Return to top

CHAPTER 8

The development of Lebanese *zajal*: genre, metre, and verbal duel

Adnan Haydar [University of Massachusetts] *

Few oral poetic traditions have attained the sophistication, formal virtuosity and popularity of Lebanese *zajal* [1] poetry, and fewer traditions have cultivated the art of poetic duelling into a national pastime as the *zajal* poets have done. Even today [1989] in war-torn Lebanon more than twenty groups of itinerant poets stage regular contests in various parts of the country and attract thousands of *zajal* aficionados. Despite the presence of many contending political ideologies and religious affiliations, these poets, who span the political and religious strata of Lebanese society, have remained largely impervious to factional strife and political wrangling. Within the medium of verbal duelling, radical statements, political dissent, and social criticism are sanctioned, encouraged, and held up as models for corrective social and political measures. The general sentiment seems to be that anything is fair in the medium of art.

Perhaps one important reason for the continued popularity of Lebanese and other Arab traditions [2] is the diglossic nature of the Arabic language itself. The fact that people in the Arab world use the dialect in most daily routines and reserve the *fuṣḥā* for more formal communications, has, in my opinion, had an important effect on the development of vernacular [3] poetry in the Arab world. As to why the Lebanese poets in particular were able to attain such richness and sophistication in their compositions, it is most likely due to the fact that Lebanese literary critics have attached less of a paradigmatic value to compositions in *fuṣḥā* [4] than have other Arab critics. Many Lebanese *fuṣḥā* poets have tried their hands at *zajal* and several have relinquished *fuṣḥā* altogether in favour of *zajal*.

Indeed, since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the general critical atmosphere has favoured serious considerations of literary compositions in the vernacular. Western critics such as Jean Lecerf led the way by highlighting the importance of dialectal studies, and Lebanese critics began to take stock of *zajal* poetics. Today in Lebanon oral poetry has become an important source for M.A. theses, doctoral dissertations, and comparative studies. The early impressionistic and descriptive accounts of *zajal* have recently given way to analytical studies, though methodological problems at times confound the picture and give rise to untenable conclusions.[5]

In what follows, I shall define some of the critical terms to be used in this study, offer an account of the existing scholarship on *zajal*, and comment on its genres and metrical features. Then I shall discuss the origins of the verbal duel, analyse some of the rhetorical strategies used by duellers, and assess the role of improvisation and audience participation. Throughout, I shall relate Lebanese *zajal* to other Arab *zajal* traditions, both ancient and modern.

In its Hispano-Arabic context the term *zajal* describes a strophic form entirely in the vernacular idiom, which bears a close structural relationship to that of the *muwashshaḥa*.[6] In the Lebanese tradition it means primarily oral vernacular poetry in general, a discourse in many forms, composed in or for performance, declaimed or sung to the accompaniment of music. It is also used to characterise a written tradition which attains high literary value and high formal virtuosity in the compositions of famous Lebanese poets writing either exclusively in the vernacular or in both the vernacular and the literary *fuṣḥā.* Critics have

only recently begun to assess the influence of *zajal* poetics on major modern Lebanese poets and consequently on the form and content of modern Lebanese and Arabic poetry in *fuṣḥā*.[7]

The etymology of *zajal* points clearly to song and music. The verb *zajala* means "to raise the voice in singing, to produce a sweet pleasing melody" (Manẓūr n.d.:II, 13). As a genre of poetry *zajal* is closely associated with *mu'annā* (or *ma'annā*), a term predating *zajal* but often used interchangeably with it to designate vernacular Lebanese poetry (*al-shi'ral-'āmmī*, *al-shi'ral-sha'bī*, *al-shi'r al-qawmī*, or *al-Lubnānī*) in its entirety. Anīs Frayḥah derives *ma'annā* from the Syriac root *'annī*,[8] which means "to sing", the term itself being a passive participial form of the root. Others disagree with Frayḥah's etymology, though they still relate the term to Syriac origin[9] despite the fact that its derivation from the second form of the Arabic verb *'anaya* is quite legitimate linguistically. At any rate, the Syriac derivation associates the term *ma'annā* with singing, while the Arabic emphasises the semantic meaning of *'annā*: to cause to be emaciated as a result of love.[10] This, in the opinion of Amīn Nakhleh (1945:39), for example, accounts for the preponderance of love themes in early manifestations of Lebanese vernacular poetry. Whatever the case, during the past fifty years *zajal* has replaced *ma'annā* as the term for this poetry. *Ma'annā* has reverted to the designation of a particular subgenre and a particular metre (Nakhleh 1945:37-39) used extensively, though not exclusively, in verbal duels, while *zajal* seems to have acquired, at least until the late 1940's in the little-known but numerous compositions of Lebanese immigrants in the United States,[11] the name of a specific metre that differentiated it from *ma'annā* and other metres.

The poet of *zajal* is called *zajjāl*, *qawwāl*, or *shā'ir zajal*. While the three terms are often used interchangeably, there are clear and basic differences among their meanings. *Zajjāl* is strictly speaking a composer of *zajal* who may or may not be capable of improvisation or extemporisation, and who may or may not attain in his compositions a level of literary excellence to merit the name of a *shā'ir* (or poet). Like the *qawwāl*, the *zajjāl*'s main function is *iṣābat al-ma'nā*, a phrase best translated as "doing justice to the meaning" or "treating a subject in the most efficient way possible in order to convey an intended message". The emphasis in the word *qawwāl* is on *qawl*, i.e. "uttering, declaiming, or singing", on improvisation or extemporisation in particular social functions. The *qawwāl* is also referred to as *ibn al-kār* ("man of the trade"), *ibn al-fann* ("master of the art"), or *ibn al-dhakā* ("*bel-esprit*"),[12] all of which are clearly value-laden terms. Mostly uneducated, though in many cases literate, the *qawwāls* are highly respected by the people of their villages and towns and are sought out to recite *zajals* on religious holidays, political celebrations, births, christenings, marriages, and funerals. Those whose fame reaches beyond their immediate region are called upon to duel other *qawwāls* or suffer loss of prestige among their critical public.[13] The term *shā'ir zajal* is principally reserved for the written vernacular which in the hands of poets such as Michel Ṭrād, William Ṣacb, and Ascad Sābā has preserved this predominantly oral tradition in literary masterpieces. *Shā'ir* is not, however, exclusively the provenance of the written vernacular, for the better *qawwāls* and *zajjāls* have, while observing their main function of *iṣābat al-ma'nā*, produced highly sophisticated poetry.

The most quoted account of *zajal* poetry is Nakhleh's introduction to *Ma'annā Rashīd Nakhleh* (1945) Both Amīn and his father Rashīd were accomplished *fuṣḥā* poets, the latter having totally abandoned *fuṣḥā* poetry in favour of *zajal* and earned himself the title of "Prince of *Ma'annā*", *Amīr al-Ma'annā*, for the many *zajal* forms that he invented. This introduction makes it clear that the history of the various Arabic *zajal* traditions is fragmentary, usually consisting of classifications based on subject matter and form. Nowhere in the previous scholarship he cites is an attempt made to attribute to poetic

metre or poetic structure a semantic value or a role in the classifications. An account of some of these is in order here.

Al-Muḥibbī (1873:I, 108), for example, divides vernacular poetry into five *aqsām* (parts or divisions), one of which is termed *zajal* because it treats of *ghazal* (love poetry), uses flower and wine imagery, and dwells on personal emotions. The other four are *balīq*, which employs jests and licentious topics; *ḥamāq*, which uses satire and jokes; *muzaylij*, which mixes *fuṣḥā* with colloquialism; and *mukaffir*, which contains aphorisms and sermons (*idem*). Clearly, the classification here depends totally on content. Al-Ibshīhī (n.d.:II, 267 et seq.), on the other hand, lists seven *funūn* (genres; constituent arts?): *al-shi'r al-qarīḍ* (*fuṣḥā* poetry), *al-muwashshaḥ*, *al-dūbayt*,[14] *al-zajal*, *al-mawāliyyāt*,[15] *al-kān wa kān*,[16] and *al-qūmā*,[17] the last four of which are in the vernacular idiom. In addition, he recognises *al-ḥaramāq* and *al-mūsījān* which he does not define. Whether these vernacular genres are characterised by particular metrical configurations or are differentiated according to form and content is not made clear. In a similar vein, Ṣafiyy al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (n.d.:5) speaks of four *funūn* without much elaboration. Only Ibn Khaldūn (1958:III, 460) views *zajal* as a method of composition which, according to him, predates the *muwashshaḥ* and uses the vernacular in all the fifteen Khalilian metres. Though admitting that these vernacular genres have specific *awzān* (metrical forms), most of the critics are content to leave it at that or specify that most of these *awzān* are different from those used by the Arabs in *fuṣḥā* poetry. Even those who see a close relationship between vernacular and *fuṣḥā* metres merely gloss over the fact or avoid close analysis.

The situation is not much different with Amīn Nakhleh. Despite his thoroughness, he too avoids metrical analysis and involves the reader in a terminological jungle erasing the distinction between *zajal* structures and *zajal* metres. According to him, Lebanese *zajal*, "one of the many extant old *zajal* traditions", *far'un min tilka al-ṭarā'iq al-qadīma*, is none other than Lebanese *ma'annā* (1945:44). Having said that, he divides *ma'annā* into four *anwā'* (kinds, genres?): *al-maṭla'* (lit., the opening), also called *al-ma'annā al-'ādī* (the usual *ma'annā*); *al-badālī* (the alternate one) which differs from *al-maṭla'* in metre; *al-muwashshaḥ*, which again differs in metre from *al-maṭla',* and *al-qaṣīd* (the ode?), which employs either the *wāfir* metre of al-Khalīl (presumably without modification), or the metre of *al-maṭla',* or that of *al-badālī*. What the metres of *al-maṭla'* and *al-badālī* are, we are not told. Nakhleh instead devotes his effort to the various rhyme patterns in which each of the four *anwā'* appears in the written traditions, especially in the *dīwān* of Rashīd Nakhleh, who is credited with the invention of most of these patterns (see, for example, *ibid*.:45-51). Only one metre, *al-wāfir*, is spelled out and that with a specific reference to *al-badālī* from *Ma'annā Rashīd Nakhleh*.

Al-zajal, he continues, consists of six *funūn*: *al-muhmal* (which is totally without diacritical marks), *al-marṣūd* (in which the first hemistich starts with a particular obligatory letter), *al-mujazzam* (where every line in the successive stanzas rhymes with the others, except for the last line whose rhyme is a *rujū'* or "return" to the rhyme of the opening line or lines), and, finally, *al-alifiyyāt* (in which the first letter of every line follows the order of the Arabic alphabet; see Whaybeh 1952:72). In this context, the word *funūn* means something totally different from genre as al-Ibshīhī's usage indicates. It describes, rather, a written style characterised by *badī'* (figurative language), formal idiosyncrasies, and verbal virtuosity.

Nakhleh then identifies several methods, *'iddat ṭarā'iq* (1945:52). The first one of these is *al-qarrādī* [18] (also pronounced *al-qirrādī*), which in turn subsumes a number of *funūn* such as *karj-ḥajal* (the gait of partridge), *mashy al-sitt* (the gait of ladies), *daqq al-miṭraqah* (the pounding of the hammer), *al-murabba'* (the quatrain), *al-mijwiz* (the couplet), *naqlet al-'arūs* (the movement of the young bride), *al-shūfāī* (related to the Shūf

area in Lebanon), *al-ʻādī*, *al-muwashshaḥ*, *al-mukhammas al-mardūd*,[19] *al-muhmal*, and *al-munaqqaṭ* (in which each letter is dotted with diacritics). These *funūn*, this time around, suggest not only rhyme patterns and verbal tricks, but also styles of oral delivery and singing, as is made quite clear by the etymology of the first four. Moreover, among the *ṭarāʼiq* of *zajal*, Nakhleh lists four kinds of *ḥidā*[20] with various rhyme patterns: *al-ḥawrabeh* or *al-hawbarah*, a term derived from the refrain of a *ḥawrabeh* poem (*ibid.*:57-58); *al-zalāghīṭ* or *al-zaghālīd*, a form specifically used in wedding celebrations; *al-nadb* (or elegiac verse); and *jalwet al-ʻarūs*, a strophic composition sung or recited by women when welcoming a new bride.

In addition to these *anwāʻ*, *funūn*, and *ṭārāʻiq*, Nakhleh (*ibid.*:60) lists what he terms *ṭarāʻiq ʻāmmīyah qadīma* (or old vernacular methods): *ʻatābā*, *mījanā*, and *abū al-zuluf*, which he treats under *bāb al-aghānī*, or sung compositions, and in which, according to him, *naẓm* (ordered beat) rather than *nagham* (melody) plays the central role. Also included under Lebanese *zajal* is *al-shrūqī* (or *al-shurūqī*), known too as *al-qaṣīd al-badawī* (the bedouin *qaṣīd*), and *al-mawwāl al-Baghdādī* (*ibid.*:65-66), two *ṭarāʻiq*, one may surmise, which are still in vogue.

Reading Nakhleh's introduction leaves one with the strong impression that Lebanese *zajal* is extremely rich in form and structure, but little is said of whether these *ṭarāʻiq*, *funūn*, *anwāʻ*, and *aqsām* are further distinguished in terms of metre or whether metre plays any significant role at all. The arbitrary identification of only some genres with music and singing and the apparent exclusion of other genres, as we shall see, gives an imperfect picture of the reality of Lebanese *zajal*.

The space that Nakhleh allows for metre in his introduction is a mere paragraph stating categorically that Lebanese vernacular poetry in its various *ṭarāʻiq* is predicated upon an aural rhythm, not upon restricted feet. It [i.e. *zajal*] is in its rhythm (*wazn*), in the articulation of sound, the position of vowels (*ḥarakāt*), the structures of words and phrases (*tarākīb al-alfāẓ*), their pronunciation and writing [*sic*], dependent on melody (*nagham*). *Some* [my emphasis] of its melodies (or rhythms) may be related to the Khalilian metres. (*ibid.*:67-68)

Important and authoritative as this statement is, it tells us precious little about *zajal* metres and seems to contradict Nakhleh's statements concerning the partial role of music. Moreover, we are not told which "melodies may be related to the Khalilian metres". The rest of his account of metre consists simply of quoted statements by Lebanese critics taken at face value, without discussion.

Other critics are no less circumspect. In *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ* under the root *ʻanaya,* al-Bustānī states that *zajal* poets "depend mostly on rhyme such that they do not care for the appropriateness of language or metre" (1870:II, 1489). This opinion is shared by others. Dozy, for example, claims that *zajal* composition requires "unity of rhyme, not unity of metre, and that it [*zajal*] has a number of metres" (1967:I, 581). Zaydān (1957:IV, 206) sees a relationship between some metres of *zajal* and those of al-Khalīl, but others bear no relationship at all to the known metres in *fuṣḥā*. Zaydān agrees with al-Ḥūrānī (1906:XLI, 602-4) that the *rajaz*, *wāfir*, and *al-sarīʻ* are the only Khalilian metres found in Lebanese *zajal*. Al-Ḥūrānī, however, qualifies his statement by observing that these three metres undergo changes which are not permissible in *fuṣḥā* poetry.

Influenced by al-Ḥūrānī, whom he cites, Zaydān then states more emphatically that "the vernacular metres which have no counterpart in *fuṣḥā* metres are most probably taken from Syriac metrics" (*ibid.*:603). This view has several proponents such as ʻAbbūd (1968:103-12) and Frayḥah (1973:173), who see *qarrādī*, in particular, as a development

from a Syriac seven-syllable metre used exclusively in church services by the early Maronite church fathers, first in Syriac, then in *Karshūnī* [21] and then in Arabic.[22] Voicing a similar opinion, ʿAwwād, in a frequently quoted essay entitled "al-Shiʿr al-ʿāmmī", sees all of *maʿannā* as scanning according to the *sarīʿ*, *rajaz*, and *wāfir* metres, excluding *qarrādī*, which he believes has unlimited metres that vary with the different forms of the genre.

The existence of two metrical systems in Lebanese *zajal* is suggested by Lecerf in his important "Littérature dialectale et renaissance arabe moderne" (1932:239), a lengthy historical bibliographical survey which also devotes several pages to the genres and metres of Lebanese *zajal*. Lecerf distinguishes two genres: "les genres chantés" and "les genres dits", listing under the former the *mawwāl*, *ʿatābā*, *mījanā*, *dalʿūnā*, and *shurūqī*, and under the latter *qaṣīd*, *maṭlaʿ* (*maʿannā*), *qarrādī*, and *jannāz* (*ibid*.:234-37), with a short definition of each one of them.[23] Only *qarrādī* is described metrically: "It is composed of seven long syllables in principle but may admit a supplementary short syllable which does not count in the measure" (1932:237). As for the metrical systems of *zajal*, Lecerf has the following to say, despite, as he puts it, "the difficulties of the subject" (239):

> Le point le plus original de la prosodie libanaise est l'existence apparante de deux systèmes aussi différents que le vers "mesuré" (*mawzūn*), dont le rythme repose sur la quantité des syllabes, et le vers à nombre fixe de syllabes. Nous avons dit que ce dernier rythme est celui du *qarrādī*. Le problème qui se pose est d'abord celui de la réalité de ce double système. En second lieu vient celui de son origine, et de la possibilité d'une influence de la poésie syriaque. Il est très remarquable en effet que le vers "nombré" (non-mesuré), de sept syllabes soit précisément celui des hymnes de saint Ephrem.

Lecerf identifies "Le vers mesuré" with *maʿannā*, citing the aforementioned statements of al-Ḥūrānī, Zaydān, and ʿAwwād, among others, as clear indication of the workings of a quantitative system. He himself does not offer any examples, although he senses that "le principe paraît indiscutable" (237), and that despite the difficulty of scanning, as soon as the quantity of syllables enters the picture, one must end up with something resembling the metrics of al-Khalīl. The second system, "le vers à nombre fixe de syllabes", is that of *qarrādī*, which Lecerf insists is composed of seven syllables and resembles the verse used in the hymns of Saint Ephram or Ephraem. A question poses itself here: Is *qarrādī* the only metre in this system? If it is, then it contradicts the available data on *zajal* where poems of four, five, six, seven, eight, or more syllables are found. If, on the other hand, *qarrādī* is the general name of a syllabic system composed of more than one metre, then Lecerf does not mention these. It is remarkable that Lecerf cites an old *qarrādiyya* which according to his own reading consists of an unequal number of syllables, and yet he blames such inconsistency on uncertainty in the pronunciation of the lines. He also cites examples of *dalʿūnā* [24] to which other critics attribute a five-syllable scansion (for example, al-Nūr 1966:106), but he neither clearly treats it as part of his second system nor indicates whether it is quantitatively scanned. Interestingly enough, he does mention the possible role of accent in his citing of Dalmann,[25] though he leaves his position unclear, and opts instead for number of syllables as the most important formal characteristic of *qarrādī*.

There is no question that Lecerf has touched on the problems involved in scanning *zajal*, that he has been conscious of dialectal problems, and that he has observed the presence of two metrical systems, but, by and large, his study rests on the authority of preceding critics and on impressions rarely supported by metrical analysis. He is more concerned with the forms of *zajal* and its history, development, and content.

Two more critics, Whaybeh (see above, note 8) and al-Nūr (1966:106), contribute little substance to the preceding scholarship. Both repeat most of the arguments of the other critics, but both are perhaps more emphatic than most about the characteristics of *zajal* metres. Whaybeh categorically posits a simple syllabic basis for these metres, while al-Nūr opts for the quantitative system of *fuṣḥā* with slight modifications. Yet the *qarrādī* presents the main problem for al-Nūr, and, as we have seen, to most of the critics before him. "Beaucoup d'éléments," he writes (*idem*), "font croire que le *qarrādī* échappe au principe général des mètres quantitatifs adoptés en dialectes." These "éléments" are not enumerated, but one main reason emerges from his ensuing argument. Because the syllabic metres lend themselves more than the quantitative metres to "coupures, omissions et additions", and because all the syllables in *qarrādī* are long, it is most likely, he says, that we are dealing with a variety of *al-khabab* metre. Although he does admit the frequent presence of short syllables in *qarrādī*, he dismisses their importance because, as he puts it, they are necessarily elongated "pour être assimilées aux longues" (*idem*). While my research seems to support al-Nūr's observation concerning the elongation of one or more short syllables, there is also the more important observation that *qarrādī* may contain more than seven syllables, be they long or short, and that such an occurrence will not affect the metre. The principle involved here concerns a pattern of stress which levels out the effect of uneven numbers of syllables, and a musical metre superimposed upon the poetic one. The possibility that *al-khabab* may be the metre of *qarrādī* notwithstanding, the reasons for that seem to be in the province of music, not metrics. I shall return to this important point later on.

It seems to me that most of these contradictory statements on *zajal* metrics result from the critics' inability to admit stress and music into their studies. Without exception, all the genres of Lebanese *zajal* are either declaimed or sung, which clearly suggests to me that a consideration of poetic stress and musical metre is essential for the proper description of the formal metrical characteristics of these genres.[26] In a completed, soon to be published manuscript on *zajal* metrics, I prepared close to sixty musical transcriptions of the known genres of Lebanese *zajal*,[27] studied the relationship of poetic stress to musical accents, and arrived at a convincing proof of the quantitative tendency of some metres and the stress-syllabic basis of others. There is no room here to study these transcriptions, but some conclusions might be in order.

Careful analysis of the descriptive musical notations mentioned above showed that the poets of *zajal* render their lines in two musical styles, one characterised by a free rhythm, the other by a regularly rhythmed underlay. They divide, in other words, along the two traditional styles of Arabic music: *nathr al-naghamāt* and *naẓm al-naghamāt*. The former (literally, "musical prose") refers to "a vocal or instrumental performance without regularly recurring rhythmic patterns". The latter, or "ordering of tones", defines a musical style based on a "traditional melody" and characterised by regular beats (Fārūqī 1981:233, 239).

The *zajal* metres used in the *nathr* style are mostly those of genres which require sophisticated arguments (as in verbal duels) or formal statements about social and political occasions, as well as formal *nasībs* (amatory preludes), panegyrics, satirical sketches, boasting, elegiac verse, and other sorts of occasional poems. In brief, longer poems with longer metres concerned with various degrees of *iṣābat al-ma'nā* seem to be associated closely with the *nathr* style, and most of their metres bear close resemblance to those of *fuṣḥā* poetry, with frequent licenses for which al-Khalīl's system cannot account. Informal, lighter, and shorter poems, such as jokes, some popular songs, counting rhymes (*'addiyyāt*), and verbal tricks, abound in the *naẓm* style, though neither style is differentiated exclusively in terms of genre.

As might be expected, stress in *ma'annā* (and all genres rendered in the *nathr* style) is irregular, since the poet freely manipulates it to accord with semantic considerations. Of course it may, at times, coincide with an underlying metrical stress, but it is neither mechanical nor characterised by regularity. Its orientation is towards the message, because the content (i.e. poetry) is more important than the formal structure (i.e. music). Conversely, the metres rendered in *naẓm*, such as *qarrādī*, have a strict rhythmic pattern imposed by a musical metre. While singing *qarrādī*, the poet is in effect producing a neutral realisation of the following trochaic pattern:

— — — — — — —

The appearance of short syllables, as we shall see momentarily, is not infrequent in *qarrādī*, and they always count in the measure.

The scansion of the following stanza from a well-known *Afrāmiyya*,[28] a modern version in both *fuṣḥā* and Syriac, illustrates the adaptation that the poetic metre goes through when made to fit the musical metre:

1) Yā ṣāliḥan abdā li-l-wujūd

/́ _ u /́ _ /́ _ u /́o// [29]

(O virtuous one, who has made manifest to the world)

2) Min lā shay'in kulla mawjūd

/́ _ /́ _ /́u _ /́o/

(From naught all that exists)

3) Wa aqāma li khidmati-hi junūd

/ú u _ /ú u _ / ú u u u /́o//

(And put hosts at his service)

4) Min rūḥin wa jismin maḥdūd

/́ _ /́u _ / ́_ _ /́o/

(Spirit and defined body [mortal body?])

5) [S] Sārūfīn wi-l-kārūbīn

/́_ _ /́_ _ /́ _ /́o//

(The Seraphin and the Cherubim)

6) Wa-l-jullās wa sādāt-un-naᶜīm

/́ _ /́o u _ /́ _ u /_́o/

(And the crowds (lit. participants) and the blessed ones [in paradise?])

7) Wa maṣāf-un-nār bit-tanghīm

/ú u _/́ _o /_ ́ _ / ́_o//

(And those in the fire [of hell], with tunes [and songs])

8) Yumajjidūna-hū ᶜan ḥubbin ḥamim

/ú _ u _ u /u´ _ /_ _ ū /o/

(Glorify Him out of earnest love)

9) Ābū wibruw–rūḥ qudshū

/´ _ /´ _ /´ _/ ´//

(Father and Son and Holy Spirit)

10) Hā dā lū hū shā rī rū

/´ _ /´ _ /´ _ /´/

(One everlasting God)

The number of syllables differs from one hemistich to another. There are 9 in the first, 8 in the second, 11 in the third, and 8, 7, 9, 8, 11, 7, and 7 in the rest of them. Only three hemistichs – 5, 9, and 10 – have the number and quantity of syllables (7 long) that characterise modern *qarrādī*. The stress pattern makes it clear that stresses fall on long syllables (_´_), on the first of two short syllables (ú u), the second of two shorts (u ú), or on a short syllable followed by a long (ú _) as in hemistich number 8. When the lines are sung, the musical rhythm and time duration are the same in all the hemistichs. The division into feet is determined by stress boundary, in all cases moulding poetic quantity to obtain equal beat intervals. We could speak of *qarrādī*, therefore, as a stress-based metre with uniform quantity.

In order to prove that syllable number is not a formal characteristic of *qarrādī*, I made spectrograms of this *Afrāmiyyah*, using a sona-graph, 7029A, which was run at a 40- to 4000-hertz scale. It recorded slightly under five seconds of speech at one time. A calibration tone which had nominally 200-millisecond duration and which measured a 1/2 inch on the spectrogram was used. After deciding where each hemistich began (the onset of the nasal resonance interval) and where its closure was, every one of the hemistichs turned out to have the exact duration of 3.2 seconds despite the significant difference in the number of syllables.

The last two hemistichs, which are transliterations of a Syriac line, are like modern *qarrādī* characterised by much more syllabic stability. This is so because Syriac exhibits the same erosion of inflections and internal voweling as does the Lebanese dialect. One conclusion is clear. The trend in *qarrādī* has been towards more syllabic uniformity as its modern manifestations clearly suggest. The early translations of the *Afrāmiyyāt* – with their mixture of *fuṣḥā* and dialect – have, in the course of the development of the genre, given way to pure dialect and consequently to poetic features influenced by the morphology and the syntax of the dialect. Again there is no room here to discuss the metrical characteristics of the other genres, but one point is manifest: musical metre and musical accent are essential for the proper description of *zajal* metrics.

*****

There is a great deal of conjecture over the history of Arabic vernacular poetry in general, and Lebanese *zajal* in particular. Most critics concur that the first important manifestations of vernacular poetry were in Arab Spain in the late twelfth century (cf. Khaldūn 1958:454-80 and Nakhleh 1945:16-32), though a number of historians, philologists, and critics trace the beginnings of this poetry to pre-Islamic and early Islamic times (see Nakhleh 1945:16-26). In the Lebanese context, there seems to be a general consensus that the early *zajal* prototypes first appeared in the writings of the Maronite church fathers, who were directly

influenced by Syriac liturgical material (see, for example, Nakhleh 1945:37-44 and ʻAbbūd 1968:78-86). The early church fathers, who were versed in Aramaic, deemed it necessary to translate Syriac hymns into the dialect of the faithful in Lebanon, retaining as they did many of the original Syriac metrical features of these hymns (ʻAbbūd 1968:77-86). There is ample evidence to suggest that this reconstruction is partly true, since the absolute majority of these hymns are in the *qarrādī* metre which has a clear musical basis. It is equally true, however, that the secular poets (and indeed some of the church fathers) had, in addition to using the *qarrādī* metre, produced a large number of poems in quantitatively based metres, quite similar to the metres of *fuṣḥā*. In my opinion, this suggests quite plausibly that the quantitative metrical compositions had *fuṣḥā* metrics as their inspiration. Formal considerations, such as rhyme schemes, nomenclature, and the use of homonyms in *ʻatābā* and *mījanā* [30] point to direct influence from the Arabic *fuṣḥā* tradition. How far back all of this goes is not certain. What is clear, however, is that the first recorded *zajal* poem dates back to 1289, the year of the destruction of Tripoli, Lebanon, by the Mamluks.[31] After that date, most of the manuscripts record the hymns of the early Maronite fathers from the early part of the fifteenth century until late in the seventeenth century. From then on, Lebanese *zajal* became part of Lebanese folk culture. By the early part of the twentieth century its idiom changed slowly from a mixture of dialect and *fuṣḥā* to pure dialect.[32]

It is in the Lebanese mountains that the major developments in *zajal* have taken place. Besides its aesthetic value, *zajal* has filled an important entertainment vacuum in villages, where in the evenings every house becomes a meeting place for the hard-working peasants, their families, and friends (ʻAwwād 1930:501-4). During the winter especially, people gather around a brazier placed in the center of the living room, drinking coffee and eating dried fruits. The evening starts with well-known songs in the vernacular in which everyone participates. Part of the time is spent listening to a raconteur reciting and singing parts of a story from Lebanese or Arab folklore. The audience may then assume the various roles of the story's characters, adding new anecdotes and embellishments. On more formal occasions, such as weddings, births, christenings, and saints' holidays, the meetings take place in the homes of the rich, the village club, or the churchyard. One or more *qawwāls* are invited to the celebration, which soon becomes a *muḥāwarah* (disputation, dialogue, argumentation) in verse between the *qawwāls* themselves or between them and some of the guests. The host then rewards the winners with money or presents (*ibid.*:501).

The most fertile ground for the verbal duel is the occasion of a saint's day. The *qawwāls* and *zajjāls* travel from village to village, seeking celebrations of these holidays, accompanied by a group of their supporters called *al-raddādah* or the chorus. Besides giving the poet the support and encouragement he needs while duelling, the chorus fulfills the important function of repeating particular lines in the duel, first in order to remind the poet of the musical metre from which he might have strayed and secondly to give the poet time to improvise the lines that follow.

If two *qawwāls* are present, the audience divides into two groups, each group supporting one of them. The older *qawwāl* starts first by lifting the *daff* (tambourine) and asking for *al-dastūr* (the permission of the audience). He starts by singing on a topic of his own choice which he addresses to the other *qawwāl*. He may start with a riddle, which he dares his opponent to solve in verse; he may challenge him to debate a political or social issue, or may start with *muṭāyabah* (banter, joke, teasing or friendly remark). The opponent must respond in kind, often with *mask al-ḥarf* or sticking to the same metre and the same rhyme. If he is unable to solve the riddle, or emulate the metre and the rhyme, he must apologise in verse or else lose the contest. Neither poet is permitted to plagiarise verses from the tradition or repeat any verses that he might have composed in previous contests;

all lines should be improvised on the spot. In most cases a judge who is a *qawwāl* himself or is versed in *zajal* is chosen by the audience to evaluate the duellers and announce the winner (*ibid*.:502).

Early in the twentieth century the verbal duel witnessed new and exciting developments. Eventually several poets pooled their resources and traveled around the countryside publicising their new group or *jawqa*. When invited to a social function, they would sit around a table and praise their host, with one *daff* changing hands as each poet recited his praise. They would then take up a particular subject (often political or social) and duel among themselves. By the late 1930's and early 1940's, the *jawqa* became more defined; it evolved into an institution, four poets in all. Two of them would band together against the other two and duel over an opposition (day and night, war and peace, freedom and imprisonment, etc.) which either they or someone from the audience would suggest. The *raddādah* would sit behind the *jawqa*, waiting for their cues to sing along with each of the duellers.

Recently a further development has taken place. The poets of one *jawqa* now duel with the poets of another – four against four, four verbal duels in all – and the reputation of each *jawqa* depends on the performance of its members. A typical *mubārāt* (or contest) attracts ten to twenty thousand people. In these contests the duellers follow a prescribed order of improvisation, employing several of the many *zajal* genres that are well-known to the audience. The opening of the duel is a *qaṣīd* (or ode) which the leaders of the two groups recite, one at a time. Part of the *qaṣīd* is a poem in praise of the country, the host, and the audience. Having curried favour with their audience, they then boast about the members of their group and dare their opponents into a duel. At this point the audience is asked to suggest a topic for the duel, which is usually in the form of an opposition. (At times, the topic is given in advance to the groups by the duel's organisers.) All together four topics (oppositions) are then treated by eight poets, four from each group. This part of the duel employs *ma'annā*, a different metre from that of the opening *qaṣīd*, and while the *raddādah* are not involved during the singing of the opening *qaṣīd*, they play an important role in the duel proper. At the end of every *ma'annā* stanza, the *raddādah* come in, pick up the last hemistich, and sing it twice or more, the frequency of repetition being dependent on whether or not the poet is ready to answer his opponent. If the poet takes too long to prepare his answer, the audience will signal their displeasure by hissing or shouting. Since audience reaction is important to the progress of the whole duel, the poets may change the metre of their duels whenever they sense the slightest boredom. When this happens, the metre used is that of *qarrādī*, which, as we have seen above, is a light musical metre characterised by strict rhythm. Also out of deference for the feeling of the audience, the poets may use formulas which the listeners know well, thereby inviting their direct participation. After all the poets are given a chance to duel, the leaders of the groups recite a love or patriotic poem, each in the metre of the opening *qaṣīd*. The contest ends after three or four hours, and both groups are declared winners by their supporters.

I have been describing the kind of highly stylised duel known to the practitioners of *zajal* as *jafā* (harshness, enmity, aversion), which is predicated upon highlighting one's own logic and belittling that of one's opponent. Another kind of duel has little to do with argumentation and disputation; instead the poets display their knowledge of verbal tricks, difficult rhymes, and historical and literary allusions. In this form of contest the poets demonstrate their ability to produce lines (usually in *qarrādī*) in which none or all of the letters appear with diacritics, or lines in which the first word of each line follows the order of the Arabic alphabet, or other such verbal tricks, of which one source alone records more than fifty (al-Wādī n.d.:V, 15-25). As might be expected, the norm here is memorisation rather than improvisation. Finally, another favourite duel is the *'atābā* duel, which involves the use of homonyms and a knowledge of *tatlīt*.[33] This form is concerned less

with a uniform subject than with the poet's ability to draw upon his knowledge of vocabulary.

Each *bayt* of *'atābā* is composed of four hemistichs, the first three of which end with the same word, which itself yields a different contextual meaning from the other two. The fourth hemistich then ends with a word rhyming with "*ār"* or "*āb"* (see Nakhleh 1945:60-62).

*****

The five stanzas that follow are from the famous *zajal* contest which took place in 1971 in Dayr al-Qal'a, Bayt Mirī, Lebanon between the *jawqa* of Joseph al-Hāshim (pen name, Zaghlūl al-Damūr) and the *jawqa* of Khalīl Rūkuz, headed by the famous poet, Mūsā Zghayb.[34] The number of people who attended the contest was estimated at more than thirty thousand (Ziadeh n.d.:8). The first duel on "innocence and guilt" was between Edward Ḥarb from Zaghlūl's group and Buṭrus Dīb from Mūsā Zghayb's group; thus the allusion in the first stanza below to the preceding duel.

[Editor's note: The Arabic transcription is made directly from the sound recording of the event, which can be accessed at https://youtu.be/61-7HNpc5zc]

Arabic:

جريس البستاني:

ارتاحو شبعنا من البري والمش بري

هلق إجا دور الكلام الجوهري

يا بت مري ع صوت صمصامي اسكري

من بعد فخر الدين انتي عنجري

زغلول حتى روح جارك تشتري

لا تنزّل عْلى ساحتي الـ بعدو طري

كنت بمباراة الأمس ما افتري

وإعطف ع كل الي اعتلو ع منبري

واليوم جايي فوق صهوة أبجري

أبطش و خلّي الروس مدريّة دري

حتى بعد ألفين عام من السنين

يتزكر التاريخ عركة بيت مري

طليع حمدان:

أوف أوف... زغلول فضّي بالك البلبل شدا
بتعرف طليع حمدان قهّار العدا
وجريس بقطع الروس مشروعك بدا
وع قطع راسك ليش سيفك ما اهتدا
معوّد عليّ تهجم بسيف الردا
وإطفيك حدّي وتنتهي من المبتدا
واليوم بالدير المرسمل بالهُدى
رح بخنقك تا رجّعك بحة صدى
وبكرا بعد مانغيب ويشيب المدا
التاريخ بدو يقول كلمة ع الهدا
تعوّد طليع بكل عركة يحطّمك
والدير ما غيّر عوايدع حدا

جريس:

شو قال بن حمدان يا أرض اسمعي
قال عم بيحطّمني وبزندو يدّعي
مش عارف ان ما قلت للشمس اطلعي
بتطيع وبتركع ازا قلت اركعي
ومش عارف المنبر طلع من مصنعي

وقوس القدح خاتم صغير باصبعي
وبكرا ازا التاريخ ع الحفلة وعي
وسجل بصفحاتو عن رجال الوعي
بيزكر بطوليتي ورخامة مقلعي
بيزكر صدى صرخة قنابل مدفعي
بيزكر الدير اللي غمرتو بمطلعي
بيزكر نطافي ونخوتي وجدي السعي
ومن ميل تاني بيزكرك مرقة طريق
من حيث لازم يزكر الـ غنى معي

<u>طليع:</u>
أوف...أوف... معتّر التاريخ من بعدي نوى
لولا زكر انسان ما منّو نوى
وتا نفترض عنّي مش زيادة روى
هلّق بقلّك ليش يا عالي اللوى
الجنة الملانة عطور وزهور وهوى
بمرقة طريق بيكتفي منها الهوى
ومش بس تاريخك ازا صوتو دوى
بيمرق عليّ متل ما فكرك نوى
انت والتاريخ ورجال القوى
والشمس والبحر الـبفلسفتي ارتوى
وقوس القدح والعاصفة وليل القوى
وكل شعّار الـ بأعلى مستوى

عا منبري عم تمرقو مرقة طريق
تتباركو من الشعر وتفلّو سوا

جريس:

تروى ع ربّك يا ابن ميّ وطين
سنينك ما صارو من سخاك مباركين
منشان ما نخدع حدا من السامعين
رح ظهّرك للجاهلينك انت مين
انت ورقة كنت بين المهملين
والحظ وصلها عا متحف نابغين
وصارت متل شحاد يستجدي السنين
تا تغتني من خير كل المارقين
عنتر مرق فيها وضع رفعة جبين
وجبران سطّرها بحبر الملهمين
وقيس الملوح خصّها بنفحة حنين
وودّولها النسّاك طهر شعاع دين
ولوما بشعري رجعت امضيها انا
ما صرت صفحة فكر ترضي الباقيين

Translation:

Jiryis Bustānī:

Rest at ease; we are done with (the subject of) the innocent and the guilty.
Now the time has come for important discourse.
O Bayt Mirī, get drunk with my songs;
You are my ‘Anjar[35] after the days of (Prince) Fakhr al-Dīn.[36]
Zaghlūl, if you want to ransom the souls of your friends,
Do not send to my pulpit an untried youth.
In the former contest I did not mince my words,
And I showed great compassion to all those who dared to sing with me.
Today (however) I come charging on my Abjar[37]
To attack and scatter around (people’s) heads

So that two thousand years hence
History will remember the battle of Bayt Mirī.

Ṭalī‘ Ḥamdān:

Zaghlūl, rest at ease. The canary sings.
You know that Ṭālī‘ Ḥamdān is the conqueror of enemies.
And Jiryis, since you have started with the severing of heads,
Why has not your sword discovered your head yet?
You are in the habit of attacking me with the sword of death
And I am in the habit of extinguishing and finishing you from the start.
And today in this monastery [38] which is filled with guiding light
I shall strangle you and make you a mere echo.
And tomorrow after you are gone and after time grows old,
History will say a few words with utmost care:
Ṭālī‘ Ḥamdān destroyed you in every battle
And the battle of Bayt Mirī was no exception.

Jiryis Bustānī:

What did the son of Ḥamdān say? Listen ye world:
He said he would destroy me and he bragged about his muscles.
Does he not know [addressing Ṭālī‘] if I tell the sun not to rise,
It will obey, and it will kneel if I tell it to kneel?
And does he not know that the pulpit is the product of my craft?
And that the rainbow is a little ring around my finger?
And tomorrow if history becomes aware of this contest
And registers in its pages the names of the great (poets),
It will mention my heroic deeds and the excellence of my quarry (where I hone my rhymes);
It will mention the echoes of my cannonballs;
It will mention the monastery that I overwhelmed with my presence;
It will mention my vitality, my good heart, and my great achievements;
And from another angle it will mention you briefly
Because it must mention those who sang with me.

Ṭālī‘ Ḥamdān:

How blasphemous is history which from a great distance
Feels constrained to mention the likes of you:
But let us suppose that history did not mention me a lot.
Let me tell you why, O conceited one:
Paradise, which is full of perfume and flowers and love,
Fills the breeze with perfume as the breeze passes by it (briefly).
That is why your history (when it rumbles)
Passes briefly by me as you have suggested.
And so do you, great men, rainstorms,
The sea, which has drunk from my thoughts,
The rainbow, tenderness, the night of love,
And all the poets who have attained the highest status,
All pass briefly by my pulpit
To be blessed by my poetry and to vanish quickly.

Jiryis Bustānī:

You have taxed the patience of God, you son of water and clay.
Your years have not been blessed by your generosity (?).
But in order not to deceive our audience
I shall expose you before those who do not know you.
You are a piece of paper among neglected papers
And by sheer luck it ended up in the company of the great,
But it was like a beggar on the roads of history
Seeking alms from all those who pass by him (briefly).
'Antar [39] passed by and bequeathed brow-raising greatness
And Gibrān [40] wrote lines with the ink of the inspired.
And Qays [41] left upon it a breath of love
And the monks crowned it with the halo of faith.
Yet had I not signed it with my poetry
It (you) would not have become a page pleasing to anybody.

What we have here is a perfect example of strong reading, a strategy whose main communicative intent seems to be to put one's opponent down or to test his ability to maintain presence of mind in interaction. One important feature is to constantly try to push one's opponent into a defensive role, by overplaying the implications of his argument. The translation above is deficient in that it is unable to capture important linguistic and paralinguistic elements such as changes in pitch, stress, and syntax which often provide the signals of contest. Also the translation necessarily leaves out all those emotive meanings that are comprehensible only to the particular audience, as well as audience reaction itself, which often consists of loud approval or disapproval of the particular poet's arguments.

Still, however, the lines of argument are perfectly clear. The main issue is how history is going to remember the two duellers. Quality rather than quantity (number of pages) becomes the fine distinction. Soon, however, the argument comes to a draw and the subject changes from "history book" to the "paper" that one of the duellers must sign if his opponent's name will ever be added to the names of the great poets. In the rest of the duel, "paper" reverts to a "death notice" and to a whole series of ratiocinations which stretch the subject to its limits, while still remaining within the realm of general history.

Some of the strategies used in these excerpts are typical of Lebanese verbal duels in general. The main issue is often avoided and side issues are highlighted instead, often over the protestations of the audience. The reason, I suppose, is directly related to the constraints of improvisation, which require, among other things, speed and changes in speech rhythms from natural ones to ones conforming to the demands of the formula. In addition to the main argument, duellers adopt other strategies. A favourite approach is to say that the opponent's argument is old and that the intelligent audience will not buy it. Here the appeal to the audience's wisdom earns the dueller psychological support. Another approach is to put words into the opponent's mouth and then attack these words. Still another strategy would be for one of the duellers to charge his opponent with evading the whole issue, or to berate him for having totally missed the point. Finally, one of the poets may repeat his adversary's weak argument in order to expose and explode it.

In all these strategies, the poets use a large number of syntactic (as opposed to verbal) formulas. The style is often additive, exhibiting similar syntactic structures (in the form of illustrations) which are piled up to give the dueller the necessary time to tie up the loose ends of his argument. A popular syntactic structure is the use of "if clauses", often five or six of them before the poet finally comes up with the "answer" to the conditions. All this leads to the "clincher", which is often in the last two hemistichs of the response. In reality, however, the poets figure out the last two hemistichs (the clincher) first, constructing the argument in reverse, as it were, starting with formulas which have little to do with the argument and then slowly leading back to the clincher. A poet may, for example, start by addressing the stars of heaven, bidding them to listen to his opponent's lies, then brag about his own logic or praise the audience, and all this before he finally comes back to the answer proper.

Rhyme plays an integral role in the duellers' improvisations. Their training involves a knowledge not only of the semantic meaning of words, but most importantly, perhaps, of their morpho-phonological characteristics. They classify words in terms of their sound patterns with particular rhyming possibilities, groupings that can be recalled quickly and employed in particular arguments. Even though the morphology of Arabic is especially conducive to rhyming, the rhymes are not infinite, and the accomplished poet is constantly aware of which rhymes are particularly useful in particular arguments. In a taped interview[42] Zaghlūl al-Dāmūr, one of Lebanon's greatest *zajal* poets, claims that the rhyme word of the first line of a duel is enough to give him an idea about his opponent's line of thought. When asked what he would do if his anticipations were wrong, he said he knew enough strategies to deal with such an eventuality. One such approach, he said, was to evade the question and change the focus of the argument.

I am convinced that all the strategies I have been discussing make improvisation a less formidable task than critics who have not mastered the art of duelling are willing to admit. I am equally convinced that the verbal duel proper is totally improvised on the spot. As Zaghlūl himself put it, no poet can get away with memorising lines or repeating well-known lines before members of a critical audience who have taped and memorised every verbal duel that has taken place in the past twenty years. He added that "in a verbal duel no poet knows where the argument is going to lead, and memorisation will be more difficult to control than actual improvisation." When probed further, Zaghlūl admitted that most poets extemporise rather than improvise their *qaṣīds*, but not the verbal duels themselves. I am using extemporisation here to describe the kind of silent preparation immediately before the actual recitation, or as Zaghlūl himself describes it, "notes, main ideas, phrases that an accomplished lecturer uses to treat a topic, with the exception that with us [the poets of *zajal*], these notes and ideas are not written on cards".

While the question of improvisation in the *fuṣḥā* tradition is fraught with controversy (cf. Zwettler 1978 and Monroe 1972), there is little doubt that the phenomenon of verbal duelling in Arabic literary history is as old as the first recorded poems in pre-Islamic times. From the *mu'āraḍah*[43] between the pre-Islamic poets Imru' al-Qays and 'Alqama, to the *mufākharah* and *munāfarah*[44] among the Arab tribes and between the Arabs and the Persians, to the *mu'āẓamah*[45] of al-Khansā' and the *murājazah*[46] between al-Mughīra ibn al-Akhnas and 'Abd Allāh Ibn Budayl, and finally to *al-munāqaḍah*[47] among the major Umayyad poets, verbal duelling in *fuṣḥā* attains a high level of development. But to say this is not to imply necessarily that Lebanese verbal duelling is directly influenced by the *fuṣḥā* antecedents. Notwithstanding some similarities in general strategy, the idiom, purpose, and content of verbal duels are significantly different in the two traditions. Each tradition, it seems to me, adapted itself to the political and social milieu specific to its own time. Certainly the difference in the poets' roles (the champions in words of their tribes in

the *fuṣḥā* tradition, and the verbal virtuosos par excellence in the Lebanese tradition) had an important impact on the form and content of the duels.

As intimated above, most of the other Arab countries, notably Saudi Arabia,[48] Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt, have similar living traditions of vernacular poetry, though none has attained the renown and richness of Lebanese *zajal*. Some of the genres and metres are similar enough to attract scholarly interest in comparative studies. As the political, social, and demographic scenes in the Arab world change, critical analyses of Arabic vernacular poetry assume particular urgency.

* The author is currently head of Arabic Studies at the University of Arkansas.

E-mail: ahaydar@uark.edu

REFERENCES

‘Abbūd 1968 – Mārūn ‘Abbūd. *Al-Shi‘r al-‘āmmī.* Beirut.

‘Awwād 1930 – Tawfīq ‘Awwād. “Al-Shi‘r al-‘āmmī”. *Al-Mashriq*, 28:436-43, 501-8.

Brockelmann 1928 – C. Brockelmann. *Lexicon Syriacum*. Halle: M. Niemeyer.

al-Bustānī 1870 – Butrus al-Bustānī. *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ.* Beirut.

Cachia 1977 – Pierre Cachia. “The Egyptian *Mawwāl*: Its Ancestry, its Development, and its Present Forms”. *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 8:77-103.

Dalmann 1901 – Gustaf H. Dalmann. *Palästinischer Dīwān*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.

Dīb 1974 – Kamāl Abū Dīb. *Fī al-Bunyah al-īqā‘iyyah li al-shi‘r al-‘Arabī: Naḥwa badīl jadhrī li ‘arūḍ al-Khalīl*. Beirut.

Dozy 1967 – Reinhart P. A. Dozy. *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes.* Leiden: Brill.

Fārūqī 1981 – Lois Ibsen Fārūqī. *An Annotated Glossary of Arabic Musical Terms*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Frayḥah 1947 – Anīs Frayḥah. *Mu‘jam Frayhḥah*. Beirut.

Frayḥah 1957 –. *Ḥaḍārah fi ṭarīq al-zawāl*. Beirut.

Frayḥah 1973 –. *Mucjam al-alfāẓ al-‘āmmiyah*. Beirut.

al-Ḥillī n.d. – Ṣafi yy al-Dīn al-Ḥillī. *Dīwān Ṣafiyy al-dīn al-Ḥillī.* Damascus.

al-Ḥūrānī 1906 – Ibrāhīm al-Ḥūrānī *Al-Nashrah al-usbū‘iyyah*. Beirut.

al-Ibshīhī n.d. – Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī. *AlMustaṭraf*. n.p.

al-Jayyūsī 1977 – Salmā al-Jayyūsī. *Trends and Movements in Modern Arab Poetry*. Leiden: Brill.

Kfarkaddī 1942 – Ibrāhīm Kfarkaddī. *Sabk al-Ma‘ānī fī al-zajal al-Lubnānī.* Boston.

Khaldūn 1958 – Ibn Khaldūn. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Trans. by Franz Rosenthal. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.

Lecerf 1932 – Jean Lecerf. “Littérature dialectale et renaissance arabe moderne”. *Bulletin d’études orientales*, 2:179-258.

Manẓūr n.d. – Ibn Manẓūr. *Lisān al-‘Arab.* Beirut.

Monroe 1972 – James T. Monroe. "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry: The Problem of Authenticity". *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 3:1-53.

al-Muḥibbī 1873 – Muḥammad Amīn ibn Faḍl Allāh al-Muḥibbī. *Khulāsat al-athar*. Cairo.

Nakhleh 1945 – Amīn Nakhleh. *Ma'annā Rashīd Nakhleh.* Beirut.

al-Nūr 1966 – Jabbour *'*Abd al-Nūr. *Etude sur la poésie dialectale au Liban*. Beirut.

al-Shāyib 1966 – Aḥmad al-Shāyib. *Tārīkh al-naqā'iḍ fī al-shi'r al-'Arabī.* Cairo.

Sowayan 1985 – Saad Abdullah Sowayan. *Nabaṭī Poetry: The Oral Poetry of Arabia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

al-Wādī n.d. – Shaḥrūr al-Wādī. *Dīwān Shaḥrūr al-Wādī.* Kfarshīmā, Lebanon.

Whaybeh 1952 – Munir Whaybeh. *Al-Zajal: tārīkhuhu, adabuhu, a'lāmuhu, qadīman wa ḥadīthan*. Ḥarīṣā.

Zaydān 1957 – Jurjī Zaydān. *Tārīkh ādāb al-lughah al-'arabiyyah.* Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl.

Ziadeh n.d. – Michel Ziadeh. *Lubnān al-zajal.* Beirut.

Zwettler 1978 – Michael Zwettler. *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry: Its Character and Implications.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

[**Editor's note**: We asked the author to supply a bibliography of his further writings on Lebanese *zajal*, and he kindly furnished the following titles.]

Haydar, Adnan. "Lebanese Zajal Poetry: A Critical History." *The Sowers of Joy: Analytical Essays on Genres of Oral Poetry*. Ed. Zoghaib, Henri. Center for Lebanese Heritage Lebanese American UP (2017): 37-90. Print.

Haydar, Adnan. "Al-Zajal Al-Lubnāni: Buḥūruhu Wa Mūsicāhu." *Al-Turāth Al-Lubnāni LAU Publications* (2015): 69-75. Print. [In Arabic]

Haydar, Adnan. "Al-Hida, Al-Nadb, Al-Hawrabah and Al-Nawh in Lebanese Zajal Poetry: A Study of Meter and Rhythm." *Edebiyat: Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures.* 13.2(2002): 159-168. Print.

Haydar, Adnan. "'Ataba and Mijana in Lebanese *Zajal* Poetry." *Kalimat = Kalimāt : an Australian-Arabic literary quarterly,* 11(2002):30-44. Print.

Haydar, Adnan. "Mkhammas Mardud in Lebanese *Zajal*." *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing.* Ed. Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash. Syracuse: Syracuse UP (1999): 426. Print.

NOTES

1. For a thorough definition of Lebanese *zajal* poetry, see below.

2. See, for example, Sowayan 1985 for an account of oral poetry among the Bedouins of Saudi Arabia.

3. "Vernacular" is used here to designate colloquial language as it is spoken today in the various Arab countries. Vernacular Lebanese shares many characteristics with the dialects spoken in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine.

4. *Fuṣḥā* refers both to classical Arabic and modern standard Arabic.

5. Much of the problem had to do with the critics' lack of discrimination between oral and written poetry. The implications of orality are hardly taken into consideration and analyses of poetic metre rarely account for the important roles of stress and musical metre.

6. The *muwashshaḥa* (pl. *muwashshaḥāt*) is a strophic poem attributed to al-Andalus (Arab Spain) consisting of several divisions with particular rhyme schemes that differ from author to author and ending with a *kharja*, a concluding *bayt* (or verse), mostly in colloquial diction, often expressing a love theme.

7. For a good account of the use of vernacular diction in modern Arabic poetry, see al-Jayyūsī 1977:II, 663-65 and 671-72.

8. See Whaybeh 1952:63, where the author quotes from a letter sent to him by Frayḥah. Also see Frayḥah 1947:173 and 1957:273. Note that *'annī* derives from the proto-Semitic *ghanaya*, "to sing".

9. "The term *ma'annā* is derived from the Syriac word *ma'anīshū* (or song)" (Whaybeh l952:63, where he quotes from a letter dated December 28, 1950, sent to him by 'Isā Iskandar al-Ma'lūf). Syriac experts see this etymology as unlikely, and instead argue for the possible derivation of *ma'annā* from the Syriac word *ma'nīthā*, meaning chant or antiphon. See Brockelmann 1928:533.

10. See 'Awwād 1930:441, quoting an unpublished book manuscript by 'Isā Iskandar al-Ma'lūf, *Nayl al-mutamannā fī fann al-ma'annā*.

11. See, for example, Kfarkaddī 1942:II, 71,105,115,121 et seq.

12. Cf. Nakhleh 1945:39 and Lecerf 1932:219.

13. On the prestige accorded to the *qawwāls* and the critical audience involved in verbal duels, see Lecerf 1932:219-20 and Frayḥah 1957:274-77.14. *Al-Dūbayt* consists of two verses (four hemistichs) with the rhyme scheme aaba. See al-Ibshīhī n.d.:II, 261.

15. For an etymology of *mawāliyā* (pl. *mawāliyyāt*) see Cachia 1977.

16. See al-Ibshīhī n.d. for examples of this genre. Also see al-Muḥibbī 1873:I, 108-110. The name *Al-kān wa kān* suggests that the content of poems in this genre relate an anecdote, or give a sermon. In other words, a *kān wa kān* poem relates what was (or *mā kān*). See Whaybeh 1952:61.

17. It is said that *al-qūmā* derived its name from the call of Baghdādī singers: "*Qūmā li nasḥur qūmā*." ("Rise and let us have a light meal before daybreak"). The reference is to *al-saḥūr* (the light meal before daybreak) during the fasting month of Ramaḍān. See al-Muḥibbī 1873:I, 108.

18. Amīn Nakhleh calls it *al-qurrādī*, but he could be alone among *zajal* critics. *Qarrādī* and *qirrādī* are used interchangeably in Lebanon today.

19. This refers to one of the main rhyme schemes of *qarrādī*. *Al-Mukhammas al-mardūd* usually consists of four-line stanzas (8 hemistichs) that rhyme abababac, this last rhyme being used throughout the poem. At times a *kharja* is added to the four lines and the rhyme scheme changes to abababadc, "d" being an independent rhyme in every one of the stanzas in the poem. See Nakhleh 1945:54. Note that Whaybeh (1952:73-74) gives an example of *mardūd* which differs significantly from that of Nakhleh. His example consists of a *maṭla'* and a *dawr* that rhyme as follows: *maṭla'*, abab; *dawr*, cdcdcdcb.

20. For a definition of *ḥidā*, see Nakhleh 1945:56-57.21. *Karshūnī* is the term used for Lebanese *zajal* compositions written in the Syriac script. See al-Nūr 1966:19-20.

22. Bishop Jibrā'īl al-Qilā'ī is credited with the first serious *zajal* poems in the Lebanese dialect. See 'Abbūd 1968:78-81.

23. The definitions leave out questions of metres and concentrate instead on rhyme schemes and a brief account of content.

24. *Ibid*:245. "Dal'ūnā" is a popular genre in Lebanese *zajal* sung to the refrain '*alā dal'ūnā / 'alā dal'ūnā*.

25. The reference is to Dalmann 1901. See Lecerf 1932:240.

26. The importance of music in a sung poetic tradition can hardly be overemphasised. Without a full analysis of musical rhythm and poetic stress, metrical description remains tentative at best. For an excellent account of poetic stress in *fuṣḥā* poetry see Dīb 1974.

27. The musical transcriptions were prepared for this study by the two musicologists Lois Ibsen Fārūqī and Israel Katz.

28. The term "*Afrāmiyyah*" (pl. *Aframiyyāt*) refers to a Maronite homily or hymn composed after the poetic metre introduced in Syriac by the famous fourth-century St. Ephram (Ephraem).

29. The symbol (_o) designates an extra-long syllable.

30. For a complete definition of *'ataābā* and *mījanā*, see Whaybeh 1952:87, Nakhleh 1945:60-62, and al-Nūr 1966:103-4.

31. The poem is introduced and printed in its entirety in Whaybeh 1952:131-32.

32. For a complete account of the successful attempts by Lebanese critics and poets to rid the Lebanese *zajal* dialect of *fuṣḥā* words and desinential inflections, see al-Nūr 1966:81-87.

33. *Tatlīt* derives from the second form of the verb *thallatha* (to make "threesomes"). In *'atābā* and *mījānā*, the term refers to the use of three homonyms in the first three hemistichs of the *'atābā* or *mījānā* verse. It is worth noting that this verbal trick most probably developed from an old genre of *fuṣḥā* poetry known as the *muthallathāt*. The most famous of *muthallathāt* is *Muthallathāt Quṭrub*, published and edited by Edvardus Vilmar in 1856. This is a critical edition in Latin which discusses, among other things, the metre and form of the *muthallathāt*. The end-rhyme in the last hemistich of each *bayt* is the same as the most popular rhyme used in *'atābā*.

34. The reference is to the first five stanzas of a famous verbal duel between Jiryis al-Bustānī and Ṭalī' Ḥamdān.

35. 'Anjar is a famous village in eastern Lebanon where a major battle between Prince Fakhr al-Dīn and the Ottoman Turks took place.

36. A seventeenth-century Lebanese prince who fought off Ottoman occupation of Lebanon.

37. The famous horse of the legendary pre-Islamic folk-hero 'Antar Ibn Shaddād.

38. The reference is to the famous monastery in Dayr al-Qal'a in Bayt Mirī, Lebanon.

39. 'Antar Ibn Shaddād is a famous pre-Islamic poet known both for his poetry and legendary valour in battle.

40. The famous author of *The Prophet* and many other writings in English and Arabic.

41. The reference is to Majnūn Laylā, Qays Ibn al-Mulawwaḥ, an early Islamic Arab poet.

42. Recorded in 1983 in Zaghlūl's house, Anteliās, Lebanon. In addition to singing all the known genres of Lebanese *zajal*, Zaghlūl discussed the metrics of *zajal* and the strategies used in improvisation. All references to Zaghlūl's observations are to this interview.

43. *Al-qaṣīdah al-muʿāriḍah* is a poem emulating the metre, the rhyme, and the aesthetic qualities of another poem. See al-Shāyib 1966:6-8.

44. *Al-mufākharah* derives from *fakhr* or boasting. *Al-munāfarah* is also concerned with boasting but differs from *al-mufākharah* in that judging by a third party is not necessary. In both poems the poets try to out-boast each other by referring to their individual qualities or the attributes of their tribes.

45. *Al-muʿāẓama*ʿ is a poem in which the poet brags about his or her ability to bear grief, especially in the case of the death of a relative or an important member of the tribe.

46. *Al-murājazah* shares most of the characteristics of the aforementioned genres but uses the *raǰaz* metre.

47. *Al-munāqaḍah* is the literary term applied principally to the famous *naqāʿiḍ* of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, and al-Akhṭal in the Umayyad period. For an account of the form of the *naqāʿiḍ* and the rhetorical strategies used in them see al-Shāyib 1966:1-6.

48. For a complete bibliography on Nabaṭī poetry in Saudi Arabia, see Sowayan 1985:218-26.