

IN SEARCH OF THE UNICORN: THE ONAGER AND THE ORYX IN THE ARABIC ODE

Abstract

In its *raḥīl* section the classical (pre-Islamic and Mukhaḍram) *qaṣīdah* may have images, or “stories” of quite specific animals, the wild ass/onager and the wild bull or cow/oryx, conforming always to very formalized appearance and behavior. Structurally, they are integrated into the *qaṣīdah* as similes of the journeying poet’s she-camel/*nāqah*. The purpose of the present article is first of all to define the two animals, the onager and the oryx, as acting agents in the *raḥīl* structure and “story” and, once defined, to reach deeper, beyond their separateness, in order to uncover their implicit coalescence into a composite, syncretic imaginary, and ultimately symbolic, *figura* of the unicorn. The essential characteristic of this “revealed” Arabic unicorn is that it has no other existence than its existence in the poem/*qaṣīdah*, within which, however, it simultaneously continues to be a simile, a metaphor, an allegory, and a symbol—all this aside from being one of the fields of glory of Arabic descriptive poetic art.

To be in search of the unicorn in Arabic poetry is different from searching for the unicorn. This has to be the first admission in approaching the present essay which, nonetheless, is intended to be a tightly knit exercise in literary method and criticism—as well as a path of discovery along quite untrodden thematic and symbolic reaches of some of the earliest Arabic poetry. If one were dealing with the topic of the unicorn in a literature other than Arabic or, more broadly speaking, in a history of the symbolic imagination other than Arabic, it would be possible, and even self-sufficient, to begin with that “animal’s” most evidential, that is, “pictured,” representation, even though it were no more than illustrative and emblematic as part of a narrative or descriptive representation. In the anthropology of perception that found its idiom through the Latin, Latinate, and Romance linguistic matrix, all things of imaginary existence were in their special (etymological) way “visible” *mirabilia*, aside from being, within that same etymological crucible, “marvelous” and “miraculous,” thus of an “unusual,” or privileged, visibility.

As it existed *visually* in the realm of *mirabilia*, the unicorn offered a composite, if not altogether incoherent, semblance of an animal that was both antelope, that is, of split hooves, and equine, of solid hooves.¹ It was

¹ In the Arabic *mirabilia* literature the typically medieval cosmographer, Zakariyyā al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), (*‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharā’ib al-Mawjūdāt*, ed. Fārūq Sa’d, 2d ed. [Beirut: Dār al-Afāq al-Jadīdah, 1977], p. 434) already thinks it strange that the rhinoceros/unicorn should combine equine hoof with horn.

neither properly horned nor without horns, that is, it had on its forehead only one horn. Despite its zoological jumble, however, it imposed itself as a singularly powerful, and above all cross-culturally pervasive and nearly universal, creature of symbolic imagination. Precisely for defying all rules of coherence, it emerged as aesthetically supremely in harmony with the undercurrents of the symbolic imagination that engendered it. The image, or representational *imago*, of the unicorn—between virtual plasticity and symbolic lore—was thus as much recognizably disparate as it was unified, all into one single imaginary “body.” This process of symbiosis was triggered at some point in time that is best called Antiquity,² and carried to its fulfillment at first not so much by a self-generating myth of the fabulous animal as by the mythopoeically willed, not entirely unconscious, integration of three, let us call them metaphorical, ingredients, drawn from the world of the *limit*, which is the world of the hunt: the onager, the oryx, and the rhinoceros, and, as Odell Shepard, in his mood of *raconteur* suggests, the tales of remote “travel-weary men sitting about many a camp-fire.”³

So much for the world of the unicorn outside the sphere of the Arabic symbolic imagination—as in the latter, which, I repeat, has to be the sphere of Arabic poetry, our search will have to be *of* the unicorn without the privilege of searching *for* the unicorn. In our Arabic search there will not be one single representational *imago* of the unicorn to serve us as a concretizing medium, or vehicle, ready to carry us to our object’s presence. The imaging of the Arabic unicorn, if it is to be achieved at all, will have to emerge not from an already tamed paradox of seamless syncretism. Instead, it will dissolve itself again into its more archaic, and if not temporally more archaic, more regressively figurative, but also symbolic, figments/components. The seams of syncretism will split. The *figura* of fully embodied imagination will evanesce. What will remain will be very old, its own very “seamless” language, words. For in the Arabic realm of imaginative and symbolic existence, what first begins and last remains is language, a fret-

² The first reports of the “sighting” of the unicorn in reaching the Mediterranean world belong indeed to historical Antiquity, for it was the late fifth-century B.C. Greek physician Ctesias of Cnidos, who, as court-physician of Darius II and Artaxerxes, gathered in his now only fragmentarily preserved *Indica* (twenty-fifth fragment), the earliest “descriptions” of unicorns—not yet of “the unicorn” of the subsequent mythopoeia. Ctesias’s unicorns are the “wild asses of India,” but their “secondary” attributes, very aptly peculiarized by Odell Shepard, are those of the onager and the oryx, coessentially complemented by the idea, more than the actual shape, of the horn of the rhinoceros. See Odell Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn* (New York, Cambridge: Harper & Row, Publishers [Harper Colophon Books], 1979), pp. 26-33.

³ In the words of the most dedicated and comprehensive unicorn scholar, Odell Shepard, the genesis of the unicorn constitutes a “confusion” of “rolling three different beasts into one,” and as such it “need not be attributed to Ctesias” (*The Lore of the Unicorn*, p. 32). In other words, what Ctesias heard narrated or reported was more than what he saw.

work of words in seemingly unharnessed effusion, not in flux, but flowing, as Goethe might have expressed it.⁴ In the Arabic realm of imagination, the image in its concreteness as “picture”—the drawn line and the carved marble—is replaced, or rather “pre-dated,” by the forming and un-forming fluidity, or call it sand-drift, of the word. It is therefore somewhere in the recesses of the Arabic word—which is language, which is poetry—that we shall be in search of the unicorn, the universal symbol of the unobtainable, of the vision that escapes visibility because it is pure imagination—not so much existence as the volition of existence.

For methodological reasons and for reasons of ultimate germaneness, we shall not precipitously try to avail ourselves of the meager, textually available descriptions of unicorn semblances in the Arabic *mirabilia* literature, or *mirabilia* incidents in otherwise zoological compendia. The Arabic interest in *mirabilia* falls into a category of “knowledge” that is never more than anecdotal—of *curiosa*: *nawādir* and ‘*ajā’ib*, rather than of *mirabilia* “envisioned” by imagination’s eye. There, it is not given the space in which to give resonance to expansive, symbol-generative imagination. Within the Arabic *mirabilia/curiosa*, such an “Arabic” unicorn, if it is at all construable, did not enliven the religious hermeneutics of Arabic/Islamic mysticism or of popular, imagination-driven piety or of a sense of adventure; neither did it roam mysterious Hercynian Forests, fascinating the imagination of the likes of Julius Caesar,⁵ nor did it find its way into poetry—lyrical, symbolic,

⁴ See Goethe’s almost “manifesto-like” poem “Lied und Gebilde” in his *West-östlicher Divan* and the translation and discussion of it in Jaroslav Stetkevych, “Arabic Poetry and Assorted Poetics,” in Malcolm H. Kerr, ed., *Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems* (Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1980), pp. 103-4.

⁵ G. Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War (De Bello Gallico)*, trans. H. J. Edwards (London: William Heinemann Ltd./Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 350/52, 351/53. Nothing in Caesar’s writings was merely “bookish.” Thus, by the time of Shakespeare, Caesar’s belief in the unicorn, having undergone an obvious Physiologus-like accretion, finds its way into the Elizabethan playwright’s *Julius Caesar* (II. i), where, in the words of the conspirator Decius Brutus, “he [Caesar] loves to hear/That unicorns may be betray’d with trees.” This curious shift from Hercynian Forest as the unicorn’s *habitat* to the belief that the unicorn “may be betray’d with [Hercynian] trees” will acquire significance in our discussion of the complex identity of the *arāh* tree in the “oryx panel” of the classical Arabic *qaṣīdah* (see below). Once again, or rather before that, in *Henry VI*, Part Three (Act 1, iv), we find in Shakespeare a fascination with, and “knowledge” of, the Hercynian Forest, although this time it is an implied jungle of the variant *Hyrkania*, thus in York’s speech to Queen Margaret, that “tiger’s heart wrapp’d in a woman’s hide”:

But you are more inhuman, more inexorable,—

O, ten times more,—than tigers of *Hyrkania*.

So too, in *Macbeth*, Act III, Scene 4, we are alerted to Shakespeare’s dark fascination with the topos of *Hyrkania* standing in such telling proximity to an “arm’d,” that is, horned, “rhinoceros”—not to mention the “inexorable” tiger—in Macbeth’s exclamation:

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,

The arm’d rhinoceros, or the *Hyrkan* tiger.

allegorical—such as Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*⁶—certainly not before the modernist movements in Arabic poetry of the second half of the twentieth century.⁷

There is a much more serious reason for hesitancy in entertaining the idea of the existence of an “Arabic” unicorn in classical Arabic poetry, which, after all, is the most central domain of the Arabic life of the imagination, for indeed the unicorn made no appearance—in the form we “know” it to be—in the Arabic poetic domain as we claim to know it. But should this latter point really be our end-point, or ought it rather to be our point of beginning of how and in what form to “know” an Arabic unicorn? In our essay, therefore, we will direct our “searching” compass to where the great metaphors and symbols of Arabic imaginative culture truly nest and incubate, and where there lies the only hope of finding the “Arabic” unicorn. For this we will have to reconsider our just issued half-ironic, half-true statement that the unicorn did not make an appearance in classical Arabic poetry; and then ask ourselves further: “if not in the form we ‘know’ it to be, then

Shakespeare makes direct reference to the unicorn in two plays, with two quite different senses. In *Timon of Athens*, Act IV, Scene 3, Timon addressing the churlish philosopher Apemantus: “Wert thou the unicorn, pride and wrath would confound thee, and make thine own self the conquest of thy fury”; and the turned-proverb exclamation of Sebastian in *The Tempest*, Act III, Scene 3 (contextually linked to the “phoenix of Arabia”):

Now I believe,

That there are unicorns; that in Arabia

There is one tree, the phoenix’ throne; one phoenix

At this hour reigning there.

⁶ With an allegorical intent, Edmund Spenser describes the ruse of a lion, England’s heraldic animal, in its fight with the unicorn, the heraldic animal of Scotland (*The Faerie Queene* [Book II, Canto v, 10], ed. Thomas P. Roche, Jr, with assistance of C. Patrick O’Donnell, Jr [Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1978], p. 259: Book II, Canto v, 10):

Like a Lyon, whose imperial powre

A prowde rebellious Vnicorne defies,

T’auoide the rash assault and wrathfull stowre

Of his fiers foe, him to a tree applies,

And when him running in full course he spies,

He slips aside; the whiles that furious beast

His precious horne, sought of his enimies

Strikes in the stocke, ne thence can be releast,

But to the mighty victour yields a bounteous feast.

For the English-Scottish heraldic history of the lion and the unicorn, see Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn*, pp. 75-77.

⁷ Standing apart from some unsuccessful attempts to broach the theme, or even merely to mention the name, of the unicorn in modern Arabic poetry, is Tawfiq Ṣāyigh’s long (435 lines) poem *Bid‘at As’ilah li Aṭraḥāhā ‘alā al-Karkadann* (A Few Questions I Pose to the Unicorn). The Palestinian critic and pioneering modernist poet, Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, greeted its appearance as “The strangest and most remarkable poem in the Arabic language.” See the poem’s Arabic text, translation, and most insightful discussion by Zahra A. Hussein Ali, “The Aesthetics of Dissonance: Echoes of Nietzsche and Yeats in Tawfiq Ṣāyigh’s Poetry,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 30, no. 1 (1999): 1-54.

is there another form?" What forms, or form, of existence do we have in Arabic visual and "visualizing" imaginative culture—especially if we attempt to get as close to the roots of that culture (and of its world of imagination) as possible?

Here we can only restate the obvious: bordering on exclusivity, Arabic poetry is our road of access to Arabic visual (i.e., *imaging*) imaginative culture. From it, as matrix, we will have to begin, with the acknowledgment that methodologically and with unavoidable laboriousness, this access will be a detailed process of passage through the "word" and through language in its semiotic manifestations as a multiplicity of "languages." Thus the "imaging" poetics of the Arabic word, the way it speaks/draws/colors—its "language"—will lead us to the "language" of language, once again poetic; from there to proceed to the "language" of the *topos*, which itself will only yield its meaning and significance when mediated by the "language" of structure that controls the pre-Islamic poem/*qaṣīdah*. Such a rigorously progressive, epistemologically inductive method, then, must be the method of the hunter of the unicorn.

1. *Properties of Archaic Bedouin Poetic Language*

At some point in the archaic period before Islam, the language of the Bedouin as poet was not concrete in the stark sense in which lexicography presents it—not at all the way it is thought to be when placed opposite its own later influx of the semantics of close conceptualization. Rather it was a language that from the start (known to us) was complex, that is, ambiguous, in its own way: it built on unrestrictedly composite perceptions that could be called "imagist" and on their subsequent analogical transfer into areas of meaning that had come into being, as it were, implicitly only, by virtue of the existence of those primary perceptions which, in being images, had become semantic units.

This "imaged" expression of archaic Arabic thought was thus quite complex in its morphology, for "imaged" and "imaging" imply a totality of perception that precedes analytical decomposition, and thus concretization, of semantics—the way images are, that is, both comprehensively simple and non-analytically complex. The transfers of meaning in this "imaged" language were largely linked to the mediator of analogy. This was thus an eminently abstract procedure, relying on an eminently abstract facilitant. That the abstract mediating process did not necessarily produce an "abstraction" in the lexical-semantic sense, is another matter, for, by way of that abstract mediating process, it appeared to lead no more than from one objectively, and thus concretely, present image or perception to another concrete image. At least this is what seems to be taking place on the surface of things in Arabic poetic diction.

On the other hand, the new image obtained by the abstract mediation of analogy was not so easily concretized. It still remained a latently imaginative product: technically, perhaps, a simple *quid pro quo* of things observed, but in effect, in its intentionality of meaning, a pervasive and persistent metaphoric leap. Only after the meaning was thus arrived at and settled upon, and after both the semantic antecedent and the mediating process had lost their effective (intruding) presence, could the obtained metaphor reconcretize itself around its own core of semanticity. Even objects which, through language, might otherwise have claimed the right to the most concrete presence in a Bedouin's awareness of reality, such as animals both domesticated and wild, tools of warfare, and meteorological phenomena, had impressed themselves upon the Bedouin's mind linguistically not through their denotative individuation but through a phenomenal profusion of characterizing and qualificative epithets—not of things “being,” but of things “seeming,” and thus semantically “becoming.” This would explain the more than stylistical Arabic poetic tendency toward the simile: *ka'anna . . . ka'anna . . . ka'anna* (as if . . . as if . . . as if).

It was precisely within this more-than-stylistically dictated “rigor” of the simile that the earliest coherently sustained semiosis of poetic form could translate itself into structural units of meaning; and, ultimately, it was these structured “smaller” simile-based units of meaning that made possible the formation of the comprehensive structure of the *qaṣīdah*. Within the simile-rigor of their paradox-like indeterminacy, however, everything was “like,” although not entirely “itself,” but in effect more than itself. A certain system, or method, of obtaining meaning was thus developed within the Arabic/Bedouin poetic language, in which epithetic would-be substantivization (that required a further “semanticizing” imaginative leap) either predated or almost wholly replaced terminological substantivization; in other words, in which the semanticity of referential, allusive *connotation* held sway over concrete *denotation*—in certain cases to the point of exclusion of denotation. Thus came about the almost total disappearance from certain pivotal poetic contexts of the concrete denotative word/name for precisely the most commanding context-building animal of all of poetic Bedouinity, the she-camel/*nāqah*. Instead, hundreds of epithetic (connotative) “names” for the missing denotant of *nāqah* came to populate the earliest Arabic poetic diction, literally determining its “classicism.” The fateful *nāqah*, it seemed, was nowhere. Furthermore, in perfect analogy, neither was there textual evidence of denotative names/terms for animals contextually, as similes, linked to the she-camel: namely the onager, identified directly, that is, denotatively, only in philological commentaries as *ḥimār al-waḥsh/al-ḥimār al-waḥshī* (“the wild ass”), and the oryx, equally merely commentary-specific as *al-thawr al-waḥshī* (“the wild bull”) or *al-baqarah al-waḥshiyah* (“the wild cow”). Both animals' textual ubiquitousness as similes of the she-

camel in the Bedouin poet's desert journey (*rahīl*), however, assured them of one of the richest epithetic semanticities in the Arabic poetic lexicon.

The paradoxical disappearance or, for the most part, the extreme rarity of denotation played in the classical Arabic *qaṣīdah* a role beyond that of mere semanticity and style-characteristic. It served also in a decisive way as a semiotic indicator or, indeed, as the outright signal that the replacement of denotation by connotation was "announcing" the coming of motival or thematic elaboration—and thereby of that elaboration's distinct structural significance in the *qaṣīdah*. Once again, this becomes especially evident, and important, in the *qaṣīdah*'s journey/*rahīl* section, in which similes of the onager and/or the oryx (whenever developed into thematic panels) must be signaled by the respective animals' connotative epithets.⁸

In the end, all the resulting massive connotative detail—especially in what pertained to the semantic complex of the she-camel, the onager, and the oryx—thus served purposes broader than those of direct communication. It precluded uni-dimensional, hard objective outlines and tangibility, and conveyed instead "intangibles" such as character, quality, impression, and imagism. In this manner, what was provided was above all an optic for aesthetic perception (we must always remind ourselves that our knowledge of ancient Arabian reality is through poetry, and is thus an aesthetic knowledge) so entirely characteristic of the point in the cultural time that had brought the art of the mosaic to its preeminence, and which later led to the formal vertigo of the arabesque. In that sense, which was poetic before being linguistic, words sprang out of matrices of meaning that were not merely semantic inscriptions, but circumscriptions, circumferences, or systems. In these the words rotated and "made sense."

Furthermore, in the Arabic case we face a language which in its formative and, in the literary sense, archaic stages was with unusual rigor circumscribed by geography, climate, flora, fauna, and demography. The Arabic language was also tellingly circumscribed by its durability—for it was not a language of a race or people who in their near past had gone through protracted periods of transcontinental migrations which would have reshaped them drastically in every aspect of their linguistic responses. The Arabs, and for that matter the Semites, do not evidence a dramatically torn linguistic formative history, or even prehistory, with truly major cycles of migrations. Duration itself, then, becomes a tightly circumscribing, limiting factor when it is a duration in unchanged place as total circumstance.

⁸ For a semiotic and structural discussion of this subject, together with some pertinent statistics, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, "Name and Epithet: The Philology and Semiotics of Animal Nomenclature in Early Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 1986): 89-124.

Looking, thus, at the Arabic language in its early pre-Islamic past as it found itself registered (not codified) in its literature, that is, as it understood itself—and became understandable to us—from within its own sphere of reality, we are prompted to call what we see in it a crucible into which there have fallen all the broadly Semitic, and other non-Semitic, etymologies of a lexicon without the embodiment of a seized reality, thus not yet the “image,” merely the words. Such, however, would only be a sterile pretense of analytical hindsight. In the Arabic case, were we to choose to perform the reverse process of extracting, for example, the appearances of the she-camel from the meaning-sphere of the Arabic language as that language is given to us in its poetry, we would indeed nearly lose the glutinant of that language’s imaging ability, obtaining in exchange a vast area of lexicon as it were in limbo—a mass of then merely broadly Semitic, or Semitic-appearing, lexical components unable to form themselves into a symbolically operative “language.” For this reason, as concerns method, we have to examine ancient Arabic poetry thematically, not merely lexically.

To begin with things of that nature in the Arabic language, one should, most likely, begin with the camel, or, more precisely, with the she-camel (*al-nāqah*), for it was one of the essential mediators to, if not the matrix of, the understanding of so many other things in the diversification of the Bedouin realm of meaning. In the end, however, it is possible to say that the meticulous alertness to the camel’s anatomy and behavior, for which the eye of the Bedouin has been praised so lavishly by lexicographers and scholars of pre-Islamic poetry, comes to constitute no more than the most easily noticeable and straightforward aspect of this animal. The other spheres and dimensions, which involve the Bedouin’s understanding of time as seasonal cycles, of life as biological cycles, of his sense of territoriality and belonging, of the landscape with its shifting contours and mirages, with the test and the knowledge of one’s self facing the darkness, or the blinding light, of the unknown (*al-majhūl*), that is, the desert—all these are part and parcel of the Bedouin poet’s language of referentiality, at the center of which stands its mediator, the she-camel.

2. *Symbolic Matrices of Understanding*

At this point we have to introduce the formal framework in Arabic poetry into which the symbolic understanding of Arabic poetic language not only falls, but inside which it is structured and organized. That “active” framework—more than just frame—is the *qaṣīdah*, the formatively early, and indeed decisive, structure of the Arabic ode of the pre-Islamic and transitional, Mukhaḍram, periods. In its very precisely circumscribed and articulated repertory of themes, which with formal rigor are distributed over the

qaṣīdah's three paradigmatic structural sections—1. the lyrical-elegiac *nasīb*; 2. the *raḥīl* of the desert journey; and 3. the *fakhr* of self-exaltation, or the *madīḥ* of encomium—the imaged reflection of the Bedouin poet's universe comes into being.

In our present, still quite discursive approach to our ultimate topic of an Arabian poetic unicorn, which by its nature must be elusive, if not outright illusory, we shall limit ourselves mostly to the median, that is, the second, section of the *qaṣīdah* structure, which is its *raḥīl*, or journey. It is the section in which the Bedouin poet's imagination has already freed itself from the rounded, consummated realm of the poet's past experiences, now only remembered, or evoked, in the elegiac, bitter-sweet idyll of the poem's *nasīb*. From here on, the poet finds himself on a journey, his journey, on which he is alone, and on which, by the poem's dictate, he must be alone. Here we are speaking of the truly "classical" *raḥīl*, still before the ambiguities and formal fragility of the Umayyad period. His desert is his *majhūl*, the "unknown," his quintessential liminal confrontation and passage—and it is unavoidable: traversable but inescapable. And yet, if we look for detailed, or more extensive, descriptions of this desert in actual pre-Islamic *qaṣīdahs*, we may be momentarily disappointed, for, if there are in any sense fuller descriptions of the desert in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, they occur rather in the elegiac section of the *nasīb*, a place, or rather, to use a Bakhtinian term, a chronotope, where the poet is no longer, and which, in his absence, has been absorbed, as in the opening scene of Labid's *Mu'allaqah*, into the pristine idyll of nature. This *nasīb*-desert, however, is not the *majhūl* that lies ahead of the poet's ordeal or the adventure which he must face. The Bedouin poet's landscape of experience in the *raḥīl*, with its quite different frame of reference, is closer to Walt Whitman's America, "The wide unconscious scenery of my soul," than to Shakespeare's idyllic "this little world,/ This precious stone set in the silver sea."

Although extensive desert description does not figure very strongly in strictly pre-Islamic poetic texts,⁹ it is yet present in an almost palpably condensed form already in even the oldest among the textually evidentiary pre-Islamic poets. Thus in a *raḥīl* of 'Abid Ibn al-Abraṣ, the main dramatic gravitation of the "dread of the desert" makes its early, theme-defining appearance:

⁹ Arabic poetic desert description becomes more fully developed only with the *mukhaḍram* "transitional" poets, such as 'Amr Ibn Ma'dikarib, whose dramatically visualized desert receives four lines of verse ([Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Qurayb Ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Aṣma'ī], *Al-Aṣma'iyyāt*, eds. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir and 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, 7th ed. [Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi Miṣr, 1387/1964], Nr. 61, p. 176, vv. 29-32), or when in Ḍābi' Ibn al-Ḥārith it is given nine verses (*Al-Aṣma'iyyāt*, Nr. 63, pp. 180-81, vv. 8-16).

12. Many a desert where the echo of owls resounds,
 When the night covers it, and it fills
 with fear and dread,
 13. I have crossed on a ruddy she-camel,
 tall and swift,
 Her saddle-cloth slipping
 off tightly girthed flanks.¹⁰

[1]

And again by the same poet:

12. Alas, [since then] many a far-flung waste-land,
 where guides fall blind and falter,
 Its distant roads like a variegated cloak
 spread out,
 13. I have traversed on a sturdy she-camel,
 not unlike a stallion,
 Not unlike a speedy onager, as compact
 as the anvil of a smith.¹¹

[2]

And, of course, the one single sustained desert poem of pre-Islamic Arabia—which contains the entire thematic, experiential, imagist, and sense-felt quintessence of Bedouin poetic desert-vision—will always be the *Lāmiyyat al-‘Arab* of the brigand-poet al-Shanfarā.¹² On the other hand, the great desert rain scene which crowns Imru’ al-Qays’s *Mu‘allaqah* belongs, within the *qaṣīdah*, arguably to a different structural domain. Otherwise, the explicitness of the desert as theme in the *qaṣīdah*’s liminal *raḥīl* section, not held down to the size of motif or theme implication, does not appear until the Umayyad period—and specifically until the poetry of Dhū al-Rummaḥ (d. 117/735).

But such would be a view from the outside, almost from the outside of vision, if the paradox can sustain itself. In this view from the outside, too, Maḥmūd ‘Abd Allāh al-Jādir’s objective observation is true: the desert as “object” of description in pre-Islamic poetry is less of a dynamic scene than it is in the Mukhaḍram period. He sees it as though it were framed as a “silent picture.”¹³ This is also confirmed by our two quotations above from ‘Abīd Ibn al-Abraṣ.

¹⁰ ‘Abīd Ibn al-Abraṣ, *Dīwān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir/Dār Bayrūt, 1384/1964), pp. 38-39. Bracketed numerals at right margin are key to the Appendix of Arabic texts, below.

¹¹ ‘Abīd Ibn al-Abraṣ, *Dīwān*, p. 136.

¹² For a translation and discussion, see: Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 119-57.

¹³ Maḥmūd ‘Abd Allāh al-Jādir, *Shi‘r Aws Ibn Ḥajar wa Ruwāṭih al-Jāhiliyyīn. Dirāsah Taḥlīliyyah* (Baghdad: Dār al-Risālah li al-Ṭibā‘ah, 1979), pp. 374-76.

The seeming change of focus—from the “she-camel”/*nāqah* to the oppositional dialectic of the animal panels, however, only reminds us of the central “mediator” of all experience in the liminal sense of the classical *qaṣīdah*’s *raḥīl*, which is the she-camel/*nāqah*. For, from what evolves in the Bedouin poet’s entering his experience of the desert, we realize that the entire language of structure in the *raḥīl* is a language of the poet’s self-revelations, of his epiphanies. These self-revelations, however, the poet does not arrive at in a direct, personal narrative as enunciating participant, not to mention protagonist. He does not foreground himself. His poetic “I” disappears. He is hardly even the speaking persona in all that transpires along the trail of self-revelation of his journey. Instead, what takes place in the *raḥīl* is a series of transpositions of persona, trans-personifications, one would say, or, more properly, allegories: the poet’s she-camel plays out her role in the poet’s stead; but no sooner has she assumed this role, than she cedes it to the next link of the allegoric chain, which may be either the story of the onager/wild ass, or of the oryx bull or cow, or of both animal stories in dialectic succession.¹⁴ And yet the subliminal, insidious presence of the she-camel will not disappear throughout the different narrative, or dramatic, theme-strata of the remainder of the *raḥīl*, for her mediating and structuring role in the *raḥīl* must remain, no matter how faint or merely implicit her textual presence. Without that presence, and here I intentionally avoid the word evidence, the chain-links of the other animal narratives, of the onager and of the oryx, would be just that: unstructured, unrelated narratives that have lost their sense and function as coalescing allegories. They would merely become narrative or imagist vignettes unstrung, or “at random strung.” Furthermore—and this is of the essence—without the she-camel as

¹⁴ For an insightful discussion of the thematic centrality of the she-camel/*nāqah* in the pre-Islamic *raḥīl* and a characterization of the two similes, the onager and the oryx, see S. P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, pp. 27-33. There is a third possible story-link in the “allegorization” of the she-camel personification-through-simile in the classical *raḥīl*, the ostrich. It is considerably rarer than the other two simile-personifications, and, although it adds its own dimension to the experience of the desert, as everything that enters the *raḥīl* does, in its predominant lyricism, it is closer to the specific lyricism of the *nasīb* and to that of the sand-grouse (*qaṭā*). Wabḥ Rūmiyyah (*Al-Riḥlah fī al-Qaṣīdah al-Jāhiliyyah* (Beirut: Ittihād al-Kuttāb wa al-Ṣaḥāfiyyīn al-Filastīniyyīn, 1975), p. 153), too, sees certain idyllic aspects in the “panel” of the ostrich, and enumerates some of the most pertinent poets that treat this subject—thus Imru’ al-Qays, Qays Ibn al-Khaṭīm, ‘Alqamah al-Faḥl, Bishr Ibn Abi Khāzim, ‘Antarah, Zuhayr Ibn Abi Sulmā. To these one could add Tha’labah Ibn Ṣu’ayr al-Māzinī and al-Ḥārith Ibn Ḥillizah al-Yashkurī. In the latter poet, however, the image of the ostrich, in its rather limited treatment (four verses), is not quite as idyllic as Wabḥ Rūmiyyah would see it, for in it the ostrich is restless and apprehensive, very much the way the oryx would be, and the hunter’s presence is sensed, or feared, as well. See the poem, the sixth of the *Mu’allaqāt*, in Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-Qāsim al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā’id al-Sab’ al-Tiwāl al-Jāhiliyyāt*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif bi Miṣr, 1969), pp. 440-43 (vv. 9-12).

the mediating in-bearer, not just carrier, of the “persona” of the poet, the structural glutenant of the entire *raḥīl* in the *qaṣīdah* would evanesce. For the she-camel is no less the mask of the poet than the onager and the oryx—within the logic of the chain—are masks of the she-camel, and thus of the journeying poet. And furthermore, inasmuch as the she-camel is ultimately none other than the archaic, totemic expression of the poet’s own *anima*—or his quite Frazerian “external soul”¹⁵—the poet hides, as much as he reveals himself, behind its multi-layered allegorical mask of incrementally deeper reaching resonances.

3. *Allegories of Identity in the Animal Panels*

With these key relationships of identity in mind, we may now pass on to the end-components of the Bedouin poet’s allegorical mask in his poem’s *raḥīl*. These are the onager and oryx animal scenes, or, more properly, panels. Being in each instance announced and marked as similes (*ka-ʿanna*) of the she-camel (“... my she-camel is like ...”), they nevertheless develop stylistically into textually free-standing, picture-like and eminently ekphrastic units with enframing opening and closure. Because they come introduced as she-camel similes, which then turn into “digressions,” it has become customary to identify them descriptively as “extended, digressive similes”—borrowing that term, albeit without its terminological implications, from Homeric criticism’s “epic digression.”

Here I shall myself digress momentarily to explain my use of ekphrasis as it applies to the poetics and stylistics of the pre-Islamic *raḥīl*. In a strict and literalist sense, the term “ekphrasis” introduced as a possible designation of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah*’s extended similes of the *raḥīl* section, may, at a first glance, appear misplaced. It should become obvious, however, that my tying ekphrasis interpretively to the term “panel,” implicitly pre-qualifies the formal identity of the “frameable” extended animal similes of the *raḥīl*’s she-camel “figura.” This in itself ought to be understood as a hermeneutical procedure to facilitate the transition of a specific poetic material—the ekphrastic animal panels—from its inherent “temporality” of narration-as-representation to “spatiality” and plasticity. The formal concept of “panel” refers itself at first to something that suggests the concrete, visual, and tactile. Only then does it permit, or suggest, the possibility of abstraction and figuration. In the history, or evolution, of plastic representation, however,

¹⁵ On Frazer’s “external soul,” see James George Frazer: *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 1 Volume, Abridged Edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Collier Books, 1963), Chapters LXVI/LXVII (pp. 773-802). See also Jaroslav Stetkevych, “The Hunt in the Arabic *Qaṣīdah*: The Antecedents of the *Tardiyyah*,” in J. R. Smart, ed., *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature* (Sussex: Curzon, 1996), p. 104.

the plastic arts themselves, as much in painting as in sculpture, have been the ones that have attempted to cross the limits of the spatial/plastic and the temporal/verbal—precisely through the spatial/temporal ambiguity proper of “panels” that can also form series such as diptychs, triptychs, etc. *Ut pictura poesis* thus reflects the restlessness and fluidity of the border-regions of the two arts with full bi-directionality.¹⁶

To speak of the two main ekphrastic simile-panels that in some implicit ways illustrate and define, and claim specificity to, aspects of the journeying poet’s she-camel, and through her, in a twice removed similitude, illustrate and define the poet himself, is to speak in merely textual quantitative terms of the majority of the *rahīl* texts—pre-Islamic, Mukhaḍram and, indeed, incrementally, early Umayyad. If there be no other than the quantitative hermeneutic argument urging us to pay closer attention to this formal textual fact, we would still have to come up with a critique that goes beyond the obvious—namely, that the Bedouin poet was no more than an astute observer of the animal world around him.

We have to go further than this and ask why there are only two main animal panels, the onager and/or the oryx (with merely a less rigorously structured-in evidence of an ostrich panel)¹⁷ in the early *rahīl*; why is the internal thematic structuring of each respective animal “story” in those panels so entirely paradigm-determined, that is, why does each type of story so stubbornly repeat itself; why is it that not just the framing themes, but, with entirely focused insistence, the themes’ internal motifs with their deep-level key-words are so commanding semantically and semiotically in each respective type of animal-panel. Aside from being questions, these are with equal rhetorical right hermeneutic propositions.

Before going into specifics that would address themselves both to the above questions and to their corresponding propositions, a first essential characterization of the onager and oryx panels has to be given: The onager panel presents an animal that is gregarious across the changing seasons. It is a herd animal, no matter how limited its herd may be. In the herd, represented poetically as a family, its stallion is endowed with all the biological-

¹⁶ See my discussion of the *rahīl* animal panels as an ekphrastic phenomenon in J. Stetkevych, “The Hunt in the Arabic *Qaṣīdah*,” pp. 116-17 (note no. 5). Akiko Motoyoshi has recently turned her attention repeatedly to the question of ekphrasis in other periods and manifestations of classical Arabic poetry. See Akiko Motoyoshi, “Poetry and Portraiture: A Double Portrait in an Arabic Panegyric by Ibn Zamrak,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 30, no. 3 (1999), pp. 199-239.

¹⁷ The common claim to an equal validity of all three animal panels in the *rahīl* is that all three animals are exceptionally fleet runners, and thus appropriate as similes of the she-camel. This, of course, is objectively, but also extra-poetically, true. In the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah* such is, however, not a necessarily valid argument or explanation, for in the oryx panel, its presence is not that of a fleeing runner but—with decisive symbolic significance—that of the goring warrior.

physiological¹⁸ qualities of a quasi-patriarchal, zealous progenitor and leader. He is also never alone, both as the lead-animal of his herd/family (or as its goading task-master) and as the protagonist, or main acting “persona,” of the storied or representational panel.

Entirely opposite are the character and image of the oryx. Whether male or female (as in Labid’s *Mu‘allaqah*), the oryx is ontologically alone, perceptively, if not “psychologically,” lonely, and existentially solitary, separated from its herd—the total *Einzelgänger*.¹⁹ It is the embodiment of iconic solitariness required by the archaic symbolic canon that rules the oryx hunt in the classical Arabic *raḥīl*. Also, the poetic oryx is distinctly not a biological-physiological being.²⁰ This is of the essence in the poetic paradigm of the oryx, as it is of the essence of the onager paradigm that the protagonist be always gregarious and demonstratively earthy.

To introduce an example, first of an onager panel, we turn to an eminently strong poet of the mid-generations of the Jāhiliyyah, Aws Ibn Ḥajar, in his *qaṣīdah* rhyming in the syllable “fū.” In it, after a *nasīb* of nine verses, the poet starts his *raḥīl* with an unusually elaborate (vv. 10-26) she-camel segment, which in its entirety is descriptive of the animal. This prepares the ground for his great simile of the onager, a panel itself of thirty-one verses (27-57). Thus the panel’s opening comes announcing that the whole is a simile of the she-camel; after which, image after image, in an almost paratactic staccato, the story/panel of the onager unfolds:

¹⁸ The semiotically valid sexual/erotic characterization of the wild ass is further stressed by the phonetically clearly associative variations through metathesis and shift (*‘a/a*) of the name of the male wild (but also domesticated) ass: *‘ayr* (“male ass”) and *ayr* (“penis”); and the female of the species: *atān* and *‘ānah* [-r] (“pubes”).

¹⁹ See my discussion of the oryx, and more specifically the oryx-cow, in Labid’s *Mu‘allaqah*, in J. Stetkevych, “The Hunt in the Arabic *Qaṣīdah*,” pp. 107-8. As regards the critical differentiation between the two panel-animals, the onager and the oryx, and, more importantly, the first attempt at an analysis of the symbolic and mythic dimension of the oryx as it figures in its *raḥīl* panel, the earliest work is that of the Iraqi scholar ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Muṭṭalibī (“Muḥāwalat Tafsīr Mazhar min Mazāhir al-Qaṣīdah al-Jāhiliyyah: Qiṣṣat Thawr al-Waḥsh wa Tafsīr Wujūdhā fi al-Qaṣīdah al-Jāhiliyyah,” *Majallat Kullīyyat al-Ādāb* 12 (1969), Baghdad, p. 235ff.

²⁰ Nevertheless, this “poetic” image of the oryx out of the pre-Islamic mythopoeic reality is contradicted in a prosaic, emphatically extra-poetic work that is, however, not entirely averse to things imaginary, namely, the para-zoological compendium by Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damīri (d. 808/1405), with margins by Zakariyyā Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān al-Kubrā, wa bi ḥāmishih ‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt wa al-Ḥayawānāt wa Gharā’ib al-Mawjūdāt*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.), 1:139. There, the oryx male, *al-baqar al-waḥshī*, is represented as being driven by “lust” and “sexual appetite” (*shabaq* and *shahwah*) to the extent of attempting to copulate with other oryx males when refused by the herd’s already pregnant oryx-cows. This image of the oryx male thus approximates it to the poetically “paradigmatic” image of the onager. For al-Damīri’s quite parallel non-poetic description/characterization of the onager—this time quite close to that animal’s “poetic” image—see 1:230.

27. As though I placed my [camel] saddle
upon a white-bellied onager stallion
that speeds through the night to reach the well,
Where on the slopes of ash-Shayyīṭayn
he smells a urine scent.
28. He drives on a long-bodied she-ass, her back
Smooth like much rolled-about pebbles
in water-filled rock-hollows,
29. Of long white rump
Scarred by stabs and bites.
30. Every drop of once-filled crevices deluded him,
Their waters wasted, sunk into the ground.
31. He drove on his mare till she grew thin,
And her ribs' points stuck out above
her two navel veins.
32. The thorn-bushes at the rain-creeks jutted out high,
And from aṣ-Ṣimmānatayn lit up toward him
the bare rocky ground.
33. There, in the forenoon, he stood at the heights
of as-Sitār
Like a marching army's scout, thirst-parched, afraid.
34. Those that see him say: "Look there, a rider,
Standing on high, in mourning!"
35. When the sun meets him, he turns away his face
Like him who swears an oath turns
from the fire of the oath-ministering priest.
36. He recalled a well at Ghumāzah,
The bubbles on its water,
the skipping water-flies aplay.
37. Its ground dew-moistened, soft,
Like quivering satin around the edges of the pools.
38. Then his pressing gallop drives his mare
to water-grounds
Where sand grouse are wont to tarry,
confidently dipping.
39. But there they met a deadly archer of Ṣubāḥ,
His hunters' blind roofed with broad slabs.
40. A thirsty one, with hollow eyes,
his flesh creased
By simoon-gales and summer-heat, all black and parched.
41. His bony forearms hairy,
The fingers coarse, stocky the frame,

42. In hunters' blinds at home, for certain knowing that
When the quarry's meat fails him, he is a wretch.
43. His custom is to slay the herds' lead-runners,
his choice meat is the roast
Of soft short ribs and flanks.
44. Remote from night-lodgings, on hunting bred,
He glues his arrows, pares and arms them.
45. He readies them with four side-feathers,
The broad side outward, the short side inward set,
the arrow trimmed all thin and long—
46. To serve a bow of lote-tree branch.
Its warning twang,
When from the hunted beasts not muffled,
resounds with the clangor of the jinn.
47. And with restraint he lingers on the arrow,
as though
With a cupped hand he ladled water from a well.
48. Then he releases it with the sure sense
That it will enter below the ribs' gristle tips
into the belly's cavity.
49. But the arrow passed by both foreleg and neck—
For certain death may sometimes spare a life.
50. At this, in fret and anguish,
he bites his right-hand thumb,
And heart-broken, in secret, bemoans his misery,
51. While the onager wheels about, not dallying,
And, urging on his mate,
at the edge of the verdant track,
they run in sustained stride.
52. And on and on he runs, his pairing forelegs
As though too short to touch the ground,
53. As though in his run, on both his sides,
two girdle-bands of pebbles
Were flying in two strains.
54. Her hind legs vie with his forelegs and his head,
Her haunch like a saddle-bag riding aft.
55. Following voices and the wind, he turns,
Strong-boned his upper neck, scarred by the bites
of other stallions' teeth,
56. His massive head like a wine-merchant's amphora,
His brow as though a slinger pelted it with rocks.

57. As he smells the mare's urine or draws out his braying,
His nostrils are awash with the spray of mucus
from his nose.²¹

[3]

In Aws Ibn Ḥajar's allegorizing simile of the onager stallion who, in the eyes of the Bedouin poet, is somehow not unlike his she-camel, and in whose simile/similarity the poet also sees himself in his own journey of liminality, we find arranged with clear paradigmatic form-and-content awareness most of what will ever happen in most onager panels in most *raḥīls* and, indeed, to most "journeying" Bedouin poets. First of all, the onager panel of the *raḥīl* is structurally and thematically an analogue—that is also an about-face—of something that in a binary oppositional sense, semiotically and with intertextual allusiveness, comes close to being a contrasting replay of another seasonal migration that has already taken place in the *qaṣīdah*'s *nasīb*—that is, the *ẓa'n*, or the seasonal breaking up of the *khalīf* of the ingathered tribe and of the melancholy departure and taking to the road of the tribe's women-folk—with the poet's beloved among them. The *ẓa'n* thus represents the non-liminal, lyrical, or, if you will, sentimental desert journey of the feminine "other" that only takes the poet's heart away,²² as in an exquisitely lyrical *ẓa'n* scene of the pre-Islamic poet, Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā:

1. The motley throng departed, unmindful
of those they forsook,
As your own journey's fare they left you
longing for the road they took.
2. The slave maids brought in the tribe's camels
and they packed to leave:
Right into the noontime their hubbub
would not cease.²³

[4]

²¹ Aws Ibn Ḥajar, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1967), pp. 67-73.

²² Only too often *qaṣīdah* criticism in its theoretical attempts confuses, first of all terminologically, and then also structurally, the two "journeys" in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah*: its *ẓa'n*, that is, the departure of the poet's beloved, which is part and parcel of the structure of the *nasīb*, with the distinct and distinctive structural *liminal* unit of the *raḥīl*. Such confusion is only excusable as an oversight, a *lapsus*. Further thematic and structural aspects of the *ẓa'n* motif within and outside the main structural confines of the *nasīb* have been studied by Hassan El-Banna Ezz El-Din, "'No Solace for the Heart': The Motif of the Departing Women in the Pre-Islamic Battle Ode," in Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, ed., *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 165-79; and (same) Ḥasan al-Bannā 'Izz al-Dīn, *Shi'riyyat al-Ḥarb 'ind al-ʿArab qabl al-Islām: Qaṣīdat al-Za'ā'in Namūdhajan*, 2d ed. (Riyad: Dār al-Mufradāt li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1998).

²³ Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā, *Dīwān*, redaction and commentary by Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad Ibn Yahyā Ibn Zayd al-Shaybānī Tha'lab (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1384/1946), p. 164 (rhyme *-kū*).

On the other hand, the panel of the onager is a co-essential, allegorizing part of the poet's own liminal desert journey. On the point of both journeys being season-determined—each one “transhumant” in its own way—both thematic segments, the *ẓaʿn* in the *nasīb* and the onager panel in the *raḥīl*, agree and coincide, although the factor of liminality in the scorching, drying, and sterile heat of summer is paramount and determining in the onager's “journey” and in the liminal quality of his trials and tribulations.

Key motif-aspects, and especially the semiotically charged key words/terms, of the panel (both in the present text and intertextually) are: a) the water and its quality encountered by the onager—this in counterposition to the quality of water which the poet himself encounters in his *raḥīl*/journey outside the onager panel; b) the onager as a potentially tragic figure; c) the hunt of the onager; d) the hunter (as unlucky/wretched, like a snake); e) the bow as the hunter's weapon; f) the onager victorious (possible apotheosis); and finally g) the onager's “earthiness” (possibly as part of his apotheosis).

Since these characterizing motival and lexical aspects of the onager panel will ultimately have either to be distinguished from or blended with the theme, the key motifs, and the semiotically key lexical aspects of the *raḥīl*-co-essential animal panel of the oryx, we shall introduce a rather compact segment/panel of the oryx from one of Labīd's longest (ninety-two verses) and most complex odes, his *qaṣīdah* rhyming in *lā*. In the *raḥīl* of this *qaṣīdah* the oryx panel follows the onager panel with only a most economical transitional linkage, which is also a linkage to the mediating she-camel. In a manner almost uncharacteristic of Labīd's favored choice of the oryx cow as protagonist, here he opts for the more generally represented and paradigmatic oryx bull:

25. Is [my she-camel] like this [onager],
 or like an oryx [bull] of meager pasture,
 spent of strength,
 That at the fruit-laden trees of Barʿīm
 sensed the presence of a guileful hunter?
26. On winding sandy tracts, by an *arṭāh* tree,
 he stayed through the night.
 The north-wind engulfed him,
 driving white rain-clouds.
27. All night long he searched for a covert
 —however he'd find it—
 Stirring up quiverings of dust
 over water-drenched sand.
28. When morning came and cleft the fog,
 A brother of wastes, a hunter, aroused him,
 calling for his hounds: Sā'il and Rakāḥ.

29. Grimly poised, like arrows, bloodied their throats,
The blood of the herd's lead-cows
they deem supreme boon.
30. But he wheeled about, not turning his back
on lop-eared hounds
That, thin like twisted wicks, vied to attain
their perilous reward.
31. The hunt—to their master—is right and sustenance;
He fears the torment of failing, of falling short.
32. [But the oryx stood] like a warrior in combat,
iron-clad, his back unguarded,
In the face of champions astute, in battle intrepid.
33. When the hounds leapt for his exposed underparts,
He pointed at their throats
[horns] like spear-points and shafts.
34. And he left the hounds prostrate
wherever he encountered them,
The leather collars on their necks
torn to shreds.²⁴

[5]

The season in which the oryx bull in Labīd's *qaṣīdah* panel appears is winter, or the cold season. This aspect is paradigmatic in the oryx panel, just as the summer season is paradigmatically contingent to every onager panel. The oryx in its *raḥīl* panel is not represented as transhumant, "journeying" with the seasons, following the pattern of the onager. Also in contrast to the "social" or gremial onager, the oryx, normally a herd animal, is invariably represented in the *raḥīl* as solitary, or separated from its herd,²⁵ responsible only for itself—an *Einzelgänger*. It does not and must not reflect ultimately, beyond the mediating she-camel, the poet's Bedouin tribal concerns. Instead, it must stand for, or address itself to, the poet's strictly isolated, individual and, in a psychological, if not philosophical, sense existential concerns—even if those be no more than a vague and barely articulated fear of the *majhūl*.

²⁴ Labīd Ibn Rabī'ah al-Āmirī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Labīd Ibn Rabī'ah al-Āmirī*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Kuwayt: Al-Turāth al-'Arabi/Wizārat al-Irshād wa al-Anbā', 1962), pp. 238-41 (Poem no. 35, Rhyme *lā*, vv. 25-34). The Dār Ṣādir edition (Beirut, 1966, pp. 115-16) has the poem as no. 38.

²⁵ The oryx as herd animal figures in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry in two structurally diverse settings: in the idyllic "development" of an essentially elegiac *nasīb*, thus in verse 7 of the *Mu'allaqah* of Labīd Ibn Rabī'ah (al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā'id al-Sab' al-Ṭiwāl al-Jāhiliyyāt*, p. 525); and in the chivalrous hunt scene, that is, the third structural section of the *qaṣīdah*, thus in the *Mu'allaqah* of Imru' al-Qays, verses 64 to 67 (al-Anbārī, pp. 93-96). The separation of the oryx from its herd, specifically when the animal is an oryx cow, occurs in the *Mu'allaqah* of Labīd, verses 36 to 39 (al-Anbārī, pp. 553-39). For further discussion of the dichotomized characterization of the onager and oryx panels, see S. P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, pp. 29-33; for her discussion of the oryx as "herd animal," see same, p. 277.

A second point of differentiation between the onager and oryx panels is the binary opposition between the onager's earthiness and pronounced sexuality and the oryx-bull's—and even, in her maternal sorrows of bereavement, the oryx cow's²⁶—equally pronounced absence of sexuality. This observable binary opposition, however, appears to have its grounding in the onager's all-season sexuality, which is unrestricted by a narrow calendar of a rutting season in opposition to such a restriction in the case of the “antelope” oryx. Thus, for the most part of the seasonal year the oryx, especially the oryx bull, had appeared to the Bedouin poet/observer as an animal expressive of other—non-sexual—character traits. These traits the poet had to discover in his own mythopoeically active mind.

Aside from these introductory questions that force themselves upon us inasmuch as they concern the “social,” seasonal, and biological antipositions of the onager and the oryx in preparation for their liminal roles in the *rahīl*, the other defining points drawn from our above-quoted oryx panel are a) the oryx's finding refuge from the rain and cold of night under, or in, the branches or roots of the *arīāh*-tree; b) the morning that brings the danger of the hunter; c) the hunt: the dogs; d) the struggle: agon; e) the “weapons”—horns—of the oryx/cow bull, his/her bravery; f) the defeat of the dogs.

Before we can claim to have topically arrived at the announced goal of our “search” of the Arabic unicorn—a name (and idea) whose presence in our poetic contexts we are only beginning to “circumscribe”—we have to attempt a juxtaposition of the diverse images and stories of the two panel animals, the onager and the oryx, poetically present before us: in what they have in common and in what separates them. Above all, we have to sort out in both panels the subject of hunt, hunter, and quarry. Here we first of all realize that in both the onager and oryx panels the protagonist, or the acting “persona,” is not the hunter but the prey; and we also realize that by the dictates of a binding rule, or paradigm, in their respective encounters with their respective hunters they, the animals-as-quarry, must emerge victorious. Of course, by the same dictate of rule and intertextually attained paradigm, we also know that, if the poem in which this type of hunting scene figures is a dirge/elegy, then the quarry, still a protagonist, turns into the panel's—and the poem's—tragic figura.²⁷ That is, in the Bedouin elegy the allegory

²⁶ On the circumstances in which the oryx cow acquires herself the oryx bull's status of a solitary, liminal animal, see J. Stetkevych, “The Hunt in the Arabic *Qaṣīdah*,” pp. 107-8.

²⁷ This is first explained theoretically by ‘Uthmān ‘Amr Ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 8 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1965-69), 2:20. For my own critical contextualization of this very important al-Jāḥiẓian theoretical statement, see J. Stetkevych, “Hunt in the Arabic *Qaṣīdah*,” p. 104; “The Hunt in Classical Arabic Poetry: From Mukhaḍram *Qaṣīdah* to Umayyad *Ṭardiyyah*,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 30, no. 2 (1999): 112-13; and “Sacrifice and Redemption in Early Islamic Poetry: Al-Ḥuṭay‘ah's ‘Wretched Hunter’,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 31, no. 2 (2000): 97.

of the animal, and of the hunt, becomes one of death, not of life. In that allegory not only *does* the animal framed inside the *raḥīl* simile die, but it *must* die. “Such is the symbolic logic of the hunt in the *raḥīl*.”²⁸

Knowing the hunt and its outcome in these simile-generated animal panels of the *raḥīl*, the next question is: Who is the hunter? In both panels the hunter is also strictly pre-defined and pre-ordained. He “is invariably a personification of despondency and failure, as well as of a distinct social destitution. . . . He is not only poor but also fated to be unlucky; and there is almost an air of wrong to his very pursuit of his quarry. He is, as it were, a poacher, as though he had no real right to intrude into the realm of the animal world itself.”²⁹ The main difference in the representation of the “wretched hunter” in the onager and oryx hunt scenes is that in the oryx hunt the hunter himself does not appear or visibly act. He is, as it were, off stage; only his voice may be heard while releasing his hounds. In the oryx hunt the real hunters, or tools/agents of the hunt, are always the hounds. We thus have the hunter “on stage” with his bow and arrows in the onager hunt, and the hunter “off stage” siccing his hounds on the quarry in the oryx hunt. So much for the role of the hunter. On the part of the quarry, the onager’s salvation lies in its extraordinary speed and prompt flight; the oryx’s, in holding his ground and in a fierce agon in which he defeats the assault-trained hounds. His own weapons are his singularly long and sharp horns. To round off the review of the motif-semiosis of the two hunts as allegories of their respective panels, two specific motival aspects must now be discussed: that of water—particularly in the panel of the onager—and that of a tree, or bush, named *arṭāh*—exclusively in the panel of the oryx. Both discussions will ultimately help us construct the “figura” and symbol of the Arabic poetic unicorn.

4. *The Symbolic Efficacies of Water (and of the Snake): Particularly in the Panel of the Onager*

Water is symbolically all-pervasive in Bedouin *qaṣīdah* poetry, if not altogether central to it; it is, as well, semiotically direction-setting in many of its central themes. In the *raḥīl* panels of the onager and the oryx, however,

²⁸ See more on the subject in J. Stetkevych, “The Hunt in the Arabic *Qaṣīdah*,” p. 104. A singular clear exception to the rule unlocked for us by al-Jāhīz (see note no. 14) is a short poem of hunt and “wretched hunter” by the Mukhaḍram poet al-Ḥuṭay’ah, which is not an elegy, but in which the hunter is successful in killing the quarry. See note no. 16 above, and especially my essay devoted to that poem and its independently curious problematics, J. Stetkevych, “Sacrifice and Redemption in Early Islamic Poetry,” pp. 89-120.

²⁹ See J. Stetkevych, “The Hunt in the Arabic *Qaṣīdah*,” p. 104. For a more detailed discussion of the motif/subject of the “wretched hunter,” see my “Sacrifice and Redemption in Early Islamic Poetry,” pp. 93-97.

water has a markedly oppositional presence—seasonally as well as, in a direct sense, circumstantially. Both animals are semiotically linked to the “matter” of water: the onager always searching for it and pursuing it, and the oryx hiding from it and pursued by it—that is, the cold rain. Of particular hermeneutical interest to us is the appearance of water in the panel of the onager. There it is always, or at least with indicative predominance, salubrious, pure, running, bubbling over. It is at such water that the onager arrives, or such it becomes upon his arrival. The onager’s water, or effect upon water, is thus revitalizing, cleansing, at times idyll-inspiring—but of an idyll that must also invariably be shattered by danger. Thus in our onager segment by Aws Ibn Ḥajar, the onager’s water is “where sand grouse are wont to tarry”;³⁰ or when in a verse by Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā the onager arrives at waters not muddied by the use of buckets;³¹ while Labīd’s onager clears brackish water away with its hoofs,³² and, much more so, in Labīd’s *Mu‘allaqah* the waters at which the onagers arrive are richly flowing and refreshing,³³ as they also are in another of his *qaṣīdahs* rhyming in *lām*, where, at the blue purity of the water the onager finds freedom from fear of the hunter’s snares;³⁴ or in the Mukhaḍram Rabī‘ah Ibn Maqrūm al-Ḍabbī’s *qaṣīdah*, where the onager stallion brings his three mates to waters cleared of impurity, overflowing, dark like the green³⁵ color of the sky, with pearly stars upon them.³⁶

On the other hand, outside the onager panel, the water that the poet encounters along his own liminal journey’s path, not yet mediated by the

³⁰ See above, p. 15, v. 38.

³¹ Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā, *Dīwān Zuhayr Ibn Abī Sulmā*, p. 69, v. 26 (rhyming in ‘ū).

³² Labīd Ibn Rabī‘ah, *Dīwān* pp. 103-111 (Poem no. 38, rhyming in *lā*).

³³ Labīd, *Mu‘allaqah* (Al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā'id al-Sab'*, pp. 552-53 [vv. 34-35]).

³⁴ Labīd Ibn Rabī‘ah, *Dīwān*, pp. 112-22 (Poem no. 38, v. 23).

³⁵ Aiming at semantic simplicity, quite in accordance with “archaic” pre-Islamic and Mukhaḍram multiple meanings of the root *kh-d-r*, it is possible to understand Rabī‘ah Ibn Maqrūm’s imaging of the color of the pool of water which the onager reaches in the darkness of night as resembling the “darkness”/“blackness” of the night itself—the color “green” being only one of the meaning-possibilities of that root. And yet such a simplified, if not simplistic, reading of that poet’s night-“description” in an onager panel would be poetically unsatisfactory and, indeed, pauperized. That there is actual “greenness” in an intentional “pastoral” sense involved in the “onager-at-the-waterhole” scene will, however, reveal itself to us only when, in later phases of the structural and motival/thematic development of the *qaṣīdah*, the motif of “the green nightly sky” has migrated out of the classical *qaṣīdah*’s *raḥīl* into the *nasīb*, where it finds its hermeneutically more explicit “home” in the lyrically elegiac motif of the “pastor of the stars” (*rā'ī al-nujūm*) on the now indisputably “green” pasture grounds of the nightly firmament. On that aspect of the poeticity of *kh-d-r*, see Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press), pp. 155-60.

³⁶ [Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mufaḍḍal Ibn Muḥammad al-Ḍabbī] *Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, eds. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr and ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif bi Miṣr, 1976), p. 182 (Poem no. 38, vv. 14-15).

onager allegory, always appears as stagnant, scum-covered, turbid, or otherwise impure. Thus the early pre-Islamic poet ‘Abid Ibn al-Abraṣ speaks of his entering the liminality of his desert-journey:

25. But many a water-place I have come to, brackish,
The road to it fearsome, barren,
26. The dove’s feathers strewn around its edges,
The heart in fear of it atremble.³⁷ [6]

Or another early poet, ‘Alqamah Ibn ‘Abadah, in his she-camel ride:

16. And I took her to a well,
whose collected water,
In its brackishness, was part henna,
part [blood-red] *ṣabīb*.³⁸ [7]

And the poet al-A‘shā Maymūn, counted with equal right as Jāhili and Mukhaḍram:

15. And a wayless desert, in which the jinn hum,
Its water-places brackish, stagnant.³⁹ [8]

So, too, in a verse by the Mukhaḍram poet Rabi‘ah Ibn Maqrūm al-Ḍabbi, where the brackish water-hole is surrounded by beasts of prey;⁴⁰ or in the equally Mukhaḍram, ‘Abdah Ibn al-Ṭabīb.⁴¹

Thus, if for no other reason than the repetitiveness and firm paradigm-adherence of this characterization of water opposite the equally firm opposing characterization of water found by the onager, we have to begin assuming the existence in the onager of a power, or property, that is capable of changing brackish, infested water into water that is sweet to thirst-parched animals. The impurity of well- and pond-water that the onager thus seems to prevent or to remove, ought, furthermore, to be related to the danger encountered by the onager at those wells and ponds—a danger personified in the hunter armed with bow and arrow. The fact that the onager literally, and prescriptively, escapes that danger is also not devoid of its semiosis and symbolism. The purity, or purification, of water and the salvation, or immunity, of the onager from the hunter at the water, are thus to be viewed as symbolically and semiotically interconnected. Of cumulative interest to us here, presumably of pre-Islamic folkloric genre-provenance of “curiosities”

³⁷ ‘Abid Ibn al-Abraṣ, *Dīwān*, p. 27 (rhyming in *bū*).

³⁸ *Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, p. 393 (Poem no. 119, v. 16).

³⁹ Al-A‘shā [Maymūn Ibn Qays], *Dīwān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1966), p. 197 (rhyming in *um*).

⁴⁰ *Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, p. 187 (Poem no. 39, v. 16).

⁴¹ *Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, p. 141 (Poem no. 26, v. 45).

(*nawādir*), is the Arabic, presumably also pre-Islamic, anecdotal claim concerning the donkey's cleansing and apotropaic/prophylactic qualities. Thus, "they assert that, when a man approaches a village, but is afraid of the pest in it and stops at its gate before entering, and brays the way that donkeys bray, the pest will not touch him."⁴²

A further semiosis- and symbolism-replete motif in the onager panel, strongly associated in a danger-sensing, purifying, and implicitly apotropaic respect with the onager, the "wretched" hunter, and above all the water, is the snake. Thus in an onager scene by the already familiar Mukhaḍram poet Rabi'ah Ibn Maqrūm al-Ḍabbī, when the onager stallion (v. 27) brings his mate to the water-hole in the pitch-darkness of night, the two do not anticipate danger. Only with the coming of the morning (v. 28) does danger show itself:

28. But with the morning he came upon a snake
 from the Banū Jillān, his gear
 A curved bow and arrows.⁴³ [9]

Another Mukhaḍram poet, al-Ḥuṭay'ah, presents the hunter as "serpent-like, gliding at the water-place to which the onagers are heading."⁴⁴ And once again, out of the same Mukhaḍram generation, al-Shammākh speaks of the hunter as "poison lurking":

41. And, [oh, the onagers,] when they saw
 that between them and the water
 There was *poison* quick in its effect, lurking
 by the path to the spring. . . .⁴⁵ [10]

On the other hand, outside the rigorously onager-proper motif-aspects of purity/impurity and salubriousness, but also of the danger of the hunter-bowman, or of the hunter as snake and poison, water is not represented in the oryx panel as a life force or life-source—or as their possible semiotic opposite, the place of danger—although in the latter respect it precipitates the oryx's need to seek shelter. Water as the cold rain of winter is rather the cause of the oryx's search for shelter.

⁴² Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Abshihī, *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kullī Fann Mustazraf*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1412/1992), vol. 2, p. 85 (Ch. 59).

⁴³ *Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, p. 189 (Poem no. 39, v. 28).

⁴⁴ Al-Ḥuṭay'ah, *Dīwān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1967), pp. 271-72.

⁴⁵ Al-Shammākh Ibn Ḍirār al-Dhubyānī, *Dīwān*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Hādī (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi Miṣr, 1968), p. 193 (Poem no. 8, v. 41).

5. The Tree Called *Arṭāh*: Its Unique Structural and Semiotic Determinacy

In a specific way that is of great semiotic significance to our topic, water also leads to the oryx's finding shelter under the branches or in the torn-up roots of a tree called *arṭāh*—and, at least paradigmatically, nowhere else but under this uniquely named tree.

If there are exceptions to the strict semiotic determinacy of this tree in the Arabic poetic contexts of the oryx panel, such exceptions occur in most telling settings and with a most telling hermeneutic idea behind them, confirming, rather than detracting from, the significance of the oryx/*arṭāh* linkage and, furthermore, pointing to a potential symbolic dimensionality of the *arṭāh* tree itself. The poet Labīd, for example, who is otherwise a faithful adherent of the oryx/*arṭāh* motival pairing, decides in one instance to let the oryx find refuge under a lote-tree (*dāl*), which, itself, is in Arabic lore a tree of deep symbolic resonance. And thus, although the oryx in this case does not hide in the *arṭāh* tree explicitly, it is yet like one who fulfills his votive (religious) obligations (*qāḍī nuḍhūrīn*). Thus a “ritual” air surrounds even the space left by the absence of the *arṭāh* tree:

17. And he passed the night as though performing vows,
Taking his refuge in wet boxthorn and a lote-tree.
18. When from the branches drops fall on his back,
He wheels about his horn again and once again,
19. Like a blacksmith hunched over his hands' toil,
Bent upon his work, polishing away rust-scabs
on spears' iron-heads.⁴⁶

[11]

⁴⁶ Labīd, *Dīwān* (Kuwayt), pp. 77-78 (Poem no. 11, Rhyme *lī*, vv. 17-19)/Beirut edition, pp. 103-111. Labīd names once again the lote-tree, this time, however, in a *ẓa'n* context in a *nasīb* (*qaṣīdah* rhyming in *ilā* [*Dīwān*, p. 112 (Poem no. 38, v. 3)]). There may, however, be a significant difference between this use of “lote-tree” (*dāl*) in the oryx panel of one *qaṣīdah* and the use of “lote-tree” as *sidrah* in the *ẓa'n* of the *nasīb* of the other, for *dāl* is the Bedouin, so to speak, “male” lote-tree that is more proper of the liminality of the *raḥīl*, while *sidrah* is a lyrical tree of the *nasīb*, that is, a more properly feminine lote-tree, the same lote-tree that subsequently finds its way into the qur'ānic scenery of Paradise. On such topics, specifically, however, with reference to a related, “Bedouin-admired” *dhāt anwāt*, see Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arri's *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, ed. 'Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Raḥmān (Bint al-Shāṭi'), 7th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1981), pp. 140-41. A relationship of semiotic *raḥīl/nasīb* counterposition occurs between *arṭāh* itself and another poetically, and apparently also ritually, celebrated tree, or bush of poetic Bedouinity, the *ghaḍāh* (tamarisk). In a *nasīb* there may thus be reference made to a gazelle that spends the night under a sheltering tree—not an *arṭāh*, however, but a *ghaḍāh*/*adāh* (sic)/*idāh*. Being a *nasīb* animal, the *ghazāl* must also be the metaphor for the “beloved.” See, for example, a poem rhyming in *hā* by the Mukhaḍram poet Ḥassān Ibn Thābit (*Dīwān Ḥassān Ibn Thābit*, eds. Sayyid Ḥanafī Ḥasanayn and Ḥasan Kāmil al-Širafī [Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1974], p. 102).

Out of a deeper Jāhiliyyah than Labīd's, the poet 'Abīd Ibn al-Abrāṣ, produces the only pre-Islamic-to-Mukhaḍram instance that I have come across where the *arṭāh*-tree has been replaced by a tree named *alā'*, under which the oryx finds refuge:

11. By the side of the *alā'*-tree he finds
 refuge from the night's bitter cold,
 And faces the morning with every limb of his
 body ashiver.

And there he stands (v. 12) "like a shining star" (*ka-l-kawkabi -d-dirrī'i*),

13. In a meadow, its ground covered by spring frost,
 Richly watered, by fodder-scouts unreached.⁴⁷ [13]

It is to be noted that *alā'* is a pleasingly aromatic tree (aloes), thus one of a special realm, pointing in the symbolic direction of a *hortus conclusus*. This allusion is reinforced by the purport of verse 13, thus equally assuring the inviolable position/nature of the oryx.

As for Labīd, he is otherwise fully observant of maintaining the oryx/*arṭāh* paradigmatic pairing. Thus in his already cited *qaṣīdah* no. 38, rhyming in *lā*, where the protagonist is an oryx bull:

26. On winding sandy tracts, by an *arṭāh* tree,
 he stayed through the night.
 The north-wind engulfed him,
 driving white rain-clouds.
27. And all night long he searched for a covert
 —if he could only find it—
 Stirring up quiverings of dust
 over water-drenched sand.

⁴⁷ Abīd Ibn al-Abrāṣ, *Dīwān*, p. 60, vv. 11, 13.

Already in the Umayyad period of 'Udhri love poetry, however, in a sharp reversal of pre-Islamic semiotics, Majnūn, in a characteristic Umayyad variant of the lyricism of "You'll take the high road, and I'll take the low road . . ." will use the *arṭā* in an entirely *nasīb*-like context, evoked further by the *arṭāh*-associated tree *alā'*, as an image of the sterile desert representing his "state" of the heart, while using *manbitu -r-rab'i* (vegetation-source of the spring encampment) as being the destination (and the "state") of his beloved:

4. At evening-time the vegetation of spring encampment
 lay before her,

While before you lay the *arṭā* of the plain and *alā'*. [12]

(Majnūn [Qays Ibn al-Mulawwah], *Dīwān Majnūn Laylā*, ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj [Cairo: Dār Miṣr li al-Ṭibā'ah/Maktabat Miṣr, 1973], p. 41, v. 4 [rhyme in *ā'ū*]).

28. When morning came and cleft the fog,
 A brother of wastes, a hunter, aroused him,
 calling for his hounds: Sā'il and Rakāh.⁴⁸ [14]

Arṭāh may also become part of the proper name of a poet, as in the case of the Mukhaḍram poet Ḍābi' Ibn al-Ḥārith Ibn Arṭāh al-Burjumī, who, perhaps because of his own "name-intimacy" with the tree, and with its poetic motif, is prone to introduce an almost "precious" sense of lyricism to the scene of the oryx that finds refuge under the *arṭāh*-tree—and in that lyricism literally ingressing upon, and surpassing, Labīd, who might indeed have been his model and master:

25. He stayed through the night under the *arṭāh*
 of a crest-curved dune,
 The north-wind winding itself around him,
 showering upon him loosened silver beads. [15]

Even though in the next line the poet will soberly reverse himself, following the "paradigm": "never had he seen a night/more damaging than it, more drawn-out."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Labīd, *Dīwān* (Kuwayt), p. 239 (Poem no. 35, Rhyme *lā*, vv. 26-28)/Beirut edition, pp. 115-16. In order to read properly the translated text, it should be further noted that Sā'il bears reference to "readiness to oblige," and Rakāh to "trustiness."

So too, the aspect of the oryx finding its refuge under the *arṭāh*, and its being "drenched in rain-water," may be further compared to a scene in Imru' al-Qays (*Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm [Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi Miṣr, 3d ed., 1969], p. 102, v. 7 [rhyme in *sī*]).

⁴⁹ *Al-Aṣma'īyyāt*, p. 182, v. 25 (Poem no. 63, rhyming in *lā*). The poet's name, Ibn Arṭāh, as it figures in *Al-Aṣma'īyyāt*, should itself strike one as strange and interpretively challenging. A first response to such a name, inculcated by old philological habit, should be that it ought to have been Ibn Abī Arṭāh, and that somehow, in the process of usage, the *kunya* (by-name) indicator Abi got lost, or that it was neglected because of habitual use and a sense of self-evidence. The other possibility, however, semiotically and symbolically more pertinent to the subject and tenor of our ongoing hermeneutic enterprise, is that no such thing as *kunya* is intended by this name, but that precisely by bypassing the *kunya* construct, the name Ibn Arṭāh approximates its bearer to something that lies in, or close to, the essence of the meaning of that tree—a meaning that, in the end, can be revealed to us only through the poetic understanding of the semantic duality and symbolic univocity of oryx/*arṭāh*.

In the typically uninvolved manner of a lexicographer, the author of the *Lisān al-'Arab*, Ibn Manẓūr (root *arṭā*) records that "its singular is *arṭāh*, and by it a man was named and by-named [i.e., given the *kunya* of Abū]." On the range of the semiotic import of the use of the *kunya*, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), vol. 5, pp. 395-96 (entry *kunya*).

See also Muḥammad Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shu'arā'*, Book 1, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Madani, 1394/1974 [?]), pp. 171-75. Al-Jumaḥī places Ḍābi' Ibn al-Ḥārith Ibn Arṭāh into the Ninth Class of the early poets of quality (*fuḥūl*), singling him out as a huntsman, owner of horses, and lover of hunting dogs.

Noticeably, the poet al-A‘shā Maymūn introduces one of his two oryx similes, and within it the obligatory reference to the *arṭāh* tree, with the most quintessential of all the epithetic/denotational “namings” of the oryx. It is “single” and “solitary” (*farīd*) all in one:

27. Or a single/solitary, hungry-bellied one that,
 in *arṭāh*’s nightfall hospitality,
 Constricted, spends by its side the night.⁵⁰ [16]

Outside of the strict structure-imbeddedness, and thus main semiosis, of the *arṭāh* tree within the oryx panel,⁵¹ the word occurs in pre-Islamic and Mukhaḍram poetry with highly limited frequency. Mostly it then denotes place names or place references, such as *dhū al-arṭāh/arṭā/arātā/urātā*. Here the semiotically most authoritative and interesting instance is the occurrence of *bi dhī al-arṭā* in Ṭarafah Ibn al-‘Abd’s short (thirteen verses) *nasīb*-centered *qaṣīdah* of deeply felt lyricism. It is said that Ṭarafah composed this poem when he was an outcast from his tribe, in a state of awareness of his despondency, solitariness, and solitude, seeing himself as though he, too, were a night-frightened oryx; and it is out of this state of mind that he speaks to us, still in the poem’s *nasīb*:

8. There where the *arṭāh* grows, I remained
 almost on Muthaqqab’s rise.
 9. The wind furled over me my cloak,
 as I sat clinging to a Ṣafadī camel
 like a bow bent, kneeling.⁵² [17]

The figuring of *arṭāh* in proper names may become even stranger when it appears almost “genealogically” complimentary to Ibn Arṭāh itself (Arṭāh/Ibn Arṭāh). Thus in the *Ḥamāsah* of Abū Tammām (*Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsah*, Commentary by al-Tibrizī, 4 vols. [Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, n. d.], vol. 4, pp. 4-5) we find a poet’s name to be itself merely *arṭāh*, i.e., Arṭāh Ibn Suhayyah al-Murri—to which al-Tibrizī adjoins, in the form of commentary, a disquisition on the semantics- and morphology-based etymology of the word. Also in the pre-Islamic “Battle-Days of the Arabs” (*Ayyām al-‘Arab*), in the redaction of Abū ‘Ubaydah Mu‘ammar Ibn al-Muthannā al-Taymī (2 vols., ed. ‘Ādil Jāsim al-Bayātī [Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub/Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyyah, 1407/1987], vol. 2, pp. 404 and 532) two such names occur, one Arṭāh Ibn Rabī‘ah Ibn Ubayy (the Day of Naqā al-Ḥasan), the other Arṭāh Ibn Munqidh al-Asadī (the Day of al-Nisār).

⁵⁰ Al-A‘shā, *Dīwān*, p. 128 (rhyme in *qū* [*wa yuḍāqu*]).

⁵¹ Here one should further mention the three, still Jāhilī, paradigmatic oryx/*arṭāh* motif-couplings in three *qaṣīdahs* by Bishr Ibn Abī Khāzim al-Asadī (*Dīwān*, 2d ed., ed. ‘Izzat Ḥasan [Damascus: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1392/1972], p. 51 [Poem no. 11, v. 12], p. 55 [Poem no. 12, v. 8], p. 82 [Poem no. 16, v. 9]).

⁵² Ṭarafah Ibn al-‘Abd, *Dīwān*, Commentary by al-A‘lam al-Shantamarī, eds. Durriyyah al-Khaṭīb and Luṭfī al-Ṣaqqāl (Damascus: Majma‘ al-Lughah al-‘Arabīyyah bi Dimashq, 1395/1975), pp. 87-88 [vv. 8-9].

Or when, accompanied by its semiotic equivalent, the fragrant *dāl* (lote-tree of the mountains), *arṭāh* surfaces in the *raḥīl*-unrelated, jarringly discordant context of Aws Ibn Ḥajar's invective/*hijā'*,⁵³ only to be contrasted, once again against the grain of the pathos of *raḥīl* semiotics, by an almost *nasīb*-like turn in Imru' al-Qays's oryx panel, where the oryx bull spends the night under the *arṭāh* tree on a winding dune. Bathed by a rain shower, the tree becomes like the tent to which the bridegroom has brought his newly wedded bride, the wet tree and ground exuding their aroma.⁵⁴

Altogether, even considering the *arṭāh* motif's marginal variants, what is so striking is the disciplined ubiquitousness of the essential *arṭāh*/oryx motif in the *qaṣīdah*-poetry of the pre-Islamic and Mukhaḍram periods, and then, too, its appearing even reinforced in certain poets, such as Dhū al-Rummah and al-Akḥṭal, in the Umayyad period.⁵⁵ In its structured, "situational" repetitiveness,

For *Dhū Urātā* as, apparently, an actual place name, see 'Amr Ibn Kulthūm (al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā'id al-Sab' al-Tiwāl al-Jāhiliyyāt*, p. 409, v. 59). As for *Dhū al-Arātā*, similarly *Dhū al-Urātā*, or *Urāt*, there was a water-place by such a name on the pilgrimage road, approximately 12km. from al-Ḥāshimīyyah, east of al-Khuzaymiyyah, thus according to Shihāb al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Yāqūt Ibn 'Abd Allāh, *Mu'jam al-Buldān (Jacuts Geographisches Wörterbuch aus den Handschriften zu Berlin, St. Petersburg und Paris*, 6 vols., ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld [Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866/offset reprint, Tehran, 1965/], 1: 181-2). The poet Abū al-Ṣafī Rifā'ah Ibn 'Āṣim al-Thaqafī mentions it as such (Usāmah Ibn Munqidh, *Al-Manāzil wa al-Diyār*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥijāzī [Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A'la li al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1968], p. 36). Of interest is also Yāqūt's (1: 209) listing among place names in al-Andalus the name of a fortress called *Arṭat* (sic) *al-Layth*—that is, "The Arṭah of the Lion." Thus the ancient Arabian poetic "tree of the oryx" acquires, on alien soil, a new meaning—possibly discordant, or else, imbued with new symbolic resonance: of the *arṭāh* between the lion and the unicorn.

Also in these contexts, special attention deserves the occurrence of *dhū al-arṭā* in al-Muraqqish al-Akbar's twelve-verse *nasīb* poem/fragment (*Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* [Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1976], pp. 223-24, Poem no. 46, esp. vv. 3-4). To be noticed in this poem is the topical attraction between *al-arṭā* in verse 3, where it is part of the place-name *Dhū al-Arṭā* and *mahā* (oryx cows) in verse 4, where *mahā* is clearly a motival reflex of *al-arṭā*. In verse 4 the oryx-cows (*mahā*) appear ostensibly grouped around (*ḥawālayhā*) the camp-fire, but implicitly, i.e., recognizably intertextually, around the *arṭā* tree. To be kept in mind, however, is the fact that this intertextually introduced or signalled *arṭā/mahā* motif in al-Muraqqish al-Akbar's poem works now from within the *nasīb*, where the *mahā* are the "maidens of the tribe."

⁵³ Thus see the strongly ironic use of *arṭāh* in Aws Ibn Ḥajar's *hijā'*, now foul-smelling rather than fragrant, where it seems to stand without a direct reference to the oryx hunt. And yet, without the *arṭāh*'s broader (original) intertextual meaning and semiosis, the poet could not have achieved his ironic (distorting) *hijā'* effect. Aws Ibn Ḥajar, *Dīwān*, p. 101 [rhyme in *hā*, v. 7].

⁵⁴ Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān*, pp. 102-3. The same motif/image is also found, and thus semiotically reinforced, in an oryx panel by al-Mutalammis (Jarīr Ibn 'Abd al-Masīḥ ['Abd al-'Uzzah] al-Dab'ī), Luwīs Shaykhū al-Yasū'ī, ed., *Shu'arā' al-Naṣrāniyyah qabl al-Islām*, 2d ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1967), p. 345. Al-Mutalammis, whom al-Jumaḥī places in his Seventh Class of *fiḥūl (Fuḥūl al-Shu'arā'*, pp. 155-56), is a poet only at the most one generation younger than Imru' al-Qays.

⁵⁵ Muḥammad al-Sulaymān al-Sudays (*Al-Ghaḍā wa al-Arṭā fī al-Lughah wa al-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Qadīm [Majallat Kulliyat al-Ādāb*, Al-Malik Sa'ūd University, 1982], pp. 63-80)

this ubiquitousness is undoubtedly trying to tell us something, just as other things, or words, or “situations” in the *qaṣīdah*, in their “repetitiveness” and patterned ubiquitousness, have already told us. As I have demonstrated in earlier studies, the *aṭlāl* (ruins), the *dār/diyār* (abode/ abodes), the *diman* (dung-traces), the *athāfi* (cauldron stones), and so many other key words and imaged conceptualizations in the ancient *qaṣīdah* are capable of revealing their true semanticity as poetic signs and symbols. Through them the ancient poems have begun to mean (again) and to regain their “imaging” and “ideating” power (again).⁵⁶ In brief, the ancient Arabic poetic language was, and can again be, a language of referential deep structure and of symbols in the poetry it generated. Because of these realizations, too, we shall have to come back—at a more appropriately “ripe” point of our argumentation—to the real, latent, or potential meanings of *arṭāh*, each one with its own claim to oryx-related poetic validity.

6. *Approaching the Ideated Syncretism of the Onager and the Oryx*

Before we answer our now implicit questions of “who” was the oryx and “what” was the *arṭāh*, we have once again to turn back to the onager of the parallel panel and to the water and the snake, and to what we at an earlier point had called the juxtaposition of both panels. Thus we already know that the oryx and the onager figure in their panels as in many respects “reverse, or rather obverse, images” that across their differences appear to complement each other and to “speak” to each other. And yet they represent counterpositions: of aloneness/loneliness versus ebullience and gregariousness; absence

offers a list, albeit in an all too traditional and, from the literary-critical point of view, ill-conceived presentation of the *arṭāh*'s ubiquitousness in Arabic poetry. To his credit, however, is that he combines his treatment of the topic of the *arṭāh* with that of the *ghadā* (according to Palgrave, “of the genus Euphorbia” [Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1877/1980, entry *gh-d-w*]). In Philip F. Kennedy's paper on “Labid, al-Nābighah, al-Akḥṭal and the Oryx,” in *Arabicus Felix: Luminosus Britannicus*. Essays in Honour of A. F. L. Beeston on his Eightieth Birthday, ed. Alan Jones (Ithaca Press Reading for Oriental Studies, Oxford University, 1991), pp. 74-89, it is stressed that “In total, there are seven oryx sequences in the *Diwān* of Labid; there are also at least two in al-A'shā's *Diwān* and others in the *Diwāns* of al-Mutalammis, Aws b. Ḥujr [sic], al-Nābigha and several in the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, to go no further” (p. 75); and in his end-note no. 7, he stresses that the *arṭāh* “formula” “appears almost without exception in all full oryx depictions,” and that it is “virtually a *sine qua non* of the oryx tableau” (p. 80). On the other hand, it is indeed puzzling that James E. Montgomery, regardless of his selection of specific oryx poems, should avoid any mention whatsoever of the motival—and more than motival—phenomenon of the *arṭāh* in an entire chapter devoted to “The Bull Oryx.” See his *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997), pp. 110-65.

⁵⁶ See, for example, J. Stetkevych, “Name and Epithet: The Philology and Semiotics of Animal Nomenclature,” pp. 89-124; and J. Stetkevych, “Toward an Arabic Elegiac Lexicon: The Seven Words of the *Nasīb*,” in S. P. Stetkevych, ed., *Reorientations/Arabic and Persian Poetry*, pp. 58-129.

of eroticism versus erotic earthiness; being surrounded by water [rain], but basically suffering from it, versus search for water and survival by it; agonistic but victorious combat with an invisible hunter's hounds versus precipitous flight from the hunter's failing arrows (or even breaking bows).

A critical and centrally hermeneutic question to consider, or to reconsider, is: Why do both animals ultimately escape death at the hunters' hands? Is al-Jāhīz's intelligent analysis, which explains the animal's survival, except in elegy—where it is slain—sufficient?⁵⁷ No matter how hermeneutically correct al-Jāhīz's analysis, the very fact of the harmonization on the allegorical level of two otherwise discrepant, if not diametrically opposed, stories of the *raḥīl* animal panels into a resolution of the triumph of life over death—this complex, phenomenal achievement almost unheard-of in universal literary history in its display of structural and symbolizing genius—must yet give us pause for further thought. Was the choice of the two animals, the onager and the oryx, for their role in the double allegory of life and death a calculated and studied choice sifted out over generations of sharp-sensored, poetically inclined Bedouin sensibilities merely assisted by a co-conspiring zoology and ecology? Or were there other—whether additional or more primary—reasons for this structural coalescence and symbolic symbiosis of apparent discordances?

Here my answer would be that neither al-Jāhīz's theory nor ancient Arabic poetic practice, which led to the structuring of the *qaṣīdah*, give us any further answers beyond the apparent ones. We are still left with two animals in visible binary opposition that, nevertheless, generate the veiled paradox of somehow being one, as it were composite, creature, the product of physical and ideated syncretism.

We know of such creatures from legends, mythologies, and religions. They are dragons, griffins, minotaurs, pegasuses, angels, sphinxes, and, of course, the unicorn. Their syncretism is physically accomplished, unified—despite being an amalgamation of contradictions⁵⁸—, but their non-physical properties remain capable of acting out their paradox. Thus the unicorn is both an equine/onager and a cloven hoofed bovine/oryx. Its body resembles that of an equine/onager, although its two species-defining bodily characteristics are those of the antelope, that is bovine,⁵⁹ oryx: it is meant to have cloven hooves and on its equine forehead a horn—a single one—most

⁵⁷ To return to al-Jāhīz's theory, see above, notes nos. 27, 28.

⁵⁸ And, we can add, despite Horace's now rather crude appearing zeal in his *Ars poetica* at furnishing an example of the absence of "organic unity," *Satires, Epistles and Ars poetica*, Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Loeb Classical Library, 1966), pp. 452-53.

⁵⁹ It is to be noted that the oryx of the Arabic *raḥīl* panel, not ever referred to by a corresponding Arabic denotative, that is, non-epithetic technical term, is yet recognized correctly in an explanatory manner as being a "wild bovine" (*baqar waḥshī*, or *baqar al-waḥshī*)—thus not to be equaled or confused with "non-bovine" deer, stags, etc.

closely resembling a singly viewed horn of the antelope oryx. Its physical qualities are those of both animals combined, though not necessarily acting in undifferentiated accord. It is erotically restrained to the point of being “virginal,” but at the same time it is an embodiment of sexual potency. Because of the prophylactic and apotropaic qualities said to be stored in its horn, the unicorn is also the most desired quarry of the hunters; but because of its unrivalled speed it can outrun its pursuers, their javelins and arrows, and with its sharp, spit-like horn it can bloody and defeat their hounds.

However, there were supposed to be two ways in which the unicorn could be caught: one, often repeated in the *Physiologus* and in the genre of the Medieval European Bestiaries, speaks of the antelope, not the unicorn, unless, tempted to draw inferences, we read the antelope and unicorn stories of those sources analogically. There, the “antelope,” going to drink in the Euphrates, catches its horns in the branches of a shrub, or tree, referred to in the Greek *Physiologus* as *erikhina* and in its Latin translation as *herecine*. Unable to disentangle itself, it is killed by the hunter.⁶⁰ The other way, derived from, or developed in, the same source-tradition, is of the ruse set up (specifically) by unicorn hunters. In it a virgin would be seated by a branching tree or bush. The unicorn would be irresistibly attracted to her, placing its horn in her bosom. In doing so it would lose all its ferocity and strength, and would become an easy prey to the hunters. Furthermore, if we keep in mind the hermeneutics and potentially Max Müllerian philology that seem to come to play in this latter method and the laxity of Late Antiquity and Early Medieval etymologizing, it does not appear utterly inconceivable or excessively daring to entertain at least collaterally—no matter how much against the grain of Odell Shepard’s biting irony⁶¹—Leo Wiener’s view that a misunderstanding of the Latin word *virga* (branch) in the Latinized *Physiologus*’s story of the capture of the antelope led to a reading of *virgo* (virgin) in the story of the hunt of the unicorn.⁶² Thus ultimately, at least in the “storied” *Physiologus* tradition, both versions of the hunt of the antelope/

⁶⁰ *Physiologus* [*Physiologi Graeci: Singulas varium aetatum recensiones codicibus fere omnibus tunc primum excussis collatisque*], ed. F. [Franciscus] Sbordone (Milan, Genoa, Rome, Naples: Society of Dante Alighieri . . ., 1936), pp. 116-18; Francis J. Carmody, *Physiologus Latinus. Éditions préliminaires versio B* (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1939), p. 12 (ii. Autolops). Carmody’s supposition (Introduction) that *Versio B* is a direct translation from a Greek original/version of the *Physiologus* is reinforced by Nikolaus Henkel (*Studien zum Physiologus im Mittelalter* [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976], p. 27); *Physiologus*, Trans. by Michael J. Curley (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1979), pp. 4-5, 69-70; Beryl Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), p. 7.

⁶¹ Shepard, *The Lore of the Unicorn*, pp. 62-64.

⁶² Leo Wiener, *Contributions toward a History of Arabico-Gothic Culture. Volume IV: Physiologus Studies* (Philadelphia, PA.: Innes & Sons, 1921), p. 252.

unicorn point to the “entanglement” theory of the mythic animal’s capture.

This, then, also brings us in the Arabic *qaṣīdah* tradition to the obligatory pairing of the oryx with the *arṭāh* tree and to our now reinforced suspicion that, in a Max-Müllerian sense of “disease of language,” in the case of the *arṭāh* tree we may be dealing with a wide-roaming mythopoeia.⁶³ There arises, too, the further suspicion that it also involves the mythopoeia of the otherwise “native” Arabian oryx, whose concrete, that is, denotative name/term, precisely in its all-important masculine singular form, we do not even know, this despite the profusion and poetic “precision” of its connotative epithets.⁶⁴

7. Return to the Arṭāh of the Oryx and Arrival at the Hercynian Forest of the Unicorn

The philology of the Arabian tree by the name of *arṭāh*, in itself, is highly problematic—irrespective of the lexicographers’ and botanical encyclopaedists’ appearance of certainty as to its identity and, above all, “existence,” which, in a circular way, is based—at least in its earliest, and thus lexicographically *solely* authoritative, attestation,—entirely on its textual appearance in pre-Islamic poetry.⁶⁵ And yet that poetry only tells us that the existence of the *arṭāh* is necessarily conditioned by the existence of the oryx and, for the most part, that the presence (in poetry) of the oryx conditions the presence, and thus existence, of the *arṭāh*.

Pursuing thus the proposition that the philology of *arṭāh* is problematic because of its peculiarly delimited and, I would add, idiosyncratic, that is, compromised, attestation, we will deal with the plant/word *arṭāh*, at first, as it stands in Ibn Manẓūr’s giant lexicon, *Lisān al-‘Arab* (7: 254-55). Its singular/collective form is *arṭā*, its concrete singular [*nomen unitatis*], *arṭāh*. Its

⁶³ Richard M. Dorson, “The Eclipse of Solar Mythology,” in *Myth: A Symposium*, ed. Thomas A. Seabeok (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 31 (first pbl. in 1955).

⁶⁴ Georg Jacob, one of the most meticulous and precise scholars of pre-Islamic Bedouin *realia*, has contributed much to the identification of the Arabic poetic oryx-antelope, while also disproving Eberharardt Schrader’s mistaken assumption that the oryx-antelope was distinct from the “wild bull/cow” (*das Wildrind*), i.e., the Arabic *mahā*. The philological zeal of the otherwise so admirable scholar, however, did not leave him room to appreciate the literary critical, not philological, fact that, despite his “potentially” mistaken philology, Schrader, in the *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie* (Year 1892, p. 58), had brought up the much more significant proposition that the unicorn “makes one oftentimes think of the oryx-antelope, and also of the *Wildrind*, in Arabic *mahā*.” See Georg Jacob, *Studien in arabischen Dichtern. Heft III. Das Leben der vorislāmischen Beduinen nach den Quellen geschildert* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1895), pp. 116-17.

⁶⁵ Ibn Manẓūr (*Lisān al-‘Arab*, 7: 255, entry *a-r-ṭ*), however, mentions an *arṭā* occurrence in a Ḥadīth: *jī’a bi ibiln ka annahā ‘urūqu l-arṭā* (“He was brought camels like *arṭā* roots”).

root is stated to be ʔ-r-ṭ , even though its plural forms are *arṭayāt*, *arāṭā*, *urāṭā*, and *arāṭī[n]*. In the form *arāṭī[n]*, however, we have the morphologically discordant suggestion that the word has also a “fourth” root radical *y*; but also *w*, as in the adjectival form *arṭāwiyy*. Finally, Ibn Manẓūr admits that there exists the further opinion that the word’s “first” radical (ʔ) is not a radical but an accretion (*zāʔidah*), as in the (possible) adjectival form *marṭiyy*. In brief, lexicography inclines toward the view that the word’s root is ʔ-r-ṭ , but is ambiguous about both its phonemic and morphological opening and closure.

Ibn Manẓūr then proceeds to describe the *arṭāh*, revealing to us his main source of information: “It is a tree that grows on sandy tracks. Abū Ḥanīfah [al-Dīnawarī, d. 281-82/894-95, or before 290/902-3] says that it resembles *al-ghaḍā* (tamarisk). It grows to a man’s size in stems out of one single root, and has sweet-scented flowers like those of the Egyptian willow (*al-khilāf*).” Here a verse by the Umayyad, still studiously Bedouinizing, poet, al-Ṭirimmāḥ Ibn Ḥakīm (d. ca. 126/743), may help us visualize, in a germane manner, Abū Ḥanīfah’s sparingly described *arṭāh*. The poet speaks of a place: where those twig-like, fanning-out stems of the *arṭāh* sway [in the wind] (*bi mustarjafi l-arṭā*), and where it is as though in their rustle one could hear jumbled voices of pilgrims repeated back and forth.⁶⁶ Thus in al-Ṭirimmāḥ’s “report” on the *arṭāh*, too, the image presented is not that of a tree with a single trunk, but rather of a thicket-like, quite robust bush—rather than tree—whose fanning-out stems sway and “tremble” in the wind and, by brushing against each other, emit rustling sounds. But had Abū Ḥanīfah actually seen and observed that *arṭāh* tree/bush that he describes and compares? Of that we have no notice. Rather, his knowledge of the *arṭāh*, too, is no more than that of a compiler of topical botanical lore. Beginning with a description of the *arṭāh* which he gathers from a bedouin, he adduces his own information, based entirely on Arabic poetry, that is, on the oryx panels of the classical *qaṣidah*’s *raḥīl*-section.⁶⁷ And al-Ṭirimmāḥ, too, may

⁶⁶ *The Poems of Ṭufayl Ibn ʿAwf al-Ghanawī and al-Ṭirimmāḥ Ibn Ḥakīm al-Ṭāʾi*, ed. and trans. by F. Krenkow (London: Luzac & Co., 1927), p. 74 (Arabic text), Poem no. 1 (rhyming in *hi*), v. 31/English translation p. 32 (English text). See also al-Sudays, “Al-Ghaḍā wa al-Aṭā,” p. 70.

⁶⁷ This aspect, and much of the methodology followed by Abū Ḥanīfah, is best elucidated in Thomas Bauer’s monograph, *Das Pflanzenbuch des Abū Ḥanīfa ad-Dīnawarī: Inhalt, Aufbau, Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988), pp. 271-72 (with reference in n. 1 to Dīnawarī’s *Kitāb al-Nabāt*, Part 1 [24/10-25/3, and Part 1:246 (119/10)]). Otherwise, in Part 3 and first half of Part 5 of his *Kitāb al-Nabāt*, Abū Ḥanīfah discusses the philology of *arṭā* as it pertains to the crafts of tanning (Paragraph 419), and dyeing (Paragraphs 654 and 655). See Abū Ḥanīfah Aḥmad Ibn Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī, *Kitāb al-Nabāt: Al-Juzʿ al-Thālith wa al-Nisf al-Awwal min al-Juzʿ al-Khāmis*, ed. Bernhard Lewin (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1974), pp. 15, 16, 106, 173, 174.

have no more than toyed, quite successfully adhering in his Bedouinizing style to the *arṭāh* topos, with a variant on a motif of the pre-Islamic bard ‘Alqamah Ibn ‘Abadah, in which the clucking of ostriches is likened to the incomprehensible prattle of Byzantines in their pavilions.⁶⁸

A more far-reaching approach to understanding the quiddity of the *arṭāh* tree/bush in the oryx panel—beyond the simplest philology practiced by lexicography, and even beyond the well-placed aesthetic appreciation of the image and pathos of the lonely animal under the singular and equally solitary tree—must now lead us to entirely speculative areas of enquiry, although here, too, we shall begin with what modern botanical lexica, this time non-Arabic, tell us. Thus Armeng K. Bedevian in his *Illustrated Polyglot Dictionary of Plant Names* (1936)⁶⁹ registers as the scientific equivalent for the plant name *arṭāh* the Latin *calligonum comosum*, which in German would correspond to *Hackenkopf*, and in Italian to *colligono*, and in which *comosum*, that is, “with hair-like [as in *aurea coma*, “the golden fleece”] or frons-like leaves,” would agree with the Arabic *hadab*. This term (*calligonum comosum*) is also accepted without further comment by the authoritative Arabist, Georg Jacob (1895) as applying to the *arṭāh* of Imru’ al-Qays.⁷⁰ Otherwise, in his *Kitāb al-Nabāt wa al-Shajar*, al-Aṣma‘ī (d. 213/828) laconically tells us: “The *arṭā*—there is in it a gum which the Arabs chew the way they chew frankincense.”⁷¹ *Arṭāh* is also of the botanical order of the *ericaceae*, which subsumes the already familiar shrub, *herecine*, that is, the *recine* of the Latin Physiologus and the *ereikeyerikhina* of the Greek Physiologus—thus “erica”/“heather”;⁷² and it is also from the “ericacean,” Greco-Latin *herecine/recine* that we obtain the English “resin” (of the pine), the Latin *resina* and the Greek *rhetine/(rezina)*—which takes us back to al-Aṣma‘ī’s resinous, gum-like sap of the Arabian *arṭāh*.

⁶⁸ The motival indebtedness of al-Ṭirimmāh’s verse 31 to verse 28 in ‘Alqamah Ibn ‘Abadah’s *qaṣīdah* (*Mufaḍḍaliyyah* no. 120, rhyming in *mu*), however, appears diffused, inasmuch as the Umayyad poet expands, or “prefaces,” his version of the Jāhili poet’s motif in his own, more “personally” Bedouinizing, verse 28, in which he likens the sounds of the wind in his ears to the wailing of funerary lamentations.

⁶⁹ Armeng K. Bedevian, *Illustrated Polyglot Dictionary of Plant Names: Latin, Arabic, Armenian, English, French, German, Italian, and Turkish* (Cairo: Argus and Parazian Press, 1936), p. 132.

⁷⁰ Georg Jacob, *Das Leben der vorislāmischen Beduinen*, pp. 26-27.

⁷¹ Al-Aṣma‘ī [Abū Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Qurayb], *Kitāb al-Nabāt wa al-Shajar*, ed. August Hafner, 2d ed. (Beirut: Al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kāthūlikiyyah li al-Ābā’ al-Yasū‘iyyin, 1908), p. 31.

⁷² The German *Erika* is thus the English “heather,” and the English “heath” is the German *Heide*, the wild, brush-overgrown space. It is then, for example, in a German folk song that *Erika* and *Heide* come together, explaining themselves in their shared etymology: *Auf der Heide blüht ein kleines Blümelein./Und es heisst Erika*.

In the *Physiologus* alone, however, the *recine/ereike*, or *heresine*, the tree/bush/thicket in which, “by the terrible Euphrates River,” the horns of the antelope/oryx become ensnared, does not appear to have an explicit connection with the unicorn. That connection requires—in the *Physiologus*—a leap of association. And yet, I propose that the *heresine*-unicorn connection not only existed, but that it predated by more than two centuries the earliest redaction of the *Physiologus*, which, according to Franciscus Sbordone, dates only to ca. A.D. 200.⁷³ To start our argument, we must turn again to the etymological root of *heresine* as a plant that produces a resinous, gum-like sap, or as that resin sap itself. With this in mind, we are now ready to return⁷⁴ to what Julius Caesar “knew” of the unicorn and of where it was at home. For this, he speaks of the Hercynian Forest, “the breadth” . . . of which “is as much as nine days’ journey for an unencumbered person.” Lengthwise, it follows “in the direct line of the river Danube.” This Hercynian Forest thus began with the Black Forest and extended to the Thuringian Forest, towards Bohemia. Here it is to be noted that, unmentioned by Caesar, about the middle of this longitudinal extent of the Hercynian Forest, are the *Harz* Mountains (my emphasis). “There is no man in Germany we know,” continues Caesar, “who can say that he has reached the edge of that forest. . . . It is known that many kinds of wild beasts not seen in any other places breed therein. . . .” Among these, “There is an ox shaped like a stag, from the middle of whose forehead between the ears stands forth a single horn, taller and straighter than the horns we know.”⁷⁵

We shall now allow ourselves to be guided further by Caesar’s awareness of the peculiarity of the Hercynian Forest. Thus, beginning with the meaning of *hercynian*, we turn for etymology and definition to the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm,⁷⁶ which gives *Harz* (n.) as *resina*; and *Harz* (m.) as corresponding to *Hercynia silva*, which can also be a reference to “a particular forest in the Harz Mountains (*Harzgebirge*).” The entry *Harz*, however, also overlaps with the entry *Hart* as *silva* and as “elevation,” “mountain.” In one sense, “Hercynian Forest,” therefore, was to Julius Caesar—and to other classical authors, such as Tacitus in *Germania*⁷⁷—a very broad and semantically inclusive concept of geography and

⁷³ Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus im Mittelalter*, p. 18.

⁷⁴ See above, note no. 5.

⁷⁵ Caesar, *The Gallic War*, pp. 350/51-352/53.

⁷⁶ Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Redaction of Moriz Heyne, 33 Vols. (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1877), vol. 4, Section 2, pp. 520-23; p. 509.

⁷⁷ [Publius Cornelius] Tacitus, *Germania*, ed. J. G. C. Anderson (Bristol Classical Press [Reprinted by arrangement with Oxford University Press], 1997), 28: 2, 30: 1, and pp. 140, 151 (notes). Tacitus refers to the forest once as *Hercyniam silvam* and again as *Hercynio saltu*. To the 7th c. A.D. Isidore of Seville, *Hyrkania* is taken to be a reference to the Black Forest: thus, in the *Etymologiae* (XIV.4.4.), the Spanish translation of *gignit aves Hyrcanias*

landscape. But to Caesar it also was more: it was a rare moment in that sober Roman general's and politician's account of the Gallic campaigns, in which he steps out of his concrete reality into the sphere of liminality and popular imagination—which he accepts “uncritically”: The Hercynian Forest, which he, clearly from some fabled source, re-tells and describes, becomes the place and habitation of unicorns. When Shakespeare, then, in *Julius Caesar* (II. i.), makes the conspirator Decius Brutus say that Caesar “loves to hear/That unicorns may be betray'd with trees,” we realize that here the process of associative transformation from Caesar's Hercynian Forest of the unicorns to the Physiologus's *herecine*-tree, which ensnares the horns of the hapless “autolops”/“antolops,” and delivers him to the hunters, has been completed; and that within this associative process the duality, in the same Physiologus, of “autolops”/unicorn is no more. Thus, through Shakespeare's deductive extraction of the twice-narrated story's essence, we return, by way of the Physiologus, to Julius Caesar's Hercynian Forest with the [fabled] knowledge that there was an oryx-like “a[u/n]tolops”/antelope, his *bos cervi figura*, with a single horn in the middle of its forehead that had lived, or had been heard of living, in the mysterious transalpine Hercynian Forest, and that, transplanted (or having migrated) from that forest, it drank from the Euphrates River, where it was playfully enticed and “betray'd with” the *herecine*-tree, and, we restate, as a unicorn delivered to the hunters. We also restate that, as *bos cervi figura*, Caesar's unicorn is now no longer the equine “Indian onager” of Ctesias, but a cloven-hoofed/antelope/oryx. It is also interesting that for reasons more associative than etymological, Caesar's/Shakespeare's “treacherous” *herecine*-tree, in the words of T. H. White, “might [now] also be translated as ‘*the Antalop-tree*’, for the ‘antalop’ was said to resemble a goat and a deer—‘*quod animal sit hircos atque cervo simile*’. It was probably,” continues White, “the Hircuscervus tree (*hircus-cervus*).”⁷⁸ With this, White also touches upon an additional, mythopoeically interpretive, more than etymologically connective, quasi-homonym of *herecine*, i.e., the Latin *hircus*, which, as “he-goat” or “buck,” with its adjective *hircinus* etymologically further facilitated by the Englished “hart”, allows the mythopoeic linguistic imagination to create the iconic *figura* of the antelope/unicorn attracted-to and entrapped-by the *herecine*-tree. What is more, this iconic *figura*, or this bonding of the antelope/

as “La Selva Negra es muy fecunda en aves.” See, San Isidoro de Sevilla, *Etimologías*, trans. Luis Cortés y Góngora, intro. Santiago Montero Díaz (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1951), p. 344. The Spanish translator's “Selva Negra,” however, would mark no more than the beginning of Hercynia.

⁷⁸ See T. H. White, ed. and trans., *The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts, Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons [Capricorn Books], 1960), p. 19n.

unicorn with the *herecine*-tree, is analogous, and indeed transferable, to the bonded poetic icon of the Arabic oryx and the *arṭāh*-tree. In the well-illustrated Latin *Physiologus Bernensis*, this connection between the fiercely horned antelope and its specific tree is further confirmed, even though, as depicted in the Plate, there the tree that attracts and entrapps the animal is not the *herecine* but the thorny-leaved (*hadab*?) “ulex” (*obligatur cornibus et tenetur ad ramos h u l i c i s*).⁷⁹

8. *More on Arṭāh: Is There One More Step to Take?*

As much as our progress along the diverse paths that gave us insight into the “being” of the unicorn through its “becoming” has thus helped us carry forward our argumentation in support of the iconic analogy between *arṭāh*/oryx and *herecine*/antelope/unicorn, it has also helped us carry forward, albeit implicitly, the argumentation of an etymological connection between the *herecine*-tree/bush and *arṭāh*. If, however, the philological-etymological case for *herecine* may at this point be left standing on its merit, the argumentation of *arṭāh* remains, at least in my thinking, unfinished, for the deeper we pry into the *arṭāh* as word and poetic icon, the more we are forced to think back to our initial—and only—literary-historical certainty: the knowledge that, when all is said, the weakness and the glory of *arṭāh* rests on its being textually documented by the earliest and in itself “truest” of Arabic poetry—and in that same pristine sense by nothing else. *Arṭāh* is thus, to us, a *word in poetry*, and the laws of knowing and understanding it are poetic: they are associative, evocative, constructive and deconstructive more than analytical; and if there is analysis, it broaches mythopoeia and hazards to approach myth. Above all, I am inclined to view *arṭāh* as a Max-Müllerian word that has its start in obscurity and that, in its peregrinations, never quite cedes to clarity—especially since, at this point, after our exploration of *arṭāh*’s “northern” migration route, a certain sense of uneasiness tells me that we may have caught up with that word’s migration merely towards the mid-point of its progress from the Hercynian Forest to Euphrates River—and that the *arṭāh*’s Max-Müllerian beginning is still hidden from us.

To reach those beginnings we have to return to the most archaic tree symbolism, which is also the symbolism of the “center” from which man began to draw the first circumferences of his awareness of space. The tree in the “known” center of space is rooted in the world-and-time where representation of the knowable is not concrete but symbolic, even if that know-

⁷⁹ *Physiologus Bernensis: Voll-Faksimile-Ausgabe des Codex Bongarsianus 318 der Burgerbibliothek Bern*, Commentary by Christoph von Steiger and Otto Homburger (Basel: Alkuin-Verlag, 1964), Plate 18, pp. 98-99.

able is seemingly as “concrete” as the imaged circumferences of space. In this circumferential symbolic space, the presence of the tree is stressed, once again more symbolically than concretely, by the presence of the animal by its side: turning its gaze towards it, rearing against it trying to reach its leafed branches, finding food and shelter in it, but above all underscoring the tree’s centrality, that is, its place in the known space. Such representations of the tree of the center in the sense of earth-tree, and, ultimately, of the tree of life, are iconographically ubiquitous, from the Mesopotamian ram rearing against a tree on a jewelled offering found in a queen’s tomb (Ur, 2500 B.C.),⁸⁰ to the actual depiction on a French/Flemish tapestry of about 1500 of a unicorn in a field of millefleurs. There the unicorn reclines inside a circular fenced enclosure, out of the center of which rises a fruit-bearing pomegranate tree to which the unicorn is tethered by a golden chain. That tapestry is known as the representation of *The Unicorn in Captivity*;⁸¹ but the symbolism of its millefleur ground and the pomegranate tree also crosses over into the symbolism of the *hortus conclusus* and the earth-center, and the space it encompasses becomes transposed onto what Mircea Eliade called, “a paradisaic plane,”⁸² on which first grew the tree that dominated the mythology of all centrality, but which also, in its own archaic way, broke the spell, or the deeper symbol, contained in the animal allegory, by introducing the “first,” but not truly first, human surface drama there where the animal allegory seemed to have organically germinated. Also here, the Menorah of ritualized Judaism, in its stylization, or in its further denuded abstraction, is the continuation of the archetype of the primal Mesopotamian tree.⁸³ The

⁸⁰ Buffie Johnson, *Lady of the Beasts: Ancient Images of the Goddess and Her Sacred Animals* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), p. 204, Plate, no. 44.

⁸¹ *The Unicorn in Captivity* tapestry, presently in the Cloisters Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, although traditionally counted as “the seventh tapestry of the series called *The Hunt of the Unicorn*,” stands, for stylistic reasons, outside that series, however (*Masterpieces of Tapestry: From the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century*, Foreword by Thomas Howing, Introduction by Francis Salet, Catalogue by Geneviève Souchal [Paris: Imprimerie Moderne du Lion, 1974], pp. 69, 76). John Williamson devotes a chapter of substance, much detail and many admirable insights, especially as regards the manifold symbolic meanings of the plants and flowers of the tapestry-panel’s millefleurs. See his *The Oak King, the Holly King, and the Unicorn: The Myths and Symbolisms of the Unicorn Tapestries* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986), pp. 199-226 [Chapter VII, *The Unicorn in Captivity*].

⁸² Mircea Eliade, *Symbolism, the Sacred, and the Arts*, ed. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (New York: Crossroad, 1985), p. 140.

⁸³ See the incised relief of a Menorah, originally from Antioch, in Christine Kondoleon, *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 28. The “primal Mesopotamian tree” as the *Tree of Life* is clearly rendered/represented on Assyrian seals, such as the “Griffin at the Tree of Life,” 12th-10th century B.C., from *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals*, vol. I, part 2, fig. 609 E, or the “Two Genii Fertilizing the Tree of Life,” 8th to 7th century B.C., The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Both examples are drawn from Joseph Campbell, assisted by M. J. Abadie, *The Mythic Image* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 190, 521.

tree's centrality in this world of archaically resonating symbolic representations continues, and is also conveyed when, in Palmyrene iconography the cypress, as sacred tree dedicated to the two deities, Agliból and Malakbél, appears on votive altars, either flanked by those deities or standing in solitary centrality.⁸⁴

Passing from the archetype, which, paradoxically, is certain, to the specific, which may only be tentatively postulated, we return to the uncertainty and to the tentatively postulated concreteness of the *arṭāh*: in its word/name, not in its archetype-invoking "treeness." That is, we shall make a second attempt at migrant (Max-Müllerian) etymology. This attempt, I myself only justify by my profound, perhaps even overbearing, dissatisfaction with the internally Arabic inability to lay to rest all my doubts about the precise temporal and geographic existence of the tree by the name of *arṭāh*, an existence that required a disproportionate effort expended by lexicographers, scholiasts, and botanists for no other purpose than to furnish a hermeneutic of the tree and its name that is extra-symbolic and, ultimately, extra-mythical, or rather, that almost methodically plants itself in the way of everything symbolic and mythical.

At present, I intend to throw upon our etymological, or merely associative, dissecting table a number of words without any obvious order and only with an inferential connection, in the hope that in the process of our discussion they will begin to interconnect and find their place and niche along an arguable line; thus: *Artemis*, *Orthia/Orthosia*, *Orthia Lugodesma*, *Orthia Limnaia*, *arth*, and *arṭāh*.

Artemis as name yields no etymology, or no clear etymology, in Greek. According to Robert Brown, Jr., it "has never been satisfactorily explained."⁸⁵ As goddess, her sphere is mainly the uncultivated countryside, the forest and hills where wild beasts abound. She is a huntress, but also a protectress of wild beasts. Herself theriomorphic, represented in votive figurines of animal shapes, she is the Lady of Wild Things. She kills the gigantic hunter Orion for boasting that he would kill all animals. She is also a Tree Divinity. Especially as Diana, "the bright one," of the Roman pantheon, she is identified with the moon. According to scholarly opinion, her cult is probably derived from that of *Artemis Orthia*.⁸⁶ The Pleiad Taygete

⁸⁴ H. J. W. Drijvers, *The Religion of Palmyra* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), p. 17 (Plates XXXVIII [ca. first century A.D.], XL [ca. second century A.D.]). On the "centrality of the tree," or the World Tree, in other than Mediterranean or Middle Eastern cultures, see, for instance, H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe, Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), pp. 21-26.

⁸⁵ Robert Brown, Jr., *Semitic Influence in Hellenic Mythology* (Clifton, New Jersey: Reference Book Publishers, 1966 [first published 1898]), p. 71.

⁸⁶ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, 2d ed.

is the hind accompanying Artemis, or chased by her; but Artemis herself, when pursued by the giant twins, the Alloadai, turns into a hind with golden antlers. Artemis is thus of two shapes and of two natures: a female divinity and a deiform, richly antlered deer. As Orthia/Orthosia ("the upright"), Artemis derives her name from the root *arth*, signifying "to make grow," perhaps with a phallic signification, but the name/word Artemis itself has an almost overlapping etymology, yielding the meaning "to go," or the Avestic *aretha* ("right," i.e., "going on straight," as well as "justice," "rightness"). In the words of H. J. Rose, Orthia "cannot be identical, although she might be identified, with the Prehellenic Artemis."⁸⁷ *Arta* appears in many Persian proper names. At times it is regarded as having an intensive force. "So far, then," sums up Brown, "in Greek *arte*, *arta*, we obtain the ideas of going, brightness, rectitude, purity, and order."⁸⁸

With her sanctuary at Sparta, Orthosia as Artemis was, according to legend, brought "back" by Orestes from the Tauric Chersonese (Pausanias, iii. 16, 10), that is, from Crimea. She bore the appellatives *Limnaia* and *Lugodesma*, the former being a reference to "standing water" or to "marshes" (*limnaion*), while the latter, derived from *lugos*, "a willowlike tree," and *lugoi*, "withes of a willow tree," but also "a thicket (of *lugoi*)." As *Orthia Lugodesma*, Artemis was thus "The One Bound in Willow Withes," or rather, the one bound *with* willow withes,⁸⁹ while herself, too, being a wooden statue.⁹⁰ She, the goddess of trees, was herself a personification of

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 126-7. On Diana, see Altheim, *Griechische Götter im alten Rom* (1930), p. 93ff.

⁸⁷ H. J. Rose, "The Cult of Orthia" (Chapter 7, pp. 399-407), in R. M. Dawkins, ed., *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta, Excavated and Described by Members of the British School at Athens, 1906-1910* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, St. Martin's Street, 1929), p. 401.

⁸⁸ Brown, *Semitic Influence in Hellenic Mythology*, p. 71.

⁸⁹ Relying on archeological indicators, H. J. Rose ("The Cult of Artemis Orthia," pp. 399, 400) maintains that the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, lying about 100 m. from the stream of the Eurotal, was on grounds that were flooded by the stream's high waters, and therefore the sanctuary site "might very naturally be called *Limnaion*," and that "this is reason enough for the title *Limnaia* or *Limnais* . . . It also fits very well with the legend of the finding of her image in a thicket of *lugoi*, which held it upright, giving it the titles of *Orthia* and *Lugodesma*." I should propose, however, that Artemis Orthia's appellatives *Limnaia* and *Lugodesma* are likely to be connected to the effigy's legend itself, that is, to its being *Taurikê*, and having "arrived" in Sparta already as *Limnaia* and *Lugodesma*, for these are precisely the two toponymic characteristics of Tauric Chersonese that have survived in the Ukrainian language with reference to that precise toponymy: as *lyman* ("estuary" [specifically of the river Dniipro], "lake," "gulf separated from the sea by a strip of land"—that is, the *Lyman* that separates the Crimean peninsula from the Chersonese mainland (the Ukrainian Chersonschyna); and as *luh* ("plain overgrown with bushes"), especially referred to as "The Great Luh."

⁹⁰ On Orthia and other characteristics and representations of Artemis/Diana, see the imaginative, wide-ranging excursus by Hans Peter Duerr, *Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary*

a tree “of a thicket,” or “in a thicket.” But Artemis in her theriomorphic appearance as a gold-antlered deer introduces, at least in the Greek (or Greco-Roman) context, seemingly quite unapproachable levels of semiotic complexity. Perhaps for that reason, Artemis, The One Bound in Willow Withes, and Artemis/Diana, The Hind of the Golden Antlers, have gone in Greek mythology their hermeneutically unperturbed separate ways. Here, however, our newly acquired Arabic *arṭāh*/oryx hermeneutical experience should at least help us entertain the possibility of a question capable of answering itself; for, as much as the goddess/tree and the goddess/hind are paired into one symbolic-mythic “figura,” even more emphatically so, the Arabic *arṭāh* and oryx are semiotically, and indeed symbolically, their own “figura” of inseparable duality; and, inasmuch as *arṭāh*, the “oryx-tree” of the classical Arabic *qaṣīdah*, leads us back to the *ereike/erikhina*, which is the “*antelop-tree*” of the Greek Physiologus (as well as the *herecine* of the Latin Physiologus), so does that “*antelop-tree*,” which on the bank of Euphrates River ensnared the antelope/unicorn, take us one step further in time and in space to the “thicket” of the Tauric Chersonese, from where the bound (ensnared?) Arthemis Orthia, the *lugodesma*, “returned,” was carried off, or wandered off in Max-Müllerian fashion toward Sparta.

9. *Traces of the Physiologus and the Bestiaries in the Arabic Extra-Poetic Animal Lore*

Long after Julius Caesar and after the early, especially Greek, Physiologus versions, but certainly coetaneous with the later Latin Physiologus and its derivative, the Bestiaries,⁹¹ Arabic zoological, pseudo-zoological, and *mira-*

between Wilderness and Civilization, trans. Felicitas Goodman (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985), pp. 12-15.

In her imaged representation as the Willow-Bound, Artemis Orthia also resembles Atargatis, the Dea Syria, who, in her statuary of the Roman period appears cast in gold, tightly wound by a serpentine coil. See Buffie Johnson, *Lady of the Beasts: Ancient Images of the Goddess and Her Sacred Animals* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), pp. 140-1; also *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, p. 136 (Atargatis).

⁹¹ About the theoretical, and by definition also chronological, differentiation of the Bestiaries from the Physiologus, see Henkel, *Studien zum Physiologus im Mittelalter*, pp. 7-8, 24. For an approximation to a comprehensive text of a Bestiary, see White, *The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts*. See especially White’s informative Appendix, pp. 230-70. For emphasis on the allegorizing Bestiary, see Luis Charbonneau-Lassay, *The Bestiary of Christ*, trans. and abridged by D. M. Dooling (New York: Viking Penguin/Parabola Book, 1992), pp. 365-75 [esp. on the Unicorn].

Aside from a more lexicon-like structuring of the Bestiaries, their accentuated exegetical allegorization of the Bible that shared in the Medieval tendency to a fixed iconography of representation and theological symbolism, produced a movement away from the relatively archaic simplicity of the Physiologus. A further characteristic of the Bestiaries was their restrictive, privileged epistemological intent of esotericism.

bilia compilations pick up diverse unicorn-related thematic figments, that are either familiar to us through Ctesias and the Physiologus, or suggest the existence of parallel, non-Physiologus sources and veins of imagination. Of those thematic figments, our attention falls on the “finer graces” of the otherwise fierce oryx/unicorn in its Arabic depictions, through which it easily appears to be in harmony with the equally discordant playfulness and heedlessness of the “a[u/n]tolops”/unicorn among the *herecine* trees on the banks of Euphrates River, or with its fatal amorousness.

Thus Zakariyyā al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283) speaks of an oryx (*baqar al-wahsh*), which may be of only one horn, which, “when it hears singing or the sounds of musical instruments, listens to them and, because of the intensity of the pleasure it takes in them, becomes unmindful of [the hunter’s] arrows.”⁹² The same love of music, or of bird-song, al-Qazwīnī attributes to the rhinoceros, another “personification,” or “embodiment,” of the unicorn. This animal of indomitable ferocity is, thus, enamored of the ring-dove (*al-fākhītah*). “It goes over to a tree on which there is a ring-dove’s nest, stops underneath it, and delights in its song-like cooing. The ring-dove swoops down and perches upon its horn. But the rhinoceros does not move its head lest the dove shy away.”⁹³

The rhinoceros has also entered Arabic folklore as an animal capable of paradoxical tenderness. Thus till the present day there is alive in Iraq the belief in “the tears of the rhinoceros” (*dumūʿ al-karkadan*), which, as ivory-like, reddish beads, are strung into “Muslim prayer rosaries” (*subḥah/subḥāt*), and are cherished for their supposed curative powers.⁹⁴ In a brief and almost decontextualized reference, al-Qazwīnī, too, speaks of tears—not of the rhinoceros but of the oryx—as possessing curative efficacy (*tiryāq*) against “all poisons.”⁹⁵

Over one hundred years after al-Qazwīnī, Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405) turns again to the subject of an antelope, which, according to the Andalusian philologist and lexicographer, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn Ismāʿīl Ibn

⁹² Al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharāʾib al-Mawjūdāt*, p. 407.

⁹³ Al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharāʾib al-Mawjūdāt*, pp. 434-35. There is no doubt that the image of the “dove-enamored” rhinoceros/unicorn is none other than an innocently “pre-scientific” distortion of so many bulky animals (and species) on the “cleansing” companionship of essentially parasitic birds. The lyrical sublimation of this phenomenon in the specific case of the rhinoceros, however, agrees—in an imagination-determining sense—with the icon of the “amorous unicorn.”

⁹⁴ The story of “the tears of the rhinoceros,” as passed on to me with great earnestness some years ago in Baghdad by a proud possessor of such a *subḥah*, is of the rhinoceros, necessarily solitary, which, roaming for days in waterless desert, endures great thirst. Finally it reaches a waterhole and bends down to drink, but out of fatigue and thirst-pain it weeps, and its tears, falling into the water, become ivory-like, reddish beads. Out of those tears, now beads, a costly *subḥah* is strung and kept in the family for generations.

⁹⁵ Al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharāʾib al-Mawjūdāt*, p. 408.

Sīdah (d. 458/1066), to whom he refers, could also have been a unicorn. Al-Damīrī, however, insists on two names that apply to such an antelope: one being *al-yaḥmūr*, a wild quadruped with two horns that resemble two saws with which it can cut through trees; and when it goes to drink from the Euphrates where it finds entwined trees, it cuts through them. Thus ends *al-yaḥmūr*'s obviously truncated story drawn from the *antelopus* story of the Physiologus.⁹⁶ More complete, equally indebted to the Physiologus, is al-Damīrī's description, and story, of *al-yaḥmūr*'s almost-namesake/variant, *al-yāmūr*, which, too, has serrated horns, and which in most respects, by al-Damīrī's admission, resembles the oryx. It takes refuge in places enclosed by trees and, having drunk its fill, turns frisky, runs about playfully among the trees and, eventually, its horns get entangled in tree-branches. Unable to free itself, it becomes easy game for hunters.⁹⁷ Among traces of the unicorn lore out of Greek and Roman Antiquity (from Ctesias of Cnidos to Caesar) and out of Late Antiquity⁹⁸ and the early Medieval Physiologus on the one hand, and, on the other hand, out of the Arabic *curiosa/nawādir* and *mirabilia 'ajā'ib*, we thus come to tread the common ground from which arose and on which walked that sometimes only tentatively one-horned, paradoxical creature, confused in its texts and narratives as much as it was confused in its metamorphosing species. With it, the Hercynian Forest is transportable from West to East. Its tree, the *herecine*, gives both refuge—as does its near-namesake *ar'āh*—and forebodes entrapment or the nearness of the hunters—not to the Northern European stag, but to the oryx/unicorn of the River Euphrates.

10. *Once more on the Purification of Water, the Snake, and the Change of Roles Played by the Onager and the Oryx*

A guiding motif in the tracing of our path to an Arabian unicorn—now in the expanded context of the lore of the unicorn—makes us return to the motif of water and, connected with it, that of the hunter-as-snake by the water. As part of the Physiologus centered identification of the unicorn, whether Greek or Latin, we find it consistently represented as an enemy of the snake. The snake, whether in the water or by it, is the poisoning or pol-

⁹⁶ Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān al-Kubrā*, 2: 408.

⁹⁷ Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān al-Kubrā*, 2: 407.

⁹⁸ Here, for their supportive relevance to us, are to be mentioned: on the oryx, Oppian of Cilicia (late 2nd. c. A.D.), (*Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus*, trans. A. W. Mair [Loeb Classical Library, 1963], “Cynegetica II,” pp. 94-99; on the unicorn/wild ass, Flavius Philostratus (d. between 244-49 A.D.), *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 2 vols. (Loeb Classical Library, 1969), 1: 234-37; on the unicorn/wild ass, Aelian [Claudius Aelianus], *On Animals [De Natura Animalium]*, Trans. A. F. Scholfield, 3 vols. (Loeb Classical Library, 1971), 1: 200-01, 272-77.

luting element of the water, while the “autolops”/unicorn as the purifier of the water is the natural enemy of the snake. Unaffected by the Physiologus, however, in the earliest Arabic strictly poetic mythopoeia, the yet imperfect syncretism of onager/oryx gives over the role of the purifier of water and of the enemy of the snake to the onager alone,⁹⁹ while the same role in the non-Arabic mythopoeia of the unicorn of the Greco-Latin textual tradition of the Physiologus lets the unicorn/stag bear the role of purifying the water of snakes. It is thus only in the Arabic strictly extra-poetic—and much belated pseudo-zoological *mirabilia*—that the oryx as *baqar al-wahsh*, entirely in the manner of the Physiologus, is represented as an implacable enemy of the snake.¹⁰⁰

11. *Conclusion: Return to Arabic Poetic Native Grounds*

In my pursuit of the idea of the Arabic unicorn, that is, in my own critical “hunt of the unicorn,” I have proceeded—with full intentionality—along a rigorously inductive path, with the hope that somewhere along that path the always tentative, that is, critically non-doctrinaire, argument for the Arabic unicorn will gain in self-formulation and critical tolerance. The critical postulation of “imperfect syncretism” between the onager and the oryx in the two principal animal panels of the classical Arabic *qaṣīdah*’s *raḥīl* section, however, must not be assumed to be a negative judgment that bears on the structural and thematic peculiarities of archaic Arabic *qaṣīdah* poetics. I propose that rather the opposite is true, that because the unicorn in the Arabic symbolic imagination is above all a poetic intimation, or ideation, without the concretizing uni-vocality and uni-formity of “presence” of the seamlessly imaged, syncretic Helleno-European unicorn, that that intimation/ideation of the Arabic unicorn in effect defied the all too palpable concreteness of its own two carrier-animals, the onager and the oryx, and was yet, in its poetically crucial respects—metaphoric, allegorical, and symbolic—capable of great semantic and semiotic cross-pollination. What was missing was that elusive name (word) and form to lead to the ideated being’s recognition: the critical recognition of the hidden, almost hermetically encoded into archaic Arabic poetry, unicorn. It was the breaking of this code which, in the narrow sense, was the objective of the present essay/pursuit, although, in a broader sense, the objective was the understanding of the poetry capable of such encoding. Therefore, too, the understanding of the structural, thematic-motivational, metaphoric, and symbolic morphology of the earliest Arabic *qaṣīdah* poetics had to come first: wrapped in philology, then unwrapped as

⁹⁹ See above, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Qazwīnī, *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharā’ib al-Mawjūdāt*, pp. 407-8.

basic hermenutics, before becoming ripe for epiphanies of critical transparency; for the early Arabic *qaṣīdah*, especially in its *raḥīl* section with its deceptive thematic and motival accessibility, had for too long remained impervious to anything but the most basic hermeneutics—although a splendid exception has to be made here in the case of al-Jāḥiẓ’s allegorization of the roles of the onager and oryx panels.¹⁰¹

As we approach the point of closure in our critical enterprise of uncovering, or decoding, the teasing inferences of the unicorn in the oldest strata of Arabic poetry, what remains is to recapitulate what has constituted our basic textual (poetic) givens, that is, our prime “matter” of evidence: the classical Arabic *qaṣīdah* and, in the *qaṣīdah*, the desert/hunt panels of the onager and the oryx. Thus we know that the *qaṣīdah* of both periods, the pre-Islamic and the Mukhaḍram, as well as further on throughout most of the Umayyad period was, in its structural uniformity, its dictate of structural semiotic, or its almost Schopenhauerian “will of form,” encompassing and expressing much of what we recognize to be the world and the worldview of Arabic social, cultural, and imaginative-symbolic Bedouinity. This capacity to encompass and express, precisely because it occurred in such a tight formal circle, was forced into enormous metaphoric (call it merely similitive) compaction. This compaction, however, did not take place at the expense of those metaphoric/similitive carriers of the *qaṣīdah*’s semantics. It retained the ability to generate an expanding scope of further metaphoric, allegorical, or symbolic equations—both inversively and extroversively, that is, both forward/outward-looking as similes/metaphors and allegories, and inward-turned as symbols. This generative ability becomes especially significant in the *qaṣīdah*’s *raḥīl* section and its animal/hunt panels. On their primary hermeneutical level, these panels may offer no more than an uncomplicated simile-connection with the poet-protagonist’s she-camel, but on another level, they may also carry in them the almost independent power of allegory, in which the onager and the oryx stand in the agon of life against death, but then, too, of life that ends in death;¹⁰² and further than these two, beyond all formal functionality or even transparent poetic usefulness, on a third hermeneutical level where there is neither simile nor allegory, or before there was either simile or allegory, there lies, latent in its regressive symbolic sleep, the always two-bodied, incontrovertibly twin-natured unicorn.

¹⁰¹ See above, note 57.

¹⁰² The supreme example of this allegorically played-out tragical endgame is, of course, the *qaṣīdah*/elegy by the Hudhalī Mukhaḍram poet, Abū Dhu’ayb (*Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad al-Zayn, 3 vols. [Cairo: Al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah li al-Ṭibā’ah wa al-Nashr, 1385/1965] 1: 1-21). It is also poem No. 126 of the classical anthology, *Al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*.

This Arabic unicorn, as symbol and as epiphany, remains not quite guessed by name or word, although it lives its imaged life—in words—inside ever so many poems, where, as an oryx, it finds precarious shelter under the enigmatic *arṭāh* tree or is drawn, as an onager, toward the equally precarious promise of the desert's sun-seared water holes. In its existence as part of the motival rigor of the Arabic *qaṣīdah*, it is a patent paradox: equally a coalescence and a bifurcation of all its primary and secondary symbolic components. This paradox, however, is what gives the Arabic unicorn its great poetic efficacy, for its symbolic opposites, or “hypostatical binarisms,” can be, and indeed are, retranslated into independently functioning metonyms/metaphors, and ultimately, allegories. Thus when the onager steps into pure water, that is, clears the water hole of impurity (the poison of the snake) and escapes the hunter's/snake's arrows; or when the oryx finds shelter under the *arṭāh* tree (which could also entrap it) and defeats the hunter's hounds with its horns of real (and legendary) length and sharpness, both the onager and the oryx, even while acting out their roles given to them by their primary poetic context, are also implicitly harboring, and implicitly acting out, the symbolic role and fate of the unicorn.

My approach to obtaining and dealing with the evidence of the unicorn myth in some of the oldest Arabic poetry was, thus, not only a search for the mythical abstraction of the unicorn in Arabic culture, but rather, and above all, it was a critical and interpretive effort which, step by step, is meant to lead us to hitherto unexplored-for-unsuspected regions of understanding of Arabic poetry.

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APPENDIX

[1] عبید بن الأبرص

- ۱۲- وَخَرَقَ تَصِيحُ الهَامِ فِيهِ مَعَ الصَّدَى
 ۱۳- قَطَعَتْ بِصَهْبَاءِ السَّرَاةِ شِمْلَةً
- مَخُوفٍ إِذَا مَا جَنَّهُ اللَّيْلُ مَرهُوبٍ
 تَزَلُّ الْوَلَايَا عَنْ جَوَائِبِ مَكْرُوبٍ

[2] عبید بن الأبرص

- ۱۲- هَذَا وَدَاوِيَّةٍ يَعْمَى الْهُدَاةُ بِهَا،
 ۱۳- جَاوَزْتُهَا بِعَلْنَادَا مُسْذَكَّرَةً
- نَاءٍ مَسَافَتْهَا كَالْبُرْدِ دَيْمُومَةٍ
 عَيْرَانَةٍ كَعَلَاةِ الْقَيْنِ مَلْمُومَةٍ

[3] أوس بن حجر

- ۲۷- كَأَنِّي كَسَوْتُ الرَّحْلَ أَحْقَبَ قَارِبًا
 ۲۸- يُقَلَّبُ قَيْدُودًا كَانَ سَرَائِهَا
 ۲۹- يُقَلَّبُ حَقَبَاءَ الْعَجِيْزَةِ سَمْحَجًا
 ۳۰- وَأُخْلَفَهُ مِنْ كُلِّ وَقْطٍ وَمُذْهِنٍ
 ۳۱- وَحَلَّاهَا حَتَّى إِذَا هِيَ أَحْنَقَتْ
 ۳۲- وَخَبَّ سَفَا قُرْيَانِهِ وَتَوَقَّدَتْ
 ۳۳- فَاضْحَى بِقَارَاتِ السُّتَارِ كَأَنَّهُ
 ۳۴- يَقُولُ لَهُ الرَّاعُونَ هَذَاكَ رَاكِبُ
 ۳۵- إِذَا اسْتَقْبَلَتْهُ الشَّمْسُ صَدَّ بِوَجْهِهِ
 ۳۶- تَذَكَّرَ عَيْنًا مِنْ غُمَاةٍ مَاوَهَا
 ۲۷- لَهُ ثَادٌ يَهْتَزُّ جَعْدٌ كَأَنَّهُ
 ۲۸- فَأَوْرَدَهَا التَّقْرِيْبُ وَالشَّدُّ مَنَهَلًا
 ۲۹- فَلَاقَى عَلَيْهَا مِنْ صُبْحٍ مُدْمَرًا
- لَهُ بِجُنُوبِ الشَّيْطَيْنِ مَسَاوِفُ
 صَفَا مُذْهِنٌ قَدْ زَحَلَفَتْهُ الزَّحَالِفُ
 بِهَا نَدَبٌ مِنْ زَرِّهِ وَمَنَاسِفُ
 نِطَافُ فَمَشْرُوبُ يَبَابٍ وَنَاشِفُ
 وَأَشْرَفَ فَوْقَ الْحَالِبَيْنِ الشَّرَاسِفُ
 عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الصَّمَّانَتَيْنِ الْأَصَالِفُ
 رَيْبَةٌ جَيْشٍ فَهُوَ ظَمَانُ خَائِفُ
 يُؤَيِّنُ شَخْصًا فَوْقَ عَلِيَاءٍ وَاقِفُ
 كَمَا صَدَّ عَنْ نَارِ الْمُهْوَلِ حَالِفُ
 لَهُ حَبَبٌ تَسْتَنُّ فِيهِ الزَّخَارِفُ
 مُخَالِطُ أَرْجَاءِ الْعَيُونِ الْقِرَاطِفُ
 قَطَاهُ مُعِيدُ كَرَّةِ الْوَرْدِ عَاطِفُ
 لِنَامُوسِهِ مِنَ الصَّفِيحِ سَقَائِفُ

- ٤٠- صَدِّ غَائِرُ الْعَيْنَيْنِ شَقَقَ لَحْمَهُ
 ٤١- أَرْبُ ظُهُورِ السَّاعِدَيْنِ عِظَامُهُ
 ٤٢- أَخَوْ قَتْرَاتٍ قَدِ تَيَقَّنَ أَنَّهُ
 ٤٣- مُعَاوِدُ قَتْلِ الْهَادِيَاتِ شِوَاؤُهُ
 ٤٤- قِصِي مَبِيتِ اللَّيْلِ لِلصَّيْدِ مُطْعَمٌ
 ٤٥- فَيَسْرَسَهُمَا رَأْسُهُ بِمَنَاكِبِ
 ٤٦- عَلَى ضَالَّةٍ فَرَعٍ كَأَنَّ نَذِيرَهَا
 ٤٧- فَأَمْهَلُهُ حَتَّى إِذَا أَنْ كَأَنَّهُ
 ٤٨- فَأَرْسَلَهُ مُسْتَتِيقِينَ الظَّنُّ أَنَّهُ
 ٤٩- فَمَرَّ النَّضِيِّ لِلدَّرَاعِ وَنَحْرِهِ
 ٥٠- فَعَضَّ بِإِبْهَامِ الْيَمِينِ نَدَامَةً
 ٥١- وَجَالٍ وَلَمْ يَعْكَمْ وَشَيْعَ الْفَقَهُ
 ٥٢- فَمَا زَالَ يَفْرِي الشَّدَّ حَتَّى كَأَنَّمَا
 ٥٣- كَأَنَّ بَجَنبِيهِ جَنَابَيْنِ مِنْ حِصِيٍّ
 ٥٤- تَوَاهَقَ رِجْلَاهَا يَدَيْهِ وَرَأْسَهُ
 ٥٥- يُصَرِّفُ لِلْأَصْوَاتِ وَالرِّيحِ هَادِيًا
 ٥٦- وَرَأْسًا كَدَنَّ التَّجْرَ جَابًا كَأَنَّمَا
 ٥٧- كِلَا مَنْخَرِيهِ سَائِفًا أَوْ مُعَشَّرًا
- سَمَائِمٌ قَيْظٌ فَهُوَ أَسْوَدُ شَاسِفٌ
 عَلَى قَدَرٍ شَتْنُ الْبَنَانِ جُنَادِفٌ
 إِذَا لَمْ يُصَبِّ لِحْمًا مِنَ الْوَحْشِ خَاسِفٌ
 مِنَ اللَّحْمِ قُصْرَى بَادِنٍ وَطِفَاطِفٌ
 لِأَسْهُمِهِ غَارٍ وَبَارٍ وَرَاصِفٌ
 ظَهَارٍ لُؤَامٍ فَهُوَ أَعْجَفُ شَارِفٌ
 إِذَا لَمْ تُخَفِّضْهُ عَنِ الْوَحْشِ عَازِفٌ
 مُعَاطِي يَدٍ مِنْ جَمَّةِ الْمَاءِ غَارِفٌ
 مُخَالِطٌ مَاتَحَتَ الشَّرَاسِيفِ جَائِفٌ
 وَلِلْحَيْنِ أَحْيَانًا عَنِ النَّفْسِ صَارِفٌ
 وَلَهْفٌ سِرًّا أُمَّهُ وَهُوَ لَاهِفٌ
 بِمُنْقَطِعِ الْغَضْرَاءِ شَدُّ مُؤَالِفٌ
 قَوَائِمُهُ فِي جَانِبِيهِ الزَّعَانِفُ
 إِذَا عَدُوُّهُ مَرًّا بِهِ مُتَضَافِفٌ
 لَهَا قَتَبٌ فَوْقَ الْحَقِيْبَةِ رَادِفٌ
 تَمِيمَ النَّضِيِّ كَدَحَتْهُ الْمَنَاسِفُ
 رَمَى حَاجِبِيهِ بِالْحِجَارَةِ قَازِفٌ
 بِمَا انْقَضَ مِنْ مَاءِ الْخِيَاشِيمِ رَاعِفٌ

[4] زهير بن أبي سلمى

- ١- بَانَ الْخَلِيْطُ وَلَمْ يَأُووَا لِمَنْ تَرَكَوَا
 ٢- رَدَّ الْقِيَانَ جِمَالَ الْحَيِّ فَاحْتَمَلُوَا
- وَزُوْدُوْكَ اِشْتِيَاقًا أَيَّهٖ سَلَكَوَا
 اِلَى الظُّهَيْرَةِ أَمْرٌ بَيْنَهُمْ لَيْكُ

[5] لبيد بن ربيعة

- ٢٥- أَدْلَكَ أُمُّ نَزْرُ الْمَرَاعِ فَوَادِرُ
 ٢٦- فَبَاتَ إِلَى أَرْطَاةٍ حِقْفٍ تَضُمُّهُ
 ٢٧- وَبَاتَ يُرِيدُ الْكِنَّ ، لَوْ يَسْتَطِيعُهُ
 ٢٨- فَأَصْبَحَ وَانْشَقَّ الضَّبَابُ وَهَاجَهُ
 ٢٩- عَوَاسٍ كَالنُّشَابِ تَدْمَى نُحُورَهَا
 ٣٠- فَجَالَ وَلَمْ يُعْكِمْ لِغَضْفٍ كَأَنَّهَا
 ٣١- لِصَائِدِهَا فِي الصَّيْدِ حَقٌّ وَطُعْمَةٌ
 ٣٢- قِتَالِ كَمِيٍّ غَابَ أَنْصَارُ ظَهْرِهِ
 ٣٣- يَسُرُّنَ إِلَى عَوْرَاتِهِ فَكَأَنَّهَا
 ٣٤- فَغَادَرَهَا صَرَغَى لَدَى كُلِّ مَرْحَفٍ
- أَحْسَ قَنِيصًا بِالْبِرَاعِيمِ خَاتِلًا
 شَامِيَةً تُزْجِي الرَّبَابَ الْهَوَاطِلَا
 يُعَالِجُ رَجَافًا مِنَ التُّرْبِ غَائِلًا
 أَخُو قَفْرَةٍ يُشَلِّي رُكَاحًا وَسَائِلًا
 يَرِينُ دِمَاءَ الْهَادِيَاتِ نَوَافِلَا
 دِقَاقُ الشَّعِيلِ يَبْتَدِرُنَ الْجَعَائِلَا
 وَيَخْشَى الْعَذَابَ أَنْ يُعَرِّدَ نَاكِلَا
 وَلَا قَى الْوَجُوهَ الْمُتَكَرَّاتِ الْبَوَاسِلَا
 لِلْبَّاتِهَا يُنْحَى سِنَانًا وَعَامِلَا
 تَرَى الْقَدَّ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِنَّ قَوَافِلَا

[6] عبيد بن الأبرص

- ٢٥- بَلْ رَبُّ مَاءٍ وَرَدَّتْ أَجِنِ
 ٢٦- رِيشُ الْحَمَامِ عَلَى أَرْجَائِهِ
- سَبِيلُهُ خَائِفٌ جَدِيدُ
 لِلْقَلْبِ مِنْ خَوْفِهِ وَجِيْبُ

[7] علقمة بن عبدة

- ١٦- [فَأُورِدْنَاهَا مَاءً كَأَنَّ جِمَامَهُ
 مِنَ الْأَجْنِ حِنَاءً مَعًا وَصَبِيْبُ]

[8] الأعشى ميمون

- ١٥- وَيَهُ مَاءً تَعْرِفُ جِنَانَهَا ،
 مَنَاهِلُهَا أَجِنَاتُ سُودُمُ

[9] ربيعة بن مقروم

٢٨- فَصَبَّحَ مِنْ بَنِي جِلَانَ صِلًا عَطِيفَتُهُ وَأَسْهَمُهُ الْمَتَاعُ

[10] الحطيئة

٤١- فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمَاءَ قَدْ حَالَ دُونَهُ زُعَافٌ لَدَى جَنْبِ الشَّرِيعَةِ كَارِزٌ

[11] ليبيد بن ربيعة

١٧- فَبَاتَ كَأَنَّهُ قَاضِي نُدُورٍ يَلُودُ بِغَرَقَدٍ خَضِيلٍ وَضَالٍ

١٨- إِذَا وَكَّفَ الْغُصُونُ عَلَى قَرَاهُ أَدَارَ الرَّوْقَ حَالًا بَعْدَ حَالٍ

١٩- جُنُوحَ الْهَالِكِيِّ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ مُكَبًّا يَجْتَلِي نُقَبَ النَّصَالِ

[12] مجنون ليلي

٤- إِذْ هِيَ أَمَسَتْ مَنِيَّتُ الرَّبْعِ دُونَهَا وَدُونِكَ أَرْطَى مُسْسُهُلٌ وَأَلَاءُ

[13] عبيد بن الأبرص

١١- يَنْفِي بِأَطْرَافِ الْأَلَاءِ شَفِيفَهَا يَنْفِي بِأَطْرَافِ الْأَلَاءِ شَفِيفَهَا

١٣- فِي رَوْضَةٍ تَلَجَ الرَّبِيعُ قَرَارَهَا مَوْلِيَّةٌ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْهَا الرُّودُ

[14] ليبيد بن ربيعة

٢٦- فَبَاتَ إِلَى أَرْطَاةٍ حِقْفٍ تَضُمُّهُ شَامِيَّةٌ تُزْجِي الرَّبَابَ الْهَوَاطِلَا

٢٧- وَبَاتَ يُرِيدُ الْكِنَّ ، لَوْ يَسْتَطِيعُهُ يُعَالِجُ رَجَافًا مِنَ التُّرْبِ غَائِلَا

٢٨- فَأَصْبَحَ وَانْشَقَّ الضِّيَابُ وَهَاجَهُ أَخْوَقْفَرَةٌ يَشْلَى رَكَاحًا وَسَانِلَا

[15] ضابيء بن الحارث

٢٥- فَبَاتَ إِلَى أَرْطَاةٍ حِجْفٍ تَلْفُهُ
شَامِيَّةٌ تُذْرِي الْجُمَانَ الْمَفْصَلَا

[16] الأعشى ميمون

٢٧- أَوْ فَرِيدٍ طَاوٍ ، تَضَيَّفَ أَرْطَا
ةٌ يَبِيَّتُ فِي دَفِّهَا وَيُضَاقُ

[17] طرفة بن العبد

٨- ظَلَلْتُ بَدِي الْأَرْضَى فُويِقَ مُتَّقَبٍ
٩- تَرَدُّ عَلَيَّ الرِّيحُ نُوبِي قَاعِداً
بِئِنَّةٍ سُوءِ هَالِكاً أَوْ كَهَالِكِ
إِلَى صَدْفِيٍّ كَالْحَنِيَّةِ بَارِكِ