

Principles of Literary Study

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review: watch your language

They ask me to tell them what *Shahid* means: Listen, listen:
It means “The Beloved” in Persian, “witness” in Arabic. (“In Arabic”)

If someone asks where Shahid has disappeared,
he’s waging a war (no, *jung*) beyond English. (“Beyond English”)

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Writes Shammas: Memory, no longer confused, now is a homeland—
his two languages a Hebrew caress in Arabic. (“In Arabic”)

review: form informs

- ▶ *aa ba ca...* rhyme (monorhyme)
- ▶ every couplet has repeated final word (Farsi *radīf*) after rhyme
- ▶ includes pen-name or *takhalluṣ* in last couplet
- ▶ (usually) every line has the same syllable count
- ▶ couplets are end-stopped, almost independent

the shape of the volume: symmetries

- ▶ “I must go back... / to tell you” (23)
- ▶ “Arabic” (24–25)
- ▶ “Of Water” (46–47)
- ▶ “Air” (59): one-couplet hinge
- ▶ “Water” (55–56)
- ▶ “In Arabic” (80)
- ▶ “Tell me what I was like” (84)

shape: a narrative arc?

- ▶ begin by returning
 - ▶ “I must go back” (23)
- ▶ exile
 - ▶ “you learn your strange fate” (28)
 - ▶ “Read slowly: the plot will unfold in real time” (33)
 - ▶ “I have brought my life here” (34)
 - ▶ “If home is found on both sides of the globe” (50)
- ▶ facing death
 - ▶ “I am become flesh” (61)
 - ▶ “If someone asks where Shahid has disappeared” (69)
 - ▶ “And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—” (83)

shape: clusters

- ▶ “Of Fire,” “Of Water;” “Land,” “Water;” “Air”
- ▶ “Angels,” God”
- ▶ “As Ever,” “Forever”

“Tonight”: speakers again

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- ▶ What are the addressees being asked / commanded / prayed to do?

“Tonight”: speakers again

- ▶ Who is being addressed?
- ▶ What are the addressees being asked / commanded / prayed to do?
- ▶ Are these requests logically compatible?

reversals / heresies / travesties

- ▶ “haven: Prisons”
- ▶ “He’s left open—for God—the doors of Hell tonight”
- ▶ “I’ll bless Jezebel”
- ▶ “multiply me”

deixis for now

deictic (“pointing out”) a word whose referent depends on the speaking situation

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- ▶ I, you, now...tonight

escape

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world.

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Harper, 1851), I, [Melville Electronic Library](#).

“AND I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE.”

Job.

The drama's done. Why then here does any one step forth? —Because one did survive the wreck.

Ibid., 313. “Job” is another Old Testament reference.

Shockley's ghazal

- ▶ How many ways of looking at southern trees are there here?

and now for something completely different

- ▶ two Conan Doyle stories
 - ▶ print out “A Scandal in Bohemia”