



BRILL

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and the Poetics of Alid Legitimacy Elegy for al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī on ʿĀshūrā, 391 A.H.

Author(s): Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych

Source: *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 38, No. 3, In Honor of Jaroslav Stetkevych, Who First Made "The Mute Immortals Speak." Part I. (2007), pp. 293–323

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25597957>

Accessed: 12-09-2016 19:29 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

http://www.jstor.org/stable/25597957?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Brill is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Arabic Literature*



Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and the Poetics of ‘Alid Legitimacy Elegy for al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī on ‘Āshūrā’, 391 A.H.

Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych
Indiana University, Bloomington

Abstract

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī’s *qaṣīdah* rhymed in *dāl* that opens: “These are the abodes at al-Ghamīm, so call to them,” (*hādhibi al-manāzilū bi-al-Ghamīmi fa-nādihā*) is generally described as an elegy to al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī and dated quite precisely to the Day of ‘Āshūrā’ 391 (10 Muḥarram) A.H. (10 Dec., 1000 C.E.) The fifty-eight line polythematic poem goes beyond the normal strictures of *rithā’* to exhibit a complex generic hybridity. It is my contention that the poem’s composition is not haphazard or arbitrary, but rather the poet has masterfully manipulated classical Arabic *qaṣīdah* conventions, including form, genre, imagery and diction, to promote a politico-religious claim for ‘Alid legitimacy—his own imminent Imāmate—and to create, at the same time, a meticulously crafted and perduring work of the poetic art.

Keywords

al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, ‘Alī Ibn Abi Ṭālib, *qaṣīdah*, elegy, ‘Āshūrā’, hybridity, legitimacy, caliphate, Shi’ism

Introduction

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī’s *qaṣīdah* rhymed in *dāl* that opens: “These are the abodes at al-Ghamīm, so call to them,” (*hādhibi al-manāzilū bi-al-Ghamīmi fa-nādihā*) is generally described as an elegy to al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī and dated quite precisely to the Day of ‘Āshūrā’ 391 (10 Muḥarram) A.H. (10 Dec., 1000 C.E.)¹ The

Author’s note: Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, Nov., 1995 and the Aspects of Arabic Literature Conference, convened by Prof. James Monroe, at the University of California, Berkeley, April, 1996.

¹ This poem is recognized as one of a group of four or five elegies by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī to al-Ḥusayn that are considered quite distinctive. This poem and others in the group, in addition to other poems to Ahl al-Bayt, are discussed at some length, albeit primarily descriptively, in the chapter on al-Sharīf al-Raḍī in Zakī Mubārak, *Al-Madā’ih al-Nabawīyyah fī al-Adab al-‘Arabī* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1936) pp. 117-31. For this reason he does not treat these poems in his later book on al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (first published 1938, see below). Mubārak gives the year 390 A.H. for this *rithā’*, whereas most sources give 391 A.H. (p. 121). See also

fifty-eight line polythematic poem goes beyond the normal strictures of *rithā* to exhibit a complex generic hybridity. It is my contention that the poem's composition is not haphazard or arbitrary, but rather the poet has masterfully manipulated classical Arabic *qaṣīdah* conventions, including form, genre, imagery and diction, to promote a politico-religious claim for 'Alid legitimacy—his own imminent Imāmate—and to create, at the same time, a meticulously crafted and perduring work of the poetic art.

Several complicated and complicating personal and political circumstances mitigated against al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's composing a generically distinct, let alone "pure," *qaṣīdah*—whether of *madīh*, *rithā*, or *hijā*, or the more ritual or liturgical Shī'ite devotional poem—when the occasion was 'Āshūrā, that is the commemoration of the slaying of the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad, al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī at Karbalā' on 10 Muḥarram 61/October, 680 ('Āshūrā).² First, there is his distinguished 'Alid lineage. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Abī Aḥmad al-Ḥusayn ibn Mūsā al-Mūsawī al-'Alawī (359/970-406/1016) is commonly known as al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, from the honorific titles bestowed upon him by the Buwayhid *amīr* Bahā' al-Dawlah. He was born in Baghdad to a distinguished and powerful 'Alid family. His father, the illustrious Abū Aḥmad al-Ṭāhir, held positions of influence at the Abbāsīd caliphal court and with the Buwayhids. He was a distinguished diplomat and held as well the offices of *naqīb al-'Alawīyyīn* (marshal of the 'Alids), responsibility for the *mazālim* (complaints) and the Ḥajj, offices that would later devolve upon his sons, the two Sharīfs: al-Raḍī and his younger brother al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044), also a renowned Shī'ite poet, writer and theologian. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī traced his

'Abd al-Fattāh Muḥammad al-Ḥulw, *Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī: Ḥayātuh wa-Dirāsāt Shi'rih*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Hajr lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1986) 2:92-93. I have consulted several of the published versions of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's *Dīwān*. For the text in the present study I have followed: al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Dīwān*, cmt. Yūsuf Shukrī Farahāt, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1995) 1:337-4.

² Khalid Sindawi in a recent article deals with short Shī'ite devotional poems composed for recitation at the tomb of al-Ḥusayn. He does not deal, however, with any complex poetic structures, even though some of his brief quotations derive from long *qaṣīdahs*, and does not mention al-Sharīf al-Raḍī. He seems to be unaware that the visit to al-Ḥusayn's tomb in the hands of some of the major poets he quotes, and others, can function as a structural element within a complex and coherent *qaṣīdah*-form (p. 257). In brief, there is some confusion in his study between short occasional poems composed with the goal of intercession in mind and full formal polythematic *qaṣīdahs* in which the theme of the visit to al-Ḥusayn's tomb may play a part in a highly sophisticated poetic and political structure. The article contains, nevertheless a valuable overview of themes and diction, examples and useful bibliography. See Khalid Sindawi, "Visit to the Tomb of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī in Shiite Poetry: First to Fifth Centuries AH (8th-11th Centuries CE)," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 37 no. 2 (2006) pp. 230-58. For a thorough summary of the life of al-Ḥusayn, including the events surrounding his revolt and death at Karbalā', and the classical sources concerning them, see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954-2002). Hereafter *EI2*.

lineage on his father's side to al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī through the seventh Shī'ī Imām, Mūsā al-Kāẓim and on his mother Fāṭimah bint al-Ḥusayn's to al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī.³ Second, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī lived in a period of great political and religious instability and complexity. The Iranian Shī'ite Buwayhids, a dynasty of Daylamī origin, ruled Baghdad while maintaining the Sunnī 'Abbāsīd caliph as a political puppet. Within the Buwayhid political framework of Imāmī (Twelver) Shī'ite domination, wealthy Shī'ites and Sharīfs played a powerful role and the 'Alids (Ṭālibids) were organized into an autonomous body in order to counterbalance 'Abbāsīd power.⁴ At the same time, the Fāṭimid Shī'ite caliphate, which traced its origins to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭimah, had recently (358/969) conquered Egypt and established its new capital of Cairo.⁵ Meanwhile, in al-Andalus, though perhaps far from the immediate political scene, the Umayyad *amir* 'Abd al-Raḥmān III (d. 350/961) proclaimed in 319/931 the restoration of the Umayyad caliphate at Cordoba and assumed the traditional caliphal title, *amir al-mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful).⁶

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was both ambitious and frustrated in his political aspirations, shifting loyalties in the hope of achieving the recognition and position to which he felt his talent and 'Alid lineage entitled him. His poetry is replete with references to his status and lineage, especially vis-à-vis the reigning Caliphs of his time, and his sense of grievance is often palpable. He apostrophizes the 'Abbāsīds, for example, demanding they relinquish the Caliphate, for their lineage cannot compare with his:⁷

رُدُّوا نُرَاتَ مُحَمَّدٍ رُدُّوا، لَيْسَ الْقَضِيبُ لَكُمْ، وَلَا الْبُرْدُ
هَلْ عَرَقَتْ فِيكُمْ كَفَاطِمَةَ، أَمْ هَلْ لَكُمْ كَمُحَمَّدٍ جَدُّ

Return the inheritance of Muḥammad, return it!
For neither the staff nor the [Prophet's] mantle are yours!

³ Moktar Djebli, "al-Sharīf al-Raḍī," *EI2*. Djebli gives a concise overview of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's biography, poetic production and his literary and religious writings. In Arabic, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī is the subject of a number of biographies and literary studies. Of particular note are Zakī Mubārak, *Abqariyyat al-Raḍī al-Sharīf*, 2 vols. in 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1988) [Baghdad, 1938]; Iḥsān 'Abbās, *Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir/Dār Bayrūt, 1959); al-Ḥulw, *Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī*. For classical sources, see the bibliographies of these works.

⁴ For a concise treatment of the Buwayhids (Būyids) and in particular the role of the 'Alids (p. 1352), see Cl. Cahen, "Buwayhids or Būyids," *EI2*.

⁵ M. Canard, "Fāṭimids," *EI2*.

⁶ L. Molina, "Umayyads in Spain," *EI2*.

⁷ Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Diwān*, 1:377.

Does blood like Fāṭimah's flow in your veins,
Or do you have a grandfather like Muḥammad?

He closes a *qaṣīdah* to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Qādir dated 382 A.H. declaring:⁸

مَا بَيْنَنَا، يَوْمَ الْفَخَارِ، تَفَاوُتٌ، أَبْدَأُ كِلَانًا فِي الْمَعَالِي مُعْرِقٌ
إِلَّا الْخِلَافَةَ مَيِّزَتَكَ، فَإِنِّي أَنَا عَاطِلٌ مِنْهَا، وَأَنْتَ مُطَوَّقٌ

When men compete in glory there is no difference between us
At all: each of us is of the noblest origins—

Except for the Caliphate: I am deprived of it
While you are crowned!

As for the Fātimids, he expresses his resentment that he should live in ignominy under the 'Abbāsīds in Baghdād, while in Egypt his kin hold sway:⁹

أَلْبَسُ الذُّلَّ فِي دِيَارِ الْأَعَادِي وَبِمِصْرَ الْخَلِيفَةَ الْعَلَوِيَّ
مَنْ أَبُوهُ أَبِي وَمَوْلَاهُ مَوْلَايَ، إِذَا ضَامَنِي الْبَعِيدُ الْقَصِيَّ
لَفَّ عِرْقِي بِعِرْقِهِ سَيِّدَا النَّاسِ سِ جَمِيعًا مُحَمَّدٌ وَعَلِيٌّ

I am clothed in humiliation in my enemies' abodes,
While in Egypt rules an 'Alid caliph,

Whose father is my father, whose master is my master,
While [in Baghdād] one distant [in kinship] oppresses me.

My blood is joined to his by the two lords of the people,
Muḥammad and 'Alī.

Above all, at precisely the period during which this poem was composed, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, encouraged by the prediction of his close friend, the renowned Sabian secretary and man of letters, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi' (d. 384/994) that he would rise to the caliphate in Baghdad, had appointed a *dā'iyyah* (agent, propagandist), one Abū al-'Awwām, to promote his cause among the Arab Bedouin tribes of Najd and southern Iraq. With the death of his *dā'iyyah* at the hands of some of the Banū Tamīm in 392 A.H., it appears that al-Sharīf al-

⁸ Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Diwān*, 2:39. I prefer *fikhār* (Form III) to Farahāt's *fakhār* (Form I).

⁹ Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Diwān*, 2:502.

Raḍī abandoned his aspirations to the caliphate and turned to a life of literature and scholarship, albeit as an active and distinguished 'Alid dignitary, under the patronage of the Buwayhid *amīr* Bahā' al-Dawlah, who lavished honorific titles upon him. It was in this later period, for example, in 400/1010 that he produced his renowned compilation of the sayings, homilies and speeches attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāghah*. He was officially given the position of *naqīb al-'Alawiyyīn* in 403/1013.¹⁰

The poet's relation to the subject of his "elegy" is thus complex and multifaceted. So close is his identification with al-Ḥusayn, whom he addresses in the poem as "Grandfather" (v. 52) that the *rāthī* becomes the *marthī*, that is, the distinction between the elegizer and the elegized collapses.¹¹ This collapse of identities establishes "mythic concordance" between al-Ḥusayn and al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.¹² It is no wonder then that the classical genre categories, too, are collapsed into one another: *madh* (praise) is equally *rithā'* (elegy) and *fakhr* (boast, self-praise). The sorrow and bereavement the poet feels are to a large degree for himself, and al-Ḥusayn's political and military defeat are at the same time his own. Moreover, the claim for 'Alid legitimacy and call for vengeance transcend the ritual and poetic parameters of lament and elegy when the restoration of 'Alid rule constitutes, *ipso facto*, the poet's personal claim to the Caliphate or Imāmate. Essentially, then, there is no distinction between

¹⁰ See Djebli, "al-Sharīf al-Raḍī," and refs. above, note 3. Iḥsān 'Abbās provides an especially lively account of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's period of political aspirations and what he terms his "*uqdat al-imāmah*" or "Imamate Complex" along the lines of the "*uqdat al-nubuwwah*" or "Prophethood Complex" of his celebrated predecessor and one of his chief poetic influences, Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965). See 'Abbās, *Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī*, pp.98-126, 148, 168. The later period of his life was replete with political prestige and poetic, literary and theological production. Cl. Cahen writes, "In Baghdād, the brother *sharīf* al-Raḍī and al-Murtaḍā, were throughout the whole of the first quarter of the 11th century, the real masters of the town, acting as intermediaries between the Buwayhids, the Caliphs and the population, at the same time as the Shī'ī scholars and traditionalists." Cahen, "Buwayhids."

¹¹ A facile distinction between the poet as composer of the text and the poet as persona in the poetic text also tends to collapse, except where I am clearly talking about composition techniques. I have avoided the term "persona" in my discussion primarily because it is so cumbersome and unappealing.

¹² I am extending Connerton's term "mythic concordance," which he uses to describe the identification between the originary events and their reenactment in commemorative ceremonies, to describe the relationship in this elegy, which we can consider a the verbal equivalent of a commemorative ceremony, between al-Ḥusayn, who is commemorated, and al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, who seems not merely to reenact or perform the events of al-Ḥusayn's life, but to actually "re-live" them in his own life. See Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 43 and ch. 2 "Commemorative Practices," pp. 41-71, *passim*. For further applications of this concept as concerns the ritual and ceremonial aspects of Arabic poetry, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2002), *index*.

personal and political loss nor between personal and political claims. Moreover, inasmuch as the past—al-Ḥusayn's failed revolt and martyrdom—serves as an allegory for al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's own situation, there is no distinction between the past and present.

Following the thesis propounded in my *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy* (2002), that the form of the standard two- or three-part *qaṣīdah* is by no means arbitrary, rigid or invariable, but rather is subject to extensive manipulation to subtend various expressions of allegiance and claims for legitimacy, I will argue here that al-Sharīf al-Raḍī subtly exploits the evocative potentialities of *nasīb* (elegiac prelude), *rithā'* (elegy), *madīḥ* (panegyric), *fakhr* (self-praise/boast) and *hijā'* (invective, satire) and their associated diction and imagery to serve his very particular, both poetic and political, ends.

Translation and Analysis of the Text¹³

The poem, for analytical purposes, breaks down into the following structural/generic components or sections:

- I. vv. 1-15 *nasīb talalī* : elegiac prelude featuring the abandoned abode theme
- II. vv. 16-18 *rithā'* : elegy for al-Ḥusayn
- III. vv. 19-32 *hijā'* : vituperation of the Umayyads
- IV. vv. 33-37 *madīḥ*: praise/ *fakhr* boast of the 'Alids
- V. vv. 38-41 *tahriq*: call to vengeance, restitution
- VI. vv. 42-53 *nasīb-rithā'*: reduplication and fusion of elegiac prelude and elegy
- VII. vv. 54-58 *madīḥ*: metapoetic expression of praise

I would like first to offer a close examination of the imagery and diction of each section before examining how the poet achieves a formal structure that is poetically unique and expressive. What will emerge from a close reading of the individual sections is that the "hybridity" of this *qaṣīdah* consists not merely in the structuring of a variety of generic components (*aghrād*) into a single poem, but in what we might term a rhetorical hybridity of images and diction within each section that reveal polyvalent significations that bind the various sections together.

¹³ For the text I have followed al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Diwān*, 1:337-40. All translations from the Arabic in this study are my own. Please note that I have tried to capture the gist of the poem in English, rather than produce a literal translation. Where necessary, more literal translations are provided in the discussion or notes.

I. vv. 1-15 nasīb ṭalalī: elegiac prelude featuring the abandoned abode theme

1. هَذِي الْمَنَازِلُ بِالْغَمِيمِ، فَنَادِيهَا،
وَأَسْكَبُ سَخِيَّ الْعَيْنِ بَعْدَ جَمَادِيهَا
2. إِنْ كَانَ نَتْنٌ لِّلْمَعَالِمِ، فَاقْضِيهِ،
أَوْ مُهْجَةً عِنْدَ الطَّلُولِ فَغَادِيهَا
3. يَا هَلْ نَبَلٌ مِنَ الْغَلِيلِ إِلَيْهِمْ،
إِشْرَافَةً لِّلرَّكْبِ فَوْقَ نَجَادِيهَا
4. نُؤْيِي كَمُنْعُطِفِ الْحَنِينَةِ ذُونَهُ
سُحْمُ الْخُدُودِ لَهْنٌ إِرْثُ رَمَادِيهَا
5. وَمَنَاطُ أَطْنَابٍ وَمَعْقَدُ فَيْتِيَةٍ،
تَخْبُو زِنَادُ الْحَيِّ غَيْرَ زِنَادِيهَا
6. وَمَجْرُ أَرْسَانِ الْجِيَادِ لِغِلْمَةٍ
سَجَعُوا الْبُيُوتَ بِشَقْرِهَا وَوَرَادِيهَا
7. وَلَقَدْ حَبَسْتُ عَلَى الدِّيَارِ عَصَابَةَ
مَضْمُومَةَ الْأَيْدِي إِلَى أَكْبَادِيهَا
8. حَسْرَى تَجَاوَبُ بِالْبُكَاءِ عَيْنُهَا
وَتَعْطُ بِالزَّرْقَرَتِ فِي أْبْرَادِيهَا
9. وَفَقُوا بِهَا حَتَّى كَأَنَّ مَطِيئَهُمْ
كَانَتْ قَوْلَائِمُهُنَّ مِنْ أَوْتَادِيهَا
10. ثُمَّ انْتَنَتْ، وَالذَّمْعُ مَاءُ مَرَادِيهَا
وَلَوَاعِيحُ الْأَشْجَانِ مِنْ أَرْوَادِيهَا
11. مِنْ كُلِّ مُسْتَمِيلِ حَمَائِلِ رَنَةٍ
فَطَرُّ الْمَدَامِعِ مِنْ حُلِيٍّ نَجَادِيهَا
12. حَبِيْبِكَ بَلْ حَيْثُ طُلُوكَ بِيَمَّةٍ
يَشْفِي سَقِيمَ الرَّبِيعِ نَفْثُ عَهَادِيهَا
13. وَغَنَتْ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْخَمَائِلِ يَمَنَةٌ
نَسْتَامُ نَافِقَةً عَلَى رُوَادِيهَا
14. هَلْ تَطْلُبُونَ مِنَ النُّوَاطِرِ بَعْدَكُمْ
شَيْئًا، سِوَى عَيْرَاتِهَا وَسَهَادِيهَا
15. لَمْ يَبْقَ نُخْرٌ لِّلْمَدَامِعِ عَنْكُمْ،
وَلَا عَيْنٌ جَرَى لِرَفَادِيهَا

1. These are the campsites of al-Ghamīm
so call to them,
And after long restraint
shed lavish tears.
2. If you owe the trace-signs a debt,
now pay it;
If you've ransomed your heart's blood to the ruined abodes,
redeem it now.
3. O, has a band of riders
looking down from its highlands
Quenched yet
their burning passion?
4. [Look! There is] a drainage trench
curving like a bow,

- Before which stand black-cheeked [women],
heirs to its ashes,
5. And the place where the tent-ropes were tied,
the place where [once] the young braves sat—
All the tribe's firebrands are now extinguished
except for them—,
 6. And the place where the slave-boys trailed
the halter-ropes of steeds
'Til they veiled the tents
with roans and bays.
 7. At [these] abodes I detained
a gallant band,
Whose hands were ever clutching
at their hearts.
 8. Grief-stricken, their eyes shed
responsive tears,
And they rent their robes
with sighs.
 9. They halted there until
their camels' legs
Seemed fixed like tent-pegs
in the ground.
 10. At last they turned
and went away,
Supplied with tears for water,
burning grief for provender.
 11. Each was girt in the sword-belt
of a ringing [blade],
And teardrops ornamented
each suspensory.
 12. May there greet you, and revive
your ruins, too, a rain unceasing
Whose vernal showers, like sorcerer's spittle,
heal what ails the spring abode.
 13. May herbage burst forth in the morning,
lush as the velvet

Of a Yemeni robe that fervid buyers
haggle over.

14. What can you ask of the eyes,
after they have gazed on you,
But tears,
and sleeplessness?
15. There was no store of tears
that was not spent on you,
Nor did any eye
find sleep.

In opening the poem with the tradition-sanctioned theme of the *nasīb ṭalalī*, that is, the elegiac evocation of the ruined encampment of the beloved, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī establishes its poeticity and authenticity. He identifies his poem in terms of genre as a *qaṣīdah* in the classical Arabic tradition or declares his intention of presenting such a *qaṣīdah*. That is, on the level of poetic allusion, the effect of even just the opening line, in which the poet calls upon his companions to call out to and shed tears over a ruined abode, identifies this poem with all others of its genre. It also serves as a pledge on the part of the poet that he will observe the constraints and conventions of this genre. It is important to note that he does not explicitly identify the subject of the poem (lament for al-Ḥusayn on 'Āshūrā'), rather, as Gian Biagio Conte expresses it, "poetic discourse [...] reveals itself first and then that to which it refers."¹⁴ My point is that al-Sharīf al-Raḍī does not intend to compose merely a Shī'ite liturgical lament for al-Ḥusayn, but rather a poetic monument with the grander classical Arabic poetic tradition, and that, like the great works of that tradition, makes religious and political claims to legitimacy.

Within the emotional or psychological trajectory of the *qaṣīdah*-form, the emotional function of the *nasīb ṭalalī* is to evoke an archetypal, that is, a shared, non-specific, sense of loss, sorrow and nostalgia. At the same time, the poet subtly directs us toward the true subject of the poem.

Verse 1 calls for recognition of the site of loss and sorrow and the pouring forth of tears that, whether due to repression or forgetfulness, had been withheld. The dramatic burst of emotion that results from the sudden recognition of the site of sorrow is rhetorically achieved through the pun on *jamād*, which means restraint or stinginess, but also drought, a dry year, and alludes to the poet's dry eye. But it is also part of a multi-layered *ṭibāq* (antithesis) with *sakhī*,

¹⁴ Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets*, trans. Charles Segal (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986), p. 45.

generous, lavish. The effect of this word-play is to suggest the metaphorical overlap of shedding rain, shedding tears and, as further verses will confirm, shedding the blood of vengeance. In other words, however “conventional” the opening verse may be, it nevertheless contains within its metaphorical overtones intimations of the poet’s more specific intentions.¹⁵

Verse 2 likewise appears to be a charming metaphor for the expressing of repressed emotions, yet here, too, the rhetorical language of debt (*dayn*) and ransom/redemption (*fidāʾ*) is suggestive of unredeemed blood. This undercurrent rises more to the surface in verse 3, where the word *ghalīl*, which means thirst, thirst for revenge and violent passion, plays a decisive role. The verse reads initially as an expression of weeping out of sorrowful passion for the former inhabitants of the abode, thereby reiterating the conventional topos of weeping over the ruined abode that opened the poem, but inescapably bears a second meaning, for “to quench a burning thirst” is a standard Arabic metaphor for achieving blood vengeance. At the same time the poetic motif of thirst suggests the topos of the thirst of al-Ḥusayn and his companions that plays a prominent role in the Karbalāʾ narrative (see below).

With verse 4 the poet moves more deeply into the motifs and diction of the traditional *nasīb*, particularly those elements that serve as signs by which the poet and his band of companions identify the abandoned encampment and that spark memory and nostalgic reminiscence. The *nuʾy* is the drainage trench dug around a Bedouin encampment, defining its limits, and which, scoured by annual rains, becomes clearer with every passing year. The *athāfi* are the three fire-blackened stones that support the cooking cauldron and which, like the trench, remain long after the tribe has departed and signal its former habitation. As discussed at length by Jaroslav Stetkevych, these are fixtures of the *nasīb ṭalālī* as much as of desert geography, and the bearers of archaic and archetypal meanings.¹⁶ Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, however, adds an evocative metaphorical dimension. For he does not denotatively name the fire-blackened *athāfi* stones, rather he refers to them epithetically in the feminine plural as “*suḥmu al-khudūdi lahunna ʾirthu ramādihā*” (black-cheeked heiresses of the [campsite’s] ashes). In doing so, he unmistakably personifies the *athāfi*

¹⁵ Al-Ghamīm is among the names of places along the Ḥajj route from Iraq to Mecca that occur in al-Sharīf al-Raḍī’s poems that mention his *dāʾiyah* Abū al-ʿAwwām. According to Yāqūt’s *Muʾjam al-Buldān* (apud al-Ḥulw), it lies near Medina. See al-Ḥulw, *Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī*, 1:198. The word *ghamīm* means green herbage beneath dry herbage [Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols., (New York: Frederick Unger, 1958 [London, 1863]), *gh-m-m*].

¹⁶ Jaroslav Stetkevych, “Toward an Arabic Elegiac Lexicon: The Seven Words of the *Nasīb*,” in Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, ed., *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1994), 58-129. On *nuʾy* see pp. 68-74; on *athāfi* see pp. 89-105;

as *nawā'ih*, that is, the bereft and wailing women of the classical Arabic elegy, indeed of the entire Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean ritual lament, who tear their hair and smear their faces with ashes.¹⁷ What is striking here, as elsewhere in the greatest classical Arabic poetry, is the poet's ability to connect the lexical and rhetorical minutiae of the specifically Arabic poetic tradition with the shared archetypal images of the Ancient world.

Likewise, the nouns of place (*asmā' al-amkinah*) of verses 5 and 6: *manāt*, place where tent ropes are attached; *maq'ad*, sitting place; *majarr* (place where something has been dragged) are to be understood as the physical signs or traces of the activities that took place when the encampment was inhabited and which serve now both to denote the campsite and to evoke the memory of those who once dwelt there. This is a particularly *nasībic* use of morphology, the *maf'al* form of the noun of place, not to designate the place where an act takes place or occurs, but rather the place, or trace of a place, now empty where an act once took place. Verse 5 compounds the meaning through the *jinās* (word-play) on *zinād* (s. *zand*), which means both fire-sticks and forearms. The literal translation of the second hemistich is, "the fire-sticks of the tribe are extinguished except for [the young braves'] fore-arms." The flow of text and sub-text seems to suggest that the object of the lamenting women (v. 4) is the young braves, the riders of the tribe's wealth of fine steeds (vv. 5-6). What is noteworthy within the broader context of the poem is that there is no evocation of the poet's beloved mistress or the departing/departed women of the tribe as we usually find in the *nasīb ṭalalī*, but rather the band of young braves.

After this evocation of the former habitation and the young braves, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī resumes the opening theme of the poet and his own young band of braves stopping to weep. Verse 9 suggests the close identification of these two bands, as the legs of the mounts of the poet's band become merged with the tent-pegs of the ruined abode. The tears and burning grief that serve as water and provender for the poet's band in verse 10, together with the tear-stained

¹⁷ J. Stetkevych has already noted the association of the *athāfi*, their number always three, with loss and lamentation, first in the common comparison of the three soot-blackened stones to three unpaired doves (the dove that has lost its mate is a conventional image of mourning and loss in Arabic poetry) and further, to bereft mother camels who have lost their young. He has also connected this to the Christian legend and iconography of the Three Marys who weep over the body of Christ after he is taken down from the cross, etc. See J. Stetkevych, "Toward an Arabic Elegiac Lexicon," pp. 94-97. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī elicits further elegiac dimensions from this traditional topos. Perhaps there is also a subliminal verbal (call it "Freudian") suggestion, for the word *nāḥa/yanūḥu* is used both for the cooing of the dove, especially for its lost mate, and for the lamentation of bereft women, termed *nawā'ih*, s. *nā'ihah*.

sword-belts of verse 11, again convey a subliminal message of unavenged blood.¹⁸

As the poet's band departs, the poet turns to a *du'ā'*, benediction, or more precisely, *istisqā'*, the poetic convention of calling for rain to revive the ruined abode (vv. 12-15). The meaning hinges on the word *ḥayyat* (3 fem. sing. of the verb *ḥayya*), which means both to revive and to greet, as in *ḥayyāka Allāhu*, May God give you life! Here, as elsewhere, the springing up of fresh herbage after the rain carries broader archetypal or symbolic connotations of revival or rebirth. The performative efficacy of the benediction is alluded to through terming the rain-water *naftḥ*, sorcerer's spittle; and the concept of blood-vengeance, which is also understood to be a form of revival, is suggested in the words *yashfi saqīma* . . . , cure an ailment, likewise a by-word for the achieving of blood-vengeance. The further introduction of tears and sleeplessness once again reminds us of the close metaphorical and symbolic association between rain and tears and, further, the association of tears and sleeplessness not merely with the poet's sorrow over his lost mistress of the *nasīb*, but also with the dead hero of elegy and the poem of blood vengeance.

II. vv. 16-18 rithā': elegy for al-Ḥusayn.

16. شَغَلَ الدُّمُوعَ عَنِ الدِّيَارِ بُكَائُنَا لِبُكَاءِ فَاطِمَةَ عَلَى أَوْلَادِهَا
 17. لَمْ يَخْلُقُوهَا فِي الشَّهِيدِ وَقَدْ رَأَى نَفَعَ الْفِرَاتِ يُدَادُ عَنْ أَوْلَادِهَا
 18. أَتَرَى دَرْتِ أَنْ الحُسَيْنِ طَرِيدَةً لَقْنَا بَنِي الطَّرْدَاءِ عِنْدَ وِلَادِهَا

16. We were diverted from shedding tears
 for [ruined] abodes
 By our weeping for Fāṭimah's weeping
 for her sons.

¹⁸ This verse recalls to us Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allaqah*, v. 9:

فَقَاصَتْ دُمُوعَ الْعَيْنِ مِئِي صَبَابَةً عَلَى النَّحْرِ حَتَّى بَلَ دَمْعِي مِخْمَلِي

Then my eyes, from ardent love, sent down a flood of tears upon my neck,
 Until my sword-belt was soaked in tears.

(Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā'id al-Sab' al-Ṭiwāl al-Jāhiliyyāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Sallām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1963), p. 31). Perhaps there, too, the theme of blood-vengeance for his slain royal father, which dominates the *akḥbār* of Imru' al-Qays, is lurking beneath the surface. See my discussion in Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Cornell UP, 1993), ch. 7, "Regicide and Retribution: *The Mu'allaqah of Imru' al-Qays*," pp. 241-85.

17. No sorrow was more grievous than hers
 for the martyr
 Who had seen the sweet Euphrates gushing torrents
 but was kept from drink.
18. I wonder if she knew,
 when she gave birth,
 That al-Ḥusayn would fall prey
 to the Banū al-Ṭardā's spears.

At least as a poetic conceit, the poet, through the use of the verb *shaghala*, to distract, divert, preoccupy, (lit., “our weeping for Fāṭimah’s weeping ... diverted us from shedding tears over abodes”) presents the mourning for al-Ḥusayn as displacing the weeping over ruined abodes. Further, as the Arab poet tells us, “one sorrow evokes another,” (*inna al-shajā yab’athu al-shajā*), so that we can understand this as a poetic transition from the generic archetypal sorrow of the *nasīb ṭalālī* (however much it pointed toward more specific concerns) to the specific sorrow, that is the elegy for al-Ḥusayn.¹⁹ The smoothness of the transition masks, however, a structural deviation from, or variation in, the normative *qaṣīdah* progression, that signals to us that this poem is essentially one of lamentation and loss, and not of triumph. For in the normative structure of the *qaṣīdat al-madh* what “diverts” the poet from the sorrows of the *nasīb* is an act of resolve, encapsulated in the concept of *himmah*—the poet’s aspiration to leave his sorrows behind and move on to greater and more manly pursuits—which forms the transition, structurally speaking, to the desert journey (*raḥīl*) and then the praise section (*madīḥ*), or, as happens most often in the ‘Abbāsīd period, directly to the *madīḥ*. In other words, in this poem, rather than proceeding to the triumphal restoration of the *madīḥ*, the poet *reverts* to further loss and weeping. These three verses thus serve as a transition from the conventional and archetypal loss of the *nasīb* that *redirects* us to the ritual and liturgical Shī‘ite lament for al-Ḥusayn. Or, keeping in mind the *madīḥ* section (VII) that closes the poem, one could think of it as a sort of *detour*. Section II has a retroactive effect as well, that is,

¹⁹ The Arab poet is the Mukhaḍram Mutammim ibn Nuwayrah in a short elegy for his brother Mālik [Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Marzūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah*, eds. Aḥmad Amīn & ‘Abd al-Sallām Hārūn, 2d prt., 4 vols. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Lajnat al-Ta’līf wa-al-Tarjamaḥ wa-al-Nashr, 1967), no. 265, pp. 797-98]. For a translation and discussion of this poem, and of the intimate relationship between *nasīb* and elegy in the Arabic tradition, and in Abū Tammām’s *Ḥamāsah* in particular, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ‘Abbāsīd Age*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), ch. 14 “Metaphorical Relationships,” pp. 313-32.

it belatedly identifies the young braves who once dwelt at al-Ghamīm as the companions of al-Ḥusayn (*aṣḥāb al-Ḥusayn*), who died with him at Karbalā',²⁰ and the visiting poet and his gallant band as mourning Shī'ites or 'Alids. At the same time it draws out or confirms the undertones of vengeance, redemption and restoration of Section I. All in all, in its bridging effect between the *nasīb ṭalālī* and the later sections of the poem, Section II falls under the traditional heading of *ḥusn al-takhalluṣ* (*beautiful transition*).

In this short transitional section there is a succinct encapsulation of the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn in the single motif of his thirsty death (v. 17). It is interesting that the historical narrative accounts of al-Ḥusayn's death present this as a factual occurrence: that when he was overcome by thirst and tried to reach the Euphrates to drink, but was prevented from doing so.²¹ It seems to me, however, that the insistence on this detail in the telling and retelling of al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom, whether in poetry or in prose, is due to its symbolic or metaphorical meaning. That is, in the Arab poetic or symbolic terms, to die thirsty means to die unavenged. The most oft-cited expression of this idea, as we read in the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* and elsewhere that the 'Arabs in the Jāhiliyyah believed that "if a slain man went unavenged, an owl would emerge from his grave and cry, 'Give me drink! Give me drink! (*isqūnī, isqūnī*) until the man's killer was slain."²² In the context of the present poem, in particular, the virtually liturgical reiteration of this detail of al-Ḥusayn's thirsty death adumbrates the explicit call for vengeance and, *ipso facto*, 'Alid restoration, of Section V (below).

Of interest, too, are the mariological parallels to Fāṭimah, the bereft mother of the martyr/victim, particularly in the motif of the mother's prescience of her son's death. To Western readers this calls to mind Bellini's Madonna of the Meadow (ca. 1500 C.E.) in the National Gallery in London, in which the death-like sleep of the infant is considered a pre-figuration of the Pietà, that is, the mother Mary holding the body of her crucified son.²³ This, in

²⁰ They are said to have numbered 32 horsemen and 40 foot-soldiers. See Vaglieri, "al-Ḥusayn."

²¹ See Vaglieri, "al-Ḥusayn."

²² Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad al-Anbārī, *Diwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, ed. Charles James Lyall (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Ābā' al-Yasū'iyyin, 1920), p.132. Sindawi cites this as well, but does not explicitly make the connection between prayers for rainfall and sprinkling water and its connection with blood vengeance—which, of course, comes much more to the forefront in al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's poem than in the short poems for intercession that Sindawi treat. See Sindawi, "Visit to the Tomb of al-Ḥusayn," pp. 254-55. For a discussion of the metaphorical interplay between wine, water, tears, and the blood of vengeance, see S. Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, pp. 69-73, 172-88, index. For an extensive study of this motif, see Th. E. Homerin, "Echoes of a Thirsty Own," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44 no. 3 (1985): 165-84.

²³ The London National Gallery website gives the following: Madonna of the Meadow about 1500 BELLINI, Giovanni Died: 1516

turn, brings to mind its converse, that is, Michelangelo's Pietà (1499 C.E.) at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, in which the extremely youthful-looking mother holds her crucified son in her lap in a way that evokes the image of Mary holding the infant Jesus.²⁴ The point is that both traditions, the Christian and the Muslim Shi'ite, draw on the same emotional and figurative archetypes. A further prescience is suggested in the *nomen est omen* type of *jinās* (word-play) between al-Ḥusayn, who is the *ṭarīdah*, prey, and those who pursued him, whom the poet terms the Banū Ṭardā' (*ṭarada* means "to pursue") (v. 18).

III. vv. 19-32 hijā': vituperation of the Umayyads

19. كَانَتْ مَاتِمٌ بِالْعِرَاقِ تَعْدُهَا أَمْوِيَّةٌ بِالشَّامِ مِنْ أَعْيَادِهَا
 20. مَا رَأَيْتُ غَضَبَ النَّبِيِّ، وَقَدْ غَدَا زَرْعُ النَّبِيِّ مَظْنَةً لِحِصَادِهَا
 21. بَاعَتْ بَصَائِرَ بَيْنَهَا بِضَلَالِهَا، وَشَرَتْ مَعَاطِبَ غِيهَا بِرِشَادِهَا
 22. جَعَلَتْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مِنْ خُصَمَائِهَا، فَلَيْسَ مَا ذَخَرْتَ لِيَوْمِ مَعَادِهَا
 23. نَسَلُ النَّبِيِّ عَلَى صِعَابِ مَطِيهَا، وَدَمُ النَّبِيِّ عَلَى رُؤُوسِ صِعَادِهَا
 24. وَآ لَهْفَاتِهِ لِعِصْبَةِ عَلَوِيَّةٍ، تَبِعَتْ أُمِّيَّةَ بَعْدَ عِزِّ قِيَادِهَا
 25. جَعَلَتْ عِرَانَ الذُّلِّ فِي أَنَاغِيهَا، وَعِلَاطَ وَسْمِ الضَّمِيمِ فِي أَجْيَادِهَا
 26. زَعَمَتْ بِأَنَّ الدِّينَ سَوَّغَ قَتْلَهَا، أَوْلَيْتَ هَذَا الدِّينَ عَنْ أَجْدَادِهَا
 27. طَلَبْتَ تَرَاثَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ عِنْدَهَا، وَشَفْتَ قَدِيمَ الْغُلِّ مِنْ أَحْقَادِهَا
 28. وَاسْتَأْتَرْتَ بِالْأَمْرِ عَنْ غِيَابِهَا، وَقَصَصْتَ بِمَا شَاعَتْ عَلَى شَهَادِهَا
 29. اللَّهُ سَابِقَكُمْ إِلَى أَرْوَاحِهَا، وَكَسَيْتُمُ الْإِنَامَ فِي أَجْسَادِهَا
 30. إِنْ قُوِّضَتْ يَدُكَ الْقِيَابُ، فَإِنَّمَا خَرَّتْ عِمَادُ الدِّينِ قَبْلَ عِمَادِهَا
 31. إِنَّ الْخِلَافَةَ أَصْبَحَتْ مَرْوِيَّةً، عَنْ شَعْبِهَا بِيِيَاضِهَا وَسَوَادِهَا
 32. طَمَسَتْ مَنَابِرَهَا غُلُوجَ أُمِّيَّةٍ، تَنْزُؤُ نِيَابِهِمْ عَلَى أَعْوَادِهَا

19. There were funerals in Iraq
 that Umayyads in Syria

NG599. Bought, 1858. 'The Madonna of the Meadow' shows Jesus sleeping in the Virgin's lap. It is a natural pose yet anticipates the Pietà, in which his dead body is laid across his mother's lap.

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/cgi-bin/WebObjects.dll/CollectionPublisher.woa/wa/work?workNumber=NG599> Accessed 5 Feb., 2007.

²⁴ Pietà by Michelangelo St. Peter in Vatican Rome 1499. http://www.romaviva.com/Vaticano/pieta-michelangelo_eng.htm Accessed 5 Feb., 2007.



Giovanni Bellini, 'The Madonna of the Meadow.'



Michelangelo, 'Pietà.'

- Counted among
their feast-days.
20. They did not fear the Prophet's wrath,
but thought
That what the Prophet sowed
was theirs to reap.
21. They sold the clear path of religion
for pathless error,
And for righteousness they purchased
the perils of transgression.
22. They have made of God's Messenger
an enemy—
What an evil store they have laid by
for Judgment Day!
23. The offspring of the Prophet on
their horses' [hooves];²⁵
On the heads of their lances
the Prophet's blood!
24. O woe is me
for an 'Alid band
Now subject to the [Banū] Umayyah
after ruling them with might.
25. They placed in their noses
the nose-bits of disgrace;
About their necks they tied
the neck-ropes of oppression.
26. [The Umayyads] claimed that religion
allowed them to kill [the 'Alids].
Isn't this the religion they got
from their forefathers?
27. Invoking their Jāhili legacy
[they slew them]

²⁵ I am not sure of my interpretation of this hemistich. Literally it reads "The offspring of the Prophet on their [i.e., the Umayyads'] recalcitrant mounts." It seems to me it could either refer to the Ṭālibis being trampled by the Umayyad squadrons, or to their women being carried off as prisoners.

And slaked [with blood] the burning thirst
of ancient rancor.

28. They usurped the affairs
of those that were absent,
And imposed their will
upon those who were present.
29. God got to [the 'Alids'] souls
before you [Umayyads] could;
You obtained [nothing but] the sins
of [slaying, defiling] their bodies.
30. If [the 'Alids'] domed tents
were pulled down,
Then surely the tent-pole of religion
was toppled first.
31. The Caliphate has been wrested
from its [true] people,
By those of the white [banners] [Umayyads]
and those of the black [banners] ['Abbāsids].
32. Umayyad infidels have defiled
its minbars,
Rapacious wolves, they mount
the wooden [steps].

Having introduced the death of al-Ḥusayn in Section II, the poet now sets the political stage for Sections III and IV which contrast the vituperation of the perpetrators of al-Ḥusayn's murder and illegitimate usurpers of the caliphate, the Umayyads (Section III) with praise for the persecuted legitimate heirs to the caliphate, the 'Alids. The competing and antithetical politico-religious claims of the 'Alids and Umayyads are masterfully encapsulated in verse 19: the slaying of al-Ḥusayn is the cause for 'Alid lament in Iraq but Umayyad celebration in their Syrian heartland, for that event signals 'Alid defeat and Umayyad triumph. The annually reiterated Shī'ite ritual mourning is an annually repeated celebration of revival (the etymological sense of *'id*, an annually recurring holiday) for the Umayyads. The controlling theme of these two sections is the illegitimacy of the Umayyad claim to the Caliphate and, conversely, the legitimacy of 'Alid claims. Inasmuch as Umayyad rule is therefore depicted as antithetical to true Islamic rule, *ṭibāq* (antithesis) is the major rhetorical device employed in this passage. The Umayyads are portrayed

as enemies of Islam and of the Prophet who have slain his progeny and thus spilled his blood (in all seventeen Ṭalibīs were massacred at Karbalā')²⁶ (vv. 19-23). Verse 20 seems to admit of two readings: first that the Umayyads felt it was their right to assume the Caliphate, i.e., the leadership of the Islamic community that the Prophet Muḥammad had instituted (sowed); or, taking the seed that Muḥammad sowed to mean his progeny, that the Umayyads considered it their right to slay, "reap," the Prophet's progeny. Verses 24-25 describe the humiliated and oppressed 'Alids as beasts subjugated by ropes and nose-bits.

In verses 26-27 the poet traces Umayyad antipathy to the Prophet's family to their Jāhili legacy, which I take to mean the Umayyads. The most likely reference would seem to be to the Battles of Badr (2/624) and Uḥud the following year. At Badr the Meccan "Polytheists" (*mushrikūn*) were led by Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb ibn Umayyah, who had long opposed the Prophet Muḥammad and his mission and did not convert to Islam until the surrender of Mecca (8/629). The accounts of Badr feature a pairing off in single combat between the Prophet's kin and those of Abū Sufyān—or, more precisely, the relatives of his wife Hind bint 'Utbaḥ ibn Rabī'ah, the mother of the first Umayyad caliph, Mu'āwiyah, and thereby the progenitrix of the dynasty. The Prophet's uncle Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib took the field against Shaybah ibn Rabī'ah; the Prophet's cousin, 'Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥārith against 'Utbaḥ ibn Rabī'ah and the Prophet's cousin 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib against al-Walīd ibn 'Utbaḥ. Ḥamzah and 'Alī slew their opponents and then helped 'Ubaydah (who subsequently died of his wounds) finished off 'Utbaḥ. In all, Hind bint 'Utbaḥ lost her father, her uncle, her brother and, in addition, her son Ḥanzalah ibn Sufyān. The Meccans took their vengeance the following year at the Battle of Uḥud, especially remarkable for Hind ibn 'Utbaḥ engaging a black slave to slay Ḥamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib with his javelin, and then Hind, in an infamous and visceral display of having achieved her vengeance, eating (some claim only biting) his liver.²⁷ The point, in brief, is that the Umayyads' Jāhili ancestors were already "blood enemies" of the Prophet and his kin, and the

²⁶ See Vaglieri, "al-Ḥusayn."

²⁷ For Badr and Uḥud, see Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mālik Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.) 2:643-803 (Badr) and 3:837-967 (Uḥud) and Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarār al-Ṭabarī, [*Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*] *Annales* ed. M. J. de Goeje, 15 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964-65 [photo-ed.]) 3:1281-1354 (Badr); 3:1383-1427 (Uḥud). I have discussed the role of Jāhili concepts of blood-vengeance, elegy and *tabrīd* (instigation to vengeance) in women's poetry as it relates to Badr and Uḥud in S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, pp. 199-205.

Jāhili institution of blood-vengeance, already exercised at Uḥud, was equally at play at Karbalāʾ.

In verse 31 the poet refers to the usurpation of the Caliphate by both the Umayyads and (currently reigning) ʿAbbāsids, although he is careful in this case to simply allude to them by their banner colors. This suggests that all the poet's railing against Umayyad usurpation, which by the time of the poem is largely a historical rather than current grievance (the Umayyad caliphate in Cordoba notwithstanding), may be taken more broadly to allude to ʿAlid claims or grievances against the ʿAbbāsids, as indeed others, such as Zakī Mubārak and Iḥsān ʿAbbās, have noted.²⁸ In verse 32 the diction is carefully chosen to suggest sexual defilement and violation: the Umayyads are termed *ʿulūj* (wild asses—with all that that implies of untrammelled and exaggerated sexuality, and which also means infidels—perhaps implying “uncircumcised”) and then wolves; the verbs *tamasat* (defile) and *tanzū* (leap, mount) have the same sexual implications in Arabic as their English counterparts. In sum, Umayyad rule is an abomination, an illegitimate usurpation of ʿAlid rights. We should note that the contents of Section III are largely standard pro-ʿAlid/anti-Umayyad political fare.

IV. vv. 33-37 *madīḥ*: praise of ʿAlids = fakhr (*boast*)

33. هِيَ صَفْوَةُ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَوْحَى لَهَا، وَقَضَى أَمْرَهُ إِلَى أُمَجَادِهَا
 34. أَخَذَتْ بِأَطْرَافِ الْفَخَّارِ، فَعَايَرَ أَنْ يُصْبِحَ النَّقْلَانِ مِنْ حُسْنَادِهَا
 35. الزُّهْدُ وَالْأَخْلَامُ فِي فِتَاكِهَا، وَالْفَتْكُ، لَوْلَا اللَّهُ، فِي زُهَادِهَا
 36. عُصَبٌ يَفْمَطُ بِالنَّجَادِ وَلَيْدُهَا، وَمَهُودٌ صَيَّبَتْهَا ظُهُورُ جِيَادِهَا
 37. تَرَوِي مَنَايِبَ فَضْلِهَا أَعْدَاؤُهَا أَبْدًا، وَتُسَيِّدُهُ إِلَى أَعْدَادِهَا

33. They are God's elect to whom
 He sent His Revelation
 And to whose noble [Imāms] He related
 His decrees.
34. They took hold of glory
 at both ends,
 So men and jinn are forgiven
 for envying them.

²⁸ See Mubārak, *Al-Madāʾih al-Nabawiyah*, pp. 123, 126; ʿAbbās, *Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī*, p. 85.

35. Their ruthless warriors are yet
 pious and forbearing,
 And but for [fear of] Allāh their pious would be
 ruthless warriors.
36. [They are] bands who swaddle their newborns
 with sword-straps,
 Whose infants' cradles are
 the backs of steeds.
37. Their virtuous deeds are recited
 by their foes,
 Even though they ascribe them
 to their enemies.

This short passage of praise that we have tentatively termed *madīḥ*, that is, praise or panegyric, is essentially polyvalent: like *madīḥ* it celebrates the legitimate rule, or claim to rule, of its subject. Thus, in verse 33, the standard 'Alid and Shī'ite claim that God's elect are the Prophet, inasmuch as God chose to reveal the Qur'ān to him, and the 'Alids, as the closest blood-kin and genealogical descendants of the Prophet, and to whom, in accordance with Shī'ite tenets, God continued to convey exclusive knowledge. I would take *awḥā* in the first hemistich, in accordance with its customary usage in such contexts, to refer to the revelation of the Qur'ān to Muḥammad, and *qadā' awāmirahu*, to give orders or decrees, to refer to God's continued communication or dispensation to rule to the Shī'ite Imāms in particular and to the 'Alid line in general. To their divine appointment (v. 33), the poet then appends unsurpassed heroic and moral-religious virtues (vv. 34-37).

Within the context of the poem, this passage can be classified as well as *rithā'* (elegy), for the poet is celebrating those who ought to rule the Islamic Ummah (community), but no longer do. Further, in light of the identity of the poet, and the essential tenselessness of the passage, it reads also as *fakhr* (boast) even though it is not expressed in the first person. In this light, the two bands introduced in Section I, the young braves who were the former inhabitants of the ruins (v. 5), whom we subsequently identified as the companions of al-Ḥusayn, and the poet's "gallant band" (v. 7), whom we identified as the poet's contemporary band of mourning 'Alids, are both simultaneously the subject of the heroic description of Section IV. This will have interesting political implications for Section V.

V. vv. 38-41 *tahriḍ*: call to vengeance and restoration

38. يَا غَيْرَةَ اللَّهِ اغْضَبِي لِنَبِيِّهِ، وَتَزَحْزَحِي بِالْبَيْضِ عَنْ أَعْمَادِهَا
 39. مِنْ عَصَبَةِ ضَاعَتْ دِمَاءُ مُحَمَّدٍ وَبَيْنِهِ بَيْنَ يَزِيدِهَا وَزِيَادِهَا
 40. صَقَدَاتُ مَالِ اللَّهِ مِلءُ أَكْفِهَا، وَأَكْفُ آلِ اللَّهِ فِي أَصْقَادِهَا
 41. ضَرَبُوا بِسَيْفِ مُحَمَّدٍ أَبْنَاءَهُ ضَرْبَ الْغَرَائِبِ عُنْنَ بَعْدَ ذِيَادِهَا

38. O divine wrath, rise to defend
 God's Prophet
 And draw the white [blades]
 from their sheathes
39. Against a band
 between whose Yazād and Ziyād
 The blood of Muḥammad and his sons
 was lost.
40. The gifts of God's money
 fill their hands,
 While the hands of God's people
 are in bonds.
41. With Muḥammad's sword
 they struck his sons
 With blows like handmills that draw back
 only to return once more.

Sections III and IV, which present Umayyad illegitimacy and usurpation of the Caliphate and their oppression of the legitimate rulers, that is, the descendants of the Prophet, pave the way for Section V with its invocation of moral outrage and divine wrath in a call to arms against the usurpers. This can be read as merely a liturgical reenactment of Shi'ite historical resentment, or can be understood in more immediate political terms. If the latter, it seems that we must understand here, and throughout the poem, that the traditional historical enemy, the Umayyad usurpers, function as well as an allegory for the contemporary usurpers, i.e., the 'Abbāsids.

Verse 39 explicitly names two Umayyad arch-villians, Yazīd (r. 60-64/680-683), the caliph responsible for the slaughter of al-Ḥusayn and his companions and 'Ubaydallāh ibn Ziyād, Yazīd's governor of Baḥrah and Kūfah, who was assigned to quell al-Ḥusayn's rebellion. The *ṭibāq* (antithesis) between the significance of their names, to augment or increase (root: *z-y-d*), then serves to contrast and identify Umayyad gains with the loss of 'Alid blood (*ḍā'at*

dimā'u Muḥammadin // wa-banihi). Verse 40 exhibits particularly intense rhetorical play again to express the illicit Umayyad usurpation of the funds of the Islamic community and their concomitant oppression and abuse of "God's people." Through a combination of double *jinās* (word-play), *ṭibāq* (antithesis) and chiasmus (abba pattern) the poet succinctly expresses the inversion of justice that constitutes the Umayyad abomination: *ṣafadātu ... 'akuffuhā // wa-'akuffuhā ... 'aṣfādhā*, where the first *ṣafad* means gift, and the second, bonds or shackles. Here we should note that *Āli Allāhi*, people or family of God, is a politically and religiously charged designation for the 'Alids, a phrase consciously constructed to buttress 'Alid claims that Muḥammad's direct blood-line are God's chosen leaders of the Islamic community. The idea is that the direct descent of the 'Alids through the Prophet's cousin 'Alī and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭimah trumps the less direct claims of kinship of the 'Abbāsids, through the Hāshimite line, i.e., which claims descent from the Prophet's uncle, al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim,²⁹ and Umayyads, based on the precept that the Imāmate/Caliphate should be from Quraysh, the Meccan tribe to which both the Hāshimites and the Umayyads belong. Of course, all these genealogical claims as the basis for legitimate rule are in opposition to the Khārijite tenet that the legitimate Caliphate belongs to the best and most just of believers, without regard to lineage.

Verse 41 seals the call to rise up against injustice and oppression with an image of the Umayyads using Muḥammad's own sword, presumably a metonymy for the Muslim armies, to strike down Muḥammad's sons. This image of ruthless slaughter is intended to provoke outrage and action and marks Section V as explicitly what the Arabic poetic tradition terms *tabrīd*, that is, incitement to battle, especially to redeem unavenged blood.³⁰

VI. *vv. 42-53 nasīb-rithā'*: reduplication and fusion of elegiac prelude and elegy

42. قَدْ قُلْتُ لِلرَّكْبِ الطَّلَاحِ كَأَنَّهُمْ رُبْدُ النَّسُورِ عَلَى نُرَى أَطْوَادِهَا
 43. يَحْتَوِ بِعُوجِ كَالْحَيِّ أَطَاعَةَ مُتَعَاصِمِهَا، فَطَغَى عَلَى مُتَقَادِهَا
 44. حَتَّى تَخِيلُ، مِنْ هَبَابِ رِقَابِهَا، أَعْنَاقَهَا فِي السَّيْرِ مِنْ أَعْدَادِهَا
 45. قِفْ بِي، وَلَوْ لَوْتُ الْإِزَارِ، فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ مُهْجَةٌ عَلِقَ الْجَوَى بِفُؤَادِهَا
 46. بِالطَّفِّ حَيْثُ عَدَا مُرَاقُ بِمَائِهَا، وَمَنَاحُ أَيْقُمِهَا لِيَوْمِ جِلَادِهَا

²⁹ See B. Lewis, "Abbāsids," *EI2*.

³⁰ On *tabrīd*, especially women's poems of incitement to blood vengeance, see S. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, pp. 161-205.

47. الْفَقْرُ مِنْ أَرْوَاقِهَا، وَالطَّيْرُ مِنْ طُرَاقِهَا، وَالْوَحْشُ مِنْ عَوْلِدِهَا
 48. تَجْرِي لَهَا حَبَبُ الدُّمُوعِ، وَإِنَّمَا حَبُّ الْقُلُوبِ يَكُنُّ مِنْ أَمْدَادِهَا
 49. يَا يَوْمَ عَاشُورَاءَ كَمْ لَكَ لَوْعَةً تَتَرَقَّصُ الْأَحْشَاءُ مِنْ إِيْقَادِهَا
 50. مَا غَدَتَ إِلَّا عَادَ قَلْبِي غَلَّةً حَرَى، وَلَوْ بَالِغَتْ فِي إِبْرَادِهَا
 51. مِثْلُ السَّلِيمِ مَضِيضَةً أَنَاوُهُ، خَزْرُ الْعَيُونِ تَعُودُهُ بِعِدَادِهَا
 52. يَا جِدُّ لَا زَالَتْ كَتَائِبُ حَسْرَةٍ تَغْشَى الضَّمِيرَ بِكِرْهَا وَطِرَادِهَا
 53. أَبَدًا عَلَيْكَ، وَأَدْمَعٌ مَسْقُوحَةٌ، إِنْ لَمْ يُرَاوِحْهَا الْبُكَاءُ يُعَادِهَا

42. I said to [the driver of] the weary riders
 like dust-hued eagles
 On lofty
 mountain peaks,
43. As he was urging on with song
 the bow-backed camels,
 Whose stubborn ones obeyed him and
 subdued the docile ones,
44. Until you would imagine
 that their necks,
 Bobbing as they run,
 were flowing streams,
45. Stop with me, if only
 for the time it takes to twist a waist-wrapper,
 For mine is a heart afflicted
 by violent passion,
46. At al-Ṭaff where once of a morning
 the heart's blood flowed
 And where their she-camels knelt
 for the sword-fight day.
47. The wasteland was their funeral-tent,
 the vultures their visitors by night,
 None but wild beasts came to call
 upon their sick.
48. For them tear-drops
 stream down,
 But only in the grains of hearts
 can [grief] be weighed.

49. O Day of 'Āshūrā',
 how great the pains you bring!
 Their burning fairly makes
 the insides dance!
50. You have not returned except
 to bring my heart once more
 A passion that, however hard I try to cool it,
 yet still burns,
51. Like a snake-bit man, his hours
 filled with pain,
 Whom the slit-eyed serpents revisit yearly
 with new pain.
52. O Grandfather! May the squadrons of sorrow
 never cease
 To overwhelm the soul with their
 charging and pursuit
53. Forever over you,
 nor poured forth tears
 That weeping brings, if not at evening,
 then at morn.

Section VI constitutes the emotional, liturgical and structural climax of the poem. The reiterative nature of the poetics, and psychology, of loss is nowhere clearer. In terms of structure and genre, the poet, rather than progressing to the *madīh* or praise section of the triumphant *qaṣīdat al-madh*, creates a striking deviation of form, that is, a circular regression to the opening of the poem. Section VI is not, however, merely a simple recapitulation of Sections I and II, but rather the reiteration of the distinct, or at least distinguishable, *nasīb* and *rithā'* components of Section I and II in a now totally fused *nasīb-rithā'* in which the object of loss and lament is now explicitly the slaughter of al-Ḥusayn and his Companions at Karbalā', or rather, more precisely, at al-Ṭaff.

Section VI opens (vv. 42-44) with the delicately achieved *nasīb* motif of the poet with a group of weary riding companions, whose camel driver urges on their mounts with song. These lead, inevitably to the *istiḡāf*, the well-known motif of the poet asking his companions to stop at the ruined abode, to assuage or evoke the "violent passion" that afflicts the poet's heart (v. 45). Only here (v. 46) the site is explicitly identified as the site of al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom, al-Ṭaff; and the violent passion is that elicited by the unredeemed blood of al-Ḥusayn and his Companions, here evoked through the traditional Arab

poetic imagery for the unavenged: their bodies left to the ravages of the vultures and wild beasts (v. 47). The tears and heart-felt grief of verse 48 lead to an outburst of passion in verses 49 to 53 that we can accurately term a lament.

In verse 49 the poet cries out in visceral pain, and here and in the following verses (50-52) we realize that we have exceeded our usual understanding of poetry and are experiencing the performance of a ritual lament: that is, the calendrical ritual reenactment of the loss and martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn as a verbal performance. Certainly verse 49 in its direct and emotive apostrophe of 'Āshūrā' and its burning pain in the gut is to be felt and experienced, not merely read or recited. At this point, too, we begin to realize that the poem, or in particular this section of it, operates as well as a spiritual or verbal performance of the Shī'ite ritual of pilgrimage to Karbalā' on 'Āshūrā'. In an almost ironic inversion, whereas one of the liturgical elements of the 'Āshūrā' pilgrimage is the recitation of a poetic lament, here, rather than the pilgrimage ritual containing a poetic lament, the poetic lament contains the pilgrimage ritual or is the verbal performance of such a ritual.³¹ We should note once again how the motif of the poet and his band of riders and the *istiqāf* has been coopted into a religious, spiritual pilgrimage, a poetic transition that begins, apparently, with al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and his student, Mihyār al-Daylamī (d. 428/1037), and makes its way in later periods into Sūfī poetry and medieval *madīḥ nabawī*.

The rituals and poetics of loss, as opposed to triumph, are carefully encoded into verses 50 and 51. In a manner that is closely connected to the inverse relation of the 'Alid ritual lamentation *versus* the Umayyad celebratory 'id of verse 19, and also with the poetic tradition of panegyric poets offering celebratory 'id poems to their triumphant patrons, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī combines two rich poetic topoi into one. First, there is the well-known play on the root 'w-d, to return, in the *nasīb* tradition to express ever-recurrent sorrow.³² Second, there is the equally familiar play on 'w-d in the virtually obligatory celebratory poems that panegyrists presented to their invariably triumphant patrons on 'Īd al-Aḥḥā and 'Īd al-Fiṭr to expressed their seasonally, calendrically renewed allegiance.³³ For the 'Alids, of course, the calendrically obligatory reconfirmation of allegiance does not consists of a celebration of triumph, but,

³¹ On the liturgical elements of the short poem for the visit to the grave of al-Ḥusayn, although without any reference to how this motif or theme might function with a fully-structured *qaṣīdah*, see Sindawī, "Visit to the Tomb of al-Ḥusayn," *passim*.

³² For discussion and examples of the *nasīb* use of 'ādalya'ūdu (to return), see S. Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, pp. 228-230.

³³ On the function of the *qaṣīdah* for the reconfirmation of allegiance on calendrical holidays, that is, 'Īd al-Aḥḥā and 'Īd al-Fiṭr, see S. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, 185-212, 241-282, *passim*.

to the contrary, the ritually repeated lament that testifies to their unending sorrow and burning thirst for vengeance.

The annual reenactment of grieving and lamentation is succinctly captured then in the extended word-play in verses 50 and 51 on the root *'-w-d*: *mā 'udta 'illā 'āda qalbī ghullatun*, (lit.: you never return but that a burning passion returns to my heart); and, at the end of v. 51, serpents that *tā'ūdubu bi-'idādihā* (bring back his recurrent pain). The latter is an altogether astounding metaphor for the Shī'ite annual lament, for, as the lexica tell us, *'idād* means "A paroxysm of pain with a person stung or bitten by a venomous reptile suffers on the completion of a year from the day on which he was stung or bitten."³⁴ Clearly in this context, the *khuzru al-'uyūni* (slit-eyed ones = serpents) alludes to the Umayyads and no doubt has the same connotations as it does in English.

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's intimate and recurrent grief over al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom is movingly expressed in verses 52-53, first through apostrophizing him as "Grandfather" and further through the powerfully placed image of metaphorical "squadrons of sorrow" (*katā'ibu ḥasratin*) whose recurrent assaults overwhelm the soul. The metaphor is particularly powerful because at the same time that it reiterates the image of the Umayyad squadrons repeatedly and savagely trampling al-Ḥusayn's body it captures the emotional reenactment of the commemorative ritual, and the obsessive repetition of the aggrieved and unavenged. That is, the original repeated physical assault on al-Ḥusayn is verbally and psychologically (and politically?) identified with the reiterative liturgical sorrow of the 'Alid lamentation. The jarring effect of a plea for squadrons *to continue* to charge back and forth over al-Ḥusayn's body is only alleviated by the following genitive, "of sorrow" (*ḥasratin*).

The emotive intensity of the poet's intimate identification with his grandfather's suffering is heightened by the *taḍmīn* (enjambment) between verses 52-53: "charging and pursuit // Forever over you" (*bi-karrihā wa-ṭirādihā // abadan 'alayka*). Metrically and emotionally it fairly takes the breath away and creates a total fusion between the physical suffering of al-Ḥusayn and the emotional suffering of the 'Alid poet who reenacts and reexperiences al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom on the day of 'Āshūrā'. In ritual, as well as psychological, terms, a "mythic concordance" is thereby established between al-Ḥusayn and the poet, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

³⁴ Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, *'-d-d*. The root seems to be semantically linked, as an intensive form with the strong consonant reduplicated, to *'-w-d* (to return).

VII. *vv. 54-58* *madih*: *metapoetic expression of praise*

54. هَذَا النَّثَاءُ، وَمَا بَلَغْتُ، وَإِنَّمَا هِيَ حَلْبَةٌ خَلَعُوا عِذَارَ جَوَادِهَا
55. أَقُولُ : جَانِكُمْ الرَّيْبِيعُ، وَأَنْتُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَنزِلَةٍ رَيْبِيعَ بِلَادِهَا
56. أَمْ أُسْتَرِيدُ لَكُمْ عَلًا بِمَدَائِحِي، أَيْنَ الْجِبَالُ مِنَ الرَّبِيِّ وَوَهَادِهَا
57. كَيْفَ النَّثَاءُ عَلَى النُّجُومِ، إِذَا سَمَتْ فَوْقَ الْعُيُونِ إِلَى مَدَى أَبْعَادِهَا
58. أَغْنَى طُلُوعَ الشَّمْسِ عَنِ أَوْصَافِهَا بِجَلَالِهَا وَصَيَانِهَا وَبِعَادِهَا

54. This is my praise,
though I have not reached [the finish],
Rather [my lines are like] horses gathered at the starting-line
when the swift steeds reins are loosed.
55. Shall I say, "May the spring rains
pour down generously upon you,"
To *you* who are the spring rain
of every abode?
56. Or shall I seek to increase your exalted rank
through my praises?
—But how the mountains tower above
the hills and plains!
57. How can one praise the stars
when they are high above
The furthest distance that
the eye can see?
58. The rising of the sun
defies description
In its glory, its radiance,
and its distant [splendor].

Section VII itself almost begs description and analysis, but in doing so reveals once again the complexity and hybridity of the poem. The poet begins by proclaiming, "This is [my] praise," (*hādhā al-thana'ū*), a phrase which, in its traditional usage serves as a line of closure at the end of a *qaṣīdat al-madh*, indicates its *completion*, and refers, descriptively, to the preceding lines and to the poem as a whole.³⁵ It is a bit disconcerting here, as the poem up until this

³⁵ See for example, its use in the penultimate verse (v. 48) of his renowned *dāliyyah*. See al-Nābighah [al-Dhubayānī], *Diwān al-Nābighah*, 3rd ed., ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm

point is dominated far more by the elements of *rithā'*, elegy and lament—what we would term the poetics of loss—than by the triumphant poetics of *madīḥ*, praise, but nevertheless it has the effect of declaring the poet's panegyric intentions. The next phrase, *mā balaghtu* (this is [my praise], [but] I have not [yet] reached [it]), helps explain what is going on: the poet has not completed or reached the end of his praise, indeed, as the stunning metaphor that follows tells us, he has not even begun. Rather his verses up until this point are merely like horses at the starting line, whose reins have just been loosed (v. 54). It is almost as if the entire poem up until now has been preambular to the praise that is to follow.

But just when we think the "steeds"/verses are going to take off at full gallop, the poet balks. In a strange sort of metapoetic and rhetorical feint, he expresses his praise through self-effacement, a claim that he is not up to the task before him (vv. 55-57). On the one hand these verses are typical of the hyperbolic praise of the 'Abbāsīd period: what al-Jurjānī terms '*aks al-tashbīḥ*, or inverted simile (e.g., "the rose is not as red as her cheeks."). The convention of (false) modesty, the poet's claim to inadequacy, here achieves an ironic inversion: the greatness of the *mamdūḥ* (object of praise) is all the more effectively expressed, thereby undermining the poet's claim to poetic incapacity.

Verse 55 plays elegantly on the *qaṣīdat al-madhḥ* convention of the benediction (*du'ā'*), "May rain fall on you," to unfold the symbolic and metaphoric dimensions of a traditional trope. Through his repetition of *rabi'* (spring rain) the poet creates a *jinās* (wordplay) in which the word exhibits its literal meaning on the first occasion and its figurative meaning as generosity the second time. In both cases the image of spring rain carries symbolic undertones of life and revitalization. At the same time, the invocation of spring rains in the closure of the poem serves as a recapitulation and fulfillment of the *du'ā'*, the benediction or call for spring rains, on the deserted encampment in Section I toward the end of the *nasīb ḥalālī* in verse 12 and 13.

It is, I believe, important to note that in this concluding passage of the poem the poet shifts from the second person singular of the apostrophe to his "grandfather" al-Ḥusayn (vv. 52-53) to the second person plural in verse 55. It is hard to know for certain whether this is an intentional change in number and referent, or merely a case of the convention of *iltifāt*. For my purposes, I will

(Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1990), pp. 14-28. For a translation and discussion, see S. Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, pp. 17-46.

read it as an intended plural, as the use of the plurals for the mountains (*al-jibāl*) (v. 56) and stars (*al-nujūm*) (v. 57) suggests. In this case, the second person plural in verses 55 and 56 signals a shift from al-Ḥusayn to the 'Alids generally, and from the lament for past loss to the celebration of present or coming glory.

The insistent repetition of the interrogative voice in verses 55-57 creates a rhetorical momentum and tension, to which the answer, in verse 58, provides climax and release. The interrogatives of verses 55-57 employ naturalistic imagery—the spring rains, the mountains, hills and plains, the stars—to express the poet's (at least rhetorical) inadequacy to describe the object of his praise. In a rhetorically stunning closing verse, the poet both confirms and disproves this. For what greater praise is there than the allegorical/metaphorical identification of the 'Alids with the glorious burst of triumph of the rising sun? If, on the surface, verse 58 pretends to confirm the poet's declared inadequacy, this is immediately undermined or contradicted by the panegyric power of his claim and by the rhetorical mastery with which he has created this supreme verse of praise. The comparison of the 'Alids to the rising sun is all the more powerful for not being explicitly stated, but rather it is expressed as *tamthīl*, allegory or metaphor. Rhetorically, I suppose, the point is that although the rising sun may be beyond all description, or more literally without or beyond the need for (taking ' *aghna* ' *an* to mean *istaghna* ' *an*) description—by which the poet means praise—a stunning metaphor is never out of place. Occurring as it does in this *madīh* passage, "description" means "praise"—that is, the *mamdūh* is both above and beyond any praise the poet can offer.

The image of the rising sun has many facets. At the basic level, it is associated with the physical concepts of splendor, radiance and distance (*bi-jalālihā wa-ḍiyā'ihā wa-bi'ādihā*), but these soon take on figurative significations of unapproachable majesty, moral guidance and superiority. Symbolically, as is familiar in the Christian and other traditions, the rising of the sun symbolizes resurrection and restoration. Just as the sun represents majesty, royal glory and universal dominion (cf. Louis XIV as the Sun King), so too the rising of the sun, as is familiar in the Christian and other traditions (cf. "The East is Red," referring to Mao Tse Tung's becoming the leader of China), symbolizes resurrection and restoration. The poet employs the perfect form of the verb *aghna*, not for the past tense, but in its use to express timeless verities, what we would call "eternal truths." Nevertheless, the poet's choice of the rising of the sun (*ṭulū' al-shamsi*), rather than just the sun itself, conjures up the vision, or hope, of 'Alid restoration.

Conclusion

Once all the sections are put together, we see that the poem's ultimate trajectory, is that of the *qaṣīdat al-madh*: that is, from the nostalgic and elegiac sorrow of the lost past, as expressed in the *nasīb-ṭalālī* (Section I) to the triumphal celebratory encomia of the *madīh* (Section VII). Within these genre-defining parameters, al-Sharif al-Raḍī has made what we have termed detours or deviations into other *qaṣīdah* sub-genres (see list of Sections, above), in particular those identified with personal and/or political loss, with recurrent sorrow and unavenged blood. Thus Sections II, III, V and VI can be identified as poetic expressions of loss, interrupted only by the praise or boast (*madīh* or *fakhr*) of Section IV. When read structurally as a whole, the poem subsumes or encloses the elements of ritual lament (the poetics of loss) within the overarching structure/framework of the panegyric ode (the poetics of triumph). Perhaps it is precisely the contrast between the extended and obsessive expressions of recurrent sorrow and grievance that comprise almost all of the first 53 verses that give the highly condensed *madīh* its dramatic power. And perhaps this contrast, too, is what gives the poem its heightened lyric expressiveness.

Above all, it is clear that this complex and hybrid poetic structure is by no means disorganized or arbitrary. Rather, its overall framework and internal thematic components are intentionally and effectively structured to create a compelling emotional and political claim for 'Alid legitimacy.