

UMM KULTHŪM SINGS AHMAD SHAWQĪ'S *NAHJ  
AL-BURDAH*: A SPIRITUALIZATION OF POLEMICS

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The 1950s and 1960s were a politically and socially charged period in the Middle East. Major developments swept across the area drastically changing life in Arab countries: wars, revolutions, disappointments, and an overwhelming need for change. However, throughout this period, regardless of religion or nationality or political affiliation, all Arabs had a set time and place to come together. The place was by the side of the radio and the time was the first Thursday of every month. The streets of Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, and all cities and villages in the Arab world were empty. Umm Kulthūm<sup>i</sup> was to sing and the Arab World was to listen. Her powerful voice traveled via radio waves across borders, real and imaginary, more capturing and convincing than any political speech or declaration.<sup>ii</sup> She took full advantage of the radio initially, and then film and television to become an Arab voice like no other with an impact that no other individual in the modern history of the Middle East can claim. Jean-Claude Chabrier writes: “Umm Kulthūm has been consecrated through her recordings and on the television; idolized by the masses of every Arab country who are either subjugated by her charm or irritated by her power, she reigns over an audience numbering one hundred thousand million” (45).

“Throughout [Umm Kulthūm’s] career, she made extensive use of the mass media; she appeared in six films, made 300 recordings and broadcast monthly concerts “live” that became primary social occasions throughout the Arabic-speaking world” (Danielson, “Umm Kulthūm”). She was completely invested in marketing her music to the widest Arab audience possible. By that she was able to create for herself a persona that was probably more credible and “real” than that of any of the political leaders at the time.

In Umm Kulthūm’s repertory, the process of modernization was launched on the basis of classical and indigenous forms, such as the qasīdah, coupled with the technology that allowed her to become a mass media icon. In the minds of most Arabs, she is associated with the

'authentic' and pure in the Arabic tradition. She is viewed by her fans as a representative of classical or indigenous values that extend far beyond music and art to touch upon issues of identity and belonging. Throughout her career she was often praised for her mastery of Arabic language and poetry. Many of her fans take pride in the fact that she began her career as a child reciting the *Qurān*. It is as if having that background was enough to prove her superiority and her excellence as a singer. In her book *The Voice of Egypt*, Virginia Danielson poses a few interesting questions from the perspective of a westerner wondering about the reason behind this great aura that surrounds Umm Kulthūm. The most interesting of these questions is the most basic: "Why was this individual, among many other entertainers, so important?" (2). In answer to that, Danielson collects a wide range of responses that show how Umm Kulthūm is associated in the minds of her audience with something that is much more than song and entertainment. She is associated with the Arabic literary tradition, with the *Qurān*, with the homeland as a concept, with Arab and Islamic identity, and most importantly, to many people she represents that which is "authentic" (*asīl*) (6). Throughout her career, she sang many *qasā'd* (classical Arabic poems), which brought the high classical structure of the pre-Islamic poem into the popular culture of the early 20th-century.

In the year 1946, Umm Kulthūm made a conscious decision to turn to the *qasīdah*. She chose a group of poems, most of them written by Ahmad Shawqī (1868-1932), the most prominent poet of the Neo-Classicist movement, including poems such as *Nahj al-Burdah*, *Salw Qalbī*, and *Wulida al-Hudá* (all of which are praises for the prophet Muhammad). Although her audience was used to listening to her singing classical Arabic poetry, this group of poems was seen as a statement made in relation to the political and social circumstances that were prevalent in the Middle East at that time. In the 1940s, the crisis in Palestine was gaining foreground.

Moreover, the movements of independence in most Arab countries placed the relationship with the West at the center of most debates related to identity, sovereignty, nationality, and other such concepts that were pressing issues at that time. This was a period that witnessed the rise of a national Arab current that was calling for the revival of Arab and Islamic values in order to face western hegemony and assert an authentic indigenous Arab identity. Umm Kulthūm's role in that period was crucial. Her choice of songs was "part of a strong, deep social and political current towards the reaffirmation of Islam and classical Arab civilization as the bases for social order" (Danielson, *The Voice* 110). The poetic texts she chose, and especially *Nahj al-Burdah*, were meant to evoke associations with a golden Arab and Muslim past. It is not a mere coincidence that three of the poems she chose from Shawqī are praises for the prophet and the significance of that lies beyond the religious message of these poems. Not only evoking the tradition but also striking significant contemporary chords, these poems were reproduced and forged by Umm Kulthūm's voice into powerful statements that had deep reverberations. In her performance of Shawqī's *Nahj al-Burdah*, Umm Kulthūm presents a new interpretive frame for the poem. In this performance, Shawqī's text is but one element which Umm Kulthūm manipulates through selection and omission, producing a new text which better suits the message of her performance. Her voice, her renditions, her status as a cultural force, and the expectations of her audience, all work together to reframe the poem in a manner that allows it to address urgent issues to which the Arab Muslim audience of 1946 would promptly respond.

### **Laying bare the Supplicatory-Structure of the Poem**

Shawqī's poem, which first appeared in published form in 1910 on the occasion of the *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) of the Khedive 'Abbās Hilmi the second, consists of one hundred and ninety lines. It is written as a contra-faction (*mu'ārada*) of the famous *Burdah*<sup>iii</sup> poem by the

medieval poet Al-Būsīrī (7th-/13th-century). In her study of al-Būsīrī's *Burdah* Suzanne Stetkevych states that the praise of the prophet is a genre that took its structure from the classical praise panegyric usually written in praise of a ruler or a patron. It is a structure based on a supplicatory ritual core through which the poet pledges allegiance and lavishes praise on his patron in exchange for a gift or reward (145). When the form was adapted in poems praising the prophet, the main structure and ritual core of the classical panegyric were preserved although the patron was now the messenger of God and the desired reward was no longer of material nature but rather a spiritual gift such as intercession, deliverance, forgiveness, and other such forms of spiritual healing.

Al-Būsīrī's *Burdah* poem has the basic supplicatory structure which begins with a lyrical-erotic prelude followed by a complaint of passion and a warning against the desires of the self/ego. The poet then turns to praising the *mamdūh* (the praised one) who is the Prophet in this case, and then ends the poem with self-abasement followed by the plea or the petition. This is the basic ritual structure of supplication which Shawqī maintains in his *Najh al-Burdah*: beginning with a lyric-erotic prelude (lines 1-24), followed by warning against the temptations of the soul (lines 25-38), repentance and submission (lines 39-46), a long praise section which includes *sīrah* themes (themes inspired by events and accounts from the prophet's life) (lines 47-176), and finally benediction and supplication where the plea is made (lines 177-190). This structure is the skeleton or backbone of both *madīh nabawī* or poems praising the prophet. Besides these ritual supplicatory sections, both poems have additional *sīrah* elements that are inserted into the praise sections. They differ from one poem to the other due to the fact that these selections from the *sīrah* are used to make statements related to each poet's times and concerns. Stetkevych states that these *sīrah* elements are employed to produce a polemic related to the contemporary issues

of the poet's time. Al-Būsīrī selects sections about the holy war and the prophet's expeditions which are "poetically rendered to produce a polemic in defense of an ideology of Islamic manifest destiny" (Stetkevych 156). This touched upon pressing issues in Būsīrī's Mamlūk Egypt. Similarly, Shawqī selects *sīrah* sections that bear upon pressing issues and concerns of Egypt at the turn of the 20th-century. He chooses to include a polemic in defense of Islam against Christianity, a long section on Jihad and the prophet's military campaigns, a section on Sharī'ah, a section in praise of Baghdād, and praise of the Orthodox Caliphs, all which play directly into Shawqī's anti-colonial message.

In other words, both Al-Būsīrī and Shawqī extend the praise sections creating space for themselves to address current issues within the ritual structure of supplication. What interests me here is how Umm Kulthūm was able to select 30 lines from Shawqī's 190 without disrupting this ritual or liturgical structure which is the basis of success in Shawqī's poem and the original poem by al-Būsīrī. The *sīrah* elements she chose to preserve in her song are also significant not only in their thematic value but also in the way she performs them taking into consideration the effect they have on her audience and how they play into the overall message of her performance.

Umm Kulthūm is known for her extensive involvement in the selection and composition of the poetry and music she performs. This is why her repertory is viewed as her own more than it is viewed as others' texts and music which she merely sings (Danielson, *The Voice* 2). She very often replaces words or phrases in a way that better fits her audience's expectations. A striking example of this is her selection of lines from Ahmad Rami's translation of the *Rubā'īyyāt* of Khayyam.<sup>iv</sup> In the case of *Nahj al-Burdah* her selections prove that she was aware of the ritual performative structure of the poem of supplication. Despite the fact that she chose less than one sixth of the poem, she was able to preserve what Stetkevych calls the "supplicatory structure."

This is why one feels that Umm Kuthūm's eventual performance has a very palpable liturgical nature. This, to the extent that even the *sīrah* sections that are included in the song, are performed in a way that draws upon the techniques of ritual performance, especially rituals that the audience is most acquainted with, such as prayer and *adhān* (the call for prayer). In other words, the *sīrah* sections that might have been the place where Shawqī most obviously delineated his polemic against colonialism, take up a spiritual weight when sung by Umm Kulthūm. That, however, does not mean that Umm Kulthūm's song don't carry a polemic or a political statement, quite the contrary. Through vocal emphasis, Umm Kulthūm guides the attention of the audience to certain words and phrases that underline her nationalistic, revivalist message and highlight the references that are meant to invoke connections with the present situation of Egypt and the Arab world in 1946. Shawqī's anti-colonial polemic is transformed into a profound spiritual experience through which the audience is guided.

#### **Umm Kulthūm Sings *Nahj Al-Burdah***

The keying of performance is the way in which "the frame" of a performance is accomplished. This gives "the receiver instructions of aid in his attempt to understand the message included within the frame" (Bauman 295). The framing is a way of directing the message in specific ways and placing it in specific contexts. In this manner Umm Kulthūm guides her audience toward a specific interpretation of Shawqī's poem by keying her performance using several of the "means of keying performance" Bauman lists in his study (295), particularly: special prosodic patterns of tempo, stress and pitch, special paralinguistic patterns of voice quality and vocalization, and appeal to tradition. These means guide her audience towards the message of her performance which is not necessarily fixed, but rather changed and modified every time she stands on stage facing a new audience, in a new place and

in a different time. Her performances “change and give rise to new points of social articulation as conditions change” (Danielson, *The Voice* 10). The message is produced and reproduced in every performance. This is why each recording can be studied on its own as a new frame with its own keys. Every time the song is performed it is given new relevance and even a new interpretation. This is a characteristic of all of Umm Kulthūm’s work where the audience plays a major role in the structure of the work presented (repetition, variation, and length). The variability and instability of the audience is reflected in the performance, which gives it what Bauman calls the “emergent quality” (302). The relevance of this idea to the discussion here is that just as repetitions and variations may be viewed as a response to audience expectations, these repetitions and variations can also be seen as a way of interactively shaping the audience’s reception to what is sung. Taylor Bickford states that:

Knowing how song structures itself – how culture grabs hold of the singing voice to elicit particular sounds and forms – is the first step in understanding how the micro- and macro-structures of singing reflect and subtly shape the micro- and macro-structures of their reception. (446)

When Umm Kulthūm repeats a line of verse upon request, she does not repeat it the same way. She manipulates it and breaks it down into phrases and words, which not only serve as means of emphasis but also as ways of interpreting the line to the audience and guiding their attention to specific points of reference. A striking example of this in Umm Kulthūm’s *Nahj al-Burdah* is the way she delivers line 25 of the song:

حتى بلغت سماء لا يطار لها      على جناح ولا يسعى على قدم  
(*Hattá balaghta samā'an la yutāru lahā*  
'alá janāhin wa lā yus 'á 'alá qadami)

Until you reached a sky which none can fly to  
by wings or strive to on foot

This line is a good place to begin the discussion of the song. It is very significant both performatively and structurally. This line is near the end of the song and the end of the praise section. It refers to the prophet's ascension to heaven, a theme which is not only familiar to the audience of a prophetic praise song, but also expected. It is one of the simplest lines in the poem. It might even be described as one of the poetically weaker lines. In Shawqī's poem, this line merely serves to introduce the one following it, which presents the idea of the prophet Muhammad's superior rank among all prophets. "You have reached a sky none can fly to," is basically the point. The rest of the line is not only redundant but also anti-climactic. A sky to which one cannot fly is definitely a sky that one cannot get to on foot. It seems as if the second hemistich is needed to complete the meter and maintain the *mīm* rhyme. However, that does not prevent the line from playing a central role in Umm Kulthūm's performance. There is a certain momentum that is built up from the beginning of the song until this point in line 25. In a recording that lasts 59:40 minutes, Umm Kulthūm spends almost fifteen minutes repeating and varying on this line alone. The tempo of the song reaches its climax here, and the insistent repetitions of line 25 bring the song to a relatively long halt. In every repetition the line is reshaped by the pauses and the phrase-breaks during which the music interferes. For example, in one variation Umm Kulthūm repeats the phrase *hattá balaghta samā'an* (until you reached a sky) three times pausing on the word *samā'* (sky) every time. In another variation she extends the long vowel of *yutār* (is flown) which also draws attention to the long vowel in *janāh* (wing) in the second part of the line. This line lends itself to a lot of vocal manipulation due to the many long vowels which Umm Kulthūm takes full advantage of by melisma (a group of notes sung to a single syllable), thus creating a chant-like liturgical effect.

The stress of long vowels and the way they are allowed to echo each other create musical parallelisms which place the stressed syllables or words in prominent positions (Bickford 462). Manipulations like this not only place the audience in a state of *tarab* (a trace-like ecstasy) but also prepare it for the punch line of the whole song which will come in line 27:

يا رب هبت شعوب من منيتها      واستيقظت أمم من رقدة العدم  
(*yā rabbī habbat shu'ūbun min manīyyatihā*  
*wa istayqazat umamun min raqdati l-'adami*)

Oh Lord, peoples have risen from death  
And nations have awoken from the sleep of oblivion

Like every collaboration between Umm Kulthūm and the composer Rīyād al-Sonbātī, the instrumental writing in *Nahj al-Burdah* “is heavy in introductions and interludes and light during the vocal rendition” (Danielson, *The Voice* 117). However, as the song builds up to line 27, the instruments retreat almost completely, leaving the voice and the words foregrounded more than any other instance in the song. Here too, Umm Kulthūm realizes the full emotional potential of the line. She repeats the opening phrase, *yā rabb* (Oh Lord), several times, gradually arriving at a climax that places her audience in the true atmosphere of fervent prayer. The fact that the music recedes into the background further creates the association with Islamic call for prayer, *adhān*. This is something that Umm Kulthūm consciously invokes from the very beginning of the song. Her pronunciation of the word Allah is always accentuated and stressed (lines 10, 15, 16, 24). Similarly, the pronunciation of all words that invoke a Qur'ānic association are modulated, such as the phrase (*janah al-dull*, the wing of humility) in line 12, and (*al-Rahmān*, the most gracious) in line 17. As Bauman states, this is a means by which Umm Kulthūm keys her performance by appealing to the tradition of Qur'ānic recitation.

The performance of line 27 achieves in its effect on the audience a successful correlative to the meaning of the line itself. The emphasis on the verbs (*habba*, to rise) and (*istayqaza*, to wake up) is very significant in underlining the relevance of this song to contemporary issues. It is as if this line is a call for the audience itself to wake up and rise. The revivalist message of the whole song reaches its culmination in this line, after it had been hinted at and insinuated from the very beginning. An example of such insinuation is extracted from the *sīrah* themes. Umm Kulthūm chooses two lines from the section on the birth of the prophet. They are lines 75 and 78 in Shawqī's poem and lines 18 and 19 in the song:

سرت بشائر بالهادي ومولده في الشرق والغرب مسرى النور في الظلم  
أتيت والناس فوضى لا تمر بهم إلا على صنم قد هام في صنم

(*sarat bashā'iru bi l-hādī wa mawlidihī*  
*fī sh-sharqī wa l-gharbi masrū an-nūri fī z-zulumi*  
*atayta wa n-nāsu fawdá la tamuru bihim*  
*ilá 'alá sanamīn qad hāma fī sanamī*)

Signs of the guiding one and his birth spread in the east  
And the west as light spreads in darkness,

You came and people were [in] chaos, you could see them  
infatuated by idol upon idol

These two lines are repeated three times. The first line introduces the second one, which is where the greater emphasis is placed. A subsiding of the instruments is easily noted when Umm Kulthūm reaches the word *fawdá*, chaos. The long vowel at the end of the word is stretched out creating an echo-like effect. This stress on *fawdá* is made every time this line is repeated, eliciting a very obvious reaction from the audience. By placing the stress here, it seems as if Umm Kulthūm is saying that just as the coming of Mohammad saved the Arabs from the chaos of the pre-Islamic age, the reviving of Islamic values will save the nation from the chaos it is experiencing at the turn of the 20th-century. The word *fawdá* must have struck a very sensitive chord with Umm Kulthūm's audience across the Arab Islamic world in 1946.

At the end of the song the message is clearly stated. By now, and especially in a typical performance that would last at least an hour, the audience is fully prepared and attentive to the slightest movements of Umm Kulthūm's voice. It is not an exaggeration to say that her audience enters into a state of trance. She herself has stated many times that her audience "is in a Sufi state." She seems to have relied on her audience's religious sensibility which would prompt them to grasp and enjoy even such a complicated song as *Nahj al-Burdah* (Danielson, *The Voice* 121). After the climax of line 27, the closing lines present the plea.

فالطف لأجل رسول العالمين بنا  
 ولا تزد قومه خسفاً ولا تسم  
 يا رب أحسنت بدء المسلمين به  
 فتمم الفضل وامنح حسن مختتم  
*(faltufl li'jli rasūli l-'ālamīna binā*  
*wa lā tazid qawmahu khasfan wa lā tasumi*  
*yā rabbī 'ahsanta bid'a l-muslimīna bihi*  
*fatammim l-fadla wa-mnah husna mukhtatami)*

For the sake of the messenger of God have mercy upon us  
 And do not increase the disgrace of his people and do not burden them

Oh Lord! You have done well in making him the first of the Muslims  
 Complete your favor and grant us a good ending

The relevance of these two lines to contemporary issues is obvious, especially in light of the strenuous relationship with the colonizing West and the rise of national Arab and pan-Arab sensibilities in the 1930s and 1940s. "Do not increase the disgrace of his people" is a plea the audience would not only have responded to but also recognized as something that concerns each one of them almost on a personal level. This is how the ritual is completed. Each person in the audience goes through a journey of realization. It does not necessarily have to be religious but it is definitely spiritual, even in the way it touches upon political issues.

Recitation or song accentuates the undulations of a written text through pitch and stress. This guides listeners towards the intended points of emphasis. Listening, as Danielson puts it,

“begins with the choice to pay attention to certain sounds rather than others” (*The Voice*, 9) and a powerful performer is one that can successfully direct the listeners’ attention to the key sounds that form his or her message. In oral expressions, and especially those accompanied by music, “conventions of syntax and meaning which might be more fixed in the written text, become less precise leaving greater freedom to make specific orientation in specific contexts” (10), and this is exactly what Umm Kulthūm does with Shawqī’s text. She doesn’t change the message of the poem per se, but rather redirects it and gives it specific orientations in specific contexts, allowing the poem to simultaneously operate in several contexts of meaning and references: the Arab, the nationalist, the Muslim, the Egyptian, the popular, the Neo-Classical. She allows the vibrations of Shawqī’s lines to extend in a range much wider than that of the Neo-Classical poem written by an Egyptian poet with anti-colonial sentiments. Her performance of the song presents the political argument for Arab revival in the face of the colonial other as a spiritual, almost personal, experience which speaks directly to each and every member of her audience all over the Arab world. She keys her performance and directs the listening experience to specific points of emphasis. Her vast audience all over the Arab world cannot choose but listen.

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These are the lines selected by Umm Kulthūm for her song Nahj al-Burdah and the order in which she sung them. The numbers in parenthesis correspond to the order of the lines as they exist in Shawqī's poem

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| (1) أحلَّ سفك دمي في الأشهر الحرم        | 1- ريم على القاع بين البان والعلم   |
| (3) يا ويح جنبك بالسهم المصيب رمي        | 2- لما رنا حدثتني النفس قائلة       |
| (4) جرح الأحبة عندي غير ذي ألم           | 3- جحدتها وكتمت السهم في كبدي       |
| (6) لو شفق الوجد لم تعذل ولم تلم         | 4- يا لآلمي في هواه والهوى قدر      |
| (7) ورب منتصت والقلب في صمم              | 5- لقد أثلتكَ أذنا غير واعية        |
| (8) أسهرت مضناك في حفظ الهوى فتم         | 6- يا ناعس الطرف لا ذقت الهوى أبداً |
| (25) وإن بدا لك منها حسن مبتسم           | 7- يا نفس دنياك تخفي كل مبكية       |
| (36) فقوم النفس بالأخلاق تستنقم          | 8- صلاح أمرك بالأخلاق مرجعه         |
| (37) والنفس من شرها في مرتع وخم          | 9- والنفس من خيرها في خير عافية     |
| (39) في الله يجعلني في خير معتصم         | 10- إن جل ذنبي عن الغفران لي أمل    |
| (40) مفرج الكرب في الدارين والغمم        | 11- ألقى رجائي إذا عز المجير على    |
| (41) عز الشفاعة لم أسأل سوى أمم          | 12- إذا خفضت جناح الذل أسأله        |
| (42) قدمت بين يديه عبرة الندم            | 13- وإن تقدم ذو تقوى بصالحة         |
| (43) يمسك بمفتاح باب الله يغتنم          | 14- لزمت باب أمير الأنبياء ومن      |
| (47) وبغية الله من خلق ومن نسّم          | 15- محمد صفوة الباري ورحمته         |
| (62) لم تتصل قبل من قيلت له بغم          | 16- ونودي إقرأ تعالى الله قائلها    |
| (63) أسمع مكة من قدسية النغم             | 17- هناك أذن للرحمن فامتألت         |
| (75) في الشرق والغرب مسرى النور في الظلم | 18- سرت بشائر بالهادي ومولده        |
| (78) إلا على صنم قد هام في صنم           | 19- أتيت والناس فوضى لا تمر بهم     |
| (83) والرسل من المسجد الأقصى على قدم     | 20- أسرى بك الله ليلاً إذ ملائكه    |
| (84) كالشهب بالبدر أو كالجند بالعلم      | 21- لما خطرت به التفوا بسيدهم       |
| (85) ومن يفز بحبيب الله يأنم             | 22- صلى وراءك منهم كل ذي خطر        |
| (86) على منورة درية اللجم                | 23- جبت السماوات أو ما فوقهن بهم    |
| (88) وقدرة الله فوق الشك والتهم          | 24- مشيئة الخالق الباري وصنعتة      |
| (89) على جناح ولا يسعى على قدم           | 25- حتى بلغت سماء لا يطار لها       |
| (90) ويا محمد هذا العرش فاستلم           | 26- وقيل كل نبي عند رتبته           |
| (187) واستيقظت أمم من رقدة العدم         | 27- يا رب هبت شعوب من منيتها        |
| (189) أكرم بوجهك من قاضٍ ومنتقم          | 28- رأى قضاؤك فينا رأى حكمته        |
| (190) ولا تزد قومه خسفاً ولا تسم         | 29- فالطف لأجل رسول العالمين بنا    |
| (191) فتمم الفضل وامنح حسن مختتم         | 30- يا رب أحسنن بدء المسلمين به     |

i Umm Kulthūm (1904?-1975), was the most famous Egyptian singer of her time. She had a traditional upbringing and education founded on the reading and recitation of the Qurān. She was known throughout her life for her powerful voice, her clear diction, and her ability to use melody and improvisation to bring out the meaning and mood of a poem. She was one of the most famous Arab singers and public personalities in the 20th-century.

ii Umm Kulthūm's first live radio broadcast was on June 7, 1937. She continued to give live performances via radio on the first Thursday of every month for the rest of her life (and even after her death through recordings). Scott L. Marcus writes: When Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power in Egypt after the 1952 revolution...he understood the potential of the voice and persona of Umm Kulthūm for promoting Egyptian and indeed pan-Arab unity. Thus, one of his first acts was to dramatically strengthen the broadcasting power of the Egyptian national radio so that the signal could be received throughout the Arab world, so far as Lebanon and Syria" (119).

iii The word "Burdah" means mantle or cloak. The epithet "Mantle Ode" (*Qasīdat al-Burdah*) was first conferred upon the conversion poem of the poet Ka'b bin Zuhayr, a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad. The accounts relate that the prophet accepted Ka'b's conversion and offered him his mantle. Most praises of the prophet that followed, including al-Būsīrī's, mention the Burdah (the mantle), which has become a symbol for spiritual redemption and intercession that a Muslim hopes for in exchange for praising the prophet. For more on this see: Stetkevych, Suzanne. "From Text to Talisman: Al-Būsīrī's Qasīdat al-Burdah (Mantle Ode) and the Supplicatory Ode." *JAL* 27.2 (2006):145-183. Shawqī's contra-faction of al-Būsīrī's poem is titled *Nahj al-Burdah* (In the Way of the Mantle).

iv In 1950, mad Rāmī, the poet, and Riyād al-Sonbātī, the music composer, worked closely with Umm Kulthūm to create the eventual "poem" that she would later sing as 'Rubā'īyāt al-Khayyām.' In this process, Umm Kulthūm personally chose fifteen quatrains, or thirty lines of Arabic verse from Rāmī's translation. Her selections were then arranged in a way that made the eventual product very much a coherent Arabic poem, similar to Arabic poems she had sung before. Umm Kulthūm's role in creating the Khayyām that was presented to the masses was decisive. The Khayyām she presented became the most widespread and well-known Khayyām in Arabic.