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Poetics of Mourning and Exile in Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* and "The Seafarer": A Comparative Reading of Pre-Islamic Arabic and Old English Elegiac Poetry

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Abstract
This article examines mourning and exile in the Old pre-Islamic Arabic poem *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* (*"Blame me not; I bear my own reproach"*) by Abd Yaghūth, and the Old English poem "The Seafarer," which is written anonymously. Through detailed comparative analysis of the two poems, the article aims at investigating how, despite their literary, cultural and historical contexts, the two poets managed to negotiate loss, exile and identity by employing the elegy to express feelings of alienation, death and longing. By analyzing the poets' employment of certain poetic techniques such as sound effects, voice, repetition and imagery, both poems showcase convergences and divergences in their treatment of the universal themes of mourning, exile, alienation and mortality.

Keywords: Abd Yaghūth, elegy, exile, Old English literature, pre-Islamic poetry, "The Seafarer".

I-Introduction

Poetry provides a cross-cultural articulation of universal human experiences including mourning, exile, loss and mortality. Whether in pre-Islamic Arabic or Old English literatures, these experiences are poignantly expressed. Despite the contextual differences between Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* and the Old English poem "The Seafarer" in terms of their literary traditions, cultures and the historical gap dividing them, they prove the power of poetry as a shared medium of universal expression and a distinctive cultural negotiation of exile, loss, identity and mortality.

"The Seafarer" employs the journey motif to dramatize the speaker's exile on the cold sea, and its transformation to a spiritual journey toward divine consolation. The blending of pagan and Christian elements indicates the gradual cultural transformation in Anglo-Saxon England from paganism to Christianity. In comparison, Abd Yaghūth's pre-Islamic Arabic poem,

composed in captivity after his defeat in a battle, laments the speaker's estrangement from his homeland, his companions, and his past life of chivalry and glory. The employment of animal and warfare imagery, and the depiction of desert landscapes reflect the Bedouin ethos while revealing the poet's refusal to accept death as anything other than the annihilation of worldly honor.

The comparative exanimation of mourning and exile in these two poems provides a rich understanding of how these themes are configured in their unique literary traditions. Whereas "The Seafarer" moves from exile, loss and despair and mortality to Christian faith, compensation, consolation, God and the eternal life, Abd Yaghūth refuses to come to terms with death, renounce his earthly pleasures and be consoled with the promise of eternal life.

Methodologically, this article begins by briefly introducing the elegiac tradition in pre-Islamic Arabic and Old English literatures. Then, it separately analyzes both Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* and "The Seafarer". After that, a separate subsection is included to provide a close comparative reading of the convergences and the divergences between the two poems, focusing on the themes of exile, loss, natural imagery, identity construction, and the treatment of death.

II- Elegy in Arabic Literature

Etymologically speaking, the term (rithā), the Arabic word for elegy, came from Middle Arabic. It refers to the inheritance that is left by the dead to his inheritors. By the 14th century A. D., the meaning of the word drastically shifted to those who lament or mourn the dead (Al-Ansari, 1994). In the pre-Islamic period, elegy became one of the literary genres, alongside other poetic purposes like satire, praise, love etc. (Ali, n.d.).

Thematically, elegy involves the celebration of the dead's virtues such as courage, generosity, chastity, and justice. Mostly, the structure of an elegiac poem consists of three elements: the first is expresses the inevitability of death, the second contextualizes death by mentioning its causes, time and place, and focuses on the effect of death on the family and on the poet himself, the third laments and commemorate the deceased by glorifying her/his virtues (Chiaook, 1977).

It's worth noting that the pre-Islamic elegiac poems were not dedicated only to family members, friends, tribal leaders or those who had the good traits of feeding the poor and helping the weak, but they extended to include lamentations of kings and princes. A remarkable example of such elegies are those written by the renowned pre-Islamic court poet, al-Nābighah al-

Dhubyānī who elegized the Lakhmid king al-Nuʿmān III (583–602) who was killed by the Persian king, Khosrau. Al-Nuʿmān was a literary patron for al-Dhubyānī who received gifts, including gold, jewelries and herds of camels in return for his eulogies and praise. The poems that were dedicated by al-Dhubyānī to the king became masterpieces of Arab literature and were later sung by many minstrels (Dhaif, 1978).

Other poems of lamentation were written by "Al-Saa'leek" poets, or "the brigands" (Mansour, 2005, p. 46), who were a group of poets disavowed and exiled by their tribes. Thus, if one of these vagabond poets was killed, his tribe would not ask for revenge. Consequently, those poets found themselves alone and without tribal protection. Thus, they formed groups bound not by tribal ties, but by loyalty, friendship and common fate. Being a minority against the tribes, the loss of one member of the group inflicts them with great grief, anguish and lamentation. Undoubtedly, the sense of being castaway, abandoned by their community and surrounded by hostile tribes is manifested in their poetry. One of these poets is al-Shanfara who, according to Stetkevych (1986), wrote an elegy to Ta'abbata Sharran, the famous pre-Islamic Su'luk poet. This elegy is known as *The Ritha' of Ta'abbata Sharran*. It begins with:

ان بالشعب الذي عند سلع
لقتيلا دمه ما يطل
خلف العبء علي وولى
انا بالعبء له مستقل
ووراء الثأر مني ابن اخت
تحل مصغ عقدته ما
مطرق يرشح سما كما
اطرق افعى ينفث السم صل

(al-Shanfara as cited in Stetkevych, 1986, lines:1-4)

On the mountain path that lies below Sal'
lies a slain man whose blood
will not go unavenged.
He left the burden to me and departed;
I have assumed that burden
for him.
Bent on vengeance am I, his sister's son,
a steadfast warrior,
his knot not to be loosed.
Eyes downcast, he oozes poison death,
like a glowering adder,
ejecting venom, deadly **(Stetkevych, 1993, p. 58).**

The quote above reflects one of the remarkable features of the pre-Islamic traditions of elegiac poetry that is the focus on blood revenge (Stetkevych, 1993). According to Nicholson (1993), pre-Islamic poetry written by female poets was predominately elegiac. It focuses more on death than love. He cited the elegiac verses sung on the death of Ta'abbata Sharran by his sister. A distinctive form of elegy is developed by the poetess al-Khansā who is dubbed as the 'elegiac queen' of Arabic literature (as cited in Sajdi, 2009, p. 178). Her Elegiac poetry forms a major part of her poetic writings. Al-Khansā composed her elegies to mourn the death of her two brothers: Ṣakhr and Muāwiyah. In these elegies, she borrows from male poetic traditions of elegiac composition certain stylistic techniques such as opening the elegy with an expression of excessive weeping over the dead (Miller, 2024).

However, during the Islamic period, the elegy underwent significant development. Because Islam forbade tribal conflicts and wars, the elegy shifted its focus from lamenting the tribal leaders and warriors killed during tribal war. Instead, most of these poems were dedicated to those who had been killed under the banner of Islam in the Islamic conquests during the life of the prophet Mohammed or the Caliphs who came after him. In this period, religious elements from Islam were added to the elegy. Where the pre-Islamic elegy tackled the inevitability of death and the need for taking blood revenge, the elegies written during the rise of Islam viewed death as a path leading to eternal life in Heaven. Poets wrote elegies that incorporate some verses from the Holy Quran, and the sayings of Prophet Mohammed. In their elegies, they replaced the pagan hero and the celebration of his traits in a pagan culture with a religious hero fighting for the sake of Islam, and elegized for having traits mentioned in the Holy Quran, such as pietism, morality, chastity, devoutness, asceticism and other traits of a good believer (Ali, n.d.). This religious and political dimension left its lasting impact on the elegy. After the martyrdom of Imam Ali b. Abi Talib, many political groups and parties emerged in the Umayyad period. Among these groups were Al-Kawarij, the dissenters who refused to give a pledge to Al-Imam Ali and fought him. Their poets wrote elegiac poems that express deep grief over the loss of their members who were killed in their battles (Ali, n.d.).

III- The Elegiac Tradition in English Literature

The term "elegy" comes from the Greek word "elegeia" or "elegos", which referred to any lamented verses (Beeker, 2009, p. 404). According to Abrams & Harpham (2012), the elegy is simply a poem written in elegiac meter (alternating pentameter and hexameter lines in Greek and Roman poetry). Stanley B. Greenfield defines the English elegy as "a relatively short

reflective or dramatic poem embodying a contrasting pattern of loss and consolation, ostensibly based upon a specific personal experience or observation, and expressing an attitude towards that experience"
(1966, p. 143). According to Anne Klinck (1992), this is the most widely accepted definition.

From the Old English period to the Renaissance, poems that tackle loss, exile and the transience of life are considered elegiac. Famous examples of these poems are “The Wanderer” and “The Seafarer”. These poems are considered elegiac, not because they adopt the classical elegiac meter, but because of their inclination toward self-reflection, exile, loss and mortality. These poems tackle themes of isolation and the impermanence of the earthly life compared to the eternal joys of the afterlife (Gordon, 1954). Greenfield identifies "the sea with cliffs, hail, snow, rain, and storms, plus the meadhall of heroic poetry with its lords, warriors, hawks, horses, and precious cups" as the setting of old English elegy (1996, p. 143). Fumo (2010) argues that “Elegy as a ‘pure’ or self-articulated form did not exist in medieval England” (p. 121).

The sixteenth century witnessed the development of the pastoral elegy which mourns the death of a shepherd. The poet usually begins by invoking the muses that inspired him to write the elegy. Eventually, the elegy ends with consolation with the acceptance of the inevitability of death. A notable example of this type of elegy is “Astrophel”, by Spencer on the death of Sir Philip Sidney in 1595.

Moreover, sixteenth-century poets like William Shakespeare wrote dirges which are considered subtypes of elegy. A dirge is simply a short lamentation poem about the death of a specific person, written to be sung. Shakespeare’s “Full Fathom Five Thy Father Lies” falls into this sub-genre (Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, 2012).

Later, in the 17th century, the term elegy started to refer to “a formal and sustained lament in verse for the death of a particular person, usually ending in a consolation” (Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, 2012, p. 101). From the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, the funeral elegy flourished. Its narrative structure is divided into three parts: lament, praise and consolation (Clymer, 2010).

In the twentieth century, the traditional elegy was criticized for its artificial rules and insincere expression of personal feelings. Modern elegists treated the elegy with more flexibility, not as conventional genre but as a reflection of the tragedy of the human condition in the modern age. Thus, a comparison of John Milton’s traditional elegy “Lycidas” with Thomas

Hardy's modern elegies "God's Funeral" and "The Darkling Thrush" reveals that modern elegy breaks free from the conventionality of traditional elegy. Hardy's elegies replace the convention of spiritual consolation that ends the traditional elegies with a sense of faithlessness and utter despair. Contrary to traditional elegies, modern elegies like Hardy's do not depict nature as a source of consolation, compensation and comfort (Günday, 2015). These elegies are considered 'anti-consolatory' because they depict a dark image of life devoid of hope and consolation (Komura, 2011, p. 2).

IV- Abd Yaghūth's Self-Lamentation

In 580 A. D, the tribe Benu Al-Harith, one of the Yemeni tribes, invaded the tribe of Benu Tamim in the second battle of Al-Kulab. In this battle, the poet Abd Yaghūth (578-618 AD.), who was one of the leaders of Banu Al-Harith tribe, was captured after his heroic fighting. He asked the leaders of Banu Tamim to release him, but they refused. When he was certain that he would not be released, he asked them to kill him in an honorable way. They were astonished by his request and asked him the way he wanted to die; he asked them to give him wine to drink and cut his artery while he was drunk. So, one of Banu Tamim leaders, who was Isma bin Abair, ordered two boys to be wine butlers. When the effect of wine touched him, he started to lament himself. The two boys felt sorry for him, and blamed him for fighting their tribe that led him to be captured in a miserable condition (Shikho, 1991). Then, he started his elegy with a poetical voice that conveys his emotional and mental state of deep pain and unbearable anguish.

ألا لا تلوماني كفا اللومَ ما بيا فما لكما في اللوم خيرٌ ولا ليا
ألم تعلما أنّ الملامة قليل نفعها وما لومي أخي من شِماليا

Blame me not; enough blame for what I bear.
For blame is vain to you and me.
Have you not realized that blame is of little avail?
And blaming my brother is not my trait * (Abd Yaghūth, as cited in Jad Al-Mawla et al., 1981, lines 1-2).

*All translations from Arabic are the authors' own unless otherwise noted.

In the extract above, the poet repeated the word "blame" as a verb and a noun five times to emphasize the uselessness of blaming at this moment of approaching death. This repetition of the word 'blame' which contains the nasal phoneme (m) and the gliding (l) reinforces the poet's psychological state and his deep pain that penetrates his heart because his life will come to an end soon. The repetition of these two phonemes in the whole poem urges the speaker to describe his old days and mourn the loss of knighthood,

nobility and generosity. His sense of personal loss overcomes the act of blame which is futile at the moment of dying (Chiaook, 1977).

Although the pre-Islamic Arab poets followed certain poetic traditions such as weeping on ruins, ghazel (love), describing adventures with women and giving a detailed picture of topography, Abd Yaghūth was uninterested in these traditions. Instead, he described his state of being a prisoner. The only thing he shared with the pre-Islamic literary tradition is addressing his speech to two boy-wine butlers (Jad Al-Mawla et al., 1981).

The speaker addresses the imagined listener asking him to carry the news of his capture to his drinking companions:

فيا راكباً إمّا عرضتَ فبلّغن نداماي من نجْرانَ ألّا تلاقيا
أبا كَربٍ وَالأيهَمَين كِليهما وَقَيساً بِأعلى حَضرَمَوتَ اليَمانِيا

Oh, rider, if you have arrived in Najran,
Inform my drinking companions, we will never meet again.
Aba Karb, both Ayhams
And Qais in the highlands of Yemeni Hadramout (Abd Yaghūth, as cited in Jad Al-Mawla et al., 1981, lines 3-4).

Here, the poet does not mention his family, relatives or tribe as the Arabs used to do. Instead, he mentions by name his drinking companions with whom he shared joyful moments. According to Masarwah (2019), wine is viewed by pagan Arabs as an integral part of their notion of the good life. It is deemed as a sign of nobility and a source of bravery. Therefore, drinking wine with his companions was a precious moment of joy for the poet who yearns for this life of happiness and comradery, and laments its unavoidable loss due to the presence of death that will soon take his body and soul away (Al-Qālī, 1976).

The poet's self-lamentation is deepened by his longing to and isolation from places such as Najran and Hadramout which are connected to his glorious past and his future loss. After his conversation with the two boys and mentioning his drinking companions, he began to recite his great deeds in fighting enemies and how he remained alone, covering the backs of retreating knights of his tribe and mentioning how he fought bravely to the last moment before he was captured. He mentions how his captors tied his tongue with a piece of leather for fear of being satirized by him, but they agreed to release his tongue after giving them his word of honor that he would never satirize them (Al-Qālī, 1976). He writes:

"أقول وقد شدّوا لساني بنِسْعة أمعشرَ تَيْمٍ أطلقوا لي لسانيا"

(*I said as they tied my tongue with a leather thong/ Oh! Taiym tribe, set my tongue free*) (Abd Yaghūth, as cited in Jad Al-Mawla et al., 1981, line 8).

The poet's psychological pain and alienation escalated when an old woman from Abd Shams (one of Tameem's families) mocked him for being a prisoner (Abu Ubaida, 1998). He states:

فإن تقتلوني تقتلوا بي سيّدا وإن تُطلقوني تَحْرُبوني بماليا
أحقّا عباد الله أن لستُ سامعاً نشيد الرعاء المُعزبين المَتاليا
وتضحك مني شيخةٌ عَبْشميّةٌ كأنْ لم ترى قبلي أسيراً يمانيا
.....
وقد عَلِمَت عَرسي مُليكَةُ أنَّني أنا اللّيثُ مَعدُوّاً عَلَيَّ وَعادِيا
وقد كُنتُ نَحّارَ الجَزورِ وَمُعمِلَ ال مطيَّ وأمضي حيث لاحي ماضيا

And if you kill me, a clan-lord you slay,
If you release me, my wealth as ransom you will seize.
Is it true, O servants of God, that I could no longer hear
the songs of the herdsmen who, with their camels, drift away?
An old woman from Abd Shams mocked me
As if she's never seen a Yemeni in captivity.
……
And my wife, Mulaykah, knows very well
That I am a lion assaulted and assaulting.
And I was the slayer of great camels, the wearier
of mounts, riding steeds to places no living man would reach (Abd Yaghūth, as cited in Jad Al-Mawla et al., 1981, lines 10-15).

The repetition of sounds such the velar phoneme (k), which is somehow similar to the Arab sound (ق), reinforces the speaker's chivalry and mastership, giving the poem a narrative style mingled with grieved tune that expresses the poet's agony. The speaker's honor and bravery are conveyed though his direct statement that if they kill him, they will kill a fearless and honorable clan lord. Moreover, the poet repeats the gliding phoneme (L) to convey his sense of desperation due to his alienation from his family and home. The internal music resulting from the repetition of these sounds and the rhyme ending with /iya/ creates an overwhelming sadness, that gradually escalated from the first to the last line. This stimulates the auditory and the visual interaction of the reader who sympathizes with the poet and is affected by his psychological state. The rhythm and the mournful tone express the

poet's alienation which is also emphasized through the predominance of the ī (ي) suffix, which in English is translated to me/my (Ismael, 2017). The poet is alone and helpless. His fate is to be decided by his captors.

In the lines above, Abd Yaghūth expresses his shock and disbelief as he grapples with the sense of looming loss. He refuses to accept the bitter truth about his imminent death. He addresses 'the servants of God,' asking them to confirm or negate his worries.

In the poem, Abd Yaghūth blends pagan and Christian elements by addressing 'the servants of God' and his reference to the singing of the slave girls and the drinking of wine. The poet employs auditory images by referring to the 'songs of the herdsmen' and the 'singing slave girls', as well as the visual images of slaying camels and his adventures to dangerous places. These are elements reflective of the poet's milieu. The speaker employs the Arabic exaggerated noun form *naḥḥār* (نَحّار/ slayer) to amplify his nobility and magnanimity. In pre-Islamic Arab culture, slaying the she-camel to feed the guests, the passers-by and the needy is a symbol of ultimate generosity and sacrifice because "the she-camel was considered of great importance. It was considered almost sacred and even looking at it was deemed a kind of worship, capable of making one free of one's worries and grief" (Masarwah, 2013, p. 540).

وأنحَرُ لِلشَرب الكِرامِ مِطِيَّتي واصدَعُ بَينَ القَينَتَين ردائِيا
وَكُنتُ إذا ما الخَيلُ شَمَّصَها القَنا لبيق بتَصريفِ القَناة بنَانِيا.
وَعادِيَةٍ سَومَ الجَرادِ وَزَعتُها بكَفّي وَقَد أنحَوا إلَيَّ العَوالِيا.

for generous drinking comrades, my steed I used to slay
and between two singing slave-girls my cloak I tore.
And when spears frightened the war steeds away,
my fingers were deft in wielding the spear.
A host that swarmed like locusts, I cast into disarray
with my bare hands—though long spears were aimed my way (Abd Yaghūth, as cited in Jad Al-Mawla et al., 1981, lines 16-18).

The poet's sense of lamentation is increased through his transition from the future that is ugly, inactive, inevitable and destructive, and the past that is happy, glorious, pleasant, active and free but irrecoverable. This shift between the past and the present enacts "the unresolvable tension between the unfigurable nature of death" (Valeri, 2019, p. 22) and the poet's identity.

Here, the poet seeks to deepen his self-lamentation which results from having his active, fearless, noble, honorable and happy life doomed to be soon sealed with silence and death. The images employed in the lines above also win the reader's sympathy for the fate of a noble and fearless warrior

who in the past, used to sacrifice his means of survival, his camels, for his companions and the poor people, but who is left alone to face death.

Abd Yaghūth closes the poem with his constant and unavoidable sense of loss, estrangement and self-lamentation that is deepened by remembering his glorious past which is in a stark contrast to his inglorious and miserable present and his future which drags him to mortality. Again, he remembers his past life of bravery in the battlefields, his enjoyment of drinking wine with his companions and his hospitality and generosity.

كَأَنِّيَ لَم أركَب جَواداً وَلَم أقُل لِخَيلِيَ كُرّي نَفِّسي عَن رِجالِيا
وَلَم أسبَإِ الزِقَّ الرَوِيَّ وَلَم أقُل لِأيسارِ صِدقٍ أعظِموا ضَوءَ ناريا.

As though I had never mounted a horse, nor told:
My steed "charge—relieve my warriors from the burden of fighting!"
As though I had never broached the brimming wineskin,
nor called to trusty comrades: "Raise the blaze—make bright my fire!"
(Abd Yaghūth, as cited in Jad Al-Mawla et al., 1981, lines 19-20).

Although the final lines are dominated by the speaker's past memories, they indirectly indicate his present emotional state and psyche as he approaches his inescapable death. This reinforces the mournful tone which pervades the whole poem. What makes the glorious past more painful, sorrowful and lamentable to the speaker is the unavoidable moment of his mortality. Using the warfare images of riding and charging with steed, and the image of the raging fire foreshadows the speaker's death, and intensify his self-lamentation as he strives to come to terms with it. His sense of exile and alienation are heightened through his reminiscences of his companions whom he defended in the battlefield, feasted with in peaceful times with the company of wine. The poet's soul-crushing sense of self-lamentation is magnified as he realized that despite his heroism and self-sacrifice during battles, and his magnanimity in peaceful times, he will not be redeemed from death (Stetkevych, 1993).

The employment of the final images and the expression (كَأَنِّيَ/as though I) convey the speaker's excruciating pain due to the inevitable destruction of his "self-identity" (Mendoza, 2017, p. 2) as a fearless and generous warrior who will cease to exist. The repeated use of the Arabic negation particle *Lam* (لَم/ never) intensifies the speaker's self-lamentation as he struggles to come to terms with the ephemeral nature of worldly glory and honor. Abd Yaghūth's laments his alienation from his horse which is "a symbol… of salvation, goodness and life" (Masarwah, 2013, p. 535).

Having no source of consolation to help him endure his death which is implied in the poem through his persistent longing to the past, Abd Yaghūth

succeeded in creating unforgettable effect of self-lamentation, and in drawing the readers to identify with his emotional state and sympathize with his sufferings. The poem's anti-consolatory stance links it modern English elegies, such as Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" that refuses to offer consolation.

In his book *al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn* (845 A. D.), al-Jāḥiẓ stated that Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* was one of the most sorrowful poems written in the pre-Islamic period. He argued that the poetry written by Abd Yaghūth and Tarafa bin Al-Abd at the moment of their death was more eloquent and magnificent than their poetry at the times of safety and welfare (Jad Al-Mawla et al, 1981).

V- "The Seafarer": The Symbolic Journey toward God's Bliss

"The Seafarer" is "a dramatic monologue divided into two parts" (The Seafarer introduction, Shippy, 2017, p. 467). "The Seafarer" is written in old English that it is difficult to be understood by the modern reader (Alexander, 1989). It has been translated lots of times by different writers, poets, and other scholars. The first translation was done by Benjamin Thorpe in 1842. The most famous translations of the poem are made by Ezra Pound, R. K. Gordon, and Michael Alexander (Delanty & Matto, 2011).

"The Seafarer" portrays the life of the Anglo-Saxon tribes that is marked by fragmentation, instability and fragility. Anglo-Saxon society was divided into ruling lords and their followers. Hence, the followers tried to satisfy their lords by all means. This social relationship made them live in a state of loss and alienation (Crossley-Holland, 1988).

The opening of the poem in which the speaker intends to provide personal details of his life and sufferings represent one of the formal features of Old English elegy (Klinck, 1992). In the first part, the seafarer depicts his personal experiences of exile during his self-chosen sea journey. Being isolated from his homeland, home and friends while voyaging in the cold sea, the seafarer is overwhelmed with sorrow and agony. He opens the poem with the hardships and woes he faces as a seafarer by depicting how he spent his life of the sea

Sitting day-long
at an oar's end clenched against clinging sorrow,
breast-drought I have borne, and bitternesses too.
I have coursed my keel through care-halls without end
over furled foam, I forward in the bows
through the narrowing night, numb, watching
for the cliffs we beat along (Alexander, 2008, lines 3-9).

The speaker recalls his past life and his drinking companions. In fact, he cherishes this company because it is a source of comfort, joy and belonging. Greenfield states that the sense of loss and alienation is noticeably the main theme in the poem. The deep feeling of despair and sorrow dominates the beginning and the middle of the poem (1954, p. 201). The poet is both physically and spiritually tormented. He depicts the harshness of the sea by referring to natural phenomena such as hail and cold. The seafarer describes how the

> Hail flew in showers,
> there was no sound there but the slam of waves
> along an icy sea. The swan's blare
> my seldom amusement; for men's laughter
> there was curlew-call, there were the cries of gannets,
> for mead-drinking the music of the gull (Alexander, 2008, lines 21-26).

Although at first, nature is viewed by the poet as a place of his self-imposed exile and a source of his alienation, sorrow and loss of entertainment and friendship, the inclusion of bird imagery indicates that nature is not only harsh, alienating and tormenting, but it is also comforting, consoling and compensating. In the lines above, the poet compensates his alienation and the loss of friends and physical pleasure by finding pleasure in nature. Thus, he alleviates the pangs of memory and nostalgia for the happy past with the joy of the immediate natural setting. This means that the seafarer does not succumb to his exile, loss, lamentation and isolation. On the contrary, he manages to meditate on his situation and to overcome his sufferings. This is due to isolation and exile that grant him a chance of contemplation to see things from another perspective (Viljoen, 2010).

The poet of "The Seafarer" also uses words that begin with the hissing and voiceless sound /s/ like "sound", "slam", "sea" and "swan" to convey, with clarity and immediacy, his psychological state of sorrow and torment. This reveals "the elegy's preoccupation with psychology" (Klinck, 1992, p. 228). He uses alliteration to maximize his grief. He employs caesuras to surprise the reader and lend his poem a gloomy and sorrowful tone. Althagafy (2024) states "the repeated long /i/ sounds in each line foresees the heavy thoughts and doubts running through the speaker's mind" (p. 35). He adds, "the exile experiences a powerful sense of deprivation, and a lack of social support and family. This is poignantly depicted in the frightful imagery that utilizes the extensive use of alliteration with the "h" sound as shown in lines 16-19" (2024, p. 35).

Although the seafarer laments his exile in the cold sea and the loss of the physical pleasures of life on the land, he could not resist the urge that drives him to be on the sea.

His heart is not in harping nor in the having of rings,
has no delight in women nor the world's gladnesses
nor can think of anything outside the thrash of waves,
sea-struck, is distracted, stillness lost (Alexander, 2008, lines 49-52).

In the lines above, the speaker repeats the word 'nor' to emphasize the sense of deprivation and loss of earthly pleasures endured by him and any other seafarer. The shift from the first person 'I' to the adjective pronoun 'his', indicates a thematic transition from personal experiences of suffering to an objective truth about physical life. Although his life on the sea made him exiled and friendless, yearning for the sound of the harp, the pleasure with his woman, drinking wine, and the earthly glory that he gained in battles with his lord, the seafarer felt attached to his seafaring life.

"The Seafarer" is reflective of both the Anglo-Saxon and Christian cultures. This is evidenced in the blending of the old pagan Anglo-Saxon and Christian elements that is obvious in the speaker's statement that "Fate is stronger, the Creator mightier, than any man's thought" (Alexander, 2008, lines: 28-29). The poet acknowledges the power of fate. However, it is viewed as a test for the seafarer's patience, "willpower and … fortitude" (Stumpf, 2019, p. 78). In this way, fate becomes "an instrument of divine will" (Stumpf, 2019, p. 57).

Another example of the incorporation of Christian elements is included in the lines below in which the speaker renounces all earthly pleasures for the sake of the eternal happiness in heaven (Greenfield, 1954). The seafarer believes that

…far warmer to me
are the Lord's kindnesses than this life of death
lent us on land.
I do not believe
earthly estate is everlasting:
three things all ways threaten a man's peace
and one before the end shall overthrow his mind;
either illness or age or the edge of vengeance (Alexander, 2008, lines 70-77).

Here, the speaker compares the eternal 'joys of the Lord' with the transient pleasures of the earthly life. He comforts and assures himself that his hardships, exile and sorrow will vanish with death, and that his soul will be

compensated with everlasting happiness and peace by 'the Lord' in the afterlife. In the quote below, the speaker expresses his deep-seated conviction that worldly glory, power, nobility and physical bodies could not withstand the power of death that is unstoppable.

> Days are soon over,
> on earth imperium with the earl's hand fails;
> kings are not now, kaisers are not,
> there are no gold-givers like the gone masters
> who between them framed the first deeds in the world,
> in their lives lordly, in the lays renowned (Alexander, 2008, lines 88-93).

The speaker sheds light of the fleeting nature of time and its destructive forces. From the middle part to the final line, the poem shifts from lamentation to sermonizing, teaching the Christian values of Godly love, patience, faith and devotion.

> Let us think where we have our home,
> and then consider how to come thither;
> then let us also strive so that we may go there,
> into the eternal blessedness,
> where life belongs in love of the Lord,
> in hope of heaven.
> Thanks be to God because he, the Holy One,
> the Prince of Glory, the Lord everlasting,
> has honoured us throughout all time.
> Amen (Alexander, 2008, lines 88-93).

In the lines above, the seafarer replaces the personal pronouns with the collective pronoun "us" to shift the readers' attention from his emotional and subjective portrayal of hardship, sorrow, loss and alienation to a contemplation that is philosophical and religious in nature. This part of the poem with the expression 'let us' turns it to a prayer ends with consolation, hope, unwavering faith in and submission to God's will and wisdom. Therefore, the poem progresses from a meditation of the transience of earthly life to a symbolic journey toward God and the eternal life (Crossley-Holland, 1988). The speaker overcomes his agony, worries, loss and torment by feeling empowered by God's love. The seafarer uses Christian expressions such as 'the Prince of Glory' and 'the Lord everlasting' to refer to God. Such expressions indicate the mixing of pagan and Christian elements and worldviews. The speaker's Christian faith distinguishes him from the pagan

heroes of other Old Anglo-Saxon poems (Mitchell, 1995). It also plays an essential role in constructing his identity as it reveals his wisdom, mental growth and agency against the challenges of exile (Stumpf, 2019).

Mitchell underscores the strong presence of the Christian elements when he stated that the last part of the poem is an "allegory based on the familiar conception that life on earth is a pilgrimage towards Heaven and that those who live it are exiles from Heaven" (1995, p. 310). This view is also shared by Klinck (1992) who argues that "The Seafarer" represents a journey from the hardships of physical journey in the cold sea to the spiritual and comforting journey towards God.

Therefore, the poem signals a transition from the physical sea journey to a meditation on the ephemerality of physical pleasure and the permanence of the heavenly afterlife (Shippy, 2017). Furthermore, Gordon (1960) argues that this shift is "an act symbolic of the renunciation of worldly life generally and the ready acceptance of the struggles and sufferings involved in the quest for eternal bliss" (p. 7).

This aligns with the use of the visual and the auditory images of the birds which according to Merila (2016), stand for the connection between earth and sky and the Seafarer's solitude in the vast sea makes him reach for spirituality that leads him to the path of God.

VI- Comparative Analysis: Convergences and Divergences

Despite their literary, cultural and historical contexts, Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* and "The Seafarer" reveal distinctive convergences as well as striking divergences. The two poems share a deep-seated, honest and immediate expression of death, exile, and alienation. In terms of length, "The Seafarer" is longer than *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā.* Where Abd Yaghūth's poem laments the speaker's exile, anguish and estrangement due to being captured on the battlefield, "The Seafarer" elegizes the speaker's self-imposed exile that ends up with his spiritual journey toward divine consolation.

Where the setting of Abd Yaghūth's poem is the desert of Arabian Peninsula, the setting of "The Seafarer" is the icy, cold sea. In the two poems, the speakers mourn the loss of their drinking companions and the sweet moments they spent together, and nostalgically recalled their homes. Both poems shift from the immediate setting to the longed-for-places. In Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā*, the speaker, overwhelmed by his miserable condition under captivity, longs to a reunion with his drinking comrades in Najran and Hadramout. Likewise, the seafarer's exile in the

gloomy and cold sea ignited his nostalgia to the mead Hall and his drinking friends.

Both poets incorporate natural elements and aspects of their culture and social environment. Abd Yaghūth includes references to animals such as camels, horses and lions. His use of this distinctive animal and warfare imagery reflects his Bedouin life. Similarly, the poet of "The Seafarer" employs images of natural phenomena related to the sea such as cold, hail, frost and snow. He also creates bird imagery through his reference to birds such as the eagle, the curlew, the gull and the cuckoo. These images are reflective of the Anglo-Saxon way of life. The seafarer also mentions seasons such as winter and spring.

However, the two poets differ in their treatment of nature. Nature in "The Seafarer" has a strong presence and a remarkable significance to the speaker. It is lived in the present and serves as a source of compensation and comfort for the speaker's alienation, loss and sorrow. Conversely, in Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā*, nature is remembered and it is part of his glorious and joyous past that is doomed to end soon. Therefore, natural elements such as camels, horses, lion and locusts deepen his spiritual torment because they symbolize the traits that made up his glorious character in the past. On the other hand, the poet of "The Seafarer," moves between the past that was spent on the land, the present that is harsh due to exile on the sea, and the joyous future promised by God.

"The Seafarer" clearly portrays the speaker's physical and spiritual torment. Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* depicts the speaker's longing to his past within the context of his impending death to dive into his mental and spiritual agony.

Additionally, the two texts are also similar with regard to employment of the rhythmical techniques and the repetition of specific sounds convey the feelings of agony, estrangement and sorrow. Furthermore, both poems blend pagan and Christian elements. Yet, both the pagan and the Christian elements in "The Seafarer" are more recognizable than *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* which reveals the dominance and persistence of the pagan mindset.

Contrary to "The Seafarer" that transitions from lamentation, agony, loss and indignation to certainty and faith, Abd Yaghūth's poem is embroiled in self-lamentation and doubt. The speaker refuses to accept the end of his glorious, noble, joyous, chivalrous and adventurous life as a result of the impending death.

Whereas the seafarer's agony, exile and sorrow were resolved at the end of the poem with the promise of the eternal pleasures of the afterlife, the

speaker in *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* was left alone and inconsolable, grappling, until the final moment of his life, with his personal loss, alienation, pain and death. The poet of "The Seafarer" consoles himself with his firm belief in the transience of earthly glory and pleasures, and his acceptance of death. On the contrary, Abd Yaghūth could not accept vainglory. In other words, while death in "The Seafarer" is directly mentioned and accepted as part of God's wise and divine plan and as something that leads to God's kindness in heaven, it is implied, received with shock and disbelief, and rejected in *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā.* Here, it is rejected because it is seen as the end of Abd Yaghūth's earthly life with no promise of a better afterlife. In other words, in contrast to the seafarer who renounces earthly pleasure and chooses Heavenly life, Abd Yaghūth clings to life by wrestling with death. Therefore, while the readers of "The Seafarer" are relieved from the feelings of sorrow and sympathy due to the seafarer's faith in the reward of the afterlife, the readers of Abd Yaghūth's poem are burdened with their sympathy and sorrow.

In *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā*, the speaker is engaged in self-praise and is consumed by his self-lamentation, exile, loss and longing. By comparison, the seafarer is concerned with God's praise and his journey towards everlasting bliss. The journey motif also reveals certain divergences. In "The Seafarer", the journey motif occupies a central position. The journey is both physical and spiritual. The poem starts with the physical and harsh sea journey, and ends with the spiritual and comforting journey toward God and Heaven. In contrast, Abd Yaghūth does not employ this motif because he is completely overwhelmed by his personal loss and self-lamentation.

Another major difference between the two poems is related to the construction of identity. Where the seafarer constructed his identity by gaining wisdom and agency through self-reflection on death and the mutability of life that led him to God, Abd Yaghūth was concerned with his unresolvable conflict with death that is seen as an imminent threat to his identity. In other words, the Seafarer's identity is reconstructed through faith (moving from an earthly to a spiritual self). At the same time, Abd Yaghūth's poem is an intense act of affirming and clinging to his established earthly identity in the face of its imminent erasure.

As for the conflict in the two poems, Abd Yaghūth's poem enacts the speaker's internal and external strive as he fights against dying and the resulting loss of his self-identity, whereas "The Seafarer" underscores man's conflict against the physical forces of nature, and his divine war against the devil to win God's bliss.

VII- Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative reading of Abd Yaghūth's *Lā talūmānī, kafā al-lawmu mā biyā* and the Old English "The Seafarer" showcases the universal articulation of mourning and grief across literarily, culturally and historically divergent contexts. However, it underscores significant divergences. The conceptualization of mourning, exile and mortality in the two poems is determined by their different cultures. Where the Seafarer overcomes exile and mourning through the divine consolation and hope, and the spiritual journey to God, Abd Yaghūth is overpowered by his self-lamentation, hopelessness and the impending and inconsolable loss and sorrow. Thus, the two poems reveal their unique social and cultural values.

In its progression from the sea, mourning and exile to consolation, the hereafter and heaven, "The Seafarer" indicates the gradual transition from pagan to Christian society. Yaghūth's lamentation stems from the pre-Islamic tribal code of chivalry and honor. In contrast, "The Seafarer" transforms personal loss and agony into a Christian meditation on transience and redemption. This proves poetry as a medium for the negotiation of exile, loss, mortality and identity across temporal and linguistic boundaries.

This comparative approach between pre-Islamic and Old English elegies allows further investigation of contemporary English and Arabic elegiac writings to examine how the elegy is conceptualized in a global context.

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شاعرية الحداد والمنفى في قصيدة عبد يغوث *لا تلوماني، كفى اللوم ما بيا* وقصيدة "البحار": قراءة مقارنة في شعر رثاء ما قبل الاسلام الجاهلي والشعر الانكليزي القديم

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مستخلص البحث:
يتناول هذا المقال ثنائية الحداد والمنفى في قصيدة (أ لا تلوماني، كفى اللوم ما بي) التي كتبها الشاعر عبد يغوث الحارثي في عصر ماقبل الاسلام، وقصيدة "البحّار" التي كتبها شاعر مجهول في الشعر الانكليزي القديم (الانكلو سكسوني). ومن خلال تحليل مقارن مفصّل للنصين، يسعى المقال إلى الكشف عن الكيفية التي استطاع بها الشاعران، رغم اختلاف السياقات الأدبية والثقافية والتاريخية، أن يقاربا ثيمات الفقد والمنفى والهوية عبر توظيف المرثية للتعبير عن مشاعر الاغتراب والموت والحنين. ويبيّن المقال، من خلال تحليل استخدام الشعراء لبعض التقنيات الشعرية مثل المؤثرات الصوتية، والصوت الشعري، والتكرار، والصور البلاغية، أن القصيدتين تُبرزان مواطن التلاقي والاختلاف في معالجتهما للموضوعات الإنسانية الكونية المتمثلة في الحداد والمنفى والاغتراب والفناء.

الكلمات المفتاحية :عبد يغوث، المرثية، المنفى، الشعر الأنكليزي القديم، الشعر الجاهلي، "البحّار."