

45.

EXCHANGES ON BAHĀ'U'LLĀH'S
AL-QASĪDA AL-WARQA'IYYA

Reproduced below are a number of communications regarding the translation and interpretation of Bahā'u'llāh's al-Qasīda al-Warqā'iyya written by Dr. J.R.Cole and Dr.D.MacEoin. The debate was sparked off by the inclusion of MacEoin's translation of this ode in Bahā'i Studies Bulletin Vol. 2.No.2. (Sept. 1983) and in view of an earlier (privately circulated) translation by Cole (made in Beirut in 1978). At the request of Dr.Cole I have reproduced the full text of his initial critique of Dr.MacEoin's translation and notes earlier summed up and commented on by MacEoin (in Bahā'i Studies Bulletin Vol. 2 No. 3, pp.68-72 and again reproduced below pp.47 - 51). In addition, reproduced below, is the text of a reply to MacEoin's response by Dr. Cole communicated to me and dated 30th June 1984. (= pp. 52-4) and another response by Dr.MacEoin (= pp.55 - 56). It is hoped that readers of the Bulletin will benefit from this learned debate. (Ed).

* In view of delays in the issue of this Bulletin over the last year certain communications reproduced below are dated after March 1984.

I wish to thank Dr. MacEoin for sharing with readers of the Bulletin his translation of the al-Qasīdah al-warqā'iyyah. The making of such provisional renderings is very important if we are to move toward new and technically accurate translations of such important and difficult Tablets, and it is also necessary that scholars share their work in this regard with one another before formal publication so that comments may be received. As Dr. MacEoin knows, I myself made a provisional rendering of the Qasīdah in 1978 while in Beirut. At that time, I shared it with him, with Mark Hellaby and with Moojan Momen for comments, as well as sending a copy to the World Center. The latter asked me not to publish my version, and I therefore put any further work on it aside.

Dr. MacEoin's rendering is a literal, prose one, while I was aiming at a more poetic effect, but I am glad to see that in most important passages we have agreed as to the basic meaning of these difficult verses. Our concurrence gives some hope that a fairly accurate formal translation can be hoped for, in spite of the work's obscurity. More comparison of Bahā'u'llāh's ode with that of Ibn al-Fārid and with the mystical Arabic poetry of Ibn al-'Arabi, as well as with later eighteenth and nineteenth century Iranian Sufi poets writing in Arabic, should provide a sounder philological basis on which to proceed. Also, I hope someone can succeed in working with an English-language poet in producing a formal version that is both accurate and yet poetry. (Professor Amin Banani's highly successful use of this technique in his translation of the poetry of Forrukhzad points the way here.)

I do have some suggestions for improving the accuracy of Dr. MacEoin's rendering, and I hope that he will take them in the spirit they are given, of respect and sharing. I should say first of all that line 84 is missing, and that this throws off the verse numbering in the latter part of the poem.

- line 7: tīb ash-shamāl does not mean "perfume of the left" but "north wind."
- line 9: I believe the translator has misread tagaballat (here, "accepted") as tagllabat ("turned about"). The heart of hearts accepted her dart. This reading is confirmed by the Persian note, which gives muqābil shudih. The passive "was stretched out" ill fits the verb tamaddati in the next hemistich, and should be "stretched forth".
- line 10: ghāyatī al-quṣwā means "my highest goal," not "the ends of creation"
- line 11: I think these lines should read "I have wept in every eye for union with her, in every fire I have burned because of our separation." That is, the verbs must be read in the first person. The idea is that the mystical lover is ubiquitous in his grief--every time someone weeps, that is him weeping for his beloved.
- line 12: The word carpet does not appear, though it could be used as a poetic translation. bi kullī'l-bast is an adverbial construction equivalent to an absolute * object; thus it equals basattu bastan.
- line 14: The phrase "and that shall be the reward of them that love me" is a quote from the Beloved.
- line 18: The translator has misread the imperative feminine munni (manna-yamunnu) as the prepositional phrase minni, from me. The correct translation is "Grant me union for my excessive love of you."
- line 22: Again, minni is mistakenly given for munni. The second hemistich has the imperative habni from wahaba, preceded by the conjunction wa (and). It should be read wa habni (and give me), not "he has granted me". habni may be a textual corruption for the more correct feminine imperative habi. The whole line should read "Grant the attainment of union with you after exile, and bestow on me the spirit of intimacy after my grief."
- line 23: the word shuhūd refers to the world of the seen ('ālam ash-shuhūd), and does not here mean witness. (also line 79).
- line 24: al-'amā' means not, "unknowing," but the unknown essence of God.
- line 25: tha'r here simply means blood and not revenge.
- line 28: gharr means vanity, not just delusion.
- line 30: "smoke" should read "dust"

- line 36: the verbs must be read in the first person. Thus, waridtu, not waridat, in the passive voice. The same holds for the second hemistich, which has also been misread as an active feminine rather than a passive first person (the latter being correct). The line should read "all sorrow has befallen me in every heart, I was gripped by sorrow in every joy (or literally, constricted completely in every expanse)."
- line 61: khalli does not mean fail, but is an imperative meaning "forsake". In English diction the use of fail to mean anything but the opposite of to succeed is in any case incorrect.
- line 76: wahshah means loneliness, not beast (wahsh). The hemistich is a play on words--the author is communing with loneliness.
- line 84: has been inadvertently omitted. I translated it "And with no spirit, heart or inmost self did I abide, till my continuing existence mightily bewildered me."
- line 91 (line 90 in the trans.): bi'thah, a technical term in prophetology referring to the sending of the Prophet forth by God, has been mistranslated as resurrection (ba'th). This is an important point, since the use of the word bi'thah demonstrates that Baha'u'llah already in 1855-56 thought of himself as having a mission. Also, matrud here means ostracized or exiled (whether to Baghdad or Sulaymaniyyah), rather than "cast down." The line should read, "No matter if I have been exiled, for I attained the light of exaltation the day I was given my mission."
- line 92: ^(trans. 91) This line has several allusions to the mi'raj story that the translator has missed. al-quds here means Jerusalem, which Baha'u'llah claims mystically to have visited, just as Muhammad did in the mi'raj. The hijrah in Tehran again appears to have been a spiritual analogy to the Prophet's hijrah. The mi'raj theme is reinforced in the next line by the use of the verb from that root. While such imagery in a mystical poem cannot be taken too literally, it might indicate an early claim of prophetic status.
- lines 95; 96 (trans. 94, 95): Ma laki (you have no part of) has been misread as the imperative malik. The second hemistichs in both thus give the wrong impression.
- line 110: wat'ah means footstep, not oppression.
- line 123: wujud does not mean assistance.

A version in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabin has a postscript from the Baghdad period of some interest.

Juan R.I. Cole
University of California
Los Angeles, California
5 January 1984

In my introduction to my translation of Baha' Allah's Qasida warqa'iyya (Bulletin 2:2, Sept. 1983), I emphasized that it was 'a very tentative personal rendering of a difficult text' and expressed serious reservations about the accuracy of the version I had prepared. Since then I have been both reassured about the overall accuracy of my translation and confirmed in my fears about the existence of errors in it as a result of an extremely able critique forwarded to the Editor of the Bulletin by Juan Cole.

Mr Cole draws attention to the fact that he himself has prepared a more poetic rendering of the qasida but that he has been dissuaded from publication of it by the Baha'i World Centre in Israel. I hope that he will at least forward a copy of this version to me so that I may be able to refer to it in the course of any future studies I may make of the work. I am extremely happy that he feels that 'in most important passages we have agreed as to the basic meaning of these difficult verses' since, as he himself points out, this 'gives some hope that a fairly accurate formal translation can be hoped for, in spite of the work's obscurity'.

I am also extremely pleased that Juan has been able to point out several errors of translation or misreadings of the text of which I have been guilty. In order to assist readers in their understanding of the text, I shall reproduce the gist of his comments here, together with one or two separate comments of my own.

1. I have accidentally skipped line 84 so that all subsequent lines are misnumbered. Mr Cole translates line 84 as follows: 'And with no spirit, heart or inmost self did I abide, till my continuing existence mightily bewildered me'. I would concur with his translation.
2. Mr Cole feels that the words tib al-shamal in line 7 should be translated, not as 'perfume of the left' but as 'north wind'. I agree that this is a possible rendering and one that readers may consider. But I am not inclined to accept it as preferable, for several reasons. The first lines of the poem contain a number of terms expressive of the idea of 'perfume', 'fragrance', or 'soft breeze' (misk, nafaha; and in the notes nafahat-i dilkash, fawat-i dilynishin, ra'iha-yi tayyiba, ra'iha-yi mahabbat), and I feel that the word tayb (which means 'scent' or 'perfume' rather than wind) fits well into this context. Secondly, Baha' Allah's own note to this line speaks explicitly of how the 'perfumed breaths of her hair' (anfās-i tayyiba-yi sha'r-i ū) are the source of 'the perfume of joy and splendour' (tayb-i bihjat wa sanā) and 'the musk of bounty and glory' (misk-i marhamat wa bahā). Not only that, but the following use of the words shamal and yamin is, I think, strong evidence that the former must be understood as 'left hand' rather than 'north'. Nor am I entirely happy with the notion that the Beloved's tresses waft the 'north wind' rather than perfume.
3. In line 9, I have committed an elementary misreading of taqallabat for taqabbalat. The sense of the line should, Mr Cole suggests, be 'the heart of hearts accepted the arrow of her eyelashes', a reading which is, he says, confirmed by the Persian note, which gives muqabil shuda. I am inclined to accept his reading, but with some reservations. If the Arabic taqabbalat be taken straightforwardly as 'it accepted', we are left with the problem of the preposition before its assumed object. Nor is the Persian much help here, since it does not, in fact, confirm a reading of 'accepted' but rather 'faced, placed itself opposite'. I would, therefore, prefer a rendering of 'the heart of hearts faced the arrow of her eyelashes', and I would re-translate the note as follows: 'They call sahm "an arrow", that is, the shining and purified hearts have turned to face the arrow of the lashes of the most exalted Beloved and have sought for it

to reach them'.

4. Mr Cole suggests the phrase ghāyatī al-quswā in line 10 means 'my highest goal', not 'the ends of creation'. That is certainly correct, but I have actually read the phrase, not as ghāyatī al-quswā (or ghāyatī 'l-quswā), but as ghāyatayī 'l-quswā, ('the two furthest ends'). Now, I know, as does Juan, that my reading does not make for very good Arabic, but it is a common difficulty in translating texts by Baha' Allah that one cannot rely on his Arabic to conform at all times to normal grammar. The phrase al-ghāya al-quswā is a fairly standard one for 'the furthest end', and I do not think that one can rule out a dual variation on this, giving 'the two furthest ends' (sc. 'of creation'), which seems to me to make better sense in this verse than 'my highest goal'. If Mr Cole can suggest a meaning for the first hemistich which incorporates his rendering and also balances it in some way with Carsh al-^Camā in the next, I would certainly be happy to accept it as the grammatically better reading. Otherwise I will stick with mine on the grounds of sense.
5. Regarding line 11, Mr Cole writes: 'I think these lines should read "I have wept in every eye for union with her, in every fire I have burned because of our separation". That is, the verbs must be read in the first person. The idea is that the mystical lover is ubiquitous in his grief -- every time someone weeps, that is him weeping for his beloved.' I find this a very attractive reading, particularly since it fits the Persian gloss rather better. It is also grammatically more satisfactory since it avoids the reading of wafā with kullu ^Cayn (although this is not impossible).
6. Mr Cole points out that the phrase 'and that shall be the reward of them that love me' in line 15 is a quotation from the Beloved, in which he is perfectly correct.
7. In lines 18 and 22, I have clearly misread the first words as wa minnī rather than wa munnī, which latter makes better sense. The first half of line 18 should, therefore, read: 'Grant me union for my excessive love of you', and the first half of 22: 'Grant the attainment of union with you after exile'.
8. Accepting this above reading, the first words of the second hemistich of verse 22 should read wa habnī rather than wahabānī, even though the latter is more grammatically correct. This being so, the hemistich should be rendered: 'And bestow on me the spirit of intimacy after my grief'. (These last three renderings are those suggested by Mr Cole.)
9. Mr Cole holds that in lines 23 and 79 the word shuhūd should be rendered as 'the world of the seen', rather than as 'witness' or 'contemplation', and this seems to me entirely correct.
10. I am less sure about his argument that the term al-^Camā (line 24 and elsewhere) should not be rendered 'unknowing', since it really refers to the 'unknown essence of God'. This is really a literary point, since my implied reference was to the Middle English mystical treatise The Cloud of Unknowing. The real meaning is, of course, that pointed out by Mr Cole: I simply used a less explicit expression for it. As far as the validity of a rendition of al-^Camā by ('cloud of) unknowing' is concerned, there are some useful references to it in Sayyid Kazim Rashti's Sharh al-khutba al-tutunjiyya, p.16.
11. Mr Cole holds that, in line 25, the word tha'r should be translated simply as 'blood' rather than ('act of) revenge. I confess that I fail to see why he thinks this is the case.

12. Mr. Cole points out that gharr in line 28 'means vanity, not just delusion'. I think that my gloss to note 20 does, in fact, make that clear.
13. In line 30, Mr Cole would prefer to read 'smoke' as 'dust'. Since the Arabic verb in question can be translated either as 'to rise in the air like dust' or 'to rise in the air like smoke', there can, I think, be no objection to either rendering.
14. Mr Cole prefers to read the verbs in line 36 as first person passives rather than third person feminine actives, giving the translation: 'All sorrow has befallen me in every heart, I was gripped by sorrow in every joy (or literally, constricted completely in every expense)'. This seems certainly entirely plausible, but it does involve the problem of a change of subject from line 35 to line 36 and back again in line 37. On the other hand, Mr Cole's reading does provide a continuity of subject with those prior to line 35.
15. On line 61, Mr Cole writes 'khalli does not mean fail, but is an imperative meaning "forsake". In English diction the use of fail to mean anything but the opposite of to succeed is in any case incorrect'. I'm afraid Mr Cole is here finding fault where there is none. Khalli certainly does mean 'forsake'; but it also means 'offend against'; 'infringe, transgress'; 'violate, break'; 'fail to fulfill, fail to meet' -- or so, at least, Wehr's dictionary says. As for the use of the word 'fail' in English, I would recommend that Mr Cole buy a bigger dictionary. The third meaning in the Shorter Oxford is 'to fall short in performance or attainment; to make default; to miss the mark'. It also has a number of other meanings, all of which may be found there.
16. Mr Cole correctly points out that, in line 76, the word wahshah means loneliness, not beast (wahsh). He continues to say that 'The hemistich is a play on words -- the author is communing with loneliness'. This seems eminently acceptable, especially since it avoids taking wahsha in a technically incorrect sense. However, it is worth pointing out that I had in mind when translating this line Baha' Allah's reference to this same period in his Lawh-i Maryam, where he speaks of his exile, in which 'the beats of the field (were) My associates' (quoted God Passes By, p.120). The original of this passage is in Persian and reads bē vuhsh-i 'Carā' mujālis gashtam (Ma'ida-yi asmanī, vol.4, p.330), there being a clear parallelism in the use of the term Carā' beside the root whsh (as well as a parallelism between mu'nīs in the previous hemistich and mu'ānis in the immediately preceding sentence in the Lawh-i Maryam).
17. Mr Cole raises an important point with regard to line 91 (90 in the translation): 'bi'thah, a technical term in propheticology referring to the sending of the Prophet by God, has been mistranslated as resurrection (ba'th). This is an important point, since the use of the word bi'thah demonstrates that Baha'u'llah already in 1855-56 thought of himself as having a mission. Also, matrud here means ostracized or exiled (whether to Baghdad or Sulaymaniyyah), rather than "cast down". The line should read, "No matter if I have been exiled, for I attained the light of exaltation the day I was given my mission".
Since these remarks are, I think, best commented on in the light of Juan's comments on the succeeding line, it will be best to cite those here as well: 'This line (92; trans.91) has several allusions to the mi'raj story that the translator has missed. al-guds here means Jerusalem, which Baha'u'llah claims mystically to have visited, just as Muhammad did in the mi'raj. The hijrah in Tehran again appears to have been a spiritual analogy to the Prophet's hijrah. The mi'raj theme is reinforced in the next line by the use of the verb from that root. While such imagery in a mystical poem cannot be taken too literally, it might indicate an early claim of prophetic status.'

I think these are extremely interesting remarks and ones deserving of careful consideration. In their light I have re-examined this whole section of the poem, and I will readily admit that something more is going on in these lines than my original translation implied. At the same time, I fear that Juan's comments here, as occasionally elsewhere, suffer by being rather too overconfidently and absolutely stated. Some things may be as he suggests, but I am far from convinced that they must be read as he reads them. To begin with, I fail to see that there are several allusions to the mi^crāj story, and I am not wholly sure that there are any. If the term al-quds is a reference to Jerusalem, that might be regarded as a mi^crāj reference, although it would by no means necessarily be so.

What appears certain is that these lines refer in some way to an exile or exiles. Matrūdan in line 92 (91) is, as Juan correctly points out, 'exiled' or 'cast out'. Hajartu in the following line means 'I emigrated' or 'I performed a hijra', while ghurbatī at the end of the same line means 'my exile'. All in all, and leaving aside for the moment the use of the verb araja in line 94 (93), I am rather inclined to think that we are dealing with the theme of hijra here and not that of mi^crāj. It should certainly be pointed out that taking al-quds as Jerusalem is contrary to the grammar of the hemistich, which continues: min nūri unsihi; the pronoun here seems certainly to refer back to al-quds, but since it is masculine it should be taken as belonging to a male person, rather than to Jerusalem, which is properly feminine. I have tried to resolve the question of whether the text here should be read al-quds or al-qudus (as I originally took it) by scanning the line. Unfortunately, although the ode is supposed to have been written in the same metre as Ibn al-Farid's original Naẓm al-sullūk, which is in tawīl, Baha' Allah's poem is virtually unscannable. I admit that scansion is not something in which I am expert, and I would be very happy if Juan or someone else could suggest a method by which the qaṣīda could be fairly scanned. In any case, line 93 (92) does not scan regularly and could be open to a reading of al-qudus, although I will accept that bi 'l-quds matches the subsequent readings of bi 'l-tā, bi 'l-nūr, and bi 'l-rūh.

At this stage, I do not wish to offer any very definite interpretation of these lines; but I would like to make a tentative suggestion as to what they are about. One of the linguistic oddities of lines 92-94 (91-93) is the recurrent but not obviously consistent use of the preposition bi with a variety of verbs before it. The chief problem caused by this is in the second hemistich of line 93 (92), where the text reads something like 'I emigrated with OR to OR in al-tā'. Now, if al-tā be taken (as Mr Cole has taken it) as a reference to Tehran (ard al-tā), the interpretation of this passage becomes problematic. Juan suggests some sort of hijra in Tehran, although I find it hard to guess what this might be. His imprisonment in the Siyāh Chāl perhaps? And how does all of this relate to 'the day of my mission' (yawma ba^cthatī) or his belief in 'al-nūr'? At the risk of sticking my neck out a little far, may I offer the following for the consideration of readers?

Al-nūr and al-nūr al-^calī are ^{possible} references to Baha's half-brother, Ṣubḥ-i Azal. In several of his less well-known works of the Baghdad period, including a letter to Mirza Muhammad Hadi Qazvini and a wasāya in Arabic, Baha' Allah speaks of his brother in terms such as this, usually as tal'at (or wajh) al-nūr (the countenance of light), and expresses his servitude towards him. It is worth comparing a passage in the wasāya with line 119 (118) of this poem. In the wasāya, Baha' Allah writes: 'Is the countenance of light (wijhat al-nūr -- sic) who has sat upon the throne of command and decrees from behind the veil a matter on the part of God?' Here he says: 'Recognize the face of light (wajh al-nūr) in the innermost part of the unseen'.

I would continue to argue that al-qudus and al-tā are references to Mulla Muhammad ^cAli Bārfurushi Quddus and Qurrat al-^cAyn respectively: there is certainly plenty of evidence for the use of al-tā or 'the letter tā' in reference to the latter. Again, the reference to al-nūr in line 94 (93) is, I think, an allusion to Ṣubḥ-i Azal. The first hemistich may be compared with the following passage from Baha' Allah's wasāya: 'I am a servant who has

believed in God and in the countenance of light'. The succession of al-nūr and al-rūh in that same line is paralleled by the following passage from the wasāya: 'Say: the light of God has encompassed you from all sides and the spirit of the command assists you at every moment'. Unfortunately, I have no immediate suggestions as to the identity of al-rūh in line 94 (93), if the word is, indeed, to be taken in this way.

I would, therefore, suggest the following translation for these lines:

- 92 What matters it if I am at this moment in exile?
I attained to (the presence of) the exalted light on the day I was given my mission.
- 93 And I associated with Quddus out of the light of his familiarity,
and I wandered with Tahira at the time when I was a stranger.
- 94 And I believed in the light out of the light of my inner being,
and I ascended with (to?) the spirit in the mystery of my inmost heart.

What is all of this a reference to? I would suggest that it relates in some way to the events of Badasht, when Baha' Allah met with and associated with Ṣubḥ-i Azal, Quddus, and Tahira, leaving afterwards with Tahira when the Babi contingent was forced to leave the vicinity. It is quite possible that Baha' Allah may have been given some form of mission to carry out by Mirza Yahya, which would be the ba^ctha alluded to in line 92. (It should be noted that, although 'prophetic mission/calling' is a perfectly correct translation of ba^ctha -- or bi^ctha -- it is by no means the exclusive or ordinary meaning of the word.) Of course, something more than a mundane mission may be involved here, a view that would fit in well with the conditions of Babism at this period.

I am as yet uncertain how to understand the possibly related lines 119-20 (118-19) and 123 (122), which refer to 'the countenance of light', 'the beauty of holiness' (jamāl al-quds) and 'the mystery of holiness' (sirr al-quds). (But on the notion of the spirit of Quddus having been reincarnated in Ṣubḥ-i Azal, see Nuqtat al-kāf, p.243.)

I realize that the above reading will, in part at least, probably prove unacceptable to most Baha'is since it has implications that do not fit in too well with the standard picture of relations between Baha' Allah and Ṣubḥ-i Azal. Nevertheless, evidence supportive of such an interpretation does exist and I hope to subject some or all of it to a closer analysis in the course of a paper I plan to write this summer.

- 18 With regard to lines 95 and 96 (94, 95), Mr Cole suggests that the word مالك in each be read as mā laki (you have no part of) rather than as the imperative mālik, and I find myself entirely in agreement.
- 19 In line 111 (110), Mr Cole suggests (correctly, I believe) that wat'a must be understood to mean, not 'oppression' but 'footstep'.
- 20 In line 123 (122), the word 'assistance' is a misprint for 'existence'.

May I once again thank Mr Cole for sharing his comments with me and allowing me thus to draw the attention of readers to some alternative readings and interpretations of passages in this extremely recondite poem. There can be no doubt but that further study will lead to considerable progress in our understanding of this important early Babi-Baha'i text.

Denis MacEoin
University of Newcastle
Newcastle Upon Tyne
May 1984

RESPONSE TO Dr. Denis MacEoin, "al-Qasida al-warqa'iyah: Further Comments.

Denis MacEoin condensed the points I made in discussing his rendering of the very difficult and obscure ode by Baha'u'llah into 17 basic critiques. I should say that he replied with a commendable graciousness. He fully accepted almost half of my suggestions for revision (some involving words or structures that recurred in the poem). In another 5 instances he found my suggestions plausible but still had reservations. In only 4 cases did he more or less reject my points.

While I do not wish to draw this discussion out or debase it with minutiae, I do want to reply in length to his remarks on the crucial lines 90 to 94 of the poem.

As for the other points of clear dispute, I think a native speaker of Arabic will confirm that *tīb ash-shamāl* means the north wind and not "perfume of the left" (line 7); the latter phrase gives no clear meaning in the first place, and I am surprised Dr. MacEoin felt constrained to defend this rendering. Moreover, the north wind in Arabic literature has pleasant connotations, as does the very word *tīb*.

The reading "*ghāyatayl-l-quswā*" in point no. 4, with the first word in the dual is highly unlikely and idiosyncratic. It does not scan, and is grammatically impossible since the modifier *al-quswā* would also have to be dual. There seems little doubt that the phrase, quite simply, means "my highest goal." Even Occam's razor would so rule.

In line 11, *tha'r* means blood; this is another case of the poet's ubiquity--all the blood spilled in the world is from the tears of blood he shed.

In line 61 (point 15), Dr. MacEoin has committed a solecism with his use of the word 'fail,' which a quick glance at a style guide will confirm. It is wrong to say "The General failed to send his troops." when one means he sent no troops. That is the sense in which he misused the word.

These are mere quibbles. Much more important are the points raised in Dr. MacEoin's no. 17, concerning the interpretation of lines 91 through 94 of the poem. I have offered an interpretation of these lines, which I hope will be printed in full in this issue of the bulletin. Dr. MacEoin says that he thinks the main theme is emigration/hijrah and not ascension/*mi'rāj*. However, I see no reason for an either/or interpretation. The central events of the Prophet's spiritual biography were his reception of a prophetic mission (*bi'thah*), his night-journey to Jerusalem (*al-Quds*) and subsequent ascension (*mi'rāj*) into heaven, and his emigration (*hijrah*) from Mecca

to Medinah. Now, in the space of only a few lines we encounter four key-words from this prophetic biography (*bi'thah*/mission, *al-Quds*/Jerusalem, ascension/*arajtu*, and *hijrah*/emigration). It seems clear to me that these lines evoke the biography of the Prophet, and they do so very possibly to make the point that Baha'u'llah himself had had rather prophetic experiences. Certainly, the use of the word "my mission" (*bi'thati*) cannot help taking on very serious overtones in this context.

Dr. MacEoin, however, tentatively rejects my interpretation, questioning whether the word *al-quds* means Jerusalem here and wondering whether *at-Ta'* might not refer to Tahirah, with the phrase the "exalted light" referring to Mirza Yahya Nuri "Subh-i Azal." The whole complex, he suggests, may make reference to Badasht.

I can only say that, even as a tentative construction, this interpretation strikes me as fanciful and wholly unsubstantiated. Moreover, it hinges on an interpretation of the Arabic that cannot be correct.

Dr. MacEoin reads *hajartu bi't-Ta'* as "I wandered with Tahira" rather than as "I emigrated in Tehran." Now, "bi" in Arabic is an instrumental preposition (*ḥarf al-ālāh*) and does not generally (never in the case of verbs of motion) have the overtones of "in the company of" that the English "with" carries. The sense of to accompany is carried in Arabic by another preposition, *ma'a*. Thus, in English I can say both that "I went with Tahirah to the store" and "I hit the door with my hand." The first "with" means in the company of, the second means "by the instrumentality of." In Arabic, you would have to use "ma'a" for the first sentence. "Dhahabtu ma'a Tahirah ilā ad-dakkān." But for the second, "bi" must be used. "Darabtu'l-bāba bi yaddi." To mix up these two Arabic "withs" is a common error for English-speakers. We are constantly hitting the door in the company of our hands.

The reading tentatively proposed by Dr. MacEoin commits precisely this error. "*Hajartu bi't-Ta'*" simply cannot mean "I wandered with Tahirah." That would be "*Hajartu ma'a Tahirah*." This is generally true of verbs of motion. Likewise, "Dhahabtu bi Tahirah" does not mean I went with Tahirah; rather, it has sinister overtones. I travelled by plane is "*Safartu bi't-tayyārah*." One cannot say "I travelled with Tahirah" by saying "*Safartu bi Tahirah*." That would mean she was the mode of transportation. I am afraid "*Hajartu bi Tahirah*" would either mean Baha'u'llah rode on her shoulders, or--well, let's just say it does not work.

The other meaning of "bi" is "in." "I lived in the Arab world five years" would be "*Sakintu bi'l-'ālam al-'Arabi khams sanawat*." Thus, if "*Ta'*" meant Tehran, "*Hajartu bi't-Ta'*" would mean "I emigrated in Tehran." Moreover, this emigration or "hijrah" could have been from the comfort of the life of a wealthy minister's son to the rigors of the Siyah Chal, paralleling the hijrah of the Prophet from Mecca to Medinah. Since we know that Baha'u'llah wrote that he underwent mystical experiences in the Siyah Chal, saw his "hour" for the first time, was assured of victory, and determined to reform

the Babi community, this would appear to be the referent of his "mission" (bi'thah). Elsewhere in the poem, Baha'u'llah makes explicit mention of the scars on his skin caused by manacles, presumably those he received in the Siyah Chal.

Dr. MacEoin's attempt to make every appearance of the word "al-quds" refer to Quddus, again, strikes me as idiosyncratic and untenable. Baha'u'llah was writing for Sufis in Sulaymaniyyah, Quddus had been dead for years, and anyway "al-quds" has many perfectly good ordinary meanings one would expect to find in a mystical poem, quite aside from its fairly obvious meaning in line 93 of Jerusalem. But I think the grammatical points above have in any case seriously undermined his tentative interpretation of these important verses.

Juan Cole
Assistant Professor
Department of History
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

COMMENTS UPON COMMENTS, GLOSSES UPON GLOSSES: SOME REMARKS ON JUAN COLE'S REMARKS

Much as I dislike having to do so, I feel obliged to offer one or two remarks about Juan Cole's further comments on my translation of the Qasida warqa'iyya. Perhaps I should first say one or two words in defence of the editor of the Bulletin, whom Mr Cole criticizes for having failed to publish his original remarks in full. This was, in fact, done at my suggestion, partly because it seemed to me to simplify things if I could simultaneously describe and comment on his remarks, but more because I wanted to defuse a potentially delicate situation and save Mr Cole some embarrassment. To put it simply, I thought many of his remarks were expressed in a high-handed, arrogant manner which at times reached the low level of a schoolteacher reprimanding a rather slow pupil (as is again the case in his most recent remarks). I have previously drawn this tendency to Mr Cole's attention in private correspondence, and I hope he does not mind my raising it here again, even though it be at the cost of his considerable amour propre. Juan is a brilliant scholar for whom I have a great deal of respect and not a little envy, but I do wish he could learn that, when others disagree with him, it is not necessarily because they are wrong or incompetent. Well, I shall leave it for other readers to draw their own conclusions: perhaps I am too sensitive, and maybe I really do need to be slapped down from above every now and then.

I suppose I ought to begin by responding to one of Mr Cole's rather annoying minutiae, his remarks about the use of the word 'fail' in line 61. Now, I'm willing to accept that 'fail to meet the demands of love' is rather inelegant, although largely dictated by the original. But I'm a bit fed up with all this pedantic niggling about the use of 'fail' in English in general. A 'quick glance at a style guide' does not, I fear, confirm Mr Cole's point. None of the several guides in my library even mentions this problem. And the remark about generals failing to send troops is as incorrect as the earlier remarks about 'fail' only meaning the opposite of 'succeed'. Let's leave aside the Shorter Oxford Dictionary and refer instead to the Concise, which gives as meanings of fail, 'neglect, not remember or not choose' and provides as examples, 'he failed to appear' and 'don't fail to let me know'. Even the much smaller dictionary section of the Oxford Guide to the English Language provides the meanings of 'neglect or be unable; disappoint'. I don't wish to seem pedantic myself about this, merely to express my impatience with Mr Cole's pedagogic smart-alekness based on something he has once read in some obscure style guide. If, of course, he wants to write independently to Oxford University Press, I'm sure they will be delighted to learn that their dictionaries are so full of elementary solecisms.

I won't say much about the comments on my interpretation of lines 91 to 94. I did say that my suggestions were tentative (although I don't see why they deserve to be regarded as 'fanciful and wholly unsubstantiated' any more, at least, than Cole's own interpretation) and I am happy to relinquish them in favour of something more substantial should it come along. In fact, now that Mr Cole is talking of the prophet's biography and not exclusively about his mir'aj, I am inclined to think there may be something in what he says. But I do take exception to the attempt to undermine my interpretation by such high-handed 'correction' of my Arabic. Why doesn't he just say my suggestions are rank heresy and be done with it? I certainly don't need Mr Cole to teach me Arabic. I've no doubt his Arabic is wonderful and much better than mine; but I have studied, read, and taught the language for thirteen years and I have, for example, learnt one or two basic points of grammar, such as the use of the prepositions bi and ma'a. By failing (sic) to respect the fact that I may know almost as much as he does about Arabic grammar, he assumes that I must be making elementary mistakes and instead runs after the red herring of prepositions while neglecting to ask why I might have suggested such a reading in the first place. And his failure to do that is crucial.

I believe I am correct when I say that I have probably read a great many more Babi texts and possibly at least as many Baha'i texts as Mr Cole himself. Now, if immersion in those texts has taught me anything it is this, that one cannot read this material very usefully with a grammar book in one hand. Surely Mr Cole is aware of the common Muslim criticism of Babi and Baha'i scripture,

that it is frequently, sometimes seriously, ungrammatical -- a point to which the standard reply has always been that God is free to play with the rules of human grammar as he sees fit. If instead of turning pedantically to his grammars, Mr Cole were to develop sensitivity to the style and phrasing of these texts, he would, I think, find himself better equipped to handle them. Frequently, of course, even sensitive reading will fail to grasp the correct meaning of a word or phrase, but in such cases the grammar is seldom likely to be of much help either. Now, Baha' Allah's Arabic is not, on the whole, good Arabic (unlike that of his son 'Abbas), and I am frankly uneasy at attempts to read it as if it must be, as if it should correspond to the rules of modern standard Arabic, with which Mr Cole is familiar.

With that as a general background, however, I think it will be as well to draw Mr Cole's attention to the fact that, even according to the technicalities of the Arab grammarians, the points he has made so confidently about the use of the preposition bi do not always hold true. Of course ma'a is the normal Arabic for 'with' in the sense of 'in the company of', but that doesn't mean that bi never has that meaning, as Mr Cole seems to suppose. Let me, for example, quote Wright's grammar (vol. 2, p. 158): 'From the idea of contact there arises, in the case of a superior and inferior or primary and secondary object, that of companionship and connection; as سار باهله he set out with his household; ... اشترى الفارس he bought the ass together with its bridle'. Or again (p. 159), referring to the use of bi for 'the relation between the act and its object' which is always the case after intensive verbs... especially such as indicate motion, e.g. جاء, اتي, to come, راح, سار, to depart, set out, قام, رَبَّ to get up, rise, سبأ, to be high, etc. These verbs are construed with بِ and the genitive of the thing, accompanied by, or in connection with, which one performs the act they denote.'

But perhaps I can illustrate this better by quoting one or two passages taken at random from a writer whose Arabic was, if not as good as Mr Cole's, at least a lot better than mine, Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i. In a short risala on physical resurrection, for example, he writes تدخل الروح بجسمها فيه (الجسد الثاني) فيخرج 'it (the spirit) enters into it (the second body) with its corporeality and leaves it in the resurrection from the grave and the accounting with its jism and its jasad' (Jawami' al-kilam) -- compare al-Risala al-khāqaniyya: وَمَا الَّذِي يَخْرُجُ مَعَ الرُّوحِ فَهُوَ الْجِسْمُ الْحَقِيقِيُّ 'that which leaves with the spirit is the true body', where ma'a is used as an equivalent for bi above. Or again, in a short risala on the barzakh: مخربت (الروح) به من البدن 'it (the spirit) went with it (its earthly form) out of the body' (Jawami', vol. 2, p. 245).

I am not trying to score points here. What I am trying to do is to get across that, if Mr Cole could muster up enough respect for my abilities and feel a little less for his own, he might spend less time 'correcting' my assumed mistakes and rather more thinking about the ideas I am trying to convey. Grammar is important (as I daily tell my students), but it must be secondary to a feel for the language, especially when one is dealing with such unconventional texts. I would certainly never advise a student to use bi whenever ma'a is the more normal preposition, but I would hardly want to criticize him if he found bi in a text where he might have expected to find ma'a. I tend not to think much about grammar when I am reading or translating, but prefer to try to get the feel of what the writer wants to say. Quite often I make mistakes, but occasionally I am correct. Actually, Mr Cole, I am frequently correct. I think my reading of these lines is, on grammatical grounds, at least, still quite defensible. It certainly has not been 'undermined'.

In the meantime, I am still waiting for an explanation of how Mr Cole thinks Baha' Allah could have 'emigrated in Tehran'. One emigrates 'from' and 'to', not 'in', even in Arabic. And the transition from wealth to the rigours of a prison cannot be a parallel for Muhammad's move from the persecutions of Mecca to a position of power and ultimate triumph in Medina. To maintain that is to turn upside down the whole significance of the hijra in Muslim consciousness. There, I think, we should leave things for the moment.