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The Anglo-Arabic Poetics Of “Locksley Hall”: Importation, Oscillation, And Disorientation

Mazen Naous

On first encountering Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s “Locksley Hall,” one quickly notices the unmistakable syncopated feel of the poem’s meter that counters the prominent iambic rhythm of English poetry. Moreover, the racialized, gendered, and exotic tropes used by the speaker seem rooted in and are strong evidence of an insidious form of orientalism. Intriguing, though not incidental, is the fact that Tennyson was influenced by Imru’ al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa” (a pre-Islamic Arabic ode) in writing “Locksley Hall.” In fact, Tennyson owes much of his poem’s meter and imagery, and many of its themes, to the “Mu’allaqa.” These importations are not deposited wholesale into “Locksley Hall,” however; they do undergo some modification so as to distance them from the “Mu’allaqa.” I use the term importation to emphasize the practice of imperial and orientalist commodification of things non-Occidental, one that emulates empire’s scouring of the colonies for raw material for later manufacture and sale. I am not accusing Tennyson of plunder or plagiarism here; rather, I am making a case for a comparative project that allows for a textured reading of “Locksley Hall” based on these

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(2) I transliterate the Arabic word for the pre-Islamic ode as “Mu’allaqa.” Other critics and translators use different transliterations for the term as will be evident in my citations of their work.

(3) Hallam Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son, vol. 1, New York: Greenwood, 1897, p. 195. Hallam Tennyson states, “I remember my father saying that Sir William Jones’s [1783] prose translation of the Moallakat, the seven Arabic poems [al-Qais’s in particular] (which are a selection from the work of pre-Mahommedan poets) hanging up in the temple of Mecca, gave the idea of the poem.”
critical importations (metrical and thematic) from the “Mu’allaqa.” I do so with supportive evidence from a poetic line’s importation from Tennyson’s earlier oriental poem “Fatima,” and a reference to Rebecca, a character in Sir Walter Scott’s Ivanhoe.

Much scholarly attention has been given to “Locksley Hall” in relation to the “Mu’allaqa,” but scarcely any has been paid to the comparative aspects of the two poems. These endeavours have attempted to gauge the extent of the debt of “Locksley Hall” to the “Mu’allaqa” and the oriental nature of the “Locksley Hall” meter without critical engagement of the “Mu’allaqa” itself. For example, W. D. Paden refutes J. D. Yohannan’s suggestion that Tennyson was impressed by the Arabic metrical forms and states that “comparison will show that the relation between “Locksley Hall” and the Moallakat is of the most tenuous kind.” I will not address the history of this scholarship in this essay, except where it is relevant to an importational reading of “Locksley Hall.” Suffice it to say that Paden’s assertion on “comparison” is itself an act of tenuous conjecture. It is thus my intention to argue that Tennyson’s importations from al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa”- its meter, imagery, and themes-reveal much about the speaker of “Locksley Hall” and his representations of his cousin Amy. To do this, I must first answer the following questions: What is a “Mu’allaqa?” Who was Imru’ al-Qais? How did Tennyson come by Sir William Jones’s prose translations of the Mu’allaqat (plural)? What is the meter of al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa” and in what way does it influence both the trochaic meter and the content in “Locksley Hall?”

The poetic term “Mu’allaqa” (the female inflected form of “Mu’allaq”) translates as “suspended, pendent, pendulous, hanging, hung (down), dangling.” Indeed, the pre-Islamic Mu’allaqat (usually referred to as odes), were transcribed in letters of gold and suspended

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from the Kaaba at the city of Mecca as masterpieces of the “qasida” form. The “qasida” is a “monorhymed lyric poem common to Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Pashto, and Urdu lit. The rhyme scheme is aa ba ca, etc., and some qs. run over a hundred lines. The Ar. q. generally shows a tripartite structure consisting of an erotic prelude (nasib) wherein the poet weeps over the deserted campsite of his beloved, an account of a desert journey (rahil) which includes a description of his mount, and the panegyric proper (madih). It originated among the Arab Bedouin as an oral poem in praise of the tribe or denigration of an enemy, the earliest examples being the seven Mu’allaqat of pagan Arabia.” Moreover, not only do the Mu’allaqat derive their name from the fact that they physically “hung down” from the temple at Mecca, but also from a temporal catharsis induced by the poet’s recollection (in verse) of past delights in which his “imagination is kindled, and his grief suspended.”

The recollection of past delights mediated by a strictly metered verse creates a formal repetition that spins the content of the past onto an imaginative present: thus the suspension of grief.

The legend goes that Imru’ al-Qais (ob. 565 AD) displayed a passion for poetry and women from his youth, and was encouraged by his poet uncle al-Muhalhil. When al-Qais’s father, head of the Kinda tribe of central Arabia, discovered that his son was chasing women and boasting about his erotic adventures in verse, he ordered him killed in a fit of anger. The would-be killer spared the young Imru’ al-Qais, and slaughtered a fawn instead. Meanwhile, al-Qais’s father had repented and was greatly pleased to find him still alive. Imru’ al-Qais, however, refused to give up poetry, so his father banished him. Thus began the wandering king’s (al-Qais’s nickname in exile) adventures through the deserts that made for great poetry. His life included a multitude of scandals so well known that no woman felt safe from his attentions. Furthermore, he boasted shamelessly of his sexual conquests in his verses, so that the men of the various tribes sought out his head in

(8) William Jones, The Mo’allaqat, or Seven Arabian Poems, which were suspended on the temple at Mecca; with a translation, and arguments, London: J. Nichols, for P. Elmsly, 1783, p. 1. All quotes from the “Mu’allaqa” are taken from Jones’s translation unless otherwise specified.
answer to his scandalizing of their women.9

Imru’ al-Qais was famous both during his lifetime and afterward. His qasidas spread throughout the entire Arab world after his death. The prophet Mohammad, who had no tolerance for poets, described al-Qais as one “exalted in life, unknown in the afterlife, noble in life, a waste in the afterlife; he is the poets’ leader into hellfire.”10 Despite this statement, Imru’ al-Qais’s popularity did not diminish. His “Mu’allaqa” is arguably the most famous and most influential poem in all of Arabic literature. The fame of the “Mu’allaqa” continued beyond the Arab world and it made its way to England by way of Sir William Jones’s translation and into the library of Tennyson’s father.11

The Mu’allaqat’s translator Sir William Jones, who was a barrister, poet, and linguist, realized the importance of these odes both aesthetically and politically. Jones was an ardent supporter of the American colonists in their bid for independence and this position cost him many votes when he stood for the English parliament in the general election of 1780. Consequently, Jones had to withdraw his candidacy. His decision to translate the seven Arabic odes, one that would ring ironically today, was based on his recognition “in the poetry of ancient Arabia that same spirit of sturdy independence and the love of freedom which animated...the America of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.”12 A. J. Arberry, who also translated the Mu’allaqat in 1957, adds, “Would the British tyrant take warning?”13

Imru’ al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa” consists of eighty-one stichic14 lines.

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(10) Al-Shanqiti, p. 4. The Prophet Mohammad’s response to the fame of Imru’ al-Qais is quoted in Al-Shanqiti’s treatise. The quote in English is my translation.
(13) Arberry, p. 9.
(14) Abu-Abdullah Al-Zawzani, Shark al-Muallakat al-Sabe’, Beirut: Dar Sader, n.d. The stichic line of al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa” is divided by a medial caesura into two metrically fixed hemistiches.
The meter, as Jones describes it, “is of the first species, called the long verse, and consists of the bacchius, or amphibrachys, followed by the first epitrite; or, in the fourth and eighth places of the distich, by the double iambus, the last syllable being considered as a long one.”

Every Arabic meter, including the “long verse,” follows a strict metrical scheme over two hemistiches. Unlike the qualitative or accentual-syllabic meters of English poetry, the Arabic meters are quantitative or relative to the duration of sound. Instead of the stressed and unstressed syllables, Arabic scansion uses moving or short and silent or long letters. The word for metered-verse in Arabic translates literally as “sea”; the “long verse” translates as the “long sea” (al-bahr al-tawil in Arabic). Jones translates the quantitative feet of the long sea into qualitative feet; the silent or long letters translate as stressed syllables and moving or short letters as unstressed syllables. However, the translational exchange does not have a one-to-one value; a moving or short letter combined with a silent or long letter is exchanged for a macron or a stressed syllable in the qualitative scansion. That is, the long letter scansion of the quantitative original becomes a normalized syllabic scansion in the qualitative translation. The expanse of the “long verse,” with its sea-like ebb and flow, is thus transformed to the metronomic/percussive medium of combination (at least in terms of scansion).

The quantitative mnemonic scansion of the long sea is “Fa’U-lun MAFA-’ilun Fa’U-lun MAFA-’ilun” per hemistich. Note that the apostrophes symbolize the space of the letter (א) “ain,” which has no corresponding letter in English. The scansion of an entire line sounds something like: Fa’oo-lun Ma-faa’ee-lun Fa’oo-lun Ma-faa’i-lun/ Fa’oo-lun Ma-faa’ee-lun Fa’oo-lun Ma-faa’i-lun. The alternation between long and short sounds is smooth and produces a flowing effect. The quantitative letter scansion of one hemistich is as follows (o refers to silent or long and / refers to moving or short):

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Fa’U-lun MafA-’ilun Fa’U-lun MafA-’ilun
/ / o / o / o /o/o / o / o / o / o
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(15) Jones, The Mo’allakat, p. 3.
The same hemistich translated to qualitative verse produces:

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\( \text{Fa'U-lun MAFA-'ilun Fa'U-lun MAFA-'ilun} \)
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In the metrical translation, the long letter scansion gives way to the compressed syllabic scansion: the quantitative scansion produces twenty-three scansion marks and the qualitative scansion produces fourteen scansion marks. As a result, the reading of the line also shortens to the percussive syllabic medium. The syllables, as Jones explains, fall into a bacchius \((\overset{\_}{/}/)\), a first epitrite \((\overset{\_}{/}/)\), a bacchius again \((\overset{\_}{/}/)\), and a di-amb \((\overset{\_}{/}/)\); I have taken the liberty of updating Jones’s terminology. The result is a fourteen foot line (two hemistiches of seven feet each) that is almost impossible to reproduce in English poetry, unless one translates the caesura into a couplet break. This calculation, however, does not take into account Jones’s description of “the last syllable being considered as a long one,” which further elongates the line quantitatively. This poetic elongation of the last letter of the “long sea” does not translate qualitatively except by marking the last syllable of the poetic line as a stressed syllable; an unstressed syllable at the end of the hemistich is re-marked as stressed and a stressed syllable remains unchanged.

This brings us to the issue of the extent to which the “Mu’allaqa” influenced the meter of “Locksley Hall.” Is Tennyson trying to imitate the “long verse” of the “Mu’allaqa”? “Locksley Hall” begins with the couplet

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\( \text{Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn:} \)
\( \text{Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-horn.} \)
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This establishes the trochaic meter of seven feet and a half or eight feet curtailed, which undergoes some variation throughout “Locksley Hall.” Enid Hamer, in *The Metres of English Poetry*, says that:
Tennyson’s great contribution to the history and development of trochaic metre is of course the couplet of the eight-foot lines curtailed, which is now known as the *Locksley Hall* metre. But the formation is not so original... When read aloud the lines show an almost constant tendency to break up, owing to the fall of the phrases, into the familiar pair of four-foot complete, and four-foot curtailed.\(^\text{17}\)

If the meter of “Locksley Hall” is indeed at some level an analogue of the long sea or *tawil*, then the syllabic translation is partly responsible for the “break up” of the rhythm. Moreover, Hamer, like many poets and critics, reads the meter of “Locksley Hall” as a “couplet of eight-foot lines curtailed”; the long sea or *tawil*, however, translates as seven feet with “the last syllable considered as a long one.”\(^\text{18}\) How then do we read the meter of “Locksley Hall?” Is it seven and a half feet or eight feet curtailed, or, as I will suggest, both?

There are two main arguments on the subject of the meter of “Locksley Hall” that I would like to address in this essay, after which I will offer my own: The first is Christopher Ricks’s argument and the second is Robert Cummings’s counter-argument. Ricks does not deal with the aspect of the meter falling “into the familiar pair of four-foot complete, and four-foot curtailed”; Cummings, on the other hand, argues for another oriental meter based on this fact. Neither Ricks nor Cummings questions the assumption that the meter of “Locksley Hall” is an eight-foot curtailed meter.

In his essay “‘Locksley Hall’ and the ‘Moallakat,’” Ricks asserts that Tennyson chose a “loping line”\(^\text{19}\) for “Locksley Hall,” because “in the poem of Amriolkais, Jones’s prose [translation] fell naturally into it.”\(^\text{20}\) To prove this point, Ricks quotes part of the third line in Jones’s translation of the “Mu’allaqat”; “Thus I spoke, when my companions stopped their coursers by my side, and said, ‘Perish not through despair: only be patient’.”\(^\text{21}\) The italics are Jones’s own and they constitute his

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(18) Jones, *The Mo’allakat*, p. 3.
(19) Christopher Ricks, “‘Locksley Hall’ and the ‘Moallakat’,” *Notes and Queries*, vol. 12, 1965, p. 300.
(20) Ricks, “‘Locksley Hall’ and the ‘Moallakat’,” p. 300.
additions to the poem that are not found in the original.\textsuperscript{22} I will consider the effect of the additions as well as the translational errors that migrate into “Locksley Hall” later in the essay. It is clear that the part of Jones’s prose line beginning with “Thus” and ending with “side” provides a perfect example of the trochaic meter of “Locksley Hall.” Ricks offers two more examples that approximately correspond to the meter of “Locksley Hall.” What Ricks’s argument leaves out is that much of Jones’s prose translation does not correspond to the meter in question. The second part of Jones’s prose line (above), for example, does not fall comprehensively into trochaics. Moreover, Ricks’s argument ties the meter to the “Mu’allaqa’s” translation and not to the “Mu’allaqa” itself. In his ground breaking essay “Tennyson, Trench, Tholuck and the ‘Oriental’ Metre of Locksley Hall,” Cummings presents compelling evidence for the poem’s Arabic origins. Cummings counters Ricks’s suggestion “that the trochaic rhythms of Sir William Jones’s prose spurred Tennyson to use a trochaic meter” and states that “this is surely very improbable.”\textsuperscript{23} Instead, Cummings posits that the metre of Locksley Hall is indeed used in Richard Chenevix Trench’s roughly contemporary \textit{Sabbation} (1838)… In Trench’s \textit{Poems from Eastern Sources} (1842) … he acknowledges his source in F.A.G. Tholuck’s \textit{Blüthen-sammlung aus der morgenländischen Mystik} […] Tholuck’s poem [is] itself a translation from Sa’di’s \textit{Bustan}…[that uses] two metres, the one an approximation of the Perso-Arabic \textit{mutaqarib} (three bacchics followed by an iamb)-impossible in English; and the other the \textit{Locksley Hall} metre- which unfortunately he does not describe, but which in any case corresponds to the trochaic tetrameter \textit{ramal}.\textsuperscript{24}

Cummings does not offer examples from Trench’s \textit{Sabbation}, but opts instead for a line from the later \textit{Poems from Eastern Sources}.\textsuperscript{25} Cummings then describes the \textit{ramal} sea as a “trochaic tetrameter.”

\begin{itemize}
\item (22) A more precise translation of the “Mu’allaqa’s” third line is: My companions halted their mounts above me/Saying, do not perish of sorrow and forbear (my translation).
\item (24) Cummings, pp. 128-29.
\item (25) The lines are: “What, thou askest, is the heaven, and the round earth and the sea”,/ “And their dwellers, men and angels,—if with God compared they be?” As is quickly apparent, these lines from Trench’s (1842) collection do conform to the “Locksley Hall” meter, and they offer the possibility that Tennyson owes Trench for the “Locksley Hall” meter.
\end{itemize}
ramal has two forms with variations in between: a complete form and a brachycatalectic form (a further curtailed version of the latter being the one Cummings describes).

The complete ramal consists of two second epitrites (/ ~/ / ) followed by an amphimacer (/ ~/ / ) per hemistich. Each hemistich amounts then to five and a half feet, the complete line being an eleven-footer. Therefore, the complete ramal cannot possibly correspond to the meter of “Locksley Hall.” The brachycatalectic ramal consists of one (instead of two) second epitrite (/ ~/ / ) followed by an ionic a minore (~ ~/ / ) per hemistich. Each hemistich amounts to four feet and the complete line amounts to eight feet. While Cummings’s hypothesis bypasses the necessity of translating the caesura into a couplet break (the brachycatalectic ramal line consists of eight feet), another problem surfaces in his description of ramal. In its brachycatalectic form, ramal is not entirely trochaic. While the prevalence of stresses is obvious (one can certainly argue that the brachycatalectic ramal has a trochaic feel), it is not the trochaic meter of “Locksley Hall.” Cummings’s trochaic description fits the complete ramal better. But the complete ramal is not a tetrameter per hemistich; it is five and a half feet per hemistich. There is, however, a further curtailed brachycatalectic ramal (not very prevalent, but an existing variation nonetheless): two second epitrites (/ ~/ / ) in the first hemistich followed by one second epitrite (/ ~/ / ) and an amphimacer (/ ~/ / ) in the second hemistich. This curtailed brachycatalectic sea best fits Cummings’s description and is a strong candidate for the “Locksley Hall” meter. All feet begin with a stress, and four feet out of the eight are trochaic; the rest are spondees except for the last stressed syllable of the line. Cummings adds that Tennyson found in the “Latin trochaic septenarius” a strong analogue for the ramal. This, also, is a possibility for the meter of “Locksley Hall.”

Unfortunately, no conclusive proof exists that Tennyson consulted Trench’s work while composing “Locksley Hall” in early 1838. Cummings observes, however, that Tennyson “would almost certainly

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(27) Moussa, p. 286.
(29) Cummings, p. 130.
have read it [Trench’s *Sabbation*], for though there is no evidence of their being in touch later in the decade, the two kept a careful watch on each other’s activities, and they had close friends in common.”

Interestingly, Ricks (years earlier) considers the Trench theory but dismisses it, opting instead for the Jones prose translation argument. In summary, Ricks points to Jones’s prose translation and Cummings to Trench for the meter of “Locksley Hall.” Is there, then, no evidence that Tennyson got the idea from the meter of the “Mu’allaqa” itself? Tennyson claims that he used a trochaic meter in “Locksley Hall,” because the English people liked trochaics. His statement does not help in finding a precedent for the “Locksley Hall” meter and does not seem entirely convincing. Both Ricks and Cummings believe that Tennyson was indeed trying to find an analogue to the long sea, or *tawil*, but had to find it away from the “Mu’allqa.”

In *Oriental Influences in the English Literature of the Nineteenth Century*, Marie E. de Meester states that “according to Prof. Koeppel’s ingenious discovery, the transcription of the original text in Latin characters (as given by Sir William Jones) has furnished Tennyson with the scheme for his trochaic rhyming couplets, in long lines of eight stresses.” Meester is referring to Emil Koeppel’s 1900 essay “Sir William Jones’s Übersetzung der Moallakat and “Locksley Hall.” Following his translation of the *Mu’allaqat* (a copy of which was found in the library of Tennyson’s father), Jones provides a section called “The Originals”; there we find transliterations of the Arabic originals in “Latin” characters, beginning with Imru’ al-Qais’s “Mu’allqa.” Koeppel refers to Jones’s transaliteration of the fifth “couplet” of the “Mu’allqa”:

Cadábica min ómmí álhhowáírithi kablahá
Wajárarihá ómmí álrábáí bimásali

(31) Christopher Ricks, “‘Locksley Hall’ and the ‘Moallakat’,” p. 300. Ricks states that “Edmund Blunden…has suggested that he [Tennyson] was influenced by the use made of it [meter] by his friend R. C. Trench.”
(32) Hallam Tennyson, p. 195. Hallam Tennyson quotes his father saying, “Mr Hallam said to me that the English people liked verse in Trochaics, so I wrote the poem in this metre.”
As in his compressing of the quantitative meter to the qualitative one, Jones compiles the two hemistiches of al-Qais’s poetic lines into couplets. He does so out of poetic necessity, because the *tawil* line is a fourteen footer; the only solution is to translate the caesura into a couplet break. The compilation of the long poetic line into a couplet gives us the first clue to Tennyson’s imitation of the transliterated *tawil*.

Koeppel argues that if we read this verse with trochaic rhythm we get exactly the model of the catalectic trochaic tetrameter that Tennyson’s poem is composed in:

Cádalbical min omimf ahhl hówailirithil káblalhá
cf. Locksley Hall 16:
Lóve took l úp the l glass of l Tíme, and l turned it l ín his l glowingl hánds.²⁵

What Koeppel proves without a doubt is that there is a precedent for the meter of “Locksley Hall” in Jones’s transliteration of the “Mu’allaqa,” which is the closest to the original poem unless one reads Arabic. Certainly, the half-line that he quotes (with accents changed) consists of seven and a half feet and corresponds to line 16 in “Locksley Hall.” If we look at the second hemistich of the fifth line of the “Mu’allaqa,” we get the same result of seven and a half feet:

Wajálratilrá ámblmí állrabálbi bilmásallí

Koeppel suggests that we read his transliterated example “with trochaic rhythm” even though it does not lend itself readily to trochaics. Notice that Koeppel shifts the accents in his example with the exception of the word “káblalhá,” which falls naturally into trochaics. If we look at the accentually unaltered example of the second hemistich of the same line, we find that the third foot as well as the seventh more readily fall into trochaics. Are these occurrences enough, however, to account for the meter of “Locksley Hall?” Furthermore, is the meter “catalectic” as Koeppel describes it?

If we look at the very next half-line of Jones’s transliteration of line six of the “Mu’allaqa,” the trochaics become much more pronounced:

ídhál kámáltá tadháwwalá ámbmíscól mínholmá²⁶

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²⁵ Meester, p. 54.
This half-line clearly calls for a trochaic reading and is an almost perfect example of the "Locksley Hall" meter. Koeppel would have only needed to look at this half-line to complete his theory. There is little doubt, then, that Jones’s transliteration in “Latin” characters provides a convincing precedent to the meter of “Locksley Hall,” especially because three consecutive hemistiches within the first six lines of the transliteration conform to the seven and a half feet scheme. Furthermore, we do not need to conjecture that Tennyson read Jones’s work pertaining to the Mu‘allaqat. The metrical pattern of seven and a half feet manifests in fifty-six hemistiches of Jones’s transliteration, enough to establish a precedent for the meter of “Locksley Hall.” But why does Koeppel, who does not refer to the transliterated lines that fall naturally into trochaics, suggest a trochaic reading of the poetic line in his example? Is there a possibility that Tennyson may have indeed read the line cited by Koeppel trochaically?

In his essay “Tennyson and Persian Poetry,” J. D. Yohannan claims that “of the major English poets of the nineteenth century who had an acquaintance with Persian poetry, only Tennyson knew how to read Persian.” Paden refutes this claim, saying that Edward B. Cowell (who taught some Persian to Tennyson) testifies that the Persian “character daunted” Tennyson. The Persian characters are almost identical to the Arabic characters with a few variations. The most one can suggest is that Tennyson may have tried to read the Arabic transliterations imaginatively under the influence of Persian poetry as well as Jones’s transliterated lines that fall naturally into trochaics, and, consequently, came up with the meter of “Locksley Hall.” This leaves us with one more question, however: why does not Jones’s transliteration of the Arabic conform to his description of the long sea (tawil)?

The tawil produces two hemistiches, each consisting of fourteen syllables in four varying feet. In Jones’s transliteration, many of the lines conform to this scheme, thirty-six full lines to be exact. However, many transliterated lines (as I have shown above) produce an extra syllable, or in rarer cases an extra foot in transliteration. On closer examination, I

(38) Paden, p. 652.
discovered that the reason for this discrepancy is an oversight in Jones's transliteration. Let us consider Jones's transliteration of the fifth couplet again:

Cadábica min ómími álhhowáfrithi kablahá
Wajáráthá ómími álrrabábi bimášali39

What Jones interprets as two syllables, “mi ál” in both hemistiches, are in fact one. In Arabic, when one word ends in a vowel and the word following begins with the “ál” of introductions (“ál” basically functioning as “the” in English), the two vowels are combined to produce one syllable. In the example above, “mi ál” is read as “mil”; the “á” follows the vowel sound of the preceding vowel. Jones does not factor this into his transliteration, and Koeppel errs, consequently, in describing the meter as “catalectic.” Moreover, the added syllable syncopates the rhythm and often creates trochees when they do not exist in the Arabic original. As such, Jones's unique transliteration produces a metrical translational agency. The extra syllable is not the curtailing of an eight-foot line, but the stretching of a seven-foot line. In that as well, Tennyson may have expanded his metrical line to accommodate Jones's description of the “long verse” in which the last syllable is “considered as a long one.”40 The scansion of Jones’s transliteration, then, produces a meter that does not clearly belong to its Arabic origins and that does not fully resonate in its English context: an Anglo-Arabic meter. Jones's transliterational oversight allows for an Anglo-Arabic tawil. The seemingly incommensurate duality (Arabic/Transliteration in English) creates yet another suspension or “Mu’allaqa” across the time and space of the in-between. It comes as no surprise, then, that Tennyson chooses a meter “appropriate to his half-deranged speaker.”41 After all, the speaker of “Locksley Hall,” like Jones’s transliteration of tawil, “stretches” reality in his vision of the orient, and this vision too owes much of its imagery and many of its themes to Imru’ al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa.”

The speaker’s derangement, Richard B. Hovey states in “Tennyson’s ‘Locksley Hall’: A Re-Interpretation,” comes partly from

(40) Jones, The Mo’allakat, p. 3.
(41) Cummings, p. 131.
his “intensity of feeling which stabs at us, [and his] almost brutal honesty...[which] depicts a tormented lover.”

To Hovey, the speaker’s “brutal” emotional response to losing his lover is the direct cause of his derangement. It is what causes a divide in the speaker’s self from a rational being to an emotionally unpredictable one. Certainly, this oscillation between rationality and derangement is mirrored in the thematic form of “Locksley Hall,” which has some critics questioning the unity of the poem. In his essay “Imagery in ‘Locksley Hall,’” E. C. Bufkin summarizes “the deprecatory attitude toward ‘Locksley Hall’ that may be taken as now generally prevalent. Baum characterizes the poem as ‘a motley,’ and Buckley quite clearly implies that, in addition to a plethora of other artistic flaws, it lacks unity of effect.”

Bufkin, however, counters that “the real interest of the poem...actually lies in its structuring through interwoven sets of imagery.”

Unbeknown to Baum, Buckley, and Bufkin, the same issue of unity is raised against al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqat” by Arab literary critics. In his book *Shi’r al-Harb fi al-‘Asr al-Jahili* [The Poetry of War in the Age of Jahiliah], Ali al-Jundi states:

Frequently, the verses appear without order with respect to logic and with respect to the idea and the method of its presentation; in most cases the ideas and the verses are not organized feasibly and logically... [One] sees the verses that address a specific point scattered throughout the poem, here and there, between the verses that address that point or other points.

Indeed, al-Qais jumps from one theme to the other without any ostensible logical connection. The poet can be describing the beloved, then suddenly jump to a night of loneliness, then to describing his horse, and then finally to describing a storm at the end of the poem. The thematic scheme of “Locksley Hall” also jumps around from a description of the beloved, to bitterness against society, to a murder fantasy, to a prophecy, to an oriental rape-like fantasy, and to a storm ending. The thematic

(44) Bufkin, p. 21.
relationship of unpredictability and interweaving between “Locksley Hall” and the “Mu’allaqa” becomes clear here. A comparative project on the themes and imagery of “Locksley Hall” and the “Mu’allaqa” is worthy of its own engagement. For the purposes of this essay, however, I will engage thematic elements and imagery, in addition to metrical elements, pertaining to Cousin Amy and the “savage woman” in order to demonstrate how an importational reading of “Locksley Hall” answers questions that have lingered in previous readings of the poem.

The meter of the “Mu’allaqa” is strict and does not undergo any variation. In the highly oral culture of Jahilia (pre-Islamic Arabia), a strict meter is necessary for remembering and reciting poetry. Variation is mostly a matter of content in the Mu’allaqat (plural) and not a matter of form. Moreover, the elaborate scheme of “interwoven sets of imagery” in the “Mu’allaqa” is a reflection of the poet’s varied thoughts and experiences while journeying in the desert. The second line of al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa” deliciously alludes to this schematic (Jones’s translation followed by mine):

“TUDAH and MIKRA; a station, the marks of which
are not wholly effaced, though the south wind and the
“north have woven the twisted sand.” (Jones)

Toodih and al-Mikrat, its trace not effaced
For all the weaving of southern and northern winds (Naous)

The weaving of the winds does not efface the trace of the beloved’s former encampment; where one wind covers the trace, the other uncovers it. This to and fro movement clearly reflects both al-Qais’s and Tennyson’s speakers’ emotional distress over losing the beloved and their struggle to free the present from the haunting of the past.

The transliterated Arabic meter of “Locksley Hall,” unfixed by the translational process, participates in the variations of the content. Let us consider lines 167-68 of “Locksley Hall”:

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing space;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.46

In his vision of the orient located somewhere “There,” the poem’s speaker unleashes his “passions.” “There,” however, is a mental landscape and one of derangement. “There” the speaker can “take some savage woman” and she will rear his “dusky race.” The “savage woman” has no agency to refuse this forced union, let alone to bear the speaker’s “dusky” progeny. After all, the speaker has the power to take the native woman and force her to rear his dusky race. The savage woman, though instrumental in fulfilling this fantasy, is neither an active nor a passive participant in it; rather, she is merely a vehicle to be discarded after the realization of desire. Indeed, the speaker checks himself in lines 173-4; “Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I know my words are wild/ But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.” The speaker emphasizes the verb “know,” which acts as a pivot gearing the speaker (and the reader for that matter) away from sexual knowledge to European knowledge writ large. From there, the speaker turns our attention to racial and religious knowledge where the “Christian child” can outwit any “gray barbarian.” The speaker thus attempts to excuse and justify his rape-like fantasy to his European audience by turning to scientific, racial, and religious forms of bigotry.

In lines 167-68 (above), the meter follows the speaker’s path of desire fulfilment in *punctuational inflection*. By *punctuational inflection*, I mean precisely an inflection that bends a meter, subtly altering its movement. In his essay “*Locksley Hall Revisited,*” F.E.L. Priestley contends that the poem is cast into couplets using the old ‘fifteener’ line, an ancient and splendid vehicle, capable of a great variety of movements, and particularly able, with its odd number of syllables, to become either [a] rising or falling metre, and able also, with its ample length, to flow continuously or to break into subordinate rhythms.47

The first line of the couplet under consideration (167-68) ends in a semicolon, giving the line “scope and breathing space” to “flow continuously.” That is, the placement of the semicolon at the end of the line (with no intervening punctuation within the body of the line) follows the speaker’s vision of unleashed passions. As such, the fifteener line (fourteen syllables stretched into fifteen) accounts for the speaker’s passionate overflow into a fantastical realm. The second line

(47) F.E.L. Priestley, “*Locksley Hall Revisited,*” *Queen’s Quarterly*, vol. 81, 1974, p. 512.
of the same couplet, however, is divided by a comma, which breaks the line into two “subordinate rhythms” of four-feet complete and four-feet curtailed. The rhythm thrusts forward in trochaic movement in an attempt to fulfil the speaker’s desire. The expansion of the previous line inverts into a curtailed rush in this line.

In *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, H. L. Malchow states that “this passage in ‘Locksley Hall’ also suggests—in fact depends upon—a male memory of coition itself. A fantasized release, an ejaculation ‘deep in yonder shining Orient’.” Malchow refers to line 154 in “Locksley Hall,” “Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat”; the word “deep” gains a sexual connotation that links colonial expansion to sexual fulfilment. It is only in the “deep” orient that the speaker can “take” the “savage woman.” In line 154 as in line 168 of the poem, the trochaic rhythm, ushered in by punctuational inflection, emulates the thrusts of sexual intercourse. Both lines are curtailed, however, for fantastical fulfilment of desire fails to match with reality. Moreover, the curtailing of the rhythm suggests a premature ejaculation and a weakness in the speaker’s perceived notions of manhood, which he projects onto women in general in lines 149-52:

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Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman’s pleasure, woman’s pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain:

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, matched with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—
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The speaker’s diatribe against women is in response to his particular rejection by his cousin Amy, who marries another for wealth rather than love. After this condemnation of women, the speaker unleashes his passions on the oriental “savage woman.” Who, then, is this “savage woman” and how does she relate to al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa?” Moreover, how does the importation of themes and imagery from the “Mu’allaqa” further our reading of the “savage woman?”

The “Mu’allaqa” and “Locksley Hall” begin respectively as follows:

“Stay—Let us weep at the remembrance of our beloved, at the sight of the station where her tent was raised, by the edge of yon bending sands between DAHUL and HAUMEL, (Jones)

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet ’tis early morn:
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-horn (Tennyson)

Both speakers’ memories of the beloved are provoked by the site of the beloved’s past dwellings. Both speakers ask their companions to halt on these sites and both enter the condition of memory where the present is “Mu’allaq” or suspended. The implied site in the “Mu’allaqa” is a tent, which turns into a mansion in “Locksley Hall.” Notice that Jones’s translation of the line contains two italicized phrases: “at the sight of” and “where her tent was raised.” As I mention earlier in the essay, these italicized phrases constitute Jones’s additions to the “Mu’allaqa” that are not found in the original. The first line of the “Mu’allaqa” actually reads, “Halt both and let us weep recalling a love and a dwelling/ By the rim of twisted sands between ad-Dakhool and Haumal” (Naous). In fact, even the un-italicized word “station” in Jones’s translation does not appear in the original. “Station” has a very different connotation than “dwelling.” “Station” sounds more European; and yet, Jones qualifies “station” with the italicized “tent,” which results in a paradox. It is as if Jones was trying both to Europeanize the “Mu’allaqa” and retain its Eastern qualities. In line 4 of Jones’s translation, this issue becomes clearer:
A profusion of tears, answered I, is my sole relief;
but what avails it to shed them over the remains of a deserted mansion?

The italicized “tent” in line one becomes a “deserted mansion” in line four. Even though the “deserted mansion” is not italicized, it certainly does not exist in the original:

Truly, my only cure is a teardrop spilled
For what is there to rely on where the trace is obliterated (Naous)

In a letter to Edward Gibbon on 30 June 1781, Jones writes, “my Seven Arabian Poets will see the light before next winter, and be proud
to wait upon you in their English dress."\(^{49}\) In another letter to Edmund Cartwright on 20 December 1781, Jones writes, "my seven Arabian poets will wait upon you as soon as the European dresses are finished."\(^{50}\) It is interesting that Jones presents translation as a process of dressing. In the Arabic tradition, translation or *tarjama* (Arabic for translation) is referred to as an act of clothing or draping: "the translated, in other words, the clothed/draped is enjoined by necessity on the translation."\(^{51}\) This act of draping raises the issue of accessibility where the "translated" is culturally modified to fit the norms of the target language. Moreover, the verb "talabbasa," Arabic for the English "wear," also refers to demonic possession; the demon can either "wear" or "clothe" the body of the unhappy victim. Certainly, the demon of orientalism and imperialism does clothe the native subject, but in such a way that the native remains unmistakably recognizable as native. Jones’s translational paradox of both Europeanizing al-Qais’s imagery while also referring to the original image (tent as mansion and tent as tent) resolves within the orientalist and colonial contexts. In this way, the poets and their poetry in "English dress" are made to "wait upon" the English audience. To "wait upon" has a double meaning: it can simply mean to visit, but it can also mean to serve. In the context of "Locksley Hall," the "tent" clothed as "mansion" could have very well given Tennyson the idea for "Locksley Hall" as a location.

In addition to the "Mu’allaqa’s" influence, the first two lines of "Locksley Hall" also allude to Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*. The location implied by "here" is "Locksley Hall," but the term "Locksley" is also the pseudonym of Robin Hood in *Ivanhoe*. Moreover, Locksley uses the "bugle-horn" to summon his companions when he needs assistance.\(^{52}\) I will engage *Ivanhoe’s* specific relevance to the argument at hand later in the essay. The first two lines of "Locksley Hall," then, introduce importations of meter (transliterated *tawil*), theme (remembering/crying on the deserted dwelling of the beloved), and imagery (the site


\(^{52}\) Edgar F. Shannon, "‘Locksley Hall’ and ‘Ivanhoe’,” *Notes and Queries*, vol. 6.6, 1959, p. 217.
of memory) from the “Mu’allaqa.” The site of “Locksley Hall,” fraught with dynamic importations and meanings, is in fact many sites.

The sites in both poems provoke a memory of the beloved. The speaker of the “Mu’allaqa” describes his mistress as a gazelle:

She turned aside, and displayed her soft cheek: she
gave a timid glance with languishing eyes, like those of
a roe in the groves of WGERA looking tenderly at her
young. (Jones)

She turns away to reveal a smooth cheek, and fends me off
With a gazelle’s eye for its fawn (Naous)

The cheek and eye images, so prominent in the “Mu’allaqa,” make their way to “Locksley Hall” in lines 21 and 22, but without the gazelle referent:

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

The smooth cheek metamorphoses to a “pale” and thin one and the tenderness of the gazelle’s eye for its fawn changes to a “mute observance.” The absence of the gazelle in this image obliterates both the amorous and playful qualities of the mistress. Instead, we get a sickly Amy who shares only the gazelle’s inability to speak, hence the “mute observance.” Amy gains a de-humanized attribute, of “mute” animals, rather than the extra-human attribute of the gazelle’s beauty in the “Mu’allaqa.” The speaker of “Locksley Hall” assumes all action in this line and all Amy can do is observe mutely his “motions.” As such, both lines of the couplet above flow uninterrupted as fifteeners and account
for the speaker’s self-centred narration. The speaker commands Amy to speak in lines 23 through 26:

And I said, ‘My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,  
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee.’

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,  
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

Notice that the imperative “speak” appears twice in line 23: the first asks Amy to “speak” and the second to “speak the truth.” For Amy to “speak” and to “speak the truth” is for her to regain the human attribute of speech. Moreover, the implication of the speaker’s command is that Amy would not have otherwise spoken the truth even if she were given the chance. Instead, Amy has to be commanded to “speak the truth.” The rhythms of lines 23 and 24 break up in punctuational inflection into three subordinate “currents” which “set” to Amy. It is as if the speaker energizes Amy’s human (emotional) faculties by bestowing on her “the current of [his] being.” Only then does Amy’s pale cheek gain “a colour and a light.” As the speaker returns to his narration and representation of Amy, so does the rhythm return to the uninterrupted fifteener.

Shortly after this description of Amy, the speaker continues his narrative at the site of memory:

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,  
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips. (lines 37-8)

The meter extends to eight feet per line in this couplet. The speaker and Amy’s “touching of the lips” is a moment of desire fulfilment for the speaker. As such, the meter overcomes its “curtailed” condition of four feet complete and four feet curtailed and regains its full eight-foot vigor; the rhythm flows without any punctuational interruption in the body of the lines. However, the figure of “spirits [rushing] together at the touching of the lips” is an importation from Tennyson’s oriental poem “Fatima”: “once he drew/With one long kiss my whole soul through/My lips.”

(53) Note 38 in “Locksley Hall,” Ricks, ed.: “A traditional notion; cp. Fatima 19-21 and n: ‘he drew/With one long kiss my whole soul through/My lips’” (122).
“Fatima” is partly based on letter XVI, titled “Narrative of a love adventure, which happened at Rosetta” in Claude Etienne Savary’s *Letters on Egypt*. In his letter, Savary recounts the story of Jemily (whose name translates from the Arabic as “beautiful”)54, a youthful Georgian, who is married to a jealous Turk, Hassan. Out walking one night, Jemily sees “a European [man], who lately had arrived at Rosetta. His dress being so different from the Turkish, made him remarkable.”55 Jemily falls in love with the European and sends a slave to secure a secret rendezvous with him. The European agrees to meet Jemily, but does not follow through with his promise. Jemily tries repeatedly to get the European to agree to a meeting, but he repeatedly fails to show up. Frustrated and angry, Jemily sends a message to the European which reads:

I saw thee, stranger, thought thou hadst sensibility, and my heart panted to be thine. Nine months though hast deceived me; perjury to thee is sport. But, beware; thy life is in my hands, (m) and I am determined...Come and receive thy pardon, or a slave shall bring me thy head. Jemily swears by the Prophet, if longer neglected, to be revenged. (m) A Turkish woman may easily have a foreigner assassinated, or even publicly executed, if she please.56

By importing the notion of the transfer of souls at the touching of lips from “Fatima,” Tennyson effectively racializes Amy and transfers to her the “Turkish” attributes of Jemily (although she is only Turkish by marriage). This importation has two main effects on “Locksley Hall.” First, the speaker preempts his oriental rape-like fantasy by the implication that all “savage” women lust after Christian European men. By “taking” some savage woman, the speaker has universal consent and does not need to bother with the needs of that woman. Second, the speaker can project this fantasy onto Amy. While Amy does refuse the speaker, she has no right to do so under the terms of her conflation with Fatima/Jemily. Furthermore, while Fatima/Jemily is sexually licentious, the implication is that Amy too is so in having sold herself to wealth

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(56) Savary, p. 184.
rather than marrying for love. The speaker of “Locksley Hall” feels justified then in threatening Amy’s life and states, “Better thou wert dead before me, though I slew thee with my hand!” (line 56). After all, Amy as Jemily threatens the life of the European; so, why wouldn’t the speaker return the favor?

The name “Fatima” also appears in al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa,” lines 16 and 17:

Delightful too was the day, when FATHIMA at first rejected me on the summit of yon sand-hill, and took an oath, which she declared inviolable. (Jones)

And a day on the dune’s back she became difficult
With me, and swore an oath never to be broken. (Naous)

“O FATHIMA, said I, away with so much coyness;
“and, if thou hadst resolved to abandon me, yet at last
“relent. (Jones)

O Fatima slowly somewhat with this coquetry
Even if you are determined to break with me, do it temperately. (Naous)

What quickly becomes apparent is that the speaker of the “Mu’allaqa” reacts much differently to rejection than the speaker of “Locksley Hall.” Nowhere in the “Mu’allaqa” do we witness any violent feelings toward the beloved. Instead, the speaker of the “Mu’allaqa” relieves his frustrations by going hunting on his horse. He asks Fatima to break with him “temperately” if she must. Jones’s translation of line 17, however, does not reveal such gentleness. The added phrase “said I” in Jones’s line shifts power from Fatima to the speaker; for immediately after the self-centring “I,” the speaker commands Fatima to do “away with so much coyness,” which carries a very different connotation than the pleading quality of “slowly somewhat with this coquetry.” The speaker in Jones’s line is almost sure that Fatima will relent and that he does not need to negotiate with her, while in fact the speaker is asking for mercy from Fatima. If she is determined to break his heart, the speaker pleads with Fatima to do so “temperately.” In “Locksley Hall,” however, it is Jones’s interpretation that holds sway and informs the self-centered speaker of Tennyson’s poem.
The translation of the name “Fatima” adds much to the issue at hand and has both a cultural and religious significance in the Arab world. “Fatima” comes from the Arabic root “fatm”, which translates as “weaning.”57 “Fatima” is the active noun meaning “one who weans,” from the root “Fatm.” As such, we can read “Fatima” as one who is weaning her lover. This becomes clear if one considers the other meanings of “weaning” in an Arabic context. “Fatama,” the verb from the root “fatm,” also translates as cutting or breaking with: “weaning the rope is its cutting...and a man [person] weans his habit by breaking with it.”58 Certainly, Al-Qais’s speaker wishes to be weaned “temperately.” He says as much in line 18 of the “Mu’allaqa”:

“If, indeed, my disposition and manners are un-
“pleasing to thee, rend at once the mantle of my heart,
“that it may be detached from thy love. (Jones)

If a habit of mine has so much offended you
Then draw my garments from your garments, and they will shed away.(Naous)

Both translations (above) of the word “khaliqa” as “disposition and manners” and “habit” are correct, and the speaker is certainly aware here of the implications in Fatima’s name. But “Fatima” (as one who weans) is also weaning a year-old baby. The speaker of the “Mu’allaqa” boasts in lines 14 and 15:

“Many a fair one like thee, though not like thee a
“virgin, have I visited by night; and many a lovely
“mother have I diverted from the care of her yearling
“infant adorned with amulets: (Jones)

Many pregnant like you I have night visited while nursing
And distracted her from the yearling, possessor of her charms (Naous)

“When the suckling behind her cried, she turned
“round to him with half her body; but half of it,

"pressed beneath my embrace, was not turned from
"me." (Jones)

When he cried behind her, she attended to him
With one side and her other side unshifted under me (Naous)

Here as well, Jones adds the phrase “though not like thee a virgin,”
which is not found in the original. There is nothing in the “Mu’allaqa”
that suggests that Fatima is a virgin and the phrase “many pregnant
like you” clearly suggests that Fatima is a married woman with child
if not already breast-feeding a baby (which is implied in line 14). Both
al-Qais’s speaker and Fatima are sexually licentious by pre-Islamic
Jahiliah standards, which are in some ways more conservative than
Islamic doctrine. Certainly, the Jahiliah did not condone adultery or the
implicit lactation fetish exhibited by al-Qais’s speaker. It is these lines
of the “Mu’allaqa,” as I mention early in this essay, which provoke
the Prophet Mohammad’s anger against poets in general and al-Qais
specifically. The condemnation might also be the result of the fact that
the name of Mohammad’s daughter is Fatima al-Zahra and that al-Qais
in retrospect brings infamy to the name as a religious symbol.

The image of the breast-feeding baby makes its way to “Locksley
Hall” in lines 87-90:

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
’Tis a purer life than thine; a lip to drain thy trouble dry.
Baby lips will laugh me down: my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, wakened touches, press me from the mother’s breast.

While al-Qais’s speaker is willing to share the mother’s body with
the infant, Tennyson’s speaker dubs the infant his “latest rival,” who
presses him “from the mother’s breast.” The lactation fetish is as implicit
in “Locksley Hall” as it is in the “Mu’allaqa.” But here, the “purer life”
of the infant is what deters the speaker from indulging in an adulterous
fantasy. Instead, Tennyson’s speaker exhibits traits of moral superiority
with the phrase “’Tis a purer life than thine.” Moreover, it is the baby’s
lip that “drain[s] [Amy’s] trouble dry” and the speaker is not going to
allow himself to participate in draining Amy’s “trouble.” Notice that
the first halves of lines 88 and 89 are metrically curtailed, rendering an
inversion of the dominant rhythmic pattern of four-feet complete and
four-feet curtailed in “Locksley Hall”; both halves deal with the baby
and both curtail the speaker’s fantasy. The rhythm inverts to account for
this curtailment. The second halves of four-feet complete, “a lip to drain
thy trouble dry” and “my latest rival brings thee rest,” allow the baby
scope and space over the mother’s bodily release, albeit a purer release.
Tennyson’s speaker convinces himself of moral superiority here by not
succumbing to an adulterous lactation fantasy and by giving way to the
infant. As such, he draws Amy as impure, in contrast to her baby, as the
baby is the product of a socially acceptable form of harlotry: marriage
for material wealth. Thus Amy is rendered as Fatima/Jemily with all her
sexual lewdness.

The speaker of “Locksley Hall” states to that effect in lines 47-50:

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

Tennyson’s speaker continues his assault on Amy by comparing
her to her husband, who is “a clown.” Notice that the first half of line
47 further divides into two parts; “as the husband is, the wife is.” The
husband part gets five syllables and Amy gets three, totalling four-feet
complete. After all, Amy is merely a minor reflection of the husband
and cannot stand equal to him. The speaker then describes the husband
as gross in nature. The husband’s “weight,” which drags Amy down, has
both sexual and social aspects. In line 49, the speaker reveals the sexual
aspect when the husband discards Amy after having his sexual fill of
her. Line 50 shows a socially degraded Amy who is “something better
than [her husband’s] dog, a little dearer than his horse.” But Amy’s state
of degradation is further highlighted by the fact that the image in line 50
is an importation from Scott’s Ivanhoe.

In his essay “‘Locksley Hall’ and ‘Ivanhoe,’” Edgar Shannon
points to the passage where “wounded Ivanhoe thanks Rebecca for her
ministrations.”59 Indeed, Rebecca reflects to herself in chapter XXIX of

the novel, "He calls me dear Rebecca... but it is in the cold and careless tone which ill suits the word. His war-horse, his hunting hound, are dearer to him than the despised Jewess." Rebecca understands that Ivanhoe’s word “dear” does not betray any amorous emotions and does not bypass her social position as a “Jewess.” Bitterly, Rebecca states that Ivanhoe holds his “war-horse” and “his hunting hound” dearer than he does her. Rebecca’s position as a Jewish woman in this context is worse than that of an animal. Indeed, Rebecca later reflects, “he names not the Jew or the Jewess...yet what is our portion in him, and how justly am I punished by Heaven for letting my thoughts dwell upon him.”

Tennyson’s speaker alters Rebecca’s comparison by giving Amy a status a little better than the “Jewess,” where Amy is “something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.” That is, Amy’s degradation in the speaker’s mind is comparable to that of Rebecca, but the speaker stops short of drawing Amy as Rebecca as if that would be too much of an insult.

However, “Heaven” punishes Amy as it punishes Rebecca for loving the wrong person: Rebecca is punished for loving a person outside her religion and Amy for marrying “a clown” for material considerations. Moreover, both Fatima/Jemily and Rebecca are in love with European men, the supposition being, of course, that Muslim and Jewish women prefer Christian European men to men of their own kind. The racialization and de-humanization of Amy in “Locksley Hall” raises an exigent question here: why does Tennyson adopt these opaque (because implicit) importations and how do they affect our perceptions of Amy? This question brings us to lines 69-74 of the poem:

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perished: sweetly did she speak and move:
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly: love is love for evermore.

(61) Scott, p. 310.
The speaker tries to seek comfort “in division of the records of the mind;” there the speaker can part and quarantine the painful memory of Amy. The act of “division” in the mind also prompts the speaker to attempt parting Amy from herself. He would then be able to love “kind” Amy and shun unkind Amy. In lines 69 and 70 the meter fragments in the phrases “where is comfort” and “can I part her from herself.” In the former phrase, “comfort” gets only four syllables from the entire line; in the latter phrase, the act of parting Amy inverts to a curtailed seven syllables (three and a half feet) in the first half of the line, which accounts for the “part” rather than the whole. Partition not working, the speaker moves to remember Amy as “one that perished.” He asks in line 73, “can I think of her as dead?” Here too, the curtailment of the meter takes place in the first half of the poetic line to account for “dead” Amy. But killing Amy off does not do the trick either. The speaker says “no,” Amy never truly loved him, for “love is love.” What is love? Does the speaker know, or is it a matter of possessing Amy? In effect, the speaker is not able to reconcile Amy to herself; to do that would mean either to lose her or to possess her. The latter being impossible, the speaker cannot bring himself to lose Amy.

Disoriented between loss and possession, the speaker rejects al-Qais’s theme of consolation by remembering happier things:

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow’s crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

The poet who sings this “truth” is in fact Dante and the poetic line is an importation from the Inferno. Here, the speaker of “Locksley Hall” enters the paradox of “remembering” Amy by re-membering her, by reconciling her to herself and ending her partition in the speaker’s mind. To remember Amy is to offer a whole re-membered Amy (kind and unkind) and to acknowledge in that wholeness a loss: a whole Amy is an Amy lost. The speaker thus tries to avoid sorrow by not “remembering

(62) Note 75-6 in “Locksley Hall,” Ricks, ed.: “the poet: Dante. T.’s note quotes Nessum maggiore dolore, Che ricordarsi del tempo felice/Nella miseria (Inferno v 121-3)...These lines are in effect a retort to the Moallakai’s ‘consolation’: ‘that he had enjoyed his full share of pleasures: thus by recollection of his past delight his imagination is kindled, and his grief suspended.’”
[and re-membering] happier things.” As such, the speaker of “Locksley Hall” answers al-Qais’s speaker, who fully acknowledges the beloved’s loss in line 4 of the “Mu’allaqa”: “A profusion of tears, answered I, is my sole relief; but what avails it to shed them over the remains of a deserted mansion?” (Jones). Al-Qais’s speaker almost despairs in this acknowledgement of loss. However, his companions intervene and urge the speaker to remember other mistresses and past delights in order to take his mind off the most recent loss. In line 5 of the “Mu’allaqa” the speaker’s companions speak; “Thy condition, they replied, is not more painful than when thou leftest HOWAIRA, before thy present passion, and her neighbour REBABA, on the hills of MASEL” (Jones). Thus prompted, al-Qais’s speaker begins recounting past adventures.

The companions of the speaker of “Locksley Hall” afford him no such support. In lines 145-48, the speaker states:

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a mouldered string?
I am shamed through all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

The speaker’s companions ridicule and “scorn” him for his “foolish passion.” In response, the speaker decides to stop harping on a “mouldered string”; he shamefully regrets his love for Amy, who is “so slight a thing.” The speaker de-humanizes Amy by reducing her to a “thing,” to a mere object. This comes as no surprise, for the speaker has previously given Amy “mute” animal attributes, racialized her as Muslim Fatima/Jemily and Jewish Rebecca, and parted her from herself to suit his needs. Still unwilling to admit loss by re-membering Amy, the speaker escapes into the future by recalling his birthplace in India: “Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat” (line 154). Before crossing into the oriental future, however, the speaker has made sure to send versions of Amy there as a “mute” gazelle and as Fatima from the “Mu’allaqa,” and as oriental Jemily and Jewish Rebecca (who, in the racialized Victorian imagination, ultimately belongs to the East). When the speaker states,

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing space;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race [.]
it becomes clear that he means to “take” Amy the “savage woman,” who is an orientalized, racialized, and de-humanized “thing.” It is only “there” that the speaker can fulfil his desire on savage Amy without any social restraint or condemnation. “There,” in the oriental fantastical location, the oriental version of Amy is not only without agency, but also (stereotypically) predisposed to love European men, as do Fatima/Jemily and Rebecca.

The fantasy does not hold, however, and dissolves with the sound of the “bugle-horn.” Awakened, the speaker is forced to check himself: “Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I know my words are wild” (line 173). All the speaker can do now is to admit defeat and leave, but not without wishing for the destruction of the site of memory and pain in lines 191-194:

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on “Locksley Hall”, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

Notice that line 191 expands to eight feet, giving the “vapour” full scope and reach. It is nature that will finally avenge the speaker’s broken heart. The “vapour,” taking on the speaker’s pain, packs a “thunderbolt” in its “breast.” The speaker asks the “vapour” to unleash its fury on “Locksley Hall” “with rain or hail, or fire or snow.” Not looking back, but with grief un-suspended, the speaker goes to sea. In this final storm image as well, “Locksley Hall” is indebted to al-Qais’s “Mu’allaqa.” Toward the end of the “Mu’allaqa,” al-Qais’s speaker also describes a storm-laden cloud (lines 73-75):

The cloud unloads its freight on the desert of GHABEIT,  
like a merchant of YEMEN alighting with his bales of rich apparel.

The small birds of the valley warble at day-break, as if they had taken their early draught of generous wine mixed with spice.

The beasts of the wood, drowned in the floods of
night, float, like the roots of wild onion, at the distant edge of the lake. (Jones)

Here too the storm offers a catharsis, but it does so positively. Al-Qais’s speaker describes the storm in terms of a Yemeni merchant unpacking his goods. The birds are exultant after the night-storm as if they had drunk “wine mixed with spice.” In the storm, “the beasts of the wood,” metaphors for the speaker’s suffering, drown. The speaker witnesses this new morning with a heart unburdened by the “bales” of the storm.

The evidence presented in this essay not only demonstrates the indebtedness of “Locksley Hall” to the “Mu’allaqa” (its meter, imagery, and themes), but also allows for a nuanced importational reading of the speaker’s representation of his cousin Amy in “Locksley Hall.” My argument for an Anglo-Arabic tawil, which is capable of a variety of movements and inflections, as is the meter of “Locksley Hall,” helps us further gauge the derangement of the speaker “Locksley Hall” as he oscillates between West and East, the exotic and the real, the orient and disorientation. The site of “Locksley Hall,” in this reading, becomes many sites (l literal and figurative): a mansion and a desert encampment, an interweaving of the past, present, and future, and, an oscillation and disorienting combination of Arabic and English scapes. Even as similarities interweave both the “Mu’allaqa” and “Locksley Hall,” their oscillations ultimately propel “Locksley Hall” to a counter position as an anti-“Mu’allaqa.” The speaker of “Locksley Hall” leaves the site in which the beloved dwelled, with his grief un-suspended (un-“Mu’allaq”). Unlike the speaker of the “Mu’allaqa,” who suspends his grief by recounting past delights, the speaker of “Locksley Hall” leaves the site with anger and fury, this, of course, after he refutes the poet’s (al-Qais) assertion on comfort. The paradox of “Locksley Hall” is that it draws heavily on the “Mu’allaqa” while actively dismissing and rendering inferior the culture on which it draws. At some level, “Locksley Hall” is an example of classic orientalism, in which recognition and indebtedness inverse to a practice of othering.
Abstract

Considerable scholarly attention has been given to Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, “Locksley Hall,” in relation to one of its main sources, the “Mu’allaqa” of Imru’ al-Qais, but scarcely any has been paid to the comparative aspects of the two poems. This essay engages Tennyson’s debt to the “Mu’allaqa”—its meter, imagery, and themes—in writing “Locksley Hall,” and traces the modifications of al-Qais’s poetics as they travel from one culture to another. The essay argues that Tennyson’s borrowing—importing—of the “Mu’allaqa’s” more salient poetics reveals much about “Locksley Hall’s” speaker and his representations of his cousin Amy. Ironically, these representations include the orientalization, exoticization, and commodification of Amy in order to render her inferior to the speaker even while the poem relies on the pre-Islamic poetics of the “Mu’allaqa.”