

Performing *A Thousand and One Nights* in Egypt

Susan Slyomovics

Many of the tales that make up the written corpus of *A Thousand and One Nights* were once orally recited. While their oral provenance is indisputable in many instances, the precise relationship between writing and orality, manuscripts and traditional spoken narrative is open to speculation. It is possible that certain tales thought to be written down or transcribed in manuscript or print were actually never recited or performed but rather consciously molded by a redactor or author to mimic the prevailing style of oral storytellers (Molan 1988). For other tales, there exist both authentic Arabic oral variants and written versions that, however “improved” or conflated, may be records of what was once a storytelling event. In the Arab world oral and written literature continue to interact in complex ways.

An observation of Edward William Lane, the English translator of *The Thousand and One Nights*, serves to illustrate the complex relationship between storytellers who operate in the context of an oral tradition and printed versions of their stories. In his renowned account of Cairo in the early nineteenth century, Lane notes that evening storytelling and public recitation of the *Nights* had long been a tradition. Yet he points out that the Cairene reciters were known to depend upon manuscripts for source material; this is proved by an anecdote about the diminishing number of poets who chose to recite the *Nights* because of the high purchase price of manuscripts (1978:409). While this anecdote shows that by the nineteenth century the reciters were literate and relied on written versions, the question remains whether the manuscripts that storytellers relied upon were transcriptions of earlier performances (made literary) or literary imitations of performances.

Further obscuring the relationship between the oral and the written is the fact that there exists no fixed, definitive written collection of tales to serve as a basis for comparison. Either thematically or historically, scholars have tried to distinguish a fixed set of repeated tales. H. Zotenberg (1888), in his study of an Aladdin manuscript, spoke of a “core” element of less

than three hundred stories around which redactors freely added material borrowed from other story collections; perhaps we might add that they may have been borrowed from storytellers as well. Zotenberg identified a nucleus of tales that have since been called “la rédaction moderne d’Égypte” and referred to as ZER or the Zotenberg Egyptian Rescension. More recently, Muhsin Mahdi’s Arabic-language critical edition, published in 1984, returned to the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript (known as Bibliothèque Nationale 3609-3611) that was the basis for Antoine Galland’s famous French translation (1704-1717). Mahdi’s English translator, Husain Haddawy, asserts that this Syrian manuscript is “of all existing manuscripts the oldest and closest to the *original* (italics mine)” (1990:xii). To understand competing notions of what constitutes an “original” text of the *Nights*, it is worth recapitulating the history of its appearance in the West.

Galland’s translation first introduced *The Arabian Nights* to European readers. His edition startlingly continues the Arab tradition of borrowing from the oral to supplement the written, for its text clearly owes many episodes not to a Syrian manuscript but to a Syrian storyteller (MacDonald 1932):

. . . a living source of the very best story material. On the morning of March 25, according to the entry in his *Journal* . . . , he [Galland] went to call on Paul Lucas, the oriental traveler. Paul Lucas was going out, but Galland remained and talked with Hanna, a Maronite of Aleppo whom Lucas had brought with him from that town, and Hanna at once began to tell him stories in Arabic which Galland recognized as *fort beaux*. From Galland’s *Journal* we learn that this went on at intervals up to June 2, and that he received in this way a large number of stories and held them either in his memory, aided by abstracts in his *Journal*, or in actual transcripts furnished to him by Hanna.

In Antoine Galland’s encounter in Paris with the living tradition of the Arab storyteller, it is as though Galland structurally reproduces the plight of Shahrazād in the tale that frames the *Nights*. She must narrate each night to avoid death at the hands of her king and husband, while Galland is driven by his publishers to produce one thousand and one nights of tales from any available sources. In Galland’s case, a storyteller arriving unexpectedly from the East enables him to satisfy the demands of his Parisian publishers by incorporating additional oral material into his collection of stories from the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript in order

to reach the number of one thousand and one nights of stories. Among the sections of the *Nights* that Galland drew from Hanna of Aleppo orally or asked him to write down are “Aladdin,” the adventures of the Caliph Haroun Al-Rashid, and “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.”

Galland’s *Mille et une Nuits* opened this work to Western readers and has had an enormous impact upon popular literature and culture. It has also influenced literate Arab readers, whose appreciation of the *Nights* is largely due to its popularity in the West.¹ Among the educated Arab elite, the work had previously been despised for its vulgar origin and vernacular language expression; it was associated with the storytellers and public performances beloved of the illiterate lower social classes.²

Galland’s insertion of Hanna of Aleppo’s oral stories allows us to reconsider spoken narrative complete with teller and audience. Though Galland followed the device of merging oral vernacular performances with written texts to create what folklorists call a “composite” text, contemporary Egyptian storytellers of the *Nights* distinguish between stories delivered from books and those orally performed. In interviews with Egyptian tellers, folklorist Hasan El-Shamy quotes a narrator who is informed that his tale is a variant that appears in the written *Nights*: ““Yes it is the same, but still it is not the same. This comes out of a book; that one is something we just know”” (1980:xlix). El-Shamy also gives examples where oral and printed versions exist simultaneously in the Egyptian community, the two never merging, and with the oral teller usually unaware of the existence of a written counterpart (1980:xlvi-li).

The subject of this paper is the multiple intersections between oral performance and the written narrative of one tale from *A Thousand and One Nights*, the story of Anas al-Wujūd and al-Ward fi-al-Akmām. This tale does not appear in the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript that was the basis of Galland’s translation nor in the tales of Hanna of Aleppo, but

¹ See al-Qalamāwī 1966. Even Galland, according to MacDonald’s account (1932:398), did not consider these stories to be of any importance in comparison with his translation of the Koran.

² Strong elitist literary bias is still present; for over a century there have been attempts to refine dialectal vulgarities and to eliminate bawdy elements: in 1985, an Egyptian court banned a new unexpurgated edition published in Beirut on moral grounds. The controversy over the court’s decision is to be found in *Al-Ahrām*, Egypt’s premier newspaper.

it is included in the ZER or Egyptian recension.³

By exploring the public performance of this oral tale as it is sung today in southern Egypt, the Ṣaʿīd, I claim that performance adds an element to the tale that should enter into considerations of the nature of orality in relation to writing: the discipline of performance studies also enables an analysis of live Egyptian performances within their socio-cultural context. This perspective leads to a second issue that appears to have no relationship to the nature of orality and writing, namely the literary question of genre and typology that has preoccupied students of *A Thousand and One Nights*, such as Sir Richard Burton, Enno Littmann, and Mia Gerhardt.⁴ These scholars attempted to classify stories from the corpus into mutually exclusive literary genres. Burton, for example, in an essay appended to his translation of *A Thousand Nights and One Night*, divides the *Nights* into fable, fairy tale, and anecdote. Littmann, the German translator, distinguishes the following categories: Märchen, Romane und Novellen, Sagen und Legenden, Lehrhafte Geschichten, Humoresken, and Anekdoten. A third scholar, Mia Gerhardt, speaks of love stories, crime stories, travel stories, fairy tales, and finally, a category of learning-wisdom-pious tales. Under their systems of classification *The Story of Anas al-Wujūd and al-Ward fi-al-Akmām* might be categorized as a fairy tale, a romance, or a love story. All of these categorizations stress the sentimental and emotional, the nonhistorical and fantastic qualities of a tale. Similarly, Peter Heath's study of genres in *Nights* places this tale in the narrative domain of romance because "on the semantic level, the primary theme of romance, a fundamental aspect of the genre's informing drive, investigates the concerns of honor as balanced between the demands of love and social propriety, within the context of Fate" (1987:13).

It is in the nature of performance, an exchange between the poet and his audience, that an audience rereads and rewrites the romantic aspects of the literary tale to conform to local social mores and conventions. In contrast with scholars of the literary texts, I propose literary categories that

³ The Arabic written version of "The Story of Uns al-Wujūd and al-Ward fi-al-Akmām" is from the Būlāq edition of *Alf layla wa-layla*, and the English translation is from the reprint of the 1838 edition by Lane (1980).

⁴ Burton 1962, Littmann 1954, Gerhardt 1963. See also Heath 1987-88. von Grunebaum (1946:305-6) compares this tale to the Greek novel that combines travel adventures with love action.

emerge from performance and are based on truth value and the verifiability of history: the anecdote, the historical anecdote, or the legend.⁵ In order to do so, I summarize the written manuscript versions and then compare them to an Egyptian oral performance, a performance mediated by the southern Egyptian (Ṣaʿīdī) audience's unarticulated knowledge of a shared, historical narrative context of the oral version.

Written Version

In the written manuscript versions of *A Thousand and One Nights*, the narrator, Shahrazād, spends eleven nights—from the three hundred and seventy-first to the three hundred and eighty-first night—reporting the love affair between the handsome soldier, Anas al-Wujūd, and the vizier's daughter, al-Ward fi-al-Akmām, the two protagonists who lend their names to the tale title. A summary of the manuscript version of the tale of Anas al-Wujūd is as follows.

A king of ancient times, called King Shamīkh, had a vizier, named Ibrahīm, whose daughter, al-Ward fi-al-Akmām (Bud in the Rose),⁶ was exceedingly beautiful. Each year the king gathered nobles of his realm for a royal ballgame. From her window, Rose spied a handsome player, and fell in love with him so deeply that when he rode by her, she dropped an apple on him. He raised his head, saw her, and fell in love. Rose's nurse told her the handsome man's name, Anas al-Wujūd.⁷ Rose improvised amorous couplets to her beloved, wrote them on paper, and placed them under her pillow. A maid stole the paper, learned of her mistress' secret love, and offered to act as an emissary. The maid brought the poems to Anas, who composed in reply a set of poems written on the reverse side of the paper.

⁵ See also Mahdi 1989.

⁶ The heroine's name, al-Ward fi-al-Akmām, is literally a rose in its calyx or sleeve, or a rose springing from the clefts of its hood, a rose in bud or a bud in the rose. For the English translation I use "Rose," or "Bud in the Rose."

⁷ Anas al-Wujūd is a pun whose double meaning is "delight of living," or with the *wu* functioning as "and" (*anas wu jūd*), "love and liberality." In spoken Ṣaʿīdī Arabic the hero's name is pronounced "Anas al-Wujūd" and in the written version "Uns al-Wujūd." I have retained the Arabic dialect form in my text and translation.

Rose sent back more verses. On one of her trips, the maid was intercepted by a palace chamberlain and accidentally dropped the love correspondence. Only later was Rose informed of the loss. A passing eunuch seized the dropped letters and gave them to the Vizier Ibrāhīm, who, realizing the author was his daughter, wept so copiously that his wife was driven to devise a plan to save the family honor. The parents exiled Rose to a remote castle where they left her with provisions and attendants; they then destroyed the ships that had conveyed their daughter to her new prison. Before her departure, Rose pinned on the palace door a message in verse to her lover describing her plight. Thereupon Anas disguised himself as a religious mendicant and wandered in search of his lost love composing poetry. On his way he had numerous adventures: he charmed a fierce lion to help him track Rose's footsteps in the desert; a hermit, hearing Anas declaim his verse, helped him fashion a boat out of a palm tree to sail across the sea to Rose's castle. Meanwhile Rose escapes by tying together clothes to lower herself from the high castle windows. She encounters a fisherman who takes her across the sea; she finds shelter with Prince Dirbās, who hears her story, takes pity on her, and sends his ministers to King Shamīkh to demand that the two lovers be reunited. After many misadventures, in the cause of which many disguises are donned and discarded, Anas and Rose are wed with much music-making and poetry recitation.⁸

The written versions occupy eleven of Shahrazād's one thousand and one nights. These written texts alternate between prose narrative and dialogue in verses. There is a large cast of characters who all divert and complicate the plot by recounting their stories along the way. They have a "once upon a time" beginning, a middle, and an ending that happily concludes in marriage.

Oral Version

In contrast, the oral version of the Anas al-Wujūd story presents a variety of distinctive stylistic, performative, and narrative features. The oral version of this tale was recorded in 1983 in the village of Maḥamīd,

⁸ The summary is from the Egyptian branch of manuscripts as well as translations of Burton and Lane. Mahdi's critical edition in Arabic, *Alf layla wa-layla* (1984) and its English translation by Haddawy (1990) are both based on the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript that Galland used. They end at night 282 and do not include the later Egyptian branch to which this tale belongs.

Aswan Governorate, Upper Egypt. It was performed by a southern Egyptian epic singer named ‘Awaḍallah ‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Ali, whose life history, poetic artistry, and epic recitation are the subject of my monograph *The Merchant of Art*.⁹ ‘Awaḍallah is a professional epic singer, the son and grandson of professional epic singers who have for generations recited the cycle of Arabic heroic tales called *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. ‘Awaḍallah is illiterate and at the time of the recording he would give his age as either 63 or 73. ‘Awaḍallah recites the epic and other tales in his repertoire in the marketplace, in local small cafes, and at saints’ pilgrimage sites. He is also commissioned to perform at certain festive occasions such as weddings, circumcisions, Ramadan breakfasts, and welcome parties to celebrate the return of pilgrims from the hajj to Mecca. ‘Awaḍallah recites accompanying himself on the *tār*, the large Nubian frame drum. Both the epic and this tale are sung in rhymed quatrains, called *murabba‘āt*, as well as in cascading, interlocking couplets, tercets, and quatrains with complex rhyme schemes (cf. Cachia 1989).

It is noteworthy that ‘Awaḍallah, the southern Egyptian epic singer, speaks and sings to his live audience entirely in verse, while in the written versions, in contrast, verse is used only when characters address each other directly in speech or writing. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that poetic discourse in both the written and oral versions involves a teller recounting a tale to a listener. In the written text, the tellers are protagonists *within* the tale and they extend their rhymed speech over eleven manuscript nights. However, in oral performance, ‘Awaḍallah is the living, reciting teller who speaks in poetry to his listeners of Upper Egyptians. Consequently, we are pointing to a major difference between oral and written versions of this tale: written manuscripts (employing both prose and poetry) characterize and unfold through the story and narrative in prose, while the oral tale characterizes and unfolds through the powerful language of poetry and erotic punning (Slyomovics 1987b). Performance is in verse, reading is primarily in prose but with marked poetic “speechifying.” The pleasure of the text is in reading, while the pleasure of the performance is in hearing.

What is performed is a (mock) romance in a complex style, marked by erotic punning, framed by a larger, well-known legend familiar both to the epic singer/storyteller and to his audience. To ‘Awaḍallah’s Upper

⁹ See Slyomovics 1987a:6-20 and 1986.

Egyptian audience these are historical events that actually took place in their region. The Egyptian audience is obviously familiar with the relevant background information: the geographic details, the personal history of the characters, and even the final outcome can therefore be omitted. Again this does not resolve the question whether this tale is a fiction turned into history or local oral legends grafted on to a written narrative by a storyteller or an oral variant co-existing with its written form.

‘Awadallah’s sung version consists of approximately three hundred lines of verse (see Appendix). This elicited version (the usual performance venue is a wedding party) was completed in forty minutes. After an opening invocation to the Prophet Muhammad, ‘Awadallah begins with a description of the hero Anas, his beauty and renown, and how beloved he was to the king. The king’s love for Anas is so great that he vows to forgo wine-drinking until Anas has safely returned from a mission. Anas passes by the window of the vizier’s daughter, Rose. They see each other and fall in love. Rose confides her love of Anas to her nurse, who conveys to him a passionate erotic love letter to which he replies in the same fashion.

The erotic content of Rose’s letter to Anas is specific to the style of oral sung performance because performance allows for the use of a range of paronomastic devices characteristic of Egyptian folk narrative in the vernacular. These devices can convey both sexual and political double meanings (cf. Slyomovics 1986). ‘Awadallah, the storyteller, calls this punning performance a *mawwāl maqfūl*, or “closed mawwāl ballad,”—a ballad full of hidden multiple meanings. For example, it is in the voice of the storyteller that Rose writes to her lover. The erotic play of meaning in the heroine’s lyrics is perhaps rendered permissible only by their being uttered by a male voice. In addition, the notion of intoxication, both sexual and alcoholic intoxication, may diminish verbal modesty throughout the poem. The poet sings about the feelings of lovers, the metaphors they use to describe them, and his own intoxication as well as the audience’s. Words that phrase love’s embraces are intensified by drinking as “the wine cup goes round again” for the poet, the audience, and the lovers:

line 195: O how lucky is she that embraces another!

[poet’s aside: “Ah more words! Speech increases”]

line 196: and the winecup goes round.

line 197: ʾaskar ana w-inta ya anas ilwujūd wa law alf I ʾām
 Let us be intoxicated, you and I, O Anas al-Wujūd, for a thousand
 years!

line 198: ʾaskar ana w-inta law alfēn sana
 Let us be intoxicated, you and I, two thousand years—

line 199: kaʾinnahu
 as if

line 200: laḥẓa fi huḍni ʾana
 only a moment in my embrace.

line 201: ma tunẓur iššagīn
 look upon my cleavage

The word for “cleavage,” *iššagīn*, would be interpreted by the audience as the cleft of the vulva or buttocks or breasts. In the latter case it would be translated as “cleavage.”

line 202: wi šayxi ʾana
 1) and I an “old man” (i.e. “young girl”)
 2) and my sash

The first translation reflects the poet’s use of oppositional substitution (*tabdīl*). *Šayx* or “shaykh,” literally “old man,” conveys its opposite, namely “young girl.” The second translation shows that the words “and shaykh” may also mean, less erotically, a “sash” (*wišāḥ*).

line 203: abyad wi maḥṭūṭ lu ḥalag
 white and wearing an earring

This phrase would be interpreted as “nipple” or “clitoris,” depending on one’s interpretation of the “cleft” metaphor in line 201.

line 204: wiyya -lxuzzām
 with a nose-ring

“Nose-ring” would be understood as designating either the aureola of the nipple or the vaginal opening.

line 206: dagg ittiyūr

like the beating of bird

This phrase would be understood as a metaphor comparing the folds of the genitals to delicate bird tracks. “Dagg” may also mean “thinness, subtlety,” that is, “thin or subtle as a bird.”

The nurse conveys this letter from Rose to Anas, who replies with a letter of his own. He describes Rose’s beauty beginning with her bow-shaped eyebrows and languorous eyes and traveling down along her body. After reaching her belly and navel, his verses pick up on Rose’s erotic self-description of her genitals as a *shaykh* or “old man.” Rose’s use of “old man” for “young girl” is baffling until the lover’s reply is heard. He compares the pleasures and dangers of sex to the benefits and obligations of a religious pilgrimage to a *shaykh*’s shrine:

- line 276: You look at her venerable *shaykh*, around him a shrine
- line 277: You look at a venerable *shaykh*, around him a mausoleum.
- line 278: The ill who visit him are sure to find rest.
- line 279: You deposit a pledge to the *shaykh*.
- line 280: You visit the mausoleum.
- line 281: Enter without permission, you will soon be harmed!

On the way to her mistress, the nurse meets the vizier, who confiscates and reads the letter. He is horrified and hastens to his wife. At this point, recall that in the written manuscript it is the vizier’s wife who concocts the scheme to imprison her daughter in order to secure the family honor. In the oral version, however, the mother sides with the smitten daughter and ends the sung ballad by addressing these cautionary verses to her husband:

- line 296: O Prince of the Arabs,
- line 297: did I love you because of silver and gold?
- line 298: What happened to me also happened to my daughter.

The oral version of the recorded performance is not only a briefer, truncated variant of the written version; it ends happily if the listener assumes implicit parental approval for the lover’s eventual union as stated by Rose’s mother in the closing verses. However, this is not the case, nor is my earlier claim that oral performance is entirely in verse a true statement. There is another aspect of the oral tale, a prose narrative, never musically performed and not even necessary to recount, but known to the audience

and storyteller. Perhaps we can call it the contextualizing prose narrative that frames and, even more importantly, undermines and contradicts the oral version performed in poetic ballad form. In other words, the storyteller's insistence on an underlying historicity for his oral version goes against the structuring narrative of a proper Proppian folktale whose happy closure lies in marriage. The oral version, unlike its written counterpart, appears to end happily but in fact does not. The oral version seems to consist of rhymed verse yet also includes the following historical narrative.

The "history" agreed upon by both the audience and the storyteller is that all characters in the tale are attested historical figures. For example, the king in 'Awaḍallah's rendition is named Asfūn and he is believed to have reigned in the recent past. The proof for the Upper Egyptian storyteller and his audience is to be found in the southern Egyptian governorate of Aswan, between the towns of Esna and Armant, where there is indeed a place called Asfūn al-Maṭāna, believed to be the historical seat of the king Asfūn. Not just individual figures but also the narrative itself is subject to historicizing elements. Significantly, these additional non-performed facts result in a different, opposite ending to the oral tale. For example, the performed version concludes with the vizier's wife convincing her husband of the power and necessity of love. But the storyteller recounted to me what the audience did not need to be told, namely that Rose's father, the vizier, imprisoned his daughter in a castle in Aswan, a castle still standing to this day. According to 'Awaḍallah, a mausoleum built by the Agha Khan, head of the Shia Ismailis, is in fact Rose's castle. On its wall, according to 'Awaḍallah's account of local history, are inscribed Rose's famous verses to her lover Anas, still recited as a folk poem familiar to many southern Egyptians:

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|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| law kan arēt ḥubbak tifūz | if you see your love escaping |
| is'ī wi ruḥ-lu wadi -lkunūz | try to go to the Valley of Treasures |
| tilga ḥubbak waṣṭ buḥūr izzalām | you will find your love among the |
| | Seas of Darkness . . . |

The crucial, historical fact claimed by 'Awaḍallah the storyteller is that Anas drowned in his search for his beloved Rose. Then, when Rose saw his corpse washed ashore, she died of grief. Anas is believed by the inhabitants to be buried in the temple of Philae, to this day known locally as the island of Anas al-Wujūd. The same local legend was recorded by a nineteenth-century traveller, Jacob Burckhardt, in his book, *Travels in*

Nubia, in which he reports the existence of a mighty king called al-Wujūd, who was the builder of the temple at Philae. In the eighteenth century, Edward Lane mentions the same legend of a king named Anas al-Wujūd who died of love and was buried at Philae near Aswan.¹⁰

In conclusion, the orally performed version, which appears to be a briefer, though eroticized, rendition of the written one, with both written and oral versions ending the same way, namely in the marriage of lovers, is seen to be reversed by the social and historical context in which performance takes place. Thematically, the oral tale deals with the relationship between the vizier-father and his princess-daughter, around whom issues of obedience versus sexual emancipation arise. The performed tale suspends history and allows us to believe the fiction of romantic love in which the intervention of the mother, who married for love as her daughter wishes to do, permits the daughter to pursue her own erotic inclinations. Once the tale is seen in its sociocultural perspective implied by the actual performance, however, the patriarchal cast of Upper Egyptian male-female arrangements are represented in an untold tale-within-a-tale: a father chooses his daughter's groom or death to the couple ensues. It is an instructive tale that opposes uncivilized sexual needs, all the more persuasive because the audience understands that the events actually occurred in recent history.¹¹ It is more convincing because performatively the masculine perspective, voiced by a male poet, need not articulate the known principles of patriarchal hierarchy or the penalties for their subversion during the wedding ceremonies of an arranged marriage.

Therefore 'Awadallah's tale—the oral not the written—occupies a coherent historical time and place and as a practice points to his impulse toward the historical. It is not merely that 'Awadallah, the storyteller, is an epic poet who insists that all he recounts is the true history of the Arabs in verse and ballad (Slyomovics 1987a:7). Rather, let us return to the erotic subtext of the story, which offers a metaphorical analogy to this complex process of reversal. While it is the case that erotic Arabic manuscripts exist, it is also the peculiar nature of an ephemeral, oral performance that

¹⁰ See Jacob Burckhardt cited in Lane 1980:517.

¹¹ For the role of the female-narrator, her relationship to female sexuality, and the female body as text, see Attar and Fischer 1991, Malti-Douglas 1991:11-28, and Nadaff 1991.

privileges rhetorical, erotic tropes and puns that must be performed and heard as opposed to being read or seen. The result is that for the purposes of a festive occasion, such as a wedding where love is triumphant, the historically significant event of the death and the parting of a historically attested king and his beloved is never mentioned. But the linguistic process by which the oral tale is recounted, namely the double meanings, oppositional metaphors, erotic possibilities in naming women's sexual parts, and literary figurations that mean one thing as well as its opposite, ought to alert the listener to contradictory elements joined together by an unspoken narrative formation.

The full significance of the performance rests upon its silent assumption of your knowledge of well-known historical events. The intersection of the performed event (with a happy ending) and the non-performed context (with a tragic ending) repeats the terms and the situation of the poetic style used in the song that expresses erotic subversion. It is what it is and it is its opposite. Many written Arab folktales begin with the formulaic "once upon a time": *kān wa mā kān*, "it was and it was not so." Significantly, oral Upper Egyptian tales use this formula with a change in one letter: *kān Ya ma kān*, with a different meaning: "it was, and O, it was really (emphatic form) so." The oral tale, in spite of, or perhaps because of, its linguistic virtuosity, may be considered to be a literary marvel, but what is equally significant is that the oral tale also directly points toward the real. Thus it is this compacting of literature and historical reference that gives the contemporary orally performed recitation its unique narrative force.

Brown University

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Appendix

Notes on Translation and Transliteration

Translation

For the purposes of smoother translation and easier reading, the following names of characters are substituted for pronouns in lines of the performance text: lines 24 (king, Anas); 31 (king); 50 (king, Anas); 60 (Anas); 148 (king); 150 (Rose); 223 (nurse); 225 (Bud in the Rose); 287 (nurse); and 294 (Rose).

[Bracket] = poet's aside.

Transliteration

For the protocol governing the linguistic transcription of Ṣaʿīdī Arabic, see Slyomovics 1987a:269-73.

The Tale of Anas al-Wujūd and al-Ward fi-l-Akmām

Praise the Arab, the Hashemite of noble lineage.

Whoever prays to Taha blots out sins.

I begin: I make art about poor Anas al-Wujūd,
a youth weary from love and passion.

The tale begins: once there was Anas al-Wujūd
of amazing beauty
that deceived the envious.

He had a pair of eyes,
he had a pair of eyes, liquid,
black without kohl,
cheeks like candles,
as if to bring light to darkness;
cheeks like candles
in darkness brought light—
and love and the beloved
enflamed him.

The moon
above the roof shone.

The king loved him.

Asfūn was ensnared with desire.

10

20

The king loved him,
 ensnared with desire.
 God had endowed him
 with so much beauty!
 If the king spent an hour without Anas next to him,
 he would send down an envoy to bring him instantly—
 [Love, love, what an ordeal, O my Lord]
 he would send down an envoy for the slightest reason.
 And they made wine,
 wine-making
 from vines bearing grapes. 30
 The king said: “O envoy,
 and all who respond passionately,
 bring it to me, so I may drink
 from mellow wines
 when companionship is fulfilled.”
 Anas came and arrived
 (No harmful government can remain in authority)
 and his anger rose, and he poured out the wine jug.
 Anas said that wine-drinking was forbidden.
 When he walked proudly, 40
 Anas al-Wujūd, O men,
 when Anas al-Wujūd walked proudly,
 he gave good evening greetings to the Sultan.
 Anas said to him: “I need a well-ordered entourage
 of regal quality and fully equipped.
 I will patrol with the troops and come to you here,
 and we ask of God the Beneficent, Our Lord,
 that you be our honor, O King,
 until we form a dark narrow grave.”
 The king said to Anas: “Mount from here. Beware of spending the night 50
 far from my sight, I cannot bear that in silence.
 If I were informed of the coming of
 the bridegroom of death,
 I would ransom my soul! None would reproach me!
 I would ransom my soul, my soul, my soul—
 and the rest of my body!¹²
 Nor would I live
 a single night
 after you in the homeland.”
 Anas mounted the glorious steed, 60

¹² Alternate trans.: “I would ransom my soul and the rest of my *people*.”

Anas al-Wujūd mounted the steed,
 and he drew himself up.
 Servants surrounded him
 like the scattering of stars.
 He mounted the glorious steed and Anas al-Wujūd
 rode expertly,¹³
 making the envious sad.
 The sultanate
 looked upon him
 and soldiers surrounded him. 70
 He came below the palace window and sang a request,
 below the palace window
 he sang and waved his turban.¹⁴
 He had two cheeks that shone, and above them a turban.
 The vizier's daughter, Bud in the Rose,
 looked down wearing rich cloth.
 He lifted his glance—
 ah!
 He saw her face and her smile.
 He lifted his glance—
 he saw her face, the lovely one! 80
 He became, in the ardors of love, humbled, wounded.
 He concealed his secret;
 he could not reveal
 nor express to others the meanings of words.
 He concealed his secret,
 He concealed his secret.
 He saw her face, the beautiful one!
 He became, in the ardors of love, wretched, overcome.
 [O God Who is One, *about love*]
 He concealed his secret, 90
 he could not complain
 nor find the strength to rein in horses.
 O, Bud in the Rose,
 when she saw his entourage,
 more distinguished than the sultan's
 on the day he rode,

¹³ Lit.: “he bent forward and straightened” to describe the motion of a mounted rider.

¹⁴ “He waved his turban” is a pun with two additional translations: “he whispered” or “he caused trouble.”

she was enflamed, Bud
 in the Rose,
 with love for him!
 And the heart submitted to passion for him, and desire. 100
 She said: "I wish you joy,"
 [Whoever reproaches a lover is reproached]
 She said: "I wish joy
 to whoever joins you
 on the bed cushions and spends
 time with you.
 We are ensnared by love,
 O Anas al-Wujūd,
 may God cause you to be ensnared with me!
 God willing, may years and a year turn in our love."
 My words return 110
 and the song is certain:
 when Anas al-Wujūd walked about the city
 there was a clamor
 that would burst a lion's gall bladder.
 He returned to the Sultan Asfūn and spoke these words to him,
 he returned to the Sultan and said: "Ah, O passion,
 I beheld waterwheels set in motion by love,
 and both breasts like pomegranates,
 white, and on them a ring and an ornament.
 I beheld waterwheels bringing forth water, and flowing 120
 beneath the trees, branches watered morning and night.
 Woe to he who encounters passion! He is seared, ended;
 He is bewildered; he thrashes in seas of darkness.
 Muhammad, we praise him.

PAUSE

O, how happy are you who praise the Prophet Ahmad Muhammad,
 Ahmad Muhammad
 Who dwells in the city of Yathrib.
 Anas al-Wujūd,
 a youth weary from love and passion! 130
 I have seen peaches ripened;
 the beloved's spittle is sweet, to the ill a cure.
 O woe to those struck by passion, he is ended and seared.
 He weeps for himself, branded by passion.
 My words return to Bud of the Rose—
 Come, little daughter of the vizier!
 She weeps, she has tears, one following another, flowing.

Suddenly—
 she had a nurse from among the women—
 The nurse entered; she found Rose 140
 weeping,
 tears soaking the veil.
 The nurse said to her:
 “For whom do you weep, do you weep?
 Are you weeping in pain or over loved ones who are absent?
 Your father is the vizier of the kingdom,
 the vizier is seated on the king’s right hand.
 He rules the ministers, all listen to his word.”
 Rose said to her:
 “O nurse 150
 I only weep
 for love of a leader, one whose beauty sears me.
 I intended to conceal the secret—
 love
 overcame me! I wept,
 I was enflamed by him!
 Before, I was innocent.”
 Rose said to her nurse:
 “Can you be the go-between
 for our love, 160
 for our passion?
 Can you ensnare him in ardor?
 If he is free
 of any attachment, then ensnare him!
 Do not be afraid of him, you have my surety.”
 The old nurse said to her: “I will go to him,¹⁵
 but I lack the courage to speak to him directly.”
 Rose said: “Take the letter,
 a missive that he will accept.
 It will not require you to speak or converse.” 170
 The nurse withdrew,
 not required to speak or converse.
 Bud in the Rose
 took out a pen
 and a sheet of paper.
 Tears from the beauty’s eyes poured forth:
 “To whom shall I lament!
 In your love and passion I am ensnared!

¹⁵ Lit.: “I take it upon myself to go to him.”

Bitter is the drink after so much tastiness,
 bitter is the drink after the fountain of Paradise. My strength is lost— 180
 in love, one's strength diminishes.
 We heard a proverb
 from those experienced:
 'when are lovers to be reproached?'"
 The beginning of the letter—
 [intoxication, my brother, everything has meaning]
 the beginning of the letter, in the letter
 (and the words are explained)
 and the grapevine cast shadows on the face:
 "To whom shall I lament?
 I am wounded by your love. 190
 Bitter is the drink, the savor of food is gone."
 The beginning of the letter
 (again the words are explained),
 the garden's blossoms fall on the beauty's face:
 "O lucky is she who embraces another!
 [Ah, more words! Speech increases]
 and the wine cup goes round.
 Let us be intoxicated, you and I, O Anas al-Wujūd, for a thousand years!
 Let us be intoxicated, you and I, two thousand years—
 as if
 only a moment in my embrace. 200
 Look upon my cleavage
 and my sash:
 white, and on it, an earring
 with a nose-ring;
 white, wearing earrings,
 delicate as a bird;
 two eyebrows and the eyes ablaze
 when they dart back and forth.
 You strut upon the cushions
 with measured steps, 210
 you cure the ill whom love sears.
 They weren't wrong who named you
 Bud in the Rose."¹⁶
 She said: "Or
 they weren't wrong who named you
 Anas al-Wujūd!
 O you whose glance conquers all lions—

¹⁶ 'Awaḍallah makes a mistake in line 213 that he corrects in line 216.

you make whoever loves you rejoice,
 you make whoever loves you rejoice!
 You are surrounded by soldiers! From the day I loved you no one could
 reproach me.” 220

She sent the letter
 with the nurse, who went forth.
 The nurse was sent
 to Anas al-Wujūd, O listeners,
 Bud in the Rose sent the letter because of her love for him.
 The nurse found Anas al-Wujūd seated cross-legged.
 She bowed low before
 his right foot. She kissed it.
 She said: “The one who concerns us
 gives greetings.” 230

She said: “The one who concerns us
 loves you greatly,
 Bud in the Rose, the vizier’s young daughter,
 a queen equal to you (she wears silks),
 a queen
 equal to you (and of the rarest kind).”
 He interpreted the letter.
 He understood it came from a suffering lover!
 Bitter is his drink after such joy—
 tears fell from his eyes, 240
 poured out like a watercourse.
 Then he called angrily like a male dove,¹⁷
 then Anis al-Wujūd called angrily while his tears flowed.
 He had tears upon the cheek descending copiously.
 Those experienced in love say:
 When are lovers to be reproached?
 He read the letter and his tears welled up,¹⁸
 his tears fell heavily
 upon the cushions, his cheeks were wet.
 Anas al-Wujūd wrote her a letter. 250
 O, in his letter he composed poems and odes!
 He brought forth the letter and brass slate
 saying “May my cheek be a trampling place for my beloved!
 By God, have pity, O Rose,
 O woman of languorous eyes!

¹⁷ Lit.: “he squawked.”

¹⁸ “He read”; lit: “he interpreted. . . .”

Passion for you has flared, and for that there is no reproach.
 Your eyebrows are two bows, O Prince's daughter,
 and your mouth,
 a date in the hands of the gourmet,
 and your mouth, O Rose, 260
 beautiful!

Other than a tiny bean, O beauty, nothing could find room there.¹⁹
 Your full breasts! O vizier's daughter,
 from the day I loved you my tears flowed."
 Anas al-Wujūd, the Prince, said:
 "Beware of reproaching
 those who love.
 Her belly folds are pure silk
 that are expensive
 in price and light in weight. 270

If you consider
 her navel,
 you would say, O Merciful God!
 You look at her venerable *shaykh*, around him a shrine.
 You look at a venerable *shaykh*, around him a mausoleum.
 The ill who visit him are sure to find rest.
 You deposit a pledge to the *shaykh*.
 You visit the mausoleum.
 Enter without permission, you will soon be harmed!
 Your feet, O Rose, like cakes of soap,
 your tresses, O Rose, incense against madness, 280
 you strut on cushions with measured steps.

You captivate the languid made ill by passion.
 Your spittle, O Rose is a cure for the languid."
 He wrote the letter, his tears flowing.
 Love tortured him,
 Anas al-Wujūd, the Prince.
 He said to the nurse: "O nurse, listen to my words."
 The nurse took the letter and she went forth,
 but she was thinking about the Prince's love.
 While entering the house, she met the vizier, 290
 and the letter fell instantly from her hand.
 The letter fell, and the vizier picked it up,
 He said: "Whoever lives long enough sees all."
 He hastened home like a bird to Rose's mother saying:
 "What happened to your daughter? She is ensnared by passion?"

¹⁹ Lit.: "other than a bean . . . nothing could find room."

She said to him: “O Prince of the Arabs,
 did I love you because of silver or gold?
 What happened to me, happened instantly to my daughter.”
 Muhammad let us praise Him.”

Arabic Transliterated Text

- 1 ṣalli ‘ala -l‘arabi -lhāšimi ‘aṣl iljidūd
- 2 ya -lli -f ṣalātu ‘ala ṭaha timḥi -zzinūb
- 3 ‘abdi w- afannin ‘a -lmaskīn anas ilwijūd
- 4 šabb I zana -lhawī wiyya -lġarām
- 5 ‘aṣl ilḥikāya kān ānas ilwijūd
- 6 fi - lḥusn I mutbada‘
- 7 wi kād ilḥasūd
- 8 lī jūz ‘uyūn āh āh
- 9 lī jūz ‘uyūn dubbal
- 10 balā kuḥl I sūd
- 11 ilxadd I šam‘a
- 12 kēf nawwarat fi -zzalām
- 13 ilxadd I šam‘a
- 14 fi -zzalām nawwarat
- 15 wi -lḥubb I wi -lmaḥbūb
- 16 fih tiwalla‘at
- 17 gamar
- 18 fōg issitūḥ šalla‘t
- 19 ḥabbu -lmalik
- 20 ‘aṣfūn w- inšabak fi hawā
- 21 ḥabbu -lmalik
- 22 wi -nšabak fi hawā
- 23 min kutr I ma taḥaff
- 24 jamālu -lilāh
- 25 iza ga‘ad sa‘a wala jā ḥadā
- 26 yinizzilu mirsāl bayjību gawām
 [ya -lḥubb ya salām ya salām ilḥubb wi -lbalā ilḥubb wi -lbalā ya rabbi]
- 27 yinizzilu mirsāl kān ‘ala -hwān sabab
- 28 wi -lxamr I šana‘ū
- 29 iṣṭinā‘ ilxamr
- 30 min itāq il‘inab
- 31 gal-lu ya mursāl
- 32 wi kull min ṭarab
- 33 hātūh li ašrab
- 34 min ‘atīq ilmudām
- 35 iza tammit iṣṣuḥba
- 36 wala jā ḥadar
- 37 matibga ‘ala -ssultān ḥakūma ḍarar
- 38 yigūm mi‘ā ilġulba yikibb ijirār
- 39 yigūl бага šurb ilmudāma ḥarām
- 40 lama xaṭar
- 41 ‘anas ilwujūd ya rijāl

- 42 lama xaṭar anas ilwujūd ya rijāl
 43 massa ʿala -ssultān amsa fi haza -nnihār
 44 gal-lu ʿaʿūz-li wakba bi -liḥtidāl
 45 bi -lmamlakiyya bi -lwazar ittamām
 46 ʿatūf bi -lʿaskar wa ʿajīlak hinā
 47 wi nuṭlub min allāh ilkarīm rabbinā
 48 tibga līna ṭayyib ya malik ʿizzinā
 49 lama niʿanis gabr I ḍayig ḡalām
 [ya salām]
 50 gal-lu ʿirkab min hinā wi ḥissak tibāt
 51 ʿan nāzri ma gdarš I ʿadūg issukāt
 52 ah law šawarbūni
 53 ʿarūs ilmamāt
 54 ʿafdīk bi rūḥi lam ʿalayya malāma
 55 ʿafdīk bi rūḥi bi rūḥi bi rūḥi
 56 ʿana wi bagiyit ilbadan
 57 wala -īšīš
 58 lēla waḥda
 59 baʿdīk fi -lwaṭan
 60 rikib jawīd ilʿizz
 61 rikb- ijjawād
 62 anas ilwujūd wi -ʿtadal
 63 wi -lḡuzz I ḥawalē
 64 misl I rašš ilḡutām
 65 rikib jawād ilʿizz u kān anas ilwujūd
 66 māl wa -ʿtadal
 67 xalla -lḥawāsīd kamūd
 68 issultāna
 69 -tfarrajit
 70 wi ḥawlu junūd
 71 jā taḥt I ṭāg ilgaṣr u ḡanna suʿāl
 72 taḥt I ṭāg ilgaṣr
 73 wi ḡanna wi dašāš
 74 lī jōz xudūd yidwi wi min fōgu šāš
 75 bint ilwazīr ilward fi -lakmām
 76 ṭāla min ḡālī -lgumāš
 77 gall innazar
 78 ah gall innazar
 79 šāf wijhihā wi -lbusām
 80 gall innazar
 81 šāf wijhihā da -lmalīḥ
 82 ʿaṣbaḥ bi lōwʿāt ilmiḥabba zalīl jarīḥ
 83 katam bi -sirru
 84 magidirš I -ybīḥ
 85 wala yigūl li -nnās bi maʿna -lkalām
 86 gall innazar
 87 gall innazar
 88 šāf wajhiha da -jjamīl
 89 ʿaṣbaḥ bi lowʿāt ilmiḥabba miskīn zalīl
 [ya wāḥid ya wāḥid ʿa -lḥubb]
 90 katam bi -sirru

91 lam gidir ynīn
 92 wala -ltagāš guwwa yigirriš ḥuṣān
 93 ah ilward I fi -lakmām
 94 lama šāfit wakbitu
 95 ʾamyāz min issultān
 96 fi yōm rukbitu
 97 tiwallʿit ilward
 98 fi -lakmām
 99 fi miḥabbitu
 100 wi -lgalb I ṭīwaʿa ila -šgu wi hām
 101 gālīt haniyān
 [ah wallah illi yilūm ahl ilhawa yitlām]
 102 gālīt haniyān
 103 li-lazi yijmaʿk
 104 ʿa -lfarš I -w yigaḏḏi
 105 zamānu miʿak
 106 ʾaḥna -nšabakna
 107 ya ʾanas ilwujūd
 108 rabbina yišbukak
 109 in šā-llā tidūr fi ḥubbina ʿāmmān wi ʿamm
 110 yirjaʿ kalāmi
 111 wi -lḡunā lu mustanad
 112 lama xaṭar anas ilwujūd fi -lbalad
 113 lī taṭṭana
 114 tifgaʿ mararit -lasad
 115 ʿāwid ʿala -ssultān iṣṣifūni gal-lu kalām
 116 ʿāwid ʿala -ssultān wi gāl ah ya -lhawa
 117 ʾarēt issawāgi dayra ʿa -lhawa
 118 wi -lnuḥd ki -rrumān -litnēn sawa
 119 ʾabyaḏ wi maḥṭūṭ li ḥalag wi -lhuzām
 120 raʾayt issawāgi tijbid ilmā wi sāḥ
 121 taḥt ilḡuṣūn ilʾaḡṣīn tizgi lēl wiyya ṣabah
 122 ya wēl li-laʿšu ilḡarām itkawa wi rāḥ
 123 yiḥṭar yiglaʿ fi buḥūr izḏalām
 124 muḥammad niṣalli ʿalēh

[pause]

125 ya masʿadak ya -lli tiṣalli ʿala -nnabi
 126 aḥmad muḥammad
 127 aḥmad muḥammad
 128 sākin madīnt ilyasribī
 129 ʾanas ilwujūd
 130 šabb izzanā -lhawa wi -lḡarām
 131 raʾayta kumitra wi- xūx istawā
 132 rīg ilmahbūb sukkar li -lʿalāla dawā
 133 ya wēl I min lāšu -lḡarām rāḥ wi -tkawā
 134 yibki ʿala ʿala nafsu kawāḥ ilḡarām
 135 kalāmi ʾila -lward I fi -lakmām
 136 taʿāli bnēt ilwazīr
 137 tibki ya ʿēni wi liha damʿ I sābig yasīl

- 138 ʿilī kānit
 139 liha dāda mn- ilḥarīm
 140 daxalit ildāda tilga -lward
 141 tibki
 142 timišš iddamaʿ bi -llitām
 143 gālit liha
 144 ildāda bitibki tibki li mīn
 145 biki ʿalam wala ḥabāyib
 146 yikūnu gāyibīn
 147 ʿabūki wazīr issultāna
 148 wazīr ʿa -lyamīn
 149 yuḥkum bi wizarā yismaʿū lu -lkalām
 150 gālit liha
 151 ya dāda
 152 ʿana ʿana ʿana lam bakit
 153 ilā bi ḥubb ahyaf jamālu -tkawit
 154 jēt aktim I -b sirru
 155 ilḥubb
 156 ḡalabni bakēt
 157 tiwallʿit ana bi min baʿd I ma kunt I xām
 158 gālt - ilward I li -ldāda
 159 tigdari ʿinti tuwṣalī
 160 bi ḥubbina
 161 bi ḡarāmina
 162 bi hawāna tušbikī
 163 ilkān xāli
 164 min ilmiḥabba ʿašbīki
 165 matifzaʿiš minnu ʿalēki -lʿamān
 166 gālit liha -ldāda -lʿajūz ʿalayy bawṣalu
 167 lakin matajīnīš jalāda бага ʿasālu
 168 gālit xud maktūb
 169 farāman bayigbalu
 170 mayiḥwajikši li -lḥadīt wala -lkalām
 171 saḥabit ildāda
 172 yihwajikši li -lḥadīt wala kalām
 173 ilward I fi -lakmām
 174 saḥabit galām
 175 wi firx ilwarag
 176 wi -ddamʿ I min ʿēn ijjamīla ya ʿēni -ndafag
 177 ʿirti li mīn
 178 fi ḥubbak wi hawāk inšabak
 179 wi marr I mašrūbu baʿd I dāk ittiʿām
 180 u marr I mašrūbu baʿd sansabīl wi ḡāʿ ilgiwa minnīh
 181 min ilḥubb I ʿazmu galīl
 182 simi ʿna masal
 183 min ilʿarifīn
 184 mita ʿala ʿala ʿahl ilmiḥabba malām
 185 ʿawwal ilmaktūb
 [taxdīr kullu ʿād ya xāy taxdīr kull li maʿna]
 186 ʿawwal ilmaktūb fi -lmaktūb
 187 wi -lgōl inšarah

- 188 wi -l'anab 'ala wajh I ya 'ēni ʔarah
 189 'arti li mīn
 190 fi 'iʃritak injarah
 191 wi marr I maʃrūbu ya'ni wi tarak itt'ām
 192 'awwal ilmaktūb
 193 tāni wi -lgōl inʃarah
 194 ward ijjanīyin 'ala wajh ijjamīla ʔarah
 195 ya baxt I min ɖamm
 [ah kitir ilħadīt 'ād]
 196 wi dār iggada'
 197 'askar ana ana w -inta ya anas ilwujūd wa law alf I 'ām
 198 'askar ana w -inta law alfēn sana
 199 [kaninahu] ka'innahu
 200 laħza fi ħuɖni 'ana
 201 matunzur iʃʃaqīn
 202 wi ʃayxi 'ana
 203 'abyaɖ wi maħtūt lu -lħalag
 204 wiyya -lxuzzām
 205 'abyaɖ wi maħtūt lu -lħalag
 206 dagg ittiyūr
 207 wi -lħajibēn wi -l'ēn wāl'īn
 208 laman tiħum
 209 tuxʔar 'ala -lfarša
 210 bi xaʔra ganūn
 211 tiʃfi il'alīl illi kawā -lġarām
 212 wala xāb min sammāk
 213 ilward I fi -lakmām
 214 gālīt wala wala
 215 xāb min sammāk
 216 anas ilwujūd
 217 ya -lli bi laħzak kitt I kull il'isūd
 218 'afraħt I min ħabbak
 219 'afraħt I min ħabbak
 220 wi ħawlak junūd min yōm ħwītak ma 'allayya malām
 221 'arsalit ilmaktūb
 222 ma' -ldīda ʔil'it tisīr
 223 marsūla
 224 'ila 'anas ilwujūd ya sami'īn
 225 'arsalit ilmaktūb li maħabbītu
 226 tilga 'anas ilwujūd jālis 'ala tanʃītu
 227 ʔīʔīt 'ala
 228 gadamu ilyamīn ħabbītu
 229 gālīt warāna warāna mīn
 230 bayīgra -ssalām
 231 gālīt warāna mīn
 232 tiħibbak katīr
 233 ilward I fi -lakmīm bnēt ilwazīr
 234 malaka kida zayyak wi tilbis ħarīr
 235 malaka
 236 zayyak w- atħaf niżām
 237 fassar ilmaktūb

- 238 ligyu min miḥabb I -nzanā
 239 wi marr I mašrūb ba'd I dāk ilhanā
 240 nizl- I dumū' il'ēn
 241 tiṣabsib ganā
 242 бага yitarjim zayy I dakar ilḥamām
 243 бага yitarjim anas ilwujūd wi dam'ū yasīl
 244 lih dam' 'a -lxadd nāzil ġazīr
 245 galū 'ahl ilġarām il'arifin
 246 mita 'ala -lahl ilmiḥabba malām
 247 fassar ilmaktūb wi dam'ū ṣadūd
 248 dam'ū haṭal
 249 'al -lfarš I ball ilxidūd
 250 katab ilmaktūb liha 'anas ilwijūd
 251 yamā fi -lmaktūb gaṣṣad wi gāl
 252 saḥab ilmaktūb wi farx inniḥḥās
 253 yigūl xaddi li maḥbūbi yikūn madās
 254 bi-llāhi 'altūf ya ward
 255 aya -mm il'uyūn inni'ās
 256 šabb I hiwēki wala 'alēhiš malām
 257 ḥawājibiki ġisān ya bint il'amīr
 258 wi fummik
 259 balaha fi 'īd ilwakkil
 260 wi fummik aya ward
 261 jamīl
 262 ġīr ilfūla jamīla mayzarigš I -mkān
 263 nuḥūdik ilburāz ya bint ilwazīr
 264 min yōm hiwītik wi dumū'i tasīl
 265 gāl anas ilwujūd ilamīr
 266 'aw'a tilawwim
 267 'ala 'ala 'ahl ilġarām
 268 ilbaṭn I ṭayāt ilḥarīr innadīf
 269 illi ġili
 270 tamanu wi ḥimlu xafif
 271 in jēten
 272 fi -ṣṣura tiġūl ya laṭīf
 273 tunzur li šēx 'ālī wi ḥawlu magām
 274 batunzur ila šēx 'ālī wi ḥawlu -dḍarīḥ
 275 wi min zāru -l'ayyān lāzim yistariḥ
 276 tixuṭt I nadr iššēx
 277 tizūr idḍarīḥ
 278 tudxul bala dustūr yiḍurrak gawām
 279 xufūfaki aya ward I walūḥ iṣṣabūn
 280 ḍufūraki aya ward I baxūr li-jjunūn
 281 tuxtīr 'ala -lfaršīt bi xaṭra ganūn
 282 tisbi il'alīl illi kawā -lġarām
 283 rigāki aya ward u šifa -l'alīl
 284 katab ilmaktūb wi dumū'ū tasīl
 285 'azzabu -lḥubb
 286 anas ilwujūd ilamīr
 287 gāl liha aya dāda 'ismaṭ li -lkalām
 288 xadit iddāda -lmaktūb wi ṭil'it tisīr

- 289 lākin tifakkir fi hawā -lamīr
290 hiyya wi daxla fi -lbēt itlgāha -lwazīr
291 wi -lmaktūb ṭabb I min īdha gawām
292 ṭabb ilmaktūb w-itlafā -lwazīr
293 gīl ya ma -lli yiṯṯ tuwirrī -ssinīn
294 rawwaḥ li ʿummiha ka-ṭīr wi yigūl
295 ēh illi jarā li bintik inṣabakit bi -lḡarām
296 gālit-lu ya ʿamīr ilʿarab
297 yaʿni ʿana hwētak ʿaškān faḍa wala ʿaškān dahab
298 illi jarā-li jarā li binti gawām
299 muḥammad niṣalli ʿalēh