

The Aesthetics of Poetic Discourse in Abu-Alkasim Saadallah's *The Green Time: A Study of the Poem "The Return of the Eagles"*

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Date of submission: 06/02/2025

Date of acceptance:03/03/2025

Date of publication:10/04/2025

Abstract:

This paper aims to study the poetic discourse of "The Return of the Eagles", one of the poems from Saadallah's collection "The Green Time". It traces the aesthetic elements of the discourse and links them to the overarching meaning of the poem, thathe composed during the Algerian War of Independence to commemorate the return of emigrants to their homeland. The study seeks to address the central question: What are the key characteristics of the aesthetic elements in the poem's poetic discourse, and what are its most significant interpretations? The findings reveal that thecollection as a whole, and the selected poem in particular, represent a rich and profound poetic text that encapsulates a pivotal moment in the revolution. It also reflects the experiences of this encyclopedic young man who lived through the colonial period and the Algerian Revolution.

Key words: *Discourse; Poetry; Revolution; The Green Time; The Return of The Eagles.*

Introduction:

Discussing a figure of the stature and greatness of Professor Dr. Abu-AlkasimSaadallah is an exceedingly challenging task, given his multifaceted talents in the fields of thought, literature, history, and intellectual struggle. His profound expertise in various social and educational sciences, coupled with his rigorous scientific methodology, has earned him a distinguished place among Algerian historians. His works are widely regarded as serious, credible, and indispensable references for any researcher studying the history of Algerian national movements and the cultural history of Algeria. He has rightfully earned the title of "Dean of Historians." Saadallah is also a prominent figure in the world of literature, culture, and thought, with a significant intellectual influence. He is one of the rare Algerian writers who emerged in the early 1950s, publishing in Arab and international newspapers, journals/magazines, and publishing houses to advocate for Algeria's identity and just cause.

As such, as above-noted, discussing Saadallah's intellectual legacy is a daunting task, which has prompted this study to focus on one aspect of his multifaceted contributions: his poetic work.

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1. The Scientific and Literary Journey of Abu-AlkasimSaadallah

Abu-AlkasimSaadallah is widely recognized for his historical writings on the national movement, Algeria's cultural history, translations, manuscripts, and critical editions. However, Saadallah also has a significant literary and poetic legacy. He composed numerous and diverse poems, which reflect the spirit of a patriotic individual deeply affected by Algeria's condition, always yearning to celebrate great figures in various fields, as well as comrades and friends.

Few are aware of his work as a journalist and literary figure (both a novelist and poet). Those familiar with his contributions to *Al-Basa'ir* in the 1950s can attest to this. In addition to his many literary writings, I have chosen to focus on another aspect of his work: his poetic output, both in free verse and classical forms. Saadallah was a poet and literary figure before he became a professional historian.

His literary works, both poetry and prose, were dedicated to national causes and to honoring the contributions of great men to humanity, a debt we owe them. His writings, particularly his poetry, alternated between free verse and classical forms, alongside numerous short stories.

In the mid-1950s, a new phenomenon emerged in Algerian poetry with a new generation of young poets: the rise of free verse. Most scholars agree that "the serious and genuine beginning of this trend started with the publication of the first free verse poem in the national press, *My Path* by Abu-AlkasimSaadallah, published in *Al-Basa'ir* on March 23, 1955" (Nasser, 1985, p. 149), specifically in issue number 313 (Al-Rekkibi, 1983, p. 68).

Every literary text must have a title that distinguishes it from other texts. It is generally accepted that a title is open to interpretation and reading, with the possibility of including subtitles. A title is "a collection of linguistic signs—words, sentences, or even texts—that may appear at the beginning of a text to designate and define it, indicate its overall content, and attract its intended audience" (Belabed, 2008, p. 67). However, the title does not immediately reveal its deeper meanings nor disclose all its connotations; rather, it is the text itself that ultimately provides an interpretation of the title rather than the other way around (Hocine, 2007, p. 52). Consequently, the title becomes a source of intrigue and enticement for the reader, as it poses a series of questions stemming from the structural gap within its incomplete formulation. The ultimate resolution, however, can only be reached through a thorough and reflective reading of the text.

The title of the poem "The Return of the Eagles" from the collection *The Green Era* by Abu-AlkasimSaadallah, composed during the Algerian War of Independence while the poet was residing in Cairo on March 16, 1956, commemorates the return of Algeria's freedom fighters—mujahideen and revolutionaries—from France to actively participate in the liberation struggle. At first glance, the title appears to be devoid of ambiguity, yet it possesses a certain enigmatic quality that obscures direct perception. "The Return of the Eagles" may initially seem conventional, abrupt, and simplistic, failing to transcend its immediate lexical meaning, which directly references the eagle as a bird. However, this title raises questions that compel the reader to go into the details of the text: Who are the eagles?

The term "eagles" connotes power and superiority, and in its textual interaction—through its association with elements such as "foreheads," "lips," "their land," "chests," and "memories"—it extends beyond its superficial meaning to a deeper level, unveiling the identity of these eagles. They are not merely birds of prey but rather human eagles—individuals who had migrated or were exiled and have now returned from foreign lands to Algeria, imbued with a fervent desire to partake in the revolution. The notion of "return" in this context carries significant weight, often symbolizing a victorious homecoming.

Within the framework of the poem, the act of returning is not an ordinary occurrence but rather a momentous and historic event, deeply rooted in Algeria's struggle: it marks the return of the revolutionary mujahideen who meticulously planned and orchestrated the Algerian revolution, driven by unwavering determination and hope to liberate their homeland from the oppression of French colonialism.

When examining the hidden layers of meaning within the title of "The Return of the Eagles," we find that it allows for multiple interpretative possibilities without being confined to a singular, definitive reading. The title encapsulates various ideas that unfold through successive readings, approaching an idealized interpretation as the textual thresholds interact cohesively.

2. The Structure of Poetic Discourse in The Return of the Eagles

Abu-AlkasimSaadallah is among the Algerian poets renowned for their mastery in constructing artistic and semantic worlds within their poetry. This is clearly evident in *The Return of the Eagles*, where he employs symbols and codes drawn from nature, culture, and history. Additionally, he utilizes the repetition of phrases or poetic lines at the beginning of stanzas as a form of emphasis, engaging not only the reader's cognitive faculties but also their emotional and psychological state.

2.1 The Semiotics of Poetic Discourse

In *The Return of the Eagles*, a poem from *The Green Era*, Abu-AlkasimSaadallah writes:

The eagles have returned to their land, the eagles have returned
Upon their chests Gleams of light
Upon their lips The melody of oaths
Upon their foreheads A mystery stirs
The eagles have returned
To their people, the eagles have returned
To memories upon the soil
To vengeance in the embrace of the hills
To the mother... to the revered bosom (Saadallah, 1985, p. 201).

A close reading of the poem reveals that it is constructed upon voiced consonants, which carry connotations of intensity, reinforcing the poet's defiance against the colonizer and his glorification of the powerful eagles. This observation allows us to assert that each phoneme in the poem holds a specific significance within the word and the overall context. In this regard, it can be argued that "the effectiveness of phonetic composition and what is referred to as distinct phonetic features should be interpreted beyond a purely phonological perspective" (Saloum, 1983, p. 37).

Upon deeper examination of the word "eagles," we find that it encompasses multiple attributes at the lexical level: (ferocity, aggression, bird, strength, height, migration, and collectivity).

At the contextual level, however, "eagles" acquires additional meanings, transforming from a term signifying birds into a metaphor for human beings, as indicated by phrases such as "their land," "chests," "lips," "foreheads," and others. This shift marks a transition from nature to culture, particularly through the phrase "gleams of light," which functions as a cultural signifier.

Furthermore, the repetition in the poem serves as an expression of movement and continuity. The reiteration of the phrase "the eagles have returned" clearly signals its persistent thematic role in structuring the poem.

The term "eagles" in the poem does not merely denote the most powerful, high-soaring, sharp-winged, and fiercest of birds of prey. Instead, its formation within the text establishes a parallel with human qualities, positioning it in opposition to the oppressive enemy—the despised

colonizer. Consequently, the word "eagles" undergoes a semantic shift, signifying not birds but heroes, warriors, and liberators, thereby reinforcing its metaphorical depth.

2.2 Interpretation of Poetic Discourse

Through the poem "The Return of the Eagles," it becomes evident that the term "eagle" or "eagles" in the text metaphorically refers to the emigrant or exiled individual who was forced to leave their homeland and resisted foreign occupation from afar. If migration or forced exile was the result of oppressive colonialism, then return signifies the triumph of the freedom fighters and the defeat of the oppressor. This imagery allows for multiple interpretations:

First Interpretation:

The exiled or emigrant men have returned victorious, bearing torches and promises of an end to suffering, the vanishing of calamity, and the dawn of hope, light, freedom, and independence.

Second Interpretation:

The "eagles" refer to the revolutionaries who orchestrated and led the struggle. The plural form implies statesmen and freedom fighters at the highest ranks, akin to eagles soaring at great heights, symbolizing power and superiority. The revolutionaries, metaphorically linked to eagles, embody heroism, militant resistance, courage, and sacrifice for the sake of freedom and victory. This also alludes to the extension of the revolution beyond national borders (Foughali, 2002, p. 139).

2.3 The Artistic Structure of Poetic Discourse

Examining "The Return of the Eagles" by Abu-AlkasimSaadallah, one observes that the poem aligns with the revolutionary, defiant, and conscious poetic tradition. This characteristic pervades much of his collection *The Green Era*, a hallmark of modern Algerian poetry, where the composition follows a unified and cohesive pattern. The structure unfolds in interlinked stanzas, each organically interwoven with the next—no segment can be displaced without disrupting the meaning. This progressive development sustains an emotional intensity, conveying sincere fervor, defiance, and a passionate attachment to life.

The diction encapsulates themes of giving, expansion, longing, and embrace. These words, emerging as deep psychological impulses, signify rejection of constraints, rebellion against captivity, and an innate drive for liberation. This internal struggle manifests in a harmonious interplay between structure and meaning.

Key words in the poem—returned, eagles, vows, light, revolt, homeland, memories, vengeance, mother, embrace, chest—all carry connotations of resurgence, sacrifice, renewal, warmth, and emancipation from suppression and confinement.

The poet employs repetition, echoing entire phrases or lines throughout "The Return of the Eagles"—whether at the beginning, middle, or end of the poem. This repetition, particularly at stanza openings, acts as a cognitive stimulant, not merely in a structural sense but psychologically as well.

For instance, Abu-AlkasimSaadallah frequently reiterates the phrase:

"The eagles have returned to their homeland, the eagles have returned."

The repeated motif serves as an affirmation of movement and continuity, reinforcing the resilience of the struggle. This persistence mirrors the unwavering march toward liberation, propelled by the immense sacrifices made by the revolutionaries battling French colonial rule across every inch of their homeland.

The poem adheres to the revolutionary poetic mode, infused with conscious defiance—a trait evident throughout The Green Era. It embodies a unified, robust poetic voice where interconnected stanzas sustain a seamless, organic flow. The poem's development never loses momentum; instead, it radiates intensity, fostering an atmosphere brimming with genuine emotional engagement, protest, and an unyielding commitment to the cause of freedom.

The lexicon reflects aspirations of giving, expansion, longing, and embrace—deep psychological impulses that signal an outright rejection of constraints and an insatiable urge for liberation. Words such as returned, eagles, vows, light, revolt, homeland, memories, vengeance, mother, embrace, chest resonate with themes of resurgence, sacrifice, renewal, warmth, and freedom from oppression.

3. Semantic Configuration

Through semantic configuration, we can discern the coherence and interconnection among the poem's visual and thematic trajectories (Greimas, 1966, p. 55). Moving from semiotic analysis to contextual and structural interpretation, the term eagles transcends its literal dictionary meaning through metaphorical transformation.

Literal Meaning	Poetic Context
The eagles have returned	A bird
To their people, the eagles have returned	Humans
To their land	A homeland for people

This poetic structure generates a contrast between bird and human, forming a layered meaning within the discourse.

"The eagles have returned to their homeland, the eagles have returned."

The notion of return, in its physical and spatial dimensions, initially aligns with its dictionary definition (as movement associated with birds), yet within the poem, it acquires a human-centered significance through contextual markers such as their people and their land, as well as additional clues that indicate human agency: badges, vows, foreheads, lips.

"Upon their chests, badges of light; Upon their lips, a melody of vows; Upon their foreheads, an enigma stirs."

The verb returned, denoting motion from one place to another, typically applies to both humans and animals. However, within the poem's discourse, it is marked by an inherent human quality, making the human class (classème) more prominent.

Consequently, returned evolves beyond mere physical motion to symbolize an act laden with historical significance and achievements.

1"Upon their chests, badges of light."

2"Upon their lips, a melody of vows."

3"Upon their foreheads, an enigma stirs."

These lines signify:

- A steadfast resolve for victory, the overthrow of the oppressor, and the fulfillment of hope.
- Determination to realize aspirations and execute necessary ambitions.
- The revolutionary struggle as the sole force capable of toppling colonialism, dismantling tyranny, and forging a future of freedom.

Thus, the revolutionary vision materializes through armed resistance, carrying aspirations of transformation, liberation, and national independence.

The eagles, therefore, symbolize the valiant freedom fighters—whether emigrants or exiles—who must return to their homeland, contribute to its liberation, and reclaim its sovereignty.

Ultimately, the eagle in this poem represents the individual forcibly exiled, compelled to leave their homeland in distress, yet steadfastly resisting colonial domination from abroad. If displacement was imposed by unjust colonialism, then return signifies the victory of the revolutionaries and the defeat of the oppressor.

The image lends itself to multiple interpretations:

First Interpretation:

The exiled or emigrant men have returned from the land to which they were forcibly displaced, triumphant and victorious, bearing torches and promises of an end to tragedy, the dissipation of calamity, and the dawn of hope, light, freedom, and independence.

Second Interpretation:

The term "eagles" refers to the "mujahideen"—those who orchestrated, prepared, and ignited the revolution. The plural form of "eagles" encompasses politicians, leaders, and freedom fighters at the highest levels of governance. Eagles, by their very nature, soar high in the sky, symbolizing elevation and ascendancy, in addition to connotations of strength and superiority. The mujahideen, metaphorically linked to eagles, embody an elevated vision signifying heroism, revolutionary fervor, courage, and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of freedom and victory. This also alludes to the extension of the revolution beyond national borders, specifically referencing the Sixth Historical Wilaya, led by the mujahideen and political figures who planned and executed the revolution (Foughali, 2002, p. 139).

The concept of return here signifies reclaiming and possessing the land. The preposition "li" (to) in Arabic implies ownership; thus, land as a valued entity is fundamentally an investment in a set of values, including security, happiness, and prosperity, as "land is a symbol of fertility and life" (Chevalier, p. 941).

The Eagles Have Returned
To their land,
The eagles have returned.

The relationship between humans and the land is akin to that between a child and a mother—a symbol of fertility and generosity. Just as a mother bestows love and warmth upon her children, the land offers them sustenance, stability, and a sense of belonging.

The Eagles Have Returned
To their land,
The eagles have returned.

Yet, a fundamental question arises: Is land alone sufficient for achieving and sustaining prosperity? The land requires protectors, defenders, and those who will cleanse it of colonial impurity, for it serves as "the keeper of covenants, from every nation: that which it encloses within" (Manzur, 2008, p. 649).

The Eagles Have Returned
To their people,
The eagles have returned,
To memories etched in the soil,
To vengeance nestled in the hills,
To the mother... to the revered embrace.

The term "their people" signifies a collective bound to the land, unified by material and spiritual ties that connect them both to each other and to their homeland, which they take pride in. The shift here marks a transformation—from an atmosphere of exile and deprivation to a return to the warmth and affection of the homeland, despite the sacrifices required for its defense. Remembrance is a deeply emotional and psychological state that nurtures hope for resurgence and the quest for retribution—for the land, for the mother, and for the revered embrace—during moments of overwhelming yearning for family, a mother's arms, a friend's tear, or a lover's memory.

3.1 The Significance of Presence and Absence in The Return of the Eagles

The study of presence and absence has played a significant role in modern and postmodern discourse due to the various gaps that arise from the author's consciousness, requiring the reader to fill these voids during interpretation. As is well known, poetry is structured upon the binary opposition of presence and absence: the more pronounced and distinct this dialectic, the more potent and expressive the poetic text.

Presence constitutes the act of formation, while absence embodies meaning. The poetic discourse revolves around this duality, simultaneously respecting and transgressing linguistic conventions. "Poetic formation is the very disruption of linguistic norms. The norm represents the referential pattern adhered to by speakers of a particular language to ensure communicative clarity and exert specific influence. The more dominant the formation, the more the norm is relegated to absence" (Ephraim, 2011, p. 77). Thus, poetic expression attempts to grasp the absent referent within the poetic text (Khemri, 2001, p. 11).

The Eagles Have Returned

The verb "returned" conveys a physical and tangible motion characterized by transition from one place to another, encapsulating multiple dimensions: movement, time, place, state, and transition.

"Returned" contrasts with "emigrated" or "was exiled." While both verbs imply movement or transition, "exiled" denotes forced displacement beyond national borders due to colonial oppression.

In contrast, "returned" signifies voluntary movement back to one's homeland, a triumphant homecoming imbued with hope and revolutionary determination.

Returned ≠ Emigrated, Exiled
To their land ≠ Away from home, exile, diaspora
On their chests ≠ In their hearts
Public ≠ Secret
Light (hope) ≠ Burdens, despair
On lips ≠ Silence
Expression ≠ Oppression, suppression
Melody (joy) ≠ Sorrow, distress, grief
Oaths (commitment to struggle and resistance) ≠ Inertia, stagnation
Riddle ignites (declaration of revolution) ≠ Problem, restriction
To their people ≠ Distance, severance, disconnection
To memories (beautiful dreams) ≠ Nightmare
Past ≠ Present
To vengeance (struggle) ≠ Stagnation, shackles

Based on these binary oppositions embedded within the poem, it becomes evident that the poetic structure is built upon two interwoven movements:

1. Exile or Forced Migration
2. The Return of Heroes

The return constitutes a dynamic event occurring within an immutable space—a historical moment that establishes a historical reference: the return of the courageous exiles. This transition carries various connotations, including the triumph of the heroes over the oppressive enemy and Algeria's victory over an aging France.

Although the period of exile and estrangement was laden with burdens, suffering, and grief, it was transient and ultimately fated to vanish and dissipate, despite its bitterness.

4. The Dialectic of Space and Time in Poetic Discourse

4.1 Space

Space is no longer merely a geometric expanse defined by shapes and dimensions; rather, it has become an integral part of human identity, revealing the depths of one's breath, thoughts, emotions, and sense of belonging.

The eagles have returned to their land, the eagles have returned.

The dominant spatial element in the poem is "the land"—the land of Algeria, with its mountains, plains, deserts, hills, its people, and its memories. It is the source of security and stability, juxtaposed with exile, which represents the absence of homeland. The land assumes the role of a nurturing mother who gathers her children into her embrace, providing them with warmth, care, and a sense of safety.

Forced exile, on the other hand, signifies foreign lands of displacement and migration. Though it may seem to embody despair, frustration, and the erosion of dreams, stripping individuals of self-expression, initiative, movement, and creativity, it simultaneously serves as a crucial catalyst for awakening consciousness, igniting national sentiment, and fostering revolutionary escalation within the public sphere.

Upon their chests Emblems of light
Upon their lips the melody of vows
Upon their brows A
riddle in revolt.

Here, the poem speaks of the triumphant return of the heroes—victorious and unburdened—driven by an unbreakable resolve and a burning hope for liberation. Thus, exile becomes a conduit for kindling revolutionary fervor, raising awareness, and serving as a bridge between the lost dream and the promised one.

4.2 Time

Time in this poem appears open-ended and expansive, allowing the eagles to fulfill their dreams and carry out their pledges—unlike the time of exile, which smothers hope, cripples willpower, and saps strength.

It is, therefore, a living time, inseparable from the eagles, for it embodies warmth, love, and unity. The implications of "land" extend to notions of shelter, security, and communal gathering, standing in opposition to homelessness, exile, death, and estrangement from one's homeland.

The eagles have returned
To their land, the eagles have returned.

Time here is marked by movement and expression, propelling the eagles toward the horizons of their dreams. It is the moment of uprising, where the eagles gather their strength, reclaim their unity, and rise in revolt.

The poem's temporal structure is built upon three distinct phases:

- The pre-return phase: exile and displacement
- The phase of awakening and realization
- The revolutionary phase

Although exile represents a stagnant, lifeless period characterized by oppression, suffering, and alienation, it paradoxically serves as a transformative period that fosters renewal and resurgence.

Upon their chests Emblems of light.

Light, in its literal sense, signifies illumination, radiance, and brilliance. Symbolically, however, it connotes hope for freedom and an unwavering determination to persist.

Upon their lips the melody of vows.

The word "melody" suggests joy and song, reinforcing the poem's transcendence over grim reality and its triumph over hardship.

The return, once merely an aspiration, becomes an undeniable reality imposed upon the colonizer. The eagles find solace in their homeland, their people, and their memories—cherishing moments that herald a new era brimming with hope.

This return symbolizes the victory of the eagles and the defeat of the despised colonizer. It underscores a historical truth—the continuity and expansion of the revolution, as well as the internationalization of the Algerian cause. Furthermore, it dispels fears, dismantles the oppressive night of colonialism, and alters the prevailing reality, replacing suffering with renewed aspirations. Time thus becomes cherished, transforming life from an ordeal into a blessing. The contrast

between past and present becomes apparent: while the past was marred by exile, oppression, and torment, the present is filled with dreams of a prosperous future.

5. Rhythm

Rhythm plays a melodious and impactful role in the poem, enhancing its aesthetic quality while imbuing it with a sense of continuous movement and vitality.

Nu—Eagles—Brows—Lips...

These words, with their extended resonance, reflect longing—just as the eagles express their yearning for return, and the lips articulate the desire to speak. The spirit of the text itself echoes this yearning, namely the aspiration for freedom and victory.

The imagery in the poem is characterized by transparency, avoiding ambiguity and opacity for the most part. It appears as though the poet sought to convey his message with clarity, steering clear of excessive rhetoric and directness while maintaining an overarching poetic sensibility.

The significance of historical events left little room for the poet to dwell on artistic embellishment. Instead, his emotions surge forth like a butterfly piercing through the stillness of night, immersed in the intensity of poetic experience. Even when he attempts to cast a veil of nuance over his imagery, his imagination does not stray far, leading to the predominance of similes and metaphors:

- The eagles have returned → Explicit metaphor
- The melody of vows → Absolute simile
- Emblems of light → Symbolic imagery
- A riddle in revolt → Implied metaphor

Because the poet carries the weight of a national cause and firmly believes in his homeland's struggle, he seeks to communicate this message with sincerity and clarity. His style, therefore, leans toward simplicity, ensuring the message resonates deeply with the reader while preserving its poetic vitality.

Conclusion:

At the conclusion of our exploration into the poetic contributions of Abu-AlkasimSaadallah, we have sought to illuminate his literary journey by analyzing one of the poems from his collection The Green Time. This collection resonates with the echoes of struggle and patriotic fervor, remaining steadfast in its commitment to the homeland, inspiring determination, and chronicling the daily battles of the Algerian people against colonial oppression.

The key findings of this research paper are as follows:

- The political, social, and cultural circumstances played a significant role in shaping Saadallah's poetic sensibility and aesthetic inclinations. His extensive travels across various Arab countries, interactions with numerous poets, and exposure to diverse poetic traditions had a profound impact on his work, which continues to testify to the power and grandeur of his words.

- Saadallah's poetic oeuvre represents a fertile ground for study and analysis, encompassing a wide range of experiences and perspectives, from nationalistic themes to aesthetic considerations.
- He successfully addressed issues of heritage and culture with a meticulous and scholarly approach, avoiding superficial judgments. Through his method of investigation and analysis, he endeavored to understand social relations and examine the challenges associated with each historical period, considering the prevailing national, regional, and global conditions.
- Analyzing Saadallah's poetic lexicon and linguistic phenomena reveals his tendency toward deviation and symbolism, steering away from mundane, repetitive language. He frequently employed narrative and dialogue techniques, which contributed to the multiplicity of poetic visions within his work.
- Saadallah's perspective on cultural issues is inseparable from their linguistic and historical dimensions. He closely observed the transformations unfolding in Algeria, marked by a rejection of the past, an intellectual void, cultural alienation, political regression, economic nihilism, and social chaos. These changes rendered the revolution—once celebrated by many—nothing more than a distant memory, its principles distorted by ideological embellishments that eroded Algeria's civilizational heritage. A revolution that fails to regenerate and rejuvenate ultimately ages and fades into oblivion—and history bears witness to numerous such sterile revolutions.

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