



مجلة كلية التربية



**Love Motive Beyond Ahmed Shawqi's "Nahj  
Alburdah"  
("The Way of the Mantle")**

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دافع الحب في قصيدة أحمد شوقي " نهج البردة"

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## المستخلص:

يفترض هذا البحث أن دافع الحب هو المحرك الرئيسي وراء كتابه أحمد شوقي لقصيدة " نهج البرده" وتشمل مظاهر الحب في هذه القصيدة حبه الإنساني وحبه لله وحب النبي محمد وآله وحب القرآن المجيد وحب السيد المسيح والشريعة الإسلامية والتاريخ العربي والخلفاء الراشدين وحب الذات. ويفترض البحث أيضاً أن دافع الحب يوجه الشاعر في استخدام اللغة والصور الشعرية والقافية والأدوات البلاغية الأخرى .

الكلمات المفتاحية : دافع الحب - أحمد شوقي - قصيدة نهج البردة.

## Abstrac:

This paper hypothesizes that love is the driving force motivating Ahmed Shawqi (1868-1932) to write "Nahj Alburdah" in 1909. These aspects include his human love, love of God, of Prophet Mohammed and His family, of the Holy Quran, of Christ, of the Islamic Sharia and Arab history, of the four Caliphs and of the self. It propounds that love directs the poet's utterances, language, imagery, rhyme and other rhetorical devices.

**Key words:** lovemotive , Ahmed Shawqi, Nahj Aburdah

This paper hypothesizes that love, with all its diverse aspects, is the driving force motivating Ahmed Shawqi (1868-1932) to write "Nahj Alburdah" in 1909. These aspects include his human love, love of God, of Prophet Mohammed and His family, of the Holy Quran, of Christ, of the Islamic Sharia and Arab history, of the Four Caliphs and of the self. It propounds that love directs the poet's utterances, language, imagery, rhyme and other rhetorical devices. The method followed throughout this paper is trace these different aspects of love, highlight them and show how they are linguistically and technically expressed in his poetry.

Born and raised in a family of mixed roots (Turkish, Arab, Kurdish, Greek and Circassian), Shawqi is distinguished by combining all the qualities that make him a poet of a loving, tender-hearted, sensitive, contemplative, religious, self-controlling and patriotic nature. According to Nada Y. Al-Rifai, "Shawqi was able to combine the old and the modern by providing Islamic character to the old religions and highlighting the call of monotheism by religions since ancient times (Wisdom 227). In the same context, H. AL Sheikh states that Shawqi could manage to blend "heritage with language, style, music, and imagination; and present them in a smooth Egyptian spirit, which fits the emerging Arab taste" (35).

Describing Shawqi, Khalil Motran writes, "He most often imitates his ancestors, yet he finds no difficulty outdoing them; his poetry is that of distinction and genius." (trans. by us, np). Though he is not the first to initiate the traditional genre of laud poetry aimed at praising Prophet Mohammed, Shawqi remains one of the greatest Arab poets who have contributed to that genre. Al-Rifai confirms, "Shawqi opposed and imitated many old poets, and his poetic emulation (or *Mu'arada*) formed a large part of his poetry collection" (Wisdom 228).

To better understand "Nahj Alburdah," it is necessary to briefly shed light on laud poetry aimed at praising Prophet Mohammed. According to Al-Resala Magazine, "If we trace the art of praising the greatest Prophet since the beginning of Islam until now, we find that it is divided into

two kinds: the first is one wherein its versifiers are bound by a particular meter, rhyme and well-known pattern. This kind is regarded as 'Badi'at'. As for the second, it belongs to the general kind of praise of the Prophet" (trans. by us, np).

"Badi'at" versifiers abide by a particular meter called "Baseet" (simple) and a rhyme scheme that always ends in /m/ sound. This kind is characterized by having at least a figure of speech in every line. They (versifiers) thus aim at embroidering this kind of praise with all beautiful figures of speech. The first known Arab praise poem written by Ka'ab Ibn Zuhair is called "Banat Su'ad" or the Burdah, written sometime after his conversion into Islam. (5-12-2021).

Mostafa Goubail adds:

And there is another Burda, which is written by imam Al-Busiri ... a lot of poets tried to imitate it, in Arabic poetry this imitation is called Mo'arada ..., [which] means that a poet writes a poem to imitate another poem in its rhyme and subject, trying to be better than the original one. And one of the famous imitations of the Busiri Burda is Nahj ul-Burda by Ahmed Shawki. (np)

In fact, Shawqi is influenced by ancient Arab traditional poets who would outset their poems with lines of courteous love even though they were handling other sophisticated themes. Similarly, he, motivated by a chaste love, begins Nahj Alburdah handling his personal emotions of love towards a woman. By doing so, he tries to sharpen his poetic sensations and prepare the reader to the serious subjects he would deal with later: "On the plain, between the ban-tree and the mountain, a white gazelle fawn / Has found it licit in forbidden months to shed my blood." <sup>1</sup> He goes further claiming that her beautiful wild eyes are like a well-aimed arrow that has struck and rendered him a "slain lion." Though bleeding, he confirms that "the wounds of lovers cause no pain." Anticipating that he could be a subject of blame and censure on the part of unforgiving people, he states: "You have been endowed with the most generous of human virtues / If you are one who seeks excuses for the sins of others." Yet, he affirms that if they

have tasted love, which, as he sees, "is fate", they "would not have blamed or censured [him]."

The poet's intense human love dictates the language of these opening lines, which include one or more figure of speech. For instance, he uses an extended personification wherein he likens his beloved to a white fawn that finds it licit to shoot him with her beautiful eyes, seen as a well-aimed arrow, during the sacred months. He uses the antithesis "licit" and "forbidden" to sharpen the power of the fawn's look. In a startling hyperbole in the second line, he finds that the fawn's wild eyes have also struck a lion (the poet himself) and caused him to bleed. To aggrandize the hyperbole, he claims that the fawn's eyes are capable of killing all animals, predators or preys alike. Moreover, out of an unjustified sense of guilt, he sees his love as a sin, though it is a chaste, reserved one. Its purity is reflected in his choice of elevated language and lofty imagery: no flagrant sensual feelings are aroused or sexually alluding words are used. Though handling courtship, Shawqi never uses a language of which he may be ashamed or blamed; on the contrary, his language is full of decency, eloquence, sweetness, one "within the traditions of the conservative aristocracy in Egypt" (Al-Rifai, Love 145).

Though emotionally overcharged, the poet – with a vivid self-control – chooses his words comfortably; he selects ones pregnant with associations and cross references. For example, when he talks about "the sacred months," he refers to an old Arab tradition (almost 4000 years old) which banned wars during particular months (Zu Elke'da, Zu Elhejja, Muharam and Rajab) except for self-defense. That tradition was originally initiated by Prophet Abraham to guarantee a safe travel to and from Mecca during the months of pilgrimage, a tradition that was substantiated by the Holy Quran wherein God states:

Verily, the number of months with Allâh is twelve months (in a year), so was it ordained by Allâh on the Day when He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are Sacred (i.e. the 1st, the 7th, the 11th and the 12th months of the Islamic calendar) (Surat Altawba, verse 36-7). (trans. by

Mohammed Alhilaly and Mohammed Khan)

Also, Shawqi's choice of the rhyming words in the above lines is neither arbitrary nor imposed; it is rather indicative and integrated with the main meaning and objective of the poem. The rhymed hemistiches he uses in the first line further testify to his compliance with the opening line of a classical Arabic poem. Moreover, his words reflect a smooth music appropriate to the atmosphere of courtship he presents. Al-Rifai comments, "He was a poet whose poems reflected the language of music, to the extent that it was said that he was born to be a musician but became a poet" (Lyrics 150). There is no better evidence to substantiate this point than the fact that selected lines of this poem were sung by Um Kulthum, the most famous Arab singer.

Going back to his beloved, Shawqi addresses her: "O you with drowsy eye, you've never tasted passion, / you've kept your pining [lover] awake, preserving passion, so sleep." Self-sacrificial and considerate of his beloved despite undergoing torture in love, he does not like her to pass through the same excruciating experience. On the contrary, he is ready to save and protect her: "A thousand times I would be your ransom." Surprisingly, he imagines her phantom coming to him at night to soothe his pains and heal his wounds, a gift that only imagination can bring to lovers to make up for their actual deprivation. Despite using, a concretization in "tasting passion" above, he does not invoke bold sexual feelings. Also, his use of the personification in describing her phantom as a physician that heals reflects physical deprivation yet spiritual gratification.

Vulnerable as a human lover, Shawqi finds himself attracted to different beautiful women who sway like well-shaped ban-trees, kill like slender spears and spill blood like sharp swords. Combining such contradictory characteristics, those women's faces are like shining moons that cause the rising sun to be jealous of them. On the other hand, their eyes "slay with eyelids sick with languor"; their coquettish gaits make men stumble in their love, while their looks inflame men's cheeks in a way that divulges their hidden emotion. For him, women "bear the banner of beauty,

however varied its forms, yet beauty is one and indivisible." He further adds, "Every [maiden] white or tawny delights the eye," describing their individualized beauty in terms of both white fawns or tawny mountain goats. To show the indivisibility of love, he uses paradoxes; for example, women's faces shine like full moons yet kill like slender spears or sharp swords. In addition, he uses antitheses, such as white fawns and tawny goats.

Shifting from his infatuation with women in general to that with his beloved in particular, Shawqi writes, "O daughter of the full-maned [lion] whose lair is protected, Shall I meet you in the forest or in the palace?" Thus, he refers to a tradition of a time when dating was not permitted on bases of societal, moral and religious considerations. That was a time when fathers were very strict about their daughters' going out with wooers or even suitors. He describes such men as real lions who vigilantly protect their lairs. Thus, all his possible means to see her are blocked: "Between you [my beloved] and me the way is blocked by brown [spears] and likewise by an 'udhri veil of chastity". In such a social atmosphere, women's status at the time, the poet's moral conservatism and religious upbringing forbid him from clearly revealing her identity (which in reality even among his close relatives and friends remained an eternal secret). They also prevent him from overtly using a flirtatious language that may arouse human desires. In support of this idea, Al-Rifai suggests that "He had a pure tongue in mentioning women even in his courting that flew with rich emotions, delicate sensations, and glowing feelings transcending above profligacy and dissipation" (Love 145).

The only way to see or visit her occurs in his dreams: "I never visited your abode except in the folds of slumber; your abode, for him who desires you, is more distant than Iram." Shawqi here alludes to the lost city of Iram whose likeliness nothing was created. Again, he makes a cross reference to the Holy Quran where God mentions that city as one whose likelihood was never created. Such cross references to the Quran reflect the poet's religious upbringing and his alert mind that is capable of associating different things at the same time.



Interestingly enough, Shawqi, who has written so far about courteous love and the suffering it incurs, as well as the possible pleasures of life in other poems, becomes the same poet who seriously handles love of God and that of the Prophet. Though this might show a duality in his character, it remains one of his rich sides since it reflects the integrated consciousness of a multiple personality. At a crucial moment in the poem, he announces that this worldly love could be a "sin", as it may divert man from the goal for which he was originally created: to worship and love God. He further suggests that he has to resist the temptation of that love to guarantee a peaceful life for himself and the collective human soul. In a pondering mood, he states that worldly love is like "speckled viper's fangs" that have to be broken to "spill its venom." Then he likens it to a woman, who is "Betrothed, as long as mankind has existed, betrothing; from the beginning of time, she has never been widowed or without a spouse." The metaphor used to identify love as a viper or the personification wherein he likens love to a spouse refer to the arbitrary association between man and worldly love. Suzanne P. Stetkevych observes that that abrupt change from dealing with courteous love to "a moral exhortation or admonition" signifies an allegorical level of "a warning against worldly and fleshly temptations." (172)

This negative attitude towards human love and the world in general makes Shawqi philosophize about them: "Time fades away but her evil deeds remain / A wound to Adam that forever makes him weep." Advising himself and the collective human soul, he advocates that man should not concern himself with their gifts/fruits since death is always awaiting. The world, just as it may bestow prosperity and health, leaves people miserable and diseased. Likewise, human love/passion is likened to a she-camel that grazes on "the lush pasturage of disobedience and sin" and drinks "sab" and "alqam," two very bitter trees. He concludes this part preaching: "For your own good, you must return to morality; straighten out your soul with morals and it will follow the straight path. / It is best for the soul to graze on wholesome pasture grounds; the worst thing for the soul is to graze on noxious

grass." The sensory and mental imagery he uses to describe the sinful soul reflects his obsession with the necessity of purifying it of all evil and worldly love. The visual image of the she-camel grazing on lush pasturage, the gustatory sense of tasting sab and alqam, as well as the mental image of straightening the soul's way formulate his attempt to foreground his idea of human love as sin and the soul's inevitable search for purity.

Finding that human love is of no real avail, Shawqi shifts to that of the Prophet, a guaranteed way to attain the love of God. He first confesses that his sins may be too grave to be forgiven, yet he is full of hope that God will grant him refuge and protection. Confident in the "key to God's love (the Prophet), he beseeches Him for the best of intercession: "I will place my hope ... in [Muhammed] the dispeller of sorrow and cares in both abodes. / When I humble myself before him to ask for the most precious [gift of] intercession, what I ask for will be nothing to him." This supplicatory act shows the poet's dedicated request of protection in the refuge of the Prophet, Who will hopefully respond to him. It is not strange that he ascribes to the Prophet an aspect of divinity; He is the dispeller of sorrow and cares in both abodes. The poet's utterance of humbling his wing of submission to the Prophet echoes the Quranic verse wherein God orders people to charitably deal with their parents saying: "And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy." (Israa, verse 23) Moreover, his utterance of holding tight to the rope of praise for the Prophet echoes the Quranic verse wherein God orders the believers to hold tight to the rope of God: "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided." (Al Imran, 24). Such echoes reflect the poet's firm religious background.

Shawqi's devoted love for the Prophet manifests itself in the following lines wherein he calls Him "the Prince of Prophets" and enumerates His unique qualities: He is the incarnation of "virtue, benefit and favor." Moreover, he affirms that praising Him will help him "on a day when bonds of lineage and kinship are [of] no avail," and it is that which gives him distinction and credit among other poets; simply put, praising Him is incomparable honor. He

proceeds that the Prophet is the "choice of the Creator" and the blessing endowed to humanity and all other creatures. In a beautiful hyperbole, Shawqi describes Him as "the master of water-trough on the day when [even] God's messengers are supplicants, for drink, and trusted Jibril thirsty." Stetkevych proposes that the Prophet's quenching of His companion's thirst "becomes a spiritual life-giving, adumbrating the Prophet's powers of revival." (181) In addition, Shawqi's love for the Prophet dictates a language of divinity: the Prophet is the One Who quenches people's physical and spiritual thirst.

For Shawqi, not only does the Prophet's shining face "illuminate the world," but it also makes all stars fall short to His splendid glamor. Unlike other people, the Prophet was born out of two lights instead of "loins and womb." Even the monk Bahira could identify Him before seeing Him, simply because His features and signs are well-known to all creatures and wise men, including Mt. Hira, the Holy Spirit, and the plains of Mecca. Out of deep love, Shawqi mentions some of the Prophet's material miracles, such as the gushing of water from among His fingers and the cloud shading Him during His trade journey to the Levant; it is also the selfsame love that warms up monks, nuns, rocks and "all things that have breath". Moreover, the hyperbole wherein he states that it is the cloud that "came to seek [H]is shelter, not vice versa, confirms his deep love for the Prophet.

Shawqi holds that "the [other] prophets brought up miracles that lapsed, but you have brought us wisdom that is never cut off." The eternal miracles he speaks about here are those of the Holy Quran, which forever remain new despite the fact that "the splendor of antiquity and age adorns them." The Quran carries exalted words that "guide you toward truth and piety and mercy." Describing the Prophet, Shawqi labels Him "the most eloquent of all of those that utter dad (Arabic); His words are sweeter than honey, purer than jewels and nobler than any piece of prose or poetry. His words revive the hearts of men and their dead aspirations.

Exhilarated on the Prophet's glorious birth, Shawqi writes, "The glad tidings of the Guide and his birth spread east and west the

way light travels in the darkness". This antithesis of light and darkness entails an Islamic cultural and political revival against the virtual death and actual ignorance of the pre-Islam community. Moreover, the Prophet's birth has petrified blood onto the hearts of Arab despots, "made fly [from fear] the souls of the Persian tyrants" and cracked the "battlements of Iwan Kisra." It has also announced the termination of idolatry, chaos, slavery, oppression, unjustified torture, shedding blood and all aspects of injustice. Albert Hourani contends that such lines do not deal much with the birth of the Prophet, as much as they deal with the chaos and tyranny that humankind suffered before His coming. (7) Hence, the poet's chosen words focus on oppression, darkness, despots, chaos, persecution, tyranny, slaughter, torture deafness and blindness that characterized the pre-Islamic community.

He further talks about the Prophet's nocturnal journey from Mecca to Aqsa Mosque and His ascension into heavens, a journey during which He leads all other prophets in prayers and almost reaches God's throne. Impressed by that incident, Shawqi ecstatically writes: [You rode Buraq] until you reached a heaven to which no wing can fly, no foot can tread / [A voice] said, 'let every prophet [stand] according to rank,' And 'O Muhammed, this is [God's] Throne, so touch it". Commenting on this idea, Stetkevych argues, "Poetically, of course, what is intended is Muhammad's unique proximity to and favor with Allāh." (191). In fact, the hyperbole implied in touching God's throne further reflects Shawqi's profound love for the Prophet.

This selfsame love pushes him to enumerate many of the Prophet's magnificent achievements and qualities: The Prophet has established the foundations of both religious and worldly sciences, kept "the stores of knowledge and wisdom," carried the "crowns of grace", as well as "the majesty of truth" and remained God's eternal "pillar of religion." The poet further expresses his utmost dignity to carry the Prophet's name – Ahmed. Elaborating on this, he states that "how can one named [after] the Messenger not reach exalted rank?" For the poet, praise of the Prophet is a blessing and a "spiritual station acquired from the Most Merciful." The

Prophet's beauty, generosity, high rank and splendor cannot be emulated by a full moon, a munificent sea, a lofty mountain or "gleaming stars." His bravery defaces a lion's courage while His light dims many full moons (*badrs*). According to Stetkevych, Shawqi here uses "a dense word-play centering around the full moon (*badr*) as a symbol of the Prophet and the miraculous early Muslim victory over the Meccan polytheists at the Battle of Badr." (198)

Shawqi adds that though the name "orphan" may carry a sense of humility to anyone, it remains a source of honor when it applies to the Prophet, just as a unique hidden pearl is described as orphan/parentless. Shawqi here uses a pun wherein he associates the word "yatim" (orphan) describing Mohammed to the word "yutum" (peerless) describing a unique pearl, thus equating them. Moreover, God has conferred, Shawqi adds, dignity upon His Messenger: Whether you say 'no' about a matter or say 'yes.' God's choice is in that 'no' or in that 'yes.'" Hence, Shawqi herein confers upon the Prophet another aspect of divinity: judging and decreeing.

The hyperbole included in line 114 further testifies to Shawqi's deep love for the Prophet; he writes, "God has apportioned His blessings among mankind, and you have been preferred in blessings and in portions." Unfortunately, the translation here falls short from conveying the true Arabic meaning. While God has divided provisions among mankind without their will, the Prophet, on the other hand, has the free will to choose His own portions and livelihoods. Such a hyperbole, beside showing the poet's love for the Prophet, further signifies the high rank bestowed by God upon His Messenger.

The lines 116-128 carry a good portion of Shawqi's love for both the Prophet and His brother Jesus. Both have revived people from death: one from actual death (Christ); the other from virtual death (Mohammed). While Christ's miracle is material, Mohammed's is spiritual: sending people back to life from the death of ignorance. Then Shawqi defends all God's Messengers saying that they were not sent to kill or spill blood; on the contrary, they were sent as signs of God's infinite love and mercy. Justifying

wars to defend oneself, Shawki confirms that only violence can stop evil. To prove this, he contends that mild Christianity has suffered a lot due to its tolerance. He adds that Christ Himself could have tasted the dire consequences of utter tolerance were it not for God's mercy to raise Him to heaven:

Were it not for Jesus's high rank with Him who sent him,  
And a sacred bond established to the [Holy] Spirit  
from the beginning of time, His body, noble and inviolate,  
would have been nailed to the two boards [of the cross]  
And his tormentor would have felt neither alarm nor fear.

Al-Rifai contends that Shawqi appears to be a religious man who "intended to clarify and increase Islam's lofty truths and was one of those who reinforced a high edifice of the love of Islam." (Love 145). Hence, having an absolute faith in what the Holy Quran propounds, Shawqi is never ashamed to announce publicly that Christ was not crucified, but He was raised to heaven:

Exalted be the Messiah [above crucifixion]! One who hated  
him tasted crucifixion [in his stead], For indeed punishment  
is in the same measure as one's sins and crimes. [Jesus] the  
Prophet's brother and spirit of God holds an honored rank  
Above the heavens and below the Throne.

In fact, Shawqi's love for Christ can be clearly seen in the choice of words. Christ, the "spirit of God," holds a "high rank" and a "sacred bond" to God "above the heavens and below the Throne" while his body is "noble and inviolate." Such descriptions of Christ show that Shawqi does not differentiate between the two Messengers, since both are brothers and two saviors of humanity.

Defensive of the Prophet and the false accusations directed against Him in relation to waging wars, Shawqi argues that He has taught Muslims the philosophy of war, its obligations and its ethics. First, he states that "war is the basis of the world's order" whereby Muslims can attain dominion. It is a means by which "[states] with high-raised columns or firm foundations" can be established. Providing evidence, he confirms that it was war, during the Dark Ages and the Age of Enlightenment, which caused

thrones to be either raised or declined. Moreover, war, Shawqi proceeds, is not a transgressive act, but a defensive one. His proof is that "the followers of Jesus have prepared every shattering [weapon], while we have prepared for nothing but to be shattered." Thus, Shawqi presents, as Stetkevych proposes, a "poetic polemic against Western Christian imperialism as a preamble to his vision of an idealized and paradigmatic Islamic past." (200) Obligated to fight, Muslims are encouraged by the Prophet to take war seriously as "hurling lions" to defend God's cause. Meanwhile, Muslims should abide by the ethics of war, such as noble dealing with the injured and the captured, civilians and the environment.

Motivated by love, Shawqi sheds light on the Prophet's tolerant Sharia (Islamic law) which urges Muslims to seek knowledge. Luckily, he pursues, Muslims are honored to have "Read/Recite" as the first word ever revealed to the Prophet, one carrying the essence of wisdom and monotheism. It is that Sharia by which all worlds are to be guided, providing safety and security in all times. Then Shawqi talks about its influence on the past Islamic history: "When the dominion of Islam rose and spread, its kingdoms ... were guided by [the Sharia's] perfect light. / It taught a nation that had dwelt in the desert how to herd Caesars, after sheep and camels." This Sharia, he adds, has helped reformers establish "edifices of knowledge, justice and civilization." Moreover, it enabled Islamic leaders to conquer "the world for their religion and gave people a first draught of its cold sweet water."

Proud of his Islamic history, Shawki insists that instead of talking about the glories of Rome and Athens, people have to remember those of Baghdad, especially when it was the capital of the Islamic Caliphate. Rome, he believes, could not compete Baghdad in eloquence and justice: "Whenever the House of Peace [Baghdad]

is mentioned, Rome, the House of Laws, throws up her hands in surrender. / [Rome] could not equal [Baghdad] in eloquence at council; nor could it imitate its justice in disputes." The personification included here better explains how Rome, with all its civilization and mighty leaders, was deficient at equaling

Baghdad in eloquence or justice. Shawqi advocates that great Islamic figures, like Al-Rashid, Al-Ma'moun or Al-Mu'tasim were matchless, imposing "their will upon the borders and the boundaries of the earth." Despite his deep national sense, he even suggests: "And leave of Ramsis, for the true sign of dominion is establishing justice, not erecting pyramids." Shawqi here is referring to the spiritual side (justice) of civilization, not the material one (erecting pyramids). For him, it is that spiritual side that counts more because it surely perpetuates human goodness, rather than material remains that may stand for human tyranny. Knowledge and justice, he adds, are the true pillars of Islam, not "sovereign power."

To substantiate this idea of justice and knowledge, Shawqi provides the Four Caliphs as great examples representing these pillars/values. They cannot be compared to mere human kings: "For who among mankind could compare with al-Fārūq [ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb] in justice, or with the humble and modest [ʿUmar] Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz? It is Shawqi's love for the companions of the Prophet here that motivates such a redressing utterance, though in fact they do deserve such a representation. Both Caliphs remain the two representatives of justice incarnated, as during their reigns it was said that no Muslim suffered poverty. On the other hand, the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abi Taleb remains a tremendous reservoir of knowledge, "the overflowing sweet water in science and letters." Another example representing knowledge and perseverance is the third Caliph: "Or [ʿUthmān] Ibn ʿAffān, the Qurʾān in his hand, over which he bends, yearning like a mother over her newly-weaned babe. / And gathering its verses in order and arranging them in an unbroken necklace of the nights." This line is replete with figures of speech: a simile, a personification and a metaphor, all reflecting Shawqi's love for the knowledgeable, tender-hearted Uthman Ibn Affan who collected the Holy Quran and arranged it within one bound volume.

Mentioning Abu Bakr last, though he is actually the first and deserves to be so, Shawqi tries to highlight his great deeds entailing knowledge, wisdom and courage: "The valor of Abū



Bakr was never doubted after his glorious achievements in deeds and services. / With resolve and determination, he protected religion from trials that sorely tried the patience of the mature and patient." Such trials could have thwarted the rising Islam in its cradle were it not for his efforts. Even the courageous Umar Al-Faruk shows weakness and outrage when he hears the news of the Prophet's death, an event that shows Abu Bakr as a man of rare knowledge, wisdom and valor: "[Trials] that lead astray even the right-guided [Umar] al-Fārūq concerning death, which is certain, an unambiguous. / He contended with the people, drawing his Indian blade, concerning the greatest of Prophets, how could he not live forever?" To pay homage to Al-Faruk, Shawqi writes "Don't blame [Umar] for being bewildered: the beloved [Prophet] had died, and an ardent lover, despite himself, erred." As seen, the Four Caliphs are not mentioned in a chronological order, but in accordance with Shawqi's argument of the two major ideas of justice and knowledge. This signifies an alert mind that cannot be easily affected by his emotional upheaval and by love for the Five Caliphs.

Concluding his poem, Shawki beseeches God and asks Him to bestow blessings and peace on the Beloved Messenger, Who "dwells at [God's] throne." Such an exaggeration (dwelling at God's throne) reflects Shawqi's deep love for the Prophet. It further shows how the Prophet has proved to be the most dedicated of all worshippers, spending most of His nights praying and glorifying God, "enduring sleeplessness and the pains of swollen feet" and enjoying a content soul and a loving heart. The poet does not forget to show his love for the Prophet's family, being the most elected among mankind, ennobled with divine-lit faces and haughty noses. Nor would he forget to praise again the Four Caliphs, send them greetings and mention some of their heroic qualities such as courage, valor and patience. Finally, he prays to God to bestow blessings, love and compassion on all the followers of Prophet Mohamed and grant them His favor:

... for the sake of the Messenger of the words, be gracious to us, And do not increase the humiliation of his people

and their disgrace. O my Lord, through [Muhammad] you made the Muslims' beginning beautiful, So complete Your grace and grant them a good end.

According to Stetkevych, "Shawqī closes his poem with a resounding plea, not for mercy on the Judgment Day, but for the restoration of Islamic worldly dominion." (166) Thus, he seeks, beside intercession for himself, God's sustenance for the entire Islamic world against all the enemies of Islam, including even despotic Muslim rulers. He further supplicates to God to confer dignity to the Muslim community.

Thus, the poem runs a full circle of love, beginning with Shawqi's human love, passing through his love for God, for the Prophet, His family and companions (the Four Caliphs), for Christ, for Islamic Sharia and for the followers of the Prophet. In handling this genre of praise, Shawqi does not seek to achieve distinction among the throngs of the Prophet's praisers as much as he tries to express his deep devotion towards his love objects mentioned above. When he tackles his personal love experience, he is never repulsive, erotic or provocative. Moreover, when he talks about his love for the other love objects, he appears to be loving, faithful, though exaggerative, and dedicated without hypocrisy. Moreover, as discussed above, it is love that directs the sincerity of his expressions and the abundance of rhetorical devices.

End Notes

- 1- Any translated lines of the text are taken from *Poem Hunter.com*. 5-12-2021.

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