M. M. Bravmann's essay under the title "'Alqamah's warning of the approach of an enemy" (included in his *Studies in Semitic Philology*, Leiden 1977, pp. 574-92) is devoted to a detailed study of a six-line poem by 'Alqamah b. 'Abadah (no. 12 by this poet in W. Ahlwardt's *Six Diwans*). But there are features in his interpretation of the piece which seem to me altogether untenable, in spite of the wealth of parallel passages with which he tries to support his arguments.

The text of the piece is as follows:

1. man rajulun ahbīhu raḥli wa nāqati
   yuballīgu 'amīn l-tā'ra iḏ māta qāʾiluh
2. nadīran wa mā yūgī l-naḍiru bi ṣabwatin
   li man ṣaʾubū ḥawla l-Badiyyi wa jāmīlub
3. fa qul li Tamīmin tajʿali l-ramla dūnābah
   wa ṣayru Tamīmin fī l-bazābīzi jābiluh
4. fa inna Abū Qābūsa baynī wa baynābī
   bi arʿanā yanfī l-tayra hūmrin mānāgilubah
5. idā rtaḥālū ašāmmah kulla muʿayyībin
   wa kulla muḥībin naqrahū wa ẓawābiluh
6. fa lā aʾrisan sabīan tamuddū ṣuḍīyyahū
   ilā muʿridin ʿan sīhribī lā yuwasīlubah

for which I myself would offer the rendering:

Who is the man to whom I may give saddle and camel, that he may convey my verses (when the speaker will have died) in solemn warning (though the warning is not worth a pin to folk whose sheep are around Badi, and their camels too).

Yet tell Tamin to take the sand-tract for shelter, while other tribes in perilous times know nothing of such.

Abu Qabus is between me and them, with a huge host, scaring the birds, leaving blood in its tracks;

when they move camp, it deafens every driver of a beast and every one who urges it on, to hear the shouting of warriors and neighing of steeds.

May I never have to see captives baring their breasts in supplication to men who would shun even their own kinsman, showing him no pity.
Line 1. B insists that ahbūbu ... nāgati must be a parenthetical and that the only relative clause is yuballīgu, rendering "Who is the man—I shall give him my saddle and she-camel as a present—who will assume the task of transmitting ...". On the contrary, I would claim that ahbūbu is indeed the relative clause, and that yuballīgu is a consequential or purposive hāl. This seems to me to be made clear by a parallel from Qays b. Mas‘ūd (Ağānî, Dar al-kutub ed., vol. 24, p. 59) which B himself cites (p. 583) which has the parallel phrase introduced by fa‘ al-nāṣīhab: a là laytanī arṣū silāhī wa baqlātī fa yuqābira qawmī l-yawma mā ana qā’ilūh B here, quite unjustifiably, says "undoubtedly Qays b. Mas‘ūd’s verse has not been transmitted in a correct, original and complete form, and the question is whether the formula a là laytanī arṣū silāhī should not be rejected altogether and replaced by a phrase similar to that used in ‘Alqamah’s verse". While one can never be sure that a transmitted text of a poem is original, there are no grounds for saying that this text is definitely not original. Anyway, even if one did emend the first hemistich as suggested by B, the second hemistich would make it certain that ahbūbu is a relative clause and not parenthetic.

Line 2. Here it must be recorded to B’s credit that he has produced a much more successful interpretation of bi-ṣabwatin than al-ʿAlam al-Ṣantamari’s supposition that it is the place-name Shabwa (in Hadramawt): a location far beyond the poet’s geographical horizon. What B proposes is that after the negative it has the sense of “(not) in the least” (like negative -E- bi-naqratin), and this is an important lexical contribution. The location of al-Badi is south-east of the bimd of Dariyyah (see U. Thilo, Ortsnamen in der altarabischen Poesie, Wiesbaden 1958. 33), which is on the Basra—Mecca road; this does indeed (see the following line) have bands of sand-desert on both sides.

Line 3. B says that the hortatory form here is ‘ironical’ and really designed to encourage Tamim to fight instead of the opposite. But when he cites a verse in Ṭabarî (Annales i. 2124) fa-hal lakumū fi l-sayri qablab qitālibim “do you wish to flee rather than to fight them?”, this does not provide a parallel; it is an example of the very commonplace rhetorical question which expects, or hopes for, the answer ‘no’. This, however, is a quite different thing from a direct exhortation to flee, which could hardly be taken as an encouragement to do the reverse; if the Ṭabarî quotation had been phrased “flee, rather than fight!” we would, I think, infer that it was simply