

# DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR TO HER FATHER

The city of Latakia was named after the Seleucid emperor's mother Laodice, and was known in ancient times as *al-Ladhiqiyyah* in Arabic, *Laodicea ad Mare* in Latin, and *Laodikeia he paralos* in Greek, "Laodikeia beside the Sea." Following rule by the Roman Empire, the city was governed by the Eastern Roman Empire; the Rashidun, Umayyad, and Abbasid Caliphates, in succession; the Crusaders; the Ayyubids; the Mamluks; the Ottomans; and finally the French, by mandate via the Alawite State.

In the modern era, Latakia continues to be the main seaport in Syria. Nearly the entire population speaks Arabic, in the North Levantine dialect. At the outset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, English-language news sources reported on protest activity that took place in the city.

Over the centuries earthquakes have damaged or destroyed many historical sites and buildings. However, traces of the city's long heritage are still visible. The marina, which has ever been the source of much of Latakia's wealth, is built on foundations of ancient stone columns. Sepulchral caves dot the hills. The public gardens at the national museum have on display a profusion of capitals, ornaments, statues, and funerary tombs.

Since 1956, the city has hosted an unofficial camp of more than 6,000 Palestinian refugees.

#### في اللاذقية

بجانب الشاطئ تُذبح قصائدي على محراب الأبجدية، قرابين.

> أتوق لذراعي قارب ابتلتا بندي وجهه

وأرى في سهول عينيه فرسانا تطارد أوغاد التاريخ

وتقرع أجراس الكنائس لأمانة تتربع عرش قلبه وتتوق أشجار الزيتون

لكلمات تهطل من فمه وغناء أطفال الحجارة يملأ وجدانه

#### In Latakia

beside the water my poems are slain at the shrine of alphabet, each a sacrificial gift

\*

I yearn for the boat whose arms are splashed with the dew of his face

across the fields of his eyes I see riding knights gallop against history's villains

church-bells ring for the pledge enthroned in his heart; olive trees thirst

for the words pouring from his mouth; the songs of stone-throwers fill his conscience وترسم دوائر تخرج من أفواهٍ بالية أقدار أجياكٍ أمَّهاتها لاهية فالنرجيلة خير مؤرخ لمَلهاةِ باكية

> وتلسع ألسنتهم كالسوط ثوب فتاة يظهر مفاتنها لكن ألسنتهم عاربة

> > فعفةُ لسانٍ خيرٌ من ثوبٍ ثماره غير دانية

ينتظرون قدوم ملك من نور ليرجموه بالحجارة والأقلام السوداء

وبما أنهم يعتقدون أن الكون خُلِقَ لهم فهم يصلبون السلام، قتلون الشياب، وبغتالون العقائد . . .

with circles of smoke seeping from their shabby mouths, women weave the fates of a generation

the tongues of indolent matriarchs whose hookahs are scribes of tragicomedies scourge a lass in a charming dress

in its nakedness the tongue is lascivious; better that it be chaste than a dress be not licentious

\*

they are waiting for the Coming of the King of Light, to meet his greetings with hurled stones and black pens

believing the world was created only for them and theirs; they crucify peace, murder youth, assassinate creeds . . . وتعري كنائس القدس من عباءتها السوداء صلابة ساعديه وتجفف دموع مدائنها راية تحملها يده

his strong arms will rip the enshrouding black off of Jerusalem's shrines, wipe the tears from her minarets with the flag in his hand

أُغلقُ أُجفاني المتعبة لتقبلها سلطانة النور فتبصر عيوني المغلقة أزرق السرور

I close my tired eyelids to perceive the blue of delight and a kiss from the Queen of Light



## SUSIE GHARIB

is a graduate of the University of Strathclyde, where her doctoral thesis focused on the work of D.H. Lawrence. Since 1996, she has made a living as a lecturer in Syria. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in venues including Crossways, The Curlew, Adelaide Literary Magazine, The Opiate, Plum Tree Tavern, Foliate Oak, The Blotter, Coldnoon, The Moon Magazine, and A New Ulster. She can be found on Twitter @GharibSusie.

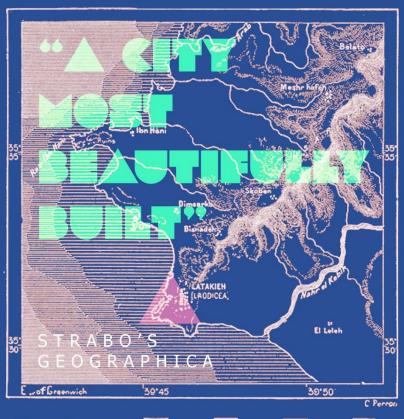


Fig. 174.—LATAKIER. Scale 1: 170,000.







320 Feet and upwards. 6 Miles.



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