

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE POETRY OF DHŪ'R-RUMMA

B, Y

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A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE POETRY  
OF DHŪ'R-RUMMA - ABSTRACT

CHAPTER I.

This chapter contains an account of Dhū'r-Rumma's life based on a study of the anecdotal material and its conflicting versions in relation to some passages in his dīwān, together with the historical background with special reference to:-

- (a) His nickname of Dhū'r-Rumma.
- (b) The question of his acquaintance with the art of writing and the philologists' attempt to create the impression of his being illiterate, thus confirming that his language was pure and chaste and fit for citational needs.
- (c) A more or less chronological order of his contacts with his patrons.
- (d) A discussion of his love for Mayya and other women, establishing that Kharqā was not Mayya.
- (e) A review of the different anecdotes concerning his death and the story of his burial.

CHAPTER II

A discussion of his social and cultural background - his Bedouin character and simple behaviour, illustrated in his ready participation in the joy of the community and his attitude towards some philosophical and religious issues.

CHAPTER III.

An attempt is made here to draw a conspectus of the Bedouin

school of poetry as a product of Bedouin life, based upon the flow of associated thoughts and images and projected on a desert background. This is followed by a discussion of Dhu'r-Rumma as a representative of his school belonging to it both by environment and culture, his place amongst its poets and his achievement, together with a comparison of some of his themes with those of his predecessors and ending with descriptions of his desert environment.

#### CHAPTER IV

A discussion of his ghazal poetry as reflecting the influence of the 'Udhri's as well as his own personal experiences, with some emphasis on his Bedouin ghazal in portraying Mayya as the embodiment of the Bedouin ideal of beauty and epitomising the most beautiful aspects of the desert as well.

#### CHAPTER V

His social relationships as illustrated in his panegyrics and satire, revealing that he was first and foremost an artist obsessed with singing of his feelings and emotions about his desert and about his beloved though responding in praise and satire to necessity and the pressure of tribal revelry respectively.

#### CHAPTER VI

A review of his artistic attitudes, and his poetical obsession; then his poetry as evaluated by his contemporaries and by literary critics subsequently.

The study ends with a conclusion based on the main points of the previous chapters.



F O R E W O R D

An early upbringing in a rural area bordering on the desert, coupled with a schooling which tended to glorify the desert, its history, heroes and romantic atmosphere coloured my childhood. It is this, perhaps, which explains the feeling of nostalgic attachment for the desert, that which I have experienced ever since and which probably explains my present choice of subject.

This is no doubt an emotional factor expressing itself in the enjoyment and interest that I have experienced throughout in dealing with Dhū'r-Rumma's work and his world. A more practical reason for deciding to write on Dhū'r-Rumma is the fact this poet has never been thoroughly dealt with and that in the controversy over the authenticity of the Jahīlī poetry, the study of the Umayyad and post-Islamic poets, particularly Dhū'r-Rumma, the most representative of the Bedouin school, is a pre-requisite.

I have tried to avoid looking at Dhū'r-Rumma simply as the mechanical product of his environment, or as an isolated incident separated from its context, but rather as an artist responding to and expressing himself within the physical, social and cultural environment. This method of dealing with him within the context of the desert has made necessary

the comparison of some of the themes and images of his poetry with their counterparts in the poetry of the poets of his school.

It remains to express my thanks to Professor Serjeant for his ready encouragement and support. I am indebted to my supervisor Dr. J.M.B. Jones for his creative direction, valuable corrections and untiring efforts, without which this work would not have been possible.

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## C H A P T E R   I

### BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF DHŪ'R-RUMMA'S LIFE IN RELATION TO HIS POETRY

#### His kunya and laqab

Ghaylān b. 'Uqba b. Nuhays<sup>(1)</sup> b. Mas'ūd,<sup>(2)</sup> or Ghaylān b. 'Uqba b. Mas'ūd,<sup>(3)</sup> known as Dhū'r-Rumma, of Banū 'Adī<sup>(4)</sup> a clan of the tribe Banū Tamīm, was born in Yamāma in the neighbourhood of the sand dunes of Dahnā',<sup>(5)</sup> in A.H. 77<sup>(6)</sup> His kunya was Abū 'l-Ḥarith.<sup>(7)</sup> As to the reason for his being nicknamed, Dhū'r-Rumma, there are different anecdotes, most of them bearing either the influence of the philologists

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- (1) Or Buhays (Ibn Hazm, *Jamharat al-'ansāb*, Cairo, 1948, 189.), Buhaysh (Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā'*, Cairo A.H. 1364, i, 506.) or Nuhaysh (Ibn al-'athīr, *al-Lubāb fi Tahdhib al-ansāb*, Cairo, A.H. 1357, i, 445).
- (2) Abū 'l-Faraj al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, Cairo (Būlāq), 1868 xvi, 110; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayāt al-'a'yān*, Cairo, A.H. 1299, i, 563; al-Sharīshī, *Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* Cairo, A.H. 1300, ii, 56.
- (3) *Al-Aghānī*, xvi, 110; (In Muhammad b. Ḥabīb's *'Alqāb al-shu'arā'*, Cairo, 1955, 301 and in Al-Bakrī's *Simt al-la'ālī* Cairo, 1936, i, 82, Mas'ūd is omitted).
- (4) *Jamharat al-ansāb*, 189.
- (5) Macartney, *A short Account of Dhū'r Rumma*, A volume of *Oriental Studies*, 1922, 293.
- (6) Muḥammad Ṣabri, *al-Shāwamikh (Dhū'r-Rumma)*, Cairo, 1946, 5.
- (7) *al-Aghānī*, xvi, 110; *Simt al-la'ālī*, i, 82; al-Suyūtī, *al-Muzhir*, Cairo, (n.d.) ii, 426, Muhammad b. Ḥabīb, *Kuna al-shu'arā'*, Cairo, 1955, 292; al-Sharīf al-Murtadā, *Amālī*, Cairo, 1954, i, 19; al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā', i, 506; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-'adab*, Cairo, A.H. 1347, i, 105; *al-Lubāb fi Tahdhib al-ansāb*, i, 445.

or the stamp of the quṣṣās or story-tellers. He is said, for example, to have been so nicknamed because of a verse<sup>(1)</sup> in which he describes a battered tent-peg, "(its top) ravelled, the end of its tie-rope still attached."<sup>(2)</sup> This is doubtless a philologist's explanation of his nickname. Another anecdote says that "Dhu'r-Rumma is a nickname which Mayya (his beloved) gave him. He passed by Mayya's tent, where she was sitting by her mother's side and asked her to provide him with some water; her mother bade her do so. It is also said that he tore his water-skin when he saw her and said, 'Mend it for me'. 'By God', she retorted, 'I cannot do it, for I am 'kharqā'.<sup>(3)</sup> He then asked her mother to order her to give him a drink. Her mother urged her to do so, she arose and brought water, and noticing a worn-out cord on his shoulder,

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- (1) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā', i, 508; Muhammad b. Abū'l-Khattāb al-qurashī, Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arāb, Cairo (Būlāq), 1308 A.H. 65; al-Tha'alibī, Latā'if al-ma'ārif, Leiden, 1867, 21; Ibn Durayd, Jamharat al-Lughah, haidarabād, A.H. 1344-1345, i, 88 and ii, 417; Ibn Jinnī, al-Mubhiḥ, Damascus, A.H. 1348, 39; Yaqūt, MU'jam al-buldān, Leipzig, 1866-1870, ii, 822; Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 566; Amālī al-murtaḍa, i, 19. Khizānāt al-'adab, i, 105; al-Muzhir, ii, 440; Sharḥ maqāmāt al-harīrī, ii, 56; Simṭ al-la'ālī, i, 81-82.
- (2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rummah, (ed. Macartney) Cambridge, 1919, xxii, v.8., "اشعث باقي رثته التلبد". Macartney's statement that this description of the tent-peg is an "allusion, no doubt, to his uncouth appearance" (A short account of Dhur Rummah, 295.) is erroneous for Dhū'r-Rumma in this passage presents a vivid and cohesive picture of the ruins of the encampment at al-Wahīd, in which the ravelled tent-peg fits very well. It has, of course, no connection with his appearance. See the dīwān of Dhū'r Rumma, xxii, 1-8.
- (3) She who does not work with her hands, because of her estimation in the tribe. al-Aghani, xvi, 110; A short account of Dhur Rummah, 295.

she said to him, 'Drink, O wearer of the worn-out cord'.  
Thus he was nicknamed."<sup>(1)</sup>

Some mention the name Kharqā' instead of Mayya as the woman who originated his nickname.<sup>(2)</sup> It must be noted, however, that most of the stories which tell of his relationship with Mayya and Kharqā' are very confused<sup>(3)</sup> and one cannot fail to see in them the story-teller's influence.

The third category of anecdotal material dealing with his nickname can be illustrated from al-Aghānī. "I copied down from Muḥammad<sup>(4)</sup> b. Dāwūd al-Jarrāh's book - 'Hārūn b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt informed<sup>me</sup> on the authority of his elders and several informants from the Bedouins of Banū 'Adī among them Zar'a b. 'Udhbūl and Sulaymān his son, and Abū Qaya and Tamīm and others from the well-informed of Banū 'Adī, that Dhū-r-Rumma's mother went to al-Ḥuṣayn b. 'Abada b. Nu'aym of Banū 'Adī whilst he, seeking no reward but God's grace, was teaching the Bedouins in the desert that which would enable them to pray correctly, and she said 'O Abū 'l-Khalīl:

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- (1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 110; Khizānat al-adab, i, 106; Sharḥ maqamat al-harirī, ii, 56-57; A Short Account of Dhūr Rummah, 295.  
(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 110.  
(3) See Below pp 42-60.  
(4) Known for his extensive knowledge of history, literature, and men of letters, who was installed as the Wazīr of Ibn al-Mu'tazz for only one day and was killed in A.H. 296. He wrote many books amongst them are the following:  
1. al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā'. 2. al-Waraqa 3. Kitāb al-arba'a fi akhbār al-shu'arā'. See Muḥammad b. Dawūd al-Jarrāh, al-Waraqa, Cairo, 1953, 15-16.

This son of mine has been exposed to terror at night, so write for me a talisman to hang round his neck.' He requested her to bring a parchment so that he could write on it. She asked 'If there is no parchment, could it be on something else that you write upon for him? He then asked her to provide him with a piece of hide and she brought him a rough hide and he wrote a talisman on it which she hung on her son's neck. Then after a lapse of time as she was going off on some business accompanied by her son, she passed by al-Ḥuṣayn while he was sitting with a group of his friends and clients. She came close and greeted him and said, 'O 'Abū 'l-Khalīl, would you like to listen to Ghaylān's talk and poetry?' He agreed and Ghaylān came forward and recited, the talisman being tied with a black cord on his left side. al-Husayn said: 'Dhū'r Rumma, (wearer of the worn-out cord) has done well.' Thus was he known". (1)

This anecdote deserves careful examination. In the first place it has an important chain of transmitters. Hārūn b. Muḥammad b. Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt, al-Jarraḥ's informant, was one of the well-known collectors of information in 'Abbāsīd

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111.

"It is said that he was nicknamed as Dhū'r-Rumma because he was subject to terror in his childhood. His mother provided him with someone who wrote a charm for him which she hung round his neck with a little rope."  
'Amālī al-Murṭadā, i, 19.

times and the author of the lost Kitāb akhbār Dhū'r-Rumma,<sup>(1)</sup> one of the few books devoted to the poet. Secondly, Hārūn relates on the authority of Muḥammad b. Sālīḥ of Banū 'Adī, who was one of Dhū'r-Rumma's clan and who, on his part, derives his material not from one but many transmitters all of whom deserve to be regarded as well-informed since they come from Banū 'Adī the poet's own clan. Comparing the different anecdotes on how he received his nickname, the last mentioned with its well-established chain of transmitters and natural sequence of events in his boyhood seems the most tenable. An interesting aspect of the story of the "terror at night" is that it reveals something of his childhood sensitivity and this in turn accounts for the references to the voices of the desert, its jinni and owls and for the images of the desert by night which occur in his dīwān.<sup>(2)</sup>

#### His upbringing and poetic training

Macartney rightly states that "as almost every anecdote of him has at least two contradictory versions, it is only possible to construct a more or less conjectural account of

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(1) Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, Leipzig, 1871, 123. In the same source further reference is made to two additional works on Dhū'r-Rumma bearing this same title - the first by Ishaq b. Ibrāhīm and the second by his son, Ḥammād (Fihrist 141-3).

(2) See below, 145-147.



his life."<sup>(2)</sup> This can only be essayed by a careful study of these versions and by relating them to passages in his *dīwān* and the historical background. Even so, one will still encounter some gaps which it is impossible to bridge.

Dhū'r-Rumma lived in Yamāma at a village called Qarī of Banū Milkān,<sup>(2)</sup> his close relations who formed a branch of Banū 'Adī. It was probably in his early years that he lost his father, for we read in al-Aghānī that Hishām, one of his brothers, was responsible for his upbringing.<sup>(3)</sup> Yamāma was a traditional forcing-ground of poetical talents, for it had been the main centre of pre-Islamic poetry and of uncontaminated Arabic, since its surrounding wilderness and remoteness cut it off from the settled areas of the provinces with their multi-racial societies. Moreover, he was brought up in a home which seems to have been strongly connected with literary activities. His maternal uncle, Abū Junna of Banū Asad was a poet,<sup>(4)</sup> a fact which both indicates an inherited trend towards literature on the part of Dhū'r-Rumma and his brothers

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(1) A Short Account of Dhur Rummah, 293.

(2) Mu'jam al-buldān, iv, 83.

(3) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111.

(4) Jawālīqī, Sharh adab al-kātib, Cairo, A.H. 1350, 122-123. His name is given as Hakim b. 'Ubayd, or Hakim b. Mas'ūd. Abū Junna is his nickname. Ibid 122.

and explains the interest of his mother Zabya<sup>(1)</sup> in his poetry, as has been indicated in one of the anecdotes quoted above. He had three brothers<sup>(2)</sup> and all of them, it is said, were poets<sup>(3)</sup> - Mas'ūd, Hishām, and Jirfās<sup>(4)</sup> (or Mas'ūd, Hishām and Awfā).<sup>(6)</sup> Elsewhere it is said that Awfā was a cousin of Dhū'r-Rumma and not his brother, his father being

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- (1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111. Al-Zajjāj states that Dhū'r-Rumma's mother was a slave of Mayya's family, (al-Amālī, Cairo 1935, 56-57), a statement which has no support from Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry or any other source. Moreover, Jawālīqī says that her brother was of Banu Asad as has been shown above.
- (2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111; al-Shi'r wa 'l-Shu'arā', i, 510.
- (3) Ahmad b. Yāhya Tha'lab, Majālis Tha'lab, Cairo 1948, i, 39; 'Askarī, Dīwān al-ma'ānī, Cairo, A.H. 1352, i, 233; al-Surraj, Masar'i al-'ushshāq, Constantinople, A.H. 1301, 351; al-Aghānī, xvi, 111; Simṭ al-la'ālī', ii, 586.
- (4) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111; Ibn Sallām states that "they were three, Ghaylān (Dhū'r-Rumma), Awfā and Mas'ūd) Ibn Sallām, Ṭabaqāt al-shu'ara, Cairo, 1952, 480; In Maṣāri' al-'ushshāq, 353 and in Short Account of Dhur Rummah, 294, instead of Jirfās there is Khirfash. However, in Maṣāri' al-'ushshāq, 351, he is called Khirwash. The word jirfās means a lion. It also means a Huge, strong camel and consequently a strong, well-built man was called jirfās. See margin of Simṭ al-la'ālī', ii, 586 and of Majālis Tha'lab, i.39.
- (5) Or Humām as in Maṣāri' al-'ushshāq, 351 and 353, although elsewhere in the same source we find Hishām mentioned as one of Dhū'r-Rumma's brothers. See Maṣāri' al-'ushshāq, 354.
- (6) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā', i, 510; Wafayāt, i, 565. Some sources say that Jirfās is Awfā himself. See Majālis Tha'lab, i, 39 and Dīwān al-ma'ānī, i, 233.

Dalham.<sup>(1)</sup> In al-Aghānī there is a fragment of five verses attributed to Mas'ūd in which he elegizes Awfā and mentions him as the son of Dalham:-(2)

"The riders announced Awfā's death when their camels came back. By my life! They brought back misfortune and so caused suffering.

They announced the death of a man of high qualities whom they cannot replace. The firm mountains are almost split asunder because of it.

The most frequented mosque became desolate after Ibn Dalham, and Awfā's people, for this reason, became weak. I consoled myself after Awfā with Ghaylān, while the eye-lid is brim-full of tears.

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111; Simt al-la'ali', ii, 586; A Short Account of Dhur Rumma, 294; Maṣāri' al-'ushshaq presents Dhū'r-Rumma as mentioning Awfā in the following verse:-

أقول لأدنى حين أبصر بالوى صفيحة وجهي قد تغير حالها

I said to Awfā when he saw at Al-Liwā the expression of my face change its character. Maṣāri' al-'ushshaq, 354. Referring to the diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma lxviii, 4, the verse runs thus:-

عرفت لها داراً فأبصر صاحبها صفيحة وجهي قد تغير حالها

I recognised her encampment and my companion saw the expression of my face change its character.

The quotation from Al-Maṣāri' alone is not sufficient evidence of Awfā being the poet's brother, lacking, as it does, any reference to the nature of the poet's remarks to Awfā. Furthermore, it lacks the integration which the diwan version possesses with the remainder of the poem. The latter makes no mention of Awfā.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111

And never will a calamity cause me to forget Awfā after his death, but the inflaming of an ulcer by another ulcer is more painful."<sup>(1)</sup>

The author of *Simt al-la'ālī* is right in remarking that "The statement which says that *Dhū'r-Rumma*'s brothers were *Mas'ūd*, *Hishām* and *Jirfās* and that there was no such name as *Awfā* amongst them, *Awfā* being their cousin, is worthy of credence."<sup>(2)</sup>

Nothing is recorded of *Jirfās* except that he was one of *Dhū'r-Rumma*'s brothers who were all poets. As regards *Mas'ūd* and *Hishām*,<sup>(3)</sup> scattered fragments of their compositions are to be found in *Al-Aghānī*, *Ibn Qutayba*'s *al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'āra* and other main books of literature. In his *Amālī*, *Al-Yazādī* records a poem of nine verses in which *Mas'ūd* expresses his love of a certain *Samrā'* of whom we know nothing:-

On the well in *Yabrīn* their loads were set down,  
May the most quivering, torrential cloud water the well !  
Indeed, I conceal my love of *Samrā'* from them,

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(1) There is considerable confusion over the authorship of the last two verses. They are mentioned in *Masāri' al-'ushshaq*, 354. *Al-Jāhiz* attributes the last two verses to *Dhū'r-Rumma*'s sister, (*al-Jāhiz*, *al-Hayawān*, Cairo 1945, vii, 164). Yet *al-Mubarrad* ascribes them to *Hishām*. (*al-Mubarrad*, *al-Kāmil*, Cairo, A.H. 1355, i, 153.) However, *al-Marzubānī*, on the authority of *Ibn al-A'rābī* attributes them to *Mas'ūd*. (*al-Marzubānī*, *Mu'jam al-shu'arā'*, Cairo A.H. 1354, 376.)

(2) *Simt al-la'ālī*, ii, 586.

(3) *Dhū'r-Rumma* mentions *Mas'ūd* in his poetry (*Dīwān* xxxii, 3 and lxii, 6. *Al-Aghānī*, xvi, lll. He mentions *Hishām* also, (*Dīwān* xlvii, 13. *Yāqūt*, *Irshād*, Cairo, 1925, vii 254).

Yet my heart knows that it will spread abroad.  
And what is the good of a hidden love, like the  
Intestinal tissue which bowels and ribs conceal.  
And certainly Samra' knew that her talk  
Is a curing water, as heaven's water is a cure  
(for the earth)

Indeed my being in love with you made me lean till I am  
As if deprived of my property and of my own family.  
And as if I were downcast through some calamity,  
Which descended (upon me) though all my family are safe.  
They say, 'He is infatuated by Samrā', passionately  
enamoured.  
May my soul be a ransom for this sort of infatuation  
and fondness  
If the reprovers ordered me to desert her;  
A broken heart turned aside from what they say.  
And how can I obey the reprovers? Yet my love keeps  
Me awake while the reprovers are falling asleep.<sup>(1)</sup>

I have quoted this poem in full since it bears some  
similarity, though differing somewhat in mood, to the style  
and imagery of Dhū'r-Rumma's ghazal. Mas'ūd lived a long  
life and had a certain acquaintance with some philologists  
such as Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' and al-Asma'i.<sup>(2)</sup>

Hisham was a poet of some distinction. In a poetical

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(1) Yazidī, Amālī, Haidarabad, 1948, 63-64.

(2) The Dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, p.157; Simṭ al-la'ālī', ii.  
585-586.

argument between him and his brother, Dhū'r-Rumma, they both exchange a series of accusations:-

"O Ghaylān!" says Hishām, "Would that the ties of affection were as before,

Then all that part of life which has elapsed would return.

Therefore, be as one of the farthest of kin to me, for I am Satisfied with a long separation from an evil brother."

To this Dhū'r-Rumma replies:-

Has the approach of the flocks which come in spring,

Deceived Hishām in dealing with his brother, his mother's son?

But can numerous flocks replace a brother of generosity,

Should a terrifying thing alight in the breasts (of men).<sup>(1)</sup>

Hishām then retorts:-

If my flocks were to vanish from amongst your freely  
pasturing animals,

By the Lord of the worlds, there would be no returning to  
you for me,

For you are a gallant youth as long as dew quivers in the  
flowers

But you when times become hard are the most niggardly of  
men" <sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Yaqūt, Irshād, vii, 254-255. Al-Aghānī, xvi, 111-112. In the diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlvii, these two verses are part of a poem of eighteen verses. The first eleven verses are ghazal and the remaining seven are dedicated to a reprimand of his brother, Hishām, for forsaking him in his lean time.

(2) Yaqūt, Irshād, vii, 254-255. al-Aghānī, xvi, 111-112

Ibn Qutayba cites a poem of Hishām's composition.<sup>(1)</sup> It consists of twelve lines of far-fetched and obscure words describing camels and their wandering in the desert. It has no merit except that it illustrates a very Bedouin bent - the minutiae of observation associated with the camel and the desert. Yet in its crudeness, lack of poetic feeling, and painstakingly obscure vocabulary, it is in the sharpest contradiction to the lines of Hishām quoted above. There are two possible explanations - either Hishām composed it in response to the demand of the philologists, or it is forged by the philologists themselves.

Hishām seems to have been a man of varied experience and of some religious inclination which characterizes, in turn, though unexpected of the Bedouin's, Dhū'r-Rumma's own personality.<sup>(2)</sup> The latter's acquaintance with the Qurān which is obvious in his poetry<sup>(3)</sup> and his inclination to the religious can, perhaps, be traced to his brother Hishām, who might have taught him the Qurān in his boyhood. Hishām's poetical characteristics as well as his philosophical and religious bent are best displayed in the following concise epigram related of him:-

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(1) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā', i, 510-514.

(2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, vii, 4; xv, 4; xxii, 79-84; xxix, 14; xlv, 13; lvii, 51; lxii, 49; lxxxI, 38-39.

(3) Ibid, xxii, 51-52; xxxviii, 22; and see Abdullah al-Ṭayib, Sharḥ Arba' qaṣa'id li-Dhū'r-Rumma, Khartūm 1958, " " " " .

"Al-Asma'ī said that al-'Alā' b. Aslam told him that Hishām b. 'Uqba came to him when the latter intended to leave for Mecca, and said: "O my brother's son! You intended to go on a journey in which Satan (is present) More so than any other journey. So fear God and pray the prayers when they are due, for you are fulfilling them in any case. Therefore, pray them while they are of advantage to you (God will accept them if prayed without delay). And note that with every company of travellers there is a dog barking to protect them. When there is a gain they would let him have a share in it, but when there is a shame (reproach) he bears it alone. So be not the company's dog."<sup>(1)</sup>

With Awfā, his cousin, as one of the reliable tradition-ists (muḥaddithun)<sup>(2)</sup> and other relations,<sup>(3)</sup> such as Mas'ūd's daughters, the poetesses, Tumāḍir and 'Ayūf,<sup>(3)</sup> the literary character of Dhū'r-Rumma's family is obvious. It did, indubitably, provide him with a literary background and must have developed his poetic genius with care and encouragement.

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(1) al-Jāhiz, al-Ḥayawān, Cairo, A.H. 1357, i, 307, al-Kamil mubarrad, i, 153; Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyun al-akhbar, Cairo, 1925, i, 136.

(2) Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalanī, Tahdhib al-tahdhib, Hayderabad, A.H. 1325, i, 385; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalanī, Taqrīb, al-tahdhib, Delhi, A.H. 1320, 20; al-Aghānī, xvi, 111. The description of the desolate mosque in Mas'ūd elegy of Awfā can be taken as connected with Awfā's being a traditionist.

(3) Mu'jam al-buldān, ii, 636 and iv. 153 and also Muḥammad b. 'Abdullah al-Najdī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Akhbar, Cairo, 1951, ii, 100, 173.



The Umayyad period was favourable to literature and literary talents as was his residence in Yamāma, the main centre of pre-Islamic poetry. The period witnessed both a literary revival<sup>(1)</sup> and the establishment of different schools of culture.<sup>(2)</sup> A new generation of the 'mawālī' (clients) who had been born and brought up among the Arabs and who could master Arabic on terms of equality with the Arabs themselves, came onto the stage. Since they had been denied by the Umayyad authorities political rights and administrative participation in state affairs, in spite of being Muslims with the Quran as their holy book, they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the cultural fields to prove their ability as indispensable at least in the field of literature and in order to attract the attention and favours of the Caliph and his administrators and to compensate for the absence of political and administrative participation.<sup>(3)</sup> Finally, they, as Muslims, had to understand the Qurān and the traditions (Ḥadīth), and for this the study of Arabic language and literature was a pre-requisite. To discuss in any detail the development and functions of the schools such as Baṣra and Kufa is not possible here. It suffices to say that philological and literary studies went

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(1) & (2) Sayyid Nawfal, Shi'r al-ṭabī'a, Cairo, 1945, 129.

(3) See Nicholson, A literary History of the Arabs, Cambridge, 1956, 278-281. See also Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom and its fall, Calcutta, 1927, 243-244.

hand in hand with grammatical researches<sup>(1)</sup> and that they all depended on extensive compilations from the then extant poetry and prose and from the utterances of the Bedouins whose remote abodes in the wilderness preserved their pure Arabic from corruption.<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma was acquainted with many distinguished exponents of these schools. His Bedouin upbringing, his extensive knowledge of Bedouin literature and pre-Islamic poetry, made him an invaluable source of information for the scholar's researches. They found in him an eloquent Bedouin<sup>(3)</sup> whose utterances were chaste.<sup>(4)</sup> Ḥammād al-Rāwīya says: "Dhū'r-Rumma came to us. We have not seen anyone better, more eloquent or more acquainted with obscure words than he."<sup>(5)</sup> They used to consult him about linguistic meanings. al-Aṣma'ī relates that 'Īsā b. 'Umar said "I asked Dhū'r-Rumma about al-naḍnāḍ, but he did nothing more than move his tongue in his mouth."<sup>(6)</sup> al-Aṣma'ī also relates that Yūnus, the grammarian "asked Dhū'r-Rumma about a certain phrase which was not in the right order. Dhū'r-Rumma asked him "Do you know al-yatn?" And Yūnus said "Yes". Dhū'r-Rumma, then, remarked "this phrase of yours is yatn", meaning that it was not in its

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(1) Muhammad Zaghlūl Salām, Athar al-Qur'an fī taṭawwur al-naqd al-Arabī, Cairo, 1952, 31.

(2) Ibid, 31.

(3) Khizānat al-adab, i, 107.

(4) A short account of Dhūr Rummah, 302.

(5) Shi'r al-ṭabī'a 144.

(6) Jamharat al-lughā, i, 157; al-Ḥayawān, iv, 216.

right order".(1) He used also to relate for them rare instances of eloquent speech.(2)

### His knowledge of writing:

The question of whether he could write is obviously an important one. It has been a matter of controversy. Having described in a verse his she-camel's eye as the letter Mīm, (M)(3) he was thus accused, it is said, of having knowledge of writing. It is also said that he defended himself against this accusation which could mar his Bedouin tongue according to the claim of some philologists in that it would point to his being influenced by civilisation.(4) He is described as having given an explanation which might confirm his illiteracy:-

« وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْيَاسِ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عُبَيْدِ بْنِ نَاصِحٍ قَالَ قَالَ الْأَصْمَعِيُّ :  
قِيلَ لَذِي الرُّمَّةِ : مَنْ أَيْنَ عَرَفْتَ الْمِيمَ لَوْلَا صَدَقَ مَنْ نَسَبَكَ إِلَى تَعْلِيمِ أَوْلَادِ  
الْأَعْرَابِ فِي أَكْثَافِ الْأُيُلِ ؟ فَقَالَ : وَاللَّهِ مَا عَرَفْتُ الْمِيمَ إِلَّا أَنِّي قَدِمْتُ  
مِنَ الْبَادِيَةِ إِلَى الرَّيْفِ فَرَأَيْتُ الصَّبْيَانَ وَهُمْ يَجُوزُونَ بِالْفَجْرِمْ فِي الْأَوَّلِ »

(1) Jamharat al-lugha, ii, 31.

(2) Al-Muzhir, i, 139; Wafayāt, i, 566; 'Uyun al-akhbār, iii (edited 1940), 207; Tha'lab, Faṣih, Cairo, 1948, i, 348-349. Ibn Manṣūr, Lisan, Cairo, A.H. 1300, ii, 480; al-Jāhiz, al-Bayān, Cairo, A.H. 1332, ii, 64; Ibn al-Sikkīt, Islāh al-mantiq, Cairo, 1949, 284.

(3) Simt al-la'ālī, ii, 633; Dīwān al-ma'anī, ii, 120. Nāsir al-Dīn al-Asad, Maṣādir al-shi'r al-Jāhili, Cairo 1956, 117; The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxv, 53.

(4) Dīwān al-ma'anī, ii, 120; al-Marzubānī, al-Muwashshah, Cairo, A.H. 1343, 177 and 192, Maṣādir al-shi'r al-Jāhili, 117; Krenkow, The use of writing for the preservation of ancient Arabic poetry, A Volume of Oriental Studies, 264.

فوقفتُ حياءُ لهم أنظر إليهم ، فقال غلام من الغامة : قد أزرقتُ هذه الأوقية  
فجعلتها كالميم ، فقام غلام من الغامة فوضع منجته في الأوقية فجاءه فأفقر ،  
فعلمتُ أن الميم شيء ضيق فشبهتُ عين ناقتي به وقد اسلختُ و  
أعيتُ (١)

Al-Qālī says: "Abū 'l-Mayyās told us that Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd  
b. Nāṣih told him that al-Aṣma'ī said: Dhū'r-Rumma was asked  
'How could you know the letter mīm unless the one who  
described you as teaching boys to write on camel's shoulder-  
blades was right? And he answered, "By God, I do not know  
how to write mīm, but on coming from the desert to the culti-  
vated land, I saw boys throwing walnuts into holes. I halted  
by them watching. One of the boys said to his comrades: 'You  
have made this hole too small like mīm.' Then one of the boys  
got up and ground his heel into the hole and thus widened  
the hole. So I learned that the letter mīm is something  
small and I likened my she-camel's eye to it when she became  
lean and tired."<sup>(1)</sup> It must be noted that this incident is  
supposed to have taken place in the cultivated land and that  
the participants were children. The language of the account,  
for this reason, must have been simple and straight-forward.  
Yet the strange and obscure words which it contains point to  
verbal usages beyond the ken of the dweller of the cultivated  
land and certainly of their children. The words 'azzaqtum'

(1) al-Qālī, Amālī, Cairo, 1926, ii, 5; al-Muzhir, ii, 350.

of their children. The words 'azzaqtum' instead of 'dayyaqtum' 'Uqa' instead of 'hufra' might be used, if at all, by Bedouins living in the heart of the desert. The style of narrative differs from the style of all other accounts attributed to Dhū'r-Rumma,<sup>(1)</sup> and betrays the linguistic pedantry of the philologist. The word 'fijrim' instead of 'jawz' of which al-Qālī, the author of al-Amālī, says, "I did not find this word in the books of the philologists nor did I hear it from any of our professors except him (meaning Abū 'l-Mayyās)", may hint significantly at the inventor of the whole account, namely, the transmitter Abū 'l-Mayyās. Furthermore, it does not say on whose authority al-Aṣma'ī relates, nor can it be reconciled with another account related on the authority of al-Aṣma'ī himself, in which he states that 'Isā b. 'Umar said "One day I was reading to Dhū'r-Rumma some of his poetry when he said to me 'Write this letter correctly'. I asked him 'Can you write?' 'Yes' he answered, 'a townsman from amongst you came and taught us by writing upon the sand'"<sup>(2)</sup> Nor does it accord with the account which states that al-Aṣma'ī was critical of Dhū'r-Rumma because the latter was a teacher of boys in the desert.<sup>(3)</sup> Why, it may then be asked, is Dhū'r-Rumma presented as having denied the knowledge of writing? It seems

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(1) al-Ṣūlī, Adab al-kuttāb, Cairo, A.H. 1341, i, 62; al-Muwashshah, 177, 178 & 195; al-Muzhir, ii, 349; Dīwān al-ma'āni, ii, 120; al-Hayawān, i, 41; Majalis Tha'lab, i, 39; al-Aghani, xv, 125 & xvi, 122.

(2) al-Muwashshah, 178.

(3) Ibid, 192.

probable as Krenkow asserts that some grammarians, who were also philologists "had put up the thesis that poets did not possess the knowledge of writing",<sup>(1)</sup> for, as a modern critic points out,<sup>(2)</sup> they considered the poet's acquaintance with the art of writing a defect which would discredit his poetry. They regarded it as something alien to the desert Arabs and as a mark of civilisation which would corrupt the Bedouins' pure language. Thus, they discredited everyone who had visited the settled provinces frequently and acquainted himself with some aspects of urban life. al-Jahīz says: Abū 'l-Mufaḍḍal al-'Anbarī (a Bedouin) told Ibn Bashīr:

'Last night I found a book. I picked it up and I have it with me. They said it contains poetry: if you would like to have it I shall give it to you.' Ibn Bashīr said: 'I want it if it is shackled', (meaning vocalized). Abū 'l-Mufaḍḍal said: 'By God I do not know whether it is shackled or fettered'. (A pun is intended here, for the equivalent of shackled in Arabic means vocalized). Had this Bedouin known vocalization, Ibn Bashīr would have paid no attention to his find."<sup>(3)</sup> For this reason, Dhū'r-Rumma was discredited,<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Krenkow, The use of writing for the preservation of ancient Arabic poetry, 264.

(2) Maṣādir al-shi'r al-Jāhili, 116-117.

(3) al-Bayān, 163-164.

(4) Dīwān al-ma'ānī, ii, 120.

and that is why al-Asma'i spoke of him disparagingly.<sup>(1)</sup> Consequently, someone, probably a philologist, who needed some citations from his poetry, undertook the task of defending him by putting in his mouth the account that explains how he came to know the letter mīm, thus confirming his illiteracy.

That he knew the art of writing is obvious from his poetry, for he describes in a verse the places of the ruined encampments of Mayya as a vocalized book.<sup>(2)</sup> And he likens, in another verse, apart from comparing his she-camel's eye to the letter mīm,<sup>(3)</sup> the beaks of the birds in the ruined encampments to the pointed ends of pens which write and vocalize.<sup>(4)</sup>

كَأَنَّ أُنُوفَ الطَّيْرِ فِي عَرَصَاتِهَا      خِرَاطِيمُ أَقْلَامٍ تَخْطُّ وَتُعْجِمُ

No one can recognize the vocalization of a book and differentiate between writing and vocalization without having the knowledge of writing. Moreover, al-Ziyādī is quoted as saying that he had read something written by Dhū'r-Rumma himself.<sup>(5)</sup> It is said also that he was asked: "which is correct عَزِيزُ بْنُ اللَّهِ or عَزِيزُ بْنُ اللَّهِ?", and he answered: "That which has more letters."<sup>(6)</sup> Finally, some of his contemporaries

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- (1) al-Muwashshah, 180 and 192.  
 (2) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxi, 3.  
 (3) Ibid, lxxv, 53.  
 (4) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxiii, 2.  
 (5) Simt al-la' āli, Margin, ii, 632.  
 (6) al-Aghānī, xvi, 121.

provide us with interesting accounts on this matter. Shu'ba asked Dhu'r-Rumma to dictate his poetry to him; he agreed and began reciting. Noticing some mistakes in Shu'ba's writing, he instructed him to correct them. "Do you write?" Shu'ba asked. Dhū'r-Rumma replied: "A man from al-Hīra came to us and undertook the task of teaching our children. I used to take him to the sands upon which he taught me, and I do this (watching Shu'ba's writing and correcting it) lest you say that which I have not said."<sup>(1)</sup> Something to this effect is said to have been related by Ḥammād al-Rāwīya on one occasion and by 'Isā b. 'Umar also, as has been mentioned above, on another. To both, Dhū'r-Rumma admitted that he knew the art of writing.<sup>(2)</sup> In some versions he is reported to have asked them to keep it secret.

A collation of these is sufficient in itself to throw doubt on them. In some<sup>(3)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma is said to have asked Ḥammad not to tell anyone about his knowledge of writing. In another<sup>(4)</sup> he is merely quoted as saying: "I will not hide it from you." In one version of 'Isa's account, he said to 'Isa: "Beware of telling anyone of it".<sup>(5)</sup> In another he is

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 177.

(2) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā, i, 507; Adab al-kuttāb, 62; Simt al-la'ālī', Margin, ii, 632; al-Muwashshah, 177 & 178; al-Muzhir, ii, 349; Masādir al-shi'r al-jahīlī, 117-118.

(3) al-Muwashshah, 177, adab al-kuttāb, 62.

(4) Dīwān al-ma'ānī, ii, 120.

(5) al-Muwashshah, 178.



presented as having asked him to keep it secret for "it is reproachful among us".<sup>(1)</sup> In two other versions nothing of the sort is mentioned; he simply admitted his knowledge of writing.<sup>(2)</sup> A significant point is raised by the quotation from Ibn Qutayba<sup>(3)</sup> which is germane to the whole argument - that is to say, that the knowledge of writing was regarded by the tribes as a stigma. This is clearly fallacious. In the first place Shu'ba's account does not indicate it. Secondly, the story mentioned earlier in this chapter, of his visits together with his mother to al-Ḥuṣayn b. 'Abada b. Nu'aym of Banū 'Adī for the writing of a charm, and again when he recited his composition to al-Ḥuṣayn, shows nothing but the respect of the illiterate for the literate. The aura of social respect which went with a capacity for writing is well illustrated by the passage in al-Balādhuri's *Futūḥ al-Buldān* describing the Kāmil, (perfect,) as "one who in addition to knowing writing knows how to shoot and swim."<sup>(4)</sup>

Furthermore, writing amongst Banū, 'Adī, Dhū'r-Rumma's clan, was not a rare accomplishment. al-Farazdaq and his *rāwīya*, Ibn Mattawayhī, went to see the poet, 'Umar b. Laja' al-Taymī. They found him surrounded by youths from Banū 'Adī writing down his boast about the tribe of al-Ribāb.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā, i, 507.

(2) al-Muzhir, ii, 349; al-Muwashshah, 178.

(3) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā, i, 507.

(4) al-Baladhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, Cairo, 1932, 459; also its English version, New York, 1924, ii, 274.

(5) The *naqa'id* of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, edited by A. Bevan Leiden, 1905-1912, 907-908.

It is clear that the weight of evidence leads one to conclude that Dhū'r-Rumma was familiar with the art of writing. The explanation of the conflicting and anomalous statements on this point probably lies once again with the philologists. It was in their interests to perpetuate the belief that the Bedouin poets were illiterate, since writing was a sign of civilization and therefore, by extension, a hint that the linguistic purity of the citational material which they required was marred. To support this contention they were prepared to fabricate material affirming the illiteracy of such poets as Dhū'r-Rumma.

#### His early poetic training

As a young man, Dhū'r-Rumma was a rawiya of 'Ubayd b. Husayn al-Ra'i,<sup>(1)</sup> a Bedouin poet of some merit,<sup>(2)</sup> who gained fame in describing in his poetry camels, their life in the desert, their journeys towards water and their shepherds.<sup>(3)</sup> Though al-Rā'ī, generally speaking, followed the style and imagery of his predecessors, yet he had his own way and treatment of a theme so much so that some critics said of him that it was "as if he traverses the desert without a guide."<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Tabaqāt al-shu'arā, 467; al-Muwashshah, 170.

(2) Tabaqāt al-shu'arā, 434; Amālī al-Murtaḍā, ii, 28; Shi'r al-Ṭabī'a, 140-141.

(3) Shi'r al-Ṭabī'a, 141.

(4) al-Aghānī, xx, 187; Tabaqāt al-shu'arā, 434.

Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry shows clearly the influence of this poet. More specifically, it is al-Rā'ī's preoccupation with camels and desert life which can be regarded as a direct, though not the sole, influence responsible for nourishing and strengthening a similar trend in Dhū'r-Rumma.<sup>(1)</sup> The latter considered al-Rā'ī as his imām and used to recite his poetry on frequent occasions as examples to support his own composition. By so doing he incurred the anger of his clan who thought of al-Rā'ī as inferior compared with their poet.<sup>(2)</sup>

However, having reached his maturity, Dhū'r-Rumma could not confine himself to al-Rā'ī's single way. His genius longed for a more spacious and different milieu. "He and I", Dhū'r-Rumma says, speaking of his relations with al-Rā'ī, "were like nothing but a young man attending the company of an old (experienced) man, going with him along certain ways, then departing from him. The young man then goes along mountain passes and valleys which have never been traversed by the old man."<sup>(3)</sup> Indeed, he traversed different ways and roved in many directions, but some of the dust from the first journeys in the wake of al-Rā'ī was never shaken off him.<sup>(4)</sup> Bad luck exposed al-Rā'ī to Jarir's sharp satire which annihilated him and shortly afterwards he died in disgrace.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) al-Shawāmikh, 30; Shi'r al-ṭabi'a, 140

(2) al-Muwashshah, 170.

(3) al-Aghānī, xvi, 121

(4) Amālī al-murtaḍa, ii, 28-29.

(5) Ṭabaqat al-shu'arā, 372-374.

Dhū'r-Rumma remained faithful to his master with respect and admiration.<sup>(1)</sup>

Perhaps greater than al-Rā'ī's influence upon Dhū'r-Rumma's poetical education was that of the Jāhili poets. As the last great representative of the Bedouin school of poetry, Dhū'r-Rumma was, in fact, summing up and embodying in his poetry the traditions of the Jāhiliya odes. As has been mentioned earlier, Yamāma was the main theatre on whose stage most of the Jāhili poets sang their poetry. Dhū'r-Rumma, brought up in Yamāma, was not only one of the audience of that theatre, but by his natural inclination and because of his poetic gifts, was able, afterwards, to ascend the stage and sing the same melody. The audience was eager to listen to him<sup>(2)</sup> as were its predecessors to the Jahili poets themselves. Since he stood out, in his maturity as a well-versed authority on the pre-Islamic poetry, his upbringing in Yamāma must have provided him with an ample opportunity for an education in poetry. He became such an expert and undisputed master in the field as to be able to differentiate between that which was of Jāhiliya composition and that which was composed in the Islamic era. It is related that "Hammad al-Rāwīya went to Bilāl b. Abī-Burda (the governor of Baṣra)

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 183.

(2) al-Aghani, xvi, 112; Maṣāri' al-Ushshāq, 316; Wafayat al-a'yān, 566; Sharh, al-Sharīshī, ii, 58.

and recited a panegyric in praise of him while Dhū'r-Rumma was present. Bilal asked Dhū'r-Rumma: 'What do you think of this poem? 'Good', Dhū'r-Rumma answered, 'but it is not his'. 'Who said it?' Bilal enquired. But he replied that he did not know except that Hammad did not compose it. After Bilāl had fulfilled Hammād's requirements and rewarded him, he asked him: Did you compose this poem?' 'No', Hammād answered. 'But who did it?' Bilāl eagerly enquired. To this Hammad answered, 'One of the Jāhilī poets. It is an old poem and no-one knows it except me.' Bilāl then asked him 'How did Dhū'r-Rumma know that it was not yours?' He could differentiate' was his reply, 'between the composition of the people of al-Jāhiliya and that of the people of Islam.' (1) "

#### His travels and his search for patronage

There are other formative influences that worked upon him. He was a great wanderer<sup>(2)</sup> and it sometimes seems to the reader of his dīwān as if he were roving with no destination in mind but simply to satisfy his own insatiable love for travel.<sup>(3)</sup> He not only traversed al-Yamāma and the expanse of al-Dahna', which he depicts vividly in his poetry,

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(1) al-Aghānī (Dar al-Kutub), vi, 88.

(2) See the Dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, vii, 10; x, 52 and 62; ~~xx~~ xvi, 33, xxix, 28-29; lxxvii, 9; lxxviii, 13-14.

(3) Ibid, xxix, 28-43.

but went as far as Iṣfahān.<sup>(1)</sup> He also travelled westward to Ḥijāz as a pilgrim,<sup>(2)</sup> and there he praised Ibrāhīm b. Hishām<sup>(3)</sup> of Banū Makhzūm, the Governor of Ḥijāz (106-114),<sup>(4)</sup> and might have listened to some traditionists<sup>(5)</sup> and poets. It is also possible that he had been to the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>(6)</sup> Of the greatest interest among his wanderings are those which brought him frequently to Baṣra and Kūfa.<sup>(7)</sup> He was certainly closely acquainted with these two cultural centres and their learned men.

... Dhū'r-Rumma apparently was an orphan and must have suffered as had most of the Bedouin from the lash of poverty. In verses, some of which were recorded earlier in this chapter, he complained that Hishām, his brother, severed the tie of brotherhood and moved away from him because he saw "my burden-camels became few."<sup>(8)</sup> The same implication of poverty can be read into the verses in which he complains of Hishām's refusal to turn towards him with favour in spite of his

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(1) See the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xli, 5-6; lxvii, 45; al-Shawāmikh, 72-73.

(2) The dī-wān of Dhu'r-Rumma, xlvi, 17-21.

(3) Ibid, lxxviii, 19-26.

(4) al-Tabarī, Annales, Leiden, 1879-1901, ii, 1561; Ibn al-Āthīr, al-Kāmil, Leiden, 1867-1874, v, 100, 133.

(5) In al-Lubab fi tahdhib al-ansab, Dhū'r-Rumma is described as a traditionist. "He transmitted from Ibn 'abbās, and Abū-Muhārib transmitted on his authority." al-Lubāb fi tahdhib al-ansab, i, 445.

(6) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxv, 35.

(7) al-Aghānī, i, 347-348, v, 364 & xvi, 112, 121, 118 & 122 al-Muwashshah, 172, 179-180, 184-185, and 195; The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma lxxxvii, 29.

(8) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlvi, 15.

(Dhū'r-Rumma's) hopes.<sup>(1)</sup>

Having heard of the great fortunes bestowed upon many poets by bountiful patrons, necessity and ambition prompted him to end most of his wanderings in seeking the favour of some influential person. Thus, he paid frequent visits to Baṣra and Kūfa.<sup>(2)</sup> and visited also al-Ḥijāz<sup>(3)</sup> and many other places where he eulogised his patrons. It seems that he appeared as a panegyrist in his early twenties, for he eulogized Mālik b. Misma', chief of Bakr b. Wā'il, who was killed together with his brother, 'Abd al-Malik, by Mu'āwīya b. Yazīd b. al-Muhallab in the year A.H. 102. Accordingly, he must have praised him some time earlier, since Mālik and his brothers were prisoners in the hands of Mu'āwīya and when the latter received the news of his father's defeat he killed them along with thirty other prisoners.<sup>(4)</sup> On one occasion, Dhū'r-Rumma complained that he was prevented from being received by Mālik b. Misma'.<sup>(5)</sup> Could it be, as seems likely, that he was still a young unknown poet who could not find ready ingress to the chief? In his dīwān there is an ode which reveals his early ambitious desire to eulogise eminent rulers. In this ode he mentions that a certain illness prevented him from visiting Ibn Layla ('Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz)

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(1) Ibid, xlvii, 12-18.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 112.

(3) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlvii, 17-21.

(4) al-Tabarī, Annales, ii, 1396, 1409.

(5) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xvii, 13.

after the latter had been installed as Caliph. He was confined, he complains, to his quarters for such a long time that he became familiar to the dogs of the tribe and a spider wove his web over his saddle.<sup>(1)</sup> 'Umar was Caliph from A.H. 99 to 101.<sup>(2)</sup>

The following are his other patrons more or less in chronological order:-

1. 'Abd al-Malik,<sup>(3)</sup> b. Bishr. b. Marwān, Governor of Basra, A.H. 102.<sup>(4)</sup>
2. Hilāl b. Aḥwaz<sup>(5)</sup> of Banū Tamīm who killed Yazīd b. al-Muhallab A.H. 102, (perhaps he eulogized him soon after defeating Yazīd).
3. 'Umar B. Hubayra,<sup>(6)</sup> Governor of Iraq A.H. 102-105.<sup>(7)</sup>
4. Mālīk b. al-Mundhir b. al-Jārūd,<sup>(8)</sup> police-chief of Basra A.H. 106-109.<sup>(9)</sup>
5. Ibrāhīm b. Hishām<sup>(10)</sup> of Banū Makhzūm, Governor of

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(1) Ibid, lxiv, 35-37.

(2) al-Kamīl (Ibn al-Athīr) v, 27, 42.

(3) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlviii, 66-69.

(4) al-Tabarī, Annales, 1433.

(5) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xx, 17-33.

(6) Ibid, xxv, 36-48.

(7) al-Tabarī, Annales, ii, 1433 and 1467-1468.

(8) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, liv, 1-14.

(9) al-Tabarī, Annales, ii, 1487; al-Aghānī, xix, 18.

(10) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxviii, 19-26; Khizānat al-adab, i, 104.



- al-Hijāz, 106-114 A.H.<sup>(1)</sup>
6. Abān b. al-Walīd,<sup>(2)</sup> deputy of Khālīd al-Qasrī at Fāris<sup>(3)</sup> on one occasion and at Wāsiṭ<sup>(4)</sup> on another (perhaps as early as Khālīd's reign 105-120 A.H.)<sup>(5)</sup>
  7. Bilāl b. Abī Burda,<sup>(6)</sup> first as police chief<sup>(7)</sup> of Beṣra 109 A.H. then its judge and governor from 110-120 A.H.<sup>(8)</sup>
  8. al-Muhājir b. 'Abdullah,<sup>(9)</sup> governor of al-Yamāma (In al-Aghānī "al-Farazdaq's death was announced to Jarīr while the latter was sitting with al-Muhājir in al-Yamāma."<sup>(10)</sup> Since al-Farazdaq died about 114 A.H.<sup>(11)</sup> al-Aghānī's statement indicates that in that year

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- (1) al-Tabarī, Annales, 1561; al-Kāmil (Ibn al-Athīr), v. 100, 133.
  - (2) The diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxi, 24-29.
  - (3) al-Aghānī, xix, 20.
  - (4) al-Aghānī, xv, 114.
  - (5) al-Tabarī, Annales, ii, 1467-1468; al-Kāmil (Ibn-Athīr), v, 93, 163.
  - (6) The diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxxii, 54-78, xxxv, 49-76, lvii, 54-100, lix, 1-3 (the whole fragment) and lxxxvii, 33-59, Wafayāt al a'yan, i, 564; Husri, Zahr al-'Adāb, Cairo, 1929, i, 1105; al-Kāmil (of al-Mubarrad), i, 27; Nuwayrī Nihāyat al-Arab, Cairo, 1924, iii, 192; al-Muwashshah, 184; Khafājī, Sharḥ durrat al-ghawwas, Constantinople, A.H. 1299, 190 and 225-226.
  - (7) al-Tabarī, Annales, ii, 1506.
  - (8) Ibid, ii, 1526.
  - (9) The diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxii, 36-53.
  - (10) al-Aghānī, xix, 45.
  - (11) al-Baṣīr 'Aṣr al-Qur'ān, Baghdād, 1947, 192.

al-Muhājir was still the governor of al-Yamama.

9. al-Mulādhim b. Hurayth<sup>(1)</sup> of Banū Hanīfa, (date unknown)
10. Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik<sup>(2)</sup> who ruled from A.H. 105 to 125.<sup>(3)</sup>

In one of his odes there are some verses<sup>(4)</sup> in praise of 'Ubaydullāh b. Ma'mar of Banū Taym. Having been composed by Dhū'r-Rumma, they must have been in praise of one of his descendants, for 'Ubaydullāh was killed in Iṣṭakhr during 'Uthman's reign in the year 23 A.H.<sup>(5)</sup> In another ode,<sup>(6)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma describes in detail his she-camel and her travel throughout the desert and in one verse<sup>(7)</sup> only he addresses his patron as the Commander of the faithful and in another verse<sup>(8)</sup> he merely states that he travelled all the distance neither because of a dispute nor because he sought refuge from a crime he had committed. In three other verses,<sup>(9)</sup> he describes his she-camel as yearning towards a noble group of

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxxi.

(2) Ibid, lx, 17.

(3) al-Tabarī, Annales, ii, 1466 and 1728; al-Kāmil (Ibn al-Athīr) v, 92, 195.

(4) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxx, 56-59.

(5) al-Tabarī, Annales, \*, 2830.

(6) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxxi.

(7) Ibid, lxxxi, 18.

(8) Ibid, lxxxi, 25.

(9) Ibid, lxxxi, 38-39-40. In al-'Iqd al-farīd of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (Cairo, 1940, i, 319), the first verse says that his property was not acquired by inheritance of blood-money nor from unlawful gain, but God's endowment gained from every journey etc.

camels left in the tribe and that these camels were God's endowment gained from every journey to a powerful, generous ruler either crowned or turbaned. It is said that the Commander of the faithful mentioned by Dhū'r-Rumma was 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān who denied him any bounty and remarked that he praised his she-camel instead of the Caliph and that he should ask her to grant him the favour he had hoped to receive from him.<sup>(1)</sup> This is certainly inaccurate, for 'Abd al-Malik died in the year 86 A.H.<sup>(2)</sup> When Dhū'r-Rumma was only nine years old. It is clearly impossible that 'Abd al-Malik should have asked Dhū'r-Rumma to recite to him some of his poetry and that Dhū'r-Rumma had responded by reciting 'What ails thy eye that water from it is flowing.' The same condemnation applied to the additional embroiderings of the tale to the effect that, on hearing this opening of the ode, 'Abd al-Malik took it as an allusion to his eyes which were given to watering, rebuked him and ordered that he should be thrown out.<sup>(3)</sup> It is interesting to read that the able critic and the author of *al-Waṣāṭa*, 'Alī-al-Jurjānī, doubted, though

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(1) al-Aghānī, (Dar al-Kutub), xii, 37-39; in *al-Khasa'is* and *Fasih Tha'lab*, he is reported to have recited to 'Abd al-Malik another ode (أَعْنِ تَرَدَّدَتْ مِنْ فَرْقَا، مَزَلَة) (the *dīwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma lxxv) which contains no praise at all. See Ibn Jinnī, *al-Khasa'is*, Cairo, 1913, i, 411 and *Fasih Tha'lab*, i, 100-101.

(2) al-Tabarī, *Annales*, ii, 1172.

(3) Ibn Hajja al-Hamawī, *Khizanat al-adab*, *Bulāq*, A.H. 1291, 5 *al-'Umda*, i, 148-149.

not on a chronological basis, the soundness of such an anecdote. He says, "I suspect this anecdote and do not think it is genuine."<sup>(1)</sup> Certainly there are some verses addressed to a certain Commander of the Faithful but it is difficult to decide to whom they were addressed. It is highly probable that this Caliph was Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik; he is praised in a verse of another ode and Dhū'r-Rumma was very active in the first half of Hishām's reign.

As regards al-Muhājir, Dhū'r-Rumma voiced in an eloquent panegyric his grievance "against a certain 'Uṭayba b. Ṭartūṭh relating to a well, for 80 years the property of his tribe and of which 'Uṭayba had usurped possession. The matter was brought before Muhājir, then Governor of al-Yamāma, and apparently Dhū'r-Rumma was successful in his claim."<sup>(2)</sup> Except in the case of Bilāl, there is little information on his relations with other patrons. Did they repay him for his praise? It seems likely that they did so, for it is difficult to imagine 'Abān b. al-Walīd, Qasrī's generous deputy and a lover of poetry, listening to Dhū'r-Rumma's magnificent verses in his praise without rewarding him bountifully. As for the Caliphs, it seems plausible that they were not pleased with the poems he recited to them, which contain no

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(1) al-Jurjānī, al-Wasāta, Saīda, A.H. 1331, 129.

(2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lx, 17; A Short Account of Dhur-Rummah, 298.

praise except for the poet's own she-camel and details of the desert world. However, in a verse mentioned previously he states that he received endowments from 'crowned and turbaned ones'.<sup>(1)</sup> The crowned could be a Caliph though he sometimes describes a governor like Bilāl as king.<sup>(2)</sup>

Bilāl b. Abī Burda was Dhū'r-Rumma's favourite patron.<sup>(3)</sup> A grandson of Abū Musā al-Ash'arī, Alī's delegate to the Arbitration of Adhruh, Bilāl was a subtle ambitious man, who did not stick at trifles.<sup>(4)</sup> He manoeuvred cunningly to grasp a post in which he might be able to satiate his ambition. But, however pious he pretended to be, his underlying unscrupulousness of character was exposed<sup>(5)</sup> before the righteous Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and his schemes failed, but not for long. In the reign of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik, he succeeded in becoming in 109, police chief of Baṣra<sup>(6)</sup> and in the following year its Governor, an appointment that included control of the judiciary.<sup>(7)</sup> He remained there till 120 A.H.<sup>(8)</sup> when Khālīd al-Qasrī was dismissed from his office

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxxī, 40

(2) Ibid, lxxxvii, 36.

(3) Wafayāt al-a'yan, i, 564; al-Zaraklī, al-A'lām, Cairo, 1927, i, 106; Encyclopaedia of Islam, 964.

(4) al-Bayān wa 'l-tabyīn, i, 179, al-Muwashshah, 178; al-Kāmil (of al-Mubarrad), i, 268-269; Khizānat al-adab (Baghdadī), iii, 32.

(5) al-Kāmil (of al-Mubarrad), i, 268; Khizānat al-adab (Baghdadī), iii, 32.

(6) al-Tabarī, Annales, 1506.

(7) Ibid, 1526.

(8) Ibid, 1658; al-Kāmil (Ibn al-Athīr), v, 167.

and taken together with his deputies as prisoners to Kufa where Bilal met his death in a very dramatic way. It is related that he asked the gaoler to falsely inform Yūsuf b. 'Umar, then the Governor, of his death in return for an ample reward. To this the gaoler agreed, but having been informed of Bilal's death, Yūsuf insisted on seeing the dead body. Thus the terrified gaoler saw no alternative but to hasten to the prison in order to kill Bilāl before the Governor's examination in order to save his own head.<sup>(1)</sup>

Bilal was a learned man<sup>(2)</sup> fond of poetry and praise. He was cordial to poets and learned men, among them being Hammād-al-Rāwīya and Abū 'Umr b. al-'Alā'.<sup>(3)</sup> His was something of a literary salon in which philological and literary subjects were discussed.<sup>(4)</sup> In addition to this he found in poetry a way to gain fame for his family and himself in order to enhance his reputation and satisfy his ambitions, for poetry was always an influential means to fame and glory. Bilāl and Dhū'r-Rumma found in each other mutual interests. The patron and the laureate were friends and they exchanged their mutual admiration in the forms of presents of gold and poetical panegyrics respectively.

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(1) Khizānat al-adab (Baghdādī), iii, 32.

(2) al-Kāmil (of al-Mubarrad), i, 268-269; Khizanat al-adab (Baghdādī), iii, 32.

(3) al-Aghānī, vi, 88 and xvi, 121-122.

(4) Ibid, xvi, 121-122.

The once needy Bedouin orphan was no longer poor. He must have received from his patron many valuable gifts which incurred the envy of his rival, Ru'ba, for the latter complained to Bilāl that Dhū'r-Rumma received his rewards for panegyrics which had not been composed by him, but put together from fragments which he had plagiarised. It seems that Bilāl realized that Ru'ba's grudge was prompted by envy of Dhū'r-Rumma and retorted that had this been so, Dhū'Rumma would still have deserved the gifts for putting the fragments together and ordered that Dhū'r-Rumma should be given ten thousand dirhams.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus the impoverished Bedouin orphan was seen in al-Mirbad wearing a two-hundred-dinars garment which was clearly a sign of wealth.<sup>(2)</sup> There are also several verses which show that he was no longer poor.<sup>(3)</sup> That he had been rewarded by Bilāl is obvious from the many panegyrics dedicated to him which are full of sincere and heart-felt praise. In fact, he seemed, in his last years, to be Bilāl's poet only and continued eulogizing him till the year of his death. In a verse from one of his panygyrics on Bilāl, Dhū'r-Rumma states that he had no excuse for being in love after he had passed forty.<sup>(4)</sup> Had he lived only forty

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 123.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 123, Shi'r al-tabīa, 148.

(3) The diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, vii, 21, xxix, 38, lii, 54, and lxxxī, 26-27 and 38-39.

(4) Ibid, xxxv, 3.

years, as all authorities agreed, this panegyric must have been composed in the last year of his life which shows clearly his good relation with his patron.

### Dhu'r-Rumma - The Lover

The story of Dhū'r-Rumma's love, though it has come down to us in a very confused form, still conveys the authentic feeling of a true personal experience against a Bedouin background. His beloved is called Mayya whom he seems to have loved from his early twenties till he died.<sup>(1)</sup> Here is a parallel to the 'Udhri Lovers, yet he differs from them in having what may be called a marginal love for other women. However, it is his love for Mayya which deserves to be discussed.

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- (1) This can be substantiated from his poetry, for he mentions her in a series of poems which can themselves be chronologically arranged on the basis of the references in them to historic personages. He mentions her in a poem (Dīwān, lxiv) in which he refers to the fact that illness prevented him from visiting Ibn Laylā ('Umar b. Abd al-Azīz A.H. 99-101), since the latter's installation. He also mentions her (Dīwān xx) in his praise of Hilāl b. Ahwaz about 102 A.H. Also in Dīwān, xxv - in which he praised Umar b. Hubayra (A.H. 102-105), also in Dīwān, lxxviii - in which he praises Ibrāhīm b. Makhzum (A.H. 106-114). Also in Dīwān, xxi - in which he praises Aban b. al-Walīd (A.H. 105-120), also in Dīwān, xxx, xxxii, lvii, lxxxvii - in which he praises Bilāl b. Abū Burda (A.H. 109-120). And also in Dīwān, lx - in which he praises Hīshām b. Abd al-Malik (A.H. 105-125).



first, for they have become "one of the celebrated pairs of lovers among the Arabs".<sup>(1)</sup> He devoted most of his poetry to singing of her beauty, expressing his anguish and yearning and describing her ruined encampments until "this devotion became proverbial."<sup>(2)</sup> Thus "he was called Ghaylān of Mayya"<sup>(3)</sup> Abū Tammām in his famous Bā'iya celebrating the conquest of 'Ammūriya says:

The encampment of Mayya, inhabited, with Ghaylān  
visiting it,

Is not more beautiful than your ruined houses.<sup>(4)</sup>

And al-Harīrī, in one of his Maqāmāt, tells of "a heat to cause Ghaylān to forget Mayya."<sup>(5)</sup> Mayya is said to have been a descendant of Qaya b. 'Āsim<sup>(6)</sup> of Banū Minqar, who was in the delegation of tamīm to the prophet. It is reported that the prophet said to him "You are the master of the Bedouin people."<sup>(7)</sup> But the historians differ as to who her father was. He is said to have been called Muqātil b. Taliba<sup>(8)</sup>

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(1) Al-Shi'ar wa 'l-shu-arā', i, 508; Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 563; Ibn al-'Imād. Shadharāt al-dhabab, Cairo, A.H. 1350, i, 122; Encyclopaedia of Islam, 964.

(2) A short account of Dhū'r-Rumma, 294.

(3) Ibid, 294; Sharh maqāmāt al-Harīrī, ii, 57.

(4) Diwan Abi Tammām, (ed. M. 'Azzām), Cairo, 1951, i, 62.

(5) A short account of Dhū'r-Rumma, 294; Sharh maqāmāt al-Harīrī, ii, 56.

(6) Al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā', i, 508, Amālī (al-Zajjāj), 56; al-Aghānī, xvi, 121; Simt al-la'ālī', i, 82; Shadharāt al-dhabab, i, 122.

(7) Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 563; Shadharāt al-dhabab, i, 122.

(8) Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 563.

(or Tulayb)<sup>(1)</sup> b. Qays b. 'Āṣim, 'Āṣim b. Ṭaliba,<sup>(2)</sup> or Ṭaliba b. Qays.<sup>(3)</sup> In the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma there is this verse:-

"If Mayya was married to a base person, it is indeed because Mundhir has for long been seeking a mate for Mayya, to humiliate her".<sup>(4)</sup>

The commentary on the verse says that Mundhir was the name of her father.<sup>(5)</sup> But it could be that "Mundhir" is a misreading of "Minqar" and accordingly, as Macartney conjectures<sup>(6)</sup> we should read in the above verse ( منقر ) to which tribe Mayya belonged.

She is described as one of the most beautiful women of her time.<sup>(7)</sup> We have four accounts depicting her on different occasions:-

(i) 'Iṣma b. Mālik, a friend of Dhū'r-Rumma, is reported to have said that he accompanied Dhū'r-Rumma on a visit to Mayya. He described her as a soft and pleasing girl. She was fair-complexioned, tall and with long hair.<sup>(8)</sup>

(ii) Ibn Qutayba says that Ibn Sawwār al-Ghanawī said that

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(1) Shadharat al-dhahab, i, 122.

(2) Wafāyāt, al-a'yān, i, 563; Šimt al-la'ālī', i, 82. In al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'ara', she is mentioned as Mayya, the daughter of fulān, (so and so, b. Ṭaliba. See al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'ara', i, 508.

(3) Amali of al-Zajjāj, 56.

(4) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxxvi, 15.

(5) Ibid, p. 648.

(6) See the diwan of Dhu'r-Rumma, (Index xix).

(7) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'ārā', i, 509; 'Uyūn al-akhbār, iv. 39.

(8) Majālis Tha'lab, i, 40; Dīwān al-Ma'ānī, i, 233; Maṣāri' al'Ushshaq. 351.

he had seen Mayya accompanied by her little children. He described her as smooth-featured, broad-cheeked and aquiline-nosed, bearing the brand of beauty. She told him that she had given birth to all her children in the camel's pastures. Ibn Qutayba says that he asked him whether she had recited for him some of Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry and he answered that "She poured forth recitation the like of which your father had never encountered."<sup>(1)</sup>

(iii) Abu-al-Muhalhil al-Ḥudā'ī said that he went to the desert seeking Mayya and when he came to a big tent he saw an old woman. "I greeted her" he said and asked her for Mayya's tent. She said that she was Mayya. "I was amazed. I said to her 'I am surprised at Dhu'r-Rumma and the quantity of his composition about you'. 'Do not be surprised', she answered, 'for I shall show you that which you will consider as his excuse.' Then she summoned someone and there came a young girl wearing a veil. She asked her to unveil her face and when the girl did so I was greatly amazed by what I saw of her beauty and uniqueness". The old woman told him that Dhū'r-Rumma had fallen in love with her when she had been as young and beautiful as this girl. "I said: 'God may forgive him and have mercy

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(1) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'ara, i, 508-509; Wafayāt, al-a'yan i, 564.

upon him.' Then I asked her to recite (some of Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry) and she recited while I was writing down what she said."<sup>(1)</sup>

(iv) Muḥammad b. al-Hajjāj al-Asadī b. 'Amr b. Tamīm said:

"I passed by Mayya when she had become old. I halted by her and I was <sup>then</sup> young . I said: 'O Mayya! I regard Dhū'r-Rumma as wasting his words on you:-

Are you not holding yourself away from mentioning Mayya?

And have you not forgotten your last meeting with her so that you remember?

You are enamoured by Mayya, not coming to your senses, yet before her are: a barrier, doors and a concealing curtain.

She laughed and said: 'You see me now when I have become an old woman and my beauty has vanished. May God have mercy on Ghaylān for he recited this poem about me when I was more beautiful than a kindled fire on a moonlit night in the eye of one stricken by cold. And you shall not leave until I establish for you his excuse." Then she called out: 'O Asmā! come out. And there came out a young girl like a gazelle I have never seen her like and Mayya said 'Is there no excuse for him who composes

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(1) 'Uyūn al-akhbār, iv, 40.

love poetry on this girl and loves her?' 'Yes', I exclaimed. She then said 'By God, when I was in her age I was more beautiful than she. Had you seen me at that age you would have despised this girl as you despise me now. Go rightly guided!'" (1)

It is said that Dhū'r-Rumma first met Mayya when he went with one of his brothers and a cousin seeking their strayed camels. Consumed with thirst they came suddenly to a large tent. Dhū'r-Rumma was sent to ask for water. He went to the tent and saw an old woman sitting under the tent-porch. When he asked her for some water she called out "O Mayya ! give water to this youth! " So he went in and on seeing the girl, he was at once overcome by her beauty. (2) Another account of his first meeting with Mayya is that "Mayya and her people were neighbours in the lower grounds of the Dahnā', of Dhū'r-Rumma and his folk. Mayya being engaged in washing her own and the servants' clothes in a tattered tent, and being somewhat decolletee, was spied upon by Dhū'r-Rumma through a crack in the tent, with the result of making him deeply enamoured (of her) - and after that he made her the subject of his verse." (3) Another version, somewhat similar to the first, has been given earlier in discussing his nickname. (4) Yet,

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 120.

(2) Ibid, xvi, 114; Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī, ii, 57; A short account of Dhū'r Rumma, 294.

(3) Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Ḥariri, ii, 57; A short account of Dhū'r Rumma, 294.

(4) See above p.2.

in spite of the apparent detail, all the accounts bear the stamp of the story-tellers' influence.<sup>(1)</sup> The second account which is reported by al-Sharīshī and quoted by Macartney, for instance, considers Dhū'r-Rumma, confusedly, as one of Banū 'udhra.<sup>(2)</sup>

It is equally difficult to trace the story of this love in Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry, for although full of sincere emotion and yearning, it rarely takes the form of narration. Nevertheless, one may, from a careful study of his dīwān, come here and there across some scattered information which throws some light on the matter. He says that he came to fall in love with Mayya suddenly and by chance,<sup>(3)</sup> her folk were neighbours of his and whenever he saw a glimpse of her, being overcome by her beauty, he fell down oblivious to all things.<sup>(4)</sup> On another occasion, her people were neighbours of his at Fitakh and Huzwa, where she, being afraid of his deserting her, used to show him a sign of love which yielded no fruit.<sup>(5)</sup> At Shāri' and Dhū 'l-Rimth they spent some time where her place was not far to be visited by him.<sup>(6)</sup> There their two peoples were also neighbours.<sup>(7)</sup> After mentioning the obliterating of Mayya's encampments at al-Zurq, Dahl and the rugged ground of

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(1) See al-Fihrist, 306.

(2) Sharh maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī. ii, 57.

(3) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 22.

(4) Ibid, lxxxvii, 19.

(5) Ibid, xxxix, 11-12.

(6) Ibid, xlvi, 9-11.

(7) Ibid, xlvii, 4 and 7.

Ḥawḍā, he says: 'As if Mayya and I after our bygone days at them and the days of Ḥuzwā had no union between us, nor had Mayya's people and ours spent the spring time at detached sand dunes with no palm-trees planted on their edges.<sup>(1)</sup> There were occasions when her people showed enmity to him and prevented him talking to her or visiting her abode.<sup>(2)</sup> He could not, at such times, talk to her nor could he do anything but go round the tents without approaching hers.<sup>(3)</sup> He complains that he did not meet her except for a short time,<sup>(4)</sup> and describes her people's departure and how they brought back from the pasture their camels. While they were disputing whether to stay or to depart, he watched until their maids pulled out the curtains and the pegs.<sup>(5)</sup> When they set off, he, unable to stay behind, followed them until he had a glimpse of his beloved and gained a smile from her.<sup>(6)</sup> Halting to watch the departing howdahs, he saw them like trees lifted by the mirage,<sup>(7)</sup> and on other occasions they were like the tops of tamarisks<sup>(8)</sup> or palm-trees.<sup>(9)</sup> On his journey to Iṣfahān, he mourns that the Kurdish people, the lapse of two years, and black mountains had come between him and Mayya.<sup>(10)</sup>

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- (1) Ibid, lx, i, 5 and 6.  
(2) Ibid, xl, 10; lxxvii, 37.  
(3) Ibid, lxxiii, 5 and 6.  
(4) Ibid, lxxviii, 15.  
(5) Ibid, lxxxvii, 9-12.  
(6) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlv, 27-32.  
(7) Ibid, lvii, 3-11.  
(8) Ibid, lxx, 7.  
(9) Ibid, lxx, 7; liii, 6; lxix, 7 & 8.  
(10) Ibid, xli, 5.

His love, it seems, was sometimes platonic and he idealizes Mayya's physical<sup>(1)</sup> and moral<sup>(2)</sup> qualities:-

"As if in her mouth, though I did not taste its savour, was a glass of wine that has become full-flavoured."<sup>(3)</sup>

An account of one of Dhū'r-Rumma's visits is reported by Ibrāhīm b. Ishaq (and also by Muhammad b. Ziyād al-A'rābī) on the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ of Banū Fīzāra; Abū Ṣāliḥ said that Dhū'r-Rumma was mentioned in a gathering in which some Bedouins were present. 'Iṣma b. Mālik, an old man from Banū Ja'sh b. Fīzāra who was then a hundred and twenty years of age, told them that he spent a spring season together with Dhū'r-Rumma and his brothers and that Dhū'r-Rumma asked him one day to be provided with a she-camel which could not be traced by Banu Minqar, Mayya's clan, for they were the cleverest people in recognizing tracks. 'Iṣma provided him with Ju'dhur d. of Yamāniya al-Jadalī and set off with him on the same she-camel to visit Mayya. They arrived at Banū Minqar's camp and, luckily, the men were absent in the pastures for they found Mayya alone in her tent. Having seen them coming, the

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(1) Ibid, i, 11-21; x, 16-25; xx, 7-8; xxi, 5-12, xxx, 16-22; xxxv, 19-33; al-Bayān, i, 126; Muhammad al-Iṣfahānī, al-Zuhra, Beirut, 1932, 12; Usama b. Munqidh, Lubāb al-albab, Cairo, 1935, 420.

(2) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 23-25; lxix, 5, lxxxiii, 9.

(3) Ibid, lxxxiii, 11.



women of Banū Minqar recognised Dhū'r-Rumma and hurried to Mayya's tent. Mayya was a fair girl, soft and pleasing and fairly tall with long hair falling down. She was wearing a yellow scarf and green garment. They all sat down and talked for a while and then the women asked Dhū'r-Rumma to recite some of his poetry and he, in his turn, asked 'Iṣma to recite for them. 'Iṣma recited Dhū'r-Rumma's ode:

I looked out at Mayya's howdahs. They were like the tops of palm-trees or tamarisk swinging their branches.

'Iṣma was occasionally interrupted by a jesting woman making some comments on how strong his love was and how Mayya was killing him. On his saying "What a beautiful body was Mayya's if only her garment had been stripped off", she expressed the wish that Mayya's garb be taken off and was rebuked by the abashed Mayya. Then, the woman asked her friends to disperse and leave the two lovers alone and they did so. 'Iṣma said, "I got up and went to another tent where I could see her, (Mayya). I heard her saying to him: 'You lied by God!' And by God I did not know what he said to her nor did I know what she regarded him as lying about. He tarried a while then came to me with a bottle of oil and necklaces and said to me: 'This is perfume Mayya has given us and these are necklaces for Ju'dhur. No, By God, I will never suspend them round a camel's neck'. He, then, tied them up on the point of his sword and we

went off. He used to visit her subsequently, but when that spring was over and summer called people to disperse, he came to me and said, 'O 'Iṣma, Mayya has gone off and nothing is left but traces and all we have is to look at the encampments. So let us go to see her abodes and trace the remains. We went off to her abode and he halted there gazing. Then he said:

May you be safe, O abode of Mayya, from destruction,

And may rain continue to pour on your sandy plain.

He could not prevent his tears from flowing. I said: 'Cease!' and he, being aware of his state said, 'Despite my (sorry) aspect, I am enduring that which you see me in.' 'Iṣma said, 'I have never seen one who was more infatuated than he nor better in consolation and endurance.' Then we went back and departed and that was the last of him."<sup>(1)</sup>

His poetry records his sorrow when the news of her marriage to a certain 'Aṣim reached him. In a fit of anger and sorrow he lampooned the groom and mentioned Mundhir, probably her father as always seeking someone for Mayya's humiliation.<sup>(2)</sup> Then he said:

When I was informed that Mayya married to a base one, the

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(1) Majālis Tha'lab, i, 39-42; al-Aghānī, xvi, 129-130; Dīwān al-ma'ānī, i, 233-235; Masāri' al-'ushshāq, 351 & 353; Amālī of al-Qālī, iii, 163.

(2) The dīwān of Dhu'r-Rumma, lxxxvi, 15-16.

plain of Mi'ā and its rugged grounds all wept.

Much confusion has been wrought by rāwīs and story-tellers concerning Dhū'r-Rumma's love. The following is a good example:

Ibn Qutayba says: 'Mayya for a long time heard his poems but never saw him. She vowed to slay a victim if she could see him. And when she saw him, a dark, ill-favoured man, she being one of the most beautiful of women, cried out: 'Oh how disappointing! Oh how grievous is this!' Dhū'r-Rumma then remarked:

On Mayya's face is an aura of beauty,

But below her garments is foulness if it were  
only revealed.

Haven't you noticed that the taste of water may  
be fetid,

Though the colour of the water is still white and clean.

Oh! how wasted are the poems which sang of Mayya,

When I had no control, out of infatuation, on my heart.<sup>(2)</sup>

In al-Aghāni this account takes another form, though related on the authority of Ibn Qutayba himself. It tells how Mayya, not having seen Dhū'r-Rumma and simply having heard of his poems, had vowed to slay a victim, and how, on discovering him to be ill-favoured, she lamented. It then describes how Dhū'r-Rumma, faced with this situation uttered the first verse: "On Mayya's face etc..." Then it says: "She promptly stripped herself

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(1) Ibid, lxxxvi, 18.

(2) al-Shi'r 'l-shu'arā', i, 509; 'Uyūn al-akhbār, iv, 39.  
A short account of Dhu'r-Rumma, 295.

stripped herself of her clothes and asked 'Do you see foulness, May you have no mother?' To this he retorted 'Have you not noticed that the taste of water may be fetid, Though the colour of the water is still white and clean.' Then she said: 'as for what is below the clothes, that you have seen and known what foulness is there. And it only remains that I call you to come and taste what is below that, and by God you shall never taste it.' He then said 'O how wasted are the poems which sang of Mayya, when I had, out of infatuation, no control upon my heart.'<sup>(1)</sup> According to Shadharāt al-dhahab, "Dhū'r-Rumma did not see Mayya without her being veiled. Desiring to see her face, he said:

'May God requite the veils with harm

They do not prevent evil from the youths.

They hide the beautiful girls and because of them we  
cannot see them.

And they hide the ugly ones, so that they, for this  
reason, flourish.'

On hearing this, she took her veil off her face. He then recited: 'On Mayya's face etc...' and the account of al-Aghānī is then repeated at this point.<sup>(2)</sup>

In his Amālī, al-Zajjāj says that Dhū'r-Rumma's mother, who

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 120; A short account of Dhū'r-Rumma, 295-296.

(2) Shadharāt al-dhahab, i, 122-123.

was a slave of Mayya's family, composed the first two verses mentioned above (On Mayya's face ...), and attributed them to her son so that she could get her son away from Mayya. Mayya was angered by the verses and Dhū'r-Rumma reiterated his apology and swore that he had not composed them and said that it was impossible for him to compose such verses for he had worn himself out composing love-poetry about her.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is sufficient to note that Dhū'r-Rumma's mother, as mentioned earlier, was Zābia of Banū Asad and not a slave. In al-Aghānī the same account is also given except that the inventor of the verses was a slave-woman, called Kathīra, of Banū Minqar, Mayya's family. This version says that Dhū'r-Rumma learned afterwards of Kathira's forgery.<sup>(2)</sup> Al-Aghānī presents another account which says, "Dhū'r-Rumma halted with some other riders besides Mayya. They greeted her and she returned the greeting leaving out Dhū'r-Rumma only. He, enraged with anger, went off and then composed three verses, the third of them being the verse "On Mayya's face..<sup>(3)</sup> Bashīr Yamūt, in his Fuḥūl al-shu'ara', thinks that the account which tells of Kathira's forgery is the true one.<sup>(4)</sup> It is difficult, indeed, in the face of all this confusion to hazard a guess at the

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(1) Amālī of al-Zajjaj, 56-57.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 119.

(3) Ibid., xvi, 119.

(4) Bashīr Yamūt, Fuḥūl al-shu'arā', Beirut, 1934, 6.

truth or even to say that there was an actual estrangement behind them. The only sure guide is that which his verses provide.

Ibn Qutayba's version which states that Mayya did not see Dhū'r-Rumma for a long time, is invalidated by the fact that they were neighbours on several occasions and in many places as shown in his poetry, and that they used to meet each other and talk of their love. Consulting his dīwān about this estrangement, there are allusions, in two places only, to some sort of rupture:-

(1) Have you been changed after my departure or have people carried between us a slander whose warp and woof is not my own.

And she who is in love and listens to the gossip of this people will desert and be deserted.<sup>(1)</sup>

(ii) Why, have you deserted Mayya and why has Mayya deserted (you),

And Mayya is to blame for the long weeping, did she obey the slanderers concerning you until it is as if your talk with her was unlawful on your part.<sup>(2)</sup>

Finally, an account in which Dhū'r-Rumma is said to have broken with her describes how he visited her on a dark night,

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(1) The diwan of Dhu'r-Rumma, lxxxī, 16-17.

(2) Ibid, lxxii, 7-8.

wishing not to be recognized by her husband, 'Āṣim, so that he could enter her tent and talk to her. Unluckily, the husband recognized him. He provided him with some food but did not invite him in. Mayya knew who he was. In the middle of the night, Dhū'r-Rumma began singing his verses in the way the riders sing (Ḥudā' al-Rukbān):-

"O Mayya, will those days of ours at Dhū'l-Athl ever return? Or is there to be no recurrence of them?"<sup>(1)</sup>

The husband, burning in rage, ordered Mayya to get up and call out 'O bastard! What days had I with you at Dhū 'l-Athl?' At first she refused protesting apologetically that he was a guest and that the poet could say what he likes. But when the injured husband unsheathed his sword threatening to kill her if she failed to obey, she obeyed and did what he wanted. The lover soon mounted his she-camel and went off, so angry that he sought to direct his love towards someone else. He happened to pass by Falj and there he met with Kharqā'. In order to make Mayya angry, he mentioned Kharqā' instead of her in his poetry. "He composed <sup>two or</sup> ~~three~~ odes and it was not long before he died."<sup>(2)</sup>

Once again, Dhu'r-Rumma's poetry is not clear concerning this particular account. Yet some verses might point to a

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(1) A short account of Dhū'r-Rumma, 297.

(2) al-Aghani, xvi, 114-115 & 123; A short account Dhū'r-Rumma, 296-297; al-Shawamikh, 71

somewhat similar incident. They run thus:-

Mayya's husband wept because of weary camels which were  
made to kneel

At Mayya's tent during the last part of the night,

So, die of grief O husband of Mayya, for

There are hearts which have in them no reproach against  
Mayya, but are sincere in advice.

If they had left her to choose, she would have chosen.

For one like Mayya ought not to be with the like of you.<sup>(1)</sup>

There is, however, no mention of Kharqā' in this ode,  
nor is there anything against Mayya except a remark in the last  
verse which runs:-

"The heart refuses to do other than to remember Mayya and  
is tormented by a changeable one, who acts seriously and  
jestingly."<sup>(2)</sup>

Though probably compounded of several fragments consolidated into one, this ode is his best composition on Mayya. Could it be that the verses of his visit to Mayya's abode echo the account of the rupture referred to above? Or, were they the basis on which the account was woven?<sup>(3)</sup>

Mayya's marriage naturally restricted the lover's visits

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, x, 30-32.

(2) Ibid, x, 62.

(3) If the former is correct, then it is worth noting that Dhū'r-Rumma states in the same ode that he was nearing his thirtieth year. (The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, x, 5.)



to her, and subsequently carried her away from him. Distance and time separated them but could not extinguish his longing for her. When he failed in his attempt to forget her, he wishes that the death of her husband, 'Āsim, would come before his death and that her people would foregather again with his.<sup>(1)</sup> He continued singing of his love for Mayya till he passed the fortieth (the last) year of his age.

Even more complicated are the tales which deal with Dhū'r-Rumma's love for Kharqā'. The rāwīs differ as to whether Kharqā' was Mayya herself<sup>(2)</sup> or another woman.<sup>(3)</sup>

(i) It is said that Dhū'r-Rumma passed by Falj after being angered by Mayya's rebuke when she obeyed her husband's wish in insulting him. One of his companions wished to patch his sandal, and seeing Kharqā', a beautiful young girl with dark blue eyes from Banū 'Āmir, coming out with some girls towards another tent, Dhū'r-Rumma asked her to mend the man's sandal. She replied mockingly that she was kharqā' who could do nothing. Thus he called her Kharqā' and made her the subject of his love-poetry in order to anger Mayya. He composed two or three poems and it was not long

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, viii, 10-15.

(2) Khizānāt al-adāb, i, 106; Shadharat al-dhahab, i, 123;

( ) Fuḥūl al-shu'arā', 7; al-Shawamikh, 76, .

(3) al-Shi'r wa'l shu'arā', i, 510; al-Aghānī, xvi, 123 and 114-115; Shadharat al-dhahab, i, 123; Wafayat al-a'yān, i, 564.

before he died.<sup>(1)</sup>

(ii) Harūn al-Zayyāt reported that Kharqā' said that Dhū'r-Rumma passed with some riders while she was with other girls by a well. He asked the girls to unveil, and they did so except for her. He threatened her, "If you do not unveil I will expose you to shame", and she, realizing what he meant, set aside her veil. Fascinated by her beauty, he began improvising poetry until he foamed at the mouth. Kharqā' said that she never saw him again after that meeting.<sup>(2)</sup>

(iii) Ibn Qutayba says "Dhū'r-Rumma composed love poetry on Kharqā', one of Banū 'l-Bakkā' b. 'Amir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a, and the reason for this was that he came to a certain desert, and there he saw Kharqā' coming out of her tent. He looked at her and suddenly fell in love with her. He tore his water-skin and then coming close to her he said, 'I am on a journey and my water-skin has been torn, so mend it for me.' 'By God, I do not know how to do it, I am kharqā'', she answered. Then he made her the subject of his poetry and called her Kharqā'.<sup>(3)</sup>

(iv) Finally, it is said that Dhū'r-Rumma composed love poetry on Kharqā' of Banu Amir without being in love with her,

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 123; A short account of Dhu'r Rummah, 297

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 124.

(3) al-Shī'r wa 'l-shu'arā, 509-510; Khizānat al-adab, i, 106.

She was knowledgeable in diseases of the eye. So he asked her "for a cure for an affection of the eyes" and she "exacted for her fee 'ten verses in which you shall vaunt my charms so that men shall desire me'." (1)

Certain observations on these accounts are called for at this point:

(i) Dhū'r-Rumma speaks of Kharqā' in ten poems and not in two or three as the first account states or in ten lines as the last version has it.

(ii) The first account also states that he died shortly after falling in love with her. Yet his latest panegyrics for which an approximate date can be given indicate otherwise, since all those dedicated to Ibrāhīm of Banū Makhzūm, Hishām b. Abd al-Malik and Bilāl b. Abī Burda including that which states that forty years had elapsed of his age, all speak of his love for Mayya, whereas one of the earliest compositions which mentions that the door of Malik b. Misma', (killed 102 A.H.), was closed before him, mentions both Mayya and Kharqā', (this poem is probably compounded of different fragments put together into one subsequently). The claim that he loved her shortly before he died is untenable.

(iii) Ibn Qutayba's account is similar to that which has been reported earlier in this chapter concerning Mayya and Dhū'r-Rumma.

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(1) A short account of Dhū'r-Rumma, 297; al-Aghānī, xvi, 123.

(iv) As against the second account which states that Kharqā' saw Dhū'r-Rumma only once, there is in al-Aghānī an account quoted from Ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ's book saying that Muḥammad b. al-Hajjaj of Banū Tamīm told him that he met Kharqā' and she recited for him some verses she had composed in praise of Dhū'r-Rumma. She said that she had recited them to Dhū'r-Rumma himself and that he thanked her. In this account also she gave a full description of Dhū'r-Rumma's artistic merits and moral qualities and asserted that Ḥuṣayn b. 'Abada had nicknamed him Dhū'r-Rumma. This account implies an old and strong tie of friendship between the two lovers.

Once again, it is difficult to discover the exact truth of how he became acquainted with her, for it seems that the subject of his love has more than anything in his life been the mainfield of the story-tellers' fabrication. However, a close look at his diwan permits of two deductions - firstly, in some of his odes, he mentions Mayya as his beloved and longs for her or likens to a gazelle or halts at her ruined abode and then suddenly mentions Kharqā' and deals with her exactly as he customarily deals with Mayya.<sup>(1)</sup> Sometimes he begins with Kharqā' and turns afterwards to Mayya.<sup>(2)</sup> Hence the impression voiced by the authors of Shadharat al-Dhahab,

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(1) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xvii, 1-12; xxxix, 1-36

(2) Ibid, iv, 1-8; xxxviii, 1-4. In ode lxx, he mentions Kharqā', then declares that he was afflicted before his love for her by parting from Mayya. Having mentioned his beloved Kharqā' and his longing for her, he then reverts to Mayya.

al-Shawamikh and Fuḥūl al-shu'arā' and also mentioned in Khizanat al-adab, that Kharqā' is but another name for, or an allusion to Mayya.<sup>(1)</sup> The reason for this is that such poems are compounded of what were originally separate fragments composed on different occasions. The fragments put in one poem have nothing in common except that they have one metre and similar rhymes. Secondly, Mayya was another woman whom Dhu'r-Rumma loved, for he says that he made the mentioning of Mayya and Kharqā' the subject of singing when journeying by night,<sup>(2)</sup> and on Kharqā''s departure he says:-

"As if fate had not affected you by the separation of Mayya before. And as if you had not witnessed a departure which removed her,<sup>(3)</sup> (Mayya). He also states that he experienced at the ruined encampments of Kharqā' the same feeling that he had experienced before at Mayya's ruined abodes.<sup>(4)</sup>

It is clear from his poetry that he loved Mayya first and Kharqā' subsequently. Yet, as his latest ode shows, his love for the former survived until the last year of his life. It is, therefore, most likely that his love for the latter came at an interval, probably at the time of a temporary estrangement between himself and Mayya.

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- (1) Khizānat al-adab, i, 106; Shadharāt al-dhahab, i, 123.  
al-Shawamikh, 76; Fuḥūl al-shu'arā', 7.  
(2) The ḍiḥān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxvi, 21.  
(3) Ibid, lxx, 2.  
(4) Ibid, li, 7.

This Kharqā' is said to have been one of Banū al-Bakkā' b. 'Amir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a, as has already been stated. She lived at Falj on the route to Mecca, and used to sit awaiting the pilgrims who passed by her and talk to them.<sup>(1)</sup> She was "brighter than the burning torch"<sup>(2)</sup> and had a daughter called Fatima who was not as beautiful as her mother.<sup>(3)</sup> Kharqā' used to say "I am one of the rituals of pilgrimage."<sup>(4)</sup> al-Mufaḍḍal of Banū Ḍabba says "every time I made a pilgrimage I alighted at one of the Bedouins. He asked me one day whether I would like to see Kharqā', Dhū'r-Rumma's beloved, and I said to him that I considered it a favour were he to do so. So we went seeking her. We walked off the road a league distance and came to some tents. He then asked for a tent to be opened and it was opened and there came out a tall, beautiful woman with a big mouth. She greeted us and sat down and we talked for a while. Then she asked me "Have you ever fulfilled a pilgrimage?" I answered that I had done so more than once. She said 'what then prevented you from visiting me? Did you not hear the saying of your cousin, Dhū'r-Rumma: 'the completion of pilgrimage is that the riding

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(1) al-Aghani, xvi, 123-124.

(2) Ibid, xvi, 124 and xx, 141.

(3) Ibid, xvi, 123.

(4) al-Aghani, xvi, 123-124 and 125 and xx, 140-141; Wafayat, al-a'yān, i, 564; A short account of Dhu'r-Rumma, 297-298.

beasts are to halt at Kharqā's tent, she having set aside her veil?' "(1)

It is reported that she was a genealogist<sup>(2)</sup> and that she lived a long life.<sup>(3)</sup> It is also said that she, after passing ninety years of age, sent to al-Quḥayf of Banū 'Uqayl asking him to make her the subject of a love-poem so that her reputation would be enhanced and people would desire to marry her daughter. Al-Quḥayf responded and sent her the following verses:-

"Kharqā' has written to me her request in order that Kharqā' may put me amongst those whom she beguiles,  
And Kharqā' only increases in beauty  
Even if she lives as long as Noah lived."<sup>(4)</sup>

In addition to Mayya and Kharqā', we have reference in his diwan to his having loved Umm Sālīm,<sup>(5)</sup> Saydā<sup>(6)</sup> Bint Faḍḍād,<sup>(7)</sup> and 'Alāb.<sup>(8)</sup> Of these we have no additional details in the sources. From a poem in his dīwān, however, there seems to be no doubt that his love for Umm Sālīm preceded his love for

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(1) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 510; al-Aghānī, xvi, 124; Khizānat al-adab, i, 107-108.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 124, 125.

(3) al-Aghānī, xvi, 124.

(4) Ibid, 123-124.

(5) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, x, xlviii, lxxii, lxxix and lxxxiv.

(6) Ibid, xi.

(7) Ibid, ix.

(8) Ibid, ii.

Mayya:

I used to conceal the love of Mayya - and my  
mentioning of her is the residue of love - as  
if I no longer desire her  
As was my wont to do with Umm Sālim and  
her neighbours as if I did not care for her."<sup>(1)</sup>

An even vaguer reference raises the question of his  
marriage. This consists of simple riwāya that he had a son  
called 'Alī<sup>(2)</sup> and in one urjuza that he had a daughter.<sup>(3)</sup>  
whose name is given in one of Mas'ud's verses as Laylā.<sup>(4)</sup>  
There are no additional details and nothing is to be found on  
the matter in other sources. It is not surprising, perhaps,  
that in the mass of legend and conflicting anecdotes, the  
mundane facts of his real every-day life should have been  
overlooked.

#### His death:

As with the other details of Dhu'r-Rumma's biography, his  
death could not escape the meddling of the rawīs and the story-  
tellers, for there are conflicting accounts of the cause as  
well as the time and place of his death.

(i) He is said to have complained of a tumour for a long

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(1) Ibid, xxiii, 5-6.

(2) W. Ahlwardt, Sammlungen alter Arabischer dichter (Elacma'  
Ajjāt( Berlin (etc.) 1902-3, i, 102.

(3) The diwan of Dhu'r-Rumma, xxii, 73.

(4) al-Aghānī, xvi, iii, Simt al-la'ali', 585-6, H.



time, and to have said:-

"I became familiar to the dogs of the tribe  
till they recognized me,

And till the spider's web was stretched upon my saddle".

Then he goes on to explain to Mas'ūd, his brother, that he was convalescing and that their family was short of necessities so that they should visit Banū Marwān, (the Umayyads). Mas'ūd agreed and went to the camels to provide him with some milk for the journey. He appointed a certain place where he would meet him and where they would set off together. When Mas'ūd departed, Dhū'r-Rumma mounted his she-camel which had regained full strength through being unriden during the time of his sickness. She jumped up and his tumour burst. He, eventually caught up with his brother, so exhausted that he could not proceed nor could he return home. He said with resignation, "We have sought something while God desired otherwise. The tumour which I have has burst." He then sent for his family and they came to him. He was buried at Huzwa, the stretches of sand which he frequently mentions in his poetry.<sup>(1)</sup>

This account was probably based on the poem which contains the verse mentioned above. The poem speaks of some disease which confined him for a long time to his quarter thus preventing him from visiting Ibn Layla ('Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz).<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 127.

(2) The ḍiwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxiv, 34-37.

It is likely that this poem is responsible for fixing the year 101 A.H. according to some references.<sup>(1)</sup> as the date of his death, ('Umar ruled from 99 to 101 A.H.)<sup>(2)</sup> That Dhu'r-Rumma died long after the year 101 A.H. is obvious from his panegyrics to many noted men, among them Bilāl, who was appointed as police-chief of Basra 109 A.H., then qādī and Governor till 120.<sup>(3)</sup>

(ii) A curious account recorded in al-'Iqd al-Farīd says that Dhu'Rumma was present at the enthronement of Marwān b. Muhammad, the last of the Umayyad caliphs in the East, which took place in A.H. 127.<sup>(4)</sup> "On the authority of Abū 'Ubayda that Yūnus b. Ḥabīb said that when Marwān b. Muhammad was installed as Caliph, the poets came to him offering their congratulations. Turayḥ b. Ismā'īl of Banū Thaqīf, Walīd b. Yazīd's uncle, came forward and said 'Praise be to God who endowed Islam with you as Imām and set you to enforce the provisions of his religion and to protect and organize the followers of Muhammad, the chosen.' Then he recited a poem in which he says:

'You displease your enemies in being rightly guided and prosperous. Our Caliphate will be ninety years and months'.

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(1) Yūsuf b. Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm al-Zāhira, Leiden, 1851, i, 275; al-Yafi'ī, Mir'āt al-jīnān, Haiderabād, A.H. 1327, i, 212; Shadharāt al-dhahab, i, 122.

(2) al-Tabarī, Annales, 1361.

(3) Ibid, 1506 and 1658.

(4) al-Kāmil (Ibn al-Athir), v, 245.

'How many months?' Marwān asked. He answered, 'To complete the hundred, you will attain in the course of them the highest state and the happiest results of victory and prowess.' Marwān then ordered that he should be given a hundred thousand dirhams. Then Dhū'r-Rumma came forward bending from old age. He stopped to arrange his turban which was falling upon his face unfolded. When asked to advance, he replied apologetically that he could not deliver a speech eulogising the Commander of the faithful with his turban disarranged. Murwān answered: 'I did not expect that Mayya and Saydah (his she-camel) had left for us anything of your poetic prowess.' On this he assured him that he still had a well of pure poetic wealth and the best of panegyrics. Then he recited a poem in which he says: I said to her (his she-camel) 'Travel! Before you is a lord, descended from Marwān or from Muhammad.' Marwān then asked him what happened to Mayya and he replied that 'her plaits have been wrapped in a garb which has become worn out, and the dust has erased the beauties of the cheek.' Marwān turned to al-'abbās b. al-Walid and said 'Do you not see the rhymes pouring from him abundantly; he must be given, for everyone of my ancestors he mentioned in his praise, a thousand dirhams.' Dhū'r-Rumma said afterwards that had he known (of his reward) he would have traced him back as far as 'Abd Shams."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, al-Iqd al-farīd, Cairo, 1940-1952, i, 369-370.

If this account is accepted as true, it points clearly to the fact that Dhū'r-Rumma had survived as far as the reign of the last Caliph of the Umayyads. Yet there is no support for this in his dīwān. All his extant panegyrics indicate that they were composed either before or during, but certainly not after, Hishām who died 125 A.H. In fact, there is nothing to indicate that he eulogises any of his governors after the arrest of his patron, Bilāl in 120 A.H. (along with other personalities he praised), nor is there anything to indicate that he was still alive in the year of their arrest. Had he heard of the calamity which befell his patrons, he would probably have said something defending or lamenting for them, especially in the case of his friend Bilāl. Moreover, the panegyric which he is said to have composed on Marwān's enthronement is not to be found in any source (except for the one verse quoted within the framework of the story given in al-'Iqd al-farīd). The account also points out that Mayya died long before him, yet the mass of evidence already mentioned earlier<sup>(1)</sup> suggest the contrary. This account can safely be regarded as an invention of the rawīs or the Quṣṣās.

(iii) Most authorities agreed that he died in the reign of Hishām<sup>(2)</sup> and some singled out 117 A.H. as the date of his

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(1) See above p. 40-41.

(2) al-Aghāni, xvi, 126; al-Shawāmikh, 11, Encyclopaedia of Islam, 964.

death <sup>(1)</sup> They also agreed that he lived forty years only. <sup>(2)</sup>  
 "on being in the desert at the point of death he said 'I am  
 the son of half the age of decrepitude', that is, he was of  
 forty years of age. And he said:-

"O you who seize the soul from my body when I expire,  
 O forgiver of sin, remove me from Hell-fire. <sup>(3)</sup>

It seems that the critics who attacked him for having  
 confined his poetry to the description of the desert world and  
 to camels <sup>(4)</sup> were, perhaps, responsible for the following  
 account which illustrates his she-camel, Saydah, as causing  
 his death in the midst of the desert. "Harūn b. Muhammad b.  
 Abd al-Malik said that al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad of Banū Asad told  
 him that Jabr b. Ribāt said that Dhū'r Rumma recited for some  
 people some of his poetry in which he described the desert in  
 al-Tha'labiya. To this Ḥalbas of Banū Asad remarked 'You  
 describe the desert in such a way that your death can have  
 never occurred elsewhere.' Dhū'r-Rumma then went out to one of  
 the two passes of Banū Tamīm, on the route of the pilgrims from

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(1) Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 566; Mir'at al-jinan, i, 253, Shadharāt al-dhahab, i, 123; Encyclopaedia of Islam, 964; A short account of Dhur-Rumma, 293.

(2) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā', i, 507-508; al-Aghānī, xvi, 126; Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 566; Khizānat al-adāb, i, 107, Shadharāt al-dhahab, i, 123.

(3) al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā', i, 507-508; Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 566; Shadharāt al-dhahab, i, 123; In al-Aghānī, xvi, 126-127 and Shārh maqāmāt al-Harīrī, i, 27, the verse quoted above is preceded by the following verse: O Lord! My soul reached its limit in sin, and knows with sure knowledge that you have counted what I have done.

(4) See below p. 251-259.

Basra. On coming towards Basra he said.

" I am on my way through it and I am frightened

Because of what Halbas said on the day of Tha'labiya". It is said that Jabr. b. Ribat reported that this was the last verse he uttered. When he reached the heart of the desert he alighted from his she-camel but she ran away, although she had never behaved like this before. His food and water being still upon her. Whenever he approached her she ran away, so he died. It is said that he said on this occasion:-

' O deliver to the young men a message from me,  
Heap humiliation upon riding-animals, for they  
deserve humiliation.  
For Saydah left me in a misleading desert;  
My tongue is twisted of thirst.'

Hārūn said that Aḥmad b. Muḥammad of Banū Kilāb told him this account also and mentioned that his she-camel came to his family while they were by their wells. His brother mounted her and followed his trail until he found him dead, still with him the gifts of the Caliph and found also the foregoing two verses written on his bow.<sup>(1)</sup> This story may simply be another manifestation of al-quṣṣāṣ embellishment. There is also the possibility, however, that it has a more

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<sup>(1)</sup> al-Aghānī, xvi, 126.

sophisticated purpose and expresses the view of his antagonists on his Bedouin background and poetic themes. It presents in an ironic fashion the desert and his she-camel which had both been the main source of his poetical inspiration slyly depicting them as the causes of his death.

The following account, on the other hand, seems to have some truth in it. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥajjāj reported his father as saying that "I came to Hajar while Dhū'r-Rumma was there complaining of an ailment which caused his death. I did not wish to leave until I knew what would become of him. I used to visit and tend him daily or on alternate days. On a visit one day, seeing him seriously ill, I asked: 'O Ghaylān! How do you find yourself?' Dhū'r-Rumma answered: 'By God, today, O Abū al-Muthanna! It is now I find myself really dying and not on the morning when I said:-

"As if I were, on the morning of al-Zurq, O Mayya,  
a sick man giving up a soul whose time of departure  
is due.

By God, (now and not on that morning - of al-Zurq -

I am in the situation (described by the verse)."(1)

A somewhat similar account is related by al-Aṣma'ī on the authority of Abū al-Wajīh. Then Abū al-Wajīh said that his death was caused by small-pox of which he said:-

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 127.

Did the news not come to her that I have been  
made to wear after (departure),  
An embroidered garb whose maker was not  
unskilled.<sup>(1)</sup>

His Burial:

The story of his burial recorded in al-Aghānī illustrates his thoroughly Bedouin character. It may be inaccurate in its details, yet "it seems to bear the impress of truth".<sup>(2)</sup> "I copied down from 'Ubaydullah b. Muhammad al-Yazīdī's book" the author of al-Aghānī says, "that Abū 'Ubayda said, (Hārūn b. al-Zayyāt gave this account on the authority of Muhammad b. 'Alī b. al-Mughīra on the authority of his father on the authority of Abū 'Ubayda from al-Muntajī' b. Nabhān<sup>(3)</sup>) that, being in his last hours, Dhū'r-Rumma said: 'I am not one of those who are to be buried in the lower grounds and the depressions', and they (apparently his family) enquired, 'What

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(1) Ibid, xvi, 126-127. The reference probably to the lesion of small-pox upon his body.

(2) A short account of Dhur-Rummah, 300.

(3) al-Aghānī, xvi, 127. "Harūn said that he was told by Muḥammad b. Salīḥ of Banū 'Adī that Abū 'Amr of Banū Marwān mentioned that Dhū'r-Rumma's tomb was in the out skirts of 'Anāq from the centre of al-Dahnā, opposite to al-'Awā'is (Hills facing the sand stretches of al-Na'am). This place belonged to Banū Sa'd and al-Ribāb shared it with them." al-Aghānī, xvi, 127.



shall we do therefore? We are now in the sands of al-Dahnā'. 'What about the sand hills of Huzwā?' he enquired. But they retorted 'How can we dig (a grave) for you in the sand which is pouring down?' To this he said, 'What about wood and clay?' Then (after he died) they prayed for him by a well and carried his corpse and carried also wood and clay on the rams, for the rams are stronger in climbing the sand hills than camels. They dug his grave there and covered it with the wood and clay they brought with them and then let the corpse down into the grave. Knowing the location of his tomb, you, while still in the desert by three nights travel, would see it before entering al-Dahnā'." (1)

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 127.

C H A P T E R    I I

DHŪ'R-RUMMA'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOME OF THE  
ISSUES OF HIS TIME

Though somewhat blurred by the distance of time and the inventions of the quṣṣāṣ, Dhū'r-Rumma's character, nevertheless, appears as the epitome of the Bedouin. He had all the Bedouin's passionate love and nostalgia for the desert<sup>(1)</sup> and his description of Najd and Yamāma ranks amongst the finest examples of such poetry. His was also the simplicity of the Bedouin, touchingly illustrated in the account of his being described as an "intruder" by some of the inhabitants of Kufa when they saw him attending a wedding gathering without having been invited.<sup>(2)</sup> They, of course, misunderstood him, for he was behaving in an accepted Bedouin way; he simply wanted to participate in the joy of the community and was unaware of the formalities governing urban behaviour.

His desert upbringing and religious background coloured his outlook and behaviour and may well have induced him to refrain from participating actively in the shameless satire in which most of the poets of the time indulged. We have for

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(1) The diwan of Dhū-r'Rumma, xxix, 17-19, xxxv, 31-33, lxxxi, 30.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 112; Ahmad b. 'Alī al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, al-Taṭṭīl wa hikayāt al-muṭaffīlīn, Damascus, A.H. 1346.  
6.

examples, the two following verses:

I did not slander a married woman who was a believer, praise be to God - a slander which necessitates capital punishment.

And I did not praise in my poetry, in order to satisfy someone who is a base man, having gained wealth.<sup>(1)</sup>

Although touched slightly by the spirit of the period<sup>(2)</sup> and engaging in marginal satire accompanied by, sometimes, some praise for his tribe, he endeavoured to stand aloof and to devote himself mainly to his art, depicting in his poetry the different aspects of the desert life and its surroundings. Thus he avoided Jarīr when the latter tried to incur<sup>(3)</sup> his anger and refused to respond when he called him to satirical combat.<sup>(4)</sup>

On the political and religious issues of the time he also kept himself uncommitted and there is no clear sign of an inclination to any of the various factions. In his praise of Bilāl, he treats the Adhrūh Arbitration skilfully. He praises Bilāl's grandfather, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, and pays him a high tribute for serving Islam, putting an end to the division of the Muslims and extinguishing the flame of war.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lvii, 51-52.

(2) al-Hājirī, Fi ṭarīkh al-naqd, Alexandria, 1953, 95.

(3) al-Aghānī, vii, 61.

(4) Khizānat al-adab, i, 106-107.

(5) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxxv, 65-66; Mu'jam al-buldān, i, 174.

"Abu Musa was the arbiter upon whom Quraysh agreed for the cause of religion when they saw it tottering."<sup>(1)</sup> Yet he kept silent about the two parties (the 'Alīds and the Umayyads) whose conflict had led to the arbitration. He simply made out of the disgraceful role of Abū Mūsā, a grand achievement which served Islam and the Muslims, and did not give any judgement for or against either of the two parties. Abū Mūsā was, at least officially, the representative of 'Alī in the Arbitration and his grandson, Bilāl, whom Dhū'r-Rumma addresses, was an official of the Umayyads, Alī's enemies. Dhū'r-Rumma did what the situation of the hour required.

On the other hand, he was on friendly terms with al-Kumayt al-Asadī, the Shī'ite, and at-Tirimmāh, the Khārijite.<sup>(2)</sup> And although he belonged to a Muḍarite tribe, this fact did not affect his sincere attachment to his patron Bilāl, who belonged to a Yamanite tribe.

On the basis of his poetry it is possible to make certain deductions as to his attitudes on a number of doctrinal issues. It is clear that he was a fatalist in the Bedouin manner, for their actions are mostly fortuitous and usually have no set plan beforehand. The unexpected for which they have not planned, plays an important role in their

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(1) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lvii, 80.

(2) See al-Aghānī (d.k.), xii, 37-39.

lives and consequently leads them to a fatalistic concept of things. That is to say, man's actions are predestined by Fate and he cannot alter that which Fate has already set for him; Fate is always the winner:-

"He (the hunter) shot (at the asses), and missed and Fates are triumphant."<sup>(1)</sup>

"O you whose soul is being destroyed by the passion of love for something which Fate took away from his hands. How many a right course have you seen in a loathed situation, and how many an erring act covered over by something loved."<sup>(2)</sup>

"If he feared something (his) natural quality which knows what Fate has written for him, quietened him."<sup>(3)</sup>

Yet, during his visits to Baṣra, he came into contact with some of the intellectuals and thinkers of his day, whose discussions concerning predestination, man's free will, and other theological topics, were so extreme that they led to the emergence of the Mu'tazilites.<sup>(4)</sup> It is said that he, realizing the implication of predestination, came to hold the view of the Partisans of Justice, 'Ahl 'l-'Adl', who dissociated God from evil-doing. Of particular interest here is

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 64.

(2) Ibid, xxxii, 51-52.

(3) Ibid, xxxii, 78.

(4) See a Literary History of the Arabs, 222-224.

the discussion of his verse,

وعَيْنَانِ قَالَ اللَّهُ: 'كُونَا، فَكَانَا' فَعُولَانِ بِاللَّيْلِ مَا تَعْلُ الْخَيْرُ

"And two eyes, God said 'Be!' and they were, are affecting the mind as wine does."<sup>(1)</sup>

It is said that when someone remarked that 'فَعُولَانِ' must be 'فَعُولَيْنِ' as a predicate of 'الْكُونِ', which must be in the accusative, he refused to render it so in order to avoid the verse being:

"And two eyes, God said: 'Be!' and they were affecting the mind as wine does," thereby ascribing evil to God.<sup>(2)</sup>

Another version states that 'Amr b. 'Ubayd, a leading Mu'tazilite<sup>(3)</sup> and one of the Partisans of Justice,<sup>(4)</sup> heard Dhū'r-Rumma saying: "And two eyes, God said 'Be!' and they were affecting the mind as wine does", and drew his attention to its implication which in the view of 'Amr was a grave sin. He, realizing what 'Amr meant, remarked "Glory be to God, had I meant what you thought of, I would have gone astray (ignorant)"<sup>(5)</sup>

(ignorant)"<sup>(5)</sup>

Yet another interesting account illustrates him as holding the view of the Partisans of Justice:-

"Muhammad b. 'Imrān al-Marzubānī said that Ibn Durayd

(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxix, 23.

(2) Amālī (al-Murtadā) i, 20; al-Aghānī, xvi, 122.

(3) al-Shahrastānī, al-Milāl wa 'l-nihāl, Cairo, 1951. 69-70.

(4) See margin of Amālī (al-Murtadā), i, 20.

(5) Amālī (al-Murtadā), i, 20.

told him that Abū 'Uthman al-Ushnāndānī told him on the authority of al-Tawwazī that Abū 'Ubayda said, 'Ru'ba and Dhū'r-Rumma disputed before Bilāl b. Abī Burda. Ru'ba said: 'By God, no bird searched a place (for food) nor a carnivorous animal took a lurking place unless by God's Will and Fate.' To this Dhū'r-Rumma answered, 'By God, God did not predestine that the wolf should devour a milch-camel of a large and poverty-stricken family.' 'Ru'ba, then, enquired, 'Was it by his (the wolf's) ability that he ate it? This is another lie<sup>(1)</sup> of which the wolf is innocent.' Dhū'r-Rumma retorted that 'to lie about the wolf is better than to lie about the wolf's Lord'.<sup>(2)</sup>

... محمد بن عمران المرزباني قال: حدثنا ابن دريد قال حدثنا أبو عثمان الأشجستاني عن أبي التوزي عن أبي عبيدة قال: - اخذهم رؤبة وذو الرمة عند بلال بن أبي بردة فقال رؤبة: والله ما فخص طائر أخوصاً، ولا تفرص سبع قرحاً إلا بقضاء من الله وقدر. فقال له ذو الرمة: - والله ما قدر الله على الذئب أن يأكل حلوبة عيالاً ضرائك. فقال رؤبة: أفتقدرته أكلها؟ هذا كذب على الذئب بأن. فقال ذو الرمة: الكذب على الذئب خير من الكذب على رب الذئب.

It may be that this account is not to be taken literally,

though its simple and Bedouin logic and style suggest its feasibility. It may be that it was forged to illustrate the views of some particular faction, namely the Mu'tazilites or Shī'ites, yet it must indicate the tone of some discussions which took place in the principal mosque of Basra and salons

(1) The first lie, Ru'ba thinks, is that the creatures' actions are not predestined. (See margin of Amālī (al-Murtadā), i, 20.  
 (2) Amālī (al-Murtadā), i, 19-20.

such as Bilal's house with which Dhū'r-Rumma came into contact. In fact, these discussions were so wide ranging that they not only led to the emergence of the Qadarites and the Mu'tazilites, but some of them penetrated deeply into the desert so that even the rajaz, which was the stronghold of the most descriptive poetry of the desert per se, echoed them.<sup>(1)</sup>

His attitude towards wine drinking is not certain. He describes in a verse a weak, sleepy young gazelle like a drinker whose head is affected by wine.<sup>(2)</sup> In another verse, he likens himself, because of his love, to a man affected by Babylonian wine.<sup>(3)</sup> However, similes such as these are traditional and cannot be taken to signify any personal experience. Yet, he describes a girl's saliva as a water of clouds diluted with red wine in a wine drinkers' pitcher which, if tapped by the cups (of the drinkers) would pour into them the like of blood. This description may indicate actual attendance at a session of convivial drinking since it implies, in its second part, an experience of one of the more esoteric practices involved. On the other hand, it can also be traced to pre-Islamic poetry,<sup>(4)</sup> and it thus loses

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(1) Nallino, *Tārīkh al-ādāb*, al-'Arabiya, Cairo, 1954, 177.

(2) The *dīwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxv, 17.

(3) *Ibid*, lxx, 4.

(4) *Dīwān al-Nabigha al-Dhubyanī*, Beirut, n.d. 74; *Dīwān Zuhayr*, Cairo, 1905, 34-35; *Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab*, 52-53.



some of its significance. The following account has also an interesting bearing on this point:-

It is said that "Ishāq b. Suwayd of Banū 'Adī met Dhū'r-Rumma in a meeting place. They were served with food and then provided with wine. Dhū'r-Rumma drank, yet Abū Ishāq refused to do so. This refusal prompted Dhū'r-Rumma to comment:-

"As for wine, do not fear those who drink it.  
But guard your clothes against he who drinks water.  
The drinkers of water hide what is in their breasts  
(of evil-intentions), and when they obtain an  
opportunity they are as a killing ailment.  
They tuck their clothes up to the middle of their shanks;  
They are the real thieves yet they are called readers  
(Qurra')'.

To this Ishāq b. Suwayd retorted:-

'As for wine, it lowers the drinker's esteem. But you  
never see a drinker (of water) whose esteem is lowered  
by it.  
The lives of all men are dependent on water, but wine,  
if you become addicted to it, is a killing ailment.  
It is said: "This is a wine drinker", addicted to it,  
slow in benevolence and good deeds.  
He is surely heedless, when asked to take care, rushing  
towards what he intends to do.

And he is also heedless with regard to unlawful doings."<sup>(1)</sup> These two fragments remind one immediately of the juridical dispute over wine at the close of the Umayyad period, a dispute which continued on to Abbasid times.<sup>(2)</sup> The fragment attributed to Dhū'r-Rumma is of doubtful authenticity. Apart from the language, which is not that of Dhū'r-Rumma and recalls in its delicate irony some of the Abbāsid poets, the subject matter conflicts with the simple and sincere religious feeling which can be illustrated so clearly from his poetry. The polemic contained in these verses belongs, in fact, to the sophisticated hedonism of the cities and not to the desert which was the background and theme of Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry. The lines attributed to him can possibly be taken as the utterance of one of the licentious poets of Kufa in the Umayyad period<sup>(3)</sup> or those of Abbasid times such as Bashshār b. Burd, Wālība b. al-Ḥubāb and Abū Nuwās, whilst the reply which is put in the mouth of Ishāq b. Suwayd is possibly the work of a preacher other than Ishāq.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) al-Amālī (al-Qālī), ii, 45-46.

(2) al-'Iqd al-Farīd, Cairo, A.H. 1316, iii, 295, 297.

(3) Tarikh al-ādāb al-'Arabiya, 245-254.

(4) A similar poem with the same implication is to be found in al-'Iqd al-farīd (Cairo, iii, 292.)

C H A P T E R   I I I

DHŪ'R-RUMMA'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE BEDOUIN  
SCHOOL OF POETRY AND HIS DESERT WORLD.

When discussing Spenser's poem, the Faerie Queene, Bishop Hurd wrote in his letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762): "When an architect examines a Gothic structure by Grecian rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the Gothic architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined, it is seen to have merits, as well as the Grecian. The question is not which of the two is conducted in the simplest or truest taste; but whether there be not sense and design in both, when scrutinized by the laws on which each is projected.

The same observation holds of the two sorts of poetry. Judge of the Faerie Queene by the classic models, and you are shocked with its disorder: consider it with an eye to its Gothic original, and you find it regular. The unity and simplicity of the former are more complete; but the latter has that sort of unity and simplicity which results from its nature."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) See David Daiches, Critical approaches to literature, London, 1956, 262.

In dealing with Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry, the Gothic and Grecian parallels are obviously irrelevant. Nevertheless Bishop Hurd's argument raises an intrinsically important point - that is to say, if an artistic work is intended to be understood and appreciated fully it should be approached within the framework of its own tradition. If the Faerie Queene is not to be judged by classic models, it is equally true that Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry cannot be approached effectively by alien standards of taste: it must be looked at from a particular aesthetic angle, from the view-point of the Bedouin school of poetry to which it belongs.

The scope of this thesis does not permit of a full discussion of the traditions of this school; a general conspectus of some aspects of these traditions is necessary, however, since Dhū'r-Rumma was himself a product of the Bedouin school.

Customarily regarded as a series of disconnected themes,<sup>(1)</sup> the *qasīda* which is the complete unit in Bedouin poetry is, on the contrary, a unity in itself. It is, moreover, a true *speculum* and if poetry is "the image of man and nature", as Wordsworth claimed,<sup>(2)</sup> then Arabian poetry, in the guise of

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(1) See Butrus al-Bustānī, *Udabā 'l-'Arab fi'l-Jāhiliya wa sadr al-Islam*, fifth edition, n.d., 5.

(2) *Critical approaches to literature*, 90.

the *qasīda*, is truly the image of the Bedouin Arab and his desert surroundings. Hence comes the stamp of verisimilitude which characterizes it. Its form and treatment are, seemingly, rigid and conventionalized<sup>(1)</sup> to the point of artistic sterility. The poet begins by mentioning the deserted abodes and the relics and traces of habitation. He weeps and complains and addresses the ruined encampments and begs his companion to halt in order that he may have an opportunity to remember those who once lived there and departed afterwards, for the dwellers in tents are different from townsmen or villagers in respect of coming and going, since they move from one water-spring to another, seeking pasture and searching out the places where rain has fallen. Then to this he links the ghazal prelude and bewails the violence of his love, the anguish of separation from his beloved and excess of passion and longing.<sup>(2)</sup> Next, he sets off on his camel in order to forget the pangs of love. He gives a detailed description of his camel, its strength, good habits, and swiftness. To him, it is the symbol of safety in the treacherous desert which only camels can stand up to and endure the hardships of travel. The poet likens its swiftness to that of the wild bulls then develops a sub-theme

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(1) See A.J. Arberry, *The seven odes*, Britain, 1957, 15.

(2) *al-Shi'r wa 'l-shu'arā*, (Leiden 1904), 14-15.

describing the latter - a lone bull has strayed from its group and wandered through the sand dunes; torrential rain together with the approaching night compels it to take refuge beneath an arṭa tree. The poet describes the tree and the bull's cautious movements under it in a murky darkness. Then as dawn illuminates the horizon, it goes off, but is surprised by trained hounds charging savagely at it. Frightened by this sudden danger, it runs away, then realizing the shame of so doing, it halts, turns back and charges at them, thrusting with its sharp pointed horns at their flanks. The battle results in the bull's triumph, (except in the case of elegy in which the bull is the one to die.<sup>(1)</sup>) The wild bull goes on his way leaving behind him the killed and wounded hounds and a hunter lamenting his bad luck.<sup>(2)</sup> Or the poet likens his camel to a wild ass (sometimes the two similes, the bull and ass, are to be found in the same ode.<sup>(3)</sup>) He describes it, its travel along with its female or a group of she-asses on a long journey to water.<sup>(4)</sup> When they reach their

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- (1) See al-Ḍabbī, al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt, Cairo, 1952, 425-427; *Dīwān Abū Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī*, Hanover, 1926, 2-4.  
(2) See Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 53-55; *Dīwān al-Nabigha al-Dhubyānī*, 18-20; al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt, 135-140; *Dīwān Ūmru'l-Qays*, Cairo, 1958, 101-104; *Dīwān Labīd*, Wien, 1880, 66-69, and 112-116.  
(3) *Dīwān Labīd*, 112-123, *Die gedichte des Labīd*, Leiden, 1891, 18-21.  
(4) *Die gedichte des Labīd*, 18-21; *Dīwān Labīd* (Wien) 116-123; Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 66-68, *Dīwān Zuhayr*, 68-71.

destination where water glitters, tempting their thirst-burned bellies, an arrow is shot by a lurking hunter. The asses, so close to the water after a difficult journey, stampede before quenching their thirst. The arrow goes astray,<sup>(1)</sup> (except in elegies where the ass or its companions are destined to die),<sup>(2)</sup> and the hunter is disappointed.<sup>(3)</sup> (Some poets add the ostrich to the wild bull and the ass)<sup>(4)</sup>. Having completed these episodic themes, the poet usually arrives at what may be described as "the formal" part of the qasida, such as boasting, praise, satire, etc... The success of the formal part depended largely on the preceding episodes which may be regarded as the artistic part of the qasīda.

These are, generally speaking, the parts of the qasīda as established in Bedouin poetry.

The rigidity and reduplicative character of early Arabian poetry has been greatly over-stressed. It must be noted that the Bedouin poet did not adhere rigidly to these norms nor were there immutable patterns to which there was no alternative. They themselves presented to the creative artist great opportunities, since each was composed of pictures based upon the flow of the artist's associated thoughts.

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- (1) al-Mufaddaliyāt, 50, 51, 181-183, 187-189; The poetical remains of Muzāḥim al-'uqaili (Edited by F. Krenkow) Leiden, 1920, 17-19.  
 (2) al-Mufaddaliyāt, 422- ; Dīwān Abi Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī, 2-.  
 (3) al-Mufaddaliyāt, 187-189; The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i 64.  
 (4) Dīwān Labīd, 70-72; al-Mufaddaliyāt, 129-130; Dīwān Umru'l-Qays, 179; The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 107-131

It was possible for the creative poet to move within the conventions and, as Professor Anberry puts it, "Invent patterns of thought and sound"<sup>(1)</sup> that were distinctively his own. This does not imply that the Bedouin poet was free from the shackles of imitation. Bedouin conservatism and the unchangeable surroundings of his physical environment made his freedom limited and the lure of imitation unavoidable. A glance at the diwans of the famous Jahīlī poets shows clearly how, in spite of depicting their personal experiences, they could not escape the conformist pressure of their school's models and traditions, and how they appear in many instances to be fettered by set descriptions and clichés.<sup>(2)</sup> It is commonly maintained, also, that the *qasīda* has no unity within its parts.<sup>(3)</sup> Looked at externally, the divisions between its component parts and its separate sub-themes would seem to confirm this. But if it is carefully examined, the *qasīda* appears to have an internal unity based upon the stream of associated thoughts and images. Coming upon a ruined encampment of his beloved, the poet encounters not only the memory of his love, but in many instances his departing youth<sup>(4)</sup> as well. His youth, his love, and the spring-time which drew

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(1) The seven odes, 246.

(2) See especially the descriptions of the ruined encampments and of camels in the poetry of al-Nābigha, Tarafa, Zuhayr, 'Alqama, and Umru'l-Qays, (W. Ahlwardt, the *diwāns* of the six ancient Arabic poets, Paris, 1913, 5, 8, 18, 21, 23, 69, 75-76, 81, 94, 111-112, 151, 157.

(3) A literary history of the Arabs, 78.

(4) The *diwāns* of the six ancient Arabic poets, 69, 94, 159, 199-200.



him near to his beloved are all emotive themes and his poetical emotion would, therefore, be stirred up and the mood for composition set. This is, as Professor Gibb has pointed out,<sup>(1)</sup> the true function of the *nasīb*.

The encampment, apart from its deserted state, also invokes many pictures associated with it - his beloved, her physical appearance, conversation, the flavour of her mouth which, in its turn, invokes the picture of wine<sup>(2)</sup> diluted, for instance, with the water of a cloud which brought rain by night,<sup>(3)</sup> or makes him think of the sweetness of honey. Here the poet may seize upon the occasion to portray a hive hung on a high peak and describes the bees, their appearance and work. Then he gives the account of a honey-collector, how he goes up with his ropes and pegs etc...<sup>(4)</sup> What would seem to be separate and inconsequential is, in fact, a subtle exercise in emotive associations. The poet in order to forget his love, departs from the ruins of his beloved's encampment. In the desert he would be exposed to nature naked, vast and treacherous. Were it not for his she-camel he would be lost in that sea of sand. He describes her and in a series of pictures of the

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(1) See H.A.R. Gibb, Arab poet and Arabic philologist, Bulletin of S.O.A.S., vol XII, 1948, 575-8.

(2) The *diwāns* of the six ancient Arabic poets, 84.

(3) *al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt*, 44; *Jamharat ash'ar al-Arab*, 149.

(4) *Diwān Abi Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī*, 5-6; Joseph Hell, *Majmū'at ash'ar al-Hudhaliyān*, Leipzig, 1933, 7-10.

wilderness, its animals, plants, the sand-dunes and wells he is carried from theme to sub-theme by the same stream of associated thoughts and images.<sup>(1)</sup> The process of thematic development in the *qasīda* is, in fact, quite natural and although one may fail to see any apparent connection between the first picture and the last it is usually possible to pick out the slender skein which connects one picture to the next and which gives the *qasida* its artistic unity. But, if the Bedouin *qasida* is a unity in itself, it may well be asked: what then is its main character present throughout? It is clear that every episode in the *qasīda* has its leading character, yet all episodes are, in reality, projected on to the desert which forms the background. It is obvious that the main character shared by all episodes of the *qasīda* is the desert itself. It is here that one discovers the most powerful formative element of all in the creation of the *qasida* as a literary genre. Any departure from desert life calls inevitably for a corresponding departure from the *qasīda* since the two are bound up together. This explains Abū Nuwās's attack on the practice of addressing the ruined encampments in the opening of the *qasīda*<sup>(2)</sup> since the society in which he lived had moved away from the desert life towards a settled and civilized one. It may also, for example, explain

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(1) 'Umar al-Dasūqī, *al-Nābigha*, al-Dhubayānī, Cairo, 1951, 52.

(2) See *Dīwān Abī Nuwās*, Cairo, 1898, 164, 235, 240, 243-5 265-7, 271, 274, 289, 299, 305, 315-353.

why the muwashshah appeared amongst the Arabs in Spain.

Having been established as a tradition, the addressing of the encampments, developed in some cases into a direct ghazal prelude, serves as a preliminary overture to set the poetic mood for the composer as well as the Bedouin audience. It invokes and intensifies the feeling of grief,<sup>(1)</sup> and gives the poet an opportunity to elevate himself above the trifles of everyday life. Further, it provides the emotional basis on which to build his own more personal themes. In short, whereas many parts of the qasida are dedicated either to the tribal matters or are artistic exercises, the opening ghazal including the addressing of the encampments is, in addition, to its introductory function, a personal part through which the artist expresses his own emotion. (In some isolated cases, the ghazal prelude expresses allusively political attitudes such as, perhaps, the ghazal prelude of the Mu'allaqah of al-Hārith b. Ḥilliza as interpreted by al-Bahbīlī.<sup>(2)</sup> He thinks that Asmā' and Hind, the two women's names, mentioned in the Mu'allaqah, are symbolical. Asmā', he states is an imaginary person mentioned also in the Murfaqqash the Elder's love story about Banū Bakr who revolted against the kings of the Mundhirites as well as those who sided with them from Banū Bakr. And Hind was a nickname of the daughters of the

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(1) See Arab poet and Arabic philologist, S.O.A.S., Bulletin, 575-8.

(2) Al-Bahbīlī, Tarikh al-shi'r al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1950, 101-102.

Mundhirite kings. "That is why we find" he proceeds, "the name, Hind, in the poetry of almost every poet who directed himself towards the M'undhirites with praise or censure."<sup>(1)</sup> }  
 Another example is Ka'b b. Zuhayr's qasīda in which he praises the prophet. A careful study of its ghazal prelude shows significantly his political views in relation to the opponents of the prophet blurred by, and confused with his ghazal towards an imaginary departed loved one. The poet's disillusion about his love, the beloved's unreliable character and her unpromising behaviour<sup>(2)</sup> reflects allusively his political disillusion with the fruitless opposition of the pagan Arabs to the prophet.

The special mention of the wild bull and ass in early Arabic poetry raises the interesting question of whether there may not be a vestigial symbolism attached to them. The worship of the wild aurochs bull was a common feature of the ancient world. It has associations with fertility, cloud

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(1) Ibid, 101.

(2) See Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab, 148-149. A most interesting example of a personal allusion in the ghazal is the beautiful poem of Abū Firās. ... أراك عصي الدمع شئتك الصبر. He composed it while suffering from a terrible wound in a Byzantine prison in Constantinople. Sayf 'l-Dawla delayed his efforts to ensure his release and sent him, instead, some insulting letters. In this ghazal, Abū Firās blames his beloved who was, in fact, Sayf al-Dawla, and complains bitterly of his painful stay in the prison, as well as the maltreatment he received of Sayf al-Dawla. See le diwan d'Abu Firas al-Hamdani, Beirūt, 1944, ii 209-211.

and rain.(1) A hint of this link with rain and fertility may, perhaps, be found in the fact that in the Bedouin poetry almost every account that deals with the wild bull mentions also a rainy night<sup>(2)</sup> which compels him to take refuge under an arṭa tree.

The description of the wild ass as depicted in the Bedouin poetry is more easily explained in terms of symbolism. It illustrates the desert life marked by seasonal changes - spring time gives way to summer, the season of drought, the grass withers, water places dry up and heat is burning. Then the long journey towards a certain water-place has to be made. The behaviour of the wild ass towards the she-asses he accompanies expresses the jealousy and care of the Bedouin male towards his females. More significant is that we have in this account, and to some extent in the account of the wild bull, a parallel to the predominant theme of the Greek tragedies - that is, the struggle between Fate and man, except

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- (1) See Conrad, *The horn and the sword*, New York, 1957, Chaps. ii-v. The Arabs used to draw a good or bad omen from the passing of the gazelle, wild bull, wild ass, or some birds on their right or left hand. See Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma'ani al-kabir*, Haiderabad, 1949, 262-275.
- (2) See *dīwān al-Nābigha al-Duhubyanī*, 18; *Dīwān Labīd*, 66, 112; *Jamharat ash'ar al-Arab*, 53, 170; *Shi'r al-Huṭay'a*, Beirut, 1951, 155-156; *Sammlungen alter Arabischer dichter*, ii, 28-31, 69-72; *The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma*, i 72-84, xxxviii, 18-28, xxxix, 73-85.

that in the Bedouin poetry the stage is the desert, the characters are animals; and Fate is represented here by a hunter (or his dogs). It is almost as if the wild bull, (and the wild ass later), is the counterpart of the heroes in Greek tragedy. The Bedouin poets developed the convention of destroying the wild bull (or the wild ass), if the ode was devoted to elegy or exhortation.<sup>(1)</sup> In Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry, however, Fate is not represented by the dogs or the hunter himself; Fate is controlling both sides and the wild bull (or ass) emerges safe because Fate does not intend its destruction and Fate has the last word.

However, the development of this theme, in Arabic poetry, is not without significance. In the pre-Islamic poetry the dogs in the story of the wild bull can be taken to represent implicitly the idea of Fate. The story of the wild ass in most of the Jāhilī poets illustrates only the hardships of the desert life and the long journey towards water. The ass and his female (or females) are allowed unhindered to quench their thirst,<sup>(2)</sup> except in some isolated cases where there is a disturbing thought, but no more, of a hidden hunter<sup>(3)</sup> near water. The poetry of most of the Mukhadramūn, on the other

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(1) See dīwān Abī Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī, 1 - ; al-Hayawān, ii 20, and al-Mā'ānī al-kabīr, i, 224.

(2) Dīwān Labīd, 1-4, 96-102, 116-123; Jamharat ash'ar 'al-'Arab, 66-68, 57-58.

(3) Dīwān Umru'l-Qays, 79-81. 180-184.

hand, presents the hunter waiting for the asses while the latter are about to drink,<sup>(1)</sup> thereby expressing the idea of Fate implicitly. In the poetry of the Hudhayliyūn, on the other hand, Fate is included expressedly but called Time.<sup>(2)</sup> Time in the Hudhayliyūn' is an exterminating power from which no-one can escape.<sup>(3)</sup> It is interesting to note that Time is given in the raja of Ru'ba b. al-Ajjāj as connected with Fate.<sup>(4)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma, who is considered as the last of the Bedouin school, mentions Fate (الْقَدَرُ), by name.<sup>(5)</sup> However, Bedouin optimism, in the accounts of both the wild bull and wild ass prevails. These animals are not always doomed heroes; the ending is not tragic except in elegy and in the sad poetry of the Hudhaliyūn where there is no escape for them from Fate (Time).

The mere adhesion to the conventions of a particular school of poetry does not necessarily conduce to the composing of poetry of real value; rather does it produce stereo-typed compositions and imitative copies. Those composers of the

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(1) al-Mufaddaliyāt, 50-51, 181-183, 187-189.

(2) Dīwān Abī Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, 2-4, 6-7; al-Mufaddaliyāt, 422, 427; Majmu'at ash'ar al-Hudhaliyīn, i, 49-51, 71-72, 107-110.

(3) Dīwān Abī Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, 1- ; Majmū'at ash'ār al-Hudhaliyīn, i, 49-51, 52, 71-72; ii, 10, 15-18, 36-37.

(4) Sammlungen alter Arabischer dichter, (Dīwān Ru'ba), iii, 13, ( دهر وأقدار عين عينا والأهر يدي بعد خطب خطبا )

(5) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 64.

Arabic Dark Ages who composed verses upon ancient models cannot be considered as poets for they did not picture their own life or society nor did they express their own experience. They were, in fact, imitative versifiers.<sup>(1)</sup> On the other hand, poetry is an art, and art means creation. Poetry, moreover, has its rules and precepts which, with other characteristics, make it different from prose. A work of real creation, and creation here means originality as well as skill, within the bounds of set conventions and following certain models, say, of a particular school, can still produce real poetry of that school. Dhu'r-Rumma composed his odes within the patterns of the Bedouin school, yet he was not an intruder who trespassed on another's land. This Bedouin school was his own; he belonged to it by virtue of birth, upbringing and culture, and his place among the Bedouin poets, thus, is a natural and inevitable one. He was born in Yamāma, in the heart of the wilderness, amongst his Bedouin tribe; his environment was probably Bedouin, his natural environment was that of the wild desert. The scenery, animals, the life of the desert in which he was brought up, were those which had been responsible for the creation of the Bedouin school of poetry. The impact of the more civilized provinces, apart from an unmistakable Islamic influence, could not

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(1) See Haidar al-Hillī, *al-Iqd al-Mufaṣṣal*, Baghdad, A.H.1331, i, 113-125, 277-288; ii, 98-99, 106-146.



penetrate very far. There, everything was well-nigh as it had been before and the desert of Dhū'r-Rumma is the desert of the pre-Islamic poets. Yamāma was one of the principal centres of the Bedouin poetry.<sup>(1)</sup> Their ideals and traditions of this school lived on uninterrupted, and were practised by poets throughout the Umayyad period.<sup>(2)</sup> Al-Huṭay'a,<sup>(3)</sup> Mutamim<sup>m</sup> b. Nuwayra,<sup>(4)</sup> Rabī'a b. Maqrūm,<sup>(5)</sup> 'Abāda b. al-Ṭabīb,<sup>(6)</sup> Suhaym, the slave of Banū 'l-Ḥaṣḥās<sup>(7)</sup> who lived part of their lives in the Jāhiliya continued to compose Bedouin poetry long after the advent of Islam. So strong were the Bedouin traditions that 'Abada b. al-Ṭabīb, who fought in the battles of Iraq against the Persians, 13 A.H., in one of his odes mentions the fighting in passing, yet in the same poem he describes in full detail his she-camel and her swiftness in the desert, and likens her to a wild bull, then tells the story of that bull, the hunter, his family and his dogs. Instead of depicting the heroic fight in Irwq, he depicts vividly the battle between the bull and the dogs and how the former left

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(1) See C. Lyall, *Ancient Arabian poetry as a source of historical influence*, J.R.A.S., 1914, i, 63-66.

(2) See C. Lyall, *The pictorial aspects of ancient Arabian poetry*, J.R.A.S., 1912, ii, 143.

(3) See *A literary history of the Arabs*, 127, 131; 'Aṣr al-Qu'ān, 72.

(4) *A Literary history of the Arabs*, 127.

(5) See *al-Mufaḍḍaliyat*, 178.

(6) See *al-Mufaḍḍaliyat*, 135.

(7) *Dīwān Suhaym*, Cairo, 1950, 1 and 15.

the dogs scattered on the sands, some killed and the rest wounded. (1)

The Bedouin traditions continued unbroken in the poetry of al-Shammakh (2) and al-Rā'ī (3) and to some extent in the poetry of al-Farazdaq. (4) In fact, the themes of this school were so vigourously alive in the desert that they became a dominant feature in the rajaz of the famous rujjāz such as al-'ajjāj (5) and his son, Ru'ba. (6) It is abundantly clear that Dhu'r-Rumma's poetry, far from being a revival of a dead school, is an episode in an organic and continuing process of growth. It was, indeed, the last brilliant episode in that long and rich process and the sacred fire of the desert poetry flared up once more in his odes before being extinguished forever.

Just as his environment was the desert and his upbringing Bedouin, so also was his literary education that of the Bedouin school of poetry. The fact that Yamāma was a centre in which the traditions of that poetry lived uninterrupted has already been stressed. Dhu'r-Rumma had, as can be shown from a careful study of his diwan, a thorough knowledge

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(1) al-Mufaddaliyāt, 135-145.

(2) Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab, 154 & 158.

(3) al-Ma'ānī al-kabir, ii, 742-3.

(4) Dīwān al-Farazdaq, Paris, 1870, 9-11 & 14.

(5) Majmū'at ash'ār al-'Arab, ii, 7, 28-29, 52 & 71.

(6) Ibid (Dīwān Ru'ba), iii, 7-8, 89-91 & 94-95.

of these traditions. Moreover, he, as a *rāwīya*, must have acquainted himself with the then extant poetry of the *Jāhiliya* and committed to memory, with the selective taste of a poet, its masterpieces. It must be noted that the *rāwīs* of that time were the best sources of Arabian poetry.<sup>(1)</sup> They were, in fact, the teachers of the earlier scholars as well as being their authorities.<sup>(2)</sup>

The poet and the *rāwīya* were combined together in *Dhū'r-Rumma*. As a result of this, one encounters in his *diwān* a great poet expressing himself eloquently, yet unable to escape the influence of the past which adds more vivid shades and colours to his poetical utterances without blurring his personality though sometimes marring his originality.

The early scholars not only trusted his pure language and appreciated his poetry, but also found in him an authority who could supply them with some of their material on pre-Islamic poetry.<sup>(3)</sup> *Yūnus b. Ḥabīb*, for instance, related on the authority of *Dhū'r-Rumma* the *Ḥā'iya* (a poem rhymed with *Ḥ*) of *ʿAbīd b. al-Abras* which describes rain. That is why *Yūnus* attributed it to *ʿAbīd* although *al-Muffaḍḍal* ascribed it to *Aus b. Ḥajar*.<sup>(4)</sup> Another example is the poem of *Umru'l-Qays* which begins with:

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(1) See a literary history of the Arabs, 133.

(2) *Masādir al-shi'r al-Jāhilī*, 507 & 521.

(3) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 965.

(4) *Tabaqāt al-shu'ara*, 76-77; *Masādir al-shi'r al-Jāhilī* 226.

# ديمة هطلاء فيرا وطف طبّق الأرض تحرى وتدر

This poem is related on the authority of al-Aṣma 'i, who related it on the authority of Abū 'Amr b. al-Alā' who took it from Dhu'r-Rumma.<sup>(1)</sup> Yūnus, the grammarian, reports that Dhu'r-Rumma "came to us returning from a journey. As he was the best in describing rain, we mentioned to him the descriptions of rain by 'Abid, Aus, and the Slave of Banū al-Ḥashās but he chose Umru'l Qays's lines beginning:

ديمة هطلاء فيرا وطف... (2)

Dhu'r-Rumma's ideal poet was Labid.<sup>(3)</sup> A study of Dhū'r-Rumma's dīwān in general and his Bā'iya in particular, reveals that Labid had exerted a great influence upon him and that Dhū'r-Rumma possessed a thorough knowledge of Labid's poetry. Besides Labid, Dhū'Rumma was well-acquainted with the great poets of the Jāhiliya. He admired the vivid similes of Umru'l-Qays especially those of rain.<sup>(4)</sup> To Dhū'r-Rumma the traditions of the Bedouin poetry were alive, illustrated at every turn by his environment. The howdahs swimming in a mirage, night and dawn in the desert, elegant gazelles emerging from the sand dunes - these and other aspects of the desert life and scenery which he saw in real life, had been depicted

(1) Dīwān Umru'l-Qays, 144-146; Maṣadīr al-shi'r al-Jāhilī, 507 & 521.

(2) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 58.

(3) al-Muzhir, ii, 481 & 482.

(4) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'ara', i, 58.

realistically in the poetry he memorized. Since he composed poetry after set patterns which formed the framework within which he expressed himself, it is natural, therefore, that his poetry bears the influence of this literary heritage. Yet to compose poetry on themes which he did not experience, but merely because they were dealt with by his predecessors was not his way. The description of horses, their habits and swiftness, was a favourite theme to some of the Jahiliya poets.<sup>(1)</sup> Dhū-r Rumma, who probably never owned a horse, did not describe these animals, except in passing, simply because he did not deal with them in his actual life.,<sup>(2)</sup> - thus showing that he did not run slavishly in the wake of the poets of the past. He, in fact, moved freely within the framework imposed by his school conveying his own experience and, sometimes as deemed necessary, breaking with traditional concepts and imagery<sup>(3)</sup> so as to portray a unique picture which he alone encountered. This does not imply that his poetry is purely original; pure originality cannot be attained by followers of a particular school, for to

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(1) See Six ancient Arabic poets, 44, 48, 63, 86, 92-93, 104; al-Mufaḍḍaliyat, 193; Diwān Umru'l-Qays, 19-21, 46-55 & 75-76; Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab, 44-45.

(2) Shi'r al-Tabīa, 150. However, Dhū'r-Rumma likens some hill-peaks in mirage to horses running or limping behind. See the diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxiv, 27, xxxix, 38-39, lxviii, 63.

(3) See al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 517-518; al-Anbārī, kitāb al-Addād, Leiden, 1881, 53; al-'Amīdī, al-Muwazana, Constantinople, A.H. 1287, 18; al-'Askarī, al-Ṣinā'atayn, Cairo, 1952, 89; al-Muwashshah, 175-176, Amālī (al-Murtaḍa), i, 278-279; Simṭ al-la'ālī, ii, 898.

work within set patterns is to mar originality. Despite the fact that Dhū'r-Rumma aspired to a new and original work,<sup>(1)</sup> he could not free himself from the impact of his literary education. Some poetical experiences of his predecessors were so identical with his own that he could not escape repeating them in his composition. In fact, the shared tools of the poets of this school, even in the Jahiliya, were both linguistic and stylistic. Not only did the poets inherit their linguistic symbols which we call words, but also stylistic symbols in the form of complete similes, metaphors and even whole phrases.<sup>(2)</sup> The task of the gifted poet was, therefore, to convey his own experiences and feelings within, and by means of, this vast linguistic and stylistic heritage.

Dhū'r-Rumma, viewed in this light, is a successful poet who portrays vividly his own world within the scope of his school yet with his own way of handling the shared tools of language and imagery. Looking at his poetry as isolated from the traditions of its school is not the way to understand it. It is also misleading to consider some of his similes and meanings simply as borrowed from his predecessors without noticing their function in producing new sounds, thoughts, shades, and colours, which he endeavoured to produce by his own subjective poetical treatment of them. A close comparison

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(1) See The *dīwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma, lvii, 48-50.

(2) See *Fī Tarīkh al-naqd*, 26-28.

of some of the themes of the Bedouin poetry and their counterparts in Dhu'r-Rumma's poetry may serve to illuminate this and to underline his particular significance amongst the poets of his school.

The picture of the ruined encampments in the Bedouin poetry is simple and realistic. What would a camp-site show after its inhabitants had left for another destination except pegs, traces of ashes and blackened (cooking) stones?<sup>(1)</sup> Then come the winds, rain and the wild life of the desert, distorting or colouring<sup>(2)</sup> the place that once was the abode of the poet's beloved. Within this general sketch the poet draws his own picture in which he presents glimpses of what he sees at a certain moment and imparts his more personalised mood and impression. Labīd describes the encampments as desolate and wild, the wild cows suckling their young, the traces of habitation after being cleared by flood, look like books whose effaced characters are renewed by the reeds of a writer, or like tattoo.<sup>(3)</sup> Zuhayr describes the ruined dwelling-place in al-Raḡmatayn which looks like the decorations of tattoo on the sinews of a wrist. There the wild cows and gazelles move towards each other's places and their young

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(1) *Dīwān* Zuhayr, 90; *Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab*, 52; *Dīwān al-Nabigha al-Dhubyanī*, 18 & 47.

(2) *Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab*, 47 & 63-65; *Dīwān* Zuhayr, 90; *Dīwān* Labīd, 108.

(3) *Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab*, 63-65.

spring up from the places where they lie. He stands there after twenty years have elapsed, unable to recognise it, he sees nothing of the past but cooking stones blackened in a place where the cauldron used to be slung and a trench like the base of a cistern still not demolished <sup>(1)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma, too, describes the ruined abodes of his beloved in a way which falls in with the Bedouin models. Yet although his pictures bear the influence of his predecessors, he succeeds in transmitting through them his own mood vividly and realistically. Dhū'r-Rumma, it must be noted, was a Bedouin lover. This being so, the coming upon his beloved's ruined encampments would fall well within the compass of his actual experience. It has been mentioned earlier that Iṣma recalled that Dhū'r-Rumma came to him after the departure of Mayya's family and suggested that they would visit the traces of Mayya's encampment. Iṣma agreed and they went there. So passionately overcome by the occasion was Dhū'r-Rumma that he recited his ode:

ألا يا أسلمي يا دارمي على البلى ولا زال مغللاً بجرائمك القطر

O abode of Mayya ! May you be safe from ruin, and may rain continue to fall upon your sandy plain. <sup>(2)</sup>

This incident reveals the actual circumstances in which

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(1) Ibid, 47.

(2) See above p. 47.



Dhū'r-Rumma composed the aforesaid ode or at least its opening. In this case the emotions of the poet are genuine and the addressing of the desolate abode a real experience and not a meaningless exercise in conformity to a set of poetic conventions.

Dhū'r-Rumma was fully aware of the effect of his beloved's encampment in stirring up the emotions<sup>(1)</sup> and thus stimulating poetry, as he was aware of the function of the ghazal prelude in general in setting the mood for a poetical achievement. He was once asked what he would do if his poetical impulse failed to help him and he answered by asking how it could fail, since he had its key in his own hand. "What is it?" he was asked. To this he replied that it was just to remember his beloved.<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma begins his composition with the usual prelude of ghazal by addressing, remembering, greeting, or praying for the safety of the deserted encampments of his beloved. (There are a few exceptions in which his ghazal contains no mention of these encampments;<sup>(3)</sup> two poems which have probably lost their opening sections, have no ghazal at all.<sup>(4)</sup>)

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(1) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xviii, 2-3; xxi, 4; xxv, 2-4 xxx, 6-10; xxxv, 12; xxxix, 7-8; xlvi, 1; lii, 3-4; lxxxiii, 6-8, lxxxvi, 1.

(2) al-'Umda, i, 138.

(3) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, ix, xlix, lvi, lvii, and lxx.

(4) Ibid, vi & liii. (Some fragments in his diwan are not considered here).

The following two passages are examples of the vividness and realism of Dhū'r-Rumma's description:

i - "O you two! Greet at al-Zurq an encampment wherein

Mayya had lived,

Albeit it caused my ailment to come back.

It appears on the elevated sandy plain like a precious decoration upon the back of a velvet garment.

It is beside a camels' refuge of which the winds have left nothing but the broken frame.

The year-old dung (turned white) at the camel's resting place looks like pieces of cowries shell or the shells of pigeons' eggs.

Abandoned there since the visiting pigeons had given up hope (that good ~~use~~ would come of them).

They (the egg shells) were scorched by the hot wind of summer - the chick had flown away although at first too weak to stand.

It (Mayya's encampment) had become desolate; the wind soughs through the gaps in the dried rimth (of the wind-breaks) by day and by night.

And the wild beasts and the genii there each evening have two alternating voices - humming and groaning."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Ibid, lxxviii, 1-7.

ii - "The traces of Mayya at al-Zurq have been effaced, and its encampments obliterated,

As has everything around it - both on its rugged and sandy plains.

Now it has become a grazing ground for the wild cows only - both those which have come from another land and those which have been left behind.

They (the wild cows) appear as winter stars appear through the swiftly-moving clouds, dark with rain.

Nothing is left except that we see the ashes from which the (cooking) stones have turned the floods aside, as if they were ash-coloured pigeons over their chicks."<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus, Dhū'r-Rumma's description of the encampment is associated with a strongly felt and minutely observed love of nature. This feeling for nature is characteristic of the poets of the Jāhiliya; the difference between them and Dhū'r-Rumma lies in the detail and subtlety of his personal observation. Labīd, for example, describes the encampments after being deserted by their people inhabited by wild life. Nothing is to be heard but the voice of a male ostrich and the cry of the genii, nothing to be seen but a herd of ostriches like young camels whose males are dun - coloured. Their

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(1) Ibid, lxii, 1-5.

inhabitants have gone away and the wild cows intermittently take refuge from the summer heat in the shade.<sup>(1)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma describes the encampment, effaced except for pegs, the sides of a place of prayer, and the blackened stones of a cauldron. The summer wind blows a soft dust until it is as if it pours the dust through the holes of a sieve; it has dressed the encampment in the dust of al-Burqatayn and come to it with a long tail of dust from the desert of al-Dahnā.

The places where water runs continuously have called Mayya to move, and when she moved away, the encampment became inhabited by herds of wild cows.

You see the wild bull returning from its forenoon grazing, walking like a Persian king dressed in trousers of silk. Returning to each covert that has a similar covert beside it to which the bull repairs for shelter when the day becomes too hot.

You find the droppings of the wild cows in and about it, new and old, like dried cloves.

The bull lives in the scented and shaded covert  
And when the heat becomes intense he protects himself from it under the branches of a sturdy, leafy tree.

(At its base) he digs for each buried root penetrating deep into the moist earth.

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(1) Diwān Labīd, 108.

He seeks for them with his cloven hooves, removing the moist caked earth until the roots become visible like the thongs of a sword scabbard.

And you see each wild cow with decorated legs (i.e. speckled), either with her calf left in the sand or her young with her.

She returns to it as the white she-camels return to their young. The wild cows approach from all sides, And each black-eyed gazelle which, because of its being isolated, is not afraid of the approach of people, turning toward the sound of voices a neck that reflects the forenoon light like the blade of a sword.<sup>(1)</sup>

The differences between Dhū'r-Rumma and Labīd are no less significant than the similarities and point to the degree of sophistication of this genre of poetry which is represented in Dhū'r-Rumma's verses. Whilst working within the framework of the traditions of the Bedouin school when describing the ruined encampments, Dhū'r-Rumma has, at the same time, introduced extensions of the usual images and a detail and subtlety of observation that are his own.

Dhū'r-Rumma, as is obvious from his diwan, had a great attachment to camels. He describes in a conventional and sometimes, it seems to us, a boring way their noble origin,<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxvii, 5-19.

(2) Ibid, vii, 32; xx, 12 & 15; xxiii, 13; xxiv, 15; xxxix, 42; lxxxvii, 42-43.

bodily strength,<sup>(1)</sup> and swiftness,<sup>(2)</sup> and likens them to wild asses,<sup>(3)</sup> wild bulls,<sup>(4)</sup> and ostriches,<sup>(5)</sup>. Their eyes, when hollowed, look like bottles half-filled with oil,<sup>(6)</sup> like oil in pots of bronze<sup>(7)</sup> or like holes in stones<sup>(8)</sup> whose bottoms usually contain some water. Even the urine of camels was to him of a beautiful colour and a fragrant scent.<sup>(9)</sup> However, amongst the conventional descriptions of camels one comes across lively passages which bear the stamp of his individual genius:-

"And how many a dangerous desert has my she-camel crossed,  
and how often has the blade of Fate slipped off her.

And how many a time has she reached, after a night of  
travel, a resting place in which the voice of the genii  
was the night-talk.

When the wolf prowls around therein, he finds nothing but  
the like of the marks left by the camel saddle,

And the marks left by the she-camel's kneeling like the  
resting places of five sand-grouses, close together;

They alighted in the middle of the desert, Hā'ir, first two.

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(1) Ibid, xxxii, 33; xxxviii, 17; lii, 22; lxxv, 51, 57.

(2) Ibid, viii, 26; xxx, 27; xxxviii, 17-18; lxxxiii, 5.

(3) Ibid, i, 40; v, 37; ix, 13; x, 54; xvii, 19; xl, 36; xlviii, 23; li, 53; lxvi, 31; lxviii, 32; lxx, 36, lxxv, 60; lxxviii, 38.

(4) Ibid, i, 67; xxxviii, 18; xxxix, 73.

(5) Ibid, i, 107; vii, 48; xxxii, 46.

(6) Ibid, xxxviii, 15-16.

(7) Ibid, xxxv, 47; li, 50.

(8) Ibid, vi, 2; xi, 59; lxx, 35.

(9) Ibid, lxvii, 58.

then two, then a lone one,

And between them is the mark left by the bridle like  
the track of a snake seeking revenge in the latter part  
of the night,<sup>(1)</sup>

And (nearby) the trace of the sleeping body of a gallant  
youth (himself),

For eight complete months always in the saddle, the  
traveller's prayer was permissible to him,

Except for lightly touching the earth with a stretched  
leg whose fellow remains in the stirrup of a lean she-camel,  
And except for leaving in a place of prostration the trace  
of a noble nose and a forehead of a man is in haste but  
not out of impiety,

Closing his eyes for a brief sleep, in spite of the fears  
of his cautious heart.

(His sleep is) so brief that it only occupies the time  
taken to say "If God wills". Then a firm resolve hoists  
him like the taking flight of a bird.

Onto a lean she-camel, whilst a night whose stars are like  
wild cows and white gazelles begins to fade.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) This passage well illustrates the extraordinary minutia  
of observation which typifies Dhū'r-Rumma's imagery.  
The five hollows in the loose sand which are left by a  
kneeling camel are to him the exact shape of the hollows  
made by resting sand-grouses and the mark of the bridle  
like the elongated track of a snake through the soft  
sand.

(2) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxxix, 40-51.

Then he describes her swiftness and tells of her past when the pasturing in Wahbīn, Ma'qulāt, and al-Shamālīl fattened her, and how she became pregnant by a sturdy camel. He tells also of his journeys on her until she became lean.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Bedouin poet's she-camel was traditionally described as well-behaved.<sup>(2)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma's own observation, however, led him on one occasion to draw a picture of the behaviour of a reckless she-camel:-

She lowers her neck (as if listening)  
reclining as he saddles her, but she leaps  
as soon as his feet rest in the stirrups,  
Like the leaping up of a much-bitten (experienced)  
wild ass from the herds of Ma'qulā, which leaps  
sideways as if moving crookedly or suffering from  
a pain in the flank.<sup>(3)</sup>

In painting this highly individual and personalised picture Dhū'r-Rumma was breaking with the traditional norm. The conservative critics attacked him for it and reminded him of al-Ra'ī's verses in which the latter describes a well-trained she-camel which puts her cheeks obediently in

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(1) Ibid, xxxix, 52-57.

(2) See Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 87-88; al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'ara, i, 518; al-Muwashshah, 174-176, 183-184; al-Aghani, xvi, 123.

(3) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 39-40.



the bridle, does not cause the rider to hasten prior to kneeling down, and is more expert in allowing herself to be mounted upon than any other; she looks, as the rider rests his feet in her stirrups, as easy-going as a boat. They considered al-Rā'ī's description to be excellent.<sup>(1)</sup> And so it is, yet so elaborated as to sacrifice all naturalness and realism. Dhū'r-Rumma was probably referring to the artificiality of his professor's description when he answered his critics saying that "al-Rā'ī described a king's she-camel whereas I described a she-camel of the common people."<sup>(2)</sup> This is a good example of the way in which Dhū'r-Rumma approached even such a traditional subject as the description of camels and of the way in which he diverged from his predecessors should his actual experience and sense of realism dictate it.

Further aspects of the special features in Dhū'r-Rumma's compositions are illuminated by his treatment of the stock themes of the Bedouin poetry namely the wild ass, wild bull and ostrich. There are special problems involved in the literary criticism of these themes through the medium of translation since here, even more than elsewhere, the words

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(1) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 517-518; al-Muwashshah, 174-176, 183-184; al-Aghānī, xvi, 123; Simt al-la'ali', ii, 898.

(2) al-Muwashshah, 175, 176, 183; al-Aghānī, xvi, 123; Simt al-la'ali', ii, 898.

of the original convey shades and nuances of meaning difficult to recapture. Nevertheless it is essential that the attempt to analyse the methods of treatment adopted by Dhū'r-Rumma and the earlier poets be made.

In dealing with Dhū'r-Rumma, Labīd is the best and most obvious comparison, for it seems clear that Labīd exercised a great influence upon him - so much so that a modern critic states that the Bā'iya of Dhū'r-Rumma is but a reproduction of Labīd's mu'allāqa.<sup>(1)</sup> This is, of course, fallacious,<sup>(2)</sup> although Labīd's influence upon him is apparent.

More directly comparable with Dhū'r-Rumma's Bā'iya is the Lāmiya of Labīd in which we find the following account of the wild ass:-

"Is it this or the accursed ass braying at she-asses  
as sticks.

He drove off their young male asses towards the high  
lands of Qaww; a consort who was not to blame for  
separating the males from the females.

He mounted them until the pregnant became distinguished  
from the barren.

During the months of summer when the water of the

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(1) al-Bahbītī, Tārīkh al-shi'r al-'Arabī, 190.

(2) Labīd's Mu'allāqa, for example, deals at length with a wild cow searching for her calf which was devoured by wolves (See Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 68-71; al-Zawzanī, Sharh al-mu'allāqāt al-sab', A.H. 1325, 62-81; The seven odes, 142-147). Whilst Dhū'r-Rumma tells the story of the wild bull, (See the diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, i.)

stagnant pools at al-Shayitayn are barred to him  
He reminded them of brackish watering-places of  
Hāja whose water is not exhausted with buckets,  
And he brought them to the high ground and their leaders  
accompanied him like the arrows of the marksman,  
To a watering-place from which the wide plains recede,  
He conquers a desert of five full waterless days.  
He brays vigourously and repeats it again and makes  
them follow running briskly from side to side.  
As if his braying were the complaining of a leader,  
fearing raiding parties and destruction,  
Or the weeping of a drinker when the old wine of  
Babylon is brought to him at night in earthenware jars.  
He remembers his grief when mixed wine with fresh  
cold water affects him.  
When they gather together he collects them in from  
both sides, he leads them to water on long curved legs.  
Then raised up clouds of dust on a windy day which is  
blown about now obliquely and now straight.  
Then he led them to water all together and he did not  
drive them back, and did not show pity in interrupting  
the drinking and putting weak ones in to drink.  
He opens a drinking-place with his hooves delighting  
the hearts of those with thirsting bellies.

He brays again in the uplands as if pipes made from the reeds of the high places were sounding forth from his breast."<sup>(1)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma, in his Bā'ya, likens the leaping of his she-camel to that of a much bitten wild ass from the herds of Ma'qulā which leaps sideways, as if moving crookedly or suffering from pain in the flank,<sup>(2)</sup> then gives the following account:-

"He (the ass) drives on strong she-asses all alike,  
dark green with ash-coloured legs,  
He brays noisily at them in his grazing grounds of  
al-Khalṣā', al-Fawdajāt and the two sides of Wāḥif.  
And when the summer heat stirred up in intensity by  
which the water-places became dry and the grass withered,  
And when a hot violent wind from Yaman blew obliquely  
it dried up the vegetation.

And when all that remained in their bellies was consumed,  
they tried to scent running water.

There stood erect around him watching him one day long-  
bodied yellowish-white she-asses whose bellies were  
emaciated.

When at last the horn of the setting sun became yellow or  
almost so, he made his decision to travel by night towards

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(1) The dīwān of Labīd, 116-123.

(2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 40.

water.

He went swiftly like an unsheathed sword driving his females, the canter and gallop were his slowest gait, (Braying) as if he were a mourner complaining of his cares. When one of them turned aside from their midst.

He ascends the high ground as if he wished to afflict them, but fatigue does not affect them.

Each time the group dispersed in the stony ground; he bites at their buttocks as though he were suffering from rabies.

As if they were like raided camels with which a group of people hasten away escaping from another raiding group. And the destination was the spring of Uthāl, he had no partiality for any other drinking-place.

They came, whilst the pillar of dawn was on the point of splitting whilst the rest of it was shrouded in the darkness of night,

To a brimming spring whose sides were covered with green herbage and in which there were fish and frogs croaking clamorously.

From it a bright rivulet unsheaths itself like a sword amongst the stunted palm-trees, and over which the palm-leaves raise themselves up

And in al-Shamā'il a hunter from the tribe of Jillān, in shabby clothes with a low voice, lies hidden in a shelter.

He has prepared arrows with sharp points attached to smooth strong shafts strengthened by knots and feathers. When the like of these asses draw near to him, some of them are due to be parted from their companions (i.e. by death).

Then as soon as the wild beasts stand in the deep water and sink in it, the fear of suspicion strikes them. They stretch out their necks out of fear, then the flowing, murmuring water invites them.

The white-bellied she-asses turned (to the water), their livers lifted above the ribs which cover the bowels, throbbing (from fear).

Until when small draughts slip through each throat to the burning thirst which they failed to quench,

He shot (an arrow) and missed and the Fates are triumphant, So they fled away and mourning and sorrow became his habit. Fleeing along the plain because of what they had seen of him (the hunter), so swiftly that the pebbles of the rugged ground are about to be ignited.

As though they were the hidden under-wing feathers of a vulture hungry for meat, the male-bustard seeking to escape from him in the stony ground."<sup>(1)</sup>

There are significant similarities and differences in

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(1) Ibid, i, 41-66.

the way in which the two poets handle this theme. Both Labīd and Dhū'r-Rumma present through the medium of the wild ass realistic aspects of desert life. Labīd describes the wild ass and his behaviour towards the lean she-asses and mentions in passing the effect of summer on the water-places in the desert; he describes the wild ass driving them towards water, his braying like the warning of a cautious chief or the crying of a drunkard intoxicated with the wine of Babylon diluted with clear, cold water. Labid describes briefly their journey to the water-springs; the animals arrive and quench their thirst. The wild ass brays again and his account ends.

In Dhū'r-Rumma the picture presented is more complex and more vivid. For example, he first of all describes the colour of the she-asses in spring time as dark green, becoming, after being affected by summer drought, yellowish white. This consciousness of the change in colour and light is typical of Dhū'r-Rumma, who shows to it a sensitivity unparalleled by any other poet of the Bedouin school. The effect of summer is well described in Dhu'r-Rumma's lines. He describes how the summer heat and the scorching winds dry up the water-places and wither any vegetation; his description of the she-asses waiting for the decision of the male, their night-journey to water, and their subsequent arrival at the spring of Uthāl at dawn, the fish and the noisy frogs and the rivulet.

all this possesses an intrinsically dramatic quality which was far less prominent in Labīd. The word, Ḥalā'il, applied to the female asses illustrates an Islamic influence.

Dhū'r-Rumma's use of the figure of the hunter is one which Labīd, Zuhayr, al-Nābigha and 'Aṣhā Qays and other Jāhilī poets do not introduce into the account of the wild ass. It would seem that the presence of the hunter in this account is an Islamic feature<sup>(1)</sup> and that Dhū'r-Rumma is following an Islamic convention. Mutammim b. Nuwayra,<sup>(2)</sup> Rabī'a b. Maqrūm,<sup>(3)</sup> al-Shammākh b. Dirār,<sup>(4)</sup> Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, and al-Farazdaq,<sup>(6)</sup> all include this development of the treatment of the basic pre-Islamic theme. Rabī'a b. Maqrūm's account of the wild ass is, because of its influence on Dhū'r-Rumma's poem, relevant here. After describing the camel Rabī'a proceeds:-

"It was as though his saddle were bound upon a sturdy wild ass, who has found the grazing in the water-courses of Ma'qula to his mind -

Water courses coming down from upland meadows well soaked

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(1) The two poems attributed to 'Umru'l-Qays (see above ) which deal with the wild ass and present him as haunted by the thought of a lurking hunter can, thus, be regarded as of doubtful authenticity.

(2) al-Mufaddaliyāt, 50-51.

(3) Ibid, 181-183 and 187-189.

(4) Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab, 154-158.

(5) al-Mufaddaliyāt, 422- and Dīwān Abī Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, 2-

(6) Dīwān al-Farazdaq, 10-11.



by successive showers that have fallen under the constellation of the Ram.

He has become therefrom stout and well knit together, like a cable of palm-fibre the loosely-laid stands of which have been rolled close together by a skilful Syrian woman.

He turns hither and thither a long-bodied she-ass, long of neck, whose body-hair flies about in the wind, and in her are streaks of white (like the gores in a shirt). When the two came down into the plain, she gained somewhat upon him in their running:

But in spite of her boldness, he kept closely up to her. He turned away from the drinking-places of the valley of Qaww, and the broken rugged path towards the ḥarrah did away with her superiority in speed;

And the nearest watering-place where they arrived, at the setting in of night, was 'Uthāl or Ghumāza or Nuṭā'.

And he brought her down to drink when the night was one of pitch-darkness, and the twain were nowise weary when the dawn broke upon them.

But with the dawn he lighted on a serpent of the children of Jillān, whose only gear was his bent bow and his arrows: When he slaughters not for his children fresh juicy meat of the foremost of the wildings, they have to go hungry.

So he let fly at them an arrow, slender, with its head worn down on both sides by sharpening - but a breaking of the bow-string caused him to miss the shot.

And he cried woe upon his mother, while (the wild ass) sped away at head-long speed, about him a cloud of dust from his galloping, spreading in the air."<sup>(1)</sup>

This account was, possibly, the direct source which influenced Dhū'r-Rumma's story of the wild ass. Comparison between them, may, however, be sometimes misleading. 'Uthāl, the hunter of Banū Jillān and his disappointment, all that is mentioned in Rabī'a's poem may give, on the face of it, the impression that Dhū'r-Rumma's account is derivative and unoriginal. Yet, as has already been emphasised, as both were treating a traditional theme, originality must be sought not in the general outline or what may be called the plot of the theme, but in the detailed treatment by means of which each poet projects his own observation and reveals his own degree of his artistic skills. Looked at in this light, Dhū'r-Rumma's account is distinctively his own. He gives in balanced length the account of the night journey towards water then proceeds with the same carefully contrived detail, to describe the hunter of Banū Jillān, his arrows, his worn out

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(1) The Mufaddaliyāt (Edited and translated by C. Lyall), Oxford, 1918-1921, ii, 137-138.

clothes, his skill, and the effectiveness of his arrows in his previous experiences. He describes the wild animals' behaviour and fears when about to quench their burning thirst, the temptation of the murmur of the flowing water under the branches of the palm-trees. Then, when at last they drink, not even enough to quench their thirst, the hunter shoots and misses. The dramatic completeness of the narrative is provided by the description of their flight in which he uses the unique simile of the wing feather of the vulture to describe the spread-out formation of the fleeing asses. This is an excellent simile richly evocative both in colour and movement; the wild she-asses form two wings at the centre of which is the male-ass. Their order and undulating movement produce in Dhū'r-Rumma's mind the picture of two wings of a vulture hurrying to catch a male-bustard. Indeed the whole episode of the wild asses in Dhū'r-Rumma is vividly realistic and of a carefully elaborated artistic balance. Its dramatic presentation is strikingly effective and he succeeds in recording through this traditional theme a sense of his own deep affinity and sympathy for the desert life, of the changes of light and colour that go with the change of season and of the bitter struggle for survival in a cruel environment.

In the same ode from which the account of the wild ass has been quoted, Labīd describes also the wild bull. After

comparing his she-camel to a palace he says:-

"(It is) like a strong wild bull caught one night in heavy rain in the pebbly ground of Wāḥif.

He has lost his herd and a rainy cloud has descended on him whose course is determined by the North Wind.

He spent the night as if he were fulfilling his vows taking refuge in the dripping 'idā and ḍāl trees.

When the branches dripped upon his back he turns round his head again and again.

Like the movement of the sword-smith stooping upon his hands, leaning forward removing rust from sword-blades.

There came to him at dawn lop-eared hounds skilled in hunting, trotting along with their men.

He moved away but not out of cowardice but with the turning to fight of a defender of honour.

And he left Maḥam dead and they turned away from him, had dyed with blood the shoulder-blades of Ṭihāl.

He pierces their flanks thrusting sideways with his horn as the awl emerges from the patched sandal.

And he turned, the agonies of death leaving him, just as the courser with its horse-cloths passes.

And he turned away making for the bends of the ravine, alternating between holding himself in check and exerting all his energy.

His forefeet traverse the sandy places of al-Dahnā' just as the gambler at fiyāl (divides the dust).

And in the morning he crosses the rugged places alone, like the blade of a sword recently refurbished."<sup>(1)</sup>

Dhu'r-Rumma, likewise, proceeds his "Bā'iya" to describe his she-camel by likening her to a wild bull, developing the analogy in the following manner:-

Is such my she-camel? or shall I liken her to a wild bull, spotted are his legs, black of cheek, active, sturdy and young.

He spent the hot days of summer in the sand until the late grass of summer is moved by the cool breeze of night; there was no hardship in his living.

The green branches of rabl and arṭa trees protected him from the blasts that go with the stars of high summer till the torches of heat died out.

He came in the evening to Wahbīn making for his grazing ground at Dhū'l-Fawāris whence the scent of the green herbs calls him.

Till, when the waves of sand and their ripples were left behind him,

The darkness of night shrouded the wild bull with its blanket and black cloud of evening poured forth its rain.

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(1) The dīwān of Labīd, 112-116.

Then he spent the night as the guest of an arṭa tree upon  
a piled-up dune which provided warmth and shelter.

Its branches bending over; it was one of the places of  
the wild herds, safe from the blowing of winds - the dung  
of the wild animals heaped around its bole,

Along with the fallen leaves of the previous year, reddish  
white in colour

As though the mulberry tree and the vine had shaken off  
their withering fruit upon its flanks.

When a torrent of rain pours upon it, the resting places  
of the wild cows and even its timber are diffused with  
perfume

As if it were the house of a perfume-seller, which he  
fills with sachets of musk; he brings them and they are  
quickly sold.

The flashing clouds reveal a white form hunched together  
as if it were a lone herdsman wrapped in a white garment.  
And the heavy drops run off his back like silver beads  
running along their string.

Whenever he moves into his shelter his horns score the  
sand which falls pouring down and forming heaps.

When he wishes to enter further into it, a root comes  
between him and the bole.

A lone bull listening for the slightest sound, keen and

accurate of hearing.

He spent the night disturbed by the breaking of the branches and kept awake by the baying of the wind, whispering fears and the sound of the rain.

Until a dawn whose shafts appear in the last part of the night, drives back from his face

The remnants of a long night whose darkness the many-folded cloud has thickened until no gaps are open in it, Then he went off in the morning as if he were attacked by madness from all directions, fearing and on his guard.

Until when he was grazing in the jadri herb whilst the sun of the day poured down its slatted rays

And there appeared a brilliant (morning) renowned for its whiteness ascending the barren sand like a flame,

There appeared, charging at him, hungry, savage, hounds - lank-bellied, afflicted by hunger and by thirst.

Lop-eared, wide of jaw, savage as wolves, with collars of leather upon their necks.

And he whose profession is hunting turns every opportunity to his purpose - he found his father earning his living in this way,

Sparse-haired, his dress grey (worn-out), having no wealth except that which came from his dogs and their hunting.

He (the bull) turned away to his right and fled swiftly and

they passed swiftly in his train; both the pursued and the pursuer sparing nothing of their strength.

Until when they circled in the distance, pride came back to him (i.e. the bull), although his running away would save him had he wished to do so.

A feeling of shame mixed with anger overwhelmed him after his fleeing along the spur of sand.

And so he checked himself in his running, listening to the laboured breathing of the lop-eared dogs upon his tail.

And when they were close upon him and he was turning aside or they were almost within reach of the heel-tendon and the tail,

They found him neither fearful nor shivering from cowardice when they circled around in a place of conflict whose affliction is feared.

He turned at them thrusting strongly at their flanks as if he were seeking God's reward in advancing into the fray, And, at times piercing the sides of the necks transversely and, at times, stringing together the lungs and the intestinal tissues;

At times he aims with the point of a horn piercing deeply with it and at times thrusts at them a long cutting horn. Till, when some are wounded with a penetrating thrust and some killed, and both his horns are dyed with blood,



He went off briskly, swift in his passing and joyful,  
since fears had left his heart.

As though he were an emblazoned star shooting down in  
the wake of a genie in the blackness of night.

Whilst they were either treading upon their own bowels  
or groaning in extremity while the blood vessels of the  
inside were bleeding copiously."<sup>(1)</sup>

The innovatory aspects of Dhu'r-Rumma's detailed treatment of the stock themes of Jāhilī poetry are even more apparent here than in the case of the wild ass. Labīd's account is brief, vivid, and rich; it reveals a conciseness and economy of expression that is characteristic of all Jāhilī poetry. Dhū'r-Rumma's treatment shows no development in the broad outlines of the wild bull, that is to say, its seeking refuge at night, encounter with the hunter etc. There are, however, deeply significant differences in the way that the basic theme is presented and developed. Dhū'r-Rumma's account begins with a preliminary setting of the background to the action - a device which effectively heightens the dramatic situation. Whilst Labīd mentions his wild bull as being caught by heavy rain, Dhu'r-Rumma prepares for the conventional description by contriving an earlier scene in sharp contrast to it - the bull grazing in the sand, and taking

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 67-106.

refuge from the summer heat under the arṭā trees and the final passing of summer. This is not intended so much to illustrate seasonal changes as to prepare the desert stage for the change of scene which follows - that is, the rainy night. Such an interpretation, in spite of seeming over elaborate, accords well with Dhū'r-Rumma's conscious awareness of the relation between the component sub-themes and the main theme. Labīd describes briefly how the wild bull spent his night taking refuge under some trees, how the dogs attacked him in the early morning and how the battle resulted in his triumph. Dhū'r-Rumma presents the account dramatically and with great artistic skill in a series of rising crises; he describes the bull driven on by the smell of a certain herb, and whilst on his journey darkness and torrential rain envelope him. This is the first dramatic climax - the bull, caught by darkness and rain, takes refuge under a tree. Dhū'r-Rumma describes fully but without unaccessory digression the tree, the shelter under its branches, its sandy floor, fragrance when soaked by the showers of rain, and the rainy night, full of the sound of the howling of the wind and the breaking of branches. The picture is natural, graphic, and well-contrived. The bull is, in a sense humanized and human-wise becomes a victim of his own sense of hearing and of his fears of the angry nature around him. Dhū'r-Rumma then

proceeds on a downward emotional curve and describes how the bull runs away at the first rays of dawn and is found grazing whilst the sun appears on the horizon. This moment of calm is then succeeded by the emotional climax of the meeting with the hunter and his dogs.

The direct comparison between Dhū'r-Rumma's Bā'iya and Labīd's Lāmiya must be limited to the wild ass and bull. From then on the two odes diverge and while Labīd describes the lightning and rain, Dhu'r-Rumma proceeds with his description of the she-camel and likens her to a male ostrich. The description of the ostrich is, of course, one of the traditional themes - 'Alqama b. 'Abada,<sup>(1)</sup> Umru'l-Qays,<sup>(2)</sup> Zuhayr,<sup>(3)</sup> 'Antara,<sup>(4)</sup> al-Hārith b. Hilliza,<sup>(5)</sup> Labīd,<sup>(6)</sup> and others,<sup>(7)</sup> make use of it and most of them depict the male ostrich accompanied by his female, hurrying towards their nest in order to reach it before the approaching evening.<sup>(8)</sup> 'Alqama b. 'Abada amongst them is famous for his description of ostriches. Ibn al-'Arābī states that everyone when describing an ostrich

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(1) Dīwān 'Alqama b. 'Abada, Alger, 1925, 53-61.

(2) Dīwān Umru'l-Qays, 170-171, 179.

(3) Dīwān Zuhayr, 68.

(4) Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab, 96.

(5) al-Shanqīṭī, al-Mu'allaqāt al-'ashr, Cairo, 1331 A.H., 117.

(6) Dīwān Labīd, 70-72.

(7) al-Mufaddaliyāt, (Cairo ed.) 129-130.

(8) Ibid, 129-130; Dīwān 'Alqama, 53-61; Dīwān Umru'l-Qays, 179; Dīwān Labīd, 70-72.

must have recourse to 'Alqama b. 'Abada.<sup>(1)</sup> Indeed his description is worth regarding as a yard-stick with its unforced realism and its richness in desert similes and observations. After describing his she-camel, he says:-

"She is like (a male ostrich), with legs coloured red and scanty down on his fore wing-feathers, to whom along the margins of the sand-dunes the colocynth and the tannūm have ripened.

He spends the day among the colocynths streaked with green and yellow, breaking them open to extract the seeds, and he nips off that which shoots up above ground of the tannūm.

His mouth is like a split in a stick - hardly canst thou discern the cleft; he is small in that wherewith he hears sounds (i.e. the ear), as though it were cut off at the root.

(So he feeds), until he calls to mind certain eggs, and a day of drizzling rain, with a heavily-clouded sky, impels him to motion;

And his swift going in his race is not intermitted, nor is he tired of his amble, just short of a gallop.

Almost (as he stretches out his neck and casts forward his

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(1) al-Aghānī, xv, 96; and see Dīwān 'alqama, b. 'Abada, 9.

foot in his stride) does his nail pierce his eye-ball, as though he were one afraid of a misfortune, in terror thereat.

A fleet runner is he; his breast is like the wooden frame of a lyre: he looks like a water-bird (flying down with outstretched neck) to pools in moist meadows.

(He is making for a brood of nestlings with little hair on their crops: when they crouch together in the nest, they look like the roots of trees with dust gathered about them by the wind).

Till at last he attains, while the sun's limb is still high, to the nest of spouses, wherein are the eggs ranged close together:

Twice he goes round the nest-cup, carefully looking for traces about it, as though he feared some evil thing, in terror thereat.

He speaks to his mate with a clucking and chirruping noises, like as the Greeks chatter their jargon together in their castles;

Small is his head, set on a slender neck, and his wings and breast are like a tent fallen down, about which a clumsy handmaid busies herself.

There comes round about him his mate, long-necked, bending down her head, who answers him with a murmuring note

wherein is a trill."<sup>(1)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma deals with the same theme as 'Alqama:

Is it thus, or a tawny male ostrich whose pasturage was in the flat plain; the father of thirty chicks, turning back in the evening (towards his nest).

Slim of leg, the remainder of his body like a tent of haircloth, heavily built, long-bodied and sturdy.

As if his legs were two long poles of the 'ushar tree from which the bark has not been stripped.

The fragrant ā' plant, the tannūm and its second shoots amongst the white stones - every pasture has its late shoots of grass - distracted him.

He remains sometimes lowering his head and you do not recognize him, and he raises at times his head and is recognized.

As if he were a Habashī (negro) tracing a trail, or one of those whose ears are perforated (i.e. an Indian).

Long of stride, dressed in a black velvet robe with fringed edges.

Or like a camel who yesterday loosened the tie-rope of the howdah, so the two panniers and the saddle were removed

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(1) al-Mufaddaliyāt (Lyal) ii, 335-336.

towards the rear,<sup>(1)</sup>

Having strayed from the two shepherds of the black camels of Kalb, returning from distant water, necks swaying.

This young camel has become in the morning separated from his she-camels, coming upon the dried herbs whose stems have been stripped.

Upon him were provision and worn-out clothes which the rope was pulling from his back.

Each one of these (the Ḥabashī, the Indian and the camel) has a likeness to him from a distance; he and they are of the same cut of body and of colour.

Until, when the male ostrich looked towards his chicks - they being neither so far away as to cause despair nor so near as to be reached quickly.

He runs swiftly under the shadow of a cloud rumbling with thunder and heavy with hail, pursued by the sound of a tempest carrying before it the small stones.

At his side runs a small-headed, black and white, obedient she-ostrich; swiftly crossing the wide land that separates them from the chicks.

She was (forging ahead) as though she were a well-bucket whose drawer having pulled it up to the point of seeing it the rope then parts and it falls away.

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(1) He is describing with astonishing felicity the loosening of the ostrich's wings which were like two loads bound loosely on a camel.

Woe to it! What a return with the wind blowing violently, the rain teeming and reverberating, and the night approaching. They do not spare any power in their swift running until their skins are almost rent from them.

Whenever they start shooting ahead in their swift running through any place it occasions wonder.

They do not trust the predatory animals of night or the hail if they are overtaken by darkness before reaching little ones with the strident voices.

They emerged from the eggs bare of feathers with no covering on them except the sand and a kind mother and father.

When they (the eggs) split open around them like dry skulls or empty colocynth.

The shells split open (revealing) crooked folded chicks as if mange had completely covered their skins.

Their mouths were like the cracks in nab'a wood, in heads like small balls, on which down had not yet appeared.

Their necks were like leeks growing in a stretch of sand, whose seed-pods have flown out or like a hayshar tree stripped of its leaves."<sup>(1)</sup>

'Alqama b. 'Abada's influence upon Dhū'r-Rumma's description is obvious - the male ostrich, huge as a tent, the

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, i, 107-131.



likeness of the chick's mouths to cracks in wood, and the obedient female are obvious examples of that influence. Any attempt at the evaluation of the significance of Dhū'r-Rumma in early Arabic poetry must of necessity lead to the isolating of the two main centres of stimuli in his poetic composition - his knowledge of the earlier poetry already composed within his school together with his own encyclopaedic knowledge of, and deep artistic feeling for, the life of the desert. Thus, he could, with consummate skill, construct a setting on which the ostriches move vividly and within which nature is depicted alive, rich in colour and in action. The conciseness which characterises the Jāhilī poetry generally also characteristic of 'Alqama b. 'Abada. Yet Dhū'r-Rumma's description is superior in its dramatic quality and descriptive detail.

On the basis of the arguments presented in the preceding pages, Dhū'r-Rumma emerges not only as a thorough Bedouin poet but as an outstanding representative of the Bedouin school of poetry. His treatment of the traditional themes shows a thorough assimilation of the classical models and a uniform excellence in depicting the various aspects of the desert life around him. In fact, his cultural inheritance and the apparatus of traditional themes and patterns were important to him in-so-far as they served to help him in depicting his world. "What will always interest us", Macartney says of

Dhū'r-Rumma's realistic description of the desert, "Are the poet's vivid descriptions of the incidents of the desert life as it existed more than a thousand years ago. The pictures drawn by Dhū'r-Rumma have all the vividness of sketches taken from the life, and are the outcome of the personal experience of the poet."<sup>(1)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma's world was that of the desert for which he had a deep attachment. He lived there and was all his life fond of its sand dunes and fragrant air. For him, it is a good land watered only by heaven's water, far away from salt and sea.<sup>(2)</sup> Its dark nights are full of perfume,<sup>(3)</sup> When describing the fragrant breath of his beloved, he depicts a meadow in Najd watered one night by clouds while the Eastern wind blows gently. In it there is fresh sweet trefoil and a fragrant hinwa herb; and upon it showers of rain fall intermittently.<sup>(4)</sup> To him the sand dunes are so beautiful that he sees in them a sensual likeness to the thighs of virgin girls.<sup>(5)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma's attachment to the desert is eloquently expressed in his dīwān. The nature of the desert, majestic both in its harshness and colourfulness and its naked yet alluring charm, moves throughout his composition with a

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(1) A short account of Dhu'r-Rumma, 301.

(2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxix, 17.

(3) Ibid, xxix, 19.

(4) Ibid, xxxv, 31-33.

(5) Ibid, xli, 31.

vitality and freshness. Describing a desert landscape, he says:-

"And many a mirage-trimmed desert in whose looming  
distance the small hills dance.

In it, the desert sand-grouse perishes of thirst.

And at its sides the breeze dies out.

There appear in it pools but with no moisture

And shapes appear to be moving though they are not  
(moving).<sup>(1)</sup>

A facet of nature comes alive in this short but suggestive passage. The desert is vast and fearful, filled with a glittering mirage. Hills dance hither and thither and pools appear in its waterless depths. It is so formidable and treacherous that even the sand-grouse of the desert perishes in it from thirst and it is so hot and quiet that even the breeze dies out at its edge. This is more than a verbal description of a mirage - the mood these three verses evoke is one of apprehension at the fearful and wide desert, silent yet fraught with danger. The hills dancing silently, the sand-grouse dying of thirst, the breeze perishing, the moving objects which do not leave their places as though setting traps to the traveller, all these work together to create an atmosphere of fear and disquiet. The language of the verses flows with ease and is charged with suggestion. The wāfir metre

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(1) Ibid, lxxvi, 11-13.

along with the use of Mīm as the rhyming letter fit in with the predominant mood.

Elsewhere, he describes a desert whose travellers do not talk for fear of thirst. Its hills dive into the mirage and emerge as if from shallow water.<sup>(1)</sup> And he describes the mirage thus:-

"As though it were, when the empty vast plain causes it to move, bright fringes of rain coming forth from a cloud under the wind's aegis.

It moves to and fro, then a thirsty wind from the hot summer gales, blowing obliquely, drives it along, Towards an empty desert through which the hot wind passes swiftly to a flat plain that is dyed with the sun's glow."<sup>(2)</sup>

The likening of a mirage with its qualities of limpidity and moving light to the bright rain coming off a cloud is wonderfully apt and the movement of the mirage through the empty desert, driven by a hot summer wind, is a strikingly imaginative concept. The picture of rain in the wide empty desert through which the hot wind blows is a further illustration of Dhū'r-Rumma's subtle use of contrasting images which has been noted earlier. Extreme aridity calls for the contrast of rain.

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(1) Ibid, Lxiv, 20-21.

(2) Ibid, ix, 17-19.

Dhū'r-Rumma's meticulous sense of artistic detail in the contriving of an image can be seen also in his description of the desert uplands. Turning to the peaks, he draws this picture:-

"Many a peak splits with its nose the waves of the mirage whilst the small hills sink into it.

You see the elongated hill through the mirage as though it were a man calling out to some people at the top of his voice and signalling with his garment."<sup>(1)</sup>

"When we pass the middle of a sandy plain, the camels ascend with us a rugged path which compels them to walk on their knees.

You see its farthest peak sinking in the mirage as though it were a lame chestnut horse following a group of horses."<sup>(2)</sup>

The image of a man calling out and waving to attract attention is intelligible only in a desert context in which sounds travel with clarity over great distances. In that context, the sense of remoteness and isolation which the peak emerging from the mirage evokes, is most effectively paralleled by the image of the man hailing from far away. The subsequent picture of a peak sinking and re-emerging through the waves of mirage like a lame chestnut horse lagging behind the other

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(1) Ibid, xlv, 38-39.

(2) Ibid, xlviii, 62-63.

horses, may at first sight, seem to be a cumbersome and inappropriate simile. Yet it contains some of the quint-essential character of the image of the mountain peak - its isolation from the main upland, its dark colouring and, most vividly of all, its apparent dipping action as it sinks into the mirage. Another excellent picture on the same theme is his likening eddying and circling movement of the mirage around the peak of a mountain to the circling of a whirling spindle.<sup>(1)</sup>

A further grouping of Dhu'r-Rumma's images centres upon the noises of the desert. Commenting on the description of desert sounds by Dhu'r-Rumma, al-Jāhiz says, "Abū Ishāq said: 'At certain hours of day time you see the small object, in these wide deserts as great, and the low sound becomes loud. The slight sound can be heard in the late morning from a distant place. And there is in the middle of the deserts and the sandy plains and the rugged grounds, at mid-day, the like of humming. It is the nature of that time and these places that these sounds occur there. Thus Dhū'r-Rumma says:

'When our driver says in a whisper 'Silence!'

there will be nothing but a humming in the ears.'<sup>(2)</sup>

He also describes this humming of the desert sands as the

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(1) Ibid, lxyii, 70.

(2) al-Ḥayawān, vi, 248.

singing of the Christians, the groaning of thirsty beasts,<sup>(1)</sup>  
or the voices of the co-wives shouting at each other.<sup>(2)</sup>

The figures of speech in which Dhū'r-Rumma describes the desert at night are particularly vivid. In order to avoid the heat of the desert, travellers mostly choose to travel through the desert by night. The quiet, cool nights of the desert under a starry sky are always a great delight to travellers, and Dhū'r-Rumma, a wanderer and traveller above all else, describes the night world in lyrical terms - the velvet darkness and the stars and voices of that sea of sand:-

"Many a night like the garment of the bride have I  
donned with four other objects seen by the eye as one -  
A fine black saddle and sharp white (sword), a white  
Mahri camel and a noble dishevelled man (i.e. himself).<sup>(3)</sup>

In these two verses, he describes in a concise way his equipment, weapon, beast, and finally himself, dishevelled from long travel, noble in character, and illustrious. The night that is like the bride's garment is a poetic expression later to have its influence on the Abbasid poets.<sup>(4)</sup> In other verses, Dhū'r-Rumma describes how he traversed a vast

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxviii, 41.

(2) al-Hayawan, vi, 248.

(3) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xvi, 31-32.

(4) al-Sūlī, Akhbar Abī tammam, Cairo, 1937, 82-3; al-Sinā'atayn, 233-234; Dīwān al-ma'ānī, i, 342; al-Muwāzana, 34.

empty desert whilst the night was pitch-dark and darkness shrouded everything. Every object whether standing or moving was something to be watched.<sup>(1)</sup> He describes also his travel with his friends and how they encamped in the desert at night; he had no pillow under his head except his hand having twisted around one of his fingers the end of the bridle. A long journey through the distant desert had tired him and his companions had fallen asleep from an excess of fatigue looking as though they were dead before the expiry of their allotted time. They had travelled a long journey and become tired as though they had given each other draughts of wine in a dusty wide desert over which the summer winds had woven interlaced tracteries of dust.<sup>(2)</sup> The desert he wandered through was as wide as heaven and the dark night had dyed the pebbles with blackness. Its deep silence is such that it makes the traveller imagine that he hears in it men singing and calling out to each other.<sup>(3)</sup> The bridle twisted around the finger of the sleeping traveller, the dust moves into interlaced tracteries by the wind, the pebbles dyed black by night and the silences so intense that they produce their own imagined cries, all these are excellent illustrations of the graphic detail symbolic overtones which characterise Dhū'r-Rumma's imagery.

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlv, 33-35.

(2) Ibid, lxxvii, 10-13.

(3) Ibid, xviii, 7-8.



"And many an empty land whose surface the wind scores is clothed by the blackness of night in dark green garments." (1)

"They (the camels) have become lean through their riders' saying: 'Move on!' when the brow of every hill appears, because of the dark night, like a tent." (2)

"And on many a night which breeds perplexity, dark like an expanse of sea, whose stars beyond the rising dust are like staring eyes.

Have I traversed with the riders haphazardly until the dark green leaves (of night) moved away from the reddish camels and the youth, (3) (revealing them).

The feeling for colour which these lines show has already been noted in Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry, yet the final image of the night, spreading and unknown as a sea, with the stars shining like eyes <sup>r</sup>through the dust is one of astonishing felicity.

Dhū'r-Rumma excels in describing the stars and although this is a characteristic theme in Jahili poetry, (4) he introduces his own particular colouring of each image:-

"And I threw a glance at the stars as if I were in the saddle a hungry noble vulture.

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(1) Ibid, xxiv, 22.

(2) Ibid, xxiv, 20.

(3) Ibid, xxix, 28.

(4) See Dīwān al-ma'ānī, i, 334.

Whilst the constellation of Gemini had inclined to setting until it were like a herd of wild cows suspended upon a sandy hillock opposite."<sup>(1)</sup>

"And Canopus had appeared to the night-traveller like a placid stallion camel drawing near to the milch camels."<sup>(2)</sup>

"I came to water while the late stars appeared like wild cows and reddish gazelles behind Arcturus and Spica Virginis."<sup>(3)</sup>

A similar theme is dealt with elsewhere:-

"I came to water unintentionally while the Pleiades appeared like a bird soaring overhead.

Aldebaran fluttered in its wake neither left behind nor catching up.

Driving with him twenty of the small stars like a herd of camels with a man (driving them) in the green plain, had he been able to speak.

Camels driven by a turbanned rider, white camels which were about to scatter from him.

In pairs and alone - a driver driving them towards water from the middle of the desert, having set them off on the first of the two days driving towards water."<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxvi, 24-25.

(2) Ibid, xxxii, 15.

(3) Ibid, xxxii, 38.

(4) Ibid, lii, 48-52.

He depicts the same subject in one of his urjūzas:-

"The constellation of Gemini soars upwards

When Canopus appears like fire.

Alone like a pursued bull, and the constellation of

Gemini appears like a cluster of grapes,

Moving abreast of it at a distance."<sup>(1)</sup>

He likens Sirius appearing in the evening to a wild cow on the raised ground of the sands of Yabrīn.<sup>(2)</sup> These similes

belong to and derive from the desert world - the stars

following each other like wild cows and reddish gazelles,

the Pleiades as a soaring bird, Aldebaran driving twenty

small stars across the expanse of the sky like a turbanned

rider driving white camels across a green plain - all these

are images which stem from the physical reality of Dhū'r-

Rumma's own world. Even heaven is seen by Dhū'r-Rumma as a

part of the desert world. The imagery depicting the movement

of the stars is extremely vivid - the constellation of Gemini

inclining to setting like wild cows coming down the slope of

a mountain opposite has a quality of pictorial realism which

is characteristic of Dhū'r-Rumma, a quality which prompted him

to present even the movement of the heavenly bodies in terms

of imagery closely congruent with his own finite experience.

There is an additional element in the picture of Aldebaran

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(1) Ibid, xxii, 41-45.

(2) Ibid, lxxxvii, 55.

following in the wake of Pleiades for he is using here a Bedouin legend which tells how Aldebaran asked the constellation of the Pleiades to marry him and offered (her) camels but (she) refused; he then followed (her) with his camels. Dhū'r-Rumma in illustrating the legend, depicts a fascinating picture of the lover Aldebaran, following the Pleiades, with his camels scattered around him in pairs or dispersed singly across the middle of the green plain of heaven.

In describing the sounds of the desert at night, Dhū'r-Rumma is at his best. The wide desert shrouded in darkness was to him a strange mysterious world full of sad, hungry creatures and gay genii:-

"And many a sound-filled desert through which the travellers stay, the male owls call out in its midst like that of the bereaved women at the last part of night."<sup>(1)</sup>

"And many a sandy plain, the humming of genii through its dunes in the quiet hour of night is like the beating of singers upon the drum."<sup>(2)</sup>

"As if its humming were, in the silent hour of night, the singing of a gallant lover."<sup>(3)</sup>

"Near it (the well) the wolf is sad as though his howling were that of a camel foal left hungry in the last part of

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(1) Ibid, lxxxii, 15.

(2) Ibid, lxiv, 22.

(3) Ibid, lxxvii, 17.

night."(1)

"A waterless desert, the voice of the genii in its unknown expanses sounds like the rumbling of mill-stones and the owls therein are like mourning women."(2)

"A country in which the owl spends the night calling for its little ones and the echoes and the genii form a night-conversation."(3)

To Dhū'r-Rumma, the wide desert at night is fearful and awe-inspiring - the owls, wolves and genii symbolising as they do the solitary and the supernatural are suitable devices for creating this ominous atmosphere and making it additionally real with its medley of sounds and its apparitions. The following picture is, indeed, one of the most magnificent portraits of night in the desert in the Bedouin poetry:-

"I sometimes traverse hazardously the unknown wide desert in the shadow of a black night while the owls call out for their males."(4)

Between the two sides of a vast desert, the traveller in it is gagged by fear;

At its margins the genii talk melodiously at its sounds on a windy day.

Here and there, whither and thither, from the left and right

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(1) Ibid, lxvii, 61.

(2) Ibid, xi, 34.

(3) Ibid, xxxii, 55.

(4) Ibid, lxxv, 28.

comes the low-pitched voice.

A Desert filled with sound and a dark night as though they were a sea on whose sides the Greeks exchange their foreign jargon."<sup>(1)</sup>

The Arabic text of these verses is full of rhythm and of an assonance which impart a strange feeling of dread and mystery - the pictures of the wide dark desert, the owls hooting, the traveller silenced by fear, and the genii whispering unintelligibly from every side seem consciously contrived in order to produce the desired effect of a strange world, awesome and intimidating. "It seems to me" Abdullah al-Tayyib states rightly, "that the poet intended by so doing to portray something of the mystery of night, its mysterious noises and its extensive fear-inspiring mood. He has presented to you distinctly the ringing of the night echoes in this whisper which he represents in his words: "

كُنَّا وَهِنًا وَمِنْ كُنَّا لَرَيْنَ بَرًّا<sup>(2)</sup>

There are other delineated groups of imagery in Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry which bring us vividly into contact with his desert world and underline his unique position as a poet describing that world - for example, his pictures of dawn, sunset, the coming of spring and the wild life of the deser

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(1) Ibid, lxxv, 32-35.

(2) Sharḥ arba' qaṣā'id, "م ١".

In his wandering night-journeys, Dhū'r-Rumma must have frequently witnessed the awakening of the desert to the break of day. Dawn first appears like a split in the middle of a rock.<sup>(1)</sup> then when it ascends the barren horizon it looks like a blazing fire.<sup>(2)</sup> In one of his poems, he tells how he came to a well at the last part of night when the late stars appeared like shining lamps. When the day dawns the sky is like a white-bellied, chestnut horse standing upright, the horse-cloth half slipping off him.<sup>(3)</sup> This theme is a recurring one as in his line:-

"Until redness split the darkness of night like the neck of a horse with a blaze on its forehead appearing through the darkness."<sup>(4)</sup>

Elsewhere he describes the morning approaching him like the approach of a white-legged horse with a blaze on its forehead.<sup>(5)</sup> In another vivid image he describes how, when the light of the morning was split, rivulets appear before his eyes like cutting swords.<sup>(6)</sup> In yet another reference to dawn, he describes how:-

"She (Mayya) tarried therein till the plants withered

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(1) The *dīwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma, xi, 45.

(2) Ibid, i, 89.

(3) Ibid, xxx, 23-26.

(4) Ibid, xviii, 11.

(5) Ibid, lxvii, 41.

(6) Ibid, xlviii, 41.

away, and till dawn drove away in its white garment the Pleiades."<sup>(1)</sup>

The latter picture contains a typical subtlety of detail beyond the immediate image, for it is only at summer that the Pleiades accompany the dawn. The symbolism of dawn as a horse is worthy of closer study. The picture of dawn as a white-bellied chestnut horse standing upright is not only an original one; it contains a series of elaborate suggestions as to colour and movement - the redness of the hidden sun, of night slipping off like a horse-cloth, of the shafts of white light among the redness like a blaze on a horse's head. The picture of dawn approaching as a blazed, white-legged horse, is, likewise, full of movement and colour. These images illustrate once again the artistic sensibility and use of symbolism which sets Dhū'r-Rumma on a special plane amongst the poets of the desert.

His description of the sun about to set as barely alive like one who is in his last hour<sup>(2)</sup> is reminiscent of Hardy's line:-

"Alive enough to have strength to die."<sup>(3)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma also likens the glow of light remaining after sunset to a rainbow appearing after the rain has ceased.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Ibid, xxix, 3.

(2) Ibid, xlviii, 36.

(3) See J.M. Murry, The problems of style, Oxford, 1956, 96.

(4) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxviii, 39.



Throughout his *dīwān*, as has already been shown, Dhū'r-Rumma describes the changing seasons in the desert. There are very many references to drought and the hot winds of summer, but spring though it is a short season, is also feelingly described. He pictures it through his dramatic treatment of the theme of the wild asses:-

"They spent the spring time on the two sides of *Rahbā* and *Ma'qula* till the high lands danced through the mirage. They ascend the banks of the water-courses which the white as well as the heavy black clouds rode. Till the meadows of the rugged land appeared as though they were dressed fully with garments splendidly embroidered."<sup>(1)</sup>

He also says:-

"Spring brought for him (the ass), by raining heavily, the meadow of *al-Qidhāf* stretching as far as the empty land, whilst the groups of people had turned away from it. So that every place sought by him was covered with soft fresh herbs so thick and plentiful that it looked as wide and dark as night.

Abundant, the drops of dew when the sun shines brightly glow upon the branches, appearing like silver beads."<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma also mentions elsewhere the heavy rain

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(1) *Ibid*, xvii, 21-23.

(2) *Ibid*, lxxv, 62-64.

dressed the land with thick fresh buhmā herbs which looked, from an excess of greenness, dark in colour and describes the yellow flowers called miknān as rugs decorated by skilful hands.<sup>(1)</sup> Again, he describes the yellow flowers of al-hawdhān shooting up in the meadow as though they were wicks burning with fire.<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhu'r-Rumma's descriptions catch the exuberance of spring time in the desert. The land, after the heavy rain, is covered with fresh, thick herbs and nature displays its splendour in a shining chiaroscuro of colour. The hills are clothed with an embroidered dress and the plain is like a skilfully decorated rug. Dhū'r-Rumma is, characteristically, attracted by the brilliant colours of the dew on the branches under the bright sun shining like silver beads and the yellow flowers of al-hawdhan glowing like burning wicks.

To the desert traveller, water is the most precious thing without which an agonizing death would most certainly meet him. To him, and to all who dwell in the desert, life and water are identical, for if there is water there is life - oases and habitation, pasture and animals. However, the summer season and its hot winds turn most of the desert into arid, empty stretches of sands in which life is reduced to its minimum and

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(1) Ibid, xlviii, 26-27.

(2) Ibid, xli, 47.

no travel undertaken except on patient camels and under the guidance of those who know the way to the hidden water-places throughout the desert. In his *dīwān*, *Dhū'r-Rumma* appears as one of those travellers well-versed in the lore of the desert. He frequently mentions that he came to certain water-places through an unknown desert, and though he travelled hazardously on no clear or trodden way, he could, in the end, manage by his Bedouin acumen to find his way through and arrive at a water-place. He describes, for example, his night-travels on a noble camel<sup>(1)</sup> or with companions on small-headed she-camels, mere shadows of themselves, because of the continuous travel and lack of water for some days. He comes at night to a water-place, or sometimes<sup>(2)</sup> arrives there in the last part of night when the late stars have appeared glittering in the firmament like shining lamps.<sup>(3)</sup> Sometimes he arrives just before dawn - before the sparrow has begun chirping,<sup>(4)</sup> when the vulture has not yet left his nest,<sup>(5)</sup> nor has the sand-grouse come to take water for its chicks, nor have the greedy wolves as yet arrived at it.<sup>(6)</sup> He describes these water-places as isolated spots in a vast empty desert<sup>(7)</sup> some hidden

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(1) Ibid, xx, 11-12.

(2) Ibid, xxix, 30-32.

(3) Ibid, xxx, 23-24.

(4) Ibid, xxxviii, 7.

(5) Ibid, xxix, 31.

(6) Ibid, xli, 33.

(7) Ibid, xxv, 32, xxxviii, 7-10, xli, 13.

because they are covered with dung<sup>(1)</sup> or dust<sup>(2)</sup> which no one except the resolute and adventurous one could discover.<sup>(3)</sup> The water is fetid<sup>(4)</sup> and so old that it has changed its colour and mixed with dung<sup>(5)</sup> or covered with a thick layer of a green scum called Tuhlub<sup>(6)</sup> - so isolated that no one had come to it except wolves and sand-grouse.<sup>(7)</sup> The terrifying isolation of the water holes is emphasised, sited as they are in a desert where hyenas, because of hunger, attack the dark-grey. charging wolves.<sup>(8)</sup> Some of Dhū'r-Rumma's descriptions of the scenes of the water-places are so vivid that one is acutely aware of the wild loneliness and the brutal predatory battle for survival. The late hour of the night at which he arrives at the water-place strikes the initial note and the howling of the hungry wolves,<sup>(9)</sup> the hyenas hunting, because of excessive hunger, even the wolf, the sand-grouse taking water for its little ones, the pigeons, the vulture, and the chirping sparrow, all help to point a vivid picture of the wild life of the desert grouped around the surviving water holes. The theme is handled with his usual elaboration of detail and minutia of personal observation:

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(1) Ibid, xxv, 32.

(2) Ibid, xxxviii, 8.

(3) Ibid, xli, 34.

(4) Ibid, ix, 22; xxv, 32; xxix, 30; xxxviii, 7; xxxix, 25-26; lii, 47.

(5) Ibid, xxv, 32; xxix, 30; xli, 33.

(6) Ibid, xx, 11; lxvii, 60.

(7) Ibid, lxvi, 28.

(8) Ibid, xxxviii, 9.

(9) Ibid, lxvii, 61-63.

"How many a watering place from which I have removed the dung, where the sand-grouses bringing water for their chicks and the greedy wolves had not yet arrived.

A hidden place, no one could know the right way through its empty desert except the resolute and adventurous one. (1)

"Many a fetid water-place which had for long been unattended by men as though the small locusts had spat into it the water of after-birth, I arrived at ... (2)

And my servant let down his bucket seeking a cure for thirst whilst the darkness of night was mixed with whiteness. And the bucket came up with a web of a spider as though the Web were like torn fine cloth over the two wooden handles of the bucket.

I asked him to try again to seek the remainder of its water, spending the entire night in so doing, since the water was deep below.

Then it came forth with a measure of fetid water half of which was dung like the water of after-birth, flickering at its margins." (3)

In addition to his treatment of the main animal themes of desert poetry, the camel, wild ass and wild bull, other birds and animals provide recurring themes in Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry.

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(1) Ibid, xli, 33-34.

(2) Ibid, lii, 47-48.

(3) Ibid, lii, 54-57.

--- Dhu'r-Rumma was fascinated by the elegant appearance of the gazelle. It is true that many poets, before and after him,<sup>(1)</sup> have admired the beauty of this animal and likened their beloved or those whom they admired to it in its grace, but Dhu'r-Rumma, shows a particular admiration for it and time and again likens his beloved to it and describes its graceful elegance. By so doing, he incensed, as will be discussed later, some critics whose urban as well as foreign background prevented them from appreciating the likeness of a woman to a slim-legged gazelle. His descriptions, moreover, have an emotional anthropomorphic touch which pictures, for example, a gazelle caring for her weak, sleepy little one whom she leaves hidden under a tree or behind sand dunes. She, uneasy lest an animal might attack him, steals a glance towards him from time to time. Dhū'r-Rumma, as is his wont, describes it in detail amidst its desert surroundings at certain sand dunes in the bright forenoon or blazing sun-set:-

"I remember you (his beloved) when a mother of a little gazelle passed by us, in front of the riding camels, stretching her neck to look then turning aside.

One of these familiar with the sands, pure white, the light of the forenoon glitters on her back.

She leaves at the soft sand of Mushrif a little foal toward

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(1) See below, 251-252.

which her eyes glance.

She saw us as though we were heading towards the place at which she left her little one, so she draws near at times and then draws back.

She is the perfect likeness (of Mayya) as to flank, neck, and eye, yet Mayya is finer and more beautiful than she."<sup>(1)</sup>

The same theme is repeated elsewhere:-

"A gazelle from the sands of Ḥuzwā or a long-necked gazelle from the sands of Ma'qula, moves through the dunes of the soft sand.

She sees a rider, or the faint voice of a weak, white little one stirs her fear with a swift indrawing of breath. When she leaves him at a flat plain or on an isolated dune, she veers aside and raises her neck to watch at each high place,

Concerned for one who is sleep-stricken in every noonday resting place, whose legs are too weak to hold him up.

When she takes him back to his place to suckle him, she leaves him behind her at the sands of al-Dahnā' or at Ḥājīr.

And she deserts him all day long except for secret visits; and how many a lover deserts his beloved for fear of a

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, x, 11-14.

watching eye:

For fear that death might hasten to him before her and she, except for that, is the weakest of helpers."<sup>(1)</sup>

Again, when describing the traces of Mayya's encampment, he presents this picture:-

The reddish gazelles groan therein and there are herds of wild cows whose cheeks are black.

As though their land were a night sky whose clouds have uncovered its stars.<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma, as mentioned earlier,<sup>(3)</sup> looked at the broad expanse of heaven and saw the stars like reddish gazelles and wild cows. Now the adverse occurs and looking at the reddish gazelles and the white, wild cows standing out amongst the traces of the dark refuse of the equipment, he sees them as stars in a sky of scudding dark cloud.

In his Dīwān al-Ma'ānī, al-'Askari considers Dhū'r-Rumma as the best of the Arabs in describing the chameleon and gives some examples of his descriptions which he greatly admires. He then concludes that "the Arabs agreed that Dhū'r-Rumma was the best amongst them in similes."<sup>(4)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma does indeed stand alone in his field. He describes how, on a day so hot

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(1) Ibid, xxxix, 15-21.

(2) Ibid, lxxvi, 3-4.

(3) See above, 143.

(4) Dīwān al-Ma'ānī, ii, 147.



that it compels the gazelle to visit the bottom of its den and the locusts to leap like animals trapped in a net, and the dust because of heat and mirage looks like salt, the colour of the chameleon begins to turn white whereas the skin of its mouth turns gradually green. Stretching its limbs, the chameleon looks like a sinner whose executioner set him high on a tree stump.<sup>(1)</sup> In a slightly different setting, in an empty, waterless desert covered with clouds of dust on every side whose traveller hears nothing but the barking of foxes and sometimes voices of the male-ostrich and gazelles, the limbs of the chameleon under the scorching sun are likened to the hands of a sinner repenting and asking God for forgiveness.<sup>(2)</sup>

Again, in a hot desert filled with mirage, this animal stands erect on a tree stretching its limbs like a criminal whose clothes have been stripped off him in preparation for flogging.<sup>(3)</sup>

Yet again, he describes it appearing as though it were<sup>a</sup> crucified, grey-haired Indian.<sup>(4)</sup> It stands erect on the trunk facing the sun as though it were praying except that it does not say 'God is the greatest.' In standing facing westward in the late afternoon it appears as a Muslim, yet, in facing the East in the morning it becomes Christian. In the morning its upper part looks grey but because of the heat and because

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, v, 41-45.

(2) Ibid, vii, 26-30.

(3) Ibid, xi, 29 & 32.

(4) Ibid, iv, 8-10.

of facing the sun it looks green subsequently.<sup>(1)</sup>

As with every separate subject treated by Dhū'r-Rumma the single and the individual is related to and projected on to the general and the whole. By describing the chameleon, its change of colour, its appearance on the trunk stretching its limbs and directing its face towards the sun, he depicts a realistic picture of a minute aspect of desert life. But the chameleon does not stand separate from its surroundings and by depicting these surroundings in vivid colour and detail, Dhū'r-Rumma produces a picture which is a complete unit, a glimpse of a real scene at a set point in time. The various similes are designed to etch more clearly the physical postures and movements of the chameleon and to endow them with a poetic symbolism. The sinner who stretches his hand repenting and asking God for forgiveness, the criminal whose executioner set him high on a trunk, the crucified Indian, and the naked criminal ready to be flogged - each one of these similes crystalises for the reader an essential and basic attribute in the chameleon's pose. It must be mentioned, however, that Dhū'r-Rumma was criticised by Ibn Qutayba for having plagiarized apparently from Zālim b. al-Barā' al-Fuqaymī the description of the chameleon as being Muslim in the late afternoon and Christian in the morning.<sup>(2)</sup> On

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(1) Ibid, xxx, 32-34.

(2) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā', i, 515.

comparing the two descriptions, it seems obvious that Dhū'r-Rumma's is akin to that of al-Fuḡaymī although his imagery is more elaborate and better fitting the context than al-Fuḡaymī's. On grounds of internal consistency, the latter's phrase, "It prays as Christian and fasts",<sup>(1)</sup> seems to fall short, for fasting is generally characteristic of Muslims rather than Christians.

Other examples of Dhū'r-Rumma's forte for presenting vignettes of his desert world can be illustrated by his descriptions of the sand-grouse, the locusts, which are so splendid in simile and realistic in colour that they need no comment. The sand-grouse comes early through a wide desert to take some of the fetid water to its little ones which have yellow mouths and red crops and have nothing on their heads except some tufts. These little ones, left in the forenoon where the winds drive over them what has fallen out of the qulāqil plant, are so weak that when they get up they feel heavy just as the lean small camels feel when they stand up.<sup>(2)</sup> The sand-grouse comes to the water so hurriedly that when it fills its water-skin (its crop) it does not wait for the other nor does it ask other's help.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) Ibid, i, 515.

(2) The dīwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxvi, 26-30.

(3) Ibid, lxxxvi, 13-14.

Describing the locust, he first portrays a vast desert so full of mirage that the peaks of the hills appear like the humps of sacrificial camels stripped of their vesture. The sun inclines towards the West and the reddish white gazelles look like cowrie shells scattered and strung. In this setting, he describes the spotted black-backed locust - humming like a stringed zither played by an intoxicated man, whose melody is alien to the languages of the Arabs. The locust is riding the burning stones and pebbles (beating them) with its legs whilst the sun, circling in the sky, looks perplexed. The locust's legs when trilling comes forth from his two wings look as though they were those of a hurrying rider goading his camel.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is clear that Dhu'r-Rumma's adhesion to the Bedouin school of poetry did not prevent him from depicting through the framework of the traditional models his own desert world. These Bedouin traditions were the natural channels for expressing his own experiences of desert life.

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(1) Ibid, lxxv, 43-46.

C H A P T E R   I V

DHŪ'R RUMMA'S LOVE POETRY

Three kinds of Ghazal were current in the Umayyad period, namely, the 'Udhri, 'Umarī, and the traditional. The open country of al-Hijaz was the background of the first and its townships of the second. In areas away from the towns there was a tribal society more or less disappointed with the turn that Islam had taken at the hands of the Umayyads, and chafing, for example, at being heavily taxed by their rulers.<sup>(1)</sup> Islam, moreover, had imposed on them many obligations and inhibitions and implanted in them an intense feeling of corporate responsibility which, in its turn, developed and deepened a feeling of guilt - a feeling which the heathen individual had never experienced. Their neighbours in the towns, the aristocratic families of Quraysh with their sophistication, fabulous wealth, retinues, slaves and singers<sup>(2)</sup>, their leisure and their idleness, enhanced the 'Udhri's feeling of disappointment and frustration. For these reasons and because of its social background in a purely tribal society the 'Udhri ghazal emerges as sad, full of sorrow and anguish

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(1) See Tāhā Husein, *Hadīth al-Arbi'ā*, Cairo, 1926, ii, 51-53.

(2) See Jubrā'il S. Jābbūr, *'Umar Ibn al-Rabi'ah*, Beirut, 1935, i, 15-127.

and reflecting a feeling of frustration and futility.

The 'Udhri poet, devoted to a particular woman and never changing to another, sings his love in songs that are the cry of a yearning and desperate soul expressing a chaste and transcendental love for another soul and a longing for spiritual unity. Sincerity and hopelessness are the two dominant features of his songs.<sup>(1)</sup> However, the 'Udhri poet adopted the traditional metres for his composition and used many of the traditional cliches to express his own experiences.

The 'Umari (or licentious) ghazal developed in the towns of al-Hijāz. The Umayyads, for political reasons, principally to distract their opponents and rivals from the caliphate, overwhelmed these towns with fabulous endowments. Consequently, a new kind of ghazal emerged there, expressing in songs and poems a colourful and luxurious life and a gay Caroline attitude towards love and amorous adventure,<sup>(2)</sup> in place of the yearning and sad hopelessness of the 'Udhri ghazal, earthiness and frank concern with things of the flesh that was perhaps in turn the by-product of a frustration, an escape from the world of political reality. Indeed, the political grievances of the Anṣār and some Qurashite families such as

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(1) See Bashīr Yamūt, *Fuḥūlal-shu'ara'* (Dīwān Jamūl Buthayna) Beirut, 1934, 12-

(2) See *Der diwan des Umar b. Abī Rabī'a*, Leipzig, 1909, 1-6, 12-13, 17-18, 23-24, 29-30, 47-49.

Banū Hāshim and the family of al-Zubayr, and their failure to secure what they regarded as their right to the caliphate and the severe punishments inflicted upon them by their opponents, probably, impelled them towards an excessive indulgence in order to forget the humiliating realities of their situation and to compensate for the loss of political glory and prowess.

The third kind, the so-called traditional ghazal was practised by the majority of the poets in the provinces, especially in Iraq and Syria. It followed the accepted traditional norms for the composition of such poetry and opened with a ghazal prelude.<sup>(1)</sup> It seems that the Umayyad policy of Arabism, tribal rivalry, and the nostalgic attitude to a revival of tribal glories of heathendom, were mainly responsible for the poets' adhesion to this sort of ghazal in these provinces. Though the emotion intended to be expressed was, for the most part, artificial, yet it was not without significance. Apart from being a literary link to, and a nostalgic expression of the past, it formed an outlet for suppressed emotions and personal desires and set an emotional mood appropriate to the composition of poetry.

It is true that the influence of the 'Udhriīs penetrated deep into Najd and Yamāma,<sup>(2)</sup> but the traditional prelude still

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(1) See *Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, 41, 43, 56, 59, 99, 124-... ; *Dīwān Jarīr*, Cairo, 1896, 3, 5, 8-....; *Abū Tammām, Naqā'id de Jarir et de Aḥṭal*, Beyrouth, 1922, 28, 48, 64, 70, 83.

(2) *Shawqī Dayf, al-Taṭawwur wa'l-tajdīd fi'l-shi'r al-Umawī* Cairo, 1959, 37-38.

continued in the poetry of poets like Muzāhim al-'Uqaylī and Dhū'r-Rumma. The flat undiversified extent of the desert scenery formed the background which developed the character of the Bedouin and coloured his outlook in regard to human beings as well. The Bedouin could not conceive of man as composed of two separate entities; the human body was to him a manifestation of both flesh and soul. Loving a woman, he thus longed for and desired her neither for the mere satisfaction of an ephemeral lust nor for spiritual union of a Sūfist or platonic character. His attitude towards love combined the sincerity of the 'Udhri's with a frank acceptance of bodily love which was yet different in character from the licentious love-poetry.<sup>(2)</sup> It expressed itself in poems akin to the pre-Islamic ghazal in form and outlook without necessarily being a set imitation of it.

The standards of female beauty remained the same as those of the pagan Arabs. The beautiful woman according to the Jahilī ideal has long black hair, wide black eyes, dark-red lips, bright fine teeth, and a long neck. She is tall and broad-chested with full rounded breasts. She has a tight narrow waist and huge hips.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) See the Poetical remains of Muzāhim al-'Uqaylī, Leiden, 1920, i, ii, iii, viii, x, xv.

(2) See Kinany, The development of gazal in Arabic Lit., Damascus, 1950, 53.

(3) See Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 42-43, 52-53 & 76; Six ancient Arabic poets, 10, 55, 60-61; Dīwān Umru'l-Qays, 16-17, 29-31; Dīwān al-ma'ani, i, 250; The development of gazal in Arabic Lit., 48.



Dhū'r-Rumma's ghazal cannot be regarded as altogether Bedouin. In its salient features, his ghazal appears as faithfully traditional as that of the traditional poets of the provinces - indeed, he rarely composed a poem without opening it with a ghazal prelude. Yet this deduction from his use of similar external forms is misleading. He experienced a real and passionate love and only expressed it through ghazal preludes because he belonged to the Bedouin school which maintained the ghazal prelude as one of its traditions. Dhū'r-Rumma's ghazal shows some of the influences of its predecessors by using the same norms of expression and many ancient clichés - this in spite of the genuine experience and true love which it expresses. Dhū'r Rumma, as a thorough Bedouin, shared the Bedouin outlook and ideals, yet his love was marked with a sincerity and genuineness resembling that of the 'Udhrīs and his own individuality was constantly expressing itself. His ghazal, if scrutinized closely, would seem to fall into three categories -(a) 'Udhrī, (b) Sensual (c) Bedouin.

His passionate love for Mayya lasted from youth till his death, except for a short interval caused by some misunderstanding or estrangement, his long-standing devotion to her, and his abiding longing to meet her raises him to the same level as the 'Udhrīs lamenting the torments of love. Moreover, he almost certainly came into contact through his journey to al-Hijāz with the

'Udhri poets and was subsequently influenced by their sad despairing ghazal. His religious attitude is also worthy of consideration. The desired fruit, being forbidden, became a source of torment and idealising inspiration. Thus, a voice similar to that of the 'Udhri's, echoes strongly through many passages of his ghazal. In them, Dhū'r-Rumma sings of a love sincere and tormenting and draws with truthfulness and passion many pictures of his emotional state:

"That evening, there was nothing for me to do at the deserted abode but to pick up pebbles and draw lines upon the earth.

I would draw a line and rub it out and then draw it again with my hand while the ravens were alighting around me." (1)

In these two verses a complete picture is drawn - the beloved's abode is desolate and deserted except for the ravens which are the customary portentous sign of the lovers' parting, the time is evening which always indicates sorrow and despair and remembrance, the time which intensifies the feeling of solitude. In a touchingly individualized portrait Dhū'r-Rumma is picking up pebbles and drawing lines upon the dust and then obliterating them, distracted by extreme sorrow and despair. (2)

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(1) al-Ḥayawān, i, 63; The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlvi, 6-7

(2) See al-Ḥayawān, i, 63-64.

In describing his tormenting love and bitter weeping he paints this impressive picture:-

"By your life, I was on the day of the sandy plain of Mālik, afflicted by flowing and choking tears. And the pupil of my eye appears when tears ebb ~~#~~ then disappears since the eye brims over with tears."<sup>(1)</sup>

His yearning for Mayya's abode is beautifully expressed in the following verses which were later sung by the famous singer, Ibrahīm al-Mu<sup>//</sup>ṣilī:<sup>(2)</sup>

"When the winds blow from the direction of a place in which the people of Mayya dwell, their blowing stirs up my yearning.

A yearning which causes the eye to shed tears and the yearning of every soul is for the place where its beloved is."<sup>(3)</sup>

And the following verses which describe his sincere lasting love and his painful state of captivity which could not be alleviated by being near to Mayya, nor could he be released from it by being distant from her:-

"If distance changes lovers my hidden love for Mayya does not depart.

If I am near her I am not wearied of love

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(1) The *diwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma, līi, 9-10

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 130.

(3) The *diwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma, viii, 8-9.

And if her abode becomes distant love for her does not become distant.

When a thought recalling Mayya flashes through the mind, it is almost enough to wound the heart.

The loves of other hearts change, yet I do not see your share of my heart given to other than you.

And some loves may perish by being deserted, yet the love I feel for you ever grows anew and increases.<sup>(1)</sup>

Similarly, in the following verses he illustrates with felicity the extremity of his love, so enamoured of his beloved that instead of enjoying the pleasure of love and the bliss of being near her, he weeps for fear of what parting will mean. He deserts her as though he hates her, but his love remains to torment him and he makes for a certain land in the hope that he may return to her:-

"And I was wont to weep though parting was not yet due, because of the knowledge of what parting can do.

And I fear your departure and the fear of the nearness of parting afflicts me, though our union is still complete. And I desert you in the manner of one who hates whilst my love for you has lacerated my liver.

And I make for a land to which she is likely to return in the hope that the returning riding camels will bring me

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(1) Ibid, x, 6-10.

back to you one day." (1)

In the following passage, Dhū'r-Rumma not only soars above many 'Udhrī poets in terms of platonic love but shows a complete unawareness of everything in his world except his beloved's existence. This passage which illustrates him oblivious of everything except Mayya and which reminds one of the obsessional attitudes of the Sūfī ghazal, ranks amongst the finest passages of Arabic love poetry:-

"And when I see a glimpse of Mayya's face, I fall in a swoon oblivious of all around me.

And when I hear her voice I feel as though a piercing arrow had entered my heart.

And when it occurred to me, I directed my face towards Mecca in the morning after a lapse of some nights.

I pray, but I do not know when I remember her whether I have prayed for the morning prayer two or eight rak'as, And when I travel through the open land, I find myself leaning in her direction as if to adjust the ropes of my saddle.

To the right if she is to the right and if she is to the left loves draws me to the left ....

She is magic although there is a cure for magic;

Yet I do not find a physician for what I suffer from. (2)

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(1) Ibid, xlv, 23-26.

(2) Ibid, lxxxvii, 19-24 & 26.

In a curious fragment of three verses, Dhū'r-Rumma's psycho-sexual attitudes betray themselves rather vulgarly through presenting a riddle. This riddle is about a pulley-ring of a well bucket through which he inserts a span-long iron pin; it creaks but when the water (taken from the well) is about to be poured out, that is when the bucket has been pulled up, it stops creaking. Dhū'r-Rumma sees in the pulley-ring, in the iron pin which goes through it, in the creaking of the water coming out of the bucket a series of sexual symbols:-

"And many a shy maid neither human nor genie have  
I dallied with while I had my oil with me.  
So I inserted into her an ample span-length and  
she cried out. And no, By God! she was not found  
to be committing fornication.  
And when the time of emission (pouring forth of  
water) came near she became quiet in order that I  
might have the emission outside though desiring  
that I do it again."<sup>(1)</sup>

The 'double entendre' in the image of the ring, pin, and gushing forth of water etc. is perfectly clear. In psychological terms, this passage points of obsessional attitudes in Dhū'r-Rumma concomitant with sexual inhibition. This might also explain his beautiful description of the sand dunes which

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(1) Ibid, lxxxv, 1-3.

he likens to the hips of virgin girls.<sup>(1)</sup> It might, likewise, explain his desire, on some occasions, not for one particular woman but for a certain type of woman - for tall beautiful women from the nobility of the tribe of 'Āmir,<sup>(2)</sup> and for his departing neighbours, those white women with long necks, beautiful bellies and full round breasts, whose hips he likens to the heaps of sands over which the sun rose after they have sipped the water of the clouds.<sup>(3)</sup>

The same emphasis is to be found in other passages where he likens them to wild cows and gazelles in a particularly sensual way.<sup>(4)</sup>

There is no clear line of demarcation between the libidinous and the idealistic elements in his poetry, for some of his ghazal on Mayya echoes the sexual obsessions already referred to, as in this lively passage:-

"(She has) heavy well-rounded hips, slim-waisted and lean-bellied, too slender to be belted firmly by the belt, and her frame and bones are perfectly built.

She beautifies the clothes she puts on, yet if she is stripped of her clothes, her reclining naked on the cushion beautifies her still more.

She shows you a pure complexion, soft with neither blemish

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(1) Ibid, xli, 31.

(2) Ibid, vii, 12-14.

(3) Ibid, lv, 18-21.

(4) Ibid, lvii, 12-19.

nor scar.

When the seeker of the enjoyment of this world sleeps  
with her, (belly to belly), while the tent over them  
is covered by night,

She would impart fragrance with a perfumed nose-tip  
anointed with musk and Indian saffron.

She increasingly delights the eye when she unveils her  
face,

Yet when she partly veils (the lower part of the face)  
the eye becomes perplexed.

Dark-red of lip is she, in her lips is a dark-red pigment,  
and on her gums and teeth there is cool sweetness and  
whiteness.

Wide-eyed, giving the effect of being with collyrium,  
Her skin is yellowish white like silver touched by gold.<sup>(1)</sup>

This beautiful description is fundamentally Bedouin, as  
will be demonstrated later. It is the ideal of female beauty  
that is being described. But what concerns us at this point  
is the sensuality of the imagery and the carnal desire which  
expresses itself openly through his ghazal about his life-long  
beloved, Mayya, whom he loved so dearly with such sincerity and  
devotion. Here, his inhibited desire once again betrays him;  
it speaks eloquently within an ostensibly traditional

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(1) The *dīwān* of *Dhū'r-Rumma*, i, 13-20.



description. Dhū'r-Rumma, in a day-dream mood, describes Mayya and dresses her with the ideal of Bedouin beauty, then he, betrayed by his suppressed carnal desire, strips her of her dress so that she appears bewitching and moving as his desire longs for.<sup>(1)</sup> Then he continues in his dream and places her away from the watchers' eyes in a tent shrouded with the darkness of night. There everything is enticing - an ideally beautiful girl whom he loves lies naked and perfumed upon a cushion. At this point, Dhū'r-Rumma could not help allowing his imagination to run away with him in dwelling upon the satisfying of his sexual hunger in the night-hidden tent. The choice of evocative words illustrates this - for example, the expression "أَهْوَلَدَةُ الدُّنْيَا", "the seeker of the enjoyment of this world", expresses his hedonistic attitude; "تَبَطَّنَا", "he attaches her directly to his belly", and "the tent hidden by night" are redolent of lust and a desire hungry for satisfaction. The expression "لَذَّةُ الدُّنْيَا", "the enjoyment of this world" suggests a struggle within himself against ephemeral and unlawful enjoyments, though implying at the same time a sexual hunger.

The Bedouin ghazal of which the traditional prelude is but a formal aspect was his natural field through which he expresses

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(1) Somewhat akin to this is his description of Mayya given in Ode V. See the *dīwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma, v, 21-22.

his sincere love for Mayya, sings her bodily beauty, and describes her character and moral qualities and longs for her not out of sheer carnal appetite but as his other half with which it is natural for him to seek unity. Mayya, as she is depicted in his poetry, is the manifestation of the ideal qualities which the Bedouin man likes in his beloved, as well as the manifestation of ideal bodily beauty which the Bedouin desires. In his poetry, Dhū'r-Rumma not only sings of Mayya's beauty but he sees in her the charm and vitality of the desert world. Nature speaks and exposes its most beautiful aspects through this beloved woman. The most beautiful, the most dear to him of the desert manifestations and the most admired of woman's qualities, are gathered in a wonderful unity. Dhū'r-Rumma, moreover, as he describes her beauty does not stop at likening her features to desert aspects, but proceeds to describe, as is his wont, these aspects amidst their natural surroundings - their colours and atmosphere. By so doing, he presents portraits which are so alive that they create in the reader's mind living experiences of desert life and which continue to impart delight and enjoyment. She, for instance, smiles and shows her teeth which are like the lilies of the sandy plain of Ma'rūf which is at the same time shot with cloud and sun alternately.<sup>(1)</sup> He goes on to describe the lilies

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, līi, 18.

blossoming in a good sandy plain, then describes them in a spring time when the clouds pass and disperse over the pure white flowers. The simile, moreover, is fascinating in its detail. By so describing the lilies, he creates the image of her teeth gleaming beautifully one moment and overshadowed by her lips the next. Thus, before the reader's mind, two pictures, both beautiful and alive, are presented as woven beautifully together. In another passage, he describes a gazelle grazing amongst sands which the heavy rain of the morning has dressed with rich green leaves. Seeing a human being at that isolated place, it comes forward, yet shows in her behaviour nothing but panic. This panic-stricken gazelle amidst that green pasture is not more beautiful than Mayya on that evening when she tried to wound your heart with a face as pure as the gleaming sun, as though the sight of it were to re-open the wound in this heart. And with an eye as though the two Babylonians (Hārūt and Marūt) had set a charm upon your heart on the day of Ma'qula, and with a mouth of well-set teeth like lilies growing in a pure sandy plain neither close to saline land nor to the salt of the sea. And with a white neck and upper breast, pure white when not yellowed from the sprinkling of saffron.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxiv, 7-14.

In this description there is a series of colourful pictures embedded in a lively and beautiful ghazal.

In the same way Mayya, as pictured in his poetry, has all the moral qualities which the Bedouin admires. She is quiet, good-natured, neither talks in an unseemly manner in her neighbour's house nor is suspected in her behaviour. If the neighbouring women talk against her in her absence, "she does not know what anger is." She does not like gossiping nor fabricating tales against others, nor does she like talking loudly or shouting.<sup>(1)</sup> In love she is unyielding, niggardly. (Dhū'r-Rumma is criticised<sup>(2)</sup> for holding a view different from that of the traditionalists who say that women turn away from the poor and love and pursue the rich. His view is that "it is not poverty that harms in love, rather, is it woman's nature which has been characterised by niggardliness."<sup>(3)</sup> They come our way to attract us and when we fall in love with them and pursue them they do not fulfil what they have promised because they are miserly by nature.<sup>(4)</sup>) Mayya does not talk obscenely; she attracts men's hearts, yet she defers the fulfilment of that which she has promised.<sup>(5)</sup> Her talk is pleasant, neither meaningless jabbering nor falling short of the minimum required.<sup>(6)</sup> She, in short,

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(1) Ibid, i, 23-25.

(2) Al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā', i, 519.

(3) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxiv, 19.

(4) See the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxix, 25-28; lxi, 17.

(5) Ibid, lxix, 5.

(6) Ibid, xxix, 22.

gathers in her person all the ideal features of desert beauty. Her picture, as reflected in his poetry, might differ from reality since it is natural that love, his creative imagination, and her being remote from him or prevented from meeting him except on rare passing occasion, would help to create in his mind an idealized picture of her.

Mayya's person, therefore, can be said to epitomise the ideal standard of desert beauty obtaining:- black pig-tails so long that they touch her sand-soft hips,<sup>(1)</sup> hanging down like black serpents hidden within a lote-tree or Palma-Christi.<sup>(2)</sup> Her face is as pure and white as the gleaming of the sun<sup>(3)</sup> emerging above the horizon from many-folded clouds,<sup>(4)</sup> having neither a blemish nor a scar.<sup>(5)</sup> Her eyes are like those of a gazelle but more telling in beauty and charm,<sup>(6)</sup> as though the two Babylonian magicians had affected his heart with the charm of her eyes.<sup>(7)</sup> God said to her eyes "Be!" and they were, affecting the mind as wine does.<sup>(8)</sup> Her mouth has a sweet smile, and is fragrant. When she smiles, she shows beautiful, well-set teeth, white like lilies which appear in

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- (1) Ibid, xxi, 6.  
(2) Ibid, xlvi, 16.  
(3) Ibid, xxiv, 11.  
(4) Ibid, xxi, 5.  
(5) Ibid, i, 14.  
(6) Ibid, lii, 17.  
(7) Ibid, xxiv, 12.  
(8) Ibid, xxix, 23.

their full magnificence in the late afternoon,<sup>(1)</sup> or as lilies in a sandy plain over which the clouds gather and disperse.<sup>(2)</sup> He describes frequently her mouth, its smile and its sweet odour. He likens her smile to the glitter of lightning,<sup>(3)</sup> the scent of her mouth to the fragrance of meadows,<sup>(4)</sup> and her saliva to wine mixed with the water of a cloud pouring forth rain at night.<sup>(5)</sup>

He shows no scruple in using many of the traditional clichés of his school such as the likeness of her face to the sun<sup>(6)</sup> or saliva to wine mixed with rain-water,<sup>(7)</sup> or teeth to lilies.<sup>(8)</sup> Even so, the creative element in his composition continues to be present and he uses these clichés to express his own personal feelings and to present a lively picture fraught with emotional suggestion about his love and the life of the desert. The following verses illustrate this welding of traditional clichés and highly personalised creative composition:-

"And she smiles, showing a sweet mouth as though its well-set teeth were lilies with which a sandy plain has

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(1) Ibid, xxix, 24.

(2) Ibid, lii, 18.

(3) Ibid, xxxv, 20; lxxxiii, 10.

(4) Ibid, xxxv, 31-33.

(5) Ibid, lvii, 25-26.

(6) Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 84.

(7) Dīwān al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, 74.

(8) al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt, 90; Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 41, 84.

been garbed.

The dark-green tooth-stick is run by soft dyed fingers over the shining teeth so that they (the teeth) are pure white,

Over teeth whose saliva is cool after a while of sleep, with the like of which thirsty hearts would be quenched and satisfied.

As though its flavour were, as the hands of the stars are laid down (i.e. the end of night), the best of the pure wine."<sup>(1)</sup>

The image of a soft hand running a dark-green tooth-stick over cool sweet-tasting teeth is typical of Dhū'r-Rumma's treatment. To him her mouth is a glass of fine wine and his thirst for it is beautifully expressed by the phrase "with the like of which thirsty hearts would be quenched and satisfied." In short, the verses draw an evocative picture of a beautiful girl, deeply longed for at the last hour of night when the stars incline to the desert horizon.

Again, he describes the fragrant smell of her mouth after she wakes up from her sleep:-

"No meadow in the finest soil of Najd upon which a cloud has rained by night whilst the East breeze blows gently. Containing fresh wild lotus and hanwa herbs to which the

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlvī, 12-15.

rain showers come again and again,  
Is finer than she in fragrance after she wakes from her  
sleep, nor is a sandy aromatic plain more fragrant than  
she."<sup>(1)</sup>

Here, he describes a meadow in the sands of Najd, the freshness of its herbs after a rainy night and the cool, gentle breeze of its famous Eastern wind blowing over the meadow and filling the area with a fragrant aura. Then, after presenting this delightful picture of nature he sings of his love and describes the sweet smell of his beloved by way of comparison. He thus presents his ghazal, characteristically, through the medium of his natural surroundings. By so doing his love fuses with nature and imparts through this fusion a feeling of personal warmth and emotion, rich in its colour and suggestion. The following descriptions complete the physical picture of Mayya:- He likens her long white neck to that of the mother of a little gazelle, frightened and, consequently, stretching its neck.<sup>(2)</sup> In likening her to a gazelle he draws lively and realistic desert portraits through which the gazelle moves with the reflection of the forenoon light waving on its white back.<sup>(3)</sup> The upper part of her (Mayya's) breast is pure white,<sup>(4)</sup> her waist so slim that the

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(3) Ibid, xxxv, 31-33.

(4) Ibid, lii, 16.

(3) Ibid, x, 11-15; xxi, 9-12; lviii, 19-23.

(4) Ibid, xxiv, 14.



belt moves slackly and loosely<sup>(1)</sup> while her hips are well-rounded and large like a heap of sand shaking and trembling.<sup>(2)</sup> Finally, her stature is characterised by two impressions - one of an upright spear and the other of a heap of sand shaking and trembling.<sup>(3)</sup> The following passage is a further example of his ghazal through which the most beautiful features of desert life are identified with his beloved's beauty. In it all nature around him sings of the beauty of Mayya and Mayya, in turn, reflects the beauty of the desert, a unique unity of the desert and of Mayya, both so dear to him and both so stimulating to his poetic inspiration:-

"The eyes of the fawn frequently remind me of Mayya, and  
the shining white likies of her mouth;  
And beneath Mayya's wrap there are the extremities of  
sand dunes and at her throat a white-necked black-eyed fawn.  
And between the fold of the waist-wrapper and the throat  
there is a wide expanse, lean of belly and slim-waisted  
so that the two belts move loosely.

And in the ivory bracelets, rings, and anklets are spear-shafts (he is referring to her upright body) which satisfy the eye, both soft and full.

(Her fingers) are soft and long whose tips are like the daughters of sands (a variety of white worm), intermittently

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(1) Ibid, i, 13; xx, 7.

(2) Ibid, xxx, 21.

(3) Ibid, xxx, 21.

disappearing and appearing.

You see her rear one half an upright spear and the other half is a heap of sand shaking and trembling.

She gets up weighted down by her hips, slow is her standing, and she walks gently for a short distance and gets tired.<sup>(1)</sup>

As has been pointed out previously,<sup>(2)</sup> his love for Umm Salīm preceded his love for Mayya. However, his ghazal on Umm Sālīm, if looked at closely, gives the impression that his love for her was simply a vehicle for composing poetry and lacks the element of personal involvement which breathes through his verses on Mayya. His ghazal on Umm Sālīm is imitatively traditional, lacking the sincere emotion and natural flowing of a genuine emotional experience which is shown in his ghazal on Mayya.<sup>(3)</sup> It was, in fact, an exercise in the composition and training of an apprentice guided by the models of the masters of his school. The main characteristics of his ghazal on Umm Sālīm are, in fact, a sense of consciously imitative composition and an apparent effort to display his linguistic ability and knowledge through the use of strange and archaic words.<sup>(4)</sup> In it his poetical spirit remains fettered and the only anticipatory sign of his later greatness

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(1) Ibid, xxx, 16-22.

(2) See above, 60-61.

(3) See the diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xv, 1-4; xlvi, 1-15. lxxix, 1-31 & 44-45; lxxxiv, 1-8.

(4) See the diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xlvi & lxxix.

lies in his feeling for nature and his power of portraying the various features of the life of the desert. It is interesting to notice in a poem on Umm Sālīm that he does not move, as he does elsewhere, from the ghazal prelude to describe his she-camel and the desert in a natural way dictated by a chain of associated thoughts. The reader is conscious almost of the sense of relief with which he uses the usual device "So leave this off!"<sup>(1)</sup> ( ) as if welcoming the change to his natural field in describing his she-camel and the desert. In another poem, he quickly leaves off mentioning Umm Sālīm and begins a ghazal about a group of women, describing their beauty, and the way they show themselves to him when their men are absent. He then presents a beautiful picture of lilies, gently shaken by dewy Eastern breeze, between the isolated tracts of sands, and of an aura of lavender sprinkled by dews when night had approached "till it touched them with its foremost parts". Then he describes those women - how they entice a youth with talk as sweet as pure honey until he falls in love only to find the consequences as bitter as colocynth.. He also describes the spectre of his beloved visiting him after the swimming stars have approached the horizon in setting. He then describes the desert and camels and likens Umm Sālīm to a gazelle<sup>(2)</sup> without

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(1) Ibid, xlvi, 16.

(2) Ibid, lxxix, 10-45.

his usual felicity - a likeness quoted by some critics when attacking Dhū'r-Rumma.<sup>(1)</sup> He turns subsequently to praise of a certain Mulādhim b. Ḥurayth al-Ḥanafī.<sup>(2)</sup> This poem seems to have been one of his earliest panegyrics before influential personalities received him as a recognized poet. Finally he turns to satirize Umrū'l-Qays tribe<sup>(3)</sup> - a very odd amalgam of praise and satire in one poem, unless it is to be regarded as a collection of fragments pieced together into one ode.

His ghazal on Bint Faṣṣāṣ (or Faḍḍād) which forms the short opening of a poem<sup>(4)</sup> is, likewise, traditional. In a swift move, the prelude turns towards a group of women, Bint Faṣṣāṣ being amongst them, and describes them in a way in which his thirsting sensuality expresses itself clearly.<sup>(5)</sup> Once again, the poem displays his excellence in describing nature.<sup>(6)</sup> It also contains a verse<sup>(7)</sup> composed awkwardly which suggests that this poem was one of his early compositions.

In his dīwān, there is a poem<sup>(8)</sup> which sings of a woman by the name of Ṣaydā'. Looking at it closely, one cannot help

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(1) See below, 251-253.

(2) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxix, 46-55.

(3) Ibid, lxxix, 56-60.

(4) Ibid, ix, 1-3.

(5) Ibid, ix, 4-10.

(6) Ibid, ix, 11-19.

(7) Ibid, ix, 25.

(8) Ibid, xi.

having the impression that Saydā' is simply Mayya herself. It contains a verse<sup>(1)</sup> which speaks of his love for Mayya but this may have been inserted later. Perhaps the poem was composed during a time of an estrangement. However, another verse<sup>(2)</sup> in one of the MSS. mentions Kharqā' instead of Saydā'. Even so, Mayya could be intended by the ghazal of this poem since Kharqā', as we shall see later, was also used by him as a cover for the person he really loved.

It has been suggested<sup>(3)</sup> that Kharqā' was another woman to whom Dhū'r-Rumma turned, perhaps during a period of estrangement between himself and Mayya. Bearing this suggestion in mind, one encounters when reading Dhū'r-Rimma's ghazal on Kharqā' a situation of confusion and entanglement. In one poem, for example, he mentions first Kharqā',<sup>(4)</sup> then turns to Mayya saying:-

"How many a desert and mountain are there before  
reaching Mayya!"<sup>(5)</sup>

In another poem, he begins by addressing Mayya's abode, then enquires from his two companions whether they see the departing howdahs. He then describes some of the seasonal changes which compelled Mayya's tribe to depart and which were the

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(1) Ibid, xi, 10.

(2) See the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, (Margin) p.95.

(3) See above, 58.

(4) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, iv, 4.

(5) Ibid, iv, 8.

cause of his grief since in turn they caused Mayya's departure.<sup>(1)</sup> Then he sees in a gazelle encountering him and his friends a likeness to Kharqā'.<sup>(2)</sup> Yet he ends the poem by expressing his love and intense longing for Mayya.<sup>(3)</sup> In the ghazal prelude of another poem he describes Kharqā''s abode then suddenly mentions the abodes of <sup>the</sup> tribes when the rope of friendliness with the family of Mayya was new and uncut off.<sup>(4)</sup> Yet another poem begins by describing Mayya's ruined encampments and howdahs and expresses his love for Mayya,<sup>(5)</sup> then mentions Kharqā''s spectre.<sup>(6)</sup> In yet another poem, he expresses his love for Kharqā',<sup>(7)</sup> then says that he entertains his companions on their night journey by singing about Mayya and Kharqā'.<sup>(8)</sup> Finally, he begins another poem by mentioning Kharqā',<sup>(9)</sup> then says: "As if time had not frightened you with parting from Mayya before her (Kharqā') and as if you had not witnessed a parting which carried her away."<sup>(10)</sup> He describes himself as if intoxicated by the wine of Babylon in the morning on which the parting of Kharqā' had suddenly terrified him and that there

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- (1) Ibid, xvii, 1-9.  
(2) Ibid, xvii, 10-12.  
(3) Ibid, xvii, 28-29.  
(4) Ibid, xxxviii, 1-4.  
(5) Ibid, xxxix, 1-10.  
(6) Ibid, xxxix, 35.  
(7) Ibid, lxvi, 1-20.  
(8) Ibid, lxvi, 21.  
(9) Ibid, lxx, 1.  
(10) Ibid, lxx, 2.

was no such grief as had been his on the day of the sand of Mālik and Huzwā when her howdahs departed;<sup>(1)</sup> yet he expresses in some verses his abiding love for Mayya.<sup>(2)</sup>

The references to both Mayya and Kharqā' in most of these poems presents a difficult problem. If Kharqā' was another woman and not another name for Mayya, as some critics have claimed, the confusion may perhaps be a result of confusing<sup>(3)</sup> Mayya with Kharqā' in some of the above-mentioned poems. It can be argued that each of these poems seems to have been compounded, as indicated earlier, of fragments which have nothing in common between them except that they are identical in metre and rhyme. Furthermore, these fragments seem to have been composed on different occasions, mentioning Mayya and some Kharqā', but this explanation could only be applied to a portion of this ghazal. Yet another likely explanation is that in turning towards Kharqā', probably during a time of estrangement, Dhū'r-Rumma still could not free himself from his love for Mayya. In spite of assuming a new love and mentioning the name of the new beloved, his heart remained always loyal to Mayya though his tongue pretended to pronounce the name of another woman.<sup>(4)</sup> Consequently, because of anger, estrangement, or some other reason, he made Kharqā''s name a

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(1) Ibid, lxx, 4-6.

(2) Ibid, lxx, 12-16.

(3) See the diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, iv, xvii; xxxix, lxx.

(4) See the diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxvi, 1-18; lxxv, 1-14.

brave cover for his longing for Mayya; yet though he pretends to open his poem by describing Kharqā', he could not hide the truth and mentions Mayya's places.<sup>(1)</sup> His mentioning of the sand of Mālik and Ḥuzwā as he speaks of the howdahs of Kharqā' is a further indication of his love for Mayya, for these were places in Yamama associated with Mayya, whereas Kharqā''s place was, as has been reported previously,<sup>(2)</sup> at Falj on the pilgrims' route. He sometimes expresses his love for Kharqā' and alludes to Mayya's betrayal of his love:-

"Separation increases the freshness of the union with Kharqā', if the worn-out ropes of love were betrayed by their maintainer."<sup>(3)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma's ghazal on Kharqā' can thus be regarded as a continuation of his ghazal on Mayya and the name of Kharqā' which he speaks of openly was but a cover for emotions associated with Mayya whom he really loved. Consequently, his ghazal on Kharqā' is similar in character to that which he composed about Mayya. Estrangement from Mayya would, understandably, drive him to seek for a substitute, although this brought no relief from the burning of love nor cure for the hidden cares.<sup>(4)</sup> He describes himself, significantly, as unchangeable in love but capable of turning away when his beloved no longer responds<sup>(5)</sup> - an unmistakable allusion here

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(1) Ibid, xxxviii, 1-6.

(2) See above, 59.

(3) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxx, 11.

(4) Ibid, lxvi, 2.

(5) Ibid, lxvi, 9.



to Mayya. He also likens Kharqā' to a gazelle which has a little dizzy fawn,<sup>(1)</sup> as he likens Mayya to that graceful creature:-

"At Dhu'l-Arṭā at evening-tide as the gazelles stretch their necks towards the riders,  
I say to a gazelle from the wild creatures which dwell between Suwayqa and the reddish rippled stretches of sands:

'I see in you, O gazelle of the winding sands, resemblances to Kharqā' - may you be safe from the entanglements of the snares.

For your eyes are like hers, and your colour is like her colour, and your neck is like hers except that she is not without ornaments.' "<sup>(2)</sup>

He describes the flavour of her mouth comparing it to the fragrance of a dark green meadow full of lilies and new buds, stirred by a rain cloud at night or to the perfume of the hanwa herb when the East wind has moved gently over it at night and the meadow has been rained upon.<sup>(3)</sup>

His ghazal on Kharqā' has, indeed, the same warmth and colour as his songs about Mayya. From some allusions, one can hear the voice of his love for Mayya still unabated;<sup>(4)</sup> he frequently pronounces the name of Kharqā' but one feels that

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(1) Ibid, lxxv, 15.

(2) Ibid, lxvi, 15-18.

(3) Ibid, lxxv, 23-26.

(4) Ibid, lxxv, 1-14.

the name of Mayya is his real concern. Perhaps Dhū'r-Rumma decided, for some reason, to turn his heart away from Mayya towards Kharqā'. However, it seems that he could not succeed in carrying out that intention and shortly afterwards he emerges again as Dhū'r-Rumma of Mayya, singing of her beauty and expressing his passionate love and longing for her till the year of his death.

C H A P T E R V

PANEGYRIC AND SATIRE

Dhū'r-Rumma's artistic concern was with his desert world, although he lived in a period in which most poets built their fame by participating in battles of abuse and satirical obscenity. The revival of ancient tribal rivalry and political conflicts intensified the involvement of poets and poetry with the main issues of the time. Creative artistry in such poetry was bound to take second place and to-day this poetry interests us mainly in-so-far as it provides us with data of a more or less social or historical nature rather than a record of artistic achievement. Dhu'r-Rumma was one of the few poets who remained faithful to their art, though the spirit of the time did touch him slightly and the pressure of social contacts pushed him into a marginal engagement in the issues of his day.

As many panegyrists received great rewards from the Caliphs and the governors and as the demands of life were pressing, Dhu'r-Rumma was tempted to cast in his lot with some prominent men. Yet, even in his praise he did not forget his own world nor did he sacrifice art for more immediate and material demands. In fact, his obsession with the desert so dominated his panegyrics that in one long ode he

refers in one verse to his patron the Caliph. However, necessity seems to have prompted him early in his life to seek the favour of some notables. It may be that he first sought audience of some personalities of his own locality before moving to Iraq, a more likely venue for the gaining of renown as well as rewards. As a young Bedouin poet in his early twenties and still unknown, he must have encountered difficult hardships. From his poetry, we understand that he sought the audience of Mālik b. Misma', an outstanding chief of Bakr b. Wā'il, but found the door shut in his face. He says:

"Verily, Iraq has not been a dwelling place for my family and the door which (leads) to Abū-Ghassān (Mālik b. Misma') is shut."<sup>(1)</sup>

As Mālik b. Misma' was killed in 102 A.H.,<sup>(2)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma's attempt to see him must have occurred sometime before Mālik's death, when he himself could not have been more than twenty five years of age. His failure in this instance did not discourage him and he went on to praise 'Abd al-Malik b. Bishr governor of Beṣra 102 A.H.,<sup>(3)</sup> subsequently 'Umar b. Hubayra governor of Iraq 102-105 A.H.<sup>(4)</sup> as well as other influential persons. He settled in the end upon his famous patron Bilāl b. Abī Burda. He tried also, probably some time during his

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xvii, 13.

(2) See above, p.28.

(3) See above p.29.

(4) See above p.29.

last ten years, to seek the bounty of the Umayyad Caliphs as his poetry indicates. But it is his praise of Bilāl that fulfilled his needs and brought sufficient luxury and wealth for him to be seen in al-Mirbad wearing a garment worth two hundred dīnārs.<sup>(1)</sup> His success incurred the envy of some poets such as Ru'ba who accused him of plagiarism.<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma as a panegyrist has been looked at unfavourably and regarded as inferior compared with famous panegyrists like al-Akḥṭal, Jarīr, and al-Farazdaq. It has been maintained that he did not excel as they did and some critics counted this alleged failure in praise, and in satire also, as a serious shortcoming responsible for his being excluded from the ranks of the great poets. Ibn Qutayba, for example, recognized his merits in describing desert life and in excelling in similes, yet he concluded that when he turned to praise and satire he failed and achieved nothing.<sup>(3)</sup> Abū 'Ubayda and Muḥammad b. Yazīd the grammarian held the view that he did not excel in praise.<sup>(4)</sup> It seems natural that he, the consummate artist who gave himself up to singing of his own feelings and emotions about his beloved and about the natural surroundings amidst which he lived, should have little

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 123.

(2) See above, p. 36.

(3) al-Muwashshah, 176.

(4) Ibid, 178-179.

inclination towards eulogy, an art requiring a heightening of social rather than artistic awareness. It is also obvious that so individual a poet as Dhū'r-Rumma, devoting his gifts to artistic ends only, could not be a first-rate panegyrist since poetical inspiration would escape were he to direct it beyond the range of his interests into praise and satire. This explains his inability to compose a panegyric on Bilāl on one of his visits to Besra, for he stayed for a year waiting for poetical inspiration, but with no avail. Then one day he passed by an old woman's house and she, noticing his frequent passings by her, said "Your moving about has been prolonged. Is it because of a wife you have obtained happiness with or a dispute by which you have become unhappy?" On hearing this, he said "By God! What I have been after has now come." Then he said:-

"An old woman, by whose door I passed every evening and morning from my family and then back, says:

'Are you (looking) for a wife in this town or are you concerned with a dispute? I have seen you staying all year long' ".

Then he passed through the ode and (completed) it.<sup>(1)</sup>

Another reason for being regarded as a failure as a panegyrist in comparison with other famous panegyrists is

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 184-185.

that he composed his praise within the framework of his school, in compositions in which he does not display a begging servility nor does he exaggerate in praise. On the contrary, he dwells to a degree upon the artistic section of his panegyric rather than the panegyric itself and imparts throughout that section a consciousness in the reader of his poetical power.

As his similies and metaphors are Bedouin, so is his praise, also true of his school. He shows the person praised as he actually was, or rather as he himself viewed him, with such verisimilitude and little exaggeration, whereas other panegyrists of his time coloured their praise with exaggeration and flattery. This, in fact, was the reason why some critics did not regard him as one of the great poets. In short, Dhū'r-Rumma was first and foremost an artist who dedicated himself to the expressing of his own personal feelings about his love and his desert environment and did not praise except reservedly. If he did praise he would not exaggerate and would only move within the framework of his school. Falling short of his contemporary panegyrists was a proof, in the view of the early critics, of the fact that he was not a great poet. Tha'lab says: "Abū 'Ubayda said "when Dhū'r-Rumma composes love poetry or describes he is like Jarīr but no more (nothing beyond this.)' Abū'Ubayda, was then asked "You do

not like his poetry except to faces that have no backs and breasts that have no buttocks.' And he said "It is so!" (1) Another critic, thinking that Dhū'r-Rumma failed in praise, satire, and boasting and succeeded only in simile, went so far as to regard him as being a quarter of a poet which prompts the author of al-Shawamikh to comment:-

"To regard the one who excels in simile and description as a quarter of a poet is something no one can say, for praise and satire have not been regarded amongst the main bases of poetry even in the age of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, whose renown was based upon satire, praise and naqā'id. The poet may excel and produce a wonder in one branch of poetry ... when a keen sense of observation and power of description are possessed by him, he then emerges and gains distinction. Yet if you eliminate the section on metaphor and simile from the praise of al-Nābigha, Jarīr, and al-Farazdaq or from their satire nothing would be left worthy of remembrance. Dhū'r-Rumma did not excel in praise nor in satire since his ways and movements were in love (poetry) and in the sands of al-Dahnā'.<sup>(2)</sup>" But Dhū'r-Rumma did compose good praise and satire within the norms of his school, although he did not make them his first concern. There are, moreover, other causes which may have operated in excluding him from the ranks of the great poets.

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 176.

(2) al-Shawamikh, 21.



Hammād al-Rāwīya states that they excluded him because of his youth and that they (i.e. Jarīr and al-Farazdaq) were jealous of him.<sup>(1)</sup> He was also attacked for some of his Bedouin expressions. It is reported that when Bilāl heard dhū'r-Rumma's words:-

"I heard 'people are seeking rain' so I said to

Saydah 'Seek Bilāl',

he ordered his servant to provide her with fodder and date-stones, inferring that Dhū'r-Rumma's praise did not deserve largesse.<sup>(2)</sup>

One version of this account has an interesting aspect other than the obvious one of criticising Dhū'r-Rumma. According to Abū 'Ubayda, Bilāl, on hearing the aforesaid verse, said to his servant "Feed his she-camel for he does not compose good praise." And when Dhū'r-Rumma went out, Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' who had witnessed the incident said to him "Why did you not say to him that you meant by the she-camel her rider just as God said "And ask the village in which we were," meaning (ask) its people, and why did you not recite for him the saying of al-Ḥārithī; "I halted at the encampment and it addressed me, so the young she-camel could not prevent her eyes from shedding tears", meaning (by the young she-camel) its

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(1) Khizānat al-adab, i, 106.

(2) See al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'ara, i, 518-519; al-Muwashshah, 178-179.

rider?" Dhu'r-Rumma replied: "O Abū 'Amr, you are unique in your knowledge whilst in my knowledge and poetry I have peers."<sup>(1)</sup> The unmistakable purpose of this version is to present Abū 'Amr as unique in his knowledge. To do so the contriver chose a Bedouin poet known for his chaste Arabic and eloquence and put in his mouth a confession which speaks highly of 'Abū 'Amr, praising his merits at the expense of Dhū'r-Rumma's.

Though the philologists and men of letters found in Dhū'r-Rumma an important source of supply for their material, they nevertheless recognised in him a gifted rival who could dispute with them over some of their claims.<sup>(2)</sup> This being so, they tried to belittle his knowledge as the story, just quoted above, shows. The same hidden purpose is at work in the story of Abū 'Amr, flattering Bilāl when Dhū'r-Rumma once corrected his reading.<sup>(3)</sup> Criticism of this sort levelled against such a Bedouin expression might also be fabricated in order to express the literary view-point arising at the time from an urban society dominated by the Mawālī and lacking both the Bedouin background and experiences.<sup>(4)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma was also criticised for his saying:-

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 179.

(2) See above, 25-26.

(3) al-Aghānī, xvi, 121-122.

(4) See below p. 251-259.

"When you (his she-camel) reach Ibn Abī Mūsā, Bilāl then may a butcher stand up with an axe between your two joints." (1)

The verse was regarded as weak, since this was no way of rewarding his she-camel which had carried him through to his patron. Once again Dhū'r-Rumma was using a purely Bedouin expression whose real meaning was not comprehended by the critics. Al-Shammākh, Abū Dahbal al-Jumāhī, and Ibn al-ʿĀmmiya al-Sulamī, in praising ʿArāba al-Ausī, al-Mughīra b. ʿAbdullah and Maʿan b. Zāʿida respectively, are also reported to have been criticised for voicing in their panegyrics the same sentiment. It is also said that the first one to criticise al-Shammākh was ʿArāba b. al-Ausī himself, saying: "How badly you have rewarded her!", as did ʿUḥayḥa b. al-Julāh when al-Shammākh recited to him his praise of ʿArāba. (2)

Another critic is said to have criticised Al-Shammākh stating that the latter "ought to care for her when he was no longer in need of her, for when the woman of al-Anṣār escaped on a she-camel belonging to the Prophet after being a captive in Mecca, she said to the Messenger of God, may God's blessing and peace be on him: 'I vowed that if I escaped on her I would slaughter her'. The prophet said to her 'How ill

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(1) See the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxxii, 61.

(2) Khizānat al-adab, iii, 34-35.

have you rewarded her'.<sup>(1)</sup> It is clear that we are here encountering a religious and moral rather than an artistic evaluation. Such an attitude was behind the criticism voiced against al-Shammākh, Dhū'r-Rumma and other Bedouin poets who prayed for the slaughtering of their beasts if they carried them safely to their patrons. The influence of such a moral judgment masquerading as literary criticism was far reaching... "Abū'l-'Aynā said 'I heard Abū Nūwās saying 'By God, al-Shammākh did not hit the mark when he said:-

'If you were to carry me and bear my saddle to 'Arāba, then may you be choked by the blood of the main artery.' He should have said as al-Farazdaq did:-

'When you reach al-Ruṣāfa you will rest from mid-day travelling and from the bleeding sores of the back.' The saying of al-Shammākh was to me a bad one, then when I heard the saying of al-Farazdaq I followed him and said:- 'And if the beasts carried us to Muḥammad, then their backs would be unlawful (to be mounted upon) by men.' And also:-

'I say to my she-camel when she has carried me (to my destination), you have become valuable in my estimation. So I have not made you a present for the Crows, nor have I said 'May you be choked by the blood of the main artery.'<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Simt al-la'ālī, i, 218-219; al-Muwashshah, 67-68.

(2) al-Sinā'atayn, 210-211.

Abū Tammām also participated in the criticising of al-Shammākh in the words:-

'I am not like the censured Shammākh in his ill-rewarding and criminal deed -

He made her choke with the blood of the main artery.

Indeed, the noble of character has strayed from his good way of acting.

It was a judgement 'Uḥayḥa b. al-Julāḥ had rightly passed whilst in his fortresses." (1)

The critics are mistaken, however, in applying a moral and religious judgment in assessing the sentiments of the Bedouin poets. In his Muwāzana, al-'Āmidī, commenting on al-Shammākh's verse, rightly states that "al-Shammākh says if she carried me to 'Araba, then I would not be bothered by her death, meaning simply that if she carried me to him I would then have acquired riches and no longer need her..." (2)

Dhū'r-Rumma's expression like that of al-Shammākh is a peculiarly Bedouin one which describes the generosity of the person praised by emphasising that the poet when he reaches his patron will have no further need even of his most beloved possession, namely, his she-camel. To those living remote from such a poet both in time and place, such a sentiment would,

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(1) Khizānat al-adab, iii, 36.

(2) al-Muwāzana, 178.

however, point simply to Bedouin roughness and ingratitude.

As with his love poetry, so also is Dhū'r-Rumma's panegyric set against the back-ground of the desert. He usually opens a panegyric poem by addressing the encampments and greeting them, describing their traces and ruins or with voicing his love and longing. He then describes the desert surroundings and wild life. This section which comes before his praise occupies most of the poem and even the entire poem apart from one or two verses:-

It is reported that one of those to whom Dhū'r-Rumma addressed such a panegyric refused to reward him and suggested instead that he should take his reward from his she-camel which he had praised in such elaborate detail. Al-Ṭirimmāḥ on hearing one of Dhu'r-Rumma's panegyrics emphasised the shortcomings of such composition in relation to material reward.<sup>(1)</sup> It is indeed, interesting to note that whereas al-Ṭirimmāḥ was concerned with its material value in terms of reward, Dhū'r-Rumma, on the other hand, had, on its completion, prostrated himself to express his gratitude to God for helping him to compose a verse which he had been seeking for an entire year.<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma uses most frequently his she-camel as an artistic device for turning from the descriptive section of a

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(1) al-Aghānī, x, 158.

(2) Ibid, x, 157-158.

poem to the formal panegyric. In the following example he says:-

"She longed for the camels of al-Dahnā' and I said to her: 'Go to Hilāl may you be successful and rightly-guided'." (1)

And similarly:-

"Hasten to the door of Ibn 'Amra for it is the end of that which you have been seeking and the shelter for your saddles." (2)

Or he describes noble camels traversing a desert which is empty but for echoes, genii, and owls. Then he describes his she-camel and says: "If you reach Ibn Abī Mūsā, Bilāl, then may a butcher stand up with an axe to your joints." (3) Sometimes, after mentioning the encampments, he describes the lean camels and the long journey (4) or describes how he traversed the desert to his patron, on noble she-camels, and after describing them he might mention the care that he takes in composing and revising his poetry and that he does not praise the wealthy base one, before finally turning to praise of his patron. Thus, even in the practical exercise of panegyric he is still held fast by his obsession with his

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xx, 17.

(2) Ibid, liv, 2.

(3) Ibid, xxxii, 61.

(4) Ibid, xxxv, 35-46.

environment and it is the camel and the desert which dominate his panegyric poetry. Even when he reaches the section devoted to praise he goes back to his natural field and may digress from his praise to describe his desert surroundings.<sup>(1)</sup>

His panegyrics are, for the most part, realistic giving an impression of integrity when describing his patron and this is typical of his school.<sup>(2)</sup> He praises his patron for his courage and generosity, for solving difficult problems and distinguishing between right and wrong - all this is projected with characterised simplicity upon a desert background. He thus praises 'Umar b. Hubayra, Governor of Iraq, for his resolute policy and for being as generous as the spring season in the desert:-

"You are the spring season when there is no rain,  
and the resolute (governor) whose order is  
obediently fulfilled."<sup>(3)</sup>

He then describes how he reaches the heights in glory and how Muḍar is gaining glory by his ascendancy till he shines forth like the moon. He reminds him of a kinship which connects 'Umar to his own tribe, for both are "connected by Hassān in the high glory which is a pride for the one who

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(1) Ibid, lvii, 85-94.

(2) See A literary history of the Arabs, 290.

(3) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxv, 39.



seeks pride."<sup>(1)</sup> He also describes the noble origin of his patron and his place amongst the Mudarites and praises Fizāra, 'Umar's tribe, for its noble origin, courage, and generosity.<sup>(2)</sup>

In his poem, praising Mālik b. Al-Mundhir b. al-Jārūd of Besra, he first describes Mālik as noble, resolute, helpful, to the poor and courageous in facing the most fearful situation, then says:-

"She whose men are absent, raiding on the bridled horses that chew their bits, says to her neighbours:  
'The son of Mundhir has exterminated the thieves.  
So there is no harm if you do not close the door of your house. And he made the night of the Muslims undisturbed and peaceful.  
You have left the thieves of the country some crucified and some kneeling with hands cut off."<sup>(3)</sup>

The same impression of authentic experience rather than formal encomium being a feature of his poetry of praise is to be noted elsewhere. Addressing Ibrāhīm b. Hishām al-Makhzūmī, Dhū'r-Rumma speaks of him as the close friend and maternal uncle of Hishām, the Umayyad Caliph. Presenting

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(1) Ibid, xxv, 42. (The mother of Hubayra was from Banū 'Adī called Busra D. of Hassān). Ibid, p.191.

(2) Ibid, xxv, 43-48.

(3) Ibid, liv, 14.

his case, concerning a well over which he disputed with a man called 'Uṭayba b. Ṭartūth, he describes al-Muhājir as the solver of difficult cases, disinterested and modest, who knows that he is to meet God and thus be questioned by Him. Then he describes al-Muhājir as courageous and noble and says "When my heart fears the tyranny and wrong-doing of an official I remember you and the cares of my heart are quietened."<sup>(1)</sup> After stating that he believes that nothing of the secret thoughts and acts of man can be hidden from God nor will there be hidden from Him the means by which one tries to get success in an affair,<sup>(2)</sup> he presents his case against his opponent and ends his defence by saying:-

"Ibn 'Abdullah (al-Muhājir) turns down the  
mouth of every wrong-doer  
Though he (the wrong-doer) whose false claim  
is presented as a genuine one quibbles."<sup>(3)</sup>

His praise for Abān b. al-Walīd runs with a fluent ease and rhythm. It is, indeed, one of the finest passages in Arabic praise-poetry:-

"I saw people seeking rain between the sand of  
al-Bayād and al-Wahīd,

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(1) Ibid, lxii, 48.

(2) Ibid, lxii, 49.

(3) Ibid, lxii, 53.

So I said to Saydah: 'Seek with my saddle and  
its occupant Abān b. al-Walīd,  
My direction and my travel are towards him with  
blessing and a journey rightly guided.  
You will meet, if you carry me to him in safety,  
With the inherited wealth of a noble one spending  
and acquiring his wealth.  
Like the blade of a sword which polishing makes  
shine, yet to which the rust of iron has not adhered.  
Noble of parents - you (his she-camel) will seek  
help of one of impressive aspect neither deaf (to  
the call of generosity) nor unyielding." (1)

Bilāl b. Abī Burda was his most important patron. His  
panegyrics addressed to him flow with ease and sincere feeling  
and are redolent of a real admiration and esteem. In them he  
draws an impressive picture of Bilāl - a many-sided portrait  
of a princely Arab personality coloured by the ideals of Bedouin  
chivalry. He is pictured by him as the son of the best of the  
people except for the prophet's, his ancestors lions in war,  
noble and generous in peace. A descendant of a noble house<sup>(2)</sup>, for  
Abū Mūsā, his grandfather, was the man who extinguished the  
fires of war and spread peace amongst the fighting factions<sup>(3)</sup>  
and "was the arbiter upon whom Quraysh agreed for the cause of  
religion when they saw it tottering."<sup>(4)</sup> His family built glory

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(1) Ibid, xxi, 24-29.

(2) Ibid, xxxii, 62-65.

(3) Ibid, xxxv, 65-66.

(4) Ibid, lvii, 80.

for him - Abū Mūsā, the chief of the riders, and his maternal uncle suffice as noble ancestors.<sup>(1)</sup> Bilāl himself continued ascending in glory till, when he reached his fortieth year, great affairs have been handed to him and he tackled them in the best way; he was then neither powerless nor straying from the right path.<sup>(2)</sup> According to Dhū'r-Rumma he was just and of the most profound intelligence, knowing how to distinguish between right and wrong in complicated issues.<sup>(3)</sup> With awe-inspiring dignity, in the pulpit he looks like an eagle.<sup>(4)</sup> He is so dignified that his laughter is only a smile, and feared but not for being obscene or vulgar; he has an awesome appearance which cannot be explained.<sup>(5)</sup> He is courageous, patient and pious - "If he feared some-thing (his) natural quality which knows what Fate has written for him, quietened him."<sup>(6)</sup> His generosity is referred to in glowing terms. He is so generous that:-

"The first rain of the season to fall heavily  
on the pastures of Najd,  
Pouring down noisily, accompanied by lightning  
like the prancing of pie-bald horses, glowing  
brilliantly.

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(1) Ibid, lvii, 61.

(2) Ibid, xxxii, 67-69.

(3) Ibid, xxxii, 70; xxxv, 73; lvii, 75-76.

(4) Ibid, xxxv, 68.

(5) Ibid, lxxxvii, 35-37.

(6) Ibid, xxxii, 78.

The flashing clouds have not left the bottom of  
a wide valley other than flowing with water.  
They have struck the land at the time of the  
setting of the pleiades with heavy rain followed  
by dews,

A south-east wind which blows across the sands  
intermittently drives it (the rain) towards the  
pools,

And al-Dhirā\* followed it with torrential rain  
gushing forth abundantly,

And its attendant constellations poured water  
upon it (the meadow) so that it shot up  
flourishing,

And each constellation in its wake refused to do  
other than dissolve itself upon it.

And it became rich in life, filling everything  
after a time of fear for the lean and noble Arabs.  
As if the blossoms of the hawdhān plant in the  
forenoon were kindling wicks in the paths of the  
meadow.

(This rain) is not more bountiful than Bilāl  
amongst people when you make a comparison between  
them."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Ibid, lvii, 85-95.

It is typical of Dhū'r-Rumma that he should paint in precise and elaborate detail a picture of rain and clouds in the desert, their association with the stars, and the surging life which follows the fall of rain, as a means of illustrating the bounty of Bilāl. He was clearly more concerned with the artistic completeness of this picture than with the formal passage of praise. One notes also in his panegyrics the easy unself-consciousness of the Bedouin in the way he refers to Bilāl,<sup>(1)</sup> by name and addresses him as Abū 'Amr or as his brother.

Although all his poems in praise of Bilāl are of high standard, one ode in particular stands out amongst them and is worthy of special mention. This is the long poem of one hundred lines rhymed in lām. It begins with a description of the night that preceded the morning of Mayya's departure and of the howdahs departing in the morning. This leads him naturally to his theme of the desert and a series of pictures of the desert present themselves to him. Only after thirty-three couplets does he mention that he has made Bilāl his goal, and describes the camels which carry him (and his companions) through to that destination. He then refers to his poetry and the laborious effort needed to revise it with care and artistry, so as to be original and known everywhere. He states some of the principles which govern him - that he has refrained from calumniating a married woman with a calumny which entails great punishment, and

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(1) Ibid, xxxv, 52 - 56

that he has not praised a base person in order to please him simply because he has gained wealth. Yet, his praise, he declares, is for the noble ones so that when he composes a panegyric he could not be shamed for having indulged in false praise. Then comes in line 54 the controvertial verse: "I heard 'The people are seeking pasture (rain)' and said to Ṣaydah: 'seek Bilāl!' " He then proceeds to praise Bilāl describing him as most generous, profound in intelligence and noble, and gives details of his noble antecedents, his brilliant personality, his handsome appearance and dignified character. He refers once again to Bilāl's ability to solve intricate problems and to discriminate between the subtle entanglements of right and wrong. He refers also to Bilāl's grandfather, Abū Mūsā and once again to Bilāl's generosity in terms of the life-giving rain on the meadows of Najd. The poem ends by describing Bilal's courage and prowess on the fields of battle.<sup>(1)</sup>

Its use of the open syllabled lām and the choice of al-wāfir as a metre together with the carefully selected and fluent language give this poem a balance and artistic excellence which rank it among the finest panegyric in Arabic.

Although satire was not his natural milieu, Dhū'r-Rumma as already stated, was touched by the spirit of his age and,

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(1) Ibid, lvii.

consequently indulged in what may be called marginal combat in satirical abuse. The anecdotal material relating to his satire is full of confusion and calls for close scrutiny. The following passages illustrate the case with which this anecdotal material can be handled:-

Abū'l-Gharrāf, one of Ibn Sallām's informants, who was also quoted frequently by the author of al-Aghānī, tells how Dhū'r-Rumma alighted at Mar'a, a village in al-Yamāma<sup>(1)</sup> belonging to Banū 'Umru'l-Qays from Banū Tamīm. Its people refused to offer him and his camel shelter or entertainment, so he set off satirising them and praising Bayhas, the lord of a nearby village called Ghisl:-

"We alighted at the middle of the day and the sun  
kindled against us the pebbles of the rugged ground.  
And when we entered the valley of Mar'a they closed  
down tents whose shades are not intended for good  
ends.

We raised over us a shelter of Yamānī cloaks on  
sword blades long-since burnished ....

And a village was called after the name of Umru'l-  
Qays.

Noble are those left thirsty and base are its  
inhabitants.

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(1) Mu'jam al-Buldān, iv, 481.



The noble hungry people tarry in its valley. It is the same to them whether its palm-trees bear fruit or remain unfertilised the whole year.

And had they (the camels) put down their saddles with Bayhas<sup>(1)</sup> at Dhat Ghisl,

Their men would not have been exposed to the sun.<sup>(2)</sup>

As a result, Dhū'r-Rumma clashed in satirical exchanges with Hishām of Banū 'Umru'l-Qays.<sup>(3)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma got the better of Hishām until Jarīr met the latter and reproached him for being defeated by Dhū'r-Rumma. Hishām answered apologetically: "What can I do O Abū Ḥazra (Jarīr)? I am a rājiz (composer of rajaz) and he composes qasīd and rajaz cannot stand in satire against qasīd. If only you were to help!" Taking Dhū'r-Rumma as being on al-Farazdaq's side, Jarīr instructed Hishām to lampoon him with (the following verses):

"You are angry about a group from 'Adī exposed to the sun?

Upon what day were the men of 'Adī not exposed to the sun?

And what is the place of 'Adī compared with Taym in glory?

Whilst our days have their deed highly esteemed."<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) In Mu'jam al-buldān iv, 481, he is called Bahnas.

(2) Tabaqāt al-shu'arā' (Leiden, 1916), 126-127; Mu'jam al-buldān, iv, 481. (Leiden)

(3) Tabaqāt al-shu'arā' (Leiden) 127. al-Aghānī, xvi, 116.

(4) Tabaqāt al-shu'arā' (Leiden) 127.

Abū'l-Gharrāf said "When Dhū'r-Rumma heard the foregoing verses he exclaimed: 'By God, These are not Hisham's utterances but the son of the she-ass's (Jarīr)<sup>(1)</sup>". Dhū'r-Rumma had the upper hand according to Abū'l-Gharrāf until Jarīr met Hishām and gave him the verses. Now Hishām defeated Dhū'r-Rumma.<sup>(2)</sup> In al-Aghānī, Abū Ṣakhra, a descendant of Jarīr is quoted as having been told by his father on the authority of his grandfather that Hishām asked Jarīr to help him against Dhū'r-Rumma (adding) that "they had been lampooning each other for a time."<sup>(3)</sup> Having mentioned how Dhū'r-Rumma satirised Banū' Umru' 'l Qays for denying him entertainment and how Jarīr helped Hishām, Abū Ṣakhra states that Dhū'r-Rumma met Jarīr and blamed him for siding with Hishām whilst he (Dhū'r-Rumma) was Jarir's uncle.<sup>(4)</sup> When Jarīr enquired in what way he was siding with Hishām, Dhū'r-Rumma mentioned the verses. Jarīr said "Nay! but you were occupied with weeping at Mayya's ruined encampments to the point that your honour became an easy target."<sup>(5)</sup> Abū Ṣakhara explains that Jarīr had been informed of Dhū'r-Rumma's siding against him and for this reason Dhū'r-Rumma kept apologising to Jarīr and swearing that it was not so. Jarīr then asked him to go to Hishām and say to him (the following verses):-

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- (1) *Tabaqāt al-shu'arā'*, (Leiden) 127; al-Aghānī, xvi, 117.  
 (2) *Tabaqāt al-shu'arā'*, (Leiden) 127; al-Aghānī, xvi, 117.  
 (3) al-Aghānī, vii, 62.  
 (4) Indicating a relation by marriage; al-Aghani, xvi, 117.  
 (5) al-Aghānī, vii, 62.

The genealogists on Tamīm

Consider the houses of glory as four great ones;

They consider al-Ribāb, the family of Sa'd, 'Amr,  
and Ḥanzāla as of them

But the one from amongst Banū Umru'l-Qays  
perishes from neglect

As you neglect in matters of blood money the  
little foal.<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus Dhū'r-Rumma composed his ode of which the first verse was "Your eyes failed to recognize a ruined encampment at Ḥuzwā which the wind obliterated and was rained upon<sup>(2)</sup>, and inserted Jarīr's three verses into it. On hearing it, Hishām began striking his head and slapping his face bewailing "Woe is me! What wrong have I done to Jarīr?" He was asked "What has Jarīr to do with you? Here is a man (Dhū'r-Rumma) satirising you and you him." "Far from it!" he answered, "By God, Dhū'r-Rumma could not have said 'But the one from amongst Banū 'Umru'l-Qays perishes from neglect as you neglect in matters of blood money the little foal'. This, By God, is Jarir's utterance!"<sup>(3)</sup> According to Abū Ṣakhra, al-Farazdaq passed by Dhu'r-Rumma whilst the latter was reciting this ode and on hearing the

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(1) al-Aghani, vii, 62; al'umda, ii, 219.

(2) See the diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxvii.

(3) al-Aghānī, vii, 62.

three verses (of Jarīr), al-Farazdaq asked him to repeat them and he agreed to do so. Then al-Farazdaq enquired: "Is it you who composed this?" "Yes, O Abū Firās" Dhū'r-Rumma replied. al-Farazdaq then said "Your mouth lied! By God, one more powerful in jaws than you gave them to you. This is the poetry of the she-ass's son,"<sup>(1)</sup> Abū Ṣakhra said that the men of Banū 'Umru'l-Qays came to Jarīr and said O Abū Ḥazra, Dhū'r-Rumma has got the better of us, so help us as has been your excellent habit." "Impossible!" he answered, "By God, I wronged my uncle once and he came and apologised and swore. Therefore, I am not helping you against him again." Abū Ṣakhra ended his story by remarking "Dhū'r-Rumma died at this time."<sup>(2)</sup>

The following anecdote is also relevant here: "Ibn Sallām relates that Abū Yahya of Banū Dabba said that Dhū'r-Rumma said one day: "I have composed some verses which have a metre, purpose and profound meaning." "What are they?" al-Farazdaq enquired. Dhū'r-Rumma then recited:-

"Is it that when Taym sought protection with  
me for their women

And when I was unsheathed (singled out) as the

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(1) al-Aghani, vii, 62-63.

(2) Ibid, vii, 63.

Yamani sword is unsheathed from its scabbard.

And when (the tribes) al-Ribāb, Mālik and 'Amr supported me and Banū Sa'd came from behind (backing me)

And from Yarbū' a multitude like a portion of the night (also backed me) whose revenge and generosity are commended."

al-Farazdaq said "Do not claim them any longer, for I have more right to them than you, (they are like my poetry)" Dhu'r-Rumma said: "By God, I shall never claim them as mine or recite them other than as yours." Thus they were incorporated in al-Farazdaq's ode in which he says:- "And we, whenever the Qaysī became arrogant, struck him above the ears and down to the neck."<sup>(1)</sup>

Another version of this anecdote is reported by Abū 'Ubayda to the effect that al-Daḥḥak of Banū Fuqaym said: "I was at Kāzima while Dhu'r-Rumma was reciting his ode in which he says: "Is it that when Taym sought protection with me for their women ...", when two veiled riders came from the passage of Kāzima. They halted and as Dhū'r-Rumma finished his reciting, al-Farazdaq removed the veil from his face and asked his rāwiya: "O 'Ubayd, take these verses!" Dhū'r-Rumma protested: For God's

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(1) Ṭabaqāt al-shu'arā', (Leiden), 136; al-Aghānī, xvi, 116; al-Muwashshah, 107.

sake, O Abū Firās!" al-Farazdaq said "I am more suited to them than you." And he inserted these verses in his ode. They are four (including "And we, whenever the mighty one (the Qaysī in the first version) became arrogant, struck him above the ears down to the neck.")<sup>(1)</sup>

It is not difficult to guess at the overt purpose of these anecdotes. Jarīr is illustrated as the master of the field - it is upon his poetical endowments that victory and defeat turn for Hishām and Dhū'r-Rumma in their own contest. On the other hand, al-Farazdaq, Jarīr's long-standing opponent, is subtly depicted as a minor poet plagiarizing in a shameless way Dhū'r-Rumma's composition. This unreal picture was doubtless created by Jarīr's partisans. The situation is so deliberately and carefully contrived that almost all the critics<sup>who</sup> have dealt with the subject have been convinced of its authenticity. Macartney, for instance, whose service in publishing the *diwān* of Dhū'r-Rumma is so invaluable, fails to perceive the hidden significance behind it;<sup>(2)</sup> so also does the author of the article on Dhū'r-Rumma in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, though with much more confusion.<sup>(3)</sup> However, the fact that Jarīr and al-Farazdaq were rivals and the suggestion that Jarīr's admirers (and even perhaps Jarīr himself) created this situation which elevates

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 107-108, (in page 106-107, al-Farazdaq is reported to have plagiarised the first and second lines only); al-Aghani, xvi, 116 and xix, 22-23.

(2) See A short account of Dhū'r-Rummah, 298.

(3) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 964.

him high above his rivals are not enough reasons for doubting the anecdote. Confirmatory evidence is needed and it is necessary to examine the question further: A curious coincidence about Jarīr's rivals is that most of them are depicted as plagiarists. There is, for example, the case of 'Umar b. Laja' of Banū Taym -"Taym were shepherds: they used to go out every morning with their sheep and everyone of them when returning at evening used to bring with him some verses to help 'Umar b. Laja'. al-Sarandi was the best among them."<sup>(1)</sup> Jarīr was asked: 'Whom did you find the more difficult amongst those whom you satirised?' 'The Taym tribe', he answered, 'I compose an ode which I adore more than my first child and they assemble and dispose of it point by point."<sup>(2)</sup>

In the case of al-Akḥṭal we find this account: Jarīr says "By God, it is not al-Akḥṭal alone but with him indeed, fifty other poets are satirising me, everyone of them no less in poetical merit than al-Akḥṭal. All he does in satirising me is to gather them together for drinking then this man composes a verse and that man another verse until they complete an ode. al-Akḥṭal then takes it as his own."<sup>(3)</sup>

al-Farasdaq is also stigmatised in the same way. According.

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 129.

(2) Ibid, 129.

(3) Ibid, 141.

to al-Asma'ī "Nine-tenths of al-Farazdaq's poetry is theft but he used to prevaricate when faced with it. As for Jarīr, I do not know that he plagiarized anything except half a verse which I do not know."<sup>(1)</sup> al-Farazdaq is shown to have plagiarized some verses from Dhū'r-Rumma, Ibn Mayyāda, al Rā'ī, Jamīl, al-'Abdī, al-Mukhabbal and al-Mutalammis.<sup>(2)</sup> al-Marzubānī describes al-Asma'ī's statement as full of prejudice against al-Farazdaq because the latter satirised Bāhila, al-Asma'ī's tribe.<sup>(3)</sup> Although al-Marzubānī admits that al-Farazdaq plagiarized some verses, he goes on to say that "to consider that nine-tenths of his poetry as being plagiarized is impossible." al-Marzubānī concludes that Jarīr had, in fact, plagiarized many of al-Farazdaq's meanings.<sup>(4)</sup> The author of Qurādat al-dhahab, moreover, explains that al-Farazdaq as a rāwīya memorized a great deal of poetry and he sometimes <sup>included</sup> in his poetry, out of forgetfulness, some composition which was not his. Jarīr, he goes on, for this reason used to accuse him of plagiarism whereas Jarīr took over and incorporated in his ode al-Mu'alwaṭ al-Sa'di's verses which are the best part of that ode.<sup>(5)</sup>

It is obvious that many factors, other than purely

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(1) Ibid, 105.

(2) Ibid, 106-111:

(3) al-Muwashshah, 106; and see diwan of al-Farazdaq, 115-116, 138, 141-142 and 193.

(4) al-Muwashshah, 106.

(5) Ibn Rāshiq al-Qayrawānī, Qurādat al-dhahab, Cairo, 1926, 42-43



aesthetic, played an important part in the literary criticism of the Arabs at that time and al-Asma'ī's prejudice against al-Farazdaq is a good example of this.<sup>(1)</sup> al-Daḥḥak b. Buhlūl of Banū Fuḡaym, Abū 'Ubayda's source of information on al-Farazdaq's plagiarizing of Dhū'r-Rumma's verses can be considered in the same light, since al-Farazdaq also satirised Banū Fuḡaym al-Daḥḥāk's clan.<sup>(2)</sup> Abū Ṣakhra, a descendant of Jarīr, is a further example. Here the tie of kinship played its own part in producing special pleading. It is most likely that Abū al-Ḡharrāf, who was acquainted with one of Jarīr's descendants derived his information from the same source as did Abū Ṣakhra. The partisans and admirers of Jarīr have unquestionably been responsible for a considerable degree of confusion and forgery.

Reverting to the details of the clash between Dhū'r-Rumma and Hishām, one notes that the former satirised the latter's tribe simply because they refused to entertain him; this is mentioned in Dhū'r-Rumma's verses. Then Hishām, so the story goes, answered him and they were engaged in satirical combat for some time. But being a rājiz, Hishām could not stand up to his opponent who composed qasīd, and thus, sought Jarīr's help. The story does not give any example of Hishām's rajaz,

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(1) Another example is al-Asma'ī's prejudice against Dhū'r-Rumma simply because the latter was reported to have held the view of the Partisans of Justice whilst al-Asma'ī was Jaberite. See al-Rāfi'i, Tarīkh Adāb al-'Arab, Cairo, 1940, i, 433-4.

(2) See 'Asr al-Qurān, 188.

nor can any be found in the sources available. Yet al-Isfahānī copied from Ibn al Naṭṭāḥ's book the statement of Abū 'Ubayda that Hishām read his satire against Dhū'r-Rumma to Jarīr and "every time he read a qasida" Jarīr remarked that he had accomplished nothing by it."<sup>(1)</sup> Thus he would appear to be not only a composer of rajaz but also of qasīd.

It is a curious, and at first sight inexplicable, paradox that when Jarīr entered the battle on the side of Hishām his naqīda proved to be composed in the same metre and rhyme as Dhū'r-Rumma's first poem, although a series of satirical poems had been exchanged prior to Jarīr's appearance in the fray. The logical thing to expect would be that Jarīr would have seized upon a more recent satire of Dhū'r-Rumma's. The explanation of this paradox is simple - Jarīr's poem is, in fact, the naqīda of Dhū'r-Rumma's first poem. It is possible to carry the argument one step further and to suggest that the author is, in fact, not Jarīr and that it can legitimately be ascribed to Hishām himself.

Furthermore, in other satirical compositions against the tribe of 'Umru'l -Qays, Dhū'r-Rumma repeatedly attacks his

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 117.

antagonist from that tribe and mentions him, on one occasion, as Hisham.<sup>(1)</sup> Elsewhere, he says that "Umru'l-Qays vies with the noble ones by means of its two slaves, the sly one and the debauchee",<sup>(2)</sup> whose names are given by the commentator of Dhū'r-Rumma's dīwān as Hishām and Ru'ba.<sup>(3)</sup> On the occasion that a third party intervened in the dispute, Dhu'r Rumma did turn upon him<sup>(4)</sup> in reproach. Yet there is no allusion whatsoever in Dhū'r-Rumma's satire to the effect that Hishām sought Jarīr's help nor is there in his poetry any accusation of plagiarism. Had Hishām or his tribe sought such help from Jarīr, it is most unlikely that it would have escaped Dhū'r-Rumma's mentioning it.

As regards Jarīr's help to Dhū'r-Rumma, it is sufficient to point out that the three disputed verses are not the best in the ode which consists of fifty-four verses, nor are they finer than his other satire. In his satire against Umru'l-Qays, Dhū'r-Rumma boasts frequently that he exposed it to shame and silenced its members:- "Was it when I filled the earth with roaring, and the lions and genii lowered their heads for fear of my grudge, that a member of it (Umru'l-Qays tribe) howled at me? and I tied up his head with a bandage of shame whose newness will never be worn out." <sup>(5)</sup>. He also

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxvii, 38.

(2) Ibid, liii, 42.

(3) Ibid, p.412.

(4) Ibid, lxxix, 56, (O Hārith b. 'Amr! is it your design by cursing me that Umru'l-Qays should attain a high position and noble deeds thereby?)

(5) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxiii, 27-28.

says that to antagonise him was something Umru'l Qays could not endure,<sup>(1)</sup> and he boasts that he satirises them with unfamiliar odes, the passing of night renews and increases the shame which these odes reveal. They are as firm, he claims, as "the moles of the face."<sup>(2)</sup> "The riders delivered them in every (season) and their recital by the mouths of the rāwīs would be appreciated."<sup>(3)</sup> It is unlikely that such a poet with such confidence in his ability would seek Jarīr's help. Nor is this consistent with his general attitude towards Jarīr who, on occasion, is said to have met Dhū'r-Rumma and attempted to stir his antagonism. The latter refused to be drawn, not out of fear, but because he felt that nothing had been left to attack since Jarir's honour, as he remarked, had been pierced by others.<sup>(4)</sup> Further, the reason for doubting the account of Jarīr's help to Dhu'r-Rumma is provided by the statement that the latter died shortly after receiving Jarīr's help. This is, of course, incorrect since Jarīr died in 114 A.H.<sup>(5)</sup> Even if he had given his help in his last year, Dhū'r-Rumma had still three years to live (i.e. till 117 A.H.)

Finally, there is the question of al-Farazdaq's plagiarism

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(1) Ibid, xxiii, 31.

(2) Ibid, xxiii, 33.

(3) Ibid, xxiii, 34.

(4) Khazana al-Adab, i, 106-107.

(5) See 'Asr al-Qur'an, 173.

of Dhū'r-Rumma's verses. The two versions of the account are not without their anamolies. Dhū'r-Rumma in the version of al-Ḍaḥḥak whose clan al-Farazdaq had satirised, is reported to have been reciting at Kāzima his qasīda which contains the four verses. al-Farazdaq came with his rāwiya and took them for himself arbitrarily and without taking any note of Dhū'r-Rumma's protest. In the version of Abū Yahyā of Banū Dabba, Dhū'r-Rumma is represented as saying, obviously to al-Farazdaq, that he had composed verses which had a certain metre, purpose and profound meaning. When al-Farazdaq asked him not to claim them any longer, he agreed of his own volition, The verses in this version are three; in al-Ḍaḥḥak's version they are part of a qasīda, yet in the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, they are part of a fragment of only seven verses satirising al-Rā'ī's son. <sup>(1)</sup> This is a curious association. It is reported that Jarīr satirised al-Rā'ī in his scathing Ba'iya because he was angered by al-Rā'ī's son and <sup>(2)</sup> al-Farazdaq later was engaged in a satirical fight against this same illeterpered son of al-Rā'ī. <sup>(3)</sup> But nothing is reported of any antagonism between dhū'r-Rumma and the son of his professor, his imām in poetical composition.

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(1) The dīwān of Dhu'r-Rumma, xix.

(2) See Tabaqāt al-shu'ara', 372-374.

(3) See Dīwān al-Farazdaq, 145.

Abdullah al-Ṭayyīb states that the foregoing verses are of al-Farazdaq's composition and that the nāwīs attributed them to Dhū'r-Rumma in order to strengthen what they had accused al-Farazdaq of in plagiarizing the poetry of minor poets."<sup>(1)</sup> However, the fragment, as it stands in the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, is an example of the confusing work of the rāwīs. The fourth verse praises Banū Yarbū', Jarīr's clan, and thus could not be the work of al-Farazdaq, Jarīr's enemy. But apart from this verse and the opening one which mentions Mayya, Dhū'r-Rumma's beloved, and which, it may be presumed, was composed by the attributer to cover up the false attribution to Dhū'r-Rumma, it is possible, on the grounds of style also, to complete Abdullah Ṭayīb's statement by adding the last two verses of the fragment to the three verses attributed to al-Farazdaq and to place them in al-Farazdaq's dīwān instead of Dhū'r-Rumma's.

To sum up, Jarīr's partisans were not content in portraying their poet as rich and resourceful, helping other poets such as Hishām and Dhū'r-Rumma, but pictured his enemy, al-Farazdaq as a weak, barren versifier who plagiarized the poetry of others such as Dhū'r-Rumma, Ibn Mayyāda etc...

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(1) Sharh arb'qasā'id, (٢ ٥).

Dhū'r-Rumma's satire, if examined closely, suggests that the criticism which labels him as a failure in this field is prejudiced. It is true that his satire cannot rival in obscenity and vulgar abuse the compositions of the eminent satirists of his time, such as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq. Yet from the standpoint of artistic excellence, some of his satire deserves to be ranked amongst a selective anthology of satire in Arabic poetry.<sup>(1)</sup> However, his satirical engagement was off the main arena in which Jarīr and al-Farazdaq and some other poets held the interests of their contemporaries and of their successors for a long time. This, with other reasons, may account for his being regarded as a failure.

Dhū'r-Rumma pictures in his satire the tribe of Umru'l-Qays as a humiliated, non-Arab, base group of people. It prides itself on untrue merits and boasts with lies; it has no right to be proud, for it has neither ancient glory nor history nor a name in the past. Although it has been called Umru'l-Qays b. Sa'd, yet the red beards and noses <sup>(2)</sup> (and the blue eyes)<sup>(3)</sup> deny them to be so, since they are non-Arabs of servile stock from Hawrān; the pig-meat and wine for them

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(1) See al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 519-520; al-'Umda, ii, 61-62; Dīwān al-Ma'āni, i, 181.

(2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxix, 44-46.

(3) Ibid, iii, 1.

are lawful. They are peasants whose country is neither a desert nor a town.<sup>(1)</sup> He rebukes Hishām for claiming to belong to Zayd:-

"You prided yourself on belonging to Zayd,  
Yet Zayd is as distant from you in prowess  
and beauty as the Pleiades.  
Have you not known that you are attached  
(to it) by a mere claim whilst I am the cousin  
of Zayd and its uncle."<sup>(2)</sup>

He asks Hishām how can he possibly boast when his father was a slave, a worthless pretender and when Hawāzim and Tamīm denied you, as well as your qualities and origin.<sup>(3)</sup> He describes Hishām's tribe as base-born and ugly:-

"The tops of the palm-trees of Umru'l-Qays  
give shade to ill-favoured and vile-bearded old men.  
You see the decoration of baseness in their  
features between the beards and the heads.  
Upon every short middle-aged one and upon  
every youth there is a garment of baseness,  
its collar new."<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Ibid, xxix, 47-48.

(2) Ibid, lxviii, 90-91.

(3) Ibid, xxvii, 38-40.

(4) Ibid, liii, 35 and 37.



Elsewhere he pillories them in the following terms:-

"And they are a tribe of cowards whose horses  
have never witnessed a fight in defence of  
that which must be defended." (1)

They are a vile and submissive tribe whose free members  
are indistinguishable from its slaves.<sup>(2)</sup> Yet the best of  
the qualities of Umru'l-Qays is that their skin is tough, in  
order to endure long humiliation and that its absent members  
are not waited for in time of decision nor are those who are  
present consulted on a momentous affair.<sup>(3)</sup> So submissive  
are they that each one of them is neither a wrong-doer nor  
a condemner of wrong-doing.<sup>(4)</sup> So equivocal are they that  
he asks:- "Are not all people, O Umru'l-Qays, either  
treacherous or loyal, yet amongst<sup>you</sup> there is neither loyalty  
nor treachery."<sup>(5)</sup> For the guest of Umru'l-Qays there is no  
difference between Umru'l-Qays and poverty; yet the members  
of this tribe are fond of obtaining food as guests, though  
they refuse to entertain guests in winter.<sup>(6)</sup>

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(1) Ibid, liii, 19.

(2) Ibid, xxiii, 22.

(3) Al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 519; Dīwān al-Ma'ānī, i, 181.

(4) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxix, 60.

(5) Ibid, xxix, 51.

(6) Ibid, xxix, 49-50.

They steal, when you become their neighbour, what the slave steals.<sup>(1)</sup>

As for the women of Umru'l-Qays, Dhū'r-Rumma seems to be violating his maxim of "not slandering a married woman who is a believer with a slander that entails capital punishment "unless by that he meant that he would not slander a woman by name, or perhaps he considered the women of this tribe as unbelievers just as he excluded from Islam the whole tribe to which, he declares, pig-meat and wine are lawful. These women are ugly<sup>(2)</sup> and worthless;<sup>(3)</sup> they defile every place they live in<sup>(4)</sup> and they are a subject of scandal:-

"God forbade other than that the shame of your daughters, O Umru'l-Qays, should be in every place the most disgraceful."<sup>(5)</sup>

He accuses the women of Umru'l-Qays of intentionally neglecting the time of the prayers, of keeping to the company of wine-skins and jars,<sup>(6)</sup> and of having unlawful relations with a certain Ibn Khawṭ:-<sup>(7)</sup>

"Is there any kinship that has made friendly relations between your women and Ibn Khawṭ O Umru'l-Qays!

Or is there relationship by marriage?

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(1) Ibid, iii, 1.

(2) Ibid, lxviii, 85.

(3) Ibid, xxiii, 26.

(4) Ibid, xxiii, 25.

(5) Ibid, xlvi, 47.

(6) Ibid, xxvii, 48.

(7) He is said to have been either a member of Umru'l-Qays or a Mawlā of Tamīm. See the diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, p.221.

Your women long for the palace of Ibn Khawṭ  
whilst drunkenness has caused the lowering  
of their necks and pig-tails.

Like the longing of the milch camels suffering  
from a nine-day thirst whose livers are set  
afire after eating the ghawlān plant.<sup>(1)</sup>

In his satire, he boasts that his own tribe is high in  
glory<sup>(2)</sup> and that its knights are the first raiders,<sup>(3)</sup> for:-

"We directed against Jarm and the sons of  
Madhḥij the mill-stone of war under the waving  
standards."<sup>(4)</sup>

A similar theme is repeated elsewhere:-

"We held sway over the upper parts of the land  
with horses and spears whilst you are the pigs  
and apes of the villages."<sup>(5)</sup>

And as he boasts about his tribe so also does he boast  
about his poetical ability in dealing with his opponents:-

"Was it when I filled the earth with roaring and  
the lions and genii lowered their heads for fear  
of my grudge,

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(1) Ibid, xxix, 56-58.

(2) Ibid, xxix, 53.

(3) Ibid, liii, 16.

(4) Ibid, liii, 20.

(5) Ibid, xxiii, 35.

That a member of Umru'l-Qays howled at me and  
I tied up his head with a bandage of shame whose  
newness will never be worn-out?

I struck the stone of Umru'l-Qays with a hard,  
black stone which breaks other stones.

O Banu Daw'ab (Umru'l-Qays)! the worst band of  
those who lead others astray when their deeds  
and ancestors are mentioned,

You have invoked a herd of camels which you  
cannot repel (i.e. you have invited my satire  
which you cannot endure or combat), and he who  
cannot drive away the herds of camels envies them.  
So I began shooting at you with each strange (ode);  
the passing of nights renews and increases the  
shame (which these odes reveal).

Rhymes that are as lasting as the moles of the  
face; when they are released (uttered) they  
cannot be hindered a single day (from spreading  
amongst people.)

The riders deliver them in every season (of  
festival) and their recital by the mouths of the  
rāwis is appreciated."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Ibid, xxiii, 27-33.

In another verbal blow at Umru'l-Qays, he says:-

"I shot at Umru'l-Qays, the slaves, and they turned into pigs falling prostrate on their faces from the shafts of lightning (i.e. from his verses).

When they shield themselves by a monkey from amongst them I shoot at him with that which breaks the hardest of the bones from which the flesh has been scraped.<sup>(1)</sup>

The boasting which is characteristic of the above quotation runs through his satire. There is, furthermore, a considerable part of a poem devoted to boasting - a poem of striking naivete and ineptitude. It consists of 79 couplets and curiously enough he occupies the last 35 couplets with boasting.<sup>(2)</sup>

Looked at closely, this ode reveals that Dhū'r-Rumma was, at the time of composing it, under the influence of al-Farazdaq who, with a feeling of aristocracy derived from the brilliant history of his family, could boast with vigour and excellence. Dhū'r-Rumma's boast, on the other hand, is imitative and naive. Transported out of his natural field, he is a striking failure; he expresses no genuine feeling and displays nothing of his natural skill or excellence. An interesting side-light is that

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(1) Ibid, liii, 38-39.

(2) Ibid, xxx, 35-79.

he reveals some knowledge of certain historical events which took place in the pre-Islamic era in relation to which he credits his tribe's early ancestors with prowess and victory. He boasts bombastically of the high position of his people:-

"Al-Ribāb tribe drags the Salūqī coats of mail  
after them (my howdahs) and Sa'd shakes the spears  
when they (the howdahs) are frightened,  
And 'Amr and the sons of al-Nuwār as though  
they were the stars of the pleiades glittering  
in the dark.

O men! is there a poet or one who boasts who  
does not versify about a people like my people?"<sup>(1)</sup>

Then he boasts of the battle of Ajrā' al-Kubāb in which his people got the upper hand. He does not limit his boast to his own tribe but talks about the glory of Muḍar to which his tribe belongs and later recalls that he is the son of prophets. After mentioning Abraham and his prayer for the ancestor to whom he belongs, he states that the Prophet (Muhammad) was from his people as was every Caliph. He ends his poem with bombastic verses which concentrate illustrious poets, power and nobility in the hands of the people to whom he and his tribe belongs. The whole part seems an unnatural reflection of a naive imitation which is significant only in that it reveals beside the imitative part in Dhū'r-Rumma, an acute rivalry amongst the tribes of the Umayyad era.

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(1) Ibid, xxx, 51-53.

C H A P T E R VI

DHŪ'R-RUMMA AND THE CRITICS

AN ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Dhū'r-Rumma was perhaps more aware of his profession as an artist than any of his predecessors of the Bedouin school of poetry. It is not too much to say that his poetry was an obsession, his final and ultimate goal in life. Khālīd b. Kulthūm said: "Whilst seeking audience with al-Tirimmāḥ and al-Kumayt who were sitting near the gate of al-Fīl in the mosque of al-Kūfa, I saw a Bedouin approach trailing his worn-out clothes. On reaching the centre of the mosque, he fell down prostrate. He then looked about and saw al-Kumayt and al-Tirimmāḥ and went towards them. I said (to myself): 'Who is this doomed man who has fallen between these two lions?' I was surprised by his prostration upon a place which was not for prostration and at a time which was not for prayer. I went to them and after giving greeting I took my place beside them. He (the Bedouin) turned to al-Kumayt and asked him to recite for him some of his poetry and al-Kumayt recited his ode:-

أَبَتْ هَذِهِ النَّفْسُ إِلَّا ذَكَرًا ...

"This soul has refused but to remember .... "

until he completed it. Then the Bedouin said to him: 'Well done, by God, O Abū'l-Mustahil, in letting those rhymes dance and in composing them smoothly.' He then turned towards

al-Ṭirrimāh and asked of him a similar request. al-Ṭirrimāh recited his ode in which he says:-

'Is it that you have been displeased by the packing  
off the tents of the departing neighbour ...?'

The Bedouin's comment was: 'Excellent! How well has it responded to your talent! I almost envy you.' Then he said, 'By God, I composed after our last meeting three poems. As for the first, I almost took flight out of joy; because of the second, I was about to claim the Caliphate; as regards the third, I experienced throughout it a sort of joy which stirred me till I finished it.' Then they asked him to recite and he recited his poem:-

'Is it because of an abode which you thought  
was Kharqā's that the tears of love are flowing  
from your eyes?'

On reciting:-

'She (his she-camel) hastens when her rings are  
covered with blood and her nose with thick foam.'  
he said: 'Do you know that I have been in pursuit of this  
verse for a year? Yet I did not find it until an hour ago;  
and I believe you saw the prostration for it.'

Then he recited his poem:-

"What ails thy eyes ...."



and also a poem in which he says:-

"If the night retreats from a high ground, they  
(the camels) cast at it a look like that of  
women hating their husbands."

Hearing this, al-Kumayt struck al-Ṭirimmāh's chest with  
his hand and exclaimed: "This is by God, the best silk and  
not of my weaving or yours which are al-karābīs (rough cotton  
clothes)....(1)

This thanksgiving prostration, this joy with which he was  
about to fly or to claim the Caliphate, and this ecstasy which  
he experienced, all these and many more such references illus-  
trate his artistic temperament. As a perfectionist, he was  
often dissatisfied with his composition; he used to revise (2)  
that which he had composed and change, now and then, words and  
phrases - "One of his rāwīs complained to him 'You have con-  
fused me concerning your poetry', for when he noticed an  
unsuitable word in his composition, he used to replace it by  
another.(3)

In his dīwān, he speaks of the great trouble and pains-  
taking care which he exercised in his poetical composition:-

"And many a poem, quaint in phrase - over it  
I have lain awake keeping it free from both sinād  
(Musānid) and defect of sense.

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(1) al-Aghānī (Dar al-Kutub) xii, 37-38.  
(2) al-Mūzhīr, i, 556.  
(3) al-Muwashshah, 184.

And I kept it correct and shaped out of it verses  
to which I consider there are no equals.

They are unique, in every region are they known.

They say new things originally."(1)

Again, he says;-

There shall come to <sup>you</sup>/from me eulogy and praise,  
carefully embellished, laborious was its original  
versification.

It is like the taming of a restive creature. Every  
kind of qasida, be it ever so intractable, easily  
do I curb its unbroken components."(2)

Not only was Dhū'r-Rumma consciously absorbed in observations of an aesthetic nature and in the critical evaluation of the appositeness of particular meaning, but there are clear signs of his attempt to weld together the subtle technicalities in combining an artistic style and a musical form. He used, for example, what is usually known as al-Taṣrīf, in which he makes

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lvii, 48-50. A modern critic expressed his doubt whether Dhū'r-Rumma in using musānid in the passage quoted above, and Adī b. al-Riqā' in using sinādīn:

وقصيدة قدبت أجمع بينها حتى أثقت ميلها وسنادها

understood the meaning of these words as they were used later (Bonebakker's introduction of Qudama's Naqd al-ahī'r, Leiden, 1956, 34-35.) Yet, obviously, both Dhū'r-Rumma and Adī point to a defect in poetical composition by using these words, which is reasonable to suggest that it was generally known to their contemporaries.

(2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xliii, 25 and 27.

the two hemstitches of the verse end with the same rhyme,<sup>(1)</sup>  
and used also al-muwāzana (balance) between the component

phrases such as:

استحدث الركب عن أشياء عزم خبراً أم راجع القلب من أطرابه طرب

for أم راجع القلب استحدث الركب is equal to

من أطرابه طرب عن أشياء عزم خبراً equal to

and also: للقلب الركب is equal to

من عن equal to

and أطرابه is equal to

and طرب خبراً is equal to (2)

Dhū'r Rumma was also a pioneer to those who later became famous for the elaboration of poetic form such as Muslim b. al-Walīd and Abū Tammām. Yet, while their poetry was burdened with unnatural embellishments which hindered the flow of their feelings, his poetry flows with a spontaneous, fluent ease.

In the 'Abbāsīd period, Harūn al-Rashīd was well-known for his partiality for Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry.<sup>(3)</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Maṣlī, the famous singer, was granted by al-Rashīd the monopoly of using Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry in the songs he sang for him. It is said that he gained out of this monopoly two million dirhams.<sup>(4)</sup> His son Ishaq is said to have sung for

(1) Ibid, 1, 3; lxxv, 7.

(2) al-Umda, ii, 18; al-Sinā'atayn, 327 concerning al-tajnīs.

(3) al-Aghānī, V, 238-239.

(4) Ibid, V, 239.

al-Ma'mūn a passage from Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry which earned him a hundred thousand dirhams.<sup>(1)</sup> Ishaq also sang some of Dhū'r-Rumma's verses for al-Wāthiq who, in his turn, composed a song based upon verses to compete with his singer.<sup>(2)</sup> Such examples show clearly the musical and poetical merits which Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry possesses.

Dhū'r-Rumma's artistic character did not, however, carry him away from reality. In his poetry, he portrays aspects of the desert and desert life as they appeared to him and with a keen sense of realism, he was aware of any deviation from verisimilitude. This is well illustrated by the following narrative:-

"Muhammad b. Sahl, the rāwī of al-Kumayt, said that Dhū'r-Rumma came to al-Kufa. There al-Kumayt met him and told him that he had composed an ode after the model of his (Dhū'r-Rumma's ode). 'Which one have you taken as a model?' Dhū'r-Rumma enquired. 'Your ode: What ails thy eyes ...', he answered. Dhū'r-Rumma then asked him to recite that which he had composed and al-Kumayt recited his ode:

"Are you not turning away from the seeking of the highland?"

When he came to its end, Dhū'r-Rumma commented: 'What a fine piece you have composed, but when you draw the analogy of

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(1) Ibid, V, 292-293.

(2) Ibid, V, 363 and viii, 164-165.

something you do not present it as appositely as it might be presented, although you come so near to it that one cannot say you are mistaken; yet one cannot say that you are completely right. You come betwixt and between; you could not describe things as I have done nor could you coin similes as I have done.' Al-Kumayt asked: 'Do you know why that is so?' To this Dhū'r-Rumma answered 'No'. Then al-Kumayt said: It is because you depict something you have seen with your own eyes whilst I depict something ~~something~~ which was described to me without my seeing it in reality.' Dhū'r-Rumma said: 'You are right! it is so.' (1)

Many famous poets of his time were aware of his poetical merits and some of them were, accordingly, jealous of his artistic achievements. It is reported that Jarīr and al-Farazdaq were jealous of him and that he was discounted amongst the famous poets out of envy and because of his youth. (2) Jarīr, in particular, showed his admiration for Dhū'r-Rumma's Bā'iya and wished that it were his. (3) On one occasion he is reported to have said: "Had Dhū'r-Rumma been silent after his saying his ode which begins with 'What ails thy eyes ...' he would have been the best poet of men. (4) On another occasion

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 195; al-Aghānī, xv, 125.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 112; Khizānat al-adab, i, 106.

(3) al-Aghānī, xvi, 118.

(4) Wafayat al-A'yan, i, 566.

he is quoted as saying "I have not liked any of Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry to be attributed to me except his saying: 'What ails thy eye....' for in it his demon was advising him sincerely."<sup>(1)</sup> Jarīr's jealousy of Dhū'r-Rumma's poetical merits accounts for his critical remark which has had a far-reaching echo subsequently.<sup>(2)</sup> When he was asked about Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry his remark was "(It is like) bride's patches and the dung of gazelles."<sup>(3)</sup> On the other hand, al-Kumayt, as indicated before, held him in great esteem and tried to emulate some of his compositions. Hammād al-Rāwīya says: "On hearing the composition of Dhū'r-Rumma:-

"O reprimander! you have frequently quoted  
what people say,  
And the blame of the reprimanders is shameful  
to the lover."

al-Kumayt said: 'This (poet) By God, is inspired! How could a Bedouin know the subtleties of intelligence and the hidden jewels of the treasure of intelligence which lie ready only for men of intelligence. He has done well, very well!'<sup>(4)</sup> Ru'ba on

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 118.

(2) It is reported to have been repeated by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' (al-Muwashshah, 171, al-Aghānī, xvi, 115; Wafayāt al-a'yan i, 566; Khizānat al-adab, i, 107), and in the form of an explanatory gloss by al-Asma'i (al-Muwashshah, 171.)

(3) al-Muwashshah, 170-172; al-Aghānī, xvi, 115; Jamharat ash'ār al-Arab, 35.

(4) al-Aghānī, xvi, 112-113.

the other hand, saw in Dhū'r-Rumma a rival of rājiz and was so jealous of him that he accused him of plagiarizing other's poetry as well as some of his rajaz.<sup>(1)</sup> The enmity and strained relations between Ru'ba and Dhū'r-Rumma<sup>(2)</sup> and the argument on linguistic matters in which Dhū'r-Rumma silenced Ru'ba,<sup>(3)</sup> together with the favour Dhū'r-Rumma received from his contact with Bilāl<sup>(4)</sup> may well explain the accusation of plagiarism against Dhū'r-Rumma. This special pleading may also explain the tale of how, having tried at first to distinguish himself in rajaz, he realised that he could not excel in this kind of poetry and was overshadowed by the leading rajaz poets such as al-'Ajjāj and his son Ru'ba, he abandoned it for the composing of qasīd poetry.<sup>(5)</sup> But, in one of his Urjūzas he mentions his daughter as warning him, on seeing his recklessness, that he would meet his end in one of his adventures.<sup>(6)</sup> Such a daughter capable of advising her father must have been grown up and her father, for this reason, might be presumed to have been in his thirties. On the other hand, some of his panegyrics which are

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(1) Ibid, xvi, 119 & 121; al-shi'r wa'l-shu'arā', i, 515/516.

(2) See above, 36.

(3) al-Aghānī, xvi, 119.

(4) See above, 36.

(5) al-Muwashshah, 173 & 174.

(6) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxii, 73-78.

of qasīd poetry were composed in his early twenties.<sup>(1)</sup> This points to the conclusion that not only did he compose rajaz in his later life but that he also wrote qasīd in his early days; in other words, the above-mentioned riwāya which says that he composed rajaz only in his early life is based on inaccurate information which can only be explained in terms of an expression of the acute rivalry and jealousy felt by his rivals, especially Ru'ba. This may well account for the accusation that each one of Dhū'r-Rumma's brothers used to compose some verses upon which Dhū'r-Rumma would then construct a poem and recite it to the people as his own composition and be accepted as genuine, because of his poetical reputation.<sup>(2)</sup> This accusation is not substantiated by any example of the verses which he is said to have used as the basis for his composition. Furthermore, it contains some contradiction by stating that the verses he annexed were taken to be his own because of his reputation, apparently as a poet. It is true that some of his brother's composition, because of its desert background which was also that of Dhū'r-Rumma's own poetry, bears some similarity to the style and imagery of his ghazal;<sup>(3)</sup> but this can be said of most of the compositions of the Bedouin school to which Dhū'r-Rumma and his brothers belonged. What is important here is that Dhū'r-Rumma's extant poems (except

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(1) See above, 28-29.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 111; Dīwān al-Ma'ānī, 233; Simṭ al-la'ālī', ii, 586. Majālis Tha'lab, i, 39.

(3) See above, 10.



in some isolated instances which are falsely attributed to him<sup>(1)</sup> illustrate one personality running throughout all of them. Had he annexed his brothers' verses then his brother, Masū'd, who lived long after him and was seen by al-Asma'ī<sup>(2)</sup>, had ample time after Dhū'r-Rumma's death to leave a good portion of poetry in his own name. But Masū'd has left nothing except a few short fragments.<sup>(3)</sup>

Moreover, neither Aḥu 'Amr b. al-'Alā' who was acquainted with Masū'd<sup>(4)</sup> nor al-Asma'ī who also met him, report anything to this effect. Indeed, the jealousy and rivalry which were rife amongst the poets of the period can be taken as the basis of such an accusation.

Apart from the poets who were his contemporaries, his audience consisted of the Bedouins, the new generation of Mawālī who formed a large number of the city dwellers, and the philologists. Among them the Bedouins can be regarded as his true audience, since his poetry was a reflection of their environment as well as an expression of Bedouin experiences, longings, and ideals. For this reason they came to know<sup>(5)</sup> and admire his poetry.<sup>(6)</sup> Their daughters recited his verses to describe a

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(1) See the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxi, p. 664.

(2) See the dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, p. 157.

(3) Amalī (al-yazīdī), 63-64; al-shi'r wa'l-shu'arā', i, 510, 511. al-Aghānī, xvi, 111 & 112.

(4) Simt al-la'alī, ii, 586.

(5) al-Aghānī, vii, 6.

(6) Ibid, xvi, 112; Sharh al-Ṣharīshī, ii, 58.

particular situation they found themselves in<sup>(1)</sup> and their women-folk expressed their appreciation of some of his utterances<sup>(2)</sup>.

There were in the philological schools of Basra and Kūfa two literary currents. The first was conservative with the philologists as its exponents; it was created out of the need to check the corruption that was creeping into Arabic, the language of the Qūrān, as a result of the geographical dispersal of the Arabs in the post-conquest period and the presence of foreign elements in the Muslim communities.<sup>(3)</sup> It was, moreover, a reflection of the general policy towards Arabism practised by the Umayyads. Pre-Islamic poetry and the pure Arabic of the Bedouins' utterances were to provide the means<sup>(4)</sup> to counteract this corruption. The second current was represented by the new generation of Mawālī who had come upon the scene in Basra and Kufa. Their background, upbringing and outlook differed markedly from that of the Bedouins and they possessed their own canons of literary taste and appreciation. More important still is the fact that the tribal society of the Arabs was almost entirely alien to them. Hitherto, Arabic poetry had been a reflection of the mores of that society; it reflected both the Bedouin individual and his tribal community in the context of their

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(1) Amālī (al-Zajjāj), 101-102; Wafayāt al-a'yan, i, 566.

(2) Maṣārī 'al-Ushshāq, 82 and 316.

(3) See al-Zubaydī, Tabaqāt al-nahwīyīn wa'l-lughawīyīn, Cairo 1954, 1-2; See also Athar al-Qur'an fī-Taṭawur al-naqd al-'Arabi, 149-

(4) Athar al-Qur'an fī Tatwwur al-naqd al-'Arabi, 150-155.

desert surroundings. This explains why the Arabs, living in a tribal society or connected with it in one way or another, could appreciate this kind of poetry, and why such poetry had no appeal to those who had neither lived in the desert nor had any close contact with its society. With the advent of the new generation of the Arabicized Mawālī a new standard of literary appreciation was inevitable.

It was natural that those who represented the first current appreciated Dhū'r-Rumma's eloquent speech, pure Arabic, strange and obscure words, knowledge of ancient literature and admired, sometimes to the point of envy, his merits and unique knowledge. (1)

"Hammād al-Rawiya said 'Dhū'r-Rumma came to us in Kufa and we had not seen a finer or more eloquent person nor one more learned in obscurities than he. This saddened many of the towns-people and they thus composed for him the following

(unintelligible) verses:-

من الدهر يوماً كيف خلق الياسر  
وأجفل أجنال الظليم المهاذر  
ولا ينفق الثبان منه بجاذر

رأى جبراً يوماً ولم يك قبلها  
فقال لخفاي مع ظمائي الاليا  
قلبت له لاذهر مكنن بدماء

Hammād said that Dhū'r-Rumma asked them to repeat the verses twice or thrice and then said "I do not think this kind of poetry is the kind of poetry which the Arabs utter." (2)

(1) al-Aghani, v, 364; xvi, 122; al-Sina'atayn, 126; Wafayat al-a'yan, i, 566; Masari'al-Ushshaq, 299.

(2) al-Aghani, xvi, 122.

Dhū'r-Rumma became, in turn, aware of the value of the gifts he possessed<sup>(1)</sup> and was perhaps influenced, especially by the philologists, in using many obscure words in his poetry. He did not respond indifferently to their criticism - on the contrary, he used to listen to them and tried sometimes to express his point of view or alter his composition accordingly, as is shown by the following anecdote: "Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā met Dhū'r-Rumma and asked him to recite 'What ails thy eyes' (his Bā'īya). Dhū'r-Rumma recited it and when he came to the verse:-

'She (his she-camel) lowers her head when he  
ties the saddle upon her, bending her body. And  
as soon as he settles his feet in the stirrup  
she leaps up'.

Abū 'Amr said: 'What your uncle al-Rā'ī said is finer than that which you have recited. He said:<sup>(2)</sup>

'She does not make a man hasten before settling  
upon her back, and she, concerning his mounting,  
is more experienced than any other'.

'He described a king's she-camel, whilst I described a

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(1) See *Tabaqāt al-shu'arā'*, 190.

(2) *al-Muwashshah*, 175-176, (In the same source 174-175 the name of the questioner is given as Ratbīl instead of Abū 'Amr.); *Simt al-'alī'*, ii, 898. There are in *al-Muwashshah* also three more versions of this incident in which the name of the questioner is omitted. See *al-Muwashshah*, 175, 176 and 183-184. A partial account is given in *al-Šhi'r wa'l-shu'arā'*, i, 517-518. Yet another full account in which the questioner is unnamed is to be found in *al-Aghānī*, xvi, 123.

common man's ' was Dhū'r-Rumma's answer. He sometimes endeavoured to make some alterations to his composition in order to satisfy them - "Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Jawharī and Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Jammāl told me that al-Ḥasan b. 'Ulayl al-'Anzī told them that Yazīd b. Muḥammad told them that he was informed by 'Abd'l-Ṣamad b. al-Mu'adhdhal, on the authority of his father, on the authority of his grand-father, Ghaylān b. al-Ḥakam as saying that Dhū'r-Rumma came to us in Kufa. He halted his camel at al-Kunāsa reciting for us his ode, al-Ḥa'iya. On reading the verse,

'If distance changed lovers, the remainder of  
passion of my love for Mayya could scarcely perish',  
Ibn Shubrama shouted: 'O Dhū'r-Rumma! I think it has already perished (hinting at his saying 'could scarcely perish' as indicating that he was no longer in love). Dhū'r-Rumma contemplated for a while and then recited the verse thus:-

'If distance changed lovers, I did not find the  
remainder of passion of my love for Mayya as  
perishing.'

Ghaylān b. al-Ḥakam said: 'I went back to my father, al-Ḥakam b. al-Mukhtār, and told him the whole story and he remarked:

'Ibn Shubrama was mistaken in disapproving of Dhū'r-Rumma's verse and Dhū'r-Rumma was mistaken when he responded (positively to the criticism of Ibn Shubrama and changed the meaning of his verse accordingly. This (his original expression) is but as the words

of God, he is exalted and glorified, Or as darkness on a vast abysmal sea. There covereth him a wave, above which is a wave, above which is a cloud. Layer upon layer of darkness. When he holdeth out his hand he scarce can see it,<sup>(1)</sup> that is, he did not see it, nor was he on the point of seeing it."<sup>(2)</sup>

Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry, in its detailed descriptions of the flora and fauna of the desert, its characteristic Bedouin nostalgia and ideals, echoed very little of the emotional impulses and aspirations of the new generation of Mawālī. Thus it is not surprising that they failed to appreciate and even to understand it, since they lacked the background without which his imagery would lose its finer shades of colour. This new trend, antipathetic to the traditional poetry, was then at its beginning, but it was certainly there. It did not reach its full vigour until the Abbasid times when Razīn al-'Arūqī, Abū al-'Atāhīya and Abū Nuwās appeared as real champions of the so-called innovatory movement.<sup>(3)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma's likening of his beloved Umm Sālīm (whom he loved, it seems, in his prime before he loved Mayya)<sup>(4)</sup> to a gazelle<sup>(5)</sup>, exposed him to severe criticism. The simile is anything but unique in Arabic

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(1) See The Meaning of the glorious Qoran, (translated by M.M. Pickthall, 1953, xxiv, 40.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 122; al-Muwashshah, 179-180.

(3) See above, 87.

(4) See above p. 60-61.

(5) See the diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxix, 44-45; al-Aghānī, xvi, 112 and 118; al-Muwashshah, 169; Amalī (al-Qalī), ii, 58-59, Sharḥ adab al-kātib, 259.

poetry, nor was he the first poet to make use<sup>(1)</sup> of it though his method of depicting this animal has a situational novelty about it, i.e. amongst certain sand dunes in blazing sun-sets<sup>(2)</sup> or on bright glowing mornings.<sup>(3)</sup> The gist of this criticism is that it was absurd to liken Umm Sālīm<sup>4</sup> to an animal that has two horns, (were they to pierce Dhū'r-Rumma they would have left upon his flanks the like of brands), and to (a creature) with split hooves at the end of the legs.<sup>(4)</sup> The conflicting versions of the tale which embodies this criticism are worthy of closer examination:-

(i) The antagonist in one version is reported to be a tailor from Besra who encountered Dhu'r-Rumma when the latter was at Mirbad<sup>(5)</sup>, reciting some of his poetry to a group of people assembled round him. He criticized Dhū'r-Rumma's addressing the ruined encampments in order that they might tell him whether his beloved had dwelt at them. Dhū'r-Rumma, silenced by this sort of criticism, left the assembly and went off. After a time had elapsed, he returned to Mirbad and started reciting poetry, but there was the tailor who loudly criticized Dhū'r-Rumma's.

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(1) See Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab, 57, 65, 83-84 and 108; Dīwān Zuhayr, 34; Dīwān Umru'l-Qays, 168.

(2) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxxv, 42.

(3) Ibid, x, 11-22; xxxix, 13-21.

(4) See al-Muwashshah, 169; Amali (al-Qālī), ii, 58-59; al-Aghāni, xvi, 118.

(5) al-Mirbad was a camel-market about three leagues from Besra. It was also a place of poetical combats and recitations. See Hajirī, Fī tarikh al-naqd, Alexandria, 1953, 102.

likeness of Umm Sālīm to a gazelle in three humorous lines and put him to flight. Never again did he recite at Mirbad till after the death of his antagonist.<sup>(1)</sup>

(ii) The scene in another version is supposed to have been set in Kufa instead of Mirbad at Basra and the persecutor was a servant-maid instead of a tailor. She criticized the above-mentioned simile in verses that, except for some slight difference, are the same verses as those attributed to the tailor.<sup>(2)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma implored her to take his camel and all its furnishings and in return to suppress her witty verses. This she promised him, and after accepting his bribe to silence, nobly restored it to him.<sup>(3)</sup>

(iii) A third version mentions his brother, Mas'ūd, as reproaching him, while he was his co-rider, in two verses which though not the same as those uttered by the tailor or the servant-maid, have the same critical implication.<sup>(4)</sup>

(iv) Finally, a curious version mentions his opponent as a jinni who, on hearing Dhū'r-Rumma's simile, attacked him from a point at which he could not be seen by Dhū'R-Rumma, with the first and second of the tailor's three verses.<sup>(5)</sup>

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 118; A short account of Dhu'r-Rumma, 302.

(2) Fī tarīkh al-naqd, 102-103.

(3) Masāri' al-Ushshāq, 235-236.

(4) A short account of Dhū'r-Rumma, 302.

(5) al-Aghānī, xvi, 112; Amālī of al-Sālī, ii, 58-59.

(5) al-Muwashshah, 169.



The mere process of putting these four versions into juxtaposition is enough to raise doubt as to their authenticity as factual data. There is no need to look at the last version unless to regard the jinni as one of the Mawālī disguised in the form of an invisible critic. As for the third one, the Bedouins, and Mas'ūd was undoubtedly one of them, have always been fond of gazelles which are, in fact, the most beautiful animals in the desert. Every Bedouin appreciates and understands the likening of a beautiful woman to a gazelle; the ease with which it moves, its eyes, neck and elegant appearance at the green pastures, or amidst the sand dunes, and its unaggressive feminine aspect - all these qualities have made it the symbol of beauty throughout the centuries. It is unlikely, therefore, that Mas'ūd could fail to appreciate his brother's simile. As regards the first and second versions, the similitude between the tailor's criticism in al-Mirbad of Baṣra and the servant maid in Kufa is very strange. It is inconceivable that the two critics could make the same remarks in almost similar verses. The maid, it must be noted, is supposed to have promised him not to spread her critical observations. How, then were they voiced abroad? The issue is clearly not one of whether the verses are ascribed to their rightful author, but who the real author might be. Dr. 'Abdullah al-Tayib ascribes them to al-Farazdaq since they bear, so he thinks, the mark of

al-Farazdaq's manner in flouting and shameless debauchery.<sup>(1)</sup>  
This is also far from being the case. al-Farazdaq, as will  
be discussed later, has had imputed to him many things with  
which he had little or nothing to do.<sup>(2)</sup>

Jarīr, al-Farazdaq's rival and great enemy, together with  
his partisans and admirers not only in his own time but for a  
long period afterwards, fathered many imputations on al-  
Farazdaq and exaggerated his shortcomings and defects to a  
great extent, so much so that one cannot but be on ~~an~~ one's  
guard in dealing with many things of which al-Farazdaq has  
been accused. A glance at al-Farazdaq's dīwān shows how far  
he shared Bedouin tastes even to the point of vulgarity. He,  
for example, wishes that he and his beloved were two camels  
infected with mange and anointed with tar so that they would  
not be bothered by those who reprimand and by watchers and  
would be left alone, as one can imagine, enjoying the sublime  
bliss of love in the green pastures.<sup>(3)</sup> The creator of this  
picture could hardly be the instigator of an attack on Bedouin  
themes. Furthermore, in poetry al-Farazdaq himself made some  
comparison between a gazelle and his beloved.<sup>(4)</sup> Who was the  
author? Was it the tailor of Basra who, by virtue of his  
profession was most likely a Mawla, since the majority of the

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(1) *Sharḥ arba'gasā'id*, "ب - ج - د"

(2) See *Muwashshah*, 106; 'Aṣr al-Qurān, 187-188.

(3) 'Aṣr al-Qurān, 195.

(4) *Dīwān al-Farazdaq*, 20 and 42.

Arabs in Umayyad times still formed the bulk of the army and refrained from being artisans and town workers? It is clearly not possible to decide who the real author was. In any case, it is the criticism itself that is important here, in-so-far as it reflects certain trends of literary appreciation which were incompatible with the familiar Bedouin values in this field; in other words, it reflects the voice of the new generation of Mawālī. More interesting still is the first episode of the tailor's version in which he criticized Dhū'r-Rumma's addressing the ruined encampments. Now, every student of Arabic literature will recall, on hearing of this sort of criticism, the familiar details of Abū Nuwās's attack on the tradition of addressing the ruins of the encampment<sup>(1)</sup> in the conventional prelude to the qasīda, and particularly he will recall his famous line:-

قُلْ مَنْ يَبْكِي عَلَى رُسْمِ دَرَسٍ      واقفاما ضركو كان جلس

"Say to him who weeps for an effaced traces while he is standing. Would it harm were he to sit down?"

Such criticisms are generally associated with 'Abbāsid times and it is thus interesting to note that Abū Nuwās was preceded by the supposed tailor of Baṣra. No doubt the so-called innovatory movement of Abū Nuwās and others in 'Abbāsid times reflects the Mawālī's influence;<sup>(2)</sup> by tracing this

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(1) See above, 87.

(2) See Ḥadīth al-arbi'ā, i, 25-27 and 35.

influence back to the time of Dhū'r-Rumma, one sees an evident reflection of it in the account attributed to the tailor. Moreover, both Abū Nuwās and the tailor missed, because of their alien origin, the significance of the Bedouin poets standing when addressing the ruined encampments. Every true Bedouin would laugh at the poet who sits while addressing them, for the Bedouin realizes that no one sits amongst the ruins of the abodes in the open desert unless to relieve himself.<sup>(1)</sup> That is why the poets emphasise that they have been standing there. Such criticism, it is clear, implies that Dhū'r-Rumma's critic was a stranger to desert habits, as were the new generation of Mawālī in Basra and Kufa. Furthermore it is inconceivable that al-Farazdaq, who himself made use of the convention of addressing the ruined encampments<sup>(2)</sup> would attack Dhū'r-Rumma for doing the same thing.

There is another example which reflects this new trend of Mawālī criticism, and which also involves al-Farazdaq. Al-Asma'ī related on the authority of 'Īsā b. 'Umar that Dhū'r Rumma once asked al-Farazdaq: "Why am I not regarded amongst you, the great poets?" "For your refraining from praise and satire and confining (your poetry) to ruins and encampments," was al-Farazdaq's answer.<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) al-Muwāzana (Cairo, 1954) 357.

(2) Dīwān al-Farazdaq, 13, 41, 43, 59 & 145.

(3) al-Muwashshah, 173.

The answer, in fact, bears a great deal of truth, for Dhū'r-Rumma, the artist, remained sincere to his artistic values even in his praise and satire<sup>(1)</sup> and was unable to turn happily to opportunist panegyrics.

However, the representatives of the new trend did not allow al-Farazdaq's remark to go unembellished. They altered it to express their own attitude which was full of dislike and ridicule for the desert poetry of Dhū'r-Rumma. Thus, al-Farazdaq's remark appears in many different versions:-

(i) "Why am I not considered among the great poets? Dhū'r-Rumma asked. To this al-Farazdaq is represented as replying: "You are prevented from being so by describing the desert and the dung of camels." al-Farazdaq then went off reciting two verses full of sarcasm (verses which, incidentally) are a deformed version of a Muraqqash<sup>(2)(?)</sup>:

"Many a desert, were Dhū'r-Rumayma (diminutive of Dhū'r-Rumma) to head towards it with Saydah, both would die,

I traversed its unknown (stretches) towards its known (places) while the mirage shimmered before

them"<sup>(3)</sup>

ودوية لو ذر الرمية رامها      وصيدع اودى ذوالرسم وصيدع  
قطعت الى معروفها منلراتها      اذالاج فيرا الامعز المتوضع

(1) See above, 192-.

(2) See al-Mufaḍḍaliyāt, 225 (al Muraqqash verses are:

ودوية غبراء قد لها لعمريها      تراك فيا الورد والمرى ناعس  
قطعت الى معروفها منلراتها      بعيرامة تضل والليل داس

(3) al-Muwashshah, 172-173.

(ii) Dhū'r-Rumma asked al-Farazdaq "why am I not mentioned with the great poets? " "There has hindered you from attaining their goal" said al-Farazdaq, "your weeping over dung-fouled camping places and describing the dung and camel enclosures."<sup>(1)</sup> Then he recited the aforesaid verses.<sup>(2)</sup>

(iii) "Why<sup>am</sup>/I not considered among the great poets?" Dhū'r-Rumma asked. "Your weeping at the dung-fouled camping places and describing lizards' and cows' urine as well as your preference for describing your she-camel and your desert." Farazdaq replied, then went off reciting the two verses.<sup>(3)</sup>

(iv) Dhū'r-Rumma asked "What hindered me from attaining the poets' goal?" to this Farazdaq retorted "Your weeping over the dung-fouled camping places and describing the sand-grouse and the urinating of camels."<sup>(4)</sup>

This new critical trend, apart from paving the way for Abū Nuwās and other 'Abbāsīd poets, left its mark not only on Dhū'r-Rumma but on other poets of his time. In a verse attributed to Majnūn, the likening of a gazelle to his Laykā was not made without extra qualification:-

فَعَيْنَاكِ عَيْنَاهَا وَجِيدُكَ جِيدُهَا سَوَى أَنْ عَظْمَ السَّاقِ مِنْكَ رَقِيقٌ

"Your eyes are hers and your neck is her neck, except that the bone of your shank is thin."<sup>(5)</sup>

(1) Wafayāt al-a'yān, i, 563; Khizānat al-Adab, i, 107.

(2) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā' i, 506-507.

(3) al-Muwashshah, 173.

(4) al-Aghānī, xvi, 129.

(5) See the diwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, p. 622.

Dhū'r-Rumma was undoubtedly conscious of this trend and reacted to it.<sup>(1)</sup> It is said that when Masū'd criticized his simile relating to Umm Sālīm, he responded instantly by qualifying it in the second line in order to make the analogy more precise.<sup>(2)</sup> In any case, it is unlikely that Masū'd, a Bedouin, failed to perceive the beauty of such a simile without the need of added qualification.

It may well be asked why Dhū'r-Rumma alone was confronted by such criticism. The answer to this may well lie in the fact that he was, to the new critics, the embodiment of all the traditions of the Bedouin school of poetry. His appearance as a purely Bedouin bard symbolised the ancient heritage of Arabic poetry.

The critics of the early Abbasid times were mainly philologists. Having been so, both their aim and impulse were towards an appreciation that was, on the whole, linguistic rather than aesthetic. They were admirers of what they regarded as pure Arabic from the linguistic point of view - hence came their emphasis on Jahilī and Bedouin poetry. Setting themselves up as literary critics, they established a limited standard of evaluation by which they did not judge the artistic excellence in the composition of a poem as a whole, but the apparent excellence of certain circumscribed topics in the poet's composition, especially satire and panegyric. There were, on some occasions, extraneous

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 119.

(2) al-Aghānī, xvi, 112. See also the diwan of Dhū-Rumma, lxxix, 45.

factors at work in influencing their judgment as is shown in the acknowledgment of the superiority of Ḥassān b. Thābit in the following account:-

"Abū 'Ubayda mentioned that the people, (he means, presumably, the learned men who were mostly philologists) agreed that the best poets of the people of the Islamic period were al-Farazdaq, Jarīr and al-Akhtal, for they were given a share in poetry which has never been given to any poets in the Islamic era; they praised some men and by so doing they elevated them and they humiliated others by satirizing them; on the other hand, other poets satirized them in turn and were silenced by their answers;; and some poets they cast into oblivion by not paying attention to their attacks on them. Those (i.e. al-Farazdaq, Jarīr and al-Akhtal) are the poets of the people of the Islamic era. They are the best poets, second only to Ḥassān b. Thābit since no one could be equal to the Messenger of God's <sup>(1)</sup> poet." This is a good example of the double standards that were being applied. In spite of acknowledging the merits of al-Farazdaq, Jarīr and al-Akhtal, on some topics which the philologists considered important, Ḥassān b. Thābit is given priority simply on religious grounds.

Measured by these standards, Dhū'r-Rumma does not earn the highest praise of the critics, though he composed very fine pieces of panegyric and satire that were the equal of that of

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(1) Jamharat ash'ār, al-Arab, 35.



al-Farazdaq and Jarir, simply because he was not a champion in the major battles of abuse nor was he a greedy panegyrist -

"Was Dhū'r-Rumma amongst the foremost poets?"

al-Batin was asked. He replied "The well-versed men in poetry agreed that poetry rests upon four bases: - elevating praise, debasing satire, accuracy of simile, and high boasting. All these are gathered together in the poetry of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, and al-Akhtal. As for Dhū'r-Rumma, he never excelled in praise, satire or boast; in all these, he fell short of them. He only excelled in simile; he is a quarter of a poet.<sup>(1)</sup> Ibn Qutayba said that though Dhu'r-Rumma is the best of men in simile and the finest in description and though he is better than others in describing the sand, mid-day heat, desert, wells, ticks and snakes, yet when he composes praise and satire his disability betrays him. This causes him to fall behind the fuhūl (great poets). Thus they describe his poetry as dung of gazelles and patches on a bride's face.<sup>(2)</sup> Al-Aṣma'ī echoed the same censure when he stated that the reason which detracted from Dhū'r-Rumma's reputation as a poet was that he could not excel in satire and praise.<sup>(3)</sup> It is clear from these quotations that Dhu'r-Rumma's concern with the artistic perfection, the descriptive realism of his verses which is one of his greatest attributes, and his

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(1) al-Muwashshah, 172.

(2) al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 41.

(3) See Khizanat al-adab, i, 107.

relative neglect of praise and satire were counted as defects. This sort of criticism, oddly reminiscent of modern critics of "uncommitted literature"<sup>(1)</sup> assumed its final form at the hands of the philologists and was transmitted without further embellishment subsequently.<sup>(2)</sup> On the other hand, the early critics admired Dhū'r-Rumma for his Bedouin language, his use of strange words and Jahīlī style and for his adhering closely to the form of Jahīlī qasīda. 'Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' said<sup>(3)</sup> that poetry began with Umru'l-Qays and ended with Dhū'r-Rumma. By this he meant, obviously, a kind of poetry characterized by Bedouin vocabulary and stylistic conventions. For this quality the philologists cited him frequently and found in his poetry a treasury of material for their philological treatises.

Moral considerations sometimes colour the judgments of the early critics. Thus we find them praising Dhū'r-Rumma's love poetry on moral grounds. Al-Asma'ī said: "I know of no finer love poet amongst the people of settled provinces and others, in expressing passionately his love, than Dhū'r-Rumma. He expressed his love passionately, yet chastely and with sound reasoning."<sup>(4)</sup> Abu 'Ubayda said that when Dhū'r-Rumma "states something (in his love poetry) he states it well.

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(1) See A. Warren and R. Wellek, *Theory of Literature*, London, 1955, Chap. ix.

(2) See *Khizanat al-adab*, i, 107.

(3) *Jamharat ash'ar al-'Arab*, 35.

(4) *al-Aghani*, xvi, 113; *Sharḥ, maqamat al-Harīrī*, ii, 58.

Then he answers the statement appropriately and apologizes and can find a way out, yet with fair judgment and chastely.<sup>(1)</sup> The moral and religious factors are well represented as has already been mentioned<sup>(2)</sup> in the critical comments on al-Shammākh, Dhū'r-Rumma, and other poets who showed in their poetry signs of ingratitude towards their beasts after they had carried them to their patrons. The critics took literally what the poets stated in this connection and overlooked the poets' true meaning that they would no longer be in need of their beasts after reaching their bountiful patrons. This kind of criticism, excessively literal and unimaginative though it be, had its influence on some distinguished poets such as Abū Nuwās and Abū Tammām.<sup>(3)</sup> Another example of a pedestrian attachment to literalness is the criticism of Dhū'r-Rumma's line:-

"O abode of Mayya! May you be safe from ruin  
and may rain continue to fall upon your sandy  
plain."<sup>(4)</sup>

The critic points out phlegmatically that his prayer that continuing rainfall upon the encampment would result in flooding and subsequently destroy it.<sup>(5)</sup> Ibn Rashīq defends Dhū'r-Rumma by stating that the poet prayed, in the opening of

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(1) al-Aghānī, xvi, 113; Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Harīrī, ii, 58.

(2) See above, 200-201.

(3) Khizānat al-adab, iii, 36.

(4) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxix, 1.

(5) Qudama b. Ja'far, Naqd al-shi'r, Leiden, 1956, 75-76.

his verse, for the safety of the encampment.<sup>(1)</sup> This sort of criticism, completely lacking in imagination, has no meaning even within the bounds of its own literalness, for the traces of the desert encampment have no walls to be destroyed by rain nor does the Bedouin poet, in his arid and ever-thirsty desert, have any fear of flooding. Rain, in the mind of every Bedouin does not involve pictures of destruction in the subjective sense; on the contrary, it is always associated with the growth of vegetation and both rain and vegetation mean to him life in its richest resurgence. Finally, one can add to Ibn Rashīq's defence the fact that Dhū'r-Rumma prayed for its flat sandy plain to be rained upon continually and by this he meant the whole region and not the spot of the encampment only. Here, the only picture Dhū'r-Rumma's expression produces, especially in the minds of those acquainted with the desert, is the encampment of his beloved amidst a green plain full of life and movement.

It is too much to expect from the early critics a systematic approach. Their critical judgments, apart from linguistic matters, which for them were of primary importance, were coloured by their momentary moods and prejudices, producing in many instances, contradictory statements. In their random judgment, however, one sometimes comes across a truly significant though rudimentary approach to literary appreciation. This is

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(1) al-'Umda, ii, 41.

well illustrated by Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' commenting on Dhū'r-Rumma's verse:-  
أقامت به حتى ذوى العود في الثرى وساق الثرى في ملأته البحر

"Mayya tarried at the encampment until the  
plant stalk withered and bent over,  
And until dawn drove away in his white garb,  
the Pleiades."<sup>(1)</sup>

He observes that he has not seen such an expression used  
by anyone else - "Do you not see how he created for the dawn a  
garb? It has no garb but he used this word for it (metaphorically)<sup>(2)</sup>

A more technically conceived opinion is that of al-Asma'ī.  
al-Tawwazī asked al-Asma'ī: "Who is the best poet?" "He who,"  
he answered, "when exhausting the meaning before ending the verse,  
can add additional meaning by completing it." "Such as?" al-  
Tawwazī enquired. al-Asma'ī then referred to Dhū'r-Rumma's  
line:

قف العيس في اطلال مية فاسأل رسوماً كأخلاق الرداء المسلسل  
(3)

Halt the white camels at the ruined encampments  
of Mayya and ask the effaced traces which are like  
the tattered cloak."

His meaning was already complete before *المسلسل* but he  
added *المسلسل* and by so doing he appended something extra to

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(1) The dīwān of Dhū'r-Rumma, xxix, 3.

(2) al-Umda, i, 180-181.

(3) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, lxvii, 1.

the already finished meaning. Then he said:-

(1) أَظُنُّ الَّذِي يَجْدِي عَلَيْكَ سُؤَالَهَا دُمُوعاً كَتَبْتِيزِ الْجَمَانِ الْمَفْصَلِ

"I think that the enquiry would provide tears that are falling down like silver-beads each of which is separated from the other by a bead." "His meaning finished", al-Asma'ī went on, "with silver-beads then he needed a rhyme and said الْمَفْصَلِ (each of which is separated by a bead from the other) and by this he added something extra. (2) "

Finally, though the philologists cited Dhū'r-Rumma frequently in pursuing their philological enquiries to provide examples for their treatises, they criticized him when he deviated from the norms which they had taken for granted or when he presented something which seemed incompatible with their conservative attitude concerning the use of certain words. For example, Abū 'Amr b. al'Alā', maintained that Dhū'r-Rumma was mistaken in using "حَرَجِي لَا تَسْكَ الْأَمَّاخَةَ" since the particle of exception "الْا" could not be used with "مَا تَنْفَلِ" (3) al-Asma'ī also pointed to what he regarded as some linguistic mistakes committed by Dhū'r-Rumma. Dhū'r-Rumma, he said, was wrong in using "دَوَّمَ" in describing some hunting dogs pursuing a wild bull, assuming that "دَوَّمَ" can only mean hovered around (4). This is not the case, for "دَوَّمَ" means also "went far away" and

(1) Ibid, lxvii, 24

(2) Naqd al-shi'r, 97-99; al-Umda, ii, 46; Sharh al-Sharīshī, i 377.

(3) al-Muwashshah, 182.

(4) al-Addād, 53; al-Muwāzana, 18; Jamharat al-lughā, ii, 302; al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā, i, 518.

Dhū'r-Rumma uses it correctly in this sense.<sup>(1)</sup> Al-Aṣma'ī was narrowly unappreciative of the vivid comparison of a group of running dogs circling in the distance round their prey to birds hovering in the sky. Al-Aṣma'ī also maintained that Dhū'r-Rumma was wrong in using "أيه" (tell us) without nunnation,<sup>(2)</sup> "زوجة" (wife), with the terminating "ة"<sup>(3)</sup> "جامس" (frozen) for water instead of<sup>(4)</sup> "جامد" and "حلقوم" (throat) without a genitive attached to it.<sup>(5)</sup>

In his *Tabaqāt-al-shu'arā*, Ibn Sallām, who was greatly influenced by the philologists, casts Dhū'r-Rumma into the second class of the poets of the Islamic era,<sup>(6)</sup> yet Ibn al-Mu'tazz, the author of *Kitab al-badī* and himself an eminent poet who composed poetry for its own sake and left a treasury of vivid similes and metaphors relating to his sophisticated life in Baghdad, admired Dhū'r-Rumma and favoured him greatly. He ranks him highly as a composer of excellent metaphors and similes.<sup>(7)</sup> Concerning Dhū'r-Rumma's verse:-

"When they - the asses - saw the night approaching,  
whilst the sun was still alive, the life of one who  
is giving up what remains of the spirit,

(1) See the margin of *al-shi'r wa'l-shu'arā*, i, 518.

(2) The diwan of Dhū'r-Rumma, p.356

(3) *al-Muwashshah*, 180; *al-Muzhir*, ii, 37.

(4) *Jamharat al-luḡha*, ii, 68.

(5) *al-Muwazana*, 81.

(6) *Tabaqāt al-shu'arā*, (Leiden) 121.

(7) *Zahr*, *al-ādāb*, iv, 114-115 & 116; *al-Khafāḥ*, *Rasā il Ibn al Mu'taz*, Cairo, 1946, 10-11, 12 & 37-38.

Ibn al-Mutazz describes the phrase 'whilst the sun was still alive' as innovatory speech and strange metaphor, and the remainder of the verse as one of the wonders of (poetic expression)!<sup>(1)</sup>

On the other hand, most of the critics who came after the philologists, though some admire his epithets,<sup>(2)</sup> reiterate the same points of criticism voiced formerly by their predecessors.<sup>(3)</sup> Moreover, they criticize some of his verses which seem complicated in diction and in order of words.<sup>(4)</sup> Al-'Askarī shows his dislike for some of his metaphors: he presents the following verse of Dhū'r-Rumma as an example of the inept use of metaphor:

تيمن يا فوخ الدجى فصد عنه وجوز الفلا صرع السيف القواطع

"Their camels, like cutting swords, went directly towards the crown of the head of the dark night and split it, together with the middle of the desert" (i.e. The camels as quick as cutting swords journeyed by night through the middle of the desert.) The metaphor "يا فوخ الدجى" the crown of the head of the dark night is to al'Askarī an unfortunate one.<sup>(5)</sup> He also criticizes "the nose of disdain in Dhū'r-Rumma's verse:-

تعرّضنا ف الناس عزة نفسه وتطلع أنف الكبرياء من الكبر

(1) al-Umda, i, 185.

(2) See *Dīwān al-ma'ānī*, ii, 147.

(3) al-Sina'atayn, 107, 110 & 431. *Khizānat al-adāb*, i, 107.

(4) al-Muwashshah, 184; al-Muwāzana, 19; al-Sinā'atayn, 164.

(5) al-Sina'atayn, 300.



(1)

"His self-resolution strengthens the weaklings of the people, and he cuts off the nose of disdain, from disdain".

al-Askarī considers this as uncompromisingly ugly.<sup>(2)</sup>

However, Qudama b. Ja'far in his Naqd al-shi'r when writing on īghāl, (īghāl is to fill out the meaning of a line of poetry by joining a rhyming word to a line whose meaning is already complete) so iterated al-Aṣma'i's statement quoted previously,<sup>(3)</sup> to the effect that Dhū'r-Rumma was the best poet for the quality of his īghāl.

Badī al-Zamān al-Hamadānī wrote a short but interesting maqāma which he called al-Maqāmat al-Ghaylāniyā, after Dhū'r Rumma's first name, Ghaylān. It is<sup>a</sup> well-constructed, and concise piece of work. The atmosphere is that of the desert, realistic and colourful, and the narrator is, as in all his maqamat, 'Īsā b. Hishām. Īsā, quite clearly reports Isma b. Badr al-Fāzārī, (his father's name is given elsewhere as Mālīk and not Badr.)<sup>(4)</sup> Dhū'r-Rumma's friend, as revealing the whole account in a meeting at which Īsā b. Hishām was present. Īsā says that when the subject of those who did not answer their enemies' satire either out of clemency or out of contempt was brought up and when al-Ṣalatān al-'Abdī and al-Ba'ith al-Minqarī

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(1) The dīwān of Dhu'r-Rumma, xxxv, 67.

(2) al-Sinā-'atayn, 301.

(3) See above, 266-267.

(4) See above p.45.

were mentioned, and when the story of ~~how~~ Jarīr and al-Farazdaq was recalled, 'Isma began his story of how he chanced to meet Dhū'r-Rumma while he was journeying through the country of Baṇu Tamīm and how both travelled till the mid-day heat compelled them to take refuge under the tall green alā' trees which looked like virgins displaying their charm beside mourning tamarisks ... After partaking of some food they laid themselves down each under the shade of a tamarisk. 'Isma noticed nearby a she-camel with a man beside it. Then Dhū'r-Rumma woke after a short nap and began reciting. He recited thirteen verses of which six are on Mayya and her ruined encampment. Then he suddenly changed the subject and began satirizing his opponent of Banū Umru'l-Qays (Hishām) and his tribe. On hearing the last verse, the man with the she-camel, whom Dhū'r-Rumma recognized as al-Farazdaq, rubbed his eyes expressing dissatisfaction with what Dhū'r-Rumma had uttered. Dhū'r-Rumma then lampooned Mujāshi', al-Farazdaq's clan in two verses, to which the latter only commented: "Woe to you O Dhū'r-Rumaym! How can you oppose me with such plagiarised speech!" Then al-Farazdaq, for he it was with the she-camel, went back to sleep whilst Dhū'r-Rumma departed, low in spirit.<sup>(1)</sup>

The gist of this maqama is obvious. It presents the point of view of the philologists as to Dhū'r-Rumma's failure in composing satire. It recalls their esteem of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, and al-Akhtal in Abu'Ubayda's account <sup>(2)</sup> for their distinction in

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(1) Maqāmāt al-Hamadānī, Beirut, 1924, 43-48; Zahr al-Adāb, iii,

(2) See above, 261.

praise and satire and it recalls, in particular, the part of that account which says: "Some poets they (the three esteemed poets) cast into oblivion by not paying attention to their attacks on them".

Further, the maqāma reiterates the accusation of plagiarism on the part of Dhū'r-Rumma. The verses put in the mouth of Dhū'r-Rumma illustrate al-Hamadānī's acquaintance with the poetry of the former, but their metre is al-muṭāqarib which is not to be found amongst the metres of the poems of Dhū'r-Rumma's dīwān.

Dhu'r-Rumma has in recent years been enjoying a relative revival. Apart from Macartney, quoted previously, other critics have dealt with his poetry and tried to assess its value. Sayid Nawful, in his shi'r-al-tabi'a (1945) saw in Dhū'r-Rumma a poet who revived the poetry of nature and also presented it comprehensively. He, the critic proceeds, selected its most beautiful aspects and assimilated them, then reproduced them in a skilful way.<sup>(1)</sup> Labouring, perhaps, under the influence of Jarīr's criticism<sup>(2)</sup> of Dhū'r-Rumma or led astray by the surface ~~to~~ similarity to Jāhīlī poetry, this critic finds no innovatory aspect in Dhu'r-Rumma's composition.<sup>(3)</sup>

In his al-Shawāmikh (1946), Muhammad Ṣabri published a

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(1) Shi'r al-tabi'a, 151-152.

(2) see above, 243.

(3) Shi'r al-tabi'a, 145.

volume on Dhū'r-Rumma. He sees in him an original artist who dedicated his life to singing of the beauty of his surroundings to which he was greatly attached - "He was inspired in his description and <sup>when</sup> he sings of the clouds, for example, he sings as the Bedouin does and in the language of the Bedouin who mentions their various names, conditions and colours. Yet you feel in his description a peculiar stamp, overwhelming you with its effect as you continue looking at it, and you feel it a charming spirit, so quiet and attractive that you wonder as to its nature...(1) " Dhū'r-Rumma, "he goes on, "penetrated far into the depths of nature by means of his natural gift and his wonderful artistic talent and spent his life amongst the sand of Dahna, weeping and singing. He confined himself both to his art and love as exclusively as the hermit (ascetic) to his worship. Thus he produced for us the sweetness of melodies and the most beautiful of colours at a time when the poets were busy with satire and eulogy seeking the favour of many governors and when revolts and quarrels were dominant amongst the tribes and parties.(2).....

According to Muḥammad Ṣabrī "almost all the poems of Dhū'r-Rumma are, in fact, equal in beauty. There is not a single poem in which the personality manifests itself clearly, yet his

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(1) al-Shawāmakh, 95.

(2) Ibid, 96.

personality shows itself throughout all his poetry, for he produces new tunes from every string in his poems and through these different tunes which spring forth from the emotions of love and longing in the sand-mountains and valleys, Dhū'r-Rumma appears as the sky appears in its full charm amidst the gorgeous colours of the evening twilight.<sup>(1)</sup> " Then he cites the following verse of al-Buḥturi to show that this poet recognized Dhu'r-Rumma's own forte in describing his desert world:-

أَيْنَ شَمَافٍ وَالْكَهْمِيتِ وَذَوِ الرِّمَّةِ وَصَافٍ مَرْهَمٍ وَبَنُوكِ

"Where are Shammākh, al-Kumayt, and Dhū'r-Rumma the describers of a wide desert and uneven grounds."<sup>(2)</sup>

This critic has also something to say on the originality of Dhu'r-Rumma's composition - "And I can almost say that the 'imitative personality' overwhelms in each poem of Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry 'the innovating one', although the 'innovatory personality' appears throughout his poetry as a whole and makes us forget the influences and traces of the ancient poetry which it contains. This ancient poetry can, perhaps, help after all to delineate the new in its most glowing and splendid aspects."<sup>(3)</sup>

In his al-Taṭawwur wa'l-tajdīd fi'l-shir al-Umawī,(1952) Shawqi Dayf devoted a section to what he called Dhū'r-Rumma's Portraits.<sup>(4)</sup> He claims that in ancient Arabic poetry, Dhū'r-

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(1) Ibid, 21-22.

(2) Ibid, 22.

(3) Ibid, 22.

(4) See Shawqī Dayf, al-Taṭawwur wa'l-tajdīd fi'l-shi'r al-Umawī, Cairo, (2nd, edition) 1959, 265-291.

Rumma "is unique in describing the desert - it is true that the poets before him and contemporary with him used to describe the desert and all that was in it, yet he alone amongst them was characterised by his love for it, for he describes it not as one who sees it and has an admiration for it but as a poet who submerges himself in it and penetrates through it. In this respect, Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry might be considered a new taste in the Arabic language since the poets before him, so to speak, used to describe the desert from outside, yet he describes it from within, from within himself and his soul for he felt it strongly. Or you can say he loved it passionately and thus turned to make portraits in which he records its aspects and draws its landscapes with all their details; he portrays its days and nights, its stones and sands, its grass, trees and animals and everything that passes over it such as the winds, lightning, thunder, and rain, and everything that shines in its firmament of stars and clouds and everything with which it was crowded such as the hot winds, birds, wells and mirages ... (1) "

In his laudatory assessment of Dhū'r-Rumma, Shawqī Dayf says "One feels as though the images and pictures of Dhū'r-Rumma's imaginative power which pours out in his poetry were limitless. Every picture is characterized with dimensions, concentration and colour. In this respect, Dhū'r-Rumma is

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(1) Ibid, 273.

almost unsurpassed by any Arab poet.<sup>(1)</sup>

In spite, however, of his capacity for appreciating the artistic excellence of Dhū'r-Rumma's composition, the critic commits the error which is typical of modern criticism of this poet in examining him in isolation and not within the context of the Bedouin school of poetry to which he belonged. As an example of this deficiency working itself out in practice, we have the following interpretation of the significance of the hunting episode in Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry: "Through Dhū'r-Rumma's descriptions of their journeys, the animals are endowed with a multitude of emotions and perhaps because of this, he does not give the hunter's arrows, nor his dogs an opportunity to kill them, and perhaps also, his sub-consciousness had something to do with this, for he could not win his beloved and so it is the hunter who is not able to reach his prey.<sup>(2)</sup> Nothing could be more erroneous than this interpretation - by failing to place Dhū'r-Rumma within the background of his school, he was missing the basic point that except in elegy and exhortation the safety of the animals is a traditional convention of the Bedouin school.<sup>(3)</sup>

This criticism of Shawqi Dayf's appraisal can be applied

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(1) Ibid, 282.

(2) Ibid, 277.

(3) See above, 91.

with equal validity to the other modern critics whose views have been quoted above. Instead of a systematic study in which an analysis and comparison of Dhu'r-Rumma's main themes is made in relation to their counterparts in the Jahili poetry and instead of scrutinising his poetry within the framework of his school, they treated him as an isolated poet except, perhaps, for some passing reference to his predecessors, which simply adds to the confusion. It is true to say that, except in the case of Muhammad Ṣabrī whose study of Umru'l-Qays in a volume of al-Shawāmikh and whose appreciative taste did produce some fruit though with a lot of hit-and-miss guesswork, the knowledge which these critics show of Jahīlī poetry is not brought to bear in any practical way in helping them to a true understanding of Dhū'r-Rumma. The seemingly formal resemblances of Dhū'r-Rumma's compositions to the Jahīlī poetry, for example, prompt the author of Shi'r al-tabia to declare that Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry is simply derivative.<sup>(1)</sup>

In spite of this, these critics have rendered a great service in drawing the attention of many readers to Dhū'r-Rumma and in pointing, though with some exaggeration, to his merits and his skill. Moreover, their efforts are significant in-so-far as they initiated the first stage of an attempt to re-appraise Dhū'r-Rumma, aesthetically for - except for his Bedouin audience and a few who appreciate him, such as Ibn al-

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(1) Shi'r al-tabia, 145.



Mu'tazz, - he had for long been the victim both of his admirers and detractors who deformed his compositions and obscured his merits. His admirers, who were mainly philologists, cited him for philological reasons and created the impression that his poetry is associated only with archaic and obscure words. Moreover, their citations of his poetry are so disconnected that the aesthetic elements could easily be overlooked. As for his detractors they, as Mawālī lacking the Bedouin background, found little in his poetry to reflect their own experiences and thus failed to appreciate the sense of delicate beauty and artistic integrity which went into, its composition.

## C O N C L U S I O N

The discussion of Dhū'r-Rumma's poetry contained in the previous chapters can be summed up in the following lines - it is obvious that he belongs to the Bedouin school of poetry by virtue of education, upbringing and environment. His knowledge and assimilation of the Bedouin poetical heritage was wide and thorough and his environment was responsible for deepening and nourishing that knowledge. Dhū'r-Rumma, as has been suggested, composed his poetry mainly through traditional norms but displayed his artistic skill by adopting them and going beyond them, and he portrays his desert world with a detail and graphic realism that are especially his. The influence of his predecessors on his poetry is obvious especially when their poetry reflects a desert experience similar to his own; on the other hand, he diverges from them whenever their composition ceases to reflect what he regarded as the true features of his own life and experience.

Verisimilitude is the stamp of the Bedouin poetry and is an outstanding feature of his poetry. His dīwān provides minute descriptions of desert life such as those of seasonal changes, the withering or flourishing of the desert flora, rain, winds, heat, clouds of dūst, hills swimming in the mirage and pools of deceptive water and his pictures of animal

life - the wild bull, the wild ass, the gazelles moving elegantly in the bright forenoon through the soft sand dunes, the chameleon standing erect on a tree directing his face towards the sun while his colour changes as the heat increases or diminishes, the locusts leaping because of the summer heat and beating the burning pebbles, and the nights and days of the desert and the shining stars in the firmament. His poetry is a complete picture of his surroundings and is, in fact, a true microcosm of the real world of desert life and experience. His realism does not consist simply in producing pictures that are truthful and minutely observed. As a gifted creative artist, he married to the photographic image a balanced and subtle feeling for words. His portraits of landscapes are not only truthful but alive. In addition to this, his description of animals such as the wild bull and wild ass not only picture their movements and tell of their adventures, but succeed in developing a dramatic atmosphere and an alternating climactic rise and fall in the dramatic action. Moreover, he presents these descriptions in passages of balanced length differing both from the brief accounts of the Jahīlīs and from the protracted digressions of some of the poets of the Islamic and Umayyad eras such as al-Shammākh and the rujjāz namely al'Ajjāj and Ru'ba.

Turning to his love poetry, his passionate love for Mayya, his long-standing devotion to her and his perpetual longing to meet her, raises him to the same level as the 'Udhrīs. In many passages of his ghazal, he sings of a love sincere and tormenting and draws with truthfulness and passion many pictures of his emotional turmoil. He, on the other hand, shows in some passages obsessional attitudes concomitant with sexual inhibition.

It was the Bedouin ghazal, however, of which the traditional prelude is but a formal aspect, which was his natural field. Through this he depicts Mayya as the manifestation of both ideal bodily beauty and of moral qualities which the Bedouin male desires. He not only sings of her beauty but he sees in her the charm and vitality of the desert world; nature, in its beautiful manifestation in the desert, speaks and exposes itself through his beloved - the most beautiful, the most dear to him of the many aspects of the desert and the most admired of woman's qualities are gathered into a wonderful unity. Yet he longs for her, not out of sheer carnal desire, but as his other half with which it is natural to seek unity.

In his ghazal, Dhū'r-Rumma uses many traditional clichés of his school, but even here, his creative impulses continue to express itself and he uses these clichés to describe his own personal feelings and to present a picture charged with

emotional suggestions.

In his praise, Dhū'r-Rumma moves, once again, within his Bedouin school and his desert forms the background on to which his panegyric composition is projected. His characteristic of depicting his patron realistically and with reservation may account for his being regarded as a failure in this field. But, although here, as well as in satire and boasting, he is out of his natural field, some of his panegyrics, if looked at from the standpoint of his Bedouin school, can be ranked amongst the fine compositions of Bedouin poetry of praise. Although he refrained from participating in the great battle of satire and abuse, he could not escape the pressure of his age and was touched by the satirical spirit which consequently enmeshed him in what may be called a marginal combat. His satire does not interest us except in-so-far as it reflects a social aspect of his life, although to the reader of satire some of his compositions in this field in their artistry and even perhaps in effectiveness of abuse, are worthy of inclusion in a selective anthology of the satiric poetry of his time.

It is his gift for simile and metaphor that makes him outstanding amongst the poets of the desert. It adds to his realistic descriptions, particularly when dealing with images

of colour and light, a quality of epithet bordering upon the symbolic. He himself was well aware of his own forte, for he once said "When I say <sup>لَا</sup> (as though) and cannot find a way out (i.e. a fit simile) may Allah cut out my tongue!" (1)

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(1) Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Harīrī, ii, 58; A short account of Dhū'r-Rumma, 302.

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