



IN LATAKIA

SUSIE GHARIB

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 الالذقية

بجانب الشاطئ تُذبح قصائدي
على محراب الأبدية،
قرايين.

*

أتوق لذراعي قارب
ابتلتا بندى 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
يملاً 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 أجيالٍ أمَّهاتها لاهية
فالرجيلة خير مؤرِّخٍ لملهاةٍ باكية

وتلسع ألسنتهم كالسوط
ثوب فتاة يظهر مفاتنها
لكن ألسنتهم عارية

ففعفُ لسانٍ خيرٌ من
ثوبٍ ثماره غير دانية

*

ينتظرون قدوم ملك من نور
ليرحموه بالحجارة
والأقلام السوداء

وبما أنهم يعتقدون أن الكون خُلِقَ
لهم فهم يصلبون السلام، قتلون
الشباب، ويغتالون 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

*

أغلقُ أجفاني المتعبة لتقبلها
سلطانة النور
فتبصر عيوني المغلقة أزرق السرور

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

*

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



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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*, *Foliage Oak*, *The Blotter*, *Coldnoon*, *The Moon Magazine*, and *A New Ulster*. She can be found on Twitter @GharibSusie.



Fig. 174.—LATAKIEH.

Scale 1 : 170,000.



0 to 90
Feet.



90 to 100
Feet.



100 to 320
Feet.



320 Feet and
upwards.
6 Miles.



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