

Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb:  
The Man and His Poetry

Thesis for the Degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in the University  
of London submitted in June 1969

by

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The Man and His Poetry

by Issa Joseph Boullata

Abstract of Thesis

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the life and poetry of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb (1926-1964) and ascertain his place in modern Arabic literature.

By visits to the scenes of al-Sayyāb's life, by personal interview and correspondence with people who knew him, by access to his unpublished poetry and to official documents relating to his education, government position and medical treatment, the author supplemented the knowledge obtained from the poet's published works and from other materials.

The picture of the poet emerging from this study is that of one deeply hurt by life. Since boyhood, the death of his mother and the desertion of his father leave him in constant search for love and security. The realization in adolescence that he is ugly, the failure of his love affairs in high school and college, and his sensitivity to social oppression make him join the Communist Party. His poetry meanwhile is romantic and rebellious. He introduces free verse and helps to create a new movement in Arabic poetry.

His struggle against his government causes him to lose his job and enter prison many times. After a short self-exile, he returns home having renounced communism and continues, after his marriage, to oppose his government and criticize Arab society in realist poems achieving literary fame.

He welcomes the revolution against the monarchy but later attacks the republican regime for its communist leanings. He uses myths of death and resurrection in his poetry to express his disillusionment and his hopes for Iraq and the Arab nation.

He then becomes afflicted with paralysis and spends the last three years of his life being treated at home and abroad, and writing of his pathetic experience with approaching death.

His poetry represents the malaise of the Arab world and ushers a new era in Arabic poetry.

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## Chapter One

### Boyhood

#### Badr's Search for Love and Security

The date palm seems to have found a natural home in Iraq. Since it requires prolonged hot and dry summers to bear fruit successfully, it has flourished in the southern part of the country and especially along the banks of Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab, the estuary of the combined Tigris and Euphrates. Some fifteen million palm trees grow in groves, extending inland for about two kilometers on each bank of Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab, constituting half of Iraq's wealth of palms, the rest growing along the twin rivers as far north as latitude 33° N. (1) The groves along Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab thicken around the town of Abū al-Khaṣīb, some twenty kilometers to the southeast of Baṣra, so that the sun can hardly be seen under them. In the vicinity of this town to the southeast lies an obscure village called Jaykūr, destined to become quite famous in Arab literary circles because a poet, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, was born in it in 1926 and loved it so fondly.

This is a small village of about 500 people. Its simple one-storey houses are built of unbaked mud bricks and palm tree trunks, and are mostly clustered along one grim dusty road behind walls with no windows. The village is

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(1) W.B. Fisher: The Middle East: A Physical, Social and Regional Geography. London and New York, 2nd. ed., 1952, p.356

reached from Abū al-Khaṣīb by an unasphalted road, about three kilometers long, winding through the palm groves. The palm groves surrounding the village are intersected by streams or creeks crossed by little footbridges usually made of palm tree trunks. The sea tide, raising the level of Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab, fills those streams or creeks with fresh water at the ebb and drains them at the flow. They constitute the most picturesque feature of the village, aside from its nearness to the great estuary. Buwayb is one of those streams or creeks; it is about two metres wide and takes its water from a bigger stream or creek called Jaykūr. Buwayb passes through a section of the village called Buqay<sup>c</sup> where the Sayyāb houses and lands are.

A great many people in this area of Iraq are engaged in the cultivation of date palms. A minority owns the large lands on which the palm trees grow and the majority earns its living by taking part in the sundry stages of cultivation before the dates reach the consumers. Some are engaged in the fertilization process in April, for the female flower of the date palm must be fertilized by hand with pollen obtained from a male flower to ensure a large crop because natural pollination is rather sporadic. (1) Others are engaged in digging the land over by hand every few years to ensure its fertility. Others take part in the picking season beginning in August, helped by nomadic tribesmen,

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(1) ibid. p. 191

and they climb up the tall slender trees to pick the fruit by hand, while sitting on slings attached around the trunks. Irrigation does not constitute a problem because the land is naturally flooded by the regular tidal rise of the river. A class of people has grown which finances the cultivation or deals with the marketing of the crop before it reaches the packers or the modern mechanized factories where the dates are cleaned, graded and packed ready for local consumption or export to all parts of the world. Iraq produces about 80 % of the world's dates (1) and its income from the date industry is about five million dinars per year.

The family of al-Sayyāb, Sunnī Muslims known in Jaykūr for many generations, owned land on which palm groves grew.(2) They were not amongst the big land-owners in Southern Iraq, but they managed to lead a respectable life by local standards. At present, the male members of the family are about thirty in number(3) but the family was larger at the beginning of the nineteenth century including, as it then did, the family of al-Mīr. Many of its members died in a plague epidemic(4) that ravaged Iraq in 1831. One of its members who had lost all his immediate relations was called Sayyāb ibn Muḥammad ibn Badrān al-Mīr .(5) Linguistically, the word sayyāb is a name given to unripe or green dates,(6) but the story runs in the family that he was called by it because he had lost

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(1) ibid. p.355

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirut, April 23, 1966.

(3) ibid.

(4) ibid. Cf. Stephen Hemsley Longrigg: Four Centuries of Modern Iraq. Oxford, 1925, pp.265-268.

(5) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, op. cit.

(6) ibid. p. 1181 under sayyāb

all his relatives (1) and was thus "left alone" or "neglected".(2) In the local dialect it is pronounced Syāb. This name or nickname stuck to his descendants who were thus differentiated from the other members of al-Mīr family, although they still recognized their relationship,(3) and their common descent from the Arab tribe of Rabī'a.(4)

One of these descendants, a grandson, was called 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Marzūq al-Sayyāb. He owned grove lands in the village and was considered to be well off. He had friendly relations with the notables of the area. He built himself a big house at Buḡay<sup>c</sup>, in the confines of Jaykūr, commensurate with his social position. Although it was of unbaked mud bricks, the house contained about fifteen rooms along the sides of an oblong open courtyard. It had two storeys at the corner of the main entrance and a roofed wood verandah opening onto the courtyard. Next to it was a special dwelling for the family's slaves who in Ottoman times helped his grandfather in the manual work on the land. He had three sons: Shākīr, 'Abd al-Majīd and 'Abd al-Ḡādir.(5) He was interested in their education but, because of the lack of nearby high schools, did not educate them beyond the elementary level.(6) After they had completed their elementary education, they started to help their father in his agricultural work.

When Turkey entered the First World War by joining the

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, op. cit.

(2) Lane, op. cit. under sayyaba

(3) Author's interview with Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, Beirut, June 14, 1966

(4) Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid's letter to the author, Baṣra, December 15, 1966, on the authority of Badr and Shākīr al-Sayyāb.

(5) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter, op.cit.

(6) ibid.

Central Powers early in November, 1914, the British forces from India occupied Baṣra and the Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab area within a few days. But it was not until towards the end of the war that the whole of Iraq had been occupied by the British forces after the fall of Mosul in October, 1918.

The Southern part of Iraq did not witness such bloody battles as those of Kūt (1916), Baghdād (1917) and Kirkūk (1918), but the people felt the impact of the war and the affront of foreign occupation and military rule. The family of ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Sayyāb lay low however in their village and waited for better times. They kept cultivating their palms, unaware of international plotting (1) against their country which culminated in the Mandate for Iraq being conferred on Britain in April, 1920, at San Remo.

The national rebellion which broke out in Iraq during the Summer of 1920 ended with the establishment of a limited national rule under the British Mandate and the enthronement of Fayṣal I as king of Iraq.

Of ‘Abd al-Jabbār's sons, it seems that Shākīr, the eldest, was the more mundane and self-seeking. In addition to supervising his father's estate, he sometimes tried his hand at brokerage (2) during the dates sale season and made extra money. He even sometimes took under his supervision, for a fee, some of the estates of the nearby town of Abū al-Khaṣīb, such as those of Yāsīn Chalabī al-‘Abd al-Wāḥid. (3) His indulgent and kind-hearted father who ran all the affairs of

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(1) The Sykes-Picot agreement was signed in London on 16 May, 1916.

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, op. cit.

(3) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, op. cit.

(3) ibid.

of his household with wise control thought his son was mature for marriage.

In 1925, Shākir married his own cousin, Karīma, an illiterate girl who was then about seventeen years old.<sup>(1)</sup> He continued to live with his wife at his father's house in accordance with local custom, and was settling down to a happy married life. In 1926, his first child was born. It was a boy and he was so happily excited that he recorded the date<sup>(2)</sup> in order to remember it, and he called his son Badr. But the record was almost immediately lost and the exact date of Badr's birth has remained unknown. The administration of the country had more on its hands in those days than to insist on registrations of births, especially in the outlying villages. In 1928, a second child was born. It was another boy and he called him 'Abdallāh. In 1930, a third child was born. Again, it was a boy and he called him Muṣṭafā. With three sons, he was a proud father now and could go about his work confident that they would grow up to help him. But none of them did; at least not in the manner their father had hoped. Badr became a poet with a Bachelor's degree in education from the Higher Teachers' Training College in Baghdād; 'Abdallāh became a professor at the University of Baghdād with a Ph.D. degree in geology from Indiana State University; and Muṣṭafā became a civil servant in Baghdād with a Bachelor's degree in business administration from the American University of Beirut.

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(1) ibid.

(2) Ibid.

Badr's early childhood was happy. Parents in the Middle East pay little attention to children between the ages of three and about six, (1) especially in villages. They leave them to get around by themselves and learn from their brothers and sisters and play with their age-groups outside the home. Their relationship with adults is mainly with the women of the household.

Badr enjoyed the tenderness of the women and the companionship of his play-mates at his grandfather's house. But he also enjoyed playing in the water of Buwayb, the little stream that passes by his village. He liked to collect shells from it and sit in the quiet shade of the graceful palm trees to play with them. At night, he liked to listen to Buwayb murmuring against the shells at its bottom. In winter, he liked to listen to the rain falling on the palm trees with a rattle that pleased his ears. He liked to hear the wind whisper in the palms and thought he heard them inhaling the warm rays of the sun. He liked to watch the ships and boats plying up Shatt al-Arab towards Basra or down towards the Persian Gulf. In the evenings, he enjoyed the stories of his grandfather about Sinbad, Abū Zayd al-Hilālī and others or those of his grandmother about Ḥizām and 'Afrā', and an imaginary world of jinn, ghosts, heroes and lovers teemed in his little mind. This age of innocence left deep impressions on him, and images from it and recollections kept recurring incessantly in his poetry in later years.

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(1) Morroe Berger: The Arab World Today. Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York, 1962, p.135.

But this happiness was not to last. All of a sudden it was shattered when his mother died in childbirth in 1932.<sup>(1)</sup> She was only twenty three when she died, leaving her three sons. Badr was only six years old and could not understand death. Yet he felt a vague bereavement that woke him up at night. He would ask where his mother was and would be answered, "She will return day after tomorrow."<sup>(2)</sup> His playmates would whisper among themselves that she was in her grave by the hill-side.<sup>(3)</sup> He started to be more attached to his grandmothers, especially his paternal grandmother, Amīna, because he felt their love and kindness. As he grew up, he would ask them about his mother again and again and their answers created in his mind an indellible picture of her which may have been highly idealized.<sup>(4)</sup>

Meanwhile, Iraq was preparing itself for independence. The British had agreed with the Iraqi government to end the Mandate in the treaty signed in June, 1930. On the 3rd of October, 1932, Iraq became independent and joined the League of Nations. Celebrations were held all over the country. The little boy did not understand much of what was going on. He was rather more excited by the idea of going to school the next week.

There was no school in Jaykūr at the time. Badr had

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter, op. cit.

(2) Cf. Badr's poem "Unshūdat al-Maṭar" in his collection Unshūdat al-Maṭar, Beirut, 1960, p.161.

(3) ibid.

(4) Author's interview with Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, Beirut, June 14, 1966.

to walk to the village of Bāb Sulaymān<sup>(1)</sup> to the west of Jaykūr to go to a government primary school that had four elementary classes. There, he learnt the rudiments of reading and writing Arabic and some notions of arithmetic and Islam. After he had successfully completed the fourth class, he was moved to al-Mahmūdiyya Elementary School for Boys at Abū al-Khaṣīb<sup>(2)</sup> which had six elementary classes. There, in addition, he learnt history, geography and some English for two more years.

The school, like most of the houses of Abū al-Khaṣīb, was built of baked mud bricks. It had two storeys, the upper one of which had an inner wooden balcony looking down on a central open courtyard used as a playground. It was named after its founder, Maḥmūd Pāshā al-ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, one of the notables of the town, who had given the building to be used as a school in the first decade of the present century. Near it were similar houses belonging to this rich Arab family that owned a private mosque nearby. One of those houses belonged to ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Chalabī al-ʿAbd al-Wāḥid who, later, employed Badr's father on his estates.

Badr seemed to be happy at school as he made new friends and acquired knowledge with success. It was here, on rainy days, that playing with other boys he learnt to chant the ditty that he later incorporated in one of his latest poems:

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter, op. cit.

(2) ibid.

Rain, rain, O Ḥalabī

Let pass the daughters of the Chalabī;

Rain, rain, O Shāshā

Let pass the daughters of the Pāshā. (1)

It was here also that he wrote his first poems in the classical language. Previously, he had written some rhymes in the colloquial Iraqi dialect, making fun of his class-mates or describing a natural scene and had thus attracted the attention of his teachers. Now, he attempted his first poems on a patriotic theme in the classical style. He later said that the poems were perfect as far as metre went, but they were full of grammatical mistakes. (2) His teachers used to call him to their common room to recite them and rewarded him with coloured books and magazines.

Badr liked particularly to be called to the headmaster's office. It had a beautiful closed-in wooden balcony looking out on the street. This balcony, called shanāshīl, had coloured glass panes of deep blue, red, green and orange and was decorated with delicate openwork of arabesque carved wood. The wooden ceiling and the plastered walls of the room were decorated with painted floral miniature designs and illuminations. The house of the rich Chalabī nearby had a similar shanāshīl, and Badr may have seen the beautiful face of the rich man's daughter behind the openwork.

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(1) Cf. Badr's poem "Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī" in his collection Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī, Beirut, 1965 (2nd ed.), p.7

(2) Cf. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Aḍwā', [Beirut, 1966 ?] p.18. Also quoted to the author with more detail by Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāḥid in his letter, Baṣra, August 30, 1966.

It evoked in him a feeling of luxury and remote enchantment, that was a contrast to his drab village home life. Such feeling haunted him for many years and, twenty-five years later, was expressed in his poem "The shanāshīl of the Chalabī's daughter". (1)

Back at home, Badr continued to play with his friends. His two younger brothers were now older and joined in their games. A favourite spot for them was an old, large, deserted house called Kūt al-Marājīj in the local dialect. It was the building that, in Ottoman times, housed the slaves owned by the family, (2) hence the name, Marājīj i.e. Marāqīq meaning slaves. Later, in his poetry, he called it Manzil al-Aqnān i.e. The House of Slaves. (3) They played in its courtyard by tracing squares and circles on the ground for sundry local hopping games. (4) They also enjoyed telling ghost stories about it.

One day in 1935, Badr witnessed an altercation between his father, Shākir, and his grandfather, 'Abd al-Jabbār. He could not understand much of it since he was only nine years old but could make out that his father was going to be re-married. His grandfather objected on the ground that the woman was of an inferior status than their own and belonged to another village. His father insisted that,

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(1) Badr's collection Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī, pp.5-10.

(2) Author's interview with Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, Beirut, June 14, 1966.

(3) Badr's collection Manzil al-Aqnān, Beirut, 1963, see poem entitled "Manzil al-Aqnān", pp. 82-88.

(4) Author's interview with Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, Beirut, June 14, 1966.

although she was illiterate, she could recite the Qur'ān<sup>(1)</sup> and that he knew what he was doing.

The next thing Badr knew was that he saw his father hardly any more. Shākir left his ancestral home to live on his own with his second wife, Razzūqa Mullā 'Alī, of the village of 'Āmiya, leaving his children to the care of his parents. He was to have three children of his second marriage: a boy, Khālid, and two girls, Najāh and Hayāh.<sup>(2)</sup> But they were all to grow up away from Badr and his brothers. At the grandfather's house, Shākir and his new family were not even spoken about. They were actually ostracized and led a separate life.

Badr loved his father, but the latter's re-marriage shook his sense of security. He did not remember his father ever trying to give his children a compensation for mother's love that they missed.<sup>(3)</sup> Nevertheless, his presence with them at home was reassuring. Now he permitted a woman to take him away from his children.

Even when Shākir's relations with his father improved a little, he continued to seek the interest of his new family under the influence of his second wife.<sup>(4)</sup> He worked at the Department of Imports at Baṣra for a while then he lived on his share of his father's property which he lost eventually due to mismanagement.<sup>(5)</sup> His first three sons felt

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter, op. cit.

(2) ibid.

(3) Author's interview with Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, Beirut, June 14, 1966.

(4) ibid.

(5) ibid.

increasingly alienated from him.

In the summer of 1938, Badr ended his six years of elementary education. His record was very good and his grandfather decided to give him the opportunity to further his education. He joined the Baṣra Secondary School for Boys in the autumn of the same year.<sup>(1)</sup> In the meantime, he lived with his maternal grandmother at Baṣra, in the section of the city called al-ʿAshshār.

Secondary education at this time in Iraq consisted of five years; the first three, called Mutawassīṭa (i.e. Intermediate), gave the students a general academic education; the last two, called Iʿdādiyya (i.e. Preparatory), were divided into two specialised streams: one for arts and the other for science.<sup>(2)</sup>

Meanwhile, Badr had started writing poetry with regularity after 1941. He wrote, re-wrote and tore to pieces a lot of what he composed.<sup>(3)</sup> His subjects were descriptions of natural scenery or rustic life in his village, or they were a crude expression of his feelings at this stage. He entertained some admiration for Wafīqa, daughter of Ṣāliḥ al-Sayyāb, a second-cousin of his father's.<sup>(4)</sup> She was a very pretty young woman of marriageable age when Badr was having his dreams of early adolescence about her.<sup>(5)</sup> Traditions

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter, op. cit.

(2) ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Hilālī: Muʿjam al-ʿIrāq, Vol. I, Baghdād 1953, see chapter on "al-Taʿlīm fī al-ʿIrāq".

(3) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter, op. cit.

(4) ibid.

(5) Muʿayyid al-ʿAbd al-Wāhid's letter to the author, Baṣra, October 22, 1966.

and family mores prevented him from making love to her or mentioning her in his poetry. But she continued, though secretly, to be the unattainable ideal to him till the end of his life. She was soon to get married and shatter all his adolescent dreams about her. The earliest of Badr's extant poems, one in manuscript entitled "On the bank" (1) and dated 1941, was written to express his deep sorrow at his shattered dreams of love.

Badr may have been proud of one or two poems and may have shown them to his teachers or his uncles. A few of his early poems have survived and I saw them in manuscript neatly written in an exercise-book, still kept by his brother-in-law at Baṣra. They follow the rules of prosody laid down by the Baṣra philologist al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 791 A.D.).

At school, Badr was doing well and ranked amongst the first students in his class. (2) His most favourite lesson was Arabic language and literature. (3) At home in Jaykūr, he tried to help his grandfather by looking after the flock of sheep. He took it to graze when he could, but it seems he did so less out of a sense of duty to help than out of a desire to meet a certain shepherdess of the village towards whom he started feeling inclined. A couple of years later, in April 1943, he wrote a poem entitled "Memories of the

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(1) See Appendix pp. 266-267 below.

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter, op. cit. Also Khālid al-Shawwāf's letter to the author, Baghdād, August 30, 1966.

(3) ibid.

Countryside"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he said in reminiscence:

I remember the flock of shepherdesses on the hills  
And amongst pastures in flowery fields;

[I remember] the bells of the sheep sounding  
Like cups sighing at a poet's mouth.

I led my flock behind them cautiously  
And looked from a distance till my eyes were sore.  
But for love, I would have never been a shepherd,  
My thoughts would have never gone to pastures.

In this poem, he relates how he followed his shepherdess and kissed her sheep when he saw her do so, that he might kiss the traces of her lips. He also described her lying on the river bank and carrying home in the evening the very grass that was her bed "lest it should divulge the secret of its friendly companion". Listening to him playing his reed-flute, she asked about the finger holes in it and he answered:<sup>(2)</sup>

Didn't you know that the holes are windows  
From which flow the hymns of the piper?  
They are fountains from which my heart's tunes  
Gush forth in overwhelming songs;  
"What are my flute's holes?" My soul be your ransom,  
They are wounds bleeding from hard misfortunes.

He also relates in the same poem how, sitting on the river bank.

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(1) Badr's collection Iqbāl, Beirut, 1965, "Dhikrayāt al-Rif", p. 73.

(2) ibid. p.75

one summer night, he saw her rowing in a boat (1)

Gliding in the river with its two oars  
Like a lover's arms extended in the dark;  
Water drops splashing were like flowers  
Showered down on her by a night companion.

In February 1944, Badr wrote another poem entitled "A Shepherd's Song"(2) in which he says:

Let our sheep graze near the fresh spring  
And let us go to the hill-top, O heart-luring [girl],  
We'll see the valleys under us dark with grass  
And our shadows in it like a spectre of hope and love.

He then invites her to a romantic hut where they will kiss for the first time and live happily. Later in 1944, he wrote "Lament of the Flock"(3) dedicated specifically "To the Shepherdess" in which he laments her flock and consoles her.

This seems to be the first love affair in Badr's life. The shepherdess was called Hāla (4) and he mentions her name in a poem written about twenty years later.(5) It was an innocent affair of early adolescence full of idealism and romantic situations.

Meanwhile, the Second World War was raging. The Nazis were victorious all over Europe and were now turning eastwards. There was much anti-British feeling in the Middle East and

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(1) ibid. p. 76.

(2) Iqbāl, "Ughniyat al-Rā'ī", p.84.

(3) ibid., "Rithā' al-Qatī'", p.91.

(4) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letters to the author, postmark: Beirut, April 23, 1966, and Beirut, June 6, 1966.

(5) Badr's collection al-Ma'bad al-Gharīq, Beirut, 1962, p.87; also Shanāshil Ibnāt al-Chalabi, p.78 and p.79.

the Nazis encouraged it with an intensive propaganda campaign. It seems they had decided to clear the region of Allied influence to prevent the receipt of any assistance from the south by Russia which they were later to invade.<sup>(1)</sup> In April 1941, Rashīd 'Alī al-Kaylānī staged a coup d'état in Iraq and the National Assembly deposed the regent, 'Abd al-Ilāh, who had fled the country with the royal family and a number of Iraqi politicians, including Nūrī al-Sa'īd.

These must have been very exciting days for the young Badr. He was only ten when the first military coup d'état took place in Iraq in 1936. But now he could better understand political affairs. His political consciousness was being formed and sharpened by his readings at school and in the press. Secondary schools were bent on a program of indoctrination in nationalism in order to instil a sense of unity and pride in future citizens. Like many of his countrymen, Badr must have been swayed by anti-British feelings and come to consider the facilities granted to Britain on Iraqi territory by the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 as an insult to national dignity and a limitation to national sovereignty.

The military operations which ensued between the Iraqi army and the British troops arriving in the country from India and Trans-Jordan ended with the downfall of the Kaylānī régime at the end of May 1941, and the return of the royal

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(1) Sir John Bagot Glubb: Britain and the Arabs, London, 1959, pp.237-238.

family to Iraq.<sup>(1)</sup> Yet the sight of British troops landing at Basra on the 18th of April embittered Badr as much as most people. Their occupation of the port area at al-Ma'qil and of the power station, and later their disarming of the resisting Iraqi police in order to occupy al-'Ashshār on the 7th of May must have left in Badr's heart a spite which can only be guessed. But amongst his papers, I have found an unpublished poem of his in his own handwriting dated 1942 in which he laments three of the leaders of the coup d'état who were hanged, namely, Yūnis al-Sab'āwī (ex-Minister of Economics) and Fahmī Sa'īd and Maḥmūd Salmān (two members of the Golden Square). In this poem, entitled "The Martyrs of Liberty"<sup>(2)</sup> he says:

They were undaunted men who had vowed to God  
To sacrifice [themselves] till the usurper yielded back the rights.  
The slaves of the English have spilt their blood:  
Woe to them from those whose power is feared.  
The slaves of the English have spilt their blood:  
But there are those who will seek vengeance.  
The fosterling of the English has spilt their blood:  
But in Berlin, there is a lion observing him.  
O Rashīd, O good leader of a nation  
That is ill-treated by 'Abd al-Ilāh and his friend:  
You are the true leader who has awakened the sleepers  
Afflicted continuously by Time's successive misfortunes.

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(1) *ibid.* pp.240-248.

(2) See Appendix p. 268 below.

Although his command of the metre was very good in this poem, Badr's diction was a little awkward and forced.

In the autumn of 1941, Badr embarked on the last stage of his secondary education, having successfully ended his intermediate studies. He chose the science stream<sup>(1)</sup> although the humanities held as strong an attraction for him as the sciences, if not stronger. He continued writing poetry however, and found occasional encouragement when he read some of it publicly to the school.<sup>(2)</sup> More encouragement was coming from a student group of similar literary tendencies who met to read to one another their latest attempts at poetry, story-writing and criticism. Of these may be mentioned Khālīd al-Shawwāf, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl, Ṣāliḥ Fādīl, Muḥammad 'Alī Ismā'īl, Muḥammad Nūrī Salmān, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Rayyīs, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rammāḥ and Badr himself.<sup>(3)</sup> Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb, another member of the group, writes,<sup>(4)</sup> "We listened to the first poems of Badr and felt, in spite of our young age, that a poet was being born who would shake the hearts, the minds and the consciences."

Meanwhile, Badr was becoming conscious of his looks as an adolescent. He was of a short stature and a weak build. He had a dark complexion and pitch-black thick hair. His ears were big and stuck out sideways from his head like

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(1) Khālīd al-Shawwāf's letter to the author, Baghdād, August 30, 1966; also Khālīd al-Shawwāf in al-Kalīma, Baghdād, January 1968, p.7

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirūt, April 23, 1966.

(3) ibid.; also Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966, and Khālīd al-Shawwāf's letter, op.cit.

(4) al-Adīb, Beirūt, June 1965, p.56.

large petals. His narrow forehead, later to be widened by the loss of hair, made his thin and long face look stunted. His broad mouth did not hide his large, slightly protruding teeth which dominated the least opening of his lips. His sharp little chin under his long nose was like a dot under an exclamation mark ! He was not handsome<sup>(1)</sup> and within himself believed he was even ugly. Yet his heart was opening up to love and beauty. His romantic relation with the shepherdess of Jaykūr inspired most of his early poetry and lent an outlet to his desire for self-assertion. The love and care of his paternal grandmother, Amīna, gave him consolation and a sense of security. But he was soon to lose her, for she died early in September 1942. His grandmother's death left him desolate and lonely. He wrote a poem lamenting her<sup>(2)</sup> in which he says:

Grandmother, to whom shall I now address my complaint ?

Sadness has overwhelmed me and I have no helper.

You opened your heart for my love yesterday,

[Today] you close your grave and leave me out.

It is not much if I shed tears

And die of continuous moaning.

Badr's grandfather was having financial difficulties in the meantime. Wartime conditions made many debtors of whom he was the guarantor unable to pay their debts and he had to settle them. He also made contract-sales which he

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, op. cit.

(2) Iqbāl, "Rithā' Jaddatī", pp.78-80.

could not fulfill when the dates season came. In addition, he lost on many undertakings of Simon Karibian's palm groves and had to resort to borrowing money at high rates of interest. His son Abd al-Qādir's virulent attacks in his Basra paper al-Nās on Simon Karibian and other date packers, merchants and usurers did not help to relieve him of his debts. The small land owners were actually being exploited and eaten up by the big land owners. Badr's grandfather decided to sell some of his property and pay off his debts. (1)

Badr felt the injustice of the exploitation of the weak by the strong. He felt something was wrong in the social and economic structure of Iraq. His idealistic nature made him think of a society where all people would be equal and would co-operate peacefully with one another. His purely academic education re-inforced such tendencies in his thinking. Iraqi education at this time was terribly abstract and academic and very much divorced from practical life. Scientific subjects were taught with little practical demonstration, handicrafts occupied a minor place in the curricula, extra-curricular activities were few; their education made young men impatient and uncompromising and their political judgments exposed to the onslaught of emotion and aspiration. (2)

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letters to the author, postmark: Beirūt, April 23, 1966, and Beirūt, June 6, 1966.

(2) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg and Frank Stoakes: Iraq, London 1958, pp.176-177.

Yet not all the discontent of the young was without real basis. Badr had, furthermore, a personal reason to feel that his family was being wronged. He already felt that Life had wronged him enough: he had lost his mother, he had been deprived of his father, he had lost his grandmother, he had been lately realizing that he was not handsome; and now his grandfather was being deprived legally of some of his ancestral property. The situation would invite revolt even from a less sensitive person than Badr. But the revolt sank deep in his spirit and, like the fire of a volcano, was to erupt later when more pressure was to be stored up.

## Chapter Two

### Youth

#### Badr's Romantic Period

In the summer of 1943, Badr ended his secondary studies and graduated from the Basra Secondary School for Boys. He was seventeen years old but had little experience in agriculture to be able to return to Jaykūr and take up his ancestors' occupation. Besides, the city offered him intellectual and other opportunities that the village could not. He was destined to be among the multitudes of country folk attracted to the city. Yet he was not educated enough to assume a professional job in the city and would not accept an insignificant, unskilled clerical post or the like. Moreover, he was not satisfied with the level of his own education. So he decided to join one of the state's free institutions of higher learning, since his family could not afford to send him abroad. He applied to the Higher Teachers' Training College in Baghdad and was accepted.

This college offered a four-year course, since 1939, preparing students to become teachers at secondary schools. It had originally grown from a two-year evening school in 1923 to a two-year day school in 1927 and then to a three-year college in 1937 after having been closed from 1931 to

1935.<sup>(1)</sup> It has been incorporated in the University of Baghdad since 1958 as the College of Education.

When Badr joined it in the autumn of 1943, it had five sections and each student had, from the first year and in addition to common general lectures, to belong to one of these sections for specialization; they were those of Arabic language, English language, social studies, sciences and mathematics.<sup>(2)</sup> Instruction was free and a boarding house was available for students who needed it.

Badr put up at the boarding house and registered himself as a student in the Arabic language section.<sup>(3)</sup> This was the first time that he was so far away from home. He was alone, a stranger, in a big impersonal city. His longing for Jaykūr and its friendly atmosphere was mixed with that for his shepherdess, Hāla, with whom he had to part. In August, 1943, he wrote "A Song of Oblivion"<sup>(4)</sup> in which he tried to rationalize the separation of lovers and consider it as a rule of life:

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(1) Abd al-Razzāq al-Hilālī: Muʿjam al-ʿIrāq, Vol. I, Baghdād 1953, see chapter on "Dār al-Muʿallimīn al-ʿAlīya", p. 244.

(2) ibid.: also Yāsīn al-Barrīshī's letter to the author, Jerusalem, June 1, 1966.

(3) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirut, April 23, 1966.

(4) Iqbāl: "Ughniyat al-Silwān", pp. 102-104.

We were the two parts of a window in the Temple of Love;  
If we did not separate, light would not have penetrated  
to the heart.  
We were like the two wings of a bird in the wide horizon;  
Without their spreading out and separation, it would  
fall down to the earth.  
If we had not gone far apart, our souls would not have  
transcended sin.  
We were the lips of Destiny, the separator of friends;  
If we did not part, Fate would not have laughed at  
my misfortune.

In December, he wrote "A Greeting to the Village"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he tried to recall the beautiful scenes of Jaykūr and the calm they invoked in his soul. But gradually, Badr was getting to know Baghdād and make some friends at college and outside it. Yet he liked to spend most of his free time reading. He would sit alone at the café of Ibrāhīm 'Arab in the Quarantina area with poetry books in front of him; when a friend came he would close the book he was reading and as soon as the friend had left he would re-open it to read.<sup>(2)</sup> Eventually, he was introduced to a little circle of friends who met to discuss literature or politics, and to celebrate literary events. Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, a member of the circle, described him reciting some of his poetry to the group for the first time and said,<sup>(3)</sup> "He started reciting poems of different types in a moving manner, and as he got emotionally involved in the atmosphere of his poetry, he made strange gestures that expressed the feelings of his heart." He then

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(1) Iqbāl, "Taḥiyyat al-Qarya", pp.71-72

(2) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa: Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb wa al-Ḥaraka al-Shi'riyya al-Jadīda fī al-'Irāq, Baghdād 1965, p.8

(3) ibid. pp.7-8

went on to say how, at the end of the recitation, the poet Hādī al-Daftar kissed Badr, the poet Khadr al-Ṭā'ī shook hands with him and 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Bannā asked to sit beside him.

At al-Zahāwī café, Badr met a number of journalists and men of letters who encouraged him. One of them, Nājī al-'Ubaydī, owner of al-Ittiḥād newspaper, was the first to publish any of Badr's poems. (1)

In the evenings or on holidays, Badr liked to go out for a walk with a friend along al-Rashīd Street and then sit at the Old Municipality café to hear the latest songs of his favourite singers, Umm Kulthūm and 'Abd al-Wahhāb; (1) he also liked to sit at Mubārak café for an istikān (i.e. a little glass) of tea which he sipped as he read Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī or al-Mutanabbī. (2)

Meanwhile, Hitler was at the peak of his power and was soon to start his downward fall to defeat. The young men who met at these cafés could not but speak about the atrocities of the war, the high cost of living, and the latest military developments. Their country, Iraq, had entered the war early in 1943 on the side of the Allies. Sometimes they were divided into two camps, one supporting the Nazis and the other the Allies. Badr remained quiet and when the

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(1) ibid. p.8

(2) ibid. p.9

argument between the two camps became heated, he excused himself and withdrew to the college boarding house. (1)

At this time, he had a number of friends interested in poetry such Baland al-Ḥaydarī, Sulaymān al-ʿĪsā and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī (2) — all of whom have become distinguished men of letters. They discussed one another's latest writings and sometimes took part in public college activities of a literary character. Occasionally, Badr went to the distant Wāq al-Wāq café to meet for the same purpose with a group that called itself Jamā'at al-Waqt al-Dā'if (Lost Time Group) established by Baland al-Ḥaydarī. (3)

Although the college had become co-educational since the academic year 1936-1937 when it accepted fifteen girls, (4) and although the number of girls had by now grown, the social relations between the sexes at college were still strained. (5) Both sexes brought to college with them the traditional values of the outside society even though both cherished secret desires of doing away with such values as limited individual freedom. The conflict of values caused diverse complexes which were reflected in the social relations between the sexes in various degrees of poignancy. These unnatural relations were aggravated by personal differences of background and temperament.

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(1) ibid. p.9

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, op. cit.

(3) Author's interview with Baland al-Ḥaydarī, Beirūt, January 19, 1967.

(4) 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Hilālī, op.cit., p.244

(5) Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ: "Gharīb 'alā al-Khalīj Yughannī li al-Maṭar", in al-Ādāb, Beirūt, February 1966, p.19

When Badr came to college, he was a sensitive boy of seventeen who had been deprived of the love of mother and father, who had lately lost his grandmother and been separated from his first sweetheart. He was revolted against the rich who exploited the poor and against his own lack of handsome looks. His heart however was aflame with a desire to be wanted, to be loved. Here at college were many girls, quite at hand. Some were extremely beautiful. But custom did not permit him to accost any one of them. He could discuss with them the last lecture they heard together or ask about the next one. But he could not as easily engage in conversation involving matters of the heart.

There was one particular girl to whom he felt special attraction. She was called Labība and was seven years his elder.<sup>(1)</sup> She liked to wear a red scarf on her head or around her neck. One day in January 1944, he saw her sitting by a stream in a garden. Looking in the water, he saw her reflection. Their eyes met in the water and he thought he saw love in them. He wrote a poem entitled "Your Reflection"<sup>(2)</sup> addressed, as is clear from the sub-title, "To Labība of the Red Scarf", and in it he says:

I wish I were a wind that passes  
Lovingly over your reflection without being blamed  
And captivates the ripples with its lure  
And repeated continuous moan,  
Then flies with [your reflection] and flies in the sky.

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(1) Nāji 'Allūsh in the introduction to Iqbāl, op.cit. p.8  
(2) Iqbāl, "Khayāluki", pp.81-83

Like clouds proudly floating about;  
There I'll be alone with your reflection amongst the stars  
Where fallen darkness strolls:  
For every kiss a star  
Shoots down or another swoons.  
Your image is more loving than my nearest relatives  
Although it has no perception.  
Women have deprived me of my father  
And early Death has taken my mother away.  
I wish for nothing in life but your satisfaction.  
Be merciful, then, for life is unjust.

It is significant that the girl by whom Badr was attracted at this stage was seven years older than he was, or that she was about as old as his own mother at her death. It is also significant that he addressed her reflection or her image, and saw her only indirectly in the water and wished to fly with her amongst the stars. Labība to him was an image of his mother in heaven. He unconsciously put himself in an impossible love situation and when his love failed, it added to his bitterness. For his love for Labība failed in spite of the many poems he composed about her.<sup>(1)</sup> When he remembered her about twenty years later, he said:<sup>(2)</sup>

And that one: because she was older or because  
[her] beauty lured her [to think]

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(1) See particularly a poem entitled "Ism Lubāb" in Badr's collection Azhār Dhābila, Cairo 1947, p.30

(2) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalebī, "Aḥibbīnī", p.60

That I was not her match, she abandoned me  
She made me see her in my mind and smell her fragrance  
Whenever leaves drink dew and buds open.

Meanwhile, Badr was becoming famous at college as a poet. He was often seen reading his poetry privately to one or two girls in a secluded place at college. His collection of poems was growing larger as he wrote them neatly in a notebook. Girls borrowed his collection to read it and he wished he was the book itself that he might enter their boudoirs. In March 1944, he composed a poem to this effect which was to become a favourite of many students.<sup>(1)</sup> In April, he composed another<sup>(2)</sup> expressing his feelings at the book returning from its adventurous tour amongst the virgins. Yet he was beginning to feel that his love was words, and only words. He wrote a poem entitled "A Poet"<sup>(3)</sup> in which he says:

He sang that he might capture his sweethearts  
But only captured their names.

For some time, he had been reading some poems of Baudelaire's Fleurs du mal in translation and was impressed above all by the sensuous character of the French poet's feelings which found an echo in his own adolescent, lustful imagination. He had also been reading Afā'ī al-Firdaws of

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(1) Azhār Dhābila, "Dīwān Shi'ar", pp.5-8, reprinted with changes and deletions in his Azhār wa Asā'ir, Beirut [1963], pp.148-150.

(2) Iqbāl, "Awdat al-Dīwān", pp.94-97, wrongly dated 12 April 1941, since that part of the book contains poems of 1942, 1943 and 1944 according to the note on p. 110.

(3) Iqbāl, "Shā'ir", p. 101

the Lebanese poet, Ilyās Abū Shabaka (d. 1947), which dwelt at length on sin and libidinous subjects. He had also been impressed by the Egyptian poet, 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (d. 1949), and his verbal power of expressing luxurious and lascivious feelings. He therefore decided to give vent to similar pent-up feelings, and record some of his own experiences with prostitutes he had started lately to visit at the Baghdād brothel with other youths.<sup>(1)</sup> He wrote a long poem of about a thousand verses, entitled "Between the Spirit and the Body"<sup>(2)</sup> and addressed to the soul of Baudelaire. He later sent it to the poet 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā with Fayṣal Jarī al-Sāmir, a Ph.D. candidate from Baṣra studying in Egypt,<sup>(3)</sup> hoping that the former would write a preface to it when it was published.<sup>(4)</sup> But the Egyptian poet soon died and it seems that the poem had been misplaced and lost. Only fifteen verses of it have been published in Badr's posthumous work, Iqbāl,<sup>(5)</sup> and about a hundred verses in manuscript<sup>(6)</sup> have lately been salvaged from friends and shown to me at Baṣra by Badr's brother-in-law, Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-'Abd al-Jalīl.<sup>(7)</sup> From the published passage, a little different from the manuscript, a conflict between the spirit and the body can be noted. Badr expressed with vehemence the hunger of his body for sexual satisfaction, casting aside all moral considerations, but finally his

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(1) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p.75

(2) Iqbāl, "Bayn al-Rūḥ wa al-Jasad", pp.88-90

(3) Cf. Iqbāl, footnote on p.90

(4) Nāḥi 'Allūsh in the introduction to Iqbāl, op.cit., pp.5-6

(5) Iqbāl, pp.88-90

(6) See Appendix pp. 269-271 for 49 verses of these.

(7) Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-'Abd al-Jalīl's letter to the author, Baṣra, July 7, 1966.

conscience awoke to chide him:

I love the seductive beauties of your surrendering body;

I'd like a love whose pleasures are mixed with sin.

[Your] body I see is forbidden me

But it is not forbidden the paltry worms.

Therefore I shall go as far as seduction goes

And obey my lust and my sinfulness.

I shall tear the veil of viture

And drown my lyre in red dragon's blood.

I shall satiate [my] burning desires

Which move in my breath and beat in my blood.

I shall amuse myself with every warm body

And quench the thirst of craving love.

Of prostitutes, I shall make cemeteries

For my sins and soothers for a love aflame.

I shall render the Spirit contemptible.

— You are unable.

Go back penitently with your Spirit.

O Poet who has preferred earth to heaven,

What a difference there is between Death and Eternal Life.

The water of deep valleys will not quench

A thirst that burns in your heart;

Seek the clouds in the early morning and ask

For the water coming from an unknown sea.

The stones of the road curse you because so often

You walked [on them, going] to enjoy a sinful love.

You have given your body as a prey to sins

And to a prostitute, throwing crumbles to her avid body.

Many sons have you left in her lap --

Dead ! What a sinful criminal you are !

The crumbles of your body will to-morrow be buried

In the same dark tomb as that of the voluptuous prostitute.

Between these two poles, Platonic love and sexual desire, Badr was swayed on a troubled sea as he was looking for an emotional harbour with little success. His studies became hateful to him because they limited the free time he would have liked to devote to an enjoyment of his youth. In a poem, "The Prisoner",<sup>(1)</sup> which he wrote in April 1944, he considers the book his prison, and its lines his fetters; and he laments the loss of his life in darkness amongst dead books. Yet to his teachers, he seemed to be doing well. At the end of the academic year 1943-1944 his marks were as follows:<sup>(2)</sup>

Arabic Language (Grammar)	85
Arabic Literature - Composition	85
English Language	79
Geography	81
Ancient History	81
Average	82 %

But in spite of this good result, Badr was not happy at the Arabic section at college and he began thinking of joining the English section in the following year. Perhaps he thought he would be more wanted as a teacher of English in future and the change would give him better security. On the other hand, his readings in English literature must have

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(1) Iqbāl, "al-Sajīn", pp.107-109

(2) College of Education: Dean's letter to the author No.4898, Baghdad, April 24, 1966.

whetted his appetite for a fuller exposure to Western thought. His Syrian class-mate, the poet Sulaymān al-Īsā, says that Badr frequently asked him to translate for him some of the French poetry he used to read such as that of Lamartine, De Musset, Hugo, Verlaine and especially Baudelaire. (1)

A new horizon was opening up for him and Badr wanted to be able to make it part of his vision. Yet for one more year he remained in the Arabic section. In his free time, he was now seen, not with Abū Tammām, al-Buhturī and al-Mutanabbī, but with Shakespeare's plays and the collections of the Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Keats. (2) Among his unpublished papers, I found four poems dated 1944 dedicated "To the soul of the poet, Wordsworth" and one "To the soul of Wordsworth, the poet of Nature". Yet Badr did not cut himself off completely from his old favourite Arab poets, nor did he become disinterested in the current literary movement in the Arab world. To keep abreast with current matters, he read the papers and listened to the radio regularly; and the Beirut monthly magazine al-Adīb was his constant companion. (3) This literary magazine, started in 1942 by Albert Adīb, fostered the younger generation of writers and poets in the Arab world and was becoming quite influential in literary circles. It introduced new poets, short-story writers and critics who were to change the literary tastes of their contemporaries

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(1) Sulaymān al-Īsā's letter to the author, Aleppo, July 26, 1966.

(2) ibid. Cf. Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op.cit., p.10

(3) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p.10

by their modern culture, and it strictly followed a non-political line.

The Second World War was coming nearer to its end every day. The Allies were victorious in the Far East as well as in Europe. The U.S.S.R. had established diplomatic relations with Iraq in September 1944 and, as one of the Allies, was commanding admiration from many young people in Iraq and other Arab countries. It was especially admired because, within a quarter of a century only, it had built itself up into a modern and powerful state. It therefore pointed to the way the young men could follow to build up their Arab homeland. Communism thus appealed to many of them and was considered a panacea for all the ills of their countries. The Soviet Union capitalized on this situation as well as on its own achievements and victories, and launched a strong propaganda campaign in the Middle East. Arab Communist bodies which were defunct or ineffective in the twenties and the thirties became active again. But now, Communism adopted the "popular front" tactics in its international attempts to win over adherents to support its anti-fascist strategy and, later, its anti-Western policy. The Soviet Union took advantage of its being an ally in the war to embark on activities that were otherwise not permissible in Middle Eastern countries. Communists infiltrated into the ranks of the intellectuals and workers in the major cities of the Middle East. Their papers and magazines were permitted, and appealed especially

to the young who, by nature, are more radical than adults and more prone to accept change and be swayed by idealistic aspirations.<sup>(1)</sup> Under names such as "The National Liberation Front" and the like, the Communists enlisted many liberally-minded young people in the Middle East as well as anti-Western politicians.

Although communism had been declared illegal in Iraq since 1938, it continued to exist underground. Its votaries now made every effort to seduce the organizers of nascent trade unions in the middle forties, and by the later war years it had gained ground perceptibly in Baghdād and other main cities. The League of Iraqi Communists drew its membership from the educated classes under the leadership of the lawyer, Dā'ūd al-Şāyigh. Yūsūf Salmān, a Christian whose party name was Comrade Fahd, led the Iraqi Communist Party and produced the secretly-printed newspaper, al-Qā'ida. The movement gained adherents amongst the poor and the thwarted, especially amongst the Kurds and the Assyrian, Armenian and Jewish minorities who had lost hope in the rulers. "This Communism of the 'Iraq of 1944-5 had little intellectual background, although it attracted the intelligentsia, and showed scarcely a link with the doctrine, or even the agents, of Moscow."<sup>(2)</sup> Secret meetings, leaflets and talks amongst workers and students were its main forms of outreach and action.

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(1) Richard Cornell: Youth and Communism, New York 1965, pp.2-3

(2) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg: 'Iraq, 1900 to 1950, London (2nd imp.) 1956, p.314.

Amongst Badr's friends there were some who had been attracted by communist tactics in Iraq. Pretty soon, he was drawn to their circle and became a member of the Iraqi Communist Party. (1) To him the world was now divided into the imperialist capitalist countries and the democratic socialist ones; society was divided into the exploiting rich bourgeoisie and the exploited poor proletariat; culture was divided into the right-wing reactionary type and the leftist progressive one; and he liked to identify himself with the second category and feel a responsibility to reverse the order of things and put right the march of History. He deeply felt the injustice of the distribution of wealth and power in his society, and firmly believed in the justice and justification of a leftist standpoint.

Amongst his fellow communists, he found furthermore the precious attention he needed, and the brotherly feeling of an esprit de corps that seemed to give his life a purpose.

He concentrated on his studies and read widely in the college library. By the end of the year, he had decided definitely to leave the Arabic section and join the English section at the college. He later said that he felt there was no additional knowledge that his teachers had at the Arabic section which they could impart to him or which he needed. (2) Yet some of these teachers were illustrious scholars such as

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: "al-Iltizām wa al-Lā-iltizām fī al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth" in Al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwāʾ, [Beirūt ? 1962 ?], p.245

(2) Author's interview with Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, Baghdād, January 10, 1967.

Dr. Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Baṣīr, Dr. Muṣṭafā Jawād and Mr. Ṭāhā al-Rāwī.<sup>(1)</sup> However, his final result for the year 1944-1945 was even better than that of the previous year, for his marks were as follows:<sup>(2)</sup>

Grammar	97
Rhetoric	89
Arabic Literature	100
English Language	83
Islamic History	90
Geography of Asia	86
Psychology	85
French Language	97
Average	91 %

The Second World War had come to an end after the collapse of Germany in May, 1945, and of Japan in August, 1945, when Badr returned to college for his third year in the autumn after a summer holiday spent at home. The world was still stunned by the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The League of Arab States had come to existence in March 1945, and its most burning problem for many years to come continued to be the Palestine problem. The Iraqi people, increasingly chafing under the ignoble terms of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, lent their support to their Arab brethren in Palestine, and anti-British feeling was mounting amongst them.

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(1) Sulaymān al-ʿĪsā's letter to the author, op. cit.

(2) College of Education: Dean's letter to the author, op.cit.

With the end of the war, the Iraqi government relaxed some of its previous restrictions on political activity and the press. New parties were formed and officially accepted. New papers were licensed. The Iraqi communists organized themselves as the Party of National Liberation under Ḥusayn Muḥammad al-Shabībī, but they were refused the right to legalize themselves.<sup>(1)</sup> They continued however to be fully active, first openly and then underground. Their "Anti-Zionist League" was permitted by the government and, through it, they continued to influence public opinion. Some communists infiltrated other extreme parties like the People's Party and the National Union. Their organization was widespread and efficient and they had cells in government offices, industrial enterprises and intellectual centres.

Badr continued to be a member of the Party of National Liberation. Since poetry was very influential in Iraqi society, the party needed some poetic spokesmen and amongst them were 'Alī Jalīl al-Wardī, Jāsīm al-Jabūrī and Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb.<sup>(2)</sup> In the general atmosphere of relaxed political activity, students in the different colleges and institutes formed students' unions. At the Higher Teachers' Training College, Badr was elected head of the college's union.<sup>(3)</sup> Leftist tendencies amongst students were growing. The college authorities were starting to look askance at Badr's influence, but the student body hailed him as a leader. They listened

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(1) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg: 'Iraq, 1900 to 1950, London (2nd imp.) 1956, p. 336.

(2) Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: "al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā' fi al-'Irāq al-Hadīth" in al-Ayyām newspaper, Baghdād, October 25, 1962.

(3) Mrs. Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā to the author, Baghdād, Jan. 10, 1967.

to his political harangues on sundry occasions and enjoyed his reciting of love poems.

One day, as he was walking in one of the corridors at college, a plump soft hand patted him on the shoulder. As he turned to see who it was, his eyes set upon a girl's beautiful face with an inviting smile that dimpled her cheeks. The elegant girl then asked him to write love poems about her. He blushed and could not believe his ears. How could this rich girl be interested in his love poems ? She assured him of her interest and asked him to let her hear all that he wrote about her. (1)

For a time after that, his heart poured forth love poems to his "soul's sister", the rich girl with the radiant dimples. In a poem (2) dated December 11, 1945, he called this his "virgin love" and said,

What a soft, melodious voice it was  
That diffused magic in my blood !  
"Write me some poems," [she said,] and my heart  
Beat with sweet, charming tunes:  
Every one of its wounds became a poet  
With an enchanted song and a sonorous guitar.  
May the poems I sang and the images thereof:  
May the vast plains, the winds that moved  
My soul, the inspiring beautiful maidens:

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(1) Daisy al-Amīr: "Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb wa al-Marfa' al-'Āṭifī", in al-Ādāb, Beirut, February 1965, pp.7-8

(2) Azhār Dhābila, pp.8-10

All be a ransom for two dimples radiating  
From the cheeks which arouse my sighs.  
Your dimples adorn the meeting  
Of love smiles, after separation.  
They shine like stars over the smiling lips  
With a quick, ruddy twinkle.

He read her his poems or passed them on to her and occasionally enjoyed some happy moments in her company. Little things made him write long poems to her: a chance look or touch, a transient conversation or absence. But his love was always chaste and above board. (1)

She once sang an American negro song by Stephen Foster called "Old Folks at Home" and he liked it immensely. (2) Swanee River must have reminded him of Buwayb at his village and of his own old folks at home.

But the girl does not seem to have been serious about this love. Sometimes she ignored him completely and made him once dream she had forsaken him. (3) She did not as much as greet him or look at him at times. (4) He suffered from this love and often told his class-mate, Sulaymān al-ʿĪsā, that he was doomed to fail in love because of his ugliness. (5) His friend tried in vain to encourage him to get over this feeling. (5) Badr was also realizing that his family's social

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- (1) Sulaymān al-ʿĪsā's letter to the author, op.cit.  
(2) Azhār Dhābila: "Nashīd al-Liqā'" dated April 7, 1946, pp.17-24  
(3) Ibid. "Ḥubb Yamūt" dated April 15, 1946, pp.26-28  
(4) Ibid. "Ba'd al-Liqā'", p.15  
(5) Sulaymān al-ʿĪsā's letter to the author, op.cit.

position was a hindrance to a successful love affair with a rich girl:

Between me and love is a vast desert  
Of bountiful wealth and father's position.  
Let my sigh cease and my song die.  
Far it is between mud and star. (1)

When the girl got married to a wealthy Iraqi, the embittered Badr plunged deep into his political hostility to the richer classes. The mere sight of a black girl begging aroused all his hatred of the rich, for in her plight he saw himself and the whole nation at the mercy of a handful of callous wealthy men in secret collusion with the greedy Western powers. (2) When the American negro singer, Paul Robeson, headed a deputation to meet President Truman in 1946 in order to protest against the treatment of negroes in U.S.A., Badr wrote a poem (3) in support of the negroes and in sympathy with them, advising the singer not to sing of love but of injustice; for in the negroes' plight, Badr saw that of the Iraqi people. He ended his poem saying:

We are alike, having a despot  
Dealing death to millions;  
We are alike in that  
[Our] night will pass and end.  
After a while, the excited fists  
Will leave the despot a wreck.

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(1) Azhār Dhābila: "Ba'ḍ al-Liqā'" dated January 5, 1946, p.16  
(2) ibid. "al-Sā'ila al-Sawda'", pp.73-75  
(3) ibid. "Ḥaṭim al-Aghlāl", pp.76-81

He was meanwhile enjoying his lessons in the English section. Mr. Joseph Spoor, the English language teacher, was not much of a success as a teacher and the students gave him a hell of a time.<sup>(1)</sup> The chairman of the section, Mr. Zebedee, was by contrast a man of wider interests and commanded great respect. He lectured on English literature and was of great influence on his students.<sup>(1)</sup> In these circumstances, Badr made the discovery of T.S. Eliot for the first time and started to admire him as much as he did John Keats, as he said later.<sup>(2)</sup> He considered him a "reactionary" poet<sup>(3)</sup> in accordance with party epithets, but he admired his technique and spent much time trying to understand him.

He also spent much time reading the Marxist books and magazines that were given to him by his party or that were flooding the bookshops of Baghdad. Some were in English and some in Arabic, but they all had an anti-Western tone and a vein of "committed literature".

Anti-Western feeling was mounting in Iraq and the communists fostered it with calculation. Badr continued with a few others to sustain a leftist under-current at college and to sponsor amongst the students a spirit of solidarity to be used in time of need. When the college administration decided upon the addition of a further year of study to the four-year course,<sup>(4)</sup> the student body was not pleased. Badr called for a strike

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(1) Author's interview with Mrs. Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, Baghdād, January 10, 1967; also R.A. Simcox, then Director of the British Institute in Baghdād, in a British Council letter to the author, London, January 11, 1967.

(2) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid in London, February 26, 1963, quoted to the author.

(3) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Asātir, al-Najaf, 1950, footnote p.93

and actively urged the students to it. He also made contacts with students of other colleges of Baghdad seeking support. The strike was successful and the college administration abandoned the idea of an additional year but Badr was to suffer. The Faculty Board decided on January 2, 1946, to suspend him for the rest of the academic year. In a note<sup>(1)</sup> signed for the Dean by Dr. Khālid al-Hāshimī communicated to him on January 8, 1946, the causes of his suspension were laid as "his urging to strike, his creating of a bad atmosphere at college preventing understanding (contrary to what is expected of him), his contacting of students in other colleges to support the strike and his spreading of harmful propaganda." The note ended with the following sentence: "He has not been finally dismissed because of his poetic potentialities and because this is the first infraction he commits in three years."

Badr went home to Jaykūr but he occasionally returned to Baghdad for a day or two. In May 1946, he came to Baghdad hoping to find some temporary job in journalism and managed to do some part-time work, mainly in the field of translation.<sup>(2)</sup> Iraq at this time was in turmoil against the Anglo-American policy in favour of Zionism in Palestine. There was a political general strike in the country in protest against the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine which recommended further Jewish immigration to that country. Badr

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(1) Higher Teachers' Training College: Dean's note No. 73 dated January 8, 1946.

(2) Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid's letter to the author, Basra, October 22, 1966.

took part in the mass demonstrations that filled the streets

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(1) Stephen Hemsley ... gg: 'Iraq, 1900 to 1950, London  
(2nd imp.) 1956, p.338

(2) Mrs. Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid,  
quoted to the author in his letter, Basra, December 15, 1966.

the government's suppression of more newspapers for inflammatory writing and the imprisonment of some communists for the issue of subversive leaflets. But before he was re-admitted to college to repeat his third year, he had to give a written undertaking to the college authorities not to belong to any political organization and to produce a certificate of good conduct from the Directorate of Police in Baghdad. (1)

This done, he resumed his studies and tried to abide by the college regulations as far as he could. He also resumed writing poetry. On the 29th of November, 1946, he wrote a poem entitled "Was it love ?" (2) in which he tried to experiment with metre and rhyme. Whether his experiment was planned or accidental cannot be said with certainty, but he was conscious of it since he tried to justify it in a footnote by claiming that the poem was like most Western and especially English poetry in that it had different rhymes in no fixed order and different quantities of similar feet in its verses with no regularity. (3) The content of the poem was not particularly different from that of his other poems written at this time; he was simply saying in it that his love was a lost hope or a fool's dream. But his metre and rhyme schemes were certainly different. His experiment was a breach in the classical rules of Arabic prosody.

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(1) College of Education: Dean's letter to the author No.3076, Baghdad, April 13, 1967.

(2) Azhār Dhābila, "Hal Kāna Ḥubban ?", pp.68-72, reprinted with changes and deletions in Azhār wa Asaṭīr, pp.139-141.

(3) Azhār Dhābila, footnote p.69. For previous attempts in free verse, cf. "Free Verse (al-shi'ṛ al-ḥurr) in modern Arabic literature: Abū Shādī and his school, 1926-46" by S. Moreh in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Vol.XXXI Part 1, 1968, pp.28-51.

Like Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, this poem was a stage in the development of Badr's technique where the change-over was not complete but quite revolutionary and significant. It consisted in a freedom to use in every verse a number of feet not necessarily equal to that in other verses and various rhymes not necessarily regular in their positions in the poem. Why this experiment should have come at this juncture can only be conjectured. Badr was in the first place more influenced now by Western literature than ever before and was realizing that much in it was revolutionary. In the second place, he was realizing the monotony and limitations of classical Arabic prosody and was following up the changes of metre in the same poem that poets like the Lebanese Ilyās Abū Shabaka (d.1947) and the Egyptian Khalīl Shaybūb (d.1951) and others were introducing at this time.<sup>(1)</sup> In the third place, he was psychologically in a position to feel he was personally fettered and needed freedom, and socially he was coming to realize that the structure of Arab society needed revolutionizing. All these factors must have unconsciously affected this experiment of his. But he did not have this poem published until more than a year later in his first collection of poems, called Faded Flowers.<sup>(2)</sup>

The new type of poem was to spread quickly in a few

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(1) In his introduction to Asātīr, al-Najaf 1950, pp.5-6, Badr mentions both poets in particular as poets introducing mixed metres in their poetry.

(2) Azhār Dhābila, Maṭba'at al-Karnak bi al-Faggāla, Miṣr 1947.

years among the younger poets of Iraq and later among others in the Arab world, and was to be called "free verse". Nāzik al-Malā'ika was to claim that she was the first to invent it<sup>(1)</sup> in her poem, "Cholera", which she composed on the 27th of October, 1947, and which was published in the December number of the Beirut magazine, al-Urūba. Badr was to confirm that his poem was composed earlier but came to be known in Iraq only when his collection, Faded Flowers, reached Baghdad from its Cairo publisher in the second half of December 1947.<sup>(2)</sup> Yet Badr conceded that the first published poetry of this type was 'Alī Aḥmad Bākathīr's translation of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" which appeared in Cairo in January 1947 after a delay of ten years.<sup>(3)</sup> However, Bākathīr's play al-Samā' aw Akhnātūn wa Nafartītī, published in Cairo in 1943, actually fits Badr's conception of free verse better, since it is composed of one metre, the mutaqārib, whereas Romeo and Juliet is a mixture of metres. Bākathīr had a poem of real free verse entitled "Namūdhaj min al-Shi'r al-Mursal al-Ḥurr"<sup>(4)</sup> and Ḥusayn Ghannām's translation of Longfellow's "Hiawatha"<sup>(5)</sup> is also in similar free verse. Fu'ād al-Khashin likewise had published a poem in free verse entitled "Anā Lawlāki"<sup>(6)</sup>. But

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(1) Nāzik al-Malā'ika: Qadāyā al-Shi'r al-Mu'āṣir, Beirut, 1962, p.21. The chapter was originally published in al-Adīb, Beirut, January 1954, as "Ḥarakat al-Shi'r al-Ḥurr fi al-Iraq", pp. 21-24.

(2) Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: "Ta'liqān" in al-Ādāb, Beirut June 1954, p.69. Badr misspoke himself when he gave January 1947 as the date of his collection's arrival from Cairo.

(3) ibid.

(4) Al-Risāla, Cairo, 1945, Vol.XIII p.625, pp.680-681.

(5) ibid. p.628, pp.752-754.

(6) Al-Adīb, Beirut, October 1946, p.25

none of these previous attempts attracted or enthused Arab poets as were Badr's and Nāzik's attempts to do later and start a new movement in Arabic poetry.

Badr did not write any other poems of free verse until 1948. Meanwhile, he continued to compose poems in the classical Arabic prosody and have them published in the local papers. His love poems at this time were bitter remembrances of the past or else they were written to an imaginary sweetheart whom he expected to come his way. When he remembered his love of the rich girl with the dimples, he wrote a bitter poem entitled "Illusive Love"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he said that she had not been a match for a talented poet but only for one who was mean and carnal. On February 1st, 1947, he wrote a long romantic poem entitled "Loves"<sup>(2)</sup> and addressed "To the one who is awaited". In this poem, he besought his imagined nameless girl to come his way:

Girl of love and imagination, come  
To [your] creator with virgin charm,<sup>(3)</sup>  
[Come] with twenty years bedewed  
Across the orbits of my heart.  
To every single year of your life I give  
All the springs of my loving life  
Except one little Spring which I keep  
For our splendid meeting day.

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(1) Azhār Dhābila, "Āshiq al-Wahm", pp.58-59 dated Jan.26,1947.

(2) ibid., "Ahwā'", pp.82-99; reprinted in Azhār wa Asatīr, with changes and deletions, pp.17-28

(3) In Azhār wa Asatīr, p. 18, this verse reads:  
"To one whose eyes are clinging to visions".

Then Badr related the story of his previous love experiences and ended his poem by saying that life would be meaningless if his love did not come true.

When Nūrī al-Sa'īd became premier on November 21, 1946, he dissolved the Iraqi parliament and prepared for elections to take place in February, 1947. The conduct of elections, however, did not prevent him from locating the hotbeds of communism and claiming by his arrests and searches to have suppressed them. (1)

When the new parliament opened, Sālīh Jabr became premier and one of the objectives of his policy was a firm resistance to communism. He suppressed a number of extreme newspapers and made further arrests. Baghdad bookshops were raided and the premises of the more extreme parties searched. (2) Some communists detained by Nūrī al-Sa'īd were tried and death sentences were passed on Yūsuf Salmān, Zakī Bāšim and Nājī Shummal for inciting troops and police against the State (3) but were later commuted to long terms of imprisonment.

In a love poem which Badr wrote in July, 1947, entitled "A Prisoner", (4) his imagery was largely drawn from imprisonment. The hungry faces, the horrible wall, the chink of fetters, the master's stick, the darkness were all set in it against long hours of waiting and a desire to escape to a far-off beloved in spite of the encircling arms of a foreboding, omnipresent father who, it might be surmised, stood for

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(1) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg: 'Iraq, 1900 to 1950, p.340.

(2) *ibid.* p.342.

(3) *ibid.*

(4) Asāṭīr, "Sajīn", pp.79-81; reprinted in Azhār wa Asāṭīr pp.108-112.

political authority as well as established traditions.

The only incident recorded against Badr during this academic year was his participation with a few other students in causing some trouble at an acquaintance party organized at college in December, 1946 by the old students for the new ones. He was given a written warning dated December 12, 1946, with a reduction of five conduct marks, and he was forbidden from taking part in any college trips, parties and meetings. (1)

The final result of his academic year was not as outstanding as that of the previous year, although it was good. His marks for the year 1946-1947 were as follows: (2)

Arabic Language	87
English Language	91
French Language	90
English Literature	76
Psychology	89
English History	72
Secondary Education	84
Translation	88
Average	86 %

It was around this time that Badr began to entertain the idea of having a collection of his poems published in book form. In the autumn of 1947, he gave some of his Baṣran

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(1) College of Education: Dean's letter to the author, No.3076, dated Baghdad, April 13, 1967.

(2) College of Education: Dean's letter to the author, No.4898, dated Baghdad, April 24, 1966

friends going to the University of Cairo some money for printing fees and a manuscript. Amongst them were 'Abd al-Hamīd al-Sāmīr and Mashkūr al-Asadī.<sup>(1)</sup> They managed to have it printed at Karnak Press and to have an eminent Iraqi writer, Raphael Buttī, who was then in Cairo, write a preface. The printed collection, "Faded Flowers", reached Baghdad in the second half of December, 1947.<sup>(2)</sup>

By this time, Badr had embarked on his last year at college. He had made the acquaintance of some new friends there. Among them was a Sabaeen girl called Lamī'a. She came from 'Amāra in lower Iraq and was now a second-year student of Arabic at the Higher Teachers' Training College. She was a pretty brunette of eighteen and had a graceful shape and beautiful eyes. She had an air of sadness about her, accentuated by her dark clothes. She wore the Iraqi ladies black cloak or 'abā'a mostly when she left college grounds. She was rather reserved and softspoken but she was quite pleasant and affable and a poetess into the bargain.<sup>(3)</sup> At first, Badr saw very little of her, but enough to arouse in him a strong, mysterious feeling towards her. Among his other new friends was 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, a second-year student of Arabic, who was a rising poet with leftist tendencies strongly sponsored by the Communist Party. Badr had settled down to work hard but political preoccupations engaged him again.

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(1) Mahmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p.10.

(2) Nazik al-Malā'ika, op. cit., p.22

(3) Information supplied to the author by Yāsīn al-Barrīshī, a class-mate of hers, in a letter dated Jerusalem, June 1, 1966.

For some time, there had been talk of amending the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 which was to come to the end of its twenty-five-year term in the middle 'fifties. The extreme nationalists advocated its immediate abrogation. When a new treaty was finally signed at Portsmouth by Šālīḥ Jabr and the Iraqi deputation and by Ernest Bevin on January 15, 1948, the immediate reaction of the Baghdad public was strikes and demonstrations.<sup>(1)</sup> The students of the different colleges in Baghdad declared a three-day strike; more strikes were called in offices, workshops and newspapers; impressive demonstrations were organized by the National Democratic, Independence, Liberal, and Communist Parties. Anti-British feeling was re-inforced by feelings of dismay at the serious food shortage, the economic inequalities, the administrative corruption, and by the resentment of young politicians excluded from power. Mass demonstrations filling the streets of the capital grew in scale on every succeeding day.

Badr took part in these demonstrations with as much bitter resentment against the régime and its British supporters as joy for being able to move others with fiery speeches and inflammatory poems. At times, he would be carried on the shoulders of some class-mate or comrade to shout against the government and denounce its treacherous policy. At others,

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(1) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg: 'Iraq, 1900 to 1950, p.344 ff.; Amīn Sa'īd: Thawrāt al-'Arab fī al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn, Dār al-Hilāl, [Cairo,] n.d.(1960 ?), p.138 ff.; Šadr al-Dīn Sharaf al-Dīn: Saḥābat Portsmouth, Beirūt, April 1948.

he would climb up the wall surrounding Parliament or other public building where the crowds assembled, in order to recite more of his poems or deliver more of his harangues while he was protectively jostled by a circle of Basran and other friends among whom the pretty face of Lamī'a looked to him.<sup>(1)</sup> Fists rose threateningly as demonstrators shouted their heads off.

Clashes with the police only helped to throw fuel on the fire. About fifty persons were killed and two hundred injured, including many policemen and students. The communiqués of the Deputy Premier, Jamāl Bābān, were unheeded. The situation was beyond discipline.

The Regent, after a five-hour meeting with a Crown Council, disclaimed the treaty in an attempt to pacify the public. The demonstrations, however, continued unabated. The police, whose morale fell and whose force weakened, could not hope to keep order, and the army could not be invoked, for political reasons. Public funerals were given to students who had fallen and were attended by thousands. Badr took part in them<sup>(2)</sup> and recited at the Ḥaydarkhāna Mosque a poem that began, Vengeance boils with anger. Cry out, O victim souls.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Iraqi Premier, Ṣālīḥ Jabr, returned from England on January 26, only to meet the rage of the press and the

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(1) Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-'Abd al-Jalīl to the author at interview, Basra, January 17, 1967.

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirut, April 23, 1966.

(3) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit. p.12

crowds who were undaunted by arrests and police fire. The street fights continued and reached a climax on January 27 when the premises of the Iraq Times and other British institutions and commercial concerns were burnt. At the royal palace, crowds demanded the resignation — even the death — of the Prime Minister. Many young men were killed in the "Battle of the Bridge" in a clash with the police, notably Qays Ismā'īl al-Ālūsī<sup>(1)</sup> and many others were wounded, notably Muḥammad Ja'far al-Jawāhirī who was also to die a few days later. Thousands of people attended the funerals of "the Martyrs" at the Ḥaydarkhāna Mosque and prayers for their souls were held at others all over the capital.<sup>(2)</sup>

Ṣāliḥ Jabr finally resigned and fled for his life. Muḥammad al-Ṣadr formed a cabinet which soon announced that the treaty would not be ratified. Parliament was prorogued for fifty days and finally dissolved on February 25, 1948, being considered illegally elected.<sup>(3)</sup>

Although the situation became quieter, student parades and outcries continued — especially on the occasion of memorial meetings held forty days after the death of their colleagues. Badr took part in these meetings<sup>(4)</sup> and, at one of them, recited a poem that began:<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966.

(2) ibid.

(3) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg: Iraq, 1900 to 1950, p.347.

(4) Mustafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, op. cit.

(5) Fu'ād Ṭāḥā al-'Abd al-Jalīl's letter to the author, postmark: Baṣra, July 7, 1966.

The roar of running blood

Still fills the ears of Time.

Meanwhile, an odd poem of Badr's would find its way to the local press with impunity, such as the following in al-Jawāhirī's al-Ra'y al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Āmm:<sup>(1)</sup>

O smile of light on the lips of wounds:  
You are the morning star before Morning dawns.  
Whenever you loom in the imagination of despots  
And set to flames the bed of the slaughterer  
A fetter melts on the fire, and a fist  
Releases its grip on the broken weapon.

It is a pity that these political poems of Badr have not been preserved. Most probably they constituted the bulk of the collection called The Roar of the Tempest<sup>(2)</sup> which was advertised as forthcoming at the end of his second collection Legends<sup>(2)</sup> published in 1950, and it may be the one which Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismāʿīl says was lost by a friend called Muṣṭafā al-Aʿzamī entrusted with its publication in Baghdad.<sup>(3)</sup>

By February 1948, Badr was sure that the girl he had been looking for all his life was Lamīʿa. The strong, mysterious feeling towards her was nothing but real love: she was the one whom he was awaiting to love. All his previous loves

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(1) Quoted in Jalīl Kamāl al-Dīn's al-Shiʿr al-ʿArabī al-Ḥadīth wa Rūḥ al-ʿAsr, Beirut 1964, p.256

(2) Zaʿīr al-ʿAṣifa, see his Asāṭir, al-Najaf 1950, p. 95. There is also a reference to it in the introduction, p. 8.

(3) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismāʿīl's letters to the author, Beirut July 19, 1966, and Beirut August 5, 1966.

with their bitterness and their poignancy receded in his memory and this new love loomed in perspective as the object of his previous unsuccessful searches for a sweetheart. On her part, Lamī'a was attracted to Badr and liked his poetry. She called him "the meek prophet"<sup>(1)</sup> and felt he was the one she had been expecting for long.

In a poem entitled "Memory of a Meeting"<sup>(2)</sup> Badr related how he could not concentrate on his studies at night because his sweetheart's memory kept distracting him as he was reading John Keats's sonnet,

Bright Star! would I were steadfast as thou art,  
parts of which he incorporated in this poem. Before he knew Lamī'a, he had imagined he had tuberculosis and, like John Keats in his "Ode to a Nightingale", he used to call death at night by soft names.<sup>(3)</sup> Now he wanted to live long and love her.

But with the female's natural reserve and the tradition-bound Eastern woman's modesty, Lamī'a wanted to be cautious. She did not want him to make any direct reference to her in his poetry and he had to destroy those of his poems which contained any thing about their relation that she did not want people to know.<sup>(4)</sup> He had to envelop his love poems to her with vagueness and involution.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) See Badr's introduction to his Asāṭīr, p.7

(2) Asāṭīr, "Dhikrā Liqā'", pp.82-84; reprinted in Azhār wa Asāṭīr, pp.113-117.

(3) Asāṭīr, "Ri'a Tatamazzaq", pp.43-46; reprinted with deletions in Azhār wa Asāṭīr, pp.59-64.

(4) See Badr's introduction to his Asāṭīr, p.7

(5) ibid.

Yet in spite of that, two things worried her about her love relation to him. The first was that she felt she had come in his life too late for him to have the innocent fullness and joy of a first love.<sup>(1)</sup> The second was that she feared their different religions would be an obstacle to their happiness.<sup>(2)</sup>

Badr tried to allay her fear and her doubt. In a poem entitled "One Love",<sup>(3)</sup> he averred that he had forgotten the past and that his life now was only a present. He regretted having dissipated his love before, but begged her to recognize their mutual unmistakable love and anguish, and he assured her of the glow in his heart.

But she remained tormented by the possibility of a future separation. She was afraid of the certain pain that such possible separation would entail. His reaction was "We shall never separate"<sup>(4)</sup>:

Let not, let not my morrow  
Spoil my day. What is my morrow ?  
If you happily smile to-day  
Let Time frown ever after.  
My life before we met  
Was but years in a body creeping.  
My pain with love is sweet, my dear;

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(1) Note the prose introduction to Badr's love poem "Hawā Wāhid", in Asātīr, p.18, deleted from his reprinted poem in Azhār wa Asātīr, p.68.

(2) Note the prose introduction to Badr's love poem "Asātīr", in Asātīr, p.31; reprinted in Azhār wa Asātīr, p. 46, the word religion being changed to sect.

(3) Asātīr, "Hawā Wāhid", pp.18-20; repr. in Azhār wa Asātīr, pp68-71.

(4) Asātīr, "Lan Naftariq", pp.21-22; repr. in Azhār wa Asātīr, pp72-71.

Enjoy your love and smile. ...

Give me your flame: in it there is a glow

That leads my steps — even though to Death.

Lamī'a started to feign that his love was not reciprocated but he tenaciously persisted. When they met and kissed each other for the first time, she told him that that was their last meeting since she was being forbidden from meeting him. <sup>(1)</sup> In a poem, "The Last Meeting" <sup>(2)</sup>, he described this first kiss and their ecstatic yet tense meeting and wished she could defy those who forbade her to meet him. The difference of their religions hovered over his thoughts incessantly. Not that religion mattered to him so much, for by now Badr did not keep the Ramaḍān fast or the daily prayers which he had occasionally kept earlier. <sup>(3)</sup> But he recognized the power of religion in a traditional society and its divisive effect in matters pertaining to inter-marriages of a heterogeneous character. Yet he blamed religion itself and the venal authors of socio-religious customs. In a poem entitled "Legends" written on the 24th of March, 1948, he says: <sup>(4)</sup>

[They are] legends from dead ages

Woven by perished hands,

Narrated by a darkness from the abyss

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(1) Asāṭīr, "al-Liqā' al-Akhīr", p.27, note the prose introduction of the poem.

(2) ibid. p.27-30 repr. in Azhār wa Asāṭīr, pp.41-45. This poem is undated but should be dated before April 5, 1948, since on this date Badr wrote another poem, "al-Wadā'", in which he refers to the previous poem. Cf. Asāṭīr, "al-Wadā'", p.37 repr. Azhār wa Asāṭīr, p. 80.

(3) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, Beirut June 6, 1966

(4) Asāṭīr, "Asāṭīr", pp.31-34; repr. Azhār wa Asāṭīr, pp.46-53.

And sung by two dead people.

[They are] legends like deserts over which  
Mirage shimmers, split by a splinter shooting star,  
And in which I see the glitter of gold [as woof]  
Meeting the warp of a loaf's shades  
And behold ! A thick veil  
Hides you from me: the waiting is lost,  
Hopes are dismayed and two lovers are finished....  
Come, come: let us melt time  
And its hours in a long embrace  
And colour with crimson  
A sail behind the distance,  
And forget the morrow  
On your warm fragrant bosom  
Akin to a poet's phantasy.  
Come, for space is filled  
With an echo whispering  
Endlessly about our meeting. ...  
Oh for the torment!  
Two wings behind the veil  
A sail  
And a murmur of farewell !

Three days later, he wrote another poem entitled "Mirage"<sup>(1)</sup>  
in which he said,

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(1) Asātīr, "Sarāb", pp.23-24; reprinted in Azhār wa Asātīr,  
pp.75-77.

Remnants of the caravan  
Whose way to death  
Is lit by a setting star,  
And solaced by the song  
Of thirsty lips —  
Phantasms drawn in the mirage  
Tearing the veil  
Over a dazed look  
And an eagerness melting the bounds. ...  
We shall go, but the mirage will stay  
And the shadow of thirsty lips  
Dreaming behind the veil.  
The slow shades will move  
At the echo of your bare feet  
To the dark abyss.  
We shall forget at the ladder's top  
Our love. Do not dream  
That we shall return !

His later poems about this love were poems of sad reminiscences or wishful thinking. He remembered how she had told him that she would love him until her tears dried up and her weak ribs broke<sup>(1)</sup>, and it pained him to know how much lovers could lie, and how much of man's life was made of the stuff of dreams. He continued to see her quite

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(1) Asātīr, "Nihāya", pp. 59-62; reprinted in Azhār wa Asātīr, pp. 121-127.

often at college, but there was no hope of a successful love. They both took part in reciting some of their poetry with other student poets in a public competition at college. Lamī'a got the first prize and Badr and his friend, Sulaymān al-Īsā, the next prizes. <sup>(1)</sup> Lamī'a was becoming a popular poetess and Badr lamented the failure of his love to her.

A more established poetess whose star was rising was Nāzik al-Malā'ika. She graduated from the Higher Teachers' Training College in 1944 when Badr was in his first year at the same college. He did not have much to do with her then, but now, after she had started to write free verse, Badr felt inclined to meet her and share with her his experience. But as she came from a rich, conservative family, Badr was a little hesitant about the means of approaching her. An opportunity offered itself when a Lebanese family living in Baghdad took him along with them to visit her and her family at home after previous permission from their friend, the poetess's father. <sup>(2)</sup> During the visit, the conversation revolved around literary subjects, poetry in particular. Exchange of views was beneficial to both poets. <sup>(3)</sup> On similar subsequent visits, Badr and Nāzik agreed to have a collection of their free verse published together in one book to surprise literary circles, <sup>(4)</sup> an agreement that was

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(1) Yāsīn al-Barrīshī's letter to the author, Jerusalem, June 1, 1966.

(2) Nāzik al-Malā'ika's letter to the author, postmark: Shaṭṭ al-Ārab, Baṣra, June 29, 1966.

(3) Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-Ābd al-Wāḥid in London, quoted to the author in the latter's letter, Baṣra, August 30, 1966.

(4) *ibid.*; also quoted in *Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb*, ed. Simon Jargy, *Manshūrāt Adwā'*, [Beirut ? 1966] ? p. 19 with some change.

never to materialize because Baḍr got involved in other things.

In the spring of 1948, Baḍr was elected to represent the student body of his college at the first national rally of students in Iraq held at the Lions Square in Baghdad.<sup>(1)</sup> The International Union of Students, dominated by communist youth, succeeded in furthering its aims through the many communist Iraqi students that were present at this rally. The Iraqi government did not wish to curtail the liberty of the students of the country or that of any other citizen for that matter. But as soon as the Palestine War started on the 15th of May, 1948, and Iraq sent its troops to participate in it, martial law was imposed throughout Iraq. By the suppression of many existing laws, civil rights were closely restricted.

The Palestine War aroused great enthusiasm amongst the Iraqis but its outcome led, as elsewhere in the Arab world, to bitter frustration.

In these circumstances, Baḍr graduated from the Higher Teachers' Training College. His results for his last year of study were the worst he ever had at college, although still acceptable. His marks for the year 1947-1948 were as follows:<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirūt, April 23, 1966; also author's interview with Mrs. Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, Baghdād, January 10, 1967.

(2) College of Education: Dean's letter to the author, No.4898, dated Baghdād, April 24, 1966.

English Language	83
French Language	79
English Literature	80
Teaching Methods (Applied)	65
English History	82
General Methods	73
Special Methods	73
Philosophy of Education	67
Average	75 %

Badr packed his belongings at college to return to Jaykūr but not before he had made Lamī'a a promise that she would soon visit him at his picturesque village. This was his last chance, he thought, and he hoped she would change her mind about him. Lamī'a was true to her word and visited Jaykūr in the summer and spent a whole afternoon with Badr.<sup>(1)</sup> Remembering his love to Lamī'a fifteen years later, Badr said:<sup>(2)</sup>

She was my poetess and was worth the whole world to me.  
I drank poetry from her eyes and slept in the shadows  
Of her poems; all her past  
And her youth were a waiting for me on a dreamy, moonlit bank  
Where birds slept and were awakened by sprinkled rain  
To fly and fill the horizon with sleepy echoes,  
Their wings sparkling with quivering light and fluttering  
With night's shadows. Gone is our summer afternoon at Jaykūr,

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(1) Author's interview with Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, Beirūt, June 14, 1966.

(2) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī, "Aḥibbīnī", pp.61-62, dated March 19, 1963.

When a bark whispered our way on its crystal water,  
When I read and she listened while the hills, the palms  
and the vines dreamt.  
Our paths parted; we walk to no return.

Badr applied for a teaching post in the Ministry of Education and was appointed to teach English at al-Ramādī Secondary School in October, 1948, for a monthly salary of eighteen Iraqi Dinars (ID. 18).<sup>(1)</sup> He moved to al-Ramādī, a town on the Euphrates, about ninety kilometers to the west of Baghdad. He was enthusiastic about his job but soon discovered that the greatest success at his job could not by itself make him happy. He was lonely in a big town where he knew almost nobody. At the end of his first week at school, he wrote a poem entitled "A Curtain"<sup>(2)</sup> in which, remembering his love, he said:

Like a deserted shore is my heart: with no light and no sail  
On a dark night wet with heavy rain;  
Neither is it haunted by the hail of a [lover's] meeting  
nor by the silence of farewell.

Writing poetry was his major consolation. He sent his poems to be published in the Baghdad papers. One of the poems to become quite famous was entitled "In the Old Market"<sup>(3)</sup>, published by Salīm Ṭāhā al-Takrītī in his paper, al-ʿUṣūr.<sup>(4)</sup> It was written in free verse which was being published in Iraq with more boldness every day. In this poem, Badr recalls

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(1) Ministry of Commerce, Directorate of Imports and Exports: Personnel letter No. 14534 dated April 25, 1961.

(2) Asātīr, "Sitār", pp.73-75; reprinted in Azhār wa Asātīr, 102-107, dated October 8, 1948.

(3) Asātīr, "Fī al-Sūq al-Qadīm", pp. 11-16; reprinted in Azhār wa Asātīr with corrections, pp.29-40 dated Nov. 3, 1948.

(4) Maḥmūd al-ʿAbṭa, op. cit., p. 11.

images from the old arcaded market of al-Ramādī in which he was walking at night:

[It is] night and the old market

Is hushed, except for the murmurs of passers-by

And the stranger's footsteps and the wind's sad tune

Pervading that dark night.

[It is] night, the old market and the murmurs of passers-by:

While pale light is being squeezed by sad lamps —

Like fog on the road —

In every old shop

Amid pale faces, as if it were a melting tune

In that old market.

Badr was then reminded of the moonlit nights at home and of his beloved and how they met a year ago and embraced each other under the street lights. The past is ruefully faded out into the present in this poem.

One day in December 1948, Badr went to Baghdad and managed to meet Lamī'a. He was disappointed with her apparent indifference towards him. He wrote a poem entitled "A Meeting and a Meeting"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he described her nonchalance and boredom and his own sadness. He did not have the privacy that he had hoped for with her and realized she was no more the one "that the soul dreamt of".

In January 1949, Badr returned to Jaykūr to spend his

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(1) Asātīr, "Liqā' wa Liqā' ", pp.76-78; reprinted in Azhār wa Asātīr, pp. 134-138, dated Dec. 14, 1948.

mid-year vacation. Pāchachī's cabinet that had taken the place of Muḥammad al-Ṣadr's in July 1948 resigned on January 6, 1949. Nūrī al-Saʿīd became Premier. The first act of his government was to continue the drive against the communists with which his predecessor had ended his ministry. Taking advantage of martial law still in force, his government made hundreds of arrests and many communists, amongst a few others, received severe sentences for sedition and treason. Four leading communists — Yūsuf Salmān ("Fahd"), Yahūda Ṣadiq, Zakī Bāšim and Ḥusayn Muḥammad al-Shabībī — were condemned to death and, this time, executed amid the angry protests of the world's communist press.<sup>(1)</sup> The government claimed that the Central Committee of the Communist Party had been located and its records seized, and were satisfied that the back of the movement was at last broken.<sup>(2)</sup>

Badr was arrested and transported to the Baghdad central prison.<sup>(3)</sup> His services in the Ministry of Education were officially dispensed with on January 25, 1949.<sup>(4)</sup> When he was released on bail<sup>(5)</sup> a few weeks later, he was administratively barred from teaching for ten years.<sup>(3)</sup> He returned to Jaykūr having suffered violent treatment in prison and feeling he

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(1) Stephen Hemsley Longrigg: 'Iraq, 1900 to 1950, pp.355-356.

(2) ibid.

(3) Mrs. Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, quoted in the latter's letter to the author, Baṣra, Dec.15, 1966.

(4) Ministry of Commerce, Directorate of Imports and Exports: Personnel letter No. 14534 dated April 25, 1961.

(5) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Bejrūt, April 23, 1966.

needed some peace and rest. He then moved to Baṣra and started looking for a job. After a period of unemployment, he worked for a while at the Iraqi Dates Company as a taster of dates, then he worked at the Baṣra Petroleum Company as a clerk. (1) He may have written some poems in these circumstances but none has been published in any of his collections. He felt the indignity of poverty and oppression and failure. He was miserable.

When he could no longer bear his condition, he moved to Baghdad in the hope of finding a better job. But he was faced with a long period of unemployment. He spent most of his days sitting at the café of Ḥasan al-ʿAjamī and was occasionally helped in his daily needs by some friends such as Akram al-Watarī, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismāʿīl and Khālīd al-Shawwāf. (2) For a while, he worked as a store-keeper in a road construction firm (3) only to move later from one daily-paid job to another.

In the summer of 1950, he was at the nadir of his depression and despair when, one evening, he sat with his friends ʿAlī al-Khāqānī and Akram al-Watarī at one of the Baghdad cafés. They both encouraged him with loving remarks of loyalty and appreciation. (4) ʿAlī al-Khāqānī then offered to publish Badr's latest poetry in a new collection for which

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb to Muʿayyid al-ʿAbd al-Wāḥid in London, quoted to the author in the latter's letter, Baṣra, August 30, 1966.

(2) Maḥmūd al-ʿAbṭa, *op. cit.*, p.12; also Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismāʿīl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966.

(3) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: see note (1) above.

(4) Note the words of dedication to these two friends in *Asāṭir*, p. 2

he was to write a short preface of praise.<sup>(1)</sup> The new collection, called Legends, was soon printed at al-Najaf in September, 1950, and it brought to Badr much happiness and restored his love of life. No wonder he dedicated it to his two friends.

Badr wrote an introduction<sup>(2)</sup> to this collection in which, among other things, he noted that the main characteristics of the collection were free verse, the use of enjambement necessitating meticulous punctuation, and the frequent resort to the structural device of psychological association. Explaining his attitude to the fair sex, he said:<sup>(3)</sup> "I lost my mother when I was a little child. I grew up deprived of woman's affection and tenderness. All my life has been a search for the one who will fill this vacuum and a waiting for the long-sought woman. My dream in life has been of a home in which I will find rest and tranquillity, and I have always felt I shall not live long."

Years later, he was to say that this collection of his belonged to "the greatest period of love in my life."<sup>(4)</sup> Its love poems were inspired by Lamī'a, though nowhere was her name mentioned in them. He began some of those poems with a short prose note to give the reader a hint of their intentionally vague subject, a thing he would never have done had his relation with Lamī'a not broken.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) 'Alī al-Khāqānī: Asātīr, p. 4

(2) Asātīr, "Muqaddima", pp. 5-8.

(3) Ibid., pp. 7-8.

(4) Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb's letter to Dr. Simon Jargy, dated al-Ma'qil, October 12, 1963; see photoprint in Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwā', p. 138.

(5) Asātīr, "Muqaddima", p. 7

The overwhelming love content of this collection made Badr inform the reader in the introduction that he had a large collection of "social and humanistic poetry" awaiting publication in the near future. It is as if a poet with the communist convictions of Badr had to justify his love poetry. Yet he explicitly refused the enslavement of the poet to a particular dogma about society and believed the poet should remain free to express himself. He believed the poet had a message for society, a debt he had to pay back, by expressing society's woes and hopes which were the poet's own if he was sincere. (1)

The only poem in the collection with a communistic revolutionary content is the last one entitled "To the Belle of the Palace". (2) He might have written it with the rich girl with the dimples in mind. In this poem, Badr addressed a beautiful, young and rich woman living luxuriously in a palace and enjoying all the amenities of wealth, unmindful of the misery of the workers who produced all that she enjoyed. He predicted that her palace would be turned to ruins by the angry rebels, her pearls would be snatched away by bloody hands, her perfumed clothes would be taken to cover naked bodies. There would be no more starvation when the people would rise and break their fetters. Generous with their blood, they would establish a happy world where

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(1) Asāṭir, "Muqaddima", p. 8

(2) Asāṭir, "Ilā Ḥasna' al-Qaṣr", pp. 88-93.

the Left would be victorious over the Right.

Badr remained loyal to the Communist Party or what remained of it. Every year, he signed the petition of the Partisans of Peace.<sup>(1)</sup> The friends with whom he associated himself were leftists, if not outright communists. The leftist poet, Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī, employed him for a time in his newspaper al-Thabāt as an editor and translator.<sup>(2)</sup> But Badr moved to work for other newspapers such as al-Jabha al-Sha'biyya and al-Ālam al-Ārabi<sup>(3)</sup>, in the latter of which he published his translations of some poems by the Turkish communist poet Nāẓim Ḥikmat (Nazim Hikmet) whom he admired,<sup>(4)</sup> and who had just then been released after an imprisonment of thirteen years.

Badr's work in journalism, however, was precarious in view of the fact that newspapers were often suspended or suppressed by the government for various political reasons. He was therefore looking for a more stable job. In August 1951, he was appointed as a clerk in the Directorate of Imports and Exports for a monthly salary of ID. 15.<sup>(5)</sup>

He did not like his routine uncreative work in this government department, but he did it efficiently, and in May, 1952, he received an increment of ID. 3 per month.<sup>(6)</sup>

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(1) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirut, April 23, 1966.

(2) Maḥmūd al-ʿAbṭa, op. cit., p. 12; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismāʿil's letter to the author, Beirut, August 5, 1966.

(3) Maḥmūd al-ʿAbṭa, op. cit., p. 13.

(4) ibid.

(5) Ministry of Commerce, Directorate of Imports and Exports: Personnel letter No. 14534 dated April 25, 1961.

(6) ibid.

His literary interests found a vent in a circle of young men, mainly Baṣran, who called themselves "The Family of Contemporary Art" and included 'Abd al-Wahhāb Bilāl and Ṭāhā al-'Ubaydī. (1) They met to discuss their latest literary productions and to help in the publication of the most outstanding among them such as Badr's translation of Louis Aragon's "Les yeux d'Elsa" into Arabic from the English version. (2)

In these days, Badr started to realize the relevance of the long poem to modern times. He previously wrote a number of poems of some length which were published in his collections, but they were mostly lyrical and their length came as a result of an interest in quantity rather than quality or an interest in a long subject rather than a complex one. His readings in modern Western poetry and criticism started to influence his outlook in this respect. He discussed this point with his friend Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl and they both agreed that the long poem was a fitter form to express the complex nature of modern life. (3)

For some time, Badr was working on two long poems; one was called "The Wings of Peace" and the other "The Curses". He wrote about 400 lines of the first and 250 of the second and continually returned to each to add or detract, to cross

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(1) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

(2) 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Baṣrī: Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, Rā'id al-Shi'r al-Ḥurr, Dār al-Jumhūriyya, Baghdād, 1960, p.83; also Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirūt, April 23, 1966.

(3) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, July 19, 1966.

out or embellish, but was not satisfied enough with either to publish it as a whole. They have both remained unfinished and unpublished. Looking into the manuscript of "The Curses"<sup>(1)</sup> kept by Badr's brother-in-law at Basra, I found great difficulty in deciphering some lines. A few verses or words were completely illegible: so much had they been crossed out and rewritten in a small space, in pencil and in ink, that they were obliterated to all intents and purposes. The whole poem is written in traditional basit metre and is composed of several units, each with a sub-title. Units are of varying lengths and each has a single rhyme unless it is subdivided into parts, then each part has a single rhyme of its own. The words are chiselled out from a rocky diction and they sparkle with an angry fire. The whole world is seen in the poem as a dark, infernal valley teeming with miserable human beings, dead and alive, wronged by evil human despots. Satan, in Dantesque dimensions, prods the despots to all sorts of evil and sin. God warns the despots to no avail and the poverty-stricken, hungry masses decide to take the matter into their hands and remove all tyrannical and cruel oppression. China elicits from the poet a deep sympathy with its Red revolution and Man hopefully stands as master of his destiny in a just world.

The traditional metre and rhyme concepts must have

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(1) See Appendix, "al-La'anāt", pp. 272-275 for 72 verses of the poem.

limited Badr's freedom of treatment in this epic-like poem. This may be why he left it unfinished and started another long poem in free verse. But this time he wanted to see the injustice and complexity of life through the experience of one man. The result was the long poem entitled "The Grave-digger"<sup>(1)</sup> which was published in Baghdad in 1952.

It is composed of 299 lines of free verse. Its narrative style is mixed with long descriptive passages that set the atmosphere of the actions and the feelings. A lugubrious introduction describing a cemetery at dusk leads to the villainous grave-digger who has not buried anybody for a long week and who therefore craves for a dead person to bury in order to earn his bread. He wishes a destructive war would break out that he might have a plenteous life, mercilessly burying the dead of all ages. He justifies his evil wish, when his conscience rebukes him for it, by his ignorance and his hunger and by considering himself less evil than the heartless warmongers themselves who are the real criminals anyhow. But finally a funeral arrives and the night finds him on his way to the city with the money earned from the burial. At a tavern where he drinks, he deplures his poverty and passionately dreams of satisfying his crying sexual desires, then he goes to a favourite

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Haffār al-Qubūr, Maṭbaʿat al-Zahrā', Baghdād, 1952; republished in his Unshūdat al-Maṭar, Dār Majallat Shi'ar, Beirut, 1960, pp.229-248.

prostitute. Back in the cemetery, he returns to his loneliness and his sensual dreams about the woman when a coffin arrives. He expectantly goes to bury it but finds that it contains the body of the prostitute herself. His own money returns to him as the city lights continue to shine and he goes back to his own dreams about women and wine.

In this poem, the grave-digger is as much the victim of his social degradation as of his own lust. Yet Badr failed to arouse rebellion against social grading or even to elicit pity for the man. The tragedy, however, remains that of a man so numbed by his poverty that he cannot think or act properly, and that of a society which, on the other hand, ignores such poverty and unhappiness, and leaves the wheel of its capitalist economy turn, churning crumbs of bread and little money to the poor.

In the meantime, there was turmoil in Iran which was to affect Iraq. In March 1951, a law was passed nationalizing Iran's oil industry and Dr. Mossadegh became Prime Minister of Iran in April. Some Iraqi deputies in Parliament demanded the nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company and its affiliated groups. The negotiations conducted by the Iraqi government with the oil companies in the course of 1951 were strongly affected by events in Iran and by the constant campaigns of opposition groups in Iraq for more favourable terms. When an agreement was signed and ratified in February

1952, granting Iraq half the companies' profits, the opposition tried to sabotage it by a general strike and demonstrations. But Nūrī al-Sa'īd's prompt and firm action saved the new agreement. In July 1952, Muṣṭafā al-'Umārī replaced Nūrī al-Sa'īd as Premier. Encouraged by the successful revolution in Egypt, the opposition in October presented notes to the Regent demanding, among other things, universal direct suffrage, a limitation on land ownership and the abrogation of the 1930 treaty. <sup>(1)</sup>

The Regent's reply was not considered satisfactory and the opposition threatened to boycott the coming elections unless one-stage instead of two-stage voting were instituted. A student strike at the Pharmacy College in Baghdad on November 22, 1952, turned into violent demonstrations and riots that shook the capital. The police lost control as extreme nationalists and communists carried out organized destruction. Badr took part in the riots <sup>(2)</sup> with other fellow communists. The Iraqi army was summoned to restore order and its Chief of Staff, General Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd became Premier. Martial law was immediately proclaimed, schools closed, and newspapers suppressed.

Arrests included many of Badr's friends and he was afraid his turn was coming. <sup>(3)</sup> He remained in hiding for

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(1) George Lenczowski: The Middle East in World Affairs, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 3d ed., 1962, p.285.

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, postmark: Beirūt, April 23, 1966. Cf. Jalīl Kamāl al-Dīn: al-Shi'ar al-'Arabī al-Ḥadīth wa Rūḥ al-'Aṣr, Beirūt, 1964, p.300.

(3) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, op. cit.

a short while then he stole away from Baghdad northwards to Ba'qūba<sup>(1)</sup> hoping to cross the border into Iran. Realizing the difficulty of escape from that way, he returned to Baghdad where his two friends Muḥammad and Mūsā al-Naqadī helped him to disguise himself and provided him with an Arab head gear (kūfiyya and ʿiqāl) and an Iraqi long shirt (dishdāsha)<sup>(2)</sup>. He moved southwards to Musayyab on the Euphrates where he took the train to Baṣra,<sup>(3)</sup> and thence went by car to Abū al-Khaṣīb and his village Jaykūr where even some of his friends and relatives did not recognize him until he spoke with them.<sup>(4)</sup> He then crossed Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab on a boat to ʿAbadān in Khūzistān (ʿArabistān). On January 12, 1953, Badr was officially dismissed from his government post by a ministerial order as from the 25th of November, 1952.<sup>(5)</sup>

By this time, Dr. Mossadegh had fallen from power and was in prison. Although the communists in Iran were still strong, they had gone underground to avoid the measures of the new Premier, General Zāhidī, against them. Badr spent some time in Khurramshahr (Muḥammara) and ʿAbadān where his connections with members of the communist Tudeh Party were of some help. He was provided with an Iranian

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(1) Mrs. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-ʿAbd al-Wāhid, quoted to the author in the latter's letter, Baṣra, Dec. 15, 1966.

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb: op. cit.

(3) Mrs. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: op. cit.

(4) Fu'ād Ṭahā al-ʿAbd al-Jalīl's letter to the author, postmark: Baṣra, July 7, 1966.

(5) Ministry of Commerce, Directorate of Imports and Exports: Personnel letter No. 14534 dated April 25, 1961.

passport in which his name appeared as 'All Ārtank.<sup>(1)</sup> On a pitch-dark night early in 1953, Badr left 'Abadān on a boat bound for Kuwait. Remembering this voyage nine years later, he wrote a poem entitled "The Escape of 1953"<sup>(2)</sup> in which he says,

On a night whose veins were  
Charcoal, whose land was of tombs  
Eating with its mud from our feet,  
[On a night] which crept towards water,  
Towards a sail torn by thunders  
Over a boat with no lights,  
Iraq on the other bank  
Almost beckoned: Welcome, O my children.  
But, alas, we shall not return.  
Oh for a cigarette in my mouth,  
Oh for a song, for an embrace  
Of a green palm or a blossom.  
In my land drunk with to-morrow's vision.  
We have a rendez-vous with Morning  
In spite of Darkness, O Iraq.

In Kuwait, Badr put up with a number of fellow communists at a house they rented together.<sup>(3)</sup> He found a clerical job at the Kuwait Electric Company<sup>(4)</sup> and settled down to

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid, quoted to the author in the latter's letter, Baṣra, Dec. 15, 1966.

(2) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: al-Ma'bad al-Gharīq, Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, Beirūt, 1962, "Fīrār 'Am 1953", pp. 131-136.

(3) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966

(4) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, Beirūt, June 6, 1966, and author's interview with him in Beirūt, June 14, 1966

a refugee's life of constant yearning for his country. His fellow communists at home do not seem to have had any intellectual or literary pretensions. They were mostly semi-literate and although he did not mention by name any of them to his friend Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismāʿīl, he told him later that they considered him as a mere mouthpiece for their movement, much below an active struggler of the party. (1)

In his free time, he sat at a café where most Iraqis met. One hot evening, he was listlessly scribbling a poem at the café. He wrote a few lines then stopped and went home, leaving the unfinished poem to be collected by a friend. This friend published the poem years later in an Iraqi paper after Badr's death. It is of little literary value but expresses the nostalgic feelings of Badr. In it he says: (2)

'Tis the sea: it continues at every moment to mock  
This weak sail heavily hoisted by this boat's chest,  
It continues to mock all that exhausts sailors.

'Tis the sea  
That still stands between me and Iraq,  
Between me and the years.

'Tis the sea: a watery wall standing high  
To face me and my yearning.

If I were Moses, I would have lifted my rod  
And shouted at it, "Be thou my support against oppressors.

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(1) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismāʿīl's letter to the author, op. cit.

(2) Quoted to the author by Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wahid in his letter, Basra, December 15, 1966. See Appendix p. 276.

Let me return to the hills of eagerness,

To my relatives, to the scene of my boyhood."

If I were Moses, I would have stretched out my hands  
over the sea

And shouted at it, "Let thy waters be divided in twain  
for me,

That I may return across my humiliation and my home

To the most beautiful thing an eye has ever seen,

That I may return across the ..."

Badr never continued the poem. But the idea of the sea separating him from his homeland kept haunting him until it was finally crystallized into one of his best poems of this period, namely, "A Stranger on the Gulf".<sup>(1)</sup> Badr may have exaggerated in it the physical difficulty of returning home but that only in an attempt to portray the dire state of poverty he was in and the unacceptable political state of Iraq so distant from that of his dreams. Iraq in this poem is not a geographical entity. It is a series of dear personal memories evoked by the turning of a gramophone record the poet heard in his exile: memories ranging from his own mother's voice singing him a lullaby in the dark, to his boy's fears of ghosts inhabiting the palm trees at night, to the enchanting folk tales told the children around the brazier by the women of the house while the men amuse themselves hilariously outside the home and finally Iraq is identified with a nameless sweetheart who

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Unshūdat al-Maṭar, "Gharīb 'alā al-Khalīj", pp.11-17.

shared all these memories with the poet and who, in all probability, was his third-cousin, Wafiqa.

Describing himself in exile, Badr says: <sup>(1)</sup>

Dishevelled and with dusty feet, I still wander  
Under strange stars  
In flapping tatters; I stretch out a generous hand  
Pale with humiliation and fever: a strange beggar  
Among strange eyes,  
Scorned, chidden away, slighted or pitied —  
Death is easier than "Pity",  
Than that compassion squeezed out of strange eyes  
In metallic, water drops.

He was desperate for money to go back home and as soon as he had economized enough, Badr returned to Iraq after about a year's exile. Fayṣal II had become king of Iraq in May, 1953, and Fādīl al-Jamālī was Premier. After a short stay with his family, Badr went to Baghdad to look for a job. He put up at one of the cheaper hotels in the city, that of Shu'ba 'Adnān, <sup>(2)</sup> and at the café of Ḥasan al-'Ajāmī he met some of his old friends among whom was Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl, now a journalist, who told him the communists would doubtlessly take care of him soon. Badr said he would refuse any such care quite frankly in spite of his financial difficulties. <sup>(3)</sup> In the evenings, Badr met more of his old friends

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(1) ibid. p. 14

(2) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966.

(3) ibid.

at al-Furāt Café on al-Amīn Street, such as the poets Kāzim Jawād, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, Sāhib Yāsīn, Rashīd Yāsīn, Khālid al-Shawwāf and Akram al-Watarī, the story-writers 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Shaykh 'Alī and Shākīr Khaṣbāk, the lawyer-journalist Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, the sculptor Khālid al-Raḥḥāl and others. (1) All these friends were leftists and some were declared communists. One particular communist friend, 'Abd al-Jabbār Wahbī, knowing Badr's funds were running low, insisted one day that Badr should bring his suit-cases from the hotel to come and live with him at home. Badr strongly refused according to Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl who was then with him at the café of Ḥasan al-'Ajāmī. (2)

Badr's financial difficulties were a little alleviated when he worked for a while at al-Difā' newspaper of Ṣādiq al-Baṣṣām. (3) He was better off when, by ministerial order, he was re-appointed as a clerk in the Directorate of Imports and Exports for a monthly salary of ID. 21 as from December 23, 1953. (4) Soon afterwards, he moved into a humble rented house at al-A'zamiyya in the north of Baghdad and asked his aunt, Āsiya to come from Jaykūr and keep house for him.

He did not have much of a home life. Most of his leisure he spent at one or another of the Baghdad cafés with

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(1) *ibid.*; Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14; also Shākīr Khaṣbāk's letter to the author, Riyād, October 21, 1966.

(2) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966.

(3) *ibid.*

(4) Ministry of Commerce, Directorate of Imports and Exports: Personnel letter No. 14534 dated April 25, 1961.

his friends talking about current events, discussing literature and the arts, arguing about ideological matters or, in the same breath, commenting on the beauty of a female passer-by. He liked to spend the late parts of the nights with a select group of friends at one or another of the cheaper taverns on al-Amīn Street,<sup>(1)</sup> or at one or another of the better taverns called "casinos" overlooking the Tigris on Abū Nuwās Street, yet his favourite place was Casino Trocadero on Nahr Street.<sup>(2)</sup> He drank moderately but smoked a lot.<sup>(3)</sup> On such occasions, he was never tired of reciting his newest poems to his friends who liked to listen to him although some were uncomfortable at his melodramatic manner.<sup>(4)</sup> He also liked to tell jokes, to poke fun at simple people and to banter even some of his own friends.<sup>(5)</sup> He did not lose his sense of humour even in his darkest moments. Yet ideological differences made his argument with some friends become so heated that Badr all but came to blows at times with such as Kāzīm Jawād and Rashīd Yāsīn.<sup>(6)</sup>

Occasionally, he wanted to be alone or with one friend. He would welcome the poet Baland al-Ḥaydarī's knock at his door and his invitation for an evening walk along the Tigris which would after hours inevitably end at a café or a tavern,

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(1) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p. 14

(2) Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966.

(3) ibid.

(4) Baland al-Ḥaydarī: "Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, al-Dhāhib ka-al-Maṭar", in al-Adīb, Beirūt, February 1965, pp. 56-57.

(5) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p. 14; and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ismā'īl's letter to the author, Beirūt, August 5, 1966.

(6) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, ibid.

there to exchange bits of paper with poems on them. If they were afraid of silence, Baland would take Badr to a friend's house to listen until a late hour to the recorded voices of T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell and Dylan Thomas reciting some of their poems. Badr would not leave the house until he heard Edith Sitwell again.<sup>(1)</sup>

When he was too lonely and could not overcome it, he went to the Baghdad brothel. He must have had severe pangs of compunction after such visits. Late one night, a friend saw him sitting on the kerbstone near the brothel after a visit to a prostitute. He had bought some bread from a nearby shop and was feeding the stray dogs swarming around him. When the friend approached, he found that Badr was weeping and smelling of wine.<sup>(2)</sup> This was very symbolic of his emotional and intellectual state at this critical stage of his life.

He must have felt he was sinking too low for his own idealism. He was painfully torn between his idealistic aspirations and the weaknesses of human nature, between his high hopes for a better society and the apparent inexorability of Iraqi conditions. He was the victim of the exigencies of real life that was by no means merciful to him. Wafīqa who had secretly embodied all that was ideal for him since his adolescence had lately died in her early thirties, leaving

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(1) Baland al-Ḥaydarī, op. cit. and author's interview with him in Beirūt, January 19, 1967.

(2) Quoted to Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāḥid and communicated to the author in his letter, Baṣra, August 30, 1966.

him rootless and bewildered. His love affairs were invariably failures, one and all. His political struggle was leading him nowhere except to fruitless agony and vagrancy. It was not even appreciated by the communists themselves, for of late he felt he was increasingly alienated from them and their methods and, on their part, they were increasingly inclined to consider the poet 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī as their spokesman.

All that was deep and fine in him was crying out for a change. Furthermore, his spiritual malaise was partly that of the Arab World as a whole. Having emerged from the Second World War as newly independent countries, the Arab states of the Eastern Mediterranean were still groping for a place under the sun and their peoples were eagerly trying to discover their own national selves amid contradicting ideologies to which they were exposed. They were torn between East and West, socialism and capitalism, European values and Islamic ones. Their anguish became deeper and more acute when their leaders failed to prevent the establishment of Israel in 1948 and laid bare the inefficiency of the traditional Arab social structure that was existing by sheer inertia. All that was hopeful and honest in the Arab World was crying out for a change. When at last the change started to come in the form of military coups d'état in Syria and Egypt, and political upheavals in Lebanon and Jordan, Iraq as a state tried to ward it off by desultory expedient reforms

and a tightening grip on the reins of government, which helped only to delay the change and make it more violent when it finally came. In North Africa, the change was coming initially as a final and successful attempt at throwing off the yoke of foreign rule and assuming a new outlook on modern life.

## Chapter Three

### Manhood I

#### Badr's Socialist Realist Period

A new vision was taking hold of Badr. His preoccupation ceased to be predominantly romantic and personal or narrowly communistic and partisan. His vision tried to embrace the whole nascent Arab nation and, through it, all humanity in its modern predicament. He identified himself with the forces that were to form the world of to-morrow and tried to transcend these forces in his expectations.

His poetic technique which he had been developing in the previous few years and which was such a far cry from classical versification was part of his vision, now more closely coming to a focus. He was breaking away from the past and its cultural traditions, though he could not renounce them altogether. He believed his mission was to create new poetry for the new world and a new world consonant with his new poetic vision.

A new literary magazine called al-Ādāb had appeared in Beirut in January, 1953, edited by Dr. Suhayl Idrīs. It was

attracting amongst others many young Iraqi poets and writers, and was bidding fair of becoming the leading literary monthly in the Arab World. From its first few numbers, it advocated committed literature, and showed a strong inclination to socialism and pan-Arabism, and an open mind to modern thought, particularly French existentialism. It encouraged the Arab movement of free verse and Badr became one of its regular readers and soon one of its devoted contributors.

In April 1954, this magazine published a poem in free verse by Badr, entitled "The Last Day of the Despots",<sup>(1)</sup> as a Tunisian Arab rebel's song to his girl. In this poem, the rebel says,

We see the sun go far behind the hills

Amidst the shadows

And, like a broken wing, flutter

Its last ray

Over a heap of shattered fetters,

Over an extinct world that will never return.

This for Badr was the symbol of the old world he was discarding.

The new world was that which the rebel's girl described:

"We are the beginning of the road —

We are those who

From the rock on which foreheads bled

And which sucked the lips dry,

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Yawm al-Ṭughā al-Akhīr", pp.66-68

From death in grim prisons,  
From misery, from empty stomachs,  
Squeezed out life for coming generations.  
Ours is the rising star,  
To-morrow's bright morning  
And its gorgeous afternoons."

But the political situation in Iraq was not promising. Premier Fādīl al-Jamālī had resigned and with him went his hopes of agrarian and social reforms. The calamitous floods of the Tigris that threatened Baghdad in the spring of 1954 accentuated the misery of the people. It grieved Badr to the core to witness such abject misery in a wealthy country. It was as needless and gratuitous as his own. He remembered his lost days of vagrancy in Kuwait, away from Iraq and beloved ones. His heart shivered. His personal predicament was indeed that of Iraq. Wafīqa's eyes gleamed softly in his imagination and their sadness evoked a tremor in his soul. A new poem was being born in him, different from any previous one. When he finally wrote it down, he called it "The Song of Rain"<sup>(1)</sup> and had it published in al-Ādāb of June, 1954, with a note that it was inspired by the days of loss in Kuwait on the Arabian Gulf.<sup>(2)</sup> In this poem, Badr says,

Your eyes are two palm groves at the hour of dawn  
Or two balconies from which the moon recedes.

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Unshūdat al-Maṭar", pp.160-167.

(2) Al-Ādāb, June 1954, p. 18.

When your eyes smile, vineyards leaf  
And lights dance like moons in a river  
Which an oar shakes at the hour of dawn  
As if, in their depths, stars are throbbing.

Like the sea when evening spreads its hands over it  
They are drowned in clouds of transparent grief  
Full of the warmth of winter, the shiver of autumn,  
Death, birth, darkness and light.

The tremor of weeping awakes in my soul  
With a frightful thrill embracing the sky  
Like a child's when awed by the moon.

As if the rainbow drinks the clouds  
And drop by drop melts in rain  
And children babble under vine trellises  
And the song of rain  
Tickles the silence of birds on the trees  
Rain...

Rain...

Rain...

Evening yawns, and the clouds

Pour down their heavy tears

Like a child who before sleeping raves

That his mother — whom he did not find

On waking up a year ago and was told

After persisting questions,

That she would return day after to-morrow —

Must by all means return

Although his comrades whisper that she is there

On the hillside mortally sleeping in her grave

Eating earth and drinking rain;

As if a sad fisherman gathers his nets

And curses water and destiny

And casts a song where the moon sets.

Rain...

Rain...

Do you know what sadness the rain evokes ?

And how roof-gutters sob when it pours ?

And how in it the lonely person feels lost ?

Endless is the rain: like shed blood,

Like hunger, love, children and the dead.

Your eyes come to my fancy with rain,

And across the Gulf's waves lightning burnishes

With stars and shells the coasts of Iraq

As if they are about to shine

But night covers them with a robe of gore.

I cry to the Gulf, "O Gulf,

O giver of pearls, shells and death."

The echo comes back

Like sobs,

"O Gulf,

O giver of shells and death."

I can almost hear Iraq gathering thunder  
And storing up lightning in mountains and plains  
So that when men break open their seals  
The winds will not leave of Thamūd  
Any trace in the vale.

I can almost hear the palms drink the rain  
And hear the villages moaning and the emigrants  
Struggling with oars and sails  
Against the tempests and thunder of the Gulf while they sing:  
"Rain...

Rain...

Rain...

And there is hunger in Iraq !

The harvest season scatters the crops in it  
So that ravens and locusts have their full  
While a millstone in the fields surrounded by human beings  
Grinds the granaries and the stones.

Rain...

Rain...

Rain...

How many a tear we shed, on departure night,  
And — lest we should be blamed — pretended it was rain.

Rain...

Rain...

Eversince we were young, the sky was  
Clouded in the winter,

And rain poured,

Yet every year when the earth bloomed we hungered.

Not a single year passed but Iraq had hunger.

Rain...

Rain...

Rain...

In every drop of rain

There is a red or a yellow bud of a flower.

And every tear of the hungry and the naked,

And every drop shed from the blood of slaves

Is a smile waiting for new lips

Or a roseate nipple in the mouth of a babe

In the young world of to-morrow, giver of life.

Rain...

Rain...

Rain...

Iraq will bloom with rain."

I cry to the Gulf, "O Gulf,

O giver of pearls, shells and death."

The echo comes back

Like sobs,

"O Gulf,

O giver of shells and death."

Of its many gifts, the Gulf strews

On the sand its salty surf and shells

And what remains of the bones of a miserable, drowned  
Emigrant who drank death

From the Gulf waters and its bottom,

While in Iraq a thousand snakes drink nectar

From flowers blooming with the dew of the Euphrates.

I hear the echo

Resounding in the Gulf,

"Rain...

Rain...

Rain...

In every drop of rain

There is a red or yellow bud of a flower.

And every tear of the hungry and the naked,

And every drop shed from the blood of slaves

Is a smile waiting for new lips

Or a roseate nipple in the mouth of a babe

In the young world of to-morrow, giver of life."

And rain pours.

Badr had high hopes for his countrymen and all those who, like them in the world, were struggling for a better life; a life of plenty, of liberty and no exploitation. But the vested interests of the Iraqi ruling class had other preoccupations at this time, mainly to safeguard themselves against any progressive encroachments. The parliamentary elections of June, 1954, showed strong opposition to Nūrī al-Sa'īd and similar conservative and reactionary politicians.

Parliament was therefore dissolved early in August and Nūrī himself became Premier — for the twelfth time. He immediately embarked upon a policy of repression in order to remove any opposition to his future plans of forging strong links with the West and breaking Iraq's relations with the Soviet Union. He wanted to prepare the country for what was to be known as 'the Baghdad Pact' which would abolish the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, yet which would keep Iraq's foreign policy in line with that of Western Powers and its internal policy well-defended against subversion and extremist movements. The parliamentary elections of September, 1954, were in his favour. He dissolved all political parties including his own Union Constitutional Party, suppressed eighteen newspapers, tightened the Press Law, took vigorous action against Communists and Partisans of Peace, and made stringent decrees against trade unions. He certainly secured for Iraq an outward stability but the cost to Iraqis was the suffering of many and the bitter frustration of intellectuals and nationalists. His spies, secret agents and security forces made of Iraq a veritable police-state.

Badr like other intellectuals suffered from the continuous and sometimes close observation of secret agents. He could no longer enjoy his evening meetings with friends at al-Furāt Café on al-Amīn Street where, in one of the corners, he was sure an informer was keeping watch. Yet the personality of

the informer interested him. Unlike the grave-digger who lived on the death of others, the informer lived on the life of others — by informing against them. He lived, however, on the death of freedom. Badr wrote a poem entitled "The Informer"<sup>(1)</sup> and had it published in al-Ādāb of October, 1954. He tried in this poem to delve deep into the dead conscience of the informer and study his mean and venal character. He concluded that he lived with no hopes or aspirations, ever afraid of death if there were political changes, and that he led a very contemptible, though for a short while powerful, life. He was the victim of the unjust and complicated relations in a society whose devious structure was necessarily iniquitous.

The personality of another such victim had attracted Badr's attention a few months earlier. That was the personality of a prostitute who happened to be blind. Badr wrote a long poem entitled "The Blind Prostitute" and had published in Baghdad in a little book of some thirty pages.<sup>(2)</sup> His personal knowledge and experience helped him to paint a realistic picture of relations in the brothel, and his imagination helped to create a pathetic story of an aging prostitute who became blind and unwanted. Pathos, however, was not his aim, although it was a strong element in the poem. His aim was to show the totally unwarranted and gratuitous character of human misery. If only there was justice in society, the

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "al-Mukhbir", pp. 32-36.

(2) Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: al-Mūmis al-Āmyā', Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Maʿrifa, Baghdād, 1954. Reprinted with minor alterations and corrections in Unshūdat al-Maṭar, pp.195-227.

misery of human beings would be eliminated. But the social structure is not just, especially in the distribution of wealth and power, and misery is therefore rampant.

The blind prostitute as a young girl was the innocent daughter of a poor husbandman who was shot on the threshing floor where he was caught stealing. She left her village to escape her father's shame, only to fall in a worse one when foreign soldiers occupying Iraq raped her. She took up prostitution as a profession and grew old and blind after twenty years. She became unwanted, yet every night she waited hopefully for clients in the light of her rented oil lamp at the brothel. Badr's irony was very bitter here, for she could not even see the light of the oil lamp in her blind wretchedness, while Iraq was squandering its oil wealth exploited by foreigners:

Woe to Iraq ! Is it just of it that you pay

The sleeplessness of your blind eyes

As a price for a handful of oil from its rich wells

So that the lamp may bloom with the light you do not see ?<sup>(1)</sup>  
Yet the prostitute is not alone the victim of the unjust society. She is only the epitome of this injustice. All the other characters in the poem are victims as much, including the policeman who keeps watch over the brothel by night and whose wife turns to private prostitution in her loneliness and poverty, and not excepting the men themselves

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(1) Al-Mūmis al-'Amyā': pp. 25-26; repr. Unshūdat al-Maṭar, "al-Mūmis al-'Amyā'", p.224.



In a footnote<sup>(1)</sup> on the word "Arabs", Badr wrote: "The meaning of 'nationalism' has been lost between Shu'ūbites and Chauvinists among us. Nationalism must be popular and popularity national. The descendants of Muḥammad, 'Umar, 'Alī, Abū Dharr, the Khārijites, the early Shī'ites, and the Mu'tazilites must be made to live a decent life as human beings and as heirs of the glories of the Arab nation." A further sentence, deleted in the 1960 edition, says: "Is it not shame on us, Arabs, that our daughters are prostitutes sleeping with men of every race and colour?"

In this footnote, Badr referred to the communists by the deprecatory term "Shu'ūbites" commonly used by Arab nationalists to denigrate them. In the poem as a whole, the prostitute became a symbol of the Arab nation who prostituted her wealth, her talents and her historical values. Meanwhile, the emphasis in communist tactics was on internationalism rather than nationalism.

After this poem, Badr broke completely with the communists and their formations. He did not even sign the petition of the Partisans of Peace any more. His literary pursuits, however, remained "committed" to the cause of freedom and better life for the masses in the world. Arab nationalism which had begun to take a progressive and socialist trend with the success of the Egyptian Revolution

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(1) Al-Mūmis al-'Amyā', p. 31; repr. Unshūdat al-Maṭar, "al-Mūmis al-'Amyā'", p. 222.

of July 1952 and the beginning of the Algerian Revolution in September 1954 held some of his attention. But it did not prevent him from sympathising with liberation movements everywhere or with the fears and hopes of modern man. His long poem, "Weapons and Children",<sup>(1)</sup> which was published at this time, and a part of which had appeared earlier in a local magazine,<sup>(2)</sup> is a good example of his interests.

This poem was inspired by the sight of innocent children peacefully playing in the street when a hawker was heard crying and offering to buy old goods of iron, lead or copper. The children evoked in Badr ideas of peace and love while the hawker's cry evoked ideas of war and hatred. The hawker became a warmonger buying old goods of iron, lead and copper to be re-made into new weapons for death and destruction. He was part of a global stratagem engineered by callous despots and financed by merciless capitalists who by war sought markets and profits only. He was living on the potential death of others but was in fact a victim of the unjust structure of international society, for his own children would die by the very weapons that were giving him a living. Rather than fetters and prison locks, bullets and sword blades, Badr wished those metal goods would be made into ploughs and bridges, bells and water wheels,

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: al-Asliha wa al-Atfal, Maṭba'at al-Rābiṭa, Baghdād, 1954; reprinted with minor alterations and omissions in Unshūdat al-Maṭar, "al-Asliha wa al-Atfal", pp. 249-277. For details of changes, cf. al-Ādāb, Sept. 1961, p. 76.

(2) al-Muthaqqaf, No. 1, Baghdād, 1954.

that city after city would cover the barren lands and a new world be built from old iron and lead in which children would be happy and safe.

The communist overtones of the poem are obvious, since he wrote it before he really broke with the communists. In its 1960 edition, however, he tried to tone it down by omitting his abusive reference to Wall Street and the persecution of U. S. negroes and by altering the Don River symbolizing Soviet Russia to the Ganges symbolizing India in his greetings to several peace-loving countries.<sup>(1)</sup> Yet the poem remains a sincere call for peace, made more effective still by the stark contrast between the innocent world of children and the ghoulish world of warmongers.

The contrast between the forces making for a life of peace and plenty and those making for war and death remained on his mind. He felt that he was a victim of the struggle between these opposing forces — indeed, that all humanity was. But this did not make him the less interested in the result of the struggle. He was sure that good would finally overcome evil, that fertility would follow barrenness and that life would come abundantly through death.

Towards the end of 1954, he happened to read in a Baghdad magazine a translation by his new Palestinian

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(1) For comment, cf. al-Ādāb, September, 1961, p. 76.

friend, Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, of two chapters of Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough related to the myth of Adonis.<sup>(1)</sup>

In this myth, Badr found the symbolic means to express his belief in the victory of life over death through the victim-hero. The use of the myth by Badr to express this belief became more vocal in his poetry as years wore on. His friendship with Jabrā meanwhile grew stronger<sup>(2)</sup> as the latter was becoming a prominent figure in the intellectual and artistic life of Baghdad, and an avant-garde writer in the Arab world.

As the climate of Iraq was tense with muffled opposition to Nūrī al-Sa'īd's co-operation with the West on regional security schemes, Badr wrote a number of poems decrying war and condemning profiteers and inhumane capitalists. His method was indirect, not only because he wanted to avoid political persecution, but because more than ever before he grasped the symbolic use of language in poetry charged with thought, and understood T.S. Eliot's recourse to myth, quotation and literary allusion.

The best of these poems was a long one published in al-Ādāb of January, 1955, entitled "From the Vision of Fu-Kai".<sup>(3)</sup> It consisted of three parts which were to be followed by others, but in its 1960 edition it had no more than those

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(1) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā: "Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb al-Uṣṭūra wa Sayf al-Kalīma", al-Āmilūn fī al-Naft, No. 38, Baghdād, April, 1965, p. 13. Jabrā's Arabic translation of a whole volume of The Golden Bough was published later as Adōnīs by Dār al-Ṣīrā' al-Fikrī, Beirūt, 1957.

(2) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā's letter to the author, Baghdād, July 4, 1966.

(3) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Min Ru'yā Fū-Kāy", pp. 46-56.

original three parts. (1) Only the first part was written in free verse, the others in traditional prosody.

Fu-Kai was a clerk in the Jesuit mission in Hiroshima who became mad at the horror he witnessed when the town was hit by the atomic bomb. Through his eyes, Badr saw a fragmented disintegrated world dominated by the greed of inhumane gold seekers. Like legendary Conghai's blood which was sacrificed to help unite gold, silver, copper and iron in order to make a bell for the emperor, modern humanity's blood was being sacrificed to unite the gold and silver profits of warmongers and their iron and copper weapons of destruction in order to make a bell for imperialism that would ring death and annihilation to mankind. Cain's weapons changed from stones, to swords, to fire; but his desire to kill Abel still persisted. Yet in this modern age, when Cain had almost paid for his crime by the virtual organization of human society and when the world had come nearer salvation thanks to its redemptive victims, a primeval beastly instinct fired some creatures with an insatiable thirst for wealth and power, though by killing others they would finally destroy themselves if their venal ambitions were not curbed. Badr, through Fu-Kai's eyes, saw humanity as a venereal patient at the Red Cross hospital in Hiroshima upon whom the goddess of love, Venus,

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(1) "Marthiyat al-Āliha", pp. 41-45 of Unshūdat al-Maṭar, is part of it according to Badr's note in al-Ādāb of February, 1955, p. 8, but there is no such note in Unshūdat al-Maṭar.

inflicted all the pains and horrors of her disease because of perverted or distorted love. The patient's contaminated brain made him imagine horrible sights which reflected the horrors of Hiroshima. He saw a dark desolate wilderness covered with graves among which a woman with a lit lamp looked for the tombs of her children. An owl answered her call for her children before she herself was engulfed in a tomb except for her hands that held the shaking lamp up to the mocking winds. He saw a barren torrid plain in which hungry giraffes were frightened away at the sight of a hideous leper hidden in bloody pussy bandages, calling out for rain. When the black clouds rained, it was blood pouring from torn breasts, from eyes plucked with red-hot iron rods or from pierced kidneys. The poem ended with the patient's fear of his own physician, Dr. Sazaki, for whom man was just a number and by the patient's desire for death.

Another poem, entitled "An Elegy for the Gods"<sup>(1)</sup> was published in the following month in al-Ādāb of February, 1955. It was wholly written in traditional prosody. Again, Badr condemned war in this poem and the profit-seeking capitalists.

Krupp, the famous German manufacturer of guns, was taken to symbolize the eternal warmonger who deposed all the gods, drank their blood and ate their flesh for the

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Marthiyat al-Āliha", pp. 41-45 (referred to in al-Ādāb of February, 1955, p. 8 as part of "From the vision of Fu-Kai").

sake of his own interests. One new god only was permitted to occupy Olympus: that was Gold who had the petrifying eyes of Medusa, the pale face of Narcissus and Judas, the fratricidal intent of Cain, the sacrilegious gait of Oedipus. He was the god who rewarded his own mother Earth with destruction. Two minor gods trembled as they served him: they were Coal and Steel. The new mysticism, unlike that of al-Ḥallāj, consisted in filling oneself with Gold. Herein lay the cause of all evil and conflict in modern times.

Badr did not like the city inasmuch as it embodied capitalist industrialization and human exploitation. Jaykūr, his village, remained symbolically the ideal place for ideal human relations. Yet with the inevitability of war, Jaykūr itself lived under the shadow of fear and death. In a poem entitled "An Elegy for Jaykūr"<sup>(1)</sup> published in al-Ādāb of April, 1955, Badr expressed his dismay at man's evil intentions towards his brethren in mankind. In this poem, Jaykūr becomes a symbol not only of the peace-loving humane nations but also, and particularly, of the underdeveloped nations of Asia and Africa which are at the mercy of the West. The Christianity of the West is emphasized and exposed as manifestly betrayed.

The cross of Christ is seen in the shadow cast by an

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(1) Unshūdat al-Mater: "Marthiyat Jaykūr", pp. 93-98.

aeroplane, symbolizing the dominant West, as it is flying over Jaykūr and threatening it with death. Is it for this purpose that inventions are made, civilizations built up, the arts nurtured? Is it for this purpose that Christ was born and darkness dispelled? The poet, "the legendary being", spins memories of the glorious past for his people but this does not make a good present or a promising future for Jaykūr. In the age of the machine, "the age of Tired son of Jesus", the scale of values is upset. Fu-Kai's bloody eyes can see Christ sold cheaply and the whole of Asia and Africa is a market for human flesh. Badr ends the poem by saying,

"He that perplexed the world for an understanding  
Is a being with money."<sup>(1)</sup>

In the same month of April, 1955, twenty-nine nations of Asia and Africa met at the Bandung conference, and their resolutions supporting neutralism, nonalignment, peaceful coexistence and self-determination among other things gave their peoples better hopes for the future. In the same month, however, Britain adhered to the Turkish-Iraqi Pact signed in February, 1955, and when Pakistan acceded to it in June, 1955, 'the Baghdad Pact' was full-fledged and Iraq's isolation from the mainstream of progressive Arab thought and politics was complete. Iran joined the Pact in October, 1955.

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(1) ibid. p. 98

For the most part of this period, Badr occupied himself with translating rather than writing poetry. It is true he chose to translate mainly some of the progressive poets of the contemporary world. But he does not seem to have been willing to commit himself openly and clash with the authorities by writing more poetry himself, especially of the type he was writing lately, with its anti-Western, anti-capitalist and peace-loving tones.

In the meantime, he was seriously thinking of getting married. He always longed for a home in which he would find rest and tranquillity. More than ever before, he needed now the security which a peaceful home life might offer. He was tired of vagrancy and political harassment as much as of the loneliness of a bachelor's life. His love affairs, however, had all failed and he could no more hope for a life-partner who would have been his sweetheart before marriage. Iraqi social customs within his class were too strong to break and he had to abide by them of necessity.

The young lady he chose for wife was not a complete stranger to him. Her name was Iqbāl, daughter of Ṭāhā al-ʿAbd al-Jalīl. Badr's paternal uncle ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Sayyāb was married to her eldest sister since the early 'thirties and before that a brother of hers had married a Sayyāb. She was a teacher in her early twenties and had graduated from the Primary Teachers' School two years earlier. She had no

great claim to beauty or high education but came from a good family of Abū al-Khaṣīb.

After the women of Badr's family had obtained the approval of Iqbāl's at Baṣra in the customary confidential way, Badr's uncle at the head of a group of men relatives officially asked her hand from her eldest brother. When the approval was given, the marriage contract was signed at Baṣra on the 19th of June, 1955, in the presence of relatives from both families.<sup>(1)</sup> The bride was then taken to Baghdad where Badr had rented a new house in the area of al-Kisra on the main road<sup>(2)</sup> and where the wedding party was limited to a few of Badr's friends.<sup>(1)</sup>

Some months after the wedding, Badr collected his translations of contemporary poetry and had them published in the autumn of 1955 as Selected Poems from Modern World Poetry.<sup>(3)</sup> The book contained twenty poems from thirteen nations and a few pages of Badr's notes at the end. The poets that figured in the selection were T. S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell, Ezra Pound, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, Walter de la Mare, John Fletcher, Federico García Lorca, Eugenio Montale, Arturo Giovanetti, Angelos Sikelianos, Luis Muñoz Marín, Angel Miguel Carmel, Pablo Neruda, Arthur Rimbaud, Jacques Prévert, Rainer Maria Rilke, Emile Cammaerts, Rabindranath Tagore and Nazim Hikmet.

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(1) Fu'ād Tāhā al-'Abd al-Jalīl's letter to the author, Baṣra, August 3, 1966.

(2) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p. 15.

(3) Qaṣā'id Mukhtāra min al-Shi'ar al-'Alamī al-Hadīth, no publisher's name and no date.

The translations were all done from English<sup>(1)</sup> and can fairly be considered faithful renderings of the originals. They were written in prose except for two which were written in free verse with foot rhythms and occasional rhymes. The content of the poems was varied, as may be expected. A few poems, however, must have made the suspicious Iraqi police prick up their ears, notably those poems dealing with prisoners, workers and nationalists or with poverty, persecution and exploitation. Badr was soon arrested at the Kāzimiyya Police Station for seven days.<sup>(2)</sup> When he was presented to court, his friend the lawyer Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa defended him. The judge could not legally find fault with the content of the book but finally fined Badr ID. 5 for failing to mention the name of the printing press in the book in accordance with the Ottoman Press Ordinance of 1323 A.H.<sup>(3)</sup>

Badr's wife was apprehensive for her husband's safety and advised him to be careful in future. His next poem was therefore so circumspect that, in its extreme symbolism, it was vague and almost incomprehensible. He entitled it "Blackout" and had it published in al-Ādāb of December, 1955.<sup>(4)</sup> In it, Badr said with impunity all he wanted against dictatorial, freedom-robbing régimes. He referred to such

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(1) Badr's note, Qaṣā'id Mukhtāra, p. 100.

(2) Mrs. Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid, quoted to the author in the latter's letter, Baṣra, Dec. 15, 1966.

(3) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p. 14.

(4) Unshūdat al-Matar: "Ta'tīm", pp. 29-31.

régimes as darkness and to their agents as tigers. To men who fought such régimes and to their struggle against them he referred as fire and light. The earthenware oven ( the tannūr) making home bread represented happy free life, and blacking it out meant a temporary expedient — like an air raid's — necessary till the life-giving bread was baked and the tigers avoided, i.e. till a revolution was ripe and a political resurrection timely.

Addressing a lady, presumably his wife as a symbol of the nation, Badr says in this poem:

When light — cast from the oven —

Dispels darkness from your face

And murkiness whispers

Its black sighs

Over your countenance

All the sorrow of the ages

And all their feasts

Flash across your eyes:

The joys of their birth

The murmurs of their vows

Their flowers and their wines !

Light and darkness

Are a legend engraved on the rocks:

How many a fierce lion

Was repelled with fire,

How many a tiger  
The men of those ages  
Frightened with light and fire !  
Put out our lamp, put it out,  
And let us put out our oven  
And inter the bread in it,  
So that the rocks may not repeat  
The fire legend which kept circulating  
Until its beginning became  
The end of us — the night of the graves  
Is its beginning —  
Let us remain in the murkiness  
So that we are not seen by tigers  
Roaming in the darkness  
To hit the living —  
From a forest in the sky —  
With rock and fire  
And to desecrate the graves!

Badr's wife cannot be blamed if she did not understand this poem. She had little intellectual pretensions and hardly any deep appreciation for poetry, anyway. She was a practical woman who needed a home, a loving husband and children. Badr began to sense this early in his married life and he tried to educate her but he must have given up soon. Years later, trying to advise a young poet, his friend Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid, he said, "When you want to get married, O Mu'ayyid,

I advise you that your future life-partner should at least have an inclination to literature so that she may understand your feelings and share your emotions. If she is not so inclined, try to let her like entering this beautiful world [of literature], and be the door unto her that she may enter it. Try and try again, O Mu'ayyid, and do not make the same mistake I made. She did not understand me and did not try to share my emotions and feelings. She lives in a world other than the one I live in, because she does not know what it is to be that miserable man who burns for the sake of the aim which he wants to achieve, that man called the poet ..."<sup>(1)</sup>

Badr loved his wife but he saw her limitations. "She is simple," he said to Mu'ayyid, "and cannot express herself in the slightest emotional situations."<sup>(1)</sup> Otherwise, she devoted herself to him and did her best to make him happy. In fact, he began to put on some weight as his meals became regular and his life more organized, and as his leisure was mostly spent in rest at home. He did not frequent cafés or taverns except very rarely now,<sup>(2)</sup> and he developed new friendships with married people or generally with people whose lives tended to be sedate. Through his friendship with Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, he started to move in a more refined and, occasionally, sophisticated society. He was introduced to

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(1) Mu'ayyid al-'Abd al-Wāhid's letter to the author, Baṣra, August 30, 1966, reporting Badr's words to him in London early in 1963.

(2) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p. 15.

the Palestinian poetess Salmā al-Khadrā' al-Jayyūsī whose husband was an attaché at the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad. At a garden dinner party given by her one moonlit night in the summer of 1956, he met the Palestinian story-writer Miss Samīra 'Azzām<sup>(1)</sup> and other writers and poets.

To some of his old friends, he seemed to have lost his fervour for social commitment,<sup>(2)</sup> yet at heart Badr remained committed. The struggle of North Africa for independence, which was coming towards a successful end in Morocco and Tunisia, inspired him with two important poems: "In the Arab Maghrib",<sup>(3)</sup> published in al-Ādāb of March, 1956, and "A Letter from a Grave-yard",<sup>(4)</sup> published in al-Ādāb of September, 1956. The dire state of the Palestine Arab refugees found a very apt expression in his poem, "The Caravan of Loss",<sup>(5)</sup> published in al-Ādāb of July, 1956. Not only did these poems show Badr's deep sympathy and genuine involvement but they also showed his own conception of an Arab world downtrodden yet nobly fighting for a place under the sun in its attempt to re-create past glories and live a decent present. His style was not the direct style that might appeal to the masses with oratorical predilections; it was clever, dependent on suggestion and symbolism.

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(1) Samīra 'Azzām in Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, ed. Simon Jargy, p. 44, and author's interview with her, Beirut, June 9, 1966.

(2) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p.76.

(3) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Fī al-Maghrib al-'Arabī", pp. 82-89.

(4) ibid., "Risāla min Maqbara", pp. 78-81.

(5) ibid., "Qāfilat al-Ḍayā'", pp. 59-65, the last 3 verses referring hopefully to Palestinian commandos in Israel being omitted.

It is true he was not committed to any political party at home -- there were no parties in Iraq, anyway -- but his interest in his own country's conditions was no less for that matter. He was however limited by stringent censorship on the one hand and by a growing sense of caution on the other. When he dealt with home problems in his poems, his style became skillfully ambivalent or equivocal. Such was his poem, "A Song in the Month of August", <sup>(1)</sup> published in al-Ādāb of May, 1956. No less poet than 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī thought that it was inspired by T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and accused Badr of plagiarism. <sup>(2)</sup> One or two images in it might have been suggested by Eliot as well as its use of everyday conversation heightened by its symbolic nature. But the content of the poem was certainly Badr's. On the face of it, the poem spoke of a woman who felt gay on the last night of July (Tammūz, in Arabic) which is usually quite hot. She asked her negro baby-nurse, Murjāna, to put on the light, tune in to London for some jazz music and serve supper. The baby-nurse shivered with cold and felt the misery of the night when lady guests arrived wearing wolf furs. The guests ate and gossiped but felt cold. The woman wished finally her gift-lavishing husband, out with friends, would return home

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(1) ibid., "Ughniya fi Shahr Āb", pp. 22-26, shortened by the omission of the woman's feelings of indifference to her gift-lavishing husband.

(2) Maḥmūd al-'Abṭa, op. cit., p. 87.

to share her cold and her frank backbiting gossip.

The poem may be taken to be a succinct picture of the broken and empty family life of the well-to-do bourgeois class in Iraq, affecting Western social standards and values. Yet Badr meant something more, by virtue of the pains he took to introduce the poem with a few notes in al-Ādāb of May, 1956, (1) in which he explained that Tammūz was the mythical god of fertility slain in July by a wild boar. The title of the poem immediately suggests that Tammūz meant the month of July but the note suggests the god whose death meant barrenness. The reference in the poem to the cold weather in July or August must be symbolic also since these are the hottest months in Iraq.

It may reasonably be suggested that Badr in this poem was disguising his purpose or camouflaging his meaning to avoid censorship. In fact, to explain the growing use of symbols in Arabic poetry in this period, Badr said a few years later, "The political conditions that the Arab countries were passing through, where an intellectual reign of terror and lack of freedom obtained, helped the poets to resort to symbols in order to express by them their dissatisfaction with the political and social conditions of their countries and their hope for a new re-birth that would raise them from death." (2)

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(1) al-Ādāb, May 1956, p. 16.

(2) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: "al-Iltizām wa al-Lā-iltizām fī al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Hadīth" in Al-Adab al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwā', n.p., n.d. [Beirut ? 1962 ?], p.250

In this poem, therefore, Badr was possibly saying that Iraq had become a dead country with the coming to power of an oppressive government in alliance with London through the 'Baghdad Pact'. The Iraqi bourgeoisie, wedded to Western imperialism, was represented in the poem by the woman whose extravagantly rich husband was out at night drinking with friends. This bourgeoisie needed an artificial light in the darkness of oppression which had caused the death of Tammūz. It also wanted to be slavishly served by the Iraqi people represented in the poem by the negro baby-nurse, Murjāna. Its aim was to attune the Iraqi people to Western policy represented in the poem by the London jazz music. But Murjāna remained cold even in August: the people remained unwilling to be subdued even in the heat of oppression. She complained of the misery of the night — the wild boar that killed Tammūz — when some lady guests arrived. The latter were possibly symbolizing the Asian members of the 'Baghdad Pact': Turkey, Pakistan and Iran. The guests were wearing wolf furs in hot August: the bourgeois governments of those nations had resort to the wolfish methods of the jungle in the 20th century to subdue their own peoples. At heart, they were all cold although they ate the people's bread: they were not really serving their own nations. The hostess in the poem started to feel the cold too and wanted her husband to come back home: the Iraqi bourgeoisie wanted Western imperialism to dominate at home so that it could finally find security in its false position.

This is only one interpretation of the poem. At any rate, the Iraqi government was less interested in it than in a manifesto supporting the Algerian revolution which Badr had signed with other Iraqi intellectuals and men of letters. (1) The government feared all gathering of men with progressive thought. Since some of the signatories of this manifesto were known for their extreme leftist tendencies, Badr was suspected but he officially and publicly disavowed any connection with the Communist Party. (2)

Shortly after that, the Iraqi government nominated him as its official delegate to the Second Conference of Arab Writers held in Syria between the 20th and the 27th of September, 1956, the other members of the official delegation being Nāzik al-Malā'ika and Muḥammad Bahjat al-Atharī. This was a golden opportunity for Badr to be personally acquainted with some of the famous men of letters in the Arab world. The first day of the conference was spent in Damascus for the official inauguration by President Quwwatī at the Syrian University, and the remaining period of the conference was spent in the beautiful summer resort of Blūdān at the Grand Blūdān Hotel.

Five morning lectures were delivered in the conference, the first four of which were followed by lengthy afternoon commentaries and general discussion. The first lecture was that of Mīkhā'il Na'ima on "The writer and the Critic" and was commented on by Ra'if Khūrī; the second was that of

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(1) Cf. al-Ādāb, May 1956. p. 76.

(2) Author's interview with Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb, Beirut, June 14, 1966.

Fu'ād al-Shāyib on "Literature and the State" and was commented on by Dr. Yūsuf Idrīs; the third was that of Maḥmūd Amīn al-ʿĀlim on "Literature and the Fine Arts" and was commented on by Dr. Suhayl Idrīs; the fourth was that of Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb on "Means of Acquainting the Arabs with their Modern Literary Output"<sup>(1)</sup> and was commented on by Dr. Shukrī Fayṣal; the fifth was that of Dr. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn on "The Place of Arabic Literature amongst World Literatures". The evenings of the conference were spent in informal gatherings for the recitation of poetry, reading of short stories and friendly talks.

Four committees were set up to make recommendations in the light of the lectures. A fifth committee, of which Badr was a member, made the final recommendations of the conference.<sup>(2)</sup>

Badr's lecture was generally well received. It can be said that he divided it into two parts: the first dealing with what literature was worth acquainting the Arabs with, and the second dealing cursorily with the means of such acquainting.

Badr started by saying that the subject-matter of all good literature was the eternal conflict between man and the forces of evil. He averred that imperialism and social injustice were the worst forces of evil, and that imperialists and oppressors were the most dangerous elements of evil.

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(1) Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: "Wasā'il Ta<sup>c</sup>rīf al-<sup>c</sup>Arab bi Nitājihim al-Adabī al-Ḥadīth", al-Ādāb, October 1956, pp.22-24 and 100-101.

(2) Cf. al-Ādāb, October 1956, pp. 97-100.

The function of good literature was therefore to depict the conflict between man and these sources of evil, in the hope of creating better life. He avowed that he believed in a committed literature or a realist literature of the type Stephen Spender called for in his lecture "Neo-Realism and Art", and he considered T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land and John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath as good examples of it. Speaking of the modern Arabic literary output, he divided it into three kinds: (a) realist or committed, (b) neutral and (c) degenerate. The second type was one that did not harm the Arabs but was not inspired by current events; the third was harmful in that either it spread despair and defeatism among the Arabs, or was outright immoral and obscene. Badr advocated the first type provided it was produced freely and not under any sort of pressure.

Speaking of the means of acquainting the Arabs with such realist or committed literature, Badr emphasized the role of genuine criticism and of state encouragement with no strings. To overcome Arab inter-state difficulties of publication and distribution, Badr recommended the establishment of a publishing house connected with the Arab League and of a permanent association for Arab men of letters.

As was pointed out by Dr. Shukrī Fayṣal in his commentary on the lecture, <sup>(1)</sup> Badr dealt more with his own conception

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(1) Cf. al-Ādāb, December 1956, pp. 57-59.

of worthy literature than with modern Arabic literature and the means of acquainting Arabs with it. He spoke with the conviction and the enthusiasm of a dedicated and committed poet rather than with the objectivity of a thinker proposing practical solutions, yet he spoke with humility and he sincerely hoped his omissions would be complemented. Mīkhā'īl Na'īma says that his lecture showed "fine taste and concentrated thought and expression."<sup>(1)</sup> Judging his character with insight, Mīkhā'īl Na'īma says that the impression Badr left on him in this conference was that of "a man who was rather bashful by nature and who was subject to a melancholy resulting from spiritual and material causes: as if he suffered from an alienation in his country and among his own relations, or as if he was searching for a lost thing but did not find his way to it."<sup>(1)</sup>

Badr had hardly returned home to Baghdad for a month when the Suez war of ten days started on the 29th of October, 1956. Like millions of other Arabs, Badr was both enthused and outraged by this war. The occasion elicited the solidarity of the Arab nation as no other occasion had ever done before. The collusion of Britain and France with Israel, uncovered early in the war, evoked the strongest feelings of indignation against the West among the Arab masses. Even Nūrī al-Sa'īd, one of the staunchest friends of the West in the Arab countries,

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(1) Mīkhā'īl Na'īma's letter to the author, Biskantā, October 26, 1966.

was embarrassed and had to break Iraq's diplomatic relations with France and to boycott all meetings of the 'Baghdad Pact' attended by Britain. The military defeat of Egypt was easily transformed into a political and national victory, especially when international public opinion at the United Nations Organization came to her support and made the aggressors withdraw. "The Suez crisis added greatly to the stature and prestige of President Nasser of Egypt as an all-Arab leader and symbol of anti-imperialist struggle."<sup>(1)</sup>

Among the many public meetings held in different parts of the Arab world to declare support for Egypt and to condemn the aggressors, one was held at the Higher Teachers' Training College in Baghdad at which Badr recited a long poem entitled "Port Said",<sup>(2)</sup> later published in al-Funūn magazine of the Iraqi capital.

The declamatory tone of the poem and its high-sounding classical language were dictated by the occasion itself. Traditional verse alternated with free verse in the poem's consecutive five sections. The traditional verse was generally used when describing the actual events and their outer impact on the world, while free verse was especially reserved for the poet's inner feelings of bewilderment, pain, sympathy, indignation and hope. Between the outer world and the poet's

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(1) George Lenczowski: The Middle East in World Affairs, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 3d ed., 1962, p. 296.

(2) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Būr Sa'īd", pp. 181-194.

inner world, the prosody of the poem shared with its words the creation of a dramatic effect of movement and mood. Its imagery may have been too involved at times for the audience to have grasped its indications on first hearing. The spirit of the poem, however, could not be mistaken: it was one of pride in the heroic feats of Port Said, of sympathy with fellow Arabs in distress and of complete identification with them and with their destiny. The shame of the aggressors for their outmoded crusading and piratical adventure was rendered manifest, though not without pity for their victims. Arab victory was elatedly celebrated and Arab victims were mourned but duly considered the ushers of a new dawn. President 'Abd al-Nāṣir was highly eulogized as the symbol of the heroism and glory of the Arab past, and the embodiment of the long-expected champion of the Arab present:

This is he whom our souls dreamt of expectantly

In every disaster we experienced;

This is he whose seed Byzantines and Tartars

Were unable to crush with cavalry and spears.

O nation that of its blood makes destiny:

Do not despair — 'Abd al-Nāṣir is destiny. (1)

Badr ended this poem on an apologetic tone. Addressing Port Said, the "Castle of Light", he said:

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(1) 'Abd al-Nāṣir's name was replaced by that of Sayf al-Dawla in the 1960 edition of the poem in Unshūdat al-Maṭar, "Būr Sa'īd", p. 193. Cf. Jalīl Kamāl al-Dīn: al-Shi'r al-'Arabī al-Hadīth wa Rūḥ al-'Asr, Beirut 1964, pp. 280-281.

I feel ashamed that my poetry, not my blood,  
Meets you, and that my victory is due to your victims.  
This [poem] is but a red bouquet I bring to you  
Whose flowers are bedewed with my blood. (1)

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Būr Sa'īd", p. 194.

## Chapter Four

### Manhood II

#### Badr's Tammūzite Period

Badr's first child was born on the 24th of December, 1956, just after British and French troops had evacuated Egyptian soil after the Suez war. It was a girl and he called her Ghaydā'. He does not seem to have been particularly elated by the birth of a daughter. Like many Eastern people, he may have preferred a son, especially as a first-born. He was however excited by the birth of a new quarterly magazine called Shi<sup>c</sup>r, devoted totally to poetry. It was edited by the Lebanese poet, Yūsuf al-Khāl, and started to appear in Beirut in the Winter of 1957. Most of those who contributed to it were young people who had a deep appreciation of contemporary European and American poetry and who were fired by a zeal to emulate it and to set Arabic poetry on a new line of development. They had a common revulsion against the hackneyed forms and themes of Arabic poetry and set out with art, acumen and vision to revolutionize them by the most daring experiments in content, diction, imagery, rhythm and rhyme. The free verse movement was quite established in Arab literary circles by now, and this magazine helped to give it stronger roots and new offshoots. Although the magazine did not have any particular political or ideological line, except perhaps

one of a general liberalism, it may be a little unfortunate that some of its contributors were previous or practising members of the National Syrian Party which was increasingly falling into disfavour in an Arab World borne on a seething wave of Pan-Arabism naturally hostile to any divisive regionalism. Yet the magazine was open to good poetry, and it was generally well received.

Badr became very soon associated with this magazine, since some of its poets like Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā and others were good friends of his. In its second number, that of Spring 1957, he published a poem entitled "The River and Death"<sup>(1)</sup> and he became a more or less regular contributor to this magazine for the next five years. It is significant, however, that Badr meanwhile stopped contributing to al-Ādāb magazine, known for its strong Arab nationalist and socialist tendencies. Some personal estrangement between him and Dr. Suhayl Idrīs, the editor of al-Ādāb, may have been behind this disjunction. But essentially it could be construed as a change of political attitude on the part of Badr, or, to put it mildly, a weakening of his political fervour. Furthermore, Badr took a part-time evening job in Baghdad at al-Sha<sup>c</sup>b newspaper of Yaḥyā Qāsim known for its pro-Western tendencies, and he became the editor of its weekly supplement devoted mainly to literature. It is true

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(1) Unshūdat al-Matar: "al-Nahr wa al-Mawt", pp. 141-144.

that the translations he provided the paper with and the literary articles he wrote or edited for it had nothing in them to compromise his known political views. He even wrote for it tales and legends of the Basran countryside and descriptions of folkloric village characters in order to be away from politics. But his very association with this paper and with Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine raised a number of question-marks about his political attitude in Arab nationalist circles, especially at a time when the Iraqi people, though muzzled, was against Nūrī al-Sa<sup>c</sup>īd and his pro-Western policy. Had Badr renounced his anti-Western attitude ? Had he abandoned his devotion to his own people and the Arab nation ? Had he become a lackey of a pro-Western government and a stooge of pro-Western agents ? Had he deserted his commitment to the cause of freedom and to those who struggled for it ?

I do not think that Badr had basically changed his political attitude at heart, although his actions may suggest the contrary to some. He remained the revolutionary he had always been but he was starting to feel disillusioned. Although still clinging to his previous tenets, he was beginning to realize how unbalanced the struggle was and how futile it might turn out to be. From his personal viewpoint, the odds seemed to be against him. He felt he was a victim of the titanic struggle between East and West, and he could do nothing to hold his ground, much as he would

have liked to, let alone throwing his tiny weight on either side of the struggle to decide its outcome. He succumbed to the demands of the weak flesh although the spirit was willing. The tragic side of it all was that he realized it. He wished he could die as a victim, if life could by his death be better for others. Only the victim-hero seemed to him to be victorious in the end.

In his poem, "The River and Death", he said: <sup>(1)</sup>

Twenty years have passed, like ages every year.

And to-day, when darkness falls

And I lie sleepless in my bed;

My conscience subtly sensitive: like a tree

Sharply extending to dawn its branches, birds and fruits —

I feel blood and tears like rain drops

Shed by the sad world

Quivering with a ring in my veins like death knells:

A yearning moves darkly in my blood

For a bullet whose deathly ice would pierce

The depths of my breast, ignite my bones like hell-fire.

I wish I might run to the support of those who struggle,

Clench my fists, then slap Destiny.

I wish I might drown in my own blood to the bottom

To carry the burden with mankind

And give life anew. My death is victory !

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "al-Nahr wa al-Mawt", pp. 143-144.

When Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine invited him to come to Beirut to be the star of one of its Thursday activities, he accepted the invitation, flattered at the recognition of his poetic capabilities. He spent ten days in Beirut making the personal acquaintance of poets such as Yūsuf al-Khāl, "Adonis" (Alī Aḥmad Sa<sup>c</sup>Id), Shawqī Abī Shaqrā, Unṣī al-Ḥājj, Fu'ād Rifqa and many other men of letters. He was interviewed on the Lebanese Broadcasting Station and by a number of Lebanese papers, and he spoke about poetry in Iraq and the Arab world. The Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine Thursday activity was held at the American University of Beirut where Badr read a selection of his poetry in front of hundreds of people. He began by a short introduction in which he expressed his view that a modern poet was a seer whose vision of the world was one of nightmarish terror and whose duty was to explain the world and to improve it by awakening the soul to the tentacles of the horrible octopus of the Seven Sins engulfing it. Since the modern world was unpoetic and dominated by materialist values, the poet had to have recourse to myths and symbols in order to express his view of it. For myths had preserved their warmth and were not a part of this world. Badr expressed his confidence that, though the poetic attempts of modern Arab poets might or might not succeed in this respect, they would certainly pave the way for a new generation of Arab poets who would become universal. (1)

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(1) Shi<sup>c</sup>r, No. 3, Summer 1957, pp. 111-113.

This visit to Beirut strengthened Badr's ties with Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine both by the recognition and the sympathy it offered him.

Back in Baghdad, Badr was still an employee at the Directorate of Imports and Exports and had become Assistant Superintendent<sup>(1)</sup> since October, 1956, with a salary of ID. 22½, which was hardly sufficient for a married man with a child. His wife was pregnant again and his family responsibilities were growing. It is true his salary was increased to ID. 27 in October, 1957,<sup>(1)</sup> but it was still difficult for him to make both ends meet since he had to contribute to the support of his father who continually pestered him for help.<sup>(2)</sup> He had to find some other source of income and, since only pro-government papers were allowed, he had to work for one of them if he was not to starve. Furthermore, Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine paid him well for his contributions and could therefore help him more than any other. This was why Badr became associated with al-Sha<sup>c</sup>b and Shi<sup>c</sup>r, meanwhile taking care not to compromise his political views and avoiding burning political issues. He felt, however, that this was not an ideal situation and he never recovered from the sensation of being victimized. Death continued to be a major theme in his poems, but now it became redemptive death and Badr resorted increasingly to myths to express it. Since he could

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(1) Ministry of Commerce: Directorate of Imports and Exports, Personnel letter No. 14534, dated April 25, 1961.

(2) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid's letter to the author, Basra, October, 22, 1966.

not die in reality with those who struggled, he died symbolically in sad poems set in mythical frames. He wished such death would bring life to others.

In his poem "Christ after Crucifixion",<sup>(1)</sup> he impersonated Christ being brought down from the cross with an unconquered divine soul, giving life to nature and men:

I died that in my name bread might be eaten,

that I might be sown with the season.

Many a life I shall live: for in every grave

I have become a future, a seed,

A generation of men in every heart of whom

There is a drop of my blood or a part thereof.

Judas was astonished at the ever-living Christ after crucifixion, for he himself secretly would have wished to be ever-living like Christ, but did not dare die like Him. Christ's death was victorious because the people of the city dared follow his example and die like Him:

After I was nailed, I looked towards the city.

I could hardly recognize the plain, the wall and the  
graveyard:

Something like a flowering forest

Reached out as wide as sight could do -

In every spot there was a cross and a sad mother.

May the Lord be praised!

This is the city in travail.

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(1) Unshūdat al-Matar: "al-Masīh ba<sup>c</sup>d al-Ṣalb", pp. 145-149. Shi<sup>c</sup>r, No. 3, Summer 1957.

Thus Badr conceived of his own affliction and that of the Arab nation as a parturition after which would come the birth of a new life. He felt he was an embodiment of the whole nation in his suffering and that, crushed painfully in the mighty struggle between East and West on the one hand, and between conflicting inter-Arab interests and ideologies on the other, the Arab people would finally emerge victoriously to enjoy a new life in which all unjust Arab rulers, like Judas, would have died leaving an ever-living Arab nation that had dared to suffer patiently and die on the cross in order to conquer death and live a plenteous life.

On November 23, 1957, Badr's wife gave birth to a boy. Badr was transported with joy and called him Ghaylān. He felt he was personally being physically immortalized. His grandfather, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār, died in the same year and his son Ghaylān was now continuing the chain of life. Badr saw in his son a fertile Iraq, a blooming Jaykūr, and felt he himself was at the bottom of Buwayb melting away joyfully in its waters to give life, like Baal, to the palm trees. He put all his feelings in a rare poem entitled "Bravo, Ghaylān!"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he said:

"Daddy, daddy !"

Your voice flows to me in the dark like fresh fertile rain,  
It flows through sleepiness while you lie in your bed.

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Marḥā Ghaylān", pp. 18-21.

From what vision did it come ? what heaven, what freedom ?

And I remain swimming in its splashes, in fragrance.

As if the valleys of Iraq

Opened vistas of your vision to my sleeplessness:

Astarte has bestowed flowers and fruits upon every valley.

As if my soul

Is a wheat seed in the soil of darkness and your echo  
is water.

Heaven, you have declared my resurrection.

This is my immortality in life bespoken by my blood.

Yet in his exhilaration, Badr was mindful of the predicament of his country and his nation. His happiness could not be complete until darkness was finally overcome by light, but the birth of his son caused him to have hopes in a better future. At the end of the poem, Badr says:

In the earth (that cage of blood, finger-nails and iron  
In which Christ remains neither dead nor alive, like a shadow,  
Like a hand with no nerve, like a dead man's skeleton,  
like a forenoon of ice,  
In which light and darkness are two labyrinths with no bounds)

Astarte is with no Baal

And Death runs in its streets shouting: 'O sleepy ones

Arise, Darkness is born

And I am Christ, I am Peace.'

Fire screams: 'O roses open, Spring is born

And I am the Euphrates. O candles

Sprinkle Baal's tomb with blood, dust and pallor.'

The Sun wails in the ways:

'Chilly am I and the sky is burdened with clouds of ice.'

"Daddy, daddy !"

From what sun did your warmth come, from what star in the sky

Stealing its way to the iron cage and giving leaves  
to the morrow in my blood ?

Perhaps Badr had reason to question his hopes in a better future. The political situation in the Arab world was far from the ideal of unity. On the question of Arab foreign policy vis-à-vis the Cold War, two camps began to crystalize: one pro-Western led by Iraq, the other anti-Western led by Egypt. After lengthy diplomatic negotiations, this division expressed itself constitutionally in the creation of the United Arab Republic uniting Egypt and Syria on February 1, 1958, and the Arab Federation federating Iraq and Jordan on February 14, 1958. Of the two unions, the first was the more popular among the masses in the Arab world, the second being considered false and subservient to Western imperialism. Badr shared the estrangement of the majority of Iraq's intelligentsia from the new régime whose Federal Premier was Nūrī al-Sa<sup>c</sup>Id, but he continued to work for al-Sha<sup>c</sup>b newspaper supporting it and his reputation among Arab nationalists was impaired further.

A poem entitled "Jaykūr and the City"<sup>(1)</sup> written at this time and published in Shi<sup>c</sup>r showed his deep revulsion against the city as an embodiment of capitalist greed and spiritual

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(1) Unshūdat al-Matar: "Jaykūr wa al-Madīna", pp. 103-107; Shi<sup>c</sup>r, No. 7-8, Summer & Autumn 1958.

death, and his nostalgic yearning for his village Jaykūr as a symbol of perfect peace and a full life. On one level, this dichotomy may well have represented Badr's actual feeling of loss as a villager in a large, complex and impersonal city. On another, deeper level, it may have represented his attitude to current political conditions, the city symbolizing all that was evil and wrong in them and Jaykūr all that was ideal and not fully realized.

The paths of the city encompass me:

Like ropes of mud chewing my heart

And giving a lump of mud for its ember,

Like ropes of fire lashing the nakedness of the sad fields

And burning Jaykūr at the bottom of my soul

Planting in it the ashes of grudge.

Allāt bewails her dead son, Tammūz, whose veins are the dry branches of a vine spreading in vain across the city paths to every house, prison, café, bar, night-club, lunatic asylum, and venereal brothel. She bewails her dead son whose veins burst as he receives an electric shock trying to give light and dispel darkness in the indifferent city, while Jaykūr lies beyond a wall with its palms gilded at the top with the sad sun of the afternoon.

Who will penetrate the wall, who will open the gate,  
break every lock with his bleeding right hand ?

While my right hand has no claw for struggle with which

I may go about in the paths of the city,

And no fist to beget life from mud,

For it is a mere lump of mud.

Meanwhile, Jaykūr lies beyond a wall

and a gate,

and is enwrapped by calmness.

In these last lines of the poem, Badr confessed his complete powerlessness to realize his vision, although the vision itself did not fade before his eyes. He still believed the poet to be a seer, a prophet of modern times, whose message was to warn and to guide although he might not be able to help practically but might suffer greatly. Some time earlier, he had said, "If I were to make a representation of modern poetry, I would find no image of it clearer than that of Saint John's impressed on my mind: his eyes devoured by his vision as he sees the Seven Sins engulfing the world like a horrible octopus."<sup>(1)</sup>

Events in the Arab Middle East were moving quickly. A civil war broke out in Lebanon in May, 1958, between Pan-Arab nationalists clandestinely supported by the United Arab Republic and the Lebanese nationalists eager to preserve the independence of their country and its pro-Western orientation. In Jordan, plots were discovered against the monarchy in favour of a Pan-Arab policy. In Iraq, the unsuspecting and powerful régime was summarily ended on July 14, 1958, when Brigadier-General <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karīm Qāsim seized control of Baghdad

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(1) Shi<sup>c</sup>r, No. 3, Summer 1957, pp. 111-113.

and all members of the royal family met their death; federal and Iraqi ministers were arrested except Nūrī al-Sa<sup>c</sup>id who, after a few days' hiding, was discovered disguised as a woman and killed. American marines landed in Beirut at the request of the Lebanese government and British paratroopers were flown from Cyprus to Amman at the request of Jordan's king.

The new Iraqi Republic established diplomatic relations with U.S.S.R. and other countries of the communist bloc, and permitted political exiles to return to Iraq. It encouraged the formation of a citizens' militia known as the Popular Resistance Forces and set up the People's Court to deal with old-régime politicians and army officers. The feverish excesses of mob violence created a tense atmosphere of terror: Iraq was in the throes of a long-awaited revolution.

Badr felt rain had finally come to Iraq, Tammūz had at last returned to give life to the waste land: all the blood shed was not in vain, after all. He wrote a poem of thirty verses in the traditional basīṭ metre greeting the revolution and entitled it "The Day the Avenger was Satiated"<sup>(1)</sup> But he did not publish it, probably because of its old-fashioned diction and technique. He may have composed it for public recitation but the opportunity did

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(1) Kitāb Munjazāt Liwā' al-Baṣra fī al-<sup>c</sup>Ahd al-Jumhūrī 1958-1961: published by the Baṣra District Commissioner's Office, Baṣra, 1961, "Yawma Irtawā al-Thā'ir", p. 283.

not offer itself in the early days of the revolution. (1)

In September 1958, he resigned his job at the Directorate of Imports and Exports and was appointed by the Ministry of Education as a teacher at the A<sup>c</sup>ẓamiyya Preparatory School at the relatively high salary of ID. 50. (2) He moved house to live at Haybat Khātūn in the A<sup>c</sup>ẓamiyya district in the north of Baghdad. (3) Having stopped work for al-Sha<sup>c</sup>b newspaper which was suspended by the revolutionary regime, he took up a part-time job as an editor in al-Jumhūriyya newspaper of Sa<sup>c</sup>dūn Ḥamādī (4) fully supporting the republic.

Badr's government services were soon transferred from education to the Directorate of Commerce where he was appointed as Chief Superintendent for the same salary of ID. 50 as from November 20, 1958. (5) By this date, the contest for power between <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karīm Qāsim and his deputy <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Salām <sup>c</sup>Arif, now under arrest, had split the Iraqis into two groups: one in power led by Qāsim and supported by communists favouring the continued existence of Iraq as a separate political entity, the other in opposition identified with <sup>c</sup>Arif and supported prominently by the Ba<sup>c</sup>th Party favouring some form

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(1) Badr recited this poem on the 3rd anniversary of the Revolution when the Director of the Ports Authority at Baṣra requested him to participate in the public ceremonies and, at his behest, added the 28th verse praising Qāsim and the 32nd referring to the Port. Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid's letter to the author, Baṣra, December 15, 1966.

(2) Ministry of Commerce, Directorate of Imports and Exports, Personnel letter No. 14534, dated April 25, 1961.

(3) Maḥmūd al-<sup>c</sup>Abṭa, op. cit., p. 16.

(4) <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār al-Baṣrī: Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, Rā'id al-Shi<sup>c</sup>r al-Ḥurr, Baghdad, 1966, p. 91.

(5) Ministry of Commerce, op. cit.

of union with the United Arab Republic. Although Qāsim was no communist, in order to offset the Pan-Arab influences he seems to have allowed, if not actually encouraged, the communists to infiltrate and gain control of the Popular Resistance Forces, trade unions, student and professional organizations and to become influential in the press, official mass media agencies, schools and a number of ministries.

Resistance to the communist upsurge came from the Ba<sup>c</sup>thist and Iraqi nationalist elements amongst civilians early in 1959, and in March, 1959, Colonel <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shawwāf organized a military revolt in Mosul which soon collapsed under Qāsim's heavy blows dealt by his loyal troops and air force. A reign of terror was immediately instituted by the communists in Mosul in which their liquidation squads committed all sorts of atrocities against the local bourgeoisie, and their self-appointed "people's court" passed death sentences in the town's public square and carried them out on the spot before excited crowds.

In all this revolutionary effervescence, Badr's attitude was anti-communist. His criticism of communist actions and methods among his communist colleagues in the Directorate of Commerce aroused their hostility and one of them denounced him to the police as an enemy of the revolution when he refused to sign a manifesto attacking <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Nāṣir. (1)

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(1) Mrs. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup> Abd al-Wāhid, quoted to the author in the latter's letter, Baṣra, Dec. 15, 1966.

The police arrested him for investigation but, with the help of the Iraci painter Nūrī al-Rāwī<sup>(1)</sup> and the legal counsel of Muḥammad al-<sup>c</sup>Abṭa,<sup>(2)</sup> he was released on bail after five days.<sup>(3)</sup> He was however suspended from government service for three years by ministerial order as from April 7, 1959, and was a few months later paid ID. 546 as a pensionary gratuity for his fifty-two months of previous, though unconnected, service.<sup>(4)</sup>

His wife and his aunt Āsiya thought that his relation with Muḥyī al-Dīn Isma<sup>c</sup>īl was the cause of his dismissal but the latter continued to be secretary to the Ministry of Social Affairs in addition to being an editor at al-Hurriyya newspaper, yet in deference to the ladies he decreased his visits to Badr's home.<sup>(5)</sup> Badr spent most of his evenings with Muḥyī at the latter's home or both of them went to Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā's house at al-A<sup>c</sup>ẓamiyya.<sup>(6)</sup> One day, a squad of the Popular Resistance Forces came to Badr's house seeking Muḥyī but Badr's aunt told them that he had moved from the vicinity and that she did not know his new address. After they had left, Badr hurried to Muḥyī's house nearby and warned him and they both went to Jabrā's house where

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(1) Muḥyī al-Dīn Isma<sup>c</sup>īl's letter to the author, Beirut, Aug. 5, 1966

(2) Maḥmūd al-<sup>c</sup>Abṭa, op. cit. p. 16.

(3) Mrs. Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb to Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid quoted to the author in the latter's letter, Baṣra, Dec. 15, 1966.

(4) Ministry of Commerce, op. cit. Also Accounts Department's letter No. Pension/103 dated June 9, 1966.

(5) Muḥyī al-Dīn Isma<sup>c</sup>īl's letter to the author, Beirut, Aug. 5, 1966

(6) ibid; and author's interview with Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, Baghdad, January 10, 1967.

they listened to his Arabic translation of Hamlet still in manuscript. (1)

Jabrā related how Badr was once coming to visit him and was jeered at and called names on the way by communist passers-by and obliged to carry a little picture of Qāsim on the flap of his coat. (2) He also relates how he found him a job at the Iraq Petroleum Company and how Ibrāhīm Kubba, Minister of National Economy, a man of Marxist leanings, disapproved of his appointment, although the Ministry had previously given its approval in his absence. (3) Badr had to content himself with a minor part-time job as a translator at the Pakistani Embassy for a low pay (3) and to wait for better times. Tammūz for him was dead again as soon as the revolution was deflected from its original aims.

The terrorist excesses of the communists came to a head in mid-July, 1959, when they started bloody disturbances in Kirkuk, attacking private homes and shops, and dragging their enemies with ropes in the streets to be tortured and killed. These incidents and the communist mass parades of May 1 in Baghdad made Qāsim become apprehensive of eventual communist domination. By a gradual process, he started to redress the balance and appeal to the moderate nationalist opinion of Iraq, though he could not possibly please the

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(1) Ibid., ibid.

(2) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā: "Shā'ir Tajaddud al-Ḥayā lam Tar'af bihi al-Ḥayā", in Hiwār No. 15, March-April 1965, p. 128.

(3) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā to the author in an interview, Baghdad, January 10, 1967. Also Mrs. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb to the author in an interview, Baṣra, January 15, 1967.

Pan-Arab elements who, in return, made an unsuccessful attempt on his life in October, 1959. Playing one extreme against the other, Qāsim succeeded in curbing both and finally in being alienated from both.

Amongst his measures to curb communists was his toleration of articles attacking communism in the growing nationalist press. A series of articles written by Badr had started to appear in al-Hurriyya newspaper in September, 1959, under the general title "I was a Communist". In each article, Badr took one aspect of his experience as a communist and developed it into an abomination, using meanwhile the latest experiences of the nation with communism as props for his argument. Perhaps he meant to write something similar to Stephen Spender's or Ignazio Silone's in The God That Failed,<sup>(1)</sup> but Badr did not succeed to do so since his interest in polemics, dominated by emotion, prevented real introspection of experience and balanced judgment. His articles, however, were avidly read and must have had their due influence on the public of those hectic days.

Badr's attitude to Qāsim is not very clear. . Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid<sup>(2)</sup> remembers an unfinished poem by Badr entitled "The Shirt" and written after some Ba<sup>c</sup>thists shot and wounded Qāsim in their attempt on his life; in this poem,

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(1) The God That Failed, ed. Richard Crossman, Harper and Brothers, 1950. Parts of this book were anonymously translated into Arabic and simultaneously published with Badr's articles in al-Hurriyya. The translator may have been Badr himself.

(2) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid's letter to the author, Basra, December 15, 1966.

Badr mentions Qāsim's bloody shirt reputedly kept in a glass wardrobe at the Ministry of Defence and, associating it with a mythical shirt whose wearer disintegrates as his body gradually falls to pieces, he expresses a hostile feeling towards Qāsim. On the other hand, <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Hillī refers, amongst others, to four of Badr's poems in which he praised Qāsim. (1) I have not been able to trace these poems, yet it seems to me that Badr was against Qāsim when the latter helped the communist upsurge and was for him when he later curbed it. But to judge from the poems of this period published in his collections, Badr's attitude was generally against Qāsim's régime which isolated Iraq from the Pan-Arab movement. Badr did not attack the régime explicitly but expressed his hostility to it in poems set in mythical frames and symbolic language such as "Sinbad's City", (2) "Cerberus in Babel", (3) "A City without Rain", (4) "The Brothel", (5) and others.

In "Sinbad's City", Badr views the political death that preceded the revolution in terms of dryness, barrenness and eagerness for rain:

Hungry in the grave with no food  
Naked in the snow with no garment  
I cried in the Winter:

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(1) Cf. <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Hillī: "al-Fannān wa al-Khuluq al-Thawrī", in *al-Ādāb* of July, 1963.

(2) *Unshūdat al-Maṭar*: "Madīnat al-Sindabād", pp. 150-159.

(3) *ibid.* "Sarbarūs fī Bābil", pp. 168-171.

(4) *ibid.* "Madīna bilā Maṭar", pp. 172-177.

(5) *ibid.* "al-Mabghā", pp. 135-138.

Stir up, O rain,  
The beds of the bones, the snow and the dust,  
The beds of stone,  
Let the seeds germinate and the buds open;  
And burn with lightning the barren threshing-floors,  
Let the veins burst  
And the trees be heavy [with fruit] .

Yet no sooner had the rain come than the resuscitated bones wished to die again. Lazarus coming back to life began to feel the pangs of hunger and thirst, to fear time and death, to praise the rabble and shed blood. Badr avoided mentioning Tammūz lest the god should be revealingly associated with the revolution of the 14th of Tammūz (July) but he called him by his Greek name, Adonis, and expressed his disenchantment with the long-awaited revolution turning communist:

The Tartars have come, there is bloodshed every where.  
Our sun is blood, our food is blood in the dishes.  
They burnt Muḥammad, the orphan, and the evening  
Is bright with his flames; blood gushes  
From his feet, his hands and his eyes,  
And God is burnt in his eyelids.

They fettered Muḥammad, the Prophet, in Ḥirā';  
The brightness of day is nailed where they nailed him.  
To-morrow Christ will be crucified in Iraq,  
Dogs will eat from the blood of al-Burāq.

Badr laments this deluding Spring that comes with blood and no fruit to "the city of ropes, blood and wines,/ the city

of lead and rocks" that is Baghdad. He sees the bronze statue of General Maude and the stone statue of King Faysal I being removed from its streets to be destroyed by the mob and he says:

Yesterday, the bronze knight was removed from its space,

Yesterday, the stone knight was removed.

Over its skies, sleepiness hung

And boredom fluttered.

In its ways, a human knight wandered about

Killing women,

Dyeing cradles with blood

And cursing fate and destiny.

The "human knight" probably symbolized Qāsim himself. Badr sees Baghdad as an ancient Babel reborn, its hanging gardens being planted with heads cut off by pickaxes and eyes eaten by ravens, and he asks:

Is this my city with wounded domes ?

Judas in red clothes in it

Lets the dogs loose

To attack the cradles of my little brothers and the houses,

To eat their flesh. In the villages,

Astarte dies thirsty, with no flowers on her forehead,

In her hand is a basket whose fruits are stones

Thrown at every wife. The palm trees

On their banks are wailing.

In another poem, "Cerberus in Babel", Badr sees Qāsim as the three-headed dog guarding the dark realm of the dead.

Let Cerberus bark in the ways  
Of sad ruined Babel  
And fill the air with roar  
Tearing the little ones with his teeth, crunching their bones  
And drinking their hearts.  
His eyes are two meteors in the dark  
His horrible muzzle is two waves of knives  
Concealing death.

— His three horrible muzzles are a fire  
Burning in Iraq —

Let Cerberus bark in the ways,  
Dig up our buried god,  
Our stabbed Tammūz,  
And eat him: suck out his eyes to the end,  
Break his strong backbone, shatter the jars  
In his hands, scatter the roses and the anemones.

Badr then laments the dead god and wishes him to come back,  
for the children of Iraq do not know what wheat, fruits,  
cradles, water and human beings are because all they see is  
oozing blood, ropes and pits. When Astarte goes about collecting  
Tammūz's torn flesh in a basket, Cerberus follows her, bites  
her legs and her hands, tears her clothes and soils them with  
old blood and barks over the new blood.

Badr ends this poem saying:

Let Cerberus bark in the ways  
Let him bite the sad goddess, the frightened goddess;  
With her blood, the seeds will become fertile,

The god will grow. The scattered chops  
Are gathered, are fidgeting. Light will be born  
From a womb oozing with blood.

In "Jaykūr's Tammūz,"<sup>(1)</sup> Badr impersonates Tammūz himself.  
His flowing blood does not become red anemones or wheat but  
salt. He calls for Astarte and hears her clothes rustle and  
her steps echo near him like lightning that is not followed  
by rain. He yearns for her kiss but when he gets it, he is  
overwhelmed as by darkness. He does not lose hope, however:

Jaykūr will be born:

Blossom and light will leaf.

Jaykūr will be born from my wound,

From the choke of my death, from my fire.

The threshing-floor will overflow with wheat,

The stone jar will laugh to the morn.

House after house in the village

Will sway with sweet tunes,

The old man will sleep on the hillock

And the palms will whisper my secrets.

Jaykūr will be born. But I

Will not go out of my prison

In the long night of mud.

My heart will not beat like a song

On the strings.

Only worms will beat about in it.

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Tammūz Jaykūr", pp. 99-102.

In "The Return to Jaykūr",<sup>(1)</sup> Badr looks around like the Magi for a star that will indicate the birth of salvation. On the wings of a dream-horse, he runs away from the city to Jaykūr to offer his food to the hungry, his tears to the distressed and his prayers for the eruption of the volcano and the flood of the Euphrates; he offers himself to be crowned with thorns and crucified, he offers his wounds to its birds and ants. When Jaykūr is revived, the cock crows and the dream fades away before his tearful eyes. He then exclaims:

Jaykūr, sleep in the darkness of years.

On the 20th of April, 1960, Badr wrote a poem entitled "A Vision in 1956",<sup>(2)</sup> and had it published in al-Ādāb magazine of June, 1960. His return to this magazine is significant. The title of the poem was calculated to deceive Iraqi censorship into the belief that he was attacking the ancien régime, not Qāsim's. But its content and its date are proof enough of its real purpose. In this poem, Badr describes a painful seizing vision in which he sees Jenghis playing havoc with Baghdad. Ropes drag an old man, a girl, an old woman, broken ribs, torn chests, a baby's bloody head and his mother's breast teeming with worms. A sickle cuts the roots of Tammūz by cutting the roots of the vines. The confused scene becomes

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "al-<sup>c</sup>Awda li Jaykūr", pp. 108-115. Shi<sup>c</sup>r No. 14, Spring 1960, p. 7

(2) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: "Ru'yā fi<sup>c</sup>Am 1956", pp. 116-127.

the fertility ritual of Attis in which, not only the god's effigy is tied to a trunk of a tree, but all the innocent including a "Northern mother because she is not communist". Blood on the olive trees is like red anemones everywhere. Hafsa [al-<sup>c</sup>Umari, of the Mosul massacre], crucified on a tree with a nail through her birth-giving womb, is an embodiment of Astarte. Her flesh is sold cheaply by weight and her clothes serve to wipe the blood off the murderous knife. "Long live the arms of the workers." Shakhnub, a cement worker hired by the communists to pretend being dead in an anti-army funeral procession, rises to his feet like Lazarus when the coffin falls: a sham resurrection is the result of a sham death. Here the vision ends and Badr rounds up the poem saying, "Only blood is a twin of rain."

The reference to Hafsa and Shakhnub leaves no doubt that Badr was attacking Qasim's régime, since the events mentioned happened during the Red upsurge in Iraq. Written in free verse, this poem draws its prosody from more than one metre, thus adding to the confusion of the vision it contains. Its main theme is that blood shed in Iraq during the early part of the revolutionary régime is going to be rewarded by fertility and prosperity for the country. It is as if the Red upsurge and its martyrs are a national ritual to Attis in which the ministers and worshippers in their frenzied zeal wound themselves and offer their blood in sacrifice and in eagerness for fertility. True resurrection comes after true death only.

On June 19, 1960, Badr wrote another poem and had it published in the Autumn 1960 number of Shi<sup>c</sup>r under the title "Jaykūr, the Brothel". It was strange of Badr to call his Jaykūr a brothel, for it was the symbol of his ideal happy society, and the intellectual object of his aspirations and sacrifices. However, to deceive Iraqi censorship he used the word Jaykūr instead of the word Baghdād in the poem, both having two long syllables, though the rhyme in two places invites the word Baghdād rather than Jaykūr. When the poem was re-published in his collection The Song of Rain it appeared under the title of "The Brothel",<sup>(1)</sup> and the word Jaykūr was replaced by the word Baghdād in all the five places in the poem. Baghdad therefore was the brothel, the Baghdad of Qāsim to be sure. Yet Badr in the collection added a footnote to the poem saying that it was written in the ancien régime. This is not true because, when the poem was first published in Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine, Badr expressly gave it the date of June 19, 1960.<sup>(2)</sup> He was not therefore speaking of the Monarchy but of the Republic in this poem and was again trying to deceive Qāsim's censorship.

Brothels had been officially abolished in Iraq after the revolution, but the idea of the brothel as one of the worst evils in a corrupt society lingered on in Badr's mind.

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(1) Unshūdat al-Matar: "al-Mabghā", pp. 135-138.

(2) Shi<sup>c</sup>r No. 16, Autumn 1960, p. 58.

Baghdad under Qāsim was a brothel in which all values were prostituted. The boredom felt as a change was expected appeared to Badr, in the eyes of a songstress,

Like a clock ticking on the wall

Of the waiting room at the railway station.

Baghdad was a nightmare of terror and death. Making allusion to the Abbāsīd poet Alī ibn al-Jahm's love poem, Badr referred to the ladies' eyes in Baghdad thus:

"The eyes of the oryx between al-Ruṣāfa and al-Jisr"

Are bullet holes embellishing the face of the full-moon.

The full-moon pours a cataract of ashes on Baghdad from its holes:

The houses are all one house,

The ways, like threads, are all squeezed

In one giant fist

Which stretches them, paralyzes them,

Turns them into one path to noon-heat.

Under the rule of the "Sole Leader", as Qāsim was called, the people are

of mud

Which the potter kneads into a statue,

It is a world like madmen's dreams

And we are kinds of shreds and torn limbs  
on their trembling waters.

The recent happiness of the "feast of flowers" left the people bewildered whether they should plant or kill. Badr ended the poem saying:

Is this Baghdad ?

Or has Gomorrah

Returned [to life] and its return was

Death ? But in the chink of fetters

I perceive ... What ? the sound of a water wheel

Or the cry of sap in the roots ?

This poem and a few others show that Badr was against Qāsim's régime and that he still cherished some hope that better conditions would be the ultimate result of the revolution.

In July, 1960, he betook himself to Beirut to have a collection of his poems published there. Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine had announced about a prize of LL. 1000 for the best collection of poems in manuscript and Badr decided to enter the competition with all the poems he had written since 1952. The money for the prize was offered by the Arabia Insurance Company and was won by Badr for his collection The Song of Rain <sup>(1)</sup> later published by Shi<sup>c</sup>r Magazine Publishing House in Beirut.

During his stay in Beirut, which lasted about one month, Badr made the acquaintance of a great number of poets, writers and journalists in Lebanon and moved in the highest literary circles. He was interviewed by newspapers and literary magazines and had the occasion to recite some of his poems at gatherings organized by the Cénacle Libanais and Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine. <sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Unshūdat al-Matar, Dār Majallat Shi<sup>c</sup>r, Beirut, November 1960.

(2) Cf. Shi<sup>c</sup>r No. 17, Winter 1961, p. 172.

At the office of Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine, Yūsuf al-Khāl introduced him to Miss Luc Norin, a French-speaking Belgian writer and journalist in her late twenties, who was interested in translating some of his poems into French. Badr met with her privately at Uncle Sem's and other cafés of Beirut to help her in the translation since she could not read the original Arabic but had to have recourse to Badr's English and personal interpretations. <sup>(1)</sup> He admired her intelligence and sensibility and she won his friendship.

When Badr returned to Iraq, he was re-appointed as Chief Superintendent in the Directorate of Imports and Exports for a salary of ID. 52 after the Cabinet and the Appeals Committee for Suspended and Dismissed Officials had abolished his three-year suspension order. <sup>(2)</sup> He started work on August 16, 1960, but did not seem to be happy with life in Baghdad any more. He had too many unpleasant associations and memories in the capital and wished he could go South where he could be nearer to Jaykūr, away from all the tumult of politics. His health was beginning to succumb to the great pressure of hard work and political tension. He complained of general weakness and of some difficulty with moving his right leg. He consulted Dr. <sup>c</sup>Alī Kamāl, <sup>(3)</sup> a specialist in

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(1) Luc Norin: "As-Sayyāb ou la vie au cœur de la mort", Les Conférences du Cénacle, XIX<sup>e</sup> Année, No. 2, Beyrouth, 1965, p. 56. For translated poetry, cf. Anthologie de la littérature arabe contemporaine: La Poésie, translated by Luc Norin and Edouard Tarabay, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967.

(2) Ministry of Commerce: Directorate of Imports and Exports, Personnel letter No. 14534 dated April 25, 1961.

(3) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā: "Shā<sup>c</sup>ir Tajaddud al-Ḥayā lam Tar'af bihi al-Ḥayā", in Hiwār No. 15, March-April 1965, p. 128.

rheumatic diseases, and his condition improved. But he decided to leave Baghdad. He resigned his job on January 22, 1961 <sup>(1)</sup> and moved with his family to live at Basra.

Major-General Muzhir al-Shāwī invited Badr to work at Basra for the Ports Authority of which he was the Director-General. Al-Shāwī was a popular and good-hearted man who had a liking for Badr's poetry, being a poet himself. <sup>(2)</sup> On February 6, 1961, Badr was appointed as Chief Superintendent at the Directorate of Cultural Affairs in the Ports Authority for a salary of ID. 52. <sup>(3)</sup> His services were loaned the next day to the Transport Department. <sup>(4)</sup>

Meanwhile, Badr was accused of having taken part in a demonstration in Baghdad and the Military Governor issued an order for his arrest on February 4, 1961. When he protested that he was not even in Baghdad, the Military Governor issued another order to set him free on February 20, 1961. <sup>(5)</sup>

Badr was returned to the Directorate of Cultural Affairs at the Ports Authority where his main preoccupation was the care of students sent on scholarship to study the naval sciences in European or Arab universities. The director of his department was <sup>c</sup>Amsū Iskandar <sup>c</sup>Amsū who had been his teacher of English at the Basra Secondary School for Boys.

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(1) Ministry of Commerce: op. cit.

(2) For an appraisal of his character, cf. Ethel Mannin: A Lance for the Arabs, Hutchinson, London 1963, pp. 70-72.

(3) Ministry of Transport: Ports Authority, Directorate of Personnel's letter S 621/109 to the author, dated Basra, May 18, 1966.

(4) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid's letter to the author, Basra, December 15, 1966.

(5) Confidential letter of the Directorate of Police to the Ports Authority No. 2086, dated February 28, 1961.

He was a meek gentleman who appreciated Badr's services and co-operated smoothly with him. (1) Of Badr's colleagues at the Ports Authority, there was one who was to become a very intimate friend of his. His name was Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid. He came from a rich family of Abū al-Khaṣīb. His grandfather <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wahhāb Chalabī al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid (d. 1955) and later his father (d. 1959) had employed Badr's father to manage their large estates and their household. Mu'ayyid knew Badr's father — Uncle Shākir, as he and his brothers used to call him in their childhood — and remembers him as an influential man in the Chalabī's household. (2) Mu'ayyid was in his middle twenties and was aspiring to become a recognized poet. He admired Badr's poetry and was greatly influenced by it. Badr liked him because of his candour and sincerity and corrected many of his poems. He saw in him a promising poet and he encouraged him.

Meanwhile, Badr's health was deteriorating. He had begun to have some difficulty moving both legs and had begun to have pains in the lower part of his back. He consulted Dr. Tūmā Hindū in Baṣra (3) and achieved some improvement. But he continued to suffer from severe anemia (4) with which

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(1) Author's interview with <sup>c</sup>Amsū Iskandar <sup>c</sup>Amsū, Baṣra, January 17, 1967.

(2) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid's letter to the author, Baṣra, August 30, 1966.

(3) *ibid.*

(4) <sup>c</sup>Isā al-Nā<sup>c</sup>ūrī: in Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwā', n.p., n.d., p. 46.

is associated a number of poorly understood inflammatory and degenerative diseases of the spinal cord causing damage to its pyramidal tracts<sup>(1)</sup> and resulting in paralysis.

Badr's wife gave birth to a girl on July 7, 1961, and he called her Ālā'<sup>(2)</sup> His financial and family responsibilities could be met only with difficulty. Yet to make matters worse, it was decided that, starting from August 1961, he should repay the government in monthly instalments the pensionary gratuity of ID. 546 he had received in 1959 plus a 5 % interest if he was to remain employed.<sup>(3)</sup> Over one third of his salary was therefore deducted every month, leaving him with hardly enough money to live on, let alone having proper medical treatment.

In an attempt to help him financially, Major-General Muzhir al-Shāwī appointed Badr on the editorial board of the Ports Authority's official magazine, al-Mawānī', so that he might benefit from the sum of ID. 5 paid monthly to each member of the board.<sup>(4)</sup> But Badr did not have any of his poems or articles ever published in this magazine, although he was once expressly asked to contribute to it. He flew to Baghdad in the last week of November 1961 to produce its special number and took the place of its editor another time

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(1) Encyclopaedia Britannica, (1967 Edition):under "Paralysis", p. 315 b.

(2) Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jalīl's letter to the author, postmark: Baṣra, July 7, 1966.

(3) Ports Authority Accounts Department's letter No. Pension/103 dated June 9, 1966.

(4) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhīd's letter to the author, Baṣra, December 15, 1966.

when the latter was sick. Otherwise, he had little to do with this government magazine of Qāsim's régime. It is true he praised Qāsim publicly on the third anniversary of the revolution<sup>(1)</sup> and wrote a few articles in al-<sup>c</sup>Ahd al-Jadīd newspaper indirectly acquiescing in his régime,<sup>(2)</sup> but Badr now was a broken reed and the critical situations in which he often found himself caused him to fall in contradictions.

Badr's need for money made him accept a commission by The Franklin Book Programs, Inc., of Baghdad to translate into Arabic two American books, revise the translation of a third and write an introduction to it.

The Franklin Book Programs, or The Franklin Publications, Inc., as it was known earlier, is an American non-profit organization established in New York in 1952, having for purpose the dissemination of American culture by the translation of American authors and books into many languages. It has offices in New York, Beirut, Cairo, Baghdad, Tehran, Tabriz, Dacca, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. It has newer offices in Kabul, Lahore, Lagos, Enugu and Buenos Aires. Its funds are said to come from tax-exempt grants by American citizens and firms<sup>(3)</sup> but it is probably also subsidised by the

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(1) See note (1) on p. 136 and note (1) on p. 137.

(2) Cf. al-Adāb, July 1963: "al-Fannān wa al-Khuluq al-Thawri" by <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Ḥillī; and 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Baṣrī: Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, Rā'id al-Shi<sup>c</sup>r al-Ḥurr, Baghdad 1966, p. 81.

(3) Author's interview with Miss Samīra <sup>c</sup>Azzām, editor of the Franklin Book Programs in Beirut, June 9, 1966. See Annual Report of Franklin Publications for the year ending 30 June, 1963, where (p. 1) "governments (U.S. and other)" are mentioned==

United States Information Agency, in an attempt to combat communism and "tell America's story to the world".

Badr translated for this organization Walter Farley's The Black Stallion for which he must have received about ID. 230 and Virginia S. Eifert's New Birth of Freedom for which he must have received about ID. 320. He also revised the translation of Vincent Sheean's Thomas Jefferson made by Jāsīm Muḥammad and wrote an introduction to the book, and he must have received about ID. 35 for this job. Badr was never paid so highly for any literary work he had done before.

Yet this work took so much of his time that , meanwhile, he wrote very little poetry. In April 1961, he paid a visit to his native Jaykūr. Standing in the village square, Badr was reminded of a host of past memories. Waffīqa's window with its blue shutters evoked the deepest of his feelings as it looked on the empty village square. Waffīqa had passed away about ten years before, but in Badr's heart she was still living as an inaccessible ideal. Her blue window did not poignantly remind him of unfulfilled hopes only but also of the vanity of life itself. He wrote a poem in two parts

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== as sources of financial grants as well as foundations, corporations; individuals and income derived from operations, and where (p. 10 and p. 16) U. S. government grants are said to be paid under Public Law 480. The annual report was published by Franklin Publications Inc., 432 Park Avenue South, New York 16, N.Y.

entitled "Wafīqa's Window".<sup>(1)</sup> This was the first time he ever mentioned Wafīqa by name in his poetry. Her window seemed to expect a miracle, like the Sea of Galilee waiting for the step of Jesus. In fact, however, it was like Icarus fleeing the labyrinth and dauntlessly approaching the sun to fall into the watery grave. Badr remembered how her window was the rock from which his heart ascended to divine paths but now he felt like old Ulysses returning home with white hair. Other beloved windows in Lebanon, India and Japan still dream with hope while Wafīqa was dreaming in the grave, her window like Icarus's wings, burnt for ever. He wished she could again open her window so that he might see her as Venus was seen opening the shell and moving through the foam to the shore. But she did not open her window and he felt like a bird crossing the seas and trying to take shelter for the night in her blue window, yet in vain. Wafīqa's window to him was like a rope tying life to death so that life might not die. He wanted to live in the past, because the past could not die as long as it could be conceived of as a living and unfinished process.

Your lips to me are the sweetest lips

Your house to me is the dearest house

Your past is more beautiful than my present:

It is the impossible which bewilders,

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq, "Shubbāk Wafīqa", pp. 5-16.

It is the perfect which does not want  
And which is not desired to be more perfect.  
An extended shade of it lingers in my mind  
And a future, in my present. (1)

A visit to his grandfather's house in the village evoked similar thoughts, embodied in his poem entitled "My Grandfather's House". (2) The house was deserted and falling to pieces after his grandfather's death. Nothing in it answered his knock except his own boyhood and youth. The faces of old women were more eloquent than funerals and cemeteries in their silent talk about the sickles of age. Remembering his young days in the house, he realized that he was not desiring the house itself in its newness and freshness but his own happy youth. The ruins of the house staring him in the face served only to remind him that he carried the bud of death within himself. He felt like Orpheus descended to Hades and facing his beloved wife, Eurydice, come back to life, as he faced the ruins of his grandfather's house. All the memories of his youth came back to him and he saw his child's world, never growing old, ever standing still in age, but always happy. He ended the poem saying,

Is this how years go by ?  
Is this how life dries up ?  
I feel I am melting, I am tired,  
I am dying like trees.

Badr's preoccupation with the problem of death was becoming more acute now as his health continued to deteriorate. He

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(1) *ibid.* pp. 14-15.

(2) *ibid.* "Dār Jaddī", pp. 45-52.

was feeling the weakness of his body in the face of a merciless and demanding life. Previously, he conceived of death as a redemptive power, as a necessary means to a better and fuller life. Now he started to feel it as a personal problem, with all the immediacy and certainty of individual experience. It was his own death, not that of others; it was his death alone and others could not help him — nay, others heedlessly went on about their own lives, sometimes even intruding upon the realm of the dead.

In July 1961, he wrote a poem entitled "Umm al-Burūm".<sup>(1)</sup> The theme of the poem suggested itself to him when Badr saw the cemetery of Umm al-Burūm being incorporated into the expanding city of Baṣra. Where the dead lay silently dreaming of their past lives and waiting for the Lord's promised day, now the tumult of the city came in with the chink of coins, the hubbub of cars and travellers, the loud noise of night-clubs, taverns and cafés. The city plucked the eyes of the dead, squeezed their breasts, tore them with wheels and dances, kicked them — and yawned. As if the city did not have enough living flesh to chew but had to resort to the ribs of the dead then vomit them into the wind. Where peace reigned, the city brought pimps asking for fees, drunkards and prostitutes laughing uproariously, and all the petty quarrels and evils of human beings.

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(1) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "Umm al-Burūm", pp. 24-31.

No city, however, seemed to be able to intrude upon the underworld of Wafīqa. In a poem entitled "The Gardens of Wafīqa"<sup>(1)</sup> written in August 1961, Badr described this impregnable underworld in terms of fragrant vegetation and shady rivers where "day and night meet, and fact and fiction" and where "Wafīqa lies in a bed of tulip-green moonshine". The whispering branches, the tearful paleness and the subdued colours and voices carry with them, however, the coldness of death and the sadness of solitude in which Wafīqa expects her companion.

A fortnight later, Badr wrote "In Front of God's Door"<sup>(2)</sup> and in this poem he pictures himself prostrated at God's great door helplessly crying out for peace in death. He does not wish for another life with better things; for his granary is full and he wants to leave his field for others to plant and to harvest. But he says,

I want to live in peace:

Like a candle melting in the dark

I die with a tear and a smile.

I am tired of the blazing noon-heat

In which I struggle with waves and with conscience,

[Tired] of my nights spent with palms, the lamp and doubts

In which I follow rhymes

In the darkness of seas and deserts

And in the labyrinth of suspicions and folly.

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(1) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "Hadā'iq Wafīqa", pp. 17-23.

(2) Ibid.: "Amām Bāb Allāh", pp. 32-39.

I am tired of my great strife  
Cutting open my heart to feed the poor man,  
To light his hut with the candle of my eyes,  
To clothe him with old flags  
Redolent with the smell of defeat.

I am tired of my last Spring  
Which I see in fertilization, daisies and roses,  
And in every Spring crossing borders.

I am tired of the pretence of life

I live in my yesterday, and call it 'tomorrow'

As if I was an actor

Entrapped from the dark world of death by destiny

Which lights the candles on [death's] great stage,

For him to smile to dawn [on it] while noon-heat fills  
his heart.

I am tired as a child is tired of crying.

Badr wishes to creep towards God with other sinners and confess his failure to attract the attention of a world which sees the water-lilies on the surface of the water but does not see the shells at the bottom containing unique pearls. To this God of beauty, he complains of his ugly face, of his lost childhood and youth, and says pathetically,

Prostrated I cry out, biting the stones,

"I want to die, O God !"

This indeed was the lowest point of dejection that Badr ever reached in his life. Little did he know that he had to live with death for the coming three years during which he was to waver between hope and despair until he breathed his last. He was to endure more severe pains and to suffer from

more excruciating feelings. His inability to walk easily was what the world saw of him. But he knew something else was happening to his body lately, for he had a few incidents of urinary incontinence at night and, worse still, his sexual power was markedly decreasing and his erection much impaired.<sup>(1)</sup> No treatment seemed to him of any use. This sick condition, after normal health, was such a staggering blow to his personality that he desired immediate death. But he was to inure himself to it so patiently, in spite of continued deterioration, that all his relatives, friends and acquaintances never missed his sense of humour.

In the summer of 1961, Badr received an invitation to participate in the conference on Contemporary Arabic Literature to be held in Rome in October of that year. He was asked to prepare a report on "Commitment and Non-commitment in Modern Arabic Literature". The conference was sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Istituto per l'Oriente and Tempo Presente magazine. There is no proof that Badr suspected that the conference was financed by any government for any ulterior political motive, but he must have known that the sponsoring bodies were in favour of a Western political outlook. Since this was not in contradiction with his own

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(1) Medical information supplied with special permission by the American University of Beirut Hospital: Discharge Note of Case No. 180704 and letter to the author dated July 21, 1966.

recently-acquired outlook, he accepted the invitation.

More now is known about the financial sources of the Congress for Cultural Freedom since The New York Times, in a series of articles starting in May 1966, disclosed the role of the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency in secretly and indirectly subsidizing student movements, labour organizations and cultural bodies in an attempt to combat communism in the world. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, established in 1950, unwittingly became one of the beneficiaries of the C.I.A. and one of its instruments in its world strategy of Cold War on the intellectual level. The Congress for Cultural Freedom sponsored a number of liberal magazines such as Der Monat in Germany, Encounter in Britain, Preuves in France, Quadrant in Australia, Quest in India, Cadernos Brasilos in Brazil, Freedom in Japan, Comment in the Philippines, Transition in Uganda, Tempo Presente in Italy, Minerva in Greece, Forum in Austria and, since November 1962, Hiwār in Lebanon.<sup>(1)</sup> It also held regional

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(1) In the General Assembly of the Congress for Cultural Freedom held in Paris in May 1967, the Director General of the Congress, after a year of press speculations on the intellectual scandal, declared the news of the C.I.A. subsidy to be true and denounced in the strongest terms the deceit to which the Congress had been subjected by the C.I.A. Some editors of the Congress's magazines resigned, notably Stephen Spender and Frank Kermode of Encounter; Tawfīq Ṣāyigh of Hiwār stopped his magazine in the face of severe attacks in the Arab world. Cf. Afkār magazine, No. 13,<sup>c</sup> Ammān, June 1967, pp. 149-153.

and international conferences on different intellectual problems, always championing the cause of cultural freedom.

The members of the Rome conference on Contemporary Arabic Literature were over fifty in number and were drawn from almost all parts of the Arab World and from some European and American orientalist centres. In this conference, Badr met some of his friends such as Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, Yūsuf al-Khāl, "Adonis", and Salmā al-Khadṛā' al-Jayyūsī, and he made the acquaintance of others such as Tawfīq Ṣāyigh, Kātib Yāsīn, As<sup>c</sup>ad Razzūq and of such scholars as Simon Jargy, Farḥāt Ziādeh, Albert Hourani, Jamīl Ṣalība, "Bint al-Shāṭi'" Ibrāhīm Madkūr and a number of Italian orientalists such as Paolo Minganti, Martino Morino, Maria Nallino, Giorgio Della Vida and others. Badr was pleased to meet Stephen Spender who represented Encounter and Ignazio Silone who represented Tempo Presente, both of whom - for one thing - had previous experiences with communism somewhat similar to his own. Among the journalists present was Miss Luc Norin, and Badr renewed his bonds of friendship with her. John Hunt, Secretary of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, seemed to take personal interest in Badr.

The mood of the conference was one of frankness, friendship and freedom in an atmosphere of lavish comfort and sophisticated ambiance. The official languages of the conference were Arabic, English and French, and there was

simultaneous translation from one language to the two others on earphones. The subjects discussed were topical. Yūsuf al-Khāl's report on "The Arab Writer in the Modern World" was commented on by Simon Jargy, <sup>C</sup>Īsā al-Nā<sup>C</sup>ūrī's on "The Arab Writer and World Culture" by Muḥammad Barrāda, Ibrāhīm Madkūr's "Arabic Literature in the Face of the Language and Writing Problems" by Francesco Gabrielli, Bint al-Shāṭi' 's on "Contemporary Feminine Arabic Literature" by Salmā al-Khadrā' al-Jayyūsī, Adonis's "Arabic Poetry and the Problem of Renewal" by Stephen Spender, Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā's on "The Novel, the Short Story, the Play and their Role in Arab Society" by Bint al-Shāṭi', Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb's on "Commitment and and Non-commitment in Modern Arabic Literature" by Ignazio Silone. Each comment was followed by a lengthy discussion except the final report, that of Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad on "Arabic Literature between Imitation and Renewal - the Arab Writers' Attitude", because it was late to reach the participants for a proper and orderly discussion. (1)

Badr's report was somewhat flippant and depended mainly on personal experience rather than on scholarship. The bulk of it was devoted to Arabic poetry; while the novel, the short story, the play and the essay in Arabic literature received very little attention. Badr maintained that Arabic

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(1) Al-Adab al-<sup>C</sup>Arabī al-Mu<sup>C</sup>āsir, A<sup>C</sup>māl Mu'tamar Rūmā al-Mun<sup>C</sup>aqīd fī Tishrīn al-Awwal sanat 1961: published by Manshūrāt Adwā', n.p., n.d. [Beirut ? 1962 ?]

poetry was committed to the service of the community from its earliest stages to modern times except for rare exceptions. It was the communists however who, after World War II, posed the question of "art for art's sake" or "art for society" in the Arab world. Literary commitment to them meant commitment to dialectical materialism alone and, in practice, it meant fanning the feelings of the mob and the poor, and using the political jargon of the Communist Party. The result of this type of commitment was very poor verse, of which Badr gave a few bad examples. In the face of communist commitment rose that of the Arab nationalists which did not differ much from the communist one except in the use of certain patent terms. Jean Paul Sartre's concept of committed literature came to reinforce non-communist commitment among Arab men of letters and T.S. Eliot's realism, especially in The Waste Land, influenced everybody though his technique was not always rightly understood, particularly by the communists. A group of young Arab poets, whom Badr called Tammūzite and among whom he included himself, understood Eliot's spirit and technique and appreciated his use of symbols. They resorted to symbols to camouflage their dissatisfaction with the political and social conditions obtaining in the Arab World where freedom did not exist. They were committed poets but, whereas communist commitment was imposed, theirs was freely springing from their souls and never neglected artistic excellence for the sake of popularity. Yet they

were attacked by the Left as lackeys of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism and by the Right as a group with little knowledge of old Arabic literature and poetic technique, corrupted by imperialist money in order to break up inherited Arab traditions in poetry. Their poetry was very promising, however, but they seemed to be overcome by disappointment finally as was clear from their latest works in which they abandoned commitment and turned their attention to personal problems and even to the affectation of them. As examples of this trend, Badr mentioned the latest poems of Yūsuf al-Khāl, Ṣalāh ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, Adonis and himself. Speaking of himself he said, "As if I am fed up with commitment and am ridding myself of it." After a short reference to the committed realist novels and short stories of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥaykal, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Maḥmūd Taymūr, Najīb Maḥfūz, Dhū al-Nūn Ayyūb and Mārūn ʿAbbūd, and the committed essays of ʿUmar Fākhūrī and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Badr concluded his report by dividing literary commitment into two kinds: the first being Communist commitment which had better be called compulsion and nationalist commitment which differed only in some details, and the second being the non-communist, non-party commitment springing from the souls of the writers who, after contributing wonderful works, were defeated in a society still dominated by party bigotry. (1)

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(1) ibid. pp. 239-255.

Commenting on this report, Ignazio Silone corroborated the view that a writer committed by personal choice was one who belonged to society not to the state, took no commitment from any authority, but was faithful to himself in the service of man. (1)

During one of the recesses of the conference John Hunt, the Secretary of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, told Professor Albert Hourani of Oxford University that the Congress was willing to give Badr a scholarship to study somewhere in England. Professor Hourani said that he would try to help him find a university which would accept him. (2) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā had amongst others encouraged Badr to further his studies abroad and Badr believed he could perhaps have both higher studies and medical treatment in England, so Jabrā asked his old friend Professor Hourani to help Badr in this respect. (3)

While in Rome, Badr had the occasion to visit the Coliseum and other Roman remains but they seemed to constrain his soul; yet when he visited the Vatican and Pope John XXIII he said, "Now I have discovered that Rome has two meanings: one in the Coliseum which constrains Man, and the other in the Vatican City which frees him." (4)

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(1) ibid. p. 256.

(2) Albert Hourani's letter to the author, Oxford, January 9, 1967.

(3) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā's letter to the author, Baghdad, July 28, 1966.

(4) Khalīl Rāmiz Sarkīs in Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwā', p. 42.

He wrote a poem entitled "Nostalgia in Rome"<sup>(1)</sup> yearning for his country and for a nameless woman to whom he expressed his erotic love. Did he address it to his wife or to Wafīqa ? Back in Beirut on his way home, he wrote another love poem entitled "Burning"<sup>(2)</sup> in which he expressed his inability to arouse in his beloved a burning passion like his, as if an impenetrable barrier was between him and her. Arriving in Baṣra, he wrote a third love poem entitled "The City of Mirage "<sup>(3)</sup> in which, noting the distance between Europe and Asia which he crossed with speed, he contrasted it with the unfathomable distance between him and his beloved and said,

And you, my bed-companion, are like far stars,  
As if there is a wall of sleep between us.  
My hands embrace you, squeeze an insensible corpse,  
As if I embrace my own blood on stone  
In a house whose thieves are winds, noon-heat and clouds,  
Whose evening is stillness and stars,  
And whose morning is a waiting.  
Years extended between us: in blood and fire,  
Which I stretch as bridges  
But are turned into a wall,  
While you are at the bottom of your deep seas  
I dive but do not touch them, rocks hit me,  
Cut the veins in my hands, I cry out for help,

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(1) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "Ḥanīn fī Rūmā", pp. 53-58.

(2) ibid.: "Iḥtirāq", pp. 145-147.

(3) ibid.: "Madīnat al-Sarāb", pp. 71-74.

"Oh, Wafīqa,

Who are the nearest person to me, O companion  
Of worms and darkness."

Ten years have I walked to you, O bed-companion who sleeps  
With me behind her wall, in the bed of her self,

My travel to you has not ended

O City of Mirage, O Death of her Life.

I crossed Europe to Asia

Before the day was gone

While you, my bed-companion, are a far city

With closed gates behind which I stand waiting.

It seems to me that Badr's desire to join Wafīqa by death was mixed up with his strong eroticism on the one hand and his growing sexual impotence on the other. Life became a cold desert for him and love, a mirage. His conjugal relations with his wife were suffering and Wafīqa, his ever-living ideal dead for ten years now, loomed as a saving desideratum. His personal problem became more acute in December 1961, when he wrote: (1)

I want to embrace, to kiss

The blood that throbs in the lips

As if it were the heart that kisses.

The dead body does not feel the divine sigh

Which sinks deep like a murderous knife

That revives the murdered ...

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(1) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "al-Ghayma al-Gharība", pp.42-43.

If what the beloved felt  
Was the pain, the dizziness not the void,  
I would not be like a strange cloud  
Thundering until it kindles the air  
With thunder  
Which the earth refuses to answer !

Badr felt he was like "a strange cloud" that thundered but had no rain. His wife could not answer that thunder but felt "the void" because his body was dead and did not feel "the divine sigh" which came with orgasm. Badr felt he was like "a strange cloud" also because his poetry thundered but the world was heedless. Communists and Arab nationalists were attacking him in literary circles as a renegade. His alienation from his beloved wife, from the world, was painfully tragic and the world of Wafīqa was a phantasy which took hold of his mind. By necessity, he lived in the past. A visit to the river of Abū al-Khaṣīb in February, 1962, reminded him of Hāla,<sup>(1)</sup> the shepherdess he loved twenty years before. A visit to Jaykūr in March, 1962, brought back to his mind the stories of Abū Zayd and Sinbad which he had heard as a child<sup>(2)</sup> and made him ask the existential question:<sup>(3)</sup>

Jaykūr... What ? Do we walk in Time  
Or does Time march  
While we are standing still ?

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(1) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "Yā Nahr", pp. 84-88.  
(2) ibid. "Afyā' Jaykūr", p. 112  
(3) ibid. p. 110

The quack of wild ducks<sup>(1)</sup> reminded him of the days of his childhood in the village where this quack was heard just before the rainy season. After another visit to Jaykūr in April, 1962, he wrote a poem entitled "Jaykūr is grey-haired"<sup>(2)</sup> in which, after remembering the natural beauty and blooming life of his village, he noted how sad it now looked and how old. Young as he was, Badr looked on the world through the eyes of an old man on the brink of death. His illness coloured all his thoughts and his emotions, and there were times when he did not care any more for the world, bundled as he was within himself and his pains.

Yet in the depth of his heart lingered an old voice that he heard sometimes. Writing to Yūsuf al-Khāl, he said, "Why bother about the world, let it go the way it pleases; yet a voice underneath whispers, 'It is my world and the direction it takes concerns me'."<sup>(3)</sup>

With this frame of mind, he wrote "The Submerged Temple"<sup>(4)</sup> in February 1962. In this poem, Badr sees himself symbolized in a Malayan Buddhist temple submerged in a jungle lake by volcanic eruption. Intact with all its treasures, the temple rests at the bottom of the lake guarded for a thousand years by crocodiles and water monsters. The passage of time

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(1) ibid. "Şiyāh al-Baṭṭ al-Barrī", pp. 89-92.

(2) ibid. "Jaykūr Shābat", pp. 137-144.

(3) Shi'r, Spring 1962, p. 138.

(4) Al-Ma'bad al-Gharīq: "Al-Ma'bad al-Gharīq", pp. 93-106; Shi'r, Spring 1962, pp. 45-51.

does not affect the temple or its treasures which stand in an everlasting wakefulness and a luxurious continuous present, mocking human transience and conceit.

Yet treasures are useless if they remain submerged. Thousands of hungry children, thousands of sick people and thousands of tyrannized nations will be saved if the world's submerged treasures are made to rise to the level of conscience. The poet therefore invokes Ulysses to venture along the Pahang River into the Malayan lake, fearless of water monsters, and reminds him of the victims of the unnecessary Trojan war, the like of whom Iraq saw during the Red upsurge. The world has not yet seen the Star of Bethlehem or heard the Qur'anic verses of Ḥirā'. The gods of the lake must be visited and raised to Olympus. The long night of Asia calls for an end.

Badr dwelt with some length in this poem on the barbarities perpetrated by the communists in Iraq during the Red upsurge<sup>(1)</sup> and he almost destroyed the artistic unity of the poem with this political excursus. In his next poem written in March, 1962, and entitled "The Martyr's Son",<sup>(2)</sup> he describes the devastating effect in Iraq of the communist hegemony in terms of ruined huts, bloody fields strewn with thorns, corpses, bones and graves left after the flood has

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(1) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq", pp. 101-103.

(2) ibid., "Ibn al-Shahīd", pp. 125-130.

receded. He epitomizes the reaction of the Arab nationalists in a boy wearing the large military uniform of his martyred father, confirmed by his mother in the hope of a bright morrow for Arabism.

Badr was thus showing some concern for his world in answer to the old voice deep in his heart. Yet he was too sick to sustain it. He could hardly walk now except with help. He lived at 2 Ajnādīn Street (previously called Tannūma Street), almost next to the Ports Authority building in one of the houses built by the Authority for its employees and rented to them cheaply. Every morning, his friend and colleague Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid took him to work, in his car, and helped him go up the stairs to his office on the first floor.<sup>(1)</sup> After the day's work, he took him back home. Mu'ayyid was soon to be sent to London on a government scholarship for a short course in statistics and Badr decided to go to Beirut for a proper medical treatment at the hospital of the American University of Beirut. He took a fifteen-day leave of his director and flew to Beirut in mid-April, 1962.

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(1) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid to the author in an interview, Baṣra, January 16, 1967.

## Chapter Five

### Manhood III

#### Badr's Tragic Period

In the Lebanese capital, Badr met some of his friends such as Yūsuf al-Khāl, Unsī al-Ḥājj, Khalīl Ḥāwī and other poets of Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine. Although he was not left alone, he felt lonely and he missed Iraq, as can be realized from his poem, "Because I am a Stranger"<sup>(1)</sup>, written in Beirut on April 15, 1962. He was worried by the idea of death and wrote another poem on the same day as he lay sleepless at night in the noisy city.<sup>(2)</sup> In his mind's eye, he saw Jaykūr with its creeks and barks but Beirut's car horns invaded his ears and he imagined they were calling prostitutes and drunkards. He lay awake and said,

I lie awake because I know

That I shall not kiss dawn's cheek one day

As it comes freeing a tune and a wing in every nest

While I shall be in my grave.<sup>(3)</sup>

He was admitted to the hospital of the American University of Beirut on April 18, 1962. A note on his admission slip states "no doctor's fee", a favour he obtained through his friends, though he paid his hospital bill amounting to LL. 370.25<sup>(4)</sup>. Dr. Shafīq N. Ḥaddād attended him

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(1) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "Li'annī Gharīb", pp. 122-124.

(2) Ibid. "Sahar", pp. 148-153.

(3) ibid. pp. 152-153.

(4) A.U.B. Hospital Assistant Director's letter to the author, Beirut, July 21, 1966.

as well as Dr. Fu'ād A. Šabra, Assistant Professor of Neurology, and later on Dr. Fu'ād S. Ḥaddād, Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery. After the preliminary tests which included a lumbar puncture he was discharged on the 21st of April to be re-admitted on the 26th. On his second admission a myelography was attempted, necessitating another lumbar puncture to inject an X-ray opaque substance in the spinal cord, which caused him great pain. The myelography failed and another was recommended but he refused it<sup>(1)</sup>. His disease was diagnosed as a degenerative disease of the nervous system and an amyotrophic lateral sclerosis syndrome<sup>(2)</sup>. No medications were given him and he decided to leave hospital on the 29th of April, 1962.

In hospital, he was visited by many of his literary friends in Beirut such as Tawfīq Šāyigh, Laylā Ba<sup>c</sup>albakī, Khalīl Ḥāwī, Samīra <sup>c</sup>Azzām and, above all, by Yūsuf al-Khāl. He complained to them of his condition but managed to put on an air of good humour. On the nurses' sheet, the observation "depressed and worried about his condition" is made twice. On the 19th of April, he wrote a poem in hospital entitled "The Will"<sup>(3)</sup> in which he expresses his fear of dying, of slipping imperceptibly from anesthesia

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(1) A.U.B. Hospital Discharge Note of Badr Shaker Sayyab, Case No. 180704.

(2) ibid.

(3) Al-Ma<sup>c</sup>bad al-Gharīq: "Al-Wašīyya", pp. 154-162.

to death, of the nothingness that may follow death if there is no resurrection, and he leaves to his wife the following will:

Iqbāl, my beloved wife,

Don't blame me. Death is beyond my control.

Even if I am spared [now], I am not immortal.

Be to Ghaylān a father and a mother. Be merciful

when he weeps.

Teach him to bend his heart toward the orphan

and the poor

And teach him ...

The darkness of sleep

Touches my strange eyes with its soft tips

[As I lie] in my bed, in the foreign city,

And kindles a flame in my conscience.

Don't be sad if I die. What harm is there

If the flute is shattered and the tune remains

till my morrow ?

Don't be far,

Don't be far,

Don't ...

On April 25, he obtained from Dr. Shafīq N. Ḥaddād a medical report in which the doctor said that Badr was not likely to be fit for duty before a period of two months. After the report was duly certified by the Iraqi Consulate in Beirut, it was sent to the Port's Authority in Basra. (1)

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(1) Copy supplied by Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup> Abd al-Wahid to the author.

Meanwhile, the Syrian poet Khalīl Khūrī, visiting Badr at hospital, suggested that he should see a certain German orthopedist whose clinic was not far from the A.U.B. Hospital on Bliss Avenue. His name on the brass plate at his door appeared thus "D. Zeuch (Allemand)"<sup>(1)</sup>. He had spent a long time in many parts of the Middle East, knew some Arabic and was married to a Lebanese. Apparently, he was not a recognized physician.

Badr visited him on May 5, 1962, and remained under his care for more than two months. He continued to visit him at his clinic where Mrs. Zeuch also massaged him until he was asked to put up at a near-by hotel called St. Paul's for further treatment.

On May 5, Badr wrote a pathetic letter<sup>(2)</sup> to Major-General Muzhir al-Shāwī, Director General of the Ports' Authority in Basra, explaining that he was miserable and threatened by complete paralysis and that his treatment [by D. Zeuch] might need three months and cost LL. 2500 of which he managed to pay LL. 1000 in advance, the balance to be paid after his cure. He added that some non-Iraqi quarters offered to help him but that he was confident that his own country was capable of helping him and willingly too. He ended the letter saying, "Will my hope be disappointed or shall I find in you as Director General

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(1) Information supplied by Kamal Boullata who visited D. Zeuch personally at the request of the author and was shown the medical records at his clinic in Ashrafiyya, Beirut, May 11, 1967 and May 16, 1967.

(2) Copy supplied by Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid to the author. See Appendix p. 277 below.

of the Iraqi Ports the help that I solicit ? Kissing your generous hands — Your faithful son."

In the meantime, Badr collected his poems and agreed to have them published by Dār al-<sup>c</sup>Ilm li'l-Malāyīn of Beirut as The Submerged Temple. The income from this collection was supplemented by a subscription from a number of men of letters in Beirut<sup>(1)</sup> who also sent a cable to <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karīm Qāsim signed by Khalīl Ḥāwī, Fu'ād Ṣarrūf, Qusṭantīn Zurayq, Khalīl Rāmiz Sarkīs and others invoking him for help.<sup>(2)</sup> A subsidy of ID. 500 was eventually sent by Qāsim through the military attaché at the Iraqi Embassy in Beirut.<sup>(3)</sup> As a gesture of thanks, Badr composed a short poem in the traditional metre praising Qāsim on the anniversary of the Iraqi Revolution on July 14, 1962.<sup>(4)</sup>

Meanwhile, D. Zeuch had put Badr in an orthopedic corset<sup>(5)</sup> that left only his head and his arms free. Mrs. Zeuch tended him for a while at St. Paul's Hotel but later a young beautiful nurse named Laylā was hired to look after him daily from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. for LL. 20 per day. D. Zeuch visited him at the hotel every now and then, and Badr insisted on kissing his hand on every visit. In spite of his condition, Badr showed good humour and Mrs. Zeuch mentions how,

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(1) Author's interview with Miss Samīra <sup>c</sup>Azzām, Beirut, June 9, 1966.

(2) Author's interview with Dr. Khalīl Ḥāwī, Beirut, June 8, 1966.

(3) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, Beirut, June 6, 1966.

(4) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, Beirut, [April 23, 1966.]

(5) Not in a plaster cast, as mentioned by some, such as Muṣṭafā <sup>c</sup>Ṣafadī in al-Ādāb, February 1965, p.73, note (1).

supported between her and Laylā, he used to smile as he moved about saying, "To-morrow you will see me as [nimble as] a horse."

Many of his friends in Beirut visited him at St. Paul's Hotel, but the one who seemed most concerned about him was Yūsuf al-Khāl. Dr. Suhayl Idrīs, editor of al-Ādāb, visited Badr and obtained from him the poem entitled "The Martyr's Son" to be published in the June number of al-Ādāb.<sup>(1)</sup> Except for a poem published in this magazine in June 1960, Badr had stopped having his poems published in al-Ādāb since 1957. To return to al-Ādāb, after five years' association with Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine, now under vehement assault by the nationalist literary press, necessitated a note of explanation from Badr which, when published, read thus: "It pleases me that the lost son returns home and that I return to al-Ādāb on whose pages is my natural breathing space which I take upon myself to last for ever."<sup>(2)</sup> He also informed Dr. Suhayl Idrīs, in the presence of Dr. Khalīl Ḥāwī and Bahīj <sup>c</sup>Uthmān, that he would cease to be the correspondent in Iraq of Adab, the new sister-magazine of Shi<sup>c</sup>r.<sup>(3)</sup> Meanwhile, he blithely continued to be friendly on the personal level to Yūsuf al-Khāl, editor

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(1) Al-Ādāb, June 1962, p. 4.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Cf. editor's note in al-Ādāb, June 1962, p. 75. Badr's name as correspondent of Adab in Iraq appears on p. 2 of Adab, Vol. I, No. 1, Beirut, Winter 1962, and disappears in subsequent numbers. See Badr's poem in Adab, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 109, "Al-Umm wa'l-Ṭifla al-Dā'i<sup>c</sup>a".

of Shi<sup>c</sup>r and Adab magazines, unmindful of the contradictions in which he was falling.

The idea of impending death kept recurring in his thoughts. In a poem entitled "The Call of Death"<sup>(1)</sup>, he imagines his mother calling him to her grave and he responds,  
O grave of hers, open your arms.

I am coming with no noise, without a moan.

He wrote a poem in May, 1962, regretting that he had carried nothing but cheap beads to his beloved<sup>(2)</sup> and another poem in June expressing his sorrow at the death of many Algerians before independence was finally achieved.<sup>(3)</sup> Life was too short to be squandered, yet there he lay sick in the prime of his youth, unable to enjoy it.

In his loneliness and desolation, the beautiful young nurse, Laylā, kept him company. She sympathized with him and took good care of him. Gradually, he began to feel attracted to her. They exchanged words of deep understanding, and Badr began to think of her at night and look forward to her company every morning. She gave him a lock of her blonde hair and a few of her love letters to read. She did not want to disappoint him. Yet only her sense of professional duty made her keep serving him. Mrs. Zeuch reports that Laylā complained to her that Badr had confided to her

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(1) Manzil al-Aqnān: "Nidā' al-Mawt", pp. 16-18.

(2) ibid. "Ḥāmīl al-Kharaz al-Mulawwan", pp. 33-35.

(3) ibid. "Rabī<sup>c</sup> al-Jazā'ir", pp. 19-25.

that he hated his wife and wanted to divorce her, and that he intended to marry Laylā.<sup>(1)</sup> Mrs. Zeuch sent word to Badr's wife, advising her to come to Beirut.

Towards the middle of June, 1962, Mrs. Sayyāb arrived in Beirut with her son, Ghaylān. By this time, Badr had been released from his orthopedic corset and needed massage. An Italian masseuse named Cecile Calandra was found for him by D. Zeuch. She had medical pretensions and claimed she could cure Badr. She offered to give him injections and charge only half the fees, the remainder to be paid when Badr was healed. Badr accepted but felt D. Zeuch had cheated him of his money. His friend, the poet Khalīl Ḥāwī of the American University of Beirut, managed through his connections with the Ministry of Health, to make D. Zeuch return to Badr some of the money he had charged him.<sup>(2)</sup>

Badr had to renew his sick leave by a medical report from a recognized physician. On June 24, 1962, he visited Dr. George Bikh<sup>c</sup>āzī at his hospital in Beirut and got from him a report that said Badr suffered from prostate inflammation, low blood pressure and a condition of general weakness necessitating at least three months of rest and treatment.<sup>(3)</sup> The report was duly certified by the Lebanese authorities and the Iraqi Embassy in Beirut before it was sent to the

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(1) Mrs. Zeuch to Kamal Boullata, quoted to the author by letter, Beirut, May 11, 1967.

(2) Prof. Khalīl Ḥāwī to the author, interview in Beirut, June 8, 1966.

(3) Copy of Dr. Bikh<sup>c</sup>āzī's report supplied by Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid.

Ports' Authority in Basra.

Cecile Calandra's treatment was lengthy, and Mrs. Sayyāb could not stay in Beirut but had to return to take care of her children. She had stayed at St. Paul's Hotel about ten days with her husband. She then returned to Iraq but not before she had discovered the lock of blonde hair and the love letters of Laylā in her husband's room. She had flung them out of the window towards the sea in an angry threatening mood. On June 27, Badr wrote his poem, "The Day is Gone",<sup>(1)</sup> in which at the end of a sad day he asks a lady, presumably his nurse, to go home and says:

Sinbad did not preserve your hair locks from perishing.

They drank salt water till their blonde colour

turned grey and disappeared.

The many love letters

Are wet, their bright promises are obliterated.

On July 1, he wrote a love poem entitled "The Roar of the Sea and of Desire",<sup>(2)</sup> probably also addressed to Laylā, in which he expresses his infatuation and his burning physical desire for her. On July 3, he wrote "Take Me"<sup>(3)</sup> in which he asks his girl, probably Laylā again, not to leave him. He confesses the failure of his marriage and sees in his new love a pre-destined fate. He confesses how, like an adolescent, he desired her in her absence and held her uniform left in his room, smelling it, feeling it and kissing it as he imagined parts of her body.

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(1) Manzil al-Aqnān: "Raḥala al-Nabār", pp. 5-11.

(2) ibid. "Nadir al-Bahr wa'l-Ashwāq", pp. 12-15.

(3) ibid. "Khudhīnī", pp. 26-32.

It seems that Badr's eroticism was growing stronger as his sexual impotence was increasing with the impairment of his nerve reflexes caused by the motor neuron disease in the lower part of his spinal cord. Remembering Laylā at Basra about sixteen months later, when his disease was even more advanced, he wrote a poem entitled "How Did I Not Love You ?" (1) in which he ruefully recalls the physical attractions of the girl and regrets his lost opportunity of making love to her. He remembered her again a short while before his death in Kuwait towards the end of 1964 in a poem explicitly entitled "Laylā" (2), yet he was then sobered by other experiences.

While in Beirut, Badr had occasion to attend a Thursday meeting of Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine (3) but he did not take part in the discussions with Yūsuf al-Khāl, Adonis, Unsī al-Hājǰ, Shawqī Abī Shaqrā and others.

Cecile Calandra's treatment of him having failed to produce any results, Badr returned to Basra and, before his sick leave had ended, he reported to the Ports' Authority on September 8, 1962. Cecile Calandra was later, in December, to follow up Badr through the Italian Embassy in Iraq and the Iraqi police asking for the remainder of her fees (4) but there is no evidence that Badr paid her since he was still sick.

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(1) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Kayfa lam Uḥbibki", pp.88-89.

(2) Al-Aḥad newspaper of Beirut, No. 743, June 20, 1965, p. 15. See Appendix pp. 278-279 below.

(3) Shi<sup>c</sup>r No. 23, Summer 1962, p. 134.

(4) Iraqi Ports' Authority letters to the Police Directorate dated December 13, 1962 and May 27, 1963.

In fact, he was too sick to be fit for any duty at his office. He consulted Dr. Tūmā Hindū who gave him sick leave and he even resorted to folk-medicine using medicinal herbs and not excluding magic incantations.<sup>(1)</sup> Finally, Badr's plans to go to England began to materialize. Professor Albert Hourani arranged with Professor T.W. Thacker, Director of the School of Oriental Studies at Durham, that Badr should go as a post-graduate student to the University of Durham and that the Congress for Cultural Freedom should pay for a year's scholarship.<sup>(2)</sup> The Iraqi government permitted him to accept the scholarship with a leave of absence. Badr was hoping to obtain both medical treatment and higher education in England. In his application form to St. Cuthbert's Society, he stated that he wished to begin his studies in November, 1962, that he intended to work on Comparative Literature and that he was being supported by a grant from the Congress for Cultural Freedom.<sup>(3)</sup> A student at the University of Durham must be attached to a College or Society and St. Cuthbert's Society is the body that caters for non-resident students, the Colleges being principally residential.

It was not, however, until the middle of December, 1962, that Badr could leave Basra to Baghdad and from there fly to London. He arrived in London on the 16th of December and

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(1) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-wāḥid's letter to the author, Basra December 15, 1966.

(2) Prof. T.W. Thacker's letter to the author, Durham, October 25, 1966, and Prof. A. Hourani's letter to the author, Oxford, January 9, 1967.

(3) J.L. Brooks, The Principal of St. Cuthbert's Society, in his letter to the author, Durham, November 4, 1966.

put up at the Cumberland Hotel, an inexpensive but fairly good hotel at Marble Arch at the top of Oxford Street. The first thing he did on the day following his arrival was to ring up Denys Johnson-Davies, editor of the Arabic quarterly magazine Aṣwāt, published in London, in which Badr had already published some of his poems such as "To Jamīla Būḥayrid". Johnson-Davies came to the hotel at the request of Badr, went up to his room and waited for what seemed to him a very long time at his door, before it was eventually opened by Badr.<sup>(1)</sup> The reason for the delay was that it had taken Badr all that time to cross the room. Johnson-Davies arranged for Badr to see a London physician, Dr. James Bevan,<sup>(2)</sup> a few days later.

On the same day, Badr wrote a letter to his friend Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid studying in London and was surprised to see him only three hours later at the hotel.<sup>(3)</sup> Mu'ayyid was to prove himself a very good friend as he accompanied Badr in London and helped him around.

Dr. Bevan referred Badr to Dr. Charles Harold Edwards, F.R.C.P., Consultant Neurologist at St. Mary's Hospital in London. Dr. Edwards saw Badr on December 21, 1962, for a preliminary examination and planned to admit him later to hospital for further medical investigations.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Denys Johnson-Davies' letter to the author, London, Oct. 13, 1966.

(2) Dr. James Bevan's letter to the author, London, Sept. 5, 1966.

(3) Author's interview with Mu'ayyid, Basra, Jan. 16, 1967.

(4) Dr. Harold Edwards' letter to the author, London, Aug. 12, 1966.

Ever since his arrival in England, Badr was particularly profuse in the production of poetry. He almost wrote one poem every day and sometimes even more. The strange physical atmosphere in which he found himself as contrasted with that of Iraq, the new experiences, things seen or felt and, above all, his hope in a cure, his fear of death and his worry about his family inspired much of what he wrote.

In a series of ten poems entitled "The Book of Job"<sup>(1)</sup> written in London after he had seen Dr. Edwards, Badr reveals a new buoyant spirit of patience, fortitude and hope. He starts by saying:

Praise be to Thee, however long is the trial

And however great the pain.

Praise be to Thee. Misfortunes are gifts,

And calamities are an aspect of largess.

He says how he misses his son, Ghaylān, and his home, how he misses the warm sun of Iraq in the London cold and fog but he bears this as much as his pains and says:

I will be healed, I will forget all that wounded

My heart and bared my shivering bones in the cold night.

I shall walk to Jaykūr one morn.

He encourages Iqbāl, his wife, to be patient and to hope for his return which he dreams of in triumphant terms.

Yet notwithstanding this hope, deep in his heart he knew he was a condemned man. He had no weapon against death except his poetry:

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(1) Manzil al-Aqnān: "Sifr Ayyūb", pp. 36-81, dated between Dec. 26, 1962, and Jan. 2, 1963.

Out of my poems, I drew  
A sword: lightning like a smith who cast his tools  
Made a blade for it and a handle.  
With my poetry, flashing, thundering and roaring,  
I hit the face of Death falling upon me  
As if it were the curtain in a bad play;  
I hit the face of Death a thousand times  
When its hateful face appeared  
As if it were a Siren towards whose arms  
My body unhesitatingly goes.  
I unsheathe my sword,  
My poetry flows with no end  
Because I am sick,  
Bidding life farewell or clinging to life  
With [poetry's] thread inherited from the dead  
Whose poetry did not defend them against Death  
Which came to them suddenly !

Badr's poetry becomes like a diary in which he records his feelings and thoughts. Its quality degenerates sometimes to the level of prosaic expression but its preoccupation with life and death remains acute. On his last night in London, on January 4, 1963, before he left for Durham, he wrote "The Last Night"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he entertains the hope of being healed

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(1) ibid. "al-Layla al-Akhīra", pp. 116-122.

a month later when he returns to London to see Dr. Edwards.

Perhaps one morning, in a month, after the doctor  
Sees him - who knows what Destiny hides away ? -  
He will carry his suitcase full  
Of a thousand thousand wonderful things,  
With jewelry and stones,  
With hidden toys  
Which will surprise Ghaylān - long did he wait,  
Long did he weep and sleep while his dream world  
Was full of bells ringing or wolves howling,  
Of sailboats in which Sinbad roamed in a dangerous world.

Thinking of his wife, he says:

My wife does not turn off the lamp. [She says:]  
"He may return in the dark night from his trip."  
She kindles a fire in our hearth [saying]: "Cold  
Is the night, and he loves warmth and night chat."

His visit to Durham was an ordeal of helplessness, loneliness and bitter cold. In London, he had his friend Mu'ayyid who kept him company and helped him to walk to near-by places such as Hyde Park and took him by car on sight-seeing tours or in order to visit Indian restaurants for spicy meals.<sup>(1)</sup> He also had a few acquaintances such as Denys Johnson-Davies. But in Durham he had nobody.

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(1) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-wāḥid's letter to the author, Basra, August 30, 1966.

Badr rented a furnished room from a certain Miss Bradley and waited for the arrival of a bank draft from the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris. He had to depend on his crutch when he went to St. Cuthbert's Society, at 12 South Bailey, to pick up his mail. The bitter cold of north England as well as his paralysis deterred him from going outdoors and he preferred to be confined to his room. He was lost with no guidance in a big city, he was bored and was in need of money.

On January 5, 1963, his first day in Durham, he wrote three poems. In one of them, he said, (1)

Durham ...

I am bored with my condition.

Stretch out your arms and embrace me

In an abyss of dark nothingness.

What is the value of a life which I pass

Walking with a crutch in the paths of old age ?

On the next day, he wrote two poems in one of which (2) he returns to Job's patience and to hope in a cure:

I do know that the day of my cure,

Glimpsed in the unknown [future],

Will remove the sorrows from my heart,

Snatch away the disease. I will throw the medicine

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(1) Manzil al-Acnān: "Durham", p. 103.

(2) ibid. "Qālū li Ayyūb", pp. 111-115

And the staff. I will run to our home plucking  
flowers on my way

To make a fresh bouquet

That I will offer to [my] patient wife

With the remnants of my heart.

On January 9, 1963, he wrote a poem entitled "I Hear Him Cry"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he imagines his son, Ghaylān, crying as he misses his father. In this poem, Badr concedes that there is rest in death to which he may submit.

Thus wavering between life and death, hope and despair, Badr eked out his days in his room waiting for the money transfer. On January 11, he wrote a letter to Denys Johnson-Davies in which he mentioned that he was in urgent need of money for his treatment and spoke very warmly of Dr. Bevan.<sup>(2)</sup>

It was not until January 22, after the money had finally arrived, that Badr went to St. Cuthbert's Society and filled a student registration form.<sup>(3)</sup> Mr. J. L. Brooks, Principal of the Society, says that Badr was unable to walk and said that he had broken his leg before leaving for England.<sup>(4)</sup> Probably Badr did not wish to disclose the fact that he had come to England premeditatively for the treatment of his growing paralysis.

A few days after registration, Badr returned to London,

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(1) *ibid.* "Asma<sup>c</sup>uhū Yabkī", pp.99-102.

(2) Denys Johnson-Davies' letter to the author, London, Oct. 13, 1966.

(3) Principal J. L. Brooks' letter to the author, Durham, Nov. 4, 1966.

(4) *ibid.* and Prof. T. W. Thacker's letter to the author, Durham, Oct. 25, 1966.

having left with his landlady in Durham most of his luggage, perhaps hoping later to return to the University of Durham. But St. Cuthbert's did not actually hear from him until April 26, 1963, when he wrote a letter from Basra, dated April 22, saying that after his treatment in London his leg got worse and that he had been transported home on a stretcher.<sup>(1)</sup>

Actually, after he arrived in London from Durham, he put up for a few days at Lexham Hotel in Kensington, off Cromwell Road; then he was admitted to the Lindo Wing of St. Mary's Hospital on February 5, 1963. Dr. Edwards conducted the medical investigations he had planned to exclude a spinal tumour. He took X-rays of Badr's spine but found "no relevant abnormality".<sup>(2)</sup> He took a myelogram which necessitated the painful injection of an X-ray opaque substance in the spinal cord that Badr had experienced in Beirut. He also made the painful lumbar puncture for the examination of the cerebrospinal fluid that Badr had also experienced in Beirut. "The myelogram was completely normal in every detail and in particular showed no evidence of a spinal cord compression and the cerebrospinal fluid was also normal in all respects."<sup>(3)</sup> This result was "the final corner stone in the diagnosis of motor neurone disease."<sup>(4)</sup> For some unknown reason, perhaps associated with pernicious anaemia, Badr's nerve-cells of

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(1) Principal J. L. Brooks' letter to the author, Durham, Nov. 4, 1966.

(2) Dr. Harold Edwards' letter to Mr. Al-Sayyab dated Feb. 27, 1963.

(3) ibid.

(4) Dr. Harold Edwards' letter to the author, London, Aug. 12, 1966.

movement were undergoing a degenerative disease which outwardly was manifesting itself in paralysis and progressive atrophy. There was no known treatment of this disease but Dr. Edwards prescribed vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, meanwhile testing Badr's blood twice to control its level. (1)

While at hospital, Badr was visited constantly by his friend, Mu'ayyid, and occasionally by Denys Johnson-Davies, by the Iraqi Military Attaché, by an Iraqi geologist named Dr. Khūrshīd al-Naqīb and by <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sayyāb, a half-brother of his mother's, studying in England. (2)

On his first day in hospital, he wrote two poems. In the first of them, entitled "At the Hospital" (3), he imagines Death trying to enter his room stealthily at night by making a way through the wall with a pickaxe and sees in the doctor's lumbar puncture a similar way for Death into his body. In the second one, entitled "Jaykūr Is My Mother" (4), he remembers his village and recalls three sweethearts associated with it: Hāla, Wafīqa and Iqbāl, his wife. The metre of this poem is chaotic verse which, Badr claimed in a note, was experimental.

He was meanwhile thinking of publishing in Beirut his latest poems written in England when, on the 8th of February, 1963, occurred the coup d'état in Iraq which put an end to

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(1) Dr. Harold Edwards' letter to B. S. Al-Sayyab, Esq., London, March 1, 1963.

(2) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāḥid's letter to the author, Basra, August 30, 1966.

(3) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Fī al-Mustashfā", pp. 98-100.

(4) Ibid. "Jaykūr Ummī", pp. 77-80.

Qāsim's régime and brought to power <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Salām <sup>c</sup>Ārif.

Badr was excited but his interest in politics had lost the ardour of the past. He wrote a poem in the traditional metre to celebrate the occasion but, on reading it, Mu'ayyid disapproved of it. A few days later Badr wrote another one in free verse entitled "A Poem To Revolting Iraq"<sup>(1)</sup> which was more acceptable, but he gave it the date of the previous poem.<sup>(2)</sup> He sent it to Beirut to be published in al-Ādāb of March, 1963. In the last section of it, he sees in the new régime in Iraq a cure for his body:

The doctor hurried to me - Oh, perhaps he found the cure  
For the disease of my body so he came -

The doctor hurried to me saying, "What happened in Iraq ?

The army has revolted and Qāsim is dead." What good

news of a cure this is !

I almost rose, out of joy, to walk, to run with no disease.

Hurrah ... What freedom !

Hurrah for the Arab nation's army that broke the fetters.

O brethren in God, in blood, in Arabism and in hope:

Rise up, the despots have been killed; Light has

scattered Darkness.

Guard your Arab revolution, with which the "comrades"

Have been smitten and the oppressors knocked down.

For Tammūz has awakened.

After the stooge had stolen his sheen, Iraq has resuscitated.

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(1) Manzil al-Aqnān: "Qaṣīda ilā al-<sup>c</sup>Irāq al-Thā'ir", pp.133-138.

(2) Author's interview with Mu'ayyid, Basra, Jan. 16, 1967.

Badr sent a copy of this poem with a number of his other recent poems to Bahīj ʿUthmān in Beirut to be published in March, 1963, as The House of Slaves.<sup>(1)</sup> He immediately received £150 for it but it was the one of his collections that he liked least, for it was written in haste.<sup>(2)</sup>

Badr left the hospital in the middle of February, 1963, and Mu'ayyid took him to York Hotel, on Queensborough Terrace, in the Bayswater district. This was a cheaper hotel and Badr was upset when he knew later that it was owned and run by ex-Iraqi Jews.<sup>(3)</sup> His health had not improved but he could not accept that there was nothing that could be done to slow down the course of his fatal illness.<sup>(4)</sup> When Dr. Edwards told him that there was no cure for his disease, he started making arrangements with his friend, Dr. Simon Jargy, in Paris to see a French specialist.

On February 16, 1963, he went to Durham accompanied by Mu'ayyid in order to collect his luggage and withdraw his money from the bank. He returned the next day to his room in York Hotel and stayed in London for almost a month before he received a telephone call from Dr. Simon Jargy in Paris informing him of arrangements to see a French neurologist.

During this time, he continued to write poems. His preoccupation continued to be his personal predicament:

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Manzil al-Aqnān, Dār al-ʿIlm li'l-Malāyīn, Beirut, 1963.

(2) Author's interview with Mu'ayyid, Basra, Jan. 16, 1967.

(3) Mu'ayyid's letter to the author, Basra, Aug. 30, 1966

(4) Dr. James Bevan's letter to the author, London, Sept. 5, 1966.

his illness, his wife and children, his lost life and his memories. His anguish sometimes reached a high degree of poignancy as in "They Say: 'You Live'" (1) or "Oh For The Alienation Of The Soul" (2); his vision of death became sometimes obsessive as in "At Night" (3); but he sometimes composed poems that seem to be like the raving of a feverish mind such as "Ha..Ha..Hoh!" (4) or poems that are naïve in their imagination as they describe his dead mother's concern for him and her calling him to death, such as "The Winds Knocking at the Door." (5)

His memories of childhood, however, produced two beautifully conceived poems with existential tones, namely, "Iram, the Many-Columned" (6) written on February 21, 1963, and "The Shanāshīl of the Chalabī's Daughter" (7) written on February 24, 1963. In the first one, Badr remembers a story related to him as a child by his paternal grandfather about the latter's experience of seeing the vanished city of Iram which, according to Muslim legend, appears once every forty years and grants happiness to the one for whom its gate is opened. Led by a twinkling star, he walked a long, mysterious way till at last he reached a silvery, white castle surrounded

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(1) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Yaqūlūna Tahyā", pp. 64-67, dated Feb. 23, 1963.

(2) ibid. "Yā Ghurbat al-Rūḥ", pp. 81-85, d. Feb. 26. 1963.

(3) ibid. "Fī al-Layl", pp. 19-21, d. Feb. 27, 1963.

(4) ibid. "Hā..Hā..Hūh", pp. 54-58, wrongly dated Feb. 29, 1963.

(5) ibid. "al-Bāb Taqra<sup>c</sup>uhu al-Riyāḥ", pp. 26-28, Mar. 13, 1963.

(6) ibid. "Iram, Dhāt al-<sup>c</sup>Imād", pp. 11-18.

(7) ibid. "Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī", pp. 5-10.

by darkness. He walked around the castle and came to an ominous iron gate at which he knocked. The closed gate echoing emptily did not deter him from knocking more till his arm was tired and he sat by the gate towards dawn. But he fell asleep and when he woke up the castle was gone. He therefore counsels his grandchildren that when they see Iram they must continue knocking and not surrender to sleep or else they will, like him, lose the opportunity of their life.

Badr has not captured in this poem childhood's fascination with the wonderful only but also man's constant yearning for happiness and his continuous search for the meaning of existence, the attainment of which, however, the weakness of the body too often prevents.

His other poem, "The Shanāshīl of the Chalabi's Daughter", brings out another aspect of man's experience of happiness and shows how, if ever attained, happiness is fleeting. Like the previous poem, he describes this experience in terms of childhood's memories. As he and other children are playing merrily, catching butterflies or rabbits, in a palm grove away from their home, rain forces them to take shelter in a reed hut where his grandfather tells them stories to while away time as the grove caretaker passes cups of tea around. The description of the rain, the streams, the palms and the sky is vivid and creates a feeling of freshness and delight as the children watch with enchantment. When lightning flashes, a vision of the shanāshīl<sup>(1)</sup> of the Chalabi's daughter

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(1) See pp. 10-11 above.

floats about in the sky, framed in white blossoms and ivy, and the beautiful Āsiya with love-weary eyes appears. Thunder soon brushes the vision away and when the rainbow is seen nothing is left of the shanāshīl. Then Badr ends the poem saying, (1)

Thirty years have passed and I grew up. Many a love  
Burnt in my heart.

Yet whenever thunder claps

I look up expectantly: perhaps the shanāshīl will shimmer  
And I will see the Chalabī's daughter coming to my  
rendez-vous.

But I have not seen her. All my desires are empty  
and vain,

A plant with no fruit and no blossom.

The fleeting vision of the shanāshīl symbolizes a transient moment of happiness. Āsiya is the name of the Chalabī's daughter, the mother of Badr's friend Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid, who Badr felt looked somewhat like his own cousin Waffīqa.<sup>s</sup> (2) Thus Badr conceives of love as part of the fleeting happiness.

Badr thought longingly of his wife. In a love poem entitled "Tomorrow I Shall Meet Her" (3), he expresses in strong erotic terms his longing for her and imagines her hungry yearning for him. Since his arrival in England, he wrote her constantly. She was getting impatient with his

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(1) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī", pp. 9-10.

(2) Mu'ayyid's letter to the author, Basra, Aug. 30, 1966.

(3) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Ghadan Sa'alqāhā", pp. 68-69, dated Feb. 27, 1963.

absence in February, 1963, and wrote insisting that he should immediately return to Iraq. He was upset by her attitude and wrote back vehemently accusing her of being the cause of his illness. When Mu'ayyid was asked to mail this and other similar letters for Badr, he secretly tore them up, but some of them found their way to Mrs. Sayyāb when Badr's uncle <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Fattāh al-Sayyāb was asked to mail them. (1)

In such a fit of anger with his wife, Badr wrote his poem entitled "The Slave and the Milky Way" (2) on March 2, 1963, which however he asked to be removed from his collection, Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī, before publication (3) and which was published posthumously. If he ever returned to Iraq, he said at the end of the poem, it was to his son Ghaylān that he would return not to her. On March 9, 1963, he wrote another poem (4) in which he deplored his marriage and declared that neither wife, nor child, friend, father or brother was kind to him. Yet on the very same day, he wrote another poem (5) expressing his home-sickness and his eagerness for a letter from his wife !

On March 15, 1963, he flew to Paris on his way back home, accompanied by Mu'ayyid who had by now ended his statistics course in England. Badr could not walk without help now and

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(1) Mu'ayyid's letter to the author, Basra, Aug. 30, 1966.

(2) Iqbāl: "al-Qinn wa'l-Majarra", pp. 23-27.

(3) Cf. Iqbāl, editor's note p. 27.

(4) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Umm Kulthūm wa'l-Dhikrā", pp. 86-87.

(5) ibid. "Fī Intizār Risāla", pp. 22-25.

had to stay in his hotel room during most of the nine days he spent in Paris. Yet in his room, many friends came to see him such as Dr. Simon Jargy, Edouard Tarabay, John Hunt, George Saydah, Miss Luc Norin and others whom Dr. Jargy had rallied around Badr to help him overcome his loneliness.

A few days after his arrival in Paris, Badr was taken by Dr. Simon Jargy and Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid to be medically examined by Dr. Cambier, a French neurologist at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière.<sup>(1)</sup> The diagnosis of the French physician was like that of Dr. Edwards in London.<sup>(2)</sup> There was nothing that could be done to save Badr's life. The degenerative disease of his nervous system was to advance upwards in his spinal cord till it reached his head. All medication was spurious though some was prescribed for him.

Dr. Simon Jargy took Badr in his car to see the Seine, the Tour Eiffel, the Bois de Boulogne and other sights of Paris, and invited him for an evening to his home.<sup>(3)</sup> Perhaps Badr never felt a more friendly atmosphere than he did in Paris.

Back in his room at the hotel, he was constantly surrounded with flowers which, he discovered, were left for him daily at the reception desk by Miss Luc Norin as she was on her way to work early in the morning.<sup>(4)</sup> Luc who was

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(1) Dr. Simon Jargy's letter to the author, Geneva, Oct. 7, 1966.

(2) Mu'ayyid's letter to the author, Basra, Oct. 22, 1966.

(3) Cf. Badr's letters in Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, ed. by Dr. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwā', pp. 133-139

(4) Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid in ibid., p. 53.

interested in Badr's poetry spent some time with him during her leisure hours translating into French some of his latest poems which he read to her in Arabic and orally translated into English. Her company was very uplifting for Badr as he renewed with her bonds of friendship made earlier in Beirut and Rome. She was extremely sympathetic to him and deeply understanding.

When Badr knew that it was she who brought him flowers daily, he wrote her a poem on March 8, 1963, entitled "A Night in Paris"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he expressed his appreciation and beautifully described the effect of her sympathy on him. He saw in her a re-incarnation of Wafīqa and, therefore, his ideal love. If she would come to Iraq as she had promised, his life would be happy for good.

When he recited the poem to her on the next day, Luc Norin wept and embraced Badr saying, "Do I deserve all this, O Badr?"<sup>(2)</sup>

This gave Badr the idea that she might be in love with him but he was afraid it was only pity. On that day, he wrote another poem to her entitled "Love Me"<sup>(3)</sup> in which he makes a clean breast of all his seven love affairs, none of which before the last was requited. He ends the poem on an erotic note, pleading for her love because all those he had

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(1) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Layla fi Bārīs", pp. 35-38.

(2) Mu'ayyid in loc.cit., p. 54.

(3) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Aḥibbīnī", pp. 59-63.

loved before her did not love him, including his wife whom he accuses of being the cause of his disease.

Luc Norin gave Badr some intimacy but made him finally understand that she had another love.<sup>(1)</sup> This upset him immensely but did not lessen his admiration for her. In a letter he later wrote to Dr. Simon Jargy from Basra on March 30, 1963, he said: "I miss you a lot and - frankly - I miss her more...I mean Luc, my poetess, my friend, the princess of my fancy and my poesy. I have not written a single verse of poetry after the two poems I wrote in Paris. Perhaps the family atmosphere in which I live is the reason for the drying up of the fountain of poetry."<sup>(2)</sup> In later letters, he asks about her, whether she had returned to Paris from Brussels, and hopes to receive a photograph of hers.<sup>(3)</sup>

Luc Norin writes how, on March 23, 1963, when she, Edouard Tarabay, Marie-Georges and Simon Jargy went to see Badr and Mu'ayyid off at the Orly airport, Badr seemed to her going against time, against death. "When a hostess came to take him to that mysterious side of the airport where none but passengers is admitted, when she pushed his wheel chair towards the door whose two leaves opened and closed like a trap, we felt our heart stop.

"Badr disappeared, stoically clinging to the smile of

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(1) Author's interview with Mu'ayyid, Basra, Jan.16, 1967.

(2) Badr's letter in Badr Sh'kir al-Sayyāb ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Aḍwā', p. 133.

(3) ibid. p. 137 and p. 135.

a hostess. He had turned round and waved his hand. But we knew that he was just plunging into the void.

"For us, Badr was dying for the first time. With the smile of death widening on the lips of a woman.

"Hoffmann."<sup>(1)</sup>

Less than two weeks after Badr's arrival in Basra, he was suspended from government service for three years as from April 4, 1963, in accordance with the Law for the Purge of the Government System of 1958 and the requirements of public interest.<sup>(2)</sup> Having praised Qāsim, he was probably considered persona non grata by the new régime.

This was a great shock which added to the worries of Badr. He wrote a letter to the Appeals Committee for Suspended and Dismissed Officials in Baghdad, protesting his innocence and his loyalty to the new régime. But pending any action, he was with no job and no income.

The first poem he wrote after his return to Basra was "A Night in Iraq"<sup>(3)</sup> in which he describes one of his sleepless nights in which memories from his past kept returning to him. He remembered how he had always been harassed by the government. Of the more recent past, he said:

And I returned to my country. O for the stretcher  
That carried my funeral! Stretched out on it, moaning,  
I saw Ghaylān

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(1) Luc Norin: "As-Sayyab ou la vie au cœur de la mort", in Les Conférences du Cénacle, XIX Année, No. 2, Beirut 1965, p.58.

(2) Iraqi Ports Authority, Personnel Directorate, letter to the author S621/109 dated May 18, 1966.

(3) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Layla' fī al-<sup>c</sup>Irāq", pp.39-46 dated April 8, 1963.

Waiting for me, staring at the sky and its windy clouds.  
Only two weeks full of sorrows had passed before  
I was shocked with the threat that years of poverty  
and deprivation

Are lying in wait for me, in the forest of iron helmets.

Ten days later, he wrote another poem, "A Breeze from the Grave"<sup>(1)</sup> in which he addresses his dead mother and says:

Have not the winds carried to you across the night's calm  
The hunger cries of your [three] starving grandchildren ?  
We hungered but silently bore hunger and deprivation  
But the children divulged our secret by their moans  
of pain.

Is there hunger in the homeland that shelters you ?

Meanwhile, Badr started acting as the literary correspondent of Hiwār in Iraq, having received the approval of Mr. John Hunt, the Secretary of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris.<sup>(2)</sup> He started sending to its editor in Beirut, Tawfiq Ṣāyigh, quarterly reports about the literary activity in Iraq and was paid \$ 40 per report.<sup>(3)</sup> He also became a more regular contributor of poetry to this well-paying magazine which was, meanwhile, under vehement fire by the nationalist intellectuals of the Arab world as an instrument of Western cultural imperialism and infiltration.

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(1) Shanāshil Ibnat al-Chalabi: "Nasim min al-Qabr", pp.94-97 dated April 18, 1963.

(2) Cf. Badr's letter to Simon Jargy in Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, Manshūrāt Adwā', p. 137.

(3) ibid. p. 135.

Badr's health did not improve although he continued to use the medicine given him by Dr. Cambier and he asked Dr. Simon Jargy for more supplies of it.<sup>(1)</sup> Even with a crutch, his walking was becoming harder now and caused him sometimes to fall down. When his father died early in May, 1963, on the Feast of Sacrifice (al-Adhā), he could not go to the mosque to attend his funeral.<sup>(2)</sup> He spent most of his time at home. He wrote no poetry for quite a while but worked on the translation into Arabic of certain sections assigned to him by Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā of a book entitled American Poetry and Prose<sup>(3)</sup> to be later published in Beirut by Franklin Book Programs of Baghdad with the contribution of other translators.<sup>(4)</sup>

In the meantime, Badr accepted to be treated by a bedouin quack at al-Zubayr. His legs and back were cauterized and he was given an ointment to rub his paralysed limbs with. The so-called treatment brought no improvement. In desperation, Badr accepted also to be treated by the Sādāt of Basra, a mystic group of the Rifā<sup>c</sup>iyya order, who professed knowledge in spiritual healing. He spent a couple of days with them and experienced what was probably an autosuggestive improvement which, however, was short-lived.

It was not until July 11, 1963, that Badr was re-appointed

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(1) ibid. p. 136 and p.138.

(2) Muṣṭafā al-Sayyāb's letter to the author, Beirut, [Apr.23, 1966] and June 6, 1966.

(3) American Poetry and Prose, ed. Norman Foerster and Robert Falk, Boston, (c) 1960.

(4) Thalāthat Qurūn min al-Adab, ed. Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, tr. Yūsuf al-Khāl et al. Beirut, Vol. I, [1965] and Vol. II, 1966.

in his previous post at the Iraqi Ports' Authority.<sup>(1)</sup> His loyal friend Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid had to accompany him daily to and from work. But there was not much work that Badr could do in his condition. Even his writing of poetry was becoming very rare now. He wrote to Simon Jargy on October 12, 1963, saying: "My poetic output these days is very little because of the lack of any new poetic experience. I rarely leave my home except to go to my office. Furthermore, I am bored with harping on the idea 'I am sick' in the poetry I write."<sup>(2)</sup>

Inasmuch as he lived in past memories and produced little poetry, Badr thought now of republishing some of his earliest poetry. From the two collections of his youth, Faded Flowers (1947) and Legends (1950), he selected a number of poems, mostly from the latter book, retouched them slightly, and had them published in Beirut in October, 1963, under the title Flowers and Legends.<sup>(3)</sup>

The turn of political events in Iraq was sickening. Where he was hoping for a consolidated front to support the régime that brought about the downfall of Qāsim, there was struggle over power. The Ba<sup>c</sup>thists were bidding for the control of the country, and President <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Salām <sup>c</sup>Arif and the army were to thwart them in November, 1963. The

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(1) Iraqi Ports' Authority, Personnel Directorate, letter to the author S621/109 dated May 18, 1966.

(2) Badr's letter in Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwā', p. 138.

(3) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Azhār wa Asāṭir, Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayā, Beirut, [1963].

struggle for power took precedence over national healing and over the implementation of the wide-reaching reforms promised by the Revolution of July 14, 1958, and re-iterated by the Revolution of Ramaḍān 14, 1382 A.H. (February 8, 1963). But Badr was too sick to care. He felt he was like a captive in a pirates' ship whose captain was constantly being supplanted by an ambitious mate. On October 29, 1963, he wrote his poem "The Pirates' Captive"<sup>(1)</sup> which described his regret and sorrow at being paralysed and his wish that he could walk, preferring ability to walk to being a poet. Then he says to himself,

And in the pirates' ship, you are  
An enslaved captive with no fetters,  
Crouching in fear and silence,  
Listening to the din of fighting:  
Blood runs, heads fall,  
Her giant captain succumbs,  
Another rises after him, then falls.  
Necks stretch out:  
What pirate comes next ?  
What pirate will have the upper hand  
Over the others - for a while ?

"Après moi le déluge."

You hear it coming from afar  
Carried by the storms across Time.

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(1) Shanāshil Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Asir al-Qarāşina", pp.90-93.

Badr, meanwhile, was being attacked for his past political contradictions as well as his present uncommitted attitude.<sup>(1)</sup> His connections with Ḥiwār magazine and the Congress for Cultural Freedom were brought against him, and his defence of them was the cause of further attack.<sup>(2)</sup> Most people tended to judge him by the strictest criteria on grounds of what he had written and was still writing. But very few knew really how sick and how weak Badr was. They still thought he was the giant of modern Arabic poetry that ought to live up to his word.

Yet Badr had nothing but self-pity and a desire to die. When Ḥamīd, a cripple he knew, died, he wrote a poem entitled "Ḥamīd"<sup>(3)</sup> in which he says,

He lies in his grave,

His folded legs witnessing to his sickness.

When he sees God at last -

Having crept on his breast -

What crushing humiliation, what defeat

Will shine in his entreating eyes !

God will weep for him out of pity and apology.

Writing to a friend, Badr said, "I do not write these days but purely personal poetry. I am no more committed. What have I gathered from my commitment ? This poverty and this

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(1) E.g. <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Ḥillī's article "al-Fannān wa'l-Khuluq al-Thawri" in al-Adāb, July 1963.

(2) E.g. In <sup>c</sup>ām al-Jundī's article "Miḥnat al-Sayyāb wa Ma'sāt al-Khuluq" in al-Usbū<sup>c</sup>al-<sup>c</sup>Arabī, Beirut, Sept. 2, 1963.

(3) Iqbāl: "Ḥamīd", pp. 36-38.

sickness ? Perhaps I am now living the last days of my life...I am producing the best I have ever produced so far. Who knows ? Don't think I am pessimistic. The contrary is true. But my attitude to death has changed. I am no more afraid of it. Let it come when it may. I feel I have lived long. I have accompanied Gilgamesh in his adventures, befriended Ulysses in his loss and lived all Arab history. Is this not enough ?"(1)

His condition was becoming worse every day. He could hardly stand at all now. He was bed-ridden on sick leave and began to develop a bed-sore. He could not control his urination or his defecation and his wife had the most trying days of her life. Although he still enjoyed the fullness of his mental capacities, there were occasions when he accused his wife of an unsympathetic attitude towards him.

In January, 1964, he heard of Louis MacNeice's death and wrote a poem on the occasion.(2) But he could not refrain in it from reference to his own sickness, to the alienation between him and his wife or to his wishes of death. He smoked a lot and ate very little and by February 9, 1964, he was so critically sick that he had to be admitted to the Ports' Hospital in Basra with high fever (40° C.) and difficulty of breathing (dyspnea). He was found to be suffering from

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(1) Quoted by <sup>c</sup>Asim al-Jundi in al-Usbū<sup>c</sup> al-<sup>c</sup>Arabi, Beirut, Jan. 4, 1965.

(2) Iqbāl: "Luwī Makmīs", pp. 31-35, dated Jan. 9, 1964.

pneumonia and early heart failure, continuous diarrhea and nausea, a large rotten bed-sore 25cm. in diameter in the lower back area, in addition to paralysis of the lower limbs and extreme leanness. (1)

For a whole week, he was given emergency treatment at this government hospital under Dr. Ibrāhīm <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Ḥamīd's care before danger to his life was partially allayed. As his heart and lungs condition started to improve, he was treated for diarrhea and when that improved he could be treated for the bed-sore which was not healed but was not pussy at any rate. In this connection, he wrote Tawfiq Ṣāyigh a pathetic letter asking for a powder medication to be bought for him at the Beirut pharmacies. (2) Besides tonics, Badr was given large additional quantities of milk, meat, fish and fruits though the hospital did not usually provide such foods and in such quantities, and his weight increased by over eight kilogrammes. Minor exercises of physio-therapy were administered to his lower extremities and, though the doctor knew there was no treatment for the spinal cord sclerosis that caused the paralysis, he suggested he should be put under the care of a neurologist in Baghdad. (3)

By April 1, 1964, Badr had used up his right to sick leave and annual leave with full pay (ID. 54), as well as

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(1) Dr. Ibrāhīm <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Ḥamīd, Director of Ports' Hospital, medical report on Badr dated April 16, 1964.

(2) Hiwār, Beirut, March-April 1965, first cover page.

(3) Dr. Ibrāhīm <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Ḥamīd, op. cit.

his right to sick leave with half-pay in accordance with the Civil Service Law of 1960. But he could not be released from hospital to resume his work at the Ports' Authority. Thus he started his 180 days of sick leave without pay permitted by the Law.

On April 8, 1964, the Iraqi Writers and Authors Association in Baghdad, of which Badr was a member, sent a letter to the Iraqi Ministry of Health requesting the treatment of Badr.<sup>(1)</sup> In answer to the Ministry's enquiries, the Association sent another letter on April 26, 1964, with information concerning Badr's condition and present treatment, and an urgent request for specialist medical help for Badr.<sup>(2)</sup> Red tape and officialism were such that it was not until late in June, 1964, that arrangements were made to transport Badr by train to Baghdad and have him treated in a First Class room at the People's Hospital in Baghdad. The hospital's invitation dated June 29, 1964, did not reach Badr until July 5, 1964.<sup>(3)</sup>

By this time, other arrangements had been made to have Badr treated in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti poet, <sup>c</sup>Alf al-Sabti, had made a public plea addressed to the Kuwaiti Minister of Health, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad al-Thanyān, to sponsor the treatment of Badr in Kuwait, at the Kuwaiti Government's

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(1) Iraqi Writers and Authors Association, letter No. 76 dated Baghdad, Apr. 4, 1964, signed by the secretary Dr. Yūsuf <sup>c</sup>Izz al-Dīn.

(2) Iraqi Writers and Authors Association, letter No. 82 dated Baghdad, Apr. 26, 1964, signed by the secretary Dr. Yūsuf <sup>c</sup>Izz al-Dīn.

(3) Ministry of Health, Directorate of the People's Hospital, letter No. 3650 dated Baghdad, June 29, 1964, addressed to the Basra Health Department and the Ports Authority.

expense. (1) The Minister of Health, an admirer of Badr's poetry, responded favourably. Arrangements were made for Badr to come to Kuwait by plane and be treated at the Amīrī Hospital.

On July 5, 1964, he wrote a note of thanks and apology on the letter of invitation he received from the People's Hospital in Baghdad, explaining that previous arrangements had been made with the government of Kuwait. On July 6, he flew on the Iraqi Airways to Kuwait all alone and was received at the airport by <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Sabtī and other friends. (2) He was immediately admitted to the Amīrī Hospital, put in a private room and given the best attention and care. (3)

Yet no attention and no care, however good, could restore to Badr his health. His condition deteriorated day after day as the sclerosis advanced upwards in his spinal cord, progressively impairing the functions of his nervous system. His bed-sore became worse with the loss of tactile sensation in the lower trunk and his inability to control his urination and defecation. His atrophied legs were powerless and their disuse was causing degeneration of their very bones. In all this, Badr was in full control of his mental powers and he could see that he was living in the lap of death. He needed no one to tell him that his

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(1) <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad al-Thanyān's letter to the author, Kuwait, June 22, 1966.

(2) ibid.

(3) Dr. Muḥammad Abū Hanṭash, Director of the Amīrī Hospital, letter to the author, Kuwait, April 20, 1966.

days were numbered. Why then the humiliation of the body and the pains of the soul ? Let death come soon, and let it come suddenly !

In the night of July 9, 1964, as he lay awake thinking of his sad condition and of his son, Ghaylān, dreaming of his father's return, he wrote a poem entitled "In the Forest of Darkness"<sup>(1)</sup> which he ended thus:

Is it not enough, O God,  
That singing be the end of life,  
So You paint life with darkness ?  
Without death, You are making me a wreck,  
A shattered boat floating on the waters.  
Give me death. I want to lie  
Amongst my relatives' graves  
Scattered behind the graveyard's night.  
The bullet of mercy, O God !

Badr was in such despondent condition that he asked for the bullet of mercy, for a sudden death that would mercifully end his misery.

At hospital, he was visited daily by many friends such as <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Sabtī, Nājī <sup>c</sup>Allūsh, Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb, Fārūq Shūsha and Mrs. Salmā al-Khadrā' al-Jayyūsī and her husband.<sup>(2)</sup> The Kuwaiti Minister of Health and other important Kuwaiti officials visited him too. He was therefore not lonely and, in fact,

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(1) Iqbāl: "Fī Ghābat al-Zalām", pp. 43-46.

(2) Author's interview with Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb, Rāmallāh, September 23, 1966.

he was rather annoyed at times with the long sessions of poets, writers and journalists that lasted till the late hours of the night.

He was so happy to receive a letter from his wife on August 3, 1964, and he wrote a poem entitled "A Letter"<sup>(1)</sup> describing his feeling of anxiety about his family. In the night of August 5, as he was thinking lovingly of his daughters, Ghaydā' and Ālā', and expecting their arrival with Ghaylān and their mother on the next day, he wrote a poem entitled "A Night of Waiting"<sup>(2)</sup> in which he said,

Tomorrow you will come, O Iqbāl, my resurrection  
And my death while there is no death.

O harbour of my ship whose planks have fallen apart,  
O my heart that will remain in the world to weep  
for me if I die,

To elegize me aloud at my tearless, noiseless grave:  
Love me ! When I am put in my coffin shroud - love me !  
When my face and all my ribs disintegrate,  
When worms eat my heart and drink it up to the bottom,  
There will remain poems which I used to write  
for you in my collections.

Love them and you will love me.

Iqbāl and her children arrived on the next day and,

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(1) Iqbāl: "Risāla", pp. 47-50.

(2) ibid. "Laylat Intizār", pp. 51-53.

while in Kuwait, stayed at <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Sabtī's house.<sup>(1)</sup> Iqbāl visited her husband daily, comforted him and attended him at the hospital. The sight of his children near him, pleasing as it was, made Badr's heart bleed within him. He knew he was dying and leaving them behind.

Badr could not write poetry now as profusely as before in spite of a more impelling call to do so. On August 14, 1964, he wrote "The Stone Pickaxe"<sup>(2)</sup> in which he says,

The ring of the stone pickaxe creeps towards my extremities.  
Soon I will be unable to write a single verse spinning  
in my brain.

O Imagination, take to the horizons and the skies.  
Burst your stars, the millions of suns and lights,  
And kindle a quake in my blood

So that I may write before my death or my madness

or the withering of my hand with fatigue

All the emotions of my soul, my memories, all my dreams  
And my fantasies,

And spill my dying soul on paper

For a miserable man to read after many years

That he may know that one, more miserable than he,

lived in this world

And in spite of sickness, pains, insomnia

And poverty determined to live.

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(1) Author's interview with Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb, Rāmallāh, September 23, 1966.

(2) Iqbāl: "al-Mi<sup>c</sup>wal al-Ḥajarī", pp.39-42. For the date of the poem, see Badr Shēkir al-Sayyāb, Manshūrāt Adwā', p. 64.

He ends the poem by saying goodbye to his friends and beloved ones, knowing that his sickness will not permit him to live.

On the night of August 21, 1964, he wrote a poem entitled "A Farewell Night"<sup>(1)</sup> which he sub-titled "To my faithful wife". He expressed all his love for his wife, sympathising with her for her loneliness. He wished she could equally sympathise with him:

Oh ! If you only knew what it means to stay in a bloody bed  
With dead legs and feverish forehead,  
My eyes feeding on darkness, my mouth sipping it,  
Lost in an oasis behind a wall of years  
And groans,  
My mind stray among the stars.

Speaking of his love for her, he wished she was less jealous and more frank:

Oh ! If you only were as frank as I was,  
We would have shaken away all the wound fill of our hearts.  
May be you saw [in me] some hatred, some boredom,  
A lock of another's hair or remnants of a tune  
Planted in my life by a poetess  
Whom I do not love as I love you, O dearest  
                  blood that ever gave my blood to drink.  
It is only a memory. But you are jealous and angry  
At a life I lived before we met  
And at a love before our love.

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(1) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: "Laylat Wadā<sup>c</sup>", pp. 70-72.

Close the door. Tomorrow an airplane will take you  
away from me

Except for a love which will stay in both our bloods.

His wife and children returned to Iraq on the next day.

While in hospital, Badr earned some money by publishing some of his poems in well-paying Kuwaiti periodicals such as al-Rā'id al-<sup>c</sup>Arabī in which Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb was an editor and paid him ten dinars per poem.<sup>(1)</sup> But Badr was now making arrangements for a new collection of his to be published in Beirut by Dār al-Talī<sup>c</sup>a under the title of The Shanāshīl of the Chalabī's Daughter.<sup>(2)</sup>

Meanwhile his health condition was precipitously deteriorating. He had no appetite and was constantly losing weight and becoming extremely lean. In spite of many tonics, his weakness was so great that at times he could speak only with difficulty.<sup>(3)</sup> The thigh bone of his left leg was broken due to calcium deficiency as he was undergoing massage.<sup>(3)</sup> In September, 1964, he had two severe attacks of bronchitis that made his condition very critical but medication administered in large quantities warded off death for a while.<sup>(3)</sup>

Towards the end of September, 1964, when his bronchitis was not yet overcome, he received a letter from the Ports' Authority in Basra informing him that, as from the afternoon

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(1) Author's interview with Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb, Rāmallāh, September 23, 1966.

(2) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī, Dār al-Talī<sup>c</sup>a, Beirut, [December] 1964, reprinted June, 1965.

(3) Dr. Muḥammad Abū Hanṭash's letter to the author, Kuwait, April 20, 1966.

of September 27, 1964, his 180 days of sick leave without pay had ended and that since he did not resume work he was put on pension in accordance with Paragraph (3 B) of Article 46 of the Civil Service Law No. 24 of 1960.<sup>(1)</sup> The effect of this letter on Badr was not salutary in the least.

In October, 1964, he became so weak he could not eat and nutrition had to be administered to him nasally by tubes. The Iraqi Writers and Authors Association in Baghdad sent him a grant of ID. 100 in an attempt to help him financially and morally.<sup>(2)</sup> No help, however, could avail. Badr began to have fits of raving and hallucination. His extreme weakness and the disorder of his nervous system were beginning to affect his brain. He would regain at moments all the clarity of mind only to fall again into confusion.

Mrs. Salmā al-Khaḍrā' al-Jayyūsī describes him thus:<sup>(3)</sup>

"Badr in the hospital bed (Room No. 1, The Amīrī Hospital in Kuwait), the food tube in his nose while life deserts his body, withered by efforts and pains, and tortured by the expectation of death. He calls me. 'Yes, Badr.' My voice is exhausted and low as it travels in the hot, sad air of the room. I am shaking and about to cry. 'Do you know? My notebook of new poetry is lost.' And in a voice that can hardly be heard, 'Iqbāl did not come.' After a few moments,

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(1) Ports' Authority, Personnel Directorate, letter to the author S621/109 dated May 18, 1966.

(2) Al-Kitāb, monthly of the Iraci Writers and Authors Association, Baghdad, May-June 1965, p. 194 and p. 197.

(3) Al-Ādāb, May 1966, pp. 8-9.

'I have lost everything.' 'Nonsense.' I said it a thousand times. 'What you have will not be lost. How poor we will have been if what you have given is lost !'

"They did not see you as I have, in that slow end that breaks the heart: the tubes, the pustules, the raving, the untouched food, the bright moments of clarity then the nightmare and the collapse, your love, your anecdotes and little needs, the fountain of poetry that kept gushing from your heart.

"The moment of poetry has known in your soul the extremes of two contradictions: the ecstasy of heroism and the defeat of the betrayed wretch and his crushing humiliation in death."

Dr. Muḥammad Abū Hanṭash, Director of the Amīrī Hospital, says that in his hallucinations Badr raved about wrongs done to him by his relatives and his wife. (1) Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb reports that Badr related to him how the devil was trying hard to pull him to hell-fire and how he resisted him and pleaded with him that he was not the person intended. (2) Nājī Ḥallūsh says that he heard Badr raving about jinn and other spirits. (3) Rādī Ṣaddūq says Badr in his clear moments used to apologize to his friends for whatever he might have told them during his moments of hallucination. (4)

Badr smoked a lot and drank heavy tea (4) but he wrote

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(1) Dr. Muḥammad Abū Hanṭash's letter to the author, Kuwait, April 20, 1966.

(2) Author's interview with Ibrāhīm Abū Nāb, Rāmallāh, September 23, 1966.

(3) Author's interview with Nājī Ḥallūsh, Beirut, June 11, 1966.

(4) Author's interview with Rādī Ṣaddūq, Jerusalem, October 7, 1966.

no poetry for a long while. On November 10, 1964, in one of his moments of clear thinking, he wrote a poem entitled "A Soul and a Grave"<sup>(1)</sup> which consisted of five stanzas, each of four verses rhyming together, written in the traditional wāfir metre. It was an expression of his despair, his affliction and his desire for death. He also wrote a poem addressed to the ruler of Kuwait, Shaykh <sup>°</sup>Abdallāh al-Sālim al-Ṣabāḥ, praising him and requesting him to send him abroad for medical treatment.<sup>(2)</sup>

In the meantime, the Iraqi Ports' Authority in Basra asked Badr's family to leave, within a month, the house rented to them, if they did not pay the arrears of rent and the water and electricity dues. This threat to his family certainly was not conducive to Badr's reassurance and rest of mind.

In another of his clear moments, on November 22, 1964, he wrote a poem entitled "A Crutch in Hell"<sup>(3)</sup> which, according to <sup>°</sup>Alī al-Sabtī, turned out to be his last poem. There is an undated poem entitled "Iqbāl and the Night"<sup>(4)</sup> which, according to Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-<sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jalīl, Badr's brother-in-law who posthumously edited Badr's last collection, is probably Badr's last poem and may have been written around this date.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) Iqbāl: "Nafs wa Qabr", pp. 54-57.

(2) I have been unable to locate this poem. Reference to it is made by Nāḥī <sup>°</sup>Allūsh in his "Introduction" to Iqbāl, p. 16.

(3) Iqbāl: "<sup>°</sup>Ukkāz fī al-Jahīm", pp. 28-30. For date of poem, see Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, Manshūrāt Adwā', p. 66.

(4) Iqbāl: "Iqbāl wa'l-Layl", pp. 58-62.

(5) Ibid. see footnote on p. 62.

In the former poem, Badr succinctly writes the history of his affliction that thwarted his genius:

And I continued, out of pain,  
To turn around the mill,  
A blind-folded ox, like a rock that will never rebel,  
While people walked to summits.  
Woe to me ! I am unable to walk on my feet,  
My bed is my prison, my coffin, my exile to Pain  
And to Nothingness !

Then he goes on to say how he kept expecting to be able to walk one day, even on crutches. But now his desire is to creep, even on his head or back, to reach the grave, find his way to Hell and shout in the face of its guard:

Why do you keep your gate closed ?  
Call the devils of Hell-fire;  
Let them mangle my worn-out body  
And my naked wounds,  
Let your falcons devour my eyes and nibble at my heart.  
Here my neighbour will not gloat over [my distress]  
Nor will a prostitute pass by my home at midnight  
and cry out:

"Here is the house of the paralytic; he now has  
no food or drink.  
Tomorrow they will throw his two daughters and  
his wife in the street  
As well as his little boy, if he does not pay  
the arrears of rent."



In December, 1964, Badr's moments of clarity were becoming rare and his confused, disturbed moments were becoming almost continuous. He did not recognize many of his friends and acquaintances when they came to visit him.<sup>(1)</sup> Furthermore, he began to have fits of unconsciousness that lasted for hours.<sup>(1)</sup> When he came to, he was fully conscious and in full control of his mental powers, lacking nothing but bodily strength.<sup>(1)</sup> Finally, on Thursday, December 24, 1964, he fell into a coma and at 3 p.m. he passed away.<sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Alī al-Sabtī cabled the sad news to Badr's family and told them he was escorting Badr's body to Basra on Friday, December 25, 1964.

It was a rainy day, the like of which had not been seen in the area for many, many years. As the car carrying Badr's body left Kuwait in the morning of this Christmas Day, it was accompanied by rain all the way. In Basra, it was greeted by more rain. The body was taken to Badr's home at 2 Ajnādīn Street in Ma<sup>c</sup>qil. The house was empty, for Badr's family had been ousted by a government order.<sup>(2)</sup> The body was then taken to Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jalīl's house in Aṣma<sup>c</sup>ī but there was nobody at home, and <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Sabtī was told that everybody had gone to the mosque to receive the body and attend the funeral.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Dr. Muḥammad Abū Hantash's letter to the author, Kuwait, April 20, 1966.

(2) Author's interview with Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jalīl at Basra, January 17, 1967.

The body was driven to the mosque where a handful of Badr's nearest relatives and friends were waiting with his wife and children. After the funeral prayers were said and the rites performed, Badr's body was taken by car to al-Zubayr, accompanied by a few men only. He was humbly buried in the near-by cemetery of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, not far from the tomb of the great Muslim saint.

The rain was still pouring, but there were no palm trees in sight.

## Chapter Six

### Badr's Achievement

To measure the achievement of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb and ascertain his place in modern Arabic poetry, the general condition of Arabic poetry up to the Second World War must be taken into consideration.

It will be recalled that the neo-classical poets had, in the first third of the 20th century, firmly established the classical style as a crowning achievement of the literary renaissance of the last third of the 19th century and were eminently represented by Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932). But they were being challenged, especially in the inter-war period, by a younger generation that tended generally to be romantic. Although the neo-classical tradition continued to exist and in certain areas even to flourish, more attention was increasingly being given to the romantic Arabic poetry whether it was coming from America or was being written in Arab lands.

Rigid classical form was giving way to a more supple one, better suited to embody the expression of personal sensibility. Revolt against conventional concepts of rhyme, metre and diction was coupled with a revulsion against traditional themes and imagery. Yet the classical heritage was too strong and deep-rooted in Arab consciousness to be completely supplanted by new modes of expression. In different romantically-inclined poets,

vestiges of classicism were to be discerned in their romantic productions in proportions varying with their education, social background and temperament.

There were poets like Khalīl Muṭrān (d. 1949), Īliyyā Abū Mādī (d. 1957), °Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (d. 1949), Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī (d. 1955), Bishārā al-Khūrī (d. 1968), Ilyās Abū Shabaka (d.1947) and a few others who were masters of the classical form in the loftiness of its language and the correctness of its construction, yet who were meanwhile romantics in various degrees of acuteness. Such poets dominated the forties when al-Sayyāb was first beginning to write poetry. Of them, he liked in particular °Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā and Ilyās Abū Shabaka: the first, well known for his wandering, searching romantic poems set in high-sounding words; the second, well known for his tender lyrics on love and nature in which there was a romantic glorification of pain. Both these poets revelled in the description of bodily pleasures, the former in verbal search for luxurious feeling, the latter in remorseful remembrance of sin. They both gave expression to a deep sadness of the soul engendered by a feeling of frustration and alienation from society.

This type of poetry appealed to al-Sayyāb, yet there was nothing like it in Iraq. Iraqi poetry was at this time lagging behind in a neo-classical apotheosis best exemplified by Ma<sup>c</sup>rūf al-Ruṣāfī (d.1945) for whom al-Sayyāb had little respect or appreciation. <sup>(1)</sup> Except for the ebullient poetry of Muḥammad

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(1) Cf. Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb: "Al-Shi<sup>c</sup>r al-<sup>c</sup>Irāqī al-Ḥadīth Mundhu Bidāyat al-Qarn al-<sup>c</sup>Ishrīn" in Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb, ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrāt Adwā', [Beirut, 1966 ?], p. 101.

Mahdī al-Jawāhirī, the Iraqi poetry of the neo-classical tradition had spent its energy and was hardly relevant to the contemporary scene any longer. Yet it hang on tenaciously among the masses.

It was in reaction to this neo-classical poetry of Iraq and in sympathy with the romantic influences from outside Iraq that al-Sayyāb began to write poetry. In this colossal endeavour of shaking the bastion of neo-classicism in Iraq, al-Sayyāb was not alone. Young poets, like him, were shyly and cautiously feeling their way into publicity as they published their lyrics in the Iraqi newspapers gradually gaining self-confidence and fame as the years went by. Some of them began to publish their poems outside Iraq too. Before long, their collections began to appear and exercise and influence in Iraqi literary circles. In 1946, Baland al-Ḥaydarī's first collection Khafqat al-Ṭīn appeared. In 1947, Nāzik al-Malā'ika's first collection ʿAshiqat al-Layl appeared, followed by Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb's first collection Azhār Dhābila. These collections, reinforced by romantic poems -- not yet collected -- by such poets as Akram al-Watarī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Nāṣirī (d.1962), Ḥusayn Mardān, Shādhil Ṭāqā and a few others shock the foundations of neo-classicism in Iraq and created among the ever-growing reading public an expectation of change in poetry parallel to that already found in Lebanon and Egypt, and a taste for new forms conveying new themes.

There was hardly anything new in this belated Iraqi romanticism. In fact, much of it was an echo of the earlier romanticism of other Arab poets which was now languishing and was either

dying out or being partially replaced by streaks of symbolism. Al-Sayyāb's contribution to the success of this Iraqi romanticism was however instrumental in clearing the way for making further progress in Arab poetry, especially in Iraq. Yet he was with enough insight to feel that romanticism was soon ceasing to be of any relevance, even in Iraq. Social and cultural factors within the Arab world were calling for a new type of poetry.

Not all al-Sayyāb's romantic companions had a sense of the times, however. When, in 1950, Akram al-Watarī published his collection Al-Watar al-Jāhid, it was as if it were one long romantic song of an impossible love; and when, in the same year, Ḥusayn Mardān published his collection Qaṣā'id ʿĀriya, it was all a variation on a single Baudelairean theme of lasciviousness along the devilish lines of Ilyās Abū Shabaka. Though Baland al-Ḥaydarī's second collection, Aghānī al-Madīna al-Mayta published in 1951, had rid itself of many romantic elements and taken an existentialist outlook, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayyātī's first collection Malā'ika wa Shayāṭīn, published in 1950, lingered on romantic themes, some of which persisted even in his second collection Abārīq Muhashshama, published in 1954, such as his nostalgic yearning for childhood and his aversion to the city. Similarly, the first collection of Shādhil Ṭāqa, al-Masā' al-Akhīr, published in 1950, was all set in a romantic climate.

Yet these poets partook — in varying degrees — of one common quality which had earlier appeared in Nāzik al-Malā'ika's second collection Shazāyā wa Ramād, published in 1949, and Badr

Shākir al-Sayyāb's second collection, Asāṭir, published in 1950. By this common quality I mean that new way of versification which was to be called "free verse" based on the single foot as a metrical unit not on the multi-footed traditional verse.

It has been shown that the first poet in Iraq to write in such free verse was Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb and that the first to publish a poem in it was Nāzik al-Malā'ika.<sup>(1)</sup> Previous attempts at writing in such or similar free verse in other Arab countries were investigated by S. Moreh,<sup>(2)</sup> to which must be added the daring and original poetical experiments of Louis <sup>c</sup>Awaḍ in his collection Plutoland<sup>(3)</sup> published in Cairo in 1947 and written between 1938 and 1940 while he was studying at Cambridge. None of these previous attempts gained the currency which the free verse of Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb and Nāzik al-Malā'ika attained in Iraq and, later, in other parts of the Arab world; nor did any of these previous attempts create a movement, such as the "free verse movement" that followed al-Sayyāb's and al-Malā'ika's experiments in free verse which was within a decade to spread like wildfire first in Iraq, then in Lebanon, Egypt and other parts of the Arab world, especially among the younger generation of poets. Though not without resistance, the free verse movement acquired direction and purpose as it successfully began to

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(1) See pp. 46-49 above and al-Ādāb, Beirut, March 1966, p. 89.

(2) BSOAS, Vol. XXXI, Part 1, 1968, pp. 28-51.

(3) Louis <sup>c</sup>Awaḍ: Blūtulānd, Maṭba<sup>c</sup>at al-Karnak bi'l-Faggāla, Cairo, 1947.

make inroads on traditional ways of poetic expression which ultimately affected the very nature of poetic content and indeed the very concept of poetry in Arab culture.

Yet when this free verse movement began in the late forties, it began as a mere revolt against the out-worn forms of classical poetry which neo-classicism had inherited and which romanticism could not seriously challenge. It was initially a reaction against a technique, and as such was not primarily concerned with content. ✓

The Iraqi romantic poets of the forties had succeeded in shaking the Iraqi neo-classical establishment but had not caused it to crumble down. A stronger dose of innovation presented itself to them in the form of free verse which they used in continuation of their efforts against neo-classicism. The content of all the early experiments in free verse continued, however, to be romantic in the main — either dealing with love or with a dream world. It was this romantic poetry in free verse, sometimes tinged with symbolism, that finally overwhelmed neo-classicism in Iraq.

Yet as free verse was becoming an acceptable way of poetic expression, it began to muster positive values. It stopped being concerned with putting an end to neo-classicism, and began to pursue its own raison d'être. The new form of free verse began to be seen rightly as part of the content itself. While minor poets contented themselves with treating usual themes in the new free verse form, the major poets recognized in the new free verse form not only a vehicle of new themes

altogether at variance with old ones but an expression of some of the very themes treated, such as liberty or new life for the Arab nation. No modern poet could sincerely write on liberty, they thought, if in his writing he used the shackles of traditional ways of expression; nor could a modern poet really express the hopes of a new life for Arab society if he used old and out-moded methods of versification and rhyme schemes. To be modern meant to be a rebel.

The phenomenal success of the free verse movement was not due to any single poet, although al-Sayyāb's contribution to that success was decisive, original and influential. Free verse expressed a psychological necessity in the Arab world, otherwise it would have never been accepted. It was doubly fortunate not only because it came at the right time but also because it had excellent poets to represent it. The previous attempts at some kind of free verse failed because they came at the wrong time and were not made by poets of first class sensibilities.

By the time al-Sayyāb and Nāzik al-Malā'ika began their first experiments in free verse, the Arab countries of the Middle East had been independent for some time but their intellectuals had begun to doubt whether they were really free. The traditional structure of Arab society and the reign of traditional values did not leave them much freedom to build a modern society after independence was achieved. Attempts at modernization were made in many walks of Arab life with differing degrees of success. In poetry, romanticism fulfilled a step forward in this respect as regards some techniques and themes, but generally

continued to be an escape from the realities of Arab life. What was needed was a realist poetry and a free one: realist, so that it could face the many problems; free, so that it could deal with them in a new, creative way.

The old, traditional way of writing poetry was so closely associated with the old themes that a completely new way had to be devised in order to extricate Arab consciousness from the lethargy that had taken hold of it for centuries. The first successful experiments in free verse, however, were mainly romantic in character. That accident was functional insofar as the experiments came first in Iraq which was up to then dominated by neo-classicism. But as soon as this romanticism was successful in Iraq, the free verse movement whole-heartedly wedded itself to realism, because that was truer to its nature as understood by its pioneers.

The Palestine war in 1948 with its disastrous results for the Arabs and the establishment of an alien state on Arab soil showed the inadequacy of the traditionally-structured Arab society in the face of modern technology and organization. The political revolutions that followed it in most Arab countries of the Middle East purported to change Arab society radically. These political and social upheavals confirmed the presentiments of the free verse poets and their sympathizers among the growing reading public. Arab society had to be re-structured in order to be modern. Similarly Arab poetry had to be re-structured if it was to give expression to that society and its modernity and, indeed, if it was to take part in the revolutionary process of

modernization.

To be sure, poets did not consciously argue like this. Many of them acted on impulse or in imitation of modern Western poets and of one another. But the movement as a whole had to have pertinence to the society which created it if it was to be accepted and achieve success. If free verse has become part and parcel of the Arab literary scene as from the middle of the 20th century, it is because it has been sincerely expressing the values of a society that has started to change radically.

The social interpretation of the success of the free verse movement should not minimize the role of individual poets in this success. It is always the combination of individual genius and particular circumstances that brings about the success of great movements in history. Circumstances create the need for ingenious action, and the individual creatively responds to the circumstances.

In this respect, Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb stands as a great pioneer of modernization in Arabic poetry. His response to the literary circumstances of his day was original and creative: original, in the sense that his developing of what came to be called "free verse" from the traditional concepts of prosody was unprecedented in Arabic literature; and creative, in the sense that it practically opened endless avenues for further development. Al-Sayyāb's response liberated the Arab poet from perpetual subjugation to al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad's concept of prosody and versification, and gave him freedom to prove his merit, if he had any.

There were other individuals in the long history of Arabic literature that attempted to break the set rules of prosody such as Abū al-<sup>c</sup>Atāhiya (d. 828), the Andalusian poets of the muwashshah, and others, even the neo-classical poets al-Bārūdī (d. 1904) and Shawqī (d. 1932); but they did not abandon the basic concept of the multi-footed verse as the metrical unit of versification. (1) Yet in spite of these attempts at breaking the rules of traditional prosody, Arabic poetry before the free verse movement remained by and large obedient to the rules of al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. The poems having variations of rhyme that became common in the inter-war period continued to honour those rules. The attempts of <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Raḥmān Shukrī (d. 1958) and Jamīl al-Zahāwī (d. 1936) and others at shī<sup>c</sup>r mursal i.e. unrhymed, blank verse continued to honour them too. The metrical unit continued to be the verse made up usually of six or eight feet, each foot or taf<sup>c</sup>īla having acceptable variations within the traditional sixteen metres and their catalectic changes.

Before al-Sayyāb, a couple of poets experimented with poetry based on the taf<sup>c</sup>īla as a metrical unit but they did not follow up their experiments, nor did they acquire a following. Al-Sayyāb, unaware of such experiments until later, started on

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(1) Only the band genre seems to have abandoned this concept but it remained obscure, rare and limited to Iraq in its Ottoman period of literary decadence. It was unknown in modern times and was not discovered except a few years after the free verse movement had already begun. Cf. Nāzik al-Malā'ika: "Al-Band wa Makānuh min al-<sup>c</sup>Arūd al-<sup>c</sup>Arabī" in Qadāyā al-Shī<sup>c</sup>r al-Mu<sup>c</sup>āsir, Beirut, 1962, pp. 167-179.

his own on November 29, 1946, by his poem "Was it love?".<sup>(1)</sup> Nāzik al-Malā'ika, again unaware of such experiments, wrote her poem "Cholera" on October 27, 1947, in free verse. In 1948, al-Sayyāb wrote ten poems in free verse<sup>(2)</sup> and, in 1949, Nāzik al-Malā'ika published her collection Shazāyā wa Ramād which included a good number of poems in free verse. In an introduction, she tried to justify free verse by saying that poets often resorted to a process of mere redundancy or unnecessary filling out in order to bring their words to fit the traditional metre and that this interrupted the flow of their thought and emotion, and even diverted them from their original purpose. She said that, by allowing the poet to use only as many feet in one verse as his meaning required, free verse was helping the poet to be sincere.<sup>(3)</sup>

Young poets in Iraq began to follow the example of al-Sayyāb and al-Malā'ika, each enriching the free verse movement with his talent and insight and allowing it finally to tide over the opposition successfully, though much unworthy poetry was also written and masqueraded as free verse.

Al-Sayyāb maintained that the free verse movement was more

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(1) Azhār Dhābila, pp. 68-72; reprinted in Azhār wa Asātīr, pp. 139-141.

(2) Cf. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb's collection Asātīr (Najaf, 1950), the poems entitled "Sawfa Amḍī", "Asātīr", "Sarāb", "al-Liqā' al-Akhīr", "Itba' inī", "Nihāya", "Fī al-Qarya al-Ḍalmā'", "Ughniya Qadīma", "Fī Layālī al-Kharīf", and "Fī al-Sūq al-Qadīm", some of which were earlier published in the papers of Baghdad and Najaf. These poems are also reprinted in his Azhār wa Asātīr, (Beirut, [1963])

(3) Nāzik al-Malā'ika: Introduction to Shazāyā wa Ramād, second edition, Beirut 1959, pp. 7-18.

than a prosodic reform. In his "Introduction" to his collection Asāṭir, he drew attention to some techniques in his collection besides the prosodic innovation: he mentioned the enjambement that necessitated the observation of punctuation; he also mentioned the structural device of psychological association of thoughts that mixed the conscious with the unconscious and hope with memory.<sup>(1)</sup> In 1954, al-Sayyāb wrote:

Free verse is more than a variation of the number of similar feet in different verses. It is a new technical structure, a new realist trend that came to crush romantic limpness, the literature of ivory towers, and the rigidity of classicism; it likewise came to crush the oratorical poetry which political and social poets were accustomed to write.<sup>(2)</sup>

A few years later, after many younger poets had superficially adopted free verse Khadr al-Walī asked al-Sayyāb, among other things, about the literary revolution that free verse had engendered and he answered:

Every mature revolution has to start with the content before the form, because the form is an attendant that serves the content. It is the new substance that looks for a new form for itself, and breaks the old frame as a growing seed breaks its shell. I am sorry to say that the stupendous renovation that has affected the form is not commensurate with the slight renovation that has affected the content. This leads us to confess that the "revolution" of the young poets against form — against rhyme and metre — is a superficial revolution, and that if it remains so, it will cause the gravest harm to Arabic poetry.<sup>(3)</sup>

As the free verse movement was groping for an aesthetic

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Introduction to Asāṭir, Najaf, 1950, pp. 5-8.

(2) Al-Ādāb, Beirut, June 1954, p. 69.

(3) Khadr al-Walī: Ārā' fī'l-Shi'r wa'l-Qiṣṣa, Baghdad, 1956, p. 12.

basis for its poetics, it was gradually acquiring direction and purpose. Al-Sayyāb was aware of the danger that the movement might be deflected into a mere innovation in prosody, a mere change in form. If this was how it started, its development showed that it was capable of introducing a change of content and that, in fact, change of content was inherent in its nature if truly understood. Al-Sayyāb was quick to realize this fact and to use it in order to bring about new life to Arabic poetry. A poet should not be a mere versifier even of free verse; he should be a seer, a visionary, a prophet.

In 1957, al-Sayyāb said, "If I were to make a representation of modern poetry, I would find no image of it clearer than that of Saint John's impressed on my mind: his eyes devoured by his vision as he sees the Seven Sins engulfing the world like a horrible octopus."<sup>(1)</sup> He then went on to say that a poet's duty was to explain the world and improve it, and added

We live in a world that stands as if it were a terrible nightmare. If poetry is a reflection of life, it must be terrifying because it uncovers for the soul the tentacles of the horrible octopus of the Seven Sins which engulfs it and almost smothers it. But as long as life continues, hope in salvation shall continue with life. It is the hope that the soul will awaken, and this is what modern poetry is trying to do.<sup>(2)</sup>

In 1956, al-Sayyāb had put his idea in more concrete words when he said that the subject-matter of all good literature was the eternal conflict between man and the forces of evil, and he considered imperialism and social injustice the worst forces of

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(1) Shi'ar, No. 3, Summer 1957, p. 111.

(2) ibid., p. 112.

evil in modern times. (1)

When a writer depicts this conflict, [he affirmed] his attitude towards it is not that of a neutral onlooker, because he is a man before anything else. The cause is his own cause, and the battle his own battle. Thus literature was and continues to be a weapon of man with which he opened and continues to open his way towards a better life. (2)

When al-Sayyāb's work of a lifetime is taken into consideration as a whole, it will be seen that the greater part of it was engaged in this struggle of man against evil. Whether when he was a communist early in his life (1944-1954) or when he was not, he continued to write poems extolling the heroism of those who struggled for freedom, justice and peace and denouncing the callousness of those who caused misery to millions by war, imperialism, exploitation, tyranny and oppression. His points of emphasis may have shifted depending on circumstances, and his enthusiasm may have suffered moments of weakness only too human, in the face of stress and strain; but his belief in the validity of his cause never failed. Yet although al-Sayyāb devoted himself to this cause and suffered harassment and imprisonment on account of it, his poetry contained other themes of a more personal nature such as his experience of love, its little joys and its great frustrations; and his experience of the growing threat of death from a chronic disease, its afflictive humiliation, its false hopes and tragic despair. The function of poetry, therefore, was not only to awaken the soul

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(1) Al-Ādāb, Beirut, October 1956, pp. 22-23.

(2) ibid.

to the Seven Sins that engulf it, and that of literature was not only to engage in the eternal conflict between man and the forces of evil — though al-Sayyāb thought so. His poetic production shows that poetry to him was also a projection of the self, an externalizing of the very experience of life, and an objectifying in words of the unfathomable depths of the soul in relation to the mystery of existence. If al-Sayyāb insisted on themes of tragedy, sacrifice, martyrdom and death, it is because life did not treat him mercifully on the personal level. On the other hand, the tensions which the Arab world was undergoing politically, socially and existentially, and the psychological crisis in which the Arab people found themselves as they were torn between conflicting ideologies and contradictory methodologies had a great bearing on his poetic vision. He refused to be on the margin of things and hurled himself vehemently in the whirlpool as the Arab nation, during his lifetime, was undergoing perhaps the most acute tests of identity, and passing through the most severe ordeals of anxiety and self-determination. It is therefore to his credit that, in spite of an unmerciful life, he continued to sing songs of hope and salvation to his fellowmen in an Arab world that, like himself, was not treated mercifully or justly by life. His aim was to transcend the present with a vision of the future, to bear the pains of parturition in the expectation of a new birth, to sustain death with the firm belief in resurrection and a better life.

To write poetry was to take a position, to commit oneself to an attitude in relation to the world, its nature and its

development. To write poetry was an attempt to explain the world and improve it — but always as the world was freely filtered through the self in the immediacy of personal experience.

As early as 1950, even when he was a communist, he said in the "Introduction" to Asāṭīr,

I am one of those who believe that the artist has a debt which he must render to this unhappy society in which he lives. But I do not accept that the artist—and especially the poet—be made a slave of this theory. If a poet is sincere in his expression of life in every respect, he will necessarily give expression to society's woes and hopes without being forced to do so by anyone. Likewise, he will give expression to his own woes and private feelings which, in their deepest, are the feelings of the majority in this society. (1)

It was probably this sense of freedom and self-imposed commitment, fomented and intensified by the predicament of an Arab world in turmoil that sparked al-Sayyāb off to seek for himself a novel poetic expression.

Al-Sayyāb was well versed in classical Arabic poetry and had a particular admiration for Abū Tammām (d. 845). The influence of this classical attachment on his poetry is never absent, though it is stronger in his earlier and more formative period than it is later. It manifests itself in many ways but chiefly in his diction, his concern with resonance, his ear for loud rhythm, his profusion of similes, his tendency to prolixity and diffusion and his inclination to declamatory overtones and to lyricism. These qualities in his poetry militated against al-Sayyāb's modernity at a time when Arab poets

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: Asāṭīr (Najaf, 1950), p. 8.

of the avant-garde, taking his lead, proceeded to more subtle techniques of form, structure and diction. This is not to say that he was not modern but to emphasize that he was the first of the moderns and as such, and given his temperament and education, he could not throw off completely the heritage of the past. Being influenced first by the English Romantic poets, especially Keats, and later by modern English poets, especially T. S. Eliot and Edith Sitwell, al-Sayyāb genuinely tried to be modern with all his background of Arab classicism and Iraqi village life. When Unsī al-Ḥājǵ said of him, "He is a Jāhilite, bedouin, folkloric, mythical, Anglo-Saxon upon a realist, lampoonist, elegist, panegyrist, weeper whose poetry flows out of excessive talent and until death,"<sup>(1)</sup> he was — aside from grotesque exaggeration — trying to epitomize al-Sayyāb's life and work and the influencing factors thereof.

Without turning his back altogether to the Arab heritage and tradition, al-Sayyāb made the best of his potentialities and propensities to effect a radical change in the concept of poetry among the Arabs and pave the way for a really modern Arabic poetry that would be relevant to modern life in form and content, by offering a new conception of life in the light of the modern revolution in thought, technology and society in the world. He made it possible for poets to transcend the traditional values of stability and seeming inexorability of their

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(1) Al-Nahār Sunday Supplement, Beirut, February 7, 1965, p. 19.

literary and cultural heritage in order to create poetry relevant to the civilizational moment they were living. But al-Sayyāb was not a mere harbinger, heralding the coming of new poetry; he was a pioneer who ventured into unknown climes, who fashioned indelibly the land upon which others were to tread and build new living quarters.

In his published seven collections, <sup>(1)</sup> some of which were reprinted with variations, al-Sayyāb left us an amazingly large quantity of poems, considering his rather short life (1926-1964). His unpublished poetry which I saw in Baṣra in manuscript, kept by his brother-in-law Fu'ād Ṭāhā al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jalīl, belongs to his early period and dates from 1941, 1942, 1944 and possibly 1951 with a few poems from 1963, <sup>(2)</sup> but there is hardly anything in it that adds to his stature. His social and political poetry collected in 1950 to be published as Za'fir al-<sup>c</sup>Āṣifa seems to have been irretrievably lost, as well as the greater part of his long poem "Bayn al-Rūḥ wa'l-Jasad" written in 1944. But it seems to me that this loss is largely of historical rather than literary value, since al-Sayyāb's greater literary contribution began to come in the fifties. It is therefore legitimate to base one's judgment of al-Sayyāb on his published work and to hope that his unpublished work will soon see the light.

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(1) See Bibliography p. 280, Nos. 1-12.

(2) See Bibliography p. 281, Nos. 13-19.

Al-Sayyāb's published poetry is not all of one calibre. In fact, there are parts of it that he himself would probably have seen changed or even deleted, had he only the opportunity to do so. Changes or deletions in reprints of earlier poems such as those found in his Azhār wa Asāṭīr and his Unshūdat al-Maṭar point to this probability, even when the changes or deletions are not due to mistakes, misprints or changed political attitudes. His retouches usually improve the diction by using more apt and more accurate words and they often improve the images by presenting more vivid and less naive images. His deletions try to achieve concision and to rid the poems of some patent redundancies.

An example or two will be sufficient. In his poem "Dīwān Shi<sup>c</sup>r", speaking of his collection of poems in the boudoirs of virgins, al-Sayyāb says:

Kisses roam about its sides. (1)

In the later edition, he says:

Kisses flutter about its sides. (2)

It seems to me that the movement of lips in repeated kisses is better expressed by the verb "flutter" (tariffu) than by the verb "roam" (taḥūmu).

In his poem "Aqdāḥ wa Aḥlām," describing a belle, he says:

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(1) Azhār Dhābila: (Cairo, 1947), p. 5.

(2) Azhār wa Asāṭīr: (Beirut, [1963] ), p. 148.

The hand of fever planted on her mouth  
Flowers that folded up her passions.  
When they are made to bloom with the fire of a kiss  
That is drunk and crying,  
Flames dance on the blossoms  
And blood flows with a prance. (1)

In the later edition, he says:

The hand of fever planted on her mouth  
Flowers with no stalks and thus with no water.  
When they are made to bloom with the fire of a kiss  
That is thirsty and crying,  
Flames dance on the blossoms  
And blood flows with a prance. (2)

The change almost makes it another poem. The meeting of waterless lips with thirsty lips makes the image of a kiss more inflammable with yearning and desire.

His deletions are sometimes too drastic as in the poem "Ahwā'" which is reduced from one hundred and ninety-two verses to one hundred and twelve verses. (3) But they generally embrace fewer verses: twenty-three verses are deleted from "Ughniya fī Shahr Āb", (4) five verses from "Min Ru'yā Fū-Kāy", (5) four verses from "Qāfilat al-Ḍayāc". (6) His first poem in free verse, "Hal Kāna Ḥubban?" comprised fifty-six verses originally but is only twenty-eight verses in its second edition. (7)

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(1) Azhār Dhābila: p. 54.

(2) Azhār wa Asāṭir: p. 11.

(3) Cf. Azhār Dhābila, pp. 82-99 and Azhār wa Asāṭir: pp.17-28.

(4) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: (Beirut, 1960), pp. 22-26, compare it with the poem published in al-Ādāb, Beirut, May 1956.

(5) ibid. pp. 46-56, compare it with the poem published in al-Ādāb, Beirut, January 1955.

(6) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: pp. 59-65, compare it with the poem published in al-Ādāb, Beirut, July 1956.

(7) Azhār Dhābila: pp. 68-72 and Azhār wa Asāṭir: pp.139-141.

These changes and deletions show that al-Sayyāb is constantly aspiring for perfection but they also show that he is too much in a hurry to publish and therefore liable occasionally to be flippant and slipshod, especially in his earlier period and, latterly, in his final period when he was sick. It is true there are some illegible verses in his manuscripts because of constant crossing out and re-writing but these are few in comparison with his abundance. Two poems in his handwriting dated 1963 have been published in photostat<sup>(1)</sup> and show very little re-writing which, even then, suggests instant reformulation before a sentence is completed.

This may give us an idea of how the man worked and suggests in general that al-Sayyāb depended upon the flow of ideas and emotions, once he was in the mood of writing. He was not the calculating poet conscious of structure but the impulsive poet usually dependent on talent and genius, of which he had lots fortunately. Free verse, which has a natural tendency to help the flow of ideas, suited his way of writing admirably, though it sometimes caused him to write long,

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(1) Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb: ed. Simon Jargy, Manshūrat Adwā', n.d., pp. 57-59.

involved sentences that ran on to several verses such as in his poem, "Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī",<sup>(1)</sup> "Ḥaffār al-Qubūr",<sup>(2)</sup> and many others. Or else it kept flowing almost endlessly and caused him to write more than the theme warranted such as in many poems of some length.

This is not to say that al-Sayyāb's poems are amorphous as a rule but only that structure as such is not his strongest characteristic. In his first two collections Azhār Dhābila (1947) and Asātīr (1950), his poems seem to be based on the mere flow of ideas by psychological association. Yet whereas in poems of traditional prosody, as in the former collection, the rhyming regular verses or the repeated stanzas keep him within some formal bounds, in poems of free verse, as in the latter collection, his thought keeps flowing until it exhausts its energy; for there is hardly anything to stop it except the limitations of the topic treated. In his later collections, however, he tries to give a framework to his poems. <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbār Dāūd al-Baṣrī, an Iraqi critic, sees in them four kinds of structure:<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: (Beirut, 1965), p. 5.

(2) "Ḥaffār al-Qubūr" in Unshūdat al-Maṭar, p. 231.

(3) "Dirāsāt fī Iqā<sup>c</sup> al-Shi<sup>c</sup>r" in al-Kitāb, Baghdad, No. 1 April 1962. Cf. also his book Badr Shēkir al-Sayyāb, Rā'id al-Shi<sup>c</sup>r al-Ḥurr, (Baghdad, 1966), pp. 30-33.

1. What he calls "the dialectical structure" as in the poem "Yawm al-Ṭughā al-Akhīr" (Unshūdat al-Maṭar, pp. 66-68).
2. What he calls "the symbolical structure" as in the poem "Fī al-Maghrib al-<sup>c</sup>Arabī" (Unshūdat al-Maṭar, pp. 82-89).
3. What he calls "the parallel structure" as in the poem "Al-<sup>c</sup>Awda li Jaykūr" (Unshūdat al-Maṭar, pp. 108-115) and others.
4. What he calls "the wavy structure" as in the poem "Unshūdat al-Maṭar" (Unshūdat al-Maṭar, pp. 160-167) and others.

Neither these specially-coined terms nor similar ones attempting to analyze or describe al-Sayyāb's poetic structure will be adequate because they do not encompass al-Sayyāb's art. It seems to me that every one of his poems has its own internal logic of composition by which it stands, and that al-Sayyāb did not allow himself to fall into patterns of structure or design. Yet if there is any single quality that runs through almost all his poetry, it is his reliance on images to convey his thought or emotion. Image after image builds up in the receiver's mind a framework for the poet's intention in the majority of al-Sayyāb's poems. This style of montage suited the flow of ideas referred to above on which al-Sayyāb depended in his writing. But it could be as dangerous to his purpose as free verse because it could flow almost endlessly into a compilation of superimposed images that would choke the thought or the emotion. A basic contrast, often underlying the theme of the poem and the tension within it, kept his imagery from overflowing in all directions and helped to brake the

flow of ideas with varying degrees of success. It was only when he came upon myth as a means to contain his imagery and bend it in a unifying whole that al-Sayyāb attained the most satisfying framework for his poetry, natural to his genius and appropriate to his talent.

Al-Sayyāb's imagery comprises similes, metaphors, allegories, literary allusions and symbols. But it also comprises short, vivid impressions of things arranged in a clever succession which leaves an effect on the mind. Consider the following set of imagery from his poem "Fī al-Sūq al-Qadīm"<sup>(1)</sup> which was to be imitated by many of his young contemporaries:

[It is] night and the old market  
Is hushed, except for the murmurs of passers-by  
And the stranger's footsteps and the wind's sad tune  
Pervading that dark night.

[It is] night, the old market and the murmurs of passers-by  
While pale light is being squeezed by sad lamps —  
Like fog on the road —  
In every old shop  
Amid pale faces, as if it were a melting tune  
In that old market.

It is not the similes or the metaphors in this passage but their being weaved into the texture of image impressions that give it its power of suggestion. This technique is repeated in many of al-Sayyāb's poems in his collection Asāṭīr.

It remains with him in his later collections too but becomes sophisticated. Consider the opening scene of his long poem

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(1) Asāṭīr: (Najaf, 1950), p. 11; reprinted in Azhār wa Asāṭīr, (Beirut, [1963]), p. 29.

"Ḥaffār al-Qubūr": (1)

Like a sad dream, the sunset light clouds the graves  
Weakly as orphans smile or as candles fade  
In the darkness of memory overshadowing tears;  
Flights of birds bluster over the far plain  
Like black tempests or like ghosts in an old house  
Appearing to frighten its inhabitants  
From a dark room in it.  
The distant wrecked hut yawns — the dark night staring  
From its blind door and its senseless, dilapidated windows.  
The atmosphere is filled with the [owl's] hoot  
Which the desert echoes in despair and monotonous wail  
With diminishing reverberations  
That the wind winnows on the far hill with boredom.

The details that combine to make up the picture are now more meticulously chosen and they all tend to add to the image's atmosphere or suggestive quality. Occasionally one detail is developed out of proportion to its significance in the total picture when al-Sayyāb goes tangentially, expanding one simile or metaphor. This becomes truer later in his life when he tends to sustain a metaphor even parenthetically at the expense of the whole poem such as in "Marḥā Ghaylān", (2) "Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī", (3) "Aḥibbīnī", (4) and others. One example will be sufficient here. Describing a day when, as a child, he was caught in the rain under the palms, al-Sayyāb says in his poem "Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī": (5)

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: p. 231.

(2) ibid., p. 20. See p. 132 above.

(3) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: p. 6.

(4) ibid., pp. 61-62. See p. 64 above.

(5) ibid., p. 6.

And under the palms where every palm branch is raining,  
Bubbles dance as they pop — they are dates  
Fallen into the hands of the Virgin as she shakes  
with eagerness  
The trunk of the graceful palm (your child's crown is of  
light not gold,  
The love of others will be crucified in Him, He will  
heal the blind,  
Resuscitate from the bottom of the grave a dead  
man exhausted  
By long travel to the darkness of death, clothe his  
bones with flesh,  
Kindle his icy heart so that it springs with His love!)  
And lightning flashes in the sky ...

The beautiful image of the rain bubbles dancing and popping under the palms has suggested the Qur'anic image of Mary shaking the trunk of a palm tree for dates at the birth of Jesus. The comparison is apt since rain is a source of life to the earth as are the dates to Mary in her seclusion. But al-Sayyāb digresses in parenthesis when he makes allusion to Jesus. It is true his allusion emphasizes the idea of life and the life-giving and loving qualities of Jesus, so badly needed by the world. But the allusion by its length and its unnecessary intrusion tends to unfocus the image already created and introduce an element of dilation when terseness seems more appropriate.

The images of al-Sayyāb are drawn with sensitivity from a myriad of things perceived by the senses or by the mind. They are original for the most part by their newness as well as their allegorical or symbolic usage. Sometimes it is their disarming simplicity, sometimes it is their shocking unexpectedness, but always it is their power of surprise and their gushing effusion that keeps al-Sayyāb's poems live. In cases

of deficient structure, al-Sayyāb's imagery is a saving element that absorbs attention with its richness and colour.

His awareness of life as a tension between being and becoming is projected in his imagery in which conflict plays a major part, keeping his good poems integrated and balanced. The conflict between good and evil, between love and hatred, between freedom and oppression, between fertility and barrenness, between life and death in which he was personally engaged and in which he conceived of himself as an embodiment of his country, the Arab world and humanity at large — found expression in his imagery as well as his themes. For there are many poems in which a certain counterpoise between two sets of images may be detected, though cleverly interwoven into the fabric of the poem, such as in "al-Asliha wa'l-Aṭfāl"<sup>(1)</sup> or "Ta<sup>c</sup>tīm"<sup>(2)</sup> and many others. In a few poems, even the prosody of the poem is affected by this contrast, notably in his poem "Port Said"<sup>(3)</sup> where the movement of thought and the imagery dramatically pass through alternate phases of traditional metre and free verse.

Al-Sayyāb's interest in imparting symbolic meanings to his images grew steadily in the 'fifties. The forces of good and life and fertility were symbolized by rain, bread, light,

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: pp. 249-277. See pp. 100-101 above.

(2) ibid., pp. 29-31. See pp. 110-111 above.

(3) ibid., pp. 181-194. See pp. 121-123 above.

anemones, the river, the village and other similar terms that evoked ideas of happiness and plenty. The forces of evil and death and barrenness were symbolized by fire, gold, rock, darkness, the city and a host of other terms suggesting pain, exploitation and misery. His insistence on themes of salvation made him use death-transcending symbols such as the cross, the grave, resurrection and other soteriological terms.

Gradually he moves into the use of myth to crystallize all these images of his and unify them by personifying his symbols to become parts of a whole. His village, Jaykūr, and its river, Buwayb, with their palms, waters and shells become part of this system of symbolism of fertility; and Babel, the wicked city and its labyrinthian paths of mud, become their counterpart of barrenness, complexity and death. He resorts to the myth of Tammūz in his search for symbols to represent the victory of life over death, and finds in it all that he needs to embody his vision of a plenteous, new life for his people. He finds in it a means to give expression to the civilizational moment he is living and the hope he is cherishing for his country and the Arab world.

The death of Tammūz which implies the death of vegetation and of the life-impulse in man and animals becomes a representation of the spiritual death of the Arab homeland whose old culture and out-worn values are no more relevant to the modern world. The return of Tammūz from the underworld

with his partner Astarte which implies the revival of nature and fertility in Spring becomes a representation of the hopeful vision that the Arab homeland will equally return to a new life of spiritual fertility and plenty. Before the vision comes true and before the hope is realized, there is pain, suffering, anxiety, bewilderment, grief and affliction in the Arab world symbolized in the myth by Astarte's mourning for Tammūz and her anxious search for him.

Al-Sayyāb's mythical poems take different episodes and symbols of the Tammūzite story at a time, depending on current events of the Arab world and their effect on his vision. If he wants to emphasize the spiritual death of the Arabs, he dwells mostly on the death of Tammūz as in his poem "Madīna bilā Maṭar".<sup>(1)</sup> But in the majority of his Tammūzite poems, his emphasis is mostly on the present suffering of the Arabs, their tragic malaise being very much his own personally. In hopeful moments, he extols the heroic, redemptive aspects of Arab sacrifice and death, as in "Ilā Jamīla Būḥayrid",<sup>(2)</sup> "Risāla min Maqbara",<sup>(3)</sup> "Fī al-Maghrīb al-<sup>c</sup>Arabi",<sup>(4)</sup> and others, where the suffering is only like a parturition preceding birth. In less hopeful moments, his poem is full of anxiety as to the outcome of the suffering endured as in the poems

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: pp. 172-177.

(2) ibid.: pp. 69-77.

(3) ibid.: pp. 78-81.

(4) ibid.: pp. 82-89.

"Tammūz Jaykūr",<sup>(1)</sup> "Jaykūr wa'l-Madīna",<sup>(2)</sup> and others where he is full of questioning, though the vision of resurrection and victory still lurks dimly in the background.

To make his point, al-Sayyāb resorts to other myths besides that of Tammūz, such as the myths of Adonis, Sisyphus, Attis, Cerberus and others. For instance, when he is disappointed with the Iraqi revolution during its Red upsurge, the Communist massacres become the bloody rites of Attis as in "Ru'yā fī 'Ām 1956",<sup>(3)</sup> and the regime of 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim becomes a Babylonian Hades guarded by Cerberus as in "Sarbarūs fī Bābil";<sup>(4)</sup> but the myth of Tammūz remains essential as a framework for his imagery. Occasionally, Christ replaces Tammūz, or is identified with him in the same poem, as in "Al-Masīḥ ba'd al-Ṣalb"<sup>(5)</sup> or "Marḥā Ghaylān",<sup>(6)</sup> because of the essential similarity of death followed by resurrection in both cases. Often the poem is set in the first person where the poet impersonates Tammūz or Christ, and becomes one with them in his personal suffering, his anguish and his vision of resurrection, and the symbols of Jaykūr and Buwayb become part of the myth, or of a new myth as it were.

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: pp. 99-102. See p. 146 above.

(2) ibid.: pp. 103-107. See pp. 133-135 above.

(3) ibid.: pp. 116-127. See pp. 147-148 above.

(4) ibid.: pp. 168-171. See pp. 145-146 above.

(5) ibid.: pp. 145-149. See pp. 130-131 above.

(6) ibid.: pp. 18-21. See pp. 131-133 above.

In 1957, al-Sayyāb said, "An important aspect of modern poetry is the resort to legends, myths and symbols. The need for symbols and myths has never been as urgent as it is today. For we live in a world that has no poetry about it — I mean that the values that are dominant in it are nonpoetic, the final word in it is for matter not for the spirit. The things that the poet was able to say and make part of himself have begun to break down one by one or to withdraw to the margin of life. Therefore, direct expression of what is nonpoetic will not be poetry. So what is the poet to do? He has returned to myths, to legends, which still retain their warmth because they are not part of this world; he has returned to them to use them as symbols and to build up from them worlds with which to defy the logic of gold and steel. On the other hand, he has started to create new myths — although his attempts at creating this type of myths are few so far."<sup>(1)</sup>

Al-Sayyāb made this statement at the American University of Beirut in a public address arranged and sponsored by Shi<sup>c</sup>r magazine. If it may be taken as an explanation of his own resort to myth, some influence of T. S. Eliot can be surmised in it, though perhaps not his cultural depth or his politico-religious attitude. Al-Sayyāb believed that "modern European

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(1) Shi<sup>c</sup>r, Beirut, Summer 1957, No. 3, p. 112.

civilization has not been satirized more violently and more deeply than in the satire levelled against it by T. S. Eliot in his poem The Waste Land."<sup>(1)</sup> Al-Sayyāb's understanding of The Waste Land as a satire rather than a vision of a particular historical and ethical situation shows the limitations of his appreciation of T. S. Eliot. Yet the technique of T. S. Eliot which al-Sayyāb admired and somehow adopted, especially the use of myth and imagery as in The Waste Land, and the influence on him of Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough<sup>(2)</sup> and of Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance<sup>(3)</sup> and possibly of other books of mythology made it possible for him to enter that period of his literary life that may be called Tammūzite in which the myth of Tammūz plays, after 1954, the main part in his imagery, symbolizing his vision of the civilizational predicament of the Arab world.

At first no particular myth is used but allusion to fertility rituals are vaguely implied as in his poem "Unshūdat al-Maṭar"<sup>(4)</sup> Then his myth technique becomes explicit but he compounds myths of varied cultures and connotations to symbolize the complexity of a situation as in his long poem "Min Ru'iyā Fū-Kāy"<sup>(5)</sup> where the Chinese myth of Conghai is used and

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(1) Al-Adab al-<sup>c</sup>Arabi al-Mu<sup>c</sup>āṣir: Manshūrāt Aḍwā', n.d. pp. 248-249.

(2) Al-Sayyāb read parts of The Golden Bough translated to Arabic by his friend Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā in 1954.

(3) Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā told me in an interview (Baghdad, January 10, 1967) that al-Sayyāb borrowed from him From Ritual to Romance and never returned it.

(4) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: pp. 160-167. See pp. 89-94 above.

(5) ibid., pp. 46-56. See pp. 102-105 above

allusions are made to Tammūz, Cain, Abel, Jenghis Khan, Christ, St. John and Ariel, and quotations are included from García Lorca, Shakespeare's The Tempest and Edith Sitwell's "Lullaby" and where a contemporary protagonist of modern man is seen in Fu-Kai, a clerk in the Jesuit mission in Hiroshima who became mad at the nightmarish horror of the atomic explosion and was treated at the Red Cross hospital where he is just a number. In such poems, al-Sayyāb burdens his reader with intrusive and often unnecessary footnotes that kill the spontaneity of symbolization and intuition by explicitness and logic. He is afraid that his Arab reader, unfamiliar with myth images, will not understand him. This quality remains with him even later when he concentrates his imagery mainly within the myth of Tammūz, especially after 1957. If he does not add footnotes, he manages to incorporate an explication in the poetic text itself with the result that his symbols become sometimes mere allusions. He includes in his poems quotations from Arabic folkloric poetry or songs and, after 1960, taps other myths such as those of Ulysses, Job, Lazarus, Orpheus, Icarus, Sinbad, Iram the Many-columned and others.

Al-Sayyāb's technique of myth imagery sometimes reaches heights of symbolism that are sublime such as in his poems, "Madīna bilā Maṭar",<sup>(1)</sup> "al-Nahr wa'l-Mawt",<sup>(2)</sup> "Iram Dhāt

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(1) Unshūdat al-Maṭar: pp. 172-177.

(2) ibid.: pp. 141-144.

al-<sup>c</sup>Imād", (1) and a few others in which his vision of the human condition is so subtly embedded in the myth that it is part of it. Such successful efforts make us deplore a few other poems in which the function of a myth is merely allegoric and very didactically so. The use of a myth is only an artifice for the camouflage of intentions rather than a search for the warmth and innocence of intuition; it is a mask to hide the real meaning rather than a means to charge the meaning with possibilities and mystery.

In 1963, he said to Kāzīm Khalīfa in a newspaper interview:

Perhaps I am the first contemporary Arab poet to begin using myths and make symbols out of them. My first motive in this respect was political. When I wanted to resist the royal Sa<sup>c</sup>idī regime with poetry, I used myths to veil my intentions, for the myrmidons of Nūrī al-Sa<sup>c</sup>id understood no myths. I also used them for the same purpose in the regime of Qāsim. In my poem entitled "Sarbarūs fī Bābil", I satirized Qāsim and his regime severely and his myrmidons did not realize that. I also satirized that regime severely in my other poem, "Madīnat al-Sindabād". When I wanted to depict the failure of the original aims of the July (Tammūz) revolution, I replaced the Babylonian name of Tammūz by the Greek name of Adonis who is his counterpart... I have almost stopped using any myths in my poetry now, except for the mention of two mythical personages and what pertains to them, namely, the Arab Sindabād and the Greek Odysseus. (2)

In spite of this naïve understanding of the function of myth in modern poetry as expressed here, al-Sayyāb succeeded in introducing the use of myth amongst his contemporaries and produced a number of successful poems that offer through myth a vision of contemporary life characterized by spontaneity,

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(1) Shanāshīl Ibnat al-Chalabī: pp. 11-18.

(2) Ṣawt al-Jamāhīr: Baghdad, October 26, 1963.

immediacy and sincerity, and inspired by the quest of modern man for peace and of the modern Arab for regeneration. Myths may be as ancient as man, but al-Sayyāb drew out of them something new for modern man, the warmth and intimacy that transcend the modern world "which does not give him except deteriorating relations between man and man, and constant harassment and disruption of his existence and his humanity."<sup>(1)</sup> He found in myths the eternal archetypes that would embody man's hopes and fears, and acutely suited them to man's modern predicament, especially that of the modern Arab.

In the last three years of his life, when al-Sayyāb was stricken by a degenerative disease of the nervous system manifested by growing paralysis, his poetry became more introspective than social. The problem of death and the meaning of life posed themselves very poignantly and very personally in his poetry. Perhaps no other Arab poet faced death with the determination to live as al-Sayyāb. He sometimes wavered between hope and despair,<sup>(2)</sup> but the general tone of his poetry was one of resilience or else resignation to God's will. Occasionally, there was a cry of anger because of lost opportunity, a tone of self-pity because of sustained pain, and sometimes there was even an outspoken desire to die

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(1) Al-Sayyāb (in an interview): al-Funūn, Baghdad, No.22, 1957.

(2) Cf. Ḥasan Mūsā: "al-Sayyāb wa Tajribat al-Ṣirāʿ Bayn al-Ya's wa'l-Amal" in al-ʿUlūm, Beirut, Vol. X, October, 1965, pp. 56-67, and November 1965, pp. 68-74.

or a heartfelt entreaty for an end to a life of suffering. But that was because it was a life of suffering, not because al-Sayyāb hated life.

Al-Sayyāb loved life with all his senses and wanted to experience it sensually. He had something Dionysiac about his character which showed itself early in his life with his desire for bodily pleasures, including wine, women and song, and his interest in Baudelaire, Byron, °Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā and Ilyās Abū Shabaka or — at any rate — in that poetry of theirs full of sensuous experiences which he tried to imitate. That is why it was particularly tragic for him to be ugly and to fail in his early love affairs, then to be doomed to an intellectually incompatible marriage and finally to have his sexual power impaired by paralysis and his whole body gradually wrecked by disease. His mind, however, remained alert to the world of sensation almost to the last and it pondered about this life.

The very abundance with which al-Sayyāb poured out his poetry in his last three years is by itself a clue to his attachment to life. Being handicapped by disease, he concentrated on his inner life and his fear of death, and produced poems which offer an existential experience quite rare in Arabic literature.

The remembrance of past experience played a major part in these poems in the lack of active living. But it is not

a romantic remembrance and a yearning for return to childhood or youth. It is rather a display of life and of the awareness of life as a succession of irretrievable sensations. Memories of pain as much as of pleasure are recorded but those of happiness make only a fleeting passage. Memories are not recorded as history but as moments of consciousness to describe the nature of life, which sometimes appears to be meaningless and absurd.

Memories of his dead mother, of his grandfather's house, of his village Jaykūr, images of Wafīqa, Hāla, Labība, Lamī<sup>c</sup>a, Iqbāl, Luc and others haunt him in his loneliness in poem after poem but cannot capture life for him. Everything seems to be fleeting and slipping away. He clings to memories of erotic experience in his impotence or to those of missed opportunities of passionate embraces, in an effort to remind his dying body of life. But life continues to abandon him, and yet he never abandons the pen for it is his last weapon in his battle for life. When al-Sayyāb finally lost the battle, he left us memorable poetry.

It is true that this poetry, characterized by an extraordinary abundance, does not all enjoy the excellence of the earlier period and that personal preoccupations and concerns are its main themes. But the tragically human anguish which it portrays, and the impotence and bewilderment of man grappling defencelessly with the intriguing problems of pain and death

which it paints commend it to our sympathies. There is hardly any philosophical solution suggested in it, for the riddle of life is only faced with more questioning than answering. But its simplicity, sincerity and intimacy are appealing. Odysseus and Sinbad, as two eternal wanderers seeking truth and happiness, and Job as the archetype of fortitude are the mainstay of its imagery. If it succeeded only in putting to shame the formalism and hypocrisy of much modern Arabic poetry, it would have served a worthy purpose.

\* \* \*

In conclusion, it may be said that Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb, in spite of his limitations, is one of the greatest Arab poets of the modern period. He was able to renovate Arabic poetry in a manner which did not allow it to break completely with the past, yet which did not prevent it from being intimately relevant to the present. With a language strongly rooted in the classical tradition, he did not disdain introducing colloquialism or a new usage when it added to the aesthetic effect of his poem. (1) With a particular sensitivity to classical rhythm, he was able to remould Arabic prosody the better to be consonant with the rhythm of modern life and expressive of the spirit and temper of a rebellious generation. A man of vision, he was able through imagery and the use of myth to portray the contemporary

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(1) Cf. Ibrāhīm al-Sāmīrrā'ī: Lughat al-Shi<sup>c</sup>r bayn Jīlayn, Beirut, n.d. [1965], pp. 215-240.

civilizational crisis of the Arab and his hope for a better future, and to depict the predicament of modern man in a fragmented world. Deeply hurt by life, he attempted to transcend his suffering in his tragic quest for truth and his restless search for a key to personal and social salvation.

Having brought life to Arabic poetry and having made life the subject of Arabic poetry in a deeply personal manner, he opened the way for other Arab poets of creative minds and rebellious temperaments to embark on further adventure in poetic experience. Arabic poetry which has been bound for over a thousand years by rigid rules of form and content has at last become an open horizon.

APPENDIX

The poems in this Appendix are not found in al-Sayyāb's published collections. I was able to obtain them by courtesy of Fu'ād Tāhā al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jalīl and Mu'ayyid al-<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wāhid on my visit to Basra in January, 1967. They are appended to this Thesis in Arabic for their historical value.

1. <sup>c</sup> Alā al-Shāṭi'	p. 266
2. Shuhadā' al-Ḥurriyya	268
3. Bayn al-Rūḥ wa'l-Jasad	269
4. Al-La <sup>c</sup> anāt	272
5. An incomplete poem	276
6. A letter to Major-General Muzhir al-Shāwī	277
7. Laylā	278

على السلي (1)

« بين رفات أهلامي التي تكسرت بهفتها ، وأحرقها نار الخيبة ...  
وبين ضباب من الأوهام يكتسني ، ووسط كون رهيب لا يعاونه  
إلا أنات قلبي الجريح ، جلست على السلي أترب عودتك ،  
ولكن ... هيهات . » ١٩٤١

على السلي أهلامي      لوانا المروج يا حبيب  
وفي هلكة أيامي      غدا نجم الهوى يخجوا  
غداً قلبي الراعي      ربي الليل وأطرافه  
وذا الفجر بأزواره      وهزّ الورد أعطافه  
رني غيرة أوهامي  
وفي بقعة آلامي  
بكي سبوبة القلب  
غداً قلبي الراعي  
ومن بعد سرى زورق      فهل فيه لتي أهوى  
وذا قلبي جوى يحرق      عسى أن يجد السوى  
ومن آهات أنغامي  
أنتني رمية الراعي  
مضى الزررق يا رب  
غداً قلبي الراعي  
وفي مركب أهلامي      تير الشئ للغرب  
فيكوك قلبي الظلامي      وإليها لوعة الحب

(1) This is the earliest of al-Sayyāb's extant poems and is dated 1941.

فيا ربة المرامي

ويا تسبح أيامي

لك القلب مفي يصبو

فردي بعض أهلامي

تقضى الليل فالفجر

وإكن هل أنت هند؟

هنا من ليغفها النهر

فأين الحب والعهد؟

سدا قشيت أعمامي

على سلطان أوهامي

ولا صفوة ولا قرب

فردي بعض أهلامي

(١٩٤١)

## شهداء الحرية (1)

”شهداء الشهداء : يونس السباعوي ، فاهمي سعيد ، محمود سلمان ١٩٤٢“

شريد العلاء لن يسمع اللوم ناديه  
طواه الردى ذاك لكون للمجد ما تم  
فتى قاد أبناء الجهاد إلى العلاء  
فتى همّه أن يبلغ العز موطنه  
فتى يعرف الأعداء نكته سيفه  
فتى ما جنى ذنباً سوى أنه انقضى  
إذا ذكروا في مجلس الحرب ”يونس“  
لقد باع للعرب النفوس ثلاثة  
فأد على من ودّع الحب واغتدى  
وآه على نر أهيض جناحه  
لئن غيبوا جثمان ”محمود“ في الثرى  
ولم يغبني على ”فاهمي“ وما كان خطبه  
شريد رأى الرغيفان يغزو بلاده  
أُشفق من يحيى الديار بيده  
رجال أباة عاهدوا الله أنهم  
أراق عبيد الانكليز دماءهم  
أراق عبيد الانكليز دماءهم  
أراق ربيب الانكليز دماءهم  
رشيد ويا نعم الزعيم لأمة  
لأنت الزعيم الحق نبهت نوّماً

وليس ريك باليه من تدريعاته  
مشاركه موّدة ومشاربه  
وقد طمّنت بأس العدد كتابته  
غدا كل باغ دون خوف يوائبه  
نقد نتحت فتحا مينا مضاربه  
هياماً بوجه الظلم مالان جانبه  
مشى الموت للأعداء همراً سبابه  
نقرّوا ودمي لا تقتر غواربه  
على ”يونس“ فليطلق الدمع هاجبه  
وكم ملأت أنفه العراق عصائبه  
فما غيبوا المجد الذي هو كاسبه  
يرهون وإن هانت لديه مشاربه  
فهبّ وقاد العزم جنداً بحاربه  
وتغدو على كب المعالي ركائبه ؟  
مضحون حتى يرجع الحق غاصبه  
فيا ويلهم ممن تخاف جوالبه  
ولكنّ دون الثأر من هو طالبه  
ولكنّ في برلين لينا يراقبه  
يعيث برا عبد الإله وصاحبه  
تقاذفهم دهر توالت نوائبه

(١٩٤٢)

بين الروح والجسد  
(قصة شاعرين)

- ١ -

شاعر الروح

جار الغرام عليه فهو مُسْتَهْدُ  
قلبٍ يَمُرُّ به الهوى فيعربدُ  
سكراً تحلُّ به النفوسُ وتُعقَدُ  
نشوى، وبات خياله يتصددُ  
ذاوي الشفاه لطلول ما يتسهدُ  
يسبي العيون، ووجهة تتوردُ  
وكفى بها من ثروة لا تنفدُ  
بالنائبات فجره يتجددُ  
تأسو الجراح بكفِّها أو تضمدُ  
طيف الحنان وفاته ما ينشدُ  
ما زال صائدُ طرفها يتصيدُ  
نظره يعف عن الأثام ويبعدُ

هذا الجريحُ وجرحه لا يُضمدُ  
صبباً أطار الصقور من أضلاعه  
أوهى إليه الشمر من آياته  
باتت تحلقُ في الأعالي روحه  
واهي الكليان كأنَّ خطباً هدهُ  
وهو المعطلُّ من قوامِ فارغِ  
لم يطم من مالٍ سوى أحلامه  
ما زال صرْفُ الدهر يرمي قلبه  
يا ليت صرْفَ الدهر أبقى أمه  
كم بات يلتمس الحنان فما رأى  
وأحب من جاراته فتانةُ  
عفت الغرام بحبه من حبه

- ٢ -

شاعر الشهوة

تغاي، فتدفع جسمه للمأثم  
ناراً، فحلل فيه كلَّ محرَّم  
سكراً تلوذ به القلوب وتحتمي

تلك الدماء بقلبه المتضرم  
ردَّ الهوى أحلامه مشبوبة  
غضُّ الإهاب تظلُّ تُبرق عينه

وإذا العيون لمحن فارع قدّه  
 أو هين للقلب الجليد بحبه  
 همّ الثراء سبي العذارى بالغنى  
 عاش الليالي وهو عفت طاهره  
 حتى أهبّ وضيعه غداً  
 قد كان يحسبها مثلاً للتقى  
 حيناً وكذبت الليالي ظنه  
 ويلاه! ساء بكل خوذ ظنه  
 ما زال يروي الشعر عن شيطانه  
 وأهبّ غانيةً فريباً سُمّه

ورشفت همرة ثغره المنفرم  
 فأطاعرت إطلاعة المتسلم  
 والحسن، حتى ما يجدن المنفرم  
 يهديه روح العبقري الملتزم  
 ألقته في جنبات ليل مظلم  
 والأظهر، والخلق الرفيع الأكرم  
 وانجاب ثمة كل سرّ فبهم  
 وارث يهرق جسمه بالمأثم  
 مقلباً سرّاً، صبيغاً بالدم  
 سرّاً، وخبأ صارماً في المسم

- ٣ -  
 المحبوبة

حناء تُفر عن محباً شاحب  
 رقت صباها وهي في ريعانه  
 ومضت تقطع صمتها ووجومها  
 لم تدّر ما دس الغرام وطهره

ما زال يغلب كل طرف غالب  
 بنواظر عبري وقلب ناصب  
 بتسمات كالصباح الكاذب  
 وأرى السفينة أمرها للراكب

- ٤ -  
 لقاء بين الشعراء

في الريف، بين نخيله المتعاقب  
 عتبة يجاذبه النسيم ظلاله  
 وأزاهره غناء رفّ نديراً  
 وميمان تشاكيا هرّ الهوى

وعلى جوانب كل نهر ذائق  
 وندي يصفق بالأريج العابق  
 فرحاً بأهنية الفراش العاشق  
 حيناً، فبرّد خافق من خافق

هَذَا يُرَى سَبَقًا وَهَذَا طَاهِرًا  
لَسَمْتَهُ مَسْقِيًا يَنْجِي فَاجِرًا  
جَسَدُهُ تَوَلَّى مَسْقِيًا مَائِرًا  
بَيْنَ الْفَضِيلَةِ وَالرِّزْيَةِ هَائِرًا

الشاعر الغرَّيدُ لاقى الشاعرًا  
لو كنتَ ثَمَّةً سَامًا نَبْوَاهُمَا  
ورأيتَ رَوْحًا يَنْبِرِي لِنَفْسَالِهِ  
وبقيتَ مضطرب الخواطر والرهوى،

- ٥ -  
حديث

شاعر الروح :

ورعتك آلهة الهوى من شاعر  
عني ، فأظلمت الحياة بناظري  
وتجلت الدنيا بثوب ساهر  
من نعمة سكرى ، وشعر ناضر

هَيْتَكَ أَنْفَاسُ الرَّبِيعِ الْبَاكِرِ  
مَرَّتْ لِيَالٍ كُنْتَ فِيهَا نَائِبًا  
وَالْيَوْمَ عُدْتُ فَعَادَ لِي صَفْوُ الْمَنِي  
فَلَسْتَلُونَ عَلَيَّ مَا هَيَّأَتْهُ

شاعر الشهوة :

وهوى لذائذه مُزَجَّنَ بِمَا تُحْمُ  
وعلى حقير الدود غير محرم أحم  
ولأعبانٍ بكل آيٍ محكم مرم  
ولأصغينٍ لما يقول به دمي لهم  
ولأصغينٍ لما يقول به دمي

ألهوى مفاتن جسمك المتسلم  
جسد عليٍّ أراه بات محرمًا  
لأطوحنٍ بكل عرفٍ سائدٍ  
ولأهتكين على الفضيلة سترها

.....

عذراء تقطر بالتصابي والجوى  
فلقد سقته مائتي حتى ارتوى  
مما تُفِيضُ عَلَيْكَ أَيَّامُ النوى  
بين التخييل وعند ذلك الملتوى (1)

لا تسمننَّ وهاتِ انتقام الهوى  
لم يلق شعري منك قلبًا راضيًا  
فلستفتننَّ بكل نغمٍ ساهرٍ  
أو ما تُفِيضُ عَلَيْكَ سَاعَاتُ اللَّقَا

(1) These are the first five parts of a long poem of about one thousand verses written in 1944. These parts are about half of what has been salvaged of the lost poem.

## (1) اللعنات

- ١ -  
إلى النار

لا ترجفي يا بنان القاري الآنا  
لا ترجفي وانثري سفراً صحائفه  
أنضى إلى عالم ناء .. إلى ظلم  
هاك الخيال المدمى بعضها قصصاً  
عذراء ما وطئت رجل مدارجها  
وإد من النار داج ، لا ألم به  
ولا تخطى بـ (دنتي) بابه بصير  
وادي هزاني وظلومين تملؤه  
ضجوا لدى الله بالشكوى فرق لها  
وانثال - كالغيث - لو أن الغيوم لظى -  
« ويل الطغاة السارى من عقاب غدٍ  
فترزم الحشر والنكباء تنشره  
رباه : لو أن في طول انظار غدٍ  
ما كان هتماً علينا أن يعذبنا  
النار أشزى فزات النار تصهرنا  
ان كان لا يدخل الجنات داخلها  
وكان أمرك أن نرضى بما صنعوا

لا انشق باب ولا صافحت إنسانا  
درب إلى النار لولا هنّ ما كانا  
كانت حياة على الدنيا وأزمانا  
والواقع المر أنباء وألمانا  
كالبحر قاعاً وغيب الله شيطانا  
(2) (شيخ المعرة) يستجديه (غفرانا)  
خاض الجحيم دماً يغني ونيرانا  
أطيب أحيائنا الخصبى وموتانا  
قلبا وهزّ النجوم الزهر غضبانا  
صوت سرى زغرعا وانشق بركانا  
ان زلزل الكوكب المنكود ايدانا «  
(3) حيناً ، وتطويه كف الله احيانا  
جدوى لما أسمعك الريح شكوانا (4)  
طاغ وأن يشهد الرحمن بلوانا  
يوم الحساب وسعنا بدنينا  
إلا شقيا على الاولى وغرثانا  
فاحفظ عبيدك ... فالشيطان مولانا

(1) Probably written in 1951, this long poem of about 250 verses has never been completed. Only one-third of it is given here.

(2) The word يستجديه is written over يستوحيه .

(3) The expression كف الله replaces مثل الظل which is crossed out.

(4) The second hemistich replaces the following which is crossed out: ما زال وسنان لم نسمعك شكوانا

## ضكّة الشيطان

في غفلة من شراب ساهم النار  
قبراً تمطى على جثمان جبار  
كأنما انفضّ عنها جوف اعصار  
فانفض بالرخد منها كل منرار  
من نومه القاني المختوم بالعار  
ساقاه عدواً وراء الكوكب الساري  
تحبيه من تحت أقدامي يد الباري  
عباً ، وتنفخ في صدري : الى النار  
في أذن هوائك الحمقاء أسراري  
أشهى من الدم في كين جزار  
ولا أمت ولا أشرعت أظفاري  
طاغٍ شرايينه الحمراء أوتاري !  
أر يهس الغد للماضي بأخباري  
جواد (عزيريل) من دارٍ الى دار  
من ضفة (الكنج) ملفونا بأطمار  
والناس ما بين اخبار وشرار  
وارتج - بالآه تترى - صدره النهاري  
ايام (قابيل) سكرى بالدم الجاري  
..... ذراعاً جاثع عاري (1)  
كيف اشقى - باع اغلاها بدينار  
في مدح سكران او تمجيد ضمّار (2)

إبليس أصفى الى الشكوى وعصيته  
والليل داج تكاد العين تحسبه  
يا هولها في سكون الليل قرقبة  
دوى الهدى في الكهوف الجوف يلقها  
وهباً في منح الآثام طائفة  
وبات يضحك حتى جنّ وانطلقت  
ابليس : "يا آدم المجدول من حمأ  
لا يبرح المقد بي ، أفنى تعبّ رمي  
أطلقها أمس يوم (التين) ناقثة  
واليوم ، يا قبحه يوماً بطرّ بنف  
واليوم لا فحّت الأفهى ولا لدغت  
ان كنت لا أترك الدنيا يبعث بها  
لو يرفع الغيب عن عينيك راحتته  
او كنت تستوقف الموت وقد ركبوا  
وتأل الهيئت المحمول هيكله  
عن أمه الراعب الخاوي وهاضره  
لا جهت أكفانه الصفراء عن فمه  
وقال "اما عن الدنيا فما برحت  
... .. ادمع التللى ... ..  
والعالم الى ظلم الذرات - يدفعها  
واستنزف الشاعر اللاهي قصائده

(1) The verse is crossed out. Most of its words are illegible.  
(2) The word قصائده replaces ملاحنه which is crossed out.

واهتت ابليس أذراً مجنونة  
رقش الثعابين في افواهرها لجم  
قصف البراكين أهنى من هوا فرها  
قد أنزلت قلب سفاوح وطاقية  
من وقهرن النظمى ملء المدى شره  
وقال ابليس ، والظلماء راعية  
«الأرض لي ... ما عليها ينازعني  
اورثتها من يشاء الشر من خرمي  
كم اوقد الراهب القنديل من لهبي  
ألقى على الله من ثأني تاجر جبع  
قال اسجدوا خشعاً هي اذا سجدوا  
«يا سيد النار» ناري مارد ...  
يا سيد المهرة الحمراء من (سقر)  
حتى اذا انصبت الأزمان في أهد  
لي فنجبر طاملاً اهمرت مضاربه  
اهويت يوماً من الايام ، أصقاه  
فما يزال النجيب الرطب مندوقاً  
حتى اذا ابيض نصل وانبرى هجر  
انثى من الطين لا حواء تشبهها  
والحسن قبح اذا اقتادت أعنته  
انثى وبغداد مأواها وفاتنة

بالنار همراء والكبريت ملتصبا  
والريح في منخريرها تنفخ القهبا  
وتعا اذا اطلقتها تضرب السبا  
فاد تمس الحجار الجماء ارتعبا  
ينفخن برقاً على الآفاق أو شربا  
من تحتها امعنث نحو الثرى هربا  
... الخلايا ... للخفي نصبا (1)  
باتوا ساكوكا وباتوا في يدي لعبا  
واستزل الشيخ صفا أهنس الخلبا  
يخفي به عن عيون الناس ما نربا  
عاف المهمل وأسى جميع الذهبا  
عيناه ... .. (2)  
لازلت رب الخلايا والخفي حقبنا  
ظلمان ، أصبحت ظلاً فيه ملتصبا  
حتى صدرن همراءً وانحنى تعبنا  
بالربع من (أطلس) العالي ولا عجبنا (3)  
في كل ركن من الدنيا ومنكبنا  
ابصرت ظلاً على مرآته اضطر بنا  
حنا ولا العالم الأعلى بما رحبنا  
كفناك فانقاد حتى عانق العطبنا (4)  
بين الكارى ، ونار جاورت حطبنا

(1) The verse is crossed out. Some of its words are illegible.  
(2) The rest of the verse is illegible.  
(3) The poet has a note on *أطلس* reading: جبل أطلس في شمال أفريقيا الشمالية.  
(4) The verse is crossed out.

مثل اسم لبياء لفظاً يبعث الطرباً  
عمرًا ، وتوقفان الكوكب الشحبا  
كفّاي جذلان في آن ومكسبا  
الصخر والتخجر القتال والرهبا  
يذكيه سوتي ويظفيه اسرى خسبا  
عين الصباح ومزقت الضحى غضبا  
فارتاع (نوح) يُعدُّ النار والخسبا

لبياء ما تحمت في الليل ساهرة  
نمازاتها تطيدان ابتسامتها  
طيف تراءى على نصل قلبه  
أرغيت من نشوة كفي وما حملت  
ثم امتطيت الخيوم الرانجات؛ لظي  
حتى سمعت بأظفاري على هنتق  
وانوار في دجلة الرغناء شاطرها

يا لذة في سرير المومن الدامي  
يا حية وجرها المسموم أحلامي  
اشباح ابنائي الصرعى وأيامي  
خيل الخطايا إلى ساحات آثامي  
أوقرثها بالبغايا والدم الظلامي  
منواله الرخو ثوب النار والذام

لبياء يا شهرة في صدري اهدمت  
يا ومضة الخنجر المأجور، في خلدي،  
يا نصف عذراء يا قبرا أوسده  
يا ملعب الدود، يا سوطاً أسوق به  
يا رقية الشر - ان شحنت مركبة  
يا مغزلاً في يد الفوضى نجبت على

قصيدة ناقصة (1)

« كان اليباب في الكويت ، وكانت ظروفه آنذاك صعبة جداً . وفي قمتي  
للعراقيين ولدت هذه القصيدة ذات أسية كئيبة من أميات الكويت اللاهبة  
ولم تكتمل ، إذ حدث أنه انصرف الشاعر وبقيت القصيدة الناقصة لدى رفيقه . »

هو البحر .. لا زال يسخر في كل حين  
بهذا الشراع الضعيف ينوء به صدر هذا السنين  
ويسخر من كل ما يرهق البحريين  
هو البحر ..

لا زال بيني وبين العراق  
وبيني وبين السنين  
هو البحر .. سراً من الماء قام  
بوجهي .. بوجه الحنين .  
لو أنني موسى .. رفعت لديه عصاي  
وصحت به .. كن رحيم على الظالمين  
اعدني الى ربوات الحنين  
اعدني لأهلي .. طغني صباي  
لو أنني موسى .. رفعت بوجه الخضم الديدن  
صرخت به : انشق لي لجنين  
لأرجع عبر صغاري .. وداري لأجمل ما تقع  
العين

يوماً عليه  
لأرجع عبر ال

(1) An unfinished poem in free verse written in Kuwait in 1953. It has obvious weaknesses in rhythm and rhyme.

بيروت في ٥/٥/٦٢

سيدي اللواء الركن مزهر الشاوي المحترم  
أرجو أن تكون والموائى كلها ، والجمهورية العراقية ، بكل خير .  
بأنس أنا ، يا سيدي ، سقني غايه الشقاء . كل الأطباء الكبار  
الذين اجعتمهم في بيروت اضبروني بأنني مهدد بالشلل الكلي ، بعد بضعة  
أشهر ، إذا لم أبادر إلى معالجة نفسي منذ الآن .  
قد يطول علاجي مدة ثلاثة أشهر عليّ أن أقضيها في بيروت .  
ويكافني العلاج - دون نفقات الإقامة والطعام - ودون أجهزة الممرضة  
التي يجب أن تسهر عليّ ١٥ يوماً بكاملها - ٥٠٠ ليرة لبنانية ،  
وهو ما يعادل ٣٠٠ دينار عماني . استطعت أن أدبرهتي الآن  
ألف ليرة دفعتها كأجرة مقدمة ، وعليّ أن أدفع الباقي بعد شفائي  
بأذن الله .

أنا محتاج للمساعدة يا سيدي ، وأستحق هذه المساعدة .  
عرضت عليّ عدة جهات غير عراقية المساعدة على أسس أدبية وشعرية  
فرفضتها لأنني واثق من أن بلدي قادر على مساعدتي وراغب فيها .  
فهو - ينجيب أملي ، أم أنتي - أجد منك ، كمدير عام للموائى  
العراقية ، العون الذي أرجوه . مع تقبيل يديك الكريمتين .

ولك المحلص

السياب

( اقلب رجاءً )

في الوسخ تحويل المساعدة اليّ عن طريق السفارة العراقية ببيروت أو  
على عنواني :-

بيروت - المنارة

او تيل - ان بول

بدر شاكر السياب

(1) ليلى

قرب بحسينك مني دون إغضاء  
أبهرتنا؟ كادت الدنيا تفجر في  
أبهرت ليلى فلبنان الشوخ على  
إني سألتها في بوؤبؤك لمن  
ليلى! هوائي الذي راح الزمان به  
حنانها كحنان الأم دثري  
أختي التي عرضها عرضي وعفتها  
عرفتها فعرفت الله عن كتب

وخاني أتملى طيف أهوائي  
عينيك دنيا شمس ذات آلاء  
عينيك يضحك أزهاراً للأضواء  
يقبل القمر الفضي في الماء  
وكاد يفلت من كفي بالداء  
فأذهب الداء عن قلمي وأعضائي  
تاج أتيه به بين الأهداء  
كأن في مقلتيها درب إسرائي

ليلى هوائي مناي شعري  
روهي الأعز علي من روحي وآمالي ومجري  
حملت ضفيريها هوائي كأنها أمواج نهر  
حملته نحو مدى السماء  
نحو المجرة والنجوم ونحو جيكور الجحيلة  
فأنا فتى أتصيد الأحلام بالك من فراشات خضيلة  
أتصيد الأشعار فيها والقوافي والغناء  
أو تذكرين لقاءنا في غرفة للداء فيها  
ظل كظل الليل يخفق ساكنها  
لكننا بالشعر حولناه زرعاً من ضياء  
بالحب أزهر واللقاء  
ما كان أهلي هبنا العربي حب كثير وجنون قيس

(1) This poem was written in Kuwait in 1964. Al-Sayyāb begins it by addressing a friend returning to Kuwait from Beirut with greetings from Laylā to the poet, who was then a patient at the Amīri Hospital.

التبغ صحرائي أهيم على رثارها الحزينة

وهناك نبي فيمتين من التأسى

«ليلى ناد دعا ليلى فحف له

ك النداء اسمها سراً وحببه

هل المنادون أهلوها وإخوتها

إن يشكوني في ليلى فلا رجعت

جبال نجد لهم صوتاً ولا البعد

ليلى تعالي تقطع الصحراء في قمرء حلوة

متماكين يداً إلى يد من تحب

وترن في الأبعاد غنوة

للرمل همس تحت أرجلنا برأ ، للرمل قلب

يرهتز منها أو ينام وللخيل برأ أنين

وتهر عن بعد كلاب يا لغيم من نباح

هيهات يعشقه سوى غبش الصياح

أنا وأنت نير حتى تتعبين

« ماء أريد أليس في الصحراء غير صدى وطني ؟ »

وتكركر الصحراء عن ماء وراء فم الصخور

فأظل بالكفين أسقيك المياه فترتوين

أسقى صدك فترتوين

أو تذكرين لقاءنا في كل فجر

وقراقنا في كل أمية إذا ما زاب قرص الشمس في البحر العتي

تأتين لي وعبير زنبقة يشق لك الطريق ناي عطر !

وتودعين قمرهبط الظلماء في قلبي ويظفي نوره القمر الوضي

فكأن روحي ودعتني واستقلت عبر بحر

وأظل طول الليل أحلم بالزنايق والعبير

وحفيف ثوبك ، والهدير

يعلو فيغرق ألف زنبقة وثوب من هدير !

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(c) Poetic translations:

20. <sup>c</sup>Uyūn Ilzā (Les yeux d'Elsa) of Louis Aragon, Usrat al-Fann al-Mu<sup>c</sup>āṣir, Baghdad, 1951.

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TABLE 5: 1

Equipment provided for each ordinand by his sponsor

<u>Article</u>	<u>Price</u> (in baht)	<u>Explanation</u>
One set of robes (3 garments)	150	In the early days of Buddhism <u>bhikkhus</u> made their own robes from cast-off rags and scraps of cloth. The ready-made robes of today are fashioned from 108 patches as a reminder of this practice (Yalman 1964, p.157) Robes which are of too brown or too yellow a dye are considered 'impolite'.
1 Begging-bowl	30	This is made from iron and fitted with a brass lid.
1 Umbrella	13	made of waxed paper and wood. Used to shelter the <u>bhikkhu</u> from both rain and sun.
1 Sleeping Mat	38	Made from cocconut-matting
1 Pillow	25	With a pale yellow cover
Mosquito net	35	To be suspended from the ceiling above the sleeping-mat
1 <u>Pinto</u>	26	An enamel container with several tiers to receive different curries and relishes offered by the householder in the morning.
Spittoon	3.25	A round enamel bowl, also used for cigarette-ash, tea-leaves, the stones and peel of fruit eaten, discarded betel-leaves, etc.
Razor	55	Of German make. Used to shave the face each day, and the head and eyebrows once every month
Spoon and fork	7	Made from aluminium
Plate	5	Enamel dinner plate
<u>Khan</u> (ladling bowl)	3	Made of aluminium with an embossed design. Used in bathing to ladle water over oneself from a large stone storage jar.
Sandals	12	Made from rubber with a thong between the first and second toes. Easily removed when entering a home, or a religious building.

Fan	12	Made from hardboard and covered with a cheap silky material. The number of the Buddhist Era (2510) and its Chinese emblem (the Goat) were embroidered upon it. Used when a <u>bhikkhu</u> pronounces the <u>Three Refuge</u> formula, and when he gives the <u>Five Precepts</u> (Rajadhon 1961 p.87)
Monk's bag	15	Made from brightly coloured silk and similarly embroidered (see above). Used for shopping, and to carry money, books, cigarettes etc. when the monk leaves the <u>wat</u> .
Water filter	2	A toy model made from tin, to remind the <u>bhikkhu</u> of the prohibition against taking life. I saw a full-scale water filter in regular use at only one monastery, namely <u>Wat Senasanaram</u> , the only <u>Thammayutika</u> foundation in Ayutthaya.
Tin cannister for water.	2	Also a toy model of a utensil used by <u>bhikkhus</u> to clean themselves, "before the invention of lavatory paper".
Towel	10	Of a plain orange colour
Quilt	28	Also as close as possible to saffron in hue, and unpatterned.
Flannel face-cloth.	28	Orange in colour
Kettle	12	For making tea. Made from aluminium.
Cup & Saucer	5	Chinese-style i.e. a small handleless cup with a matching saucer.
Bathing robe	10	A plain skirt-like garment. Similar to the lower garment ( <u>sabong</u> ) of the monk's robe.
Robes for wear during the ordination ceremony -		White in colour. Worn by the ordinand during the ritual before he dons the yellow robe.
upper robe:	18	
lower robe:	15	

Total 420 baht.

do her humbler relations a favour, by helping to sponsor the ordination of one of their sons, which was also a highly meritorious action in itself.

Twenty-three year old Chaloen, who was also employed in the Post Office in Bangkok, was his father's particular responsibility, whilst I volunteered to sponsor Kuson who was two years younger than myself, with a view to repaying Khun Siri in some measure, for the assistance he had given.

The main duty of the sponsor, besides giving his signature to the nak's application form is to provide the ordinand with the equipment he needs for life in the wat. In theory the Buddhist bhikkhu requires only a set of robes, an alms-bowl, a razor, one needle and some thread, a filter for straining living organisms from the water he uses, and a girdle to secure his lower robe; these articles are known as the Eight Requisites of a monk. Nevertheless the 28 items listed in Table 5:1 were considered by Khun Siri Imchai to be the minimal requirements, and were provided for each boy by his sponsor.<sup>29</sup> In Hua Ro market place, as in any Thai town, there are shops which specialize in the provision of robes, bowls, fans and other monkish paraphernalia. The crockery, cutlery and other utensils presented to the candidates for ordination were of ordinary cheap brands which are in common use. Their umbrellas were however, of the old-fashioned Thai type, made from waxed paper and with wooden ribs. Most bhikkhus prefer western-style umbrellas made from nylon and aluminium as they are both lighter and more durable, though somewhat more expensive, being imported from Japan. But

Khun Siri prided himself on his strictness in these matters, and considered that an umbrella of the traditional Thai type was not only cheaper, but also more appropriate to a monk. According to the same principles the towels, flannels and quilts presented were of a plain orange or yellow colour, without the garish multi-coloured designs favoured by most laymen.

Several weeks prior to the ngan upasombot Khun Siri began to contact bhikkhus whom he knew and respected with a view to inviting them to perform the necessary ritual. However, as the Lenten Season was fast approaching many monks whose services he requested were already engaged to perform ordination ceremonies elsewhere on that day. The abbots of both Wat Suwandararam and of Wat Phanan Choeng were not free to attend for this reason. The names of the bhikkhus who eventually came to officiate at the ceremony are set down in the accompanying table (Table 5:2) together with some details as to the nature of their relationship with the chao phap.

It can be seen from a brief examination of this table that several of these bhikkhus were invited to attend because they had specific links with Khun Siri. One of them, the abbot of Wat Yanasen, is a relative who has become a monk, whilst others are bhikkhus with whom Khun Siri became friendly, either during his own period of service in the Sangha or since his return to lay life. Some of the monks on this guest list were invited on the basis of a more generalized sense of obligation the host felt towards them; the bhikkhus of Wat Nang Plum for instance were in essence included because Khun Siri did not wish to slight them by holding the ceremony elsewhere.

TABLE 5: 2

The caste for the performance of the ordination ceremony which took place at Wat Nang Plum, Ayutthaya, on July 2nd, 1967

1. The upacha

The bhikkhu who acted as upacha was the abbot of Wat Arun, Bangkok, and second in seniority to the Supreme Patriarch, in the national ecclesiastical hierarchy. He was a native of Paknampran, Khun Siri's natal village in the south, and had been ordained at Wat Paknampran some twenty years earlier than Khun Siri himself. Although the two men had never met, the fact that they had been born in the same village and had been resident in the same wat was felt by Khun Siri to have created some kind of a bond between himself and the bhikkhu. Consequently, in the middle of June he travelled to Bangkok to invite (nimon) the abbot to act as upacha on the appointed day. He had previously put forward an informal request to the bhikkhu when the latter attended the ordination of a pupil at Wat Prasat on May 7th.

2. The khu suat (2 monks)

a. The Chao Khana Amphoe (Ecclesiastical District Head) who was the abbot of Wat Boromwong Ayutthaya, acted as khu suat (tutor, witness) during the ceremony. He had met Khun Siri, whilst the latter was still a monk, when they had both been invited to take part in a ceremony held in Ayutthaya which had been sponsored by a common friend. The two men had in fact been ordained in the same year, the one in Paknampran and the other in Ayutthaya, and each considered

that this might indicate that they had been close friends in some previous existence. The Chao Khana Amphoe teased his lay friend by saying that the yellow robe had become too hot for him (pha ron) and he had had to return to lay life, at the same time praising Khun Siri's industry and his experience in religious affairs. When this bhikkhu had been the abbot of Wat Monthop, before receiving promotion to the position of Chao Khana Amphoe, Khun Siri had in his spare time collected rent from the tenants of land which belonged to that monastery.

b. The abbot of Wat Salapun, who was in addition the Deputy Ecclesiastical Provincial Head (Rong Chao Khana Changwat) also performed the role of khu suat at the ordination of the Imchaisons. This monk had become very friendly with Khun Siri when he had been the abbot of Wat Nang Plum. When he was appointed as Rong Chao Khana Changwat he transferred to Wat Salapun to which this office was attached. Khun Siri remarked that the abbot had on several occasions lent him money to help him out of financial difficulties, usually arising from the costs of educating his numerous offspring.

### 3. The phra andap

Khun Siri invited twenty two monks as phra andap who act as a kind of chorus during the ceremony.

Phra andap 1 - 5 came from Wat Nang Plum. Khun Siri invited the abbot whom he knew personally and requested that he should bring four other members of the community.

" " 6 - 7 came from Wat Arun, Bangkok. The abbot was asked to bring two bhikkhus with him, which is to say that their invitation was of the kho song variety.

- Phra andap 8 - 9 came from Wat Monthop. One of these monks was the acting abbot of that monastery (i.e. the phuraksakanthaen chao awat); both were pupils of the Chao Khana Amphoe, and also friends of Khun Siri. Accordingly they received specific invitations (nimon cho chong) from the host.
- " " 10 - 12 came from Wat Salapun. The abbot who was acting as khu suat was invited to delegate two other bhikkhus to attend.
- " " 13 came from Wat Yanasen. This monk was related to Khun Siri's wife, Khun Pa, and was invited on this basis.
- " " 14 lived at Wat Chonlaprathan, Bangkok but toured round the provinces teaching morals (sinlatham) to pupils in State schools. He had first become acquainted with Khun Siri when the latter began to work in the Division of Education in the Town Hall, Ayutthaya. The monk sometimes stayed with the Imchai family when he was teaching in the area.
- " " 15 - 17 were the abbot of Wat Prasat, a friend of Khun Siri's and two junior members of the community invited (kho song) by the host.
- " " 18 - 19 came from Wat Tuk. Khun Siri asked the abbot whom he knew slightly to officiate at the ngan and to bring one other monk.

- Phra andap 20 - 21 were the abbot of Wat Wongkhong and a more junior member of his community. This abbot was invited largely because he had given me a great deal of help with my research. He was perhaps motivated in part by the fact that I knew the family whose ancestor had restored Wat Wongkhong in the 1850's. He stated quite openly that he hoped this charitable gesture would be repeated.
- " " 28 was a monk from Wat Samwihan whom Khun Siri had invited (kho song) to make up the numbers.

Note: For detailed explanation of terms kho song and nimon chochong see above Chapter Two.

As this material shows, some of the monks, unknown or only slightly known to Khun Siri were invited to make up the number.<sup>30</sup> In several cases they accompanied a fellow member of the monastic community who had a specific personal tie with the chao phap, whilst in other instances monks were invited because they were resident in a wat which was situated in the vicinity of the Imchai home.

The upacha, the most illustrious member of this chapter of monks fits into none of these categories as his presence was requested primarily for reasons of prestige, even though Khun Siri might explain the monk's being invited with reference to the bond which he felt to exist between them because of their common birthplace. It is unlikely, however, that the abbot of Wat Arun would have even heard of the ordination of Khun Siri's sons had he not been invited, let alone have felt slighted on this score. On the other hand the monks of Ayutthaya who were close friends of the chao phap would almost certainly have felt offended had they not been invited to officiate at the ngan.

At the close of the ceremony offerings of money and material goods were given to the bhikkhus who had taken part, the costs of these presentations being shared equally between the three sponsors. It can be seen that each sponsor spent approximately 720 baht, taking into account the money spent on equipping the new bhikkhus. (See Tables 5:1 and 5:3).

The material given in Table 5:4 shows that, in all, 266 laymen and women contributed a total of 12,040 baht at the time of the ordination ceremony, a sum which more than covered its costs. Several weeks before the ceremony was due

to take place Khun Siri had sent out over forty invitation cards to his relatives and friends. Each of the twenty-three people on the list of contributors, to whose ngan tham bun Khun Siri had at some time contributed, received an invitation to attend. The remaining 28 cards were sent to other kinsmen and acquaintances with whom he also had close personal ties. Khun Siri felt that they should receive some notification of the ceremony as they would wish to pay their respects to him, a process which in this instance involves contributing an appropriate sum of money. All except two of the people invited did indeed respond in a positive manner. The majority of these individuals came in person to the wat, whilst those who were for some reason unable to attend sent their contributions through a third party or by post. The two laymen invited who made no contribution, both relatives of Khun Pa, lived at some distance away, and consequently the links between themselves and the Imchai household had become rather attenuated.<sup>31</sup>

The list of subscribers shows quite clearly that the majority of laymen who made contributions had not in fact been invited. For several of them the ordination ceremony provided an opportunity to repay Khun Siri for the assistance he had given them in their business activities; many of the Chinese shopkeepers in Hua Ro, for example, contributed to the costs of the ngan upasombot as a way of showing their gratitude for the help the host had given them in their dealings with the Thai bureaucracy.

Unbidden, though not entirely unexpected contributions came from some of Khun Siri's social superiors whom he had not

presumed to invite. The Manageress of the Thai City Bank who contributed 500 baht was of this number.

Finally, groups of the ordinands' friends and workmates who had similarly received no invitation, clubbed together to make a contribution to the cost of the ceremony marking the boys' entry into the Sangha.

It can be seen from this description of the personnel - both monk and lay - who were involved in the ordination ceremony sponsored by Khun Siri Imchai that ngan tham bun or merit-making ceremonies provide people with an opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen the social ties which exist between them. An individual makes merit by fulfilling his social obligations which is to say that the actions which an anthropologist sees as tending to maintain social solidarity are regarded as meritorious.

In inviting bhikkhus to perform the ritual of upasombot Khun Siri made merit by enacting an essential aspect of the householder's role as supporter of the Sangha; in inviting some bhikkhus who were at the same time relatives or personal friends he fulfilled his two-fold obligation to them. The lay guests on the other hand, expressed their continuing attachment to Khun Siri by contributing to the merit-making ceremony of which he was the host. The sponsors and their respective nak also fulfilled their mutual obligations to one another; the former by financing the ordination, the latter by becoming ordained and thus acquiring merit both for themselves and for the sponsor. Finally, all those who participated in this ceremony in any way were at the same time expressing their commitment to the cardinal values of the Thai social order which are rooted in the practice of Theravada Buddhism.

TABLE 5:3

Offerings presented to the  
bhikkhus at the close of the  
ordination ceremony.

<u>The Monk</u>	<u>The Offering</u>	<u>The Cost (in baht)</u>
The <u>upacha</u> received:	A lotus bud, 2 candles and three incense sticks; cigarettes, china tea, and other groceries; a vacuum flask; a chit for 100 baht to be presented to the <u>waiyawachakon</u>	150
The <u>khu suat</u> each received:	ritual items and groceries identical with the above; a chit for the sum of 50 baht to be presented to the <u>waiyawachakon</u> .	(for each <sup>100</sup> offering)
The <u>phra andap</u> each received:	ritual items and groceries identical to those given to the <u>upacha</u> and <u>khu suat</u> ; a chit for 10 baht to be presented to the <u>waiyawachakon</u>	25 (for each offering)
<p>Total cost of presentations was 900 baht; the expenses were divided equally between the three sponsors.</p>		

TABLE 5: 4. Details of the contributions made by lay guests at the ordination of Khun Siri Imchai's three sons at Wat Nang Plum, Ayutthaya on July 2nd, 1967.

This list is the translation of the one which was made out for me by Khun Siri Imchai himself. I have not however written out the names in full for reasons of space, although I have indicated which of the subscribers were female, and which of them came from the Chinese community of Hua Ro. It will be noted that Khun Siri made two errors in his use of arabic numerals; numbers 39 and 66 are omitted, so that there are in fact only 72 contributors listed here. Khun Siri was accustomed to using Thai numerals, and chose this unfamiliar arabic system in making out the list, largely in deference to me.

I have also emulated Khun Siri Imchai in giving fewer details about the people who gave less money; he said that he would keep a fuller record of these donations for his own use, but when I left the field had not yet done so. He said that most of these individuals were local people, relatives, friends and colleagues with whom he was in regular interaction. He had sent invitations to only eight out of this number, as he felt that it was by and large unnecessary to waste money in this way upon people with whom he was so intimately involved. In addition, some of these smaller contributions came from friends and workmates of the three boys who were being ordained. Furthermore, several friends in the Sangha who had been unable to attend the ngan owing to prior engagements gave small donations; the Abbot of Wat Suwan for example gave 20 baht; the Deputy Abbot of Wat Phanan Choeng contributed 30 baht towards the costs of this ceremony.

\*Indicates those laymen who received invitations.  
Khun Siri's choice in this matter seemed to me to be rather arbitrary and haphazard.

Details of the contributions made by lay guests at the ordination of Khun Siri Imchai's three sons at Wat Nang Plum, Ayutthaya, on July 2nd, 1967.

<u>Contributor</u> (by number)	<u>Size of Contribution</u> (in baht)	<u>Place of Residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Relationship to Khun Siri</u>	<u>Nature of previous assistance given by Khun Siri to contributor.</u>
No.1 (female)	1,500	England	Research Student	Friendship & respect	-
2*	300	Samutprakan (Central Thailand)	Civil Servant (Ex-Governor of Ayutthaya)	Wife's relative	At merit-making ceremonies
3* (female)	500	Ayutthaya	Bank Manager	Mutual Respect	In business <sup>1</sup>
4*	200	Chiengmai	Civil Servant (Governor of Chiengmai)	Wife's Relative	At ordination ceremony
5*	300	Ayutthaya	Accountant at tobacco factory	Nephew	At marriage ceremony
6	680	Bangkok	Friends of two elder sons		-
7	300	Ayutthaya	Businessman	<u>Dek wat at Wat Nang Plum</u>	Helped to rear as a child
8*	200	Paknampran (S.Region)	Businessman	Relative	Taught him as a child
9* (female)	200	Paknampran	Businessman	Sister-in-law	Helped at ordination
10*	200	Bangkok	Author & Journalist	Became friends as monks	Canvassed for him during election to House of Representatives (1957) <sup>2</sup>

<u>Contributor</u> (by number)	<u>Size of contribution</u> (in baht)	<u>Place of Residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Relationship to Khun Siri</u>	<u>Nature of previous assistance given by Khun Siri to contributor.</u>
11* (Chinese woman)	200	Hua Ro, Ayutthaya	Property owner	Relative	Helped at marriage
12 (Chinese)	100	Hua Ro	Hotel keeper	Mutual Respect	Helped in business
13*	100	Ayutthaya	Restaur- ateur	Mutual Respect	Helped in business
14*	100	Ayutthaya	Civil Servant (Education Section)	Mutual Respect	Helped at work
15* (Chinese)	100	Hua Ro	Bread & cake shop	Mutual Respect	Helped in shop
16* (Chinese)	100	Hua Ro	Shop-keeper	Mutual Respect	Helped in business
17 (Chinese)	100	Hua Ro	Radio shop	Mutual Respect	Helped in business
18 (Chinese)	100	Hua Ro	Business- man	Mutual Respect	Helped in business
19* (female)	100	Bangkok	House-keeper	She reared one of ordinands as a child	-
20 (female)	100	Hua Ro	Shop-keeper	Relative	-
21	100	Bangkok	Shop-keeper	Relative	-
22 (female sponsor)	720	Bangkok	House-keeper	Relation	-
23 (female)	100	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Relative & live in same house	-
24	100	Ayutthaya	School-teacher	Taught 2 of sons	-

<u>Contributor</u> (by number)	<u>Size of contribution</u> (in baht)	<u>Place of Residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Relationship to Khun Siri</u>	<u>Nature of previous assistance given by Khun Siri to contributor</u>
25	100	Ayutthaya	School-teacher	Taught youngest son	-
26*	100	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped with <u>ngan tham bun</u>
27* (female Chinese)	50	Bangkok	Shop-keeper	Relative	Helped at <b>cremation ceremony.</b>
28*	150	Ayutthaya	Civil Servant (Education Section)	Workmates	Helped with work
29	50	Nonburi (Central Region)	Civil Servant (retired)	Wife's relative	-
30	50	Ayutthaya	Secondary school teacher	Taught sons	-
31 (Chinese woman)	50	Hua Ro, Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Relative	Helped in business
32	50	Bangkok	Civil Servant (G.P.O.)	Friend of son	-
33*	50	Ayutthaya	Civil Servant	Respect	Helped in merit-making
34* (Chinese)	50	Hua Ro, Ayutthaya	Owns shop & hotel	Respect	Helped in business
35* (Chinese)	50	Hua Ro, Ayutthaya	Printer	Relative	Helped with ceremonies
36* (Chinese)	80	Hua Ro	Dentist	Relative	Helped in business
37 (female)	50	Bangkok	Civil Servant	Niece	-

<u>Contributor</u> (by number)	<u>Size of contribution</u> (in baht)	<u>Place of Residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Relationship to Khun Siri</u>	<u>Nature of previous assistance given by Khun Siri to contributor.</u>
38*	50	Ayutthaya	Civil servant	Workmate	-
40*	50	Ayutthaya	Civil servant (Educ. Section)	Workmate	Helped in merit-making
41*	50	Banpong (Central Region)	Shop-keeper	Went to school together	-
42	60	Bangkok	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	-
43	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped in business.
44	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	-
45	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	-
46*	40	Bangkok	Civil servant	Born in Paknan-pram	Helped with ordination
47*	40	Bangkok	Civil servant	Mutual respect	Helped at <u>ngan tham bun</u>
48	40	Bangkok	Civil servant	Helped Khun Siri's sons	-
49	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Relative	Helped in business
50*	40	Bangkok	Civil servant	Wife's relative	-
51 (Chinese)	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Friend of son	-
52*	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Fellow member of <u>kammakan Wat Nang Plum</u>	-

<u>Contributor</u> (by number)	<u>Size of contribution</u> (in baht)	<u>Place of Residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Relationship to Khun Siri</u>	<u>Nature of previous assistance given by Khun Siri to contributor</u>
53*	40	Hua Ro, Ayutthaya	Photographer's shop	Mutual respect	Helped at marriage
54* (female)	40	Bangkok	Shop-keeper	She was <u>upathak</u> <sup>3</sup> when Khun Siri was a monk	Helped at several <u>ngan tham bun</u>
55*	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Friend	Helped in business
56	40	Ayutthaya	Civil servant	Mutual respect	-
57	40	Ayutthaya	Hotel-owner	Relative	Helped in business
58*	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped with merit-making.
59*	60	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Relation	-
60* (Chinese)	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped with merit-making
61*	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped with merit-making
62*	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Relative	Helped with merit-making
63	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Relative	Helped with merit-making
64* (Chinese)	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Neighbour	Helped in merit-making
65*	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped in merit-making
67* (female)	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Wife's relation	Helped in merit-making
68	40	Ayutthaya	Cinema manager	Went to school together in Bangkok	-

<u>Contributor</u> (by number)	<u>Size of contribution</u> (in baht)	<u>Place of residence</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Relationship to Khun Siri</u>	<u>Nature of previous assistance given by Khun Siri to contributor</u>
69	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	-
70	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	-
71	40	Ayutthaya	Civil servant	Taught in same school	-
72	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Friends	Helped in business
73	40	Ayutthaya	Hotel owner	Friends	Helped in business
74*	40	Ayutthaya	Civil servant	Workmate	Helped with merit-making
75*	40	Ayutthaya	Chemist	Mutual respect	Helped in business and with ceremonies
77	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped in business
78	40	Ayutthaya	Shop-keeper	Mutual respect	Helped in business.

In addition, 190 people gave contributions of 30 baht or less;-

22 people gave 30 baht each; Khun Siri had helped 9 of these people with merit-making

133 people gave 20 baht each; Khun Siri had helped 60 of these people with merit-making

35 people gave 10 baht each; Khun Siri had helped 7 of these people with merit-making

The total amount of money received was 12,040 baht

The total amount of money expended was 11,515 baht

Khun Siri claimed to have spent approximately 8,000 baht from his own pocket on the ordination ritual, and the associated ceremonies of tham khwan (calling the khwan) and blessing the ordinands which were held on the day prior to the ngan upasombot. Several days after the ordination ceremony the new monks took part in the ceremony of Chalong Phra Mai (Celebrating the new Bhikkhu) which was also sponsored by Khun Siri.

The major items of expenditure associated with the ordination are listed below.

Total cost of equipping the ordinands	-	2,500 baht
Total cost of offerings made to the officiant monks	-	900 baht
Travelling expenses of upacha and two other monks from <u>Wat Arun</u> , Bangkok (by taxi)	-	200 baht
Food costs during this period (i.e. this includes money spent on food for days prior to ceremony and afterwards as many friends and relatives lodged with Khun Siri (this sum also covers the costs of entertaining guests on the day of the ordination)	-	4,100 baht
Cost of soft & alcoholic drinks	-	1,250 baht
Cost of living orchestra for <u>tham khwan</u> ritual (Khun Siri spent a further 600 baht at least on hiring the ritual expert, paying for decorations, film show, etc. He did not account for this sum here).	-	300 baht
Miscellaneous expenditures (flowers, candles, etc.)	-	285 baht
Offerings to 9 monks who performed blessing chant on evening prior to ordination	-	180 baht
Costs of food for 3 monks during their sojourn in <u>wat</u> and money spent on <u>kaeng wian</u> during Lent 1967.	-	1,800 baht

FOOTNOTES TO TABLE 5: 4

1. Khun Siri contributed 10 baht to the ordination of this woman's adopted son which took place at Wat Maphrao Bangkok on July 18th.
2. The last election to this ideally elective body took place in 1957. The House of Representatives is a legislative assembly.
3. See above p. 261

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. See Wells (1960 p.52-53)
2. From the Pali magga meaning 'a path' and nayok meaning 'a leader'. - magga nayok
3. Wells(1960 p.53-54)
4. In Thailand most butchers are of Chinese or Indian stock, but, as the commercial and business sector is largely monopolized by individuals from these minority groups it is not possible to attribute the absence of Thai butchers to the influence of the Buddhist injunction against taking life.
5. This may serve to explain why this action was evaluated in different ways by the villagers interviewed by Kaufman (Kaufman 1960 p.183) and Tambiah (Tambiah 1968 p.69) respectively. My own experience would suggest that to rank merit-making activities in this way is to some extent to falsify the issue in that in each case my informants stated that the quality of the action was affected by the intentions of the actor as well as by its own pragmatic value for the community.
6. In the case of cremation ceremonies held in the wat the monks themselves may arrange and decorate the sala (pavilion) where the ritual is to take place. It is usual for them to make some charge for this service, varying from a few to several hundred baht according to the degree of display - in terms of flowers, lights etc. - required by the host.
7. Liké - traditional Thai drama, musical folk drama
8. See Chapter 4 p.186 for details.
9. There exists incidentally a rather vague and unformulated belief that all people who live under the same roof share in the merit made by one of their number.
10. See above Chapter 4 p. 175.
11. Several of the most generous donations received by the monastic community during my stay in Ayutthaya were made by elderly spinsters of independent means. Many of these women had few close relations, and thus spent little money on fulfilling familial obligations.

12. See below p.255, the case history of Khun Thep Damkham.
13. Wan Phra falls on the 8th and 15th days of the waxing & waning moon.
14. These observances are obviously more optional than life-crisis ceremonies, which must be observed in however perfunctory a manner.
15. See Wells (1960 p.273)
16. He became Phra Racha Khana Chan Rat  
See Appendix No.IV.
17. I have given the biographies of both Khun Thep and Khun Siri in some detail not only because it is necessary to have an understanding of their respective backgrounds in order to appreciate their religious behaviour, but also because some of this biographic material is illustrative of points made in my concluding chapter concerning the nature of Thai social structure.
18. He had used this sum of money to buy text-books, writing materials and supplementary food. His upathak, an elderly spinster who lived near Wat Suan Phlu, had been attracted by the bhikkhu's devotion to scholarship and requested permission to become his sponsor. See above p. 211.
19. At the end of the 19th century a national education system was adopted. New schools were built and the monastery schools previously run by the bhikkhus have gradually been taken over by the civil authorities.
20. On entering the civil service he also changed his name from the Chinese name 'Chum' to his present appellation 'Siri' which is recognisably Thai. His Chinese friends and relatives in Hua Ro and outside Ayutthaya, continued however, to call him 'Chum'.
21. As far as I could make out officials from the Education Section collected rents from monastery lands, and placed the money with the bank on behalf of individual wats. In fact this situation still prevails as many junior officials from this branch of the civil service are members of kammakan wat (see below).
22. The Thais do not make a habit of entertaining outsiders in their homes, although visitors may call in for brief periods to chat and drink tea.
23. See Wells (1960 p.78-80)
24. See Wells (1960 p.71-72)

25. In the year 1966-1967 Khun Siri spent 8,387 baht on religious affairs; 8,000 baht went towards the cost of ordaining three sons. Over the same period Khun Thep spent 450 baht on religious activities.
26. See Max Weber's 'The Sociology of Religion' (trans.by Ephraim Fischhoff) Beacon Press 1963. Also Pfanner and Ingersoll (1962 p.341-61)
27. In his book Economic Development in Thailand since 1850 Ingram writes:  
'No methods have been devised for mobilizing small savings in Thailand. People prefer to keep their savings in the form of gold or cash, and they have not made much use of banks, postal savings or cooperatives for this purpose. Nor are they willing to invest in the stock of a corporation which they do not understand or trust.'
28. See Wells (1960 p.135-150) also Vajirananavarorasa (1963)
29. See accompanying Table 5:1.
30. In fact as Vajirananavarorasa writes (1963 p.4) ....  
'five bhikkhus were enough to form the quorum and carry out the processes of ordination. This has been practised up to the present time.'  
Nevertheless most laymen like to invite as many monks to officiate at this ceremony, as they can afford.  
Wells writes:  
'For any ceremony involving only the Sangha the favourite number is 25 - allowing for five monks for each one hundred present at the First Council after the Buddha's death (1960 p.141)
31. Distance does not inevitably weaken ties of family and friendship. As the list of contributors shows, several lay guests travelled considerable distances (from Chiangmai, and Paknampran) to fulfill their social obligations to Khun Siri.

CONCLUSION

THAILAND:      A LOOSELY-STRUCTURED SOCIAL SYSTEM?

In concluding this thesis I shall attempt to assess the way in which the material already presented contributes to the broader study of Thai society. Since J.F.Embree wrote his pioneering article, it has generally been assumed that Thailand has indeed 'a loosely structured social system'<sup>1</sup>. It seems to me however, that by underlining some of the implications inherent in the foregoing chapters it may be possible to shed more light on the issues involved, whilst at the same time placing the monk/layman relationship, which has been the focus of this study, in a broader social context.

Students of Thai society have discussed the problem of 'loose-structuring' on at least three different analytical levels. On some occasions the term 'loosely structured' is used to indicate that social roles are relatively simple and unspecialized in content (Mosel 1965 p.1-11); elsewhere this description implies that role-playing individuals are under no pressure to form permanent groups (Embree 1950 p.181-193), whereas, in the third place the term 'loosely structured' is used to characterize the basic psychological make-up of individual actors, who assume and retire from social roles with apparently unusual readiness, and interact in a variety of situations. In the following quotation from his article entitled 'Social Contact vs. Social Promise in a Siamese Village' the anthropologist Herbert P. Phillips contrives to take account of these three approaches in a single sentence where he states that:

'the loosely structured nature of relationships in Bang Chan is due primarily to psychological and philosophical ('world-view') factors and is permitted expression by the relatively undifferentiated social system (Phillips 1967 p.361)

The difficulties experienced in dealing with the Thai social system derive in part from the fact that, the peculiar combination of features with which it presents the student, renders many common anthropological assumptions invalid. To take for example the question of the quality of social roles in Thai society. It is generally agreed that in Thailand, as in most other 'small scale' societies, social roles are fairly simple in terms of the qualifications required by individual actors; that 'the actual number of functionally specific tasks and roles are few, and any number of individuals can perform them' (Phillips 1965 p.81). But whereas these conditions are usually associated with recruitment according to 'contingent' qualities, and, hence, a fairly static situation (Nadel 1951 p.152) in Thailand this simplicity of roles is associated with remarkable ease of movement between them.<sup>2</sup> 'Ease in role shift appears to be a very general and widespread cultural phenomenon, for social mobility, among the Thai has traditionally been very great' (Mosel 1965 p.7)

My own observations from a fairly restricted sphere of social action, do indeed support Mosel's contention. As I have shown, there is a great deal of movement into and out of the Buddhist Sangha, since in theory all men of eligible age should follow this most prestigious calling for some period of time. Furthermore, the monkhood provides a recognised channel for social advancement, and the individual who remains in the wat for a number of years and makes good use of the educational facilities available can achieve a significant improvement in social position when he returns to lay life.

There is some evidence to suggest that since the successful military coup of 1932 the Thai army has begun to provide a second important avenue of social mobility for the ambitious young man (Wilson 1962 p.164-194). It seems, moreover, that, as Mosel suggests, it has at all times been possible for the individual who has a certain degree of natural ability, to better himself by skillful manipulation of his links with people higher up the social scale.

'The coherence of Thai society rests largely on the value of becoming a client of someone who has greater resources than one alone possesses ... the crowning moment of happiness lies in the knowledge of dependable benefits distributed in turn to faithful inferiors' (Hanks 1962 p.1249).

But social mobility in Thailand is by no means restricted to the kind of vertical movement described above. A reflection of the relatively simple and unspecialized nature of roles is seen in the ease with which individuals move between different spheres of activity. It may be recalled for example that Khun Thep Damkham was trained in law, but on his graduation became teacher of English in a boys' secondary school. After a number of years in this position he entered the civil service where he is employed at present. I have no doubt that he also used personal contacts of various kinds to accomplish these horizontal role shifts, but as this mode of procedure is entirely normal he was unable to remember the details.

The Bank Manageress, another valuable lay informant frequently mentioned in this thesis, was in reality only qualified as a midwife. For many years prior to her appointment she had helped her uncle, the previous bank manager, with his

paper work.<sup>3</sup> On his death, by virtue of her intimate knowledge of the affairs of the Thai City Bank, she was naturally appointed to succeed him.

It has been remarked that the Thais value 'education for education's sake', that it is not highly specialized or vocational, and is very rarely 'regarded as a prelude to intensive training for some technical pursuit' (Caldwell 1967 p.53). As the preceding examples show quite clearly, it is very easy to exchange a position in one sphere for a comparable one in another, given a certain degree of intellectual competence and practical experience.<sup>4</sup> These considerations also serve to explain why men who have received a minimum of formal education in ecclesiastical schools can be incorporated into the clerical ranks of the civil service, where they prove most valuable by keeping the more highly educated senior officials in touch with local affairs.<sup>5</sup>

Associated with this high rate of mobility between roles is the considerable emphasis placed upon the relative status of their incumbents;

'statuses associated with roles can almost always be distinguished in terms of higher or lower .... in a sense we might say that in Thai society there two highly generalised roles: superior and subordinate. Given any two statuses or clusters of social characteristics the average Thai can easily and consistently make paired comparison judgements' (Mosel 1964, p.4-5). In all social encounters each individual involved reaches a decision as to the linguistic and behavioural usages appropriate to the situation, after a rapid

summing up of a number of crucial variables, which is to say that he must take into account not only his protagonist's sex and relative age, but also his occupation, income, place of residence and so on. Where the distinction in relative status is not absolutely clear-cut, it is better to err on the side of deference. For example, a middle-aged monk who has been in the Sangha since he was a boy is likely to give precedence in terms of seating arrangements, patterns of greeting, and on on, to an elderly man just newly ordained, who is clearly his inferior in terms of Lenten seniority. Curious linguistic usages may arise in such ambiguous situations. I was often addressed as phi (elder sibling) by taxi-drivers, vendors and other people who considered themselves to be of inferior social status, though they were clearly my seniors by age. They wished not only to show their respect, but also their friendship, and thus avoided using the more deferential pronoun khun (meaning 'you')<sup>6</sup>.

The relationship between superior and subordinate varies very little either in content or in outward forms whatever the sphere of activity may be; in his article entitled 'Some Notes on Self, Role and Role Behaviour of Thai Administrators' Mosel writes that

'the superior is benevolent, calmly self-assured, authoritative (rather than authoritarian) whilst the subordinate is respectful, attentive, helpful but not necessarily obedient (although face-to-face disobedience would be unthinkable)'  
(Mosel 1965 p.5)

Each individual has in fact very similar kinds of relationship with his patron, his teacher, a senior kinsman and a Buddhist monk; all of whom occupy a position of superiority with respect to him. All these relationships

tend moreover to have a material component which is to say that the inferior party receives not only advice and sponsorship, but also more tangible benefits in the form of financial support. The details of the religious expenditures of some of my lay informants, given in Chapter Five, show quite clearly that the superior partner is obliged to assist with the expenses of life-crisis rituals sponsored by, or for his clients and dependents, but this kind of support should be provided whenever the need arises.<sup>7</sup>

With respect to the relationship between the bhikkhu and the householder it should be remembered that though the former can be regarded as the patron of the latter the benefits he confers are of a spiritual kind, whereas support of a more tangible kind, in the form of money food and other material goods passes in an upwards direction from the inferior party.

Another distinctive feature of role-playing in Thai society is that great emphasis is placed upon the 'etiquette of one's station' (Hanks 1967 p.1256), which is to say upon the formal rather than upon the substantive characteristics of a particular role.<sup>8</sup> It was remarked in an earlier chapter that, on his ordination, a Thai boy assumes immediately, the mien and deportment appropriate to a monk. Indeed, as subsequent discussion revealed, little else may be asked of a Buddhist bhikkhu other than that he is orthodox in these outward forms. The monk who fulfills these minimum requirements for conformity is moreover allowed considerable leeway in the interpretation of his role.

This 'ritualization' of roles (Gluckman 1961 p.26) in Thai society, is not as in some other societies an outcome of their 'multiplex' nature, but can I believe, be explained with reference to their relatively unspecified nature, and to the fact that they are thus fairly easily assumed, or cast aside. Mosel suggests that this stylization, and emphasis on etiquette which is evident in all spheres of activity, is designed to facilitate movement between roles by preventing the actor's becoming committed to any one of them.<sup>9</sup> In the article cited above he writes that

'perceptually the administrator is able to differentiate very successfully between Self and role ... he does not internalize the role, but he internalizes the values and beliefs which prescribe that he should play the role'.(Mosel 1965 p.10).

Lucien Hanks, another anthropologist who is interested in isolating and explaining the peculiar features of the Thai social order, similarly suggests that it is because of this ability to remain detached that the Thais are able to 'equip themselves for mobility and transient position. To a greater extent than in the West the insignia transform the person' (Hanks 1962 p.1252).

I would agree with the contention that the Thais do indeed place a very great emphasis on diacritical role attributes, although I would hesitate before implying, as do both Hanks and Mosel, that this emphasis is deliberate and purposive. I would suggest on the other hand that the importance which is attached to etiquette and other distinguishing features is consonant with the ease of role shift in Thai society, but that it is not specifically designed to make such movement easier. In such a fluid

situation it is probable that there is a need to define more sharply which role an individual is playing at any one time, particularly when there is so strong an emphasis on disparities in status. In some instances this stylization appears to result from an interest in elaboration for its own sake. In rural settlements for example the prefix thit is placed before the names of laymen who have at some time been ordained, even though their period of service in the wat may or may not have any repercussions on their subsequent behaviour and social position. Interestingly enough, this practice was not followed in Ayutthaya, where there were many other criteria of differentiation, occupation, ethnic affiliation, previous place of residence and so on, according to which individuals might be categorized.

Another distinctive feature of the Thai social system is that permanent groups appear to be virtually absent. In his seminal article 'Thailand: a loosely structured social system' (American Anthropologist 1950, 52) Embree states quite categorically that the Thais 'do not like to work in organisations' (Embree 1950 p.187) because they are too individualistic in temperament. The responsibility for this alleged antipathy to co-operative action is generally laid at the door of Theravada Buddhism. Phillips for example considers that 'a major source of the villagers' loose relationships... is the Buddhist emphasis on primacy of individual action and responsibility' (Phillips 1967 p.363-4). The question as to whether the Buddhist ethos actively promotes loose relationships - in any sense of this term - will be discussed below.

But in the first instance I suggest that it might be possible to shed some light on the problem of the absence of permanent groups in Thai society by looking at the material from other areas where long-term groups do exist although the basic social structure is not altogether dissimilar.

For our purposes Leach's study of the Singhalese village 'Pul Eliya' provides perhaps the clearest analysis of the factors which prompt individuals in such a society to enter into co-operation.<sup>10</sup> In Pul Eliya for example, social groups are formed to protect individual interests in scarce property holdings and, to ensure the day-to-day co-operation which is necessary to maintain the irrigation system. The same factors are however not operative in village Thailand where neither technological specialization, nor economic need, make group formation necessary to ensure present co-operation, and to protect the interests of the next generation. As I stressed in my introductory chapter Thailand's natural resources are very plentiful, a fact of which the Thais themselves are well aware. As the pressure on land increases, a situation not unlike that described by Leach (1961) may become operative, but as yet one can only speculate. Similarly, as the economy develops it is clear that specialist occupational groupings will become more important, although at the present time such associations are of only minor significance.

The effects of the general abundance of material resources are manifest in certain features of monastic organisation. It was remarked in an earlier chapter that Buddhist bhikkhus move very freely between monasteries, and that only the abbot

who as an office-holder, has a stake in a particular monastery feels more committed to remaining in one place. This general freedom of movement is permissible largely because of the fact that wherever the monk resides, he receives an adequate amount of food, money, and so on from the householders in the vicinity. There is, by and large, no need to restrict entry into certain monastic communities, as individual wats are not differentiated with respect to their access to scarce economic benefits.

In certain areas of Bangkok, however, there have been some significant changes in this traditional pattern of balanced supply and demand. The decline in general interest in religious affairs in the metropolitan area, combined with a number of other factors which were described above, means that many of the larger monasteries are forced to rationalize their economic behaviour in order to make the monastic estates into a 'going concern'. In these circumstances the community tends to become more 'closed' and cohesive, and there is some evidence to suggest that it is more difficult for a new-comer to gain access because of the pressure on the limited resources available.<sup>11</sup>

With respect to the formation of permanent groups with political functions, it should be noted that this phenomenon has, until relatively recently, been largely restricted to the aristocratic families who traditionally took the initiative in managing the country's affairs. As was mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, there is a much greater awareness of kinship and pedigree amongst this privileged minority; one informant told me that his ancestry could be traced back to the Ayutthaya era (1350-1767).

although only during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the family came into real political power, were genealogies specifically recorded, with the express purpose of excluding false claimants and very distant kin, from the right to highly valued titles and material possessions.

It is generally agreed that most people in Thailand, which is to say, the vast rural majority, are not 'involved in politics' which is regarded as properly the affair of politicians, or, more broadly, of the ruling class.' (Wilson 1962 p.57-58). It should be added that the political élite have traditionally preferred urban to rural society, and have consequently always resided in the capital, near to the seat of power. There is in fact no rural landlord class as such, and the majority of cultivators own the land which they farm. Furthermore, the fact that the country has escaped colonization may have inhibited the development of political awareness, which might have resulted in the formation of groups with political functions.

Although it seems clear that permanent groups are not an important feature of Thai society it is nevertheless inevitable that short-term co-operative associations should be formed from time to time. In his article 'Some Aspects of Rural Life in Thailand' Wijeyewardene writes that Thai society 'is perhaps most satisfactorily characterized as pragmatic, with organisation directed to specific and limited ends' (Wijeyewardene 1967 p.65). And concludes on a similar note by saying that 'organisations arise to fulfill specific tasks but there is no tradition of on-going associations which may be called on to fulfill any task which might arise.' (Wijeyewardene 1967 p.83).

Organisations of this nature are indeed familiar from many anthropological studies of village Thailand; the mechanism for reciprocal exchange of labour between farming households, known as ao raeng (to take strength) is perhaps the one most frequently described (Kaufman 1960 p.30). Furthermore as we have seen from the foregoing chapters religious observances and activities also necessitate the formation of co-operative units wider than the individual family or household. The party of laymen which is formed to take kathin robes to the wat at the close of the Lenten season for example, is sociologically very similar to the gathering of householders who attended the ordination of Khun Siri Imchai's three sons; an event which was described in detail in Chapter Five. Both these groupings which came into being for a specific purpose conform to the concept of an 'action-set' as defined by Mayer (Mayer 1966 p.108 et passim) in that the component individuals are all related, directly or indirectly, to the central ego, although 'a wide variety of bases for linkage are involved' (Mayer 1966 p.108) which is to say that the grouping includes ego's kinsmen, colleagues, and neighbours, as well as other individuals related to him only through the latter, with whom he is in more direct contact. It might thus be claimed that Theravada Buddhism in practice serves to promote social co-operation between individual actors, and that 'the Buddhist emphasis on primacy of individual action and individual responsibility' does not, as Phillips would claim, constitute 'a major source of loose relationships' (Phillips 1967 p.363-4). It is certainly true that

the khammic actions of each actor are believed to determine his future status, and that no Saviour can intervene on his behalf. But the contention made by Phillips that 'The whole complex cosmology relating to the accumulation of merit and demerit is phrased in terms of the individual's lonely journey through cycles of interminable existences working out his own moral destiny.' (Phillips 1967 p.363) bears no relationship to the situation on the ground. As is, I think, abundantly clear from the data already presented, the emphasis in merit-making is not upon the sacrificial aspect of renouncing ones' ties and material possessions, but rather upon giving for a specific return, whether tangible or intangible; the phrase tham di: dai di (Do good: receive good) is given a very literal interpretation on a practical level<sup>12</sup>.

It was stated at the beginning of this chapter that several students of Thai society have attributed the absence of permanent groups and the relative ease with which interpersonal links are broken to the particular personality dispositions of the average Thai (Phillips 1965). I have suggested on the other hand that there is little pressure upon individuals in Thai society to form permanent groups because there is no permanent need, arising from economic or political considerations, to do so.

My observations further suggest that the Thais are certainly not more individualistic, and indeed probably rather less so than other people. The deference given to seniority of age, the assumption that if you have lived longer then you automatically know better, an attitude which is closely

related to the relatively undifferentiated and, until recently, unchanging economic situation, certainly does not suggest that the Thais are a nation of radicals. There is in fact very little value placed on innovation or originality; even at the University level teaching is largely by rote; discussion is not encouraged nor demanded, and the pupil accepts the word of his Teacher. Indeed the Thais recognise and approve of their own ability to lian baep (to imitate or copy), a talent which enables them to adapt themselves very easily, at least as far as outward forms are concerned, to alien cultural influences from the West, or increasingly, from Japan.

With more general reference to the fluidity of Thai society, I would suggest that it is important to distinguish between the possibilities for upward mobility, and the desire or ambition to achieve it. Leach's dictum that 'a conscious or unconscious wish to gain power is a very general motive in human affairs' (Leach 1964 p.10) does not hold good for Thai society. This lack of incentive is largely explicable by reference to the political and economic circumstances already described. Many observers have noted that the Thais exhibit a high degree of 'self-acceptance' or, less flatteringly, that 'their self-approval borders on narcissism' (Mosel 1965 p.4). Furthermore a prominent Thai writer and politician, Seni Pramot, recently expressed the view that the imminent population explosion might be of some service to the nation, in that by creating a little salutary deprivation it might shake the society from its present state of complacency and indolence.

In such a situation it is not surprising that the rare ambitious individual has little difficulty in improving his position, for he meets with relatively little resistance or competition.

I would suggest in conclusion that in some respects the Thai social system presents us with a situation which is the reverse of that with which we are familiar from most of the classic anthropological sources.<sup>13</sup> It is, for instance, generally emphasized that strong local or kin group ties are an ever-present threat to the coherence of the wider social unit. A number of institutions and practices (exogamy, the incest taboo, age-sets, ritual observances and so on) are believed to counteract these fissive tendencies by promoting the formation of cross-cutting links and creating a relationship of inter-dependence between the parts which make up the whole (Gluckman 1961 p.44-47). In Thailand by contrast there are very few corporate groups, or permanent co-operative groupings of any kind, which at the level of individual behaviour, means that actors move quite easily from role to role both within and between spheres of activity, and freely relinquish social ties which they no longer consider to be of any importance. This fluid situation is largely an outcome of political and economic features as I have already emphasized, and is found in association, and perhaps permitted by, an exceptionally strong sense of identification, on the part of people at all levels of society, to the wider unit, to the State and its symbols: the Monarchy and the Buddhist Sangha.

FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. 'Thailand: a loosely structured social system' (American Anthropologist 1950.52. p.181-193)
2. 'It is probably true to say that simpler societies lean towards compulsory, and complex societies towards voluntary, recruitment, which lends to the former their more static nature, and to the latter their greater mobility (Nadel 1951 p.152)
3. She was acting in conformity with the ideal that 'phi nong tong chuai kan' (Relations must help each other).
4. Mobility is of course not absolute. Formal educational qualifications are becoming increasingly important, and it is undoubtedly the case that it is still easier for individuals from higher income families to acquire them. Nevertheless as the case of Khun Thep Damkham (see above Chapter Five) showed quite clearly, it is possible for an ambitious and intelligent student from a humble family to obtain a government scholarship to pay for his education.
5. See above, Chapter One
6. Khun - pronoun, deferential, common, meaning 'you'. See 'Thai-English Student's Dictionary' - compiled by Mary Haas (O.U.P. 1964).
7. Compare the relationship between an eminent monk and his pupils (see above Chapter Three).
8. In his article "'Reading poetry makes you nice and neat' (or the hazards of teaching Eng.Lit. in Thailand)" D.J.Enright reports that 'The three fundamental principles of Teaching Methods, so I was told, are: the teacher should not possess any visible defect, the teacher should be neatly dressed and groomed, the teacher should not rub out chalk on the blackboard with his or her fingers.' See 'Transition' No.37 1968 Vol.7 (vi) p.24
9. Mosel attributes this detachment to the influence of the Buddhist ethos, and in particular to the value placed on uppekha or "'the withholding of the act whereby something is perceived as part of the self'" (Mosel 1965 p.7). My informants however laid greater emphasis on the positive aspects of copying and imitating the diacritical role attributes, and none mentioned the concept of uppekha. I would agree with Wilson that 'the significance of any relationship between this cosmic outlook, and social behaviour is neither easily measured nor demonstrated' (Wilson 1962 p.46).

10. The Sinhalese have a bilateral kinship system similar to that of the Thais. All children inherit from both parents. (Leach 1961 p.67). Kinship is similarly made the idiom for social co-operation which is to say that in Sinhalese society kinsmen co-operate and, conversely, that people who are in close contact usually come to regard one another as kin.  
It should be remembered that most of the generalisations concerning the nature of the Thai social system are based on fieldwork carried out in rural areas.
11. See above, Chapter Four.
12. The fact that khammic reaction may be immediate or delayed may make it easier for the Thais as Buddhists to accept, and to explain, the very fluid nature of their society, but I would not posit a causal link between ideology and social behaviour.
13. E.g. 'The Nuer' - E.E.Evans-Pritchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press (1940)  
'The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi'  
- M.Fortes.  
(London O.U.P. for the International African Institute 1945).

APPENDIX No.1.THE CASE OF THE 'FATHERLESS' CHILD

A judge from the Law Courts in Ayutthaya told me of a case which had caused him great embarrassment and distress as it involved a member of the Buddhist Sangha.

The action had arisen when a woman living in a rural settlement, had gone to the District (Amphoe) Office to register the birth of her baby. She had named, as its father, the abbot of the local wat. When he heard of her action, from her own mouth, the bhikkhu in question indignantly denied his paternity, and decided to sue her for libel.

The judge, as narrator, repeatedly expressed his grief and discomfort at being required to deal with such a situation. After a private interview with the woman he learnt that she was a regular supporter of that monastery. She always attended services there on Holy Day (Wan Phra), and frequently presented food to the community.

Over a year ago however, her husband had died, and the abbot in his turn had given food and money to help support herself and her family. The woman thus felt herself to be under a great obligation towards him, and consequently when he visited her home after dark one evening, she did not like to refuse to 'become his wife'. The abbot made several such visits and in due course she became pregnant.

The judge interjected at this point, that the child

in question did indeed bear a strong resemblance to the monk. This heightened rather than simplified the predicament. Clearly it would be unjust to convict a woman whom he believed to be innocent. He considered that her registering the abbot as the baby's father was a simple-minded rather than a malicious act; had she thought at all it would have been obvious that in doing so she could only harm her position, as she could not expect to profit by bringing disgrace on her benefactor, who might otherwise be expected to continue to support herself and all her children.

On the other hand the judge shrank from bringing disgrace to any member of the Sangha. His natural instinct was to try to reach some kind of compromise in the quietest manner possible. Accordingly, he asked the woman whether the abbot had any distinguishing marks 'below the waist', to which question she replied that she did not know as all his visits had taken place after dark! Had she answered in the affirmative, the judge had intended to ask the abbot, in private, if he would mind proving his innocence by showing that he had no such marks. His reaction to this suggestion would, according to the judge's reasoning, have been sufficient testimony to his innocence or guilt.

As this stratagem had failed to yield the desired results, the judge approached the abbot and confessed the court's inability to ascertain the truth of the matter. He said that the answer lay with the abbot and no-one else. He further suggested, that the case be dropped if the woman could be persuaded to go to the District (Amphoe) office and withdraw the bhikkhu's name from the register. The monk

readily agreed to this course of action, which, as the judge remarked, was evidence enough. The mother for her part did not demur, as she was already terrified by the judicial processes which her unconscious action had set in motion. The baby was registered as having no known father.

CASE HISTORY No.2THE CASE OF THE UNORDAINED 'BHIKKHU'

It was rumoured that there was one man in Ayutthaya who frequently masqueraded as a Buddhist monk. He had shaved his head, and every morning donned his yellow robe in order to go out collecting alms from the laity. When his bowl was full, he returned home to his wife and children. He was said to live in a part of town which was regarded as being very 'wild'. Few people lived in the area, which had largely been reclaimed by trees and undergrowth.

It appeared from various sources however, that this man's own deeply-ingrained respect for the Buddhist Sangha prevented him from deriving full benefit from his falsely assumed position of prestige, and might eventually prove his downfall. When he attended ceremonies and fairs which took place at various monasteries in town he could not, for example, bring himself to eat with the other monks, but rather took his meal later, sitting on one side. This behaviour was considered by everyone present to be extremely odd. When anyone enquired as to his place of residence he replied evasively that he was merely visiting from another town. He did not receive invitations from the laity to perform merit-making ceremonies, as his contact with them was largely limited to the binthabat (alms-collecting) transaction.

This case shows clearly that a bhikkhu cannot perform his role to the full, unless he is living in a wat, and is thus

accessible and accountable to the lay community. As was mentioned in Chapter One, the card of identity received on ordination is a necessary permit for entry into the society of the Sangha.

APPENDIX No.IIRESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

I began my questionnaire survey on Dec.28th 1966 by which time most of the monks who had been ordained for the duration of one Lenten season, had already returned to lay life. The forms were distributed on the occasion of the annual ecclesiastical examinations organised by the Chao Khana Amphoe at Wat Monthop. They had been printed for me by my chief informant, Khun Siri Imchai, who had access to the typing and duplicating facilities at the Town Hall. Before distributing these questionnaires at Wat Monthop I was able to explain the aim of my study to the assembled monks. It was also stated on the forms themselves that I was conducting research for a doctoral thesis, an explanation which was both understandable and most acceptable to my informants.

Questionnaires were given to 187 monks living in 20 monasteries in the municipal area (i.e. to residents of the 15 wats whose incomes and expenditures are analyzed in Chapter Four, and to members of 5 other communities viz. Wats Choeng Tha, Nang Plum, Tong Pu, Tum and Phrayat.)

Approximately 100 of these forms were returned but only 90 of them were complete enough to make possible the correlation of different items of information. It is therefore probable that the results are biased in favour of younger and more educated monks, who would be more willing and able to complete the survey forms.

The answers received are set out in tabulated form below:

A. Ordination

1.

i. Average length of ordination i.e. the average number of Lenten seasons spent in the wat: 14.3 Lenten seasons.

ii. Average age of monks: 42.25 years old.

(Average age of abbots, and their length of service in the wat:

Average age: 56.3 years old

Length of service: 26.1 Lenten seasons)

2. Age at which ordained.

Ordained when 20/21 years old: 42 monks

Ordained in late twenties: 10 monks

Ordained in middle-age (i.e. late 40's and upwards) : 25 monks

(18 of these men were ordained for the second time in middle-age, 17 of them were married, and the wives of 10 of them were still living).

Total number of monks ordained twice: 28 monks

Total number of monks ever ordained as a novice: 41 monks

(28 of whom stayed on after reaching the age of 20 to become permanent monks)

3. Reason for Ordination (75 monks answered this question)

Answers given in terms of interest in study of the Dhamma: 47 monks

Ordained because it is a Thai custom: 4 monks

It is the duty of a Buddhist to become a monk: 5 monks

Because of obligations to parents or senior relatives living or dead: 4 monks

Because wanted to: 2 monks

Lay life too arduous: 3 monks

Desire to teach the Dhamma to others: 1 monk

(N.B. These different explanations are not of course mutually exclusive).

4. Views on Disrobing 30 of the 90 monks answered.

Monks who were either fairly sure or quite certain that they would not leave the Order: 18 monks

Monks who were unsure as to their future plans: 12 monks

5. Concerning the previous ordination of the informant's father:

61 monks stated definitely that their fathers had been ordained.

10 monks stated definitely that their fathers had not been ordained. (The fathers of two of the monks who answered had been living in China).

B. Monastic Residence

1. Number of monasteries lived in.

All except 19 of the 90 monks who replied had lived in 2 or more monasteries.

Of the remainder, 4 had become ordained recently, and were unsure as to how long they would remain in the wat; 5 monks had retired into the nearest urban wat in old age. 6 monks had chosen their present wat because of its status, or that of its residents.

4 monks had been ordained at the nearest wat, and had remained there.

2. Reason for living in present wat.

To study the <u>Dhamma</u> :	32 monks
To study (with reference to particular facilities offered):	7 monks
Because of relationship with another monk in the <u>wat</u> , eg. <u>upacha</u> , respected abbot:	7 monks
Came on the advice of a lay relation:	4 monks
Came on the instruction of ecclesiastical officials. i. To be abbot:	6 monks
ii. To increase the size of the community:	2 monks
Because this <u>wat</u> is pleasant/quiet/peaceful/comfortable:	5 monks
To teach:	1 monk
Because lived here as a novice:	1 monk

(N.B. As is clear from their nature these answers are not necessarily mutually exclusive)

3. The number of monks who had, at any stage in their career, lived in the same wat as had their respective fathers at some earlier date (The father of none of the monks interviewed was in the Order at the time of my study).

21 monks answered in the affirmative  
 34 " " " " negative  
 6 " did not know.

(It should be noted from B.2 above that no monk gave as his reason for living in a wat the fact that his father had once resided there).

C. Residence prior to Ordination

- i. Number of monks who had lived in a rural area: 58 monks. Of this number 15 had come from farming settlements within Amphoe Ayutthaya; 26 had lived in rural districts in some other part of Ayutthaya Province, but outside Ayutthaya District (Amphoe); the remainder came from other Provinces.
- ii. Number of monks who had lived in an urban area; 27 monks. 2 of these came from Bangkok, 2 from Saraburi (See Map A) 4 from Ayutthaya, 5 from Angthong. The remaining individuals came from other towns outside the region, notably 3 from Mahasarakham (N.E.Region) and 2 from Songkhla (Southern Region).

D.1. Occupation prior to Ordination.

Farmer: 52 monks (This means in many cases that as a boy the informant helped on his father's farm: this is clear from the age of ordination of the individuals concerned)

Vendor: 13 monks

Labourer: 5 monks

Civil Servant (Cd.4): 5 monks

Soldier: 2 monks

Carpenter: 1 monk

Watchman: 1 monk

Builder: 1 monk

Train-driver: 1 monk

Samlo-driver: 1 monk (samlo - lit.three-wheels, a rickshaw-like vehicle; a pedicab)

The remaining 8 monks who answered had been ordained from school as novices or monks.

2. Father's Occupation (where known)

Farmers: 48 men  
 Vendors: 4 men  
 Labourers: 1 man

3. The occupation to be assumed in the event of disrobing.

(Some of the monks who said that they would not disrobe answered this question, hypothetically; 23 monks completed this part of the questionnaire)

- i.) 13 monks said that they would resume their previous occupation should they disrobe. Of this number 5 had been farmers; 5 had been labourers; 2 men had been vendors, and 1 had been employed as a watchman.
- ii.) 10 had precise plans for a change of occupation should they disrobe, although a number of these were not certain that they would in fact ever leave the Order.

8 of this number said that they would become civil servants; 5 of them had been farmers; 1 man had driven a samlo and 2 of them had been vendors. 1 monk who had been a farmer planned to become a vendor.

1 monk who had been a farmer said that he would go to University in England with my sponsorship!

E. Kinship Position

- i. Average number of siblings in the family (incl.monk)  
5.75 children  
(According to a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office, Bangkok in 1963 the average family size in villages of the Central Region was 5.6 and in towns 5.4 (see 'Household Expenditure Survey: Central Region'. National Statistical Office, Bangkok B.E.2506 (1963))
- ii. Sex.Ratio of children:- no discernible regularities
- iii.Monk's position in the family; there were similarly no discernible regularities, i.e. there was not a preponderance of individuals born first, second, etc. etc. in their respective families.

F. Marital Status

25 monks had been married at some time  
19 had wives still living  
22 of the married monks had children

G. Educational Achievements1 Prior to Ordination

- i. 14 monks had some secondary education; only one monk had received as many as three years of secondary education.
- ii. 43 had received some formal primary schooling;  
37 had completed the primary grades (Prathom 1-4)
- iii. 11 said they had been taught by monks in monastery schools  
(31 informants had been ordained as novices on reaching the limits of free education provided by the State in their area)

APPENDIX No. IIIi Ecclesiastical Educational Qualifications of the Monks of Ayutthaya.

Ayutthaya is an important centre for ecclesiastical education with schools at Wat Phanan Choeng, Wat Suwandararam, and Wat Senasanaram (Thammayutika Nikai). Monks with an interest in pursuing formal courses of study thus tended to live in the municipal area, easily accessible to the monasteries mentioned above.

Of the 90 monks who answered my questionnaire 18 only had Barian or Pali Grades. Three of this number (all Barian Gd.5) came from Bangkok to teach at Wat Phanan Choeng during term time. The two most highly qualified monks in Ayutthaya, the abbot of Wat Salapun, and the Deputy Abbot of Wat Suwandararam held Barian Grade 6. Eight monks, including the three from Bangkok mentioned earlier, had passed Barian Grade Five. The remaining eight bhikkhus had passed Grade Three or Four.

With respect to the preliminary or Nak Tham course, most of the remaining monks studied fairly regularly, though not necessarily to any great effect. Fifty three monks had obtained some Nak Tham grades:-

27 monks had passed Grade 3  
 14 monks had passed Grade 2  
 9 monks had passed Grade 1

ii. Results of the Ecclesiastical Examinations 1966-1967

The Nak Tham examinations were held at Wat Monthop Ayutthaya on December 28th. The monks and novices examined came from the 72 (Mahanikai) monasteries in Amphoe Ayutthaya. There were in all approximately 434 permanent monks and 97 novices living in these monasteries at that time. The figures presented below thus refer to an area much wider than my chosen unit of study. They are nevertheless instructive in that they give some idea of the standards of achievement reached.

Most novices study the Nak Tham Grades, but it was rare in Ayutthaya, though not in Bangkok, to find any novice engaged in Pali study.

I do not have the comparative statistics for the examinations held at Wat Senasanaram at the same time. Monks and novices of the Thammayutika Sect from the whole of Ayutthaya Province attended. I suspect that the overall academic standard may have been somewhat higher than that of the Mahanikai

Nak Tham Grade Three

Examined: 286 monks and novices  
Passed : 156 monks and novices

Nak Tham Grade Two

Examined: 94 monks and novices  
Passed : 57 monks and novices

Nak Tham Grade One

Examined: 63 monks and novices  
Passed : 34 monks and novices

The Barian or Pali examinations held at Wat Phanan Choeng (Mahanikai) in March 1967 were attended by monks from the whole of Ayutthaya Province.

The results were as follows:-

Barian Grade Three

Examined: 35 monks

Passed : 3 monks

Barian Grade Four

Examined: 5 monks

Passed : 5 monks

The higher Pali Grades were examined in Bangkok. Only two monks in Ayutthaya were qualified to teach up to Barian Grade 5, namely the abbot of Wat Salapun, and the Deputy Abbot of Wat Suwandararam, both of whom had passed Barian Grade 6. They had themselves long since ceased to study, as their administrative duties left them no time. It would have been necessary for them to transfer to a monastery in Bangkok, had they wished to continue their academic pursuits.

(The figures given above were obtained from the Chao Khana Amphoe (Ecclesiastical District Head) Ayutthaya.

APPENDIX No.IVHonorific Titles Awarded to Monks

There are over forty ecclesiastical titles of this kind. The ranking system is presented in simplified form below. (See Wells (1960 p.184)) for more detailed information.

Honorific titles are conferred upon worthy monks as a token of the King's appreciation, and appear to involve no extra duties or responsibilities. They are customarily attached to Royal rather than to Commoner wats, and bhikkhus may thus have to change their place of residence when a title is conferred. Title-holders are given special fans as insignia of rank. These may be used only at ceremonies attended by the King or his representative (i.e. at pithi luang - royal ceremonies).

This hierarchy of honorific ranks merges at the top with the official administrative grades, but is elsewhere only partially congruent. The Ecclesiastical Provincial Head (Chao Khana Changwat) must for example be of Phra Racha Khana status, although his grade within this category is variable. Similarly all Chao Khana Tambon are of Phra Khru status, though a monk can be a Phra Khru and yet not hold the position of Chao Khana Tambon.

There is no direct relationship between educational achievement and honorific rank, which is to say that academic standing is neither necessary nor sufficient to acquire one of the titles which are listed below in order of importance.

1. Phra Khru (4 Grades)
2. Phra Racha Khana Yok - awarded to monks with no Barian Grades.
3. Phra Racha Khana Chan Saman Barian - the holder must have passed at least Barian Grade 3
4. Phra Racha Khana Chan Rat
5. Phra Racha Khana Chan Thep
6. Phra Racha Khana Chan Tham
7. Phra Racha Khana Rong
8. Somdet Phra Racha Khana
9. Somdet Phra Sangkharat (Supreme Patriarch)

ii. List of the monks in Ayutthaya who received a monthly food allowance or nittayaphat.

The amount awarded appears to vary according to the position of the bhikkhu concerned in the administrative hierarchy, although honorific titles and academic honours may also be taken into account. Nevertheless these criteria do not appear to be applied with any consistency and there are several notable anomalies. The abbot of Wat Tong Pu, for example seems to be underpaid, whilst his counterpart at Wat Na Phramen may be receiving more than he deserves. My investigations suggest that the monks themselves are rarely aware of the amount of nittayaphat which is granted to their fellows.

<u>Wat</u>	<u>Monk</u>	<u>Adminis- trative Office</u>	<u>Honor- ific Rank</u>	<u>Ecclesias- tical Educational Qualifica- tions.</u>	<u>Amount Received each month (in baht)</u>
<u>Suwardararam</u> *	(1)	Abbot (Deputy Chao Khana Chang- wat)	<u>Phra Racha Khana Chan Thep</u>	<u>Nak Tham 1</u>	180
"	(2)	*Deputy Abbot	<u>Phra Racha Khana Chan Rat</u>	<u>Barian 6</u>	180
<u>Phanan Choeng</u> *	(3)	Abbot (Chao Khana Changwat)	<u>Phra Racha Khana Chan Thep</u>	<u>Nak Tham 3</u>	260
"	(4)	*Deputy Abbot	<u>Phra Khru (Gd.1)</u>	<u>Barian 5</u>	100
"	(5)	-	-	<u>Barian 5</u>	80
<u>Senasanaram</u> * ( <u>Thammayutika- nikai</u> )	(6)	Abbot (Chao Khana Chang- wat of the Thammay- utika sect)	<u>Phra Racha Khana Chan Rat</u>	<u>Barian 3</u>	240

<u>Wat</u>	<u>Monk</u>	<u>Adminis- trative office</u>	<u>Honor- ific Rank</u>	<u>Ecclesias- tical Educational Qualifica- tions</u>	<u>Amount Received each month (in baht)</u>
<u>Sanasanaram</u>	(7)	*Deputy Abbot	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.1)	<u>Barian</u> 5	80
"	(8)	-	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.1)	<u>Barian</u> 5	80
"	(9)	-	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.1)	<u>Barian</u> 5	80
<u>Tum</u>	(10)	Abbot	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.1)	-	120
<u>Borommawong*</u>	(11)	Abbot ( <u>Chao</u> <u>Khana</u> <u>Amphoe</u> )	<u>Phra Racha</u> <u>Khana Chan</u> <u>Rat.</u>	<u>Nak Tham</u> 2	240
"	(12)	-	-	<u>Nak Tham</u> 1	30
<u>Tong Pu</u>	(13)	Deputy <u>Chao</u> <u>Khana</u> <u>Amphoe</u>	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.1)	<u>Barian</u> 5	80
<u>Phrayat</u>	(14)	Abbot ( <u>Chao</u> <u>Khana</u> <u>Tambon</u> )	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.2)	<u>Nak Tham</u> 3	60
<u>Thammikarat</u>	(15)	Abbot ( <u>Chao</u> <u>Khana</u> <u>Tambon</u> )	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.3)	<u>Nak Tham</u> 1	30
<u>Ket</u>	(16)	Abbot ( <u>Chao</u> <u>Khana</u> <u>Tambon</u> )	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.3)	<u>Nak Tham</u> 3	30
<u>Salapun*</u>	(17)	Abbot ( <u>Deputy</u> <u>Chao</u> <u>Khana</u> <u>Chang- wat</u> )	<u>Phra Racha</u> <u>Khana Chan</u> <u>Barian</u>	<u>Barian</u> 6	180
<u>Ratanachai</u>	(18)	Abbot ( <u>Deputy</u> <u>Chao</u> <u>Khana</u> <u>Amphoe</u> )	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.1)	<u>Barian</u> 5	60
<u>Na Phramen*</u>	(19)	Abbot	<u>Phra Khru</u> (Gd.1)	<u>Nak Tham</u> 1	80

<u>Wat</u>	<u>Monk</u>	<u>Adminis- trative office</u>	<u>Honor- ific Rank</u>	<u>Ecclesias- tical Educational Qualifica- tions.</u>	<u>Amount Received each month (in baht)</u>
<u>Chang Thong*</u>	(20)	Abbot ( <u>Chao Khana Tambon</u> )	<u>Phra Khru (Gd.3)</u>	-	30
<u>Phoromniwat*</u>	(21)	Abbot	<u>Phra Khru (Gd.1)</u>	<u>Nak Tham 1</u>	80
<u>Phutthaisuwan</u>	(22)	Abbot ( <u>Chao Khana Tambon</u> )	<u>Phra Khru (Gd.3)</u>	<u>Nak Tham 3</u>	30
<u>Yai Chai Mongkhon</u>	(23)	Abbot	<u>Phra Khru (Gd.3)</u>	<u>Nak Tham 3</u>	60
<u>Sawangarom</u>	(24)	Abbot ( <u>Chao Khana Tambon</u> )	-	<u>Nak Tham 3</u>	30

Notes:

- i.\* Indicates royal foundation.
- ii. Monks (2, (4), (7)), are centrally appointed officials unlike deputy abbots in smaller monasteries who are personally chosen by the abbot and receive no formal appointment from higher ecclesiastical authorities.
- iii. a) Chao Khana Changwat - Ecclesiastical Provincial Head  
 b) " " Amphoe - " District Head  
 c) " " Tambon - " Sub-district Head

APPENDIX No.V.Estimated Annual Income and expenditure (1966-67)  
of two monks.a. Chao Khun Thep: his estimated annual income and expenditure.

The figures given are in most cases only approximate as the monk himself did not keep a close account of his income nor of his expenditure.

Estimated Annual Income

Food allowance ( <u>nittayaphat</u> ) - (260 baht per month)	- 3,120 baht p.a.
Money received in return for his services as <u>upacha</u>	- 4,500 baht p.a.
Money received for other pastoral services	- 1,000 baht p.a.
<u>Estimated annual Income</u>	- <u>8,620</u> baht

He also received various durable goods e.g. an electric fan, a sofa, vacuum flasks etc.

Estimated Annual Expenditures

Regular contribution to a <u>Cremation Assurance Fund</u> at <u>Wat Ratanachai</u>	- 3,600 baht p.a.
Contribution to costs of building school for lay children in the compound of <u>Wat Phanan Choeng</u>	- 3,000 baht
Miscellaneous expenses for support of 6 novices and five <u>dek wat</u> ; purchase of text books for ecclesiastical school	- 1,200 baht
Personal Expenditures - travel, betel-nut, food for visitors, etc.	- cost unknown
<u>Estimated Annual Expenditure</u>	- <u>7,800</u> baht

b. Phra Sombat: his estimated annual income and expenditureEstimated income

from merit-making ceremonies	800 baht
Occasional gifts from kinsmen and friends:	200 baht
<u>Estimated annual income:</u>	1,000 baht

Expenditures

The money received was largely spent on buying books, cigarettes and supplementary food for his own needs.

## APPENDIX NO. VI.

## COMPOSITION OF THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY AND EXTENT OF LAY SUPPORT AT FIFTEEN WATS IN AYUTTHAYA

NAME OF WAT	MONKS	NOVICES	MONASTERY BOYS	NUNS	MONASTERY COMMITTEE (NO. OF LAY MEMBERS)	LAY PEOPLE WHO MAKE MERIT (THAM BUN) ON HOLY DAY	LAY PEOPLE WHO OBSERVE THE PRECEPTS (THU SIN) ON HOLY DAY	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WHICH REGULARLY PRESENT RICE (BAN PRACHAM)
1) Suwandararam*	Lent	44	22	46	-	170	15	10
	Out of Lent	28	25	43	-	30	35	
2) Phanan Choeng*	L.	45	60	50	2	100	35-40	-
	O.	29	52	30	-	40-50	15-20	
3) Prasat	L.	21	-	11	12	50	40-50	1
	O.	11	15	20	10	10-20	20+	
4) Ratanachai	L.	18	-	15	-	100	30-40	15
	O.	15	-	12	-	40+	-	
5) Wongkhong	L.	14	7	10	-	50-70	20	50
	O.	8	2	5	-	20-40	-	
6) Kluai	L.	11	1	2	-	200-300	50	20
	O.	5	1	2	-	100	-	
7) Yaichai Mongkhon	L.	37	33	3	35	5-10	3	Few Few
	O.	22	11	3	35	-	-	
8) Yanasen	L.	4	7	-	-	30	7-8	10-12
	O.	6	-	3	-	-	-	

NAME OF WAT		MONKS	NOVICES	MONASTERY BOYS	NUNS	MONASTERY COMMITTEE (NO. OF LAY MEMBERS)	LAY PEOPLE WHO MAKE MERIT (THAM BUN) ON HOLY DAY	LAY PEOPLE WHO OBSERVE THE PRECEPTS (THU SIN) ON HOLY DAY	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WHICH REGULARLY PRESENT RICE (BAN PRACHAM)
9) Tuk	L.	12	3	7	-	4	50	25-30	30
	O.	18	3	6	-		-	-	
10) Woraphot	L.	7	1	4	-	-	50	5	10
	O.	7	-	5	-		-	-	
11) Na Phramen*	L.	10	-	18	5	3	100	10	10
	O.	9	-	19	4		5-6	5-7	
12) Salapun*	L.	8	2	12	-	21	30	20+	5-6
	O.	5	2	12	-		-	8-15	
13) Thammikarat	L.	13	-	11	5	-	100	20	30
	O.	5	-	10	5		-	-	
14) Borommawong*	L.	14	3	4	-	4	50	25-30	-
	O.	12	-	5	-		-	-	
15) Monthop	L.	12	5	12	-	-	20-50	6-7	3-4
	O.	13	3	15	-		10-15	6-7	

Note: \* Indicates Royal Wat (Wat Luang)

THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE ABBOT OF A WAT

The duties of the abbot as stated in the Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha (1902) are as follows:--

The abbot is required

- i) to maintain and develop the monastery as well as he can.
- ii) to take care not to let his monastery be a robber's hiding place
- iii) to govern the bhikkhus and laymen in his wat.
- iv) to maintain law and order and settle disputes and quarrels occurring amongst the bhikkhus and laymen in his wat.
- v) to undertake to establish the bhikkhus and laymen in his monastery in right conduct in accordance with their character and ability.
- vi) to arrange to educate the children under his care in accordance with their tendency and aptitude.
- vii) to provide lay devotees with proper facilities for their merit-making in his monastery.
- viii) to make a list of the bhikkhus and laymen in his monastery together with a report to higher ecclesiastical authority.
- ix) to issue the identification card to a bhikkhu or a samanera (novice) in his monastery, who wishes to go on a journey or to live in another monastery. However when the abbot has reason to believe that such a bhikkhu or a samanera (novice) will behave disgracefully outside, he may, upon notification to the suspected bhikkhu or samanera withhold his consent.

(Part 4, Article 14, 1902)

(More recent Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha (1941, 1963) list the same provisions in a less specific form).

In the Act of 1902 (Part 4 Article 17)

The abbot's governing power is defined as follows.

- i. He can govern and admonish monks novices and laymen in his wat.
- ii. He can settle disciplinary disputes in his monastery; in the event however, that it is a civil case, the abbot may also do so with the unanimous agreement of both parties.
- iii. A monk, novice, or layman cannot stay in his monastery without obtaining permission from him.
- iv. He is empowered not to allow any disobedient monk, novice of layman to stay in his monastery.
- v. The abbot is empowered to impose a penalty upon a disobedient novice or monk\*

\* The miscreant is traditionally made to perform some distasteful menial chore (e.g. cleaning the latrines, sweeping the compound).

APPENDIX No. VIIIAPPOINTMENT OF HIGHER ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICIALS1. Ecclesiastical Provincial Head. (Chao Khana Changwat)

In order to be appointed Chao Khana Changwat a bhikkhu must possess the following qualifications

- i. He must have been ordained for at least 10 Lenten seasons, and must have lived in a wat in the Province concerned for that length of time.
- ii. He must have been Deputy Chao Khana Changwat for two years.

OR

iii. He must have been Chao Khana Amphoe (Ecclesiastical District Head) in one of the Amphoe in the Changwat concerned for at least 4 years.

OR

iv. He must have the rank of Phra Racha Khana Chan Saman Barian or be of Phra Khru (2nd Grade) status.

OR

v. He must have passed Bariam Grade 6

The Chao Khana Changwat is chosen by the Ecclesiastical Regional Head (Chao Khana Phak) in consultation with the Council of Elders, and is appointed by the Supreme Patriarch (Somdet Phrasangkharat)

2. Ecclesiastical District Head (Chao Khana Amphoe)

In order to be appointed Chao Khana Amphoe a bhikkhu must possess the following qualifications

- i. He must have spent at least 5 Lenten seasons in the Order.
- ii. He must have been Deputy Chao Khana Amphoe for two years.

OR

iii. He must have been Chao Khana Tambon (Ecclesiastical Sub-District Head) of one of the Tambon in the Amphoe concerned for at least 4 years.

OR

iv. He must be of Phra Khru (2nd Grade) status or be of Phra Racha Khana Yok grade.

OR

v. He must have passed Bariam Grade 4.

The Chao Khana Amphoe or Ecclesiastical District Head is chosen by the Ecclesiastical Provincial Head (Chao Khana Changwat) in consultation with the Ecclesiastical Regional Head (Chao Khana Phak) and is appointed by the Council of Elders (Mahatherasamakhom).

3. The Ecclesiastical Sub-District Head (Chao Khana Tambon)

In order to be appointed Chao Khana Tambon a bhikkhu must have the following qualifications.

- i. He must have been ordained for at least 5 lanten seasons.
- ii. He must have been Deputy Chao Khana Tambon for two years.

OR

- iii. He must have been Abbot in that Tambon for 4 years.

OR

- iv. He must be of Phra Khru status

OR

- v. He should have passed Barian Grade 3 or Nak Tham Grade 1.

The Chao Khana Tambon is chosen by the Chao Khana Amphoe and appointed by the Ecclesiastical Provincial Head (Chao Khana Changwat)

(Details from Kot Mahatherasamakhom (Laws of the Council of Elders) Vol.2 Bk.V. Sub-sections 1.27 - 1.37)

## APPENDIX No. IX

i. Cash Contributions Received from the Laity 1966-67

<u>Wat</u>	<u>Amount Received as Kathin presenta- tion. (in baht)</u>	<u>Amount Received as Pha pa presenta- tion (in baht)</u>	<u>Amount Received from Thet Mahachat Wat Fairs, etc. (in baht)</u>
1) <u>Suandararam*</u>	11,000 (King's representa- tive)	-	10,000
2) <u>Phanan Choeng*</u>	50,000 (Officials of the Department of Fine Arts)	-	-  5,885
3) <u>Prasat</u>	2,000 (Private donor)		
4) <u>Ratanachai</u>	40,000 (Bangkok Co.)	-	-
5) <u>Wongkhong</u>	3,500 (Private donor)	3,000 (Private donor)	7,000
6) <u>Kluai</u>	2,000 (phuak wat)	-	200
7) <u>Yai Ghai Mongkhon</u>	24,000 (Private donor)	-	-
8) <u>Yanasen</u>	4,000 (Private donor)	4,000 (Private donor)	-
9) <u>Tuk</u>	40,000 (Municipal Offices, Ayutthaya)	2,000 (Private donor)	-
10) <u>Woraphot</u>	24,173 (Yellow Bus Co., Bangkok)	1,500 (Private donor)	-
11) <u>Na Phramen*</u>	5,500 (Private donor)	-	-
12) <u>Salapun*</u>	5,000 (King's repre- sentative)	-	-
13) <u>Thammikarat</u>	2,500 (Private donor)	500 (Private donor)	800
14) <u>Borommawong*</u>	79,582 (King's repre- sentative)	-	-
15) <u>Monthop</u>	2,040 (Teachers at an Ayutthaya secondary school)	-	-

Note: Details in brackets indicate the host (chao phap) or organising force behind the presentation.

\* Indicates royal foundation (wat luang)

ii. Statistics relating to land ownership and income from land.

<u>Name of Wat.</u>	<u>Thi Wat (rai)</u>		<u>Thi Thoran- isong. (rai)</u>		<u>Thi Kala- pana (rai)</u>	
		<u>Income p.a. (baht)</u>		<u>Income p.a. (baht)</u>		<u>Income p.a. (baht)</u>
1) <u>Suandararam*</u>	12	-	83	24-36,000	75	2,000
2) <u>Phanan Choeng*</u>	82	-	42	96,000	42	2-3,000
3) <u>Prasat</u>	11	31,200	2	-	0	-
4) <u>Ratanachai</u>	11	-	9	12,000	0	-
5) <u>Wongkhong</u>	38	-	0	-	0	-
6) <u>Kluai</u>	9	-	0	-	0	-
7) <u>Yai Chai Mongkhon</u>	20	-	631	20,000	0	-
8) <u>Yanasen</u>	26	1,000	0	-	0	-
9) <u>Tuk</u>	17	-	2	-	0	-
10) <u>Woraphot</u>	62	-	0	-	0	-
11) <u>Na Phramen*</u>	6	-	118	5,000	0	-
12) <u>Salapun*</u>	20	-	0	-	0	-
13) <u>Thammikarat</u>	33	-	42	1-3,000	0	-
14) <u>Borommawong*</u>	20	-	38	36,000	0	-
15) <u>Monthop</u>	30	-	50	-	0	-

Miscellaneous items of income.

Wat Suandararam - received 600 baht per annum from the owner of the ferry service, the landing stage for which was built on wat land.

Wat Phanan Choeng- received 600 baht per annum from the source described above, as its land was on the opposite bank of the river from that owned by Wat Suandararam - and received in addition approximately 20,500 baht from the shops erected in front of the bot which sold ritual items needed in the worship of the Buddha.

Wat Monthop - received 1,200 baht per annum as rent from houseboats belonging to the wat.

Note:

i. £1 sterling is equivalent to 50 baht

ii. 1 rai = .4 acre

\* Indicates royal wat (wat luang)

iii. Estimated annual income and expenditure  
of three wats 1966-67

I would like to stress that the figures given below are only approximate. The accounting system at the monasteries I studied was at best haphazard, at worst, non-existent. Consequently the figures given were obtained at random over time, and often from different members of the monastic community. This being the case many smaller donations and more routine expenditures may have been overlooked.

In the second place these statistics are misleading in that they deal with financial transactions which took place during a single year, and do not take into account such factors as interest accruing from money deposited in the bank or bills outstanding from the previous year. In some cases the fact that the wat was financing a building project which spanned several years made the assessment of financial position even more difficult.

I would refer the reader to Kaufman (1960 p.106) for details of the income of a rural monastery, Wat Bangkhuaed.

Estimated annual income and expenditures of  
three of the monasteries studied,  
1966-67

1. Wat Phanan Choeng

Estimated Annual Income

i. Income from land.

a) Thi wat:-

Money from shops outside the <u>bot</u> (this sum represents a share of proceeds taken by lay owners of shop)	- 20,500 baht.
Rent from ferry owner	- 600 baht

b) Thi Thoranisong:-

Rent received	- 96,000 baht
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c) Thi Kalapana:-

	- <u>2,500 baht</u>
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ii. Direct Cash Contributions

<u>Kathin presentation</u>	<u>50,000 baht</u>
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<u>Estimated Cash Income (1966-67)</u>	<u>-169,600 baht</u>
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(The wat also possessed a munithi fund of 120,000 baht)

Expenditures

Building and restoration:-	90,000 baht
Equipment for ecclesiastical school	3,000 baht
Salary for 3 monks sent from Bangkok to teach in the school (each received 300 baht per month)	10,800 baht
Electricity Charges (500 baht per month)	6,000 baht
Water Charges (500 baht per month)	6,000 baht
Cost of food for the community	36,500 baht

Estimated Expenditures 152,300 baht  
(1966-1967)

I must stress that these figures are only estimates as the bhikkhus tended to forget about smaller donations and occasional expenditures. The system of accounting, where such existed was usually makeshift and vague.

2. Wat WongkhongEstimated Annual Incomei. Income from land

The thi wat (38 rai) was not rented out.  
The wat possessed no other land-holdings

ii. Direct Cash Contributions

a. <u>Kathin</u> presentation	30,500 baht
b. <u>Pha pa</u>	3,000 baht
c. <u>Thet Mahachat</u>	<u>7,000</u> baht
<u>Estimated cash Income</u> - (1966-67)	40,500 baht

Expenditures

Restoration of <u>bot</u>	20,000 baht
Building new <u>kuti</u>	12,000 baht
Electricity charges (100 baht per month)	1,200 baht
Water charges (100 baht per month)	<u>1,200</u> baht.
<u>Estimated expenditures</u> (1966-67)	<u>34,400</u> baht

3. Wat KluaiEstimated annual incomei. Income from land

The thi wat (monastery compound) which was 9 acres in area was not rented out.

This wat possessed no other land.

ii. Direct Cash Contributions

a) <u>Kathin</u> presentation		2,000 baht
b) <u>Thet Mahachat</u>		<u>200 baht</u>
<u>Estimated income</u> (1966/67)	-	2,200 baht

Expenditures

Repairs to the <u>bot</u>		500 baht
Water Charges (100 baht per month)		1,200 baht
Electricity Charges (150 baht per month)		<u>1,800 baht</u>
<u>Expenditures</u> (1966/67)	-	3,500

(During the year 1966/67 Wat Kluai spent more money than it received from the laity. The abbot stated however that there was a little money in the wat's bank account although he could not be more specific).

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