

Testimonies in Verses: Arabic Poetry as a Witness to Identity and the Syrian Resistance

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Abstract

Arabic poetry has long been a repository of collective memory, preserving histories of resistance, resilience, and identity across generations. This paper traces poetry's role as a witness to the Syrian revolution, exploring the connections between the pre-Islamic elegies of Al-Khansa and the Abbasid political verses of Al-Mutanabbi to the colonial defiance of Najib al-Rayyes, the revolutionary chants of the Arab Spring, and the spoken word performances of contemporary diaspora poets. My methodology combines literary criticism (الشعر النقدي), semi-structured ethnographic interviews with Arab college students, and personal narrative. I examine how poetry operates not only as a historical record but as a lighting torch, passed from generation to generation, illuminating the path for identity and resistance. By centering the voices of young Arabs in the diaspora, this research argues that Arabic poetry sits at the intersection of the personal and the political, remaining a transformative instrument for reconstructing identity, reclaiming voice, and resisting erasure.

Beyond Conflict: Revealing the True Syria

I have often asked myself: *How do I show the world who we are as Syrians beyond war and exile?*

One night, I sat with that question, letting it settle, and found my answer in the verses I wrote:

They seek to know who I am, the age I hold,
The civilizations that through my land have strolled.
How I declared the beginning of life's span,
How I discovered what the world now understands.
How I sent the first letter to script humanity's lore,
And composed a melody that became a global symphony, evermore.

(Abdelghne, 2026, Appendix)

These verses capture Syria as I know it: a land of firsts, the birthplace of musical notation, the place where the first alphabet was carved into clay, and home to one of the oldest continuous civilizations on Earth. Yet today, when people hear the word "Syria", the immediate associations are flattened into images of war, mass displacement, and devastating crises.

Growing up in Halab (Aleppo), Syria, poetry always surrounded me. I remember walking home from school when a verse stopped me in my tracks, spray-painted across a crumbling beige wall in graffiti: "*Words pierce where the needle cannot.*" It echoed in my head the rest of the way home. Curious, I asked my father what it meant. With passion, he said, "It means that words have more power than anything else. They can wound deeper than a blade, but they can also heal like miracles." He then began recounting his earliest memories of poetry,

reciting verses he had memorized in elementary school. “Poetry,” he explained, “is more than words that rhyme. It’s what we leave on the table, what we have fought for, and what we treasure. These poems take us back in time and carry us on.”

After twelve years away from Syria, navigating the fragmentation of life in the diaspora, I have never forgotten that moment. I have realized that his words hold true everywhere on Earth. Arabic poetry isn’t just art—it’s a testimony to our resilience, an archive of cultural identity, and a way to preserve the wisdom of our ancestors. When tides push against us, these lines echo with the voices of those who preceded us and continue to hold us up in our struggle.

Arabic Poetry: The Heart of Arab Culture

Arabic poetry has been at the heart of Arab culture since the earliest days of recorded history, distinguishable by its flow and rhythmic structures, which follow the intricate patterns of the *Arūd* system, commonly known as the Sixteen Seas—a framework of meters mapped out by the scholar Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi. Renowned as the “poetry of wisdom” (Aleem 2022), it serves as both a mirror and a cornerstone of Arab identity. It also captures the full spectrum of human emotion, from the unyielding love for the motherland (*watan*) during the Syrian revolution to the romantic verses of poets like Nizar Qabbani, who intertwined romantic love with radical political significance.

This tradition is deeply embedded in Arab history, most famously exemplified by the *Mu’allaqat*, a collection of pre-Islamic poetry considered among the finest in Arabic literature. These poems, which directly translate to “The Suspended Odes,” (Britannica, 1998) are so called because they were honorably hung on or in the Kaaba as a testament to their high status. The *Mu’allaqat* are composed of seven long poems, each by a different poet, celebrating themes of love, tribal pride, and honor, values foundational to the tribal society of the time. The poets of the *Mu’allaqat* include Imru’ al-Qais and Antara Ibn Shaddad, who used their verse to immortalize the values, battles, and romance within society, crafting lines that resonated with the deep emotional and social currents of their communities. The significance of the *Mu’allaqat* in Arabic poetry cannot be overstated; they were like a collection of amendments in a constitution that reflected the central values, aesthetic ideals, and artistic standards of Arab society during that era and influenced the next generation of poets. This legacy of eloquence and emotional depth continued evolving through the rise of Islam, further enriching the literary tradition by connecting it with spiritual and philosophical reflections. Poets in Arabic societies were like modern-day influencers, shaping societal norms and values.

Investigating Identity and Resistance Through Poetry

During the Syrian revolution, poetry became a rallying cry for resistance, a vehicle of hope, and a way to immortalize the people’s struggles. Arabic poetry thus serves as a thread that ties together generations, carrying the voices of those who came before us while empowering those who follow. This brings me to my research questions:

How does Arabic poetry function as a witness to identity and resistance in the context of the Syrian struggle? How are young Arabs today using it to reclaim their voices in exile and displacement?

To answer these questions, I will explore three key dimensions. First, I will dive into the historical role of Arabic poetry as a cultural and intellectual pillar, demonstrating how it has preserved Arab identity across pre-Islamic, Islamic, colonial, and modern periods. Second, I will analyze poetry’s function as a literary witness, particularly in the context of war and

displacement, exploring how poets such as Najib al-Rayyes, Nizar Qabbani, and Amal Kassir transform poetry into testimony. Lastly, I will investigate the contemporary evolution of poetry, highlighting its presence in digital activism, spoken word movements, and the global Syrian diaspora. Demonstrating how poetry remains a force of identity and resistance today, I weave in interviews with Arab college students, incorporating their voices into my research.

While previous studies have explored the historical and political significance of Arabic poetry, its role in shaping culture extends beyond preserving the past to also shaping the present. Arab youth today, especially those who are displaced, are turning to poetry to reclaim their voices, challenge exclusion, and unite in struggle. Many scholars regard Arabic poetry as a form of cultural preservation, emphasizing its role in political struggles and historical documentation. However, how poetry functions as a tool for self-development and cultural cohesion, especially for young Arabs navigating displacement and upheaval today, remains critically underexplored. My research examines how poetry can serve as a transformative force rather than a nostalgic relic of Arab heritage, offering new perspectives on how diaspora communities sustain their identities.

Arabic Poetry as Historical Record

To understand how poetry functions as a transformative force today, we must first trace its roots. Poetry has functioned as the primary archive of Arab identity for centuries. Lekssays (2016) traces the development of Arabic poetry from pre-Islamic tribal society to Abbasid intellectualism, highlighting its role in transmitting ethical, political, and philosophical thought. Al-Rashid (2023) examines the global influence of Arabic poetry, demonstrating how its grammatical precision has shaped scientific and literary traditions beyond the Arab world. These studies emphasize how poetry has not just preserved but also actively shaped Arab intellectual and cultural discourse, making it a critical historical record. While classical poetry celebrated tribal pride, love, and wisdom, modern Arabic poetry has assumed an increasingly political and testimonial role, particularly during times of conflict. Wahesh (2020) argues that Arabic poetry evolved from a literary tradition into a political instrument, where poets like Nizar Qabbani and Muhammad Al-Maghut broke formal poetic structures to challenge authoritarianism and social constraints. This shift marks poetry's transformation from heritage to witness literature, demanding a closer analysis of how it shapes resistance and resilience in contemporary contexts.

Al-Khansa is the earliest female Arab poet whose extensive body of work was officially collected and preserved in a Diwan (anthology), making her the oldest female voice in recorded classical Arabic tradition. She is one of the most celebrated poets of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia and mourned her brother Sakhr in verses that remain among the most devastating expressions of grief in the Arabic canon:

يا عينُ جودي بدمعِ منكِ مغزار
Be generous, my eyes, with shedding copious tears
 وابكي لصخرٍ بدمعِ منكِ مدرار
And weep a stream of tears for Sakhr
 إني أرقفتُ فبثُّ الليلِ ساهرةً
I could not sleep and was awake all night
 كأنما كُجِلتُ عيني بعوار
As though my eyes were lined with burning embers
 أروعى النجومَ وما كُلفتُ رعيثها

I watch the stars, though tending them was never my burden
وتارةً أتغشى فضلَ أطماري
And sometimes I wrap myself in what remains of my garment
(Al-Khansa, personal translation, cited in Mlynxqualey, 2020)

What makes Al-Khansa’s elegies so significant is not just their emotional intensity but also their social function. In pre-Islamic tribal society, to mourn publicly and eloquently was itself an act of witness, a declaration that the fallen deserved to be remembered and death carried meaning beyond the personal. “*I watch the stars, though tending them was never my burden.*” Her sleepless vigil is not merely private grief—it is the posture of an entire community that refuses to move on or let the dead be forgotten.

One of my favorite stories is from the legends of love between Qays ibn al-Mulawwah and Layla bint Mahdi which is set in the 7th century Umayyad-era Arabian desert (circa 645–688 AD). Ancient Arabs had a tradition where, whenever a girl was spoken for or engaged, she would put red henna on her palms to signify to others that she was in a committed relationship. So, after Qays and Layla had parted for many years and saw each other again for the first time, he noticed that her palms were red. He got concerned and said:

ولما تلاقينا على سفح رامة
When we met on the top of Rama
وجدتُ بنانَ العامريةِ أحمرًا
I found Al-Amiriya (Layla) colored her fingers in red
فقلتُ خضبتِ الكفَّ على فراقنا؟
So I asked: Did you color your hand in celebration of our separation?
فقالَت معاذَ اللهِ ذلكَ ما جرى
And she quickly responded: God forbid, that never happened!
ولكنني لما رأيتهُ راحلاً
It’s just that when I saw you leaving (me)
بكيثُ دمًا حتى بللتُ به التُّرى
I teared blood until the soil got wet
مسحتُ بأطرافِ البنانِ مدامعي
Then I wiped off my tears with my fingers
فصارت خضابًا في الأكفِّ كما ترى
It now appears that I colored them with Henna
(Al-Mulawwah, translation by Mohammed, 2013)

This poem is one of the world’s most enduring love stories, but to read it only as romance is to miss its deeper function in the Arabic literary tradition. In pre-Islamic Arab society, love poetry was never purely private; it was a public declaration, performed before the tribe and witnessed by the community. When Layla weeps blood for Qays, she is not just mourning a person. She is shedding “teared blood” and her fingers are “colored” with Henna, thereby embodying the Arab ideal of devotion so absolute it consumes the self entirely.

We also can’t discuss Arabic poetry without talking about Al-Mutanabbi (915–965 AD), one of the greatest Arab poets, who transformed the tradition and set the standard for future poets in the 10th century. Writing during the Abbasid Golden Age, he served as the court poet of Sayf al-Dawla, the powerful ruler of Aleppo, for nearly a decade. Yet their relationship was as

turbulent as it was celebrated: Al-Mutanabbi's fierce pride and refusal to subordinate his voice to anyone, even his patron, eventually led to a bitter fallout. He left Aleppo in 957 AD, having composed some of his most celebrated and controversial verses in the Aleppo court, which praised, challenged, and at times openly defied the ruler who hosted him. This tension between poet and power is itself a testament to Arabic poetry's tradition of speaking truth regardless of consequence. As Al-Mutanabbi wrote:

”أنا الذي نظر الأعمى إلى أدبي * و أسمعك كلماتي من به صمم
*I am the one whose eloquence the blind have seen
 and whose words were heard by the deaf*
 أنام ملء جفوني عن شواردها * ويسهر الخلق جراها ويختصم
*I sleep soundly once my words leave me,
 while people bicker about them and despair*

(Al-Mutanabbi, translation by Skanderhannachi, 2014)

In this poem, he wasn't just praising his own talent; he was highlighting the power of words to be heard by the “deaf” and seen by the “blind.” His poetry sparked debate and controversy, proving that, once spoken, words take on a life of their own. This is why Arabic poetry has been so influential—it doesn't just document history, it shapes it, challenging power; and fueling defiance. And yet al-Mutanabbi is unbothered, he "sleep[s] soundly" while the world argues over what he left behind. The poem outlives the moment and continues to fight even without him.

This is the thread that runs unbroken through Arabic poetry across the centuries: the love that makes Laila weep blood for Qays, the grief that keeps Al-Khansa awake counting stars, the defiance that makes al-Rayyes sing from behind colonial prison bars. These are all expressions of the same devotion, to a person, tribe, and homeland. Arabic poetry has always understood that the personal and the political are not separate. It is this emotional architecture, built over centuries, that gives resistance poetry its power to move people long after the moment that produced it has passed.

Poetry as Social Witness and Political Resistance

A striking example of this is the poem “Oh Darkness of the Prison” by Najib al-Rayyes, originally written as a statement against the French colonizers in Syria. Decades later, this same poem echoed in the streets during the 2011 revolution against the Assad regime, symbolizing the fighting spirit of resistance and resilience. Its revival highlights how poetry transcends time, serving as a bridge between historical struggles and contemporary movements while preserving cultural identity and collective memory. Today, this poem is taught in Syrian schools and remains deeply embedded in Syrian collective memory:

يا ظلامَ السَّجْنِ خَيِّمِ إِنَّنا نَهْوَى الظلاما
Oh, darkness of the prison prevail, for we adore the dark and hail
 ليسَ بعدَ الليلِ إلا فجرٌ مجدٍ يتَّسامى
There is nothing after night, but the dawn of rising glory
 وتعاهدنا جميعاً يومَ أقسَمنا اليَمِينا
We pledged together all of us, on the day we swore the solemn oath
 لنْ نخونَ العهدَ يوماً واتخذنا الصدقَ ديناً
Never betray the promise, and we took honesty as our faith

يا رنينَ القيدِ زِدْني نغمَةً تُشجِّي فُوادي
Oh the ringing of the chains add a tone that stirs my heart
 إِنَّ في صَوْتِكَ مَعْنَى الأَسَى والاضْطهادِ
In your sound lies the meaning of sorrow and oppression endured
 لم أكن يوماً أثيمًا لم أحن يوماً نظاماً
Never was I sinful, nor did I ever betray order
 إنما حبّ بلادي في فُوادي قد أقام
It is only the love of my homeland, that has firmly settled in my heart
 (al-Rayyes, translation by Mlynxqualey, 2016)

This poem exemplifies poetry's ability to resurrect historical narratives for contemporary struggles, reinforcing its role as a living witness rather than a static record. The speaker doesn't beg for light ("There is nothing after night, but the dawn of rising glory"); he welcomes the dark because he knows what follows it. Similarly, with the "ringing of the chains" that "add a tone that stirs [the] heart," al-Rayyes transforms the sound of physical bondage into music, something that moves rather than breaks him.

Arabic poetry has also served as a literary witness to oppression, exile, and trauma in the Syrian conflict. Behar (2022) positions Syrian poetry within the global tradition of witness literature, comparing it to Holocaust poetry and Latin American testimonio. He argues that modern Syrian poets have redefined traditional Arabic poetry by integrating trauma narratives and fragmented verse to reflect the ruptures of war and displacement. Similarly, Alatrash and Alsamad (2020) highlight the role of poetry in preserving diasporic identity, demonstrating how exiled poets reconstruct home and belonging through verse. This reconstruction of home through language is further exemplified by Amal Kassir, a contemporary spoken word poet. Born of a Syrian father and American mother, Kassir describes her identity as one of liminality, "dwindling between two places, between two worlds," with poetry serving as the way she "[claims] that non-belonging as a space" (Kassir & Zietlow, 2020). Having lost 31 family members to airstrikes, chemical attacks, and the aggression of the Syrian regime, her poetry carries generational grief and mourning. She translates the Syrian experience into language accessible to audiences who have never set foot in Syria, making her work a living extension of the witness tradition Alatrash and Alsamad describe. What makes Kassir's contribution distinct is not just what she says but how she says it: through spoken word poetry. She bypasses censorship, directly speaking to diaspora communities and Western audiences.

Despite these insights, most scholars analyze Arabic poetry as reactive, focusing on its descriptive power rather than its transformative function. My research expands these discussions by examining how Arabic poetry actively reshapes collective memory and resilience, making it a force of cultural and historical intervention instead of a passive document.

Contemporary Transformations: The Digital and Global Evolution of Arabic Poetry

Nowhere is this intervention more visible than in the digital age, where poetry has found new stages, audiences, and urgency. Today, poetry continues to preserve cultural memory and resist silencing, now through new forms like spoken word performances and social media platforms that carry Arab voices across geographical borders and generations.

In English, we say, "We will never stop fighting for justice in Syria," but in Arabic poetry, we say:

إذا الشَّعْبُ يوماً أرادَ الحياةَ
If the people one day desire to live
 فلا بُدَّ أنْ يَسْتَجِيبَ القدرُ
Then fate must surely answer their call
 ولا بُدَّ لِلَّيْلِ أنْ يَنْجَلِي
And the night must fade, the dawn must rise
 ولا بُدَّ للقيد أنْ يَنْكَسِرَ
And the shackles must surely break and fall
 (al-Shabi, translation by Mlynxqualey, 2011)

These verses became an anthem for resistance across the Arab world. Originally written in the early 20th century, Abu al-Qasim al-Shabi's "To the Tyrants of the World" resurfaced during the Arab Spring and continues to echo through modern struggles, including the Syrian revolution. The message is clear: when people rise for freedom, nothing can stop them. The night will end, the chains will break, and justice will prevail. However, the conditional "if" places the entire burden on the people themselves. Fate doesn't move first; the people do. Only after that desire is declared does "fate ... surely answer their call." This sequencing is not incidental; it is the poem's argument. Agency precedes liberation.

This message has traveled far beyond its original context through digital platforms. The internet did not change the poem's meaning but did amplify its reach. It became a TikTok trend that revived old poems and introduced Western audiences to a new perspective grounded in the depth of Arab poetry. This digital transformation has further amplified poetry's power as a tool of resistance and cultural survival. Platforms such as ArabLit have played an important role in circulating, translating, and contextualizing Arabic poetry for broader audiences. This shift is particularly significant for Syrian refugee poets, whose work now circulates beyond the constraints of physical borders. Along with social media platforms, this digital transformation has given poetry a new role and stage in activism, with poets utilizing platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to reclaim their identities, document human rights abuses, and sustain cultural continuity. The rise of spoken-word artists like Amal Kassir and Omar Offendum exemplifies how poetry is no longer confined to written verse but is now a performative and interactive medium. This also provides an escape from censorship and surveillance by oppressive and discriminatory regimes. For instance, these social media platforms were a weapon used by activists to defend themselves from the brutal dictatorship of the Syrian regime, which arrested and kidnapped anyone who publicly spoke against it.

What Does Poetry Mean to Young Arabs Today?

To understand how Arabic poetry lives in the present, I spoke with Arab Stanford students whose experiences helped me see how poetry continues to shape identity, memory, and resistance beyond the page.

Many young Arabs, especially those shaped by migration, exile, or political instability, continue to use poetry to make sense of home and self. Adam, a Syrian international student, vividly described the integral role poetry played during his education in Syria: "Poetry was probably the best part of [the Syrian curriculum]. It gave a really good perspective on history ... It was something you could enjoy." His reflection demonstrates that poetry is not just taught as a literary form, but as a way of encountering history emotionally and culturally.

Adam then explained how Arabic poetry connects him to home, even thousands of miles away, and sang one of his favorite poems, “Damascus is in the Heart” by Nizar Qabbani. He emphasized the thematic richness of Arabic poetry, noting its focus on “patriotism, love, and ratha,” which he described as paying homage to a loved one who has passed away. These themes are not just literary motifs; they are deeply informative and reflective of the collective Arab psyche. The digital age has further transformed the accessibility and expression of Arabic poetry; Adam shared, “Social media has given Syrian poets a platform to reclaim their narratives and resist oppression without any censorship.”

Ameera Eshtewi, a Libyan American poet and student, spoke passionately about poetry’s indispensable role in her life, equating it to life itself: “Poetry is life, like oxygen, necessary to sustain me. It’s how I express, expose truths, and build bridges.” Her analogy shows that poetry is not only an artistic expression, but also a means of survival and resistance. Ameera shared an example that illustrated the personal and collective importance of poetry, discussing how resistance poetry has become a form of cultural preservation and political expression. She described poetry’s role in the Libyan context, particularly during periods of civil unrest: “Poetry ... was a form of resistance against Italian occupation and continued to echo through decades of strife in Libya.” Her reflection broadens the scope of this paper beyond Syria alone. It suggests that, across Arab contexts, poetry repeatedly becomes a vessel through which communities remember struggle, resist domination, and preserve dignity.

Taken together, Adam’s and Ameera’s testimonies demonstrate the transformative power of poetry to maintain connections with one’s heritage while navigating the challenges of diaspora. Their testimonies make clear that Arabic poetry is not confined to the past. Instead, it shapes collective memory and carries resistance forward across generations. It is a vibrant part of the present and a hopeful voice for the future.

My Testament to Syrian Resilience

Following in the footsteps of my ancestors, I felt compelled to contribute my own voice to the Arabic poetic canon. Here is an excerpt from “Syria: Cradle of Humanity,” an original poem that springs from the resilience and unwavering hope of my homeland:

They thought they could erase my history’s thread,
That my essence could be lost, my spirit dead.
They scattered me to winds, like whispers to fade,
Dancing like devils where my ashes were laid.
But no force can silence the rebel’s flame,
Where defiance burns, I rise and reclaim.
Like the Day of Resurrection, I rise with might,
Gathering strength from storms in the darkest night.
I return as a fighter, bold and untamed,
The greatest revolution, forever proclaimed.

(Abdelghne, 2026, Appendix)

To us, the Day of Resurrection is the restoration of everything that was unjustly taken. Survival alone was never enough—what I was writing toward was vindication, to document the story of my country through my eyes.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Arabic Poetry

Poetry is history written by the hearts of those who lived through it. Arabic poetry, with its rich melodious rhythms, does more than tell old tales—it encapsulates the spirit of entire generations. My research unveils Arabic poetry’s role as a dynamic force in the lives of young Arabs today, especially those living in exile. Poetry offers them a means to reclaim their fragmented identities and voice their ongoing struggles for justice and recognition. As long as Arabic poetry remains, so will the voice of justice. The cry for freedom and the declaration of existence that refuses to be silenced will live on. In the current era of digital transformation, where verses travel beyond physical borders, Arabic poetry continues to evolve. It reaches new audiences, engaging them in the collective memory and shared aspirations of the Arab world. Through this research, I hope to have illuminated not only the historical significance of Arabic poetry but also its enduring impact as a living, breathing testament to cultural resilience and identity.

As my father once said, “Words are more powerful than anything else.” As long as we continue to write, speak, and listen, Arabic poetry will continue to inspire, connect, and empower us all. In the heartbeats of its verses lies the undying hope of a people, the unbreakable spirit of a culture, and the unwavering belief in the inevitable dawn of a just tomorrow.

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APPENDIX: "Syria: Cradle of Humanity" by Baraa Abdelghne

Syria: Cradle of Humanity

They call me the land where jasmine's scent
fills the air,
The essence of beauty, resilience, and care.
They say I am the one with the strategic
geographic place,
The meeting point of three continents, in this
grand space.
They also say I am the cradle of ancient
civilization,
The oldest cities, filled with endless
fascination.
They consider me the most beautiful, diverse
and bright,
So I became the gateway to history's light.
Researchers and historians from all around the
globe,
Set foot on my soil, with questions to probe.

They seek to know who I am, the age I hold,
The civilizations that through my land have
strolled.
How I declared the beginning of life's span,
How I discovered what the world now
understands.
How I sent the first letter to script humanity's
lore,
And composed a melody that became a global
symphony, evermore.

سورية: مهد الإنسانية

يدعونني أرض الياسمين وبيت الصالحين،
حيث السحر يفوح بين البساتين

يقولون إنني صاحبة الموقع الجغرافي
الاستراتيجي
وإنني ملتقى القارات الثلاث
ويقولون أيضا إنني أقدم الحضارات والمدن
مليئة بالدهشة والفن
يعتبرونني الأجل والأكثر تنوعا وسطوعا
حتى أصبحت بوابة إلى التاريخ

أتاني الباحثون والمؤرخون من كل أرجاء العالم
وافترشوا أرضي ، وأصبحوا يبحثون عني
يحاولون أن يعرفوا من أنا
كم عمري ، ما هي الحضارات التي مرت
خلالي
وكيف أتى أنا التي أعلنت عن بداية الحياة
كيف أتى أنا التي اكتشفت ما يحيا عليه العالم
وكيف أتى أنا التي أرسلت أول حرف لتسطر
البشريّة به أجدياتها
وكيف أتى عرفت لحنًا فأصبح سمفونية عالمية
وكيف أتى على أبواب عاصمتي توقفت التاريخ

How history paused at my capital's gate,
I am the land where mountains, seas, and
valleys create.

I possess every shade and form of nature's
scene,
The most beautiful tourist sites, and the finest
resorts ever seen.
For those who want to live inside history's
tale,
I have Ugarit, Solomon's Fortress, and
Amrit's trail.

With over sixty castles, each a historic
treasure,
Enough to fill the world with stories of ancient
measure.

I am the water wheels in Hama, and Aleppo's
Citadel's reign,
The oldest churches and mosques, where
history remains.
I am Palmyra, a symbol so grand,
For those who wish to live in the oldest
inhabited land.

My capital's seven gates stopped time's flow,
A piece of heaven surrounded by a wall, like
sunlight's glow.

The straight path runs through its heart,
Where saints and sages refused to depart.

أنا صاحبةُ الجبلِ والبحرِ والواديانِ
طبيعتي فيها من كلِّ ظلٍّ وشكلٍ واللوانِ
فأنا التي أملكُ أجملَ الأماكنِ السياحيَّةِ وأروعَ
المصايفِ
ولمن يُريدُ أن يعيشَ في داخلِ التاريخِ
فلدي أوغاريتُ ولدي حصنِ سليمانَ وعمريتِ
وأملكُ أكثرَ من ستينِ قلعةً فيها من التاريخِ ما
يكفي العالمِ

أنا نواعيرِ حماه وأنا قلعةُ حلبِ القديمةِ
أنا أقدمُ الكنائسِ والجوامعِ، حيث يبقى التاريخِ
أنا تدمرِ واللاذقيةِ
ولمن يُريدُ أن يحيا داخلَ أقدمِ العواصمِ المأهولةِ
في العالمِ

فلدي عاصمةُ ذاتِ أبوابِ سبعةِ
توقَّفُ التاريخُ عندها
قطعةً من السماءِ
يُحيطُها سورٌ كما تُحيطُ الشمسُ بالأرضِ
الطريقُ المُستقيمُ يمرُّ بقلبِها
في أرضِها أباي القديسونِ والأولياءُ إلا أن يبقوا

أنا معلولا وصيدنايا ولغةُ السيِّدِ المسيحِ
أنا التي حيرتِ العلماءِ والمؤرِّخينِ بألقابِ

I am Maaloula, Saidnaya, and the language of
Christ's call,

I puzzled scholars and historians with my
titles enthrall.

Some named me the world's open-air
museum,

Others called me the Earth's garden, a
paradise supreme.

The gateway to the East, the world's greatest
small land,

I hold the ingredients, the flavors so fine,
In a rich diverse kitchen, from my lands they
shine.

Each city, distinct, with its own charming
way,

Once the safest haven where peace would
stay.

I gathered people from dawn till sunset's ray,
Every inch of my land was a shelter, a place to
stay.

Every moment with me was a lifetime's
dream,

For I am the land to which all roads seem.

The only one who opened borders and heart,

To all who came, from the very start.

Until a story began in 2011's year,

A tale written with many pens, so dear.

A story with big aims, and grand designs,

فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَالَ إِنَّنِي الْمُتَحَفُّ الطَّبِيعِيُّ الْمَفْتُوحُ فِي
العالم

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَالَ إِنَّنِي جَنَّةُ الْأَرْضِ

مِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَالَ بِوَابَةِ الشَّرْقِ

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَالَ إِنَّنِي أَكْبَرُ بَلَدٍ صَغِيرٍ

أَنَا الَّتِي أَمْلِكُ الْمُكُونَاتِ وَالنَّكْهَ

فِي مَطْبَخِ عَرِيقٍ مُتَنَوِّعٍ

فَكُلُّ مَدِينَةٍ لَهَا مَا يُمَيِّزُهَا

أَنَا الَّتِي كُنْتُ الْأَكْثَرُ أَمِنًا وَأَمَانًا فِي الْعَالَمِ

فَكُنْتُ أَجْمَعُ النَّاسَ مِنْ شُرُوقِ شَمْسِي حَتَّى مَغِيْبِهَا

كُلُّ شَيْبٍ فِي أَرْضِي كَانَ مَلَاذًا

وَكُلُّ لِحْظَةٍ مَعِيَ كَانَتْ عَمْرًا

فَأَنَا الَّتِي كُلُّ الطَّرِيقِ تُؤَدِّي إِلَيَّ

وَالْوَحِيدَةُ الَّتِي فَتَحْتُ حُدُودِي وَقَلْبِي لِلْجَمِيعِ

إِلَى أَنْ بَدَأَتِ الْقِصَّةُ عَامَ ٢٠١١

قِصَّةٌ تَمَّتْ كِتَابَتُهَا بِعَدِيدٍ مِنَ الْأَقْلَامِ

قِصَّةٌ تَحْمِلُ أَهْدَافًا وَغَايَاتٍ كَبِيرَةً

قِصَّةٌ تَبْدَأُ بِشِرَارَةٍ لِتُصْبِحَ كَرَّةً مِنْ نَارٍ

تَحْرِقُ التَّارِيخَ وَالْجُغْرَافِيَا وَالْحَضَارَةَ

أَنَا الَّتِي أَصَابَنِي مَرَضٌ دَاخِلٌ جَسَدِي وَالْكَثِيرُ

مِنَ الْأَلَامِ

دَمَّرُوا أَسْوَاقِي وَقَيْلَاعِي

Starting with a spark, turning into fire's lines.
Burning history, geography, and civilization's
crown,
An illness within me, trying to drag me down.
They destroyed my markets, my fortresses so
tall,
They harmed my heritage, but why, after all?
Was it because I am who I am, my beauty, so
hard to tame,
That revealed their ugliness, their shadows of
shame?

Few years ago, I welcomed millions to see,
Tourism thrived, my treasures on display for
free.
But then, every hand in the world, it seemed,
Held a hammer to strike my heart, as if they
dreamed.
They thought they could erase my history's
thread,
That my essence could be lost, my spirit dead.
They scattered me to winds, like whispers to
fade,
Dancing like devils where my ashes were laid.
But no force can silence the rebel's flame,
Where defiance burns, I rise and reclaim.
Like the Day of Resurrection, I rise with
might,
Gathering strength from storms in the darkest
night.

أساءوا إلى آثاري وحضارتي
وكأنهم فعلوا ما فعلوا لأنني أنا
لأن جمالي فضح بشاعتهم

حتى إنه لم تبق يد في العالم إلا وقد حملت فأساً
وأتت لتدقّه في صدري
في آثاري
في تاريخي
في حضارتي

ظنوا أنهم يستطيعون طمس هويتي
وحرق روعي وإخمد وجداني
أيظنون أن شعبي الثائر يُدفن؟
وأن دم الشهداء وآلام المعتقلين تُنسى؟
عبثاً يحاولون، فالحرّ لا يُهزم
أنا كالساعة أت بل أقسم
وسأعود حرّاً بلا قيد، مولوداً من أعظم الثورات
لم تتباطأ نبضات الحياة في عروقي لحظه واحدة
رغم الألم
يجب أن استمر
خيارتي الذي لا يمكن الشك فيه
لأن هناك من ينتظرنني
وهناك من رحل من أجلي
ومن أجل أن أستمر

I return as a fighter, bold and untamed,
The greatest revolution, forever proclaimed.

The heartbeat of life in my veins never
slowed,
Even through pain, my resilience showed.
For there are those who await, and those
who've left for me,
To continue, I must, it's my destiny.

Many martyrs gave their lives for mine,
Their blood flowed in my veins, keeping time.
Every joint of mine stands firm, unyielding,
Nothing can stop my steadfast shielding.
I am the faces of my people, their laughter and
play,
The spark of rebirth, life's ever-bright day.
With every sunrise, I call to the world and say:
"Rise, endure, for life belongs to you."
So, tell me now, do you know who I am?

شهداء كثر قدّموا حياتهم من أجل حياتي
دمّ كثير تمشّى في عروقي من أجل نبضات قلبي
فكيف لا أستمر؟
فكلّ مفصلٍ من مفاصلي مُستمرّ صامداً
لا يقف في وجهه شيء
أنا وجوه الناس ، وأنا ضحكة الأطفال
وأنا الأمل عندما يُبعث
وأنا الإستمرار

فَعِنْدَ كُلِّ إِشْرَاقِ شَمْسٍ جَدِيدَةٍ
أَهْمَسُ فِي آذَانِ الْعَالَمِ وَأَقُولُ :
قَوْمُوا اسْتَمِرُّوا ، فَالْحَيَاةُ لَكُمْ
فَهَلْ عَرَفْتُمْ مِنْ أَنَا