"Estrangement and Selfhood in the Classical Concept of *Waṭan*"

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Abstract:

The modern Arabic term for national homeland, *waṭan*, derives its sense from the related yet semantically different usage of this term in classical Arabic, particularly in classical Arabic poetry. In modern usage, *waṭan* refers to a politically defined, visually memorialized territory whose expanse is cognized abstractly rather than through personal experience. The modern *waṭan* is the geopolitical locus of national identity. The classical notion of *waṭan*, however, is rarely given much geographical content, although it usually designates a relatively localized area on the scale of a neighborhood, town, or village. More important than geographical content is the subjective meaning of the *waṭan*, in the sense of its essential place in the psyche of an individual. The *waṭan* (also *mawṭin*, *awṭān*), both in poetry and other types of classical writing, is strongly associated with the childhood/youth and primary love attachments of the speaker. This sense of *waṭan* is thus temporally defined as much as spatially, and as such can be seen as an archetypal instance of the Bakhtinian chronotope, one intrinsically associated with nostalgia and estrangement. The *waṭan*, as the site of the classical self's former plenitude, is by definition lost or transfigured and unrecoverable, becoming an attachment that must be relinquished for the sake of virtue and glory. This paper argues that the bivalency of the classical *waṭan* chronotope, recoverable through analysis of poetic and literary texts, allows us to understand the space and time of the self in classical Arabic literature and how this self differs from that presupposed by modern ideals of patriotism.

Keywords: *waṭan*, homeland, idyll, chronotope, naïve, pastoral, Bakhtin, Schiller, patriotism, childhood, family, Persian literature, love poetry, geography

The earliest extant Arabic work on the theme of "yearning for the homeland," traditionally attributed to the *adab* patriarch al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869), begins with an anecdote accounting for the author's interest in the topic.¹ The author had once conversed with a king, who despite his power and riches, suffered from melancholy upon thinking of his homeland. The poverty of his homeland did not prevent him from remembering it as the site of his true happiness. Moved by this testimonial, the author undertook to collect the poems and narratives that make up his work entitled "Risālah fī al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān." The king's story,

¹ 'Amr b. al-Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, "Risālah fī al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān," in *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, vol. 2 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1964), 383–384. The attribution of this epistle to al-Jāḥiẓ has long been in doubt, though it is defended by Hārūn, the editor of the collection cited here (ibid., 377–378). This epistle, which appears to have inaugurated the "yearning for the homeland" genre and supplies much of its material, was probably authored by Mūsā b. 'Īsā al-Kisrawī, a contemporary of al-Jāḥiẓ, as persuasively argued by the editor of a subsequent work of the same genre. See Muḥammad b. Sahl ibn al-Marzubān, *Kitāb al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān*, ed. Jalīl 'Aṭīyyah (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1987), 10–12. The attribution to al-Kisrawī is accepted by Albert Arazī in his exhaustive study of the genre. See Albert Arazī, "al-Ḥanīn ilā 'l-Awṭān. Entre la Ġāhiliyya et l'Īslām. Le Bédouin et Le citadin reconcilés," *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 143.2 (1993), 288. Arazī also discusses the anecdote about the king recounted above, 291–292.

characteristic of the *waṭan* lore of the early Islamic centuries, displays a homeland and a love for it that differ from those presupposed by modern ideals of patriotism. The pining king does not see his place of origin as a national homeland or a political entity of any kind. Though he is powerful, he seems to feel no sense of duty toward his distant homeland or his former compatriots. Nor does he seem to envision his homeland as a place to which he can return at any time. The nature of his attachment seems to be more subjective in nature: it is an attachment to the condition of fulfillment that he experienced in his homeland, a condition that cannot be reproduced, even though he has attained the successes for which he left his homeland in the first place.²

During the 19th century, the word *waṭan* in Arabic and in other languages that adopted this word came to take on the new meaning of “national homeland,” with *waṭaniyyah* coined in Arabic to mean “patriotism.”³ This modern sense of *waṭan* is more or less parallel to the terms corresponding to “homeland” in other modern languages. Yet the genealogy of the modern sense of *waṭan* lies in the pre-modern usages of this term, and particularly in the literary topos or thematic that developed around it.⁴ In pre-modern Arabic usage the term *waṭan* rarely has any political sense and is not often geographically precise, usually evoking a localized area of personal attachment on the scale of a neighborhood, town, or village.⁵ In some contexts the term designates the entire region that contains this locality.⁶ More important than geographical content in the pre-modern usage, however, is the subjective meaning of the *waṭan*, in the sense of its imputed essential place in the affective make-up of individuals. This dimension of the classical term is also central to the modern concept of the national homeland. It is through the transformation of the affective structure of the pre-existing *waṭan* literary topos that the modern ideal of

² Perhaps the most famous instance of the motif of a king pining for his homeland concerns the founder of the Umayyad dynasty in al-Andalus, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dākhil (d. 788). For his often cited verses addressed to a Syrian palm tree that is a stranger like himself in his adopted land, see Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭah fī akhbār Gharnāṭah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Ubayd Allāh ‘Inān (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1973), 3:470.

³ For the usage of the term in Arabic since the late 19th century, particularly with a political sense, see Said Bensaid, “Al-Waṭan and Al-Umma in Contemporary Arab Use,” in *The Foundations of the Arab State*, ed. Ghassane Salamé (New York: Routledge, 1987); Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Bernard Lewis, “Waṭan,” in *The Impact of Western Nationalisms*, ed. J. Reinharz and G. L. Masse (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1992).

⁴ Rifā‘ah Rāfi‘ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1873) was one of the earliest Arabic writers to introduce the modern concept of homeland. For this purpose he composed a number of patriotic poems, drawing on the conventional poetic motifs connected with the *waṭan*. See U. Haarmann, “Waṭan,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs (Brill Online, 2014). See also Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789–1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 68–69, 78–81. For these poems see al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Dīwān Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī*, ed. Ṭāhā Wādī (Cairo: al-Hay‘ah al-Miṣriyyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1979).

⁵ For an argument that the term began to develop a political sense in pre-modern times, see Zayde Antrim, “Waṭan before Waṭaniyya: Loyalty to Land in Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Syria,” *Al-Masaq* 22.2 (2010). However, the two examples provided by Antrim can be interpreted in terms of the panegyric motif of proclaiming the praised figure to be the speaker’s true homeland (discussed below), and no evidence is offered to show that a political sense of the term became widespread.

⁶ In another usage, the term *waṭan* could have the meaning “country” or “region” in a general manner, rather than specifying a particular person’s land of origin or residence. This sense however does not seem to have become standard.

patriotic sentiment was initially represented and developed.⁷ Recent research on the classical *waṭan* has centered on medieval literary anthologies that assembled poetry and other materials on the topic of “yearning for the homeland” (*al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān*).⁸ This research has surveyed the various motifs connected with yearning for the homeland, as well as those connected with the paired and opposing theme of the benefits of emigrating from the homeland. The aim of this essay is to investigate the nature of yearning for the homeland as it features in classical poetry and other types of pre-modern writing, and the moral content associated with this yearning. In its embodiment of a specific relationship between affect and moral ideal, the classical *waṭan* stands as a primary premodern thematic of the self.

The *waṭan* (also *mawṭin*, *awṭān*) in classical writing is strongly associated with the childhood/youth and primary love attachments of the speaker. In many contexts, particularly in poetry, *waṭan* refers to the native ground of the speaker’s youth, now existing only in personal remembrance, and the word may evoke this subjective connotation in more neutral contexts as well.⁹ In this way the *waṭan* is defined temporally as much as spatially, and as such can be seen as an archetypal instance of the Bakhtinian chronotope. A key element in the structure of the *waṭan* as a chronotope is its intrinsic association with loss and estrangement. The term evokes displacement from one’s homeland and the feeling of yearning that results. The poetic *waṭan*, the site of the self’s original familial and erotic investment, is almost by definition lost or transfigured and unrecoverable. The *waṭan* evokes a former golden age characterized by natural simplicity, not only on the biographical level of an individual’s memories of childhood, but on a social level through the association of yearning for the homeland with stereotypical images of the simplicity and happiness of primitive Bedouin life.

On this basis the *waṭan* topos has an intrinsic connection with pastoral thematics. Like the rustic locales of pastoral poems as envisaged by Friedrich Schiller in his theory of “naïve” and “sentimental” poetry, the *waṭan* figures an originary, natural lifestyle in which desire and necessity coincided. At the same time, however, that the classical *waṭan* signifies a lost plenitude for which one should yearn, it may also stand for a state of immature

⁷ On this transformation, see Afsaneh Najmabadi, “The Erotic ‘Vatan’ [homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To Love, to Possess, and to Protect,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39.3 (1997); and Yaseen Noorani, “The Lost Garden of Al-Andalus: Islamic Spain and the Poetic Inversion of Colonialism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31.2 (1999).

⁸ Of the nine literary anthologies devoted to this topic that are mentioned in medieval sources, two are extant. See Wadad al-Qadi, “Dislocation and Nostalgia: al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān, Expressions of Alienation in Early Arabic Literature,” in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Toward a New Hermeneutic Approach* (Beirut: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1999), 6. These two extant works consist of the one attributed to al-Jāhīz but probably written by his contemporary al-Kisrawī, and another authored by Ibn al-Marzubān (d. circa 942). See note 1 above for citations. Numerous other multi-topic anthologies contain chapters on “yearning for the homeland.” For a substantial list of works containing sections on this topic, and a quantitative analysis of pro-patria and pro-emigration materials in these works, see Kathrin Müller, “al-Ḥanīn ilā al-Awṭān in Early Arabic Literature,” in *Myths, Historical Archetypes, and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*. For a detailed exposition of the primary themes and motifs associated with the topic of “yearning for the homeland,” see Arazi. The geographical content of the pre-modern literary *waṭan* is addressed in Zayde Antrim, *Routes and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁹ “Native ground” is Jaroslav Stetkevych’s translation of *waṭan* in classical poetry. See Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 181.

contentment that must be relinquished in order for self-completion and ultimate fulfillment to be attained. This authentic fulfillment, the goal of human life, may then stand as the true *waṭan* that supersedes and displaces the homeland of immaturity. In this case, the meaning of the innate yearning for the homeland of birth turns out to be ambition for the higher homeland of maturity. In all of this, the *waṭan* topos constitutes a subjective chronotope through which the self and its affective structure are represented. I have argued previously that in classical Arabic depictions of the self, the virtue and rationality of perfected selfhood are the products of the self-negation of primordial desire.¹⁰ I will argue here that the dual meaning of the *waṭan* in classical Arabic writing allows it to embody this relationship between virtue and desire by casting the *waṭan* as the manifestation of innate yearning for perfection and at the same time as a pre-conscious childhood state that must be surrendered and superseded for the sake of glory and permanence. Invested with this opposition, the *waṭan* is a thematic complex that encapsulates what the classical Arabic *qaṣīdah* dramatizes through its poetic structures: absolute emotional investment and its painful sublimation into virtuous self-sacrifice. As a stereotyped, static image, the *waṭan* can have the tendency to serve as a ready-to-hand evocation of estrangement from the present coupled with yearning for a former state of fulfillment.

The *Waṭan* and Primordial Desire

The key psycho-structural feature of the classical *waṭan* is its conjoining of primordial desire and virtue. In the earliest extant work devoted to the “yearning for the homeland” topic, the connection of yearning for the homeland with rationality, virtue, and nobility has a strong presence that persists in subsequent *adab* works.¹¹ This connection between desire and virtue gives the *waṭan* thematic much of its power. The connection is not that the two elements are identical, I argue, but lies in the overwhelming nature and necessary presence of primordial desire as the displaced substrate of virtue. The kind of attachment depicted in the classical *waṭan* topos differs markedly from the morally oriented sentiments usually associated with modern patriotism. The feeling one has toward one’s homeland, as depicted in classical writing, is not what moderns would call a sentiment or an emotion, but appears as an overwhelming passion, a manifestation of primordial desire. This passion is conventionally denoted by the term *ḥanīn*, which may be translated as “yearning,” but should be understood as a natural, even biological force of longing. Passionate yearning for the homeland is not limited to human beings, nor is it even primarily human in nature. Animals, such as birds and lions, experience such attachment, and camels particularly, especially she-camels, were the first to be associated in poetry with longing for the homeland.

Albert Arazi has observed that in pre-Islamic poetry, yearning for the *waṭan* appears primarily as a feature of camels rather than of human beings.¹² The association of yearning for the homeland with the she-camel is significant in that she-camels are emblematic in poetry for their overwhelming attachment -- *ḥanīn*-- to their calves. The she-camel is

¹⁰ Yaseen Noorani, *Culture and Hegemony in the Colonial Middle East* (London: Palgrave, 2010).

¹¹ See al-Jāhiz, “Risālah fī al-ḥanīn,” 385, 389, 391, for intellect; 407, for nobility.

¹² Ibid., 293–296.

shown as desperate and inconsolable when its calf has died, and manifests the same desperation when it pines for its homeland. *Hanīn* is defined not only as the feeling of longing itself, but as the sound of a camel's bellowing that is taken to indicate this feeling.¹³ The primary *waṭan* motif of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry shows the poet moved to remembrance of distant loved ones by his bellowing, homesick camel.¹⁴ In later poetry, the force of the camel's yearning for its homeland became a standard reference, as we see in the following verse by Ibn Ḥamdīs (d. 1133):

لقد حنت إلى مثواك نفسي كمرزمة إلى وطن نتوق
My soul yearned for your abode Like a pining camel longing for her homeland.¹⁵

A number of Arabic verbs synonymous with the verb *ḥanna* that appears in this verse have a specific sense of yearning for the homeland on the part of both camels and human beings, including *abba*, *arzama* (as in the verse above), and *nazaʿa*, as attested in dictionaries such as *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Moreover, a frequent motif in pre-modern *waṭan* anthologies is the dictum that the noblest camels are those that yearn most strongly for their homelands.¹⁶ Although camels remained proverbial in this regard, after the early Islamic period their grief-stricken bellowing gave way to the plaintive warbling of doves as the favored provocation of the poet's longing and homesickness:

إذا تغنى حمام الأيك في غصن حن الغريب إلى أوطانه فبكى
When doves in the wood sing on a bough, The stranger yearns for his homeland and weeps.¹⁷

Yearning for the homeland is depicted in this way as a natural passion in which human beings partake.

The Full *Waṭan* Topos

The full *waṭan* topos that emerged in Arabic poetry and lore attributed to the Umayyad period is no longer limited to the homesick camel motif of pre-Islamic poetry, but has become a body of motifs that illustrate the poet's own relation to his or her homeland. It may be surmised that this body of motifs did not originate in pre-Islamic poetry but came into the poetic tradition from folkloric sources during the early Umayyad period. As indicated above, in extant pre-Islamic poetry longing for the homeland is not attributed to the poet, but to the poet's camel. The poet, in response, remembers his beloved. This situation is a motif of the *nasīb*, the section of the ode devoted to the remembrance of past

¹³ See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. Amīn Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq al-ʿUbaydī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1999), v.3, 366-379, root ḥ-n-n.

¹⁴ For examples, see Ibn al-Marzubān, 103–104, and references provided by Arazī, 296, fn. 25.

¹⁵ ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ḥamdīs, *Dīwān ibn Ḥamdīs*, ed. Yūsuf ʿĪd (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 2005), 309. All translations from Arabic are my own.

¹⁶ See, for example, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Bahjat al-majālis wa-uns al-majālis*, ed. Muḥammad Mursī al-Khulī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyyah lil-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjamah, 1967–1970), 2:70.

¹⁷ al-Jāhiz, *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-aḍḍād*, ed. Gerlof van Vloten (Leiden: Brill, 1898), 123.

love.¹⁹ In pre-Islamic poems, the places for which poets yearn are not their homelands, but specific, named locations where the poet and the beloved came together in tribal-migratory settings. These sites of remembered, youthful love play a central role in the *nasīb*. The full *waṭan* topos joins this geographical evocation of youthful love with motifs of family, childhood, and upbringing, while associating these elements in narratives with Bedouin characters and settings. This topos seems to appear for the first time in poetry originating in the early Umayyad period. Many of the *waṭan* anecdotes and other lore present in the medieval anthologies are associated with this period as well.²⁰

The Umayyad period poems rendering the *waṭan* thematic are usually short pieces, only two verses in many instances, often presented in the context of folkloric anecdotes involving Bedouin characters, early Muslim figures, and the like. The love poetry (*ghazal*) that first emerged during this period also contains elements of the full *waṭan* topos, but they are subordinated to erotic love, resulting in the assimilation of the *waṭan* to the remembered sites of love of pre-Islamic poetry.²¹ The relationship between the *waṭan* topos and genres of Arabic poetry can be considered in terms of Bakhtin's account of the idyll as a primary literary chronotope. The idyll is an idealized literary depiction of a conventional way of life. Bakhtin posits that the different types of idyll, including the family idyll and the love idyll, emerge from what he calls folkloric time, which is collective in nature and encompasses all the activities of communal life. All forms of idyll are characterized by "unity of place," such that their "little spatial world is limited and sufficient unto itself," and by the "conjoining of human life with the life of nature," such that the time of the idyll is universal and cyclical.²² In terms of Bakhtin's schema, the Arabic *waṭan* thematic has aspects of both the family idyll and the love idyll, whose basic form according to Bakhtin is the pastoral. The *waṭan* topos does not depict idyllic space and time directly, but recalls it and laments its loss.

It appears that at some time during or before the early Umayyad period, family-idyllic *waṭan* motifs from folkloric sources entered the poetic tradition by fusing with the *nasīb* motifs of the homesick camel and the remembered sites of past love. This gave rise to the new image of the poet nostalgically remembering his homeland where he enjoyed familial as well as romantic love, and plenitude despite poverty. The result of the fusion of the folkloric and poetic motifs is that the primordial desire of heroic sexual love, already associated in the pre-Islamic ode with youth and immaturity, takes in the Umayyad period a form more fully connected with childhood and familial love in general, softened by its

¹⁹ For a book-length treatment of the role of remembrance and nostalgia in the *nasīb*, see J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs*.

²⁰ Stetkevych points out that reference to Najd as an archetypal pastoral locale in the manner of Arcadia began in Umayyad-period poetry. See J. Stetkevych, 115. Najd is at the same time the archetypal *waṭan*, as discussed below.

²¹ For example, al-ʿArjī (d. 738) begins a love poem with the common *nasīb* motif of perceiving flashes of lightning which seem to come from specific places that he names, and then remarks,

تلك أوطان لليلي ولنا ما يهيج ذا الهوى إلا الوطن

These are Layla's native places and ours;
Nothing can stir such passion but the homeland.

See ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar al-ʿArjī, *Dīwān al-ʿArjī*, ed. Shajīr Jamīl Jubaylī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1998), 328.

²² M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 225, 226. For Bakhtin's discussion of the idyll, see pp. 224–236.

connection to the family idyll.²³ This is seen fully in the short poetic pieces expressing the *waṭan* thematic which conjoin kin (*ahl*), childhood upbringing, intimate friends, and early love. In love poems and in longer poems in which the *waṭan* is part of the *nasīb*, the love-idyll side of its depiction is dominant. The *waṭan* topos therefore appears fully elaborated in short poems and anecdotes and is usually only referenced or invoked in other genres in a manner dependent on the context.

The Pastoral *Waṭan*

In rendering primordial desire as attachment to a place and time, the *waṭan* shows kinship with pastoral literary forms,²⁴ particularly in the depiction of the *waṭan* as a golden age of primal innocence, and most specifically in the firm association of nostalgia for the homeland with Bedouinity. The *waṭan* thematic has a distinct Bedouin substrate in Arabic literature. In his survey of *waṭan* thematics in classical Arabic literature, Arazi affirms that while the literature depicts attachment to the homeland as characteristic of city-dwellers as well as of Bedouins, and of non-Arabs as well as of Arabs, “there remains nonetheless an indissoluble link between the *ḥanīn* and the Bedouin: the poems, narratives and maxims uttered by nomads take up the greater part of the treatises and sections of *adab* works devoted to this topic.”²⁵ Much of the poetry attributed to Bedouins that expresses this yearning is assigned to Bedouin women who have left their natal homes and kin due to marriage. Two frequently anthologized pieces with a distinct pastoral tenor are ascribed to women who married into wealth and are removed from the desert to civilization yet nevertheless pine for their rustic homelands.²⁶ One of these poems came to be attributed to Maysūn bint Baḥdal, the wife of the Caliph Mu‘āwiyah and mother of Yazīd.²⁷ In each verse, Maysūn affirms her preference for simple and crude features of desert life over refinements and luxuries of settled life. According to the story, Mu‘āwiyah, after hearing the poem, returned Maysūn to her desert kinfolk. Although the word *waṭan* does not appear in either

²³ On the immature character of sexual love in the *nasīb*, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 270.

²⁴ The critical debate over what constitutes the pastoral form and how “pastoral” is to be defined as a literary category has not been settled. Generally, the depiction of a pastoral society in a “golden age” condition has been taken as characteristic. A prominent contemporary critic, Paul Alpers, has argued for eliminating the “golden age” frame in our understanding of the pastoral and centering our understanding instead on the depiction of shepherds and their simplified way of life. See his article, “Schiller’s Naive and Sentimental Poetry and the Modern Idea of Pastoral,” Department of Classics, UC Berkeley, April 1, 1990, and his book, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). In characterizing the *waṭan* topos as pastoral I refer both to the association with herders (Bedouins) and their “simplicity” as well as to the casting of the *waṭan* (and Bedouin life) as a golden age, since both are relevant and interconnected in the Arabic materials. On pastoral themes, see Andrew V. Ettin, *Literature and the Pastoral* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). On pastoral resonances in classical Arabic poetry, see J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs*, 114–167.

²⁵ Arazi, 308. On the Bedouin association with the *waṭan* in the literary anthologies, see also Antrim, *Routes and Realms*, 20.

²⁶ One of these poems is attributed to Zaynab bint al-Ḥasnānah in al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā’*. The other is usually attributed to Maysūn bint Baḥdal al-Kalbiyyah. Versions of the story and the poem that came to be associated with Maysūn can be found in ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn ‘Umar al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-adab wa-lubb lūbab lisān al-‘arab*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa-l-Nashr, 1967–1968), 8:503–506. A shorter version of the poem, without two added lines that mention the term *waṭan*, are cited in ‘Alī b. Abī al-Faraj b. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-ḥamāsah al-baṣriyyah*, ed. ‘Ādil Sulaymān Gamāl (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1999), 2:940–941 (no. 806).

²⁷ This poem is discussed in Arazi, 312–313. He also cites other instances of verses attributed to Bedouin women.

of these poems, the poems are mainstays of the medieval *waṭan* anthologies. The Bedouin woman yearning for her homeland appears to have become a proverbial standard for this feeling, though not to the same extent as the pining camel.²⁸

These poems and anecdotes draw not only on the conventional linkage between femininity and nature, but on a broader linkage between Bedouinity and nature, giving the *waṭan* its pastoral resonance. In his work *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, Schiller explained the pastoral idyll as a representation of “innocent and contented mankind.”²⁹ Since this state of human existence is regarded as incompatible with the “artificial” manners and feelings of civilized social life, “the poets have removed the location of idyll from the tumult of everyday life into the simple pastoral state and assigned its period before the *beginnings of civilization* in the childlike age of man.”³⁰ Schiller’s analysis is based on the application of a romantic conception of nature to literary depictions of pastoral life and love in Europe from Theocritus to his own time. Without adopting the same conception, we can observe that idealized notions of a primitive, natural, state of life are present in Arabic depictions of the *waṭan*. The association of the *waṭan* with Bedouin feeling is characteristic of the fascination with Bedouin lore and manners that prevailed in Abbasid courtly culture.³¹ The litterateurs and philologists of the Abbasid period who were responsible for collecting and editing the pre-Islamic and Umayyad literary materials that are now available to us were apparently motivated to a significant degree by their idealization of Bedouin virtues and feelings. This predilection on their part has left its imprint on the *waṭan* topos that Abbasid scholars transmitted to succeeding generations through the materials that they assembled. The import of the anthologized *waṭan* anecdotes is that the love of Bedouins for their homeland is more intense and sincere than that of ordinary people. At the same time, the central Arabian region of Najd came to be the primordial and proverbial homeland in Arabic poetry.³²

Bedouins, because they were regarded as close to nature, were seen as violent and uncouth savages, but at the same time as sincere and heroic. Thus the early Muslims were thought to have achieved moral superiority over other peoples by virtue of their Bedouin purity, which made them fully receptive to Islam. Similarly, Schiller draws a connection between heroic virtue and the pastoral in his own conception of nature and the naïve when he states that individuals of “naïve” and “childlike” temperament “comport themselves even at the courts of kings with the same ingenuousness and innocence that one would find only in a pastoral society.”³³ The depiction of precisely such comportment is the focus of a genre of narratives in which a pre-Islamic or early Islamic rustic Arab at the sophisticated Persian court astonishes the emperor with his sincerity and eloquence.³⁴ This genre

²⁸ See the lines quoted in J. Stetkevych, 145.

²⁹ Friedrich Schiller, *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, and on the Sublime; Two Essays*, trans. Julius A. Elias (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1967), 146.

³⁰ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

³¹ The connection between the Arabic literary fascination with Bedouin life and pastoral themes in European literature is noted in S. Enderwitz, “Homesickness and Love in Arabic Poetry,” in *Myths, Historical Archetypes, and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*, 63.

³² On the importance of Najd and its similarities to Arcadia, the archetypal setting for the European pastoral tradition, see J. Stetkevych, 114–134.

³³ Schiller, 93.

³⁴ For some narratives of this type, see Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*, ed. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Tarhīnī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmī, 1987), 1:275–288.

exemplifies a general cultural trend of connecting the simple, natural, austere condition of the desert Arabs with their capacity for virtue.

The Bedouin depicted in this manner stands as an instantiation of the universal, natural human being, the type of person most capable of displaying and expressing primordial feelings. William Empson characterized the pastoral in a general sense in a manner that is fully applicable to the depiction of Bedouin characters in the *waṭan* anecdotes:

The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way). From seeing the two sorts of people combined like this you thought better of both; the best parts of both were used.³⁵

The association of desert Arabs with authentic and intense feeling is seen broadly in the love lore collected in the Abbasid period. The redactors of these materials explicitly favored Bedouin figures for their linguistic purity and eloquence, which they linked with natural authenticity. The early Arabic love poetry and accompanying narratives, and particularly the so-called *ʿudhrī* genre of poetry depicting chaste, fervent, immature love, belong to the same early Islamic Bedouin environment in which the *waṭan* anecdotes assembled in literary anthologies are set. It is not coincidental that the *ʿudhrī* poems and others of the Umayyad period are the earliest to display the later conventional *waṭan* motifs, establishing a cultural linkage between the *waṭan* and romanticized Bedouin characters who pine plaintively for beloveds and homelands. This linkage takes a larger narrative form in the lore surrounding the legendary *ʿudhrī* poet Majnūn, the ultimate tragic lover. Jaroslav Stetkevych has pointed out the generic features that these stories share with the ancient Greek pastoral romance *Daphnis and Chloe*. The pastoral features of the Majnūn poems and anecdotes played an important role in the subsequent canonization of the Majnūn narrative. The Persian poet Nizāmī gives these features a prominent development in his great romance *Laylā va Majnūn*, in which the innocence and simplicity of the Bedouin characters sets the stage for a coming-of-age romance featuring childhood love, chaste affection, gentle manners, and elegiac sorrow. Najd, Majnūn's homeland and the rustic setting of his Bedouin way of life, is not only a desert waste but contains gardens, meadows, and congenial animals. Nizāmī's romance, drawing its material from the Arabic Majnūn narratives, combines motifs of childhood, upbringing, and domestic life, with an intense development of romantic love motifs that culminates in a transcendent, Sufi significance. The romance is a synthesis of family and love idylls, as is the *waṭan* topos itself, but in a narrative form.³⁶

³⁵ William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1974), 11–12. Empson's understanding of pastoral is idiosyncratic, in that he sees any representation by something simple of something more complex to be a type of pastoral. Nevertheless, he provides many insights into conventional pastoral representations as well.

³⁶ Bakhtin observes this kind of fusion in some European novels. See Bakhtin, 226. On the pastoral features of the Arabic Majnūn narratives and poetry, see J. Stetkevych, 143. On pastoral romances in European literature, see Richard F. Hardin, *Love in a Green Shade: Idyllic Romances Ancient to Modern* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

The identification of Bedouin austerity and authenticity with the image of a former time of happiness in the place to which one inherently belongs enables us to see the central meaning of the homeland in the classical *waṭan* thematic: the *waṭan* that one remembers is a former state of self-sufficient totality that was blissfully enjoyed in an unconscious manner. In this state fate, the opposition between necessity and desire that we experience ordinarily, did not hold sway. Need and lack did not exist because desire was completely satisfied precisely with what actually existed, and was thus not experienced as desire. The depiction of the *waṭan* in this way is closely related to Schiller's conception of the "naïve" state, and the "sentimental" attraction to this state, by which he attempts to explain our attraction to nature and natural phenomena. "We love in them ... their existence in accordance with their own laws, the inner necessity, the eternal unity with themselves"—a condition which our human will, unsatisfied with what is, prevents us from enjoying. "They [natural phenomena] *are* what we *were*; they are what we *should once again become*." For this reason they are "a representation of our lost childhood, which eternally remains most dear to us, but fills us with a certain melancholy. But they are also representations of our highest fulfillment in the ideal, thus invoking in us a sublime tenderness." Nature shows us the ideal condition of total harmony with external necessity that human beings cannot experience in the way of unconscious things of nature but must strive to reestablish as a future goal of humanity. For Schiller, this ideal condition of being that we see in nature, and which is the basis of our attraction to it, makes our attraction to nature moral in character, "for it is mediated by an idea, not produced immediately by observation."³⁷

In this way Schiller's conception of pastoral themes and their relation to nature is characteristic of modern notions of emotion and affect in which these are inherently morally oriented. Thus Schiller's analysis leads him to remark that a child is a "*sacred* object," in an early formulation of the modern notion of childhood, which as will be discussed below, differs from the classical Arabic association of youth with primordial desire.³⁸ This difference can also be seen when we compare the modern and classical Arabic notions of the *waṭan* itself. Modern patriotism, like Schiller's love of nature and childhood, is understood to be a moral sentiment, inherently oriented towards the uplifting or perfection of human community. Classical yearning for the homeland, however, appears as a manifestation of primordial desire, a powerful passion that afflicts people (and animals) only when they are separated from their homelands. This yearning is oriented towards personal bereavement rather than towards communal fellowship. Despite this key difference, the *waṭan* topos has a crucial similarity with Schiller's notion of the "sentimental." Yearning for the homeland is the idealization of a "naïve" condition of unconscious unity of the self and the world, before knowledge and experience disrupt this unity. Therefore, the ignorant and blissful state of absolute contentment in the homeland can stand as a subjective ideal, but not as an actual ideal that one should seek to reinstate.

The ideal contentment that was once experienced in the *waṭan* depended on ignorance—as soon as one gains knowledge of life's realities, and becomes conscious of imperfection and exigency, the *waṭan* becomes the memory of the homeland as it was once experienced, rather than the homeland as it exists in the present. The Bedouin's intense love for the homeland effectively conveys the purely subjective nature of this former

³⁷ Schiller, 84–85. Original emphases.

³⁸ Ibid., 87.

natural state of bliss and freedom from fate, because, as the literary depictions emphasize, the Bedouin's homeland is in reality barren and impoverished. The best homeland for literary purposes is one that only its innocent natives can love. The absolute contentment with existence as it is that characterizes the classical *waṭan* is most apparent when deprivation is most unmistakable. We have seen that the author of the earliest extant *waṭan* epistle, “Risālah fī al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān,” states that he was moved to compose his work by a powerful king who continued to yearn for his original homeland. The paradox of the impoverished yet beloved homeland is a dominant theme throughout the epistle, which is a primary source for the subsequent works on the topic. Thus, an important component of the anecdotes in the medieval *waṭan* anthologies is the Bedouin who pines in eloquent and recondite language for the deprived lifestyle of his desert home. “We lived the good life! Our food was the nicest and most enjoyable—bitter colocynth, lizards, jerboa, porcupines, snakes ... we didn’t know of anyone better off than we were.”³⁹ This speech illustrates in hyperbolic terms the innocent and spontaneous nature of love for the homeland. In that place and time necessity and desire coincided, in the sense that the most deprived existence was experienced as absolute contentment, a condition which is now lost and tenderly recalled. What this central thematic of the *waṭan* topos makes apparent is that the savagery and chaotic violence generally attributed to the desert Arabs, as well as the denigration and ridicule of them associated with Shu‘ūbī polemics, are not in reality in opposition to the positive depictions of Bedouins that have been discussed.⁴⁰ The image of Bedouins as natural and primeval implies both dimensions, for the negative dimension in an idealized form plays a necessary role in the *waṭan* thematic. Romanticized poverty and rusticity indicate the ignorant and unreal nature of the lost golden age while at the same time affirming its innate desirability as a subjective state.⁴¹

The Bedouin substrate of the *waṭan* materials is, however, not intrinsic to the topos—it merely allows the literary tradition to bring out more clearly what *is* intrinsic to it: the homeland as the self-contained, totalized desire of youth/childhood, blissfully unaware of the perpetual frustration of desire that characterizes the real world. Love was fully invested and fully sated in its primary and comprehensive form that did not yet differentiate among familial love, friendship, and romantic love. The homeland is connected with motherhood, as the source of the milk with which one was nursed, and with parenthood more generally. It is associated with childhood through its conventional identification as the place where the charms hung on children (*tamā'im*) were worn. The homeland is also identified with kin, often occurring in the phrase “*al-ahl wa-l-waṭan*” (kinfolk and homeland), and with intimate companions and neighbors.⁴² At the same time, the homeland is remembered as the site of youthful erotic attraction in a manner that does

³⁹ al-Jāhiz, 394. Arabic text:

عشنا والله عيش تعلل جاديه، وطعامنا أطيب طعام وأهنؤه: الهبيد والضباب واليرابيع، والقناذل والحيات ... فلا نعلم أحدا أخصب منا عيشا ...

⁴⁰ A fine instance of this duality can be seen in the disquisition on why the Arabs are the most rational nation, reportedly uttered by the great author Ibn al-Muqaffā‘ (d. circa 756), who was generally known as anti-Arab. The simplicity for which the Arabs were often denigrated becomes here the source of their virtue. See Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, 3:278–279.

⁴¹ Erwin Panofsky, in discussing the cultural history of Arcadia as the archetypal pastoral setting, has pointed out that a “soft” golden-age primitivism came to displace an earlier “hard primitivism” in the depiction of Arcadia and its shepherds. See Erwin Panofsky, “Et in Arcadia Ego,” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 297–300.

⁴² For a sample of these motifs, see al-Jāhiz, 385, 386, 389, 391.

not distinguish childhood from youth as separate phases of life with different forms of desire.

Childhood and Youthful Love in the *Waṭan*

The Arabic terms that designate childhood/youth and erotic love indicate a close semantic relation between these two concepts. The centrality of these terms to the *waṭan* topos instantiates how the *waṭan* signifies both concepts simultaneously. A primary term associated with the memory of the *waṭan* is *ṣibā*, which means “childhood” and connotes love. Closely related is the verb *ṣabā/yaṣbū*, which means “to be in love.” The dictionary *Lisān al-‘arab* gives the verb *ḥanna* (to yearn) as its synonym. The verbal noun of *ṣabā/yaṣbū*—*ṣabwah*—is in turn glossed as “*jahlāt al-futuwwah wa-lahw al-ghazal*,” that is, “the violent passion of youth and pleasure of amorousness.” In poetry, these terms are standard in the *nasīb* and in particular in connection with remembrance of the *waṭan*. The term that stands as antithetical to *ṣibā* is *shayb* or *mashīb*, denoting the white hair of advancing age. Consider the famous verse of the pre-Islamic poet ‘Abīd b. al-Abrāṣ:

تصبو فأنى لك التصابي أنى وقد راعك المشيب

You fall in love—how so can you play at love?
How so, when you have been stricken by white hair?⁴³

Here, the term “to play at love” (*taṣābī*) as well as the verb “you fall in love” (*taṣbū*) are derived from the same root as the word “youth” (*ṣibā*). The *shayb* motif, in which the appearance of white hairs signifies the passing of youth and romantic love, is a standard motif of the *nasīb* that is the corollary of the linkage between youth and primordial desire. This linkage is seen in other terms related in sound and sense to the word *ṣibā* that are often employed in love poetry, such as *shabāb* (“youth”), and *ṣabābah* (“passionate love”). For this reason the identification of the homeland as the place of youth directly invokes the fulfillment of familial and romantic love in an undifferentiated manner.

بلاد بها نيطت عليّ تمانمي وكان بها عصر الصبا نضرا رгда

The land in which my childhood charms were hung on me
And where the time of youth was fresh and opulent.⁴⁴

The time of youth, love, and the *waṭan* are synonymous, as is explained in the following oft-quoted verses of Ibn al-Rūmī:

ولي وطن أليت ألا أبيعته وألا أرى غيري له مالكا ...
فقد ألفتة النفس حتى كأنه لها جسد إن بان غودرت هالكا
وحبيب أوطان الرجال إليهم مآرب قضاهما الشباب هنالكا

⁴³ ‘Abīd b. al-Abrāṣ, *Dīwān ‘Abīd b. al-Abrāṣ* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1964), 25.

⁴⁴ Usāmah ibn Munqidh, *al-Manāzil wa-al-diyār*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥijāzī (Cairo: al-Majlis al-‘Ilā lil-Shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1968), 246.

إذا ذكروا أوطانهم ذكرتهم عهود الصبا فيها فحنوا لذلكا

I have a homeland I swore never to relinquish,
And never to see anyone else its possessor ...
My soul has such intimacy with it that it is as
The soul's body, which, if it were removed, I would perish.
Men's homelands have been made beloved to them
By desires fulfilled by youth in those places;
When they remember their homelands they are reminded
Of the time of childhood there and that is why they yearn.⁴⁵

In these verses, attachment to the homeland is connected with the romantic love interests of youth, signaled by the term *ma'ārib*, "desires." More often, another term with this meaning, *awṭār*, is used due to its closeness to *awṭān* ("homeland"). In this the affiliation of the *waṭan* topos to the *nasīb* is clear. While the *nasīb* on the whole is characterized by passionate love and its association with immaturity, the *waṭan* topos brings immaturity to the fore by collapsing romantic love with childhood, familial affections, and particularly motherly love. The love of the *nasīb* gives rise to conflict and danger. The love of the *waṭan*, however, is a childhood state of complete envelopment in love in a manner that does not admit of differentiation and thus conflict between types of love. It is a pre-lapsarian state of complete fulfillment of all desires for love before these desires have been differentiated, or, in other words, a state of totalized libidinal investment.

This time of childhood/youth and totalized libidinal investment that the *waṭan* signifies endows it with the quality of a lost Eden, a place that was outside of time and fate, and remains so as a memory that is a constituent element of the self. The state of total contentment with actuality in the *waṭan* makes the *waṭan* the home of the self in which the vicissitudes of fate were not in effect and anxiety was not experienced:

وي وإن كان ماضيا لا يريع	زمن راعني تذكره الثا
فكان المصيف فيه ربيع	وطن طاب جوه وثره
فق من خشية الحوادث روع	حيث لا تهتدي الخطوب ولا يخ

A time whose permanent remembrance overwhelms me
Though it is a past that is never to return;
A homeland of wholesome climate and soil
Whose summer was always like spring;
To that place no calamities find their way,
And no heart there palpitates with fear of what may happen.⁴⁶

In consonance with the motifs of the *nasīb*, the *waṭan* is a *locus amoenus*, a garden of love, to which the self properly belongs but which is now estranged and unrecoverable. For this reason, the *waṭan* is intrinsically associated with yearning not merely for a place, but for a

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān Ibn al-Rūmī*, ed. Qadrī Mayū (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1998), 5:38.

⁴⁶ Usāmah ibn Munqidh, 224.

place as it was experienced in the past, during the time of youth, and which thus no longer exists outside of the self. This meaning is spelled out in the following lines:

هي هذي أقول أين زمني فهو عين الغريب في الأوطان	فإذا قلت أين داري وقالوا وطن العاشق الوصال وإلا
When I say, "Where is my home," and they reply, "Right here," I say, "Where is my time?" The homeland of the lover is union, and otherwise He is a stranger in his own country. ⁴⁷	

The homeland is no longer the home of the self once the charmed state of fulfilled desire, innocence, and freedom from necessity and hardship has ceased. The *waṭan* topos thus contains a definitive sense of loss and estrangement and imparts this association to the term *waṭan* itself, even when the term is used in a primarily geographical sense, as was often the case in medieval writings. As seen in the cited verses, the term gains in this way a psychological sense that transcends material geography.

Leaving the *Waṭan*: Misery and Glory

The state of estrangement from the homeland is thus a condition of misery, whether we are speaking of estrangement from the actual geographical homeland, estrangement from the homeland of youth and its pleasures, or more broadly, the feeling of estrangement from being at home with oneself. This is seen in the body of motifs on the misery of estrangement that complement the *waṭan* motifs. Most of the *adab* anthologies devote a separate chapter or section to this material, which contains dicta on the deprivations of living abroad and the sayings and poetry uttered by emigrants. A sub-genre of this material consists of short narratives in which homesick sojourners in foreign lands happen upon verses and sayings that express feelings of estrangement written on walls or at tourist sites. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī is the author of a book, entitled *Adab al-ghurabā'*, which assembles much material on the topic of estrangement from the homeland, including a number of autobiographical narratives.⁴⁸ This work and the motifs of estrangement in general tend to be melancholy and pessimistic, expressing sentiments sometimes bordering on the suicidal. Whereas the nostalgia-oriented *waṭan* topos centers on remembrance of a past condition of completeness, the estrangement motifs depict on-going suffering caused by separation from that condition. Estrangement here signifies not just material and social deprivation but a depressed psychological state, and it is easy to see

⁴⁷ al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, *Dīwān al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn 'Alī al-Bīsānī*, ed. Aḥmad Aḥmad Badawī (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1961), 122.

⁴⁸ Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb adab al-ghurabā'*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1972). For a description of this work, see H. Kilpatrick-Waardenburg, "The Kitāb Adab Al-Ġurabā' of Abu Al-Faraj Al-Iṣfahani," in *La signification du Bas Moyen Age dans l'histoire et la culture du monde musulman* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1978), 127–135.

how estrangement could be developed from this material into a metaphysical condition, as we see in Sufi writings.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, despite the innate longing of the self for its home, and the misery of the condition of estrangement, the theme of willfully giving up the homeland and coming to terms with the fate and necessity of actual life is a key dimension of the *waṭan* topos. We find alongside and in connection with yearning for the *waṭan* an opposing set of motifs that illustrate the necessity of giving up the homeland in order to find sustenance and achieve glory. This as well is a theme to which literary anthologies devote separate treatment, usually just after the section on yearning for the homeland.⁵⁰ Connectedness to the *waṭan* is an element of the self, but it is paired with the capacity to give up the *waṭan* willingly. A number of commentators have remarked on the presence of motifs in classical poetry that urge the abandonment of the *waṭan* for the sake of sustenance and worldly ambition, and found these to be antithetical to the motifs of yearning. Wadad al-Qadi, for example, has asked, “why ... has the theme of the goodness of sticking to one’s homeland been seriously countered by the theme of the goodness of departing from one’s native land in early Arabic literature?”⁵¹ It is possible to address this question through consideration of the temporal and pastoral nature of the *waṭan* that makes it a place primarily of interiority rather than an actual economically productive geographical locale. Just as time/fate (*al-dahr*) necessarily brings an end to love, so does it bring separation from the *waṭan* as well. The form that necessity often takes in effecting estrangement from the *waṭan* is the need for sustenance.

Poetic admonitions that not only is the world vast and rich in sustenance, but that one should substitute new loves and friendships for those of the *waṭan*, stand in direct opposition to the poetic motifs proclaiming the irreplaceability of the lost *waṭan*. Ibn al-Rūmī, who swore never to relinquish his homeland in the verses cited above, also gives advice of a contrary tenor:

إذا نلت في أرض معاشا وإن نأت
فما هي إلا بلدة مثل بلدة
فلا تكثرن فيها نزاعا إلى الوطن
وخيرها ما كان عوناً على الزمن

Once you are making a living in some land, however distant,
Do not indulge in longing for your homeland,
For it is just a place like any other place,
Good when it aids you against hard time.⁵²

In these verses, the term *waṭan* is paired with the term *zaman* (“time”), as in some of the examples given above. In this case, however, the signification is the opposite—time here is not the former Edenic time of the *waṭan* that stood apart from the ordinary time of fate and hardship, but is precisely the time/fate of hardship. Now the *waṭan* is no longer the home of the self, but a geographical location like any other, and indeed inferior to others due to

⁴⁹ Kilpatrick-Waardenburg discusses Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī’s development of the theme of estrangement in this direction. *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁰ For a statistical survey of the occurrence of this theme in some *adab* anthologies, see Müller, “*al-Ḥanīn ilā al-Awṭān* in Early *Adab* Literature.”

⁵¹ al-Qadi, “Dislocation and Nostalgia,” 19.

⁵² Usāmah ibn Munqidh, 237.

its lack of material sustenance. To attain maturity is to become aware of the reality of time and necessity and to wean oneself away from the *waṭan* by accepting its loss as the result of one's own will:

سأوطن أكوار العناق النجائب
بلادي وكل العالمين أقاربي

ويا وطني إن بنت عني فإني
إذا كان أصلي من تراب فكلها

My homeland, though you have left me,
I will make my home the mounts of noble camels.
If my origin is the earth then all of it
Is my country and all the world my relatives.⁵³

The *waṭan* as a *nasīb* motif is here countered by the *raḥīl* motif of struggle in the world, of accepting and adapting to fate and necessity. The verb (*binta*) in the phrase “you have left me” is one frequently used in the *nasīb* for separation from the beloved, as in the famous “Bānat Su‘ād” poem of the early Islamic poet Ka‘b b. Zuhayr, further connecting attachment to the homeland with love and youth. Thus, remaining in the *waṭan* shows failure to become mature as a result of one's desire to remain in the comforts of maternal security, as indicated by al-Sharīf al-Raḍiyy (d. 1015):

وإن لم ينلنا العز إلا التقلب

وفي الوطن المألوف للنفس لذة

The self feels pleasure in the familiar homeland
Though only ceaseless travel can gain us glory.⁵⁴

The *waṭan* therefore signifies the condition of childhood in a positive as well as a negative sense. It is the home of the self, for which the self innately yearns, but which cannot and should not remain the self's actual habitation. Glory (*‘izz*), or more precisely power and dignity, is antithetical to pleasure and comfort. It can only be attained by leaving home.

This depiction of the homeland appears in other contexts as well, and shows us that the *waṭan* topos is not merely elegiac, in the sense that it laments a lost state of fulfillment, but that this state of fulfillment is inherently problematized and thus bivalent. Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), for example, in his work *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, invokes the *waṭan* as the state of safety and comfort that one who wants to probe his character in order to attain virtue and closeness to God must leave behind. The *waṭan* is a state of blindness to one's flaws, whereas travel brings about awareness and movement toward perfection. Many passages in the work give the term this pejorative sense:

As long as the traveler is limited to seeing the apparent world with the physical power of sight, he remains in the first stage of those on their way to God and the travelers to His presence. For it is as if he were still at the gate of

⁵³ Ibid., 223.

⁵⁴ Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Raḍiyy, *Dīwān al-Sharīf al-Raḍiyy*, ed. Maḥmūd Muṣṭafā Ḥalāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam b. Abī al-Arqam, 1999), 1:168.

his homeland (*waṭan*) and has not yet set out into open country. There is no reason for remaining at this stage but cowardice and deficiency.⁵⁵

From al-Ghazālī's sense of *waṭan* in passages such as this one, as well as in the verses cited above, it is clear that yearning for the homeland does not have a one-dimensional cultural meaning, but comprises the notion that the homeland is an existential condition that is both desirable and illusory. Even though attachment to the homeland is innate and inescapable, the homeland stands for a mode of being that belongs to the past and is not to be exalted as an absolute ideal.

A comparable outlook is seen in the literary scholars who have faulted European pastoral forms for escapism and naïveté. These scholars regard the direct representation of a simple life of sated desire untouched by any effects of fate and necessity as little more than fantasy and wish fulfillment.⁵⁶ Some of these scholars have argued that the pastoral theme is of interest only in works that depict pastoral bliss in juxtaposition with some kind of intrusion of reality or fate that threatens this vision of fulfillment and problematizes its inner meaning. Such a depiction of the pastoral idyll has been seen, for example, in the *Et in Arcadia ego* motif in painting, in which the face of death, or a reminder of one who has died, suddenly appears before shepherds reveling in a garden setting.⁵⁷ Leo Marx, in his work *The Machine in the Garden*, uses the term "counterforce" to designate such an intrusion of fate into a pastoral idyll. He argues that anxiety over industrialism and technology constitutes a fundamental element of American literature and culture by acting in major literary works as a "counterforce" that disrupts and threatens popular American ideals of pastoral bliss.⁵⁸

The bivalence of the *waṭan* topos can likewise be analyzed in terms of the motifs that problematize and seemingly negate the remembered vision of bliss. Unlike straightforward versions of the pastoral that directly depict an idyllic state, the *waṭan* topos is presented as a memory of this state and a grieving over its loss. In this sense, remembrance of the *waṭan* is an instance of what Schiller calls the elegy, which he designates as the counterpart of the pastoral idyll. The *waṭan* topos, however, contains in addition the seemingly antithetical notion of the limitation, imperfection, and immaturity of homeland existence. The homeland taught us what it is for the self to be at home, but awareness of reality reveals the illusory nature of that home. Thus, the *waṭan* topos inherently contains both the mourned pastoral idyll and the counterforce of fate and necessity, or actual worldly existence, in its semantic complex.

⁵⁵ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Ḥalabī, 1967), 2:315. Arabic text:

ما دام المسافر مفتقرا إلى أن يبصر عالم الملك والشهادة بالبصر الظاهر فهو بعد في المنزل الأول من منازل السائرين إلى الله والمسافرين إلى حضرته، وكأنه معتكف على باب الوطن لم يفض به المسير إلى متسع الفضاء، ولا سبب لطول المقام في هذا المنزل إلا الجبن والقصور.

The chapter on travel in which this passage occurs is suffused with this theme.

⁵⁶ For example, Schiller faults the pastoral for "leading us backward" and for leaving us "only with a sad feeling of loss, not with a joyous feeling of hope" (Schiller, 149). Leo Marx identified a wish-fulfillment version of the pastoral as a feature of American popular culture. See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9–11. Poggioli goes so far as to see the pastoral as a fantasy of sexual wish fulfillment in a Freudian sense. See Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 12–15, 31.

⁵⁷ See Panofsky's article on this topic cited above.

⁵⁸ On the "counterforce," see Marx, 25–26.

Metaphorical Homelands

The effect of the bivalence of the *waṭan* is that its depiction is able to show the innateness and perpetual presence of primordial desire, and show at the same time the necessary displacement of this desire for virtue and rationality to arise. This is not to say that desire is to be removed or suppressed and replaced with virtue and rationality, which would then be a different substance from desire. In this case there would be no need of maintaining the presence of desire, and of showing it in any kind of positive light. Rather, it is the self-negation of desire that brings about virtue and rationality. For this reason, desire must be always present so that it can continually negate itself for virtue to exist. The *waṭan* is a topos that can evoke this necessity of primordial desire and at the same time its displacement. We see this particularly in the metaphorical uses of the topos, in which the term *waṭan* no longer refers to a geographical territory. The identification of the *waṭan* with love and youth is itself metaphorical, although this representation of the *waṭan* remains bound to the actual geographical location where youth was spent. In a fully metaphorical manner, however, the *waṭan* can be disconnected from any fixed location and identified fully with love and the beloved.

جسمي معي غير أن الروح عندكم فالجسم في غربة والروح في الوطن

My body stays with me but my soul is with you.
My body is estranged but my soul is in its homeland.⁵⁹

This is perhaps the most frequent usage of the *waṭan* in love poetry—the true homeland of the soul is the beloved and whatever place is occupied by the beloved.⁶⁰ In this metaphorical turn, the lover is true to his higher self by abandoning the familiarity and safety of the actual, geographical home, which is to say, the familiarity and safety of ordinary life and its expectations, for the sake of infatuation with the beloved. In this case, love for the beloved is the inner truth and higher meaning of ordinary desires, and for that reason the soul's true home. We remain here however with primordial desire unless this love is given some kind of deeper meaning, as in mystical poetry.

There are other metaphorical invocations of the *waṭan* which are more directly related to virtue. For example, one of the conventional motifs of panegyric poetry is the assertion that the patron is the true home of the poet rather than the poet's actual homeland, which he leaves behind to join the patron. The virtue and justice of the patron is identified as what the self truly desires in its innate desire for the homeland. In mystical poetry and treatises, yearning for the homeland is frequently identified with love of God. Ibn 'Arabī, for example, quotes the verses cited above by Ibn al-Rūmī explaining why people yearn for their homeland in his own explanation of the desire of all things to reach

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Marzubān, 80.

⁶⁰ On the theme of the beloved as the lover's true homeland in classical Arabic love poetry, see S. Enderwitz, "Homesickness and Love in Arabic Poetry," in *Myths, Historical Archetypes, and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*, 59–70.

their higher purpose.⁶¹ In these metaphorical uses of the term *waṭan*, on the basis of the *waṭan* topos, the innate desire for the home of the self, experienced in childhood as a primeval and pre-conscious condition, is the same desire that should lead us to re-attain this condition in a perfected state that is not in any way illusory. This innate desire therefore is not to be abandoned, but must transform itself into the perfected condition for which we truly long.

The *waṭan* as a chronotope combines opposing elements whose simultaneous presence defines the structure of the classical poetic self. The *waṭan* unites primordial desire and rationality, childhood and maturity, permanence and the degenerative time of fate. The containment of these oppositions shows how the classical *waṭan* differs from the modern *waṭan*. The primordial desire of the classical *waṭan* is an overwhelming passion that cannot be satisfied in this form. Nevertheless it must remain present because its displacement is the basis of virtue and moral order. The memory of the object of primordial desire proves that this desire is continually relinquished. The object and desire for it remain present to the mind, but are relinquished in the recognition that the object is lost, and in the transmutation of totalized love into nostalgia.

The modern *waṭan* cannot be relinquished in this way, because the modern *waṭan* has to be the site of emotional investment and moral order at the same time. The emotional investment made in the modern *waṭan* therefore cannot be identified with primordial desire, which is inherently unbounded and uncontrollable, but like Schiller's love of nature, must be a moral sentiment to begin with. In other words, love of the *waṭan* in modern contexts is always depicted as a morally oriented emotion that gives rise to citizenship and self-sacrifice for the nation. It is not unbridled love, grief, and longing that form the substrate of patriotic feeling, but an innate love for one's countrymen and their values (liberty, justice, order) that is aesthetically activated by national culture and the beauty of the homeland, which are combined in the women of the nation.⁶² For this reason, the classical *waṭan* could only be mapped onto the nation through alteration of its affective structure.

Nevertheless, the relation between emotional investment and virtue contained in the classical *waṭan* topos allowed the classical *waṭan* to serve as the basis for developing the modern senses of homeland in the nineteenth century. The temporal dimension of the *waṭan* chronotope played a key role in this process. The lost age of innocence and love signified by the *waṭan* in biographical as well as pastoral registers was mapped on to the "homogeneous, empty time" designated by Benedict Anderson as the temporality of the nation.⁶³ The idyllic time of the *waṭan* acquired the form of the ancient golden age of the nation. Longing for the *waṭan* of one's childhood paved the way for longing for the nation's lost splendor. The difference is that unlike the lost innocence of the classical *waṭan*, the former glory of the modern homeland must be reinstated. The modern individual's

⁶¹ Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah*, ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr (Cairo: al-Hayʾah al-Miṣriyyah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Kitāb, 1975), 4:129.

⁶² Examples in 20th-century Egyptian writing include Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Thawrat al-adab* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, 1965), 110–119; Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, *ʿAwdat al-rūḥ* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Adab, n.d.), 2:31ff.; Salāmah Mūsā, *Fann al-ḥubb wa-l-ḥayāt* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1967), 148–152.

⁶³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread and Origin of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 26. Anderson's view that national time is "empty" and "homogeneous" fails to take into account the affective dimensions of national time that make it meaningful for individuals and lay claim to their attachment.

attachment to homeland is imagined not as infatuation with the past, but as the force behind the nation's integration and advancement in the present and future. Just as the nature of the affect has undergone alteration, so has the temporal structure that this affect implies.

The *waṭan* topos did not acquire the status of an independent theme in classical Arabic literature that could be the subject of a classical literary work.⁶⁴ As a physical topography, the *waṭan* did not go beyond the descriptive features of the *locus amoenus*, the pleasing garden, that provided the setting for love poems or reminiscences of love. Markers of specificity, which certainly did appear in descriptions of particular homelands, were generally assimilated to the conventional descriptive motifs rather than developed in an individualized direction. The *waṭan* of course is a special kind of garden, the self's original garden where it found the most complete fulfillment, and of which all subsequent gardens are but an echo. As Abū Tammām put it in famous verses, "Turn your heart in passion wherever you wish: love is only ever for the first beloved / How many homes a man gets to know on this earth—his yearning always is for his earliest home."⁶⁵ Because the *waṭan* in classical Arabic literature is the home of primordial desire, and because primordial desire cannot be redeemed as such, but must persist as it is, so that it can be continually negated and reappear as virtue, this primordial desire is the same for all people, and thus the *waṭan* has the same characteristics for all people. It is not the unique character of one's *waṭan* that inspires love for it and self-sacrifice for its inhabitants, but the universal character of the *waṭan* and primordial attachment to it, which is to be transformed into a virtue that is not intrinsically tied to any territory and is indeed free from any such particularities. The productive capacity of the *waṭan* as a classical topos derives from this universality. In this way, the *waṭan* works as a subjective chronotope that renders the space and time of the self in classical Arabic literature.

⁶⁴ Works of the genre of the "histories" of towns, which are primarily biographical dictionaries of a town's notable residents, were apparently inspired in many cases by the authors' sense of pride in their hometowns. These works do not seem to develop the *waṭan* topos in any extensive manner in their presentation. Any informed assessment, however, requires more research into this aspect of works in this genre. Examples include *Tārīkh Baghdād*, by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 1071), and *Tārīkh Dimashq*, by Ibn 'Asākir (d. 1176).

⁶⁵ These verses are cited in many works. See Abū Tammām Ḥabīb b. Aws al-Ṭā'ī, *Dīwān Abī Tammām* (Cairo: al-Markaz al-'Arabī lil-Baḥṭh wa-l-Nashr, 1983), 4:253. Arabic text:

نقل فؤادك حيث شئت من الهوى ما الحب إلا للحبيب الأول
كم منزل في الأرض يألفه الفتى وحنينه أبدا لأول منزل