'raka", al-Adāb, op.cit., p. 82.
42. Nizār Qabbānī, al-Kitāba 'Amal Inqilābī, pp.129-130.

43. Nizār Qabbānī, "Yatafarrajūn 'alā al-Ma'raka", al-Adāb, op. cit., p. 82.
44. Ibid.
45. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1985, Vol. 3, p.429.
46. Ibid., pp. 429-430.
47. Ibid., p.430.
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49. Ibid., pp.430-431.
50. Ibid., p.431.
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80. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3. p.452.
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113. Ibid., pp.474-475.
114. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, Beirut 1979, pp.25-30.
115. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.487.
116. Ibid., p.448.
117. Ibid., p.489.
118. al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.749.
119. Ibid., p.171.
120. Tāhira Mukhtār, "Ba'd Murūr 10 Sanawāt 'alā Camp David", al-Shirā', Beirut, no. 349, year 7, Monday 28 November 1988, p.43.
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130. Ibid., p.510.
131. Ibid., p.510.
132. Ibid., p.511.
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138. Ibid., pp.643-644.
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140. Ibid., p.644.
141. Ibid., p.644.
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145. Ibid., p.48.
146. Ibid., pp.27-28.
147. Nizār Qabbānī, "Yatafarrajūn 'alā al-Ma'raka", al-Ādāb, op. cit., p. 83.
148. Ibid., p.83.
149. Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Aṭīyya, op. cit., pp.13-40.
150. Sa'id Hūrāniyya, "Yā Lahm Tishrin", al-Ādāb, Beirut, no.1, year 23, January 1975, p.76.

CHAPTER SEVENTHE DEATH OF JAMAL 'ABD AL-NĀSIR

This chapter deals with a single topic, the effect of the death of President Nasser upon Nizār's poetry. It is divided into three sections. Section I is a general introduction which discusses briefly a limited number of points: the revolution of July 1952, Nasser's subsequent achievements, the secret of the close relationship between Nasser and the masses in Egypt and the Arab world, and the attitude of Arab writers, Nizār among them, to Nasser's death.

Section II is a critical analysis of Nizār's elegies upon Nasser. We shall see that in them Nizār accuses the Arabs of killing the departed President, and attempts to immortalise him by comparing him, for example, to the fourth pyramid, or claiming that he would come back to life in one form or another.

Section III is a commentary in four parts: Nizār's feeling of shock after the President's death; the relationship of his elegies to praise (madh); the repetition in these elegies of two fixed ideas, those of return and embodiment; and the difference between these elegies and those upon his son Tawfiq and his wife Bilqis.

I

INTRODUCTION

So many books and studies have been written about President Nasser

(1918-1970), both during his life and after his death, that there is little scope for adding to them here in any way. However these various writings need not prevent us from offering a concise general introduction in which we shall touch upon the most important and outstanding achievements of his life.¹

1. Nasser and the revolution of 23 July 1952

On the 23 July 1952 Nasser led the Free Officer's revolution which put an end to the monarchy. After the revolution he became the leading figure in Egypt, and occupied a number of political posts - deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior (1953), Prime Minister (1954), and President of Egypt (1956).²

The Revolution of 23 July 1952 can be regarded as a landmark in the history of Egypt and the Arabs in the twentieth century.³ Various thinkers see it as a serious attempt to establish freedom and national rights, an effort to reconcile science and religion, or a demand for democracy and the recognition of the popular will.⁴

Nasser was convinced that this revolution was the only means of freeing the Arabs from colonialism and combating backwardness.⁵ He believed that it should arm itself with two weapons - constant awareness of scientific facts and enlightened ideas, and clarity in the perception of objectives and constant effort in pursuing them.⁶ He announced that its aims were to destroy colonialism and the Egyptian traitors who served it, to destroy feudalism, to destroy monopolies and the domination by capitalism of the government, to establish social justice, to establish a strong national army, and to establish a sound democratic life.⁷ Starting from this revolution, he undertook a series of actions on three levels, the internal Egyptian level, the Arab level and the world level.

(a) The internal Egyptian level

Here we may mention the following actions: the proclamation of the Republic on 18.6.1953⁸; the achievement of full Egyptian independence (through the signing of the evacuation agreement with Britain in 1954 and the complete evacuation of British troops in 1956; the ending of the international treaties and agreements which limited Egypt's independence; the confrontation of the tripartite aggression)⁹; the promulgation of the constitution of the Egyptian Republic in 1956, which gave Egyptians the opportunity to participate in government and create a modern state¹⁰; the introduction of certain internal reforms (such as the agricultural reform policy, the reduction of differences between social classes, the abolition of titles like Pasha and Bey, the nationalisation of the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956, the policy of nationalising and Egyptianising other major businesses, the laying of the foundation stone of the High Dam project on 9 January 1960, the commitment to a concept of socialism which would not conflict with religion, and the giving of greater prominence to the role of workers, peasants and women in political and social life).¹¹

(b) The Arab level

The most prominent achievements here were:

(i) The adoption of the idea of Arab unity

Nasser continually maintained that the Arabs were a nation who deserved unity because they possessed its essential common components - language, history, hopes and future.¹² He believed that any partial union between two Arab peoples would be a positive step which would pave the way for

comprehensive Arab unity.¹³ He likewise emphasised that Egypt's primary mission was to work for unity between the Arabs.¹⁴ He put ^{his} beliefs into practice when he agreed to unity between Egypt and Syria in February 1958.¹⁵ However this unity did not last long, since Syria separated from Egypt in September 1961 for reasons which lie outside the scope of this introduction. It is interesting to note here that Nasser's project for Arab unity, in the view of Ḥasan Ṣa'b, Professor of Philosophy at the American University of Beirut, was a psychological project which aimed to restore the Arab's faith in himself and in his ability to achieve progress.¹⁶

(ii) Support of Arab struggles

Nasser supported the Algerian uprising of 1954-1962 against French colonialism with material assistance and supported the Yemeni revolt against the rule of the Imams in 1962 with equipment and troops.¹⁷ He also responded positively to other nationalist movements in Sudan, Libya and Iraq.¹⁸ Jamāl al-Sharqāwī says:

... the July revolution adopted all Arab revolutions, became their mother-revolution, took them under its wing, and supported them in so far as it was an example and an ideal for them.¹⁹

According to Nadīm al-Bayṭār:

... Nasserism was the first Arab social revolution. Its victory provided the motive power for similar movements, and every other revolution found the way open before it and was able to realise itself with relatively great ease.²⁰

As for the Palestinian cause, Nasser gave it great attention from an early period in his life. When the Partition resolution of 29.11.1947 was adopted, he believed that what was happening in Palestine was part of an

imperialist design aimed at the whole Arab nation.²¹ He never ceased to regard the foundation of Israel as a destructive cancer directed against the struggle of nations.²² He considered that it presented two dangers - the extermination of the Palestinian people, and regional expansionism in order to accommodate the Jews of the Diaspora.²³ His policy toward it did not change, even after its attack upon the Arabs on the 5th June 1967. He expressed this policy clearly at the Khartoum conference held in August 1967 which became famous as the conference of the "three noes" - no negotiation, no recognition and no peace with Israel.²⁴

His belief in the Palestinian's right to their country was absolute. For this reason he supported their armed revolution, and considered it the noblest contemporary Arab phenomenon. He continued to espouse their cause from the first Arab summit conference in 1964 until his death in 1970.²⁵

(c) The world level

Here his most important achievements were the following:

(i) Resisting colonialism

The war against colonialism was the front line of Nasser's internal and external policy.²⁶ To condemn it and unmask its plans was his overwhelming preoccupation, as he regarded it as the chief reason for the problems of the Arabs, especially in Palestine.²⁷ On the basis of this policy, he called for respect for the rights of nations to decide their own destiny²⁸, supported Arab and African liberation movements²⁹, condemned Apartheid in South Africa³⁰, and rejected treaties like the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine.³¹ These activities, in addition to other actions like the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the recognition of the Chinese People's

Republic, aroused the hostility of the West toward him.³²

(ii) Building a strong relationship with the Socialist Camp

Nasser was able to build a strong relationship with the countries of the Socialist Camp because he found in them a strong ally against Western imperialism. According to Jamāl al-Sharqāwī:

Nasserism realised that the struggle against colonialism was a world struggle, that this struggle could only be undertaken by a broad world front of all the forces hostile to imperialism, and that the two outstanding forces in this front were the national liberation movement and the Socialist Camp. Accordingly Nasser gave a marvellous example of co-operation and fraternity with the Socialist Camp, in particular with the leadership of that Camp, represented by the Soviet Union.³³

(iii) Commitment to the principle of non-alignment

Nasser was committed to the principle of non-alignment in the struggle between the two camps, the Western and the Socialist, because of his conviction that Egypt had no direct concern with the Cold War which arose from the competition between them. He believed that Egypt's advantage lay in the reduction of international tension, not in aggravating it.³⁴ For him, the principle of non-alignment also meant working for world peace and supporting international co-operation in order to achieve prosperity.³⁵

2. Nasser and the masses

Nasser was able to build a strong relationship with the Arab masses in Egypt and the Arab world. In Egypt the masses gave their President their love and loyalty in a manner which surpasses all description.³⁶ This firm bond between the two may be attributed to Nasser's belief in the Egyptian people's

ability to lead Egypt after the July 23 revolution.³⁷ At that time he liked to describe his nation as "the great teacher which resists its enemies".³⁸ He himself was likewise described as the voice, tool and servant of the masses.³⁹

The journalist Muṣṭafā Amin ascribes his ability to identify himself with his people to a number of reasons, including his simplicity, his humility, and his refusal to exploit his position for personal advantage:

But how did this identification happen? How was the miracle of complete trust between ruler and people achieved for the first time? The secret is that the leader of the people did not desert the people. He did not forget that he sprang from the loins of the country. He was a peasant from the village of Bani Murr. He was a simple, believing, modest man. He did not exalt himself over people. He did not rule despotically by force. He did not exploit power to grow rich or revenge himself. He did not exploit the state and did not permit anyone else to exploit it. He did not demand glory, title or position for himself, but rather led the revolution from the first day and preferred to conceal himself in the ranks.⁴⁰

It may be noted here that the Egyptians revealed their attachment to their President on two major occasions, firstly after the 1967 defeat when he offered his resignation, and they came onto the streets in the biggest demonstration since 1954 to demand that he remain in office⁴¹, and secondly at his death in 1970 when millions followed his funeral crying out, "with our souls and our blood we shall complete your mission."⁴²

In the Arab world the personality and ideas of Nasser were accepted among the Arab masses on a wide scale, because they found in them something which expressed their aspirations and hopes.⁴³ The Arabs' admiration for Nasser increased greatly after the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the union with Syria in 1958.⁴⁴ It seems that the Arabs' attachment to Nasser was due to his trust in them, his frankness with them, the simple way in which he spoke to them, and his understanding of their causes. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ṣubḥī writes:

The President spoke to the Arabs ... and made them feel that they were a single nation. He spoke to them about the best-hidden international secrets and the facts of the world situation ... a great part of his success in rallying them at times of crisis was due to the fact that he spoke to them not only in normal language, but in the language of everyday speech. He did not raise himself over them by using revolutionary, cultural or foreign expressions, or *displaying expertise in* specialised subjects. He was full of the problems and difficulties of the people. People heard him discussing their problems like an expert and a believer, and allowed him to direct them; and he never let them down.⁴⁵

As a result of the popularity which Nasser enjoyed in the Arab world, some saw in him a new Saladin who would liberate Palestine from the Israelis⁴⁶, a prophet sent by God to persecuted peoples in order to apply the principles of Jesus and Muhammad⁴⁷, and a national hero and leader of liberation movements in the whole of the Third World.⁴⁸

3. His death

Nasser died on 28.9.1970 immediately after the conclusion of the extraordinary Arab summit conference held to discuss the conflict between Jordan and the P.L.O. in September of that year, as a result of a severe heart attack.⁴⁹ His death came as a terrible shock to Arabs everywhere, and was welcomed only by those who saw him as a dictator.⁵⁰

(a) The attitude of writers and poets

Egyptian writers spoke repeatedly of this terrible shock wherever they were. Khālid Muhyī al-Dīn, his friend and one of the leaders of the 23 July revolution, said, "his death is a disaster for all the revolutionaries in the world,"⁵¹ while Tawfiq al-Hakīm said, "sorrow has entered every house in distress at your death, because there is a piece of you in every house".⁵²

Yūsuf Idrīs declared in dismay, "death! O death! You who have defeated us in a way in which the enemy could not!"⁵³ The journalist Muḥammad 'Awda wrote in anguish, "you have left us ... orphans who see no-one to support us, naked with no-one to cover us, wanderers who see no light, lost men who fear tomorrow and every moment to come."⁵⁴

The same sentiments were repeated in dozens of poems written immediately after his death. We shall mention only a few examples here, since what was written on the subject would fill a large anthology. Thus from Egypt we have Kitāba 'alā Qabr 'Abd al-Nāṣir by Badr Tawfiq⁵⁵, Ughniyya li-al-Shitā' by Wafā' Wajdi⁵⁶, Lā Taqūlū al-Wadā' by Maḥmūd Ḥasan Ismā'il⁵⁷, Lā Waqt li-al-Bukā' by Amal Dunqul⁵⁸, Aḥzān Izis by Muḥammad al-Bukhārī⁵⁹, al-'Imlāq al-Asmar by Fu'ād Ḥasan⁶⁰, Kull 'Id mā Khalā al-Naṣr Habā', Ughniyya 'alā Qabr Baṭal and Ba'd al-Wadā' by Ṣāliḥ Jawdat⁶¹ and Aḥzān al-Fuqarā' by Fārūq Shūsha.⁶² From Sudan we have al-Qādim 'ind al-Fajr by Muḥammad al-Faytūri⁶³, and from Palestine we have Taḥt Ṣūrat 'Abd al-Nāṣir by Mu'in Busaysū⁶⁴, al-Rajul dhū al-Zill al-Akḥḍar by Maḥmūd Darwish⁶⁵ and Marthiyat al-Fāris by Fadwā Ṭūqān.⁶⁶

(b) Nizār's attitude

Nizār's relationship with Nasser goes back to the latter's attitude to his poetry. When Nizār wrote Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa, some Egyptian writers and critics launched a violent attack upon it, considering it a great insult to the Arabs.⁶⁷ Perhaps this attack sprang from their supposition that the character of the tyrannous sultan mentioned in stanza 17 alluded to Nasser alone. In fact this character may be a symbol of tyranny in general, or it may be a symbol of a particular ruler. The way in which it is taken depends upon the width or narrowness of the reader.

However Nizār's enemies in Egypt succeeded in their campaign against him, and his poem was banned there. Another official embargo was placed on all his poetry in broadcasting and the press.⁶⁸

Faced with this, Nizār was alarmed, and was convinced that his enemies' campaign had "left the sphere of criticism and civilised discussion and entered the sphere of official denunciation".⁶⁹ Accordingly he wrote a short letter to Nasser on 30 October 1967 in which he drew attention to the following points:

- (i) He was currently being subjected by the official authorities in Egypt to a kind of oppression for which there was no precedent in history.⁷⁰
- (ii) His forbidden poem Hawāmish 'alā Daftar al-Naksa was an attempt to restore self-esteem, without boasting or exaggeration, and to offer a vision of the building of a new Arab thinking, different from the thinking which had prevailed before the defeat.⁷¹
- (iii) In his poem he had not gone beyond the self-criticism expressed by President Nasser after the setback, when he spoke frankly and openly about the Arabs' failings.⁷²
- (iv) He wished to draw the President's attention to an extremely important question, the attitude of authority to the writer or intellectual; would he be permitted to express what he wanted to say, or would he fall under the whips of suppression?⁷³
- (v) In the shadow of defeat he could not keep silent. He felt humiliated, and found himself crying out in pain. This was natural and to be expected.⁷⁴

Nizār concluded his letter by asking Nasser to read Hawāmish⁷⁵ and then added:

Mr. President, I complain to you of the hostile attitude taken to me by the official authorities in Egypt, under the influence of the words of the mercenaries and the traders in speech. I ask nothing more than that my voice be heard; it is one of the simplest principles of justice that the writer should be allowed to explain what he has written ... I only ask, Mr. President, for freedom of speech, for I have been reviled in Egypt and no-one knows why I have been reviled; and my patriotism and honour have been impugned because I have written a poem, while nobody has read a letter of this poem. My poem has entered every Arab city and aroused a dispute between Arab intellectuals, positive and negative. Why have I been deprived of this right in Egypt alone? When has Egypt closed her doors in the face of the word and not been able to bear it? Mr. President, I do not want to believe that one like you can punish the bleeding man for bleeding ... or permit the persecution of an Arab poet who wished to be noble and courageous in facing himself and his nation and has paid the price for his truthfulness and courage. Mr. President, I do not believe that this can happen in your time.⁷⁶

Nasser read the poem and admired it. He wrote to the Ministry of Information saying that he found nothing in it to cause objection, and asked it to rescind all the measures it had taken with regard to Nizār and his writings. He issued instructions to other concerned quarters to open Egypt's doors to Nizār and to give him all the respect appropriate to his standing.⁷⁷ Nizār felt great happiness at these decisions, and felt sure that they were a positive step taken by a civilised ruler, through which he had removed the wall of fear which stood between poetry and authority.⁷⁸

When Nasser passed away it was natural for Nizār to mourn him in his poetry. He wrote four elegies on him - Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, al-Haram al-Rābi', Risāla ilā Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir and Ilayhi fi Yawm Milādihi. A full analysis of all of them follows below.

IIELEGIES, ACCUSATIONS AND IMMORTALITY1. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir

This elegy is virtually a part of the black picture of the Arabs which Nizār draws in his poetry. He opens it by accusing them of killing the last of the prophets, Nasser. Here he touches upon two completely contradictory themes - that of genius and loftiness, represented by Nasser, and that of barbarism, represented by the Arabs. He suggests that peace between the two sides is impossible, and that the battle is always decided in advance in favour of barbarism. Thus Nasser is killed, and the killers are the Arabs. When they kill, they are not embarrassed and they feel no shame, because they have committed such murders many times before. Such is their history, which has witnessed crimes committed against their leaders which have made their lives, long ago and now, identical chapters in a book of tragedy, which he symbolically calls Karbalā'. The battle of Karbalā' (which took place on 10 Muharram 61 A.H./10 October 680 A.D.) represents on a historical level the bloody struggle between two competing factions, the supporters of the descendants of 'Ali and the supporters of the Umayyads, and is thus a symbol of the Arabs' killing of one of their noblest leaders, since the battle of Karbalā' ended with the death of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Ali, the grandson of the Prophet (stanza 1):

We have killed you, O last of the Prophets
We have killed you
It is not a new thing for us the
To assassinate the Prophet's Companions and holy men;
How many a Prophet have we killed
And how many an Imam have we slaughtered as he prays the evening prayer!
Our whole history is a tribulation
And all our days are Karbalā'.⁷⁹

After this Nizār goes on to compare Nasser with the Arabs in order to give depth to his accusation, for he considers the difference between them to be very wide indeed. Nasser is a symbol of prophethood, thought and culture (the beautiful book) and of unity (the land of innocence), while the Arabs are a symbol of ignorance and unthinking rejection (stanza 2):

You descended upon us like a beautiful book
 But we are not good at reading
 You travelled among us to the land of innocence
 But we did not agree to depart.⁸⁰

Nasser was also the person who led the Arab nation after the setback of 1967 to emerge from the tunnel of darkness into the light, and in order to achieve this he endured dreadful suffering, as did Moses in the desert of Sinai. The Arabs, on the contrary, do not suffer or endure torment, but sit back, deceiving themselves and their masses without achieving anything (stanza 2):

We left you alone under the sun of Sinai
 Speaking to your Lord alone on Mount Sinai
 Enduring nakedness, misery and thirst alone
 While we were here, sitting crosslegged
 Selling slogans to the foolish
 Stuffing the masses with hay and straw
 And leaving them chewing the wind.⁸¹

While Nasser began to spread the ideas of revolution and the struggle against backwardness, and to teach the people national pride, the Arabs were apostasising from his ideas and turning against him (stanza 4):

You shook off the dervish's dust from us
 You gave us back our boyhood
 And you travelled with us to the impossible
 You taught us splendour and vigour
 But we,
 When the journey became too long for us,
 And our nails and our beards grew too long,
 We killed the steed.⁸²

In order to confirm in the reader's mind that the Arabs are guilty of the crime of killing Nasser, Nizār quotes (stanza 3) some of the methods used by the Arabs to kill the President. Among these are the way they loaded him beyond endurance with their problems (the poison of the Arabs), made him a participant in the events of 1970, betrayed him when he summoned them to unity, and insisted upon division:

We have fed you the poison of the Arabs until you have grown sated
 We have cast you into the fire of Amman, until you burned
 We have shown you the treachery of the Arabs, until you lost faith.⁸³

To these Nizār adds some of the other characteristics of the Arabs which played their part in the killing of Nasser, including hypocrisy, lack of cultural spirit, tribalism, lack of principle, secret plotting, and public proclamation of what was not in their souls (stanza 3):

For we are tribes of the Time of Ignorance
 We are instability
 We are oscillation
 We are the Bātiniyya
 We swear loyalty to our lords in the morning
 And eat them when the evening comes.⁸⁴

Faced with this overflowing blackness of crime, the Arabs and the death of Nasser, two hopes escape from Nizār (stanza 4). The first is that the Arabs should perish:

So perish our hands
 Perish our hands.⁸⁵

The second is that Nasser should appear in another, distant land, not an Arab land, for the Arabs are unworthy of him:

Would that you had never appeared in our land
 And would that you had been the prophet of some other people.⁸⁶

Nizār had blamed Nasser before (stanza 3) for appearing in the land of the Arabs, because he felt that he was greater than his age:

Why did you agree to come to us?
 For one like you is too much for us.⁸⁷

and:

Why did you appear in the land of hypocrisy?
 Why did you appear?⁸⁸

In Nizār's view, Nasser's death was a great loss for all the Arabs. With his death, the aims and miracles which could have been accomplished at his hands had he lived longer were shattered (stanza 5):

Whither?
 All of the legends have died
 With your death, and Scheherezade has killed herself.⁸⁹

The Scheherezade who is intended here is Scheherezade the story-teller, not the beloved. The meaning seems to be that the departed President used to create great events in Egypt, and found people who would relate and broadcast them (Scheherezade); but when he died these events ceased to occur, and as there was no longer any role for Scheherezade, she killed herself.

The Khawārij (a new symbol in Arab poetry, used to indicate rebels, those against the régimes, and progressive forces) share Nizār's view that Nasser's death was a great loss. Thus they come to Egypt to express their

sorrow, despite their differences of opinion with him about the method of dealing with Arab problems (stanza 5):

The delegations of Kharijites have all come
 To compose love-epics upon you
 And those who declared you an unbeliever,
 Those who called you a traitor,
 And those who crucified you at the Damascus gate.⁹⁰

As for the other Arab leaders, with Nasser's death they felt that they had been rid of a heavy and terrifying burden (perhaps Nizār is alluding here to those Arab régimes which Nasser considered to be reactionary). They came to participate in the funeral ceremonies, impelled by a sense of duty, but in reality they were gloating at his death. They pretended to be sad, and concealed their personal intentions and dreams (stanza 5):

Here is one shedding tears over you
 With his dagger under his mourning garments.
 Here is one waging war in his sleep,
 Over whom the holy war weeps when he is awake
 Here is one who seeks kingship after you
 But after you
 All the kings are ashes.⁹¹

After all of this Nizār is overwhelmed by a wave of despair when he feels certain that the vacuum which Nasser has created by his death can never be filled by anyone else (stanza 5):

I call upon you, Abū Khālid,
 Though I know that my voice is too distant to be heard
 And know that you will not answer
 And that miracles cannot be repeated.⁹²

We may observe here that this poem was attacked violently by the

Egyptian critic Sāmi Khashaba. He described it as an ideal example of the

campaigns to cast doubt upon Nasser's principles and to bring into contempt the Arab nation who had believed in him.⁹³ He also accused Nizār of having reviled Arabism, the belief so firmly rooted in Nasser's thinking, when he said, "We have fed you the poison of the Arabs until you have grown sated," of having isolated the masses from the social movement and regarded them as a crowd of riffraff when he said "I call upon you, Abū Khālid ... etc.", and of opposing Nasser's call for the masses to be given a greater role in the leadership of the revolution and of history.⁹⁴

2. al-Haram al-Rābi'

In this second elegy Nizār attempts to immortalise Nasser, the "Fourth Pyramid", by drawing three different images of him after his death. The first is an image of him sleeping in his room, a light sleep from which he will awaken in a little time (stanza 1). Here Nizār adds two more of Nasser's attributes - his knightliness (comparing him to a sword which rests for a while from its battles) and his innocence (comparing him to a child drowsing in the lap of nature).⁹⁵ He denies that Nasser is dead, and insists that he is still alive and waiting for the morning to awaken as he was accustomed to do every day:

The leader has not gone at all, -
 But has gone into his room to rest
 And will wake up when the sun rises
 As does the perfume of the apple
 He will eat bread with us
 And drink his coffee with us.⁹⁶

The second image is one of him alive, living his ordinary, everyday life. Here we encounter two brief scenes, like news reports in their language. The first shows him travelling through Egypt, contemplating its historical monuments (stanza 2) and showering his love upon it:

The Lord is still here
 Walking on the Nile bridges
 Sitting in the shade of the date-palms,
 Visiting Giza at dawn
 To kiss the stones of the Pyramids.⁹⁷

The second shows him close to the people and meeting them on religious occasions:

Performing the Friday prayer, and the two 'Ids
 And granting people's requests.⁹⁸

The third image depicts him as still present in some of his achievements for the peasants and workers (symbolised by the Nile flood, the cotton-flowers and the peasant-women's necklaces in the second stanza⁹⁹, loaves of bread, the sweat of the workers, Aswan and Sinai in the third stanza)¹⁰⁰ and various aspects of nature (like the stars and the sands of the beaches in the third stanza).¹⁰¹ He is also present in the masses of Egypt, who remember him eagerly, pray for him, and, like him, reject the enemy's demands and believe in the necessity of fighting (also stanza 3).¹⁰²

3. Risāla ilā Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir

This is another attempt to immortalise Nasser. In the introduction Nizār emphasises the links of Egypt and the Egyptians with their President after his death (stanzas 1, 2 and 3) and their united desire to meet him once again after his temporary absence from them. Perhaps stanza 2 is the clearest in its expression of this:

The crops in the fields and the lads in the country
 The Prophet's Birthday celebrations

The blue minarets
 The Sunday bells,
 This Cairo which sleeps
 Like a white flower in the hair of eternity,
 All send you their greetings,
 All kiss your hands
 And ask every visitor to the country
 When will you return to the country.¹⁰³

After this Nizār acknowledges that Nasser has disappeared from life as a human being, but says that he has not died, because he is embodied in many forms after his death. Nizār addresses him in these words (stanza 4):

You are in the scent of the earth, in the burgeoning of the flowers,
 In the sound of every wave, the voice of every bird
 In children's books, in letters, in note-books
 In the greenness of eyes, in the shaking of bracelets
 In the heart of every believer, the sword of every avenger.¹⁰⁴

Suddenly he feels in the depths of his soul that this re-embodiment is not the same thing as Nasser's physical presence. He becomes sorrowful, and his life turns into a series of inter-connected agonies (stanza 5):

O great teacher,
 How great is our sorrow,
 How great is our wound!¹⁰⁵

Soon he realises that this sorrow will not bring the President back. Therefore he repeats firmly that he will not display any grief or weakness to anyone in future (stanza 5):

We swear by God the Exalted, the Almighty
 That we will imprison our tears in our eyes
 And stifle our weeping.¹⁰⁶

He is not content merely to display this stoicism in the face of death,

but declares, in the same stanza, that he will take Nasser's path as an example to be followed, and will keep faithfully to the ideas expressed in Nasser's books Falsafat al-Thawra (The Philosophy of the Revolution), which contains the most important principles of the 1952 revolution, and al-Mithāq (The Charter) (1962) which speaks more fully of his political ideas (for example the necessity of revolution, democracy, industrialisation, the concept of Arab unity, and international co-operation to ensure prosperity):

We swear by God the exalted, the Almighty
That we will preserve the Charter
And preserve the Revolution.¹⁰⁷

4. Ilayhi fi Yawm Milādihi

In the introduction to this elegy Nizār gives a beautiful, romantic picture of Nasser's rule from 1952 to 1970 and his achievements in Egypt, without going into details:

You were, and there were ears of wheat in the fields
There were sparrows, and there were pine trees,
You touched our hopes, and they became streams
You caused love to rain upon us, and you never ceased to rain.¹⁰⁸

Then he speaks of his death, thinking of it as a temporary absence, and awaits his return to life. He is certain that his waiting is worth while, and compares Nasser to the Mahdī who must reappear to fill the Earth with justice where once it was filled with injustice:

You are late, most precious of men, and our night
Is long, and the lights of the lamps keep vigil.
You are late, and the hours devour themselves
And our days stumble over one another.
Do you ask about our lives? You are our life
You are our Mahdī, you are our liberator.¹⁰⁹

He states that Nasser's absence has led to: a neglect of the enemy (symbolising this by the horse, the instrument of battle, which weeps because it is not being used in battle); an increase in the sufferings of the Palestinians, and the intensification of Israeli persecution of them:

Your steed in Sinai drinks its tears
O the torment of horses, when they remember.¹¹⁰

Then he says:

The women of Palestine anoint their eyes with grief
And in Bethlehem are women with downcast eyes, and young lads
The lemons of Jaffa are dry in their fields
Can a tree blossom in the grip of injustice?¹¹¹

Later, Nizār asks Nasser to come back to life again as soon as possible for the following reasons (enemies, symbolised ^{by} the Byzantines, are gathering together to attack the Arabs), a new revolutionary force (the guerrillas), to whom he might lend strength, have appeared, and the Arab world (symbolised by Mecca, Badr) needs him as a saviour:

Companion of Saladin, will you return?
For the armies of the Byzantines forbid and command
Your companions in the Aghwār have saddled their mounts
And your army in Hittin have prayed and praised God.
... The minarets of Mecca call upon you passionately
And Badr and Khaybar call upon you, my dearest one.¹¹²

To these he adds other reasons - the Arabs are weak, they have suffered a continuous succession of defeats, they are internally divided and are unaware of the dangers surrounding them, and internal suppression (symbolised by Hulagu and Caesar) is increasing:

Come to us, for manly virtues hang their heads
And the land of my fathers is broken glass

We have been defeated, and are still scattered tribes
 Living and taking revenge with hidden hatred.
 ... A thousand Caliphs besiege us like death
 For in the East is Hulagu, and in the West Caesar.¹¹³

Suddenly Nizār concludes his poem with six lines which have no connection with the rest of the elegy, in which he complains of the 1967 defeat and dreams of the birth of a new Messiah who will lead the Arabs from defeat to victory.¹¹⁴

III

COMMENT

1. The reader of these elegies will note that they convey a great feeling of shock. Nizār expresses this feeling with truthfulness and consummate artistry. Perhaps the clearest signs of this truthfulness are the way he avoids wallowing in distress and exaggerating the pain caused to him by Nasser's death. Perhaps we may exclude here the last stanza of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir in which Nizār declares that the vacuum left behind by the departed President can never be filled:

I call upon you, Abū Khālid,
 Though I know that my voice is too distant to be heard
 And know that you will not answer
 And that miracles cannot be repeated.¹¹⁵

since in our view this is an obvious exaggeration.

2. Many modern Arab critics are agreed that elegy is an enumeration of the

dead person's virtues, attributes and deeds - for example, nobility, courage, breadth of knowledge, piety and self-control. Arabic elegies were composed in the Jāhiliyya and the succeeding ages in accordance with this idea, and still are.¹¹⁶ The preceding elegies by Nizār scarcely depart from this model. Any careful reading of them will reveal that Nizār praised Nasser either by indicating his heroism and achievements (as in Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, al-Haram al-Rābi' and Ilayhi fi Yawm Milādihi) or by making the period of his rule seem beautiful in the mind of the reader (because of his great admiration for it, as he considers it a unique and matchless period in the modern history of the Arabs). See for example the last stanza of Risāla ilā Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir:

And when our children ask us;
 Who are you?
 In what age did you live -
 In the age of what inspired leader?
 In the age of what magician?
 We shall answer them: In the age of 'Abd al-Nāṣir.
 O God! What a marvellous testimony
 That man should exist in the time of 'Abd al-Nāṣir!¹¹⁷

We may note that Nizār does not attack Nasser or hint at any negative aspects of his rule, such as his refusal to share power or his struggle with the Muslim Brethren¹¹⁸, but draws a magnificent picture of him as a great leader whose like will never come again. Thus we do not find it unreasonable to consider these elegies as a variety of praise for the dead.¹¹⁹

3. In his elegies al-Haram al-Rābi', Risāla ilā Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir and Ilayhi fi Yawm Milādihi, Nizār repeats two fixed ideas, those of return and embodiment. By the first we mean the return of the dead person to life once again. It is possible that Nizār derived this idea from two sources. The first was the rumour that Nasser had not died but had ascended like a prophet to Heaven, and that his spirit was wandering through the green

fields and the ancient monuments. This rumour was repeated frequently in Egypt, particularly in the poor quarters, and dominated the minds of many immediately after Nasser's death.¹²⁰ The second source is the Shiite idea of return (raj'a), i.e. the return of the Imām after occultation to a new life.¹²¹

As for embodiment, what we mean by this is the appearance of the dead person, after the disappearance of his body, in new and different forms which are recognised everywhere. This embodiment is without doubt very close to the theory of hulūl embraced by extreme Sufis, especially al-Hallāj (858-922) and his followers, the gist of which is a belief that God is immanent in everything, so that it is correct to give His name to all existing things.¹²²

4. Nizār was not a specialist in the art of elegy or an outstanding exponent of it. He only composed elegies upon those closest to him, and so their number is small. In addition to his elegies upon Nasser, he wrote only two, full of beauty, truth and anguish - Ilā al-Amīr al-Dimashqī Tawfiq Qabbānī and Qasīdat Bilqīs. We shall glance at these now to see if they are different from the above elegies upon Nasser.

(a) Ilā al-Amīr al-Dimashqī Tawfiq Qabbānī

When we look at this elegy we find that Nizār's grief is deep and tragic. With the death of his son while a university student, he feels that he has lost an important part of himself as an individual human being, and that he is living in an unending state of desolation.¹²³ He mentions that his sufferings at his loss are personal and unique to him.¹²⁴ Thus we understand that they differ from the sufferings expressed in his elegies upon Nasser, in which the Arabs as a whole shared.

It is interesting to note that in his elegy upon his son Nizār turns to Death and portrays it as a cruel, overwhelming force which attacks mankind suddenly, a previously unfamiliar portrayal:

Death attacks us from every direction
And cuts us like two willows¹²⁵

or again:

O Tawfiq,
If Death had a son, he would know what the death of sons is
And if Death had a mind
We would ask him how he explains the death of nightingales
and jasmine
And if Death had a heart
He would hesitate to slaughter our good children¹²⁶

He concludes the elegy by giving a picture of the father who awaits the return of his son, which is almost a repetition of the idea of raj'a which we find in the earlier elegies.¹²⁷

(b) Qasīdat Bilqīs

This is a long elegy in which Nizār grieves for his second wife, the Iraqi Bilqīs al-Rāwī, who was killed in a bomb blast at the Iraqi embassy in Beirut on 15 December 1981. He begins the poem by speaking of her wondrous beauty, regarding her as one of the beautiful creatures of nature, like peacocks, deer or the waves of the Tigris¹²⁸, and then goes beyond this to compare her to Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba.¹²⁹ When he realises that she is dead, he longs for her¹³⁰, and expects her to come back to life again and suddenly come home.¹³¹ In this waiting, he reveals a deep grief which we are not accustomed to find in him, and he cries out:

Bilqis,
 We are wounded, wounded in our depths
 Our eyes are haunted by bewilderment
 Bilqis
 How you took up my days and my dreams
 And abolished gardens and seasons!¹³²

He almost collapses under the effect of her death, and he is racked by acute feelings of loss and lack of direction.¹³³ Now another part of his personal existence is being destroyed, as happened before with ^{The death of} Nasser or the death of his son Tawfiq in 1973. Immediately he is overwhelmed again by memories, accompanied by longing for her, and he grows calmer,¹³⁴ but his sorrow continues to resound unceasingly in his soul.¹³⁵

After saying all this, Nizār now moves to another subject, accusing the Arabs of murdering Bilqis. This accusation does not remain a simple accusation, as in the case of his poem Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, but takes on a new, different imprint, that of political satire. This political satire is the most striking feature of the poem, and distinguishes it from his earlier elegies. Perhaps this is the reason for its popularity and the eagerness with which it is read by a wide Arab public. In fact, this satire does not occur in a single consecutive series of lines, but consists of a number of passages distributed through the body of the poem. Nizār throws it in the face of the reader to give vent to his rage at himself and at his society. This political satire comprises the following points:

(i) Doubt that the Arabs are a civilised nation, and the idea that they are a tribe which enjoys all the things a tribe enjoys, such as tribalism, individualism, hostility, unsettledness, internecine fighting, and conflict with other tribes:

And I shall say
 That the story of the diffusion of culture is the silliest joke ever uttered

For we are a tribe among tribes.¹³⁶

(ii) The claim that the events which took place in past Arab history are identical to the events which are taking place today in contemporary Arab life in their general backwardness and degeneracy:

I shall never read history after today
My fingers are on fire
And my clothes are covered in blood
Here we are, entering our Stone Age
Going back a thousand years every day.¹³⁷

(iii) A hint that the urge to kill, shed blood, and destroy oneself and others is an ancient urge among the Arabs, and that the crimes committed against the Arab today in Arab societies are an extension of this ancient urge:

Here we are, Bilqis,
Entering once again the age of the Jāhiliyya;
Now we are entering savageness
Backwardness, ugliness and humiliation
Entering once again the ages of barbarism
Where writing is a journey
Between shrapnel and shrapnel
Where killing a butterfly in its field has become the cause.¹³⁸

(iv) A hint that the destiny of the Arab is to die by treachery and assassination at the hands of another Arab, with no distinction between man and woman. Thus the Arab lives in perpetual fear. He expects a stab in the back, and however long he lives he is already dead, and his death is pre-ordained and inescapable:

Bilqis,
Our fate as Arabs is that Arabs murder us
Arabs eat our flesh,
Arabs rip open our bellies
And Arabs open our graves.
How can we flee from this fate?¹³⁹

(v) A suggestion that the Arabs have other attributes in addition to murdering - lying, distortion, concealment and hypocrisy:

I shall say that our chastity is whoredom
 And our piety is filth:
 I shall say that our struggle is lies
 And that there is no difference
 Between politics and debauchery.¹⁴⁰

(vi) The declaration that the Arabs are not merely enemies of mankind, but enemies of everything else, especially nature, culture and beauty:

Even green eyes are devoured by the Arabs
 Even locks of hair, and rings,
 Bracelets, mirrors and playthings.
 Even the stars fear my country
 And I do not know the reason.
 Even the birds flee from my country
 And I do not know the reason
 Even the planets, and the ships, and the clouds,
 Even the notebooks, and the books
 And all of the things of beauty,
 All of them, are against the Arabs.¹⁴¹

(vii) Condemnation of contemporary Arab régimes who take on a savage and primitive form, that of a gang headed by a wicked and malign boss who is more like a bloodthirsty pirate than anything else (symbolised by Abū Lahab, the uncle of the Prophet who worked constantly to harm him), surrounded by other evil aides:

I shall say at the investigation
 How my gazelle died by the sword of Abū Lahab
 All the bandits, from the Gulf to the Ocean
 Are destroying, burning,
 Plundering, taking bribes,
 Attacking women
 As Abū Lahab wishes.¹⁴²

He goes on to draw a terrifying picture of Abū Lahab in which he is like an octopus which sees everything, knows everything, and rules everything. In general, it is close to the picture of the Sultan in stanza 4 or the poem al-Mumaththilūn:

There is not a grain of wheat in the land
Which grows without the approval of Abū Lahab
There is no child born among us
Whose mother has not visited one day
The bed of Abū Lahab
There is no prison opened
Without the approval of Abū Lahab
There is no head cut off
Without the command of Abū Lahab.¹⁴³

Nizār accuses Abū Lahab and his gang of shedding his wife's blood in three more consecutive stanzas which illustrate their savagery and their ^{evil} characters.¹⁴⁴

(viii) A mention of the failure of the Arabs to liberate Palestine,¹⁴⁵ and their preoccupation with settling scores with one another by assassinating the innocent:

If, after a quarter of a century, they had liberated
An olive or had restored a lemon
And had wiped clean its shame from history
I would thank those who killed you, Bilqīs
Whom I worship to the point of intoxication
But they abandoned Palestine
To murder a gazelle.¹⁴⁶

Unquestionably, this political satire is a new genre in Arabic poetry, which takes no account of anything, however great and holy it may be. It is the essence of Nizār's spiritual and intellectual revolt against contemporary Arab life - its corruption, its flabbiness, its motionlessness and its

hidebound nature. It is a raging storm in the face of anyone who claims that Arab society is still pure and unsullied, wearing a chastity belt and sleeping on silken pillows.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Our aim here is not to chronicle the life of Nasser. This may be obtained from many other sources, for example Jean and Simone Lacouture, Egypt in Transition, London 1958; P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics, Indiana 1961; K. Wheelock, Nasser's New Egypt, New York 1960; P. Mansfield, Nasser's Egypt, London 1965 and R. Stephens, Nasser, London 1971.
2. al-Mawsū'a al-Filastīniyya, Vol.2, p.59.
3. Sa'd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, "al-Muqaddasāt wa-al-Mudannasāt fi Thawrat Yūliyū", al-Dastūr, Amman, no. 7521, year 22, Sat. 30 July 1988, p.17.
4. M. Amin al-'Alim, "al-Ma'raka al-Thaqāfiyya fi Misr", in Misr min al-Thawra ilā al-Ridda, ed. Dār al-Talī'a, Beirut 1981, p.149.
5. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, al-Mithāq, Beirut n.d., p.28.
6. Ibid., pp.28-29.
7. Ibid., pp.12-14.
8. al-Mawsū'a al-Filastīniyya, Vol. 2, p.59.
9. Majīd Khaddūri, 'Arab Mu'āṣirūn; Adwār al-Qāda fi al-Siyāsa, Beirut 1973, pp.93-94.
10. Mawsū'at al-Siyāsa, Vol.2, p.75.
11. See al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.641; M. Amin al-'Alim, op. cit., pp. 150-151; and Najlā' Abū 'Izz al-Dīn, 'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-al-'Arab, Cairo 1981, pp.27-181.
12. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 195.
13. Ibid., pp.199-200.
14. Ibid., p.200.
15. Mawsū'at al-Siyāsa, Vol.2, p.75.
16. Hasan Sa'b, "'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.2, year 19, February 1971, p.4.
17. Mawsū'at al-Siyāsa, Vol.2, p.76.
18. Majīd Khaddūri, op. cit., p. 94.
19. Jamāl al-Sharqāwī, "al-Nāṣiriyya wa-al-Nidāl didd al-Isti'mār", al-Adāb, op. cit., p. 54.
20. Nadīm al-Bayṭār, "al-Nāṣiriyya wa-Maqāṣidunā al-Thawriyya", al-Adab, op. cit., p. 10.
21. al-Mawsū'a al-Filastīniyya, Vol.2, p.59.
22. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 213.
23. Hasan Hanafi, "'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-Qaḍiyyat al-Ṣulḥ ma'a Isrā'il"

in 'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-mā ba'd, ed. Anīs Ṣāyigh, Beirut 1980, p.10, p.12, p.16.

24. al-Mawsū'a al-Filastīniyya, Vol. 2, p.60.
25. Ibid., pp.59-60.
26. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 207.
27. Jamāl al-Sharqāwī, op. cit., p. 49.
28. al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.1770.
29. Muhammad Fā'iq, 'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-al-Thawra al-Ifriqiyya, Beirut 1984, p.5.
30. al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.1770.
31. Mawsū'at al-Siyāsa, Vol.2, p.75.
32. Majīd Khaddūri, op. cit., p. 92.
33. Jamāl al-Sharqāwī, op. cit., p. 54.
34. Majīd Khaddūri, op. cit., p. 95.
35. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 207.
36. Qustantin Zurayq, "'Abd al-Nāṣir al-Mubdi'", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.1, year 19, January 1971, p.3.
37. Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, op. cit., p. 15.
38. Ibid., p.15.
39. Nadīm al-Bayṭar, "al-Nāṣiriyya wa-Maqāṣidunā al-Thawriyya", al-Adāb, op. cit., p. 9.
40. 'Abd al-Laṭīf Zakī al-Sayyid, 'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-Hā'ulā'i, Cairo 1975, pp.28-29.
41. Ghālī Shukrī, "Madkhal Tamhidī ilā al-Fikr al-Nāṣiri", in Miṣr min al-Thawra ilā al-Ridda, op. cit., p. 34.
42. Muḥyi al-Din Ṣubḥī, al-'Arabi al-Filastīni wa-al-Filastīni al-'Arabi; Dirāsāt fi al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa-Ṣirā'ihā ma'a al-Ṣahyūniyya, Damascus 1977, p.95.
43. 'Abd al-Karīm Ahmad, "al-Nāṣiriyya wa-al-Masira al-'Arabiyya", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.2, year, 9, February 1971, p.21.
44. Fathī Ridwān, "Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir wa-Sirr Tārikhihi al-Maknūn", al-Majallā, Cairo, no.166, year 14, October 1970, p.13.
45. Muḥyi al-Din Ṣubḥī, op. cit., pp. 95-96.
46. Sa'd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, "al-Dawla al-Qutriyya wa-Sināriyūhāt al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi", al-Waḥda, Rabat, no.48, year 4, December 1988, p.5.

47. Fathī Ridwān, op. cit., p. 11.
48. Ḥasan Ḥanafī, op. cit., p. 28.
49. al-Mawsū'a al-Filastīniyya, Vol.2, p.6.
50. After his death, Nasser's enemies made serious charges against his regime and his administration, such as corruption and repression. Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal refuted all of these accusations and defended Nasser in an objective fashion in his well-known book Li-Miṣr lā li-'Abd al-Nāṣir, Kuwait 1976.
51. 'Abd al-Laṭīf Zakī al-Sayyid, op. cit., p. 124.
52. Ibid., p.98.
53. Ibid., p.134.
54. Ibid., p.139.
55. al-Majalla, Cairo, no.166, year 14, October 1970, pp.14-15.
56. Ibid., p.16.
57. al-Majalla, Cairo, no.167, year 14, November 1970, pp.28-31.
58. Ibid., pp.48-50.
59. Ibid., pp.62-63.
60. Ibid., p.65.
61. 'Abd al-Laṭīf Zakī al-Sayyid, op. cit., pp. 73-76, pp. 77-78, pp. 81-83.
62. Ibid., pp.170-172.
63. Ibid., pp.168-169.
64. Ibid., pp. 165-166.
65. Mahmūd Darwīsh, Diwān Mahmūd Darwīsh, Beirut 1987, Vol.1, pp.574-580.
66. Fadwā Tūqān, Diwān Fadwā Tūqān, Beirut 1978, pp.602-605.
67. Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, p.236.
68. Ibid., pp.236-237.
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87. Ibid., p.357.
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89. Ibid., p.362.
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93. Sāmi Khashaba, "Qasīdat Nizār Qabbāni", al-Adāb, Beirut, no.11, year 18, November 1970, p.91.
94. Ibid., p.92.
95. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.367.
96. Ibid., p.368.
97. Ibid., p.369.
98. Ibid., p.370.
99. Ibid., p.370.
100. Ibid., pp.371-372.
101. Ibid., p.371.

102. Ibid., p.372.
103. Ibid., p.376.
104. Ibid., p.378.
105. Ibid., p.379.
106. Ibid., p.379.
107. Ibid., p.379.
108. Ibid., p.384.
109. Ibid., p.385.
110. Ibid., p.386.
111. Ibid., p.387.
112. Ibid., pp.387-388.
113. Ibid., pp.388-389.
114. Ibid., pp.388-389.
115. Ibid., pp.389-390.
116. Jabbūr 'Abd al-Nūr, al-Mu'jam al-Adabi, Beirut 1979, pp.120-121.
117. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.380.
118. For further details see Sa'd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, "al-Muqaddasāt wa-al-Mudannasāt fī Thawrat Yūliyū", al-Dastūr, op. cit., p. 17.
119. The idea that elegy is a kind of panegyric is familiar to modern critics. See for example 'Izz al-Dīn Ismā'il, Fī al-Shi'r al-'Abbāsi: al-Ru'ya wa-al-Fann, Cairo 1980, pp.36-63 and Mustafā al-Shak'a, Funūn al-Shi'r fī Mujtama' al-Hamdāniyyīn, Cairo 1958, p.133.
120. 'Abd al-Laṭīf Zakī al-Sayyid, op. cit., p. 133.
121. al-Mawsū'a al-'Arabiyya al-Muyassara, p.863, p.1764.
122. Jabbūr 'Abd al-Nūr, op. cit., p. 99.
123. Nizār Qabbāni, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1983, Vol. 2, pp.277-278.
124. Ibid., pp.278-279.
125. Ibid., p.278.
126. Ibid., p.284.
127. Ibid., p.285.
128. Nizār Qabbāni, Qasīdat Bilqīs, Beirut 1982, pp.2-5.

129. Ibid., p.11.
130. Ibid., pp.20-21.
131. Ibid., pp.22-24.
132. Ibid., p.25.
133. Ibid., pp.30-32.
134. Ibid., pp.34-39.
135. Ibid., pp.48-49.
136. Ibid., p.10.
137. Ibid., p.45.
138. Ibid., p.15.
139. Ibid., pp.42-43.
140. Ibid., p.51.
141. Ibid., pp.53-54.
142. Ibid., p.60.
143. Ibid., pp.62-63.
144. Ibid., pp.64-66.
145. Ibid., p.68-70.
146. Ibid., p.71.

CHAPTER EIGHTTHE CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON

This chapter will undertake to study the effect created by the Civil War in Lebanon upon Nizār Qabbānī's poetry. It consists of three linked sections. In the introduction there is a brief résumé of the origins of the Civil War, its development, its causes, its miseries, the ways of escape from it, Nizār's views on it, and his relationship with Beirut before the war and after it. It will be noted that we shall not discuss here the views of Arab critics on the effect of this war upon Arab literature, because we have not come across anything here of any real interest.

In the second section we shall analyse those of Nizār's poems which are devoted to the Civil War. We note that they revolve around a single topic, the image of Beirut. In them Nizār follows the destructive effects of the war upon Beirut, upon the competing Lebanese factions, and upon himself personally. We shall see that he plays in his poetry the role both of an observer of events, and of a participant.

In the last section we shall record some critical observations on Nizār's poetry in Beirut, particular his inflation of his personal sufferings over its destruction, his portrayal of it as a ravished woman, his reference to it as a one-dimensional city of evil and blackness, his assertion of his links with other Arab cities, and his portrayal of it, before the war took place there, as a city of love and peace, as opposed to its image during the war and after.

I

INTRODUCTION1. The Civil War: its beginnings and development

On the 13 April 1975, in the presidency of Sulayman Franjiyeh, elements of the Phalange killed 27 passengers, Palestinian and Lebanese, while they were travelling in a bus in the Shar'qiyya suburb of Beirut. This event was the beginning of the unending Civil War.¹ On the following day Yasir Arafat sent messages to Arab Kings and Presidents asking them to intervene. A number of local forces held a meeting chaired by Kamal Jumblatt and declared that the massacre was part of a colonialist plot carried out by the Phalange. At the same time Abbot Shirbil Qissis, the president of the Maronite League (al-Rābiṭa al-Mārūniyya), paid a visit to Haifa to coordinate possible future steps with the Israelis.²

In following days clashes broke out between various parties to the conflict, communal killings began, and the Prime Minister Rashid al-Sulh resigned after issuing a statement in which he charged the Phalange with the responsibility for having created the situation.³ In the meantime two opposing forces appeared on the Lebanese scene, each having the aim of destroying the other. The first were the progressive nationalist parties, including the Druze, the Shi'a, the Sunni Muslims and the Palestinian resistance, and the second were the right-wing Christian Maronite parties, including the Phalange, headed by Pierre Gemayyel, the National Liberal Party, headed by Camille Chamoun, the Zghorta Marada organisation headed by Sulayman Franjiyeh, and the Forces Libanaises headed by Bashir Gemayyel.⁴

When Franjiyeh's term of office came to an end the war was at its

height. He was succeeded as President by Elias Sarkis in April 1976, who began his term with a mini-summit conference in Riyadh (October of the same year) which ended with a decision to send Arab peacekeeping forces to Lebanon under his personal command with the aim of halting internal fighting and preventing its expansion. These forces entered Lebanon on 25 January 1977 and 1 April 1981, but were not able to play any commanding role there.⁵

In the throes of this Lebanese-Lebanese struggle Israel found the opportunity to mount a series of actions which had the effect of further aggravating the Civil War. Thus in 14 March 1979 it invaded the South of Lebanon to protect a self-proclaimed "security zone", and after withdrawing its troops from some towns in the South of Lebanon it set up a puppet militia under the leadership of Col. Sa'd Haddād which created its own mini-state in the area.⁶

This intervention was crowned on 6 June 1982 when Israel sent over 40,000 troops, backed by artillery and the air force, into the South. By July their number had risen to 170,000⁷ and the Israeli advance had reached the outskirts of Beirut. The objectives of this invasion were never publicly stated but it seems clear that Israel's intentions were: (a) to completely destroy the P.L.O.'s organisation in Lebanon and drive its forces out of the country and (b) to convert Lebanon into a client régime under the leadership of Bashir Gemayyel and the Phalange.⁸ Neither of these objectives were to prove feasible. Israel was unwilling to commit troops to street-fighting in West Beirut with the heavy casualties which would be entailed, and Bashir Gemayyel was killed in an explosion on the very day of his election as President.⁹ Meanwhile Israel had sought to reduce West Beirut by a combined siege and bombardment whose effects were so horrific as to force international

intervention, particularly on the part of the U.S.A. The P.L.O. agreed to remove its fighting men, and on 18 September the massacres of Sabra and Chatilla took place, carried out by elements of the Phalange with Israeli complicity.¹⁰

On 23 September 1982 Amin Gemayyel was elected President of Lebanon and remained in office for six years without being able to remove the Israelis from the South, reunite the country, or end the Civil War.¹¹ His term of office ended in 1988 without a new President being elected to succeed him. A few seconds before leaving office he signed a decree forming a military government headed by the Maronite General ^{Michel} Aoun. This was a clear breach of the National Pact, the basis of co-existence among the various religious communities, which specifies that the President should be a Maronite and the Prime Minister a Muslim.¹² As a result two new governments appeared, a Maronite government headed by Michel Aoun, and a Muslim government headed by Selim Hoss. At the time of writing conflict between the two sides is extremely acute.

2. Reasons for the Civil War

(a) Sectarianism

In the view of a large number of Lebanese, sectarianism is the prime reason for what is happening now in Lebanon.¹³ It has also been regarded as the prime reason for the previous wars which occurred in 1860 and 1958.¹⁴ The political system in Lebanon is based on sectarianism. Article 95 of the constitution stipulates that religious communities should be justly represented in the government and in state appointments, and with the passage of time this became a fixed practice. On this basis the Maronites kept many important positions, which made the other communities feel that they had been blatantly defrauded. Among these posts were those of President, Army Chief, Director of Intelligence, Chief of Police, Governor of the Bank of Lebanon,

Head of the Lawyer's Union and many others.¹⁵ Some modern studies have stated that sectarianism has some fatal negative features; it is centred upon the interests of the religious community, it seeks to suppress other communities, it relies upon fanatical religious ideas,¹⁶ and it does not recognise equal political and legal rights for all citizens.¹⁷ We may note that Kamal Jumblatt, the leader of the Druze, said of the Lebanese government in 1967 that its policy was one of racial discrimination.¹⁸ He said also that the Maronites represented a "Lebanese Rhodesia" which treated the other communities as the white masters treated the blacks.¹⁹

(b) The Palestinian presence

Some Lebanese parties, especially those of the extreme right,²⁰ consider that the physical Palestinian presence in Lebanon upset the delicate demographic balance and shattered the formula of coexistence among the population. These parties believe that expelling the Palestinians, and distributing them among other Arab countries, would bring back stability to Lebanon.²¹ As for the armed Palestinian resistance, this has constituted, for these people and for many Lebanese in general, a source of great danger and fear. Hostility toward them has grown with the increase in armed clashes between them and their opponents in heavily populated areas and the extension of the area of their dispersion in Lebanese territory.²² We should mention here that on the 25 July 1976 the Lebanese government signed an agreement with the P.L.O. regulating the Palestinian presence and agreeing on the withdrawal of P.L.O. fighters from the South.²³ Unquestionably, the resistance became a major factor in the Lebanese equation after it joined the National Movement headed by Kamal Jumblatt which opposed the right-wing forces.²⁴

(c) Class differences - poverty, deprivation and misery

Lebanese society suffers from one major shortcoming, which is the lack of equality between its members. There are destitute poor, and a few rich, in every community, who monopolise everything and own everything. Speaking of this problem, the Egyptian writer Jamāl al-Alfi says:

Simply, the problem of the Lebanese people is the problem of a mere 10% of the total Lebanese population who possess 83% of the total national wealth of the country. As for the remainder of the Lebanese people, they are on the margin of life: either recruited into the party militias or the militias of local magnates, or working in the least respected occupations, or as day-labourers, or emigrated to God knows where.²⁵

It may be added that the Lebanese government tended to develop some regions to the exclusion of others, so that whole regions (like the South, Hirmil and 'Akkār) turned into areas populated by deprived people. In recent years emigration from these areas to Beirut has increased so much that an area has grown up around it known as the "misery belt" (about 600,000 miserable people living in shanty-towns who have gained nothing from the Lebanese "trickledown" but the pleasure of looking at the red lights in the shop windows).²⁶ The government's neglect of this broad popular base helped to fill the latter with hatred for the rich of Lebanon and to create a deep cleavage in society.²⁷

(d) Parties and political movements

There grew up in Lebanon between the thirties and the seventies a number of left-wing or left-leaning²⁸ parties and movements which were able to successfully reach wide sections of the oppressed Lebanese masses. According to Māzin al-Bandak:

It is not strange that we find in the Lebanese Progressive Movement the most aware, cultured and active members of Lebanese youth, from all its communities. We can only conclude that the

dynamic elements in the Lebanese left have been able to gain the trust of the deprived groups and to mobilise these groups under their leadership. Have the people of the ancien régime left any other way forward for the new generation?²⁹

These are the most important internal causes of the Lebanese Civil War. To these we can add certain other external causes, such as Arab-Arab conflicts, Israeli intervention, and international influences. These, however, in our view, lie outside the framework of our study.

3. The miseries of the war and ways of escape

After it broke out in 1975 the Civil War in Lebanon turned into an immense self-generating monster. It created its own institutions - militias, armed organisations and joint military leaderships - which expanded, took root and fed upon the circumstances of the internal conflict.³⁰

It brought many miseries in its train - the disintegration of Lebanese society into factional units, the loss of freedoms, an immense loss of life (there is no definite figure available as yet), the extension of the area of poverty, the collapse of the Lebanese lira, the dispersion of the citizens overseas, and immense damage to buildings, residential areas and cities.³¹ An Arab journalist visiting Beirut in August 1988 describes it as follows:

Ruined buildings. Collapsed walls. Sewers, arches, and windows opened up by shells of differing sizes and destructive power. Parasitic plants, overarching weeds of various colours and shapes. Walls and soil whose cracks have sprouted grass and anemones. Débris everywhere.³²

In addition, the Civil War had serious psychological effects. On this point Munah al-Sulh writes:

A destruction has taken place in the Lebanese individual himself, and in the values of his society. Abilities and virtues which used to characterise the Lebanese as contemporary have regressed within the individual. So far no accurate scientific studies or statistics have become available to determine the regression on this level, that of contemporaneity. But it can be asserted ... that today's Lebanese is more shut in within his own private world (that of family, local neighbourhood, and the direct surroundings to which he belongs) than he was previously, that he is more concerned with the past than with the future, and that he is less interested in following new manifestations of intellectual and material progress, less programmed in his time and his life, and more inclined to believe in the laws of coincidence, chance and fate.³³

Despite all the horrors of the war in Lebanon a number of educated Lebanese politicians, Christian and Muslim, have remained optimistic that it will come to an end. They believe that the road to salvation lies in the following measures: the abolition of sectarianism, in all its aspects and manifestations; belief in the Lebanese state, in that it is a benefit to all communities; a reliance upon secularism as a firm basis, with all faiths regarded with complete impartiality; the achievement of a minimum political consensus between competing communities upon the most pressing subjects of dispute; the adoption of a policy of development, bearing in mind that the building of Lebanon begins and ends with the human being; and the liberation of the border strip from Israeli domination and putting an end to Israeli incursions into the South by implementing U.N. Security Council resolutions with the cooperation of international forces.³⁴

4. Nizār and the Civil War

Nizār describes the time at which the Civil War broke out in Lebanon as the "grey time, the time of snipers and shedders of blood, the time of mercenaries and anarchists, the time of madness and madmen".³⁵

He describes Lebanon after destruction had descended upon it as "the country of nervous collapses, of people with complexes and of sadists",³⁶ and compares it to "a mad ship wallowing in a sea of contradiction, fanaticism and foolishness, in which every sailor tries to interfere in the captaincy, the course and the steering".³⁷

He believes that the losses arising from this war are frightful and innumerable, and compares them to the losses which would probably have been suffered if there had been a war with Israel, and thinks that they would have been small by comparison:

In this filthy Civil War - and all civil wars are filthy - we have lost many more times the victims and suffered many more collapses of economic institutions, commercial, industrial, banking and tourist companies than we would have done if we had entered the wars of 1967 and 1973 against Israel, or the Second World War against Hitler. War against Israel could never have caused more destruction, ruin or hatred than this destruction which has blown up Lebanese life from its roots and exploded all the prosperity which Lebanese intelligence has built ... during the last quarter of a century.³⁸

He remarks that the tragic results which this war will have for the spirits and minds of the Lebanese will remain alive for a long time after its conclusion. In this context he cites the Spanish Civil War of 1936-9 as an example, saying that it created more than a million dead, and that its memory, decades later, is still to be felt in the songs of contemporary flamenco singers.³⁹

The Civil War, to Nizār, was a kind of suicide complex pushing the Lebanese to collective death. He says that it resembles the Jewish Masada complex.⁴⁰ He was never optimistic that it would end soon, and in fact expected it to be a "hundred years war", because it was a complex, interlocking and enduring war, which gradually expanded and grew hotter.⁴¹

He considers that the parties responsible for the escalation of this war are three: the traditional sectarian political system,⁴² Lebanese intellectuals who did not speak out,⁴³ and Israel.⁴⁴

5. Nizār, the Civil War and Beirut

For Nizār, Beirut, during the years he spent there (1966-1982), represented a number of aspects: it was the base of his work, supervising the publishing house which he owned; it was the centre of his creativity, being the place in which he wrote the greater part of his poetry; it was the centre of his renown, being the station from which he set off to other parts of the Arab world;⁴⁵ and it was a centre of cultural and intellectual diffusion to rival Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. Unquestionably, all these aspects combined to draw him to remain in Beirut and to adopt it as his country and his home which he never ceased to cherish. Thus his relationship to it was not an ordinary one, but was firm and outstanding, closer to friendship, love, passion and adoption than to anything else. Thus Beirut was always, both before and after the Civil War, something quite unique for him.⁴⁶

Nizār feels great sorrow and regret at the outbreak of the Civil War and the fact that it is centred on Beirut itself, and wishes sincerely that it would stop. He expects that if the war is protracted, Beirut will turn into a deserted city of ruins:

I am Beirut. Works on archaeology and excavations will mention me as they mention Sodom, Amorium... Hiroshima and the other cities against which God sent "swarms of flying creatures which pelted them with stones of baked clay."⁴⁷

This expectation carries within itself a feeling of eagerness to

preserve the beauty of Beirut, natural and man-made, from annihilation. It is directed, in the first place, to those who wish to do violence to Beirut, in the hope that they will desist or take warning.

It may be noted here that his love for Beirut remained strong, mixed with a tremendous nostalgia, even after he left it in June 1982 for Larnaca. A year after this date he wrote, illustrating the difference between Beirut and the other cities through which he had wandered:

I was everywhere and nowhere. To me, all the cities of the world were transit halls or hotels fit for a stay of one or two nights but no more. After Beirut I could not sleep anywhere or come to an understanding with anywhere. The whole world was a third-class hotel and Beirut was home. The whole world had no walls and Beirut was the roof. The whole world was a desert and Beirut was the water. The whole of geography was secondary matters and margins, and Beirut was the original.⁴⁸

The Civil War and Beirut dominated Nizār as a poet and he wrote six poems on them: Yā Sitt al-Dunyā yā Bayrūt, Sab' Rasā'il Dā'i'a fī Barīd Bayrūt, Bayrūt Maḥziyyatukum -- Bayrūt Ḥabibatī, Ilā Bayrūt al-Unthā ma'a al-I'tidhār, Bayrūt Tahtariqu ... wa-Uḥibbukī and Akhir 'Uṣfūr Yakhruj min Gharnāṭa. On close inspection, we have found that they carry within themselves a single subject, the image of Beirut. A detailed analysis of all of them follows below.

II

THE IMAGE OF BEIRUT

In order to facilitate our study of this image it has been divided into

four sections, which are: the image of Beirut - death and the expectation of rebirth; the image of Beirut-war, love and poetry; the image of Beirut - the attitude of the Arabs, of sectarian groups and of Nizār to the war; and the image of Beirut - despair at the war and flight. A detailed account of these follows.

1. The image of Beirut - death and the expectation of rebirth

This is represented by one poem, Yā Sitt al-Dunyā yā Bayrūt. In it the city Beirut takes the form of a luxurious woman, weighed down with beauty and adornments. She is exposed, without any previous warning, to a sudden attack in which her beauty is destroyed and her life turns into a continuous hell. All Nizār can do is ^{to} ask with horror and amazement what is the nature of the attackers, as when he says (stanza 1):

O Queen of the World, O Beirut,
 Who has sold your bracelets inlaid with rubies?
 Who has confiscated your magic ring
 And cut your golden braids?
 Who has murdered the joy sleeping in your green eyes
 Who has slashed your face with a knife
 And thrown vitriol on your wondrous lips?
 Who has poisoned the sea water, and scattered hatred on the rosy
 beaches?⁴⁹

These lines are clearly a successful portrayal of the conflict between innocence (Beirut/the woman) and the attackers (the new killers). We note that the torment and killing of Beirut the woman was savage. This savagery may be derived from a social factor, the subordination of woman and the domination of man in modern Arab society.⁵⁰

If, for Nizār, Beirut the woman is a victim, she is also a changeable city, never remaining in one condition and never hesitating to commit murder, even against herself (stanza 2). She emerges from unique innocence to unique

savagery:

Who would have thought that the rose would grow thousands of
fangs?
Who would have thought that the eye would one day fight against
the eyelashes?⁵¹

He adds, in the same stanza:

From where did this savagery come to you, O Beirut
When you were as delicate as a houri?
I do not understand how the house-sparrow turned
Into a wild night-cat
I do not understand at all, O Beirut,
I do not understand how you forgot God
And returned to the era of idolatry.⁵²

In our view, this image of the city which is killing itself is at odds with and contradicts the previous image of Beirut the tender, delicate woman who is suddenly attacked. Nizār should have dispensed with one of them. This image of Beirut turning upon itself may be a reference to the way the Lebanese sectarian groups turned upon one another. Only in this way can the critic accept it without objection.

After this the poem takes us to a new threshold, that of accusation - accusation of the sectarian groups of destroying Beirut. In the poet's view, these groups are, in their aggressive behaviour, closer to primitiveness and backwardness than to civilisation. They are like nomadic beduin who sleep with Beirut in the night, enjoying her body, and then leave her at dawn without any further concern at the crime they have committed (stanza 5).⁵³

It is this piratical behaviour which Nizār condemns, because it does not pay any attention to consequences. Beirut the woman is accused of treachery and murder, while these groups, her executioners and rapists, watch

her death, as though nothing were happening in front of them. Nizār takes on the character of a follower of one of the conflicting groups and cries out, condemning all that has happened (stanza 5):

We confess, now, that we were illiterate
 And did not know what we were doing.
 We confess, now,
 That we were among the killers
 And saw your head
 Falling beneath the rocks of al-Rawsha like a sparrow
 We confess, now,
 That we were, at the time when the sentence was carried out
 False witnesses.⁵⁴

Nizār's sharp condemnation of sectarianism continues when he expresses the view that the murderers of Beirut are not merely enemies of themselves and mankind, but also cruel, savage and ignorant, unable to value the beauty of Beirut or to understand how to treat her. Thus it was easy for them to lay violent hands on her with premeditated intent (stanza 6):

We confess before the One God,
 That we were jealous of you
 And that your beauty pained us.
 We confess now
 That we did not treat you fairly, did not forgive you and did not
 understand you
 And in place of a rose, we gave you a knife.⁵⁵

In stanza 7 he says:

We confess now
 That we were sadists and men of blood
 And were the Devil's agents.⁵⁶

When we go a little further into the poem we find Nizār bestowing descriptions upon Beirut which show her beauty and wonder, describing her, for example, as Astarte, the goddess of fertility, beauty and love. She is also a field of pearls, a harbour of love, a peacock of the water, and the sweetest

of queens (stanza 3).⁵⁷ Indeed, we wonder how these descriptions can be reconciled with the two previous bloody images (the victim and the murderess).

The disparity between the various sections of the poem increases notably in the succeeding stanzas. We are taken by surprise by a new image of Beirut (stanza 4), that of the sleeping woman who will awaken from her sleep at any moment. We sense Nizār standing before her and humbly begging her to wake up, because in her waking lies life for the world, for mankind and for love. Beirut is the centre of life, and without her everything will revert to ruin:

Arise from your sleep
O empress, O blossom, O lamp kindled in the heart,
Arise, so that the world may survive, O Beirut
And we may survive
And love may survive.⁵⁸

Nizār has certainly committed a gross error here, especially when he says "arise from your sleep", since it is inconceivable for us to visualise Beirut as sleeping here when she was a murdered victim before. He should have said something like, "We know that you are dead, but now we are awaiting your resurrection from the world of the dead"; something like this would have been more logical, and the reader would have been perfectly happy with it.

Beirut remains asleep, or absent, and emptiness penetrates everywhere. God and nature (the sea and the moon) depart in search of it (stanza 7)⁵⁹ and Nizār is assailed by a strong feeling that there is some vacuum in life which can only be filled by the resurrection of Beirut amid the ruins. Thus he implores her once again to rise anew so that harmony may prevail over the whole of life (stanza 7):

O Queen of the world, O Beirut,
Arise from beneath the rubble like an almond-blossom in April
Arise from your sorrow -

The revolution is born from the womb of sorrows.
 Arise to honour the forests
 The rivers
 And the valleys.⁶⁰

In his supplication, he does not forget to repeat that he still loves Beirut despite the crimes committed against her and the crimes she has committed against herself (stanza 8), for she is still the city he loves best, with all her innumerable contradictions:

I still love you, despite the follies of man
 I still love you, O Beirut;
 Why do we not start now?⁶¹

2. The image of Beirut: war, love and poetry

This is embodied by two poems, Sab' Rasā'il Dā'i'a fi Barid Bayrūt and Bayrūt Tahtariq .. wa-Uhibbuki.

(a) Sab' Rasā'il Dā'i'a fi Barid Bayrūt

This poem was written in 1977, two years after the beginning of the Civil War. It is divided into seven stanzas or letters, which speak of the effect of the Civil War upon Nizār, and more particularly upon his relationship with Beirut, the beloved woman, and poetry.

Nizār acknowledges that he has become one of the victims of the Civil War (stanza 2) It has tormented him with its miseries until he cries out:

The two-year war
 Has broken me.⁶²

The war grows fiercer, but Nizār resists it, wishing to deny its existence in his world in order to remain a lover. He wishes to meet his beloved and live with her, but his desire remains imprisoned within him. He cannot reach her, because the road is full of barricades, and he is alone, enduring her absence (stanza 2):

So forgive me if I am a little later than I promised
 For it was impossible for me to come
 And impossible to correspond
 Thousands of barriers
 stood between your eyes and myself.⁶³

Suddenly a strange force pervades his soul. He goes toward her, thinking that the road to her is open, and that the world will rejoice at his meeting with her. He is followed by random shots from the fighters, which pursue his dream of reaching the woman, pursue his love for her, and pursue the innocent beauties of nature in which she lives (stanza 2 again):

They opened fire on dreams, and flung them down dead
 They opened fire on love, and flung it down dead
 They opened fire on the sea, on the sun, on the crops
 On the children's books, they cut Beirut's long hair,
 Stole the beautiful life.⁶⁴

After this, Nizār ceases to search for his beloved, and she ceases to think of him. Each goes their own way, and with the passage of time their feelings both toward one another and toward the world change (stanza 5):

This base war has scattered us,
 Made us hideous, deformed us,
 Burned all the old files.⁶⁵

She is away from him for a long time and he loses touch with her. Then he starts to search for her again and to ask where she is (stanza 5):

I no longer know anything about you -
 In what country are you?
 What are you doing today?
 What are you feeling now?
 Have you lost faith, like me, in all the gods
 And the tribes' traditions?⁶⁶

Time passes and the poet's misery increases. One night her image flashes through his mind, and he seizes hold of it and feels that he is in love with her again, forgetting his external world, the world of war (stanza 1):

My darling,
 After two long years of exile and banishment
 I remembered you this evening.
 I was driven mad by your eyes
 Driven mad by my papers
 Driven mad because love had come.⁶⁷

Madness, for him, is his dream and his desire. It is a state in which he wishes to live continually, as it gives him uncommon feelings of wonder and stimulation and sets him apart from the repetitious daily routine.⁶⁸

Nizār awakens from his vision to find himself surrounded by war, which is now knocking increasingly on his door. Will he give up love to save himself? At this point Nizār reveals the view which he has proclaimed in all his love poetry, which is that love is the food of life, the power which revives beauty and spreads warmth.⁶⁹ At the same time he reveals another truth, which is that love in time of war, a period of destruction and ugliness, is a miracle which cannot easily be achieved. War wipes out of man's memory every beautiful past and besieges him in a jungle of death, so that he thinks of nothing but saving himself. At such a time there is no room at all for love (stanza 1):

It is not easy for a man to recollect in time of war

The face of a woman whom he loves
 For war is against memory.
 It is not easy in a time of ugliness
 To gather magnolia flowers
 And the butterflies which emerge at night from the windows of the
 rainy eyes.⁷⁰

As for Nizār, he is a man who is different from the rest of mankind. When war rages, he is completely against it. He was created for love, so that love has become his daily sustenance without which he cannot live. Thus we see him loving in a time of war and ugliness, and achieving the major miracle of continuing to love in the most difficult times of human life.⁷¹

Nizār goes on to speak of the effect of the Civil War upon his poetic creativity, saying that it has committed a second crime against him - in addition to the crime of separating him from his beloved - which is to rob him of the time of poetry and of poetry itself (stanza 3):

They stole the time of poetry from us, my pearl,
 And the writings which fell like red cherries
 From my fingers.⁷²

He repeats the same idea later in stanza 7, adding to it the theft of tranquillity, wonder, love and travel. These are all necessary elements for the generation of poetry.⁷³ We must explain here that for him poetry is not something simple and easy. In brief, poetry equals his life and his existence, and for it to be stolen from him (that is, for him to be forced to abandon it, or to be exiled from it in one way or another) equals his death. It is here that Nizār's personal tragedy lies (stanza 4):

I am alive
 But what does it mean, my lady,
 For a man to be alive?
 If you love me, ask me how my words are;
 A thousand shots have entered the body of poetry.⁷⁴

We could expand our commentary on these lines to say that the problem which disturbs Nizār is not the Civil War with its deaths and its terrors, but his poetry; will the war permit him to write it or not?⁷⁵

This understanding of the war is undoubtedly an egotistical one, steeped in self-worship. If the modern critic accuses Nizār of giving no importance to people's lives in the war, he will not be far from the truth.

In conclusion, Nizār whispers to the reader that war is against love and poetry, which are the basis of every beauty in life. It is for this reason that the opposing warriors look upon him as a danger which threatens them (stanza 4):

I was fighting, my lady, in the ranks of love
 And for this reason I was not among the victors
 I was, my lady, on the side of poetry, and for this reason
 They classified me as a petty bourgeois
 And added me to the list of deviationists.⁷⁶

(b) Bayrūt Taḥtariq . . . wa-Ubbuki

This poem begins with a scene of the rape of Beirut the woman. The protagonists are the confessional factions who participate collectively in the crime in a manner which is both sadistic and masochistic. It is clear that the rape takes place publicly and that the rapists are quite content with their actions, feeling no sense of sin or regret. They believe that it is their sacred right to commit violence against others; it is Beirut, the weak, beautiful and delicate woman, who suffers and bleeds now, and nobody objects to her rape or demands punishment for the perpetrators. All are equally guilty of the crime (stanza 2):

When our country strangled our country
 I was a few metres away from the crime
 Observing the killers
 As they lay with Beirut like a girl
 And took turns with her
 One
 By one
 In accordance with tribal protocol
 Family prerogative
 And military rank.⁷⁷

The further we go into the poem, the more we learn about the methods used by the warring factions to torture Beirut the woman. After raping her, the factions fall upon her body with knives and then throw it into the fire, performing a primitive dance to the tom-tom (stanza 2). This crime is followed by other murders committed by other people, and blood flows so abundantly that it dyes the Mediterranean red.⁷⁸ In the whole of this scene of rape, murder, primitive dancing and redness we see a demonstration of the savagery of the Lebanese factions and a denial of their civilisation, despite the fact that they hide behind slogans like brotherhood, humanity and peace.

This central scene of the murder of Beirut takes shape at the same time as the other more marginal events which are also caused by the barbarism and terrorism of the killers (for example the Beirut international airport crammed with sad families trying to flee, the clouds coming from the Greek islands which fear to approach the Lebanese coast because of the snipers' bullets, and the sea-birds migrating, carrying their young, to distant lands).⁷⁹

In addition the poem transports us to another scene, the destruction of Beirut (stanza 1), in which we see fire devouring her, while firemen intervene to save her, though we do not know whether they will succeed or not. Unexpectedly a new character rushes forward through the flames, that of the hero, Nizār, in order to rescue his beloved and to rescue Beirut and Lebanon.⁸⁰

Instead of telling us what he did for Beirut and Lebanon, we find him launching into a description of his attachment and that of his beloved to Beirut, the city which is now burning. We learn that they were born there and spent their childhood there (stanza 1), and also that Beirut is the city in which love blossomed between them, and which embraced it and blessed it so that it continued to grow in their hearts like a stormy giant.⁸¹ Perhaps this old mutual love between himself and Beirut explains its special place in his heart. We scarcely need say that Nizār's absorption in recalling the past does not cause him to forget the reality in front of him. Very soon the burning Beirut appears once again, and he clings to his beloved as his last hope of escape in the face of destruction and death (stanza 3):

When Beirut was burning
 And everybody
 Was thinking of rescuing what was left of his personal wealth
 I remembered, suddenly
 That you were still my beloved
 And that you were my greatest wealth, which I had not declared
 ... In this wondrous capital
 Which was, once,
 The magic box in which we hid
 All our little treasures.⁸²

At the same time that he declares his love for his beloved, we also find him drawn to Beirut the city and feeling a new bond with it because he finds in it four sacred substances (love, the city, woman and poetry) from which life derives its continuity and its value (stanza 4):

When the masses were expressing their sorrow
 In a single way
 And weeping in a single way
 I was searching for my private sorrow
 For a woman like no other
 A city like no other
 And poems like no others
 On everything which men have written about love for women.⁸³

In the course of his reflections on Beirut there comes a swift reference to the negative effect left by the war upon his poetry and his love - the loss of poetry, the loss of his beloved, of the romantic dreams connected with her, and of travel (stanza 4):

Estimating my losses
 In thousands of words which we could have spoken
 Dozens of ships and trains
 On which we could have travelled
 And hundreds of dreams which we could have realised
 If Beirut had not burned.⁸⁴

Before the end of the poem Nizār renews his loyalty to his beloved the woman, declaring that he will never leave her prey to the hellish situation in Beirut. His ecstasy reaches its height when he realises for certain that he still loves her and that his love for her is still a conquering power which will achieve for him all the harmony and tranquillity which he desires in this life (stanza 5):

But the main thing,
 And this is my discovery,
 Is that I still love you
 And that you still float like a lotus blossom
 On the waters of my memory.⁸⁵

He also says, in the same stanza:

The fateful thing now
 Is that I love you
 And consider myself responsible for the protection of the two most
 beautiful violets
 In the world,
 You and Beirut.⁸⁶

Starting from this loyalty and love, Nizār, the saviour hero, leaps up to rescue his beloved (stanza 6), while Beirut the city is still burning, and plucks her from her room, crying out:

Here I am, I have come
To carry you on my shoulder like a little cat
And take you out
From the ship of fire, death and madness -
For I am against the burning of beautiful cats
Beautiful eyes
And beautiful cities.⁸⁷

3. The image of Beirut, and the attitude of the Arabs, the Lebanese
factions, and Nizār himself to the war

This is represented by two poems, Bayrūt Maḥziyyatukum . . Bayrūt
Ḥabibatī and Ilā Bayrūt al-Unthā ma'a al-I'tidhār.

(a) Bayrūt Maḥziyyatukum . . Bayrūt Ḥabibatī

This poem begins with a bloody scene of innocence and violence which is as close as it could be to a real event. The heroes of the scene are the victim (Beirut/the woman), her enemies, the murderers who set about raping her, and the Arabs who watch the victim without raising a finger. They ought to avenge their sullied honour as they usually do, but they do not. Their manhood has died, and they have withdrawn from facing the enemy. They were associates of the criminals in the commission of the crime. We may note that this scene is similar to the earlier scene found in the second stanza of Bayrūt Taḥtariq . . wa-Uḥibbuki, though with perceptible difference in certain details. Thus while in the previous poem Nizār concentrates on the rapists and murderers, here he gives more attention to bringing the Arab onlookers into the foreground (stanza 1):

Forgive us
If we have left you to die alone
And crept out of the room weeping like fleeing soldiers
Forgive us
If we have seen your rosy blood pouring out like rivers of

carnelian
 Been spectators at an act of adultery
 And have remained silent.⁸⁸

In the second stanza Nizār brings more light to bear on the Arabs' attitude to the Civil War, and suggests that they have washed their hands of it completely by fleeing to tourist and entertainment centres in the West. They flee, it seems to him, because they wish to wipe away the memory of their guilt and fill the void of black misery in their souls:

Alas! How ugly we were, and how cowardly
 When we sold you, Beirut, in the slave-market
 Reserved luxurious flats in the Elysées
 And in London's Mayfair
 Washed away sadness with wine, sex and gambling halls
 And remembered, at the roulette table, news of our country.⁸⁹

Nizār does not content himself with condemning the Arabs' flight from confronting the rape of Beirut, but condemns equally their internal differences (stanza 3) which have made Beirut the woman an easy prey for murderers:

Forgive us
 If we have made you into fuel and firewood
 For the disputes which have torn at the Arab's flesh
 Ever since the Arabs have existed.⁹⁰

It is interesting that Nizār chooses the political leaderships ("the latrines of politics") and the leaders ("the circus kings" and "the players") as a target for his attacks. He blames them for leaving the Lebanese problem without any decisive solution and for making hollow claims to be able to deal with it in a way which makes people lose all trust in them (stanza 5):

Forgive us, my lady Beirut;
 We did not abandon you by choice, but we were disgusted
 By the latrines of politics

And grew tired
Of the circus kings,
The circus, and the fraudulence of the players.⁹¹

As for the conflicting Lebanese factions, he sees in them too a great source of danger to Lebanon, because they build walls of mistrust and mutual hatred rather than trust and tolerance, and because they are unconcerned with the interests of their country, Lebanon, and are concerned only with their own interests. For this reason he criticises them harshly without exception and rejects them all (stanza 5):

And lost faith
In the shops which filled all sides of the city
And sold men hatred and loathing,
Blankets, carpets and smuggled petrol.
Ah, my lady! How we are tortured
When we read that the sun in Beirut has become
A ball at the feet of mercenaries.⁹²

We have already seen that in two poems analysed earlier, Yā Sitt al-Dunyā yā Bayrūt and Bayrūt Tahtariq . . wa-Uḥibbukī, Nizār has illustrated the attitude of the Lebanese factions to their country by giving a tragic picture of Beirut, and this is repeated at the beginning of this poem with the references to murder, rape, and taking pleasure in the perpetration of crimes.

Nizār devotes the remaining stanzas of this poem to a discussion of his own attitude to the Lebanese War. The first thing he wishes to establish is that he refuses to align himself with any of the opposing groups which make religion a means of division and killing (stanza 7):

They demanded that we enter the school of killing
But we refused
They demanded that we cut the Lord in half
But we were ashamed to
We believe in God -

Why did they make God meaningless here?⁹³

Another important point underlined by Nizār is that he rejects the partition of Lebanon, and clings to its natural, known geographical unity, believing that all of its communities can live together in complete security (stanza 7):

They demanded
That we cut off the breast from whose bounty we were suckled
And we excused ourselves,
Stood against all the killers
Stayed with Lebanon, plains and mountains,
Stayed with Lebanon, North and South,
Stayed with Lebanon, cross and crescent,
Stayed with Lebanon the springs,
Lebanon the bunches of grapes,
Lebanon the ardent love.⁹⁴

Nizār's attitude to Lebanon (its people and its tragedy) becomes even more clear as he experiences the acute crises which rage in his own life and the lives of other Lebanese (stanza 4). One of the results of the war is that it scattered the population, including Nizār, to the uttermost ends of the earth and made them repeat the odyssey of the Wandering Jew and pass through many bitter experiences:

This meaningless war has murdered us,
Completely exhausted us of ideas,
Scattered us to the ends of the earth,
Rejected, crushed, ill, exhausted
And made of us, contrary to the prophecies, wandering Jews.⁹⁵

Nizār bears this dispersal patiently (stanza 9), and sets off to wander the world in search of a new home which resembles Beirut and to which he can belong. However he fails:

We have searched for a substitute for you,
O greatest Beirut

O best Beirut
 O purest Beirut,
 But we have not found one.⁹⁶

After this failure, he goes back, desiring no other home. Now he sees it in a beautiful form derived from nature which is, in our view, the image of Beirut of which he dreams after the war (stanza 9):

And we have returned,
 Kissing the land whose stones write poetry,
 Whose trees write poetry
 Whose walls write poetry,
 And taken you to our breast,
 Fields, sparrows, corniche and sea
 And we shouted out like madmen on the ship's deck
 "You are Beirut
 And there is no other Beirut."⁹⁷

This clinging to Beirut and Lebanon, despite having been driven into exile, is a frank and positive call to all the Lebanese who have left their country during the war to return and rebuild it, and a dream of a new country cured of all its previous ills. His attitude to Lebanon is supplemented when, in stanza 8, he hopes that peace will settle upon it instead of war, and that people will search for a radiant life. He fears, however, that the war will have changed people's feelings and made them less in touch with one another, and will also have changed and weakened their relationship with their country.⁹⁸

(b) Ilā Bayrūt al-Unthā ma'a al-I'tidhār

This poem gives a romantic picture of Lebanon, making it seem like paradise and making the Arabs seem like Beduin cut off in a remote desert. Naturally we see them hastening toward it in search of nature, beauty and women when the desert grows too harsh for them:

Lebanon was a fan for you,
 Scattering colours and cool shade,
 How often did you flee there from your deserts
 Seeking water and a beautiful face,
 Wash yourselves in the dew of its forests,
 Hide long between its eyelids?⁹⁹

In this context he says that it is Lebanon which has taught the Arabs love and offered them knowledge. Perhaps there is a reference here to its openness to the West and to the greater degree of social freedom which prevails there, especially in the relations between the sexes. Perhaps there is also a reference to its position as a centre of intellectual and cultural diffusion in the Arab world:

It taught you to love -
 Lebanon was not niggardly with love.
 It taught you to read -
 Do you say to it "Thank you very much"?¹⁰⁰

From all of the above the critic can conclude that Lebanon did its duty to the Arabs when, before the war, it offered them what they did not have - nature, love and knowledge. Thus it is not surprising that Nizār asks the Arabs now to support Lebanon so that it may pass through its present trial and emerge from the circle of self-destruction:

All that Lebanon demands from you
 Is that you love it, love it a little.¹⁰¹

He reminds them that what they offer to Beirut will benefit them in the long run. It will be enough for them afterwards that Beirut will remain forever the giving woman, Astarte, the goddess of fertility, beauty and love:

Beirut is the woman
 Who grants fertility and gives us the seasons.¹⁰²

One final observation is that there is nothing new in this poem. The romantic picture of Lebanon as a paradise seems to be influenced by some of the Mahjar poets.¹⁰³ The rest of the poem consists of disconnected lines which are scarcely more than an inferior reworking of ideas which have been expressed before by other poets.

4. The image of Beirut: despair at the war and flight

This is represented by the poem Akhir 'Usfūr Yakhruj min Gharnāṭa. In it Nizār whispers to the reader that he has tried to confront the Civil War with his two great weapons, love and poetry, but that they have not rescued him from the fangs of ugliness and killing. He begins to reveal their ineffectuality (stanza 3):

Your eyes are the last two shores of violet
 And the storms have torn me apart.
 I thought that poetry would rescue me
 But the poems drowned me.
 I thought that love would gather me together
 But women divided me up.¹⁰⁴

Nizār is about to collapse when he is filled with a new love after meeting a woman who is different from all the women he has met in his life. The most important difference in this woman is that she is a Shiite¹⁰⁵ from the South of Lebanon who is in revolt against Arab weakness and Israeli oppression (stanza 2):

I love you
 You who store in your eyes the lakes of the South;
 Stay with me.¹⁰⁶

The woman takes up all Nizār's attention; she seems to him the only

hope of escape from Beirut - the destruction, the Civil War, the slow suicide,
and the victim killed by the Arabs (stanza 4):

Beirut is the widow of the Arab world.
The barricades,
The factions,
The crime and the madness.
Beirut is being murdered in her marriage bed
And the people round her bed are onlookers.
Beirut
Is bleeding like a chicken in the road -
Where have the lovers fled to?
Beirut is searching for her truth,
Searching for her tribe,
Searching for her relatives
But all are hypocrites.¹⁰⁷

In the face of all this darkness Nizār clings to his love for this
woman, and confesses to her that he can no longer find a place for himself in
Beirut, and that it is no longer in harmony with him. He has grown weary of
its constant hell and bloody madness, and now he wants to save himself from it
(stanza 1):

Your eyes are the last two ships to travel
But is there anywhere?
I have grown tired of tarrying in the stations of madness,
And I have not arrived anywhere.
Your eyes are the last available chances
For one who thinks of flight,
And I am thinking of flight.¹⁰⁸

We read on in the poem and encounter two short scenes from his flight
from Beirut. In the first we see him sorrowful, but not regretting his
departure (stanza 4):

And I, on the deck of the ship,
Am like an orphaned sparrow
Who does not think of return.¹⁰⁹

In the second we see him preparing to depart, while the trees ask him to

help them to go with him, in flight from the violence of the Civil War. This image of the trees is deep, simple and affecting. It forms a strong protest against a crushing war in which there is no victor and no defeated (stanza 5):

Your eyes are the last night journey
 And my cases on the ground are waiting for the embarkation
 The trees implore me, weeping, to take ~~them~~ with me -
 Have you ever seen trees thinking of flight?
 This is the time which is stained with ugliness and disgrace,
 Treachery and sins.¹¹⁰

Nizār leaves Beirut: he becomes free in another wide space, and seems content with his new love for the Shiite woman, praising its effects upon him (stanza 7):

Your love is the most beautiful white revolution
 Announced in millions of years.¹¹¹

After this the poem makes some comments which have no connection with Nizār or Beirut, and revolve around two points - the relationship between poetry and suppression in Arab society (stanza 3)¹¹² and his contempt for oil and oil princes, whom he considers to be a disaster for the Arabs (stanzas 5 and 6).¹¹³ These points have been discussed in Chapters Three and Four, to which the reader is referred.

One final point: in this poem Nizār is obsessed by a troubling historical feeling. As indicated by the title he compares Beirut and its Civil War to Granada, the last outpost of the Arabs in Islamic Spain, and compares himself, implicitly, to Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣaghīr, the last of its petty kings. In these two comparisons there lie a feeling of shame and a view of history whose theme is that tragedies repeat themselves (the departure of the Arabs from Spain, the Civil War) and not great glories.¹¹⁴

III

COMMENTS

Nizār's above poems on Beirut appear at first glance to be a kind of urban elegy. However a careful reading will reveal that this verdict is quite incorrect. Nizār does not bewail Beirut the city, since he does not offer a complete vision of its fall and ruin, and because he is not grief-stricken as are those who grieve for a slain loved one, even though he reveals his sorrow for it sometimes.

All that Nizār has done is to offer a partial view of the crime committed against Beirut - rape, murder and assault - in which, generally speaking, he described things from a distance or speaks of them with extreme coldness; see for example the following extract from Bayrūt Taḥtariq . . . wa-Uḥibbuki in which he describes a disgraceful sexual scene with an absolute impartiality which we do not expect from a poet who had an overwhelming love for Beirut:

I was a few metres away from the crime
 Observing the killers
 As they lay with Beirut like a girl
 And took turns with her
 One
 By one
 In accordance with tribal protocol
 Family prerogative
 And military rank.¹¹⁵

It is clear that in these poems he has not conveyed to us a deep feeling for the catastrophe which has befallen the Lebanese people, despite his sympathy for them, as much as he has conveyed his personal catastrophes caused by the destruction of Beirut (such as the loss of his source of income from his publishing house, and the impossibility of distributing his poetry from

Beirut to neighbouring Arab countries). As an indication of this it will be enough for us to point to his constant reversion in his poems to a point which disturbed him very deeply, the negative effect of the war upon his love and his poetry. The war did not give him any new opportunities to establish new relationships with women which would provide him with poetry; - with perhaps, the exception of his relationship with the Shiite woman from the South. The war had devoured his nerves. He lived with it for a while, and tried to forget it, thinking that it was a passing phase which would soon come to an end. For these reasons he remained in Beirut, only leaving it on occasions when he was invited to read his poetry in other Arab countries. When he left Beirut in the summer of 1982 and went to live in Larnaca we find him bursting out into love relationships which he recorded in his masterpiece Ilā Samaka Qubruṣiyya Tud'ā Tāmārā, where he says:

How can I forget a woman from Cyprus
 Called Tamara
 Whose hair is caught by the wind
 And whose breasts hold conversation with God,
 Who came out of the sea-foam like Astarte
 Wearing the sun on her legs like an anklet?
 How can I forget a body
 Which strikes a spark in the night like phosphorus?
 How can I forget a mad nipple
 Which tore apart my body, rising
 And falling?¹¹⁶

2. In these poems Beirut the woman has two images: the image of the ravished victim, whose enemies use multifarious means to rape and kill her, as in Ya sitt al-Dunyā yā Bayrūt, Bayrūt Taḥtariq... wa-Uḥibbuki and Bayrūt Maḥziyyatukum, Bayrūt Ḥabībatī; and the image of the beloved after whom Nizār runs, desirous of her love, as in Sab' Rasā'il Dā'i'a fi Barīd Bayrūt and Akhir 'Uṣfūr Yakhruj min Gharnāṭa. In our view, the first image represents the violence of the Civil War while the second represents Nizār's desire for woman, perfection and uniqueness.

It hardly needs to be said that the image of the city as a woman is not a strange one to Nizār, as he has used it before (Chapter Six), when Damascus was the beloved woman who captivated him. It seems that the idea of a city as a woman is not a monopoly of Nizār alone and could almost be described as common to poets. Thus Ihsān 'Abbās says:

The modern poet's visualising of the city as a woman, and in the form of a promiscuous woman, is almost the common property of a large number of poets. It is not a new image, but is frequently met with in ancient and pre-modern literature. It is all the same for the modern poet whether the city relates to the modern age, or whether it represents ancient civilisation.¹¹⁷

In fact, the comparison of cities and countries to beloved and chaste women or to violated women is an early tendency in Nizār's poetry which goes back to the period of a few years after the defeat of 1967. Perhaps the poem Jarimat Sharaf Amāma al-Mahākīm al-'Arabiyya is one of the earliest poems in which Nizār firmly established this tendency. For example, in the first stanza of this poem he says:

You have lost, my country, your virginity.
 Nobody was concerned.
 The court found against a person unknown
 And the curtain was lowered.¹¹⁸

It seems that Nizār mixes women, sex and love with politics in his poetry for two reasons. The first is that the subject of woman dominates his mind so completely that he cannot escape it, even when he is writing on another subject, such as politics. The second reason is that he wishes to attract the Arab reader's attention by offering something which will arouse him, and considers that the subject of woman is an appropriate one in this context.

It remains to be said that Nizār avoids linking woman and Jerusalem in

his famous poem al-Quds out of respect for the followers of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For this reason all the descriptions which he applies to Jerusalem suggest purity, sorrow and prophethood.¹¹⁹

3. In these poems, Beirut the city generally seems to be a one-dimensional city. We mean by this that it is always an embodiment of evil and blackness. It is a kind of reckless fate which takes hold of personalities and events and gives them no opportunity, however marginal or limited, for freedom or movement. Beirut the place is mined with crime and sniping. Murder is committed with monotonous regularity, and the murderers are primitive, temperamental and anarchic. They enjoy seeing crime and blood, and dance around fire and mutilated bodies. Beirut the place is a pillaged city which is subject to a law of destruction which nobody challenges. Any reader, even many years after the end of the Civil War, will be able to recognise with ease the one-dimensional Beirut of these poems. The features of killing, destruction and violence turn in them, sometimes only partially, into an entity which can be seen and sensed, as in the first three stanzas of Bayrūt Tahtariq... wa-Uhibbuki.¹²⁰

4. Nizār's strong links with Beirut did not prevent him from establishing firm links with other Arab cities, on the basis of his view that these cities are a single country, to all of which he belongs, even though their names may differ. Thus in the second stanza of Umm al-Mu'tazz he says:

Every Arab city is my mother,
 Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, Baghdad, Khartoum,
 Casablanca, Benghazi, Tunis, Amman, Riyadh,
 Kuwait, Algiers, Abu Dhabi, and their sisters;
 These are my family tree
 All of these cities brought me forth from their wombs,
 Gave me to suck from their breasts
 And filled my pockets with grapes, figs and plums.
 All of them shook their date-palms for me, so that I could eat,

And opened their skies for me like a blue notebook.
 So that I could write.
 For this reason I do not enter an Arab city without it calling to me
 "My son",
 I do not knock on the gate of an Arab city without finding my
 childhood bed waiting for me
 No Arab city bleeds without my bleeding with it.¹²¹

5. For Nizār, pre-war Beirut resembles a dream city embodied on earth- a city of love, security, purity, life and ease. It is sufficient for us to consider a few poetical examples in order to prove our point.

Thus in Bayrūt wa-al-Hubb wa-al-Matar Beirut forms the setting for a stormy love-story which takes place between Nizār and a beautiful woman. The season is winter, and Beirut is wrapped in thick clouds and cold. It is now, as he sees it, in the best state for him to become a lover again. Therefore he goes out with his beloved to idle in the streets and to walk aimlessly. After a short while he feels the cold and whispers to his beloved that what he needs now is love, and there is nothing, as far as he is concerned, to stop her clinging to him, so that he may feel a little warmth:

When it rains in Beirut
 I need a little affection
 So come inside my coat, moistened with water,
 Come inside my woollen pullover
 My skin, my voice,
 And eat the grass on my chest like a horse.¹²²

When thunder sounds, lightning flashes and rain pours down, he feels that Beirut is glittering anew, and that he is in a rare state of ecstasy, and so he does not feel embarrassed in asking his beloved to show him the physical side of love in front of witnesses:

Exchange love with me in the thunder and lightning
 And the drumming of the rain-spouts; give me a country
 in my grey fur overcoat.
 Crucify me like Jesus between your breasts

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Baptise me with water of roses and myrtle, and perfume
of black elder.¹²³

In these tense emotional moments his beloved proposes that they go to a certain place, and he whispers to her:

Look for a flat buried in the sand
Look for a hotel which does not ask lovers their names
Keep me awake in cellars in which there is nothing but
A singer and a piano.¹²⁴

Soon he forgets what he has said, and leaves her the freedom to choose the place in which she wants to stay. All the places in Beirut are equally good for love, without exception:

You decide where to go
For love in Beirut is, like God, in every place.¹²⁵

In Barid Bayrūt there is another story which takes place between Nizār the lover and a far-off woman. The story has one scene, in which we see Nizār in a Beirut café on the sea-front, reading a newspaper and drinking coffee. The September rain falls gently and he realises that it is autumn and the real winter has not yet come. He remembers a past time with a woman he loved, who soon disappeared, so that her absence caused him pain. He wishes she were with him now, so that he could feel great happiness.¹²⁶ Suddenly the memories come to an end, and Beirut pulls him to itself. He finds that Beirut is in love with his beloved, as though it were an extension of her or a part of her:

Beirut in the autumn, my beloved,
Is in love with you
O my near, distant one,
You whose presence is amazing as a poem,
Its rains are in love with you,
Its stones are in love with you,

Its sea has travelled in its shores
And has poured into your eyes.¹²⁷

He goes on to describe the beauty of Beirut in autumn, especially when its ground is covered by withered leaves, yellow, brown and green. A note of sorrow steals through him and his desire for his beloved's company doubles, as it might put an end to his inner isolation and lamentation. Now he portrays the beauty of Beirut for her again, hoping that it will reach her and she will come to him:

Beirut, my beloved,
In these times, is like a legend.
The September leaves on the ground are copper and gold
And al-Hamrā' Street, my beloved,
Is a garment embroidered with gold
God! How much I need you, my beloved
When the season of tears comes-
How much my hands have searched for yours
In the crush of the damp streets.¹²⁸

In al-Istiqāla there is another love-story, in which we see Nizār trying to persuade his beloved to leave him, saying that he wants, after thirty years of love, to rest a little. His beloved is amazed at these words and thinks that they are frivolous.¹²⁹ Nizār writes to Beirut, the environment which has embraced his love for this woman, explaining that he is now retiring from the role of lover and that he wants it to know that he is changing his life-style and will choose a path other than that of love:

I have written a long letter to Beirut
In which I have informed it that I have taken my decision,
Handed over to it the key of my house and the key of my abode,
Given my role to another,
Announced that I have retired from the play
And said farewell to the face of my beloved, which is portrayed in
the cloth of the masts,
On the sands and on the shells.
And I have said 'farewell',
O rose of the night, O notebook of dreams, O signet of the sun,
O sea, O poetry, O alphabet,
Farewell to all the lovers in Ra's Bayrūt and al-Ashrafiyya.¹³⁰

However Beirut refuses to accept his resignation:

I explained to Beirut
That thirty years of love are enough
But it refused to accept my apology.¹³¹

Now he falls under its spell anew. He realises that it is still a city for love and for nothing else. Now his beloved makes a move: she reveals her love for him and her captivation by him, and he falls at her feet, brought low by an even more violent love.¹³²

In Hal Taji'ina ma'i ilā al-Bahr there is a fierce passion for Beirut as an environment for sea, love and passion before the outbreak of the Civil War:

Will you come with me to the sea?
Will you flee with me from the dry time to the time of water?
For we, for thirty years,
Have not entered into the possibilities of the colour blue,
Have not held with our hands
A horizon,
A dream, or a poem,
The Civil War has made us two wild animals
Who speak without appetite,
Procreate without appetite,
Stick to one another with the glue of acquired habits
My Turkish coffee is an acquired habit
And your morning shower is an acquired habit
So why do you not put on the hat of the sun
And come with me?¹³³

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NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Mawsū'at- al-Siyāsa, Vol.5, p.418.
2. al-Muqaddam Abū al-Tayyib, al-Qāṭi' al-Thālith min Zilzāl Bayrūt, Amman 1983, p.16.
3. Ibid., p.16.
4. Mawsū'at al- Siyāsa, Vol. 5, p.418. For further details about these parties see Ibid. Vol.2, pp.43-44, pp.507-509, p.510, and pp.529-530. It is also possible to find interesting detailed information about these conflicting factions in Jamāl al-Alfi, al-Tā'ifiyya wa-al-Hukm fi Lubnān, Cairo 1983.
5. al-Muqaddam Abū al-Tayyib, op. cit., pp.17-18.
6. Mustafā Ahmad Fu'ād, Duwaliyyat al-Sirā' al-Lubnāni: al-Tadakhkhulāt al-Ajnabiyya wa-Juhūd al-Munazzamāt al-Duwaliyya, Alexandria 1985, pp.17-18
7. For details see 'Alī Husayn Khalaf, al-Hiṣār: Yawmiyyāt Bayrūt 82, Amman 1983, p.7. ff; William Espinosa and Les Janka, Difā' am 'Udwān: al-Qawānin al-Amrikiyya li-Dabt Sādirāt al-Silāh wa-al- Ijtiyāh al-Isrā'ili li-Lubnān, tr. Mu'assasat al-Dirasāt al-Filastīniyya, Nicosia 1983, p.8.
8. Munir al-Khatib, "Lubnān al-Ma'zūm Tārīkhiyyan wa-Lubnān al-Badil fi Fikr Yāsīn al-Hāfiz", al-Waḥda, Rabat, no.48, year 4, September 1988, p.102.
9. Muṣṭafā Ahmad Fu'ād, op. cit., p.18.
10. The events of the massacre and its attendant circumstances are recorded in al-Muqaddam Abū al-Tayyib, Sabrā wa-Shātillā: al-Dhikrā al-Thālitha, Amman 1985, and Tāhir al-'Udwān, al-Filastī niyyūn bayn Harbayn, Amman 1983.
11. Mawsū'at al-Siyāsa, Vol.5, p.419.
12. Salim al-Ḥuṣṣ, Fi al-Azma al-Lubnāniyya, Beirut 1989, p.3.
13. 'Abd al-Aziz Qabbāni, Lubnān wa-al- Siḡha al-Ma'sāt, Beirut 1982, p.30.
14. Munir al-Khatib, op. cit., p. 98.
15. Mawsū'at al-Siyāsa, Vol. 5, pp.420-421.
16. 'Isām Khalifa, Fi Mu'tarak al-Qadiyya al-Lubnāniyya, Beirut 1985, pp.113-114.
17. Fu'ād Tarābulusī, Qadiyyat Lubnān al-Waṭaniyya wa-al-Dimūqrāṭiyya, Beirut 1978, p.18.
18. Kamāl Janbulāt, Hādhihi Waṣiyyati, Beirut 1987, p.14.
19. 'Isām Khalifa, op. cit., p. 12.

20. An example of these is the organisation called the "Guardians of the Cedars" (hurrās al-arz), an extremist Christian military organisation founded on 24.9.1975, whose aim is to consecrate the concept of the Lebanese nation. It considers the Arabs, in particular the Palestinians and the Syrians, to be enemies of Lebanon, and regards itself as a life-and death ally of Israel. See Mawsū'at- al-Siyāsa, Vol.5, p.461.
21. Salīm al-Huss, "Madkhal ilā al-Qadiyya al-Lubnāniyya," al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabī, Beirut, no. 42, year 3, February 1981, p.8.
22. Ibid., p.9.
23. Muṣṭafā Aḥmad Fu'ād, op. cit., p.p.27-28.
24. Mawsū'at- al-Siyāsa, Vol.5, p.139.
25. Jamāl al-Alfi, op. cit., p. 23.
26. Māzin al-Bandak, "Qirā'a fi al-Fusayfisā' al-Lubnāni", Shu'ūn Filastīniyya, Beirut, no. 52, December 1975, p.44.
27. Fawwāz Tarābulusī, op. cit., p. 36.
28. Examples of these parties are the Lebanese Communist Party, the Organization of Communist Labour, The Movement of the Deprived, the Popular Nasserite Organisation, the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, the Progressive Socialist Party, the National Progressive Party, and the Arab Socialist Union. See Mawsū'at al-Siyāsa, Vol.2, pp.231-234, pp.296-297, pp.308-310, pp.456-457 and p.526.
29. Māzin al-Bandak, op. cit., pp.44-45.
30. Salīm al-Huss, "Madkhal ilā al-Qadiyya al-Lubnāniyya", al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabī, op. cit., p. 14.
31. Ibid., pp.14-16.
32. See al-Jil, Cyprus, no.8, Vol. 9, August 1988, p.10.
33. Munah al-Sulh, "Lubnān wa-al-Khiyār al-'Arabī", al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabī, Beirut no.86, year 8, April 1986, p.11.
34. See Ibid., pp.11-13; Salīm al-Huss, "Madkhal ilā al-Qadiyya al-Lubnāniyya", op. cit., pp.13-16; 'Abd al-'Azīz Qabbānī, op. cit., pp.11-12; 'Abd Allāh Lahhūd and Jūzif Mughayzil, Huqūq al-Insān al-Shakhsīyya wa-al-Siyāsiyya, Beirut 1972, p.130; and Qusṭantīn Zurayq, Nāḥnu wa-al-Mustaqbal, Beirut 1977, pp.419-448.
35. Nizār Qabbānī, Yawmiyyāt Madīna Kāna Ismuhā Bayrūt, Beirut 1981, p.34. This work will be referred to in future as Yawmiyyāt.
36. Ibid., p.68.
37. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, Beirut 1979, p.156.
38. Nizār Qabbānī, Yawmiyyāt, p.143.
39. Ibid., pp.163-164.

40. Ibid., pp.24-25.

41. Nizār Qabbānī, Shay' min al-Nathr, p.150.

42. Of factionalism, Nizār says:

The factional poison fills the sea of Beirut. It kills the fish, big and small, sinks the ships, violates the virginity of the gulfs, and swallows the children swimming in the sea one by one.

See Yawmiyyāt, p.10. He notes that this development began to touch all aspects of life in Lebanon except for the politics:

Everything in Lebanon works electronically except for the political machine, which still runs on wood and steam like the trains of the nineteenth century.

See Ibid., p.72.

43. The absence of the intellectuals from the political decision-making process caught Nizār's attention, and he asked:

Why do they not take part in the building of the country?... Why do they not lift up their hands in protest at the mistakes? Why do they not form an opposition party?

See Ibid, pp.64-65. He draws attention to the fact that the Lebanese intellectual suffers from three basic maladies - egoism, i.e. thinking of immediate interest and of a quick way to make money, negativism, i.e. a refusal to comment on events and an eagerness not to get involved in any position or utterance which will damage his business or his possessions, and cowardice, i.e. fighting against any reform or change of the factional system. See Ibid., pp.66-67.

44. Nizār considers that Israel's long-term aims in intervening in the Lebanese Civil War were; to destroy the Palestinians in Lebanon so that they would not turn with time into a "forest of swords" in her face; to demonstrate the impossibility of Jews, Muslims and Christians living together in the secular Palestinian state proposed by Yasir Arafat by escalating Lebanese factional slaughter and presenting it to the world as living evidence; and to distract the Arabs with the Lebanese problem so as to divert them from their basic struggle with Israel. See Ibid., pp.133-134.

45. Beirut also lay behind the fame of many other contemporary Arab poets, like Nāzik al-Malā'ika, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, Maḥmūd Darwish and Samih al-Qāsim.

46. Nizār Qabbānī, Wa-al-Kalimā Ta'rif al-Ghadab, Beirut 1983, Vol.2, p.155.

47. Nizār Qabbānī, Yawmiyyāt, p.24. The quotation is from the Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Fil, verses 3-4.

48. Nizār Qabbānī, Wa-al-Kalimā Ta'rif al-Ghadab, Vol.2, pp.153-154.

49. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1985, Vol.3, pp.577-578.

50. In the thirties, forties and fifties of this century the Arab woman was still subjected in some Arab countries to immense repressive pressures.

She was a weak creature who had no right to be more than a tiny atom in the world of men. When she committed a major crime such as adultery she was killed, and this was always done in a savage way. See Khalil Ahmad Khalil, al-Mar'a al-'Arabiyya wa-Qadāyā al-Taghyir; Baḥth Ijtimā'i fi Tārīkh al-Qahr al-Nisā'i, Beirut 1985, pp.77-102. Perhaps Nizār is relying upon this traditional image of woman when he portrays Beirut facing her murderous attackers.

51: Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol. 3, p.579.

52. Ibid., p.580.

53. Ibid., p.584.

54. Ibid., p.585.

55. Ibid., p.586.

56. Ibid., p.587.

57. Ibid., p.581-582.

58. Ibid., p.583.

59. Ibid., p.587.

60. Ibid., p.588.

61. Ibid., p.590.

62. Ibid., p.595.

63. Ibid., p.596.

64. Ibid., p.596.

65. Ibid., p.604.

66. Ibid., p.603.

67. Ibid., p.593.

68. Nizār regards madness as one of the principal elements needed for the comprehension of his poetry in addition to childhood and revolution:

The keys to my poetry are three: childhood, revolution and madness. By childhood I mean everything which is innocence, frankness and spontaneity... by revolution I mean the creation of upheavals, splits and breaks in all the cultural, psychological and historical inheritances which have taken the form of custom or the form of law. By madness I mean taking apart the old clock of the intellect and violently opposing all the encrusted rules which were made for us before we were born.

See Nizār Qabbānī, Qiṣṣati ma'a al-Shi'r, Beirut 1982, pp.80-81.

69. Nizār Qabbānī, Al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.593.

70. Ibid., p.594.

71. Ibid., p.593.

72. Ibid., p.597.

73. Ibid., p.608.

74. Ibid., p.599.

75. Nizār indicates the effect upon his poetry of the Civil War in another poem outside his political poetry, Hal Tajj'ina ma'i ilā al-Bahr, especially in the fourth stanza where he says:

Help me to find my words

For the war has taken my notebooks and my childish scribblings.

Has taken the words which could have made you the most beautiful of women

And the words which could have made me the greatest of poets.

Shall I tell you a little secret?

I become ugly when I do not write

And become ugly when I do not love,

So help me to recover the two glories,

The glory of writing and the glory of love.

See Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Shi'riyya al-Kāmila, Beirut 1983, Vol.2, pp.873-874.

76. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.602.

77. Nizār Qabbānī, Ilā Bayrūt al-Unthā ma'a Ḥubbi, Beirut 1981, p.94.

78. Ibid., p.95.

79. Ibid., pp.92-93.

80. Ibid., pp.89-90.

81. Ibid., pp.90-91.

82. Ibid., pp.96-97.

83. Ibid., p.100.

84. Ibid., p.102.

85. Ibid., p.104.

86. Ibid., p.105.

87. Ibid., p.107.

88. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.611.

89. Ibid., p.612.

90. Ibid., p.613.

91. Ibid., p.615.

92. Ibid., p.615.
93. Ibid., p.617.
94. Ibid., p.618.
95. Ibid., p.614.
96. Ibid., p.621.
97. Ibid., p.622.
98. Ibid., p.620. It may be mentioned that the dream of the end of the war and the descent of peace and settled conditions upon Beirut continue to pursue Nizār in two poems which lie outside the framework of this study, Arba' Rasā'il Sādhaja ilā Bayrūt, and Muhāwala Tashkiliyya li-Rasm Bayrūt. In the first of these he says for example;

It is possible for the rose to rise from its bed
 And for the perfume to regain consciousness?
 It is possible for the letters to return from their absence
 And for the sea to flood?

See Nizār Qabbānī, Tazawwajtuki Ayyatuhā al-Hurriyya, Beirut 1988, p.99.
 In the second poem he says:

Is it possible for the beautiful Beirut to rise
 Once more
 From the ruined earth?
 Is it possible for wheat to grow
 In the waters of the sea
 Or for a book to come with the wave?

See Ibid., p. 104.

99. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.625.
100. Ibid., p.627.
101. Ibid., p.628
102. Ibid., p.627.
103. In Nizār's poetry the image of nature has sometimes been said to be drawn from Mahjar poetry. See 'Isā al-Nā'ūrī, Adab al-Mahjar, Cairo 1964, Chapter 3.
104. Nizār Qabbānī, Qasā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, Beirut 1986, p.80.
105. Nizār shows a noticeable sympathy for Shiism which appears in two ways. The first is his repetition in several poems of certain Shiite symbols and personalities, like al-Husayn, Fātima, Karbalā' and 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. See Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.197, p.209, p.352, p.358, p.394, p.411, p.483, and p.487. The second is his defence of the Shiite resistance in the South of Lebanon in 1985 to the Israeli occupation there. This defence occurs in al-Simfūniyya al-Janūbiyya al-Khāmisa. This is a beautiful melodic poem which is saturated with music, emotion and optimism. It

consists of fifteen stanzas and has four pivots, which are;
 (a) Praise of the Shiite resistance in the South of Lebanon
 (stanzas, 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12). Thus for example he says (stanza 2):

I have called you the South
 O moon of sadness which rises at night from the eyes of Fāṭima
 O fishing boats whose trade is resistance
 O fish of the sea whose trade is resistance
 O frog of the river
 Who recites throughout the night the Sūra of resistance.

See Nizār Qabbānī, Qaṣā'id Maghdūb 'alayhā, p.60.

(b) Regarding the Shiite resistance as a distinctive and positive sign in the modern era, and portraying it as the one hope of the Arabs for salvation from their illnesses - degradation, collapse and defeat at the hands of their enemies (stanzas 4 and 15). In the latter stanza he says;

O my Lord, o Lord of the free,
 Nothing remains but you
 In a time of fall and destruction
 In a time of revolutionary regression
 National regression
 And intellectual regression
 And of thieves and of traders
 In a time of flight.

See Ibid., p. 74.

(c) Showing the bravery of the Shiite resistance in halting the attacks of Israel and standing like a mighty barrier in the face of its tyranny (stanza 7):

Allow us to kiss the sword in your hands
 Allow us to collect the dust from your shoes
 If you had not come, my lord the Imam.
 We would have been, before the Hebrew leader,
 Slaughtered like sheep.

See Ibid., p.66. In this context Nizār does not forget to refer to Ma'raka, the village which in 1983 was a stronghold of national resistance, endurance and challenge (stanza 11):

History will remember one day a little village
 Among the villages of the South
 Called Ma'raka
 Which defended with its breast
 The honour of the land and the dignity of the Arabs
 While surrounded by cowardly tribes
 And a disjointed nation.

See Ibid., p.70.

(d) Condemnation of the Arabs' reluctance to come to the aid of Lebanon (stanzas 3 and 14). In the latter stanza he says, for example:

Beware of reading a letter of the writings of the Arabs
 For their warfare is a rumour,

Their sword is wood
 Their love is treachery
 And their promise is a lie.

See Ibid., p.73.

106. Ibid., p.79.

107. Ibid., p.83.

108. Ibid., pp.76-77.

109. Ibid., p.82.

110. Ibid., p.84.

111. Ibid., p.88.

112. Ibid., p.81.

113. Ibid., pp.85-87.

114. There is a theatrical work by Nizār on the Civil War, in addition to the above poems, called Jumhūriyyat Junūnistān. In it he puts on trial the leaders of the Civil War, and imagines Lebanon as being divided into seven mini-states headed by a ruler with seven eyes. See Nizār Qabbānī, Jumhūriyyat Junūnistān, Beirut 1988.

115. Nizār Qabbānī, Ilā Bāyrūt al-Unthā ma'a Ḥubbī, p.94.

116. Nizār Qabbānī, Sa-Yabqā al-Hubb Sayyidī, Beirut 1986, p.36.

117. Ihsān 'Abbās, Ittijāhāt al-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Mu'āsir, Kuwait 1978, p.114.

118. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, p.229.

119. Ibid., pp.161-164.

120. Nizār Qabbānī, Ilā Bayrūt al-Unthā ma'a Ḥubbī, pp.89-99.

121. Nizār Qabbānī, al-A'māl al-Siyāsiyya al-Kāmila, Vol.3, pp.721-722.

122. Ibid., pp.19-20.

123. Ibid., p.20.

124. Ibid., p.23.

125. Ibid., p.23.

126. Ibid., pp.55-56.

127. Ibid., pp.56-57.

128. Ibid., pp.57-58.

129. Ibid., pp.265-267.

130. Ibid., p.269.

131. Ibid., p.270.

132. Ibid., pp.267-268.

133. Ibid., pp.865-867.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters we have reviewed a number of political issues, starting with Arab nationalism and ending with the Civil War in Lebanon, as they are reflected in the poetry of Nizār Qabbāni. It has been our aim to discuss these issues as fully as possible, in order to provide the reader with everything which is necessary for a thorough understanding of Nizār's political poetry.

It only remains now to make a few general points about this part of Nizār's poetic output and about Nizār himself as he appears in his political poetry.

1. His poetry is a true artistic reflection of the events happening around him in the Arab world. Indeed, his poetry provides as good an introduction to modern Arab political history as can be found in the Arab world today.
2. While Nizār's writings are not in any sense a neutral or dispassionate account of events, they do reflect very closely the reaction of the Arab man in the street to these events as they happened. Nizār is an accurate barometer of Arab feelings, and could well be studied as a record of the reactions of ordinary Arabs to major political events during the period covered by his poems. This is without doubt one of the major reasons for the popularity of Nizār's poetry in the Arab world today.
3. Nizār cannot in any way be described as an "ideological" poet. He is a purely reactive poet, and his reactions often lack consistency. More than this, his positions often shift radically over the years. Examples of this are the way in which he passionately espouses Arab nationalism in the fifties but seems to have forgotten about it in the eighties, and the way in which he

attacks the failings of Arab society after the June War but abandons this criticism in the exhilaration of the early days of the October War. He is carried along by waves of enthusiasm, generally short-lived. The latest example of such a wave of enthusiasm are his poems on the Palestinian intifāda. It may also be noted that at these moments of enthusiasm he tends to throw caution to the winds and imagine that all the problems of the Arab world are about to be solved as if by magic. In this respect one has to concede that his political thinking is marked by a certain superficiality.

4. Nizār is always truthful and honest in the expression of his ideas, and is not afraid to utter painful truths which may anger those in authority or the more conservative elements in Arab society. He does not hesitate to be critical of what he considers to be outworn social values or religious ideas, and can be very direct and abrasive in his condemnation of certain political leaders, like the oil princes of the Gulf or President Sadat after his visit to Jerusalem. His description of the latter as a new Kāfūr may have entertained many Arabs at the time, but it did not endear him to those ruling Egypt.

5. Nizār is always a very personal poet. In his poetry on the October War and the Civil War in Lebanon we notice that he seems to be concerned only at the effect of these events upon himself. He has been criticised as being self-centred and narcissistic, and we cannot entirely exonerate him from these accusations.

6. Even in his most impassioned political poetry, the theme of sex and women keeps reappearing. Political events tend to be perceived by him in terms of his own sexuality. The most obvious example of this is the way in which he feels sexually impotent after the June War while the October War restores his manhood. The fate of Beirut during the Civil War is also

described in openly sexual terms.

7. His political poetry is generally restricted to the depiction of war and to the results of war. We see this already in Qisṣat Rachel Schwartzenburg, which deals with the events of 1948, and his subsequent poetry is almost exclusively triggered by other wars - the Suez crisis, the Algerian struggle, the June War, the October War and the Lebanese Civil War. We could almost ask whether Nizār is not primarily a war poet, and his poetry war poetry, in that part of his output which he has described as political poetry.

8. Finally, we should mention what is perhaps the most important aspect of his poetry, the clarity of his language and the good and simple style which Nizār has always insisted is the foundation of the writing of poetry. He has always based himself on these principles, from the beginning to the present day. In this he is very different from poets like Adonis or Maḥmūd Darwish, who have made use of linguistic complications and imagery which seems to have no relevance to the poem. The simplicity and beauty of his language are without doubt the main reasons for his enormous popularity in the Arab world today. His aim has always been to bring poetry to the Arab people and nobody could deny that he has been immensely successful in achieving this objective.

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al-Sharāra, Beirut, no.3, 15 January 1975.
Shi'r, Beirut, no. 14, Spring 1960.
 -----, Beirut, no 24, Autumn 1962.
al-Shirā', Beirut, no. 349, year 7, Monday 28 November 1988.
Shu'ūn Filastīniyya, Beirut, no.52, December 1975.
al-Thaqāfa, Cairo, no.10, September 1963.
al-Wahda, Rabat, no.44, year 4, May 1988.
 -----, no.48, year 4, September 1988.