

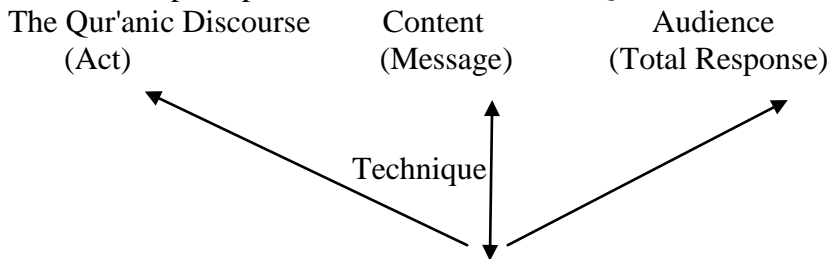
Dramatic Impulses in the *Qu'ran*: A Study in Function

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The experience provoked by any Qu'ranic discourse can work by mimesis: the text, recited or read, mirrors emotions and feelings in the Qu'ranic characters; simultaneously, it mediates similar ones to the offstage spectators be they audience or readers. This motivational impulse in the audience is a means of creating an influential role played to repulse vice and attract virtue, an idea that harmonizes with the moralization nature of the Qu'ran. As long as the impulse brings about that end, it is, therefore, dramatic. Interestingly, the terms 'dramatic' and 'impulse' in this work are used as functional and literary elements that help the fulfillment of the moralizational 'message' by transforming the feelings of the characters in the texts onto the offstage audience. Such elements are intrinsically functional, for they would help the effect operate. Nonetheless, the term 'dramatic' is not, and might not be, antonymous of 'theatrical' because a poem and a fiction can be dramatic though not necessarily theatrical.ⁱ The Qu'ranic discourse, however, is by no means different, for it operates in a similar process of transformation: the readers/audience discover the meaning of the discourse by reflecting upon the action created, drawing conclusions about life, and constituting wisdom permitted by human experience. The Qu'ranic discourse is 'dramatic' because "it acts out its meaning."ⁱⁱ

Nevertheless, the term 'dramatic' inevitably implies the existence, actual or imagined, of speakers and audience; i.e., the addresser(s) and the addressee(s). It also infers some relations between the 'discourse' and its recipients, too. In this respect, it is most convenient to adopt Wimsatt's tableⁱⁱⁱ of the relation of the poet, poem, and audience to the 'Qu'ranic discourse' after some modification:



The Qu'ranic discourse is an act that is inevitably concerned with a message addressed to audience regardless of who/what the audience can, in fact, be. The 'content' (Message) and the 'audience' (Response) are the entities of this act. Interestingly, it is essential to commit ourselves that these entities cannot, and should by no means, exist separately. The whole process of the Qu'ranic discourse to display a message for the audience and ensure a response does not undervalue the technique which is justified by the poignant message, the thoughts, passions and responses of the audience. The audience in the Qu'ranic discourse usually varies in accordance with the context of incident. Very often, one may envisage an internal audience, sometimes referred to as micro-audience; i.e., the audience who witnesses the act and is present when the act is displayed. The immediate (direct) addressee the Qu'ranic discourse requires also implies macro-audience to whom the message is eventually intended. What reinforces this instructive feature of the Qu'ranic discourse is the fact that the Holy *Qur'an* is primarily oral. The orality of the Holy *Qur'an* enhances the employment of the dramatic elements to help intensify its moralization nature. It is, indeed, quite feasible to assume that the macro-audience in this case is something like an audience over another audience's shoulders; he receives the message through the micro-audience, to whom the discourse is first addressed.^{iv} To demonstrate this stance, one can lucidly employ the first Qu'ranic verses revealed to Islam Prophet by Gabriel. The first verse addressed to the prophet reads:

Proclaim!
In the name
Of thy Lord and Cherisher,
Who created- (Q: xcvi, 1)

The verse begins with "proclaim", "read" or "recite", hence the conversational tone that underlines the context. Evidently, the Qu'ranic discourse displays that there is a divine commission for proclamation revealed to the Prophet by a messenger. The text identifies the source of the message and the one addressed, and the situation establishes direct nexus between the source "thy Lord and Cherisher" and the one addressed, the immediate audience to whom the verses have been revealed. Simultaneously, the discourse is also addressed to other macro-audiences who are, in this course, universalized: they are the

people who either recite the Qur'anic verses or heard them recited. In fact, the tone of the proclamation reinforces the verblivity of the act required.

The total response of the audience is, therefore, ensured. The vital relations between the discourse, the content, and the technique of presentation secure the arrival at the audience's total response: the mode of passion experienced by the immediate addressee is mediated to the offstage audience. It also contributes to the audience's immediate reception of the message, for the presence of both micro-audience and macro-audience render the Qur'anic stance live and lively by means of sound argument. The argumentative undertone of the verses emphatically rests on solid grounds:

Created man, out of
A (mere) clot
Proclaim! And thy Lord
Is most Bountiful, - (Q: xcvi, ٢-٣)

The discourse is conceived as an act with personal contexts. The message, however, is not merely an abstract proposition of philosophy but it is a "direct concrete message of personal God to creatures whom He loves and cherishes." (*ibid.*, note: ٦٢٠٤, ١٩٦١) The term "thy" is appropriately of a poignant value. It increases the contact between the divine messenger, Gabriele, and the prophet to whom, and through whom, the message is addressed to mankind in addition to the contact with Him who sent the messenger. Interestingly, this imagined situation constitutes what William Dowling describes as "the dramatic coordinates of an imagined world,"^v hence it encourages the manifestation of the message as timeless. The audience's perception of an "imagined world" essentially "resists time not by being frozen in a recording but by transforming itself."^{vi} This nature of transformation is found in the memories of the individual audience once the content (message) is conveyed to him/her; therefore, it occurs whenever the content is presented, eventually, bringing about a collective and universalized response. As a result, the act of transformation intensifies the unique unity of the micro-audience and macro-audience rendering the experience (message) a collective and universalized one. Hence, the moral and religious teachings the Qur'anic discourse aims at. The verse above, however, points out the working of this experience by a metaphorically employed 'conceit' that enriches the dramatic potential of the image: the effective contrast between the lowly animal origin of man "clot/ Of congealed blood" and the lofty intellectual, spiritual and moral nature of the "Most Bountiful" creator. The effect of the message is ensured by the unique unexpected awareness of the audience as to the contrast between the Creator's bountifulness and man's animal origin. This dramatic impulse proceeds through the next verses where God's graces to man surpass man's lowly origin: God honours man with much more gifts; i.e., fresh knowledge:

He who taught,
(The use of) the Pen, -
Taught man that
Which he knew not. (Q: xcvi, ٤-٥)

The audience who either recite the verses or hear them done are normally aware of the orchestral harmony of the Arabic words *Allaamma* (for, taught) and *ilm* (for, knowledge); hence, they acquire the subtle correlation between both words (being of the same root) of proclamation the first verse identifies and man's new knowledge. This orchestration is dramatic as it inspires man to employ fresh knowledge to understand God's infinite gifts: the power to learn which man receives as a grace from God, day after day, and which potentially overruns his lowly origin. The Qur'anic discourse employs such a dramatic impulse to 'awaken' the audience's insight by surprise, hence the bountifulness of God. The discourse indeed more than tempts the audience to side with the graces displayed either vividly or symbolically; therefore, the message is both instant and effective. The audience plainly acquires awareness as to God's graces endowed to man. The audience is called to celebrate that state of awareness as well as the mediation of the experience provoked by mimesis. The idea that the world is a stage and all people are, therefore, players which has been characteristically predominant since Shakespeare operates powerfully in the Qur'anic discourse. The definition of life as a theatre applies to all characters, be they micro-audience or macro-audience: the notion, however, stresses "the representational act of living [as well as] the individual's vantage point as observer of repeated event."^{vii} This 'play' image enhances the audience to absorb the enactment and reenactment of life incidents, metaphorically as series of action and reflection; therefore, the experience organizes both spatial and thematic relations between the characters and the seated viewers or offstage spectators who are emotionally and spiritually enrapt with the

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incidents. The audience is fully called to get engaged with the experience. He is encouraged to deal with life both as reality and abstraction, hence as a "phenomenon and concept"^{viii} through which process the message is arrived at.

Nevertheless, this *motif* and implication are not solely restricted to frank theatrical ingredients; they can also equally apply to any other text where the boundaries between the 'theatrical' and 'dramatic' are blurred, and the discourse can yield such highly effective power to experience that effect and render possible the audience's absorption with the incidents, hence the arrival at the religious message. Notwithstanding, this aspect may incorporate with another experience that helps the attainment of the desired effect (message).

Indeed, this experience is akin to what Louis labels as the 'individual psychology' wherein human desires result from human relationships. He elaborates on the experience in terms of bonds among "the model, disciple, and object."^{ix} For Louis:

[t]he individual who exhibits a desire functions as a model
Who ... impresses the disciple as imitable. The *disciple* who
... imitates that desire attempts to appropriate either the same
Object as the model ... or the same sort of object.^x

The immediate audience in the verses above displays that 'fresh knowledge' manipulation where the addresser (•r; the voice) operates as model that intricately impresses the addressee (disciple audience) and tempts him/her to imitate the awareness of that 'fresh knowledge'. On his/her part, the macro-audience attempts to appropriate and universalize the fresh knowledge to help all audience attain it. Typically, the process assembles all types of audience into one collective type sharing the same experience, an act that enhances the spread of moralization and teachings. Indeed, a prominently functional effect of such dramatic impulses is also evidenced in the story of Abraham, especially the incident of Abraham's smashing the idols. The idol incident highlights how potentially the function of the dramatic irony operates. The incident is actually a representational act of living, demonstrating how drama serves. The Qur'anic discourse enhances the audience's act of transformation among the various types of audience. The Qur'anic incident commences with Abraham's wise and logical argument with his people;

Behold! He said
To his father and his people,
"What are these images,
To which you are
(So assiduously devoted?" (Q:xxi, ๑๒)

The verse plainly spotlights two levels of conflict: Abraham's struggle between his Divine duties and those towards his father and people. The exposition of the incident is normal, and it rises quite steadily and rationally. Abraham's ancestral devotion to their idols is emphasized:

They said, "We found
Our fathers worshipping them." (Q: xxi, ๑๓)

And it operates as a ground on which their refusal of his message rests. Therefore, Abraham must ensure a practical stratagem to win over his people. Hence the spectacular idol smashing incident. Abraham manipulates the 'concrete' smashing scene when he realizes that the 'abstract' reasoning is futile. When logical dispute does not amend (Q: xxi, ๑๔-๑๖), the tension dramatically reaches a state of confrontation and frank defiance;

"And by God, I have
A plan for your idols-
After ye go away
And turn your backs." (Q:xxi, ๑๗)

Abraham has endeavoured to sensibly convince his people that their idols are totally powerless: he defiantly plans to challenge them forthrightly, not underhand. The stage of the conflict seems live, foretelling keen conflict: Abraham's unfeared challenge and his people's mindless logic. Potently, the Qur'anic discourse manipulates the broad affinities of the 'dramatic'/ theatrical and the 'narrative' to represent the potential of the incident^{xi}: they are both incorporated into the discourse to reinforce the effect on the audience. When argument fails, Abraham seeks refuge into a matter-of-fact design (Q:xxi, ๑๗, above) that initiates the time of action.

Abraham resorts to some enactment to convince his people that they are worshipping powerless stock.

Dramatically, Abraham and the idols are now characters in action, and his people are, therefore, spectators who watch the action. The others who read the discourse or hear it recited are, however, offstage audience who imagine the incident. The Qur'anic discourse actually underlines a subtle dramatic shot: Abraham's plan is conducted at the people's backs, pragmatically to evidence that the idols are void of power and that they are, nevertheless, dependent on the people's care and protection.

A situation of suspense is roused then, and the response of both the immediate audience (Abraham's people) and the collective spectators (those who read or hear the text) is intensified. The deed is done:

So he broke them to pieces,
(All) but the biggest of them,
That they might turn
(And address themselves) to it. (Q: xxi, ٥٨)

The text fascinatedly unveils Abraham's architect to survive the "biggest" idol; the people must inevitably turn to it to seek an explanation, whereupon they find their attempts futile and ridiculous. The eventfulness of the incident increases when the people hold a council:

They said, "who has
Done this to our gods?
He must indeed be
Some man of impiety!"
They said, "We heard
A youth talk of them:
He is called Abraham."
They said, "Then bring him
Before the eyes of the people,
That they may bear witness:" (Q: xxi, ٥٩-٦١)

As the Abraham-people conflict rises, the dramatic impulse of the scene equally does. Abraham is formally arraigned in front of all groups of spectators (i.e., those who have heard of him mention his 'plan', the others who have been absent, and the collective audience, too.) Virtually, Abraham is asked: "Art thou/ The one that did this/ With our gods, ... ?" (Q: xxi, ٦٢) Grimly, Abraham resorts to use an ironic taunt to intensify his derision of his people's mindlessness. The subtle sardonic impulse is developed into a bitter practical jest;

He said: "Nay, this
Was done by—
This is their biggest One!
Ask them if they
Can speak intelligently!" (Q: xxi, ٦٣)

Indeed, this is a highly dramatic instance that incorporates irony with 'dramatic-ness'. The 'impulse' here functions spectacularly. Biting and bitter as it is, the joke portrays Abraham's people helpless. The gathering council is publically defied to act or 'react' because Abraham's stunning logic has silenced them; So they turned to themselves

And said, "Surely ye
Are the ones into wrong!"
Then were they confounded
With shame: (They said),
Thou knowest full well that
These (idols) do not speak!" (Q: xxi, ٦٤-٥)

The effect of the incident is transmitted from the micro-audience represented by the formal gathering of Abraham's people onto the macro-audience, all the audience of the Qur'anic discourse. The total response is certainly ensured, and the moral message operates more powerfully being practical; i.e., done live and living, hence theatrical. The intensity of the action is reinforced by the condensation of time. The verses assume the elapse of time through various intervals of the conversation between Abraham and his people. Dramatically, this elapse of time has been heavily compressed to spotlight action and secure effect, which has been briskly attained with the resolution:

"Do you then
Worship, besides God,
Things that can neither

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Be of any good to you
Nor do you harm?" (Q: xxi, ٦٦)

In effect, the message (theme) is transmitted not only accurately but also 'ephemerally' by means of effective basis and unavoidable attitudes. The term 'ephemeral' in this dramatic context is used to evoke "the ever-changing flow which characterizes being-in-life."^{xii} It is the 'imagined' performance of the ideal incident that has lasted for a short time, but its effect, total response, operates by principles "which endure throughout time."^{xiii} The response is expected to take root in the collective audience's memories; therefore, it is timeless and universalized. Every single audience sees the imagined 'performance' in his/her mind's eyes; simultaneously he/she sees through the 'performance' as well. The 'imagined' incident does not belong to the world of the 'ephemeral' (in this sense, 'changeable'), but it does to the *Eternal*, the *Infinite*, and the *Timeless*. In fact, this is the way the Qur'anic discourse essentially operates: whenever an incident is recalled, irrespective of the means of recalling, the audience relives the experience afresh. Besides, it is often the case that any spectator of the Qur'anic discourse is never passive, but he/she is a collaborator in the experience. He/she is absorbed in the incident the very time he/she contributes to transmitting it. The character that functions as a micro-audience within the incident is soon transformed into the public. In the Qur'anic events, both are uniquely united into one 'entity' undergoing one collective experience. In this respect, it is hypothesized that the terms 'audience' and 'spectator' do not solely apply to people gathering around a performance or action. They are those who contribute to the exploration of the total response, be they immediate voices in the action or those to whom the response is transmitted regardless of the process (i.e., technique) of transmission. The formal gathering who argue with Abraham are characters in the sense that they directly play a role in the incident and, similarly, they are later on transformed into spectators of the futility of their mindlessness. By so doing, they convey their own experience to other groups of audience, even if those audience could only envision the scene in their minds. This process, however, brings forth a good deal of dramatic energy to the Qur'anic discourse, where the experience is beheld not as a single voice addressing a group of spectators, but more comprehensively as numerous voices that speak together, hence ensuring much more effect. After the grim plan has already been operated, it is not only Abraham's voice that is heard to prove the people's mindlessness, but their voices indicate a similar conclusion. In truth, such experience rightly evokes Barba and Fowler's opinion that such impulse of instance "has to do with creating a woven fabric of actions which is coherent on the preexpressive level..., precise in its dramatic rhythm, and which contains 'knots' of images that can arouse the attention of every spectator."^{xiv} The *Qur'an* also displays more incident in Abraham's story that reinforces the impressive manipulation of dramatic pulsation (Abraham being set on fire, xxxvii, ٩٧), where characters and speakers collectively incorporate roles interchangeably under the force of action. Hypothetically, if the idol incident achieves only one level of 'dramatic-ness'; i.e., it may be seen as concerned only with the telling of a story, the Fire incident, on the other hand, is of a more energetic stage of 'dramatic-ness'. It is, in fact, concrete, for it appeals to the people's eyes: it is, in Weiner's words, "in the visible realm."^{xv} Abraham's people gathering around are struck unavoidably with what should awaken the truth they might have blindly deceived themselves not to see in the idol incident. Despite Abraham's sound argument, his people are so obstinate that they plan to meet it with violence and secret schemes: they have conspired to throw Abraham into the blazing fire:

They said, "Build him
A furnace, and throw him
Into the blazing fire!" (xxxvii, ٩٧)

The Qur'anic discourse fundamentally explores the Fire incident to extend the humiliation of Abraham's people, representing the furnace a scene of their failure and the futility of their belief. The sharp contrast between their expectations and the instant miraculous happening is so amazing that it silences all voices but those of Faith and Abraham: the people's surrender and their helplessness are really energetic and potentially dramatic. The paradox of what the people have anticipated and what they have perceived constitutes the total response (hence, the theme) of all spectators. Abraham's people do not witness an image or a scene only; in fact, they behold themselves and their faith practically ridiculed. The furnace develops into a 'mirror' wherein they see their disappointment, and wherein all spectators, as well, do the futility of such belief and argument.

Architecturally, the visual image of the furnace carries multiple meanings for the spectators and characters alike. The imagined incident seems imposing for it depicts a single instant whose

interpretation depends on the viewer's expectations that are evidently directed by the intention of the discourse; i., e., the total response of both Abraham's people and the offstage spectators. The interpretation of the furnace incident is, therefore, unambiguous and morally suggestive. To the people's misfortune, the nature of fire transcends all physical laws of the 'matter': by the mercy of God, the fire does not harm Abraham:

We said, "O Fire!
Be thou cool,
And (a means of safety
For Abraham!" (Q: xxi, ٦٩)

Apparently, the verse above does not frankly demonstrate the consequence of the scene, but it only hints at it. It is obvious that the spectators are invited to realize both the miraculous deed and the people's mortification. Very briefly, the verse vividly recalls the people's humiliation:(This failing), they then Sought a stratagem against him, But we made them the ones

Most humiliated! (Q: xxxvii, ٩٨)

The Qur'anic discourse displays a series of humiliating incidents of Abraham's people. These incidents are represented briskly to ensure a more impressive effect. Upon the failure of the people's schemes and plots, the verse keenly experiences a technique that metaphorically ignores both the physical and spiritual existence of Abraham's people:

He said: " I will go
To my lord! He
Will surely guide me!
"O my Lord! Grant me
A righteous (son)!"
So We gave him
The good news
Of a boy ready
To suffer and forbear. (Q: xxxvii, ٩٩-١٠١)

The focus is evidently transformed to Abraham, praying to God for guidance and support. The verses brush aside Abraham's people, symbolically suggesting their defeat. They are entirely 'nonexistent', and dramatically off scène. Only Abraham's prayer is highlighted; his good fortune is equally foreshadowed: Abraham is promised a 'good boy' who is 'ready to forbear.' The verses foreground the story of Sacrifice, which is a grace granted Abraham as a world reward for his Faith. The brisk rhythm of action is, in fact, interesting: Abraham's future lot is opposed to that of his people, who have been totally uprooted, whereas Abraham, on the other hand, has become the root of great prophets that will keep him alive :

And we made them
Leaders , guiding (man) by
Our command, and We
Sent them inspiration,
To do good deeds, (Q: xxi, ٧٣)

The dramatic time allotted the representation of Abraham's future bliss is displayed so concisely that it has required only few verses to present. (Q: xxxvii, ٩٨, and ١٠١) The rise of Abraham to spiritual power and pious authority has eclipsed his people's physical and spiritual existence. The Qur'anic verses, as a matter of fact, yield transparent interpretation, for they place the spectators (or: encourage them to place themselves) before the action to ensure that the "system of verbal interpretation is [adequately] grasped."^{xvi} The Qur'anic discourse does not often keep the audience and readers away from the imagined scene and action; it shows as though the audience is standing before a glass that presents a space where action is envisioned as taking place. The audience/reader is actually tempted to judge himself/herself and, therefore, either regret his/her failure to sensibly understand what he/she is supposed to have done, or thank God for the bliss granted him/her. Hence, the Qur'anic discourse is a unified matrix that operates aptly enough to assist the audience adopt a total response. Any addressee in the Qur'anic discourse is called to understand his/her participation in life scenes, hence acquire insight into the meaning of life. Nonetheless, the story of the Companions of the Cave in the *Qur'an* exhibits a potential effect on the audience by virtue of a similar technique. The amazingly 'dramatic' pulse employed to attract people's attention to the potent evidence of Faith and Unity achieves its end. The *Qur'an* brings the companions' incident into the public where the gathering operates as spectators and

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eye-witnesses of a scene that is too

definite to overlook. The verses publicize the universal potency of Faith and the restoration of true spiritual values the story yields. The *Qur'an* describes the story as a 'wonder';

Or dost thou reflect

That the Companions of the Cave

And of the Inscription

Were wonders among our signs? (Q: xviii, 9)

The whole story is so concise that even as a narrative it runs through only twelve verses, a quality that highlights its dramatic potentials. The direct Divine Voice addresses the Muslim Prophet who, on his part, addresses the people who have planned to discredit Him, when they asked him about the Christian Legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. The text, however, explores the spiritual morals that rest on trust in God, a theme with which the legend is not concerned. To escape the danger of the Heathen power, the Companions of the Cave betook themselves to a cave; they said

"Our lord! Bestow on us

Mercy from Thyself,

And dispose of our affair

For us in the right way!" (Q: xviii, 10)

The Qur'anic discourse briskly exhibits how God's bliss is soon granted them:

Then We draw (a veil)

Over their ears, for a number

Of years, in the cave

(So that they heard not): (Q: xviii, 11)

The following verses are devoted to the illustration how they have led their lives all asleep in the cave. For them, time has as though fully stopped at the instance they fall asleep, hence no one of them is aware of the World Outside and the duration of their sleep. The 'dramatic' time of the incident identified by the brief and few verses contrasts with the actual chronological time they have really spent asleep. The text mentions the span of three hundred and nine years (Q: xviii, 12) that have all passed so fast they think: "We have stayed

(Perhaps a day, or part

Of a day." (Q: xviii, 12)

In fact, the peak of the dramatic situation occurs when the Companions argue about the length of time they have been asleep, and resort to testify that exactly. One Companion is inspired to suggest;

Now send ye then one of you

With *this money* of yours (italics mine)

To the town: let him

Find out which is best

Food (to be had) and bring some

To you, ... (Q: xviii, 13)

Dramatically, the incident here functions powerfully. The irony underlying the anticipated meeting is strikingly fascinating. The companions of the Cave are entirely cut off the world outside both physically and spiritually; they are more than three centuries apart from Time, fully unaware of the changes that befell all life systems. The text also refers to the anticipated complexion of each companion: had the audience/reader beheld them;

Thou wouldst have certainly

Turned back from them in flight,

And wouldst certainly have been

Filled with terror of them. (Q: xviii, 14)

The scene of one terrifying-looking companion arrives at the town where action is, spotlights a highly dramatic tension as well as a striking ironic situation for the companion. The audience and the reader/hearer of the text/discourse are both insinuated to visualize the scene with all its dramatic bearings. The image of the companion carrying coins as old as three centuries off to buy 'food' puzzles both the characters and spectators alike. The incident impresses all audience, awaking them to the truth of man's mindlessness. This realization is arrived at unexpectedly and very sharp. It is just one brisk dramatic shot: the companion with his 'unworkable' money, shocked by the changes and conscious of the time they have been asleep, and the macro-audience open-mouthed at the incredible scene of a

'strange' youth they behold, all taking place amazingly fast. The scene here incorporates the responses of both the characters and immediate audience into one collective response, and immediately contributing to engaging all audience types (readers and hearers) into a similar process. The audience's participation in the experience is indeed exciting. The readers who either recite the discourse or listen to it are, on their part, invited to re-create the experience and measure its worth, hence arriving at the very conclusion of the potency of Faith and Trust in God. It is, however, likely that the reader visualizing the scene also " "contributes his voice, his gesture and his movement."^{xvii} The force of words actually encourages the reader's interaction with words that energetically illuminate in his mind an impression. In this incident, all types of audience are intermingled into one voice, undergoing one experience and responding to one scene effect. The sense awaking process operates more by dramatic drive and incentive than by direct preaching. The power of words in a dramatic situation is more than a mere dramatized situation or a literary rhetoric, for it, nevertheless, contributes to making 'plastic images' active 'in the mind'.^{xviii} The Qur'anic incident, on the other hand, orchestrates an appropriate rhythm of the scene to the content, an act that ensures the desired effect. The Cave incident indeed embodies such orchestration. The multi-layered irony of the scene is interesting: it contributes to the incorporation of the sweep and power of the scene. The incident is, for instance, characterized by an extraordinary conciseness that corresponds with the rhythmic tempo of the action in town. This orchestration is uniformly powerful, for its steady progression operates as a pace that is tuned with the feelings the scene calls upon. Besides, the unified matrix of the tempo, message and feelings evokes the meaning of the act, enhances the content and highlights the total response of all audience who merge into one collective voice. This is a case where dramatic conciseness works at its best, and the message, therefore, is impressively explored. Characteristically, a similar orchestration is also evident in the Story of Mary and Jesus' birth though in quite a different pace. The Qur'anic story of Mary and Jesus is, in fact, presented rather lengthily where the story of Jesus' birth is retracted to the time of Mary's birth, hence operating as a prelude to Jesus' birth incident. In terms of Freytag's triangle, however, it functions as an 'exposition' to the 'rising action' of the story. In the *Qur'an*, the story commences with Mary's birth:

Behold! A woman of 'Imran

Said: "O my Lord! I do

Dedicate unto Thee

What is in my womb

For Thy special service:

So accept this of me:

And Thou hearest

And knowest all things."

When she was delivered,

She said: "O my lord!

Behold! I am delivered

Of a female child!"

And God knew best

What she brought forth-- (Q: iii, ٣٥-٦)

Against her expectations, the Mother of Mary delivered a female child, not the male child she longed for, yet she was not disappointed. The dramatic foregrounding of the bliss lying ahead is soon prefigured:

I have named her Mary,

And I commend her

And her offspring

To Thy protection. (Q: iii, ٣٦) The Qur'anic incident steadily progresses to formulate the story.

The exposition is indeed smooth and natural, yet it is also concise and condensed, for the discourse, having established the layout of the story, embarks on Jesus' birth. Only six verses later, the *Qur'an* explores the miracle of Jesus' birth:

Behold! The angels said:

"O Mary! God hath chosen thee

And purified thee- chosen thee

Above the women of all nations." (Q:iii, ٤٢)

Nonetheless, the Qur'anic discourse impressively exercises a technique that is undeniably unique: flashback scene. This *modus operandi* operates by recalling events back to Mary's birth when prediction

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of her mystic graces is demonstrated. In an interestingly interrupted instance, the discourse evoked the contention between priests as to the "honour of taking charge of Mary, and how it was decided by means of rods and reeds." (Q:iii, ٤٤; note; ٣٨٥)

As a technique the flashback scene is the creation of Modern times, but the *Qur'an* has, long centuries ahead, employed so impressively that it brings about an effect required to ensure moralization. Dramatically, the Qur'anic verse re-presents a scene that displays the honours granted Mary even when she was a child, hence the sanctity and graciousness of her offspring:

This is part of the tidings
Of the things unseen,
Which We reveal unto thee
(O Apostle!) by inspiration;
Thou wast not with them
When they cast lots
With arrows as to which
Of them should be charged
With the care of Mary: (Q:iii, ٤٤)

The scene, however, prepares for the miraculous birth of Jesus: the mystical and spiritual glory of Mary at birth vividly foreshadows, and orchestrates with, the miracle of Jesus' birth. In fact, the Qur'anic version of Jesus' birth is a great miracle of God, and it immensely amazes all audience who act as witnesses of Jesus' birth, and, in turn, all readers and hearers of the story. Jesus' birth is demonstrated as an highly incredible, for it transcends all laws of life and biology. Mary herself is in a state of fright, notwithstanding purity, when an angel appears to her in the shape of a man. Panicked, she abjures the 'man' not to invade her privacy, but to her utmost surprise, the angel replies:

" I am only
A messenger from thy Lord,
(To announce) to thee
The gift of a holy son."

To which, equally amazed, she inquires;

" How shall I
Have a son seeing that
No man has touched me,
And I am not unchaste?" (Q:xix, ١٩-٢٠)

The rhythmic tempo of the incident paces more briskly as the action reaches the peak: Mary has delivered a child against all established worldly norms. More dramatically, the event is transpositioned onto the public, where it is no longer a mere dialogue between Mary and an angel held in private. The scene amazingly culminates with Mary delivering Jesus in public. The Qur'anic discourse meritoriously relocates the scene onto the public to ensure a collective response, and, universalize the message.

And the pain of childbirth
Drove her to the trunk
Of a palm-tree;
She cried (in her anguish);
"Ah! Would that I had
Died before this! Would that
I had been a thing
Forgotten and out of sight!" (Q: xix, ٢٣)

Nevertheless, in the *Qur'an*, the publicization of Jesus' birth is more the child in her arms, an act that drives her people, now operating as macro-audience, to inquire: " O Mary!/Truly an amazing thing/Hast thou brought!"(Q: xix, ٢٧)The 'dramatic' tension reaches its climax when Mary beckons to her people to talk to the newborn infant to which act they reflect in full astonishment:" How can we/Talk to one who is/A child in the cradle?" (Q:xix, ٢٩) The macro-audience are, in fact, displayed in double surprise; Mary giving birth to a child against all norms, and her implication that the child can talk. More marvelously, however, the infant does talk before the gathering can even prevail over their amazement as if the child was replying to their inquiry:

" I am indeed

A servant to God:
He hath given me
Revelation and made me
A prophet;..." (Q" xix, ٣٠)

More interestingly, Jesus proceeds to mention God's graces granted him: Jesus is created "blessed wherever [he] be", kind to his mother, and never "Overbearing or miserable." (Q: xix, ٣١-٣٢) Open-mouthed, the gathering listening to Jesus talking recalls Abraham's people fully amazed when fire does not harm Abraham. Analogously, Mary's people represent all spectators and readers. Again, the incident functions as a reminder to man of the necessity of Faith and Trust in God. Nevertheless, the Qur'anic discourse proportionally varies the rhythm and tempo of incidents to correspond with the situation and context, and it often makes the greatest use of such 'dramatic' components to highlight the moralization themes of the *Qur'an*.

NOTES

ⁱ Abert Weiner, "The Function of the Greek Chorus", in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. ٣٢, No. ٢ (May, ١٩٨٠), ٢٠٧.

ⁱⁱ Lynn Altenbernd and Leslie L. Lewis, *A Handbook for the Study of Fiction* (N. Y. :The Macmillan Company, ١٩٦٦), ١٥.

ⁱⁱⁱ W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (London: Methuen & CO. LTD, ١٩٧٠), xvii.

^{iv} The metaphor is originally Wimsatt's (*ibid.*, xv), and has here been modified.

^v William C. Dowling, " Invisible Audience: Peter J. Rabinowitz's 'Truth in Fiction'", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. ٥, No. ٣ (Spring, ١٩٧٩), ٥٨١.

^{vi} Eugenio Barba and Richard Fowler, "Four Spectators," *TDR* (١٩٨٨), Vol. ٣٤, No. ١ (Spring, ١٩٩٠), ٩٦.

^{vii} Catherine G. Bellver, "Spectators and Spectacle: The Theatrical Dimension in the Works of C. F. Cubas", *American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese*, Vol. ٩٠, No. ١ (March, ٢٠٠٧), ٥٢.

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} Louis Burkhardt, "Spectator Seduction," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. ٣٧, No. ٣ (Fall

^x *Ibid.*, ٢٣٧-٨.

^{xi} Critics often agree to the opinion that plays are related to all other narrative works "in virtue of the incontrovertible fact that a theatrical text narrates events, in whole or in part imaginary, and they are interconnected." See: Catherine G. Bellver, ٥٣.

^{xii} Barba and Fowler, ٩٦.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*

^{xiv} Barba and Fowler, ٩٧.

^{xv} Weiner, ٢٠٧.

^{xvi} David Carrier, "Art and Its Spectators", *The journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. ٤٥, No. ١ (Autumn, ١٩٨٦), ١٦.

^{xvii} J. L. Styan. *The Elements of Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ١٩٧٣), ٨٦.

^{xviii} *Ibid.*