

«Its *Maṭla* ' and *Harja* are Twofold in Function»: Form and Content in Ibn Quzmān's «*Zajal* 59» and «138»

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SUMMARY. This article begins (1) by briefly contrasting the goals of those treatises on rhetoric and poetics composed in Greek, Latin and Arabic during the Ancient and Medieval periods, on the one hand, with the goals of modern, post-Romantic literary criticism, on the other, in order to highlight the fact that pre-modern treatises had, as their main purpose, that of teaching students how to write, and of correcting their mistakes when they did so. As such they were largely prescriptive, and cannot be of much use for the purposes of modern literary criticism, which is largely descriptive and interpretative in its approach. Despite this obvious fact, pre-modern methods have often been misapplied, in modern times, to the study of Arabic poetry. (2) The article proceeds to discuss the role and function of the 'initial refrain' or *maṭla* ' as well as the 'exit' or *harja* in Andalusī-Arab strophic poetry, pointing out that the function of those two elements is essentially a musical one, and stems from an oral tradition. (3 and 4) Thereafter, the article analyses two *zajal* poems by the renowned twelfth-century Andalusī-Arab poet Ibn Quzmān. These two poems exhibit an unusual trait: each one makes use of a single, identical text, that is repeated verbatim at the beginning and end of the poem, both as its *maṭla* ' and as its *harja*. It is suggested that this external thematic parallelism framing the poem encloses an internal patterning based on ring composition, an organizational technique of which the poet may well have been consciously aware. (5) The form this patterning takes, however, points to certain ambiguities and contradictions, inviting the reader to interpret the text by penetrating beyond its surface meaning, in order to arrive at its deeper layers of significance. This technique of «allegorical» interpretation is, in turn, based on methods of Qur'ānic interpretation introduced by the Mu'tazilī school of Islamic theologians, and which had heavily influenced literary authors long before the time of Ibn Quzmān. (6) Finally, it is concluded that, in this instance, the tension between the surface and hidden meaning of the text

RESUMEN. Este artículo comienza por contrastar brevemente los objetivos de aquellos tratados de poesía y retórica compuestos en griego, latín y árabe durante la Antigüedad y el periodo medieval, por un lado, con los objetivos de la crítica literaria moderna y post-romántica, por otro, para subrayar el hecho de que los tratados premodernos tenían como propósito principal aquel de enseñar a los estudiantes cómo escribir, y corregir sus errores. Como tal, eran mayoritariamente prescriptivos, y no pueden ser de gran utilidad para el propósito de la crítica literaria moderna, que es ampliamente descriptiva e interpretativa en su enfoque. A pesar de este hecho obvio, en la actualidad se han aplicado erróneamente métodos premodernos en el estudio de la poesía árabe. Este artículo prosigue discutiendo el papel y la función del 'estribillo inicial' o *maṭla* ' así como la 'salida' o *jarja* en la poesía estrófica arábigo-andalusí, señalando que la función de estos dos elementos es esencialmente musical, pues surge de la tradición oral. A partir de aquí, el artículo analiza dos zéjeles del ilustre poeta arábigo-andalusí Ibn Quzmān. Estos poemas muestran un rasgo inusual: cada uno se vale de un único e idéntico texto, que se repite textualmente al comienzo y al final del poema, ambos como su *maṭla* ' y como su *jarja*. Se sugiere, por tanto, que este paralelismo temático que enmarca el poema encierra un patrón interno basado en la composición circular, una técnica organizativa de la cual el poeta bien podría haber sido consciente. La forma que toma este patrón, no obstante, presenta ciertas ambigüedades y contradicciones, invitando al lector a interpretar el texto introduciéndose más allá de la superficie de su significado, para alcanzar las capas más profundas de su mensaje. Esta técnica de interpretación alegórica está, asimismo, basada en los métodos de interpretación del *Alcorán* introducidos por la escuela Mu'tazilī de teólogos islámicos, que había influido a diversos autores mucho antes del tiempo de Ibn Quzmān. Finalmente, se concluye que, en este caso, la tensión entre la superficie y el significado oculto del

is a means of allowing the author to adopt a critical stance toward the society in which he lives.

texto permite al autor adoptar una postura crítica ante la sociedad en la que vive.

KEYWORDS: Rhetoric, Poetics, Arabic poetry, *maṭla'*, *ḥarja*, *zajal* poems, Ibn Quzmān.

PALABRAS-CLAVE: Retórica, Poética, poesía árabe, *maṭla'*, *jar̄ya*, zéjeles, Ibn Quzmān.

1. CLASSICAL ARABIC RHETORIC AND POETICS, VERSUS MODERN LITERARY CRITICISM

Like the Ancient Greco-Roman tradition that preceded it, Arabic scholarship also produced a rich corpus of treatises on rhetoric and poetics during the Medieval period¹. The main purpose of such studies, in all three traditions, was not, however, to analyze literary works in such a way as to elucidate their meaning (such being the underlying and implicit goal of modern literary criticism), but rather to teach potential writers how to compose correctly within the canons established by each literature. Thus, when Aristotle (384-322 B. C.) informs us in his *Poetics* that, after having read a large number of Greek tragedies, he noticed that they all had a basic number of features in common, he is providing his readers with a formula or recipe for how to write a Greek tragedy². What he is specifically not doing is offering us his personal interpretation of the meaning, let us say, of *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Similarly, when Ibn Qutayba (213/828-276/889) informs us that many of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdas* or 'odes' he has come across, begin with an evocation of an abandoned, Bedouin encampment, and go on to describe a brief love affair between the poet and a lady, long since departed, then proceed to describe the poet's journey over a vast and terrifying desert, and end with the praise of a distinguished individual³, he is providing future, would-be poets with the basic formula for composing a *qaṣīda*, rather than investigating the specific meaning of the famous *Mu'allāqa* of, for example, that prince of pre-Islamic poets, Imrū' al-Qays⁴, or even

¹ See, for example, Grube, 1965; Trabulsi, 1955.

² Fyfe, 1982.

³ «I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of Odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling-places and the relics and traces of habitation. Then he wept and complained and addressed the desolate encampment, and begged his companion to make a halt, in order that he might have occasion to speak of those who had once lived there and afterwards departed; for the dwellers in tents were different from townsmen or villagers in respect of coming and going, because they moved from one water-spring to another, seeking pasture and searching out the places where rain had fallen. Then to this he linked the erotic prelude (*nasīb*), and bewailed the violence of his love and the anguish of separation from his mistress and the extremity of his passion and desire, so as to win the hearts of his hearers and divert their eyes towards him and invite their ears to listen to him, since the song of love touches men's souls and takes hold of their hearts, God having put it in the constitution of His creatures to love dalliance and the society of women, in such wise that we find very few but are attached thereto by some tie or have some share therein, whether lawful or unpermitted. Now, when the poet had assured himself of an attentive hearing, he followed up his advantage and set forth his claim: thus he went on to complain of fatigue and want of sleep and travelling by night and of the noonday heat, and how his camel had been reduced to leanness. And when, after representing all the discomfort and danger of his journey, he knew that he had fully justified his hope and expectation of receiving his due meed from the person to whom the poem was addressed, he entered upon the panegyric (*madīh*), and incited him to reward, and kindled his generosity by exalting him above his peers and pronouncing the greatest dignity, in comparison with his, to be little» (Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb aš-ši'r wa-š-šu'arā'*, trans. Nicholson, 1962: 77-78. See too, Lecomte, 1979-2002: III, pp. 844, col. b-847, col. b (henceforth abbr. *E. I. 2*).

⁴ On whom, see Boustany, 1979: 1177, col. a-1178, col. b.

attempting to show in what way it differs in meaning from the ode of Ṭarafā⁵. In other words, both Aristotle and Ibn Qutayba are telling us what all tragedies or *qaṣīdas* have *in common*, in order to teach us *how to* write future works in those two genres; they are not telling us in what way individual works in either genre are *different from* one another, so as to help us grasp their specific meaning. In this respect, both Classical and Medieval writings about literature fall into the category of what, today, we would call lessons in «creative writing», rather than attempts at «literary criticism». The very terms used by Ancient and Medieval authors support such a conclusion, for (1) the word *criticism* itself derives from the Greek verb *krinō* (‘to judge’), whereas its equivalent, the Arabic term *naqd* (‘to test’), originally meant ‘to test or assay gold in order to determine the degree of its purity’. That is to say, the «critic», as understood by Ancient and Medieval authors, was one who *judged* or *tested* literary works, not for their content, but in order to determine whether their metal was pure, in the sense that they respected and followed the traditional rules of composition.

As an inevitable consequence of the above, Ancient and Medieval rhetoricians had little if anything to say about the specific meaning of individual works, and even less about how each work differed from the next. The latter is a strictly Modern concern; it developed out of the belief that individuals have the ability and right to interpret any given text; a belief spread by Luther’s dictum that individuals should be allowed to interpret the Bible on their own, rather than accepting an official interpretation from above, and such a belief gained foothold in Europe during the Romantic period, which was, in turn, deeply concerned with the differences between peoples and nations (*volksgeist*), not to mention individuals, in contrast to the eighteenth-century interest in what was *universally* valid for all mankind.

Without taking the fundamental distinction between pre-Modern and Modern literary «criticism» into account, it is the case that some students of Arabic poetry have attempted to apply the principles of Medieval rhetoric and poetics (which were never designed to highlight the differences between one poem and another in the first place), to individual Arabic poems. As a result, they have come up with some bizarre theories. The following is one of them: Classical Arabic poetry tends to avoid enjambment rather overwhelmingly. To this must be added the fact that Medieval Arab rhetoricians, in discussing that poetry, normally proceed line by line, putting the meaning of each individual line into simpler prose as they go along, both in order to explain it, as well as to point out its merits or defects to potential students of poetry. What they never do, however, is attempt to grapple with the poem as a whole. Thus, because Medieval Arabic rhetoricians never go beyond the line in their analyses, some Modern students of Arabic poetry have concluded that Arab poets themselves were not concerned with establishing any logical train of thought going beyond the individual line of poetry. As a result, one would have to reach the absurd conclusion that it would be possible to take any given poem and rearrange its lines at random, thereby coming up with as many valid versions of the poem as there are possible line-combinations within it. In contrast to this approach, much of the poetic production of eighteenth-century Western European literatures also avoids the usage of enjambment, yet it would never occur to a Modern critic of such poetry to declare that there was no overall cohesion to that poetry’s thought. On this point, it must be said that the difference in approach between readers of Arabic and Western poetry lies not in the specific nature of either poetic tradition itself, but in the methods used by the reader: Whereas professionals of literary criticism in the European languages have largely been trained in that specific discipline, it is far too often the case

⁵ On whom, see Montgomery, 2000: 219, col. a-220, col. b.

that those professionals who deal with Arabic poetry are historians, philologists, linguists, textual editors, etc, who, though they may be exceptional and distinguished experts in their own fields, have little if any formal training in the discipline of literary criticism itself.

Over the years, I have made an attempt to counter prevailing notions about Arabic poetry by showing, in the specific case of al-Andalus, that one of its greatest and most original poets, namely Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160), certainly does exhibit, in his literary production, a deep concern for orderly literary composition. Specifically, I have subjected a number of his *zajals* to detailed analysis from a literary perspective, thereby showing that one of the guiding principles he used seems to have been the chiasmic arrangement of themes known as ring composition⁶. To date, I have come to such a conclusion on the very modest basis of 14 poems, selected from the unique, if incomplete, surviving manuscript of Ibn Quzmān's *Dīwān*, which, in its totality, contains 149 extant *zajals*⁷. In all, my efforts have been directed to illustrating the chiasmic form exhibited by the poems I have studied, on the basis of the thematic content of those poems themselves, while simultaneously attempting to use that same chiasmic form as a means of further understanding the meaning of the poems studied. Insofar as the principles of ring composition were, to the best of my knowledge, never mentioned or discussed by Medieval Arab rhetoricians, but were, instead, first discovered by Modern critics studying Ancient Greek poetry, and then identified in a large number of other literatures, be they Ancient, Medieval, or Modern, a major question that arises, is whether Ibn Quzmān was at all aware of the chiasmic nature of his compositional techniques, or whether he was following an unconscious path instinctive to the human mind itself⁸. With respect to this question, there are two rather interesting *zajals* in his *Dīwān*,

⁶ For ring composition as a universally used literary technique, see the bibliography listed by Niles, 1979: 924-935. The validity of this critical approach to reading literary texts was discussed by Peterson, 1976: 367-375. For a recent and most welcome study, see Douglas, 2007. That distinguished anthropologist states: «Ring composition is found all over the world, not just in a few places stemming from the Middle East, so it is a worldwide method of writing. It is a construction of parallelisms that must open a theme, develop it, and round it off by bringing the conclusion back to the beginning. It sounds simple, but, paradoxically, ring composition is extremely difficult for Westerners to recognize. To me this is mysterious. Apparently, when Western scholars perceive the texts to be muddled and class the authors as simpletons, it is because they do not recognize the unfamiliar method of construction» (*ibid*, X).

⁷ For individual Quzmānī *zajals* previously analyzed by me, in which ring composition has been identified and used as a tool of interpretation, see (1) Monroe, 1979: 78-128 (On *Zajal 12*); (2) Monroe, 1985-1986: 769-799 (On *Zajal 137*); (3) Monroe, 1987b: 1-42; (4) Monroe, 1988: 853-878; (5) Monroe, 1996: 79-115; (6) Monroe, 1997: 94-139; (7) Monroe, 2003: 138-177 (in collaboration with Mark F. Pettigrew), (On *Zajal 90*); (8) Monroe, 2005: 135-159; (9) Monroe, 2006: 1-45; (10) Monroe, in press a; (11) Monroe, 2007: 324-351; (12) Monroe, in press b; (13) Monroe, forthcoming a (on *Zajals 21, 92, and 147*). See too, Hernández, 1991: II, 383-408; Farrin, 2004: 247-269 (On *Zajals 8 and 48*). For further bibliography on the Andalusī *zajal*, see Heijkoop and Zwartjes, 2004. See especially, the groundbreaking study by Farrin, 2010, demonstrating that ring composition also applies fully to the Classical Arabic poetic tradition as well.

⁸ While there is no evidence, to the best of my knowledge, that Medieval Arab rhetoricians were aware of ring composition, it is clear that at least one famous Arab prose writer certainly was, for in a letter addressed to a friend, Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī (358/968-398/1008) the inventor of the *maqāma* genre, states: «As for your writing, its wording is ample and its themes are eloquent, *while its beginning is related to its end, and its end continuous with its beginning*, and between them flows running water...» (*Rasā'il al-Hamaḍānī*, ed. Hindī, 1928: 167 (emphasis mine). Similarly, and a century earlier, Ibn al-Rūmī (221/836-283/896), the famous Šī'ite poet from the 'Abbāsīd period, composed an ascetic poem ending with a statement that draws attention to the resemblance of its end to its beginning:

*Chide your heart when it rebels, / restrain your glance when it is unruly,
And direct your soul to a maiden of Eden / who is coquettish, flirtatious, and lively,*

namely Nos. 59 and 138, which I would like to discuss on the present occasion. In each of the two, the poet repeats, verbatim, the same text at the beginning and end of his *zajal*, using that text both as its *maṭla‘* or ‘initial refrain’ and as its *ḥarja* or ‘exit’, in a way that is highly suggestive of ring composition. Moreover, he draws our attention to the fact that he is repeating those texts, in a way that unequivocally suggests that he is perfectly aware of doing so. Before we proceed to analyze these two poems, however, it would be helpful to discuss the role of *maṭla‘* and *ḥarja* in Andalusī poetry.

2. MAṬLA‘ AND ḤARJA IN ANDALUSĪ-ARABIC STROPHIC POETRY

In an article written some years ago, I pointed out that, within the body of any given *muwaššaha*, the function of its *ḥarja* was, primarily, to indicate the melody to which that poem was intended to be sung⁹. I further indicated that, in many cases in which the *ḥarja* was couched in Colloquial Arabic, as opposed to ‘Mozarabic’ or early Hispano-Romance, it could be definitively demonstrated that such a *ḥarja* had been borrowed from an earlier, extant Arabic *zajal* and, even more significantly, that it was a quotation taken specifically from the *maṭla‘* of that *zajal*. This being the case, and reasoning by analogy, there are solid grounds to assume that the same is also true of the so-called ‘Mozarabic’ *ḥarjas*, namely that they are also initial refrains from songs in Romance for which we lack earlier, extant textual documentation. This custom can only be explained if we consider that the *zajal* was originally a popular genre intended for singing in oral performances. As also occurs in the case of its putative strophic Romance congenres such as the *cantiga* and the *villancico*, the *maṭla‘* of the Arabic *zajal* constituted its initial refrain, and was repeated chorally after each strophe had been sung by a soloist. Since the refrain was that part of the song most often repeated, it became the part most easily remembered, and thus, in a song tradition in which music was not written down, so that the melody to each song-text had to be learned by heart and transmitted orally from singer to singer, one simple way to indicate that melody was to quote, at the end of the poem, the refrain of the earlier song of which it was a musical *contrafactura*. Such was the strategy adopted by composers of *muwaššahas*. This conclusion further

And whom God adorned with so bright a cheek / that if small ants walked on it they would be hurt.

If her face appeared from behind her curtain, / you’d say: «Lightning flashed above the rain-cloud»,

Or if the full moon saw her as it rose / it would don humility and modesty, and be put to shame.

He to whom she hands it, / will obtain aged wine in a cup and bowl,

From fingers like silver combs / dyed with light in the course of prayers.

Whenever he rejoices at her, she says to him: «May God increase your joy and happiness.

With you, my love, and goal of my desires, / may life increase in pleasure and righteousness».

They are both in the Garden of Eden, / around whose broad extent the glance can roam.

The birds sing within its borders / with melodies that leave the heart full of joy,

And the gentle breeze brings them / the fragrance of roses from those open spaces;

Their eyes were given refreshment / in exchange for the tears that had been shed,

So take this poem, as if it were a well-strung necklace of pearls, / whose end resembles its beginning.

The point being made here appears to be that the «restrained glances» of the poem’s initial line are «given refreshment» in its penultimate line. See Ibn al-Rūmī, 1998: II, No. 412, pp. 186-188 (my translation, emphasis mine). I wish to thank Professor Raymond K. Farrin for kindly pointing out this poem to me.

⁹ Monroe, 1986: 230-250. See too, Monroe, 1987a: 265-317.

implies that the Colloquial Arabic *zajal* was originally an oral and popular genre and that it preceded the more learned *muwaššaha* couched in Classical Arabic, an assumption for which I also provided documentary evidence¹⁰.

Practically the earliest *zajal* poet of whom we have a substantial surviving corpus of poetry, however, is Ibn Quzmān. Although he himself names some of his more famous predecessors, going back a couple of generations (a few fragments of whose poems have survived), and although we have some independent Andalusī references to the *zajal*, going back as far as ca. 319/931, we have no surviving texts from this early period¹¹. Our references provide evidence, however, that this early *zajal*, now lost, existed within an oral tradition, that it flourished among minstrels, that it was sung in the marketplaces of the cities and towns of al-Andalus, and that, like the verses of Ibn Quzmān, it was often scandalous in nature. By the time we get to Ibn Quzmān, however, we are clearly dealing with a learned poet who knew Classical Arabic perfectly well, but who chose, for literary reasons, to compose in the vernacular, using a popular form. His case is, then, analogous in some respects to that of Luis de Góngora y Argote or Federico García Lorca, two learned poets, both of whom composed ballads in emulation of the popular, Spanish *romance* genre. There is plenty of explicit evidence, within the *zajals* of Ibn Quzmān, however, that he still intended his *zajals* to be sung¹². This being the case, we must assume, until evidence to the contrary is provided, that they were delivered in the traditional fashion, with the *maṭla‘* being repeated chorally at the end of each and every strophe, while the strophes themselves were performed by a soloist.

Another factor relevant to our discussion is that most of Ibn Quzmān’s poems exhibit the true *zajal* structure, of which the basic rhyme-scheme may be represented as follows: AA bbba, ccca, ddda, etc, in which the *cabeza/maṭla‘* or ‘initial refrain’, in its simplest form, is represented by two lines rhymed AA, the *mudanzas/guñns* by the rhymes bbb, ccc, ddd, etc, and the *vuelta/markaz*, which must rhyme with the *maṭla‘*, by the letter *a*. Nevertheless, some of Ibn Quzmān’s poems, although they are composed in Colloquial Arabic, adopt the slightly more complicated structure characterizing the Classical *muwaššaha*, as follows: AA bbbba, cccaa, dddaa, etc, and in which the *markaz* exhibits the same number of rhymes as the *maṭla‘*, unlike the *zajal*, in which the *markaz* contains roughly half the *maṭla‘*’s rhymes.

This hybrid form, Samuel M. Stern dubbed the ‘*muwaššaha*-like *zajal*’, a term that I shall adopt (for all intents and purposes, it could just as easily be called the ‘*zajal*-like *muwaššaha*’)¹³. The point to be made here is that the ‘pure’ *zajal* does not have a *ḥarja*, whereas the pure *muwaššaha*, along with its hybrid sister, the ‘*muwaššaha*-like *zajal*’ does. This suggests that, in the oral tradition out of which the Colloquial *zajal* developed, the minstrels who sang the songs, originally knew by heart the melodies of those songs that constituted their repertory, thereby needing no reminders. In contrast, and in the case of the learned *muwaššaha* and its hybrid sister, the *muwaššaha*-like *zajal*, the singing was done by orchestras, in a more learned setting, possibly at court, where songbooks were available, containing the text of the songs, but not their melodies, there being no system of musical notation in use among medieval Arab musicians¹⁴. It was

¹⁰ Monroe, 1979b: 168-187; Monroe, 1989: 38-64.

¹¹ See Monroe, 1988: 45-56; 2005: 138.

¹² See specifically *zajals* 2: 10, 10: 1, 19: 13, 37: 7, 42: 5, 54: 8, 71: 7, 74: 7, 94: 31, 182: 5.

¹³ See Stern, 1974: 170, 197, 210, 212-213, 219-220.

¹⁴ See Liu and Monroe, 1989. This is also why, in his *Libro de buen amor*, Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, advises those who do not know the melody of a song-text to go and learn it directly and orally from singing-girls:

largely in order to provide basic musical instructions to the singers, that the *ḥarja* played so essential a role.

Some of Ibn Quzmān's *zajals*, as we have mentioned, are of the hybrid *muwašṣaḥa*-like variety, and these poems invariably exhibit a *ḥarja* appended to their last strophe, which would have been sung in solo performance, after which, we are justified in suspecting that the initial refrain would have been repeated chorally for the last time. There are, however, two curious *muwašṣaḥa*-like *zajals* in Ibn Quzmān's *Dīwān*, namely Nos. 59 and 138, in which an anomaly is to be found: In these two examples, the initial refrain or *maṭla'* is repeated verbatim at the end of the poem, as its *ḥarja*, thereby thematically framing the poem in a manner that is more than typical of ring composition. If the *ḥarja*'s *raison d'être* is to indicate the melody of the poem to its singers, and if it is normally located at the end of the text, what is it also doing at the latter's beginning, in the case of these two *zajals*? And if the *maṭla'* is to be repeated chorally, as a refrain, after each strophe is sung in solo performance, does this mean that the text was meant to be sung twice at the end of the poem; once in solo, and once in choral rendition? Let us examine those two poems in order to determine what light they can shed on the poetry of Ibn Quzmān.

3. IBN QUZMĀN'S «ZAJAL 59»

Ibn Quzmān's «*Zajal 59*» constitutes one of two poems in which that author not only repeats his initial refrain, or *maṭla'*, as the ending, or *ḥarja*, of that same poem, thereby framing it symmetrically, but also draws emphatic attention to the repetition, in such a way as to arouse in the reader/listener, a certain expectation that the rest of what is contained within the *zajal* will also be symmetrically arranged. Let us, therefore, examine the poem from the perspective of its form and content, to determine whether our expectations will be fulfilled. The following are the poem's text and translation:

A	O.	<i>mā'i ma'sūqan malīḥ wa-waḥī jīd yakūn in lam tajīḥ ṭuza'u</i>	<i>I have a handsome and faithful beloved: He would be great, were he not subject to his temper tantrums.</i>
B	1.	'al-malīḥ muḍ kān 'anīs wa-nafūr wa-fi 'ahlāquḥ 'asā wa-surūr wa-'in anṣaf layla jum'ah yajūr lassu qalbī min wiṣāluḥ raḥī 'annu fā ḥlā mā yaṭīb qaṭa'u	That handsome chap is ever sociable and withdrawing, While his character brings me both joy and sorrow: If he is fair for a night, he'll be unfair for a week; My heart can never rely on a love-union with him, For he will cancel it when he is at his very sweetest.
C	2.	gāḍab al-maḥḍūl wa-qām wa-qa'ad wa-bi-'akṭar min ṣudūduḥ wa'ad ṭumma qāl yaqlaq li-jawrī ba'ad 'aš 'alayḥ min jawrī 'aw naṣaḥī man šakā ḍarsan radī qala'u	The rascal became angry and caused a commotion, Threatening he would do more than just avoid me, Then he asked: «Does my unfairness disturb him? What's it to him whether I am fair or unfair? Whoever complains of a bad tooth should remove it ¹⁵ .

Después muchas cantigas fiz de dança e troteras,
para judías e moras e para entendederas;
para en instrumentos, comunales maneras:
el cantar que non sabes, oílo a cantaderas.

After this I composed many songs for dancing and quick-steps,
For Jewesses and Moorish girls, and for ladies in love,
And for instruments of the usual kind.
If you don't know one of these songs, hear it from singing girls.

(Ruiz, 1967: 565, v. 1513). English trans. MacDonald, 1999: 373, v. 1513.

¹⁵ According to García Gómez, this is the Arabic equivalent of a proverb found in all the major Spanish collections. He gives the example: «A quien le duele la muela, que la eche fuera (o: que se la saque)». See García Gómez, 1972: I, 300, n. 1.

3. qul lu 'an-nī 'in laqaytu ḥabar
yaqtana' min waṣlī b-aš-mā ḥaḍar
wa-yakūn fih iḥtimāl wa-ṣabar
lā ya'addad 'in šutum 'aw juḥf
rubba-mā ḍāk aš-šatam nafa'u
- Should you come across him, tell him, on my behalf,
To put up with whatever love-union he can get out of me;
Tell him to be patient and enduring,
And to refrain from reproach, when insulted or mistreated;
Perhaps my insults will teach him a lesson».
- D** 4. bayn ḍīk al-'aynayn wa-qalbī qitāl
bi-rimāḥ min tīh wa-jawr wa-nakāl
wa-yarūg miskīn yamīn wa-šimāl
yā ṣabī man 'allamuh ṭaqfī
'aw min ayn rāh 'aw min ay sama'u
- A struggle goes on between those eyes of his and my heart,
Waged with lances of arrogance, injustice, and torment,
As my poor heart ducks right and left.
Who taught him to fence with me, my boy?
Where did he observe it? Whence did he hear of it?
- E** 5. 'ay malīḥ ṭawb 'al-jamāl qad kuṣī
ḥusni ḡayruh 'inda ḥusnuh nusī
fa-l-ḡazāl qāl min qibal ḥanasī
wa-l-qamar qāl min qibal kalafī
fa-'alā tafḍīlu 'ajṭama'u
- What a handsome chap! He has donned the robe of beauty!
Next to his, the beauty of all others is forgotten.
The gazelle says: «. . . and all because of my snub-nose»,
And the moon says: «. . . and all because of my spots»¹⁶,
For both agree that he is superior to them.
6. mā 'u ḍā l-ma'šūq matā 'ī badan
las tarāh illā li-man 'aw li-man
darmakan ma'jūn ḥaḍā bi-laban
fī qawām az-zurzar aš-šarafī
l-al-ḥubūb yanzal 'alā faza'u
- This beloved of mine has a body
The equal of which you will rarely find in others;
It is made of fine, white flour kneaded with milk,
Into the shape of a starling¹⁷ from the Aljārafe¹⁸,
Swooping down to gather grain, despite its fear.
- F** 7. 'asma' al-mamdūḥ wa-da' mā jarā
man darā fā ban sa'īd mā darā
lā ḡinā luh 'an yaqūlu mā yarā
yaḥtamal mā jālla min kulafī
wa-l-jamīl fī jānībī ṣana'u
- Listen to the one I'm about to praise, and forget the past:
Whoever knows what he knows about Ibn Sa'īd¹⁹,
Must necessarily speak out about what he has observed:
That patron of mine bears my heavy burdens,
And has bestowed favors upon me.
- E'** 8. mā 'u 'awlādan milāḥ nubalā
kabarū fī jāh wa-māl wa-'ulā
miṭlu-hum 'immā ziyāda fa-lā
man waṭaq bīh kullī mūnah kuḥfī
wa-man aqṭaṣad 'ilay-hi nafa'u
- He has handsome, noble sons,
Brought up in glory, wealth, and lofty rank;
No one is like them and, far less, superior to them.
Whoever relies on their father, will be spared all trouble,
For the latter is beneficial to whoever approaches him.
- D'** 9. kullu-hum lī fī madīḥu 'amal
wa-'abū 'abd al-la ṣāḥb az-zajal
yaškur aš-šā'ir 'alā mā 'amal
fī ḥalāwatī wa-fī ṭurafī
naftan az-zāhid 'alā wara'u
- In praising him, I set my hopes on all his sons,
But Abū 'Abdallāh²⁰ is the specific object of this *zajal*,
In which the poet is grateful for his patron's actions:
With my sweet words and rare expressions,
I charm ascetics, despite their piety,
- C'** 10. fa-'anā šarraftu kullī 'adab
- For I have ennobled every form of literature,

¹⁶ Here, García Gómez cites an anecdote from the fifteenth-century Granadan author Ibn 'Āšim, about an incident involving the famous 'Abbāsīd caliph Hārūn al-Rāšīd (r. 170/786-193/809), who is portrayed as reciting a poem about the imperfections of the gazelle and the moon; the first, because of its snub-nose, and the second because of its spots. *Ibid*, 301, n. 2.

¹⁷ The starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) is a black bird considered a nuisance, since it bands together in large, raucous flocks that drive away smaller, more desirable songbirds. See Harris and Levey, 1975: 2611, col. a. See too, Whinnom, 1966.

¹⁸ A region near Seville.

¹⁹ The unidentified patron to whom this *zajal* is addressed.

²⁰ I. e., Abū 'Abdallāh ibn Sa'īd, the poem's unidentified patron.

	wa-ʿanā saḥḥaltu kulli ṣaʿab	I have eased every difficulty,
	wa-ʿanā ʾaẓhartu kulli ʿajab	I have displayed every marvel,
	wa-ʿanā bayyantu kulli ḥafī	I have clarified every obscurity,
	wa-ʿanā ʾabdaʿtu fih bidaʿu	And produced wonders in so doing.
B*	11. mā ʿi zājlan muʿlam aṭ-ṭarafayn	I have a <i>zajal</i> minted on both ends,
	ka-l-ʿiyār fā š-šūqri min jihatayn	Like the impression on both sides of a gold coin;
	[maṭlaʿuh] wa-l-ḥarja DOŠ ʿamalayn	Its <i>maṭlaʿ</i> and <i>ḥarja</i> are twofold in function:
A*	<i>māʿi maʿšūqan malīḥ wa-waḥfī</i>	<i>I have a handsome and faithful beloved:</i>
	<i>jīd yakūn in lam tajīḥ ṭuzaʿu</i> ²¹	<i>He would be great, were he not subject to his temper tantrums.</i>

If we examine the poem's thematic content from a conventional point of view, according to the principles identified and codified by Medieval Arab rhetoricians in their efforts to characterize pre-Islamic and subsequent forms of the *qaṣīda*, and with whose themes Ibn Quzmān is toying here, we will note that strophes 1 to 6 are an echo of the familiar *nasīb*, or 'love prelude' with which so many earlier Classical poems begin. Unlike pre-Islamic poetry, however, in which the beloved is invariably a woman, here the poet is addressing his complaints to a youth. In this respect, he is receiving his inspiration from the 'Abbasid poet Abū Nuwās (ca. 130/747-ca. 200/815), who lived three centuries before him, and who is reputed to have introduced the theme of homoeroticism to Arabic poetry²². In the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, the erotic *nasīb* was normally followed by the *raḥīl* or 'journey', but that element was often suppressed by the poets of the 'Abbāsīd period²³ and, following their practice, it is also omitted from the *zajal* under consideration. Instead, and following previous conventions, in strophes 7 to 9 the poet offers his praise to the patron. This theme, with which *qaṣīdas* normally end, is called *madīḥ*, or 'panegyric'. But since the panegyric of a worthy individual would be of little value unless it proceeded from a poet who was (at least in theory) of equal standing as his patron, from the end of strophe 9 to strophe 11, the poet enumerates and highlights his own accomplishments, thereby establishing an equality, on the level of merit, between himself and the patron, so as to lend weight to his praise of the latter. This theme is known as *fahṛ* ('self-praise'). We have, then, a Colloquial Andalusī *zajal* that, on the surface at least, follows the thematic conventions of the Classical 'Abbāsīd panegyric, especially as it was developed by Abū Nuwās.

If we take a second look at the poem, however, we will note that there are a number of anomalies in the author's presentation. To begin, and this is so unusual in the genre, that the poet points it out with pride, the poem's *maṭlaʿ* or 'initial refrain' (0) is repeated verbatim as its final *ḥarja* (11). That text states:

*I have a handsome and faithful beloved:
He would be great, were he not subject to his temper tantrums.*

²¹ Sources: (1) Photographic reprint of the unique Saint Petersburg MS: Gunzburg, 1896: 63-64; (2) Editions: García Gómez, 1972: 296-301; Corriente, 1980: 384-391; 1995: 187-190. Spanish translations: García Gómez, op. cit, loc. cit; Corriente, 1984: 151-153; 1989: 129-131. English translation mine, based on the above texts.

²² See Wagner, 1979: 143, col. b- 144, col. b. On the theme of homoeroticism in Ibn Quzmān specifically, see Monroe: 1997: 94-139. For that theme elsewhere in the Arabic literary tradition, see the other articles in the above volume.

²³ On the suppression of the *raḥīl* during the 'Abbāsīd period, see Sperl, 1977: 20-35.

In the lines immediately preceding the final citation of the same text, as the poem's *ḥarja*, in strophe 11, the poet even goes to the trouble of pointing out that:

I have a *zajal* minted on both ends,
Like the impression on both sides of a gold coin;
Its *maṭla‘* and *ḥarja* are twofold in function:

Insofar as the immediately ensuing statement both begins and ends the poem, that statement arouses our expectation that the *zajal* will be constructed according to strictly symmetrical principles. But, as we have seen, this is not so on the conventional, thematic level, insofar as six strophes are devoted to the beloved, only three to the patron (who must share the praise he receives with his sons), and two to the poet's own merits. Furthermore, at the beginning of strophe 7, the poet promises to «forget the past», despite which the figure of the cruel beloved keeps intruding, strophe after strophe, as the refrain is repeated chorally. Hence, the poet's obsession with his beloved, and with his own merits and needs, considerably outweighs any interest he may have expressed in the patron. Despite its symmetrical and parenthetically constructed outer frame, the poem's interior appears, therefore, to be thematically unbalanced.

If we take a second look at the symmetrical, framing *maṭla‘/ḥarja*, we will note that in it the poet characterizes his beloved as being 'handsome' (*malīḥ*) and 'faithful' (*wafī*). Insofar as the young man is described as being 'faithful', we are justified in assuming that he is a *reliable* person, but that assumption is immediately turned on its head when we learn, from the second line of the couplet, that he is subject to certain temper tantrums that characterize him (*tuza‘u*), which can only mean that he is, if anything, lacking in self-control, hence *unreliable* and, therefore, possibly *unfaithful*. In sum, the poet seems to be saying, the beloved would be perfect, were it not for the fact that he is imperfect. Armed with this information, we may begin to suspect that the *maṭla‘* and *ḥarja* do, indeed, have a twofold function: (1) On the formal level, they suggest that the poem they enclose will offer a sense of internal symmetry and (2), on the thematic level, the inherent contradiction implied by the figure of a beloved who is simultaneously reliable and unreliable, faithful and unfaithful, perfect and imperfect, suggests that the poem has been put into the mouth of a literary *persona* who is not to be trusted, and is, therefore, the quintessential unreliable narrator. This means, on a secondary level, that the surface meaning of the poem must be rejected in favor of a hidden, deeper meaning that it is our duty, as readers, to discover. For such a purpose, I have divided the poem into corresponding thematic sections revealing that, like so many other poems by Ibn Quzmān, it is organized according to a chiasmic patterning known as ring composition, to wit:

Both *maṭla‘* and *ḥarja*, parenthetically enclosing the poem, have been designated with the letters A, and A', respectively. They both have as their overall theme, a contradictory statement to the effect that the beloved is both *physically beautiful* but *reliable/unreliable*, *faithful/unfaithful*, and therefore *morally ugly*. While these characteristics of his will be further illustrated and developed within the *nasīb*, it is also worthy of note that this theme is reiterated and summarized at the poem's beginning and end, thereby suggesting that the poet himself, insofar as he deals in incompatibles and contradictions, is an unreliable narrator.

In strophe 1, here designated as theme B, we are informed that the beloved has *two opposite and contradictory sides* to his character: (1) He is simultaneously sociable and withdrawing, (2) he causes both joy and sorrow to the lover, (3) he is both fair and unfair, (4) he arbitrarily and cruelly breaks off relations when he is at his very sweetest.

All of the above traits only serve to confirm our initial suspicions that he is highly *unreliable* and hence, *worthless* as a lover. In contrast, strophe 11, here designated as theme B’, describes the *zajal* just composed by the poet: It is like a gold coin minted on *both sides* that, it is implied, are equivalent to and, therefore, in *harmony* with, one another. Furthermore, insofar as the coin is made of gold, it is *valuable*, and hence highly *reliable* as a form of currency. The poet is, therefore, contrasting the *worthless* and *unreliable* beloved with the *valuable* and *reliable* poem he has composed. Let us not fail to note, that the statement to the effect that the poem is the equivalent of a gold coin lends that poem all the more value, insofar as it is meant to be exchanged for the real gold the poet hopes to receive from the generous patron he is praising. The reference is, therefore, an entirely mercenary hint to the patron, to the effect that the poet desires gold from him, in return for his poem, and that, in this respect, the poem is a mere commodity meant for monetary exchange. In sum, the poet’s praise of the patron is inspired, not so much by sincere admiration, as it is by a crass desire for money and is, therefore, hollow.

In strophes 2 and 3, here designated as theme C, the beloved is referred to as a ‘rascal’ (*maḥḍūl*—literally, the word means ‘untrustworthy’), while his arbitrary and unfair behavior toward the poet is illustrated: Although the youth is fully aware of his own callous, unfair, and arbitrary behavior, this causes him no pangs of conscience and, although he is parsimonious with his favors and insults the poet, he expects the latter to put up with such cruel treatment. The beloved is, in sum, a *destructive* individual who not only feels no remorse over his deliberate and conscious mistreatment of others, but even *boasts* about such mistreatment. In contrast, in strophe 10, here designated as theme C’, the poet *boasts* of his own accomplishments: He has ennobled different forms of literature, smoothed over difficulties, displayed marvels, clarified obscurities and produced wonders; that is to say, in the area of literary creativity, he has made a positive and *constructive* contribution to society, or so he claims. But since all this poetic effort is geared toward making money, we are left with the distinct impression that the poet’s efforts are not exactly inspired by a love of art for art’s sake. Note too, that the *destructive* aspects of the beloved’s nature overshadow the *constructive* contributions claimed by the poet, insofar as the former are described in two strophes, whereas the latter are restricted to a single one. This suggests that the thematic correspondence between the two passages is at odds with its formal correspondence; that the poet is as excessive in listing his beloved’s injustices, as he is restrained in enumerating his own (dubious) accomplishments. Likewise, the poet’s obsession with the cruel beloved far outweighs his interest in the benevolent patron.

In strophe 4, here designated as theme D, the eyes of the beloved are described as being in martial *conflict* with the heart of the poet, in support of which statement the images of weapons are either directly invoked (lances) or indirectly implied (fencing = swords). The poet has, therefore, been *seduced* by the beloved’s militantly aggressive eyes, and is in *despair* because of them. This theme corresponds closely to that found in strophe 9, here designated as D’, and in which the poet praises his patron, namely a certain unidentified Abū ‘Abdallāh ibn Sa‘īd, along with his sons. In this strophe, the poet declares that he has set his *hopes* on both father and sons, although the former is the immediate object of his praise; that he is grateful for his patron’s generous actions toward him, thereby implying that he is at *peace* with the latter, and that, by means of his eloquence, he is able to *seduce* even the most pious among ascetics. We therefore begin to sense that, whereas the *warlike*, confrontational relationship between poet and beloved is a *negative* one that has led to *despair* in the immediate *past*, the *peaceful*,

friendly relationship between poet and patron is a *positive* one that will lead to *hope* for the immediate *future*.

As we have seen, in the *maṭla‘/ḥarja* the beloved was characterized as being both morally unreliable and physically handsome. The unreliable aspects of his nature have been amply illustrated in sections B, C, and D of the poem. In contrast, and in section E, which includes strophes 5 and 6, his physical beauty is examined and extolled: In strophe 5 he is declared to be extremely handsome; so much so that both the gazelle and the moon, personified, recognize his superiority in the aesthetic domain, pointing to their own defects as a justification for his preeminence (the gazelle admits to being disfigured by a snub-nose, and the moon, by spots). Let us note that there are no gazelles in the Iberian Peninsula; instead, these animals are natives of Arabia. Hence, their image is purely literary. In this respect, both gazelle and moon are images conventional to Classical Arabic poetry. Normally, in that tradition, beautiful women are compared, because of their gracefulness, to gazelles, whereas beautiful faces, because of their brightness, are compared to the brilliance of the moon. In this case, however, and by way of hyperbole, the comparison is reversed, insofar as the gazelle and moon point to their own blemishes in order to declare the beloved to be far more beautiful than they are. If the images in strophe 5 derive from the Classical, imported Arabian high culture, those in strophe 6 are homegrown, local, and popular: The beloved's body is as white as refined flour kneaded with milk so as to form a dough shaped into the form of a starling from the Aljárafe region of Seville. Thus, if the beloved is gazelle-like in his *gracefulness*, and moon-like in his *whiteness*, from the perspective of the Classical poetic tradition, he is, with a correspondence that is amazing in its equivalence, similarly *white* like the flour and milk, and shaped *gracefully* like the starling, of the local (Aljárafe), popular tradition. But even here, a contradiction occurs, for if the youth is white as flour and milk, he is also like the starling, which, though graceful in shape, is black, raucous, and appears in flocks that drive away more pleasant song-birds (see n. 17, above). Thus, not only is he black/white, corresponding to his reliable/unreliable nature, but also as beautiful as he is raucous, thereby driving away his lovers. This *unreliable* beloved is, furthermore, *superior* (*tafḍīlu*) to all others in his beauty. Such a theme contrasts and, at the same time, parallels that found in strophe 8, which has been designated as theme E'. Here we are informed that the patron has sons who are also handsome (*milāḥ*), but that, unlike the *rascally* beloved, they are *noble* (*nubalā*), and have been brought up in glory, wealth, and lofty rank. Whereas the beloved has been described in some detail as *superior* to all in his physical beauty, the patron's sons have few rivals who are like them, and none who are their *superiors* in social standing and moral uprightness. To this, it is added that the patron may always be *relied* upon, in sharp contrast to the *unreliable* and morally *inferior* nature of the beloved. Note too, that when the homoerotic-inclined poet praises his patron for having handsome sons, he is without a doubt implying to the father, that he should never be trusted in the company of those sons. This implied factor, of course, entirely undercuts the sincerity of his panegyric, raising further questions about the sincerity of his praise for the patron.

In the very thematic, if not formal, center of the poem, namely strophe 7, here designated F, the poet addresses himself in the second person singular, thereby including the reader/listener in his remarks. He exhorts the latter to pay close attention to the patron, and to forget all the troubles of the past, thereby preaching what he himself cannot practice, since the poem's refrain will keep on reminding him, strophe after strophe, of the troublesome beloved. The patron, whose name is invoked, as is often customary, in the very center of Andalusī panegyrics, either of the *muwaššaha* or *zajal* genre, is

here described as relieving the poet of the latter's heavy burdens, and granting him favors of all kinds. In the center of the poem, a transition is therefore made, from the pessimism of its initial section, to the optimism that will characterize its second part. The following chart contains a summary of the poem's thematic structure:

- A** 0. *Beloved is physically beautiful but unreliable and, therefore, morally ugly.*
- B** 1. Beloved has two contradictory sides to his spiritual nature = he is a worthless, unreliable lover.
- C** 2-3. Beloved, an overt rascal, is a destructive individual: he boasts of his negative amatory accomplishments. He disdains poet, an individual.
- D** 4. Poet is seduced by beloved's warlike eyes; he despairs over beloved's past niggardliness.
- E** 5-6. Beloved (= rascal) is like moon, flour and milk in whiteness; like gazelle and starling in gracefulness; but also like starling in blackness, raucousness, and unreliability = he is superior in physical beauty, yet unreliable, therefore inferior in moral perfection.
- F** 7. In future, poet will adhere optimistically to patron, and hopes to overcome his past pessimism.
Patron's name is identified. He has relieved poet's burdens and granted him favors in the past.
- E'** 8. Patron's sons (= nobles) are beautiful; superior both in social standing and moral uprightness; patron is reliable, therefore superior in moral perfection.
- D'** 9. Poet hopes for patron's forthcoming generosity; he peacefully seduces ascetics with his poetry.
- C'** 10. Poet, an implied rascal, is a constructive individual: he boasts of his positive literary accomplishments. He admires patron and sons, a group.
- B'** 11. *Zajal* (= gold coin) has two harmonious sides to its physical shape = it is a valuable, reliable commodity.
- A'** *Beloved is physically beautiful but unreliable and, therefore, morally ugly.*

In conclusion, the poem exhibits a careful patterning, from the thematic point of view. At the same time, this thematic patterning is in conflict with the poem's formal strophic divisions: The verbatim repetition of content in both *maṭla'* and *ḥarja* leads the reader/listener to expect that this repetition will coincide with a strictly symmetrical organization on the formal level, but here the reader/listener's expectations are dashed, insofar as the content of the poem, though *thematically* chiasmic, is *formally* asymmetrical. The poem's beginning and end, by declaring, in a contradictory manner, that the poet's beloved is both reliable and unreliable, thereby warns us to be wary of the narrative voice. In addition, the poem is compared to a gold coin such as the one the poet expects to obtain from the patron for his literary efforts. This comparison thereby has

the effect of warning us that the panegyric is a mercenary one. The contrast between the poem's asymmetrical form and its symmetrical content, thus warns us not only that it is a double-edged sword, but also that we should be wary of taking its statements at face value. By examining the poet/patron relationship which, in the Classical period, was one intended to uphold social values, the poet is declaring that, in current times, that relationship is no longer a valid one, but that it has, instead, degenerated into a mercenary, money-grubbing, and self-serving activity. In this respect, the poet is using his inverted poetics to criticize the social and literary practices of his age.

4. IBN QUZMĀN'S «ZAJAL 138»

Let us now turn to examine «Zajal 138», for which purpose the following text and translation are provided:

A	0.	<i>las fā l-balad 'ajmal min al-'abbās 'aban ḥamad</i>	<i>No one in town Is more handsome than al-'Abbās Ibn Aḥmad!</i>
B	1.	da' mā ra' ayt wa-jannab at-tahlīq fa-hū 'ajall in jīt 'alā t-tahqīq kaf las 'anā maḥmūl 'alā t-taṣdīq wa-'indu qad yamīl ka-ḡuṣn al-'ās wa-yan'aqad	Forget what you've seen and avoid any digressions: You'll find him outstanding, if you check matters out: How can I not be inclined to admit it, When he has a figure That sways like a myrtle branch Bearing fruit?
C	2.	šams aḍ-duḥā min ba'di 'anwāruh wa-ḍū l-faqār yaqṣur li-'ašfāruh min ḍā s-sabab yuḡmaz li-ḥazzāruh wa-l-lah la-qad yamḥan qulūb an-nās wa-yajtahad	The midday sun is part of his brilliance; Ḍū l-Faqār's ²⁴ edge is less sharp than the rims of his [eyelids: That is why one must blink before the charm of his eyes: Indeed, How diligently he tempts Men's hearts!
D	3.	yā man yarīd yaḥkīh yaṭūl ta'bak tarbaḥ fī ḍā 'illā quṭū' qalbak qaṣṣar 'anāk wa-'aḥṭaṣar ḥarbak fa-las yujad miṭluḥ fī ḥaḍrat fās 'ilā l-'abad	You, who seek to resemble him, long will be your efforts, In trying to do so, you will only gain a broken heart; Shorten your toil and abridge your struggle, For there will never Be anyone like him in all The city of Fez ²⁵ .
D'	4.	ḥiṣfan ṣaḡīr fī 'awwal ibbānuh mā 'šaqnī fīh wa-l-jawri min šānuh yaṣūl 'alā qalbī bi-'ajfānuh ṣawlat 'asad wa-yabtalīh b-ajnās min an-nakad	He is a small fawn in the prime of its youth. How I love him, though injustice is his habit! He pounces on my heart, with his eyelids, Leaping like a lion, And afflicting it with various Forms of torment.

²⁴ This was the sword of the Prophet Muḥammad, which he won at the battle of Badr, and later bequeathed to his son-in-law 'Alī. It came to be a prominent symbol of Šī'ism. See Mittwoch, 1983: 233, col. a.

²⁵ This reference to the famous Moroccan city tends to suggest that Ibn Quzmān must have visited it at some point in his life.

C’ 5.	mā dā laqayt fī ‘išqi dā l-miqnīn qad raddanī fī ‘uqdat at-tis ‘in kam tamtaḥan yā qalbī al-miskīn li-kulli ṣadd naskīk raḥīq al-kās baš tartafad	How much I’ve suffered from loving that linnet! ²⁶ He left me in my nineties; in a tight predicament ²⁷ . How much you’ve suffered, oh my poor heart! With each rejection, I pour you a cup of pure wine To help sustain you.
B’ 6.	yā man liqāh ḥayyānī ba‘d [al]-ḥayn mimmā raja‘ ‘ismak li-zajlī zayn karrartu fih kamā tarā martayn	You, meeting with whom has brought me back from death, Since your name is an ornament to my <i>zajal</i> , I have repeated it twice, as you can see:
A’	las fā l-balad ‘ajmal min al-‘abbās ‘aban ḥamad²⁸	No one in town Is more handsome than al-‘Abbās Ibn Aḥmad!

In «*Zajal 138*», the text that frames the poem (A, A’) declares, in superlative terms, that no one in town is more handsome than its addressee, identified by name as one al-‘Abbās ibn Aḥmad. Further along, and at the end of strophe 3, that is to say, in the center of the poem, that town, in which he dwells, is identified as Fez. Thus the poem is framed by the beloved’s name, whereas the identity of his place of residence is provided in its center. This poem does not follow the thematic conventions of the *qaṣīda*, but is instead, a *ḡazal* or independent ‘courtly-love poem’ in its own right. It should also be noted that it is a convention of the Classical ‘Abbāsīd *ḡazal* not only to refrain from mentioning the name of the beloved, but even to go to the occasional extreme of stating explicitly that one has no intention of doing so (*lastu ‘usammī-hā*, ‘I will not name her . . .’ or words to that effect, constitute an oft-repeated formula much used in that traditional genre). Nevertheless, in this poem, the name of the beloved is mentioned both at the beginning and at the end, and, in the process of musical performance, it is also repeated chorally after every strophe. Thus, the beloved’s identity, that is conventionally supposed to be kept secret is, in fact, being publicly broadcast over and over again. By further providing the name of the youth’s town of residence in the center of the poem, the poet is practically giving away his beloved’s address as well, thereby flouting convention to an unusual and extreme degree.

In strophe 1 (B), the poet declares that said youth is superior to all others in *beauty*, on the grounds that he has a figure that sways like a full-grown branch of myrtle bearing fruit. This idea is echoed in the final strophe, 6 (B’), where it is stated that the young man’s name is an ornament that adorns, and thus *beautifies* the poet’s *zajal*, for which reason, he intends to repeat it. Both strophes, therefore, imply recognition of the beloved’s beauty. As we have noted, in section B, he is described as having a figure that sways gracefully like a supple myrtle branch bearing fruit. It is a *topos* of Classical

²⁶ This songbird, the *fringilla cannabina* of Linnaeus, comes in brightly colored red, grey, or brown plumage, according to its sex and the season of the year. In the spring, the male sports bright red, black and white feathers to attract the female. It is fond of flax seeds, hence its name. See «Linnet», 1910-1911: XVI, 734. See too, n. 29, below; Whinnom, 1966.

²⁷ This expression is based upon the practice of *ḥisāb al-‘aqd*, a traditional form of reckoning done by counting on the knuckles of the hand, in which the figure 90 is represented by clenching the index finger as tightly as possible. In other words, it is implied that, on the one hand, the poet has been left in ‘a tight squeeze’, in ‘dire straits’, or in ‘a severe predicament’ and, on the other, that love’s cares have aged him to such a point that they have transformed him into a nonagenarian. See Corriente, 1997: 359, cols a-b, at col. b. «*raddanī fī ‘uqdat at-tis ‘in* he put me in a fix», and nn. 1, 2; Pellat, 1977: 60.

²⁸ Sources: (1) Photographic reprint of MS: Gunzburg, 1896: 138-139; (2) Editions: García Gómez, 1972: II, 684-689; Corriente, 1980: 871-873; 1995: 398-399. Spanish translations: García Gómez, 1972, *loc. cit.*; Corriente, 1984: 288-289; 1989: 245-246. English translation mine, based on the above texts.

Arabic poetry to describe beautiful ladies by using this simile, in which the myrtle branch refers to the lady's flexible waist or figure (*qadd*), and the fruit, to her breasts (*nahdayn*). But in this instance, and since the person described is a male rather than a female, the image has the effect of feminizing him, thereby suggesting the ambivalence of his sexuality. As a boy/girl, he is, therefore, being viewed as a dual or ambiguous personality, and this contrasts with the explicit, unambiguous 'doubling' or repetition of his name in B'. Put differently, he has a single name twice repeated, but two natures once mentioned.

In strophe 2 (C) the youth is declared to be more brilliant than the sun, insofar as the light of the latter merely constitutes a single component of his otherwise far more dazzling brilliance. Using a rather complicated play on words, the implied blade-edge (*šafra*) of the famed sword of the Prophet, namely Ḍū l-Faqār, is declared to be less sharp than the rims or edges of the young man's eyelids (sg. *šafra*, pl. *ašfār*), with which the latter wounds his lovers, at the same time that he tempts men's hearts. Moreover, his eyes are a charm or amulet (*ḥazzār*) that wreaks havoc on all those who gaze on him. That is to say, he is an aggressively charming individual. Similarly, in strophe 5 (C'), the poet complains of his suffering, compares the youth to a linnet, and sustains his heart with wine after each rejection. Using another complicated metaphor he declares literally, that he has been «left at the knuckle, or finger-joint of ninety». As we have noted (see n. 27, above) this expression implies that, on the one hand, the poet has been left in a tight spot and, on the other, that love's cares have transformed him into a non-agenarian. If, in C the omnipotent beloved is *aggressively* charming, in C' the powerless poet has been *passively* charmed, while both sections imply the use of magic. Furthermore, if in C, the youth charms all men's hearts in *general*, in C' the poet's individual heart, in *particular* has been charmed. Lastly, in C, the charm or amulet constituted by the youth's eyes, makes his lovers blink their own, thereby bringing *trouble* to their hearts, whereas in C', the youth is metaphorically described as a linnet, a song-bird that is both beautiful and enjoys the proverbial reputation of being a *trouble-maker*²⁹. Strophes 3 (D) and 4 (D') constitute the formal center of the poem. In D, the poet warns anyone who would attempt to compete with the beloved to refrain from so doing, insofar as he will only be disappointed in his efforts and gain a broken heart for, the poet adds, there will never be anyone as handsome as that youth in all of Fez. Put differently, he is asking the youth's rivals to be *honest* and *just* in recognizing Ibn Aḥmad's overwhelming superiority over themselves. In contrast, in D', the poet describes the youth as a young fawn in the prime of youth and, with full knowledge of the fate that lies in store for himself, he *honestly* declares how much he loves the *unjust* lad, who leaps upon his heart, with his eyelids, like a lion, and otherwise torments him. In other words, both those who seek to rival the helpless fawn (that is, at the same time, a ferocious lion), and those who love it, will only reap a broken heart. Furthermore, just as in B, above, the youth had been described ambivalently as a male possessing the seductive qualities of a female, here he is described as a helpless newborn fawn manifesting the qualities of a ferocious lion. The following chart summarizes the thematic structure of the poem:

A 0. *Name of beloved is made public = violation of 'courtly love' conventions.*

²⁹ *Lintwhite* is a variant form of *linnet*, derived from the Old English form «*līnetwige* linnet, lit. flax (or flax-field) trouble-maker, so called because the bird pecks out and eats flaxseed, equiv. to *līnet-* (<ML *līnētum* flax-field) + *wige*, fem. of *wiga* fighter)». See Stein (ed.), 1966: 834, col. c, s. v. «*lint.white*». See too, n. 26, above; Whinnom, 1966.

- B** 1. Beloved is superior to all in beauty; his figure (myrtle branch [= waist] bearing fruit [= breasts]) = male/female = ambiguous sexual identity.
- C** 2. Beloved is more brilliant than sun; rims of his eyelids are sharper than swords (=attractive but dangerous = ambivalent); eyes are amulets that charm admirers (activity); he is aggressively charming; charms all men's hearts in general.
- D** 3. Beloved's rivals exhorted to be honest and just, thereby recognizing his superiority. Name of his city of residence made public = *violation of 'courtly love' conventions*.
- D'** 4. *Adherence to 'courtly love' conventions*: Poet honestly admits he loves the unjust beloved; all who love him will reap a broken heart. Beloved is a newborn fawn and a fierce lion (= beautiful but dangerous = ambivalent).
- C'** 5. Beloved is a linnet (=attractive, but a trouble-maker = ambivalent); poet sustains his bewitched heart with wine (= passivity); his own heart has been charmed in particular.
- B'** 6. Beloved's superior name will beautify *zajal*, hence it will be repeated = unambiguous personal identity.
- A'** *Name of beloved is made public = violation of 'courtly love' conventions.*

In the case of the above two poems we have discussed, let us note that the former, namely «*Zajal* 59», offers what, at first sight, appears to be a neatly symmetrical form, provided by the fact that the poem is parenthetically enclosed within beginning and ending statements, each of which is a verbatim repetition of the other. Upon closer inspection, however, we note that the subject matter contained within that parenthesis is irregular within its regularity, in the sense that the themes neatly correspond with one another according to a chiasmic pattern, but that that pattern is lopsided, insofar as more strophes are devoted to the amatory and self-praising, than to the panegyric theme. Furthermore, the ambiguity expressed in the *maṭla'ḥarja* (implying that both have a dual role to play in the poem), is a subtle hint to the reader, that he should not take what is said in the text literally, but search for a deeper meaning to it. The same is true in the second poem being considered. Here, the themes are arranged in a chiasmic pattern that does indeed correspond symmetrically with the formal ordering of the strophes, but in this case, the identity of the beloved, which is required by Arabic 'courtly love' conventions to be kept secret is, instead, being loudly publicized by the inclusion of the youth's name in the refrain, and that of his city of residence, at the center of the poem. Therefore, a basic convention of *ġazal* poetry is being flouted and undermined in such a way as to suggest that the *zajal* in question is a critique of the conventional relationship of lover to beloved as portrayed in Classical Arabic love poetry. In both poems, then, the reader/listener is being indirectly encouraged to seek a second, deeper, and truer meaning to the poem.

5. ISLAMIC THEOLOGY AND ARABIC LITERATURE

In this respect, there is a long tradition, in Arabic literature, of reading texts in such a way as to eschew their surface meaning in favor of a deeper, esoteric, and true significance. Such a tradition began with the Islamic theological school known as the

Mu‘tazila, founded in the first half of the 2nd /8th century, and which taught that the *Qur‘ān* had to be read in such a way as to reject its surface, exoteric meaning in favor of a hidden, esoteric one. Possibly the first person to apply this theologically derived technique to fictional literature was the translator of the *Book of Kalīla wa-Dimna* from Pahlavi to Arabic, named Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (ca. 102/720-ca. 139/756)³⁰. Although Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ was neither a Muslim nor an Arab, but a Manichaean and an ethnic Persian instead³¹, during his formative years in Baṣra, he was deeply influenced by the Mu‘tazilī school³². Similarly, Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī (358/968-398/1008), the inventor of the *maqāma* genre, at the time he wrote his major work, was a Šī‘ite³³, the latter being a confession of Islam that incorporated into its system the theological principles of the Mu‘tazila, of which the main one that concerns us here is that, in keeping with His justice, God grants human beings free will in the area of moral decisions. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of those passages in the *Qur‘ān* that refer to the issue of free will, as opposed to predestination, support the doctrine of predestination. This doctrine was, in turn, adopted by the rival theological school of the Aš‘arīya, whose principles were eventually incorporated into Sunnī Islam. As proponents of the doctrine of Divine Justice, the Mu‘tazila developed a method for interpreting the sacred text allegorically (*ta‘wīl*), in support of their beliefs. This method was based on recognizing the fact that language is inherently ambiguous. Hence, if a given word in the sacred text had more than one meaning, this might allow the interpreter to find a hidden or esoteric (*bāṭin*) sense to the text, in support of an interpretation favorable to the doctrine of free will, even though the surface or exoteric meaning (*ẓāhir*) might appear to favor the doctrine of predestination. This practice even led to the writing of a genre of manuals on the double meanings of words, intended for the usage of Qur‘ānic interpreters (one such manual was actually composed by the great Andalusī author of *maqāmas*, al-Saraqusṭī [d. 538/1143], who was roughly contemporary with Ibn Quzmān)³⁴. It was further assumed by Mu‘tazilī scholars that the hidden meaning of the text was the true one, whereas the surface meaning was false. Therefore, the act of reading a text involved penetrating beyond the surface, in order to get to the *bāṭin* of things. In turn, this way of reading influenced writers of prose fiction such as Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ who, as we have mentioned, was in close contact with the Mu‘tazilī school of thought. It also influenced the Šī‘ite author Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī, inventor of the *maqāma* genre, along with his followers, among them the Andalusī writer al-Saraqusṭī. Thus, according to a long-standing literary tradition, Ibn Quzmān is distinguishing, in one way or another, between the intelligent reader, who is capable of penetrating beyond the surface of his poetry, in order to get at its true, esoteric sense, and the ignorant reader, who is unable to do so, and is, therefore, inevitably doomed to derive a false message from the text.

Let us further suggest that the act of framing the two poems we have considered, within a statement that is identical both at its beginning and end, at least insofar as these poems appear on the written page, implies that Ibn Quzmān is not only expecting his text to be performed as a song, but also, that he intends it to be read, whereupon the identical initial and final statements will provide a pleasing (but also cautionary) sense of symmetry on the page. If this is so, we may venture to suggest that, in the case of Ibn

³⁰ On Ibn al-Muqaffa‘’s usage of Mu‘tazilī ideas in his translation/adaptation of the *Book of Kalīla wa-Dimna*, see Monroe, forthcoming b.

³¹ See Guidi, 1927; Gabrieli, 1979.

³² See Jallad (trans.), 2002: 14-17.

³³ See Monroe, 1983.

³⁴ See Monroe (trans.), 2002: 36-41.

Quzmān, we have a poet who, while he is totally conversant with the oral tradition of musical performance, is also perfectly capable of composing poems, within a literate tradition, intended for viewing on the page. As such, he is a transitional figure in the passage from an oral to a literate tradition.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In a previous study, I have argued that the *zajal* itself may best be understood as a hybrid genre³⁵. My argument went briefly as follows: Unlike the kind of hybridization exhibited by some of the mythological creatures of Antiquity, such as the sphinx, the minotaur, and the siren, in which the lower body of an animal is combined with a human head and/or torso (or vice-versa), thereby producing a grotesque creature, there is another, far more subtle kind of hybridization in which the form, or structure, of the literary work is provided by one culture, whereas the content, or materials, is provided by another. Such hybridization may be observed, for example, in the case of the Islamic Mosque which, no matter where it is to be found, throughout the vast territories of the Islamic world and beyond, normally exhibits a distinctive structure, including a *mihṛāb* (indicating the direction of prayer), multiple and parallel naves, a single minaret, and so on. In contrast, the materials out of which individual mosques are built may, and often do, vary from place to place. Thus, mosques built in the eastern lands of the former Persian Empire often incorporate elements inspired by Zoroastrian fire-temples, while the Mosque of Damascus, built on the site of a former basilica of Saint John the Baptist, incorporates elaborate Byzantine-inspired mosaics and a square-based minaret, whereas the Andalusī Mosque of Córdoba, exhibits Roman columns, striped horseshoe arches of Visigothic inspiration, combined with Byzantine mosaics, all within one structure³⁶. In all these examples of Mosque architecture, however, the local elements or materials are being given a new meaning insofar as they are being re-structured into a form new to the area. It is as if the dominant, Islamic culture is triumphantly re-shaping local elements, be they Christian or Zoroastrian, into a new configuration, thereby giving them a new, Islamic meaning.

The same is true, in reverse, in the case of Spanish *mudéjar* churches, built by Hispano-Christians, first of all in the lands newly conquered from Islam on the Iberian Peninsula, and later, in the Ibero-American territories, stretching from Texas, west to California and, from there, south as far as Chile³⁷. In this instance, the form or structure of many examples is that of the Christian Church: they all exhibit an altar with a cross on it, they tend to have three naves (insofar as the number 3 is of special significance to Christianity), they often have two steeples, and so on. In contrast, the decorative elements found in these churches are largely Arab-Islamic, ranging from coffered ceilings and geometrically carved doors, to arabesque designs and tile-work on the walls. Here

³⁵ Monroe, 2007: 324-351. For hybridization as a cultural construct, see the remarks and useful bibliography in Stewart, 1999: 40-62.

³⁶ On the structure of the original Arabian mosque at Medina, see Sauvaget, 2002. The portico of the twelfth-century Maghak-i Attari Mosque in Bukhara contains elements typical of Zoroastrian fire-temples (see Knobloch, 2001: 125). The Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, built on the site of a former basilica of Saint John the Baptist, made use of Byzantine mosaics and the square-based minaret typical of Christian churches in the region (see Flood, 2001). For the Mosque of Córdoba's Byzantine, Roman, and Visigothic elements, see Dodds, 1992. See too Pederson *et al.* 1960: 644, col. b-p. 707, col. a.

³⁷ Among the many works on *mudéjar* art, see especially Gómez Moreno, 1916; Bevan, 1938: 104-114; Toussaint, 1946; Pavón Maldonado, 1973; Borrás Gualis, 1987; Galiay Sarañana, 2002; López Landa, Íñiguez Almech, and Torres Balbás, 2002. For an overview of *mudéjar* history, see Chalmeta, 1993: VII, 286, col. a-p. 289, col. a. To the bibliography provided in that article, add the more recent, and extremely valuable contribution by Catlos, 2004.

again, a specific form or structure, associated with the dominant Christian culture, is being imposed upon local, Islamic materials and elements, in order to give them a new, Christian meaning.

In both instances, a dominant culture has absorbed and incorporated elements borrowed from a dominated culture in order to reshape them in accordance with its own values. This kind of art thus constitutes a triumphant imposition of one culture's values on those of a vanquished rival, whose fate it is to be absorbed into the dominant culture, and reorganized according to the guiding norms of the latter. We are, therefore, dealing with a form of art that exalts the values either of Islam or of Christendom, while reshaping its vanquished rival in its own image. Such a process of absorption, in fact, lay at the very heart of the Arab, the Spanish, and the Portuguese empires. In all three cases, the conquerors culturally absorbed the peoples they conquered, thereby making new Arabs, Spaniards, or Portuguese out of them. They did so by giving their subjects a new language and religion, rather than by ruling over them as a closed caste of outsiders who refrained from intermarriage with the conquered populations (as did the «British colony» in India and the «French colony» in North Africa), or who attempted, with varying degrees of unsuccessfulness, to exterminate such native populations (as did the British in Ireland, and the Anglo-Americans in North America). In the latter instance, the colonizers set themselves up as a group distinct from the colonized, and refrained from mingling with them. In the case of the Arab, Spanish, and Portuguese empires, the ideal was, instead, to reproduce oneself abroad by turning the conquered peoples into Arabs, Spaniards, and Portuguese, respectively, on a cultural level, as a result of which, racism was never an instrument of expansion, and never took hold in those three empires as it did in others.

When certain practices of a culture are being criticized from within that very culture, a different form of hybridization may occur, and this is precisely what we find in the case of the Quzmānī *zajal*, where the form or structure is borrowed from a popular, oral, and native Ibero-Romance folk tradition (i. e., from the dominated culture), whereas the content or materials tend to derive from the Classical Arabic tradition. We thus encounter, in the Quzmānī *zajal*, themes obviously inspired by the Classical Arabic *qaṣīda*, such as the *nasīb*, the *madīḥ*, and the *fahr*, all of which are, however, handled in a burlesque and parodying fashion. We also find images, such as the lion or gazelle—there being no lions or gazelles in the Iberian Peninsula—that are borrowed from the Classical *qaṣīda* and the *ḡazal*, but are being incorporated into the *zajal*, a native, Andalusī-Arabic, non-monorhymed, strophic genre analogous to the medieval Galician *cantiga*, the Castilian *villancico*, the Provençal *dansa*, the French *rondeau* and *virelai*, and the Italian *laude* and *ballata*, not to speak of a much earlier category of Irish songs going back at least as far as the ninth century, if not earlier, and from which that *zajal* no doubt derived its form, if not its content³⁸.

It further seems to be the case that, by enclosing an Arabic content within a local form, Romance in origin, and by abandoning the Classical Arabic language in favor of the Colloquial Andalusī dialect, Ibn Quzmān is enabled to adopt the *persona* of a clown or fool and, thereby, to criticize society, its practices, and its values, with impunity³⁹. What then, is he criticizing in the two poems we have analyzed?

In «*Zajal 59*», the poet has produced a travesty of the Classical Arabic *qaṣīda*. This is so in the sense that, within the statement enclosed between the poem's parenthet-

³⁸ For a summary and documentation of the above, Monroe, 2007: 326-333.

³⁹ On the figure of the ritual clown, as it is manifested in Ibn Quzmān's poetry, see Monroe, 1985-1986: 769-799.

ical and symmetrical *maṭla‘* and *ḥarja*, he provides us with a sequence that, although chiasitic in its *thematic* arrangement, is *formally* unbalanced, in the sense that more space is devoted to describing the antics of his beloved, along with his own (de)merits, than is dedicated to praising the patron. There is, therefore, a conflict between form and content in the poem. Furthermore, by characterizing himself as one who is madly in love with an unworthy beloved who is as handsome as he is reliably unreliable, the poet is portraying himself as a reckless and foolish lover. Moreover, by comparing his *zajal* to a gold coin, and thereby introducing the subject of filthy lucre into the relationship between himself and the patron, the poet is depicting himself as a mercenary individual. In this example, the criticism the poet aims at his own *persona* serves to warn the patron indirectly, that the poet may well be an insincere panegyrist. This, in turn, raises questions about the poet-patron relationship. On this point, it should be remembered that, during the heyday of the Sunnī Arab ‘Abbāsīd caliphate in Baghdad (132/749-656/1258), the principal genre of Arabic literature was the Classical panegyric *qaṣīda*, the main purpose of which was to praise the Caliph for his embodiment of Islamic and Arab values, thereby upholding those very values themselves. In other words, when the poet declared, in his verses, that his royal patron was brave, generous, pious, wise, and so on, he was simultaneously upholding the values of bravery, generosity, piety, and wisdom for the benefit of those courtiers in attendance. This was possible, at the ‘Abbāsīd court, because its caliphs enjoyed both spiritual *authority* as well as military *power*; that is to say, they were, *grosso modo*, the Islamic equivalent of a pope and king rolled into one. Later, when the Buwayhids, a Šī‘ite and Persian dynasty (320/932-454/1062) assumed military power over major areas of the Middle East, including ‘Irāq, they ruled in the name of the Sunnī Arab ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, from whom they derived their spiritual authority, but from whom they had forcibly wrested military power; in other words, they were the rough equivalent of Protestant kings spiritually subservient to Catholic popes whom they dominated militarily. A similar situation arose in Egypt, where the Mamlūks (648/1250-922/1517), a military caste, followed the custom of ruling in the name of ‘Abbāsīd puppet caliphs. As a result of the fact that these military leaders lacked the religious authority of caliphs, thus raising serious questions about their legitimacy, and since it would have been inappropriate to praise illegitimate upstarts as an embodiment of those spiritual values dearest to society, the decline of the *qaṣīda* occurred, along with the appearance of new, experimental genres, all satirical in nature, and all critical of society in general, among them, the *maqāma* and the shadow play⁴⁰. Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī, the inventor of the *maqāma*, was originally from Persia, but flourished in ‘Irāq under the rule of the Buwayhids, whereas Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Dāniyāl (d. 710/1310), the inventor (or adapter) of the shadow play, was originally from ‘Irāq, yet flourished in Mamlūk Egypt. The same phenomenon took place in Andalus, under the fundamentalist rule of the Berber Almoravids (483/1090-539/1145), who had little knowledge of the Arabic language and, consequently, no understanding of, or appreciation for, Classical Arabic poetry⁴¹. At this time, the *zajal*, in all likelihood an originally popular genre, oral in nature, was incorporated into the high culture by poets such as Ibn Quzmān, but was normally performed, not before Al-

⁴⁰ For more on this subject, see Monroe and Pettigrew, 2003: 138-177.

⁴¹ On this subject, see García Gómez, 1945; 1949; Monroe, 1973: 65-98; al-Nowaihi, 1993; Yaqub, 1999: 240-255; Garulo, 1999: 73-96. The major center of literary patronage for poets under the *mulūk al-ṭawā‘if* was the Seville of the ‘Abbāids, particularly under the reign of al-Mu‘tamīd (r. 461/1069-484/1091), who was himself a poet. As García Gómez pointed out, after the Almoravids had deposed that king, and literary patronage disappeared, the *topos* of «hatred of Seville» became a commonplace among disgruntled poets, whose productions were no longer appreciated in that city.

moravid rulers, but before individuals of lesser social rank and status, many of them unidentified, as is the case of the two examples studied here. This explains the liberties the poet was able to take, by resorting to various forms of buffoonery, in order to get his otherwise very serious points across.

Insofar as «Zajal 138» is concerned, it too makes a travesty of the Classical tradition, specifically of the 'courtly love' genre of poetry known as *ġazal*. In violation of that tradition, which requires that the beloved's name be withheld, the poet uses the *zajal* form, with its repetitive refrain, as a means of broadcasting his beloved's name for all to hear. As if that were not enough, and in the very center of the poem, he all but provides us with that beloved's address. Thus, he presents himself as an inconsiderate, unworthy lover, thereby implying that his love poem is an unworthy expression of amatory sentiments. In sum, if the first poem studied shows us a *foolish lover* (the poet) enslaved by an *unworthy beloved*, the second poem shows us precisely the opposite, namely an *unworthy lover* (the same poet) enslaved by a *beloved who is being fooled*. In the first case, the repetition of the text found in the *matla'* and *harja* offers us a neat *formal symmetry* masking an internal *thematic asymmetry*, whereas, in the second, form and thematic content are both symmetrical. Ultimately, either poem, insofar as it is a travesty of a Classical genre, offers us a critique of attitudes and customs, inherited from the past, but that the poet no longer views as valid and, in this respect, the *matla'* and *harja* of either poem is «twofold in function» in a far deeper and more critical sense than we might originally have suspected.

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